

Srebrenica

**Reconstruction, background, consequences
and analyses of the fall of a 'safe' area**

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Prologue

The history preceding the conflict: Yugoslavia
up till 1991

Chapter 1

The era up till 1945

1. Introduction

In January 1991 J. Fietelaars, the Dutch ambassador to Yugoslavia, sent a message from Belgrade to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague that Slovenia was virtually certain to leave the Federation of Yugoslavia.¹ The Dutch diplomat felt this would lead to a political momentum where Croatia would rapidly follow Slovenia's example and the remaining republics of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro would no longer wish to belong to the remnants of a Yugoslav state that would be dominated by Serbia.

An answer to the question of what would happen if Yugoslavia were to disintegrate came on 16 January from none other than President Milosevic of Serbia during a four-hour lunch in Belgrade with the European Community ambassadors to Yugoslavia. Here, Milosevic indicated 'the ultimate compromise' that Serbia was prepared to make if Yugoslavia were to collapse: 'If this cannot be achieved peacefully, Serbia will have to opt for the power resources that we have at our disposal but they (the remaining republics) do not possess.' According to the coded message that Ambassador Fietelaars sent to The Hague, the Serbian president continued by saying:

'... [B]ut let there be no misunderstanding about this: if a federal Yugoslavia is no longer supported then the Serbian willingness to make sacrifices is rendered superfluous and is robbed of its value. We will then return to our starting point, to our Serbia. But this is not the present administrative department but the Serbs' fatherland, and the Serbs in Yugoslavia who declare themselves in favour of a return to the Serb fatherland have the right to do this and the Serbian people will enforce that right.'²

Milosevic told his diplomatic audience that Serbia had no objection to Slovenia leaving the Yugoslav state structure because hardly any Serbs lived there. In Croatia, where 650,000 Serbs lived, 'the borders will be adjusted and the Serbian enclaves will be secured. This is inevitable and is non-negotiable. Otherwise leaving the federation cannot be accepted and will be opposed by every available means.' As yet the Serbian leader had reached no conclusions about Macedonia's position. But Montenegro and Bosnia-Hercegovina would have to remain a part of Yugoslavia. 'There's no place for concession.'³

Five months later Slovenia and Croatia declared independence on 25 June 1991. During the days that followed, images appeared throughout the world of terrified Yugoslav People's Army conscripts who had found themselves caught up in a real war in Europe. For 45 years Europe had been synonymous with the absence of war. This almost idyllic situation came to an abrupt end in June 1991. For the Europeans, war was no longer something distant.

At first it still seemed like a 'drôle de guerre': an operetta-like war in Slovenia. It was a war that would last for ten days and would claim no more than a few dozen dead and wounded.⁴ By contrast in Croatia, which had also proclaimed its independence, the conflict between Belgrade and the renegade republics rapidly took a sinister turn. Serbs and Croats were fighting a war where the Geneva Convention was repeatedly violated.

¹ Hazewinkel, 'Beleid', pp. 10 and 13.

² ABZ, DDI-DEU/ARA/00408, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Servië, Fietelaars 14, 21/01/91.

³ ABZ, DDI-DEU/ARA/00408, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Servië, Fietelaars 14, 21/01/91.

⁴ Zametica, *Conflict*, p. 15 mentions the Slovenian armed forces sustaining 19 fatalities with the federal army incurring 45.

The conflict spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992. This occurred shortly after the United Nations had decided to station troops in Croatia that were known as the *United Nations Protection Force*, or UNPROFOR for short. It was under this UNPROFOR flag that the Netherlands soon became involved in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia as ultimately it was also to be in the fall of Srebrenica. This was because UNPROFOR's mandate was rapidly extended to include Bosnia.

The Netherlands contributed to the UNPROFOR peacekeeping force from the very start. At first its contribution included a signals battalion and a transport battalion but this was later extended to the formation of a fighting unit in East Bosnia in March 1994. This meant that the Netherlands had sent 2339 armed soldiers to the former Yugoslavia so that the Dutch were the fourth largest supplier of troops to UNPROFOR (after France, Great Britain and Jordan) and were the eighth worldwide in terms of the 17 United Nations' peace operations that were currently underway.⁵ In addition, approximately 400 men of the Dutch Royal Navy and an additional 400 members of the Dutch Royal Air Force were deployed for the operations in and around the former Yugoslavia. Moreover, with its contingent of 50 unarmed UN observers, the Netherlands also supplied the largest proportion of the 600 *United Nations Military Observers* (UNMOs) in the former Yugoslavia. Most of the unit, or 'Dutchbat' as it was known in UN jargon, was stationed at Srebrenica, a Muslim enclave in East Bosnia. Its role was security, a task for which other countries had shown little enthusiasm.

In July 1995, sixteen months after the deployment of the first Dutch fighting battalion, Bosnian Serb troops overran the United Nation's Safe Area of Srebrenica. The Dutch UN troops who were present were forced to abandon their task and over the following days several thousand Muslims were killed in the forests and at execution sites in this 'safe area's' immediate vicinity.

Many felt that this was proof of the moral bankruptcy of an international community that had worked for three years without finding a political solution to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. This was a bitter blow, certainly when bearing in mind the radical changes to the world stage that had recently occurred. The world order had changed radically since the reformer Mikhail Gorbachev had taken office in Moscow in 1985: Soviet control over Eastern Europe had been dismantled, the Berlin Wall had fallen and, finally, Communism had ceased to be the Soviet Union's governing movement in the summer of 1991. This led around 1990 to a general sense of euphoria about the new world order that had been created by the end of the Cold War which had dominated international relations for more than 40 years. This euphoria became still more intense at the beginning of 1991 when an international force under the leadership of the United States rapidly ended the occupation of Kuwait. American President George Bush declared that his country had entered the war against Iraq because of 'more than one small country; it is a big idea, a new world order'.⁶ This new world order would include new forms of co-operation between countries, a peaceful settling of differences, international solidarity against aggression, arms reduction, arms control and the fair treatment of all peoples. It was received with general acclaim.

However, there was also cause for concern. Now that a suicidal war between East and West was no longer an issue, there was an increasing awareness that there were also fewer restraints on outbursts of violence, particularly in the Balkans.⁷ Indeed, rather than suddenly improving, the international context had simply changed. This does not alter the fact that the violent outbursts in the Balkans in the early 1990s were difficult to understand within this international context.

The violence in the Balkans was also in stark contrast to the solemn tributes at the 1980 funeral of Josip 'Tito' Broz. This event in a still-united Yugoslavia was attended by the largest imaginable collection of heads of state from both East and West along with the Non-Aligned Movement countries.

⁵ Apart from the three countries already mentioned, it came after Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Malaysia. M.A.W. Scheffelaar, 'De blauwe onmacht', *Carré* 1995, no. 11, p. 11; the Information Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Nederlandse militairen in en rond voormalig Joegoslavië. Stand van zaken 1 maart 1994'.

⁶ Quoted in Dore, *Japan*, p.116.

⁷ K. Koch, 'Het nieuwe dreigingsbeeld, Nederlandse defensie tegen een nieuwe achtergrond', p. 11.

All of them paid their last respects to the man who, for 35 years, had enabled Yugoslavia to gain a unique position and respect in the world.

What happened in the 11 years between 1980 and 1991 when the country that Tito had forged together was finally to disintegrate? Where are the causes of the dramatic end of the multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia? Do these causes exclusively exist in Yugoslavia itself or were there also external ones? Have other nations or the international community either intentionally or unintentionally contributed to the collapse of Yugoslavia's political structure? Would it have been possible to try to prevent this deterioration externally? And what were the outside world's options to end or to limit the conflict once it had started? Which routes were open here and what resources were available? These questions are mainly discussed at the beginning of the preceding history because they are necessary for a good understanding of the events that occurred in and around the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1995. What follows reveals an all-too-frequent collision between the reality of international decision-makers and the reality of the developments within the region itself. The consequences were to be fateful.

As was previously stated, a good understanding of the events in Srebrenica can only be achieved by exploring the history of Yugoslavia. This chapter has already referred to President Tito who managed to maintain his country's unity for dozens of years. We must now focus on the period of his regime and on the preceding era so as to be able to understand that the conflict in the early 1990s had an extensive and contiguous history.

2. The death of Tito

On 10 May 1980 the Dutch publisher *Uitgeverij Het Spectrum* had no scruples about literally capitalizing on the death six days earlier of the Yugoslav president and die-hard Communist Josip Broz, or Tito as he was better known. Amongst newspaper advertisements was the headline 'Yugoslavia After Tito'. The advertisement read: 'Which course will Yugoslavia take? East, West or will it once again become Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia, just as before the First World War? Will national interests override the international ones?' If you wanted to discover more 'about this country's wealth of history, art, workers' self-rule, politics and music' the thing to do was to invest in the 25-volume *Grote Spectrum Encyclopedie*.

This commercially astute publisher had played on the interest shown throughout the world over the previous week in the late statesman who was also the oldest major leader since World War Two. Governments from both East and West along with the Non-Aligned Movement, which was partly founded by Tito, sang the praises of this political tight-rope walker who not only managed to control regional differences in his own country but also maintained an independent foreign course between the Communist and the Capitalist powers.

Tito's recognition and importance was demonstrated at his funeral. Apart from half a million Yugoslavs, dignitaries from as many as 129 countries came to pay their last respects to the statesman in Belgrade. They included four kings, six princes, three presidents, ten vice presidents, eleven parliamentary leaders, dozens of premiers, 47 foreign ministers and many Communist Party leaders. The official Dutch delegation was also considerable and consisted of Prince Bernhard, Prince Claus, Premier van Agt and Minister Van der Klaauw of Foreign Affairs.

Many people felt that Yugoslavia would probably never be the same again after the death of its first president and this was illustrated by the Dutch newspapers of the day. To quote the *Algemeen Dagblad* reporter B. van Oosterhout, Tito had taken Yugoslavia from being 'a backwards Balkan province, a ball on the field of influence of international politics' and had turned it into 'a self-aware, independent Socialist country'.⁸ Apart from the hundreds of thousands of mourners, Yugoslavia

⁸ B. van Oosterhout, 'Belgrado loopt uit', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 07/05/80. Also F. Schaling, 'Tito: de successtory van een meedogenloze partizanenleider' & 'Door breuk met Stalin kon Joegoslavië geschiedenis maken', *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/05/80.

appeared outwardly unchanged in the days following the death and funeral of the ‘old man’ - ‘Stari’ or ‘old man’ being one of Josip Broz’ nicknames. Four months of illness had prepared the country for the death of the last major leader of the Second World War.

The Dutch newspapers focused considerable attention on the main points of Tito’s political course during the 35 years after the war: his independent foreign politics, workers’ self-rule and his policy concerning Yugoslavia’s separate regions. The daily newspapers described him as ‘the greatest statesman (...) to come out of the Balkans’,⁹ the man who was called the ‘only Yugoslav’,¹⁰ and – to quote Nehru – the man who had forged Yugoslavia out of ‘six republics, two autonomous provinces, five different peoples, four languages, three religions, two alphabets and one political party’.¹¹

The question was whether Tito’s legacy would be preserved.¹² According to F. Schaling of the *NRC Handelsblad*, Tito ‘had lived too long because his all-but-eternal presence had blocked the solutions to many of the problems of Yugoslavia’s future and this had resulted in a general stagnation in the country’s leadership.’ This stagnation was, for instance, evident in the carefully-formulated rules concerning the collective leadership that was to govern Yugoslavia after Tito’s death and which, Schaling argued, ‘would automatically have a brief existence.’ Stagnation was also demonstrated by the fact that the set of leaders under Tito was generally frighteningly mediocre because Tito distrusted all forms of ambition and quality was not rewarded.¹³

Clearly disturbance within the Yugoslav state system could not be excluded. A crisis could be caused by the leadership of the Soviet Union which had recently invaded Afghanistan: ‘The Afghan scenario – an internal power struggle, tensions between national minorities and finally a cry for help to sympathetic Communists in the Kremlin – ultimately was and is the nightmare of many Yugoslavs.’¹⁴ However, Moscow publicly stated that it would leave Tito’s country alone. President Carter warned that the United States would tolerate no form of ‘terrorism’ against Yugoslavia. In diplomatic circles it was understood that here the American president was referring to the causing of internal disorder ‘which is regarded as being a much greater danger to Yugoslav independence than any “normal” military invasion.’¹⁵

According to a leader article in the *Volkskrant*, ‘one of Tito’s greatest virtues is the fact that the formation of the Yugoslav nation seems to be sufficiently rooted so as to be able to survive his passing.’¹⁶ By contrast other Dutch commentators argued that, although the Yugoslavs’ sense of national identity had increased under Tito, the Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Montenegrins and Macedonians ‘and all those other tribes’ were still contaminated by ‘the passionate tribal chauvinism that the mixed population of Yugoslavia has suffered from since time immemorial.’¹⁷ ‘The strength of the forces that threaten the country’s unity both at home and abroad will be revealed now that the old leader is no longer around’¹⁸

⁹ M. Broekmeyer, ‘Tito was uitzonderlijk’, *Het Parool*, 06/05/80

¹⁰ B. van Oosterhout, ‘Belgrado een tranendal’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 09/05/80. Also ‘Tito was zijn eigen Marx’, *de Volkskrant*, 05/05/80.

¹¹ Nehru quoted in T. Kuijt, ‘Tito’s leven in het teken van strijd’, *Het Parool*, 05/05/80.

¹² ‘Joegoslavië zonder Tito’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 05/05/80; B. van Oosterhout, ‘Belgrado loopt uit’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 07/05/80.

¹³ F. Schaling, ‘Door breuk met Stalin kon Joegoslavië geschiedenis maken’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/05/80.

¹⁴ T. Kuijt, ‘Tito’s leven in het teken van strijd’, *Het Parool*, 05/05/80. J. den Boef, ‘Kan Joegoslavië zonder Tito?’, *Trouw*, 05/05/80, ‘Tito’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/05/80; F. Schaling, ‘Leiders Joegoslavië hebben eerste vuurproef doorstaan’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/05/80.

¹⁵ A. de la Kromme, ‘Supermachten laten Joegoslavië met rust’, *de Telegraaf*, 08/05/80. ‘De politieke dood van een staatsman’, *Het Parool*, 05/05/80; ‘Commentaar - Tito’s dood’, *Trouw*, 05/05/80; ‘Russen blijven uit Joegoslavië’, *ibidem*, 06/05/80.

¹⁶ ‘Ten geleide – Tito’, *de Volkskrant*, 05/05/80.

¹⁷ ‘Tito was zijn eigen Marx’, *de Volkskrant*, 05/05/80. Also J. den Boef, ‘Kan Joegoslavië zonder Tito?’, *Trouw*, 05/05/80.

¹⁸ ‘Joegoslavië zonder Tito’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 05/05/80. ‘Tito’s naaste adviseurs krijgen de macht’, *de Volkskrant*, 07/05/80; ‘Tito’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/05/80; F. Schaling, ‘Leiders Joegoslavië hebben eerste vuurproef doorstaan’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/05/80; ‘De politieke dood van een staatsman’, *Het Parool*, 05/05/80.

Tito's obituaries were illustrations of the developments that had occurred in his country during the 20th century. He was born in 1892 to a Croat father and a Slovenian mother. Before assuming leadership of the Communist Party at the end of the 1930s, Tito had climbed the ranks of the Imperial Army to become a sergeant major during the First World War - Croatia still being a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At first he fought against the Serbs along the Drina, a fact that he later preferred to omit from his biography.¹⁹ After being captured by the Russians, he converted to Communism and initially remained in Russia. When Josip Broz returned to the land of his birth in 1920, Croatia was no longer a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire but of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes that was later to be called Yugoslavia. This first Yugoslavia took him by chance just as its end took him by surprise in 1941. The second Yugoslavia, which was formed after the Second World War, was largely his creation and survived him by only eleven years.

The events that led to Slovenia and Croatia's proclamations of independence in the summer of 1991 raised the question as to the feasibility of a Yugoslavia that had been created and destroyed on two occasions during the 20th century. Of course, the question was not simply of academic importance but was also relevant for the initial positioning of other countries vis-à-vis the conflict that arose in 1991. Linked to this is the question of whether the collapse of Yugoslavia can be attributed first and foremost to causes within Yugoslavia itself (endogenous explanations) or to external developments and events (exogenous explanations). Some authors place great emphasis on internal factors in terms of the collapse of both Yugoslavias. One of them, Dusan Necak, has written: 'The nations of Yugoslavia have faced a decision on their common destiny on several occasions in history, but the forces of division and disintegration have always been stronger than those of unity and consolidation.'²⁰ Ivo Banac, an authoritative historian who specializes in Yugoslavia and works at the University of Yale, goes one step further. He attributes no credit whatsoever to the Yugoslavs for the creation of their state of Yugoslavia (which literally means South Slavia): 'Every examination of the Yugoslavia project will show that the idea of South Slavic unity and reciprocity was promoted, often unwittingly, by the non-Slavs and was undermined by the southern Slavs themselves.'²¹ We will explore in depth the question of whether this is correct. The answers are important so as to show which centrifugal tendencies were present in both the First and the Second Yugoslavia, which were the mechanisms that had to counter these developments and why these ultimately failed. The reader must be patient here because Bosnia only enters the picture at a late stage. In fact, Bosnia-Herzegovina was not the source of major political problems in Yugoslavia. On the contrary, probably there would have never been a war in Bosnia in the 1990s if Yugoslavia had not already collapsed.²²

3. The events preceding the first Yugoslavia

'Yugoslavia's death had been a long one with the first seeds of its destruction sown before its birth...'²³

Yugoslavia was located on the Balkan Peninsula that throughout history was the victim of alternately too much or too little interference from the major civilizations and great powers. Hence, in many ways, the country was situated on a fault line: it was simultaneously a no man's land, an area of confrontation and a melting pot.

¹⁹ Glenny, *Balkans*, pp. 571-572.

²⁰ Dusan Necak, 'Historical Elements for Understanding the "Yugoslav Question"', Akhavan/Howse (eds.), *Yugoslavia*, p.

14. See also Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 7

²¹ Ivo Banac, 'The Origins and Development of the Concept of Yugoslavia', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.) *Disintegration*, p. 1.

²² Susan L. Woodward, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina: How Not to End Civil War', in: Walter/Snyder (eds.), *Wars*, p. 75.

²³ Owen, 'Breakup', p. 39.

For centuries the line dividing the Western from the Eastern Roman Empire ran through what was later to become Yugoslavia. After the schism between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches in 1054, representatives of both branches of the Christian faith continued for many years to fight together against Islam that appeared to be spreading to the West.

The Serbs had their own kingdom from the beginning of the 13th century; it was supported by its own church that was founded by Saint Sava. He had seized upon a momentary weakness in the Byzantine Orthodox Church so as to set up an independent Serb Orthodox Church with its own liturgy. The Serb Empire achieved its ultimate expansion in the middle of the 14th century under King Stefan Dusan (1331-1355). At that point it covered Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, a large part of Greece and Bulgaria. But it was all downhill from then on: the troops of the Serbian King Lazar were beaten by the Turks at the 'Blackbird Field': the Battle of Kosovo or *Kosovska Bitka*. This event was kept alive with epic songs for centuries to come. The Serbian Empire continued until the middle of the 15th century when it was forced to admit defeat against the Ottomans, the Sultans who ruled the Turkish Empire between approximately 1300 and 1922.

The Slovenes and the Croats came under the domain of the Roman Catholic Church once Byzantium fell to the Turks in 1453. Hence, the Slovenes were subject to Venetian rule and the Croats to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Like the Serbian Empire, the Bosnian Empire, which had existed since the 12th century, was conquered by the Ottomans in the 15th century.

Most Serbs remained loyal to the Orthodox faith under Turkish rule but some of the Serbs in Bosnia and the Albanians in Kosovo converted to Islam. The Ottoman government had a high degree of religious tolerance that was maintained by the *millet* system. This system included a form of sectarianism: religious organizations also governed a part of the people's lives within society. This resulted in a development where faith and ethnicity converged. Through faith, the administration of justice and cultural tradition, the Orthodox priests greatly contributed to the preservation of an individual identity and the development of the Serbs' sense of nation.



Towards the Treaty of Berlin

This development of a Serbian national awareness was not insignificant. Turkish domination resulted in the Serbs emigrating to the north and away from Kosovo that was associated with such important memories. They moved to more peripheral areas such as what was later to become Vojvodina along with the area around Banja Luka in the north-west of Bosnia, Slavonia and the Krajina which bordered on the territory under Turkish rule. In Slavonia and the Krajina, the Serbs were able to live as free peasants under the Austro-Hungarian regime with the right to practise their own religion in exchange for military service in the fight against the Turks.

The Vojna Krajina (literally: military border area) extended like a sickle from Novi Sad and Belgrade to close to Zadar on the coast. This area, which encompassed both Krajina near Knin and

East Slavonia, maintained a separate legal status until 1881 when it was no longer of military importance and became a part of Croatia.

From the end of the 18th century, there was an overt national awareness in the area that was to become Yugoslavia. This awareness was initially based on religion. Serbs, Croats and Muslims could only be distinguished from one another on the basis of their religion, no matter how weak their belief. Croats were Catholic, Serbs were Orthodox and Muslims were Islamic. A Catholic Serb and an Orthodox Croat would be just as absurd as a Jewish Muslim.²⁴ A Serb who changed religion would also change ethnicity. For instance, a Serb who converted to Islam would therefore also become a 'Turk' or 'Muslim'; a Serb who embraced Catholicism would become a Croat.²⁵

The second distinguishing element was the memory of the past where the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians had all had their own empires replete with myths that were communicated and touched up through an oral tradition that passed from generation to generation. These epic poems created a sense of intimacy with eras long past and virtually erased the intervening centuries from human consciousness. Some Serbian ideologists even went so far as to argue that if a Serb converted to Islam, he not only became a 'Turk' but was also tainted with the blood of the Serbs who had been killed four or five hundred years previously during the Ottoman conquests.²⁶

There were only limited linguistic differences between the three Slavic groups that could be compared to the differences between English and American. The Slovenes had a different language during the later Yugoslavia, as did the Albanians in Kosovo and the Macedonians.

In 1815 the Sultan of the now-fading Turkish Empire granted limited self-rule to Serbia and in 1830 he recognized Obrenovic's sovereignty over Serbia, Obrenovic being the forefather of one of the two dynasties that would rule Serbia during the 19th century. Serbia now had the status of a vassal state that encompassed a limited area to the south of the Sava and the Danube, and with Belgrade to the far north.

Between 1815 and 1833 many Serbs moved to Serbia from the surrounding areas while the Turkish citizens and Muslims left the Serbian territory. This was the beginning of a series of expulsions and massacres that left Serbia virtual 'Muslim-free' at the beginning of the 20th century and showed how Serbian nationalism tended to exclude non-Serbs rather than integrate them.

Yet many Serbs still lived outside of the Serbian heartland: in Montenegro, Vojvodina, Krajina, etc. It was not long before pioneering Serbs began to dream of a Greater Serbian Empire that reflected the memory of the medieval Kingdom of Serbia. Once the Turks had abandoned their final bulwark in Serbia in 1867, the Serbs began to work towards a union with the areas outside of Serbia where their ethnic kinsfolk lived.

The Serbs fought the Turks with the help of Russia, and Serbian sovereignty was fully recognized at the Treaty of San Stefano and the Treaty of Berlin (1878). The Treaty of Berlin also recognized the independence of Montenegro, an area where the mountain dwellers and their religious and secular rulers had always managed to maintain a certain autonomy vis-à-vis the major powers.

Towards the First World War

Nonetheless the Serbs were dissatisfied with the results of the Treaty of Berlin because they had failed to achieve a foothold in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This Ottoman area was assigned to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the form of a protectorate. In 1908 the Austro-Hungarian Empire formally annexed this region, much to Serbia's fury.

Along with the ideal of a Greater Serbia, there was an increasing desire following the Treaty of Berlin for the unification of all the southern Slavs (i.e. the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) who were

²⁴ Detrez, *Balkan*, p. 12.

²⁵ Also Raju G.C. Thomas, 'History, Religion and National Identity', Thomas/Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, pp. 26-27.

²⁶ Michael Sells, 'Christoslavism 2. The Five Major Components',

<http://www.haverford.edu/relg/sells/postings/christoslavism2.html> consulted 26/12/00.

located within the borders of the Double Monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This movement was nourished by the fact that there were no major linguistic differences between the various southern Slavs. However, at that time Serbia's political and military ambitions were directed southwards.

During the First Balkan War (1912-1913), Serbia and Montenegro along with Bulgaria and Greece attacked a weakened Turkey that was virtually driven out of Europe. However, Serbia and Montenegro once again felt that they had missed out on the territorial spoils that had been divided up by the major powers.

This dissension led a month later to fresh hostilities, this time between Bulgaria on the one side and Serbia, Greece, Roumania and Turkey on the other: the Second Balkan War had just broken out. Serbia acquired a large part of Macedonia once the peace treaty was signed. The rest of Macedonia was handed over to Greece and Bulgaria.

During the two Balkan Wars, the Serbian territory grew from 48,000 to 87,000 square kilometres. Serbia gained control of areas including Kosovo and Macedonia, both having many Albanian residents. Many Serbs felt that this was historically justified. After returning from the Second Balkan War, Crown Prince Aleksandar was greeted by crowds as the 'avenger of Kosovo'.²⁷

However, Serbia hardly had time to integrate the new areas into the Kingdom. The Austro-Hungarian Empire regarded Serbia's power expansion with displeasure. Vienna felt that there were calls from the elite of Croatia and Slovenia for Serbia to play the same role in achieving a southern Slavic amalgamation as the Prussians had for German unification or Piedmont had for Italy. The Serbian regime was aware of the fact that some circles in Vienna were just waiting for a reason to declare war on Serbia.

On 28 June 1914 the Bosnian Serb Gavrilo Princip murdered the Austrian Archduke and heir to the throne Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo. Princip belonged to a group of Bosnian-Serb nationalists who were supported in semi-official Serbian circles. These circles had refused to accept the annexation of Bosnia by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1908.²⁸ This attack was to trigger the First World War.

Austria, encouraged by Germany, stipulated humiliating conditions for Serbia who, according to Austria, was behind the attack. Serbia, supported by Russia, did not want to give in. After Russian mobilization, which was rapidly followed by the mobilization of other countries, the First World War had become a fact.

4. The first Yugoslavia

'You cannot understand Yugoslavia without having a detailed knowledge of its history even before its official birth in 1918. This is because the reasons for its birth were the same as for its death.'²⁹

The first Yugoslavia consisted of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia- Hercegovina, Montenegro and Vojvodina; it came into being on 1 December 1918.³⁰ The direct reason for the creation of this first Yugoslavia is to be found in the course of the First World War in this area.

During the First World War, the Croats and Slovenes fought in the Habsburg Army (the army of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) against the Serbs. Amongst these fighters was Josip Broz who was

²⁷ Branislav Gligorijevic, 'King Aleksandar I Karadordevic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 143.

²⁸ For more about the complicated relations between Princip, the Unification or Death group (*Ujedinjenje ili Smrt*) (which is better known under its popular name of The Black Hand (*Crna Ruka*) and was responsible for secret operations outside of Serbia) and the official organizations in Belgrade, see David MacKenzie, 'Dragutin Dimitrijevic-Apis', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, and in particular pp. 69-82.

²⁹ Dobrica Cosic, quoted in Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 1.

³⁰ For a survey of the history of the first Yugoslavia see, for instance, Almond, *War*, pp. 112-132; Glenny, *Balkans*, pp. 402-412, 428-436, 473-477; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 99-196; Mønnesland, *Land*, pp. 211-238.

later to become known as Tito. The Croats set up seven concentration camps for Serbs and Bosnians, the most notorious being at Doboï. Ten thousand prisoners were to die here, mostly from illness and neglect.³¹

In the autumn of 1915, with the help of the Bulgarians, the Austrian and German troops managed to drive the Serbian enemy into Albania. The Serbian troops reached Greece through Albania and Montenegro where a Franco-British fleet evacuated the 155,000 men who had survived the appalling journey to Corfu.

In 1915 political exiles from Croatia and Slovenia agreed in London on the formation of a federal Yugoslav state. At first it was impossible to reach conciliation with the supporters of the idea of a centrally-governed Greater Serbia. However, the February Revolution in Russia in 1917 brought both sides closer together: the Serbs no longer had the support of the Russian tsar and feared that the other members of the Entente – France and Great Britain – would recognize an independent Croatia that would still include many Serbs within its borders. On the other hand the Slovenes and Croats, who wanted to separate themselves from the Habsburg Dual Monarchy, now also had their interests in a Greater Serbia. They had read in diplomatic documents exposed by Russian revolutionaries, that two years earlier the allies had promised Italy territory – South Tyrol, Trieste, Istria and parts of the Dalmatian coast – in exchange for it entering the war on their side. These promises of territory would have been at the cost of Slovenia and Croatia who hoped to free themselves of the Double Monarchy.

Due to these foreign threats, in 1917 the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes agreed upon a joint kingdom that would be ruled by the Serbian Karadjordjevic dynasty. During the final year of war, the Serb forces were based in Albania and managed to reconquer the territory that they had had to give up at the end of 1915. At the same time there was a growing sympathy for a southern Slavic state amongst the starving and war-weary peoples of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia because it would mean an end to the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that had plunged the Balkans into catastrophe.³²

Following the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the international climate favoured the implementation of the southern Slavs' federal plans. This enabled King Petar to proclaim the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on 1 December 1918. Macedonia and Montenegro, who were considered to be a part of Serbia, were excluded from this title as were the Muslims in areas such as Bosnia-Herzegovina. Petar abdicated six months later in favour of his son Aleksandar.

Unlike the nation states of Western Europe, Yugoslavia was not therefore a nation in the sense of a political entity that had been grafted onto an ethnic community. It was the result of the fragmentation process of two multi-ethnic states; it occurred at the end of the suffering of Europe's 'sick' Habsburg Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. And it was also the result of the temporary decline of the great states of Germany and Russia during the First World War: the two political entities that had constantly influenced the Balkans during the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Hence, Yugoslavia was created from areas that had extremely diverse political backgrounds. It encompassed the former Kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro (which had managed to escape the Ottoman domination), Croatia (which following two centuries of independence from the beginning of the 12th century had, with the maintenance of a certain level of autonomy, become a part of first Hungary and then the Habsburg Empire), Bosnia and Herzegovina, (which were a part of the Ottoman Empire for many centuries but were added to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1878) and Slovenia (which had never existed as an independent state, had spent many centuries under German influence but finally became a part of the Habsburg Empire).

Unlike some Western European states, the Yugoslav State had not begun as the dream of a people who had fought together for their freedom. In the 19th century Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and Montenegrins had either argued for Pan-Slavism (which went way beyond Yugoslavia) or had fought

³¹ Johnsen, *Enigma*, p. 39.

³² Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 106.

for a separate Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian or Montenegrin state. Each of these aspirations paled alongside Yugoslavia as a construction.

If there was mention of a southern Slavic state in the nationalist programs of the Slovenes and the Croats, it was mostly for tactical reasons. This was because they would need the Serbs' support so as to be able to free themselves from the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy or alternatively so as to achieve autonomy as a third state that would be the equal of both Austria and Hungary. And when the Serbs spoke of southern Slavic unification, as based on a common language, it was mainly because they were seeking a solution so as to create a new national home for the Serbs who lived outside of Serbia.³³ The lack of synchronization between the various nationalist aspirations made the ideal of a southern Slavic state virtually impossible until the First World War: Croatia and Slovenia were not independent and Serbia was already an autonomous state which would later achieve independence and would not voluntarily allow itself to be confined within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The national awareness in this area, which entered the world community in 1918 under its initial name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, had long been the dream of an elite. This elite consisted of a modest-sized intelligentsia that included a clergy that advised its political leaders against a background of romantic nationalism.³⁴ These elite circles lived in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Sarajevo, cities that had become greatly modernized during the 19th century. Rural areas remained excluded from innovative trends or they actively opposed them.

These elite circles played a role in the region's nationalist sentiments in two separate ways. Firstly representatives of these circles traced the borders on Balkan maps and coloured them in a way that subsequently was to be realized by political and military leaders. The people counted only as foot soldiers and had no voice in these nationalist aspirations. A second way in which the intelligentsia propagated nationalism during the 19th century was to create the ethnic-national myths whose influence was still to be felt at the end of the 20th century. While ignoring the long period of Austrian, Hungarian, Turkish and Venetian domination, the nationalists longed for the eras when the historical empire was at its zenith – either in reality or in the imagination. This meant, for instance, that the historical claims for a Greater Croatia or a Greater Serbia had to overlap. It also meant that the needs of Macedonia, Bosnia and Albania to have their own states were in conflict with each other.

Serb mythology focused on the Battle of Kosovo at the Blackbird Field where King Lazar was given the choice between a place in the Kingdom of Heaven or conquest on Earth: he accepted the first choice. His troops then suffered a defeat that would lead to centuries of Turkish domination. Their Orthodox faith generated the idea amongst the Serbs that they formed a front against Catholicism on the one hand and Islam on the other. This gave them both a sense of pride and a feeling of victimization and xenophobia.

Croatian nationalists regarded their people as being a stronghold of Catholic Rome, the *Antemurale Christianitatis*, against both the Orthodox Church and Islam.³⁵ The nationalist movements of the 19th century generally added extra emphasis to the exclusive elements of their own parties although it was impossible to exclude paradox in an area where so many different groups lived together. For instance, Ante Starcevic, who set up the ultra-nationalist Party of Croatian Rights in 1861 and who is regarded by many Croats as being the founder of anti-Serbian, Croatian nationalism, was also the son of a Serbian Orthodox mother and a Catholic Croatian father. Sometimes other population groups were usurped in an attempt to justify claims to particular areas. Hence, Serbs became 'Orthodox Croats' and Muslims became 'Serbs who have converted to Islam'.

These forms of 19th century nationalism finally led to a compromise that was only made possible by the First World War. However, it in no way solved the tensions between the amalgamated ethnic elements of the first Yugoslavia. On the contrary, these tensions dominated the country's politics

³³ Batakovic, 'Integration?'

³⁴ Also Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 229-230.

³⁵ Some 19th century nationalists contended that the Croats had also protected Western Europe against the Avars and the Mongols, Deschner/Petrovic, *Krieg*, p. 101.

for virtually its entire existence. For that matter, the Serbs and Croats had decided on the formation of a southern Slavic state for entirely different reasons. The Serbs saw it as being the only possibility to realize their dream of combining all the Serbs into a single nation. They effectively regarded the presence of other ethnic groups as being a part of the bargain. The Croats needed Serbia's help to acquire the necessary clout so as to achieve independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Once the new state had become a reality, the vast majority of its inhabitants were Serbs who numbered five million amongst a total population of twelve million. The Serbs tended to dominate the other ethnic groups. The Croats no longer appreciated the Serbs' dominance now that Austro-Hungarian dominance had been thrown aside and the state had been set up. In fact the Croats, who had enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy under Austro-Hungarian rule, even felt that their position in the new Kingdom had deteriorated. The Serbs, on the other hand, had emerged from the war on the winning side and argued that they had made sacrifices during the war for the freedom of the Slovenes and the Croats whom, as they pointed out, had fought against them for the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Serbian domination was also the plan of the peace negotiators at Versailles, and this was especially true of the French who felt that the southern Slavic state had to be a bulwark against the restoration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire or the possibility of new German interests in the Balkans.³⁶

Further consideration of the politics of the first Yugoslavia

The explanation for the creation of the first Yugoslavia can be sought through causes that existed both within Yugoslavia (endogenous factors) and abroad (exogenous factors).

The supporters of the endogenous explanation for the creation of the first Yugoslavia emphasize the fact that the idea for a southern Slavic state was already present in the programs of the 19th century nationalists in the various areas that were later to become the amalgamated parts of Yugoslavia. They argue that this idea had gained considerable support in the ten years preceding the First World War.³⁷

In addition, they refer to the linguistic homogeneity of the southern Slavic area, with the exception that the Serbs generally use the Cyrillic alphabet and the other ethnic groups the Latin version.

The endogenous explanations continue by arguing that, at the end of the First World War, elite circles from Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia regarded a unified southern Slavic area as being the best guarantee against the power of neighbouring countries such as Germany, Hungary, Italy, Rumania and Turkey. Of course, this could also be regarded as an external factor. These authors contend that a condition for southern Slavic unification was the power of the Serbian army.

The supporters of the exogenous explanation consider the significance of the First World War as being all important: 'Yugoslavia is a product of the First World War.'³⁸ The Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman Empires were in decline and had emerged from the war in defeat. Croatia and Slovenia could expect nothing more of these empires after the war. And without the Italian threat at the end of the war, the elite of Ljubljana and Zagreb would have never fled into the arms of their Belgrade counterparts.³⁹ Finally, at the peace conference in Versailles, the major powers forced the Serbs, their wartime ally, to accept the multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia.⁴⁰ Hence, they also determined that large Slovenian minorities would remain in Austria while at the same time Italy had been allocated Istria,

³⁶ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 108-109, 151, 161; Van den Heuvel, *Land*, pp. 10 and 34; Tiersky, *Mitterrand*, p. 204; Naarden, *Western Perceptions and Balkan realities*, p. 31.

³⁷ For the arguments mentioned here, see for instance: Dusan Necak, 'Historical Elements for Understanding the 'Yugoslav Question'', Akhavan/Howse (eds.), *Yugoslavia*, p. 16; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 99.

³⁸ Stallaerts, *Afscheid*, p. 74. Also Rogel, *Breakup*, p. 7: 'World War I determined what happened to the Southern Slavs; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 70: 'Only the course of the First World War ... made it possible to form the first Yugoslav state ...'.

³⁹ Weithmann, *Brandbaard*, p. 64.

⁴⁰ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 4.

Zadar and a number of Dalmatian islands. Hungary was forced to surrender Vojvodina and a part of the Banat to the new Kingdom.

The southern Slavic State was founded in 1918 with the international situation playing a vital role. Yet it did not have an easy start. The country was poor. Eighty per cent of the population lived in rural areas where, in both Croatia and Serbia, Habsburg soldiers had requisitioned a great many cattle and goods. Two-thirds of all peasant families lived below subsistence level.⁴¹ Industry was not sufficiently developed to alleviate the widespread hidden unemployment in rural areas in any significant way. Moreover, there was considerable inequality between the various regions. Serbia had suffered terribly in the war. More than a quarter of a Serb population of four-and-a-half million had been killed in the two Balkan Wars and the First World War. As many as 62% of men aged between 15 and 55 had died.⁴² By contrast, the cost in human life was less than ten per cent in the regions of Yugoslavia that had been a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

What applied to people also applied to industry. The slight industrial lead that Slovenia and Croatia originally had over Serbia was subsequently increased by the war itself and by Serbia's reconstruction problems after the war. The retreating Austro-Hungarian troops had focused their scorched earth tactics on Serbia. After the war Croatia benefited from investments from Austria and Hungary whereas Serbia failed to attract foreign investment for several years. The new Kingdom still had virtually no integrated national transport system. Train connections, roads and bank systems were still the same as in the days of the great empires. There had been virtually no trade between the various areas of the Kingdom before the First World War, a situation that was slow to change afterwards. The advantages of a large internal market were rarely exploited.

The political system was particularly unstable. Croat and Slovene political leaders resisted the Belgrade-based centralist state government that had been imposed by the Serbs and was included in the Constitution of 1921. This meant that the imbalance between centralism and federalism was inherent to the first Yugoslavia right from the start and was ultimately to destroy the second Yugoslavia. Even the day on which the constitution was proclaimed revealed Serbian domination: 28 June, Saint Vitus' Day, the day of the battle on the Blackbird Field and also of Gavrilo Princip's attack.

By virtue of its constitution, Yugoslavia had become a parliamentary democracy with the King fulfilling an exceptionally important role. This constitution was passed with only a small majority of the voting delegates. A large number of representatives, including the Croat Peasant Party and the Communists, had abstained.

Non-Serbian groups discovered that the practice of government was no better than the principle. Almost all the prime ministers of the 24 cabinets between 1921 and 1929 were of Serbian origin; only once, for almost six months in 1928, was there a non-Serbian premier: Bishop Anton Korosec of Slovenia. Almost all the army chiefs were Serbian, an ethnic group which otherwise accounted for 40% of the population. There were virtually no Croats in top positions although they formed a quarter of the population. Let alone the eight per cent who were Slovenes along with the Bosnian Muslims (six per cent), the Macedonians (five per cent), the Germans (four per cent) and roughly 15 other smaller ethnic groups who could not recognize themselves in the new Kingdom's title.

In addition, the Serbs were grossly overrepresented in the political world: of the 656 ministers who served between 1921 and 1939, 452 were Serbs, 26 were Croats with party affiliations and 111 were Croats without party affiliations.⁴³ On the eve of the German invasion of Yugoslavia, 161 out of a total of 165 generals were either Serb or Montenegrin; only two were Croats. This situation represented a deterioration for the Croats who, during the Habsburg era, had accounted for 15% of the generals and admirals of the Austro-Hungarian forces.⁴⁴ In 1934, out of a total number of 145 top diplomats,

⁴¹ Almond, *War*, p.119.

⁴² Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, p. 25.

⁴³ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 183.

⁴⁴ Cohen, *War*, pp. 8-9.

123 were Serbs and 21 were of Croatian origin.⁴⁵ In addition, the vast majority of provincial prefects were Serbs in every area except Slovenia.

60% of the Yugoslav army were Serbs who also accounted for more than half of all civil servants.⁴⁶ It was only in the justice system that the relation remained in proportion, at least so far as the Serbs and the Croats were concerned. More than half of all judges were Serb and a quarter Croat.

The Slovenes fared the best of all the non-Serb groups in the Kingdom. Their language ensured that they maintained a certain level of government autonomy vis-à-vis Belgrade. And educational opportunities, which had been limited under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, now were greatly increased. But it was a very different story for the inhabitants of Macedonia which was now known as South Serbia and had been subjected to a 'Serbification' program that had demolished their own educational system and religious organizations. Even their Macedonian names had been changed into their Serbian equivalents.⁴⁷

The instability of the first Yugoslavia was demonstrated by the high level of political violence. 24 political death sentences were carried out during the Kingdom's first ten years and approximately 600 political murders were committed. In addition, there were around 30,000 political arrests and 3000 citizens fled the country for political reasons.⁴⁸ The victims were primarily Croats, Macedonians and Albanians.

Following an overly heavy-handed attempt by the Serbs to introduce educational materials that were based on a joint Yugoslav nationality, texts remained in use that took each individual ethnicity and region as their point of departure.

The development of political parties, along with general trade union activity, seemed only to occur along ethnic lines. The Social Democratic, the Communist and the tiny Republican Parties were the exception to this rule. At the 1920 council elections, the Communists gained a majority in 36 towns and villages that included Belgrade and Nis. They also won 12% of the votes at elections held for the constitutional assembly; this made them the third biggest party in the country. However, measures taken against the party's revolutionary nature soon drove it underground.

Despite centralism and their numerical superiority, the Serbs were unable to control the parliament effectively. This was due to the fact that the Serbian parties were rarely able to work together in unity. Consequently virtually no legislation was passed and the various judicial systems of the Kingdom's amalgamated areas continued to exist alongside each other.

The Kingdom's most popular opposition party was the Croatian Peasant Party that was led by Stjepan Radic, a populist lawyer from Zagreb. He ensured that nationalism, which up till then had been an elitist issue, was to reach every Croatian hamlet. Radic resisted the domination of the Orthodox Serbs and Montenegrins right from the start. He fought for an independent republican Croatia that at most would be a part of a Yugoslav confederation, a political construction that would allow for a high degree of independence amongst its member states. By focusing Croatia on Europe, he tried to maintain its distance from the rest of Yugoslavia 'so as not to become dependent upon the Balkans which, whatever one may say, are simply an Asian protuberance. Our duty is to make the Balkans more European rather than to make the Croats and the Slovenes more Balkan...'⁴⁹

Radic's party repeatedly boycotted both the parliament and the elections that were always prone to fraud and were regularly the signal for the Serb-dominated police force to inflict violence on non-Serbs. The Croatian Peasant Party was more of a national movement than a political party. Therefore, in the 1920s and 1930s, its contribution was for promoting ethnic nationalism rather than for creating a sense of 'Yugoslavism'.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Almond, *War*, p. 128.

⁴⁶ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 130.

⁴⁷ Cohen, *War*, p. 11.

⁴⁸ Cohen, *War*, p. 10.

⁴⁹ Radic quoted in Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 15.

⁵⁰ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 16.

One of the low points of the troubled history of the first Yugoslavia came in 1928 with a Montenegrin delegate's assassination in parliament of Radic and two other members of the Croatian Peasant Party. Two of the victims were killed instantly. Radic died some time later from the wounds that he had sustained in the attack.

At the same time, the Empire of King Aleksandar was confronted with territorial claims and other threats from surrounding countries. The danger from abroad and the internal state of deadlock resulted in the King abolishing democracy and introducing a monarchic dictatorship. He also began to suppress every expression of ethnic nationalism. Hence, he replaced his Kingdom's extensive title with a shorter name: from 1920 onwards the country was officially known as South Slavia or Yugoslavia.

Consequently, ten years after the creation of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the country's name was officially changed to 'Yugoslavia'. This Yugoslavia was divided into nine government units. These were arranged in such a way that six of them had a Serbian majority while two had a Croatian majority and one was dominated by the Slovenes. It was a blatant attempt to sweep the ethnic issue under the carpet. At the time, this step was greeted with the remark that children, let alone states, cannot be brought into the world by decree.⁵¹ Political parties were forbidden, press censorship was introduced and judicial independence was swept aside. Croatia and Macedonia were terrorized by a police force that functioned both secretly and openly, officially and unofficially, and which almost always consisted of Serbs.

The 1931 Constitution paved the way for the political parties' return. However, these parties were to play a subordinate role and only 'Yugoslav' parties were permitted. In fact, this new electoral system strongly favoured the Serbs. Extremist parties on both the left and the right had long since been driven underground. These included the VMRO, the Macedonian nationalist organization. Croatian nationalism reached its extreme in 1929 in the form of the Ustashe Croatian Revolutionary Organization or the 'uprisers' movement. It was known as the Ustashe for short and was led by Ante Pavelic. This fascist movement opposed Serbian domination and found support in Italy, Germany and Hungary.

King Aleksandar of Yugoslavia was murdered during a visit to Marseille in 1934. The Ustashe was responsible for the murder and had deployed a VMRO terrorist. It was supported by the Italy of Mussolini who wanted the return of the former Italian areas along the Adriatic coast. Naturally King Aleksandar had opposed this.

Political relations remained difficult but the economy improved from 1934 onwards. This was due to focusing on Germany and on an industrialization program that particularly benefited Serbia and the mining and metallurgic industries of Central Bosnia. Nonetheless, at that time the Yugoslav economy was one of the slowest to develop in the Balkan region.⁵²

The shift in industrial centre was viewed by Croatian politicians as being new evidence that Croatia would not benefit from what they regarded as being Serbian centralism.⁵³ Dr. Vlatko Macek, Radic's successor as the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, argued that Croatia should acquire a higher level of autonomy. He felt that Croatia and Serbia should only be joined by a personal union. Meanwhile Pavle, Yugoslavia's Prince Regent, was confronted by the increasing threat of war in Central and Eastern Europe. An additional danger was the possibility that either Germany or Italy would take over Croatia or would try to turn this area into a puppet state. The Prince Regent took action to deal with this pressure: at his instigation the Serbian Prime Minister Cvetkovic strengthened Yugoslavia's stability in 1939 by compromising with the Croats. In August of that year, Cvetkovic reached an agreement with Macek whereby Croatia acquired an autonomous status with the addition of the area in Bosnia-Herzegovina where the most Croats lived. This expanded Croatia was to have its own parliament and government. Only foreign policy, defence, transport and communication would be dealt

⁵¹ Gojko Boric, 'Kroatien und Jugoslawien – Ein Abriss historischer Erfahrungen', Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)erben*, p. 62.

⁵² Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 57.

⁵³ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 185

with on a national level. Neither the parliament nor the people were consulted about this plan. In fact, this attempt to create more autonomy for Croatia had come too late. The agreement's implementation had virtually no effect because of the approaching war.

Towards the Second World War

On 25 March 1941 Pavle, the Prince Regent, and his government responded to tremendous German pressure by agreeing that Yugoslavia would enter the Axis pact of Germany and Italy. Two days later this step was countered by a successful military putsch. The coup was supported by demonstrations where people chanted slogans such as 'Better dead than a slave' or 'War is better than the pact', slogans that 50 years later would once again emerge from the junk room of history.

However, the true position of the coup's leaders was less principled than the sentiments of these slogans. They were soldiers who had seized the moment to express the army's indignation at the politics of the past few years. Although they talked about resisting the Axis pact, the coup's leaders soon secretly let Germany know that they would adhere to its agreement.

The leaders of the coup then set about reorganizing the government: they replaced a number of ministers from the previous cabinet, they included several fascists in the government and they replaced the Prince Regent with the underage Crown Prince who was proclaimed King Petar II. However, this did not placate Hitler. The Germans bombed Belgrade on 6 April 1941. This signalled the beginning of a campaign that would only last for 12 days.

This was followed by a wave of invasions by different countries – Germany, Italy, Bulgaria and Hungary – each of whom wanted to be bequeathed a part of the territorial assets. These invasions also make it difficult to judge the debate between the supporters of the endogenous and the exogenous explanations for the collapse of the first Yugoslavia. For instance, it can be argued that the actions of the German forces, which were rapidly followed by those of other countries, prevented a possible solution to the Yugoslav question as based on the Cvetkovic-Macek agreement.⁵⁴ One can defend this to the extent that this agreement largely erased all the years of Croatian resentment against Serbian domination; in its place came the Croats' long-time dream of achieving the status of a federation. However, this reasoning does have its flaws. The agreement met with objections from both the Serbs and the Croats because they respectively felt that either too many or too few concessions had been made to Croatia. Weithmann argues that the agreement in no way eased the tension within the country and that it actually increased it still further.⁵⁵

Additionally, there were three other problems. Firstly the definitive border in Bosnia that would separate Croatia from Serbia still had to be established. This was bound to cause problems. Secondly Belgrade was only prepared to consider the Croats' political wishes when faced with the threat of Fascist Italy and National-Socialist Germany. Thirdly other ethnic or regional groups, such as the Albanians, Macedonians, Montenegrins and Slovenes, were not included in this solution or, as in the case of the Bosnian Muslims, they were actually its victims. The agreement also ignored the Serbs in Croatia. In other words: the issue of nationality in the first Yugoslavia was initially reduced to just three groups – the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes – and finally to a matter to be solved by an arrangement between the Serbs and the Croats. There was little or no consideration of the other groups. For instance, in Kosovo, the relations between the Albanians – the most oppressed group in the Kingdom – and the Serbs were so bad that in 1937 political circles in Belgrade argued that the solution would be the Albanians' forced emigration, a policy which followed the example of the treatment of the Jews in Nazi Germany.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Also Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 8, 190, 192-194; V.P. Gagnon, 'Historical Roots of the Yugoslav Conflict', Esman/Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p. 182; Judah, 'Serbs', p. 34.

⁵⁵ Weithmann, *Brandhaard*, pp. 70-71.

⁵⁶ Cohen, *War*, pp. 4-6; Dusan Necak, 'Historical Elements for Understanding the 'Yugoslav Question'', Akhavan/Howse (eds.), *Yugoslavia*, pp. 23-24.

In conclusion, it would seem here that, even if it had not been invaded, the first Yugoslavia would have found it extremely difficult to survive in its existing form. To quote Necak:

‘The Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was supposedly established exclusively to protect the national interests of the constituent nations. Once this fundamental expectation was not fulfilled, the existence of the state defied its *raison d’être*. Social injustices only deepened national antagonism, and became a substantial part of the explosive mix of national and class differences that destroyed the first Yugoslavia.’⁵⁷

5. Yugoslavia in the Second World War

Lampe argues that the Second World War defined the creation of the second Yugoslavia to an even greater extent than the First World War defined the first one. This was because the dismantling of Yugoslavia had destroyed virtually all the existing institutions. Without that influence, says Lampe, the 8000 Communists at the beginning of the war would have never been able to dream about seizing power in 1945 and defying the Soviet Union several years later.⁵⁸



However, before this occurred, various nationalist movements in Yugoslavia would be driven to extremes. Those who sought to escape this ended up in the Partisan movement that was dominated by the Communists and was the only important organization that included a multi-ethnic perspective. By the end of the war, the rest of the population had virtually no alternative to Tito’s Communism. Nationalism had been discredited and the pre-war system that revolved around nationalism was bankrupt.

The Yugoslav army collapsed like a house of cards during the German campaign. Many Slovenian and Croatian officers and soldiers either deserted or simply did not show up for mobilization. The Serbian sections of the army did little better. The Germans captured 100,000 Yugoslav soldiers, most of whom Serbs, while they lost only 166 of their own men. King Petar fled to London with most of his government of eight Serbs, two Croats and a Slovene.

Although the government-in-exile could still maintain a degree of multi-ethnicity, the political structure of the first Yugoslavia had become completely fragmented. Following Yugoslavia’s capitulation, the Yugoslav monarchy was split between the National-Socialist and Fascist powers. Germany took over Central Serbia. The Italians let the Ustashe leader Ante Pavelic form ‘the first Croatian government’ in Croatia and allowed him to incorporate Bosnia-Herzegovina. At first Germany and Italy assumed joint responsibility for Croatia. The country then became an Italian protectorate but,

⁵⁷ Dusan Necak, ‘Historical Elements for Understanding the ‘Yugoslav Question’’, Akhavan/Howse (eds.), *Yugoslavia*, p. 24. Also Glenny, *Balkans*, p. 405; Van den Heuvel, *Land*, p. 10.

⁵⁸ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 197.

following the Italian capitulation in 1943, the area was completely incorporated into Germany's field of interest.

The Ustashe State during the war

With his Croatia *sve do Drine* (right to the Drina), Pavelic was able to achieve some of the nationalist dreams of the medieval Croatian Kingdom. However, he still found it painful that Italy, who also wanted to restore its lost empire, now occupied almost the entire Dalmatian coast and its islands along with Montenegro whose coast Italy also had its eye on. Slovenia was divided between Italy, Germany, Hungary and Croatia. Hungary took over Vojvodina. Bulgaria occupied Macedonia and southern Serbia. Kosovo was incorporated into Albania.

At first the occupation of Yugoslavia created a reversal in the power relations between the Serbs and the Croats. The Serbs, who had dominated Yugoslavia during its 22-year existence, now found themselves oppressed and even threatened physically. After several months the Germans installed a puppet-government in Belgrade that was led by General Nedic, a Serb and a former Minister of War. Nedic was known for his anti-Communist views and before the war he had argued that the country should join the Axis. The Germans allowed this cross between Pétain and Quisling to raise a small army of 17,000 men that was to help to combat the Partisans' growing resistance. The Germans themselves did not have enough troops for the job. In the course of time, Nedic was also supported by volunteer units who were from Greater Serbia and/or of a Fascist persuasion, an example being the Zbor, the Serbian Fascist party. Nedic was a supporter of a Greater Serbian state that would be based on Serbian peasants who formed 'the perfect Serbian race' because their 'blood [was] not yet mixed with that of other peoples'.⁵⁹

The physical threat to the Serbs came from both the German occupiers and their local enforcers and, more particularly, from Croatian extremists who, before the collapse of the Yugoslav state, had been forced into an existence of illegality or even self-imposed exile.

Before the war, the Ustashe movement had only a few thousand members and an estimated following of not much more than five per cent of the population in Croatia.⁶⁰ However, in what was typical of pre-war relations, the inhabitants of the Croatian capital of Zagreb were greeting the invading German troops as liberators while Belgrade was still burying 2300 of its citizens who had been killed as a result of German bombing.

A triumphant Pavelic entered in the wake of the German troops, a pattern that was repeated when Bulgarian troops marched into Macedonia several days later. Pavelic received the immediate support of the Catholic Church. Archbishop Stepinac of Zagreb sent a charge to his priests with the text: 'Today's events have fulfilled a long-cherished dream of our people.'⁶¹

Once in power, Pavelic's government began to attract more Croats. The Ustashe movement had approximately 28,500 members by 1943. The *Domobrani*, a Ustashe people's militia, consisted of 90,000 men. At its height, in September 1944, it was to consist of as many as 312,000 members. However, their battle readiness and morale were low. There was also another smaller Ustashe militia group that was more dogmatic. It consisted of 70,000 members including Pavelic's Personal Guard. It was mainly this group that applied its own, particularly cruel version of the Final Solution to the Serbs, Jews and Gypsies, and was supported by a section of the Bosnian Muslim community. On 2 May 1941, just a few weeks after Pavelic's government had come to power, the Ustashe Minister Zanic declared:

'This country can only be a Croatian country and there is nothing that we would not resort to so as to make it truly Croatian and to cleanse it of Serbs

⁵⁹ Cohen, *War*, p. 53.

⁶⁰ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 193.

⁶¹ Anstadt, *Servië*, p. 97. See also Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 269.

who have threatened us for centuries and would do it once again if they get the chance.’⁶²

Pavelic reverted to the nationalist ideas of the 19th century. He spoke of the ‘Resurrection’ of the ‘Independent State of Croatia’, ‘by God’s grace, the wish of our allies and the long, sorrowful and ancient struggle of the Croatian people’. This state would ‘be pure Croatian, a bulwark of Western civilization against the Serbs.’⁶³ Pavelic declared that all the Serbs within his state were to be stripped of their civil rights and protection. Just like the Jews and the Gypsies, they were banned from government jobs. Marriage between people of different ethnicities was forbidden. The Ustashe tried to create an ethnically-homogenous state through forced Christianization and large-scale massacres. Pavelic ordered that a third of the almost two million Serbs in the Ustashe state, as he now regarded Croatia, were to be murdered, a third were to be driven out and a third were to be converted. As one of the leading Ustashe figures was to comment after the war: ‘anti-Serbianism was the essence of the Ustashe doctrine, its *raison d’être* and *ceterum censeo* [constantly recurring fundamental attitude, author]’⁶⁴

The Jasenovac camp was the symbol of the regime’s atrocities, and it was here that probably between 60,000 and 80,000 prisoners were killed.⁶⁵ The commandant was Filipovic, a Franciscan priest. Apart from in Jasenovac, the Stara Gradiska death camp and a number of other concentration camps, tens of thousands of Serbs were killed in Pavelic’s state in local massacres and particularly in Serb-dominated cities such as Knin, Glina and Bijeljina.

About a quarter of all Croatian Jews survived the war, a figure that was higher than the less than ten per cent who survived in Serbia. One of the Ustashe government’s alleged reasons for their destruction was that Jewish doctors had committed ‘several hundreds of thousands of abortions’ between the wars so as to keep the Croatian birth rate down.⁶⁶

Franciscans and Catholic priests directed a program of forced conversions in wartime Croatia. When this failed to produce results, Pavelic’s government set up a ‘Croatian Orthodox Church’. Between two and three hundred thousand Serbs were forcibly converted or joined the new church. Hundreds of Orthodox churches, convents and monasteries were destroyed, as were synagogues. It is estimated that more than 200,000 Serbs were forced to migrate to Serbia from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁶⁷

Here, the question was how ‘the first Croatian national government’ of Pavelic and his associates would manage to govern not only Croatia but also a large area of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was for this reason that the Ustashe maintained an ambivalent attitude towards the Muslims. Sometimes they committed atrocities against them and sometimes the Muslims were called ‘the flower of the Croatian nation’ and encouraged to attack the Serbs.

Ustashe, Cetniks and Partisans

Archbishop Stepinac was later to adopt a more reserved attitude towards Pavelic’s government,⁶⁸ but Pavelic could still rely on the support of a considerable section of the clergy.

A large percentage of the population, who cheered at the end of the first Yugoslavia, now felt disillusioned with Pavelic’s government that was responsible for anarchic forms of violence that were also directed against Croats with divergent viewpoints. Many deeds that conflicted with ‘the honour

⁶² Quoted in Johnsen, *Enigma*, p. 122.

⁶³ Van den Heuvel, *Land*, p. 46.

⁶⁴ Eugen Dido Kvaternik, quoted in I. Banac, ‘The Fearful Asymmetry’, p. 155.

⁶⁵ Higher estimates, which are sometimes as much as ten times as high, are often (incorrectly) quoted, I. Banac, ‘The Fearful Asymmetry’, pp. 154 and 172, n. 30.

⁶⁶ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 207.

⁶⁷ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 206-207.

⁶⁸ Monnesland, *Land*, pp. 269-270; Geert van Dartel, ‘Nationalities and Religion in Yugoslavia’, in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 33.

and the vital interests' of the Ustashe state were considered to be high treason and were punishable by death, an example being a discussion about Croatian borders.

Resistance in Yugoslavia initially came from sections of the defeated Serb army under the leadership of the monarchist Colonel (and later General) Dragoljub (Draza) Mihailovic. Mihailovic was known before the war for his anti-German views and his criticism of the Serbian army's lack of preparation.⁶⁹ He also felt bitter about the Croat officers and men who deserted while he was stationed at Djakovo in April 1941 during the Hungarian invasion.

On 11 April, the day after the proclamation of the 'independent' Ustashe State, Mihailovic and his men fought the Ustashe troops at Brcko in Bosnia. This resulted in Mihailovic being cut off from his headquarters and he subsequently operated on his own initiative. After Belgrade had capitulated on 17 April, he decided to wage a guerrilla war with a group that initially consisted of just a few dozen men. Mihailovic and his officers based themselves on the tradition of the Cetniks: Serbian guerrillas who had fought against the Turks in the 19th century. He set up his headquarters in Ravna Gora, a mountain village in the area of Serbia where Serbian resistance to the Ottoman rulers had started at the beginning of the 19th century.

In the summer of 1941 Mihailovic's troops claimed their first big success against the Germans when they liberated the city of Loznica. The leaders of the Cetnik movement declared their support for a 'homogenous Serbia' that would encompass two-thirds of Yugoslavia. To realize these plans, they estimated that it would be necessary to deport a million Croats and more than one-and-a-half million others. The remaining country would consist of Slovenia, with the addition of Istria, and a mini-Croatia. The Muslims were described as being 'a serious problem'.⁷⁰ The Cetniks were soon attacking the Croats and Muslims in an attempt to create an ethnically-pure Serbia.

Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, a second resistance movement was launched when Tito's Communists engaged in a partisan campaign. The Communist Party had been banned in 1921 because of a series of attacks but had continued to exist illegally. It had less than 500 members in 1932.⁷¹ Although the Party expanded from 1935 during the People's Front period when the Communists sought contact with other parties and the broader masses, by October 1940 it still only consisted of 6600 members and 17,800 young sympathizers.⁷² However, the first two months of Yugoslavia's occupation resulted in the Communist Party expanding by 50%. Its membership subsequently reached a total of 12,000 adults and 30,000 young people after the German invasion of the Soviet Union.

Josip 'Tito' Broz became the leader of the illegal party in 1937. Although the Party had decided in 1935 to retain the state of Yugoslavia, most of its support at the beginning of the war came from the Serbs and particularly from those who were threatened by the Ustashe regime in Croatia. This was soon to change. Unlike the Cetniks Tito, who was of Croatian-Slovenian origin, was not working towards a Greater Serbia. In addition, he had led a party meeting in Zagreb in October 1940 that had opposed the Cvetkovic-Macek agreement and had promised self-rule to Montenegro, Macedonia and a restored Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The preparations for Communist resistance were completed before Operation Barbarossa. Once the Operation was underway, the Yugoslav Communists engaged in a campaign of large-scale sabotage at the instigation of the Comintern, the Communist Party International. Like the Cetniks, the Partisan movement benefited from the fact that the Italian troops were weak and Hitler had sent all his best troops to the Russian front. In fact, there were only three German divisions in Serbia, each of which consisted of two regiments rather than the usual figure of three. Moreover, the units were mainly

⁶⁹ Kosta Nikolic, 'Dragoljub-Draza Mihailovic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, pp. 207-208.

⁷⁰ Cohen, *War*, p. 44; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 202.

⁷¹ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 171.

⁷² Ivo Banac, 'The origins and development of the concept of Yugoslavia (to 1945', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.) *Disintegration*, p. 20.

made up of older conscripts with little combat experience. They were almost exclusively stationed in towns and had poor transport facilities.

In September 1941 Tito established his headquarters in Uzice on the Serbian side of the Drina where the Uzice Republic had existed for three months. At the end of the year Tito's Partisans were driven from there by the first in a series of seven German offensives. Tito then moved his headquarters to Foca in East Bosnia. Once the Partisans had left, there was little resistance in Serbia and it remained relatively peaceful until 1944. There were only 1700 Partisans there by the end of 1943.⁷³

By contrast, tens of thousands of people joined both the Partisan resistance and the Cetniks in Croatia and Bosnia–Hercegovina. Local Serb-dominated militia in these areas had been fighting the Ustashe terror since 1941. Moreover, the resistance had flourished in Bosnia as Pavelic did not have enough troops to govern the area effectively.

Mihailovic's Cetniks and Tito's Partisans operated jointly for some of the autumn of 1941. They had forced a large number of German soldiers to surrender and had set up a prisoner-of-war camp. However, the two organizations soon disagreed over issues such as command, tactics, the division of weapons and the countries' political future. The Cetniks were organized on a loose basis. In fact, many of the Cetnik groups were unclear about whether they accepted Mihailovic's authority or were led by purely local and regional motives. Naturally Mihailovic and the Yugoslav government-in-exile presented a different picture to the Allies. Tito's Partisans had a clear structure and hierarchy that was determined by the Leninist doctrine of democratic centralism. When a group of supporters appeared to have divergent views, as was the case with the leadership of the Croatian section in 1944, they were either replaced or eliminated in some other way.

But there were other differences between the Cetniks and Tito's Partisans. The Cetniks aimed at restoring the monarchy. Tito's Communists regarded the war as being an excellent opportunity to implement political and social revolution. They limited themselves to *hit-and-run* actions but also tried to occupy and govern the areas they conquered. The usual way in which the Cetniks operated was through warlords who led groups of peasants. By contrast, Tito's resistance movement provided both peasants and others with the potential for social mobility and a feeling of self-worth.

The events in Kragujevac in October 1941 proved to be a turning point in the relations between the Cetniks and the Partisans. Ten Germans had been killed and 26 wounded in an ambush; the penises of the dead men had been severed and placed in their mouths. The German reaction was that this mutilation was typical of the Cetniks' conduct⁷⁴. In reprisal, the Germans and their Serbian accomplices executed more than 2300 Serbian citizens on the spot. The Germans announced that, just as elsewhere in occupied Europe, 100 Serbs would be executed for every German who was killed and fifty would be executed for every German casualty. The Cetniks felt that the price was too high. As many Serbs as possible had to survive the war so to be able to create a homogenous Serbia. Therefore, the Cetniks subsequently tried to avoid German reprisals against the civilian population. They wanted to postpone major actions until the military front moved closer.

From then on Mihailovic sought the collaboration of the Italians, the Germans and their Serbian associates whose ideology frequently resembled the Cetniks' own beliefs. Their common enemy was the Partisan movement.⁷⁵ By contrast, the Partisans did not avoid civilian sacrifices and actually regarded them as presenting an opportunity to radicalize the population who would subsequently join their movement.

Fighting also broke out between the Cetniks and the Partisans in the autumn of 1941. The Partisans now regarded the Cetniks as being 'internal traitors, the occupier's servants and Greater Serbian reactionaries'. The Cetniks in turn described the Partisans as being the 'betrayers of the Serbian nation, Ustashe criminals and Communist lunatics'.⁷⁶ At the beginning of 1943, Pavelic remarked to a

⁷³ Cohen, *War*, p. 98.

⁷⁴ Cohen, *War*, p.41

⁷⁵ For striking examples of collaboration and attempted collaboration, see Cohen, *War*, pp. 39-43; 46, 57.

⁷⁶ Kosta Nikolic, 'Dragoljub-Draza Mihailovic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 213.

British colonel that, in order of importance, the Cetniks' enemies were Tito, the Ustase, the Muslims, the Croats and *finally* the Germans and the Italians.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, the Partisans waged a war of terror against villages that were suspected of having Cetnik sympathies. Yugoslav Communist historians later glossed over this episode as being a 'left-wing aberration'. This particularly occurred in Montenegro where those who did not support the Communists were convicted by people's tribunals or were simply shot.⁷⁸

At the end of 1941, the Yugoslav government in London and the British government recognized Mihailovic as being the leader of the Yugoslav resistance. Mihailovic was also able to rely on the support of three-quarters of the Orthodox clergy.⁷⁹ Although the Germans were hot on his heels during 1942 and 1943, Mihailovic managed to form separate commando units for the various parts of Yugoslavia. Hence, 68 units with tens of thousands armed men were set up during the course of 1942 and 1943.⁸⁰ These fighters concentrated on attacking German communications and on anticipating an allied landing on the Adriatic coast. At the same time Mihailovic also exhorted the population to civil disobedience. According to German intelligence at the beginning of 1943, Mihailovic had won the sympathy of 80% of the Serbian population.⁸¹

Tito's troops had managed to take over a large part of Bosnia in 1942. At the end of that year, the Partisan army consisted of 150,000 men who were divided into eight divisions. The Partisans came under heavy fire at the beginning of 1943 when they were surrounded in Montenegro by a German offensive that was supported by the Bulgarians, the Ustashe and the Cetniks. However, the Partisans broke through the siege and reached Bosnia although they left at least ten thousand men behind.

The three indigenous groups, the Cetniks, the Ustase and the Partisans, were fighting more amongst themselves than they were with the occupying forces. The Partisans also made agreements with the Germans although less frequently than the Cetniks did.⁸² The mutual warfare between the various Yugoslavs regularly resulted in degrading crimes that shocked even the German and Italian occupiers. They were particularly disgusted by the Ustashe who, for instance, felt no scruples about shutting the Serbs up in their churches and setting fire to them or pushing women and children off mountain tops.

But there was also a calculating attitude along with the genuine abhorrence: the occupiers feared that the Ustashe's extreme actions would strengthen the resistance by driving more and more people into the arms of the Cetniks and the Partisans.⁸³

At first the Cetniks had been able to rely on material support from England because that country hoped that this would hamper the German troops. However, the British government reviewed its policy once the Allies had landed in Italy in 1943. It was now in London's interests that the Germans should be successfully resisted in Yugoslavia. Intercepted German messages had already convinced London that the Partisans were more effective than the Cetniks at countering the Germans. A British mission to the region also came to the same conclusion. Consequently, the British government decided to support the Communists. Moreover, London was offended by the Cetniks' constant reprisals against the Croatian population that were intended to avenge the Ustashe's crimes against the Serbs. In addition, it became clear that the Cetniks' were virtually unable to recruit non-Serbs because they were associated with a pre-war situation that the non-Serbs did not support.

⁷⁷ Cohen, *War*, p. 48.

⁷⁸ For a documented survey of this 'aberration' as seen from the Serbian side, see Vukceвич, *Tito*, passim.

⁷⁹ Cohen, *War*, p. 45.

⁸⁰ For the development of the numerical strength of Tito's partisans, see Gow, *Legitimacy*, pp. 35-37.

⁸¹ Kosta Nikolic, 'Dragoljub-Draza Mihailovic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 216.

⁸² See, for instance, Almond, 'War', pp. 141-142; Peter Radan, 'The Serbs and their History in the Twentieth Century', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, pp. 11-12; Cohen, *War*, p. 90; Neeven, 'Koning', p. 34; Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 183; Vukceвич, *Tito*, p. 267.

⁸³ Almond, *War*, pp. 134 and 136-137; Anstadt, *Servië*, p. 56; Constandse, *Joegoslavië*, p. 70; Deschner/Petrovic, *Krieg*, p. 268; Glenny, *Balkans*, p. 487; Pavlowitch, 'Who is 'Balkanizing' Whom?', p. 215; Van den Heuvel, *Land*, pp. 49-50; Peter Radan, 'The Serbs and their History in the Twentieth Century', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 11; Weithmann, *Brandhaard*, p. 77.

The People's Congress or Saint Sava Congress typified the Cetniks' position and was held at the Serbian village of Ba in January 1944. Here, the Cetniks declared their support for the restoration of the pre-war Yugoslav State and they rejected the Cvetkovic-Macek agreement. Yugoslavia was to be a federation consisting of Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian member states. The future border between Serbia and Croatia was not yet defined but in principle Serbia would encompass all the land 'where Serbian blood was shed and Serbian heads had fallen'.⁸⁴ The Serbs would play a leading role in federal affairs.

The Communists were able to generate support amongst non-Serbs through their *bratstvo i jedinstvo* (brotherhood and unity) ideology and the promise that after the war a federal Yugoslavia would be based on the right to self-rule. In November 1943 Tito held a second meeting of the Anti-Fascist Council for National Liberation in Jajce (Bosnia) that resulted in the creation of a provisional government. This meeting emphasized the equal rights of Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The rights of ethnic minorities were also guaranteed. This represented a fundamental break with the pre-war situation where it was primarily Serbian rights that mattered; these were followed at some distance by those of Slovenia and Croatia.

From the end of 1943 London opted to send arms to the Partisans instead of the Cetniks. The allied leaders also recognized Tito as their ally at the Teheran conference in November 1943. The change in British policy on Yugoslav resistance has been attributed to the activities of Communist agents within the British secret service Special Operations Executive in Cairo.⁸⁵ But even without this situation, it would be difficult to see how the British could have acted in any other way. The Partisans were clearly more effective than the Cetniks and it seems that the British government felt that this was the most important consideration.⁸⁶

An additional consideration, which on a long-term basis was scarcely less important, was the fact that in the long term it was difficult to see how the realization of the Cetniks' future plans as based on their opinions could result in stable relations in South Slavia. Here, the Partisans' outlook was clearly more promising. Tito's supporters had managed to create a stable society in the areas they had conquered. Banac goes so far as to say that, without Communism, there would have been no post-war Yugoslavia.⁸⁷

Moreover, the Partisans succeeded in taking advantage of the Italian troops' withdrawal following Italy's capitulation in the summer of 1943. Tito's troops occupied large areas of the land that was thereby released and took possession of the arms that the Italians had left behind.

The decisive battle for Serbia began on 28 July 1944 when it was invaded by three Partisan divisions. Within a few weeks there was heavy fighting between the Cetniks and the Partisans. The British government put pressure on King Petar II that he should recognize the Partisan movement's position of power. This succeeded and on 12 September the King appealed to all the Serbs, including Mihailovic's Cetniks, to place themselves under the command of Tito and his provisional government. A month earlier Tito had promised an amnesty to all those who chose to support him. 10,000 Cetniks took advantage of this offer including some who had clearly collaborated with the Germans. Tito repeated his offer on a number of occasions up till 15 January 1945.

In addition, Tito flew to Moscow to draw up an agreement with Stalin about the liberation of Yugoslavia. He received an undertaking from the Soviet leader that the Red Army would liberate the country with the Partisans but would subsequently leave. Russian troops entered the Yugoslav territory in October 1944 in support of the Partisans. The Red Army and the Partisans jointly liberated Belgrade on 20 October 1944. Fighting in north-west Yugoslavia was to continue until May 1945. The German

⁸⁴ Kosta Nikolic, 'Dragoljub-Draza Mihailovic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 220.

⁸⁵ For a reference to these statements, see Kosta Nikolic, 'Dragoljub-Draza Mihailovic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, pp. 218-219.

⁸⁶ Almond, *War*, pp. 139-140.

⁸⁷ Ivo Banac, 'The origins and development of the concept of Yugoslavia (to 1945)', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 20.

occupiers finally surrendered to the Partisans on 7 May 1945 with Tito's troops taking Zagreb some two days later.

Yugoslavia at the end of the war

After the liberation of Belgrade, Mihailovic and the troops that had remained loyal to him left for Bosnia-Herzegovina in the hope that there would be a confrontation between the Western Allies and the Soviet troops. In doing this, he had also handed Serbia over to the Partisans. Mihailovic had counted on there being a Serbian uprising against the Communist government but the only support he received was from General Nedic who had led the Germans' puppet government in Serbia. Nedic's troops placed themselves under Mihailovic's command in the autumn of 1944. However, the remaining 25,000 Cetniks had become demoralized as they were without a supply of arms and munitions, and there was too little food. Many soldiers and a number of commanding officers deserted. Even Mihailovic's son and daughter joined the Communists while another son was killed fighting the Partisans.

On 13 May 1945 the Cetniks suffered their final defeat at the Zelengora Mountain in south-east Bosnia. 4000 of them were either killed, wounded or captured. Mihailovic went into hiding. He turned down numerous offers from the American authorities to go to the United States. Deserted by an increasing number of officers, he was finally captured in the night of 12 and 13 March 1946 and brought to Belgrade. The trial against him for treason had already begun. Mihailovic was found guilty on 15 July 1946 and was executed two days later. Many tens of thousands of others had already suffered the same fate: Ustashe, Cetniks, ethnic Germans, Serb Fascists, collaborators and other 'traitors'.⁸⁸ The Tito regime kept the exact number of executions a closely guarded secret.

For a long time the precise number of war victims remained subject to mystification. After the war, the authorities initially put the figure at 1,700,000. This number was primarily intended to 'benefit' Yugoslavia in terms of post-war reparations but it then began to lead a life of its own.⁸⁹ At the beginning of the 1960s, when talks with Germany led to a demand for an exact figure, Belgrade reduced the number to almost a third (600,000), but this figure was then classified as a state secret. Since then serious research has proved on several occasions that the number of dead must have been slightly more than a million out of a total population of sixteen million in 1941.⁹⁰ However, there is a greater variation in the death toll's ethnic division. The number of Serbs varies between 460,000 and 590,000, the Croats between 190,000 and 270,000, the Muslims between 70,000 and 95,000, and the Jews between 60,000 and 70,000.⁹¹ Approximately 80% of the total number of Jews were killed, seven or eight per cent of the Muslims, seven per cent of the Serbs and five per cent of the Croats.

⁸⁸ Almond, *War*, pp. 144-146; Arday, 'Hintergrund', p. 258; Bell-Fialkoff, 'History', p. 117; Glenny, *Balkans*, p. 530; Van den Heuvel, *Land*, pp. 62-63; Johnsen, *Enigma*, p. 43; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 223-224; Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 193; Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 254; Chuck Sudetic, "Srebrenica – The endurance of depravity", IWPR's Tribunal Update no. 228, Part 1, June 2-7, 2001, pp. 4-7; Raju G.C. Thomas, 'History, Religion and National Identity', Thomas/Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, p. 23; Vukceovich, *Tito*, pp. 273-277; Weithmann, *Brandhaard*, p. 78.

⁸⁹ Cohen, *War*, p. 108.

⁹⁰ This refers to research by the U.S. Bureau of Census (1954), the Serbian academic Bogoljub Kocovic (1985), the Croatian academic Vladimir Zerjavic (1991) and a 1995 estimate by Srdan Bogosavljevic, the former director of the Federal Institute for Statistics in Belgrade, who had had access to the most statistical of the sources for estimates, Cohen, *War*, pp. 109-111; Srdan Bogosavljevic, 'Drugi Svetski Rat – Zrtve u Jugoslaviji', *Republika*, 01-05/06/95, quoted in Hayden, 'Fate', pp. 746 and 748.

⁹¹ For the number of Jewish dead, see in particular Cohen, *War*, pp. 93 and 107; Raju G.C. Thomas, 'History, Religion and National Identity', Thomas/Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, p. 24.

Bosnia-Herzegovina was the hardest hit in terms of the number of victims per republic. It lost 10.3 % of its population. Croatia had the next highest figure of 7.3% and was followed by Serbia with 4.2%.⁹²

There have been repeated attempts by the Serbs to suggest they were the ones who resisted Fascism and National Socialism and that, after the Jews, they were the main victims of the Second World War. Terms such as ‘the Serb Holocaust’⁹³ equate the fate of the Serbs with that of the Jews. Conversely, from the Serbian point of view, it was the Croats who were responsible for the crimes. Tito’s government was accused of brushing these ‘facts’ under the carpet. It was an image that was widely accepted abroad and has even appeared in recent academic publications.⁹⁴

The figures mentioned above indicate that this version of events cannot be justified either numerically or in terms of Yugoslavia as a whole. However, it is true that, apart from the Jews, the Serbs in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia were the hardest hit of all the groups with, respectively, 12% and 17% of their total population killed. This is equal to one in eight Serbs in Bosnia and one in six Serbs in Croatia.⁹⁵

Apart from the concrete number of victims, the following should be borne in mind: the deeds of the Ustashe government should not be blamed on the Croatian people as a whole. Pavelic and his associates were only able to assume power with the support of Italy and Germany; they never would have succeeded on their own. During the Second World War, there were no more than 30,000 Ustashe who only controlled a section of the Croatian territory. Italy occupied the coastal area. Despite a brief, initial period of enthusiasm, a large part of the Croatian population distanced itself from the Pavelic government.

The number of Partisans in Croatia outstripped the number in Serbia until the liberation of Belgrade. Only a part of Tito’s troops consisted of Serbs in Croatia. His troops also included many Croats, for instance the young Franjo Tudjman.⁹⁶

The Serbians who entered the Partisan movement as liberation already dawned ‘September Knights’ included those who collaborated but who also benefited from Tito’s amnesty. This amnesty was partly responsible for the fact that a large number of collaborators were able to acquire or retain prominent positions in Serbia after the war.⁹⁷ Moreover, various Serbian groups and organizations participated during the Second World War in the persecution of the Jews both in Serbia and elsewhere. They included Nedic’s Nazi-supported regime and various state security services, the Zbor Serbian Fascist movement and the Cetniks. The leading collaborators in Serbia had mostly been involved with the main pre-war movements.

By contrast, the Ustashe were a marginal movement in Croatia before the war. The leadership of the major political movement, the Croatian Peasants’ Party, refused to collaborate, despite repeated pressure from the Germans. Macek was even imprisoned for five months in Jasenovac and spent the rest of the war under house arrest because he refused to co-operate politically. Finally, it should not be forgotten that the Cetnik resistance, which appealed to so many nationalist Serbs, was deeply involved with collaborating with the German National Socialists, the Italian Fascists and even the Ustashe.

Hence, it can be concluded that the occupation of Yugoslavia was also a period of civil war where the wounds would be slow to heal.⁹⁸

⁹² Ivo Banac, ‘The origins and development of the concept of Yugoslavia (to 1945)’, Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 18; Ludwig Steindorff, ‘Die Vorgeschichte – Von der Zeit vor der Staatsbildung Jugoslawiens bis zur Krise der achtziger Jahre’, Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)Erben*, p. 26.

⁹³ Deschner/Petrovic, *Krieg*, pp. 264 and 269

⁹⁴ See, for instance, Raju G.C. Thomas, ‘History, Religion and National Identity’, Thomas/Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, p. 25

⁹⁵ Ludwig Steindorff, ‘Die Vorgeschichte – Von der Zeit vor der Staatsbildung Jugoslawiens bis zur Krise der achtziger Jahre’, Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)Erben*, p. 26.

⁹⁶ Almond, *War*, pp. 135-136; Cohen, *War*, p. 96; Also Vinko Prizmic, ‘Het volgzame Nederland. Kanttekeningen bij de lessen van “voormalig Joegoslavië”’, *Idee*, September 1996, p. 32.

⁹⁷ Cohen, *War*, passim, and particularly pp. 102-106 and 137-152.

⁹⁸ For part of this reasoning, see also Michel, *Nations*, p. 220.

Subsequently, the second Yugoslavia was set up in 1945 and would exist for 46 years. On an external level, the second Yugoslavia was made possible by the Fascist and National-Socialist occupation that eliminated many of the pre-war structures and discredited the nationalist ideologies. On an internal level, Tito and his associates contributed by the fact that Yugoslavia could largely be restored after the war on its own conditions. Up till that time, the debate about Yugoslavia had mainly been a pointless discussion between nationalist ideologies. Tito and his government succeeded in transforming this discussion into a political struggle about how the state was to be organized and where the succession of post-war constitutions were to play an important role.

Chapter 2

Tito's Yugoslavia

1. Introduction

The Partisans' role in liberating Yugoslavia meant that the Communist Party had gained greater prestige there than in other Eastern European countries. A similar status had been achieved by the Yugoslav People's Army, the *Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija* (or JNA), which was set up after the liberation on the basis of the Partisan movement. Moreover, the Communist Party assumed power more rapidly in Yugoslavia than in the rest of Eastern Europe where considerable support from the Soviet Union was needed before it was able to make a definitive break-through several years later.

Hence, the second Yugoslavia involved the population as a whole in a way that the first Yugoslavia had not since it was a state created by an elite. Although Communism in Yugoslavia had a higher level of grass roots support than elsewhere in Eastern Europe and had not been imposed upon the country from abroad, it was nonetheless only able to establish itself through terror. The first years of Tito's government can quite simply be described as Stalinist.

A government was formed in March 1945 where 23 of its 28 members were either Partisans or former Partisans. Tito became both its Premier and the Minister of Defence. He managed to counter the opposition with the help of his friend A. Rankovic who was the director of the secret police. The secret police was initially known as the *Odsek za zastitu naroda*, or OZNA for short, which literally meant the 'Department for the People's Security'. This was later changed to *Uprava državne bezbednosti*, or UDBa for short, which in turn meant the 'Office for State Security'.

The secret police had far-reaching powers. Just like its Russian example, the KGB, it was allowed to make arrests and to execute people without trial. In fact, the executions and revenge actions against collaborators at the end of the war were to continue and those who opposed the new regime were either executed or persecuted. Under Rankovic's leadership, tens of thousands of people who opposed the regime were to be executed during the first years after the war. It has been estimated that 200,000 people were killed between 1945 and 1953 as a result of the regime's barbarism.⁹⁹ Hundreds of thousands of others were interned.¹⁰⁰

The Communists won 90% of the votes of the first post-war elections in November 1945. However, this was partly due to the disenfranchisement of countless opponents of the Communists, which resulted in Yugoslavia becoming a one-party state where changes to the constitution could now be made.

2. The founding of the second Yugoslavia

As based on the constitution that was introduced on 31 January 1946, the new Yugoslavia was both a republic and a federation of six equal republics: Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Hercogovina, Macedonia and Montenegro. This was closely modelled on the example of the Soviet Union's 1936 constitution. The Slovenian ideologist E. Kardelj, who was a close friend of Tito, was mainly responsible for all the constitutions of the second Yugoslavia. Kardelj's reason for copying the Russians was that the Soviet Federation [was] 'the most positive example of the solution to the issue of the relations between peoples in the history of mankind.'¹⁰¹

Just like its Soviet predecessor, the new Yugoslav constitution included the republics' formal right to secede. However, for the next few years the government's interpretation was that the republics

⁹⁹ Van den Heuvel, *Mythen*, p. 373.

¹⁰⁰ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 234.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Hondius, *Community*, p. 137.

had forfeited the right to secede by joining the federation in the first place.¹⁰² This right was subsequently dropped from the 1953 Constitution.

In practice, the republics' power was still limited. Instead a strict centralism had been chosen that would operate from Belgrade which was once again to become the capital. In terms of the country's territorial divisions, Tito tried to alleviate the ethnic tensions that had existed both before and during the Second World War. He was also aware of the problem that the Serbs could potentially dominate the other ethnic groups as they accounted for one third of the total population. Tito and his advisors partly tried to solve this through defining the borders between the various republics and provinces. A small committee of Communist Party leaders had already established these borders although it had not devoted much time to this task because the Yugoslav leadership expected that the borders would lose their significance with the advance of Socialism. For that reason, the committee opted primarily for the pre-1914 borders as its point of departure but its decisions were also based on ethnic and economic considerations.¹⁰³

The significance of the new constitution for the Serbs

The decision to return to the pre-1914 situation, which had already been taken during the war, meant that the Macedonians and Montenegrins now had separate nationalities. During the first Yugoslavia, the Serbs still regarded them as being Serbian. Moreover, Serbia was confronted with the fact that its territory would now include two autonomous districts: the 'Autonomous Province of Vojvodina' and the 'Autonomous District of Kosovo and Metohija'. (See map of 'The Yugoslav Republics').

The problem for Serbia was not the ethnically-mixed Vojvodina that had become a part of Serbia while also retaining its autonomy. In fact, the area had not previously belonged to Serbia and had suffered relatively heavy losses during the war with a total of 80,000 dead.¹⁰⁴ The Hungarian Arrow Cross Fascists had caused widespread destruction and after the liberation the Serbs had killed approximately 40,000 Hungarians in revenge.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, the number of ethnic Germans, many of whom had lived in Vojvodina, had been diminished by several hundred thousand at the end of the war through flight, deportation and extermination. These demographic changes meant that most of the Vojvodina population was Serbian so that Serbia could rely on the region's support and co-operation.

However, the real problem for Serbia was the 'loss' of Kosovo where the roots of Serbian national awareness were based. 11,000 Serbian colonists had settled there during the first Yugoslavia. Most of Kosovo along with Albania had been governed by Italy during the war, and Albanians had moved to Kosovo while 100,000 Serbs had left the area. Tito had encountered strong anti-Communist resistance there from the end of 1944, which he was only able to quell in the summer of 1945. He therefore created a special regime for Kosovo so as to reconcile the Albanians with Yugoslavia and where – unlike the example of Vojvodina – the Serbs were not allowed to settle even if they had fled from there during the war and wanted to return to their homes. A particularly repressive regime of Serbian and Albanian Communists was set up to govern the area.

An additional disappointment for Serbia was the fact that these losses were not to be compensated by the addition to Serbia of the Serbian areas in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The borders now meant that approximately 30% of Serbs were living outside of their 'own' republic of Serbia, as was also the case for 20% of Croats. This created the situation that constitutionally Serbia consisted of one people: the Serbs. By contrast, Croatia consisted of two peoples: the Croats and the Serbs. And Bosnia-Herzegovina consisted of three peoples: the Muslims, the Serbs and the Croats.

¹⁰² Hondius, *Community*, pp. 140-144.

¹⁰³ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 24; Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 260; Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, pp. 48-51; Ludwig Steindorff, 'Die Vorgeschichte – Von der Zeit vor der Staatsbildung Jugoslawiens bis zur Krise der achtziger Jahre', in: Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)erben*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁰⁴ Cohen, *War*, p.111.

¹⁰⁵ Van den Heuvel, *Hongaren*, pp. 66-67.

Only in Slovenia was the population virtually ethnically homogenous. There was a dominant group in all the other republics with the exception of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In Tito's Yugoslavia, various legal – and often sensitive – concepts would continue to exist alongside each other: the citizenship of the state of Yugoslavia; the inhabitants of a republic; and the membership of an ethnic group.

An ethnic group could take three legal forms: a nation with the right to its own republic (*narod*), a nationality (*narodnost*) or a national minority (*nacionalna manjina*). The nations consisted of the people who were mentioned in the constitution: the Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Macedonians, Montenegrins and - from 1974 - the Muslims. An ethnic group did not qualify as a nation if its fatherland was located outside of Yugoslavia. In this case, it was considered to be a nationality. Here, examples include the Hungarians, Italians and Romanians. The Albanians were another example who did not have the status of a nation although they constituted the fourth largest ethnic group in the country after the Serbs, Croats and Muslims.

Finally, various groups constituted either a national or an ethnic minority such as the Ruthenians, Vlachs and Gypsies. Tito's government was initially optimistic about the problem of ethnic nationalities. Kardelj had already written in a 1938 statement that a Yugoslav consciousness would originate and surpass that of the various ethnic groups, when economic relations and society were exposed to the beneficial affects of Communism.¹⁰⁶ The Communist leadership remained convinced of this, even when the party was in power.

The party leaders were just as optimistic about the painful memories of the Second World War: they would be forgotten. After the war and the settling of accounts that followed, the government imposed a taboo on discussing ethnic differences in general and the confrontations that occurred during the years 1941 to 1945 in particular. During Tito's regime, many of the victims of the civil conflict during the Second World War were described as being the victims of Fascism. The existence of other victims was simply hushed up. The leadership in Belgrade hoped that time would heal the wounds. Meanwhile, the ideology of 'brotherhood and unity' (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*) was used to try to foster a Yugoslav consciousness.

It was partly through these measures that Tito gained a reputation on an international level of being the great organizer of stability in the multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia. However, this suggests too much of a stable situation : the equilibrium that Tito created was actually very fragile. Here, Cohen writes: 'Throughout the existence of the Yugoslav state from 1918 to 1991, survival against the odds was its quintessential feature.'¹⁰⁷ Tito was a tightrope walker who functioned through constant tactical swerves as the exclusive and most important arbiter between the ethnic groups. However, he was unable to create a lasting solution so that his legacy was ultimately troublesome.

The significance of the new constitution for the Croats

At first Croatia had as little reason as Serbia to be satisfied with Tito's political solutions. In 1944 he had already replaced the Croat Communist Party leaders because they demanded more autonomy for Croatia and a certain accommodating of the traditional powers there. Pavelic and Macek managed to escape the vengeance of the Communists by fleeing abroad.

By contrast, the Catholic Church and its servants were to remain there, and in the years following the war there were to be many clashes between the Communist authorities and the Roman Catholic organizations in Croatia. Several hundred priests were killed because they had supposedly collaborated. Cardinal Stepinac was condemned to a prison sentence of 16 years in a show trial in 1946. In fact, he was released in 1951 but would remain under a form of house arrest until his death in 1960.

¹⁰⁶ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 22. The prominent Communist M. Djilas, who became a dissident in the 1950s, also shared these ideas, *ibidem*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁷ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 1.

The fact that Serbs accounted for half of the Partisan movement in Croatia meant that there was a relatively high number of Serbian Communist officials there after the war. This in turn meant that the party was less readily accepted.¹⁰⁸

The Croats also felt that they had been harmed by a number of territorial regulations. For instance, the Croats had lost the part of Bosnia-Herzegovina that had been gained through the Cvetkovic - Macek agreement of 1939. They had also been deprived of the area around Kotor in the south, which was given to Montenegro, and Srem, which had been added to Vojvodina. On the other hand, the Croats were pleased that Tito had managed to augment Yugoslavia with Zadar and a large part of Istria. Only Trieste would remain a part of Italy despite Yugoslavia's demands and years of bickering.



The causes of ethnic tension in the second Yugoslavia

There had never been many Communists in Slovenia. Many Slovenes did not support the Communist state but they became reconciled to it when Tito succeeded in augmenting the country with a large part of the Slovenian areas of Italy and Austria.

Macedonia was known as South Serbia before the war. Here, the Macedonian Communist Party had only opted to become a part of Yugoslavia rather than Bulgaria at a late stage of the war. After 1945, Tito's Communist rule was resisted for many years in this republic. As a concession, Belgrade recognized Macedonian as being a separate language.

By recognizing a number of republics and minorities, Tito would appear to have made Yugoslavia considerably more difficult to rule than it was between the two world wars when there were only three official groups: Serbs, Slovenes and Croats. On the other hand, the principle of equality between the republics and the many minorities made the all-encompassing Yugoslav state more palatable to both the elite and the general population. And the increased number of pawns on the political chessboard provided Tito with more room for manoeuvre than had existed during the Serb-Croat differences between the two world wars. Moreover, he created a one-party state so that he had none of the problems of the political instability that had plagued the parliament of the 1920s.

Just like the first Yugoslavia, where the Serbs had been victors in the First World War and thought that they could rule the roost, Tito's state was also burdened with the Greater Serbian issue. Serbia had survived the Second World War relatively unscathed when compared to the other parts of Yugoslavia. In addition, it was liberated six months earlier than the rest of the country: at the end of 1944. This created a flaw in the construction of the Communist Party that was never repaired. Up till then, the Party only had several tens of thousands of members but from the autumn of 1944 to May 1945, its ranks were swelled with a few hundred thousand Serbs. Moreover, as previously mentioned, many of these newcomers were *Cetnik* defectors. Hence, the Serbs had entered the Party with their superior numbers and Greater Serbian philosophy, and this was to remain the source of constant

¹⁰⁸ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 49.

turmoil.¹⁰⁹ Even in 1981, when the Serbs constituted 36.3% of the population, they still accounted for 47.1% of the party membership.¹¹⁰

Moreover, Serbia again had the advantage that the Yugoslav capital of Belgrade was located in its territory. Apart from at the very top, Serbs occupied a relatively high number of positions both in the army and in the civil service.¹¹¹ By approximately 1990, it was estimated that 90% of the civil servants who were working for federal organizations were Serbian.¹¹² Roughly 60% of both the commissioned and the non-commissioned officers of the Yugoslav National Army (the JNA) was either Serbian or Montenegrin. However, the Croat and Slovenian numbers remained in proportion. By contrast, all the other ethnic groups were under-represented amongst the JNA officer class.¹¹³ Rankovic's secret service was also dominated by Serbs.¹¹⁴ What's more, the fact that Belgrade was the capital of both Yugoslavia and Serbia could easily create the impression that an unwelcome measure from the federal capital was actually a *ukase* from the federal capital of Serbia.

A new source of ethnic tension in Yugoslavia was the over-representation of Serbs in leading social positions; this occurred despite the egalitarian and multi-ethnic promises of Tito's regime. Apart from the historical accidents of the war years, this over-representation was based on a conscious political choice. On the one hand, Tito appointed many Serbs because he aimed at eliminating the Serbian dissatisfaction with Yugoslavia's territorial division. On the other hand, by appointing them to posts in other republics, he wanted to counter any individual developments in these areas. Tito hoped in vain that his compatriots would eventually regard these Serbian officials as Communists and Yugoslavs and not primarily as Serbs.

3. Yugoslavia's foreign relations after the Second World War

The Cold War, which was at its height at the end of the 1940s, was mainly 'a war by proxies', a war that was waged not by the major powers themselves but through the agency of allied states. By being the 'proxy' of neither the Soviet Union nor the United States, Yugoslavia remained an attractive 'bride' for both parties in the global conflict. Yugoslavia was to be seduced, not taken.

Relations with the Soviet Union

Tito had had arguments with Stalin on several occasions during the war. For instance, for opportunist reasons the Soviet leader had opposed the fact that Tito's Partisans had emphatically presented themselves as Communists. Moreover, Tito had formed a provisional government without first consulting Moscow. After the war, the Yugoslav leader clearly had no objection to Stalinism but he did not want to let himself be ordered about by his great example. He resisted both direct instructions from Moscow and the interference of Russian agents and advisors in Yugoslavia. Moreover, Tito did not want to subject the Yugoslav economy to the interests of the Soviet Union. Conversely, Moscow was seriously concerned about Tito's headstrong actions concerning the Greek Civil War and his ambitions for a Balkan federation that would include Albania, Bulgaria and possibly northern Greece.

Stalin could not accept that there was an alternative Communist power. This resulted in Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform, the Moscow-led command centre of the Communist Party. It was no coincidence that this occurred on 28 June 1948: Saint Vitus Day, a day full of significance in the history of Yugoslavia. The Cominform passed a resolution on that day that accused

¹⁰⁹ See also Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, p. 93.

¹¹⁰ Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 300.

¹¹¹ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 258.

¹¹² Tromp-Vrkic, '*Burgeroorlog*', note 5.

¹¹³ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 250.

¹¹⁴ Dusan T. Batakovic, 'Collective and Human Rights: Opposing Views from The former Yugoslavia', Baehr/Baudet/Werdmöller (eds.), *Tights*, p. 62.

the Yugoslav party leadership of Trotskyism, nationalism and deviating from Communist principles. Stalin hoped that this denunciation would cause the Moscow-oriented Communists in Yugoslavia to join battle with Tito. He supported this plan with an economic embargo against Yugoslavia and the threat of its military invasion by the troops of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites. This invasion never occurred despite the massing of troops on Yugoslavia's borders.

It is unclear to what extent Stalin had felt constrained by a wartime agreement with the British Prime-Minister Winston Churchill where the division of Yugoslavia would result in one half being under Anglo-American control and the other half being under Soviet control. Stalin must have realized that a Soviet invasion of Yugoslavia, which borders on Italy, would have been unacceptable to the West as it would have allowed for the Russian domination of the Adriatic Sea.

The Soviet threat from the summer of 1948 onwards did not spell the end of Tito's regime but it did curtail his foreign adventures in the Balkans such as the dream of a Balkan federation and his interference with the civil war in Greece. From then on, to quote a Yugoslav pun, the country was encircled by *brigama*. This was not only an acronym made up of the first letters of the seven countries that surrounded Yugoslavia¹¹⁵, but also the Serbo-Croat word for 'worries' as expressed in the instrumental plural case.

Yugoslavia's expansionist tendencies vanished in 1948, with the initial exception of Trieste. Henceforth, the emphasis was to be on the established nature of Yugoslavia's external borders.

Relations between Moscow and Belgrade were to thaw to some extent for two reasons in the second half of the 1950s and the early 1960s. The first reason was that Stalin's successor, Krushchev, was less vehemently opposed to Yugoslavia's alternative Communism. Relations were also improved by the moral support that Tito gave to the Soviet Union at the time of the Hungarian Uprising in 1956 and during the conflict between the Soviet Union and China from the end of the 1950s onwards.

Relations with the West

Its Stalinist attitude and the widespread nationalization of banks and businesses in the early post-war years did not suggest that Yugoslavia was ultimately to be the country out of all the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe that was to have the best relations with the West. At that time, the West was irritated by the Belgrade government's support of the Communists in the Greek Civil War and it instigated considerable conflict about the possession of Trieste. However, all that was soon to change.

Once the Soviet Union had stopped its credit loan to Yugoslavia and trade with Eastern Europe had come to a virtual standstill, Belgrade launched an urgent appeal in 1950 to the United States and Western Europe for food-aid because otherwise the country would be threatened with famine. Because of Yugoslavia's strategic position on the Adriatic Sea, the United States offered the country six hundred million dollars of economic help between 1950 and 1955, of which only fifty-five million dollars were in form of a loan.¹¹⁶ This money was not quite enough to cover the deficit in Yugoslavia's balance of payments. In economic terms, Yugoslavia had become an artificial state where its chances of survival depended on the Western infusion.¹¹⁷ Along with its economic help, the United States provided another six hundred million dollars in military aid during the first half of the 1950s¹¹⁸. In exchange, the West received an assurance that Yugoslavia would resist if the Soviet troops decided to invade northern Italy from Hungary.¹¹⁹ Although there was relatively less American aid after the mid-1950s, the United States still took care of 60% of the deficit of Yugoslavia's balance of payments during the years 1950 to

¹¹⁵ Here, the letter M stands for *Madjarska*, the Serbo-Croat word for Hungary.

¹¹⁶ Pasvkovic, *Fragmentation*, pp. 54-55; Anstadt, *Servië*, p. 107; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 254-255.

¹¹⁷ Weithmann, *Brandhaard*, p. 110; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 255-256; Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 25.

¹¹⁸ Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, p.55.

¹¹⁹ Gervasi, '*Germany*', p. 43; Pedrag Simic, '*Civil war in Yugoslavia. The roots of disintegration*', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), p. 77.

1964. Moreover, the American Export-Import Bank and the World Bank provided loans from 1960 until 1990 that would amount to a total of, respectively, one and four billion dollars.¹²⁰

4. Internal consequences of Yugoslavia's foreign policy

The fact that both the East and the West knew that Yugoslavia was to be seduced rather than taken, was also to have consequences for the country itself. Hence, Western markets were opened up to Yugoslav products, particularly in Germany and Italy. However, Yugoslavia's extensive foreign aid meant that there was little impetus to focus on exports.

Moreover, the country's need to stand on its own two feet between the two major powers caused it to concentrate on the production of investment goods so as to meet its internal demand. Of all the Eastern European Communist countries, only Romania and Albania achieved a lower level of foreign trade per capita during the years 1950 to 1965.¹²¹

Trade relations between Yugoslavia and the Eastern bloc improved again after 1955. However, the threat of the Soviet invasion of Yugoslavia never completely vanished, despite the restored economic and diplomatic relations. There were periodic moments of fear such as in 1959 when tensions led to the inclusion of 126 Partisan brigades as territorial militia in the Yugoslav National Army (the JNA). And when the Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968, a system of territorial defence was introduced that in principle allowed for the involvement of all Yugoslavs in a Partisan war.

Even after the 1950s, Tito's Western connections regarded him as being a considerable irritant so far as the Communists were concerned. Just as he had ultimately been their best ally in the struggle against Hitler's Germany during the Second World War, Tito was now the Communist darling of the West because his attitude deviated from the Soviet point of view. The West's economic aid to Yugoslavia was partly intended to show other Eastern European countries that taking a more independent stance vis-à-vis Moscow would have its rewards. Thanks to this support, Yugoslavia lived above its means both economically and in terms of international politics, and this helped Tito to control the tensions between the different population groups.

The West had every interest in maintaining the stability of Tito's multi-ethnic state. Therefore, the United States did not try to destabilize the regime despite its attempts to undermine the other Eastern European countries (with the exception of Albania).¹²²

In ideological terms, Yugoslavia's central position in the Cold War was based on its participation in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries that came out of a 1955 gathering of former Asian and African colonies in Bandung, Indonesia. The Movement's first meeting took place in Belgrade in 1961 where it was immediately apparent that Yugoslavia had assumed a central position as a European power. Tito had many contacts with foreign heads of state on behalf of the Movement and, conversely, this greatly increased his authority at home.

The break with the Cominform in 1948 was to affect Yugoslavia both in the short term and the long term. The regime hardened in the short term. Stalin had hoped that his rejection of Tito's policy would result in serious opposition to Tito within his own party. However, the Yugoslav helmsman managed to retain the support of the vast majority of Communists. This was partly due to his heavy-handed suppression of any opposition within the party: Communists who were not on Tito's side were prosecuted as 'Stalinists'. Approximately 50,000 of them were arrested, of whom between 10 and 20,000 were imprisoned on Goli Otok Island, the Naked Island, a reef to the south of Rijeka where the summers were too hot and the winters were too cold. Although this Yugoslav equivalent of the Gulag

¹²⁰ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 270-271.

¹²¹ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 74.

¹²² Gervasi, 'Germany', p. 43; interview Boris Stanojevic, 26/10/00. Also Kadrijevic, *Viem*, pp. 13-14. In addition, there were no Radio Free Europe or Radio Liberty broadcasts to either Yugoslavia or Albania.

Archipelago was to be closed down several years later, its existence had to be hushed up until after Tito's death.

Another short-term effect of the break with the Cominform involved agriculture. The widespread collectivization of agriculture had begun in 1949 and was applied particularly strictly partly because the Communist Party leadership wanted to prove its doctrinal correctness after the break with Moscow. However, this policy of collectivization was also to be dropped several years later.

The long-term effects of the Cominform's rejection were that Tito and his associates realized that they had to organize a higher level of internal support. The country would not be able to survive the constant Soviet threat if heavy-handed repression resulted in too much internal resistance. Therefore, there were no more political death sentences after the beginning of the 1950s. Political opposition was punished with lengthy prison sentences or dismissal. The political system was transformed into what the Serbian writer Cosic described as a pragmatic tyranny.¹²³

The transformation into a pragmatic tyranny

The measures taken by Tito's regime to organize internal support included a higher level of openness than in other Eastern bloc countries. After the first few years, Yugoslav Communism became less rigid in a number of respects than the Communism of other Eastern European countries. When Yugoslavia was hit by an economic crisis at the beginning of the 1960s, its reaction was to open its borders. Many thousands of Yugoslavs seized the opportunity to become migrant workers in Northern and Western Europe. From the late 1950s onwards, hoards of tourists visited the country each year and they provided a major source of foreign currency.

However, Yugoslavia's academic and artistic freedom was still limited. Books and films could be banned. Nonetheless, from the beginning of the 1950s, there was a higher level of cultural freedom than elsewhere in Eastern Europe.¹²⁴ 'Western' consumer goods became common in large areas of Yugoslavia at the end of the 1960s. Hence, Tito's Yugoslavia was relatively open and liberal which also created a good impression of the country abroad.

Moreover, the country's economy appeared to be in good shape. The Communists' economic policy was helped by the fact that the consequences of the Second World War had been less disastrous for Yugoslavia's economy than the First.¹²⁵ For instance, the Germans had managed to increase the productivity of both mining and the metal industry through capital investment. Hence, Yugoslavia recovered rapidly after this war and was partly helped by more than four hundred million dollars of United Nations aid for reconstruction and rehabilitation. This was the program's largest donation to any single country.¹²⁶ The aid consisted not only of food and coal but also, to an important extent, of investment goods. Expropriation of the possessions of ethnic Germans and collaborators facilitated the Communists' nationalization and redivision programs.

From having been a mainly agrarian nation before the Second World War, Tito's Yugoslavia was transformed into a more industrialized state that also managed to develop tourism along its coastal areas. Between 1945 and 1971, the percentage of the population that lived from agriculture decreased from more than 73% to more than 38% of the total work force.¹²⁷ Yugoslavia was one of the fastest growing economies in the world with an average annual growth in national income of 5.3% between the years 1953 and 1989.¹²⁸

¹²³ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 32.

¹²⁴ Also Ugresic, *Cultuur*, pp. 46-51.

¹²⁵ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 63.

¹²⁶ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 235.

¹²⁷ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 126 and 136.

¹²⁸ V. Bojicic, 'The Disintegration of Yugoslavia: Causes and Consequences of Dynamic Inefficiency in Semi-Command Economies', Dyker/Vejvoda, *Yugoslavia*, p. 29. Also Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 31.

But the peasants were less successful despite the fact that they had played such a strong role in the Partisan movement.¹²⁹ The agricultural sector clearly failed to develop as much as the economy as a whole. The collectivization program had been reversed because it had led to a dramatic decrease in agricultural produce and to a number of local revolts. However, depending on the region, land ownership remained limited to a maximum of ten or twenty hectares per farmer. Moreover, a radical price policy for agricultural produce remained in force that meant that the rural areas had to finance the development of industry and the cities.

The Communist leadership regarded small-scale private farming as a money spinner. Nonetheless, despite the abandoning of collectivization, farmers were also viewed for many years as being modest capitalists who had no place in the Communist system. Because they operated outside of the public sector, they had no right to either welfare provisions or representation at the higher levels of workers' self-rule. When companies had to lay off workers, those with a rural background were often the first to go. The idea behind this was that they would still be looked after by their families in the countryside. This contributed to a serious aggravation of the economic relations between the cities and the rural areas that were increasingly marginalized.¹³⁰

Worker' self-rule and its consequences

The attempt to legitimize Yugoslavia's individual interpretation Socialism led to the introduction of workers' self-rule in 1950. According to this system, the employees of each company elected a workers' council. The company's management consisted of the director and a daily committee that the council provided. In practice, these workers' councils were to be dominated by the Communist Party. Ultimately, this variation on the centralist Communist planned economy was 'one great utopia, which was really needed as an alibi for the absence of political democracy'.¹³¹

The reason behind the fiasco of workers' self-rule was that under this system, employees tended to give priority to employment and wages rather than to other economic factors, a situation that was helped by the fact that companies could not go bankrupt. Well-established foreign observers assessed this experiment as being 'uneconomical, socially unproductive and to a great extent unsuccessful'.¹³² Tito was never particularly interested in economic issues but other Yugoslav party leaders began to endorse this criticism from the 1970s onwards.¹³³ However, by contrast, workers' self-rule contributed for many years to the idea abroad that Yugoslav Communism was a milder version of Moscow Communism.

The system of workers' self-rule also went hand in hand with the fact that the economy's decision-making process was decentralized to the level of the opština (councils) and the control over virtually every federal company was transferred to the republics. This resulted in the mixing of politics with economics at a regional level, and the regulation of labour relations became largely the councils' responsibility. This not only countered the development of a real market economy, it also resulted in the councils becoming inward looking. The development was by Western standards anti-modern and is one of the examples of how, between 1945 and 1991, Yugoslavia embodied 'a deep contradiction between the imperatives of modernization and the fundamentally anti-modern features of the "Yugoslav road to socialism"'.¹³⁴

Along with an economic dimension in 1952, political decentralisation was also reflected in the Communist Party's transformation into the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (*Savez Komunista*

¹²⁹ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 183; Deschner/Petrovic, *Krieg*, pp. 299-300.

¹³⁰ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 126 and 135.

¹³¹ Josip Zupanov, quoted in Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 36.

¹³² FBIS commentary dating from 16/10/89 and quoted in Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 43. See also Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 138.

¹³³ Van den Heuvel, *Land*, p. 87.

¹³⁴ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 7-8. See also Ludwig Steindorff, 'Die Vorgeschichte – Von der Zeit vor der Staatsbildung Jugoslawiens bis zur Krise der achtziger Jahre', Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)Erben*, pp. 31-32.

Jugoslavije or SKJ). This change made it clear that there was no single Communist Party, but that the League consisted of parties that were primarily organized by each republic or autonomous area and were only connected at a national level. These forms of decentralization were typical of the Tito government at the beginning of the 1950s. Each political crisis was followed by a 'solution' that led to the decentralizing of both politics and the economy.

There were two reasons for this decentralization. First and foremost, Tito refused to consider a multi-party system. Therefore, in his view, decentralization was the only acceptable alternative. Secondly, there was such a taboo on nationalism that it could only be debated in the coded form of discussions about economic centralization or economic decentralization. New political crises were partly caused by the adverse effects of economic measures that had followed previous political crises. This situation could be described as a vicious circle had it not involved a downward spiral that would ultimately land Yugoslavia in the depths of misery in approximately 1990.

Milovan Djilas, who was one of Tito's closest confidants along with Kardelj and Rankovic, was to discover the extent to which the discussion of the Communist Party's monopoly was forbidden. As an extension of economic self-rule, he suggested that there should be a greater decentralization of political authority so as to counter the Party's bureaucratization. He supported a multi-party state and argued that the UDBa (the secret police) should be held responsible for its deeds. Djilas was expelled from the Party after a special meeting of the Central Party Committee in January 1954. In 1956 he was sent to prison for his constant criticism where he was ultimately to remain for nine years.

5. The promotion of 'the' Yugoslav culture

Djilas had actually made an important effort to create a Yugoslav national awareness. From 1952 onwards, the Yugoslav regime addressed its citizens as the 'working people' (*radni narod*) of Yugoslavia so as to communicate the idea that the individual was first and foremost a producer. Nonetheless, Tito's government failed to create a sense of socio-economic awareness amongst large sections of the people that went beyond the usual ethnic boundaries. During the first half of the 1950s, the Communist Party abandoned the idea that an enforced industrialization and a tightly-planned economy would create a new person who would no longer be susceptible to ethnic nationalism. Subsequently, it mainly tried to foster Yugoslav patriotism through a process of political socialization and education. Here, the central elements were the Partisans' struggle during the Second World War and the break with Stalin in 1948.

Tito was the nation's binding force and a virtual cult began to develop around his personality. Cities and streets were named after him. Portraits of the bronzed statesman in his marshall's uniform hung not only in public buildings but also in homes and shops. On Tito's official birthday, youth relay races were held throughout the country that ended in a Belgrade stadium. Religious education, which had been tolerated till then, was banned in 1952. It was replaced by lessons that were intended to educate children as Socialist citizens, and Yugoslav culture was also promoted. The Seventh Party Congress in 1958 was completely dominated by this Socialist Yugoslavism.

However, it was never completely clear whether the Yugoslav culture that the government tried to promote was a reservoir of separate national cultures or an all-encompassing culture. 'Brotherhood and unity' meant that a Yugoslav patriot could regard himself as being a Croat, a Serb or a Macedonian (etc.) but that at the same time he was a Yugoslav who was prepared to sacrifice his life for Yugoslavia.

The media – newspapers, radio and later television – were mainly organized per republic. The exceptions were the *Borba* daily newspaper, the *Tanjug* press agency, which reflected the federal leadership's opinions, and the *Danas*, *NIN*, *Politika* and *Vjesnik* magazines. In addition, the second Yugoslavia never used national school books.

The ideology of Yugoslavism had an obvious attraction but one that certainly did not affect everyone. It particularly flourished amongst intellectuals and sections of young people who were

neither Catholic nor Muslim and who mainly lived in the cities.¹³⁵ Yugoslavism also appealed to the Serbs more than to other ethnic groups who regarded it as being a veiled attempt to create a Serbian hegemony.¹³⁶

Census results revealed that only a limited percentage of the population had registered as Yugoslav. The highest percentage in Yugoslavia as a whole was reached in 1991 with 6.6%, a modest achievement when one considers that 13% of the population was the result of ethnic intermarriage¹³⁷ and that the regime had had 45 years to propagate a Yugoslav ideology with the help of a party monopoly. The Yugoslav optants primarily consisted of professional servicemen and civil servants.

Religious organizations were now the sole competition in terms of the promoting of values but they only had a limited influence. There was a certain relaxation of legislation and regulations during the 1960s and '70s, but the Communist regime kept a tight rein on the various religious denominations because it regarded them as being the bulwarks of ethnic nationalism. Whether that was sensible, considering the Communists' aims, remains to be seen. By suppressing religious expression, the government of brotherhood and unity was in fact thwarting an ecumenical movement that in turn established religion as a sign of ethnicity.¹³⁸

The Communists also failed to eliminate the differences in economic development between the areas in the north of the country and those in the south, a situation that had already existed before the Second World War. A federal investment fund was set up in 1956 to bridge that gap. This fund was replaced in 1965 by a development fund for the disadvantaged south that was financed by a tax of 1.85% on all government services. In spite of this policy, this state of inequality continued to grow dramatically. In 1947 the Slovenes earned 175% of the average income per capita of the Yugoslav population while the residents of Kosovo earned just 53%. In 1979 these figures were, respectively, 195% and 29%. In other words: on average, the Slovenes earned at least three times as much as the Kosovans in 1947 and a good 30 years later they earned more than six times as much.¹³⁹

Education and literacy levels also varied greatly from region to region. Although the illiteracy rate for those above the age of ten was 20% for the whole of Yugoslavia in 1961, this consisted of just 2% in Slovenia, 12% in Croatia, 33% in Bosnia-Herzegovina and 41% in Kosovo.¹⁴⁰ These figures had fallen 20 years later but the regional differences remained the same: the illiteracy rate for the whole of Yugoslavia was 9.5%; for Slovenia it was less than 1%, for Bosnia-Herzegovina it was 14.5% and for Kosovo it was 17.6%.¹⁴¹

There were different reasons for the republics' varying levels of development. The north had been more industrialized while agriculture and cattle breeding continued to play a greater role in the south. So far as industry existed in the south, it was mainly the result of the industrialization program that the government had set up shortly after World War Two. This primarily involved mining that was capital intensive and provided relatively little employment. Partly because of the economic differences, the birth rates in the south were considerably higher than those in the north so that any growth had to be divided amongst a higher number of people.

The fiasco of the government policy to divide economic affluence equally became a source of irritation. There was a feeling in the south that the government was not doing enough and that, for

¹³⁵ Cohen, *Bonds*, pp. 32 and 49; Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 285; Vesna Petic, 'The War for Ethnic States', Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 20; Naarden, *Western Perceptions and Balkan realities* [Annex to NIOD *Srebrenica Report*].

¹³⁶ Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, p. 62; Peter Radan, 'The Serbs and their History in the Twentieth Century', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 14; Williams, *Legitimacy*, p. 62. Even the Serbian writer Dobrica Cosic warned about this in 1961, Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 29; Hondius, *Community*, pp. 242 and 315-316.

¹³⁷ Nikolai Botev, "Seeing Past the Barricades. Ethnic Intermarriage in The former Yugoslavia, 1962-1989", Halpern/Kideckel (eds.), *Neighbors*, p. 225.

¹³⁸ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 299; Geert van Dartel, 'Nationalities and Religion in Yugoslavia', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 25-28.

¹³⁹ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 196. For more figures see, for instance, *ibidem*, pp. 83-84; Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 35.

¹⁴⁰ Hondius, *Community*, p. 25.

¹⁴¹ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 333.

instance, Croatia with its coastal tourism could afford to spare more. However, the north felt that the money that it gave was not being used effectively and would therefore be better invested in its own region.

Economic recession – ethnic consequences

Ethnic nationalism began to stir again at the end of the 1950s and it indeed included issues of division. For that reason the Serbian writer Dobrica Cosic branded it as ‘dinar nationalism’.¹⁴² There was also industrial unrest at that time because the working population was demanding a greater share in the country’s economic success. This was soon followed by a recession. Up till 1960, the economy had grown faster than almost any other in the world. In the 1950s, the average annual increase in the gross national product was 6.7%,¹⁴³ and this was mainly due to an expanding industry that was growing by more than 11% per year.¹⁴⁴ However, around 1960, this growth seemed to have reached a limit. The central investment fund was partly responsible for this and had levelled this growth by siphoning capital off to the disadvantaged areas. The party leaders failed in their attempts to reform the economy and to increase the market orientation and cost awareness of the largely politically-appointed management teams of the major factories.

Industrial production dropped in 1961 and 1962. Unemployment figures reached a level of, respectively, 6% and 7.3%.¹⁴⁵ The dinar was devalued to 40% of its old value. The cost of living rose by 30% between 1959 and 1962 although wages remained frozen. The Communist Party was confronted with the question of whether to opt for more decentralization or simply to return to centralization so as to get the economy back on course.

6. The 1960s: centralization versus decentralization

Rankovic, who was the head of the UDBa secret police until 1964, was the strongest opponent of the decentralization of political and economic power. His intelligence agency was also partly decentralized in 1964 which led to the UDBa’s name being changed into the State Security Service, the *Služba Državne Bezbednosti* (or SDB). Yet Rankovic’s power seemed to remain unaffected. He was even appointed Vice-President of the Federation as a result of the 1963 Constitution; this made him the second most important man in Yugoslavia after Tito.

However, an enquiry was launched in 1966 into the heavy-handed actions of the secret police in Kosovo. Rankovic’s mainly Serbian security force had tried to crush every attempt at decentralization, particularly in Kosovo. Tito also failed to solve the tensions there between the Serbs and the Albanians, and this repeatedly led to violence. The activities of the secret police in Kosovo had resulted in a series of deaths and serious injuries.

The enquiry revealed that Rankovic had bugged the phones of countless leading politicians who included, according to unconfirmed rumours, Tito himself. To make things worse, Tito had assigned this enquiry to the KOS (*Kontraobavestajna Služba*), the military counter-intelligence service that mainly consisted of Croats. Rankovic was sacked and expelled from the Party along with many of his police. This blow to the regime was regarded by many Serbs as an attack on their position within the state. It was greeted in the other republics with relief.¹⁴⁶

Even in the 1950s, there was a struggle within the League of Communists of Yugoslavia between the supporters of the original centralism and those who favoured decentralization. The supporters of centralism could rely on the help of Rankovic while the other side was backed by Kardelj,

¹⁴² Hondius, *Community*, pp. 241-242.

¹⁴³ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 275.

¹⁴⁴ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 272.

¹⁴⁵ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 273, 277.

¹⁴⁶ I. Banac, ‘*Asymmetry*’, pp. 147-148; Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 94.

the Slovenian Communist Party ideologist whose friendship with Tito gave him plenty of influence. The supporters of decentralization argued that the existing emphasis on Yugoslav unity was simply a masquerade for Serbian domination.

This political issue confronted Tito with a difficult decision. He had strongly encouraged Yugoslavism in around 1960 and the population census of 1961 had for the first time included the possibility of registering as a Yugoslav. However, only 317,000 people opted for that choice. All the others selected an ethnic nationality. The precise role that this signal played is unknown but Tito increasingly distanced himself from Yugoslavism from 1962 onwards. In March of that year he confronted a secret meeting of the party leadership with the following question: 'Is our country really in a state to continue to survive or will it collapse? Is this society viable or not?'¹⁴⁷ Six months later Tito declared that 'Socialist social relations' were to be the binding factor between Yugoslavs. He felt that an all-encompassing Yugoslav culture was unnecessary. There was no need for a Yugoslav layer to come between the republics' culture and global culture.¹⁴⁸ Apparently Tito felt that his two main political objectives - the State of Yugoslavia and the rule of its Communist Party - would benefit the most by abandoning Yugoslavism and allowing for a tendency towards decentralization. Kardelj declared: '[O]ur Federation is not a framework for creating some new Yugoslav nation or an outline for the kind of national integration that the supporters of hegemonism or denationalizing terror have been daydreaming about.'¹⁴⁹

Tito's decision in 1962 to abandon Yugoslavism was described by the future Minister of Defence General Kadijevic as being 'beyond any doubt the worst and the most fateful in the entire existence of the second Yugoslavia'.¹⁵⁰ A new constitution was introduced in 1963 that had been drawn up by Kardelj. It was a triumph for the decentralists. Numerous powers were transferred to the republics. The new Constitution transformed the Federation into being primarily the guardian of both the country's unity and integrity, and the unity of its financial and economic policy. The Federation's main responsibilities were to be foreign policy, defence and trade. However, the republics also had a need to assert their influence in these areas. This was mainly accommodated by striving towards a proportional representation of civil servants from the republics in federal posts. As based on this Constitution, over the next few years a growing number of federal posts were rotated between representatives of both the republics and the autonomous provinces. All posts could be held for a maximum of two terms with the exception of the presidency. The right to secession was once again included in the Constitution and was now granted to the different peoples: the ethnic groups.

During the Eighth Congress of the Communist League of Yugoslavia in 1964, Yugoslavism, which had been the positive theme of the previous congress six years earlier, was to suffer a defeat from which it would never recover.¹⁵¹ Tito condemned Yugoslavism at this conference as being a form of 'assimilation and bureaucratic centralism, unitarianism and [Greater Serbian] hegemony'.¹⁵² Kardelj readily followed in his footsteps by describing the Yugoslav nation as a creation made from 'the remnants of Greater Serbian nationalism'. There was also no mention of Yugoslavism or a common Yugoslav culture in the 1964 party program.¹⁵³ At the end of 1965, Kardelj declared at a meeting of 80 leaders from both the Federation and the republics that the idea that ethnic distinctions would automatically diminish had proved to be incorrect. He argued that they had actually become stronger.

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Stallaerts, *Afscheid*, p. 94. Also Dusan Bilandzic, 'Termination and Aftermath of the War in Croatia', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 86; Vukcevic, *Tito*, p. 277.

¹⁴⁸ Hondius, *Community*, p. 243.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Hondius, *Community*, p. 242.

¹⁵⁰ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 64.

¹⁵¹ Vesna Pesic, 'The War for Ethnic States', Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 20.

¹⁵² Tito quoted in Dusan T. Batakovic, 'Collective and Human Rights: Opposing Views from The former Yugoslavia', Baehr/Baudet/Werdmöller (eds.), *Tights*, p. 63.

¹⁵³ Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, p. 63.

In his opinion, the only way to avoid Yugoslavia's collapse was to set up a confederation that allowed the republics a high level of autonomy.¹⁵⁴

The order had been reversed between the regional congresses and the Central Party Congress before the Eighth Congress in 1964. Binding decisions were previously taken by the Central Congress that were subsequently implemented by the regional congresses. But there was a radical break with this tradition in 1963: the congresses in the republics and autonomous areas were subsequently to precede the Central Congress. Thereafter, the Central Congress was to become more and more of a market place for horse trading between the representatives of the regional congresses.

The 1963 Constitution and the 1964 Party Congress were followed by major economic reform in 1965. This change of policy led to a reorganization of banking which up till then had mainly been organized on the level of the opstina or councils. Here, the idea was that the new trade and investment banks would be responsible for transactions throughout Yugoslavia. However, in practise, they mainly functioned on the level of the republics and were strongly over-represented in Belgrade. These banks, rather than the central government, were mostly responsible for the investment policy. The government no longer had control over the production of money so that there was an inherent risk of inflation. The banks began to grant favoured companies loans that had extremely favourable and effectively negative interest rates. This problem was increased even more by the fact that companies that encountered problems because of the limitations of the available banking transactions between the republics would simply circumvent the banks altogether by borrowing money from other companies in their own republics. This led to an increase in the amount of money in circulation. In 1970, the sum of the companies' outstanding bills amounted to a quarter of the gross national product.¹⁵⁵ Inflation would remain at an annual average of 18% between 1970 and 1979; this was almost twice as high as the global average.¹⁵⁶

The Ninth Party Congress in 1969 decided that key posts in all the important party committees were to be divided along ethnic lines. Moreover, there was to be a greater emphasis on the Party's organization per republic. Therefore, a Yugoslav identity was clearly a handicap for Party officials. Each federal post would only be held on a temporary basis. Politicians' grass roots support was undeniably to be found in their republics.

'Yugoslavia as a goal in itself' is put to rest

Other parts of Yugoslav society were also permeated by the formula of ethnic division. Yugoslavia was the common manger from which everyone was to receive his share. Here, it seems that for large sections of the population, Yugoslavia was increasingly becoming a means rather than a goal in itself.¹⁵⁷

Jobs in companies in ethnically-mixed areas were also given out according to the formula of ethnic division, a policy that even extended, for instance, to company holiday homes. Although it was intended as a way of eliminating tension between ethnic groups, the ethnic division formula actually contributed to a fixation on mutual relations. Everyone was constantly on guard that his group was not being disadvantaged.¹⁵⁸ And when this did occur, the other group would have to suffer the same fate. This was also demonstrated by the consequences of Rankovic's dismissal from his post as the head of the secret police.

The 1963 Constitution and the attack on Rankovic resulted in an important reversal in the relationship between the secret service and the Communist Party as organized per republic. Unlike its

¹⁵⁴ Dusan Bilandzic, 'Termination and Aftermath of the War in Croatia', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 87.

¹⁵⁵ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 309.

¹⁵⁶ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 309

¹⁵⁷ Paul Shoup, 'Titoism and the national question in Yugoslavia: a reassessment', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 62.

¹⁵⁸ Also Paul Shoup, 'Titoism and the national question in Yugoslavia: a reassessment', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 61-62; Slapsak, *Joegoslavië*, p. 69; interview R. Dukic, 14/06/00.

predecessor the UDBa, the SDB did not have control over party appointments in the republics. In fact, the political leaders of each republic had now acquired control over their republic's secret service. The secret service's permission was no longer needed for a passport which greatly contributed to the mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers to Western Europe. In the late 1960s, this in turn appeared to have solved Yugoslavia's unemployment problem in one fell swoop.

In many ways, Rankovic's fall had a liberating effect on Yugoslav society. Voices of dissent now found an outlet in the newspapers and magazines. Tito had expected that Rankovic's dismissal would cause unrest in Serbia but it remained calm, and liberals even took over the Serbian Party. They were in fact prepared to undertake measures such as far-reaching decentralization so as to eliminate non-Serb fears of Serbian domination.¹⁵⁹ Yugoslavia experienced a spring that resembled the Prague Spring of Dubcek's Czechoslovakia and which occurred at virtually the same time. Moreover, the economy recovered in 1968. Yugoslavia developed into a consumer society and compared favourably with other Eastern European countries with their famous queues for bread and meat.

Just as elsewhere in Europe, there were student demonstrations in Belgrade in 1968 that focused on issues such as the affluence of party officials. The students were also demanding reforms and a higher level of Socialist idealism instead of a slide towards a market economy. Tito parried the students' demands with a mixture of flattery and violence. He announced that his economic reforms would benefit those on the lowest incomes. At the same time, his response to the student demonstrators was heavy-handed. It became clear that the individual freedom to have a divergent opinion was permitted to a certain extent. Students could subject themselves to the 'sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll' of their Western counterparts and could also write critical articles, but any form of organized opposition remained absolutely forbidden.¹⁶⁰ Hence, the Communist government prevented the development of all forms of organization that would have existed between the agencies of the Communist State and the individual. When opposition was allowed, it could only occur within the party and the state agencies.

7. Ethnic problems: Kosovo, Slovenia, Croatia versus Serbia in around 1970

Ethnic problems became apparent during the emergence of nationality issues and especially when economic problems rapidly recurred and the question of the division of wealth was once again on the agenda. Signs of nationalism were most evident in Kosovo and Croatia.

But the economy was not the only problem in Kosovo. A major grievance of the Albanians concerned the fact that the Kosovan Serbs and Montenegrins occupied more than half of the province's government posts including jobs at the police and the SDB. In the autumn of 1968, Albanians demonstrated in Kosovo for a higher level of autonomy under the rallying-cry of 'Kosovo Republic'. This caused great irritation amongst the Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo. They felt threatened by the province's Albanians and by the shifts in demographic relations. These were caused by the increasing number of Serbs who were leaving the province and also by the Albanian birth rate that had an annual increase of 3.2% in the 1970s and was the highest in Europe.¹⁶¹

The introduction of the 1963 Constitution meant that conferring the status of a republic also entailed the possibility of secession. Non-Albanians felt that behind the call for the status of a republic was a secret desire for independence or assimilation with Albania.

Just like the student demonstrations, Belgrade responded to the problem with a mixture of violence and promises. Demonstrations were ruthlessly broken up and their organizers were sentenced to years of prison. On the other hand, Albanians were made eligible for a wide range of government posts and for the first time they acquired a real place in the representing structures of both the

¹⁵⁹ Vesna Pesic, "The War for Ethnic States", Popov (ed.), *Road*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁶⁰ Also Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 274-275.

¹⁶¹ Detrez, *Balkan*, p. 98.

Federation and Serbia. School books from Albania were introduced on a massive scale and the capital of Pristina acquired its own university. The Serbs soon began to leave Kosovo in far greater numbers than ever before. It was difficult for them to find work and they no longer felt at home there. This exodus was a bone of contention for the Serbs and particularly for those who chose not to leave. Hence, Kosovo was rapidly becoming the powder keg of Yugoslavia.

Following Kosovo, there was also tension between Slovenia and Belgrade in 1969. This was caused by the fact that Slovenia had missed out on its share of the money that was provided by the World Bank for modernizing the roads. The heated emotions about economic handicaps were demonstrated by the fact that there were calls in Ljubljana for Slovenia's cession. The Slovenes were kept in check by a combination of heavy pressure from Tito and the promise that Slovenia would be given priority in future projects, but they did not forget this experience. Moreover, this conflict had caused differences between Slovenia on the one side and Croatia and Macedonia on the other so that these three republics no longer operated at a national level as a closely-knit liberal bloc.

The greatest outburst of nationalism took place in Croatia and was ignited by a 1967 conflict about language. There had been an agreement in 1954 to design a joint Serbo-Croat dictionary. However, when the first two volumes were published in 1967, it appeared that many Croat words had been left out or had been included with the words 'local dialect'. In each case where there were two possible spellings, the Serbian version had been selected as the correct one. Indignant Croat intellectuals published a statement where they demanded that Croatian should henceforth be recognized as a separate language alongside Serbian, Slovenian and Macedonian. This cultural movement was becoming increasingly political.

Moreover, there were numerous complaints in Croatia that, although this republic earned a great deal of money through exports, migrant workers and tourism, its profits were largely appropriated by the state and companies in Belgrade to support objectives such as developing the southern regions. The northern republics' complaints about the failed attempts to divide affluence equally across the country at their expense would frequently be heard over the next two decades. A further annoyance was the fact that the Croats only had to threaten to step out of line for them to be immediately associated with the *Ustashe* terror.¹⁶² The Croatian Communist Party's sympathetic attitude towards this criticism led to remarks of a 'Croatian Spring' as based on the analogy of the Prague Spring of 1968. Just as in Czechoslovakia, the Croatian Communist leadership tried to relax the political and economic command structure. The people's support for this new approach overwhelmed even the party leaders in Zagreb who nonetheless did not feel that it was necessary to reverse their policy despite the problems that they could expect from the national party organization in Belgrade.

There were massive demonstrations. 30,000 students and school children went on strike to add weight to the demands for a higher level of autonomy and even independence. This movement, which was initially liberal, began to become more overtly nationalist. The party leadership in Croatia was surpassed by the *Matica Hrvatska*. This Croatian cultural movement had supported Croatian self-awareness since the middle of the 19th century but had virtually led a clandestine existence during the first decades of the Communist government. Tens of thousands of new members signed up. Difficult questions were asked such as why almost 60% of the Zagreb police were Serbian although they only accounted for 15% of the city's residents.¹⁶³ There were also calls to exercise the right to an army, an individual currency and membership of the United Nations, and territorial claims were made on parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In August 1971, the Croatian Student Union unveiled a commemorative plaque in honour of Radic who had been described by Tito as a *kulak* or big peasant. It was located on the front of the house where he had lived in Zagreb. A statue of him was even erected in Metkovic.

Eventually the Serbs also began to rebel in Croatia. Their mildest demand was that the rights of the Serbian minority should be included in the Croatian Constitution. But some Serbs went further and

¹⁶² For Croatia's depiction as the 'genocide nation' see, for instance, Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 281.

¹⁶³ Glenny, *Balkans*, p. 591.

began to arm themselves. They demanded the right to secede their area so that it could be linked to Serbia. Once this point had been reached, there was a very real risk of Croatia's secession or even a civil war. Therefore, conservative Communists, including those from Croatia, tried to persuade Tito to deploy the army in Croatia. However, the 80-year-old leader realized that he could opt for a less violent response because at that moment Croatia's position in Yugoslavia was somewhat isolated.

Hence, at the end of 1971 and the beginning of 1972, Tito decided to purge the Croatian League of Communists of its 'Fascist totalitarian tendencies'. Tens of thousands of people were forced to leave the Party. The *Matica Hrvatska* was banned. Universities and the media were also subjected to the same 'spring cleaning'. Several thousand people, particularly intellectuals, were imprisoned for some months without trial. After the 1972 purge, the new leaders of the Communist League of Croatia remained tainted by the crushing of the Croatian Spring and by the impression that, when it came down to it, they would always be at Belgrade's beck and call. The brief Croatian Spring was followed by 17 years of the Croatian Silence (1972-1989). Those arrested included Franjo Tujman, the Director of the Zagreb Institute for the History of the Labour Movement, along with Stipe Mesic and various others whose names would emerge at the centre of Croatian politics in 1990.

Both this intervention and the equating of the Croatian desire for reform with the *Ustashe* past resulted in bad blood in Croatia, particularly against the Serbs. The fact that Tito allowed Croatia to keep half of its income from the tourist industry and a quarter of the republic's foreign exchange was a pleasant but insufficient form of compensation. In a sense, this concession actually aggravated Yugoslavia's economic and political problems because it was the cause of increasing complaints from the south about the unequal division of the nation's wealth. And in the north it strengthened the idea that economic progress had to be fought for through ethnic nationalism at the expense of Communism. The Croatian Serbs were also left with a bitter experience. As a Serb in Kordun told the American-Serbian journalist Dusko Doder in 1974: '[We] will never let ourselves be surprised again. At least now there's an axe behind every door.'¹⁶⁴

The nationalist powers suppressed

It was obvious that Tito had completely failed to defuse the issue of nationality. This particularly applied to the most serious aspect of this issue that had already dominated the first Yugoslavia and where the Serbs' goal was centralism while the Croats' most basic desire was for autonomy. Rather than cultivating a system of mutual tolerance between the various ethnic groups, Tito had acted like a new Habsburg sovereign with his divide and rule politics of playing the groups off against each other. The status of a particular group was increased or decreased according to what Tito felt was necessary for the country's internal stability. Often a government action against one group would be followed by another against a different group. This created a pattern of expectation amongst the population whereby a blow to one section of the people had to be followed by the adverse treatment of another group.

The 1970s also started in this way. In an attempt to restore the ethnic balance, most of the other republican and provincial Communist leagues were purged in the months that followed the suppression of the Croatian Spring. Those affected included the Reformist Serbian leaders and 6,000 of their supporters.

These purges dealt a fatal blow to the possibility of reforms coming from within the Communist Party itself and it is difficult to overestimate the consequences that this would have for the further history of Yugoslavia. The Communist League had been stripped of its reforming powers. The liberal opposition that had embraced nationalism now largely abandoned its liberalism in favour of pure nationalism. However, this development would only become overt at the end of the 1980s. As yet, the

¹⁶⁴ Doder, *Yugoslavia*, p. 13.

only sign was the fact that the Communist Party was becoming increasingly rigid and unsound. The Party had been stripped of its ideals forever and it attracted fewer young people.¹⁶⁵

As a substitute for liberal reform, Tito and Kardelj decided to further their policy of shifting power towards the regions. They wanted to create a strong basis for regionalism in a new constitution. Tito had already established in April 1970 that:

‘today there is not only an increasing desire for greater autonomy, the republics want actual independence, they want to separate themselves politically from the Federation... If someone were to ask me about it right now, I would find it difficult to say that we have a real federation. It already seems to be a confederation ...’¹⁶⁶

Tito stressed the need for a new constitution in a letter to the federal parliament that was dated 9 December 1970. It stated that greater autonomy at the level of the republics would deal with the tensions that had been created by the differing economic developments. The next day the parliament decided to set up a committee that would be responsible for drawing up a new constitution. Kardelj would be its chairman and its members would be the speakers of the parliaments of the various republics and autonomous areas. It was not difficult to guess the direction that the new constitution would take.

The 1974 Constitution: Kosovo and Vojvodina are autonomous and not independent

The new constitution had been completed in 1974. With 406 articles and more 350 pages, it was the largest in the world and included complicated stipulations about the relations between the federation and the republics that would repeatedly lead to quibbles.

The essence of this constitution was that government authority had been decentralized to such an extent that it had become difficult to rule the country on a federal level. Along with the six republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia, the constitution also included the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina that were located within Serbia. These two provinces had now acquired the same status as the other republics although they also remained a part of Serbia, an incongruity that was to have major consequences.

There was one important exception to this process of equalization. Each of the republics was supposedly based on the people’s sovereignty that in turn implied a right to secession. However, this right was withheld from the two autonomous provinces as a concession to Serbia.

To prevent the country’s disintegration, the new constitution stipulated that any alterations to it would need the approval of all six republics and the two autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. This decision would have to be made by the collective state presidium that was set up by the constitution. This body would ultimately consist of eight members: one for each republic and autonomous province. The chairmanship would change each year according to an order that had been established in advance. The same principle was applied to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Finally, there was the Committee for the Protection of the Constitutional Order that was set up in 1975 and included the Ministers of Home Affairs and Defence. Using a system of checks and balances, these three bodies had to safeguard the continuity of the Yugoslav State and Communist society after Tito’s death.

Only foreign policy, defence and foreign trade policy continued to operate on a mainly national level. Decisions concerning economic affairs required unanimity within the presidium. A majority was enough for most other matters but the representatives of each republic or autonomous province could

¹⁶⁵ Cohen, *Bonds*, pp. 48-49.

¹⁶⁶ Tito quoted in Dusan T. Batakovic, ‘Collective and Human Rights: Opposing Views from The former Yugoslavia’, Baehr/Baudet/Werdmöller (eds.), *Rights*, p. 65.

also opt to veto federal decisions. Kosovo and Vojvodina could therefore block the decisions of Serbia of which they themselves were also a part. Even making a treaty required the approval of all the republics. From then on, the republics were able to maintain foreign contacts through the co-ordination committees for foreign relations that began to develop from the republics' Chambers of Commerce from 1970 onwards.

Economic problems were increased by the fact that the new constitution included the Croatian demand that the banking system, that was still concentrated in Belgrade, would now be completely decentralized. The immediate consequence of this was that the financial flow between the separate republics diminished to a level of between one and two percent of Yugoslavia's entire capital.¹⁶⁷

Although the 1974 Constitution was intended as a step forwards after the Croatian Spring, it was actually a step into the dark. It provided a recipe for difficult decisions and compromises at the lowest possible level, and would ultimately arrive at a complete impasse. The situation was saved for the time being by the charismatic Tito who had been appointed president for life by the constitution. After his death, the collective state presidium would operate on the basis of a constitution that had in principle transformed Yugoslavia into being a 'semi-confederation of semi-sovereign republics'.¹⁶⁸

Was there another possible arbiter between the republics apart from Tito and the state presidium? There were two other important centres of power: the Communist Party and the army. It was no coincidence that the Party's leading role was once again emphasized after the acceptance of the 1974 Constitution. The Party had to be the binding factor in a state where the republics and the autonomous provinces dealt with each other on a basis of virtual equality and were not constrained by the federal bodies. The principle of democratic centralism was once again introduced so that the Yugoslav expert Allcock had no qualms about describing the apparent liberalization that followed the 1974 Constitution as being effectively a Stalinist reform.¹⁶⁹ Others use the term 'polycentric étatism' to define the post-1974 situation.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, the Party had acquired the power to elect candidates for government posts. This completely changed the composition of Yugoslavia's elite in the years following 1974. The technocrats, whose presence was based on workers' self-rule, were now supplanted by professional politicians. These politicians mainly fulfilled the role of exegetes of the extremely complicated paper regulations that were the result of the world's largest constitution. The party's new and weighty role, which left little space for other organizations, again prevented liberal alternatives from developing in Yugoslav society that would have been able to oppose the rise of nationalism in the 1980s.¹⁷¹

However, it would have been difficult for the Communist Party to fulfil a binding role because, for instance, of its over-representation of Serbs and Montenegrins. At the same time, decentralization even affected the Communist League of Yugoslavia. For instance, the members of the Central Committee were elected at the regional congresses. The combination of position appointments and regionalism resulted in the creation of government empires in every republic and province that refused to obey the national authorities. Regional governors no longer had to feel responsible for the level above them. They were supported in their quest for self-sufficiency by the heads of local and regional businesses who sought protection against competition from other parts of the country. Incestuous relations developed between political governors and the directors of state companies. The consequence of all this was an end to political decency and the rise of a mass desire for personal gain amongst party officials who effectively operated as feudal lords. The Communist Party became less of a political body and more of a career channel that also helped the unscrupulous. From the 1970s onwards, all this

¹⁶⁷ Ilija Ika Todorovic, 'Regional Economic Nationalism in the Former Yugoslavia', in: Thomas/Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, pp. 174-175.

¹⁶⁸ Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, p. 70. See also interview S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

¹⁶⁹ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 92. Also Djilas, *Profile*, p. 85.

¹⁷⁰ Pedrag Simic 'Civil war in Yugoslavia. The roots of disintegration', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 83 and 85.

¹⁷¹ Also Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 77.

meant that corruption flourished in Yugoslavia, as was occasionally revealed in much talked-about scandals.¹⁷²

Apart from Tito and the state presidium, there was just one other institution that could be described as existing on a national level: the Yugoslav Peoples' Army or JNA. The question now was how it would react once Tito was dead and there was no other arbiter.

¹⁷² Also Meier, *Jugoslaviën*, pp. 77-78; Michielsen, *'Joegoslavië'*, p. 224.

Chapter 3

The era after Tito

'In the wake of the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation (...) the attempt to provide an explanation has dwelt quite disproportionately upon the factor of ethnic diversity. Nevertheless, I contend that no explanation which does not place at its heart economic factors deserves to be taken seriously.'¹⁷³

1. Introduction

Tito died at the respectable age of nearly 88. This is a considerable achievement for a person but for the country that he led, it is difficult to decide whether his death came too early or too late. On the one hand, in terms of merits and charisma, Tito was the only politician in Yugoslavia to go beyond the ethnic and republican level. On the other hand, his leadership had blocked fundamental political and economic solutions for far too long. The slogan "*Posle Tita – Tito!*" (After Tito – Tito!) bore witness to the sense of destitution that followed his death. Like almost every dictator, Tito had failed to leave a crown prince.

Shortly before his death in 1980, Tito spoke to W. Averell Harriman, the former American Undersecretary of State: 'When I came to power as the leader of the Partisans, I had the whole country behind me. That will never happen again. I was able to exert this level of power because of the war. It is completely impossible for me to select a single successor. Ultimately there is no way to protect this country against its own disunity.'¹⁷⁴

After Tito, there was only the collective presidium of the Yugoslav Federation with its rotating chairmanship, but it had none of Tito's charisma. The members of the presidium were just anonymous figures in Tito's shadow. They became the laughing-stock of cinema newsreels where their appearance was greeted by a noisy audience trying to guess which shadowy figure was now stalking across the screen. Moreover, establishing the Yugoslav leadership, as demonstrated by the cult around Tito, had been strongly based on the experiences of the 1940s: the Partisans' struggle and the break with Stalin. These experiences were becoming less relevant to the younger generations. The fact that the Communist regime in Yugoslavia was initially stronger than elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe and that it was so strongly based on Tito's charismatic leadership had now become a major stumbling block for the central authority's continued existence.¹⁷⁵

Tito's successors were similarly unsuccessful at creating structural solutions to the issues that arose during the final years of his life such as economic problems and the difficulties created by the 1974 Constitution. The future Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic described the situation as follows: 'The system wasn't working even before he died – it was Tito who functioned. After his death, nothing worked and no one even seemed capable of agreeing about anything.'¹⁷⁶

Perhaps that was also too much to expect of a party where the Reformist leaders had been removed and any form of creativity had vanished after the re-introduction of democratic centralism and the appointment systems. The party was losing its attraction for young people and was increasingly the symbol for impasse, stagnation and eventually deterioration. Only the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had led to an increase in student members so that the Party reached its zenith in 1982 with a

¹⁷³ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 89.

¹⁷⁴ Tito's words as remembered by Mrs. Pamela Harriman and quoted in Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 108.

¹⁷⁵ Also Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 421.

¹⁷⁶ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 53.

membership of 2200,000. This figure had fallen to 1500,000 by 1989. Half of all young people in the mid-1980s did not want to join. In Croatia that figure was 70% and in Slovenia it was as high as 88%.¹⁷⁷

Even abroad Tito's government had already lost its allure before his death. Yugoslavia's international position in the Non-Aligned Movement had been seriously eroded during the 1970s because the organization had inclined towards the Communist camp under Cuba's leadership. China had already initiated a détente with the West at the beginning of the 1970s and even Republican President Ronald Reagan's blustering rhetoric about the Evil Empire could not hide the major improvement in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. This improvement was of major significance for Yugoslavia's internal relations. Just as the first Yugoslavia had been partly created and maintained by the fear of the territorial claims of countries such as Italy (in particular) and subsequently Germany, so the threat of a Soviet invasion had helped to suppress the internal tensions of the second Yugoslavia. An important reason for Tito's intervention in the Croatian Spring was that the Russian leader Leonid Brezhnev had offered the Soviet Union's (not entirely disinterested) assistance in solving this issue. In a speech after the crisis, Tito warned workers in Zagreb that if the Yugoslavs were unable to keep their own house in order, then 'someone else' would do it for them.¹⁷⁸ There was no need for Tito to explain to the Zagreb workers who he meant by this.

There were two reasons why the country did not immediately disintegrate after Tito's death, as many had predicted. Firstly the threat of a Soviet invasion had not entirely subsided.¹⁷⁹ Shortly before Tito died, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had demonstrated that Moscow still did not hesitate at teaching Communist regimes a lesson by force of arms. But Afghanistan was also to be the Soviet Union's Vietnam: it revealed the Soviet forces' short-comings in a guerrilla war. The experience of Afghanistan forced the leaders in Moscow to re-consider the system in their own country. However, the outcome of the war in Afghanistan would also affect Yugoslavia because the risk of action being taken against Yugoslavia was becoming progressively more unlikely. The second reason why Yugoslavia did not immediately disintegrate was that the country was still kept afloat by capital from the West. However, this economic help strongly depended on the first factor: the degree to which the Soviet Union was seen to be a threat.

There was no immediate opposition in Yugoslavia after Tito's death. As has been previously demonstrated, the Yugoslav Communist system had allowed very little space for the development of organizations that could lead to opposition. Even if there were more organizations in the 1980s, these were mostly regional and not national although this may not have been the original intention. For instance, it was typical that at the beginning of the 1980s, the Belgrade Committee for the Freedom of Ideas and Speech was unable to attract members outside of Serbia.¹⁸⁰

Moreover, the Communist government's instruments of power were still intact: the Party, which maintained a strict discipline, the SDB secret service and the JNA federal army. These factors kept Yugoslavia going at the beginning of the 1980s, but the question now was for how long?

2. New ethnic tensions in Kosovo

The consequences of the 1974 Constitution virtually destroyed the possibility of federal government by the collective state presidium. This particularly applied after May 1980 when the presidium had to continue without Tito as an arbiter. Each republic was now looking for the maximum of room for manoeuvre.

Serbia found it difficult to accept that it had almost no power in its autonomous provinces. This was especially true of Kosovo where Albanians accounted for 78% of its population in 1981 and 90%

¹⁷⁷ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 336-337.

¹⁷⁸ Magas, *Destruction*, p. 81.

¹⁷⁹ Also Paul Shoup, 'Titoism and the national question in Yugoslavia: a reassessment', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 55-56.

¹⁸⁰ Magas, *Destruction*, p. 70.

some ten years later. The rest of its people mainly comprised of Serbs. The Albanians in Kosovo regarded the 1974 Constitution as the first step towards an ethnically-pure state.¹⁸¹

In 1981 the Serbian authorities in Kosovo with the support of the Albanian Communists had already deployed a 30,000-strong special police force against the Albanians who were initially protesting against the dire economic situation. There were approximately ten deaths according to official sources (which did not always agree with each other). The Albanians put these figures at hundreds or even more than a thousand victims. The party leaders in Kosovo were purged; teachers and students from the university in the capital Pristina were removed. Over the next few years, this confrontation would lead to increasing turmoil in Kosovo where the Albanians found it difficult to forget this repression. This was also because a total of 6400 of the demonstrations' instigators and participants were convicted on the basis of false allegations, a process that was to continue for five years. Almost 600,000 Albanians were either arrested or interrogated between 1981 and 1989 so that as many as half of the adult population was directly involved.¹⁸² Despite the Albanians' harsh treatment, the Serbs continued to leave Kosovo: 100,000 left between 1980 and 1987. Their departure was mainly for economic reasons and was also to avoid Albanian harassment that included puncturing tyres and setting property on fire.

Serbs, both in Kosovo and beyond, were angered by the Albanians' arrogance so that the heated emotions of the Kosovan Serbs were to spread to other republics. There, non-Serbs regarded the Serbian repression in Kosovo as the writing on the wall. And indeed an increasing number of Serbian politicians, intellectuals and journalists watched the advancing decentralization of the State of Yugoslavia with regret because it was made at the expense of approximately three million Serbs who lived outside of the Republic of Serbia. Rankovic, the former head of the secret police, had advocated a powerful Yugoslav unity and a tough approach to the Kosovan Albanians. His death in 1983 prompted opposition to decentralization and an estimated 100,000 Serbs attended his funeral.

3. It's the economy, stupid

Meanwhile a decline in the Yugoslav economy was undermining political relations. As shown in the previous chapter, an important part of Yugoslavia's post-war economic affluence depended on financial support from the West that wanted Yugoslavia to maintain its position as a relatively independent state vis-à-vis the Communist bloc.

Tourism to the hospitable and relatively open Yugoslavia ensured an influx of currency. The number of foreign tourists who visited Yugoslavia between 1959 and 1967 had risen from 500,000 to 3600,000 with the resulting foreign currency growing from four-and-a-half million dollars to 133 million dollars.¹⁸³ Yugoslav migrant workers in Western Europe were subsequently responsible for an additional flow of money from abroad. There were as many as 800,000 of them in around 1970, a number that accounted for more than 10% of the home work force.¹⁸⁴ In 1971, these migrant workers sent 852 million dollars back home, a sum that was equal to 59% of the balance of trade's deficit of 1438 million dollars.¹⁸⁵

However, after the 1973 international oil crisis, there were wide-spread lay-offs of Yugoslav migrant workers, some of whom returned to Yugoslavia. The liquidity problem that this caused in Yugoslavia forced companies to repeatedly send employees home for long periods of time while the cost of living continued to rise. In addition, Yugoslavia was hit by the 1973 oil crisis in other ways. Although the country produced much of its energy through hydropower, 40% of its intensive deployment of energy still depended on foreign sources that mainly involved oil. The reaction to this

¹⁸¹ Dusan T. Batakovic, 'Collective and Human Rights: Opposing Views from Former Yugoslavia', Baehr/Baudet/Werdmöller (eds.), *Tights*, pp. 67 and 69.

¹⁸² Thompson, *House*, p. 128.

¹⁸³ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 82.

¹⁸⁴ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 165; Glenny, *Balkans*, p. 589; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 329.

¹⁸⁵ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 94.

first energy crisis consisted of taking out more foreign loans. This financial support from abroad camouflaged a number of fundamental defects in the Yugoslav economy. These comprised of a lack of efficiency and the inability to adapt, a lack of technological innovation, low productivity, large-scale unemployment and major foreign debts. Unemployment had already reached 13.6% in 1978.¹⁸⁶ Although the gross national product increased by an average of 5.1% between 1970 and 1979, this growth was mainly due to foreign capital. During the same period, the country's debts were increasing by 20% each year.¹⁸⁷ The Yugoslav national debt amounted to 15 billion dollars in 1980, and a quarter of all foreign income was used to pay the interest on that debt.

The second oil crisis in 1979 threw the Yugoslav economy completely off balance. Although migrant workers sent some 1902 million dollars to their country, which was more than twice as much as ten years earlier, that sum was now equal to just 31% of the balance of trade deficit that had grown to 6086 million dollars.¹⁸⁸ The national debt would rapidly increase to 20 billion dollars and the value of the dinar would be decimated between 1979 and 1985. Food subsidies were cancelled in 1982 and a year later the prices of fuel, food and transport were to rise by a third. The import of all goods that were not necessary for home production was halted.

The republics were becoming increasingly self-sufficient within Yugoslavia through the 1974 Constitution's decentralization of political and economic power. The republics' leaders were able to take a great many independent fiscal and monetary measures. The fact that the republics' Communist leadership depended on the population's support meant that companies that were not economically viable were often bailed out even when more efficient equivalents existed elsewhere in Yugoslavia. Hence, employment opportunities were kept artificially high.

The separate republics, which were able to create and borrow money, had contributed to the country's growing debt because they did not feel responsible for national development. This debt was aggravated by Yugoslav society's low internal savings quota. This was the price that the country paid for its high level of consumption in comparison with other Eastern European countries. The republics' independent stance in terms of acquiring foreign loans had reached such an extreme in 1981 that the federal government found it necessary to ask foreign organizations to establish the extent of Yugoslavia's total foreign debt.

Yugoslavia encountered major difficulties when capital interest rates rose rapidly at the end of the 1970s. By 1982, the country was no longer able to fulfil its foreign financial obligations and the International Monetary Fund (the IMF), the World Bank and the Bank for International Settlements had to come to its aid. This restored the equilibrium in the balance of payments. However, the IMF had only agreed to help after the American Deputy Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger, had found a consortium of private banks called 'the Friends of Yugoslavia' that was prepared to lend the country two billion dollars. At that point, Yugoslavia was still able to count on special treatment from the United States.

Economic growth continued to decline despite the IMF's rescue plan. Although Yugoslavia was once one of the most rapidly-developing countries in the world, in the 1980s the average growth of its national income was just 0.5%, the lowest percentage in the whole of Europe.¹⁸⁹ The standard of living fell drastically. The average income in 1988 was just 70% of what it had been in 1978.¹⁹⁰ Unemployment rose dramatically. It stood at 8% in relatively prosperous Slovenia in 1990, yet it was double that figure in Serbia in 1991 and had reached almost 40% in Kosovo. Social security provisions

¹⁸⁶ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 311.

¹⁸⁷ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 315.

¹⁸⁸ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 94.

¹⁸⁹ V. Bojicic, 'The Disintegration of Yugoslavia: Causes and Consequences of Dynamic Inefficiency in Semi-command Economics', Dyker/Vejvoda, *Yugoslavia*, p. 34.

¹⁹⁰ D.A. Dyker, 'The Degeneration of the Yugoslav Communist Party as a Managing Elite - a Familiar East European Story?', Dyker/Vejvoda, *Yugoslavia*, p. 57. Also Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 317.

had never been good and they now suffered from the high level of inflation.¹⁹¹ The number of people living below the poverty line grew between 1978 and 1989 from 3.4 million to 5.4 million, in other words: from 17.2% to 23.6% of the population.¹⁹² There was also spiralling inflation that had reached an annual level of as much as 2500% by December 1989.

Meanwhile there was a widening economic gap between the northern and the southern republics, and the cities and countryside. Economic reform was desperately needed but there was no effective mechanism at the federal level. Not only the constitutional stipulations but also the difference between the disadvantaged and the more affluent regions made it difficult to develop a common economic policy. The more advanced economies, such as Slovenia's, supported decentralization and the free market; the disadvantaged economies of Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina wanted centralization and a redistribution of incomes. The unwillingness to continue sending income to the less developed regions of Yugoslavia would ultimately be one of the reasons for the secession of Slovenia and Croatia at the beginning of the 1990s.

Moreover, right or wrongly, all the republics with the exception of Serbia would have immediately regarded any increase of federal power as involving the danger of Greater Serbian claims. Yugoslavism had failed for this very reason at the beginning of the 1960s and the developments of the 1980s in no way prompted a change of mind.

4. Consequences of the end of the Cold War

The shaky balance that arose in Yugoslavia in the 1980s was placed under extra pressure by the end of the Cold War during the decade's final years.

Back in the spring of 1984, American President Ronald Reagan had sent out a National Security Decision Directive stating that it was vital to the West that Yugoslavia should be independent, strong and stable in both economic and military terms. This directive also described Yugoslavia as being an important obstacle to the Soviet Union's expansion and hegemony, and that it could be held up as an example to other Eastern European countries in terms of the advantages that could be gained by having a more independent stance towards Moscow and closer links with the West.¹⁹³ However, after 1985 and the advent of Mikhail Gorbachov, the West lost much of its previous interest in Yugoslavia because of the improved relations between East and West. This meant that the supply of money to Yugoslavia was decreased. The West shifted its interests – and its money – to Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, countries that seemed to be more successful at making the transition to a free market economy and a democratic system.

Yugoslavia, which had always been more open than the other Eastern European Communist countries, now began to experience the dialectics of progress. There was a certain smugness amongst much of Yugoslavia's elite and its general population concerning the regime's relative humanness, the degree to which the economy had diverged from the standard Communist solutions and the scale of relations with the West.¹⁹⁴ In addition, the opposition was disadvantaged when compared with its equivalents in other Communist countries that increasingly came to the forefront and ultimately took over power.

Despite his tolerance, Tito had made it impossible for the opposition to organize itself.¹⁹⁵ This meant that the social alternative that existed at a level between the state and its citizens was far less developed than elsewhere in Europe. The exception here was Kosovo, which had also been subjected to the most extreme repression. The relatively high degree of national acceptance of Communism

¹⁹¹ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 192 and 194.

¹⁹² S. Radosevic, 'The Collapse of Yugoslavia - Between Chance and Necessity', Dyker/Vejvoda (ed.), *Yugoslavia*, p. 72.

¹⁹³ National Security Decision Directive 133, 14/03/84, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/23-2222t.gif> consulted 08/01/2001.

¹⁹⁴ Also Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 227.

¹⁹⁵ Also Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, pp. 42, 101.

would prevent Yugoslavia from changing. Moreover, in the second half of the 1980s, Yugoslavia had the additional handicap that the necessary economic reforms would have to be carried out by the existing Communist regime. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, these changes were implemented by the governments that succeeded the Communists and where their people's initial trust enabled them to introduce unpopular economic measures.

The changing international constellation once again affected the West's readiness to support Yugoslavia both financially and economically. Up till the mid-1980s, Yugoslavia's non-aligned position meant that the West had been sparing with its criticism of the country's human rights violations.¹⁹⁶ The fear now was that too much criticism would drive Yugoslavia into Moscow's arms. Moreover, Tito had kept the ethnic groups under control and, in order to prevent Yugoslavia from seeking support from Moscow, the West did not want to be too judgmental about the methods that had been used. But Yugoslavia's human rights record was to play a considerable role after the mid-1980s, and the United States was to be particularly critical of the Serbs' harsh treatment of the Kosovan Albanians.

5. The rise of the 'ethnic entrepreneurs'

In an attempt to deflect attention away from their own problems or to justify claims in terms of other republics, the party elite in the various republics began to appeal increasingly to the ethnic awareness of their republic's majority. The more the security of Tito's welfare state disintegrated, the more ethnic nationalism seemed to be *the* solution for the many individuals who were not used to contributing independently to democratic decisions. Not only did it provide a form of safety, it could also act as a model of explanation so that adversity could be blamed on other ethnic groups or republics. The ratios between the ethnic groups in companies completely obsessed leaders at all levels in the different republics¹⁹⁷. This created a 'culture of paranoia'.¹⁹⁸

Data from sociological research indicates that the rural population had begun to define social issues in terms of ethnic antitheses even before the major economic problems of the 1970s and '80s. Whereas in the 1970s an overtly liberal pattern of values can be detected in the cities particularly amongst the intelligentsia, it is clear that traditional norms and values were still strongly represented amongst the peasants, agricultural workers and uneducated workers.¹⁹⁹ Here, there seems to have been a revival of traditional norms and values amongst sections of the Serbian population and this included a rediscovery of their own culture and history. This affected not only the rural population but also the city dwellers of rural origins. Rapid urbanization meant that a large proportion of the people living in the cities were just one generation away from their rural roots. These new city dwellers often lived in groups on the edges of the city where they maintained their rural way of living which is therefore defined as 'rurbanization'. They often encountered discrimination on the jobs market in terms of their background because their rural mentality had accompanied them to the city: 'Instead of the provinces becoming citified, the cities became countrified'.²⁰⁰ From the 1960s onwards, the rural population and the underlying city groups were involved in a reorientation towards traditional values and the history of their own ethnic group. This in turn created a breeding ground for nationalist ideologies that particular politicians and the Serbian intelligentsia only began to propagate in the 1980s.²⁰¹ Ethnic nationalism from the bottom upwards, which Tito had long kept under control, then encountered a nationalism

¹⁹⁶ Also Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 143; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 104.

¹⁹⁷ See, for instance, Carol J. Williams, 'Croatia's "Raving Nationalist" Now Seeks to Contain the Flames', *Los Angeles Times*, 30/10/90.

¹⁹⁸ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 97.

¹⁹⁹ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp.204-205; Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 84.

²⁰⁰ Job, 'Furies', p. 67. See also Dimitrios Kyriakou, 'Civil Society and Civil War in Bosnia', in: Danopoulos/Zirker (eds.), *Relations*, pp. 243-245.

²⁰¹ Also supplement Naarden 2001, p. 80.

from the top downwards: ‘nomenclature nationalism’.²⁰² Research, which was carried out at the beginning of 1983 on behalf of Radio Free Europe, appears to confirm this and shows how some Communists warned the Party’s Central Committee about nationalist trends, particularly in Serbia where the Party was doing too little to counter them. The author added his own conclusion:

‘... [I]t is certainly true that large segments of the Serbian population are now undergoing a kind of nationalist feeling. It is also true that this new wave of nationalism is mainly concentrated on and emanates from the Serbian cultural scene: theaters, books, papers, periodicals and the provincial press. It should also be noted that the Serbian Orthodox Church, with its historically deep ties with the national idea, is playing an ever greater role in the latest development. Very recently, however, sparks of Serbian nationalism have begun to inflame broader strata of the population, youth in particular. Religious services and celebrations of religious events are being held more frequently and are better attended, books on national themes or about Serbian history are best sellers, young people are demonstrating en masse their Serbian national feelings in songs and national symbols.’²⁰³

It was illustrative that, according to the same research, rumours suggested that the author Dobrica Cosic, who was the cultural leader of Serbian nationalism, was the protégé of a number of Serbian Communist leaders who tried to revive Serbian nationalism for politically- opportune reasons.²⁰⁴ The embrace between ethnic nationalism from below and nomenclature nationalism was made all the stronger because politicians, thanks to their access to government money and their company links, could just keep on dividing the pie no matter how meagre the portions. Moreover, if they wanted, they could opt to favour their own ethnic group. In other words: they became ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’.²⁰⁵

²⁰² D.A. Dyker, ‘Introduction’, Dyker/Vejvoda, *Yugoslavia*, p. 3.

²⁰³ Antic, *Danger*, p. 3.

²⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 5

²⁰⁵ The term is used in connection with Yugoslavia by Jill A. Irvine, ‘Introduction: State-Society Relations in Yugoslavia, 1945-1992’, in: Bokovoy/Irvine/Lilly (eds.), *Relations*, p. 13. There is a further description of the role played by the ethnic entrepreneurs in ethnic conflicts in Milton J. Esman/Shibley Telhami, ‘Introduction’, in: Esman/Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p. 10: ‘Perceived slights or threats from outsiders can generate powerful collective reactions, which can be mobilized and politicized by ethnic entrepreneurs who are motivated partly by genuine concern for their people and partly by a desire to build a constituency in pursuit of personal political ambitions. Ethnic entrepreneurs precipitate conflict by politicizing collective identity, that is, by dramatizing grievances or threats to common interests or by pointing out opportunities to promote and further such interests by organized action. These competitive interests may run the gamut from control of territory to eligibility for citizenship and the exercise of political rights, from official recognition of language to the status of religion, from access to education to opportunities for employment, landownership, business enterprise, and the distribution of government investments and public services.’

Chapter 4

Yugoslavia during the Serbian presidency of Slobodan Milosevic

‘If there was a single cause of the war, it was the expansionist nationalism Milosevic employed to propel himself up the greasy pole of Serbian politics.’²⁰⁶

‘I have no doubt that if Milosevic’s parents had committed suicide before his birth rather than after, I would not be writing a cable about the death of Yugoslavia.’²⁰⁷

Much to their frustration, the Serbs in Kosovo realized that the level of autonomy granted to their province by the 1974 Constitution made it virtually impossible to protect their rights. The Republic of Serbia, of which Kosovo was a part, could not ensure these rights and the federal authority was unable to intervene. The constant ‘emigration’ of Serbs from Kosovo caused great concern amongst the Serbian party leadership in Belgrade. From 1981 onwards, there was so much press coverage of the fate of the Kosovan Serbs that even such a well-informed author as Paul Shoup was surprised that the Serbian leadership had only adopted a truly nationalist course with the advent of Slobodan Milosevic.

Yugoslavia was the only state where all the Serbs were able to live together. As the disintegration of Yugoslavia took hold and the Serbian nation wished to remain united, there were just three options from their perspective: a radical about-turn from the path of disintegration through democratic reform and the guaranteed protection of minority rights; an about-turn from the path of disintegration by means of violence; or the creation of a Greater Serbia to which parts of other republics with a Serbian majority would be added.

In terms of the first option, it is never easy to make concessions that adversely affect your position of power and, as we have already seen, there was clearly no tradition of this in Communist Yugoslavia. Moreover, at that time all the leaders of the Eastern European Communist Parties realized that democratic reform, as implemented by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, not only greatly damaged the Communist Party’s power but also set off centrifugal forces. That meant that there were only two alternatives left.

1. Intellectuals play the nationalist card

Serbian intellectuals assumed their responsibility in this situation.²⁰⁸ They were no longer asking for democratic freedom but appeared to opt for a combination of the second and third alternatives, in other words: they cherished Greater Serbian aspirations and these would have to be achieved through violence. More punitive actions needed to be taken against groups that they felt formed an obstacle to Serbian ambitions. A stream of publications was brought out about the threat that the Kosovar Albanians constituted for the Serbs, whose rights were the most ancient because Kosovo, with its monasteries and the Battle of Kosovo, was the cradle of Serbian civilization. Writers did not baulk at

²⁰⁶ Major, *Autobiography*, p. 534. Italics as in the original text.

²⁰⁷ Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 251.

²⁰⁸ For a justification of the Serbian intellectuals’ lifesaver attitude, see: Mihailovic/Krestic, Memorandum, pp. 19-20. For a discussion of what he feels to be the Serbian intellectuals’ traditional pattern of expectation, i.e. the justifying of historical, territorial claims, see: Willem Vermeer, ‘Albanians and Serbs in Yugoslavia’, Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 103-105. For the veneration of intellectuals by less developed sections of the Serbian population, see: Job, *Furies*, pp. 67-68

the task at hand. Serbian literature had a long tradition that combined the heroism and the victimization of both the people and its leaders. In this nationalist genre, the individual was subsumed into his ethnic-national identity: the individual was primarily, for instance, a Serb or Croat, or a ‘Turk’ as nationalist Serbs used to refer to Muslims.

On 21 January 1986, 212 prominent Serbian intellectuals, orthodox priests and former army officers set the tone of the political debate of the following years with the publication of a petition called ‘Against the Persecution of the Serbs in Kosovo’.²⁰⁹ The signatories demanded an end to the ‘genocide’ of Serbs which referred to the Albanian harassment and the exodus of Serbs from Kosovo. Old women and nuns had allegedly been raped and children had been beaten up in the name of an ‘ethnically-pure Kosovo’. The extent of the Albanians’ crimes against the Serbs would be proved by the Djordje Martinovic Case. On 1 May 1985, Martinovic, a Serbian peasant, was found more dead than alive in his field in Kosovo with a beer bottle in his hand. Some people swore that it was the work of the Kosovan Albanians. Research would later prove that the man had most probably fallen on the bottle on purpose. Nonetheless, the Martinovic Case would obsess the Serbian press and public for months and even years. Some people argued that the man had a sexual aberration but the case was mostly presented as ‘proof’ of the perversities that the Albanians inflicted on the Serbs. The successful publicity of this case spawned the feeling amongst the Serbian press that, after years of Communist manipulation, it could now ply the people with nationalism. The petition’s signatories were outraged by this case. They argued that it was difficult to imagine a more heinous crime. They felt that the fact that the Communist regime appeared not to take the case seriously should have confused international public opinion that appeared to be more concerned about the genocide of the persecutors (the Albanians) than about the fate of the persecuted (the Serbs). The drift of the nationalist reporting was that the autonomy of Kosovo and also Vojvodina should be immediately abolished and that even more radical changes would be subsequently needed throughout Yugoslavia.

These statements about the genocide and rape of Serbs were widely circulated over the next few years and were used by the Serbian elite to launch a psychological war so as to create the idea amongst the Serbian population that their continued existence was at stake and that repressive actions against the Albanians were justified.²¹⁰ No one took any notice of the information that there was no question of Albanians committing ethnically-motivated murders and rapes against Serbs, and that the percentage of rapes in Serbia, excluding the autonomous areas of Kosovo and Vojvodina, was in fact higher than in Kosovo.²¹¹ A few months after the petition’s publication, the Serbian government stipulated that ordinary crimes would henceforth be treated as crimes against the state whenever the perpetrator came from a different ethnic background than the victim. This legislation was particularly aimed at Kosovo.²¹²

Back in 1985, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts had set up a committee that was to prepare a memorandum about both the political, social, economic and moral crisis in Yugoslavia and Serbia’s political status. The Memorandum was published on 24 and 25 September 1986 in the Belgrade daily newspaper *Vecernje Novosti*. Up till that point it had been an unofficial and incomplete document that had only been distributed within limited circles.²¹³ The manifesto combined what in some ways was a correct analysis of the problems with a solution that would only increase them. The Memorandum blamed the economic stagnation on the economic policy’s subordination to the disintegrating regional power monopolies of the republican and provincial leaders instead of blaming it either on the central

²⁰⁹ Magas, *Destruction*, pp. 49-52.

²¹⁰ Also Ugresic, *Cultura*, pp. 101-102.

²¹¹ Magas, *Destruction*, pp. 61-62.

²¹² Magas, *Destruction*, pp. 55 and 62.

²¹³ On 1 February 1989, the memorandum was published in *Nase teme*, no. 33, pp. 182-263; in June 1989, it appeared as a special publication of the Belgrade magazine *Duga* in Belgrade. Finally it was formally published on 23 April 1993. For an official English-language version, see: Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*.

plan or on market forces or on workers' self-rule.²¹⁴ The Memorandum also argued that the trend towards a confederation no longer suited the present circumstances. This trend was the consequence of the much-criticized 1974 Constitution that had created a constant political impasse due to the requirement of a consensus decision-making process. This same demand made it impossible to alter the constitution.

The Memorandum emphasized that, following the Comintern, Tito and Kardelj had attached too much value to the national issue of non-Serbs.²¹⁵ It argued that it was no coincidence that these two pivotal figures were of Croatian and Slovenian origins. After the Second World War, they had constantly treated Serbia and the Serbs in an adverse way in accordance with the motto that a weak Serbia meant a strong Yugoslavia. Serbia was the victim of an anti-Serbian coalition of the other republics that even allowed a 'physical, political, legal and cultural genocide'²¹⁶ to be committed against the Serbs by the Albanians whose goal was an 'ethnically-pure' Kosovo.²¹⁷ The Serbs had never been so threatened in Croatia, apart from during Pavelic's Fascist state.²¹⁸ Moreover, the Serbs' cultural heritage was kicked around more than that of any other ethnic group in Yugoslavia.²¹⁹

The Memorandum argued for the following measures: Yugoslavia's recentralization; political transparency and participation at all levels of the decision-making process; an open, democratic decision-making process and freedom of speech.²²⁰ The principles that the Memorandum presented sounded lofty: 'Any form of political repression or discrimination on ethnic grounds in modern, civilized society is unacceptable.'²²¹ However, these principles mainly involved the Serbs as victims. According to the Memorandum's authors, they were disadvantaged when compared with Yugoslavia's other ethnic groups because less money was being invested in Serbia, the Serbs did not have their own state ('it is impossible to imagine a worse defeat in peace time')²²² and they were being seriously oppressed outside of Serbia.²²³ By contrast, Slovenia and Croatia had benefited from Tito's economic policy.

Therefore, the Memorandum stated that Serbia would be justified in no longer contributing to the federal funds for underdeveloped areas of Yugoslavia, and it condemned the Serbian leaders who had agreed to these payments by not even exercising their right to veto: 'the Serbian leaders were not ready for the historical task that was facing them as a consequence of the extremely adverse internal relations within the state of Yugoslavia'. The time to say 'no' to Serbia's humiliation had come.²²⁴

The Memorandum argued that Kosovo and Vojvodina had to be integrated once again into the Republic of Serbia. Here too, the Serbian leaders had been overly defensive and timid.²²⁵ The issue of the Serbs in Croatia also had to be solved because otherwise 'the consequences will be disastrous not only for Croatia but for the whole of Yugoslavia.'²²⁶

The Memorandum remained vague about the political future apart from the two provinces' reintegration into the Republic of Serbia. Its point of departure was that: 'the establishing of the complete national and cultural integrity of the Serbian people is their historical and democratic right, no matter which republic or province they may live in.'²²⁷ It appeared that the Memorandum did not

²¹⁴ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, pp. 102-103.

²¹⁵ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, pp. 106-107.

²¹⁶ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 128.

²¹⁷ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, pp. 129 and 130.

²¹⁸ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 133.

²¹⁹ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, pp. 134-135.

²²⁰ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, pp. 106-110, 117.

²²¹ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 117.

²²² Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 127.

²²³ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, pp. 118-119.

²²⁴ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 125.

²²⁵ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 128.

²²⁶ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 133.

²²⁷ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 138.

exclude a federal solution. But Serbia would clearly have to emphasize its national interests in the preparations for a revision to the 1974 Constitution. It should not hold back this time. The Republic of Yugoslavia would be endangered if Serbia and the Serbs did not achieve their goal of a status that was equal to that of the other republics and ethnic groups.²²⁸ Hence, this document meant that the Belgrade intelligentsia had rejected a federal Yugoslavia as being the best solution for the Serbs; the other republics would just have to guess at what this would mean for them. In no uncertain terms, the manifesto confronted the official ideology of Yugoslavia as being in all respects superior to the rest of the world with its wretched reality.²²⁹

The Serbian Communist Party reacted by trying to push the nationalist genie back into the bottle. It let it be known that there was no need for forces other than itself to indicate the social situation and, moreover, to teach its leaders a lesson. Hence, the Memorandum was endangering the Party's ideological hegemony while the leaders of the other republics could accuse the Serbian leaders of 'not having their own house in order' by having failed to thwart such expressions of nationalism. Probably the other republics would have reacted to the Memorandum by opposing the call for constitutional reform that threatened their autonomy. For that reason, the Serbian Communist Party immediately condemned the Memorandum but it was clearly an omen that the manifesto was extremely popular amongst other Serbs.

The Memorandum and similar writings meant that the Serbian intelligentsia had assumed a heavy responsibility. 'The original call to upgrade Serbian power within the Yugoslav federation, which would irrevocably lead to war, came not from the leaders, not from the people but from the thinkers', writes Frank Westerman.²³⁰ 'As the vanguard and the conscience of the people, illustrious writers and scholars had cried *'en garde!'*²³¹ Even if, as we have already seen, the intelligentsia was in fact the interpreter of feelings that existed amongst wider levels of the population rather than their inventor, the Memorandum succeeded in creating a platform and a legitimization of Serbian nationalist ideas.

2. The rise of Slobodan Milosevic

In fact, the Memorandum constituted the ideological starting point for Slobodan Milosevic, who shortly before its publication had become the chairman of the Central Committee of the Serbian Communist Party. Up till then, Milosevic had been an intelligent if colourless party bureaucrat who did not seem destined for a major political future. He was born on 29 August 1941 in Pozarevac, a Serbian provincial city some 100 kilometres to the south-east of Belgrade. His mother Stanislava was a teacher and a dedicated member of the Communist Party. His father Svetozar, an Orthodox priest from Montenegro, taught Russian and Serbo-Croat literature and language at the local secondary school. Slobodan's parents divorced in 1950 after which he and his elder brother were brought up by their mother. What the parents had in common was depression. His father finally committed suicide when Milosevic was 21; his mother followed suit some 12 years later. Slobodan was an exemplary pupil at school but did not become involved in, for instance, sports. Milosevic's youth must have been an unhappy one and many have looked there for the roots of his subsequent chilly political conduct and

²²⁸ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 140.

²²⁹ See, in particular: Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 116.

²³⁰ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 118.

²³¹ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 129. Also Karahasan, Sarajevo, p. 76: '... the leaders of the Serbian nationalist parties who have destroyed Yugoslavia and plunged the country into war, are almost without exception writers and professors of literature.' Compare 'Intellektuelle Väter der serbischen Expansion', FAZ, 13/09/92; Blagojevic/Demirovic, *Bloedverwanten*, pp. 11, 23 and 65; Slapsak, *Joegoslavië*, pp. 69 and 73.

his lack of empathy.²³² His fellow students nicknamed him Little Lenin because of his emotionless behaviour.²³³

Milosevic seems never to have had friends apart from his self-assured wife Mirjana (Mira) Markovic, with whom the introverted Slobodan began a close friendship during the fourth year of the Pozarevac secondary school.²³⁴ Their relationship was both inward looking and deeply involved. Both were members of the Communist Party. Mirjana, who was the child of Communist Party aristocracy and had a reputation as an ideological quibbler, constantly pushed her Slobodan up the social ladder and into the Party.

Mirjana Markovic was helped in designing her husband's career by Ivan Stambolic, who was five years older and had met Slobodan Milosevic as a student. Ivan Stambolic, who was the nephew of one of Yugoslavia's most important Communists, Petar Stambolic, acted as Milosevic's older brother and political mentor. He continued to fulfil this role after Slobodan had graduated in law from the University of Belgrade in 1964. Each time Stambolic left a particular post, he would bequeath the vacancy to Milosevic. Hence, after several lowly jobs at Belgrade City Council, Milosevic worked at the *Tehnogas* power company between 1970 and 1978, first as an assistant director and later as the director. When Stambolic became the chairman of the Belgrade Chamber of Commerce in 1978, he ensured that Milosevic become the director of *Udružena Beogradska Banka*. Stambolic's pupil then learned English and frequently visited the United States with which he developed a love-hate relationship.²³⁵ At that time Milosevic was known as an economic liberal.²³⁶ In 1982, Stambolic arranged for Milosevic to be included in the Serbian Communist Party presidium.

When Stambolic became the head of the Communist Party in Serbia in 1984, Milosevic followed him as the chief of the Communist Party in Belgrade. In this capacity, Milosevic distinguished himself with his fierce attacks on dissident intellectuals along with his opposition to any form of liberalization and his tough actions against expressions of Serbian nationalism. Two years later, in 1986, Milosevic again followed Stambolic and now became the chairman of the Serbian Communist Party after Stambolic had recommended him as a man who 'can organize and take action but can't make long speeches'.²³⁷ Stambolic had now become President of Serbia.

In June 1987, Milosevic still condemned the Serbian Academy's Memorandum as being 'the purest kind of nationalism. It means the liquidation of the Socialist system, in other words: our country's complete collapse.'²³⁸ However, there was a noticeable difference between the hard criticism of the Memorandum that Milosevic expressed behind closed doors, and the wishy-washy way in which he rejected it in public.²³⁹ Shortly afterwards, the Memorandum was to become the ideological basis, if not the grand design of Milosevic's politics.

Milosevic's conversion to Serbian nationalism: 'no one may beat this people'

Milosevic's political about-turn had already begun in the spring of 1987 during a visit to Kosovo Polje, where the illustrious Battle of Kosovo had taken place. He had been sent there by Stambolic who had warned him of the extreme nationalism that he would confront there. Indeed, Stambolic was aware of a growing Serbian nationalism, particularly in relation to Kosovo. However, he continued to argue for a

²³² See, for instance: Westerman, *Brug*, p. 105; Yael Vinckx, 'Emotieloze "Kleine Lenin"', *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/10/00; Zimmermann, 'Ambassador', p. 5; idem, *Origins*, p. 24.

²³³ Yael Vinckx, 'Emotieloze "Kleine Lenin"', *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/10/00. According to Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 56 Milosevic acquired this nickname when he was the party chief of Belgrade.

²³⁴ For information about Mirjana Markovic see, for instance: Bart Rijs, 'De vrouw achter president Milosevic', *HP/De Tijd*, 30/04/93, pp. 14-15.

²³⁵ See, for instance: the interview by Carl Bildt, 13/12/00; Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 50.

²³⁶ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 106; Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 50.

²³⁷ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, pp. 72-73.

²³⁸ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 108.

²³⁹ Lenard J. Cohen, 'Slobodan Milosevic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, pp. 237-238.

‘constantly militant position towards the nationalist poisoning of youth’.²⁴⁰ During a visit to Kosovo Polje in April 1986, he himself had taken a powerful stand against the Serbian ‘paranoia’ and ‘disinformation’ vis-à-vis the Albanians.²⁴¹ Hence, Milosevic seemed to be following the line that his master had set out for him.

When Milosevic arrived by train at Kosovo Polje on 24 April 1987, there was a demonstration of 15,000 Serbs who were protesting against the behaviour of the ethnic Albanians. While Milosevic consulted the Communist leaders in the local house of culture, the Serbs threatened to storm the building. The police, who mainly consisted of Albanians, dealt with the crowd harshly. When Milosevic went outside to try to calm the crowd, a number of demonstrators complained to him about the actions of the police. Then Milosevic uttered the sentence of which he was soon to understand the enchantment: ‘*Ovaj narod niko ne sme da bije* – No one may beat this people.’ He then invited a delegation of demonstrators for discussions at the house of culture that were to last for 12 hours and produced a list of complaints about the Serbs’ position in Kosovo.

It seemed to be a spontaneous event but appearances can be deceptive. Few people realized that Milosevic had already been in Kosovo Polje four days earlier when there was a much smaller demonstration of 2000 Serbs. Here, Milosevic was told that the Serbs were no longer interested in the Communist leaders’ monologues which they were all too familiar with. Milosevic allowed himself to be persuaded to return several days later for talks. The major demonstration for 24 April was orchestrated in the days between the two visits.²⁴² This initial experience of the organization of a demonstration to support his politics was much to Milosevic’s liking. His political comrades at the state television station ensured that, through constant repetition, his words were soon known throughout Serbia.²⁴³ Other Serbian media also reacted enthusiastically.

With this one small sentence, Milosevic had broken the taboo that had existed since 1945 against any public expression of nationalism and ethnic antitheses. Ethnic nationalism had replaced the ideology of brotherhood and unity. Milosevic ‘went to Kosovo Polje as a Communist and came back as a Serb’ was how his biographer Slavoljub Djukic described these events which he witnessed in person.²⁴⁴ At the beginning of the Communist government shortly after the Second World War, it was believed that nationalism would automatically disappear, yet one of its top men was to embrace nationalism in its most extreme form at what was to be the end of both Yugoslavia and its government.

Yet the transition from Communism to nationalism was not such a big one for Milosevic who was a power-hungry tactician with no ideals apart from his own interests. Like so many others, he had not embraced Communism primarily as an ideology but as a means of obtaining and retaining power. It was true of both Milosevic and his followers within the Communist Party that: ‘the opportunism that made them Communists in the Tito era led them to embrace ethnic nationalism thereafter.’²⁴⁵ This about-turn was not only an act of opportunism but also of ‘political cannibalism’ where the opponent, Serbian nationalism, was devoured, but its spirit was later to take possession of the eater.²⁴⁶

Moreover, since the 1974 Constitution, all the leaders of the Yugoslav republics had become nationalist to some degree even if initially it was primarily in an economic sense. Once it had become obvious that Communism had lost both its vitality and its capacity to solve the problems of Yugoslavia’s political organization and economy, those searching for an answer for the present would have to look either to the future or to the past. The past was the only way open to the Communists

²⁴⁰ Quoted in Lenard J. Cohen, ‘Slobodan Milosevic’, in: Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 235. For his powerful position against nationalism, see also: Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 339.

²⁴¹ Lenard J. Cohen, ‘Slobodan Milosevic’, in: Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 236; idem, *Serpent*, p. 57.

²⁴² For this version of events, see: Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 39; Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 62; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 23-26 and pp. 33-34.

²⁴³ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 39.

²⁴⁴ Djukic, quoted in Westerman, *Brug*, p. 110.

²⁴⁵ Newland, *Conflict*, p. 95.

²⁴⁶ Djilas, *Profile*, p. 87.

who refused to implement the reforms that the West would have liked to have seen. Up till then, Communism's legitimacy was based on the past of the Second World War. If one broke with this, it would be necessary to look further back in time. Those who were familiar with Yugoslavia's history knew that the nationalism of the previous two centuries was the only ideological force apart from Communism that had succeeded in mobilizing the masses.

As a top Serbian politician, Milosevic set the tone with his blatant transition to nationalism. The Communist system with its power over the media and the police had created a situation where just one man could make such a difference. The system, which was so strongly based on collectivism, actually provided a great deal of space for the individual's will and objectives. Tito knew it and Milosevic had begun to understand it. Milosevic, the man who was never known to have friends or advisors, who never discussed strategy or tactics (except with his own wife²⁴⁷), who had always been a loner right since his youth and was a poor speaker, had suddenly discovered the electrifying effect of the contact between him, the leader, and the Serbian people.²⁴⁸

3. The end of the 1980s: precursors of a new ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia

In essence, ethnic conflict is based on the following four conditions:

- a serious economic crisis combined with mutual changes for the various ethnic groups in the access to the sources of wealth;
- a disintegration of the state combined with an altered and unequal access to power;
- a collapse of the common culture;
- the exploitation of mutual fear.²⁴⁹

The meaning of the words 'no one may beat this people' partly implied that Milosevic had placed the Serbs in Yugoslavia above the law. Hence, Milosevic had added the third ingredient for ethnic conflict, a collapse of the common culture that had been based on a fragile balance of ethnic pluralism. The first two conditions had already been fulfilled in Yugoslavia.

All that was left was the fourth condition: the conscious and large-scale exploitation of mutual ethnic tensions. As demonstrated, the nationalists included in their number both the authors of the Memorandum and a section of the intelligentsia along with those living in the countryside and city migrants. Milosevic had to travel from Belgrade to Kosovo Polje to discover the extent of the nationalist breeding ground. Now he had to make sure that the nationalist vision of both the past and the present would be able to press ahead against other possible views.

The fact that there were people who could be used, who were not allies or partners but instruments that could be thrown away at will, appealed to Milosevic's cynicism because he was a man without qualities, vision and policy apart from a hunger for power. He was in fact 'the amoeba in power'.²⁵⁰ A section of the people that was not schooled in the subtleties of democracy but was brought up with a Communism that was constantly searching for front positions found it easy to make the transition to nationalism. One collectivist ideology was simply exchanged for another.

Milosevic was happy to exploit the fact that Yugoslav Communism had always had enemies not only abroad but also at home. His political language was drenched with such terms as 'counter-revolutionary', 'Stalinists', 'Cominform supporters', '*koelaks*', 'bourgeois liberals', 'Greater Serbian hegemonists', 'anarcho-liberalists', 'anti-Communist reactionaries' and 'techno-managers'. As late as

²⁴⁷ Also Westerman, *Brug*, p. 130.

²⁴⁸ Also Ramet, *Milosevic*, p. 95.

²⁴⁹ Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, 'Ethnic Conflicts and Human Rights: Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary Perspectives', Baehr/Baudet/Werdmöller (eds.), *Rights*, pp. 15 and 17; Joost Herman, 'Intergovernmental Organisations and Ethnic Conflicts', *ibidem*, pp. 27-29.

²⁵⁰ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 117. See also: Djukic quoted in Gutman, *Witness*, p. 18; Olaf Tempelman, 'Milosevic' succes wordt nu zijn ondergang', *De Volkskrant* 27/09/00; Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 24-25.

1984, party chairman Stipe Suvar had drawn up a white list of enemies that was so long that any self-respecting intellectual felt insulted if he was left out.²⁵¹ This old image of enemies was easy to replace with the new one.²⁵² The new enemy was called Albanian, Croat or Muslim and could be the man or the woman next door. Milosevic now set his sights on again subjecting the autonomous republics of Kosovo and Vojvodina to direct Serbian government. But the constitution stipulated that this required the other republics' unanimous agreement.

But before Milosevic could press ahead on a national level, he first had to strengthen his power position within his own party. At that point there were two groups within the Serbian Communist Party: a reform movement under Stambolic's leadership that was prepared to resign if elections changed the regime, and the group led by Milosevic that had no qualms about diverting attention away from the political debate about reform by exaggerating anti-Serbian ethnic nationalist threats and by provoking ethnic conflict. In this way, Milosevic's group hoped to counter the loss of power that would be the consequence of free elections.

Hence, as an ethnic nationalist, Milosevic was now opposing his master Stambolic who had allowed space for reformers. Stambolic tried in vain to control his sorcerer's apprentice. He realized that his pupil, who had followed him for so many years, now wanted to stab him the back.²⁵³ Nonetheless he seemed to be virtually paralysed by these events and incapable of defending himself against the crude methods that Milosevic used to commit political patricide. In the past, Stambolic had consistently refused to listen to warnings about Milosevic's ambitious nature. He was not unaware of Milosevic's unpleasant side and shortcomings, but he felt that his positive qualities were the decisive factor.²⁵⁴ It was from a paternalist magnanimity that he provided Milosevic with the space to develop.²⁵⁵ He had quarrelled with him in the past about Milosevic's appointment of people whom he found disagreeable, but for a long time he had believed that these decisions were the result of political inexperience.²⁵⁶ It was already too late when Stambolic finally realized that Milosevic was after his position. For a quarter of a century, Stambolic had praised Milosevic to everyone who would listen. To admit that Milosevic was the wrong man would be at the cost of Stambolic's own credibility. Having promoted Milosevic for many years, he now realized that he had become the victim of his own patronage.²⁵⁷ During the eighth session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia in September 1987, Milosevic and his supporters with their nationalist program defeated Stambolic's more liberal faction which they blamed for not fighting hard enough for Serbia's interests within the Yugoslav federation. Some months later, in December 1987, Milosevic replaced Stambolic as the chairman of the presidium of the Serbian Communist Party.

The leaders of the other republics immediately drew their own conclusions about this political patricide. 'It was an obvious sign to us that this could happen to anyone who worked with Milosevic in the future ...', remarked Milan Kucan, who led the Slovenian Communist Party from 1986 and often encountered Milosevic in that capacity.²⁵⁸ For that matter, working with Milosevic was already an unappealing prospect for leaders from other areas.

With Stambolic out of the running, Milosevic undertook the next phase of his program. He attempted to oust the current Communist leadership in several areas by means of an 'anti-bureaucratic revolution'. To achieve this, he set up a number of mass organizations such as the Committee for the Protection of the Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo. Large-scale 'solidarity gatherings' and 'truth

²⁵¹ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 77.

²⁵² Also Paul Shoup, 'Titoism and the national question in Yugoslavia: A reassessment', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 61.

²⁵³ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 45.

²⁵⁴ Stambolic, *Put*, p. 101, 135 and 139.

²⁵⁵ Stambolic, *Put*, p. 140 and 159.

²⁵⁶ Stambolic, *Put*, p. 158 and 160.

²⁵⁷ Stambolic, *Put*, p. 160-162.

²⁵⁸ Stephen Engelberg, 'Carving Out a Greater Serbia', *The New York Times*, 01/09/91.

meetings' of Serbs attempted to pressurize the party executives of Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro into resigning. The aim of this was to subordinate these areas to Serbian interests and to shore up Milosevic's long-term power position. These gatherings mobilized hundreds of thousands of Serbs who, through Milosevic's organization of politics by means of the street, felt that finally here was a Communist who, in their eyes, did not represent the arrogant, urban elite that had refused to listen to them for so many years. For them, his populist nationalism was a new and welcome form of political participation at a time full of economic uncertainties. In 1988, an estimated four million demonstrators took to the streets in a country where not so long ago expressions of protest resulted in the certain intervention of the feared secret police.²⁵⁹

At the same time, Milosevic responded to the Memorandum's call for recentralization through his actions against the regional bureaucracies. On 6 October 1988, Milosevic succeeded in getting 100,000 people out onto the streets of Novi Sad, the capital of Vojvodina, so that the province's party leadership was forced to resign. He subsequently installed his own people. In January 1989, he achieved the same result through a mass meeting in Titograd which was the current name of the Montenegrin capital of Podgorica. This was a signal to the other republics that Milosevic was not content simply with the restoration of Serbia's power over its autonomous republics and that his desire would continue to expand.²⁶⁰

The federal leadership wanted Milosevic to withdraw his actions but did not have the power to force him. The Yugoslav People's Army, the JNA, also did not intervene. An action in March 1989 resulted in an official death toll of 22 Albanians and two police; this followed months of Serbian pressure to place the Kosovan government under Milosevic's control and was supported by both the police and the army. Threatened with the deployment of military government, the Kosovan Parliament no longer resisted the constitutional changes that would abolish the province's autonomy. Shortly afterwards, on 28 March 1989, the Serbian parliament accepted a new Serbian constitution that largely reversed the high level of autonomy that had been granted to both Vojvodina and Kosovo in 1974. The two areas did retain a separate seat in the collective state presidium. However, from then on it was clear that they could only voice the same opinions as the representative of Serbia.

This take-over meant that the Serbian party leader Slobodan Milosevic now had control over four of the eight votes in the federal presidium: those of Serbia, Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro. Hence, the fragile balance that Tito had tried to maintain by granting equal status to the six republics and two provinces had been destroyed forever. Votes of four against four were now inevitable. Moreover, the four other republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia were also threatened by mass demonstrations of Serbs within their own territory that were not only protests against bureaucracy but were also displays of Serbian nationalism.

Resistance against Serbian nationalism in Slovenia

Milosevic also wanted to organize a 'truth meeting' where Serbs would denounce what had happened to their brothers in Kosovo.

Slovenia had occupied a special place in Yugoslavia for quite some time. Only a very small number of Serbs lived there. It was also the most economically successful area in Eastern Europe but it did not escape the general Yugoslav malaise of the 1980s. In 1978, the average purchasing power of wages in Slovenia still amounted to 80% of those in Austria; ten years later, in 1988, this had fallen to just 45%.²⁶¹ Consequently, Slovenia became progressively less willing to let itself be dragged along by Yugoslavia. Opinion polls at the beginning of the 1970s revealed that nationalism was a stronger force in Slovenia than in the other republics. Polls in the 1980s also showed that there was a more developed

²⁵⁹ Cohen, *Bonds*, pp. 45-46.

²⁶⁰ Also Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 155.

²⁶¹ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 130.

belief in democracy amongst Slovenes than elsewhere in Yugoslavia.²⁶² Nonetheless, after many years, Slovenia still retained a dogmatic party leadership. It was only in April 1986 that the Communist Party was taken over by the liberal wing under the command of Milan Kucan so that the conservatives were finally pushed into the background. This take-over was influenced by the increasing irritation concerning the Serbian actions in Kosovo, although elements of snobbery and gloating over the Serbs certainly played a role in the Slovenian attitude to Kosovo.²⁶³ There are even indications that Slovenian nationalists were using the Kosovo issue for their own ends.²⁶⁴

A liberal climate developed under the leadership of party chairman Milan Kucan. This resulted in an increasing number of political taboos being broken by the independent station Radio Student and the Communist youth organization's publication *Mladina*. In February 1987, the Slovenian magazine *Nova revija* published a special issue that was devoted to the 'Slovenian national program' and included complaints about the neglect of the Slovenian language and demands for still more autonomy. The existence of Yugoslavia was not discussed as such. However, more space had to be created for the development of democratic relations and the extending of Slovenia's 'European' sides. This program was regarded as being the Slovenian answer to the Serbian Memorandum. Significantly, whereas at that point the Serbian leadership still distanced itself from the Memorandum, the same was not true of Kucan's relation with the nationalist program in Slovenia.²⁶⁵ Indeed, it was a sign that a nationalist trend was accepted earlier amongst the Slovenian elite than in Serbia. There was an increasing number of articles in *Mladina* that found fault with the JNA although the constitution forbade any criticism of the army.²⁶⁶ There was also a growing number of rumours that the JNA wanted to resort to violence in order to counter the liberal climate in Slovenia.²⁶⁷

At the beginning of 1988, *Mladina* published an article that was based on a number of secret documents that included the names of prominent Slovenians who were to be arrested in the event of a state of emergency. Consequently, the federal army detained the editor-in-chief, two journalists and the person who had provided the documents. The Slovenian public was outraged, particularly when the military court decided that, although the sessions took place in Slovenia, they would be held in Serbo-Croat. The JNA's attempt to force Slovenia back into the old framework had the effect of a boomerang. This case greatly influenced the continuing development of nationalist awareness in Slovenia. A demonstration of 40,000 people took place in Ljubljana on 22 June 1988; it was the biggest in Slovenia since World War Two. The hastily-established Committee for the Protection of Human Rights (*Odbor*) soon collected a petition of 100,000 signatures on behalf of the four detainees. The Slovenes then opted *en masse* for the path of democracy. Suddenly, new political parties were set up in the wake of *Odbor* that were soon demanding a Western-style constitution. According to an opinion poll in July 1988, 63% of the Slovenian population supported a form of independence.²⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the four accused were condemned to relatively mild prison sentences that varied between five months and four years. From then on, the JNA was jeeringly referred to in Slovenia as the 'occupying army'.

The role of the JNA in Slovenia

The JNA deeply regretted Yugoslavia's disintegration, a situation that was the most advanced in Slovenia. It was not easy for the federal army to define its position in this increasing political chaos.

²⁶² Paul Shoup, 'Titoism and the national question in Yugoslavia: a reassessment', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 63-64.

²⁶³ Paul Shoup, 'Titoism and the national question in Yugoslavia: a reassessment', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 62 and 64-65.

²⁶⁴ Dimtrij Rupel, who became the Minister of Foreign Affairs in April 1990, admitted at a conference in Berlin in March 1992 that the Slovenian nationalists had indeed done this, Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 440, n. 32.

²⁶⁵ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 112.

²⁶⁶ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 117.

²⁶⁷ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, pp. 118-123.

²⁶⁸ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, pp. 128-129.

Moreover, through its structure, the JNA was automatically involved in the looming ethnic conflict and would also play an active part in it.

The JNA had come out of Tito's Partisan army during World War Two and was extremely prestigious for many years. In an ideological sense, it was shaped by Tito's Communism and was based on 'brotherhood and unity'. The armed forces were the guardians not only of Yugoslavia's unity but also of its Socialist social order and were therefore a conservative power in Yugoslavia. In addition, the histories of the JNA and the Communist Parties were closely interwoven. Until January 1996, 96% of all officers were members of the League of Communists.²⁶⁹ Along with the six republics and two autonomous provinces, the JNA had an official seat in the Central Committee of the League of Yugoslav Communists. For that reason, the armed forces were known as being Yugoslavia's ninth Communist Party.

The JNA was one of Europe's larger armies. In around 1990, it consisted of 150,000 men and 510,000 reservists. Moreover, a system of territorial defence had been introduced after the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact countries that meant that virtually every Yugoslav could be called up. Apart from the fact that the territorial defence system clearly reflected the Partisan tradition, Kardelj also regarded it as being a part of the prominent ideology of self-rule. The territorial defence system consisted of reservists who had been trained by the JNA. This meant that one-and-a-half million people could be mobilized in the event of war. They were under the command of both the JNA and the local authorities: the republics, districts and city councils. It was, to quote General Veljko Kadijevic who later became Minister of Defence: 'an excellent basis for paralysing the command structure or for something even worse'.²⁷⁰ The JNA had already neutralized the territorial defence system in Kosovo in the 1980s so as to counter the sabotaging of this organization, which could appeal to the local authorities' commands.

The JNA's position was further complicated by the fact that it was the keeper of social and constitutional order yet it remained under the supreme command of the state presidium that was ruled by the republics and autonomous areas. The weak, federal leadership created the impression amongst military leaders that the JNA was in fact an army without a state.²⁷¹ In terms of finance, the JNA depended on the federal agencies whereas the funding of the territorial defence system was a matter for the republics, districts, city councils and state companies. Yugoslavia's further disintegration threatened the JNA with financial cutbacks while the territorial defence system, which could always count on a higher level of sympathy at a local level, remained relatively unscathed.

The army had already suffered cutbacks in the 1980s as a result of the poor economic situation so that its share of the national income was officially reduced from 6.1% to 3.9%. However, the real reduction was even more drastic.²⁷² So as to maintain the republics' support at budget discussions, the JNA increasingly had to allow officers to serve in their own republics although it had always been the JNA's policy that officers should serve outside of their republics as much as possible.

The ethnic imbalance in the officer class also played a role in some republics' unco-operative attitude towards the financing of the JNA. At the end of the 1980s, 60% of all officers were Serbian although the Serbs only accounted for 36% of the population. Some of the other ethnic groups were represented as followed: Montenegrins 6.2% of all officers (2.6% of the population); Macedonians 6.3% (6.0%), Croats 12.6% (19.8%); Slovenes 2.8% (7.8%); Muslims 2.4% (8.9%) and Albanians 0.6% (7.7%).²⁷³ Just as in the civil service, a code of proportional ethnic representation was applied to the top military posts. Here too, the Serbs were dissatisfied with the ethnic relations within the army because relatively few Serbian officers were able to occupy the highest posts.

²⁶⁹ Sanz, *Army*.

²⁷⁰ Kadijevic, *Vien*, p. 75.

²⁷¹ Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 3, 78.

²⁷² Kadijevic, *Vien*, p. 76. Also Meier, *Jugoslavien*, p. 131.

²⁷³ Gow, 'Deconstruction', p. 302; Djilas, 'Profile', p. 91. Comparable figures in Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 305; Zametica, *Conflict*, p. 41. See also: Gow, *Legitimacy*, pp. 54-55 and 142.

The JNA became even more involved with the ethnic conflict when Admiral Branko Mamula became Minister of Defence in 1982. This job was always given to one of the JNA's top men and was combined with the post of Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command at the state presidium. Mamula took a number of measures that made the federal armed forces look more like a Serbian army. For instance, he abandoned the system of proportionally dividing the top military jobs along ethnic lines. In addition, he tried to subordinate the territorial defence system to the JNA. Slovenia particularly criticized these measures.

Slovenia was also critical of the fact that, since 1982, the JNA increasingly regarded the West as its greatest enemy because of the weakness that it had detected in the Warsaw Pact. This development intensified after 1985 when there was détente between East and West. At that point, NATO was seeking contact with the Warsaw Pact countries. Yugoslavia's chosen isolation vis-à-vis the two military blocs now began to be regarded in JNA circles as an imposed isolation with an implied threat that was mainly due to the more powerful West.²⁷⁴

This Slovenian criticism pushed the federal army leadership towards Milosevic. At first, the relationship between the JNA and the Serbian president seemed to be an uncomfortable one. Milosevic had little affinity with the armed forces and conversely the JNA officers felt that Milosevic had a poor understanding of military affairs.²⁷⁵ During the first years of his government, Milosevic was uncertain as to whether the Yugoslav army would attempt a coup d'état, if necessary by pushing the Serbian leadership aside. For that reason, he created an alternative power resource through the police that developed into a kind of Praetorian Guard of 60,000 men who were both well equipped and well paid. However, the JNA officers appreciated Milosevic's military turn of phrase that he used when speaking in measured tones of mobilization, combat and war.²⁷⁶ Perhaps the most important element at that moment was the fact that the Milosevic-controlled media protected the JNA against the attacks of the Slovenian and Croatian media. Moreover, the officers approved of Milosevic because he resisted the abolition of the Communist organizations for far longer than the other Communist leaders in Eastern Europe.

However, the Slovenian Communists were noticeably less pleased with Milosevic's resistance to the Communist organizations' abolition. This led to clashes, particularly during the February 1989 session of the Central Committee of the League of Yugoslav Communists. Here, the Slovenian party leader Milan Kucan made it clear that Slovenia would only accept a democratic, pluralist, Europe-oriented Yugoslavia. Without democracy Yugoslavia would simply cease to exist.²⁷⁷ This position led to a sharp exchange with Milosevic, who wanted to have nothing to do with pluralism. Milosevic's reactions strengthened the impression in Slovenia that Yugoslavia was heading in exactly the wrong direction so far as the Slovenes were concerned and that this was partly due to the Serbian action in Kosovo.²⁷⁸

Mounting tensions between Slovenia and Serbia

On 27 February 1989, when army and police actions had aimed at deposing the government leadership in Kosovo, an event occurred in Ljubljana that would inflame Slovenian-Serbian relations. The Slovenian Communist Party leadership demonstratively attended a meeting for the protection of human rights in Kosovo that also supported the Albanian miners who had locked themselves in the Trepca mines as a protest against Serbia's constant pressure. Here, Kucan commented, 'the situation in Kosovo shows that people are no longer living together and are increasingly in conflict. Politics must be kept off the streets and away from anywhere where lives are at stake.'

²⁷⁴ Also Meier, *Jugoslawien*, pp. 129-130; Woodward, *Tragedy*, pp. 150-151.

²⁷⁵ Interview Carl Bildt, 13/12/00.

²⁷⁶ Djilas, 'Profile', pp. 81 and 91.

²⁷⁷ Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 326.

²⁷⁸ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 31.

The Slovenian party chairman argued that Yugoslavia was being subjected to an insidious coup. It was not hard to guess who Kucan was referring to.²⁷⁹ Shortly beforehand, Kucan had sent Slovenian television teams to Kosovo because he felt that the Serbian reporting there was no longer reliable. Serbian television understood the historical importance of the meeting in Ljubljana and aired it in its entirety. These images resulted in outrage in Serbia. Hundreds of thousands headed to the federal parliament building in protest and to demand that action should be taken against the Albanian leaders of Kosovo.

In September 1989, the Slovenian parliament adopted a constitution that emphasized Slovenian sovereignty and determined that only the representatives of the Slovenian people could declare a state of siege in Slovenia or could allow JNA troops to enter Slovenian territory. In contrast to the 1974 Constitution, the new Slovenian constitution stipulated that the area could separate itself *without* the other republics' permission. This constitution was accepted despite extreme pressure from both Serbia and the JNA. It was then rejected by the Constitutional Court and the federal parliament but Slovenia held its ground partly because it received support from within the Central Committee of the Yugoslav party.²⁸⁰ For the first time in this exploding conflict, the Croatian party had emphatically rallied on the side of its Ljubljana comrades.

When Serbian politicians announced that a truth demonstration would be held in Ljubljana on 29 November, the Slovenian authorities posted police along its borders to hold back the Serbian demonstrators. Once again they were supported by Croatia which the Serbian demonstrators would first have to cross but found themselves obstructed by the Croatian authorities. Milosevic experienced the failure of this march on Ljubljana as a slap in the face. He hit back by calling on Serbian companies to break all business ties with Slovenia and to boycott Slovenian products. Slovenian property in Serbia was confiscated and import duty was imposed on products from Slovenia. A month later, economic transactions between Serbia and Slovenia had come to a virtual standstill.

The Serbian boycott also meant that Slovenian papers were no longer available in Belgrade. It was becoming increasingly difficult for the Serbian capital to follow Ljubljana's train of thought.²⁸¹ The authorities in Ljubljana reacted by taking things into their own hands and reducing the federal budget by 15% and replacing their contribution to the fund for underdeveloped areas with a direct donation to Kosovo. The Slovenian people took their own measures. From then on, anyone with a car with Serbian number plates could expect to be refused service at Slovenian petrol stations.²⁸² Because of these events, the American ambassador to Belgrade, Warren Zimmermann, reported to Washington that the unimaginable in Yugoslavia had now become imaginable, that the country would split up.²⁸³ Ever sensitive to the rapid democratic developments in Eastern Europe in 1989, the Slovenian parliament introduced changes on 27 December 1989 that allowed for political parties other than the Communist Party and proposed the prospect of free elections.

The 14th Party Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia took place in January 1990. This occurred at the instigation of the JNA and others who felt that the federal party had to call a halt to the process of disintegration that was affecting Yugoslavia. The Slovenian party chairman Milan Kucan warned the Congress that the country was on the brink of civil war. The Slovenian party leadership proposed the introduction of a multi-party system, freedom of the press and other civil rights. It wanted a political solution that would make it possible to join the West and would also include an acceptable regulating of the situation in Kosovo.²⁸⁴ One by one, the Slovenian proposals were voted down. When it became clear that the Serbian party would continue to focus on the problem of the Serbs in Kosovo and that the Slovenian suggestions were considered unacceptable, the Slovenian

²⁷⁹ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 66.

²⁸⁰ See also Part I.

²⁸¹ Slapsak, *Joegoslavië*, p. 101; also *ibidem*, p. 65.

²⁸² Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 34.

²⁸³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 53.

²⁸⁴ See also: Hans Smits, 'De Joegoslavische waarheid kent vele staten', *Vrij Nederland*, 18/01/92.

deputation left the hall and was followed by the Croatian delegation. Both parties left the Communist League shortly afterwards. Milosevic tried to carry on with the meeting but was confronted with objections from the other parties. This signalled the end of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the country's connective tissue as Tito had once called it.²⁸⁵ The only remaining mainstay of Yugoslav unity was the army: the JNA.

Several days after the Congress, the state presidium assigned the army to intervene in Kosovo where there had been demonstrations in various cities that, according to the presidium, threatened to turn into civil war. The army's actions on 1 and 2 February resulted in 28 deaths and 79 injuries. On 4 February 1990, Slovenia decided to withdraw its units from the federal police troops that were stationed in Kosovo. Croatia once again followed Slovenia's example.

The Slovenian and Croatian parties' resignation from the League had seriously upset Milosevic's plans. After Slovenia had first halted his attempt to trigger a revolution in Slovenia through his call to take to the streets, he had now been robbed of the chance to impose Serbia's will on the rest of the country by creating a majority within the Communist Party and through the diktat of democratic centralism. Moreover, Milosevic was shocked by the fact that Croatia had followed the Slovenian example.²⁸⁶ From that moment onwards, Milosevic felt that a Greater Serbia would be the best solution for the Serbian people.²⁸⁷ Conversely, the thoughts of Slovenia and Croatia were increasingly of a confederation or even independence.

4. The strengthening of Milosevic's position as Serbian leader

Because of these developments, Milosevic was increasingly supported by a large section of the Serbian intelligentsia. Some of them viewed him as being the first Communist since Rankovic who was prepared to stand up for Serbian interests. Others regarded him as someone who had placed himself in the tradition of the 19th century Serbian leaders.²⁸⁸ Not so long ago Milosevic had condemned this intelligentsia for its nationalism, but it had now become extremely important to him for airing his policy views to the media.

Meanwhile, Milosevic realized that Serbia could not be the only area in Eastern Europe to evade elections. Hence, he began to transform the Serbian Communist Party into the Serbian Socialist Party that was finally set up on 12 July 1990. His less-than-fastidious methods earned him the nicknames 'Tito the Second' and the 'Baby Face Killer'. His wife, Mirjana Markovic, remained loyal to Communism. Ultimately, she was also to set up her own party but before that, as a Communist Party member and a Belgrade University sociology professor, she created a bridge on her husband's behalf with both the neo-Marxist intellectuals and the Communist-oriented officers of the JNA. As journalists at the Belgrade-based publication *Vreme* remarked: Milosevic 'managed to trick both the Communists and the nationalists; the Communists thought that he was only pretending to be nationalist, and the nationalists thought that he was pretending to be Communist'.²⁸⁹

Milosevic also created the opportunity for a major development of the Orthodox Church.²⁹⁰ This religious revival, which had already begun immediately after Tito's death,²⁹¹ was also significant in terms of his objectives. Xenophobia was an important element in the dominant Serbian Orthodox theology of the 20th century that had constantly referred to the danger that the Albanians in Kosovo constituted for the Serbian heartland. This theology was also extremely defensive vis-à-vis Islam and Catholicism, both of which were regarded as being a threat not only to the Orthodox Church but also

²⁸⁵ Thompson, *House*, p. 226.

²⁸⁶ Obrad Kesic, 'Defeating 'Greater Serbia'', Building Greater Milosevic', Danopoulos/Messas (eds.), *Crises*, p. 55.

²⁸⁷ Also Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 82 and 87.

²⁸⁸ Lenard J. Cohen, 'Slobodan Milosevic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, pp. 248-249.

²⁸⁹ Quoted in Lenard J. Cohen, 'Slobodan Milosevic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 252.

²⁹⁰ Tomanic, *Crkva*, pp. 21-29 and 33.

²⁹¹ Radmila Radic, 'The Church and the "Serbian Question"', Popov (ed.), *Road*, pp. 247-249; Tomanic, *Crkva*, pp. 10-15.

to Serbian ethnicity. From the end of the 1980s, it stirred up the Serbian aversion to the Croats and Muslims with its services and reburials for the victims of the World War Two genocide.²⁹² Serbian Orthodox priests and theologians greatly contributed to the defining of discrimination against Serbs by non-Serbs as genocide, and the equating of the Serbs' suffering with Golgotha, the suffering of Christ, or with that of the Jews during the Third Reich.²⁹³

In 1989, the Orthodox Church and the Serbian state under Milosevic's leadership jointly celebrated the 600th anniversary of the battle at Kosovo Polje with great pomp. On 28 June, Milosevic and his followers managed to gather one million Serbs for this Golgotha where the Serbian people were supposedly crucified in order to protect the West from the advance of the Muslim 'Turks'. At this event, Milosevic admitted for the first time that 'armed combat' could not be excluded.²⁹⁴ In any case, it was obvious that the return of Kosovo to the Serbian bosom had failed to satisfy Milosevic's political ambitions.

The call to protect the Serbs both in Kosovo and elsewhere spread fear amongst the non-Serbs. This strengthened the other republics' resolve to keep their Serbian minorities on a short rein. Little else could be expected here. The description by even the Serbian intellectuals of the Albanian harassment of Serbs in Kosovo as constituting genocide, the aggression of the Serbian demonstrators calling for protection, the memories of the pre-war Serbian hegemony and the post-war actions of Rankovic and his kind combined to create the impression amongst non-Serbs that the Serbs saw little difference between defence and attack. There was the threat on the Serbian side of what the Serbian writer Svetlana Slapsak called 'preventative revenge'.²⁹⁵

The role of the media in the strengthening of Milosevic's position

The media were chosen to play a vital role in the campaigns to strengthen Milosevic's power and to promote ethnic nationalist views.²⁹⁶ Milosevic had purged the most important media immediately after he had come to power. Thereafter, the media provided the public with the enemy. Here, the residents of other republics and provinces, and the members of other ethnic groups were maligned whereas the Serbian side was portrayed as the victim. It was now possible to fall back on ethnic and national values that had been suppressed during Tito's government.

The population, that was subject to great existential uncertainty once the old collective values of Communism were gone and had been suffering the effects of a serious economic crisis since the beginning of the 1980s, became convinced within a relatively short time of this new gamut of ethnic values. Family memories of World War Two atrocities, which were committed for ethnic reasons, encouraged this conviction. Large sections of the population were no longer interested in 'factual' reporting about others, but in confirming the 'opponent's' demonic image as created by ultra-nationalist leaders, power-hungry manipulators and the media.

'Old' nationalists, who were from the opposition, and new nationalists, whose origins were the Communist nomenclature, looked for the differences between the ethnic groups and exaggerated them.²⁹⁷ They generated and orchestrated fear by exposing the long-suppressed memories of mass murder during the Second World War that were committed by 'them' against 'us': by Cetniks against

²⁹² Radmila Radic, 'The Church and the "Serbian Question"', Popov (ed.), *Road*, pp. 257-260; Tomanic, *Crkva*, pp. 42-43.

²⁹³ Geert van Dartel, 'Nationalities and Religion in Yugoslavia', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 37-40 and 45-46; idem, *Kerk*, p. 42; Van den Heuvel, *Land*, pp. 92 and 100; idem, *Mythen*, p. 374; Westerman, *Brug*, p. 167. For the growth of nationalism in the 1980s amongst the younger clergy of the Orthodox Church, see: Cohen, *Serpent*, pp. 151-152.

²⁹⁴ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 173; Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 72.

²⁹⁵ Svetlana Slapsak, 'Serbische Alternativen', Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)erben*, p. 174.

²⁹⁶ See, for instance: Pejic, 'Medien'.

²⁹⁷ For a description of this mechanism see, for instance: Ugresic, *Cultuur*, pp. 51-53.

(allegedly) Ustashe, by Ustashe against (allegedly) Cetniks et cetera.²⁹⁸ But the previous centuries of Turkish domination and medieval glory were also added for good measure.

It has been said that at that time Yugoslavia was a country with ‘too much history’,²⁹⁹ but it would be equally valid to say that Yugoslavia had no sense of history at all. The historical vision that was imposed on the people was a cut-out history, a caricature, where sometimes whole centuries were ignored so as to concentrate overly on periods of greatness and periods of struggle and victimization. The terror of remembering was the counterpart of the terror of forgetting.³⁰⁰ It was as if the equally one-sided historical landscape of the Communist era had been turned upside down. Highpoints became low points and vice versa. Where brotherhood and unity had once been emphasized, the focus was now on moments of mutual strife. The media were increasingly using the term ‘ethnically pure’. Here, cards were published with coloured areas that denoted either actual ethnic division or ethnic ambitions. They contributed to a climate where the fear of the ‘ethnically impure’ prevailed. Fear was followed by hate. This turned neighbours and acquaintances into ‘imagined adversaries’.³⁰¹

Television and radio played the main role in the spreading of ethnic fear and hate because the influence of the written press in Yugoslavia was mainly limited to the better-educated middle class.³⁰² Private television and radio stations did not exist until B92, an independent radio station, was set up in Belgrade in May 1989. The state stations were primarily organized per republic and appointments had always been controlled by the party. In the 1980s, the Republican parties switched to the policy that their own stations should limit broadcasts from other republics as much as possible. The stations in Zagreb and Ljubljana began to apply strict language norms so that programs from elsewhere were refused. Following the purging of staff at Belgrade Television in 1987, the station’s most important subject was Kosovo followed by broadcasts about the Ustashe crimes and Slovenia’s alleged ingratitude and German sympathies.

The media also played a similar role in Slovenia and Croatia, and the Slovenian and Croatian stations began to emphasize the Serbs’ Christian-Orthodox and Communist aspects as compared with their own regions’ supposed European and democratic traditions. What the Slovenian and Croatian stations had in common was the much-emphasized idea that the various ethnic groups could no longer co-exist in Yugoslavia: Yugoslavia was ‘Serboslavia’. They attacked what remained of the federal organizations, with the JNA as their main target which they viewed as being the most important obstacle to independence.

Conspiracies supposedly planned by other republics were a favourite subject of both radio and TV. Hence, the Serbian stations believed that plots engineered by Germany and the Vatican were behind Slovenian and Croatian nationalism; they also felt that ‘Muslim fundamentalists’ were preparing a holy war against the Serbs in Bosnia and Kosovo with the help of their fellow believers abroad. Negative stereotypes of other groups were frequently emphasized: the Serbian media argued that the Croats had a genocidal predisposition and, according to the Ljubljana press, non-Slovenes were lazy. Real media events were created when all sides began to dig up the remains of the opponent’s victims from previous conflicts so as to rebury them in consecrated ground.

Media and journalists who refused to be involved with this nationalist rhetoric found that their work was obstructed in every possible way, for instance: by refusing them access to state printers or distribution channels, or by cutting off their phone or telex lines.

Meanwhile, a sense of powerlessness prevailed amongst those who had grown up with Tito’s saying that one ‘must protect unity and brotherhood as the apple of my eye’ or reader sentences such as ‘no mountain is too high when brotherly hearts unite’.³⁰³ They had believed in a Yugoslavism that was

²⁹⁸ Also Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 103.

²⁹⁹ Also Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 19.

³⁰⁰ Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 113. Also Ugresic, *Nationaliteit*, pp. 56-57.

³⁰¹ The term ‘imagined adversaries’ can be found in Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 2.

³⁰² Simic, *Yugoslavia*, p. 41.

³⁰³ Ugresic, *Cultuur*, pp. 9, 21, 98.

based on ‘a false or a real brotherhood and unity that resulted in a joint Yugoslav cultural area’.³⁰⁴ And they were both right and wrong. Yugoslavia was a joint cultural area that primarily embraced the urban, upper echelons rather than the countryside. But they were wrong because they believed that their reality and future could no longer be overtaken by the memories and exploitation of the past because it would incite nationalist sentiments. However, behind Yugoslavism’s veneer of propaganda and idealism, ethnic-national antitheses had continued to play a role in the decades following the Second World War. But they remained invisible to the public at large, the subject of veiled allusions by the Communist elite. Unaware of the subtleties of the nationalist problems and the chosen solutions, the people were susceptible to the nationalist manipulators who could easily suggest that their population group’s interests had been constantly blocked.³⁰⁵ In other words: ‘the future occurred because – in a very particular way – the past reoccurred.’³⁰⁶

The first real declaration of independence: Kosovo

In the second half of 1990, there was to be a dramatic sequel to the chain of actions and reactions in Kosovo, which had previously contributed so much to the escalation of relations between Serbia and Slovenia. Although Kosovo had been incorporated into Serbia a year previously, on 2 July 1990 a majority of more than two-thirds of the Albanian people’s representatives voted in the Kosovan capital of Pristina that Kosovo would be a part of either a Yugoslav federation or confederation, but only as a republic.

Milosevic’s answer was to dissolve both the parliament and the government of Kosovo and to order the representatives’ arrest. The Serbian parliament then accepted the ‘program for the realization of peace, equality, democracy and prosperity in the Kosovo region’. This meant that public life in that area was to be purged of everything Albanian. Political parties and trade unions were forbidden, broadcasting networks and newspapers were closed, education was to follow a Serbian program and tens of thousands of Albanians were sacked from government service. The Albanian members of parliament who had been sent home declared Kosovo’s independence on 13 September 1990. Shortly afterwards, the federal government annulled Kosovo’s autonomy. On 28 September, the Serbian government adopted a new constitution that abolished Kosovo’s autonomy. The preamble mentioned ‘the Serbian people’s centuries of struggle’ and their resolve ‘to create a democratic state of the Serbian people’.³⁰⁷ The constitution’s 136 articles no longer mentioned the agencies of the Yugoslav federation. Article 135 briefly mentions that Serbia was a part of Yugoslavia but only in a negative sense: ‘when laws of the federal government or other republics are contrary to the federal constitution and damage Serbia’s interests, then the Serbian government must protect those interests’. This reference to the federation could hardly be taken seriously and did not disguise the fact that Serbia was actually the first republic to withdraw from the Yugoslav federation even though the West was barely aware of this. Milosevic had already discussed this legislation in an interview with the magazine *Politika* at the end of June 1990. Because of the strong trend towards disintegration, he remarked that it would be irresponsible if he and his party were to provide only one solution for the Yugoslav crisis. He felt that this was why the drafted constitution offered the possibility of ‘Serbia as an independent state’.³⁰⁸ Therefore, this constitution revealed the first clear evidence that Milosevic had altered his course from the preservation of Yugoslavia to the realization of a Greater Serbia.³⁰⁹ Back in March, Milosevic and

³⁰⁴ Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 10.

³⁰⁵ Paul Shoup, ‘Titoism and the national question: a reassessment’, in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 60.

³⁰⁶ Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 14.

³⁰⁷ Hayden, ‘Nationalism’, p. 660.

³⁰⁸ Almond, *War*, p. 185.

³⁰⁹ Detrez, *Balkan*, p. 129, Ramet, ‘Road’, p. 873. On 19 August, the day on which the Serbs in Krajina voted on autonomy, the Montenegrin newspaper *Dnevnik* published a letter from Milosevic to the state presidium where the Serbian president wrote that the federal presidium must rapidly adopt legislation that would enable a peaceful separation from Yugoslavia for those peoples who wanted it, Milosevic, p. 98.

his confidant Borisav Jovic had concluded behind closed doors that their power-retaining politics would be easier to achieve without the presence of Slovenia and Croatia. However, they felt that it was not yet advisable to admit this publicly.³¹⁰ Nonetheless, Serbian party officials were already roused to support a course whereby the Serbian Communist Party would fight for Yugoslavia's preservation while also preparing for a Greater Serbia that would consist of Serbia, Montenegro, a part of Bosnia-Herzegovina and possibly Macedonia.³¹¹

At the end of June 1990, Milosevic and Jovic, who had now become president of the state presidium, wanted to speed up the departure of Croatia and Slovenia because they regarded these republics as holding back the advance of their party domination regarding the elections that were soon to be held throughout Yugoslavia. However, there were two problems for which they had no suitable solution: the position of the Serbs in Croatia and the attitude of the JNA. They would have liked the JNA to have ensured a *fait accompli* in the areas with many Serbian residents. Nonetheless, Kadijevic had grave doubts about whether the JNA should separate from Yugoslavia and also about whether he was prepared to deploy the JNA without the presidium's permission.³¹²

Borisav Jovic was becoming increasingly agitated about Kadijevic's indecisiveness. On 3 October, Jovic wrote in his diary: 'The generals remain constantly obsessed by Yugoslavia's unity but it has already disintegrated and has no future.' He also wrote: 'Slobodan Milosevic maintains that he must simply let Slovenia go and will only have to intercede in Croatia in those areas where the Serbs live.'³¹³ Another of Milosevic's confidants, Mihalj Kertes, who was a member of the Serbian presidium, wrote at a slightly later date about this constitution that: 'the federal constitution only exists on paper. What the Slovenes can do, we can do as well.'³¹⁴

5. The economic consequences of Yugoslavia's disintegration

The progressive rejection of Yugoslavia by the federation's republics had major consequences for the program of economic reforms that were supposed to save Yugoslavia from its downwards political and economic spiral. At the 13th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in June 1986, it was decided that all questions concerning the policy's 'Socialist contents' would be shelved until the economic crisis had been solved. It was no wonder that the attempts to get the economy back on course were doomed to failure. The combination of mass unemployment, pay cuts and price rises led to major industrial unrest in the mid-1980s.³¹⁵

In May 1986, Branko Mikulic became chairman of the Federal Executive Council, which the National Assembly had elected to serve as the cabinet for the next four years. His task as Yugoslavia's premier was to reform the country economically after it had been saved from financial ruin by foreign loans in the first half of the 1980s. Significantly, the appointment of Mikulic, who was a Bosnian Croat, was partly due to the fact that the National Assembly refused to accept a Serb as premier. When he took office, Mikulic was confronted with 90% inflation and 16.6% unemployment (with 60% of the unemployed being under the age of 25). In addition, a quarter of all Yugoslavs lived in poverty. Mikulic did not succeed in reducing inflation. Inflation for the whole of 1987 stood at 419% and it had reached 1232% by 1988.³¹⁶ The British economist Harold Lydall remarked in 1989 that the fall in the standard of living had been so great that that it was difficult not to imagine any other country reacting to this without either radical political change or even revolution.³¹⁷

³¹⁰ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 125-128.

³¹¹ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 131.

³¹² Jovic, *Dani*, pp. 160-163.

³¹³ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 103.

³¹⁴ Quoted in Hayden, *Blueprints*, p. 48.

³¹⁵ Magas, *Destruction*, p. 53.

³¹⁶ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 96.

³¹⁷ Quoted in Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 105.

Only 10% of the population still trusted the Federal Executive Council by the middle of 1987. 79% felt that it was no longer possible to escape these economic difficulties.³¹⁸ For the first time since the Second World War, there were articles in the press that called for the resignation of both the premier and his cabinet. There was a general awareness by the end of 1987 that the entire Yugoslav political system was not in favour of any real economic reforms.³¹⁹ Meanwhile, Mikulic found that the republics had forced him to make the implementation of his economic reforms depend upon the acceptance of amendments to the constitution. Moreover, accepting these amendments proved to be a time-consuming business. Similarly, the Western financiers threatened to make future credit loans depend upon the centralization of monetary policy but Mikulic did not succeed in breaking the republics' opposition to this. In fact, the federal government was no longer positioned above the republics' governments; they were now on a par. Mikulic and his federal cabinet were forced to resign in December 1988, a unique event in Communist Yugoslavia.

Mikulic was succeeded in March 1989 by the economist Ante Markovic (who was not related to Milosevic's wife). This former electro-engineer launched a program that was supposed to result in a free market economy, drastic cutbacks in government expenditure, an end to inflation and the potential to convert the dinar. Markovic was a Bosnian Croat but he regarded himself as being a Yugoslav and was also a reformist Communist.³²⁰ Yet he was also an incorrigible optimist who, despite his better judgement, kept hoping that he would be able to push his program through.

His optimism seemed justified at first. For instance, Markovic managed to curb inflation in December 1989 by linking the dinar with the Deutschmark so that inflation was reduced to less than 20%. He also managed to increase the amount of foreign currency and to break particular monopolies. He announced in the middle of 1989 that Yugoslavia now hoped to become both a member of the European Free Trade Association and an associate member of the EC.

Markovic introduced economic shock therapy in January 1990. This entailed measures such as the reduction of government subsidies on essential goods and the creation of the option of bankruptcy. However, this approach was thwarted by its social consequences and by the collapse of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. The industrial production of the first few months of 1990 dipped by 10% in comparison to the previous year, the retail trade turnover decreased by 23.8% and the standard of living fell by 28.1%. After an initial decrease, inflation began to rise once again. Payment difficulties were encountered by more than 8600 companies employing in excess of three million workers, i.e. more than half of the working population.³²¹ When Slovenia and Croatia stopped paying taxes and import duty to Belgrade in 1990, these republics experienced a run on foreign currency that resulted in the federal government imposing a ban on its supply so that the dinar became *de facto* unconvertible. Moreover, savers lost all confidence in the banking system that had apparently more or less confiscated their deposits.

The different opinions concerning the republics' future economic policy had become irreconcilable. Slovenia and Croatia wanted to introduce market mechanisms, Serbia and Montenegro preferred the deployment of state control and Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia supported an economic middle way. Moreover, Slovenia and Croatia found that Markovic had become an obstacle to their increasing desire for independence.³²² Yet the Serbs felt that he was too liberal and Western. Borisav Jovic, the Serbian chairman of the state presidium, even called him an American spy.³²³

At first Markovic tried to concentrate as much as possible on the required economic reforms and to steer clear of the current political situation that involved increasing human rights abuses in

³¹⁸ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 322 and 326.

³¹⁹ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 80.

³²⁰ For a personal description see, for instance: Theo Engelen, 'Ante Markovic. Alleen nog vertrouwd in het Westen', *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91; Nicole Lucas, 'Ante Markovic. Een schietschijf voor iedereen', *Trouw*, 14/12/91.

³²¹ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 129.

³²² Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 112-113.

³²³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 112.

Serbia and Kosovo. But this was an untenable position. The federation needed to function again for the economy's sake, and this could not occur without extensive political reforms. Serbia's aggressive actions stopped the other republics from working towards recentralization just as they also dissuaded the United States from providing economic support.³²⁴

Yet Markovic was extremely popular. According to an opinion poll, 79% of the population endorsed his policy in the spring of 1990.³²⁵ This probably encouraged Markovic who had also jettisoned the idea that political reforms could be separated from economic reforms. In the middle of 1990, he set up his own party: the Alliance of Yugoslav Reformist Powers.

6. Elections in Slovenia and Croatia

Meanwhile two of the six republics, Slovenia and Croatia, had already held elections. But instead of this leading to more stable and democratic relations, the election results in the republics generally created an increase in ethnic tensions.³²⁶

These were the first free elections since the 1930s. There had been little experience between the two World Wars of representative democracy. Parties had largely been organized on an ethnic basis. Political leaders had mainly pursued populism, and were elected for their charisma and their ethnic leadership rather than for the contents of their policies. So the 1990 elections could hardly be regarded as a renewed experience of a Western-style democracy following Communism's interruption. Instead, they resulted in a restoration of populist and collectivist traditions.³²⁷

The first free, post-war elections in Yugoslavia were held in Slovenia and Croatia in April and May 1990. The non-Communist parties won both elections. The Slovenian elections were won by the Democratic United Opposition of Slovenia (DEMOS), a party that was a somewhat broadly-based coalition of Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, liberals, democrats, Greens and the Peasants Alliance. Their only common interest was a desire for greater independence.

In Croatia, the Croatian Spring, which was suppressed in 1972, was followed by 17 years of silence that was imposed by the secret police and by other forms of repression. There had been virtually no dissident voices in Croatia. But in 1989, the Communist leadership in Zagreb had failed to evade the increasing pressure for pluralism. In this, they followed the example of a series of Communist governments throughout Eastern Europe that had given way to this pressure. The conservative Communist government of Croatia was replaced by a more liberal regime in December 1989. The new leadership promptly proclaimed the other political parties' right to exist. A month before the free elections, the JNA leadership warned the Croatian leaders that the 'Ustashe' would gain power but the politicians in Croatia took little notice of this.³²⁸

The elections in Croatia were won by Franjo Tudjman's conservative and nationalist Croatian Democratic Party (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* or HDZ) that supported Croatia's future independence and closer ties with Western Europe. Tudjman's campaign was largely financed by donations from Croatian exiles; he had also benefited from an electoral system that had been designed by the Communists and where a minority of the votes could still achieve a parliamentary majority. Hence, with 40% of the votes, the HDZ was able to gain 205 of the 365 seats. Tudjman became president.

In Slovenia, although DEMOS triumphed in the parliamentary elections, the presidential elections were won by the current Slovenian leader Milan Kucan, who was the candidate for the Democratic Renewal Party that had grown out of the old Communist Party. Kucan's election was due to his credibility as a reformer.

³²⁴ Also Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 47, 51 and 59.

³²⁵ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 129; Hayden, *Blueprints*, p. 28.

³²⁶ Also Pejic, *Medien*, p. 57.

³²⁷ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 275.

³²⁸ Kadijevic, *Viem*, p. 96 n. 4.

Slovenia's new parliament approved a draft constitution on 2 July that established its right to self-determination. The country also retained the right to block federal decisions. The Slovenian leaders described a request by the federal government to negotiate this constitution as being 'totally baseless and absurd'.³²⁹ In its government policy statement, the Slovenian cabinet under the leadership of the Christian-Democrat premier Lozje Peterle declared that Yugoslavia would become a confederation in the future. If negotiations about this did not lead to a satisfactory result, Slovenia would then opt to become an independent state. It would acquire its own army along with an intelligence service and a secret service. Ljubljana would also cease making payments to the federal fund for underdeveloped regions. Shortly afterwards, the Slovenian government took over the responsibility for its area's territorial defence from the federal authorities. These developments were unmistakably gaining momentum. On 5 July, the Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel told the Italian press that Yugoslavia no longer existed.³³⁰ Slovenia was now determining the steps to independence and Croatia followed.

Non-Communist parties had also come to power in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia by the end of 1990. The only exceptions now were Serbia and Montenegro. Free elections were held there in December. Following the power upheaval in Eastern Europe, Serbia was slower at organizing free elections than any other country apart from Albania. Along with the Serbian Socialist Party (the SDS), which Milosevic had created out of the Communist Party, Vuk Draskovic's Serbian Renewal Party and Vojislav Seselj's Serbian Radical Party were the most important. Moreover, these leaders were just as nationalist as Milosevic. The SDS won 48% of the votes. The 'winner-takes-all' district system meant that the party had acquired 194 of the 250 parliamentary seats. Milosevic won 65% of the votes in the first round of the Serbian presidential election. While Communists were losing power throughout the rest of Europe, they still ruled Serbia, albeit under the cloak of nationalism.

The Yugoslav premier Ante Markovic participated in the elections of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. However, this resulted in the worst of both worlds: he lost his reputation for impartiality while his party's weak campaign was partly responsible for the fact that he won virtually no votes and failed to achieve the power base that he had apparently hoped for. During the election campaign in Serbia, he was opposed with unprecedented ferocity by the SDS and Milosevic who viewed him as a potential rival. Moreover, it proved impossible to organize federal elections. This was mainly because of the resistance of Slovenia that feared being voted away in the national elections through a system of 'one man, one vote'. The fact that elections were held in the republics but not at a federal level meant that Markovic lost still more legitimacy. He also experienced the embarrassment that no television station was prepared to broadcast his 'speech from the throne'. A subsequent attempt to deploy YUTEL, his own television station, ultimately failed. Hence, he ended up being caught between the desired economic policy for recentralization on the one hand, and the continuing process of decentralization on the other.

Markovic's program was seriously torpedoed when Serbia introduced a boycott of Slovenian goods in November 1989 after the failure of the march on Ljubljana.³³¹ On 24 October 1990, Serbia decided to take over the federal government's role concerning economic and financial areas. This meant that Serbia now dealt with the taxes that had been previously collected by the federal government. Here, the Serbian government's argument concerned the federal government's backlog. But this measure was really intended to punish Slovenia and Croatia for their desire for increasing autonomy by imposing taxes on products from these areas. It also undermined Markovic's economic reform program. Moreover, the Slovenian and Croatian governments now realized beyond a shadow of a doubt that the collective presidency was merely 'a branch of the Serbian government'.³³² This measure was to have few practical advantages for Serbia.

³²⁹ ABZ, IDB-rapport 5125/RC/90, 'Centrifugale tendenzen in Joegoslavië versterken zich', 30/07/90.

³³⁰ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 120.

³³¹ Also Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 115.

³³² ABZ, Joegoslavië, 911.31, deel IV. IDB-rapport 8099/RC/90, 'Joegoslavië drijft verder uiteen', 12/11/90.

A consequence of this Serbian fiscal measure was that Ljubljana now refused to hand over import duties. This resulted in the central government announcing an import ban on all Slovenian goods on 13 June 1991. Slovenia was to declare independence less than two weeks later. The final blow to Markovic's program came in December 1990 when Milosevic, who had an eye on the up-coming elections, withdrew 18.3 billion new dinars from the National Bank of Yugoslavia so as to be able to pay off salary and pension arrears. This was the equivalent of more than 1.7 billion dollars or more than half of the total issue of money in 1991 for all six republics put together. Kucan concluded that if Serbia could get away with dipping into the federal purse, the federation had clearly lost its right to exist.

7. The rise of Franjo Tudjman

Franjo Tudjman, who had come to power in Croatia after an election campaign where he had promised to end the republic's domination by Belgrade, also felt that the federation of Yugoslavia had lost its right to exist.

Tudjman, who was born in 1922, had been a part of the Partisan movement during World War Two. He had become the JNA's youngest general at the age of 39. During the 1960s, he became increasingly converted to Croatian nationalism, and he also advocated autonomy and the Croatian language. As an historian, he wrote books where he played down the seriousness of the Ustashe actions. Tudjman was expelled from the Communist Party in 1967 because of his nationalist views. The former JNA general was one of the leaders of the Croatian Spring and was imprisoned from 1972 to 1974 for his 'propaganda against the state'. Once he was released, he was banned from publishing in Yugoslavia. When he circumvented this by providing a German journalist with figures about the Serbian over-representation in both the Croatian Communist Party and the police, he was condemned to three years imprisonment in 1981.³³³ On 30 May 1990, the vast majority of the newly-elected Croatian parliament voted for Tudjman as their president. His fellow party member Stipe Mesic became premier.

Whereas Milosevic's nationalism was based on opportunism, Tudjman's was a matter of conviction. On the morning after his party's election triumph, the next Croatian president repeated to US Ambassador Warren Zimmermann what he had stated throughout his campaign, that Bosnia-Herzegovina traditionally belonged to Croatia. If the Serbs applied 'pressure', then Croatia would deem it necessary to claim its 'historic rights'.³³⁴

The Croatian Serbs, who numbered almost 600,000 and constituted 12% of the population, reacted to Tudjman's 1990 election triumph in an extreme way. Emotions were running high even before he was elected. The HDZ had been set up at the beginning of 1989 before any other non-Communist parties were permitted in Serbia. Party extremists had already carried out a series of attacks on Serbs in Dalmatia in the summer of 1989. Just a few weeks before the collapse of the Communist League and a fortnight before the first congress of Tudjman's HDZ, a Serb from the Knin region was quoted in the Serbian weekly *Nin* as saying: 'We sleep here with guns in our hands. Go to any village you like and try to find a house where the gun is not already loaded.'³³⁵ The axes of 1974 had apparently been replaced some 15 years later with guns.

Two months before the elections in March 1990, Jovan Opacic, a prominent Serb from the Knin region, had already stated that the republics' borders would have to be discussed if Yugoslavia became a confederation because 'the creation of small, separate states would result in the politics of genocide'.³³⁶ Tudjman was portrayed as a future mass murderer. For several years, there had been a

³³³ In 1980, the Serbs accounted for 14% of the population as a whole, 24% of party members and more than half of the police, Van den Heuvel, *Land*, p. 107.

³³⁴ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 74.

³³⁵ Quoted in Vermeer, *Joegoslavië*, p. 68.

³³⁶ Slobodna Dalmacija, 26/03/90, quoted in Vermeer, *Joegoslavië*, p. 69.

movement in Serbia that attempted to label the Ustashe's genocidal tendencies as being a genetic defect of the Croatian people.³³⁷ Verbal attacks on the Catholic Church, which was strongly identified with Croatia, were nothing unusual in Belgrade at the end of the 1980s.

Conversely, Tudjman, the author of a book that considers genocide to be a normal part of human history and where multi-ethnic states are described as an anomaly,³³⁸ did little to remove the fear of Croatian domination that affected the Serbian minority who constituted 12% of Croatia's population. Following his election, Tudjman set up a Ministry of Emigration with aims that included raising funds amongst Croats abroad, a source that the Serbs viewed with suspicion. Extreme forms of Croatian nationalism were active within the extensive diaspora of Croats in, for instance, the United States and Australia that had been created through two waves of emigration after the Second World War and the Croatian Spring. Moreover, the Serbs particularly regretted the fact that Tudjman had acquired the support of the Catholic Church by abolishing the limitations imposed on religious expression.

In the flurry of triumphalism, little importance was attached to minority rights. Croatia's new constitution no longer mentioned a co-ordination of Croats and Serbs, rather the regional republic of Croatia was now described as a state of the Croatian people and of other nationalities such as Serbs, Italians and Hungarians. Although in theory the constitution provided the same rights to non-Croatian nationalities, the Serbs still felt that they had been relegated to the position of second-class citizens.³³⁹ Tudjman did not appoint a single non-Croat to the republic's political leadership. In fact, Serbs were fired from top positions because it was alleged that they were over-represented. This particularly affected the police and journalists. Serbs, who wanted to keep their jobs or to be able to vote, were forced to sign declarations of loyalty. Tudjman had rubbed extra salt into the wounds by publicly stating during his election campaign that he was fortunate that his wife was neither Jewish nor Serbian.³⁴⁰ The red-and-white checkerboard flag flew in many places in Croatia after the HDZ's triumph. This coat of arms had existed in Croatia since the Middle Ages and was also in use in the Communist era. It was, for instance, included in the 1974 Constitution. Nonetheless, many could easily be offended by the omnipresent flags with their coat of arms that had also adorned the government of Ante Pavelic, the Croatian Ustashe leader both before and during the Second World War. Serbs complained that the Jews never had to live with swastika flags whereas they had to put up with the flag in whose name genocide had been committed against them some 50 years previously.³⁴¹

Tudjman's statement during the election campaign that Croatia was claiming Bosnia-Herzegovina also evoked memories of the 'independent' Ustashe state during the Second World War. The slogan 'a Croatia exclusively for Croatians' had a similar effect. Croats wore badges bearing Pavelic's portrait. Tudjman also made an unfortunate attempt to eradicate the religious distinction between Croats and Serbs by once more setting up a Croatian Orthodox Church that brought back bitter memories for the Serbs of the Ustashe government's program of forced conversion to Catholicism. A section of the Croatian population began to crow increasingly loudly about their sense of superiority over the Serbs. These Croats regarded themselves as being a part of the developed Occident whereas the Serbs belonged to the turbulent, dark and inferior Balkans. This provoked a reaction amongst the Serbs to emphasize their military and political past along with their military superiority, an attitude that had once enticed the Croat writer Miroslav Krleža to remark: 'May God

³³⁷ I. Banac, 'The Fearful Asymmetry', pp. 155-157; idem, 'Historiography', p. 1101.

³³⁸ F. Tudjman, *Bespuca Povijesne Zbiljnosti: Rasprava o povijesti i filozofiji zločinja*, Zagreb 1990. See also the quotation from this book in: Hayden, *Nationalism*, p. 671.

³³⁹ Also Hayden, *Nationalism*, pp. 657-658.

³⁴⁰ Hayden, 'Fate', p. 745; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 73.

³⁴¹ Helen A. Pavelich, 'Foreword', in: Vukcevic, *Tito*, unnumbered page.

protect us from Croatian culture and Serbian heroics.³⁴² Hence, there was reason enough for a sense of turmoil amongst the almost 600,000 Serbs in Croatia, of which approximately one third lived in Slavonia and Krajina, the two extremities of the republic that encircled Bosnia-Herzegovina like a boomerang. Unlike Slovenia, Croatia was a breeding ground for mutual fear and hate that harked back to the time of the Cetniks and the Ustashe.

8. Serbian reactions to Tudjman's election as president

Meanwhile Milosevic was sharpening the knives. On 13 February, he told his confidant Jovic that there would be war with the Croats.³⁴³

Several days later, Milosevic's agents helped to organize a Serbian political party in Krajina. In June 1990, the Belgrade secret services began to supply arms and to infiltrate agents into the Serbian communities in Croatia. They set up the basis for political control and paramilitary formations. Belgrade's agents and members of the Serbian Democratic Party (the SDS) launched a campaign of intimidation in those places in Krajina where Serbian political leaders were still prepared to negotiate with Zagreb. The SDS wanted Krajina, where Serbs accounted for 70% of the population, to become a part of Serbia.

On 25 June 1990, Milosevic declared in the Serbian parliament that the republics' borders would need to be discussed if Yugoslavia were to become a confederation. He pointed out that the constitution stipulated that it was the ethnic peoples rather than the republics who had the right to self-determination. In other words: so far as he was concerned, a Greater Serbia was the only alternative to a federal Yugoslavia.³⁴⁴

There were skirmishes in Croatia between Croats and Serbs in August 1990. Serbs in Krajina stole guns from police stations, set up barricades on the roads, blocked the railway between Zagreb and Split and closed off the area. Then Serbian paramilitary units began to patrol 'their' areas of Croatia. A Serbian referendum on autonomy was held in Krajina on 19 August. According to the official result, it was opposed by just 172 people.³⁴⁵ However, the Croatian and official authorities were not prepared to recognize the referendum. Nonetheless, the government in Zagreb was powerless although this was not true of the Yugoslav Army, the JNA. This federal army officially occupied the area and divided the parties, but in fact it consolidated the situation in favour of the Serbs. When Zagreb wanted to send a number of police helicopters to the area, the JNA obstructed their arrival. Hence, Zagreb was well aware of the side that the JNA supported in this conflict.

The Serbs in Krajina issued a declaration of the Autonomous District of Krajina at the beginning of October. At the same time, Milosevic brought the crowds out onto the streets of Belgrade with slogans such as 'We want guns' and 'Off to Croatia'. The National Serbian Council, which consisted of mayors from places with a Serbian majority and the representatives of Serbian parties in Croatia, declared itself to be 'the highest authority' for Serbs in Croatia. This council immediately called on the Croatian Serbs 'to resist Croatian state terror with every available means'. They also appealed to the federal government to protect the Serbs in Croatia. A National Serbian Council was also set up in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On 15 May 1988, the Croatian Serb Veljko Kadijevic succeeded Admiral Mamula as the Minister of Defence of the Yugoslav federation and the Chief-Of-Staff of the Supreme Command of the JNA. Kadijevic represented the increasing mistrust of foreign countries amongst Belgrade officials who repeatedly blocked communication with the West. It seemed as if the country's political and

³⁴² Quoted in Gojko Boric, 'Kroatien und Jugoslawien – Ein Abriss historischer Erfahrungen', Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)erben*, p. 58. Compare the views of the Croatian politician and sociologist Stipe Suvar in 1972, almost 20 years before Tudjman's election as president, about the nature and aims of Serbian and Croatian nationalism, quoted in Oschlies, *Ursachen*, p. 6.

³⁴³ Noted by Jovic, quoted in Doder/Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 75.

³⁴⁴ Van den Heuvel, *Land*, p. 109.

³⁴⁵ Ramet, *Milosevic*, p. 102.

military leadership was unable to free itself of the siege mentality that had dominated the ideas of the Yugoslav elite during the Cold War. It had become effectively impossible to make the mental switch from large-scale conflict, where the JNA fought one or two foreign enemies, to a situation of internal conflict. Sections of the elite were behaving as if they were actors in the film *Underground* that was made by the Yugoslav director Emil Kusturica. The characters in this film spend many years underground in a state of war because someone above ground has assured them that the Second World War had not yet ended.

It is striking that Kadijevic pays far more attention to foreign enemies than to internal factors in his later explanation for the collapse of Yugoslavia. This completely reflects the evaluation of the General Staff of the Supreme Command at the end of 1989, who stated that foreign countries were the most important factor for the developments in Yugoslavia.³⁴⁶ Kadijevic was completely convinced that the American and German governments were determined to destroy Yugoslavia's unity and viewed civil war as being the most suitable means of achieving this. He argued that these governments' ultimate goal was to gain supremacy in the Balkans³⁴⁷ and that official American agencies were actively involved. Secret agents and straw men from Germany were active at the highest political levels in Croatia and Slovenia.³⁴⁸

According to Warren Zimmermann, America's ambassador to Belgrade, Kadijevic felt that there was no difference between Helmut Kohl's Germany and the Third Reich.³⁴⁹ In his view, Austria and Italy acted as the accomplices of, respectively, Germany and the United States.³⁵⁰ He also argued that the Vatican was providing the financial backing for all anti-Yugoslav activities by, for instance, having made it possible for Croatia to buy arms.³⁵¹ Finally, there was a fifth column in Yugoslavia that was ready to undermine the country.³⁵² The power with which these ideas took hold of Kadijevic and others was partly determined by the tendency to think exclusively in mechanistic and functionalistic terms. Unpleasant developments – such as the collapse of Yugoslavia – were explained as reflecting the West's bad intentions. Kadijevic rejected every suggestion of mistakes and errors: there were only masterplans.³⁵³

Against this background, it comes as no surprise that Kadijevic and the JNA leadership vehemently opposed every form of international mediation or interference with Yugoslavia.³⁵⁴ This attitude was the result of a lack of allied contacts over the preceding decades and the West's tendency to avoid meddling with the country's internal state of affairs during the Cold War.

Kadijevic was unimpressed with Croatia's new leadership. He viewed the former JNA General Franjo Tudjman as being a disaffected Communist, and it was also a bitter pill that Janez Jansa, who had been condemned for the publication of the JNA document in *Mladina*, had now become the Slovenian Minister of Defence. The JNA was unequivocal in its views about the Croatian leadership and constantly referred Tudjman as the 'so-called president'.³⁵⁵ Kadijevic might have been able to endorse the advancement of a pluralist, democratic society but only if it had been implemented from above.³⁵⁶ It had apparently slipped his notice that everything that was implemented in Yugoslavia from above was *per se* suspect for the republics of Slovenia and Croatia. Kadijevic personally contributed to that suspicion because he increasingly adopted a Serbian point of view.³⁵⁷

³⁴⁶ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 36.

³⁴⁷ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 5, 14-15, 18, 25-26, 87. See also: Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 90

³⁴⁸ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 25, 88, 111, 117 and 123-124.

³⁴⁹ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 89.

³⁵⁰ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 34-35.

³⁵¹ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 34.

³⁵² Kadijevic, *View*, p. 29.

³⁵³ See, for instance: Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 5, 28.

³⁵⁴ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 37 and 115.

³⁵⁵ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 96.

³⁵⁶ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 18, 53-54.

³⁵⁷ See, for instance: Kadijevic, *View*, p. 38.

Kadijevic's remarks that the 1974 Constitution had turned the JNA into an army without a state, were lacking in candour because he also rejected the federal authority whenever it suited him. For instance, he had little sympathy for Markovic whom he regarded as being too much of an implementer of the American-backed policy of economic liberalization. He also expected that Markovic would reduce the JNA budget.³⁵⁸ According to Kadijevic, in the summer of 1991 the JNA had made it 'drastically' clear to Mesic, the Croatian chairman of the state presidium, that he could in no way influence the JNA: 'there were orders that he gave to the army via the media, that we ignored at the General Staff of the Supreme Command, as if they simply didn't exist.'³⁵⁹

The army under Kadijevic initially supported the federation but only as a 'real' one that actually worked. In 1988, the JNA proposed a number of amendments to the constitution so as to re-establish a functioning federation. This gained the army little sympathy. Many felt that it was only concerned with solutions that would restore a powerful Yugoslav unity.³⁶⁰ It had become unclear which constitutional and social order the JNA was still supposed to defend now that the army was confronted with what it judged to be a failing constitution along with republics that had little or no respect for the federal laws and a political system where the party monopoly had been replaced by pluriformity. The JNA leadership increasingly spoke of a constitutional order that would contravene the 1974 Constitution. This led to statements such as: 'the armed forces were manoeuvred into a situation where they had to act in an unconstitutional way if they were to protect the constitutional order (...). Which constitutional order was supposed to be protected: the one that led to the country's disintegration or another one? In this case, which one was it?'³⁶¹ 'Were the armed forces supposed to carry out their duties within the existing judicial system that would inevitably lead to the countries disintegration? Or should they oppose that system?'³⁶²

There were frequent rumours of a JNA *coup*, but that would have been harder to achieve than many people realized. Seizing power would have been particularly difficult because of the existence of the republics' territorial defence system.³⁶³ This system would have enabled large sections of the population to turn against the JNA. Moreover, the army would have been unable to control the situation after a *coup* for any length of time because it would have had to deal with the desertion of non-Serbian soldiers. It would have also been difficult to motivate some of the Serbs to fight outside of Serbia after a coup. This would have provoked foreign sanctions and the army leadership even felt that the possibility of foreign military interventions could not be excluded.³⁶⁴

Kadijevic wanted to prevent circumstances where, by intervening, the JNA would be lumbered with all of Yugoslavia's failings. He preferred a situation where the JNA could be portrayed as a victim of the 1974 Constitution and a Little Yugoslavia would ultimately be created.³⁶⁵ Moreover, Kadijevic attached considerable importance to the constitutionally-required legitimization of the JNA's actions by the federal presidium. This repeatedly led to conflict between him and Blagoje Adzic, the JNA Chief-of-Staff. Adzic was prepared, if necessary without the state presidium's agreement, to declare a state of national emergency so as to oppose the consequences of Yugoslavia's disintegration.³⁶⁶ Adzic, a Bosnian Serb, belonged to the generation that came to power in around 1990 but still had grim memories of World War Two. The *Ustashe* had killed most of his family when he was ten years old. He

³⁵⁸ Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 15 and 116-117; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 90.

³⁵⁹ Kadijevic, *Vien*, p. 38.

³⁶⁰ Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 66-67.

³⁶¹ Kadijevic, *Vien*, p. 87.

³⁶² Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 90-91.

³⁶³ Gow, *Deconstructing*, p. 299.

³⁶⁴ Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 122-123.

³⁶⁵ Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 91 and 123.

³⁶⁶ Gow, *Deconstruction*, p. 301.

rarely missed an opportunity to talk about these events.³⁶⁷ Some of what he said was extreme and was greeted with little sympathy abroad: ‘And what does it matter if a few thousand heads roll? The world will make a fuss for about a week or so and then will forget all about it.’³⁶⁸

Under Kadijevic and the extremely anti-Croatian Adzic, the JNA leadership became increasingly convinced that what was good for the Serbs, was also good for Yugoslavia.³⁶⁹ This meant that here the difference with Milosevic’s Greater Serbian views was only a matter of degree. Moreover, Kadijevic respected Milosevic. He had tried in vain to urge the Serbian president to succeed Mikulic as the federal premier so as to apply ‘his political authority and proven competence, and particularly his ability to find simple solutions to the complex problems that the Yugoslavian system constantly produced.’³⁷⁰ In addition, a new Communist Party was set up in November 1990, the League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia, which was supported by Kadijevic and many prominent generals. Milosevic’s wife, Mirjana Markovic, was its vice-chairman.

Kadijevic was much less enthusiastic about the federal authorities. He thought that the federal agencies contained three categories of politicians: the real Yugoslavs, those who supported separation and opportunists. The JNA leadership felt that it could no longer present its evaluations and plans to the state presidium and the Federal Executive Council because this would entail turning this information over to ‘the enemy’.³⁷¹

Since the end of 1990, ‘the enemy’, according to the JNA leadership, was first and foremost Slovenia, which was continuing its preparations for separation. It was closely followed by Croatia. On 4 October 1990, a joint working party of the presidia of Croatia and Slovenia drew up a proposal for a Yugoslav confederation. The member states would remain sovereign. They would each acquire their own currency, army and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The military and foreign policy would be coordinated at the level of the confederation. In short, Yugoslavia would have to be organized ‘in the style of the European Community’.³⁷²

Slovenia had repeatedly urged that the Slovenes’ military service should be limited to their own territory and that their Slovenian officers should exclusively command JNA units. The JNA leadership opposed this vehemently because it would effectively lead to a Slovenian army.³⁷³ So as to prevent this, in October 1990 the JNA began to confiscate weapons that were intended for the territorial defence systems of Slovenia and Croatia. In December 1990, Kadijevic announced that the idea of the peoples’ defence system was finished. The JNA subsequently confiscated the arms of the territorial defence systems in all the republics except Serbia. In Slovenia, the JNA only managed to acquire 40% of the territorial defence system’s materials although this included almost the entire stock of heavy artillery. However, it managed to confiscate virtually all the Croatian weapons. These differing results were to affect the development of combat forces in both republics. Slovenia created an army out of the remains of its territorial defence system that resulted in a corps of 10,000 professional soldiers and 50,000 conscripts. Slovenian conscripts ceased entering the JNA in March 1991. Instead, the Slovenian parliament introduced a scheme where the seven months of military service would be spent with its own forces. All Slovenian citizens were withdrawn from the JNA in June 1991.

Robbed of its military defence system, Croatia began to transform its police force into an army at the end of 1990. This was no easy task because in mid-1990 the police in Croatia mainly consisted of Serbs.³⁷⁴ However, they were largely sacked in the aftermath of the HDZ election victory.

³⁶⁷ Caroline de Gruyter, ‘Onze Kacin is beter dan Goebbels’, *Elsevier*, 13/07/91, p. 36; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 100. For descriptions of Adzic see, for instance: ‘Blagoje Adzic. Eenheid tot elke prijs’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/07/91; Ian Traynor, ‘Spook uit jaren veertig achtervolgt stafchef’, *De Volkskrant*, 05/07/91.

³⁶⁸ Sanz, *Army*.

³⁶⁹ Also Kadijevic, *View*, p. 109.

³⁷⁰ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 112.

³⁷¹ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 95.

³⁷² The model of a confederation in Yugoslavia, quoted in Zametica, *Conflict*, p. 14.

³⁷³ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 105-106.

³⁷⁴ Lendvia, *Yugoslavia*, p. 255 n. 6.

Approximately 50,000 reservists were called up so that the republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which included the police, now grew from 25,000 to 75,000 men. The police troops were lightly armed and had no real armoured cars.

The conduct of the JNA and the development of armies in both Slovenia and Croatia led to a war of nerves between both parties from the end of 1990 onwards. Once the Serbs in Krajina had made the district virtually autonomous with the help of the JNA, the federal army began to grow in other 'Serbian' areas in Croatia and in cities such as Dubrovnik.

9. The Slovenian and Croatian preparations for separation

Over the next few years, in many respects General Tudjman was to prove to be a better strategist than his opposite numbers in Belgrade. He had a clearer understanding than Milosevic of the opinions abroad.³⁷⁵ In October 1990, he warned a nationalist crowd in the Croatian capital of Zagreb against impulsiveness. He declared that public opinion elsewhere in the world would turn against the side that fired the first shot in an ethnic war.³⁷⁶ In December 1990, he opposed a plan drawn up by his own Minister of Defence Martin Spigelj that consisted of immediately encircling the JNA barracks and of disarming the federal troops. Tudjman later commented: 'Had we accepted that plan we would have been condemned by the world as outlaw secessionists who wanted to overthrow the constitutional system. If we had carried out that plan, the world would have condemned us as an illegal movement for separation that wanted to overthrow the constitutional system.'³⁷⁷

Military preparations

Meanwhile, the JNA was also confronted with the issue of timing. If the army were to intervene too quickly against the nationalist developments in Slovenia and Croatia, it would be blamed as a Greater Serbian military power that had pursued aggression against the republics' democratically-elected governments. If the army were to wait too long, these governments would have enough time to organize their armed defence.³⁷⁸ And Slovenia and Croatia had indeed started to purchase arms abroad in reaction to the disarming of their territorial defence systems.³⁷⁹ In December 1990, Slovenian television showed footage of the republic's troops destroying a tank with Amhurst rockets that had been bought abroad and could be fired from the shoulder.

However, Croatia made the most famous purchase by buying several tens of thousands of Kalashnikovs in Hungary.³⁸⁰ Under great pressure from the JNA³⁸¹, the presidium and the federal government attempted to oppose the formation of Croatian paramilitary units in January 1991 by warning of the JNA's intervention. The Bosnian Serb Bogic Bogicevic resisted the Serbian pressure in the state presidium to authorize the JNA for this kind of intervention.³⁸² But this did not mean that Croatia was no longer under threat. The JNA still argued that action should be taken against the Croatian authorities.³⁸³ Despite Belgrade's threats, Croatia continued to arm its police and Zagreb ensured that the armed forces were in a state of readiness. On 25 January, a film was shown on various Yugoslav television stations. It was made by the KOS, the JNA's secret service, and showed deliveries of arms from Hungary to Croatia. It also showed how the Croatian Minister of Defence Martin Spigelj

³⁷⁵ Zimmermann, 'Ambassador', p. 8; idem, *Origins*, p. 77.

³⁷⁶ Carol J. Williams, 'Croatia's "Raving Nationalist" Now Seeks to Contain the Flames', *Los Angeles Times*, 30/10/90.

³⁷⁷ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 109.

³⁷⁸ Kadijevec, *View*, pp. 89-90.

³⁷⁹ Silber/Little, *Death*, pp. 106-109.

³⁸⁰ See, for instance: Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 149.

³⁸¹ Kadijevec, *View*, pp. 118-119; Zimmermann, *Ambassador*, p. 10; idem, *Origins*, p. 98.

³⁸² Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 99.

³⁸³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 100. For a description of the atmosphere in Zagreb at that time, see: Drakulic, *Communism*, pp. 169-178.

tried to persuade a Croatian JNA officer to leave the federal army with the words: 'We are at war with the JNA.' A few days later, the Yugoslav army demanded that Spegelj should be arrested on the suspicion of preparing a civil war. The Croatian authorities refused to co-operate. Instead they declared that they would welcome foreign help in the event of a federal attack. In a sense, that help had already been offered by the American ambassador Warren Zimmermann who informed the authorities in Belgrade on 17 January that the West would not accept an armed intervention by the JNA in Croatia.³⁸⁴ The British government followed suit.³⁸⁵

But the most extraordinary offer of help to Croatia came from Milosevic himself. He had been aware of the existence of the KOS film since the middle of October but had apparently not acted on that knowledge.³⁸⁶ Shortly before the broadcasting of the incriminating footage on 25 January, he had already mentioned to his loyal follower Borisav Jovic that Serbia would not resist a Croatian secession. The JNA would have to withdraw from a large part of Croatia and to move to those areas where the Serbs formed a majority. At almost the same time, on the evening of 24 January, Milosevic informed the Slovenian President Kucan that Slovenia could separate from Yugoslavia so far as he was concerned.³⁸⁷ Some two months earlier, Jovic, the Serbian member of the federal presidium, had told his Slovenian colleague Janez Drnovsek that the Serbian leadership would not oppose Slovenian secession.³⁸⁸ This information tallied with a speech that Milosevic gave to the European Community ambassadors on 16 January (see the introduction to this preview) and with the announcements that Milosevic had made to the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gianni de Michelis at the beginning of 1991.³⁸⁹

However, the JNA had not yet gone as far as Milosevic. The army still had the official duty of defending Yugoslavia's unity.³⁹⁰ The army leadership continued to hesitate between occupying Krajina, as supported by Milosevic and Jovic, and preserving Yugoslavia.³⁹¹ Meanwhile, the political problems were mounting and had now begun to affect the federal republic of Macedonia. On 25 January, the day of the broadcasting of the KOS footage, the Macedonian parliament had accepted a declaration of independence and a plan to discuss its secession from Yugoslavia.

Politics in Slovenia and Croatia head towards secession; turmoil in Serbia

On 23 December 1990, 88.5% of all Slovenes who were eligible to vote had supported a referendum for independence. Two months later, on 20 February 1991, the Slovenian parliament accepted an amendment that declared that the Federal Yugoslav government was no longer authorized to govern the republic. Slovenia became a 'autonomous, sovereign and independent country', that would only continue to remain a part of the Yugoslav federation for six months at the very most. This was followed by far-reaching preparations for separation: the country stopped payments to Belgrade, it set up a form of diplomatic representation abroad and introduced its own currency. The day after the Slovenian parliament's actions, the Croatian house of representatives also decided that the laws of its own republic should prevail over federal legislation. Moreover, the Croatian government received the go-ahead to start preparing for separation.

In March 1991, Serbia seemed to be experiencing a transformation that had been unleashed by the masses and had already occurred in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Roumania. For several days from 9 March onwards, hundreds of thousands of people, under the command of student leaders and

³⁸⁴ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 119; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 99; Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 112.

³⁸⁵ Eyal, *Europe*, p. 2.

³⁸⁶ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 117.

³⁸⁷ Silber/Little, p. 113. Also Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 145; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 111.

³⁸⁸ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 110.

³⁸⁹ Doder/Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 77.

³⁹⁰ Silber/Little, *Death*, pp. 114-115.

³⁹¹ Silber/Little, *Death*, pp. 114-115; Jovic, *Dani*, pp. 255-257 and 259.

the opposition leaders Vuk Draskovic and Zoran Djindjic, took to the streets of Belgrade to challenge the results of the December election and Milosevic's grip on the media. Expressions of support to the demonstrators occurred in a number of major Serbian cities. Milosevic's government appeared to be undermined. However, he managed to remove the movement's sting by consenting to some of the students' demands and by using the media to point out the dangers of Serbian disunity at a time of sharp ethnic contrasts. For the rest, the JNA's tanks and armoured cars did the work that the police appeared – either intentionally or unintentionally – incapable of doing: dispersing the demonstrators. Tanks rolled through the streets of Belgrade for the first time since 1944. A student was shot after a policeman had been stoned to death by demonstrators. Apparently this people could be beaten. Later the media received a tape where Adzic could be heard urging the police to beat the demonstrators until their officers were exhausted.³⁹²

Moreover, the JNA had acted at the request of Jovic, Milosevic's paladin in the state presidium.³⁹³ The writing was on the wall. The demonstrations meant that the fates of both Milosevic and the army were now bound together. At the same time, the JNA had suffered a sensitive defeat in the presidium. Jovic had called a meeting of the federal state presidium for 12 March. Rather than tackling the subject of the demonstrations, this meeting was to discuss the January proposal concerning the disarming of the paramilitary units in Croatia. Once it had gathered, the entire presidium was transported by military bus to Topcider, the presidium's emergency seat in times of war. The highlights of this meeting were later broadcast on television. Jovic gave a sombre picture of the country's situation. All the enemies from World War Two had returned to the Yugoslav stage and included the Ustashe, the Cetniks and the Albanians. On behalf of the Supreme Command, Kadijevic proposed declaring a state of national emergency so as to allow for general mobilization. All the republics' paramilitary units had to be abolished; military service must once again be served in the normal way. However, the state presidium rejected these proposals.

On 13 March 1991, Kadijevic, the federal Minister of Defence, flew to Moscow to ask the Russian Minister of Defence Dmitrii Yazov for support if a JNA *coup* were to be followed by a Western intervention. His actions were undertaken with the permission of Jovic, the chairman of the federal presidium, but without the rest of the presidium's knowledge. Several months earlier the JNA had also gauged international reactions to the possibility of a *coup* by sending Mamula to London, Adzic to Paris and Admiral Stane Brovet to Moscow. They were given to understand that London and Paris would not oppose the *coup* and Moscow would even support it although the Russian government would not admit this publicly. There was no point in Kadijevic asking for Washington's views on this subject.³⁹⁴ While Kadijevic was visiting Moscow on 13 March, Warren Zimmermann made it clear in Belgrade that the American government would halt all economic aid to Yugoslavia if the JNA were to resort to violence.³⁹⁵

The Russians informed Kadijevic that the West had no plans for military intervention in Yugoslavia. However, his hosts avoided the question of support. But Kadijevic had seen enough; the Russians had offered him not so much as a drink, not even mineral water. On the way back, he commented to his assistant Colonel Vuk Obradovic that the Russians were 'in a dreadful state'. But his subsequent conclusions completely reflected the situation in Yugoslavia. He thought that Gorbachev's days were numbered, that it would not be long before the 'real' Communists would attempt to seize power in Russia. And that is exactly what happened later that year. When Kadijevic returned to Belgrade, he told Jovic: 'We're going for the *coup*.'³⁹⁶

On 14 and 15 March, the presidium continued its meeting with the JNA leadership. Jovic was still unable to convince a majority of the state presidium to support the declaration of a state of

³⁹² Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 108.

³⁹³ Zametica, *Conflict*, p. 42.

³⁹⁴ Silber/Little *Death*, p. 126. Also Zametica, *Conflict*, p.42.

³⁹⁵ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 458, n. 27.

³⁹⁶ Svarm, 'Kill', Based on Jovic's published diary notes; Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 127.

national emergency. At Milosevic's command, Jovic resigned as chairman of the state presidium on 15 March. Milosevic also ordered the resignation of the members representing Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro who were under his control. His aim was to do away with the state presidium. In a television speech on 16 March, Milosevic said that Yugoslavia was finished and that Serbia could no longer respect the federal authority.³⁹⁷ He declared that he had ordered the mobilization of special reservists and the immediate creation of extra Serbian paramilitary units.³⁹⁸ Milosevic appeared to be creating the maximum of space for the JNA to act on its own authority.

On the next day, 16 March, Milosevic called the 200 mayors of Serbia to a closed strategy meeting in Belgrade. Speaking to them, he set the tone for the violent xenophobia of the next few years with the following slogans: Serbia was in great danger; the West hated the Serbs; a united Germany would attempt to extend its control over the Balkans; Slovenia and Croatia were Germany's puppets; if the Serbs were unable to work, they could still fight. Serbia would no longer accept the federal government's decisions. Milosevic argued that Yugoslavia was in 'the terminal phase of its death throes'.³⁹⁹

Milosevic also made it clear that the Slovenes and Croats could leave Yugoslavia, but not the Muslims. All the Serbs had to be united in a single state. A few days later he repeated his resolutions almost literally at a meeting with two hundred students.⁴⁰⁰

However, Milosevic was mistaken if he thought that he could kill off the state presidium by withdrawing four members. With Markovic's support, the four remaining members met and declared that they would continue to function as the state presidium. This completely upset the plans of the JNA's *coup* leaders. Moreover, there was probably still a level of mutual mistrust between Milosevic and the JNA. Milosevic feared that a JNA *coup* would undermine his political position in favour of the armed forces. Conversely, the JNA was afraid that Milosevic would push the army aside as soon as he had achieved his goal of uniting all the Serbs in a single state. The *coup* did not take place.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Command of the JNA had taken it upon itself to change its task concerning Greater Serbia. It would no longer try to preserve Yugoslavia's unity; rather it would protect the rights of the ethnic groups that wanted to remain a part of Yugoslavia. These were primarily Serbs and Montenegrins. What Kadijevic later described as a 'peaceful separation' would be sought for the other groups that no longer wished to remain a part of Yugoslavia.⁴⁰¹ In other words: in terms of its tasks, the JNA was in the process of becoming a Serbian army. The objectives of Milosevic and the 'federal' army were increasingly one and the same but the federal army leadership still found it extremely difficult to abandon Yugoslavia. The army leadership had informed the Serbian leaders on 25 February that from then on they would work with the SDS in Croatia so as to keep Tudjman's HDZ under control.⁴⁰² On 19 March, the JNA publicly announced its new task: the army would fight ethnic unrest, protect the borders and prevent republics from leaving the federation against the other republics' wishes.⁴⁰³

The next day, the Serbian National Assembly corrected Milosevic's mistake by refusing to accept Jovic's dismissal as the state presidium's chairman. Jovic returned to the presidium along with the representatives of the three other areas who had resigned their seats a few days previously.

³⁹⁷ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 102-103.

³⁹⁸ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 128.

³⁹⁹ Rick Kuethé, 'Grimmige logica in Belgrado', *Elsevier*, 23/03/91, p. 40; Stephen Engelberg, 'Carving Out a Greater Serbia', *The New York Times*, 01/09/91.

⁴⁰⁰ Silber/Little, *Death*, pp. 129 and 131.

⁴⁰¹ Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 117 and 121.

⁴⁰² Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 116.

⁴⁰³ See also: Libal, *Limits*, p. 25.

10. How should Yugoslavia proceed?

The republics' presidents met several times over the following months so as to discuss a new political structure for Yugoslavia.

Slovenia and Croatia proposed a confederation. By contrast, Serbia and Montenegro suggested a stronger concentration of power at a federal level. The presidents of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, Alija Izetbegovic and Kiro Gligorov, tried to mediate with a proposal for an asymmetrical confederation. This was to be constructed around Serbia and Macedonia, with a slightly more loosely-associated Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, and with Croatia and Slovenia retaining as much sovereignty as possible. Izetbegovic had his reasons for attempting to mediate: he believed that Bosnia would not survive the death of Yugoslavia.⁴⁰⁴ He had no positive expectations of either Milosevic or Tudjman. As he said himself, choosing between them was like choosing between leukaemia and a brain tumour.⁴⁰⁵

He had every reason to say this. On 25 March, a meeting had taken place between Milosevic and Tudjman at Tito's former hunting lodge in Karadjordjevo. Despite their different opinions, both presidents had a symbiotic relationship⁴⁰⁶ because of their strongly-nationalist politics, a relationship that was rarely more clearly defined than on that day. During a four-hour discussion, they agreed to work together for two more months so as to prevent Yugoslavia's disintegration. Moreover, they spoke of a possible exchange of territory where Tudjman would agree to give up the Serbian areas of Croatia (which were mainly in Krajina) in return for the Croatian parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It went without saying that Serbia could do what it liked with the rest of Bosnia. This proposal also allowed for the possibility that the Muslims would retain a small area.⁴⁰⁷

Tudjman had already suggested this division of Bosnia-Herzegovina to Milosevic in 1990. Here, he was harking back to the 1939 agreement between Cvetkovic and Macek. The Croats who were involved felt that Milosevic reacted to the proposal in a positive way. According to the Croatian presidium member Stipe Mesic, Milosevic said that personally he was not particularly concerned about Croatia and the Croatian Serbs; his objective was to incorporate two-thirds of Bosnia into Serbia.⁴⁰⁸ On 12 June 1991, this proposal for a Greater Serbia and a Greater Croatia would also be presented to the Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic (for further information, see Part I). However, the Karadjordjevo Agreement had no real influence on events in Krajina.

After the Serbian National Council of the Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina had proclaimed a declaration of independence on 28 February, skirmishes between the Serbian militias and the Croatian police were to continue there throughout the month of March. At the end of the month, members of the Serbian Krajina militia tried to occupy the Plitvice National Park, a tourist attraction in the overwhelmingly Serbian region of Lika. The attempts by the Croatian police to prevent this resulted in the first two deaths in Croatia's ethnic tensions: a Croatian police officer and a Serbian militiaman. The 29 Serbs who were arrested included eight members of special units from Serbia. On 1 April, the Serbian activists in Krajina, Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem (see the map on page #) took the unilateral decision to announce that they, as the Serbian Autonomous Region, had been annexed by Serbia. Krajina's Serbian National Council decided that henceforth its territory would only be governed by the laws of Serbia and Yugoslavia.

⁴⁰⁴ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 115.

⁴⁰⁵ Thompson, *House*, p. 95.

⁴⁰⁶ Also Hirs/Hellinga, *Zeit*, p. 174.

⁴⁰⁷ Also Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 117; Patrick Moore, 'A Bizarre Media Campaign in Croatia', RFE/RL Newline vol. 1 no. 34 (20/05/97), part II; Bodansky, *Offensive*, pp. 48-49; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 127-131; Ed Vulliamy, 'Bosnia: The Secret War. Croats Who Supped with the Devil', *The Guardian*, 18/03/96.

⁴⁰⁸ Davor Butkovic, 'Mesic. I drugi su Hrvatski politicarai svjedocili pred istraziteljima Suda u Haagu!', *Globus*, 16/05/97, pp. 14-15; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 126.

Serbian paramilitary units began to form not only around Knin but also in Western and Eastern Slavonia, where the population was more ethnically mixed than in Krajina. They were regularly provoked by extremists from Tudjman's party, the HDZ. On 2 May 1991, Croatian police were ambushed by Serbian paramilitaries in the village of Borovo Selo near Vukovar. Twelve of them were killed along with three citizens. The Serbian ultra-nationalist Vojislav Seselj proudly declared on TV Belgrade that his Cetniks had been involved in this incident. Radmilo Bogdanovic, who had been Serbia's Minister of Internal Affairs from 1987 to March 1991 and was subsequently a shadowy figure in the Serbian secret service, later said that the Serbian authorities had provided the weapons for Borovo Selo.⁴⁰⁹ The JNA encircled the village after this incident.

It was not just the Croats and the Serbs who were killing each other. In the first six months of 1991, there were many victims amongst the Croatian Serbs who still tried to reach a settlement between both parties and were killed by their militant fellow residents.⁴¹⁰ Moderate Serbs were frequently threatened, abused or even murdered – usually by paramilitary agents – if they did not seem prepared to take a stand or at least to keep their mouths shut.⁴¹¹ 'What's most important for a people is to know who its enemies are', said the Serbian paramilitary leader Arkan who was soon to make a name for himself.⁴¹² The Serbian areas of Croatia demonstrated what so often precedes a radical conflict: that the moderate forces in the middle became the first victims.

In reaction to the events in Borovo Selo, demonstrations of Croats were held the next day in the Croatian towns of Zadar and Sibenik, during which the household goods of Serbs were smashed. On 6 May, Croats attacked Yugoslav troops who were guarding the navy base in Split. Kadijevic, the federal Minister of Defence, subsequently declared the country to be entering a civil war and proclaimed a state of national emergency. The JNA received the presidium's approval, which had been previously withheld, so as to disarm the paramilitary units in the insurgent republics. Jovic gave the army permission to intervene in situations of ethnic unrest, and the presidium decided that the army should be used to protect the Serbs in Krajina.⁴¹³ In addition, the JNA began to arm the Serbs there.⁴¹⁴ JNA Chief-of Staff Blagoje Adzic took advantage of Kadijevic's absence in hospital to deploy JNA units not only in one-third of Croatia's territory but also in the 'Serbian' parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The JNA's actions had immediate consequences for the troops' ethnic make-up. Soldiers from Slovenia, Croatia and Kosovo failed to show up for mobilization. Macedonia would only permit its conscripts to serve in its own territory and therefore made no direct contribution to the JNA's new combat plan. So the federal army increasingly depended on Serbian reservists. The result of this was that the JNA abandoned the final remnants of Yugoslavism and began to create ethnically-homogenous units.

Jovic's permission for the JNA's new course of action came several days before the annual rotation of the presidium's chairmanship. He was to be succeeded by the Croat Stipe Mesic on 15 May 1991. Although Mesic was a HDZ member, he was a moderate one. He was married to a Serb and the Ustashe had wiped out virtually his entire family during the Second World War. Nonetheless, Milosevic and the army found his appointment unacceptable. If Mesic were to take office, he would probably distance himself from his predecessor's decision to allow the JNA to act *de facto* as the protector of the Serbs in Krajina. Therefore, Mesic's appointment was obstructed by the Serbian bloc in the state presidium. Consequently, the Federation of Yugoslavia no longer had a president and the federal agencies were paralysed. The exception was the JNA that felt that it now had *carte blanche*.

Events followed each other in rapid succession. Four days after Mesic should have been appointed, a referendum about independence was held in Croatia just as it had been some five months

⁴⁰⁹ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 142.

⁴¹⁰ Caroline de Gruyter, 'Wie niet meedoet legt het loodje', *Elsevier* 19/10/91, pp. 44-49.

⁴¹¹ See, for instance: Williams/Cigar, *War Crimes*, n. 171.

⁴¹² Haviv, *Blood*, p. 70.

⁴¹³ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 145.

⁴¹⁴ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 145.

earlier in Slovenia. With a turn-out of 84%, 93% supported independence. This meant that an important section of the urban Serbs must have voted for independence.

For a moment it seemed as if the impending catastrophe might still be averted. During a series of discussions between the presidents of the separate republics, an agreement was reached in principle on 6 June about a confederation of sovereign republics that was proposed by Izetbegovic and Gligorov on behalf of Bosnia and Macedonia. However, after the meeting, the Serbian authorities denied ever having agreed with the agreement in principle.

On 11 June 1991 the Slovenian government declared that the country would proclaim its independence on 26 June. Slovenia would then take over the federal authority's responsibility for the checkpoints on the borders with Italy, Austria and Hungary. In addition, all Slovenes would be withdrawn from the federal agencies. The Yugoslav army would also have to withdraw from Slovenian territory. Slovenia would eventually introduce its own currency.

Croatia's government, which had previously announced that 30 June would be its independence date, now decided to opt for Slovenia's choice because it did not want to remain in the federation without its Slovenian ally, not even for just four days.⁴¹⁵

In fact, both Slovenia and Croatia declared independence on 25 June 1991.

⁴¹⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042. DEU/berichtgeving d.m.v. coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Fietelaars 151 aan het Luxemburgse EG-voorzitterschap, 31/05/91.

Chapter 5

The West and Yugoslavia before the crisis

‘It is a tragic paradox that though no one in Europe wishes to see Yugoslavia collapse, no one knows how to control the destructive forces that are at work within it.’⁴¹⁶

In a sense, Yugoslavia was fiction so far as the West was concerned until the beginning of the 1990s. It had been misunderstood; the country’s independent status during the Cold War had been exaggerated; the decentralization of power had been mistaken for a form of democracy; and workers’ self-rule was wrongly viewed as a liberalization of the economy. When, from 1989 onwards, the realities of this country became increasingly obvious to those both at home and abroad, they were simply too complicated to be easily understood. Moreover, the Western media and policy-makers were involved with other issues such as the virtually-silent revolutions that ended the Communist regimes elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union’s simultaneous liberalization and dismantling, and the Gulf War.⁴¹⁷ Here, the question is whether the ultimate outcome would have been different if the West had paid greater attention to Yugoslavia’s internal developments.

1. The Dutch relation with Yugoslavia until 1990

Just like the other Western countries, Yugoslavia’s special status during the Cold War was a constant factor in Dutch foreign politics that was to have far-reaching consequences.⁴¹⁸ The Netherlands did not have an articulate Eastern European policy until the end of the 1980s.⁴¹⁹ The government did not have this kind of policy and the parliament did not request it. The Netherlands had kept its distance during the Cold War and, when required, had simply followed the policy of NATO or the EC.⁴²⁰ At the Dutch parliament’s request, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans van den Broek, finally produced a memorandum in 1988 called *Dutch Policy Concerning Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and Albania*. However, it contained virtually no policy proposals. Little attention was paid to Yugoslavia and that also applied to the subsequent written and verbal consultations between the government and the parliament.⁴²¹ The memorandum stated that the Netherlands had ‘always greatly appreciated the way in which Yugoslavia had given shape and content to its independent position in a positive way.’ The memorandum emphasized the country’s economic problems. Minister Van den Broek felt that Yugoslavia was ‘well aware’ that only its continued orientation towards the West would provide the necessary solace.⁴²²

In October 1970, Tito was the first president of a Communist country to pay an official state visit to the Netherlands. He was warmly received. The relations between the Netherlands and Yugoslavia remained cordial after his death in 1980, and there were regular meetings between the various ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence. When the Yugoslav presidium member Lazar Kolisevski visited the Netherlands in mid-December 1981, he described the relations between the two countries as being friendly and without problems. In April 1984, Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers visited President Mika Spiljak who informed him of the Yugoslav authorities’ concern about their country’s

⁴¹⁶ Lendvai, *Yugoslavia*, p. 261.

⁴¹⁷ Also Callahan, *Wars*, pp. 75 and 97.

⁴¹⁸ The following description for the period 1975-1989 is primarily based on Baudet, *Aandacht*, pp. 213-251.

⁴¹⁹ Unlike the usual views, Baudet concludes that the Dutch governments during the period 1972-1989 did in fact have an Eastern European policy where human rights in the form of roll-back strategy played an important role; *Aandacht*, pp. 253 and 257

⁴²⁰ Van den Heuvel, *Leven*, pp. 8, 158 and 166; Boussard/Van Ham, *Continuïteit*, passim.

⁴²¹ TK 1987-1988, 20564, nos. 3 - 7.

⁴²² TK 1987-1988, 20564, nos. 1-2.

growing nationalism. This did not prevent Van den Broek from announcing during the same visit that Dutch arms supplies would be subsequently permitted because the Dutch government believed that Yugoslavia was adopting an increasingly-independent stance regarding the Eastern bloc.⁴²³

There was also close contact between delegations of Dutch MPs and members of the federal Yugoslav house of representatives. Moreover, the Netherlands had a special relation with Yugoslavia in terms of foreign aid. Here, Yugoslavia was the only Western country with which the Netherlands maintained permanent co-operation. The ministers responsible held talks about this virtually every year.⁴²⁴ For instance, the Netherlands financed agricultural courses for Third World students that were held in Yugoslavia. In addition, the Netherlands was part of the same electoral group in the International Monetary Fund so that the finance ministers of both countries maintained frequent contact. Here, the Netherlands helped to arrange loans for Yugoslavia in the second half of the 1980s.⁴²⁵

The Hague was aware of human rights violations in Yugoslavia,⁴²⁶ but for a long time these were less serious than in other Eastern European countries and – more importantly – criticism could have alienated the Belgrade government. The Dutch parliament was also less critical of Yugoslavia than it was of other Eastern European countries. During the period 1975-1989, only one question about Yugoslav human rights violations was asked in parliament; it was posed by the pacifist-socialist (PSP) MP Fred van der Spek in 1984.

In the 1980s, the Kosovan Albanians' efforts to achieve a higher level of autonomy met with as little sympathy from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as they did in other countries. At first, this reticence remained unchanged until the mid-1980s when Yugoslavia's edge over other Eastern European countries concerning human rights issues, was reversed. An Amnesty International campaign in the spring of 1985 focused attention on the 2200 people in Yugoslavia who had been condemned on political grounds over the previous three years. However, this did not lead to the Dutch government taking the measures in Belgrade that Amnesty had hoped for. Apart from the Dutch Helsinki Committee, Amnesty International was the only non-official group in the Netherlands to focus on the human rights situation in Yugoslavia. In 1988, when Minister Van den Broek was asked about his views concerning Serbian nationalism and its consequences for Yugoslavia as a whole, he argued that the success of the planned constitutional and economic reforms would determine the extent to which Yugoslavia would be able to overcome its 'national problems'.⁴²⁷

From the mid-1980s onwards, the combination of Yugoslavia's declining importance in international relations and the country's internal tensions led to increased criticism in the West. The first sign of a change in the Dutch position could be detected when Van den Broek visited Belgrade on 10 November 1987, some months after the eighth session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia when Milosevic had seized power from Stambolic.

During lunch, various representatives of Yugoslav human rights organizations pointed out to the Dutch minister that it would be impossible to achieve the country's required economic changes without first implementing political reforms. These political reforms would not occur while the Communist Party was in power. They argued that the republics' growing alienation would only be increased by the Communist divide-and-rule policy that stirred up nationalist sentiments, and that the republics could not secede because of Yugoslavia's position in the international power constellation. An

⁴²³ G. van de Kreeke, 'Nieuwe benadering betekent doorbraak. Nederland mag wapens leveren aan Joegoslavië' [New Approach Means Breakthrough. The Netherlands Can Supply Weapons to Yugoslavia], *de Telegraaf*, 26/04/84. See also: 'Planinc Holds Talks with Netherlands' Lubbers', *Tanjug*, 24/04/84, 1753 and 'Spiljak Receives Netherlands Premier Lubbers', *Tanjug*, 25/04/84, 1336.

⁴²⁴ Interview J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

⁴²⁵ TK 1987-1988, 20564, nos. 1-2, p. 17; interview W. Kok, 08/05/00.

⁴²⁶ See also: TK 1987-1988, 20564, nos. 1-2, p. 17.

⁴²⁷ TK 1988-1989, 20564, nos. 3 and 4, question 41 plus answer.

answer was not forthcoming when Minister van den Broek asked about what was still keeping the country together.

Van den Broek told Premier Mikulic that it was partly due to Dutch pressure that a recent European Investment Bank loan to Yugoslavia had been increased from 380 to 550 million ecu. However, he wondered whether the money would vanish into a bottomless pit if there was no political reform.

The European Community had signed a preferential co-operation agreement with Yugoslavia in 1980.⁴²⁸ Nonetheless, by the end of the 1980s, it began to be confronted with a dilemma where a higher level of financial aid to the republics would simply strengthen their resolve for increased autonomy. This would not benefit the Yugoslav economy as a whole. It was doubtful whether donations of money to Belgrade would actually end up in the right hands, particularly as the Belgrade government had an increasingly bad reputation for human rights.

The EC policy concerning Eastern Europe was strongly influenced by economic considerations such as the presence of market-oriented ideas, a structure of tax legislation that protected private property relations, infrastructure, modernizing production machinery and the issue of foreign debt. Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia were granted a form of association with the EC because they had made the most rapid and far-reaching advances concerning these points; Yugoslavia fell by the wayside.

Like other Western diplomats in Belgrade and, for instance, Minister of Defence Kadijevic⁴²⁹, the Dutch ambassador to Yugoslavia A.J.A.M. Nooij initially felt that the energetic Milosevic was the man who could possibly reverse Yugoslavia's process of disintegration. An additional factor here was that Milosevic passed as being liberal in economic terms. However, Nooij soon had to abandon all hope when it became obvious to him that Milosevic was definitely not the 'consensus figure' who could preserve the country from further misfortune. In April 1989 following the authorities' heavy-handed actions against the Albanians in Kosovo, Van den Broek informed Kovic, the Yugoslav ambassador to The Hague, that the West would increasingly take the side of the Kosovan Albanians if Belgrade were to pursue this course. Nonetheless, the governments of both the Netherlands and other Western countries did everything they could to avoid the impression that they sympathized with the people in Yugoslavia who were put on trial for criticizing Belgrade's dominant position.

However the Belgrade government made it increasingly difficult for the West to hide its criticism. On 28 March 1989, the Dutch ambassador did not attend the festivities in the Serbian parliament to mark the ending of an autonomous Kosovo where 22 people had just been killed. The Dutch diplomat stated that this was 'an objectionable spectacle'. On 28 June 1989, he and most of his colleagues also failed to appear at the commemoration of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo.⁴³⁰ Nonetheless, at the same time, Yugoslavia along with Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union were granted guest status at the Council of Europe.⁴³¹ However, in the same year Yugoslavia was informed that there was no question of entry to the European Community or the Council of Europe while European diplomats were still denied access to the country's political processes.

From the summer of 1989 onwards, Ambassador Nooij repeatedly hinted at Yugoslavia's disintegration. On 23 June 1989, five days before the commemoration of the Battle of Kosovo, he wrote to The Hague: '*Rien mais vraiment rien ne va plus entre Serbie et la Slovénie*' ('Nothing but nothing still works between Serbia and Slovenia'). 'The alienation of these two republics has now assumed such forms at every level and area of society that a return of a consensus policy no longer seems possible.' He observed separatist trends in both Slovenia and Serbia.⁴³² On the same day, he stated that relations between the republics and provinces had 'degenerated to such a point that one must fear for the

⁴²⁸ A non-preferential trade agreement had been previously signed in 1970.

⁴²⁹ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 77.

⁴³⁰ Also Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 19.

⁴³¹ R. Sieckman, *Sovjet-Unie in Raad van Europa?* ('Soviet Union in Council of Europe?'), *Trouw*, 24/06/89.

⁴³² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00408, Nooij 76, 23/06/89.

federation's continued existence'.⁴³³ The sense of alienation between Serbia and Slovenia (and later Croatia) as caused by the Kosovo issue, and disagreement about the economic policy were frequently mentioned in the dispatches that he and Fietelaars, who succeeded him at the end of 1990, were sending to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴³⁴

2. Prophets on the sideline

At the beginning of the 1990s, the entire Western world was waiting for Croatia and Slovenia's declarations of independence. However, in Western Europe this was often based on the unjustified hope that it would not necessarily lead to a catastrophe and that the predicted crisis might just blow over.⁴³⁵ By contrast, there were numerous articles in, for instance, *The New York Times* about the Yugoslav federation's potential disintegration.⁴³⁶ In May, the former German chancellor Willy Brandt argued in vain for the formation of a European intervention force so as to secure peace in Yugoslavia.⁴³⁷

Prophesying the conflict: Dutch politics

The outbreak of conflict in Yugoslavia had also been predicted by a wide political spectrum in the Netherlands.⁴³⁸ 'You hardly needed to be a prophet to be able to prophecy a civil war in Yugoslavia', remarked Eimert van Middelkoop, a MP representing a Protestant party called the *Gereformeerde Politiek Verbond* (GPV). His comments came at a meeting on 11 July 1991 of the Parliamentary Commission for Foreign Affairs that was to discuss the events that followed Croatia and Slovenia's declarations of independence.⁴³⁹ At the beginning of the 1980s, when he was working as A.J. Verburg's parliamentary assistant, Van Middelkoop had been detained for an hour at Skopje railway station after trying to make photographs of Kosovo from a train.⁴⁴⁰

Theo Kralt, the foreign secretary of the CDA Christian Democrat party, had spoken with the Slovenian Christian Democrat premier Lozje Peterle when he had visited as a member of a CDA delegation of foreign specialists in February 1991. Kralt warned in the March 1991 edition of *CD/Actueel* that Yugoslavia would have to abandon its present political form. The country had to become a confederation or else it would disintegrate. He felt that the minorities' position in the republics that were gaining independence was such that the Council of Europe would need to supervise the implementation of human rights. The EC would also have to contribute so that the process of political reform would occur peacefully.⁴⁴¹ 'If there ever was an armed conflict and crisis that could have been predicted after the Second World War, then it's the one in present-day Yugoslavia', wrote Olaf van Boetzelaer in the *CD/Actueel* party publication of the autumn of 1991. Van Boetzelaer was a member of the CDA Central and Eastern Europe working party and was also the head of the Analysis

⁴³³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00408, Nooij 75, 23/06/89.

⁴³⁴ See, for instance: ABZ, DDI-DEU/ARA/00408, Nooij 143, 13/12/89; Nooij 38, 28/02/90; Nooij 109, 20/07/90; Fietelaars 198, 19/12/90.

⁴³⁵ See, for instance: Maarten Lak, 'The Involvement of the European Community in the Yugoslav Crisis During 1991', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 176; Libal, *Limits*, p. 11; 'Yugoslavia Is On the Brink of a Ruinous Internal Ethnic Struggle', *Nieuwweek*, 15/01/90; Maren Köster-Hetzendorf, 'Auf Tito schießen, um Jugoslawien zu töten', *Die Presse*, 21/06/89.

⁴³⁶ See, for instance: 'A Single Yugoslavia, Pluralized', *The New York Times*, 29/12/89; *One Yugoslavia or Six?*, *ibidem*, 31/01/90; Chuck Sudetic, *As Croatia Goes, Will All Yugoslavia?*, *ibidem*, 05/05/90; *ibidem*, *Ethnic Revolutions Push Yugoslavia to Edge*, *ibidem*, 14/10/90; *Why Keep Yugoslavia One Country?* *ibidem*, 10/11/90.

⁴³⁷ Eyal, *Europe*, p. 10.

⁴³⁸ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 100.

⁴³⁹ TK 1990-1991, 22181, no. 2, p. 8.

⁴⁴⁰ Interview E. van Middelkoop, 08/10/99.

⁴⁴¹ Theo Kralt, 'Joegoslavië. Voortzetting federatie niet haalbaar, maar ook confederatie problematisch' [Yugoslavia. Continuation Federation not Feasible, but Confederation also Problematic], *CD/Actueel*, 30/03/91, pp. 8-9.

Department of the Dutch Foreign Intelligence Service. He continued, ‘however, it has to be admitted that the majority of political authorities in the West – and the Dutch political authorities are no exception here – have created the impression of being insufficiently prepared for the outbreak of this crisis.’⁴⁴²

‘Rarely has conflict been so repeatedly predicted and in such detail as the war in the former Yugoslavia’, was how the liberal democrat D66 MP Bob van den Bos later described this situation in 1997.⁴⁴³

The Socialist PvdA MP Gerrit Valk published an article in his party’s magazine *Voorwaarts* following a visit to the PvdA’s sister organization in Slovenia in April 1990. This article was called ‘Yugoslavia Does Not Exist’ and it had been drastically cut by the editors because of its gloomy tone.⁴⁴⁴ But the gloominess still pervades even the abbreviated version:

‘The adjective ‘Yugoslav’ resounds like a curse in the ears of all true Slovenians. Chairman Pucnik of our sister organization *Socialdemokratska Zveza Slovenije* even declared recently that Yugoslavia no longer exists. While borders are disappearing in Western Europe, there is an increasing call for Slovenia to opt for secession. Hence, Yugoslavia seems to be returning to the state structure that preceded the two World Wars. During discussions in the corridors at the SDZS’s founding congress, it seemed to me that the Social Democrats regard a confederation as simply being a tactical move towards an independent Republic of Slovenia (...). Yet the foundation of a new, independent state that is half the size of the Netherlands and has a population of two million is less alluring for the rest of Europe. And that’s not to mention the creation of the independent republics of Croatia, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia along with the additional possibility of Kosovo and Vojvodina. So what will the future hold for the Balkans?’⁴⁴⁵

Valk’s colleagues also found his article too morbid and asked if he had eaten something that had disagreed with him.⁴⁴⁶ Shortly afterwards, in mid-May 1990, he attended the London conference for young parliamentarians. Here, he discussed his fears concerning Yugoslavia’s disintegration with President Vasil Tupurkovski of Macedonia who also dismissed his concerns out of hand.⁴⁴⁷

However, Valk was not alone. For instance, a month earlier, Sir Michael Howard, the chairman of the distinguished *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, had asked in a lecture about how much longer the amalgam of the former Habsburg and Christian-Orthodox areas of Yugoslavia would be able to survive.⁴⁴⁸ The Amsterdam historian M.C. Brands wrote in the autumn of 1990 that Yugoslavia was already in a state of ‘semi-permanent civil war’.⁴⁴⁹ Valk was also not the only one to be disbelieved. When the journalist Misha Glenny wrote in a February 1991 report for the BBC that the leaders of Yugoslavia ‘were stirring a cauldron of blood that would soon boil over’, he was reprimanded by his superiors because his piece was too ‘alarmist’. Unlike at the beginning of the 20th century, they felt that there were to be no more Balkan wars at its end.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴² Olaf van Boetzelaer, ‘EG-politiek in Joegoslavië baseerde zich op onvoldragen analyse’ [EC Politics in Yugoslavia Based on Premature Analysis], *CD/Actueel*, 23/11/91, p. 20. Similar descriptions in: Olaf van Boetzelaer, ‘Bosnië’ [Bosnia], *CD/Actueel*, 14/11/92, p. 14.

⁴⁴³ Bob van den Bos, ‘Aanval op de oorlog’ [Attack on the War], *Idee*, June 1997, p. 29.

⁴⁴⁴ G. Valk to the NIOD, 31/05/00.

⁴⁴⁵ G. Valk, ‘Joegoslavië bestaat niet’ [Yugoslavia does not exist], *Voorwaarts*, 15/04/90, p. 25.

⁴⁴⁶ Interview G. Valk, 15/10/99.

⁴⁴⁷ Interview G. Valk, 15/10/99; G. Valk to the NIOD, 31/05/00.

⁴⁴⁸ Howard, *Remaking*, p. 102.

⁴⁴⁹ M.C. Brands, *Een conservatieve beschouwing over Europese veiligheid, Nederlandse defensie tegen een nieuwe achtergrond*, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁵⁰ Glenny, *Balkans*, p. 634.

Finally, the Protestant SGP party magazine *De Banier* warned shortly afterwards that Yugoslavia was on the point of disintegration and that the time for discussion was over. Civil war would automatically follow if Serbia's Communist leadership did not adopt a more constructive approach. The same also applied if the Serbian opposition failed to tone down its nationalism and if the Croatian government resorted to violence against the Serbian minority in Croatia.⁴⁵¹

Prophesying the conflict: the Foreign Intelligence Service

In the Netherlands, the Foreign Intelligence Service (IDB) wrote in July 1990 that Tito's Yugoslavia 'was finished' after the elections in Slovenia and Croatia, and the Albanian MPs' declaration of independence. The Dutch Intelligence Service argued that Slovenia and Croatia's desire for at least a confederation and possibly even independence was incompatible with the Serbian demand for a more efficient federation. With considerable foresight, the secret service did not exclude the chance that Serbia would also leave the state but that it would then impose demands concerning the Serbian areas outside of Serbia. Both political 'solutions' involved the prospect of war: either a civil war or a war of separation. The IDB felt that Bosnia-Herzegovina risked being divided up between Croatia and Serbia. However, Yugoslavia's internal conflict would entail little danger at an international level now that the Cold War was over.⁴⁵²

Three-and-a-half months later, the service observed that the federal perspective was farther away than ever. Greater Serbian objectives now had to be taken into account that could lead to the borders being altered. Bearing in mind Yugoslavia's history, this development could result in bloodshed. The IDB considered the election in Bosnia-Herzegovina on 18 November 1990 to be of great importance. If this 'Little Yugoslavia' remained harmonious after this election, then there was still hope for Yugoslavia as a whole.⁴⁵³

More than a week before Croatia and Slovenia's declarations of independence, the IDB stated that there was a 'real' risk of armed combat between Slovenian and Yugoslav forces following the conflict around the import of Slovenian goods into Serbia. If Slovenia and Croatia were to proclaim independence, then there was a likelihood of 'large-scale violence', and Italy and Austria would probably have to deal with an extensive stream of refugees. Moreover, irregularities could follow in Kosovo and Macedonia that – in the case of Macedonia – could also affect Bulgaria and Greece. Finally, the service detected a 'growing pressure for independence' amongst the Muslim population of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴⁵⁴

In fact, the Dutch authorities and politicians were not the only ones who were aware of the coming conflict. Before Croatia and Slovenia's declarations of independence, the number of reservations for holidays in Yugoslavia for the summer of 1991 had already fallen by 80 to 85% in comparison with the previous year.⁴⁵⁵

3. The summer of 1990 to the summer of 1991: a wretched idleness

‘The war is here. I recognize it now. It tricked me – it tricked all of us.
It's in our waiting for it to begin.’⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵¹ H. Lenselink, *Buiten onze grenzen* ('Beyond Our Borders'), *De Banier*, 30/05/91, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁵² ABZ, 911.31 Yugoslavia, Part IV, IDB-rapport 5125/RC/90, Centrifugale tendenzen in Joegoslavië versterken zich, 30/07/90.

⁴⁵³ ABZ, 911.31, Yugoslavia Part IV, IDB-rapport 8099/RC/90, Joegoslavië drijft verder uiteen, 12/11/90.

⁴⁵⁴ ABZ, 911.31, Yugoslavia, Part IV, IDB-rapport 4610/RC/91, Slovenië en Croatië aan de vooravond van de afscheiding, 17/06/91.

⁴⁵⁵ 'Toeristen krijgen advies Joegoslavië te mijden' [Tourists Advised to Avoid Yugoslavia], *de Volkskrant*, 29/06/91. See also: Nicles Lucas, 'De zon schijnt hier tevergeefs' [The Sun Shines here in vain], *Trouw*, 03/07/91.

⁴⁵⁶ Drakulic, *Communism*, p. 178.

During the previous months, the Dutch government and parliament had repeatedly discussed the new structures of a European security policy and the nature of the possible risks to security. Here, the nationalist aspirations in Yugoslavia were constantly mentioned as prototypes of possible conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe. The Western governments, including the Dutch government, could not be blamed for failing to spot the dramatic developments in Yugoslavia that would lead to conflict between Serbia and the republics that were working towards separation.⁴⁵⁷

In the summer of 1990, Ambassador Nooij wrote to the Dutch Foreign Affairs department as he was leaving Belgrade that the multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia was on the point of disintegrating.⁴⁵⁸ There was open discussion of the possibility of a confederation of Slovenia, Croatia and potentially a part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, along with a Greater Serbia that would also encompass Montenegro, Kosovo and Vojvodina. The Dutch diplomat argued that the possibility that this revolution would involve violence could not be excluded because the Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic had already announced that the borders would have to be revised so that every Serb would be able to live in Serbia without having to give up his current abode in Croatia or Bosnia-Herzegovina. Similarly, on the basis of *mutatis mutandis*, Tudjman would also accept nothing less on behalf of the Croats.⁴⁵⁹ The Eastern Europe department of the Europe Directorate of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed with this assessment. Violence would be the result of the federation's disintegration but, conversely, it seemed that violence was all that could keep the federation together.⁴⁶⁰

A meeting of NATO's Political Committee on 31 July 1990 revealed that this observation was shared by most other Western countries.⁴⁶¹ There was no question of there being any real choice here so it was also impossible to draw up a policy. Only the United States supported greater activism.

The American view of Yugoslavia from 1990 to 1991: unity and democracy

The USA was the country that had been confronted with Yugoslavia's economic problems for the longest period of time. In the 'National Security Decision Directive 133' of 14 March 1984, President Reagan observed that Yugoslavia's financial situation endangered the country's stability so that that it had been weakened in terms of the Warsaw Pact. He therefore announced that the United States along with other Western countries would strengthen economic relations with Yugoslavia and would help to stimulate a free market economy within the country.⁴⁶² But this was to no avail. When the President of Slovenia, Janez Stanovnik, visited the United States in October 1988, he stated at a Washington press conference that his country was on the brink of civil war.⁴⁶³

Less than half a year later, in March 1989, the US State Department decided to fundamentally alter its policy concerning Yugoslavia. So far as America was concerned, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger had established that Yugoslavia had by now lost its geo-political importance of the Cold War period. The Polish and Hungarian economies were more open than Yugoslavia's. Moreover, Yugoslavia had a poor record in terms of human rights. The new American ambassador to Belgrade, Warren Zimmermann, who had been previously made responsible for human rights issues at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), was asked to convey that message when presenting his credentials to President Raif Dizdarevic of Yugoslavia and his Minister of Foreign

⁴⁵⁷ Also Both, *Indifference*, p. 71.

⁴⁵⁸ Unless otherwise stated, the following information about the official Western reactions to the developments in Yugoslavia between the summers of 1990 and 1991 is based on the internal Foreign Affairs memorandum by H. Hazewinkel, 'Het beleid t.a.v. Joegoslavië, 1990-1993', 11/03/93, which the author has placed at the disposal of this report, and Both, *Indifference*, pp. 72-98, which is based on the same piece.

⁴⁵⁹ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁰ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 1.

⁴⁶¹ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 3.

⁴⁶² National Security Decision Directive 133, 14/03/84, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/23-2222t.gif>, consulted 08/01/2001; Gervasi, *Germany*, p. 42.

⁴⁶³ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 443, n. 51.

Affairs, Budimir Loncar. He was able to add that Washington still greatly appreciated Yugoslavia's unity, independence and territorial integrity, but that its unity could only be supported on the basis of democracy.⁴⁶⁴ At almost the same time, Eagleburger told the American senate that Milosevic had created a dangerous situation in Yugoslavia: 'I don't yet say it's come to the point of a real likelihood of shooting. But it is far the worst situation with regard to the nationality question that we've seen since the close of the war.'⁴⁶⁵ Zimmermann's diplomatic intervention met with little success. Loncar informed him that neither the federal government nor the army could restrain Milosevic's Kosovo politics. And, according to Loncar, Milosevic was not remotely interested in the West's opinion about this.⁴⁶⁶ Indeed, the Serbian president, who already suspected what Zimmermann would want to tell him, waited for ten months before receiving the American ambassador. In addition, Zimmermann soon discovered once he arrived in Belgrade that Milosevic's Kosovo policy was immensely popular with the Serbs.⁴⁶⁷

In October 1989, President George Bush received Premier Markovic who was respected in the West for his attempts to implement economic reforms that would promote a free market economy.⁴⁶⁸ Markovic was expecting aid from the West. He was hoping that the American government would provide a billion dollars so as to bail out the Yugoslav banking system and that the World Bank would lend an additional three billion dollars. However, he could offer no guarantee of Yugoslavia's successful future. In fact, he warned that it would be difficult for him to continue his political reforms against the Communist hard-liners. Moreover, his reform policy could create a drastic increase in unemployment that in turn could lead to serious ethnic tensions within the six republics and the two autonomous provinces.⁴⁶⁹ Washington rejected Markovic's request for aid on the basis of the human rights violations in Kosovo and because the American Treasury, which determined the financial and economic aid policy, was only willing to help those countries in Eastern Europe that were prepared to leave all traces of Communism behind them.⁴⁷⁰

Shortly after this visit, the American diplomats in Belgrade outlined a worst case scenario where aggressive nationalism would result in Yugoslavia's disintegration. Such a development would be accompanied by extreme violence and probably war. However, Zimmermann's frightening message met with little response at a meeting in Brussels of the American ambassadors to Europe, which was also attended by Secretary of State James Baker.⁴⁷¹

Meanwhile, Washington's policy towards Yugoslavia maintained a combination of unity and democracy. The State Department felt that these two concepts were intrinsically linked. Slovenia's secession, which would possibly be followed by Croatia, could result in intervention from Serbia and the JNA. This would mean the end of democracy. On the other hand, unity without democracy was not feasible because the longing for democracy was also the driving force behind Slovenia and Croatia's desire for separation.⁴⁷²

The State Department maintained a largely non-active approach to Yugoslavia for almost a year after its policy was changed. The reason for this was that the ultra-conservative Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina was criticizing Lawrence Eagleburger for the financial interests that he had had in Serbian and Slovenian companies at a time when he was out of office.⁴⁷³ In addition, as he stated during

⁴⁶⁴ Zimmermann, *Ambassador*, pp. 2-3; idem, *Origins*, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁶⁵ Quoted in Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 8.

⁴⁶⁶ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 16.

⁴⁶⁷ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 17.

⁴⁶⁸ See, for instance: Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 173; Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 28 and 42.

⁴⁶⁹ Gervasi, *Germany*, p. 44; Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 46-47.

⁴⁷⁰ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 51.

⁴⁷¹ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 41.

⁴⁷² Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 41.

⁴⁷³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 58. In the 1980s, Eagleburger had helped to set up two Yugoslav companies in the United States: the LSB Bank, a branch of the Ljubljanska Banka, and Global Motors/Yugo of America, a branch of the Yugoslav

a speech in Berlin in 1989, Baker felt that the promoting of political and economic reforms in Eastern Europe was first and foremost a task for the European Community.⁴⁷⁴

At the beginning of 1990, Eagleburger ceased avoiding the subject of Yugoslavia and visited Belgrade on 25 February 1990. President Stanovnik of Slovenia impressed upon him that his republic was moving towards secession and that Yugoslavia was on the point of following the unfortunate example of the Lebanon, a country that had been ruined by civil war. Peter Jambreč of the Slovenian DEMOS party showed how relentlessly the Slovenians were striving for independence. Slovenia would not be dissuaded from achieving its objective by the threat that this could be accompanied by bloodshed. This was something that could happen in the rest of Yugoslavia but not in Slovenia. It was for this reason that politicians in Ljubljana felt that they did not need to take this into account. The Croat Vladimir Seks, who was a member of Tudić's HDZ party, informed Eagleburger that his party would adopt a Greater Croatian stance if Yugoslavia's internal borders were tinkered with.⁴⁷⁵

At this time, David Gompert was Senior Director for Europe and Eurasia and Senior Deputy to the National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft. After Eagleburger's visit, Gompert sent instructions to all American embassies in Europe to communicate to their respective governments America's concerns regarding Yugoslavia and to ask them to support the American policy of unity and democracy. Washington also referred to the elections that were soon to be held in the republics and that could result in forces coming to power that advocated Yugoslavia's dissolution. This was met with little reaction on the European governments' part.⁴⁷⁶

Meanwhile, Washington remained somewhat powerless. During his discussions in Belgrade, Eagleburger had made it clear that there was no question of the United States resorting to any form of violence to oppose secession, a message that was later reiterated by Zimmermann.⁴⁷⁷ On the other hand, Washington turned down a Croatian request for 'technical help to improve the police' in December 1990.⁴⁷⁸

From the spring of 1990 onwards, the American government ensured that its opinion concerning the developments in Yugoslavia would not be misunderstood. In June 1990, when the Serbian parliament declared a state of emergency in Kosovo and the Kosovan members of the house of representatives were sent home, the American government induced the European Community to join it in implementing the first phase of the CSCE's 'human dimension' mechanism against Yugoslavia. This concerned the country in question providing information about its human rights situation and its willingness to discuss this within the context of the CSCE.⁴⁷⁹ The US also informed Belgrade that any future aid from America would depend on Yugoslavia's political developments.⁴⁸⁰ Washington cancelled Secretary of State Dick Cheney's visit to Belgrade, which had been planned for the first week of July 1990.

Both the European Community and NATO's Political Committee were frankly disappointed by the Belgrade federal authorities' answer to the CSCE procedure. It showed that the federal Yugoslav authorities were unable to distance themselves from Serbia's position of intolerance.⁴⁸¹ Like Washington, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague had established in October and November 1990 that Yugoslavia was only being kept together for negative reasons.⁴⁸² Nonetheless, the extra European Council of government leaders from the European Community member states met in Rome

arms manufacturer Zavodi Crvena Zastava and an importer of 'Yugo' cars, 'Lawrence of Serbia', *The New Republic*, 24/02/92; David Binder, 'Eagleburger Anguishes Over Yugoslav Upheaval', *The New York Times*, 19/06/92.

⁴⁷⁴ Quoted in: Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, *Lessons*.

⁴⁷⁵ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 58-59.

⁴⁷⁶ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 64-65.

⁴⁷⁷ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 62 and 73.

⁴⁷⁸ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 95; Laura Silber, 'The Terrifying Logic of War', *Financial Times*, 02/09/95.

⁴⁷⁹ Callahan, *Wars*, p. 116. Austria also participated in this diplomatic action, Mock (hg.), *Balkan-Dossier*, pp. 68-69.

⁴⁸⁰ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 4.

⁴⁸¹ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁸² Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, pp. 6-7.

on 27 and 28 October. Apparently without discussion, it expressed the wish ‘that the current process of democratic evolution in Yugoslavia will succeed in developing respect for human rights and maintaining the country’s unity and territorial integrity’.⁴⁸³ Here, Washington and Europe were on the same wavelength: unity and democracy. At that point, there was a strong desire both in the EC and the United States not to support the ‘centrifugal’ forces in Yugoslavia.

The European view of Yugoslavia 1990-1991: democracy before unity?

Once a particular policy had been established by the European Community, there was not much willingness to change it. This position was partly determined by the fact that the French and German governments had reached agreement after the fall of the Berlin Wall concerning the idea that German reunification had to be embedded in the process of European integration that also needed to be developed in greater detail. The provisional result of this would have to be the acceptance of a monetary and political union in 1991. During this stage, the consensus within the European Community (EC) needed to be maintained as much as possible. The Dutch Minister Hans van den Broek also supported this approach.⁴⁸⁴ A similar desire to avoid cracks in the fortress prevailed at NATO that had been strongly involved in discussions after the end of the Cold War about the legitimacy of its continued existence. This organization came into being in 1949 with the aim of defending member states’ territory. ‘Out of area’ operations were not in principle a part of its objective although they were not completely excluded by the Washington treaty that had set up NATO.

This did not mean that there were no divergent opinions within the Western community. On 6 November, NATO’s German political advisor underlined his country’s somewhat extraordinary position with the remark: ‘if a choice has to be made between Yugoslavia’s stability and unity on the one hand, and democracy and human rights on the other, then priority must be given to the latter concern’.⁴⁸⁵ The German political director repeated this comment more than a week later at the European Community’s *Comité Politique* (CoPo), whose meetings were attended by the political directors of the EC member states’ Ministries of Foreign Affairs.⁴⁸⁶

The Europe Directorate of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs then added the following: ‘According to the current situation, the greatest supporters of Yugoslavia’s unity are not the greatest supporters of its democracy.’⁴⁸⁷ Although the dilemma was obvious, the policy remained unclear. Federal Premier Markovic, who supported economic reform but had no power base, was the only person who could enable the West to ignore the problem for the time being.

Yugoslavia was not particularly high on the priority list of the American foreign policy for 1990 and the first half of 1991. Much of the White House’s attention was taken up with Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait, the creation of an international coalition and armed forces along with the short-lived Gulf War. In addition, Washington’s foreign policy establishment was preoccupied with events in the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia’s possible division could not be detached from the potential dissolution of the Soviet empire or of other Eastern European nations. Opinions concerning the relevant policy differed between the State Department and the Pentagon. The State Department opposed any form of dissolution in Yugoslavia because it did not want the Soviet Union to follow this example.⁴⁸⁸ By contrast, the Pentagon hoped that a peaceful separation of Yugoslavia’s component parts could serve as a positive example to the Soviet Union. However, the State Department won the argument in Washington and its position met with much approval in the European capitals including The Hague.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸³ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 7; Both, *Indifference*, p. 90.

⁴⁸⁴ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 81 and 85.

⁴⁸⁵ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 8.

⁴⁸⁶ Both, *Indifference*, p. 90.

⁴⁸⁷ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 8. Also Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 70.

⁴⁸⁸ Gutman, *Witness*, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁹ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 79-80 and 84-85.

In April 1991, the American intelligence service, the CIA, warned that the Balkans would be particularly susceptible to ethnic differences after the end of Communism. The agency felt that this situation was the most dangerous in Roumania and Yugoslavia. Civil wars and even widespread wars could break out there.⁴⁹⁰ In November 1990, the CIA presented the National Intelligence Estimate, an evaluation of Yugoslavia, to President Bush. It detailed the Serbian striving for hegemony within Yugoslavia alongside the other republics' desire for a higher level of autonomy or even secession. It felt that there was a high chance of bloodshed as a result of these conflicting developments and predicted revolts amongst the Albanians in Kosovo and the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. A civil war was clearly on the cards but would probably not happen within the next two years. The US and Europe would be unable to preserve the country's unity. The CIA proposed that the American government's policy should focus on maintaining Yugoslavia's external borders.⁴⁹¹

Curtis Kamman, the State Department's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Eastern European, Yugoslav and Soviet Affairs, admitted to J.H. Meesman, the Dutch ambassador to the United States, that the West could do little or nothing to prevent the outbreak of violence in Yugoslavia.⁴⁹²

The American Congress paid less attention to the developments in Croatia and Slovenia than it did to the abominable human rights situation in Kosovo that had been strongly criticized in 1990 by the State Department's annual report on Yugoslavia's human rights.⁴⁹³ Senator Bob Dole of Kansas and Representative Tom Lantos of California argued for an improvement here especially after Dole and two other senators had visited Kosovo in the summer of 1990 and had witnessed the Serbian police using tear gas and clubs against the 10,000 Albanians who had waited for the Americans' arrival.⁴⁹⁴ This visit also had consequences in terms of the support that Yugoslavia could henceforth expect from the United States.

No unity means Yugoslavia's excommunication

The US Congress accepted the 1991 Foreign Operations Appropriations Law 101-513 on 5 November 1990. This act presented the prospect of financial aid to Eastern European countries that demonstrated their willingness to introduce a free market economy. It also included a number of economic measures that were directed at regimes that were hostile to Washington: Angola, Cambodia, Cuba, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria, North Korea and Vietnam.

The Republican Senator Don Nickles of Oklahoma, who had visited Kosovo with Dole in the summer of 1990, managed to add an amendment to this law so that Yugoslavia was added to this list of 'pariah' countries, an inclusion that was against the Bush administration's wishes.⁴⁹⁵ This meant that the law stipulated that within six months the United States would cut off all forms of financial aid, loans and credit loans to Yugoslavia and would freeze trade relations with the country if the human rights situation in Kosovo was not improved. Financial and economic relations would also be severed with the six republics until free elections were held there. In addition, the law stated that in the future oppositional 'democratic forces' would be supported financially. Americans working at international

⁴⁹⁰ Director of Central Intelligence, *Future*, pp. 181-183.

⁴⁹¹ Michael Putzel, 'Intelligence Report Predicts Collapse of Yugoslav Federation', *The Associated Press*, 28/11/90; David Binder, 'Yugoslavia Seen Breaking Up Soon', *The New York Times*, 28/11/90; Stephen S. Rosenfeld, 'A Timely Warning: The CIA Predicts a Blowup in Yugoslavia', *The Washington Post*, 30/11/90; K. Royce and P.J. Sloyan, 'The U.S. Waited. Back in June, CIA Told Bush of Atrocities', *Newsday*, 14/08/92; Gutman, *Witness*, p. xxiv; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 84.

⁴⁹² Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 9.

⁴⁹³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 126-127; Callahan, *Wars*, pp. 72 and 116; Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, pp. 21-25. For the human rights report on Yugoslavia, see: the United States Senate, Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Strife*, pp. 3-15. Kosovo features prominently in the rest of this hearing's report. See also the limited attention that was generally paid to Yugoslavia in: United States House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Policy*.

⁴⁹⁴ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 127-130.

⁴⁹⁵ For the history of Nickles' amendment, see: Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, pp. 30-33.

organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were expected to implement this policy within these agencies. The amendment affected a sum that was less than five million dollars. The measures became effective on 6 May 1991 but were suspended by Baker some two weeks later because he did not support the idea that the whole of Yugoslavia would be made to suffer for Serbia's behaviour.

Meanwhile, the amendment had an extremely adverse effect on American-Yugoslav relations, and especially on those with Serbia.⁴⁹⁶ The Nickles amendment was later copied to some extent in Europe. A Council of Europe delegation stated on 6 February 1991 that Yugoslavia would not be admitted to the Council of Europe until federal elections had been held there. There was even the threat of economic measures if these failed to occur over a longer period of time.

On 21 February 1991, the Sub-Committee on European Affairs of the American Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations held a special hearing about Yugoslavia, an event that had not occurred in a long time. The reasons behind this meeting were the awareness that Yugoslavia had become dramatically less important in geo-political terms and the fact that the country now appeared to be on the brink of civil war.⁴⁹⁷ Senator Joseph R. Biden, who chaired the hearing, stated that Yugoslavia's altered strategic importance meant that criticism of its government could no longer be withheld.

He also criticized the government's position that was based on the twin points of unity and democracy. For him, it was not a given that these points should continue to exist alongside each other in contemporary Yugoslavia, and he was supported in this opinion by Bob Dole.⁴⁹⁸ Nonetheless, Serbia was still championed on Capitol Hill by the Democratic Senator Jim Moody of Wisconsin and his Republican colleague Helen Delich Bentley of Maryland.

It was particularly Bentley, whose ancestors had emigrated from Serbia to the United States 'long before it was part of Yugoslavia' who had, as she admitted herself, 'strong feelings on the subject'.⁴⁹⁹ She objected to the hearing's title ('Civil War in Yugoslavia: The United States Response') and pointed out that Yugoslavia had not yet reached that situation. As an alternative, she suggested 'Preventing Yugoslavia's Internal Strife: An Accommodation Must be Found'. The sub-committee wanted to go no further than replacing the word 'war' in the title with 'strife'.⁵⁰⁰

The EC European Council, which had no solution to Yugoslavia's seemingly inevitable bloody separation process other than that of the USA, could do little else than advise against the use of violence and 'express the hope that the dialogue between the republics and the Federal authorities would lead to a new Yugoslavia that would be based on freedom and democracy'.⁵⁰¹ It was along these lines that the ambassadors representing the troika of the EC's past, present and future chairmen took direct steps at the federation and wrote to the republics' authorities in Yugoslavia.⁵⁰²

Following the deliberations of the political directors of the member states' Ministries of Foreign Affairs on 6 and 7 February 1991, it was decided that the Yugoslav republics' representatives should not be received by members of the Twelve so as to emphasize the preference for Yugoslavia's unity.⁵⁰³

However, Prime Minister Lubbers circumvented this agreement several days later by receiving Premier Lozje Peterle of Slovenia who was also chairman of his country's Christian Democrats. Peterle was visiting the Netherlands and their meeting was held under the pretext that it concerned contact

⁴⁹⁶ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 131.

⁴⁹⁷ United States Senate, Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Strife*, p. 1.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 2 and 37.

⁴⁹⁹ United States Senate, Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Strife*, p. 48.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰¹ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 15.

⁵⁰² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Van den Broek to the Belgrade embassy, 04/02/91, celer 5; *ibidem*, Coreu message from the Luxembourg EC chairmanship, 08/02/91, cpe/pres/lux 150.

⁵⁰³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Schoen 14 to Van den Broek, 07/02/91.

between two politicians from the Christian Democrat European People's Party.⁵⁰⁴ Peterle assured Lubbers that Slovenia's separation could be implemented without violence. However, Croatia's separation would involve violence, but this would not deter Slovenia from declaring independence.⁵⁰⁵

In fact, Lubbers was not alone in breaking the EC agreement. For instance, on 20 March the German Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher received the Slovenian President Milan Kucan and Minister Rupelj of Foreign Affairs. Genscher urged them not to take any hasty or biased steps.⁵⁰⁶

However, Van den Broek wanted to keep the EC agreement during Peterle's visit so he was replaced by Peter van Walsum, his Director General of Political Affairs. The Slovenian president convinced Van Walsum, a senior civil servant, that a Western policy that still focused on the maintenance of Yugoslavia's territorial integrity was unlikely to influence the governments of either Slovenia or (most probably) Croatia.⁵⁰⁷ Nonetheless, in terms of both Europe and discussions with American government representatives, Van Walsum realized that there was no possibility of altering the Western point of view so as to provide a higher level of support to the republics from which, he felt, more democratic awareness could be expected than from the Belgrade leadership.⁵⁰⁸

In February 1991, Washington informed the EC countries that it had already undertaken so many initiatives in Belgrade that it now expected a higher level of action on the part of Europe.⁵⁰⁹ Moreover, despite the fact that the Americans strongly supported Yugoslavia's unity, both the Serbian and JNA leaderships constantly suspected that they were actually undermining it.⁵¹⁰ The participants of the CoPo discussions agreed on 4 March that:

‘ultimately respect for territorial integrity must carry the greatest weight in those cases where the arguments both for and against the conservation of a country threatened with disintegration are more-or-less keeping each other in check. Agreement was reached that a life-threatening situation would be created in Central and Eastern Europe if those politicians who are confronted with ethnic problems begin to view the founding of a new state as an ‘easy way out’. This situation would be effectively a recipe for violence that would result in human rights abuses which would be considerably worse than those that are currently occurring in Kosovo.’⁵¹¹

The next day, the European Council repeated its statement of 4 February and confirmed its support for Yugoslavia's unity and territorial integrity.

However, it remained unclear just how actively the EC should implement its point of view. Fietelaars had succeeded Nooij as ambassador in Belgrade on 3 October 1990. Following his initial optimism, he soon changed his mind about the developments in Yugoslavia⁵¹² and strongly opposed the dispatching of European mediators to Belgrade: ‘There is no way that an outsider would return

⁵⁰⁴ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 16.

⁵⁰⁵ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁰⁶ Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 931.

⁵⁰⁷ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 82-83; ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Van den Broek circ. 152 to the Washington and Belgrade embassies, 28/02/91.

⁵⁰⁸ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 83-84.

⁵⁰⁹ See, for instance: ABZ, DEUARA/00042, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Van den Broek circ. 152 to the Washington and Belgrade embassies, 28/02/91; *ibidem*, Van den Broek to the Luxembourg embassy, 05/03/91, celer 21.

⁵¹⁰ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 101 and 123.

⁵¹¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Van den Broek 152 to the Luxembourg embassy, 05/03/91, celer 21; Both, *Indifference*, p. 91.

⁵¹² Both, *Indifference*, pp. 73-74.

from the hornets' nest of Yugoslavia in one piece.'⁵¹³ America's proposals also met with luke-warm reactions elsewhere in the EC.

Following the demonstrations on 9 March in Belgrade, J.D. Blaauw, a member of parliament for the Conservative Liberalist VVD party, presented questions that discussed the situation in Yugoslavia. He urged that the European Community troika should be sent to inform the Yugoslav government that any future aid would depend on compliance with human rights and respect for a pluriform democracy. In addition, Blaauw remarked that he feared for 'an extremely explosive situation' if the democratization process was not completed in Yugoslavia. Action by the EC that would involve both the federal government and the republics would have to be taken so as to prevent military conflict.

Prime Minister Lubbers commented that this proposed mission was already the subject of discussion amongst the 12 member states. When asked about the Dutch contribution here, he replied that the government in The Hague was investigating how the 'Twelve could turn this step 'into concrete action'.⁵¹⁴

Looking back in 1998, Fietelaars wrote about how, as the Dutch ambassador, he had observed the Luxembourg chairmanship in Belgrade. He also stated that the catastrophic forces that were operating between the Croats and Serbs in Krajina had become obvious by the Easter weekend of 24 and 25 March 1991. The dramatic events of mid-March were apparently realized in Belgrade by that time. From then on, it also became clear that only Bosnia-Herzegovina was still prepared to support the federal structure.⁵¹⁵ Therefore, on 28 March the troika of EC ambassadors presented a statement to Loncar, the Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs, that once again emphasized the need for a peaceful solution to the problems along with respect for human rights. A united and democratic Yugoslavia would have the best chance of being integrated into the new Europe⁵¹⁶. This was also primarily intended as a signal to Slovenia and Croatia that if they separated, they could not automatically count on rapid economic and political help from the EC.

On the same day, Ambassador Zimmermann of the United States presented Premier Markovic with a similar message from President Bush that placed an even greater emphasis on Yugoslavia's continued unity.⁵¹⁷ President Bush also phoned the Yugoslav premier in person.⁵¹⁸ Moreover, on 11 April Zimmermann urged Kadijevic that the JNA should not resort to the use of violence.⁵¹⁹ The NATO's North Atlantic Council of 27 March considered the situation in Yugoslavia to be extremely serious although tensions seemed to have decreased to some extent since the middle of March 1991. Despite its concern, the North Atlantic Council did not want to issue any public statements for fear that the Serbs in particular would conclude that dark forces from the West would facilitate separation. The Council left it up to the EC and the separate member states to voice their concern and to urge mutual dialogue instead violence along with democracy, respect for human rights and minorities, and the maintenance of Yugoslavia's unity and territorial integrity. Only the representative of a small member state expressed a somewhat divergent opinion by stating that Yugoslavia's unity could result in greater instability than would be created by the separation of Croatia and Slovenia.⁵²⁰ Austria received no support from the other countries when it proposed the implementation of the second phase of the CSCE mechanism on 28 March following the Serbian actions in Kosovo. Yet Serbia's reaction to

⁵¹³ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 18.

⁵¹⁴ TK 1990-1991, *Handelingen*, p. 3375, 12/03/91.

⁵¹⁵ ABZ, 109, 1998. Fietelaars 18 to Van Mierlo, 28/01/98.

⁵¹⁶ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 24; Confidential Information (187).

⁵¹⁷ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 24. See also: ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042. DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Van den Broek 084 to the Washington embassy, 25/03/91; Confidential Information (188).

⁵¹⁸ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 122.

⁵¹⁹ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 123.

⁵²⁰ Confidential information (175)

Austria's 13-point complaint was clearly alarming. The Serbian government stated that its human rights violations were understandable in the light of the 'separatist tendencies' in Kosovo.⁵²¹

The EC troika of Gianni de Michelis, Jacques Poos and Hans van den Broek then visited the Yugoslav leaders President Jovic, Premier Markovic and Minister Loncar of Foreign Affairs.⁵²² The aim of this visit was to emphasize to the country's leadership that Yugoslavia's disintegration would hamper closer co-operation with the EC because of its destabilizing effects on the Balkans. Moreover, the troika stressed that violence was not the solution and that federal elections also needed to be organized.

In the report of his visit which he presented during the Council of Ministers on 5 April 1991, Van den Broek made it clear that there was a very real chance that civil war would break out in Yugoslavia if Slovenia and Croatia decided to separate from the federation because this in turn would provoke an extreme reaction from the Serbs. During his discussions, Van den Broek became aware of the fact that nationalist sentiment in Yugoslavia was so powerful that the EC would be virtually unable to exert any form of influence.

These impressions were backed up by President Kucan of Slovenia who told EC government leaders at the beginning of April that Slovenia was now virtually certain to separate.⁵²³ Bearing in mind the Netherlands' upcoming EC chairmanship, Ambassador Fietelaars notified the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 19 April 1991 that Greece was already treating Milosevic as a head of state and that Italy and Germany also seemed to be reconsidering their positions in terms of Belgrade. This message was partly prompted by a conversation between J.L. Werner, the embassy's Undersecretary, and Drago Bekic who was a Croatian and Tadjman's personal advisor. Bekic was extremely critical of the discussions between the Troika and Premier Markovic of Yugoslavia. He argued that the federal agencies were being increasingly excluded and that the republics' presidents now constituted the only real power, a claim that Fietelaars described as a 'premise that is becoming difficult to dismiss'.

Although Bekic believed that it would still be difficult to discuss a confederation, he nonetheless felt that foreign mediation was needed because otherwise Serbia, with the JNA in the background, would exert a disproportionate influence on these discussions. Bekic blamed Western Europe for following America's example and emphasizing multi-party democracy and a market economy. He argued that it was insufficiently aware of the nationalities issue and the problems' historical roots. The West had to understand that the conflict between Croatia and Serbia was dominated by the fundamental antithesis between the 'European West' and the 'Eastern South' where Serbia stood for despotism, orthodoxy and nationalism. Bekic told the Dutch diplomat that Croatian troops would take action 'in the near future'.⁵²⁴ Werner was also informed that 26 June would be crucial for the area's independence. This date came six months after the referendum where the Slovenes had supported separation from the Yugoslav political structure.⁵²⁵

These developments again prompted the Eastern Europe department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to enquire about the feasibility of the EC position of maintaining Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and unity. The moment was 'probably nigh (...) that the only possibility is to guide Yugoslavia's disintegration in such a way that bloodshed can be avoided and that a part of the federal structure may still be retained'.⁵²⁶ The German government seemed to have reached the same conclusion but the EC as a whole had not yet progressed this far.⁵²⁷

⁵²¹ Mock (Hg.), *Balkan-Dossier*, pp. 69-71.

⁵²² Reports in: ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Coreu message from the Luxembourg EC chairmanship, 06/04/91, cpe/pres/lux 316; *ibidem*, Van den Broek 23 to Belgrade, 07/04/91.

⁵²³ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 29.

⁵²⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00405, Memorandum, CdP/Belgrade to DEU/OE, no. 1455, 19/04/91.

⁵²⁵ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 29.

⁵²⁶ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 31.

⁵²⁷ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 32; Both, *Indifference*, pp. 91-92.

It's not good but you can no longer be sure that it's really bad'

The Netherlands maintained an attitude of 'wait and see' in terms of the position of both the EC and NATO. Yet it remained unclear about what could be done to protect Yugoslavia from disintegration and civil war. There was also a lack of consensus at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry's civil servants felt that both Fietelaars and the Europe Directorate were being overly alarmist.⁵²⁸ There was even the suggestion of 'crying wolf' because since Tito's death the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been constantly informed that Yugoslavia was on the brink of disintegration. The usual NATO scenario was that Yugoslavia would collapse and then be invaded by the Soviet Union.⁵²⁹ The American diplomat Ron Neitzke later remarked, 'During the Cold War, for forty-five years, we were obsessed about Yugoslavia. It was one of the top three potential tinderboxes for World War III. The resources focused on that country were enormous.'⁵³⁰

The Dutch attitude in general was illustrated by the book *Joegoslavië in crisis* ('Yugoslavia In Crisis') which Marius Broekmeier wrote for the Clingendael Institute in 1985 and where he demonstrated that Yugoslavia's collapse had already passed the point of no return. Only three hundred copies of this book were sold.⁵³¹ Warnings from Belgrade and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' regional policy department were virtually ignored by the rest of the Ministry.⁵³² There, the attitude towards Yugoslavia was one of 'it's not good but you can no longer be sure that it's really bad.'⁵³³ Elsewhere, the fact that Yugoslavia still existed ten years after Tito's death was viewed as an indication that there was still hope for the country.⁵³⁴

However, the Dutch Ministry of Defence and the armed forces closely followed the developments in Yugoslavia during the spring of 1991. On 27 February, the Defence Chief-of-Staff General P. Graaff commented at the Defence Council that the situation was giving cause for concern. Now that Croatia and Slovenia were heading towards independence, he felt that it was no longer possible to create a compromise between the federal government and the republics. Similarly, he argued that there was an increasing likelihood of a JNA intervention so as to retain Communism and the federal political structure.⁵³⁵ After the Dutch defence authorities had initially thought that there would be a return to stabilization,⁵³⁶ the Defence Chief-of-Staff confirmed at the Defence Council of 22 May that, along with the problems concerning the federal agencies, 'the conditions for further unrest are clearly present'. At this point, B.J. van Eenennaam was the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Atlantic Co-operation and Security Directorate. Although he tended to be less pessimistic, Van Eenennaam warned at the same meeting that the West had few resources at its disposal that were capable of influencing the situation in Yugoslavia. He felt that the only means of providing some respite would be an association agreement with the EC to maintain the country's integrity.⁵³⁷

At the beginning of May, the Military Intelligence Service detected an escalation of relations in Krajina. This was partly because of the events in Borovo Selo where the Croatian police had been ambushed by the Serbian paramilitary (see: Chapter four). The Service did not exclude a JNA coup

⁵²⁸ Both, *Indifference*, p. 77; interview A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

⁵²⁹ Interviews H.A. Schaper, 10/04/00, H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00 and P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99; Both, *Indifference*, p. 80. Also Sanz, *Army and Woodward, Tragedy*, p. 72. In his book *The Third World War: a Future History* Sir John Hackett had described in 1978 how a build-up of tension between East and West would lead to conflict between NATO and Warsaw pact troops in Slovenia.

⁵³⁰ Quoted in Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 173.

⁵³¹ J.G. Siccamo, 'Nogmaals: ex-Joegoslavië' [Once again Ex-Yugoslavia], *Armex*, July/August 1993, p. 5.

⁵³² Both, *Indifference*, p. 80.

⁵³³ Interview H.A. Schaper, 10/04/00.

⁵³⁴ Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 69; interview A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00.

⁵³⁵ KAB, report of a Defence Council meeting, 27/02/91.

⁵³⁶ *Ibidem*, report of a Defence Council meeting, 27/03/91.

⁵³⁷ *Ibidem*, report of a Defence Council meeting, 22/05/91.

d'état. The consequence of all this would be the disintegration of Yugoslavia's armed forces along ethnic lines, which in turn increased the prospect of civil war.⁵³⁸

The Hague cancelled a spring visit by State Secretary Van Rooy of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. It was announced that she would be pleased to travel to Yugoslavia in the autumn once the situation had become clearer.⁵³⁹ Nonetheless, Vice-Premier Kok visited Belgrade on 27 May where he spoke with a number of people including Premier Markovic of Yugoslavia.

In an interview on 4 May, A. Mock, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Austria (which was yet an EC member) argued that the European Community should provide a mission of peace-keeping troops. He felt that it was too late for calls to reject violence and that rapid action was needed; otherwise a civil war would break out that would have consequences for the whole of Europe.⁵⁴⁰ Two days later, he replaced this proposal with a suggestion for a commission of three or four wise men who would stimulate Yugoslavia's internal dialogue. This idea was acclaimed by the leaders of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, Budimir Loncar, Yugoslavia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, rejected it because it involved meddling with the country's internal matters.⁵⁴¹

On 29 May, Premier Jacques Santer of Luxembourg visited Belgrade as the chairman of the EC along with Jacques Delors who was the chairman of the European Commission.⁵⁴² The previous day, Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President François Mitterrand had sent a joint letter to the Yugoslav state presidium and the presidents of all the republics in which they pushed for a peaceful solution and for dialogue concerning Yugoslavia's future political structure.⁵⁴³ Santer and Delors emphasized the importance of maintaining territorial integrity, the undesirability of altering the country's internal borders, the implementation of a market economy, respect for human rights and complete democracy.⁵⁴⁴ If Yugoslavia was able to find a peaceful and democratic answer to its political problems, the EC would then be prepared to put in a good word at the IMF and other agencies that could subsequently benefit from the stabilization of the Yugoslav economy. Moreover, although it was mostly on his own authority, Delors promised that the EC was willing to begin immediate discussions concerning Yugoslavia's associate membership and it would be able to count on the EC's considerable financial support (of up to five billion ecu).⁵⁴⁵ Yet even this financial carrot could not deter the leading figures in Belgrade, Ljubljana and Zagreb from a course that would inevitably lead to confrontation.⁵⁴⁶

On the advice of an extremely-concerned Jacques Delors, the CoPo (the political directors of the member states' Ministries of Foreign Affairs) were asked to prepare a worst case scenario.⁵⁴⁷ However, the Eastern Europe working party of the EC's European Political Co-operation section decided to abandon this once it became known that it could create the impression of accepting the republics' declarations of independence.

⁵³⁸ ABZ, Chief-of-Staff Intelligence Department, S.W. Schouten, Colonel of the Cavalry, to head of IDB, head of BVC and Foreign Affairs for the attention of AMAD, 03/05/92, DIS/91/095/2253, with the supplement of the memorandum 'Joegoslavië: verscherping militair/politieke situatie'.

⁵³⁹ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 38.

⁵⁴⁰ Mock (Hg.), *Balkan-Dossier*, p. 72.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 72-73.

⁵⁴² Reports in: ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042. DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Fietelaars 150 & 151 to the Luxembourg EC chairmanship, 31/05/91; *ibidem* Coreu message from the Luxembourg EC chairmanship, 31/05/91, cpe/pres/lux 496.

⁵⁴³ Libal, *Limits*, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁴ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 40.

⁵⁴⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081, DEU/berichtgeving dmv COREUS inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, June-September 1991, celer circ 339 from Van den Broek to the Athens embassy, etc., 04/06/91. See also: Isakovic, *Democratisation*, p. 4.

⁵⁴⁶ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, pp. 40-42.

⁵⁴⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081. DEU/berichtgeving dmv COREUS inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, June-September 1991, Lux. COREU message, 04/06/91, cpe/pres/lux 507; celer circ 339 from Van den Broek to the Athens embassy, etc., 04/06/91.

The only possibility was to wait and see.⁵⁴⁸ Ultimately, it was not easy to anticipate the form that the independence declarations would take: they would either be rhetorical or definitive. The European capitals tended to view the militant rhetoric of Ljubljana and Zagreb as simply the means of acquiring a good starting position for negotiating Yugoslavia's political future.⁵⁴⁹ Moreover, the Eastern Europe department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs hoped that the compromise that the presidents of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia had proposed to their colleagues on 6 June would be successful. The department felt that 'it would be sensible to allow the Yugoslavs the time to develop the agreement that has been reached so that consequently they can find a solution to their problems'.⁵⁵⁰

Nonetheless, at the same time State Secretary Van Voorst tot Voorst of Defence had asked D.J. Barth, the director of the department's General Policy Matters, to draw up a memorandum about the security consequences for the Netherlands if the tensions in Yugoslavia were to escalate. In his memorandum, Barth stated that the Netherlands had no direct interests that would be affected by a conflict in Yugoslavia but that it did have general interests in terms of Europe's stability. The EC, which was to adopt a Dutch chairman in the second half of 1991, would provide the proper framework for action. This was because political and economic tools would be initially deployed so as to influence the crisis. The CSCE involved many limitations including the unanimity rule. Nevertheless, it seemed sensible to use it as much as possible so as to test Europe's new security arrangement (which had been championed by the Dutch government) and, if necessary, to expand it still further. Potentially, the UN Security Council would also have to be involved. Barth argued that the use of military resources should be regarded as the final option because they would probably lead to a further escalation. Apparently, to some extent Barth was still thinking in Cold War terms because he particularly recommended that attention should be paid to the positions of the two super-powers and he did not exclude the possibility that both parties would be supported in the conflict.⁵⁵¹

On 19 June, the CSCE Council of Ministers in Berlin appealed for a peaceful solution to Yugoslavia's differences. It declared its support for the country's territorial integrity and simultaneously endorsed the republics' democratic developments whereby it also explicitly requested that attention should be paid to human rights including minority rights.⁵⁵²

James Baker, who had also attended the conference, flew to Belgrade on 21 June 1991 to explain the American policy on Yugoslavia to Markovic, Loncar, the presidents of the six republics and the Albanian leaders of Kosovo. The American Secretary of State indicated that Washington wanted the country's unity to be maintained. He warned Slovenia and Croatia against one-sided initiatives and that America would not recognize their independence. He lectured Milosevic in no uncertain terms. Baker argued that the Serbian leader was the main cause of turmoil and was responsible for the civil war that the country was heading for. In his opinion, Milosevic had scuppered Markovic's program and blocked the appointment of the Croat Stipe Mesic. 'We reject any claims by Serbia to territory beyond its borders. If you persist, Serbia will be made an outcast, a pariah.'⁵⁵³

But Baker was unable to threaten Milosevic with anything more than Serbia's isolation from the international community; America would not resort to violence. To quote Zimmermann, with his emphasis on maintaining Yugoslavia's unity Baker did not, as has often been suggested, give the go-ahead to the JNA's use of violence yet he also failed to call a halt through the threat of American measures if violence were to be deployed.⁵⁵⁴ He urged Markovic not to resort to violence because in

⁵⁴⁸ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 44.

⁵⁴⁹ Libal, *Limits*, p. 4.

⁵⁵⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/0 0081, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, June-September 1991, memorandum DEU/OE, 'Joegoslavië, for the ministerial EPS, Luxembourg, 17/06/91, 13/06/91.

⁵⁵¹ CRST, 245, D.J. Barth to Politiek Beraad, 12/06/91, D91/284 with the supplement 'Notitie over de veiligheidsconsequenties voor Nederland van een eventuele escalatie van de spanningen in Joegoslavië'.

⁵⁵² See also: 'CVSE roept Joegoslavië op tot eenheid' [CSCE Calls For Yugoslav Unity] *NRC Handelsblad*, 20/06/91; *Joegoslavië* ('Yugoslavia'), *ibidem*, 21/06/91.

⁵⁵³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 134.

⁵⁵⁴ Zimmermann, *Ambassador*, pp. 11-12.

that case the United States would have to choose for the side of ‘democracy’.⁵⁵⁵ Tudjman was completely unconvinced by Baker’s argument that the JNA would be deployed against Croatia if it declared independence.⁵⁵⁶ He was also impervious to pressure that he should adopt a conciliatory attitude towards the Serbs in Croatia. Baker was able to confirm that the various parts of Yugoslavia were on a collision course.⁵⁵⁷ Hence, it was too late for persuasion but too early for military intervention.

On 24 June, both the EC and the CSCE declared their support for Yugoslavia’s territorial integrity. However, they would not support Croatia and Slovenia’s independence. On the same day, Bonn used the EC’s Coreu communication system to send a message to all the member states’ capitals that urged the maintenance of a minimum of unity within Yugoslavia but also proposed caution in condemning Slovenia and Croatia’s expected declarations of independence.

According to Bonn, the desire for a Greater Serbia had caused the Slovenian and Croatian pursuit of independence. In fact, Ljubljana and Zagreb would probably have taken little notice of any condemnation because they were hoping that sections of Western European public opinion would take their side. Moreover, such condemnation would simply play into the hands of the Serbian forces that wanted to counter separatism with violence. The best approach was simply to ignore the declarations of independence as much as possible and to emphasize Yugoslavia’s internal dialogue that had to lead to new political relations. This would preferably occur on the basis of the Bosnian-Macedonian compromise proposal of 6 June.⁵⁵⁸ The Netherlands supported this German position.⁵⁵⁹ The next day, both Croatia and Slovenia declared independence.

4. Conclusion: is there a link between the end of Yugoslavia and the Western position?

Here, a basic question involves locating the main causes of Yugoslavia’s disintegration. The relevant literature contains two interpretations. Many authors consider Yugoslavia’s increasing ethnic tensions to be the main cause of its disintegration.⁵⁶⁰ Other authors feel that Yugoslavia could have continued to exist if Milosevic and his associates had not disturbed the fragile balance between the ethnic groups.⁵⁶¹ It is certain that both internal and external causes played a role in the historical process that led to this disintegration. The relation between these causes requires some discussion.

Causes from the inside

A problem that was fundamental to the Yugoslav state was the Serbs’ numerical domination. So long as Yugoslavia’s population continued to think primarily in ethnic terms, this domination would consistently create losers, both Serbs and non-Serbs, in every political and economic issue of division.

⁵⁵⁵ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 137.

⁵⁵⁶ He also refused to believe the news brought to him a day later by his followers concerning intelligence from Belgrade about a JNA attack. At that point, he said that this did not correspond with the agreements that he had made with Kadijevic and Milosevic, Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 152. See also: Glenny, *Fall*, p. 38.

⁵⁵⁷ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 133. For a report of Baker’s discussions, see also: ABZ, 911.31 Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Message to Minister of Foreign Affairs Van den Broek from Secretary of State Baker, supplement concerning C.H. Wilkins Jr. to Van den Broek, 22/06/91; ‘US Secretary of State in Yugoslavia’, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 27/06/91.

⁵⁵⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081. Berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, June-September 1991, Bonn COREU message, 24/06/91, cpe’bon 294.

⁵⁵⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081. DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, June-September 1991, Foreign Affairs to cpe/pres/lux, 25/06/91.

⁵⁶⁰ ‘Andreas Zumach Responds to Phillips’, *Covert Action Quarterly*, no. 55, Winter 1995-1996, p. 55.

⁵⁶¹ See, for instance: Ludwig Steindorff, ‘Die Vorgeschichte – Von der Zeit vor der Staatsbildung Jugoslawiens bis zur Krise der achtziger Jahre’, Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)Erben*, pp. 35-36.

Tito and his Communist Party failed to solve this problem, a fact that is most clearly illustrated by their decision in the first half of the 1960s to abandon Yugoslavism.

Serbia's ruthless attitude to Kosovo played a particularly important role in the dramatic developments that preceded the conflict between the nationalities. This was because its attitude was viewed in the other republics as a sign of what could be in store for them as well. The leadership of the Serbian Communist Party was partly responsible for this and had opted for this front line. They did this because many of their people were not willing to hand over power without putting up a fight; they would not allow a velvet revolution to take place as it had in other former Communist states at around this time.

The position of Tudjman *cum suis* can also be added to these endogenous factors. His extremely thoughtless attitude towards the Croatian Serbs and his claims on Bosnia-Herzegovina certainly contributed to igniting the conflict. In addition, the Yugoslav media were similarly responsible by helping to dredge up memories of a violent past and by spreading ethnic hate. The JNA also played a negative role in the conflict. Its social and political conservatism meant that it could not maintain a neutral position in terms of developments such as decentralization and the creation of a pluriform society. Ultimately, the army opted for a Greater Serbian program and therefore became allied with Milosevic. As subsequent events reveal, its role in forming and arming paramilitary groups that had begun before the conflict had even broken out, also contributed to its occurrence.

Causes from the outside

However, there are also authors who felt that the causes of Yugoslavia's disintegration were located in the West. They were critical of the West's attitude of 'wait and see' in terms of the developments in Yugoslavia that preceded the declarations of independence. Could the West have prevented Yugoslavia's disintegration? The supporters of the exogenous explanations have pointed to Yugoslavia's loss of international status at the end of the Cold War,⁵⁶² and the destabilizing consequences of the Western requirement of economic reform.⁵⁶³

It has, however, been suggested that Yugoslavia could have been saved by a larger number of credit loans from the West.⁵⁶⁴ The question is whether this is true. Yugoslavia's political elite had shown for far too long that credit loans simply meant that they postponed essential reform rather than implementing it.⁵⁶⁵ A form of recentralization was needed for achieving real economic reform; no republic was prepared to do this apart from Serbia and then only on its own terms. From the 1950s onwards, the Communist system had relied far too heavily on deploying decentralization as a safety valve. The 1974 Constitution had made that process irreversible.

In addition, there is criticism of the IMF's strict requirements because they resulted in social upheaval.⁵⁶⁶ But it should not be forgotten that during the 1980s the IMF was prepared to compromise on a number of occasions. However, the IMF did insist on its main requirement of recentralizing economic policy.

It has also been suggested that the EC could have saved Yugoslavia in 1989 if it had wanted to 'help to improve mutual relations so as to enable a united Yugoslavia to become a member of the EC'.⁵⁶⁷ The European Union has always opted to export stability rather than to import instability, and it would have certainly imported instability if it had admitted the Yugoslavia of 1989. If requirements

⁵⁶² Jason McQuinn, *The West Destroyed Yugoslavia*, *Covert Action Quarterly*, pp. 60-61.

⁵⁶³ Gervasi, *Germany, passim*; Jason McQuinn, 'The West Destroyed Yugoslavia', *Covert Action Quarterly*, pp. 60-61; S.L. Woodward, 'Redrawing Borders in a Period of Systemic Transition', Esman/Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, pp. 198-234.

⁵⁶⁴ Milo Anstadt, 'We moeten de mythe van de Servische schuld doorprikken' [We Have to Puncture the Myth of Serbian Guilt], *NRC Handelsblad*, 20/12/94.

⁵⁶⁵ See also: Michielsen, *Joegoslavië*, p. 225; Tromp, *Conflict*, pp. 33-34.

⁵⁶⁶ See, for instance. Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 383; *ibidem*, 'Redrawing Borders in a Period of Systemic Transition', Esman/Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, pp. 198-234.

⁵⁶⁷ Anstadt, *Servië*, p. 123.

concerning political and economic stability and human rights had been omitted in Yugoslavia's case, the floodgates would have then been opened to other countries that the Community was still excluding, such as Turkey. Moreover, this position would have deprived Brussels of the possibility of imposing entry requirements that probably would have been difficult to implement at a later point in time. The issue of whether the European Community should be prepared to import a certain degree of instability so as to prevent a more serious situation will remain a question that is certain to be frequently discussed in the future. At that point, it involved the antithesis between European Community stability and European security; it had become an issue following the fall of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

There is also Norbert Both's criticism that the West had supported the concept of territorial integrity '*ad absurdum*'.⁵⁶⁸ The question is whether there was any other possibility. Just as the West could not physically intervene in a sovereign nation so as to prevent civil war, it was also unable to promote the secession of republics within what was still a sovereign nation. For instance, at the beginning of June 1991 Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar had rejected the idea of sending UN observers to Slovenia with the argument that this area was not an independent member of the United Nations.⁵⁶⁹ The West's recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina under dramatically-altered circumstances certainly did not prevent the Serbs and Croats' use of violence.

This argument can be opposed by the rationale of David Gompert who was at that time closely involved with policy as the second highest official of the American National Security Council. He wrote: "Those who criticize the Bush administration for contributing to the conflict by favoring unity have yet to explain how favoring disunity would have prevented the conflict."⁵⁷⁰ Conversely, nothing was achieved by the Western insistence on emphasizing Yugoslavia's unity and striving for a confederal solution. Here, the question is whether more diplomacy would have helped the republics' leaders to reach agreement. '[C]ompromise wasn't in their lexicon', wrote the American ambassador Warren Zimmermann. The fact that Milosevic kept him waiting for ten months before receiving him was indicative of the prevailing attitude. In the summer of 1990, the Serbian president also refused to receive a delegation of seven American senators under the leadership of the Republican Bob Dole. The federal authorities admitted that they could no longer control Milosevic and his Kosovo policy. The fact that Milosevic was not susceptible to money and reason is demonstrated by a speech that he gave in November 1988:

"This is not a time for sorrow, it is a time for fighting. Serbia has become convinced of this over the last summer. This awareness has increased and has become a force that will stop the terror in Kosovo and will unite Serbia. No opposing force can halt this process; it is a process where all fear is weakness. The people are even prepared to live in poverty (...). We will win the battle for Kosovo no matter what obstacles we encounter either at home or abroad..."⁵⁷¹

The view that money could have succeeded here would be under-estimating the power of nationalism from the end of the 1980s. Nationalism's supporters prefer their own hell to someone else's heaven. Many Serbian leaders considered foreign governments and agencies to be their enemies. These included both the German government and the International Monetary Fund. The question here is whether they would have still knuckled under for loans, credit loans and donations to be given under certain conditions.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁸ Both, *Indifference*, p. 86.

⁵⁶⁹ Jakobsen, *Multilateralism*, p. 371.

⁵⁷⁰ Gompert, *Serbia*, p. 34.

⁵⁷¹ Ramet, *Milosevic*, p. 96. Quoted in Van den Heuvel, *Land*, pp. 100-101.

⁵⁷² Also Patricia Clough, 'Europe the Key To Yugoslavian Future', *The Independent*, 22/03/91.

The greatest problem in Yugoslavia was the sense of fear that accompanied the growing ethnic tension that was the result of economic decline. Many people felt unsafe. The Slovenes could still believe that they would be unaffected by the violence. But there was fear between the Croats and the Serbs, and the Bosnian Muslims were afraid of both groups.

Only a large-scale preventative deployment of troops could have probably ensured the desired security but that was still too much to ask of the world community in 1990 and 1991. It had more on its mind than Yugoslavia and also had strong views about national sovereignty.

Bearing all the arguments in mind, it is nonetheless possible to regret that in 1990 the international community did not have more resources at its disposal so as to remove the sting from the Yugoslav conflict. However, credit loans to guide the economic reform program did not help and there were no peace-keeping troops to prevent the outbreak of predictable crises.

But even if the international community's failings are accepted as a factor, the Yugoslav leadership must still bear a heavy responsibility. It starts with Tito's government that sacrificed so much for party monopoly and went on to such irresponsible projects as the 1974 Constitution along with uneconomic solutions that included the extensive decentralization of monetary policy and social politics. It continues with the leaders who failed to come up with more creative solutions to the economic and political problems in the years that followed Tito's death. And it concludes with the nationalist leaders, headed by Milosevic and Tudjman, who increased and exploited the ethnic tensions in an irresponsible way. Their number also includes the Slovenian leadership that found it all too easy to think: 'Après nous le déluge.'

Therefore, the West simply waited for Slovenia and Croatia to declare independence. The outside world would then have to come up with an *ad hoc* solution for the almost irreconcilable values of respecting territorial integrity on the one hand and sympathizing with the more democratic republics' right to self-rule on the other.

Part I

The Yugoslavian problem and the role of the West 1991–1994

Introduction to Part I

The main question dealt with in this first part of the report is how it can be explained that the Netherlands made such a relatively large contribution to the peace-keeping forces in the former Yugoslavia. How did a Dutch military unit come to end up precisely in Srebrenica, the enclave for which other troop-contributing nations to the region showed such little enthusiasm? This special position of the Netherlands cannot be explained solely on the basis of political factors in the Netherlands, but must also be considered against the background of the international diplomatic and military decision-making.

This part of the report will deal with the relationship between the Netherlands and the former Yugoslavia; it should be realized, however, that the contact between the two was only partially direct. In nearly all cases, international organizations acted as intermediary between the Netherlands and the former Yugoslavia. It will be shown that precisely this indirect nature of the official dealings of the Netherlands with Yugoslavia, despite all the good intentions which may have existed, led to mutual distortion of the facts and incorrect calculations on the part of the policy-makers.

The war in Slovenia was to be the first of a series of violent conflicts on Yugoslav soil during the last decade of the twentieth century. As each conflict ended, the hotbed of violence shifted towards the south-east and the course of each of these wars was an important factor in determining the nature of the next confrontation. The short war in Slovenia and the reaction of the international community to it will therefore be dealt with first, followed by the conflict in Croatia and finally the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. First of all, however, the theoretical starting points on which this part of the report is based will be presented and insights will be offered into the issues to be dealt with.

*Doors of perception and windows of opportunity*¹

‘Intervention is both a problem of knowing what to do and when to do it. The issue of timing haunts all retrospective looks at the Yugoslav catastrophe.’²

Two days after Croatia and Slovenia made their declarations of independence on 25 June 1991, the Yugoslav Federal Army (JNA) initiated actions on Slovenian soil. The Slovenian government wasted hardly any time in calling on the European Community (EC) and the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) to mediate in the situation that had arisen.³

How did the West, which had mainly watched passively as events developed in Yugoslavia up to 25 June, react when Croatia and Slovenia did actually declare their independence? And how did it react to the involvement of the JNA? The starting points determining the stance of the major nations, such as Germany, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, to the conflict will be reviewed. Since the European Community had the main involvement with the conflict in the first instance, particular attention will be paid to the activities of the EC in the coming chapters, alongside the ambitions, resources and scope for action of the United Nations, NATO, CSCE and Western European Union.

¹ The concept ‘doors of perception’ is taken from the title of a book by Aldous Huxley, in which he described his experience in the use of mind-expanding substances.

² Michael Ignatieff, ‘Introduction: Virtue by Proxy’, in Danchev & Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, p. xvi.

³ The European Community was succeeded by the European Union on 1 November 1993. The CSCE became the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the OSCE, with effect from 1 January 1995. To ensure uniform terminology, the terms European Community (abbreviated EC) and Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) will be used throughout this part of the report.

It is important to consider in the first place whether the West had a proper perception of the Yugoslav crisis. Did the West identify the actors in Yugoslavia and their objectives correctly, as well as the geographical regions involved in the problems? And did it have a clear insight into the nature of the conflict? The extent to which the media, in particular the Dutch media, offered insights to and/or forced opinions on the policy-makers (in particular the Parliament and the Government) will also be considered.

When policy concerns people – which is often the case – the perception of the people affected by the policy is also of importance: how do they understand the policy-makers' objectives, and how do they try to influence them? For this reason, this report also considers the insights, views and intentions of the various parties in (the former) Yugoslavia themselves.

However, good observation and correct insights are not enough to guarantee a policy based on reason and the appropriate policy requirements. The realization of policy objectives requires resources that are both sufficient and adequate to the purpose, as will appear time and time again in the course of this report. This applies not only to personnel and finances but also to the scope of the terms of reference and mandate of national and international bodies charged with tackling problems and bringing them to a good conclusion.

Another question which will be considered throughout this part of the report is whether, apart from the availability of sufficient resources, the political will to realize certain policy objectives was also present. Western action with respect to the wars in Yugoslavia has been described as the "Triumph of the Lack of Will".⁴ The truth or otherwise of this claim will be considered.

Attention will further be paid to the question of whether the rationale of the policy-formers corresponded to the categories involved and to the object of the policy. The answer given to this question will be largely based on consideration of the possible contradictions between the realities in (the former) Yugoslavia and western reality as perceived in Brussels, The Hague, Washington, New York etc.

To sum up, the topics reviewed here will cover:

perceptions: western perceptions of Yugoslavia and *vice versa*, and Dutch views of international politics;
 clarity of policy objectives;
 policy resources, including institutional assets;
 political will;
 the interaction of policy circuits.

The timing factor

Yet another relevant factor in this context is timing. Good timing is of vital importance, especially if several policy circuits are involved. A decision in one policy circuit can have an adverse effect in another: in such cases, policies can thus be counterproductive. Policy circuits can be visualized as a set of cylinders, rotating around one another. Each cylinder may have one or more openings in it. Some cylinders rotate in one direction, others in the opposite direction. There are only a limited number of moments when the openings of all cylinders are aligned with one another. When policy-makers realize that such a moment has arrived, they can make use of this *window of opportunity*. If they fail to do so in time, the cylinders rotate further and the opportunity is lost – sometimes forever. This idea of a window of opportunity is particularly relevant in the case of interventions in wars – especially civil wars.

Intervention in intrastate conflicts is not easy. It is in principle only likely to succeed if applied at an early stage, before the conflict has escalated, or at a late stage when the conflict has lost (almost)

⁴ Gow, Triumph.

all its momentum.⁵ This is true of military intervention, but even more so of diplomatic intervention not backed up by military resources.⁶

Seen from the perspective of the conflict region itself, early intervention would be ideal.⁷ Society has not yet been eroded so far that warlords have a free hand. Food supplies have not yet become a weapon in the hands of the combatants. Intervention is practically impossible when the battle is in full swing.⁸ The conflict has escalated; practically every inhabitant has lost friends or relatives. Especially in civil wars, the conflict itself creates new hate in this way, playing into the hands of extremists at the expense of more moderate elements. Even a powerful country like the United States will find it practically impossible to influence the course of a conflict at this stage.⁹

Many authors point out, however, that the national and international decision-making required for military intervention by an external force takes so much time that the spirit of conflict has already escaped from the bottle before an intervention force can be made operational.¹⁰ The problem is often not that the decision-makers are unaware of the impending crisis, but that new crises threatened in the (near) future generally lose the battle for their attention from existing crises.¹¹ For example, as already mentioned in the part of this report entitled 'The prehistory of the conflict', the conflict in the Persian Gulf and the disintegration of the Soviet Union caused policy-makers to lose sight completely of the developments in Yugoslavia between mid-1990 and 1991.

The relative lateness of military intervention also follows from the requirement that such an intervention must be seen as the ultimate remedy;¹² this norm is based on the *ius ad bellum*, the idea of the just war in international law. According to international law, only the Security Council of the United Nations can legitimize intervention in the affairs of another state. Two conditions must be satisfied before this can be done: there must be a threat to international peace and security, and the issues involved must not be purely domestic ones. Considerations of international law are not the only ones that can prevent the Security Council from considering a crisis. Serious problems are in general only passed on to the UN for consideration when the big powers or other international organizations are unable or unwilling to find a solution themselves.

If the UN finally approves external involvement in a conflict, there are various possible ways of deploying troops. The choice may be for a UN operation, but since the United Nations does not have a standing army it will have to ask member states to make troops available; this process involves a great deal of consultation. Moreover, it is by no means certain that such a round of consultations will yield

⁵ See e.g. O'Hanlon, *Lives*, p. 8; Hoffmann, *Politics*, p. 39; De Nevers, *Democratization*, p. 33; Max van der Stoep, 'Zwijgen is soms halve medeplichtigheid' (Keeping silent is sometimes halfway to complicity), *NRCHandelsblad*, 27/11/99; J.G. Siccama, 'De NAVO-top' (The NATO summit), *Armex*, 77(1993)11, p. 5; idem, 'Vredesmacht' (Peacekeeping forces), *Armex*, 77(1993)12, p. 5; idem, 'Luchtmobiele brigade' (Airmobile brigade), *Armex*, 78(1994)2, p. 5; idem, 'Lessen leren versus lering trekken' (Learning by rote as compared with learning from experience), *Armex*, 80(1996)2, p. 5; Terrett, *Dissolution*, p. 363; General A.K. van der Vlis in: A.K. van der Vlis & W.F. van Eekelen with C. Homan, 'Lessen uit vredesoperaties' (Lessons from peacekeeping operations), Weerdenburg (ed.), *Lessen (Lessons)*, p. 55; De Wijk, *Interventie (Intervention)*.

⁶ Bertram, *Diplomacy*, p. 66.

⁷ Cf. Andrew S. Natsios, 'Whither Intervention?', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 17(1994)1.

⁸ Eric Balemans, 'Een nieuwe militair-politieke orde 'doos van Pandora?' (Is new military and political order a Pandora's box?), *Liberaal Reveil*, 34(1993)4, p. 120; 'Gewatteerde interventie. In gesprek met Jan Geert Siccama' (Kid-glove intervention. Conversations with Jan Geert Siccama), *Idee*, 16(1995)(December) p. 14; Rob de Wijk, 'Absentie is preventie' (Absence is prevention), in: *Interventie*, p. 12.

⁹ Callahan, *Wars*, p. 85.

¹⁰ Bob van den Bos, 'Aanval op de oorlog' (Attack on war), *Idee*, 18(1997)(June), p. 29; Mient Jan Faber, 'Presentie is preventie' (Presence is prevention), in: *Interventie*, p. 16; Wim Bossema, 'Vredessoldaten komen nooit op tijd' (Peacekeeping forces never arrive on time), *de Volkskrant*, 16/12/00.

¹¹ Cf. Frans Timmermans, 'Conflictpreventie. De noodzaak van diplomatieke vernieuwing' (Conflict prevention. The need for diplomatic innovation), in: Melissen (ed.), *Diplomatie*, p. 113.

¹² Cf. Dijkink, *Rijk*, p. 492.

the desired number of troops. Another possibility is for a regional organization or a *coalition of the willing* to be given the task of implementing the mandate of the Security Council.

However, governments are often only prepared to engage their troops in a humanitarian conflict, *after* marked escalation of breaches of human rights has been observed.¹³ ‘Ordinary’ violations of human rights are not seen as a sufficient basis for the decision to risk the lives of one’s own troops. It is only when the violations assume the character of mass extermination and wide-scale expulsion, or become a threat to surrounding countries, that western governments are prepared to intervene.¹⁴ Politicians in democratic countries will consider carefully how much grass-roots support they have before deciding on any military action. However, while society at the end of the twentieth century has more information about the world – and about violations of human rights – than ever before, according to some authors it is slow to react with the appropriate emotions.¹⁵ As a result, while the military costs of early intervention are low, the political costs are high. Conversely, the political costs of late intervention are lowest even though the military costs are high.¹⁶ Additionally, the decision-making process depends further on the contributions of two specific groups of professionals: the diplomats and the soldiers. Both groups demand due time for their decision-making. Diplomats are often imbued with a ‘culture of caution’.¹⁷ While this is frequently a useful characteristic in the exercise of their day-to-day diplomatic tasks, it is less welcome when quick decisions have to be taken. Military commanders, in their turn, do not wish to plunge themselves and their troops into a conflict without thorough preparation. Proper analysis of the causes of the conflict and the characteristics of the warring factions is required, as is a clear view of the desired form of intervention and an exit strategy.

In all cases, setting up a peacekeeping operation demands a long preparation time. By definition, such an operation will not take place on the doorstep of the troop-contributing nations. In general, the UN does not ask neighbouring states to contribute troops, in order to ensure that they do not become involved in the conflict. The military commanders of the participating countries and the UN are thus often faced with logistic problems. The transport to the area in question is often not without difficulties. Many countries have inadequate means of transport, especially for air travel. As a result, military transport often takes place by sea, which can be very time-consuming. Other countries, especially those in the Third World, often lack the necessary equipment and are dependent on supplies from the richer countries.

Troops from these countries have to be trained in the use of the new equipment, while even soldiers from western countries will have to receive special training in the use of weapons adapted to the nature of the conflict. All troops will have to receive instruction about peacekeeping operations and the procedures typically involved in them, the nature of the conflict and the culture(s) in the region affected by the conflict. In the early nineties, three to four months usually elapsed between the authorization of a mission by the Security Council and the presence of operational peace-keeping troops on the ground in the region in question.

Theoretically, the consequence of the lack of synchronicity between the escalation of intra-state conflicts on the one hand and the decision-making about military interventions for humanitarian purposes on the other is that external intervention seldom occurs in the initial stages of the conflict. The willingness to intervene, boosted by the publicity given to large-scale violations of human rights, will not be great until the conflict has escalated to such proportions that it is hardly controllable, if at

¹³ Cf. N. Stuijver, colonel of the Royal Netherlands Air Force (ret.), chairman of the NOV (Dutch Officers’ Association), ‘De Nederlandse krijgsmacht op weg waar naar toe? Jaarrede 1992’ (Where are the Dutch armed forces going? Annual lecture 1992), Carré, 15(1992)12, p. 8.

¹⁴ Cf. Bruce Nelan, ‘Justifying Just Wars’, Time, 29/05/00.

¹⁵ Stjepan G. Mestrovic, ‘Introduction’, idem (ed.), Genocide, p. 12. This also applies in the case of preventive involvement, see Saadia Touval, ‘Lessons of Preventive Diplomacy in Yugoslavia’, Crocker & Hampson with Aall (eds.), Chaos, p. 415.

¹⁶ E.A. Hammel, ‘Lessons from the Yugoslav Labyrinth’, Halpern & Kideckel (eds.), Neighbors, p. 35.

¹⁷ Callahan, Wars, p. 230.

all. If external forces do intervene at this moment, they will tend to become directly involved in the conflict instead of remaining impartial arbitrators or mediators, as they are supposed to be.¹⁸

In his article 'Why the West Failed', the professor of war studies Lawrence Freedman argued that this was precisely the mechanism that operated in the case of Yugoslavia. 'The growth of concern [in the West] was always outpaced by the deterioration in the local situation and the consequent growth in the requirements for a successful intervention.' The result was 'a collection of half measures that left unbridgeable gaps between the ends proclaimed and the means adopted'.¹⁹ The applicability of the general ideas about the lack of synchronicity between the course of the conflict and the reaction to it by the outside world to the case of (the former) Yugoslavia will be considered in greater depth below.

Since this part of the report ultimately attempts to answer the question as to how it came about that Dutch troops ended up precisely in Srebrenica, particular attention will be paid not only to the developments in Yugoslavia and at international level, but also to Dutch policy. This is particularly relevant as far as the second half of 1991 is concerned because this period, in which the Yugoslav conflict first manifested itself to the world in all its violence, happened to be one during which the Netherlands had the presidency of the European Community (EC). It will be considered whether the Dutch government was aware of the intentions of the governments of the other EC Member States, and whether it took these into account when forming its policy.

Various officials from the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs have claimed after the event that this chance involvement of the Netherlands with the conflict committed the government in The Hague to the Yugoslav question to such an extent that they were subsequently unable to distance themselves from it.²⁰ The involvement of The Hague from the European President's chair had raised the target for Dutch performance so high that the Netherlands felt obliged to contribute more than it would have if it had not had the presidency. It will be considered below whether this view is backed up by the facts. To this end, the organization and ambition levels of the Dutch authorities (insofar as relevant to the issue discussed here) will be reviewed. In concrete terms, this means that attention will be paid to the role of the government in The Hague, the Dutch Parliament and the ministries of General Affairs (roughly equivalent to the Cabinet Office in the UK), Foreign Affairs and Defence.

Intermezzo: the morality of Dutch foreign policy

Before answering the above-mentioned questions, it is appropriate to make a comment about the morality of Dutch foreign policy. Dutch foreign policy is often described as motivated by ethical considerations, among others. According to this view, the voice of the minister of religion alongside that of the merchant is a constant element in the utterances directed by the Dutch government to other countries. It is claimed that this foreign policy is often (maybe even too often) characterized by a belief in the moral superiority of the Netherlands compared with other countries and a disinclination to get down to the nitty-gritty of power politics.

'The Dutch are so imbued with the need to bear witness (to the Gospel) that they always tend to be more interested in the moral content of the motives than in the results', wrote Ben Knapen,²¹ while as long ago as 1864 W.J. Hofdijk ended his six-volume cultural history of the Netherlands with

¹⁸ Cf. Rob de Wijk in: Marijnissen & Glastra van Loon, *Oorlog*, p. 92.

¹⁹ Freedman, *West*, pp. 53-54. See also S.L. Woodward, 'Redrawing Borders in a Period of Systemic Transition', in Esman & Telhami (eds.), *Ethnic Conflict* p. 230.

²⁰ Interviews B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00; H. Hazewinkel, 17/04/00; J.L. Sandee, 12/06/00; H.A. Schaper, 10/04/00; A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

²¹ Ben Knapen, 'Het vaderland in Europa' (The fatherland in Europe), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91. See e.g. Baehr, *Role*, p. 151; Castermans-Holleman, *Mensenrechtenbeleid*, pp. 87-88, 148, 261-262; Metzemaekers, *Grenzen*, p. 13; Malcontent, *Kruistocht*, pp. 23 and 46; Scheffer, *Natie*, pp. 44-45; M. van der Stoel, 'Koopman en dominee' (Merchant and minister of religion), in: Heldring (ed.), *Moraal*, pp. 78-82; M. van der Stoel, cited in C.J. Visser & S. Rozemond, 'Nederland en het opkomen voor de mensenrechten' (The Netherlands and the obligation to urge compliance with human rights), *Rozemond* (ed.), *Woord*, pp. 204-205; Voorhoeve, *Peace*, pp. 49-50; Wels, *Aloofness*, pp. 60-61.

the statement ‘It is better to be the most virtuous nation on earth than to be the most powerful’.²² The idealistic Dutch expert on international law Van Vollenhoven even believed at the start of the twentieth century that a combination of disinterestedness and moral superiority made the Netherlands ideally suited as the supplier of a world army.²³

Both the Dutch decision-makers concerned and observers have made similar comments about the policy concerning Yugoslavia in the period from 1991 to 1995. The above-mentioned moralistic tendency led in the Netherlands to a call ‘to do something’, on the basis of the idea that doing something is better than doing nothing.²⁴ Or as Van Vollenhoven put it in 1933, ‘The trick is not to avoid mistakes – everyone who (...) dares to act must make some mistakes’.²⁵ But is such a principled stand sufficient justification for a foreign policy?

In theoretical discussions of foreign policy, this attitude is often characterized as the idealistic, as opposed to the realistic approach. The latter assumes that the world consists of an anarchy of states that are out to maintain or increase their power. According to this view, a sheep – a country that wishes to play the innocent on the international stage – would be well advised to keep far away from such a pack of wolves. It is often – incorrectly – assumed that idealists are on a higher moral plane than realists. Such an attitude may be sensed e.g. in a statement like: ‘having done something (...) may be a pleasant feeling for a private person, from a moral point of view. However, as important as moral views are, they are not the only considerations that should guide foreign policy.’²⁶

In this part of the report, the positions assumed by various countries and organizations with respect to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia will be described having due regard to these differences in morality. The possible policy alternatives seen against this background, in particular for the Dutch government, will also be reviewed. In order to remove the risk over-simplifying the contrast between Dutch idealism and the realism or immoralism of other countries in advance, it should be noted that there is another sort of morality than that which is often seen as the basis of Dutch foreign policy, viz. morality founded on conviction.

The planner of actions, in the present case actions in the field of foreign policy, is also under a moral obligation to think through the foreseeable consequences of his actions and of the possible alternatives.²⁷ In other words, apart from a morality in terms of conviction and desirability there also exists a morality in terms of feasibility and consequences.

The sociologist Max Weber stated in his lecture *Politik als Beruf* (Politics as a profession) in 1919 that as well as feeling passionately about the cause he espouses, a man cannot call himself a real politician until, he:

‘also takes the *responsibility* for this cause as the main guideline for his action. And to this end, one needs *discernment*, the most important mental property of the politician. This is the ability to absorb the impress of reality calmly and deliberately, i.e. to *distance* oneself from things and people. The inability to do this is in itself already a deadly sin for any politician (...) For in the final resort there are only two kinds of deadly sins in the field of politics: an unbusinesslike approach and – often but not always identical with this – irresponsibility.’²⁸

²² W.J. Hofdijk, *Ons voorgeslacht in zijn dagelijksch leven geschilderd VI*, Leiden 1875, 2nd impression pp. 323-324.

²³ C. van Vollenhoven, *De eendracht van het land*, The Hague 1913, p. 28.

²⁴ Repeated by G. Valk in his review of Klep & Van Gils, *Korea*, in *BMGN* part 115, No. 4, p. 657: ‘Het alternatief zou zijn geweest dan maar helemaal niets te doen.’ (The alternative would have been to do nothing at all.)

²⁵ Cited in H.T. de Beaufort, *Cornelis van Vollenhoven 1874-1933*, Haarlem 1954, pp. 209-210.

²⁶ Baehr, *Role*, pp. 23-24.

²⁷ Fisher, *Ethics*, pp. 57-58; M.F. Fresco, ‘Zedelijke normen en buitenlandse politiek’ (Ethical standards and foreign policy), in: Heldring (ed.), *Moraal*, pp. 61-62; Van der List, *Mensenrechten*, pp. 56, 95-96 and 143; Voorhoeve, *Rol*, pp. 75-76.

²⁸ Weber, *Politiek*, pp. 90-91; italics in the original.

On this basis, Weber distinguishes between the ethics of conviction or intention and the ethics of responsibility. One who acts on the basis of the ethics of conviction does not consider the consequences of his deeds: 'If the consequences of his actions, arising from a pure conviction, are bad he does not consider himself to be responsible for this, but rather the world, the stupidity of other people – or the will of God who created them so.' One who acts on the basis of the ethics of responsibility, on the other hand, takes 'the shortcomings of the average person' into account. He believes 'that you have to take responsibility for the (foreseeable) *consequences* of your actions'.²⁹ Weber points out that those basing themselves on the ethics of conviction have a particular tendency to preach violence, 'the *final* violence, that must lead to the destruction of the rule of violence everywhere'.³⁰ He did not, however, make a choice between these two types of ethics, though he did realize that they were practically incompatible within one and the same person:³¹ 'For the problem is precisely how fiery passion and discrimination can be forced to cohabit within a single soul.'³²

'Truly: politics are made with reason, but certainly not with reason *alone*. Those who base themselves on the ethics of conviction are right when they claim this. But no one can prescribe whether one should act on the basis of the ethics of conviction or on the basis of the ethics of responsibility, and when one should do the one or the other.'³³

Others believe that one can make a choice between the two. According to them, politicians are obliged to have regard to the ethics of responsibility. Joris Voorhoeve, later to become the Dutch minister of Defence, introduced the term 'functional idealism' in this connection, in response to the question of how concrete contributions could be made to an improvement in 'world politics'.³⁴ And Todorov wrote e.g. in his book on the French civil war of 1944:

'Political life is a matter not of the ethics of conviction but of the ethics of responsibility. Its manifestations are judged not in function of what precedes them but of what ensues, of their effects rather than their motivations. The criterion that allows each of these acts to be legitimated must be as follows: in full knowledge of the facts, can I be sure that the good that should ensue from this will be greater than the bad that could come from it?'³⁵

What is true of foreign policies is also true of war. For example, Arnout Brouwers, one of the editorial staff of the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant*, wrote: 'In war, good intentions are not enough. They have to be grafted on to a realistic estimate of the relationship between end and means.'³⁶ Marijnissen and Glastra van Loon made a similar statement in their book about the war in Kosovo: 'Those who do not bother about effectiveness but merely base themselves on their moral motives may sometimes discover at the end of the ride that they have actually been acting immorally.'³⁷

²⁹ Weber, *Politiek*, p. 99.

³⁰ Weber, *Politiek*, p. 101.

³¹ Weber, *Politiek*, p. 98.

³² Weber, *Politiek*, p. 90.

³³ Weber, *Politiek*, p. 111.

³⁴ Voorhoeve, *Rol*, p. 76.

³⁵ T. Todorov, *A French Tragedy: Scenes of Civil War, Summer 1944*, Hanover 1966, p. 127. Cf. Martin Sommer, 'Niet mees – petitie volgt' (We disagree – petition follows), *de Volkskrant*, 26/01/01.

³⁶ Arnout Brouwers, 'Europa wil wel de oorlog maar niet de gruwelen' (Europe wants war without the associated horrors), *de Volkskrant*, 18/01/01.

³⁷ Marijnissen & Glastra van Loon, *Oorlog*, p. 193. Cf. M. Bos, 'Verheven moraal leidt niet tot betere rechtsorde' (A high moral tone does not lead to a better legal order), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/12/99: '... human rights may be universal, but they do not have an 'absolute' effect. ... You always have to ask yourself what the role and the scope of a human right that has been repealed are, and what is or can be regarded as 'just' under the given circumstances. In a historical perspective, justice

Some critics of Dutch foreign policy also make a stand against the dominance of the ethics of conviction over the ethics of responsibility which they perceive in it. According to the historian Maarten Kuitenbrouwer from Utrecht, Dutch human rights policy after the Second World War aimed at mobilizing domestic support for promotion or protection of human rights elsewhere in the world often called on ‘specifically Dutch feelings of humanity and civilization (...) which led to ineffective or even counter results when embodied in the foreign policy.’³⁸ And as early as 1974, C.L. Patijn wrote that ‘a deep misunderstanding about the way desired effects could be realized in the international field’ lay behind ‘the continued pressure for permanent intervention’ by Dutch diplomacy in connection with human rights violations in other countries.³⁹

The emeritus professor of Human Rights Peter Baehr, on the other hand, believes that it can actually harm the credibility of the Netherlands, which regards its human rights policy as an essential part of its foreign policy:

‘if it has to adapt its policy too much to that of other countries in the interests of a supposed increase in effectiveness. The alternative, of being ‘one crying in the wilderness’, may not seem very attractive but can actually be preferable in terms of credibility in the long term. Finally, the credibility with respect to one’s own grass roots must not be lost sight of either.’⁴⁰

The relationship between the Dutch will to action⁴¹ and the (predictable) effectiveness of the policy followed will therefore be scrutinized in this part of the report. It is interesting in this connection that Dutch foreign policy, which is often described as reactive,⁴² had the intention of acting as a catalyst on international decision-making in the case of Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1995. Attention will therefore also be paid to the question as to whether the organization of Dutch foreign policy was adapted to this end and how this was given form.

In answering these questions, it is not the intention to pass easy judgements in the light of hindsight on the decisions taken. As engineer B.J. van der Vlies, member of Parliament for the SGP (one of the Christian parties) wrote as early as the summer of 1992 about military actions in support of humanitarian activities in the former Yugoslavia, ‘Participation creates heavy responsibilities, but so does non-participation’.⁴³ Or as the Americans put it in the discussions on intervention, you’re ‘damned if you do, damned if you don’t’.⁴⁴ It is however the intention, on the basis of knowledge which was already available at the time, to map how much room there was for manoeuvre and what alternatives

has never been anything else than ‘what works’; Jonathan Moore, ‘Introduction’, in Moore (ed.), *Choices*, p. 7: ‘To be moral is to be operational ...’; Both, *Indifference*, version 99, p. 8: ‘Moral entrapment’ refers to instances where a government publicly commits itself to a policy in the name of certain moral values and principles at stake, only to discover that it cannot translate its moral concerns into effective policy.’; M. van der Stoel, ‘Koopman en dominee’, in Heldring (ed.), *Moraal*, p. 81: ‘The word of witness must always have a well considered function. It cannot be simply the expression of deeply rooted feelings and convictions, but must also be aimed at achieving an objective. ... Effect and repercussion must therefore always be given careful consideration, especially in situations of acute tension and conflict.’ See also Willem de Bruin, ‘De diepe stilte rond Tsjetsjenië’ (The deep silence round Chechnya), *de Volkskrant*, 10/12/99; Voorhoeve, *Peace*, p. 248; F. Westerman & J.W. Honig, ‘Dezelfde gebeurtenis, verschillende interpretaties: Twee boeken over Srebrenica’ (Different interpretations of the same event: two books about Srebrenica), in Weerdenburg (ed.), *Lessen*, p. 19.

³⁸ Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland*, p. 201.

³⁹ C.L. Patijn, ‘Grenzen en mogelijkheden van de morele factor in de buitenlandse politiek’ (Boundaries of and scope for the moral factor in foreign policy), in Heldring (ed.), *Moraal*, p. 32.

⁴⁰ P.R. Baehr, ‘Een hoeksteen van het buitenlands beleid? Nederland en de rechten van de mens’ (A cornerstone of foreign policy? The Netherlands and the rights of man), in Van den Berg, Boerfijn & Weerdenburg, *Wijs*, p. 32.

⁴¹ ‘Dutch foreign policy regarding Yugoslavia was very activist, certainly by small power, and even by great power standards’, Jan Willem Honig, ‘Dutch Foreign Policy Towards Ethnic Conflict’, in Baehr/Baedet/Werdmöller(eds.), *Rights*, p. 92.

⁴² See e.g. Castermans-Holleman, *Mensenrechtenbeleid*, p. 76.

⁴³ B.J. van der Vlies, ‘Kort en bondig’ (Short and sweet), *De Banier*, 20/08/92, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Richard C. Leone, ‘Foreword’, in: Callahan, *Wars*, p. xi.

there were for other policies, in order to explain why the policy was followed as it was and to judge the policy for internal consistency.

It goes without saying that this part, like any work of history, can only offer a limited cross-section through the reality of the time. The limitations on space in this report made it even more imperative to make choices. Without wishing to offer a story that is too strongly overshadowed by the ending which is already known in the meantime, it will be clear that this part of the report is strongly marked by the ultimate outcome, the sending of Dutchbat to Srebrenica. This means that certain aspects of the case that played an important role for decision-makers and opinion formers at the time will receive relatively little attention here. This is true e.g. of the great fear of the outbreak of conflicts in other parts of (the former) Yugoslavia such as Kosovo and Macedonia,⁴⁵ the problems connected with the recognition of Macedonia,⁴⁶ the operation of sanctions against (the former) Yugoslavia and the actions of Dutch naval units, the financial aspects of the operations⁴⁷ and the reception of refugees from the former Yugoslavia.

⁴⁵ With respect to Kosovo see e.g. Detrez, *Balkan*, pp. 95-113; B. Rijs, 'Meneer de president' (Mr. President), *HP/De Tijd*, 05/02/93, pp. 14-20; BVD (Dutch internal security service), 'Probleemgebied Kosovo' (The Kosovo problem area), January 1994.

⁴⁶ As regards the question of Macedonia, see e.g. Detrez, *Balkan*, pp. 141-162.

⁴⁷ See e.g. TK, 1995-1996, 24 605, Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4; TK, 1996-1997, 25 250 Nos. 1, 2 and 3.

Chapter 1

Europe confronted with war in Slovenia: June-July 1991

1. War in Slovenia: ‘not worth the life of a single Serbian soldier’

‘When we started breaking up Yugoslavia and changing the social system in 1990, did we have any idea what the results of these changes would be? I don’t think so. If we had, things would be different now ... Now the region and the system of the former Yugoslavia are a mess. Even if the best minds of the former Yugoslavia were to work together, they would find it difficult to deal with the situation; divided as they are at present, it is almost impossible to find a solution.’⁴⁸

Slovenia declared its independence on 25 June 1991. With the exception of Bulgaria, not a single country recognized it; the authorities in Ljubljana were thus quickly forced to give up their idea of introducing their own passport, and Slovenes abroad continued for the moment to make their way through the world as Yugoslavs. At the same time as the declaration of independence, a contingent of three thousand Slovene policemen occupied the frontier with Croatia. Along the borders with Italy, Austria and Hungary, the frontier signs, flags and other Yugoslav symbols were replaced by emblems of Slovenia. The federal police and customs officials were ordered to leave their posts. The Slovenian authorities commandeered the control towers at airports. The Slovenian territorial defence forces quickly gained control of all Slovenian territory, and declared themselves lord and master of the air space above its soil.

The estimated more than thirty thousand Slovenian soldiers of the territorial defence forces had in principle to be prepared to confront the powerful forces of the JNA. The federal army had started calling up Serb reserves in May 1991, raising the number of troops in Slovenia from twenty thousand to 55,000 and those in Croatia from forty thousand to a hundred thousand.⁴⁹ The JNA did not dare to rely on multi-ethnic troops in any action against Slovenian independence, and therefore mainly made use of purely Serbian units in support of its plans. The above-mentioned expansion of the forces would however prove to be ineffective and, as it turned out, even counterproductive.

On the day before the declaration of independence, the Serb president Milosevic and his confidant Jovic on the one hand and the Minister of Defence General Kadijevic and JNA chief of staff Adzic on the other had still not reached agreement about the course to be followed. The political leaders of Serbia considered that the JNA should confine itself to protecting the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. The JNA was not yet fully prepared to give up the idea of Yugoslavia. Moreover, the military leaders were annoyed that Milosevic and Jovic had prevented the Croat Mesic from assuming the chairmanship of the presidium on 15 May, as a result of which the Yugoslav presidium was without a chairman. This topic overshadowed the talks to such an extent that the course to be followed in dealing with the country’s problems was forced into the background.⁵⁰

On 25 June, the Yugoslav Federal Executive Council (the cabinet) approved the deployment of no more than 1900 JNA troops, intended for the protection of the frontier. In fact, the cabinet was not authorized to take this decision since the state presidium had the supreme command of the army. The presidium was paralysed, however, because Mesic had not been appointed chairman.

⁴⁸ Mira Markovic, Milošević’s wife, *Night*, p. 127 (12/10/93).

⁴⁹ Isby, *Yugoslavia*.

⁵⁰ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 340.

The motives that led the Yugoslav premier Markovic to agree with the decision to deploy JNA troops have never been made completely clear.⁵¹ There are various possible explanations. On the one hand, Markovic probably acted under pressure from the JNA. On the other, he was furious about the sudden seizure of the customs posts by the Slovenian leadership, despite their assurance a few days before that things were not that bad; indeed, they had signed an agreement at that time stating that the customs duty on goods passing the Slovenian border would be handed over to Belgrade.⁵² The Slovenian seizure of the border and customs posts removed the basis for the federal programme of economic reforms. Markovic may also have been overpowered by his deep personal attachment to the Yugoslav idea.⁵³

Three thousand JNA troops were finally deployed – still a very modest operation in view of the potential the federal army had at its disposition in Slovenia. The force was in any case much too small to stand up to the many tens of thousands the Slovenian authorities managed to mobilize under the motto of territorial defence. The federal troops were not authorized to shoot, and indeed some of them had not been issued with live ammunition. The JNA high command in Belgrade expected the Slovenian government and people to climb down after a limited display of force, a kind of police action.

In any case, the JNA units passing through Croatia on their way to Slovenia encountered no problems. The authorities there did nothing to impede the advance of the federal army, despite a mutual assistance pact signed between Slovenia and Croatia in January which stated that if one of the two republics was to be attacked, the other would not allow troop movements on its soil.⁵⁴ It was partly thanks to this Croatian compliance that the JNA experienced few problems in occupying 133 of the 137 Slovenian border posts in the space of 48 hours on 27 and 28 June. Federal units also attacked Ljubljana airport on 27 June, but the federal army did not manage to occupy the airport.

Neither did it succeed in putting an end to Slovenian radio and TV broadcasts by destroying the transmitters. After this, events took a disastrous turn for the JNA. On the very same day, units of the Slovenian territorial defence forces surrounded federal army barracks on Slovenian soil, where extra large numbers of troops had recently been quartered. Their water and electricity supplies were cut off, and telephone links were interrupted. The JNA was completely surprised by the resistance offered.⁵⁵ Markovic, who must have felt that the ground was slipping away under his feet, proposed a ceasefire and a three-month suspension of the declarations of independence of Croatia and Slovenia on the evening of 27 June – the first day of the war. None of the warring factions paid any attention to this proposal, however.

In slightly more than a week's time, the JNA lost 7900 troops by desertion or capture by the Slovenian forces. Thirty-one tanks, 230 armoured vehicles and four helicopters were put out of action, while the Slovenian forces captured no fewer than 124 tanks.⁵⁶ The Slovenian defence activities were backed up by good military organization and a wealth of information. Slovenes working for the federal ministry of Defence passed on the JNA's plans straight to Ljubljana. Moreover, the morale of the Slovene defence forces was high, unlike that of the JNA. Some JNA soldiers were told that they were being deployed to counter an attack by German and Austrian forces, others that the threat was an Italian invasion.⁵⁷ Picture their amazement and shock when they found that they were supposed to fight fellow Yugoslavs. The limited nature of the operation and the lack of clarity about its objectives helped

⁵¹ See e.g. Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 154-155 and 161.

⁵² Zimmerman, *Origins*, pp. 142-143; Ulrike Rudberg, 'Servië zal desnoods met geweld Servische minderheden helpen' (Serbia intends to support Serb minorities – with force, if necessary), de Volkskrant, 21/06/91; Robin Alison Remington, *The Yugoslav Army: Trauma and Transition*, in Danopoulos & Zirker (eds.), *Relations*, p. 172 n. 36.

⁵³ Pointers in this direction may be found in 'Markovic: Belgrado zal het leger inzetten' (Markovic says Belgrade will deploy army), *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/06/91; Detrez, *Balkan*, p. 131.

⁵⁴ Ramet, *War*, IV, claims that Milošević got Croatia to adopt this stance as part of the Karadjordjevo agreement.

⁵⁵ See e.g. the reaction of the JNA generals Andrija Raseta and Milan Aksentijević in Silber, Little, *Death*, p. 158.

⁵⁶ UN, S/1994/674/Appendix II, Bassiouni report, appendix III, p. 21.

⁵⁷ See e.g. Theo Engelen, 'Slovenië laat gevangenen vrij, wijst ultimatum van de hand' (Slovenia releases prisoners but rejects ultimatum), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/07/91.

to demoralize the JNA even further. Furthermore, the Slovene territorial defence forces experienced relatively little trouble in blocking the advance of the JNA armour. This took place along main roads, allowing the Slovenian troops to cut off these roads with barricades and set the tanks and armoured vehicles under fire when they had come to a halt. Once the Slovene defence forces had managed to set a few JNA tanks on fire and to shoot down a few helicopters, the morale of the Slovene population seemed unshakeable.

The divided views in Belgrade about the point of the war raised as many problems for the JNA as the resistance in Slovenia. It was clear to everyone that the real struggle would centre on Croatia. Some of the leaders in Belgrade regarded the attack on Slovenia as a regression to Yugoslavism, serving no useful purpose at all in the struggle to promote the interests of (Greater) Serbia.⁵⁸ Others were convinced, on the other hand, that if the JNA did not fight to preserve Slovenia, the subsequent battles in Croatia would be seen as a war between Serbs and Croats. If Slovenia was given up, then the JNA and the Serbian leadership would lose, both at home and abroad, the benefit of the argument that they were fighting for the unity of Yugoslavia.⁵⁹

However, Slovenia as such was not worth a war to Milosevic. According to the diaries of his great confidant Jovic, he had said on the eve of Croatia's and Slovenia's declarations of independence, 'We oppose any policy aimed at keeping the Croats and Slovenes (in the federation) by force and we repeat our demands that the army should establish itself along the new Serbian borders of Yugoslavia. If it fails to do so, we will organize our own defence and drop the Yugoslav army.'⁶⁰

Milosevic repeated this message clearly to Minister of Defence Kadijevic on 27 June.⁶¹ The JNA, under the leadership of Kadijevic, wanted to strike a firm blow in Slovenia after their humiliating initial experiences. This was not intended so much to keep Slovenia permanently within the federation as to show the rest of Yugoslavia – in particular Croatia – the kind of reaction any attempt at secession was likely to encounter. In other words, the JNA should defeat the Slovenian troops before withdrawing. The army high command calculated that this would require an extra three brigades and that more use should be made of air power than had been done so far.⁶² The state presidium did not agree with this analysis, however. Jovic stated in the presidium as early as 30 June that there was no point in continuing to wage war in Slovenia.⁶³ On the same day, Milosevic decided to end his opposition to the nomination of Mesic as chairman of the state presidium. He needed the Croat to create a constitutional basis for an order to the JNA to withdraw from Slovenia.

According to his diary, Jovic together with Milosevic made it clear to Kadijevic on 5 July that the JNA had to concentrate its troops along the line joining Karlovac and Plitvice in the west, Baranja, Osijek and Vinkovci in the east and the river Neretva in the south (see map in Section 2 of Chapter 2).⁶⁴ Kadijevic obeyed, and then blamed premier Markovic for the Slovenian debacle, claiming that the premier had forced their army into a military adventure for which it was not prepared.⁶⁵ This was to Milosevic's advantage: his position could only be strengthened if premier Markovic and Minister of Defence Kadijevic (also Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command) started squabbling.⁶⁶ On 12 July, Milosevic gloated to the British and American ambassadors in Belgrade, Peter Hall and Warren Zimmermann, that Markovic had blundered with his half-hearted measures in Slovenia: according to the Serbian leader, he should either have sent a hundred thousand soldiers immediately to Slovenia, or

⁵⁸ Libal, *Limits*, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁹ Glenny, *Fall*, p. 97.

⁶⁰ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 340; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 159.

⁶¹ Jovic, *Dani*, pp. 343-345; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 160.

⁶² Kadijevic, *View*, p. 132.

⁶³ Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 161.

⁶⁴ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 349; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 164.

⁶⁵ Theo Engelen, 'Van solidariteit Kroaten en Slovenen is niet veel over' (Not much left of solidarity with Croats and Slovenes), *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/07/91.

⁶⁶ Cf. Doder/Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 94.

none at all. If it had been up to Milosevic, he would not have sent any troops: as he put it, Slovenia was not worth the life of a single Serbian soldier.⁶⁷ Hard lines on the 37 JNA soldiers who did fall.

The struggle was over in ten days. While outsiders might have characterized it as a Mickey Mouse war, it had a lasting effect on the Slovenes. They called it their war of independence. Their state had received a baptism of blood, for the Slovenes had their own – eighteen – victims too: twelve members of the territorial defence and police forces, and six civilians. While the declaration of independence spoke of disassociation from the Yugoslav federation, an opinion poll held after the bloodshed showed that three-quarters of the Slovenes were no longer prepared to have any link with Yugoslavia, no matter how tenuous.⁶⁸

2. David and Goliath: A public relations coup

The politicians in Ljubljana made simultaneous use of the confrontation with the JNA as the basis for a well-thought-out public relations campaign, aimed at a number of different target groups: the new state's own population, in the hope of getting it to close its ranks more firmly behind the government; the officers and men of the JNA, in order to sow the seeds of doubt in their loyalty to the federal army; and, probably most importantly, the European governments and their electorate which had to be fed with television images.⁶⁹

While the action of the federal army was limited in nature, involving only three thousand troops, and the number of victims on the JNA side was three times that among the Slovenes, the Slovenian authorities presented the world with a picture of the JNA operation as a repetition of the Soviet invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, and as a copy of the action of the Chinese authorities in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Film images were intended to raise the impression in the West that this was an operation involving armoured military units in Soviet-made tanks against an innocent population – a battle between democracy and panzer Communism, between civilization and barbarity. The political leaders spoke continually of the threat of mass murders of the civilian populations, which never eventualized.⁷⁰ The Slovenian president Kucan told western journalists that they were the only mouthpiece of oppressed Slovenia.⁷¹ He asked for understanding from world opinion for his republic's wish to secede from a country governed by 'antiquated ideological formulas' and 'hegemonistic ambitions'.⁷²

The Dutch journalist Caroline de Gruyter, writing for *Elsevier*, stated that the Slovenian propaganda machine had beaten 'the experienced PR men of Belgrade' hands down by forcing the Serbs into the role of merciless Bolshevik murderers.⁷³ The American ambassador Zimmermann spoke of 'the most brilliant public relations coup in the history of Yugoslavia'.⁷⁴ Henk Hirs, reporting for the Dutch daily *Trouw* from Ljubljana, saw the whole series of activities as 'intended to persuade the outside

⁶⁷ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 149.

⁶⁸ Opinion poll cited in a Round Table discussion on Yugoslavia on Soviet television, 14/07/91, 12:30, included in the BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 16/07/91. According to Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 144, all Slovenes held this opinion after the short-lived war. See also the remarks in this connection by Kucan in Ray Moseley, 'Fighting pushes Yugoslav peace plan toward collapse', *Chicago Tribune*, 30/06/91; Rajko Mursic, 'The Yugoslav Dark Side of Humanity. A View from a Slovene Blind Spot', Halpern & Kideckel (eds.), *Neighbors*, pp. 66-67.

⁶⁹ Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, p. 136.

⁷⁰ Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, pp. 137-138; Henk Hirs, 'Slovenen lijden aan oorlogshysterie' (Slovenes suffering from war hysteria), *Trouw*, 03/07/91. See also Simic, *Yugoslavia*, p. 44; 'Slovenia appeals to EC as deadline passes', *Agence France Presse*, 30/06/91; James Morgan, 'As they say in Europe. A war of words without ceasefires', *Financial Times*, 06/07/91.

⁷¹ Peter Sartorius, 'Slovenien: "Wir erwarten das Allerschlimmste"' (Slovenia says 'We expect the worst'), *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 01/07/91.

⁷² Blaine Harden, 'Yugoslav Regions Assert Independence', *The Washington Post*, 26/06/91.

⁷³ Caroline de Gruyter, "Onze Kacin is beter dan Goebbels" (Our Kacin is better than Goebbels), *Elsevier*, 13/07/91, p. 34.

⁷⁴ Zimmermann, *Ambassador*, p. 13; idem, *Origins*, p. 145.

world that this was a struggle of David against Goliath'.⁷⁵ Raymond van den Boogaard, correspondent of the *NRC Handelsblad*, came to the same conclusion: according to him the real facts of the Slovenian war generally pointed in exactly the opposite direction. Slovenian troops laid siege to barracks or had 'fun and games' with the charred bodies of JNA soldiers. He talked to Yugoslavs conscripts from Macedonia who a short while later would be 'blown to smithereens'.⁷⁶ One Dutch journalist who did echo the Slovenian point of view to a certain extent was Peter Michielsen of *NRC Handelsblad*, who expressed complete sympathy for Slovenia, the 'plucky little nipper' who had subjected the 'ugly Goliath' in the form of 'an army of reckless orthodox-communist generals' to a couple of humiliating defeats.⁷⁷ Most messages in this direction were to be found, however, on German television, which showed pictures of JNA planes and tanks in action. These made a deep impression on viewers.⁷⁸

Despite the Slovenian PR offensive, there was a certain amount of more or less amused astonishment in the press about this war – the first in Europe in nearly half a century. Journalists had largely missed the run-up to the Yugoslav crisis, because media attention had been strongly concentrated on the Gulf War during the preceding year.⁷⁹ There were few established press correspondents in Eastern Europe. Since Eastern Europe, and in particular the Balkans, did nevertheless arouse a fair degree of interest in the late 'eighties, this region tended up to the outbreak of the conflict in Yugoslavia to be the field of free-lance journalists writing in particular *couleur-locale* stories.⁸⁰

The Cold War had presented the Foreign desks of the media with a relatively simple framework for international reporting: the world was divided into capitalists or democrats and Communists or dictators. They now had to get used to the change in post-war relationships, re-learn their history and geography and find new frameworks for the interpretation of their observations.⁸¹ At the same time, they had to present complicated matters in a relatively compact format to a western public with a grasshopper mind, that had become accustomed to zapping faster and faster from one item to another. In this respect the first part of the Yugoslav conflict, the war in Slovenia, was still fairly easy to grasp – even though it was over before the media had had the chance to explore its background in depth.

The struggle in Slovenia offered a war that could be reached from Vienna in a couple of hours along the *Autobahn*. A total of some two thousand journalists found their way to Ljubljana. Many of them knew little about Yugoslavia. They were in a certain sense disappointed that there was not much to see. During this 'ten-day war', there were only six days of real fighting. Sometimes there was little more to report than an 'eerie silence', in which a bell could be heard ringing 'unnaturally loudly'.⁸² A truce was announced as early as 3 July. The unreal nature of the 'war' in Slovenia reinforced the historic

⁷⁵ Henk Hirs, 'Slovenen lijden aan oorlogshysterie', *Trouw*, 03/07/91. The description of the struggle as one between David and Goliath came from Kučan, Peter Sartorius, 'Slowenien: 'Wir erwarten das Allerschlimmste'', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 01/07/91.

⁷⁶ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Lessen van de oorlog op de Balkan' (Lessons from the war in the Balkans), in Van Es & Sampimon & Starink (ed.), *Redacturen*, p. 214.

⁷⁷ Peter Michielsen, 'Breuk Joegoslavische federatie maakt van Balkan weer kruitvat' (Split in Yugoslav federation turns Balkans into a powder keg once more), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/07/91.

⁷⁸ On this last-mentioned topic, see e.g. 'CSCE members increasingly divided over Yugoslav crisis', *Agence France Presse*, 03/07/91. See also Martin Kettle, 'Europe. The west sees the light', *The Guardian*, 05/07/91; Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 45.

⁷⁹ Mira Beham, 'Mythen und Lügen. Zum historischen Serbien-Feindbild' (Myths and lies. On the fine detail in the historical picture of Serbia), *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 02/03/94; Herman Hoeneveld, 'Litouwse pers in opmars' (Lithuanian press on the march), *De Journalist*, 42(1991)4, p. 16.

⁸⁰ Peter Olsthoorn, 'Heen en weer in de roerige Balkan' (To and fro in the troubled Balkans), *De Journalist*, 42(1991)4, pp. 19-20.

⁸¹ Grunwald, 'Press'.

⁸² Peter Sartorius, 'Slowenien: 'Wir erwarten das Allerschlimmste'', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 01/07/91.

image of the Balkans as ‘a silly little place with silly wars’.⁸³ This remarkable overture to the wars in Yugoslavia strengthened the impression that this was ‘a provincial entertainment’,⁸⁴ an ‘operetta war’.⁸⁵

Peter Millonig - who had been recognised as a foreign agent of the Slovenian republic in March of that year - wrote in the *New York Times* that the Slovenian declaration of independence could not be called particularly dramatic from the perspective of world history.⁸⁶ The following passage from an article by the Dutch journalist André Roelofs in *De Volkskrant* may be seen as typical of this type of reporting, in which the dramatic element was strongly played down: ‘Fortunately, the Slovenes are an orderly people: nice little red and white warning signs were placed in front of the iron dragons’ teeth of the anti-tank barricades. You wouldn’t want an accident to happen.’⁸⁷

This relaxed tone, suitable for summer editions of the media, was reinforced by the fact that the western press, while reporting the reactions of the Slovenes, also played considerable attention to the problems of stranded tourists.⁸⁸

3. ‘Europe’s hour’

As soon as the Yugoslav crisis broke out in late June 1991, the EC leaders, glowing with enthusiasm, announced that here was a chance for the European Community to prove itself. The EC sent its troika (the ministers of Foreign Affairs of the previous, the present and the next Member of State to take up the presidency of the EC in turn) to the crisis-stricken region without delay. At that time they were the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs De Michelis, his colleague from Luxembourg Jacques Poos and the Dutch Minister Van den Broek respectively. Off they went to lend a helping hand. Luxembourg had almost finished on its term of presidency at the time, and Poos rejoiced on his way to Yugoslavia: ‘It is the hour of Europe. If anyone can achieve it, it is the European Community.’ And: ‘If there is one problem which the Europeans can solve, it is the Yugoslav problem... It is not up to the Americans’.⁸⁹

Other European leaders also stressed that the EC could and should solve this problem without support from the United States: ‘Yugoslavia is a European country’, said the German Federal Chancellor Kohl. ‘That means that we have the primary responsibility, and not the Americans or the Russians.’⁹⁰ The chairman of the European Commission, Delors, was of the same opinion: ‘We do not interfere in American affairs. We hope they will have enough respect not to interfere in ours.’⁹¹ The chairman of the Christian Democrat fraction in the European Parliament, Otto von Habsburg, never one to be shy of forceful statements, put it even more clearly. According to him, Yugoslavia was in no sense any business of the Americans. ‘They don’t understand the slightest thing about the matter, and they shouldn’t meddle with it.’⁹² The Italian De Michelis stated in more diplomatic terms that

⁸³ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 168.

⁸⁴ Peter Michielsen, ‘Fluwelen en andere revoluties’ (Velvet and other revolutions), in: Van Es & Sampiemon & Starink (ed.), *Redacteuren*, p. 175.

⁸⁵ Peter Sartorius, ‘Slowenien: ‘Wir erwarten das Allerschlimmste’’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 01/07/91.

⁸⁶ Peter Millonig, ‘After 7 Centuries, Slovenia Is Free’, *The New York Times*, 26/06/91.

⁸⁷ André Roelofs, ‘Slovenië hoopt, maar is op ergste voorbereid’ (Slovenia is hopeful, but prepares for the worst), *de Volkskrant*, 08/07/91.

⁸⁸ See e.g. ‘Twee lijken in een straat met broden’ (Two dead bodies in a street with loaves of bread), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/06/91.

⁸⁹ Poos, speaking on BBC Radio 4 News, 27/06/91 and Channel 4 News, 27/06/91, respectively, cited in Almond, *Wars*, p. 392 n. 3. Cf. Alan Riding, ‘Conflict in Yugoslavia: Europeans send high-level team’, *New York Times*, 29/06/91. See also Gutman, *Witness*, p. xxv; Gijs de Vries, ‘Een kwestie van leiderschap’ (A question of leadership), in: De Vries et al., *Continent*, p. 18.

⁹⁰ ‘Bemiddeling EG’ (EC mediates), *de Volkskrant*, 29/06/91. See also Oscar Garschagen, ‘Kwestie-Joegoslavië brengt EG-leiders in alle staten’ (Yugoslav question agitates EC leaders), *de Volkskrant*, 01/07/91.

⁹¹ Cited in Bert, *Superpower*, p. 139.

⁹² Cited in Henri Beunders, ‘Aloude Duitse gevoelens tegen de Serviërs’ (Age-old German feelings against the Serbs), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/91.

Washington was being kept informed, but was not being consulted.⁹³ And the Dutch premier Lubbers considered that the United States were 'not essential' for the solution of this crisis.⁹⁴

Someone from the inner circle of the Dutch Government stated that the European Community had got 'a kick' out of the Yugoslav question on 28 June. After the subsidiary role they had played during the Gulf War, EC leaders sensed that this new crisis might offer them new chances. With his typical habit of thinking up the questions that should be put to him, Lubbers stated, 'If you ask me whether the will to action we are displaying is partly due to the knowledge that the European reaction to the Gulf crisis was so markedly divided, I must answer yes.'⁹⁵

A certain optimism about the conflict in Yugoslavia could initially also be noted in the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (DAV) of the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs. A memo from this directorate issued a few weeks after the outbreak of the crisis stated among other things, 'The next Ministerial (meeting of the CSCE) will take place in Prague on 30 and 31 January 1992, that of the CHA (Dutch abbreviation for Committee of Senior Civil Servants) on 22-24 October 1991. These meetings are thus only relevant to the Yugoslav crisis if that crisis is still in existence then.'⁹⁶ Like every Greek tragedy, the Yugoslav crisis began with *hubris*, the sin of pride.

The American government did not seem to be visibly hurt by the noises from Europe indicating that it should not interfere in the Yugoslav crisis. On the contrary. After Secretary of State James Baker had made a statement of American policy in Belgrade on 21 June 1991, less than a week before the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia, official American policy concerning the conflict was initially marked by extreme restraint. This attitude was due to American isolationist tendencies after the end of the Cold War, and a wish to let other countries share the costs of action in the interests of international stability. The weakening of the Soviet Union meant that the United States no longer had to intervene worldwide in order to counter possible Soviet influences.⁹⁷

The lack of clear aims in American foreign policy after the Cold War was probably an even more important factor than the growing isolationism.⁹⁸ The new world order proclaimed by George Bush Sr. was apparently mainly a slogan introduced to support the Gulf War rhetoric. Soon after that *tour de force*, American policy became cautious, *ad hoc* and reactive. Yugoslavia was no longer considered to be among the United States' vital interests after the Cold War. The attitude of the government in Washington was 'We don't have a dog in that fight.'⁹⁹ Washington seemed convinced that Europe, which had leaned heavily on the Americans for support since the Second World War, should deal with this crisis itself. Even Douglas Hurd, the Foreign Secretary of the UK, who always stressed his country's special relationship with the USA, was convinced that the American government could not be relied on for help in the case of Yugoslavia. 'The United States has no desire or ambition to police the world', he told the congress of the Conservative Party on 8 October 1991. 'For me it is clear and the case of Yugoslavia proves that the United States increasingly expects regional organizations to take care of regional conflicts.'¹⁰⁰

If Europe managed to get the sting out of the problem, Washington would be pleased. If it failed, the European government leaders would have to tone down their behaviour in dealings with the US compared with what they had shown shortly after the outbreak of war in Slovenia.¹⁰¹ The US State Department had concluded shortly after the event that there would be no quick solution to the

⁹³ Alan Riding, 'Conflict in Yugoslavia: A Toothless Europe?', *New York Times*, 04/07/91.

⁹⁴ Dutch Radio 1, *VARA*, Vrijdageditie, 05/07/91, 6.10 pm.

⁹⁵ 'Conflict Joegoslavië beheerst EG-top' (Yugoslav conflict dominates EC summit), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91.

⁹⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03283. EU/GBVB/extra CoPo 1991, memo from RZ/rz, 'Joegoslavië/CVSE', 17/07/91.

⁹⁷ Cf. Bert, *Superpower*, pp. 3-10; Callahan, *Wars*, p. 19; Gergen, *Opportunities*; Talbott, *Blues*.

⁹⁸ See also e.g. Martin Walker, 'VS moeten nieuwe rol in wereld zoeken' (US forced to look for new world role), *de Volkskrant*, 29/08/91.

⁹⁹ Baker, cited in Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 30; Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 61. See also Jakobsen, *Multilateralism*, pp. 370-371.

¹⁰⁰ Cited in Roper, *Yugoslavia*, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Newhouse, *Round*, p. 61.

Yugoslav problem, so direct involvement would not yield them any *kudos*.¹⁰² Time would prove them right.

Although the Yugoslav crisis had been foreseen, it could not have come at a more unfortunate moment. While it is true that President Bush had announced a new world order, nearly half a century after the Second World War and so shortly after the end of the Cold War the European architects of security had not yet managed to set up a usable edifice. This gap made it possible for the Yugoslav question to lead to what Richard Holbrooke, the subsequent American mediator in the conflict, called ‘the greatest collective security failure of the West since 1938’.¹⁰³ The end of the Cold War had caused the security situation in Europe to change drastically in the space of a few years. The European security architecture still was not furnished for intervention in intrastate conflicts. The international lawyer Steve Terrett has correctly stated that the rhetoric of the new world order was well in advance of the capacity for intervention in such conflicts.¹⁰⁴ But some comments went even further.

In many publications about (the former) Yugoslavia in the ‘nineties, the discussion concerning a new security architecture for Europe was regarded as the decor against which the developments there were enacted. A report like the present one, in which the developments in Yugoslavia also occupy a central place, could easily give rise to the same impression. This impression would be false, however, and would exaggerate the importance assigned to Yugoslavia – especially in the first few years of the conflict. Things were precisely the other way round, in fact: the crisis in Yugoslavia would form the decor against which the discussions about Europe’s new security architecture were held.¹⁰⁵ Yugoslavia was certainly not without significance in this context, and may have speeded up certain decisions which might only have been taken later under other circumstances, but the main question under discussion was the significance of NATO, the WEU, the security policy of the EC, CSCE and the role of the UN in the event of a European conflict. The events in Yugoslavia were secondary to all this. And, though it may seem regrettable from the viewpoint of Yugoslavia and the remnants resulting from its dissolution, what governments and ministries in the western capitals considered to be good for European security would not always offer a solution to Yugoslavia’s problems. In addition, one aspect of Yugoslavia that had been an advantage for many years, its non-aligned status, was starting to turn into a disadvantage after the collapse of the Soviet empire. With the exception of the CSCE, European security organizations were mainly interested in their own traditional member states and in the former members of the now defunct Warsaw Pact and Comecon. Yugoslavia had been caught in the offside trap: it was part of Europe, but was not a member state of any of these organizations.

There was a strong need for consensus within the EC at this time, on the way to the Maastricht treaty. This was perceived as more important than any detailed considerations of content. As more international organizations became involved in the solution of the conflict – the initial involvement of the EC was followed by that of the WEU, NATO, CSCE and UN – the problem of getting the western reaction to follow a single line increased. And even if all these organizations managed to reach a common decision, this would not necessarily mean that the policy chosen was the most effective one in the Yugoslav context.¹⁰⁶

Despite all the fine words about a new world order, it was thus completely unclear at this time (mid-1991) what order the international community, and the western countries in particular, were aiming at. Apart from lacking a clear, unanimous vision of the international order after the Cold War, the United States and the Western European countries also had no view of the objectives of their own foreign policy.¹⁰⁷ NATO, the only organization with the resources for military intervention, was going

¹⁰² ABZ, Kabinetsarchief Stg. Geheime Codes. Bentinck 815 to Van den Broek, 16/08/91, Confi.

¹⁰³ United States Congress, Committee on Security and Cooperation in Europe, United Nations, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ Terrett, *Dissolution*, p. vi.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 54.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Freedman, *West*, p. 54.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Callahan, *Wars*, p. 14; Erich Rathfelder, ‘Der Historiker Jasper Ridley über britische Balkanpolitik’ (The historian Jasper Ridley on British policy in the Balkans), *Taz, Die Tageszeitung*, 24/01/95.

through an identity crisis¹⁰⁸ and other organizations that could have played a role in a European security structure, such as the Western European Union (WEU), the CSCE and the European Community, were not (yet) ready to do so. The main reasons for the failure of these organizations to make any meaningful contribution were the vacuum created after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and Comecon in 1991; the fact that the multilateral security organizations were designed to deal with interstate, not intrastate, conflicts; and a lack of suitable problem-solving tools.

No role for NATO...

NATO had several big advantages compared with other international bodies that could have played a role in decision-making about the Yugoslav question: political consultation and military planning were already well integrated within its structure, and military cooperation between member states was already institutionalized. It was a big organization, its component units were used to working together and it had a clear command structure.

On the other hand, NATO was an intergovernmental organization within which decisions were taken on the basis of consensus. This had not given rise to problems during the Cold War, when everyone knew who the enemy was; but the end of this era heralded a certain degree of mental renationalization also within the ranks of NATO.¹⁰⁹ The disagreements about Yugoslavia which manifested themselves between e.g. Germany, France and Great Britain in the European Community or the WEU could also be felt in NATO – quite apart from the fact that the most important member state of the Atlantic alliance, the United States, felt little for intervention in the former Yugoslavia. Due to this lack of commitment, the Americans in NATO could not exert the same tempering effect on differences between the Western European partners that they could generally provide.

Moreover, each NATO member state had individually cashed in its own 'peace dividend' quite soon after the end of the Cold War. As a result, NATO had fewer troops at its disposal while the lack of coordination when the cuts were made had led to an imbalance in resource structure. In addition, NATO was hampered by a conflict of interests (which may or may not have been imaginary) between the United States and Europe. Precisely because trans-Atlantic relationships were less governed by military considerations after the Cold War than before, differences between Europe and America made themselves felt not only in the military but also e.g. in the economic field. At the same time, these somewhat strained relationships naturally also had an effect on matters in the field of defence.

The American reserve with respect to the Yugoslav conflict means that NATO, within which the United States were such a dominant factor, would also be unable to play a role of significance – at least in the beginning. It would in any case have been difficult for NATO to do so at that time, since in 1991 the alliance was only supposed to deal with conflicts in which one of the signatories to the treaty was attacked. Initially, therefore, NATO did little more in connection with the Yugoslav crisis than monitor the situation and express support for the initiatives of the EC and the CSCE.

During the NATO summit conference in Rome in November 1991, member states were supposed to embrace the new Strategic Concept according to which, among other things, NATO was to become one of the pillars of security in Europe. By so doing, the alliance took an important step in its development from a confederation for collective self-defence towards an organization for collective security. Nevertheless, NATO's new Strategic Concept did not as yet say anything about peacekeeping operations.

There were in principle three European organizations capable of playing a role in connection with the Yugoslav conflict: the WEU, the CSCE and the EC. Two of these three, the CSCE and the

¹⁰⁸ See e.g. Herman Amelink and Frits Schaling, 'Dilemma: vernieuwing of vergetelheid' (Dilemma: innovation or oblivion), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/10/91.

¹⁰⁹ See e.g. the relevant passage in the talk given at the AGM of the NOV (Dutch Officers' Association) on 24 November 1993 by the chairman of NATO's Military Committee, Field Marshall Sir Richard Vincent: 'NATO – Where next?', *Carré* 17(1994)1, p. 8.

WEU, were chaired at this time by Germany, a country that had proved during the Gulf War to have great constitutional problems about deploying troops outside its national borders. Moreover, an active role on the part of Germany was made more difficult by the fact that Serbia had started up a violent press campaign against German 'revanchism' several months before the outbreak of the conflict. None of the three European organizations had an adequate political crisis-management mechanism.

...or for the WEU...

The WEU, set up in 1954 by a number of Western European countries with the objective of offering mutual support in the case of an attack on one of the member states' territory, comprised all EC states with the exception of Ireland, Denmark and Greece in 1991. It had led an almost dormant existence in the shadow of NATO for decades. The union first assumed operational tasks in 1987, when it coordinated the sending of naval units to the Gulf in order to protect shipping in the region during the Iraq-Iran war, mainly by means of mine-sweeping duties. The operation lasted one and a half years. Thereafter, the WEU also supplied ships for an economic blockade of Iraq after troops from that country had invaded Kuwait in 1990.

The union had one clear advantage over the much more powerful NATO when it came to dealing with the conflict in Yugoslavia. While the North Atlantic Treaty Organization restricted itself to the territory of member states (the 'treaty region'), the WEU was not subject to any such geographical limitation.

The drawback of the WEU was the lack of American participation. This lack would be felt most strongly in the case of a possible WEU intervention in the fields of transport facilities and intelligence. The French President Mitterrand and the German Chancellor Kohl had suggested in December 1990 that a WEU force might be set up as the defence arm of the EC. The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Van den Broek had opposed this idea forcibly because he feared that it would undermine NATO, in which the Americans played the leading role.¹¹⁰ Shortly after, on 20 February 1991, the American State Department informed WEU capitals via the 'Bartholomew telegram' that while a role for the WEU outside Europe was acceptable, Washington was against WEU involvement in Eastern Europe. The American government did not wish the impression to be created that the Americans cared less about Eastern Europe than the Europeans. This telegram caused the WEU ministers to decide to freeze further decision-making on this point.¹¹¹

It appeared during a regular meeting of the WEU on 27 June in Vianden (Luxembourg) that the Netherlands and the United Kingdom were still opposed to a European security and defence identity in which the WEU would play a greater role, as in particular France wanted.¹¹²

On that occasion, the WEU also issued a statement expressing concern about the situation in Yugoslavia and the wish that the parties to the conflict would soon get down to negotiations. The Union called on CSCE member states to promote such a process.¹¹³ Shortly after, the WEU Institute for Security Studies prepared a memo on a possible role for military observers to counter escalation of the conflict in Yugoslavia. Germany – occupying the chairmanship of the WEU at the time – refused to circulate this paper, however.¹¹⁴ The organization did not meet again for a considerable time.

¹¹⁰ P.G.S. van Schie, 'Vrede en veiligheid in het nieuwe Europa' (Peace and security in the new Europe), *Liberaal Reveil*, 32(1991)4, p. 122; P. Rusman, 'De laatste Koude Oorlogstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)' (The last Cold War warrior, Hans Van den Broek (1982-1993), in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 275-276.

¹¹¹ W.F. van Eekelen, 'Nieuwe dimensies van Europese veiligheid' (New dimensions of European security), *LEF*, (1992)33 (June), pp. 19-20. The text of the telegram is reproduced in Van Eekelen, *Security*, pp. 340-344

¹¹² Oscar Garschagen, 'WEU blijft verdeeld over veiligheidsbeleid Europa' (WEU remains divided on security policy for Europe), *de Volkskrant*, 28/06/91.

¹¹³ Statement by WEU Council of Ministers, Vianden, Luxembourg, 27/01/91, <http://www.weu.int/eng/comm/91-vianden-a.htm>.

¹¹⁴ Van Eekelen, *Security*, p. 143.

In fact, the union was poorly equipped for an active role. The WEU, headed by the former Dutch Minister of Defence W.F. (Willem) van Eekelen since the spring of 1989, had a ‘remarkably small’ staff;¹¹⁵ insiders in the Dutch political scene often jokingly said that WEU stood for ‘Willems Eigen Unie’ (Willem’s own union). As the Member of Parliament for the VVD (Liberal) fraction Weisglas said, ‘To be honest, it’s nothing more than Mr. Van Eekelen in his London office.’¹¹⁶ It was not until the second half of 1992 that a planning unit with a staff of about forty was set up within the WEU to deal with crisis management operations.

Two of the WEU’s member states, Germany and Italy, were completely unacceptable to Serbia as to deal with the crisis in Yugoslavia. Great Britain was completely opposed to involvement of the WEU. The only remaining supporters of the idea were Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

... or for the CSCE...

The CSCE, which comprised all European countries (with the exception of Albania), the United States, Canada and observers from Japan and South Korea – therefore called ‘the Euro-Atlantic community from Vancouver to Vladivostok’ by Secretary of State Baker¹¹⁷ – was set up in 1975 by the Act of Helsinki to deal with matters concerning security, economic cooperation and human rights. The founding agreement enshrined the importance of the principles of territorial integrity and the right to self-determination, without assigning priorities. The second Conference devoted to the Human Dimension was held in Copenhagen in June 1990. In the final communiqué of the Conference, the CSCE member states made far-reaching commitments concerning human rights, national minorities, free elections and the promotion of democratic institutions. Further guidelines to this effect, drawn up at the initiative of the Netherlands among other countries, were laid down in the Paris Charter for a New Europe that was adopted during the CSCE summit conference held in the French capital in November 1990. The Charter also contained agreements on improvement of security in Europe by further arms controls, political consultation and conflict-prevention mechanisms. It instituted a permanent CSCE Council of Ministers, together with a Commission of Senior Civil Servants to prepare the ministerial meetings. A permanent secretariat, a conflict-prevention centre and a bureau for the observation of free elections were also formed.

While these changes reflected the high level of ambitions in the CSCE at the time, the organization was still weakly developed when the conflict in Yugoslavia broke out. It had no military resources, and the large number of member states (initially 34, i.e. the original 35 signatories minus the GDR, subsequently 52, with Bosnia-Herzegovina as the 52nd member) made decision-making difficult. Consensus was initially required for all decision-making, but with effect from January 1992 this requirement was weakened to ‘consensus minus one’.

The CSCE’s main activity was consultation, and this remained the case for some considerable time. As a diplomat put it at the end of June 1991, the CSCE was still in its milk-teeth stage.¹¹⁸ It was not much more than a ‘fair-weather’ debating society.¹¹⁹

In November 1990, the United States and the Soviet Union had vetoed CSCE involvement in the incipient Yugoslav crisis. The Soviet Union was particularly worried that the CSCE might get involved in the internal affairs of a country, since it might then go on to meddle with the issue of the

¹¹⁵ Van Eekelen, *Sporen*, p. 231.

¹¹⁶ VARA, *Vrijdageditie*, 10/07/92, 5.05 pm

¹¹⁷ See e.g. Joris Cammelbeeck, ‘CVSE heeft haar plaats gevonden’ (CSCE has found its place), *de Volkskrant*, 21/06/91.

¹¹⁸ Alan Philips, ‘Crisis in Yugoslavia; Europe’s fire brigade fails in Balkan crisis’, *Daily Telegraph*, 29/06/91. See also ‘CVSE: weinig concreets, veel fraaie woorden’ (CSCE: Plenty of fine words but few concrete conclusions), *Trouw*, 20/06/91.

¹¹⁹ Van Eekelen in: Ko Colijn & Paul Rusman, ‘Wim van Eekelen over zijn Joegoslavië-plannen: divisie, vlootje, luchtmachtje’ (Wim van Eekelen on his plans for Yugoslavia: a cosy little army division, a cosy little fleet, a cosy little air force), *Vrij Nederland*, 30/05/92.

Baltic states, which were pressing for independence from the Soviet Union. This decision was not repealed until July 1991.

On 27 June, Austria asked for CSCE measures to boost confidence and promote security, in view of the unusual military activities in neighbouring Yugoslavia. Austria had been following the developments with great interest for some considerable time. The Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Alois Mock visited a series of European capitals starting in the Spring of 1990 to point out the serious nature of the crisis in Yugoslavia, but his own government was divided on the question of what Austria could do about these developments.¹²⁰ In May 1991, he made a plea for the formation of a group of wise statesmen to mediate in the impending conflict. His Yugoslav counterpart Loncar rejected that proposal, however. Austrian troops were placed on a state of alert as early as the second week of May, in response to movements of JNA troops along the Slovenian border.¹²¹ In view of its application for membership of the EC, Austria did not want to make a direct plea for recognition of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia which would go against the European Community's initial stress on Yugoslav unity. However, the Austrian Consul-General in Ljubljana and the governors of a number of Austrian provinces did attend the Slovenian independence celebrations on 26 June. The CSCE charter offered Austria a mechanism for placing the Yugoslav question after the declarations of independence before an international forum for debate.

Austria's example was soon followed by another neighbour of the two republics that were striving for independence, viz. Italy. So far, that country had not been steering a perfectly straight course with respect to the constitutional future of Yugoslavia. On the one hand, it had no wish to see European borders – in particular those of Yugoslavia – undergoing change, this might revive discussion of the status of the borders around Trieste, only agreed after complex and difficult negotiations after the Second World War. On the other hand, two weeks before the declarations of independence the Italian government violated the EC agreement not to receive representatives of the breakaway republics at high level, when Premier Giulio Andreotti and President Francesco Cossiga met the Slovenian President Kucan, the Slovenian Premier Peterle and the Croatian President Tudjman. The Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs De Michelis pointed out on that occasion that Italy was bound by the EC viewpoint stressing the unity of Yugoslavia, but Cossiga countered that Croatia and Slovenia should not be sacrificed on the altar of Yugoslavia's constitutional unity.¹²²

The recently instituted CSCE crisis mechanism stipulated that Yugoslavia should provide answers to Austria and Italy within 48 hours about the military activities of the JNA, after which the latter countries could ask for a meeting to be convened. On 30 June, Luxembourg made use of another CSCE instrument by asking Germany as the current chair of the CSCE to call an emergency meeting of the Committee of Senior Civil Servants in accordance with the crisis mechanism procedures. After Yugoslavia had provided the information requested about the unusual military manoeuvres, representatives of the 34 CSCE member states met in Vienna on 1 July. The final communiqué, based on consensus and thus also agreed on by Yugoslavia itself, called for immediate cessation of hostilities and immediate return of the troops to their barracks.

The Dutch government, which took over the chairmanship of the European Community from Luxembourg on that date, did its best to coordinate the activities undertaken within the framework of the CSCE as closely as possible with those of the EC,¹²³ since the CSCE offered a platform for continued involvement of the Soviet Union and the United States in the handling of the Yugoslav crisis. Thanks among other things to an active contribution from the Netherlands as chair of the EC, the CSCE's Committee of Senior Civil Servants reached agreement on 4 July on a call for a ceasefire, a communiqué about a CSCE goodwill mission and one about the sending of a team of observers to

¹²⁰ Woodward, *Tragedy*, pp. 148-149.

¹²¹ Gow, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 304 and 308.

¹²² Gow, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 304-305.

¹²³ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 1.

Yugoslavia.¹²⁴ The mission in question would only be sent, however, in response to a formal invitation from Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia had played a constructive role within the CSCE in the past. During the Cold War Belgrade regarded this organization, in which member states participated on an equal footing, as the ideal platform for neutral and non-aligned countries to voice their opinions in a European context.¹²⁵ The organization even remained attractive to the regime in Belgrade after the end of the Cold War, because it was the only security organization of which Yugoslavia was a member. However, the 34 countries of the CSCE felt more nervous than the twelve EC countries about active involvement in a matter that could be described as an internal affair.¹²⁶ In addition, the Yugoslav delegation could block all decisions it did not like on the basis of the consensus rule. After Slovenia and Croatia had made their declarations of independence, however, Belgrade preferred the matter to be handled by the EC since the current chair of the CSCE, Germany, had expressed its preference for independence of the two republics too clearly. As a result, Belgrade never sent an invitation for the goodwill mission. Milosevic and his men were against it.

...not to mention the UN...

The stance adopted by the UN was initially if possible even more reserved than that of the WEU and CSCE. Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar stated shortly after the declarations of independence that he regarded the matter as a Yugoslav internal affair.¹²⁷ This view was also shared in particular by Russia and China. The permanent members of the Security Council decided during an informal discussion held on 3 July 1991 that the situation in Yugoslavia did not call for a formal meeting, since there was as yet no question of a threat to international peace and security.¹²⁸

In mid-July, the G-7 (the seven richest industrialized countries) called for a UN peacekeeping force to be sent to Croatia; this initiative met with Russian opposition, however.¹²⁹ Even if the Security Council had been more willing to deal with the Yugoslav conflict, it is doubtful whether such a peacekeeping initiative would have been possible. In the early 'nineties, the UN was confronted with a combination of growing ambitions and a shrinking budget, partly because of the tardiness of certain member states in paying their dues.¹³⁰ As a result, the UN's secretariat was not particularly keen to get involved in a conflict in Europe, which was rich enough to deal with it itself. It would be better to leave the problem to a regional organization.¹³¹ As the months went by, Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar was more and more inclined to regard the Yugoslav question as 'a failed undertaking', with which his organization would be well advised to have as little to do as possible.¹³²

...so maybe the EC could do something after all?

As a result on the one hand of the reserved stance adopted by the United States and the unwillingness or inability of other international organizations to deal with the matter, and on the other of the

¹²⁴ Libal, *Limits*, p. 18.

¹²⁵ Baudet, *Aandacht*, p. 215.

¹²⁶ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 2, p. 14.

¹²⁷ Herman Amelink, 'Joegoslavische crisis eerste test voor CVSE-mechanisme' (Yugoslav crisis first test for CSCE mechanism), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91.

¹²⁸ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 2, p. 14; ABZ, DEU/ARA/03283, EU/GBVB/extra CoPo 1991, memo from DEU/OE, 'Joegoslavië/scenario's en beleidsmogelijkheden' (Yugoslavia: scenarios and policy options) for Extra CoPo, The Hague 19/07/91, 18/07/91.

¹²⁹ Steven L. Burg, 'The International Community and the Yugoslav Crisis', in Esman/Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p. 242. See also Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 37.

¹³⁰ Cf. 'Vredesmissies VN schieten tekort door geldgebrek' (UN peace missions underperform due to cash shortage), *de Volkskrant*, 24/08/00.

¹³¹ Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 478 and 486.

¹³² Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage*, p. 486.

euphoria felt by some European leaders at the prospect of the EC getting a chance to prove itself on the international stage, the European Community became the main foreign actor in the Yugoslav conflict in the summer of 1991.

However, this conflict came both too early and too late for the EC. Too early, because the Community was still busy developing a common foreign and security policy. Starting in 1958 with six member states wishing to set up an economic union, it now comprised twelve countries and its activities had expanded to cover non-economic fields as well. The member states had decided in 1970 to embark on European Political Cooperation (EPC), involving inter-governmental consultation aimed at coordination of the foreign policy of the individual member states. The terms of this form of cooperation were laid down in the Single European Act, adopted in 1986, which also stipulated that the member states undertook 'to avoid any action or attitude which reduces their effectiveness as a cohesive force in international relations or within international organizations'.¹³³

EPC was not an integral part of the European Community, but an independent body with its own secretariat in Brussels. In the meantime, however, the Twelve were on the way to realizing a common foreign and security policy. After the collapse of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, some European leaders were afraid of the possibility of renationalization of European foreign and defence policy. The wish to avoid this was one of the motives leading European leaders to agree during the Dublin summit in June 1990 to open negotiations concerning the formation of a European Union. The Dutch government was a particularly fervent opponent of renationalization. The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Van den Broek wrote e.g. in this connection, 'History forbids a return to unbridled freedom for national states, to the bilateralism of the European great powers and the *Kleinstaterei* of the others', and he went on to say 'Europe will cooperate or it will cease to exist'.¹³⁴

Despite the difficulty associated with some steps along the path of European unification, the EC had made great progress towards integration. In this respect, the Yugoslav crisis came too late. While some tendencies towards renationalization may have become apparent after the end of the Cold War, the leaders of the EC were no longer mentally equipped to deal with expressions of extreme nationalism. Thinking in terms of transfer of authority from national states to intergovernmental, Community or confederative bodies was so far advanced in Western Europe since the Second World War that there was little room for understanding of what was regarded as old-fashioned nationalism.¹³⁵ 'Separatism and European unity cannot co-exist in principle', noted W.H. Weenink in *NRC Handelsblad*.¹³⁶

While Europe seemed to be on the way to the future, it was brutally confronted in the Summer of 1991 with the resurrection of an aspect of history which many people had thought was dead and gone after Fukuyama. While it is true that the examples of Fidel Castro in Cuba, Kim Il Song in North Korea and, nearer home, Ceausescu in Romania had proved, long before Milosevic, that nationalism was still a real option for Communist leaders struggling to hold on to power, this tendency was apparently too alien to current Western European political value patterns to be clearly noticed.

The nature of the tools the EC had at its disposal to try to control the crisis in Yugoslavia clearly reflected the organization's mainly economic origins. As Delors was to comment in September 1991, the EG had only three weapons it could use: public opinion, recognition and economic sanctions.¹³⁷ It had no military weapons at all. Negotiating to reach a settlement on such matters as agriculture or mutual trade was quite a different matter from trying to achieve diplomatic aims without a real threat to fall back on.

¹³³ Single European Act, title III, art. 30.

¹³⁴ H. van den Broek, 'Continuïteit en vernieuwing in Europa' (Continuity and innovation in Europe), *Christen Democratische Verkenningen* (1990)5, p. 208.

¹³⁵ Cf. Callahan, *Wars*, pp. 11-12; Bertrand de Largentaye, 'The Role of the European Community', in: Palau & Kumar (eds.), *Ex-Yugoslavia*, p. 32; Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 221; Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 69; interview H.A. Schaper, 12/04/00.

¹³⁶ W.H. Weenink, 'Pax Europeana', *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/07/91.

¹³⁷ Cited in Maull, *Germany*, p. 127 n. 5.

It was characteristic of the second half of 1991 that a strong feeling existed within the EC that the Community should reflect a spirit of consensus on the way to the Maastricht Treaty.¹³⁸ In view of the existing developments and balance of power, however, that meant that big countries with clear objectives could make use of this desire for consensus among the other partners to force acceptance of their own wishes.

Moreover, each one of the major EC countries had its own policy as regards Yugoslavia right from the start of the conflict.

4. National positions within the European Community

A meeting of the Council of Ministers was planned on 28 and 29 June in Luxembourg, to mark the end of that country's chairmanship of the EC.

The only measure taken during this meeting, at the instigation of Germany, was the threat to freeze EC financial assistance to Yugoslavia if it did not meet EC wishes with respect to the crisis. After the weekly government meeting in The Hague, Vice-Premier Kok, who replaced Lubbers who was at the EC summit, stated his view that the EC had been right to take up 'firm positions' so early on in the process.¹³⁹ He went on to say that as a result the Netherlands, which was due to take over the chairmanship of the EC 'had also got right to the heart of the attempts to contribute to finding peaceful solutions'. He added on the same occasion that the Netherlands would fulfil 'an important function' not only in the EC but also in the CSCE.¹⁴⁰ Premier Lubbers was less optimistic about the results of the threat to stop financial assistance. According to him, experience has taught that such threats to cut off the flow of money did not help 'when people have finally come to the end of their tether'.¹⁴¹

Two days before the meeting of the Council of Ministers, the Eastern Europe department of the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs briefed Minister Van den Broek, suggesting that the points to be raised at the meeting were that the conflict in Yugoslavia should be localized as far as possible, attempts should be made to reach a ceasefire and dialogue should be resumed. Formal recognition of the independence of Croatia and Slovenia would 'probably be inevitable in the long term, but should be postponed as long as possible'.¹⁴²

In the meantime, the urgency of the developments in Yugoslavia did not seem to have penetrated to the department. EC chair Luxembourg had proposed sending a legal commission to Belgrade to advise the parties. Germany, supported by England and France, regarded the problem not as a legal but as a political one, so that a political mission would be more appropriate. The civil servants of the Eastern Europe department of the Dutch ministry agreed that some kind of mission to Belgrade was desirable, but thought it advisable to decide on the nature of the mission before sending anybody. According to the Eastern Europe department, the Eastern Europe working group of the EC could work out a recommendation during its next meeting in mid-July.¹⁴³ The European Community thus had little to offer at the moment when Croatia and Slovenia made their declarations of independence. Although the impending crisis in Yugoslavia was also discussed within the framework of the EPC, not a single plan of action was ready for use when it finally came.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 89 and 102; Dumas, *Fil*, p. 354.

¹³⁹ 'Kabinet denkt aan opschorten hulp voor Joegoslavië' (Government considers stopping aid to Yugoslavia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91.

¹⁴⁰ AVRO, *News*, 28/06/91, 6.04 pm

¹⁴¹ 'Bemiddeling EG', *de Volkskrant*, 29/06/91.

¹⁴² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081, DEU; COREU messages concerning EPC standpoints on Yugoslavia, June-September 1991, memo DEU/OE, 'Joegoslavië – Spreekpunten' (Yugoslavia: topics for discussion) for the Council of Ministers, 28/06/91 and 29/06/91, 26/06/91.

¹⁴³ Council of Ministers, *Ibid*.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 70.

Energetic approach from Italy

During the meeting of the Council of Ministers, however, it soon became clear that the Italian delegation was determined to make use of practically the last opportunity for it to set a stamp on events as a member of the troika (its membership ended two days after the summit, on 1 July).¹⁴⁵

The Italian delegation arrived in Luxembourg in a DC-9 of the Italian Air Force, which was much too big for it. Right after the opening of the conference, Premier Andreotti proposed that the troika should go to Yugoslavia to quieten down the conflict there. That was why the Italians had arrived in such a big aircraft, which would have room not only for the three ministers of the troika together with their staff, but also for journalists (only Italian ones, of course).¹⁴⁶

The troika did indeed leave Luxembourg for Yugoslavia in the late afternoon of 28 June. The delegation was armed with little more than persuasive words. ‘Come to your senses, man’, the Italian Minister De Michelis, who played a dominant role during the troika’s visit to Belgrade, appears to have called out to the Yugoslav premier Markovic.¹⁴⁷ The troika threatened Markovic and the Serb president Milosevic with termination of the financial assistance to Yugoslavia valued at 1.9 billion guilders (some 850 million euros, at current rates of exchange). Pressure was exerted on the Slovenian and Croatian presidents, Kucan and Tudjman, to agree to a three-month moratorium on their independence.

Since the truce that the troika thought they had brokered on Friday 28 June did not hold, while Kucan and Tudjman denied having made any promises about a moratorium, the troika set off again two days later. During this second visit, on 30 June 1991, the troika managed to bring about a delay in the implementation of the two declarations of independence. A ceasefire was also announced, and it was further agreed that the JNA troops would withdraw to their barracks and that the Croat Mesic, whose appointment as chairman of the collective state presidium in May had been blocked by Serbia, would be confirmed in this function after all.

Kucan and Tudjman demanded, however, that the EC should send observers to monitor compliance with the agreements. Markovic objected to this proposal. Van den Broek, who had taken over the chairmanship of the EC from Poos at midnight in Belgrade, commented modestly after his return from Belgrade on 1 July that ‘the EC has neither the pretension nor the illusion to claim to have achieved lasting solutions for Yugoslavia with these proposals’. The solution would ultimately have to come from Belgrade and the constituent republics themselves. But ‘if you don’t try to advance, you will soon very quickly slide further and further back. Particularly in the Yugoslav situation, this possibility is far from imaginary.’¹⁴⁸ According to *De Volkskrant*, everything that the Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs said came down to ‘I’ll believe it when I see it’. It was concluded that Minister Van den Broek was going to face difficult times. This was not just due to the problems in Yugoslavia but also to the lack of European unity and consensus.¹⁴⁹

British scepticism

At the end of June, when Poos and other EC leaders had expressed such euphoria, the British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd had sounded a more cautious note. He had stated on that occasion that no solution could be imposed from outside. He had further pointed out that Yugoslavia had been formed after the First World War as a solution to the problems of a multi-ethnic population in the Balkans ‘with a long history of peoples fighting each other’. According to him, the independence of Slovenia

¹⁴⁵ Cf. interview H. Hazewinkel, 17/04/00.

¹⁴⁶ Oscar Garschagen, ‘Kwestie-Joegoslavië brengt EG in alle staten’, *de Volkskrant*, 01/07/91; ‘Conflict Joegoslavië beheerst EG-top’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91; ‘EG lijkt te schrikken van daadkracht’ (EC seems scared of idea of using force), *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Oscar Garschagen, ‘Kwestie-Joegoslavië brengt EG in alle staten’, *de Volkskrant*, 01/07/91; according to André Roelofs, ‘Een voorproefje van Duitse Alleingang’ (A foretaste of German *Alleingang* (‘going it alone’)), *de Volkskrant*, 03/07/91, De Michelis had said, ‘Come on man, come to your senses’.

¹⁴⁸ NCRV, *Hier en Nu* (Here and now), 01/07/91, 12.05 pm

¹⁴⁹ Oscar Garschagen, ‘Kwestie-Joegoslavië brengt EG-leiders in alle staten’, *de Volkskrant*, 01/07/91.

and Croatia meant the displacement of many thousands of people, ‘and that doesn’t happen peacefully and easily. The prospect is a frightening one.’¹⁵⁰

He considered further that all the European Community was capable of was tightening the economic thumbscrews on a country, but in conflicts like the one in Yugoslavia such an approach achieved nothing. Politics were trumps there. In Hurd’s opinion, all the West could do was to try to negotiate, but in fact he had little hope of good results from such an approach.¹⁵¹ The British government had experience of a civil conflict in Northern Ireland. Because London knew how little effect regular troops could have in such a conflict, it adopted a very reserved attitude in the present case.¹⁵² An additional factor was that officials in London were far from happy about the lack of results in Cyprus, where a multinational UN peacekeeping force had been stationed since 1974. As a British civil servant put it, ‘We are the WEU member with the greatest experience of peace-keeping and all that experience suggests is that it is far easier to send the troops in than to take them out afterwards.’¹⁵³ Moreover, London considered that military involvement required a solid political foundation. It was not felt in the British capital that the EC – or later the UN – offered such a foundation.¹⁵⁴

Great Britain’s reserve was reinforced by the tradition of avoiding involvement in matters affecting the European continent.¹⁵⁵ The British secret service MI6 also had the motto ‘Stay out as long as possible.’¹⁵⁶ There was a great tendency for splendid isolation and arrogance to go hand in hand. The first time the British premier John Major discussed the situation in Yugoslavia with his Dutch counterpart Lubbers, he told the Dutch premier, ‘This is Africa.’¹⁵⁷

Finally, the UK had made drastic cuts in its armed forces in the summer of 1991 while at the same time increasing the number of troops stationed in Northern Ireland. The army was worst hit, its numbers being reduced from 147,000 to 116,000. The British Army on the Rhine was more than halved, from 55,000 to 23,000.¹⁵⁸ As a result, the country had few troops available to meet new commitments abroad. This led Great Britain to keep a foot continually on the brake during the first year of the conflict in (the former) Yugoslavia, and to block initiatives proposed within the framework of the European Community and the WEU.¹⁵⁹

Moreover, Great Britain was not without sympathy for the Serb cause. This was true of the British diplomatic service,¹⁶⁰ but also in particular of politicians and the media.¹⁶¹ Friends of Serbia were to be found both in Labour and in Conservative circles. Besides, Great Britain had had a well-developed Serb community of its own since 1945. Despite such pro-Serb feelings, which had been reinforced by Serb action during the First World War, reservations about the Serbs also existed in the United Kingdom because they were seen as potential allies of Russia. In fact, the British had objections to all parties with regard to the Yugoslav conflict, which provided a fertile soil for a policy of isolationism. The Croats were Catholics, which elicited an instinctive aversion in many Britons. They

¹⁵⁰ Cited in Almond, *War*, p. 234.

¹⁵¹ Interview Hurd by Jonathan Dimbleby, ‘On the Record’, BBC1, 30/06/91, cited in Almond, *War*, pp. 234-235.

¹⁵² For references to the conflict in Northern Ireland see e.g. Caroline de Gruyter, ‘Wachten op een Churchill’ (Waiting for a Churchill), *Elsevier*, 15/08/92, pp. 31-32; Rick Kuethe, ‘De oorlog als moeras’ (The war as a swamp), *Elsevier*, 22/08/92, p. 34; the British Major-General Thompson, cited in Joke van Kampen, ‘Op de plaats rust!’ (At ease, men!), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 19/08/92, p. 7; Hans van den Broek in: Leonard Ornstein, ‘Minister Van den Broek: ‘Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg’’ (Foreign Minister Van den Broek says, ‘I would suggest we start by firing a shot across their bows’), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 10; interviews A. Erdős, 11/05/00 and H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00.

¹⁵³ Menon & Forster & Wallace, *Defence*, p. 118 n. 11.

¹⁵⁴ Interview P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00.

¹⁵⁵ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

¹⁵⁶ Interview M. Urban, 26/03/99.

¹⁵⁷ Interview R.F.M. Lubbers, 13/10/00.

¹⁵⁸ ‘Londen beperkt kosten defensie met een vijfde’ (London slashes defence costs by a fifth), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/91.

¹⁵⁹ Interview H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00.

¹⁶⁰ For examples, see Russell, *Prejudice*, pp. 283-285.

¹⁶¹ For examples, see Tanner, *Croatia*, pp. 272-273.

were also unduly influenced by Germany. And in a later phase of the conflict, the Muslim presence in Great Britain led to a fear of fundamentalism in Europe.¹⁶²

Great Britain tried to coordinate the policy regarding recognition of the republics produced by the crumbling of Yugoslavia with that followed by the western world with respect to the Soviet Union. Certain problems were similar in both cases, such as the question of boundaries, the minority problems and the burden of debt.¹⁶³

Germany prepared to go it alone?

It became immediately clear during the meeting of the Council of Ministers in Luxembourg at the end of June that the two main principles involved in the conflict – maintenance of territorial integrity in the case of Yugoslavia and recognition of the right to self-determination in the cases of Slovenia and Croatia – led to serious divisions within the EC, and in particular between the two countries regarded as the driving forces behind European integration, France and Germany. The French President François Mitterrand was a firm advocate of the first principle, while the German Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl stated his strong support for the right to self-determination. It was decided during the meeting by way of compromise that the European Community should take steps to promote a process of controlled constitutional change in Yugoslavia.¹⁶⁴

The main country to articulate a national standpoint of its own during this phase was Germany, which was in the process of re-orienting its international stance since the re-unification of Eastern and Western Germany on 3 October 1990. Weighed down by the burden of the past, (Western) Germany had not acted like a great power for decades after the Second World War. While the country had developed into an economic giant, it had not dared to follow a foreign policy that matched its national status. It had made great efforts to embed its foreign policy in multilateral treaties and international organizations and had followed a highly normative policy embodying a positive valuation of international law and an aversion to violence as a means of resolving conflicts.¹⁶⁵

In 1989, the American President Bush had called on the government in Bonn to play a greater role in international politics. He did this by stating that the United States and Germany were partners in leadership. In fact, the American government clearly had less trouble accepting Germany's new position than European governments had. Now that the Soviet Union no longer counted as a great power, the nuclear threat was reduced and the Federal Republic had been re-united with the DDR, Bonn had less need of American guarantees of its security than in the past and Germany could start steering a more independent course.

It took Germany some time to adapt to its new role, however. Since the German government considered that its constitution prohibited an international military role for the *Bundeswehr* other than the defence of its own territory and that of its allies, it refused to respond positively to an American request for it to play a substantial military role during the Gulf War. Bonn made a contribution of 17 billion mark in lieu of this obligation.¹⁶⁶ Even after that, in particular with reference to the Yugoslav conflict, most German politicians would continue to insist that the German armed forces should only be used to defend its own territory and that of its allies. Others were more responsive to the argument that German relations with South-east Europe were so burdened by the events of the Second World War that the deployment of German troops in this region, even for peacekeeping purposes, would not

¹⁶² Erich Rathfelder, 'Der Historiker Jasper Ridley über britische Balkanpolitik', *Taz, Die Tageszeitung*, 24/01/95.

¹⁶³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00404, Speaking note from the British Embassy, 'Consequences of recognizing Croatian independence', 02/12/91.

¹⁶⁴ Both, *Indifference*, p. 93; Alan Riding, 'Conflict in Yugoslavia', *The New York Times*, 29/06/91.

¹⁶⁵ Maull, *Germany*, p. 114.

¹⁶⁶ Shaw, *Germany*, p. 13.

be opportune.¹⁶⁷ It was not until 12 July 1994 that the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe ruled that German armed forces could be used for purposes other than pure self-defence.

Despite this caution in the military field, Germany was re-adjusting both nationally and internationally to the idea of boxing in the heavyweight division again. It became clear that the re-united Germany felt less need to tread carefully in order to avoid disturbing sensitivities arising from the country's recent past. For example, a few days after the outbreak of the Yugoslav conflict it was decided to move the government and the parliament back to Berlin in the near future.

The new attitude of the government in Bonn would be reflected particularly clearly by the stance adopted by Germany concerning the Yugoslav question in the second half of 1991.

German interest in the development of the conflicts in Croatia and Slovenia was of recent date. A delegation from the *Bundestag* had travelled to Yugoslavia in November 1990, but it had been mainly concerned with Kosovo. After that, the topic of Yugoslavia practically disappeared from the political agenda in Bonn for half a year. As in other countries, the Gulf War dominated the reporting in the media, and apart from that German politicians were mainly busy dealing with questions arising from the re-unification of Western and Eastern Germany.¹⁶⁸

While the German government continued up to the end of June to support the EC standpoint that the unity of Yugoslavia should be preserved, voices in the media and those of various prominent politicians were raised well before that in favour of the right of Croatia and Slovenia to self-determination. For example, the *Frankefurter Allgemeine Zeitung* set up a campaign supporting the right to self-determination of both these Yugoslav republics as early as March 1991.¹⁶⁹ After a visit to Yugoslavia, the deputy chairman of the SPD Norbert Gansel argued at the end of May that the independence of Slovenia – and possibly also that of Croatia – should be recognized as soon as they were proclaimed.¹⁷⁰ On 19 June, the CDU, SPD, FDP and the Green party in the *Bundestag* passed a resolution endorsing this right to self-determination. The resolution did not speak of recognizing the independence of constituent republics, however, and it offered Yugoslavia as a whole associate membership of the EC on condition that it adopted a new constitutional form.¹⁷¹

The day after the declarations of independence, 26 June, the German government adopted a standpoint that was practically identical with that of this resolution recognizing the right to self-determination. They made a strong plea for talks in Yugoslavia itself about the future of the country, in which more room was left for the right to self-determination for the peoples of Yugoslavia; the use of violence was most strongly to be deprecated.¹⁷²

Bonn hoped that the proposal made on 6 June by the presidents of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, Izetbegovic and Gligorov, could form the basis for further talks,¹⁷³ even though the Serbs had had consigned it to the waste-paper basket shortly after it had been made and Tudjman had categorically rejected it on the occasion of the Croatian declaration of independence.¹⁷⁴ The German government still hoped to sail the same course they had plotted at the time of re-unification, viz. not to raise the impression in other countries that Germany was a threat to their security; not to awaken memories of Germany's questionable past; and to speed up the process of European integration. Croatia and Slovenia were subsidiary to these aims. The Bonn government wanted to avoid any form of *Alleingang* in the EC.

¹⁶⁷ Koslowski, *Bosnien*, p. 361; Maull, *Germany*, p. 120.

¹⁶⁸ Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 41.

¹⁶⁹ Jakobsen, *Multilateralism*, p. 392 n. 7; Mira Beham, 'Mythen und Lügen. Zum historischen Serbien-Feindbild', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 02/03/94.

¹⁷⁰ Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 41; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 932; Libal, *Limits*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁷¹ Libal, *Limits*, p. 7.

¹⁷² Libal, *Limits*, p. 12.

¹⁷³ Libal, *Limits*, p. 13.

¹⁷⁴ 'President Tudjman's speech proclaiming the independence of Croatia', *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 27/06/91.

German grass-roots opinion was quite different.¹⁷⁵ Public discussion of this topic erupted in the weekend of 29 and 30 June. Many Germans were highly indignant about what they saw as the much too weak stance of the EC. Prominent members of the SPD and the CSU, together with large numbers of Croatian migrant workers, raised their voices in the press. The German Green Party demanded immediate recognition of Croatia and Slovenia. Björn Engholm, chairman of the SPD, endorsed this standpoint on 2 July,¹⁷⁶ immediately followed by the Secretary-General of the CDU, Volker Rühle, and the former leader of the SPD, Hans-Jochen Vogel.¹⁷⁷

The question arises how this sudden, wide German support for recognition can be explained. It was in any case not based on material interests: the economic ties Germany had with Croatia and Slovenia were of only slight significance, and at any rate in the short term not very promising.¹⁷⁸ The disintegration of Yugoslavia would have adverse consequences for the German treasury, since Yugoslavia had a heavy burden of debts to the former GDR.

The international political set-up offers more explanations. The idea of a *Mittleuropa* (Central Europe) under German leadership had long had many adherents in Germany, especially in the Bavarian CSU, one of Chancellor Kohl's key supporters. The result of two world wars in the twentieth century had prevented the realization of this dream, but now that Eastern and Western Germany were re-united and after the collapse of Communism, the Central Europe idea began to look more attractive to Germans compared to that of Western Europe. This does not mean that Germany was thinking of expansion or of gaining a position of hegemony at this moment. On the contrary: Germany had its hands full with the costs of German re-unification, which were turning out to be many times higher than initially expected. However, Germany did feel a special responsibility for the stability of Eastern Europe, in particular because it would be the first to feel the consequences of wide-scale unrest, e.g. in the form of floods of refugees. It had already received many refugees from Kosovo during the preceding years who had been victims of Serb policies, so the government in Bonn did not find it hard to imagine what consequences repression in other republics could have for it.¹⁷⁹ The German government had the feeling that it could not 'escape from the new turbulence that might break out anywhere between Saint Petersburg and Constantinople', as a spokesman of the German ministry of Foreign Affairs put it.¹⁸⁰ Bonn hoped that the other EC countries would be prepared to take this special German responsibility into account, as Bonn had taken account of France's special position within the EC for decades and was now prepared to give up the Deutschmark, the emotionally charged symbol of post-war Germany's monetary and political stability, for the euro.

Traditional sympathy for Croatia and Slovenia played a certain, albeit modest, role in Germany. This was partly based on the fact that the upper classes in both regions had spoken and written German in the nineteenth century, and because of the strength of Catholicism there.¹⁸¹

The favourable German attitude towards Croatia is often represented, especially in Great Britain, as a result of the links between Nazi Germany and the Ustashe, the fascist Croatian nationalist movement that has been dealt with at length in the part of this report about the run-up to the Yugoslav conflict. This is a particularly ungenerous representation of the facts. It would probably be truer to say that the ethnic cleansing that occurred somewhat later in the conflict evoked reactions precisely in Germany because that country had, in an attempt at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (overcoming the past),

¹⁷⁵ Jakobsen, *Multilateralism*, pp. 375-376.

¹⁷⁶ Willem Besusekamp, 'Regering in Bonn onder druk om Kroatië en Slovenië te erkennen' (Government in Bonn under pressure to recognize Croatia and Slovenia), *de Volkskrant*, 03/07/91.

¹⁷⁷ Libal, *Limits*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁸ For a more extensive survey of the motives for German support for recognition, see in particular Axt, *Jugoslawien*, pp. 353-354.

¹⁷⁹ Libal, *Limits*, pp. 104-105.

¹⁸⁰ Joseph Fitchett, 'East Europe: Bonn's Growing Preoccupation', *International Herald Tribune*, 13/01/92.

¹⁸¹ See also Mira Beham, 'Mythen und Lügen. Zum historischen Serbien-Feindbild', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 02/03/94.

been flooded with pictures of the Second World War, of which the events in Yugoslavia forty years later seemed to be a re-run.¹⁸²

It is true that one factor of importance in German public opinion was the aversion to Communism, with which the country had been so much more closely confronted than the rest of Western Europe as a result of the decades of partition it had suffered. Germany's positive attitude towards the throwing off of the Communist yoke in Eastern Germany led to an *a priori* favourable stance towards the longing for self-determination in the Yugoslav republics. Croatia and Slovenia should not be deprived of the advantages that Germany had managed to acquire.¹⁸³ Just as Eastern and Western Germany had been allowed to re-unite within the framework of self-determination, so should the Yugoslav republics be granted the right to secession.

Finally, Slovenia and Croatia were favourite tourist destinations, especially for Germans. Besides, more than half a million migrant workers from the two republics lived in Germany itself, making up the majority of the roughly seven hundred thousand Germans of Yugoslav origin.

Hans Dietrich Genscher, Germany's Foreign Minister, was not only subject to the pressure of public opinion but also – from the very first day of the Yugoslav conflict – felt the full weight of Chancellor Kohl bearing down on him.¹⁸⁴ Genscher, who had been the most popular minister in Germany during practically the whole of his eighteen years in office, was known to be sensitive to his popularity rating.¹⁸⁵ This was not just a personal matter. He had to take account of the position of his party, the FDP, which was often on the verge of falling below the percentage of the national votes which, under Germany's system of proportional representation, it needed to get any seats at all in the *Bundestag*. Neither he nor his party could afford to let the CDU and the opposition party SPD join forces over the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, leaving him offside.¹⁸⁶

During a meeting of the *Bundestag* Foreign Affairs committee called by the opposition and held on 1 July 1991, Genscher ran the risk of getting the full blast from the committee on account of the reserved stance adopted by the EC. Kohl made a statement during the meeting 'jointly with the Foreign Minister', the essence of which was that Germany would not support the unity of Yugoslavia under all conditions and at any price.¹⁸⁷ This intervention by Kohl showed that the political grandmaster foresaw dangers ahead not only on Yugoslavia but also for Germany. The developments in Yugoslavia and the public commotion in Germany in response to them were indeed putting his government in a difficult position. There was probably no other government that had, without external prompting, invested as much political capital in the realization of European political union as the German. The Kohl government wished, therefore, to avoid all possible obstacles along the road leading to the Maastricht Treaty. Kohl gave a public warning early in July that the Yugoslav problem should be solved by a joint European approach because German solo diplomacy could have disastrous consequences for European integration.¹⁸⁸ However, domestic political pressure forced Kohl and Genscher to make concessions to the call for recognition of Croatia and Slovenia.

The responsible members of the German government found a route they could steer between this Scylla and Charybdis from early July. While they demanded recognition, they made this conditional. In this way, they took up a standpoint that agreed in principle with the desires of their German grass roots, while not departing too much from the main current of European opinion. An additional advantage of this stance was that the government in Bonn could use it as a threat both to the Serb

¹⁸² Cf. Maull, *Germany*, p. 111.

¹⁸³ See e.g. the remarks in this connection by Volker Rühle in: William Drozdiak, 'Germany Criticizes European Community Policy on Yugoslavia', *Washington Post*, 02/07/91 and Maull, *Germany*, p. 117 and further William Drozdiak, 'Conflicts Over Yugoslav Crisis Surface in Europe', *Washington Post*, 05/07/91; Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 44.

¹⁸⁴ Kalaitzidis, *Relations*, pp. 18-19; Horsley, *Sins*, p. 240. See also Almond, *War*, pp. 237-238

¹⁸⁵ Horsley, *Sins*, p. 229.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Axt, *Jugoslawien*, p. 354; Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 44; Maull, *Germany*, p. 122.

¹⁸⁷ Libal, *Limits*, pp. 15-16; Axt, *Jugoslawien*, p. 351; J.M. Bik, 'Bonn weet niet goed raad met Joegoslavië' (Yugoslav question poses a quandary for Bonn), *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/07/91; Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 44.

¹⁸⁸ Maull, *Germany*, p. 102.

leadership and to European partners who in the opinion of the German government were too soft towards Serbia.

On the very same 1 July on which Genscher was confronted by a closed front in the *Bundestag*, Germany opposed a statement made at a CSCE meeting in Vienna that referred to previous EC pronouncements supporting maintenance of the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia.¹⁸⁹

Genscher experienced a kind of personal conversion on that 1 July, and wasted no time in telling the world about it. He went on to Belgrade the same day, where he had talks with the Yugoslav premier Markovic, the Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs Loncar, the Croatian chairman of the Yugoslav presidium and thus in fact President of Yugoslavia Mesic, the Serbian President Milosevic, the Macedonian President Gligorov, the Bosnian President Izetbegovic and the Montenegrin President Bulatovic. On the following day he had talks with the Slovenian President Kucan and Minister of Foreign Affairs Rupelj in Klagenfurt (Austria). He told all parties that violence must be excluded as a solution to the problem. At the same time, he sounded the opinions of the various parties about a CSCE goodwill commission and an EC mission to monitor the situation.¹⁹⁰ Genscher formally made this trip in his capacity as chairman of the CSCE, but there can have been no misunderstanding of the fact, as the head of the South-eastern Europe department of his ministry subsequently wrote, that Genscher, who was not a member of the EC troika, wanted to give visible form to German diplomacy in this field.

The talk with Genscher was an enormous boost for the Slovenes in their struggle for independence. After the tone had been set on 1 July for Germany's exceptional efforts in favour of recognition, the next months saw a constant coming and going of the presidents and foreign ministers of the various Yugoslav republics in Bonn.¹⁹¹ The most prominent guest was Tudjman, who was received by Kohl and Genscher on 18 July to make up for Genscher's failure to meet Tudjman on 2 July. It may be noted, however, that Genscher toed the EC line during this talk. He did not mention the subject of recognition on this occasion.¹⁹² Tudjman did make a plea for recognition in his talk with Kohl, but the Chancellor rejected his proposal.¹⁹³

Genscher held the Yugoslav Federal Army responsible for his inability to travel to Ljubljana and Zagreb because of the risk of war, which meant that he had to meet the Slovenian leaders in Klagenfurt instead and had been unable to meet Tudjman at all. Genscher used the fact that the JNA had apparently put itself beyond any form of civil control, as the argument *par excellence* that there was no longer any need to insist on maintenance of the unity of Yugoslavia.¹⁹⁴ It did not take long for the rest of the West to share the idea that the JNA was an aggressor in what was still its own country. That was the result of a number of factors, of which the high-handed action of the army, that would not listen to Markovic and Mesic, was indeed one. Others were the successful propaganda of the Slovenian authorities, who had pictured the fairly limited JNA actions as a form of 'panzer Communism'; and – starting in August 1991 – the disproportionate violence of the federal army in Croatia.

Two countries within the EC would experience particular difficulties with the new German assertiveness: France and the Netherlands.

¹⁸⁹ ABZ, Kabinetsarchief; Coll. Van den Broek, box 7 (1991). Joego-voorzitter (Chair of Yugoslavia committee), memorandum from DAV for M, 01/07/91, No. 206/91. For further details of the German position, see also Hans Nijenhuis, *Het Westen schrikt weer van de werkelijkheid* (Reality scares the West again), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/07/91.

¹⁹⁰ Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 939; Libal, *Limits*, p. 17.

¹⁹¹ For a summary of the visits made, see Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 932-933; Zeitler, *Rolle*, pp. 186-187.

¹⁹² Libal, *Limits*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁹³ 'Bonn wimpelt pleidooi van Tudjman af' (Bonn brushes aside plea for Tudjman), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/07/91.

¹⁹⁴ Libal, *Limits*, p. 17.

France's opposition to Kleinstaaterei

A special sympathy for Serbia had traditionally existed in France. The elite of Belgrade had looked towards France and spoken French in the nineteenth century, while German was the dominant language among the upper classes in Zagreb and Ljubljana. France and Great Britain had applauded 'poor Serbia', so viciously attacked by Austro-Hungary and Germany, as their ally during the First World War, and in particular France had offered help after the march of Serb troops through Albania. The Serb troops had later fought their way back from Thessalonica to Serbia under French command. Memorials like the monument set up near Kalamegdan Castle in Belgrade or the sunken marble plaque bearing the text 'France-Serbie 1914-1918' in the Gračanica Orthodox monastery in Kosovo preserve the memory of this historic episode of solidarity between the two nations.

During the *interbellum* period, France tried to make Serb-dominated Yugoslavia a cornerstone of the Eastern European *ententes* aimed at countering German expansion. It was during the visit of King Aleksandar to France in 1934 in support of this policy that the king and the French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou were assassinated. The event itself was partly a consequence of the emotional links between the two countries. The king had been warned that Croatian extremists planned an attack on his life when he arrived in Marseilles, and he was advised to dock elsewhere. Aleksandar insisted on landing in Marseilles, however, as a gesture in honour of the French troops who had lost their lives alongside the Serbs on the Thessalonica front.¹⁹⁵

The idea that Serbia had fought on the Allied side in two world wars, while the Croats were regarded as the heirs of the Ustashe, resurfaced repeatedly in discussions in France during the 1990s, and initially gave rise to pro-Serb sentiments.¹⁹⁶ Mitterrand's image of the situation in Yugoslavia was also strongly coloured by ideas about the Second World War. The French Head of State received the Yugoslav Premier Markovic in May 1991 with the words that there had been strong links between France and Serbia since Napoleonic times, which were reinforced by two world wars.¹⁹⁷ Mitterrand told the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* at the end of November 1991 that he did not want to talk of assailants and victims in the conflicts between Serbs and Croats. He went on to say, 'What I know is that the history of Serbs and Croats has been full of such dramas for ages. Especially during the last World War, many Serbs were killed in Croatian camps. As you know, the Croats belonged to the Nazi Block, while the Serbs did not.'¹⁹⁸ This statement not only witnessed to a lack of historical knowledge; it was also particularly shocking because it was made ten days after the fall of the Croatian Vukovar and after a visit by the French Secretary of State for Humanitarian Aid Bernard Kouchner to the Croatian Dubrovnik. The interview was noted in Croatia, and soured Franco-Croatian relations for many years;¹⁹⁹ it also caused Mitterrand to be accused in the French press of being a 'Serb-lover'.²⁰⁰ It was not until June 1992 that Mitterrand named the Serbs as the aggressor in the conflict.²⁰¹ Even as late as the beginning of 1994, however, Mitterrand could still say, 'Yes, I love the Serbs – and what of it? How could one forget their courage during two world wars? It is the Croats who have suppressed seven hundred thousand Serbs.'²⁰²

During the French government meeting of 7 August 1991, Mitterrand sketched French policy with regard to Yugoslavia as follows:

¹⁹⁵ Branislav Gligorijevic, 'King Aleksandar I Karadjordjevic', in Radan & Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 156.

¹⁹⁶ Chenu, *France*, pp. 376 and 379-380.

¹⁹⁷ Olivier Lepick, 'French Perspectives', in Danchev & Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, p. 78.

¹⁹⁸ 'Mitterrand: Frankreich will in Maastricht den Erfolg' (Mitterrand says France wants Maastricht to succeed), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29/11/91.

¹⁹⁹ Chenu, *France*, p. 379.

²⁰⁰ See also Tardy, *France*, p. 119.

²⁰¹ Chenu, *France*, p. 376.

²⁰² Adler, *Année*, p. 84.

‘All the ingredients of this century are combined at a dangerous spot. The Twelve have no armed forces or peacekeeping troops. The Soviet Union, which has troubles of its own with national groups, will not intervene. We cannot avoid taking traditional friendships into account. For us, just as for Russia, Serbia is a friend. Slovenia and Croatia are more oriented towards the Germans. In short, the situation is very grave: it is not righting itself, and it is not going to right itself.’²⁰³

It is thus clear that Mitterrand did not think much of the Croats, whom he regarded as the ‘buddies’ of Germany and the Vatican.²⁰⁴ Moreover, Mitterrand – just like the French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas – did not like the idea of *Kleinstaaterei* (the continued breaking up of large states into small ones) : steps had to be taken to stop secessions spreading through Europe like a forest fire.²⁰⁵ The thought of the struggle for independence in Corsica will doubtless not have been far from his mind. In his 1992 New Year’s speech, Mitterrand was still saying that the right to independence must not be confused with the ‘anarchy of tribes from a distant age’.²⁰⁶ This standpoint also initially led Mitterrand to a pro-Serb stance.

In line with this, Dumas commented shortly after the outbreak of the conflict that the tasks of the EC did not include promoting the independence of peoples.²⁰⁷ This standpoint was in direct contrast to that of the German government.

Unlike the government in Bonn, that in Paris was prepared for military intervention, though the French government did all it could to avoid such intervention turning into all-out war.²⁰⁸ France has traditionally had fewer inhibitions about peacekeeping operations than other great powers. In a certain sense, the government in Paris regarded peacekeeping operations as a possible means of global politics which France could no longer realize at a national level. Moreover, since the end of the ‘eighties there had been a strong moral awareness in France of a duty, if not a right, to carry out humanitarian interventions, which was nourished by people like Bernard Kouchner, the founder of the international organization *Médecins Sans Frontières*.²⁰⁹ It should be remembered that France was not only the state with its cynical *raison d’état* for which it is often so well-known in the Netherlands. It was also the country that was to celebrate the bicentennial of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen a few years later. Like the Netherlands, it had made human rights an important element of its foreign policy.²¹⁰

This attitude was clearly visible at the time of the Yugoslav conflict. France was the biggest contributor to UN peacekeeping operations worldwide in mid-1993.²¹¹ It started deploying troops in the former Yugoslavia in April 1992, ultimately reaching a level of six thousand soldiers, making it the

²⁰³ Dumas, *Fil*, p. 354. The original text here is as follows: ‘Toutes les données du siècle se trouvent réunies sur un terrain dangereux. Les Douze n’ont pas de forces de combat ou d’intervention. L’URSS, qui a ses problèmes de nationalités, n’interviendra. Nous ne devons pas négliger de tenir compte des amitiés traditionnelles. Pour nous, comme pour la Russie, c’est la Serbie. La Slovénie et la Croatie sont plutôt tournées vers les Germains. En conclusion, l’affaire est très grave, elle ne s’arrange pas et ne s’arrangera pas.’

²⁰⁴ Chenu, *France*, p. 373 n. 10 and n. 11.

²⁰⁵ See e.g. Chenu, *France*, p. 367; Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 47; Koslowski, *Bosnien*, p. 363; Dumas, *Fil*, p. 353; ‘UPI News Analysis. Yugoslav crisis reveals split within European Community’, *UPI*, 06/07/91.

²⁰⁶ Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 47.

²⁰⁷ In an interview in ‘The World at One’, *BBC Radio 4*, 05/07/91, cited in Almond, *War*, p. 237.

²⁰⁸ Confidential interview (1).

²⁰⁹ See e.g. Marie-Claude Smouts, ‘Political aspects of peace-keeping operations’, in: Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, pp. 19-20, 33 and 36-37; Yves Daudet, *Legal aspects*, *ibid*, p. 54; *idem*, ‘Budgetary and financial aspects’, *ibid*, p. 78.

²¹⁰ Baehr, *Role*, p. 127; Martin Sommer, ‘Fransen waren niet simpelweg pro-Servisch’ (The French were not simply pro-Serb), *de Volkskrant*, 17/11/2000.

²¹¹ Cf. Marie-Claude Smouts, ‘Political aspects of peace-keeping operations’, in Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, p. 19.

biggest contributor of troops to the region. It would ultimately also pay the highest price of all troop suppliers for this intervention, with a total of 56 dead and nearly six hundred wounded.²¹²

French Foreign Minister Dumas had already suggested in July 1991 that a peacekeeping force should be sent to the region, after the head of the directorate for Europe at the *Quai d'Orsay* (the home of the French Foreign Ministry) had stated, on the basis of a fact-finding mission to Yugoslavia from 9 to 12 July, that separation of the hostile troops and creation of a buffer zone could not be excluded.²¹³ France would play a leading role in all important initiatives taken in 1991 – the mobilization of the EC, the peace conference, the Arbitration Commission and the involvement of the Security Council. And this would continue to be the case in the succeeding years. Mitterrand commented in September 1994 that France had done more for Bosnia than any other country.²¹⁴

French policy with regard to Yugoslavia was further largely determined by the attempt to prevent the conflict from spreading to other countries²¹⁵ and the wish to deal with the matters involved without NATO intervention. This was related to the dominant role played by the Americans in the latter organization and the fact that France had only played a partial role in it since 1967, when it had withdrawn from the organization's military activities while still playing a role in its political set-up.

Since the American government initially had no wish to get involved in the conflict, there seemed to be a good chance of realizing this latter wish. As mentioned above, attempts to take action within a WEU framework stranded on British intransigence. German support for recognition of the independence of the breakaway Yugoslav republics was initially a barrier to effective EC involvement.²¹⁶ In the autumn of 1991, however, the German and French governments reinstated the Paris-Bonn axis, which had been damaged by the differences of opinion about how to deal with the Yugoslav crisis. The differences between Germany and the Netherlands were to prove longer lasting.

5. The Netherlands as EC chairman despite itself

It was unfortunate that the EC troika in the second half of 1991 consisted of relatively small countries, viz. Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal. While it is true that the three Ministers of Foreign Affairs Poos, Van den Broek and De Deus Pinheiro were the official representatives of the European Community, they did not have the same political clout as their counterparts from the more powerful nations such as Dumas, Genscher, Hurd and De Michelis. Even though a senior Dutch civil servant claimed that the Netherlands was 'a kind of superpower' compared with Luxembourg and Portugal,²¹⁷ the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Van den Broek would find that it is no sinecure for a chairman from a small country to keep his colleagues from the big member states on board in such an enterprise.

The small countries did have some advantages, however: they could hardly be accused of pursuing material interests in their handling of the Yugoslav conflict,²¹⁸ or of being burdened by historical sentiments and reflexes.²¹⁹

There was certainly no traditionally strong negative image of the Serbs in the Netherlands.²²⁰ In fact, up to the Second World War there could have been said to have been 'a certain pro-Serb tendency'.²²¹ The Dutch author and journalist A. den Doollaard did more than anyone else to 'maintain

²¹² Marie-Claude Smouts, 'Political aspects of peace-keeping operations', in: Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, p. 21.

²¹³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03283, EU/GBVB/extra CoPo 1991, memo from DEU/OE, 'Joegoslavië/scenario's en beleidsmogelijkheden' for Extra CoPo, The Hague 19/07/91, 18/07/91.

²¹⁴ Cited in: Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, *Lessons*.

²¹⁵ Confidential interview 1.

²¹⁶ Confidential interview (1) and H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00.

²¹⁷ 'Conflict Joegoslavië beheerst EG-top', *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91.

²¹⁸ This advantage was also evident to Paris, 'EG wijzigt beleid voor Joegoslavië' (EC changes Yugoslavia policy), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/07/91.

²¹⁹ Interview H.A. Schaper, 10/04/00.

²²⁰ Cf. the comments of the head of DEU in ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Engels 76 to Kooijmans, 20/03/93.

²²¹ Appendix Naarden, *Beeld en Balkan*.

a positive image of the Balkans and Yugoslavia in the Netherlands' in the years round the Second World War.²²² He did this mainly with the aid of his novels, which were filled with noble but violent characters. Den Doolaard, who travelled widely through the Balkans in the 'thirties and 'fifties, was acclaimed by many other post-war Dutch authors who credited him with 'a view of Yugoslavia that was very optimistic while not being entirely free from criticism'.²²³

In a country like the Netherlands, where there was a strong feeling (especially in the 'sixties and thereafter) that the population as a whole had not really given the Resistance movement sufficient support during the Second World War, it is understandable that there could be great, if not blind, admiration of the struggle of the Communist partisans in Yugoslavia.²²⁴ When Tito died in 1980, there was only one commentator in the Dutch broadsheets who raised a finger in criticism of the Serbs. According to J. den Boef in *Trouw*, they would 'inevitably try to regain their dominant position'.²²⁵

Some left-wing politicians and shapers of opinion in the Netherlands, such as the Minister of Defence Relus ter Beek, the columnist and lecturer in international relations and comparative politics at the University of Leiden Koen Koch, the author Lisette Lewin and the journalists Herman Vuijsje, John Jansen van Galen and Igor Cornelissen, had in their time flirted with the idea of workers' control or worked on the construction of the big Brotherhood and Unity motorway between Belgrade and Zagreb.²²⁶ Left-wing intellectuals saw Yugoslavia as the country behind the Iron Curtain where the Marxist sun still shone, 'a country where the foundation for the realization of Marx's theories has been laid and where – somewhat in contrast to most of the other countries of Eastern Europe – there is still room for further development'.²²⁷ Wim Kok, leader of the PvdA (Labour), had also been 'keenly interested' in the system of workers' control in Yugoslavia during the time when he had been closely involved in the work of the Dutch union movement in the 'seventies'.²²⁸ The positive image of Yugoslavia and the Serbs in the Netherlands would not change until 1991, when undue emphasis was put on the violent aspects of their history and their 'nature'.

The differences between Germany and the Netherlands concerning the Yugoslav question, which put a heavy burden on the Dutch chairmanship of the EC, were due not so much to Yugoslavia itself as to the position which these two countries considered they had to take up in the world – and in particular to the change in Germany's stance, already alluded to above, which took place round about the time of the Yugoslav crisis. For many years after the end of the Second World War, German foreign policy had strongly resembled that of the Netherlands, both being characterized by a stress on multilateral alliances, moral considerations and a strong aversion to the use of military force.

Dutch Premier Lubbers and Foreign Minister Van den Broek were thus struck by a form of cognitive dissonance when Germany, strengthened by re-unification and with a new feeling of responsibility for stability in Central and Eastern Europe, started to adopt a foreign policy marked by a greater stress on Germany's own role in the affairs in question. The impact of this change in course was even harder because Van den Broek and Lubbers were doing all they could at that time to carry through the Dutch chairmanship of the EC on the basis of consensus. Dutch civil servants in the ministry of Foreign Affairs also noted 'a rather surprising self-awareness on the part of the Germans. Self-awareness of this kind was not exactly the most convenient development at this juncture!'²²⁹

The situation was made even more difficult by the fact that the two actors with primary responsibility for Dutch foreign policy – Van den Broek and Lubbers – had already manoeuvred

²²² Appendix Naarden, *Beeld en Balkan*.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Cf. Constandse, *Joegoslavië, passim*; Bart van Steenbergen, 'Ten geleide' (Introduction), in: Markovic, *Weg*, p. 9.

²²⁵ J. den Boef, 'Kan Joegoslavië zonder Tito?' (Can Yugoslavia go on without Tito?), *Trouw*, 05/05/80.

²²⁶ See in this connection Appendix Naarden, *Beeld en Balkan*; Arendo Joustra, 'Hollandse stootarbeiders voor Tito' (Dutch 'storm troopers' work for Tito), *Elsevier*, 05/09/92, pp. 16-20; Van den Heuvel, *Leven*, pp. 143-144.

²²⁷ Bart van Steenbergen, 'Ten geleide', in Markovic, *Weg*, p. 8.

²²⁸ Interview Wim Kok, 08/05/00.

²²⁹ Interview A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

themselves into a problematic position with respect to Germany by trying to make Western acceptance of German re-unification subject to certain conditions. Van den Broek was afraid that the re-unification of Germany could lead once again to German *Alleingang* (going it alone) and to the country's following a *Sonderweg* (separate path) between East and West. Like Lubbers, he wanted public guarantees from the re-united Germany that the Oder-Neisse would remain Poland's western frontier.²³⁰ In particular Chancellor Kohl, but also Foreign Minister Genscher, would not lightly forget the attitude taken by the Dutch ministerial duo.²³¹ Moreover, Genscher suspected the pro-NATO Van den Broek of wishing to play down the Paris-Bonn axis in the run-up to European political union.²³² Conversely, Genscher had been incredibly rude to Van den Broek in February 1990 during the Open Skies Conference in Ottawa when the latter had claimed a place for the Netherlands alongside the four former occupying powers in the discussions on German re-unification. 'You are not part of the game,' Van den Broek was told by his German counterpart.²³³

The Netherlands has an existential problem, as the diplomat N.H. Biegan put it: it's too big to be counted among the small countries, and too small to be counted among the big ones.²³⁴ This leads to a constant ambition to belong with the big countries, and constant rejection by the latter. In addition, Lubbers and Van den Broek had been 'spoiled' in the 'eighties by the international position accorded to the Netherlands at the time of the debate on cruise missiles and by the growing appraisal of Dutch economic policy. The central position the Netherlands had assumed during the debate on the siting of cruise missiles had been a boost to the ego of the ministerial spokesmen. In a world that still seemed fairly simple, the idea could grow that the Dutch Foreign Minister had 'a little, a very little say in the way the world went'.²³⁵ Hence, according to Lubbers, the Netherlands was not using the Yugoslavia dossier to build up a position for itself as chairman of the EC: 'the Netherlands already had a position.'²³⁶ And in the view of the Dutch government, this position implied a *noblesse oblige* attitude on its part. This means that the Netherlands had to adopt a more active stance than countries like Ireland or Austria. And the 'assertive Minister of Foreign Affairs Van den Broek' had to do something significant, as a 'consequence of the fact that he already was someone'.²³⁷

This 'plucky-little-country syndrome'²³⁸ had not however turned Van den Broek into a power thinker. He still argued primarily in political and moral terms where the future of Europe was involved.²³⁹ Nevertheless, Van den Broek was convinced that interest-based politics and idealism could go hand in hand. He found it quite logical, for example, that when dealing with the Yugoslav conflict the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs should aim at realization of one of the main objectives of Dutch foreign policy, viz. making a contribution to the maintenance and promotion of peace.²⁴⁰ Execution of this task would at the same time enhance Dutch prestige on the international scene and create a positive image.²⁴¹

²³⁰ See e.g. H. van den Broek, 'Continuïteit en vernieuwing in Europa', *Christen Democratische Verkenningen*, (1990)5, pp. 207 and 211-212; J.M. Bik, 'Er valt nog veel te verbeteren aan omgang met Duitsland' (There is lots of room for improvement in relations with Germany), *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/09/91; Wielenga, *Vijand*, pp. 186-187, 211.

²³¹ Interview H. van den Broek, 02/12/99; Metze, *Stranding*, p. 259; P. Rusman, 'De laatste Koude-Oorlogsstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)', Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 275-276; Wielenga, *Vijand*, p. 187; Both, *Indifference*, p. 118. See also Van Eekelen, *Sporen*, p. 234.

²³² Both, *Indifference*, p. 118; Dankert in Rehwinkel en Nekkers, *Regerenderwijs*, pp. 151-152.

²³³ Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 729.

²³⁴ TCBU. *Vertrekpunt* (Starting point), III, deposition by N.H. Biegan, 29/05/00, p. 185.

²³⁵ Leonard Ornstein, 'Minister Van den Broek: "Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg"', *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 9.

²³⁶ Interview R.F.M. Lubbers, 13/10/00.

²³⁷ Interview R.F.M. Lubbers, 13/10/00.

²³⁸ The term was coined by Ben Knapen, 'Het vaderland in Europa', *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91.

²³⁹ See e.g. H. van den Broek, 'Continuïteit en vernieuwing in Europa', *Christen Democratische Verkenningen*, (1990)5, p. 208.

²⁴⁰ TCBU. *Vertrekpunt*, III, deposition by H. van den Broek, 22/05/00, p. 19.

²⁴¹ TCBU. *Vertrekpunt*, III, deposition by H. van den Broek, 22/05/00, p. 21.

In the meantime, considerable confusion existed in the Netherlands round about 1990 (as in many other countries at that time) about the form foreign policy and in particular security policy should take after the Cold War.²⁴²

It was ironic that the Netherlands should be the very country to occupy the chairmanship of the European Community at this time, and thus in fact to give form to the common foreign and security policy *avant la lettre* via a process of intergovernmental consultation. After all, the traditional Dutch supranational orientation led to a preference for a strong European Commission and a disinclination to give much power either to the Council of Ministers or to the chairmanship of the EC. When the Netherlands had been chairman of the EC in the past, therefore, it had restricted itself mainly to 'looking after the shop'.²⁴³ Van den Broek objected to the Council of Ministers, because he was of the opinion that it often degenerated into a cosy get-together of the big countries. Besides, he was not entirely happy that not he but the Prime Minister took part in such meetings.²⁴⁴

The Netherlands was such a strong advocate of a Community approach – a view in which it differed appreciably from the big countries – that it was even doubted in June 1991 whether it would make a good chairman of the EC at this juncture.²⁴⁵ The Hague had the reputation of not consulting the other European capitals much. As Rob Meines put it in *NRC Handelsblad* shortly before the Netherlands was to assume the chairmanship of the EC, the country 'often had an almost high-priestly fidelity to the true doctrine'. Formally, the Council of Ministers was only empowered to take decisions on matters prepared by the European Commission. In general, the Netherlands waited patiently to see what the Commission had hatched out and then discussed it with the other members of the Council of Ministers, so that it often did not have much of a finger in the pie. In other words, the Netherlands was not skilled in European 'lobbying techniques, which tended to be equated with hanky-panky in our country'.²⁴⁶ The Director-General of the department of Political Affairs in the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs, A.P. van Walsum, wrote later that Van den Broek 'did not really do his best to create the impression of being vitally interested in European integration'.²⁴⁷ Piet Dankert, Junior Minister for Foreign Affairs during the Lubbers-Kok coalition, said that he had never thought that Van den Broek had been keenly interested in Germany and France. 'His mind was much more on England and America'.²⁴⁸ Van den Broek had the reputation of always wanting to participate when the Americans went to war.²⁴⁹

Not only was the Netherlands traditionally rather ill at ease when it came to chairing the EC, but also like Great Britain it was (to put it mildly) not a strong advocate of quick realization of a common European security policy. Both London and The Hague feared that if Europe were to have its own policy line in this field, this could lead to collisions with the United States, with which both countries had special relationships of long standing.²⁵⁰ Moreover, the Netherlands was not particularly keen to cooperate in the setting up of a common policy that would, it suspected, be dictated by the big

²⁴² 'Buitenland, hoezo?' (What do you mean, abroad?), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/04/92; J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 'Nederland is niet te klein voor rol in de wereld' (The Netherlands is not too small for world role), *ibid.*, 14/04/92.

²⁴³ Victor, *Presidency*, 6.1 en 6.2.2.2.

²⁴⁴ Co Welgraven, 'Zes zware mannen in een Europa vol obstakels' (Six big men in a Europe full of obstacles), *Trouw*, 29/06/91.

²⁴⁵ Rob Meines, 'Een voorzitter met een sterk afwijkende mening' (A chairman with a strong view of his own), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91.

²⁴⁶ Rob Meines, 'Nederland is 'Europees' genoeg' (The Netherlands is 'European' enough), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/06/91.

²⁴⁷ Van Walsum, *Nederland*, pp. 59-60.

²⁴⁸ Dankert in: Rehwinkel & Nekkers, p. 143.

²⁴⁹ Stemerding, *Dromen*, pp. 191-192; P. Rusman, 'De laatste Koude-Oorlogssrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)', Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, p. 274

²⁵⁰ Menon & Forster & Wallace, 'Defence', pp. 104-105; Frits Schaling, 'Europees Parlement gelooft Haagse voornemens niet zo' (European Parliament has little faith in Dutch intentions), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/91; Leonoor Meijer & Co Welgraven, 'Internationaal kan Henz Vendenbroek niet meer stuk' (The international position of 'Henz Vendenbroek' (Anglicized pronunciation of Hans Van den Broek) is secure), *Trouw*, 13/07/91; André Roelofs, 'Keuze lokatie vredesmacht is het probleem?' (Choice of location of peacekeeping force is the problem), *de Volkskrant*, 03/08/91.

three (France, Germany and the United Kingdom) while the smaller countries like the Netherlands would have little or no say but would still share the responsibility for the decisions taken.²⁵¹ It has even been suggested that the zeal Van den Broek displayed concerning the Yugoslav conflict was mainly motivated by his need to remove the impression on the part of his German counterpart Genscher that he was not really prepared to put effort into the realization of such a policy.²⁵² In line with this, the Netherlands would remain a firm advocate of actions within a NATO framework to deal with the Yugoslav question, but had little enthusiasm for the WEU actions repeatedly proposed by the Dutch head of the WEU Van Eekelen.²⁵³

Since the Dutch embassy in Belgrade also acted for Luxembourg during the first six months of 1991 when the latter was chairman of the EC, all the additional information on conditions in Yugoslavia that Luxembourg received via this channel for the purposes of the EC chairmanship also landed on the desks of the appropriate civil servants at the ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague. This would have provided ideal material for a preparatory study of the problems that were on the way in Yugoslavia. It was however only in the last few months before the Netherlands was due to take over the chairmanship that Van den Broek started considering Yugoslav issues seriously; before that time, it had long been a matter left to the Eastern Europe department of his ministry. In a letter to Parliament describing the programme for the Dutch chairmanship of the EC, Van den Broek summed up a large number of priorities. Yugoslavia occupied a very modest place here. The list of priorities did include 'a number of very disturbing developments in Eastern Europe', on which the Twelve would have to formulate a standpoint. This referred primarily to the breakdown of the Soviet Union and in particular to the position of the Baltic states. The letter to Parliament went on to state that 'due attention must also be paid to the impending disintegration of Yugoslavia' However, Van den Broek looked for solutions mainly in expansion of the CSCE and maintenance of the good trans-Atlantic relationships, not in the EC.²⁵⁴

6. The Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs

The ministry that was to back up Van den Broek during the Dutch chairmanship of the EC did not in fact have a large number of civil servants who were really engaged in policy production.²⁵⁵ The ministry, with its dual leadership – apart from the minister of Foreign Affairs, his colleague the minister for International Development also headed the department – had three Directorates-General in the early 1990s: those of Political Affairs, European Cooperation and International Cooperation.

The task of the Director-General for Political Affairs (Dutch abbreviation DGPZ) was to deal with all aspects of foreign policy involving a definite policy line. He was thus responsible for coordinating the work not only of the directorates that fell directly under his authority, but also that of the units which formally fell within the field of the other two Directorates-General. This made the Director-General for Political Affairs not only the *primus inter pares* of the three directors-general but also the minister's highest political advisor.

Four regional directorates fell directly under the authority of the the Director-General for Political Affairs, those of Asia and Oceania, Africa and the Middle East, the Western Hemisphere and Europe. He was also responsible for the directorates for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs and

²⁵¹ See e.g. ABZ, Bosnia discussion, Fietelaars 18 to Van Mierlo, 28/01/98.

²⁵² J.G. Siccama, 'Tegengaan van anarchie in Oost-Europa; een pleidooi voor een idealistische integrationistische visie' (Countering anarchy in Eastern Europe; a plea for an idealistic integrationist vision), in Gijs de Vries et al., *Continent*, p. 108; idem, 'Nogmaals: ex-Joegoslavië' (The former Yugoslavia again), *Armed*, 77(1993)7/8, p. 5. See also A. van Staden, 'NAVO: Opties voor de toekomst' (NATO: options for the future), *ibid.*, p. 175.

²⁵³ See e.g. the standpoint regarding enforcement of the flight restriction, ABZ, kabinetsarchief, Joegoslavië, resolution 781, 786 (1992), ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Jacobovits 2005 to Van den Broek, 18/12/92.

²⁵⁴ TK, 1990-1991, 22 052, No. 1, p. 10.

²⁵⁵ For a more detailed description of the organization of the ministry of Foreign Affairs, see the appendix 'The Organization and Coordination of the ministry of Foreign Affairs.'

for Political UN Issues. These two last-mentioned directorates, together with the directorate for Europe (DEU), played the main role within the ministry in relation to the Yugoslav question.

Van den Broek was an ‘Atlanticus *pur sang*’.²⁵⁶ Thanks to his many years as minister, since 1982, the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs had developed into a key part of the ministry during the eighties. The formal terms of reference of this directorate covered the protection of Dutch security interests in an international framework, which meant that it had to deal with NATO, the WEU, the CSCE, arms control, verification and arms export policy as well as Atlantic cooperation. In practice, the department also dealt with relations with the United States and Canada, though this was formally the responsibility of the regional directorate for the Western Hemisphere.²⁵⁷

Van den Broek considered it to be of great importance that competent civil servants were employed in this department.²⁵⁸ The head of the directorate since August 1990 was B.J. (Boudewijn) van Eenennaam, like Van den Broek a whole-hearted Atlanticus with a great affinity for the American mentality. The minister gave him a free hand as director.²⁵⁹ Van Eenennaam was an advocate of power politics, but suffered the disadvantage in this connection of having been born a Dutchman. His perception of international politics was strongly coloured by the Cold War. His conviction that Serbia was the aggressor in all conflicts in the former Yugoslavia led Van Eenennaam to believe that Serbia should be dealt with firmly and forced into isolation.²⁶⁰ He had also concluded on the basis of his experience during the Cold War that policy should be based not on the views held in the region which was the object of the policy, but on the convictions of the policy-maker. He also believed firmly that if the Netherlands wanted to be an international leader in the field of overseas aid and to contribute to the solution of humanitarian crises, it must also be prepared to curb the violence which can arise in such situations.²⁶¹

The influence of the regional directorates, which embodied the institutional memory and the analytical capacity to handle issues relating to particular regions, was reduced under Van den Broek in favour of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs.²⁶² Nevertheless, the regional directorate for Europe (DEU), which was responsible for bilateral contacts in Europe, was formally the first port of call when it came to issues of Yugoslav politics. DEU consisted of one Western Europe office and one for Eastern Europe, the latter being responsible for matters concerning Dutch involvement in the former Yugoslavia. Each of these two offices had a staff of three in 1991; it should be noted that the Eastern Europe office also had to deal with matters concerning the Soviet Union. The Western Europe office was not so interested in bilateral relations; the main emphasis in this unit was multilateral diplomacy. During the Cold War, the ministry of Foreign Affairs had the impression that there was little for it to do in Eastern Europe. The head of the Eastern Europe office (and Deputy Director of DEU) was H.J. Hazewinkel. He had been mainly responsible for Yugoslavia before the outbreak of the conflict. When Yugoslav matters began to demand more and more of his department’s attention, from mid-1991, the young diplomat AM van der Togt was added to the department’s staff. He was given the special task of dealing with issues concerning Yugoslavia.

The Directorate for Political UN Issues was charged with the contacts with the United Nations. It was headed by J.T. (Jan) Hoekema from 1 July 1990 to 1994, when he became a member of Parliament. This directorate included a Political office, the main task of which was to maintain contacts with the permanent delegation of the Netherlands to the United Nations in New York. This directorate

²⁵⁶ Stemerding, *Dromen*, p. 157; cf. Dankert in Rehwinkel & Nekkers, p. 147; P. Rusman, ‘De laatste Koude-Oorlogsstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)’, Hellema et al. (ed.), *Ministers*, pp. 269, 272, 275, 276; Van Walsum, *Nederland*, pp. 52 and 60.

²⁵⁷ Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 49.

²⁵⁸ Interview M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

²⁵⁹ Interview M. Hennis, 09/03/99; Leonard Ornstein, ‘Het stratego van de experts’ (Stratego for experts), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/93, p. 11.

²⁶⁰ Interview B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00.

²⁶¹ Interview B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00; TCBU. *Vertrekpunt*, III, deposition by B.J. van Eenennaam, 05/06/00, p. 280.

²⁶² Interview M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

had little involvement with the Yugoslav question in 1991, since the UN initially kept its distance from this matter.

It goes without saying that the activities of these different directorates operating alongside one another required coordination. In the ministry of Foreign Affairs, this coordination occurred both at top level and at operational level. The top civil servant at the ministry was formally the Secretary-General. Since 1989, this post had been filled by Dr. Bernard Rudolf Bot who had the reputation of being one of the leading Dutch diplomats in this period. It should be noted, however, that the Secretary-General played a less prominent role at Foreign Affairs than in various other Dutch ministries. The primary responsibility for policy coordination lay not with him but with the Director-General for Political Affairs (DGPZ). In addition, the function of personal secretary to the minister had been created a number of years before; his task was to regulate the flow of documents and to control access to the minister. The Secretary-General at Foreign Affairs was thus little more than formal head of the organization of civil servants working at the ministry.

All these facts made the Director-General for Political Affairs the minister's main political advisor. He acted as gatekeeper to the minister together with the latter's personal secretary and was further responsible for the general policy line and the unity of Dutch foreign policy. In addition, together with his counterparts from other EC member states he was a member of the EC's *Comité Politique*, which prepared matters for discussion by the Council of Ministers. Peter van Walsum, a respected diplomat with a well balanced approach, had been Director-General for Political Affairs since July 1989. His diplomatic career had been an excellent preparation for the task he had to perform during the Dutch chairmanship of the EC in the second half of 1991. He had more than twenty years of diplomatic experience in South-Eastern Europe. He was posted to Bucharest in 1967, and travelled to Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece and the European part of Turkey from the Romanian capital. He was moved to the Dutch permanent delegation to the United Nations in 1970 – a position to which he would return between 1998 and 2001 at the end of his diplomatic career. At the UN, he was the Dutch representative in the Third Commission of the General Assembly, which dealt with human rights. In 1979, he was posted to the Dutch permanent delegation to the EC in Brussels. He had a reflective nature, and while a keen analyst he had a tendency to secondary reaction. Thus, he stood in sharp contrast to Van den Broek. The minister, who often reacted in a primary manner, thought that his Director-General for Political Affairs often reacted too slowly.²⁶³

When the Yugoslav conflict broke out, the ministry was thus headed by five persons: the Foreign Minister Van den Broek; Director-General for Political Affairs Van Walsum; to a certain extent his deputy, ambassador at large C.M.J. Kröner; the head of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs Van Eenennaam; and Henri Wijnaendts, the Dutch ambassador in Paris and special confidant of the minister. Of this select company, the Director-General for Political Affairs was the appropriate figure to take care of policy coordination. However, Van Walsum did not play the coordinating role that might be expected of him in dealing with the matters contained in the Yugoslavia dossier. Consequently, the policy concerning (the former) Yugoslavia was divided over the three directorates: Atlantic Cooperation and Security, Europe and Political UN Issues, the chief actors being forced to arrive at policy proposals by a process of mutual consultation.²⁶⁴ It was not always clear to the staff in the three directorates who was supposed to be dealing with which aspect of the policy concerning Yugoslavia, since a given issue may have several sides each of which belongs in principle under one or other of the three directorates.²⁶⁵ And if guidance was not being given from the top, at the level of the Director-General for Political Affairs, could one expect it from the heads of the individual directorates? As K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, a member of staff of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation

²⁶³ Interview P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99.

²⁶⁴ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

²⁶⁵ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

and Security Affairs, put it, 'But who was in fact responsible for this problem? That was not clear'. He went on to say,

'There was never any task setting. Any clearly defined head. Who was supposed to be that head?... it was characteristic of the style of government. Let everyone struggle on with the job as well as he could and then we pick out the best result and talk it over with the minister. That is not a transparent way to work. You don't know what's happening to your products. You don't even know what's demanded of you. You don't know who has the initiative.'²⁶⁶

Not only was there a lack of control, but the staff of the various directorates often lacked clear information about what was going on at top level. A great deal of information and policy-in-the-making flowed through the hierarchy from bottom to top, but there were very seldom signals passing in the opposite direction.²⁶⁷ This situation was reinforced by the fact that the ministers, in particular Van den Broek during the Dutch chairmanship of the EC, discussed many matters by phone with their foreign counterparts while the Director-General for Political Affairs had many similar discussions with the ambassadors. In addition, Van den Broek had the habit of not making decisions on the basis of official documents, but of calling together a number of heads of departments and their immediate staff for a talk early in the evening. The feedback from these various sorts of verbal exchanges of ideas was often fragmentary. Written notes of conversations were seldom taken, though they often are in the ministries of Foreign Affairs in other countries.²⁶⁸

The same complaint was heard about feedback from the Ministerial Council to the staff in the directorates. As one of the officials in question commented:

'Preparing a paper for the Ministerial Council was an ordeal. You never heard what decisions were taken in the Ministerial Council about it. We were sometimes passed over completely, or documents were even presented to the Ministerial Council that we had not seen in the final form ... We were greatly handicapped and this was also connected with the internal organization of Foreign Affairs. We never got feedback from the Ministerial Council on the Monday morning because we have two ministers (for International Development as well as for Foreign Affairs) and each one had his own following. That was a really weak point in the organization of Foreign Affairs. The distribution of classified documents, the conclusions of the Ministerial Council and minutes was always a very sticky business too. It could take days to lay eyes on them. That could be a bit of a drawback. We often had to ask Defence what decision had been taken.'²⁶⁹

If something was laid down on paper, no structure existed for its distribution. The same was also true of the distribution of information of this sort to the Dutch diplomatic missions abroad. Dutch ambassadors repeatedly found in their dealings with the ministry of Foreign Affairs in the country where they were accredited that they were confronted with the contents of talks that the Dutch

²⁶⁶ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00. Cf. Michiel van Hulten, 'Zwarte Maandag. Kroniek van en gemiste kans' (Black Monday. Chronicle of a lost chance), in Labohm (ed.), *Waterdragers*, p. 196, where Ronald van Beuge, Director-General of European Cooperation at the time, stated that Van den Broek 'had become accustomed to getting a set of contradictory recommendations all the time, between which he could then arbitrate himself.

²⁶⁷ Interviews P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00; K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00; J.L. Sandee, 12/06/00; R. Swartbol, 08/07/00; and A. M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

²⁶⁸ Interviews R. in den Bosch, 19/04/00; J.T. Hoekema, 05/03/98; K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00; R. Swartbol, 08/07/00; and AM van der Togt, 04/05/00.

²⁶⁹ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

minister of Foreign Affairs or the Director-General for Political Affairs had had with a foreign counterpart on the (incorrect) assumption that this information had already been passed on by The Hague to the embassy in question. If notes were taken of talks, the Dutch contribution was often left out so that the Dutch diplomats reading them abroad were unable to distil the Dutch policy from them.²⁷⁰

This gave rise to the remarkable situation that the minister often had a good knowledge of the position of other EC member states via his telephone contacts, while his civil servants had to gather scraps of information about it from embassy reports, articles in the press, press reports and CNN.²⁷¹ The situation was somewhat mitigated in the second half of 1991 by the very high frequency of ministerial meetings or meetings of the EC *Comité Politique*. These meetings required preparation, which led to preliminary discussions in Van Walsum's room. As a result, there was temporarily less need for structural coordination between the directorates. A coordinator for the policy concerning Yugoslavia at operational level would not be appointed until the summer of 1992.

Another question is how the ministry had organized its knowledge about Yugoslavia. According to Van Walsum, after looking round a bit there proved to be sufficient expertise about the Balkans already present in the ministry, including his own.²⁷² Many other top civil servants in Foreign Affairs considered, however, that there was a severe lack of knowledge about the Balkans in general and Yugoslavia in particular. According to H.A. Schaper, deputy head of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs, this soon led to a knowledge bottleneck.²⁷³ The person in the department who knew most about the region was H.J. Hazewinkel, head of the Eastern Europe office. His directorate occupied a marginal position, and he and his director were much less visible than the self-confident staff of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs, who had established good access routes to the minister and the Director-General for Political Affairs during the preceding years. When the conflict broke out, therefore, various officials from Foreign Affairs hurried off to the library and the bookshop to get hold of literature on Yugoslavia.²⁷⁴ Van Eenennaam had to admit, as did Schaper and Hoekema, that Foreign Affairs had approached the Yugoslav conflict very largely from the viewpoint of Western European logic, and had severely underestimated its difficulty.²⁷⁵

Many civil servants had however brushed aside the lack of knowledge, on the basis of the argument that knowledge of the region was not relevant for policy development - if indeed one could speak of policy development at this early stage:

‘We were very much carried along by the current of events ... You reacted, and from the very first moment you just had to keep on reacting. I kept on writing notes for Parliament until I was dizzy. I had no time at all to really think about policy and policy options. No one asked me to do that anyway. I have the feeling that this was going on at the level of the Director-General for Political Affairs, the minister and maybe one or two directors ... Look, doing nothing was not an option. Suppose that that is your conclusion, on the basis of your deeper knowledge of the Balkans. Well, you put that very nicely, but there are a couple of things that the pressure of public opinion will not let us do. You can't say: It's a terrible situation, but as I see things we only have one realistic option and that is to do nothing and wait, see how things turn out. No, ... things that

²⁷⁰ Interview A.P.R. Jacobovits de Szeged, 21/09/00.

²⁷¹ Interview AM van der Togt, 04/05/00.

²⁷² TCBU. *Vertrekpunt*, III, deposition by A.P. van Walsum, 22/05/00, p. 9.

²⁷³ Herman Schaper in: Leonard Ornstein, ‘Het stratego van de experts’, *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 12. See also interview N. Biegman, 03/07/00.

²⁷⁴ Interviews with B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00 and A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00; Leonard Ornstein, ‘Het stratego van de experts’, *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 11; Willem Wansink, ‘Scheepstoeter-diplomatie’ (Ship's hooter diplomacy), *Elsevier*, 22/07/95.

²⁷⁵ Leonard Ornstein, ‘Het stratego van de experts’, *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 11.

pointed in that direction were simply not an option. We had to do something.²⁷⁶

Van den Broek would say, nearly a year after the Netherlands' chairmanship of the EC, 'I keep on hearing Balkans experts say, you have underestimated the nationalist forces. That may well be the case, but what would we have done differently if we had estimated them correctly?'²⁷⁷ And somewhat later, 'What could we have used if we had all been highly qualified professors of the history of the Balkans?' '...Even if you had read everything there was to read about the history of the Balkan wars at the start of this [twentieth] century, what would you have learnt that would be of use today?' Van den Broek doubted the relevance of detailed knowledge of local circumstances and history to policy decisions in particular because the main stress in Dutch policy lay on keeping the standpoints of the EC member states on the same line. One's own insights were of little value in this connection.²⁷⁸ It was precisely this stance of Van den Broek which would so annoy the Serbs with whom he was engaged in discussion. As the Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladislav Jovanovic would say, 'Van den Broek epitomized that arrogance of the EU (European Union, still called the European Community at that time) towards international law. I witnessed his superficiality. He was not willing to invest in learning more about Yugoslavia. They had the political might. They were ignorant.'²⁷⁹

The chairmanship of the EC was a mixed blessing as far as the level of knowledge in the ministry was concerned. It is true that the department received much more information about developments in Yugoslavia thanks to the chairmanship than would have been the case otherwise.²⁸⁰ At the same time, the chairmanship meant that the Netherlands had much less freedom in the formulation of its own policy, as it continually had to take into account what would be an acceptable policy for the Twelve. Another problem was that 'if you put two Balkans experts next to one another, the chance that they would reach agreement is very slight'.²⁸¹

7. Hans van den Broek: pros and cons of a long period in office

The lack of adequate coordination at civil-servant level meant that a very heavy burden fell on the shoulders of the minister, who in general had too little time to draw in the policy lines.²⁸² In fact, this was the least of Van den Broek's problems during the Yugoslav conflict: he was generally regarded as a 'Samson'²⁸³ with years of experience. He also had a reputation for 'doing his homework very thoroughly' and as a fast reader.²⁸⁴

The politician Hans van den Broek, born in Paris where his father was a correspondent of the Dutch daily *de Telegraaf* at the time, was discovered by Norbert Schmelzer, a powerful figure within the CDA (Dutch Christian Democrat party). Schmelzer, who had been minister of Foreign Affairs himself in the past, brought Van den Broek to The Hague as a Member of Parliament. After a year as junior minister for Foreign Affairs, Van den Broek became minister of that department in November 1982. He was on the right wing of his party, as appeared during his time as a backbencher from his standpoint on such issues as abortion and euthanasia. As minister, he supported the idea of siting cruise

²⁷⁶ Interview AM van der Togt, 04/05/00.

²⁷⁷ Leonard Ornstein, 'Minister Van den Broek: "Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg"', *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 10.

²⁷⁸ Interview H. van den Broek, 02/12/99.

²⁷⁹ Interview V. Jovanovic, 14/09/01.

²⁸⁰ Both, *Indifference*, p. 232.

²⁸¹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt, III*, deposition by A.P. van Walsum, 22/05/00, p. 9.

²⁸² This problem in the ministry of Foreign Affairs had been pointed out earlier and in more general terms by Everts (ed.), *Controversies*, pp. 74 and 330.

²⁸³ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

²⁸⁴ Interviews B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00; P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99 and H.A. Schaper, 12/04/00; P. Rusman, 'De laatste Koude-Oorlogstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)', Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, p. 269.

missiles in the Netherlands and opposed a unilateral oil embargo against South Africa. During the formation of the Lubbers-Kok coalition in 1989, he had difficulty dealing with the differences between the political programme of his own party and that of the left-wing PvdA.²⁸⁵ He had the reputation of being a ‘cold fish’, but according to political colleagues he could be emotional within his own four walls.²⁸⁶

Van den Broek combined all the pros and cons of a long period in office. During more than eight years as minister of Foreign Affairs, he had collected a small group of advisers whose opinion he valued. The central figure in this group was Van Eenennaam, the head of DAV.²⁸⁷ Van den Broek was a minister with a pronounced opinion of his own,²⁸⁸ who became more and more convinced of the rightness of his ideas the longer he remained in office.²⁸⁹ This gave him the image of ‘a dominant man who would rather convince others than be convinced’, as his fellow CDA member Aarts put it.²⁹⁰ Both friend and enemy regarded him as ‘arrogant’.²⁹¹ The Yugoslavs would never see him in any other role.²⁹² Van den Broek had in addition a very legalistic line of reasoning. He was not very flexible, and believed that a politician should stick to his course once he had chosen it: ‘We do not mess around.’²⁹³

Van den Broek’s stance was at the same time the strength and the weakness of his ministry: ‘Of course, he made a control structure, a coordination structure, unnecessary because he had all the lines in his own hand. He was the boss, and he did it himself. With just a few close advisers.’²⁹⁴ After nearly ten years in office, the press increasingly lost interest in him.²⁹⁵

The final years of Van den Broek’s tenure of the ministry were moreover adversely affected by the troubled relationship with Prime Minister Lubbers. Lubbers had had a great deal of respect for Van den Broek for many years. In 1989, however, the relationship began to cool. At that time, Van den Broek was one of the three members of the CDA tipped as possible candidates to succeed Lubbers as Prime Minister, the other two being the Minister of Finance Onno Ruding and the leader of the CDA fraction in Parliament, Elco Brinkman. In order to test their suitability for the job, the leaders of the CDA thought it necessary to try out Van den Broek and Ruding in a new position. They recommended that Ruding should be made minister of Foreign Affairs and Van den Broek minister of Justice. The plan failed, however, because Van den Broek refused to leave his accustomed hunting ground.²⁹⁶ In Lubbers’ view, this decision put Van den Broek out of the running.²⁹⁷

The personal relationship between Van den Broek and Lubbers was even more seriously damaged in the autumn of 1990, as the result of disagreement about competences in the field of foreign

²⁸⁵ Metze, *Stranding*, p. 178.

²⁸⁶ Metze, *Stranding*, pp. 85 and 188.

²⁸⁷ Interview M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

²⁸⁸ Gualthérie van Weezel, *Rechts*, p. 71.

²⁸⁹ Interview H. van den Broek, 02/12/99; cf. P. Rusman, ‘De laatste Koude-Oorlogstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)’, Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, p. 269, 270.

²⁹⁰ Leonoor Meijer & Co Welgraven, ‘Internationaal kan Henz Vendenbroek niet meer stuk’, *Trouw*, 13/07/91. See also Dankert in: Rehwinkel & Nekkens, *Regerendewijs*, pp. 144, 151; Metze, *Stranding*, p. 188.

²⁹¹ Leonard Ornstein & Max van Weezel, ‘Van den Broek kan de wereld weer aan, dertel als een veulen’ (Van den Broek can handle the world again, as frolicsome as a foal), *Vrij Nederland*, 11/04/92; Leonoor Meijer & Co Welgraven, ‘Nederland is bijna te klein voor Hans van den Broek’ (The Netherlands is almost too small for Hans Van den Broek), *Trouw*, 13/07/91; ‘Van den Broek mikpunt spot’ (Van den Broek is target for satire), *de Telegraaf*, 24/03/93; Jan Bron Dik, ‘De Hollanditis ligt gelukkig achter ons, er is weer internationaal respect’, *CD/Actueel*, 16/01/93, p. 6; P. Rusman, ‘De laatste Koude-Oorlogstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)’, Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, p. 281.

²⁹² See e.g. Kadjevic, *View*, p. 46; interview A. Buha, 17/12/99; interview V. Jovanovic, 14/09/01.

²⁹³ Leonard Ornstein, ‘Minister Van den Broek: “Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg”’, *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 10.

²⁹⁴ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

²⁹⁵ Interview B. Hiensch, 13/07/00; ‘Steile calvinist alleen populair op aperots’ (Stiff Calvinist only popular on monkeys’ climbing rock), *de Volkskrant*, 18/09/91; Jan Tromp, ‘Van den Broek had geen minister meer moeten willen wezen’ (Van den Broek should not have wanted to continue in power), *De Volkskrant*, 08/10/91.

²⁹⁶ Metze, *Stranding*, p. 39.

²⁹⁷ Metze, *Stranding*, pp. 40, 188-189.

policy.²⁹⁸ When the European Council of heads of government was set up in 1976, it was discovered that the Dutch prime minister had much less authority in the field of foreign policy than many other members of the Council. This Council, which generally met at six-monthly intervals, was formally composed of the heads of government, the (French) head of state and the chairman of the European Commission. The heads of government were accompanied at these meetings by their ministers of Foreign Affairs. There were however moments during such a summit, e.g. during the final ceremonial dinner, when the prime ministers were not accompanied by their ministers of Foreign Affairs when they exchanged views with their foreign counterparts. Now the mandate of the Dutch premier was determined by the government, and largely by Foreign Affairs; it had been found, however, that once the premier was in the Council such a mandate could show some serious loopholes.²⁹⁹ For this reason among others, Dries Van Agt, the Dutch prime minister at the time, had written at the end of 1978 that it had 'long' been true that the minister of Foreign Affairs no longer had the prime responsibility for the European dimension of Dutch foreign affairs.³⁰⁰

The Dutch Home Secretary, Ien Dales, proposed at the end of 1990 in a memo to the Government that the Prime Minister, like the German Federal Chancellor, should be given powers of assignment so that he could assume an independent position on behalf of the Government during European summit meetings. Lubbers, who had not only experienced problems with respect to his constitutional position at the six-monthly European summits but also wished to maintain contacts, in particular by phone, with his counterparts abroad in between these summits to realize a kind of informal 'European consultative body',³⁰¹ agreed with this proposal. He explained in a letter to Van den Broek that he wanted to enjoy the same scope as his foreign counterparts, without hindrance as regards 'information, contacts, presence, status' and the like.

Van den Broek was not at all pleased at Lubbers' attempt, as he saw it, to go too far towards 'European harmonization' of his office, and threatened to resign.³⁰² Though the acute conflict was calmed down, the affair had done lasting damage to the relationship between Lubbers and Van den Broek.³⁰³ The two ministers kept up a constant low-level squabbling, and the daily *Trouw* sketched Van den Broek as giving the impression of a 'child that keeps on whining because it doesn't get what it wants'.³⁰⁴ The conflict was compounded by background rumours that Lubbers could succeed Jacques Delors as chairman of the European Commission, which could reduce the chances of Van den Broek continuing his career abroad in view of the scarcity of top international positions.³⁰⁵

It was thought on the eve of the Netherlands' taking up the chairmanship of the EC that the draft of the Maastricht Treaty, embodying a design for European political union, that was due to be signed at the end of 1991 would be the main item on the agenda. However, the complications

²⁹⁸ For a further discussion of this problem, see also Rozemond, *Regeringsleider*.

²⁹⁹ Schmelzer, *Minister-president*, p. 193.

³⁰⁰ Cited in: Schmelzer, *Minister-president*, pp. 190-191.

³⁰¹ TK, 1990-1991, Proceedings 08/11/90, p. 1129.

³⁰² Metze, *Stranding*, pp. 40 and 189; A.E. Kersten, 'Een woud van verandering. Ontwikkeling van taak en organisatie van het ministerie' (A forest of change. Development of tasks and organization within the ministry), in Van Ditzhuyzen et al. (eds.), *Jaar*, p. 74; TK, 1990-1991, 21 865, No. 1; *ibid.*, pp. 1115-1133.

³⁰³ Dankert in: Rehwinkel & Nekkers, *Regerendernijfs*, p. 153; P. Rusman, 'De laatste Koude-Oorlogstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)', Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, p. 269, 270, 272, 276-277, 281; 'Duitsland verwacht veel van Nederland als voorzitter van de EG' (Germany expects a lot from the Netherlands as EC chairman), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91; Victor, *Presidency*, 6.2.1.

³⁰⁴ Leonoor Meijer & Co Welgraven, 'Nederland is bijna te klein voor Hans van den Broek', *Trouw*, 13/07/91.

³⁰⁵ 'Had Lubbers Van den Broek maar op cake getrakteerd' (If only Lubbers had treated Van den Broek to some cake), *Trouw*, 18/06/91; Jan Tromp, 'Delors draait Lubbers in moeilijke positie. Premier vindt speculaties over EG-carrière vervelend en vervuilend' (Delors puts Lubbers in difficult position. Dutch Prime Minister finds speculation about EC career annoying and denigrating), *de Volkskrant*, 26/06/91; Oscar Garschagen & Wio Joustra, 'Premier Lubbers over het Nederlands EG-voorzitterschap: 'Ik hoor nergens een vals geluid'' (Prime Minister Lubbers on Dutch chairmanship of EC: 'I don't hear a false note anywhere'), *de Volkskrant*, 27/06/91; Leonoor Meijer & Co Welgraven, 'Internationaal kan Henz Vendenbroek niet meer stuk', *Trouw*, 13/07/91.

surrounding the Yugoslav crisis very soon took up so much of Foreign Minister Van den Broek's time that he had hardly any left to devote to other issues.³⁰⁶

8. Brioni: success or make-believe?

While European leaders were in a jubilant mood, convinced that the EC was going to play a heroic role in the handling of the conflict in Yugoslavia, Dutch Foreign Minister Van den Broek wanted to start off his country's chairmanship of the EC by getting to know the American standpoint on this issue.

To this end, he paid a lightning visit to his American counterpart James Baker and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft in Washington. Van den Broek heard that the American government was considering a block on economic aid to Yugoslavia and the imposition of an arms embargo on that country. Baker stated further that the American government would in principle support EC actions in this field, and the solution to the problems involved devised by the EC.³⁰⁷ He emphasized that the EC would have to take the lead, while the United States would remain in the background.³⁰⁸ A Dutch diplomat told the Dutch daily *NRC Handelsblad* that it was 'interesting to observe' during Van den Broek's visit 'how the Americans calmly leave everything to us. They have the highest praise for all EC initiatives in Yugoslavia, and seem to be adopting the attitude, "it's your problem, so you decide how to handle it."'³⁰⁹

Baker and Van den Broek did however issue a joint statement after their talks to the effect that they would respect the independence of the Yugoslav republics, if this was brought about by peaceful means. This represented an abrupt departure from the standpoint taken by the European Community in the autumn of 1990 (that the unity of Yugoslavia should be preserved), within a week of the outbreak of the conflict.³¹⁰ The independence of Croatia and Slovenia was changed from an option that was not on the cards at all to a question of modality and opportunity.³¹¹ Since a great deal of water would doubtless have to flow through the Danube before the questions on this issue would receive an answer, Washington could confidently expect that the question of recognition would not be an acute one; this was reassuring, since the whole matter of the independence of constituent republics was a tricky one for Gorbachev in the Kremlin - with whom the Americans were currently on good terms - to handle in view of his wish to preserve the unity of the Soviet Union.

The visit to Washington had shown Van den Broek quite clearly that he could not expect any real support from the USA in dealing with the Yugoslav crisis.³¹² Since the Second World War, the unity of Europe had nearly always been forged on an American anvil.³¹³ Would the Atlanticus Van den Broek, who had always plotted his course with the aid of Washington's compass in times of major international conflicts, manage to bring the Twelve of the EC in line without backup from the USA? The signs were not favourable.

³⁰⁶ Interview P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99; Elsbeth Tiedemann, 'Terug naar Zwarte Maandag' (Return to Black Monday), *Elsevier*, 22/06/96, p. 14; Michiel van Hulten, 'Zwarte Maandag. Kroniek van en gemiste kans', in Labohm (ed.), *Waterdragers*, p. 194; Hans Nijenhuis, 'Nederland heeft niet het laatste woord' (The Netherlands does not have the last word), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/09/91.

³⁰⁷ R. Gutman, Q and A. 'Why are Yugoslavia's people fighting each other?', *Newsday*, 12/07/92; M.C. Brands & Ronald Havenaar, 'De Verenigde Staten en het probleemkind Europa', in: Gijs de Vries et al., *Continent*, pp.69-70.

³⁰⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081, DEU; COREU messages concerning EPC standpoints on Yugoslavia, June-September 1991, COREU, 04/07/91, cpe/sec 579.

³⁰⁹ Rob Meines, 'EG afhankelijk van diplomatieke bluff en een overjarige typemachine' (EC dependent on diplomatic bluff and an antiquated typewriter), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/91.

³¹⁰ 'VS: toch steun voor onafhankelijkheid' (US ready to support independence after all), *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/07/91. The Dutch MPs Blaauw and De Hoop Scheffer stated on Dutch Radio 1, NCRV, *Hier en Nu*, 03/07/91, 5.05 pm, that they shared the American viewpoint on the need to support the independence of the Yugoslav republics.

³¹¹ Cf. Peter Michielsen, 'Breuk Joegoslavische federatie maakt van Balkan weer kruitvat' (Split in Yugoslav federation turns Balkans into a powder keg once more), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/07/91.

³¹² Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 71.

³¹³ This image is from Hodding Carter, *Serbia*, p. 51.

On 3 July, the Croatian chairman of the Yugoslav presidium (and hence *de facto* President of Yugoslavia) Mesic phoned German Foreign Minister Genscher; Bonn sent a report of their telephone conversation to the other EC capitals on the same day. According to this report, Mesic said that the JNA (Yugoslav Federal Army) was acting entirely without authorization, and had in fact staged a coup. The Yugoslav premier Markovic had phoned Mesic to say that he believed his life was in danger, and that this might be the last telephone call he ever made. Genscher concluded from this that both their lives could be in danger. Mesic asked Genscher to get the international community to do everything in its power to force the JNA to moderate its actions, and to recognize Slovenia and Croatia as independent states that might form a confederation with the other Yugoslav republics in the future. Genscher told Mesic, completely in line with the German policy of ‘recognition, if’ that he would be prepared to take this latter step if the JNA did not return to its barracks.³¹⁴

Now that the JNA ‘had gone mad’, Genscher did not exclude the possibility that Germany might recognize Croatia and Slovenia independently, if the situation called for it.³¹⁵ He phoned Van den Broek in the latter’s hotel in Washington to tell him this, waking him up at 4.30 am for the purpose. Van den Broek did not let the grass grow under his feet, and phoned his counterparts Dumas, Hurd and Baker, and Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Alois Mock twice. Finally, he phoned Mesic. The latter repeated to Van den Broek that only recognition of Croatia and Slovenia could halt the JNA’s military advance on these two regions. Van den Broek replied that he expected that such recognition could lead precisely to escalation of the violence.³¹⁶

Dumas suggested that Van den Broek should call an emergency meeting of the EC ministers for two days later in The Hague. Van den Broek decided to cancel a large part of his appointments in Washington and to fly back to the Netherlands without delay.³¹⁷ The talks with Dumas and Baker had confirmed Van den Broek in his opinion that a threat to recognize the two breakaway republics would be too dangerous, as it might lead either to JNA actions to protect Serb minorities³¹⁸ or to Slovenian provocation of the Federal army.³¹⁹

Before he left Washington, Van den Broek urged EC member states not to make unilateral statements or take unilateral steps concerning the independence of Croatia and Slovenia.³²⁰ In the meantime, however, De Michelis made a statement in the Italian Parliament to the effect that Italy would recognize Croatia and Slovenia if the JNA continued to use violence.³²¹

The German position on this issue clearly irritated Van den Broek and the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs. When it was suggested to Van den Broek during a radio interview that Germany was after all a force to be reckoned with, he replied that the chairman of the EC was by no means negligible either.³²² It was clear to the leadership of the Dutch department of Foreign Affairs that Yugoslavia could be a banana peel on the path towards further European unification, and a blemish on the Dutch

³¹⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081, DEU; COREU messages concerning EPC standpoints on Yugoslavia, June-September 1991, COREU bonn, 03/07/91, cpe’bon 322; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 940.

³¹⁵ Richard Ingham, ‘World consensus shatters as Germany threatens to recognise breakaways’, *Agence France Presse*, 03/07/91.

³¹⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081, DEU; COREU messages concerning EPC standpoints on Yugoslavia, June-September 1991, 03/07/91.

³¹⁷ Rob Meines, ‘EG afhankelijk van diplomatieke bluf en een overjarige typmachine’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/91.

³¹⁸ Nederland 2, NOS, *Journal* (News), 04/07/91, 8 pm; ‘Erkennen Slovenië wordt netelig punt voor EG-ministers’ (Recognition of Slovenia ticklish point for EC ministers), *de Volkskrant*, 05/07/91; Rob Meines ‘Joegoslavië wordt nooit meer wat het was’ (Yugoslavia will never again be what it was), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/07/91. See also Both, *Indifference*, p. 105.

³¹⁹ Rob Meines, ‘EG afhankelijk van diplomatieke bluf en een overjarige typmachine’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/91.

³²⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081, DEU; COREU messages concerning EPC standpoints on Yugoslavia, June-September 1991, Meesman 682 to Foreign Affairs for COREU, 03/07/91.

³²¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081, DEU; COREU messages concerning EPC standpoints on Yugoslavia, June-September 1991, Jacobovits 1036 to Van den Broek, 04/07/93.

³²² VARA, *Vrijdageditie*, 05/07/95, 4.05 pm.

chairmanship of the EC.³²³ The prestige not only of Van den Broek personally but also of the Netherlands was at stake.

Emergency summit on Yugoslavia in The Hague

It became clear during the ministerial EPC meeting in The Hague on 5 July 1991 that Germany, Italy, Denmark, Belgium and Luxembourg were in favour of speedy recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. France, Spain and Great Britain, which were unlikely to be flooded with refugees from the region thanks to their geographical situation and which had their own problems with separatists, took the opposite view and stressed the need to preserve the unity of Yugoslavia.³²⁴ Genscher found himself in particular opposed by Dumas.³²⁵ France perceived the German position, that was supported by Austria, as embodying the threat of a German *Drang nach Osten* (push to the East),³²⁶ and also, as anonymous French sources put it, evidence of a 'Teutonic will to power'.³²⁷

While the Dutch position as regards Yugoslavia before the Netherlands had taken over the chairmanship of the EC had not differed all that much from the German standpoint, Van den Broek now felt that his new role forced him to follow the view of the majority of EC member states, which still aimed at preservation of the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. It was the start of a policy where preservation of a uniform line within the Twelve was seen as more important than working out well based concrete plans about how to deal with Yugoslavia.³²⁸ This was one time when Genscher could not force through acceptance of his standpoint (in this case, in favour of recognition of the breakaway republics).³²⁹

One consequence of the EPC meeting of 5 July was that, following the lead given by Washington, an immediate embargo on the supply of weapons to Yugoslavia was proclaimed. Other countries were urged to do the same, and countries bordering Yugoslavia were urged to block the transport of weapons through their territories to Yugoslavia.

The troika in action again

The ministerial troika paid a third visit to Yugoslavia on 6 and 7 July, in response to a call for help from Loncar, the Federal Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Dutch ambassador in Belgrade Fietelaars ('we badly need help, we badly need help'),³³⁰. The venue this time was Brioni, an island to the south of Istria that had been Tito's favourite spot for conferences and where he had offered hospitality to countless foreign guests. Genscher repeated his warnings to Serbia in *Welt am Sonntag* on 7 July, where he stated that renewed military action on the part of the JNA would remove any basis for negotiations. In that case, recognition of the independence of Croatia and Slovenia would be among the possibilities.³³¹

³²³ Both, *Indifference*, p. 102.

³²⁴ Interview R.F.M. Lubbers, 13/10/00; 'Geen erkenning door EG' (No recognition by EC), *de Volkskrant*, 06/07/91.

³²⁵ Chenu, *France*, p. 373; Dumas, *Fil*, p. 353; Axt, *Jugoslavië*, p. 352.

³²⁶ See e.g. Eduardo Cue, 'UPI News Analysis. Yugoslav crisis reveals split within European Community', *UPI*, 06/07/91; Jonathan Kaufman, 'Yugoslav strife spoils Europe's unity party', *The Boston Globe*, 07/07/91; R.C. Longworth, 'As Yugoslav crisis unfolds, Europe is struggling to police itself', *Chicago Tribune*, 07/07/91; Rob Meines 'Joegoslavië wordt nooit meer wat het was', *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/07/91.

³²⁷ 'Europese bemiddeling' (European mediation), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/07/91.

³²⁸ Leonard Ornstein, 'Het stratego van de experts' (Stratego for experts), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 12.

³²⁹ Rob Meines, 'Joegoslavië wordt nooit meer wat het was', *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/07/91.

³³⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287. EU/GBVB/*Trojka*, voorbereiding en verslaglegging bezoeken *Trojka* aan Joegoslavië (preparation for and reports on visits of troika to Yugoslavia), July/August 1991, Fietelaars 187 to Van den Broek, 05/07/91.

³³¹ Libal, *Limits*, p. 22.

The troika found the various Yugoslav parties so divided as to be hardly able to provide any contribution of substance to the discussion.³³² In particular the Serbian member of the Yugoslav presidium, Jovic, behaved in a manner that was far from diplomatic. He claimed that the JNA could wipe Slovenia off the map in a day if they wanted. He thought it unlikely that peaceful solutions could be achieved in Croatia, because according to him the destruction of the Serb minority in that republic was being prepared. If other republics considered that they had the right to self-determination, then so had the Serbs according to him. The Serbian republic guaranteed Serbs the right to exercise this option, he went on to say, in a clear reference to the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia.

After sixteen hours of discussion, Van den Broek stated that the text of the declaration worked out by the troika in the course of the day was non-negotiable. If it was not accepted, the EC had no further role to play in the process. This ultimatum produced a joint declaration by all parties concerned with two appendices, which came to be known as the Brioni Agreement.³³³ This stipulated that negotiations between all parties concerned would start no later than 1 August, without any preliminary conditions. At that conference, the peoples of Yugoslavia would themselves decide about their future. The EC would only assist in the search for a solution and in the provision of the necessary facilities. A ceasefire would be observed in Slovenia, and the Federal army would return to its barracks. In the meantime, there would be a three-month moratorium on the implementation of the declarations of independence.

The European monitoring mission

One of the provisions of the Brioni Agreement was that a group of observers from the European Community under the name European Commission Monitoring Mission (ECMM) would be admitted to Slovenia and Croatia in order to monitor compliance with the ceasefire, the withdrawal of the JNA, the exchange of prisoners and the implementation of the moratorium. The mission would consist of thirty to fifty observers who would be given diplomatic status, and whose safety would be guaranteed by the parties concerned. These monitors were soon given the nickname 'ice-cream men' because of the snow-white clothing they wore to underline their unarmed civilian status. A Memorandum of Understanding between the EC representatives, the Yugoslav authorities and representatives of Croatia and Slovenia, specifying the mandate and status of the observers, was signed on 13 July.

The number of members of the ECMM increased gradually to about four hundred over the next two years. The mission subsequently also became active in Bosnia-Herzegovina and had a small office known by the rather grand name of 'regional centre' in Belgrade. It had other regional centres in Szeged (Hungary), Sofia (Bulgaria) and Tirana and Kukes (Albania), that were intended to help prevent the conflict from spreading beyond the boundaries of (the former) Yugoslavia. From August 1991, monitors from the CSCE member states Canada, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Sweden joined the ECMM. The mission received its instructions from the chairman of the EC and reported to him and to the United Nations and the International Red Cross. The chairman of the EC passed the reports of the ECMM on to the Community's Ad Hoc Group on Yugoslavia.

Although the mission's attempts to mediate between the parties to the conflict had little success, and the mission was in fact hardly able to play a significant role in monitoring the ceasefire agreements, it did achieve a certain value as the eyes and ears of the European Community in the field. It also started investigating violations of human rights from the autumn of 1991, with the encouragement of the chairman of the EC. As time went by, it further played a role in the exchange of

³³² ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287. EU/GBVB/*Trojka*, voorbereiding en verslaglegging bezoeken *Trojka* aan Joegoslavië, July/August 1991, Fietelaars 195 and 196 to Van den Broek, 08/07/91.

³³³ The text of this agreement is given in *Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 42, Nos. 995-7, pp. 20-23 and in ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287. EU/GBVB/*Trojka*, voorbereiding en verslaglegging bezoeken *Trojka* aan Joegoslavië, July/August 1991, COREU Nederlands EG-voorzitterschap (COREU message Dutch chair of EC), 08/07/91, cpe/pres/hag 320. For a report of the meeting where the agreement was reached, see *ibid.*, Fietelaars 195 to Van Den Broek, 08/07/91.

prisoners, the execution of confidence-increasing measures and the monitoring of aid convoys.³³⁴ Thus, the ECMM gradually developed from a body charged with monitoring the withdrawal of the JNA from Slovenia and compliance with the terms of truce agreements to an *in situ* monitor of not only the military but also the political, economic and humanitarian situation.³³⁵ It was therefore true to a certain extent to say of it, 'It was improvised and disordered, and it should not have worked, but it did.'³³⁶

After the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was set up early in 1992, however, the ECMM came to be overshadowed by this UN organization. The ECMM was largely trapped in the role of an observer with the supplementary task of solving acute, often humanitarian problems at a local level in regions where the situation was tense. ECMM reports were mainly restricted to factual information about a shooting incident at such and such a location, at such and such a time. Since the recipients of such reports in Western capitals did not in general appreciate it when the monitors gave their own assessment of the situation, these reports were not highly respected either by the EC and UN mediators or by the authorities in the various European capitals. The ECMM had thus very little involvement in the political negotiation process.³³⁷

Things had however not yet reached this stage when, shortly after the signing of the Brioni Agreement, 62-year-old Jo van der Valk, former head of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs at the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs and before that (in the late 'seventies) Dutch ambassador in Belgrade, was appointed head of the ECMM with Brigadier General J.C. Kusters as his deputy. They arrived in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, on 15 July with a few dozen ECMM observers (diplomats and a few officials from EC countries). This site had been chosen because of its location between Belgrade and Slovenia. The ECMM set up its headquarters there, and would make missions to Slovenia by jeep or helicopter.

Soon after the signing of the Brioni Agreement, a German diplomat had stated that the real war – by which he meant one between Serbs and Croats – was bound to start soon: 'Observers will have to be sent there without delay, or they will be bashing one another's' heads in again.'³³⁸ The question was whether the ECMM was actually authorized to perform tasks in Croatia as well as Slovenia. The Memorandum of Understanding signed by the EC and the six republics of Yugoslavia, which governed the mandate of the ECMM, stated that the field of operation of the mission comprised 'Slovenia and, as appropriate, Croatia, unless the Participating Parties agree that the implementation of the Mandate also requires activities beyond these areas'.³³⁹

While Van der Valk was on the way to Zagreb to take up his mission, representatives of the countries who had sent observers to take part in the mission were meeting in The Hague. The Dutch ambassador-at-large Christiaan Kröner, who had led the group preparing the way for the ECMM,³⁴⁰ explained during this meeting that the JNA and the Federal authorities were afraid that there were spies among the monitors. The organizers of the mission had managed by the skin of their teeth to persuade the authorities in Belgrade to admit monitors from certain countries – doubtless including Germany and probably Italy too. Activities in Croatia were particularly sensitive in this connection. This could

³³⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05267. COREU van het EG-voorzitterschap (COREU message from chair of EC), 22/09/93, CPE/Pres/Bru/928.

³³⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05267. COREU van het EG-voorzitterschap, 17/12/93, CPE/Pres/Bru/1596. For summaries of the activities of the ECMM see J.W. Beekman, 'EG-waarnemers in het voormalige Joegoslavië; de juridische aspecten' (EC observers in the former Yugoslavia: the legal aspects), *Carré*, 15 (1993)10, pp. 6-9; Bohr, *Experiment*, ABZ DEU/ARA/00085. COREU message from British chairman of EC, 08/10/92, cpe/pres/lon 1490.

³³⁶ Nuttall, *EC*, p. 22. Cf. Libal, *Limits*, p. 49.

³³⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05267. dossieraantekening CoPo, 'ECMM en CVSE in voormalig Joegoslavië' ('ECMM and CSCE in the former Yugoslavia', with marginal notes by CoPo), from JW./DAV/MS and HZ/DAV/PH, 07/09/93, 17/12/93, CPE/Pres/Bru/1596.

³³⁸ Rob Meines, 'EG afhankelijk van diplomatieke bluf en een overjarige typemachine', *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/91.

³³⁹ Article III.1 of the memorandum, as reproduced in *Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 42 (1992) Nos. 995-7, p. 22; DCBC, 244. Appendix to memo from De Winter to Ter Beek, 11/07/91, D91/352.

³⁴⁰ 'EG-kwartiermakers' in Belgrado' (EC quartermasters in Belgrade), *Trouw*, 10/07/91.

easily give rise to problems, since the headquarters of the mission were sited precisely in Croatia. Kröner stressed that it was essential to ensure that the monitors did not get involved in the struggle between the Serbs and Croats: 'Although, as agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding, Croatia was not to be excluded from the mission area, it would not be the main focus of the mission.'³⁴¹ Other Western diplomats reported that the leadership of the JNA had told the presidium that they had strong reservations against the simple fact of the stationing of the observers in Zagreb.³⁴²

On arrival in Zagreb, Van der Valk created the impression during his first press conference that the mission had no mandate at all to monitor hostilities in Croatia. His remarks were greeted with incomprehension by the reporters present and by the Croatian authorities.³⁴³ The Dutch ambassador in Belgrade, Fietelaars, reported without delay to Foreign Affairs that according to him Van der Valk was a 'very agreeable old gentleman', but 'no longer competent to deal with this very complicated task and not tough enough to deal with the snake pit of present-day politics here. His knowledge of the Brioni Agreement and the Memorandum of Understanding is inadequate, and his reaction to questions from the press was clumsy.'³⁴⁴

The Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs responded to Fietelaars that a policy group at the ministry led by the head of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs, Van Eenennaam, was responsible for the policy aspect of the ECMM, while the practical work was delegated to a coordinator of the Yugoslavia mission, K.J.G. van Oosterom, who had been appointed head of a new liaison office to be set up within the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs which would be known under the initials DAV/LSO. This office formulated the tasks of ECMM and was responsible for the logistics, setting up the mission's regional offices and the distribution of ECMM reports to the capitals of EC member states via 'COREUS', special telegrams designed for European correspondence. The office consisted of two members of staff in charge of policy issues and a clerk from Foreign Affairs and a military advisor who was responsible for the liaison between the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs and the Defence staff. After some initial troubles in the filling in of this function of liaison with Defence, T.P.J. (Tom) Karremans, subsequently the commander of Dutchbat III, was appointed to this position on 14 August.

In the meantime, sources within the American National Security Council (NSC) stressed to the Dutch ambassador in Washington, Meesman, on 16 July that the ECMM should pay attention to the situation in Croatia. According to these NSC sources, there would 'no longer be much point' in looking for structural solutions to the problems in Yugoslavia once violence had broken out in Croatia. The State Department was also a keen supporter of ECMM activity in Croatia.³⁴⁵ Washington also urged other EC member states to extend the mandate of the ECMM to include Croatia.³⁴⁶

Somewhat embarrassed by the situation that had arisen as a result of Van der Valk's restrictive interpretation of the ECMM's mandate, the Dutch permanent representative at NATO, A.P.R. Jacobovits de Szeged, had to state in the North Atlantic Council that the mission to Yugoslavia was intended to monitor a ceasefire, not a conflict.³⁴⁷

Ten days after the signing of the Brioni Agreement, on 18 July, the Federal Presidium of Yugoslavia decided that the JNA troops should be gradually withdrawn from Slovenia within the space

³⁴¹ ABZ, DAV. ISN 4824115, COREU message from chair of EC, 16/07/91, cpe/pres/hag 381.

³⁴² David Hearst, 'Conflict erupts over EC observers', *The Guardian*, 13/07/91.

³⁴³ Zeidler, *Rolle*, pp. 129-130; Theo Engelen, 'Ook Kroatië wil EG-waarnemers. 'Teleurstelling in Zagreb over uitlating Van der Valk' (Croatia wants EC observers too. Disappointment in Zagreb about statement by Van der Valk), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/07/91; 'EG-waarnemers zullen niet actief worden in Kroatië' (EC observers will not be active in Croatia), *de Volkskrant*, 16/07/91; Nicole Lucas, 'Politici spelen met vuur' (Politicians are playing with fire), *Trouw*, 18/07/91.

³⁴⁴ ABZ, Kabinetsarchief, Stg geheime codes. Fietelaars 213 to Van den Broek, 16/07/91, Stg geheim.

³⁴⁵ ABZ, Kabinetsarchief, Stg geheime codes. Meesman 711 to Van den Broek, 16/07/91, Stg Geheim.

³⁴⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03283. EU/GBVB/extra CoPo 1991, Jacobovits 1115 to Van den Broek, 19/07/91.

³⁴⁷ ABZ, NAR: CR (91)51. NATO, Summary record of a meeting of the North Atlantic Council held at NATO Headquarters, Brussels 17/07/91, 19/09/91.

of three months. This goal was indeed reached in October. This would seem to indicate that the EC had scored a quick success with the Brioni Agreement.

A number of critical comments may be made in this connection, however. Firstly, the negotiation process stipulated as part of the Brioni Agreement was supposed to be one in which the EC left it up to the various parties in Yugoslavia to work out their future. It may be asked whether this was a good idea, in view of the differences that had existed between the various Yugoslav republics since 1987, the inability to reconcile the conflicting wishes for recentralization on the one hand and confederation – not to speak of independence – on the other, the irreconcilable claims of the Serbs and Croats on Krajina and Slavonia and finally the complete impotence of the Federal authorities. Milosevic stated once more in Brioni that those who wanted to leave Yugoslavia should be able to do so, but that Serbs living outside Serbia had an equal right to continue to be part of the common state of Yugoslavia, and that the Yugoslav army would protect that right.³⁴⁸ Even if it was not already clear to the EC at that moment that the parties to the conflict would not be able to resolve matters unaided, the continual breakdown of the ceasefires should in any case soon have acted as a warning signal.

Secondly, the EC stipulated an end to the hostilities as a condition for political talks. The continual violations of the ceasefires thus caused much precious time to be lost. In the absence of solutions, the unity of Yugoslavia had to be maintained and the EC was prepared to reinforce the Federal authorities.³⁴⁹ Their efforts in this direction were however pointless, as the Federal cabinet had in fact ceased to function. The Federal premier Markovic and his Foreign Minister Loncar no longer played a meaningful role, as noted as early as the spring of 1991 by the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch Military Intelligence Service (Dutch abbreviation MID).³⁵⁰ The American ambassador in Belgrade, Zimmermann, commented in a similar vein that at the time when Croatia and Slovenia made their declarations of independence, Markovic was increasingly seen as ‘a figurehead or, even worse, a fig leaf’.³⁵¹

The EC insistence on the nomination of Mesic as chairman of the Federal Yugoslav presidium was fairly pointless too; this move was only of symbolic value. It did not give Mesic any real influence over the JNA. Serbia could always reckon on four of the eight votes, thanks to its usurpation of the seats of Kosovo and Vojvodina and the support of Montenegro, as Izetbegovic told the European troika in early August 1991. He hoped that the EC would now only do business with the heads of the six republics: ‘They hold the real power.’³⁵²

The presidium was practically paralysed in the spring of 1991 by the even split of votes (Serbia and Montenegro against the rest). The EC, which continued to support the unity of Yugoslavia, tried to counter this *de facto* situation. This helped Serbia, which was trying to block the trend towards independence. These facts help to explain why the Federal Minister of Defence Kadijevic, who normally did not have a good word to say about the actions of the EC, thanked the troika in early August 1991 for the fact that the Community had enabled the presidium to function again.³⁵³

³⁴⁸ Steven L. Burg, ‘Negotiating a Settlement: Lessons of the Diplomatic Process’, Blank (ed.), *Wars*, p. 38.

³⁴⁹ See e.g. ABZ, DEU/ARA/03283. EU/GBVB/extra CoPo 1991, memo from DEU/OE, ‘Joegoslavië/scenario’s en beleidsmogelijkheden’ (Yugoslavia: scenarios and policy options) for Extra CoPo, The Hague 19/07/91, 18/07/91.

³⁵⁰ ‘The Federal government under premier Markovic has lost nearly all its authority, and the question is how long it will remain in the saddle.’, ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042. DEU/COREU message re EPC standpoints on Yugoslavia, 1990-1991, points for Van den Broek’s speech at the Gymnich meeting, Monorf-les-Bains, 27-28/04/91, 23/04/91; ‘In the meantime, the divisions between the constituent republics have led among other things to a situation where the central organs of administration, in particular the Federal government, are actually powerless’, Archives of Dutch ministry of Defence, (Head of Information Staff department), S.W. Schouten, Colonel of Cavalry, to head of IDB, head of BVD and Foreign Affairs re AMAD, 03/05/92, DIS/91/095/2253, with the memo ‘Joegoslavië: verscherping militair/politieke situatie’ (Yugoslavia: exacerbation of military and political situation) as appendix.

³⁵¹ Zimmermann, *Ambassador*, p. 11.

³⁵² ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287. EU/GBVB/Trojka, voorbereiding en verslaglegging bezoeken Trojka aan Joegoslavië, July/August 1991, Hasselman 250 to Van den Broek, 03/08/91.

³⁵³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287. EU/GBVB/Trojka, voorbereiding en verslaglegging bezoeken Trojka aan Joegoslavië, July/August 1991, Fietelaars 253 to Van den Broek, 05/08/91.

Thirdly, the moratorium on the independence of Croatia and Slovenia agreed in Brioni created the impression that this independence would be a fact when the waiting period came to an end – an impression that could only be reinforced by the general recognition of the importance Germany attached to this independence. And that at a moment when the EC was still formally a firm supporter of the need to maintain the unity and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. This stance thus quickly lost most of its credibility, and the situation supported the JNA in its conviction that there was every reason to win territory as quickly as possible. The troops that withdrew from Slovenia (a move monitored by the ECMM) were deployed in Croatia and Bosnia, in preparation for the offensives the JNA would be mounting there in the near future.³⁵⁴ It was the predictability of this threat that made the Croat Mesic the only member of the presidium to vote against the motion for withdrawal from Slovenia, while Bogic Bogicevic, the representative of Bosnia-Hercegovina, abstained.³⁵⁵ While Croatia fell victim to the new offensive shortly after, Slovenia could lie back calmly in the expectation that all it had to do was ‘wait till the EC moratorium was over’.

By agreeing with a monitoring mission aimed solely at Slovenia, the EC had set foot on the path of limited, local solutions instead of making a contribution to an approach to the future of the Yugoslav state as a whole.

After the withdrawal of the JNA from Slovenia had been confirmed, the deputy head of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs, Schaper, asked Van der Valk once again what he thought about extending the field of operation of the ECMM to Croatia and possibly to Bosnia-Hercegovina, now that JNA actions in Croatia were to be expected in the near future.³⁵⁶ However, Van der Valk continued to turn down the idea of operation of the mission in Croatia.³⁵⁷ ‘We are an unarmed civilian mission, and are thus not equipped for operations in Eastern Croatia’, said Van der Valk.³⁵⁸ The Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs finally supported him in this position. An official from the ministry thought that since the tense situation in Slovenia had not yet completely cleared up, there was no reason for the observers to leave.³⁵⁹ Tudjman, however, perceived a difference between Van der Valk’s position and that of ‘his chief, Van den Broek’. Tudjman wanted the latter to explain what sense it made for him, as head of state of Croatia, to have voted for the Brioni Agreement and the deployment of the observers if they were not allowed to operate in Croatia itself.³⁶⁰

The restrictive interpretation of the mandate by Van der Valk and Milosevic’s decision to give up Slovenia thus put the international community on the back foot. Two weeks after the mission had been brought into being its aims were, according to the Dutch daily *NRC Handelsblad*, ‘generally regarded as overtaken by events and more or less pointless’.³⁶¹ It was not even allowed to monitor the withdrawal of the JNA from Slovenia to barracks in Bosnia-Hercegovina. The initiative shifted to Belgrade, and the international community would find itself forced, time after time, to react to new crises for which it was hardly prepared. Slovenia would be followed by Croatia, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia in succession.

³⁵⁴ Cf. Kadijevic, *View*, p. 130.

³⁵⁵ See also Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Kroatië reageert met scepsis en achterdocht’ (Croatia reacts with scepticism and suspicion), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/07/91; ‘Slovenië viert feest; Kroatië ziet bui hangen’ (Slovenia celebrates while Croatia sees stormy weather ahead), *Trouw*, 20/07/91.

³⁵⁶ ABZ, DAV archives, ISN 4824115, memo from deputy. DAV to HOM, 19/07/91, No. 22-91.

³⁵⁷ ABZ, DAV archives, ISN 4824115, COREU of EC presidency, 17/07/91, cpe/pres/hag 385.

³⁵⁸ Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Kroatië reageert met scepsis en achterdocht’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/07/91. See also ‘Soldaten weg waar ze als bezetters worden gezien’ (Soldiers removed where they are seen as occupying forces), *Trouw*, 19/07/91.

³⁵⁹ ‘Slovenië viert feest; Kroatië ziet bui hangen’, *Trouw*, 20/07/91.

³⁶⁰ Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Kroatië eist terugtrekking federale leger’ (Croatia demands withdrawal of Federal army), *NRC Handelsblad*, 20/07/91; idem, ‘Opracht waarnemers goeddeels achterhaald’ (Remit of observers has already lost most of its validity), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/07/91.

³⁶¹ Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Opracht waarnemers goeddeels achterhaald’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/07/91.

9. Dutch assessment of the future of Yugoslavia

Of the main Dutch dailies, the Liberal *NRC Handelsblad* generally adopted a cynical stance as regards the ability of the EC to deal effectively with the crisis in Yugoslavia. On the other hand, it did recognize that the EC had to do something. The risk of a complete breakdown of society in Yugoslavia was great, in the opinion of the paper's editor in chief W.H. Weenink. 'Doing nothing, or welcoming the secessions, are however even less attractive options for the EC. The former would make the efforts towards political union lose credibility, while the latter would probably lead to prolonged instability and a breakdown of proper relations in Europe. The Yugoslav crisis shows that only European integration can save the old continent from relapsing into an era of tribal wars, which had for so long been kept nicely under control by the Cold War and Western-European unification.'³⁶²

The foreign affairs commentator of the *NRC Handelsblad*, J.L. Heldring, did however have a few good words to say about the efforts of the troika under the leadership of Van den Broek, though he did warn that what the EC had been aiming at so far was crisis management rather than policy.³⁶³ A leader in that broadsheet asked 'whether an approach the Dutch elements of which would be clear to the insider will prove to be functional in the Balkans'. Temporizing tactics which might seem useful in the Dutch situation could lead to a fatal loss of tempo in the Balkans.³⁶⁴

In general, however, Dutch opinion approved of what the EC and in particular Van den Broek were doing. Leonie Sipkes, Green Left Member of Parliament who had expressed fierce criticism of Van den Broek during the Gulf crisis, admitted, 'it hurts me to say so, but Van den Broek has been doing well in this conflict.'³⁶⁵ This statement reflects not only the all-party support Van den Broek could count on in Parliament but also the U-turn in security policy manifested by Green Left. In the winter of 1990/91, Green Left had been the only party that did not support military intervention in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. However, a split developed in the party at that time about the deployment of Dutch Patriot rockets to intercept the Scud missiles Iraq was firing at Israel. Paul Rosenmöller and Ina Brouwer supported the deployment, while Peter Lankhorst, Ria Beckers and Leonie Sipkes opposed the sending of these defensive weapons. This led the CDA (Christian Democrat) MP Thijs Van Vlijmen to call Green Left 'Brown Left' – a reference to the treasonable activities of the brown-shirted NSB, Dutch fascist party during the Second World War, for which CDA fraction leader Brinkman later apologized.

The U-turn in Green Left thinking was brought about by the situation of the Kurdish refugees in Northern Iraq. After this crisis, peacekeeping and peace enforcement in response to serious violations of human rights were no longer taboo in Green Left.³⁶⁶

In the Protestant daily *Trouw*, Dr. R.C.R. Sieckmann, who was attached to the T.M.C. Asser Institute for international law, praised the navigational skills of Van den Broek as he tacked between the Scylla of Yugoslav unity and the Charybdis of the Croatian and Slovenian claims for independence to reach the relatively safe haven of the Brioni Agreement. He was sorry, however, that only observers had been sent, and that that the CSCE lacked the resources and the political will to send a peacekeeping force to act as a buffer and maintain peace and quiet.³⁶⁷

³⁶² W.H. Weenink, 'Pax Europeae', *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/07/91.

³⁶³ J.L. Heldring, 'Democratie als gevaar voor vrede' (Democracy as a threat to peace), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/07/91.

³⁶⁴ 'Europese bemiddeling', *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/07/91.

³⁶⁵ Leonoor Meijer & Co Welgraven, 'Nederland is bijna te klein voor Hans van den Broek' (The Netherlands is almost too small for Hans Van den Broek), *Trouw*, 13/07/91.

³⁶⁶ Tweede-Kamerfractie Groen Links, *Blauwdruk* (Green Left fraction in Parliament, Blueprint), pp. 2 and 14; Ab Gietelink, 'De Verenigde Naties als schietende politieagent' (United Nation as an armed policeman), *de Helling*, 4(1991)2, pp. 11-14; Leon Wecke, 'Het glibberige pad naar de nieuwe wereldorde' (The slippery path to the new world order), *de Helling*, 4(1991)3, pp.19-20.

³⁶⁷ R.C.R. Sieckmann, 'Gevraagd: vredesmacht van de CVSE' (Situation vacant: peacekeeping force for CSCE), *Trouw*, 11/07/91.

A variety of comments were seen in the left-wing *De Volkskrant*. A leader commenting on the second visit of the troika to Yugoslavia on 30 June gave the opinion that the Netherlands had started its chairmanship of the EC well.³⁶⁸ Columnist Koen Koch, writing in the same paper the next day, thought however that the visit had set a seal on the failure of EC policy which shared responsibility for the bloodshed by supporting the unity of Yugoslavia.³⁶⁹

André Roelofs, reporting for *De Volkskrant* from Ljubljana, said that it was not clear what would happen if the three-month moratorium on independence for Croatia and Slovenia were to expire without an agreement having been reached. In his report, Roelofs cited Slovenian premier Peterle, who seemed to be suggesting that Slovenia simply had to be patient for the stipulated three-month period and the independence would drop into its hands: 'We have waited a century for independence, and it won't do any harm to wait another three months.'³⁷⁰

Oscar Garschagen praised the provisional success achieved at Brioni, stating that the EC's shuttle diplomacy had shown it 'in an unusually dynamic light' – largely thanks to the initiatives of Van den Broek. He went on to say that while Genscher had so far not dared to venture on a course of German *Alleingang* (going it alone), the Yugoslav crisis would remain a test case of the ability of the Twelve to maintain a united front.³⁷¹

Some commentators sympathized with Van den Broek in connection with the headaches Genscher was giving him. For example, writing in *Trouw* about the personal visit Genscher made to Yugoslavia in the first few days of July, Theo Koelé commented that there was no obligation on the chairman of the CSCE to pay such a personal visit to a region hit by crisis.³⁷²

Approval of Van den Broek's actions so far was also expressed in the Dutch Government meeting of 11 July 1991. A number of ministers went so far as to suggest that the Yugoslav crisis might provide an opportunity for setting the tone for European security policy for the coming years. One minister noted the positive side-effect of the united front shown by the Twelve, though he added that it would be unwise to cheer too soon.³⁷³

At the request of two Members of Parliament, Gualthérie van Weezel of the CDA and Weisglas of the Liberal VVD, the permanent Parliamentary Committee of Parliament was called back from the summer recess to discuss the situation in Yugoslavia.³⁷⁴ On the evening of 11 July 1991, the Committee debated a letter of 10 July from the minister of Foreign Affairs.³⁷⁵ This was a rather false start to a dossier in which practically all actions were taken jointly by the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. In fact, the department of Defence made an official protest to their colleagues at Foreign Affairs because it was not informed of the letter until it had been sent to the Government. After all, the monitoring mission discussed in the letter was a joint responsibility of the ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence. Even though the operational leadership was in the hands of Foreign Affairs, the Defence Staff and the Directorate for General Affairs of the ministry of Defence were involved in the policy formation and Army staff took care of the execution of Defence's share of the mission.³⁷⁶

³⁶⁸ 'Ten geleide – Joegoslavië' (Introduction to Yugoslavia), *de Volkskrant*, 02/07/91.

³⁶⁹ Koen Koch, 'Repeterende mislukking' (String of failures), *de Volkskrant*, 03/07/91.

³⁷⁰ André Roelofs, 'Parlement Slovenië stemt in meerderheid voor akkoord Brioni' (Brioni Agreement ratified by majority vote in Slovenian Parliament), *de Volkskrant*, 11/07/91.

³⁷¹ Oscar Garschagen, 'CVSE moet eer aan EG laten in crisispreventie' (CSCE has to give way to EC when it comes to crisis prevention), *de Volkskrant*, 13/07/91.

³⁷² Theo Koelé, 'Bonn beschuldigt Belgrado van boosaardigheid' (Bonn accuses Belgrade of ill will), *Trouw*, 11/07/91.

³⁷³ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 11/07/91, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

³⁷⁴ 'Spoedoverleg Kamerleden over Joegoslavië' (Emergency debate on Yugoslavia in Dutch Parliament), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/07/91; ABZ, Kabinetsarchief: Coll. Van den Broek. Memo's PS 1991, memorandum PS to DGPZ, 04/07/91, No. 115/91.

³⁷⁵ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 1.

³⁷⁶ DCBC, 247. Memo De Winter to Ter Beek, 11/07/91, D91/352.

Having to combine the tasks of minister of Foreign Affairs and chairman of the European Community was a mixed blessing for Van den Broek in the Dutch Parliament. On the one hand, MPs tended to be less critical of the minister during the Dutch chairmanship of the EC since they recognized that he had to mediate between the views of the various EC member states and was thus unable to keep strictly to the line that the Netherlands would have chosen on its own. For example, a report in *NRC Handelsblad* stated that an MP (not mentioned by name) asked during the first discussion of the Yugoslav question with Van den Broek what was left of Dutch foreign policy now that Van den Broek was acting as chairman of the EC during the crisis.³⁷⁷ On the other hand, the minister was under pressure from Parliament to make something good out of the chairmanship, since the Netherlands was in the international spotlight as well as Van den Broek. This in itself was sufficient reason for the Netherlands not to adopt a passive stance in the conflict. The Parliament stimulated Van den Broek to take an active approach.

The minister and the EC troika received all-party support during the debate.³⁷⁸ Eimert van Middelkoop from the Protestant GPV party (*Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond*) praised Van den Broek for ‘his active stance and above all for his political caution’, and added, ‘Messrs Genscher and Kohl could learn a lot from his example.’³⁷⁹ In general, the political parties wanted to support neither Serb dominance nor regional strivings for independence. They agreed with Van den Broek that the Helsinki Accords and the Charter of Paris should serve as their starting points. ‘That means’, the minister pointed out, ‘recognition of both the right of peoples to self-determination and the great benefits attached to the integrity of states. It is thus clear that some kind of appropriate compromise must be found between these two aims, in the sense that a unilateral choice for one of the options is unacceptable.’ The parties to a conflict involving these matters would have to reach an agreement that would be capable of recognition at international level.³⁸⁰ The European Community would have to try to reconcile the differing viewpoints of the various parties via a process of negotiation. It could attempt to stimulate the parties to reach agreement, or could offer support in the form of expertise e.g. with respect to constitutional, economic or financial questions. If however the parties did not wish to negotiate, there was not really a role for the EC to play in the process.³⁸¹ The perspectives in this latter case were extremely dark. Van den Broek went on to say, ‘Once again, I must stress that any result which is not the product of a negotiation process and real agreement can be nothing but a scenario for disaster! All such outcomes are prescriptions for civil war, without exception!’³⁸²

The spokesmen of the various fractions in Parliament agreed with the minister that the parties in Yugoslavia had to reach agreement about the future structure of their country. Ton de Kok of the Christian Democrat CDA said, ‘Any support for a unilateral declaration of independence will give rise to further escalation of the crisis. This does not only apply to Yugoslavia – in fact, we are afraid that it applies to the whole of Central and Eastern Europe.’³⁸³ Van Middelkoop (GPV) objected to ‘a premium on state-destroying nationalism. That is a cancerous growth on the countries in that part of the world, nationalism of a kind which we in the Netherlands can hardly imagine. If we want to maintain peace and stability in the world, we will have to oppose that sort of nationalism as much as

³⁷⁷ Rob Meines, ‘Minister v.d. Broek overlegt met Kamer over toestand Joegoslavië’ (Foreign Minister Van den Broek consults Parliament on situation in Yugoslavia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/07/91.

³⁷⁸ See also ‘Kamer: bij nieuw geweld troepen naar Joegoslavië’ (Parliament supports sending troops to Yugoslavia if new violence erupts) and Rob Meines, ‘Minister v.d. Broek overlegt met Kamer over toestand Joegoslavië’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/07/91; ‘VVD en Groenen: overweeg inzet leger in Joegoslavië’ (VVD (liberals) and Greens urge that consideration should be given to deployment of army in Yugoslavia), *Trouw*, 12/07/91; ‘Lof Tweede Kamer voor Van den Broek’ (Parliament praises Van den Broek), *De Telegraaf*, 12/07/91.

³⁷⁹ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 2, p. 8.

³⁸⁰ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 2, p. 15.

³⁸¹ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 2, p. 17.

³⁸² TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 2, p. 17.

³⁸³ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 2, p. 3.

possible'.³⁸⁴ He went on to say, 'I can agree with the EC standpoint that we will have to start for the moment from the idea of territorial integrity for Yugoslavia. In this connection, I would like to underline the word "start" heavily. It is clear that Yugoslavia will never be what it once was – and that is a good thing. In any case, it means that everyone will have to learn to deal with one another in a different way.'³⁸⁵

Jan-Dirk Blaauw of the Liberal VVD was the only one during this debate to mention the problems in Bosnia-Herzegovina 'between the Serb minorities on the one hand and the Croat minorities on the other': 'According to the reports I have received, the Serb civilians in Bosnia-Herzegovina are however currently being transformed half-way into combatants by being called up as reservists and transported in military vehicles from Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Croatian border. Or is this all just propaganda?'

Blaauw wondered whether the Western nations were perhaps not doing enough. He suggested the possibility of putting the whole of Yugoslavia under the supervision of observers, and pointed out that in the past hostile groups had been separated by UN observers and peacekeeping forces. Maybe a similar construction might be possible in the present case, under the CSCE umbrella, though he did not think the CSCE was really 'ripe' for this. He went on to say:

'The use of other military organizations might perhaps create an undesirable impression. In this connection, I would like to offer what might be a rather wild suggestion. Might it not be a good idea, even now, to start to create a construction which would make it possible, if a request to that effect were ever made, for the Benelux countries, possibly in combination with the Scandinavian countries and Switzerland, to offer a little bit more than civilian good services? To supply, if necessary and if requested, military units to separate hostile groups so as to make combat impossible, and thus to prevent bloodshed rather than allowing it to spread, so that a more stable starting situation could be created for a Yugoslavia of the future in which the component parts could once again be allowed to go their own ways.'³⁸⁶

Wilbert Willems of Green Left also asked Van den Broek 'to consider, both internally and in an EC context, the possibility of further deployment of peacekeeping forces', even though he was not prepared to go as far in this direction as Blaauw.³⁸⁷

Maarten van Traa (PvdA) and Ton de Kok (CDA) made it perfectly clear, however, that they didn't think much of Blaauw's 'wild suggestion', which clearly could not be realized at that moment under a CSCE or UN umbrella. Nevertheless, Blaauw was not the only Member of Parliament to play with the idea that the Netherlands as a small power might be able to play a special role in relation to the conflict. Van Middelkoop (GPV) characterized it as 'quite a fortunate circumstance' that the Dutch were chairing the EC precisely at this time: 'If you want Europe to have a good foreign policy, you have to start by creating a sort of internal European balance of policies. Well, creating a balance of that kind is a role that the Netherlands is quite accustomed to play.'³⁸⁸ Van Middelkoop hoped that Van den Broek would not give in to *Realpolitik*: 'That makes justice subsidiary to all kinds of ambitions, which is not a good thing.'

³⁸⁴ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 2, p. 8.

³⁸⁵ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 2, p. 9.

³⁸⁶ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 2, pp. 6-7.

³⁸⁷ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 2, p. 11.

³⁸⁸ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, No. 2, p. 8.

10. Division along ethnic boundaries?

After the signing of the Brioni Agreement, Van den Broek, Poos and De Michelis proposed to their EC colleagues on 10 July that the Community should go one step further by developing ideas about the material aspects of the negotiations that had been stipulated as part of the Brioni Agreement. De Michelis, who had left the troika in the meantime, was a strong supporter of the idea that the internal boundaries of Yugoslavia should not be changed. (He was doubtless influenced in taking up this stance by the situation in the Southern Tyrol, where voices had been raised in favour of secession from Italy in favour of some form of union with Austria.) He received warm support for this idea from Genscher.³⁸⁹ Director-General for Political Affairs Van Walsum, who was doing his homework at that moment in preparation for the formulation of the second phase of the EC intervention, does not appear to have been aware of these noises. The development of his ideas had by this time become strongly influenced by the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Peter Michielsen had already commented in the *NRC Handelsblad* of 5 July that acceptance of the independence of Croatia and Slovenia would have major consequences for Bosnia-Herzegovina. He had pointed out the unstable nature of the ethnic equilibrium in that republic and the hungry glances Croatia was casting at it from just across the border.³⁹⁰ The *Financial Times* reported on 10 July that Milosevic and Tudjman had been having talks about dividing up Bosnia-Herzegovina; this report was taken over in the Dutch press. The publication of this item was stimulated by the remark Tudjman had made on the television: 'If the Serb demand that all Serbs should live in a single state is realized, no one can deny the same right to the Croats.' Tudjman's advisor Mario Nobile explained later the same week that the Bosnian Muslims could be left with a mini-state of their own the size of Slovenia. This would be brought about by massive ethnic migrations leading to the creation of pure Croat and Serb areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which could then link up with their 'mother countries'.³⁹¹

The report in the *Financial Times* set Van Walsum thinking. The Netherlands would have to act fast as chair of the EC, and not just in reaction to the ambitions Croatia and Serbia apparently had with respect to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Van Walsum was also afraid that if the EC chairman did not come up with a solution soon, 'some other party' would. He therefore wrote a memo to Van den Broek on 11 July, in which he wrote that three things were in any case unthinkable. Firstly, that the constitutional structure of Yugoslavia would remain unchanged. Secondly, that Yugoslavia would split up peacefully into six republics with the same borders as the existing ones. And thirdly, that the borders of the republics could be changed by negotiation. In brief, there was no peaceful way out of the Yugoslav crisis: 'What we would like to do here is to square the circle.'³⁹² He submitted this memo on Friday 12 July to Van den Broek, who was attending a Government meeting at the time, with a request for comment.

Van Walsum did not offer a real solution to the problems he posed in his memo. In line with this, Van den Broek told Van Walsum in the course of the same afternoon that his memo was of limited use because it did not offer a policy choice. Van Walsum had in the meantime come to the conclusion that the ethnic question in Yugoslavia could not be solved exclusively by guarantees of the protection of minorities.³⁹³ He took the view that it was better to redraw the borders of the Yugoslav republics so as to give maximum ethnic homogeneity within each republic. When Van den Broek pointed out to his Director-General for Political Affairs the lack of a policy choice in his memo, Van

³⁸⁹ Libal, *Limits*, p. 22.

³⁹⁰ Peter Michielsen, 'Breuk Joegoslavische federatie maakt van Balkan weer kruitvat', *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/07/91.

³⁹¹ Tim Judah, 'Creation of Islamic buffer state discussed in secret', *The Times*, 12/07/91; 'Serviërs en Kroaten in geheim grens-overleg' (Serbs and Croats in secret border negotiations), *Trouw*, 11/07/91; Nicole Lucas, 'Bosnië vreest ten onder te gaan aan kempende bureu' (Bosnia fears that conflict between neighbours will lead to its own downfall), *Trouw*, 15/07/91; André Roelofs, 'Kroatië bevestigt plan voor opdelen republiek Bosnië' (Croatia confirms plans for division of Bosnian republic), *De Volkskrant*, 13/07/91.

³⁹² ABZ, DEU/ARA/03309. DGPZ to Van den Broek via Secretary-General, 11/07/91, No. 161/91.

³⁹³ Both, *Indifference*, p. 81.

Walsum replied (according to claims he made later) that his preference was for a redrawing of Yugoslavia's internal borders so as to give maximum ethnic homogeneity in each constituent part. The minister responded (again according to Van Walsum) that if the Director-General for Political Affairs modified the memo along these lines, he (the minister) would have no objection to the Director-General for Political Affairs sending it to capitals of the various EC member states as a COREU message.³⁹⁴

Good reasons could be given to back up Van Walsum's preference for modifying Yugoslavia's internal borders in such a way that each ethnic group could live in a state of its own. It is true that Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission from 1985 to 1994, and Jacques Santer, Prime Minister of Luxembourg, had told the Yugoslav leaders that they would have to find a solution to their constitutional problems 'within the existing internal and external borders'.³⁹⁵ And James Baker, the American Secretary of State, had during his dramatic visit to Belgrade on the eve of the declaration of independence by Croatia and Slovenia also called on the various parties involved to preserve the integrity of Yugoslavia, 'including the borders of the constituent republics'.³⁹⁶ The subsequent signing of the Brioni Agreement showed however that the EC had in principle accepted the independence of Croatia and Slovenia, and hence also the loss of Yugoslavia's external borders which had been guaranteed in the 1975 Helsinki Accords. Why then should the country's internal borders be sacrosanct? There was in a certain sense a historical argument to support this line of thought as regards the border between Croatia and Serbia. While this border was substantially the same as that between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, which had existed since the seventeenth century, the region of Vojna Krajina had been transferred to Croatia as late as 1881 after having had a special status in the preceding centuries.

The COREU message sent by Van Walsum on 13 July for comment to the capitals of all EC member states put into words the basic idea that according to the Netherlands as chair of the EC, 'the principle of self-determination (...) cannot exclusively apply to the existing republics while being deemed inapplicable to national minorities within those republics'. In other words, Yugoslavia could not be split up into six republics within their existing borders. The Netherlands therefore proposed that these borders should be redefined on a voluntary basis. The EC would never approve an agreement like that of Karadjordjevo, where Tadjman and Milosevic decided the fate of Bosnia-Herzegovina without the knowledge of the Federal government and without consulting the republic itself.³⁹⁷

If Van Walsum's idea were to be accepted, that would have consequences not only for e.g. Krajina, the Croatian region where many Serbs lived, but also in particular for Bosnia-Herzegovina, where none of the three main ethnic groups (the Bosnian Muslims, the Serbs and the Croats) formed a majority of the population. Van Walsum seems to have been aware of this. In any case, he said in an interview with Both on 20 August 1995, 'If Yugoslavia died of its ethnic divisions, it does not seem to be a very good idea to choose the option that would lead precisely to the creation of a new independent state (Bosnia-Herzegovina) that would be plagued by exactly the same ethnic divisions'.³⁹⁸ Another indication in the same direction is a note written by Van Walsum in late August 1991, where he stated that the time was not yet ripe for a discussion between Milosevic and Tadjman concerning the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina.³⁹⁹ In brief, while Van Walsum did not want a division of Bosnia imposed by

³⁹⁴ Van Walsum, *Ontbinding*, p. 80; idem, *Nederland*, p. 73; interview A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* (Starting point), III, deposition by A.P. van Walsum, 22/05/00, p. 10.

³⁹⁵ Cited in Steven L. Burg, 'The International Community and the Yugoslav Crisis', Esman & Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p. 239.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288. Joegoslavië: EU/EPS. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparation of Dutch contribution. Reports of meetings July-December 1991, COREU message Dutch chair of EC, 13/07/91, cpe/pres/hag 367.

³⁹⁸ Both, *Indifference*, p. 108; the original Dutch text of this quotation is from Both, 1999 edition, p. 193, note 21. See also Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 73; interview A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00.

³⁹⁹ Both, *Indifference*, p. 114.

Milosevic and Tudjman, he hoped that something along these lines might be possible in consultation with the Muslims.

Van den Broek had only seen the memo with the remark about squaring the circle – i.e. not the additional far-reaching suggestions about changing the borders. When questioned about this later, the minister could not remember ever having seen the draft COREU message⁴⁰⁰ or, if he had, he must have underestimated the scope of Van Walsum's suggestion.⁴⁰¹ In any case, the COREU message was sent on Saturday 13 July, signed by Van Walsum.

It led to almost unanimous rejection within the EC. France feared that the proposal, if carried out, would lead to massive displacement of people.⁴⁰² Spain did not want the EC to endanger its scope for mediation by adopting such a sharply defined stance.⁴⁰³ Only Copenhagen showed some sympathy for the idea.⁴⁰⁴ While Lord Owen would later praise Van Walsum for his idea, which the British mediator thought might have led to less bloodshed on Yugoslav soil if put into practice,⁴⁰⁵ it is understandable that the idea reigned in other European capitals that if the European Community were to give a signal to the world that they were in favour of creating state boundaries along ethnic lines, this would have the effect of opening a Pandora's box.⁴⁰⁶ And for some countries, such a box was not far away: 'The Italians thought of Southern Tyrol, the English of Northern Ireland, Scotland and perhaps even Wales; the French thought of Corsica and the Spanish of the Basque regions or Catalonia. The fear of creating the precedent of one successful secession far outweighed the feeling of common European responsibility.'⁴⁰⁷ In addition, various EC member states expected that changes in the existing borders would lead not only to massive displacement of people but also to violence. A 'free for all' situation would be created.⁴⁰⁸ And if the internal boundaries were up for discussion, the external ones might well follow. As soon as the Albanians of Kosovo and Macedonia had united, they would doubtless be wanting to join up with Albania. And would the Hungarians of Vojvodina not then opt for union with Hungary?⁴⁰⁹

Van Walsum's behaviour reflected a lack of coordination within the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs. Not only is it doubtful whether Van den Broek ever actually saw the text of the telegram suggesting the border changes, but in addition Van Walsum sent it without consulting the rest of the ministry.⁴¹⁰ This led to direct criticism of Van Walsum's COREU message, e.g. from his deputy Kröner.⁴¹¹ According to Van Walsum's own report, his close colleagues 'tore the telegram to shreds' when they finally became aware of its contents.⁴¹² Van Eenennaam thought that his own criticism was perhaps the fiercest. In his opinion, the pursuit of mono-ethnicity was morally reprehensible. He did not believe that the existence of a Greater Serbia alongside a radicalized Muslim state would contribute

⁴⁰⁰ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 107-108; interview H. van den Broek, 02/12/99.

⁴⁰¹ Interview H. van Den Broek, 15/11/99.

⁴⁰² ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288. Yugoslavia: EU/EPS. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparation of Dutch contribution. Reports of meetings July-December 1991, COREU message to Paris, 17/07/91, cpe/par 335.

⁴⁰³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288 Yugoslavia: EU/EPS. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparation of Dutch contribution. Reports of meetings July-December 1991, COREU message to Madrid, 18/07/91, cpe/mad 306.

⁴⁰⁴ Both, *Indifference*, p. 108; see also ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. London to BZ, 05/11/92, 07:32, Hoekman 601.

⁴⁰⁵ Owen, *Breakup*, p. 38.

⁴⁰⁶ Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 73.

⁴⁰⁷ Translated from the German of J. Stein, cited in Heinz-Günther Stobbe, "Realpolitik" und dritter Balkankrieg. Thesen zum Versagen der europäischen Politik auf dem Balkan' (Realpolitik and the Third Balkan war. Theses concerning the failure of European policies in the Balkans), in: Bremmer (ed.), *(Sch)erben*, pp. 123.

⁴⁰⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081. DEU; COREU messages concerning EPC standpoints on Yugoslavia, June-September 1991, Van den Broek 74 to Dutch embassy Belgrade, 18/07/91.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288. Joegoslavië: EU/EPS. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparation of Dutch contribution. Reports of meetings July-December 1991, non-paper from the Dutch chair of the EC for the EC ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia, 30/07/91.

⁴¹⁰ See e.g. interview A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

⁴¹¹ Van Walsum, *Ontbinding*, p. 80; Both, *Indifference*, p. 108; interview A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00.

⁴¹² Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 73.

to the stability of the region. And finally, he was convinced that Van Walsum's proposal had no chance at all of acceptance by the Netherlands' EC partners.⁴¹³

The rest of the ministry staff seem thus to have been opposed to Van Walsum's telegram not only because they were against the idea of discussing the borders at all, but also because they took a positive stand in favour of multi-ethnicity.⁴¹⁴ The West chose multi-ethnic society as the model for the new republics which they hoped would rise out of the old Yugoslavia. This was a choice that, in Van Walsum's words, was 'forced' on Yugoslavia.⁴¹⁵

The discussion on this topic would flare up again in late 1997 and early 1998 in the coded messages passing between a number of staff members in Foreign Affairs, such as Vos, Biegan, Van Eenennaam, Van Walsum and Fietelaars, who had been closely associated with the course of events in July 1991. At the time, Van Walsum had rejected the criticism of his colleagues that the proposal he had made in his COREU message of 13 July 1991 was 'indefensible, irresponsible, unwise and impracticable'. He pointed out that the decision not to discuss the internal boundaries of Yugoslavia had led to the creation of the sovereign state of Bosnia-Herzegovina - a development that he regarded as highly questionable. He was hurt by the allegation from inside the ministry that the drawing of boundaries around ethnically homogeneous regions was 'morally indefensible':

'It goes without saying that it is better to maintain multi-ethnic structures under all circumstances – but then that would have applied to Yugoslavia too. It is curious that everyone realized that Europe did not have the power to save Yugoslavia, while it was assumed unhesitatingly that we could keep Bosnia-Herzegovina together or that the problem would not arise at that level.'⁴¹⁶

Van Walsum was prepared to admit in 1998 that dividing up Yugoslavia along ethnic lines was not an ideal solution, 'but I find it difficult to see why it should be morally more indefensible than the course actually chosen by the Twelve, which cost the lives of at least 150,000 people.'⁴¹⁷ Even later than that, Van Walsum would stick to his opinion that the EC had been too quick to assume that multi-ethnicity was the best solution for the new states arising out of the old Yugoslavia.⁴¹⁸

It is questionable whether Van Walsum's standpoint would have met with any warmer welcome in the Netherlands than it did in the rest of the EC, in view of the marked antipathy to any form of ethnic division manifested in Dutch politics. As Wim Kok, who was vice-premier at the time, put it later:

'(...) at the moment when lines of ethnic division start to determine the way majority and minority groups deal with one another and to influence the balance of power, that is when you rebel. As I mentioned, we are talking about the early 'nineties, during the Dutch chairmanship of the Union (the European Community), and this issue did raise its head in quite a marked form then. My feeling at the time was that as a human being, as a citizen, you rebel as it were

⁴¹³ Interview B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00.

⁴¹⁴ In a later telegram of 6 July 1995, Engels compared the "*Realpolitik*" approach of "ethnic compactness" with the more 'principled' approach of the 'pluri-ethnic society' as possible ways of handling the question of the former Yugoslavia; see DCBC, 630. Engels 78 to Foreign Affairs, 06/07/95.

⁴¹⁵ Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 76.

⁴¹⁶ ABZ, BZ 109. Van Walsum 33 to Van Mierlo, 26/01/98. See also TCBU, *Vertrekpunt, III*, deposition by A.P. van Walsum, 22/05/00, p. 10.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid. Cf. Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 78 and idem, *Ontbinding*, p. 82.

⁴¹⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt, III*, deposition by A.P. van Walsum, 22/05/00, pp. 9-10.

against something that according to your standards is impermissible, impossible, just can't be allowed to happen .⁴¹⁹

The clear rejection, both in the Netherlands and abroad, of Van Walsum's proposal to modify Yugoslavia's internal boundaries had two consequences. Firstly, any solution to the problems of Yugoslavia would now have to contain a clear guarantee of minority rights. And secondly, the West would have to consider how it was going to respond to movement of Serb and Federal Yugoslav forces across internal boundaries and to attempts to change these boundaries.

One of the reasons why the German government had not been able to agree with Van Walsum's idea was that the German rejection of the behaviour of the JNA was based precisely on the violation of the existing boundaries of the republics.⁴²⁰ After these boundaries had more or less been declared 'sacrosanct' by the EC responses to Van Walsum's COREU message, the question of whether the JNA's military aggression (which had by definition already taken place) should be halted by military means became much more pressing. Just a few weeks after the outbreak of the conflict in Yugoslavia, the top officials in the Dutch department of Foreign Affairs concluded that political and diplomatic initiatives concerning Yugoslavia should receive military backing.⁴²¹

This shift of stress towards military intervention led automatically to an increase in the importance of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs within Foreign Affairs at the expense of the regional expertise to be found within the Eastern Europe office of DEU.⁴²² Although the idea of military action repeatedly resurfaced among Dutch politicians and civil servants during the subsequent period, it remained no more than an idea because The Hague realized that going further along this road would damage the consensus within the EC. Moreover, The Hague was not in favour of involving the WEU in this matter, and while it would have been in favour of NATO involvement it knew that no support for this idea could be expected from Washington.⁴²³

On the morning of 17 July, Foreign Affairs heard from Washington that the American government would be prepared to support a change in Yugoslavia's internal boundaries, if the parties concerned in Yugoslavia agreed with this proposal. The Dutch ambassador Meesman reported that he had heard from sources within the US National Security Council that this body was even of the opinion that a 'Serboslovenia' with an independent Slovenia and an independent Croatia that had given up part of its territory to the Serbs 'might ultimately be the best achievable solution under the circumstances.'⁴²⁴

It is doubtful however whether Van Walsum's COREU message would have met with more understanding if it had been discussed with Washington beforehand. Officials at the State Department were exceedingly unhappy with his assumption that the outside world would simply have to accept the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Van Walsum would hear repeatedly in the future from the Americans, in particular from Gewecke, the second-in-command at the American embassy in The Hague, how unhappy they had been with his suggestion.⁴²⁵

⁴¹⁹ Interview Wim Kok, 08/05/00.

⁴²⁰ Both, *Indifference*, p. 108.

⁴²¹ Both, *Indifference*, p. 109.

⁴²² Both, *Indifference*, p. 109.

⁴²³ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 110-111.

⁴²⁴ ABZ, Kabinetsarchief, Stg. Geheime Codes. Meesman 711 to Van den Broek, 16/07/91.

⁴²⁵ Interview A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00.

Chapter 2

The war in Croatia and the western reaction

1. Consequences of the war in Slovenia for the subsequent course of the Yugoslavian conflict

Although brief, the war in Slovenia had a number of major consequences and, by opting for independence, the Slovenians also bore a significant responsibility.⁴²⁶

In the first place, the war marked the start of a far more serious conflict that was to last for years between the JNA and (at a later stage) Serbian forces on the one hand, and republics attempting to assert their independence on the other. After the actual departure of Slovenia from the Yugoslavian federation it was even less attractive for the other republics to remain as members together with Serbia and Montenegro. The ease with which Milosevic said goodbye to Slovenia can be attributed not only to the limited number of Serbs in the area, but also to his expectation that it would make it all the easier for him to settle the score with the remaining republics. After the JNA's departure, Slovenia indeed lost nearly all interest in the further negotiations about Yugoslavia.⁴²⁷ There was also no longer much point in the three-month moratorium on the declaration of independence that was agreed in Brioni. The EC could even have recognized the separate independence of Slovenia except that this would have meant abandoning a continuation of Yugoslavia, even as relatively loosely linked nations, as early as July 1991. And the EC was not ready for this at that time. It was a position that was to generate negative publicity in Slovenia, especially for the Dutch presidency of the EC. The word there was that they had already freed themselves of the Serbs and all that remained was to get rid of the Dutch.⁴²⁸

Secondly, Slovenian and Croatian officers left the JNA, voluntarily or otherwise, so that the Yugoslavian people's army steadily became more purely Serbian.⁴²⁹ It became increasingly common for soldiers to have an emblem with the four Cyrillic S-es, which stand for *Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava* (only unity will save Serbia) sown onto their uniforms rather than a red star.⁴³⁰ Finally, on 23 October 1991 the Yugoslavian people's army, the JNA, would be renamed the Yugoslavian Armed Forces, the *Vojska Jugoslavije* (VJ). The JNA top helped the Serbification of the armed forces because, as the Yugoslavian Minister of Defence Kadijevic was later to write, they communicated with the presidium (in other words the high command) on two levels. Some of the plans were submitted to the complete presidium, and some to 'those members who worked for Yugoslavia'.⁴³¹

Thirdly, the JNA was totally surprised by 'the scope, forms and scale of the hatred' displayed by the Slovenians towards them during the short war.⁴³²

And a final consequence of the war in Slovenia was that other republics aspiring to independence were able to learn from the international PR success of the authorities in Ljubljana. The trick was to shed light on the brutality of the Serbs with the intention of provoking an international reaction. For instance, an instruction was issued by Croatian Radio and Television management that military defeats were not to be hushed up in war reports, but that the overwhelmingly superior strength of the Serbian enemy and its 'unscrupulous brutality' were to be stressed in such cases.⁴³³ Croatian authorities resorted to a deliberate *Verelendung* of its own population by provoking enemy fire and

⁴²⁶ Cf. Zimmermann, *'Ambassador'*, p. 7; idem, *Origins*, p. 146.

⁴²⁷ Libal, *Limits*, p. 24.

⁴²⁸ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 402.

⁴²⁹ Cf. Owen, *Breakup*, p. 37.

⁴³⁰ Van Cleef, *World*, p. 42.

⁴³¹ Kadijevic, *Vien*, p. 128, n. 7.

⁴³² Kadijevic, *Vien*, p. 133.

⁴³³ Reported in: Simic, *'Yugoslavia'*, p. 45.

exaggerating the damage caused.⁴³⁴ Furthermore, the party that was to engage in combat with the Serbs in each subsequent conflict found it easier to portray them as aggressors. The Croatian government was able to take advantage of the fact that the Serbs had drawn the joker from the pack in the short Slovenian war. In turn, the government in Sarajevo then again made use of the effect achieved by the Croatian media campaigns. If the governments in the West did not immediately react as they were supposed to, it might still be possible to cause them to do so through public opinion. An 'advantage' for Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, which were to follow in Slovenia's footsteps, was that the Serbian forces and their helpers hardly made it difficult for them. The Serbian side consistently responded with overwhelming fire power to suspected or real aggression from the Croatian side, which was a phenomenon that was to be seen again later in Bosnia: 'Small arms would be answered by mortars, and machine guns by shellfire.'⁴³⁵

2. The action of the JNA in Croatia

For a clear understanding of the conflict that developed in July and August 1991 in Croatia, it is necessary to refer to the problems that the JNA had in manning its units.

The greatest surprise for the federal army command during the JNA's 'ten-day campaign' in Slovenia was the exodus of soldiers and the poor level of enlistment.⁴³⁶ At the time of the declaration of independence, the federal army already had a reputation among the Croats for being completely partisan. While the JNA had disarmed Croatian territorial defence units, Kadijevic took it for granted that the territorial defence in the Serbian areas in Croatia and Bosnia collaborated with the JNA.⁴³⁷ Soldiers from Croatia and Slovenia had also deserted en masse. A significant number of the deserters had found their way to the Croatian National Guard, which had developed from the territorial defence prior to the foundation of the Croatian state. Although the Guard was to engage in combat with the JNA and the Serbian irregular units, it was not originally an army in the true sense of the word. Initially, the nature of the Guard was that of a robust domestic police force, whose purpose was to deal with the Serbian 'rebels' in Krajina and Slavonia. As the conflict progressed it developed into a true Croatian Army, Hrvatska Vojska (HV).

In each case the objective of the JNA's deployment in Croatia was to protect the areas there that were labelled as Serbian, which roughly speaking constituted the area to the east of the line Karlobag-Karlovac-Virovitica (see map in this section). However, these areas were not ethnically homogeneous. Out of a total of approximately six-hundred thousand Serbs in Croatia, approximately 200,000 lived in Zagreb. The overwhelming majority of the rest lived in Krajina and Slavonia: 316,000. As mentioned above, the Serbs had declared the autonomy of Krajina as early as August 1990 following a referendum. On 25 June, the day Croatia proclaimed its independence, Serbian representatives took the decision also to create an autonomous region of Slavonia, Baranja and West Srem. The Serbs constituted three quarters of the population in Krajina around Knin; in Banija, Kordun and East Lika approximately seventy per cent; in West Slavonia 50 per cent, but in East Slavonia only 35 per cent (see map in this section). In East Slavonia the Serbs were in the majority only in the town of Pakrac. The formation of a 'pure' Serbian area therefore required the non-Serbian part of the population to 'disappear' from Krajina and Slavonia. At the same time, the Croatian Volunteer Guard and the Croatian police also attempted to assert their authority on this part of Croatian territory. In July and August 1991 the skirmishes that had already been taking place in the region for a year degenerated into outright war.

⁴³⁴ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Lessen van de oorlog op de Balkan' ('Lessons from the Balkan War'), Van Es & Samiemon & Starink (eds.), *Redacteuren*, p. 213.

⁴³⁵ Bell, *Way*, p. 108.

⁴³⁶ Kadijevic, *Viem*, pp. 133-134.

⁴³⁷ Kadijevic, *Viem*, p. 99.

The JNA's ambitions, however, went beyond the 'Serbian' areas in Croatia alone. Kadijevic may well have solemnly declared to Milosevic and Jovic on 30 July that the JNA was now transforming itself into a Serbian army,⁴³⁸ but this arch waverer at the top of the JNA almost never failed to backtrack on a decision.⁴³⁹ For all his embrace of Milosevic's Greater-Serbian ideas, the general was unable to put all thought of Yugoslavia out of his mind. The federal army therefore developed a second plan that would enter into force as soon as Croatian troops directly attacked the JNA. If the situation allowed it, the Croatian armed forces were to be completely defeated in that case.⁴⁴⁰ It was therefore necessary to develop the JNA within Croatia in Krajina and Slavonia as well as in the (as yet) undisputed parts of the republic.⁴⁴¹ In the meantime, the JNA had to maintain the appearance of impartiality that was appropriate to the ideology of the guardian of Yugoslavian unity. The federal army must not be open to being branded as a Greater-Serbian conquering force, but must appear to be a neutral arbitrator between the Croats and Serbs. In name the army had to remain Yugoslavian.⁴⁴² Milosevic and compatriots were aware that the moment it could be labelled a Serbian-Montenegrin army they would lose significant benefits.⁴⁴³ Whereas, behind the scenes, Milosevic gave orders to draw up lists of names of generals and colonels who clung too much to Yugoslavia, he constantly resisted great pressure, for example, from the Serbian Ministry of Defence, from the side of Kadijevic, from Serbian volunteers, or from the Serbian opposition, to create an openly Serbian or Serbian-Montenegrin army.⁴⁴⁴



During the war in Croatia, Milosevic therefore also adopted the position that Serbia was not involved. Only in February 1992, after the hostilities had ceased, did he admit that his regime had helped the Serbs in Croatia, 'at first economically and politically, (...) but eventually, when this proved inadequate, with arms'.⁴⁴⁵ The JNA therefore initially had to limit itself to supporting the Serbian militias in Croatia and to tactically important counterattacks on the Croatian armed forces. As soon as the Croatian army attacked across a broad front, the JNA would begin a wholesale counterattack, according to the plan known as *Bedem II*.⁴⁴⁶ In that second phase the JNA was to double its deployment

⁴³⁸ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 366.

⁴³⁹ Jovic, *Dani*, passim; Mamula, *Slučaj*, p. 154.

⁴⁴⁰ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 145; Norma Cigar, 'Serb War Effort and Termination of the War', Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, pp. 201-202.

⁴⁴¹ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 136-137.

⁴⁴² Cf. Krizan, *Nationalism*, p. 77; Kadijevic, *View*, p. 136; Libal, *Limits*, p. 25.

⁴⁴³ Statements by Mihailo Markovic in late August and by Jovic in late September, cited in Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 176-177.

⁴⁴⁴ Jovic, *Dani*, pp. 349 and 389; Gajic Glisic, *Vojska*, pp. 28, 41, 80, 84, 85, 90 and 92.

⁴⁴⁵ Cited in Norma Cigar, 'The Serbo-Croatian War', 1991, in: Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 65.

⁴⁴⁶ *Bedem* means Stronghold. As early as 7 August, the Slovenian Minister of Defence Janez Jansa made public the plan, which had shortly before fallen into Slovenian hands, 'Slovene Defence and Interior Ministers on Alleged JNA Plots', press conference in Ljubljana, 07/08/91, 13:30, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 09/08/91. *Bedem I* was concerned with the withdrawal of the JNA from Slovenia after the defeat, see 'Kucan and Jansa on advantages and problems of JNA withdrawal from Slovenia', press conference in Ljubljana, 19/07/91, 13:30, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 22/07/91. That plan was

with fifteen to eighteen army brigades.⁴⁴⁷ So what they were waiting for was Croatian manoeuvres that could be construed as large-scale aggression against the JNA.

This took some considerable time. Slovenia had thoroughly prepared for its independence and the military response that may follow. But the Croatian president continued for a long time to hope that Kadijevic would not attack his republic, possibly from an outdated idea that a JNA general would not do such a thing⁴⁴⁸ as long as Zagreb indicated that it was still aiming for a form of accommodation. Tudjman also believed he could derive security from his agreements with Milosevic on a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Tudjman furthermore continued to express the view that for international support the other party had to deal the first major blow. He was fairly optimistic that the West would intervene on Croatia's behalf when it came under attack. When the American ambassador Zimmermann advised Tudjman in August 1991 not to rely on American intervention, Tudjman answered unperturbed that he perhaps knew more about the United States than the American diplomat.⁴⁴⁹ He therefore brushed aside proposals from his military advisers for many preparations and a more offensive strategy.⁴⁵⁰ There was another reason for Tudjman not to rush into a defensive war as the Slovenians had done. He had a great interest in the area in Bosnia that was largely inhabited by Croats and therefore had nothing to gain from an immediate complete withdrawal from Yugoslavia.

The reserve of the Croatian armed forces initially gave the JNA no excuse for large-scale action and it could do little more than 'protect' the 'Serbian areas' in Croatia. In those early days it was particularly the local militias, about twelve thousand men in total under the leadership of the Minister of the Interior of Krajina, the former policeman Milan Martić, who took action and so enlarged the Serbian area in Croatia. The JNA were always on hand to help if they got into difficulties. Then the federal army would separate 'the combatants'. It led to limited skirmishes. This is how on 27 June the federal army came to use thirty tanks to seal the town of Glina (sixty kilometres south of Zagreb) from the outside world, which coincided with the JNA actions in Slovenia, following a lengthy exchange of fire around the police station between Serbian citizens and a special Croatian army unit. In the weekend of 6 and 7 July, while the EC were meeting with the Yugoslavian leaders on Brioni, at least fifteen people died in a skirmish in the village of Tenja near Osijek, including ten Croatian Guards and policemen.⁴⁵¹

The occasional engagements intensified the war rhetoric. On Monday 8 July, Milosevic attended a Serbian territorial troop manoeuvre in the border area of Serbia and Croatia. He took the opportunity to urge the Serbian population to prepare themselves morally for war. In a television broadcast that same evening, Tudjman said that the Croatian government could no longer stand by and watch while 'Greater-Serbian terrorists' walked around with impunity on Croatian soil. He repeated that Croatia would yield not one centimetre of territory and demanded the complete withdrawal of the JNA.

Starting on 12 July, the JNA mobilized reservists and dispatched units to Croatia. On 17 July, on the eve of the announcement of the withdrawal of the JNA from Slovenia, Tudjman announced the formation of a nine-member crisis staff, a sort of war cabinet, that was to lead Croatia 'now that the safety of the republic is in danger'. Josip Manolić resigned as prime minister of Croatia to lead the crisis staff. The decision was taken after the Croatian authorities had received information that the JNA was to transfer to Croatia one armoured division from Vojvodina and two from Bosnia. According to the

again preceded by *Bedem-91*, the plan for the attack on Slovenia, Christopher Bellamy, 'Yugoslavia in Crisis: Federal troops have "secret plan"', *The Independent*, 04/07/91.

⁴⁴⁷ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 145.

⁴⁴⁸ Libal, *Limits*, pp. 38 and 50; Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 153.

⁴⁴⁹ Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 154.

⁴⁵⁰ Norman Cigar, 'The Serbo-Croatian War, 1991', in: Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 64; Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Kroaten ontspannen maar alert' ('Croats relaxed but alert'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/07/91; Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 169-170; Tanner, *Croatia*, pp. 249-251; Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 151.

⁴⁵¹ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Spanning tussen Kroatië en Servië loopt op' ('Tensions mount between Croatia and Serbia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/07/91.

authorities in Zagreb that would lead to 'total war'.⁴⁵² At that time, six thousand Croats mainly from Serb inhabited areas in Croatia, and thirteen thousand Serbs from predominantly Croatian areas, had already fled.⁴⁵³

On 19 July, Vinkovci in East Slavonia became the first Croatian town to be attacked by Serbian regular units, who went in with rocket launchers. In the days that followed, the conflict between Croats and Serbs erupted in all ferocity.⁴⁵⁴ On 22 July rail traffic between Belgrade and Zagreb, which ran close to the scene of battle, was suspended, and twenty people were killed in engagements in East Slavonia. On that day Tudjman made a television address to all Croats to call them to prepare for a general war.⁴⁵⁵ The fierce fighting in and around Vinkovci caused the Croatian president to return with all haste from a meeting with the other presidents in Ohrid, where they were to discuss the political future of Yugoslavia and, according to the Macedonian president Tupurkovski, were only a quarter of an hour away from an agreement at that time.⁴⁵⁶ Furthermore Milosevic was not willing to agree to Tudjman's condition that the JNA should withdraw to their barracks. If Serbia were to do so, 'we would now have total civil war', according to the Serbian member of the presidium Borisav Jovic, 'and we would be up to our knees in blood'.⁴⁵⁷ Later that same day the Croatian National Guard went over to offensive actions in the Lika region, in which, according to their own account, they 'liquidated at least sixty terrorists'.⁴⁵⁸

At the end of July, Croats started to erect barricades in such places as Virovitica, Krizevci and Bjelovar (see map in this section), in response to which Kadijevic announced the second plan.⁴⁵⁹ Some of the most important elements of this second plan were as follows: a total air and sea blockade of Croatia and effective coordination between the Serbian armed forces in the Croatian-Serb areas and the JNA garrisons in the rest of Croatia. Croatia was to be transected by four JNA axes: Gradiska-Virovitica; Bihac-Karlovac-Zagreb; Knin-Zadar; and Mostar-Split. The strongest wave of attack was to free East Slavonia and then pull west, aiming to link up with armed forces in West Slavonia and subsequently to advance on Zagreb and Varazdin, in other words to the border between Croatia and Slovenia. At the same time, an attack was to be launched from Herceg Novi and Trebinje in Bosnia, which was to lead to a blockade of Dubrovnik, and link up with the troops that were active on the Mostar-Split axis.

Until early September the JNA operation went largely according to plan. At the end of July fighting broke out on a large scale between Croats and Serbs, and the death toll rose from a few casualties to dozens each day.⁴⁶⁰ There had been fighting on 28 July around Vukovar. Three days later, Osijek, the largest town in East Slavonia, was attacked with mortars. Both Serbs and Croats started to flee the combat zones. The bloodiest battle so far took place on 1 August in Dalj, a small town with 7500 Croatian residents, which was harassed for hours with tanks, mortars, bazookas, shells and machine guns. Serbian tanks and paramilitaries were said to be responsible for the deaths of seven Serbs and 84 Croats. Afterwards nearly all the houses showed signs of impact. Journalists encountered

⁴⁵² Theo Engelen, 'Toezegging army: geen aanvalsplan tegen Kroatië' ('Army pledge: no attack plan against Croatia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 18/07/91.

⁴⁵³ Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 49.

⁴⁵⁴ 'Bij strijd in Kroatië minstens 12 doden' ('At least 12 die in fighting in Croatia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/07/91.

⁴⁵⁵ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Kroatië bereidt zich voor op oorlog' ('Croatia prepares for war') and 'Oorlog lijkt onvermijdelijk en wordt 'totaal', zegt Tudjman' ('War seems inevitable and will be "total", says Tudjman'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/07/91; Ulrike Rudberg, 'Tudjman roept Kroaten op zich voor te bereiden op oorlog' ('Tudjman calls on Croats to prepare for war'), *de Volkskrant*, 23/07/91.

⁴⁵⁶ Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 153.

⁴⁵⁷ 'Verwijten over en weer; opnieuw onlusten in Kroatië' ('Mutual reproaches; more unrest in Croatia'), *Trouw*, 24/07/91.

⁴⁵⁸ 'Kroatië zegt zestig "Servische terroristen" te hebben "geliquideerd"' ('Croatia claims "liquidation" of 60 "Serbian terrorists"'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/07/91.

⁴⁵⁹ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 139 and 146; Mamula, *Shucaj*, p. 220.

⁴⁶⁰ See e.g. Blaine Harden, '30 Reported Dead in Croatia After Night of Battles', *The Washington Post*, 28/07/91.

a veritable bloodbath in the local school gym.⁴⁶¹ The Yugoslavian Red Cross claimed that on 27 July alone 54,000 people fled the centres of combat in Croatia.⁴⁶²

The JNA offensive intensified in mid August. In the second half of August, the JNA began a siege of the strategically situated town of Vukovar. Vukovar was a town on the Danube with 45,000 residents, where Serbs made up 37.4 per cent of the population. It was Croatia's advance stronghold. Built on the bed of the dried-up Pannonian Sea, the town was an easy target for JNA artillery and air bombardments. The town was to be defended for three months, mainly by a local militia consisting of a couple of thousand men, against the superior strength of the JNA and paramilitaries, who at one point had 35 to 40,000 men. The longer the resistance persisted, the more the town became the focus of a battle of prestige between Serbs and Croats. The JNA bombarded the town with five thousand shells daily. In early October the chief of the local military police of the mechanized guard, Major Veselin Slijivancanin, was already making no secret of the fact that the town would be razed to the ground if the Croats were to continue to defend it.⁴⁶³ This promise was fulfilled at the end of a three-month-long siege.

According to a general who was involved, the order for the heavy shelling of Vukovar came 'from Dedinje itself', in reference to the Belgrade residential area where Milosevic lived.⁴⁶⁴ In September 1991, the Serbian weekly *Vreme* also printed a transcript of a telephone conversation between Milosevic and the Bosnian-Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, which had been passed to them by the Bosnian police. In it, Milosevic said that Vukovar had not been bombarded on that day because a meeting of the EC was taking place.⁴⁶⁵ Vukovar was also where the activities of the paramilitary groups, especially the troops of Arkan and Vojislav Seselj, first became apparent to the outside world on a large scale.

The fighting spread to West Slavonia on 16 August. Three days later the centre of Osijek was heavily shelled. In the weekend of 24 and 25 August the JNA occupied Baranja, the fertile region to the north of Osijek. The Serbs there constituted only 25 per cent of the population, as opposed to 44% Croats.⁴⁶⁶ The army drove the Croatian and Hungarian population out and handed the region over to the Serbian Autonomous Province of Slavonia, Baranja and West Srem.

The collaboration between the JNA and paramilitaries again became abundantly clear on the following day, 26 August, when, first of all, the artillery of the recently appointed JNA Chief of Staff in Knin, general Ratko Mladic, attacked the village of Kijevo. The shelling of this completely Croatian community of approximately one thousand villagers in an otherwise predominantly Serbian area lasted for twelve hours, after which almost no stone was left standing. After this, Milan Martić's paramilitaries entered the village. Any survivors fled.

After the fall of Kijevo, Tudjman was no longer able to deter his government from war. On the day that Kijevo was cleansed, the cabinet in Zagreb announced a general mobilization and called for a 'war of liberation'. The government in Zagreb delivered an ultimatum that the federal army must be out of Croatian territory before 31 August.

Until then, there was little sign in the capital city Zagreb itself of the war on Croatian territory. The war appeared to be far away, merely a media spectacle. Early September, however, saw the start of a real war psychosis caused by reports of possible attacks on the capital city. All important buildings were protected with barriers of sandbags, and roadblocks with armoured vehicles were put in place by bridges. A night-time blackout was ordered, and the air-raid sirens regularly went off, after which the population had to go to the air-raid shelters.

⁴⁶¹ 'Serviërs en Kroaten richten bloedbad aan in school Dalj' ('Serbs and Croats cause bloodbath at Dalj school'), *de Volkskrant*, 05/08/91.

⁴⁶² Theo Engelen, 'Bestand in Kroatië geëist' ('Ceasefire demand in Croatia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/07/91.

⁴⁶³ Milan Dragovic, 'Serbian-controlled presidency decrees "partial mobilization"', *Agence France Presse*, 04/10/91. See also Nicole Lucas, 'Om half twee klinkt het eerste schot' ('At 1.30 the first shot rings out'), *Trouw*, 10/10/91.

⁴⁶⁴ Williams & Cigar, *War Crimes*, IV.A.

⁴⁶⁵ Tanner, *Croatia*, pp. 241, 256 and 317 n. 1; Almond, *War*, p. 221.

⁴⁶⁶ Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 255.

On 7 September the authorities in Zagreb decided to blockade the oil pipeline that ran through their territory on its way to Serbia. On 13 September JNA barracks were put under siege throughout Croatia, which until then had received water, food and energy from the Croatian authorities. From this moment, the war, which until then had been restricted mainly to East Croatia, expanded as far as the Adriatic coast. Milan Martić had already announced in August 1991 that the Croatian Serbs wanted Zadar, because they needed a port.⁴⁶⁷ The attack on Zadar was to have a great impact on relations in a European context between Germany and the Netherlands, as will be explained below.

Morale problems in the JNA

First, consideration will be given to the consequences of the firmer attitude of the Croatian authorities to the JNA offensive. This harder line made the JNA command aware of the difficulty of simultaneously protecting the 'Serbian areas' in Croatia and their own units in the rest of Croatia.⁴⁶⁸ The problem was not so much the resistance from the Croats, which was modest, as the limited success of the mobilization and the large-scale desertion of reservists.⁴⁶⁹

The JNA soldiers, in cooperation with the population, had been in preparation for military action for many years. Now that the JNA had come into action, it was being deployed against the population. It had already become clear in Slovenia that fighting against those who (until recently) had been considered fellow countrymen had a serious impact on morale, including among conscript JNA soldiers from other republics.⁴⁷⁰ In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croat and Muslim enthusiasm for the JNA declined rapidly. On 26 July the Bosnian government ceased to dispatch new recruits to the JNA. Shortly afterwards, the Macedonian leaders also stated that it was no longer prepared to allow conscripts to operate outside its own territory. When, nevertheless, two thousand Macedonian soldiers were deployed in Croatia, the authorities in Skopje allowed the conscription lists to go missing.

In September the JNA had already shrunk from 160,000 to 70,000 soldiers.⁴⁷¹ Not only did soldiers from other republics desert or fail to present themselves, but the conscripts' enthusiasm for the army also proved particularly subdued in Serbia itself.⁴⁷² A problem that the Yugoslavian army had in calling up conscripts was that throughout the period described here Milošević persisted in the pretence that Serbia was not in a state of war, because he knew that the Serbian population had no enthusiasm for the war. Furthermore, the kit necessary for a complete mobilization was not available. Above all, important military production centres were still in the republics that had declared themselves independent.⁴⁷³

Therefore there was no declaration of war by Serbia and neither was there a mobilization. There was considerable desertion even among conscripted Serbs in the Serbian regions of Croatia. It is estimated that between thirty and sixty thousand of them fled to Serbia to avoid serving at the front, which prompted the then Serbian Minister of Defence, General Marko Negovanović, to remark bitterly that he could not protect the Croatian Serbs against genocide if they did not want to defend themselves.⁴⁷⁴ The fleeing of Croatian Serbs to avoid their military service also led to irritation among

⁴⁶⁷ Van den Heuvel, *Land*, p. 114.

⁴⁶⁸ Kadijević, *Vieć*, p. 140.

⁴⁶⁹ Kadijević, *Vieć*, pp. 140 and 179; Jović, *Dani*, p. 385.

⁴⁷⁰ See also David Binder, 'Ethnic Conflict in Yugoslavia Tearing Apart Its Army, Too', *The New York Times*, 01/10/91.

⁴⁷¹ Libal, *Limits*, p. 50; Wijnandts, *Kroniek*, p. 88.

⁴⁷² See e.g. Blaine Harden, 'Thousands of Serbs Evade Call-Ups; Young Men Hide From Military Service in Yugoslav Crisis', *The Washington Post*, 25/07/91. For a comprehensive overview of the problems surrounding the mobilization, desertion and mutiny of Serbian soldiers see Ofelija Backović/Milos Vasić/Aleksandar Vasić, 'Who Wants to be a Soldier? The call-up crisis – an analytical overview of media reports', Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, pp. 329-345.

⁴⁷³ Cf. David Binder, 'Ethnic Conflict in Yugoslavia Tearing Apart Its Army, Too', *The New York Times*, 01/10/91; Gajić Glisic, *Vojška*, pp. 16, 21, 23, 65, 72-73 and 86; Jović, *Dani*, p. 401.

⁴⁷⁴ Norman Cigar, 'The Serbo-Croatian War, 1991', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 71.

Serbs who had served at the front, some of whom saw their jobs in Serbia being taken by Serbs from Croatia.⁴⁷⁵

According to Kadijevec, the JNA could count only on units made up largely of reservists.⁴⁷⁶ Under Yugoslavian law, however, reservists could be kept in the army only for a limited period in peacetime. When nevertheless the reservists of Serbia and Montenegro were mobilized in the autumn of 1991, across Serbia only thirty per cent of the recipients responded to the call-up order, and in Belgrade and Vojvodina as few as ten per cent or less did so. Forty per cent reported from Montenegro.⁴⁷⁷ Between one hundred and two hundred thousand young people failed to respond to the call-up; approximately forty thousand Serbian soldiers left the front. The reservists who did report frequently complained about their kit, the quality of the food and the capability of their superiors.⁴⁷⁸ A large number of soldiers died at the start of the war in Croatia because, for example, there were not enough helmets.⁴⁷⁹ The competence of the officers continued to deteriorate as a result of the ethnic exodus, which turned the JNA increasingly into an army of only Serbs and Montenegrins. Unrest about the command contributed to new desertion.⁴⁸⁰ A considerable problem for morale was that many reservists that were called up did not know what objective they were fighting for. If Greater Serbia was mentioned as an objective, there appeared to be scant enthusiasm to risk their lives for it.⁴⁸¹ If the preservation of Yugoslavia was mentioned as an objective, it would not sound credible in view of the widespread criticism expressed by Serbian nationalists about Yugoslavia.⁴⁸² However, some of the deserters, who considered that the volunteers were better off than the regular JNA, crossed over complete with arms to the paramilitary units, where, furthermore, objective and status were clearer than those of the JNA.⁴⁸³

It was repeatedly necessary to goad the troops into action by having their own troops fire on them from behind.⁴⁸⁴ A case in point regarding the morale problem is the account of General Slavko Lisica, commander of the Dalmatian front, who admitted ordering his artillery to fire on his own people for this reason. He recounted how he had once tried to deal with the situation more subtly. He tried to appeal to his men's sense of honour and shame by giving them a pep talk. He ordered everyone who did not wish to defend 'the glory of the Serbian nation' to put down their arms and to remove their uniform. When everyone did just that, Lisica demanded that the soldiers also remove their underpants. Everyone did that too, after which the soldiers marched away naked. Lisica hoped that the unit would change their minds, but the following day the men appeared to have found not only clothes, but also a gun, which they used to shell Lisica's headquarters.⁴⁸⁵ Officers in Slavonia complained that they had to sleep with their pistols in their hands out of fear of mutinous men.⁴⁸⁶

In another incident, at the Vukovar front, a commander asked a group of recruits who was prepared to fight and who wanted to return home. The group then divided up, but one recruit grabbed

⁴⁷⁵ David Binder, 'Ethnic Conflict in Yugoslavia Tearing Apart Its Army, Too', *The New York Times*, 01/10/91.

⁴⁷⁶ Kadijevec, *Viem*, p. 127.

⁴⁷⁷ Reuter, *Bürgerkrieg*, pp. 704 and 705; Mirjana Prosic-Dvorniv, 'Serbia. The Inside Story', Halpern & Kideckel (eds.), *Neighbors*, p. 330 n. 24. See also Ray Moseley, 'Army in tatters. Many Yugoslavs refuse to fight', *Chicago Tribune*, 30/09/91.

⁴⁷⁸ See e.g. the letter from Vuk Draskovic to Simovic in: Gajic Glisic, *Vojaska*, p. 78.

⁴⁷⁹ Gajic Glisic, *Vojaska*, pp. 72-74.

⁴⁸⁰ Gajic Glisic, *Vojaska*, p. 89; Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 142.

⁴⁸¹ Norman Cigar, 'The Serbo-Croatian War, 1991', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 70; David Binder, 'Ethnic Conflict in Yugoslavia Tearing Apart Its Army, Too', *The New York Times*, 01/10/91; Ofelija Backovic & Milos Vasic & Aleksandar Vasovic, 'Who Wants to be a Soldier? The call-up crisis – an analytical overview of media reports', Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 329. See also Gajic Glisic, *Vojaska*, p. 90.

⁴⁸² Ofelija Backovic/Milos Vasic/Aleksandar Vasovic, 'Who Wants to be a Soldier? The call-up crisis – an analytical overview of media reports', Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 330.

⁴⁸³ Gajic Glisic, *Vojaska*, pp. 61 and 95.

⁴⁸⁴ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 97.

⁴⁸⁵ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, pp. 97-98.

⁴⁸⁶ Ofelija Backovic & Milos Vasic & Aleksandar Vasovic, 'Who Wants to be a Soldier? The call-up crisis – an analytical overview of media reports', Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 334.

his gun and shot himself through the head.⁴⁸⁷ The number of victims of ‘friendly’ fire was very large, not only through deliberate shooting from behind, but more particularly through the extremely poor performance of their own air force.

As a consequence, many reservists also deserted. In the autumn of 1991 there were repeated demonstrations by reservists, with the authorities daring to take little action against them. Entire units deserted as soon as they reached the front.⁴⁸⁸ For instance, a group of one thousand soldiers from Kragujevac deserted the front with impunity to return home, approximately one thousand reservists from Kraljevo refused to return to the front after leave, and seven hundred reservists from Velika Plana surrendered their uniforms and arms.⁴⁸⁹ Others failed to appear. The army had to resort to raids on companies to round up conscripts. More than one hundred thousand young Serbian people left for abroad to avoid service at the front.⁴⁹⁰ For reasons of political opportunism, and so as not to overload the courts, only a very small number of deserters were prosecuted.⁴⁹¹ To reduce the growing reluctance to the war in Serbia the JNA introduced a rotation system in which no one had to serve more than 45 consecutive days at the front. This, of course, only exacerbated the manpower problem and led to inefficiency.

A consequence of the manpower problem was that the JNA had to resort to dividing the full-scale attack on Croatia, the *Bedem II* plan, into phases.⁴⁹² Knin-Krajina fell almost without problem into the JNA's hands. There had been almost no recruiting problems here. On the other hand, the shortage of soldiers for the attack through the Gradiska-Virovitica axis in West Slavonia was most acute, according to Kadijevec. The JNA managed to mobilize only one and a half of the planned five brigades. A large proportion of the men who reported dropped out later as they approached the front. However, it was fortunate for the JNA that it had armed the militias in West Slavonia well and prepared them for combat. Furthermore, the tactical coordination of the militias with the JNA proceeded with few problems there. This allowed West Slavonia to be occupied.⁴⁹³ Only the equivalent of one of the intended four brigades turned up for the operations in Banija, Kordun and Lika, so that the operation had to be scaled down.

The strongest wave of JNA attack had indeed managed to liberate East Slavonia, but not to push through to Zagreb and Varadin, mainly owing to a lack of motorized infantry to accompany the tanks. The offensive was also held up by the engagements around Vukovar, where the Croatian armed forces put up heavy resistance.

In Mostar, which was to have been the start of an offensive on Split, only one third of the necessary number of soldiers showed up, and accordingly the operational objectives had to be adjusted drastically. This group was left only with the task of occupying the Mostar airfield and attempting to set up a base in East Hercegovina for a possible later strike towards Split.

It was possible to recruit enough men in East Hercegovina and Montenegro for the land blockade against Dubrovnik. The navy succeeded in the meantime in effecting a sea blockade against Croatia. The JNA and paramilitary units had already carried out limited attacks on the ancient Croatian port of Dubrovnik in June and August 1991. On 1 October the JNA started a siege by land and sea around the largely defenceless city. The shelling that started on that day was to last until December.

⁴⁸⁷ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 98; Ulrike Rudberg, ‘Vredesbeweging Belgrado zoekt een alternatief voor de oorlog’ (‘Belgrade peace movement seeks alternative to war’), *de Volkskrant*, 30/11/91.

⁴⁸⁸ Kadijevec, *Viem*, p. 147. See also Norman Cigar, ‘The Serbo-Croatian War, 1991’, Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, pp. 67, 70 and 72.

⁴⁸⁹ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 98; ‘Duitsland legt als eerste verkeer met Joegoslavië stil’ (‘Germany first to break ties with Yugoslavia’), *de Volkskrant*, 10/12/91.

⁴⁹⁰ Ofelija Backovic & Milos Vasic & Aleksandar Vasovic, ‘Who Wants to be a Soldier? The call-up crisis – an analytical overview of media reports’, Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, pp. 331, 340 and 342-343.

⁴⁹¹ Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 141; Gajic Glisic, *Vojska*, p. 16; Ofelija Backovic & Milos Vasic & Aleksandar Vasovic, ‘Who Wants to be a Soldier? The call-up crisis – an analytical overview of media reports’, Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 330.

⁴⁹² Kadijevec, *Viem*, p. 148.

⁴⁹³ Kadijevec, *Viem*, p. 149.

During the worst bombardment there were six hundred shell bursts a day. The primary objective appeared to be to hit historical buildings in the old city. In 1991 and 1992, 563 of the 824 buildings in the old city were hit,⁴⁹⁴ but in many cases the material damage was limited. More than eighty Dubrovnik citizens died as a result of the JNA action between September 1991 and December 1992, 43 of them between 1 October and 6 December 1991. Thirteen citizens died on 6 December 1991 alone as a consequence of that day's extremely heavy shelling.⁴⁹⁵

The reasons for attacking Dubrovnik can only be guessed at. According to some, Serbia could make a historical claim on the city, while according to others the Serbian command begrudged Croatia the income from tourism.⁴⁹⁶ The military explanation was that Serbia wanted co-determination over a city so close to the Bay of Kotor, which was traditionally a large naval base.⁴⁹⁷ Finally there was a suggestion that Milosevic, who was often on the lookout for accomplices, felt that Montenegrins, through their efforts at Dubrovnik, 'would also have to be sprinkled with blood'.⁴⁹⁸

All things considered, the JNA had accomplished everything from the limited plan for the protection of the Serbian areas, except for the occupation of part of West Slavonia. The more extensive plan to operate throughout Croatia was wrecked, mainly owing to a serious lack of manpower. In the execution of the more limited plan, the federal army was also forced to relinquish theoretically more favourable positions in the rest of Croatia, such as its garrisons and military depots, which were surrounded by the Croatian National Guard.

3. The JNA in relation to the Serbian military and security organizations

'The conflagration didn't break out through spontaneous combustion. Pyromaniacs were required.'⁴⁹⁹

The war in Croatia was only partly a JNA conflict. The fact is that the Serbs' fight against the Croats was not only a criminal war. It was also a war of criminals.⁵⁰⁰ There were two main reasons why they were given a chance. The first was the Serbs' need to camouflage the federal army as a military force that sought only to preserve Yugoslavian unity as much as possible. The JNA should present itself, when possible, as a neutral buffer that was attempting to restrain the ethnic factions from fighting with each other. Therefore the military dirty work had to be carried out as far as possible by the local militias and volunteer corps from Serbia. Only if these units were unable to hold their own was the JNA to intervene. The second reason that the JNA was to leave the field clear for paramilitary factions was the shortage of its own manpower.

This shortage prompted the JNA General Staff in July 1991 to order that volunteers were to be admitted into the army as fully-fledged members. While, on the one hand, military service was widely evaded, the JNA now had an influx of extreme nationalists, criminals and paramilitaries who had worked or still worked for the secret services. This decision meant the entry into the war of those with a bent for dangerous living or who, after a week of hard work, wanted to enjoy themselves at the weekend at the front: the 'weekend cetniks' or 'weekend snipers'.⁵⁰¹ It was people of this sort who were later to make the weekends in Sarajevo the most dangerous days of the week.⁵⁰² During the war in Bosnia there was even said to be a paramilitary unit operating in the north around Brcko that went by

⁴⁹⁴ ICTY, charge against Pavle Strugar, Miodrag Jokic, Milan Zec and Vladimir Kovacevic, 22/02/01.

⁴⁹⁵ United Nations, S/1994/674, Appendix, par. 287-294 and 298-301.

⁴⁹⁶ Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 362.

⁴⁹⁷ Mamula, *Slucuj*, p. 232.

⁴⁹⁸ Mamula, *Slucuj*, p. 233. See also *ibid.*, p. 294.

⁴⁹⁹ Zimmerman, *Origins*, pp. 204 and 210.

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. Bell, *Way*, p. 57; E.A. Hammel, 'Lessons from the Yugoslav Labyrinth', Halpern & Kideckel (eds.), *Neighbors*, p. 34.

⁵⁰¹ See e.g. Voet, *Hotel*, p. 36; Westerman, *Brug*, pp. 180 and 184.

⁵⁰² Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 110.

the name *Vikendasi*: the weekenders. On the other hand, weekend snipers were also to be found on the Croatian side.⁵⁰³ Moreover, on 3 October the JNA command was ordered by Milosevic to grant entire paramilitary units the status of members of the regular armed forces.⁵⁰⁴ Otherwise, the action of paramilitaries at the front did not in all respects represent a solution to the problem of manning the regular units. Their activities had a demoralizing effect on the regular army. Officers were frequently told by their men that they were not prepared to fight, let alone to die, for the misdeeds of the paramilitaries.⁵⁰⁵

While the JNA formed its own units from paramilitaries, the Ministry of the Interior had already been training its own paramilitaries for some time. In August 1990, which was when Milosevic made the transition from preservation of Yugoslavia to Greater Serbia, the Serbian parliament had already passed a law allowing paramilitary units to be placed under the authority either of the territorial defence or of the JNA.⁵⁰⁶ On 16 March 1991 Milosevic made his infamous television broadcast, in which he said that Yugoslavia was at its end, and announced that one day earlier he had ordered the formation of 'new groups that were able to protect the interests of Serbia and the Serbian people outside Serbia'.⁵⁰⁷

In this connection, Milosevic appealed to a group of men who, together with his propaganda chief, Dusan Mitevic, formed the circle of his intimate confidants. Their names were: Radmilo Bogdanovic, Mihalj Kertes, Radovan Stojcic and Jovica Stanisic.⁵⁰⁸ They had helped Milosevic establish his authority and widen his power after his victory over his mentor Stambolic.⁵⁰⁹ This group formed what was known as the military faction ('vojna linija') within the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministarstvo Unutrasnjih Poslova (MUP), which included the Serbian state security service, the Sluzba Drzavne Bezbednosti (SDB).



Bogdanovic had been the Serbian Minister of the Interior since 1987, and Milosevic ordered him to organize the antibureaucratic revolution and the truth meetings.⁵¹⁰ Shortly after the 19 August 1990 referendum on autonomy for the Serbs of Krajina, Milosevic decided to send arms and ammunition to the Serbian rebels in Krajina.⁵¹¹ Bogdanovic then created a special cell within his

⁵⁰³ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Kanonnen al in Zagreb te horen' ('Cannon already heard in Zagreb'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/10/91.

⁵⁰⁴ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 199.

⁵⁰⁵ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 97; Norman Cigar, 'The Serbo-Croatian War, 1991', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 74.

⁵⁰⁶ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 201.

⁵⁰⁷ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 199-200; Tomanic, *Crkva*, p. 37.

⁵⁰⁸ Doder/Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 142; Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 165; Thomas, *Serbia*, p. 93.

⁵⁰⁹ For more information on the persons named below and the role they played, see e.g. Jonathan S. Landay, 'Belgrade Regime Tied to Alleged War Crimes', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 26/11/93; George Rodrigue, 'To Divide and Conquer', *The Dallas Morning News*, 03/07/94; Michael Dobbs, 'Crash of Yugoslavia's Money Man', *The Washington Post*, 29/11/00; Williams & Cigar, 'War Crimes', IV.B.3.b, V.A.2 and V.A.4; United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, II.D.2 and II.D.6(a)(ii); Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 165; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 199-207.

⁵¹⁰ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 57.

⁵¹¹ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 98.

Ministry of the Interior for arming the Serbian rebels, who were to come under the leadership of a clique from Vojvodina.

Its direct command was entrusted to Mihalj Kertes, who had served in the Germany and Russia sections of the SDB. He himself was an ethnic Hungarian, but at the same time a fierce Serbian nationalist. In 1988 he led the antibureaucratic demonstration in Novi Sad that was attended by 150,000 people, which was to bring an end to the autonomy of Vojvodina. In the spring of 1989, Kertes and Stanistic, help by other Serbian nationalist Milosevic supporters within the state security service, won the struggle against the old communists who still clung to the federal ideal.

The supervision of the cell led by Kertes was put in the hands of Jovica Stanistic.⁵¹² Stanistic was born in 1950 in Backa Palanka into a Montenegrin family. Immediately after completing his studies in 1974 he started work at the SDB. After working for some time in the counterintelligence service, he became the right hand man of the Serbian SDB head. At the time Stanistic was one of the people charged with organizing the six-hundredth anniversary celebrations of the Battle of Kosovo (the "Field of Blackbirds"). He is said to have greatly indebted Milosevic there by foiling an attempt on his life.⁵¹³ On 16 March 1991, Milosevic appointed Stanistic head of the SDB.

Radovan Stojicic, who was from Sremska Kamenica in Vojvodina, started his career as a uniformed policeman in the Belgrade police, but climbed to become head of the special units within the MUP. His nickname was Badza, which means: Bluto, after the violent character in the Popeye cartoon. Stojicic 'won his spurs' in 1989 with the tough action of his units in Kosovo, for example, by devising a plan to drive the Albanian mineworkers out of the Stari Trg mine in Kosovo, where they had locked themselves in as a protest against Milosevic's politics. In 1990 he helped organize the Serbian uprising in Croatia. As commander of the territorial defence of Slavonia, Baranja and the West Srem, he had units comprising selected troops of the JNA, reservists and volunteers at his disposal. When in the spring of 1991 Serbian prison doors were opened for criminals who were prepared to serve at the front, Stojicic was an important consumer of this new potential. He provided them with weapons and arranged for military training.

On 16 March 1991, the day Milosevic appointed Stanistic as head of the SDB, he appointed Stojicic as Deputy Minister of the Interior and ordered both of them to secretly create a paramilitary unit able to realize the Greater-Serbian plans and at the same time to break residual opposition to them in the JNA. Stojicic and Stanistic involved Franko ('Frenki') Simatovic in their activities.⁵¹⁴ Simatovic was a Croatian, also from Vojvodina. He was Stanistic's deputy and at the same time commanded the police special and antiterrorist units.⁵¹⁵

As a concession to the March 1991 student demonstrations, Milosevic had to dismiss Bogdanovic as Minister of the Interior, but Bogdanovic continued behind the scenes to lead the group that organized and controlled the paramilitary units. This sphinx sometimes managed to be covered by official functions as chairman of the Council of Serbs outside Serbia.

License to kill: the paramilitary units of Arkan, Seselj and the Beli Orlovi

'Profiteers have come back from every war, and this war is no exception, with large quantities of bounty, usually in the form of money, gold or arms. It is no secret that people from this war returned

⁵¹² Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 98.

⁵¹³ Translated article by Dobrila Nenadic, 'Last Second-in-Command', *Reporter*, Banja Luka, 24/05/00.

⁵¹⁴ There is also information on Stanistic's links with Simatovic and leaders of paramilitary units in interview B. Spasic, 16/09/01.

⁵¹⁵ Daniel Sunter, 'Serbia: War crimes arrests spark Serbian mutiny', IWPR's Tribunal Update no. 243, Part I, 05-10/11/01, pp. 5-6. Simatovic is sometimes also known as Stamatovic.

with more sophisticated bounty: fridges, televisions or video recorders. Lesser plunderers robbed larders and made off with pots of jam.⁵¹⁶

The action of paramilitary units was to become one of the decisive features of the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia. The Bassiouni committee that reported to the United Nations on the human rights violations in this area announced in 1994 that it had established the existence of 83 such groups: 56 Serbian groups, 13 Croatian and 14 with a Bosnian Muslim background.⁵¹⁷ The great majority of these groups operated within a limited region. A feature of the start of the conflict was that on the Serbian side there were a couple of larger groups that were deployed in several locations, such as Arkan's volunteers, Seselj's Cetniks and the Beli Orlovi.

Arkan had links with Yugoslavia's secret services long before 1990. In the early seventies, during and shortly after the Croatian Spring, the military counterintelligence service Kontraobavestajna Sluzba (KOS) was confronted with increasing political agitation against the Tito regime, which the service thought stemmed from Croatian and Serbian nationalists in other countries. In an attempt to combat this, the KOS had nationalist emigrants in other countries murdered by Yugoslavian underworld figures. The service provided them with false documents and safe houses. The State security service, the SDB, also hired criminals for matters it was unwilling to be associated with itself, such as murder and kidnapping.⁵¹⁸ This is how in 1972 or 1973 Arkan was engaged by the Yugoslavian Federal Secretariat for Domestic Affairs (SSUP), mainly to liquidate Yugoslavs in Western Europe who were not well-disposed to the regime in Belgrade.⁵¹⁹ According to police records, 'Arkan', whose real name was Zeljko Raznjatovic, was born in 1952 in Brezice, Slovenia, as a son of a retired Yugoslavian air-force Colonel. He was always in trouble, and he ran away from home at the age of fourteen, to be detained one year later in a hostel for juvenile delinquents. After his release he went abroad, where he continued along the wrong path together with his partner-in-crime Carlo Fabiani, who became known later as Giovanni di Stefano, the British businessman-lawyer whose Yugoslavian passport bore Milosevic's residence as address.⁵²⁰

In that period Arkan accepted the offer of the SSUP to carry out liquidations in exchange for a degree of impunity. In the years that followed he alternated committing attacks ordered by the secret powers in Belgrade with crimes such as bank robbery, theft and extortion in Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy.⁵²¹ In the course of time Arkan turned into one of the most wanted criminals on the Interpol list. He was sentenced in various Western European countries, including the Netherlands, where he nonetheless managed to escape from the Amsterdam Bijlmer prison.⁵²² Arkan returned to Yugoslavia in the early 1980s. There too he occupied himself with criminal practices, but usually avoided prosecution by using his relations with the SSUP. His star rose rapidly in the Belgrade underworld. At the same time he was head of the Red Star Belgrade football team fan club, and he quickly gained a senior position in the club management.

Under Milosevic the practice of hiring criminals for political purposes reached unprecedented levels through the organization of paramilitary units by the *vojna linija*. Milosevic was fully aware that he had to leave as little evidence as possible of his own involvement in the work of the paramilitary units. He habitually kept no record of discussions, and guests were liable to be searched for bugging

⁵¹⁶ Mira Markovic, Milosevic's wife *Night*, p. 141 (12/11/93).

⁵¹⁷ United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, I.C.

⁵¹⁸ Spasic, *Lasica*, p. 60.

⁵¹⁹ United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, II.D.6.(b)(i); Chuck Sudetic, 'A Shady Militia Chief Arouses Serbs', *The New York Times*, 20/12/92; Zoran Kusovac, 'Crime and culpability in Milosevic's Serbia', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01/02/00; Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 101.

⁵²⁰ Williams & Cigar, *War Crimes*, n. 213.

⁵²¹ Also the MID report, MID 438-0042, box 251. 'The conflict between Milosevic and Seselj', January 1994 mentions that Arkan was 'a trained intelligence officer'.

⁵²² Mark van Driel, "'Kon of wilde hij me niet doden?'" ('"Couldn't he kill me or didn't he want to?"), *de Volkskrant*, 20/12/00; Westerman, *Brug*, p. 163; Voet, *Hotel*, pp. 167-169; [Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 210-211.

devices⁵²³ and his circle of confidants was extremely small. Nevertheless, since then various people who were involved have indicated that Milosevic was very well-informed of the activities of the paramilitary units and the assistance given to them, both from the Serbian Ministry of the Interior and by the JNA.⁵²⁴ According to Dobrila Gajic Glisic, the secretary of the Serbian Minister of Defence, General Tomislav Simovic, her boss spoke to Milosevic almost every day on a special telephone line, and Milosevic concerned himself in detail with the paramilitary activities in Croatia.⁵²⁵ When a Croatian diplomat once asked Milosevic in 1993 about Arkan, the Serbian president is said to have answered: 'I also need someone to do jobs of a certain kind for me.'⁵²⁶

The fact was that under Milosevic, Arkan continued to cooperate with the authorities. Bogdanovic originally used Arkan to reshape the hard core of the Red Star supporters crowd into a movement for Milosevic. Until that time the notorious north side of the Red Star supporters did adhere to the Greater-Serbian idea, but not to Milosevic. Arkan did his job well. He made sure that the nationalist opposition leaders, Vuk Draskovic and Vojislav Seselj, and their supporters, would no longer dare to show themselves at Red Star, and he disciplined the hooligans.⁵²⁷ The activities of Arkan and the supporters then started to extend beyond the stadium. For instance, in June 1990 Arkan offered his hooligans to Bogdanovic to disrupt an anti-Milosevic demonstration. The offer was gratefully accepted.⁵²⁸

Tudjman won the elections in Croatia in May 1990, and in the summer of that year Serbs in Knin started a 'popular uprising', in which they set up roadblocks. However, to the disappointment of their secret sympathizers in Belgrade, by no means all the Serbs in Croatia supported the uprising. They responded by sending Arkan to agitate them with references to the Croats' Ustashe past. Arkan also distributed World War II vintage machine guns among the Serbs. On 11 October 1990 Arkan set up the Serbian Volunteer Guard the Srpska Dobrovoljacka Garda (SDG) for his activities in Croatia, the core of which consisted of the Red Star Belgrade hooligans and Belgrade underworld figures. These Arkan volunteers considered themselves to be totally loyal to Milosevic and his party.

However, the Croatian secret service, the Ured za Nacionalnu Sigurnost (UNS), disrupted the activities of Arkan and his Guard by luring Arkan and three companions into a trap at Dvor na Uni on 29 November 1990. On their apprehension they were found to be in possession of explosives, automatic rifles and pistols. Arkan was sentenced on 14 June 1991 to twenty months imprisonment less the period spent in pre-trial detention. Arkan and his three associates were released pending appeal, whereupon they set off for Belgrade. It appears that one million German marks had been paid from Belgrade for their release.⁵²⁹

Immediately after his return to Belgrade, Arkan dedicated himself to expanding the Serbian Volunteer Guard, who were than also known as the Tigers, because a tiger was the Arkanovci's traditional mascot. Arkan's Guard received its weapons, uniforms, communication equipment, maps

⁵²³ 'His Master's Voice: the adventures of Hrvoje Sarinic in the land of the Serb aggressor', *Bosnia Report*, new series no. 8, January-March 1999.

⁵²⁴ Jonathan S. Landay, 'Belgrade Regime Tied to Alleged War Crimes', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 26/11/93; George Rodrigue, 'To divide and conquer. Serbian leader saved self by ruining nation', *The Dallas Morning News*, 03/07/94; 'Sarajevo could become "the Beirut of Europe", Karadzic warns', *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 27/11/95, 10:40; Jonathan McGeary, 'Face to face with evil', *Time Magazine*, 13/05/96; Julian Borger, 'Milosevic Case Hardens' and 'Inside Story: The President's Secret Henchmen', *The Guardian* (London), 03/02/97; Philip Smucker, 'International criminals find a home in Serbia', *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 16/02/97; Dusan Stojanovic, 'International News', AP Worldstream, 01/11/00; Williams & Cigar, 'War Crimes', I.5.c, IV.A, V.A.2, nVI.A.2. 21 and n. 173; Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 410; Doder/Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 101.

⁵²⁵ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 102.

⁵²⁶ Hrvoje Sarinic, quoted in 'His Master's Voice: the adventures of Hrvoje Sarinic in the land of the Serb aggressor', *Bosnia Report*, new series no. 8, January-March 1999; Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 135.

⁵²⁷ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 212; Thomas, *Serbia*, p. 94; Ivan Colovic, 'Football, Hooligans and War', Popov (ed.), pp. 385-388.

⁵²⁸ United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, II.D.6.(b)(i).

⁵²⁹ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 419 n. 39.

and training from Serbian official bodies.⁵³⁰ The training took place in Bubanj Potok camp, just outside Belgrade, and in Erdut and Tenja, near Osijek and Vukovar, in East Slavonia. From the summer of 1991, Arkan's troops were deployed on completion of their training in Croatia, and later also in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Arkan's fighters, who were estimated to be five hundred to one thousand in strength, were by far the best armed of all the paramilitary groups. They even had tanks, mortars and various types of automatic rifles at their disposal.⁵³¹ Their small number did not stand in the way of great notoriety. The news that Arkan and his Tigers were on the way was enough to make entire villages take flight. The Arkan Tigers headquarters were in Vasa Pelagic street in Belgrade, not far from Milosevic's house in the Dedinje residential neighbourhood.

As a consequence of his detention in Croatia, when Arkan started to expand his Milosevic loyal guard he had to catch up with a number of other militias, which had some degree of affiliation with opposition political parties. One of the militias was aligned with the extreme nationalist politician Seselj. Vojislav Seselj was born in 1950 in East Herzegovina/Sarajevo.⁵³² At 26 he became Yugoslavia's youngest PhD after submitting a thesis on Marxist justifications for war. Following a year teaching in Michigan, he went on to teach political science at the University of Sarajevo. In 1984 he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for anticommunist activities: the police had found at his home an unpublished article he had written, which argued for a Greater Serbia.⁵³³ Amnesty International acted on his behalf at the time.

When he was released after 21 months, he had transformed from a rebel against communism into a monarchist nationalist.⁵³⁴ At the same time he was said to have suffered serious psychological damage as a result of the torture that he underwent in prison. This trauma could explain his later violent behaviour.⁵³⁵ Others ascribe his vengeful behaviour to his anger at not having been given any important institutional position in Belgrade, where he settled after his release.⁵³⁶ He joined the leading Serbian nationalists there and started to publish nationalist documents.

He was the fiercest supporter of a Greater Serbia, which he believed should stretch 'from Zagreb to Thessaloniki'.⁵³⁷ That Seselj, who was once supported by Amnesty International, had little interest in human rights himself, became apparent when this man, who since 1990 constantly carried an automatic pistol in his bag, advocated almost three weeks before the Croatian declaration of independence, gouging Croats' eyes out with a rusty spoon so that they would die of blood poisoning. He apparently changed his mind later and thought that Serbs should not cut their opponents' throats, but rather hang them, because it was more hygienic.⁵³⁸ Another pronouncement from his rabid repertoire was that Zagreb should be attacked with napalm.

In March 1990 Seselj, together with Vuk Draskovic and Mirko Jovic, set up the Serbian Renewal Movement, the Srpski Pokret Obnove (SPO). After only a few weeks the three started to have disagreements and Seselj left the movement. After a number of other brief political adventures he created the Serbian Cetnik Movement, Srpski Cetniki Pokret (SCP), with which he claimed the Cetnik tradition for himself and his followers. He felt this to be his right after the notorious World War II

⁵³⁰ Blaine Harden, 'Serbia's Treacherous Gang of Three', *The Washington Post*, 07/02/93; Williams & Cigar, *War Crimes*, V.A.4; United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, II.D.2; Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 102.

⁵³¹ United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, II.D.1 and 2, D.6.(b)(iv).

⁵³² For information on Seselj see e.g. Hans Steketee, 'Trouw aan de doodshoofd-vlag' ('Allegiance to the skull and crossbones') and "Mijn soldaten zijn vechters" ("My soldiers are fighters"), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/07/91.

⁵³³ See also Magas, *Destruction*, pp. 89-93.

⁵³⁴ This is according to the sociologist Slobodan Inic from Belgrade in: Laura Silber, 'Serbia's Ultranationalist Leader Emerges as Formidable Political Force', 03/08/93.

⁵³⁵ Peter Michielsen, 'Seselj: kampioen van de haat' ('Seselj: champion of hatred'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/10/97.

⁵³⁶ Svetlana Slapsak, 'Serbische Alternativen', Bremer (Hg.), (Sch)erben, p. 174.

⁵³⁷ Gerbert van Genderen Stort, 'Gerecht zonder aangeklaagden' ('Trial without defendants'), *HP/De Tijd*, 04/06/93, p. 28. See also Yoeri Albrecht, 'De oorlog van Joegoslavië is er een van oude mannen' ('The war in Yugoslavia is one of old men'), *Vrij Nederland*, 07/08/93, p. 23; Cohen, *War*, p. 128.

⁵³⁸ Markovic, *Night*, p. 122.

Cetnik warlord, pope or (Christian-Orthodox) priest Momcilo Djujic, who had collaborated on a large scale with the Italians and Germans and was almost universally considered to be a war criminal, had bestowed on him the Cetnik title *vojvoda* (duke), which was the highest military rank in the Serbian army during World War I and under the Cetniks during World War II, on 28 June (St Vitus day) 1989. With this rank he received the instruction 'to cleanse the holy Serbian land' of the last remaining Jew, Albanian, Croat and any other 'foreign elements'.⁵³⁹ Seselj's Cetniks made a start on executing this task in 1989 in Vojvodina, where they terrorized non-Serbs in an attempt to make them leave the province.⁵⁴⁰

Seselj and his Cetnik movement came fourth in the 1990 presidential elections. After the elections he was imprisoned for two months in Belgrade, because he had smuggled weapons on his own account to Serbs in Knin. On his release, at the end of February 1991, he set up the Serbian Radical Party (SRS). He entered the Serbian parliament in the spring of 1991 after a mid-term election.

This is when Milosevic discovered him as the ideal opposition politician, a man who was far more radical in his pronouncements than himself and did not shrink from getting his hands dirty, especially through his organization's paramilitary arm, the Serbian Cetnik Movement. This was led by Branislav Vacic, a former boxer, who, like Seselj, had briefly been a member of the SPO, but was expelled because of 'extremism' and 'criminality'.⁵⁴¹ According to Seselj himself, the collaboration of his paramilitary troops with the secret services started on 1 April 1991, shortly before the massacre at the village of Borovo Selo, where his troops had been sent to 'protect' local Serbs.⁵⁴² The arrival of Seselj's paramilitaries in Borovo Selo was applauded in the Belgrade media as a rescue of endangered Serbs.⁵⁴³ In truth, Seselj, like Arkan, contributed to a reluctance on the part of moderate elements to speak out, or as he himself put it: 'Twenty or thirty Cetniks in every village is enough to hearten the local population.'⁵⁴⁴ Seselj claimed that his Cetniks were responsible for the death of the twelve Croatian policemen in Borovo Selo in early May 1991. When asked about the legality of the his people's action he answered: 'What we do is not illegal; the fact is that we do not recognize the law.'⁵⁴⁵

In the meantime, the royalist Serbian Renewal Movement, the Srpski Pokret Obnove (SPO), which Seselj had once been a member of and which was now led by Draskovic, founded its own paramilitary organization in June 1990: the White Eagles (Beli Orlovi). Its commander was Dragoslav Bokan. Bokan considered that the collaboration of his unit with the SDB, like Seselj with his Cetniks, started in the early days of April 1991. The Eagles were then supposed to be subordinate to the Territorial Defence in East Slavonia, which was a creature of the Serbian security forces.⁵⁴⁶

When the Beli Orlovi gained more independence, Draskovic set up a new paramilitary unit, the Srpska Garda, in the summer of 1991. Its creation was announced on 24 July 1991 at a press conference given by the vice-chairman van the SPO, Zoran Kojic, and the guard commander, Djordje Bozovic ('Giska'), who took the opportunity to announce that forty thousand Serbs had already reported for duty, and that activists of the SPO and 'fatherland-loving Serbs' had already contributed 15,500 bullets, 265 kilos of explosives, pistols and other military equipment to Croatia in the last few days.⁵⁴⁷ Outsiders estimated the size of the Guard in 1991 at approximately seven thousand men.⁵⁴⁸

⁵³⁹ Cohen, *War*, pp. 45-47 and 128-129.

⁵⁴⁰ Williams & Cigar, *War Crimes*, V.1.

⁵⁴¹ Thomas, *Serbia*, p. 97.

⁵⁴² Williams & Cigar, *War Crimes*, IV.B.3.b; United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, II.D.1.

⁵⁴³ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 137.

⁵⁴⁴ Cited in Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 208.

⁵⁴⁵ Hans Steketee, "Mijn soldaten zijn vechters", *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/07/91.

⁵⁴⁶ Williams & Cigar, *War Crimes*, IV.B.3.b. For information on Bokan see also Juan O. Tamayo, 'Leader of feared Serbian band likes label of war criminal', *The Dallas Morning News*, 04/10/92; 'Milosevic Has Created Monsters He Cannot Stop', All Things Considered, *National Public Radio*, 19/05/93.

⁵⁴⁷ Theo Engelen, 'Servië formeert leger voor strijd tegen Kroaten' ('Serbia forms army for fight against Croats'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/07/91.

Bozovic had a string of convictions to his name, especially in Italy. Like Arkan, he was reputed to have committed attacks in Western Europe on dissidents, but in the course of time he would become anti-Communist and attracted to the Cetnik tradition.⁵⁴⁹ Because of Draskovic's opposition role, especially at the time of the March 1991 demonstrations, the Serbian Guard was repeatedly obstructed by the authorities.⁵⁵⁰ At the front in Croatia there was full-blown combat between the JNA and members of the Serbian Guard.⁵⁵¹ Bozovic was to die on 14 September 1991 at Gospic in Lika. Under his successor Branko Lainovic, the Guard became estranged from Draskovic, when he embarked on a course towards peace. This growing distance made the Guard acceptable to the authorities. They were to play an active role in the early months of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵⁵²

Finally, it is necessary to mention Captain Dragan, a Serb from Belgrade, who emigrated to Australia but returned to Yugoslavia a few years before the outbreak of war. He was spotted by western journalists in Krajina soon after the start of the war in Croatia.⁵⁵³ He did not avoid journalists and his favourite pose for photographers was holding a black club to a Croatian skull. His men walked around in the same type of camouflage suits used by the special troops of the federal army, had brand new *sniper guns* and used JNA topographic maps. Dragan himself told journalists that it was perfectly normal for him to receive help from federal army commanders.⁵⁵⁴

He was unclear about his background, which contributed to his mysterious hero status among Serbs. Some said that Dragan, in his mid-thirties, had been a member of the French Foreign Legion or the Australian SAS or that he had worked for the CIA or the IRA. Others said that his real name was Daniel Pavic and that he maintained links with the Israeli secret service, the Mossad. In reality he was Dragan Vasiljkovic alias Daniel Sned(d)en, who was known to the police in Australia for trading in drugs and running prostitution. There was a suspicion that he had been part of a private Serbian army in Victoria that returned to Yugoslavia at the end of the 1980s with several hundred men.⁵⁵⁵

Captain Dragan was nicknamed the 'Rambo of Knin' and his fighters were called the Knindjas, after the popular cartoon series 'Ninja Turtles'. He himself called his militia the regular army of the Serbian autonomous region Krajina.⁵⁵⁶ At the outset of the war in Croatia, Captain Dragan set up fifteen military camps, where he is said to have had between one thousand and 1200 paramilitaries at his disposal.⁵⁵⁷ There were also women among them.⁵⁵⁸

According to his own account, his involvement in the region started in 1990, when 'a very good friend', who held a position in the region, requested him to train for irregular warfare. Tight discipline meant that he succeeded in setting up armed units, which he said had failed until then because of internal disputes between the Croatian Serbs. In addition to the area around Knin, the Draganovci caused particular havoc around Vukovar, where they executed dozens of Croats. Later they were active in such places as Brcko and around Zvornik.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁴⁸ Williams & Cigar, 'War Crimes', n. 13.

⁵⁴⁹ Thomas, *Serbia*, p. 100.

⁵⁵⁰ Thomas, *Serbia*, pp. 102-103; Judah, *Serbs*, p. 256.

⁵⁵¹ Gajic Glisic, *Vojaska*, p. 83.

⁵⁵² Thomas, *Serbia*, p. 104.

⁵⁵³ See e.g. Dusko Doder, 'Mysterious commander', *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 08/08/91; Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Legendarische Servische kapitein weer op oorlogspad' ('Legendary Serbian captain back on the warpath'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/11/91.

⁵⁵⁴ Mary Battiata, 'Serbian Guerrilla Camps Operate Inside Croatia', *The Washington Post*, 22/07/91.

⁵⁵⁵ Dragan Vasijevic. De zwervende zwijgende kapitein van de Kninja's' ('Dragan Vasijevic. The roaming silent captain of the Kninjas'), *Trouw*, 07/08/91; Geoffrey Lee Martin, 'Serb rebel has record in Australia', *The Daily Telegraph*, 13/08/91.

⁵⁵⁶ 'Other reports on Croatia', *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 11/07/91.

⁵⁵⁷ Williams & Cigar, 'War Crimes', n. 13; United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, III.C, Captain Dragan units.

⁵⁵⁸ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 187.

⁵⁵⁹ United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, III.C, Captain Dragan units.

All these special units played a central role in the conflict in Croatia and later in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which, however, had little to do with their reputedly modest military value.⁵⁶⁰ In Croatia they sometimes engaged with Croatian fighters. If they were in danger of coming off worse, the JNA would come to the rescue. Their primary task actually consisted of ethnic cleansing: actions against a defenceless population, which the irregular units could carry out only with the support of the JNA, who, for example, would close off one of the paramilitaries' operational areas from the outside world or would provide artillery support. Their hardly dangerous actions resulted in correspondingly few casualties among the paramilitaries. They 'cleansed' places of Croats or Muslims. Their reward was whatever they could plunder.⁵⁶¹ The Serbian authorities provided Arkan's troops with means of transport and permits to remove plundered goods from Croatia and later Bosnia and import them into Serbia, which earned them the epithet 'truck division' among the Serbian soldiers.⁵⁶² A symbiotic relationship developed between the JNA and the irregular units, in which the paramilitaries needed the regular army's artillery and logistics, and the JNA relied on the paramilitaries, who put the Croatian or Muslim population to flight with their ethnic cleansing and so made conquered territory safe. But Mladic had few words of praise for the paramilitaries:

'Most of them consisted of "great patriots" who never forgot to appear on television and "liberators" who "would fix everything". But their units and militias generally hung around jeweller's shops, banks and well-stocked self-service stores, and there is not a single hill that they defended or liberated. All they did was extensive plundering.'⁵⁶³

The above units were associated with the *vojna linija* of the Serbian Ministry of the Interior. In addition, the JNA had its own paramilitary units from early October 1991. It was inevitable that these two lines would come into contact before long. The person at the point of intersection of the lines was Captain Dragan and the person confronted with this was the Serbian Minister of Defence, General Tomislav Simovic.

This history also shows how unbelievably unclear the organizational relationships at various levels in the disintegrating Yugoslavia were. There were tensions between federal and republican bodies, between official and unofficial bodies, and between the Serbian Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior, all of them wanting a say in a future Serbian army. The Serbian Minister of Defence, Simovic, had no say in the JNA. In fact, the supreme command of the JNA resided with the federal state presidium. He did have a say in the Serbian territorial defence. From this position he worked with paramilitary groups that he hoped would eventually become the core of a future, purely Serbian, army, such as Arkan and his men.⁵⁶⁴ In the course of October and November, however, the JNA increasingly became a Serbian army, while the presidium barely continued to function. Against this background, Simovic ordered Captain Dragan to train the paramilitaries in Belgrade for what, according to Simovic, would become the pure Serbian army. This appeared to take place with the SDB's consent, who thought that Captain Dragan had put himself too much in the limelight through his contacts with foreign journalists. The SDB feared that this could mean that their financial and other support of Captain Dragan might be revealed at any moment.⁵⁶⁵

Furthermore, Captain Dragan had come into conflict with the Bosnian-Serb leaders Milan Babic and Milan Martić, who were protégés of the JNA.⁵⁶⁶ Dragan was to arrange the training of Red

⁵⁶⁰ See e.g. Norman Cigar, 'The Serbo-Croatian War, 1991', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, pp. 68-69.

⁵⁶¹ Williams & Cigar, 'War Crimes', III.C and IV.A.5.

⁵⁶² Pejic, 'Medien', p. 60.

⁵⁶³ Cited in Norma Cigar, 'Serb War Effort and Termination or the War', Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 212.

⁵⁶⁴ Gajic Glisic, *Vojaska*, pp. 16, 50-58 and 62.

⁵⁶⁵ Gajic Glisic, *Vojaska*, pp. 101-102.

⁵⁶⁶ Gajic Glisic, *Vojaska*, p. 109.

Berets and the Munja, in other words Lightning Flash troops, in Bubanj Potok. In his new position, Dragan came to support the view that the position of the irregular troops should be formalized.⁵⁶⁷ At the same time he had personal difficulty in being forced into the role of regular officer and in giving up his legendary existence.⁵⁶⁸ He apparently had the feeling that he was being sidelined, which would have been reinforced because hardly any recruits turned up for his training.⁵⁶⁹ Captain Dragan subsequently explained to journalists that Simovic had told him face-to-face that his objective was to set the JNA officers an example with the Dragan training programme. The JNA was later bent on revenge on Simovic and stated that the Serbian Minister of Defence had given Captain Dragan an improper order at the Bubanj Potok camp, because it did not fall under the authority of the Serbian territorial defence and neither, therefore, under Simovic.⁵⁷⁰

When in late December Simovic ordered Dragan's transfer, Dragan appealed to his commitments to the SDB and let it be known that any involvement on his part required the approval of that service. Of course, the existence of irregular units run by civil authorities was no secret for Simovic. In November 1991, in response to media questions on Milosevic's support of Arkan, he had somewhat cryptically remarked that:

‘As far as I know the said “Arkan” is active with the blessing of the Serbian government in the areas Slavonia, West Srijem and Baranja. It is also known that they are not the only volunteers there. I would not tend to draw a distinction between criminals and patriots, but sooner between those who do contribute to the interests of the nation and those who do not, and we know which category the criminals are in.’⁵⁷¹

What Simovic did find unacceptable was that special units of paramilitaries that he believed to be under his command were also controlled by Stojicic and Bogdanovic. The Minister of Defence was furious about this and demanded an immediate interview with Milosevic. What he got was not an interview, but the sack.⁵⁷² Simovic was told that the creation of a Serbian army was impossible as long as Milosevic preferred to uphold the pretence of a federal army.⁵⁷³ This member of government had also come up against a phenomenon that would be repeated often in the years to come: despite their incorporation into the JNA, the irregular troops repeatedly received direct ‘requests’ for specific actions from the Serbian government.⁵⁷⁴

The criminalization of a society

A destructive influence from the paramilitary leaders started to affect society, not only in Croatia and later Bosnia, but also in Serbia. The leaders of the irregular troops often were or became members of parliament. They were state television celebrities and a role model for some young people.⁵⁷⁵ The top people had interesting prospects. Seselj's party won 33 seats in the May 1992 federal elections, giving him the largest opposition party. However, Seselj did not exactly behave like an opposition politician.

⁵⁶⁷ Gajic Glisic, *Vojska*, p. 102.

⁵⁶⁸ Gajic Glisic, *Vojska*, pp. 103-104.

⁵⁶⁹ Gajic Glisic, *Vojska*, p. 106.

⁵⁷⁰ Gajic-Glisic, *Vojska*, p. 106.

⁵⁷¹ Gajic Glisic, *Vojska*, p. 86; Williams & Cigar, ‘War Crimes’, IV.A.

⁵⁷² James Gow, ‘Army of Yugoslavia or Serbian Army?’, *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01/08/92; Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, pp. 102-103.

⁵⁷³ Gajic-Glisic, *Vojska*, p. 107.

⁵⁷⁴ Williams & Cigar, ‘War Crimes’, IV.B.3.b.

⁵⁷⁵ See e.g. United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, II.D.6(a)(ii); Andrew Bilski, ‘Wild in the streets’, *Maclean's*, 14/12/92; Chuck Sudetic, ‘A Shady Military Chief Arouses Serbs’, *The New York Times*, 20/12/92.

He more than once threatened to shoot people who sought to overthrow Milosevic.⁵⁷⁶ With 73 seats, Seselj's party, the SRS, became Yugoslavia's second party after the December 1992 elections, and this time they formed a coalition with Milosevic's SPS party.

Arkan was elected the representative of Kosovo in December 1992. Shortly afterwards he formed his Party of Serbian Unity (Stranka Srpskog Jedinstva), which had the specific purpose of reining Seselj in after he started in that year to turn ever further against Milosevic, and submitted a motion of no-confidence against the Serbian government in September 1993. In that period there was a small breach in the pact of silence. Milosevic accused Seselj of crimes in Croatia and Bosnia with his paramilitaries, the existence of which Milosevic had always denied. And Seselj made known that Milosevic had been aware of these practices for years and that he not only tolerated them, but had also personally facilitated them.⁵⁷⁷ Because Arkan did not manage to mobilize the extreme right-wing element of the electorate in the same way as Seselj, Milosevic felt it necessary to retain Seselj as his favourite opposition leader, but Seselj was never again given the chance to shine.

And then there was Kertes, the head of the cell for arming the Serbian rebels. Under Milosevic, Kertes became first deputy Minister of the Interior of the federation, and head of the domestic security forces. He later became Minister for the Serbs in the Diaspora, under which title he was able to move freely through Croatia and Bosnia. As a member of the Serbian state presidium he advocated in 1990 the forced emigration of Albanians from Kosovo and the colonization of the area by Serbs.⁵⁷⁸ At the end of 1993 he was to be rewarded for his support to Milosevic with the lucrative post of Head of Customs, according to many the centre of smuggling in Serbia. At the time Kertes decided who did and who did not have to pay import duty and who was granted the monopoly of certain trade.⁵⁷⁹

In honour of his services to the Milosevic regime, Stojicic was appointed Head of Public Safety in January 1992, in other words: head of all uniformed police, and deputy Minister of the Interior. All this contributed to the idea that people could get away with crime in Serbia, and that it was even possible to become a hero in the process. Pursuant to a Ministry of the Interior bye-law, from the summer of 1991 paramilitaries were allowed to carry weapons openly in Belgrade. It was also nothing special to see them walking through the capital city or outside bars in camouflage suits with pistols and hand grenades. The condition was that the paramilitaries had to have the requisite arms permit.⁵⁸⁰ A lively arms trade developed in Belgrade. Explosives, ammunition and even rocket launchers were available on the black market, where the price of a hand grenade dropped from one hundred to five marks between early September and mid November 1991.⁵⁸¹

If the action of such groups was objectionable enough on moral grounds, so was it from a purely political point of view. The groups that the *vojna linija* had created or helped to create not infrequently set up their own deals, which ran right across and over the front lines. For instance, they sold weapons to Croats. Serbs were also murdered, either for their money and their property, or because they opposed the violence that had appeared to have become routine through the action of such groups, within Serbian society too. When Stojicic needed money for 'our lads' in Croatia and Bosnia, he approached Serbian businessmen, who were afraid to say no.

The methods of combat the irregulars used externally were also reflected internally. Once back in Belgrade after their 'excursions' in Croatia and later in Bosnia, the leaders of the paramilitary groups were unable to relinquish their lifestyle, which was based on large-scale robbery, plundering and extortion. A symbiotic relationship developed between the police and organized crime. The police in

⁵⁷⁶ United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, n. 196.

⁵⁷⁷ See e.g. Jonathan S. Landay, 'Belgrade Regime Tied to Alleged War Crimes', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 26/11/93; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 217-218.

⁵⁷⁸ Michael Montgomery, 'Serbian threat to expel Albanians after unrest', *The Daily Telegraph*, 12/03/91.

⁵⁷⁹ John Pomfret, 'Government Officials Linked to Criminalization of Yugoslav Society', *International Herald Tribune*, 22/11/96.

⁵⁸⁰ Reuter, 'Bürgerkrieg', p. 704.

⁵⁸¹ These prices were for type M-75 hand grenades, Reuter, 'Bürgerkrieg', p. 704.

Serbia was being thoroughly corrupted. Competing factions rose up within the 'law enforcers', who traded in drugs, arms, fuel, cigarettes and other contraband, and who extorted businessmen.⁵⁸² Such smuggling practices were particularly profitable after the imposition of the UN embargo of Serbia in May 1992. The combinations of police and criminals worked in turn together with politicians in bank fraud, for example, where not only the leaders of paramilitary groups but also prominent members of government and other politicians profited at the cost of small savers.⁵⁸³ Politicians who followed Milosevic faithfully were rewarded with lucrative jobs on the side in state bodies and nationalized companies. The principle that had been applied on a small scale before 1990, in which criminals who had rendered services for the secret services could enjoy a certain indemnity from prosecution for criminal activities, was now applied almost without restriction.⁵⁸⁴ Because laws no longer applied to anyone who was on Milosevic's side, except the law of the jungle. But even the names of opposition leaders were regularly linked with corruption and fraud.⁵⁸⁵

However, a number of members of the paramilitary network were to find out that a lawless life can be a short one. After a number of years, various key figures of Stojicic's network, himself included, were murdered. The perpetrators were seldom arrested, and it remained unclear whether the murders were the result of internal rivalry in the criminal circuit or eliminations for fear that the victims might open their mouths about Milosevic's complicity and his allegiance to their activities. The list of confidants who had perished was to become a long one.⁵⁸⁶

Radovan Stojicic was shot dead on the night of 10 to 11 April 1997 in the Mamma Mia restaurant in Belgrade, close to the headquarters of the MUP, by a masked man. A number of months earlier he had indicated that he was less eager about committing violence against demonstrators than Milosevic, and especially his wife Mirjana Markovic. In addition there were rumours that Stojicic had had contact with the International War Crimes Tribunal in the former Yugoslavia to testify against Milosevic.⁵⁸⁷

Arkan was murdered by four men at the start of 2000 while he sat in the lobby of the Intercontinental Hotel in Belgrade. Shortly before there had been rumours that he had turned away from Milosevic to the opposition and was in the process of doing a deal with the Yugoslavia Tribunal, which the Tribunal itself happens to deny.⁵⁸⁸ He had also just had a quarrel with Milosevic's son Marko about the fuel import monopoly.⁵⁸⁹

The uprising against Milosevic in October 2000 brought Captain Dragan and Kertes together again in a special way. After several years of paramilitary activities, Dragan settled in Belgrade, where he set up the Internet company NetCentar and created a foundation, the Captain Dragan Fund, to provide assistance to veterans and families of Serbs who had been killed. During the coup against Milosevic in October 2000, Dragan honoured a request from Zoran Djindic, who was later to become prime minister, to lead the occupation of the Studio B television station and the Belgrade customs office, where Kertes resided. Kertes, who was personally engaged in shredding documents at the time of the

⁵⁸² See e.g. Dan Fesperman, 'In Yugoslavia, crime has become the norm', *The Baltimore Sun*, 02/08/94.

⁵⁸³ Andrew Bilski, 'Wild in the streets', *Macleans*, 14/12/92; Dan Fesperman, 'In Yugoslavia, crime has become the norm', *The Baltimore Sun*, 02/08/94.

⁵⁸⁴ See e.g. Andrew Bilski, 'Wild in the streets', *Macleans*, 14/12/92.

⁵⁸⁵ See e.g. Dan Fesperman, 'In Yugoslavia, crime has become the norm', *The Baltimore Sun*, 02/08/94.

⁵⁸⁶ For a summary of a number of these murders, see 'Dangerous acquaintance: Petrovic is latest Milosevic associate to die', *Agence France Presse*, 26/04/00; Steve Crawshaw, 'Anarchy, assassinations, gangland rule – another day in Belgrade', *The Independent*, 30/04/00; 'Depuis 1991, une longue série d'attentats', *Agence France Presse*, 16/06/00. See also Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 220-221.

⁵⁸⁷ Edin Subasic, 'Dokaze protiv Milosevica Britanci su dobili od Badze!', *Ljiljan*, 04/06/97, p. 22; 'Drzava i mafija. Atentat na Radovana Stojica Badzu', *Vreme*, 19/04/97, pp. 6-13.

⁵⁸⁸ 'Tribunaal praat niet met Arkan' ('Tribunal not in talking to Arkan'), *Spits*, 15/07/99; Michel Maas, 'Diepe angst alleen al voor de naam Arkan' ('Arkan's name alone strikes terror'), *de Volkskrant*, 17/01/00; 'Aanklacht tegen Arkan blijft geheim' ('Charge against Arkan remains secret'), *Spits*, 18/01/00.

⁵⁸⁹ Peter Beaumont & Norma Jelacic, 'Did Milosevic's son kill Arkan?', *The Observer*, 23/01/00.

raid by Dragan's men, surrendered without resistance.⁵⁹⁰ Kertes was fired, and on 15 December 2000 he was arrested for misusing his position. A few days later he was released after appealing to his parliamentary immunity.

Paramilitary units were not a uniquely Serbian phenomenon during the conflicts in (former) Yugoslavia. There was no shortage of extremists on the Croatian side, though there were fewer of them.⁵⁹¹ This mainly involved the Croatian Defence Force, the *Hrvatske Odbrane Snage* (HOS), the paramilitary arm of the Croatian Rights Party, the *Hrvatska Stranka Prava* (HSP), led by the thirty year old former theology student Dobroslav Paraga.⁵⁹² The HSP was an extreme right-wing party that availed itself of the Ustashe symbols and demanded all Bosnia-Herzegovina as Croatian territory. Paraga was convicted in 1980, at the age of twenty, to four years imprisonment for his contacts with Ustashe supporters in other countries. He was convicted for a second time in 1987 for criticising the Yugoslavian regime's maltreatment of political prisoners. Paraga's HVO sent volunteers to places at the front where breakthroughs were likely. Paraga and his supporters tried to capitalize on this action for publicity. Because of pressure from the JNA, the regular army HVO tolerated the presence of the HOS paramilitaries at the front. Paraga's men made a name at Vukovar in particular. They collaborated closely there with the local Croatian army commander Mile Dedakovic, who, like Paraga, repeatedly accused Tudjman of doing nothing for the defence of the city.⁵⁹³ According to HOS commander Ante Dapic, approximately three thousand HOS men were active in and around Vukovar in October 1991.⁵⁹⁴

The HOS consistently criticized Tudjman's policy as too moderate. There was talk of an impending coup by Paraga and his compatriots on several occasions. Tudjman was the brunt of some considerable criticism from abroad because he would allow Paraga and his men to pursue neo-fascist activities. He was arrested in early November 1991 and detained for almost a month on suspicion of conspiring against the constitutional order of Croatia and its government. The action of the HSP and HOS was a thorn in the side of the West, which saw it as an obstacle to complete support for Croatia. Ultimately the HOS was integrated into the regular Croatian army. However, the HOS would continue to carry out independent actions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the justification that agreements with the authorities in Zagreb referred only to Croatian territory itself.

If Paraga was the Croatian counterpart of Seselj, then the Croatian opposite number of Arkan was: Branimir Glavas, a specialist in ethnic cleansing, who came from West-Herzegovina. He was the one who actually held sway in Osijek and surroundings and was later also formally appointed commander. Tudjman tried in vain to curb his influence. Among the Croats of East Slavonia, Glavas was well liked precisely because of his ruthless methods. Dirty jobs were otherwise carried out by the Black Legion, which officially formed the antiterrorist brigade of the Croatian police in Sisak and which also had foreign volunteers among its ranks.⁵⁹⁵ Another example of a notorious Croatian unit was the Zebras, led by Drovski, a Croat from Austria known in the field as Commander Sinisja. This unit consisted of skinheads who carried out dirty work. There was also no shortage of football hooligans among the Croatian troops. For example, a unit of the National Guard stationed at Vinkovci comprised largely of the 'Bad Blue Boys', hooligans from Zagreb.

The situation in which irregular groups and militias played an extremely important role in the conflict continued until the autumn of 1993. Military organizations were then formed almost

⁵⁹⁰ Paul Watson, 'Dot-camaraderie helped in Milosevic's ouster', *Los Angeles Times*, 18/10/00; Julius Strauss, 'Henchman betrayed Milosevic in revolt', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 20/10/00; Michael Dobbs, 'Crash of Yugoslavia's Money Man', *The Washington Post*, 29/11/00.

⁵⁹¹ See e.g. Ewoud Nysingh, 'Kroatische Rambo's veroveren slechts één spookstadje' ('Croatian Rambos conquer a single ghost town'), *de Volkskrant*, 10/08/91.

⁵⁹² For information on the HOS see e.g. Raymond van den Boogaard, "'Tudjman een verrader; wij vechten door'" ('"Tudjman's a traitor: we fight on"'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/09/91.

⁵⁹³ Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 266.

⁵⁹⁴ Peter Sartorius, 'Zagreb: Die Erben der Ustascha melden sich zu Wort', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 28/10/91.

⁵⁹⁵ See Ed Vulliamy, 'Kroaten negeren bestand in jacht op Cetniks' ('Croats ignore truce in their hunt for Chetniks'), *de Volkskrant*, 21/09/91.

simultaneously by all parties in the conflict. This gave the armies more control over the paramilitaries and special troops, for example by integrating or disarming them. Among the reasons for this simultaneous normalization were international diplomatic pressure, the desire for professionalization of the national armed forces and the need of politicians to increase their grasp on the military system and to settle scores with opposition factions within the paramilitaries.⁵⁹⁶ Clearer command structures and more discipline were then introduced in the armies themselves. These changes also manifested themselves externally in the form of an increasing number of soldiers dressed in regular uniforms with familiar emblems. This was not previously the case and it contributed to the ease with which individuals crossed the boundary between the regular army and irregular units.

4. Intermezzo: the nature and form of the conflict

For a clear understanding of the matter it is necessary to interrupt the chronology and answer the following question: what precisely was the nature of the conflicts here? Fighting as it broke out in Croatia in the summer of 1991 cannot formally be considered a war of aggression, in view of the fact that as yet there was no element of international relations between Yugoslavia and Serbia on the one hand and Croatia on the other. Originally there was also no element of civil war. The Serbs in Croatia were guided too much from outside for that and the Croats, at Tudjman's urging, were too passive. We have seen a number of instances where, in the eyes of the leaders in Belgrade, a significant proportion of Serbs in Croatia responded too passively and were unwilling to go along with the official line that the Serbs in Croatia were about to face a genocide equal to the one during the Ustashe regime in World War II.

The breeding ground of the conflict was that right from the start of Yugoslavia there had been two mutually exclusive state projects within the country. The first was the Serbian view that all Serbs had to be kept together, if possible within Yugoslavia, and, failing that, within a Greater Serbia. This was the view that anywhere Serbs lived, or – in a more extreme variant – were buried, was Serbian territory. The second was the Croatian view that if a harmonious existence within Yugoslavia was not possible, far-reaching autonomy, if not independence, was the alternative. In addition it had to be considered whether the Croats from Bosnia-Herzegovina should not also have the opportunity to join the independent Croatia. These claims on regions originally made the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia territorial conflicts, with the Serbs in particular demanding their share as the most powerful party: the 'Serbian regions' in Croatia, access to the coast, two thirds of the land of Bosnia-Herzegovina, etc. After that, a start could be made within the framework of ethnic homogenization, distribution of economic prosperity, strategic interests and suchlike, on shuffling the maps, possibly at the negotiating table, but, if there was more to be gained, by a continuation or resumption of the conflict.

The actual reason for the conflict was the unwillingness of Milosevic and other Communists to relinquish power at a time when the rest of Europe was taking its leave of Communism. For him, engaging in war was a way to preserve his position of power and to divert attention from the poor economic situation. In other words, Milosevic was engaged in what is known as social imperialism: aggression as a lightning conductor. Serbian nationalists were behind him in this.

As stated above, the large-scale involvement of irregulars in the conflict made it also a war of criminals. Local warlords and outside gang leaders used the war for self enrichment and they gave the combat a dynamic of their own. It was precisely this irregular nature of the conflict that contributed to a lack of restraint of the violence.⁵⁹⁷ This created even more room for the volunteers, such as the weekend Cetniks, who took part in the war for their 'pleasure'. Some of them were unadulterated

⁵⁹⁶ Bougarel, *Bosnie*, pp. 114-115.

⁵⁹⁷ See for this view of the conflict e.g. A. de Swaan, 'De staat van wandaad' ('The state of outrage'), *Carré*, 17(1994)3, pp. 19-23, especially p. 22; Piet de Moor, 'Aleksandar Tisma', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 13/10/93.

nationalists. A significant number of them were the scum of society, 'the philosophy of football hooliganism magnified a hundredfold'.⁵⁹⁸

The important role played by these irregulars in the war made it easier for others to fight a multitude of personal and local conflicts, arising from quarrels with neighbours, professional envy, and suchlike. This was what was referred to in Yugoslavia as the *mali rat*, or small war, within the larger conflict.⁵⁹⁹ This created an interplay between violence from outside and locally determined conflicts, with local elites and leaders competing for power, and old village feuds flaring up again. This explains why the arrival of special units in certain areas could so easily produce a chain reaction from village to village of threats and attacks between groups who previously apparently lived peacefully side by side. The paramilitary units, who operated on a larger scale, often received support from members of the local militias, police and radical political parties. Sometimes representatives of the groups referred to, united in the local crisis committee, would call in the assistance of paramilitary units from outside their own region.

Their propaganda of fear and hatred, and terrorist actions allowed the instigators of the war to fulfil their prophecy that ethnic groups would be at each other's throats. For instance, they succeeded in involving ordinary people in their slaughter. In so doing they caused a complete blurring of moral standards so that violence was given free rein. Fear was also an important motivation of the war among all sections of the population.⁶⁰⁰

When the fear that the other ethnic group will strike with murder and rape became large enough, people were prepared to make a pre-emptive strike, which would not be difficult to justify later: if we hadn't done it, then they would have...⁶⁰¹ Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian-Serb political leader, understood this mechanism all too well: 'Everyone is suspicious of what the other sides are intending to do. So, to prevent anything horrible being done to them, they do it to the others first.'⁶⁰² Time and again, alleged provocation from the other party was discovered, which did not have to be investigated, but created a mechanism of revenge and counter-revenge. The less secure the population became, the easier it became to appeal to fears and feelings of insulted honour, which demanded redress.

The residents of the rural areas, the 'peasants', the 'folk from the hills', came down to the cities to take revenge on the signs of civilization, modernization and cosmopolitanism that were threatening their traditional existence.⁶⁰³

Because the ethnic differences had been preserved more clearly in the countryside than in the cities, and the state television was the pre-eminent source of information, nationalist leaders found it easier to recruit foot-soldiers there to counter the inter-ethnic links that had been created in the cities - mixed marriages, multi-ethnic parties and suchlike. Shades of meaning and voices of reason, whether from their own surroundings or from the international community, no longer had any effect. The black and white thinking - 'us' against 'them'; the countryside against the city; the mythical experience against reason - had gained the upper hand. There was something of a Pol Pot-like intimidation of cities and intellectuals. The population could be mobilized for wars that originally had a predominantly territorial character by appealing to such feelings of dissatisfaction and ethnic sentiments. However, in the course

⁵⁹⁸ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 280. See e.g. also Gert van Wijland, 'Autoraces aan de Donau' ('Car races by the Danube'), *Elsevier*, 10/09/92, p. 71.

⁵⁹⁹ For information on this see e.g. Tromp, 'Moeder'.

⁶⁰⁰ Ivica Ceresnjes, chairman of the Jewish community in Sarajevo: '... the feeling I have is that they are afraid of each other rather than that they hate each other.', in: Max Arian, 'La Benovolencija', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 09/06/93, p. 10.

⁶⁰¹ Cf. Maas, *Neighbor*, pp. 112-113.

⁶⁰² 'We will never again be history's fools', *Los Angeles Times*, 30/08/92.

⁶⁰³ Hirs & Hellinga, *Geit*, p. 178; Voet, *Hotel*, p. 123; Sreten Vujovic, 'An Uneasy View of the City', in: Popov (ed.), *Road*, pp. 123-145.

of the conflict, ethnic differences grew to such a level as a consequence of the spiralling violence that the ethnic nature of the conflict became dominant.⁶⁰⁴

It was not only fear that drove individual citizens into war, however. The war also offered unprecedented opportunities for enrichment or rising up the social ladder. Individuals were able to take possession of their neighbours' houses, cars and refrigerators, and their wives' and daughters' bodies. Bar owners became local gang leaders, ordinary soldiers became generals, teachers became mayors and professors became ministers.

As the war progressed, the religious undertones of the conflict became stronger.⁶⁰⁵ It was mentioned above that the distinction between Croats, Muslims and Serbs could in principle be traced back to religious differences. However, a strong process of secularization had unfolded in Communist Yugoslavia after World War II. In the late 1980s in Bosnia, only 53 per cent of the Croats, 37 per cent of the Muslims, and 34 per cent of the Serbs, were religious.⁶⁰⁶

In 'Catholic' Croatia in the early 1990s, only one third of all parents sent their children to catechism, and church attendance, in the forty to sixty age group especially, declined sharply. However, there was something of a religious revival among young people and sections of the intelligentsia, which was accompanied by a growing national awareness and a need for support in difficult economic times. There was an increase in the numbers entering the priesthood.⁶⁰⁷

A joke was circulating in Bosnia in the early 1990s that the difference between a Serbian, a Croat and a Muslim was that the first never kissed icons in the Orthodox Church, the second never attended a Catholic Mass and the third never prayed facing Mecca.⁶⁰⁸ Apparently no more than 28 per cent of Bosnian Muslims were actively religious even in the autumn of 1992.⁶⁰⁹ Another joke from the time is the following: 'What is the definition of a Bosnian Muslim? Answer: A Bosnian Muslim is someone who drinks alcohol, eats pork and doesn't pray to Mecca five times a day.'⁶¹⁰ There were even Muslims who had fled from Sarajevo, whose first encounter with Muslim girls wearing headscarves was in the Netherlands.⁶¹¹

The outbreak of conflicts between ethnic groups emphasized religious differences once more, however.⁶¹² For instance, at the start of the war in Bosnia, Muslims who had never done so before started to fast during Ramadan.⁶¹³

In May and August 1991, the Roman Catholic Cardinal Kuharic of Zagreb met the Orthodox patriarch Pavle in an attempt at reconciliation, but it appeared to be more of a ritual than a genuine attempt to cooperate⁶¹⁴ and Pavle especially was increasingly drawn into the political developments. At the start of August 1991, the Conference of European Churches in Geneva produced a report on the deteriorating relations between the churches in Yugoslavia. The report said that not only were politicians exploiting the religious differences, but members of both the Roman Catholic and Christian Orthodox Churches were also intensifying the ethnic conflict with religious polemics. At the same time

⁶⁰⁴ For information on this view of the conflict, see for example S. Radosevic, 'The Collapse of Yugoslavia - Between Chance and Necessity', Dyker & Vejvoda (ed.), *Yugoslavia*, pp. 66 and 78.

⁶⁰⁵ See e.g. Michael Sells, 'Christoslavism 1/The religious component', 27/06/96, <http://www.haverford.edu/relg/sells/postings/christoslavism1.html> accessed on 19/12/00; Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 194.

⁶⁰⁶ Calic, *Krieg*, pp. 28 and 30.

⁶⁰⁷ Ton Crijnen, 'Kroaten zien katholieke kerk als dam tegen Servisch gevaar' ('Croats see Catholic Church as dam against Serb danger'), *Trouw*, 04/07/91.

⁶⁰⁸ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 74.

⁶⁰⁹ Caroline de Gruyter, 'In de tang van de halve maan' ('In the grip of the half moon'), *Elsevier*, 14/11/92, pp. 68-69.

⁶¹⁰ Maas, *Neighbor*, p. 66.

⁶¹¹ Ineke Bijngte, 'Korak. Een eskimo uit Sarajevo' ('Korak. An eskimo from Sarajevo'), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 17/11/93, p. 9.

⁶¹² Duijzings, *Conflict*, p. 5.

⁶¹³ Van Cleef, *Wereld*, p. 52.

⁶¹⁴ Radmila Radic, 'The Church and the 'Serbian Question'', in: Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 261.

as Pavle called for reconciliation, the report quotes him as saying that extremist Croats were committing the same 'brutal atrocities' against the Serbs as the Ustashe in 1941.⁶¹⁵ In the autumn of 1991 Pavle would write to Carrington that the Serbs were being exposed to genocide for the second time in the twentieth century in what he called a new Ustashe state. He said that it was impossible for Croats and Serbs to live together in one state, and he advocated linking parts of Croatia with Serbia.⁶¹⁶ When Milosevic decided at the end of 1991 to call a halt to the war in Croatia, this even met with the objection of the Orthodox Church.⁶¹⁷

At the start of the conflict Serbian-Orthodox clerics were already expressing on television their support for militant Serbs in Borovo Selo and Knin.⁶¹⁸ During the war in Bosnia, Orthodox clerics repeatedly blessed soldiers and paramilitaries and incited them to murder and plunder.⁶¹⁹ Arkan had his recruits baptized in Dahl Cathedral during the war in Croatia in 1991.⁶²⁰ During the war in Croatia almost five hundred churches were totally destroyed or seriously damaged.⁶²¹ Croatian prisoners of war were sometimes forced by Serbs to swallow the crosses they wore around their necks.⁶²²

Later in Bosnia too, close links developed between the Orthodox Church and Radovan Karadzic's political party, the SDS.⁶²³ However, when the consequences of Serbian aggression became visible there in the first months of the war, the leaders of the Orthodox Church started to criticize Milosevic and his supporters for closing their eyes to the crimes being committed there by the paramilitaries. The lower clerics, who were frequently militantly nationalist, maintained close ties with Karadzic and his supporters, however. The leaders in Pale also had a positive attitude to the church and traditional Serbian national values. 'Our spiritual leaders are present at all our discussions and are involved in the decision making process; the voice of the church is respected as the voice of the highest authority', Karadzic said in 1994.⁶²⁴ The nationalist section of the clergy therefore felt more affinity with the Bosnian-Serb leaders than with Milosevic, who they continued to see as more of a Communist, and who had made an arrangement with the church out of pure opportunism.⁶²⁵ Serbs carved crosses with knives in the bodies of Muslims.⁶²⁶ A Muslim was nailed alive to the door of the mosque, with his arms spread like Christ on the cross.⁶²⁷ Mosques were desecrated, and Korans were urinated on.⁶²⁸ Mosques and minarets in Bosnia were among the favourite targets of Serbian soldiers and volunteers.⁶²⁹

However caution is called for in attributing the attacks on Catholic churches and on mosques only to anti-Catholic or anti-Islamic motives. They were also an attack on a culture, a civilization, comparable with the shelling of the National Library in Sarajevo. The wrecking of churches and

⁶¹⁵ "Katholieke Kroaten dreigen orthodoxe Serviërs uit te roeien" ("Catholic Croats threaten to wipe out Orthodox Serbs"), *Trouw*, 03/08/91. See also Radmila Radic, 'The Church and the "Serbian Question"', in: Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 262.

⁶¹⁶ Geert van Dartel, 'Nationalities and Religion in Yugoslavia', in: Van den Heuvel & Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 45; Tomanic, *Crkva*, pp. 65-73. For Pavle's ambivalent attitude towards ethnic tensions and conflicts in 1991 see also Cohen, *Serpent*, pp. 152-153.

⁶¹⁷ Norman Cigar, 'The Serbo-Croatian War, 1991', in: Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 76.

⁶¹⁸ Geert van Dartel, 'Nationalities and Religion in Yugoslavia', in: Van den Heuvel & Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 41. Cf. Blagojevic & Demirovic, *Bloedverwanten*, p. 31.

⁶¹⁹ For examples see Sells, *Bridge*, pp. 80-83.

⁶²⁰ Martin Bell, 'I know he's a war criminal but I can't help liking him', *Mail on Sunday*, 06/06/99.

⁶²¹ Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 278.

⁶²² Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 77.

⁶²³ Cohen, *Serpent*, pp. 153-154; Radmila Radic, 'The Church and the "Serbian Question"', in: Popov (ed.), *Road*, pp. 265-268.

⁶²⁴ Radmila Radic, 'The Church and the "Serbian Question"', in: Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 268.

⁶²⁵ Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 155; Radmila Radic, 'The Church and the "Serbian Question"', in: Popov (ed.), *Road*, pp. 265-266.

⁶²⁶ Bart Rijs, 'Sporen van een massamoord' ('Traces of a massacre'), *HP/De Tijd*, 28/08/92, p. 10; Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 204;

United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, IV.A.42.

⁶²⁷ Maas, *Neighbor*, p. 7.

⁶²⁸ Maas, *Neighbor*, p. 8.

⁶²⁹ Moore, 'Aspects', p. 38. See e.g. first the list of 55 Muslim holy places shelled in Sarajevo in: United Nations, S/1994/674/Add. 2 (Vol. II), Appendix 5.

mosques was also an attempt to erase the visible and tangible evidence of Croatian and Muslim presence from the landscape, which was the cultural aspect of ethnic cleansing.⁶³⁰

The form of the conflict was partly determined by the serious shortage of men on the Serbian side. This was compensated by superior artillery strength. This gave the combat in the former Yugoslavia a strong flavour of a war of siege, in which Serbian troops surrounded Croatian or Bosnian cities with terror bombardment, while those under siege were in no position to break out because of a lack of fire power, despite having a numerical majority. For instance, there would often be local standoffs in which the most powerful weapon appeared to be starvation. The Bosnian-Serb Colonel Milovan Milutinovic explained this strategy in the following words: 'We Serbs are like a snake. When we want to eat a frog, we first hypnotize it.'⁶³¹ Because the population of the cities was cut off from food, water, medicines, fuel and the most elementary resources for keeping the city clean, they were at the mercy of the mafia, who were able to make unprecedented profits from all parties in the conflict by cashing in on the needs of a destitute population. Some cities, such as Vukovar and Jajce, were captured only after months of siege. Other cities, such as Dubrovnik or Sarajevo, were able to withstand the siege.

With the exception of the early phases, there was relatively little fighting along clear front lines with the purpose of conquering territory. Where troops opposed each other, they became accustomed to the idea that they had nothing to fear from each other other than mortar attacks. Often they would not even put a guard on sentry duty at night.⁶³²

A much more common objective was the ethnic cleansing of an area, in which members of an ethnic group were caused to leave a city or village. Again, the agent for achieving this was fear, which was employed by the paramilitary units in particular. They put the population into a state of anxiety psychosis by means of a broad spectrum of ill-treatment and threats, oriented towards driving out the population of another ethnic group, in order that their own territory would become ethnically homogeneous: murder, summary executions, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, arbitrary arrests and detention, shelling and wrecking possessions. The paramilitaries would often set fire to or blow up houses, after looting them, to make it almost impossible for the population to return. They often sought out members of the elite as their victims. This choice, together with the fact that many of the crimes, including rape, were carried out openly, was intended to enhance the effect of terror on the population. The population that remained often also fled. Otherwise, sooner or later, if they were not killed first, they would be deported or exchanged for prisoners of the other party.

The wars in the former Yugoslavia were therefore a combination of various conflicts on different levels. And just as the conflict had different characteristics and forms, the fighters also differed. As was observed in early 1996 in a final UNPROFOR report: 'This war gave employment to every type of fighter: the mercenary, the regular, the fanatic, the pressed man, the brutal sadist and the villager defending his home.'⁶³³ However, it was a long time before the international community came round to this way of thinking. The fact is that one of the deciding factors in the request for intervention in ex-Yugoslavia was always the lack of clarity on the nature of the conflict among the opinion and policy makers in the West.⁶³⁴

5. Intermezzo continued: the unknown Balkans

'The problem, I fear, is the Yugoslavs themselves. They are a perverse group of folks, near tribal in their behaviour, suspicious of each other (with usually sound reasons), friendly on the outside but very cynical

⁶³⁰ Cf. Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 278; Maas, *Neighbor*, p. 85.

⁶³¹ Cited in Westerman, *Brug*, p. 16.

⁶³² Loyd, *War*, p. 47. Cf. Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, pp. 158-159.

⁶³³ Headquarters UNPF, Force Commander's End of Mission Report, 31/01/96, p. 7.

⁶³⁴ Cf. Weithmann, *Brandhaard*, p. 9.

within, ever ready for a war or a battle, proud of their warrior history,
and completely incapable of coming to grips with the modern world
...⁶³⁵

In many respects the West thought of the Balkans as 'foreign' and 'different' within Europe, where assumptions that worked elsewhere did not apply. There were plenty of ideas about the Balkans, but understanding was another matter entirely. And many in South-east Europe itself agreed that this was also too much to expect. Westerners were not infrequently told: 'You are incapable of understanding our fight'.⁶³⁶

The - relatively - limited scope of this report, which focuses on the deployment of the Dutch Airmobile Brigade in Srebrenica, means that it is neither possible nor necessary to go into detail on the image of Yugoslavia that was created in the West.⁶³⁷ This report will, however, cover those elements of the image created that were decisive for the question of whether it was possible and sensible for the West to intervene militarily in (the former) Yugoslavia. It will be evident that a large part of the argumentation surrounding the intervention issue was based on an overestimate of possible Yugoslavian resistance and on an overdose of unsatisfactory historical parallels. There was certainly no shortage of historical analogies in the intervention debates in the West. 'The less they understood the historical context, the more historical analogies they found', a Balkan expert sighed.⁶³⁸ 'Anytime one attempts to grasp the meaning of this Balkan War, a historical phenomenon is invoked by journalists and agents of various governments,' wrote the sociologist Stjepan Mestrovic in an introduction to a compilation in which the representation of the conflict had an important place.⁶³⁹ How true that was is instantly clear from the first contribution in the same collection:

'Former Yugoslavia is not Vietnam, not Lebanon, not Northern Ireland. The more appropriate analogy is Adolf Hitler and, more recently, Saddam Hussein (...) The crisis in the former Yugoslavia has epitomized the choice between the paths of Neville Chamberlain and Winston Churchill.'⁶⁴⁰

It is often unclear whether argumentation is based on insufficient knowledge of facts or that rationalizations were used *pour besoin de la cause*, dragged in to back up a policy that had already been determined. A further comment is that many contributions in, for example, correspondence columns, appeared to be intended less to contribute to a greater understanding of the actual situation in Yugoslavia than to inject a moral undertone into a domestic political debate.

We will suffice here with a brief mention of the reasoning used and the arguments against them. The reader will encounter similar arguments now and again in the description of the decision-making surrounding the dispatch of Dutch troops. Otherwise we will devote attention here mainly to generally held views in the West. More nationally-determined conceptualizations were mentioned in the description of the attitudes of individual countries in the conflict. Particular attention will be paid here to discussions in the Dutch press, because one of our objectives is to illuminate the relationship between the media and policy.

Knowledge of the Balkans in general and Yugoslavia in particular was scarce in the West. This may seem strange at first sight, in view of the pet status of the country during the Cold War, but it is not. During the two-sided battle from the end of World War II to the end of the 1980s, the intellectual energy of the West was oriented more to potential adversaries, specifically the Soviet Union and the

⁶³⁵ David Anderson in *The Wall Street Journal*, 21/02/91, cited in Mestrovic, *Habits*, p. 48.

⁶³⁶ Hirs & Hellinga, *Geit*, p. 8; Westerman, *Brug*, p. 143.

⁶³⁷ For a more extensive description of this, see the Naarden and Tromp appendices.

⁶³⁸ Stevan K. Pavlowitch, 'Who is 'Balkanizing' Whom', p. 215.

⁶³⁹ Stjepan G. Mestrovic, 'Introduction', idem (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 13.

⁶⁴⁰ Philip J. Cohen, 'Ending the war and securing peace in former Yugoslavia', in: Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 43.

Warsaw Pact, than to non-aligned Yugoslavia. Stevan K. Pavlowitch, affiliated with the University of Southampton for the history of the Balkans, wrote that western knowledge of Yugoslavia was at a lamentable level: 'The West did not understand Yugoslavia better than it understood Armenia or Georgia, Afghanistan or Cambodia, Somalia or Angola, but Yugoslavia was nearer.'⁶⁴¹ In the eyes of many in the West, it had always seemed that the study of the 'foreign' country Yugoslavia was the realm of eccentrics.⁶⁴² Knowledge of Yugoslavia was also impeded by the lack of freedom of expression in Yugoslavia itself and the fact that for many years research data had to be forced into either a Marxist or a nationalist frame of interpretation.⁶⁴³ This was actually a general problem of Eastern Europe experts.

In the entire western world, the study of Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s went into crisis because of the end of the Cold War, and it did not emerge for years afterwards.⁶⁴⁴ This lack of knowledge served only to create more room for poorly founded views.

Whereas academic knowledge of Eastern Europe in the Netherlands was not particularly great, knowledge of Yugoslavia was nearly non-existent.⁶⁴⁵ Among the few experts that could be consulted in the Netherlands when the conflicts in Yugoslavia exploded in the summer of 1991 was Z. Dittich, a professor emeritus, who had held the chair of Eastern European history at the University of Utrecht for twenty years. He characterized the Serbs as 'a people who take offence very easily', who had liberated themselves unaided from Turks and Germans, which had made them 'not easy to negotiate or make treaties with'.⁶⁴⁶

The Dutch press and the Yugoslavian conflict

Anyone interested in finding out about and interpreting the developments in Yugoslavia therefore had to resort to the media. It is necessary to make a distinction in the media reporting on Yugoslavia between the audiovisual and the written press. The television depended mainly on pictures. A further problem with television was that TV crews were generally restricted in how long they could operate in the region because of considerations of cost and conflicting priorities, whereas some newspaper correspondents worked there for years on end. In addition, for example, the Dutch public service (NOS) news sent different reporters each time. This form of parachute journalism damaged the continuity of the reporting, and the level of knowledge on which it was based even more.

The Dutch reporting was therefore performed mainly by journalists of the printed media.⁶⁴⁷ In the printed media in the Netherlands, but to a certain extent also on radio and television, there were separate information flows, and they often all went their own way: the reports from the correspondents on the ground, the parliamentary journalism in The Hague, the editorial teams and the contributions in the correspondence columns.

The larger newspapers in the Netherlands had their own correspondents on the ground. For instance, Othon Zimmermann, whose background was in Slavonic studies, had been reporting intensively on the region in the *Algemeen Dagblad* prior to the outbreak of the conflict. Raymond van den Boogaard reported on the war from Zagreb and elsewhere in Croatia for the *NRC Handelsblad*. He was previously stationed in Moscow. He regularly submitted reports on hostilities. For the same newspaper, Theo Engelen was closely involved in the reporting as correspondent in Ljubljana and Peter Michielsen provided many opinion-forming articles. *De Volkskrant* had a contract with Ulrike Rudberg, who provided contributions from Belgrade. Marianne Boissevain and André Roelofs reported for this

⁶⁴¹ Stevan K. Pavlowitch, 'Who is 'Balkanizing' Whom', p. 215; cf. Ivan Banac, 'The Fearful Asymmetry', p. 143.

⁶⁴² Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 5.

⁶⁴³ Cf. Willem Vermeer, 'Albanians and Serbs in Yugoslavia', in: Van den Heuvel & Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 101-102.

⁶⁴⁴ D.P. K. wrote in 1996 that this crisis 'has now continued for so long that it might more properly be termed a malaise than a crisis', 'From the editor', *Slavic Review*, 55(1996)4, p. 725.

⁶⁴⁵ Cf. Van den Heuvel, *Leven*, pp. 8 and 144.

⁶⁴⁶ Bert Bukman, 'Bang voor de buitenwereld' ('Afraid of the outside world'), *HP/De Tijd*, 18/10/91, p.17.

⁶⁴⁷ Cf. Karskens, *Pleisters*, p. 259. See also Scholten and Wieten appendices.

newspaper from Ljubljana from the start of the conflict, while Ewoud Nysingh also reported from Belgrade for a time. For *Trouw*, Nicole Lucas took charge of reporting on Yugoslavia from Belgrade. For the same newspaper, Henk Hirs departed in the autumn for the former Yugoslavia, where he provided reports from various cities. These correspondents generally offered a balanced picture of the local situation and the complex relationships between the parties in the conflict. However, it was difficult to convey this picture effectively, not only to the readership, but also among their peers in the Netherlands.⁶⁴⁸ The rule that applied here was that whoever was closest to the printing press had the greatest influence on what appeared in the newspaper.⁶⁴⁹ For Raymond van den Boogaard, who reported in turn on the wars in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia for *NRC Handelsblad* this was the most bitter lesson that he learned from the conflicts: 'The historical picture of that war will not be painted by reporters like me, but by remote observers, who will take a simplified version of the facts and mix it with moral views to construct what the structure of the conflict was and possibly even who was right or wrong.'⁶⁵⁰ He noted 'with disgust' that 'even at my own newspaper' editors urged adopting a position and gave credence to the horror stories that emerged from the combatants' propaganda machines, suggesting that by not adopting a position he was 'on the wrong side' in this war.⁶⁵¹

The conflict in Yugoslavia was not entirely unexpected, neither for the Dutch press nor for Dutch politicians. There were reports in the first half of 1991 on Slovenia's and Croatia's plans to secede, and on Krajina's pursuit of autonomy. The outbreak of war between Serbia and Croatia was anticipated.⁶⁵² As in politics, the dominant note in the press was 'Hopefully, this turns out all right.' On the day before the Croatian declaration of independence, Raymond van den Boogaard reported from Zagreb that, in anticipation of events that he felt would have unpredictable consequences, there was an 'almost uncanny calm'.⁶⁵³

Between the outbreak of the conflicts in Yugoslavia in the summer of 1991 and their (provisional) cessation in late 1995, more than one hundred Dutch journalists, photographers and camera crew would visit the fronts, which made the Yugoslavian conflict 'the best attended war ever' by Dutch journalism.⁶⁵⁴ However, it proved difficult for the Dutch correspondents to break through established news patterns. Interesting items were often not used by their masters in the Netherlands because they usually wanted to hear the news from CNN, the BBC or major foreign press agencies first.⁶⁵⁵ On the other hand, journalists of other nationalities also experienced this phenomenon. BBC correspondent Martin Bell wrote that he likewise ran up against reactions from the BBC *newsroom* such as: 'Are you sure about this ambush? It's not on the wires yet.'⁶⁵⁶

Furthermore, the Dutch reporting on the conflict was faced with considerable budgetary constraints. Editorial teams did not have the money for long-term war-risk insurance or security arrangements such as armour-plated vehicles and bulletproof vests.⁶⁵⁷ In Germany too, newspapers not always insured their journalists, and there was no money for expensive armour-plated cars.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁴⁸ See e.g. interviews W. Breedveld, 11/10/00; G. Eickhof, 18/01/00; M. Kranenburg, 13/09/00; W. Lust, 19/07/00.

⁶⁴⁹ Interview M. Kranenburg, 13/09/00. Investigation has shown that in Britain there was also a wide gulf between the reports from Croatia and Bosnia and editorial policy, with the latter having the upper hand, Simms, Hour, p. 301.

⁶⁵⁰ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Lessen van de oorlog op de Balkan', Van Es & Sampiemon & Starink (eds.), *Redacturen*, p. 217.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² See e.g. Rik Kuethe, 'Van oude partizanen, de dingen die voorbijgaan' ('From old partisans, the things that pass'), *Elsevier*, 22/03/91, pp. 38-39; Igor Znidarsic, 'Passeport Slovenija' ('Passport Slovenija'), *HP/De Tijd*, 29/03/91, pp. 38-42; Harry Lensink, 'De geschiedenis als verdeelmes' ('History as carving knife'), *HP/De Tijd*, 12/04/91, pp. 18-19; Hugo Camps, 'Joegoslavië is science-fiction, meneer' ("Yugoslavia is science-fiction, my good man"), *Elsevier*, 08/06/91, pp. 38-41.

⁶⁵³ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Stilte voor de storm in Joegoslavië' ('Calm before the storm in Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/06/91.

⁶⁵⁴ Karskens, *Pleisters*, p. 255. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 271.

⁶⁵⁵ Cf. the remarks made by Harald Doornbos, reporter for Zuid Oost Pers and Radio 1 in: Karskens, *Pleisters*, p. 260.

⁶⁵⁶ Bell, *Way*, p. 29.

⁶⁵⁷ See e.g. Karskens, *Pleisters*, pp. 257, 265, 269 and 283.

⁶⁵⁸ Richter, *Journalisten*, pp. 133 and 149.

Freelancers were certainly unable to pay the high insurance premiums.⁶⁵⁹ Editorial staff often used these independents to 'spare' their own people.⁶⁶⁰ And freelancers especially were under greater pressure to produce sensational reports than correspondents in regular employment.⁶⁶¹

It was certainly dangerous for journalists in the war areas. Of the 65 journalists around the world who were to die while performing their work in 1991, eighteen died in Slovenia and Croatia. Serbs in Croatia were often unpredictable at best, at worst, the word 'press' on a car windscreen, which afforded a degree of protection to the occupants in many wars, was sufficient reason for them to start shooting.⁶⁶² German and Austrian journalists were the favourite target.⁶⁶³ In May 1992, the Dutch Association of Journalists (NVJ) advised its members not to travel to Bosnia, and those who were already there were advised to seek shelter for the time being, because, according to the NVJ, the parties in the conflict shot at 'everything that moved'. The danger was enhanced even more because combatants would pose as journalists. By that time, 24 journalists had already lost their lives in the war in Yugoslavia in the course of their work.⁶⁶⁴ In August 1993, the Dutch Association of Journalists (NVJ) withdrew their travel and war-risk insurance for Yugoslavia. After that it was only possible to arrange insurance with the same company for ten thousand guilders a week.⁶⁶⁵ At the end of 1993 there were no Dutch photographers working in Bosnia because of the dangers.⁶⁶⁶ In due course, it became possible for NVJ members to hire one of the two bulletproof vests that the association had at its disposal, or to borrow a vest from the Army Information Officer of Dutch Transport Company in Central Bosnia, whose stock was also limited, however.⁶⁶⁷ When, on top of that, Dutch journalists discovered that real news from the front was used only after editorial staff had confirmed it from other sources, the enthusiasm for exposing themselves to risky situations declined rapidly.

The view on the conflict also added to this lack of enthusiasm. Dick Verkijk, not the most easily scared of Dutch journalists, called the Yugoslavian war 'the most pointless in history. Started over nothing and leading to nothing.' First, according to him, there were invented incidents that were blazed about by the Yugoslavian media especially; the invented incidents provoked real incidents; and the real incidents led to escalation. According to him, it was 'not a civil war at all'. Serbian and Croatian citizens fled the disputed area, not out of fear of each other, but of the war-like actions of 'fanatics'.⁶⁶⁸ He considered the risks for journalists to be (too) great. In the Croatian war there was literally no boundary to be drawn: 'Before you know it you are in the "other" area; there are countless enclaves of one party or the other. No party takes risks: they shoot at everything that seems slightly out of the ordinary.' Fronts were seldom cordoned off, so that a journalist could easily wander into the line of fire. 'I have always been prepared to give something for a good cause', said Verkijk. 'But here? In Yugoslavia? This war is a poor cause, not worth dying for.'⁶⁶⁹

The majority of the reports from correspondents therefore consisted of news coming from public relations officials in the capital cities of the various (former) republics, and descriptions of the atmosphere. The approximately seven hundred foreign correspondents who were accredited in Zagreb

⁶⁵⁹ Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 134.

⁶⁶⁰ Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 144.

⁶⁶¹ Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 146.

⁶⁶² Richter, *Journalisten*, pp. 128, 149, 150.

⁶⁶³ Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 129.

⁶⁶⁴ 'Bosnië-Herzegovina', *De Journalist*, 22/05/92, p. 7. For an overview of the incidents in which, by that time 27 journalists had died in ex-Yugoslavia, see: 'Pers onder vuur' ('Press under fire'), *De Journalist*, 28/08/92, p. 18. In 1991, eighteen journalists died in Slovenia and Croatia; in 1992, eleven in Bosnia; in 1993, eight in former Yugoslavia; in 1994, eight in the Balkans; and, in 1995, four in Bosnia and Croatia, Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 131.

⁶⁶⁵ 'Sarajevo niet langer automatisch verzekerd' ('Sarajevo no longer automatically assured'), *De Journalist*, 20/08/93, p. 9.

⁶⁶⁶ For a non-exhaustive list of the photographers who visited the area previously, see Frits Baarda, 'Foto's uit Bosnia veroorzaken niets' ('Photos from Bosnia have no effect'), *De Journalist*, 19/11/93, p. 19.

⁶⁶⁷ See the advertisement for bulletproof vests that appeared regularly in *De Journalist* in 1993.

⁶⁶⁸ Dick Verkijk, 'Joegoslavië. De officiële tv wakkert haat aan' ('Yugoslavia. State television fuels hatred.'). *De Journalist*, 22/11/91, p. 19.

⁶⁶⁹ Dick Verkijk, 'Joegoslavië. De officiële tv wakkert haat aan', *De Journalist*, 22/11/91, p. 18.

during the war in Croatia based their reporting largely on Croatian sources.⁶⁷⁰ Furthermore, the Yugoslavian Centre for Eurovision was based in Zagreb, so that for a long time reports from Serbia were able to reach the rest of Europe only indirectly. A British colleague criticized the risk-avoiding work ethic of many journalists. In his view, they all too easily assumed that a visit to the front would not yield any new points of view, whereas discussions with authorities would.⁶⁷¹ In his opinion, this attitude was further encouraged by the editorial offices at home, who preferred to read reports containing the familiar names of the most important leaders from well-known places, rather than items that they could mockingly dismiss as local colour stories: better to have an item from Sarajevo than one about Gornji Vakuf, for example.⁶⁷²

Image forming: peoples with a penchant for war

The war in Yugoslavia was represented within the context of the Balkans. The Balkans was an elastic concept. During the Cold War, when Yugoslavia's singular position in the international field of influence was valued by the West, the country was not counted as part of the Balkans, and the term itself had fallen somewhat into disuse, but came back into use immediately after disturbances broke out in the early 1990s.⁶⁷³ War and violence apparently have to be understood within a Balkan context: 'Along with the themes of fragmentation and confusion, violence has become a component of the definition of the term "Balkan".'⁶⁷⁴

For many, the Balkans was seen as a peripheral and underdeveloped area.⁶⁷⁵ 'The Balkans is like a poorhouse, Europe's back yard, that has only marginal significance in international politics.'⁶⁷⁶ Even Maria Todorova, who carried out an extensive study into the negative representation of the Balkan areas, described Yugoslavia as 'a corner of Europe'.⁶⁷⁷

But this image had a reverse side. Especially those who advocated a more active position on the part of the West argued that Yugoslavia, and particularly Croatia and Bosnia, were in 'the heart of Europe',⁶⁷⁸ 'in the middle of Europe, in a country where two years ago millions of Western Europeans still lazed around half naked next to the sea'.⁶⁷⁹ From the point of view of a country such as Austria, ex-Yugoslavia was, of course, 'close to home': 'Bosnia is (...) not "somewhere over there". It is "here".'⁶⁸⁰ Journalists and others repeatedly emphasized that a mere thousand or so kilometres from the Netherlands, France, etc., or two hours by plane, wholesale slaughter of people was taking place.⁶⁸¹

As is the case with so many regions, both a positive and a negative image existed of the Balkans, inside and outside the region. The two images would alternate in time depending on the current

⁶⁷⁰ Simic, 'Yugoslavia', p. 45.

⁶⁷¹ Loyd, *War*, p. 110.

⁶⁷² Karskens, *Pleisters*, p. 260; Loyd, *War*, p. 111.

⁶⁷³ Todorova, *Balkans*, p. 136.

⁶⁷⁴ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 381. Cf. Bakic-Hayden, 'Orientalisms'; in: Bakic-Hayden & Hayden 'Variations', p. 3; Todorova, *Balkans*, p. 3; idem, 'Balkans', pp. 453 and 474-475; Caroline de Gruyter, "De Turken komen" ("The Turks are coming"), *Elsevier*, 01/02/92, p. 32; Papoulia, 'Balkan', p. 206; Laura Silber, 'The terrifying logic of war', *Financial Times*, 02/09/95.

⁶⁷⁵ Bernard & Schlafer, *Bed*, p. 9; J.H. Sampiemon, 'Europa in verdacht gezelschap', ('Europe in conspicuous company'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/07/91.

⁶⁷⁶ Weithmann, *Brandhaard*, p. 9. The Balkans or Yugoslavia as back yard also in Anet Bleich, 'Tegen het Wilde Oosten' ('Against the wild East'), *de Volkskrant*, 29/06/91; Ian Traynor, 'Brussels grapples with biggest blot on new European landscape', *The Guardian*, 02/08/91; Kalaitzidis, *Relations*, p. 7.

⁶⁷⁷ Todorova, *Balkans*, p. 186.

⁶⁷⁸ See e.g. Mestrovic, 'Foreword', Cigar, *Genocide*, p. xiii; Thatcher cited in Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 269; Van Cleef, *Wereld*, p. 134. See how Mestrovic refers to the war in Yugoslavia on the one hand as taking place in the heart of Europe, and on the other hand as a war in a corner of Europe, Mestrovic, *Balkanization*, pp. vii and ix.

⁶⁷⁹ Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 30 (20/05/92).

⁶⁸⁰ Bernard & Schlafer, *Bed*, p. 32.

⁶⁸¹ See e.g. Daan Dijkman, 'Een héél rare oorlog' ('A very strange war'), *HP/De Tijd*, 07/02/92, p. 7; Daan Dijkman, 'Waanzin' ('Madness'), *HP/De Tijd*, 04/09/92, p. 7; Marie-Claude Smouts, 'Political aspects of peace-keeping operations', in: Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, p. 37.

circumstances. Milo Anstadt, who in 1993 wrote one of the few Dutch language books on (the start of) the Yugoslavian conflict, summed up the two images as follows 'that the majority of Yugoslavs can be amiable, hospitable, sociable and forthcoming, but also extremely intolerant, bigoted, stubborn and malicious'.⁶⁸²

For instance, in times of hope and expectation it was written that the Balkans were 'the ideal place for bringing about an integration of races and cultures from Europe, Asia and Africa'.⁶⁸³ Some would say that this observation was particularly applicable to Bosnia-Herzegovina, 'a special place, known for the tolerant, civilized interaction of its many ethnic groups. It was a miniature of the multinational Yugoslav state, except that its melting pot really worked'.⁶⁸⁴

Many Europeans also knew Yugoslavia as a pleasant holiday destination.⁶⁸⁵ This applied especially to Germans, who, with three million a year, accounted for one third of the flow of foreign tourists to Yugoslavia.⁶⁸⁶ It applied likewise to the Netherlands, which saw approximately half a million tourists a year depart for Yugoslavia in the second half of the 1980s.⁶⁸⁷ Before 1991, for example, sixty per cent of foreign tourists to the Macedonian Lake Ohrid were from the Netherlands.⁶⁸⁸

It was an experience that could also be of importance for policy makers. The Netherlands Junior Minister of Justice, Aad Kosto, accepted on behalf of the Netherlands three thousand Displaced Persons from Yugoslavia in August 1992 after seeing a news picture of a Bosnian orphan who was wounded when the bus she was travelling on was fired on by a sniper, with the words: 'When I saw that child in that bus, I thought: this is unacceptable. It shocked me. Yugoslavia is so close, you have been there on holiday, you have touched the people there, then *this* happens there. I therefore think that some of those people should be offered shelter here'.⁶⁸⁹

Unlike the Western Europeans, there was no holiday-experience for most of the American public. They saw Yugoslavia as far away, not only geographically but also mentally. For them, Yugoslavia meant only a basketball or water polo team that could beat the superpowers Russia or America in the Olympic Games once every four years.⁶⁹⁰ But a mixture of respect and fear for the Balkans was not absent among the elite there, as can be seen in the words from 1950 of the American journalist C.L. Sulzberger. He said that the area was:

'a gay peninsula filled with sprightly people who ate peppered foods, drank strong liquors, wore flamboyant clothes, loved and murdered easily and had a splendid talent for starting wars. Less imaginative westerners looked down on

⁶⁸² Anstadt, *Servië*, p. 128; Milo Anstadt, 'We moeten de mythe van de Servische schuld doorprikken' ('We have to puncture the Serbian blame myth'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 20/12/94.

⁶⁸³ The Slovenian anthropologist Niko Zupanec in 1920, cited in Blagojevic & Demirovic, *Bloedverwanten*, p. 6.

⁶⁸⁴R. Gutman, 'Q and A. Why are Yugoslavia's people fighting each other?', *Newsday*, 12/07/92. See also Gutman, *Witness*, pp. xviii-xix. Elsewhere, Gutman calls Bosnia-Herzegovina an 'ethnic tinderbox', *ibid.*, p. 4, and a 'powder keg republic', *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶⁸⁵ For the lack of understanding and the shock of the civil war for Yugoslavia's former holidaymakers, see e.g. Bert Bukman, 'Bang voor de buitenwereld', *HP/De Tijd*, 18/10/91; Daan Dijkman, 'Waaizin', *HP/De Tijd*, 04/09/92, p. 7. *Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland* also attributed the willingness of people to receive Displaced Persons from Yugoslavia in their own family to holiday sentiments, Marianne Fennema, 'Opvang vluchtelingen' ('Accommodating Refugees') *CD/Actueel*, 12(1992)(5 September) p. 12.

⁶⁸⁶ Oschlies, 'Ursachen', p. 10.

⁶⁸⁷ TK, 1987-1988, 20 564, nos. 1-2, p. 17.

⁶⁸⁸ Van den Heuvel, *Leven*, p. 166.

⁶⁸⁹ Max van Weezel, 'De verfijnde Balkan-oorlog tussen WVC en Justitie' ('The sophisticated Balkan war between the Welfare and Justice Ministries'), *Vrij Nederland*, 03/10/92, p. 7. On the other hand, others in the article disputed that this was a correct description of what happened. According to them Kok prevailed upon Kosto to accept the Displaced Persons.

⁶⁹⁰ Cf. Maas, *Neighbor*, p. 106.

them with secret envy, sniffing at their royalty, scoffing at their pretensions, and fearing their savage terrorists.⁶⁹¹

It should be clear that, in a time of crisis and violence, the positive image of the Balkans, which was characterized by romantic ideas of the passion, the hospitality and the authenticity of the population and the rustic life in the region, hardly rang true. In so far as the positive image still left memories, it was in the form of the pain and lack of understanding felt by former holidaymakers, volunteers in the construction of infrastructure works and admirers of the system of worker self-government in Yugoslavia, because black storm clouds had gathered above the sunny places they loved so much. From 1990, the black side of the Balkans dominated the representation of Yugoslavia. The images that arose from this were hardly contradicted by knowledge of discordant facts.

A counterpart of the romantic image was the idea of the Balkans as an area where irrationality was dominant,⁶⁹² which was a notion that gained in acceptance during the conflict when many Yugoslavs and immigrants from Yugoslavia themselves declared to Westerners that their fellow countrymen had gone collectively mad.⁶⁹³ Irrationality was also raised as an argument by policy makers who felt little inclined to intervene. For instance, the American Acting Secretary of State Eagleburger said the following in September 1992 on the war in Bosnia:

'It is difficult to explain, but this war is not rational. There is no rationality at all about ethnic conflict. It is gut; it is hatred; it's not for any common set of values or purposes; it just goes on. And that kind of warfare is most difficult to halt.'⁶⁹⁴

The author, Wayne Bert, who described American policy on the war in Bosnia, pointed to the paradox that those who used irrationality as an argument not to resort to military intervention, still spent many years attempting to solve the conflict through diplomacy: 'Isn't force the preferred method of influence when confronting forces that will not listen to reason ...?'⁶⁹⁵

Other authors felt they knew exactly where the border between rationality and emotion, civilization and barbarism, lay. Long before Samuel Huntington's ideas on a *clash of civilizations* became popular in some quarters in the 1990s, there was a view in the West that a boundary existed between what was called the civilized West Roman, Catholic, former Hapsburg northwestern part of Yugoslavia on the one hand, and what was called the less civilized Byzantine, Christian Orthodox or Islamic and former Ottoman southeast of Yugoslavia on the other.⁶⁹⁶ It was an idea that was gladly reinforced by Slovenians and Croats because they found themselves on the 'European-civilized' side of the border as opposed to the darker Balkan side.⁶⁹⁷ There is a certain irony in the two republics that around 1990

⁶⁹¹ Cited in Kaplan, *Ghosts*, p. xviii.

⁶⁹² See e.g. Lendvai, 'Hass', p. 4; Bart Rijs, 'Vrijheid of de dood' ('Freedom or death'), *HP/De Tijd*, 16/08/91, p. 24. For a powerful example from a later period, see Olaf Tempelman, 'Servisch irrationalisme. Spookrijders op de westerse snelweg' ('Serbian irrationalism. ghost-drivers on the Western freeway'), *de Volkskrant*, 02/04/99.

⁶⁹³ See e.g. Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, pp. 26-27, 89; Bart Rijs, 'Vrijheid of de dood', *HP/De Tijd*, 16/08/91, p. 25; Bert Bukman, 'Bang voor de buitenwereld', *HP/De Tijd*, 18/10/91, p. 17; Bart Rijs, 'Adagio voor de dood' ('Adagio for death'), *HP/De Tijd*, 26/06/92, p. 43; P. de Moor, 'Aleksandar Tisma', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 13/10/93.

⁶⁹⁴ Cited in Bert, *Superpower*, p. 102.

⁶⁹⁵ Bert, *Superpower*, p. 102.

⁶⁹⁶ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 13. See e.g. R.C. Longworth, 'Ancient hatreds heat Yugoslav cauldron', *Chicago Tribune*, 27/06/91; Willem Wansink, 'Dood aan de Donau' ('Death by the Danube'), *Elsevier*, 10/08/91, p. 28; Bert Bukman, 'Bang voor de buitenwereld', *HP/De Tijd*, 18/10/91, p. 16. In Germany this notion figured particularly strongly in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, see Mira Beham, 'Die Medien als Brandstifter', in: Bittermann (Hg.), *Serbien*, pp. 123-124; Henri Beunders, 'Aloude Duitse gevoelens tegen de Serviërs' ('Centuries-old German feelings against the Serbs'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/91. A later expression of this border-through-Europe approach is contained in: Peter Michielsen, 'Rome versus Byzantium', *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/10/99.

⁶⁹⁷ See e.g. Tadjman in: Blaine Harden, 'Yugoslav Regions Assert Independence', *The Washington Post*, 26/06/91. See also Bakic-Hayden & Hayden, 'Variations', pp. 6-12; Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 24; Kaplan, *Ghosts*, pp. 25-26; Hugo Camps,

appealed most powerfully for the right to self-determination being so willing to subordinate themselves to the larger entity of Europe. The political top and church leaders of Croatia again presented their country to the West, as the Croatian nationalists had done in the nineteenth century, as the bastion against the Islam and Orthodoxy.⁶⁹⁸

Image forming: centuries of violence

'O smallest among peoples! rough rock-throne
 Of Freedom! Warriors beating back the swarm
 Of Turkish Islam for five hundred years,
 Great Tzernagora! never since thine own
 Black ridges drew the cloud and brake the storm
 Has breathed a race of mightier mountaineers.'⁶⁹⁹

Multi-ethnic and multinational empires have been collapsing in the Balkans and its direct surroundings since the nineteenth century. Ethnic cleansing had taken place repeatedly then and during the processes of nation forming that were to follow. The nineteenth century British statesman Benjamin Disraeli had already described the nationalist uprisings in the Balkans as a 'throwback to barbarism'.⁷⁰⁰ The Serbs wreaked havoc in Kosovo during the Balkan wars. During World War I, Turkey violently disposed of one and a half million Armenians. Turks and Greeks drove each other from their own territory. During World War II, Pavelic and his followers attempted to cleanse Croatia. At the end of the World War II, the ethnic Germans were driven out en masse from Sudetenland, Silesia and Vojvodina. On Cyprus, a division was made between Greeks and Turks, which was still in place at the end of the twentieth century. If the twentieth century was indeed 'the century of expulsions' (Günther Grass), then it was certainly true for Central and Eastern Europe.

It was incorrectly concluded from over a century of ethnic tensions in the Balkans that an age-long hatred existed there between groups of the population. 'The war we are now witnessing did not start this summer', commented Peter Michielsen at the end of September 1991 in *NRC Handelsblad*:

'the war has actually been going on for hundreds of years. The postwar peace - which was imposed by Tito - was an intermezzo: an exception rather than the rule. A Serbian saying has it that a gram of power weighs more than a kilo of brains, and this is the philosophy that, by and large, has always determined the actions of the leaders in Belgrade (and Zagreb). That Western politicians consider that they can settle the account presented by seven hundred years of history by stationing the odd peacekeeping force here and there and sitting

'Joegoslavië is science-fiction, meneer', *Elsevier*, 08/06/91, p. 39; André Roelofs, 'In Joegoslavië gaat het ook om de grenzen van 'Europa'. Conflict in Balkanstaat is een conflict tussen westerse en oosterse denkwereld' ('In Yugoslavia it's also about the borders of "Europe". Conflict in a Balkan State is a conflict between Western and Eastern mentalities'), *de Volkskrant*, 10/07/91; Hayden, 'Use', pp. 215-216; Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, pp. 54, 61-63 and 67; Russell, *Prejudice*, pp. 156-157; Voet, *Hotel*, p. 138; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 72.

⁶⁹⁸ Dusan T. Batakovic, 'Collective and Human Rights: Opposing Views from Former Yugoslavia', in: Baehr & Baudet & Werdmöller (eds.), *Tights*, p. 72; Smith, *Story*, p. 18; Cardinal Kuharic to Fietelaars, see ABZ, DEU/ARA/00408, Fietelaars 410 to Van den Broek, 07/11/91.

⁶⁹⁹ Lord Tennyson, *Montenegro*.

⁷⁰⁰ appendix Naarden, *Beeld en Balkan*.

around the table under the flag of decent principles, is, certainly in the longer term, an illusion.'⁷⁰¹

Some even considered that the feuds underlying the conflict were thousands of years old.⁷⁰²

This view of history played an important role in the Yugoslavian conflict, both in the region itself and in the views of outsiders. During his press conference in Belgrade on 4 August 1991, the Dutch Minister Van den Broek already remarked that the European troika was finding it extremely difficult to accept that it appeared impossible to focus attention on the future in discussions with Yugoslavia's leaders; discussions always seemed to have to go back to the past.⁷⁰³ We are like cat and dog, we can never live together, according to the Bosnian-Serb nationalist Karadzic.⁷⁰⁴ The West proved to be very susceptible to this idea that was disseminated so vigorously by the nationalists in Yugoslavia themselves.⁷⁰⁵ Some therefore considered war in this region to be 'a regularly recurring natural phenomenon'.⁷⁰⁶

This view was a powerful argument for not having to intervene.⁷⁰⁷ The American president Bush avoided deploying American soldiers with the comment that Bosnia was about 'a blood feud' and 'a complex, convoluted conflict that grows out of age-old animosities'.⁷⁰⁸ His Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger, did the same in August 1992 at the Conference of London when he referred to the conflict as having 'ancient and complicated roots'.⁷⁰⁹ America's Chief of Staff Colin Powell stated that 'a thousand-year-old hornet's nest' existed in the former Yugoslavia, and 'an ethnic tangle with roots reaching back a thousand years', where it would be better not to sacrifice the lives of American soldiers.⁷¹⁰

Clinton, who at the time of his inauguration as president had said that the war in Bosnia was the consequence of Serbian aggression, was to say a number of weeks later: 'The hatred between all these three groups [Croats, Muslims and Serbs] (...) is almost unbelievable. It's almost terrifying, and it's centuries old. That really is a problem from hell.'⁷¹¹ In a television broadcast in early 1995, Clinton and his vice-president even seemed to be trying to outdo each other in the historical nature of the conflict

⁷⁰¹ Peter Michielsen, 'Joegoslavië vecht tot boedel is verdeeld' ('Yugoslavia fights on until the estate is divided'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/09/91. For other expressions of the conviction of age-long ethnic tensions, see for example Richard Schifter, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, in United States Senate, Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Strijde*, p. 83; Blaine Harden, 'Yugoslav Regions Assert Independence', *The Washington Post*, 26/06/91; R.C. Longworth, 'Ancient hatreds heat Yugoslav cauldron', *Chicago Tribune*, 27/06/91; Nicole Lucas, 'Joegoslavië is niet meer' ('Yugoslavia is no more'), *Trouw*, 26/06/91; idem, 'Serviërs en Kroaten koesteren oud zeer' ('Serbs and Croats nurse old wounds'), *Trouw*, 11/07/91; idem, 'Een onmogelijke missie' ('An impossible mission'), *Trouw*, 03/08/91. See also the remark made by Hylke Tromp: 'We are dealing in the Balkans with conflicts that are hundreds of years old, which have never been solved and never will be unless a world policeman takes action.' in: Max Arian & Joke van Kampen, 'Te wapen' ('Call to arms'), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 05/08/92, p. 4.

⁷⁰² See e.g. Snow, *Peacekeeping*, p. 8.

⁷⁰³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287. EU/GBVB/Trojka, voorbereiding en verslaglegging bezoeken Trojka aan Joegoslavië, July/August 1991, Fietelaars 253 to Van den Broek, 05/08/91.

⁷⁰⁴ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 266; Garrison Walters, 'The Future of History in the Balkans', Thomas & Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, p. 43; Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 73.

⁷⁰⁵ See e.g. Magas, *Destruction*, p. 58; Susan L. Woodward, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina: How Not to End Civil War', in: Walter & Snyder (eds.), *Wars*, p. 110 n. 7. See also Garrison Walters, 'The Future of History in the Balkans', Thomas & Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, p. 43.

⁷⁰⁶ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Lessen van de oorlog op de Balkan', Van Es & Sampiemon & Starink (eds.), *Redacteuren*, p. 215.

⁷⁰⁷ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 266.

⁷⁰⁸ Cited in Gutman, *Witness*, p. xxxi.

⁷⁰⁹ Gutman, *Witness*, p. xxxii.

⁷¹⁰ Powell & Persico, *Journey*, pp. 281 and 544.

⁷¹¹ Cited in Bert, *Superpower*, p. 105.

in Bosnia. After Vice-President Al Gore had said that the people there had already been fighting each other for five hundred years, Clinton said that it was probably more like a thousand years.⁷¹²

The most recent crises, from the 1990s, were seen as an 'anachronistic tribal war',⁷¹³ one link in a long chain of tribal conflicts.⁷¹⁴ According to Mestrovic, 'tribalism' was probably the term most commonly used by Western journalists, diplomats and politicians to refer to the conflicts in (the former) Yugoslavia in the 1990s.⁷¹⁵ The reference to tribal relations carried an implied connotation of a reference by the civilized world to the world of savages.⁷¹⁶

The view that the Balkans had been the scene of an age-long bitter ethnic conflict, however, was not correct.⁷¹⁷ Bart Tromp rightly commented that the ethnic differences were only a century old.⁷¹⁸ Until the first Yugoslavia there was little conflict. The medieval empires of Croats, Serbs and Bosnians did not fall because they fought each other, but because of internal differences and because the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires swallowed them up. Croats and Serbs then lived largely separately: the first group in the Hapsburg empire; the second in the Ottoman empire. In so far as Serbs were living in Croatian areas, it was mainly in Slavonia and Krajina, where they took upon themselves the defence of Hapsburg empire, and consequently also of the Croats, against the Turks. Only at the end of the nineteenth century would Serbs and Croats in Croatia be set against each other by a Hungarian divide-and-rule policy. Finally, many Slovenians and Croats, including Josip Broz 'Tito', fought in the Austrian-Hungarian army against Serbian forces in World War I. But many Serbian units also fought on the Hapsburg side against Serbs in that war.

There had been conflict for some time between Serbs and Muslims. Serbian peasants in the Ottoman empire were dominated by Muslim landowners, but the domination did not yet have a bloody aspect. In the early nineteenth century the frictions became more clearly visible. Around 1830 and shortly after 1860, the Serbs drove Muslims out of their central area, which they had managed to wrest from the Ottomans, and in so doing boosted an outflow that had already started in 1804.⁷¹⁹ Between 1875 and 1878 Serbian peasants rose up against the Ottoman regime and at the same time against the Islamic upper class in Bosnian society. However, during the first Yugoslavia the Muslims generally chose the Serb side again.

Croats and Serbs first came up against each other in real life-and-death combat in World War II, but it has to be borne in mind that the conditions for this outburst of violence were created mainly by the foreign powers - Germany, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria, which had pushed aside Yugoslavian state authority in April 1941. And during the Pavelic regime the Muslims were reputed to be the cream of his Ustashe state. All things considered, the differences between the peoples of Yugoslavia were not age-old and the region that was later to become Yugoslavia was actually fairly peaceful in comparison with Western Europe.

Some commentators felt that, in terms of long-term or violent conflicts, the West had little right to speak. '[W]hat about the English and French, who fought more or less continuously from 1066 to 1815?', remarked Warren Zimmermann, American ambassador in Belgrade at the time of the outbreak

⁷¹² Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 209.

⁷¹³ Rudolf Gruber, Marjolein Sebregts & Gert van Wijland, 'Acht schorpioenen' ('Eight scorpions'), *Elsevier*, 10/08/91, p. 26.

⁷¹⁴ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. xviii. Cf. the opinions cited in Th. Cushman and S.G. Mestrovic, 'Introduction', idem (ed.), *This Time*, pp. 21, 28 and 38.

⁷¹⁵ Stjepan G. Mestrovic, 'Introduction', idem (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 15.

⁷¹⁶ Cf. Dunja Melcic, 'Aufstieg und Fall Jugoslawiens: Stationen einer europäischen Tragödie', in: Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)erben*, pp. 151-153.

⁷¹⁷ For the criticism of this view see e.g. Fraser, *Yugoslavia*, p. 1; V.P. Gagnon, 'Historical Roots of the Yugoslav Conflict', Esman & Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p. 179; H. Richard Friman, 'Introduction', in: Tomas & Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, p. 4; Naarden, pp. 2-3; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. vii.

⁷¹⁸ Ko Colijn & Paul Rusman, 'Wat moet Nederland met 'Joegoslavië'? ('What should the Netherlands do with 'Yugoslavia?')', *Vrij Nederland*, 31/07/93, p. 12.

⁷¹⁹ See appendix Duyzings, *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnie* (History, Memory and Politics in Eastern Bosnia)

of the Yugoslavian conflict.⁷²⁰ 'Not to mention France during the French Revolution or Germany since 1870'.⁷²¹ 'Considering the record for violence of the members of the European community in this century and the fact that one of them developed the art of ethnic cleansing to its perhaps ultimate degree of technical efficiency, the association of the Balkans with extreme violence is ironical at best', the Balkan expert Robert Hayden remarked.⁷²² Minister Van den Broek probably got closest to the truth at the opening of the Yugoslavia Conference on 7 September 1991 under the auspices of the European Community, when he said with diplomatic courtesy: 'The Yugoslav lands are an age-old battleground for imperial ambitions, religious beliefs, political allegiances and ethnic identities. From this angle, Yugoslav history resembles a microcosm of European history.'⁷²³

There were opinion and policy makers in the West who placed the emphasis not so much on (non-existent) age-long ethnic conflicts, but on the frequency and scale of violence in general, on the 'horror' and the 'barbarity' of the Balkans: 'Dreadful things have always happened in the Balkans, simply because the Balkans are the Balkans.'⁷²⁴ The idea of a long tradition of violence in the Balkans had its supporters in Yugoslavia itself. For instance, the Croatian writer Dubravka Ugresic wrote of the 'culture of sticks, clubs and knives'.⁷²⁵ In his younger years, the nationalist Serbian writer Dobrica Cosic devoted much attention to the cult of the slaughter knife among Serbs.⁷²⁶ And the British Yugoslavia expert John B. Allcock observed that it was not insignificant that the novel in which Vuk Draskovic proclaimed himself leader of Serbian nationalism bore the title *Nož*, which means: 'The knife'.⁷²⁷

Allcock considers the issue of violence in Yugoslavia to be one of the greatest obstacles to understanding the region, and anyone wishing to discuss the subject enters a territory 'where angels fear to tread'.⁷²⁸ Pervasive violence in the Balkans was a central theme of the book *Balkan Ghosts* by the American Robert D. Kaplan, the text of which was completed shortly before the outbreak of the conflict in Yugoslavia, and which was intended as a travel guide.⁷²⁹ However, the book gained an extra dimension because it is said to have made President Clinton cautious about a military intervention in favour of the Bosnian Muslims in 1993. The question remains as to whether this actually was the case. As will become clear later, Clinton would not have needed such a book. Kaplan himself was later also to question this assertion. He writes correctly that there is little in the book about Bosnia. Only a quarter of the book or thereabouts, approximately 75 pages, is about Yugoslavia. Romania is given far more attention. If policy makers were to base their decisions on such a flimsy basis, it would be cause for great concern, Kaplan thought. He is probably right when he writes that Clinton was only looking for an excuse and may have found it in his book, which would actually disappoint Kaplan, who happened to be in favour of military intervention.⁷³⁰

In January 2001, Clinton sent a letter to Kaplan in which he wrote that he had read more into the book than it actually contained.⁷³¹ Nevertheless the book was indeed characterized by the black sides of Yugoslavian history. There is a constant undercurrent of killing and acts of revenge. The blood drips from the pages. The diversity of murders in Yugoslavia appears to be unlimited: with hammers, with nails, with clubs, with axes; by throwing a child in the air and catching it on a knife; by tying

⁷²⁰ Zimmermann, *US*, p. 1.

⁷²¹ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 120-121.

⁷²² Hayden, *Use*, p. 216. Cf. Stojanovic, *Fall*, pp. 141-142

⁷²³ 'Gebruik geweld om problemen op te lossen niet acceptabel' ('using force as a means to solve problems is unacceptable'), *Staatscourant*, 10/09/91.

⁷²⁴ Benard & Schlafer, *Bed*, p. 9.

⁷²⁵ Ugresic, *Nationaliteit*, p. 37; see also pp. 129-130 on the culture of knives and blood.

⁷²⁶ Job, 'Furies', p. 64.

⁷²⁷ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 398 n. 16. See also Naarden appendix, *Beeld en Balkan*.

⁷²⁸ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 381.

⁷²⁹ Kaplan, *Ghosts*, p. ix.

⁷³⁰ Kaplan, *Ghosts*, pp. x-xi.

⁷³¹ Elsbeth Tiedemann, 'Angst als beleidsmaker' ('Fear as policy-maker'), *de Volkskrant*, 24/03/01.

someone to a burning tree trunk;⁷³² with sulphuric acid; and through vampirism.⁷³³ Rapes were also committed in abundance in Yugoslavian history.⁷³⁴ In brief, the book appears to foreshadow the *war porn* that was soon to follow. Everything that was bad, appeared to have its origins in the Balkans: terrorism, the fanaticism of Iranian Fundamentalists and National Socialism.⁷³⁵ Serbs, Croats and others in the Balkans had a closed, tribal character.⁷³⁶ They were prisoners of their own bloodthirsty history, which they repeated endlessly.⁷³⁷ Yugoslavia awaited only the lighting of a new fuse.⁷³⁸

In an attempt to explain the violent nature of the Balkans, reference is made to the repressive character of the Ottoman empire and the cruel punishments imposed by the Ottoman rulers, such as beheading and what was known as impaling - running people through with stakes. A notorious example is the tower of skulls in Nis, which the Turks built after beheading the defeated Serbs there in 1809. There is also a reference to the glamorization of violence through the acceptance of the social banditry practiced by the Serbian *Hajduks*, which was new life breathed into by the Cetniks and partisans of World War II.

Montenegro and Krajina kept their traditions of violence alive through social and cultural circumstances. In Montenegro, where the hostility between the clans was even greater than that shown to the Turks, it became customary in the nineteenth century to cut off the noses of defeated enemies. 'A constant undercurrent of war was as much a part of the Krajina as a low pressure area was to the Azores', *Volkskrant* correspondent Frank Westerman wrote.⁷³⁹ Even before the outbreak of the conflict in Croatia, Raymond van den Boogaard wrote about the belligerent attitude of the Serbs there, which was supposed to be linked to their history of resistance against the Turks.⁷⁴⁰ Anstadt, who generally cannot be accused of Serbia-*bashing*, considers that the Serbs' 'blackguardly past' in the Krajina still rears its ugly head in times of crisis. At the same time, in view of the warlike traditions of the Montenegrins, he says it is 'almost a miracle' that they urged the Bosnian Serbs to cease hostilities during the war in Bosnia.⁷⁴¹

Anyone looking at the history of Yugoslavia and its national predecessors could find an abundance of traditions and incidents that would confirm the violent nature of the societies there. For instance, there were the traditions of vendetta and political attacks, such as the regicide in Serbia in 1903,⁷⁴² of course, Gavrilo Princip's attack on Franz Ferdinand, the attack on Radic, and many others during the First Yugoslavia.⁷⁴³

Various books, with a more or less literary slant, contributed to the image of the Balkans in the West as a traditionally violent society. For Bosnia in particular, the author and winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, Ivo Andric, recorded the culture of violence in his novels and stories, and his books were often referred to as 'a literary blueprint of the passions that plunge the Balkans, and the rest of the world, into madness every few generations, sometimes more often than that'.⁷⁴⁴ Another source of inspiration was *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, the weighty tome about Yugoslavia written in 1941 by the British Rebecca West, who wrote the following about World War I, for example: 'Millions of people

⁷³² Kaplan, *Ghosts*, p. xxi.

⁷³³ Kaplan, *Ghosts*, p. xxii.

⁷³⁴ Kaplan, *Ghosts*, pp. 55, 61

⁷³⁵ Kaplan, *Ghosts*, pp. xxvii and 56-57.

⁷³⁶ Kaplan, *Ghosts*, p. 16.

⁷³⁷ Kaplan, *Ghosts*, pp. xxv and 58.

⁷³⁸ Kaplan, *Ghosts*, p. 7.

⁷³⁹ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 41.

⁷⁴⁰ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Angst voor provocaties Servië' (Fear of Serbian provocations), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/06/91.

⁷⁴¹ Anstadt, *Servië*, p. 116.

⁷⁴² Todorova, *Balkans*, p. 118 attributes great significance to this event in forming an image in the West.

⁷⁴³ See e.g. Johnsen, *Enigma*, pp. 16-18, Michel, *Nations*, p. 204.

⁷⁴⁴ Maas, Neighbor, p. 10. See e.g. also Almond, *War*, pp. 138-139; Beale, *Bombs*, p. 9; Briquemont, *Something*, pp. 18, 33, 175; Cohen, *War*, p. 106; Fraser, *Yugoslavia*, p. 3; Morillon, *Croire*, p. 32; interview F. Briquemont, 22/06/00.

were delivered to the powers of darkness, and nowhere were those powers more cruel than in Serbia.⁷⁴⁵ And there were also the youthful memories of the former communist and dissident Milovan Djilas of the Montenegrin village where he was born, which the English edition's cover blurb says 'was nourished by blood'.⁷⁴⁶ Djilas wrote about what he says was an age-old and perhaps even inborn hatred felt by Montenegrins towards the 'Turks' (read: Muslims), partly because of their alleged wrongful possession of sacred Serbian land since the Battle of Kosovo (the "Field of Blackbirds") in 1389.⁷⁴⁷ He provides a bloody account of a slaughter of unarmed Muslims in Montenegro after a murder that took place shortly after World War I, which was erroneously blamed on Muslims. There was a clear pattern in this slaughter that was to prove prone to repetition seventy years later: 'Faithful to the traditions of their forefathers, the mob murdered only men older than ten - or fifteen or eighteen, according to the killers' mercy. Approximately three-hundred and fifty people were slaughtered, all in a dreadful way. In the midst of looting and arson there were also incidences of rape, until then unheard of among the Montenegrins.'⁷⁴⁸

'One of our villagers, Sekula, went from body to body and severed the Achilles tendons. That is what was done to bullocks in the village after they had been felled with an axe, to prevent them standing up if they came to life again. Some of the people who searched the pockets of the dead found blood-soaked lumps of sugar, which they ate. Babies were taken from the arms of mothers and sisters and slaughtered before their eyes. The murderers later justified their behaviour by saying that they would not have cut their throats but only shot them had their mothers and sisters not been there. The beards of the Muslim clerics were ripped off and crosses were carved in their foreheads (...) A group attacked an isolated Muslim farm. They came across the farmer while he was skinning a lamb. They wanted to shoot him and set fire to the house, but the skinning of the lamb gave them the idea of hanging the farmer by his heels from the same plum tree. A practiced butcher split open the farmer's head with an axe, but very carefully, so that he did not touch the torso. He then cut open the chest. The heart was still beating. The butcher removed it with his hand and threw it to a dog. It was later said that the dog did not touch the heart because even a dog would not eat Turkish flesh.'⁷⁴⁹

Beyond a number of minor reprimands, the government left the perpetrators alone.

The step from an age-old culture of violence to a nature of violence was not so large for some authors. The use of violence seemed to be genetically determined, and so 'Balkan Man' appeared on the scene, cursed with a barbaric disposition. It was an idea that was given credence not only outside the Balkans, but also inside. The moderate Bosnian Muslim Zulfikarpasic, for example, based his prediction of a bloody conflict in Bosnia in the early 1990s on the notion that some nationalities faint at the sight of blood, 'but we in the Balkans become delirious, we become intoxicated'.⁷⁵⁰

The idea that the population of the Balkans was predisposed to violence was first given a pseudo-scientific explanation within Yugoslavia itself by the founder of modern Serbian geography, Jovan Cvijic (1865-1927). Cvijic drew a distinction between various ethnic types in Yugoslavia, one of which was the violent Dinaric people, who were mountain peasants that he held responsible for an ancient tradition of violence in Serbian and Montenegrin history.

⁷⁴⁵ Cited in Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 90.

⁷⁴⁶ Djilas, *Land*.

⁷⁴⁷ Djilas, *Land*, pp. 205 and 212.

⁷⁴⁸ Djilas, *Land*, p. 207.

⁷⁴⁹ Djilas, *Land*, pp. 208-209. Cf. Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 18.

⁷⁵⁰ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, p. 151.

Dinko Tomasic, a Croatian sociologist and United States émigré, propagated this view in a somewhat modified form in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He considered Dinaric behaviour to be a social characteristic of the peoples from the Balkans and around the Urals, which originated in the personality traits of power-crazed and rapacious cattlemen-cum-fighters and had not changed through the centuries since the arrival of Genghis Khan.

At the start of the 1990s, another sociologist of Croatian origin in the United States, Stjepan G. Mestrovic, resurrected Tomasic's ideas from their obscurity. He was supported in this by Slaven Letica, a sociologist from Zagreb, who was also an adviser to the Croatian president Tudjman.⁷⁵¹ They described Dinaric behaviour as barbaric, violent, power hungry, emotionally unbalanced, intolerant, suspicious, deceitful, patriarchal, authoritarian and prepared for self-sacrifice. Because the Dinaric type was identified, albeit not exclusively, but still predominantly, with Serbs and Montenegrins, as opposed to Croats and Slovenians,⁷⁵² their book appeared to be a veiled attempt to create a distinction between more civilized Croats and Slovenians on the one hand and emotionally unbalanced Serbs and Montenegrins on the other. In any case, they felt that Tomasic's publications explained why the Serbs attempted to conquer territory from the Croats, violated human rights in Kosovo, and continued to cling to Communism while the rest of Eastern Europe had abandoned it.⁷⁵³ That they did not base their case on empiricism, they hardly considered to be a shortcoming.⁷⁵⁴ As long as there was some 'insinuating evidence'.⁷⁵⁵

In popularized form, similar ideas are also encountered from other late twentieth century writers on Yugoslavia. Blagojevic and Demirovic, for example, write that it cannot be denied that the southern Slavic war habits were still typified by extreme cruelty.⁷⁵⁶ They blamed this on the constant presence of foreign armies and brigandry that led to a patriarchal-heroic culture, which became almost second nature to the southern Slavs.⁷⁵⁷

However, there is no real evidence for the existence of Balkan Man, born for violence, any more than for the corresponding existence of Lebanon Man because a civil war was raging in that country, or for Tutsi Man because the Tutsis carried out the mass extermination of Hutus. Internal conflicts lead to unexpected outbursts of violence. Between 1861 and 1865, the Americans also surprised themselves with the degree of violence they appeared capable of in a civil war.⁷⁵⁸ More Americans lost their lives in that war than in any foreign war that they fought.⁷⁵⁹ After a long quest for Balkan Man, the Dutch journalist Frank Westerman possibly came closest to his essence:

'Perhaps it is like this: Balkan Man lives inside the heads of the people in the Balkans. He is not in their blood or genes. If he is to live on he must be recreated from generation to generation, and, because this has always happened, it seems that he has crept into the nature of the Balkan peoples.'⁷⁶⁰

The epic tales that glorify the heroic acts, the self-sacrifice and the bloody violence have probably been the most important vehicle from generation to generation for this Balkan mutation.

Just as with assertions of age-long conflicts in the Balkans, assertions of endemic violence in the Balkans beg the question of how much the situation there differed from that in the West. After two world wars, with tens of millions of dead and the extermination of six million Jews, a series of colonial

⁷⁵¹ Mestrovic, *Habits*.

⁷⁵² Mestrovic, *Habits*, pp. 26, 29-30, 36, 38, 42 and 90.

⁷⁵³ Mestrovic, *Habits*, p. 51.

⁷⁵⁴ Mestrovic, *Habits*, pp. viii en 64.

⁷⁵⁵ Mestrovic, *Habits*, p. 56.

⁷⁵⁶ Blagojevic & Demirovic, *Bloedverwanten*, p. 48.

⁷⁵⁷ Idem, p. 61.

⁷⁵⁸ Hayden, *Blueprints*, p. 11.

⁷⁵⁹ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 209.

⁷⁶⁰ Westerman, *Brug*, pp. 196-197.

wars, after the Vietnam War with three million dead, and after the 'clean' Gulf War, it is difficult to raise the 'different-ness' of the Balkans with respect to the use of violence.⁷⁶¹ As the British journalist Anthony Loyd confronted his readers: 'Is dropping fire from aircraft on to civilians in Dresden more acceptable than cutting their throats with a knife in Bosnia? Apparently so.'⁷⁶² The American reporter Peter Maass even expressed a preference for the Bosnian low-tech war. It had:

'the cruel virtue of limiting the carnage each soldier could accomplish. Is a soldier who slits another person's throat more barbaric than a soldier who pushes a button that launches a missile that kills one thousand people? I suspect not. In the pecking order of barbarism, Bosnia's war could be topped.'⁷⁶³

The historian Mark Mazower has pointed out that the discussion of the violence in the Balkans relates not so much to a difference in the scale of violence between the West and the Balkans, as to disgust in the West about what it views as the cruel forms assumed by the violence in Southeastern Europe. That would also explain why the Nazis distanced themselves from certain violent acts in the Balkans during World War II.⁷⁶⁴ And it is why the Italian writer Curzio Malaparte was shocked when Ante Pavelic showed him a basket full of human eyes.⁷⁶⁵ And it is also why Irwin Shaw was appalled in 1964 on seeing a war memorial just over the border between Italy and Slovenia that realistically depicted a partisan running through a German, who is lying at his feet, with a bayonet. There were war memorials throughout Europe, he wrote, 'quietly elegiac or absurdly triumphant, but this one (...) is savagely unique, and perhaps tells us more of the character of the people than they would really wish us to know'.⁷⁶⁶

The humanitarian indignation of the West about cruelty in the Balkans dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century, when such punishments as beheading were being abolished, public executions discouraged and collective punishment declared taboo in Western Europe, while there was an uninterrupted view from the King of Montenegro's palace of Turkish heads drying on poles in the sun.⁷⁶⁷ This divergence of opinions was further reinforced at the end of the twentieth century when the West, at least in the PR sphere, aspired to clean wars, which it had to be possible to see at any hour of the day, even if children were present, on television in people's living rooms. The wars in Yugoslavia transgressed the parental guidance rating of television viewers in the West. This shock was all the more severe because never before had there been a war, not even the 'CNN war' in the Gulf, that had played itself out before the eye of the camera as much as the war in Bosnia.⁷⁶⁸ Originally, the parties under attack both in the Croatian and Bosnian wars imposed hardly any restrictions on journalists. Camera crews stood with their lenses right on top of acts of war.⁷⁶⁹ The Western television viewer was treated to 'prime time horror'.⁷⁷⁰

Allcock also suggests that the cause of the difference between the West and the Balkans is probably mainly that the West has discouraged the 'display' of violence and that violence is applied more professionally and has passed into official hands. The official monopoly on violence has been put into practice less in the Balkans than in the West.⁷⁷¹ The delay in this process of modernization resulted from the fact that parts of this area - Krajina, the fringes of the Ottoman empire, Montenegro with its

⁷⁶¹ Cf. Hayden, *Blueprints*, p. 3.

⁷⁶² Loyd, *War*, p. 141.

⁷⁶³ Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 150.

⁷⁶⁴ Mazower, *Balkans*, pp. 148-149.

⁷⁶⁵ Bell-Fialkoff, 'History', pp. 116-117.

⁷⁶⁶ Cited in: Job, 'Furies', p. 54.

⁷⁶⁷ Djilas, *Land*, p. 10.

⁷⁶⁸ Bell, *Way*, p. 137; Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 126.

⁷⁶⁹ Richter, *Journalisten*, pp. 126-127.

⁷⁷⁰ *Wall Street Journal*, 28/05/92, p. A10, cited in Th. Cushman & S.G. Mestrovic, 'Introduction', idem (ed.), *This Time*, p. 9.

⁷⁷¹ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 383-384. See also Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 210

constantly threatened autonomy - remained border regions for a long time. Society remained, as it were, militarized. This was so during World War II to an extreme extent and remained so after 1945 through the development of the doctrines of the popular and territorial defence. The obvious presence of the military in the communist hierarchy showed that the social differentiation between the section of society that may legitimately make use of violence and the section that may not was not well developed in Yugoslavia. Military values and military expertise were therefore widespread in Yugoslavian society. They were highly regarded and there was no clear distinction between the military and political elites. Allcock's vision is also supported by the view that, in Yugoslavia at the end of the twentieth century, the civic culture of the large cities had not yet gained the upper hand over the culture of the countryside, where a combination of peasant and military values and traditions were held in high esteem.⁷⁷²

Vendetta, which is often put forward as an example of revenge, wilfulness and lack of personal emotional control, is likewise a consequence of the imperfectly developed state system. It would disappear the more the state took over the monopoly on violence; it would reappear in times of declining state authority. In the meantime, vendetta had become a structured social process. It worked to a fixed code; there was no question of wilfulness, it was more of a social obligation.⁷⁷³

Allcock also points out that the question often asked in the West about the conflicts in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, 'How can they do such a thing to their neighbours?' can therefore be answered in part by saying 'Their neighbours would be precisely who they would do it to'. There was a tradition in the Balkans, where people lived on boundary lines and where vendetta was an established custom, to single out the next-door neighbours for action. It has been estimated that in 1989 it was not safe for 17,000 Albanians in Kosovo to set foot outside the door, because of the risk of being involved in a vendetta.⁷⁷⁴

Finally, there was also the revenge against foreign oppressors, which was particularly highly regarded through the esteem in which the social banditry of, for example, the *Hajduks* was held, and which lived on in folklore and provided role models for the use of violence. The glamorization of partisan heroes was an extension of this tradition: 'In this respect, Communism enshrined violence, rather than ending it.'⁷⁷⁵ There was good reason for various paramilitary leaders to hark back to the older role models by referring to themselves as *Vojvoda* or *Cetnik*. In the early 1990s, once the enemy images in which Serbs and Croats saw each other as *Cetniks* and *Ustashi* had become established, the frozen images from the civil strife during World War II served both as role models and a justification for extreme violence.⁷⁷⁶

However, there is evidence that not everyone in Serbia and Montenegro in the early 1990s was affected by the glamorization of the military tradition in Serbian literature, in that in the summer of 1991 many thousands of Serbian and Montenegrin young people and reservists dodged military service and even fled the country, and mothers organized protest meetings to demand their sons' release from the JNA.⁷⁷⁷

Like the myth of age-old ethnic conflicts, the reputation of endemic violence in the region worked to the advantage of the nationalists in Yugoslavia who were trying to prevent intervention by the West. From the top to the bottom, the cry of war appeared to fulfil this function for the Bosnian-Serb politicians and soldiers. For instance, the Belgian journalist Dirk Draulans recorded the following from the mouth of a Bosnian-Serb commander: 'No one can defeat us (...) because of all the peoples in

⁷⁷² Dimitrios Kyriakou, 'Civil Society and Civil War in Bosnia', in: Danopoulos & Zirker (eds.), *Relations*, p. 248.

⁷⁷³ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 389.

⁷⁷⁴ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 175.

⁷⁷⁵ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 393.

⁷⁷⁶ Hayden, 'Use', p. 214.

⁷⁷⁷ Cf. Blaine Harden, 'Thousands of Serbs Evade Call-Ups; Young Men Hide From Military Service in Yugoslav Crisis', *The Washington Post*, 25/07/91.

the world we love war the most.'⁷⁷⁸ A Bosnian-Serb official said to the American journalist David Rieff: 'Wait until the coffins start coming back from Bosnia'. 'You are not a strong nation any more. You cannot stand the idea of your children dying. But we Serbs can look at death. We are not afraid. That is why we will beat you even if you come to help these Turks you love so much.'⁷⁷⁹

The Western media accepted too easily the assertions of the nationalists in Yugoslavia that the bloody history of the past explained everything. Because no violence had broken out in Europe for decades, it did appear that the roots of the extreme violence that were starting to sprout in Yugoslavia must lie in the distant past, in memories and historical analogies.⁷⁸⁰ The adjective therefore used to describe the cruelty that took place in the former Yugoslavia was often 'medieval'.⁷⁸¹ With this inflated view of history, the media helped accentuate the ethnic nature of the conflicts and they had no regard for the fact that the background to the disputes was so much more varied and could be interpreted in so many other ways.⁷⁸²

Not only did the media help legitimize the conflict in this way, they also offered a justification for not intervening.⁷⁸³ According to the senior American diplomat Richard Holbrooke, this fallacy of age-long tribal conflict between Serbs, Croats and Muslims largely determined the Washington government's policy on the conflict until the mid 1990s.⁷⁸⁴ The same applied to the notion that cruelty was part of the natural state of the Balkan people.⁷⁸⁵ The idea that the governments and population in the Balkans were more primitive and more violent than those in the West discouraged many a government from involving its 'boys and girls' in an attempt to bring the conflict in the former Yugoslavia under control.⁷⁸⁶ If the violence had already persisted for centuries, one also had to wonder how long the conflict would last this time. The American military expert and political scientist Edward Luttwak was of the opinion that the international community would be well advised to abandon the former Yugoslavian areas to their fate, in view of the fact that the level of civilization of the population groups fighting in Bosnia was so low that they could well continue massacring each other for a century.⁷⁸⁷

However, Holbrooke himself demonstrated that such a representation does not necessarily have to infer remaining aloof, when he wrote the following about a quarrel between Tudjman and Izetbegovic: 'An aspect of the Balkan character was revealed anew: once enraged, these leaders needed outside supervision to stop them from self-destruction.'⁷⁸⁸ For some commanders of the UN forces on the ground, the tradition of violence actually offered the argument that force could be used because that was precisely the language that people understood in the Balkans.⁷⁸⁹

Views on multi-ethnicity

The assumed inevitability of ethnic conflict was also not accepted by everyone in the West. We have already seen that this applied to a large proportion of senior civil servants in the Netherlands Ministry

⁷⁷⁸ Draulans, *Mirjana*, p. 95.

⁷⁷⁹ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 160.

⁷⁸⁰ Cf. Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 2.

⁷⁸¹ See e.g. Fisher, 'Ethics', p. 58. Criticism on this e.g. in Pfaff, 'Invitation', p. 97

⁷⁸² For a bitter indictment of this 'help' from the international media to the 'savages' who caused the war in Yugoslavia, see Nenad Fiser, 'Dance macabre van Western media', *de Helling* 6(1993)3, pp.19-21; Garrison Walters, 'The Future of History in the Balkans', in: Thomas & Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, pp. 43-44; cf. Chuck Sudetic, 'The Crime and the Witness', in: Haviv, *Blood*, p. 11.

⁷⁸³ Zimmermann, *US*, p. 1.

⁷⁸⁴ Holbrooke, *War*, p. 23.

⁷⁸⁵ Cf. Pfaff, 'Invitation', p. 99.

⁷⁸⁶ Todorova, *Imagining*, p. 185; Holbrooke, *War*, p. 23; Th. Cushman and S.G. Mestrovic, 'Introduction', idem (ed.), *This Time*, p. 23.

⁷⁸⁷ Cited in Mock (Hg.), *Balkan-Dossier*, pp. 84-85.

⁷⁸⁸ Holbrooke, *To End*, p. 165.

⁷⁸⁹ See e.g. Major, *Autobiography*, p. 542.

of Foreign Affairs after Van Walsum unleashed the discussion on Yugoslavia's internal borders. Perhaps the Dutch who lived in the era of 'pillarization' of their own society could have understood something of the situation where Muslims and Serbs lived both alongside and in opposition to each other. And perhaps the Dutch from the colonial East Indies, where society was divided into Europeans, Indonesians, and Chinese, with Indo-Europeans as a sort of in-between category, could have understood something about strict separation. But not the Dutch from the post-pillarization Netherlands, where the multicultural society had been raised to the highest political importance, and where the white culture was still sufficiently dominant to create the expectation that it would eventually overrun or overwhelm all other cultures on Dutch soil.⁷⁹⁰

As the Dutch Minister Van den Broek said in the Dutch Lower House on 21 November 1991, a political solution was being sought for Yugoslavia that also introduced in the Balkans the notion that, as such, multinational states are an idea of the current time. In other words, different ethnic factions living together within one national unit (...) should be considered part of the normal, civilized practice of the current time.⁷⁹¹ What applied to Yugoslavia as a whole, and at that time to Croatia in particular, also applied later specifically to Bosnia-Herzegovina. On 21 October 1994, the European Affairs Department of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs was able to proudly note: 'The Bosnian government's endeavour to maintain Bosnia-Herzegovina as a single multicultural national unit has always enjoyed the warm support of the Netherlands.'⁷⁹²

There was great intransigence regarding ethnic separation, especially among American opinion and policy makers. There were a number of reasons for this. If the process of ethnic homogenization was not halted, it would be imitated in the rest of Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union.⁷⁹³ Many also thought that a compromise would seriously erode the standards and values that the West attempted to uphold. In this sense, the process could even represent a moral undermining of Western Europe.⁷⁹⁴ Americans could say this all the easier because they could all too easily equate the multi-ethnicity of their own society, 'the most successful multiethnic country in the world',⁷⁹⁵ which had been created through immigration, with the multi-ethnicity that either existed or must be preserved or created in Yugoslavia, and in particular in Bosnia.⁷⁹⁶ As Senator Joseph R. Biden of Delaware presented to his audience early in 1991: 'They [the United States] have more people with greater ethnic diversity than you have in the country of Yugoslavia, and they live very, very well. There is some magic about America that seems to be missing in other parts of the world...'⁷⁹⁷ 'Lord of Mercy', sighed Clinton to journalists, 'there's 150 different racial and ethnic groups in Los Angeles County...'⁷⁹⁸ If this attitude was not enough to lead to military intervention, then at least it would lead to sympathy for the Bosnian government, which was assumed to be a supporter of a multi-ethnic society.⁷⁹⁹ Warren Zimmermann, American ambassador in Belgrade at the outbreak of the Yugoslavian conflict, considered that, with the exception of Japan, all states in the world were multi-ethnic. 'History does not favour the nation-state concept (...) If stability cannot be constructed on a multinational principle, (...) then the twenty-first century will be an unstable time for us all.'⁸⁰⁰

What was at least as fatal as the overaccentuation of ethnic differences to the West's assessment of the conflict in Yugoslavia was the lack of attention to internal differences within the ethnic groups.

⁷⁹⁰ Cf. Karahasan, *Sarajevo*, p. 54; Westerman, *Brug*, p. 25.

⁷⁹¹ TK, 1991-1992, Proceedings, p. 1647.

⁷⁹² ABZ, DPV/ARA/00797. Memorandum DEU to Van Mierlo, 21/10/94 no. 837.

⁷⁹³ See e.g. Pfaff, *'Invitation'*, pp. 97-99 and 105-106.

⁷⁹⁴ Pfaff, *'Invitation'*, p. 107.

⁷⁹⁵ Zimmermann, *'US'*, p. 4. Similar in Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 218 and 244. See also Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 10: 'the most successful multicultural society in history'.

⁷⁹⁶ Cf. Kumar, *Divide*, p. 144 n. 19.

⁷⁹⁷ United States Senate, Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Strife*, p. 131.

⁷⁹⁸ The editors, 'The Abdication', in: Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 172.

⁷⁹⁹ See e.g. Pfaff, *'Invitation'*, p. 104.

⁸⁰⁰ Zimmermann, *'US'*, p. 4.

For instance, the Serbs were a far less homogeneous group than the leaders in Belgrade liked to pretend. History has shown that one quarter of the Hapsburg army that invaded Serbia in 1914 consisted of Serbs from Krajina.⁸⁰¹ The enormous problems that arose in 1991 with the turnout of conscripts in Serbia for the 'brotherly assistance' to their fellow-sufferers in Croatia were typical. This was precisely the reason that the political effect of the West's weak and poorly monitored sanctions on Serbia on account of the Bosnian Serbs' behaviour could be so significant, because Milosevic realized that the willingness in Serbia to suffer for the brothers on the other side of the Drina was not great.

Image forming and intervention: the Balkans as the powder keg of Europe

In addition to the fear of the violence that was considered possible within Yugoslavia, there was fear in the West of an international escalation resulting from conflicts there. The idea that the Balkans was the powder keg or the hotbed of Europe goes back as far as the nineteenth century.⁸⁰² A simplistic historical account has it that World War I was ushered in by the shot fired in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip on 28 June 1914, which killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the crown prince of Austria-Hungary, and which according to the historical image was heard throughout the world. As the American journalist John Gunther, who was popular at the time, wrote in his *Inside America*: 'It is an intolerable affront to human and political nature that these wretched and unhappy little countries in the Balkan peninsula can, and do, have quarrels that cause world wars.'⁸⁰³ Some people considered that almost eighty years later Sarajevo could again play its nation-destroying role.⁸⁰⁴ 'Everything came back to the surface and personally I saw the ghost of August 1914 rise again', wrote Minister of Foreign Affairs Roland Dumas with a sense of drama.⁸⁰⁵

The comparison between Sarajevo in 1914 and Sarajevo in 1991/1992 was rather meaningless, however. Europe was not 'a tinderbox awaiting a light' as it was in 1914.⁸⁰⁶ In 1914 it was not so much that the Balkans was the powder keg, but that a fuse was placed there by two powerful alliances, on the one hand France, Great Britain and Russia, and on the other Germany, Austria-Hungary and, in theory, Italy. The powder keg itself existed primarily in Western Europe. Alliances that would facilitate an escalation and chain reactions, such as in 1914, did not exist in 1991. In 1914 war was not excluded as a means by the great powers; in the early 1990s they actually went to great lengths to avoid being drawn in.⁸⁰⁷

The powder keg argument could be used for various political objectives: non-intervention to avoid giving the powder keg a chance to explode, *containment*, or, conversely, intervention, to avoid a

⁸⁰¹ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 185.

⁸⁰² 'Afsplitsing' ('Separation'), *de Volkskrant*, 27/06/91; Larrabee (ed.), *Powder Keg*, p. xi; Peter Michielsen, 'Breuk Joegoslavische federatie maakt van Balkan weer kruitvat' ('Breach in Yugoslav Federation makes Balkans powder keg once more'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/07/91; James Baker, cited in: 'VS en Europa achten situatie zeer bedreigend' ('US and Europe regard situation as highly threatening'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/06/91; Nicole Lucas, 'Buren van Joegoslavië houden het kruit droog' ('Yugoslavia's neighbours keep their powder dry'), *Trouw*, 23/07/91; Weithmann, *Brandbaard*, p. 10; Crnobrnja, *Drama*, p. xii; Naarden, *Beeld en Balkan*; Papoulia, 'Balkan', p. 197; Peternel, *Joegoslavië*, p. 49; Simic, 'Europe', p. 4; Todorova, 'Balkans', p. 475. See e.g. also the six articles on the Balkans in *Elsevier*, 27/06/92, that were illustrated with a cartoon of a bomb with a burning fuse. and the words 'The Balkans Hotbed'; H. Lenselink, 'Buiten onze grenzen' ('Beyond our borders'), *De Banier*, 22/08/91, p. 12; Marcel van Lingen, 'Bonden lakoniek over actie Joegoslavië' ('Alliances laconic about action on Yugoslavia'), *Het Parool*, 06/06/00.

⁸⁰³ John Gunther, *Inside Europe*, New York 1940, p. 437.

⁸⁰⁴ See e.g. Strausz-Hupé, 'Rendez-vous'; Willem Wansink, 'Kruitvat Sarajevo' ('Powder keg Sarajevo'), *Elsevier*, 27/06/92, p. 37.

⁸⁰⁵ Original: 'Tout revenait au jour et, personnellement je voyais ressurgir le spectre d'août 1914', Dumas, *Fil*, p. 352.

⁸⁰⁶ Pfaff, 'Invitation', p. 107.

⁸⁰⁷ Cf. Niall Ferguson, 'Europe Nervosa', Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, pp. 131-132; Pierre Hassner, 'From War and Peace to Violence and Intervention. Permanent Moral Dilemmas under Changing Political and Technological Conditions', in: Moore (ed.), *Choices*, p. 14; Larrabee, 'Memories', pp. 71-72; Papoulia, 'Balkan', pp. 198-199; H.J.A. Hofland, 'Een zwerm spoken' ('A swarm of ghosts'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/91; H.L. Wesseling, 'Sarajevo 1914-1994', *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/07/94; Frans Altling von Geusau, 'Joegoslavië kan niet uiteenvallen' ('Yugoslavia cannot fall apart'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/08/91; Jacques Rupnik, 'Les enjeux internationaux', Rupnik (ed.), *Sarajevo*, p. 115.

world conflagration.⁸⁰⁸ It was, for example, the argument that Van Eekelen used for dispatching a WEU peacekeeping force.⁸⁰⁹

Many mentioned the fear that the war in the former Yugoslavia would spread from Croatia and Bosnia to, for example, Kosovo and Macedonia, and then move on by involving, for example, Albania and Greece, and then would spread throughout the Balkans.⁸¹⁰ This argument weighed heavily with Van den Broek: "Those who have read the history of the Balkans know how unpredictable the area is. How it can escalate."⁸¹¹

There were also fears that the balkanization of Yugoslavia would be imitated elsewhere, for example in the (former) Soviet Union. Van den Broek, for example, was an adherent of this view: "This conflict has within it the danger of a risky escalation. My thoughts turn to such places as the Moldovas, the Nagorno-Karabakhs, the Ossetias and the Abkhazias. Coming events cast their shadows if we accept what is happening in Yugoslavia. And we will just have to wait how the situation develops between Russia and the Ukraine regarding Crimea."⁸¹²

The late twentieth-century counterpart of the powder keg was the 'hornets' nest', a much used metaphor in the media for the conflict-torn (former) Yugoslavia, which implied that the West would be better to stay outside, unless they wanted to be stung.⁸¹³ The hornets' nest metaphor was also used among policy makers. For instance, back in July 1991, the Eastern Europe Department of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked whether the countries of the European Community would 'venture deeper into this hornets' nest', should the conflict in Yugoslavia escalate further.⁸¹⁴

⁸⁰⁸ Cf. Caroline de Gruyter, 'Wachten op een Churchill' ('Waiting for a Churchill'), *Elsevier*, 15/08/92, p. 32.

⁸⁰⁹ TV, Nederland 3, *NOS Laat*, 16/09/91, 10.30 p.m.

⁸¹⁰ See for example Van Eekelen, *Security*, pp. 141-142; Major, *Autobiography*, p. 535; Moore, 'Aspects', pp. 38-42; Voorhoeve in: Huib Goudriaan, 'Toekijken werkt als boemerang' ('Looking on will rebound like a boomerang'), *Trouw*, 17/11/92; Manfred Wörner in: Herbert Kremp, 'Wir müssen den grossen Balkankrieg verhindern', *Die Welt*, 25/01/93; R. Gutman, 'Q and A. Why are Yugoslavia's people fighting each other?', *Newsday*, 12/07/99; Warren Christopher, cited in: Gutman, *Witness*, p. xxxviii; Caroline de Gruyter, 'De Turken komen', *Elsevier*, 01/02/92, p. 32-33; Hans Van den Broek in: Leonoor Meijer, 'Joegoslavië gruwelijke voorbode' ('Yugoslavia a terrible omen'), *Trouw*, 12/06/92 en in: Leonard Ornstein, 'Minister Van den Broek: 'Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg'' ('Minister Van den Broek: "I'd say start with a shot across the bow"'), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 10; Caroline de Gruyter, 'Smeulend vuur in Kosovo' ('Smouldering fire in Kosovo'), *Elsevier*, 18/07/92, p. 31; Auke Kok & Bart Rijs, 'Oorlog of vrede' ('War or peace'), *HP/De Tijd*, 11/09/92, pp. 22 and 24; Frans van Deijl and Auke Kok, 'Mission impossible', *HP/De Tijd*, 21/08/93, p. 16; B. Rijs, 'Meneer de president' ('Mister President'), *HP/De Tijd*, 05/02/93, pp. 14-20; W.F. van Eekelen in: 'Europese veiligheid in een veranderende wereld. Speech given at the general meeting on 28 October 1992 in Soesterberg', *Carré*, 16(1993)1, p. 11; M. van den Doel in: Michiel Zonneveld, 'Actie in Joegoslavië kan jaren duren' ('Action in Yugoslavia could take years'), *Het Parool*, 10/06/92; Bart Tromp, 'Derde Balkanoorlog is in voorbereiding' ('Third Balkan War in the making'), *Het Parool*, 01/08/92.

⁸¹¹ Interview Van den Broek, 15/11/99.

⁸¹² Leonard Ornstein, 'Minister Van den Broek: "Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg"', *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 10.

⁸¹³ Anstadt, *Scheuren*, p. 136; Nicole Lucas, 'Joegoslavië is niet meer', ('Yugoslavia is no more') *Trouw*, 26/06/91; idem, 'Serviërs en Kroaten koesteren oud zeer', *Trouw*, 11/07/91; Z.R. Dittrich in: Steven de Vogel, 'Zeven argumenten om Joegoslavië heel te houden' ('Seven arguments for keeping Yugoslavia together'), *Vrij Nederland*, 13/07/91, p. 7; Peter Michilesen, 'Bosnië meegesleurd in kolkend conflict' ('Bosnia dragged into fermenting conflict'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/07/91; Meijers, 'Joegoslavië', pp. 157, 158 and 160; Bob van den Bos, 'Strategische keuzen in ons buitenlands beleid' ('Strategic choices in our foreign policy'), *Idee*, 14(1993)(September) p. 11; Frans van Deijl & Auke Kok, 'Mission impossible', *HP/De Tijd*, 21/08/93, p. 18; Willem Wansink, 'Kruitvat Sarajevo' ('Powderkeg Sarajevo'), *Elsevier*, 27/06/92, p. 37; retired serviceman J. Scholten in EV, 'Militair ingrijpen. Was het de moeite waard?' ('Military intervention: Was it worth it?'), *Vrij Nederland*, 15/08/92, p. 10; Colonel A.W. van Koeveringe (ret.) in: Remco Meijer, 'Een harde job' ('A tough job'), *Elsevier*, 22/08/92, p. 32. Weisglas in: Jan van der Ven, 'Ingrijpen in Servië voor CDA al reëel' ('Intervention in Serbia a realistic prospect for CDA'), *Het Parool*, 15/06/92; the Chairman of the General Federation of Military Personnel B. Snoep in: Marcel van Lingen, 'Bonden lakoniek over actie Joegoslavië', *Het Parool*, 06/06/92; Bart Tromp, 'Derde Balkanoorlog is in voorbereiding' ('Third Balkan war on the way'), *Het Parool*, 01/08/92. Moreover, the 'hornets' nest' metaphor for Serbia was also used shortly after World War I, Todorova, *Balkans*, p. 120. A less common label for Yugoslavia was 'snake pit', see e.g. Voorhoeve in: Bayer, 'Noodzaak', p. 5.

⁸¹⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03283. EU/GBVB/extra CoPo 1991, memo from DEU/OE, 'Joegoslavië/scenario's en beleidsmogelijkheden' for Extra CoPo, The Hague 19/07/91, 18/07/91.

Non-intervention, however, could lead to recriminations framed in other historical analogies. In discussions on whether or not to intervene in Yugoslavia, comparisons were repeatedly drawn with the aloofness of the West at the time of Nazi Germany's expansionism: with the appeasement of Munich in 1938, the unwillingness to die for Gdansk⁸¹⁵ and the Western non-intervention policy during the Spanish civil war.⁸¹⁶

Image forming and intervention: the misconceptions surrounding the partisan conflict

Likewise, the quagmire was a regularly recurring metaphor for the situation in Bosnia.⁸¹⁷ It was most commonly used by those who feared that by supplying troops the West would sink into a guerrilla war.

One of the historical analogies that cropped up frequently in the intervention debate at the end of the twentieth century was concerned with assertions about the difficulties that German troops were said to have had in Yugoslavia half a century earlier during World War II because of the strength of the partisan resistance. It was not only an argument *pour besoin de la cause*. Genuine supporters of intervention also felt shaken by the argument that Tito's partisans in the hilly and wooded territory had succeeded in restraining twenty German divisions.⁸¹⁸

Some even went further than the number of twenty divisions. The Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs W. Claes said on Dutch television in December 1992: 'If you consider that during World War II more than forty German divisions, armed to the teeth, were powerless to control the area, then one has to think twice [before resorting to military intervention].'⁸¹⁹ And Lieutenant Colonel M. van den Doel, who was affiliated with the Clingendael institute for international relations for security and defence issues, even thought that the Germans had lost six divisions in trying to overrun Serbia from Croatia.⁸²⁰

The comparison did not hold true. It led both to underestimating the West's own strength and overestimating the danger to be feared from the Serbian side. To start with, the historical 'facts' are flawed. In the first place, as stated in the 'Previous history' section of this report, the Germans had easily crushed the Yugoslavian army in 1941. Secondly, the German military force in Yugoslavia during World War II was not as large as some assumed. If all units had been at full strength, at some point they would have had 36,000 men in Serbia and Croatia together, 16,000 men plus a few Bulgarian and Croatian divisions in Bosnia, and 12,000 in Albania. Including Croatian and other units, the number of troops did not exceed one hundred thousand.⁸²¹ Until the summer of 1943 there were only four, low quality, German divisions in Yugoslavia. Two reserve divisions were added in August of that year. When, one month later, the Italians withdrew from the war, the Germans doubled their military force

⁸¹⁵ See for example Cohen, *War*, p. 136; Weithmann, *Brandhaard*, p. 7; 'Bosnië een tweede "München"' ('Bosnia a second Munich'), *CD/Actueel*, 13(1993) (15 May) p. 11; Van den Broek in: Theo Brinkel, 'Europa mag nooit op geweten hebben dat moslims van kaart worden geveegd' ('Europe must never have the decimation of the Muslims on its conscience'), *CD/Actueel*, 29/01/94, p. 13; American senator Pat Moynihan, cited in G.F. Will, 'How Can We Help End Bosnia's War?', *Newsday*, 11/08/92; Sharp, *Balkans*, p. 19.

⁸¹⁶ See e.g. J.G. Delfgaauw, 'Bosnia', *HP/De Tijd*, pp. 6-7.

⁸¹⁷ E.g. Rick Kuethé, 'De oorlog als moeras' ('The war as quagmire'), *Elsevier*, 22/08/92, pp. 34-35; Hans Righart, 'Het Bosnische moeras' ('The Bosnian quagmire'), *HP/De Tijd*, 16/04/93, p. 15; J.H. Sampiemon, 'In Bihac klinkt echo van 1914' ('The echo of 1914 sounds in Bihac'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/11/94; Tromp, *Verraad*, pp. 39 (12/08/92) and 63 and 65 (31/03/93).

⁸¹⁸ See for example R. Gutman, 'Q and A. Why are Yugoslavia's people fighting each other?', *Newsday*, 12/07/92; De Kok: 'Hitler had many divisions there, he could never really keep control of the situation.', Radio 1, IKON, *De andere wereld van zondagmorgen*, 10/05/92, 9.30 a.m.; Dr Paul Hoekink: 'Demokratie kun je niet afdwingen met militair ingrijpen' ('You can't enforce democracy with military intervention.'), *Tribune* 29(1993)2 p. 14; General C. de Jager (ret.) in: Remco Meijer, 'Een harde job', *Elsevier*, 22/08/92, p. 33; the Chairman of the General Federation of Military Personnel B. Snoep in: Marcel van Lingen, 'Bonden lakoniek over actie Joegoslavië', *Het Parool*, 06/06/00.

⁸¹⁹ TV, Nederland 3, NOS, *Het Capitoel*, 06/12/92, 12.00 noon. Flounders, *Tragedy*, p. 6 refers to 43 divisions. See also Simms, *Hour*, pp. 285-286.

⁸²⁰ Michiel Zonneveld, 'Actie in Joegoslavië kan jaren duren', *Het Parool*, 10/06/92.

⁸²¹ Van Eekelen, *Security*, p. 145.

in Yugoslavia to thirteen divisions.⁸²² They were either second-rate divisions or divisions that used Yugoslavia as a recuperation area after engagements on the Eastern front.⁸²³ Only the *1. Gebirgs Division* rose above the low level. Nevertheless, the German second-rate troops managed to make things very hard for the partisans.⁸²⁴

Furthermore, the comparison as such was inaccurate. In the early 1990s a military force would have had to control a much smaller area than the Germans in World War II in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, if it had been deployed against the Serbs, such an intervention force could have relied on the sympathy of the Croats and Muslims. As a troop separation force, an international unit in the early 1990s would also have had a moral advantage over the German occupying force in World War II. It is remarkable how little the moral advantage of the peacekeeping force in the early 1990s was weighed against the national-socialist and fascist military presence half a century earlier.⁸²⁵ As if the United Nations is equivalent to Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy. Almost half a century after World War II, the Western troops, albeit with all their limitations, could also have made more use of the airspace than the Germans could have done.⁸²⁶ Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s was also much more accessible than half a century earlier, so that the area had become less suitable for guerrilla-type operations. This was even more so for the areas in Croatia. Something else that many overlooked was that what was referred to as the success of the partisan fighting was a myth that had been nourished by Western politicians from the early 1950s to justify extending large credits to the communist Tito.⁸²⁷

Finally, the morale of the Serbian troops was generally low and could certainly not stand comparison with that of Tito's partisans. They had few internal difficulties as long as they were able to shell cities such as Vukovar, Dubrovnik and Sarajevo, but as soon as they were confronted with a resolute and mobile opponent, their resistance easily caved in, both in Croatia and Bosnia.⁸²⁸ Because the Bosnian-Serb army was dependent on its fire power, guerrilla-operations were less appropriate than for the Cetniks and partisans in World War II.

A large error of judgment in the West was that many saw the paramilitaries as (potential) guerrillas.⁸²⁹ Their effectiveness was limited, however. They behaved faint-heartedly by usually only operating under the cover of the regular troops and they were often undisciplined and drunk.⁸³⁰ There was no truth in the idea that a guerrilla war was in progress in Yugoslavia similar to the World War II partisan conflict. The Bosnian Serbs mainly made use of artillery, either to prepare for ethnic cleansing, or shelling for the purpose of creating terror. The paramilitary factions were not conducting a guerrilla conflict, but they mishandled, murdered and plundered in areas that were shot to a pulp or surrounded, against an often defenceless population, with consequently extremely modest losses among the paramilitaries. A UN military observer pointed out to journalist David Rieff that the paramilitaries' extensive weaponry, including entire sets of knives, may have appeared impressive at first sight, but was ineffective in a military sense: '(...) such gear was for killing civilians, not enemy soldiers. If (...) the Serbs had believed that they were going to face people who could effectively shoot back, they would have carried more ammunition and fewer weapons(...)'.⁸³¹ This is consistent with a report written in

⁸²²Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 216; Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 208.

⁸²³Almond, *War*, p. 140.

⁸²⁴ See also Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 208.

⁸²⁵ An exception is Strobe Talbott, 'America Abroad. Why Bosnia Is Not Vietnam', *Time*, 24/08/92, p. 49.

⁸²⁶ Anthony Farrar-Hockley, 'Niet ingrijpen is ook partij kiezen' ('Non-intervention is also taking sides'), *Het Parool*, 05/01/93.

⁸²⁷ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, pp. 154-155.

⁸²⁸ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 408; Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 284. Cf. Tromp, '*Conflict*', p. 38.

⁸²⁹ See e.g. the reference to the Serbian paramilitaries in Croatia as guerrillas in 'Van den Broek paste nog snel toespraak aan' ('Van den Broek amended speech at last minute'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/09/91; 'Lord Carrington krijgt leiding van vredesconferentie' ('Lord Carrington to chair peace conference'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/09/91.

⁸³⁰ Cf. Philip J. Cohen, 'Ending the war and securing peace in former Yugoslavia', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 33; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 214.

⁸³¹ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 157.

August 1992 to the American Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in which the Bosnian-Serb soldiers were described as 'a force of essentially cowardly attackers'.⁸³² The paramilitaries may well have operated with the help of local radical Serbs and their militias, but they did not operate for long periods in a territory where they would depend on the support of the population like fish in water - according to the Maoist guerrilla doctrine. On the contrary, the so-called guerrillas in the former Yugoslavia at the end of the twentieth century actually drove the population out of the territory through ethnic cleansing.

The often-made remark that all Yugoslavs were trained in territorial and civil defence and were therefore formidable opponents, capable of engaging in a heavy guerrilla conflict, calls for a number of comments. The territorial and civil defences were myths created by Yugoslavia after 1968 in the hope of deterring a Soviet invasion like the one in Czechoslovakia. In reality, the territorial and civil defence were makeshift solutions that were necessary because Yugoslavia's economic weakness prevented it building up conventional armed forces to the required level.⁸³³

And the regular army behaved in just as 'cowardly' a way as the paramilitaries. It did little more than operate artillery at a safe distance while leaving the dirty work to the irregulars. One of the few reports from the ECMM (the European monitoring mission) to contain policy advice referred in so many words to the cowardly nature of the JNA. A report leaked to the press proved that the ECMM considered that the federal army must be made to understand that ships could not shell cities with impunity and that gunners ran the risk of being hit themselves if they fired on hospitals. In the Netherlands, Bart Tromp, who fully supported this analysis, repeatedly stated that the martial reputation of the Serbs was incompatible with the known facts about the shelling. He also stated that the Serbian aggression of the 1990s shrivelled to 'the ranting of a drunk', as soon as the Serbs were confronted with trained and well-armed soldiers.⁸³⁴

Tromp correctly remarks that those who referred to the strength of the partisan resistance in World War II overlooked the current power relationships. Tromp challenged people such as Kissinger, who spoke of 35 German divisions in Yugoslavia during World War II, to explain to him how it could be, half a year after the start of the war, that the shabby government troops in Bosnia had still not been overpowered by opponents who were far better armed 'and were reputed to be the heirs of the partisans'.⁸³⁵

In the United States, any reference to possible guerrilla warfare evoked alarming visions of the lost war in Vietnam. The general conviction in the United States was that American ground forces would never again be put in such a hopeless situation as in the 1960s and 1970s in Vietnam.⁸³⁶ President Bush Sr. and his immediate advisers were said to be 'traumatized' by the thought of a new Vietnam.⁸³⁷ Bush's successor, Clinton, his Secretary of State Warren Christopher and the American army top were equally unwilling to become embroiled in a 'second Vietnam' through American participation in military intervention.⁸³⁸ 'That the Balkans had the look and feel of a Vietnam-like quagmire did not help to stiffen spines in our government', Christopher said.⁸³⁹ The Washington government's fear was also felt by a large part of the American population. When asked in January 1993

⁸³² United States Senate, *Cleansing*, p. 29.

⁸³³ Suilen, 'Interventie', p. 170.

⁸³⁴ Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 38. See also *ibid.*, pp. 25-26, 33 and 39. For a similar position see Sharp, *Balkans*, p. 7.

⁸³⁵ Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 47 (30/09/92).

⁸³⁶ See e.g. Bert, *Superpower*, p. xxiii; Callahan, *Wars*, p. 192; R. Howell, 'Outrage. At UN Pressure For Armed Reply', *Newsday*, 07/08/92; Stjepan G. Mestrovic, 'Introduction', *idem* (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 13; Thompson, *House*, p. 325.

⁸³⁷ Zimmermann, 'US', p. 3; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 215. For the influence of the Vietnam trauma on the Bush policy on Bosnia, see also Bert, *Superpower*, pp. 107-123. See further the quote from Bush in Warren P. Strobel, 'The Media and U.S. Policies Toward Intervention. A Closer Look at the 'CNN Effect'', Crocker/Hampson with Aall (eds.), *Chaos*, p. 367: 'I do not want to see the United States bogged down in any way into some guerrilla warfare. We lived through that once.' For the influence of Vietnam on Eagleburger's Bosnia policy, see Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 214.

⁸³⁸ 'Vance en Owen stuiten op verzet regering-Clinton' ('Vance and Owen encounter resistance from Clinton administration'), *de Volkskrant*, 03/02/93.

⁸³⁹ Christopher, *Chances*, p. 252.

whether sending American troops to Bosnia would lead to a war more like the one in Vietnam or more like the Gulf War, 41 per cent said that Bosnia would turn into a Vietnam-like situation; 47 per cent opted for the analogy with the Gulf War and four per cent expected that a war in Bosnia would be unlike either of the earlier conflicts.⁸⁴⁰ But the parallel with the Vietnam war was drawn outside America too.⁸⁴¹ This was a fear that was consciously exploited by the leaders in Belgrade and Karadzic.⁸⁴²

Here too, the comparison would not stand up. Unlike the Hanoi regime in the Vietnam war during the Cold War, Serbia could not count on the wholesale support of Russia or China. Milosevic's regime was virtually isolated internationally. Nationalism had strongly motivated the Vietcong, but the enthusiasm to fight for a Greater Serbia was, as we have seen, considerably less strong.⁸⁴³

Finally there was concern among Americans for a situation resembling the one that followed the attack on American soldiers in Beirut in 1983, in which 241 marines died, after which domestic public opinion forced the American government to withdraw its troops.

The Yugoslavian army was often described at the start of the war as the second or third largest in Europe. This was also a myth. A comparison with the armed forces in a number of European countries in 1990 proves that the JNA was closer to the tenth than the third or fourth place. The regular army (without the territorial defence) comprised 180,000 men. This was less than the armies in the Soviet Union, Turkey, East Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Great Britain, Spain or Czechoslovakia. In numbers of tanks it trailed the Soviet Union, West Germany, Czechoslovakia, Turkey, Poland, East Germany, Bulgaria, Romania and Greece. And as far as artillery is concerned, as many as thirteen countries were ahead of Yugoslavia. Much of the equipment was also long out-of-date.⁸⁴⁴

The Serbs as villains

The media, which ever more often had to compete for the volatile attention of zapping viewers, listeners and readers, could often not afford to report subtle shades of meaning. According to them, their target group usually had a need for a clear division of roles between villains and heroes. It was indeed the question whether the West, that had just recovered from the well-defined split of the Cold War, was able to think in shades of meaning. If such a clear division of roles was actually necessary, the Serbs were the ones who appeared most to deserve the position of *bête noire*.

To the United States especially, the Serbs regularly appealed to the fact that their country had fought on the same side as the Americans in both twentieth century World Wars, while the Croats had twice been on the 'wrong side' in the same conflicts.⁸⁴⁵ It was often raised both by Americans and by Serbs that Woodrow Wilson, more than anyone else in the world, had contributed to the creation of the first Yugoslavia.⁸⁴⁶ It would do the Serbs no good.

Many American politicians and officials who dealt with Yugoslavia judged the country by only one standard: was it still Communist or not? The Serbs were governed by former Communists of the old school, who had also once embraced Nationalism. In a world that, in 1991, still looked forward

⁸⁴⁰ Bert, *Superpower*, p. 88.

⁸⁴¹ Hans Leber, "Laat ze de oorlog uitvechten" ('Let them fight out their war amongst themselves'), *Tweentsche Courant*, 05/08/92; Laurent Heere, "Militaire actie in Bosnië onvermijdelijk" ('Military action in Bosnia unavoidable'), *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 06/08/92.

⁸⁴² Judah, *Serbs*, pp. 212-213 Ramet, *Babel*, p. 244; Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 160; Koen Koch, 'Joegoslavië, Oost-Europa en de strategie van neo-containment' ('Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe and the strategy of neo-containment'), Gijs de Vries e.a., *Continent*, p. 124.

⁸⁴³ See e.g. also Strobe Talbott, 'America Abroad. Why Bosnia Is Not Vietnam', *Time*, 24/08/92, p. 49.

⁸⁴⁴ Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, pp. 110-113.

⁸⁴⁵ See e.g. Zimmermann, 'Ambassador', p. 4; idem, *Origins*, pp. 13 and 22.

⁸⁴⁶ E.g. Representative Moody and James F. Dobbins, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs, in United States Senate, Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Strife*, pp. 69 and 77.

positively to a future without history, the Serb leaders appeared hopelessly outdated.⁸⁴⁷ In the absence of a final break with Communism, for American policy makers the rulers in Belgrade remained the Communist 'them' as opposed to the anti-Communist and democratic 'us'.⁸⁴⁸ But someone such as Genscher also had the same view on the subject.⁸⁴⁹

The black-and-white picture of Communism versus democracy was the reason that recognition of the problem of ethnic differences took so long to come about in the United States.⁸⁵⁰ Those Americans who had more of an eye for the mix of Communism and Nationalism practiced by Milosevic, did not judge his regime any the milder, however. For them, Milosevic combined the worst of two worlds: 'He is a Stalinist Bolshevik and he is an ardent nationalist'.⁸⁵¹

As was evident in the description of Slovenia's and Croatia's PR campaigns, the Serbs with their superior artillery strength quickly bombarded their opponents into the role of underdogs. From the somewhat mystical and xenophobic view of being the 'eternal' victim of the Western lack of understanding, or, worse, Western conspiracies - involving the Vatican, Germany, 'the Fourth Empire', the United States - Serbs devoted relatively little energy to public relations beyond their own borders.⁸⁵² The Serbs were so convinced of their own moral rectitude that they seldom found it necessary to tell the world of their 'truth'.⁸⁵³ A notable example is the pride with which the Chief of Staff of the JNA, Kadijevic, repeatedly mentions in his recollection of the collapse of Yugoslavia that he did not speak to foreign statesmen who wished to meet him.⁸⁵⁴ In 1989, Milosevic even kept the American ambassador Warren Zimmermann waiting for an interview for almost a year, because the message he brought from Washington was not agreeable to the Serbian statesman.⁸⁵⁵

Furthermore, as will become clear in the description of the war in Bosnia, the analogy of World War II was to contribute strongly to the demonizing of the Serbs on the one hand and the portrayal of Muslims as pure victims on the other. In the international press, however, comparisons were being drawn between Milosevic and Mussolini as early as the autumn of 1988, especially because of the way in which Milosevic pushed opponents aside and took over power in his antibureaucracy revolutions.⁸⁵⁶ The Dutch professor F.A.M. Alting von Geusau considered that Goebbels could have learned something from Milosevic with respect to 'the propaganda and provocation that dripped hatred' which he carried out from the time he took office.⁸⁵⁷ As will be shown elsewhere in this report, at the time of

⁸⁴⁷ Cf. Julian Borger, 'The Observer profile: Europe's last dinosaur', *The Observer*, 29/12/96.

⁸⁴⁸ See e.g. Bob Dole and Joseph DioGuardi in United States Senate, Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Strife*, pp. 37-40 and 91. Cf. Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 13. Cf. the objection to this Cold War inspired black-and-white thinking by Michael Bernhard in: United States House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Policy*, p. 2.

⁸⁴⁹ Libal, *Limits*, p. 14.

⁸⁵⁰ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 130.

⁸⁵¹ Joseph DioGuardi in United States Senate, Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Strife*, p. 92.

⁸⁵² Stjepan G. Mestrovic, 'Series Editor's Statement', in: Cohen, *War*, pp. xiv-xiv; Zimmermann, *'Ambassador'*, p. 3. See for example also the surprise of the journalist Bert Bukman about what he took to be the xenophobic views of the Serbian author and professor of cultural history Milorad Pavic in 'Bang voor de buitenwereld', *HP/De Tijd*, 18/10/91, pp. 16-18, or the powerlessness of Bart Rijs as opposed to the conspiracy theories of the Serbian philosophy professor Mihailo Markovic, who was the hero of the Belgrade students in 1968, and a Milosevic ideologue and vice-chairman of his party in the early 1990s, in 'Adagio voor de dood' ('Adagio for death'), *HP/De Tijd*, 26/06/93, p. 43. For an earlier positive reception of Markovic in the Netherlands when he was one of the Marxist philosophers who congregated around the magazine *Praxis* see Bart van Steenbergen, 'Ten geleide', Markovic, *Weg*, pp. 7-11. For the disappointment about Markovic's *progress* see Magas, *Destruction*, pp. 4, 52, 55-73, 122-124. See also interview A. Buha, 17/12/99.

⁸⁵³ Cf. Sherman, *Zerschlagung*, p. 5.

⁸⁵⁴ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 26, 33, 44.

⁸⁵⁵ Zimmermann, *'Ambassador'*, p. 3.

⁸⁵⁶ Cf. Ramet, *'Milosevic'*, p. 96.

⁸⁵⁷ Olaf van Boetzelaer, 'Naleving Verenigde Naties-resoluties' ('Compliance with United Nations resolutions'), *CD/Actueel*, 13(1993)(6 February) p. 15.

the conflict in (former) Yugoslavia, World War II often functioned as a frame of reference and benchmark, not only within Yugoslavia itself, but also in the West.⁸⁵⁸

What most defined the image in the West at the time, however, was the action of Serb soldiers, both of the JNA and irregulars. Unlike in opinion and policy making circles, accounts of the Serb dominated army and the Serbian paramilitaries by journalists on the spot made a disorganized, even chaotic, impression.⁸⁵⁹ They wore 'a hotch-potch of uniforms: chubby grandfathers, smooth-faced teenagers, a handful of irregulars in Chetnik badges and shaggy hats, a real-life unit of Dad's Army'.⁸⁶⁰ Dutch journalists also spoke of 'Serbs in all manner of fancy uniforms',⁸⁶¹ in casually worn attire under which navels, chest hair and bellies were visible,⁸⁶² about 'wild tattooed men with Kalashnikovs over their shoulders'.⁸⁶³ Journalists repeatedly endured mortal fear when drunken Bosnian-Serb soldiers played with their rifles and hand grenades in their presence.⁸⁶⁴ The home-made armoured vehicles and artillery vehicles also aroused the disbelief of journalists who knew only the regular weaponry and the vehicle fleet of the Royal Netherlands Army in the Veluwe.⁸⁶⁵

The first graphic accounts of Serbian atrocities appeared in Dutch newspapers towards the end of July 1991, concerning a Serbian attack on 26 July near Struga, a village in Banija with a population of four hundred, in which the region was almost entirely 'cleansed' of Croats. This was also the first time that the pattern of ethnic cleansing was clearly reported for Dutch newspaper readers: one and a half hours of shelling with 120 mm shells, after which Serbian paramilitaries marched into the village using Croats from neighbouring Zamaca as a shield. Three policemen who for this reason refused to fire on the Serbs were murdered by them, after two of them had their eyes poked out and they were undressed and beaten. After that a few more Croats were killed or abducted.⁸⁶⁶

De Volkskrant on 2 August also made a first attempt at portraying the emptiness after an ethnic cleansing: with a photo of two dogs running through the deserted streets of the village Kostanjica after the local population had fled before Serbian paramilitaries.⁸⁶⁷ One day later *Trouw* made the first mention of the word 'rape' in connection with the war in Yugoslavia. At that time they were said to be the order of the day, without explicitly mentioning who the perpetrators were.⁸⁶⁸ For their part, Bosnian-Serbs claimed that concentration camps for Serbs had been set up at four sites in Croatia. Other than in *De Volkskrant*, no noticeable attention was paid to this issue.⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁵⁸ Cf. Tromp, *Verraad*, pp. 15, 38.

⁸⁵⁹ See e.g. Raymond van den Boogaard, "De schoften schieten van ons geld" ('The bastards are shooting thanks to our money'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/07/91; Hirs & Hellinga, *Geit*, p. 176.

⁸⁶⁰ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 244.

⁸⁶¹ Bart Rijs, 'Reis naar het einde van Bosnië' ('Journey to the end of Bosnia'), *HP/De Tijd*, 04/09/92, p. 22. See also Kees Schaepman, 'Kogels fluiten en de waanzin wint' ('Bullets hum and madness wins'), *Vrij Nederland*, 25/07/92, p. 7.

⁸⁶² Bart Rijs, 'Vrijheid of de dood' ('Freedom or death'), *HP/De Tijd*, 16/08/91, p. 24. See also N. Lucas, 'Serviërs in Bosnië: kogels voor bier' ('Serbs in Bosnia: bullets for beer'), *Trouw*, 28/09/91 on Serbian and Montenegrin reservists: 'With their unkempt appearance - unshaved, vests half out of their trousers - and their clumsy behaviour';

⁸⁶³ Bart Rijs, 'De aanval' ('The attack'), *HP/De Tijd* 23/08/91, p. 14.

⁸⁶⁴ E.g. Bart Rijs, 'Reis naar het einde van Bosnië', *HP/De Tijd*, 04/09/92, p. 24. Cf. Gert van Wijland, 'Autoraces aan de Donau', *Elsevier*, 10/09/92, p. 71; Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 136.

⁸⁶⁵ Bart Rijs, 'Reis naar het einde van Bosnië', *HP/De Tijd*, 04/09/92, p. 24.

⁸⁶⁶ Ulrike Rudberg, 'EG presenteert vredesplan voor strijd in Kroatië' ('EC presents peace plan for conflict in Croatia'), *de Volkskrant*, 29/07/91; "Onze Servische burens zijn achtergebleven, ze huilden" ('Our Serbian neighbours stayed behind', they cried'), *de Volkskrant*, 31/07/91; Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Bloedbad in dorp Kroatië: wellicht bijna 200 doden' ('Bloodbath in Croatian village: up to 200 feared dead') and 'Serviërs gebruikten mede-dorpelingen als schild' ('Serbs used fellow-villagers as shield'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/07/91.

⁸⁶⁷ 'Half Kroaat half Serviër en nu alleen' ('Half-Croat, half-Serb and now alone'), *de Volkskrant*, 02/08/91.

⁸⁶⁸ Nicole Lucas, 'Een onmogelijke missie' ('An impossible mission'), *Trouw*, 03/08/91.

⁸⁶⁹ Ulrike Rudberg, 'Bittere beschuldigingen in Kroatië. Leaders verwijten elkaar 'oorlogsmisdaden en genocide' ('Bitter accusations in Croatia. Leaders blame each other for "war crimes and genocide"'), *de Volkskrant*, 30/07/91; idem, 'Strijd tussen Ustaša en Cetniks leeft weer op in Kroatië' ('Struggle between Ustaša and Cetniks revived in Croatia'), *de Volkskrant*, 03/08/91.

The associations with World War II would certainly not leave Western newspaper readers and television viewers unmoved. The war in Croatia disrupted the 'never again' attitude towards war in Europe that had been cherished for almost half a century.⁸⁷⁰ The war in Bosnia would make clear that the notion of 'never again genocide' had become 'a sick joke'.⁸⁷¹ Unlike the response to the genocide of the Jews in World War II, this time the West would not be able to say, as many commentators stressed, that they 'didn't know'.⁸⁷²

Croats: no angels themselves

There was a general air of sympathy in the Dutch media for Slovenia's pursuit of independence, which was felt to be a response to Serbia's pursuit of hegemony, especially under Milosevic's leadership. Anet Bleich in *De Volkskrant*, however, questioned the declarations of independence of Slovenia and Croatia. She said that the governments of these areas would have been better advised to forge links with the Serbian opposition to Milosevic rather than using their energy 'in rehearsing their old national anthem and changing the flag'. In her opinion, if the two republics wanted so badly to belong to the civilized Europe, they should not resort to 'Wild East games of cowboys and Indians in the Balkans'. She foresaw that Bosnia would then shortly be hacked into three: 'One piece for Greater Croatia, one piece for Greater Serbia, and a corridor to Turkey for the Muslims'.⁸⁷³ Bleich's article was one of a pair, in which Jan Luijten adopted the position that the peoples of Yugoslavia had the right, belatedly, to realize their nation states.⁸⁷⁴

Likewise, the correspondence columns of *NRC Handelsblad* two weeks later contained two contributions on the expediency of Croatia and Slovenia exercising their right of self-determination. P.J. van Krieken, deputy regional representative of the High Commissioner for Refugees in Stockholm, argued that attempts must be made to prevent the disintegration of Yugoslavia. If Europe were not to do so, it would forfeit its moral authority and would carry less weight in international law, and so be unable to pass judgement on wars of secession elsewhere in the world, such as in India or Africa.⁸⁷⁵ In the other article, the emeritus professor of administrative law, S.W. Couwenberg, argued for a Yugoslavian confederation, as Croatia and Slovenia had proposed shortly beforehand. His argument was that Europe should not leave two republics that were on the road to becoming a liberal democracy and a market economy out in the cold in favour of a still Communist Serbia.⁸⁷⁶ According to an editorial in *Trouw*, in the conflict between 'the arrogant nationalism of the Serbs' and Croatia's and Slovenia's pursuit of independence, which the newspaper felt did not fit in with the general development of Europe, 'there was no clear line between good and evil'.⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷⁰ Gompert, 'Serbia', p. 30.

⁸⁷¹ Carter, 'Serbia', p. 54. Cf Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 27.

⁸⁷² Magas, *Destruction*, p. xii; Stjepan G. Mestrovic, 'Series Editor's Statement', in: Cohen, *War*, pp. xiii and xvi; Thomas Cushman & Stjepan G. Mestrovic, 'Introduction', idem (eds.), *Time*, p. 7; Samary, *Déchirure*, p. 9; Mestrovic, 'Balkanization', p. vii; Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 56 (13/01/93); Weithmann, *Brandbaard*, p. 7; Member of the American House of Representatives for Virginia, Frank R. Wolf in: United States Congress, Committee on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *United Nations*, p. 17; Ton de Kok in: "Westerse politici mede schuldig aan drama Bosnië" ("Western politicians share blame for drama in Bosnia"), *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 19/11/92; P.R. Baehr in: Ko Colijn and Paul Rusman, 'Wat moet Nederland met 'Joegoslavië'? ('What is the Netherlands to do with Yugoslavia'), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/07/93, p. 12.

⁸⁷³ Anet Bleich, 'Tegen het Wilde Oosten', *de Volkskrant*, 29/06/91. See also idem, 'Het slopen van Joegoslavië lost niets op' ('Demolishing Yugoslavia won't solve anything'), *de Volkskrant*, 16/08/91 and idem, 'Een nieuw volks denken bedreigt Oost-europa' ('A new popular thinking threatens Eastern Europe'), *de Volkskrant*, 18/09/91.

⁸⁷⁴ Jan Luijten, 'Het recht op een eigen lot' ('The right to their own fate'), *de Volkskrant*, 29/06/91.

⁸⁷⁵ P.J. van Krieken, 'Alle pogingen Joegoslavië te redden zijn nastreven waard' ('All efforts to save Yugoslavia are worthwhile'), *NRC Handelsblad* 11/07/91.

⁸⁷⁶ S.W. Couwenberg, 'Confederatie lijkt voor Joegoslavië een reële optie' ('A confederation seems to be a realistic option for Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/07/91.

⁸⁷⁷ 'Een conservatief oordeel (2)' ('A conservative assessment'), *Trouw*, 03/07/91.

On the other hand, the emeritus professor of Eastern European history, Dittrich, already detected a *good guys, bad guys* pattern in the first weeks of the conflict. It irritated him. In his opinion, Slovenians and Croats made as much demagogic use of Nationalism as Milosevic. Dittrich understood the Serbs' fear of a repetition of the Croatian genocide of World War II. He was in favour of retaining the Yugoslavian unitary state. Slovenia might perhaps be able to leave. But: 'In the case of Croatia there are already squabbles about the border with Serbia, and I cannot even begin to imagine how in the name of God Bosnia is supposed to secede.'⁸⁷⁸ He hoped that the EC and the United States would bring gentle pressure to bear to prevent a collapse of Yugoslavia. If such a thing were to happen, surrounding countries could become involved, and Dittrich thought that the only possibility left would be military intervention.

If these articles, which appeared shortly after the declarations of independence, showed a degree of caution with respect to Croatia, this was not set to change in the following months. In the first year of the conflict especially, much of the Western media, including in the Netherlands, associated Croats with Ante Pavelic's extreme nationalist Ustashe movement. Between 1941 and 1945 it was at the head of the Croatian puppet state that was tolerated by the Fascist powers, and in which many thousands of Serbs were put to the sword.⁸⁷⁹ It was a typical expression of the late twentieth century historical awareness, where today's deeds were judged within the framework of the moral indignation about events half a century earlier. Sometimes the two eras were linked together very simply, as in the 1993 summer edition of *Foreign Affairs*: 'Today's victimized Croats were yesterday's Fascist oppressors of the Serbs...'⁸⁸⁰

It was also observed in *De Groene Amsterdammer* that World War II was always being refought: 'The distinction between "good guys" and "bad guys" is becoming ever more difficult to make in the former Yugoslavia. All things considered, there are only 'mad guys' left ...'⁸⁸¹ The Zagreb regime did not make it very difficult for its critics to make the connection with the Ustashe state by virtue of a number of hamfisted incidents, as described above.

This association in particular stopped the Croats from being the perfect victims for the Western media.⁸⁸² The British *Financial Times* of 17 July 1991 portrayed the Croatian 'problem', for example, as a question of insufficient denazification.⁸⁸³ Mestrovic is largely right, however, in saying that blaming the fifty year old Ustashe past on an entire people, while the Ustashe in Croatia were a small minority, and the same region contributed significantly to Tito's partisan movement, was at least as absurd as holding the French population at the end of the twentieth century responsible for collaborating with the World War II Vichy regime, or the Italians for the Fascism in their country half a century earlier.⁸⁸⁴ It is interesting to contrast the Western media's attacks on the President of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, with its relatively mild treatment of Mitterrand's Nazi collaboration. Tudjman was a partisan general who fought the Nazis, while Mitterrand collaborated with them.⁸⁸⁵

⁸⁷⁸ Steven de Vogel, 'Zeven argumenten om Joegoslavië heel te houden', *Vrij Nederland*, 13/07/91, p. 6.

⁸⁷⁹ Cf. Mestrovic, *Balkanization*, pp. 28 and 39-42. See e.g. Simms, *Hour*, p. 284; Edward Pearce, 'Kroaten zijn bepaald geen engelen' ('Croats are certainly no angels'), *de Volkskrant*, 06/07/91; Piet de Moor, 'Milosevic en Tudjman moeten ophoepelen, alletwee. Het democratische gehalte van de regering in Kroatië' ('Milosevic and Tudjman should clear off, the pair of them. The democratic content of the government in Croatia'), *de Volkskrant*, 27/07/91, illustrated with a photo of Pavelic performing the Fascist salute; Bert Bukman, 'Bang voor de buitenwereld', *HP/De Tijd*, 18/10/91; Fred Stroobants, 'Rauwe wortel' ('Raw carrot'), *Trouw*, 25/11/91.

⁸⁸⁰ Grunwald, 'Press'.

⁸⁸¹ Arthur van Amerongen, 'Zwart Kroatië' ('Black Croatia'), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 26/08/92, p. 4.

⁸⁸² Cf. Mestrovic, *Balkanization*, p. 51. The Dutch NOS television news of 8 August 1991 showed pictures of the remnants of the Croatian World War II concentration camp Jasenovac in connection with Serbian accusations that Tudjman's Croatia was the heir to Pavelic's state. Extreme examples of this association can be found in Anstadt, Serbia, passim. Cf. Van den Heuvel, *Land*, p. 109.

⁸⁸³ Cited in Eyal, *Europe*, p. 31.

⁸⁸⁴ Stjepan G. Mestrovic, 'Introduction', idem (ed.), *Genocide*, pp. 18-19.

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

In the Netherlands, Willem Vermeer, a Slavist from Leiden, wrote that he saw little reason why Tudjman and his democratically elected government 'should be made to pay for genocide that was carried out half a century earlier by an irregular rabble that was kept in the saddle by two suspect occupation regimes'.⁸⁸⁶

New life was breathed into the association of Croatia with the Ustashe by the sympathies of right-wing extremists for Croatia's pursuit of independence.⁸⁸⁷ This was the case in France with the Front Nationale. In Brussels, members of the Vlaams Blok took part in a demonstration of Croats on 29 July 1991 to coincide with a meeting of EC ministers.⁸⁸⁸ In Great Britain, Branimir Glavas was portrayed in the press as 'a neo-Nazi killer'.⁸⁸⁹ And in the Netherlands the Ustashe past was raised through the interest displayed by a few dozen Dutch people for providing military support to the Croats. They responded to an advertisement on 2 November 1991 in *De Telegraaf* placed by the Nederlands Kroatische Werkgemeenschap movement, which was set up by the extreme right-winger, Douwe van de Bos. Their applications led to the deployment of the First Dutch Volunteer Unit in Croatia.⁸⁹⁰

An attempt was made from Belgrade to exploit the association of Croatia with the Ustashe regime of half a century earlier, for example by distributing English and French translations of passages from one of Tudjman's earlier publications on genocide and Jews in the West.⁸⁹¹ For the same reason, members of the Yugoslavian air force intelligence service planted bombs in August 1991 at the Jewish cemetery and the Jewish community centre in Zagreb within the framework of the secret operation 'Opera Orientalis', which had the purpose of opposing the secession of Croatia.⁸⁹² In addition to the two agents concerned, the then head of KOS (the JNA's military intelligence and security arm), Aleksandar Vasiljevic, the former air force commanding officer General Zvonko Jurjevic, and the ex-

⁸⁸⁶ Willem Vermeer, 'De genocide van hoofdman Ante Pavelic en zijn Ustase op Serviërs' ('The genocide of Serbs by leader Ante Pavelic and his Ustase'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/09/91.

⁸⁸⁷ See also Dzamic, *Psi*, pp. 75-166.

⁸⁸⁸ Oscar Garschagen, 'EG: bij vrede geld naar Joegoslavië' ('EC: when there is peace there will be money for Yugoslavia'), *de Volkskrant*, 30/07/91.

⁸⁸⁹ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 213.

⁸⁹⁰ See e.g. Sluik & Kurpershoek (ed.), *Duiveljager*; Dzamic, *Psi*, pp. 97-109; 'Oud-strijders mobiliseren Nederlands steunkorps voor onderdrukt Kroatië' ('Veterans mobilize Dutch support company for repressed Croatia'), *Trouw*, 06/11/91; 'Extreem-rechts schiet leger Kroatië te hulp' ('Right-wing extremists jump to Croatia's help'), *Trouw*, 07/11/91; 'Garanties ontbreken: vrijwilligers gaan niet naar Kroatië' ('No guarantees. Volunteers will not go to Croatia'), *Trouw*, 08/11/91; 'Vrijwilligers alsnog 'op verkenning' bij militairen Kroatië' ('Volunteers will go 'on reconnaissance' with soldiers in Croatia' after all), *Trouw*, 25/11/91; 'Ultra-rechts in Europa op de bres voor Kroatië' ('Far right in Europe in the breach for Croatia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/11/91; Karin de Mik, 'Aan avonturiers hebben ze niks in Kroatië' ('We don't need adventurers in Croatia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/11/91; Boris Peters, 'Van kreten dat het niet mag, trekken de Serviërs zich niets aan' ('Serbs take no notice of being told to stop'), *de Volkskrant* 06/11/91; 'Werving Kroatië-strijders gestopt na kritiek op comité' ('Recruitment of Croatia fighters stops following criticism of committee'), *de Volkskrant*, 08/11/91; 'Het moet daar gewoon afgelopen zijn' ('It simply has to stop there'), *de Volkskrant*, 02/12/91; Jos Slats, 'De huurling gaat omdat de hele wereld Kroatië laat stikken' ('The mercenary goes because the whole world is leaving Croatia in the lurch'), *de Volkskrant*, 11/12/91; idem, 'Nederlandse huurlingen vuren op Serviërs' ('Dutch mercenaries fire on Serbs'), *de Volkskrant*, 23/12/91; idem, 'Vrijwillige strijders vereerd door Kroaten' ('Voluntary fighters honoured by Croats'), *de Volkskrant*, 14/01/92; Clifford C. Cremer, 'Een héél rare oorlog', *HP/De Tijd*, 07/02/92; Clifford C. Cremer, 'Een steeds raarder oorlog' ('An ever stranger war'), *HP/De Tijd*, 27/03/92, pp. 14-17; 'Nederlandse huurlingen gevangen in Hercegovina' ('Dutch mercenaries imprisoned in Hercegovina'), *De Telegraaf*, 25/07/92; Angelo Vergeer, 'Blanke boeren min of meer onze volksgenoten' ('White farmers more or less our fellow countrymen'), *De Telegraaf*, 30/06/93; Clifford C. Cremer, 'Van Kroatië naar Transvaal' ('From Croatia to Transvaal'), *HP/De Tijd*, 13/08/93; Griezels, *De maten van Janmaat* ('Horrors. Janmaat's friends'), *Tribune* 29(1993)2 p. 20; Bert Huisjes, 'Opgejaagd op de Balkan' ('Hounded in the Balkans'), *Algemeen dagblad*, 19/09/01; TK 1991-1992, Appendix, nos. 364 (Questions in the House, Frinking) and 448 (Questions, Valk and Stoffelen).

⁸⁹¹ Richard West, 'An Apologist for Hitler', *The Guardian*, 18/10/91.

⁸⁹² 'Political report in brief. Former head of army intelligence service under investigation', *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 21/07/92; 'Further reports on election preparations. Trial of ex-chief of military counter-intelligence postponed 'indefinitely'', *ibid.*, 09/12/92; 'Seventy generals reportedly punished after war in Slovenia and Croatia', *ibid.*, 26/01/93; Batsheva Tsur, 'Anatomy of a Balkan frame-up', *The Jerusalem Post*, 03/02/93; Cohen, *War*, p. 127.

head of the air force intelligence service, Colonel Slobodan Rakocevic, were put on trial for these incidents. As well as the attack in Zagreb, they were accused of plotting against the Serbian government and of fraud. The trial was mainly seen as an attempt by the JNA to rid itself of officers who were still strongly Communist and too weakly Serbian in their thinking. In spite of this stain on his reputation, Vasiljevic managed to make a comeback as an adviser to Geza Farkas, the head of KOS under Milosevic. President Vojislav Kostunica would finally dismiss him as a Milosevic confidant.⁸⁹³

The Serbian smear campaign against Croatia was not without success.⁸⁹⁴ Ton Crijnen wrote in *Trouw* that anti-Semitism, nationalism and Catholicism in Croatia 'had gone hand in hand for centuries'.⁸⁹⁵ The London newspaper *The Guardian* saw in Tudjman's earlier anti-Semitic statements reason to caution against recognition of Croatia.⁸⁹⁶ Conversely, the chairman of the Jewish community in Zagreb, Nenad Porges, stated that although there were anti-Semitic feelings under the surface of Croatian society, the official authorities were not guilty of it. He also cautioned against the often heard misconception that Serbs stood up for the Jews in World War II. Serbia, he said, was *Judenfrei* sooner than Croatia.⁸⁹⁷

Much Western reporting mentioned Tudjman's hardly democratic character.⁸⁹⁸ The Dutch media, for example, devoted ample attention to the nationalism of Tudjman and his followers, which had unnecessarily rubbed the Serbs in Croatia up the wrong way and roused their suspicions, and criticized the authoritarian nature of Tudjman's administration and his personality cult.⁸⁹⁹ They were therefore not very susceptible to the explanation of the differences between Croatia and Serbia expounded elsewhere as a conflict between democracy and Communist dictatorship.⁹⁰⁰ Furthermore, much of the Western media referred to the stifling nationalist climate and the link between nationalism and Catholicism in Croatia.⁹⁰¹

The conflict between Serbs and Croats could not therefore be portrayed by the Western media simply as a conflict between good and evil.⁹⁰² National variations on this theme were possible, however. The British press, for example, remained extremely neutral in the conflict between Serbs and Croats. On the one hand this was because they adopted much Serb propaganda, but on the other hand also because correspondents in the region were as little inclined to create the impression of being pro

⁸⁹³ Vensa Peric Zimonjic, 'Kostunica purges Yugoslav army of Milosevic loyalists', *The Independent*, 01/01/01.

⁸⁹⁴ See e.g. Robert D. Kaplan, 'Croatianism; the latest Balkan ugliness; Holocaust denial and revisionism', *The New Republic*, 25/11/91; Teddy Preuss, 'Goebbels lives - in Zagreb', *The Jerusalem Post*, 06/12/91.

⁸⁹⁵ Ton Crijnen, 'Kroaten zien katholieke kerk als dam tegen Servisch gevaar', *Trouw*, 04/07/91.

⁸⁹⁶ Richard West, 'An Apologist for Hitler', *The Guardian*, 18/10/91.

⁸⁹⁷ John Daniszewski, 'Today's Turbulence and Nitter Memories Disquiet Jews', *The Associated Press*, 27/07/91.

⁸⁹⁸ See e.g. Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 181; Tromp-Vrkic, 'Kroatië, in het bijzonder' pp. 8-10 and 14.

⁸⁹⁹ See e.g. Theo Engelen, 'President van Kroatië houdt nauwelijks grondgebied over' ('President of Croatia left with hardly any territory'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/06/91; Nicole Lucas, 'Joegoslavië is niet meer', ('Yugoslavia is no more') *Trouw*, 26/06/91; idem, 'Spelers in drama van Joegoslavië (Players in Yugoslavia drama)', *Trouw*, 03/07/91; idem, 'Franjo Tudjman. Nationalist ten koste van zijn volk' ('Nationalist at the expense of his people'), *Trouw*, 12/10/91; Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Echte feestvreugde wil niet uitbreken in Zagreb' ('Real party spirit won't take hold in Zagreb'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/06/91; idem, 'In Kroatië neemt verzet tegen Tudjman toe' ('Resistance to Tudjman within Croatia on the rise'), *ibid.*, 05/12/91; Peter Michielsen, 'De wrok zoekt een uitweg' ('The resentment is looking for a way out'), *ibid.*, 06/07/91; Anet Bleich, 'Franjo Tudjman is symbool van onafhankelijk Kroatië' ('Franjo Tudjman is symbol of independent Croatia'), *de Volkskrant*, 27/06/91; Piet de Moor, 'Milosevic en Tudjman moeten ophoepelen, alletwee. Het democratische gehalte van de regering in Kroatië', *de Volkskrant*, 27/07/91; Bert Lanting, 'Kroatische leider Tudjman neemt alle beslissingen zelf' ('Croat leader Tudjman takes all the decisions himself'), *Het Parool*, 17/07/91; Lydia Luttenberger, 'The democratic forum, Rijeka', Palau & Kumar (eds.), *Ex-Yugoslavia*, pp. 59 and 61; Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, pp. 58-59.

⁹⁰⁰ Cf. Nicole Lucas, 'Een onmogelijke missie', *Trouw*, 03/08/91.

⁹⁰¹ Arthur van Amerongen, 'Zwart Kroatië' ('Black Croatia'), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 26/08/92, pp. 4-5; Dubravka Ugresic, 'Het onverdraaglijk overleven in Yugoslavia' ('The unbearable survival in Yugoslavia'), *Vrij Nederland*, 12/09/92, pp. 22-24; idem, 'Goedenacht, Kroatische schrijvers, waar u zich ook bevindt!' ('Goodnight Croatian writers wherever you are!'), *Vrij Nederland*, 20/02/93, pp. 26-28.

⁹⁰² Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 181.

Tudjman as pro Milosevic.⁹⁰³ In the German media, on the other hand, reports on the lack of democracy in Croatia were suppressed for some time because it was 'politically inconvenient'.⁹⁰⁴

In the reporting of the conflict between Serbs and Croats, the Dutch media were generally relatively impartial. As early as July, the *NRC Handelsblad* quoted a Croatian woman in Slavonia who was married to a Serb. 'There are two truths', she said. 'The Serbs provoke violence from the Croats or vice versa. Who should you believe?'⁹⁰⁵ The journalists also appeared to be unsure. A number of weeks later Van den Boogaard wrote in *NRC Handelsblad* that, as the intensity of the engagements between Croats and Serbs increased, the full facts of the events became more difficult to ascertain.⁹⁰⁶ However, inequalities in power were observed: Croatian shotguns as against Serbian mortars.⁹⁰⁷

The reports in the Dutch press revealed that not only did the JNA support the local Serbian militias, but also sent paramilitaries into the area and assisted with weapons. Attention was also paid to ethnic cleansing, which was practiced by the Cetniks especially, with mention of atrocities such as the use of citizens as a shield, the poking out of eyes, the mutilation of bodies and acts of destruction. Van den Boogaard, for example, wrote background accounts, mainly from the mouths of Croatian Displaced Persons.⁹⁰⁸ It also became clear how this furtherance of violence drove Croats and Serbs completely apart in Krajina and Slovenia, how old friendships were broken from one day to the next and changed into hatred and murder, while emphasizing their own ethnic symbols, such as Cetnik caps.⁹⁰⁹ Possessions of Croat-Serb couples especially were singled out.⁹¹⁰

There was also a considerable degree of objectivity to be seen in the photographic material. For instance, *NRC Handelsblad* showed a photo of a passing car in the Croatian independence celebration, where not only is the Croatian flag to be seen waving out of the window, but also the driver's left hand holding a revolver.⁹¹¹

It could be stated in general that the criticism of Croatia was concerned with the political system and the associations with the Ustashe past in particular. Reporting on current Croatian war crimes committed against Serbs was given little attention in the Western media for a long time.⁹¹² This was only to change during the war in Bosnia. After returning to the Netherlands in the summer of 1992, Squadron Leader J. Brinkhof, who had served for six months as a UN observer in Bosnia and Croatia, complained that the reporting in the Dutch media 'had been taken for a ride by the Croatian propaganda machine'. According to him, the Croats and Muslims were 'just as bad' as the Serbs.⁹¹³ It would take until the spring of 1993 before Croatian acts of war also became the subject of serious criticism. For instance, the following could be read in May 1993 in *HP/DeTijd*: 'The more or less intact image of barbaric Serbs and obliging Croats is long out-of-date (...) Like the Serbs, Croats now cut off food-aid transport to Muslim areas with the following objective: starving out and evicting the population.'⁹¹⁴

⁹⁰³ Russell, *Prejudice*, pp. 214-215.

⁹⁰⁴ N. Lucas, 'De waarheid over 'Joegoslavië'' ('The truth about Yugoslavia'), *Trouw*, 09/03/93.

⁹⁰⁵ Hans Steketee, 'Serviërs vluchten voor 'terreur'' ('Serbs flee 'terror)'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/07/91.

⁹⁰⁶ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Hagelwit op missie' ('Snow white on mission'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/07/91.

⁹⁰⁷ See e.g. Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Jachtgeweer helpt niet meer tegen mortiervuur' ('A hunting rifle is no use against mortar fire'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/91. See also idem, 'Kroatië zonder wapens en zonder hoop', ('Croatia without arms and without hope') *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/08/91.

⁹⁰⁸ See e.g. Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Serviërs gebruikten mededorpelingen als schild', *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/07/91; idem, 'Kroatië zonder wapens en zonder hoop', *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/08/91.

⁹⁰⁹ See e.g. Hans Steketee, 'Serviërs vluchten voor 'terreur'', *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/07/91; Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Jachtgeweer helpt niet meer tegen mortiervuur' ('A hunting rifle is no use against mortar fire'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/91; Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Serviërs gebruikten mededorpelingen als schild', *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/07/91.

⁹¹⁰ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Serviërs gebruikten mededorpelingen als schild', *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/07/91.

⁹¹¹ Placed alongside 'Twee lijken in een straat met broden' ('Two bodies in a street with loaves'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/06/91.

⁹¹² Caroline de Gruyter, 'In Kroatië is iedereen goed' ('Everyone is good in Croatia'), *Elsevier*, 08/08/92, p. 32.

⁹¹³ Eric Vrijnsen, 'Een massale invasie is onbegonnen werk' ('A massive invasion is a hopeless task'), *Elsevier*, 09/01/93.

⁹¹⁴ Henk Steenhuis, 'Philippe Morillon', *HP/De Tijd*, 21/05/93, p. 24.

General half-heartedness and the difficulty of identification

The Western press's lack of a very clear position regarding the war in Croatia, which formed such a remarkable contrast to the later engagement in the war in Bosnia, also had to do with the initial lack of public interest and the time journalists needed to put the conflict into an understandable context. After three months among snipers and artillery duels in Croatia, the journalist Raymond van den Boogaard, for example, remarked that the topic of the war was not 'alive' in the Netherlands: 'Strange Balkan business, people would think, a squabble between neighbours that had got out of hand.'⁹¹⁵ 'Ignorance is the bane of journalists arriving in any crisis. It was to prove particularly acute in Yugoslavia, which drew hundreds of Balkan first-timers.' According to Alec Russell, Balkan correspondent of the British *Daily Telegraph*.⁹¹⁶ However, the first months of the war in Croatia were covered mainly by correspondents who were old hands in the Balkans.⁹¹⁷ Many journalists who dropped in on the war in Slovenia turned out to be just passing through. After the Slovenian war, for example, it took almost a year before the large American television networks returned to the region.⁹¹⁸ In the second half of 1991 the serious American television programmes devoted hardly any air time to the war in Croatia.⁹¹⁹ American newspapers with an orientation to international news, such as *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, still had a little more than one article a day on average on the conflict in Yugoslavia in this period.⁹²⁰ Throughout 1991, on the other hand, the major American weekly papers *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report*, had a total of only 31 articles on the country.⁹²¹ In the words of an American media analyst, the reporting in the American media on Yugoslavia in 1991 and 1992 was 'misinformed and superficial, when not biased and racist. It has tended to focus on the sensational rather than the substantive; it has concentrated on personalities rather than issues; and it has tended to recast what is essentially a Balkan affair in terms of American policy or the role of such international organizations as the EC, the UN and NATO.'⁹²²

In France too, the interest for the war in Croatia appeared to have been limited. In July 1991, *Le Monde* considered that Yugoslavia was only worth an opening article on two occasions, and after 10 July, *Le Figaro* made no further comment on the crisis in Yugoslavia for weeks.⁹²³

The lack of interest in the West for the war in Croatia was generally attributed to the confusing nature of the conflict. There was no question of a real declaration of war. While fighting was going on elsewhere in Croatia, people in Zagreb were sitting in pavement cafes in the summer of 1991.

'Like a leaky tap, the fighting was now on, now off and by August it had settled into a cyclical pattern. The Serbs attacked a position; the EC issued a condemnation; the federal authorities called a ceasefire. After a few days of posturing at peace, the sequence started again with the next Serb assault. No one seemed sure if this routine counted as war or not and so journalists, politicians and the public continued to talk about the "Yugoslav crisis" just as we talk about currency crises or job crises...'⁹²⁴

⁹¹⁵ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Een oorlog zonder sympathie' ('A war without sympathy'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/10/91.

⁹¹⁶ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 158.

⁹¹⁷ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 173.

⁹¹⁸ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 165.

⁹¹⁹ James J. Sadkovic, 'The response of the American media to Balkan neo-nationalisms', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, pp. 116-119.

⁹²⁰ James J. Sadkovic, 'The response of the American media to Balkan neo-nationalisms', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 121.

⁹²¹ James J. Sadkovic, 'The response of the American media to Balkan neo-nationalisms', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 123.

⁹²² James J. Sadkovic, 'The response of the American media to Balkan neo-nationalisms', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 123.

⁹²³ Godfrey Hodgson, 'Discord in the European concert', *The Independent*, 03/08/91.

⁹²⁴ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 198.

For many Westerners in major cities, for months after the start of the Croatian war, Balkan meant no more than the name of the restaurant on the corner. The beaches and islands of the Adriatic coast in Yugoslavia had been heard of, as had *cevapcici* and *slivovitz* and the Red Star Belgrade football club. It was a pleasant holiday country, but little was known of the ethnic distinctions and the history of the former Yugoslavia. Sarajevo as the event that sparked World War I, the partisan conflict in World War II, and Tito's independent position in the Cold War were the best kept collective memories.⁹²⁵

It was difficult to explain to the public what had happened in Croatia, especially after the Gulf War that had been so pleasingly easy to understand:

"The fighting had five main theatres, in each of which the JNA had different war aims. On one front the fighting was about ethnic rivalry. On another it was about territorial aggression, a.k.a. Greater Serbia. On a third it was about tribal vendettas. On a fourth the fighting was spawned by the culture of violence. With commentators struggling to explain this maze, interpretations differed, and the big picture, that the JNA was running amok, was obscured."⁹²⁶

Lack of understanding and despair led to resignation. Furthermore the complexity of the conflict took away the possibility of identifying with what was going on. 'It would appear that you have to be a German or an Austrian to believe in the conflict, as the Croatian propaganda tried to hammer home: democracy versus reactionary Communism', wrote Van den Boogaard after three months experience in Croatia.

"The French, the British and the Dutch tend to distance themselves more. Rather too many lies were told about the course of the conflict and who started shooting, a little too much primitive propaganda intended to stir up hatred against Serbs, a few too many bodybuilders with extreme right-wing ideas arriving on the Croatian side from all over Europe to make their childhood dreams come true. No, the first war in Europe in decades had to make do without having meaning given to it, and without broad sympathy for one of the combatants."⁹²⁷

The commentator Koen Koch in *De Volkskrant* also felt that the Yugoslavia fatigue that he had observed in December 1991 had to do with a lack of opportunity for identification. After all, who in the Netherlands felt attracted to the nationalism of Milosevic or Tudjman? He thought that a fundraising campaign run by the Red Cross and a few other aid organizations for humanitarian assistance to the victims of the conflict in Yugoslavia was late in getting under way and perfunctory.⁹²⁸ The proceeds were disappointing. Part of the reason, according to the Red Cross, was that the television companies were unwilling to give it sufficient attention. The NOS thought that it was also due to the public response to Yugoslavia.⁹²⁹

In late 1991, Elsbeth Etty and Peter Michielsen expressed their frustration in *NRC Handelsblad* about the lack of interest in the conflict in Yugoslavia, with the phrase 'War is being waged in the heart of Europe and we couldn't care less':

⁹²⁵ Cf. Mock (Hg.), *Balkan-Dossier*, p. 8.

⁹²⁶ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 221.

⁹²⁷ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Een oorlog onder sympathie', *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/10/91.

⁹²⁸ Koen Koch, 'Yugoslavia-moeheid' ('Yugoslavia fatigue'), *de Volkskrant*, 06/12/91. He was referring to the Yugoslavia campaign of Memisa, Mensen in Nood, the Netherlands Red Cross, the ecumenical aid foundation, the foundation for Displaced Persons and UNICEF in the Netherlands.

⁹²⁹ 'Ruzie over hulpactie' ('Quarrel about aid operation'), *Trouw*, 30/11/91; 'Ruzie omroepen en Rode Kruis fataal voor hulpactie Joegoslavië' ('Quarrel between broadcasters and Red Cross disastrous for aid to Yugoslavia'), *de Volkskrant*, 06/12/91.

"The war in Yugoslavia has never been the topic of the day here: from the outset it was a war of which only a few could see the logic and the deeper historical motives, and where there is a lack of understanding and knowledge, indifference quickly follows. The war in Yugoslavia has no appeal. A war is being fought in Yugoslavia about land and influence, a nationalist war. We think this is outdated, backward, an anachronism (...) And so there never was a demonstration for peace in Yugoslavia in this country. For that matter, neither was there in any other country. If there was any kind of demonstration it was by Croats."⁹³⁰

A demonstration of sympathy with the independence of Croatia was held in the Netherlands on 30 June, but there were few participants, which according to the organizers was a consequence of the conflict in Slovenia that followed the declaration of independence.⁹³¹

On Saturday 13 July 1991 one hundred and fifty demonstrators in The Hague declared their support for a united and peaceful Yugoslavia. The meeting was organized by the confederation of Yugoslavian associations in the Netherlands. The turnout was disappointing and it was not all about Yugoslavian unity, as evidenced by the criticism directed at a reporter of *De Volkskrant* by one of the demonstrators: 'Serbs are portrayed as oppressors and Milosevic as a Bolshevik. Communism has given all the leaders, also those of Slovenia and Croatia, dirty hands. But the press heaps the blame on us.'⁹³²

According to Raymond van den Boogaard, the 'civil war' that developed in early July in Croatia had little resemblance to the 'more or less orderly conflict' in Slovenia:

"This is the conflict of the *pistolleros* led by minor Serbian politicians, of one village against the other, one half of the village against the other, of the assassins, the lumberjacks and the users of grandad's hunting rifle. And around that, the Yugoslavian army gathered along the border between Serbia and Croatia, the Croatian police units, the Croatian National Guard estimated at 30,000 men, and the countless police reservists in all republics."⁹³³

In his article, Van den Boogaard also mentioned Serbian 'terrorists', who the Croatian government said were supported by the JNA. And *HP/De Tijd* wrote at the beginning of September 1991:

"What gradually came to be known as the Yugoslavian crises occupied a lot of newspaper space, but otherwise resulted in little more than the shrugging of shoulders. A shame about the beaches, though. There is a shortage in Yugoslavia of clear heroes and villains which we can identify with. (...) On television each evening you see men in camouflage firing at men in approximately the same clothing in battles over unheard-of pieces of the country (East Slavonia! West Srenj!)."⁹³⁴

This was reason for the *HP/De Tijd* editors not to include too much Yugoslavia in its pages, for fear that the reader would quickly skip over it because they found nothing to identify with.⁹³⁵ The weekly mainly restricted itself to balanced atmosphere reports by Bart Rijs and, later, a number of more military-oriented articles by the freelance journalist Clifford C. Cremer.

⁹³⁰ Elsbeth Etty & Peter Michielsen, 'Europese vredesactie is wat Joegoslavië nodig heeft' ('A European peace operation is what Yugoslavia needs'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 31/12/91.

⁹³¹ Voor vrij Croatia' ('for free Croatia'), *de Volkskrant*, 01/07/91.

⁹³² 'De demonstranten zijn allen Joegoslavaaf' ('The demonstrators are all Yugoslavs'), *de Volkskrant*, 15/07/91.

⁹³³ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Burgeroorlog nadert Zagreb' ('Civil war approaches Zagreb'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/07/91.

⁹³⁴ Arno Kantelberg & Bart Rijs, 'Zonder helden of schurken' ('Neither heroes nor villains'), *HP/De Tijd*, 13/09/93, p. 8.

⁹³⁵ Daan Dijkman, 'Een héél rare oorlog', *HP/De Tijd* 07/02/92, p. 7.

There was no lack of contributions on the conflict in Yugoslavia in the correspondence columns, even though they were not yet thick on the ground at the time of the war in Croatia, but the matter was seldom mentioned in the letters to the editor.⁹³⁶ No one knows whether this was the consequence of a conscious editorial policy or that there really were relatively few readers who felt the urge to write letters on Yugoslavia.

A case in point was also that a book on the conflict in Yugoslavia did not yet prove to be commercially attractive for publishers in the Netherlands at the start of the war.⁹³⁷ Arendo Joustra, writing in *Elsevier* recorded the following in September 1991:

"Do you still read everything about Yugoslavia?."

"Not for a long time. I turn the page if it is full of stories about Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia."

'A bit of chat concealed in the convolutions of a discussion in a bar. Bar talk, in other words. But the interest was hardly greater in the offices of the professional observers.'

Joustra also attributed the lack of interest or engagement to the difficulty in identifying with the nationalist conviction of Croats, for example. 'The demonstrators at the embassy in The Hague are Croats, Serbs and the odd Yugoslavian. They are not Dutch sympathizers.' Others' nationalism was unable to arouse any ideological enthusiasm elsewhere, as the Spanish Civil War or the Cuban revolution had done earlier.⁹³⁸

Alongside the difficulty in identifying as a cause of the modest interest, *Elsevier* also cited the constant lurching between peace talks, ceasefire agreements and violations of these agreements. Seemingly futile details, 'news on the square millimetre', had to provide evidence for peace optimism, but the reader of that news quickly discovered that 'the typical Balkans choreography' consisted of one step forward, two steps back.

"All that fuss, I have stopped following it", the majority of people in the West eventually said. "They are choking on it, there in Yugoslavia." So much intrigue, so much deceit on a high level does not fit in with our view of the world.⁹³⁹

Therefore, according to *NRC Handelsblad* correspondent Raymond van den Boogaard, the war in Yugoslavia was not a popular subject in the Netherlands until 1993. As early as 1991 he encountered acquaintances in the Netherlands who would say they had 'stopped reading about it' because it was complicated, insoluble and was always the same thing.⁹⁴⁰

The war in Croatia was also difficult to illustrate. Toon Schmeink, deputy editor-in-chief of *Het Parool*, explained that for months the editorial team had been driven 'crazy' by the photo material: 'From the start of the war in Yugoslavia, the same sort of picture was offered almost every day: an older

⁹³⁶ For some notable exceptions see M. Wiegman, 'Joegoslavië' ('Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/09/91; H. Neudecker, 'Yugoslavia', *NRC Handelsblad*, 12-12-91; 'Volkenrechtelijk is ingrijpen in Kroatië uitgesloten', ('International law rules out intervening in Croatia') *de Volkskrant*, 10/08/91; I. van Wijngaarden, 'Vukovar', *de Volkskrant*, 24/10/91; Igor Znidarsic, 'Nieuw taalgebruik nodig voor oorlog in Kroatië' ('New language needed for war in Croatia'), *de Volkskrant*, 23/11/91; Nikola Rasic, 'Kroatië' ('Croatia'), *de Volkskrant*, 09/12/91.

⁹³⁷ Ugresic, *Nationaliteit*, p. 18.

⁹³⁸ Arendo Joustra, 'De betrokkenheid ontbreekt' ('The commitment is missing'), *Elsevier*, 21/09/91, p. 41.

⁹³⁹ 'Jojo' ('Yo-yo'), *Elsevier*, 19/10/91, p. 49.

⁹⁴⁰ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Lessen van de oorlog op de Balkan', Van Es & Sampiemon & Starink (eds.), *Redacteuren*, p. 215.

woman in tears. You had to be happy if now and again you saw a young mother with a child in the shot.⁹⁴¹

6. The early intervention debate in the Netherlands

Despite the resignation of a large part of the population, a split began to appear among the major Dutch quality newspapers at the end of June 1991 between *NRC Handelsblad* on the one hand and *De Volkskrant* on the other regarding the advisability of European involvement in the events in Yugoslavia. *Trouw* adopted a middle position in this matter.

From the outset, *NRC Handelsblad* took a critical course with respect to the European Community's possibilities for doing something about Yugoslavia. An editorial four days before the declarations of independence stated that the Community lacked effective instruments 'and the CSCE had none whatsoever'. The EC budget had no room for support and the organization did not have a political-military arm. If the Slovenians were to separate cleanly, the EC would be seen to be wearing the emperor's clothes: its credibility as the centre for European crisis management would be seriously undermined.⁹⁴² Shortly after the declarations of independence it was considered to be an outdated idea to deny Slovenia and Croatia the chance to leave Yugoslavia and to be admitted to Europe. Even without Serbian hegemonism, the 1918 solution was no longer adequate for Croatia and Slovenia.⁹⁴³ Through the eagerness with which it threw itself into the matter, the EC was in danger of 'digging a hole for itself'. The community would be given the blame if no solution was found.⁹⁴⁴ In the defence of the unity of Yugoslavia, the Community found itself in 'the questionable company of senior officers and populist zealots who were mainly obsessed with the continuity of their own power'.⁹⁴⁵

According to Peter Michielsen, the breakup of Yugoslavia would lead to bloodshed in Yugoslavia against which the confrontation in Slovenia would be as nothing. The question, however was 'whether something can still be done to change that scenario'.⁹⁴⁶ According to *NRC Handelsblad* columnist Paul Scheffer, the 'in more than one respect Orthodox Serbia' actually took little notice of outside pressure. And areas such as Croatia and Slovenia should not remain in a reactionary Yugoslavia as a result of Western European interference: 'where persuasion fails, we have to reconcile ourselves to a separation'. In that case, recognition was better than clinging to the unity of Yugoslavia, which Belgrade took as encouragement for the use of force. And if it came to violence, 'the brave EC troika would efficiently take to its heels'.⁹⁴⁷ According to the *NRC Handelsblad* editorial too, 'Persuasiveness, with the suspension of aid as an incentive' was 'the only means' at the EC's disposal. Furthermore, the contribution of the EC, namely the combination of unity and democracy, was equivalent to squaring the circle. And the Community's foreign policy was rendered 'lame' by the prevalence of national interests, as the actions of Genscher and Hurd demonstrated. As long as the EC encompassed many disparate views the troika would never be able to replace the large countries.⁹⁴⁸

Following Belgrade's decision to withdraw the JNA from Slovenia *NRC Handelsblad* hoped that the EC had learned that it could exert little influence on developments outside the community borders. According to the editorial in this newspaper, the combined effect of arguments of international law and financial-economic means of pressure failed to outbalance the 'historically accepted hatred and deeply-

⁹⁴¹ " Een krant positioneert zich via de foto's" ('A newspaper positions itself through the photos'), *De Journalist*, 22/05/92, p. 17.

⁹⁴² 'Joegoslavië' ('Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/06/91.

⁹⁴³ 'Afgewezen' ('Rejected'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/06/91.

⁹⁴⁴ 'Machtsvertoon' ('Show of strength'), editorial, *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91.

⁹⁴⁵ J.H. Sampiemon, 'Europa in verdacht gezelschap', *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/07/91.

⁹⁴⁶ Peter Michielsen, 'Breuk Joegoslavische federatie maakt van Balkan weer kruivat' ('Rift in Yugoslav Federation turns the Balkans back into a powder keg'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/07/91.

⁹⁴⁷ Paul Scheffer, 'De vraag van Tomas G. Masaryk' ('The question of Tomas G. Masaryk'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/07/91.

⁹⁴⁸ 'Trojka en Twaalf' ('Troika and twelve'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/07/91.

rooted urge for emancipation' that existed in Yugoslavia.⁹⁴⁹ At the beginning of August, after the war in Croatia had become visible to the West in all its horror, *NRC Handelsblad* observed that 'four weeks after the first lightning action (...) the EC's widely publicized mediation attempts appeared to have delivered precious little'.⁹⁵⁰

Dick Verkijk in the professional journal of Dutch journalism used similar terms. He wrote that the conflict in Croatia had been caused by 'a collection of irresponsible politicians' who until recently had belonged to the Communist party and were only interested in maintaining their positions. He said that they had always learned that to compromise was equivalent to capitulation and that nothing was worse than losing power. That was 'too much for ten ECs to compete with'.⁹⁵¹

The criticism directed from the outset at foreign involvement in the Yugoslavian crisis, in particular from the EC, by *NRC Handelsblad*, had no place on the editor's desks at *De Volkskrant*. While Ulrike Rudberg from Belgrade was sending her balanced contributions, totally different ideas were apparently floating around the Wibautstraat office in Amsterdam. As early as 29 May 1991 they printed an article by Flora Lewis with the title 'CSCE must prevent civil war'. She observed that the Yugoslavs were heading for civil war as if hypnotized. She dismissed a Western response by saying 'let them fight it out among themselves: we only have to take care that the violence does not get out of hand'. Conflict in Yugoslavia would inevitably inflame old border disputes in neighbouring countries, would result in hundreds of thousands of Displaced Persons and break up international economic networks. She felt that the parties in Yugoslavia were not open to mediation at that time, although, under the aegis of the CSCE, a group of generally respected people could map out the differences and at the same time make clear that none of the parties could rely on the support of the rest of Europe. Furthermore, the CSCE should make it very clear that both the external and internal borders of Yugoslavia were inviolable.⁹⁵²

The powerlessness of the CSCE was observed three weeks later in *De Volkskrant* when the CSCE ministers in Berlin stressed that the Yugoslavs would have to solve their problems themselves.⁹⁵³ Another week later an editorial nominated the European Community as a body to help the Yugoslavian republics conduct a dialogue that they did not appear to be able to do themselves. The instrument of economic and financial help could be used as a lever in this.⁹⁵⁴ On 3 July the newspaper observed that until then the international involvement had failed, but that was no reason not to continue to try to silence the weapons. The highest priority was to persuade the JNA to return to their barracks.⁹⁵⁵

At the end of July, when the fighting in Croatia exploded in all its intensity, André Roelofs criticized the failure to grant the Croatian authorities' repeated request to station ECMM people in Croatia too. The Brioni agreement opened the way for this. If the EC waited too long, only a rump of Croatia would remain and Europe could expect a conflict between Serbia and Croatia 'that could last for generations'. He admitted that it was possibly a little dangerous for civil observers. Then the moment would quickly arrive when the EC member states would have to be prepared 'at the request of the involved parties' to send a 'European "peacekeeping force"' to Yugoslavia.⁹⁵⁶ After the conflict in Croatia had flared up further in the following days, *De Volkskrant* expressed the opinion that the EC could not avoid discussing the question of whether a peacekeeping force for Yugoslavia would have to be formed.⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁴⁹ 'Slovenië vrij' ('Slovenia free'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/07/91.

⁹⁵⁰ Hans Nijenhuis, 'EG verstrikt geraakt in eigen bemiddelingplan' (EC tangled in own mediation plan), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/08/91.

⁹⁵¹ Dick Verkijk, 'Joegoslavië. De officiële tv wakkert haat aan', *De Journalist*, 42(1991)21 p. 19.

⁹⁵² Flora Lewis, 'CVSE moet burgeroorlog voorkomen' ('CSCE must prevent civil war'), *de Volkskrant*, 29/05/91.

⁹⁵³ 'CVSE-top' ('CSCE summit'), *de Volkskrant*, 20/06/91.

⁹⁵⁴ 'Afsplitsing', *de Volkskrant*, 27/06/91.

⁹⁵⁵ 'Ten geleide - Joegoslavië' ('An introduction - Yugoslavia'), *de Volkskrant*, 03/07/91.

⁹⁵⁶ André Roelofs, 'EC heeft A gezegd, EC moet B zeggen' ('EC said A, EC should say B'), *de Volkskrant*, 25/07/91.

⁹⁵⁷ 'Ten geleide - EG-troepen' ('An introduction - EC troops'), *de Volkskrant*, 31/07/91.

Another striking fact about the Dutch press was that while the Netherlands held the presidency of the European Community at the time, little interest was shown in the press for noises from over the borders.

Among the Yugoslavian voices that were heard in the Netherlands was that of the Croatian writer Dubravka Ugresic, who visited the Netherlands in late September 1991 and went on to the United States, returning to Zagreb via the Netherlands in the summer of 1992. For some time she wrote as a United States based correspondent for *NRC Handelsblad* and would later also contribute to Dutch media.⁹⁵⁸ She wrote the following Dutch language publications during the Yugoslavian conflict: *Nationaliteit: geen*, (Nationality: none) part of which she wrote in Amsterdam in 1993 and *De cultuur van leugens* (The culture of lies) in 1995. In her publications she expressed her feeling of being rootless both inside and outside her native country through the sharpness of Croatian Catholic-nationalism and the Western lack of understanding for Yugoslavia, full as she was of nostalgia for 'Titoland', her 'poor Atlantis'⁹⁵⁹ or 'Yugo-Atlantis'.⁹⁶⁰

The Czech writer Milan Kundera had the opportunity at the end of July 1991 to argue in *De Groene Amsterdammer* for preserving Slovenia. The West must not make the mistake made by Chamberlain, who rejected the idea of intervention for an unknown and far away country at the time of the Munich Conference.⁹⁶¹

Prof.dr.ir. J.J.C. Voorhoeve, at the time director of Clingendael, was one of the first among Dutch opinion makers to advocate intervention. As early as 29 June 1991, while the fighting in Slovenia had just started, he urged the deployment of peacekeeping forces, which, if necessary, would have to press ahead against the will of the JNA. He regretted that international law still offered too few opportunities for intervention in humanitarian crises; possibly, however, the genocide treaty would provide a way out!⁹⁶² In October, Voorhoeve expressed the opinion that Yugoslavia came close to 'a situation (...) that no longer has an ethical justification'. In such a case, he felt that humanitarian intervention should be possible in principle. The problem nonetheless was that not a single international organization appeared to be properly equipped for the purpose. He therefore advocated either strengthening the UN, in particular the secretariat, or enhancing the CSCE into an effective crisis management body.⁹⁶³

The director of the Clingendael Institute for International Relations and the former chairman of the VVD parliamentary party would repeatedly urge far-reaching military intervention.⁹⁶⁴ Unlike many interventionists, his argument was not simply emotional in nature. Neither was his starting point the possibility of a relatively small country such as the Netherlands becoming great in the field of human rights. His main point was an awareness of international responsibility for the course of events in the world.⁹⁶⁵ It was the moralism of the Netherlands elevated to a worldwide level: from model country to model world. And because Voorhoeve did not entirely ignore the power relations: moralism with a dash of realism.

⁹⁵⁸ Ugresic, *Nationaliteit*, pp. 9-10. See e.g. Dubravka Ugresic, 'Het onverdraaglijk overleven in Joegoslavië', *Vrij Nederland*, 12/09/92, pp. 22-24; idem, "Goedenacht, Kroatische schrijvers, waar u zich ook bevindt!", *Vrij Nederland*, 20/02/93, pp. 26-28.

⁹⁵⁹ Ugresic, *Nationaliteit*, pp. 18 and 20.

⁹⁶⁰ Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 58. See also Ugresic, 'Confiscatie', p. 149.

⁹⁶¹ Milan Kundera, 'Redt Slovenië!' ('Save Slovenia!'), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 31/07/91, p. 5.

⁹⁶² Wim Jansen/Johan ten Hove, 'De wereld kan wat doen' ('The world can do something'), *Trouw*, 29/06/91.

⁹⁶³ Bayer, 'Noodzaak', p. 6.

⁹⁶⁴ See also Paul Scheffer, 'Weg naar de hel' ('The road to hell'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/09/95.

⁹⁶⁵ See also the remarks of the then Clingendael worker Theo van den Doel in: Eric Vrijzen, 'Recept voor een ramp' ('Recipe for disaster'), *Elsevier*, 21/10/95, p. 36.

Voorhoeve's argument was preceded by an appeal by S. Rozemond, who wrote that even without the presence of a collective security system, 'it is impossible on the one hand to pursue pan-European cultural and economic linkage and on the other to remain indifferent to acts of war'.⁹⁶⁶

Others were more cautious. Koen Koch, political scientist and columnist for *De Volkskrant*, thought it best to limit the physical area of the conflict and to deprive it of oxygen.⁹⁶⁷ Brigadier General (ret.) J.C.A.C. (Koos) de Vogel, UNIFIL Head of Operations in Lebanon in 1980 and defence attaché in Belgrade between 1982 and 1986, warned in August 1991 that the dispatch of a peacekeeping force, which Van den Broek and Van Eekelen were discussing at the time, could not be realized from one day to the next, and certainly not in the absence of American command.⁹⁶⁸ 'If not all parties and militias consent to your arrival, you will be hacked to pieces.' According to him the West should have no illusions about what it would mean to make peace in the border area between Croatia and Bosnia, 'with so many combatants and interests'. Within the framework of the territorial defence, the weapons were mostly 'in a shed behind the town hall', and the territory was inhospitable⁹⁶⁹ and the Serbs in Krajina had been expert in the execution of military exercises since the sixteenth century.⁹⁷⁰ He thought that negotiations were vastly preferable to any form of military intervention whatsoever.⁹⁷¹

The Groningen based polemologist Hylke Tromp, who was married to the Croatian Nena Vrkic, was also one of the pessimists as far as Western involvement was concerned. In August 1991 he still thought that if EC mediation did not yield results, a military intervention by a *Rapid Deployment Force* would be 'virtually inevitable'.⁹⁷² For the time being he deemed mediation still possible, however, for example by a committee of wise men.⁹⁷³ Tromp's wife Vrkic also wanted to give such a committee another chance in early September, even though she started to fear that 'the deployment of military power is ultimately the only language that will still be understood in Yugoslavia'.⁹⁷⁴ Her husband also became increasingly convinced of this. The only way of still avoiding intervention with force was to threaten it, he wrote a few weeks later. And if that threat did not work, Europe would have to intervene with force without the permission of Milosevic and Tudjman.⁹⁷⁵ An action of this sort would have to be large scale: 'You don't put out a fire with a cup of water.'⁹⁷⁶

In October 1991, Hylke Tromp saw no solution to the conflict emerging from the region itself. He pointed to the Yugoslavs' xenophobic attitude, which he said was largely attributable to a general human pattern of radicalization during a conflict. The authoritarian structure in Eastern Europe was a further guarantee of people passively following their leaders.⁹⁷⁷ He thought that economic sanctions no longer made the slightest impression now that the conflict in Yugoslavia had escalated so far. However, he had doubts about military intervention:

⁹⁶⁶ S. Rozemond, 'Het dreigingsbeeld', *Nederlandse defensie tegen een nieuwe achtergrond*, p. 7, wrote this even before the outbreak of the war in Yugoslavia.

⁹⁶⁷ K. Koch, 'Het nieuwe dreigingsbeeld', *Nederlandse defensie tegen een nieuwe achtergrond*, p. 12, prior to the conflict in Yugoslavia

⁹⁶⁸ J.C.A.C. de Vogel, 'Zo'n Europese vredesmacht staat niet zo gauw in het gelid' ('Such a European peace force is not inclined to fall in line'), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/08/91, pp. 26-27.

⁹⁶⁹ 'Instemming van alle partijen nodig' ('Assent of all parties needed'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/08/91.

⁹⁷⁰ "Pacificatie duurt al maanden" ('Pacification has already taken months'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/08/91.

⁹⁷¹ Wio Joustra, "Praatcultuur kan Joegoslavië redden, interventie niet" ('The culture of talking can save Yugoslavia, intervention cannot'), *de Volkskrant*, 09/08/91.

⁹⁷² Hylke Tromp, 'Crisis Joegoslavië is vooral een machtsstrijd' ('The Yugoslavia crisis is mainly a power struggle'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/08/91.

⁹⁷³ Hylke Tromp, 'EG-trojka had te weinig gezag. Alleen team van ervaren chirurgen kan Joegoslavië redden' ('EC troika had too little authority. Only a team of experienced surgeons can rescue Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/08/91.

⁹⁷⁴ Nevenka Tromp-Vrkic, 'Steeds verder escaleert de Joegoslavische crisis' ('The Yugoslavia crisis escalates ever further'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/09/91.

⁹⁷⁵ Hylke Tromp, 'EG moet vrede in Joegoslavië durven afdwingen' ('EC must have the courage to enforce peace in Yugoslavia'), *de Volkskrant*, 19/09/91.

⁹⁷⁶ Haro Hielkema/Alder Schipper, 'De oorlog in huize Tromp' ('The war in the Tromp household'), *Trouw*, 28/09/91.

⁹⁷⁷ Bert Bukman, 'Bang voor de buitenwereld', *HP/De Tijd*, 18/10/91, p.17.

'The only thing that still makes an impression, is threatening intervention. And then not with thirty thousand lightly armed people, something I refer to in private as the rifle club - no, you have to be able to present yourself with two hundred thousand men, with precision weapons; you must be able to use the Sixth Fleet as a threat. Only then will you be credible. But I am afraid that even that will no longer help. The problem is that we in Europe lack the structure for situations of this sort. We are empty-handed.'⁹⁷⁸

What did Europe actually do in the meantime?

7. Further problems of the Dutch EC presidency surrounding the monitoring mission

Prior to an additional meeting of the Political Committee of the Twelve on 19 July, there was great foreign pressure on the Dutch presidency of the EC to resort to expanding the ECMM mandate to Croatian territory. Nonetheless, when on the eve of this meeting the Eastern Europe Department of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs drew up an assessment of opportunities available to the EC for influencing the situation in Yugoslavia, the officials concerned did not put such an expansion at the top of the list. The department wondered how the Serbian irregular groups could be monitored, how the observers might operate in an area such as Slavonia where there was no suspension of hostilities and how expansion of the mandate could be realized while Belgrade opposed it. According to the department, other opportunities for the EC to contain the conflict were as follows: the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia; the suspension of financial aid; sanctions; and suspending the EC effort, such as withdrawing from the monitoring mission. The EC could also raise the subject of measures in a CSCE context or in the UN.

The department felt little for the first option, the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia. The Serbs in Croatia would then rise up, after which the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina would possibly join in. Civil war could subsequently break out in Bosnia, which - apparently through the involvement of Muslims - would be given a religious twist, according to the department. The Eastern Europe Department rejected military intervention: 'Yugoslavia is a great hornets' nest. Military supervision in mountainous and therefore difficult to monitor territory does not seem realistic. The inflamed passions of the local population and the extent to which they are armed justify the fear that military intervention could involve many victims.'⁹⁷⁹

During the 19 July EC *Comité Politique* meeting (which discussed matters in advance of the Council of Ministers) it was decided to change the name of the ad hoc group for the monitoring mission to the 'ad hoc group on Yugoslavia'. From now on this group would be able to discuss all aspects of the relations between the EC or its member states and Yugoslavia. At its next meeting it would also have to consider the expansion of the activities of the ECMM to Croatia and possibly Bosnia-Herzegovina, where likewise difficulties were expected by the *Comité Politique*, which was itself unable to decide on extending the terms of reference of the monitoring mission.⁹⁸⁰ In response to this outcome the Dutch embassy in Belgrade advised The Hague against the dispatch of monitors to Bosnia. The ethnic problem was even greater there and the ECMM should not get involved in this 'mess'.⁹⁸¹

⁹⁷⁸ Bert Bukman, 'Bang voor de buitenwereld', *HP/De Tijd*, 18/10/91, p.18.

⁹⁷⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03283. EU/GBVB/extra CoPo 1991, memo from DEU/OE, 'Joegoslavië/scenario's en beleidsmogelijkheden' for Extra CoPo, The Hague 19/07/91, 18/07/91.

⁹⁸⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03283. EU/GBVB/extra CoPo 1991, Van den Broek to Belgrade embassy, 22/07/91, celer 080; *ibid.*, DDI-DEU, 03288, Yugoslavia: EU/EPC. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparations for the Dutch contribution. Minutes of sessions July-December 1991, COREU of the Dutch EC presidency, 19/07/91, cpe/pres/hag 405.

⁹⁸¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03309. Hasselman 232 to Van den Broek, 23/07/91.

Another outcome of the deliberation of the *Comité Politique* of 19 July was that four days later, on 23 July 1991, the Dutch ambassador in Paris, Henry Wijnaendts, left for Yugoslavia with the mandate from the *Comité Politique* of the Twelve to ask the federal authorities and the republics how they viewed the negotiations on the future of the country and to suggest what he thought the role of the EC could be.⁹⁸² Wijnaendts was Van den Broek's star player. He had already acted in awkward situations as the minister's diplomatic *troubleshooter*.⁹⁸³ He rapidly came to the conviction that the greatest danger in Yugoslavia came from the conflict between the Serbs and the Croats and that the assistance of the Europeans was indispensable in bringing about a solution.⁹⁸⁴

Also after the meeting of the *Comité Politique* of 19 July, the German government continued to urge the Dutch presidency of the EC to expand the ECMM task to Croatia. This lured Van Walsum to respond in like kind. The Dutch Director-General of Political Affairs asked his German colleague Chrobog by telephone on 23 July if Germany could arrange for the WEU or the CSCE to take the lead in a peacekeeping operation, in view of the fact that it was chairman of both. In so doing Van Walsum overlooked a memo of a few days earlier from the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (DAV) of his own ministry, which stated that NATO and WEU troops were little suited to peacekeeping duties. Anyway, such a deployment would possibly lead to objections from the Soviet Union, the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs thought. The memo said that these troops were suited to peace-enforcing. According to the directorate, however, a scenario in which there would be (an element of) peace-enforcement in Yugoslavia was not likely.⁹⁸⁵

Chrobog told Van Walsum that a WEU action was undesirable in view of the fact that the CSCE even found the EC too exclusive a gathering, not to mention the even smaller WEU. Chrobog considered action by the CSCE unfeasible. Van Walsum then gave Chrobog notice that from now on Bonn should give more careful consideration before pressing for monitoring tasks in Croatia, where, according to Van Walsum, the observers could accomplish little without military support.⁹⁸⁶ It would not be the last time that the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs would play such a 'prank' on their counterparts in Bonn.

However, the Dutch Director-General's intervention by telephone made little impression on the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One day later Genscher repeated the German request for expanding the ECMM to Croatia in a letter to Van den Broek.⁹⁸⁷ On the same day, 24 July, Genscher took the initiative for a meeting with his counterparts from France and Luxemburg, Dumas and Poos, during the *Bayreuther Festspiele*, to prepare for the meeting of the EC Ministers of Foreign Affairs that was to take place in Brussels in five days time. Under Genscher's leadership they agreed on a request to Van den Broek as EC president to invite not only the Yugoslavian premier Markovic and his Minister of Foreign Affairs Loncar to this EPC meeting on 29 July as planned, but also representatives of all the republics. The purpose was to reach agreement at the meeting on the expansion of the ECMM mandate to Croatia.

Minister Genscher would increasingly irritate his Dutch counterpart Van den Broek with tête-à-têtes of this sort.⁹⁸⁸ The following day the Netherlands lodged an objection in the *Comité Politique* to Bonn's proposal. As a compromise it was therefore decided to invite the entire Yugoslavian presidium.

⁹⁸² ABZ, DEU/ARA/03283. EU/GBVB/extra CoPo 1991, Van den Broek to Belgrade embassy, 22/07/91, celer 080.

⁹⁸³ See e.g. Philip Freriks, 'Henry Wijnaendts is diplomaat voor moeilijke klussen' ('Henry Wijnaendts is a diplomat for difficult assignments'), *de Volkskrant*, 13/09/91.

⁹⁸⁴ Wijnaendts, *Kroniek*, p. 67.

⁹⁸⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03283. EU/GBVB/extra CoPo 1991, memo from DAV/PN/CG, 'Een mogelijke rol voor de WEU m.b.t. peace-keeping in Joegoslavië', undated, probably 17 or 18/07/91.

⁹⁸⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03309. Memorandum from DGPZ to DAV, 23/07/91, no. 173/91.

⁹⁸⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03308. Genscher to Van den Broek, undated, appendix to K.J. Citron to Van den Broek, 24/07/91; Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 130; 'EG wil nu ook waarnemers in Kroatië' ('EC now wants observers in Croatia too'), *de Volkskrant*, 25/07/91; 'Mandaat waarnemers in Joegoslavië wordt mogelijk uitgebreid' ('Mandate for observers in Yugoslavia may be extended'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/07/91.

⁹⁸⁸ Interview H. van den Broek, 02/12/99.

This compromise fell through, however, because the Netherlands addressed the invitation to the presidium and not to the individual members. Furthermore, Ambassador Fietelaars in Belgrade implemented his instruction rather flexibly by handing the invitation to the Macedonian presidium member Tupurkovski, who he happened to meet on his way to a meeting of the presidium. As a consequence, only Tupurkovski himself and the Bosnian member of the presidium turned up at the EPC meeting. The representatives of Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia stayed at home. Genscher was furious at Van den Broek, because his attempt to act as Croatia's protector had been thwarted by the way in which the Dutch authorities had implemented the *Comité Politique* decision.⁹⁸⁹

On 24 July Dumas also made a proposal for deployment of a WEU military force for peacekeeping in Croatia. However, on the same day in the French Ministerial Council, French president Mitterrand declared opposition to a peacekeeping force of this kind. Only a continuation of the dialogue between the Yugoslavian republics was acceptable to him.⁹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Dumas persisted in developing the idea and presented the proposal to send soldiers along with a group of three to four hundred observers at the EPC meeting of 29 July in Brussels.

It is not clear how sincere Dumas's proposal was. After all, it was not only the French head of state who had objections to a WEU peacekeeping force. It must have been known in Paris that it was a virtual certainty that the United Kingdom would not participate in such a peacekeeping force, firstly because the British government felt little for engaging the WEU for fear that they would harm the Atlantic cooperation, secondly because the British Minister Hurd made no secret of the fact that he expected little good to come of involvement in an internal conflict. Dumas must also have been aware that if Serbia already objected to the deployment of monitors on Croatian territory, it would certainly resist the stationing of a WEU peacekeeping force that above all had Germany, which Belgrade so mistrusted, in its chair.⁹⁹¹ Not unexpectedly, the proposal stranded on 29 July. Dumas's colleagues called an intervention force premature, and Genscher pointed out that assent could not be expected from all parties in the conflict.⁹⁹²

At the EPC meeting of 29 July, the EC ministers declared that the internal borders of Yugoslavia were just as important as the international borders, which was the final shunning of Van Walsum's COREU of 13 July. Otherwise the other EC ministers were prepared to extend the ECMM to Croatia on the condition of an effective ceasefire. On two important points, the matter of the internal borders and the expansion of the ECMM mandate to Croatia, EC President the Netherlands therefore was isolated. The request from the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina to station monitors there also was kept in the portfolio. For the time being the EC wanted to concentrate on the problems in Croatia, although the German government warned that it was Bosnia where it expected the greatest problems.⁹⁹³

When later, at the meeting of the ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia, the German representative proposed that EC diplomats in Belgrade repeatedly visit Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia to demonstrate their concern for these two moderate republics specifically, it met with objections from Greece.

Greece adopted an individual position within the EC with respect to Yugoslavia.⁹⁹⁴ The Greek government took pride on its historically good relations with Serbia. Both countries had freed

⁹⁸⁹ Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 942-944; Libal, *Limits*, pp. 27-28; Zeitler, *Rolle*, pp. 296-297; J.L. Heldring, 'De kop van Jut' (The scapegoat), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/08/91.

⁹⁹⁰ Favier & Martin-Rolland, *Décennie*, p. 189.

⁹⁹¹ Cf. Jakobsen, 'Multilateralism', p. 374.

⁹⁹² Favier/Martin-Rolland, *Décennie*, p. 190.

⁹⁹³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03309. COREU of the EC presidency, 22/07/91, cpe/pres/hag 414; idem, no. 00405, Yugoslavia/Domestic Politics/Croatia 1990-1991, COREU of the Secretariat, 29/07/91, cpe/sec 636; Wijnaendts, *Kroniek*, p. 70; Interview M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

⁹⁹⁴ For a summary of the Greek position with respect to the wars in ex-Yugoslavia, see Prodromos Yannas, 'Greece's Policies in the Post-Cold War Balkans', Danopoulos & Messas (eds.), *Crises*, pp. 153-168. And further: Frans van Hasselt, 'Grieken van EG meest pro-Servië' ('Within the EC the Greeks are the most pro-Serbia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/11/91; Jan van

themselves from the same oppressor, the Ottoman empire, and their populations adhered predominantly to the Orthodox faith. Milosevic's regime hoped in the 1990s to make use of these links to avoid international isolation. Conversely, the government in Athens took pride in their relationship with Milosevic and in the following years they were eager to play the role of mediator with the Serbian leadership in Belgrade.⁹⁹⁵ Greece therefore had less of a tendency than other EC countries to denounce the Milosevic regime and Serbian misdeeds. Furthermore, the country itself would suffer more than other EC member states under sanctions imposed on the former Yugoslavia. Athens therefore preferred a diplomatic solution to the conflicts at times when other countries were advocating military action. It would not participate in such action itself and later it would look on with sorrow that Turkish F-16s and ground forces were deployed in connection with the war in Bosnia.

With a view to its own Macedonian area in the north of the country the government in Athens had more to fear than other EC and NATO states for an escalation of the war in Macedonia. Furthermore, the Greek government feared territorial claims from an independent Macedonia on the north of Greece. Therefore Greece was to raise many objections, especially against the name 'Macedonia', which appeared to underscore the territorial claims.

In this early phase of the conflict, the Greek government feared that visits by EC diplomats to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, as proposed by Bonn, would actually provide an impetus for the pursuit of independence in those republics. It was decided to allow each country the freedom to determine what to do on this point, as long as they informed the other EC partners on the visits and findings of their own diplomats.⁹⁹⁶

Partly to provide better guarantees of the safety of the observers, at the European Political Cooperation (EPC) meeting of 29 July Van den Broek raised for discussion the possibility of mixed patrols of the JNA and Croats, with possible ECMM participation, following the example of Angola. The minister failed to see why that would not be possible if both parties were actually aiming for negotiations on the future of Yugoslavia.

At the same time it was a makeshift solution. The EC had no means for sending soldiers, and Germany, that as chairman still had not convened the WEU on the Yugoslavian issue, did not appear to be prepared to deploy the union for protecting the monitors. Furthermore, Van den Broek expected, deployment of the WEU would provoke much discussion on the acceptability of risks and the nature of the weaponry, so that it would take too long before the monitors could actually be protected.⁹⁹⁷ Nothing came of this idea from Van den Broek. Germany and Belgium objected to the role that Van den Broek had in mind for the JNA in the mixed patrols.⁹⁹⁸

der Putten, 'Athene steunt Serviërs uit vrees voor aanspraken Macedonië' ('Athens supports Serbs for fear of claims from Macedonia'), *de Volkskrant*, 05/12/91; ABZ, 999,241, Vijverberg 58 to Kooijmans, 05/04/93.

⁹⁹⁵ See also interview T. Miller, 18/06/00.

⁹⁹⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288. Yugoslavia: EU/EPC. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparations for the Dutch contribution. Minutes of meetings July-December 1991, Van den Broek to Belgrade embassy, 27/08/91, celer 107.

⁹⁹⁷ Radio 2, AVRO, Radio news, 28/07/91, 13.02 hours; Radio 1, NOS, *Met het oog op morgen*, 01/08/91, 23.05 hours; 'Nieuw EG-plan voor Joegoslavië' ('New EC plan for Yugoslavia'), *Trouw*, 29/07/91; Ulrike Rudberg, 'EG presenteert vredesplan voor strijd in Kroatië' ('EC presents peace plan for struggle in Croatia'), *de Volkskrant*, 29/07/91; 'Van den Broek doet nieuw vredesvoorstel' ('Van den Broek presents new peace proposal'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/07/91. The idea of such mixed patrols was proposed by Van der Togt (Eastern Europe department) in departmental consultation. According to Hazewinkel, Van der Togt was only joking, but the joke was to be taken seriously by the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (DAV), interview H. Hazewinkel, 17/04/00. This recollection of Hazewinkel also found its way into Both, *Indifference*, p. 111. According to Van der Togt himself, however, it really was a serious idea, which had come up in a discussion involving Herman Schaper, Sigrid Kaag and himself: 'This also happened in other operations. It happened in Angola too. That was another example of a tentative proposal: could we apply it there as well? These were brief moments when you thought: maybe this is something that could be useful? Then we actually would have made a contribution...!', Interview, 04/05/00. See further ABZ, DEU/ARA/03309. Memorandum from deputy DAV, Schaper, to Van den Broek via DGPA and secretary-general, 26/07/91, no. DAV-RP/233/91.

⁹⁹⁸ Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 943.

The failure of the fourth troika mission and Van den Broek's disillusionment

On 2 August, four days after the EPC meeting, the EC troika departed for Yugoslavia for the fourth time since the declarations of independence, at the request of the federal government. It became clear during the visit that the request had come from Markovic and Loncar in particular. Minister of Defence Kadijevic proved to have completely different views, namely ones identical to those of Milosevic. They both had little regard for the EC's involvement with Yugoslavia.

The main goal of the troika's visit, in accordance with the decision of 29 July, was to discuss the possibility of expanding the duties of the EC observers to Croatia, which required the assent of all parties, and therefore of Kadijevic and Milosevic especially. The fact is that the EC ministers set an effective ceasefire as a condition for expansion of the mandate to Croatia. Van den Broek still also wanted to discuss the possibility of mixed patrols of Croatia, the JNA and representatives of Croatian Serbs.⁹⁹⁹ Before the event, Van den Broek deemed the chance of effecting a ceasefire and of getting the parties back around the negotiating table small. On 1 August he said on the radio: 'I fear that the history of Yugoslavia also teaches us that these [solutions] will not be easily found, whatever the circumstances. (...) Ultimately we are dealing with something that has deep historical roots and that is not likely to change permanently in response to a single salutary word from Brussels or from The Hague.' Van den Broek understood from contacts with Wijnaendts that the Serbian leadership 'would fend off, if not obstruct, any form of interference from the European side.'¹⁰⁰⁰ By putting his own influence into perspective in this way, Van den Broek apparently sought to temper excessive expectations.

Similar evidence of diplomatic modesty could be heard when Van den Broek rejected a suggestion for military intervention in Yugoslavia put forward by the Luxemburger Poos on the same 1 August. The television pictures of the areas in Croatia mainly inhabited by Serbs left an impression on Van den Broek of 'a state of desperation (...), such that it is also difficult to see how it can be alleviated in the short term.'¹⁰⁰¹

One day later, Van den Broek stated that he was taking account of the fact that a WEU peacekeeping force could be necessary at any moment, which would emphatically not be intended to enforce or impose peace, but at the same time he called the idea of such a peacekeeping force premature:¹⁰⁰² 'I am not ready for that yet,' the Dutch minister said,¹⁰⁰³ in which he enjoyed the support of the the government parties PvdA (Labour) and CDA (Christian Democrats), which did not wish to see troops dispatched in the absence of a sustainable truce.¹⁰⁰⁴

The Secretary-General of the WEU, Van Eekelen, who thought that it would be possible to assemble a WEU buffer force of several thousand within one or two weeks, was also not 'straining at the leash to jump into that (Yugoslavian) hornets' nest', as long as the EC did not request it,¹⁰⁰⁵ and the political will was also absent elsewhere: 'The level of violence is still too low and public opinion is insufficiently mobilized for that.'¹⁰⁰⁶

Van den Broek's aspirations prior to the fourth troika mission may have been modest, but he was nevertheless badly affected by its failure. According to Van den Broek, Serbia was mainly to blame, having thrown up a blockade against the EC proposals although they were acceptable to the other five

⁹⁹⁹ For reports see ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287. EU/GBVB/Troika, preparation and reporting of Troika visits to Yugoslavia, July/August 1991, COREUS of the Secretariat, 05/08/91, cpe/sec 643 and cpe/sec 644; *ibid.*, Fietelaars 253 to Van den Broek, 05/08/91.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Radio 1, NOS, *Met het oog op morgen*, 01/08/91, 23.05 hours.

¹⁰⁰¹ Radio 1, NOS, *Met het oog op morgen*, 01/08/91, 23.05 hours.

¹⁰⁰² Radio 1, VARA, *Vrijdageditie*, 02/08/91, 17.05 hours.

¹⁰⁰³ 'WEU-macht 'laatste middel' in Joegoslavië' ('WEU force 'last resort' in Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/08/91.

¹⁰⁰⁴ De Kok and Van Traa in Radio 1, NCRV, *Hier en Nu*, 02/08/91, 13.10 hours; De Kok and Van Traa in Radio 2, NCRV, *Hier en Nu*, 18/09/91, 17.04 hours; De Hoop Scheffer in Radio 1, NCRV, *Hier en Nu*, 23/09/91, 12.05 hours.

¹⁰⁰⁵ 'WEU-macht 'laatste middel' in Joegoslavië', *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/08/91.

¹⁰⁰⁶ 'Van Eekelen: WEU kan zeer snel paraat zijn' ('WEU can quickly achieve a state of readiness'), *Trouw*, 03/08/91.

republics and the federal presidium. On Saturday evening 3 August, while the troika discussions were still in progress, Milosevic, in a statement that was 'bursting with insults',¹⁰⁰⁷ announced that he rejected all the troika's suggestions. According to the Serbian head of state, representatives of the EC were welcome as politicians, diplomats, businessmen or tourists, but not in the form of a peacekeeping force or observers.¹⁰⁰⁸

The following day the Serbian discussion partners, with the exception of Kadijevic, failed to appear. For Van den Broek, the possibility of a peacekeeping force was provisionally off the agenda now that Serbia even objected to unarmed civilian observers. It was clear to the troika that little could be accomplished as long as the Serbian territorial aspirations in Croatia remained unsatisfied.¹⁰⁰⁹ While EC politics appeared to be in a deadlock, Van den Broek considered the step to the Security Council still too great at that time: 'For that, I think, you have to consider an unhoped-for much more serious situation of large scale violence, civil war, and the threat of violence.'¹⁰¹⁰ There first have to be 'circumstances like those in Irak with the Kurds'.¹⁰¹¹

At the end of the troika's visit, Van den Broek made no secret of his disappointment to the members of the presidium and the presidents of the republics present. Under the circumstances, he said, further efforts by outsiders would be useless. He announced that he would make it abundantly clear in his contacts with the press which party the troika thought had obstructed an agreement.¹⁰¹²

At the concluding press conference in the early afternoon of 4 August at the federal palace in Belgrade, Van den Broek appeared to the representatives of the press who were present to be weary and shaken. 'The mission has failed. Europe can do little more for Yugoslavia', was his message to the media.¹⁰¹³ He blamed the failure of the troika mission on one of the parties, but did not want to say which party he meant. On his return that evening to Schiphol, where he still gave an exhausted and disheartened impression,¹⁰¹⁴ he blamed the Serbs explicitly. 'The outside world should know where the obstruction is.'¹⁰¹⁵ He said he sympathized with a people who had leaders like Milosevic. Van den Broek was 'undiplomatically bitter', according to *The New York Times*.¹⁰¹⁶ The way in which Van den Broek aired his disappointment was deemed to be unprofessional. 'The frustration was all too understandable - a minister is only human - but the way it was expressed at Schiphol was unwise.'¹⁰¹⁷ The *Volkscrant* even used the term 'defeatism'.¹⁰¹⁸

¹⁰⁰⁷ 'Van den Broek verbitterd en somber na mislukking EG-trojka. 'Servië saboteert vredesmissie' ('Van den Broek bitter and gloomy after EC troika failure. Serbia sabotages peace mission'), *Trouw* 05/08/91.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ulrike Rudberg, 'Trojka staakt bemiddeling in Joegoslavië' ('Troika abandons mediation in Yugoslavia'), *de Volkskrant*, 05/08/91; Zeitler, Rolle, p. 131.

¹⁰⁰⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287. EU/GBVB/Trojka, preparation and reporting of Troika visits to Yugoslavia, July/August 1991, COREU of the Secretariat, 05/08/91, cpe/sec 643.

¹⁰¹⁰ TV, Nederland 3, NOS, Journaal, 04/08/91, 20.00 hours.

¹⁰¹¹ 'Spoedoverleg EG na mislukte trojka-reis' ('Emergency EC meeting after failed troika mission'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/08/91.

¹⁰¹² ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287. EU/GBVB/Trojka, preparation and reporting of Troika visits to Yugoslavia, July/August 1991, Fietelaars 253 to Van den Broek, 05/08/91.

¹⁰¹³ Rudolf Gruber, Marjolein Sebregts and Gert van Wijland, 'Acht schorpioenen', *Elsevier*, 10/08/91, p. 26. See also 'Kroatië wil hulp Verenigde Naties' ('Croatia wants UN help'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/08/91; Leonoor Meijer, 'EG peinst over laatste redmiddel voor (delen van) Joegoslavië' ('EC contemplates last resort for (parts of) Yugoslavia'), *Trouw*, 06/08/91; Ulrike Rudberg, 'Trojka staakt bemiddeling in Joegoslavië', *de Volkskrant*, 05/08/91.

¹⁰¹⁴ Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, 'Van den Broek vermoeid en ontmoedigd' ('Van den Broek weary and discouraged'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/08/91; Pieter Nijdam, 'EG-missie mislukt in Joegoslavië' ('EC mission fails in Yugoslavia'), *Telegraaf*, 05/08/91; 'Van den Broek verbitterd en somber na mislukking EG-trojka. 'Servië saboteert vredesmissie' ('Van den Broek bitter and gloomy after EC troika failure. Serbia sabotages peace mission'), *Trouw* 05/08/91.

¹⁰¹⁵ Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, 'Van den Broek vermoeid en ontmoedigd' ('Van den Broek weary and discouraged'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/08/91.

¹⁰¹⁶ Stephen Engelberg, 'Carving Out a Greater Serbia', *The New York Times*, 01/09/91.

¹⁰¹⁷ 'Bijbaantje' ('Job on the side'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/08/91. See also 'Joegoslavië', *de Volkskrant*, 06/08/91.

¹⁰¹⁸ Wio Joustra, 'Waar niet wordt gepraat, vallen doden' ('Where talking stops, people die'), *de Volkskrant*, 07/08/91.

Van den Broek admitted for the first time after the mission that the federal authorities no longer had much relevance, and in any case had no control over the JNA.¹⁰¹⁹ It was the Croatian and Slovenian discussion partners especially who had contributed to these convictions. Tudjman commented to the troika that every decision taken by Markovic that was not to the liking of the Serbian leadership would not be carried out.¹⁰²⁰ Half a day later, the Slovenian Prime Minister, Peterle, said that Markovic 'had no credibility or support for his action nor real power'.¹⁰²¹ Markovic also had absolutely no influence on the Minister of Defence Kadijevec, who described Loncar to the troika as 'only 25 per cent of the problem'; the other 75 per cent was formed by the leaders of Serbia.¹⁰²²

According to the Dutch ambassador, Fietelaars, an evaluation of the Yugoslav relations as the troika encountered them, led to the conclusion:

'that the actual power relations were much less complicated than the complex institutional structure of this country might lead you to believe. This has to do with a life-and-death power struggle between the (actually single-headed) communist leadership of the expansive-nationalist republic Serbia (which has absorbed Montenegro in all but name) and the neodemocratic leaders, not to be confused with democrats, of two equally nationalist, but less expansionist republics, Croatia and Slovenia.'¹⁰²³

According to Fietelaars, the JNA had decided to carry out 'the hard work' for the Greater-Serbian aspirations. As long as not as many Serbs as possible in areas outside Serbia were brought together under the protection of the JNA, it would not consent to the arrival of foreign busybodies.

Under these circumstances, it was even more inconvenient that the EC was still unable to decide between maintaining the unity of Yugoslavia on the one hand, and assuring the right to self-determination on the other. According to Markovic this, as he called it, European fickleness, was the main cause of the failure of the troika mission.¹⁰²⁴

On the Serbian side, there was a completely different explanation for the troika fiasco: Dutch pigheadedness. This was an easy reproach to make, of course, and it was often levelled at the Dutch in international consultation, but this made the reproach no less justified. Van den Broek, who was more or less taken by surprise by the outbreak of the major crisis in Yugoslavia a few days before the start of the Dutch EC presidency, had immediately set to work fervently to bring about solutions, as various other members of government and his officials observed at the time.¹⁰²⁵ The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, more than most of his colleagues, was fearful that if the West failed to take action, the conflict would have repercussions outside Yugoslavia. He therefore thought that 'there was no time to lose'.¹⁰²⁶ However, Van den Broek quickly noticed that the Yugoslavia problem was less susceptible to a rapid solution than in all optimism had originally been thought.¹⁰²⁷

The confrontation with the Balkans certainly did not leave Van den Broek unaffected. As early as July 1991 he had formed an extremely negative image of Yugoslavia and its citizens in general, and of

¹⁰¹⁹ Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 131.

¹⁰²⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287. EU/GBVB/Troika, preparation and reporting of Troika visits to Yugoslavia, July/August 1991, COREU of the Secretariat, 05/08/91, cpe/sec 643 and cpe/sec 643.

¹⁰²¹ Ibid.

¹⁰²² ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287. EU/GBVB/Troika, preparation and reporting of Troika visits to Yugoslavia, July/August 1991, Fietelaars 253 to Van den Broek, 05/08/91. Cf. *ibid.*, COREU of the Secretariat, 05/08/91, cpe/sec 644.

¹⁰²³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287. EU/GBVB/Troika, preparation and reporting of Troika visits to Yugoslavia, July/August 1991, Fietelaars 260 to Van den Broek, 07/08/91.

¹⁰²⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287. EU/GBVB/Troika, preparation and reporting of Troika visits to Yugoslavia, July/August 1991, Fietelaars 256 to Van den Broek, 06/08/91; *ibid.*, Fietelaars 260 to Van den Broek, 07/08/91.

¹⁰²⁵ Interviews R.F.M. Lubbers, 13/10/00; P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00; A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

¹⁰²⁶ Jan Bron Dik, 'Nederlands EG-voorzitterschap', *CD/Actueel*, 21/12/91, p. 5.

¹⁰²⁷ Interview R.F.M. Lubbers, 13/10/00.

Milosevic in particular. At one point during the negotiations on the Brioni agreement, the Slovenian president, Kucan, said that the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs had stormed out of the room muttering the words 'What a people! What a country!'¹⁰²⁸ According to Van den Broek, Milosevic was the major villain.¹⁰²⁹

It quickly became apparent that Van den Broek's fervour was not linked to a deep understanding of the issue. The risk of blind activism was not far away. 'Hectic, haphazard, confused and inconsistent' is how the liberal *Süddeutsche Zeitung* described the activity of the EC after one week.¹⁰³⁰

Neither could everyone at his own ministry understand Van den Broek's fervour. At the Eastern Europe Directorate there was a view that Tudjman was scarcely more respectable than Milosevic. Officials therefore wondered what the point was of EC involvement in the conflict: 'What on earth are we to do with this? Do we need to get involved in it? To be drawn in? This activist nonsense? I do understand that the minister is on that track, but I had major reservations. Is it possible for us to grasp the situation anyway? Should we want to?'¹⁰³¹

After a few weeks of involvement, Van den Broek had already perceived that agreements with the leaders in the former Yugoslavia had little value, and that, in his own words, 'in that regard the Balkans are a law unto themselves'.¹⁰³² More than a year later he would remark: 'With respect to Yugoslavia, agreements no longer give me any pleasure. I am only pleased about agreements that are *complied with*. (...) I have learned to live with the great lie. Saying yes and then doing no. I have always had difficulty with that.'¹⁰³³

The Dutch Minister Van den Broek was certainly not the only Western statesman to feel frustrated in the 1990s by a series of broken promises from leaders in the former Yugoslavia. Lubbers also referred to an initial underestimate on the side of the Dutch of 'the capacity of politicians and peoples there to manipulate (...) a climate in which you reach agreement and that is that - yes, life just isn't that simple there (...) And then you get that muddle.'¹⁰³⁴

The mediator Lord Carrington once let slip that he had never met such two-faced and unreliable people as in the former Yugoslavia.¹⁰³⁵ His successor Owen did not fare any better: 'The most striking thing - which everyone who has ever taken part in the negotiations on the modern Yugoslavia will notice - is the astonishing capacity that all people on all levels appear to have: the capacity to lie. It almost defies belief. How many truces have been violated. They just keep signing treaties without the slightest intention of respecting them. In the former Yugoslavia our views on honour are unheard of, it is part of their culture.'¹⁰³⁶

The British Prime Minister, John Major, also quickly perceived that 'an "agreement" with states of the former Yugoslavia is one of history's less useful pieces of paper'.¹⁰³⁷

Although there was a tendency to consider this form of insincerity as a sort of Balkan characteristic, too little attention was given to the fact that parts of Yugoslavia were in a state of war and that truces served as an 'opportunity to stock up on additional ammunition'.¹⁰³⁸ Contrary to what would have been the case if an inborn Balkan attitude had existed, the repeatedly broken promises were

¹⁰²⁸ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 164.

¹⁰²⁹ Interview M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

¹⁰³⁰ Quoted in: "Struisvogel is het symbool van de EG" ('Ostrich is the symbol of the EC'), *de Volkskrant*, 04/07/91.

¹⁰³¹ A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00. See also interview H. Hazewinkel, 17/04/00.

¹⁰³² Interview H. Van den Broek, 15/11/99.

¹⁰³³ Leonard Ornstein, 'Minister Van den Broek: 'Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg'', *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 10.

¹⁰³⁴ Interview R.F.M. Lubbers, 13/10/00.

¹⁰³⁵ BVD, inspection of dossiers Yugoslavia reports, no. 98272. BVD, 'Vredeskansen in ex-Joegoslavië en de gevolgen voor Nederland', 22/04/94. Cf. Almond, *War*, p. 243; Barbara Crossette, 'Europe's Envoy in Yugoslav Crisis Quits', *The New York Times*, 26/08/92; Tromp, *Verraad*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁰³⁶ Cited in Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 97. See also Terrett, *Dissolution*, p. 76.

¹⁰³⁷ Major, *Autobiography*, p. 538.

¹⁰³⁸ Frans van Deijl and Auke Kok, 'Mission impossible', *HP/De Tijd*, 21/08/93, p. 18.

also seen in Yugoslavia as a phenomenon that had to do with the war. For example, according to the Yugoslav newspaper *Borba*, the parties in the region followed the principle 'agree today, and wriggle out of it tomorrow!'¹⁰³⁹

The Dutch weekly *Elsevier* quoted an official of the Ministry of the Interior in Zagreb regarding a ceasefire agreement: 'No one believes it. This agreement is for the benefit of the Europeans, because we are keen to have their support. Not for ourselves.'¹⁰⁴⁰

The Dutch polemicist Hylke Tromp, on the other hand, considered that failing to honour agreements was part of the local culture.¹⁰⁴¹ His opinion was supported by the nationalist Serbian writer Dobrica Cosic, who was soon to be president of Yugoslavia: 'The lie is a part of our patriotism and a confirmation of our innate intelligence.'¹⁰⁴²

If that was true, there was only one possibility for doing something about it, and that is to attach sanctions to the breaking of agreements. Van den Broek's personal experiences quickly convinced him that the only way of making sure that agreements made would also be complied with was to threaten with the use of force. Otherwise, in his opinion, with people like Milosevic the international community could 'fairly quickly forget' it.¹⁰⁴³

Van den Broek was therefore at the end of his diplomatic tether on 4 August: promises were worth little and if he could not threaten with force, he knew he would be treated with contempt by Milosevic. On the one hand it was impossible to make binding agreements with the Yugoslav parties. On the other hand, Van den Broek wanted to bring the European presidency to a successful conclusion, backed up by consensus. These two desires were hardly compatible, and that led to Van den Broek's personal frustration with the Yugoslavia dossier.¹⁰⁴⁴ He is said even to have briefly considered resigning.¹⁰⁴⁵

In his speech to the conference with the Dutch ambassadors on 27 August 1991, Van den Broek sighed that in recent months he had often wondered 'how Jan Fietelaars had gathered all his contacts, because I have often had the feeling of being surrounded by nothing other than horse thieves and brigands'.¹⁰⁴⁶

Van den Broek had got his teeth stuck into the Yugoslavia issue and it would not let him go. Even after the end of the Netherlands presidency of the EC, the Yugoslavia issue continued to have 'a top priority' for the minister. 'He had sunk his teeth into the Yugoslavia file.'¹⁰⁴⁷ David Owen, who was later to become EC mediator in the Yugoslav conflict, sensed in Van den Broek 'signs of trauma' as a consequence of his failed approach to the issue during the EC presidency. After that, Owen said, he behaved like a 'hawk', which fell on deaf ears among his opposite numbers in other countries.¹⁰⁴⁸ For his part, Van den Broek was to criticize Owen for his 'strategy of capitulation'.¹⁰⁴⁹

Shortly after his resignation as Minister of Foreign Affairs in late 1992, Van den Broek called the inability to bring an end to the conflict in (former) Yugoslavia the low point of his period of office.¹⁰⁵⁰ In his next position as European Commissioner for External Relations, he also continued to

¹⁰³⁹ Quoted in 'Jojo', *Elsevier*, 19/10/91, p. 49.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴¹ Bert Bukman, 'Bang voor de buitenwereld', *HP/De Tijd*, 18/10/91, p.17.

¹⁰⁴² Cited in Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 97. See also p. 104.

¹⁰⁴³ Interview H. Van den Broek, 15/11/99.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Interviews H. Van den Broek, 15/11/99; B.J. van Eennaam, 22/08/00; H. Hazewinkel, 17/04/00; and H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00; Leonard Ornstein, 'Minister Van den Broek: 'Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg'', *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 10. Cf Major, *Autobiography*, p. 532

¹⁰⁴⁵ Rob Meines, 'Rol EG bij de Balkancrisis begon zo mooi' ('The EC's role in the Balkans crisis got off to such a good start'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/09/91.

¹⁰⁴⁶ ABZ, Kabinetsarchief: Coll. Van den Broek. File: Ambassadors' conference 1991. Speech Van den Broek, 27/08/91.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Interview A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Cited in Van der Roer, *Frontdiplomaten*, p. 61. Similar sentiments in interview D. Owen, 21/10/99.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Ibid. Cf. interview W. Claes, 21/03/01

¹⁰⁵⁰ Jan Bron Dik, 'De Hollanditis ligt gelukkig achter ons, er is weer internationaal respect', *CD/Actueel*, 13(1993)(16/01/93), p. 4.

present the case for intervention.¹⁰⁵¹ As his successor P.H. Kooijmans put it: 'In comparison, I was rather tame.'¹⁰⁵²

It was a little ironic, in view of the frequent friction Van den Broek experienced during the Dutch EC presidency with the political leaders in Bonn, that the Serbs saw Van den Broek only as second-fiddle to Kohl and Genscher, who were pursuing the speedy recognition of Croatia.¹⁰⁵³ When a Dutch reporter left Serbia in the autumn of 1991, someone said to him: 'Genscher grosses Schwein, Van den Broek kleines Schwein.' When some time later he drove into Croatia, he was to hear: 'Genscher Freund, Van den Broek grosses Schwein.'¹⁰⁵⁴ Dutch citizens in Yugoslavia were no longer patted on the back to enthusiastic shouts of 'Kroif', referring to the ex-football player Johan Crujff, but were given a hostile greeting with references to Van den Broek.¹⁰⁵⁵ His name was pronounced by Serbs as *Bruka*: which means disgrace.

Otherwise, Minister Van den Broek's frustration with the difficulty of moving others in the European Community to a more active position was shared by the rest of the government: 'From the outset there was an element of irritation and a degree of impatience regarding the lack of deftness on the part of the international community, including the European Union, in turning the words that had been spoken into proud deeds.' In this respect, there was no difference of opinion the government between the coalition partners CDA and PvdA.¹⁰⁵⁶

What now?

On 6 August, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Twelve attended a special meeting of the EPC in The Hague at the request of the German Minister Genscher, to discuss the results, or rather the lack of them, of the troika mission. After Van den Broek had given his account of the visit, various ministers emphasized that, in their eyes, the troika had not failed and could still play a role.¹⁰⁵⁷ This was comfort that Van den Broek sorely needed at that time. It was added, however, that other international organizations should be involved in the solution of the conflict to step up the pressure on Yugoslavia. The Security Council would be requested to prepare for involvement. At the proposal of Dumas, the Permanent WEU Council was to be convened for an initial exchange of views on a peacekeeping force, although the British Minister Hurd immediately urged restraint.¹⁰⁵⁸

Both initiatives were torpedoed almost immediately by the United States and the Soviet Union. Later the same day, the Soviet government warned the EC not to intervene militarily in Yugoslavia, because this would mean that the community would not only come into conflict with powers within Yugoslavia, but also outside, which could lead to a European war.¹⁰⁵⁹ Washington stated its opposition to engaging the Security Council, because it did not want the Soviet Union to concern itself with the matter.¹⁰⁶⁰ The very next day in London the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the WEU rejected any notion of a peacekeeping force.¹⁰⁶¹

¹⁰⁵¹ See e.g. Van der Roer, *Frontdiplomaten*, pp. 61-71; interview W. Claes, 21/03/01.

¹⁰⁵² Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

¹⁰⁵³ See e.g. Kadjevic, *View*, p. 46; Theo Engelen, "Servië heeft EG-overleg niet laten mislukken" ('Serbia did not cause EC consultation to fail'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/08/91.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Peter Michielsen, 'Na duizend doden gaat Van den Broek eindelijk ultimatum stellen' ('After one thousand deaths Van den Broek finally issues ultimatum'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/10/91.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Dick Verkijk, 'Joegoslavië. De officiële tv wakkert haat aan', *De Journalist*, 22/11/91, p. 18.

¹⁰⁵⁶ interview W. Kok, 08/05/00.

¹⁰⁵⁷ See e.g. Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 944.

¹⁰⁵⁸ On the dismissive British response see also ABZ, DEU/ARA/03305. Roberts (London) 271 to Van den Broek, 06/08/91.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Hella Rottenberg, 'Moskou verwerpt Europese bemoeienis met Joegoslavië' ('Moscow rejects European involvement in Yugoslavia'), *de Volkskrant*, 08/08/91; Jakobsen, 'Multilateralism', p. 371; Kaufman, 'Force', p. 313; Weller, 'Response', p. 575; Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 161.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Védrine, *Mondes*, p. 609

¹⁰⁶¹ Eiserman, *Weg*, p. 53.

On 6 August, the EC ministers also demanded a study into the possibilities for economic and financial sanctions against those parties in Yugoslavia that resisted the establishment of a ceasefire. This was a clear reference to Serbia. It had therefore taken little more than a month before the EC appeared to be prepared to exchange its neutral attitude towards the conflict for selective policy. However, such an attitude could lead to problems as long as the EC still hoped to mediate.

At the previous EPC meeting on 29 July, the EC ministers had stated that they would stand by to provide substantial support to the federal presidium and the leaders of the constituent republics in negotiations on the political future of Yugoslavia, with recommendations on legal, economic and financial matters. However, the point of departure then was still that the Yugoslavs themselves should find a concrete solution to their problems. The EC was prepared to formulate the principles with which such a solution should comply, but not to draw up a blueprint.¹⁰⁶² After the troika's visit had created the impression that the parties could achieve little with their own resources, the EC ministers stated, on a British proposal,¹⁰⁶³ on 6 August that they were prepared to organize a round table conference on Yugoslavia.

The EC ministers were aware that a mediating role at a conference and simultaneous application of sanctions against one or more of the parties at the negotiating table were mutually incompatible. However, the German government thought that pressure would have to be brought to bear on Serbia in order to get negotiations moving at all. If it did not happen, the Serbian authorities would continue to present the world with *faits accomplis*, as evidenced by the intensification of the conflict in Croatia at the end of July. Furthermore, it would become increasingly difficult to interest Slovenia in a comprehensive arrangement for Yugoslavia, after the announcement on 18 July that the JNA would withdraw from that area.¹⁰⁶⁴

As a compromise, the Twelve decided to have the European Commission carry out a study into the possibility of selective sanctions. The Commission ultimately did not produce a report, because it considered that there were no opportunities for such sanctions. Van den Broek did not regret this. He saw (as yet) 'little point' in drawing a distinction between 'good guys' and 'bad guys'.¹⁰⁶⁵ In this, Van den Broek adopted a different position from that of Van Eenennaam, who from the outset was in favour of the international isolation of the 'bad guy' in Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁶⁶

Furthermore, Genscher asked again on 6 August for 'understanding' for Germany's desire for speedy recognition of the independence of Croatia and Slovenia, albeit stressing that Germany wished to negotiate on this point only in line with the rest of the EC.¹⁰⁶⁷ Hurd immediately stated his opposition. He thought that such recognition would accelerate the disintegration of Yugoslavia and encourage similar processes elsewhere in Europe. Van den Broek supported his British opposite number and stressed that the EC must speak with a single voice on the subject. He refused to reopen the discussion on this subject.¹⁰⁶⁸ Genscher had only raised this subject, however, for the purpose of forcing Serbia to cooperate.¹⁰⁶⁹

¹⁰⁶² ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288. Yugoslavia: EU/EPC. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparations for Dutch contribution. Minutes of meetings July-December 1991, Van den Broek to Belgrade, 02/08/91, celer 93.

¹⁰⁶³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288. Yugoslavia: EU/EPC. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparations for Dutch contribution. Minutes of sessions July-December 1991, UK paper, 'Scheme for a possible round table conference', distributed at the meeting of the ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia of the EC, 01/08/91; *ibid.*, Van den Broek to Belgrade, 02/08/91, celer 93.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Libal, *Limits*, p. 32.

¹⁰⁶⁵ ABZ, Cabinet archives: Coll. Van den Broek, box 7 (1991), Yugo chairman, memorandum PV EC to M, 07/08/91; *ibid.*, ABZ, DIE/ARA/01232. EC/Yugoslavia September-October 1991, minutes of interdepartmental consultation dated 08/10/91. See also ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288. Yugoslavia: EU/EPC. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparations for Dutch contribution. Minutes of meetings July-December 1991, Van den Broek to Belgrade, 27/08/91, celer 107.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Interview B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 945.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Both, *Indifference*, p. 110.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Libal, *Limits*, p. 34.

Van den Broek and the other troika members could derive some comfort from the remarks of the other ministers that they had not failed in their mission, but there was no denying that at the meeting of 6 August, the major countries, Germany, France and the United Kingdom, started to concern themselves more emphatically with the direction.¹⁰⁷⁰

The Russian factor

The United States also appeared in the wings for a while. After the troika had failed to move Milosevic and Kadijevic to consent to the expansion of the ECMM mandate to Croatia, the American government decided to make an indirect attempt by requesting Moscow to exert pressure on Belgrade to agree.¹⁰⁷¹ It was a first sign that Washington had realized that it needed the Russian government in a solution to the Yugoslav crisis, after the American government a short time previously had opposed engaging the Security Council in view of the Soviet Union's representation on it.

Russia was traditionally considered to be an ally of the Serbs. One of the first foundations of the political sympathy was laid in the war between Russia and Turkey (1828-1829), when Russia managed to achieve greater autonomy for Serbia. After that, prominent Russians supported the idea of Pan-Slavism, in which the shared creed of Orthodox Christianity could serve as cement. On the eve of World War I, Russia threw in its lot with that of Serbia. When the government of Austria-Hungary, encouraged by Berlin, made presumptuous demands on Serbia, Russian troops mobilized, setting off a chain reaction that resulted in World War I.

Nevertheless, the past Russian and Serbian links were less strong than was believed at the end of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁷² There was more affection in Serbia for Russia than vice versa.¹⁰⁷³ For instance, in 1878, Russia adopted more of a pro-Bulgarian than a pro-Serbian position at the Congress of Berlin and the earlier discussions in San Stefano.¹⁰⁷⁴ In 1908, much against Belgrade's will, Russia consented to the annexation of Bosnia by Austria-Hungary, in the expectation of gaining Austrian support for opening the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles for Russian warships.¹⁰⁷⁵ During both Balkan wars, too, Serbia enjoyed no support from Russia.¹⁰⁷⁶ During the interbellum period, Yugoslavia maintained no official relations with the Communist rulers in Moscow. There was still even a Tsarist embassy in Belgrade until 1939.

At the end of World War II there was something of a renewal of the 'special relations'. In 1944 the Serbian Orthodox Church welcomed the Red Army at the liberation of Belgrade as 'our brothers and sisters from the distant Slavic country of Russia'. This 'profound brotherhood' indicated 'that nothing was more beautiful than mother Russia'.¹⁰⁷⁷ Patriarch Gavriilo repeated this tribute more than two years later at the International Pan-Slavic World Congress in Belgrade.¹⁰⁷⁸

In 1948 relations between Russia and Serbia deteriorated again because of the split between Stalin and Tito. After the invasion by Warsaw Pact troops in Czechoslovakia in 1968, relations between Moscow and Belgrade escalated. This was relaxed again only in 1988 thanks to Gorbachov's visit to Yugoslavia, when he solemnly swore that the Soviet Union would never intervene militarily in the country. The Soviet leader otherwise took the opportunity to express his great admiration for the developments in Slovenia, which illustrated the remaining gulf between the reform-minded regime of Gorbachov and the regime of Milosevic.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Cf. 'Parijs en Bonn geven niet op' ('Paris and Bonn are not giving up'), *Trouw*, 06/08/91.

¹⁰⁷¹ ABZ, Kabinetsarchief Stg Geheime Codes. Bentinck 803 to Van den Broek, 14/08/91, Stg Confi., Van den Broek circ 448 to Moscow and Washington embassies, 13/08/91, Stg Confi.

¹⁰⁷² Naarden appendix, 2001, pp. 39-40.

¹⁰⁷³ Blagojevic & Demirovic, *Bloedverwanten*, pp. 50-51; Interview Carl Bildt, 13/12/00; Sremac, *War*, pp. 54 and 70.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Libal, *Serben*, p. 115.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Libal, *Serben*, p. 116.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Libal, *Serben*, p. 116-117.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Monnesland, *Land*, p. 273.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Monnesland, *Land*, p. 273.

The Soviet Union originally had as little idea as the West about what to do with the Yugoslavia issue, even though the collapse of Yugoslavia had been the most rehearsed scenario of the Warsaw Pact for years, as was also the case with NATO.¹⁰⁷⁹ An anonymous government official in Moscow said the following a few days after the declarations of independence of Croatia and Slovenia: 'Ironically enough this is a crisis - the collapse of Yugoslavia with a few republics turning capitalist and separating - about which we have been deliberating and making plans for three or four decades.' At the time of the Cold War the thinking was in terms of intervention, both in the Soviet Union and the West. But now it was difficult even for Moscow to put together a statement on the crisis. It could do little other than to stand behind the CSCE declarations.¹⁰⁸⁰

By early July 1991, Gorbachov had come to the conclusion that the eventual disintegration of Yugoslavia was inevitable in view of the German support for the independence of Croatia and Slovenia.¹⁰⁸¹ In the following weeks, Gorbachov found an ally in the American president Bush senior, who was no less anxious about the collapse of the Soviet Union than the Soviet leader himself. Both agreed that in the short term Yugoslavia should remain as a unit to prevent Soviet republics grasping the development in the southern Slavic federation as a precedent.¹⁰⁸²

When the coup against Gorbachov took place in Moscow in mid August, it came as no surprise to the JNA command. They had maintained contact with the perpetrators of the coup for months, and in the spring there was even talk of the possibility of simultaneous coups in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁸³ As soon as news of the coup in Moscow broke, the regime in Belgrade expressed its sympathy for the perpetrators. This yielded Milosevic the abiding disfavour of Russian President Boris Jeltsin's circle, who, to Gorbachov's cost, had emerged from the attempted coup as the great saviour of reform-minded Russia.¹⁰⁸⁴ Neither did Milosevic improve matters later by occasionally treating the Russian leaders with contempt.¹⁰⁸⁵ In the meantime, the failure of the coup in Moscow spelled the end of the JNA's expectation that the Yugoslav army could carry out a coup, directed towards restoration of a federal state, by analogy with and with the support of their comrades in Moscow.¹⁰⁸⁶

After the coup in Moscow, the leaders there managed not to develop a clear policy on Yugoslavia for half a year. Because they were dependent on Western support, they mainly echoed the sentiments of Washington and the Western Europe capitals.¹⁰⁸⁷ However, from the spring of 1992, increasing criticism was to be directed by the Russian opposition to their own government's accommodating policy on the former Yugoslavia. The pro-Serb position of the nationalist opposition to Jeltsin was, however, mainly motivated by feelings of frustration with Russian powerlessness in carrying out aspirations outside their own borders now that the gross national product had gone into free-fall. Furthermore, the Russian opposition was able to play the domestic political card that, if Jeltsin should go too far in making overtures to the Western position, he could be accused of being a traitor to the Serbian brothers.¹⁰⁸⁸ Meanwhile there were various contacts between nationalist Russians and Serbs, including on arms supplies and Russian mercenaries and volunteers. In exchange for this, Serbs were to send money to the Russian nationalists, for example via Cyprus. It is unknown to what extent official Russian bodies were aware of these arms supplies, but it is unlikely that they did not know.¹⁰⁸⁹

¹⁰⁷⁹ Richard H. Ullman, 'The Wars in Yugoslavia and the International System after the Cold War', idem (ed.), *World*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Michael Parks, 'News analysis. Moscow caught flat-footed by crisis', *Los Angeles Times*, 29/06/91.

¹⁰⁸¹ Andrei Edemskii, 'Russian Perspectives', Danchev & Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁸² Thomas Halverson, 'American Perspectives', Danchev/Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, p. 5; Andrei Edemskii, 'Russian Perspectives', *ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁸³ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 119-120.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Doder/Brandson, *Milosevic*, p. 71; Glenny, *Balkans*, p. 637; Hoppe, 'Moskan', p. 269; Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 176.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Interview Carl Bildt, 13/12/00.

¹⁰⁸⁶ See e.g. M. Vasic, 'The Yugoslav Army and the Post-Yugoslav Armies', Dyker & Vejvoda (ed.), *Yugoslavia*, pp. 126-127.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Paul A. Goble, 'Dangerous Liaisons: Moscow, the Former Yugoslavia, and the West', Ullman (ed.), *World*, p. 190.

¹⁰⁸⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Vos 245 to Kooijmans, 21/04/93.

¹⁰⁸⁹ See e.g. Bata, *Auslandskontakte*, pp. 378-380; Ramet, Babel, pp. 254-255; confidential interview (5).

From the summer of 1992, the Russian government would discover that a position that diverged somewhat from the West would both take the wind out of the sails of the domestic opposition and offer a chance to gain a place of its own in international politics.¹⁰⁹⁰ The United States' engagement of Russia in the Yugoslav conflict in the years to follow was therefore also mainly motivated by the need to support Jeltsin, more than by the hope that Moscow could exercise any real influence on the Serbs' authority.¹⁰⁹¹

Reproaches for foot-dragging in The Hague, Croatian escalation

The criticism directed by other countries towards Van den Broek after the last unsuccessful troika mission was not echoed in the Netherlands itself. Dutch politicians still had the tendency to protect their Minister against Genscher, whom the VVD member Blaauw accused of following the 'Greater-German line'.¹⁰⁹²

In the first one and a half months after the declarations of independence of Croatia and Slovenia, the Dutch Ministerial Council was not strongly involved in the development of the conflict and the formulation of the European response. This did not mean that the government did not support Minister Van den Broek. There was understanding for the fact that he, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Prime Minister Lubbers ('I am somewhat of a doer')¹⁰⁹³, adopted a strong position because of the European presidency. There was a feeling in the Ministerial Council from an early stage that the international community should not allow events in the disintegrating Yugoslavia to run their own course.¹⁰⁹⁴

In the Ministerial Council of 15 August, satisfaction was expressed that, in spite of the obstruction suffered by the Netherlands as EC president from the pro-Croatian and Slovenian action of the German government, it had succeeded in preventing 'premature' recognition, among other things by pointing out that this would cause a chain reaction - for example, with respect to the Baltic states.¹⁰⁹⁵ Despite the difficulties encountered, a preference remained for a prominent EC role now that the supremacy of the United States and the Soviet Union was under discussion. Although the deployment of a peacekeeping force appeared to have little chance in view of the attitude of the Serbian and German authorities and the fact that a proposal to that effect in the Security Council would probably meet with a Russian veto, it was deemed desirable for the three Western European countries in the Security Council - Belgium, France and Great Britain - to urge the Council to prepare for possible UN intervention.

The following day it became clear in The Hague how slight the chance of deploying a peacekeeping force in Yugoslavia was. On 16 August the Dutch ambassador in Washington, Bentinck, reported that the American government was not prepared to supply troops for peacekeeping or peacemaking that would be necessary at the end of the hostilities in Yugoslavia. The American authorities held out the prospect only of logistics support. Bentinck's informant in the State Department even suggested that the EC would be well advised to delay the negotiations on the Yugoslav issue, which he felt were no less complicated than those of Cyprus or Northern Ireland, until economic problems forced Milosevic to make way for more moderate leaders. The senior official of the

¹⁰⁹⁰ Paul A. Goble, 'Dangerous Liaisons: Moscow, the Former Yugoslavia, and the West', Ullman (ed.), *World*, pp. 190-191.

¹⁰⁹¹ See also Thomas Halverson, 'American Perspectives', Danchev & Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, p. 2; Bert Lanting, 'Ook Rusland mist greep op Serviërs' ('Russia also has no hold on the Serbs'), *de Volkskrant*, 19/07/95. See also interview Th. Stoltenberg, 22/09/00.

¹⁰⁹² Wio Joustra. Verdeelde EG laat Yugoslavia aan lot over. Kritiek op Van den Broek wordt in eigen land niet gedeeld ('Divided EC abandons Yugoslavia to its fate. Criticism of Van den Broek not shared in his own country'), *de Volkskrant*, 08/08/91.

¹⁰⁹³ Willem Breedveld, 'Ik ben nu eenmaal een doenerig type' ('I am something of a doer myself'), *Trouw*, 26/10/91.

¹⁰⁹⁴ See e.g. interview W. Kok, 08/05/00.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 15/08/91, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

State Department advised against stationing monitors in Bosnia-Herzegovina without Serbia's permission, because he thought that Milosevic would not hesitate to eliminate a few observers in order to influence public opinion in Western Europe.¹⁰⁹⁶ One week earlier, an anonymous *State Department* informant made a statement to the press that the American restraint was partly determined by pessimism about the state of affairs in Yugoslavia: "There is a feeling that the Yugoslavs are determined to cut each other down in droves, whatever we do or say."¹⁰⁹⁷ At the end of August, the aloofness of the American government, despite the increasing pressure of public opinion and Congress, was repeated both publicly and in a discussion with Bentinck. The opportunity was taken to scrap plans of the Principal Assistant to the Secretary of State Ralph Johnson, who was responsible for policy on Yugoslavia at the State Department, and National Security Council official Hutchings, to come to the Netherlands to discuss Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁹⁸

On 20 August 1991, Van den Broek informed Parliament by letter of the state of affairs with respect to Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁹⁹ The minister stated that provisionally only the EC could play a mediating role through a conference, although he said that he was now convinced of the great degree of difficulty of the terms of reference. The CSCE was hindered by consensus decision making and therefore the necessity for the assent of Yugoslavia. There was (as yet) no role for the UN because it was an internal conflict. The minister acknowledged the danger that 'premature' recognition of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia could entail for the other republics, which would not be pleased with the resulting Serbian domination. Van den Broek continued that he was taking account of the possible precedent of the solution to the conflict in Yugoslavia for other Central and Eastern European states.

After the failure of the troika mission, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs appeared to have lost some of its momentum. The Hague emphasized that there must be an effective ceasefire before the start of the envisaged Yugoslavia Conference. Meanwhile, Minister Van den Broek left for a delayed, short holiday in his own country. Van den Broek and the head of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (DAV), Van Eenennaam, were pressed from the German, French, Irish and Spanish capitals not to lay too much emphasis on this condition and to make haste with getting the conference under way.¹¹⁰⁰

Not only foreign ministers and diplomats, but also the press started to question the Netherlands' conduct of the presidency. "This has been the summer which the Dutch, in whose lap the international management of the Yugoslav crisis has fallen, will prefer to forget", wrote David Hearst in *The Guardian* on 16 August.¹¹⁰¹ Around this time, the message got through to Van Walsum. Doing something was better than doing nothing, he thought at the time, even if waiting and seeing (as recommended by the Eastern Europe Department) was objectively the better option.¹¹⁰²

Meanwhile, the intensity of the war in Croatia only increased. On 22 August Tudjman announced that Croatia would take all necessary measures to protect its territory. He threatened all-out war if the JNA, which the Croatian government now referred to as an occupation army, had not withdrawn from Croatia by 1 September.¹¹⁰³ A number of days later, Croatian armed forces started to

¹⁰⁹⁶ Bentinck 815 to Van den Broek, 16/08/91, Stg Conf.

¹⁰⁹⁷ 'VS kunnen in Joegoslavië geen eer behalen' ('No credit for US in Yugoslavia'), *de Volkskrant*, 08/08/91.

¹⁰⁹⁸ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Bentinck 868 to Van den Broek, 30/08/91.

¹⁰⁹⁹ TK, 1990-191, 22 181 no. 3.

¹¹⁰⁰ ABZ, Kabinetsarchief: Coll. Van den Broek, box 7 (1991). Yugo-chairman, message from Dumas to Van den Broek, 12/08/91; ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288. Yugoslavia: EU/EPC. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparations for Dutch contribution. Minutes of sessions July-December 1991, memorandum of DAV head to Van den Broek, 13/08/91, DAV-160.91; ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081. DEU; reporting via COREUS regarding the points of view of the EPC on Yugoslavia, June-September 1991, appendix to J.A. López Jorriñ to Van den Broek, 14/08/91; 'Spanje wil initiatieven' (Spain wants initiatives), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/08/91.

¹¹⁰¹ David Hearst, 'Europe: A Weak Way to War', *The Guardian*, 16/08/91.

¹¹⁰² Both, *Indifference*, p. 113.

¹¹⁰³ See also Raymond van den Boogaard, "Onze operaties zullen radicaler worden" ('Our operations will become more radical'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/08/91.

besiege the JNA barracks on Croatian territory and to cut off the oil transport through a pipeline from Rijeka to Serbian territory.

It appeared difficult to convince the Croatian authorities of the idea that they could not bring about an outside intervention with an escalation of the conflict. Washington went to great pains to implore the leaders in Zagreb to continue to occupy the 'moral high ground' and requested the Netherlands to dissuade Tadjman and his followers that a Western intervention was imminent.¹¹⁰⁴ At the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs there was little sympathy for Tadjman, whose Greater-Croatian aspirations appeared to the Dutch officials to differ little from Milosevic's Greater-Serbian ambitions.¹¹⁰⁵ Van den Broek himself talked of Tadjman in terms of 'that awkward customer'¹¹⁰⁶ and felt that 'some of the so-called repressed, and the Croats in particular, also made things very difficult for us from time to time'.¹¹⁰⁷

The German government, on the other hand, continued to consider Tadjman, *right or wrong*, as their protégé.¹¹⁰⁸ Bonn also had more regard for the escalation of the JNA's violence in the second half of August. On 24 August Genscher told the Yugoslav ambassador in Bonn, Boris Frlec, that if the federal armed forces persisted with their actions, the German government would seriously 'review' the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia within their existing borders, and would urge a similar review by the EC. At the end of the interview, this German government position was also made public.¹¹⁰⁹ It was an unmistakable signal from the government in Bonn, which in the preceding weeks had still expressed the EC position to both the Slovenian government and the Bosnian vice-president Ejup Ganic, and had urged cooperation in the creation of a confederate Yugoslavia.¹¹¹⁰ But it remained a signal mainly intended for domestic consumption, that Genscher felt was necessary in view of the public indignation in Germany about the JNA's action.¹¹¹¹

8. Dutch energy against the background of the Bonn-Paris axis

For Bonn, the escalation of the violence in Croatia was also a reason to request a meeting of the EPC Ministerial Council on 27 August in Brussels. Meanwhile, the EC had already decided to provide a chairman to lead the meetings of the Yugoslavia conference. A ceasefire was indeed no longer a condition for calling a conference. The principles underlying such a conference were as follows: eschewing the use of force, only peaceful changes of borders, firm guarantees for the rights of national minorities, respect for human rights and the law in general, political pluralism and a market economy.¹¹¹²

In the car on the way to the meeting in Brussels, Van den Broek asked Van Walsum what the presidency could still propose to the ministers of the other member states after the repeated ceasefire violations. The tête-à-tête in the car led to a draft for a 'hard anti-Serbian statement' from the Council, in which Serbia was warned that it was making a serious mistake if it thought it could present the EC

¹¹⁰⁴ABZ, DEU/ARA/03283. EU/GBVB/extra CoPo 1991, Van Nouhuys 1233 to Van den Broek, 30/08/91; *ibid.*, ABZ, DEU/ARA/00405. Yugoslavia/Domestic Politics/Croatia 1990-1991, Hasselman 287 to Van den Broek, 27/08/91; *ibid.*, Van den Broek to Belgrade embassy, 30/08/91.

¹¹⁰⁵ Interviews H. Hazewinkel, 17/04/00 and A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

¹¹⁰⁶ Interview H. Van den Broek, 15/11/99.

¹¹⁰⁷ Interview H. Van den Broek, 02/12/99.

¹¹⁰⁸ Maull, '*Germany*', p. 112.

¹¹⁰⁹ Libal, *Limits*, p. 39; Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 400.

¹¹¹⁰ Libal, *Limits*, p. 39.

¹¹¹¹ Libal, *Limits*, p. 40.

¹¹¹²ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288. Yugoslavia: EU/EPC. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparations for Dutch contribution. Minutes of sessions July-December 1991, COREU of the Dutch EC presidency, 23/08/91, cpe/hag 660.

with military *faits accomplis* in Croatia.¹¹¹³ This statement offered the possibility of a conference on the future of Yugoslavia, from which Serbia and Montenegro would be excluded if Belgrade did not agree to the conference and with a ceasefire to be verified by monitors, before 1 September.

However, Van den Broek was overtaken in this initiative by Genscher and Dumas. Genscher, who was seriously concerned about the crack that the Yugoslavia issue threatened to cause in the traditional EC Bonn-Paris axis, had prior consultation with his French opposite number. The two ministers had come up with a formula for bridging the French-German differences. All Yugoslav parties, without exception, would have to take part in the conference: both the federal government, which Paris wanted, and the presidents of all six republics, which Bonn wanted.

Furthermore, Dumas had Genscher's ear for the idea of attaching an arbitration committee to the conference under the chairmanship of the president of the French Constitutional Court, Robert Badinter, who was a confidant of the French president, Mitterrand.¹¹¹⁴ At Genscher's proposal, the committee was to be made up of members of constitutional courts of the EC countries that had such a body: Belgium, Germany, Italy and Spain. In view of the fact that the Netherlands had no such court, the presidency of the EC was again put at a disadvantage. Furthermore, it was decided later that the committee would not meet in The Hague, where the Yugoslavia Conference was being held, but in Paris. A satisfied Genscher would later write: 'Deutschland und Frankreich hatten wiederum der Politik der Europäischen Gemeinschaft einen wichtigen Impuls gegeben.'¹¹¹⁵

Van den Broek was highly irritated by what he perceived to be a German snub.¹¹¹⁶ This blow was felt all the more acutely because Van den Broek could consider that he had shifted to Bonn's position of giving the Serbs a serious warning. The German-French tête-à-tête meant that Van den Broek saw himself as EC president forced to return to a policy of *even-handedness* in the form of the Yugoslavia Conference, while Germany meanwhile headed further towards recognition of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia.

On the other hand, Great Britain, Greece, Spain, Ireland and Luxemburg also felt the tone of the statement to the Serbs formulated by Van den Broek and Van Walsum to be too sharp. This resulted in a milder statement. Serbia was mentioned, but only by reference to the action of the Serbian irregulars and to 'elements' of the JNA who provided support to Serbia. The JNA as such remained out of harm's way.¹¹¹⁷

On a more practical level, the statement stressed the necessity of an internationally monitored suspension of hostilities. To this end, the ECMM monitors would also have to act with respect to Croatia. The German government did not succeed in persuading the other EC countries to station monitors in Bosnia and Macedonia too, mainly because of resistance from Greece.¹¹¹⁸

According to Fietelaars in 1998, the Dutch presidency was prepared to go much further at this meeting. It was said to have made a proposal for EC action, in collaboration with the Security Council and the United States under the auspices of NATO, to stop the JNA actions. The JNA was to be bombarded from the air, there was to be a total ban on flying on penalty of strikes on airfields, and the JNA fleet was to be confined to the Bay of Kotor. No ground troops would have been necessary for these actions. France, the United Kingdom and Germany were opposed the proposal. In so far as any specific blame was attached to the Netherlands for the wars in Yugoslavia, Fietelaars thought that it was mainly to do with the fact that the Netherlands was unable to persuade these important EC

¹¹¹³ Interview H. Van den Broek, 15/11/99; ABZ, DEU/ARA/00405. reporting from the posts on the domestic politics of Yugoslavia regarding Croatia, March 1990 - September 1991, Declaration on Yugoslavia; Both, *Indifference*, p. 115; the Dutch language quotation is taken from Both, version 1999, p. 194 n. 43.

¹¹¹⁴ Genscher, 'Erinnerungen', pp. 946-947; Libal, *Limits*, p. 40.

¹¹¹⁵ Genscher, 'Erinnerungen', p. 947. Luxemburg and Portugal also had no constitutional court, so that not only the presidency, but also the troika was excluded from the committee.

¹¹¹⁶ Both, *Indifference*, p. 119; Genscher, 'Erinnerungen', p. 948. See also Rob Meines, 'Genscher en Dumas prijzen Den Haag, maar niet te veel' ('Genscher and Dumas praise The Hague, but not too much'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/09/91.

¹¹¹⁷ Libal, *Limits*, p. 41.

¹¹¹⁸ Libal, *Limits*, p. 41.

member states in late August 1991 of the 'moral imperative' of a joint military action at that time.¹¹¹⁹ Evidence of such a course of events could not be found, however.

The preliminary discussions between Dumas and Genscher were not the only indication that Van den Broek, as president of the EC, was told little of the activities of his colleagues in Bonn and Paris. For instance, it appeared that Genscher received the Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jovanovic, on 27 August without informing Van den Broek, whom he met the same day.¹¹²⁰

On 28 and 29 August, the French president, Mitterrand, held discussions in Paris with Milosevic and Tudjman to prevail upon them to take part in the conference. For Van den Broek in the meantime it was the umpteenth slap in the face as EC president. He had hoped that the anti-Serbian statement of 27 August was the start of a new development, but the French government, which had likewise failed to announce these forthcoming discussions in Brussels, actually extended Serbia a helping hand.¹¹²¹

It was time that the EC president made his voice heard again. Van den Broek, encouraged by Wijnaendts,¹¹²² decided on Sunday 1 September 1991 to travel to Belgrade himself to obtain the signatures of Milosevic and Tudjman to a Memorandum of Understanding concerning the monitoring activities within the framework of a suspension of hostilities in Croatia. This time Van den Broek had more success than at the beginning of August. After intensive discussions, shortly after midnight the agreement for deploying observers was signed. According to Van den Broek and Wijnaendts, Milosevic finally gave in under the threat made by the Dutch minister that the conference would begin without the Serbs if necessary.¹¹²³ It is not improbable that Milosevic would give in for this reason. It was probably known in Belgrade that Tudjman would have welcomed a refusal by Milosevic. In that case the Croatian president could count on concerted European action against Serbia.¹¹²⁴

In other words, the Dutch minister was belatedly able to play the card that he was unable to get rid of at the EC meeting: to threaten Serbia with exclusion from the conference. The notion that Minister Van den Broek appeared to be going it alone was reinforced, as was observed in the Dutch parliament, in that this time he was not travelling to Belgrade as part of a troika. In his defence, Van den Broek stated that speed was called for, and that the two other troika members had expressed their assent for his unilateral action after the event.¹¹²⁵ That irritation about the recent German manoeuvres might not have been unrelated to his solo action can be inferred from Van den Broek's statement in the Dutch parliament that the German position in the Yugoslav conflict was apparently determined by the notion that 'charity begins at home', with the nation rather than the community.¹¹²⁶ It may not have been an action according to the diplomatic rule book, but no one could say that Van den Broek returned from Belgrade with empty hands this time. At last observers could leave for Croatia and the Yugoslavia Conference could begin.

After all the Yugoslav parties had signed the ceasefire agreement and the Memorandum of Understanding on the monitor activities, the EC dispatched between 250 and 300 additional observers to Croatia. A ministerial meeting took place on 3 September within the framework of the European Political Cooperation, where the conference agenda could be established. In the run-up to the

¹¹¹⁹ ABZ, Fietelaars 18 to Van Mierlo, 28/01/98.

¹¹²⁰ ABZ, Cabinet archives: Coll. Van den Broek, box January-May 1991. Memorandum from M to S, DGPZ, DEU, DAV, DVL, 28/08/91 no. 18/91.

¹¹²¹ Interview H. Van den Broek, 15/11/99; Rob Meines & Hans Nijenhuis, 'Niemand consulteert EG-voorzitter' ('No one consults the EC president'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/08/91; interview Jovanovic, 14/09/01.

¹¹²² Wijnaendts, *Kroniek*, p. 83.

¹¹²³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03286. ministerial EPC, 03/09/91, Van den Broek 126 to Belgrade embassy, 09/09/91; Wijnaendts, *Kroniek*, p. 86; Leonard Ornstein, 'Mr. Henry Wijnaendts - voor het eerst - over zijn zeven vredesmissies in Joegoslavië' ('Henry Wijnaendts - for the first time - on his seven peace missions in Yugoslavia'), *Vrij Nederland*, 21/11/92, p. 14. Cf. Jovic, *Dani*, pp. 381-382

¹¹²⁴ Wijnaendts, *Kroniek*, p. 86.

¹¹²⁵ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, no. 9, p. 6.

¹¹²⁶ TK, 1990-1991, 22 181, no. 9, p. 7.

ministerial meeting, the Dutch Foreign Affairs official Lak proposed to the department leaders that, in view of the objections to German, Italian and French candidates, a British chairman - Lord Carrington 'or possibly' Sir Geoffrey Howe - would be the most eligible. Furthermore, he stuck to the condition that the ceasefire would have to be observed, and proposed that the head of ECMM produce a daily report. The situation would be reviewed after ten days. He felt that the opening of the conference could take place between 12 and 16 September.¹¹²⁷

The governments of other member states felt little for the ceasefire condition, however, because it would offer Milosevic the opportunity to continue with his policy of *faits accomplis*.¹¹²⁸ It was decided to bring forward the opening of the conference to 7 September. This therefore meant that the fighting in Croatia would continue during the negotiations. Although suspensions of hostilities were agreed with some regularity, such agreements were always violated within a couple of days, and sometimes within a few hours. In the end, there would be fourteen ceasefires agreed and violated between 27 June and the end of 1991.

Van den Broek had more success with his proposal to appoint Carrington as chairman, which met with general approval.¹¹²⁹ This put a representative of one of the large countries at the head of the EC mediation.

During the telephone call in which Van den Broek requested Carrington to mediate, he immediately offered him Wijnaendts' assistance. Van den Broek asked Carrington to steer towards a comprehensive peace arrangement within two months. Carrington later called this period 'absolutely ridiculous', and evidence of a general lack of understanding in Western Europe of the difficulties still to be expected in Yugoslavia.¹¹³⁰

Carrington, who in 1980 had helped to steer the transition of the former colony of Rhodesia to the independent Zimbabwe clear of disaster, without the then feared outbreak of civil war,¹¹³¹ actually demonstrated cheerful naivety himself by continuing to mediate in the Yugoslavia issue alongside his position as Chairman of Christie's International auction house in London.

On the other hand, the period of two months that Van den Broek mentioned to Carrington would go well beyond the end of the three month moratorium for the independence of Croatia and Slovenia, almost two months of which had elapsed by then. This fact would cause a few headaches for Van den Broek. Apart from that, he himself was also partly to blame for this deadlock because, after the failed troika visit in early August, he did not succeed in keeping up the momentum of the EC involvement with Yugoslavia.

The criticism of Van den Broek's performance that could be heard here and there in other countries was not yet echoed in the Netherlands, however, as was evidenced in a verbal meeting between the Permanent Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs and the minister on 4 September 1991.¹¹³²

For example, there was no trace of criticism in a memo written one day earlier by PvdA parliamentarian G. Valk for the members of his party's parliamentary committee for Foreign Affairs. On the contrary, there was even understanding for Van den Broek, who found himself confronted with a host of difficulties and worrying developments.¹¹³³ Valk wrote that it was apparently still too early for a joint EC foreign policy, which was further handicapped by not having military weapons at its disposal. Sanctions appeared to have no effect on Serbia. The PvdA party member thought that

¹¹²⁷ABZ, DEU/ARA/03286. Ministerial EPC, 03/09/91, Lak to DGPZ, 02/09/91.

¹¹²⁸ See e.g. Libal, *Limits*, p. 48.

¹¹²⁹ABZ, DEU/ARA/03286. Ministerial EPC, 03/09/91, Van den Broek 126 to Belgrade embassy, 09/09/91.

¹¹³⁰ Silber/Little, *Death*, pp. 190.

¹¹³¹ For brief biographical outlines see Oscar Garschagen, 'Lord Carrington gaat liefst in stilte te werk' ('Lord Carrington prefers to work in silence'), *de Volkskrant*, 04/09/91; W. Woltz, 'Lord Carrington. Een heer op de Balkan' ('a gentleman in the Balkans'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/09/91.

¹¹³² TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 9.

¹¹³³ NIOD, Coll. Valk. PvdA parliamentary party, memo Valk for the members of the parliamentary party committee for Foreign Affairs before the debate on 4 September 1991, 03/09/91, FC/BUZA/005.91.

recognition of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia would only serve to increase the problems. He wondered what the EC could do if Serbia were to occupy Slavonia, Banija and Krajina in Croatia. And what if it were to do the same with certain areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where Serbs also lived? An 'all-out civil war' in Yugoslavia would have dramatic consequences for the country, could lead to internationalization of the conflict and start a large flow of Displaced Persons.

The most critical questions to the minister in the debate were whether the CSCE or the Security Council should not be involved in the peace process. Van den Broek answered that, as president of the EC, the Netherlands was already making efforts to keep the CSCE command informed of all actions of the Twelve, so the CSCE structures were 'currently utilized as effectively as possible'.¹¹³⁴ France, Great Britain and Belgium kept the Security Council informed of the EC activities. So Van den Broek was certainly not short of domestic support at the start of September, which would soon see the opening of the Yugoslavia Conference as well as a major confrontation between Van den Broek and Genscher.

9. The Yugoslavia conference in The Hague

It proved not to have been a good idea to give the opening of the Yugoslavia Conference on 7 September a public character. The protagonists in the conflict wanted to put their own points of view firmly back in the spotlight in front of the assembled press. The atmosphere was 'icy'.¹¹³⁵ Various European ministers were given their first opportunity to experience first hand how the fighting cocks Milosevic and Tudjman positioned themselves against each other in public. Tudjman accused the Serbs of conducting a dirty war and committing war crimes and held out to Belgrade the prospect of reparations. He demanded from the international community unconditional recognition of Croatia. In turn, Milosevic said the military actions in Croatia were necessary to prevent genocide on the Serbs living there. It was like a continuation of World War II, the bewildered Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mark Eyskens, observed.¹¹³⁶

Meanwhile, Carrington was given a completely different impression in his first behind-the-scenes contact with the two 'fighting cocks'. It was immediately clear to him that the actual problem did not lie in Croatia or Slovenia, but in Bosnia, because the two presidents - who the American ambassador Zimmermann described as the 'Tweedledum and Tweedledee of destructive nationalism' -¹¹³⁷ had jointly devised a solution for dividing up the republic. This led Carrington to the conclusion for his further activities that Yugoslavia no longer existed. He therefore hardly made room in his discussions for the federal Prime Minister, Markovic, who had previously been the white sheep of the EC and the American government.¹¹³⁸ Carrington also believed that a solution for the former Yugoslav territory would have to be comprehensive. Recognition of the independence of republics must occur solely within the framework of an all-embracing regulation.¹¹³⁹

In his opening speech to the conference, Lubbers fired a warning shot that was mainly intended for Serbia. He recalled the recent events in Moscow and stated that they contained a clear lesson for the

¹¹³⁴ TK, session, 1991-1992, 22 181 no. 9, p. 8; Cf. ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288. Yugoslavia: EU/EPC. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparations for Dutch contribution. Minutes of meetings July-December 1991, Van den Broek to Belgrade, 25/07/91, celer 084.

¹¹³⁵ Stallaerts, *'Afscheid'*, p. 102; Oscar Garschagen, 'Presidenten sluiten wijziging grenzen uit. Haagse conferentie over Joegoslavië begint in gespannen sfeer' ('Presidents rule out border changes. Conference in The Hague on Yugoslavia starts in a tense atmosphere') and idem, 'Joegoslavisch slagveld verplaatst zich naar Den Haag' ('Yugoslavian battlefield moves to The Hague'), *de Volkskrant*, 09/09/91.

¹¹³⁶ Willam Drozdiak, 'Yugoslavs Trade Accusations As Peace Conference Opens', *The Washington Post*, 08/09/91. See also Libal, *Limits*, pp. 45-46; Rob Meines, 'Even schrikken in Den Haag' ('A bit of a fright in The Hague'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/09/91.

¹¹³⁷ Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 153.

¹¹³⁸ Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 162.

¹¹³⁹ Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 190-191.

conference participants: 'those in power cannot escape answering to their electorate if they intend to turn back the clock and maintain by force of arms structures and practices that have had their time'.¹¹⁴⁰

Van den Broek said in his opening speech that time had been lost since Brioni in seeking a solution because of the use of force. He hoped that the press, who were present in abundance, would present the population of Yugoslavia with an objective picture of the conference and in doing so would contribute 'to the atonement of heated and even blind emotions'.¹¹⁴¹

It was important to the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs that the conference, which was taking place in The Hague, was brought to a successful conclusion. He must have realized, after all his earlier frustrating experiences, how little it could take to make the meeting fail, and he painstakingly tried everything in his power not to allow that to happen. After a series of growing irritations, this caused a hard confrontation with his German counterpart Genscher.

Even before the start of the meeting, Genscher appeared to throw sand in the conference machine. He said in a debate in the German Bundestag on 4 September that if the peoples of Yugoslavia who wanted their independence were unable to obtain it through negotiation, Germany would resort to unilateral recognition.¹¹⁴² In the conference corridors he also remarked to Kucan and Tudjman that, if the conference were to fail, Germany would resort to recognition, in which case the rest of the EC would follow Bonn.¹¹⁴³ This message could hardly have contributed to a favourable attitude on the part of the two presidents, who were aiming for the recognition of their countries; after all, it would seem that this recognition would come anyway. In the Dutch parliament one day after Genscher's performance in the Bundestag, Van den Broek expressed his hope that after the start of the Yugoslavia Conference the 'national oracles (...) keep their mouths shut'.¹¹⁴⁴

Both the repeated collisions of Van den Broek with Genscher and Kohl¹¹⁴⁵ and the lack of contact between the governments in Bonn and The Hague had not been kept secret from the German press. 'The relationship between Hans Van den Broek and myself improves from conference to conference', Genscher joked at the beginning of September to the assembled press in Van den Broek's own ministry.¹¹⁴⁶ The German media took the side of their own minister and Chancellor.¹¹⁴⁷ The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* accused Van den Broek of '*überdurchschnittliche Inkompetenz in Balkanfragen*'.¹¹⁴⁸ There were accusations of Dutch pro-Serbian bias and naivety, which aggravated the EC's failure.¹¹⁴⁹ The Dutch minister felt 'goaded' by this 'character assassination' and 'mud slinging', as he described it.¹¹⁵⁰

The collision between Van den Broek and Genscher

The explosion occurred around the weekend of 14 and 15 September. In the previous week, which was the first week of the conference, Van den Broek was disturbed by Zagreb's escalating position. Prior to this, Van den Broek as EC president was bombarded with complaints by the Croatian authorities

¹¹⁴⁰ 'EG kan niet voorbij aan hulp aan Joegoslavië', *Staatscourant*, 10/09/91.

¹¹⁴¹ 'Gebruik geweld om problemen op te lossen niet acceptabel', *Staatscourant*, 10/09/91.

¹¹⁴² Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 303.

¹¹⁴³ Libal, *Limits*, p. 46-47; Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 304.

¹¹⁴⁴ Leonoor Meijer, 'Van den Broek trekt boetkleedje aan' ('Van den Broek dons hair shirt'), *Trouw*, 06/09/91.

¹¹⁴⁵ See e.g. also ABZ, Kabinetsarchief: coll. Van den Broek. Van den Broek to Lubbers 01/08/91 with appendices.

¹¹⁴⁶ Rob Meines, 'Genscher en Dumas prijzen Den Haag, maar niet te veel', *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/09/91.

¹¹⁴⁷ J.M. Bik, 'Voor Duitse media is Van den Broek kop van Jut' ('Van den Broek is scapegoat for German media') and 'Europees huis aan verwarring ten prooi' ('European house the victim of confusion'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/09/91.

¹¹⁴⁸ Cited in: Leonard Ornstein & Max van Weezel, 'Van den Broek kan de wereld weer aan, dartel als een veulen' ('Van den Broek can face the world again, as frisky as a foal'), *Vrij Nederland*, 11/04/92.

¹¹⁴⁹ Cf. Meier, *Jugoslavië*, p. 402.

¹¹⁵⁰ Leonard Ornstein/Max van Weezel, 'Van den Broek kan de wereld weer aan, dartel als een veulen' ('Van den Broek can face the world again, as frisky as a foal'), *Vrij Nederland*, 11/04/92.

regarding Serbian behaviour, threats to escalate and requests for the recognition of Croatian independence.¹¹⁵¹

Following an instruction from Van den Broek, Fietelaars took diplomatic steps as early as 8 September with the Croatian chairman of the federal presidium, Mesic, who had said that if the JNA ignored an order given by him, it was tantamount to a coup. In accordance with his instruction, Fietelaars said that such statements were 'very unhelpful' in the delicate initial phase of the conference.¹¹⁵²

In a short discussion in the afternoon of 13 September, Carrington said to Van den Broek that, in his opinion, in the event of a deteriorating military situation in Yugoslavia and the conference appearing to be heading for failure, the Croatian and Slovenian delegations seemed to expect the EC to be prepared to resort to military intervention. Carrington impressed upon them: 'you're living on another planet', but he apparently doubted whether his words had the desired effect. The British negotiator therefore asked Van den Broek to put similar pressure on Croatia, because he feared otherwise that Croatia would aim for a failure of the conference in the hope of bringing the EC's recognition and material assistance closer.¹¹⁵³

On 13 September Van den Broek lectured his Croatian opposite number Separovic, because, more than those of the other parties, Croatian ceasefire violations were endangering the conference in The Hague. Perhaps Van den Broek recalled how he had booked success in Belgrade less than two weeks earlier with the threat of exclusion, because he mentioned that the conference could also continue without Croatia. According to his own account, in that case Van den Broek would make it abundantly clear how matters had got to that stage: 'We will expose you.'¹¹⁵⁴ The Dutch minister recorded his invective in a COREU, which was sent the following day, Saturday 14 September, to the other capitals of the EC.¹¹⁵⁵ Van den Broek's attitude led to anger and bitterness in Croatia.¹¹⁵⁶ A short time later, the Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Zvonimir Separovic, would describe his Dutch opposite number on Croatian television as an 'arrogant tulip'.¹¹⁵⁷ But amazement with the EC president's attitude was not confined to Croatia.

Although the EC ministers agreed on 6 September to speak with one voice on Yugoslavia in order to make the conference a success,¹¹⁵⁸ after a bilateral meeting in Venice, Genscher and De Michelis announced to the assembled press on Sunday 15 September that Germany and Italy were prepared, if necessary, to recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia separately from the other EC countries, should the negotiations under Carrington not lead to a result.¹¹⁵⁹ There was a certain emotionality in Italy at the time because of the strike on Zadar, which had once been a Venetian and later an Italian city.

¹¹⁵¹ABZ, DEU/ARA/00405. Yugoslavia/Domestic Politics/Croatia 1990-1991, Franjo Greguric to Lubbers, 22/08/91; Zvonimir Separovic to Van den Broek, 26/08/91; *ibid.*, Tudjman to Van den Broek, 22/08/91, 27/08/91, 03/09/91; *ibid.*, Marijan Kostrencic to Foreign Ministries of the EC states.

¹¹⁵²ABZ, DEU/ARA/00405. Yugoslavia/Domestic Politics/Croatia 1990-1991, Fietelaars 304 to Van den Broek, 08/09/91, cpe/pres/hag 859.

¹¹⁵³ ABZ, Cabinet archives: Coll. Van den Broek, memos PS, 1991, memorandum from PS to DGPZ, 13/09/91, no. 178/91.

¹¹⁵⁴ ABZ, Cabinet archives: Coll. Van den Broek, memos PS, 1991, memorandum from PS to DGPZ, 16/09/91, no. 179/91. See also 'Kroatië is schuldig aan escalatie geweld'. Uitspraak Van den Broek brengt geschil in EG over kwestie-Joegoslavië aan het licht' ('Croatia is to blame for escalation of violence'. Statement by Van den Broek throws light on EC dispute on Yugoslavia issue'), *de Volkskrant*, 16/09/91.

¹¹⁵⁵ABZ, DEU/ARA/00405. Yugoslavia/Domestic Politics/Croatia 1990-1991, COREU of the Dutch EC presidency, 14/09/91, cpe/pres/hag 857.

¹¹⁵⁶Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 148.

¹¹⁵⁷ 'Hollands optimisme in hoofdstad Kroatië' ('Dutch optimism in Croatian capital'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/10/91.

¹¹⁵⁸ See also Oscar Garschagen, 'Genscher berispt aan vooravond Joegoslavië-top' ('Genscher reprimanded on the eve of Yugoslavia summit'), *de Volkskrant*, 07/09/91.

¹¹⁵⁹Both, *Indifference*, p. 120; Libal, *Limits*, p. 52-53.

Genscher's tendency of consulting other EC member states and subsequently confronting the presidency with faits accomplis was a source of irritation for Van den Broek. A highly critical COREU was sent from The Hague at 1 o'clock in the morning of 16 September. As president of the EC, Van den Broek was sending:

'an urgent appeal to all partners strictly to abide by established EC positions, declarations and statements in order not to undermine the chances of success of both the Yugoslavia Conference and EC monitoring. It continues to be essential for the Twelve to be even-handed and to avoid raising vain hopes regarding EC recognition or intervention'.

The statement of 'two partners after their meeting in Venice' carried the risk that Croatia would withdraw from the Yugoslavia Conference and would take no notice of the suspension of hostilities.¹¹⁶⁰

The COREU provoked an angry reaction from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bonn. They were convinced that Van den Broek's views on the behaviour of the authorities in Zagreb constituted a somewhat remarkable assessment of the actual situation in Croatia in the light of Serbian aggression. There were fears in Bonn that each time the threat of recognition of Croatia and Slovenia was prohibited, it would only incite the Serbs to unbridled aggression.¹¹⁶¹

Later the same day, 16 September at 5 o'clock in the evening, the Dutch ambassador in Bonn, Van der Tas, was summoned to the German Director of Political Affairs, Chrobog. The German diplomat stated on Genscher's behalf that, 'in spite of excellent personal relations on an official level' between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Bonn and The Hague, the previous weekend's attribution of blame by the EC presidency on the Croats, and the critical remarks made by a Dutch official that the Germans were conducting their own aggressive foreign policy after regaining their unity, was causing 'a strain on German-Dutch relations' and was deemed to be a direct attack on Genscher.

Van der Tas parried - at least according to his own account - forcefully. He considered that it could never be possible for a position adopted by the presidency to be a burden on bilateral relations. Furthermore, the German position within the EC was certainly not 'mehrheitsfähig'. He ascribed the remark made by an official in The Hague to a personal view, which was also often to be heard in Bonn. He expressed his 'concern' about the extent to which 'German actions, often under the influence of fairly emotional and vague opinion forming in the media or among political supporters, often came down to a position that was difficult to align with points of view recently agreed in an EC connection'. The German leaders could follow the example of the political courage with which Van den Broek stood up to public opinion.

Chrobog said that Kohl and Genscher were in no way intending to abandon the threat of recognizing Croatia and Slovenia, and they would also do so if the Yugoslavia Conference failed. Van der Tas said that such a position could lead to a fiasco. Furthermore, after recognition the EC would have no weapon left. The UN would then have to come into action with a peacekeeping force, to which Germany would not contribute, of course. At the end of the discussion, Van der Tas said that, if he had not been instructed, he would have sought Chrobog out himself with the question whether 'in view of the incredible mud-slinging campaign' against the Dutch presidency in the German press, 'might [Genscher] not find a way of occasionally uttering a word of appreciation for and solidarity with the presidency'. It is difficult to believe, but, according to Van der Tas, the discussion was conducted 'in a sympathetic atmosphere'.¹¹⁶²

¹¹⁶⁰ABZ, DEU/ARA/00405. Yugoslavia/Domestic Politics/Croatia1990-1991, COREU of the Dutch EC presidency, 15/09/91, cpe/pres/hag 859.

¹¹⁶¹Libal, *Limits*, p. 53.

¹¹⁶²ABZ, DIE/ARA/01232. EC/Yugoslavia September-October1991, Van der Tas 394 to Van den Broek, 17/09/91; Both, *Indifference*, p. 120.

In the meantime, the German-Dutch irritations with respect to Yugoslavia were given a focus in the ECMM. On 13 September, Van der Valk was succeeded as head of mission by D.J. van Houten, who had worked as counsellor under Van der Valk in Belgrade at the end of the 1970s. On the following day Van Houten visited the Croatian president, Tudjman. According to Van Houten, the tension in Croatia was increasing rapidly, especially through the agency of the Croats. He felt that the media in Zagreb were stirring up a war euphoria. Van Houten did not succeed, however, in at least persuading Tudjman to restore the electricity and water supplies to the headquarters of the fifth military district of the JNA in Zagreb. In rather unfortunately chosen words, Van Houten warned in his report, which was read in all capitals of the EC, that: 'JNA, which seems to have been rather reticent in places like Vukovar, does not seem prepared to accept further provocation.'¹¹⁶³ In Bonn, such expressions were viewed as curious, to put it mildly. For Michael Libal, head of the Southeast Europe Department of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, they were 'strangely out of touch with what was really happening'. What the Croats were doing was on a different scale from the war of capture, destruction and expulsion being conducted by Serbia.¹¹⁶⁴

On 15 September Van Houten together with his deputy, General Kusters, again paid his respects to Tudjman in response to a violation of the ceasefire ordered by the authorities in Zagreb. Van Houten made himself Van den Broek's mouthpiece by pointing out to the Croatian president that he should not count on a military intervention by European forces. Recognition of Croatia was possible only as the outcome of negotiations. It was said that Tudjman's recent actions were little appreciated in Europe. Tudjman said that Croatia could do little else. It had to protect itself and the president pointed in particular to an attack on Zadar. It was also known in Zagreb that the JNA was suffering from low morale at the time, in other words it was the ideal moment to attack.¹¹⁶⁵

On 16 September, two German ECMM monitors refused to carry out a mission to Zadar because they considered it to be too dangerous. Also in the ECMM, which was deployed to monitor compliance with the Brioni agreement, a lack of consensus among the representatives of the various European countries became apparent immediately after the arrival of the mission in Zagreb. It was agreed that the monitors would not report independently to their own capitals, but exclusively through the head of mission to the EC presidency.¹¹⁶⁶ To the irritation of the Dutch leadership, several members of the mission set up their own satellite dishes on their balconies immediately on arrival in Zagreb, while other observers kept themselves completely out of sight and operated apparently according to their own agenda.¹¹⁶⁷

Also on 16 September, Van Oosterom pointed out to Minister Van den Broek at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was charged with the day-to-day coordination of the ECMM, that it was now the second time that German monitors had refused an order. Furthermore, the German Junior Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Kastrop, had given this refusal personally and immediately to those concerned. The head of mission, Van Houten, was greatly enraged by this refusal. The Memorandum of Understanding allowed no room for misunderstanding that only he decided where and by whom missions were to be executed. Participation in the ECMM according to an à la carte formula was fundamentally wrong.¹¹⁶⁸

Van den Broek now saw an opportunity 'to put the problem firmly on our neighbours' plate'.¹¹⁶⁹ Or as it was expressed rather more strongly in Germany: 'die Verantwortung für weitere Fehlschläge

¹¹⁶³ABZ, DEU/ARA/03306. COREU of the EC presidency, 16/09/91, cpe/pres/hag 863.

¹¹⁶⁴Libal, *Limits*, p. 51.

¹¹⁶⁵ABZ, DEU/ARA/03306. COREU of the EC presidency, 17/09/91, cpe/pres/hag 873.

¹¹⁶⁶ ABZ, DAV archive, ISN 4824115, COREU of the EC presidency, 16/07/91, cpe/pres/hag 381.

¹¹⁶⁷ Interview M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

¹¹⁶⁸ ABZ, DAV archive, 921.353.22, Memo DAV (Van Oosterom) via DGPZ and secretary-general to Van den Broek, 16/09/91, DAV/PC 268.91, with memo HOM to DAV, 16/09/91.

¹¹⁶⁹ Voorhoeve cited in Bayer, 'Noodzaak', p. 5.

von der niederländischen EG-Präsidentschaft auf den deutschen WEU-Vorsitz zu verlagern'.¹¹⁷⁰ Van den Broek did that on 16 September in a shift from his earlier resistance to a Western European Union action - *Trouw* referred to a 'dramatic turnaround' - by¹¹⁷¹ asking Genscher as chairman of the WEU whether the Union could not form a peace force for *peacekeeping*. The fact was that situations repeatedly arose in which it was too dangerous for the civilian EC monitors.¹¹⁷² It was something of a repeat dose of his own medicine that Van Walsum had served Chrobog on 23 July, but now on a ministerial level. If the German government knew it all so much better than the government in The Hague, then they should take the lead themselves for once, while it was known in advance that Bonn itself felt it could not supply any troops.

Van den Broek was able to rely on support in his action. The French government had urged Van den Broek to have the possibility of an intervention force from the WEU looked into.¹¹⁷³ And in the Netherlands he had been promised support for his action by Minister of Defence Relus Ter Beek¹¹⁷⁴ and Prime Minister Lubbers, who was opposed to the idea that the European Community had no business and nothing to offer in Yugoslavia:

'I (...) would find it a dreadful idea, anno 1991, to say: well, if people are beating each other's brains out again somewhere, that is their business, we should not interfere.(...) I think it is only right (...) that we now also say: look, just put those weapons down, and if you can no longer sort it out yourselves and instead go back to fighting each time, then we are available to send soldiers, not to wage war, but to keep the peace. But then, of course, there must first be a suspension of hostilities.'¹¹⁷⁵

Van den Broek had also set a ceasefire as 'an absolute condition' for dispatching a peacekeeping force.¹¹⁷⁶ That last point was the crux of the matter. It was completely clear in the European relationships that no WEU force would be deployed without the assent of the parties involved. The deployment of WEU units would be possible, also according to Minister Van den Broek himself, 'only with the assent of all involved parties, of course', as he and Ter Beek wrote to Parliament on 20 September.¹¹⁷⁷ It could hardly have been a secret for Van den Broek that the proposal would founder in Yugoslavia on resistance from Serbia. What sort of response could be expected from Milosevic, who in early August still opposed expansion of the mandate of the ECMM to Croatia with the announcement that Yugoslavia was prepared to receive only diplomats, businessmen and tourists from the West?¹¹⁷⁸ As expected the Serbian government announced as early as 17 September that it would not accept an 'invasion'.¹¹⁷⁹ In Croatia, a peacekeeping force would probably still have been welcome. After all, a

¹¹⁷⁰Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 162. See also *ibid.*, p. 305

¹¹⁷¹ Co Welgraven, 'WEU-leger naar Joegoslavië. Dramatische ommezwaai minister Van den Broek' ('WEU to go to Yugoslavia: dramatic U-turn by Minister Van den Broek'), *Trouw*, 17/09/91.

¹¹⁷² Cf. Van Eekelen, *Security*, p. 145; *idem*, *Sporen*, p. 243.

¹¹⁷³ Favier/Martin-Rolland, *Décennie*, p. 197.

¹¹⁷⁴ TV, RTL4, News, 16/09/91, 18.00 hours.

¹¹⁷⁵ Radio 1, NOS, *Met het oog op morgen*, 20/09/91, 23.06 hours.

¹¹⁷⁶ Rob Meines, 'Van den Broek: vredsmacht van WEU naar Joegoslavië' ('Van den Broek: WEU peacekeeping force to go to Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/09/91. See also 'Voorlopig geen vredesleger' ('No peace army for the time being'), *Trouw*, 20/09/91

¹¹⁷⁷ TK, session 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 6, p. 2.

¹¹⁷⁸ Cf. Van den Broek's own words at the beginning of August: 'The Serbs already object to unarmed soldiers in plain clothes who form part of the EC observers team in Yugoslavia. Let alone that they would agree with stationing armed soldiers in the crisis zones in Yugoslavia', Leonoor Meijer, 'EG peinst over laatste redmiddel voor (delen van) Joegoslavië', *Trouw*, 06/08/91.

¹¹⁷⁹ Steven L. Burg, 'The International Community and the Yugoslav Crisis', Esman & Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p. 244; Rob Meines, 'Van den Broek: vredsmacht van WEU naar Joegoslavië' ('Van den Broek: WEU peacekeeping force to Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/09/91.

banner had been hanging over the centrally located Jelacic Square in Zagreb for months with a text inviting the UN to come to Croatia.¹¹⁸⁰ But even in Croatia, the interest in a European peacekeeping force faded as it became clearer that Western Europe was prepared not so much to defend the borders of Croatia as to find a solution around the negotiating table that the Serbs would also have to find acceptable.¹¹⁸¹ The reactions from the Western European countries to Van den Broek's proposal were therefore also sceptical.¹¹⁸² Even if the parties involved had agreed and the WEU had consented to the dispatch of units, the question remained as to whether NATO would have consented. The fact is that the WEU would have had to rely on units that were promised to NATO. Apart from the fact that the American government would have felt little for facilitating a WEU initiative, Washington would have objected to the deployment in Yugoslavia of troops intended for NATO.¹¹⁸³

It is therefore also right to ask why Van den Broek made his proposal. Van den Broek said later that he could only 'conclude that the Netherlands was a little ahead of its partners in the EC'.¹¹⁸⁴ If that was so, this episode could be added to a whole list of cases, starting with Van Walsum's proposal for border changes, where the Dutch government launched thoughts and proposals whose acceptability in other countries would have been limited from the start.

Another possibility is that Van den Broek was affected by at least a hint of 'get Genscher back'. In any case, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs took into account that the Dutch initiative could be viewed in this light. The Dutch diplomats in other countries were given clear instructions on this point from department spokesman Dig Ishta. If they were to be asked 'Is it true that this step was taken only to cross Germany?', they were to answer: 'That is completely untrue. It is not how we treat each other in the EC. The fact that Germany was requested to organize the WEU meeting is a coincidence, because Germany holds the WEU presidency.'¹¹⁸⁵ Apparently the instruction for statements to the press were not well known at the department in The Hague, because the German press agency DPA quoted an official of the ministry with the words: 'Jetzt soll Aussenminister Genscher Verantwortung als Vorsitzender der WEU übernehmen.'¹¹⁸⁶ In *NRC Handelsblad* too it was observed that Foreign Affairs people were sniggering that Van den Broek had forced Genscher to convene a WEU Ministerial Council on a peacekeeping force that Germany itself could not participate in.¹¹⁸⁷

Van den Broek's proposal again provoked heated reactions in Germany. Genscher had serious objections to deploying a peacekeeping force to Croatia because it could obstruct the central German objective - recognition of Croatia.¹¹⁸⁸ CSU spokesman Christian Schmidt felt that Van den Broek was moving 'ever further from reality', and as mediator in the Yugoslav conflict had 'failed across the board'. Second parliamentary party chairman and security expert of the SPD, Norbert Gansel said: 'It looks very much as if Van den Broek is trying to obscure his lack of success by shifting the responsibility onto the WEU, of which Germany and therefore Minister Genscher is chairman.'

¹¹⁸⁰ Tanner, *Croatia*, pp. 281.

¹¹⁸¹ Cf. Raymond van den Boogaard, 'In Joegoslavië opereren veel groepen autonoom' ('Many groups operate autonomously in Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/09/91.

¹¹⁸² 'Europa nogal sceptisch over sturen vredesmacht' ('Europe fairly sceptical about sending peacekeeping force') and Frits Schaling, 'Belgen wachten wat andere EG-landen zullen zeggen' ('Belgians wait to see what other EC countries say'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 18/09/91; 'Bonn en Parijs eens over Joegoslavië' ('Bonn and Paris agree on Yugoslavia') and 'Major tegen snelle inzet van troepen' ('Major opposes rapid deployment of troops'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/09/91.

¹¹⁸³ Cf. Van Walsum, cited in TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 89.

¹¹⁸⁴ Van den Broek, cited in TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 89.

¹¹⁸⁵ ABZ, Kabinetsarchief: Coll. Van den Broek, memos PS, 1991, spokesman to CSCE posts, 17/09/91, reference 1049/91. See for the irritations of AMAD and DAV on sending this instruction without their knowledge: *ibid.*, memorandum from PS to M, 01/10/91, no 191/91.

¹¹⁸⁶ Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 162.

¹¹⁸⁷ Rob Meines, 'Om troepen te kunnen sturen moet er eerst vrede in Joegoslavië zijn' ('There has to be peace in Yugoslavia before troops can be sent'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/09/91. See also Theo Koelé, 'Quarrel Genscher-Van den Broek', *Trouw*, 17/09/91

¹¹⁸⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 88.

According to him, 'Van the Broek with his manoeuvring was in the process of ... throwing away the moral responsibility that the Netherlands had gained for itself in international politics'.¹¹⁸⁹ The relationship between Genscher and Van den Broek was meanwhile becoming 'ever more painful' and Kohl complained to Lubbers about Van den Broek's 'pigheadedness'.¹¹⁹⁰

So, on 19 September at Dutch initiative, a meeting took place of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence of the West European Union, which was also attended by observers from Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Norway and Turkey.¹¹⁹¹ The objective was to investigate the desirability and feasibility of a possible deployment of a limited military peacekeeping force to Yugoslavia, which would become operational as soon there was a sufficient prospect of the ceasefire being upheld, and with the assent of all involved parties. The Dutch ministers declared at the meeting that in the event of the creation of a WEU peace mission, the Netherlands was prepared to contribute personnel and equipment. After the meeting, Ter Beek firmed up the offer in the form of a battalion of marines.¹¹⁹²

However, the WEU conference concluded that a military intervention was not among the possibilities through lack of assent of the parties in the conflict.¹¹⁹³ Genscher managed to manoeuvre himself out of the corner that Van den Broek had pushed him into by proposing an investigation into four options for military intervention. The ministers present consented to setting up an ad hoc working group to study these possibilities.

However, the United Kingdom did not support such an investigation. London had learned from civil wars such as the ones in Northern Ireland and Lebanon that it was simpler to send in troops than to withdraw them. Furthermore, the military force usually has to be expanded considerably in the course of a mission.¹¹⁹⁴ The British Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hurd, stated therefore, after a British cabinet meeting held that morning, that he considered there could be no strict compliance with the condition of assent of all parties. The British Minister of State, Archie Hamilton, said at the WEU meeting that the fact that the observers were unable to perform their work did not mean that a peacekeeping force had to be dispatched.¹¹⁹⁵ In his opinion, an open-ended deployment would entail the EC being sucked into 'the Yugoslav quagmire'.¹¹⁹⁶ Hurd did not give way to the strong pressure of other countries to shift his position. Therefore the EPC meeting eventually agreed with only a WEU study into reinforcing the effectiveness of the monitors.

After that, the Foreign Affairs spokesman, Dig Ishta, deemed it advisable to give Van den Broek clear advice: 'Your position on returning from Yugoslavia on 5 August (...) was poorly received in the media and is (not only in the German press) still quoted as an example of what is referred to as "lack of professionalism"! Now that no immediate decision had been forthcoming on a WEU peacekeeping force, steps had to be taken to prevent headlines appearing in the media, 'which is always eager to report a failure', such as 'Van den Broek Plan rejected' or 'No enthusiasm for Dutch WEU plans'. Ishta therefore advised Van den Broek in communicating with the press to lay the 'blame' on the lack of a ceasefire and the lack of assent of all parties, which were conditions for a peacekeeping force, 'and to avoid any suggestion that the idea for a WEU peacekeeping force was rejected by the allies

¹¹⁸⁹ 'Vredesmacht alleen weg als alle partijen instemmen' ('Peacekeeping force only to leave when all parties agree'), *de Volkskrant*, 18/09/91. See also Wio Joustra, 'Joegoslavië inzet van burenruzie tussen Nederland en Duitsland' ('Yugoslavia is nub of quarrel between neighbours Netherlands and Germany'), *de Volkskrant*, 20/09/91.

¹¹⁹⁰ Lubbers, 'Keer', p. 369.

¹¹⁹¹ For reports of this see ABZ, DEU/ARA/03286, extra ministerial EPC, 19/09/91, Van den Broek to Belgrade, 21/09/91, celer 136; TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 6; Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 20/09/91, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

¹¹⁹² Van Eekelen, *Security*, p. 146; DAB, 248. Memo De Winter for Ter Beek, 03/10/91, D91/503, with as appendix: 'Elements for the Minister of Defence's reply in the debate on the situation in Yugoslavia on 03/10/91.

¹¹⁹³ Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 306.

¹¹⁹⁴ Thompson, *House*, p. 325.

¹¹⁹⁵ Van Eekelen, *Security*, p. 146.

¹¹⁹⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03286, extra ministerial EPC, 19/09/91, Van den Broek to Belgrade embassy, 21/09/91, celer 136.

because they thought it was a poor plan'.¹¹⁹⁷ However, Van den Broek could not resist one more chance to get even in the press. It is very easy for someone to recognize Croatia and Slovenia from behind his desk and to leave the rest of the work to others, the Dutch minister said to the press.¹¹⁹⁸

In the meantime, Van den Broek had inflicted considerable damage with his proposal for the WEU conference. His suggestion would provide open evidence of the incapacity of the Western European countries to intervene militarily. This unnecessarily damaged the position of the international community towards Serbia.¹¹⁹⁹ Thanks to Van den Broek's initiative, it had become perfectly clear that Europe itself was unable to guarantee the peace. Was it actually the EC president's intention to demonstrate that European organizations were not in a position to bring about peace on the ground and to show that only the UN was still eligible for this? Van den Broek was able to book a victory only in the personal dispute with Genscher. The German minister would have to admit that the German government would not resort to the deployment of troops, which was detrimental to the standing of the country that constantly took the lead with its call for recognition.¹²⁰⁰

The follow-up to the WEU initiative

In late September, the WEU ad hoc working group had developed the four options, which was a laborious task. The first option consisted of deploying from two to three thousand lightly-armed soldiers for logistics support of the observers. In the second option, these soldiers would have to fulfil a protective role towards the observers (troop requirements: five to six thousand men). The third option involved an armed peacekeeping force that would supervise the ceasefire itself and would require approximately ten thousand men. The fourth option included the deployment of larger units (twenty to thirty thousand men in total) which would be required to form a buffer and, under the heading of 'expanded peacekeeping' would in fact be engaged in peace enforcing. Otherwise, the number of soldiers that were considered necessary for the four options varied in the course of time. As might be expected, after the meeting on 19 September the enthusiasm for a WEU force was little. The Italians, French and Dutch had actively cooperated in developing the options, but the other delegations had cried off. There was 'no substantial contribution from the Germans, heavy opposition from the British, and silence from Spain, Portugal, Belgium and Luxemburg'.¹²⁰¹

The British 'opposition' consisted of a totally different view on the action required of an intervention force. The Netherlands considered that a deployment of troops in separate areas that were the subject of dispute between Croats and Serbs was sufficient. According to the British, this was a far too optimistic view of a guerrilla war such as the one to be conducted in Yugoslavia, for which entire areas would have to be pacified. Above all, the British still feared that the conflict would escalate further so that the troop deployment would have to continue for a long time, as in Cyprus or Northern Ireland.¹²⁰² Hurd saw absolutely no necessity to send troops into a situation where the future development was unclear. The British minister agreed with a further study of the first option, but he indicated clearly that he was not yet ready for a decision on the matter.¹²⁰³

¹¹⁹⁷ ABZ, Kabinetsarchief: Coll. Van den Broek, doss. January-May 1991, memorandum of spokesman to M, 19/09/91 no. 1054.

¹¹⁹⁸ David Gow & John Palmer, 'Mitterrand and Kohl urge UN intervention in Yugoslavia', *The Guardian*, 19/09/91.

¹¹⁹⁹ Cf. Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 306.

¹²⁰⁰ Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 306.

¹²⁰¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03286, ministerial EPC/Brussels, 30/09/91, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to PV New York for the attention of the minister via DGPZ, 27/09/91, celer 238; Cf. ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288, Yugoslavia: EU/EPC. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparations for Dutch contribution. Minutes of meetings July-December 1991, Van der Tas 405 to Van den Broek, 26/09/91

¹²⁰² ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288, Yugoslavia: EU/EPC. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparations for Dutch contribution. Minutes of meetings July-December 1991, Van den Broek to London embassy, 23/09/91, celer 151; DSG.Yugoslavia, memo De Winter for Ter Beek, 25/09/91, D91/484.

¹²⁰³ Van Eekelen, *Security*, p. 147; ABZ, central NATO records, Van den Broek to London embassy, 02/10/91, celer 153.

France supported the fourth option, for which it was prepared to supply one quarter of the troops. The Netherlands objected to the fourth option, not only because there was a question of whether such a considerable military force could be mobilized in the short term, but also because such a unit could easily create the impression of an intervention or an occupation army.¹²⁰⁴ The Netherlands was in favour of the third option, but considered that only five thousand troops would be necessary, divided into companies of 120 men for the thirty to forty individual trouble spots that the Netherlands estimated to exist.¹²⁰⁵

According to Van Eekelen, Van den Broek and Ter Beek were the most enthusiastic for deployment among all the attendees at the WEU ministerial meeting of 30 September, where the options were discussed, as they had been one and a half weeks earlier.¹²⁰⁶ Apart from the Netherlands and France, which were in favour, and Great Britain, which was against further decision-making on a WEU force, the member states had a lukewarm reaction to the proposals. Finally, Genscher managed to bring the WEU ministers into line with the proposal to defer a possible decision until after the chairman of the Yugoslavia Conference, Carrington, had indicated to Genscher that a suspension of hostilities demanded the support of the WEU. In order to reassure Hurd, Genscher also stated that such a decision could also turn out to be negative. This statement could hardly have inspired the development of any of the four options. Carrington himself adopted the position that Yugoslavia was not even worth the life of a single British soldier.¹²⁰⁷ In further discussion of the options, the United Kingdom finally appeared willing in principle to deploy one hundred men for duties that were without danger, such as the multinational staff, medical support and mapping support.

As disappointed as the Netherlands Ministry of Defence was with the British attitude, which made the WEU peacekeeping force 'an almost academic exercise',¹²⁰⁸ it was equally concerned about the eagerness with which France threw itself at the study. The Chief of Defence Staff and the ministry's Directorate of General Policy Matters feared that France might be trying to make political capital out of the matter and was attempting to weaken NATO. The fact is that France had managed to achieve a transformation of the original idea for a WEU peacekeeping force into a WEU Reaction Force, also for other situations in Europe. The most important French operational staff, of the First Army in Metz, led by the Chief of Staff, General P. Morillon, embarked on drawing up an operational plan for the WEU and a two star general was designated as a possible commander of the WEU force.¹²⁰⁹ The Netherlands could not skirt around these developments. With his tactical manoeuvre against Genscher, Van den Broek, who had always opposed a development in the direction of the WEU at the expense of NATO, had therefore not only achieved nothing for Yugoslavia but also done the general Dutch security policy a disservice.

This time Van den Broek was also given a black eye in the Dutch Parliament with his proposals for a WEU peacekeeping force. During verbal consultation with the two responsible ministers in the permanent parliamentary committees for Foreign Affairs and Defence on 3 October 1991, the VVD member of parliament Blaauw said that he shared the ministers' preference for the third WEU option. He wondered, however, whether the Netherlands was ready for participation in it.¹²¹⁰ Van Traa also

¹²⁰⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03286, ministerial EPC/Brussels, 30/09/91, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to PV New York for the attention of the minister via DGPZ, celer 238.

¹²⁰⁵ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 27/09/91, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study; ABZ, DEU/ARA/03288, Yugoslavia: EU/EPC. Ad hoc working group on Yugoslavia. Preparations for Dutch contribution. Minutes of meetings July-December 1991, Van den Broek to London embassy, 23/09/91, celer 151; *ibid.*, secretariat WEU to WEU member states, 24/09/91, weusec 192; DSG. Memo Barth to Ter Beek, 27/09/91, D91/494.

¹²⁰⁶ Van Eekelen, *Security*, p. 147.

¹²⁰⁷ Van Eekelen, *Security*, p. 149; *idem*, *Sporen*, p. 244.

¹²⁰⁸ DAB, 248. Memo De Winter for Ter Beek, 03/10/91, D91/503, with as appendix: 'Elements for the Minister of Defence's reply in the debate on the situation in Yugoslavia on 03/10/91.

¹²⁰⁹ KAB. Minutes of Defence Council meeting, 09/10/91; Morillon, *Credo*, pp. 134-136.

¹²¹⁰ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 10, p. 2.

liked the idea of the third option, but considered deployment impossible for the time being.¹²¹¹ The CDA member Kok saw 'absolutely no need for even more speculations on deploying troops in Yugoslavia'.¹²¹² Sipkes of the Greens called discussions on the subject 'totally premature': 'Military intervention has an escalating effect and it would also mean that ultimately only a limited number of Western European countries would bring "matters to order"'.¹²¹³ She favoured a peacekeeping force of soldiers from the East and West, only if the Yugoslavia Conference was successful. The Minister of Defence, Ter Beek, finally stated that it was not yet necessary to warn the Defence personnel of a possible deployment, because the conditions of a ceasefire and the assent of the involved parties were not yet complied with.¹²¹⁴

The first Security Council resolution regarding the Yugoslav issue

The Dutch government had been toying with the idea of involving the Security Council since the failure of the troika mission in early August. On 13 September, Van den Broek raised with Carrington the matter of whether France and the United Kingdom could bring up the Yugoslavia issue in the Security Council. Carrington replied that it would be worthwhile trying. On this occasion Loncar did not dwell on whether Yugoslavia might oppose discussion in the Security Council.¹²¹⁵

Confronted with the question of whether they favoured discussion of the Yugoslav issue in the Security Council, the French government had to deliberate on how much this would bear pressure on the special relationship with Germany within the EC. After all, discussion in the Security Council would give France, as a permanent member, a considerable say, but Germany, which put itself forward so prominently within the EC, would be sidelined. The reason for raising the matter in the Security Council regardless could be the persistent German urging for the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia.¹²¹⁶

The German government was spurred on in this position by the Vatican, which from the start of the conflict in Yugoslavia had argued for respect of the right of self-determination and against the violence of the JNA. Cardinal Soldano, who was responsible for Vatican foreign policy, urged Genscher on 18 September to move to recognition and said that such action by Germany would be followed immediately by Austria, Poland and the Vatican.¹²¹⁷ After an official visit by Tudjman, the Vatican pressed the EC ambassadors to collectively proceed to recognition, because it expected that this would result in a reduction of the violence.¹²¹⁸ When Genscher again sounded out Paris on the subject of recognition in response to the Vatican's representation, he came up against Dumas, who felt that a rapid recognition would tempt the Serbs into even more offensive actions.¹²¹⁹

In the course of September, however, the French position began to shift in the German direction. Paris also saw the need to repair the Bonn-Paris axis, since the press on Yugoslavia was even mentioning the possibility of a German-Italian axis.¹²²⁰ At a press conference on 12 September, Mitterrand stated that, after the events of recent months, a future independence of Croatia and Slovenia

¹²¹¹ Ibid., p. 4.

¹²¹² Ibid., p. 3

¹²¹³ Ibid., p. 3

¹²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 9

¹²¹⁵ ABZ, Kabinetsarchief: Coll. Van den Broek, memos PS, 1991, memorandum from PS to DGPZ, 13/09/91, no. 178/91.

¹²¹⁶ Cf. Centro Studi di Political Internazionale, 'Lessons'; ABZ, DIE/ARA/01232, EC/Yugoslavia September-October 1991, Van den Broek to Belgrade embassy, 21/09/91, celer 136.

¹²¹⁷ Chenu, 'France', p. 374; Dumas, *Fil*, p. 254.

¹²¹⁸ Chenu, 'France', p. 374.

¹²¹⁹ Dumas, *Fil*, p. 354.

¹²²⁰ Josef Riedmiller, 'Wird eine neue 'Achse' geschmiedet? Deutschland und Italien lassen sich im Jugoslawien-Konflikt auf eine Sonderrolle ein', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 17/09/91; J.M. Bik, 'Europees huis aan verwarring ten prooi' ('European house the victim of confusion'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/09/91.

was possible.¹²²¹ Four days later, on 16 September, Dumas said on French television that the problem was no longer *whether* Croatia and Slovenia could become independent, but *how*.¹²²² It was also not at all in the German government's interest for Bonn and Paris to have divergent points of view on committing the WEU, or for Paris to play political games behind the back of the Dutch EC presidency. The time was ripe for a bilateral statement on the joint French-German points of departure regarding Yugoslavia.¹²²³

Kohl and Mitterrand therefore reached a compromise on 19 September, which would have to bring an end to the open rifts in the Bonn-Paris axis, which both statesmen found undesirable in the run-up to Maastricht. This formula was intended to guarantee that, in the Yugoslav issue, Germany 'weder allein steht noch geht'.¹²²⁴ Kohl promised that Germany would not take any unilateral action in the matter of Yugoslavia and acknowledged the rights of the minorities there, while Mitterrand accepted in principle the right to self-determination of Croatia and Slovenia.¹²²⁵ One day later in the German Bundsdag, Genscher committed all thought of a German virtuoso performance on Yugoslavia to the wastepaper basket: 'Wir halten den Schulterschluss mit Frankreich für entscheidend.'¹²²⁶

Kohl and Mitterrand also agreed that at the opening of the General Assembly of the United Nations, both countries would press for the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force.¹²²⁷ The German government actually seemed not to have such a great objection to involving the Security Council. Firstly, it was a way of involving Russia in the approach to the Yugoslav issue, which the German government had long wanted. Furthermore, involving the Security Council would mean possible military deployment, which the European Community was not in a position to provide.¹²²⁸

On 20 September, only one day after the agreement between Kohl and Mitterrand, Germany and France, together with Canada and Austria, requested the Security Council to convene on the Yugoslavia issue. Because it was feared that several members of the Council (China, India, Cuba, Ecuador) would object to discussing the Yugoslav issue because they considered it to be an internal affair, Yugoslavia itself was also persuaded to request discussion of the matter.¹²²⁹ The Security Council met on 25 September. The Council took the opportunity unanimously to call an arms embargo against all parties in Yugoslavia in Resolution 713. It was the first Resolution of the Security Council, three months after the outbreak of the conflict in Slovenia.

It was furthermore a measure that Yugoslavia itself had requested.¹²³⁰ This was not so strange, because the authorities in Belgrade themselves at that time only stood to gain from an embargo. They had considerable military stocks of what until recently had been one of the largest armies in Europe. An embargo would take the wind out of independence-seeking Croatia's sails. And more than half a year later, Bosnia-Herzegovina, which by then would be declared independent, would be put at a disadvantage by the embargo. This would open the international community to severe criticism when they neither appeared prepared to lift the embargo to put the country in a position to defend itself, nor were inclined to provide military support to the Bosnian government. At the time of imposing the embargo, the Western world did not yet have Bosnia clearly in its sights, however.¹²³¹ The reason that in both cases this embargo caused few problems was that there was plenty of supply on the international

¹²²¹Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 97.

¹²²²Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 305.

¹²²³Libal, *Limits*, p. 53.

¹²²⁴'Initiative bei Mitterrands Besuch in Deutschland', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 20/09/91.

¹²²⁵Jakobsen, *'Multilateralism'*, pp. 371, 375-376 and 378-379; Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 97.

¹²²⁶Genscher, *'Erinnerungen'*, pp. 950-951. See also Libal, *Limits*, p. 55.

¹²²⁷David Gow & John Palmer, 'Mitterrand and Kohl urge UN intervention in Yugoslavia', *The Guardian*, 19/09/91.

¹²²⁸See also Rob Meines, 'Frans-Duits pragmatisme bij VN' ('Frenco-German pragmatism at UN'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/09/91.

¹²²⁹Weller, *'Response'*, p. 578. See also archive PV New York, Yugoslavia/general, September 1991 - December 1995, PV New York to Van den Broek, 25/09/91, nyv/6490; minute-message Bas Backer (PV New York) to DPV, 04/10/91.

¹²³⁰Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 57; Weller, *'Response'*, p. 578.

¹²³¹Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 155.

arms market at the time as a consequence of - oh, irony - arms reduction agreements between the East and West, the dismantling of the military apparatus of the former Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and the stabilization of Lebanon after many years of civil war.¹²³² In the short term, the arms embargo led to an intensification of the 'barracks war' in Croatia. Provisionally this was the most convenient way for the Croatian armed forces to avail themselves of heavy weapons.

Yugoslavia's call to the Security Council indicated that the authorities in Belgrade expected more from them than from the EC. The Security Council indeed offered more guarantees for Serbian interests. The Council had taken a more reserved position on intervention in the internal Yugoslav situation than the EC, which appeared to be taking a much firmer line, especially after convening the conference. Of the Western European countries, France and the United Kingdom, whose position in the conflict until then had not been unfavourable for Serbia, had a seat in the Security Council, and Germany, which was hated in Belgrade, did not.¹²³³ In addition, the Soviet Union, which Serbia considered to be a traditional ally, and the People's Republic of China, with which the Milosevic regime felt ideological kinship, had a right of veto in the Council. Furthermore, both countries had a reputation for feeling more strongly than the Western countries about the international community intervening in the internal affairs of a state. Involving the UN also meant that the non-aligned countries would be given a voice in the conflict. There was hope in Belgrade that it would be able to count on sympathy from this group of countries, with which Tito had maintained such friendly relations in the past. What is more, UN involvement, which until then had kept its distance, meant that a second international player would appear on the scene alongside the EC, which could not always be expected to adopt the same position as the Twelve of Europe. This could create room for manoeuvre for the Milosevic regime.¹²³⁴

Resolution 713 also supported the efforts made by the EC until then. The Security Council further decided 'to remain seized of the matter until a peaceful solution is achieved'.¹²³⁵ This guaranteed permanent UN involvement.

To what extent this would produce a real improvement relative to what the EC had done until then, remained to be seen. In any case, France and Great Britain had permanent seats in the Council. Differences between them on European level could equally well arise in the Security Council. The involvement of two other permanent members, the United States and Russia, could complicate matters. Furthermore, from now on France and the United Kingdom would be able to play chess on two boards at the same time. What they did not like in the EC they could attempt to correct behind the - often closed - doors of the Security Council.

In pursuit of the involvement with Yugoslavia imposed on him by the Security Council, the UN Secretary-General, Javier Pérez de Cuellar, appointed the former American Secretary of State Cyrus Vance as his personal envoy for Yugoslavia on 8 October. His task would include maintaining contact with the European Community's Yugoslavia Conference. Vance, who appeared a little diffident towards the media, had a long reputation as a fighter of world fires. In 1968 he was the second negotiator on the American side in the peace talks with North Vietnam in Paris. This New York lawyer had been involved in the past at the American government's request in such matters as the Cyprus conflict, relations between the two Koreas, discussions between the South African government and the anti-apartheid organization ANC, and with the race issue in the United States. As Secretary of State in the Carter administration, he gained a reputation as the architect of the Camp David treaty between Israel

¹²³² See e.g. Cekić, *Aggression*, pp. 47 and 162.

¹²³³ Cf. Thompson, *House*, p. 318.

¹²³⁴ Petković, 'Role', p. 6.

¹²³⁵ For the text of resolutions and explanations of the Security Council chairman, see United Nations Department of Public Information, Nations.

and Egypt.¹²³⁶ Vance was one of the few foreigners involved in the Yugoslavia conflict to enjoy a good reputation with the Serbs.¹²³⁷

Observers to Bosnia-Herzegovina

At an additional ministerial meeting in The Hague on 19 September in connection with the European Political Cooperation, after a visit to Yugoslavia Lord Carrington called the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina 'explosive'. The leaders there and in Macedonia had therefore requested the stationing of monitors in their republics as a preventive measure. The Dutch presidency had responded cautiously and expressed the opinion that there must first be a study of 'to what extent it would be advisable and possible'.¹²³⁸ Also in those days, requests reached the Dutch presidency of the EC from the Bosnian Muslim leaders for stationing ECMM personnel in Bosnia in connection with the deteriorating situation there, partly as a result of the behaviour of Serbian and Montenegrin JNA soldiers there.¹²³⁹

On 26 September Van den Broek therefore sent Wijnaendts to Sarajevo to establish whether sending observers to Bosnia-Herzegovina was possible as a form of preventive diplomacy. The Dutch government considered it 'not out of the question' that the hostilities in Croatia could spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina, 'in view of the internal tensions within this republic, in particular as a consequence of troop movements of federal army units, which had led to negative reactions among sections of the population and the authorities'.¹²⁴⁰

The political leaders of the three large ethnic communities in Bosnia and Milosevic appeared to agree with observers who would be ordered 'to contribute to maintaining peace and stability and to help prevent possible conflicts'. In agreeing, it will not have escaped the notice of the Serbian leaders that the Serbs in Croatia were starting to rate the monitors more highly, and the Croats conversely less highly, because they were effectively helping to consolidate the Serbian positions deep into Croatia.¹²⁴¹ At an EPC lunch in Brussels on 30 September, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Twelve agreed on expanding the number of monitors to two hundred. Eight of them would be deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹²⁴²

The Greater-Serbian coup

Anyone who thought they could derive hope from the fact that the Serbian leaders appeared to see an advantage again in cooperating with the EC at the end of September, was soon to be disappointed. On 3 October 1991 the representatives of Serbia, Montenegro, Vojvodina and Kosovo decided in the collective state presidium that from now on they were entitled to exercise the highest state authority

¹²³⁶ On Vance see e.g. Caroline de Gruyter, 'De man zonder bijnaam' ('The man with no alias'), *Elsevier*, 18/01/92, p. 37; 'Cyrus Vance. Geboren diplomaat' ('Cyrus Vance. Born diplomat'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/10/91; Stanley Meisler & Carol J. Williams, 'Globe-trotting envoy douses the hot spots', *Los Angeles Times*, 07/04/92.

¹²³⁷ Kadjevic, *View*, p. 47; interview V. Jovanovic, 14/09/01; Stanley Meisler & Carol J. Williams, 'Globe-trotting envoy douses the hot spots', *Los Angeles Times*, 07/04/92.

¹²³⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03306, Izetbegovic to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EC, 16/09/91; ABZ, DEU/ARA/03286, extra ministerial EPC, 19/09/91, Van den Broek to Belgrade, 21/09/91, celer 136. Genscher, *Erinnerung*, p. 950 as well as the Netherlands, refers to Greece as an opponent of stationing monitors in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia.

¹²³⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03306, Fietelaars 330 to Van den Broek, 24/09/91; Van den Broek to HOM ECMM, 24/09/91, celer unnumbered.

¹²⁴⁰ TK, session 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 7, p. 2.

¹²⁴¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00402, Yugoslavia/Domestic Politics/Bosnia-Herzegovina, Fietelaars 337, 26/09/91.

¹²⁴² ABZ, DEU/ARA/03306, Fietelaars 340 to Van den Broek, 27/09/91; Fietelaars 343 to Van den Broek, 29/09/91; COREU of the EC presidency, 29/09/91, cpe/pres/hag 1018; DAB, 248. Memo De Winter for Ter Beek, 03/10/91, D91/503, with as appendices: 'Elements for the Minister of Defence's reply in the debate on the situation in Yugoslavia on 03/10/91 and KvO/DAV, Discussion points for the Ministerial EPC 30 September 1991 and activities for Monitor Mission for UCV Yugoslavia, 03/10/91.

with or without the other members. They therefore conferred upon themselves the highest state authority and furthermore took over the authority of the federal parliament, because of 'a situation of impending danger of war'.¹²⁴³ In fact, after that, the federal Yugoslavia consisted only of Serbia and Montenegro. A clearly asymmetrical relationship existed between the two areas, one of which, Serbia, had ten million residents, and the other, Montenegro, only six-hundred thousand. It was clear that only one person was in charge in the new federation: the Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic.¹²⁴⁴ The representatives of Croatia and Slovenia left the presidium a few days later; the three month moratorium on the execution of their declarations of independence had passed and it was clear that they had little reason to remain in Belgrade.

Belgrade upheld the fiction of a federation, however, in the hope of using legal arguments to make a claim on continuity of the former Yugoslavia. This would allow Belgrade to make a claim on the assets of the ex-state and its seats in international organs. An example of the extent to which Serbia dominated the federation was the fact that the Serbian police had forty thousand men as against two thousand federal police, who were finally taken over by the Serbian police in October 1993.

On 8 October, the ambassadors of the EC met in the Dutch diplomatic mission's building in Belgrade and took stock of the European Community's efforts so far. The outcome was discouraging. According to the assembled diplomats, all the good intentions of the EC had come to nothing because the nationalists of Serbia and Croatia were not seeking a compromise, but appeared to be aiming for the other party's capitulation. This fundamental fact had not been discounted in EC policy. This meant that the EC had been transformed from an impartial arbiter into one of the parties in the Yugoslav conflict: 'This has reduced the community to the Yugoslavs' own level of give and take, without any commitment to durability of the agreements reached, a climate that they know very well and that they can better exploit than anybody else.' The opportunities remaining for the EC to do something were slight. They consisted mainly of economic and financial sanctions. In addition, the EC diplomats made a futile attempt to limit the effects of the 'coup' of 3 October by upgrading Markovic and Loncar in the negotiations relative to the 'Serbian' federal presidium.¹²⁴⁵

Apparently by way of upgrading Markovic, the EC ambassadors invited him one week later as a guest to their monthly lunch meeting. Markovic told the EC that it was wrong to see the conflict between Serbia and Croatia as one 'between the rearguard of totalitarianism and the leading edge of democracy'. In reality, Milosevic and Tudjman had the same motives, namely a craving for power, in which they would go to any lengths. He also reproached the EC that they had accomplished little until then. This was especially because the community promised and threatened, but seldom kept promises and carried out threats. That was seen in Yugoslavia as a sign of weakness 'and weakness is always exploited'.¹²⁴⁶

Meanwhile, one month after his appointment, Carrington had come to some conclusions. He presented a plan for Yugoslavia at a conference on 4 October in The Hague, in which the republics that wished to be independent would be allowed to do so and could use their own discretion in the extent to which they maintained links with a Yugoslav confederation. Carrington's proposal came down to a sort of Yugoslavia à la carte, and resembled the plan of Gligorov and Izetbegovic of 6 June. As he did with that plan, Milosevic appeared to accept it in the first instance.¹²⁴⁷

At an informal meeting at Haarzuilens Castle on 5 and 6 October, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Twelve were informed of the state of affairs. Van den Broek announced that Serbia now

¹²⁴³ Public Statement SFRY Presidency, 03/10/91, in: *Review of International Affairs*, vol. 42(1991) nos. 995-7.

¹²⁴⁴ Cf. Williams/Cigar, 'War Crimes', IV.B. 1.c and n. 149.

¹²⁴⁵ ABZ, DIE/ARA/01232, EC/Yugoslavia September-October 1991, Fietelaars 364 to Van den Broek, 08/10/91.

¹²⁴⁶ ABZ, DIE/ARA/01232, EC/Yugoslavia September-October 1991, Fietelaars 382 to Van den Broek, 17/10/91.

¹²⁴⁷ Cf. Wijnaendts, *Kroniek*, pp. 129-130; 'Akkoord over toekomst van Joegoslavië' ('Agreement on the future of Yugoslavia') and Rob Meines, 'Haags akkoord biedt Joegoslavië weer hoop' ('Hague agreement offers Yugoslavia renewed hope'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/10/91.

appeared resigned to the recognition of the republics that were pursuing independence.¹²⁴⁸ Besides this good news, the ministers expressed dismay at the violence displayed by the JNA in Croatia.¹²⁴⁹ Genscher demanded the immediate withdrawal of the JNA from Croatia and stated that, if necessary, Germany would proceed to the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia alone. The twelve EC ministers sharply condemned the Serbian 'coup' and announced that from now on they would recognize no further decisions of the presidium. They decided, if no ceasefire was in effect after 7 October, to resort to sanctions against reluctant parties and termination of the cooperation agreement between the EC and Yugoslavia. On the other hand, a cooperation agreement would be entered into with the cooperative parties. This not only marked the EC's turn to a biased course, which it been reluctant to take until then in connection with the mediation that it wished to offer the Yugoslavia Conference, but it could also create the impression that it was anticipating the recognition of Croatia, Slovenia and possibly other republics. On 8 October, after intensive telephone consultation, Van den Broek belatedly reached agreement with the Deputy Minister of Defence of Yugoslavia, Admiral Brovet, and the head of the ECMM mission, Van Houten, on a suspension of hostilities. This meant that the sanctions would not go ahead.¹²⁵⁰ Van den Broek, who until then had avoided contact with the Yugoslav military as much as possible, had now apparently sought direct contact with Brovet to avoid contact with the 'Serbian' presidium under the leadership of Kostic.

Van den Broek's promise of recognition of Croatia and Slovenia

Van den Broek badly needed a success. On Monday 30 September 1991, 'black Monday', the Dutch draft treaty for a political union was torpedoed by all other member states of the European Community except Belgium. Its failure was not directly attributable to Van den Broek himself, who was hardly in a position to concern himself with the draft treaty because of his involvement with Yugoslavia, but to Junior Minister Piet Dankert, who, according to an anonymous diplomat in the Dutch ministry, entertained 'bizarre ideas' on the acceptability of the draft among other member states.¹²⁵¹ 'It seemed as if Dankert had not been entirely part of this world for months', according to a well-informed diplomatic source in London.¹²⁵² As a European ambassador in The Hague put it: 'In the Netherlands they are so convinced of the moral superiority of what they have in mind for Europe (...) that they have tended to lose sight of the power relations.'¹²⁵³ It was serious food for thought that senior officials in the ministry - Dankert was supported by the Director-General of European Cooperation, Van Beuge, and the European Integration Directorate - apparently took such little account of the how the cards were stacked in the other European capitals.¹²⁵⁴ The Dutch permanent representative to the EC, P. Nieman had tried in vain to give a warning that the Dutch draft would not be acceptable to the EC partners.¹²⁵⁵ 'While in Yugoslavia, Minister Van den Broek was being confronted in a hard way with the limits of European foreign policy, Mr Dankert dreamed on 'undisturbed', VVD opposition leader F. Bolkestein would rightly observe.¹²⁵⁶ Furthermore, diplomatic circles in The Hague had once again

¹²⁴⁸Both, *Indifference*, p. 125.

¹²⁴⁹Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 953.

¹²⁵⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03283, EU/GBVB/extra CoPo 1991, Van den Broek circ 594 to embassy Belgrade and PV EC, 10/10/91.

¹²⁵¹ Frits Schaling, 'Nederland oogst storm met voorstel voor politieke unie' ('Netherlands brings storm on its head with proposal for political union'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/09/91.

¹²⁵² Rob Meines, 'De Haagse zelfmoord' ('The suicide of The Hague'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/10/91.

¹²⁵³ Rob Meines, 'De Haagse zelfmoord' ('The suicide of The Hague'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/10/91.

¹²⁵⁴ See e.g. Oscar Garschagen, 'Stay in touch with the Dutch', *de Volkskrant*, 05/10/91.

¹²⁵⁵ 'Premier erkent fouten bij presentatie unievoorstel EG' ('Prime minister admits errors in presentation of union proposal'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/10/91; Elsbeth Tiedemann, 'Terug naar Zwarte Maandag' ('Back to black Monday'), *Elsevier*, 22/06/96, p. 16; M. Sie Dhian Ho, 'Federatiekampioen of trouwe bondgenoot. Het Nederlandse beleid ten aanzien van de Europese en Atlantische Samenwerking', Van Ditzhuyzen et al (ed.), *Jaar*, p. 303; Michiel van Hulten, 'Zwarte Maandag. Kroniek van een gemiste kans', Labohm (ed.), *Waterdragers*, pp. 196-197.

¹²⁵⁶ Rob Meines, 'Lichte Europa-moeheid in Kamer' ('Slight Europe fatigue in parliament'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/10/91.

underestimated the power of the Bonn-Paris axis by believing that the German government would support the Dutch draft despite objections from Paris.¹²⁵⁷ According to the professor of constitutional law of the University of Nijmegen, Kortmann, this should not come as a surprise to those interested in history: "They know or are in a position to know that the Netherlands, or more specifically Holland, has a tradition of wrongly estimating the wishes of (the) other (European) states."¹²⁵⁸ Paul Scheffer, commentator in *NRC Handelsblad*, likewise thought that there was an element of a long [Dutch] tradition of self-deception: 'We feel so sure of what we want that the idea that others might want something else has trouble breaking through.'¹²⁵⁹ Also, the Dutch attitude of 'we'll just do that more properly', which had resulted in the Luxemburg draft from before the Dutch presidency being pushed aside, had raised hackles in other European cities.¹²⁶⁰

It was, again, a blot on the Dutch EC president's copybook. According to *NRC Handelsblad*, the defeat of the Dutch ambitions for Europe was 'total'.¹²⁶¹ Diplomats who had witnessed the meeting of EC representatives in which the Dutch draft was slated, spoke of 'carnage'¹²⁶² or a 'bloodbath'.¹²⁶³ 'We looked like complete idiots', concluded Van den Broek himself.¹²⁶⁴ EC president the Netherlands, in *NRC Handelsblad's* analysis, would 'no longer be able to blow its own trumpet so much'.¹²⁶⁵ And its foreign affairs correspondent thought he observed in the following weeks a demoralization among Dutch diplomats, because they were no longer taken completely seriously by their foreign discussion partners.¹²⁶⁶

The Netherlands had to come up with a new proposal as quickly as possible, in order to avoid 'Maastricht' being a complete washout. The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs then found himself in the position of 'a schoolboy who has to repeat an exam', according to PvdA's foreign affairs specialist Maarten van Traa.¹²⁶⁷ Apparently the masters had little confidence in that, because at a press conference in Utrecht after the EC Ministerial Conference in Haarzuilens Castle in the weekend of 5 and 6 October, Dumas and Genscher stated that they would take the initiative for a German-French variant.¹²⁶⁸ By any measure the press conference was a low point in the relationship between Genscher and Van den Broek. Dumas and Genscher acted in breach of the custom after an EC meeting that the EC president and the chairman of the European Commission are the first to speak the press. What is more, the German minister, who arrived by helicopter, hijacked his Dutch opposite number's official car after the meeting to travel to the press conference in a hotel in Maarssen. "This time the Germans didn't just take a bike, but a Dutch government limousine", is how J.H. Sampiemon summed up the old and new Dutch sores caused by German rudeness, in *NRC Handelsblad*.¹²⁶⁹

¹²⁵⁷ See e.g. 'Delors troost vernederd Nederland' ('Delors comforts humiliated Netherlands'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/10/91; Rob Meines, 'De Haagse zelfmoord', *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/10/91.

¹²⁵⁸ 'C.A.J.M. Kortmann, 'Nederlandse EG-politiek is irreal' ('Netherlands EC policy is unrealistic'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/10/91.

¹²⁵⁹ Paul Scheffer, 'Veroordeeld tot Europa' ('Sentenced to Europe'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/10/91.

¹²⁶⁰ Rob Meines, 'De Haagse zelfmoord', *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/10/91.

¹²⁶¹ 'Delors troost vernederd Nederland', *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/10/91.

¹²⁶² Frits Schaling, 'Nederland oogst storm met voorstel voor politieke unie' ('Netherlands brings storm on its head with proposal for political union'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/09/91.

¹²⁶³ Theo Koelé, 'Nederland op de pijnbank' ('The Netherlands on the rack'), *Trouw*, 05/10/91

¹²⁶⁴ Rob Meines, 'De Haagse zelfmoord' ('The suicide of The Hague'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/10/91.

¹²⁶⁵ 'Delors troost vernederd Nederland' ('Delors comforts humiliated Netherlands'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/10/91.

¹²⁶⁶ J.L. Heldring, 'Het rendement van onze diplomatie' ('The outcome of our diplomacy'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/10/91.

¹²⁶⁷ Maarten van Traa, 'Verlies niet je zelfrespect bij ontbrekend applaus' ('Do not lose your self respect with a lack of applause'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/10/91.

¹²⁶⁸ 'Niet meer dan Luxemburg' ('No more than Luxembourg'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/10/91; Theo Koelé, 'Frankrijk en Duitsland kapen voorzitterschap EG', ('France and Germany hijack EC presidency') *Trouw*, 07/10/91; Oscar Garschagen, 'Dumas en Genscher gaan verder zonder Van den Broek' ('Dumas and Genscher continue without Van den Broek'), *de Volkskrant*, 07/10/91; idem, 'Dumas en Genscher plegen overval op EG-voorzitterschap' ('Dumas and Genscher raid EC presidency'), *de Volkskrant*, 08/10/91.

¹²⁶⁹ J.H. Sampiemon, 'De Europese arsenalen sterven niet vanzelf uit' ('The European arsenals will die out of their own accord'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/10/91.

Domestically, Van den Broek had to watch how, as a result of the defeat, his ministry eventually had to allow the prime minister to take the lead with respect to European integration.¹²⁷⁰ The CDA member of parliament J.P. van Iersel proposed that, for the rest of the Dutch presidency, Prime Minister Lubbers should spend six hours a day on European policy, 'not only to save the political and monetary union, but equally Dutch political prestige in the Community'.¹²⁷¹ After almost ten years, the press had grown tired of Van den Broek as minister, and now took it out on him, playing 'the Requiem of a middleweight'.¹²⁷²

On 8 October, the three month moratorium set down in the Brioni agreement on the implementation of the proclamations of independence of Croatia and Slovenia expired. Both republics reaffirmed their independence and made a start on its implementation, including in the area of currency. One week later, on 15 October, Bosnia-Herzegovina also declared its sovereignty. This republic did state that it was prepared to continue to cooperate with the other republics in a newly to be formed association.

The expiry of the Brioni moratorium posed a problem for Van den Broek. On the one hand he did not wish to give the impression of delaying the recognition indefinitely. On the other hand such a recognition could derail the Yugoslavia Conference. Furthermore, as EC president, Van den Broek had to take account of the differences between Germany, which wanted rapid recognition, and France and Great Britain, which were not in favour.

An illustrative example of the tensions that this could cause within the EC was that Minister Hurd of Great Britain, who under different circumstances was a none too warm supporter of European integration, on seeing the opportunity to curb German brashness, suddenly discovered the usefulness of the EC. In his address to the British Conservative Party Congress on 8 October, he said that:

'the luxury and danger of the West European powers pursuing national policy on their own in Eastern Europe belong in the first and not the last decade of this century. Even if the European Community had not been invented in 1956, we should have to invent it now for this reason. Had we not become a member in 1973, we should have to do so now.'¹²⁷³

Van den Broek found a compromise for himself between the extremes, and on 8 and 9 October he informed the European capitals and Washington by telephone that, if the Yugoslavia Conference had not yielded results within two months, recognition would follow automatically on 10 December.¹²⁷⁴ The same information was given to Milosevic and Kadijevic.¹²⁷⁵ It was a rash assertion for Van den Broek to make. Maybe he had allowed himself to be swayed by optimism from the willingness with which Milosevic had responded to the Carrington's proposal of 4 October and was pleased with the personal success that he had achieved with Brovet on 8 October. An internal memorandum from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs formulated the matter somewhat more cautiously than the minister had done in his telephone calls: the recognition of those republics in Yugoslavia that desired it

¹²⁷⁰ Willem Breedveld, 'Lubbers uitroepen tot staatshoofd?' ('Should Lubbers be declared head of state?'), *Trouw*, 19/10/91; Leonoor Meijer, 'Debacle rond Europese Politieke Unie was geen incident' ('Debacle surrounding European Political Union was not an isolated incident'), *Trouw*, 24/10/91; idem, 'Lubbers tempert EG-hoop' ('Lubbers dampens EC hope'), *Trouw*, 30/10/91.

¹²⁷¹ Rob Meines, 'De Haagse zelfmoord' ('The suicide of The Hague'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/10/91.

¹²⁷² Jan Tromp, 'Van den Broek had geen minister meer moeten willen wezen' ('Van den Broek should not have wanted to carry on as minister'), *de Volkskrant*, 08/10/91.

¹²⁷³ Cited in: Roper, 'Yugoslavia', p. 2.

¹²⁷⁴ Both, *Indifference*, p. 123; Rob Meines, 'EC: leger verlaat Kroatië; leger weet van niets' ('EC: army leaves Croatia; army aware of nothing'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/10/91.

¹²⁷⁵ Helmut Hetzel, 'In zwei Monaten entscheiden wir über die Anerkennung', *Die Presse*, 18/10/91. See also Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 954-955

could take place before the end of the year at a concluding meeting of the Yugoslavia Conference, on condition that a general settlement had been arrived at.¹²⁷⁶

Even with this condition, the authorities in Croatia and Slovenia could now have the impression that they would not have to wait much longer for recognition of the independence of their republics. Would it be possible for the recognition to be refused after two months, if the blame for the failure of the conference could be laid at the door of the Serbs? And that would not take much. The situation that had arisen after Van den Broek's pronouncements was clear on 10 October at a press conference following a five hour discussion between Milosevic and Tudjman in The Hague within the framework of the Yugoslavia Conference. Van den Broek then stated that the JNA would hopefully withdraw from Croatia within a month in the framework of a political solution. Milosevic, sitting on Van den Broek's left, said that Van den Broek's proposal was realistic, as long as the notion of a centralized Yugoslav state was the focus of the negotiations. Tudjman, sitting on Van den Broek's right, said that it was no longer relevant whether Yugoslavia was a centralized state or a loose confederation: Croatia became independent with effect from 9 October.¹²⁷⁷ No wonder that Lord Carrington was unpleasantly surprised by Van den Broek's telephone calls.¹²⁷⁸

The government in Paris had less difficulty with this development. On 9 October Dumas stated in the Assemblée Nationale that Yugoslavia no longer existed and that the EC would have to draw logical conclusions from the fact.¹²⁷⁹ Bonn was obviously pleasantly surprised by the sudden change of course of the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹²⁸⁰

It remained hidden from the general public that by mentioning a period of two months for the recognition of independence, Van den Broek had bowed towards Bonn. The barrage of abuse against him from German politicians and journalists continued. The CSU representative in the European parliament and son of the former Emperor of Austria-Hungary, Otto von Hapsburg, called Van den Broek, because of his supposed adherence to Yugoslav unity, 'the Serb among the Europeans'.¹²⁸¹

The failure of the Yugoslavia Conference

More than one week later, on 18 October, the crucial sixth plenary meeting of the Yugoslavia Conference took place in The Hague. Its importance was underscored by the presence of UN envoy Vance and a joint statement from the EC, the United States and the Soviet Union that was issued on the same day, which rejected the use of force in the Yugoslav conflict, both for changing external and internal borders.¹²⁸² At this meeting, Carrington explained to the leaders of the Yugoslav republics the draft agreement for a general settlement of the Yugoslav crisis, which he had presented two weeks earlier in The Hague, and to which Milosevic then appeared to agree.

In the plan, as he presented it on 18 October, Carrington had gone a long way to meeting a number of Serbian desires. Because he did not wish to discuss the borders of the republics, Carrington made extensive concessions with respect to the protection of minorities. One of the clauses of his plan mentioned a special statute for 'areas where persons belonging to a national or ethnic group form a

¹²⁷⁶ ABZ, Kabinetsarchief: Coll. Van den Broek, box October 1991 - January 1992, memorandum from spokesman to Van den Broek, 10/10/91, no. 1169/91, plus draft of article by Rob Meines; Rob Meines, 'Tijdslimiet aan inzet EG in Joegoslavië' ('Time limit on EC deployment in Yugoslavia') and idem, 'Succes voor shuttle diplomatie Den Haag' ('Success for The Hague's shuttle diplomacy'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/10/91.

¹²⁷⁷ Paul L. Montgomery, 'Croat and Serb Chiefs Meet but Fail to Bridge Gap', *The New York Times*, 11/10/91.

¹²⁷⁸ Both, *Indifference*, p. 125-126.

¹²⁷⁹ Jakobsen, 'Multilateralism', p. 379; Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 97.

¹²⁸⁰ Genscher, 'Erinnerungen', p. 955.

¹²⁸¹ Peter Sartorius, 'Zagreb: Otto von Habsburgs zäher Kampf um ein unabhängiges Kroatien', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 19/10/91, in which the emperor's son also pilloried Van den Broek as a hater of Germans and Catholics, who furthermore had not got over World Wars I and II.

¹²⁸² Terrett, *Dissolution*, p. 79; TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 11, p. 4.

majority'.¹²⁸³ It had still to be negotiated which areas were eligible, but it was beyond dispute that it would have to apply to the areas in Croatia, and probably also those in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with a Serbian majority. The Serbs would be allowed to use their own national symbols there, as well as the flag of their choice. The Serbs in these areas were permitted their own parliament, own administration, own police and own law. They were granted the right to a second, Serbian, nationality. Education in these areas would take account of 'the values and needs' of the Serbs. There would be international supervision on effecting the rights of the minorities.

Five of the six republics agreed with Carrington's plan on 18 October. Milosevic now objected, however. As formal obstacle he said that Carrington's proposal would establish that Yugoslavia no longer existed. Milosevic and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vladislav Jovanovic, used as a legal argument that if other republics were given the right to separate, Serbia, Montenegro and possibly Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia must be given the right to remain in the federal Yugoslav republic. Carrington, on the other hand, could not deny Serbia and Montenegro the right to call themselves jointly Yugoslavia again, but according to him that would have to be a new state and not the legal successor of the existing federation. This position was later, on 29 November, supported by the Badinter Committee, which stated that Yugoslavia was in a state in dissolution.¹²⁸⁴ Furthermore, according to Milosevic, the plan incorrectly assumed that the republics were the constituent elements of Yugoslavia, rather than the peoples. Neither of these objections was realistic. Milosevic and his supporters themselves gave the lie to the idea that they were still greatly attached to Yugoslavia four days later, on 22 October, when the 'Serbian bloc' in the federal presidium - Serbia, Montenegro, Vojvodina and Kosovo - made proposals for the 'continuation' of Yugoslavia in the form of a Greater Serbia: Serbia, Montenegro and the Serbian regions in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Otherwise, Milosevic was not only concerned with the notion of Greater Serbia. He also wanted the recognition of his new Yugoslavia as the legal successor to the second Yugoslavia (1945-1991), in order for the assets of that state to benefit his regime.¹²⁸⁵

Although they did not openly raise the matter, the Slovenian government was also not favourably disposed to Carrington's plan. They felt no need whatever to reopen the discussion on complete sovereignty, which appeared to be in prospect, by participating in a Yugoslavia à la carte.¹²⁸⁶ Being well tuned to the West, however, the government in Ljubljana understood that it would be given little credit there by being obstructive. It would be much better for the blame to be placed on one or other of the other republics. The most eligible for that were Serbia and Montenegro, which had always meekly followed the Serbian lead since the antibureaucratic revolution. Montenegro dropped out, however, because the president of the republic, Momir Bulatovic, allowed himself to be bribed by De Michelis shortly before the opening of the meeting on 18 October in The Hague, with an Italian promise of substantial financial support.¹²⁸⁷ Milosevic was greatly enraged by the Bulatovic's 'treachery', partly because, by dropping out, Montenegro had considerably weakened the claim that 'his' Yugoslavia was the legal successor of the second Yugoslavia.¹²⁸⁸

After Bulatovic's 'treachery', Milosevic showed himself to be a willing victim of a Slovenian scheme. The Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rupel, remarked at one of the conference working party meetings attended by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the republics, that the rights for minorities, as granted by Carrington's proposal to the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, according to the same plan were equally applicable to all minorities throughout Yugoslavia with a local majority. And therefore also to the Albanians in Kosovo. Not only would Serbia have to grant broad minority rights to the Albanians, they would also have to accept international supervision of their observance. Rupel

¹²⁸³ Ramcharan (ed.), *Conference*, I, p. 16.

¹²⁸⁴ Jovanovic, 'Status', p. 1725; interview V. Jovanovic, 14/09/01.

¹²⁸⁵ Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 192; Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 162.

¹²⁸⁶ Cf. Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 404.

¹²⁸⁷ Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 195.

¹²⁸⁸ Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 194.

had hit the raw Serbian nerve: *Quod licet Jovi non licet bovi*. In other words: what would be granted to the Serbs outside Serbia, would not apply to the Kosovo Albanians. As Rupel later recalled, following his remark the Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jovanovic, became 'really (...) mad, that was really something I shouldn't have said. It was the end of our friendship.'¹²⁸⁹ Apparently Tudjman understood the game. At the plenary meeting of 25 October he argued for application of the special statute for minorities to be applied to all of Yugoslavia, while Milosevic wanted it to be considered as a solution *sui generis* for the Serbs in Croatia.¹²⁹⁰

This attitude meant not only the end of the friendship between Jovanovic and Rupel, it was also the end of the Carrington proposal and actually of the peace conference he had chaired. Three days later the 'federal' presidium in Belgrade stated that it no longer had confidence in the impartiality of the EC.¹²⁹¹ All that followed was by way of an epilogue. On 8 November Carrington would adjourn the conference, because its continuation served no purpose now that Serbia was unable to accept his plan, while in the meantime the fighting was continuing in all its intensity. The Twelve agreed and left it to Carrington to decide when the conference could be reconvened. The British chairman had rightly concluded at the start of his activities that only a comprehensive solution to the Yugoslav issue would offer a way out. At the same time this was also the problem. What was granted to one ethnic group, whether it was a form of minority protection or the right to separate, would immediately be demanded by the other groups. As long as Milosevic would not accept this consistency and the West refused to enforce it, every 'solution' would carry the seed of a following conflict. So somehow or other, the law of conservation of problems would apply in Yugoslavia at the end of the twentieth century.

After returning to Belgrade from the conference, Bulatovic was given a thorough dressing down, so that he would never again dare to let his 'ally' down. He was forced to organize a referendum in Montenegro on the question of whether this republic should remain in Yugoslavia. The answer was an overwhelming 'yes'.¹²⁹²

Selective sanctions

It was not only the coup of 3 October and Milosevic's pull-out from the Yugoslavia Conference that stirred up bad blood among the EC ministers. The heightened activities of the JNA and Serbian irregulars in Croatia did so too. The shelling of Dubrovnik and Vukovar especially made a great impression on Western public opinion, not in the least in the Netherlands.¹²⁹³ The shelling of Vukovar,

¹²⁸⁹ Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 193. See also Paul L. Montgomery, 'Serb rejects plan posed by Europe', *The New York Times*, 26/10/91; Steven L. Burg, 'The International Community and the Yugoslav Crisis', Esman & Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p. 246; Libal, *Limits*, p. 68-69; Meier, *Jugoslawien*, pp. 410-411.

¹²⁹⁰ Wijnaendts, *Kroniek*, p. 140.

¹²⁹¹ Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 61.

¹²⁹² Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 195-196.

¹²⁹³ Monnesland, *Land*, pp. 360-368; Both, *Indifference*, p. 101 and 112-113. The number of publications in the Dutch press devoted to just these two cities is overwhelming. See e.g. 'Kroatische havenstad zwaar onder vuur' ('Croatian port town under fire'), *de Volkskrant*, 02/10/91; "Beslissend' offensief tegen Kroatië. Joegoslavische leger bombardeert en omsingelt Dubrovnik" ('Decisive' offensive against Croatia. Yugoslav army shells and surrounds Dubrovnik'), *de Volkskrant*, 03/10/91; Ulrike Rudberg, 'Servië uit op toerisme-inkomsten Dubrovnik' ('Serbia out to get tourism income from Dubrovnik'), *de Volkskrant*, 04/10/91; 'Historisch Dubrovnik zwaar bestookt' ('Historic Dubrovnik heavily shelled'), *de Volkskrant*, 24/10/91; 'Leger bestookt Dubrovnik van alle kanten' ('Army shells Dubrovnik from all sides'), *de Volkskrant*, 11/11/91; 'EG wil waarnemers weghalen uit zwaar belegerd Dubrovnik' ('EC wants to pull observers out of beleaguered Dubrovnik'), *de Volkskrant*, 12/11/91; 'Evacuatie waarnemers in Dubrovnik vertraagd' ('Evacuation of observers in Dubrovnik delayed'), *de Volkskrant*, 13/11/91; Norman Stone, 'Serviërs zijn rijp voor nieuw 'Neurenberg'', 'Federale leger geeft veerboot toegang tot haven Dubrovnik' ('Serbs ready for new 'Neurenberg') and 'In oude Dubrovnik bloeide het humanisme' ('Humanism blossoms in old Dubrovnik'), *de Volkskrant*, 14/11/91; 'Geduw om plaatsje op veerboot in haven Dubrovnik' ('Jostling for a place on the ferry Dubrovnik harbour'), *de Volkskrant*, 15/11/91; 'Val Kroatische stad Vukovar lijkt op handen' ('Fall of Croat city of Vukovar seems imminent') and Ewoud Nysingh, 'Spookstad Vukovar symbool van heftig Kroatisch verzet' ('Ghost town Vukovar symbol of Croatian resistance'), *de Volkskrant*, 18/11/91; 'Aanblik oorlogsleed in Vukovar schokt VN-afgezant Vance' ('Glimpse of war suffering in Vukovar shocks envoy Vance'), *de*

which was given the epithet of 'the Stalingrad of Croatia'¹²⁹⁴ or the 'Hiroshima of Europe',¹²⁹⁵ led again to comparisons with the conflict between David and Goliath, which Slovenia had earlier used so profitably in its PR campaign in the West.¹²⁹⁶

Even more than the attacks on Vukovar¹²⁹⁷ those starting in October on Dubrovnik, the Pearl of the Adriatic and the best preserved walled medieval city in Europe, provoked great international indignation.¹²⁹⁸ The destruction in a city that in 1979 had been given a place on the UNESCO list of monuments and was familiar to many foreign holidaymakers, led to more protest in other countries than the many human victims until then.¹²⁹⁹ The Serbian nationalists took little notice of the international criticism. If necessary they would build a more beautiful and older Dubrovnik, except that it would be renamed Niksic on Sea, according to cynical comments on the Western indignation.¹³⁰⁰

The attacks on Vukovar and Dubrovnik prompted the EC ministers to decide to abandon their neutral position on the conflict.¹³⁰¹ Carrington observed that mainly because of the attacks on Dubrovnik, the EC ministers 'were getting very short tempered'.¹³⁰² He also spoke himself of 'the distastefulness of the fuss being made about historical buildings while ignoring the usually considerable human suffering'.¹³⁰³ In a statement made on 27 October, the EC ministers said that the repeated attacks on Dubrovnik had given the lie to the assertion that the JNA only went into action to liberate

Volkskrant, 20/11/91; 'Vukovar is veranderd in een hoop stenen en stof' (Vukovar transformed into a pile of stones and dust), *de Volkskrant*, 21/11/91 (with photos), 'Vukovar', *de Volkskrant*, 30/11/91 (photos); 'Federale legertop gaf geen order tot aanval Dubrovnik' (Federal army commanders order attack on Dubrovnik), *de Volkskrant*, 09/12/91; Nevenka Tromp-Vrkic, 'Alle partijen zijn schuldig aan verwoesting van Dubrovnik' (All the parties to blame for destruction of Dubrovnik), *de Volkskrant*, 14/12/91; 'Honderden doden bij slag om Dubrovnik' (Hundreds die in battle for Dubrovnik), *Trouw*, 03/10/91; 'Vukovars patiënten verbleven in kelders' (Vukovar's patients have to stay in cellars), *de Volkskrant*, 18/12/91; "Beneden ons brandt Dubrovnik" (Below us Dubrovnik is burning), *Trouw*, 05/10/91; 'Honderden monumenten in puin' (Hundreds of historic buildings in ruins), *Trouw*, 09/10/91; 'Dubrovnik van alle kanten onder vuur; bewoners vluchten' (Dubrovnik under fire from all sides: residents flee), *Trouw*, 18/10/91; 'Felle strijd bij Dubrovnik' (Fierce fighting at Dubrovnik), *Trouw*, 21/10/91; 'Strijd op alle fronten' (Fighting on all fronts), *Trouw*, 24/10/91; 'EG stelt Servië nieuw ultimatum' (EC delivers Serbia new ultimatum), *Trouw*, 29/10/91; 'EG-waarnemers weg uit Dubrovnik' (EC observers leave Dubrovnik), *Trouw*, 12/11/91; 'Kroatische regering vreest wraakzucht Serviërs in Vukovar' (Croatian government fears Serbs' lust for revenge in Vukovar), *Trouw*, 18/11/91; Nicole Lucas, 'Na Vukovar is de haat alleen maar groter' (After Vukovar the hatred is all the greater), *Trouw*, 19/11/91; 'Eerste vluchtelingen uit Dubrovnik komen aan in haven Brindisi' (First Dubrovnik refugees arrive in Brindisi harbour), *Trouw*, 20/11/91; 'Barbarij gemeld in en om Vukovar' (Barbarism reporte in and around Vukovar), *Trouw*, 21/11/91; 'Kindermoord Vukovar: een verzinsel' (Murdered children in Vukovar: a fabrication), *Trouw*, 22/11/91; 'Dubrovnik: parel en verzetshaard' (Dubrovnik: pearl and centre of resistance), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/10/91; 'Oude stad van Dubrovnik onder vuur' (Old city of Dubrovnik under fire), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/11/91; 'In Vukovar heerst nog steeds geen rust' (Still no peace in Vukovar) and 'Vukovar', *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/11/91; 'Vukovar bestaat niet meer', 'Serviërs: Vukovar is bevrijd van fascisme' (Vukovar has been freed from fascism) and 'Vukovar', *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/11/91; Vukovar, *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/11/91 (photos); Rieke Leenders, 'De kracht van het belegerde Dubrovnik', (The strenght of besieged Dubrovnik) *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/11/91; 'Dubrovnik in brand na beschieting' (Dubrovnik burns after shelling), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/12/91; Peter Michielsen, 'Lot van Dubrovnik extra navrant omdat het geen enkel doel dient' (Dubrovnik's fate particularly distressing because it serves no purpose), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/12/91.

¹²⁹⁴Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 243.

¹²⁹⁵ Payam Akhavan, 'Preface', in: Akhavan and Howse (eds.), *Yugoslavia*, p. xxiv.

¹²⁹⁶ Cf. Tanner, *Croatia*, pp. 265.

¹²⁹⁷ See e.g. 'Het is onze stad, ons land' (It is our city, our country), *Trouw*, 21/10/91.

¹²⁹⁸ See e.g. Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, pp. 60; Tanner, *Croatia*, pp. 261-263; Russell, *Prejudice*, pp. 222 and 234; Confidential interview (14). The memories of it still persist. See e.g. Nell Westerlaken, 'Een geteisterde stad herleeft' (A ravaged town comes back to life), *de Volkskrant*, 23/09/00.

¹²⁹⁹ For biting comments on this see e.g. Almond, *War*, p. 228.

¹³⁰⁰ Sreten Vujovic, 'An Uneasy View of the City', Popov (ed.), *Road*, pp. 131-132.

¹³⁰¹ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 15.

¹³⁰² ABZ, DIE/ARA/01232, EG/Joegoslavië September-October 1991, Van Schaik 1036 to Van den Broek, 29/10/91.

¹³⁰³ ABZ, DIE/ARA/01233, EG/Joegoslavië, November 1991, Van Schaik 1144 to Van den Broek, 12/11/91. Cf. Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 241: 'The fixation of the West with Dubrovnik's old buildings, at a time when the east Slavonian town of Vukovar was being bombed literally out of existence, smacked of Western cynicism at its worst.'

besieged barracks or to protect the Serbian population.¹³⁰⁴ Less than seven per cent of the population of Dubrovnik was Serbian.¹³⁰⁵

The shelling of Dubrovnik and Vukovar led to the decision of the EC ministers eventually to send a signal to Serbia. Furthermore, after the failure of the Yugoslavia Conference, which had forced it into a more or less neutral position, the EC no longer needed to restrain itself. Spurred on by Van den Broek,¹³⁰⁶ the EC ministers agreed on 28 October at a ministerial lunch in Brussels on restrictive measures against the parties in the Yugoslav conflict who were unwilling to cooperate in its solution. This referred to Serbia and the federation, which was given until 5 November to arrive at a more positive position on the Yugoslavia Conference.

In consultation with the Committees for Foreign Affairs and Defence in parliament on 28 October, the Dutch parliament appeared to agree with the less neutral EC position. It was clear from the contributions of the parliamentary committees that an oil embargo and freezing the federal bank accounts would be approved by the Dutch parliament.¹³⁰⁷ Doubts were expressed on its feasibility. Therefore Eisma (D66) asked whether the Dutch Marine could contribute to its enforcement.¹³⁰⁸

Although there was now a prospect of a clear step against Serbia, it was actually a sign of weakness. The sanctions were a substitute for the deployment of military resources, which the EC member states were not prepared for.¹³⁰⁹ After the EC had exhausted the political and diplomatic resources, only economic weapons remained. And even then it remained to be seen to what extent the Security Council would stand behind it, in view of the attitude of China and the Soviet Union. The EC actually hoped that its sanction measures would be adopted by the Security Council.

At least, so it seemed. The shift of the centre of gravity of the involvement with Yugoslavia from the EC to the UN made it possible for France and Great Britain in particular to play a double game, however. As president of the EC, the Netherlands furthermore found itself in an awkward position through the increasing involvement of the Security Council, because it was not a member of the Council and could therefore not directly influence the decision making process. The Maastricht Treaty, which was to be concluded in December, determined that member states of the European Union who were members of the Security Council should consult with the other member states and keep them fully informed. Furthermore, they would be obliged to defend the positions adopted by the Union, albeit with observance of their responsibilities under the UN Charter.¹³¹⁰ Even after that treaty had come into effect, this stipulation was far from always adhered to.¹³¹¹ Not to mention beforehand.

On the same day that the EC ministers had taken their decision to impose sanctions, Carrington spoke in New York with the five permanent members of the Security Council. The British permanent representative David Hannay did not wish his Dutch counterpart Van Schaik to be present.¹³¹² In the next meeting of the three EC members in the Security Council - Belgium, France and the United Kingdom - Van Schaik was also not allowed to attend, this time because the French permanent representative opposed it. Furthermore, the Frenchman managed to arrange that he would be the one to inform Van Schaik of what was discussed. The French ambassador had instructions from Paris no to cooperate in the creation of a resolution on selective sanctions, while France had agreed to do so within

¹³⁰⁴ 'EG veroordeelt Joegoslavisch leger' ('EC condemns Yugoslavian army'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/10/91. See also Libal, *Limits*, p. 58.

¹³⁰⁵ Bennett, *Collapse*, p. 169.

¹³⁰⁶ Helmut Hetzel, "In zwei Monaten entscheiden wir über die Anerkennung", *Die Presse*, 18/10/91; Both, *Indifference*, p. 127-128.

¹³⁰⁷ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 15.

¹³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹³⁰⁹ Interview H. Van den Broek, 02/12/99.

¹³¹⁰ Marie-Claude Smouts, 'Political aspects of peace-keeping operations', Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, p. 27.

¹³¹¹ See e.g. Marie-Claude Smouts, 'Political aspects of peace-keeping operations', Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, p. 28.

¹³¹² ABZ, DIE/ARA/01232, EC/Yugoslavia September-October 1991, Van Schaik 1036 to Van den Broek, 29/10/91.

the EC. This created the impression that double agendas were being used, but there was little that Van Schaik could do.¹³¹³

Van Schaik did succeed on 31 October in organizing a discussion of the permanent representatives of the EC with Vance. Perez de Cuellar's envoy did not create the impression at the time that he was aware of any urgency. He said that the keywords were now 'patience' and 'perseverance' and he thought that 'seven weeks of negotiation in the Yugoslav crisis, in view of the problems, could not be considered a long time'. He also felt that it could still take 'considerable time' before the JNA would realize a Greater Serbia.¹³¹⁴

On 8 November the EC announced the sanctions against Yugoslavia on which the ministers had decided in principle on 28 October. These were the suspension and cancellation of the cooperation agreement and the ECCS agreement; the reintroduction of quantitative limitations for the import of textile products; scrapping Yugoslavia from the general preferential system; and suspension of support within the framework of PHARE (Pologne Hongrie: Aide à la Restructuration Economique, to which Yugoslavia was admitted on 4 July 1990). The Security Council would be requested to investigate the possibility of an oil embargo, because Russia provided a large part of the Serbian energy requirement. It was announced that the sanction measures would later be annulled for cooperative republics.

The abandonment of the EC's neutral position in the conflict was to have significant implications. Making a distinction between the constituent republics against which sanctions were and were not imposed would mean the de facto recognition of the separate constituent republics.¹³¹⁵ It was effectively the EC taking leave of Yugoslavia as an entity. As the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Samaras said: 'We are pronouncing the patient dead before he has died!'¹³¹⁶

On 2 December the distinction between the republics became a fact when the EC, on the advice of the Dutch presidency, took 'positive compensating measures' for the sanctions towards the 'cooperative' republics Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia. The sanctions were otherwise mainly a political signal. Little effect was to be expected in the short term. Serbia was already fairly economically self-sufficient in 1991, and there were record grain and potato harvests in that year in the republic. The European Council of Ministers also expressly commented that the distinction in the sanctions 'in no way prejudged the recognition of republics'.¹³¹⁷ Like the EC, Washington announced sanctions, albeit not selective, but against all republics.

Peace after Vukovar

In the weekend of 9 and 10 November 1991, the rump presidium in Belgrade and Tudjman requested the UN to provide a peace-keeping force. Milosevic had prepared the letter containing this request in the greatest secrecy with Jovic and Branko Kostic, the Montenegrin chairman of the rump presidium. To prevent obstruction by the Croatian permanent representative of Yugoslavia, Darko Silovic, to the UN, use was even made of the unconventional method of sending the letter through the Romanian ambassador to the United Nations.¹³¹⁸ What were the reasons for the leaders in both Belgrade and Zagreb to take this step? First Belgrade. On 8 November, the international community finally seemed to have taken the two steps to which the Serbian president had proved to be sensitive between 1991 and 1995: a threat of sanctions and a possible American military intervention.

¹³¹³ ABZ, DIE/ARA/01232, EC/Yugoslavia September-October 1991, Van Schaik 1049 to Van den Broek, 31/10/91.

¹³¹⁴ ABZ, DIE/ARA/01233, EG/Joegoslavië, November 1991, Van Schaik 1069 to Van den Broek, 01/11/91.

¹³¹⁵ This consequence was also raised for discussion in the Dutch Ministerial Council, objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting, 25/10/91. Cf. Maarten Lak, 'The involvement of the European Community in the Yugoslav crisis during 1991', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 180.

¹³¹⁶ ABZ, DIE/ARA/01233, EC/Yugoslavia, November 1991, Nieman 298 to Van den Broek, 05/11/91.

¹³¹⁷ Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 70.

¹³¹⁸ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 408. See also Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage*, p. 487.

It was often said that sanctions would not harm Milosevic. An argument put forward was that the Serbian president and his supporters would feel nothing personally, and on the contrary they would actually be better off because of smuggling. Furthermore, there would often be huge flaws in the implementation of the sanctions by the international community. And finally sanctions would only strengthen the Serbs in their nationalism and make them rally behind the great leader Milosevic.¹³¹⁹

All this may contain a kernel of truth, but Milosevic himself thought otherwise. Besides nationalistically motivated voters, his electoral support consisted largely of people who had voted for him because he promised not to erode the communist facilities that they profited from: civil servants, soldiers, pensioners, officials who were sensitive to his promise that they could not be fired, etc.¹³²⁰ As will be evident on other occasions, Milosevic feared that sanctions might erode his electoral basis and encourage social unrest.¹³²¹ It has already been seen that the war in Croatia was certainly less popular in Serbia than was supposed in other countries. In any case, the JNA had great difficulty filling its units. The Serbian economy was in a very poor state. After the economic and financial problems of the 1980s, the Serbian economy was heavily hit by the effective collapse of Yugoslavia. According to some, Milosevic had started the war against Croatia partly to divert attention from the economic problems of Serbia, for which he had no solution.¹³²² The war had sapped the Serbian economy even more, however.

By the end of October the waiting times at petrol stations in Belgrade had risen to four hours as a consequence of the suspension of the oil supply by the Croatian authorities.¹³²³ There were rumours that petrol would soon be rationed. With the prospect of winter, hardship loomed. It was not for nothing that Milosevic organized elections in these years - in 1990, 1992 and 1993 - always in December, shortly before the winter, so that the people would not yet discount the problems with the heating in their voting behaviour.¹³²⁴ Milosevic's wife Mira Markovic wrote at the end of 1993 that the winter in recent years in Yugoslavia was not simply a meteorological phenomenon, but, as she called it, also a social phenomenon.¹³²⁵ A political phenomenon would have been a more satisfactory description. Furthermore, despite Greater-Serbian ideas, there was a traditional arrogance among the Serbs towards the Serbs outside Serbia, who were known as the *prečani*,¹³²⁶ which was fuelled during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. The assistance to the Serbian 'brothers' and the flow of Serbian Displaced Persons, first from Croatia and later from Bosnia, implied a heavy burden on the economy of Serbia, as Mira Markovic would not tire of writing in her published diaries.¹³²⁷ The question was how long the population of Serbia would be prepared to make sacrifices and - as a consequence of sanctions - take even heavier sacrifices into the bargain.¹³²⁸

The EC's decision to impose sanctions on 8 November came unexpectedly for Milosevic. Even after the first reports of possible selective sanctions by the EC, he incorrectly continued to assume that such restrictive measures could be imposed only through the UN. Should the EC wish to persist, he

¹³¹⁹ See e.g. Henk Hirs, 'Servië vreest isolement niet' ('Serbia not afraid of isolation'), *Trouw*, 05/08/91; 'Weinig kans op succesvolle boycot van EG tegen Servië' ('Little chance of a successful EC boycott of Serbia'), *de Volkskrant*, 07/11/91; Peter Michielsen, 'Mislukking vredesoverleg ligt ook aan EG' ('EC also to blame for failure of peace talks'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/11/91; 'Wanhoopsdaad' ('Act of despair'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/11/91; Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 157.

¹³²⁰ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 174; interview S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

¹³²¹ For Milosevic's already existing fear that the workers would turn their backs on him see Jovic, *Dani*, p. 130 (25/03/90).

¹³²² Cf. Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 54.

¹³²³ Nicole Lucas, 'Serviërs vrezen koude winter. Oliekort kan generaals dwingen tot onderhandelen' ('Serbs fear severe winter. Oil shortage could force generals to negotiate'), *Trouw*, 23/10/91.

¹³²⁴ Cf. Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 134.

¹³²⁵ Markovic, *Night*, p. 141 (13/11/93).

¹³²⁶ Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 296.

¹³²⁷ Mira Markovic did so in her diaries published between December 1992 and July 1994 in the fortnightly magazine *Duga*. They were later published under the title *Noc i dan*. This book appeared in an English translation as *Night & Day. A Diary, December 1992-July 1994*. Reference will be made to the English translation below. *Night*, pp. 56 (04/05/93), 74 (14/06/93), 75 (18/06/93), 96 (05/08/93), 108 (02/09/93), 114 (11/09/93), 119-120 (27/09/93).

¹³²⁸ Cf. Henk Hirs, 'Vredesbeweging in Belgrado machteloos' ('Belgrade peace movement powerless'), *Trouw*, 28/11/91.

was counting on the orthodox Greece to act within the EC for its 'brother' Serbia and block any negative economic steps that might be proposed. Milosevic had made a serious miscalculation. Even worse, after the EC had announced the sanctions, signals came that three other assumed supporters of Serbia, namely the Soviet Union, China and Romania, would not oppose UN sanctions. The invitation from Belgrade to the UN to send in Blue Helmets was partly an attempt to avoid the imposition of at least these sanctions.¹³²⁹

A second explanation for the willingness to end the war lay in the almost paranoid attitude of the JNA command, in particular Kadijevic, towards the West. This attitude of JNA general mostly gave the international community great problems. This time Kadijevic's distrust worked to the benefit of UN envoy Vance. After the failure of the peace conference in The Hague, and therefore the increased probability of international recognition of Croatia, the political and military command in Belgrade took account of an internationalization of the conflict.¹³³⁰ In view of the developments in the Soviet Union itself, the JNA could not expect help from Moscow in such an eventuality. The JNA command thought it had little to fear from the European powers. They rightly concluded that the WEU was not in a position to take a hard line. The JNA analysis was that it would be different if the United States was to come to their assistance.¹³³¹ The American military action in the Gulf War had made a deep impression on the Serbs.¹³³² And on each occasion during the conflicts in the first half of the 1990s, a credible threat of an American intervention would move the Serbian leaders in Belgrade to an accommodating attitude.¹³³³

A NATO summit took place in Rome on 8 November at which the Alliance's Strategic Concept was adopted. This strategy assumed that it could no longer be predicted, as it could during the Cold War, where the security threat for the alliance came from. The risks were 'multi-faceted in nature and multi-directional, which makes them hard to predict and assess'.¹³³⁴ One month later, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council was set up, which made clear that the NATO had reserved a task for itself in maintaining European security out-of-area. However, NATO was not yet ready for intervention in Yugoslavia. A few days before the meeting in Rome, the Secretary-General of the alliance, Manfred Wörner, had said that it was by no means certain whether his organization ever should or could intervene in internal conflicts.¹³³⁵ In Rome, the NATO therefore restricted itself to applauding the efforts of the EC, CSCE and NATO.¹³³⁶

However, the wrong impression was created in leadership circles in Belgrade as if the *Rapid Reaction Force* that was discussed on 8 November at the Rome summit was associated with a shady NATO plan to intervene in Yugoslavia.¹³³⁷ Kadijevic in particular deduced from reports of an emphasis at the NATO summit that force projection would be more important than territorial defence in future alliance strategy, that NATO was already in the process of preparing such a military intervention.¹³³⁸

The JNA's enthusiasm for the war in Croatia had considerably cooled in the meantime because of the long time required to seize Vukovar. The JNA had achieved less than expected militarily. There were rumours of corruption, nepotism and incompetence in the army. The morale within the JNA had plummeted so far and the scale of desertion and mutiny was so considerable that November 1991 was

¹³²⁹ABZ, DEU/ARA/00408. Fietelaars 412 to Van den Broek, 12/11/91.

¹³³⁰ See e.g. Jovic cited in Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 197.

¹³³¹ Ramet, *Babel*, p. 244.

¹³³² Fouad Ajami, *Beyond Words*, Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 152.

¹³³³Cf. Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 160.

¹³³⁴ Cited in Shaw, *Germany*, p. 14.

¹³³⁵Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 155.

¹³³⁶ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 12, p. 3.

¹³³⁷ Zametica, *Conflict*, p. 65.

¹³³⁸ Gompert, '*Serbia*', p. 36 n. 1; David C. Gompert, 'The United States and Yugoslavia's Wars', Ullman (ed.), *World*, p. 144 n. 8.

deemed to be the most critical month in the existence of the Yugoslav army.¹³³⁹ Various operations had to be cancelled in that month because of morale problems.¹³⁴⁰ In those days, reservists in Belgrade demanded recognition that they were being sent into a war as opposed to, as the official line claimed, 'on exercise'. Furthermore they demanded guarantees that they would be relieved at the front.¹³⁴¹ Reservists in Cacak shot at police troops from Belgrade when they arrived to collect them, after which the police fell back.¹³⁴² A survey held at the beginning of December, proved that sixty per cent of the Serbs wanted peace in the first place.¹³⁴³ In December, the Serbian government found itself forced by personnel shortages to scrap the 45 day maximum duration of consecutive service at the front for reservists, which was introduced to reduce resistance to service. After that, reservists were required to serve for six months at the front.¹³⁴⁴

During the war in Croatia, the division between the political (Milosevic and Jovic) and the military (Kadijevic and Adzic) command in Belgrade persisted. It irritated the political leaders greatly that the JNA had such difficulty in moving away from the option of all-out war in Croatia. The army command was harming the international position of Serbia in this way. Furthermore, because the JNA did not withdraw immediately at the start of the conflict in the 'Serbian' parts of Croatia, much military equipment fell into Croatian hands during the barracks war. The political leaders accused Kadijevic of losing the war because he had not transformed the army in good time into a pure Serbian organization, so that there were now so many morale problems. Kadijevic thought that the political leadership put insufficient force behind the mobilization.¹³⁴⁵ In late October, Jovic and Milosevic started to have enough of Kadijevic's attitude. In their eyes Kadijevic was increasingly reproaching the politicians, while he military accomplished little.¹³⁴⁶ Kadijevic, who had never been a decisive officer, appeared to collapse psychologically under the pressure of the war in Croatia.¹³⁴⁷ An attempt by Milosevic and Jovic to sideline Kadijevic and replace him with Adjutant Colonel Vuk Obradovic stranded because of resistance from Adzic, however.¹³⁴⁸ Attempts by Mira Markovic to push Kadijevic aside with a coup had equally little success.¹³⁴⁹ On 25 October, matters developed into a violent quarrel between Kadijevic and Adzic on the one hand and Milosevic and Jovic on the other, in which Kadijevic threatened to set the army on the two political leaders if it received no more reservists. Jovic said that if Kadijevic no longer accepted the high command he had better go home.¹³⁵⁰ On 2 November, Jovic discussed with Milosevic that continuation of the war would lead increasingly to large-scale mobilizations in Serbia, which would be 'completely counterproductive to our policy'.¹³⁵¹ On 30 October, Milosevic blocked a plan of Kadijevic to attempt to liberate the barracks in Croatia by overwhelming force.¹³⁵² Kadijevic and Adzic finally got Milosevic's message. They were neither able nor

¹³³⁹Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 140. On the increasing problems of the JNA see also Ewoud Nysingh, 'Joegoslavisch leger kan oorlog niet beslissen' ('Yugoslavian army cannot determine outcome of war'), *de Volkskrant*, 26/10/91.

¹³⁴⁰ Norman Cigar, 'The Serbo-Croatian War, 1991', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 78.

¹³⁴¹ Ofelija Backovic & Milos Vasic & Aleksandar Vasovic, 'Who Wants to be a Soldier? The call-up crisis - an analytical overview of media reports', Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 339.

¹³⁴² Ofelija Backovic & Milos Vasic & Aleksandar Vasovic, 'Who Wants to be a Soldier? The call-up crisis - an analytical overview of media reports', Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 339.

¹³⁴³ 'Kroatië en Servië ruilen gevangenen uit', ('Croatia and Serbia exchange prisoners'), *de Volkskrant* 11/12/91. For similar surveys see Ofelija Backovic & Milos Vasic & Aleksandar Vasovic, 'Who Wants to be a Soldier? The call-up crisis - an analytical overview of media reports', Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 339.

¹³⁴⁴ Ulrike Rudberg, 'Kabinet Servië valt na interne ruzie' ('Serbian government falls after internal quarrel'), *de Volkskrant*, 13/12/91.

¹³⁴⁵ Cf. Jovic, *Dani*, pp. 385-387 and 402.

¹³⁴⁶ Jovic, *Dani*, pp. 392 and 401-402.

¹³⁴⁷ Mamula, *Slucaj*, p. 216; Jovic, *Dani*, p. 387.

¹³⁴⁸ Mamula, *Slucaj*, p. 215.

¹³⁴⁹ Mamula, *Slucaj*, pp. 224-227; Brey, *Logik*, pp. 121-122.

¹³⁵⁰ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 403.

¹³⁵¹ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 407.

¹³⁵² Jovic, *Dani*, p. 407.

permitted to win the war against Croatia. On 22 October and again on 7 November, Kadijevic wrote to the state presidium that it was time to take the plunge on the desired geographical borders of the new Yugoslavia.¹³⁵³

While the JNA had to contend with considerable personnel and political problems, the Croatian National Guard, which started as a sort of gendarmerie but had developed into an army, grew vigorously. Whereas the guard had only four brigades at the start of the war, in October there were already 35.¹³⁵⁴ And they continued to expand. At the start of 1992, the Croatian army would have two-hundred thousand men, or 4.8 per cent of the Croatian population, in, by that time, 64 brigades.¹³⁵⁵

The guard was also becoming ever better equipped because of the equipment that had fallen into Croatian hands thanks to the siege of the JNA barracks. Kadijevic had considerable problems, not only with the loss of equipment, but also with the fact that approximately thirty thousand JNA soldiers were confined to their barracks as a consequence of Croatian blockades.¹³⁵⁶

According to the Dutch ambassador in Belgrade, Fietelaars, the Greater-Serbian ambitions as a consequence of the military setback in November 1991 had meanwhile been reduced to 'a Serbia-Minor of unexpectedly minimal dimensions and even less prosperity'.¹³⁵⁷

That 'Serbia-Minor' should at least include the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, according to Belgrade. After the Croatian and Muslim representatives had accepted a declaration of sovereignty in the Bosnian parliament on 15 October, the Bosnian Serbs made an appeal to Belgrade for protection. On 9 and 10 November they voted in a referendum against the sovereignty of Bosnia. In the four wars that Milosevic conducted with parts of (former) Yugoslavia at the end of the twentieth century, he always made sure that he never had more than one opponent at a time. Now that a conflict over Bosnia-Herzegovina was on the horizon, it was time to end the war in Croatia.

A similar consideration applied to the other great nationalist of the former Yugoslavia: President Tudjman of Croatia. He also made claims on parts of Bosnia. Between 15 October and 12 November Bosnian-Croatian nationalists held three meetings with the knowledge of the authorities in Zagreb, which resulted in the decision that Croatia should realize its 'age-old dream' of a Greater Croatia. Tudjman also therefore needed to free troops and weapons. However, this was not possible as long as the war in Croatia itself continued. The Croatian commander, General Anton Tus, could at the time not even free up additional weapons for the heavily beleaguered Vukovar.

The months of Serbian siege had in the meantime given Vukovar a significance that was out of proportion. It would have been much better militarily for the JNA to have gone around the city. Now it had brought the offensive in the direction of Zagreb to a standstill. Milosevic and the JNA could not end the war in Croatia without considerable loss of face if Vukovar was not taken. Tudjman must also have understood that. Observers do not rule out that a silent pact existed between Tudjman and Milosevic that the fall of the city was a condition for a ceasefire.¹³⁵⁸

On 12 November, the EC Ministers of Foreign Affairs decided to request the Security Council to consider the idea of a UN peacekeeping force, which was put forward several days earlier by Milosevic and Tudjman. Meanwhile, the EC dispatched Carrington to Yugoslavia to assess the chances of an agreement.

Shortly after receiving signals from Belgrade and Zagreb on the willingness to accept a UN peace mission, Vance also left for Yugoslavia accompanied by Sir Murrack I. Goulding, the UN Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to investigate the possibilities of a UN operation. On 16 November Vance and Goulding flew first to the Netherlands. They spoke there with

¹³⁵³ Kadijevic, *Vien*, p. 141-143.

¹³⁵⁴ Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 187.

¹³⁵⁵ Ozren Zunec, 'Democracy in the 'Fog of War': Civil Military Relations in Croatia', in: Danopoulos & Zirker (eds.), *Relations*, p. '220.

¹³⁵⁶ Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 160; Wijnaendts, *Kroniek*, pp. 101, 124-125 and 142.

¹³⁵⁷ ABZ, DIE/ARA/01233, EC/Joegoslavië, November 1991, Fietelaars 406 to Van den Broek, 03/11/91.

¹³⁵⁸ Tanner, *Croatia*, pp. 266 and 268.

Van den Broek, who told them that he thought that a peace operation was necessary. They then flew on to Belgrade. Various events made them realize that they should have no illusions about the nature of the conflict. The two UN diplomats arrived on 19 November, as Vukovar was falling.

The three-month siege of Vukovar was one of the clearest illustrations that perhaps both parties were lashing out in the Serbian-Croatian conflict, but that there was one, the Serbs, who struck the hardest. As the Montenegrin Major Veselin Sljivancanin, commander of the military police of the mechanized guard, said: 'And if they fire as much as a single shot, we strike back hard.'¹³⁵⁹ It made an indelible impression on the outside world that the Serbian mayor of Vukovar, Slavko Dokmanovic, and Major Sljivancanin granted Cyrus Vance and the International Red Cross no access to the hospital. 261 patients and medical personnel were later taken away in buses 'for questioning' and - as was to be revealed only in the autumn of 1992 - executed in the nearby village of Ovcara.¹³⁶⁰ Seselj was also ordered to execute wounded people after the fall of the city. According to a Serbian security officer in Vukovar, this instruction came from 'a particularly popular politician', which was an implied reference to Milosevic.¹³⁶¹ In total, 2642 Croats lost their lives in the siege of Vukovar and in the days following its capture.¹³⁶²

The exact scale of the tragedy of Vukovar was not yet clear to them, but Vance and Goulding could at least suspect that serious events were taking place there at the time of their visit to Yugoslavia. Shortly after their arrival, the British Undersecretary-General of the UN met a JNA officer whom he had known as a military observer in the war between Iraq and Iran in 1988, and whom he had gained great respect for at the time. When the soldier told Goulding that the Yugoslav army was supposed to be using flame-throwers to flush 'the rats' from the cellars of Vukovar, Goulding immediately had an impression of the problems that could be expected in a peace operation in Yugoslavia.¹³⁶³ The Serbian refusal to allow Vance and Goulding to visit the hospital in, the since then captured, Vukovar, confirmed the impression of a particularly dirty war.

Meanwhile, the position of Vance and Goulding went down well with Milosevic. They left open the possibility that UN troops would not be stationed along the border between Croatia and Serbia but along the existing front lines, so that the UN would in fact be preserving the status quo. In other words: The Croatian areas occupied by the Serbs would not have to be surrendered.

In this way, the UN was offering Milosevic more than he had bargained for. The Serbian president was, as was already apparent at the beginning of October in The Hague, prepared if necessary to give up the Serbs in Croatia in order to normalize relations with Croatia.¹³⁶⁴ He would then content himself with the rump Yugoslavia, consisting of Serbia, Montenegro and (parts of) Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia. One month later, in early November, Milosevic attempted to persuade the Krajina Serbs to accept a special status for their communities within Croatia. In so doing, Milosevic was no longer supporting territorial claims of the Serbs in Croatia. The Serbs in Croatia, whom he and his supporters had first stirred up to fight, were now suddenly told that they effectively had to rely on their own resources.¹³⁶⁵

¹³⁵⁹ Nicole Lucas, 'Om half twee klinkt het eerste schot', *Trouw*, 10/10/91.

¹³⁶⁰ As an appendix to a report of 19 January 1993 in response to the exposure of a mass grave near Vukovar, Physicians for Human Rights attached a list containing 294 names of missing persons from the hospital and the surroundings, United Nations, S/25274, Appendix II, Appendix D; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 194. See also Dusko Doder, 'Red Cross caught in Yugoslavia crossfire', *The Toronto Star*, 04/12/91; Blaine Harden, 'Serbs Accused of '91 Croatia Massacre', *The Washington Post*, 26/01/93; 'Massacre in Vukovar', *The Guardian*, 26/01/93; Roger Cohen, 'Tribunal indicts 3 Serbia Officers', *The New York Times*, 10/11/95.

¹³⁶¹ Williams & Cigar, *War Crimes*, IV.A.

¹³⁶² Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 278.

¹³⁶³ Shawcross, *Evil*, pp. 62-63.

¹³⁶⁴ Cf. Obrad Kestic, 'Defeating 'Greater Serbia', Building Greater Milosevic', Danopoulos & Messas (eds.), *Crises*, p. 61.

¹³⁶⁵ 'Servië bereid tot concessies om overleg te redder. Druk op Serviërs in Kroatië ('Pressure on Serbs in Croatia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/11/91; 'Serbia: geen afscheiding minderheden' ('Serbia: no separation of minorities'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/11/91; 'President laat Servische minderheden in de steek' ('President leaves Serbian minority in the lurch') and Ulrike

There are other indications that the Serbs in Krajina and the attempt to conquer the Serbian regions in Croatia were 'a relative sideshow' for Milosevic.¹³⁶⁶ At the end of February 1991, Mesic observed to Milosevic's assistant Jovic that he did not understand the Serbian leadership's policy in Belgrade with regard to the Serbs in Croatia. According to Mesic, this issue could only be solved at the negotiating table, because the ratio of Serbs in Croatia to Croats was one to nine. Mesic said to Jovic that Serbian policy only made sense to him if Belgrade wished to appropriate a piece of Croatian territory. Jovic then answered Mesic that the Serbian leadership in Belgrade was completely uninterested in the Croatian Serbs. What Milosevic and his supporters actually wanted was two-thirds of the territory of Bosnia-Hercegovina.¹³⁶⁷ The captured Serbian area in Croatia served Milosevic only as a pawn with which he could assure himself of Tudjman's complicity in laying his hands on areas in Bosnia-Hercegovina.¹³⁶⁸ Tudjman himself said this in so many words to Vance in mid October:

'In a tête-à-tête conversation with Vance, Tudjman stated clearly that he had reached a verbal accommodation with Milosevic under which Croatia would receive satisfaction in regard to the areas of Croatia most heavily populated by Serbs (the Krajina and eastern Slavonia), meaning that Serbia would not seek territorial adjustments there. In return, Tudjman would support Milosevic in the latter's efforts to secure satisfaction in regard to the more heavily populated Serb-populated areas in Bosnia-Hercegovina... Tudjman said that Bosnia-Hercegovina could be persuaded - that he, in fact, had already discussed it with Izetbegovic.'¹³⁶⁹

Milosevic was aware of Tudjman's personal ambitions for a Greater Croatia from their earlier discussions. However, he had to be sure that the Croatian president would actually take part of the blame for the attack on the integrity of Bosnia-Hercegovina.

As it happens, the Serbian capture of Vukovar may have strengthened Tudjman's intentions. After the fall of the city, a wave of criticism of Tudjman broke out among Croats. He was accused of consciously abandoning Vukovar, where his party did not have a large following.¹³⁷⁰ After half a year of conflict, Croatia had 6651 dead and almost fourteen thousand missing persons.¹³⁷¹ 35 cities and villages had been virtually flattened. More than two-hundred thousand houses had been destroyed, about twelve per cent of the Croatian housing stock. Approximately 605,000 people had left hearth and home. Of these, 324,000 remained in Croatia; Bosnia and Serbia each received one hundred thousand, and sixty thousand ended up in Vojvodina.¹³⁷² Forty per cent of Croatian industry had been destroyed. More than a quarter of Croatian territory was in the hands of the Serbs, mainly the regions of Knin, Banija and West and East Slavonia. Together they formed the area that on 19 December 1991 would be declared the Republika Krajina, a republic that tolerated only Serbs in its territory. Tudjman therefore needed a success somewhere else.

On 2 January 1992, when the suspension of hostilities in Croatia went into effect, Milosevic confided in Tudjman that for him the Serbian issue in Croatia was indeed a problem of a minority, not a territorial issue. One week later, on 9 January, Milosevic even promised Tudjman that he would give

Rudberg, 'Milosevic zaait tweedracht en oogst eenheid' (Milosevic sows discord and reaps unity), *de Volkskrant*, 02/11/91; Nicole Lucas, 'Ommezwaai Slobodan Milosevic: knieval of afleidingsmanoeuvre?' ('U-turn Slobodan Milosevic: a gesture of humility or a diversionary tactic?'), *Trouw*, 05/11/91; Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 89.

¹³⁶⁶ Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 144.

¹³⁶⁷ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 126; Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 82.

¹³⁶⁸ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 175.

¹³⁶⁹ Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage*, p. 483.

¹³⁷⁰ Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 248; Norman Cigar, 'The Serbo-Croatian War, 1991', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 77.

¹³⁷¹ Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 278.

¹³⁷² Weiss & Pasic, *UNHCR*, p. 44; Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 278; Bell-Fialkoff, *Cleansing*, p. 46.

up all the Croatian territory on the condition that the Croatian president was prepared to start a war in Bosnia-Hercegovina together with him.¹³⁷³

Stationing Blue Helmets along the front line in Croatia therefore suited Milosevic very well. It camouflaged his lack of interest in the area to the Serbs and it kept Tudjman under pressure. In the meantime, Milosevic could hope for a long-term impasse in Croatia, like the one in Cyprus, where UN soldiers had been stationed along the front line since 1964. Or he could hope for a plebiscite after a number of years had passed.¹³⁷⁴

At the same time, Milosevic would be able to present himself to the West as an apostle of peace by accepting Blue Helmets in the face of resistance from his Croatian Serbs, who felt betrayed, and resistance from maniacal opposition leaders in Belgrade, such as Seselj, who warned the West that if they were to intervene: '... tens of thousands of Western soldiers will perish. It will be all-out war, a war without mercy ... We will poison their food, we will poison their water. There will be no means that we will shun to oppose Western intervention.'¹³⁷⁵

After the fall of Vukovar, Milosevic had no further reason to oppose stationing a peacekeeping force in Croatia. A section of the JNA officers thought otherwise. As at the time of the end of the war in Slovenia, there were still officers who had difficulty accepting that the conflict was over. For example, General Zivota Panic, who had been responsible for the operation against the city, wanted to advance rapidly along the line of march to Zagreb set out by the JNA command in the summer of 1991. His orders were that he should capture Osijek as soon as Vukovar had fallen. He said later that in his opinion it would have been possible to be in Zagreb within two days of the fall of Vukovar. However, he was restrained by a personal order from Milosevic, who told him that it was not the intention to capture all of Croatia, but only the Serbian regions.¹³⁷⁶ Milosevic had the JNA leadership on his side. They were by then prepared to content themselves with achieving the more limited objective: occupying more than one quarter of Croatian territory. It was better to stop now that the JNA had provisionally made the maximum gain.

A pause for breath was also welcome for the Croats. The fact was that they would not be able to drive the Serbs out of their territory for the time being. The Croatian army may have proved themselves capable of attacking actions in West Slavonia in the autumn of 1991,¹³⁷⁷ but to launch a larger counteroffensive, the Croatian armed forces needed more mobility. The hastily formed armed forces could be modernized during a long-term pause in hostilities. Furthermore, it would be difficult for Zagreb to counterattack as long as the most important connecting roads (Zagreb-Karlovac-Rijeka; Zagreb-Karlovac-Zadar-Split-Dubrovnik; and Zagreb-Nova Gradiska-Vinkovci-Osijek) were constantly within range of Serbian firepower.

In brief, the time was ripe for stationing Blue Helmets. On 23 November in Geneva, Vance achieved a suspension of hostilities with Milosevic, Tudjman and Kadijevic. Croatia would immediately lift the blockades of JNA barracks and the JNA would withdraw all its units and equipment from Croatia. The ceasefire was soon violated, however. Nevertheless, in the coming weeks preparations continued for the dispatch of a peacekeeping force. On 27 November the Security Council in Resolution 721 undertook to take the necessary decisions as soon as Perez de Cuellar came with proposals for a peace operation in Yugoslavia.

¹³⁷³Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 223. See also Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 183, who writes that Milosevic and Tudjman again discussed the division of Bosnia-Hercegovina in Brussels at the beginning of January 1992.

¹³⁷⁴interview V. Jovanovic, 14/09/01. The chairman of the Serbian Renewal Movement, opposition leader Vuk Draskovic, also proposed such a referendum at the end of November to a member of the Dutch embassy staff, ABZ, DEU/ARA, 26/11/91. And later Cosic's foreign affairs adviser, Svetozr Stojanovic, would also propose the same in an interview with *Borba*, 28-30 November 1992, cited in Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 101.

¹³⁷⁵ Gwynne Dyer, 'How will it end in Yugoslavia?', *The Washington Times*, 17/11/91.

¹³⁷⁶ Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 186-187. See also Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 191.

¹³⁷⁷ See e.g. Theo Engelen, 'Strijd laait hoog op in alle omstreden gebieden in Kroatië' ('Combat flares up in all disputed areas in Croatia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/11/91.

On 2 January 1992 Vance would achieve a ceasefire in Croatia that this time would last. It would lead to the dispatch of an extensive UN peacekeeping force to the area. Vance's plan was seen by many as one of the few successes of international diplomacy in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.¹³⁷⁸ It will be clear from the above, however, that it was mainly the combatants themselves who had decided that a ceasefire was to their advantage. It was necessary not only to silence the weapons in Croatia, but at the same time to prepare for the following conflict, which would take place in Bosnia.

Meanwhile the fall of Vukovar provoked great emotion among Dutch policy makers. According to Both, in the eyes of senior Dutch Foreign Affairs officials, precisely this would move the Yugoslav crisis from a political to a moral level.¹³⁷⁹ Van Walsum drafted a memo for Van den Broek on 19 November, which unambiguously urged abandoning the policy of *even-handedness*, because otherwise the Netherlands would be overcommitted to the Serbian conquests.¹³⁸⁰

But the public in the Netherlands were not yet shown the worst pictures of Vukovar. For example, Othon Zimmermann, *Algemeen Dagblad* correspondent, took photos in Vukovar of piles of bodies. They were not printed in the newspaper.¹³⁸¹

On 21 November, the Dutch parliament held the first open debate on the situation in Yugoslavia. That took place at the request of VVD member of parliament Blaauw, who was responding to public statements of Minister Ter Beek that the Netherlands had a battalion of between 500 to 800 men ready for a UN operation. The announcements surprised Parliament. Blaauw demanded an emergency debate.¹³⁸² The members of parliament Van Traa, who reproached Blaauw for placing too much emphasis on emotion,¹³⁸³ and De Kok did not greatly appreciate the VVD member's initiative. They would have preferred to have the debate one week later, when Vance's findings with respect to the possibilities of stationing a peacekeeping force would have been known.¹³⁸⁴ The pictures of Vukovar, however, had made an impression on Blaauw, and not only on him. The liberal member of parliament compared them with West Beirut and Dresden. If this is how a city was treated, he found it difficult to speak of an internal conflict. 'Whose interior might that be?'¹³⁸⁵ He also had difficulty with the term civil war. 'This is total violence against Croats.'¹³⁸⁶ According to him it was a case of 'ordinary war between peoples'.¹³⁸⁷ The federal state of Yugoslavia had actually ceased to exist after the federal structure had been taken over entirely by Serbia.¹³⁸⁸ Van Traa did not agree with him. He felt that the fierceness of the conflict arose from the fact that it was a civil war.¹³⁸⁹ Leerling (RPF) also spoke of a civil war.¹³⁹⁰

The question of the nature of the war was partly determined by the matter of the recognition of the independence of republics that wished to separate themselves from Yugoslavia. In view of their proclamations of independence of June 1991, the first candidates for such recognition were Croatia and Slovenia, but Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were also heading increasingly in that direction.

¹³⁷⁸ See e.g. Bertram, 'Diplomacy', p. 70.

¹³⁷⁹ Both, *Indifference*, p. 129 and 138.

¹³⁸⁰ Leonard Ornstein, 'Het stratego van de experts' ('The strategy of the experts'), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, pp. 12-13.

¹³⁸¹ Interview Othon Zimmermann, 28/04/00.

¹³⁸² Radio 1, VOO, Nieuwsradio, 19/11/91, 17.05 hours.

¹³⁸³ TK, 1991-1992, Proceedings, p. 1643.

¹³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1643-1644.

¹³⁸⁵ TK, 1991-1992, Proceedings, p. 1640.

¹³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1640

¹³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1641.

¹³⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 1641.

¹³⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 1641.

¹³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1643.

Chapter 3

Recognition of Croatia and Slovenia and the significance of that for Bosnia

1. After Rome, an independent German initiative after all?

The crucial meetings of the European Community and NATO in Rome on 8 November 1991 resulted in more than a decision by the EC to impose selective sanctions and create a new strategy for the Atlantic alliance. This special EC meeting also significantly brought to the fore the issue of recognizing the independence of Croatia and Slovenia. Within the European Community, Germany had again and again pressed emphatically for recognition. In the meantime, one month had passed since Van den Broek had promised that recognition – a possible outcome of a successful International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia – would follow within two months.

After Carrington had adjourned the conference on 8 November for an indefinite period, Kohl and Genscher thought it necessary to ensure that the EC continue to pursue the course of recognition they considered to be the right one. However, they were only partially successful with their EC colleagues. In a joint declaration, the European politicians stated that recognition of republics could only be taken into consideration within the framework of a comprehensive political settlement that also embraced guarantees with regard to human rights and rights of minorities.¹³⁹¹

This position had come about mainly because the US opposed recognition without a comprehensive settlement, for two reasons, the first being the risk that the conflict might spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia, and the second, the precedent this might set for the Soviet republics.¹³⁹² However, after Carrington's suspension of the Yugoslavia conference, a comprehensive political settlement of this nature seemed further away than ever. At a press conference after the meetings in Rome, Kohl declared that time was running out: 'It's about blood and suffering, with each day the conflict continues, more lives will be lost.' Moreover, according to the German government, further delay only served to reward Serb aggression. If no breakthrough had been made in the talks on the Yugoslav crisis by the end of the year, Bonn would recognize Croatia and Slovenia. Kohl and Genscher announced that they would invite the presidents of both republics to Bonn to conduct bilateral talks in preparation of recognition.¹³⁹³ The Bonn government was particularly interested in seeing the protection of minorities regulated by law so that the EC partners would no longer have to take exception to regulations that discriminated Serbs residing there.¹³⁹⁴

Despite Kohl's clarion calls, Bonn still considered it of prime importance to bring about a decision on recognition in a European context. Bonn did not want to upset relations, especially not with the government in Paris. Kohl and Mitterrand met up on 15 November, a week after the meetings in Rome. The Federal Chancellor informed the French head of state that his government would, by hook or by crook, move to recognize Croatia and Slovenia. In the light of public opinion in Germany, he felt that he had no choice. Mitterrand was clearly unhappy with Kohl's decision, but realized that the Chancellor was not to be deterred. As such, the French President did not go beyond insisting on a joint decision by the Twelve on recognition and on guarantees that the borders of the republics be legitimized and the rights of minorities respected.¹³⁹⁵

¹³⁹¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03286. COREU from the Dutch EC presidency, 08/11/91, cpe/pres/hag 1410.

¹³⁹² ABZ, DIE/ARA/01232. EC/Yugoslavia September-October 1991, Meesman 1074 to Van den Broek, 24/10/91.

¹³⁹³ 'Bonn wil snel resultaten in Joegoslavië. Dreigement met erkenning' (Bonn wants fast results in Yugoslavia. Threat plus recognition), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/11/91; Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 142.

¹³⁹⁴ Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 961-962; Libal, *Limits*, pp. 79-80; Zeitler, *Rolle*, pp. 143 and 315.

¹³⁹⁵ Libal, *Limits*, p. 76.

Once Kohl realized that as far as Mitterrand was concerned, the lights were no longer red but had changed to amber, the German government invited a whole parade of dignitaries from the former Yugoslavia for discussions in Bonn. The idea was to synchronize watches regarding the date of recognition and to remove any remaining obstacles standing in the way of recognition. The first to visit Bonn on 22 November was the Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, who had in past months continually impressed upon Western representatives that recognition of Croatia's and Slovenia's independence would mean war in Bosnia.

German insistence on rapid recognition of the independence of republics was based on the notion that it would restrain Serb aggression. That is, it would no longer be possible to define such aggression as internal use of force. Recognition having been established, any armed actions on the part of Serbia would give rise to an international conflict. As for Slovenia, such considerations were no longer relevant. The last JNA (Yugoslavian National Army) troops had already left there in October. Almost immediately after the Rome summit, an end to hostilities in Croatia also seemed possible, since the governments in Zagreb and in Belgrade had asked for peace troops to be stationed.

If the independence of the Croatian and Slovenian republics were recognized, the same could hardly be withheld for other republics. Accordingly, Bosnia and Macedonia, likewise in pursuit of independence, appeared on the horizon. The American Ambassador in Belgrade, Zimmermann, had already warned Washington in October 1990 that Milosevic had been fostering territorial ambitions with regard to Bosnia¹³⁹⁶, long before Croatia and Slovenia had declared their independence.

In a memorandum drawn up on 26 June 1991, the day after Croatia and Slovenia had declared independence, the Eastern European Division of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out that if Yugoslavia were to break up, Bosnia-Herzegovina would, by reason of its ethnic composition, be in danger of being divided up.¹³⁹⁷ At the time of the Brioni agreement, Minister Van den Broek had gained the impression through contacts with local parties that after Slovenia not only Croatia but also Bosnia-Herzegovina ran the risk of Serb actions. This due to the strong Serb presence there¹³⁹⁸. In his 13 July COREU, a circular to the other EC capitals, Van Walsum had had in mind an alteration of the Yugoslavian internal frontiers, and particularly the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Based on press reports about an agreement between Milosevic and Tudjman regarding a Croatia-Serbia division, it was there that he expected the greatest difficulties.

It was indeed difficult to imagine how Bosnia could continue to exist if the multi-ethnic Yugoslavian Federation were to split up. Bosnia-Herzegovina was not called Yugoslavia in miniature for nothing.¹³⁹⁹ In the multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia, it was the only republic that had no dominant ethnic group. In 1991, 43.7 per cent of the then 4.4 million inhabitants called themselves Muslims, 31.4 per cent or 1.4 million Bosnians called themselves Serbs and 17.3 per cent Croats. Eight per cent of the population stated that they perceived themselves as Yugoslav or had 'no [ethnic] nationality'.¹⁴⁰⁰ Were Bosnia to disintegrate, how much more violent than in Croatia would the struggle be there? In Croatia, the war over Serb territory still had relatively clear territorial borders. The situation was different in Bosnia, where the various population groups intermingled. The question was whether the Serbs in Bosnia would take up a different stance than the Serbs in Croatia, who were striving towards autonomy

¹³⁹⁶ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 83.

¹³⁹⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081, DEU; report through COREUs regarding the opinions of the EPC (European Political Cooperation) on Yugoslavia, June-September 1991, DEU/OE memorandum, 'Yugoslavia', for the benefit of the European Council, 28-29/06/91, 26/06/91.

¹³⁹⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287, EU/GBVB/Trojka, preparation of and report on visits by Troika to Yugoslavia, July/August 1991, COREU Dutch EC presidency, 08/07/91, cpe/pres/hag 320.

¹³⁹⁹ Cf. Dusan T. Batakovic, 'Collective and Human Rights: Opposing Views from Former Yugoslavia', Baehr & Baudet & Werdmöller (eds.), *Tights*, p. 72; Van den Heuvel, 'Desintegratie', p. 153; Peternel, *Joegoslavië*, p. 24; Samary, *Déchirure*, p. 32; ABZ, 911.31 Yugoslavia. IDB report 8099/RC/90, *Joegoslavië drijft verder uiteen*, 12/11/90.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p.27. See also A. Stam. 'Zuidslavische broedertwisten. Een historische schets van het Joegoslavische nationaliteitsvraagstuk', *Oost-Europa Verkenningen* (1991)15(June), p. 19; X. Bougarel, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina - State and Communitarianism', Dyker & Vejvoda (ed.), *Yugoslavia*, p.88.

or else association with Serbia. Were they to steer the same course, the problems would be incalculable. The Croatian government had already had to wage a full-scale war against the Serbs, who made up a mere 12 per cent of the population and who lived in fairly concentrated areas. How much more difficult would it be for the Bosnian government if the Serbs – who made up 31 per cent of the population and who were dispersed throughout the area – were to entertain the same hopes?

Reactions to the German recognition plan

The Bonn government has often been reproached for Germany's decision to press for recognition. Various reasons were put forward.

The first reason cited was that it was 'fine' for Bonn to talk. Recognition created a moral responsibility to support the new states. Should Serb aggression continue, a new state could not be left in the cold. In that respect, the German drive seemed rather strange, as the German government had deemed at the time that Germany's past and its constitution prohibited a deployment of troops in crisis regions. As such, Germany itself would not have to face the possible military consequences of its viewpoint. And if the West were not prepared or in a position to send troops, then it would, at the very least, have to reconsider the weapon embargo imposed on all parts of (former)Yugoslavia by the United Nations on 25 September. The fact of the matter was that each state had the right to defend itself against external aggression.¹⁴⁰¹

Another objection to recognition was that it would shut the door on the conciliation process initiated by the EC in September 1991 with the Yugoslavia conference presided over by Lord Carrington. But that objection was hardly very strong as the peace process was at a standstill and no one knew rightly how to get it going again.¹⁴⁰² From Belgrade's viewpoint, the EC would no longer be neutral after recognition, but that was in effect no longer the case anyway and certainly not after the decision of 8 November to impose selective sanctions.

Formally speaking, recognition by the European Community could be objected to on the grounds that it was essentially up to the United Nations to make a pronouncement on the right to self-determination. Moreover, recognizing Croatia meant recognizing a state, a third of whose territory was not in government hands. Those were, in point of fact, formal objections.

However, the most important argument against Germany's pressing on with recognition was that it would not only have seriously damaged burgeoning European foreign and security policies, but would also have brought about or at the very least accelerated the war over Bosnia.¹⁴⁰³ Mitterrand and Dumas, his Minister of Foreign Affairs, later on repeatedly expressed their regret that in respect of recognition they had let themselves be led by the German government¹⁴⁰⁴, whereas Genscher always insisted that Serb aggression in Croatia would have gone on had Croatia's independence not been recognized.¹⁴⁰⁵ That claim is as specious as that of Germany's critics, who believed that 'premature' recognition imposed by Bonn resulted in the break-out of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Preparations for that war were already well underway in November and December 1991.

To verify that, it is necessary to outline the history of Bosnia. As so often in the recent history of (former)Yugoslavia, an unequivocal answer is not possible without in-depth cause and effect research. For this reason, the attention now turns to the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina, an aspect that until now has played a minor role in the text.

¹⁴⁰¹ Cf. Jonathan Eyal, 'Stop the West's Cynical Game in the Balkans', *Wall Street Journal*, 27/01/93.

¹⁴⁰² Cf. Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 66.

¹⁴⁰³ Cf. Bell, *Way*, p. 36; Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, p. 37; Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 82; Kalaitzidis, *Relations*, pp. 4 and 26. For examples of criticism see Calic, '*Jugoslawienpolitik*', p. 18.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Cf. ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Wijnaendts 217 to Kooijmans, 21/06/93; Olivier Lepick, 'French Perspectives', Danchev/Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, p. 79.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 960, 963 and 966; Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 199.

2. The history of Bosnia-Hercegovina

Bosnia under the Ottomans

‘If you want to find the truth in Bosnia, you must ignore words and examine actions, and even then, you must be careful of the conclusions you draw.’¹⁴⁰⁶

Scarcely larger than the Netherlands, the area of Bosnia-Hercegovina had known foreign domination for many centuries. After a period of independence as a kingdom, Bosnia was a distinct entity and part of the Ottoman Empire from 1463 to 1878. Shortly after Ottoman rule had been established, large sections of the population converted to Islam, but thanks to the *millet* system which sanctioned separate religious groups, there was still room for followers of other religions. For instance under this system, education was left to a large extent to these communities themselves. The Ottoman rulers did however adopt a more positive attitude towards Christian Orthodox followers than towards Catholics. The popes, despised on account of the Crusades, had always been the enemy of the Turkish Empire. Moreover, the pope in Rome was elusive, unlike the Christian Orthodox patriarch, who resided within the national borders of the Empire. In fact, orthodoxy spread under Ottoman rule. Because Roman Catholics were considered less important, the number of conversions to orthodoxy grew. Added to that, several Catholics migrated from Bosnia to Croatia and Dalmatia, while Serbs entered Bosnia where they took up vacated positions, particularly in the rural areas.¹⁴⁰⁷

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries migration helped to increase the percentage of Serbs in Bosnia from ten to forty.¹⁴⁰⁸ There had been an Orthodox bishop in Bosnia as early as 1532 and the first Orthodox church was built in Sarajevo some decades later. But even the Catholics were doing relatively well in Bosnia. The Franciscans were granted the status of *millet*, treatment that other Catholics in the Ottoman Empire did not enjoy.¹⁴⁰⁹

As a result of the ousting of followers of the Islamic faith from Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, the number of Muslims in Bosnia increased sharply in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁴¹⁰ Whilst the migration of Muslims from Serbia to Eastern Bosnia solved one problem for the adherents of the Greater Serb doctrine, it created a new one. Several Muslims leaving Serbia settled on the opposite bank of the Drina river in Eastern Bosnia. At the same time, Serbs from Eastern Bosnia moved to Serbia. In this way, an ever stronger Muslim buffer grew on the Western banks of the Drina, which then formed a divide between Serbia itself and the Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia.

Meanwhile, the consequence of the comparative tolerance shown by the Ottoman Empire towards dissidents was that no single ethnic group was numerically predominant in Bosnia. Towards the end of Turkish rule in 1878, 38.7 per cent of the population of Bosnia-Hercegovina was Islamic, 42.9 per cent Orthodox (Serb) and 18.1 per cent Catholic (Croatian).¹⁴¹¹

Conversely, century-long Turkish rule had resulted in marked socio-economic differences along ethno-religious lines.¹⁴¹² Around 1875, Bosnia's economy was dominated by agriculture. A census conducted twenty years later revealed that 88 per cent of the population was still employed in agricultural occupations.¹⁴¹³ The landowners were almost exclusively Islamites, whilst the permanent tenants – whose status was similar to that of serfs (known as *kmetovi*) – were mainly Orthodox (74 per

¹⁴⁰⁶ Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Fouad Ajami, ‘In Europe’s Shadows’, Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 64.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 22-23.

¹⁴¹⁰ Cf. Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniaks*, p. 24.

¹⁴¹¹ X. Bougarel, ‘Bosnia and Herzegovina - State and Communitarianism’, Dyker & Vejvoda (ed.), *Yugoslavia*, p. 88.

¹⁴¹² Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 17.

¹⁴¹³ Donia & Fine, *Bosnia*, pp. 75-76.

cent) and Catholic (21 per cent).¹⁴¹⁴ This inequitable distribution became the most significant bone of contention in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Bosnia. Moreover, due to this disproportionate relationship, the foundation was laid for discrepancies between towns where Muslims were present in far greater force, and rural areas in which the presence of Serbs and Croats was comparatively stronger. As late as 1991 even, 70 per cent of the Bosnian Muslims lived in the cities, as opposed to 30 or 40 per cent of the Serbs.¹⁴¹⁵ Prior to the 1992 conflict, 56 per cent of Bosnian territory was in Serb hands, although they constituted no more than 31 per cent of the population.¹⁴¹⁶

In 1875, a peasant revolt broke out against the supremacy of Islamite landlords, a revolt which soon took on the character of an Orthodox rebellion striving to form an association with Serbia. The peasants were backed by Serbia and Montenegro, who declared war on the Ottoman Empire in 1876. Initially, Serbia was backed by Russia. However, during peace negotiations in 1878 in Berlin, Russia agreed that while Bosnia-Herzegovina would be separated from the Ottoman Empire, it would also become an Austro-Hungarian protectorate.

Bosnia under Habsburg rule

The entry of the Habsburg army in Bosnia was accompanied by fierce resistance from the Muslims, who not only feared a non-Islamic regime but also a shift in their hitherto favourable socio-economic status. In a conflict lasting almost three months, a final total of 268,000 Habsburg soldiers, most of them Croats and Serbs from Krajina, had to hold their own against 93,000 Muslim volunteers. An estimated 150,000 lost their lives in this war, 5,000 of whom fell on the Austrian side.¹⁴¹⁷ In the years leading up to the First World War, close to 100,000 Muslims took refuge in Turkey¹⁴¹⁸ and several tens of thousands in Kosovo, Macedonia or Sandzak, the region in Southern Serbia and Northern Macedonia. Most left because they did not want to live under Christian rule.

However, the greater majority of Muslims soon reconciled themselves to Austrian rule, one of the reasons being that this administration kept their socio-economic status intact. The Habsburg authorities also accepted the existence of a Bosnian community, divided into Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic and Jewish socio-political blocks existing more or less independently of one another and linked only by a sense of good neighbourliness (*komsiluk*). Accepting this situation was made easier for the Austro-Hungarian authorities in that they were able to secure the right to appoint both Orthodox Christian and Roman Catholic bishops in Bosnia. The Muslim hierarchy dissociated itself from Istanbul in 1882 and the Habsburg Emperor appointed the leader of this religious community, the *Reis ul-ulema*, as well.

At the end of the nineteenth century, despite these favourable arrangements for the Dual Monarchy, the nationalist sentiment that was then becoming so prevalent in Zagreb and Belgrade began penetrating the Croat and Serb communities in Bosnia. The lower clergy were by no means last when it came to being responsible for imparting nationalistic sentiment to both Serbs and Croats.

Attempts by the representatives of the Danube Monarchy to develop an all-embracing awareness of Bosnian identity (*bosnjastvo*) in reply were largely ineffectual. If the political loyalty of Bosnian citizens was at all projected onto a level higher than their own local surroundings, the level was generally not Bosnia but external centres such as Turkey, Austria-Hungary, Belgrade or Zagreb.

At the end of the nineteenth century, members of the Orthodox and Catholic churches started to define themselves more and more categorically as Serbs and Croats, respectively, under the influence of nationalist trends beyond the Bosnian borders. At the same time, no characteristic national

¹⁴¹⁴ Donia & Fine, *Bosnia*, pp. 78-79; Bougarel, *Bosnie*, p. 28.

¹⁴¹⁵ Harry Bauer & Thomas Kimmig, 'Frieden um jeden Preis. Ein Diskussionsbeitrag zum Krieg in Bosnien und seiner Wahrnehmung in der Bundesrepublik', Stefanov & Werz (Hg.), *Bosnien*, p. 48.

¹⁴¹⁶ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 28.

¹⁴¹⁷ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 35; Donia & Fine, *Bosnia*, pp. 94-95; Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, pp. 87-88.

¹⁴¹⁸ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 140.

awareness grew among Muslims. Religious orientation remained preponderant. Lacking a Bosnian identity, individual Muslims described themselves in the first decades of the twentieth century as Serb, Croat, Yugoslav, Bosnian or as 'Turk'.¹⁴¹⁹ As Donia and Fine write: 'Muslims changed from one national identity to another with the same ease that an American might change political parties.'¹⁴²⁰ They do, however, point out that despite such public utterances, Muslims retained their own identity and frequently played a double role by taking an active part in Croat and Serb factions and in Muslim organisations.¹⁴²¹ On the other hand, the level of group consciousness among the Muslims was such that, despite individual declarations, they remained a clearly defined category in Bosnian society.¹⁴²² Differences between Muslims, Croats and Serbs manifested themselves in clothing, eating habits, house decorations and celebrations, for instance. The various groups lived primarily alongside one another. Villages were often ethnically homogenous. In the cities, there were not only separate districts for each group, centring round a church, mosque or synagogue, but also districts in which members of various ethnic entities commingled.

In response to resistance to the 'Catholic dominance' of the Habsburgers, group consciousness among the Muslims grew from 1878 onwards. In spite of the determination of the Austrian rulers not to favour Roman Catholics, the number of Croats increased during the Dual Monarchy. One consequence of this was, for example, that the percentage of Catholics in Sarajevo grew from 3.3 to 34.5 per cent between 1879 and 1910.¹⁴²³ Muslim activists seized upon the irritations of the Islamites with the Roman Catholic church's plan to consolidate their political power in Bosnia.¹⁴²⁴ As a result, the period of Austrian rule saw a rapid growth of separate Muslim organizations in almost all reaches of life.

The Serbs, and in particular the younger ones, became more radical, emphasizing their identity more and more despite attempts by the Habsburg rulers to steal a march on Serb nationalism by granting the Serbs religious and educational autonomy.

For all the Dual Monarchy's efforts to uphold the relatively harmonious relations between the ethnic groups during the Turkish period, they could not prevent the segmentation of society becoming yet more sharply outlined at the turn of the century. In the years between 1906 and 1908, one after the other, separate Muslim, Serb and Croat parties were established. When, after the adoption of a provincial constitution in 1910, a Bosnian parliament was formed, the Orthodox group won 37 seats, the Muslims 29, the Catholics 23 and the Jews one in elections in that same year. The Social Democrats were the only party not organized along ethno-religious lines. They won no seats at all.

At first, the Serb party and the landowner-dominated Muslim party collaborated in parliament, although the Serb party took the line that Bosnia-Herzegovina was Serb territory and Muslims were islamized Serbs. Croat parties likewise claimed that Bosnia was Croatian territory and that the Muslims were Croats who had converted to Islam. When Serb politicians tried to change property relations in the rural areas in 1911, the Muslim-Serb coalition was replaced by a political collaboration between Muslims and Croats. In both cases, the interests of both the Serb and the Croat coalition required that the position of the Muslim landowners not become the subject of debate.

During the short period of a Bosnian parliament under Austrian rule, various rudimentary hallmarks emerged of political life in Bosnia, the general tenor of which would continue to exist until 1992. Both Croats and Serbs needed Muslim support to secure a majority. As such, they contended that the Muslims were, in fact, part of their group, whilst at the same time laying claim to the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Muslims formed the swing factor, the group that always constituted part of the coalition. Making use of the strategic position they held in society, the Muslims tried at once to

¹⁴¹⁹ Duijzings Appendix, *Geschiedenis en berinnering in Oost-Bosnië*.

¹⁴²⁰ Donia & Fine, *Bosnia*, p. 111.

¹⁴²¹ Donia & Fine, *Bosnia*, pp. 111-112.

¹⁴²² Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 152.

¹⁴²³ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 36.

¹⁴²⁴ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 146.

safeguard their own social position and to counteract the centrifugal tendencies of the Croats towards Croatia and Serbs to Serbia. In consequence, the political Muslim leaders were not only respected for their multi-ethnic tolerance, but also criticised for political opportunism.

The 1910 constitution had been adopted after Vienna had taken a formal decision to annex the region because it feared renewed Turkish claims to Bosnia-Herzegovina. As mentioned earlier, this stirred up animosity among the Serbs in Serbia as well as in Bosnia. Serb resistance to this decision underpinned Gavrilo Princip's assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the overture to the First World War. Immediately after the assassination, riots broke out in Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia, in the course of which Croats and Muslims molested Serbs and ransacked their houses and shops. At first, police and military did not intervene.

Bosnia remained all but undamaged during the war, and the only area hard hit was Eastern Bosnia. In the early stages of the war, Serb troops sent out punitive expeditions against Muslim villages. Later on, Austrian troops did the same to Serb villages. Moreover, Austrian rulers displaced an estimated 100,000 Serbs from Eastern Bosnia to the west of the area for fear that they would otherwise come to the assistance of Serb forces on the opposite bank of the Drina. In addition, 5,000 Serb families were driven to Serbia and Montenegro. Several thousand Bosnian Serbs were interned, and most of them did not survive.¹⁴²⁵ Hundreds of Serbs were executed on suspicion of treason or espionage, sometimes, but not always, after trial. Muslims and Croats, on the other hand, enlisted – some compulsorily – with the *Schutzkorps*, the territorial defence unit deployed by the Habsburg rulers in Eastern Bosnia to guard against Serb activities thought undesirable by the Austrians. The actions taken by the corps, which would eventually number 20,000 men, occasionally ended in dreadful atrocities.¹⁴²⁶

Bosnia during the first Yugoslavia

In 1918, once the First World War, and with it Austro-Hungarian rule, had ended and Bosnia-Herzegovina had been incorporated into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, the Bosnian Serbs turned against the Muslim landowners, merchants and tradespeople, assaulting and murdering them. In February 1917, the Serb government in exile had promised each soldier five hectares of land. Attracted by these assurances, some Bosnian Serbs had volunteered. Serbs who stayed in Bosnia were encouraged by the Serb government to stop paying rent to Muslim landowners.

By the end of 1918, it seemed the day of reckoning had come. Muslim landowners and smaller Muslim peasants were evicted in favour of the Serbs, large numbers of whom had previously been employed as tenants on Muslim property. This violence and these politics of economic inequity were followed by an exodus to Turkey of approximately one million Muslims, among them almost all persons of Turkish origin.

In February 1919, the *Jugoslavenska Moslimanska Organizacija* (JMO) was set up as a political party to safeguard, where possible, the position of the remaining Muslims. Incidentally, with the exception of the Communist party, all other political parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina also operated along ethnic lines during the interbellum years. The JMO had a very steadfast following, proof of the intensity of Muslim identity.¹⁴²⁷ The JMO leader Mehmet Spaho's loyal attitude towards the federal authorities in Belgrade, and participation in various government coalitions, were instrumental in helping his party to achieve a great deal for the Muslims, such as compensation for the expropriations. The party was also fairly successful in its attempts to retain Muslim autonomy with regard to religion, education and the Islamic (*sharia*) system of law. A further political success of Spaho's was that the frontiers of Bosnia-Herzegovina were maintained when Yugoslavia was divided into administrative zones. That changed ten years later, in 1929, when King Alexander attempted to replace the regional identities with a

¹⁴²⁵ Donia & Fine, *Bosnia*, p. 118; Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 158.

¹⁴²⁶ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 163.

¹⁴²⁷ Donia & Fine, *Bosnia*, pp. 124-125.

Yugoslav consciousness. He divided Bosnia-Herzegovina into four parts, which, together with Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and the Dalmatian coast, formed a banat (province). The Muslims were in the minority in each of the four banats and were considered inferior when it came to appointments.

Mehmet Spaho died in June 1939 during the discussions on the agreement between Cvetkovic and Macek. This settlement was effected entirely without consulting the Bosnians. Large sections of Bosnia then fell to Croatia, such as Posavina, Western Herzegovina and a large part of Central Bosnia. The rest, including the area around Banja Luka, Sarajevo and Eastern Bosnia was allotted to Serbia or remained linked to Montenegro.

Bosnia in the Second World War

After the capitulation of Yugoslavia in April 1941, the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina was annexed by Ante Pavelic's 'independent' Croatia. Part of the JMO leadership opted for Ustashe rule, which promised Muslims equality and freedom of religion and education. Some Muslims also sided with the Ustashe in committing crimes against Serbs. The behaviour of the 13th Handzar (or 'Handschar' in German) SS Division was notorious. It largely comprised Muslims who were brought into action in Bosnia in 1944 against the partisans after having trained in France and Germany. The division committed atrocities against the Serbs in Northwest and Eastern Bosnia, especially in the area around Vlasenica.¹⁴²⁸ However, other Muslims protested openly against the atrocities committed by the Ustashe against the Serbs.¹⁴²⁹ Consequently, they themselves also fell victim to Ustashe terror. At the same time, Muslims were also subjected to Cetnik violence. Among the worst instances were the massacres that took place in December 1941 and January 1942 in Foca, Gorazde and Visegrad. On the bridges over the Drina, the throats of many thousands of victims were cut and their bodies then thrown into the river.¹⁴³⁰ Both Cetniks and Ustashe demonstrated a rampant fantasy when it came to devising ways of torturing and murdering.¹⁴³¹ Sexual crimes also occurred frequently.

In order to defend themselves, the Muslims entered into alliances with all parties to the conflict, even the Cetniks,¹⁴³² or else set up their own local militia known as 'green cadres'. Having said that, local relationships could change from one region to another and from one moment to another.

As the war progressed, more and more Muslims joined Tito's Partisan movement. Tito made Bosnia the operating base from which to fight for the liberation of the entire Yugoslav territory. During the Second World War in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Partisan movement always addressed the 'Serbs, Muslims and Croats'. In the view of Tito and his supporters, once it had been freed from fascism and national socialism, Bosnia would become a separate administrative entity in which the three large population groups would be treated on equal terms. The Communist party wanted Bosnia to be a separate republic after the war, serving as a buffer between the two biggest assailants in the first Yugoslavia: Croatia and Serbia. Tito believed that if Bosnia were to be divided between Croatia and Serbia, as the Cvetkovic-Macek agreement of 1939 had intended, this would have made both republics too large compared to Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovenia.

In any event, up until the end of the war, Tito's Partisan movement attracted only a few Muslims.¹⁴³³ In order to protect them from 'unwitting' Serbs – who even in the partisan movement were after Muslim blood – Muslim partisans were sometimes given Serb *noms de guerre*. Subsequently,

¹⁴²⁸ Lepre, *Division*.

¹⁴²⁹ Cf. Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, pp. 62-64.

¹⁴³⁰ Cf. Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 20.

¹⁴³¹ For examples, see Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 24.

¹⁴³² Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 188.

¹⁴³³ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 37.

the result of this camouflaging of Muslim partisans was that the number of Muslims in the communist resistance movement was underestimated.¹⁴³⁴

Because Bosnia became the nucleus in the struggle against the occupation of Yugoslavia, the number of casualties there was comparatively the largest. Realistic estimates vary from 316,000 to 382,000 dead as opposed to upwards of one million in the whole of Yugoslavia.¹⁴³⁵ By contrast, almost 300,000 people had lost their lives in Croatia during the Second World War, and about 150,000 in Serbia.¹⁴³⁶ In Bosnia, according to the calculations that came to a total of 382,000 victims, 209,000 of these were said to be Serbs, 57.5 per cent of the casualties in Bosnia (with the exception of 10,000 Jews and 9,000 'others'), 79,000 Croats (22 per cent) and 75,000 Muslims (20.5 per cent).¹⁴³⁷ Calculated thus, 16.7 per cent of the Serb population of Bosnia-Herzegovina died, 12.8 per cent of the Croat population and 8.6 per cent of the Muslim population.¹⁴³⁸ In other words, 1 in 6 Serbs, 1 in 8 Croats and 1 in 12 Muslims lost their lives in Bosnia during the Second World War. The Jewish and gypsy communities were all but wiped out.

Multi-ethnicity under Communism: harmony or precursor of violence?

With comparatively heavy losses during the war, Bosnia was also rather badly off during the period of peace under Communist rule. The Habsburg regime had brought about a period of economic modernization in Bosnia, particularly in infrastructure, forestry and mining, industry and banking. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Germans had invested in heavy industry. However, Bosnian industry did not develop fully until after the rift between Yugoslavia and the Cominform, when Tito's government developed a strong defence industry in Bosnia. This industry was aimed chiefly at extracting raw materials. The production of manufactured goods, however, lagged far behind the Yugoslav average. The same applied to employment, income and investments, even though for years Bosnia received more than twenty per cent from the federal development fund.¹⁴³⁹ After Kosovo, Bosnia was, in many respects – urbanization, literacy, infant mortality – the most backward area of Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁴⁰

After 1945, along with other religions, Islam was ousted under Communist rule. Islamic law courts were prohibited in 1946. Four years later, the wearing of veils was also forbidden by law, and the same thing happened to Muslim education and most Muslim organizations. Because of these measures, further expropriations or a Ustashe-tainted background, many Muslims fled abroad after the Second World War, in particular to Turkey. Turkish statistics suggest that a total of approximately 190,000 Bosnian Muslims emigrated to Turkey after 1945.¹⁴⁴¹

Tito and his following expected that the Muslims would, as a group, disappear in the course of time.¹⁴⁴² At the first Communist party congress after the war, it was said that Bosnia could not be divided up between Croatia and Serbia, 'not only because Serbs and Croats intermingle throughout the territory, but also because the region is inhabited by Muslims, who have not yet resolved their national identity', i.e. whether they were Croats or Serbs.¹⁴⁴³ Muslim party officials were compelled to declare whether they saw themselves as Croats or Serbs.

¹⁴³⁴ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, p. x; Ivo Banac, 'Bosnian Muslims: From Religious Community to Socialist Nationhood and Postcommunist Statehood, 1918-1992', Pinson (ed.), *Muslims*, pp. 143-144.

¹⁴³⁵ Cohen, *War*, pp. 109-111.

¹⁴³⁶ Cohen, *War*, p. 111.

¹⁴³⁷ Cohen, *War*, p. 109. Except for the Muslims, these figures differ considerably from those mentioned by Srđan Bogosavljević, 'Drugi Svetski Rat – Zrtve u Jugoslaviji', *Republika*, 01-05/06/95, cited in Hayden, *Fate*, p. 746, according to him, 72 per cent of the casualties were Serbs, 17 per cent Muslim and 4 per cent Croat.

¹⁴³⁸ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 38.

¹⁴³⁹ Calic, *Krieg*, pp. 61-63.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 202.

¹⁴⁴¹ Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁴² Cohen, *Hearts*, pp. 69 and 71; Judah, *Serbs*, p. 154.

¹⁴⁴³ Cited in Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 197. See also Milovan Djilas in: Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, pp. 84-85.

The 1948 census contained the categories 'Muslim Serb', 'Muslim Croat' and 'nationally non-defined Muslim'. Of all the Muslims, 778,000 (or 89 per cent) stated that they belonged to the latter category, only 72,000 (eight per cent) called themselves Serbs and 25,000 (three per cent) Croat.¹⁴⁴⁴ By 1953, the category 'Muslim' was absent from the census form. Within the framework of Yugoslavism policy, it was now possible for Muslims to be registered as 'non-defined Yugoslav'. Almost 900,000 Bosnians, almost all Muslims, opted for this alternative.¹⁴⁴⁵

In the first decades after the Second World War, Bosnia had to contend with Serb dominance. This came not only at the expense of Muslims, but also Croats. After the fall of Rankovic, the Serb head of the state security service in 1966, the repression of the non-Serb groups eased off in Bosnia, too.¹⁴⁴⁶ In the light of the wrongs done to the Croats in Bosnia, Cvjetin Mijatovic, the prominent Bosnian-Serb Communist, went so far as to say that he was ashamed of being a Serb.¹⁴⁴⁷

However, after Tito had sought to join the Non-Alignment Movement, he started to trot out the Muslims in his own country in front of the non-aligned states. In Bosnia, too, religious practice was tolerated as long as it was not linked to manifestations of ethnic nationalism. Hence, the Muslim community in Communist Bosnia was eventually able to establish hundreds of new mosques.

Inadvertently, it was the Muslims living in the cities who benefited from the schooling campaigns organized by Tito's government. Thanks to his support, the Muslim community in Bosnia-Herzegovina emancipated in the 1960s. Moreover, because the party leadership renounced Yugoslavism, in the 1961 census, it was possible for the first time to state that one was 'ethnic Muslim'. Almost one million Bosnians claimed that status. In the Bosnian constitution of 1963, Muslims were recognized as being a constituent community in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1968, the Communist party leadership accepted the Muslims as such a community in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia. The nationalist writer Dobrica Cosic turned against the decision in 1971, but to no avail. In 1971, the Yugoslav census spoke of 'Muslims in the sense of a nation'. The latter was embedded in the constitution of 1974. As from that date, the word 'Muslim' – as a people – has always been written with a capital M in Yugoslavia.

To the extent to which Muslims, Croats and Serbs in Bosnia felt the need to have a joint identity, this was still not to be found in a shared Bosnian, but rather a common Yugoslav background.¹⁴⁴⁸ However, this need was largely restricted to the intellectual upper classes in Bosnia. Of the circa eight per cent of the population that defined itself as Yugoslav in the 1981 census, three quarters were from the large cities.¹⁴⁴⁹ Incidentally, with the increased ethnic tension, the census held ten years later revealed a decrease in the number of Bosnians who described themselves as Yugoslavs to 5.5 per cent of the population. Exceptions were Tuzla and Sarajevo where 17 and 10.5 per cent, respectively, of the population called themselves Yugoslavs.

The recognition of the Muslims as a population group led to a social awareness as well as a religious revival among the Muslims. By recognizing them as a category, the statistics then revealed that under the social elite in Bosnia, the Muslims were subordinate to the Serbs.¹⁴⁵⁰ That discrimination was partly a consequence of a delayed reaction to large demographic shifts between the various population groups. In the 1961 census, the Serbs with 42.8 per cent were still a majority in the Bosnian population. With a percentage of 25.6, the Muslims were scarcely larger than the Croat section of the population (21.7 per cent). Ten years later, in 1971, the ratios had changed drastically, due especially to the relatively high number of births among Muslims and the increase in Croat and Serb migration. These latter groups had a fairly strong urge to move to Croatia and Serbia, respectively, with their stronger

¹⁴⁴⁴ Donia & Fine, *Bosnia*, pp. 175-176; Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 198.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 198.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Judah, *Serbs*, p. 153.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Marijan, *War*, p. 176 n. 5.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 44; Krizan, *Nationalisme*, p. 71.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 42.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Calic, *Krieg*, pp. 77-78.

economies and better job opportunities, whereas the Muslims stayed in Bosnia.¹⁴⁵¹ In 1971, the population ratios were Serbs (37.3 per cent), Muslims (39.6 per cent) and Croats (20.6 per cent). The relative majority of Muslims would then continue to grow until, by 1991, the population ratios were Serbs (31.4 per cent), Muslims (43.7 per cent) and Croats (17.3 per cent).¹⁴⁵²

The effect of these shifts at a national level was that, on a regional level, there were more and more places with a Muslim majority and fewer and fewer with a Serb majority. Moreover, because the migration of minorities from the villages was the strongest to the cities, the villages became more and more homogenous in terms of ethnic composition and the cities more and more heterogeneous.¹⁴⁵³

There were those among the Muslim elite in the process of emancipating themselves, who thought that Muslims should become the leading nation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, given that the Croats and the Serbs had their own republics. A small group even went as far as to advocate the ethnic homogenization of all Bosnia.¹⁴⁵⁴

For the Communist party leadership in Sarajevo and Belgrade, the growth of a greater Muslim self-awareness was a problem. Of all Yugoslav republics, the Communists in Bosnia-Herzegovina were the most doctrinal.¹⁴⁵⁵ While one could be threatened with arrest for ideological aberrations in Belgrade or Zagreb, one would have actually been arrested in Sarajevo.¹⁴⁵⁶ Sarajevo was:

‘a city in which it was impossible to be an avowed dissident and from where intellectuals fled to Belgrade or Zagreb; a city in which the party was totally under the control of the media, and in which the student revolt of 1968 was most effectively suppressed; a city in which spies controlled the ideological attitudes of the people, right down to their private lives’.¹⁴⁵⁷

Ideological repression and mutual religious and ethnic tolerance went hand in hand in Bosnia. Expressions of nationalist hatred were ranked among the most serious crimes against the ideology.¹⁴⁵⁸ Communist leadership viewed propagating Islam as the best creed, which occurred in the context of Muslim emancipation, as a direct attack on the idea of brotherhood and unity.¹⁴⁵⁹

In the early 1980s, this concern about an Islam revival led to a campaign by the Communist government against ‘Muslim fundamentalism’, particularly in Bosnia and Macedonia. Muslim leaders were attacked in the press and Muslim clerics arrested for using their beliefs for political ends. Fear of such problems as foreign meddling in developments in Bosnia – especially by Iran, Libya, Cairo and Mecca – prompted this campaign.¹⁴⁶⁰ In 1983, this campaign culminated in the trial for hostile activities of 13 Muslim intellectuals, among them Alija Izetbegovic, Omer Behmen and Hasan Cengic. They had known each other for years and would, in the 1990s, take up prominent positions in the nationalist Muslim party SDA.

At the same time, publications from Communist and Serb nationalist quarters with a strong anti-Muslim character appeared in Sarajevo and Belgrade, including the novel *Nož* by Vuk Draskovic. It was a sign that the carefully maintained equilibrium between the groups was out of plumb.

¹⁴⁵¹ For statistics, see Detrez, *Sloop*, p. 253; Judah, *Serbs*, pp. 154-155.

¹⁴⁵² Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 330.

¹⁴⁵³ For statistics, see Detrez, *Sloop*, p. 254.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Calic, *Krieg*, p. 76.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Bougarel, *Bosnie*, p. 43; Draulans, *Mirjana*, p. 77; Slapsak, *Joegoslavië*, pp. 52, 55.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Nebojsa Popov, ‘Kriegerischer Frieden. Annäherung an ein Verständnis des Krieges in Bosnien-Herzegowina’, Stefanov & Werz (Hg.), *Bosnien*, p. 105.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Svetlana Slapsak, ‘Waarom Sarajevo?’, in: Dojcinovic & Keulemans (eds.), *Hommage*, p. 62.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Slapsak, *Joegoslavië*, p. 185.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Antic, *Officials*.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Antic, *Officials*.

Ethnic relations on the eve of the conflict

‘Rest and warmth existed side by side with violence and perversity. They were just two unavoidable sides of the same way of life.’¹⁴⁶¹

‘Until recently, I really thought that people were getting on reasonably well with one other, that it didn’t matter whether you were Serb, Croat or Muslim. But nowadays, it’s about the first question you’re asked. And you’re wary if he doesn’t belong ‘on your side’. So now I almost wonder whether it really used to be that good.’¹⁴⁶²

In the past, the various ethnic movements in Bosnia had, at best, existed side by side, that is to say when the climate in Bosnia-Herzegovina was politically stable. Where that was not so, there were conflicts between the ethnic groups. The political unrest in Yugoslavia as from the late 1980s did not leave Bosnia unaffected. Whoever was so inclined still saw equilibrium, others noted that the foundations of society had started to shift.

The different ethnic groups had intermingled to a limited degree only. However, at the end of 1991, a sociological study revealed that only 43 per cent of the Muslims, 39 per cent of the Croats and 25 per cent of the Serbs in Bosnia wanted a marriage partner of the same ethnic group.¹⁴⁶³ But actual practice showed that until then, the willingness to enter a ‘mixed marriage’ appeared to be even less. In 1981, a mere 15.3 per cent of all marriages were mixed.¹⁴⁶⁴ In 1991, 16 per cent of the children in Bosnia were born out of a mixed marriage.¹⁴⁶⁵ These figures are frequently cited in the literature, but the annual averages between 1962 and 1989 sooner reveal a mixed marriage percentage of 11 to 12, a rate which remained almost constant throughout that period.¹⁴⁶⁶ It should also be noted when considering this figure that the mixed marriages took place mainly between members of small ethnic groups, such as Jews and Montenegrins, for whom the chances of marriage within their own group were slim. Such marriages were far less frequent among the three large ethnic entities, viz. Croats, Muslims and Serbs. In those three groups, mixed marriages took place mainly between Croats and Serbs (in that order), and far less often among Muslims – 95 per cent of Muslim women and 93 per cent of Muslim men entered into homogenous marriages.¹⁴⁶⁷ Another marginal note is that mixed marriages were as good as confined to the cities, where in a few cases levels of 40 per cent were reached.¹⁴⁶⁸ It is often erroneously assumed that the percentage of such marriages was comparatively high in Bosnia.¹⁴⁶⁹ On the contrary, it is significant that precisely in Bosnia-Herzegovina where ethnic distribution was greater than in the rest of Yugoslavia, the percentage of mixed marriages between 1962 and 1989 was the lowest of all republics, with the exception of Macedonia.¹⁴⁷⁰

Villages were often more or less homogenous, though scattered at random. The census of April 1991 showed that of the 109 Bosnian municipalities (*opštine*), 37 had an absolute Muslim majority, 32 a Serb and 13 a Croatian. Fewer than a third of the *opštine* showed no clear-cut ethnic majority.

¹⁴⁶¹ Djilas, *Land*, p. 245.

¹⁴⁶² Muhamed Vlasic, employed by a travel organization in Mostar in N. Lucas, ‘Serviërs in Bosnië: kogels voor bier’(Serbs in Bosnia: bullets for beer), *Trouw*, 28/09/91.

¹⁴⁶³ Calic, *Krieg*, p. 58.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 42.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Calic, *Krieg*, p. 45; Crnobrnja, *Drama*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Nikolai Botev, ‘Seeing Past the Barricades. Ethnic Inter-marriage in Former Yugoslavia, 1962-1989’, in: Halpern & Kideckel (eds.), *Neighbors*, p. 225; Detrez, *Sloop*, p. 255.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 42.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Sreten Vujovic, ‘An Uneasy View of the City’, Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 136.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Cf. Ali & Lifschulz, ‘Bosnia’, p. 367; Cohen, *Bonds*, pp. 173 and 247; Crnobrnja, *Drama*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Nikolai Botev, ‘Seeing Past the Barricades. Ethnic Inter-marriage in Former Yugoslavia, 1962-1989’, Halpern & Kideckel (eds.), *Neighbors*, pp. 225 and 229.

The positive view Bosnian intellectuals and the West had of the inter-ethnic relations in Bosnia on the eve of the conflicts of the last decade of the 20th century was coloured mainly by information on ethnic tolerance in the capital Sarajevo or in Tuzla. Inhabitants of Sarajevo themselves put about the idea that there was no more cosmopolitan city in the Balkans, no city 'in which in such a small area so many languages, religions and cultures were in contact with one another and intermingled'.¹⁴⁷¹ And given that 'Bosnian culture (...), in particular in Sarajevo, in its purest form' was found there¹⁴⁷², the area would, it was repeatedly emphasized in Bosnia itself, act as a bridge between the West and the Orient.¹⁴⁷³ As is often the case with city-dwellers, those in Bosnia forgot that beyond their own cities, which they felt showed cosmopolitan tolerance, there were rural areas where quite different standards prevailed.¹⁴⁷⁴

Frequently, foreign journalists also reported that in Sarajevo, you could find a mosque, a Roman Catholic cathedral, a Christian Orthodox church and a Jewish synagogue, in virtually one and the same street. According to their reports, Muslims, Serbs, Croats, Jews, gypsies and Albanians lived alongside one another in 'Europe's truest melting pot'.¹⁴⁷⁵ Even when Sarajevo was surrounded by Serbs, there were still 80,000 Serbs alongside 200,000 Muslims and slightly less than 20,000 Croats.¹⁴⁷⁶

However, decades before the outbreak of the war, some observers felt that even in Sarajevo there existed a parallel reality, 'a deep and obvious separation between the ethnic groups, a separation characterized by both mistrust and apprehension'.¹⁴⁷⁷ 'Most of the peace and quiet rests on hypocrisy and on not wanting to attract the regime's attention ...'¹⁴⁷⁸ As a Croat resident of Bosnia said later: 'Yes, we lived in peace and harmony. We lived in peace and harmony because every hundred yards there was a policeman who made sure that we were really nice to one another.'¹⁴⁷⁹ Another observer noted:

'Undercurrents of intolerance could be spotted in unguarded chance remarks of hateful envy: snide comments about 'those' Croats, Muslims, and Serbs 'always sticking together'; occasional displays of rage over pork-barrel monkeys 'always benefiting them'; and furtive glances at Muslims going to the mosque in a largely Christian village, or at Christians going to their churches in predominantly Muslim towns. Confidentially, one was told of widespread mutual mistrust, at least in certain localities and sometimes even in Sarajevo.'¹⁴⁸⁰

At the end of the 1980s, consequently, the inter-ethnic situation in Bosnia was open to a dual interpretation. More than 90 per cent of those interviewed for a survey in Bosnia in 1990 did indeed say that where they lived, ethnic relations were good, and that was also the case at work, according to more than 80 per cent. However, 87 per cent considered the ethnic relations in Yugoslavia as a whole bad or very bad.¹⁴⁸¹

¹⁴⁷¹ Karahasan, *Sarajevo*, pp. 8-10. Cf. ibidem, p. 53; Weine, *History*, p. 21; Edo Barak in: Ineke Bijnagte, 'Korak. Een eskimo uit Sarajevo' (Korak. An eskimo from Sarajevo), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 17/11/93, p. 8; Broekmeyer, 'Overpeinzing', p. 9; Kemal Kurspahic, 'Herzegovina en Bosnië zijn ondeelbaar' (Hercegovina and Bosnia indivisible), *de Volkskrant*, 31/12/91.

¹⁴⁷² Karahasan, *Sarajevo*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁷³ Cf. Hoessein Susic, cited in Clifford C. Cremer, 'Met pijl en boog tegen tank' (Bows and arrows against tanks), *HP/De Tijd* 15/01/93, p. 12.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Weine, *History*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Maas, *Neighbor*, p. 129. See also Anthony Lewis, 'War Crimes', Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 55.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Max Arian, 'La Benovolencija', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 09/06/93, p. 9.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Andrei Simic, 'Nationalism as a Folk Ideology. The Case of Former Yugoslavia', Halpern & Kideckel (eds.), *Neighbors*, p. 106. See also Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 247.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Slapsak, *Joegoslavië*, p. 187.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Bell, *Way*, p. 132.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Job, *Furies*, p. 69.

¹⁴⁸¹ Calic, *Krieg*, p. 59.

The Communist party in a tight corner

The Communist party in Bosnia also felt the increase in tension. Monitoring the combination of ideological purity and inter-ethnic tolerance was de facto in the hands of a few families from each of the three population groups that ruled the roost in the Communist elite in the republic.¹⁴⁸² While these families at the top of the political and social pyramid compromised to ensure that the republic remained governable, the rest of society had, in that respect, little experience. By the late 1980s, once the willingness to compromise had begun to erode as a result of the decline in the economy, relations throughout the whole of society became strained and arguments broke out at each level over the political and economic sources of power. At that point, the Communist party in Bosnia-Herzegovina itself became very disaffected by ethnic differences and tarnished by countless corruption scandals.

After the Communist League of Yugoslavia had fallen apart in January 1990 during the Fourteenth Party Congress and it had become clear that elections would also be held in Bosnia in which several parties would be able to participate, the executive of the Communist party employed a variety of means to discourage the formation of political parties with an ethnic or religious base. An opinion poll held in May 1990 demonstrated that this policy was still supported by 74 per cent of the Bosnian population.¹⁴⁸³ The party had little choice. Because it was organised along multi-ethnic lines – in 1982, 42.8 per cent of the members were Serbs, 35 per cent Muslim, 11.9 per cent Croat and 8.4 per cent Yugoslav¹⁴⁸⁴ – it could not play the nationalist card as Milosevic had done with his reconstructed Communist party in Serbia. At the same time, the oligarchic character of the Bosnian party leadership prevented reforms, which might have provided a solution to the threat of nationalism in the three ethnic groups.

A solution was urgently needed, however, because since the summer of 1989, Serb and Croatian mass meetings had been held in Bosnia that were tied up with the increase in ethnic tension elsewhere in Yugoslavia, notably in Kosovo, Slovenia and Croatia. At these meetings, Serbs declared their sympathy with Milosevic, and Croats their pursuit of independence. From the summer of 1989, the media in Belgrade began writing about the risks Serbs ran in Bosnia. Ostensibly, Serbs were being treated unfairly in terms of job opportunities and the migration of Serbs from Bosnia was termed ethnic cleansing. From 1989 onwards, a growing ethnic nationalism and a religious revival went hand in hand in Bosnia. More and more, the Orthodox church stepped into the limelight and gave Serb nationalists the opportunity to manifest themselves at religious gatherings.¹⁴⁸⁵ Religious feasts, such as the consecration of churches and mosques, became more ethnonationalist in character.¹⁴⁸⁶ Serbs accused Muslims of seeking to islamize the republic, evoking memories of Muslims collaborating with the Ustashe during the Second World War.¹⁴⁸⁷ Conversely, rumours did the rounds that Serbs in Bosnia were receiving and secretly training with weapons from pro-Milosevic circles.¹⁴⁸⁸ All parties claimed that the others were making lists of names of people from other ethnic groups who were to be murdered.¹⁴⁸⁹

So, not surprisingly, the support of 74 per cent for a ban on national parties was as large as it was lukewarm. It was a reflection of the awareness that division along ethnic lines carried great risks, judging by the occurrences of the Second World War. Be that as it may, as soon as the situation were to deteriorate, it was to be expected that the diverse population groups would fall back to their own ethnic party. As a consequence, the existence of the formerly dominant Communist party in Bosnia, which,

¹⁴⁸² Dusan T. Batakovic, 'Collective and Human Rights: Opposing Views from Former Yugoslavia', Baehr & Baudet & Werdmöller (eds.), *Tights*, p. 68.

¹⁴⁸³ X. Bougarel, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina - State and Communitarianism', Dyker & Vejvoda (ed.), *Yugoslavia*, p.99.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 45.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Cekic, *Aggression*, pp. 35-36.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Bougarel, *Bosnie*, p. 44.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 218; Ramet, *Milosevic*, p. 102; appendix Duijzings, *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnie*.

¹⁴⁸⁸ See for Srebrenica Duijzings, *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnië*.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, pp. 147-148.

with the upheavals elsewhere in Eastern Europe, was under pressure anyway and now at even greater risk.

In the spring of 1990, the Communist party of Bosnia-Herzegovina attempted to deter ethnicization of politics by taking a great leap forward, that is to say by calling elections at very short notice. When it became clear that no other parties could organize themselves in such a short period, the Communist leaders had to abandon this plan as their legitimacy would otherwise be seriously damaged. The next attempt at repelling ethnicization was the Bosnian parliament's adoption in March 1990 of an electoral law forbidding political organisations with an ethnic basis. The Bosnian Constitutional Court declared the act unconstitutional, however.

With that, the road was open for the formation of political parties based on ethnic principles. The former Communist party was reconstructed into the Communist League – Social Democratic Party (*Savez Komunističke – Socijalističke Demokratske Partije* (SK-SDP)). Pluralism and the transition to a market economy were included in its programme. Furthermore, the party also devoted itself to preserving the federal Yugoslavia. That was also what the reformist party of the Federal Prime Minister Markovic wanted. This party appeared to have excellent prospects during the election campaign. That he attracted an audience of more than 100,000 to Mount Kozara, a location in a predominantly Serb area, illustrates this. Formally speaking, the only parties that were permitted in Bosnia-Herzegovina were autochthonous but in practice that did not stop Serbs or Croats from setting up parties that were closely connected to party formations in Belgrade, Knin and Zagreb. Approximately 40 new parties were established. However, the most important were three parties whose explicit premise was ethnic nationalism. In the run-up to the first, free post-war elections, all ethnic groups wanted to be represented by their own specific party. This had the appearance of an ethnic political contest.

3. Alija Izetbegovic's political career

The race was opened by the three most important men sentenced to imprisonment for 'national and Muslim fundamentalism' in 1983, Izetbegovic, Behmen and Hasan Cengic, who, with a few others, had set up the Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka Demokratske Akcije* (SDA)), a Muslim party. Of all the nationalist party leaders in Bosnia, the then 64-year-old Alija Izetbegovic was to be the most enigmatic.

Born in Bosanski Samac in 1925, his forefathers were Muslims who had been in commerce in Belgrade, but who had fled from Serbia to Bosnia in the nineteenth century. At the age of three, Izetbegovic moved to Sarajevo with his family, where he joined the Young Muslims (*Mladi Muslimani*), a movement with a hundred or so members established in 1939 to protect Muslim interests. After the Second World War, the Communists accused the movement of having had ties with the youth movement of the Ustashe. Izetbegovic would later deny that. He believed that the activities of the Young Muslims were aimed at putting Islam into practice, it being understood that its foremost task was the formation of a Muslim state.¹⁴⁹⁰ After the war, Izetbegovic co-founded the organization 'Fighters of the True Creed'. He was arrested in March 1946, accused of inciting 'religious hatred' and sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

After his release from prison in 1948, he studied law in Sarajevo. Subsequently, he became a legal adviser to two large companies. In 1970, Izetbegovic published the *Islamska Deklaracija* (*Islamic Declaration*). In the 1990s, in order to demonstrate that Izetbegovic was aspiring to a form of Muslim supremacy in Bosnia¹⁴⁹¹, Serb nationalists would frequently cite a number of pronouncements made in this manifesto. Incidentally, the word 'Bosnia' appears nowhere in the text. In this declaration, Izetbegovic emphasized that it was impossible for Islamic and non-Islamic institutions to co-exist peacefully. He also argued in favour of a regeneration of Islam by creating a pan-Islamic world 'from

¹⁴⁹⁰ Ivan Sabic, 'Covjek koji se ne mijenja', *Danas*, 19/03/93, p. 32.

¹⁴⁹¹ Cf. Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 292, for example.

Morocco to Indonesia'. He went on to proclaim that when Turkey was still an Islamic land, it was much more powerful than the secular state it later became. As soon as Islam was morally and numerically strong enough to bring down non-Islamic rule and replace it with an Islamic version, it should indeed, in his view, assume power. For that, Muslims would have to make up at least half of the population. Once that situation had been reached, peace or co-existence between the Islamic faith on the one hand and non-Islamic political and social institutions on the other would be out of the question. Providing they were granted freedom of religion and a normal life, Muslim minorities would demonstrate loyalty and discharge their civic duties, 'excluding those that prejudice Islam and Muslims', as long as Muslim were not yet in the majority.¹⁴⁹²

In the early 1980s, when the Communist authorities started to fear the Islamic revival that had begun to burgeon after the recognition of the Muslims as an ethnic group, they decided to prosecute its principal representatives. Among the Communist authorities, there were also Muslims who wanted to prevent Muslim awareness from becoming too overtly religious. Accordingly, in 1983, Izetbegovic was arrested and tried together with others for 'hostile activities' and 'fundamentalist aberrations', i.e. the pronouncements he made in the *Islamic Declaration* published 13 years earlier. The judiciary in Sarajevo saw in the actions of Izetbegovic and his followers and in his writing a reconfirmation of the *Mladi Muslimani* proclaiming the establishment of a Muslim state.¹⁴⁹³ Moreover, with the exception of Izetbegovic, all the defendants had secretly visited Iran at the beginning of 1983 to celebrate the anniversary of the Islamic revolution.¹⁴⁹⁴ This time Izetbegovic was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment, later reduced by the Federal Court in Belgrade to nine years' detention. The court in Sarajevo hearing the case in first instance, did, for that matter, make it clear that the trial was not against the Muslim creed or against Islamites in general, but concerned a group whose objective was an ethnically clean Muslim Bosnia-Herzegovina, and which aimed at substituting the socialist system of Yugoslavia with a social order based on the principles of Islam.¹⁴⁹⁵

In 1984, shortly after his conviction, Izetbegovic published *Islam između istoka i zapada (Islam between East and West)*. The book received little attention in the West and if it was at all noted it was mainly glossed over, for instance in the magazine *The New Republic*.¹⁴⁹⁶

Izetbegovic's book, *Islam Between East and West*, (...) should have been a defence lawyer's dream. An amateurish work, an intellectual hodgepodge, it is the product of an anxious *assimilé*, a child of the western tradition reassuring himself that all the sources of his mind add up to a coherent whole, a man of our messy world born at the crossroads of cultures. This must be the only book on Islam with nine references to Dostoevski, seven to Albert Camus, nine to Hegel, three to Malraux, two to Rembrandt, ten to Bertrand Russell, eight to Kenneth Clark, and so on. This is not the work of a Muslim fundamentalist, or a traditional apologist.¹⁴⁹⁷

Reading this book might well have revealed that Izetbegovic had a somewhat fundamentalist streak, if fundamentalism is defined as the wish to base the organization and the workings of a social and politic

¹⁴⁹² For an overview of suchlike quotes, Cf. Allcock & Milivojevic & Horton (eds.), *Conflict*, pp. 129-130; Johnstone, 'Izetbegovic'; Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 220; Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 118; Zametica, *Conflict*, pp. 38-39. In a speech at the beginning of July 1990, Izetbegovic would even have considered that an Islamic majority of 70 per cent of the population was necessary, Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 208.

¹⁴⁹³ Yugoslav Press Agency, 'Trial of Muslim fundamentalists in Sarajevo', 1414 and 1906, 18/07/83 and 1433, 21/07/83, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 02/08/83.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Ljiljana Smajlovic, 'Strategy of Flirt', *Vreme*, 04/06/96.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Yugoslav Press Agency, 'Sentences Reduced on Muslim Nationalists', 1240, 30/05/84, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 02/06/84.

¹⁴⁹⁶ For a critical discussion in the West of both of Izetbegovic's publications, see Johnstone, 'Izetbegovic'.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 51.

system on religious notions. In his book, Izetbegovic positioned Islam in relation to the materialistic and in particular the socialist world, which represented values he could not subscribe to, among them rationalism, self-interest and uniformity.¹⁴⁹⁸

The book was Izetbegovic's attempt to set himself up as intermediary between East and West. As he would say later, the Bosnian Muslims lived with their hearts in the Islamic world and with their heads in Europe – religious by birth and European by education.¹⁴⁹⁹ According to Izetbegovic, Islam itself was in several respects a synthesis of the religious and the material world in particular.¹⁵⁰⁰ Whilst Christianity took care of inner well-being and socialism of outward well-being, Islam presented a synthesis of both.¹⁵⁰¹ Hence, Izetbegovic saw Islam not just as a religion, but as a fundamental principle for a social and political order.¹⁵⁰² Conversely, the social order should 'promote the ideals of religion and ethics'.¹⁵⁰³ For him, an Islam without a political component meant reducing it to religious mysticism, which was unacceptable, and at the same time, it meant accepting that others would decide the fate of the Islamites and that could not be tolerated.¹⁵⁰⁴ In Izetbegovic's view, the dualism of Islam was also expressed in the *shabeed*, 'Islam's greatest figure'. The *shabeed* was a fighter for God. He was at once a soldier and a saint, unlike the doctrine of the Christian West where religion and worldly dominance were separated.¹⁵⁰⁵ In Islam, the pursuit of moral perfection went hand in hand with the desire for happiness and power.¹⁵⁰⁶ Just as Islam denounces rulers who do not believe, so it denounces believers without power, Izetbegovic said.¹⁵⁰⁷ There is no distinction between law and theology in Islam. Consequently, Izetbegovic believed that Islamic law was superior to that of the West.¹⁵⁰⁸

The book also contained some pointers with regard to Izetbegovic's position with regard to the realities surrounding him, albeit rather unspecific ones. In his view, Islam takes up a position between historic determinism and idealism. Given circumstances and personal freedom of choice pertain to each other as communicating vessels.¹⁵⁰⁹ Izetbegovic's fatalism does not seem to be entirely consonant with this. For him, the most significant value of the Islam is the acceptance of fate.¹⁵¹⁰ The number of factors that man could influence were negligible in the light of what he had no hold over; man was the victim of chance. He was steeped in the circumstances in which he existed. In spite of every advance, man would continue to suffer. As such, it was better if he were to subject himself to God who governed his fate. That, at least, would give him a sense of security.¹⁵¹¹

Izetbegovic's fatalism in tandem with his endeavour to carry at least some weight in history, are also found elsewhere in his publications. For instance in June 1995, he said to the executive committee of his party, the SDA, that since history is decided by fate and God, its course is as it should be.¹⁵¹² He also felt that the SDA should work towards a nationwide revival of Muslim national awareness in Bosnia and emphasize their part in society.¹⁵¹³ He saw pending war in Bosnia-Herzegovina as an ordeal for the Muslims ordained by God.¹⁵¹⁴

¹⁴⁹⁸ Izetbegovic, *East*, pp. xviii and xxvii.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Cf. Izetbegovic, *Govori*, pp. xviii, 43 and 125.

¹⁵⁰⁰ Izetbegovic, *East*, p. xxv.

¹⁵⁰¹ Izetbegovic, *East*, pp. xxviii and xxx.

¹⁵⁰² Izetbegovic, *East*, p. xviii.

¹⁵⁰³ Izetbegovic, *East*, p. xix.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Izetbegovic, *East*, p. xxxi.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Izetbegovic, *East*, p. 213.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Izetbegovic, *East*, p. 225.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Izetbegovic, *East*, p. 227.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Izetbegovic, *East*, pp. 242-243.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Izetbegovic, *East*, p. 233.

¹⁵¹⁰ Izetbegovic, *East*, p. 289.

¹⁵¹¹ Izetbegovic, *East*, pp. 289-292.

¹⁵¹² Izetbegovic, *Govori*, p. 69.

¹⁵¹³ Izetbegovic, *Govori*, p. 70.

¹⁵¹⁴ Izetbegovic, *Govori*, p. 100.

In November 1988, Izetbegovic was released early from prison, at the instigation of such individuals as Seselj, then professor of sociology. Subsequently, he was assured of being surrounded by a small group of faithful followers with a somewhat circumscribed world view. The Izetbegovic who emerged from his books remained all but unknown in the West. In the eyes of the world's media, the leader of the SDA and later President of Bosnia was a timid man, who seemed to wear the cloak of leadership with a great sense of unease. 'He seemed diminished, rather than inflated, by the opulence of the presidential palace', wrote Zimmermann.¹⁵¹⁵ Western diplomats, military and journalists doubtless saw in him a pious Muslim, but by no means a fundamentalist.¹⁵¹⁶ 'A man of reason and reconciliation: a loner', Peter Michielsen of the *NRC Handelsblad* newspaper called him, a peculiar characterization in the light of a speech by Izetbegovic in the spring of 1991, cited in the same article, in which the Bosnian politician said that the Muslims would oppose a splitting-up of Bosnia,¹⁵¹⁷ 'taking up weapons', if need be. Kooijmans, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, who would succeed Van den Broek at the beginning of 1993, saw Izetbegovic as 'a tormented man. I felt immensely sorry for the man. Fate had thrown him in high relief. He had become a standard-bearer and could be nothing other than that'.¹⁵¹⁸ Western politicians and journalists almost always saw in him the advocate of a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁵¹⁹ Writing about the 1983 verdict, Martin van den Heuvel, an expert on Eastern Europe, said that under Communism, a sentence did 'of course not mean much. And Izetbegovic was above all a peaceful Muslim, an advocate of non-violence and harmonious co-operation between all peoples and religions in Bosnia. He was often compared to Ghandi because of his peace-loving behaviour'.¹⁵²⁰ Raymond Detrez, the Belgian expert on the Balkans, wrote that Izetbegovic in fact set no more store by religion in politics than Christian Democrat party chairman in Western Europe.¹⁵²¹ The enigma Izetbegovic was wasted on them.

Veering between a fatalistic attitude to life and the concept of being the executor of God's will, he often shilly-shallied or tended to retract decisions, a fatal attitude for a political leader who was to end up in such a tight corner. This did make him a moderator between various movements in his own party, but his vacillating posture and his revocations on prior agreements made him a statesman with whom it was difficult to do business. His wavering attitudes were criticized by Bosnian Serbs and Muslims alike. Rajko Dukic, the prominent SDS (Serb Democratic Party) man, said on that score:

'It is almost impossible to come to an agreement with Izetbegovic. There are no problems at the negotiating stage. You can say to him: this is a pen, that's what we'll agree on, tomorrow we'll discuss the notepad. The problem is that Izetbegovic doesn't turn up the next day. He always sent Cengic. And with him you could start all over again, as if nothing had happened the previous day.'¹⁵²²

The Muslim intellectual Muhamed Filipovic, who would join an opposition party, wrote that during negotiations Izetbegovic had the habit of:

'leaving each decision, particularly the important ones, till the following day. The most obvious reason for that was that he always had to discuss such

¹⁵¹⁵ Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 172.

¹⁵¹⁶ Cf. Laura Silber, 'The terrifying logic of war', *Financial Times*, 02/09/95.

¹⁵¹⁷ Peter Michielsen, 'Bosnië meegesleurd in kolkend conflict' (Bosnia dragged into seething conflict), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/07/91.

¹⁵¹⁸ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

¹⁵¹⁹ Cf. Zimmerman, *Ambassador*, p. 9.

¹⁵²⁰ Van den Heuvel, *Land*, p. 117.

¹⁵²¹ Detrez, *Balkan*, p. 135.

¹⁵²² Interview R. Dukic, 14/06/00.

decisions with his most trusted friends, whom he had to turn to for support. There is no alternative way of interpreting this behaviour.¹⁵²³

Izetbegovic's principal confidants in the early days of the SDA were Omer Behmen and Hasan Cengic. Together with Sulejman Ugljanin, they were to become deputy chairmen of the SDA in 1991.

A contemporary of Izetbegovic, Behmen had been sentenced to eight years' imprisonment for Muslim fundamentalism during the 1983 trial. Prior to that, he had already been given a 20-year sentence on similar grounds. In all, he had spent 17 years in prison, a fact that did not make his dealings with the outside world any the easier. A particularly repressive prison regime and being spied on in prison, had made a suspicious man of him.¹⁵²⁴ Shortly after the foundation, he was given the lead of the extremely important executive committee of the SDA. Like Cengic, Behmen had good connections with the government of Iran¹⁵²⁵ and was to become Ambassador to Teheran in 1993.

Hasan Cengic was the son of Halid ('Hadzija') Cengic, one of the members of *Mladi Muslimani*. Hasan had studied theology at the university of Sarajevo and was an Imam. Izetbegovic was a shining example for him in the early 1980s and they became close friends. In the circle of fifty and sixty-year-olds around Izetbegovic, Behmen and his own father, who came from the *Mladi Muslimani*, Hasan Cengic became the link to the group of younger Muslims studying at the Sarajevo Medresa, the Islamic religious school. Cengic held radical Islamic positions. For instance, he was to turn against blood transfusions between Muslims and non-Muslims. At the invitation of the Iranian authorities, Cengic went on a study trip to Teheran in 1982. On return to Sarajevo, he was arrested and stood trial with others, including Izetbegovic and Behmen. On appeal, he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and he remained in prison until 1986. After his release, he became Imam in the mosque in Zagreb, at which time it formed the core of the Islamic resistance to the government in Yugoslavia. This time, he was the link for Izetbegovic with circles in the Zagreb mosque, which would have an important share in the SDA. In 1990, he became SDA secretary. He fulfilled his most important role after 1992 by maintaining contacts with the Iranian government and organizing weapon purchases from his villa in Zagreb.¹⁵²⁶ As the chief weapon buyer in the Bosnian government army, he was also known as the Shadow Minister of Defence.

Apart from Behmen and Hasan Cengic, further individuals such as Enver Mujezinovic, Fikret Muslimovic and Bakir Alispahic who were also included in the circle of Izetbegovic familiars came from the KOS. In the 1980s, they had fought 'Muslim fundamentalism' and suddenly, in 1991 and 1992, they sided with Izetbegovic, whilst moving to take control of the new Bosnian security organizations. They frequently gave Izetbegovic radical advice, whilst giving him the impression that the intentions of Milosevic and the Bosnian Serb politicians and the military were not so bad. As a result, the idea took root among various leading Bosnian figures that the regime in Belgrade was controlling Izetbegovic via the KOS.¹⁵²⁷ Although that may not be ruled out altogether, particularly not prior to the outbreak of the war in Bosnia, the influence of the advisers had probably more to do with Izetbegovic's tendency to keep on the safe side and always confer with others. As the commander of the Bosnian government army said, 'His personality structure is highly interesting and even if he is against a particular suggestion, he never dismisses anything. His reactions were invariably that it was interesting and that he would think it over.'¹⁵²⁸ Obviously, that gave people close to him the chance to attempt to influence his way of thinking.

¹⁵²³ Muhamed Filipovic, 'Hasan Cengic's Conspiratorial Logic', *Dani*, 08/04/00.

¹⁵²⁴ Cf. 'Muslim nationalist prisoner interviewed by 'Borba'', 1656, 08/06/87, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 11/06/87.

¹⁵²⁵ John Pomfret & David B. Ottaway, 'U.S. Allies Fed Pipeline of Covert Arms to Bosnia', *The Washington Post*, 12/05/96.

¹⁵²⁶ For information regarding the role of Cengic, cf. John Pomfret & David B. Ottaway, 'U.S. Allies Fed Pipeline of Covert Arms to Bosnia', *The Washington Post*, 12/05/96; Tino Andic & Marko Juric, 'Muslimanska obavestajna sluzba AIS s dopustenjem ministra Suska djeluje pod krinkom humnitarnih organizacija u Zagrebu, Splitu i Rijeci, a bavi se nabavom oruza za Armiju BiH!', *Globus*, 11/10/96, pp. 14-16.

¹⁵²⁷ Cf. Halilovic, *Strategija*, p. 82; Alibabic, *Bosna*, passim.

¹⁵²⁸ Emir Imamovic, 'Izetbegovic wanted Sarajevo under siege', *Reporter*, undated, p. 7.

In 1989, Izetbegovic, Behmen and Cengic held talks about establishing a party in Zurich with Adil Zulfikarpasic, a rich Muslim businessman who lived there. Zulfikarpasic came from an aristocratic family that once owned land near Srebrenica. Like several sons from *bey* families, he had joined the Communist party in the 1930s. After the war, he held the position of deputy minister of trade in Bosnia. However, he was soon grew disgusted with the nepotism, greed and corruption of the Communists.¹⁵²⁹ He went abroad and became active in the diaspora, including such activities as promoting a Bosnian sense of identity with his magazine *Bosanski pogledi* (Bosnian ideas). The brainchild of Zulfikarpasic, the Bosniak Institute in Zurich also published a book about the trial of Izetbegovic *cum suis* and induced the Serb nationalist Dobrica Cosic in Belgrade to organize a protest against the trial. Izetbegovic's son, Bakir, later found a job at the Bosniak Institute. Izetbegovic's visit to his patron in Zurich was the beginning of a series of meetings between the future party leaders.

On 24 February 1990, a few weeks after the collapse of the Communist League of Yugoslavia, Izetbegovic and Zulfikarpasic agreed to found a party as soon as possible.¹⁵³⁰ Together with several others in Tuzla, on 27 March 1990, Alija Izetbegovic founded the Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka Demokratske Akcije* (SDA)). Among the forty founders were eight from the group of *Mladi Muslimani* and twelve from the Zagreb mosque. The movement presented itself as a 'political union of Yugoslav citizens who are part of the cultural and historic Muslim tradition' and appeared not only to focus on the Bosnian Muslims, but on those in Kosovo, Macedonia and Sandzak as well. In addition to such general objectives as a parliamentary democracy, the party also had more specific Islamic goals, including the introduction of Islamic feasts as national holidays and subsidies for building mosques. Izetbegovic became the party leader. Zulfikarpasic arrived in Bosnia two days after the party was founded and was appointed deputy chairman. The SDA grew rapidly under Izetbegovic and his followers. In November 1990, more than six months after its foundation, the party had 120 branches in Bosnia, 29 in other parts of Yugoslavia and 24 in the rest of the world, including one in the Netherlands.¹⁵³¹

That growth unnerved Serb nationalists. Allaying comments that a Muslim state would not be established until half the population was Muslim did nothing to set their minds at rest. By 1991, Muslims comprised 44 per cent of the population. Serb nationalists believed that Muslims had a predetermined plan to eventually outnumber the Serbs with high birth rates.¹⁵³² That would have been the case when extrapolating demographic developments even without such a plan.

4. Radovan Karadzic's political career

It was thus a matter of course that the Serb nationalists would organize themselves, although it was three and a half months after the formation of the SDA before the Serb Democratic Party (*Srpska Demokratska Stranka* (SDS)) was founded. Three thousand people attended the inaugural conference, among them not only the Serb leaders from Knin, Jovan Raskovic and Jovo Opacic, but Izetbegovic, the new SDA leader, was also invited. The SDS officially set itself the unconditional task of achieving equality for all Serbs in all social fields in Bosnia. From the onset, the SDS endeavoured to be a movement for the all Serb people rather than just a party. Consequently, membership was impossible.¹⁵³³

¹⁵²⁹ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, pp. 78-82.

¹⁵³⁰ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, p. xv.

¹⁵³¹ Izetbegovic, *Govori*, p. 72.

¹⁵³² Sells, *Bridge*, p. 22.

¹⁵³³ Interview R. Dukic, 14/06/00.

The role of Dobrica Cosic

The almost seventy-year-old nationalist writer, Dobrica Cosic, played a significant part in the founding. In 1992 and 1993, Cosic was to step into the limelight as the President of Yugoslavia. During this period, however, he still played his favourite role, that of the great man behind the scenes, whose political activities among the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia were financially and logistically supported by the Serb secret police.¹⁵³⁴

Cosic had become a Communist in 1939 while studying at a secondary school of agriculture.¹⁵³⁵ He had been political commissioner of a partisan unit during the Second World War. Thanks in part to his friendship with Tito, he had become a prominent post-war member of the Communist party. However, the reputation he acquired stemmed largely from his authorship. First published in 1951, his first literary endeavour – *Daleko je sunce* (Far is the Sun) – was an immediate and overwhelming success. With one million copies, it was up till then the best sold book in Yugoslavia, which discussed the suffering of the Serb people under Ottoman oppression.

At the end of the 1950s, he led the *jugoslovenstvo* campaign and opposed nationalism, which appeared to be growing, particularly in Slovenia. Moreover, on account of Cosic's leadership and the close ties he had with Rankovic¹⁵³⁶ – the Serb head of the secret service – nationalist-minded individuals outside Serbia questioned the merit of the *jugoslovenstvo* campaign. In the early 1960s, Tito offered Cosic the job of chairman of the Serb Communist party, but he refused, having always been better able to face the half-light than the limelight.¹⁵³⁷ Cosic lost a powerful patron, however, once Rankovic had been sidelined. Furthermore, he became convinced that the Serbs would gain nothing from the Communist party, despite his long-cherished hopes. Cosic now began to see Yugoslavism, which he had previously defended with such force – contrary to many others outside Serbia – as a means for the Communist party oligarchies outside Serbia to express national sentiments. His Serb nationalism was now fired by talks held at the end of the 1950s with Slovenians, concluding that the break-up of Yugoslavia was inevitable.

In 1967, Cosic himself set the cat among the Communist pigeons with his talk of an existentialist threat of the Serbs from Albanian nationalism in Kosovo, after Rankovic and his rigid policy on Albania had been pushed to the sidelines.¹⁵³⁸ He warned that if Albanian nationalism were not put to an end, the Serbs would split up the multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia in order to achieve their 'ancient historic goal' of establishing a Greater Serbia. A shocked Presidency adjourned the meeting, but Cosic had prompted a mental process which in time would prove unstoppable.¹⁵³⁹ On the grounds of his nationalism, he was ousted from the party's central committee a year later, resigning his party membership.

Outside the party, his authority as a Serb nationalist grew over the years. He was often called the 'father of the (Serb) nation'. His historic novels and political essays contributed substantially to the idea that Serbs were the victims of history. He stressed the genocide perpetrated against them during the Second World War and the way in which they were supposedly deceived by Tito after the war, who, in effect, followed an anti-Serb line.¹⁵⁴⁰ In 1977, in a speech to the Serb Academy of Science and Art, Cosic made what was to become a frequently quoted pronouncement that in peacetime, Serbs lose what they have won in wartime.¹⁵⁴¹ Initially, the text of the speech circulated illegally and it was only after Tito's demise that it was officially published in *Stvarno i moguće*, a collection of literary and political

¹⁵³⁴ For information regarding the line between the head of the Serb SDB Stanisic and Karadzic, cf. Berislav Jelinic, 'Croatian citizen is the primary financier of both Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic', *National online*, no. 294, 05/07/01.

¹⁵³⁵ The S. Djukic interview of 04/08/01 is one of the sources for biographic information on Cosic.

¹⁵³⁶ Christopher Cviic, 'Slovene and Croat Perspectives', Danchev & Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, pp. 120-121.

¹⁵³⁷ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 192.

¹⁵³⁸ Libal, *Serben*, p. 105.

¹⁵³⁹ Gutman, *Witness*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Cf. Mirko Dodevic, 'Populist Wave Literature', Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 362.

¹⁵⁴¹ Brey, *Logik*, p. 89; Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 170.

essays. When published in *Nin*, it was ascribed all the qualities needed for a Serb nationalist bible and instantly became a best-seller. Cosic worded it most succinctly in what became known as the Serb question (*Srpsko pitanje*):

‘Very broadly speaking, it is the demand for equality for the entire Serb nation and its republic in Yugoslavia, for recognition of the human and civil rights of the Serbs, wherever they live in Yugoslavia; it is the demand for a society in which the citizen and not the nation is the foundation of the state.’¹⁵⁴²

Cosic believed that like the Serbs, the Croats, Slovenians and Kosovo Albanians had the right to a state of their own. However, the Croats and Kosovo Albanians should bear Serb claims to the territory of Croatia and Kosovo in mind. Cosic also repeatedly spoke in support of non-Serb nationalists under arrest, such as Izetbegovic, Tudjman and Jansa, defending their right to freedom. After his release, Izetbegovic went to Cosic to thank him.¹⁵⁴³

As such, Cosic’s nationalism could be broadly defined as democratic or liberal, were it not that he always placed special emphasis on the rights of Serb citizens, while the same rights could also be claimed for Croatian citizens or Albanians in Kosovo.¹⁵⁴⁴

With his body of ideas, Cosic’s adherents in the Serb Academy of Sciences grew. In 1986, the Yugoslav Writers Association was the first Yugoslav institution to break up because the Slovenian authors feared Serb hegemony led by Cosic. Many say that Cosic was the driving force behind the infamous Memorandum of the Serb Academy of Sciences¹⁵⁴⁵, but he has always denied this.¹⁵⁴⁶

As from 1990, the nationalist writer saw – in Milosevic – the man who would at last stand up for the Serb people.¹⁵⁴⁷ Cosic’s support for Milosevic was very momentous. His backing meant that a permanent bridge was being built for Milosevic to the nationalist groups and the intelligentsia.¹⁵⁴⁸ In spite of that, Cosic remained in some respects sceptical towards Milosevic. He disagreed with Milosevic’s having built his party on the old Communist party. In Cosic’s view, Serbia needed a social democratic rather than a socialist party. Cosic understood that everything that smacked of Communism would have an enormous image problem in the West. Furthermore, Cosic thought that Serbia should not claim a full hold on Kosovo.¹⁵⁴⁹

Towards the end of the 1980s, he advocated for the Serbs to concentrate on their own people and leave the rest of Yugoslavia to the other ethnic groups.¹⁵⁵⁰ In the early 1990s, he attended the inception of the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) in Knin and maintained close contact with the leaders, Jovan Opacic and the psychiatrist Jovan Raskovic.¹⁵⁵¹ Raskovic’s SDS had set up a branch office in Bosnia as early as July 1990, and this office was particularly active in the regions bordering on the Croat Krajina. In subsequent months, Cosic developed the idea that the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia should be united territorially.¹⁵⁵² At the beginning of the war with Croatia, he called ‘pacifistic rhetoric (...)

¹⁵⁴² Quoted in Libal, *Serben*, p. 106. See also Levinsohn, *Serbs*, pp. 303-304.

¹⁵⁴³ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 118.

¹⁵⁴⁴ Cf. Drinka Gojkovic, ‘The Birth of Nationalism from the Spirit of Democracy. The Association of Writers of Serbia and the War’, Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 334.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Cf. Bennett, *Collapse*, p. 81; Oliveira Milosavljevic, ‘The Abuse of the Authority of Science’, Popov (ed.), *Road*, pp. 274 and 276; Ramet, *Babel*, p. 200.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Interview S. Djukic, 04/08/01. Cf. Jdah, *Serbs*, p. 158

¹⁵⁴⁷ Cosic quoted in Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 306.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 130. Cf. interview L. Perovic, 01/08/01.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 194.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 28.

¹⁵⁵¹ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 193; Weine, *History*, p. 92.

¹⁵⁵² Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 142.

meaningless'. He called on the population to fight for Greater Serbia and praised Milosevic as the best Serb leader in fifty years.¹⁵⁵³

The role of Nikola Koljevic and Biljana Plavsic

Cosic entrusted a colleague and friend of Jovan Raskovic, Radovan Karadzic,¹⁵⁵⁴ with Serb party leadership in Bosnia. As it happened, Karadzic was not Cosic's first choice. By his own account, he preferred Nenad Kecmanovic, the Serb chancellor of the University of Sarajevo, who was known for his liberal views on Yugoslav and Bosnian politics. Kecmanovic was later to assume the leadership of the Bosnian branch of the reform-minded party of Ante Markovic, losing the contest for a place in the Bosnian Presidency from Nikola Koljevic and Biljana Plavsic. It was precisely these two who, with others, had urged Cosic not to appoint Kecmanovic as Bosnian Serb leader, but the initially reluctant Radovan Karadzic. Because Cosic was alone in putting Kecmanovic forward, he reconciled himself to the suggestion to entrust Karadzic with the leadership.¹⁵⁵⁵

The names Koljevic and Plavsic require some explanation. It is true that the SDS was a party of the Serbs, most of whom lived outside the large cities, and the furious attacks this party made on multi-ethnicity and modernity were often seen as a struggle between the countryside and the city. However, there were many professors among the SDA leadership. Plavsic was a professor of biology at the University of Sarajevo, Koljevic a professor of English, specializing in Shakespeare, and the man who was to become Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republika Srpska in 1992, Aleksa Buha, was professor of German philosophy, who had obtained his doctorate with a dissertation on Hegel.

Koljevic was regarded as the brain of the SDS and the man who attempted to justify ethnic cleansing intellectually. He has been compared to Alfred Rosenberg, the German Nazi race ideologue. Nikola Koljevic suffered from depression after the death of his seventeen-year-old son during a skiing accident in Austria in 1977. These depressions were caused by a bizarre guilt complex, which took on the character of a Shakespearean drama. He saw his son's death as a punishment for something he had done to his brother Svetozar. Like Nikola, Svetozar had specialized in English literature. The two brothers were both intelligent, but it was clear to all that Svetozar was the more brilliant of the two. When Svetozar received a scholarship to study abroad, he left his fiancée Milica Medic in the care of Nikola. On his return home, Svetozar's fiancée was pregnant, by Nikola. Nikola and Milica married soon after. The family wanted no trouble and forced Svetozar to marry Milica's sister. After the death of his son, Nikola withdrew more and more into Christian Orthodox mysticism. He believed that not only did God want to punish him for stealing his brother's fiancée, but also for having behaved like an Englishman up to then. In an attempt to put matters straight, he became an increasingly fanatic Serb nationalist. He was increasingly enthralled by philosophy professor and prominent member of the Serb Academy of Sciences and Art, Milorad Ekmecic, and Karadzic, who treated him for his depression.¹⁵⁵⁶ It was a tragic change for the worse. Until then, he had been known as a cultured man and was popular among his students.¹⁵⁵⁷ After the outbreak of war, he became the most militant prophet for the destruction of Sarajevo. Bosnian Muslim Ejup Ganic, who with Koljevic had become a member of the Bosnian Presidency in 1990, later compared him to a well-behaved little boy who had to do the most terrible things to be allowed to join the gang.¹⁵⁵⁸ On 17 January 1997, he took his own life.

¹⁵⁵³ Gutman, *Witness*, pp.18-19.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 149; Weine, *History*, p. 125.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Interviews D. Cosic, 13/09/01 and V. Matovic, 02/08/01. According to Weine, *History*, p. 240 n. 6, before choosing Karadzic, apart from Kecmanovic had his eye on Svetozar Koljevic – the latter's brother Nikolai and Radovan Vukovic – to no avail. In the same interview, Matovic also speaks of a list of several names.

¹⁵⁵⁶ Thomas Deichmann, "Ik heb niets verkeerd gedaan" (I did nothing wrong), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 13/08/97; Janine Di Giovanni, 'The Cleanser', *The Guardian*, weekend page, 01/03/97.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Cf. Bell, *Way*, p. 97; Judah, *Serbs*, p. 166.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Janine Di Giovanni, 'The Cleanser', *The Guardian*, weekend page, 01/03/97.

It was also Koljevic who invited the sixty-year-old Plavsic to join the SDS executive in 1990. In the words of the American journalist David Rieff, Plavsic was 'far and away the weirdest of the lot'.¹⁵⁵⁹ She was born in Tuzla and raised in Sarajevo, in a rich merchant family that had an aversion to the Communists. She received a university education in Zagreb, Prague and the United States. Finally, she became professor of biology at the University of Zagreb. Like the others in the SDS leadership, she did not enter politics until after the fall of Communism, where she soon proved to be a nationalist hawk.

In April 1992, President Izetbegovic sent her as member of the Presidency to Eastern Bosnia to investigate the atrocities perpetrated there by Serb troops and paramilitaries. To the horror of the world, she kissed Arkan in front of the cameras just after the latter's savage operations in Bijelina and called him 'a true Serb hero'. Shortly afterwards, she became a member of the Presidency of the Republika Srpska, with Karadzic and Krajisnik. As a politician, she would later play a leading role in ethnic cleansing and was frequently at the front, encouraging and thanking the soldiers. Like Koljevic, she justified ethnic cleansing with great – and in her case, social Darwinist – conviction. She termed Muslims 'genetically deformed' Serbs and ethnic cleansing a 'natural phenomenon'.¹⁵⁶⁰ Serbs had the 'biological right' to cleanse. 'As a biologist' she was under the impression that Bosnian Serbs were higher in rank than the Serbs in Serbia, as they had more often been compelled to adapt to new surroundings. Plavsic went so far in her fanaticism as to say that as far as she was concerned, six million Serbs could die for the good cause since six million would be left over to benefit from it. After that remark, Milosevic said she was of unsound mind: 'She does not belong in politics and urgently needs a psychiatrist.'¹⁵⁶¹

Together with Karadzic and Momcilo Krajisnik, Koljevic and Plavsic were to form the leadership of the SDS. It was no coincidence that Karadzic, like the leader of the SDS in Knin, Rankovic, was a psychiatrist. Among their patients, they had noted the suppressed traumas caused by the ethnic struggles during the Second World War. Things that were not allowed out into the open during the Communist regime came out in the psychiatrist's rooms. Both developed an ethnically based socio-political programme, based on the tales of woe they had heard and the therapies they employed.¹⁵⁶² The leadership of the SDS, whose individual members displayed countless unresolved traumas in their biographies, were just right for an electorate with a fear of the future or, as Tim Judah writes in his book on the history of the Serbs: 'In such times it seems that people are simply willing to surrender all critical faculties and be led by the mad (...)'¹⁵⁶³

The rise of Radovan Karadzic

Like a rocket, Radovan Karadzic, too, had risen from nowhere into the political firmament of the Yugoslav republic. Until the foundation of the SDS, few had ever heard of him outside of Bosnia.

He was born on 19 June 1945 in Petnica, a village in the Savnik district in the Montenegrin hills, not far from where Milosevic was born. His father, Vuk Karadzic, had originally belonged to the Cetniks during the Second World War, but later switched over to Tito's Partisan party. Six months after Radovan Karadzic was born, his father was arrested on account of his Cetnik past. Whilst Radovan was growing up, his father spent five years in prison. The circumstances in which he grew up with his family were destitute, in a village with a parochial outlook.¹⁵⁶⁴ His mother looked after the cattle and, when his father was released from prison, he soon resumed his shoemaker's craft. Karadzic left home at the age of fifteen to finish his secondary schooling in Sarajevo, after which he trained as a nurse and then

¹⁵⁵⁹ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 99.

¹⁵⁶⁰ For the social Darwinist justification of ethnic cleansing, cf. Inic, *Portreti*, pp. 268-274.

¹⁵⁶¹ Corine de Vries, 'Biljana Plavsic ging zelfs Milosevic te ver' (Biljana Plavsic even went too far for Milosevic), *De Volkskrant*, 11/01/01.

¹⁵⁶² Cf. Weine, *History*, especially pp. 95-98.

¹⁵⁶³ Judah, *Serbs*, p. 181.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 114.

studied medicine. During the 1974/1975 academic year, he followed postgraduate studies in psychiatry and poetry at the Columbia University in New York, and studied medical depression in Copenhagen for a year. After having completed his studies, he became a psychiatrist, specializing in neurosis and depression. From 1979 to 1992, he worked at the psychiatric department at the Kosovo state hospital in Sarajevo.

Karadzic has never been able to forget his rural background. A neighbour in the Bosnian capital who had known him as a poor, shy young man with a 'hillbilly' head of hair, which was common in his village, called him 'provincial, a typical farmer who felt lost in the big city'.¹⁵⁶⁵ For that reason, he subsequently became an excellent representative of the struggle between the countryside and the city, which was one of the elements of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. On 11 December 1992, for instance, he said to a Serb magazine: 'So far, the Turks used to live in the cities and we in the woods, and now it is the other way around; we are in the cities and it is the Turks who are in the woods, and thanks to that, 'general winter' is going to be the enemy of our enemy'¹⁵⁶⁶. More than twenty years earlier, in 1971, he had already written in his poem *Sarajevo*: 'The city is burning like incense/our consciousness twists in the smoke./Empty clothes glide through the city. Red/dies the stone these houses were once built of. The plague!/Rest. A group of armoured poplars/climbs up in itself. The aggressor/travels through our veins/and sometimes you're a human, sometimes a creature of air./I know that this is all preparation for a cry...'.¹⁵⁶⁷

With hindsight, Karadzic's poems from the end of the 1960s reveal how he worked his way up from a nightmare to become a god, at once a creator and a destroyer. At first, the nightmare was synonymous with Montenegro, later it took on the form of the city. In his poems, Karadzic's actions were inspired by the anticipation of 'last days', in which each subtle distinction would disappear and he would bring about a regeneration and a rebirth for his followers.¹⁵⁶⁸ Looking back, this poetic struggling out of the city can be understood as a metaphor for the ethnic cleansing that was to take place under his direction.¹⁵⁶⁹

As likely as not, it was thanks to his origins that Karadzic had an inferiority complex, which he endeavoured to compensate with megalomaniac traits. Shy though he was at first in the Bosnian capital, he insisted later, as Seselj did, that he be addressed with the Cetnik title of 'duke'. During student demonstrations, Karadzic, who in those days looked like a hippie with his long hair, always walked in front, irrespective of whether the demonstration was in favour of Tito or against him.¹⁵⁷⁰ At the same time, he operated as police spy.¹⁵⁷¹ Karadzic's compensation urge probably did not diminish when he married Ljiljana Zelen, a fellow student from Sarajevo's high society, with whose parents the young couple lived. Thanks to his parents-in-law's money, his growing confidence began to surface.¹⁵⁷²

However, as a poet, Karadzic was not taken seriously in the Bosnian capital, which led to his hatred of artistic and intellectual circles in Sarajevo.¹⁵⁷³ Marko Vesovic, one of his fellow poets in

¹⁵⁶⁵ Tracy Wilkinson, 'Bosnians Recall Karadzic, a Neighbour Turned Enemy', *L.A. Times*, 23 & 07/95. Cf. Hirs & Hellinga, *Geit*, p. 178.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Quoted in Paul Garde 'The world's most wanted man', <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/karadzic/bosnia/bosnia.html> consulted on 01/03/00.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Quoted in Ugrecic, *Cultuur*, p. 76.

¹⁵⁶⁸ For examples, see Weine, *History*, pp. 119-124.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Weine, *History*, p. 122.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Tracy Wilkinson, 'Bosnians Recall Karadzic, a Neighbour Turned Enemy', *L.A. Times*, 23/07/95.

¹⁵⁷¹ Svetlana Slapsak, 'Waarom Sarajevo?', Dojcinovic & Keulemans (eds.), *Hommage*, p. 62; 'The World's Most Wanted Man', written and directed by Kevin Sim, *PBS* air date 26/05/98; Paul Hoggart, 'The wanted war criminal with wavy hair', *The Times*, 31/07/98; W. Nelan, 'Seeds of evil', *Time*, 29/07/96; Interview with Vladimir Srebrov, with Adil Kulenov, <http://www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk/bosnia/srebrov.html>, q.v., consulted 06/03/00; 'Vladimir Srebrov speaks out', *BosNet*, 15/11/99, <http://www.bosnet.org/archive/bosnet-bw3archive/9511/msg00342.html> consulted 06/03/00.

¹⁵⁷² Tracy Wilkinson, 'Bosnians Recall Karadzic, a Neighbour Turned Enemy', *L.A. Times*, 23/07/95; Weine, *History*, p. 108.

¹⁵⁷³ Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 30.

Sarajevo, described him as ‘lazy and constantly dreaming about his own greatness.’ By contrast, Karadzic called himself one of the best psychiatrists and poets of all Yugoslavia.¹⁵⁷⁴ Among his psychiatrist colleagues, Karadzic was also noted for his mixture of laziness, ambition and megalomania.¹⁵⁷⁵

Back in Sarajevo, Karadzic took to crime, making diagnoses and writing prescriptions to help people to cheat the social insurance.¹⁵⁷⁶ Halfway through the 1980s, he came into conflict with the law. He was a good friend of Momcilo Krajisnik, who worked at the state company Energoinvest. With a grant intended for farmers, Krajisnik and Karadzic had had a house built for Karadzic. Although there was never enough evidence to prove this fraud conclusively, Karadzic and Krajisnik spent almost a year in prison in 1987. Later, Karadzic claimed that this imprisonment was for anticommunist activities.

At the end of the 1980s, Karadzic tried to improve his position at the psychiatric hospital in Belgrade. In the Serb capital, he would be surprised that he had far more trouble with his rural background than in Sarajevo. He returned to Bosnia with his tail between his legs. Initially, once non-communist parties were permitted, he founded the Green Party. However, it soon became clear to him that that party could never expect much support.

Meanwhile, during his stay in Belgrade, Karadzic had come into contact with Cosic, the Serb nationalist talent scout who made sure that Karadzic – craving recognition – finally got what he had always desired: greatness. In the SDS top, Karadzic held a position in which he could repair the communication breakdown between reality and his own world view by manipulating his surroundings. Where necessary, he was spurred on by Cosic who told him that he was to work at the Serb cause until, using a well-known expression by the Montenegrin poet prince Njegos, ‘the impossible became possible’¹⁵⁷⁷. Originally, Karadzic was not strongly anti-Muslim, even as Bosnian Serb party leader. He had several Muslims among his acquaintances, both in his student days and later as a psychiatrist.¹⁵⁷⁸ Until the end of the 1980s, he lived in Sarajevo, surrounded by Muslims. Neighbours had never noticed any hostility on the part of this man who was soon to say that because of century-long differences of opinion, Muslims, Croats and Serbs could no longer live in one state.¹⁵⁷⁹ However, shortly after his election as chairman of the SDS, for instance, Karadzic criticized the media in Serbia, who were cautioning against Muslim fundamentalism in Bosnia. He said that the Bosnian Muslims were also Slavs, with the same blood and the same language as the Serbs. He did not think it necessary that the Serbs should protect Christian Europe from Islam: ‘We Serbs are closer to our Muslims than to Europe’.¹⁵⁸⁰ Karadzic did, it appeared, have an ever growing penchant for Serb traditions.¹⁵⁸¹ More so than against the Muslims, Karadzic’s hatred was first directed towards the Communists.¹⁵⁸² But that hatred also resulted in his resurrecting their suppressed history and thus helping to topple Bosnia’s multi-ethnic house of cards.¹⁵⁸³

Karadzic’s friend Krajisnik became the most important executor of his politics. Those two would have formed a perfect team: Karadzic had all the grand ideas and Krajisnik was a good organizer who knew how to get things done.¹⁵⁸⁴ Yet their relationship was less dissimilar than it would seem on the surface. In this relationship, too, Karadzic was very much aware that he was a Montenegrin and that

¹⁵⁷⁴ Tracy Wilkinson, ‘Bosnians Recall Karadzic, a Neighbour Turned Enemy’, *L.A. Times*, 23/07/95; Samantha Powers, ‘The world of Radovan Karadzic’, *U.S. News and World Report*, 24/07/95; Weine, *History*, p. 108; ‘The World’s Most Wanted Man’, written and directed by Kevin Sim, PBS air date 26/05/98.

¹⁵⁷⁵ Weine, *History*, pp. 108, 112, 113 and 118.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Tracy Wilkinson, ‘Bosnians Recall Karadzic, a Neighbour Turned Enemy’, *L.A. Times*, 23/07/95.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Quoted in Weine, *History*, p. 109.

¹⁵⁷⁸ Cf. Weine, *History*, pp. 114 and 116-117

¹⁵⁷⁹ Tracy Wilkinson, ‘Bosnians Recall Karadzic, a Neighbour Turned Enemy’, *L.A. Times*, 23/07/95.

¹⁵⁸⁰ Quoted in Maas, *Neighbor*, p. 159.

¹⁵⁸¹ Cf. Weine, *History*, pp. 113 and 115.

¹⁵⁸² Cf. Weine, *History*, pp. 110

¹⁵⁸³ Cf. Weine, *History*, pp. 111

¹⁵⁸⁴ Andrew Purvis, ‘Under arrest’, *Time*, 17/04/00.

as a 'real' Serb, Krajisnik was more of an authority. In most cases, Karadzic allowed himself to be led more often than the other way round.¹⁵⁸⁵

After having finally opted for Karadzic, Cosic sung the new leader's praises to the Serb leadership.¹⁵⁸⁶ However, from the onset, relations between Milosevic and Karadzic were never warm.¹⁵⁸⁷ Milosevic waited until a month after the founding of the Bosnian SDS before inviting Karadzic to come to Belgrade.¹⁵⁸⁸ Milosevic would never have that degree of influence on Karadzic, Koljevic and Krajisnik as he had on the Serb leadership in Croatia.¹⁵⁸⁹ Karadzic had seen how Milosevic had treated Serb leaders in Croatia who did not fully comply with his wishes. He realized that he had to pursue a careful line with respect to the Serb President. He could not do without him nor rub him up the wrong way, but it could be dangerous if he were to become too dependent on the Serb leader in Belgrade.

There were strong personal differences between Milosevic and Karadzic. Where Karadzic was quite a balanced person, Milosevic was volatile and screamed constantly if presented with policy options. Milosevic was originally a Communist, Karadzic a vehement anti-Communist and deeply religious. He would later say that he had made no single decision without consulting the church.¹⁵⁹⁰ Irrespective of whether this was true or not, it indicated what his frame of reference was. Milosevic had no relationship at all with the church, using it only if it suited him personally. Karadzic's popularity was to grow among the Serbs, not only in Bosnia itself, but also in Serbia.¹⁵⁹¹ That was one of the reasons why Milosevic's wife, Mira Markovic, was not sympathetic towards Karadzic. She saw herself as the last Yugoslav Communist and detested Karadzic on account of his anti-Communism. If Karadzic phoned the Milosevic household, and Mira answered the phone, she always said that her husband was not at home. She never wanted Karadzic to set foot in her house.¹⁵⁹²

For opportunist reasons, they pretended that they had nothing to do with each other. The uneasy relationship between Karadzic and Milosevic remained hidden from the outside world. That also gave Milosevic the opportunity to avoid taking responsibility for Karadzic and his supporters. In turn, it was of great importance to Karadzic not to be made out to be Milosevic's marionette.¹⁵⁹³

Notwithstanding the distance between these two men, be it assumed or personal, Karadzic and Milosevic had close ties, both directly and indirectly through Kertes, who has already been discussed in Chapter 2 of this section.¹⁵⁹⁴ Kertes was the man who had been in charge of arming the Serbs in Krajina from 1990, and who became the head of state security and then minister of the Serbs in the diaspora. In the words of one of Kertes's close assistants, the Bosnian Serb leaders could not even drink a glass of water without being ordered or permitted to do so by Milosevic.¹⁵⁹⁵ Apparently, each week, Karadzic went to Bosnia to receive instructions from Milosevic, not only for himself, but also for Mladic, who travelled less outside Bosnia.¹⁵⁹⁶

5. Election contest in Bosnia in 1990

On 18 August 1990, the Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica Bosnia* - HDZ) was formed, a full month after the founding of the SDS. The party was closely linked to the movement

¹⁵⁸⁵ Interviews V. Andreev, 07/07/00, V. Jovanovic, 14/09/01 and M. Milutinovic, 20 and 22/03/00.

¹⁵⁸⁶ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 193; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 149.

¹⁵⁸⁷ Interview B. Pellnäss, 03/11/99. Cf. Stoltenberg & Eide, *Dagene*, p. 107.

¹⁵⁸⁸ Obrad Kesic, 'Defeating 'Greater Serbia', Building Greater Milosevic', Danopoulos & Messas (eds.), *Crises*, p.64.

¹⁵⁸⁹ Stojanovic, Fall, p. 173; interview V. Matovic, 02/08/01.

¹⁵⁹⁰ Nobjsa Popov, 'Traumatology of the Party State', Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 103. For information regarding Karadzic's relationship with his religion, cf. Paul Mojzes, 'Religioznost Radovana Karadzica', *Genocid*, pp.295-298.

¹⁵⁹¹ Cf. Vojin Dimitrijevic, 'The International Community and the Yugoslav Crisis', Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 648.

¹⁵⁹² Interviews S. Djukic, 04/08/01; V. Matovic, 02/08/01.

¹⁵⁹³ Cf. Zimmermann, *Ambassador*, p. 18.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Spasic, Lasica, pp. 234, 250-251; interview B. Spasic, 16/09/01.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Interview B. Spasic, 16/09/01.

¹⁵⁹⁶ Interview B. Spasic, 16/09/01.

of the same name in the 'homeland' Croatia and opted for independence from Bosnia-Herzegovina and the right of the Croats to separate from it. Soon the party was divided between moderates, who were in favour of keeping Bosnia-Herzegovina intact, and extremists hoping to unite a Croat part of Bosnia with Croatia. The moderates under Stjepan Kljuic lived for the most part in Sarajevo and North and Central Bosnia, where Croats were generally in the minority. The extremists, also known as the Herzegovina faction, under Mate Boban, lived chiefly in Western Herzegovina, where most of the cities and villages were predominantly Croatian. Kljuic had the upper hand, for the time being. With this Croatian party in Bosnia, the nationalist party trio was complete.

Despite the various ethnic backgrounds of these three parties, the election contest was, at first, relatively restrained. The parties had not yet honed their party programmes and were not battling with one another because, due to their ethnic background, there was no cause to fish for votes in the same pond. They mostly targeted the Communists, from whom they hoped to wrestle control, and any dissidents among their own ranks. Nevertheless, the election campaign led to tensions between the ethnic groups because the parties tried to organize rallies that were as large as possible, which then became shows of strength towards the others. Moreover, the symbols used at these meetings were offensive.

For example, it stung the Serbs that at a meeting of probably 100,000 party members and sympathizers in Foca on 25 August 1990, the SDA paid homage to the Muslims who had been slaughtered there during the Second World War by the Cetniks. On 27 September 1990, the SDA held a meeting in Novi Pazar in Sandzak in Serbia, where 50,000 people were present and where the idea of autonomy for Sandzak was proclaimed.¹⁵⁹⁷

At several rallies, Izetbegovic declared that if Croatia and Slovenia were to leave the Yugoslav federation, Bosnia could not stay behind because it would otherwise become part of Greater Serbia.¹⁵⁹⁸ After Slovenia and Croatia had left, Serbia – with Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro – would then have four of the six votes in the Presidency. Izetbegovic was, for that matter, convinced that the Serbs had a tendency towards hegemony 'in their blood'.¹⁵⁹⁹ Since 1918, they had tormented the other Yugoslav peoples with those aspirations, employing the army and the police in particular.¹⁶⁰⁰

However, the SDS made it clear that any change in the status of Bosnia-Herzegovina or the position of the Serbs in Bosnia would have to be decided by referendum among the Serb peoples in the republic.¹⁶⁰¹ In the election campaign, Karadzic advocated a Yugoslav federation, consisting of Serbia, Montenegro, a large part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Serb territories in Croatia and Macedonia, in short Greater Serbia.¹⁶⁰² Even the moderate Croat, Kljuic, let it be known that participation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in a 'rump' Yugoslavia would be completely off target. They would regard that as an 'occupation' and a cause for revolt.¹⁶⁰³ Hence, Izetbegovic and his party were caught up in a *prisoner's dilemma*. Whatever option the SDA chose – be it to remain part of Yugoslavia or to split off – it would always lead to violence on the part of one of the two other ethnic groups. In addition, the SDA was itself divided into a wing that advocated a Muslim state, which might come into being if Bosnia-Herzegovina were split up, and one that advocated a multi-ethnic, secular Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The perceptions of the SDA founders became more and more sharply divided. Zulfikarpasic was irked by the religious exclusivity of the party and the increasingly prominent position it assumed among the Muslim clerics. In his view, it was wrong for the SDA to be preoccupied with Sandzak, the

¹⁵⁹⁷ Izetbegovic, *Govori*, p. 72.

¹⁵⁹⁸ 'Bosnië-Herzegovina gaat zijn eigen weg' (Bosnia-Herzegovina goes its own way), *Trouw*, 16/10/91; Grémaux & De Vries, 'Crisis', p. 37; Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 47.

¹⁵⁹⁹ Izetbegovic, *Govori*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰⁰ Izetbegovic, *Govori*, p. 68.

¹⁶⁰¹ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 47.

¹⁶⁰² Chuck Sudetic, 'Ethnic Rivalries Push Yugoslavia to Edge', *The New York Times*, 14/10/90.

¹⁶⁰³ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 73; Kitty McKinsey, 'Bosnia fears it will be sliced up by Croatia and Serbia', *The Ottawa Citizen*, 04/08/91.

area in Serbia inhabited mainly by Muslims, because it underscored the religious character of the party. He was, on the contrary, a proponent of a party with a secular Bosnian national character. It worried him to see that Omer Behmen and Hasan Cengic in particular emphasized the religious character of the party more and more with readings from the Koran and speeches by Imams at mass meetings. These two were also responsible for building a kind of personality cult around Izetbegovic. Also, the hunt for jobs and the accompanying hypocrisy irritated him.¹⁶⁰⁴ Instead of becoming a middle-class party of the centre with support among the intelligentsia, as Zulfikarpasic had wished, the SDA became a populist party.¹⁶⁰⁵ He had no qualms about using the word 'fascism' and 'fundamentalism' for the development he so deplored.¹⁶⁰⁶ He gave up his intention of inviting to SDA meetings prominent individuals from the liberal European movement with whom he had good contacts, as they would get the impression of having ended up at a gathering in Egypt or Algeria.¹⁶⁰⁷

Izetbegovic, on the other hand, applauded the leading role the Imams played within the SDA because they could reach a large section of the Muslim electorate.¹⁶⁰⁸ Zulfikarpasic also blamed Izetbegovic for tolerating Salim Sabic in his entourage, according to Zulfikarpasic a KOS agent run by Belgrade, whose aim it was to bring the ethnic differences of opinion in Bosnia to a head.¹⁶⁰⁹ Sabic was an important representative of the mosque in Zagreb. He led a group of others from circles in that mosque who were said to exert considerable influence over Izetbegovic. Sabic was to become one of the deputy chairmen of the SDA and was later appointed head of the Islamic community in Croatia, as successor to Hasan Cengic. Neither did Zulfikarpasic agree that the SDA was secretly engaged in buying weapons and organizing military training courses.¹⁶¹⁰ Moreover, Zulfikarpasic was convinced that a form of co-operation with the Serbs had to be sought to avoid a drama in Bosnia.¹⁶¹¹

On 10 September 1990, the largest SDA rally in the election campaign in Velika Kladusa pushed Zulfikarpasic over the edge. In the presence of at least 200,000 people, the party made it clear that the Muslims were not prepared to live in a 'rump' Yugoslavia and that if need be they would take up arms to defend Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁶¹² Now, Zulfikarpasic really became frightened by what he saw and heard. There were hundreds of green flags, people in Arabic dress and portraits of Saddam Hussein. People were chanting 'Long live Saddam Hussein' and 'We're going to kill Vuk [Draskovic]'.¹⁶¹³ After this, Zulfikarpasic no longer trusted Izetbegovic and, on 18 September, along with a few allies, he and Muhamed Filipovic left the SDA.

They formed a new, liberal party for people of all ethnic backgrounds, although that could not be readily deduced from the name *Muslimanska Bosnjacka Organizacija* (MBO). Izetbegovic was able to prevent several SDA branches from following the schisms, using old Communist tactics, according to Zulfikarpasic.¹⁶¹⁴ Soon after the establishment of the MBO, the party had to cancel all election meetings because the SDA had arranged incidents and threatened MBO members. SDA members smashed windows at a secondary school in Srebrenica, for instance, because the head of the school was a prominent member of the MBO.¹⁶¹⁵ Izetbegovic himself felt little need to explain the substantial and

¹⁶⁰⁴ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, pp. xv, 94, 110, 135-137 and 141.

¹⁶⁰⁵ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, p. 153.

¹⁶⁰⁶ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, pp. 136-137 and 142.

¹⁶⁰⁷ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, p. 137.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, p. 136.

¹⁶⁰⁹ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, pp. 140-141.

¹⁶¹⁰ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, pp. 139-140.

¹⁶¹¹ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, pp. 94, 138.

¹⁶¹² Izetbegovic, *Govori*, p. 72.

¹⁶¹³ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, p. 141.

¹⁶¹⁴ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, p. 143.

¹⁶¹⁵ Yugoslav press agency, 'Other reports in brief; Muslim Bosniak Organisation cancels meetings because of harassment', 1207, 13/11/90, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 15/11/90.

tactical differences. He believed that Zulfikarpasic and his associates had made an illegal attempt to gain control of the party. Izetbegovic and his supporters had thwarted that.¹⁶¹⁶

As the election campaign went on, feelings ran higher and higher and the demand for armed struggle grew louder. At a press conference in October 1990, Karadzic declared that the defence of territory and people no longer sufficed to protect the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He wanted the Federal Presidency of Yugoslavia to issue new instructions for their defence. In addition, the army garrisons in 'threatened' areas should be reinforced.¹⁶¹⁷ During SDA party meetings, those present now shouted for weapons to be handed out.¹⁶¹⁸

During the elections in November and December 1990, it emerged that the parties based on ethnic principles had won the race. The three largest ethnic-based parties gained 83.7 per cent of the vote, the SDA won 35.8 per cent, equal to 86 of the 240 parliamentary seats, the SDS polled 29.1 per cent (72 seats) and the HDZ 18.8 (44 seats).

In no other Yugoslav republic was the Communist loss as great as in Bosnia, where they won 18 seats, less than eight per cent of the votes. With 5.4 per cent of the votes, the alliance of reform-minded forces of Federal Prime Minister Markovic took 13 seats in parliament. The MBO of Zulfikarpasic and Filipovic obtained just two seats. The distribution of seats deviated only slightly from the demographic ratios among the ethnic groups.

For a long period, the hopes of humanitarian groups in the West were focused on those groups prepared to maintain a multi-ethnic society in Bosnia, although their numbers did decrease through emigration. However, the governments in Europe saw the leaders of the ethnic parties mainly as interlocutors.¹⁶¹⁹ They failed to live up to what Van den Broek said at the opening meeting of the Hague peace conference, namely that a lasting solution to the conflict could be achieved by building a bridge between the peace-loving forces inside and outside Yugoslavia.¹⁶²⁰

6. New political relations in Bosnia

Hand in hand, the three ethnic parties now began dismantling the undivided state of Bosnia-Herzegovina. After the elections, a Presidency came into being, consisting of two Muslims, two Serbs, two Croats and a representative of the other population groups. They all represented ethnically-oriented parties, who at this stage worked together to break (former) Communist power. However, from time to time, there were sometimes angry clashes among their supporters.

Izetbegovic became chairman of the Presidency, HDZ representative Jure Pelivan became Prime Minister and Momcilo Krajsnik the President of Parliament. Chairmanship of the Presidency was to rotate every twelve months. A cabinet was formed consisting of ten ministers from the SDA, seven from the SDS and five from the HDZ. As from this moment, a distribution of jobs and positions took place on the grounds of ethnic origin, at all administrative and official levels. Not only did this lead to countless conflicts, but also to an immobilisation and disbanding of the state machinery and to flagrant corruption.

Illustrative for the unworkable relations was the struggle that developed in the Bosnian Parliament about the text used for the swearing of the oath. The SDS demanded that the text be printed not only in Latin, but in Cyrillic script. Croatian members of parliament called for a text in 'Croatian', although there was a difference of just one letter in the oath between 'Croatian' and

¹⁶¹⁶ Izetbegovic, *Govori*, p. 72.

¹⁶¹⁷ Tanjug report of 11/10/90, 11:07, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 15/10/90.

¹⁶¹⁸ Cf. Duijzings, *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnië*.

¹⁶¹⁹ This complaint came, for instance, from Prof. Vojin Dimitrijevic of the opposition Civil Alliance for Serbia and member of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations, 'Interventie zal de lijdensweg verlengen' (Intervention will prolong the agony), *Tribune* 29(1993)8 p. 19.

¹⁶²⁰ Cf. Quaevlieg-Mihailovic, '*Betrokkenheid*', p. 9.

‘Bosnian’¹⁶²¹. In reply to that, one SDS member said sarcastically that there should also be a text in ‘Muslim’.¹⁶²²

Moreover, the distribution of posts increasingly took on the character of a territorial division. Ethnically pure administrations were installed at local level. It became clear that there was considerable resistance to the ‘ethnicization’ of society among the public when Sarajevo TV organised a poll among its viewers about whether they thought the station should be divided up into three ethnic broadcasting stations, as the SDS had demanded. A total of 330,000 viewers voted against and only 35,000 were in favour. In response, the SDS took possession of the local station in Banja Luka in August 1991. From then on, politicians tried to organize all television stations in Bosnia along ethnic lines.

Meanwhile, the views held by the three nationalist parties on the future of Yugoslavia differed. The SDS wanted a federalist solution, and the HDZ wished to break away from Yugoslavia, but then Bosnia would, at the very least, have to become a confederation of three ethnic regions. For the SDA, upholding Bosnia-Herzegovina as an integrated, separate administrative entity was the most important. In February 1991, the SDA and the HDZ suggested that Parliament declare that laws of the Bosnian republic have preference over federal Yugoslav laws.

On 27 February 1991, Izetbegovic declared in the Bosnian Parliament: ‘I would sacrifice peace for a sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina, but for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I would not sacrifice sovereignty.’¹⁶²³ This was a remark the Serbs would hold against him for years, seeing it as proof that Izetbegovic himself had wanted war in Bosnia. For that matter, Izetbegovic had to vacillate between the multi-ethnicity he avowed as a means to uphold Bosnia-Herzegovina’s sovereignty, and the exclusiveness of his Muslim party.¹⁶²⁴ Confronted with this inconsistency, Izetbegovic declared that he had no choice but to lead an ethnic party as multi-ethnic parties would attract too few supporters.¹⁶²⁵ Izetbegovic did not manage to dispel suspicions among other ethnic groups. For instance, political relations deteriorated because the election results had reinforced Muslim triumphalism, which was already noticeable in the SDA at election time. During the discussions on the distribution of the three top positions in the republic, Izetbegovic remarked, for example, he felt it was logical for Bosnia to become a state for the Muslims, as Croats and Serbs each already had a state of their own.¹⁶²⁶ In December 1990, after the elections, Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, a prominent SDA member, wrote that Serbs and Croats now had to adapt all aspects of their development to those of the Bosnian Muslims.¹⁶²⁷

When Izetbegovic, also as president, spoke of ‘our people’, he meant the Muslims and not the Croats and Serbs.¹⁶²⁸ On state occasions, the SDA flag often flew alongside the Bosnian one. At party meetings, those present expressed their support for the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and saw Arab clothing. The many green flags flying on such occasions, some with half moons, were a clear reference to Islam, not to any multi-cultural Bosnian identity. Not surprisingly, Izetbegovic drove the Serbs to distraction with his ethnic party. He was certainly no less clumsy, to phrase it carefully, than Tadjman when choosing symbols that offended other ethnic groups in their republics. For instance, the first three countries Izetbegovic visited after being inaugurated as president were Libya, Iran and Turkey. During a trip to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey in July 1991, he conveyed the impression that he was looking to conclude an Islamic alliance. He also requested that Bosnia-Herzegovina be granted observer status as it were in the Organization of Islamic Countries. Karadzic said that with his journey,

¹⁶²¹ The difference between *demokratija* and *demokracija*.

¹⁶²² Burg & Shoup, *War*, pp. 53-55.

¹⁶²³ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 91; Bougarel, *Bosnie*, p. 56.

¹⁶²⁴ Cf. Duijzings, *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnië*, on the exclusive character of the SDA who refers to the repeated refusal of the SDA in Srebrenica to admit a Serb woman.

¹⁶²⁵ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 92; Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 219.

¹⁶²⁶ Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 186; interview R. Dukic, 14/06/00.

¹⁶²⁷ Mahmutcehajic, *Bosnia*, p. 30.

¹⁶²⁸ Izetbegovic, *Govori*, passim.

Izetbegovic had proven his most sombre suspicions that Bosnia would become an Islamic country.¹⁶²⁹ Shortly after the referendum of 29 February and 1 March 1992 on the independence of Bosnia, Izetbegovic was to set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca, where he was received by King Fahd of Saudi Arabia.

Karadzic feared serious acts of violence in Bosnia were Yugoslavia to fall apart. A civil war in Bosnia could lead to a mass slaughter among the Serbs. For this reason, on 21 February 1991, he requested the Serb member of the Yugoslav Presidency, Jovic, that the Serbs be protected by the JNA. Jovic informed him that he was, in theory, prepared to pledge such support, but could give no guarantees because the JNA itself was subject to serious ethnic tension and might split up.¹⁶³⁰ As early as the spring of 1990, when they had decided that Croatia and Slovenia could leave Yugoslavia, the question presented itself to Milosevic and Jovic how much store they would set by preserving Bosnia-Herzegovina in a rump Yugoslavia. There was little interest since it was assumed that an integrated Bosnia would produce few votes for Milosevic's party.¹⁶³¹ Always thinking of his own power, Milosevic did want to hold a referendum to allow the Serbs in Bosnia to choose autonomy.¹⁶³² Needless to say there were votes to be had in this group.¹⁶³³

Accordingly, at the meeting on 21 February 1991, Jovic enjoined Karadzic that he should resist any developments that stood in the way of a Greater Serbia. If there should be a vote on independence, he should leave Parliament before voting started. Furthermore, he could count on the support of the JNA. Karadzic promised to do everything possible to keep the Muslims within the rump Yugoslavia, but he, too, said that he could offer no guarantees, because in his view, the Muslims were working towards a Muslim state that included Sandzak and Kosovo.¹⁶³⁴

In the following months, SDS politicians vigorously proclaimed their opposition to Bosnia-Herzegovina's independence. For example, as soon as May 1991, the month prior to the declarations of independence of Croatia and Slovenia, the SDS Minister D. Balaban said that:

'If Bosnia becomes an independent and sovereign state, the Serb section of the population will not become a national minority within that state. If that happens the [Serb] communities will break away and proclaim their own autonomous province, with all the trappings of a state... Within 24 hours, at least one military unit will be called into being in each Serb community. The Serbs will not let themselves be surprised again as they had done in 1941.'¹⁶³⁵

On 21 June 1991, when President Izetbegovic spoke to US Secretary of State Baker, he told him that if civil war were to break out in Yugoslavia, it would be in Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁶³⁶

¹⁶²⁹ Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 213.

¹⁶³⁰ Jovic, *Dani*, pp. 273-274.

¹⁶³¹ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 152.

¹⁶³² Jovic, *Dani*, pp. 176-177.

¹⁶³³ This information from Jovic's diary refutes arguments that Milosevic long entertained the hope of holding on to the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina for a rump state of Yugoslavia, after Slovenia and Croatia had left. Cf. for those views Kadrijevic, *Vien*, p. 159; Pedrag Simic, quoted in: Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 161.

¹⁶³⁴ Jovic, *Dani*, pp. 273-274; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 150.

¹⁶³⁵ *Borba*, 14/05/91, quoted in X. Bougarel, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina - State and Communitarianism', Dyker & Vejvoda (ed.), *Yugoslavia*, p. 100. See also Bougarel, *Bosnie*, p. 50.

¹⁶³⁶ 'US Secretary of State in Yugoslavia', *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 27/06/91. A few days later Raymond van den Boogaard wrote that Bosnia-Herzegovina itself feared that it would become the largest battlefield if the Yugoslav crisis were to degenerate into a civil war, 'Angst voor provocaties Servië' (Fear of Serb provocations), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/06/91.

Green Berets and Patriotic League

‘We are not afraid of weapons, which can be found everywhere, as weapons do not of their own accord find troops; we are afraid of troops who always find themselves weapons.’¹⁶³⁷

The conflicts in Slovenia and Croatia did indeed have immediate implications for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Early in June 1991 already, a few weeks before Croatia proclaimed its independence, two hundred Serb paramilitaries from the Serb Autonomous Region of Krajina held military exercises in the vicinity of Banja Luka. Milan Martić, the Serb Minister of the Interior in the autonomous region, declared that with this ‘invasion’ of his troops, the frontier between Bosnia and the Serb areas in Croatia had, to all intents and purposes, disappeared. That was Izetbegović’s cue on 9 June to declare that ‘the struggle for Bosnia has begun.’¹⁶³⁸

The following day, a meeting took place in the police station – the *Dom Milicije* – in Sarajevo under the auspices of the SDA, where official Muslim representatives from all over Bosnia decided to fight to defend the republic.¹⁶³⁹ During the meeting, the Council for the Defence of the Muslims was set up, comprising Izetbegović, Muhamed Cengić, Deputy Prime Minister and brother of Hasan Cengić, one of the founders, Ejup Ganić, member of the Bosnian Presidency, Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, Minister of Energy, Salim Sabić, co-founder of the SDA and confidant of Izetbegović, and Sulejman Ugljanin, the leader of the Muslims in Sandžak. A course was set, in which the Bosnian leadership would try to gain international recognition, while preparing to defend Bosnia.¹⁶⁴⁰ In that respect, a few things had already taken place.

Evrim Svrakić had founded the Green Berets (*Zelene Beretke*), more or less on his own initiative.¹⁶⁴¹ Part of his family had been murdered in Glamoc by the Serbs during the Second World War. He had become a member of the SDA shortly after it had been established. Having seen what happened in Croatia in the spring of 1991, he was afraid of a repeat of the terrible incidents during the Second World War. With family and friends, he set up an organization in Sarajevo that would undertake to organize the defence of the Muslims. He named the organization Bosna, but it would later become popular as ‘Green Berets’ (*Zelene Beretke*). At the time of the *Dom Milicije* meeting, the movement consisted of four hundred members.

With the SDA leadership’s blessing, Svrakić’s movement was able to grow. At the start of 1992, there were 52 groups (*Bosne*), each of which comprised forty to fifty people. Eventually, the *Zelene Beretke* had three thousand men in Sarajevo, ranging in age from fifteen to sixty. They were armed with the help of the Bosnian Ministry of the Interior under Alija Delimustafić. At the outbreak of war in April 1992, they were equipped with Kalashnikovs, rocket launchers, and 60 mm and 82 mm mortars. Some of the groups were destined to defend Sarajevo, another would operate in the city itself in order to capture barracks and weapons from the JNA. Only one professional officer from the JNA was active in the *Zelene Beretke*, Major Zijo Rujanac. Some of the commanders were criminals, including Musan Topalović (‘Caco’), with whom Izetbegović had become friendly in his years in prison in the 1980s, Ramiz Delalić (Celo II) and Jusuf Prazina (‘Juka’). They were to make an important contribution to the defence of Sarajevo at the beginning of the war. *Zelene Beretke* were also active in Konjic, Mostar and Travnik. According to Izetbegović, the Green Berets complied readily with the political leadership.¹⁶⁴²

¹⁶³⁷ General Aleksander Vasiljević, head of the KOS, to Izetbegović, on the outbreak of war in Bosnia, Mahmutćehajić, *War*, p. 21.

¹⁶³⁸ Donia & Fine, *Bosnia*, p. 228.

¹⁶³⁹ Izetbegović, *Govori*, pp. 6 and 53. Cf. Mahmutćehajić, *War*, p. 13; Marko Attila Hoare, *Civilian-Military Relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992-1995*, Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 181.

¹⁶⁴⁰ Mahmutćehajić, *War*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁶⁴¹ For more information on the *Zelene Beretke*, see Vildana Selimbegović, ‘Evrim Svrakić, Zelena Beretka: Mismo poceli, Atif završio’, *Dani*, January 1996, pp. 46-49.

¹⁶⁴² Izetbegović, *Govori*, p. 90.

A second organization that existed as an idea at least on 10 June was the Patriotic League (*Patriotska Liga*). It was meant as the military arm of the SDA. The deputy Minister of Defence, Munib Bisić would later maintain that, as early as April 1991, it was clear to the SDA leadership that a war would be unavoidable.¹⁶⁴³ Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, one of the political leaders of the Patriotic League, also said that, in the spring of 1991, it was a foregone conclusion among the leading Bosnian Muslims that war was unavoidable.¹⁶⁴⁴ As such, the Patriotic League was founded at the end of March 1991¹⁶⁴⁵, which was very early, given that it took place at a time when the large-scale supply of weapons to the Bosnian Serbs had yet to begin.

However, at the time of the *Dom Milicije* meeting, the Patriotic League comprised no more than a few individuals, who were active in their own right, collecting documentary material or misappropriating conscription cards, for instance. At the 10 June meeting, it was decided that the Patriotic League should be further enlarged. A political branch was appointed, under the leadership of President Izetbegović, Minister Rusmir Mahmutćehajić and Hasan Čengić. The military arm did not begin to take shape until after September 1991, after the first Muslim officers – Sulejman Vranh ('Sule'), Meho Karasić ('Kemo') and Sefer Halilović ('Halil') – had left the JNA to make up the military command. Together with a number of others, they made up the General Staff of the League. On account of their illegal activities, members could not stay at the same address for longer than two nights in a row.

The Bosnian Muslims prepare for war

In October 1991, Halilović and Karasić were ordered by the political leadership to organize the defence of Bosnia. Halilović's priority was to draft a plan for defending Sarajevo. Later, after a meeting between the League top with Izetbegović and the SDA top on 2 December, Izetbegović agreed to Halilović's Sarajevo defence plan and to his suggestion to subsequently prepare the defence of the entire republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Incidentally, on that occasion, Halilović got the impression that Izetbegović was not very interested in military preparations for independence. Moreover, he called the defence plan for all Bosnia 'megalomaniac'.¹⁶⁴⁶

Yet here, too, Izetbegović was ambiguous. Whilst publicly preaching peace to the gullible public¹⁶⁴⁷, behind the scenes he was still preparing the Muslims for war. An idealist on the outside, who continued to maintain that he was against the forming of paramilitary groups¹⁶⁴⁸, he was in actual fact a tactician evaluating what chances of success the use of violence would have. In November 1991, when the SDA mayor of Srebrenica, Ibisević, phoned to ask whether he should organize resistance in response to the JNA announcement that federal army troops would be passing through the city, Izetbegović replied that the mayor should only resist if he had sufficient weaponry and was sure that the Muslims could defend themselves.¹⁶⁴⁹ And one of the other leaders of the Patriotic League, Karasić, believed that, on the contrary, Izetbegović was urging the Patriotic League to work harder at the defence plans for Bosnia.¹⁶⁵⁰

¹⁶⁴³ Hannes Hofbauer, 'Neue Staaten, neue Kriege. Die Zerstörung Jugoslawiens (1991-1999)', idem (Hg.), *Balkankrieg*, p. 85.

¹⁶⁴⁴ Mahmutćehajić, *War*, p. 19; Marko Attila Hoare, 'Civilian-Military Relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992-1995', Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 181. Ibidem, p. 260.

¹⁶⁴⁵ Bougarel, *Bosnie*, p. 111; Mahmutćehajić, *Bosnia*, pp. 98; Mahmutćehajić, *War*, p. 20. The following information about the Patriotic League is based mainly on serial instalments by Sefko Hodžić, 'Meho Karasić Kemo – Tajne Patriotske Lige', *Oslobodenje*, 09 to 17/01/99 and 'Kako je nastajala Bosnić-Herzegovina. armija', *Oslobodenje*, 15/04 to 10/05/1997.

¹⁶⁴⁶ Halilović, *Strategija*, pp. 55-56.

¹⁶⁴⁷ Wijnaendts, for instance, thought that Izetbegović was not making any military preparations, interview H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 43.

¹⁶⁴⁹ Appendix, Duijzings, *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnić*.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Meho Karasić quoted in Sefko Hodžić, 'Meho Karasić Kemo – Tajne Patriotske Lige (6)', *Oslobodenje*, 14/01/99.

There were discussions in the military top of the League about whether the defence should be based on small, well-armed and trained commandos or on mobilizing the masses, which would at first not be well-armed. Halilovic opted for the latter. He was counting on the members of the League to apprehend the arms themselves. Eventually, Halilovic's plan was chosen, but a small number of commando troops were installed, whose very object it was to accumulate arms.

Meanwhile, the General Staff of the League was recruiting more and more JNA deserters and setting up underground formations. As soon as the military arm of the League was formed in October 1991, it began to send co-ordinators to the separate regions of Bosnia to form units in secret, reconnoitre terrain and chart the movements of the JNA and Serb paramilitary groups. The SDA and the Muslims in the Ministry of the Interior checked the antecedents of those who registered in the League. On the eve of war, there were nine regional and almost one hundred municipal commandos. They were trained by military and members of the Bosnian police. Training consisted of such actions as making explosives, blocking roads and sabotaging bridges. In the spring of 1992, for example, members of the Patriotic League placed explosives on all bridges across the Drina to prevent units of the Uzice and Niksic Corps of the JNA from entering Eastern Bosnia. However, Izetbegovic ordered the explosives to be removed as he was frightened that using them would endanger recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁶⁵¹ The Patriotic League also secretly set about producing weapons, having components for their own hand grenade – later given the name Bosanka – manufactured all over Bosnia, for instance.

Various key persons at the Ministry of the Interior played an important role in the formation of the Patriotic League, including Minister Delimustafic, Deputy Interior Minister Jusuf Pusina, Assistant Interior Minister Avdo Hebib, and head of internal state security Bakir Alispahic. In the early months of 1991, Bosnian Interior Minister Delimustafic began buying Kalashnikovs and munitions for the League in Vienna.¹⁶⁵² Avdo Hebib was the chief contact between the Ministry and the League. On 10 April 1991, Hebib was arrested with a few assistants when they rode into Sarajevo with three trucks full of weapons. The military prosecutor of Sarajevo threatened to prosecute him¹⁶⁵³, after which the directors of the Ministry of the Interior kept a lower profile.

It was Halid ('Hadzija') Cengic, the father of Hasan and Muhamed who had the biggest hand in organizing the arms.¹⁶⁵⁴ In that respect, he had good contacts with Iran, as did his son Hasan. The Cengic family had made a name for themselves in the weapons trade. As Deputy Prime Minister, Cengic signed a contract for military collaboration with Turkey in March 1992, under the pretence of ensuring that Turkey would purchase arms from Bosnian weapon manufacturers who could no longer supply the Yugoslav army.¹⁶⁵⁵ Given the position of the Cengic family and the interests of the Bosnian Muslims, it would seem obvious to assume that the Turkish-Bosnian weapon transport was, in actual fact, going in the other direction. From late 1991 to early 1992, Hebib created a secret police to back Izetbegovic.¹⁶⁵⁶

From 7 to 9 February 1992, the regional commanders of the Patriotic League met in secret in Mehurici, a village near Travnik. Each commander was accompanied by two other men. Also present at the meeting were the General Staff and Hasan Cengic. Each co-ordinator reported how many men and weapons he had under his charge. It seems to have been established at this point that the Patriotic League had at its disposal 60,000 to 70,000 men under arms¹⁶⁵⁷, which is probably a slight exaggeration.

¹⁶⁵¹ Medina Delalic, 'SDA Strategy: Low Blows', *Slobodna Bosna*, 20/04/00; Obrad Kesic, 'Defeating 'Greater Serbia', Building Greater Milosevic', Danopoulos & Messas (eds.), *Crises*, p. 62.

¹⁶⁵² Interview B. Spasic, 16/09/01.

¹⁶⁵³ Yugoslav Press Agency, 'Sarajevo military prosecutor charges Assistant Interior Minister with spying', 1436, 08/06/91, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 12/06/91.

¹⁶⁵⁴ Tino Andic & Marko Juric, 'Muslimanska obavestajna sluzba djeluje pod krinkom humanitarnih rijeci, a bavi se nabavom oruzja', *Globus*, 11/10/96.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Moore, *Relations*, p. 9.

¹⁶⁵⁶ Interview B. Spasic, 16/09/01.

¹⁶⁵⁷ Marijan, *War*, pp. 160-161.

Halilovic and Karisik reported separately that, in the spring of 1992, the League had 120,000 members, thirty per cent of whom bore arms. That would amount to about 36,000 armed men, which corresponds to the number of between 35,000 and 40,000 mentioned by Izetbegovic.¹⁶⁵⁸

On 25 February, the SDA top approved Halilovic's Bosnian defence plan. The basis of this plan was that the Patriotic League would defend the lives of the Muslims and the integrity of a multi-ethnic Bosnia against the JNA, SDS and 'extremist wing' of the HDZ. The League would collaborate as far as possible with the Croats.¹⁶⁵⁹ According to the handbook, the League would liberate all Bosnia within 67 days. That was a statement intended mainly to boost morale. The military command of the League actually surmised that it would need at least two to three years. Nonetheless, with that supposition, too, those who had drafted the plan were still too optimistic. They assumed that war in Bosnia would coincide with a conflict in Kosovo, Macedonia and Sandzak. They had also sent various persons to those regions to act as co-ordinators. Since, at that stage, things remained quiet, the JNA and Serb paramilitary groups could focus without restraint on Bosnia.

7. The consequences of the war in Croatia for Bosnia

Milan Martić's remarks of early June 1991 about the disappearance of the frontiers between Bosnia and Croatia had accelerated the Bosnian Muslims' military preparations. A few weeks later, when Croatia and Slovenia declared independence, threats regarding the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina grew. Verbally, Serbs and Croats went for each other's throats. On the eve of the declaration of Croatia's independence, the Croatian Serbs announced that on 28 June they wanted to align their autonomous regions with Serb-dominated areas in Bosnia.¹⁶⁶⁰ On 27 June, a day earlier than announced, the union of the Bosnian and Croatian Krajinas was proclaimed in Bosansko Grahovo. In a declaration adopted at the time, it was said that the union of all Serbs was imperative. A day later, the SDS warned that a peaceful division of Bosnia was out of the question.¹⁶⁶¹

President Tudjman said in his declaration of independence to the Croatian Parliament that Croatia would respect all internal Yugoslav borders 'and those of Bosnia in particular'. Should Serbia aspire to a Greater Serbia, however, it would then raise the matter of the Croats in Bosnia. It was one of the three moments in his long speech that Tudjman had to pause for applause from the Croatian delegates.¹⁶⁶² Early in July 1991, the leader of the HDZ in Bosnia Stjepan Ključić, warned that if Croatia were to actively devolve from Yugoslavia, the Croats would not want to remain in a Bosnia that was still part of it.¹⁶⁶³

Once war had broken out in Croatia, this soon had even more consequences for Bosnia. Not only did the war fuel the memories of the Second World War, but it showed each day what the various population groups could do to one another. As early as the beginning of July, Serbs started fleeing from Croatia to Bosnia. Conversely, Serbs, Croats and Muslims went from Bosnia to Croatia to join the war.¹⁶⁶⁴ Early in December 1991, there were a total of approximately 10,000 Bosnians fighting in Croatia.¹⁶⁶⁵ 'No Vukovars here', boards along the roads in Bosnia announced towards the end of 1991,¹⁶⁶⁶ referring to the struggle between Serbs and Croats for this town. A total of 100,000 people

¹⁶⁵⁸ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 74. Incidentally, he called them the Green Berets, a term that was increasingly being used in the Bosnian forces in the making. In January 1992, the Serb leadership was said to have had access to information showing that the League had 96,000 armed men at its disposal. Interview D. Cosic, 13/09/01.

¹⁶⁵⁹ Marijan, *War*, p. 161.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Blaine Harden, 'Yugoslav Regions Assert Independence', *The Washington Post*, 26/06/91.

¹⁶⁶¹ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 152.

¹⁶⁶² 'President Tudjman's speech proclaiming the independence of Croatia', *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 27/06/91.

¹⁶⁶³ 'Other reports on Bosnia-Herzegovina', *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 11/07/91.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Cf. Gajic Glisic, *Vojska*, p. 116; Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 286; Marijan, *War*, p. 158.

¹⁶⁶⁵ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 428 n. 100.

¹⁶⁶⁶ Bell, *Way*, p. 33.

protested in Sarajevo on 12 November against the war in Yugoslavia, but it was illusory to think that the Croatian war would not also leave its mark on Bosnia.¹⁶⁶⁷

From September 1991, JNA units used Bosnia as an operating base for attacks on Croatia. That was initially the case in Bosanska Krajina, from where attacks on West Slavonia were launched. Croats and Muslims blocked the passage of JNA troops on their way to Croatia at various points. When Croatian and Muslim citizens attempted to stop a column of armoured cars on the road to Vukovar in September 1991 near Visegrad in Eastern Bosnia, the latter opened fire.¹⁶⁶⁸ Moreover, units under the command of General Nikola Uzelac of the Banja Luka Corps of the JNA started bombarding Croatian cities and villages from Bosnian territory.¹⁶⁶⁹ Tudjman then tried to convince Izetbegovic to launch Bosnian territorial defence against the JNA, so that the federal army would become implicated in a war on two fronts.¹⁶⁷⁰

Apart from the Bosnian Krajina, JNA units were also active in the area of Eastern Hercegovina. This took place in the light of the war in Croatia, in this case, the attacks on Dubrovnik and Prevlaka. On 20 September 1991, units of the Uzice and Podgorica Corps of the JNA fanned out in Central and Eastern Bosnia, where, they maintained, the Mostar airport was in danger.¹⁶⁷¹ In their wake, 3,000 Montenegrin reservists appeared in Mostar, who stirred up a lot of trouble with their undisciplined and trigger-happy behaviour. Their actions elicited reactions from armed Muslims on the spot, who set up barricades against the JNA.¹⁶⁷² In October, the village of Ravno near Trebinje – where Croats lived – was razed to the ground by the JNA and other volunteer units, in addition to ten or so other villages.¹⁶⁷³ Elsewhere in Bosnia, the presence of irregular troops, who were on their way to or from the front in Croatia, caused great trouble, firing at mosques, for instance¹⁶⁷⁴, or inciting and provoking the local population *en route*, as was the case in Foca, Bijeljina and Visegrad.¹⁶⁷⁵

The arrival of the Uzice and Podgorica Corps of the JNA on Bosnian territory induced the government in Sarajevo to mobilize territorial defences, all the more since the JNA was not only deployed to fight the war in Croatia, but was also starting to 'protect' Serb areas in Bosnia. The atmosphere of tension grew when the Bosnian government refused to co-operate in calling up Bosnian youth to fight for the JNA in Croatia. On 21 September, Izetbegovic demanded that all JNA troops, who had recently entered Bosnia-Hercegovina, make an about-turn and go back where they came from.¹⁶⁷⁶ Milosevic promised to withdraw certain JNA units, if Izetbegovic were to disband the Islamic paramilitary groups. In the end, neither took place.¹⁶⁷⁷ An agreement was made however, in which the Bosnian government promised to make sure that the JNA could move through Bosnia unhindered, while the JNA agreed to refrain from every kind of ethnic provocation.¹⁶⁷⁸ In October, Izetbegovic

¹⁶⁶⁷ Bell, *Way*, p. 33.

¹⁶⁶⁸ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 228.

¹⁶⁶⁹ Stipe Mesic orders JNA to withdraw to barracks', *Croatian radio*, 11/09/91, 15:00, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 13/09/91.

¹⁶⁷⁰ Kumar, *Divide*, p. 47.

¹⁶⁷¹ Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 166.

¹⁶⁷² Wilbur G. Landrey, 'In Yugoslav breakup, there is plenty of blame to go around', *St. Petersburg Times*, 27/09/91; Mahmutcehajic, *Bosnia*, pp. 41-42 and 82-84; Th. Engelen & R. van de Boogaard, 'Groot offensief van leger Joegoslavië' (Yugoslav army launches full-scale offensive), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/09/91.

¹⁶⁷³ Cekic, *Aggression*, pp. 167 and 186.

¹⁶⁷⁴ Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 167.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 276.

¹⁶⁷⁶ 'Izetbegovic message to Igalo signatories wants troop columns out of republic', *Tanjug*, 21/09/91, 17:15, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 23/09/91.

¹⁶⁷⁷ Sremac, *War*, p. 84.

¹⁶⁷⁸ 'Agreement reached between government and army in Bosnia-Hercegovina', *Radio Sarajevo*, 2000, 25/09/91, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 27/09/91; 'Other reports on Bosnia-Hercegovina', *Radio Sarajevo*, 1700, 28/09/91, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 03/10/91.

declared Bosnia's neutrality in the conflict between Croats and Serbs. 'It is not our war', said the Bosnian President.¹⁶⁷⁹

Where the polls in Bosnia had until mid-1991 shown a majority of 80 to 90 per cent in favour of retaining a federative Yugoslavia, there was now a change of heart.¹⁶⁸⁰ The feeling that one's own safety could be threatened by other groups intensified this. A survey in November 1991 revealed that almost 60 per cent of the Muslims and 70 per cent of the Croats thought that the Serbs had too much influence in Bosnia. Conversely, 52 per cent of the Serbs were of the opinion that Croats and 44 per cent that Muslims had too much say.¹⁶⁸¹ The fact that the map of Bosnia-Herzegovina was an ethnic patchwork, without the comparatively clear dividing lines as in Croatia, did nothing to alleviate that feeling of being threatened. On the contrary, the closer 'the others' got, the greater the perceived danger and the stronger the need to get rid of 'the others' before they struck. Visits to pubs took place more and more along ethnic lines and there were regular fights among Serb and Muslim pub-goers.¹⁶⁸²

Ethnic relations came under additional pressure because the war in Croatia also had economic consequences for Bosnia. In the autumn of 1991, Croatia forbade the export of foodstuffs to Bosnia, the first motive being to keep these products for its own market, but also because it wanted to prevent Bosnia from 're-exporting' them to Serbia. In the early part of 1992, Serbia took a similar step, intended also as punishment for Bosnia's neutrality. 30 per cent of the Bosnian working force was out of work in February 1992, a quarter had earnings of no more than DEM 50 per month.¹⁶⁸³

8. Serb preparations for war

Meanwhile, in consultation with political and military leaders in Belgrade, the Bosnian Serbs were also preparing for war. A day after the Karadjordjevo meeting, at which Milosevic and Tudjman had, in principle, agreed to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina, Seselj left for Bosnia to meet Karadzic 'to proclaim the uprising' there.¹⁶⁸⁴ In other words, Seselj was already active in Bosnia before he made a move in Croatia with his paramilitary troops.

In June 1991, the JNA confiscated weapons from the territorial defence in Bosnia, as it had done earlier in Croatia and Slovenia, fearing that these weapons would be used for an independence struggle.¹⁶⁸⁵ This appropriation was not successful everywhere. Whilst the JNA was impounding weapons in areas in which the Bosnian Muslims were in the majority, they began distributing them to Bosnian Serbs. To avoid the impression that the JNA was only disarming the territorial defence in Croatian and Muslim communities, the federal army even confiscated weapons in Serb localities only to distribute them in secret to Serbs in other places later on.¹⁶⁸⁶

By Mid-1991, the SDS in Bosnia-Herzegovina placed a summons that the JNA make weapons available to all Serbs of fighting age.¹⁶⁸⁷ The Serb sections of the Bosnian territorial defence and 'voluntary units' were to be brought together under the command of the JNA. Conscientious objectors would be regarded as traitors and punished.¹⁶⁸⁸ As in Krajina before, the first to be terrorized were moderate elements in the movement's own ranks.¹⁶⁸⁹

¹⁶⁷⁹ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 228.

¹⁶⁸⁰ Calic, *Krieg*, pp. 87-88.

¹⁶⁸¹ Calic, *Krieg*, p. 80.

¹⁶⁸² Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 195.

¹⁶⁸³ Calic, *Krieg*, p.65.

¹⁶⁸⁴ Libal, *Serben*, p. 174.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Appendix, Duijzings, *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnië*.

¹⁶⁸⁶ Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, p. 147.

¹⁶⁸⁷ Cekic, *Aggression*, pp. 42 and 182.

¹⁶⁸⁸ Cekic, *Aggression*, pp. 44-45.

¹⁶⁸⁹ Cf. Calic, *Krieg*, p. 93.

From May 1991, the Bosnian authorities stopped weapon transports meant for Serb (para)militaries.¹⁶⁹⁰ In September 1991, the Serb Minister of Information in the Bosnian government, Velibor Ostojic was prepared to admit to the Dutch newspaper *Trouw* correspondent Nicole Lucas that although the Bosnian Serbs were heavily armed, so were the other parties. He believed that the fact that all parties had organized themselves and procured arms was, in a way, advantageous. This, he thought, created a 'balance of fear'.¹⁶⁹¹

As from the end of May, Milosevic phoned Karadzic regularly.¹⁶⁹² The reports were tapped by the Federal Secret Service and the transcripts handed to Prime Minister Markovic. In August 1991, Milosevic referred Karadzic for initial assistance to JNA General Nikola Uzelac, the commander of the Banja Luka Corps, in charge of arming the Serbs in Bosnia. However, if he so wished, Karadzic could always go directly to the Serb President himself.¹⁶⁹³

In September 1991, Prime Minister Markovic disclosed the transcript of a conversation in which Milosevic instructed Karadzic to contact General Uzelac, who was in charge of carrying out the 'RAM' or outline plan of the JNA General Staff.¹⁶⁹⁴ Most authors believe that this plan dates from shortly before the telephone conversation in question. One of the co-founders of the Bosnian SDS, Vladimir Srebrov, believed that the plan dated from as early as the 1980s¹⁶⁹⁵, though this seems unlikely given both the contents and the names and ranks of the signatories.

According to Defence Minister Kadijevic, whilst planning the war in Croatia, the JNA had decided to take full control of Bosnia-Herzegovina with the aim of looking after Serb interests there, should that become necessary, because the role of the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina 'would be instrumental for the future of the Greater Serb nation'.¹⁶⁹⁶ When that was seen as aiming too high, the JNA confined itself to focusing on Serb areas in Bosnia. Protection of Serb residents there was not the only reason why the army command did that. Firstly, Bosnia was an important recruitment area – during the mobilization for the Croatian war, the Bosnian Serbs had caused the fewest problems.¹⁶⁹⁷ Secondly, a strong presence of the JNA in Bosnia was important to be able to station rapidly deployable forces who could, if necessary, be sent to Serb areas in Croatia.¹⁶⁹⁸ The realization of the RAM plan should be seen in that context.

According to Italian journalists, who it seems had insight into it – incidentally, it was only two pages long, said Srebrov – the document was drawn up by General Adzic, Major General Gvero, Major General Cedo Knezevic, Lieutenant-Colonel Radenko Radinovic and General Aleksander Vasiljevic.¹⁶⁹⁹ This plan of the JNA General Staff was based on a Greater Serbia at the expense of Croatia and Bosnia. The JNA set itself the target of creating a Greater Serbia, in collaboration with paramilitary groups from Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The plan focused on provoking interethnic conflicts, followed by the occupation of strategic points by the JNA. To this end, the plan counted on the support of Bosnian-Serb militias. According to Srebrov, the plan was aimed at a kind of

¹⁶⁹⁰ Cf. Celic, *Aggression*, pp. 45-114, for a detailed report.

¹⁶⁹¹ N. Lucas, 'Doodvonnis voor Bosnië' (Death penalty for Bosnia), *Trouw*, 26/09/91. Others also entertained the notion that a balance of fear could prevent an armed ethnic conflict from erupting in Bosnia, Judah, *Serbs*, p.194.

¹⁶⁹² Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 152.

¹⁶⁹³ Williams & Cigar, 'War Crimes', IV.A; Celic, *Aggression*, p. 43; Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, pp. 95-96; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 152-153.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Cf., for instance, F. Hartmann, 'Sévère réquisitoire du premier ministre M. Ante Markovic, contre l'armée' (Severe indictment of the army by Prime Minister Ante Markovic), *Le Monde*, 21/09/91; Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, p. 148.

¹⁶⁹⁵ Interview with Vladimir Srebrov, with Adil Kulenov,

<http://www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk/bosnia/srebrov.html> q.v., consulted on 06/03/00. A more extensive version of this interview was published in *Vreme* on 30/10/95; 'Vladimir Srebrov speaks out', BosNet, 15/11/99,

<http://www.bosnet.org/archive/bosnet-bw3archive/9511/msg00342.html> consulted 06/03/00.

¹⁶⁹⁶ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 145. cf. ibidem, p. 97.

¹⁶⁹⁷ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 159.

¹⁶⁹⁸ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 159-160.

¹⁶⁹⁹ Allen, *Warfare*, p. 56.

‘Endlösung’ of the Muslims in Bosnia, comparable to the treatment the Serbs underwent at the hands of the Ustashe during the Second World War: half would be killed, some converted to orthodoxy and a smaller number – those who could pay – would be ‘allowed’ to leave to Turkey.¹⁷⁰⁰

Whether the plan did indeed go that far is questionable. It seemed more likely to have been a plan for the process of ethnic cleansing, the aim of which was primarily to chase Muslims out of the area the Serbs had set their sights on. According to the plan, psychological warfare would play a significant part. Attacks on their religious and social structures would undermine Muslim morale, which would lead to panic, thus putting the Muslims to rout. The Slovenian newspaper *Delo* surmised that this plan had been flanked by another one aimed at breaking the morale of the Muslim population by executing Muslim men and raping Muslim women as soon as war broke out.¹⁷⁰¹ The state security and counter-intelligence service of the JNA, KOS, was also given an important role. The SDS top seemed to regard the KOS as the principal agents of its share in the plan.¹⁷⁰²

The SDS leaders such as Karadzic, Krajisnik, Plavsic, the future Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republika Srpska, Aleksa Buha, the future Minister of Information of the republic, Miroslav Toholj and the Bosnian Memorandum ideologist, Milorad Ekmečić, were among the first to receive weapons in June 1991.¹⁷⁰³ According to Jovan Divjak, a Serb, who after the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina would go on leading the territorial defence of Sarajevo, in the summer of 1991, 8,000 automatic weapons were handed out to local Serb militia in the Drvar region alone.¹⁷⁰⁴

In the same period, the first reports were published of attacks in Bosnia by Cetniks from Serbia and large-scale issuing of arms to local Serb militia by the JNA.¹⁷⁰⁵ Towards the end of the summer of 1991, the shelling of Muslim targets in Eastern Bosnia from the Serb side of the Drina began.

A compromise still possible?

In the year prior to the outbreak of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it was undoubtedly the SDS, Karadzic’s party – with the Belgrade leadership in the background – that was making preparations for military actions with a view to safeguarding the autonomy of at least those areas in Bosnia referred to as Serb. The Bosnian Muslims secretly tried to set up a defence with whatever means they had at their disposal.

Yet it goes too far to say that there were no more openings left to avert a war. In the course of the year preceding the war, there were a number of situations in which a compromise might have been possible. Of what subsequent value they would have been, we shall never know. The root lies in Izetbegović’s and the SDA leadership’s behaviour. Each time a compromise was within reach or even carried out in essence, it was always Izetbegović who backed out. The description below of the discussions in Split between Milošević, Tuđman and Izetbegović on the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the account of the attempts by Adil Zulfikarpasić to reach a settlement between Muslims and Serbs will uphold this. Later on in this section, this will also be shown to have been the case at other times, particularly the first months of 1992.

From the moment Milošević and Tuđman in Karadjordjevo had, in theory, reached a settlement on the partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina, there were rumours about further discussions. Two joint working committees were set up as a consequence of ‘Karadjordjevo’, which were to work out the

¹⁷⁰⁰ Interview with Vladimir Srebrov, with Adil Kulenov,

<http://www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk/bosnia/srebrov.html> q.v. consulted on 06/03/00. A more extensive version of this interview was published in *Vreme* on 30/10/95; *Vladimir Srebrov speaks out*, BosNet, 15/11/99,

<http://www.bosnet.org/archive/bosnet-bw3archive/9511/msg00342.html> consulted, 06/03/00.

¹⁷⁰¹ Duijzings, 12/06/01, p. 133; Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 231.

¹⁷⁰² Cf. Cekić, *Aggression*, p. 42 n. 3.

¹⁷⁰³ For a detailed overview of the weapons handed out to SDS leaders, see Cekić, *Aggression*, pp. 86-88.

¹⁷⁰⁴ Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 41.

¹⁷⁰⁵ Peter Michielsen, ‘Bosnië meegesleurd in kolkend conflict’ (Bosnia dragged into seething conflict), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/07/91; E. Nysingh, ‘Moslims blijven Tito trouw’ (Muslims stay faithful to Tito), *de Volkskrant*, 19/08/91; Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 195; Gow, *Forces*, p. 1; Zimmermann, *US*, p. 3.

details of the agreement on the map. The commission convened three times in April, but the ethnic confusion in Bosnia deadlocked their discussions.¹⁷⁰⁶ Dozens of these kinds of discussions on the apportionment of Bosnia-Herzegovina were to be held in subsequent years; some claim as many as 48.¹⁷⁰⁷

Milosevic left no stone unturned in arousing Tudjman's interest in a joint partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina. At a secret meeting in Tikves in April 1991, he presented Tudjman a document which would reveal that Muslims and their descendants, who had earlier emigrated from Bosnia to Turkey, were on the brink of returning and would take control in Bosnia. Milosevic believed this demonstrated that the Muslims were pursuing what was known as the 'Green Transversal' (a continuous Muslim area that would stretch from Turkey through Bulgaria, Macedonia, Kosovo and Sandzak to Bosnia-Herzegovina).¹⁷⁰⁸ Milosevic, who himself did not believe in the Green Transversal¹⁷⁰⁹, knew that Tudjman was obsessed by the fear of the emergence of a (fundamentalist) Muslim state in Bosnia.¹⁷¹⁰ A shocked Tudjman asked Milosevic for a copy of the document and waved it around at home during meetings. However, the 'top secret' document was nothing more than a plan that had been published in September 1990 in the satiric magazine *Vox*, in which various young people in Sarajevo were attacking sacred cows and bringing up taboo subjects. They had written the 'plan' in question in response to the increasingly loud claims to Bosnia-Herzegovina by Croats and Serbs.¹⁷¹¹

On 12 July 1991, at a meeting with Izetbegovic in Split, Tudjman and Milosevic came up with the idea for a partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Milosevic made no secret of his intentions. That very same day, he announced to US Ambassador Zimmerman that he did not mind if Croatia were to annex the Herzegovina region. He had little pity for the 'Muslim fanatic Izetbegovic'.¹⁷¹² In what was for him a typical move, Izetbegovic did not resist the partitioning during the meeting, but complained afterwards that he had had no chance to put his own opinion forward. Moreover, Izetbegovic declared that he had not protested because the Muslims could not do without the Croats in the fight against the Serbs. That was why Izetbegovic felt compelled to accept the plan in the presence of Tudjman.¹⁷¹³

Immediately after returning from Sarajevo, Izetbegovic started to speak out loudly against the plan. He called partitioning Bosnia the worst solution imaginable.¹⁷¹⁴ He might be prepared to discuss partitioning it into cantons.¹⁷¹⁵ Apparently, once he was back from Sarajevo, Izetbegovic felt pressure from the home front. Minister Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, Salim Sabic, who had succeeded Zulfikarpasic as Deputy Chairman of the SDA, and Deputy Prime Minister Muhamed Cengic let it be known that the

¹⁷⁰⁶ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 129-130.

¹⁷⁰⁷ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 130.

¹⁷⁰⁸ Mile Stojic & Senad Pecanin, 'Punkerki kao ratnici Dzihada', *Dani* 29/03/99; Tudjman's assistant Hrvoje Sarinic, cited in 'His Master's Voice: the adventures of Hrvoje Sarinic in the land of the Serb aggressor', *Bosnia Report*, new series no. 8, January-March 1999.

¹⁷⁰⁹ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 130.

¹⁷¹⁰ Cf. ABZ, DEU/ARA/05252, Nederlof to Kooijmans, 07/12/93, no. ZAG-93.19.

¹⁷¹¹ Mile Stojic & Senad Pecanin 'Punkerki kao ratnici Dzihada', *Dani* 29/03/99.

¹⁷¹² Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 150.

¹⁷¹³ Izetbegovic, *Govori*, pp. 122-123. Cf. Larrabee, *Instability*, p. 40; X. Bougarel, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina - State and Communitarianism', Dyker & Vejvoda (ed.), *Yugoslavia*, p. 102; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 132; M. Boroagovic and S. Rustempasic, 'The white paper on Alija Izetbegovic',

http://www.xs4all.nl/~frankti/Bosnian_congress/izetbegovic_white_paper.html consulted on 17/02/00; Judy Dempsey, 'Serbs, Croats in secret border talks', *Financial Times*, 10/07/91; Tim Judah, 'Creation of Islamic buffer state discussed in secret', *The Times*, 12/07/91; Serviërs en Kroaten in geheim grens-overleg' (Serbs and Croats in secret border negotiations), *Trouw*, 11/07/91; Nicole Lucas, 'Bosnië vreest ten onder te gaan aan kempende bureu' (Bosnia fears fighting neighbours will be its downfall), *Trouw*, 15/07/91; André Roelofs, 'Kroatië bevestigt plan voor opdelen republiek Bosnië' (Croatia confirms plan for division of Bosnian republic), *de Volkskrant*, 13/07/91.

¹⁷¹⁴ 'Izetbegovic: division of Bosnia-Herzegovina the worst possible solution', *Yugoslav news agency*, 13/07/91, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 15/07/91.

¹⁷¹⁵ Charles Richards, 'Intrigue returns to a Sarajevo caught in the political crossfire', *The Independent*, 18/07/91.

integrity of Bosnia would be defended militarily.¹⁷¹⁶ Izetbegovic now said that an attempt to partition Bosnia 'would most certainly lead to a civil war in which Yugoslavia, the Balkans and maybe even Europe would get involved'.¹⁷¹⁷ Meanwhile, because he had taken part in a debate on partitioning, Izetbegovic had thwarted a joint initiative of his and Zulfikarpasic to visit Major, Kohl and Mitterrand in order to seek international support to prevent a civil war in Bosnia. The journey was cancelled immediately.¹⁷¹⁸

In the meantime, it had become clear to the Muslim leaders in Sarajevo from Tadjman's position, that no more than spurious support was to be expected from the Croats in a conflict with the Serbs. As such, Zulfikarpasic – who had always been of the opinion that a political solution for Bosnia would only be possible with the approval of the Serbs – consulted with Izetbegovic to reach an agreement to avoid a bloodbath. Zulfikarpasic was in no doubt that the confrontation between the three ethnic groups would have such results:

'This is a country of murderers (...) We are not the Lebanon, where various religions and ethnic groups live separately. In the space of one week, there will be 200,000 dead. No one is better than the other, be he Serb, Croat or Muslim. And yet, there is so much hatred here. If we could sell that, we would all be millionaires.'

If an agreement could not be made with the Serbs, there would be mass murder: 'The knives have been sharpened, the guns oiled'.¹⁷¹⁹

Izetbegovic agreed with Zulfikarpasic that something had to be done, but he was not prepared to contact the Serbs himself, fearing that he would come up against recriminations from his own party following. However, he did assent to Zulfikarpasic and Filipovic, the second-in-command of the MBO party, which had broken with the SDA, having discussions with the Bosnian Serb leadership.¹⁷²⁰

On the morning of 14 July, the two Muslims spoke to the Bosnian Serb leaders Karadzic, Krajisnik and Koljevic. Zulfikarpasic propounded the idea that Bosnia-Herzegovina should remain part of a union of states, which also included Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and maybe Croatia. The integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina would have to be maintained, however. To begin with, the Bosnian Serbs were not prepared to relinquish their regions, in which they were showing intensified autonomous behaviour. In contrast to Zulfikarpasic, who had said that a confrontation was imminent, they thought that that stage was already passed. Finally, they agreed and the deal was clinched verbally with Izetbegovic. A meeting with Milosevic was scheduled for Zulfikarpasic for the following day. Izetbegovic said that he was leaving for a short visit to the United States the following day, and he would sign the agreement on his return. At that point Koljevic said in front of the others, including Izetbegovic himself, that the President was lying. Even so, that same evening Koljevic announced the agreement on television and added that for the first time in months, he was relieved that an impending conflict between Muslims and Serbs had thus been averted. Karadzic also publicly backed the

¹⁷¹⁶ Charles Richards, 'Intrigue returns to a Sarajevo caught in the political crossfire', *The Independent*, 18/07/91; 'Bosnian government seeks official explanation on Tadjman statement', *Yugoslav news agency*, 17/07/91, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 19/07/91.

¹⁷¹⁷ 'Izetbegovic warns against civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina', *Tanjug*, 21/07/91, 09:48, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 23/07/91. Cf. Kitty McKinsey, 'Bosnia fears it will be sliced up by Croatia and Serbia', *The Ottawa Citizen*, 04/08/91.

¹⁷¹⁸ Dusko Doder, 'Yugoslav Muslims Align With Serbs', *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 27/07/91.

¹⁷¹⁹ Dusko Doder, 'Yugoslav Muslims Align With Serbs', *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 27/07/91.

¹⁷²⁰ Cf. Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, pp. 171-185 for a discussion of this meeting and the incidents that followed immediately after that; Dusko Doder, 'Yugoslav Muslims Align With Serbs', *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 27/07/91, in addition to the sources listed below.

agreement.¹⁷²¹ Zulfikarpasic was given a warm welcome by Milosevic who approved all parts of the agreement. In Zulfikarpasic's view, the Serb President considered the idea appealing that an ethnic group had suggested remaining part of Yugoslavia at a time when the rest of the world was blacklisting him.

On his return to Sarajevo airport from the United States, Izetbegovic declared on Bosnian television that he had heard that negotiations between Muslims and Serbs were underway and that he gave them his assent, hoping that they would come up with results.¹⁷²²

On 23 July, a two-hour meeting took place between Zulfikarpasic, Filipovic, Karadzic, Koljevic and Krajisnik with Izetbegovic in the latter's presidential office. At the end of the talks, Izetbegovic concluded that the parties had drawn up close to one another and he suggested that Filipovic and Koljevic draft an agreement. Filipovic, however, thought that there was still one obvious difference: the Serbs thought in terms of a Yugoslav federation, whereas the Muslims saw Bosnia as a part of a future confederation of states. It was decided that Filipovic and Koljevic would each draft an outline agreement, after which any remaining differences of opinion would be discussed two days later.¹⁷²³ Filipovic advised Kljuic on how the discussions were progressing so that the political top of the Bosnian Croats was also up to date.

However, shortly after, in a press declaration, the SDA leadership said that it did not approve the talks and had no wish for an agreement. The implication was that Cengic was behind this about-turn.¹⁷²⁴ Nevertheless, at the instigation of Zulfikarpasic, Izetbegovic visited his colleague Milosevic in Belgrade, after which meeting he indicated that he was no longer enthusiastic about the agreement.

Meanwhile the war in Croatia began to accelerate and Izetbegovic did not fancy taking sides with either the Serbs or the Croats.¹⁷²⁵ Even after Izetbegovic had rejected the plan, the SDS went on backing it in public. In support of the initiative, the SDS and the MBO, Zulfikarpasic's and Filipovic's party, held well-attended joint meetings at various locations in Bosnia. During one such meeting in Zvornik, Karadzic announced that Greater Serbia was a wonderful dream, but no more than that because Muslims and Serbs lived intermingled throughout Bosnia.

The longer Izetbegovic's signature was in coming, the more watered down the interest among the Bosnian Serbs. After a few weeks, mutual distrust returned. On 7 August, Izetbegovic said that he could not accept an agreement to which Croats were not a party, nor a Yugoslavia to which Croatia and Slovenia did not belong. 'We have not written them off yet,' he said. One of the Bosnian Serb leaders, Koljevic, replied that neither Muslims nor Serbs would be dictated to by Tudjman. He could not understand Izetbegovic's consideration for the Croats; if it was so that two parties were conspiring against a third, then that was not Muslims and Serbs against Croats, but Muslims and Croats against Serbs, who were continually being voted down in the Bosnian Parliament and the Presidency.¹⁷²⁶ On 12 August, Milosevic convened a meeting in Belgrade of representatives of three of the four republics that had not (yet) seceded from Yugoslavia: Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia. Izetbegovic was invited on behalf of Bosnia. He declined with thanks. One person who did attend, however, was the chairman of the Bosnian Parliament, Momcilo Krajisnik.

In the third week of August, Izetbegovic made it known that he would publicly oppose a permanent participation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in a Yugoslavia dominated by Milosevic. He announced that he was going to organize a referendum on secession, which would, he believed, show

¹⁷²¹ Dusko Doder, 'Yugoslav Muslims Align With Serbs', *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 27/07/91; 'Bosnian Serbs and Muslims 'about to reach historic agreement' on Yugoslavia', *Belgrade home service*, 25/07/91, 13:00, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 29/07/91.

¹⁷²² Muhamed Filipovic, 'Hasan Cengic's Conspiratorial Logic', *Dan*, 08/04/00.

¹⁷²³ Muhamed Filipovic, 'Hasan Cengic's Conspiratorial Logic', *Dan*, 08/04/00.

¹⁷²⁴ Muhamed Filipovic, 'Hasan Cengic's Conspiratorial Logic', *Dan*, 08/04/00.

¹⁷²⁵ Yugoslav news agency, 31/07/91, 12:28, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 06/08/91.

¹⁷²⁶ 'Controversy over 'historic accord between' Serbian and Muslim parties in Bosnia', *Yugoslav news agency* 07/08/91, 11:46, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 12/08/91.

that three quarters of the Bosnians were against the idea of Bosnia having permanent ties with Yugoslavia.¹⁷²⁷ A few months earlier, Izetbegovic had opposed a proposal put forward by Milosevic to organize a referendum on independence among each large ethnic group in each Yugoslav republic. Izetbegovic had warned that that 'could cause an explosion that would completely shatter Bosnia-Hercegovina and that in the future, people would shoot at one another through their windows (...) The population of Bosnia-Hercegovina is as mixed as grain and flour'.¹⁷²⁸ At this point, Izetbegovic evidently had no problem with a referendum that would sideline the Bosnian Serbs. Krajisnik declared right away that if such a referendum were to be organized, the Serbs would walk out of the Bosnian Parliament.¹⁷²⁹

Autonomous regions

Shortly after that, the Bosnian Serbs made it clear that they were going their own way. Between September and November, they proclaimed five autonomous Serb regions¹⁷³⁰: Eastern and 'Old' Hercegovina, around Rudo and Trebinje, Bosanska Krajina with Banja Luka as centre, Romanija, east of Sarajevo, Semberija, and Ozren-Posavina in North Eastern Bosnia with Bijeljina as centre (see map in this section). In those regions, Bosnian Serbs began to assemble illegal paramilitary formations, which were trained and armed by the JNA.¹⁷³¹ Non-Serb residents were discriminated and terrorized. Serb leaders did not take Bosnian legislation seriously if it was in conflict with Yugoslavian legislation. Mobilization was carried out against the will of the government in Sarajevo. In October, JNA General Uzelac ordered a general mobilization of the population of Northwest Bosnia. Taxes were no longer paid into the Bosnian state treasury by autonomous regions. In fact, as from the summer of 1991, several businesses elsewhere in Bosnia only paid taxes to parties with whom they were on friendly terms.¹⁷³² At their request, JNA troops secured the borders of the regions declared autonomous by the SDS.



¹⁷²⁷ Blaine Harden, 'Bosnia Braces for Arrival of Ethnic Violence', *The Washington Post*, 23/08/91.

¹⁷²⁸ Quoted in Kumar, *Divide*, p. 45.

¹⁷²⁹ Blaine Harden, 'Bosnia Braces for Arrival of Ethnic Violence', *The Washington Post*, 23/08/91.

¹⁷³⁰ *Srpske Autonne Oblasti*

¹⁷³¹ Ramet, *Babel*, p. 243.

¹⁷³² Calic, *Krieg*, p. 88.

Under normal circumstances, it was the Muslims who were able to wield influence in Bosnia, so that as a result, decisions that were taken favoured the Croats and the Serbs by turns. In the situation in which Muslims and Serbs appeared to be heading straight towards a conflict, the Croats had now become the swing factor. They supported the Muslims in their pursuit of independence, but also backed the Serbs in their attempt at easing away parts of Bosnia. In that respect, they were in the comfortable position that they could support the Muslims and then have the Serbs do the dirty work. As Tudjman was said to have remarked to one of the Bosnian HDZ leaders: 'You should always ask the same as the Serbs, but after they have asked it first.'¹⁷³³

However, that did not mean that the government in Zagreb was not busy working through its own agenda, in close collaboration with Bosnian Croat leaders. On 13 and 14 June, Tudjman conferred in Zagreb with the Croatian leaders in Bosnia, among them Mate Boban, on the implementation of the Croat share in the partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁷³⁴

In the autumn of 1991, the Bosnian Croats held several meetings¹⁷³⁵, which on 12 November resulted in a decision by the chairmen of the Croatian crisis staff of Herzegovina and that of Travnik that the Croatian people should realize their 'ancient dream' of a Greater Croatia. The first steps in that direction were that Croatia should declare its own 'banovina' (district) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and hold a referendum. At the same time, the Bosnian Croat nationalists realized that even inside the HDZ, there were people who were against these 'historic interests' and who continued to support a sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁷³⁶

On that twelfth of November, the Bosnian Croats formed the Croatian Sava valley community (Bosanska Posavina) in the eight municipalities in the North of Bosnia, with Bosanski Brod as the centre.

Six days later, on 18 November, whilst Vukovar was on the verge of falling, the 'Croatian Democratic Community of Herceg-Bosna' was proclaimed in the thirty municipalities in the West Herzegovina region, where Croats were in the majority. The Bosnian Croat leaders said that despite this autonomy, they would continue to respect the authority of the Bosnian government on condition that Bosnia were independent of Yugoslavia.

Finally, on 27 January, the Croatian Community of Central Bosnia was proclaimed as the third autonomous Croatian region in Bosnia. As such, more and more regions were removed from Sarajevo government rule.

Towards the end of 1991, once things had quietened down on the Croatian front, the issuing of arms to Bosnian Croats started from Croatia.¹⁷³⁷ In the months to follow, Croats who had taken part in the struggle in Croatia returned to Bosnia.

9. Towards independence for Bosnia-Herzegovina

On 9 October, Milosevic's party held a conference in Pec. In his speech to the delegates, party ideologist Mihailo Markovic said in no uncertain terms that the new Yugoslavia would comprise Serbia, Montenegro and an area consisting of Bosnia and Knin. If the Muslims so wished, they could also be part of this new Yugoslavia. If they did not want this, then they would have to reckon on being surrounded by Serb territory.¹⁷³⁸

¹⁷³³ Mahmutcehajic, *War*, p. 17.

¹⁷³⁴ Other participants were: Vladimir Soljic, Bozo Raic, Ivan Bender, Pero Markovic and Dario Kordic, 'Plans for a 'Greater Croatia'', *Bosnia Report*, New Series no. 1 (November-December 1997).

¹⁷³⁵ On 15 October in Grude, on 22 October in Busovaca and once again on 12 November in Grude.

¹⁷³⁶ 'Plans for a 'Greater Bosnia'', *Bosnia Report*, New Series no. 1 (November-December 1997); Cekic, *Aggression*, pp. 37-38 and 329-332; idem, *Causes*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁷³⁷ Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 243; Donia & Fine, *Bosnia*, p. 239; Marijan, *War*, p. 160.

¹⁷³⁸ Quoted in Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 229.

The die was cast within a week, on 15 October 1991. In the Bosnian Parliament, the Muslim and Croatian delegates adopted – there were no negative votes and a few abstentions – a declaration of sovereignty initiated by the SDA. This proclamation did not yet constitute formal independence, but established conditions under which internal laws could take precedence over those of the federation, stipulations Slovenia and Serbia had already included in their constitutions. Moreover, representatives of Bosnia-Herzegovina would no longer take part in activities of the Federal Presidency and Parliament, if representatives of all other republics did not do so either. As soon as Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia, a start would be made realizing the right to self-determination, ‘including secession of the population groups of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Muslims, Serbs and Croats)’.¹⁷³⁹ One of the aims of this bill was to prevent JNA troops from moving across Bosnian territory.

The Serb SDS felt that Parliament could not adopt such a bill because the Bosnian constitution required a two-thirds majority for an amendment and the bill had been adopted by 142 to 240 votes. Radovan Karadzic warned the other two parties: ‘I seriously ask you to take note that what you are doing is not good. Do you want to send Bosnia-Herzegovina in this direction, the same fast track to hell and suffering that Slovenia and Croatia are following? Do not be sure that you will not send Bosnia-Herzegovina to hell, or that you might not be bringing the Muslim population to ruin, because the Muslims cannot defend themselves if war breaks out.’¹⁷⁴⁰ Those were far less mild words than those spoken by Mihailovic. Izetbegovic did not dispute that there could be a ‘bloodbath’, given that 200,000 Bosnians were already armed to the teeth.¹⁷⁴¹ However, he believed that Karadzic’s words had stated exactly why groups other than the Serbs did not want to remain part of Yugoslavia.¹⁷⁴² Out of protest, the Bosnian Serb members of parliament had left the chamber before the vote, obediently following the instructions Jovic had received from Karadzic eight months earlier. When the other members left Parliament after the vote, they were wearing bullet-proof jackets and were escorted by armed police. They were afraid of being attacked by their Serb colleagues.¹⁷⁴³

That same day, UN envoy Cyrus Vance reported to EU mediator Carrington, with the Dutch diplomat Wijnaendts as go-between, that all his recent interlocutors – Gligorov, Tupurkovsky, Djukanovic, Kostic, Izetbegovic, Bogicevic, the Bosnian Prime Minister Jure Pelevan and the Bosnian Foreign Minister Silajdzic – regarded the adoption of the declaration of sovereignty by the Bosnian Parliament as ‘a seminal event in the current crisis’. In their view war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was now imminent.¹⁷⁴⁴

On 24 October, in response to these events, the Serb delegates in the Bosnian Parliament decided to establish their own Serb Parliament under the chairmanship of Krajisnik, also chairman of the Bosnian Parliament. Meanwhile, they would also remain part of the Bosnian Parliament.¹⁷⁴⁵ On 9 and 10 November, the new Bosnian Serb representatives organized a plebiscite among the Serbs on the question whether they wanted to become part of Greater Serbia. The response was an almost unanimous ‘yes’.

The twelve-month period ended in November 1991, after which Izetbegovic, as chairman of the seven-strong Bosnian Presidency had to make way for one of the other members. However, he refused to relinquish his seat, pleading special circumstances. As from that moment, he became the de

¹⁷³⁹ Quoted in Hayden, *Blueprints*, p. 93.

¹⁷⁴⁰ Burg & Shoup, *War*, pp. 77-78. Similar quotes in Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 288; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 247; Oslobodjenje, 15/10/91, quoted in X. Bougarel, ‘Bosnia and Herzegovina - State and Communitarianism’, Dyker & Vejvoda (ed.), *Yugoslavia*, p. 100; Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 215.

¹⁷⁴¹ U. Rudberg, ‘Soevereiniteit van Bosnië wekt woede Serviërs’ (Bosnian sovereignty stirs up Serb anger), *de Volkskrant*, 16/10/91.

¹⁷⁴² Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 215.

¹⁷⁴³ ‘Bosnië-Herzegovina gaat zijn eigen weg’ (Bosnia-Herzegovina going its own way), *Trouw*, 16/10/91; U. Rudberg, ‘Soevereiniteit van Bosnië wekt woede Serviërs’, *de Volkskrant*, 16/10/91.

¹⁷⁴⁴ ABZ, PVNY. Vance to Wijnaendts, 15/10/91

¹⁷⁴⁵ Cekic, *Aggression*, pp. 289-291.

facto president of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The SDS backed Izetbegovic's decision. However, it was one of the SDS last actions in an interethnic context.

Now that the conflict in Croatia was coming to an end and Bosnia seemed on the verge of one, the final touches could be put to military preparations. After the referendum among the Bosnian Serbs on 9 November 1991, the distribution of arms to the Serbs was accelerated.¹⁷⁴⁶ According to Divjak, during the winter of 1991-1992, the Bosnian Serb volunteers received another 51,000 automatic rifles and 800 rocket launchers and guns.¹⁷⁴⁷

Bosnian Serbs get the upper hand in the JNA

On 5 December, Milosevic instructed his entourage to start negotiations on the withdrawal of the JNA from Macedonia, which had declared its independence on 22 November.¹⁷⁴⁸ With a ceasefire in Croatia and the JNA pulling out of Slovenia and Macedonia, Milosevic could give all his attention to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Jovic's diary states that, as early as December, Milosevic had given the order to ensure that the Bosnian troops be made up of as many Bosnian Serbs as possible so that when Bosnia-Herzegovina declared independence only the command would have to be changed.¹⁷⁴⁹

Within three weeks, 85 per cent of the JNA troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina came from that republic.¹⁷⁵⁰ Although Croats and Muslims continued to leave the JNA, the JNA troops doubled in Bosnia from 50,000 to somewhere in the region of 90,000 to 100,000 soldiers in the period from December 1991 to March 1992.¹⁷⁵¹ After a reorganization, the officer's corps comprised 92.6 per cent Serbs and seven per cent Montenegrins. The federal army had approximately 500 tanks, 400 armoured vehicles and 1,000 mortars.¹⁷⁵² At almost the same time, the federal state security operation *Jedinstvo* (Unity) got off the ground by order of Petar Gracanin, the federal Minister of the Interior. Representatives of the federal state security were placed next to existing department heads in all large cities in Bosnia.¹⁷⁵³

On 21 November, the *Slobodna Bosna* newspaper published a secret plan, which it had been able to attain, showing that with the help of paramilitaries to be trained by the JNA, the SDS was going to blockade Sarajevo.¹⁷⁵⁴ In December, the JNA began digging in artillery in the hills around Sarajevo, with guns pointing towards the city. This was just the beginning of a large-scale deployment of the JNA and Serb units at strategic positions in Bosnia, which took place in late 1991 and early 1992.¹⁷⁵⁵ In the first days of January 1992, Major General Ratko Mladic, who had lead the war in Krajina, began organizing 'volunteer formations' in Bosnia.¹⁷⁵⁶ He was able to recruit almost 70,000 men, half of whom resided in Sarajevo and surrounding areas.¹⁷⁵⁷ In areas in which Serbs were not in the majority, they were ordered to establish parallel municipal councils that were wholly Serb. A 'crisis staff' was set up in each locality, consisting of representatives of the SDS and Serb police. In collaboration with the JNA, they organized arms for the Serb population and created a climate of war. In addition, they made lists of HDZ and SDA activists.

¹⁷⁴⁶ Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 48.

¹⁷⁴⁷ Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 41.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 186.

¹⁷⁴⁹ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 420; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 187.

¹⁷⁵⁰ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 188.

¹⁷⁵¹ Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 41.

¹⁷⁵² Domazet-Loso, *Aggression*, p. 139.

¹⁷⁵³ Spasic, *Lasica*, p. 237; interview Spasic, 16/09/01.

¹⁷⁵⁴ Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 158; Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 97.

¹⁷⁵⁵ Cf. Cekic, *Aggression*, pp. 115-154 for a detailed overview of the movements of and positions taken up by the JNA and Serb soldiers.

¹⁷⁵⁶ Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 198.

¹⁷⁵⁷ Cekic, *Aggression*, pp. 200 and 319-321.

And meanwhile, the European Community tackled the question of whether Bosnia-Herzegovina should be recognized.

10. Recognition by the European Community and the United States

Double game by Izetbegovic

Apparently, Izetbegovic was fully convinced that a break-up of the Republic of Yugoslavia would lead to the outbreak of civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. For this reason, he had made several attempts early in 1991 to prevent the break-up together with Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov.¹⁷⁵⁸ By the end of April 1991, he told the EC Ambassadors in Belgrade that any attempt by one of the three ethnic groups to split up Bosnia-Herzegovina would certainly lead to civil war.¹⁷⁵⁹

On 21 November, the day before Izetbegovic was to visit Bonn to attend the recognition talks between the German government – that had taken the initiative – and the leaders of the region, UN envoy Vance and UN Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Goulding travelled to Sarajevo. They talked to Izetbegovic and his Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic. Izetbegovic again pointed out the danger of fights breaking out between Croats and Serbs and asked that a peacekeeping force be deployed. Milosevic was against it however. He was also against the UN setting up headquarters in Sarajevo to carry out peace operations in Croatia, fearing that Izetbegovic would take advantage of the UN presence to effect Bosnia's secession from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Bosnian Serbs also spoke out against deployment.¹⁷⁶⁰

Meanwhile, Hansjörg von Eiff, the German Ambassador in Belgrade, shared Izetbegovic's worries about what would happen to Bosnia after German or EC recognition of Croatia and Slovenia. Nearly overstepping the mark in respect of his authority, he gave Izetbegovic elaborate instructions, before the latter's visit to Bonn on 22 November, about the arguments he should use in Bonn to prevent Genscher from forcing through recognition among the EC partners.

However, while visiting Kohl and Genscher in Bonn, Izetbegovic did not bring up the issue of recognition at all.¹⁷⁶¹ Disappointed, US Ambassador Zimmermann concluded that Izetbegovic was playing a double game. Apparently, the Bosnian President was hoping that the recognition of Bosnia's independence would lead to a Western intervention in support of his government the minute Serb cannons would threaten his country.¹⁷⁶² Izetbegovic was indeed pursuing the course that had been determined at the *Dom Milicije* at Sarajevo on 10 June, i.e. pressing for recognition while preparing for war at the same time.

On 25 November, three days after Izetbegovic, Croatian Foreign Minister Ivan Separovic arrived in Bonn. After he had aired his worries about the precarious situation in his country and the lack of Western aid, Genscher reminded him of the final recognition date set by Van den Broek, two months after 10 October. The German Minister did however point out to his Croatian colleague that Zagreb should create a climate in which the rights of minorities were better protected.¹⁷⁶³

The next day, 26 November, a meeting of Christian Democrat government and party leaders was held at Stuyvenberg Castle near Brussels. Attended by German Chancellor Kohl and Prime Ministers Andreotti, Lubbers, Martens, Mitsotakis and Santer, the meeting decided to recognize Croatia and Slovenia before Christmas.¹⁷⁶⁴ The outcome was not made public. The status of the agreement is

¹⁷⁵⁸ Zimmermann, *Ambassador*, p. 10.

¹⁷⁵⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00402, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Bosnië-Herzegovina, Fietelaars 124, 07/05/91.

¹⁷⁶⁰ Shawcross, *Evil*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁷⁶¹ Libal, *Limits*, p. 77; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 176; Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 193.

¹⁷⁶² Zimmerman, *Ambassador*, pp. 16-17; *Origins*, pp. 176 and 178.

¹⁷⁶³ Libal, *Limits*, p. 77; Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 316.

¹⁷⁶⁴ Both, *Indifference*, p. 131.

not entirely clear, but it must at least have encouraged Bonn that the term of 10 December set by Van den Broek as an ultimatum would not again be deferred.

On 27 November, the day after the meeting at Stuyvenberg Castle, Kohl announced in the Bundestag that the German government would recognize Croatia and Slovenia before Christmas.¹⁷⁶⁵ Although he said that a unilateral action of Germany would be dangerous and unsound, he also said unanimity would not be required. He just hoped that as many EC countries as possible would support Germany's position. Neither should the issue of recognition be linked to the conclusion of the Treaty of Maastricht in any way, he warned, i.e. Yugoslavia should not dominate the important EC summit taking place in Maastricht, the Netherlands, on 9 and 10 December.¹⁷⁶⁶ The unanimity that was so crucial for the summit's success would no longer be put to risk by the issue of the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia after the Maastricht Agreement had been adopted by the 12 EC member states on 9 and 10 December, German Chancellor Kohl must have thought. Recognition should therefore be effected between 10 December, i.e. the day of the Maastricht summit, and Christmas.¹⁷⁶⁷ Later, it was officially decided to avoid the subject of Yugoslavia in Maastricht. Yugoslavia would be discussed during a special European Political Cooperation (EPC) meeting the week after the summit. The day after Kohl's announcement, Italian Prime Minister Andreotti said the Italian government would back Germany, in the 'conviction' that other governments would follow suit.¹⁷⁶⁸

In spite of a telegram sent by the Dutch Ambassador in Bonn¹⁷⁶⁹ about the agreement that had been reached, it seems that Van den Broek was not aware of such a settlement.¹⁷⁷⁰ This was possibly the result of deficient communication between Dutch Foreign Minister Van den Broek and Lubbers.¹⁷⁷¹ However, Foreign Affairs staff might have known the truth if they had read the newspapers more carefully. Interviewed by *Die Welt* on the subject of the forthcoming EC summit in Maastricht on 9 and 10 December, Lubbers - described by the German newspaper as unusually clear for a Prime Minister renowned for his 'clever but often also vague diplomatic phrasing' - said the German and Italian announcements regarding the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia did not come as a surprise. Only the actual moment was new: 'But we have to close the books on this matter, in any case before the end of the year.'¹⁷⁷² The magazine did not fail to conclude that the Prime Minister appeared to disregard the objections made by Van den Broek. Dutch daily newspaper *De Volkskrant* quoted the crucial statements made by Lubbers in the German newspaper.¹⁷⁷³

On 3 and 5 December, respectively, Kohl received Slovenian President Kucan and Croatian President Tudjman and told them that Germany, and as many other EC member states as possible, would recognize both countries before Christmas.¹⁷⁷⁴ In a telephone conversation with Mesic about this time, Kohl announced that he did not intend to postpone German recognition until all EC countries were in agreement.¹⁷⁷⁵ Almost at the same time, i.e. on 5 December, the Croatian Parliament recalled

¹⁷⁶⁵ Axt, *Jugoslawien*, p. 352; Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 74; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 958; J.M. Bik, 'Bonn erkent Kroatië nog vóór Kerstmis' (Bonn recognizes Croatia before Christmas), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/11/91.

¹⁷⁶⁶ 'Italy, Germany prepared to recognize Slovenia and Croatia', *Agence France Presse*, 28/11/91.

¹⁷⁶⁷ Libal, *Limits*, p. 78.

¹⁷⁶⁸ 'Italy, Germany prepared to recognize Slovenia and Croatia', *Agence France Presse*, 28/11/91; Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 196; 'Servische terroristen bereiden aanslagen op EG-politici voor' (Serb terrorists plan attacks on EC politicians), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/11/91, 'Rome steunt Kohl in eis tot erkenning' (Rome supports Kohl's demand for recognition), *de Volkskrant*, 29/11/91.

¹⁷⁶⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00404, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Kroatië, memorandum Van der Tas to DGPZ, 28/11/91.

¹⁷⁷⁰ Both, *Indifference*, p. 132.

¹⁷⁷¹ Both, *Indifference*, p. 132.

¹⁷⁷² Helmut Hetzel, 'Ruud Lubbers, der Handlungsreisende in Sachen EG' (Ruud Lubbers, commercial traveller in EC matters), *Die Welt*, 30/11/91.

¹⁷⁷³ 'EG erkent Kroatië en Slovenië dit jaar' (EC recognizes Croatia and Slovenia this year), *de Volkskrant*, 30/11/91.

¹⁷⁷⁴ 'Beim Bonn-Besuch des Präsidenten; Kohl sagt Tudjman Anerkennung Kroatiens vor Weihnachten zu' (During the president's visit to Bonn; Kohl promises Tudjman recognition of Croatia before Christmas), *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 06/12/91; Libal, *Limits*, p. 81.

¹⁷⁷⁵ Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 74.

Mesic as President of the collective Federal Presidency, a decision that would have retroactive effect from 8 October, the day on which the Brioni moratorium expired and Croatia considered itself independent. Federal Foreign Minister Budimir Loncar, a Croat, had resigned two weeks earlier on 20 November.

After having obtained Kohl's promise, Tudjman no longer objected to the deployment of UN forces in the disputed areas in Croatia instead of along its border with Serbia.¹⁷⁷⁶ Formal recognition is within reach, so sovereignty of the entire Croatian territory will only be a matter of time and military power, Tudjman must have thought. Vance's peace plan was ready for submission to the Security Council on 11 December.

Many objections to German rush

In spite of the promises regarding recognition made at Stuyvenberg Castle, the German government had not yet won the day, which was apparent from the Mitterrand interview published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 29 November. The French head of state declared that although his country was not against the recognition of Croatia's independence, it could only come about if all EC countries supported it and after the rights of the Serb minority in Croatia had been guaranteed. It seemed that Mitterrand even wanted to discuss the borders of Croatia. 'Will the internal frontier within Yugoslavia separating Serbia and Croatia automatically become an international frontier?', the French head of state contemplated aloud.¹⁷⁷⁷ Nor did he seem in much of a hurry with regard to recognition: 'I do not think that the recognition of Croatia would improve matters at this moment.'¹⁷⁷⁸

There were also many objections against an early recognition of Croatia and Slovenia at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Officials were aware of the enormous implications it could have for the Yugoslavia conference. The Slovenians would see no need at all to negotiate. The Croatians would perhaps be willing to talk, if only to obtain the area that was now under Serb control. To make matters worse, Serbia would no longer regard the EC as a neutral mediator if it recognized Croatia and Slovenia. Nor would it be very willing to continue talks about a Yugoslavia that no longer comprised Croatia and Slovenia. Recognition would also affect the establishment of a peace force, which was now under discussion following Resolution 721 of the Security Council. Serbia would probably not accept the presence within the peace forces of troops from countries that intended to recognize Croatia. If, on the other hand, recognition took place when peace forces were already stationed in the area, the safety of the troops could be jeopardized. The British government had expressed serious concerns about this matter to the Hague and wanted a carefully arranged organisation of UN peace forces before proceeding to recognition. The danger of Serb reprisals following the recognition of Croatia also involved the observers of the European Monitoring Mission, the ECMM.¹⁷⁷⁹

Besides, for months now, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Hague had been aware of the seriousness of developments within Bosnia-Herzegovina. News reaching the Foreign Office, both through its diplomatic post at Belgrade and through the media, was very alarming. According to Fietelaars, the Dutch Ambassador in Belgrade, there was an 'escalation of the polarization' of the three ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina as early as the end of April 1991.¹⁷⁸⁰ No more than Izetbegovic did D.R. Hasselman, Dutch Counsellor of the Embassy in Belgrade, entertain any illusions with regard to a conflict in Bosnia. In the summer of 1991, he expected the problems in Bosnia to be far more

¹⁷⁷⁶ Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 197-198.

¹⁷⁷⁷ In early December, Mitterrand used similar words on Dutch television: 'France supports EC recognition for Croatia, Slovenia', *Agence France Presse*, 05/12/91.

¹⁷⁷⁸ 'Mitterrand: Frankreich will in Maastricht den Erfolg' (Mitterrand: France wants Maastricht to be successful), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29/11/91.

¹⁷⁷⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00404, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Kroatië, memorandum from DEU/OE to DGPZ via DEU, 06/12/91 no. 157 and Speaking note of the British Embassy, 'Consequences of recognizing Croatian independence', 02/12/91.

¹⁷⁸⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00402, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Bosnië-Herzegovina, Fietelaars 124, 07/05/91.

serious than those occurring at the time in Croatia. Also, in his view, possible frustrations of JNA units that were being withdrawn from Slovenia and sent to Bosnia should be taken into account. However, given the ethnic diversity and the excessive violence that was expected, Hasselman thought that a monitoring mission in Bosnia would ‘not be the proper technical instrument’ for peacekeeping.¹⁷⁸¹ In early August 1991, Izetbegovic had told the European Troika that he hoped observers would also be sent to Bosnia at some point as he did not rule out the possibility that, after Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina would become a victim of Milosevic’s Greater Serbia aspirations.¹⁷⁸²

By the end of September, Fietelaars also recommended that observers be sent to Bosnia. He reported movements of JNA troops and equipment from Serbia and Montenegro to Bosnia, which he interpreted as an attempt to realize the Greater Serbia objective. He observed the JNA provocations against the Muslims and a marked growth of Serb militias, which, in its turn, prompted the forming of Muslim militias. Events that took six months to happen in Croatia took only a week in Bosnia, according to Fietelaars. The Bosnian Presidency, whose member Ejup Ganic was Fietelaars’s contact, asked him daily for the immediate deployment of observers in those parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina where incidents had occurred.¹⁷⁸³ The day Fietelaars reported this to the Hague, the Dutch daily newspaper *Trouw* featured an article in which Ganic said he had been pleading for the deployment of observers in Bosnia for more than six months now – in vain. ‘It could still do some good,’ he added. ‘Two weeks from now it will be too late.’¹⁷⁸⁴

When, by the end of October, Dutch helicopters deployed for the monitoring mission were called back to the Netherlands as they had been grounded for weeks because of the dangerous situation in the Yugoslav airspace¹⁷⁸⁵, and, shortly after, the EC observers posted in the area around Vukovar and Dubrovnik had to be recalled because hostilities had broken out, Van den Broek still favoured the presence of the remaining observers in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He praised their stabilizing influence on ‘a potentially explosive situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina’, where the Serbs held their referendum against Bosnian independence on 9 and 10 November.¹⁷⁸⁶

Others were also aware that Bosnia would quickly erupt into violence. A ‘joke’ going around in Yugoslavia at the time said: ‘Why is there no fighting in Bosnia? Because Bosnia will get to the finals directly.’¹⁷⁸⁷ In July, Nijaz Durakovic, leader of the formerly communist Social Democratic Party in Bosnia said it would be an understatement to say that Bosnia was on the verge of civil war, as it was already in the middle of one.¹⁷⁸⁸ On 7 August, *Volkskrant* commentator Koen Koch warned that Croats, Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia would thrash out among themselves where the borders of Croatia and Serbia and a future Muslim state would run: ‘As the violence in Croatia is much worse than the violence in Slovenia, the bloodbath in Bosnia will be much worse than the violence in Croatia.’¹⁷⁸⁹ According to *Trouw* correspondent Nicole Lucas, by the end of September 1991, leading politicians of the various ethnic groups in Bosnia were in agreement about what would happen if Europe did not find a solution for Bosnia: ‘There will be a civil war worse than ever before in history. Lebanon will seem a nursery game compared to the cruelties that will take place here.’¹⁷⁹⁰

At the beginning of November 1991, Second Secretary of the Embassy, J.L. Werner, learned from Karadzic in Sarajevo that he had forced Milosevic to extend his protection to the Serbs outside Serbia. This, according to Karadzic, had led Milosevic to reject the propositions of Carrington,

¹⁷⁸¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00402, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Bosnië-Herzegovina, Hasselman 232, 23/07/91.

¹⁷⁸² ABZ, DEU/ARA/03287, EU/GBVB/Trojka, preparation and reporting of the Troika visits to Yugoslavia, July/August 1991, Hasselman 250 to Van den Broek, 03/08/91.

¹⁷⁸³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00402, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Bosnië-Herzegovina, Fietelaars 337, 26/09/91.

¹⁷⁸⁴ N. Lucas, ‘Doodvonnis over Bosnië’ (Death sentence for Bosnia), *Trouw*, 26/09/91.

¹⁷⁸⁵ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 11, p. 3.

¹⁷⁸⁶ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 12, p. 1.

¹⁷⁸⁷ Kaplan, *Ghosts*, p. 22.

¹⁷⁸⁸ David Hearst, ‘Conflict erupts over EC observers’, *The Guardian*, 13/07/91.

¹⁷⁸⁹ K. Koch, ‘Falende trojka’ (The Troika has failed), *de Volkskrant*, 07/08/91.

¹⁷⁹⁰ Nicole Lucas, ‘Doodvonnis voor Bosnië’ (Death sentence for Bosnia) *Trouw*, 26/09/91.

although he was personally inclined to accept them. There is no doubt that Karadzic, who liked to give the impression that he exerted real influence over Milosevic, was boasting. However, this did not alter the fact that the JNA was distributing weapons to Serbs, which, according to the Secretary of the Embassy, only made the break-out of a civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina more likely.¹⁷⁹¹

The Hague was also aware of the fact that by the end of November and at the beginning of December – except during Izetbegovic's visit to Bonn –, the Bosnian and Macedonian governments had urgently requested the EC countries not to proceed to recognition too soon. However, they also made it clear that, if recognition took place, they also wanted to be recognized as independent states, as they did not want to stay part of a rump Yugoslavia. The Bosnian government pressed for the establishment of UN peace forces in Bosnia prior to EC recognition of Croatia. The British government was sensitive to these arguments. Given the ethnic patchwork in Bosnia-Herzegovina and possible JNA reprisals against Croats in Bosnia after the recognition of Croatia, London expected violence to break out.¹⁷⁹² The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared the British concerns, but seemed, as yet, more preoccupied with the potential consequences for Macedonia and Kosovo, which were expected to have both internal and international implications.¹⁷⁹³

Meanwhile, the British and the French mounted another offensive against early recognition. By the end of November, Foreign Office staff had told journalists that British recognition of Croatia and Slovenia would soon come to pass now that the deployment of peace forces in Croatia seemed likely. Recognition would probably even take place before Christmas, they said.¹⁷⁹⁴ Apparently, Minister Hurd felt the need to explain his country's formal position once more declaring in *The Times* of 3 December that any Yugoslav republic that wanted to could gain independence: 'This is a matter of judgement and timing rather than principle.' As such, his position on record had shifted towards that of the French government, which had already accepted recognition on 9 October, although it questioned the timing of it. As a result of the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia would also want to gain independence soon, Hurd said in *The Times*. And this would threaten the peace in these countries. According to the British Minister, it was an illusion to think that the recognition of independence would stop the fighting. The West was not prepared to supply troops to protect the new states. Moreover, if recognition was pushed through too hastily, it would be impossible for the international community to demand adequate protection of minorities from the governments of the states that wanted to be recognized.¹⁷⁹⁵

The day Hurd's article was published in *The Times*, Mitterrand criticised the German government's intention in a personal conversation with Kohl. He told the German Chancellor that recognition would have no impact on the fighting in Yugoslavia.¹⁷⁹⁶ As he had done a few weeks earlier, Kohl replied that internal pressure in his country left him no choice.¹⁷⁹⁷ Nor did contacts between American President Bush and Chancellor Kohl after the summit in Rome have the outcome Washington desired.¹⁷⁹⁸ In the first week of December, UN envoy Vance also gave up hopes that Bonn could be made to change its mind and sighed, 'My friend Genscher is out of control.'¹⁷⁹⁹

When it was clear that Kohl and Genscher would stick to their intentions, Hurd at last accepted that the EC would probably recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia before the year was

¹⁷⁹¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00402, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Bosnië-Herzegovina, Memorandum Chef de Poste to DEU/OE and DAV, 13/11/91, BEL 4659.

¹⁷⁹² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00404, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Kroatië, Speaking note of the British Embassy, 'Consequences of recognizing Croatian independence', 02/12/91.

¹⁷⁹³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00404, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Kroatië, memorandum from DEU/OE to DGPZ through DEU, 06/12/91 no. 157.

¹⁷⁹⁴ Adrian Bridge & Sarah Helm, 'UK ready to recognize Croatia and Slovenia', *The Independent*, 29/11/91.

¹⁷⁹⁵ Douglas Hurd, 'Averting a Balkan Tragedy', *The Times*, 03/12/91.

¹⁷⁹⁶ Favier & Martin-Roland, *Décennie*, p. 243.

¹⁷⁹⁷ Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 75.

¹⁷⁹⁸ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844, Meesman 1259 to Van den Broek, 14/12/91.

¹⁷⁹⁹ Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 177.

out, even if it would be impossible to impose conditions for recognition.¹⁸⁰⁰ On 3 December, the EC Foreign Ministers met in Brussels. After the meeting, Danish Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen announced that the EC would recognize Croatia and Slovenia at the special EPC meeting on 16 December. Hurd confirmed this statement of his Danish colleague.¹⁸⁰¹ The British Minister had made a remarkable U-turn in the matter of the timing of recognition since the publication of his letter in *The Times* that very morning. However, this quick reversal – and probably previous statements of Hurd’s staff as well – was explicable, as the need for the United Kingdom to oppose recognition was considerably diminished. The fear – mostly felt by staunch British ally the United States – that recognition would affect the situation in the Soviet Union was virtually gone. In December 1991, it was clear to anyone willing to recognize it that the Soviet Union would break up, with or without a Yugoslav precedent. British concerns that the WEU might be deployed in Yugoslavia had also been removed nor could the British government have continued to cherish much hope that the conference presided over by their fellow countryman Carrington could still succeed and should not be thwarted by recognition.

In spite of this, the governments in London and Paris had still not accepted Bonn’s attitude entirely. Before Hurd’s public change of heart and before the Dutch Embassy in Washington reported the American government’s failure to make Kohl and Genscher change their minds, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the capacity of EC President, had taken up a position that was based on the expectation that recognition could be postponed by demanding Croatian guarantees regarding the observance of human rights. It was thought at the ‘Monkey Rock’ (Foreign Ministry) in the Hague that the German government would support this view.¹⁸⁰² The Dutch EU Presidency intended to use these conditions to stall recognition until 1 March 1992. However, there were facts Foreign Affairs officials failed to anticipate. Firstly, they had yet to understand that their own Prime Minister Lubbers had meanwhile accepted that recognition would take place before the year was out. Secondly, the German government was busily conferring with the government in Zagreb to remove any objections to the lack of protection of minorities as quickly as possible.¹⁸⁰³ Thirdly, a few days after the Dutch position was determined in the Hague, Hurd declared that the United Kingdom would accept early recognition, if necessary even without conditions being imposed. Lastly, the Paris government realized that an EC recognition forced through by Germany was unavoidable. After Kohl’s message to Mitterrand indicating that Germany would recognize Croatian independence no matter what, French Foreign Minister Dumas proposed that the Directors General for Political Affairs of the German and French Ministries of Foreign Affairs formulate recognition criteria. Genscher agreed to this. The criteria proposed by the two Directors General were an attempt to make certain demands which had not been made at the Yugoslavia conference, including demands with regard to human rights, the rights of minorities and the inviolability of borders. Prior to the special EPC meeting of 16 December, Kohl and Mitterrand agreed to these terms.¹⁸⁰⁴

The European summit held at Maastricht on 9 and 10 December had been successful after all, which must have been quite a relief for the Dutch government after the rejection of its draft treaty on ‘Black Monday’. A week later, on 16 and 17 December, Yugoslavia would be on the agenda of an EPC meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers, where Germany was expected to push through recognition of Croatian and Slovenian independence. Both Bonn and the Hague were warned against this German

¹⁸⁰⁰ Hella Pick, ‘Early recognition “is unstoppable”’, *The Guardian*, 05/12/91.

¹⁸⁰¹ ‘EG erkent Slovenië en Kroatië op 16 december’ (EC recognizes Croatia and Slovenia on 16 December), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/12/91; ‘EG zal zelfstandigheid Slovenië en Kroatië binnenkort erkennen’ (EC to recognize Slovenia and Croatia soon), *de Volkskrant*, 04/12/91.

¹⁸⁰² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00404, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Kroatië, memorandum from DEU/OE to DGPZ through DEU, 06/12/91 no. 157 and Speaking note of the British Embassy, ‘Consequences of recognizing Croatian independence’, 02/12/91.

¹⁸⁰³ Libal, *Limits*, pp. 79-80; ‘Duitsland scherpt boycot Servië en Montenegro aan’ (Germany intensifies boycott of Serbia and Montenegro), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/12/91.

¹⁸⁰⁴ Favier/Martin-Roland, *Décennie*, pp. 242-243; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 959.

intention on innumerable occasions before this meeting took place. In his report to Perez de Cuellar of 10 December, UN envoy Vance, working out the preconditions for peace operations in Croatia, stated his fear that recognition would lead to an outburst of violence which would jeopardize the establishment of a peace force.¹⁸⁰⁵ The UN Secretary-General himself was worried about the risks recognition entailed for the minorities in the independent republics, particularly the danger that ‘an early, selective recognition could widen the conflict and fuel an explosive situation, especially in Bosnia and Hercegovina’.¹⁸⁰⁶ In a letter to the EC President, he warned that a premature recognition of the two republics could have a destabilizing effect.¹⁸⁰⁷ There was even an usually sharply-worded correspondence between Perez de Cuellar and Genscher about the matter of recognition. The UN Secretary-General declared that recognition would only be possible within a general settlement for Yugoslavia, as proposed by Carrington, to which Genscher retorted that the conference chaired by Carrington had not yielded any results in weeks, for which the Serbs were mostly to blame, and that any further postponement of recognition would only lead to more violence on the part of the Serbs.¹⁸⁰⁸

The American government indicated it shared the objections of Perez de Cuellar, Vance and Carrington in a letter to EC President Van den Broek. Washington feared that, once its independence was recognized, Croatia would be less inclined to refrain from the use of violence, and hinder Vance’s attempts to enable peace operations. For this reason, the American government wanted the EC to stick to the agreement of 8 November, which stipulated that recognition would only be possible as part of a general settlement for Yugoslavia.¹⁸⁰⁹ In addition to the other objections, the American government expected that recognition of the two republics would cause the JNA to intervene in Bosnia-Hercegovina. Recognition would also imply that the US were prepared to protect the republics’ borders, which, at the time, they were not all willing to do.¹⁸¹⁰ American diplomats also urged the Foreign Ministries of the other EC countries to postpone recognition.¹⁸¹¹ Even Germany’s own Ambassador in Belgrade, Von Eiff, urgently requested the government in Bonn to refrain from early recognition.¹⁸¹² Finally, the ECMM argued that recognition of Croatia would result in more Serb aggression and would ‘directly threaten the lives’ of observers.¹⁸¹³

On 15 December, the Security Council adopted Resolution 724, urging all countries to refrain from any actions that could increase tensions or delay a peaceful outcome of the conflict in Yugoslavia. It could hardly have been a secret that this resolution was mostly meant for Germany and that it was sponsored by the United States, France and Great Britain. The resolution was fairly unique in Western diplomacy.

Still, as a final attempt to prevent the German government from recognizing Croatia and Slovenia, it had failed. In its initial wording, the resolution referred explicitly to the recognition intended by Germany, but after Genscher had embarked on a telephone offensive, the governments in London and Paris that had let themselves be led by Washington, decided to delete the warning against recognition from the draft.¹⁸¹⁴ This demonstrated once again that the British and French governments were not prepared to go to any length to stop Germany.

¹⁸⁰⁵ Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage*, p. 492.

¹⁸⁰⁶ UN document S1991/23280, Annex 4, quoted in the UN Srebrenica Report, par. 10; Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage*, p. 493.

¹⁸⁰⁷ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181 no. 20, p. 7.

¹⁸⁰⁸ Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 493-494; Weller, *Response*, p. 587.

¹⁸⁰⁹ ABZ, 911.13, Joegoslavië, verhoudingen en partijen, deel III, 1990 - September 1991, C. Howard Wilkins Jr. to Van den Broek, 13/12/91; Gompert, *Serbia*, p. 36.

¹⁸¹⁰ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Meesman 1236 to Van den Broek, 06/12/91; Meesman 1259 to Van den Broek, 14/12/91.

¹⁸¹¹ Zimmerman, *Origins*, pp. 176-177; ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Meesman 1259 to Van den Broek, 14/12/91.

¹⁸¹² Zimmerman, *Origins*, pp. 176-177.

¹⁸¹³ ‘Waarnemers EG waarschuwen tegen erkenning Kroatië’ (EC observers warn against recognition of Croatia), *de Volkskrant*, 12/12/91; ‘Erkenningskwesie Kroatië’ (The issue of Croatia’s recognition), *de Volkskrant*, 16/12/91; Folkert Jensma, ‘Europese Unie sluit gelederen op ‘t nippertje’ (European Union closes ranks just on time), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/12/91.

¹⁸¹⁴ Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 77; Libal, *Limits*, p. 82.

Germany's success in the matter of recognition

Against this background, the Foreign Ministers at the special EPC meeting of 16 December were to address the question whether to go ahead with the recognition of the Yugoslav republics and in what manner. The Ministerial meeting was preceded by a meeting of Directors General. At this Political Committee meeting, Dutch Director-General for Political Affairs Van Walsum, who was acting on instructions from Van den Broek, made a final attempt to suspend recognition. Senior officials of the Dutch Foreign Ministry probably still had the date of 1 March 1992 in mind.¹⁸¹⁵ In Both's opinion, the Dutch Foreign Ministry urged for suspension of the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia as it realized too late how recognition would affect the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In spite of continual warnings from the Dutch Embassy in Belgrade and the Dutch press, the Minister and Foreign Affairs staff had temporarily forgotten about the consequences for Bosnia, which had been such an important part of Van Walsum's famous COREU message of 13 July.¹⁸¹⁶ It is hard to believe, but the final efforts of the Dutch Ministry with regard to recognition seem only to have been based on the warnings received the week before and the adoption of Resolution 724. There is no other explanation than that.

It became apparent during the Political Committee meeting that doubts had arisen among the representatives of Italy, Denmark, Belgium and Luxembourg too, who were under the impression of all these warnings and who had appeared, until then, to support Germany. Suddenly, Germany found itself in an isolated position. 'Most EC partners do not follow Genscher,' cheered Dig Ishta, spokesperson of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁸¹⁷

However, Ishta's own Minister was not cheering. To Van Walsum's amazement, Van den Broek was not pleased at all when informed by him of the results. What had happened? On 15 December, Mitterrand had sent a letter to Lubbers, Kohl and Major, stating that, in spite of Perez de Cuellar's warnings against recognition, the unity of the twelve EC countries should be preserved as to both the timing of and the terms for recognition. If Croatia and Slovenia agreed to the terms, they should be simultaneously recognized by the twelve EC countries.¹⁸¹⁸ The letter to Lubbers was to be delivered by French Ambassador Jean-René Bernard, who sent it to J.M.P.H. Merckelbach, senior adviser of the Ministry of General Affairs, on 19 December. However, the accompanying letter shows that Bernard had already informed Merckelbach of the nature of Mitterrand's letter on 16 December. It seems that Van den Broek was notified of this while Van Walsum was still trying to thwart German insistence at the meeting. This would explain his rather piqued reaction to Van Walsum's report, describing the matter as 'complex' and recognition as 'unavoidable'.¹⁸¹⁹ Once again, it was clear how close-knit the Bonn-Paris axis was and to what extent the partnership of Germany and France had been able to hoodwink the Dutch EC Presidency.

At the meeting of Foreign Ministers that took place the same day, the Directors General were overruled by their political bosses who wanted no dissension at the time the Maastricht Treaty was being signed. In the early morning of 17 December, the EC Ministers found a solution that was in line with the French and German proposition. They proposed to set criteria with regard to the inviolability of borders and the protection of human rights and minorities for states asking for recognition before 23 December. This was opposed by Greek Foreign Minister Samaras and his Dutch colleague Van den Broek. Samaras had already informed the other EC Ministers at the meeting of 28 October 1991 that his country would never accept the recognition of an independent state bearing the name of Macedonia. Then, on 16 December, he managed to add 'no hostile propaganda' against neighbouring countries that were also EC member states as a condition for the recognition of parts of the former

¹⁸¹⁵ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Meesman 1259 to Van den Broek, 14/12/91.

¹⁸¹⁶ Both, *Indifference*, p. 134.

¹⁸¹⁷ Zeitler, *Rolle*, pp. 320-321.

¹⁸¹⁸ ABZ, Kabinetsarchief: Coll. Van den Broek, box 7 (1991), Joego chairmen, Mitterrand to Lubbers, 15/12/91.

¹⁸¹⁹ Both, *Indifference*, p. 134.

federal republic of Yugoslavia. This included the stipulation that no names could be used that ‘imply territorial demands’, which was a reference to the name of Macedonia.

Van den Broek says he himself tried to change the course of events by pointing out to his colleagues that Vance and Carrington had advised against recognition, and by saying that one should not simply ignore this. The other eleven countries argued that consensus within the EC was more important, an argument that had been supported by Van den Broek himself throughout the Dutch Presidency. Van den Broek was also sympathetic to the argument that if recognition were suspended, Serbia could draw out the talks to block recognition of Croatia.¹⁸²⁰ ‘The Germans held on to the essence of their point of view. As a result, the views of the other partners were gradually adjusted to that of Germany, during talks that lasted until after 1am,’ Van den Broek wrote afterwards to the Dutch Embassy in Belgrade. Nor would he himself have been pleased to see dissension over foreign policy during the Dutch EC Presidency¹⁸²¹ which was why he did not criticize Genscher too harshly in the press:

‘I could have done so with regard to the role he played when he complicated matters during the attempt to formulate an (...) overall solution for Yugoslavia. However, in December we had to admit that one third of Croatia was de facto occupied. Only by recognizing Croatia’s independence could one speak in terms of one country terrorizing another, which would then become the basis for subsequent Security Council resolutions, or (...) a sanction policy or similar actions against the country we already perceived as the aggressor.’¹⁸²²

According to several authors, Germany’s concession to Great Britain, i.e. enabling it to opt out of the Social Charter of the Maastricht Treaty, had smoothed out British opposition, after which there was nothing else France could do but formulate a few conditions for recognition.¹⁸²³

British Prime Minister Major vehemently denies that the United Kingdom had received certain promises from Germany regarding the Maastricht Treaty in exchange for its support of recognition.¹⁸²⁴ Authors claiming the opposite offer no more proof than a few references to press articles. The most important one is Newhouse’s publication of August 1992 in which the author uses various arguments that contradict rather than prove a connection between the Maastricht Treaty and recognition¹⁸²⁵. The article goes on to quote a senior diplomat who:

‘agrees that the Germans made no direct link between the treaty and recognition.’ He adds, ‘But just before and during the meetings on the sixteenth, they said, “We have been helpful to you. We backed John Major when he was in some tight corners. We backed you French against the Americans on defence. You owe us something.”’¹⁸²⁶

¹⁸²⁰ Leonard Ornstein, ‘Minister Van den Broek: ‘Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg’ (Minister van den Broek: “Let’s start with a warning shot”) *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 10; also, ‘Het stratego van de experts’ (The stratego played by the experts), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 12.

¹⁸²¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00411, COREUs regarding the EPS position in the matter of Yugoslavia, October-December 1991, Van den Broek 190 to the Belgrade Embassy, 17/12/91. Cf. Both, *Indifference*, pp. 134-135.

¹⁸²² Interview H. van den Broek, 15/11/99.

¹⁸²³ Both, *Indifference*, p. 133; Bell, *Way*, p. 37; Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 112; Hannes Hofbauer, *Neue Staaten, neue Kriege. Die Zerstörung Jugoslawiens (1991-1999)*, also (Hg.), *Balkankrieg*, p. 68; Kumar, *Divide*, p. 50.

¹⁸²⁴ Major, *Autobiography*, pp. 533-534.

¹⁸²⁵ Newhouse, *Round*, p. 65. This article appears in edited form as Newhouse, ‘Bonn’.

¹⁸²⁶ Newhouse, *Round*, pp. 65-66.

So even according to this much-quoted source there was not really a *quid pro quo* deal. When trying to persuade other countries, German diplomats may have used a few examples of generous German concessions made to those countries in the recent past.

Another source is an article published in *The Independent* almost two years after the decision to recognize Croatia and Slovenia. In this article two anonymous ‘senior Whitehall sources’ claim there had been a deal between Kohl and Major. ‘One UK official’ – the article does not clarify whether this is one of the sources mentioned – was quoted saying: ‘Kohl supported us on the crucial points we needed at Maastricht and we gave in on recognition in return.’¹⁸²⁷ The possibility that such an exchange of favours really took place cannot be excluded. On the other hand, it would be difficult to conceive how German pressure for recognition, which dated from the first six months of 1991, could have been subdued much longer given the increasing criticism of Serb actions. Besides, the other EC countries could not rule out the possibility that Germany – perhaps together with or followed by other countries – would proceed to recognize Croatia and Slovenia by itself, given the nature of some statements made by Kohl following the joint statement of Germany and Italy in Venice on 15 September. It seems that the British and French governments found it of the utmost importance that EC unity be preserved.

Which was why they assumed that their colleagues from the other EC member states would probably give in if Kohl and Genscher stuck to their points. And that is exactly what happened in early December, i.e. even before the summit in Maastricht took place. It is apparent from statements made by Hurd that, by 5 December, he had accepted the fact that Germany could not be stopped. After the conclusion of the Maastricht Treaty, for which consensus had been required, there was now nothing to prevent Bonn from pursuing a solo path. The treaty was no longer at issue. However, the EC countries also considered the matter of recognition as a first test to see whether the community was able to operate as a unity after the conclusion of the Treaty. Or, as an anonymous senior EC diplomat put it: ‘It will be very bad news indeed if the aspiration to a common policy falls at the first fence.’¹⁸²⁸ Dumas declared that the unity of the EC was more important to him than the Yugoslavia ‘epiphenomenon’: ‘The break-up of Yugoslavia is a tragedy, the break-up of the European Community, however, would be a catastrophe’¹⁸²⁹. Immediately after the conclusion of the Maastricht Treaty, which provided for a common foreign and security policy, it was clear that this common EC policy could be moulded to the will of whichever member state was the most determined as was the case shortly afterwards when Greek opposition against the recognition of Macedonia dragged on for a year and a half, in spite of the wishes of eleven other countries.

It has been suggested that Mitterrand agreed to the recognition of Croatia in exchange for Kohl’s agreeing to accept 1 January 1999 as the commencing date of the European Monetary Union.¹⁸³⁰ The then Dutch Ambassador in Paris, Wijnaendts, did not want to suggest there was a direct connection between German concessions regarding the monetary union and the French attitude towards recognition. ‘That is not the way it works.’ However, he thought Mitterrand must have realized that Kohl expected support from Paris in the matter of recognition without having to mention it. As such, Wijnaendts believed there had been a ‘silent understanding’.¹⁸³¹

Other authors claim that Germany had promised France an intensification of the existing European Union instead of expansion and agreed to a less representative European Parliament than it originally intended.¹⁸³² However, there is no proof to confirm either of these ‘deals’.

¹⁸²⁷ Michael Sheridan, ‘United Nations: What’s gone wrong? The high cost of peace-keeping. Failure in Yugoslavia’, *The Independent*, 01/11/93.

¹⁸²⁸ John Palmer, ‘German plan to recognize Croatia puts EC in turmoil’, *The Guardian*, 16/12/91.

¹⁸²⁹ Favier & Martin-Roland, *Décennie*, p. 244.

¹⁸³⁰ Ronald Havenaar, ‘Passie en bederf in Parijs en Bonn’ (Passion and corruption in Paris and Bonn), review by Kenneth Dyson & Kevin Featherstone, *The Road to Maastricht. Negotiating Economic and Monetary Union*, *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/03/00.

¹⁸³¹ Interview H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00.

¹⁸³² Edwina S. Campbell & Jack M. Seymour Jr., ‘France, Germany, and the Yugoslav Wars’, Danopoulos & Messas (eds.), *Crises*, p. 306.

The EC Ministers had agreed that the arbitration commission presided over by French judge Badinter would determine whether the criteria for recognition had been met. Republics that met the requirements could then be recognized on 15 January 1992. However, the German government had already broken any possible link between the recommendations of the Badinter Commission and the implementation decision of 15 January by Genscher's statement in the morning of 17 December, immediately after the EC Ministers had in principle decided to agree to recognition, by saying that his government in Bonn would announce its intention to recognize Croatia and Slovenia on 19 December. Apparently, the German government wanted to avoid the scenario of being unable to proceed with recognition because the Badinter Commission advised against it.¹⁸³³

The German government eventually announced its intention to recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia on 18 December, a week before Christmas and without waiting for the opinion of the Badinter Commission. As a gesture of 'courtesy' towards the EC partners, the government in Bonn decided to suspend actual recognition until 15 January.

Obviously, this was an insult to the Badinter Commission, although Germany should not bear the sole blame. After all, the governments of the other EC member states had accepted that this would happen, as is apparent from the explanation given by Van Eenennaam, head of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (DAV) of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the Defence Council on 18 December:

"The majority of the "12" holds that there are risks to a premature and selective recognition and is supported in this by the UN Secretary-General and the Security Council. The outcome for now is that preservation of the unity of the "12" comes foremost. Republics that want to be recognized by the middle of January 1992, may obtain this recognition subject to certain conditions. Countries who want to recognize them sooner may do so. Germany will send diplomats no sooner than after 15 January."¹⁸³⁴

The adamant German position partly¹⁸³⁵ originated from Kohl's wish that the matter of Croatia and Slovenia's recognition be concluded by the time the congress of his party took place in Dresden on 17 December. Kohl got his intended ovation at the congress when he spoke of a 'grosser Erfolg' for German foreign policy. The Anglo-Saxon press translated *Erfolg* (success) as 'victory' or 'triumph',¹⁸³⁶ making it a case of sour grapes for those politicians who had tried to steer Kohl and Genscher away from recognition. After that, a veritable anti-German hysteria broke out in Great Britain, with the use of expressions such as 'overmighty Hun' and comparisons between Genscher and Hitler.¹⁸³⁷ *The Economist* came up with a new word for recognition: '*wreckognition*'.¹⁸³⁸

11. Fears for Bosnia

Outside Germany, there was a general reaction of stupefaction or anger to the decision of the EC to proceed with recognition. Lord Carrington was thoroughly disillusioned and left the meeting of 16 December before it was closed.¹⁸³⁹ He was furious that he had been deprived of the one weapon that

¹⁸³³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00411, COREUs regarding the EPS position in the matter of Yugoslavia, October-December 1991, Van den Broek 190 to the Belgrade Embassy, 17/12/91; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 961-962.

¹⁸³⁴ KAB. Defence Council report, 18/12/91.

¹⁸³⁵ According to Jakobsen, *Multilateralism*, p. 376, it was the most important reason.

¹⁸³⁶ For examples cf. Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 80. This faulty translation also appeared in relevant literature. Cf. Maull, *Germany*, p. 104; Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 200. Oscar Garschagen, 'Kohl erg blij over EG-besluit over Kroatië' (Kohl very pleased with EC decision about Croatia), *De Volkskrant*, 18/12/9, also said that Kohl had spoken in terms of a 'big triumph'.

¹⁸³⁷ Cf. Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 272.

¹⁸³⁸ The Economist, 18/01/92, pp. 48-49, quoted in Eyal, *Europe*, p. 50.

¹⁸³⁹ Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 23-24; Marijnissen & Glastra van Loon, *Oorlog*, p. 74.

could be used to enforce the protection of minorities.¹⁸⁴⁰ Yugoslav Prime Minister Markovic resigned on 20 December, officially because he did not agree to the federal budget for 1992, 81% of which was reserved for the army.¹⁸⁴¹ The always overly optimistic Prime Minister had waited until his last hope, the EC, had also abandoned him. Now, people had nearly forgotten about him already. According to Dutch newspaper *Trouw*, his position over the last few months had been 'less useful than that of an empty battery in a broken radio'.¹⁸⁴² Hardly anyone noticed his political demise. Fietelaars called it the end of 'a serial coup' against the remaining federal institutions of Yugoslavia which had started with the coup against the Federal Presidency on 3 October.¹⁸⁴³

Germany's solo path also left a bitter taste in the mouths of the Dutch. In a speech before the Evangelical Academy in Tutzing, Bavaria, Junior Minister Piet Dankert said that Germany

'had made a big fuss about the matter, preferring powerful language to sound arguments. Sometimes it seemed as if Germany's recognition was at stake instead of Croatia's. A very inauspicious beginning of a common European foreign and security policy. (...) Also, it would have done the German government credit if it had defended the Dutch EC Presidency against mostly unjustified and sometimes even vicious attacks by sections of the German media.'¹⁸⁴⁴

The German attitude was not forgotten by the Netherlands or by other countries. In early June 1993, Van Walsum, recently appointed Ambassador in Bonn, was taken to task by Genscher's successor Klaus Kinkel for commenting to the Bonn newspaper *General-Anzeiger* that the recognition might have been unwise.¹⁸⁴⁵

Many expected a bloodbath to follow in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Vance and various media repeated their warning that the recognition of the independence of Croatia and Slovenia would sooner cause the war to spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina than put an end to war in Croatia.¹⁸⁴⁶ Disappointed, American Ambassador Zimmermann telegraphed from Belgrade to Washington that the Croatian death toll of ten thousand would now be multiplied by ten in Bosnia.¹⁸⁴⁷ Bosnian Foreign Minister, Muslim Haris Silajdzic, warned that, within a few months, Bosnia might number 200,000 to 300,000 dead.¹⁸⁴⁸ Vance sent his special adviser, American diplomat Herbert Okun, to Izetbegovic and Ejup Ganic, a member of the Bosnian Presidency. They told him they had decided to ask for international recognition and asked him to send 10,000 peace troops to Bosnia immediately. Izetbegovic expected total war to break out in Bosnia if the West did not intervene.¹⁸⁴⁹ Okun said he did not expect the Security Council to take such steps, to which Ganic replied that Bosnia did not want to miss the boat now the EC had decided to set it in motion.¹⁸⁵⁰

¹⁸⁴⁰ Major, *Autobiography*, p. 533; Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 112; Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 200; Newhouse, 'Round', p. 66.

¹⁸⁴¹ Theo Engelen, 'Markovic treedt af als premier van Joegoslavië' (Markovic resigns as Prime Minister of Yugoslavia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/12/91.

¹⁸⁴² 'EG wil VN-troepen in Bosnië-Herzegovina' (EC wants UN forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina) *Trouw*, 21/12/91.

¹⁸⁴³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00411, COREUs regarding the EPC position in the matter of Yugoslavia, October-December 1991, Fietelaars 424 to Van den Broek, 20/11/91.

¹⁸⁴⁴ 'Staatssecretaris Dankert in Beieren: Duitsland vervult cruciale rol in Centraal- en Oost-Europa' (Junior Minister Dankert in Bavaria: Germany has a prominent part to play in Central and Eastern Europe), *Staatscourant* (Netherlands Government Gazette), 15/01/92.

¹⁸⁴⁵ Daan Dijkman & Bart Rijs, 'Henry Wijnenendts', *HP/De Tijd*, 11/06/93, p. 24; interview A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00.

¹⁸⁴⁶ Gutman, *Witness*, pp. 4-5, 7.

¹⁸⁴⁷ Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 178.

¹⁸⁴⁸ Gutman, *Witness*, p. 7.

¹⁸⁴⁹ Gutman, *Witness*, p. 8.

¹⁸⁵⁰ Michael Sheridan, 'United Nations: What's gone wrong? The high cost of peace-keeping. Failure in Yugoslavia', *The Independent*, 01/11/93. Also cf. Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage*, p. 491.

In common with the governments of Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina informed the EC within a week after its decision on principle to proceed with recognition that it too wanted to qualify for recognition. The governments of the other republics, Serbia and Montenegro, did not. They insisted they would preserve the former republic of Yugoslavia. Not seeking recognition, they avoided being required to offer guarantees regarding minorities, such as the Albanians in Kosovo.¹⁸⁵¹

The response of Serb leaders in Bosnia followed soon after the Bosnian government had asked for recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent republic on 20 December.¹⁸⁵² Maps were circulating among Bosnian Serb leaders as early as December, with colours indicating areas that were coveted by the Serbs to create a corridor around Banja Luka between Belgrade and the Serb areas in Croatia.¹⁸⁵³ On 18 December, the autonomous Bosnian Serb region of Bosanska Krajina declared itself part of Yugoslavia instead of Bosnia-Herzegovina. An EC decision to recognize Bosnia-Herzegovina would therefore not apply to this territory. On 21 December, the day after recognition had been applied for, the Serb Parliament in Bosnia decided to proclaim the areas where Bosnian Serbs constituted a majority a 'Serb republic' within Bosnia-Herzegovina, with effect from 14 January 1992.¹⁸⁵⁴ Apparently, the Bosnian Serbs did not want to lose any time. Only two days later, on 23 December, Karadzic declared that Bosnia-Herzegovina no longer existed.¹⁸⁵⁵ He expected that Bosnia's declaration of independence would cost at least half a million lives.¹⁸⁵⁶ Nor was the proclamation of the Serb Republic in Bosnia to wait until 14 January; it was proclaimed as early as 9 January 1992. This Bosnian Serb republic or 'Republika Srpska' considered itself entitled to 60 per cent of the Bosnian territory.¹⁸⁵⁷

Dutch Counsellor of the Embassy Hasselman declared that, after the EC decision of 16 December, a 'timely arrival of, above all, a sufficiently strong' UN peace force in Bosnia would be crucial to prevent bloodshed.¹⁸⁵⁸ The EC thought so too and pressed for the deployment of a preventive UN peace force in Bosnia.¹⁸⁵⁹ This was indeed done through Van den Broek who was about to lay down the EC Presidency. On the next-to-last day of 1991, he consulted with his colleague De Deus Pinheiro in Portugal, the country that would take over the Presidency from the Netherlands two days later. Carrington and Vance were also attending. Again, Carrington urged the twelve member states to delay their recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, Van den Broek had no intention of going back on the promised recognition. The Dutch Minister held that Serbia should not be rewarded for 'faits accomplis' and for holding Bosnia hostage. Besides, he thought it would not matter at all whether the Twelve recognized Bosnia if Milosevic really intended to cause trouble by trying to redraw Bosnia's borders too.¹⁸⁶⁰ Meanwhile impressed with the potential consequences for Yugoslavia of the decision on principle regarding recognition, he urgently asked his discussion partners again to ask for a UN peace force to be deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina as soon as possible, as 'otherwise the threat of another Croatia would become very real'. However, the Dutch Minister was told by those present that

¹⁸⁵¹ Cf. Gied ten Berge and Mient Jan Faber, 'EG-Ministers maken het nog bonter dan de Duitsers' (EC Ministers make it even worse than the Germans did), *de Volkskrant*, 19/12/91.

¹⁸⁵² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00402, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Bosnië-Herzegovina, Silajdzic to Van den Broek, 20/12/91.

¹⁸⁵³ Gutman, *Witness*, p. 9.

¹⁸⁵⁴ Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 298.

¹⁸⁵⁵ Quoted in Eyal, *Europe*, p. 61.

¹⁸⁵⁶ Theo Engelen, 'Serviërs in Bosnië willen hun republiek opdelen' (Serbs in Bosnia want to split up their republic), 23/12/91.

¹⁸⁵⁷ Sremac, *War*, p. 87.

¹⁸⁵⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00402, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Bosnië-Herzegovina, Hasselman 454, 23/12/91.

¹⁸⁵⁹ EG wil VN-troepen in Bosnië-Herzegovina' (EC want UN troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina), *Trouw*, 21/12/91; 'EG wil snel VN-macht naar Bosnië sturen' (EC wants to send UN forces to Bosnia soon), *de Volkskrant*, 21/12/91; Unclassified State Department report, annex 13. The Charge of the Light Blue Brigade: UNPROFOR First Deploys Fall-Winter 1992, p. 1.

¹⁸⁶⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00775, Van den Broek 64 to Lisbon Embassy, 31/12/91; Both, *Indifference*, p. 145.

the Serb government objected to a peace force, and the Security Council would not decide to deploy a force without the consent of Belgrade. The UN also feared that the establishment of a peace force in Bosnia would lead to requests for the same from Macedonia, Kosovo and Vojvodina, which could then not very well be refused, although such forces had better be deployed in 'the real crisis areas' the UN thought were in Croatia.¹⁸⁶¹ Vance had for several months stuck to the classic UN opinion that a peace force should be deployed only after a conflict has erupted and not before.¹⁸⁶²

In his report to the Security Council of 5 January 1992, Boutros-Ghali, who had succeeded Perez de Cuellar as UN Secretary-General, held that 'for now' there was no reason to send peace forces to Bosnia-Herzegovina. For now, only observers were sent to the areas in Bosnia that bordered on Croatia. It seems that Vance did not want to endanger the arrangements made for Croatia by the stationing of peace forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was so strongly opposed by Milosevic.¹⁸⁶³

On 15 January 1992, the EC recognized Slovenia and Croatia, although, according to the Badinter Commission, the latter had not offered sufficient guarantees with regard to the rights of minorities.¹⁸⁶⁴ Germany was the only EC country to open embassies in Ljubljana and Zagreb right away, which amounted to nothing more difficult than granting a diplomatic status to the consulates general already there. Presently, 43 other countries followed the EC's example. They did not include the United States. The Vatican needed no example and had already recognized the republics on 13 January.

The recognition of Macedonia did not meet with objections of the Badinter Commission.¹⁸⁶⁵ Contrary to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia had nothing to fear from Milosevic, who had expressed his contempt for Macedonia in the presence of Zimmermann in July 1991. 'A nonentity', the American Ambassador heard him say, 'a detail, so insignificant that we don't even need to worry about it. It will disintegrate. The Macedonian nationalists will gravitate toward Bulgaria, Macedonia's Albanians will join Albania, and the rest of the Macedonians can stew in their own juices.'¹⁸⁶⁶

However, Macedonia's request for recognition was not complied with immediately because of the objections of Greece, which focused on the country's name. Greek resistance would only end in the spring of 1993. Early in 1992, the Netherlands were even faced with a short-lived Greek trade boycott, as Van den Broek had been too eager to recognize Macedonia's independence.

Bosnia-Herzegovina would not be recognized immediately. The Badinter Arbitration Commission thought it not clear whether all sections of the population would be in favour of independence. The twelve EC countries would therefore await the outcome of the referendum recommended by the Badinter Commission.¹⁸⁶⁷ It is doubtful what the commission and the EC meant to achieve by a referendum. In previous months, it had become absolutely clear what the political parties in Bosnia thought and they received massive support from their ethnic followers.

The entire issue of recognition had become a terrible mess. The republics that basically met the requirements for recognition – i.e. Bosnia and Macedonia – were not recognized (yet). Croatia, although it did not guarantee protection of its Serb minority, was recognized, because the EC countries thought they could not fall out of step with Germany. The EC also disregarded the fact that the Croatian President Tudjman had repeatedly demonstrated his eagerness with regard to certain parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Had the EC received any guarantees from Croatia that it would respect the independence of Bosnia it had desired so much for itself?

¹⁸⁶¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00775, Van den Broek 64 to Lisbon Embassy, 31/12/91. Minister Van den Broek claims to have warned Vance twice that observers should be sent to Bosnia-Herzegovina which was likely to become the next target of Serb aggression, Leonard Ornstein, 'Minister Van den Broek: 'Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg'' (Minister Van den Broek: "Let's start with a warning shot"), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 10.

¹⁸⁶² Zimmermann, *Ambassador*, p. 16; also, *Origins*, p. 172.

¹⁸⁶³ Wijnaendts, *Kroniek*, p. 153. Cf. unclassified State Department report, annex 13. The Charge of the Light Blue Brigade: UNPROFOR First Deploys Fall-Winter 1992, p. 1.

¹⁸⁶⁴ Terrett, *Dissolution*, p. 164.

¹⁸⁶⁵ Terrett, *Dissolution*, p. 165.

¹⁸⁶⁶ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 150.

¹⁸⁶⁷ Terrett, *Dissolution*, p. 162.

Tudjman and Milosevic would later claim that the independence of Slovenia and Croatia triggered off a chain reaction. After all, what was granted to these territories could not be denied to Bosnia-Herzegovina. If Yugoslavia was allowed to break up, why not Bosnia – often called ‘small Yugoslavia’ because of its ethnically heterogeneous population – as well? This seemed an argument that supported the claims of a Greater Serbia and a Greater Croatia. However, Tudjman disregarded the fact that he himself refused to apply this argument to the areas in Croatia that were claimed by Serbs. Moreover, Milosevic refused to recognize the right of separation of the Albanians in Kosovo, a right he had assigned to the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia.

Bonn’s expectation that the recognition of Croatia (and of Bosnia at a later date) would prevent further Serb aggression was totally unfounded and could certainly not be based on the reality represented by the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The fact that the war in Croatia came to an end was the result of the attitude adopted by the conflicting parties, not because Germany had supported recognition. Although the prospect of recognition might have made it easier for the government in Zagreb to accept the establishment of peace forces – which it had itself requested – on Croatian territory instead of along its borders.

The war that should have been prevented was the war in Bosnia. Demanding a useless referendum before it would proceed to recognize Bosnia, the EC had afforded all the parties in Bosnia – Croats, Muslims and Serbs – time to prepare for the conflict. Florence Hartmann, a Frenchwoman, wrote: ‘The recognition of the Yugoslav republics, often described as premature, eventually came too late to prevent more bloodshed.’¹⁸⁶⁸ Recognition as such had little to do with the outbreak of conflict in Bosnia. It would have made a difference if the countries that recognized Bosnia had been prepared to use military means to prevent a conflict. As both Hurd and Mitterrand had told the German government in early December: recognition would not affect the conflict in Yugoslavia if no troops were made available at the same time. And as Dumas had told Mitterrand on 3 December when they discussed the German insistence on recognition: ‘There was no miraculous solution for Yugoslavia as nobody was prepared to intervene militarily even then.’¹⁸⁶⁹ Given the lack of opportunity and willingness to intervene militarily, Bonn’s urge for recognition was the German version of ‘doing something’, or the ‘ethics of conviction’ (for an explanation of this term, see Chapter 1 of this section).

12. The EC and the Dutch Presidency: an assessment

In the introduction to this section, the importance of perceptions is explained: the Western perception of Yugoslavia and vice versa, the Dutch perception of international politics, the clarity of policy targets, the policy instruments including institutional capacity, the political will, the interaction between policy circuits, and policy timing. At this point in the report, we take stock of how the European Community, the most important actor in the first six months of the Yugoslav conflict, operated, focusing especially on the role of the Netherlands as President.

The conclusion of this Chapter is that the West did not adequately assess the power of the actors it was dealing with in Yugoslavia. It was a delusion to continue pinning one’s hopes on the influence the federal government and presidency of Yugoslavia could wield in the summer of 1991. People such as Markovic and Mesic were of no real account anymore in June and July 1991. Nor was it very useful to help Mesic retain his position as President of the collective Federal Presidency. It is a miracle he lasted for five months, i.e. until 5 December when he retired with retroactive effect from 8 October. There were few illusions about the actions of Milosevic, his staff and his confidants such as Jovic and Jovanovic. The EC was aware of their aspirations to a Greater Serbia. However, it was clear at the same time that no solution could leave out Serb leadership. Any other external actor would have been facing the same tensions.

¹⁸⁶⁸ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 188.

¹⁸⁶⁹ Favier & Martin-Roland, *Décennie*, p. 245.

However, the EC did not realize that Milosevic actually did not set that much store by the ‘Serb’ areas in Croatia. Greater Serbia was no principle but a means to maintain power. The EC had more room for manoeuvring than it realized, but in the early stages of the conflict the Community did not fully recognize the cynicism of the Serb leading figure.

Nor was the European Community sufficiently aware of the JNA’s true part. Initially, the twelve EC countries expected that the JNA would be prepared to accept the authority of the federal government. Later on, the JNA was too easily thought of as an extension of the Serb leadership. The EC did not understand the great tensions that were felt in the highest ranks of the JNA during the first months of the conflict about the question as to whether the army should try preserve the integrity of Yugoslavia or pursue the goal of a Greater Serbia. In other words, the JNA was a more or less independent factor manoeuvring between federal and Serb levels. It was unknown that the irresolute attitude of the army also caused major tensions with the Serb leadership. Later, Yugoslav Defence Minister Kadijevic would write slightlyingly:

‘The high-ranking officials of the EC went through several stages in their attitude towards the army. The first consisted of their attempts to have Mesic appointed President of the Yugoslav Federal Presidency in order to gain control over the army, preventing it from being used to serve Serb interests or from following an independent course. During this time, EC officials who visited Yugoslavia did not even consider involving JNA officials in their talks.

The second stage of the EC attitude towards Yugoslavia is characterized by the attempts to regain control over the army through the Federal Executive Council, i.e. Prime Minister Markovic’s attempts (...). The fact that these were entirely unconstitutional made it easier for us to thwart them.

The third stage began when Mesic, Drnovsek, Tupurkovski and Bogicevic left the Federal Presidency and EC officials, refusing to recognize the ‘rump or Serb Presidency’ as they called it, decided to establish direct contact with the army. It was then that the EC encouraged the JNA to operate independently, although they had previously accused us of acting without permission of the civil authorities.¹⁸⁷⁰

Kadijevic even suggests that eventually the West would have been prepared to support the JNA if it brought down Milosevic. But the JNA did not do this.¹⁸⁷¹

The fact that the JNA remained such an unknown factor to the Community was partly the result of Germany stressing in the early stages of the conflict that the Troika should not attribute a political role to the JNA.¹⁸⁷² Unfamiliarity with the JNA also suited German policy. It made it possible to depict the JNA as a powerful panzered Goliath dealing brutally with a few small Davids. It was not sufficiently clear within the EC that the JNA was in fact seriously weakened by desertion. It had trouble filling its ranks and made little progress against weak opponents.

If possible, the EC had even less insight into the role played in the conflict by the paramilitary forces. First, it was not understood that they were not guerrilla forces but rather criminal elements using the regular army’s artillery. Secondly, it was often assumed that these gangs were not centrally organized, operating instead on their own, whereas in reality they followed the orders of the authorities. As a result of all these misconceptions, the member states had little inclination to intervene.

¹⁸⁷⁰ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁸⁷¹ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 91.

¹⁸⁷² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081. DEU; COREUs regarding the EPC position in the matter of Yugoslavia, June-September 1991, COREU Bonn, 30/07/91, CPE/BON 370; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 943.

The EC was invariably late in identifying problem areas. At first, the Community focused on Slovenia although there were enough signs indicating that Milosevic was prepared to give up the area without much resistance. The EC response to the outbreak of hostilities in Croatia came too late although it had been imminent ever since the declaration of independence the year before. Then it was only after much vacillating that the ECMM obtained its mandate for Croatia while the attitude of the Dutch Foreign Ministry was not the best example of forcefulness. Subsequently, the EC failed to take the necessary steps to alleviate rapidly mounting tensions in Bosnia-Herzegovina although they had been noted. According to Both, the Dutch Presidency was temporarily out of touch with that reality.

Although the 'COREU' (telegram to all EC capitals) sent by Director General for Political Affairs Van Walsum on 13 July may demonstrate a flawed assessment of the feasibility of the proposals set out in it, it did serve to clarify, a few weeks after the outbreak of the conflict in Yugoslavia, that the EC did not want to tamper with the republics' borders. The one matter the EC intended to be adamant about if the republics gained more autonomy or even independence was the protection of the rights of minorities. Eventually, however, it mishandled the matter. The EC was unable to make arrangements for the Albanians in Kosovo or the Serbs in Croatia. Nor did it succeed in making it perfectly clear to Milosevic that the position of the Serbs in Croatia was inextricably linked to that of the Albanians in Kosovo. The Yugoslavia conference was really over the moment this was put to Milosevic. The protection of the rights of the Serbs came to nothing because of Bonn's wish for an early recognition of Croatia. And obviously, the problem of the precarious position of the various ethnic groups in Bosnia was not solved by demanding a referendum that would sooner increase the tensions than remove them.

A missed opportunity?

‘Stage one: We say that nothing is going to happen.

Stage two: We say that something might happen, but we should not get involved.

Stage three: We say that we possibly ought to do something, but there is nothing we can do.

Stage four: We say that perhaps it might have been possible to do something, but it is too late now anyway.’¹⁸⁷³

When trying to realize its objectives without compromise, one of the greatest obstacles the EC had to cope with was the absence of a military component within the European Political Cooperation (EPC). In early September 1991, Delors compared the Community to an adolescent faced with an adult crisis.¹⁸⁷⁴ He said the crisis in Yugoslavia had probably come ten years too soon. Economic aid and recognition were the only instruments the EC had at its disposal. Ten years later, the EC might perhaps have been able to establish a peace force.¹⁸⁷⁵ ‘The glaring contrast between the abundance of declarations issued by the twelve member states and their military non-existence has undoubtedly done much to encourage Milosevic to resort to violence, first in Croatia and then in Bosnia’, Van Walsum says looking back.¹⁸⁷⁶ However, given the attitudes adopted by Bonn, London and Rome, it is doubtful whether the EC could have deployed a military component effectively even if it had been available.

¹⁸⁷³ Prime Minister Jim Hacker in the television series *Yes Prime Minister*, quoted in Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 14.

¹⁸⁷⁴ Cf. Eyal, *Europe*, pp. 71-72: ‘The European Community has tried to run before it could walk’.

¹⁸⁷⁵ William Drozdiak, ‘Lack of an Armed Option Limits EC’s Yugoslav Peace Initiative’, *The Washington Post*, 05/09/91.

¹⁸⁷⁶ ABZ, BZ 109. Van Walsum 33 to Van Mierlo, 26/01/98.

Nor were NATO or the WEU called to the fray during the first months of the conflict, although military experts feel they could have made a great difference with comparatively few means.¹⁸⁷⁷ It has been asked why NATO was not put to action against JNA artillery during the siege of Vukovar. This was open terrain, unlike the later situation in Bosnia with its mountains and forests. Moreover, at this stage of the conflict there were no UN troops that could be taken hostage as a response to air strikes. But NATO argued that air strikes would not have sufficed and that none of the countries was prepared to deploy ground forces.¹⁸⁷⁸

Western use of limited military means might also have prevented much bloodshed at the time of the shelling of Dubrovnik. American general John Galvin, the highest ranking NATO officer in Europe ('SACEUR' in military circles, or Supreme Allied Commander Europe) had made plans in anticipation of such a deployment, but President Bush, prompted by his military advisers, was against intervention.¹⁸⁷⁹ At a hearing of the American Congress, Galvin would later state that NATO air strikes could have put an end to the bombing of both Dubrovnik and Vukovar.¹⁸⁸⁰

On 26 November 1991, the ECMM changed the usually factual character of its reports that reached the European capitals through the EC Presidency. 'In the last analysis the JNA is a cowardly army, fighting for no recognisable principle, but largely for its own status and survival', was one of the crucial statements. The report called attention to the JNA's high degree of desertion and low morale. 'There is thus good reason to believe that selective show of force – to intimidate and hit the JNA in places where it hurts – can show its bluster and bluff.' The suggestion was made to strike back against the ships that were bombing Dubrovnik and the batteries holding hospitals under fire.¹⁸⁸¹ The report was leaked and the outspoken recommendation caused much commotion and irritation,¹⁸⁸² but nothing else. In the Netherlands, Bart Tromp wrote that he supported the ECMM's point of view.¹⁸⁸³

The notion must have appealed to Van Walsum as well. As a former artilleryman, he was much angered by television shots of a Serb battery firing a village after which its soldiers did not try to get away as quickly as possible – as they usually do in a war in expectation of counter-fire – but instead stayed around smoking, perfectly at ease, having nothing to fear. He wanted the West at least to show that a price would have to be paid for such actions. During talks with the Ministry of Defence, he proposed bombing a military air base in Serbia as a retaliation against the artillery attacks on Vukovar,¹⁸⁸⁴ but the answer was that military action without access to ground forces was not possible.

French General Jean Cot, UN Commander in the former republic of Yugoslavia from July 1993 to March 1994, would later write he was convinced that the Serbs might have been stopped in October 1991, if three ships, three dozen aircraft and 3,000 troops had been deployed at Dubrovnik and Vukovar as a clear indication of EC determination.¹⁸⁸⁵ He was not the only one to think so at the time, nor is he now.¹⁸⁸⁶ Shortly after laying down the office of Deputy Secretary of State early in 1993,

¹⁸⁷⁷ Cf. Jakobsen, 'Multilateralism', p. 374; S.L. Woodward, 'Redrawing Borders in a Period of Systemic Transition', Esman/Telhami (eds.) *Organizations*, p. 222.

¹⁸⁷⁸ Owen, *Breakup*, p. 38.

¹⁸⁷⁹ Zimmermann, *Ambassador*, p. 14; also, *Origins*, p. 158; F. Stephen Larrabee, 'US Policy in the Balkans: From Containment to Strategic Reengagement', Danopoulos & Messas (eds.), *Crises*, pp. 281 and 294 n. 21; Anthony Lewis, 'War Crimes', Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, pp. 60-61.

¹⁸⁸⁰ Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 208.

¹⁸⁸¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03308. COREU from the EC Presidency, 03/12/91, cpe/pres/hag 1662.

¹⁸⁸² Cf. ABZ, DEU/ARA/03308, De Vos van Steenwijk (Ottawa) 177 to Van den Broek, 05/12/91; 'EG-waarnemers: federale leger heeft vermoord' (EC observers: federal army has committed murder), *Trouw*, 03/12/91; 'Joegoslavisch leger moordt en brandschat' (Yugoslav army kills and plunders), *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/12/91; 'Joegoslavisch leger walste dorpen plat' (Yugoslav army razed villages to the ground), *de Volkskrant*, 03/12/91.

¹⁸⁸³ Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 26 (11/12/91).

¹⁸⁸⁴ Interview A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00.

¹⁸⁸⁵ Quoted in: Van Eekelen, *Security*, p. 142.

¹⁸⁸⁶ Cf. Bertram, 'Diplomacy', p. 79; Callahan, *Wars*, pp. 101 and 237; E.A. Hammel, 'Lessons from the Yugoslav Labyrinth', Halpern & Kideckel (eds.), *Neighbors*, pp. 34-35; Michael Ignatieff, 'Introduction: Virtue by Proxy', Danchev & Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, p. xviii; Newhouse, 'Round', p. 64; Simms, *Hour*, p. 98; J.C.A.C. de Vogel, 'Joegoslavië, een typisch geval van

Eagleburger said that in the summer and autumn of 1991 there had been opportunities for the West to intervene with comparatively few means, which would have stopped the tragedy from unfolding.¹⁸⁸⁷ At the time of the Dubrovnik bombings, WEU Secretary-General Van Eekelen proposed sending navy vessels to the besieged city. Paris and Washington were willing, but the United Kingdom was not¹⁸⁸⁸ and so it did not come off. Holbrooke, as well, would later hold the view that NATO should have been put to action in 1991 or 1992.¹⁸⁸⁹

Indeed, there was ample opportunity to chase away the besiegers from Dubrovnik and Vukovar. It may well be asked whether such a successful action of western ships and aircraft would have put an end to Serb aggression in general.¹⁸⁹⁰ It seems, however, that a few sharp military blows might have curbed the violence. As regards timing, October and November 1991 might still have afforded an opportunity to intervene with comparatively few military means, as in those first months of the conflict the Milosevic regime appears to have been very much impressed by the intervention power displayed by the West against Iraq.¹⁸⁹¹ Petar Lukovic, vice editor of *Vreme* in Yugoslavia, was also convinced that a western military intervention in 1991, when the front line stretched no more than fifty kilometres would, 'in twenty-four hours (...) have scared the shit out of Milosevic's army or the Croatian army or anybody'.¹⁸⁹²

The EC not only lacked a military instrument, but also a central body to assess and set out a policy for the crisis, i.e. an integrated crisis control centre to deal with the conflict in Yugoslavia. Regular meetings of officials (the Political Committee, Coreper and the ad hoc group) about Yugoslavia could not make up for that. Political analysis of the situation in Yugoslavia continued to take place on a national level. The most important system for information exchange was the COREU network. That EC and EPS analysis mostly depended on a rotating presidency that always needed time to settle in seems amateur. In this respect, the Netherlands even had the advantage of having acted on behalf of EC President Luxembourg in Belgrade during the first six months of 1991.

Press comments in the period of the Dutch EC Presidency

As will become apparent later on, the press were often held responsible for the eagerness of Dutch politicians to dive into the Yugoslavia issue. The following demonstrates that there was not that much enthusiasm in the first six months of the war and that the Dutch press rather advised politicians not to get involved than otherwise.

According to the Dutch weekly *Vrij Nederland*, the EC Presidency made Van den Broek more enemies than friends, mostly because of Black Monday and the arguments with Germany about Yugoslavia.¹⁸⁹³ Especially abroad, the Dutch Presidency was judged very negatively. The French newspaper *Le Monde* stated that this presidency was unanimously considered 'the most disastrous in the entire EC history'.¹⁸⁹⁴ We already pointed out how harshly Van den Broek was criticized, not only by Genscher but also by the German press. Criticism usually focused on his lack of knowledge about the situation in Yugoslavia, which incidentally he himself did not consider a shortcoming at all. It was

'te weinig' en 'te laat', *Armex*, 78(1994)1 p. 25; Secretary-General of the Austrian Foreign Ministry, Albert Rohan, quoted in Mock (Hg.), *Balkan-Dossier*, p. 108.

¹⁸⁸⁷ Don Oberdorfer, 'A Bloody Failure in the Balkans', *The Washington Post*, 08/02/93.

¹⁸⁸⁸ Alain van der Horst, 'We moeten onze tanden laten zien' (We should show our teeth), *HP/De Tijd*, 23/06/93, p. 28; Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 234.

¹⁸⁸⁹ Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 157.

¹⁸⁹⁰ Cf. David C. Gompert, 'The United States and Yugoslavia's Wars', Ullman (ed.), *World*, p. 129.

¹⁸⁹¹ Philip J. Cohen, 'Ending the war and securing peace in former Yugoslavia', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 41.

¹⁸⁹² Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 122.

¹⁸⁹³ Leonard Ornstein & Max van Weezel, 'Van den Broek kan de wereld weer aan, dertel als een veulen' (Van den Broek, frolicsome like a foal, able to face the world again), *Vrij Nederland*, 11/04/92.

¹⁸⁹⁴ Quoted in Philip Freriks, 'Actie Dumas heeft diepere achtergrond' (There is more to Dumas' action), *de Volkskrant*, 10/10/91.

especially his harsh attitude towards Croatia that led to him being described by a German academic publication in 2000 as ‘professionally incompetent and, in this matter, partial to the Serbs’.¹⁸⁹⁵ The Germans also thought the EC President was quick to take offence. ‘Generally speaking, the Dutch Presidency was not very competent, which made it very sensitive to criticism and correction of the other EC members’¹⁸⁹⁶ According to some, this did not only apply to the Minister alone. At the time, the culture of the Dutch Foreign Ministry was described by Hans Moleman in *De Volkskrant* as ‘a curious mixture of pride and brisk ingenuousness’.¹⁸⁹⁷

Still, there was not only criticism. Van den Broek was praised by Delors who said the Dutch Presidency had shown understanding of the Yugoslav problem and had unwaveringly tried to find solutions whenever obstacles presented themselves. At the same time, however, he concluded that the targets – protection of human rights, democracy, no recognition of borders that were redrawn after the use of violence and recognition of the right to self-determination of the Yugoslav peoples – were incompatible.¹⁸⁹⁸ Under the direction of Van den Broek, the EC had taken some new initiatives, such as sending observers to the area and organizing a Yugoslavia conference. The Troika had been actively engaged in shuttle diplomacy. And, in spite of differences of opinion, Van den Broek had successfully preserved a consensus in the matter of Yugoslavia.

Criticism of the Dutch EC Presidency not only originated abroad. At home, newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* monitored general EC policy very closely, and the Dutch Presidency in particular. Several matters were criticized. The Presidency’s policy was labelled unrealistic, at least inappropriate for Yugoslavia. ‘There seem to be two Yugoslavia’s: one where the parties are butchering one another and at best drive civilians into shelters, and another where diplomats are meeting and observers are deemed to travel about’, was the editorial comment in *NRC Handelsblad* of 18 September 1991.¹⁸⁹⁹ According to the paper, this lack of realism also stemmed from the Dutch inclination for consensus. In the case of Yugoslavia, this was meant to lead to impartiality: Croatia was as guilty as Serbia and incidents such as the Croats opening fire on Wijnaendts’s helicopter were seized on to maintain the balance.¹⁹⁰⁰ The Dutch government knew nothing about Yugoslavia and relied for too long on the federal government, although it held no real power anymore, said columnist J.L. Heldring.¹⁹⁰¹

Secondly, the lack of objectives and vision was denounced. *NRC Handelsblad* observed that the Serbs had taken advantage of the fact that the EC had not sufficiently thought through its actions in advance.¹⁹⁰² There was general criticism that Van den Broek’s actions lacked vision. During the first weeks of his official involvement in the Yugoslav issue, Van den Broek demonstrated great diligence. However, it could not be denied that his actions did not seem to spring from a thorough assessment of underlying reasons and relations. Nor were there any clear objectives. Even his own party criticized Van den Broek’s policy for its lack of vision with regard to Yugoslavia during the EC Presidency.¹⁹⁰³

Most actions were motivated by the aim to bring about ceasefires that were broken before the ink on the agreement had dried and gave rise to unrealistic expectations.¹⁹⁰⁴ Jan Tromp commented in *De Volkskrant* that Van den Broek should not have ‘set himself up as a self-important would-be

¹⁸⁹⁵ Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 148.

¹⁸⁹⁶ Zeitler, *Rolle*, pp. 162-163.

¹⁸⁹⁷ Hans Moleman, ‘Aperots maakt er het beste van’ (Foreign Ministry makes the best of it), *de Volkskrant*, 12/10/91.

¹⁸⁹⁸ ‘Delors: v. Broek goed in kwestie Joegoslavië’ (Delors: “Van den Broek knows how to deal with Yugoslavia”), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/10/91.

¹⁸⁹⁹ ‘De vrede van Igalo’ (The peace of Igalo), *NRC Handelsblad*, 18/09/91.

¹⁹⁰⁰ ‘De vrede van Igalo’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 18/09/91.

¹⁹⁰¹ Cf. J.L. Heldring, ‘De kop van Jut’ (Fry your strength), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/08/91.

¹⁹⁰² ‘Een dubbele tragedie’ (Double tragedy), editorial, *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/09/91.

¹⁹⁰³ Olaf van Boetzelaer, ‘EG-politiek in Joegoslavië baseerde zich op onvoldragen analyse’ (EC politics in Yugoslavia were based on lack of analysis), *CD/Actueel*, 11(1991)(23 November) p. 20.

¹⁹⁰⁴ Cf. Maarten Lak, ‘The involvement of the European Community in the Yugoslav crisis during 1991’, Van den Heuvel & Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 182.

general'.¹⁹⁰⁵ Serb Foreign Minister Jovanovic also stressed the fact that Van den Broek's attitude of prominence in Yugoslavia not only stemmed from the presidency: 'Van den Broek was the most ambitious to be visible.'¹⁹⁰⁶ This would soon affect his reputation.¹⁹⁰⁷ Van den Broek's image was damaged as there was something ridiculous about announcements of solutions that were invariably followed by another breaking of the truce.

An editorial comment in *NRC Handelsblad* at the end of August 1991 raised the question whether Van den Broek had not thrown himself too enthusiastically on the matter of Yugoslavia: 'His staff – if it had had the necessary knowledge of the region's psychology and history – might have prevented him from taking this fresh approach to crisis management, in a region the Netherlands were so unfamiliar with.'¹⁹⁰⁸ However, Hans Oversloot, Political Science professor at Leiden University, stated in *Trouw* that the departmental staff should not be the first to blame. Minister Van den Broek himself had been neglecting his Eastern European advisers for years.¹⁹⁰⁹

Shortly after Van den Broek's proposal of a WEU peace force that had not been well thought-out, *NRC Handelsblad* editor Frits Schaling wondered if the Dutch EC Presidency might be suffering from hyperventilation. His criticism mainly focused on the Dutch draft treaty for the European Political Union, but did not fail to mention the unsuccessful attempts to end the Yugoslav conflict.¹⁹¹⁰ According to *NRC Handelsblad*, Van den Broek's actions in the matter of Yugoslavia became 'increasingly embarrassing'. In an in-depth analysis, the editor said that the Minister had allowed himself to be used 'as a miner's canary' by the EC member states: 'without protection, without means of power, without compassion.' This was partly caused by his insufficient understanding of the historic and psychological factors in the Balkans and the fact that the Netherlands appeared to be lacking direction without the coordination of the US. The commentator concluded that not only Van den Broek's reputation had been damaged but that of the Netherlands also:

'The only solution in the matter of Yugoslavia is to wait until the chaos, confusion and tragedy have become intolerable. This may seem to be in bitter contrast with the harrowing television images, but up to now, pseudo actions and good intentions have caused more damage than the Netherlands can bear.'¹⁹¹¹

After Carrington's decision to postpone the Yugoslavia conference early in November, the editorial comment said: 'This showed an unexpected sense of reality; the series of ceasefires and threats uttered by the Community were starting to verge on the ridiculous.' The commentator concluded that the EC had bitten off more than it could chew with Yugoslavia.¹⁹¹²

The third point of criticism was the awkward position held by the Dutch Presidency in its relation with the Bonn-Paris axis, which relation had by the end of August recovered from a short rupture during the first two months of the Yugoslav conflict. *NRC Handelsblad* admitted it was hard for the Minister to secure a position between Bonn and Paris, but also wondered 'what the Netherlands would gain by such a Presidency, if it did nothing but display the country's irrelevance time and

¹⁹⁰⁵ Jan Tromp, 'Van den Broek had geen Minister meer moeten willen wezen' (Van den Broek should not have wanted to be a Minister anymore), *de Volkskrant*, 08/10/91.

¹⁹⁰⁶ Interview Jovanovic, 14/09/01.

¹⁹⁰⁷ Cf. Bertrand de Largentaye, 'The Role of the European Community', Palau & Kumar (eds.), *Ex-Yugoslavia*, p. 33.

¹⁹⁰⁸ 'Bijbaantje' (Job on the side), *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/08/91.

¹⁹⁰⁹ Hans Oversloot, 'Van den Broek en de fictie van Nederlands Oost-Europa beleid' (Van den Broek and the fiction of a Dutch Eastern-Europe policy), *Trouw*, 18/09/91.

¹⁹¹⁰ Frits Schaling, 'Nederland hyperventileert als voorzitter van de EG' (The Netherlands is hyperventilating as EC President), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/09/91.

¹⁹¹¹ 'Van den Broek', *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/09/91.

¹⁹¹² 'Vier maanden later' (Four months later), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/11/91.

again'.¹⁹¹³ Moreover, Van den Broek could be blamed for not having developed a personal rapport with his German and French colleagues.¹⁹¹⁴

Finally, criticism concerned the fact that the EC did not have the means required to deal with the crisis in Yugoslavia properly. According to *NRC Handelsblad*, a solution could only be reached if the Serb occupation of areas in Croatia had been brought to an end by military means. Peacekeeping was not sufficient – only peace-enforcement would enable a return to the *status quo ante*. As long as the EC was unable to intervene militarily, it had better 'get out of the adventure quickly' and free itself of 'this dead-end job'.¹⁹¹⁵

Peter Michielsen, in particular, sharply criticised the EC's actions in *NRC Handelsblad*, describing them as too late, half-hearted and unrealistic.¹⁹¹⁶ In his opinion, the EC should either have stayed out of the conflict as much as possible or assume a firmer attitude by immediately imposing sanctions on Serbia and recognizing Croatia and Slovenia.

'It *might* have done some good. Instead, the EC thought it could put an end to a bloody vendetta by addressing the heads of the family in a fatherly and admonishing manner – a dialogue that unfolded on several levels and, contrary to what the Hague may think, did not earn the Dutch any praises but mostly scorn, damaging the reputations of both the Netherlands and the EC.'¹⁹¹⁷

He thought 'the EC would not be able to end the war as long as the rapacious warlords in the region managed to find ample reason to continue it'. He reproached EC politicians for 'the useless farce of their calls for peace and their statements'. Faced with the inflexible determination of the Serbs to occupy 'their' territory in Croatia, they could achieve nothing with their 'international code of behaviour and social conventions, which, being based on voluntariness, agreement and consensus, were quite useless in Yugoslavia'.¹⁹¹⁸ Treading on the Yugoslav 'minefield' would sooner lead to an increase of violence than bring about the intended peace.¹⁹¹⁹ 'After all, despite their good intentions, the attempts made by the EC have only increased the mutual embitterment, hatred and distrust and tarnished the image of the EC and the EC protagonists, and that of Minister Van den Broek in particular.'¹⁹²⁰

All his warnings that interference from abroad, however well-intentioned, would have a contrary effect on the conflict in Yugoslavia made it even more remarkable that, on the last day of the

¹⁹¹³ 'Bijbaantje', *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/08/91.

¹⁹¹⁴ 'Van den Broek', *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/09/91. Cf. Philip Freriks, 'Actie Dumas heeft diepere achtergrond', *de Volkskrant*, 10/10/91, on the bad relationship between Van den Broek and Dumas, and cf. Ben Knippen, 'Lubbers mag de top in Maastricht redden' (Lubbers is called upon to protect the Maastricht summit from failure), *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/12/91, about the Dutch Foreign Ministry's brittle relationship with Germany and France.

¹⁹¹⁵ 'De vrede van Igalo', *NRC Handelsblad*, 18/09/91.

¹⁹¹⁶ Cf. Peter Michielsen, 'EG-actie inzake Joegoslavië even halfslachtig als haar hele beleid' (EC steps in the matter of Yugoslavia are as half-hearted as its entire policy), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/11/91.

¹⁹¹⁷ Peter Michielsen, 'Na duizend doden gaat Van den Broek eindelijk ultimatum stellen' (With 1,000 dead, Van den Broek starts setting ultimatums), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/10/91. In common with the German government, he was in favour of recognizing Croatia and Slovenia, hoping it would curb Serb violence, Peter Michielsen, 'Roeren in Joegoslavisch kruitvat leidt niet tot vrede' (Treading the Yugoslav minefield does not bring peace), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/09/91.

¹⁹¹⁸ Peter Michielsen, 'Joegoslavië vecht tot boedel is verdeeld' (Yugoslavia fights until the loot is divided), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/09/91.

¹⁹¹⁹ Peter Michielsen, 'Roeren in Joegoslavisch kruitvat leidt niet tot vrede', *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/09/91; idem, 'Hollands paternalisme past niet in Joegoslavië' (Dutch paternalism not fitting in Yugoslavia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/09/91; also, 'EG kreunend naar erkenning Kroatië en Slovenië' (EC unwillingly recognizes Croatia and Slovenia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/12/91.

¹⁹²⁰ Peter Michielsen, 'Mislukking vredesoverleg ligt ook aan EG' (EC also to blame for failure of peace talks), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/11/91.

year 1991, Michielsen and Elsbeth Etty co-wrote an article bearing the title ‘European action for peace is what Yugoslavia needs’.¹⁹²¹ This article is discussed in detail in the Wieten appendix to this report.

Apparently, the article resulted from frustration about the lack of interest for the war. Its tone was emotional and concluded by saying:

‘perhaps something might be achieved if a great number of peace activists were to appear on the battlefield. A well-organized action for peace, for example with international peace brigades or peace camps established between the contending parties, might convince both the Serbs and the Croats of the seriousness of Europe’s desire that the conflict should end.’¹⁹²²

The article was in line with the article of journalists Anet Bleich and Ewoud Nysingh that appeared in *De Volkskrant* on the same day. The latter had a similar tone and content and also called for ‘a European action for peace organized by concerned citizens that could make it clear to the contending parties that the times of war in Europe were over.’¹⁹²³ Both articles called for the existing Dutch peace movement – that had once managed to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people to protest against nuclear missiles – to come out of hiding. It was at this point an unusual call for intervention, all the more so as it was published by *NRC Handelsblad*.

Mient Jan Faber, general secretary of the Interchurch Peace Council or IKV, replied that his organization had already discussed the idea of an international peace brigade in July 1991, ‘together with our Yugoslav friends’, but putting the plan to work ‘had to date proven impossible *because* of the war’. Referring to a range of mostly small-scale activities, he pointed out that he and others were already ‘working themselves to death’ trying to put a stop to the war in Yugoslavia. He regretted the fact that these activities had not received any press coverage nor had they induced the Foreign Ministry or the Ministry of Defence to grant him any subsidies.¹⁹²⁴

The editorial comment in *Trouw* hardly ever dealt with foreign affairs, but even this newspaper now commented that the EC policy did not accomplish much: ‘Whether the EC likes it or not, the Yugoslav leaders (and Serb President Milosevic in particular) will do what they want.’¹⁹²⁵ The EC had failed the ‘Yugoslavia’ exam.¹⁹²⁶ R.C.R. Siekmann, who works for the T.M.C. Asser Instituut voor Internationaal Recht (Asser Institute for International Law) in the Hague, regularly contributed to the editorial page of the *Trouw* newspaper. In September, he said that the EC and WEU had proven powerless in the Yugoslav crisis. The time for diplomatic mediation was over. Force was required now, which was ‘no business for the EC’. Though he doubted whether the UN, the proper organization to take such actions, would proceed to use force.¹⁹²⁷ Without it, actions of both the EC and the UN would be mere rituals. Like Peter Michielsen in *NRC Handelsblad*, Siekmann perceived a contrast between the EC’s ‘diplomatic fantasies’ and ‘thinking along abstract lines’ on the one hand and grim reality in the former federal republic of Yugoslavia on the other.¹⁹²⁸

¹⁹²¹ *NRC Handelsblad*, 31/12/91.

¹⁹²² *NRC Handelsblad*, 31/12/91.

¹⁹²³ Anet Bleich & Ewoud Nysingh, ‘Joegoslavische oorlog schreeuwt om actie van burgers’ (Yugoslav war cries out for citizens’ action), *de Volkskrant*, 31/12/91.

¹⁹²⁴ Mient Jan Faber, ‘Juist de media laten het afweten in Joegoslavië’ (It is the press that is failing in Yugoslavia), *de Volkskrant*, 03/01/92. Also cf. ‘Media lijden aan beeldversmalling over de oorlog’ (The media’s coverage of the war is insufficient), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/01/92.

¹⁹²⁵ ‘De EG en Joegoslavië’ (The EC and Yugoslavia), *Trouw*, 05/09/91.

¹⁹²⁶ Frits van Exter, ‘Europa zakt voor examen ‘Joegoslavië’ (Europe fails ‘Yugoslavia exam’), *Trouw*, 23/09/91.

¹⁹²⁷ R.C.R. Siekmann, ‘Erkenning Kroatië als politiek signaal’ (Recognition of Croatia as a political signal), *Trouw*, 21/09/91. Also cf. ‘Europese vredesmacht in Kroatië beter dan boycot’ (European peace force in Croatia better than boycott), *Trouw*, 18/10/91 and ‘Vredesactie op drijfzand’ (Peace action built on quicksand), *Trouw*, 12/09/91; Herman Verbeek, ‘EG gaat boekje te buiten’ (EC is overstepping the mark), *Trouw*, 13/09/91.

¹⁹²⁸ R.C.R. Siekmann, ‘Rituele diplomatie’ (Ritual diplomacy), *Trouw*, 10/10/91.

Herman Verbeek, a member of the Green party of the European Parliament, said in *Trouw* that the EC had overestimated itself in the Yugoslavian conflict:

‘Minister Van den Broek was not to be envied. As acting chairman of the European Council, he was ordered to go to Yugoslavia, which he was happy to do. He went there four times – four times he was treated like a boxing ball. The Dutch Minister is unfamiliar with Yugoslavia, lacks the experience of operating within such an intricate political web and makes all the mistakes a junior diplomat would make. The pompous tone, the bragging in the press, the blind and consistent prejudice against the Serbs – he was the perfect tool for politicians in Yugoslavia.’¹⁹²⁹

Although the unusual editorial comment in *Trouw* of 16 October could sympathize with those who thought that the fighting in Yugoslavia should be allowed to go on until common sense prevailed, the commentator ‘had much more sympathy for and was even in awe of’ the continuing attempts of the EC and Van den Broek to find a solution at the negotiation table: ‘No matter how exhausting, the most sensible course to take is to negotiate until you drop. Hoping the miserable despondency of the smoking battlefield would gradually leave its traces at the negotiation table too.’¹⁹³⁰ In a *Trouw* interview, Voorhoeve said the EC had done about all it could do. He attributed the fact that nothing more was done to the UN and NATO being unwilling to take any action. Nor did he have the impression that Dumas, Genscher or Hurd would have done much better than Van den Broek as EC President.¹⁹³¹

The first debate about Yugoslavia, and EC policy in particular, unfolded in the opinion pages of *Trouw*. In their contribution to this section, Doeke Eisma, a member of parliament for the D66 party, and party worker Bob de Rooter defended the EC policy against increasing criticism. They understood why the Community had not yet imposed sanctions against Serbia: negotiations with Serbia were forthcoming. According to them, it was only logical that Croatia and Slovenia had not been recognized yet – secession should not be made too easy. True, the EC might sometimes be in two minds about things or even inconsistent, but the authors considered EC policy a way of ‘pumping the brakes’ ‘to prevent getting into a skid it would be impossible to get out of’.¹⁹³² Heleen Bakker and Mark van Barschot, international secretary and national leader of the Young Democrats respectively, did not agree with the senior democrats at all. They criticized the EC for having supported the party that was most guilty, i.e. Serbia, by insisting on the preservation of Yugoslavia’s unity for far too long, while Serbia continued the aggression. In their view, the EC should recognize Croatia and be prepared to guarantee its independence at the same time.¹⁹³³ Jan Emck, a member of the IKV, criticized the Young Democrats, saying that the EC had no other choice than to pursue an ‘ad hoc zigzag policy’¹⁹³⁴ as long as it was unclear whether the international community of the 1990s would, with regard to countries that were splitting up, prefer the establishment of ethnically homogeneous areas to the preservation of the internal frontiers. The ‘ill-fated decision’ of the EC to proceed to recognition induced IKV member Laurens Hogebrink to a diatribe against the EC. Apparently, the unity of the twelve member states was considered more important than the reality in Yugoslavia, where the decision to recognize the republics would threaten the safety of areas that had not been drawn into the war so far.¹⁹³⁵

¹⁹²⁹ Herman Verbeek, ‘EG gaat boekje te buiten’, *Trouw*, 13/09/91.

¹⁹³⁰ ‘Een hek om Joegoslavië?’ (A fence around Yugoslavia?), *Trouw*, 16/10/91.

¹⁹³¹ Bettina Hubo, ‘Joris Voorhoeve: Kritiek op optreden niet terecht. ‘Joegoslavië een slangenkuil’ (Joris Voorhoeve: Criticism of EC is unfounded. ‘Yugoslavia is a snake pit’), *Trouw*, 20/11/91.

¹⁹³² Doeke Eisma & Bob de Rooter, ‘Groeiende kritiek op EG-beleid Joegoslavië is ongerechtvaardigd’ (Increasing criticism of EC policy is unfounded), *Trouw*, 26/11/91.

¹⁹³³ Heleen Bakker & Mark van Barschot, ‘Angst EG voor ‘precedent’ speelde Servië in de kaart’ (EC fear to create a precedent played into Serbia’s hands), *Trouw*, 03/12/91.

¹⁹³⁴ Jan Emck, ‘Gewoon een ouderwetse oorlog’ (Just an ordinary war), *Trouw*, 12/12/91.

¹⁹³⁵ Laurens Hogebrink, ‘De blindheid van de EG’ (The EC’s blindness), *Trouw*, 28/12/91.

Koen Koch attacked the EC policy in *De Volkskrant*: intentions were good, but the outcome had a contrary effect.¹⁹³⁶ However, *De Volkskrant* readers would in general encounter more sympathy and appreciation for the EC, and more confidence that it could help find a solution to the problems than the readers of *NRC Handelsblad* or *Trouw*. The EC should at least be praised for its ‘courage’.¹⁹³⁷ After the war in Croatia had escalated in the first half of September, the editor of *De Volkskrant* commented that the EC should not be ashamed to admit that it ought to hand the matter over to the UN for lack of military means and the absence of a truly uniform foreign policy.¹⁹³⁸ After the UN had brought about a ceasefire, the EC would get a second chance to show its true worth ‘as an honest mediator’.¹⁹³⁹ Whereas *Trouw* called Van den Broek’s middle of September proposal to deploy a WEU force ‘an act of desperation’¹⁹⁴⁰, the editor of *De Volkskrant* called it ‘a solution’¹⁹⁴¹. The latter paper thought it ‘inappropriate’ to scorn the laborious attempts of Van den Broek and Carrington to solve the issue of Yugoslavia.¹⁹⁴² However, by the middle of October, the editor, ‘with all due respect for Van den Broek’s striving for peace in the Balkans’, wondered ‘whether his concept of a political solution had anything to do with reality.’ The paper was unable to understand why the Minister expected the political issue to be solved within two months, although this had proven impossible in the previous three months. In fact, the situation had only become worse.¹⁹⁴³

On the other hand, *De Volkskrant* did not think the Yugoslavia conference had been altogether useless when Carrington was forced to postpone it in November. After all, ‘a coherent EC peace plan had now been drawn up, which afforded all the parties a reasonable way out of the conflict’. If Milosevic did not want to accept the plan, the EC was justified in imposing sanctions against Serbia.¹⁹⁴⁴ And although the EC actions in Yugoslavia ‘had not exactly been an unqualified success’, ‘it is better to do something than nothing at all’. After the Yugoslavia conference had been postponed and the EC would have no other option than to hand the matter over to the UN, that ‘something’ would, for the time being, be limited to humanitarian aid. None of the European countries would be willing to fight side by side with the Croatians: ‘The Balkan war is not a Hollywood movie with “good guys and bad guys”’. They cannot be distinguished along ethnic lines in Yugoslavia.¹⁹⁴⁵

13. Conclusion: The role of the Dutch EC Presidency with regard to the conflict

Reviewing the role of Van den Broek with regard to the issue of Yugoslavia, it is clear that the first weeks seemed to be characterized by much promptness of action resulting from a great sense of responsibility. Yugoslavia was the EC’s test case: would the Community be able to manage a crisis? There is no doubt whatsoever that it was not easy for the Dutch Presidency. It had to cope with an internal ‘great power Cooperation with a multilateral face’¹⁹⁴⁶ There were many different attitudes among the countries, particularly during the first crucial months of the Presidency, i.e. after 1 July 1991. Or, as it was formulated on the other side of the Atlantic: ‘The Europeans revealed themselves to be

¹⁹³⁶ Koen Koch, ‘Falende trojka’, *de Volkskrant*, 07/08/91.

¹⁹³⁷ Cf. Ewoud Nysingh, ‘EG moet druk opvoeren op Joegoslaven’ (EC should increase pressure on Yugoslavia) *De Volkskrant*, 31/08/91; ‘Vredesconferentie’ (Peace conference), *de Volkskrant*, 07/09/91; ‘Vredesmacht’ (Peace force), *de Volkskrant*, 19/09/91.

¹⁹³⁸ ‘Uitzichtloze burgeroorlog’ (Hopeless civil war), *de Volkskrant*, 16/09/91; Theo Koelé & Co Welgraven, ‘Wordt Joegoslavië Van den Broeks Vietnam? (Will Yugoslavia become Van den Broek’s Vietnam?)’, *Trouw*, 18/09/91.

¹⁹³⁹ ‘Sprankje hoop’ (Glimmer of hope), *de Volkskrant*, 23/09/91.

¹⁹⁴⁰ Theo Koelé & Co Welgraven, ‘Wordt Joegoslavië Van den Broeks Vietnam?’, *Trouw*, 18/09/91.

¹⁹⁴¹ ‘Vredesmacht’, *de Volkskrant*, 19/09/91.

¹⁹⁴² ‘Onduldbaar geweld’ (Intolerable violence), *de Volkskrant*, 05/10/91.

¹⁹⁴³ ‘Geven en nemen’ (Give and take), *de Volkskrant*, 12/10/91.

¹⁹⁴⁴ ‘Sancties tegen Servië’ (Sanctions against Serbia), *de Volkskrant*, 06/11/91 and ‘Verdeeldheid’ (Division), *De Volkskrant*, 09/11/91.

¹⁹⁴⁵ Ewoud Nysingh, ‘Europa kan slechts erger voorkomen’ (Europe can only prevent the worst from happening), *de Volkskrant*, 20/11/91.

¹⁹⁴⁶ Jakobsen, *Multilateralism*, p. 372.

Europeans, incapable of united action, guided by separate historical and cultural temperaments'¹⁹⁴⁷. In Yugoslavia itself, Van den Broek found the negotiating parties to be so unreliable that he was unable to respond to it adequately, and this caused him to lose heart very quickly. After his disappointment in Belgrade at the beginning of August, which he was unable to hide sufficiently from the press, he was no longer the international protagonist. Other ran off with that role within five weeks, which was not so bad in itself, but Van den Broek found it hard to deal with.

Early in September, Van den Broek seemed to achieve something after all by having Milosevic agree to the deployment of observers in Croatia and persuading the Serb head of state to participate in the conference at the Hague, but it is more likely that these were the results of the political 'massage' Mitterrand had been giving the Serb leader for two days. Then, at the time of the Yugoslav conference, the initiative was taken from him almost completely.

By the end of August, the Bonn-Paris axis had recovered from its breakdown, but Van den Broek did not know how to turn this to his advantage. On the contrary, he felt he was constantly crossed by it. In September, Van den Broek was engaged in a number of - not very salutary - fights with Minister Genscher. The failure of the WEU peace force proposal was Van den Broek's swan song. The increasingly important role of the UN as of the end of September was something of a relief to the EC and, apparently, even to Van den Broek himself.¹⁹⁴⁸ 'It seems it is still difficult for us to admit that Eastern European history is not written by the West and that our possibilities to turn the tide are limited.'¹⁹⁴⁹

Van den Broek had learned his lesson the hard way. The notion that a solution could be found for the region if only unity were preserved in Brussels was repeatedly proven wrong during the Dutch EC Presidency. Meanwhile, the opportunity for an early military intervention had been lost. At an early stage of the conflict, Fietelaars had written that events that took six months to happen in Croatia would only take a week in Bosnia. The West would not be afforded enough time to intervene. When it happened, the West was indeed still focusing on the former conflict, i.e. the one involving Croatia.¹⁹⁵⁰

Meanwhile, Van den Broek had thrown himself with much dedication on the matter of Yugoslavia. In early October 1991, an official of the Foreign Ministry said:

'Right from the start, we at the Ministry have been aware that, as EC President, we were the very last ones that could say: let the citizens of Yugoslavia fend for themselves. Although this attitude was perceived in some other countries: let them battle it out, there is nothing we can do about it.'¹⁹⁵¹

The more or less accidental involvement of the Netherlands in the Yugoslavia crisis in the beginning had developed into an emotional involvement of politicians and political staff, which they found it hard to extricate themselves from afterwards. Van den Broek's actions had earned him a reputation for decisiveness abroad, even if his energy was not always properly targeted. But the self-righteousness of Dutch politicians began to cause irritation. The blame was entirely political – the government had given Van den Broek free rein and Parliament was applauding his actions. And what about the press? They criticized him and issued warnings.

¹⁹⁴⁷ The editors, 'Stop Serbia Now', Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 165.

¹⁹⁴⁸ Cf. Rob Meines, 'Steun van VN verwacht voor optreden EG' (UN support of EC actions expected), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/09/91.

¹⁹⁴⁹ André Gerrits in: *Intermediair*, 29/01/93, quoted in Anstadt, *Servië*, p. 156.

¹⁹⁵⁰ Cf. J.C.A.C. de Vogel, 'VN-vredesmacht: er is nog hoop' (UN peace force: there is still hope), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/12/91, who labelled the establishment of a peace force in Croatia as 'too little, too late' and thought it wiser to send preventive peacekeeping forces to Bosnia.

¹⁹⁵¹ Rob Meines, 'Succes voor shuttlediplomatie Den Haag' (Successful shuttle diplomacy of The Hague), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/10/91.

Chapter 4

UNPROFOR and the Dutch contribution

1. United Nations peace operations: peacekeeping and peace-enforcing

Although the regimes in Belgrade and Zagreb had expressed their desire for a United Nations peacekeeping force as early as November 1991, it was not until early 1992 that UN peacekeeping troops were actually deployed in Croatia. There were several reasons for this. Firstly the UN wanted a clear signal that a truce would hold this time. Secondly it had to be clear that not only the governments of Tudjman and Milosevic but also the Croatian Serbs would agree to the presence of UN peacekeepers. Finally, the UN needed time to reach a decision and to implement it accordingly.

On 2 January 1992 the UN envoy Cyrus Vance brought about a ceasefire in Croatia. This was now the 15th truce but this time it held through the following months, notwithstanding regular skirmishes. Six days after the ceasefire agreement the Security Council resolved to send 50 military liaison officers to oversee the maintenance of the truce (Resolution 727). In this capacity they were to work closely with the ECMM, the monitoring mission of the EC. Furthermore the liaison officers were to serve as quartermasters (military personnel making advance preparations) for a possible peacekeeping force.

Following the end of the Cold War it seemed that the changed international climate would also create new opportunities for the United Nations. Almost since its creation by the Allies in 1945, at the end of the Second World War, the global organization had had difficulties with the realization of its central aim: the promotion and maintenance of peace. This was due to the enmity between the Soviet Union and the United States. These two major powers, like the other three permanent members of the Security Council (China, France and the United Kingdom) held the power of veto. By means of a dissenting vote the two superpowers were able to paralyze the decision-making process in this vital body of the UN, which worked for peace and security throughout the world. At the inception of the United Nations it was envisaged that a Military Staff Committee would bring together the permanent members of the Security Council to cooperate in the strategic leadership of troops supplied to the international organization. In practice, however, this committee never really got off the ground.

The option of dispatching peacekeeping missions by the United Nations was created more or less in spite of the UN Charter and the impasse between the superpowers. Peacekeeping missions were fully in line neither with Chapter VI of the Charter, which contained provisions for traditional forms of dispute settlement such as mediation or fact-finding, nor with Chapter VII, which provided only for purely military or 'green' operations intended to maintain international peace and security.

Thus the latter form of action, known as peace-enforcement, did indeed permit the use of force. Such operations, for instance, had been conducted in 1950 when North Korean troops invaded South Korea, and in 1991 after Iraq had occupied Kuwait. Generally speaking the Security Council had balked at such actions. During the Cold War the major power blocks were not prepared to intervene in each other's spheres of influence, but even outside these areas they remained highly cautious. No military action was taken, for instance, during the genocide that was carried out in Cambodia under the regime of Pol Pot.

It had become traditional in peacekeeping that three conditions should be met. The involved parties should agree to the deployment of UN troops; there should be a ceasefire; and the UN troops should only use their (light) weapons for self-defence. In such situations the UN troops usually created a buffer zone between the parties in conflict, while attempts were made to initiate and successfully conclude peace talks between the former warring factions. But the UN blue helmets did not guarantee peace. Peacekeeping operations could last decades, as became evident in the case of the force deployed to separate the military parties in Cyprus in 1964.

As it was assumed that the former parties to the conflict would in principle observe the ceasefire, such UN forces were generally small in size. The peacekeepers often acted more as observers than as real peacekeepers. They did not intervene in the internal affairs of the host country. As such peacekeeping operations were actually situated halfway between Chapters VI (peacemaking) and VII (peace-enforcing) of the UN Charter, they were christened ‘chapter six-and-a-half operations’ by Dag Hammarskjöld, the UN Secretary-General of the time.¹⁹⁵²

The UN had initiated the first peacekeeping operation in May 1948. It was intended to support the ceasefire between Israel and the Arab countries: the United Nations Truce Observation Organization, the UNTSO. From 1948 onwards this UN observer organization monitored the ceasefire lines between Israel and its neighbours. The body still consisted of military observers only. The first operation involving peacekeeping troops dates from 1956, when UN troops were deployed in response to the Suez crisis. During the Cold War era the peacekeeping forces were almost always supplied by smaller and non-aligned countries. The states with a permanent seat on the Security Council usually did not contribute troops. In the years up to 1978, 13 such peacekeeping operations took place – and not one in the ten years that followed.

A certain degree of resignation arose regarding the long duration and lack of perspective that sometimes accompanied peacekeeping operations, such as those in Cyprus and in Lebanon. Above all the operation conducted by UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) led to considerable doubts about the usefulness of peacekeeping operations. In this case the use of peacekeeping troops had not been based on prior agreement by the parties in conflict. The mandate was unrealistic: UNIFIL was supposed to intervene between the parties; if necessary to motivate the Israeli troops to withdrawal, and to restore the authority of the Lebanese government in Southern Lebanon. And all this without the use of force. When Israeli troops invaded Lebanon in June 1982 and the UN troops could do little else than record this invasion, many regarded this as the definitive fiasco for UNIFIL. Many of the problems experienced by UNIFIL in Lebanon were to be repeated in Yugoslavia at the start of the 1990s.

At the end of the 1980s, as the Cold War evaporated, the governments of the Soviet Union and the United States started to assign a larger role to the UN in the management of regional conflicts.¹⁹⁵³ Furthermore, the close of the Cold War in the late 1980s also brought an end to the blocking of resolutions in the Security Council. The Soviet Union took a considerably more flexible attitude than it had before and played an active role in ending international conflicts in Afghanistan, Angola and El Salvador, as well as in the Iraq-Iran war. It was in this climate that five new UN peacekeeping operations, all of the classical type, took place in 1988. In the same year the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the UN for its peacekeeping operations.

At the same time, it became clear that the end of the Cold War did not mean a world free of conflict. It was precisely the disappearance of the stand-off between the two superpowers that created space for conflicts that were often not so much wars between states as struggles within states, as in the case of Yugoslavia. The UN was not designed to deal with such domestic or intrastate conflicts. In fact, the organization was set up to deal with conflicts between states. Article 2, Section 7 of the UN Charter forbade intervention in the internal affairs of a state. On the other hand the task of the global organization was to work against threats to peace. And it was the end of the Cold War which made it politically easier for the UN to intervene in individual states. This meant that a self-confident organization had room to manoeuvre with regard to intrastate conflicts, but that there was also a potential for considerable lack of clarity and for disunity.

At the start of the 1990s there were calls for a new type of UN-approved operations which would occupy the middle ground between peacekeeping and peace-enforcing, known as VI - operations or quasi-peace-enforcement. At the start of 1992 Brian Urquart, the former Undersecretary-General of

¹⁹⁵² Vos, *Altaar*, p. 9; Klep/Van Gils, *Korea*, p. 22.

¹⁹⁵³ See for instance Dore, *Japan*, p. 86.

the UN and dubbed the 'father of peacekeeping', advocated military intervention that was intended to restore a certain degree of order and security so that humanitarian aid could continue and a process of reconciliation could be started. It was exactly this sort of humanitarian intervention which, in contrast to the classical cases, did not have to be limited to conflicts between states but could also be conducted in domestic situations where state authority had fully or partially broken down.¹⁹⁵⁴

June 1992 saw the publication of the report *An Agenda for Peace* by the Secretary-General of the UN, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, which summarized a range of new peacekeeping operations. These included the preventative deployment of peacekeeping units, the protection of humanitarian convoys in conflict areas and the provision of support for the democratic reconstruction of societies torn apart by conflict. The enthusiasm for peacekeeping operations remained high. While 13 such operations took place in the period up to 1988, UN troops were deployed 20 times in the period between 1988 and 1993. Between 1990 and 1993 the costs incurred by the UN for peacekeeping operations increased by a factor of seven: from 400 million dollars to 3 billion dollars per year.¹⁹⁵⁵ As a result of the increased interest in peacekeeping operations, the UN created a new body entitled the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and headed by the Ghanaian diplomat Kofi Annan, a visionary and a man little bound by conventions who was later to become the Secretary-General of the UN.

However, the United Nations was also subject to a large number of handicaps at the start of the 1990s. One fact that was easily forgotten in the euphoria accompanying the end of the Cold War was that the UN was still dependent on the political will of the member states. The United Nations was in fact no more than the sum of the almost 200 member states. The actual power was held by the Security Council, and within the Council by the five permanent members holding the power of veto. Therefore much depended on the degree of freedom that the major powers were prepared to grant the Secretary-General, and on his personal attitude.

As the UN does not have its own military forces, the dispatch and mandating of peacekeeping missions is preceded by a long and complex decision-making process. First of all the Secretary-General of the UN must prepare proposals for such a mission. Then he must consult the member states. The 15 members of the Security Council then make a decision on the operation and its mandate, i.e. the aim, the powers and the resources of the peacekeeping force. This mandate, generally set out in a resolution of the Security Council, is the only legal basis for the operation since the UN Charter itself contains no provisions regarding peacekeeping. It is thus extremely important that the mandate be clearly formulated. A mandate is however often the result of political compromises and thus intentionally ambiguous.

A resolution by the Security Council requires a majority of nine votes, and moreover none of the veto-holding powers may vote against it. The General Assembly, which has had a Committee on Peacekeeping Operations since 1965, then defines the budget and the distribution of costs. Finally, national governments then have to decide whether and how they wish to participate in an operation. This usually begins with a behind-the-scenes gearing of supply and demand, carried out between the UN Secretariat and the Permanent Representatives stationed in New York, i.e. the ambassadors of the individual countries. Once it is virtually certain that a country can make a particular offer, this is followed by a formal request from the Secretary-General. Even once the Security Council has approved a peacekeeping operation, the crucial question remains as to whether the Secretary-General will manage to 'extract' enough troops from the member states. This inertia in the decision-making process and its implementation makes the United Nations less suited to acute crisis management.

Once a UN peacekeeping mission has been decided, the Secretary-General appoints a commander to lead the force in the field. At the start of the 1990s, the process of military advice to the Secretary-General was a complicated affair. As described, the Military Staff Committee envisaged in the

¹⁹⁵⁴ A. Kamsteeg, 'VN: naar de humanitaire interventie?' (UN: Towards humanitarian intervention?), *Nederlands Dagblad*, 10/06/92.

¹⁹⁵⁵ Milton J. Esman & Shibley Telhami, 'Introduction', Esman & Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p. 3.

Charter never really got off the ground. From 1992 onwards it was the DPKO at the UN headquarters in New York which was charged with implementing peacekeeping operations. But for a long time the DPKO was seriously understaffed.¹⁹⁵⁶ At the start of 1994 the department had a staff of 267 including secretaries¹⁹⁵⁷, which was a low level for such an important UN department; it was viewed as the weakest department within the UN.¹⁹⁵⁸ As a result it had trouble holding its own against the Department of Political Affairs, the policy-forming body of the Secretary-General that was set up at the start of 1993, and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

Another factor was that following the creation of the DPKO, the Field Operations Division – which had a staff of 195 and formed the core of every UN peacekeeping operation – continued to function under the Department of Administration and Management. As a result the stream of information from and to the field flowed along different circuits.¹⁹⁵⁹ It was only at the end of 1993 that this department came under the DKPO, under the name Field Administration and Logistics Division (FALD). But this brought no end to the impracticable relationships, because FALD continued to lead an isolated existence within the DKPO. It was only in September 1993 that the UN set up a planning and operations department, originally headed by the Dutch Marines Colonel C.P.M. van Egmond.¹⁹⁶⁰ An operations centre that was available round the clock was also lacking for much of 1993.

Military personnel had considerable difficulty with the culture of UN bureaucracy. Some of them called the administration of the United Nations ‘the last bastion of Communism’. They objected to the bureaucratic tendency to shift responsibilities instead of taking them on, combined with strong compartmentalization which lead to problems firstly being pushed up high within one’s own compartment (department of the UN Secretariat) before they could move over the boundary to another compartment. Conversely, many members of the UN bureaucracy had trouble with military operations and the accompanying culture. They objected to the fact that many military personnel were not inclined to allow for political necessities in their plans.¹⁹⁶¹

Another disadvantage of the UN peacekeeping operations lies in the responsibility, or rather the lack of it, taken by the Security Council. More than a few of the 15 members of the Security Council do not dispatch troops to actual peacekeeping operations. Furthermore the Council itself is not subject to any form of control. As a result the Security Council can easily lack a full sense of responsibility for the operations that it has itself created. In 1995 the EC mediator in the Yugoslavian conflict, Lord Owen, lamented that nothing sharpens the minds of politicians and public so well than when the lives of their own soldiers are in danger.¹⁹⁶² But in practice this situation rarely occurs in the Security Council.

In 1992 a number of other developments took place that further hindered the work of the UN in peacekeeping operations. Even though the United States did not directly participate in peacekeeping missions, its attitude towards such operations had always proved highly important. As remarked earlier, an isolationist tendency occurred in the US at the start of the 1990s. In March 1992 a Defence Planning Guidance Document drawn up by the Pentagon was leaked, revealing that the defence chiefs in Washington assigned no role whatsoever to the UN as a form of collective security. President Bush Senior did indeed decide, at the end of his period of office, to send American troops to Somalia as part of a UN peacekeeping operation. Nonetheless, during his farewell speech at the West Point military academy the American head of state warned that the government in Washington would judge such forms of armed intervention on their merits from case to case.¹⁹⁶³ After President Gorbachev had made

¹⁹⁵⁶ Hillen, *Helmets*, p. 160.

¹⁹⁵⁷ DCBC, no. 1836. Permanent Representative in New York to Ministry of Defence/DAB/CDS, 16/05/95, no. 3079.

¹⁹⁵⁸ Interview J. Baxter, 16/10/00.

¹⁹⁵⁹ Cf. MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, p. 106.

¹⁹⁶⁰ On his activities see Van Egmond, ‘Peacekeeping’; Robert van de Roer, ‘VN te velde gedoemd tot doormodderen’ (UN in the field doomed to muddle through), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/10/94.

¹⁹⁶¹ Interview Colonel R. van Veen, 16/08/00.

¹⁹⁶² Owen, ‘Grenzen’, p. 373.

¹⁹⁶³ Dore, *Japan*, p. 116.

way for Boris Yeltsin in Russia, at the end of 1991, nationalism in this country grew stronger. Moscow increasingly complained that the American government was using the UN for its own ends.

On 1 January 1992 the Egyptian Boutros Boutros-Ghali became Secretary-General of the UN, succeeding Perez de Cuellar. He had the reputation of being someone who did not take a strong lead and moreover he had a 'poor standing' with the American government.¹⁹⁶⁴ Even before his appointment Boutros-Ghali had let it be known that he had little enthusiasm for a peacekeeping operation in Yugoslavia. He knew that whatever happened the UN had something to lose. The organization would be criticised if it did nothing and then, Boutros-Ghali felt sure, terrible things would happen in the Balkan country. But the Egyptian knew that the UN would equally come under fire, so to speak, if it did do something but after a while, as he expected, was forced to withdraw from Yugoslavia.¹⁹⁶⁵

2. The UN peacekeeping force in Croatia: a new round with new nationalists

'Laszlo just laughed as he told me the secret way to predict Milosevic's every move.

"Don't ask what strategy is best for achieving a Greater Serbia or the survival of this thing that everyone calls 'rump Yugoslavia' (...) Ask what strategy will keep Milosevic in power, and that's the one he will follow."¹⁹⁶⁶

Boutros-Ghali's sombre view was understandable, especially considering the attitude of the Croatian Serbs. In contrast to Milosevic, Milan Babic, the political leader of the Croatian Serbs who had forced Jovan Raskovic from his position in 1990, was totally opposed to the arrival of a UN peacekeeping force. It was favourable for the Serbs that the Vance peace plan stipulated that 27 percent of Croatian territory would remain in Serb hands until a definitive arrangement could be made. Furthermore the UN troops would not be stationed along the Croat-Serb border, but within the area of Croatia controlled by the Serbs. However, the plan demanded the withdrawal of the JNA from Croatia and the disarming of the Croatian Serb militias. Babic was possibly prepared to countenance the disarming of his militias, but in this case the Croats should disarm too and the federal army should remain in the Serb areas. Moreover, the 'Autonomous Serbian Area' should then be recognized as 'one of the republics of the Yugoslav Federation'.

This position brought Babic into open conflict with Milosevic.¹⁹⁶⁷ The disparity between Babic and Milosevic tended to create the impression in the West that the Serbian president was a moderating factor whose life was being made difficult by radical Serbs. This was how Vance saw things, for instance.¹⁹⁶⁸ Milosevic seemed to be 'making best of a bad job'¹⁹⁶⁹ and to have assumed the role of a

¹⁹⁶⁴ See for instance R. Kuethe, 'Een knik in de brandslang. De Verenigde Naties, 50 jaar oud, schitteren alleen op de bijvelden' (A kink in the fire-hose. The United Nations, 50 years old, shining only in the subsidiary areas), *Elsevier*, 17/06/95.

¹⁹⁶⁵ Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 65.

¹⁹⁶⁶ Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 201.

¹⁹⁶⁷ Theo Engelen, 'Serviërs onderling oneens over voortgang van vredesproces VN' (Serbs divided on progress of the UN peace process), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/01/92; idem, 'Vredesplan in gevaar door koppige Serviërs in Krajina' (Peace plan endangered by stubborn Serbs in Krajina), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/01/92; 'Joegoslavië balanceert tussen oorlog en vrede' (Yugoslavia in the balance between war and peace), *Trouw*, 13/01/92; Nicole Lucas, 'Serviërs en Kroaten worden oorlogsmoe' (Serbs and Croats become tired of war), *Trouw*, 14/01/92; Heller, *Brasiers*, p. 93.

¹⁹⁶⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00775, Van Schaik 1399 to Van den Broek, 12/12/91.

¹⁹⁶⁹ Peter Michielsen, 'Servische president Milošević heeft eieren voor zijn geld gekozen' (Serbian president Milosevic makes the best of a bad job), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/01/92.

‘dove’.¹⁹⁷⁰ Milosevic reinforced this impression by publicly declaring that the JNA should keep out of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁹⁷¹

For a long time during the war in Croatia Milosevic had had only a limited hold over the JNA but since January 1992 his power over the JNA had increased, partly due to the resignation of Minister of Defence Kadijevic for reasons of health.¹⁹⁷² He was temporarily replaced by his Vice-Commander Adzic, who was less inclined to the Yugoslavian position and more to the Greater Serbian one. While in the guise of a ‘dove’ Milosevic had long been making preparations for his next war, the one in Bosnia. He was determined that Babic should not stand in his way. UN emissary Goulding had repeatedly declared that the UN would only send troops when all parties, including the Serbs in Croatia, had agreed to this move.¹⁹⁷³ In addition, Milosevic wanted to prevent the Serb leaders in Croatia and Bosnia from becoming too powerful. This was why, on 8 January, Milosevic blocked a plan by Babic for the Serb areas in Croatia to merge with the autonomous Serb regions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He warned Babic then that not all Serbs could live in one state and that the Serbs in the homeland (*matika*) could not let themselves be hostage to the Serbs who lived outside Serbia, here doubtless referring to the sanctions which had been imposed on Serbia because of the war in Croatia.

Proclamation of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia

Meanwhile the preparations for the war in Bosnia continued. At the urging of Milosevic, on 9 January Karadzic proclaimed the autonomous ‘Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina’.¹⁹⁷⁴ The decision would be implemented as soon as the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina was recognized. At the same time the Bosnian Serb leadership declared that they no longer recognized the Bosnian President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs as the legitimate representatives of the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁹⁷⁵ However, all this did not prevent the Bosnian Serb representatives (at least for the time being) from continuing to form part of the Bosnian parliament and other representative bodies.

Thus the two Serb areas outside Serbia, at the urging of Milosevic, remained separate. By now Milosevic had lost practically all interest in the Serb area in Croatia, while he feigned lack of interest in the Serb area in Bosnia. On 10 January, one day after its creation, Milosevic told the American ambassador Zimmermann that he would not recognize the Serb republic in Bosnia.¹⁹⁷⁶

Milosevic’s irritation with Babic’s resistance to the arrival of a UN peacekeeping force in Croatia increased when the Holy Synod, the highest organ of the Serb Orthodox Church, came down on the side of Babic and accused Milosevic of betraying the interests of the Serb people.¹⁹⁷⁷ When at the start of February 1992 Babic stuck by his position that Krajina could not be regarded as Croatian territory and that both the disarming of the Serb militias and the withdrawal of the JNA were out of the question,¹⁹⁷⁸ he was ordered to Belgrade. Members of the federal presidium, the high command of the JNA and the leaders of the Bosnian Serbs and Biljana Plavsic attempted to convince him that he need have no worries about the withdrawal of the JNA. The Bosnian Serbs would soon secede from Bosnia,

¹⁹⁷⁰ Nicole Lucas, ‘“Slobo” Milošević meet zich de rol van “vredesduif” aan’ (‘Slobo’ Milosevic assumes the role of ‘dove’), *Trouw*, 24/02/92.

¹⁹⁷¹ ‘Servië eist dat Kroatië verloren gebied opgeeft’ (Serbia demands that Croatia give up lost territory), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/01/92.

¹⁹⁷² Although at the time there was intense speculation about other reasons for his resignation, according to Kadijevic himself in his memoirs this really was due purely to reasons of health, Kadijevic, *Viem*, pp. 166-168.

¹⁹⁷³ Ulrike Rudberg, ‘Serviërs in Kroatië wijzen VN-plan af’ (Serbs in Croatia reject UN plan), *De Volkskrant*, 29/01/92; ‘Voorlopig geen VN-vredesmacht naar Joegoslavië’ (No UN peacekeeping force for Yugoslavia for the time being), *De Volkskrant*, 30/01/92.

¹⁹⁷⁴ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 227.

¹⁹⁷⁵ Amnesty International, *Abuse*, p. 6.

¹⁹⁷⁶ Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 179.

¹⁹⁷⁷ Ulrike Rudberg, ‘Servisch-orthodoxe kerk treedt uit schaduw van de staat’ (Serb Orthodox Church emerges from the shadow of the state) and ‘Servische tovenaarsleerling’ (Serbian sorcerer’s apprentice), *De Volkskrant*, 21/01/92; Ton Crijnen, ‘Servische kerk uit Tito’s schaduw’ (Serb Church emerges from Tito’s shadow), *Trouw*, 27/01/92.

¹⁹⁷⁸ Leurdijk, ‘Rol’, p. 160.

they told him. Thanks to the areas in Bosnia that would then fall into Serb hands, a Serb corridor would continue to exist between Serbia proper and Krajina, so that Babic need not fear losing practical support from Belgrade.¹⁹⁷⁹ But Babic refused to be convinced. In order nonetheless to obtain his signature to the Vance peace plan, he was then subjected by his hosts in Belgrade, for three consecutive days, to intimidation practices reminiscent of the era of the unalloyed Communists.¹⁹⁸⁰ In the end Babic signed the plan, but said later that he had done this at a moment that he had fallen asleep from pure exhaustion.¹⁹⁸¹

When Babic, even after signing the document, still refused to recognize the advantages of the Vance plan for the Serb people of Krajina, the other Croatian Serb leaders, encouraged by Belgrade, started a campaign of defamation against him. On 9 February Milosevic convened the parliament of the Croatian Serbs; not as was customary in Knin, the power base of Babic, but in Glina. The ‘parliament’ thus convened by Milosevic accepted the Vance plan under great pressure from Belgrade and the JNA¹⁹⁸² and subsequently sent Babic home on 17 February.

On 28 February the autonomous Serb areas in Croatia were united to form the Serbian Republic of Krajina. The appointed president was Goran Hadzic, secretary of the Vukovar department of the SDS, who had been put forward by the SDB, the Serbian state security service. This effectively sidelined Babic. A few months later, in Benkovac, he was shot in the head under unexplained circumstances. He survived the attack but subsequently withdrew from politics for some time.

‘To be as sure as possible that a United Nations force would succeed’: the birth of UNPROFOR

Once it had become clear that Milosevic was resolved to break Babic’s resistance and that the Serb area in Croatia would get a leadership that did not reject the Vance plan, on 15 February Boutros-Ghali proposed to the Security Council that a peacekeeping force be created to implement the Vance plan. In a rather apologetic tone he declared:

‘If it is only now that I am proposing such a force, it is because of the complexities and the dangers of the Yugoslav situation and the consequent need to be as sure as possible that a United Nations force would succeed in consolidating the ceasefire and thus facilitate the negotiations of an overall political settlement.’

In referring to problems in his declaration, Boutros-Ghali was thinking not only of the situation in Croatia itself but also of the willingness of potential donor countries to provide troops and funds – a willingness he estimated to be low. However, the Secretary-General felt the risk of a too small body of troops to be ‘less grievous than the danger that the delay in its despatch will lead to a breakdown of the ceasefire and to a new conflagration in Yugoslavia’.¹⁹⁸³

On the basis of this ‘recommendation’ the Security Council accepted Resolution 743 on 21 February, providing for the stationing of a peacekeeping force in Croatia as a contribution to the maintenance of the ceasefire. The peacekeeping force was given the name of *United Nations Protection Force* (UNPROFOR). Against the custom of UN abbreviations for peacekeeping operations, every reference to the area was omitted from the name because it might well generate new difficulties between Croats and Serbs.

¹⁹⁷⁹ Jovic, *Dani*, pp. 430-435; Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 202-203.

¹⁹⁸⁰ Ewoud Nysingh, ‘De zetbaas van Milošević kijkt niet voor geweld’, (Milosevic’s figurehead does not submit to violence), *De Volkskrant*, 05/02/92; Nicole Lucas, “‘Slobo’ Milošević meet zich de rol van “vredesduif” aan’, *Trouw*, 24/02/92; Gajic-Glisic, *Vojska*, pp. 136-140.

¹⁹⁸¹ Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 280.

¹⁹⁸² Ulrike Rudberg, ‘Parlement Krajina wil wél vredeslager’ (Krajina parliament now accepts peacekeeping force), *De Volkskrant*, 10/02/92.

¹⁹⁸³ UN document S/23592, cited in UN Srebrenica Report, par. 13.

UNPROFOR in Croatia was to comprise 14,000 peacekeeping troops, consist of twelve infantry battalions with a total strength of 10,400, a logistics and support staff of 2480, 100 military observers and 530 political functionaries. This made it the biggest UN operation since the one conducted in the Congo between 1960 and 1964, which at its climax involved almost 20,000 troops. At its greatest strength, when it was also active in Bosnia, UNPROFOR was to involve 50,000 participants, mostly military but also with an important civilian component. The troops in Croatia would later be known as UNPROFOR I, to distinguish the force from UNPROFOR II which was active in the Bosnian theatre.

The 12 battalions of UNPROFOR I included a French, a Belgian and a Danish infantry battalion but the majority of the participants came from countries outside the European Community: from Argentina, Canada, Jordan, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Poland, Russia and Czechoslovakia. In addition there was a very large French logistics battalion. The United Kingdom, which constantly showed great hesitation about any form of intervention in (former) Yugoslavia, contributed only a medical unit. The British government felt, with reference to the efforts of its soldiers in the Persian Gulf and Cyprus, that they were 'already doing more than enough'.¹⁹⁸⁴

It was intended that UNPROFOR should create the conditions for a political solution to the conflict. On the one hand UNPROFOR was in this phase therefore a classic peacekeeping operation, intended to separate troops of opposing forces, equipped with light weapons and in position with the agreement of both parties. On the other hand UNPROFOR was also required to make a contribution to peace by achieving a demilitarization and enabling the return of some 300,000 Displaced Persons from the areas in question. The task of UNPROFOR was thus to effect a return to the *status quo ante* and therefore contained elements of peacemaking.

These different goals of UNPROFOR were hard to reconcile. Demilitarization, effecting the return of the Croatian population and incorporation of Croats into the police forces were all things that the Serb leaders could be expected to oppose. At the same time these same leaders needed to be persuaded to participate in talks which should lead to a definitive peace agreement.

The peacekeeping troops were to be stationed in the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) in Eastern Slavonia (Sector East), Western Slavonia (Sector West) and Krajina (Sectors North and South) (see map in Part I, Chapter 2, Section 2). Moreover, from 30 June 1992 onwards UNPROFOR also became responsible for separating troops in the areas known as pink zones: areas where many Serbs lived and Serb militias were also present, but which lay outside the UNPA areas (Resolution 762). The peacekeeping operation was originally planned for a period of 12 months.

Only once the UNPAs were demilitarized would UN military observers also start patrolling in limited areas within bordering Bosnia-Herzegovina. This demilitarization was never to happen, however, and the area as such was never brought under the administration of the UN. Following the arrival of UNPROFOR the Serbs continued to hold authority in this area.

The Bosnian president Izetbegovic, following the EC decision on recognition in principle that was taken on 16 December, had urgently appealed to the European governments and the United Nations to send peacekeeping troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina as a preventative measure. It transpired, however, that Vance opposed this move.¹⁹⁸⁵ Just as at an earlier point the Brioni agreement and its implementation by the ECCM had confined the international approach to the Yugoslav problem to Slovenia, while the crisis in Croatia was already looming, now UNPROFOR confined itself to the Serb areas in Croatia, while the signs of an approaching crisis in Bosnia were already plentiful.¹⁹⁸⁶

The Serb leaders could thus be satisfied. Their aims in Croatia had been achieved and they now envisaged a situation there similar to the one in Cyprus, where a UN peacekeeping force had already been stationed for decades in order to separate opposing troops, and which had led to two ethnically

¹⁹⁸⁴ Eyal, *Europe*, p. 58.

¹⁹⁸⁵ Also see Wijnaendts, *Kroniek*, p. 153.

¹⁹⁸⁶ Cf. Leurdijk, 'Rol', p. 159.

pure areas on that Mediterranean island. The result that had been achieved in Croatia could serve as a blueprint for the Serbs in Bosnia. Following a quick conquest of territory they too could call in the support of the UN to monitor the areas they controlled in Bosnia and thus see the situation created by them accepted as the *status quo*.¹⁹⁸⁷ The chance of such a course of events taking place in Bosnia was increased even further by the withdrawal of the JNA from Croatia under the terms of the peace agreement. Now the army had its hands free to intervene in the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Croatian government was considerably less satisfied. It had provisionally accepted the presence of UN peacekeeping troops on its territory, but following their arrival increasingly saw them as a hindrance in extending its authority over the parts of Croatian territory that, it said, were occupied by the Serbs. What made things even worse for Zagreb was that the Serbs still had weapons at their disposal. The JNA may have withdrawn but the army had left behind a large part of its weapons. These weapons came into the hands of a Serb police force that numbered no less than 15,000 men and, together with the militias, would grow into a force of 38,000 men by the end of 1994. This force had at its disposal over 200 tanks, 150 armoured vehicles and also rockets that threatened the major Croatian cities.

Furthermore it was out of the question that the displaced Croatian population could return to the areas where UNPROFOR was present. Because UNPROFOR was unable to bring the UNPA areas under its administration, the Serb warlords had a free hand there. Ethnic cleansing and murders continued 'quietly' under the gaze of the UN troops, although the UNPROFOR mandate, contrary to the opinion of some authors,¹⁹⁸⁸ authorized UN troops to protect citizens against Serb aggression.¹⁹⁸⁹ UNPROFOR even found itself compelled to prevent the return of Croats because the situation in the UNPAs and pink zones was not considered safe enough for Croats. In November 1992 Boutros-Ghali had to report to the Security Council that after more than six months of deployment UNPROFOR had been unable to prevent Serbs continuing to commit acts on other ethnic groups such as murder, burning and other destruction of houses, devastation of churches, killing of livestock and armed robbery.¹⁹⁹⁰ The Director of Civil Affairs of the UN operation, the Irishman Cedric Thornberry, had to admit that the so-called protected areas were the scene of full-blown anarchy.¹⁹⁹¹

This was why, in the following years, Tudjman and his followers were to repeatedly object to the six-monthly extensions following expiry of the UNPROFOR mandate. Because of this critical attitude by the authorities in Zagreb there was an almost constant danger that the Croatian government would attempt to take over the UNPA areas by force. Occasional skirmishes did indeed take place and it was only possible to halt these under intense international pressure.¹⁹⁹²

¹⁹⁸⁷ Cf. Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 101.

¹⁹⁸⁸ Philip J. Cohen, 'Ending the war and securing peace in the former Yugoslavia', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, p. 42; Norman Cigar, 'The Serbo-Croatian War, 1991', *ibidem*, p. 81.

¹⁹⁸⁹ United Nations Department of Public Information, United Nations, 1993 and 1994/1995, p. 3; Blokker & Muller & Raic, 'VN-vredesmachtten', p. 387.

¹⁹⁹⁰ Zeitler, *Rolle*, p. 52.

¹⁹⁹¹ Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 282.

¹⁹⁹² Declaration by Petar Sarevic, Croatian ambassador in Washington, in: United States Congress, Committee on Security and Cooperation in Europe, United Nations, pp. 73-88; MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, p. 115; 'Kroatië voert strijd tegen Serviërs op' (Croatia intensifies struggle against Serbs), *De Telegraaf*, 01/02/93; 'Blaauwhelmen in Kroatië blijven langer, maar garanderen niets' (Blue helmets in Croatia stay on longer, but guarantee nothing), *Trouw*, 22/02/93; Scheffers, *Ambassadeur*, p. 21; ABZ, DPV/ARA/00141. Memorandum from DEU/OE to DGPZ, 17/12/92, no. 150/92; Van Oordt 007 (Budapest) to Kooijmans, 21/01/93; Van Oordt 028 to Kooijmans, 11/02/93; PR New York to Kooijmans, 12/02/93, nyv/2084; MID. MID, Developments in the Former Yugoslav Federation, 72/92, 05/10/92; 82/92, 06/11/92; 84/92, 11/11/92; 92/92, 30/11/92; 96/92, 11/12/92; 98/92, 16/12/92; 01/93, 05/01/93; 08/93, 22/01/93; 0/93, 28/01/93; 12/93, 04/02/93; 13/93, 08/02/93; 14/93, 11/02/93; ABZ, 911.31, Yugoslavia. Political Relations and Parties, Part V-VI, May 1992 - April 1993, MID, Developments in the Former Yugoslav Federation, 97/92, 14/12/92; 07/93, 20/01/93; 09/93, 25/01/93; 21/93, 22/03/93; 22/93, 25/03/93; 23/93, 31/03/93; 24/93, 05/04/93; 28/93, 22/04/93; Part VII, March 1993 to March 1994 inclusive, 36/93, 27/05/93; 44/93, 05/07/93; 53/93, 03/09/93; 54/93, 08/09/93; 55/93, 13/09/93; 57/93, 20/09/93; 58/93, 28/09/93; 60/93, 12/10/93; 61/93, 19/10/93; 67/93, 01/12/93; DCBC, no. 2117, MID, Developments

In fact the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered it possible that the Croatian government could use force of arms at any moment to assert its authority in the Croatian Serb areas. In December 1992 the Director-General of Political Affairs, Van Walsum, wrote in a memorandum to Minister Van den Broek that he thought it ‘was not on the cards at the moment’ that Croatia would ‘reconquer the lost territory’. But the minister noted here that ‘things might turn out differently’.¹⁹⁹³ That was an interesting analysis by a government that was itself contributing to UNPROFOR.

3. The previous history of Dutch contributions to peacekeeping operations

Since the start of the 1950s, making a military contribution in the international arena to support international peace and security has been among the tasks of the Ministry of Defence and the Dutch armed forces.¹⁹⁹⁴ The first UN operation in which the Netherlands was involved was the Korean War. This was not a peacekeeping operation, however. The first peacekeeping operation in which Dutch officers participated was the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO), the monitoring organization which supervised the ceasefire lines between Israel and its neighbouring states from 1948 onwards. From 1956 onwards the Netherlands participated in this operation for many years with 15 military observers. In the second half of 1958 Dutch military observers formed part of the United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL) which was intended to combat illegal infiltrations and weapons imports in Lebanon. From August 1960 to October 1963 the Netherlands contributed a small medical contingent and staff personnel to the *Opération des Nations Unies au Congo* (ONUC). In 1963 and 1964 Dutch military observers were involved in the United Nations Yemen Observation Mission (UNYOM), which supervised the separation of forces in the civil war in Yemen. Equally, Dutch observers were involved in the United Nations India-Pakistan Observation Mission (UNIPOM) between September 1965 and February 1966 to uphold the ceasefire in the armed conflict between India and Pakistan. In all these cases the Netherlands thus provided only small groups of observers. In September 1963, however, Minister of Foreign Affairs J.M.A.H. Luns offered to supply the United Nations with a permanent contingent of 300 marines for peacekeeping operations. Two years later the Dutch government doubled the number of available marines to 600 and also augmented the available resources by a supply ship, four transport and communication helicopters and a number of ships for patrol duties. The Royal Netherlands Army would, if requested, also make a contribution: an armoured infantry battalion and an independent medical company. The Air Force for its part held a Fokker Friendship and three Alouette helicopters in readiness.

But it was not until 1979 that the UN once again requested the Dutch government to participate in a peacekeeping operation: the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). This time a large group of Dutch military personnel would be involved. The Netherlands supplied a contingent of 800 men for the UNIFIL operation, consisting mostly of the 44th Armoured Infantry Battalion, supplemented by elements of the 43rd. The Dutch government originally agreed to a participation lasting one year, but later extended this by four years. However, the invasion of Lebanon by Israeli troops in June 1982 reduced the Dutch enthusiasm for participation just as strongly. As early as October 1983 the Dutch government brought back the greater part of the battalion and two years later it withdrew the remaining contingent due to risks to the soldiers and the impracticability of the mandate.

in the Former Yugoslav Federation, 14/94, 17/03/94; 2116, 15/94, 22/03/94; 2115, 16/94, 28/03/94. ABZ, Communications Archive, COREU Danish EC Chairmanship, 10/01/93, cpe/pres/cop 52; idem, COREU of the Danish EC Chairmanship, 24/04/93, cpe/pres/cop 913.

¹⁹⁹³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Memorandum from DGPZ to Van den Broek, 09/12/92, no. 195/92.

¹⁹⁹⁴ Van der Doel and Loef, *Geef acht*, p. 2. For a historical overview of the Dutch participation in UN peacekeeping operations see Klep & Van Gils, *Korea*.

This was a decision that was long to be held against the Netherlands at the UN Secretariat.¹⁹⁹⁵ The military adviser to the Dutch Permanent Representative at the United Nations, Colonel R.P.H. van Veen, and his deputy Major E.A.W. Koestal, noticed that there was still a considerable lack of understanding about this when they took up their positions in 1993. According to the UN the operation had not involved such high risks and the argument that there was little prospect of progress carried no water either. Some UN operations had lasted longer. Moreover the financial settlement of the Dutch contribution had become a long drawn-out issue.¹⁹⁹⁶ It was also regrettable that the Royal Netherlands Army had not evaluated the experiences gained during the peacekeeping operation in Lebanon with a view to facilitating the future deployment of Dutch troops for such purposes.¹⁹⁹⁷

The Ministry of Defence was also aware of the poor impression that the Dutch government had made with the withdrawal from UNIFIL. At the start of 1992 the Deputy Director of General Policy Affairs, J.H.M. de Winter, wrote that when contributing Dutch troops to a peacekeeping force in Yugoslavia the government should realize that the operation would be of unlimited duration. He added that in view of the UN reaction to the UNIFIL events it would be 'difficult, if not impossible, to withdraw Dutch units before the end of the operation without seriously snubbing the UN.'¹⁹⁹⁸

When peacekeeping operations were *en vogue* again at the end of the 1980s, the Netherlands was ready to play its part. It began in 1989 and 1990 with a contingent of 60 Dutch military policemen who took part in the United Nations Assistance Group for Namibia (UNTAG), which assisted Namibia on the road to independence. In the wake of the Gulf War a Dutch unit with a strength of about 600 men carried out humanitarian tasks in support of the Kurds in Northern Iraq (until 1993). In mid-1991 the Dutch government decided to provide 15 military and ten police observers to the UN for participation in the operation United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) in Angola.

The Netherlands also took part in a peacekeeping operation outside the context of the UN. From 1982 onwards it provided an interservice communications company and a unit of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (the Dutch military police) to the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai which supervised observance of the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.

4. Dutch participation in a peacekeeping force in Croatia

When in November 1991 a peacekeeping force in Croatia became ever more likely, the Dutch parliament also began to consider the matter. In preceding years Parliament had acquired the right to be heard on the dispatch of Dutch troops for peacekeeping operations. In January 1979 Parliament had been completely surprised when the Van Agt/Wiegel government decided to contribute the 44th Armoured Infantry Battalion to UNIFIL.¹⁹⁹⁹ Following the commotion around the non-voluntary dispatch of conscripts on this operation, Parliament passed the Brinkhorst amendment that requested the government in the future to take decisions on participation in a UN peacekeeping force only following consultation with Parliament.²⁰⁰⁰

With the amendment of Section 33 of the Military Service Act in October 1987, the Frinking amendment was also adopted: this stressed the desirability that Parliament should 'in good time' be able to debate the non-voluntary dispatch of conscripts outside the Netherlands in those cases where the Netherlands was not subject to existing obligations.²⁰⁰¹ The following governments gave a broad interpretation to this resolution and since then the government has informed Parliament about all cases involving the dispatch of conscripts; in fact, since UNIFIL this dispatch has always been on a voluntary

¹⁹⁹⁵ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, I, p. 24; Bais, *Mijnenveld*, pp. 36 and 67.

¹⁹⁹⁶ Interviews A.W. Koestal, 24/05/00; C. Minderhoud, 02/06/00; and R. van Veen, 16/08/00.

¹⁹⁹⁷ Hoffenaar & Schoenmaker, *Blik*, p. 370.

¹⁹⁹⁸ CRST, no. 251. Memorandum from De Winter to the Political Council, 10/01/92, D92/007.

¹⁹⁹⁹ Berghorst, *News*, pp. 34-35.

²⁰⁰⁰ TK, 1978-1979, 15 441, no. 7.

²⁰⁰¹ TK, 1987-1988, 16 521 no. 13.

basis. The 1991 Defence White Paper also stated that: ‘Dutch participation in a peacekeeping force will always be subject to parliamentary consultation. (...) In practice the mandatory dispatch of conscripts for action in dangerous situations outside the NATO context is already always subject to such parliamentary consultation.’²⁰⁰²

After the Ministry of Defence had announced the establishment of an airmobile brigade composed fully of volunteers in the 1991 Defence White Paper, at the start of 1992 Parliament asked Minister Ter Beek whether it would also be informed in advance if this unit were to be dispatched outside NATO territory. The minister agreed to this.²⁰⁰³ In May 1992 Minister Ter Beek stated that the point of information to Parliament about the dispatch of military personnel had a basis in customary law.²⁰⁰⁴ A year later, when considering the Defence Priorities Review, the member of parliament E. van Middelkoop (GPV – one of the small Christian parties) advocated ‘a stronger formal basis’ for this customary law by means of legislation or a constitutional provision.²⁰⁰⁵ In January 1994 the government sent Parliament a previously promised memorandum on the involvement of Parliament in the dispatch of military personnel. Here the government made reference to Van Middelkoop’s proposal and wished to retain the established practice of informing Parliament by means of a letter before moving to implement a decision to dispatch troops.²⁰⁰⁶ Nonetheless, developments moved towards a constitutionally anchored right of approval by Parliament for dispatch of troops, but this exceeds the limits of this part of the report;²⁰⁰⁷ this subject will be returned to in Part II. Suffice to say that in the period described here the government and Parliament agreed that Parliament should be informed before troops were dispatched.

It is in this light that one should view the first plenary debate in Parliament on 21 November 1991 on the situation in (former) Yugoslavia; this debate has been previously discussed (see Chapter 2 of this part of the report). The debate took place at the request of Blaauw, member of parliament for the VVD (Liberals), who responded to public statements by Minister Ter Beek that the Netherlands had a battalion of 500 to 800 men ready for a UN operation. As the reports had surprised Parliament, the VVD man demanded an emergency debate.²⁰⁰⁸ Blaauw and Leerling, member of parliament for the RPF (one of the small Christian parties), had noticed a discrepancy between Ter Beek’s words to the press, where he had mentioned the use of aircraft, ships and ground troops in the context of the Western European Union and a Dutch contribution of 500 men, and the letter from the government to Parliament on 20 November²⁰⁰⁹ in which such military resources were not mentioned. Blaauw left no doubts about the direction in which he wished to see this discrepancy resolved. He wanted to see ‘action’ taken at last.²⁰¹⁰

At this moment, however, it was not clear to Blaauw which international organization had the initiative to end the conflict. He asked whether it was NATO, the UN or the CSCE?²⁰¹¹ Blaauw was supported by L. Sipkes, member of parliament for GroenLinks (the Green Left party). In her case the feeling of powerlessness induced by images of Vukovar and Dubrovnik was transformed into anger: ‘It’s just crazy to say that we should accept that there’s no one who can prevent or stop this senseless

²⁰⁰² TK, 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 74

²⁰⁰³ Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, ‘Kamer heeft twijfels over luchtbrigade. Stapsgewijze goedkeuring’ (Parliament has doubts about airmobile brigade. Step-by-step approval), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/02/92; ‘Kamer voortaan sneller ingelicht over luchtbrigade’, (Parliament now to be informed more rapidly about airmobile brigade), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/02/92.

²⁰⁰⁴ TK, 1991-1992, 22 300 X, no. 88, p. 8.

²⁰⁰⁵ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p.4968.

²⁰⁰⁶ TK, 1993-1994, 23 591 no. 1.

²⁰⁰⁷ For this see Parliamentary Documents no. 23 591; DJZ. Memorandum from Ybema to the Political Council, 29/10/93 no. JZN93/0775/IJB; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, I, pp. 28-33; Megens, ‘*Vredesoperaties*’.

²⁰⁰⁸ Radio 1, *V.O.O.*, News Radio, 19/11/91, 17.05 hours.

²⁰⁰⁹ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181 no. 13.

²⁰¹⁰ TK, 1991-1992, Proceedings, p. 1641.

²⁰¹¹ *Ibidem*.

bloodshed²⁰¹² But various other parliamentarians doubted whether it would be possible to meet the conditions for the stationing of a peacekeeping force: a ceasefire and agreement by the warring factions. Van Traa, member of parliament for the PvdA (Labour), thus advocated that strong use should be made of the sanctions weapon instead.²⁰¹³

Minister Van den Broek believed that the initiatives of the UN and the EC complemented each other. The UN would provide a peacekeeping force and in the meantime the EC would continue to work on a political solution. To this end it was necessary that the party taking the most aggressive attitude, Serbia, should be selectively subjected to sanctions.²⁰¹⁴ Minister of Defence Ter Beek told Parliament that if the Netherlands were to be asked to contribute to a UN peacekeeping force, he would consider a maximum of one battalion. If air transport were needed for Displaced Persons, he also wanted to offer an F-27.²⁰¹⁵ Sipkes thanked the minister for this, above all now that the 'WEU fuss' seemed to be over.²⁰¹⁶ This led Van Traa to remark that 'the relationship between GroenLinks and the Minister of Defence has never been as good as it is today'.²⁰¹⁷

When at the end of November 1991 the UN Secretariat informally sounded out the Dutch government about a possible participation in a peacekeeping force in Croatia, the Dutch Permanent Representative in New York, R.J. van Schaik, informed the UN both verbally and in writing of the 'Dutch readiness to provide up to 800 men', shortly after clarified as 'one battalion'.²⁰¹⁸ The Ministry of Defence had drawn up plans for dispatch of one marines battalion, to be relieved after two or three months by an armoured infantry battalion; this was because a marines battalion was also to be deployed in Cambodia, where it was hoped to contribute to the establishment of a democratic society following the civil war in the country.²⁰¹⁹ It was an ambitious aim to participate in peacekeeping operations with two battalions simultaneously, above all in view of the sweeping cuts being made in the Dutch armed forces at the time.

5. Defence in a changed world

The tone for a new defence policy for the Netherlands, as for the other 15 NATO countries, had been set during the NATO summit in London in July 1990. The central themes there were: smaller, more flexible and more mobile armed forces and more multinational units. A few months later, on 19 November 1990, the treaty on conventional forces in Europe (the CFE agreement) was signed, in which the member states of NATO and the Warsaw Pact committed themselves to a major reduction in their conventional armed forces to mutually equal levels. This move finally ended the threat from the Soviet Union, which had determined Western defence policy for 40 years. In 1991 Washington announced that the American contribution to NATO would be reduced from the 300,000 Americans stationed in Europe up to that time down to 100,000. The Canadian government announced that it would fully withdraw its troops from Europe. A main NATO force of half a million men would remain, together with a rapid intervention force of four divisions with a total strength of 70,000.

²⁰¹² Ibidem, p. 1641.

²⁰¹³ Ibidem, p. 1644.

²⁰¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 1646.

²⁰¹⁵ Ibidem, pp. 1648-1649.

²⁰¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 1649.

²⁰¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 1650.

²⁰¹⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, I, p. 91; ABZ, PVNY. Van Schaik 1295 to Van den Broek, 29/11/91; ABZ, PVNY. Van Schaik to Goulding, 03/12/91, no. 8239; ABZ, 00775, Van den Broek to PR New York, 02/12/91, celer 399.

²⁰¹⁹ DARIC, Medical Affairs HKKM, Yugoslavia 1991, box 32. Organization of UN unit for deployment in Yugoslavia, 22/11/91; BDL, exh.no. BDL 91070409/252. File for ICOSO, Available units of the Marine Corps for UN operations, 28/11/91; BDL. File for Air Force Staff for meeting, authored by A.C.L. Adema, 02/12/91; BDL, exh.no. BDL 91070383/252. Memorandum from J. Waltmann to COCSB, 02/12/91, S91/139/3815; KM, UN operations, marines staff dossiers, 5.10822, exh. 06/01/92, no. 13106/4431, note from the Defence Staff on UN activities in Yugoslavia and Cambodia, 06/12/91; interview J.C. Groeneveld, 17/02/98.

The policy response to the changed perception of international security and the position of the Netherlands within the new international world order was the subject of the 1991 Defence White Paper²⁰²⁰ presented by Minister Ter Beek at the end of March 1991. This made the Netherlands the first NATO country to present a policy document following the signing of the CSE agreement. This was prompted in part by the hope of signalling to its allies that following the end of the Cold War there was no need for them to shift towards renationalization.²⁰²¹

According to the document, there was no longer any prospect of a major surprise war in the heart of Europe caused by the Soviet Union: ‘the Cold War is over’.²⁰²² The Minister of Defence predicted that the disappearance of the great threat in the East might prompt a return to patterns of national defence, but described such a development as ‘highly undesirable.’²⁰²³ According to the government, the collective and integrated nature of the NATO alliance with its considerable American contribution still provided the best basis for stability in Europe. The Dutch government recognized however that Europe would now be expected to make a relatively larger contribution to the alliance. It declared its wish to provide strong support for the multinational forces, partly in the hope that this would prevent Germany from following its own, aggressive path in the future.²⁰²⁴

According to the Defence White Paper, the uncertainty resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union could lead to armed conflicts within and outside Europe, against which military action might have to be taken. The document noted that ‘new tension [was] present particularly in the Balkans (...) as a result of a resurgence of nationalism and major economic problems’.²⁰²⁵ It was true that a ‘wave of democratization’ was flowing through Eastern Europe, but according to the document this was being slowed in Yugoslavia by ‘sharp internal differences’.²⁰²⁶

In the view of the government there was a supplementary role for the CSCE, an organization which did not confine itself to military security in the narrower sense but which also focussed on human rights and minorities. The government believed that the European Political Union (EPU), then being established, also had tasks with regard to defence policy. Consequently the Netherlands had urged that the EPU include the possibility of participation in UN peacekeeping operations and joint actions outside the NATO treaty area.

The document took an optimistic view of the chances for UN peace operations thanks to the more constructive attitude of the Soviet Union: ‘The UN now has the chance to engage not only in peacekeeping, but also in peace-enforcing.’²⁰²⁷ Against this new background the 1991 Defence White Paper cited the following main tasks, besides the protection of Dutch territory in Europe and the Antilles and Aruba: contributing to the defence by NATO, to multinational operations outside the NATO treaty area and to peacekeeping operations.

Simultaneously to the reorientation of the defence policy, the government wanted to carry out financial cuts to the armed forces which in seven years should lead to a 30% reduction in personnel. However, these cuts and reorganization should not be at the expense of effective fighting capability in the new situation. Restructuring should not mean dismantling, and Minister Ter Beek did not want to have to nail a sign to his door saying ‘Closed for renovation’ during the restructuring period.²⁰²⁸

²⁰²⁰ TK, 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3

²⁰²¹ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 77; Lieutenant Colonel H. Sonneveld, ‘Vierkant beschouwd: ‘Defensienota 1991: voorbarig en onvolledig’ (A frank view: 1991 Defence White Paper premature and incomplete) *Carré* 14(1991)7/8, pp. 16-17.

²⁰²² TK, 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 9.

²⁰²³ TK, 1990-1991, 22 991, nr. 3, p. 21

²⁰²⁴ P.G.S. van Schie, ‘Vrede en veiligheid in het nieuwe Europa (Peace and security in the new Europe), *Liberaal Reveil* 32(1991)4, p. 123.

²⁰²⁵ TK, 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 9.

²⁰²⁶ TK, 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 16

²⁰²⁷ TK, 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 30

²⁰²⁸ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 181; Leonard Ornstein, ‘Het eergevoel van Relus ter Beek’ (The sense of honour of Relus ter Beek), *Vrij Nederland*, 18/03/95; Marcel Reijmerink, ‘Vooral luisteren naar de generaal’ (Listening closely to the general), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 15/06/95.

Restructuring and cost cutting should go hand in hand, and the Royal Netherlands Army should undergo the greatest changes in both instances. The personnel of this part of the armed forces was to be reduced from 65,000 to 40,000 men. The number of divisions was reduced from three to two and the number of brigades in these from ten to seven. In order to have a rapid deployment force for crisis management situations, i.e. operations outside the framework of the classical collective defence carried out in the NATO context, one of the armoured infantry brigades was to be reformed to an airmobile brigade equipped with combat and transport helicopters. In this way the Netherlands planned to retain its status as an interesting alliance partner, not only strongly cutting costs but modernizing at the same time.

The personnel of this airmobile brigade, with a ready status, were thus the first troops designated to fulfil the Dutch government's increased offer for UN peacekeeping operations. On 19 December 1985 the Netherlands had made a new promise to the UN, basically stating that the Netherlands could provide 300 marines, one frigate, three helicopters and 30 military policemen within 48 hours. Within a week the Netherlands would be able to provide another 300 marines, several frigates and a supply ship. Within a period of three to six months the Dutch government, 'depending on circumstances and availability' would offer other units. On 21 May 1990 the Secretary-General of the UN, Perez de Cuellar, had asked all member states to announce what personnel and materiel they could provide to meet the new requirements of the United Nations.²⁰²⁹ The Defence White Paper constituted the Netherlands' answer to this request: an infantry battalion, a signal company, a medical unit, personnel for staff functions and officer observers. The Dutch government was in fact one of the few to respond to the Secretary-General's question.²⁰³⁰

Confronted with the heavy cuts, the armed forces felt the need to show their indispensability in the new international constellation. The marines had a relatively easy task here because their units contained few conscripts. Conscripts could only be dispatched on a voluntary basis.

The dispatch of conscripts outside the Netherlands had led to political or social resistance and legal objections several times since the Second World War.²⁰³¹ When in the mid-1960s the Dutch government decided to put several units of the armed forces at the disposal of the United Nations, some lawyers raised the question as to whether conscripts could be deployed against their will for tasks on behalf of the United Nations. The government thought they could, but when assigning the conscripts in question it applied the volunteer principle. When the Secretary-General of the United Nations asked for a Dutch contribution to UNIFIL, the Dutch government (at the time the Van Agt/Wiegel government) saw itself however compelled to dispatch conscripts against their will. The majority of Parliament supported the government, but saw itself forced to conduct a resolution requesting the government to apply the principle of voluntary dispatch as far as possible. In the end 120 men were dispatched against their will. The media and parliament spent weeks discussing the legality of this non-voluntary deployment. After the Dutch National Servicemen's Association (VVDM) had instituted summary proceedings against the State of the Netherlands, and then the Supreme Court of the Netherlands had ruled in its favour in February 1980, the only way that the non-voluntary dispatch could be maintained was by means of a legal trick.

This is why in 1988, as described, the government amended Section 33 of the Military Service Act. Since then the first article has read: 'Conscripts can be assigned to carry out active service outside the Netherlands.' Subsection 2a then stated that dispatch was possible in the context of a peacekeeping operation if those involved gave their permission. If they did not give this they could then be ordered

²⁰²⁹ DARIC, archive DS, box 12, 02/05/91, S91/139/1409. Perez de Cuellar to the Dutch government, 21/05/90, SPA/Q/05.90.

²⁰³⁰ Bais, *Mijnenveld*, p. 121.

²⁰³¹ For the history of the problems concerning the dispatch of conscripts, see J. Hoffenaar, 'De inzet van dienstplichtigen bij operaties buiten NAVO-verband' (The use of conscripts in operations outside the NATO context), *Carré* 15(1992)2/3, pp. 33-36 and the notes on this by the major of the military legal department, mr. W.B. Kroon, 'Uitzending van Nederlandse militairen' (Dispatch of Dutch military personnel), *Carré* 15(1992)6, pp. 16-17. Also see Klep & Van Gils, *Korea*, pp. 72-74.

to go on the mission, but this then required a Royal Decree authorizing deployment and prior consultation with Parliament. Non-voluntary dispatch of conscripts thus remained possible. In practice, however, this no longer took place since the participation in UNIFIL. At the start of their military service, conscripts could state whether they were prepared to carry out their service in peacekeeping operations outside the national borders, but they were allowed to revoke this permission later, 'right up to the aircraft steps' so to speak.

This meant that the marines had an advantage over the army since they had almost no conscripts in their ranks. Only in the course of 1993 would the army have a prepared unit consisting fully of volunteers: the Airmobile Brigade. However, the fact that the marines would simultaneously supply a battalion for Cambodia and a battalion for Yugoslavia generated resistance in the army. This was why the Ministry of Defence devised a distribution of tasks in which the marines, above all in view of their experience in the tropics, would go to Cambodia, while the army was earmarked for operations in the former Yugoslavia.²⁰³²

However, following the offer of a battalion which Minister Ter Beek made to the UN at the start of December, he indicated that he did not wish any public preparation of a battalion for Yugoslavia until the wishes of the UN became clearer.²⁰³³ Almost immediately after this it transpired that the UN had reconsidered and would not be taking up the Dutch offer of a battalion. The first reason for this was that the UN strove for a geographical distribution of the troop-contributing nations. The second reason was that the Serbian government accused the Netherlands, as EC chairman, of bias in the conflict.²⁰³⁴

6. Dutch troops to Yugoslavia: 'a responsible and acceptable risk'

Although this seemed to be the end of Dutch participation in a peacekeeping force in Yugoslavia, the Dutch government continued to strive for the stationing of such a force, not only in Croatia but also in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the weekend of 9 and 10 February 1992 Minister Van den Broek called on the UN to deploy a preventative peacekeeping force in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as he had already asked the UN envoy Cyrus Vance in a closed circle at the end of 1991.²⁰³⁵

During the meeting held within the framework of the European Common Foreign Policy on 17 February 1992, Van den Broek gave considerable attention to the mandate to be issued to the UN peacekeeping force that had been announced two days previously by Boutros-Ghali. Once again the Dutch minister pointed to the dangerous situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and expressed the hope that the peacekeeping force would be stationed there too, even though he appreciated the organizational and financial problems associated with this. On 4 March Van den Broek again urged the Dutch Permanent Representative to the UN to discuss the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina with the representatives of the other EC member states and of the US.²⁰³⁶

After Boutros-Ghali had definitively decided to propose a peacekeeping force to the Security Council, the UN had once again informally asked the Netherlands to make a contribution to the UN peacekeeping force. This took place during a meeting organized by the UN Secretariat on 13 February for thirty potential troop-contributing nations, including the Netherlands. The Dutch government was asked for a signal unit of 300 men, five military observers, eight military police officers and 30 civilian

²⁰³² Klep & Van Gils, *Korea*, p. 102.

²⁰³³ CDS, box 12. S91/139, draft memorandum from Van den Breemen to COCSB, 05/12/91; KM, UN operations, marines staff dossiers, 5.10822, Exh. 06/01/92, no. 13106/4431, memorandum from Van den Breemen to COCSB, 10/12/91; Defence Staff, 1414, exh.no. BDL 9107238/252, A.A. Wijgerse to COCSB, 16/12/91, S91/139/4019.

²⁰³⁴ DARIC. Memorandum from Barth to Ter Beek, 17/12/91, D91/666; CRST, 1109. Memorandum from De Winter to the Political Council, 10/01/92, D92/007; report of meeting of the Defence Council, 18/12/91; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, I, p. 91.

²⁰³⁵ Ulrike Rudberg, 'Parlement Krajina wil wèl vredesleger' (Krajina parliament now accepts peacekeeping force), *de Volkskrant*, 10/02/92.

²⁰³⁶ ABZ, DEU/Staten-Generaal. Van den Broek to PR New York, 04/03/92, celer 54.

police observers. On 19 February, in response to this, the Dutch government conditionally offered a signal unit comprising 300 men.²⁰³⁷ Following this, and before a formal request from the UN had been received, the Dutch Ministerial Council decided on 28 February to offer a signal unit of 300 men, five military observers and eight military police officers as a contribution to UNPROFOR. The formal request was not sent by the Dutch Permanent Representative at the UN in New York until 4 March.²⁰³⁸ The signal battalion would ultimately consist of 310 soldiers, and three military observers and six military policemen would be dispatched as well. These would be drawn from the 108th Signal Battalion in Garderen, including about 200 conscripts who would be dispatched on an exclusively voluntary basis.

In a signal battalion consisting of various smaller units who could to some extent train each other 'on the job', the use of conscripts was not a great problem. The loss of conscripts who did not wish to be dispatched could be covered for. But in combat units, who had to be welded into a single unit during their training, such a loss did present problems. In practice such combat units were composed mostly of conscripts. In August 1992 the departing Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, General M.J. Wilmink, spoke out strongly for the combat units:

‘The army cannot responsibly deploy combat units there in the short term. It is not possible with conscripts selected on a voluntary basis, who then need to be formed into new units. These volunteers need three to six months of hard training to create new, tightly-knit units with members who in the most extreme case must be loyal to each other unto death.’²⁰³⁹

The conscripts also formed a problem in units which, due to lack of enthusiasm, could not be manned with a sufficient number of volunteers. In early 1992 a shockwave went through the upper echelons of the Ministry of Defence when it transpired that the Dutch government could not meet a request by the United Nations for a medical unit of 120 men for Cambodia, although such a unit formed part of the standing offer that the government had made a year before. This experience would be a major factor in the decision to suspend, or abolish, conscription later in the year.²⁰⁴⁰

However, the dispatch of the signal battalion did not yet generate such difficulties. As 1 (NL) United Nations Signal Battalion it would be responsible for carrying out communication between the central UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo, the regional offices, the logistical headquarters and the 12 UNPROFOR battalions. The Dutch government had now ascertained from both the UN and from Belgrade that, in contrast to the term of Dutch chairmanship of the EC, the Dutch troops would not be subject to an increased security risk due to supposed Dutch bias during this period.²⁰⁴¹ Nonetheless the Dutch troops dispatched to Yugoslavia would often encounter a negative attitude by Bosnian Serb

²⁰³⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155, Van Schaik 146 to Van den Broek, 14/02/92; Van den Broek to PR New York, 18/02/92, celer 035; Van Schaik 159 to Van den Broek, 20/02/92; Theo Engelen, ‘VN-topman: vredesleger Kroatië 13.000 man’ (UN top man: peacekeeping force for Croatia 13,000 men), *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/02/92; TCBU, *Vertretpunt I*, pp. 91-92.

²⁰³⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155. Van Schaik 207 to Van den Broek, 04/03/92.

²⁰³⁹ Guido van de Kreeke, ‘Zandhaas heeft weer toekomst’ (Fresh prospects for foot-slogger), *De Telegraaf*, 22/08/92.

²⁰⁴⁰ Bert Steinmetz & Jan van der Ven, ‘Omvormen leger lastige klus’ (Restructuring of army a difficult task), *Het Parool*, 07/11/92; Leonard Ornstein/Max van Weezel, ‘Het warme bad en de koude douche van Relus ter Beek’ (The warm bath and the cold shower of Relus ter Beek), *Vrij Nederland*, 12/12/92, p. 9; interview D. Barth 08/10/99.

²⁰⁴¹ ‘Nederlandse militairen niet naar Joegoslavië’ (Dutch troops will not go to Yugoslavia), *de Volkskrant*, 07/01/92; TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 19, p. 3. See also ABZ, DPV/ARA/00143. Memorandum DPV/PZ, 14/02/92; Memorandum DPV/PZ, ‘Yugoslavia/UN peacekeeping force’, 28/02/92; 00155, Van Schaik 146 to Van den Broek, 14/02/92; Van den Broek to embassy in Belgrade, 21/02/92; Van Schaik 170 to Van den Broek, 22/02/92; Fietelaars 72 to Van den Broek, 26/02/92; ABZ, PVNY. Memorandum from Minderhoud to PR, 20/02/92; KAB. Defence Council report, 19/02/92; ANP report, ‘BZ: geen extra risico voor Nederlandse troepen in Joegoslavië’ (Foreign Affairs: no extra risk for Dutch troops in Yugoslavia), 25/02/92, 1448; ‘Den Haag vraagt garanties VN’ (The Hague asks for UN guarantees), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/02/92; ‘Deelnemen aan VN-macht stuit op Haags voorbehoud’ (Participation in UN force subject to reservations in The Hague), *de Volkskrant*, 26/02/92; TCBU, *Vertretpunt I*, p. 93.

troops, including the Commander General Ratko Mladic, because they were compatriots of the abhorred 'Bruka' (Serbo-Croat for 'disgrace'), i.e. Minister Van den Broek, who had led EC actions in the first six months of the conflict in Yugoslavia.²⁰⁴²

On 3 March, the Ministers Van den Broek and Ter Beek informed Parliament by letter about the offer and added that the deployment of the Dutch troops involved 'a responsible and acceptable risk'.²⁰⁴³ This term 'acceptable risk' requires some explanation, because Minister Ter Beek would repeatedly use it in troop dispatch decisions during these years. The minister took this primarily to mean a political risk. He had to take the decision on his political responsibility and the base of political and public support had to be big enough that, should there indeed be casualties among the Dutch contingent in a peacekeeping operation, a sufficient degree of support would remain.²⁰⁴⁴ 'Acceptable risk' was thus not a calculable quantity, but rather an estimate by the minister and his advisors with regard to the political and social climate in the Netherlands. The minister was thus 'firmly convinced that it is impossible to create any kind of computer program that will indicate whether or not you should dispatch troops. You just have to have wide support.'²⁰⁴⁵

Although casualties among Dutch troops were acceptable, this acceptability also depended on the usefulness of a Dutch presence in the conflict area. 'I constantly have to weigh up the risks to the safety of the assigned troops against the importance of their presence in the former Yugoslavia', said the minister.²⁰⁴⁶ An 'acceptable risk' was thus not the same as a 'risk to safety'. With regard to such risks Ter Beek always listened to the information of his military advisors.²⁰⁴⁷ They supported his calculation, and they were not the only ones. 'Acceptable risk' was thus, as H.F. Dukers, Commander of the first marines battalion in Cambodia, put it: 'A political term for domestic use. The minister has to use this term, but it won't help you in the field.'²⁰⁴⁸ The highest military advisor to the minister, the Chief of Defence Staff General A.K. van der Vlis, also had trouble with the expression: 'I don't know precisely what this term means. I think we agree that personnel run a degree of risk that we can accept within our profession and our ethics. In crisis management operations you impose more restrictions than when defending your own territory.'²⁰⁴⁹ Put in these broad terms the civil service advisors to the minister also found the expression workable: 'What is acceptable also depends on the type of operation and who is participating in it. I would add that the verdict of alliance partners is also highly important.'²⁰⁵⁰ The politicians took the same line, as here for instance the PvdA parliamentarian Valk: 'It's not an exact science of course, in the sense of here's the limit and no further. You have to weigh things up: what are you actually doing it for, what do you want to achieve by sending troops?'²⁰⁵¹

There were still some difficulties to be overcome regarding the first decision to dispatch troops to Yugoslavia. One problem was that the Dutch government had held up the recognition of Croatia, which the EC countries had agreed to on 15 January, because it considered the guarantees on the protection of minorities to be insufficient (see previous chapter). On 22 February the chairman of the Council of Europe actually vindicated the Badinter Commission – which had objected to recognition of Croatia due to the republic's minorities policy – by sending a letter to President Tudjman about the

²⁰⁴² See for instance W.A.M. van Dijk, 'UNMO-actie naar Zepa' (UNMO operation to Zepa), *Carré* 16 (1993)7/8, p. 20; Honig/Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 246. See also Peter Michielsen, 'VN-vredesmacht moet prille vrede bewaken' (UN peacekeeping force must protect fresh peace), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/02/92.

²⁰⁴³ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 19, p. 3.

²⁰⁴⁴ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99; Bert Steinmetz & Jan van der Ven, 'Omvormen leger lastige klus', *Het Parool*, 07/11/92.

²⁰⁴⁵ Bais, *Mijnenveld*, p. 127.

²⁰⁴⁶ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 176.

²⁰⁴⁷ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 95.

²⁰⁴⁸ Bais, *Mijnenveld*, p. 56.

²⁰⁴⁹ A.K. van der Vlis & W.F. van Eekelen, with the collaboration of C. Homan, 'Lessen uit vredesoperaties', Weerdenburg (red.), *Lessen*, p. 56.

²⁰⁵⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing J.H.M. de Winter, p. 145.

²⁰⁵¹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing G. Valk, 31/05/00, pp. 249-250.

constitutional shortcomings on this point.²⁰⁵² But after President Tudjman had promised at the end of February that Croatian legislation would be amended with regard to the protection of the rights of minorities, the Dutch government saw no further reason to block recognition and the dispatch of troops could go ahead.²⁰⁵³

A few months later, however, the Badinter Commission would conclude that even the Croatian constitution of 8 May 1992 still failed to meet the requirements for the protection of minorities, as formulated by Lord Carrington. This was however irrelevant to the governments of Western Europe. They had already decided on recognition in principle on 15 January and had then, as in the case of the Netherlands and France, after initial hesitation now implemented this for practical reasons.

Another problem related to the UN's request to the Dutch government for dispatch of 30 police officers who were to ensure the safety of the local population and supervise the local police to see that it conducted its tasks objectively and correctly. In the letter to Parliament of 3 March, the Ministers Van den Broek and Ter Beek did not yet mention this request. The Netherlands had never before contributed civil police officers to a UN peacekeeping operation. In the recent past the Netherlands had rejected requests for similar deployments in El Salvador and Iraq due to the reorganization taking place within the Dutch police force, the safety risks and language problems.²⁰⁵⁴ This time however the top echelon of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs felt more inclined to cooperate, partly because the Netherlands had made a strong showing as EC chairman 'and it would now be difficult to lag behind the rest'.²⁰⁵⁵ In divergence from the recommendations of her civil servants, however, Minister Ien Dales considered that the dispatch of Dutch civil police was 'not necessary'.²⁰⁵⁶ After this the request was passed to her colleague the Minister of Justice, Ernst Hirsch Ballin, who might possibly provide personnel from the national police force. After extensive consultation the Ministry of Justice also decided not to contribute any personnel.²⁰⁵⁷

The CDA (Christian Democrats) member of parliament A.B.M. Frinking, supported by Blaauw, complained during an procedure debate about the way that the government had provided information about the UNPROFOR participation.²⁰⁵⁸ Reports had appeared about it in the press even before the Council of Ministers had taken a decision on dispatch.²⁰⁵⁹ Some of these publications resulted from the fact that the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dig Ishta, had answered journalists' questions 'off the cuff'.²⁰⁶⁰ The press reports had caused a considerable commotion because they spoke of the dispatch of conscripts.²⁰⁶¹ As acting chairman of the Permanent Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs, Van Traa told the government that the committee wished for verbal consultation 'if necessary during the spring recess, before one Dutch soldier be sent to Yugoslavia'.²⁰⁶²

²⁰⁵² Terrett, *Dissolution*, p. 169.

²⁰⁵³ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181 no. 18 and no. 20, pp. 6-7.

²⁰⁵⁴ ABZ, DOV/ARA/00155. Memorandum from DPV to Van den Broek, 27/02/92, no. DPV-266/92; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt I*, p. 94.

²⁰⁵⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155. Th.C. de Graaf to Hoekema, 28/02/92, with appendix: Deputy Director of Police to Dales, 27/02/92.

²⁰⁵⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155. Head DPV to Van den Broek, 12/03/92, no. DPV-355/92.

²⁰⁵⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155. Van den Broek 098 to PR New York, 29/04/92.

²⁰⁵⁸ DAV. Deetman to the ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence, 10/03/92; appendix: report of procedure debate, 10/03/92, D92/210/6878.

²⁰⁵⁹ 'Kabinet wil 300 militairen naar Joegoslavië sturen' (government to send 300 troops to Yugoslavia) and Wio Joustra, 'Nederland levert vaak militairen voor vredesoperaties van VN' (The Netherlands often supplies troops for UN peacekeeping operations), *de Volkskrant*, 15/02/92; 'VN-macht naar Joegoslavië. Nederland stuurt mogelijk 300 man verbindingstroepen' (UN force to Yugoslavia. The Netherlands may send 300 signal troops), *Trouw*, 24/02/92; 'Den Haag vraagt garanties VN', *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/02/92; 'Deelnemen aan VN-macht stuit op Haags voorbehoud', *de Volkskrant*, 26/02/92.

²⁰⁶⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155. Memorandum from DPV/PZ to DPV, 26/02/92, no. 254/92.

²⁰⁶¹ Postscript from DPV/PZ on ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155. Memorandum from DPV to Van den Broek, 27/02/92, no. DPV-266/92.

²⁰⁶² ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155. Memorandum from PS to DEU and DPV, 28/02/92, no. 19/92.

On 12 March 1992 verbal consultation took place with the Committees for Foreign Affairs and for Defence.²⁰⁶³ They generally approved the dispatch. In view of the positions of the parties in the Yugoslav conflict, the members of parliament wanted to know, among other things, on what the estimate of an 'acceptable risk' was based and how large the chance was that peacekeeping could turn into peace-enforcing. Blaauw and the CDA parliamentarian De Kok asked whether the mandate area could be extended to Bosnia-Herzegovina if circumstances there should deteriorate. Van den Broek, who himself had repeatedly advocated such an extension, now appeared, obviously better informed through international consultation, to take a less favourable view of this and declared that the situation in Bosnia seemed 'reasonably manageable at the moment'.²⁰⁶⁴ The mandate would, according to Van den Broek, explicitly not involve peace-enforcing.²⁰⁶⁵ Ter Beek explained that the instructions on the use of force related to both self-defence and the protection of lives among the local population.²⁰⁶⁶

On 9 March a group of UNPROFOR quartermasters, commanded by the Indian Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, arrived in Yugoslavia. The Deputy Commander was the French Major General Philippe Morillon. The Chief of Staff was the Canadian Brigadier General Lewis W. MacKenzie, who had acquired considerable experience in peacekeeping operations in the Gaza Strip, Cyprus, Cairo and Central America. Contrary to a previous plan, Boutros-Ghali decided not to appoint a Special Representative because he wanted to emphasize that the responsibility for finding a political solution lay with the EC, a responsibility that he at that time did not (yet) want to see combined with the peacekeeping role of the UN.²⁰⁶⁷ Instead of sending a special representative he added a Director of Civil Affairs to the operation: the Irishman Cedric Thornberry.

On 3 April the Dutch signal battalion arrived in Zagreb as the first full UNPROFOR unit. From the Croatian capital it deployed in the North, South, West and East sectors in Croatia into which UNPROFOR was divided, and shortly afterwards in the fifth sector, Sarajevo in Bosnia. The battalion was split up into small communications centres, stationed with the various units to which they were assigned. As a result the battalion was spread over 22 locations. From this point it was to be in service until 1 September 1994 and would comprise a total of some 2000 military personnel. UNPROFOR was formally deployed in Croatia on 7 April through acceptance of Security Resolution 749 and its headquarters was established in Sarajevo, partly for reasons of safety. But this safety was to be short lived.

²⁰⁶³ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 20.

²⁰⁶⁴ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 20, p. 6.

²⁰⁶⁵ Ibidem.

²⁰⁶⁶ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, nr. 20, p. 8.

²⁰⁶⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00143. Van Schaik 156 to Van den Broek, 18/02/92.

Chapter 5

The start of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina: March 1992 – May 1992

1. New plans for dividing up Bosnia-Herzegovina

On 9 January, as described in Chapter 2, Milosevic promised to give up all Croatian territory if the Croatian president was prepared to start a war together with him in Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁰⁶⁸ On the same day the autonomous Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina was proclaimed, several days earlier than announced. It consisted of five so-called autonomous areas and a number of districts.

During these days the division of Bosnia was high on the agenda of the Serbs and Croats. According to Haris Silajdzic, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, Deputy Prime Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Bosnian Serb leader Koljevic conducted talks about division with Tudjman on 14 January in Zagreb.²⁰⁶⁹ Koljevic was reportedly acting there on behalf of Milosevic.²⁰⁷⁰ On the same day Tudjman tried for over an hour to convince the American ambassador Zimmermann of the desirability of such a division of Bosnia between Croatia and Serbia. The Croatian president told the American diplomat that otherwise the Bosnian Muslims would make Bosnia into a fundamentalist Muslim state, using methods that included the import of half a million Turks. He warned about the Green Transversal (an unbroken region of Muslims) that would stretch from Bosnia via Sandzak and Kosovo to Turkey, and he called the Bosnian President Izetbegovic a puppet of Turkey. Asked about the source of his information, Tudjman frankly admitted that he based his opinions on information from Milosevic.

As described in Chapter 3, in April 1991 Milosevic had impressed Tudjman with the plan for the Green Transversal and the return of a large number of Muslims from Turkey; this 'plan' was in fact a copy of an article from the satirical magazine *Vox* that was published in Sarajevo. Zimmermann informed the Croatian president that his ideas about division of Bosnia-Herzegovina could not expect to meet with the sympathy of the Americans.²⁰⁷¹

According to the statements of various Serb leaders, the share of Bosnia-Herzegovina demanded by the Serbs amounted to about two-thirds. Karadzic said in January 1992, for instance, that in the event of the independence of Bosnia the Serbs should get 66 per cent of the territory.²⁰⁷² This claim was supposedly based on the 'fact' that the Serbs, who were comparatively strongly represented in rural areas, had already owned more than 60 per cent of the land before 1992.²⁰⁷³ On 11 February Milosevic told Zimmermann that, in contrast to Croatia, the Serbs in Bosnia were not oppressed. To back this up he cited the circumstance that the Serbs in Bosnia only made up 35 (in fact: 31) per cent of the population but owned 64 per cent of the land. The real purpose of this remark was more probably to get the American ambassador used to Serbian claims for two-thirds of Bosnian territory than to show goodwill towards Bosnia, because Milosevic constantly referred to Izetbegovic as a dangerous Muslim fundamentalist. Moreover, so reasoned Zimmermann, would not Milosevic, who constantly

²⁰⁶⁸ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 223; Oscar Garschagen, 'Croatie mag van Milosevic intact blijven' (Milosevic lets Croatia remain intact), *de Volkskrant*, 10/01/92.

²⁰⁶⁹ Judy Dempsey, 'Secret talks reopened on Bosnia', *Financial Times*, 16/01/92; Peter Sartorius, 'Jugoslawien-Konflikt: Ist der Krieg in Bosnien-Herzegowina noch zu vermeiden?' (Yugoslavia conflict: can the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina still be avoided?), *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 07/02/92.

²⁰⁷⁰ According to Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 253 Milosevic had already sent Koljevic to Zagreb on 8 January.

²⁰⁷¹ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 181-182.

²⁰⁷² Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 26. See also Cigar, *Genocide*, pp. 39-40.

²⁰⁷³ Cf. Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 97. In fact the figure was 56 per cent. [See Chapter 3].

said that he was willing to grant Tudjman his share of Bosnia, want to take a bite of the apple himself?²⁰⁷⁴

While the Serb leaders put their claims on the table and tried to tempt the Croatian government into becoming an accomplice, the atmosphere in Bosnia-Herzegovina was deteriorating day by day. The JNA, the Yugoslav army, took up strategic positions around various Bosnian towns at the end of 1991 and start of 1992 and, in the first months of 1992, the federal army organized training courses for territorial defence forces to which exclusively Serbs were invited.

The various ethnic groups increasingly shut themselves off from each other. Police forces split up along ethnic lines, whereby one of the groups often made itself the sole master of the stock of weapons.²⁰⁷⁵ From the start of January onwards bomb attacks took place in Mostar and other towns, the various ethnic groups repeatedly set up roadblocks and the army laid mines around military buildings as a prevention against attacks.²⁰⁷⁶

2. The referendum in Bosnia

It was against this background that on 24 January the parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina dealt with the issue of the referendum on the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina; this referendum was required by the European Community before being able to proceed with recognition of Bosnian independence. The Bosnian Serb leaders opposed such a referendum, which would lead to independence, while Izetbegovic and his supporters were in favour of it. The Croats, who were strongly divided between moderates who advocated a multi-ethnic state of Bosnia-Herzegovina and radicals who wished for a part of Bosnian territory to join up with Croatia, were the ones who would tip the balance.

The actual parliamentary treatment was preceded by two days of intensive consultations between all involved parties. The preliminary discussions seemed to indicate a compromise along the following lines: the referendum would be held throughout Bosnia and be open to all citizens. The question however should not simply be whether voters were for or against independence, but would offer several options for the future status of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The referendum would thus have a more advisory nature than a binding one.

Izetbegovic and Karadzic had opposed each other in the referendum issue like two fighting-cocks, but on the evening prior to the parliamentary treatment they too were eventually able to agree to this solution. Typically for his way of doing things Izetbegovic refused however to sign an agreement to this effect, remarking that that was still possible the next day. The following morning, 'as if nothing had happened in the previous two days', the Bosnian president announced that he could not agree to the compromise.²⁰⁷⁷

This meant that the referendum had to be debated by parliament on 24 January in its original form, and that the Muslims and Serbs were once again opposed to each other. During an adjournment of the parliamentary session, Karadzic and the leading politician of the SDA (Izetbegovic's party) and Deputy Prime Minister Muhamed Cengic were, however, once again able to agree on a way out of the

²⁰⁷⁴ Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 179. Cf. Zimmermann, 'Ambassador', p. 16, where Milosevic is said to have claimed 70 per cent of Bosnian territory. Milosevic also told Mesic that his ultimate aim was to incorporate two-thirds of Bosnia into Serbia, 'Davor Butkovic, 'Mesic. I drugi su hrvatski politicari svjedocili pred istra[iteljima] Suda u Haagu!', *Globus*, 16/05/97, pp. 15-16

²⁰⁷⁵ For information on this deteriorated climate see for instance Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, *Operations*, Section 5.1.

²⁰⁷⁶ 'Schietpartij in Croatië bedreigt bestand' (Shooting in Croatia threatens truce), *de Volkskrant*, 11/01/92; 'Politici Servië en Croatië naar VN voor overleg' (Serb and Croat politicians to the UN for consultation), *de Volkskrant*, 22/01/92; Ulrike Rudberg, 'Honderden woedende Croaten op barricades in explosief Bosnië' (Hundreds of angry Croats on barricades in explosive Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 05/02/92; idem, 'Leger Joegoslavië zegt Croaten in Mostar wacht aan' (Yugoslav army issues warning to Croats in Mostar), *de Volkskrant*, 06/02/92; 'Croatië 'onvoorwaardelijk' akkoord met VN-vredesplan' (Croatia agrees 'unconditionally' to UN peace plan), *de Volkskrant*, 07/02/92; 'Spanningen in Bosnië lopen op na aanslag' (Tensions increase in Bosnia following attack), *de Volkskrant*, 26/02/92.

²⁰⁷⁷ Muhamed Filipovic, 'Hasan Cengic's Conspiratorial Logic', *Dani*, 08/04/00.

crisis. They agreed that a political and territorial arrangement should be made first. The referendum would then be held directly after this. Karadzic declared to the parliament, following the reaching of this compromise, that the parties had never been so close to an agreement as they were now, a remark greeted with cheers by the delegates. But then Izetbegovic took the floor and declared that the referendum could not be made subject to any conditions.

At this moment – by now it was half-past three in the morning – Krajisnik decided as parliamentary chairman to adjourn the meeting until ten o'clock. After the Serb members of parliament had left, however, an SDA delegate reconvened the non-Serb members of parliament an hour later. The referendum was put to the vote and all 130 of the parliamentarians present voted in favour.²⁰⁷⁸ The referendum was to be held on the weekend of 29 February and 1 March.

The Bosnian Serb politicians, who felt excluded from the decision, were furious. They pointed out that the Bosnian constitution required the agreement of all three ethnic groups for changes in the status of the territory.

In the weeks prior to the referendum a series of armed incidents took place, for instance when police from Sarajevo tried to intercept weapons consignments being sent to the Serbs in the autonomous areas²⁰⁷⁹ or during blockades by Croats of JNA installations in Hercegovina.²⁰⁸⁰

The day before the referendum, Karadzic declared that the referendum did not exist for the Bosnian Serbs. They would not participate in it, but they would not hinder the referendum either.²⁰⁸¹ On the other hand the SDS, Karadzic's party, warned that Serbs who took part in the referendum would be regarded as traitors. During the weekend of the referendum some local SDS functionaries refused to allow the setting up of voting stations if the Serb names were not first removed from the electoral lists.²⁰⁸² In many of the districts controlled by the Serbs the voting stations did not open at all.²⁰⁸³ Whether pressurized by the SDS or not, Bosnian Serbs stayed away from the voting stations in their masses. 63.7 per cent of the registered voters, i.e. chiefly Muslims and Croats, did go to the polls; 99.4 per cent of these voted for independence.

On the evening of 1 March, the second day of the referendum, the tensions between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs culminated in an incident in Bascarsija, the old Muslim quarter of Sarajevo. A wedding celebration was taking place during which the Serb wedding guests, as was customary at that time,²⁰⁸⁴ waved Serb flags. Suddenly shots were fired at the celebrants, killing the father of the bridegroom and wounding an Orthodox priest. Immediately after this incident supporters of the SDS set up roadblocks around the old quarter of Sarajevo. The attack on the wedding guests proved to be the spark that lit the powder keg. These developments must have surprised at least part of the SDS leadership.²⁰⁸⁵ The most important leaders were in Belgrade at that moment. But it was not to be long before the SDS mastered the situation and declared that the siege of Sarajevo would be lifted only when the preparations for the independence of Bosnia-Hercegovina were stopped. Furthermore they wanted greater influence on the police and television in Sarajevo. Karadzic took a hard line when speaking

²⁰⁷⁸ Hayden, *Blueprints*, pp. 96-97.

²⁰⁷⁹ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Serviërs Bosnië onder bevel leger' (Bosnian Serbs under army command), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/02/92.

²⁰⁸⁰ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Oorlog funest voor Mariaverering in Medjugorje' (War disastrous for Veneration of the Virgin Mary in Medjugorje), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/02/92.

²⁰⁸¹ Amnesty International, *Abuse*, p. 7.

²⁰⁸² Kumar, *Divide*, p. 51.

²⁰⁸³ Amnesty International, *Abuse*, p. 7.

²⁰⁸⁴ Meier, *Jugoslavië*, p. 376. See also the report on a wedding celebration in the small Bosnian town C/Gacko six months earlier in E. Nysingh, 'Muslims blijven Tito trouw' (Muslims remain faithful to Tito), *de Volkskrant*, 19/08/91: 'The Serb wedding guests make an ear-splitting noise. They ride in convoys through Gacko, they sound their horns and shoot automatic weapons into the air. Serbian and Yugoslav flags wave from the opened windows. The residents of Gacko, a small town in Bosnia-Hercegovina with a Muslim majority, seem to take no notice.' In fact, at a later point in the article the journalist writes that 36 per cent of the population in Gacko was Muslim and 44 per cent Serb.

²⁰⁸⁵ Cf. Meier, *Jugoslavië*, p. 376.

from Belgrade. He warned that developments threatened in Sarajevo 'which would make Northern Ireland look like a holiday resort'²⁰⁸⁶ and said he feared 'a war on the same scale as the one between India and Pakistan'.²⁰⁸⁷ In a counter-action, Croats and Muslims set up barricades around Serb neighbourhoods of the Bosnian capital. Following this the first openly armed members of the Muslim militias appeared.²⁰⁸⁸

Supporters of independence who wanted to demonstrate their loyalty to an undivided Bosnia held a demonstration on 2 March, with slogans such as 'Remove the barricades, we are unarmed'. The demonstrators were fired on, resulting in several wounded. Hasty consultation between leaders of the SDS and SDA, where the SDA leaders promised to meet the demands of the Serbs for greater influence on the police and media, then brought about a return to calm. But it seemed likely that this calm would be only temporary. The fact that the SDS agreed so easily appeared to be chiefly because Milosevic did not want the arrival of UNPROFOR, which was to have its headquarters in Sarajevo, to be disrupted.²⁰⁸⁹

On 3 March Izetbegovic declared the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. At the same time he announced that if the Serbs once more tried to paralyze daily life in Sarajevo, there were between 200,000 and 300,000 people ready to prevent this.²⁰⁹⁰ Two days later Izetbegovic sent a letter to the government leaders of the European Community, requesting that they recognize the independence now that the referendum demanded by the EC had been held and a majority of the population had voted for independence.²⁰⁹¹

The shots fired on the wedding guests, often seen as the overture to the war in Bosnia, are often mentioned in the international literature without examination of the question as to who committed the crime. Authors speak for instance of 'unidentified gunmen'.²⁰⁹² Muslims said that the Serbs themselves were responsible for the shooting in Bascarsija.²⁰⁹³ The French author Bougarel comes close to the truth when he writes that several weeks after the shooting a Muslim stated on the radio that he was responsible. It was Ramiz Delalic, nicknamed Celo II,²⁰⁹⁴ who was known as a criminal who had spent eight years in prison on a charge of rape. Delalic was a member of the Green Berets. It actually became public that 'Celo II' was involved in the Serb wedding shooting just two days after the incident, when the Bosnian Minister of Internal Affairs issued an arrest warrant for him and his accomplice Suad Sabovic in connection with the attack.²⁰⁹⁵ Delalic went underground and was not found, but a few weeks later he, like several other criminal elements, would lead the defence of Sarajevo. Although Delalic once again claimed the 'honour' of the attack in August 1992,²⁰⁹⁶ for a long time it appeared impossible to institute proceeding against him because victims were threatened or beaten up, after which they firmly withdrew their statements. In June 1999 Delalic was arrested in Sarajevo after he had wounded a policeman during a traffic check. But a year later he was able to escape abroad when he was released on bail while investigations against him were conducted. After earlier investigations had thus not provided any definite proof for the involvement of Celo, in August 2001 the public prosecutor in Sarajevo decided to reopen the investigation because, in his opinion, it had

²⁰⁸⁶ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Gewapende Serviërs omsingelen Sarajevo' (Armed Serbs surround Sarajevo) *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/03/92.

²⁰⁸⁷ 'Oorlog dreigt in Bosnië-Herzegovina' (War threatens in Bosnia-Herzegovina), *de Volkskrant*, 03/03/92.

²⁰⁸⁸ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Gewapende Serviërs omsingelen Sarajevo', *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/03/92.

²⁰⁸⁹ Henk Hirs, 'Bosnië gered door misrekening Serviërs' (Bosnia saved by Serb miscalculation), *Trouw*, 04/03/92.

²⁰⁹⁰ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Sarajevo in de greep van geruchten' (Sarajevo in the grip of rumours), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/03/92.

²⁰⁹¹ AZ, appendix to 92M002475, Izetbegovic to Lubbers, 05/03/92.

²⁰⁹² E.g. Kumar, *Divide*, p. 39. Meier, *Jugoslavië*, p. 376 writes of 'ein Krimineller muslimischer Nationalität'.

²⁰⁹³ Bougarel, *Bosnie*, p. 10.

²⁰⁹⁴ Bougarel, *Bosnie*, p. 10.

²⁰⁹⁵ 'Other reports on Bosnia-Herzegovina', *Tanjug* 1900, 03/03/92, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 05/03/92; 'Other reports on Bosnia-Herzegovina', *Tanjug*, 2159, 03/03/92, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 06/03/92.

²⁰⁹⁶ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 257.

been too superficial up to then.²⁰⁹⁷ Since then various media have reported the existence of a secret indictment against Delalic by the Yugoslavia Tribunal in relation to crimes that he committed during the war in Bosnia.²⁰⁹⁸ On 1 February 2002, the subdistrict court in Sarajevo granted permission for the reopening of the investigation of Delalic in connection with the murder of the father of the bridegroom on 1 March 1992.

3. The Cutileiro Plan and its thwarting by the Americans

Due in part to the referendum, the American government started to take a more active attitude towards the developments in the former Yugoslavia and Bosnia in particular. The American government was in a dilemma after the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia by the EC. It had not been in favour of the recognition and had stuck by the position that an American recognition would follow only later within the context of a general solution to the Yugoslav issue.

But such a solution still seemed far away. However, the American government felt that shifting to the European position had its disadvantages too. If Croatia and Slovenia were to be recognized, but the same were not to happen simultaneously for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, which had also requested recognition, then this could give the wrong signal to the JNA, namely that this army had a free hand with regard to the latter two areas. The American Deputy Secretary of State Eagleburger thus believed that the EC, by recognizing only two republics, had caused further destabilization of the former Yugoslavia. If the American government were to proceed with recognition then it would do this simultaneously for the four republics that wished recognition. The American government preferred however to await the result of the referendum in Bosnia.²⁰⁹⁹

On 10 January 1992 the Dutch ambassador to Washington, Meesman, had already reported to The Hague that it was strange that Bosnia and Macedonia could count on more sympathy at the American State Department than could the other republics of the former Yugoslavia.²¹⁰⁰ On this same 10 January, when Milosevic and the Bosnian Serb leadership were busy dividing up Bosnia, the American government warned the regime in Belgrade not to take any action to threaten the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. When the Serbian member of the Federal Presidium, Borisav Jovic, visited the United States on 27 January, Eagleburger told him that a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina would be totally unacceptable to the American government. Three weeks later, on 19 February, Izetbegovic visited Washington and on the occasion he received 'strong support' for the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina.²¹⁰¹

Prior to the referendum the European Community was also studying the question of what should be done about Bosnia. As described in Chapter 3, Lord Carrington had already been seriously worried in December 1991 about the consequences that the recognition of the former Yugoslav federal republics would have for Bosnia-Herzegovina. These concerns were not allayed following his visit to Sarajevo on 6 January 1992. Almost immediately after returning he reactivated the Yugoslavia Conference, which he had adjourned in November 1991. With the reopening of the conference, which no longer convened in The Hague but now in Brussels, Carrington had the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina particularly in mind. After Carrington had visited Bosnia again on 5 and 6 February, the

²⁰⁹⁷ 'Sarajevo court to re-investigate killing that precipitated Bosnian war', *SRNA news agency*, Bijeljina, 1157, 15/08/91, *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 15/08/01.

²⁰⁹⁸ 'Sefer Halilovic accused of war crimes in Grabovica; Zagreb's Daily', *Global News Wire*, *ONASA News Agency*, 22/09/01; 'BIH Press Review', *ibidem*, 24/09/01.

²⁰⁹⁹ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Meesman 1276 to Van den Broek, 20/12/91; Meesman 1289 to Van den Broek, 31/12/91; Meesman 50 to Van den Broek, 10/01/92; Meesman 137 to Van den Broek, 01/02/92; Meesman 160 to Van den Broek, 05/02/92.

²¹⁰⁰ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Meesman 50 to Van den Broek, 10/01/92.

²¹⁰¹ Burg & Shoup, *War*, pp. 99-100.

British mediator called together the representatives of the three major ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina in Sarajevo in order to reduce tensions.

On 1 January Portugal had taken over the EC chairmanship from the Netherlands. Carrington had asked the Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs, De Deus Pinheiro, to take on the leadership of the talks. The Portuguese EC chairmanship had obviously learned from its Dutch predecessor: the Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs treated the Yugoslavia issue as a matter of secondary importance²¹⁰² and confined itself chiefly to silent diplomacy, thus reducing the chance of attracting heavy criticism.

The core of the Portuguese efforts was formed by talks in Lisbon that commenced on 21 February under the leadership of the Portuguese diplomat Jose Cutileiro who worked on behalf of Minister De Deus Pinheiro, and Lord Carrington. From the start Cutileiro made it clear that an agreement between the three Bosnian leaders would have to satisfy two conditions: the inviolability of the external borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the acceptance of the existence of three separate ethnic groups, each with their own interests.

The basis of the talks was a cantonization of Bosnia according to the Swiss model. This was above all a wish held by the Croat and Serb leaders in Bosnia. In September 1991 Karadzic had said that a solution for what he saw as the problem of Bosnia-Herzegovina would be massive population migrations.²¹⁰³ A month later the Bosnian Croat nationalist leader Stjepan Kljucic had advocated a tripartite division of Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines. And in December 1991 the Bosnian Serb nationalists had themselves tabled a concrete plan in which 70 per cent of Bosnia would consist of Serb cantons.

On 15 February, following the Lisbon talks, Karadzic told Zimmermann he was highly enthusiastic about developments in the Portuguese capital. Cutileiro had obtained the agreement of all three parties for cantons on an ethnic basis within a unified state of Bosnia.²¹⁰⁴ The next day Karadzic, together with Koljevic, had a meeting with two advisors of Tudjman, Zvonko Lerotic and Josip Manojlic. They discussed a division of Bosnia, but an agreement was prevented because both parties claimed the Sava Valley, also known as Posavina, in the north of Bosnia. Many Croats lived there, but the area was also of great importance to the Serbs because it was to form the link, through Bosnia, between Serbia and the Serb areas in the east of Bosnia on the one hand and the Serb area in Croatia on the other hand.²¹⁰⁵

²¹⁰² Williams, *Legitimacy*, p. 140.

²¹⁰³ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 87.

²¹⁰⁴ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 189.

²¹⁰⁵ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 254.



On 25 February Zimmermann also saw Izetbegovic, who according to the American ambassador was correspondingly unhappy about the developments in Lisbon. He had felt pressured by Cutileiro and then agreed to the recognition of three separate cantons in Bosnia, but on his return to Sarajevo his party colleagues had accused him of weakness. Zimmermann, according to his own account, told Izetbegovic that he should keep to his promise but he had also cheered the Bosnian president by telling him that in the further course of the talks he would have more opportunity to put forward his position.²¹⁰⁶

The discussions with Karadzic and Izetbegovic prompted Zimmermann to advise his government to proceed rapidly with the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In fact he had already come to this conclusion in the course of February, and his government had done the same. Radicalization was particularly evident among the Croats in Bosnia. On 5 February 1992 in Siroki Brijeg, the party congress of the Bosnian HDZ (the Croat Democratic Association of Bosnia) had sidelined its leader, the more moderate Stjepan Kljuic who had advocated the participation of the Bosnian Croats in the referendum on 29 February and 1 March. In his stead the congress elected the fanatical Mate Boban, who was in favour of the 'Croat' areas in Bosnia joining up with Croatia. It was generally assumed that Tudjman was responsible for this shift in power.²¹⁰⁷ After this power transfer Herzegovina witnessed violent incidents between Croats and Serbs, such as shootings, bomb attacks and arson.²¹⁰⁸ On 26 February Secretary of State Baker told a committee of the American Senate that he was engaged in 'reviewing our recognition policy on the Yugoslav republics on an almost daily, or certainly weekly basis'.²¹⁰⁹

According to Zimmerman, Izetbegovic needed support, all the more because the American ambassador had little faith in the talks being held under the leadership of Cutileiro. Either they would lead to the tripartite division about which Karadzic was obviously so enthusiastic, or the Bosnian Serb leader would prolong the talks in order to create more autonomous Serb areas in Bosnia in the meantime. Zimmermann told Washington that recognition of Bosnia would help to provide protection

²¹⁰⁶ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 190.

²¹⁰⁷ Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 286; Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 279.

²¹⁰⁸ Ulrike Rudberg, 'Honderden woedende Croaten op barricades in explosief Bosnië', *de Volkskrant*, 05/02/92.

²¹⁰⁹ David Binder, 'U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992', *The New York Times*, 29/08/93.

against aggressive Serb aims. This was the same reasoning that the German government had applied earlier to argue for recognition of Croatia: recognition would be able to stop aggression because it would no longer be a question of an intra-state conflict but of a war between states. According to Zimmermann, the American government could further achieve this aim by telling Milosevic that it would grant him the long-hoped-for recognition of a federation of Serbia and Montenegro as successor state to the old Yugoslavia in exchange for his recognition of Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia.²¹¹⁰ The National Security Council and the State Department were now also convinced that recognition of a state such as Bosnia, which in American eyes met all democratic requirements, was desirable.²¹¹¹

Following the referendum of 29 February and 1 March the policy-makers in Washington became seriously concerned about, as they called it, Serb attempts to destabilize the situation in Bosnia. They understood that recognition provided no guarantee that hostilities could be prevented but, as they saw it, the most broadly based recognition possible was the best medicine existing at that moment for the Bosnian crisis.²¹¹²

On 4 March Zimmermann was charged by Baker to deliver a message to Milosevic in which the American government demanded that Karadzic should not in any way thwart the result of the referendum in Bosnia. Baker's policy was now directed at preventing Izetbegovic from agreeing to the Cutileiro Plan for the division of Bosnia and informing him that the United States would support his government in the UN if any difficulties should arise. But according to a high-placed official in the State Department no guarantees against Serb aggression were given and nothing was put down on paper, 'because Baker didn't believe it would happen'.²¹¹³

On 4 March, the same day that Zimmermann was instructed to deliver his message to Milosevic, Baker wrote a letter to the leaders of the European Community in which he urged recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The American government wanted as many countries as possible to recognize Bosnia-Herzegovina so as to increase this republic's chances of survival. Furthermore Washington wanted to avoid bearing sole responsibility for this new state.²¹¹⁴ On 10 March Baker personally urged the European foreign ministers in Brussels to recognize Bosnia and Macedonia.²¹¹⁵ Should this not happen, then the US would not recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia.²¹¹⁶ On the same day the EC and the United States declared that they would coordinate the policy of recognition with regard to the former Yugoslav republics.²¹¹⁷ On 6 April, so they agreed, the ministers of the EC would jointly take a decision on the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia.²¹¹⁸

According to Ralph Johnson, at that time the Principal Assistant to the Secretary of State charged with the American policy on Yugoslavia, on 10 March Baker also urged his European discussion partners to halt their plans for cantons.²¹¹⁹ In any event Johnson himself told the Dutch

²¹¹⁰ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 191-192. Regarding Zimmermann's expectation that recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina would hold back Serb aggression, see also, David Binder, 'U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992', *The New York Times*, 29/08/93.

²¹¹¹ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 192.

²¹¹² ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Coreu of the Portuguese EC chairmanship, 05/03/92, cpe/pres/lis 423.

²¹¹³ David Binder, 'U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992', *The New York Times*, 29/08/93.

²¹¹⁴ David C. Gompert, 'The United States and Yugoslavia's Wars', Ullman (ed.), *World*, pp. 129-130; ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Meesman 219 to Van den Broek, 25/02/92; Coreu of the Portuguese EC chairmanship, 05/03/92, cpe/pres/lis 423. For information on the American urging for recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina by the EC countries, see also interview A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00.

²¹¹⁵ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Coreu of the EPS Secretariat, 11/03/92, cpe/sec 260;

²¹¹⁶ Chenu, 'France', p. 370 n. 6; ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Meesman 301 to Van den Broek, 18/03/92.

²¹¹⁷ Terrett, *Dissolution*, pp. 82-83.

²¹¹⁸ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Coreu of the EPS Secretariat, 11/03/92, cpe/sec 260; Meesman 301 to Van den Broek, 18/03/92.

²¹¹⁹ David Binder, 'U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992', *The New York Times*, 29/08/93.

ambassador Meesman that the American government was concerned about the course of the talks that Minister of Foreign Affairs De Deus Pinheiro was conducting with the Bosnian parties.²¹²⁰

On 16 March the three Bosnian leaders met again in Sarajevo for a discussion with Cutileiro on the canton plan. Karadzic placed a heavy burden on the conference by declaring that, if the plan were not accepted, a civil war would follow with hundreds of thousands of dead and hundreds of destroyed towns, after which Bosnia would consist of three parts anyway.²¹²¹ In other words: the choice was up to Izetbegovic. With Karadzic's knife on the table, the three Bosnian leaders reached an agreement late in the evening of 17 March.

The Cutileiro Plan, which was to be presented the following day, envisaged an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina that would be divided into three cantons according to the Swiss model. These would consist of 13 areas distributed over Bosnia and would be divided on an ethnic basis, taking into account 'economic, geographic and other criteria'.²¹²² Each of the cantons would be controlled by one ethnic group which was entitled to conduct its own economy and politics, while the foreign, security and monetary policy would remain the prerogative of the central government and the parliament of Bosnia. Each of the three ethnic entities would be assigned an equal number of delegates in the upper house of the parliament; decisions on important issues would be passed if 80 per cent of the delegates voted in favour.

Furthermore a special tribunal would be created to decide on disputes between the central authority and the cantons. The tribunal would consist of one member of each of the cantons and four foreigners. The plan left the difficult questions of authority over the army and police still unresolved. Moreover the map on which the internal borders were drawn also needed to be discussed. According to the provisional map there would be two Muslim areas, four Croat areas and seven Serb areas. The Muslims would control 45 per cent, the Serbs 42.5 and the Croats 12.5 per cent of the Bosnian territory. The difficulty of dividing up Bosnia-Herzegovina into ethnic areas was demonstrated by the fact that according to this map 50 per cent of the Bosnian Serbs would live outside the areas of their own ethnicity, while the corresponding figures for the Bosnia Croats and the Bosnian Muslims were 59 per cent and 18 per cent respectively.

Although Karadzic had constantly objected to an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina, he called the acceptance of the Cutileiro plan a great event in the history of Bosnia; according to him this now saved the country from civil war.²¹²³ Washington was less enthusiastic. Following this round of talks the Principal Assistant to the Secretary of State Johnson once again expressed his concern in Washington to the Dutch ambassador Meesman. In his opinion the Bosnian Serb leaders would stretch out the talks under Cutileiro and in the meantime would convince the Serb population in Bosnia of the need to secede and to join with Serbia.²¹²⁴

A week after the end of the talks, on 26 March, Izetbegovic withdrew his acceptance of the plan. The Bosnian President, who on 18 March had still declared that the Cutileiro Plan was an acceptable compromise that provided a solid basis for further talks,²¹²⁵ now said that he had only agreed because he had been told that otherwise the EC would not go ahead with recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina.²¹²⁶ It is not clear which persons or governments within the EC had given this indication,

²¹²⁰ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Meesman 301 to Van den Broek, 18/03/92.

²¹²¹ David Binder, 'U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992', *The New York Times*, 29/08/93.

²¹²² Hayden, *Blueprints*, p. 99.

²¹²³ Sremac, *War*, p. 92; Theo Engelen, 'Doorbraak in overleg over de toekomst van Bosnië' (Breakthrough in consultations on future of Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/03/92; David Binder, 'U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992', *The New York Times*, 29/08/93.

²¹²⁴ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Meesman 301 to Van den Broek, 18/03/92.

²¹²⁵ Theo Engelen, 'Doorbraak in overleg over de toekomst van Bosnië', *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/03/92.

²¹²⁶ David Binder, 'U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992', *The New York Times*, 29/08/93.

but the British government in particular seems to have indicated at an early stage that it would prefer to see a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina.²¹²⁷

According to others Izetbegovic withdrew his acceptance on the urging of the American ambassador in Belgrade, Warren Zimmermann.²¹²⁸ It is not unimaginable that the American government did indeed tell Izetbegovic that he could achieve more by sticking to the principle of an integral Bosnia-Herzegovina that was about to be recognized.²¹²⁹ However, the rejection of the Cutileiro Plan meant that Izetbegovic, supported by the American government, ran the risk of the bloodbath foretold by Karadzic.²¹³⁰ Actually it was the Croats who were the first to withdraw their acceptance of the agreement because on further consideration they wanted more territory than they had been promised.²¹³¹

The rejection of the Cutileiro Plan by Izetbegovic triggered a stream of developments. The Bosnian Serb leaders now saw even more clearly that if they wanted to form a state accommodating all Serbs, and not just the half, then territorial conquest and driving out the non-Serb population was the only alternative to a voluntary migration. The day after Izetbegovic's withdrawal of his acceptance, 27 March, the Bosnian Serb parliament declared the independence of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, previously declared autonomous on 9 January. On the same day the Bosnian government appealed to the UN to send peacekeeping troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina. This request was in vain; the UN Secretariat pleaded budgetary problems that forced it to limit the number of crisis areas where the UN could be active.²¹³² The European Community had in principle accepted a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into separate ethnic communities, as long as these would be held together by a coordinating central authority. Karadzic realised that Izetbegovic and his government could count on little support from either the UN or the EC if the Bosnian Serbs were to press ahead with their aims. He was ready to fulfil the threatening words he had spoken during the last round of talks under the leadership of Cutileiro.

4. The recognition of the multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina

On 6 April the ministers of the EC declared that as of the following day they would recognize Bosnia-Herzegovina. One day later the US did the same. Both the EC and the American government postponed the actual recognition, originally planned for 6 April, by one day out of respect for the memory of the Germany attack on Yugoslavia 51 years earlier.²¹³³ In total 72 states recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina on 7 April. Actually it was a long time before Western governments actually established diplomatic contacts with the government in Sarajevo. The American government, for instance, first opened an embassy in the Bosnian capital on 4 July 1994.

The Netherlands and Bosnia-Herzegovina decided on 15 December 1992 to establish diplomatic relations at the level of ambassador. To begin with this led only to the appointment of a temporary Bosnian *chargé d'affaires* in Brussels, who was also accredited with the Dutch government. The Netherlands conducted the relations from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague. The government postponed the appointment of a Dutch ambassador or temporary *chargé d'affaires* in Sarajevo because the security situation and the communications would make proper functioning

²¹²⁷ Stjepan Mesic, quoted in: Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, pp. 104-105.

²¹²⁸ R. Dolecek, 'I accuse!', http://www.snd-us.com/history/dolecek/dolecek_accuse.htm; Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 162; Sremac, *War*, p. 92; interviews A. Buha, 17/12/99 and V. Andreev, 07/07/00.

²¹²⁹ Cf. Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 243.

²¹³⁰ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 244.

²¹³¹ Hayden, *Blueprints*, p. 100; Paul Shoup, 'The role of domestic and international actors in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian drama', Palau & Kumar (eds.), *Ex-Yugoslavia*, pp. 252-253.

²¹³² ABZ, DPV/ARA/00143. Van Schaik 190 to Van den Broek, 27/02/92.

²¹³³ ABZ DEU/ARA/00083. Van den Broek 59 to embassy in Belgrade, 07/04/93; Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 140; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 194.

practically impossible. In the summer of 1994 the Eastern European department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered that the Dutch involvement in the rebuilding of Sarajevo justified the Netherlands following the example that had now been given by France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Italy, Austria, Croatia, the Vatican, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Iran and Turkey by also appointing an ambassador, or at least a temporary chargé d'affaires. The idea was that political reporting from the Bosnian capital could provide a useful supplement to that from Belgrade, Zagreb and by G.C.M. Baron van Pallandt, the ambassador to Albania, who was based in The Hague.²¹³⁴ Nonetheless it was not until March 1996 that a Dutch diplomatic representation was opened in Sarajevo.²¹³⁵

The West, and the Netherlands in particular, was not only slow in appointing personnel to realize diplomatic relations following the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The West and the UN also neglected to enable or to organize the defence of the new state. At the start of 1992 the CIA had already warned that in the event of recognition of Bosnia a major international effort would be needed to counter Serb aggression and to keep the state together.²¹³⁶ However, the new state of Bosnia-Herzegovina was affected by the UN arms embargo that had been imposed in September 1991 on all areas of the former Yugoslavia. By maintaining this embargo Bosnia was deprived of its legitimate right to defend itself from external aggression, a right that was granted to each state under Article 51 of the UN Charter.

The West abandoned Bosnia-Herzegovina not only militarily but also morally. On the one hand Western politicians argued in favour of a multi-ethnic state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but on the other hand they strengthened the nationalist leaders in Bosnia and Serbia by conducting negotiations exclusively with them; they ignored the democratic forces that were striving for multi-ethnicity and that had pinned their hopes on help from the West.²¹³⁷ When at the end of June the American government set out its view to the Dutch government, via its embassy in The Hague, that the Bosnian government should not be pressured to negotiate directly 'with what in fact are extremist Bosnian Serbs who follow a policy of terrorism', the Dutch response was that there was 'little point in casting doubt on this. But however despicable the behaviour of Karadzic and his followers may be, they do represent the most important power factor on the Serb side'.²¹³⁸

Another illustration of the lack of support for democratic forces was the subsidy policy of the Dutch government. At the start of 1994 a memorandum was sent by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs about a subsidy for the Dutch organization Press Now, which provided support to independent media in the former Yugoslavia. The Dutch government found the aim a sympathetic one, but: 'For reasons of a political nature a reserved policy has been conducted to date regarding individual Dutch

²¹³⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05293. Memorandum from DEU/OE to deputy DGPZ, 29/07/94, no. deu-609; Memorandum from DEU to PLVS, 11/08/94, no. 644/94.

²¹³⁵ ABZ, DIE/2001/00023. Memorandum from Deputy DEU to AP and others, 27/11/95, no. DEU-995/95. Originally a temporary chargé d'affaires was active there. An ambassador was appointed in June 1996.

²¹³⁶ Patrick Glynn, 'See No Evil', Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 135.

²¹³⁷ See for instance the quote from June 1991 by the Serb writer Milo Dor at the start of *De vernooëting van Joegoslavië*: 'I think that pragmatism in Yugoslavia will win out under the pressure of the Americans and the European Community.' Or Milovan Djilas in March 1991: 'My greatest hope rests in Europe: I cannot imagine that Europe would stand for a mass slaughter of Serbs, Croats, Albanians in Kosovo, etcetera.' in: Rick Kuethe, 'Van oude partizanen, de dingen die voorbijgaan' (Of old partisans, the things that pass) *Elsevier*, 23/03/91, p. 39. See also the appeal by Tanja Petovar, chairwoman of the Yugoslav Helsinki Committee to the West for 'a great deal of contact, not only between governments but also between independent groups of people', Nicole Lucas, *De stuiptrekkings van een stervend systeem* (The twitchings of a dying system), *Trouw*, 04/07/91; Gied ten Berge/Mient Jan Faber, 'EG-ministers maken het nog bonter dan de Duitsers' (EC ministers go even further than the Germans), *de Volkskrant*, 19/12/91; Slavko Curuvija, 'Westen vergeet democraten Servië' (The West forgets Serb democrats), *de Volkskrant*, 28/01/92; S.L. Woodward, 'Redrawing Borders in a Period of Systemic Transition', Esman/Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p. 221.

²¹³⁸ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844, Circ. Van den Broek 386, 25/06/92.

support for independent media in Serbia. The prevention of an undesirably exposed position has always stood in the way of aid other than in a multilateral context.²¹³⁹

Bosnia in the Central and Eastern Europe Foundations of Dutch political parties

Another example of how Bosnia-Herzegovina was abandoned by the Netherlands was seen in the provision of grants to Dutch political parties for the promotion of pluriform societies in Eastern Europe. At the start of the 1990s the major Dutch political parties had foundations which maintained contacts with sister parties in Eastern Europe and which were able to provide these parties with some support in the development of a pluriform society. To this end they could utilize a grant scheme set up by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior for 'General Education and Training of Political Functionaries in Central and Eastern Europe'.

To facilitate this task, the political parties represented in Parliament received a basic sum of 50,000 guilders plus a sum of maximally 10,333 guilders per parliamentary seat. In addition the parties themselves supplied a relatively small sum. CDA (Christian Democrats), PvdA (Labour), VVD (Liberals), D66 (Democrats), GroenLinks (Green Left), RPF (party allied to the Dutch Reformed Church) and the Centrum Democraten (extreme right) utilized this scheme, which was extended for several years in succession as long as the political parties in Central and Eastern Europe were considered still to be in a state of development. At the time of the scheme's inception, the countries for which the grants were intended were Bulgaria, the GDR, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia – and Yugoslavia.

In the VVD the contacts with Central and Eastern Europe were handled by the D.W. Dettmeijer Foundation until 1992. In that year this foundation, as well as several other foundations of the VVD, was dissolved, after which the activities of the VVD with regard to Central and Eastern Europe were taken over by the Prof. mr. B.M. Telders Foundation and the Haya van Someren Foundation. In its contacts with Central and Eastern Europe, the VVD chiefly focussed on parties in countries which could be considered for rapid entry into the European Community, such as Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia and – later – Slovenia.²¹⁴⁰

In contrast to the VVD, the Alfred Mozer Foundation of the PvdA and the Eduardo Frei Foundation of the CDA also directed considerable attention towards areas where the political (and economic) structure was less developed. In February 1993 the PvdA and the Alfred Mozer Foundation requested that the grant scheme be extended to Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.²¹⁴¹ In September of the same year the Eduardo Frei Foundation of the CDA made the same request for Serbia and Montenegro. However, Minister Dales turned them down flat by telling the foundations that they themselves should provide the required moral support and should supply the accompanying financial help from their own funds. According to the minister, this provided 'adequate opportunities for anticipating possible positive developments in both states in the near future'.²¹⁴²

In 1994 the geographic scope of the subsidy was finally extended to the republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the countries of the former Yugoslavia. But an

²¹³⁹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00782. FRY, assistance for independent media via Press Now, 19/01/94, NH-056/94.

²¹⁴⁰ See also Michiel Zonneveld & Jan van der Ven, 'Subsidiegeld Oost-Europa split VVD' (Subsidy for Eastern Europe splits VVD), *Het Parool*, 17/09/92; 'VVD sust conflict over 'fraude' van Blaauw' (VVD calms conflict over 'fraud' by Blaauw) *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/05/93; 'VVD'er Blaauw op onverkiesbare plaats' (VVD politician Blaauw on non-electable standpoint) *Het Parool*, 13/10/93, VVD party leadership, documents of meetings, central committee, agenda item 12 of meeting of 10/10/94; agenda item 5B of meeting 25/05/95; agenda item 6 of meeting 06/06/95.

²¹⁴¹ CDA Secretariat, Foreign Affairs Committee, 9316020, Alfred Mozer Foundation to Eduardo Frei Foundation, 25/02/93, no. 30.088 with appendix. J.M. Wiersma, deputy vice-chairman PvdA International Affairs, and B.J. van den Boomen, Director of Alfred Mozer Foundation to Dales and Van Rooij, 21/02/93.

²¹⁴² CDA Secretariat, Foreign Affairs Committee, 93160596, Dales to W.K.N. Schmelzer, Chairman of Eduardo Frei Foundation, 13/10/93, BW93/2082.

exception was made for countries where civil war was underway at that time, such as Bosnia.²¹⁴³ In 1995 the political parties and their foundations nonetheless asked the Dutch government to extend their efforts to the countries in a state of civil war as well. The government rejected this move because, it said, the political situation in these countries was underdeveloped. The foundations felt that this was precisely the argument for starting activities in these countries, but they failed to convince the ministry with this reasoning.²¹⁴⁴

In March 1996 Alfred Mozer Foundation (PvdA), the Eduardo Frei Foundation (CDA), the Haya van Someren Foundation (VVD), the Institute for Education and Cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe (D66) and the Eastern Europe Training and Education Project (GroenLinks) once again asked that the grant scheme be extended to Bosnia-Herzegovina.²¹⁴⁵ The Ministry of the Interior rejected this request because the current grant scheme was set to expire at the end of that year.²¹⁴⁶ In the course of 1996 it was decided to extend the scheme by another year, but the Ministry of the Interior still did not consider it possible to alter the existing scheme in the requested direction. In the second half of 1996 the Ministry of *Foreign Affairs* then proposed an *ad hoc* possibility for providing support to sister parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This ministry now realized that the Netherlands also needed to make a contribution to the implementation of the Dayton Agreements. A situation thus arose in which a development explicitly forbidden by the Ministry of the Interior was promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²¹⁴⁷

It is not appropriate to examine this problem further within the confines of this report, but it is still worth describing because other aspects of the West's policy too, and thus also of the Dutch government, placed such emphasis on higher-level diplomatic involvement and on military involvement while neglecting the democratic and multi-ethnic potential contained in the Bosnian and Serbian societies. If the political goal of the West was to bring about a form of ethnic division in Bosnia, as seemed to be indicated by the Cutileiro Plan, then this omission was still comprehensible up to a point. But it was less understandable for a government such as that of the Netherlands which stressed the realization of a multi-ethnic society, against the dominant political trend in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Above all because the Netherlands took such a leading role in the high-level politics and, as will be seen, thus damaged its relations with traditional (alliance) partners, while these partners would certainly not have objected to the Netherlands making its own contribution at a lower level – an opportunity which, for instance, the Eastern Europe foundations of the Dutch political parties would have provided. It is never too late or too early for such political initiatives, even if here it was just to encourage groups in Bosnia who still upheld the principle of multi-ethnicity. The success of military intervention, including peacekeeping operations, is indeed highly dependent on the political and military developments in the region itself. And in Bosnia, as soon as the first skirmishes broke out in March 1992, this were certainly not positive.

5. The start of the war

In the last full week of March, in and around the towns of Bosanski Brod in the north, Jajce and Mostar in the centre and Neum in the south of Bosnia, fighting broke out between the JNA and Serb militias on one side and Croat and Muslim militias on the other. These encounters, which sometimes

²¹⁴³ Alfred Mozer Foundation, memo Arjen Berkvens to Wim van Gelder, q.v, re 'Subsidy scheme 'General Education and Schooling of Political Functionaries in Central and Eastern Europe'.

²¹⁴⁴ Alfred Mozer Foundation, memo Arjen Berkvens to Wim van Gelder, q.v., 'Subsidy scheme 'General Education and Schooling of Political Functionaries in Central and Eastern Europe'.

²¹⁴⁵ Alfred Mozer Foundation, J.W. Wiggers to the head of the Administration and Legislation department of the Ministry of the Interior, 28/03/96.

²¹⁴⁶ Alfred Mozer Foundation, Ministry of the Interior to Eduardo Frei Foundation, 11/04/96, BW96/624.

²¹⁴⁷ Alfred Mozer Foundation, memo Arjen Berkvens to Wim van Gelder, q.v., 'Subsidy scheme 'General Education and Schooling of Political Functionaries in Central and Eastern Europe'.

involved prolonged mortar and artillery bombardments, cost dozens of lives. Fighting had already broken out at the start of the month in Bosanski Brod, an industrial town with a population of 33,000, consisting of 43 per cent Croats, 35 per cent Serbs and 12 per cent Muslims. At this time Serb fighters attempted to take a bridge over the River Sava in order to prevent troops reaching the town from Croatia. Local Croats resisted this attempt with the support of the regular Croatian Army. Following a ceasefire of several weeks the JNA and Serb militias once again opened fire, and looting took place in the Croat quarter of the town. Croats took revenge on Serbs in the nearby village of Sijekovac, resulting in several deaths and the burning of houses. On Sunday 29 March several hundred Croats and Muslims tried to flee the town during a lull in the fighting. All men aged between 18 and 55 in this group were however prevented from leaving by the Patriotic League,²¹⁴⁸ the paramilitary grouping of Bosnian Muslims (see Chapter 3).

After Karadzic had said on 31 March that those parts of the police force controlled by the Serbs would take no further orders from the Bosnian government,²¹⁴⁹ Izetbegovic mobilized the territorial defence force and the police reserve of Bosnia-Herzegovina on 4 April. Of course, he could only do this for those parts of Bosnia where Muslims and Croats held authority. By 15 April at the latest the militias, which had shot up like mushrooms all over Bosnia, should allow themselves to be incorporated into the territorial defence force. The Patriotic League was also commanded to put itself under the command of the territorial defence force. When Izetbegovic gave this mobilization order, he declared in a speech on radio: 'Citizens of Sarajevo, sleep peacefully tonight, there will be no war.' ('*Narode, spavaj mirno, rata nece biti.*')²¹⁵⁰ Izetbegovic had been making such statements for the past half-year,²¹⁵¹ but this time the reassuring effect failed to work. The Bosnian Serb leaders demanded that the President withdraw the order immediately. Izetbegovic refused to do this.

During this weekend members of the different ethnic groups set up barricades at various points in Sarajevo. On Sunday 5 April fighting broke out in the suburbs. Explosions were heard all over the city. Nonetheless there were still many people in the Bosnian capital who resisted the growing ethnic tensions. Following a call from the peace movement, the trade unions and the television station, between 60,000 and 100,000 demonstrators gathered in front of the Bosnian parliament to show their rejection of the nationalist parties. They demanded new elections, waved portraits of Tito and chanted slogans against the 'murderers'. But the demonstration was brutally disrupted by gunmen of the SDS, Karadzic's party, who were positioned on the roof of the Holiday Inn hotel that accommodated the headquarters of the SDS. Several demonstrators were killed. According to various observers, members of the SDA, Izetbegovic's party, also fired on the demonstrators.²¹⁵² If this is true, it was the last act in the joint dismantling by the SDS and the SDA of the desire for a pluriform society in Bosnia. Following this shooting Muslim fighters stormed the SDS headquarters in the Holiday Inn hotel, where they arrested a number of gunmen. The SDS politicians made themselves scarce. Then Bosnian Serbs bombarded the old – i.e. Muslim – quarter of the city with shells. In the night of 5/6 April the JNA, commanded by Colonel-General²¹⁵³ Milutin Kukanjac, took Sarajevo's airport.

On 7 April, the day that the European Community and the United States recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Bosnian Serb parliament decided definitively to implement the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This was to be based in Pale, a ski resort just outside Sarajevo. The SDS withdrew

²¹⁴⁸ 'Croaten en Islamieten ontluchten strijd Bosnië' (Croats and Muslims flee from conflict in Bosnia) *de Volkskrant*, 30/03/92.

²¹⁴⁹ Amnesty International, *Abuse*, p. 7.

²¹⁵⁰ Biography of Izetbegovic, Gale Research Company, 1996.

²¹⁵¹ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 78; M. Boroagovic and S. Rustempasic, 'The white paper on Alija Izetbegovic', http://www.xs4all.nl/~frankti/Bosnian_congress/izetbegovic_white_paper.html, consulted on 17/02/00. They date a similar statement to January 1992.

²¹⁵² X. Bougarel, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina - State and Communitarianism', Dyker & Vejvoda (ed.), *Yugoslavia*, p. 102; VN, S/1994/674/Appendix VI, pp. 152-154; MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, p. 136.

²¹⁵³ This is a rank comparable to lieutenant general.

its two members, Koljevic and Plavsic, from the collective presidium of Bosnia and asked all other functionaries still active in Bosnian political bodies to follow their example. As reason for their departure from the Bosnian presidium, Koljevic and Plavsic cited Izetbegovic's mobilization order for the territorial defence force. From this time onwards Koljevic and Plavsic formed the presidium of the Republika Srpska. Karadzic would first join this on 12 May and would then immediately become the *de facto* president of the Bosnian Serb republic. But before this was to happen, the presidium of the Republika Srpska declared on 15 April that there was an immediate threat of war and ordered mobilization of the territorial defence force throughout the territory controlled by the republic. All those subject to military service were ordered to report to the local headquarters of the territorial defence force.²¹⁵⁴

Between March and June the Bosnian Serb forces, supported by the JNA and paramilitaries from Serbia, took control of a large part of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The territorial goals of the Republika Srpska were Northern and Western Bosnia (around Banja Luka), Eastern Bosnia (the Drina Valley), Eastern Herzegovina (to the east of the River Neretva) and the Posavina Corridor. According to the 1981 census, the population mix in the north-west of Bosnia was 63% Serb, 15% Muslim and 10% Croat. Eastern Bosnia, separated by the Drina, bordered on Serbia and in the strategic planning of the Serbian military formed a buffer zone for the Serbian motherland. The Posavina, the Sava Valley, was of great strategic importance to the Serbs due to the link it provided with the Serb areas in Croatia. It has already been mentioned that talks between Croats and Serbs on a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina had failed precisely on the question of who should control this latter area, around the town of Brcko. The valley was also important because within Bosnia it was to connect the north-western and the eastern areas of the Bosnian Serbs. Fighting for possession of this valley, known as the Posavina Corridor, would continue throughout the war. Just to the north of the valley, at the start of the war, there was a small area separated from the rest of Bosnia that was held by the Croats. They knew they could rely on the support of the Patriotic League and the Green Berets. This area included the town of Bosanski Brod, on the border of Croatia and Bosnia. On 5 April the Croatian Army moved into the town.

Apart from the Sava Valley, the interests of the Bosnian Croats were located chiefly in West-Herzegovina (to the west of the Neretva). It was thus possible to divide the general spheres of interest in Herzegovina with the Serbs, with the exception of the town of Mostar which lay on the Neretva and was to be heavily contended, all the more so because the Muslims wished to control it as well. In April 1992 fighting broke out here involving all three ethnic groups. This fighting was to last almost two years. It became clear that the Croats were prepared to push through their claims in West-Herzegovina by force of arms when, at the end of March and the start of April, Croat forces operating from their stronghold in the town of Tomislavgrad (Duvno) fought for possession of the strategically important Kupres Pass (see map in Part I, Chapter 3, Section 8 of this report), where the JNA had taken up positions in the previous months. During talks between the political leaders the Serbs had in fact agreed to Croat domination of West-Herzegovina, but this area still contained many military bases and installations that the JNA was not prepared to give up without a fight. Moreover the Kupres Pass provided access to Central Bosnia, where the mix of the various ethnic groups was considerable.

The armed forces: the creation of the ABiH

On 8 April the Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban instituted the Croat Defence Council, *Hrvatsko Vijeće Obrane* (HVO), as the military branch of the Croat Nationalist Party HDZ in Herceg-Bosna, the name for the part of Bosnia-Herzegovina claimed by the Croats. The HVO was a Croat militia originally consisting of soldiers who had gained their first battle experience in Croatia. Since the Bosnian government, at the start of the war, had to direct all its attention to the defence of Sarajevo, the HVO was given a free hand as long as it attacked the Bosnian Serb forces. The government in Sarajevo

²¹⁵⁴ ICTY (IT-98-33), D73/9, Decision no. 03/11/92 by Presidency of the RS.

expected that in the course of time the HVO would place itself under the command of the Bosnian territorial defence force, but this never happened. The HVO had a strength of between 35,000 and 45,000 and could count on the support of about 15,000 troops of the regular Croatian Army, the *Hrvatska Vojska* (HV).²¹⁵⁵ Moreover the HVO depended heavily on the Croatian Army for its supplies. During the first six months of the war the HVO supported the still-weak Bosnian government army. Finally, the Croat armed forces also contained paramilitaries such as the Croatian Defence Force, the *Hrvatske Obrambene Snage* (HOS), the armed wing of the Croatian Party of Rights, the *Hrvatska Stranka Prava* (HSP), which wanted to see Croat territory extended to the Drina.

After Izetbegovic had mobilized the territorial defence force, seven of the nine regional staffs and 73 of the 109 municipal staffs declared their loyalty to his government.²¹⁵⁶ On 8 April Izetbegovic placed the leadership of the territorial defence force in the hands of Colonel Hasan Efendic, a Muslim. His appointed deputy was the Serb Jovan Divjak, while the appointed Chief of Staff and Head of Operations was the Croat Stjepan Siber. The appointment of Efendic was a blow for Sefer Halilovic, one of the leaders of the Patriotic League, who had felt that the territorial defence force should be subordinate to the Patriotic League and not the other way around. Another problem in the eyes of Halilovic was that the Patriotic League consisted mostly of supporters of the SDA, while the army was expressly Bosnian instead of being a Muslim army. As a result, members of the Patriotic League had to place themselves under the command of Serb officers who shortly before had still been on their secret arrest lists. A reconciliation between the two groups was soon achieved, however, when Halilovic was given command of the new army's Operations Centre. Other leading figures from the Patriotic League were kept happy with important posts at the Ministry of Defence.

Efendic issued an order that officers of the JNA had until 20 April to join the territorial defence force. If they did not do this they would be regarded as the enemy. In these days about a hundred officers of the JNA went over to the Bosnian armed forces.²¹⁵⁷ These included several later key players, such as the future Chief of Staff of the Bosnian Army Enver Hadzihasanovic and also Rasim Delic, at that time fairly unknown but to become the commander of the government army (the ABiH) in the summer of 1993. But generally speaking few officers shifted from the JNA to the Bosnian government, resulting in highly deficient training of the government troops in the early days.²¹⁵⁸ On 27 April Izetbegovic demanded that all federal troops should leave Bosnia.

As early as 14 April Efendic had issued instructions for the defence of the sovereignty and independence of Bosnia, including the recommendation that weapons depots should be seized and garrisons blockaded. These instructions were even more optimistic than those of the Patriotic League from the end of February (see Chapter 3). According to Efendic's instructions, the liberation of Bosnia should be achieved within 45 days at the latest.

Besides the territorial defence forces, the Patriotic League and the *Zelene Beretke*, the Bosnian armed forces consisted chiefly of troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, numbering some 30,000 men and led by Commander Dragan Vikić. On 24 April it was established that the Bosnian armed forces already numbered more than 100,000 men. However, this was not as significant as might seem because there was a serious shortage of weapons.

On 23 May Izetbegovic relieved Efendic of the command of the Bosnian armed forces, telling him that the army needed a younger commander. According to Efendic himself the real reason was that he had a Serb wife. The official explanation was that as of 20 May the territorial defence force had ceased to exist and thus also the post held by Efendic. Moreover, it was said, after almost 45 years he was entitled to a pension. On 5 July 1992 the collective presidium of Bosnia-Herzegovina announced

²¹⁵⁵ Detrez, *Sloop*, pp. 280-281; Calic, *Krieg*, p. 99.

²¹⁵⁶ The following passage on the history of the creation of the Bosnian Army is based on the serial by Sefko Hodzic, 'Kako je nastajala armija Bosnië i Hercegovine', *Oslobodenje*, 15/04 t/m 10/05/1997.

²¹⁵⁷ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 280.

²¹⁵⁸ Jovan Divjak, 'The First Phase, 1992-1993: struggle for survival and genesis of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 161.

the formation of the *Armija Bosne i Hercegovine* (ABiH) as the sole official army force of the Bosnian state. The appointed commander was Sefer Halilovic, meaning that his dream of holding the highest position in the Bosnian armed forces had now been achieved after all. At the age of 40 Halilovic was indeed considerably younger than Efendic, but he was also much less experienced. He had never been to higher military college and he did not have a particular reputation as a strategist. According to many he thanked his appointment chiefly to his membership of the SDA.²¹⁵⁹

The ABiH rapidly developed a corps structure that was linked to at first four and later six regions. The Bosnian government army had to be built up almost from scratch, but there was a strong motivation in the population to join its ranks. As a result the Bosnian government army could be formed around the many tens of thousands of men who volunteered for service in April.²¹⁶⁰ In early 1993, according to its Deputy Commander Divjak, the army comprised around 200,000 men, not all of whom however were armed. In 1994 the government army reportedly reached a size of 250,000 men.²¹⁶¹ Gow assumes an operational size of 40,000 troops in early 1993. A year later this size had doubled, while there were then 120,000 men available in reserve.²¹⁶²

Despite the arms embargo, the ABiH managed to obtain light weapons from abroad. Furthermore an armaments industry was set up on the territory of the Bosnian government in which 15,000 people were reported to be working at the start of 1994. The materiel produced here included rifles and shells.²¹⁶³ Important armaments factories were located in Sarajevo, Gorazde, Vitez, Konjic, Zenica and Tuzla. In the two years between the start of the war and early 1994, the Bosnian government is reported to have achieved a production of 20,000 automatic rifles, 100,000 mines, 50,000 hand grenades and 11 million rounds for small arms.²¹⁶⁴ During the siege of Sarajevo, the city was even able to achieve an annual production of 40,000 82 mm mortar shells.²¹⁶⁵ However, the lack of heavy weapons would remain a constant hindrance for a more offensive strategy by the Bosnian government army.

In the course of the conflict mercenaries fought for all three parties. The Serbs received assistance chiefly from Russians, Ukrainians, Romanians and Greeks. At the start of 1993, for instance, 70 Russian specialists appear to have been active on the Serb front at Srebrenica.²¹⁶⁶ On the Croat side the foreign auxiliaries were mostly adventurers and figures of extreme right-wing persuasion. A large proportion of these came from Germany, Great Britain and Sweden.²¹⁶⁷ In Central Bosnia men from Muslim countries came to fight, and were referred to as *mujaheddin*. In all cases there seem to have been no more than a few hundred up to maximally 2000 persons of each nationality.²¹⁶⁸ The highest reports include 2500 Russians on the Serb side at the start of 1993²¹⁶⁹ and several thousand Iranians on the Bosnian side in the summer of 1992.²¹⁷⁰ In both cases the numbers seem to have been exaggerated as a result of war propaganda.

²¹⁵⁹ 'Bez hapsenja Radovana Karadžića i njemu slicnih definitivno se ne može očekivati nikakav napredak', *Ljiljan*, 12/11/97, pp. 7-9; interview A. Makar, 16/06/00 and confidential interview (5).

²¹⁶⁰ Jovan Divjak in Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 267.

²¹⁶¹ Jovan Divjak, 'The First Phase, 1992-1993: struggle for survival and genesis of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina', Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 162.

²¹⁶² Gow, 'Forbes', p. 2.

²¹⁶³ VN, S/1994, 674/Appendix III, p. 29.

²¹⁶⁴ Calic, *Krieg*, p. 102.

²¹⁶⁵ Rusmir Mahmutcehajic in Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 263.

²¹⁶⁶ Cekic, *Aggression*, pp. 240-241.

²¹⁶⁷ Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 249. For the Dutch figures in this category refer to Chapter 2.

²¹⁶⁸ For divergent figures see Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 240; Calic, *Krieg*, p. 100; Dzamic, *Psi*, pp. 206-207; Gow, 'Year', p. 3; Vego, 'Army', p. 66; VN, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III; ABZ, 910 Yugoslavia, part 4, 'Informal meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Gymnich) in Bocket Hall (VK), 12-13 September 1992', appendix to secure fax no. 15 from Foreign Affairs /DEU to Washington embassy, 24/09/92.

²¹⁶⁹ Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 241.

²¹⁷⁰ Sahara, 'World', p. 388.

The conflict around Sarajevo

In the months of April and May the defence of Sarajevo still relied to an important extent on persons with a criminal background, such as the former pop singer Musan Topalovic ('Caco'), who had become a friend of Izetbegovic during the latter's imprisonment in 1980s, Jusuf Prazina ('Juka') and Ramiz Delalic ('Celo II'), who has already been discussed due to his suspected part in the shooting of the Serbian wedding guests on 1 March. These criminals formed part of the Green Berets, which had strong links with the government in Sarajevo and the Bosnian government army (the ABiH).²¹⁷¹ However, they repeatedly committed breaches of the Geneva Convention.²¹⁷² They 'lifted' men from the streets and forced them to dig defence lines at the front. The indispensability of these criminal elements in the first months of the war made them virtually immune to the law, even when they committed acts about which the Bosnian state was less happy. They gained control, for instance, of the food supply and aid facilities in Sarajevo. Celo became commander of the 109th Mountain Brigade. Topalovic was appointed as commander of 10th Brdaska Brigade. Their units successfully defended Mount Trebevic to the south of Sarajevo, but at the same time they were notorious for their misdeeds. Topalovic intimidated the non-Muslim population of Sarajevo: he had defenceless Serbs and Croats kidnapped, tortured and murdered. Hundreds were killed in this way. Then he had the bodies of the victims dumped in Kazani, a ravine on the front line.²¹⁷³ In fact Muslims also became victims of his actions. His followers kidnapped rich residents of Sarajevo in order to extract high ransoms, they participated in extortion and they raped women. As time went on Topalovic accepted the authority of the army headquarters less and less, and heeded only the links with the SDA. Izetbegovic is said to have been a regular visitor to Caco's headquarters.²¹⁷⁴

When a new Bosnian government took office under the leadership of Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic in late 1993, with respect for human rights as a key element of its programme, figures such as Topalovic were finally dealt with. On 26 October army troops and police surrounded his headquarters. During the storming of the building 18 people were killed, including nine soldiers and policemen. Topalovic was arrested and killed the same night at the headquarters of the First Army Corps. 'Shot while attempting to escape' was the official explanation. Delalic was arrested at the same time.

Alibabic, the chief of police of Sarajevo at the time, was convinced that Izetbegovic and his party had used Topalovic to create a mono-ethnic army and a pure Muslim state.²¹⁷⁵ In 1996 Izetbegovic gave his personal permission for a ritual reburial of Topalovic, which turned into a demonstration by 25,000 people. When General Jovan Divjak protested at this display being staged for someone who had probably been responsible for the deaths of many Croats and Serbs, Izetbegovic wrote back to him that up to October 1993 he had no knowledge of the serious crimes for which Topalovic had been responsible: 'Until then I thought that all his actions had been no worse than making people dig trenches and bothering people.'²¹⁷⁶ Divjak knew that this was not true. As early as 27 May 1993 he had written the President a letter in which he summarized the crimes of Topalovic in detail. In September 1993, following the action against Delalic and Topalovic, the Minister of Internal Affairs Bakir Alispahic declared that he had been made to wait for months for top-level permission

²¹⁷¹ United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, II.B.1.(b). For Prazina see also Hans Moleman, 'Sarajevo viert feestje bij vertrek laatste Joegoslavische militairen' (Sarajevo celebrates departure of the last Yugoslav military), *de Volkskrant*, 06/06/92.

²¹⁷² United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, II.B.1.(d).

²¹⁷³ On these practices by 'Caco' see for instance Othon Zimmermann, 'Caco', moordenaar/held', ('Caco', murderer/hero) *Algemeen Dagblad*, 06/12/97.

²¹⁷⁴ Othon Zimmermann, 'Caco', moordenaar/held', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 06/12/97.

²¹⁷⁵ Othon Zimmermann, 'Caco', moordenaar/held', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 06/12/97.

²¹⁷⁶ Othon Zimmermann, 'Caco', moordenaar/held', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 06/12/97.

before being allowed to conduct this operation.²¹⁷⁷ Prazina later went over to the HVO and was eventually discovered murdered in Belgium.²¹⁷⁸

The defenders of Sarajevo, which is situated in a valley, found themselves confronted with Serb troops who occupied most of the hills around the city from which they bombarded the city with their superior firepower. The first heavy bombardments took place on 21 April. Serb groups then began with attacks on Ilidza and Grbavica, suburbs of Sarajevo, but the defenders of the city were partially able to prevent this loss of territory.²¹⁷⁹

After heavy artillery bombardments of Sarajevo had taken place on 1 May, the following day Bosnian Serb troops penetrated into the suburbs of Sarajevo; in the weeks that followed heavy house-to-house fighting took place. The attack was carried out simultaneously with an attempt to oust Izetbegovic. He landed at Sarajevo's airport on 2 May following a visit to Lisbon and was then taken prisoner by the JNA unit stationed there. It hoped to exchange the Bosnian President for the JNA commander of Sarajevo, General Kukanjac, and 400 men of the JNA who were surrounded in their barracks in the centre of the city by troops of the territorial defence force. Weeks of negotiations had already taken place to facilitate the departure of these troops from the city, but Sefer Halilovic was only prepared to allow this if they left behind their weapons. Kukanjac was not prepared to agree to this.

At the same time there seem to have been plans to use the imprisonment of Izetbegovic to allow Fikret Abdic to take over power. Abdic was a Muslim who was known to favour an agreement with the Serbs. In the elections to the presidium in 1990 he had received more votes than Izetbegovic and was seen as a rival to the president. Abdic had however voluntarily renounced his position on the condition that Alija Delimustafic became Minister of Internal Affairs. Delimustafic was suspected of being a member of the KOS, the military counter-intelligence service of the JNA. The UNPROFOR Chief of Staff, General Mackenzie, and the representative of Lord Carrington in Sarajevo, the Irish Major Colm Doyle, were able to free President Izetbegovic from his unpleasant position in exchange for free passage for Kukanjac and his troops out of the city. Despite the agreements made by their government, Bosnian troops shot dead several JNA soldiers during their departure. In the meantime the coup against Izetbegovic had failed thanks to the efficient action of Vice-President Ganic and Minister Mahmutcehajic. Delimustafic was then compelled to resign from his ministerial post because of suspicions about his role in the matter. He left for Austria and was later not prepared to talk about the affair.²¹⁸⁰

In the following weeks the JNA tried to penetrate further into the city.²¹⁸¹ After Serb troops had fully conquered the suburb of Grbavica in mid-May, the offensive came to a stop at the Bratstvo i Jedinstvo Bridge over the River Miljacka, which flows through the centre of the city. This was due to the lack of Serb infantry. The Romanija Corps of the JNA, that was stationed around Sarajevo, had some 29,000 men available to cover a front line of 64 kilometres. This was too little to carry out an effective attack.²¹⁸² The shortage of troops among the Bosnian Serb forces was so big that they did not

²¹⁷⁷ J.F. Burns, 'New Horror for Sarajevo: Muslims Killing Muslims', *The New York Times*, 31/10/93.

²¹⁷⁸ See also 'Power-starved Sarajevo faces prolonged shortage', Agence France Presse, 05/01/94.

²¹⁷⁹ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Servische militia in aanval in Sarjevo', (Serb militia in attack on Sarajevo) *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/04/92; idem, 'Om Sarajevo wordt fel gevochten' (Fierce fighting around Sarajevo), *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/04/92; idem, 'Sarajevo is binnen drie dagen een luguber oord geworden' (Sarajevo becomes a dismal place within three days) and 'Nietsonziende woestheid kenmerkt strijd in Sarajevo' (Battle in Sarajevo marked by ruthless fury) *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/04/92; 'Moslims bij Sarajevo op de vlucht gedreven' (Muslims at Sarajevo forced to flee) *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/04/92; 'Servische strijders vallen Sarajevo aan' (Serb fighters attack Sarajevo) *de Volkskrant*, 22/04/92; "'Servische' wijk in Sarajevo onder vuur' (Serb district in Sarajevo under fire), *de Volkskrant*, 23/04/92.

²¹⁸⁰ Marko Attila Hoare, 'Civilian-Military Relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992-1995', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, pp. 184 and 186-187; Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 131; Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 237-238 and 243 n. 3.

²¹⁸¹ 'Sarajevo toneel van hevige straatgevechten' (Sarajevo scene of heavy street-fighting), *de Volkskrant*, 15/05/92.

²¹⁸² Jovan Divjak, 'The First Phase, 1992-1993: struggle for survival and genesis of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 163-164.

have enough qualified personnel to man the artillery on the hills around the city. These specialist troops were thus forced to shift from position to position.

The failed attack on Sarajevo rendered the Bosnian Serb forces unwilling to undertake house-to-house fighting against Muslims for the rest of the war. The forces around Sarajevo thus mainly confined themselves for the next three-and-a-half years to weakening the population through a state of siege and artillery bombardment. On the other hand the government army saw no opportunity to break through the surrounding Serb forces on the hills, so the result was a stalemate leading to miserable conditions for the population, who also had to reckon with mortar and artillery bombardments and also sniper fire. It should be mentioned that during the siege the population of Sarajevo continued to comprise a large proportion of Serbs and Croats. In the meantime the Bosnian Serb leaders pressed for agreements for a permanent division of the city, either by means of a green line as in Nicosia, or by means of a wall such as the one that until recently had divided Berlin in two.

6. Ethnic cleansing in Bosnia

While the attention of the West was mostly directed towards the developments around the capital Sarajevo, there was considerable activity by Serb paramilitary groups elsewhere in Bosnia in the months from April through to June. Serb paramilitaries were chiefly active in the north-west and east of Bosnia, in towns such as Brcko, Dobo, Prijedor, Bratunac, Bijeljina, Foca, Visegrad and Zvornik. They allowed journalists and representatives of international aid organizations to enter the areas where they were operating only in very small numbers. Since telephone and telex links were also interrupted, the media had to rely mostly on accounts by Displaced Persons and they could present news only with delay and great caution. Insofar as news did emerge, to begin with it was mostly from Eastern Bosnia.

Bosnian Serb crisis staffs or war councils were set up in all towns in East and Northwest-Bosnia; these usually consisted of the chief of police, the commander of the local military unit and the head of the SDS. They had often been able to acquire the weapons of the local police and/or the territorial defence force, thus enabling them to act against the Croat and Muslim population in their town and the surrounding villages. Furthermore the practice became established whereby local political leaders invited, or even paid, paramilitaries such as Arkan to act in their municipality, possibly in cooperation with the local Serb militia.²¹⁸³

Despite such local initiatives the actions by these paramilitary groups were primarily concerted by political and military authorities. Research has repeatedly shown that this was not a matter of independently operating, local warlords, as was often thought in the West. These paramilitaries could indeed be seen to operate within the existing power relationships.²¹⁸⁴ Insofar as concretely established the signs point towards Belgrade, and in particular to President Milosevic.²¹⁸⁵ The Serb paramilitary units were correspondingly deployed mostly in the areas claimed by the Serbs, but where they still encountered large groups of Muslims or Croats, and in the area where the Serbs needed to create a continuous region between Serbia and the Serbian centres in Croatia.

In Bosnia the ethnic cleansing took two forms. First of all the classical method, already described, which had already applied in Croatia before and which aimed to put the population of a certain place to flight within days, if not hours. In addition there was a slower variant, used in three types of situation. Firstly, in places where the Serbs had come to power relatively easily, from within the local community. From their positions of power they exerted gradual pressure to make the Muslim

²¹⁸³ United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, I.C and I.D and 1.D.2.

²¹⁸⁴ United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III; Archive PR New York, Bosnia-Herzegovina/emergency aid, Statement by Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, Saving Lives in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 03/10/92, appendix to ICRC to Permanent Representative to the UN, 03/10/92; Calic, *Krieg*, pp. 104-105.

²¹⁸⁵ See for instance Seselj, quoted in Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 223; ABZ, 999.21, Part 74, Hoekman 323 to Van den Broek, 10/06/92; ABZ, 910, Yugoslavia general correspondence, part 4, Jul'92-Feb'93. Deputy CdP Washington to head DEU, 13/08/92, PA-117681.

population leave. Secondly, Croats or Muslims were sometimes so many in number that a rapid Serb cleansing was impossible. And thirdly, the Serbs knew all too well that it would be unwise to apply open, large-scale cleansing when the eyes of the world were upon them. An example of the slow variant was provided by Banja Luka, where the SDS had come to power through a local coup. After this the process went roughly as described. To begin with Muslim men were dismissed from positions of authority and later from every independent position. Moreover, Muslims were called up to serve in the Bosnian Serb army. When they refused to enlist they were dismissed from their job. Since the job was often linked to an apartment or house – a legacy of the Communist past – those who refused military service not only lost their job but the home for their family as well. Sometimes at this stage people ‘disappeared’, either murdered or sent to camps. Possessions such as cars were confiscated.

A good illustration is provided by the decision taken by the Serb war council in the small town of Celinac near Banja Luka in September 1992. It imposed a curfew of 4pm to 6am on non-Serbs. The decree also forbade them to gather in catering establishments and other public places; to bathe and swim in rivers; to hunt and to fish; to move to another town without permission; to carry a weapon; to travel by car; to gather in groups of more than three people; to have contact with relations outside the town; to use any communication resources other than the telephone at the post office; to wear uniform; and to make property transactions without permission.²¹⁸⁶

The case of Banja Luka proved that the slow variant of cleansing could also be effective: at the end of 1993 just 40,000 Muslims were still there compared to the 350,000 who had lived there before the war.²¹⁸⁷ In both kinds of cleansing the Bosnian Serb aggressors often forced the Croats and Muslims before their departure to sign declarations that they were leaving their homes voluntarily and waiving ownership of all possessions that they left behind.²¹⁸⁸

Even more than had been the case in Croatia, the streams of Displaced Persons that appeared in Bosnia in April and May were not a side-effect of the war but rather the intentionally achieved result, because the Bosnian Serbs were trying to ‘cleanse’ areas of Muslims and Croats. Men and women were often separated from one another during the cleansing actions. Men in particular were often held for shorter or longer periods in camps, schools, sports halls and many other temporary detention centres. The conditions under which this took place were often appalling. There was a shortage of food, water, hygiene and space, people were mistreated, tortured, murdered, and there was sexual abuse particularly of women.²¹⁸⁹

In April and May the JNA, paramilitaries and militias together drove the Muslims out of virtually all of Eastern Bosnia, from the towns Bijeljina, Zvornik, Bratunac, Visegrad and Foca. Ultimately enclaves remained around Srebrenica, Zepa, Cerska and Gorazde, where Displaced Persons from the surrounding areas sought refuge. A brief summary is given below of the events in several East-Bosnian towns in the month of April. The cleansing actions in Northwest-Bosnia are dealt with in the following chapter.

On 1 April Arkan entered Bijeljina in the north-east of Bosnia with his unit. This town of about 100,000 inhabitants had a population made up of almost 60 per cent Serbs and more than 30 per cent Muslims. Arkan’s Guard, which now comprised more than a thousand men, had been renamed the Arkan Tigers because they kept a live tiger as a mascot.²¹⁹⁰ In Bijeljina the *Arkanovci* started the process

²¹⁸⁶ Anna Husarska, ‘Dateline Banja Luka: City of Fear’, Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 74.

²¹⁸⁷ Cigar, *Genocide*, p. 58.

²¹⁸⁸ See for instance R. Gutman, ‘Ethnic Cleansing? Yugoslavs try to deport 1,800 Muslims to Hungary’, *Newsday*, 03/07/92; ‘UN: Serbs Press Point. 200,000 Bosnians imperiled’, *Newsday*, 20/08/92; Marjolein Sebregts, ‘Vannacht waren het er tien’ (‘Last night there were ten’) *Elsevier*, 15/08/92, p. 29; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 268; Maass, *Neighbor*, pp. 9 and 87.

²¹⁸⁹ See for instance the amended indictment from the ICTFY of 13/07/98 against Dragoljub Kunarac with regard to Foca, <http://www.un.org/icty/indictment/english/kun1ai980819e.htm>, consulted on 10/03/00.

²¹⁹⁰ This is illustrated in Haviv, *Blood*, p. 71.

of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia with the execution of 27 Muslims on 1 April.²¹⁹¹ Following the cleansing the Arkan Tigers could expect their reward in the form of mass looting. Reports of the execution of the 27 Muslims prompted Izetbegovic to send Biljana Plavsic to the town to institute an investigation. Instead of doing this she gave her notorious kiss to Arkan and praised him as a true Serb hero. After the *Arkanovci* had carried out their dirty work with the approval of the JNA, they left the town in the hands of the local SDS committee, which continued the repression against the remaining Muslims so that they too ultimately fled.

At the end of March units of Seselj had already arrived in Zvornik, a town on the Drina where the population was over 60 per cent Muslim.²¹⁹² The town occupied a strategic position on both the Belgrade-Sarajevo line and the Belgrade-Tuzla line. Seselj's men warned the Muslims in the town and the immediate surroundings that they had ten days to hand in their weapons. On 7 April units of Seselj, accompanied by some of Arkan's men and the *Beli Orlovi*, Draganovci and a large number of smaller groups, arrived in the neighbouring village of Grbavci, where they killed Muslims who had not handed in their weapons. The next day the JNA, together with paramilitary units and supported by the Serb territorial defence force, attacked Zvornik; during the fighting it was not possible to make any clear distinctions between the groups. A Muslim unit managed to defend the town for several days but was unable, partly due to lack of ammunition, to withstand the artillery bombardments, mostly coming from tanks on the Serbian side of the Drina.

Following the fall of Zvornik the paramilitary groups were given a free hand while the JNA kept the town surrounded.²¹⁹³ The paramilitary groups were reportedly led by Marko Pavlovic, who was reported to be a member of the Serbian state security service. The *Arkanovci* committed the most crimes. Torture, rape and murder were the order of the day for more than a week. Houses of Muslims were plundered and then set on fire. Jose Maria de Mendiluce, the highest representative of UNHCR in the region, arrived in Zvornik while the Serb paramilitaries held sway and described later what he observed: 'I saw kids put under the treads of tanks, placed there by grown men, and then run over by other grown men (...) Everywhere, people were shooting. The fighters were moving through the town, systematically killing all the Muslims they could get their hands on. It was an intoxication (...)'.²¹⁹⁴ In the following weeks too, until July, serious mistreatment of Muslims continued incidentally in and around Zvornik, this time mostly by Seselj's Cetniks. The remaining Muslims were then deported, either to Serbia or to the Muslim area around Tuzla.

On 5 April the first shells were fired at the more southerly Visegrad, a town of 20,000 inhabitants with a Muslim majority. On the same day helicopters of the JNA landed there. The next day *Arkanovci* attacked the town together with the Uzice Corps of the JNA, Seselj's Cetniks, Beli Orlovi and local Serbs. At the same time a member of the Patriotic League threatened to blow up the dam on the Drina near Visegrad.²¹⁹⁵ Muslims then fled in panic, for fear both of the Serb paramilitaries and a flood, while the Serbs headed for higher ground. On 14 April units of the Uzice Corps entered the town, after which the SDS took over government of the municipality. The Muslims were encouraged to return; the JNA would guarantee their safety and President Izetbegovic had ordered that the dam should be left intact. Many Muslims followed this call and, with the exception of a few whose names were on Serb lists, were allowed back into the town. After this peace seemed gradually to return to Visegrad. At the end of May, however, the JNA started a gradual withdrawal. Then paramilitary groups arrived in the

²¹⁹¹ Shocking photographs of the action of the Arkan Tigers in Bijeljina in: Haviv, *Blood*, pp.56-61. For more information about the events in Bijeljina see Duijzings' Appendix, *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnië*.

²¹⁹² For a report on the events around Zvornik see Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, "Operations". See also Sremac, *War*, p. 95 and Duijzings' Appendix, *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnië*.

²¹⁹³ Williams & Cigar, III.B.2; United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2 (Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, III.C, Anticevci; Captain Dragan units; Dusan the Great; Cetniks led by Dragan Ignjatovic, Ljubisav, and Mile Mijatovic; Paramilitary Forces from Padinska Skela; White Eagles (Beli Orlovi); IV.A.46.

²¹⁹⁴ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 200. For more observations by Mendiluce in Zvornik see Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 223

²¹⁹⁵ Medina Delalic, 'SDA Strategy: Low Blows', *Slobodna Bosna*, 20/04/00.

town again, including men who seem to have been from the Uzice Corps but had changed uniforms. Mass murders, looting and arson then followed. Part of the population was deported or killed in concentration camps.²¹⁹⁶

On 16 April, following days of bombardment by the Uzice Corps of the JNA, Serb units took Foca, a town where the numbers of Muslims (51.6%) and Serbs (45.3%) had been virtually balanced up to then. Following the fall of the town, paramilitaries conducted large-scale plundering. A few days later, when foreign aid providers were allowed to visit the battered town, they wondered where the population had gone.²¹⁹⁷ The place resembled a ghost town.²¹⁹⁸ The Serbs, who were now in control after the capture of the town, had killed the local elite and everyone whom they believed to be a member of the SDA. The Muslims who had been unable to flee were captured, the men and women separated and interned in separate camps. In the meantime the town had ceased to be called Foca and had been renamed Srbinje.

On 6 and 7 May Serb troops took the town of Brcko without much resistance. They herded the non-Serb men together and issued verdicts on them during 'trials' lasting a few minutes. Hundreds of men are said to have been killed in this way.²¹⁹⁹ So just a month after the start of the war the Serbs had conquered Brcko and the nearby village of Doboij, meaning they had created a corridor between the Serb areas in Northwest-Bosnia and Eastern Bosnia. In mid-May however this corridor came under heavy attack from Croat and Muslim forces, after which only a narrow strip remained.

New administrative constellations in Bosnia

At about the same time, on 6 May, Karadzic and Boban made territorial agreements on Bosnia-Herzegovina during a meeting in the Austrian town of Graz: Serbs and Croats were to divide up Bosnia and leave only a small part of the republic to the Muslims.²²⁰⁰ However, a definitive agreement once again failed to materialize due to disagreement on the Posavina Corridor, the ownership of Mostar and the border between the Serb and Croat areas in Herzegovina.²²⁰¹ The talks between the Croat and Serb leaders of Bosnia were not however without significance. When in mid-May the defenders of Sarajevo made an attempt to attack the Serb troops in the rear at Ilidza, they found that a Croat unit stationed at Kiseljak stood in their way.

The Croats were well aware that they held a key position in the conflict and were prepared to enter into frequently changing alliances. On 21 May representatives of Croatia and Bosnia signed a political and military cooperation agreement in Zagreb. The Bosnian Croats of the HDZ accepted the political hegemony of Izetbegovic, in exchange for which the SDA accepted the presence of the military arm of the HDZ, the HVO, on a large part of Bosnian territory. This agreement was followed by a defence pact on 18 June and a treaty of friendship and cooperation on 21 July 1992. All this did not prevent the Bosnian Croat leaders from declaring their own 'Croat Community of Herceg-Bosna' with its capital in Mostar. Mate Boban became the head of this new autonomous area, within which Boban and his followers exerted authority over army, police and education. The region had its own flag

²¹⁹⁶ Esad Hecimovic, 'Na Haskoj potjernici nema Milana Lukica zlocinca odgovornog za brutalna ubistva vise od 3.000 Bosnjaka iz Visegrada', *Ljiljan*, 28/05/97, p. 33.

²¹⁹⁷ 'Foca met de grond gelijk gemaakt' (Foca razed to the ground), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/04/92.

²¹⁹⁸ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 90.

²¹⁹⁹ United States Senate, *Ethnic Cleaning*, p. 7.

²²⁰⁰ X. Bougarel, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina - State and Communitarianism', Dyker & Vejvoda (ed.), *Yugoslavia*, p. 102; Caroline de Gruyter, 'In Croatia is iedereen goed' (In Croatia everyone is good), *Elsevier*, 08/08/92, pp. 32-33; Sremac, *War*, p. 99.; Vjera Bogati, 'Serbs and Croats hatched deal on fate of Mostar', *IWPR's Tribunal Update* no. 240, Part II, October 15-20, 2001.

²²⁰¹ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 282; Kumar, *Divide*, p. 55; Glenny, *Fall*, p. 194; Ulrike Rudberg, 'Leiders Croaten en Serviërs verdelen gebieden in Bosnië' (Croat and Serb leaders divide up areas in Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 09/05/92; Peter Michielsen, 'Lot Bosnië al bezegeld door geheim akkoord' (Fate of Bosnia already sealed by secret agreement), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/05/92.

which was derived from the Croatian one and the residents used the *kuna*, the Croatian currency. The Bosnian Croats viewed this development as a step towards separation from Bosnia; in many respects the area functioned thereafter as a part of Croatia.

In this time the HVO experienced a large influx of recruits from the Bosnian Muslims who lived in the area it controlled. An important part of this recruitment took place, with the knowledge of the government, through the Muslim organization *Zmaj od Bosne* (Dragon of Bosnia). In Hercegovina the proportion of Muslims in the HVO was the lowest (20 per cent), in Central-Bosnia it was 40 per cent and in the Posavina area it was no less than 80 per cent. Conversely, at the start of June 1992 the Bosnian territorial defence forces, shortly before they were converted into the Bosnian government army, consisted of 18 per cent Croats and 12 per cent Serbs.

Elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia too, issues of new authority and administration were being dealt with. On 10 December the Badinter Commission had declared that Yugoslavia was in a state of dissolution. Serbia and Montenegro, however, had not submitted a request for recognition to the EC as had the four other former republics, namely Bosnia-Hercegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia, in December 1991. Indeed, Serbia and Montenegro took the position that instead of the Federation of Yugoslavia being dissolved, they were in fact continuing it, while the other republics had seceded. The background to this situation was the issue of who would get the assets of the Yugoslavian State. If Serbia and Montenegro were together to be regarded as the legal successor of Yugoslavia, then they would be entitled to the corresponding possessions. The same would however not apply, if Milosevic had his way, to the liabilities: according to the regime in Belgrade, the issue of the state debts should be handled by a commission set up to oversee the distribution of these among the former parts of Yugoslavia. Furthermore Serbia and Montenegro, as the legal successor to Yugoslavia, could continue to occupy the position in international organizations previously held by that country. Moreover, Serbia and Montenegro, by not asking the EC for recognition, had prevented conditions being set for them with regard to the protection of minorities – conditions that the other republics had had to satisfy.

If the idea of a continuation of the State of Yugoslavia, albeit in a more modest form, were to be abandoned and it were to be assumed that Yugoslavia had disintegrated, then the six former republics should have issued a claim for the division of the possessions of the dissolved federation. In that case Serbia and Montenegro, possibly jointly, would have to reapply for a place in international organizations. This question of state succession was a thorny problem which the EC preferred to leave well alone. The ministers of the community thus took the position that the parties involved should solve it for themselves during the Yugoslavia Conference. They still had no desire to undertake ‘derecognition’, the reverse action to recognition. In a certain sense it actually suited the EC that the issue was unresolved. As long as there was something resembling a central Yugoslavian authority, they could retain their ambassadors in Belgrade and maintain contacts with the Yugoslavian mission to the UN in New York.²²⁰²

Following the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia by the European Community, the Milosevic regime had in the meantime decided to establish a ‘new’ or ‘third’ Yugoslavia which would consist of at least Serbia and Montenegro. Milosevic and his supporters said at that time that they hoped all of Bosnia too would form part of the ‘third’ Yugoslavia. If not, then in any case they wanted the ‘Serb’ parts of Bosnia to form part of it.²²⁰³ On 27 April 1992 the federal assembly of the former Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia accepted the constitution for a new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to comprise Serbia and Montenegro. The new federation claimed to be the successor to the old Yugoslavia and to take that country’s place in international organizations. In Serbia and Montenegro this was referred to as a third Yugoslavia.

²²⁰² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00083. Van den Broek to embassy in Belgrade, 17/03/92, celer 045.

²²⁰³ Ulrike Rudberg, ‘Servië reageert voorzichtig op erkenning rivalen’ (Serbia responds cautiously to recognition of rivals), *de Volkskrant*, 17/01/92; idem, ‘Serviërs gekant tegen referendum in Bosnië’ (Serbs set against referendum in Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 24/01/92.

7. The response of the international community

The large majority of the international community did not however recognize the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) as the legal successor to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). On 11 May the foreign ministers of the EC stated that Serbia was the major aggressor in Bosnia and that withdrawal of federal troops from Bosnia-Herzegovina was a condition for, at the least, reducing the bloodshed. The EC states decided to withdraw their ambassadors from Belgrade until further notice, and shortly after this the United States, Norway, Sweden and Austria followed suit. The EC ministers also proposed suspending Yugoslavia as a member of the CSCE. This move was not taken for the time being due to the opposition of Russia but the CSCE did decide shortly afterwards to exclude Serbia, which held the Yugoslavian seat at this organization, from participation in the decision-making on the crisis in the former Yugoslavia until the end of June. Furthermore the EC ministers threatened further economic sanctions and the exclusion of Yugoslavia from other international organizations. The position taken by the EC ministers meant international isolation of the regime in Belgrade. After this a total freeze on diplomatic relations was repeatedly mooted. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not in favour of this, however, chiefly because the military attaché in Belgrade was a useful contact for the Ministry of Defence and the intelligence services, and his presence was also important for the Dutch UNPROFOR troops.²²⁰⁴

On 4 July the Badinter Commission declared that the process of dissolution in which the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had been engaged in was now at an end. In other words, the FRY could not be the legal successor to the SFRY, because this no longer existed. There was thus no continuity and the FRY could thus also not take the place of the old Yugoslavia in international organizations. On 22 September the General Assembly of the United Nations was to accept Resolution 47/1 which also established and declared that if the FRY wished to form part of the organs of the UN it must submit a corresponding request.²²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, even after this the EC countries decided to maintain their embassies in Belgrade and the Yugoslavian embassies in their own capitals for practical reasons, to enable contacts with the 'new Yugoslavia'.²²⁰⁶

The actions of the Serbs in Bosnia had thus, in a little over a month since the outbreak of the war, led to a hardening of the EC's attitude towards Serbia. Until shortly before, events had seemed likely to take a different course. All the efforts of the EC and the US seemed in fact to be aimed at keeping the Belgrade regime happy. During the General Council in Luxembourg on 6 April the French Foreign Minister Dumas, against the will of Genscher but with the support of Van den Broek, had arranged for the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina to be accompanied by efforts to lift the sanctions against Serbia. The French line was intended to prevent an isolation of Serbia, because this would only encourage Serbia to intervene on the side of the Serbs in Bosnia.²²⁰⁷ It was only by linking the lifting of sanctions to a number of strict conditions that Genscher, who was spending his last days as Foreign Minister, was able to prevent the implementation of this plan.²²⁰⁸ At the end of April the head of the ECMM mission also stressed the need to 'dose' the international pressure on Serbia: too much would be counterproductive and lead to a 'fortress mentality' that would make Serbia even more intractable for the international community.²²⁰⁹

In mid-April the American Principal Assistant to the Secretary of State, Johnson, had travelled to Sarajevo. Izetbegovic asked him for NATO air attacks against Bosnian Serb positions. But Johnson

²²⁰⁴ ABZ, DIE/2001/00023. Report of the interdepartmental meeting on possibilities for strengthening sanctions against the FRY on 20/01/93.

²²⁰⁵ On this issue see for instance Jovanovic, 'Status'.

²²⁰⁶ See for instance ABZ, DEU/ARA/00085. Engels 293 to Van den Broek, 30/09/92; coreu The Hague, 07/10/92, cpe/hag 609.

²²⁰⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00083. Van den Broek 59 to embassy in Belgrade, 07/04/92.

²²⁰⁸ Folkert Jensma, 'EG erkent Bosnië, maar stelt besluit over Macedonië uit' (EC recognizes Bosnia but postpones decision on Macedonia), NRC *Handelsblad*, 07/04/92.

²²⁰⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00083. Van den Broek 067 to embassy in Belgrade, 29/04/92.

told the Bosnian president that he should not expect military intervention from external parties.²²¹⁰ Shortly after this, in Belgrade on 19 April, Johnson told Milosevic that the American government was prepared to consider recognition of Serbia and Montenegro as the state of Yugoslavia, on the condition that Belgrade would refrain from supporting and approving the aggression in Bosnia. If Belgrade continued to do this, then the United States would make efforts to isolate Milosevic's regime politically and economically.²²¹¹ The response was far from encouraging. General Zivota Panic, who was to succeed Adzic a few weeks later as Chief of Staff, told him that Serbia had 'borne the Turkish yoke' for five centuries, 'so it can certainly stand a little isolation'.²²¹²

At the start of the war in Bosnia the EC (and the US as well) thus had to change its policy within the space of a few weeks and shift to a course that shortly before had been rejected as counterproductive. According to Van Walsum isolation was now the only weapon that the international community had and moreover the only weapon to which Milosevic was sensitive.²²¹³ Another remaining option, of course, was the deployment of an international force in Bosnia. As described, for budgetary reasons the UN Secretariat had no desire to send a peacekeeping force to Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Van den Broek continued however to urge UN planning in this direction, with an eye to eventualities in Bosnia. He requested the Dutch Permanent Representative in New York, Van Schaik, to consult on this with his colleagues from the other EC member states and from the US. Moreover the Dutch minister hoped that the presence of the UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo would exert a moderating influence on the parties.²²¹⁴

One of the reasons for locating the headquarters there was to take up a neutral position between Zagreb and Belgrade. Besides this, Sarajevo was viewed as safe. However, almost immediately after establishing the headquarters in Sarajevo the leadership of UNPROFOR found itself in the midst of fighting. 'It was the only known case in military history', wrote the British war reporter Martin Bell ironically, 'where a headquarters staff received messages of sympathy and concern from the front-line troops in the field.'²²¹⁵ In the meantime UNPROFOR had no mandate to intervene in the situation in Bosnia. The situation was to some extent comparable to the one previously experienced by the ECMM headquarters in Zagreb, which was also set up outside the actual conflict zone and which suddenly found itself in the middle of a conflict for which it had no mandate.

On 7 April the UN Under-Secretary-General Goulding announced in discussions with the Security Council that the United Nations was considering increasing its involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Three days later in Geneva the Bosnian Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic asked Boutros-Ghali to send peacekeeping troops to Bosnia. However, the UN Secretary-General told Silajdzic that he would do better to ask the EC; the United Nations wanted to confine itself to the peacekeeping operation in Croatia. A few days later Izetbegovic repeated the request to Goulding, after the ceasefire arranged by the EC had immediately been broken. Notably, Izetbegovic declared on this occasion that he once more advocated a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into cantons. His only special requirement here was that the accompanying map be drawn by experts from abroad.²²¹⁶ In the following weeks it appeared that Boutros-Ghali had little desire to send a UN peacekeeping force without a clear mandate into an area where peace had not been achieved.²²¹⁷

On 23 and 24 April the Security Council convened for consultations on the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This took place following formal requests by Algeria and Austria and calls by Germany,

²²¹⁰ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 197.

²²¹¹ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 198.

²²¹² Ian Traynor, 'The bloody agony of Bosnia', *The Guardian*, 25/04/92.

²²¹³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00083. Van den Broek 144 to embassy in Moscow, 14/05/92.

²²¹⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00143. Van den Broek to Van Schaik, 04/03/92, celer 54.

²²¹⁵ Bell, *Way*, p. 24.

²²¹⁶ VN, S/23836.

²²¹⁷ Unclassified State Department report, appendix 13. The Charge of the Light Blue Brigade: UNPROFOR First Deploys Fall-Winter 1992, p. 1.

the Netherlands and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.²²¹⁸ The Security Council passed a declaration by its chairman in which all parties were called upon to observe the ceasefire of 12 April and support was expressed for the mediation efforts of the EC, which were now being undertaken by Carrington and Cutileiro.²²¹⁹ A fact-finding report by Vance on 24 April did indeed establish a serious deterioration of the situation in Bosnia, but at the same time remarked that in view of the limited resources of the UN and the widespread nature of the violence a UN peacekeeping operation in Bosnia was impossible. Boutros-Ghali supported this position.²²²⁰ Nonetheless Boutros-Ghali made a gesture by announcing that as per 1 May, 41 UN observers would be sent to the Bosnian towns of Medjugorje, Mostar, Stolac and Trebinje, although earlier plans had provided for this only once the United Nations Protected Areas in Croatia had been demilitarized.²²²¹ In a conversation with Mitterrand the UN Secretary-General also promised to discuss with the Security Council the possibility of sending observers who would investigate the possible deployment of a peacekeeping force.²²²²

At the start of May Goulding and his colleague Shashi Tharoor visited Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb. The emphasis of their visit came to rest on the deteriorating conditions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Around this time the ECMM observers left Bosnia because their safety was in danger. The UNPROFOR Commander Nambiar explained to Goulding and Tharoor that he was now hardly in a position to lead the operation in Croatia because he and his staff were almost fully occupied with the problems in Bosnia. Moreover the freedom of movement of the staff was seriously curtailed by the bombardments.²²²³ He wished to transfer his headquarter to Belgrade or Zagreb. The Deputy Commander Morillon advocated that in this case a symbolic presence should still be maintained in Sarajevo.²²²⁴ At the end of his visit Goulding indicated that he did not currently see a role for the United Nations in Bosnia, because the UN was already stretched to its limits. According to him the EC should take a more active role. Goulding was also not in favour of a symbolic presence of UN troops who would have the task of protecting humanitarian missions in Bosnia, which were subject to considerable risks.²²²⁵

Following this report, on 12 May Boutros-Ghali told the Security Council that although the situation was 'tragic, dangerous, violent and confused' it was not suitable for peacekeeping, because the required agreement of the parties was lacking and thus a workable mandate was not possible.²²²⁶ Three days later however, on the urging of Belgium, France and Great Britain, the Security Council empowered the Secretary-General through Resolution 752 to once again investigate whether a peacekeeping force could be sent to Bosnia. He was also asked to look for ways of protecting humanitarian convoys. In the same resolution the Security Council called on the JNA to withdraw from the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This also applied to 'elements of the Croatian Army'. Finally, all irregular forces in Bosnia should be dissolved and disarmed. In the view of Boutros-Ghali, Resolution 752 marked the start of the disaster of the UN's Bosnian adventure.²²²⁷ On 30 May he again attempted

²²¹⁸ Owen CD-ROM, Statement by the President of the Security Council, 24/04/92. see also J.M. Bik, 'Duits-Nederlands voorstel voor VN-overleg over Bosnië' (German-Dutch proposal for UN consultation on Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/04/92.

²²¹⁹ United Nations Department of Public Information, United Nations, pp. 9-10.

²²²⁰ VN, S23836. For the rejection of a peacekeeping force by Vance and his arguments see also Neso Djuric, 'Vance: No peacekeeping troops for Bosnia', *UPI, BC Cycle*, 15/04/92.

²²²¹ 'EG-missie onder vuur' (EC mission under fire), *Trouw*, 23/04/92; ABZ, 00143, Van Schaik 387 to Van den Broek, 22/04/92; VN, S/23900.

²²²² ABZ, DPV/ARA/00143. Dossier note by DPV/PZ regarding 231^{ste} CoPo, Lisbon, 06 and 07/05/92, 28/04/92.

²²²³ UN, S/23900.

²²²⁴ Morillon, *Croire*, p. 42.

²²²⁵ ABZ, Communications Archive, coreu of EG chairman Portugal, 12/05/92, cpe pres lis 955. see also Allcock & Milivojevic & Horton (eds.) *Conflict*, p. 312; Theo Engelen, 'Voorlopig geen vredesmacht VN naar Bosnië' (No UN peacekeepers to Bosnia for the time being), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/05/92; 'Toestand Bosnië uitzichtloos' (Bosnian situation hopeless), *Trouw*, 11/05/92.

²²²⁶ UN, S/23900.

²²²⁷ Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, p. 40.

to convince the Security Council that the dissolution and disarming of the irregular forces in Bosnia was only possible within the framework of a general political solution for Bosnia. If this did not come about, then an international military force would have to take on the job.²²²⁸

In the meantime, the UNPROFOR headquarters had left Sarajevo in two convoys on 16 and 17 May. A little less than a hundred soldiers, mostly French but also with a few Dutch troops, stayed behind. They continued to offer mediation to the warring factions, to supervise the exchange of imprisoned, wounded or dead soldiers and to undertake other humanitarian tasks.

In order to preserve impartiality Nambiar promised that from now on the UNPROFOR headquarters would alternate between Belgrade and Zagreb, starting in Belgrade. The UNPROFOR headquarters thus set itself up in this city. But after sanctions had been announced against Serbia at the end of May and the diplomatic staff in Belgrade had been reduced, the UN Secretariat no longer found it wise for UNPROFOR to remain in Belgrade. Firstly the UN Secretariat felt that UNPROFOR would seem weak if it continued there at full strength while most of the ambassadors had departed, and moreover it feared reprisals against the UNPROFOR headquarters. Nambiar was therefore directed to relocate to Zagreb, which was done at the end of July.²²²⁹

On 22 May the United Nations recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina as its 177th member state (Resolution 46/237 of the General Assembly). With the resolution of 15 May and the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a member state the United Nations took the position that the war in Bosnia was an international conflict, with the aggression in fact originating from the regime in Belgrade. All following UN resolutions would continue this line of reasoning. As already remarked, the UN did not however take the next logical step, namely lifting the arms embargo against the new state to enable it to defend itself against an armed attack. Not to mention the possibility that the UN might go so far as to take on a trusteeship for Bosnia, as was also advocated at the time.²²³⁰

8. The 'withdrawal' of the JNA, the creation of the VRS and the rise of Mladic

As shown in Chapter 3, Milosevic and his right-hand man Borisav Jovic had already realized as early as the end of 1991 that, as soon as Bosnia became independent, the JNA would be regarded as an aggressor. Consequently in December of that year preparations were conducted on Milosevic's orders to ensure that 85 per cent of the JNA personnel was comprised of Bosnian Serbs. This enabled a withdrawal on paper. On 8 May Lieutenant General Adzic, the interim Minister of Defence since the departure of Kadijevic, signed an order for the restructuring of the JNA in Bosnia-Herzegovina. A new army was to be created in the Republika Srpska: *Vojaska Republike Srpske* (VRS). The joint chiefs of staff of this Bosnian Serb army were: Lieutenant General Mladic, who became chairman; Major General Manojlo Milovanovic, Chief of Staff; Major General Milan Gvero, Assistant Chief of Staff for Morale and Information; Major General Djordje Dukic, Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics; Colonel Zdravko Tolimir, Head of Security; and Colonel Mico Grubor, Head of Mobilization.

This order was one of Adzic's last acts. Together with 37 other generals and (vice) admirals he was dismissed at almost the same moment. His successor as Chief of Staff was General Zivota Panic, who, unlike his predecessors, was no longer to be Minister of Defence as well. This post was now taken by a civilian. All these measures were intended to strengthen Milosevic's hold on the JNA and to remove the last attachments to Yugoslavia, still represented under the generals.

On 19 May 1992 the JNA officially withdrew from Bosnia-Herzegovina, but only 14,000 men left Bosnia.²²³¹ As planned, the federal army left behind 85 per cent of its officers and troops, amounting to some 75,000 men. The same applied to its equipment and supplies: about a thousand pieces of heavy artillery, 300 to 400 tanks, almost the same number of armoured vehicles, 35 aircraft, 21

²²²⁸ Review of International Affairs, (1992)1005-6(1 June/1 July), p. 14; Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, p. 41.

²²²⁹ Morillon, *Croire*, pp. 87-88.

²²³⁰ see Sharp, *Balkans*, pp. 2 and 12.

²²³¹ Vego, *Federal Army*, p. 445.

helicopters and air defence systems.²²³² Thanks to the legacy of the JNA in Bosnia the Bosnian Serbs gained a major material advantage which they could maintain because the arms embargo imposed by the international community prevented the Bosnian government from redressing the balance.

Following the 'withdrawal' of the JNA from Bosnia the federal armed forces were definitively renamed the Army of Yugoslavia (*Vojaska Jugoslavije*, VJ). Milosevic declared on television that Serbia was not in a state of war and that not a single soldier who was a citizen of Serbia was to be found outside the Serbian borders. Meanwhile the obituary notices of soldiers killed outside Serbian territory told a different story.²²³³ Milosevic was later to admit to Morillon that parts of the Serbian army remained active in Bosnia until May 1995.²²³⁴ The first strategic echelon of the new Yugoslavian army was correspondingly reported to be active on both banks of the Drina.²²³⁵ These were mostly several smaller units of the VJ, such as the 66th and 82nd Parachute Brigades.²²³⁶ Furthermore both Serbia and Montenegro continued to provide logistical and medical support as well as intelligence to the VRS. An integrated air defence system also remained in service between Serbia and the Serb parts of Bosnia.²²³⁷ Even the command structure linking the VJ and the VRS would never fully disappear.²²³⁸ Promotions, transfers and dismissals of officers of the VRS were conducted on the orders of the General Staff of the VJ, the successor to the JNA in Belgrade,²²³⁹ and Belgrade continued to pay the salaries of VRS officers higher than the rank of major. The salaries in the highest ranks were even increased from 500 to 1500 German marks per month.²²⁴⁰

The VRS incorporated not only the remaining part of the JNA but also elements of the territorial defence force and irregular local units. The VRS was to have seven corps, including the Drina Corps in Eastern Bosnia. The weak point of the VRS remained its relatively low manpower. From the peak in 1992, when the VRS had 86,000 men at its disposal, this number declined to about 60,000 in 1994, of which 45,000 are reported to have been operational at this time.²²⁴¹ There are however authors who assume a much lower effective fighting strength. It has been claimed that as early as 1992 only 35,000 of the 80,000 VRS troops were operational. Moreover, some of them regularly left their posts to conduct civilian activities.²²⁴² Their successes were chiefly due to their heavy firepower. When faced with a motivated and well-armed opponent they suffered defeats.²²⁴³ Indeed, the morale of the Bosnian Serb troops was low: they were poorly trained and organized; there was a lack of competent leadership. In Bosnia too, draft-dodging and desertion were rife among the Serbs. In total this is reported to have

²²³² United States Senate, *Cleansing*, pp. 7 and 28; Gow, 'Forces', p. 1; Cuvalo, *Dictionary*, p. 59; MID/KL. Operations Directorate, Royal Netherlands Army, Intelligence and Security Department, Intelligence Section, Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, no. 30370/4/021194, p. 2; idem, Royal Netherlands Army, Intelligence Bureau, Infomap former Yugoslavia, July 1996, no. 35286/4/250696, p. 17; VN, S/1994/674/Appendix VI, p. 11; KL, Operations Directorate, AIV, Intelligence Section, no. 27383/4/191193, Manual Tactical Action Warring Factions in the Former Yugoslavia, November 1993, p. 5. see also Vego, 'Federal Army', p. 447.

²²³³ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 130; Ulrike Rudber, 'Geen suiker te koop, wel handgranaten: sfeer in Servië is bedrukt' (No sugar, but hand-grenades, on sale: depressed atmosphere in Sarajevo), *de Volkskrant*, 30/04/92.

²²³⁴ Ed Vulliamy, 'The general who told troops to tear up UN mandate' and "Only passivity is dishonourable", *The Guardian*, 12/01/96. see also Calic, 'Frage', p. 150. For the lasting links between the VJ and the VRS see also Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 274-275.

²²³⁵ Domazet-Loso, 'Aggression', p. 143.

²²³⁶ Gow, 'Forces', p. 2; Bram Versteeg, 'Uitspraak tribunaal brengt Milosevic in het nauw' (Verdict of tribunal puts pressure on Milosevic), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 17/11/98.

²²³⁷ VN, A/47/747, The situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Report of the Secretary-General, 03/12/92, p. 4; Norman Cigar, 'Serb War Effort and Termination of the War', Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, pp. 209-210.

²²³⁸ Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 186.

²²³⁹ Vego, 'Federal Army', p. 448.

²²⁴⁰ Ed Vulliamy, 'Serbian lies world chose to believe', *The Guardian*, 29/02/96. see also Jovic quoted in Julian Borger, 'The Observer profile: Europe's last dinosaur', *The Observer*, 29/12/96; Esad Hecimovic, 'Na Haskoj potjernici nema Milana Lukica zlocinca odgovornog za brutalna ubistva vise od 3.000 Bosnjaka iz Visegrada', *Ljiljan*, 28/05/97, p. 33.

²²⁴¹ Gow, 'Forces', p. 1.

²²⁴² VN, S1994/674, Appendix III, p. 26.

²²⁴³ Vego, 'Federal Army', pp. 447-448.

involved between 120,000 and 150,000 men, twice the size of the Bosnian Serb army. A large proportion of those evading military service went to Serbia, and as a consequence mocking reference was made to a 'Belgrade Corps' of the VRS.²²⁴⁴ This drain of manpower in the VRS was not confined to the ordinary troops. At the start of the war in Bosnia only 52 per cent of the eligible JNA officers had followed the call to join the Bosnian Serb forces. Moreover, by the end of 1994 almost half of the VRS officer corps had left for Serbia. Due to this exodus and to losses the VRS had only 21 per cent of the number of officers it needed.²²⁴⁵ Desertion in particular increased as the impression grew that the main aim of the war was to enrich the Bosnian Serb leadership.²²⁴⁶ Moreover, many left when the number of casualties in the army's own ranks started to increase. By the end of the war the VRS would have suffered more than 18,000 dead and double this number of wounded.²²⁴⁷

General Mladic

As recounted, the appointed commander of the VRS was General Ratko Mladic, until then commander of the JNA troops in Knin. Mladic was born on 12 March 1943 in the village of Bozinovici near Kalinovik, almost 50 kilometres south of Sarajevo, as the son of two partisans. His father Nedjo was killed in a clash on 12 March 1945, i.e. on his son Ratko's second birthday. The simultaneity of these events must have been an annually recurring trauma for Ratko. According to Mladic himself he longed to revenge the death of his father all through his life.²²⁴⁸ It was long said that Croat Ustashe had killed his father, but Mladic later reportedly admitted that his father was killed by Cetniks.²²⁴⁹

Mladic joined the JNA and the Communist Party. Within the JNA he had a reputation as a good organizer who was highly successful in exercises.²²⁵⁰ At the start of 1991 he was appointed as Chief of Staff for Logistics at the Pristina Corps in Kosovo. A few months later he became, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, Chief of Staff of the Ninth Army Corps in Knin, the centre of Krajina. When many Croats left the federal army, Mladic became the commander of the corps and was promoted to Major General.

During the fighting in Croatia he gained the reputation of being a real soldier's officer and a courageous fighter who led his men into battle from the front.²²⁵¹ He himself said that offence lay more in his nature than defence.²²⁵² He impressed people with his good memory for the names of soldiers, so that they were later surprised and flattered that he recognized them.²²⁵³ In the course of the war Mladic gained an almost mythical reputation, with comparisons being made to King Lazar and his battle against the Turks. At the same time, however, he was said to be unscrupulous, cruel, clever but not intelligent and no great strategist.²²⁵⁴ Milosevic is reported to have personally insisted that Mladic become the commander of the Bosnian Serb army. It is precisely Mladic's cruelty which seems to have recommended him to Milosevic. In mid-1994 the former State Department official George Kenney

²²⁴⁴ Norman Cigar, 'Serb War Effort and Termination of the War', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 213.

²²⁴⁵ Norman Cigar, 'Serb War Effort and Termination of the War', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 214.

²²⁴⁶ Norman Cigar, 'Serb War Effort and Termination of the War', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, pp. 212-213.

²²⁴⁷ Norman Cigar, 'Serb War Effort and Termination of the War', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 214.

²²⁴⁸ Ian Traynor, 'Profile: Beast of Bosnia', *The Guardian*, 18/04/94.

²²⁴⁹ Cuvalo, *Dictionary*, p. 170.

²²⁵⁰ Ian Traynor, 'Profile: Beast of Bosnia', *The Guardian*, 18/04/94.

²²⁵¹ Bulatovic, *Mladic*, p. 171; Bill Hewitt et al, 'Driven by personal demons, this Serbian general has made war in Bosnia', *People*, 13/06/94; interview D. Milovanovic, 17/12/99

²²⁵² Roger Cohen, 'Conflict in the Balkans: Serbian strategy', *The New York Times*, 17/04/94.

²²⁵³ Interview V. Matovic, 16/12/99.

²²⁵⁴ MID. AVI, OVIC, doc. no. 99015, Information document political and administrative information/organization Bosnia and Hercegovina, 21/07/97, p. 75; idem, letter from head MID, mr. J.C.F. Knapp, 12/07/95, DIS 95/12.13.4/1658; Vego, *Federal Army*, p. 446; interviews V. Andreev, 07/07/00, C. Bildt, 13/12/00, B. Pellnäss, 03/11/99 and V. Matovic, 16/12/99; Colonel Andrei Demurenko, Chief of Staff of Sarejevo Sector in 1995, quoted in Thomans, 'Lessons'; Ian Traynor, 'Profile: Beast of Bosnia', *The Guardian*, 18/04/94; Robert Block, 'Vredelievende moordenaar met een volkse aanpak' (Peace-loving murderer with a common-man's approach), *Trouw*, 23/09/95.

remarked: 'He doesn't seem to have internal inhibitions, which is one reason they put him in charge. He knows how to test the edge of what is possible and always push.'²²⁵⁵

In Bosnia too the actions of Mladic, who in Krajina had acquired the title 'butcher of Knin',²²⁵⁶ were to be marked by cruelty. In May 1992 radio messages were intercepted in which he personally ordered that Sarajevo be 'set on fire' and in the process to stop using 82 and 120 millimetre mortars and instead to employ 155 millimetre howitzers.²²⁵⁷ At the start of the 1990s Mladic, who as a Communist officer had taken the Yugoslav position for many years and who seems to have been a fierce Communist,²²⁵⁸ became a fervent Serb nationalist with a great interest in Serb history and myths. He himself said that the war had made him 'the greatest Serb'.²²⁵⁹ He believed that the Serb borders should come to lie 'where Serb blood has been spilled, the blood of every individual Serb soldier and officer, excepting none, not only in this war but in all previous ones too. As far as I'm concerned this war will be over when the Muslims hand me their weapons.'²²⁶⁰

Some who experienced him at close quarters doubted the mental stability of Mladic, even before the suicide of his 22-year-old daughter Ana in March 1994,²²⁶¹ which was to seriously disturb his balance.²²⁶² Mladic was said to be extremely hot-tempered.²²⁶³ According to some he had a suspicious, if not paranoid, nature.²²⁶⁴ He surrounded himself with a close circle of confidants²²⁶⁵ and said that he was constantly afraid that something would happen to his family.²²⁶⁶ However, his wife is reported to have been already killed at the start of the war during artillery bombardments near Sarajevo.²²⁶⁷

According to some he was a megalomaniac. He himself said: 'If I had been a surgeon, I would have been a super-surgeon. If I had been a lawyer, I would have been a super-lawyer. But I'll never be a Frank Sinatra, because I don't have a super voice.'²²⁶⁸ When President Izetbegovic, during negotiations in Geneva, doubted whether the Serbs would keep promises they had made, Mladic answered him: 'When I guarantee you something, it's the same as if the Almighty guarantees you something.'²²⁶⁹ After the fall of the Zepa enclave in July 1995 he told a bus full of Muslim citizens: 'No Allah, no UN, no NATO can save you. Only I can.'²²⁷⁰ During the war in Bosnia Mladic increasingly took on the role of the cat that plays with mice, someone with the power of life and death.

While members of the JNA were often convinced that the secession of the republics from the Yugoslav federation was prompted by foreign forces, Mladic came to view the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the following wars as an almost supernatural event. He liked to refer to UNPROFOR, NATO, the great Western powers and the Muslim states as the gods of war.²²⁷¹ In his view they were the ones who dictated the course of the war. The Muslims, Croats and UN peacekeeping troops were

²²⁵⁵ Bill Hewitt et al, 'Driven by personal demons, this Serbian general has made a war in Bosnia', *People*, 13/06/94.

²²⁵⁶ John Burns, 'Serbian General Is Either a Snake or a Charmer, Depending on the Beholder', *The New York Times*, 08/08/93.

²²⁵⁷ Bill Hewitt et al, 'Driven by personal demons, this Serbian general has made war in Bosnia', *People*, 13/06/94.

²²⁵⁸ Interview S. Djukic, 04/08/01.

²²⁵⁹ Mladic quoted in Sreten Vujovic, 'An Uneasy View of the City', Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 138.

²²⁶⁰ Ian Traynor, 'Profile: Beast of Bosnia', *The Guardian*, 18/04/94.

²²⁶¹ Roger Cohen, 'Conflict in the Balkans: Serbian strategy', *The New York Times*, 17/04/94; interviews J. Cot, 19/04/00, R. Dukic, 14/06/00 and V. Matovic, 16/12/99; Milos Vasic, the military member of staff of *Vreme*, quoted in Judah, *Serbs*, pp. 230-231.

²²⁶² Bulatovic, *Mladic*, pp. 25-26; Ian Traynor, 'Profile: Beast of Bosnia', *The Guardian*, 18/04/94.

²²⁶³ Interviews R. Dukic, 14/06/00, M. Milutinovic, 20 and 22/03/00 and Z. Stankovic, 01/10/98.

²²⁶⁴ Interviews R. Dukic, 14/06/00 and Z. Stankovic, 01/10/98.

²²⁶⁵ Interviews R. Dukic, 14/06/00, M. Milutinovic, 20 and 22/03/00 and Z. Stankovic, 01/10/98.

²²⁶⁶ Interview B. Spasic, 16/09/01.

²²⁶⁷ Ian Traynor, 'Profile: Beast of Bosnia', *The Guardian*, 18/04/94.

²²⁶⁸ Ian Traynor, 'Profile: Beast of Bosnia', *The Guardian*, 18/04/94.

²²⁶⁹ Robert Block, 'Vredelievende moordenaar met een volkse aanpak', *Trouw*, 23/09/95.

²²⁷⁰ Robert Block, 'Vredelievende moordenaar met een volkse aanpak', *Trouw*, 23/09/95.

²²⁷¹ See for instance Bulatovic, *Mladic*, pp. 33, 87, 89 and 191.

the local executors of the fate devised by these gods.²²⁷² These gods had proved capable of making Yugoslavia fall apart. First of all the Communist regime of Tito had, according to Mladic, disadvantaged the Serbs and then the war had ‘come over’ the Serbs as ‘an undesired wind’ that suddenly stormed across Yugoslavia.²²⁷³ What else could the Serb population of Bosnia do than undertake heroic resistance?²²⁷⁴ The end of the war would be determined not by him but by the gods of war in the West. A scenario was developing that could not be stopped by Serb mortals.²²⁷⁵ Due to this attitude Mladic was not able to think in terms of an ultimate strategy. In late 1993 this was also the impression gained by the Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (the UN organization in Sarajevo), Brigadier General Ramsay: ‘He lacks the breadth of strategic vision to achieve peace’.²²⁷⁶ This concept of superior Western power did not detract from Mladic’s pride in the fact that his own part in the struggle was securing him a place in the history books.²²⁷⁷

Conflicts often broke out between Mladic and Karadzic, the political leader of the Bosnian Serbs. Although Mladic himself had shifted from Communism to Serb nationalism, he found it hard to forgive Karadzic that the latter made references to his anti-Communism and had been an open dissident during his student days.²²⁷⁸ Milosevic, who had made it a speciality to exploit differences between persons or groups, took advantage of this situation too. In fact he could generally get along much better with Mladic than with Karadzic.²²⁷⁹ Although Commander in Chief in name, Karadzic was to have no real authority over Mladic; the only person to have that was Milosevic.²²⁸⁰ But Mladic always had difficulty with politicians in general²²⁸¹ and he profited from the fact that in time of war it was difficult for politicians to place constraints on military commanders. Moderate tones were soon no longer to be heard from the army itself. Criticism of Mladic among VRS officers is said to have fallen silent out of fear of the VRS commander.²²⁸² Mladic was also too stubborn to take the advice of other officers.²²⁸³

9. The Dutch attitude to the war in Bosnia

At the start of 1992 reports in the Dutch media were still marked by complaints by a limited number of emotionally involved journalists about the general indifference of Netherlands to the situation in the former Yugoslavia. This was a continuation or result of the combined action of four journalists of *NRC Handelsblad* and *De Volkskrant* on 31 December 1991.²²⁸⁴ The content of the newspapers in the first months of 1992 confirmed the impression of a low involvement by the newspapers and their readers in the events in the former Yugoslavia. In *NRC Handelsblad* and *Trouw* there was a drop in the number of articles dealing with the situation in the conflict-torn Balkan country. These reports were mostly factual journalism or atmospheric impressions from Yugoslavia. There were few opinion columns or readers’ letters on the subject. In *NRC Handelsblad* there was a continuation of the critical commentaries on Western involvement. After the Dutch parliament had agreed to the dispatch of the signals battalion,

²²⁷² Bulatovic, *Mladic*, pp. 34 and 87.

²²⁷³ Bulatovic, *Mladic*, pp. 39 and 87.

²²⁷⁴ Bulatovic, *Mladic*, p. 89.

²²⁷⁵ Bulatovic, *Mladic*, pp. 33, 37 and 87.

²²⁷⁶ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Ramsay to BHC Fwd Sarajevo, etc. 30/10/93, ‘Soldier, statesman and diplomat – General Ratko Mladic meeting at Sokolac 28/10/93’.

²²⁷⁷ Bulatovic, *Mladic*, p. 37.

²²⁷⁸ Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00.

²²⁷⁹ Interview S. Djukic, 04/08/01.

²²⁸⁰ Interviews C. Bildt, 13/12/00; J.-W. Brinkman, 11/10/99; F. Briquemont, 22/06/00 and R. Smith, 12/01/00; Djukic, Vetra, p. 240; Morillon, quoted in Ed Vulliamy, ‘Only passivity is dishonourable’, *The Guardian*, 12/01/96.

²²⁸¹ Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00.

²²⁸² Interview A. Makar, 16/06/00 and B. Pellnäss, 03/11/99.

²²⁸³ Interview V. Matovic, 16/12/99.

²²⁸⁴ Mischa de Vreede, ‘Oorlogskinderen’ (War children) and Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘De dood van een groot journalist-in-wording’ (The death of a great journalist-in-the-making), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/01/92.

an editorial commentary said that the mandate for UNPROFOR I was no better than that for UNIFIL (the peacekeeping force in Lebanon at the end of the 1970s). The commentator pointed out that the Netherlands had withdrawn from this last operation in 1985 due to the impracticability of the mandate. Since the UNPROFOR mandate had hardly been discussed by Parliament, the newspaper felt that Dutch politicians were open to the accusation that the troop dispatch was more about their own prestige than about real peacekeeping.²²⁸⁵

Insofar as a general tone could be made out, it was one of reservation in the other newspapers too during this period. The *Algemeen Dagblad*, for instance, was prompted by the fighting that broke out in Bosnia after the referendum at the start of March to advocate that this region should not be recognized for the time being.²²⁸⁶ An exception to the apathy was formed by Hylke Tromp, Professor of War Studies in Groningen, who at the start of 1992 once again advocated military intervention. Besides humanitarian motives, his main reason was that the neighbours of Yugoslavia, as well as Turkey, threatened to become involved in the conflict.²²⁸⁷

The outbreak of the war in Bosnia led to some increase in opinion-forming contributions, but not to a major increase. Generally speaking, Dutch journalists viewed Serb political and military leaders as the instigators of the conflict. A tendency could already be discerned not to trouble readers with the details of the conflict. At the start of March, for instance, *De Volkskrant* published a photograph of the funeral of a Serb, with a cross in the centre bearing the name of the man in Cyrillic script; the caption stated only that it was ‘one of the victims of the violence between Serbs and Bosnian Muslims’.²²⁸⁸ A month later *NRC Handelsblad* captioned an almost identical photograph of the same funeral with the words ‘funeral ceremony in Sarajevo in Bosnia-Hercegovina’.²²⁸⁹ In neither case was it mentioned that the funeral was of a Serb, and thus that Serbs were also being killed in the conflict. In this respect the series ‘*In tijd van oorlog*’ (In time of war) in *Trouw*, in which from early 1992 onwards Nicole Lucas described the effect of the Milosevic regime on daily life in Belgrade, broke a pattern that was beginning to establish itself.

In *NRC Handelsblad*, even following the outbreak of the war in Bosnia, there was still little enthusiasm for Western involvement in the events there. Raymond van den Boogaard, for instance, argued from his base in Sarajevo for the uselessness of any attempt at Western intervention:

‘So the Yugoslav civil war, a war for territory, enters its second summer and there seems to be no one, either in Yugoslavia or abroad, who can prevent it. Ministerial visits, the dispatch of observers, the dispatch of peacekeeping troops – none of it has any sense if there is a lack of will to find a solution for the Yugoslav legacy through peaceful negotiations. Moreover, the Yugoslav politicians recognize that every civilized solution suggested by foreign parties will be based on the idea of a multinational society, and that is precisely what they don’t want.’²²⁹⁰

According to *NRC Handelsblad* neither the EC nor the US was able to stop the Serb violence in Bosnia,²²⁹¹ not even by peace-enforcing because the warring factions lived in such heavily intermingled

²²⁸⁵ ‘Vlagvertoon’ (Waving the flag), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/03/92.

²²⁸⁶ ‘Bosnië nog niet erkennen’ (No recognition for Bosnia yet), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 03/03/92.

²²⁸⁷ Hylke Tromp, ‘Militaire interventie in Joegoslavië kan groter bloedbad voorkomen’ (Military intervention in Yugoslavia can prevent greater bloodbath), *de Volkskrant*, 04/01/92.

²²⁸⁸ Photograph by Ewoud Nysingh, ‘Duizenden Bosniërs in vredesbetoging’ (Thousands of Bosnians in demonstration for peace), *de Volkskrant*, 06/03/92.

²²⁸⁹ Photograph by Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Joegoslavische burgeroorlog is niet te beëindigen’ (Yugoslav civil war impossible to stop), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/04/92.

²²⁹⁰ Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Joegoslavische burgeroorlog is niet te beëindigen’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/04/92.

²²⁹¹ ‘Bosnisch bestand’ (Bosnian truce), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/04/92.

areas and the area had a tradition of guerrilla war.²²⁹² The newspaper advised the West to wait until the political and military leaders in Bosnia had themselves had enough of the fighting and then immediately to dispatch peacekeeping troops, as had been done in Croatia. The paper 'could no longer imagine' that ethnic cleansing could now be reversed.²²⁹³

De Volkskrant, which had taken a more pro-active position in the summer of 1991, now also adopted a more reserved position in the first months of 1992. According to Oscar Garschagen writing at the end of April, sanctions were the only tool that the European Community could apply against Yugoslavia, and one should not harbour too many illusions about the effect they would have: this would take a long time.²²⁹⁴ An editorial commentary of 5 May went further and advocated the total economic and political isolation of Yugoslavia if the Serb aggression in Bosnia did not stop. If this did not help either, then 'military intervention by the UN should not be ruled out'.²²⁹⁵ A week later Ewoud Nysingh wrote that it was 'unfortunately right' that no UN peacekeeping force was being sent to Bosnia: 'No country is prepared to send soldiers into the Bosnian hornets' nest, where everyone with a gun does as he pleases. This would result in many deaths in the UN force.' Talks with Belgrade should continue and thus it should not be fully isolated, 'however guilty Milosevic may be'. Once the regime in Belgrade were to cooperate in a ceasefire then a peacekeeping force could be dispatched and talks could be held on 'the provision of far-reaching autonomy for the three population groups' in Bosnia.²²⁹⁶

Caroline de Gruyter, who had reported in *Elsevier* about the Yugoslavian conflict from the start, wrote a few weeks after the outbreak of the conflict in Bosnia that even if a European army were already to exist, intervention there would amount to 'sheer suicide'.²²⁹⁷ After two months of war in Bosnia she wrote that the only remaining realistic possibility was the separation of the ethnic groups in Bosnia. 'How do you arrange that, with a military intervention? That is not only impracticable, it is also unfair to the Serbs who have lived their whole life there, and of whom many have refused to participate in this war.'²²⁹⁸ She did not consider the removal of Milosevic an option. His replacements would probably dream no less strongly of a Greater Serbia than he did.²²⁹⁹

The fairly general opinion that troops should be sent only when a real ceasefire had been achieved, and the growing acceptance of an ethnic division in Bosnia, was countered by the daily newspaper *Trouw* on 22 April. On this day the paper published articles by several advocates of more extensive intervention in Bosnia. Sonja Licht, the chairwoman of the Helsinki Citizen's Assembly in Belgrade, and Mient Jan Faber, General Secretary of the Interchurch Peace Council IKV, expressed their anger on the Podium Page about the lack of initiative shown by the EC and the UN. They described the Cutileiro Plan as unrealizable in view of the distribution of the ethnic groups and considered the plan, from a moral perspective, to be 'highly dubious, to put it mildly'. In line with several opposition politicians in the former Yugoslavia, they advocated the institution of a UN trusteeship for the entire region.²³⁰⁰ On the same page the CDA politician A.M. Oostlander, member and rapporteur for Yugoslavia of the European Parliament, pointed out that at that moment the Netherlands had fewer UN troops stationed in the former Yugoslavia than Belgium did. He criticized the 'exorbitantly expensive' Airmobile Brigade, which he claimed would not become operational for the

²²⁹² 'Ongrijpbaar Bosnië' (Bosnia intangibles), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/05/92.

²²⁹³ 'Geen alternatief' (No alternative), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/05/92.

²²⁹⁴ Oscar Garschagen, 'EG moet Servië tot keus dwingen' (EC must force Serbia to choose), *de Volkskrant*, 23/04/92.

²²⁹⁵ 'Ultimatum' (Ultimatum), *De Volkskrant*, 05/05/92.

²²⁹⁶ Ewoud Nysingh, 'Druk op Servië opvoeren, maar blijven praten' (Increase pressure on Serbia, but keep talking), *de Volkskrant*, 12/05/92.

²²⁹⁷ Caroline de Gruyter, 'Een Bosnische worst' (A Bosnian sausage), *Elsevier*, 02/05/92, p. 58.

²²⁹⁸ Caroline de Gruyter, 'Balkan Storm brengt geen bevrijding' (Balkan Storm will bring no liberation), *Elsevier*, 06/06/92, p. 47.

²²⁹⁹ Caroline de Gruyter, 'Balkan Storm brengt geen bevrijding', *Elsevier*, 06/06/92, p. 47; Caroline de Gruyter, 'De prins tuigt het witte paard op' (The prince saddles the white horse), *Elsevier*, 20/06/92, p. 46.

²³⁰⁰ Sonja Licht & Mient Jan Faber, 'VN moeten van Joegoslavië 'mandaatgebied' maken' (UN must make Yugoslavia a 'mandate area'), *Trouw*, 22/04/92.

next five years. In his opinion the Dutch government could better spend the money on peacekeeping operations and on the economic and social reconstruction of Eastern Europe.²³⁰¹ The opinion contributions of this day remained, however, an isolated phenomenon.

Nonetheless, the outbreak of hostilities in Sarajevo had led to increasing concern about the fate of some 60 Dutch troops of the signals battalion who were still stationed in the Bosnian capital. In particular the military trade unions and members of the CDA urged that their safety be ensured.²³⁰² The Dutch government took the position that although the deteriorated situation in the former Yugoslavia made the task of UNPROFOR more difficult, it did not make it impossible. According to Minister of Defence Ter Beek the Dutch troops were in no great danger. 'Locally the situation appears in many cases to be much quieter than the overall picture given by the media', he assured Parliament on 12 May.²³⁰³

However, the developments did prompt the Minister to activate the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) by manning it continuously. The Defence Crisis Management Centre, which was set up during the Gulf War, was entrusted by the Chief of Defence Staff with policy control and evaluation during crisis management operations.²³⁰⁴ The Defence Crisis Management Centre convened in a bunker under the Ministry of Defence on the Plein (Central Square) in The Hague. This bunker had been built in 1984 as an 'Emergency Base' for the minister and his staff in the event of a nuclear war. Until the start of the 1990s, however, it was hardly used.²³⁰⁵ This changed after the arrival of crisis management operations. Peacekeeping operations could be of a 'inter-service nature' and were indeed so during the Yugoslavia conflict. Planning, coordination and operational leadership could best be undertaken from a single point. The most suitable person to carry this out was the Chief of Defence Staff, the highest military advisor to the minister, who was supported in this task by the Defence Crisis Management Centre.

Furthermore, the political sensitivity of peacekeeping operations contributed to this development.²³⁰⁶ During a peacekeeping operation the Dutch government retains full command over the dispatched units (as anchored in Article 98, Section 2 of the Constitution: 'The government has full command of the armed forces.').²³⁰⁷ This means that the government can withdraw such troops at any moment, as it actually did in the case of UNIFIL in 1985. The Dutch government thus also remains responsible for the administrative command, i.e. aspects such as legal status, disciplinary matters etc.

During peacekeeping operations the tasks, location and deployment duration of a unit are normally defined before it is dispatched. This is followed by a transfer of operational control. This means that a UN commander may deploy a supplied national unit at his own discretion as long as this is in accordance with the defined tasks, the agreed resources and within the agreed geographical constraints. Deviations from the agreed goals are only possible after consultation with, and agreement by, the troop-supplying nation. Transfer of operational control thus means that the dispatching country

²³⁰¹ A.M. Oostlander, 'Geen dure defensieplannen voor later, nú actie' (No expensive defence plans for later, action now), *Trouw*, 22/04/92.

²³⁰² See for instance Def, 927, SG DV 91/92, memorandum from Kreemers to Ter Beek and Van Voorst to Voorst, 22/04/92, V-440/92 with appendix press release 'VVDM bezorgd over Joegoslavië' (VVDM concerned about Yugoslavia), 24/04/92 and press release AVNM defence editor, 22/04/92; DGP, 373, exh. GO/92-5732/Z 205K, CMHF to the chairman of the Centrally Organized Military Council, 07/05/92.

²³⁰³ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 28, p. 2.

²³⁰⁴ For more extensive information on the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) see the appendix on the Ministry of Defence, on the CD-ROM that accompanies the Dutch edition of the report.

²³⁰⁵ Information the bunker in, for instance, Leonard Ornstein, 'Onder de grond speelt de oorlogsstaf de Balkan' (The war staff plays the Balkans underground), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, pp. 12-13; Gerrit den Abtman, 'In de bunker klopt het hart van het crisiscentrum' (The heart of the crisis centre beats in the bunker), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 15/07/95; Rob Schoof, 'Vloeren kraken en faxen ratelen in Crisiscentrum' (Floors creak and faxes rattle in Crisis Centre), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/07/95.

²³⁰⁶ For the following passages on the transfer of competencies and the permanent responsibility of the Minister of Defence, see for instance BSG, no. 550. Memorandum G.H. de Keizer to Voorhoeve, 29/08/95, no. 95000860.

²³⁰⁷ Cf. The tenth point of attention of the evaluation form for decisions with regard to the dispatch of peacekeeping troops, TK, session year 1994-1995, 23 591 no. 5, p. 11.

remains closely involved in the operational development of a peacekeeping operation, especially when there is a danger that the implementation of the task may be compromised.²³⁰⁸ The dispatching country is not formally allowed to issue any order after control is transferred, but close consultation remains necessary.²³⁰⁹

However far the transfer of control went, the Minister of Defence remained politically responsible for the actions of the Dutch units that were provided to the UN. It was thus his task to constantly take account of the interests of the dispatched units and if necessary to consult with the competent authorities. In view of this permanent involvement by the minister and his close advisors, it is not so surprising that in April 1992, shortly after the creation of UNPROFOR, the Defence Crisis Management Centre started to be manned on a 24-hour basis in order to monitor developments during peacekeeping operations from the policy perspective.

The Chief of Defence Staff was actually strongly dependent for his information on the armed forces. When a unit had been dispatched as part of a peacekeeping operation, the armed forces remained responsible for the administrative command and logistics in the broadest sense, including personnel facilities and care, medical care, training, transport and supplies. The required information was therefore supplied to the bunker by the Crisis Staffs of the individual Armed Forces. Information was also obtained from radio and television broadcasts and the ANP news service. The contacts between the separately dispatched staff officers and the Defence Crisis Management Centre initially also followed an indirect route, via the Armed Forces. The activation of the centre on 2 April 1992 meant that staff officers in the Defence Crisis Management Centre followed developments seven days a week, 24 hours a day, and recorded their findings on a daily basis in situation reports for the government and for high-ranking civil servants and military personnel.

Following the developments in Sarajevo the Ministry of Defence considered transferring the Dutch troops from the UNPROFOR headquarters to a safer environment. Locations in Belgrade and Zagreb were accordingly examined. This fact was however 'known only in limited quarters' 'in order to prevent disquiet, both in the Netherlands and in Yugoslavia'. In fact the location of the UNPROFOR headquarters was the responsibility of the UN. Since the commander of the signals battalion, Lieutenant Colonel H. Vermaas, did not view the situation as threatening enough to necessitate evacuation, the Dutch government did not take the politically sensitive decision to intervene in the choice of the location for the UNPROFOR headquarters.²³¹⁰

In addition to concern about the dispatched Dutch troops and ideas about their relocation, calls for stronger intervention were now also heard. It was the CDA member of parliament De Kok who opened the discussion. De Kok had a clear involvement in the events in the former Yugoslavia. At the start of September 1991 he had been among the first willing to travel to Yugoslavia as an observer. 'In Yugoslavia – and other Central European countries too – Western parliamentarians have authority', he said at the time in a radio broadcast.²³¹¹ During a television programme on Sunday 10 May he advocated the dispatch of a military intervention force, preferably by the UN, to the former Yugoslavia. In his opinion action should primarily be taken against Serb airfields and aircraft, and be carried out by Western European air forces operating from Italy and from aircraft carriers. He said he was aware that there was a lack of international support for such an action, but he wanted the Ministers Van den Broek and Ter Beek to try and persuade the opponents of intervention in the CSCE.²³¹² Otherwise, the former marine explained to *Het Parool*, the entire concept of new, flexible Dutch armed forces, as set out in the Defence White Paper, threatened to 'fall on its face'. If the government refused to do what De Kok wanted, then he would resist the investment of six billion guilders in the Airmobile Brigade

²³⁰⁸ Cf. DJZ, 784 and 785. DJZ/Sre/IJB, memo from H-IJB to P-DJZ, 30/08/95 no. 95000873.

²³⁰⁹ For illustrations regarding the deployment of Dutch marines in Cambodia see Bais, *Mijnenveld*, pp. 64-70.

²³¹⁰ NIOD, Coll. Vandeweyer. Disk 1, file Vragcds.vra, memo from HOZ to CDS, z.d.

²³¹¹ Radio 1, KRO, Echo's Magazine, 03/09/91, 8.10am.

²³¹² 'CDA-Kamerlid De Kok wil in Joegoslavië militair ingrijpen' (CDA MP De Kok wishes military intervention in Yugoslavia), *Trouw*, 11/05/92.

that had been announced in the White Paper: ‘If there is a lack of political will to end such widespread butchery, then you’d do better to invest the money for an intervention force in other things.’²³¹³ De Kok expressed himself in a rather unparliamentary manner, but it was certainly not the last time that this argument would be used in the discussion on intervention in Yugoslavia. According to De Kok the job could be done within the space of an hour: ‘Then the Serb generals will know what to expect if they continue. The only language they speak is that of force.’²³¹⁴

De Kok's statements were followed the next day by an article by his party colleague and member of the European Parliament Oostlander, who had already spoken out in favour of more action several weeks earlier. In *NRC Handelsblad* he contended that the international community could no longer deal with Milosevic, his accomplice Karadzic, who applied ‘a variant of National Socialism’, and Boban without using military means. He too advocated the use of air and sea power and he also made reference to the new defence concept and once more to the ‘very costly Airmobile Brigade’.²³¹⁵

De Kok and Oostlander received little support from the Dutch government and from Parliament for their views. De Kok had not consulted his party prior to making his statements and was forced by the leadership to withdraw his remarks.²³¹⁶ Outside De Kok’s party too, politicians were quick to argue for the inadvisability of his suggestion. His fellow party member Van den Broek stressed that he did not consider the time ripe for military intervention. The competent body here was the Security Council, said the minister, and this would only take such action when the involved parties agreed to it, which was not the case.²³¹⁷ The PvdA member of parliament Van Traa indicated that he thought little of De Kok’s proposal because it was ‘impossible from the start’.²³¹⁸

The MPs Van Heemskerck Pillis-Duvekot (VVD) and Eisma (D66) criticized De Kok heavily for his ‘thinking out loud’ during a debate on 12 May. At the same time Van Traa told him that it was important to prevent the 60 Dutch soldiers who remained in Sarajevo from becoming hostages.²³¹⁹ De Kok himself, according to the report of the debate, made no further mention of his proposal because, as he declared, he had now understood that ‘if there is no international consensus on this, (...) there [was] no point in raising the possibility.’²³²⁰ However, he did not consider it wrong to have expressed his thoughts because he had a right to his personal opinions and was not a ‘party minion’.²³²¹

Minister Van den Broek emphasized on behalf of the government that the Bosnian government’s appeal for military assistance could not be answered because there was no consensus on this in the Security Council and the CSCE.²³²² The minister later told Parliament that he took a reserved position because he did not want to make statements which would manoeuvre either himself or later the EC into the role of an ‘impotent shouter’.²³²³ The interventionist position was taken in this debate

²³¹³ Frans Peeters, “Actie in Joegoslavië kan in één uur slagen” (‘Action in Yugoslavia can achieve success in one hour’), *Het Parool*, 12/05/92.

²³¹⁴ ‘CDA-Kamerlid De Kok wil in Joegoslavië militair ingrijpen’, *Trouw*, 11/05/92.

²³¹⁵ Arie Oostlander, ‘Stop geweld in Bosnië-Herzegovina met militaire middelen’ (Stop the violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina with military means), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/05/92. see also ‘Europarlementariër Arie Oostlander: Nut interventiestrijdmacht niet duidelijk’ (European MP Arie Oostlander: Usefulness of intervention force not clear), *Europa van Morgen*, 10/06/92, pp. 305-306.

²³¹⁶ ‘Ter Beek wil naar Joegoslavië om soldaten mentaal te steunen’ (Ter Beek to visit Yugoslavia to give soldiers moral support), *de Volkskrant*, 13/05/92.

²³¹⁷ ‘EG zegt Servië wacht aan’ (EU issues warning to Serbia), *Trouw*, 12/05/92.

²³¹⁸ ‘CDA-Kamerlid De Kok wil in Joegoslavië militair ingrijpen’, *Trouw*, 11/05/92.

²³¹⁹ ‘Tweede Kamer: geen interventie VN in Bosnië’ (Parliament: no UN intervention in Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/05/92.

²³²⁰ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 28, p. 5.

²³²¹ ‘Ter Beek wil naar Joegoslavië om soldaten mentaal te steunen’, *de Volkskrant*, 13/05/92; ‘Van den Broek ziet niets in militaire actie tegen Serviërs’ (Van den Broek rejects military action against Serbs), *Trouw*, 13/05/92.

²³²² TK 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 28, p. 9.

²³²³ Interview H. van den Broek, 02/12/99.

by the GroenLinks (Green Left) MP Sipkes, who asked about the possibilities for creating safe zones in Bosnia for threatened persons.²³²⁴

The criticism from other politicians did not silence De Kok and Oostlander. At the start of June De Kok told *Het Parool* that he wanted to teach the ‘cowardly Serbs’ a lesson: ‘You need to cut through the Serbs’ lifelines in one blow, get to the nerve bundles. They are cowards and if you do it well, they’ll just take to their heels’. He also felt that the Netherlands should participate in a blockade of Dubrovnik: ‘If we send a few ships to that city, then they [the Serbs] will run like rabbits. (...) The Netherlands can’t allow it morally and ethically that people are being slaughtered in front of our eyes, can it? We have the moral obligation to do something.’²³²⁵ In the same month of 1992 Oostlander submitted a resolution to the European Parliament which urged air bombardments of Serb artillery positions around Sarajevo.²³²⁶ This was not accepted.

Nevertheless the frustration about the inaction regarding Bosnia, which had obviously motivated De Kok and Oostlander to make their statements, slowly began to emerge in the media. Very cautiously, journalists and contributors chose a middle path between doing something and doing nothing. A day after De Kok’s first remarks, an editorial in *NRC Handelsblad* advocated a limited operation in Bosnia, as would actually be realized a few months later:

‘Perhaps it would be better for the international community to confine itself to trying to reduce the human suffering of the war as much as possible by giving UN troops a task that they can handle – accompanying consignments of food and medicine to Bosnia – and by ensuring relief for the Displaced Persons from Bosnia, already numbering 700,000, in the neighbouring countries. Little more than this is feasible, however painful the conclusion may be.’²³²⁷

The editorial commentary in *Trouw* on 12 May argued that although there was no international readiness to intervene militarily in the ‘hornets’ nest’ of Yugoslavia, Europe could also not leave the former Yugoslavia to ‘a gang of brigands who are dragging it to disaster’: ‘Otherwise we will remain stuck with muddling on and impotent anger.’²³²⁸ On the same day *De Volkskrant* published, under the title ‘The West must prevent the devastation of the Balkans’, a declaration signed by various international academics and artists, such as the war studies expert John Galtung, Milovan Djilas and – from the Netherlands – Cardinal Simonis and once again Mient Jan Faber. They advocated contacts with the democratic opposition in the former Yugoslavia, the setting up of temporary UN protectorates in crisis areas in Bosnia and a harder line against undemocratic elements in Croatia and against the Green Berets in Bosnia. The West should halt negotiations with nationalist leaders.²³²⁹

Sam Muller, assistant at the Department of International Public Law of the University of Leiden, took the opposite line with ‘an appeal to remain realistic’ made in opposition to calls by Oostlander and De Kok for military intervention. It was not to be expected that the UN would accept a corresponding resolution. Moreover, he claimed that few Europeans would be prepared to sacrifice

²³²⁴ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 28, p. 8.

²³²⁵ Jan van der Ven, ‘Ingrijpen in Servië voor CDA al reëel’ (Intervention in Serbia already realistic for CDA), *Het Parool*, 05/06/92. Similar statements by the former Dutch defence attaché De Vogel in Nicole Lucas & Co Welgraven, “‘We moeten Servië ook militair op de vingers durven tikken’” (“We should be prepared to penalize the Serbs with military action too”), *Trouw*, 03/06/92.

²³²⁶ See also ‘Oostlander wil militair ingrijpen Bosnië-Hercegovina’ (Oostlander wants military intervention in Bosnia-Hercegovina), *Dagblad de Stem*, 05/06/92.

²³²⁷ ‘Ongrijpbaar Bosnië’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/05/92.

²³²⁸ ‘Struikrovers’ (Brigands), *Trouw*, 12/05/92.

²³²⁹ Janos Kis et al, ‘Westen moet verwoesting van Balkan voorkomen’ (The West must prevent devastation of Yugoslavia), *de Volkskrant*, 12/05/92.

their lives for a hopeless attempt to separate the warring factions in Bosnia.²³³⁰ M. van den Doel, on the staff of the Clingendael Institute for International Relations, felt that intervention was also militarily impossible in view of the range of parties in the conflict. UN troops who tried to enforce peace would themselves be drawn into the fighting, which according to Van den Doel would then take the form of a guerrilla war. In his opinion it would be better to send troops to Kosovo and Macedonia to prevent the conflict from spreading to these areas. Moreover the Security Council should impose a no-fly regime on the Serb air force which – rather in contradiction of his general idea – UN troops should be able to enforce with Stinger anti-aircraft missiles.²³³¹ In a reader's letter, De Kok and Oostlander wrote that although many people seemed not to realize it, 'the idea of intervention is accepted in Dutch political circles in The Hague. An intervention force is due to be created at a cost of many billions of guilders, in the form of a mobile brigade.' They were not put off by the fact that the idea of intervention had little international support: 'Politicians should never just accept the trend of the day, certainly not when so much human suffering is involved.'²³³²

The announcement on 15 May that 200 of the total of 300 UN peacekeeping troops in Sarajevo were to leave the city prompted many to advocate concrete action on Bosnia by the international community. On 16 May *De Volkskrant* carried an editorial commentary that recommended a total trade embargo against Serbia and military action to facilitate humanitarian aid and to open Sarajevo's airport for the supply of food and medicines.²³³³ André Roelofs felt that 'public opinion in Europe (...) [should] gradually be getting seriously concerned about the awkwardness of the international efforts for peace'. He considered it 'a blunder' that UN units had been sent to Sarajevo without sufficient resources for self-defence and without the option of calling in air support.²³³⁴

On 22 May 1992 the Dutch Ministerial Council devoted detailed discussions to the situation in Yugoslavia for the first time since 28 February 1992. Attention was focussed on the problem of Displaced Persons.²³³⁵ At first sight it seems remarkable that this issue should be given relatively so much more attention than in other policy documents of the Dutch government regarding Yugoslavia, and moreover that the issue of Displaced Persons was such a frequently discussed subject in the minutes of the Ministerial Council regarding the former Yugoslavia. The explanation for this is that the other, mostly diplomatic and military, aspects of the Yugoslav question were chiefly matters for the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Defence. These issues were submitted to the Government meetings in well-prepared form and led to little discussion with colleagues in view of the 'non-intervention principle' by which ministers generally did not comment on affairs that did not concern their own department.²³³⁶ The issue of Displaced Persons, however, also involved the Ministers of Justice, of Finance, of Welfare, Health and Culture, and of Education and Science. This is why the minutes of the Ministerial Council meetings contain relatively frequent references to Yugoslavia with regard to the (possible) streams of Displaced Persons from this country.²³³⁷

In 1991 7000 Yugoslavs had come to the Netherlands. At the start of 1992 the Ministry of Justice changed its policy, allowing the Yugoslavs, on an individual basis, to exceed the maximum residence of six months granted to tourists pending further developments in their country.²³³⁸ The High

²³³⁰ Sam Muller, 'Militair ingrijpen in Bosnië-Herzegovina niet de oplossing' (Military intervention in Yugoslavia not the solution), *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/05/92.

²³³¹ M. van den Doel, 'Militair ingrijpen in Bosnië-Herzegovina niet de oplossing', *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/05/92.

²³³² Ton de Kok & Arie Oostlander, 'Interventie' (Intervention), *NRC Handelsblad*, 18/05/92.

²³³³ 'Isoler Belgrade' (Isolate Belgrade), *de Volkskrant*, 16/05/92.

²³³⁴ André Roelofs, 'Europa kan niet weglopen van Joegoslavië' (Europe cannot walk away from Yugoslavia), *De Volkskrant*, 16/05/92.

²³³⁵ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meeting of 22/05/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

²³³⁶ Cf. R.B. Andeweg, 'Tweeërlei Ministerraad. Besluitvorming in Nederlandse kabinetten' (Dual Ministerial Council. Decision-making in Dutch governments), idem (ed.), *Ministers*, pp. 26-27.

²³³⁷ Interviews W. Kok, 08/05/00 and J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

²³³⁸ Radio 1, *IKON*, *De andere wereld van zondagmorgen*, 26/01/92, 9.30am.

Commissioner for Refugees had already established that following two months of war there were 1.3 million Displaced Persons in Bosnia-Herzegovina alone. The basic principle applied by the Dutch government, in line with that of the High Commissioner, was that relief should as far as possible be provided in the region itself. Faced with the situation in Bosnia, judged to be dramatic, the Ministerial Council examined the question as to whether the international community was taking a sufficiently tough attitude to Serbia and whether the Dutch government was making a sufficient effort in this respect. The Ministerial Council meeting of 22 May established that the Dutch government had called for further economic sanctions against Serbia, but that resistance had been met within the EC from France, Greece and, to a lesser extent, Spain, while within the CSCE this move had been resisted by Russia and in the Security Council by China and the non-aligned states.²³³⁹ A little more than a week later, however, the Dutch government got its way.

10. More American involvement?

In the third week of May the American policy of restraint began to change. This shift came about because news of atrocities in the Bosnian war reached the West and through a change in American public opinion. Moreover, Washington could reportedly no longer tolerate the indecision of the EC. On 20 May the American government rescinded the landing rights of the Yugoslavian airline JAT and withdrew its military attachés from Belgrade. Their Yugoslavian colleagues in the United States were ordered to leave the country and the Yugoslavian consulates in New York and San Francisco were told to close their doors. Two days later Secretary of State Baker spoke of a 'humanitarian nightmare' in Bosnia which the world could not ignore.²³⁴⁰

On 24 May, during an international conference in Lisbon on aid for countries of the former Soviet Union, Baker issued an urgent appeal to the rest of the world to call for a halt to the bloodshed in Bosnia. Baker and diplomats close to him gave the impression that the American government was prepared to provide logistical support and air cover for humanitarian convoys, on the condition that other countries be prepared to bear the greater part of the burden of such an international operation.²³⁴¹ Baker also advocated the relief of Sarajevo airport.²³⁴² In a following press conference Baker spoke of a minimum of 2225 deaths in Bosnia in the previous month, 7600 wounded and 2500 missing. He called the practice of ethnic cleansing conducted by Serbs against Muslims as 'all too reminiscent of something that we sat back and witnessed a number of years ago', an implicit reference to the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis. Equally implicit was the accusation he directed at the EC, or those who were seeking 'reasons not to act, or arguing somehow that action in the face of this kind of nightmare is not warranted at this time.'²³⁴³

As if to add strength to Baker's words, on 27 May in Sarajevo a mortar attack took place on a crowd of people queuing for bread. Eighteen people were killed and 160 were wounded. The human slaughter was appalling. Western television companies broadcast only short fragments of footage of the havoc after the attack, so that viewers had no time to make out severed body parts.²³⁴⁴

²³³⁹ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meeting of 22/05/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study; Oscar Garschagen, 'Baker wil van EG and VN zware sancties tegen Servië' (Baker urges EC and UN to impose heavy sanctions against Serbia), *de Volkskrant*, 25/05/92; 'EG bereidt boycot tegen Servië voor' (EC prepares boycott against Serbia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/05/92.

²³⁴⁰ Don Oberdorfer, 'Baker Urges U.N. To Sanction Serbs. Armed U.S. Role Not Ruled Out', *The Washington Post*, 25/05/92.

²³⁴¹ Don Oberdorfer, 'Baker Urges U.N. To Sanction Serbs. Armed U.S. Role Not Ruled Out', *The Washington Post*, 25/05/92.

²³⁴² Oscar Garschagen, 'Baker wil van EG and VN zware sancties tegen Servië', *de Volkskrant*, 25/05/92.

²³⁴³ Don Oberdorfer, 'Baker Urges U.N. To Sanction Serbs. Armed U.S. Role Not Ruled Out', *The Washington Post*, 25/05/92; 'VN eisen van EG harder optreden tegen Servië' (UN demands that EC take tougher line on Serbia), *Trouw*, 25/05/92.

²³⁴⁴ Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 134.

Bosnian Serbs claimed that the attack was the work of Muslims.²³⁴⁵ They were supported by MacKenzie, the Canadian Chief of Staff of UNPROFOR.²³⁴⁶ This was the first major incident in the Bosnian war which raised doubts as to whether the Bosnian Muslims had possibly fired on their own people. Doubt was easy to cast; the truth was mostly impossible to ascertain. Many UN military personnel were inclined to believe in Muslim intent. According to them, members of the Bosnian (Muslim) forces repeatedly provoked fire from Serb units, not only on military positions but also on civilian targets with the aim of mobilizing international public opinion against the Serbs. They also claimed that many Bosnian Muslim forces attacked civilian targets and UN troops in the hope of creating the impression that the Serbs were responsible for this.²³⁴⁷

Izetbegovic had a number of influential ministers, such as Vice-President Ejup Ganic, the Minister for Foreign Affairs Haris Silajdzic, the Ambassador to the UN Muhamed Sacirbey and the Minister of Humanitarian Aid Lagumdzija, who had studied in the United States and had been highly impressed by this country. They were thus also sometimes known as the ‘American mafia’. Their policy was strongly focussed on obtaining American intervention.²³⁴⁸ They had no great interest in an atmosphere of quiet in and around Sarajevo, whereby the siege of the city would drop out of the world’s consciousness.²³⁴⁹ Izetbegovic too believed at that stage of the war that sooner or later the international community would intervene to help the Bosnian government,²³⁵⁰ and in fact a large part of Sarajevo’s population still thought this too.²³⁵¹

There was another reason to be cited for firing on friendly targets: criminality. In Sarajevo one can still hear today how Muslim defenders blackmailed residents of flats with the threat that otherwise they would be fired on. After Sarajevo’s airport had been opened again in June 1992, shelling took place there when the prices on the black market dropped. Following the bombardment the airport was closed and the transport into the city of food and other necessities took place through a tunnel under the airport and the Serb lines. The traffic through these tunnels was mostly in the hands of criminals. After a while soldiers of the government army started to notice that they were engaged in defending not their houses, but the black market.²³⁵² ‘[N]o seasoned observer in Sarajevo doubts for a moment that Muslim forces have found it in their interest to shell friendly targets’, wrote General Charles G. Boyd in 1995. Before this he spent almost three years as deputy commander of the US European Command of NATO and in those years had travelled regularly through Yugoslavia.²³⁵³

Journalists, by contrast, often had more difficulty believing that the Bosnian government army provoked incidents against its own people. They felt that the UN’s tendency to impartiality played into the hands of the military. ‘Thankfully, we have not always been so circumspect’, wrote Peter Maass for

²³⁴⁵ Sremac, *War*, pp. 7-98; Bilatovic, *Mladic*, p. 83; Ulrike Rudberg, ‘Artillerievuur richt bloedbad to in Sarajevo’ (Artillery fire causes bloodbath in Sarajevo), *de Volkskrant*, 29/05/92.

²³⁴⁶ MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, p. 194; Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 31. See also Wijnaendts, *Kroniek*, p. 181.

²³⁴⁷ Leonard Doyle, ‘Muslims “slaughter their own people”’, *The Independent*, 22/08/92; MID/CO. MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, 65/92, 11/09/92; 68/92, 22/09/92; 69/92, 25/09/92; 01/93, 05/01/93; 16/93, 22/02/93; 17/93, 25/02/93; ABZ, 911.31, Yugoslavia. Political relations and parties, Part V-VI, May 1992 - April 1993, MID/CO. MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, 93/92, 04/12/93; Cf. *ibidem* 25/93, 13/04/93; 27/93, 19/04/93; Part VII, May 1993 to March 1994, MID/CO. MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, 31/93, 06/05/93.; 32/93, 10/05/93; 63/93, 02/11/93; 70/93, 15/12/93; 64/92, 08/09/92; 74/92, 12/10/92; 75/92, 15/10/92; DCBC, 2129, MID/CO. MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, 02/94, 11/01/94; 2126, 05/94, 25/01/94; 2125, 06/94, 31/01/94; 2124, 10/94, 15/02/94; 2120, 11/94, 18/02/94; 2119, 12/94, 22/02/94; 2118, 13/94, 25/02/94; L. MacKenzie, ‘Interventie zal in Bosnië geen vrede brengen’ (Intervention will not bring peace in Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 06/02/93; Eyal, *Europe*, p. 67.]

²³⁴⁸ Among other sources, interview H. Silajdzic, 16/04/98.

²³⁴⁹ Morillon, *Croire*, pp. 95-96.

²³⁵⁰ ‘Die Welt muss sich einmischen’ (International community must intervene). Spiegel Interview with Bosnia’s President Alija Izetbegovic’, *Der Spiegel*, 29/06/92.

²³⁵¹ Charles Lane, ‘Dateline Sarajevo’, Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 73.

²³⁵² Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 133.

²³⁵³ Boyd, *Peace*, p. 28.

instance, ‘and did not demand, during World War II, that Winston Churchill provide proof that the bombs exploding in London were German rather than British.’²³⁵⁴ The editors of *The New Republic* wrote following another large attack, that took place on the market of Sarajevo in February 1994, that shortly afterwards everyone was talking about ‘crater analysis’. They added ironically:

The little bomb fell, in the words of a British soldier, ‘in a range bracket that straddles both sides’. The sadists, lucky again. ‘When they kill me,’ the president of Bosnia said the day after the massacre, ‘they will probably say I committed suicide.’ With the authority, no doubt, of ‘bullet-hole-analysis’. This whole controversy is a Goebbels-like fake.²³⁵⁵

Whichever side was responsible, the attack on the Sarajevo bread queue led to a trade embargo by the European Community against Serbia and Montenegro on 28 May. The EC obviously took to heart Baker’s accusation that they were being too weak.²³⁵⁶ The American government then successfully worked, supported by Muslim states and Turkey, for a much more powerful boycott by the UN.²³⁵⁷

The European embargo was followed two days later by acceptance of Security Council Resolution 757. It was possible for this resolution to be passed because the Russian government, which up to then had resisted such moves, would be sorely in need of the goodwill and above all the credits of the G7 countries a little over a month later. A Russian veto of the resolution would have prevented this goodwill.²³⁵⁸ Resolution 757 punished the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with sanctions that were heavier than those ever before imposed by the United Nations on a country. Import and export, together with transport to and from Serbia and Montenegro, were forbidden, financial transactions were almost totally forbidden, all scientific, cultural and sporting contacts were broken off and the level of diplomatic representation was drastically reduced. Only the supply of food and medicines to Yugoslavia was still permitted. As a consequence of the resolution Yugoslavia was also excluded from participation in the Olympic Games and the European Football Championships.

The resolution kept open the option, with reference to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, for military measures intended to bring about a peaceful solution to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. Possibilities considered here were a marine blockade or closure of the airspace over Yugoslavia for military supply aircraft.²³⁵⁹ The sanctions were to remain in place until Serbia and Montenegro complied with Resolution 752, which among things condemned the military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Furthermore the resolution demanded that ‘all parties and others concerned create immediately the necessary conditions for unimpeded delivery of humanitarian supplies to Sarajevo and other destinations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the establishment of a security zone encompassing Sarajevo and its airport (...)’. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali was given the task of making efforts to achieve this.

According to the Dutch Minister Van den Broek, this practically complete trade boycott was ‘a first step’ by the Security Council against Serbia. If Serbia were to conduct a policy of starvation against the Muslim areas, military protection of the aid convoys could form a following step.²³⁶⁰ The government parties were generally in agreement with the minister. Furthermore, they felt that the government should take the initiative in providing aid to Displaced Persons in Yugoslavia. De Kok

²³⁵⁴ Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 161.

²³⁵⁵ The editors, ‘The Abdication’, Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 168.

²³⁵⁶ ‘Belgrade niet immuun’ (Belgrade not immune), *De Volkskrant*, 29/05/92.

²³⁵⁷ Janny Groen, ‘VS willen toch snel harde actie tegen Servië’ (US now wants tough action against Serbia taken quickly), *de Volkskrant*, 30/05/92.

²³⁵⁸ Andrei Edemskii, ‘Russian Perspectives’, Danchev & Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, p. 35.

²³⁵⁹ ‘VN-sancties tegen Servië’ (UN sanctions against Serbia), *de Volkskrant*, 01/06/92.

²³⁶⁰ Radio 1, NCRV, Hier and Nu, 31/05/92, 1.10pm.

wanted relief on the spot, for instance by the creation of a Safe Area protected by UN troops, as had been done for the Kurds following the end of the Gulf War.²³⁶¹

Meanwhile the American government began to show its scepticism. On 1 June an anonymous American functionary said that the Europeans 'couldn't organize a convoy of three cars if their lives depended on it'. The growing mutual irritation between the United States and Europe about the approach to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia became evident when a French diplomat commented in return that the American government was just trying to divert attention from the fact that it itself had ignored the events in ex-Yugoslavia for almost a year.²³⁶² Europe's 'finest hour', that seemed to have struck with the outbreak of the war in Slovenia, was now clearly over.

But the Netherlands, with American support, now seemed to rehabilitate itself from the criticism aimed at it during the EC chairmanship. This was also indicated by J.H. Sampiemon in *NRC Handelsblad*:

'Is there a secret American-Dutch agenda with regard to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia? As a notorious international moralist, The Hague will certainly applaud the sharp rebuke, initiated by Washington, of the remaining Yugoslavia, the republics of Serbia and Montenegro.'²³⁶³

According to the commentator H.J.A. Hofland the Netherlands no longer needed to be ashamed that in the second half of 1991 it had expressed opinions which now, thanks to Secretary of State Baker, seemed to be becoming internationally accepted.²³⁶⁴ The commentators obviously remembered that Minister Van den Broek had conducted a strong anti-Serb policy. This was actually only the partial truth, as is revealed for instance by the limited interpretation of the ECMM mandate, the COREU from Van Walsum that called into question the borders of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the inertia in convening the Yugoslavia Conference, the criticism of the decision by the Croatian government to extend the war and the attempts to postpone the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia.

11. The political and military situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina

At the start of February the Bosnian government had included not only nine Muslims but also six Serbs and five Croats. The resignation of the Serbs had necessitated a revision of the government. On 31 May 1992 Izetbegovic formed a government of national unity which also gave space to parties that did not take a purely ethnic-national position.

Around this time the Serbs held almost 70 per cent of the territory in Bosnia-Herzegovina, more than a million people had already been driven from their homes and thousands, or possibly tens of thousands, had died. The strategy of the Bosnian Serbs had been focussed on a speedy conquest. Plans had been drawn up to take Sarajevo within one to one-and-a-half weeks and the rest of Bosnia-Herzegovina in three to four months. These plans had not succeeded because the Bosnian Serbs had underestimated the resistance put up by government and Croat forces.²³⁶⁵ The Bosnian Serb leaders particularly regretted the fact that the Bosnian capital had not fallen into the hands of Serbs, as these leaders had often had to leave behind their own homes and possessions in the Bosnian capital and were now compelled to make do with the insignificant ski-resort of Pale as capital of their 'republic'. Banja

²³⁶¹ 'Van den Broek sluit militaire actie tegen Servië niet uit' (Van den Broek does not rule out military action against Serbia), *Trouw*, 01/06/92.

²³⁶² Wio Joustra, 'Rol van vredestichter gaat United Nations nog erg moeilijk af' (Role of peacemaker still very hard for United Nations to fill), *de Volkskrant*, 02/06/92.

²³⁶³ J.H. Sampiemon, 'Wat resteert, is een wrede status quo' (What remains is a cruel *status quo*), *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/05/92.

²³⁶⁴ H.J.A. Hofland, 'Over There! (bis)' ('Over There!' (again)), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/05/92.

²³⁶⁵ Jovan Divjak, 'The First Phase, 1992-1993: struggle for survival and genesis of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, pp. 156-157; Norman Cigar, 'Serb War Effort and Termination of the War', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 216; Burg & Shoup, *War*, pp. 129-130.

Luka, the biggest Serb city, was not a candidate for the capital because Karadzic enjoyed relatively low popularity there.

Although the Bosnian Serb forces had not achieved everything their leaders had hoped for, they had still conquered somewhat more than the two-thirds share of Bosnia-Herzegovina that they had talked about before the fighting started. The territorial gains they had made in these first two months would remain virtually unchanged in the following three years, despite many armed confrontations and large numbers of dead and wounded. Following May 1992 the main aim of the Bosnian Serb authorities was to retain as much of their territory as possible in diplomatic and military terms, or through exchange of areas to acquire more of the territory they especially wanted.²³⁶⁶ The Bosnian Serbs would thus profit from the greatest possible retention of the *status quo*, which was weighted strongly in their advantage. Karadzic declared: 'We have what we want. We control 70 per cent of the region, but we claim only 64 per cent of it. All we need now is a homeland fixed in a treaty'.²³⁶⁷

The strategy of the Bosnian Serb leadership was thus, following the first months of the war, a defensive one. As the VRS had a relatively low manpower it was difficult to properly occupy the front line that totalled almost 1500 kilometres in length. At the same time the manpower level reduced the opportunities for going on the attack. This was why after the first months of war the VRS tactics were mostly confined to conducting sieges of towns and enclaves. This cautious strategy had a negative influence on morale. It could be expected that, despite the arms embargo, the light weaponry of the Bosnian government army would improve, together with the training of the ABiH troops.

Another weak point of the VRS was the connection between the Serb areas in the east of Bosnia and in the west. The Serb military had been able to conquer the Posavina Corridor, but at some points the area they held was no wider than two or three kilometres. The Croat and Muslim forces were on the two opposite sides of the corridor. When attempting to widen this strip the Serbs would chiefly encounter the Croats, who were less than enthusiastic about the existence of good supply lines to the Serbs on Croat territory.

This was why, on 15 July, the Serbs started a major offensive to secure the Posavina Corridor. During this offensive it immediately became clear that an extra deployment of Bosnian Serb troops on one front led to the very serious weakening of another front. The offensive on the Posavina Front thus allowed the Bosnian troops in Srebrenica, who had been able to throw off a Bosnian Serb dominance in May 1992, to substantially increase their territory in the summer of 1992. At the same time the Bosnian government army was able to push back the besieging Serb troops for some distance around Sarajevo.

Actually, after mid-1992 the situation for the Bosnian Serbs could only get worse in the long run if the victories already achieved were not to be fixed in an agreement with the Bosnian government. The attention given to this weakness was to be temporarily diverted in late 1992 and above all in early 1993 by the outbreak of hostilities between the ABiH (the Bosnian government army) and Croats. The long-term goal of the Bosnian government, which was dominated by Muslims, was a more or less centralistic united state, to which end they had to reverse the Serb conquests as far as possible through both negotiation and military actions. This goal applied in particular to those areas which had had a Muslim majority before April 1992, such as Eastern Bosnia.²³⁶⁸

12. Political changes in Belgrade

In early 1992 Dobrica Cosic and other nationalistic intellectuals realized that from the international perspective, with the recognition of Croatia and Bosnia, the idea of a Greater Serbia had become a non-

²³⁶⁶ Interviews A. Buha, 17/12/99 and M. Toholj, 14/12/99.

²³⁶⁷ Quoted in Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 393.

²³⁶⁸ MID, MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, 66/92, 14/09/92;, 71/92, 01/10/92; DCBC, 2125. MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, 06/94, 31/01/94.]

starter.²³⁶⁹ Cosic was seriously disappointed by the development undergone by Milosevic,²³⁷⁰ and he was not alone. As described, in January the Serb-Orthodox Church sided with Babic, at that time still the leader of the Croat Serbs, in his conflict with Milosevic and accused the Serbian president of bartering away the interests of the Serb people. A few weeks later the independent weekly *Vreme*, published in Belgrade, listed 70 of Milosevic's 'successes', such as war with Croatia, a stream of Displaced Persons, international isolation, inflation, a growth in violent crime and an exodus of the nation's elite.²³⁷¹ In mid-February, in Belgrade in the space of five days, the Democratic Party was able to collect 200,000 signatures to a petition calling for the resignation of Milosevic.

In the eyes of many nationalists Milosevic had not turned out to be the man who had the interests of the Serb people at heart. Cosic felt himself to be roundly betrayed by the Serbian president.²³⁷² Consequently Cosic's villa, actually situated quite close to that of Milosevic, became in early 1992 a meeting place for nationalist intellectuals who felt that Milosevic had done their cause more harm than good. This group was added to by persons from political and military circles and from the intelligence and security services, not only from Serbia but also from Serb circles in Croatia and Bosnia. One of the members of this group was Nikola Koljevic, one of the Bosnian Serb leaders. The group was convinced that Cosic should replace Milosevic. Cosic himself did not however wish to become politically active, despite the great pressure exerted on him by his supporters.²³⁷³ One of the reasons he gave was his weak health: he had problems with his circulation, his heart and his prostate gland. In the previous years he had undergone major surgery three times.²³⁷⁴ Instead of becoming politically active, on 8 April Cosic warned Milosevic in a letter that his leadership was doomed and urged the Serbian president to form a government of national unity. As soon as Milosevic had received the letter he invited Cosic to a conversation, also attended by Kosta Mihajlovic, one of the authors of the memorandum issued by the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts in 1986 (see Chapter 4 of the section 'History preceding the conflict...' in this report).

Criticism of Milosevic increased following the outbreak of the war in Bosnia; this criticism was expressed in many sections of society. Some leaders of the Orthodox Church criticized the crimes committed by Serbs in Bosnia. In their opinion Milosevic should be replaced by a moderate non-Communist who would be internationally acceptable. These circles focussed their hopes on persons such as Prince Aleksandar Karadjordjevic, the son of the former King Petar, who visited Belgrade in June 1992.²³⁷⁵ In the same month the Serb Orthodox Church in Belgrade organized a 'prayers for peace' march against Milosevic and against the participation of Serbia in the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ten thousand Serbs took part in this march, carrying a variety of bells. During the demonstration the churches of Belgrade rang their bells,²³⁷⁶ and the procession was led by Patriarch Pavle.²³⁷⁷ He had already expressed his support for a march by 50,000 demonstrators on 9 March, organized to commemorate the bloody suppression of another demonstration on the same date a year before. When speaking to the demonstrators on that occasion he had addressed Milosevic and the Serbian government with the words: 'For you, all the bloodshed and all the misfortune in the insanity of this fratricidal war has not revealed the truth that no good can come of such evil.'²³⁷⁸ On 29 May the

²³⁶⁹ The following is based chiefly on Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, pp. 126 v.v.

²³⁷⁰ This is also indicated by interview V. Jovanovic, 14/09/01.

²³⁷¹ Ulrike Rudberg, 'Volksmenner Milosevic vreest nu 'de straat'' (Demagogue Milosevic now fears 'the street'), *de Volkskrant*, 20/02/92. See also Judah, *Serbs*, pp. 276-278.

²³⁷² Cosic quoted in Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 306.

²³⁷³ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 165; idem, *Autoritet*, pp. 5-6; interviews V. Matovic, 02/08/01; S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

²³⁷⁴ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 198; interview S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

²³⁷⁵ Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 155.

²³⁷⁶ 'Servisch protest tegen oorlog' (Serb protest against war), *De Stem*, 15/06/92.

²³⁷⁷ 'Patriarch loopt voorop in Belgrado' (Patriarch leads the protest in Belgrade), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/06/92; 'Duizenden Serviërs protesteren tegen oorlogsgeweld' (Thousands of Serbs protest against war violence), *de Volkskrant*, 15/06/92; Ramet, *Babel*, p. 202.

²³⁷⁸ Thomas, *Serbia*, p. 112.

Serb Orthodox Church issued an official statement for the first time since the Second World War in which it criticized Serb authorities. In the declaration the Orthodox bishops called for the formation of 'a government of national salvation': 'We remind those in power that no one's seat is more important than the fate and the freedom of the entire people and that no one has a monopoly on the people and the future of our children.'²³⁷⁹

After 18 members of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences had written an open letter at the end of November 1991 in which they called for an immediate end to what they saw as the senseless war in Croatia,²³⁸⁰ a meeting of the Academy followed on 4 June 1992 at which 37 academics demanded the resignation of Milosevic.²³⁸¹ The Academy became violently divided between the supporters and opponents of Milosevic.²³⁸²

The group around Cosic is said to have maintained contacts both with nationalist politicians in Moscow and with Western intelligence and security services, including the CIA, about the attitude of foreign countries to a coup against Milosevic. At the start of May Koljevic approached the American ambassador Zimmermann, according to him with the knowledge of Cosic, but heard from the diplomat that Zimmermann did not regard him and several other Serb nationalists as the solution, but in fact as 'major problems'.²³⁸³

In mid-May the majority of the opposition, divided until then, joined together in the Democratic Movement of Serbia (DEPOS). It refused to participate in the elections on 31 May for the parliament of rump Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) which had been announced shortly before and which had left the opposition too little time to prepare. The Albanians in Kosovo did not participate in the elections either, so that only 56 per cent of the electorate voted. Of these cast votes, another 12 per cent were declared invalid. The resulting parliament consisted mostly of Milosevic supporters, Milosevic's wife Mira Markovic, who had her own Communist party, and the extreme nationalist Seselj. While the party of Milosevic gained 43 per cent of the votes, the party of Seselj surprised with an electoral success of 30 per cent. Another surprise was in store for Milosevic on 25 June when a faction under the leadership of Cedomir Mirkovic split off from his party because it advocated a more reform-oriented policy. In the months following the elections, students repeatedly demonstrated against Milosevic's war policy and demanded his resignation. The leading opposition figure, Vuk Draskovic, who now increasingly changed his nationalist position for a more democratic one, said that the enemy of the Serbian people was based in Belgrade and resembled Saddam Hussein.²³⁸⁴ Other opposition parties urged a coalition government without Milosevic in which the opposition would have to be represented in order to prevent a civil war.

Milosevic's economic problems were mounting up as well. After the United Nations had declared a boycott of Serbia and Montenegro on 30 May queues immediately formed at filling stations, where no more than 12 litres of fuel was issued per car.²³⁸⁵ Milosevic instructed his propaganda department to present the sanctions to the Serb people as proof of a worldwide conspiracy against his regime, in the hope of appealing to nationalist sentiments among the population. Nonetheless, just as in November 1991, Milosevic was seriously concerned about the effect of sanctions on the already shaky economy. The joint gross national product of Serbia and Montenegro had roughly halved since 1989. The industrial output had dropped by tens of percentage points since the previous summer, and at the end of April 750,000 citizens of Yugoslavia were registered as unemployed. Inflation had reached 40

²³⁷⁹ 'Servische kerk hekelt regering' (Serb church denounces government), *NRC Handelsblad*, 20/05/92.

²³⁸⁰ 'Servische academici: deze oorlog is zinloos' (Serb academics: this war is senseless), *de Volkskrant*, 27/11/91.

²³⁸¹ Olivera Milosavljevic, 'The Abuse of the Authority of Science', Popov (ed.) *War*, p. 295.

²³⁸² Olivera Milosavljevic, 'From Memorandum to 'Collective' Responsibility', Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, *Elite*, p. 18.

²³⁸³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 201.

²³⁸⁴ Ramet, *Babel*, p. 202.

²³⁸⁵ Ulrike Rudberg, "Servië is rijk, het voedde de halve wereld" (Serbia is rich, it feeds half the world), *de Volkskrant*, 02/06/92; Nicole Lucas, 'We overleven het wel, zeggen de Serviers' (Serbs say 'we'll survive'), *Trouw* 02/06/92.

per cent per month and in the month of April it was no less than 80 per cent. Official figures predicted an inflation of 17,500 per cent for all of 1992; it was ultimately to be many times higher. The average monthly income had dropped below 100 guilders.²³⁸⁶ Even moderately conducted sanctions could thus be disastrous for Milosevic's image. Moreover, many Serbs in Serbia did not wish to pay for the costs of a war fought for the Serbs outside Serbia, whom they often described as primitive.²³⁸⁷

On 28 May, even before the Security Council had decided on widespread sanctions, Milosevic said on Serbian television that Yugoslavia was a 'medium-sized country with a great development potential' but in the same broadcast he admitted with regard to the economy that he '[did not] believe that there is a single citizen of Serbia who does not feel concern today'.²³⁸⁸ On 1 July the Belgrade regime was forced to freeze the wages and salaries in Yugoslavia and to devalue the dinar by 80 per cent. At the same time petrol was rationed to 20 litres per month.²³⁸⁹ In August 1992 most of the large factories had to close due to lack of fuel and raw materials.²³⁹⁰ A serious energy shortage was predicted for the winter. In Belgrade alone there were 200,000 apartments that could only be heated with oil. The sanctions led to a dramatic increase in unemployment. The Dutch embassy in Belgrade reported that social unrest was considerable as a result of the economic decline.²³⁹¹ Reports appeared in Serbian newspapers and magazines that a civil war would soon break out in Serbia. Milosevic had to think of a ruse.

After the creation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) at the end of April, and the acceptance of a constitution that provided for a president, Cosic was subjected to growing pressure from friends and the Orthodox Church to become politically active and to take up a state post.²³⁹² Milosevic himself and leading figures in his party, the SDS, also started to pressure Cosic now.²³⁹³ The motives cited for this were disparate. According to an advisor of Cosic, Milosevic needed a true nationalist because Milosevic himself, originally from Montenegro, would otherwise now encounter difficulties with the extreme nationalist opposition in Serbia, such as Seselj and his party.²³⁹⁴ According to another party this Montenegrin background presented no problems at all, but Milosevic hoped to boost his popularity again with the appointment of Cosic.²³⁹⁵

In the first week of June Milosevic offered Cosic the presidency of the new Yugoslavia. In view of the letter of 8 April and other messages that Cosic had sent the Serbian leader,²³⁹⁶ it can have been no secret to Milosevic and his party leadership that Cosic was taking an increasingly sceptical attitude towards the President of Serbia and his policy. Milosevic must however have calculated that he would be wiser to put Cosic, who was at his best as a manipulator behind the scenes, into a position in the limelight, where he would moreover be virtually powerless. Following the elections Milosevic's party, together with the Montenegrin Democratic Party of Socialists and Seselj's party, now dominated the federal parliament. It was not the Serbian people but this parliament that chose the president. It could also dismiss him.

²³⁸⁶ 'Het nieuwe – 'derde'- Joegoslavië' (The new – 'third' – Yugoslavia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/04/92; Theo Engelen, 'Voor Milosevic is het erop of eronder' (Sink or swim for Milosevic), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/05/92; Nicole Lucas, 'We overleven het wel, zeggen de Serviers', *Trouw* 02/06/92; Judah, *Serbs*, p. 267.

²³⁸⁷ Cf. Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 118.

²³⁸⁸ Quoted in Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 161.

²³⁸⁹ ABZ, DIE/2001/00023 Memorandum from ASI to TZ/dossier, 02/09/92, no. 3212.

²³⁹⁰ Richard Becker, 'The role of sanctions in the destruction of Yugoslavia', *Nato*, p. 119.

²³⁹¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01802. Engels 283 to Van den Broek, 14/09/92.

²³⁹² Interview V. Matovic, 16/12/99.

²³⁹³ Stojanovic, *Fall*, pp. 165-166; interviews V. Matovic, 02/08/01; S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01; Oliveira Milosavljevic, 'The Abuse of the Authority of Science', Popov (ed.) *War*, p. 295; Djukic, *Vetru*, p. 192.

²³⁹⁴ Interview V. Matovic, 02/08/01.

²³⁹⁵ Interview S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

²³⁹⁶ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 166.

By this time Cosic was not only dissatisfied with Milosevic, but unhappy with the opposition too.²³⁹⁷ He felt that it was more intellectually than politically oriented; besides this, the opposition was fragmented and spent more time in discussions with each other than with the population.²³⁹⁸ Under these circumstances Cosic had little alternative than to play a more visible role on the political stage himself. On 15 July the Milosevic-controlled parliament elected Cosic to the position of President of Yugoslavia.

Cosic's policy as president was chiefly focussed on the international community. Here, he believed, lay the key to improving the lot of the Serbian people. He thought that if he could clarify what he saw as the historical roots of the conflict, the West would gain a better understanding of the Serb standpoint.²³⁹⁹ Moreover, Cosic was convinced that as long as Communists or ex-Communists were in power, the West would not be prepared to lift the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and also that no favourable agreements could be made for the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The policy of the brand-new federal president was thus aimed at getting a new government into power in Serbia.²⁴⁰⁰ Furthermore a confederation should be created in Bosnia: an idea he felt to be justified, as he told his foreign contacts, because not only Serbs but all three parties in Bosnia were guilty of crimes.²⁴⁰¹ At the same time he signalled to the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia that in the current international climate they could not expect to join with Serbia or rump Yugoslavia.²⁴⁰² Autonomy was the most they could hope for.

Cosic's policy was to gain the support of a man who until then had been a total outsider in Serbian politics: Milan Panic.²⁴⁰³ Prior to his appointment Cosic had suggested to the leadership of the SDS that the future prime minister of rump Yugoslavia should be a Serb who had gained a positive reputation working abroad. The leadership of the SDS had agreed to this.²⁴⁰⁴ With this move, in fact, Cosic and the SDS immediately broke a provision of the new constitution stipulating that if the president of the federation was a Serb, the prime minister should be a Montenegrin.

Shortly before the election of Cosic by the parliament, intimates of Milosevic proposed to Cosic and his advisors that Milan Panic be appointed as prime minister. He was an unknown quantity to Cosic, but he agreed to this candidate.²⁴⁰⁵ Panic had fled Yugoslavia in 1955, at the age of 25, supposedly to take part in a cycle race in the Netherlands. In fact he went to the United States. Here, following studies in biochemistry in California, he set up the pharmaceuticals company International Chemical and Nuclear (ICN), which at the start of the 1990s achieved a global annual turnover of half a billion dollars. In 1990 ICN had entered into a joint venture with the Yugoslavian state company Galenika. In this way the dynamic self-made man Panic had become acquainted with President Milosevic. Milosevic invited Panic to dinner when the Yugoslavian American was visiting Belgrade on business and offered him the office of prime minister of Yugoslavia. Milosevic saw Panic as the ideal man for a campaign directed at the West for removal of the sanctions against Yugoslavia.²⁴⁰⁶

However, the arrival of Panic was delayed by several weeks because the pill magnate was conducting negotiations with the government in Washington to prevent the American authorities taking action against his company as part of the UN sanctions regime if he should accept the

²³⁹⁷ Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 307.

²³⁹⁸ Stojanovic, *Autoritet*, pp. 26 and 33.

²³⁹⁹ Stojanovic, *Autoritet*, pp. 34, 38-41 and 47.

²⁴⁰⁰ Stojanovic, *Fall*, pp. 171 and 186-187.

²⁴⁰¹ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 188.

²⁴⁰² Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 191; idem, *Autoritet*, pp. 42-43; interviews S. Djukic, 04/08/01; V. Matovic, 02/08/01.

²⁴⁰³ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 169; interview S. Djukic, 04/08/01.

²⁴⁰⁴ Interviews V. Matovic, 02/08/01; S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

²⁴⁰⁵ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 167; Djukic, *Vetra*, p. 197; interview V. Matovic, 02/08/01.

²⁴⁰⁶ According to Mira Markovic this was the only motive for her husband (and herself) to choose Panic, quoted in Williams & Cigar, *War Crimes*, no page numbers, n. 149. see also John F. Burns, 'Bosnia Loses Any Hope of Being Saved', *The New York Times*, 25/07/93.

Yugoslavian state function.²⁴⁰⁷ On 4 July Panic finally arrived from the US in Belgrade to take up office. He was accompanied by John Scanlan, who had been the American ambassador to Belgrade between 1985 and 1989. Scanlan had left the American foreign service in 1991 and had then become vice-president of Panic's pharmaceuticals company, charged with supervising the expansion of the company in the former Communist world.

Panic, who quickly acquired the nickname of 'the Ross Perot of the Balkans',²⁴⁰⁸ turned to his task with energy. During his inaugural speech he called for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Five days after his appointment he travelled to Sarajevo where he met Izetbegovic. After this meeting he criticized 'cheap politicians who have played the nationalist card and brought about a civil war'.²⁴⁰⁹ In the summer Panic was to sack one of the most important executors of Milosevic's policy of illegal arming of nationalists and paramilitaries, Mihalj Kertes. Panic also placed himself at the head of the Ministry of Defence, although this was only accepted by the army high command after it had been assured that final authority would be held by Cosic.

Immediately after his arrival Panic told Milosevic that there was only one way to get the sanctions against Yugoslavia lifted: Milosevic himself should disappear from the political stage. In order to sweeten the bitter pill of resignation for Milosevic the pharmaceuticals man offered ex-Prime Minister Milosevic a well-paid job as director of a planned American-Yugoslavian bank in California.²⁴¹⁰ Milosevic did not immediately refuse the offer. In fact, he himself had announced at the start of June that he was prepared to step down if this could lead to the lifting of sanctions against Yugoslavia.²⁴¹¹

Following this Panic contacted the Bush government to obtain a visa for the Milosevic family. However, Panic's position both at home and abroad was weak. Many foreign politicians and diplomats saw Panic as a puppet of Milosevic, who would be sidelined as soon as the international community had lifted the sanctions.²⁴¹² Moreover, the attitude of the international community towards Cosic and Panic was made more difficult because they were President and Prime Minister respectively of Federal Yugoslavia, which still claimed to be the successor to the old Yugoslavia. As described, the international community did not recognize the new Yugoslavia and the legal succession.²⁴¹³ Finally, to many in the West Milosevic seemed, despite all that had happened, to be a man one could do business with when necessary. After all, had not Milosevic pushed through acceptance of the Vance Plan against the resistance of Milan Babic? And who else apart from Milosevic would be able to get the Bosnian Serb leadership to end the aggression in Bosnia?

Another disadvantage of Cosic and Panic was that they had not been able to get the existing opposition against Milosevic within Serbia on their side.²⁴¹⁴ The opposition felt that they had almost managed to push Milosevic aside at the moment that Cosic and Panic accepted their posts, and thus, in the opinion of the opposition, had saved the Serbian leader.²⁴¹⁵ At the end of June, following repeated demonstrations by the opposition, Milosevic agreed to elections for the presidency of Serbia at the end of the year. After this announcement and with Cosic and Panic in their posts, the protests against Milosevic subsided. Milosevic harvested the first fruits of the appointment and Cosic and Panic stood there empty-handed. When Cosic invited representatives of the opposition for talks, most of them refused because they said they did not recognize the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, its constitution,

²⁴⁰⁷ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 167; interviews V. Matovic, 02/08/01; S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

²⁴⁰⁸ Gregory Crouch, 'Can-do Entrepreneur Will Tackle Balkan War', *Los Angeles Times*, 03/07/92.

²⁴⁰⁹ Thomas, *Serbia*, p. 123.

²⁴¹⁰ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 147; Djukic, *Milosevic*, p. 55.

²⁴¹¹ Ulrike Rudberg, 'Servische president Milosevic flirt met aanbod tot ontslag' (Serbian President Milosevic flirts with offer to resign), *de Volkskrant*, 05/06/92; Theo Engelen, 'Sleutel voor vrede in handen van president Servië' (Key to peace in hands of Serbian president), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/06/92; Djukic, *Milosevic*, p. 56.

²⁴¹² Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 169.

²⁴¹³ See for instance APVNY. Bosnia-Herzegovina/emergency aid, May 1992 – August 1995, Van Schaik 753 to Van den Broek, 07/08/92.

²⁴¹⁴ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 178; idem, *Autoritet*, p. 10.

²⁴¹⁵ Stojanovic, *Autoritet*, pp. 24-27.

and thus not the president either.²⁴¹⁶ Talks conducted by Cosic and Panic with the Albanian leaders in Kosovo in late 1992 were to remain equally fruitless.²⁴¹⁷

On 10 July Panic met James Baker in Helsinki, where he pressed for an assurance that the sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro would be lifted in exchange for the resignation of Milosevic. Baker said this was out of the question: the lifting of sanctions was not a matter for the US, but for the UN. Panic returned to Belgrade having accomplished nothing.

Shortly after this Panic made a new attempt and requested a conversation with Deputy Secretary of State Eagleburger. But the latter rejected a meeting with Panic out of hand, citing the order from President Bush that the United States should keep out of the Bosnian question. Eagleburger himself was not happy with Panic's appointment. He is said to have believed that Panic, by accepting the office of prime minister of rump Yugoslavia, had thwarted the opportunity for removing Milosevic.²⁴¹⁸ It does indeed seem that Cosic and Panic had disrupted Anglo-American plans. The British Foreign Minister Hurd was later to tell Cosic that the British government had been planning to oust Milosevic and to have him replaced by Aleksandar Karadjordjevic. However, following the appointment of Cosic the government in London had abandoned the plan.²⁴¹⁹

Aware that he could not count on American help, Panic turned to Cosic and his circle. With their support Panic once again tried to convince Milosevic to step down. Cosic did indeed side with Panic in this matter.²⁴²⁰ Almost from the moment that he took up office, Cosic, just like Panic, was constantly at odds with Milosevic.²⁴²¹ There were strong personal differences between Cosic and Milosevic. One major factor was the age difference of 20 years in a society strongly stratified by generations. Moreover, Cosic came from the world of art and literature while Milosevic was uncultivated. Cosic took the long-term view, while Milosevic decided things from day to day.²⁴²² Finally there were major differences about the policy to be followed, whereby Cosic's main concern was the Serbian people and Milosevic primarily followed his own interest.²⁴²³ Although Panic, with his background in American corporate culture, was also a very different person to Cosic, the two soon managed to get along. Panic, who had been away from Yugoslavia for more than 20 years, made a number of political blunders to begin with, but Cosic valued his intentions.²⁴²⁴ According to various persons involved, Milosevic's resignation had actually been one of the conditions on which Cosic accepted his post.²⁴²⁵

Panic was also able to obtain the support of Milosevic's confidant, the media man Dusan Mitevic. The Chief of Staff of the Yugoslavian army, Zivota Panic (no relation to the Yugoslavian prime minister), was more hesitant.²⁴²⁶ According to Cosic, three weeks after the accession of his government Panic submitted a written agreement to Milosevic in which the latter would promise to resign. If he did this the sanctions would immediately be lifted, Milosevic would become president of the Serbian-American Bank and Milosevic and his family would be granted visas for the United States. The agreement was to be signed by Milosevic and Baker. According to Cosic this was the only time that Milosevic genuinely considered stepping down as president. He seemed seriously concerned about his own fate.²⁴²⁷ Two days later, however, he called to say that he would not sign. According to Cosic, Mira

²⁴¹⁶ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 168.

²⁴¹⁷ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 231.

²⁴¹⁸ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, pp. 148-153; interview S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

²⁴¹⁹ Djukic, *Vetra*, p. 209.

²⁴²⁰ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 480.

²⁴²¹ Interviews S. Djukic, 04/08/01; V. Matovic, 02/08/01; S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

²⁴²² Interview V. Matovic, 02/08/01.

²⁴²³ Cf. Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 171.

²⁴²⁴ Interview V. Matovic, 02/08/01.

²⁴²⁵ Interviews D. Cosic, 13/09/01; V. Jovanovic, 14/09/01; S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01; Stojanovic, *Fall*, pp. 169 and 215.

²⁴²⁶ See also Robin Alison Remington, 'The Yugoslav Army: Trauma and Transition', in: Danopoulos & Zirker (eds.), *Relations*, pp. 166-167.

²⁴²⁷ Djukic, *Vetra*, p. 201.

Markovic had talked her husband out of the idea.²⁴²⁸ Afterwards Milosevic did not want to be reminded of the episode and denied that he had ever made an agreement with Panic about resigning.²⁴²⁹ When Milosevic also realized that Panic had been cold-shouldered by the American government and had been bluffing, he knew that he had nothing really to fear from Panic and he regained his energy.²⁴³⁰ The world once again appeared as the Serbian president liked to imagine it: it consisted of enemies and of people who could be used or abused.²⁴³¹ A newly self-assured Milosevic stated that the role of Cosic and Panic was simply to be the executors of his policies.²⁴³² But they were not yet prepared to accept this view of things.

13. Conclusion

The war in Bosnia had been predicted long in advance. However, it was only two months after its outbreak that the West was able to formulate a concrete response in the form of a UN boycott. But the means to enforce this were not yet available. Worse still, the coincidentally present peacekeeping troops had left the Bosnian capital. Once again the West was lagging behind events when a conflict erupted in the former Yugoslavia.

This reserve was due to a combination of reasons. To begin with there was an unwillingness to deploy troops in a state that was still awaiting recognition. But the chief motives were probably the lack of UN resources and the absence of agreement by the Bosnian Serbs. Furthermore, the Secretary-General of the UN, Boutros-Ghali, felt that the rich European Community should do something while the leaders of the EC said they were waiting for the UN. This was not to be the last time in the Bosnian conflict that the parties passed the buck back and forth.

The European Community accepted a form of ethnic division in Bosnia from the very start. The speed at which Serb troops realized this in practice betrayed their thorough preparation. Of the parties in Bosnia, only the government in Sarajevo still took a multi-ethnic position. The Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat leaders strove for the autonomy or secession of ethnically homogenous areas. The ferocity of the conflict and the rapid escalation quickly created a situation in which intervention was difficult, if not impossible.

Reversing the process of ethnic homogenization would require a major effort by the West, in all likelihood not only at the negotiating table but also by military means. In view of the hesitation in the Western camp during the first year of war in the former Yugoslavia, it was unclear whether the Western governments were able to make, and wished to make, this military effort. In this respect the (Bosnian) Serb policy of quickly achieving a *fait accompli* had proved successful.

The question was whether the Serb leaders would manage to capitalize politically on their military successes by means of a favourable peace agreement. Or would public opinion in the West finally turn against the ethnic cleansing, and in a way that pressured the Western governments to do more? This was the Bosnian government's gamble. Concrete reports about the brutal acts of Serb troops in East and Northwest-Bosnia were still scarce and in the Netherlands – but not only there – politicians and media were still taking a reserved stance on the war in Bosnia. Nonetheless, in the course of May enough information reached the West to generate the first signs of a growing readiness for more humanitarian or military action.²⁴³³ The path between doing nothing and doing something started to be explored. The risk that this involved was that half-measures would be decided on, a nightmare for the military since the lessons of the Vietnam War.

²⁴²⁸ Djukic, *Vetra*, 201.

²⁴²⁹ Interview V. Jovanovic, 14/09/01.

²⁴³⁰ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, pp. 148-153; interview S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

²⁴³¹ Cf. Inic, *Portreti*, p. 146.

²⁴³² Inic, *Portreti*, p. 136.

²⁴³³ See also for instance Stephen S. Rosenfeld, 'Idee van militair ingrijpen tegen Servië wint terein in VS' (Idea of military intervention against Serbia gains ground in US), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/05/92.

The West had more opportunities for political manipulation in the former Yugoslavia than for military action, either by supporting the opposition in Bosnia and Serbia or by exploiting the differences between Milosevic on the one side and Cosic and Panic on the other. However, the politicians and diplomats of the West showed little creativity in this respect. They quickly assumed that the only negotiation partners in the former Yugoslavia were the nationalist leaders – the most pessimistic scenario – even though remarks attributed to Eagleburger and Hurd indicate that at least one attempt to manipulate Serbian politics was made by the governments in Washington and London.

Furthermore, the European Community and the United States, which was starting to play a stronger role, took a position on the Yugoslavian legal succession based more on pragmatism than on principles. This was in glaring contrast to the lack of haste showed by these countries when it came to opening diplomatic offices in Sarajevo. In this respect too they revealed that they continued to view the Milosevic regime as the most important negotiation partner. Unless the West was prepared to take military action to reverse the *fait accompli* in Bosnia that the Serbs had presented to the world, then Milosevic would remain the central point of contact. It was through him that Europe, the United States and the UN had to continue to exert pressure on the Bosnian Serbs and prevent a conflict breaking out elsewhere, for instance in Kosovo or Macedonia.

Chapter 6

Emotionalization of the debate following reports about the camps ('Omarska'): June 1992 – August 1992

1. The peace mission begins its task in Bosnia; UNPROFOR-II gets underway

Resolution 757, which was passed by the Security Council on 30 May, contained the most far-reaching embargo ever imposed on a country by the UN, but at the time it was accepted there were no enforcing measures attached to it. The resolution also required that all parties should immediately establish the conditions for the unhampered delivery of humanitarian aid to Sarajevo and other destinations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. One of these conditions was that there would be a security zone encompassing Sarajevo and its airport.

However, after the acceptance of Resolution 757, the Bosnian Serbs did not back down at all; for example, they continued to occupy the airport of the Bosnian capital. The question was whether countries or international organizations would be prepared to enforce the stipulations of this resolution by military means. Many governments regretted what was happening in Bosnia, but at the same time there was not a single government which thought that it touched on vital interests of their own state,²⁴³⁴ and therefore they were not very willing to become deeply involved in the situation in Bosnia, for instance by putting the lives of their own military at risk. On the other hand, in the media there was growing pressure on the Western governments to 'do something'.²⁴³⁵

On 2 June the WEU Assembly met. The Dutch MP De Hoop Scheffer had the task of reporting on Yugoslavia and the sanctions against that country. De Hoop Scheffer said that 15 July, the date fixed by the UN to report on the effectiveness of the embargo, was too late. The Assembly then appealed to the governments of the member states to consider the use of military force in the Yugoslav conflict. As usual, the British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd stepped on the brake: 'Neither the UN, the EC, the NATO, the WEU or any other combination of initials can make peace or drive out the fear and hatred in Eastern Europe by force.'²⁴³⁶

However, on 5 June Cedric Thornberry, UNPROFOR's Director of Civil Affairs, managed to reach an agreement with the conflicting parties in and around Sarajevo as to opening the airport. According to this agreement, humanitarian aid would be delivered to Sarajevo under UN supervision,

²⁴³⁴ Cf. Andreatta, *War*, Bert, *Superpower*, pp. xxiii, 12, 68-69, 74-75 and 78; Steven L. Burg, 'Negotiating a Settlement: Lessons of the Diplomatic Process', Blank (ed.), *Wars*, p. 52; id., 'The International Community and the Yugoslav Crisis', Esman/Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p. 262; Callahan, *Wars*, pp. 43-44, 97; Haass, *Intervention*, p. 72; J.L. Heldring, 'Een mutatie in de staat' ('A change in the state'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/06/95; Steven A. Holmes, 'Backing Away Again, Christopher Says Bosnia Is Not a Vital Interest', *New York Times*, 03/06/93; Klep, 'Offer', p. 14; Koslowski, 'Bosnien', p. 366; Newhouse, 'Round', p. 68; Koen Koch, 'Joegoslavië, Oost-Europa en de strategie van neo-containment', in: De Vries e.a., *Continent*, pp. 117-118 and 129; F. Stephen Larrabee, 'US Policy in the Balkans: From Containment to Strategic Reengagement', Danopoulos & Messas (eds.), *Crises*, p. 281; Bruce K. MacLauray, 'Foreword' in: Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. vii; Woodward, *Tragedy*, pp. 6-7; Moore, 'Report', p. 1; Newhouse, 'Round', p. 68; James Baker in: Van der Roer, *Frontdiplomaten*, p. 125; Don Oberdorfer/Marc Fischer, 'Bush Turns Aside Bosnian Plea for Military Intervention', *The Washington Post*, 10/07/92; J.H. Sampiemon, 'In Bihac klinkt echo van 1914' ('In Bihac an echo of 1914 can be heard'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/11/94; Doug Seay, 'U.S. and Bosnia: Too late, wrong war', Heritage Foundation Report, 20/07/92; Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 114; Simms, *Hour*, pp. 11 and 14; Richard H. Ullman, 'Introduction: The World and Yugoslavia's Wars', id. (ed.), *World*, p. 3; Infantry Major General ret'd. J.C.A.C. de Vogel, 'Ingrijpen in Joegoslavië?' ('Intervene in Yugoslavia?'), *Carré* 1992, no. 12, pp. 13-14; Wettig, 'Rolle', pp. 125-126.

²⁴³⁵ Cf. also Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 273.

²⁴³⁶ 'Roep om militaire interventie in Joegoslavië luider' ('Call for military intervention in Yugoslavia louder'), *de Volkskrant*, 03/06/92.

without discrimination and purely on the grounds of need. The conflicting parties promised not to obstruct the humanitarian work in any way and guaranteed the safety of the aid workers. For this purpose, corridors between the airport and the city would be created, which would be supervised by UNPROFOR.²⁴³⁷

In a report to the Security Council on 13 May the head of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations Murrack Goulding had warned against the deployment of UN troops in Bosnia, a country torn apart by war. Nevertheless, after the 'airport agreement' on 8 June the Security Council decided in Resolution 758 to send a thousand UN troops to Sarajevo, as well as sixty military observers and forty policemen. They were to assume control of the airport so that an airlift could be arranged to send food and medical supplies to the suffering inhabitants of the Bosnian capital. The resolution stipulated that the conflicting parties were not to obstruct air traffic and must therefore withdraw their weapons out of the field of fire of the airport. Resolution 758 was based on Resolution 757, which referred expressly to Chapter VII of the UN charter, thus authorizing the use of force. It was strange that the mandate of the Resolution 758 was for classic peacekeeping, in which only self-defence was permitted. Conditions for the implementation of the resolution were a lasting ceasefire and acceptance by the parties involved.

Major General Lewis MacKenzie, who had up till then been Force Commander Nambiar's Chief of Staff, was put in charge of implementing the resolution. In addition to the hundred French soldiers who had remained in Sarajevo when Nambiar moved the headquarters to Belgrade, he also had the Canadian battalion, which withdrew from sector East in Croatia, at his disposal. However, the Canadian battalion was to fulfil this task only temporarily; at the end of July it returned to East Croatia to resume its original task. In the meantime it had been replaced by three smaller infantry companies consisting of five hundred men each: Frenchbat 2, an Egyptian and a Ukrainian battalion. Together, these three supposedly reflected the religious background of the three parties in the conflict, namely Catholic, Muslim and Orthodox.

Irritation between UNPROFOR and the inhabitants of Sarajevo

MacKenzie, who had experience of classic peacekeeping operations, was not to have an easy time carrying out his task. Later he was to complain that he had experienced 17 ceasefires, the longest of which had lasted four days.²⁴³⁸ On 11 June he moved into Sarajevo with an advance guard of 150 Canadian troops and a few French military observers. A few weeks later the rest of the Canadian troops joined them. This was the beginning of the UNPROFOR operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina; it was called UNPROFOR II, to distinguish it from the operation in Croatia, UNPROFOR I. In fact, in common parlance the term UNPROFOR continued to be used to refer to the mission in the former Yugoslavia in general. Later in this report this usage will be adopted; the term UNPROFOR will be used when strictly speaking UNPROFOR II is meant.

When MacKenzie arrived in Sarajevo, he was welcomed by cheering inhabitants.²⁴³⁹ However, their enthusiasm was soon to fade, in the first place because a ceasefire was not effected, so that in practice the airport was still not open. Moreover, the inhabitants came to realize that UNPROFOR had not come to fight on the side of the Bosnian government. The sole purpose of UNPROFOR II was to ensure the safe provision of food to the people of Sarajevo. This led to reproaches by the Sarajlije, the inhabitants of the Bosnian capital, that the United Nations was just making sure they could die with full stomachs.²⁴⁴⁰ The population asked the blue helmets to distribute weapons instead of food, and they

²⁴³⁷ MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, p. 200.

²⁴³⁸ United States Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Situation, p. 57.

²⁴³⁹ See for example Hans Moleman, 'Aankomst VN-konvooi geeft burgeres Sarajevo weer hoop' ('Arrival of UN convoy restores hope to Sarajevo woman'), *de Volkskrant*, 11/06/92.

²⁴⁴⁰ See for example. Maas, *Neighbor*, p. 30.

nicknamed UNPROFOR SERPROFOR²⁴⁴¹ or SRBOFOR.²⁴⁴² Passers-by greeted the white UNPROFOR armoured vehicles in Sarajevo with raised middle fingers or with shots.²⁴⁴³ More and more frequently, blue helmets were the targets of Bosnian government army firing; for example, around Sarajevo more UNPROFOR troops were killed by the ABiH than by the VRS.²⁴⁴⁴

This ingratitude had the effect of a cold shower on many of the UNPROFOR troops and increased the tendency to believe that none of the parties in the Bosnian conflict could be trusted.²⁴⁴⁵ The UN troops realized that it was in the interests of the Bosnian government and its army, as the weakest party, to provoke military intervention, but they did not appreciate the means by which this was done.²⁴⁴⁶ Moreover, each provocation by the ABiH, the government troops, led to a severe over-reaction from the Serb side in the form of artillery or mortar fire.²⁴⁴⁷ Provocations during which ABiH troops fired from positions near hospitals, densely populated areas and UN posts were particularly notorious among the blue helmets. This firing would then provoke a Serb reaction with heavy artillery, after which the Serbs were seen as the culprits.²⁴⁴⁸ There was also irritation with the Bosnian authorities who obstructed the restoration of food, electricity and water supplies because it would detract from the image of the Muslims as victims.²⁴⁴⁹

MacKenzie was extremely irritated at the attitude of the Muslims, which led to the idea that none of the parties could be trusted. 'Dealing with Bosnia is a little bit like dealing with three serial killers', MacKenzie told the Armed Services Committee of the American House of Representative in May 1993, after the conclusion of his task in Yugoslavia. 'One has killed fifteen. One has killed ten. One has killed five. Do we help the one that has only killed five?'²⁴⁵⁰

The Canadian commander seemed to have been traumatized by the incidents surrounding the abduction of the Bosnian president Izetbegovic at the beginning of May.²⁴⁵¹ At that point he had managed to persuade the JNA (Yugoslavian National Army) to release the Bosnian president in exchange for free passage for the JNA unit which was trapped in Sarajevo. While this agreement was being implemented, Muslims carried out a surprise attack on the retreating JNA troops, some of whom were killed. After this incident, MacKenzie saw many other incidents in the light of duplicity on the part of the Muslims. MacKenzie, who did everything in his power to attain a ceasefire, was of the opinion that the Bosnian government forces did just as much to prevent it as the VRS and probably more.²⁴⁵² The Canadian commander was also extremely irritated by the alleged firing of the ABiH on their own troops.²⁴⁵³ At a certain point he told his Serb and Muslim partners that peace might be achieved if only they were to stop shelling themselves.²⁴⁵⁴ As the first commander of UNPROFOR II, MacKenzie set the tone for his troops and for his successors.

²⁴⁴¹ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Gebulder laat Sarajevcani weinig hoop' ('Booming leaves little hope for Sarajevcani'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/07/92.

²⁴⁴² Theo Engelen, 'Muslims voelen zich alleen staan' ('Muslims feel isolated'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/92.

²⁴⁴³ John Daniszewski, 'VN-leger maakt zich in Bosnië niet populair' ('UN army not making itself popular in Bosnia'), *Trouw*, 24/07/92.

²⁴⁴⁴ Confidential report (1); Draulans, *Mirjana*, p. 113.

²⁴⁴⁵ See for example Van der Kroon, *Defence*, p. 97; the Dutch UN observer Gerard Wondergem, cited in: Anstadt, *Scheuren*, pp. 157-158.

²⁴⁴⁶ See for example MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, pp. 225, 230 and 292; interview T. Quiggin, 13 and 14/10/97.

²⁴⁴⁷ MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, pp. 200, 227, 228, 238, 274, 292.

²⁴⁴⁸ See for example the interview with V. Andreev, 07/07/00; MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, pp. 200 and 309.

²⁴⁴⁹ Confidential report (1); the statements of the Belgian blue helmets Captain Jan Seger and Major François Robert in: Draulans, *Mirjana*, pp. 105-106; confidential information (75).

²⁴⁵⁰ Bennett, *Collapse*, p. 194 n. 28; Maas, *Neighbor*, p. 32; Gutman, *Witness*, p. 169.

²⁴⁵¹ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 165.

²⁴⁵² MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, pp. 216 and 255.

²⁴⁵³ MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, p. 255-256, 267, 308.

²⁴⁵⁴ Maas, *Neighbor*, p. 30. See also 'Strijd Sarajevo' ('Conflict in Sarajevo'), *de Volkskrant*, 23/07/92.

The Bosnian authorities strongly resented the fact that MacKenzie accused them of duplicity. In turn, they accused him of being biased.²⁴⁵⁵ The authorities in Sarajevo were also annoyed with Morillon, the UNPROFOR commander in Sarajevo, because he advised against any threat of force by the West, because it would stand in the way of the work of the UN troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁴⁵⁶ After some time the Bosnian government launched a propaganda campaign against MacKenzie in which all the stops were pulled out.²⁴⁵⁷ For example, MacKenzie was ‘accused’ of having a Serbian wife – which was not the case – to whom he had been introduced by the ‘Serbian terrorist, Mila Mulronej’, the wife of the Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulronej.²⁴⁵⁸ Mila Mulronej had in fact been born in Serbia, but had moved from Belgrade to Canada for good at the age of five. Later it was alleged that at the beginning of June MacKenzie had visited a brothel in Vogosca, where Croatian and Muslim women were held against their will by Serbs. However, the ‘evidence’ relating to this allegation could not possibly have been true, since MacKenzie was staying in Belgrade at the time.²⁴⁵⁹ It was true that other UNPROFOR soldiers had made use of these women, and it was partly because the UN tried to cover this up that the rumours about MacKenzie were so persistent.²⁴⁶⁰ Eventually, at the end of July, MacKenzie came to the conclusion that the hostility of his ‘hosts’ was becoming too great a threat to his own life and those of his staff. He therefore decided to resign from his post.²⁴⁶¹ He was by no means the last representative of the United Nations to fall victim to smear campaigns and threats in the Bosnian capital, nor was he the last to be forced to leave the country to save his life. This proved how limited the capacities of the small UNPROFOR force in Bosnia were.

2. New security structures in the conflict

Some had already secretly wondered if it might not be possible for the NATO to take action in Yugoslavia. The NATO was a military organization with more possibilities and a more forceful image than the ‘soft’ UN. However, up till then the NATO, in accordance with its own treaty, had not been authorized to carry out peacekeeping operations. As was made clear in Chapter 1, the WEU and the CSCE also had their shortcomings, but in June and July of 1992 these organizations had undergone developments which increased their chances of becoming involved in the crisis in the former Yugoslavia.

In this context, an important role was reserved for the Dutch Minister Van den Broek, who had suggested in the spring of 1992 that from that point on NATO should be allowed to make a contribution to peacekeeping operations in the framework of the CSCE. For a number of reasons, this was a clever idea. Van den Broek succeeded in winning the approval of the French government for the reasoning that only NATO had the necessary infrastructure at its disposal to carry out a peacekeeping operation on behalf of the CSCE. The consequence was that the WEU, on which Paris had always placed high stakes, sank below the horizon and the NATO, to which the Netherlands attached so much importance, came into the spotlight. Moreover, Van den Broek’s plan gave NATO a new right to exist now that the Cold War was over. In addition, the plan offered the countries of Eastern Europe a security structure, something they sorely needed after the disappearance of communism and the Warsaw pact. ‘It is not always “Black Monday” for Dutch diplomacy,’ wrote the *NRC Handelsblad* jubilantly with respect to Van den Broek’s plan, referring to the rejection of the Dutch plans for the

²⁴⁵⁵ Morillon, *Croire*, p. 96; Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 118.

²⁴⁵⁶ Theo Engelen, ‘Militair geweld bemoeilijkt VN-opdracht in Joegoslavië’ (‘Military force makes UN task in Yugoslavia more difficult’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/07/92.

²⁴⁵⁷ MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, pp. 274 and 290-291.

²⁴⁵⁸ MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, p. 293.

²⁴⁵⁹ Roy Gutman, ‘Bosnia Outrage. Ex-prisoner says UN troops sexually assaulted detainees’, *Newsday*, 01/11/93; Sells, *Bridge*, pp. 208-209 n. 43. Nevertheless, this allegation continued to haunt MacKenzie even in more serious literature. See for example Cuvalo, *Dictionary*, p. 160; Rathfolder, *Sarajevo*, p. 188

²⁴⁶⁰ Strobel, *Policy*, pp. 101-102.

²⁴⁶¹ MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, pp. 290, 293.

European Community on 30 September 1991.²⁴⁶² Of course, there was still one drawback: the CSCE, with its 52 members, could only make decisions with the biggest possible majority (unanimous minus one, to prevent Yugoslavia from blocking every decision) and Russia might well prove to be a major troublemaker in relation to operations in the former Yugoslavia if they were aimed against Serbia.

On 4 June 1992 the meeting of the foreign ministers of the NATO member states decided in Oslo to accept Van den Broek's plan. However, the deployment of NATO troops would have to be examined in each separate case. In his farewell speech on 24 June, the Supreme Allied Commander of the NATO, General John Galvin, said that the NATO was the most suitable organization to intervene in Yugoslavia. It would be able to ensure 'deterrence, recovery and the maintenance of peace and humanitarian missions'.

His successor, General John Shalikasvili, was much more cautious in his statements. In his opinion, any peace mission to Yugoslavia would have to be prepared for the worst.²⁴⁶³ An American plea to use NATO resources to enforce the sanctions pursuant to UN Resolution 757 failed at once, on 4 June. Hurd, Dumas and Claes opposed the idea,²⁴⁶⁴ but the Dutch Minister Van den Broek embraced it. He supported the use of NATO resources to escort food convoys to the war zones, saying 'I admit that it is easier said than done. But I don't think that because it is so difficult and so risky we should do nothing.'²⁴⁶⁵ This statement was a typical one for Van den Broek, and it showed how much more prepared the Dutch government was than its European partners to deploy military resources in the former Yugoslavia. In the Dutch government meeting of 5 June there was also optimism about the new situation which had arisen as a result of the decision to allow the possibility of deploying NATO troops for peacekeeping operations outside the NATO's treaty area.²⁴⁶⁶

As yet, Van den Broek was not in favour of military intervention which went further than the protection of humanitarian convoys. In his opinion this would be possible only if there was wide international support. And that would not be the case until all diplomatic, political and economic means were exhausted.²⁴⁶⁷

By his enthusiasm, Minister Van den Broek placed himself in the international public eye. The French government had declared that it was willing to supply a large portion of the 1100 troops needed to implement UN Resolution 758 and that it was looking for partners.²⁴⁶⁸ 'Paris', wrote Wijnaendts, the Dutch ambassador in Paris, 'was fervently hoping that the Netherlands, which had constantly played an important role in the Yugoslav crisis, would also be prepared to make a contribution.'²⁴⁶⁹ However, Van den Broek made it clear that this time he 'did not want to be in the front line.' 'Defence will of course

²⁴⁶² 'Den Haag en de vrede' ('The Hague and peace'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/04/92. See also 'Navo in beginsel bereid militairen te leveren voor vredesoperaties' ('Nato willing in principle to contribute troops for peace operations'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/05/92; 'CVSE en NAVO' ('CSCE and NATO'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/05/91; B.J. van Eenennaam, 'Nederland blijft internationaal een belangrijke rol spelen' ('The Netherlands continues to play an important role internationally'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/05/92; 'Vredesmacht NAVO dichterbij' ('NATO peace force closer'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/05/92; Leonoor Meijer, 'Joegoslavië gruwelijke voorbode' ('Yugoslavia gruesome herald'), *Trouw*, 12/06/92.

²⁴⁶³ 'Navo tot interventie in staat' ('Nato capable of intervention'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/06/92.

²⁴⁶⁴ Theo Koelé, 'Optreden Navo in Joegoslavië is (verre) toekomstmuziek' ('Nato action in Yugoslavia in the (distant) future'), *de Volkskrant*, 03/06/92; 'Navo deinst terug voor optreden in ex-Joegoslavië' ('Nato shrinks from action in the former Yugoslavia'), *Trouw*, 05/06/92; Sally Jacobsen, 'NATO Foreign Ministers Approve Peacekeeping Role', *AP*, 04/06/92.

²⁴⁶⁵ Oscar Garschagen, 'VS zien rol NAVO bij afdwingen VN-sancties' ('US see a role for NATO in enforcing UN sanctions'), *de Volkskrant*, 05/06/92.

²⁴⁶⁶ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 05/06/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

²⁴⁶⁷ Jan van der Ven, 'Ingrijpen in Servië voor CDA al reëel' ('Intervention in Serbia already a real possibility for CDA'), *Het Parool*, 05/06/92; Leonoor Meijer, 'Joegoslavië gruwelijke voorbode', *Trouw*, 12/06/92.

²⁴⁶⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155, memorandum from head of DPV to AMAD, 09/06/92, no. DPV-886/92.

²⁴⁶⁹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155, Wijnaendts 230 to Van den Broek, 10/06/92.

be very pleased to hear this', commented Hoekema, head of the directorate of Political UN Affairs, spitefully.²⁴⁷⁰

It was indeed the case that Van den Broek's caution met with the support of the other ministers. At their meeting of 12 June, the government took the position that if the UN were to ask for assistance in the implementation of the recent UN resolutions, other Dutch efforts in the former Yugoslavia and the contribution made by the Netherlands to the peacekeeping force in Cambodia should be taken into account. Nevertheless, in response to a formal request by the UN Secretariat at the beginning of July, the Dutch government would provide 54 extra troops because it had become necessary to expand the Dutch signals unit, as well as several military observers.²⁴⁷¹ Later this number was raised from 54 to 65.²⁴⁷²

A few weeks after the decision made by the NATO on 4 June, the WEU ministers made a similar one, at Petersberg near Bonn on 19 June. In future, the WEU would be allowed to supply troops in areas of tension. They were to be deployed for humanitarian aid, crisis management operations, peacekeeping and peacemaking.²⁴⁷³ With this last term, peacemaking, the WEU went one step further than the NATO, which had agreed only to peacekeeping operations. The WEU would be able to act at the request of the UN, the CSCE and the European Union. The ministers also stipulated that a group of experts was to examine what contribution the WEU could make to the implementation of the Security Council resolutions in relation to Yugoslavia.²⁴⁷⁴

During a meeting at Helsinki on 9 and 10 July the CVSE designated itself as a regional organization in the sense of Chapter VIII of the UN charter. This means that they too would be authorized to carry out peacekeeping operations. Since the CSCE itself did not have troops at its disposal, for purposes of implementation it would have to rely on the NATO and the WEU. Finally, in December, the NATO declared that it was prepared to carry out peacekeeping operations under the authority of the UN Security Council. Gradually phenomena such as 'interlocking institutions' and 'double hatting' were becoming observable.

The CSCE meeting of 9 and 10 July was strongly focused on the Yugoslav crisis. As early as 15 April the CSCE had decided that territorial conquests and borders altered by means of violence would not be recognized and that the return of Displaced Persons to their homes must be guaranteed. On the eve of the meeting, Rest-Yugoslavia (consisting of Serbia and Montenegro) was suspended from membership for three months. Initially the Russian government was unwilling to allow a condemnation of Serbia during the conference. However, when the Russian delegation eventually decided to go along with the other member states, Van den Broek demanded his share of the credit. During the gala dinner on 9 July he had sat next to his Russian colleague Andrei Kozyrev and discussed the issue with him in depth. This must surely have had some effect.²⁴⁷⁵ Prime Ministers Lubbers also went out of his way to make the Dutch position absolutely clear. During the conference he told his audience that the selfishness of the West was almost as much of a threat to the security of Europe as nationalism in the East.²⁴⁷⁶

²⁴⁷⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155, memorandum from head of DPV to AMAD, 09/06/92, no. DPV-886/92.

²⁴⁷¹ SG 1991/1992. DS, memorandum from Defence Staff for Ter Beek, 01/07/92, S92/061/2239; ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155. 12/06/92, DPV/PZ-910/92; CRST. Memorandum from DAB for Ter Beek, 22/06/92, D92/272; TCBU, *Vertretpunt I*, p. 97.

²⁴⁷² ABZ, 00155, Boutros-Ghali to the Permanent UN Representative of the Netherlands, 09/07/92; ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155. PR New York to Van den Broek, 10/07/92, nyv-4777; SG 1991/1992. DS, Memorandum from Waltmann to Ter Beek, 10/08/92.

²⁴⁷³ Western European Council of Ministers, Petersberg Declaration, Bonn, 19/06/92, <http://www.weu.int/eng/comm/92-petersberg.htm>.

²⁴⁷⁴ Extraordinary meeting of the WEU Council of Ministers with States of Central Europe, 'Declaration on the Yugoslav crisis', Bonn, 19/06/92, <http://www.weu.int/eng/comm/92-bonn-b.htm>

²⁴⁷⁵ Guikje Roethof, 'Helsinki', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 15/07/92, p. 4.

²⁴⁷⁶ Parliament records, R9200163 70.

But the slim success achieved in the suspension of Rest-Yugoslavia paled in comparison with the rude awakening which Izetbegovic underwent during the conference in a talk with the American president Bush Sr. In this talk the American president made it clear that the Bosnian government should not count on foreign intervention.²⁴⁷⁷ Mitterrand's spokesman rubbed it in firmly once again; there could be no question of military intervention, because that would lead to 'an unpredictable, extremely risky chain reaction'.²⁴⁷⁸ This led to an adjustment of the Bosnian government's politics. On many occasions during the following weeks Bosnian government spokesmen declared that all they were asking for was arms and possibly Close Air Support.²⁴⁷⁹ The Bosnian military could take care of the ground war themselves; after all, the Bosnian government had plenty of troops. It was odd that few people seemed to realize that the Bosnian government was asking for what the Americans were later to call a 'lift and strike' policy, i.e. lifting the arms embargo and launching air raids. It is remarkable that in the debate about whether or not there should be military intervention, this voice from Sarajevo was so seldom heard.

Implementation of the embargo: beginning of NATO involvement in the conflict

In the sideline of the CSCE meeting in Helsinki on 10 July, the WEU Ministers of Foreign Affairs decided to dispatch a squadron for a navy blockade to supervise the embargo which had been imposed on Yugoslavia by Security Council Resolutions 713 and 757.²⁴⁸⁰ Although in May the American government had accused the European governments of being too slack, they were not happy with this form of European 'decisiveness'.²⁴⁸¹ They preferred the NATO to go into action rather than the WEU, and arranged for a NATO squadron to set out as well. The Dutch government, worried about the disagreement between Europe and the US as to how to approach the crisis in Yugoslavia, stated by the mouth of Minister Van den Broek that without American participation 'the political signal would be too weak'²⁴⁸² and pressed for a joint operation by the WEU and the NATO. But this alternative appealed even less to the American government, because they were afraid that such a combined venture would be dominated by the WEU.

The NATO then claimed a very large area in the Adriatic Sea as its operational territory, but WEU president Italy was opposed to this because the WEU had been the first to bring the idea forward. By way of compromise, a boundary was then drawn between Brindisi in Italy and the point at which the border between Albania and Montenegro meets the sea. South of that boundary the WEU

²⁴⁷⁷ Theo Engelen, 'Moslims voelen zich alleen staan', *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/92; 'Dit bloedbad moet stoppen' ('This bloodbath must stop'), *Trouw*, 10/07/92.

²⁴⁷⁸ 'Bosnië smeekt om hulp' ('Bosnia begs for help'), *de Volkskrant*, 10/07/92.

²⁴⁷⁹ Silajdzic said this on 15 July; on 22 July Izetbegovic sent a letter to the Security Council in which he stated that military intervention could be limited to air strikes mainly against Serb artillery positions and airports, Giersch, *Konfliktregulierung*, p. 275; at the UNHCR conference on 29 July Vice-Premier Zlatko Lagumdžija said 'I do not expect us to be liberated. We will do that ourselves, just as long as the world gives us the resources', Lidy Nicolassen, 'Geneefs overleg bewijst lippendienst aan vluchtelingen' ('Consultations in Geneva pay lip service to refugees'), *de Volkskrant*, 30/07/92. 'Either the UN passes a resolution authorizing military intervention or they allow us to procure weapons,' said Ganic on 1 August, 'Bosnian Leader: We Might Not Last', *Newsday*, 01/08/92; James Gow & James Tilsley, 'The Strategic Imperative for Media management', Gow & Paterson & Preston (eds.), *Bosnia*, p. 109. On 5 August Izetbegovic declared that the international community had done nothing to stop the aggression against Bosnia; this was why he wanted the arms embargo to be lifted, Theo Engelen, 'Bosniërs 'Klaar voor bevrijding van Sarajevo' ('Bosnians "Ready for the liberation of Sarajevo"'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/08/92. A few days later the Permanent UN Representative of Bosnia-Herzegovina Sacirbey declared that all the Bosnian government expected from the West was that it should use air strikes to eliminate the Bosnian Serb guns around the cities that were in the hands of the Bosnian government, and the Bosnian Serb airforce. In addition, the West should supply arms, Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 123.

²⁴⁸⁰ Extraordinary meeting of WEU Council of Ministers on the situation in Yugoslavia, Declaration, Helsinki, 10/07/92, <http://www.weu.int/eng/comm/92-helsinki.htm>

²⁴⁸¹ 'WEU en NAVO zorgen voor verrassinkje' ('WEU and NATO deliver a little surprise'), *de Volkskrant*, 11/07/92.

²⁴⁸² Herman Amelink & Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, 'WEU en Navo zenden marine naar Joegoslavië' ('WEU and NATO send navy to Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/07/92.

was to operate, and north of it the NATO. The consequence of this division was that NATO scarcely needed to monitor any ships, since every ship first had to pass through the WEU zone.²⁴⁸³ Nevertheless, 16 July, the day on which Operation Maritime Monitor started, marks the entrance of NATO into the Yugoslav conflict.

Although Resolutions 713 and 757 were both adopted under Chapter VII of the UN charter, thus authorizing the use of force, the NATO and WEU ships were initially not permitted to do anything except monitor, i.e. register which ships passed. It was not until after 16 November 1992, when the Security Council passed Resolution 787, prohibiting the transit of oil and oil products, that NATO and the WEU were allowed to halt ships, inspect them and send them back. But this sanction regime was not watertight either; it could be evaded practically without any trouble by way of the Danube, because the neighbouring countries Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania were unable or unwilling to monitor the embargo effectively. On 5 April 1993 the WEU countries finally decided to supply patrol boats and a police presence to close this Danube gap. The embargo had by then already been in force for one and a half years. However, it was to take several more months before the first WEU ship actually appeared on the Danube.

On 17 April 1993 the Security Council also introduced a general embargo against Serbia and Montenegro, not only at sea and in the air but also on land and on the Danube (Resolution 820). The North Atlantic Council of NATO then decided that if necessary NATO would also enter the territorial waters of Yugoslavia. In June 1993 NATO and the WEU came to an agreement about joint command of the implementation of the sanctions. This gave rise to Operation Sharp Guard, whose objective was to enforce all sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro on water. This sanction regime was to last until 18 June 1996, and in its framework a total of 73,000 ships were halted, 5800 inspected and 1400 taken to a port and inspected.²⁴⁸⁴

An American offer

In mid-June the international community began to realize that the inhabitants of Sarajevo were on the point of starving to death. The American reaction to this news was rather inconsistent, due to differences between the State Department and the Pentagon. The State Department was prepared to go even as far as deploying ground troops to deliver humanitarian relief to Bosnia, although emphatically not to bring about a political solution. The Pentagon on the other hand was hesitant even about using aircraft and ships to support humanitarian aid. The American Defence Minister Dick Cheney stressed that the fighting in Bosnia should be regarded as a civil war, not as an international conflict. In his opinion it definitely did not pose a threat to international peace. On 28 May he had made a rather unusual statement for an American Defence Minister, namely that the American government was not considering deploying troops in Bosnia, 'because we have not been asked to'.²⁴⁸⁵ Cheney was supported by Chief of Staff Colin Powell, who was afraid the conflict might escalate if the American government were to supply armed forces. Powell, who was traumatized by the American experiences in Vietnam and the Lebanon and had seen success in the wars in Panama and against Iraq, named three conditions for the deployment of American troops: overwhelming force, clear objectives and a swift conclusion of the operation. In the case of Bosnia these conditions were not met.²⁴⁸⁶ According to the Pentagon, even large-scale air raids could not influence the actions of the Serb military.²⁴⁸⁷ As for limited air raids, Powell wanted nothing to do with them. When he was asked in September 1992 if he was not in favour

²⁴⁸³ Van Eekelen, *Sporen*, p. 244; Folkert Jensma, 'Varend bewijs van Europese geschillen in Adriatische Zee' ('Floating evidence of European disputes in Adriatic'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/07/92; Ruud Kersten, 'Van Eekelen: 'Terugschieten dus' ('So shoot back'), *Leids Dagblad*, 29/07/92; Kreemers, 'Balkan-express', pp. 9-10.

²⁴⁸⁴ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, I, p. 76; Van Eekelen, *Security*, pp. 153-159.

²⁴⁸⁵ Quoted in Almond, *War*, p. 253.

²⁴⁸⁶ Čalic, *Krieg*, p. 162; Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, pp. 77-78.

²⁴⁸⁷ Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, p. 78.

of them, he answered: 'As soon as they tell me it is limited, it means they do not care whether you achieve a result or not. As soon as they tell me "surgical", I head for the bunker.'²⁴⁸⁸ If so-called surgical intervention was not successful, the demand for more far-reaching deployment would follow, and that was exactly how things had gone wrong for the Americans in Vietnam.²⁴⁸⁹

If Powell's conditions were incompatible with a classic peacekeeping operation, it was even more difficult to meet them in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where no ceasefire lasted more than a few days.

Initially President Bush's security adviser Brent Scowcroft could not choose between the position of the State Department and that of the Pentagon. 'On the one hand they are afraid to get involved in an extremely nasty conflict. On the other hand there was a bloodbath going on there while they just stood by and watched. 'I don't know what the best reaction is,' said the security adviser in a speech to the Atlantic Council in Washington on 22 June.²⁴⁹⁰ However, Scowcroft did move towards Secretary of State Baker's position after American intelligence services had reported that the Bosnian Serbs were trying to starve out Sarajevo and could only be stopped by a convincing threat of military intervention.²⁴⁹¹

Bush and his advisers realized that the reputation of the American nation and the president himself were starting to suffer as a result of the reports of atrocities and the threat of starvation in Bosnia. More and more American news commentators asked what had happened to Bush's new world order and to American leadership.²⁴⁹² On 7 January 1992 the American president, who had previously sent military troops to Panama and Kuwait, had adopted a position that was difficult to abandon in the election year of 1992: 'I don't want to send young men into a war where I can't see that they are going to prevail and prevail rapidly.'²⁴⁹³ Bush finally decided that military action in relation to the former Yugoslavia was needed after all, but he definitely did not want to deploy American ground troops, as he was convinced that they would be a cherished target for Serb guerrillas.²⁴⁹⁴ This position meant that the governments of other countries, especially the European allies, would have to bear the risks of any ground operation. Although the American government had become more involved in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia than a year earlier, they still clung to the point of view that the Europeans themselves should take care of stability on their own continent. The government in Washington was prepared to lend a helping hand, but the Europeans had to show that they were willing to shoulder the greatest risks.

On 15 June the American government made its first concrete offer to the secretaries-general of the NATO and the UN. The gist of their proposal was that they were prepared to make a contribution to humanitarian relief in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This assistance could take several forms, including support in planning, intelligence, and communications, and supplying ground vehicles and helicopters.

²⁴⁸⁸ Michael R. Gordon, 'Powell Delivers a resounding No On Using Limited Force in Bosnia', *The New York Times*, 28/09/92.

²⁴⁸⁹ Paulsen, *Jugoslavienpolitik*, pp. 78-79.

²⁴⁹⁰ Moore, 'Pase', p. 5; Maarten Huygen, 'Bosnië plaatst VS voor dilemma' ('Bosnia place US in a dilemma'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/06/92. See also Eisermann, *Weg*, pp. 122-123; Barton Gellman, 'Administration Is Sharply Divided On Whether to Expand Balkan Role', *The Washington Post*, 09/07/92; 'VS: pas hulp na bestand' ('US: aid only after truce'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/06/92; Maarten Huygen, 'VS willen luchtdekking geven aan Bosnië' ('US want to give Bosnia air cover'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/07/92; Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 121; Reneo Lukic & Allen Lynch, 'U.S. Policy Towards Yugoslavia: From Differentiation to Disintegration', Raju & Thomas & Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, pp. 272-274; Sanya Popovic, 'Debating Operation Quagmire Storm: U.S. Crisis Management in Bosnia', *ibid.*, pp. 293-294. See also ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844, Meesman 613 to Van den Broek, 25/06/92.

²⁴⁹¹ Barton Gellman, 'Military Uneasy at Balkan Commitment', *The Washington Post*, 02/07/92.

²⁴⁹² See for example Anthony Lewis, 'Bush washes hands of Bosnian blood', *St. Louis Post-Despatch*, 19/06/92; Jim Hoagland, 'It's All or Nothing in the New World Order', *The Washington Post*, 23/06/92; 'The World Watches Murder', *The New York Times*, 24/06/92; Barton Gellman, 'Military Uneasy at Balkan Commitment', *The Washington Post*, 02/07/92. See also Paulsen, *Jugoslavienpolitik*, p. 77.

²⁴⁹³ Jim Hoagland, 'It's All or Nothing in the New World Order', *The Washington Post*, 23/06/92.

²⁴⁹⁴ Barton Gellman, 'Military Uneasy at Balkan Commitment', *The Washington Post*, 02/07/92.

The American offer would have to be part of a collective effort, preferably by the NATO.²⁴⁹⁵ However, Boutros-Ghali informed the American government at once that he did not wish to make use of American intelligence; the fact that in general the UN was not keen on working with intelligence is discussed in detail in Chapter 1 of the Appendix to this report dealing with intelligence.²⁴⁹⁶ Boutros-Ghali objected in particular to the deployment of espionage aircraft above the former Yugoslavia.²⁴⁹⁷

'The faster the better'

In this scheme, the American government wanted its European allies to take responsibility for the transport of humanitarian relief supplies by road. They therefore asked the Dutch authorities to provide lorries and drivers to deliver humanitarian aid in the framework of the NATO.²⁴⁹⁸ In one of the few cases connected to policy on Yugoslavia in which the Dutch Ministry of General Affairs took part in an interdepartmental consultation about the Yugoslav issue²⁴⁹⁹ it was decided that in principle the Netherlands was willing to lend the assistance requested. In view of the situation in Bosnia, the Dutch convoys might have to travel under military escort. In that case, as the officials and military involved realized, the borderline between peacekeeping and peace-enforcing could be crossed very easily. For this reason, the Dutch authorities made it a condition that the Security Council should make military protection possible. Even before this guarantee had been given it was decided to mention the Dutch conditional offer at international consultations during the following days: on 24 June in the NATO Council; on 26 June at the WEU ad hoc group which was examining the possible deployment of member states' resources in the former Yugoslavia; and on 29 June at the Committee of Senior Officials of the CSCE. In this way the Dutch government showed that it was serious about finding a solution to the humanitarian crisis in Bosnia.²⁵⁰⁰

In the meantime the American attitude to the Serbs seemed to be growing even harsher. On 25 June various highly-placed American officials declared that if it did not soon become possible to deliver food and medical supplies to Sarajevo, the use of force, preferably in the form of air raids against Serb artillery in the hills around Sarajevo, could not be ruled out. The Russian ambassador to the United States, Vladimir P. Lukin, declared that if it came to this point his country would be prepared to take part in a military operation.²⁵⁰¹

On 26 June the American government informally asked the heads of government of the European Union, who had assembled in Lisbon for a European Council, to assist the population of Sarajevo by means of an airlift and escorts for aid convoys overland.²⁵⁰² The American fleet in the Mediterranean would serve as a co-ordination point, the United States were prepared to carry out supporting air raids and European armed forces would escort the aid operation on the ground.²⁵⁰³ According to various media reports, American troops in Germany had already been showing signs of increased activity in connection with the planned airlift.²⁵⁰⁴ The 82nd American Airborne Division was said to be preparing itself there for an offensive on and around the airport of Sarajevo and American

²⁴⁹⁵ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844, Meesman 582 to Van den Broek, 15/06/92. See also Meesman 596 to Van den Broek, 20/06/92.

²⁴⁹⁶ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844, Van Schaik 594 to Van den Broek, 23/06/92.

²⁴⁹⁷ Paulsen, *Jugoslavienpolitik*, p. 77.

²⁴⁹⁸ ABZ, PRNY. Bosnia-Hercegovina/emergency aid, May 1992 – August 1995, Van den Broek, 18/06/92, circ. 364.

²⁴⁹⁹ Cf. appendix about the Ministry of Defence (n.b. CD-ROM that goes with the Dutch edition of this report)

²⁵⁰⁰ SG 1991/1992. DS, Memorandum from Defence Staff for Ter Beek, 24/06/92, S92/061/2173; Def 488, SG, Departmental consultation 1992-1996, list of decisions made during the departmental consultation of 27/06/92.

²⁵⁰¹ Stanley Meisler & Duyle McManus, 'Allies talk of using force to aid Sarajevo', *Los Angeles Times*, 26/06/92.

²⁵⁰² 'VS werken aan luchtbrug Sarajevo' ('US working on airlift Sarajevo'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/06/92.

²⁵⁰³ See also Simms, *Hour*, p. 55; Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 121.

²⁵⁰⁴ 'VS werken aan luchtbrug Sarajevo', *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/06/92; Maarten Huygen, 'Bosnië plaatst VS voor dilemma', *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/06/92.

Sixth Fleet warships were making their way to the Adriatic Sea.²⁵⁰⁵ The American forces were said to be already drawing up targets for attack.²⁵⁰⁶

The Dutch Prime Minister Lubbers was no less eager about the prospect of deploying military resources in the former Yugoslavia than Minister Van den Broek had been on 4 June during the meeting of the foreign ministers of the NATO states in Oslo. On 17 June, during an oral consultation with the permanent parliamentary committee for Foreign Affairs and Defence, the MPs had said that they thought military intervention was in the offing, but that they did not want to urge it yet.²⁵⁰⁷ In fact, Lubbers was running ahead of the Dutch parliament when he reacted enthusiastically to the American suggestion on television, saying: ‘Now, at this moment, I can only speak for the Netherlands, and that is: the faster the better, that is our attitude and that is how we will approach the talks with our European colleagues.’²⁵⁰⁸ Supported by Van den Broek, Lubbers urged colleagues from the United Kingdom, France and Belgium, who occupied seats in the Security Council, to work on a resolution permitting the use of military force to support aid convoys.²⁵⁰⁹ The Dutch ministers’ duo was successful; the summit did not rule out the possibility of military support for humanitarian operations and asked the Security Council to pass a resolution authorizing it. However, this result had not been achieved without a struggle. Just as had been the case in NATO, there was not a single country that supported military intervention without reservations, but even the deployment of military resources to protect aid convoys gave rise to problems. When the meeting was over, Lubbers was willing to ‘reveal that there were significant differences of opinion. There were countries that were very detached. There were also countries that said: “things cannot go on like this, with these inhuman conditions, we must take a more active position (...)” You know that the Netherlands belongs to this latter group.’²⁵¹⁰ The other countries, the Prime Minister continued, were Italy and Germany, but those two countries had historical reasons of their own for not wanting to send troops. Therefore their position counted less than that of the Netherlands, which could deploy troops, suggested the Dutch Prime Minister.²⁵¹¹ The British government had also made things difficult. In a fit of trans-national historic awareness, the British Prime Minister John Major had motivated his objections to the deployment of military resources by referring to the encirclement of French troops in Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam in 1954.²⁵¹² Major also referred to estimates by intelligence services that military intervention in the former Yugoslavia would require the deployment of 100,000 troops.²⁵¹³ However, the Dutch Prime Minister said he could understand why a country like the United Kingdom was hesitant; after all, no one knew what would happen if troops were deployed. But Lubbers himself felt no hesitation, he said. The situation in Sarajevo brought back memories of the Netherlands in the winter of starvation in 1945. The ‘umpteenth feeble declaration’ was therefore not good enough for him.²⁵¹⁴

3. The grand French gesture: Mitterrand goes to Sarajevo

The sequel to the summit in Lisbon was as unexpected as it was spectacular; without informing the other European heads of government during the meeting, the French president Mitterrand decided to

²⁵⁰⁵ Herman Amelink, ‘Westen gaat met tegenzin af op het bijna onvermijdelijke’ (‘West reluctantly heads for the almost inevitable’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/92; Theo Engelen, ‘Leider Serviërs tegen VS: interventie wordt ‘een soort Vietnam’ (‘Serb leader to US: intervention will be “a sort of Vietnam”’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/07/92; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 292.

²⁵⁰⁶ Ed Vulliamy, ‘The Secret War’, *The Guardian*, 20/05/96.

²⁵⁰⁷ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 27.

²⁵⁰⁸ TV, *RIT4*, Avondnieuws, 26/06/92, 7.30pm.

²⁵⁰⁹ Radio 1, *NOS*, Met het oog op morgen, 14/08/92, 11.07pm.

²⁵¹⁰ Radio 1, *NOS*, Met het oog op morgen, 27/06/92, 11.05pm.

²⁵¹¹ Radio 1, *NOS*, Met het oog op morgen, 03/07/92, 11.05pm.

²⁵¹² Oscar Garschagen, ‘EG en BS willen luchtbrug op Sarajevo openen’ (‘EC and BS want to open airlift to Sarajevo’), *de Volkskrant*, 27/06/92.

²⁵¹³ Peter Dobbie, ‘Yugoslav crisis deepens as French president heads for war zone’, *Mail on Sunday*, 28/06/92.

²⁵¹⁴ Radio 1, *NOS*, Met het oog op morgen, 27/06/92, 11.05pm.

fly directly from the Portuguese capital to Sarajevo. Only at the very last moment before his departure did he inform his Portuguese hosts and Chancellor Kohl of his intentions, in general terms.²⁵¹⁵

Mitterrand was accompanied on his journey by the French Minister of Health Bernard Kouchner, founder of the international organization *Médecins sans Frontières*. Kouchner had also been Minister of Human Rights in the previous French government; he had then turned humanitarian aid into a French export product.

The reason given for the French lightning tour of the Bosnian capital was that an appeal had reached President Mitterrand from Bosnia. The French philosopher Bernard-Henry Lévy, who had visited Sarajevo a short time before, had been given a message from President Izetbegovic for his French fellow-president. Among other things, Izetbegovic had written: 'We are the ghetto of Warsaw. Will the ghetto of Warsaw be allowed to die again?'²⁵¹⁶ The French head of state was said to have been deeply moved by this. He passed on the comparison with the Jews of the Warsaw to the heads of government in Lisbon.²⁵¹⁷ Then, driven by emotion, he had decided to go in person to bolster the morale of the inhabitants of the besieged city.

However, according to another interpretation there were less noble motives for this grand gesture on the part of the French president. On 26 June Boutros-Ghali had issued an ultimatum to the Bosnian Serb military to leave the airport of Sarajevo within 48 hours and to place their heavy weapons under the supervision of the UN. President Bush then contacted several countries which had taken part in the international coalition in the Gulf War to ask if they would be prepared to carry out air raids in order to lift the blockade of the airport.²⁵¹⁸ Even before the Lisbon summit it had been clear that Mitterrand was not keen on action by the NATO or an ad hoc coalition forged for Bosnia, because in his view this would lead to too great an American involvement.²⁵¹⁹ Moreover, Mitterrand was irritated by Baker's plea for action. According to the French president the government in Washington was 'telling the Europeans once again what they ought to do in Yugoslavia.'²⁵²⁰

What really triggered Mitterrand's lightning visit to the Bosnian capital, according to this interpretation, was the American proposal to lend military support, possibly in the form of air raids, for the delivery of humanitarian aid. Mitterrand made no secret of the fact that he was prepared to deploy French troops in the former Yugoslavia for humanitarian purposes, but not for any action that threatened to lead to war. When the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* asked the French president in May 1994 if the French government could not do more, Mitterrand reminded them that this had been his position for two years: 'I have been criticized for this. I have not deceived anyone.'²⁵²¹ According to an American interpretation this was why Mitterrand deliberately wanted to frustrate Washington's plan by visiting the Sarajevo airport himself and making sure it was opened.²⁵²² The French head of state accomplished his mission; the Bosnian Serb leaders promised him that their military would hand over the airport to UNPROFOR. It was implied that this agreement was reached after Mitterrand, in the days preceding

²⁵¹⁵ Dumas, Fil, pp. 360 and 362; 'Mitterrand baant weg voor noodhulp' ('Mitterrand paves the way for emergency aid'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/92; Oscar Garschagen, 'Franse president heeft genoeg van getreuzel over Bosnië' ('French president has had enough of dawdling on Bosnia'), *de Volkskrant*, 29/06/92.

²⁵¹⁶ Jan Gerritsen, 'Een bestudeerd mooi gebaar van een president' ('A carefully studied gracious gesture by a president'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/92.

²⁵¹⁷ Oscar Garschagen, 'Franse president heeft genoeg van getreuzel over Bosnië', *de Volkskrant*, 29/06/92; Favier/Martin-Rolland, *Décennie*, p. 298.

²⁵¹⁸ Ed Vulliamy, 'The Secret War', *The Guardian*, 20/05/96; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 291-292.

²⁵¹⁹ 'Navo tot interventie in staat', *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/06/92.

²⁵²⁰ 'Irritatie over Baker' ('Irritation at Baker'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/92.

²⁵²¹ 'Francois Mitterrand blickt auf 13 Jahre im Amt zurück' ('Francois Mitterrand looks back on 13 years in office'), *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 26/05/94.

²⁵²² ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Yugoslavia in general, Meesman 760 to Van den Broek, 13/08/92; Barry Schweid, 'Baker Says Bush Considered Gulf War-Style Response in Bosnia', 28/09/95; Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 122. There were similar insinuations in the French media as well, Philip Freriks, 'President zonder Grenzen' ('President without borders'), *de Volkskrant*, 30/06/92. See also Favier & Martin-Rolland, *Décennie*, pp. 298-299

the Lisbon summit, had had intensive contact with Milosevic via Jacques Blot and Serge Boidevaix, the director for Europe and the Secretary-General of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs respectively.

On his return from Sarajevo, Mitterrand had assured the Serb president by telephone that the airport would be used only for humanitarian relief and that it would certainly not fall into the hands of the Bosnian government. Thereupon Milosevic had ordered Mladic to free the airport.²⁵²³ Karadzic also consented, having realized by now that if Sarajevo were really starved out the result would be huge international indignation and in its wake possibly military intervention.

In fact, Mitterrand rescued the Bosnian Serb leaders from the awkward predicament they had got themselves into since their troops had proved unable to capture Sarajevo or even to divide it into two.²⁵²⁴ On 29 June the Bosnian Serb troops withdrew from the airport, so that there was no longer any need for the American government to take military action.²⁵²⁵ A few days later the airlift to Sarajevo began and a hundred and fifty tons of food and medical supplies were flown in daily to keep the three hundred thousand inhabitants of Sarajevo on their feet. However, contrary to prior agreements, the warring factions did not remove their heavy weapons and anti-aircraft artillery from around the airport, so that the resupply of Sarajevo by air continued to hang by a thread. Nevertheless, by 4 January 1996, in spite of various interruptions, UNHCR had been able to carry out a total of almost thirteen thousand flights.²⁵²⁶ On 13 July the Security Council decided in Resolution 764 to expand the number of UN troops destined for the airport of Sarajevo by five hundred, to 1600 altogether. Their tasks would include manning a radar post to track down artillery.

After the first euphoria about Mitterrand's visit, the authorities of Sarajevo began to see clearly that the opening of the airport for humanitarian missions had only taken place instead of military action. Just over a week after the airport was opened, the Bosnian Defence Minister Jerko Doko, a Croat, said he wished it had never happened: 'It is only delaying the liberation of Sarajevo.'²⁵²⁷

Not everyone in Dutch politics was entirely pleased with Mitterrand's grand gesture either. Frits Bolkestein, leader of the VVD (Liberal Party), called the French president's solo performance 'underhand'²⁵²⁸ and saw it as evidence of the bankruptcy of European foreign policy.²⁵²⁹ In his opinion the Dutch government should register a very clear protest against the French head of state's conduct.²⁵³⁰

By contrast, Prime Minister Lubbers spoke positively about Mitterrand's visit, even if it had possibly been merely a reaction to an American attitude which seemed to imply that the government in Washington no longer regarded the crisis in Yugoslavia as a purely European affair. 'If two people do something good together, I can only be pleased,' he said.²⁵³¹

The PvdA (Labour) and the CDA (Christian Democrat Party) agreed to the EC decision to deploy military troops to assist with humanitarian aid. But CDA MP De Kok, who in the preceding weeks had strongly advocated action by the airforce and navy, made the point that his party was 'extremely wary' about the deployment of ground troops. If the Dutch government wanted to contribute troops, his parliamentary group would find this extremely difficult to accept.²⁵³² In contrast, PvdA MP Valk was prepared to accept the risk that Dutch troops might become involved in a ground war. In his opinion, without further foreign intervention the conflict might well escalate and spread to

²⁵²³ Favier/Martin-Rolland, *Décennie*, pp. 298-299 and 302; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 292.

²⁵²⁴ Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 254.

²⁵²⁵ Paulsen, *Jugoslavienpolitik*, p. 89.

²⁵²⁶ Judah, *Sebs*, p. 213.

²⁵²⁷ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'In Sarajevo worden de bevelen fluisterend gegeven' ('In Sarajevo the orders are given in whispers'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/07/92. See also Heller, *Brasiers*, p. 133.

²⁵²⁸ 'Alom bewondering maar ook vraagtekens' ('Universal admiration but also question marks'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/92.

²⁵²⁹ TV, Nederland 1, KRO, Brandpunt, 28/06/92, 9.20pm.

²⁵³⁰ 'Alom bewondering maar ook vraagtekens', *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/92.

²⁵³¹ Radio 1, NOS, Met het oog op morgen, 03/07/92, 11.05pm.

²⁵³² Radio 1, NCRV, Hier en Nu, 28/06/92, 1.08pm.

neighbouring countries.²⁵³³ The Dutch Secretary-General of the WEU, Van Eekelen, shared this opinion, saying ‘what is the alternative, if we put up with this and the matter escalates further; we will get civil war in Kosovo, Macedonia will be divided up, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria will be involved? Then we will be right back in 1912 with a Balkan war and then we really will have problems.’²⁵³⁴

4. Aid overland to Sarajevo?

Mitterrand’s action, which led to the Bosnian Serbs handing over the airport of Sarajevo to the UN, put paid to the planned military action which had been decided on by the Council of European ministers and heads of state in Lisbon. This meant that the Dutch offer to assist with transport by road also remained up in the air. After Boutros-Ghali had reported to the Security Council that the Bosnian Serb forces had handed over control of Sarajevo airport to UNPROFOR, on 29 June the Security Council appealed in Resolution 761 to all member states to make a contribution to the humanitarian efforts in Sarajevo and environs. In response to this resolution, the Dutch ministries of General Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Development Cooperation decided to make their conditional offer to contribute to the transport of food and medical supplies by road more specific. In addition to an F-27 transport plane, to be supplied by the Royal Netherlands Airforce, the Royal Netherlands Army would provide a transport unit consisting of about one hundred military drivers and thirty lorries. A large number of the drivers would be national servicemen; in this case this was not a problem, because enough soldiers had volunteered for the task.²⁵³⁵

An offer with consequences

The transport plane was put into action quickly. From 3 July on, the F-27 flew to Zagreb and Sarajevo daily with relief supplies. The drivers and their lorries presented more problems. At the beginning of July the Dutch government reported to UNHCR and the UN that they were prepared in principle to supply 30 lorries and 120 troops, but that their decision would depend on the final status of the operation and on the protection and safety guarantees which could be given to the Dutch unit.²⁵³⁶ Defence and the Army had pointed out to the other Dutch authorities that there were serious safety risks involved in the deployment of transport units. In mid-June, for example, 18 Swedish drivers had discontinued their transports to Sarajevo for reasons of safety, even though they had been escorted by armed UNPROFOR troops.²⁵³⁷ Moreover, the UNHCR head of operations informed the Permanent UN Representative of the Netherlands in Geneva J.F. Boddens Hosang that ‘there is no way to have a convoy [from Zagreb to Bosnia] unless somebody is going to clear the way’.²⁵³⁸ According to the Dutch government, the Royal Netherlands Army’s transport unit, which was preparing for dispatch on 11 July and would be placed at the disposal of UNHCR, would have to be protected by an UNPROFOR

²⁵³³ Ibid.

²⁵³⁴ TV, Nederland 1, VARA, *Achter het Nieuws*, 21/07/92, 10.06pm.

²⁵³⁵ SG 1991/1992. DS, memorandum from Defence Staff to Ter Beek, 30/06/92, OZ366.

²⁵³⁶ ABZ, DIO/2003/00065. PR Geneva to W. Blatter (UNHCR), 02/07/92; Boddens Hosang 498 to Van den Broek, 03/07/92; Boddens Hosang 502 to Van den Broek, 04/07/92; PR New York to Van den Broek, 06/07/92, nuv-4419; PR Geneva to Van den Broek, 07/07/92, hum/gev-0338/92; ABZ, PVNY. Van den Broek to PR New York, 16/07/92, celer 178; Van den Broek, 08/07/92, circ 428.

²⁵³⁷ SG 91/92. SG, memorandum from Defence Staff to Ter Beek, 10/07/92; ABZ, PVNY. Van den Broek to PV New York, 16/07/92, celer 178.

²⁵³⁸ ABZ, DIO/2003/00065. Boddens Hosang 512 to Van den Broek, 09/07/92.

fighting unit.²⁵³⁹ The Dutch Ministry of Defence also wanted the troops to operate in uniform, with blue berets, and with military status.²⁵⁴⁰

The Dutch conditions gave rise to many objections from UNHCR and the UN. The UNHCR wanted the Dutch soldiers, who would operate under its aegis, to conform to the rules and regulations of its organization, i.e. they would have to wear civilian clothes and be unarmed. The UN and UNHCR wanted to preserve a clear distinction in clothing between UNPROFOR and UNHCR, so that there would be no misunderstandings among the population and the warring factions as to the different roles of the two organizations. The UN let it be known that it was impossible for UNPROFOR to protect the convoy because at that time UNPROFOR's mandate in Bosnia did not extend outside the route from the airport near Sarajevo to the Bosnian capital itself, whereas the lorries would have to travel through Bosnia.²⁵⁴¹ Boutros-Ghali was not prepared to ask the Security Council to expand the UNPROFOR mandate, because he believed that by then UNHCR's relief operations, which outside Sarajevo took place without protection, were functioning reasonably well.²⁵⁴²

In interdepartmental consultations in the Netherlands it had been decided that the Netherlands itself would not be able to deploy any other ground troops than the signals unit which had already been sent and the transport personnel it had agreed to supply.²⁵⁴³ In other words, the Dutch government itself would not be able to offer the protection which it believed the transport unit needed. So apart from the question of principle as to whether the mandate of UNPROFOR II would permit a military escort for the Dutch lorries, there was also the practical question of which country would protect the unit. Only one thing was clear: this protection would not come from the Netherlands.

On 24 July, because the situation in Bosnia continued to be unsafe, Minister Ter Beek ordered the ad hoc transport unit for Yugoslavia, which had already been formed, to disband. However, the government kept the offer open and waited to see if the UN changed its mind with regard to the Dutch conditions.²⁵⁴⁴ The Dutch government had now manoeuvred itself into an awkward position; in June 1992 it had declared at several international forums that it was strongly in favour of firmer action in the former Yugoslavia, but when it came to the crunch it had to go around other countries cap in hand trying to secure protection for the offer it had made so eagerly.²⁵⁴⁵ This lopsided position, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, would prove to be one of the main reasons why the Dutch government, in view of its position in international forums, could scarcely do otherwise than provide combat troops itself.

Quarrel between Boutros-Ghali and the Security Council

On 7 July 1992 the G7, the forum of the leaders of the seven major industrialized countries, met in Munich. Led by President Bush and his team, the conference adopted a firm stance with respect to the regime in Belgrade, which they regarded as being chiefly to blame for the conflict.²⁵⁴⁶ With the exception of the British government, the G7 leaders held out the threat of a Security Council resolution

²⁵³⁹ SG 1991/1992. DS, memorandum from Defence Staff for Ter Beek, 07/07/92, no. 92/0701; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing D.J. Barth, 31/05/00, pp. 84-85. See also ABZ, PVNY. Van den Broek to PV New York, 16/07/92, celer 178.

²⁵⁴⁰ SG 1991/1992. DS, memorandum from Defence Staff for Ter Beek, 07/07/92, no. 92/0701.

²⁵⁴¹ SG 1991/1992. DS, memorandum from Defence Staff for Ter Beek, 07/07/92, no. 92/0701; Def 868, SG 91/92 SG, memorandum from Defence Staff for Ter Beek, 10/07/92.

²⁵⁴² SG 1991/1992. SG, memorandum from Defence Staff for Ter Beek, 10/07/92.

²⁵⁴³ SG 1991/1992. DS, memorandum from Defence Staff for Ter Beek, 24/06/92, S92/061/2173.

²⁵⁴⁴ SG 1991/1992. SG, Memorandum from Defence Staff for CDS, 27/07/92, no. S92/061/2491; ABZ, DIO/2003/00065, Foreign Affairs (DIO/Jugoslavia) to PR Geneva, 28/07/92, DIO/Joegoslavië-552/91; G. Landman to G. Welter, 27/07/92, DIO/92-690.

²⁵⁴⁵ As shown for example by the comments made by Jacobovits de Szeged in the North-Atlantic Council, NATO, Summary record of a meeting of the NAC held on 08/07/92, 28/07/92, C-R(92)47; Summary record of a meeting of the NAC held on 09/07/92, 27/07/92, C-R(92)47bis.

²⁵⁴⁶ Political statement by Dr. Klaus Kinkel, *Federal News Service*, 07/07/92.

authorizing force if the parties in Bosnia did not open land corridors from Split or Zagreb to Sarajevo for humanitarian convoys. Douglas Hurd, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom, which had held the presidency of the EU since 1 July, continued to oppose the use of force. In his opinion it could only lead to disaster and possibly thwart the negotiations being led by Carrington.²⁵⁴⁷

According to the leaders of the other countries at the G7 summit, the reason Hurd continued to oppose the use of force was that the British government needed a large proportion of its severely reduced armed forces in Northern Ireland and thought that British public opinion would be against possible British victims in Bosnia.²⁵⁴⁸ Around that time John Casey, for example, indeed wrote in the *Daily Mail* that no matter how terrible the war in the former Yugoslavia was, ‘it is not worth the bones of one British soldier’, almost an echo of the words of the German statesman Otto von Bismarck that the Balkans were not worth the healthy bones of one Pomeranian musketeer.²⁵⁴⁹ However, the other G7 leaders were starting to get fed up with the British point of view and also with the fact that Hurd constantly hid behind Lord Carrington’s continuing attempts at conciliation. When the G7 summit was over, Mitterrand and Dumas declared that as far as they were concerned Carrington could stop his negotiations. A wider forum should be created to discuss the problems of the former Yugoslavia.²⁵⁵⁰ Hurd was not too pleased with this opinion, but ten days later something happened that made it impossible for him to ignore the French advice.

Led by Lord Carrington and the Portuguese diplomat Cutileiro, consultations between representatives of the warring factions resumed in London from 15 July. Initially the discussions did not seem very promising, partly because the Bosnian Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic refused to confer with ‘child murderers’, a reference to Karadzic.²⁵⁵¹ Moreover, declared Silajdzic, the Jews had not negotiated with Hitler either.²⁵⁵² However, on 16 July Karadzic agreed that the VRS would store its heavy weapons in 62 depots which would fall under international supervision. This would be a solution, for example, to the problems around the airport of Sarajevo, which had to be closed every so often because fighting had broken out, and for the Gorazde enclave, which was being heavily bombed in those days by the Bosnian Serbs. On 17 July, one day after Carrington had managed to get Karadzic to agree, the Security Council, on the insistence of the British Permanent Representative Sir David Hannay, agreed to an expansion of UNPROFOR’s mandate, which meant that the UN troops would be charged with supervising the surrender of heavy weapons. The Security Council asked Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali to present a report within three days as to how this decision was to be implemented.²⁵⁵³

This decision gave rise to a serious dispute between the Security Council and Boutros-Ghali, who had already been unable to expect much sympathy from the governments in Washington and London.²⁵⁵⁴ As early as May, Boutros-Ghali had intimated that ‘our plate is full’ as far as UN peace operations were concerned.²⁵⁵⁵ Now he was confronted with a decision which the Security Council had made without consulting him beforehand. According to Boutros-Ghali it would require 1100 extra UN troops for a period of three months to collect the heavy weapons, while Carrington had not succeeded

²⁵⁴⁷ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 121.

²⁵⁴⁸ Annika Savill & Steve Crawshaw & Andrew Marshall, ‘Britain isolated over Yugoslavia’, *The Independent*, 08/07/92.

²⁵⁴⁹ John Casey, ‘Why we should walk away from this bloody war’, *Daily Mail*, 29/06/92.

²⁵⁵⁰ Annika Savill & Steve Crawshaw & Andrew Marshall, ‘Britain isolated over Yugoslavia’, *The Independent*, 08/07/92; Olivier Lepick, ‘French Perspectives’, Danchev & Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, p. 80.

²⁵⁵¹ ‘Overleg in Londen over Bosnië levert niets op’ (‘London talks on Bosnia produce nothing’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/07/92; Henk Strabbing, ‘Londens overleg met partijen Bosnië mislukt’ (‘London talks with Bosnian parties fails’), *de Volkskrant*, 16/07/92.

²⁵⁵² ‘Partijen Bosnië komen in Londen nader tot elkaar’ (‘Bosnian parties come closer together in London’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/07/92.

²⁵⁵³ United Nations Department of Public Information, United Nations, Statement by the President, 17/07/92, pp. 22-23.

²⁵⁵⁴ Harvey Morris, ‘Give me the battalions for peace’, *The Independent*, 03/08/92; interview J.A. Schear, 30/11/00. See also Boutros-Ghali, *Umwanquished*, pp. 42-45.

²⁵⁵⁵ Patrick E. Tyler, ‘U.N. Chief’s Dispute With Council Boils Over’, *The New York Times*, 03/08/92.

in bringing about an effective ceasefire. In Boutros-Ghali's view, the European Community had reached an agreement for which the UN was going to have to pay the cost. In his opinion this was turning things upside down; the Security Council was authorized to entrust certain tasks to a regional organization, but not vice versa.²⁵⁵⁶ In a confidential letter, Boutros-Ghali reproached the Security Council with not having considered for a moment whether or not the agreement was feasible. They had not even waited for advice from the UNPROFOR commander and from himself. If they had, then Boutros-Ghali would have responded that he thought the plan was 'unrealistic'. He had in fact told Carrington this as soon as the agreement had been reached in London.²⁵⁵⁷ This was why Boutros-Ghali was particularly annoyed that Hannay had managed to force the decision through in the Security Council. The Secretary-General was so irritated that the British Minister Hurd felt obliged to go to New York by Concorde on 22 July in order to pacify him. This did not really help.²⁵⁵⁸

For quite some time the Egyptian Secretary-General had been calling the Yugoslav conflict 'the Vietnam of the United Nations',²⁵⁵⁹ a 'quagmire into which we are being sucked further and further'. He was aggrieved that up to that point in 1992 the Security Council had spent sixty percent of its time on this conflict, while the number of conflicts laid before the UN for solutions since the end of the Cold War had constantly increased. In his view, Europe itself should have been doing more to solve the conflict. In this specific case it would take the UN three months to raise the 1100 troops and the resources required for monitoring, whereas the major European countries could do it themselves within four days. Demonstratively, Boutros-Ghali delivered the letter the Security Council wanted from him concerning the implementation of the decision two days late. The substance of the letter was quite plain: he criticized the Security Council for paying too much attention to Yugoslavia at the expense of other conflicts which were by no means less gruesome, such as that in Somalia, where according to him ten times as many people had been killed.²⁵⁶⁰

On 24 July, during a closed session of the Security Council, Boutros-Ghali again compared the costly peacekeeping operation in the former Yugoslavia with the civil war in Somalia. In May the Secretary-General had made a proposal to the Security Council to deploy five hundred troops in Somalia to protect food convoys. After lengthy hesitation, the Security Council had finally approved only the dispatch of fifty observers. In view of the UN's perpetual deficit the Security Council had to choose, and Boutros-Ghali made it perfectly clear which conflict he thought the Security Council should concentrate on. Many Africans call the conflict in the former Yugoslavia 'the war of the rich', he told his audience. He pointed out that the television pictures from the Balkan country showed well-nourished victims, in contrast to those from Africa. Europe should solve its own conflicts.

In turn, the Security Council made it clear that it was not impressed by the Secretary-General's objections.²⁵⁶¹ Several members accused Boutros-Ghali of miscommunication, intellectual arrogance and an overly independent attitude. The Security Council was of the opinion that the Secretary-General's task was to implement its decisions, whereas Boutros-Ghali thought that the status of the UN secretariat was equal to that of the Security Council or the General Assembly.²⁵⁶² The affair became positively sordid when the Secretary-General, remembering an experience in his native Egypt, suggested that the differences of opinion between certain members of the Security Council and himself

²⁵⁵⁶ Herman Amelink, 'Boutros houdt zijn bedenkingen' ('Boutros maintains his objections'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/07/92; Harvey Morris, 'Give me the battalions for peace', *The Independent*, 03/08/92; Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 115.

²⁵⁵⁷ 'Boutros Ghali in conflict met V-raad' ('Boutros Ghali in conflict with Security Council'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/07/92.

²⁵⁵⁸ 'Boutros blijft dwarsliggen over rol VN' ('Boutros continues to dissent on UN role'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/07/92.

²⁵⁵⁹ See for example Patrick E. Tyler, 'U.N. Chief's Dispute With Council Boils Over', *The New York Times*, 03/08/92.

²⁵⁶⁰ Matthias Nass, 'Der Pharao will nicht nur Sekretär sein' ('The Pharaoh does not want to be just a secretary') and id., 'Auf uns richten sich zu grosse Hoffnungen' ('Excessively high hopes are pinned on us'), *Die Zeit*, 07/08/92.

²⁵⁶¹ Seth Faison, 'U.N. Chief Mired in Dispute With Security Council', *The New York Times*, 24/07/92.

²⁵⁶² Harvey Morris, 'Give me the battalions for peace', *The Independent*, 03/08/92. See also 'VN hebben weer secretaris-generaal die weet wat hij wil' ('UN has a Secretary-General who knows what he wants again'), *de Volkskrant*, 04/08/92.

might well be due to the fact that he was a 'wog', or 'westernized oriental gentleman,' the degrading name given to Westernized Arabs and Indians in the British colonial era.²⁵⁶³

The fact that the UN Secretary-General did not have much faith in peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia was not the only thing to emerge from this entire discussion. Six months after he had taken office, his independent attitude toward the Security Council had also become clear, an attitude which was to lead to more and more serious disagreements with the permanent members of the Security Council, especially the United States.²⁵⁶⁴

It also became clear how acute the need was for better co-ordination between the efforts of the EC and its mediator Lord Carrington on the one hand and the activities of the United Nations in relation to the former Yugoslavia on the other. 'It is extremely irregular for the United Nations to be asked to help with the implementation of a politico-military agreement when this organization has had any share in the discussions about it,' wrote Boutros-Ghali to the Security Council.²⁵⁶⁵ And in a declaration on 23 July the UN Secretary-General said that not only did he still have objections to the Security Council's decision, but that there was also 'a lack of clarity as to the respective roles of the United Nations and the European Community in the implementation of the agreement reached in London'.²⁵⁶⁶ It was plain that a distinction whereby the UN was to keep the peace and the EC was to look for a political solution to the conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia, as Boutros-Ghali had himself suggested at the beginning of 1992, could no longer be drawn.

Eventually the Security Council accepted Boutros-Ghali's view that in Bosnia-Herzegovina the conditions were not yet such that the UN could undertake the supervision of heavy weapons. The Security Council invited the Secretary-General to make a list of what resources member states could supply in order to make this supervision possible. The Security Council also asked the EC to provide a broader basis for the discussions about Yugoslavia.²⁵⁶⁷ On 6 August Boutros-Ghali also informed several European organizations directly that in his opinion Europe ought to be in a better position to solve conflicts than other regions. He asked the CSCE to supervise the surrender of heavy weapons by the parties in Bosnia. He sent a copy of his letter to the WEU and the NATO.²⁵⁶⁸ The strange situation thus arose that the quarrel Boutros-Ghali had begun because he thought the UN should do less in Yugoslavia actually led to the United Nations being dragged deeper into the conflict. Finally, Boutros-Ghali's dispute with the government in London and its diplomatic representatives as to the division of responsibilities between the European Community and the Security Council also showed that a scenario had begun which was to include many scenes entitled 'passing the buck'.²⁵⁶⁹

5. Refugee streams and policies relating to them

One area in which both responsibilities and people have traditionally been moved around is that of refugee policy. In the month of June, but especially in July the disconcerting size of the refugee stream from Bosnia began to dawn on the West; it was the biggest in Europe since the Second World War.

²⁵⁶³ Patrick E. Tyler, 'U.N. Chief's Dispute With Council Boils Over', *The New York Times*, 03/08/92. See also Willem Offenbergh, 'VN-bureaucratie werkt niet zoals Boutros-Ghali wil' ('UN bureaucracy does not work as Boutros-Ghali wants it to'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/07/92; Willem Offenbergh, 'Boutros-Ghali en VN-raad ruziën door' ('Boutros-Ghali and UN Security Council continue to wrangle'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/08/92; Harvey Morris, 'Give me the battalions for peace', *The Independent*, 03/08/92.

²⁵⁶⁴ Cf. P.R. Baehr, 'Kan Annan de Naties Verenigen?' (Can Annan Unite the Nations?), *International Spectator*, 51(1997)2, p. 53; Meisler, 'Boutros-Ghali'.

²⁵⁶⁵ Herman Amelink, 'Boutros houdt zijn bedenkingen', *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/07/92.

²⁵⁶⁶ 'Boutros blijft dwarsliggen over rol VN', *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/07/92.

²⁵⁶⁷ United Nations Department of Public Information, United Nations, Statement by the President, 24/07/92, pp. 23-24; Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 116.

²⁵⁶⁸ 'NAVO bestudeert mogelijk gebruik geweld in Bosnië' ('NATO examines possibility of using force in Bosnia'), *de Volkskrant*, 07/08/92.

²⁵⁶⁹ Günther Bächler, quoted in Čalic, *Krieg*, p. 236.

According to the High Commissioner for Refugees, by the beginning of June there were 1.7 million displaced people throughout the whole of Yugoslavia. The largest group among them were the almost eight hundred thousand Bosnians, almost a fifth of the total population of 4.4 million.²⁵⁷⁰ By the end of July the UNHCR estimated that two and a quarter million Bosnians had fled from the violence.²⁵⁷¹ The refugees told their tales of murder, arson, travelling, deportation and missing family members, which made it clear that they had not fled from the violence of war but because of ethnic cleansing, a form of violence deliberately aimed at forcing certain ethnic groups to leave their home environment.²⁵⁷²

However moving the stories in the papers were, one after another the governments in Western Europe introduced restrictions with respect to the refugees. The Dutch government was no exception. Since the war in Yugoslavia had broken out in the summer of 1991, thousands of Yugoslavs had arrived in the Netherlands. Most of them entered the country as tourists and often they found shelter with relatives, acquaintances or people met during holidays. The policy problems began when they remained in the Netherlands longer than three months and applied for benefits. Another problem was that they had no health insurance.

In 1992 there were widely varying figures in circulation as to the exact number of Yugoslavs who had sought asylum. For example, in the second half of 1991 the statistics quoted in the media for asylum applications made by refugees from the (former) Yugoslavia ranged from 1395 to more than three thousand, and for the first five months of 1992 from 1321 to more than 3200.²⁵⁷³ For the two periods together a figure of 6800 asylum seekers is quoted.²⁵⁷⁴ According to the reliable figures of the UNHCR, in the Netherlands there were 2733 asylum applications from (former) Yugoslavs in 1991 and 2725 in the whole of 1992.²⁵⁷⁵

One of the objectives of the Dutch government in their efforts to provide humanitarian aid in the former Yugoslavia had always been to ensure that relief for displaced and homeless people, i.e. refugees who did not apply for asylum, was given to as large as possible an extent in the states of ex-Yugoslavia themselves, so as to keep down the numbers of refugees coming to the Netherlands. Moreover, the Dutch government wanted its policy to avoid creating the impression of complicity with

²⁵⁷⁰ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Ondanks de air conditioning stinkt het' ('In spite of the air conditioning it stinks'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/06/92; Alfred van Cleef, 'VN: twee miljoen mensen zijn op de vlucht' ('UN: two million people have taken flight'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/06/92; 'Bosnische vluchtelingen overspoelen Zagreb' ('Bosnian refugees flood Zagreb'), *Trouw*, 10/07/92; 'VN waarschuwen voor vluchtelingencrisis rondom Joegoslavië' ('UN warns of refugee crisis around Yugoslavia'), *Trouw*, 22/07/92; 'Europa zit in zijn maag met Joegoslavische vluchtelingen' ('Europe does not know what to do about Yugoslav refugees'), *Trouw*, 28/07/92; 'Vluchtelingenstroom uit Kroatië en Bosnië blijft groeien' ('Refugee stream from Croatia and Bosnia continues to swell'), *de Volkskrant*, 10/07/92; 'VN rekenen op vlucht 400 duizend Bosniërs' ('UN expects flight of 400 thousand Bosnians'), *de Volkskrant*, 28/07/92.

²⁵⁷¹ Steven L. Burg, 'The International Community and the Yugoslav Crisis', Esman & Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p. 251.

²⁵⁷² Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Ondanks de air conditioning stinkt het', *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/06/92; idem, 'Wij noemden elkaars namen niet' ('We did not utter each other's names'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 20/07/92; id., 'Exodus vluchtelingen uit Bosnië' ('Exodus of refugees from Bosnia') and 'Geen vlucht maar een exodus' ('Not a flight but an exodus'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/07/92; John F. Burns, 'Vooral Moslims zijn slachtoffer van moorden Bosnië' ('Muslims in particular are the victims of Bosnian murders'), *de Volkskrant*, 24/06/92; 'Komst tienduizend vluchtelingen uit Bosnië gemeld' ('Arrival of 10,000 refugees from Bosnia reported'), *de Volkskrant*, 25/07/92; Blaine Harden, 'Bosnia Bleeds Under Serb "Purification"', *The Washington Post*, 23/06/92.

²⁵⁷³ Alfred van Cleef, 'VN: twee miljoen mensen zijn op de vlucht' ('Two million people have taken flight'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/06/92; 'Kosto wil Joegoslaven opvangen in kazernes' ('Kosto wants to house Yugoslavs in barracks'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/06/92; 'Asielverzoeken ex-Joegoslaven komen in behandeling' ('Asylum applications of ex-Yugoslavs are dealt with'), *Trouw*, 03/02/93, in which a figure is quoted of 2700 asylum applications from Yugoslavia in 1991 and 2725 in the first seven months of 1992. See also TK 1991-1992, Aanhangsel no. 390 (Questions put by Wiebenga).

²⁵⁷⁴ 'Opvang voor Joegoslaven' ('Relief for Yugoslavs'), *Trouw*, 16/07/92.

²⁵⁷⁵ UNHCR, Background Paper on Refugees and Asylum Seekers from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Geneva, May 1996, Table 3; UNHCR, Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Europe. A Statistical Overview of Citizens from The former Yugoslavia 1991-1995, Geneva s.a., Table 3.

ethnic cleansing.²⁵⁷⁶ This policy was supported by the parliamentary groups, which from May onwards argued in favour of designating certain areas in the region as safe havens, in which camps could be set up and refugees could be assisted, with safe protection by international troops.²⁵⁷⁷

In December 1991 the German government had decided unilaterally not to admit any more planes from Yugoslavia on to its territory. As a consequence of this decision, a constant flow of planes carrying Yugoslav refugees from Skopje and Sofia had been arriving at Beek airport in Limburg. Most of these refugees came from Kosovo and Macedonia.²⁵⁷⁸ By the beginning of June 1992 these flights had become so frequent that there were almost daily landings at Beek airport.²⁵⁷⁹ Of the approximately 25,000 Yugoslavs who landed at Beek airport in the first six months of 1992, about 15,000 travelled straight on to relatives in Germany.²⁵⁸⁰ When the German authorities began to place restrictions on the influx of Yugoslav refugees in June, there was an immediate effect on the climate of admissions at Beek. Until then the refugees had always been admitted as tourists, but in the weekend of 13 and 14 June the Dutch customs at the airport sent almost a hundred Albanians from Kosovo back because they did not have enough money to stay in the Netherlands.²⁵⁸¹ When the press began to pay more and more attention to the refugees arriving at Beek, in late June the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management refused landing permits for several planes carrying Yugoslav refugees.²⁵⁸²

Confronted with the flights landing at Beek airport, the German government's restrictive regulations against the admission of Yugoslavs, overcrowded asylum seekers' centres and budget overrun for aid to refugees, the Dutch government decided to introduce compulsory visas for people from the former Yugoslavia as of 1 July 1992.²⁵⁸³ The visas could be issued only by the Dutch embassy in Belgrade, which caused great difficulties for the refugees, most of whom after all came from Kosovo and Macedonia. It led to an immediate reduction in the number of planes from Skopje landing at Beek.²⁵⁸⁴

The next incident involving refugees was triggered by Hasan Huremovic, an employee of Merhamet, a foundation in Rotterdam which assisted Bosnian Muslims. He presented the Dutch government with a *fait accompli* when he promised 332 Bosnian Muslims who had fled to Croatia admission to the Netherlands even though they did not have the visas required. After Huremovic had managed to draw the attention of the Dutch press to his refugees by reporting that there were six coachloads of Bosnian Muslims waiting for permission from the Dutch government,²⁵⁸⁵ by 28 July the

²⁵⁷⁶ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 22/05/92, 19/06/92, 26/06/92, 09/07/92 and 20/08/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

²⁵⁷⁷ De Kok and Valk in Radio 1, NCRV, Hier en Nu, 31/05/92, 1.10pm; 'Kamerleden terug van vakantie voor Joegoslavië-debat' (MPs back from holidays for Yugoslavia debate), *de Volkskrant*, 06/08/92; Rob Meines, 'Verdeeldheid over ingrijpen in Bosnië' (Dissension over intervention in Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/08/92.

²⁵⁷⁸ 'Joegoslaven zonder visum worden niet toegelaten' (Yugoslavs without visas not admitted), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/07/92.

²⁵⁷⁹ Alfred van Cleef, 'Ik wil niet doden en ik wil niet gedood worden' (I do not want to kill and I do not want to be killed), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/06/92.

²⁵⁸⁰ 'Kosto wil Joegoslaven opvangen in kazernes', *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/06/92.

²⁵⁸¹ 'Servisch protest tegen oorlog' (Serb protest against war), *De Stem*, 15/06/92.

²⁵⁸² Radio 1, IKON, De andere wereld van zondagmorgen, 28/06/92, 9.30am.

²⁵⁸³ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 20/06/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

²⁵⁸⁴ 'Joegoslaven zonder visum worden niet toegelaten', *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/07/92.

²⁵⁸⁵ 'Vluchtelingen gestrand bij grens Slovenië' (Refugees stranded at Slovenian border), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/07/92; 'Vluchtelingen tijdelijk naar Nederland' (Refugees come to the Netherlands temporarily), 'Merhamet wil met politiek niets meer te maken hebben' (Merhamet wants nothing more to do with politics) and 'Komst vluchtelingen deze week verwacht' (Refugees expected to arrive this week), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/07/92; 'Groep doorgelaten na toezegging Nederland' (Group let through after Dutch promise), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/07/92; Harm van den Berg, 'We rijden nu toch, daar ging het me om' (We are moving now anyway, that was what it was about), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/08/92; Ward op den Brouw & Anneke Visser, 'Bosnische lasser schudt Nederlandse instanties wakker' (Bosnian welder makes Dutch authorities wake up), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/08/92; Henny de Lange, 'Het begon met z'n familie. Hasan Huremovic haalt ex-landgenoten hier zelf heen' (It started with his family. Hasan Huremovic brings ex-compatriots here himself), *Trouw*, 19/08/92; Rik Zaal,

Dutch government had little choice but to relent. These Muslims were the first former Yugoslavs to be admitted into the Netherlands in the framework of the Displaced Persons Regulation, which went into force as of 1 August.

By virtue of this Temporary Regulation for the Relief of Displaced Persons, asylum applications from Yugoslavs were put aside for the time being; the government tolerated their presence temporarily. This saved the Yugoslav refugees a great deal of red tape, but the main idea behind the regulation was that when the situation in Yugoslavia had become 'normal' again, they would have to return to their countries of origin. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs initially objected to the regulation because they thought it implied complicity with ethnic cleansing; the ministry continued to favour relief in the region itself.²⁵⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the regulation remained in force and in the first six months after its introduction 7200 ex-Yugoslavs were to be eligible for it.²⁵⁸⁷

On 28 and 29 July the audience survey department of the NOS (Netherlands Broadcasting Authority) conducted a representative opinion poll for *Veronica's* current affairs programme *Nieuwslijn* among 685 Dutch people over the age of 14 about their opinions on the admission of Yugoslav refugees. The outcome was that almost 80% of those questioned were in favour of admitting people who had been forced to flee from their homes by ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, even though the question was put in such a way that it suggested that there were areas there where it was safe. Almost 16% of those questioned were against admission. Of those in favour, as many as one in eight thought there should be no restrictions at all on the number of refugees admitted. One in seven declared they were prepared to offer shelter to one or more refugees in their own homes.²⁵⁸⁸

The refugee problem became even more dramatic when the Croatian government, which had already taken in more than half a million refugees, announced in mid-June that it was 'absolutely impossible' to 'accommodate even one more new refugee'. The government in Zagreb would not close the borders with Bosnia, but it would immediately transfer all new refugees to the borders with Austria, Slovenia and Italy. The government said it was compelled to take this measure because so many countries had closed their borders to refugees from Bosnia or had introduced stringent visa requirements, so that Croatia, which was already on the brink of economic collapse, was turning into 'one vast refugee camp'. Moreover, the West was only giving the Croatian government financial aid for a limited number of the refugees.²⁵⁸⁹ In the succeeding days the Croatian authorities did in fact put refugees from Bosnia on the train to Austria, Germany and Italy. This led to scenes in which trains carrying refugees came to a standstill at the border between Croatia and Slovenia because the passengers did not have the visas required.²⁵⁹⁰ The Croatian authorities even sent able-bodied male Muslim refugees back to Bosnia en masse, because in President Tudjman's opinion their place was there, fighting.²⁵⁹¹

On 28 July 1992 UNHCR reported that by then 2.2 million Croatians, Muslims and Serbs had taken flight. Half a million of them had sought refuge outside the former Yugoslavia. Germany had taken in the largest number: two hundred thousand. Then came Hungary (54,000), Austria (50,000),

'Kosto', *de Volkskrant*, 19/08/92. For a critical discussion of the role of the media in this affair, see Auke Kok, 'De Bosniërs komen!' ('The Bosnians are coming!'), *HP/De Tijd*, 07/08/92.

²⁵⁸⁶ See also Frinking, cited in: 'Joegoslavië', *CDA/Actueel*, 06/06/92, p. 18.

²⁵⁸⁷ 'Asielverzoeken ex-Joegoslaven komen in behandeling', *Trouw*, 03/02/93.

²⁵⁸⁸ *Kijk- en Luisteronderzoek* NOS, 'Vluchtelingen uit het voormalige Joegoslavië', 30/07/92, B92-130; TV, Nederland 2, VOO, Nieuwslijn, 30/07/92, 10.00pm.

²⁵⁸⁹ 'Kroatië kan vluchtelingen niet bergen' ('Croatia cannot accommodate refugees'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/07/92.

²⁵⁹⁰ 'Vluchtelingen Bosnië na dagen toegelaten' ('Bosnian refugees admitted after days'), *de Volkskrant*, 20/07/92; Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Vluchtelingen uit Kroatië niet gewenst' ('Refugees from Croatia not wanted') and 'Treinen tenslotte toegelaten' ('Trains finally admitted'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 20/07/92; J.A. Hoeksma, 'Vluchtelingen afdoen als "ontheemden" is onaanvaardbaar' ('Dispensing with refugees as being "Displaced Persons" is unacceptable'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/07/92; 'Het gesol met vluchtelingen' ('Messing around with refugees'), *Trouw*, 20/07/92.

²⁵⁹¹ 'Bosnische mannen massaal door Kroatië teruggestuurd' ('Bosnian men sent back en masse by Croatia'), *de Volkskrant*, 22/07/92.

Sweden (44,000), Switzerland (17,000), Italy (7000), Turkey (7000), the Netherlands (6300), Luxembourg (3200), Norway (2300), Czechoslovakia (1700), France (1100) and the United Kingdom (1100).²⁵⁹² According to the UN Commission for Refugees the end of the refugee flow was not yet in sight. The Commission did not believe the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was likely to end soon and thought that the feelings of hatred and revenge were so great that it would be a very long time before the refugees would dare to return to their homes. According to the UNHCR, there was a danger that a 'permanent refugee population in the heart of Europe' would result.²⁵⁹³

As we have seen, after Croatia Germany took in the largest number of refugees. Since the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina had broken out, two hundred thousand refugees had fled to Germany, 140,000 of whom had applied for asylum. As a result, the constitutionally guaranteed right to asylum in Germany came under political pressure. On 20 July Klaus Kinkel, who had succeeded Genscher as Minister of Foreign Affairs, failed to persuade his fellow ministers from the other EC countries to make agreements on national quotas for refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina so that every country would take in a certain percentage of the refugees.²⁵⁹⁴

UNHCR and the Conference in July 1992

It was against this background that Sadako Ogata of Japan, High Commissioner for Refugees, decided to hold a conference in Geneva on 29 July on a Comprehensive Humanitarian Response to the war in Bosnia. At this conference both the financing of relief for Displaced Persons in the region itself and the willingness of Western countries to accept refugees would be discussed. In addition to UNPROFOR, the High Commission for Refugees had a significant role in UN involvement in the war in Bosnia; UNHCR was the member of the UN family that had been providing aid to refugees who had crossed international boundaries since 1951, but recently it had been spending more of its resources on support for all humanitarian victims of war. The most striking example was the aid given to the Kurds in the north of Iraq after the Gulf War in a zone which was proclaimed a safe haven.

On 25 October 1991, months before UNPROFOR had been set up, UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar had designated UNHCR as the UN's 'lead agency' in (former) Yugoslavia. This organization would be charged with providing relief for internally Displaced Persons in Yugoslavia. UNHCR had agreed with this designation on condition that its activities would not stand in the way of the deployment of UN peace forces.²⁵⁹⁵ However, it was not clear exactly what the status of a 'lead agency' was. There was no regulation or agreement in which this task was laid down, and at that time the co-ordination in the field suggested by the term 'lead agency' had no corresponding institution at the central level of the UN. It was not until April 1992 that the United Nations set up a Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), which was supposed to co-ordinate the humanitarian activities of UN organizations and bring them to the attention of the Security Council. However, not much came of this. An analysis made in 1994 states: 'In any event, DHA in New York functioned in quiet – some would say, invisible – ways.'²⁵⁹⁶ and 'In short, there was a limited value-added element in DHA's involvement.'²⁵⁹⁷

UNHCR itself interpreted its mandate in Yugoslavia as the 'prime responsibility for logistics, transport, food monitoring, domestic needs, shelter, community services, health, emergency transition activities in agriculture and income generation, protection/legal assistance, and assistance to other

²⁵⁹² Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 157.

²⁵⁹³ 'Europa zit in zijn maag met Joegoslavische vluchtelingen', *Trouw*, 28/07/92.

²⁵⁹⁴ J.M. Bik, 'Kinkel ventileert 'machteloze woede' ('Kinkel gives vent to "helpless rage"'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/07/92.

²⁵⁹⁵ Lidy Nicolassen, 'Miljoenen op drift in het Jaar van de Terugkeer' ('Millions drifting in the Year of Return'), *de Volkskrant*, 15/02/92.

²⁵⁹⁶ Minear et al., *Action*, p. 108.

²⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

agencies in sectors under their responsibility'.²⁵⁹⁸ In short, UNHCR wanted to make sure that all the needs of those who had been forced to take flight in the region or had been stricken by the war locally were met. From late 1991 on UNHCR devoted itself to aid, including the prime responsibility for logistics and transport. UNHCR co-ordinated all inter-governmental aid, ensured the co-ordination of the efforts of the UN and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civilian aid linked up with military efforts. In this context, UNHCR would work mainly with UNICEF, which had a tradition of assisting all parties in civil wars (from November 1991), the WHO (from July 1992) and the WFP, which went into action in the former Yugoslavia as of November 1992. The term 'lead agency' by no means implied that other UN organizations were subordinate to UNHCR.²⁵⁹⁹ Moreover, on 6 December 1991, Perez de Cuellar asked UNHCR to take on an additional task, as well as the usual one of providing aid to Displaced Persons, namely that of inspecting the living conditions of people who had been driven from their homes, because while there were as yet no peace troops present the UN 'wanted to do something' in Yugoslavia.²⁶⁰⁰

In the light of the enormous task UNHCR would eventually have to confront, the Commission began in Yugoslavia in a relatively small way. In October 1991 the refugee organization had only a modest office in Belgrade. A few weeks later José-Maria Mendiluce, a Basque diplomat, arrived as Special Envoy for humanitarian action in Yugoslavia. At the time, the arrival of the first UNHCR aid workers passed practically unnoticed by the outside world. Nevertheless, as early as 1991 UNHCR offered its first assistance to Displaced Persons in Croatia and Serbia. But it was not until April 1992 that the UNHCR's activities in the former Yugoslavia really got underway,²⁶⁰¹ at that point UNHCR found itself in a war zone in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The organization was no longer responsible only for refugees, but for an entire population which was in danger of being expelled or starved. The UNHCR's policy was focused on doing as much as possible to provide the population with reasonable living conditions locally, so that they did not need to flee.²⁶⁰² The result was that the UNHCR's target group in Yugoslavia grew from half a million in December 1991 to several million a few months later. In December 1991 there were 19 UNHCR staff members in Yugoslavia, a year later 337, and in November 1993 as many as 678, of whom 226 were international and 452 local. UNHCR, which was responsible for food convoys in Bosnia, had 350 vehicles at its disposal with a total capacity of four thousand tons. Eventually UNHCR was spending half of its budget on the war in the former Yugoslavia. By the end of 1992 Yugoslavia had grown to be 'the largest, most complex and risky operation (...) ever undertaken by humanitarian organizations', according to Mendiluce.²⁶⁰³

The leadership of UNHCR was in the hands of Sadako Ogata, the High Commissioner for Refugees. She combined intelligence and diplomacy with resolution and dedication. She was a good organizer and in general had a well-developed sense of choosing the right moment to use her authority.²⁶⁰⁴ On taking office in February 1992 she had found an organization whose morale was low, mainly due to allegations that UNHCR had been inadequately prepared for the emergency situation which had arisen after the Gulf War. The organization had been taken by surprise by the flight of the Kurds from Saddam Hussein's regime, which led to pictures of miserable people shivering in the freezing cold on mountain slopes in the north of Iraq. Yugoslavia offered UNHCR a new chance, and Ogata, competent as she was, grasped it eagerly. She became, as she herself put it, the 'desk officer for the former Yugoslavia'.²⁶⁰⁵ However, she left the real work to Mendiluce.

²⁵⁹⁸ Quoted in Minear, *Action*, p. 26.

²⁵⁹⁹ See LL. A UNHCR Handbook for the Military on Humanitarian Operations, Geneva 1995, p. 24.

²⁶⁰⁰ Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 48.

²⁶⁰¹ Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 28.

²⁶⁰² Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 51.

²⁶⁰³ Minear et al., *Action*, p. 26.

²⁶⁰⁴ Cf. Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 220-221.

²⁶⁰⁵ Weiss & Pasic, 'UNHCR', p. 50; Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 197.

Mendiluce, who had had experience in Northern Iraq helping the Kurds, was soon to observe in Yugoslavia that ‘Kurdistan was a teaparty compared to what we are facing here’.²⁶⁰⁶ As was described in Chapter 5, when he arrived in Zvornik at the beginning of April, he found himself in the midst of the Serb paramilitary actions against the local Muslims. He then told the local commanders on his own authority that the population was under the protection of UNHCR. In this way he had been able to save hundreds of lives, but the price he paid was that he co-operated with ethnic cleansing by taking these Muslims out of the city.²⁶⁰⁷

This was not a new dilemma; as early as mid-October 1991 the Croatian Minister of Interior Affairs Ivan Vekic had accused the observers of the European monitoring mission, the ECMM, of being involved in the ‘deportation of the Croats of Ilok’ and assisting ‘the enemy’, after they had helped Croats who had signed documents ‘voluntarily’ giving up their possessions to leave.²⁶⁰⁸ In July 1992 irritation arose again, this time on the part of UN staff, after UNPROFOR troops and UNHCR personnel had given assistance to a convoy taking seven thousand Bosnian Muslim refugees from Bosanski Novi in north-western Bosnia to the Croatian town of Karlovac. According to the Serb authorities, these seven thousand people were leaving the area voluntarily, because it was scourged by violence. On arrival in Karlovac, when the ‘refugees’ felt free to talk, they said they had been forced to sign documents declaring that they gave up all their property. The UN authorities realized, to their indignation, that they had been accessories to ethnic cleansing.²⁶⁰⁹ Between the beginning of June 1992 and mid-1993 UNHCR practice vacillated between on the one hand protecting people in their own homes and villages and on the other helping people to escape from life-threatening situations.²⁶¹⁰ However, from the summer of 1992 onwards, the policy at the top of the organization was, as Mendiluce later formulated it, ‘I prefer 30.000 evacuees to 30.000 bodies.’²⁶¹¹ The International Red Cross had the same policy line: ‘We saw only one way out – to help people to get away and at the same time denounce “ethnic cleansing”’.²⁶¹²

How to prevent more refugees fleeing from Bosnia: the birth of the Safe Area concept

Representatives of seventy countries attended the conference convened by Ogata on 29 and 30 July. Most of them were ministers and secretaries of state, but there was also a delegation from the International Red Cross (ICRC). On behalf of the Netherlands a delegation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was present, led by Junior Minister P. Dankert. At this conference it emerged that the Western governments were not very willing to accept refugees in their own territory.²⁶¹³ The United Kingdom, France and Italy were particularly reluctant.²⁶¹⁴ A spokeswoman for the British delegation declared that her government wanted to save the refugees the long journey to the United Kingdom.²⁶¹⁵ Many governments did promise considerable financial support for UNHCR. The meeting again made it clear that the governments of Western Europe believed that relief for the victims of ethnic cleansing practices should, to as great an extent as possible, be provided in the former Yugoslavia itself. It would

²⁶⁰⁶ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 200.

²⁶⁰⁷ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 201.

²⁶⁰⁸ Theo Engelen, ‘Strijd laait hoog op aan alle fronten in Kroatië’ (‘Conflict flares up on all fronts in Croatia’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 18/10/91. For an example of one of these ‘documents of voluntary departure’, see ‘Bosniërs tekenden voor ‘permanente emigratie’ (‘Bosnians signed for “permanent emigration”’), *de Volkskrant*, 25/08/92.

²⁶⁰⁹ Silber & Little, p. 247; Maas, *Neighbor*, pp. 72-73; Lidy Nicolassen, ‘Geneefs overleg bewijst lippendienst aan vluchtelingen’, *de Volkskrant*, 30/07/92.

²⁶¹⁰ Minear et al., *Action*, p. 67.

²⁶¹¹ Minear et al., *Action*, pp. 66-67; Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 208.

²⁶¹² Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 6.

²⁶¹³ Folkert Jensma, ‘Portemonnees open maar grenzen dicht in Genève’ (‘Purses open but borders closed in Geneva’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/07/92; Lidy Nicolassen, ‘Vluchtelingenconferentie wil Bosniërs op Balkan houden’ (‘Refugee conference wants to keep Bosnians in Balkans’), *de Volkskrant*, 30/07/92.

²⁶¹⁴ ‘Geen oplossing’ (‘No solution’), *de Volkskrant*, 31/07/92.

²⁶¹⁵ NOS Laet, 29/07/92.

be even better if the flight of people from ethnic cleansing could be prevented, but then some form of safety would have to be offered to them. This was in fact the UNHCR's objective. The next question was how it should be done. On the eve of the conference in Geneva the French government therefore proclaimed that security zones should be created in Bosnia itself for the relief and protection of Displaced Persons; these zones would be similar to the Safe Areas which had been created for the Kurds after the Gulf War. The French Chief of Staff Admiral J. Lanxade was said to have discussed this matter with his American colleague General Powell in Washington on 24 July.²⁶¹⁶

During the conference the idea of 'preventive protection' was put forward, in concordance with an agreement reached between the Croatian and Bosnian governments on 22 July about providing relief for Bosnian displaced people in Safe Areas in Bosnia itself. This 'preventive protection' was intended to stop the population being put to flight, both in areas where conflicts had already broken out and in regions where tension was rising. The idea was widely approved since the European governments, and in particular the Austrian government, were afraid of the large refugee flow from the former Yugoslavia.²⁶¹⁷ Many delegations therefore made statements about setting up safe havens, demilitarized zones or protected areas. In all these cases it was assumed that international troops would provide military protection, on condition that the warring factions in Bosnia consented. The UN would have to design a political regulation for this purpose.²⁶¹⁸

At the conference it was decided to set up a 'Follow-up Committee on the Comprehensive Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in the Former Yugoslavia', in which representatives from 35 countries, from the European Commission, the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Red Cross and various other international organizations would participate. The Committee suggested to Boutros-Ghali that the UN Department for Humanitarian Affairs should investigate the idea of safety zones and their feasibility in the former Yugoslavia.²⁶¹⁹

The Dutch government stated at once that it was in favour of such safety zones. However, UNHCR considered that there should first be a greater UNPROFOR presence and the International Red Cross was initially not in favour because it was afraid that zones like this would have the effect of provoking even larger streams of people.²⁶²⁰ This idea was eventually to lead to a paper by UNHCR and the International Red Cross on preventive action and Safe Areas, which was presented on 17 December 1992. The UNHCR conference at the end of July can therefore be regarded as the cradle of the concept of Safe Areas.²⁶²¹

There is another reason why the UNHCR conference at the end of July 1992 is worth mentioning, although most of those attending did not realize it at the time. During the conference Cornelio Sommaruga, president of the International Red Cross, reported that in Bosnia civilians were being put into internment camps on a large scale and that torture and summary executions were taking place in the framework of ethnic cleansing. He described these actions as practices which by now had been thought to exist only as themes in museums about the Second World War.²⁶²² The leader of the International Red Cross had decided to abandon his traditional policy of confidentiality and had deliberately grasped the opportunity of the conference to jolt the ministers attending it and

²⁶¹⁶ 'Europa zit in zijn maag met Joegoslavische vluchtelingen', *Trouw*, 28/07/92.

²⁶¹⁷ Interview I. Khan, 28/01/2000.

²⁶¹⁸ Lidy Nicolassen, 'UNHCR ontwerpt aparte status voor tijdelijke vluchteling' ('UNHCR creates separate status for temporary refugee'), *de Volkskrant*, 31/07/92.

²⁶¹⁹ ABZ, DIO/2003/00063. Follow-up Committee on the Comprehensive Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in the Former Yugoslavia, Second Meeting, 04/09/92, Working Document. Advance copy, appendix to PR Geneva to F. van Wulfften Palthe, 24/08/92, fax no. hum/gev-0579/92.

²⁶²⁰ ABZ, DIO/2003/00063. Van den Broek 252 to PR Geneva, 13/10/92.

²⁶²¹ Interview I. Khan, 28/01/2000.

²⁶²² Records of PR Geneva, Statement by Cornelio Sommaruga, 29/07/92; Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 217; Mercier, *Crimes*, pp. 53 and 199-202; Mark van Driel, 'Met NAVO-bommen ging te veel mis' ('Too much went wrong with NATO bombs'), *de Volkskrant*, 13/08/99.

international public opinion with the news of the camps.²⁶²³ Although Sommaruga's words were difficult to misunderstand, they had little effect on those present.²⁶²⁴ This was all the stranger because on the same day that Sommaruga gave his speech, an article appeared in the British newspaper *The Guardian* in which the existence of Serb concentration camps in Bosnia was reported.

6. Reporting on the complicated relations in Bosnia

‘Kriege haben es an sich, dass es viel schwieriger ist, zu recherchieren; viel problematischer, die Wahrheit herauszufinden. Was ist Wahrheit? Im Krieg wird schlagartig klar, dass es viele Wahrheiten gibt – vielleicht mehr als in anderen Situationen.’²⁶²⁵

[‘A characteristic of wars is that it is much more difficult to investigate them; much more of a problem to discover the truth. What is truth? In war it suddenly becomes clear that there are many truths – perhaps more than in other situations’.]

‘The television is the pressure cooker of public indignation and the pan in which political indignation is pre-cooked (...) Anyone in favour of intervention in the Balkans should perhaps first try to get camera crews sent,’ wrote Gijsbert van Es on 5 August 1992 in *NRC Handelsblad*.²⁶²⁶ It was as though his tip was taken at once: on 6 and 7 August 1992 television pictures were broadcast throughout the whole world of an emaciated Bosnian Muslim behind barbed wire. These film fragments, which became known in the Netherlands as ‘the pictures of Omarska’,²⁶²⁷ would etch themselves on the retinas of television viewers more deeply than any other image of the war in Bosnia and in the opinion of many authors they contributed to the discussion on possible military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁶²⁸ In the following section these pictures will be examined in detail; the discussion will include both the history of the origin of the pictures and the doubts which later arose as to the authenticity of these fragments. The space devoted to these pictures is justified because with the help of this much talked about case an attempt can be made to establish the relative influence (or lack of it) of the media on the policies of the Western governments with respect to Yugoslavia. The discussion will show that many of ‘the pictures of Omarska’ were not what they seemed; for example, they were not pictures of Omarska.

It is first necessary to outline the relations that existed in Bosnia at that moment and how they were reported. The situation in Croatia in 1991 and early 1992 had already been complicated for outsiders, but the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina was even more difficult to comprehend. In the era preceding the conflict, an inhabitant of Bosnia had a rich choice of identities. At the national level he could choose one of three identities: he could decide to define himself as a Yugoslav, a Bosnian, or a Muslim/Serb/Croat/other ethnicity. After Yugoslavia had disintegrated, there were still two possibilities left. A Serb, for instance, could choose for the Serb nationalism of the SDS of Karadzic, Koljevic, Krajisnik and Plavsic, but he could also choose for the Bosnian government and the Bosnian

²⁶²³ Mercier, *Crimes*, pp. 55 and 110-111.

²⁶²⁴ Mercier, *Crimes*, pp. 53 and 138.

²⁶²⁵ Andreas Braun, reporter for the *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, quoted in Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 106.

²⁶²⁶ Gijsbert van Es, ‘Televisie als snelkookpan’ (‘Television as pressure cooker’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/08/92.

²⁶²⁷ See for example Rik Kuethe, ‘Definitie van horror’ (‘Definition of horror’), *Elsevier*, 15/08/92, p. 28; Gerbert van Genderen Stort, ‘Gerecht zonder aangeklaagden’ (‘Court without defendants’), *HP/De Tijd*, 04/06/93, p. 29; Peter de Waard, ‘Dubieuze beelden van een ‘dodenkamp’ (‘Dubious pictures of a “death camp”’), *de Volkskrant*, 10/03/00; Marjolijn de Cocq, ‘Het grote belang van de kleine vissen’ (‘The great importance of the small fry’), *Haagsche Courant*, 11/08/01. They were also referred to as the pictures of Manjaca; Caroline de Gruyter, ‘Kroaten rijgen kettingen van Servische vingers’ (‘Croats make chains from Serb fingers’), *Elsevier*, 03/10/92, pp. 46-47.

²⁶²⁸ See for example Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 121; Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 252; M. Borogovac and S. Rustempasic, ‘US administration announces further support for Serbian plan for Bosnia’, *Bosnia Storm* 08/03/95.

government's army, the ABiH. President Izetbegovic was the leader of a Muslim party, but at the same time head of a multi-ethnic state. Not only outsiders, but even the people concerned experienced a great deal of conceptual confusion with regard to their own identity. For example, in 1990 Izetbegovic's SDA still rejected the term Bosnjak to refer to the identity of their own followers, but in September 1993 they embraced it.

A factor which made relations even more complicated was that during the war fundamental differences of opinion had arisen within the separate ethnic groups, a topic often neglected in Western news coverage of Yugoslavia and of Bosnia in particular.²⁶²⁹ On the Serb side there were major differences of opinion between the political and military leaders, personified by Radovan Karadzic, president of the Serb Republic, and Ratko Mladic, commander of the Bosnian Serb army. There was also tension between the political leaders of the Serb Republic in Pale and the Bosnian Serb military and political leaders in Banja Luka. Within the limited territory that comprised his state in 1993, the Muslim president Alija Izetbegovic had to deal with what was in fact a separatist movement by troops in the Bihac region led by Fikret Abdic, who, as was discussed in Chapter 5, had been his rival since May 1992. There was also constant tension between extremist and more moderate elements in the Bosnian Croat group.

Croats and Serbs in Bosnia tended to be oriented towards Croatia and Serbia respectively. The fact that large groups of the population of Bosnia felt special ties with Croatia and Serbia respectively added extra layers to the conflict. Just as there had been tension between Babic, the Serb leader in Croatia, on the one hand and Milosevic on the other, there were also differences of opinion between Karadzic in Bosnia and Milosevic in Serbia.

The presence of criminal elements whose interests sometimes coincided with the strategy as a whole and sometimes did not, made things even more obscure. Finally, in Bosnia, unlike Croatia, there was no question of more or less clear front lines; the warring factions' areas overlapped, so that various enclaves and corridors were fought over by coalitions whose composition changed occasionally. For example, Croats and Serbs collaborated in Neretva Valley while simultaneously fighting against each other in the Posavina corridor.

It was not easy for correspondents on the spot to create a coherent picture for American or West European newspaper readers and television viewers on the basis of infrequent reports from this hotch-potch of data. Until a very short time before the parties now in conflict with each other in Bosnia had lived side by side. When negotiating about ceasefires, which they would soon violate again, or exchanging prisoners or corpses, they would also cordially exchange stories about the fortunes of families on either side of the dividing line and eat and drink together as if there were no frontlines, no shots had been exchanged and no houses had been set on fire. In some places warring factions lent or sold each other arms. Journalists were sometimes baffled by the reality of such events, which did not correspond with the three-way division into Croats, Muslims and Serbs which had become fixed in their own images of Bosnia.²⁶³⁰ And even during the war in Croatia, as it turned out, the complexity of the conflict and the confusion it brought down on the journalists themselves made it difficult for them to get Western readers interested in events taking place in the former Yugoslavia. But at least Croatia was familiar to many West Europeans as a holiday destination; the journalists found it much more difficult to explain the complicated situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina to the public. They could not assume that their readers were at all familiar with the ethnic and geographic relations in this area.²⁶³¹

Engaged journalism

Another reason why readers had not felt much involvement with the war in Croatia was that it was difficult for both reporters and readers to identify with one of the warring factions. In most Western

²⁶²⁹ Cf. Mirjana Prosic-Dvornic, 'Serbia. The Inside Story', Halpern & Kideckel (eds.), *Neighbors*, p. 317.

²⁶³⁰ Cf. Loyd, *War*, p. 115.

²⁶³¹ Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 182.

countries there was little sympathy not only for the Serbs but also for the Croats. Bosnia was different: from the outset the Muslims were seen as the party under attack and as victims of ethnic cleansing. Those most to blame for the conflict were the Serbs. Most attempts at investigative journalism during the war in Bosnia were focused on finding more convincing proof of the victimization of Muslims.²⁶³²

However, investigative journalism had its limitations. For example, reporters never succeeded in discovering the whole truth about the three great massacres in Sarajevo of May 1992, February 1994 and August 1995.²⁶³³ Paul Moorcraft, who covered wars for a quarter of a century, including the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, believed that in this war there was such a thing as ‘the tyranny of victimology’: ‘The Bosnian Muslim atrocities and their intransigence tended to be ignored by the media.’²⁶³⁴ For example, of the 71 photos relating to the Bosnian war published by *The Washington Post* in the first six months of 1992, 31 were devoted to Muslim victims and three to Serb victims, which, even if one takes account of the fact that in this phase of the war the Serbs were making the most victims, still presents a distorted picture.²⁶³⁵ German television broadcasting stations were not even at all interested in acquiring material on film about Serbs who had been killed.²⁶³⁶ When in the spring of 1993 a Dutch UN military observer met a group of Dutch newspaper journalists in Tuzla who were travelling along the front with ABiH officers, and asked them if they were also going to visit the Serb side, they told him they were not, because ‘the Serb story is known well enough’.²⁶³⁷

Some journalists were so emotionally involved in events such as ethnic cleansing that they used their articles to try to prod their governments into taking a more active approach to military intervention.²⁶³⁸ Moreover, editors often altered reports from correspondents if they were not in keeping with the fixed image of Serb perpetrators and Muslim victims.²⁶³⁹ This was also the case in the newsrooms of Dutch newspapers and broadcasting companies. It was even suggested that in choosing correspondents editors allowed themselves to be influenced by the question of whether or not the person concerned was anti-Serb enough.²⁶⁴⁰ Adept of this form of engaged journalism justified it by saying it was difficult not to become emotionally involved when ethnic cleansing and mass murder were taking place.²⁶⁴¹ *Daily Telegraph* correspondent Alec Russell wrote of his experiences: ‘[A]nalogies with Nazi Germany rightly have to be used with extreme caution in newsprint. But in Bosnia in 1992 correspondents (...) struggled to find a lesser comparison.’²⁶⁴² ‘If the bad news about Bosnia could just be brought home to the people, I remember thinking, the slaughter would not be allowed to continue’, wrote David Rieff, who worked in Bosnia from September 1992 on.²⁶⁴³ ‘Indifference was not an option open to us’, said BBC correspondent Martin Bell.²⁶⁴⁴ According to him, a ‘journalism of attachment’ arose in Bosnia.²⁶⁴⁵

This attachment did not only derive from the journalists themselves; it was also a deliberate goal of the Bosnian government, who lacked heavy weapons and therefore regarded foreign journalists as their ‘artillery’, as the Bosnian Minister of Foreign Affairs and future Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic put it,²⁶⁴⁶ or as their most reliable allies.²⁶⁴⁷ Nevertheless, journalists were divided as to the appropriateness

²⁶³² Burg & Shoup, *War*, pp. 162-163.

²⁶³³ Cf. Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 167.

²⁶³⁴ Moorcraft, *Conflict*.

²⁶³⁵ Sremac, *War*, p. 103.

²⁶³⁶ ‘Een Servisch lijk verkoopt niet’ (‘A Serb corpse does not sell’), *Elsevier*, 03/10/92, p. 48.

²⁶³⁷ Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

²⁶³⁸ See for example Richter, *Journalism*, pp. 206 en 257.

²⁶³⁹ Bell, *Way*, p. 29; Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 163.

²⁶⁴⁰ Appendix Jan Wieten, *Srebrenica en de journalistiek*, pp. 57 and 59-60.

²⁶⁴¹ Richter, *Journalisten*, pp. 186-187, 227 and 250.

²⁶⁴² Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 259.

²⁶⁴³ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 9. See also *ibid.*, pp. 169-170; Richter, *Journalisten*, pp. 62-63.

²⁶⁴⁴ Bell, *Way*, pp. 99-100. See also Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 217

²⁶⁴⁵ Martin Bell, ‘I know he’s a war criminal but I can’t help liking him’, *Mail on Sunday*, 06/06/99.

²⁶⁴⁶ Quoted in: Sremac, *War*, p. 24.

²⁶⁴⁷ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, pp. 217-218.

of this sort of attachment. Some of them clung to the ethos of objective and impartial reporting.²⁶⁴⁸ The fact that it was mainly the emotionally involved journalists who wrote books or published volumes of their articles can lead all too easily to the distorted impression that ‘attachment journalism’ was dominant amongst the correspondents. This kind of emotional stance was often more pronounced in editorial offices and newsrooms than among the journalists operating in the war zone.

During the war in Croatia journalists had been able to move fairly freely along the front lines and even pass them, though sometimes at the risk of their own lives. In the early months of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina the situation was quite different. Often Serb paramilitaries refused to give journalists access to the areas where they were carrying out ethnic cleansing or threatened reporters who approached nevertheless. In early April 1992 Arkan had made an exception by inviting the photographer Ron Haviv to Bijeljina, where his Tigers were wreaking havoc at the time. Haviv took a number of shocking photos there, including one showing an Arkan Tiger kicking the body of a dead woman. The woman had run to a man who had previously been shot and killed, and had then been shot herself. This and several other horrifying photos taken by Haviv were printed in the American magazine *Time*.²⁶⁴⁹ It cannot be ruled out that at the early stages of ethnic cleansing Arkan deliberately wanted publicity for the actions of his paramilitaries so as to increase fear of them and to encourage Muslims to leave Eastern Bosnia. Later it no longer made sense to permit the media to be present during actions because their reports on ethnic cleansing had a negative effect on world opinion. Haviv’s photos, for example, caused some commotion in the West, though not for long.

Because they were often refused access to the scenes of conflict, journalists were unable to verify most of the reports on events in eastern and north-western Bosnia at first hand;²⁶⁵⁰ often they had to depend on rumours,²⁶⁵¹ or they were unwilling to check reports on the spot because they considered the risks too great. From the summer of 1992 on most journalists were of the opinion that due to danger of shooting they could only travel through Bosnia as part of UN convoys.²⁶⁵² Certain parts of Bosnia, such as the strategic area around Brcko, where a great deal of fighting took place throughout the whole war, were thus seldom or never visited by journalists.²⁶⁵³ A considerable number of the foreign journalists stayed in Zagreb, Sarajevo or Belgrade and for the real work made use of so-called ‘stringers’, local workers who supplied reports and photos.²⁶⁵⁴

After the war broke out in Bosnia the vast majority of the foreign journalists stayed in Sarajevo, mainly at the Holiday Inn.²⁶⁵⁵ It must be said that this was not only because they wanted to avoid combat areas; outside Sarajevo it was often impossible to find good telephone connections.²⁶⁵⁶ Journalists were also tied to one place by the high broadcasting frequency of some media. For instance, the British war correspondent Martin Bell, who worked for BBC television, wrote that a colleague who worked for the radio had to deliver 28 bulletins a day. No wonder this man never left Holiday Inn; he scarcely had time to get hold of information by telephone from the local UN spokesman.²⁶⁵⁷ Moreover, it was at least possible for a journalist to do his work (or some of it) at the Holiday Inn. The hotel became ‘a grandstand from which you could watch the snipers at work.’²⁶⁵⁸ ‘In Sarajevo, I could stand

²⁶⁴⁸ See for example Richter, *Journalisten*, pp. 185-187.

²⁶⁴⁹ ‘The killing goes on’, *Time*, 20/04/92; Haviv, *Blood*, pp. 18-19, 60-61.

²⁶⁵⁰ For the problems involved in objective reporting on the war in Yugoslavia see for example Peter Brock, ‘Dateline’; id., ‘Meutenjournalismus’, in: Bittermann (Hg.), *Serbien*, pp. 15-36.

²⁶⁵¹ Bell, *Way*, pp. 19, 50.

²⁶⁵² Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 204.

²⁶⁵³ Cf. Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 252.

²⁶⁵⁴ Cf. Karskens, *Pleisters*, p. 271; Loyd, *War*, pp. 81 and 179; Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 151; Sadkovic, *Media*, p. 11; interview P. Milinov, 17/11/99.

²⁶⁵⁵ Peter Brock, ‘Meutenjournalismus’, in: Bittermann (Hg.), *Serbien*, p. 26.

²⁶⁵⁶ Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 227.

²⁶⁵⁷ Bell, *Way*, pp. 28-29.

²⁶⁵⁸ Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 146.

at my window, out of the line of fire, and watch more drama unfold in five minutes than some people might see in a lifetime,' wrote the American journalist Peter Maass.²⁶⁵⁹

The concentration of journalists in Sarajevo had an unmistakable effect on reporting. 'You knew that the Serbs were shooting at people – at you', said NCRV radio reporter Wouter Kurpershoek, 'and because of that you were less inclined to say anything positive about them.'²⁶⁶⁰ Victims had little difficulty in talking to foreign journalists – on the contrary.²⁶⁶¹ The consequence was that the journalists mainly told the story of the Muslims. It was easy for them to lose sight of the fact that sixty thousand of the more than three hundred thousand inhabitants of Sarajevo were Serbs. And even if they did not lose sight of this fact personally, it was a detail which neither they nor their editors were sure they should burden their readers with.

Any journalist who did take the trouble to widen his outlook and move outside Sarajevo to try to learn something about the Serb side of the story had to overcome many obstacles. For example, a journalist who travelled to Pale (just outside Sarajevo), where the highest Bosnian Serb authorities were ensconced, not only exposed himself to firing, but also had to confront numerous roadblocks. In addition, he ran the risk of being robbed or taken for a spy.²⁶⁶² Since the efforts made by journalists to reach Pale were often not rewarded by the 'government' of the Serb Republic, most journalists decided not to leave Sarajevo for a trip of this nature.²⁶⁶³ Pale was also the place where the journalists had to fetch permits to enter any area inside the Serb Republic they wished to visit. Decisions on granting these permits were quite arbitrary.²⁶⁶⁴ Travelling without permits was dangerous, because in general the attitude towards foreign journalists in the Bosnian Serb area was hostile.²⁶⁶⁵ But even travelling with permits did not guarantee that a journalist would not get into trouble. Local authorities often turned out to have different views on the significance of a permit than the authorities in Pale. The VRS also often made things very difficult for journalists.²⁶⁶⁶ There was a high risk of being arrested in the Bosnian Serb area,²⁶⁶⁷ and from early 1993 onwards the only Western European television broadcasting companies the VRS gave access to enter the areas they controlled were the BBC and RAI 1.²⁶⁶⁸ From September 1993 on the Bosnian Serb authorities did not allow any more reporters at all to enter the enclaves in East Bosnia.²⁶⁶⁹ However, the most dangerous areas to work in were those controlled by Bosnian Croats. Sometimes they went as far as sending journalists into the line of fire in the hope that their opponents would shoot them.²⁶⁷⁰

There is no doubt that it was dangerous for television crews with cameras to travel past roadblocks. There was a good chance that their equipment would be confiscated. Even the enterprising Martin Bell from BBC television sometimes restricted his work area for several weeks to the street in front of the Holiday Inn, which went in one direction towards the airport of Sarajevo, and in the other to the presidential palace in the capital.²⁶⁷¹ This was the street which was regularly under fire from Serb snipers – it was also known as 'Sniper Alley' – so that often pictures of Muslim victims could be taken. It even led Bell to ask when he had ever taken pictures of Serb victims; but, he added, 'even to raise

²⁶⁵⁹ Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 148.

²⁶⁶⁰ Judith Neurink, 'Angst en stress in Sarajevo' ('Anxiety and stress in Sarajevo'), *De Journalist*, 28/08/92, p. 16.

²⁶⁶¹ Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 161.

²⁶⁶² See for example Richter, *Journalisten*, pp. 208 and 229; James Gow & Richard Paterson & Alison Preston, 'Introduction', idem (eds.), *Bosnia*, p. 3.

²⁶⁶³ Bell, *Way*, pp. 112-113.

²⁶⁶⁴ Richter, *Journalisten*, pp. 154 and 221.

²⁶⁶⁵ Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 154.

²⁶⁶⁶ Interview W. Lust, 19/07/00.

²⁶⁶⁷ Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 214.

²⁶⁶⁸ Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

²⁶⁶⁹ Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 127 n. 3.

²⁶⁷⁰ Richter, *Journalisten*, pp. 221 and 261.

²⁶⁷¹ Bell, *Way*, p. 114.

these questions is to risk being branded as an apologist for the Serbs, which I am not, and never was.²⁶⁷²

In view of the grave risks they ran as soon as they left the relative protection of their hotel, the journalists gathered in Sarajevo's Holiday Inn decided shortly after the beginning of the war in Bosnia to pool their film material. This was a unique event in the media world, where normally the quest for scoops is all-important. In Sarajevo there was no question of the usual *'typische Berufsneid – Journalisten waren existentiell bedroht, mussten näher zusammenrücken.'* [*'typical professional jealousy – journalists were existentially threatened, had to draw closer together.'*]²⁶⁷³ It goes without saying that this pooling of films, which continued until the summer of 1995, did not contribute to the diversity of reporting. It meant that only one camera needed to go to a combat zone; as Bell put it, 'It penalized the brave. It rewarded the indolent, who need not leave the hotel'.²⁶⁷⁴

The adage that journalists are not where the news is but news is where the journalists are became all too true due to the concentration of journalists in Sarajevo.²⁶⁷⁵ Koljevic was later to say that the Bosnian Serb leaders were quite happy that the journalists focused on Sarajevo. It meant that in the spring of 1992 the Serbs were free to do as they pleased in northern and north-western Bosnia.²⁶⁷⁶

7. First information about camps in north-western Bosnia

The ethnic cleansing which took place in the Drina River area in eastern Bosnia in the first half of 1992 has already been discussed in Chapter 5. Up to this point little attention has been paid to north-western Bosnia, an area where 700,000 Muslims lived, but which the Serbs seriously wanted as a link between Serbia and the Serb areas in eastern Bosnia on the one hand and the Republika Srpska in Croatia on the other.

In north-western Bosnia ethnic cleansing began in late April in towns such as Banja Luka, Prijedor and Kozarac (see map in Chapter 3, Section 8).²⁶⁷⁷ Some of the Muslims who were forced to leave their homes in these towns were put into camps from May on. In some cases this was done with object of persuading them by means of a short stay in wretched conditions to leave the area claimed by the Bosnian Serb authorities. In other cases people were imprisoned in order to be able to exchange them for Serbs who had fallen into the hands of Croats and Muslims.

An investigative team sent by the American Senate would later conclude that by the summer of 1992 approximately 170,000 people had been placed in Bosnian Serb camps, most of them Muslims. Only a small number were prisoners of war. The American team established that people in the camps were raped, beaten and starved. The investigators said there was proof of 'organized killing', but often the murders in the camps were of a 'recreational and sadistic' nature.²⁶⁷⁸ The team set up by the UN at the beginning of October 1992 to investigate the violation of human rights in the former Yugoslavia was eventually to inspect 715 prison camps; some were run by Bosnian Serbs (237), others by Croats (77) and Muslims (89), by Croats and Muslims together (4) and in other cases it was not even possible to establish clearly who was in charge (308). In general the conditions in the Bosnian Serb camps were worse than in the camps run by Croats and Muslims.²⁶⁷⁹

The most important Bosnian Serb detention centres in north-western Bosnia were the Keraterm factory near Prijedor, which manufactured ceramic products and thermal insulation materials,

²⁶⁷² Bell, *Way*, p. 114.

²⁶⁷³ Rupert Neudeck quoted in Richter, *Journalisten*, p. 169. See also *ibid.*, pp. 207, 216.

²⁶⁷⁴ Bell, *Way*, p. 64.

²⁶⁷⁵ Bell, *Way*, p. 59. Cf. Dominic Lawson: 'So now we know what the British and American troops will be chanting in Bosnia and Somalia: "We're here because the networks are here,"' quoted in *Dore*, Japan, p. 138.

²⁶⁷⁶ Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 253.

²⁶⁷⁷ For a description of the events that took place there see for example the Bassiouni report, UN, S/1994/674, Appendix, clauses 151 - 182; United States Senate, *Cleansing*, pp. 8-9.

²⁶⁷⁸ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, pp. 114-115.

²⁶⁷⁹ Čalic, *Krieg*, p. 134.

and the camps Manjaca, Omarska and Trnopolje (see map in Chapter 3, Section 8). The worst of these camps was the iron-ore mine at Omarska, near Prijedor, where between three and five thousand people, mainly men with Croat or Muslim backgrounds, were imprisoned. The guards beat the prisoners frequently, in many cases to death, and the inmates were undernourished.²⁶⁸⁰

In May and June 1992 Bosnian government agencies and private individuals in Sarajevo gathered information about the stream of refugees which was being caused in north-western Bosnia by ethnic cleansing and tried to engage the interest of world opinion for this question. Information was for example, issued by the Bosnian Red Cross, the Bosnian Esperanto Association and the Bosnian United Nations Association.²⁶⁸¹ The information included reports of camps in which Croat and Muslim civilians were imprisoned.

The existence of such camps was in violation of the laws of war as set down in the Geneva treaties and protocols. All areas which could be regarded as legal successors of Yugoslavia were bound by the acceptance of the four Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols of 1950 and 1979 respectively. The second Additional Protocol was specifically about internal conflicts.²⁶⁸² Moreover, on 22 May 1992, at the invitation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, representatives of the presidium of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the SDS, the SDA and the HDZ, signed an agreement binding themselves to respect the provisions of the Geneva Conventions. In this agreement the parties promised to give the ICRC free access to all detained civilians.²⁶⁸³ The committee led by Frits Kalshoven, which set out in October 1992 to investigate serious violations of the Geneva Conventions and other violations of international human rights in the former Yugoslavia, assumed that in view of the nature of the conflict and the agreements entered into by the parties, the law that was applicable to international conflicts was also applicable to all conflicts taking place in the former Yugoslavia.²⁶⁸⁴ Finally, on 31 December 1992 the Bosnian government yet again explicitly stated that it would honour the Geneva Treaties and Protocols. The displacement of the population, unless for its own safety or for urgent military reasons, is expressly prohibited in the first Geneva Protocol. The same is true of many other measures which were taken in the framework of ethnic cleansing, such as artillery attacks on civilian targets, starvation and the torture and murder of prisoners.

At the same time that private organizations were reporting the existence of camps in Serb-dominated areas, the government in Sarajevo had no more than eyewitness accounts at its disposal. The Bosnian authorities were not in a position to actively gather information in the area. However, on 3 June 1992 a group of Bosnian humanitarian organizations published a list with the names of 94 Serb camps in Bosnia, in which a total of 105,348 prisoners were said to be detained, and 11 camps in Serbia and Montenegro with another 22,710 detainees.²⁶⁸⁵ On 27 July UNHCR issued a special report about the Omarska camp,²⁶⁸⁶ which however received little attention.

²⁶⁸⁰ Amnesty International, *Bosnia-Herzegovina. Gross abuses of basic human rights* (AI Index: EUR 63/01/92), p. 23.

²⁶⁸¹ See for example Ed Vulliamy, 'Bosnia's secret war', *The Gazette*, 02/07/96; Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, *Rückkehr in Würde*. See also Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 251.

²⁶⁸² Mercier, *Crimes*, pp. 19 and 223 n. 3. The Slovenian government, in its declaration of independence of 25 June 1991, stated that it would respect all principles of international law and all treaties to which the federal state of Yugoslavia had bound itself with regard to its territory. Soon after the arrival of the ECMM mission in Zagreb the Croatian authorities had issued a similar declaration. On 27 November 1991 a 'memorandum of understanding' between the federal government of Yugoslavia, the Croatian and the Serbian authorities had been created under the leadership of the International Committee of the Red Cross in which the parties had explicitly undertaken to respect large sections of the 1949 Geneva conventions and the first Additional Protocol, Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 37; Lieutenant-Colonel J.W. Beekman of the military legal service, 'EG-waarnemers in het voormalige Joegoslavië; de juridische aspecten' ('EC observers in the former Yugoslavia: the legal aspects'), *Carré* (1993)10, pp. 7-8.

²⁶⁸³ Mercier, *Crimes*, pp. 106-108 and 203-207.

²⁶⁸⁴ United Nations, S/25274, Appendix I, clause 45; in its final report the committee, in the meantime chaired by Bassiouni, upheld this view, United Nations, S/1994/674, 27/05/94, Appendix, clause 44; United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.

²⁶⁸⁵ The list is printed in United States Senate, *Cleansing*, p. 35.

²⁶⁸⁶ Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 252.

In late June and early July the Bosnian government tried to draw attention in the West to the existence of Serb prison camps. When Mitterrand went to Sarajevo on 28 June, Izetbegovic told the French head of state about the camps and gave him the list of 94 plus 11 camps. Izetbegovic asked Mitterrand to do everything he could to have a committee sent to investigate the violations of human rights. There was no reaction from Paris, not even when in the course of July the French embassy in Zagreb sent information to Paris confirming the existence of the camps.²⁶⁸⁷ On 9 July Izetbegovic touched briefly on the Serb camps during a speech at the CSCE conference in Helsinki: 'My country was a peaceful multicultural, multinational and multireligious community. Today there are 27 concentration camps and innumerable mass graves. Schools and football stadiums are places where torture and murder take place', the president said in his speech.²⁶⁸⁸ During the conference the Bosnian Minister of Foreign Affairs Haris Silajdzic compared the violence of Serbs against Croats and Muslims in Bosnia with the atrocities committed by the Nazis during the Second World War. Both condemned the passivity of the international community. However, the two Bosnian statesmen's allegations made little impression on the many dignitaries present, including the American president Bush and his Secretary of State Baker. Izetbegovic told the press that in the margins of the meeting, during a personal encounter, he had again spoken to Bush about the 'concentration camps' and a 'genocide', which by that time had cost the lives of between forty and sixty thousand civilians.²⁶⁸⁹

In view of the presidential elections, in which Bush was a candidate, the American president and his government were not very receptive to information which might lead to a greater involvement in the conflict in Bosnia in the form of deploying American ground troops. Bush and most of his advisers expected that information of this nature would lead to more disadvantages than advantages.²⁶⁹⁰ Bush's suppression machinery worked extremely well. According to his closest assistants the president usually reacted to information about Yugoslavia by saying: 'Tell me again what this is all about.'²⁶⁹¹ The conflict was too complicated for the American president to be able to remember which party wanted what. It was also too complicated to be able to formulate clear objectives.²⁶⁹²

In the meantime international aid organizations had also gathered a certain amount of information about Serb prison camps. On 2 July a confidential paper on camps in Bosnia was completed at UNHCR, based mainly on information from the Danish UNPROFOR battalion. Danish blue helmets in Dvor in Croatia had inspected camps just over the border in Bosnia.²⁶⁹³ The UNHCR paper was distributed the next day at a meeting of representatives of UNPROFOR, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the European monitoring mission ECMM at Topusko in northern Bosnia. In the report the Omarska, Keraterm and Trnopolje camps were referred to as 'reported concentration camps'. The camp at Manjaca was also mentioned. In this report the frustration at 'our inability to do anything other than write reports and stand by' came to the fore. The paper also drew attention to the fact that the UNPROFOR mandate was only for Croatia and Sarajevo.²⁶⁹⁴

According to Mendiluce, the UNHCR's envoy in the former Yugoslavia, UNHCR handed over the report to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) because camps were 'classic ICRC ground'.²⁶⁹⁵ In the preceding period the ICRC itself had been 'blind' for a few weeks, because the

²⁶⁸⁷ Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 217; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 293.

²⁶⁸⁸ 'Bosnië smeekt om hulp' ('Bosnia begs for help'), *de Volkskrant*, 10/07/92.

²⁶⁸⁹ Guikje Roethof, 'Helsinki', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 15/07/92, p. 4.

²⁶⁹⁰ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 171; Don Oberdorfer, 'A Bloody Failure in the Balkans', *The Washington Post*, 08/02/93.

²⁶⁹¹ Michael Dobbs, 'Bosnia Crystallizes U.S. Post-Col War Role', *The Washington Post*, 03/12/95; Doder/Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 105; Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 201.

²⁶⁹² Halberstam, *War*, pp. 43-44.

²⁶⁹³ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 293.

²⁶⁹⁴ 'Polemique à l'ONU autour de la diffusion interne des informations sur les camps de detention' ('Controversy at UN over the internal diffusion of information about the detention camps'), *Agence Franse Presse*, 07/08/92; Stephen Engelberg & Chuck Sudetic, 'Conflict in the Balkans: In enemy Hands', *The New York Times*, 16/08/92; Aengus Finucane, 'The Changing Roles of Voluntary Organizations', Kevin M. Cahill (ed.), *Framework*, p. 253; United States Senate, *Cleansing*, p. 11.

²⁶⁹⁵ Ed Vulliamy, 'Bosnia's secret war', *The Gazette*, 02/07/96.

organization had temporarily withdrawn from Bosnia. The reason was that Frédéric Maurice, who had been destined to become head of the ICRC in Bosnia, had died as a result of injuries sustained on 18 May, when an ICRC convoy had been fired at while driving into Sarajevo. According to some reports, the shooting of Maurice was a deliberate attempt on the part of the Bosnian Serbs to secure the departure of the ICRC, just after the ECMM monitors had left Bosnia because it was becoming increasingly unsafe.²⁶⁹⁶

Representatives of the ICRC had only just resumed their activities in Bosnia at the beginning of July when news reached them that there were more than ten thousand detainees in Manjaca and Trnopolje.²⁶⁹⁷ On 14 July several ICRC representatives visited the Bosnian Serb army's camp at Manjaca, where they were shocked by what they found: 2300 starving men in six cowsheds. Four hundred men there were on the brink of death.²⁶⁹⁸ Patrick Gasser, head of the ICRC delegation, felt compelled to bring a dietician who had had experience during the famine in Somalia to the camp.²⁶⁹⁹ Gasser himself flew to the ICRC headquarters in Geneva to make a report. On arrival, according to his own statement, he met with unbelief: the return of camps in Europe was considered impossible.²⁷⁰⁰ At that same time the ICRC had been aware of the existence of a camp at Omarska for weeks, but the organization had not succeeded in obtaining permission from the local authorities who ran this camp to inspect it.²⁷⁰¹ In the case of Omarska the ICRC therefore had to rely on information from a Bosnian Serb doctor who worked for the Red Cross. He reported that apart from diarrhoea there were no health risks in the camp. By 6 August, when the pictures of emaciated prisoners behind barbed wire were broadcast on television, the ICRC had visited 4200 prisoners in ten camps in Bosnia, of which three were in Serb hands.²⁷⁰² However, it was not until 29 July that president Sommaruga of the International Committee of the Red Cross went public with his charges against the camps.

In retrospect, it is also remarkable that the media showed so little interest in the first reports of the camps. In the Netherlands, for example, *Trouw* placed the speech in which Izetbegovic spoke of the camps on the front page,²⁷⁰³ but *NRC Handelsblad* made no mention of it, while *De Volkskrant* placed the Bosnian president's words on page 5. On 27 July *Trouw* reported a letter from Izetbegovic to Carrington which had been made public the previous day. In this letter, as examples of continuing Serb aggression against the Bosnian people, the Bosnian president made mention of 'new mass murders' in the area of Prijedor in the north-west of Bosnia and '57 Serb concentration camps'.²⁷⁰⁴ *NRC Handelsblad* and *De Volkskrant* paid no attention to the topic. In view of the commotion which was to arise shortly after, it is striking not only that so little attention was paid to the subject in the Dutch media at this phase, but also how little space it was given when it was actually reported. For many in the Netherlands – and elsewhere – the conflict in the former Yugoslavia was apparently still associated with lunacy. As Nicole Lucas wrote in *Trouw* on 25 July:

‘Times of war have actually made Yugoslavia, a country where you could imagine yourself in four or five different worlds, a surprisingly uniform country. Because whether it's Vukovar or Mostar, Pakrac or Zvornik, all that is left is a scrapheap, a pile of rubble, on top of which totally bereft people are desperately wondering if they will ever be able to lead normal lives again and whether they

²⁶⁹⁶ Stephen Engelberg & Chuck Sudetic, 'Conflict in the Balkans: In enemy Hands', *The New York Times*, 16/08/92.

²⁶⁹⁷ Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 108.

²⁶⁹⁸ Ed Vulliamy, 'Bosnia's secret war', *The Gazette*, 02/07/96.

²⁶⁹⁹ Mercier, *Crimes*, pp. 112-113.

²⁷⁰⁰ Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 110; Ignatieff, *Honor*, p. 1344.

²⁷⁰¹ Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 112.

²⁷⁰² Con Coughlin & Philip Sherwell, 'Death in the Balkans', *Sunday Telegraph*, 09/08/92.

²⁷⁰³ 'Dit bloedbad moet stoppen' ('This bloodbath has to stop'), *Trouw*, 10/07/92, but mentioned only 23 camps.

²⁷⁰⁴ 'Nieuwe kaart van Bosnië' ('New map of Bosnia'), *Trouw*, 27/07/92.

ever really have. ‘Can you understand it at all,’ people sometimes ask me in the Netherlands, often a little testily. More and more often I have to say: “No”²⁷⁰⁵.

Moreover, it was extremely difficult for the media to report the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, because often it was impossible to check allegations of atrocities. The Western media were flooded with biased reports from the ministries of information and press agencies in the various capitals of the former Yugoslavia. There was also no scarcity of film footage and photographs whose authenticity could not be established. Often parties offered pictures of corpses with captions in which the ethnicity of the perpetrators and victims had been changed at will. According to Balkans specialist Milan Andrejevich of Radio Free Europe, after a year of war in Yugoslavia the foreign media were so desperate about the difficulty of establishing authenticity that they just did whatever occurred to them. Tim O’Sullivan of the British magazine *PR Week* was of the opinion that it was so difficult to apply the rules of journalism that most reporters just ignored them altogether.²⁷⁰⁶

Roy Gutman’s reports: concentration camps in Bosnia

In the midst of this general confusion there was one journalist who had sunk his teeth into the issues of ethnic cleansing and the camps in north-western Bosnia and was to make an important contribution to reporting them in the West. This was the American Roy Gutman, who worked as a correspondent for *Newsday*, a newspaper of which more than 800,000 copies were published daily in New York and Long Island and which had a good reputation for investigative journalism. In 1991, after the Gulf War had ended, Gutman had revisited Yugoslavia for the first time in 16 years. Soon afterwards he had become office manager for *Newsday* in Bonn.

Gutman was extremely frustrated by the lack of interest in the Croatian and Bosnian wars in the United States. He compared the attitude of the West towards Bosnia with that of the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain towards Czechoslovakia in 1938.²⁷⁰⁷

On 3 July, the same day that UNHCR sent its report on the camps to the International Committee of the Red Cross, Gutman reported a transport of eighteen hundred Muslims in eighteen railway carriages from the Bosnian village of Kozluk, near Zvornik, to the Yugoslav-Hungarian border. It was, as Gutman wrote in *Newsday*, ‘a practice not seen in Europe since the end of World War II’.²⁷⁰⁸ This comparison with the Third Reich and the Second World War gained a more and more prominent place in Gutman’s reports.²⁷⁰⁹ A few weeks later, for example, he quoted a Muslim student who had left Banja Luka and had said that the Muslims there had felt like Jews in the Third Reich. According to the same article, Croat and Muslim authorities had reported nightly rail transports of people through Banja Luka. These Muslim leaders said that the men subjected to these transports were executed or taken to camps, ‘some of which, the leaders say, are in fact death camps’.²⁷¹⁰

On 9 July 1992 Gutman was asked by the SDA leader in Banja Luka, whom he had met a year earlier, to come and witness the practices of ethnic cleansing for himself.²⁷¹¹ According to Gutman’s contact, Muslims were deported from Banja Luka in cattle cars. Gutman’s source said it reminded him

²⁷⁰⁵ Nicole Lucas, ‘In tijd van oorlog’ (‘In times of war’), *Trouw*, 25/07/92.

²⁷⁰⁶ Caroline de Gruyter, ‘Kroaten rijgen kettingen van Servische vingers’, *Elsevier*, 03/10/92, p. 47.

²⁷⁰⁷ Interview Gutman on <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/conversations/Gutman/gutman-con6.html>, consulted on 29/02/00.

²⁷⁰⁸ Roy Gutman, ‘Ethnic Cleansing’. Yugoslavs try to deport 1,800 Muslims to Hungary’, *Newsday*, 03/07/92, see also Gutman, *Witness*, pp. 20-23; the last expression also in Roy Gutman, ‘Like Auschwitz’. Serbs pack Muslims into freight cars’, *Newsday*, 21/07/92.

²⁷⁰⁹ In the comments accompanying a later edition of his articles, Gutman again spoke of ‘Third Reich practices’, *Witness*, p. ix.

²⁷¹⁰ R. Gutman, ‘If Only They Could Flee. Muslims, Croats held in city’, *Newsday*, 26/07/92.

²⁷¹¹ Gutman, *Witness*, p. vii.

of the Jews who were transported to Auschwitz.²⁷¹² Gutman then succeeded in becoming the first Western journalist to penetrate to the north-west of Bosnia, an area scourged by ethnic cleansing. However, the Bosnian Serb military authorities in Banja Luka did not give him permission to visit Omarska.

He was given permission to visit the interrogation camp at Manjaca near Banja Luka, on 14 July, on the same day as the ICRC delegation led by Patrick Gasser. Normally the ICRC did not like to have journalists accompany them on their visits to camps, fearing that it might result in the gates then remaining closed to the ICRC itself. But on this occasion Gasser gave Gutman and Ed Vulliamy, correspondent for *The Guardian*, the opportunity to go with them and gather the information Gasser thought was needed to make the world wake up. However, Gasser asked the two journalists not to go inside the camp with the delegation.²⁷¹³ For unknown reasons, Vulliamy never published anything about this visit.

The camp at Manjaca was originally an agricultural complex. In the summer of 1992 Muslims and Croats were detained there. Gutman was not given access to the barracks of the camp, but he did see men's heads being shaved and guards with rubber clubs. He was also able to 'interview' eight men in the presence of the guards: VRS members asked most of the questions and the conversations were filmed by a camera crew from the Bosnian Serb army. Gutman concluded from these conversations and from interviews with several men outside the camp that the VRS's statement that Manjaca was a camp for prisoners of war was untenable. Not all the men he had spoken to in the camp had taken part in combat. Gutman's impression was that as many Muslims and Croats as possible had been assembled in the camp in order to exchange them for Serbs. The prisoners told Gutman of random maltreatment they had undergone and of incidental deaths.

On 19 July Gutman's article about Manjaca appeared in *Newsday*. It described Manjaca as one of a series of 'new detention facilities, which one American embassy official in Belgrade (...) routinely refers to as "concentration camps"'. Gutman added his own comment: 'It is another example of the human rights abuses now exploding to a dimension unseen in Europe since the Nazi Third Reich.'²⁷¹⁴ And according to Gutman, it had to be borne in mind that according to leading Muslims, Manjaca was 'a first-class camp', because it was run by the regular Bosnian-Serb army, in which a certain discipline still prevailed. According to Gutman it was much worse in other camps in northern Bosnia, where the local police were in control. It is interesting, in the light of the reports that were to shake the world a few weeks later, that Gutman reported the presence of several barbed wire fences around the camp: 'With its multiple perimeters of barbed-wire fence, its newly dug minefields and its guard posts, the former army exercise grounds have the appearance of a Stalag 17 or the former East-West German border.'²⁷¹⁵

After his article on Manjaca Gutman decided for himself that what he had heard in Banja Luka and the surrounding area about the camps was so serious that his reporting needed to be based on verifiable data. But, as he wrote later in the introduction to his volume of articles on the war in Bosnia: 'Having set such lofty standards, I immediately made an exception and wrote about the Omarska camp.'²⁷¹⁶ Gutman's article about the camp at Omarska, which the Bosnian Serb authorities did not permit the ICRC to visit at that time, also appeared in *Newsday* on 19 July. It was based on third-hand information, from a Muslim aid organization in Banja Luka which had informed Gutman of the testimony of a Muslim woman. Gutman wrote that Omarska was an open mine where thousands of Muslims were being held prisoner. Only a third of the prisoners had protection against the elements. The rest had to stay in the burning sun and when it rained they stood in the mud. Food was scarce and so were medical and sanitary facilities, so that sickness and disease were rife. Every day six to ten

²⁷¹² R. Gutman, 'Like Auschwitz'. Serbs Pack Muslims into Freight Cars', *Newsday*, 21/07/92; Gutman, *Witness*, p. 36.

²⁷¹³ Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 110; Ignatieff, *Honor*, p. 136.

²⁷¹⁴ R. Gutman, 'Prisoners of Serbia's War. Tales of hunger, torture at camp in north Bosnia', *Newsday*, 19/07/92.

²⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

²⁷¹⁶ Gutman, *Witness*, p. xii.

people died. According to Gutman there were more and more indications that Omarska was a 'death camp'.²⁷¹⁷

Two days later another article by Gutman appeared in *Newsday*. Again he wrote that according to Muslim authorities Omarska was a death camp, where young men were detained.²⁷¹⁸ In addition, on the basis of a witness's description, he reported on the camp in Trnopolje, where apparently mainly women, children and old men were held. The witness had seen how his neighbour, Ilijaz Hadzic, who had been chairman of the SDA in Kozarac, together with his wife and three children were executed in the camp at Trnopolje when he refused to give the names of other SDA activists. At night guards would select women prisoners and then rape them. Eventually the thousands of imprisoned inhabitants of Kozarac were transported by rail in abominable conditions to the town of Zenica, which was in Muslim hands.

Gutman's reason for not sticking to his intention to describe only verified reports was that if Omarska really did turn out to be a death camp, it should be put down in black and white 'to alert others'.²⁷¹⁹ He thought that a story by an experienced reporter in a serious newspaper would be sure to draw the attention of the American government. So as to leave nothing to chance, at his request colleagues from *Newsday* in Washington brought his articles to the attention of the authorities: the CIA, the White House and members of the American Congress. There was not a single reaction.²⁷²⁰

On 2 August two new articles by Gutman appeared in *Newsday*, this time about the Omarska and Trnopolje camps and the camp at Luka near Brcko. Evidently in an attempt to succeed in drawing attention this time there was a heading with five-centimetre-high letters, at the top of the front page: 'The Deathcamps of Bosnia'. According to Gutman's report, more than a thousand civilians had been killed in the Omarska and Luka camps and thousands more were being detained, in anticipation of a certain death. This report was based on the testimony of two released prisoners with whom Gutman had spoken.²⁷²¹

For the article about the camp at Luka near Brcko, Gutman had spoken with a 53-year-old civil servant, who claimed to be one of the 150 survivors of a group of 1500 prisoners the rest of whom had been shot by firing squads or had their throats cut between mid-May and mid-June. Along with the other detainees, the witness had been forced to watch the murders. According to his testimony inhabitants of Brcko had also been processed into cattle fodder by means of cremation and rape had also taken place. Several prisoners were said to have had their genitals torn off or their noses cut off. Eventually a group of a hundred and twenty men, including the witness, had been released.²⁷²² Later, it was established that of the eight thousand people who were detained in this camp three hundred had been killed by the beginning of July 1992.²⁷²³

In the other article Gutman wrote mainly about the former mining complex of Omarska, where thousands of Muslims and Croats were said to be enclosed in metal cages without food or sanitary facilities. They included the elite of Prijedor, wrote Gutman. In this case he based his reports of the rape, torture and mass executions which were said to have taken place there on the testimony of a 63-year-old Muslim building contractor, who had been released from the camp in the first week of June on grounds of his advanced age. According to the contractor every few days ten to fifteen prisoners in the camp were executed. In addition he alleged that during the short period he had been in the camp, 35 to 40 men had died as a result of maltreatment. He himself had also been repeatedly beaten up, so that he was now missing seven teeth.

²⁷¹⁷ Gutman, *Witness*, p. 34.

²⁷¹⁸ Gutman, *Witness*, p. 41.

²⁷¹⁹ Gutman, *Witness*, p. xii.

²⁷²⁰ Gutman, *Witness*, p. xii; Harry Kreisler, 'Witness to genocide. Conversation with Roy Gutman',

<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/conversations/Gutman/gutman-con7.html> consulted on 10/03/00.

²⁷²¹ Gutman, *Witness*, p. 44.

²⁷²² Gutman, *Witness*, pp. 50-51.

²⁷²³ Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 61.

Later Gutman would write about these two articles: ‘Why did I publish a story with only two witnesses? I was convinced that the lives of thousands of people were at stake and that we should take the journalistic risk in their interests.’²⁷²⁴ Gutman reported little about Trnopolje, but in view of later debates about the nature of this camp it is interesting that Gutman wrote that he had talked to a woman who had been in the camp without being a prisoner.²⁷²⁵

One day after the publications about ‘The Deathcamps of Bosnia’, on 3 August, Gutman wrote an article about camps in Bosanski Samac. Although according to a written statement by one of the detainees the prisoners had been forced to watch the murder of fifteen fellow-prisoners, Gutman thought that in this case the term ‘death camp’ was not applicable. What did worry him was that the camps in Bosanski Samac were not on the list of 94 Bosnian Serb detention centres which Bosnian agencies had in the meantime sent to UNHCR. It therefore seemed likely that the number of camps in Bosnia was even larger than had been assumed up to that point.²⁷²⁶

On 5 August Gutman could write a new article about Omarska, after talking the day before to the 53-year-old Muslim ‘Hujca’ in Zagreb, who had been detained in the camp for twelve days in May. According to this source, every night seven or eight prisoners were taken at random by guards from a storage room where six to seven hundred internees were kept, and then executed. Gutman also reported that he had heard from a 30-year-old member of the Bosnian Muslim armed forces that he had heard from a 15-year-old boy who had been detained in Omarska for a week, that some men had been taken from the open mine and had never returned.²⁷²⁷

The effect of Gutman’s reports on the American government

Gutman’s articles of 2 August did have the desired effect: both inside and outside the United States they attracted a large amount of interest from other media and from authorities. On 4 August the Security Council, in a statement by its president Li Daoyu from China, expressed its deep concern about ‘continuing reports of widespread violations of international humanitarian law and in particular reports of the imprisonment and abuse of civilians in camps, prisons and detention centres throughout the territory of the former Yugoslavia and especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina’. The Security Council asked for ‘immediate, unimpeded and continued access to all such places’. Those who committed these violations of human rights, warned the Council, would be held individually responsible for their deeds.²⁷²⁸

Gutman’s articles of 2 August also had a significant effect on the American presidential election campaign. Until then the American media had devoted much less attention to the wars in the former Yugoslavia than the European media. Moreover, reporting on Yugoslavia displayed ignorance and confusion and contained many errors. The neglect of the conflicts was reinforced by the fact that no direct American interests were involved and that as far as war reporting was concerned the American media had financially exhausted themselves during the Gulf War.²⁷²⁹

During an election campaign in the United States, a sitting president who is also a candidate tends not to plunge into perilous foreign adventures, being aware that the voters are primarily interested in domestic affairs. And if he himself is not sufficiently aware of this fact, his opponents will not fail to rub it in, just as in this case the Democratic rival candidate William Jefferson Clinton, governor of Arkansas, and his followers passed the message on to Bush: ‘It’s the economy, stupid.’

²⁷²⁴ A. de Vries, ‘Het journalistieke risico’ (‘The journalistic risk’), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 31/01/96.

²⁷²⁵ Gutman, *Witness*, p. 49.

²⁷²⁶ Gutman, *Witness*, p. 54.

²⁷²⁷ R. Gutman, ‘Serbs’ death camps. How the Guards Chose the Victims’, *Newsday*, 05/08/92; see also Gutman, *Witness*, pp. 60–63.

²⁷²⁸ United Nations Department of Public Information, *The United Nations*, p. 24; J. Friedman, ‘The UN Demands Access’, *Newsday*, 05/08/92.

²⁷²⁹ Eyal, *Europe*, p. 66.

At the beginning of June 1992 *The New York Times* reported that up to that point of the year less foreign news had been broadcast in the evenings by the major American television networks than in the previous three years. Some of the explanations given by the networks for this were: greater interest in national issues, the emphasis on domestic topics in the election campaign and – specifically in relation to Yugoslavia – ‘the difficulty of explaining a complicated conflict to viewers who lack a vested interest in the outcome’. Besides, according to Peter Jennings, anchorman of ABC’s *World News Tonight*, initially there was not a single journalist who understood what was going on in Yugoslavia and ‘you can’t get the public to understand if the journalists don’t understand’. Some networks admitted that they had given insufficient coverage to the developments in Yugoslavia. One producer, who wished to remain anonymous, said that news about Yugoslavia was very much determined by scenes of violence: ‘Everybody seems to want to go for the blood. (...) It’s back to “Cut me a minute of bang-bang.” But nobody wants to go into the issues behind the bangs.’²⁷³⁰

Indeed, the 1992 American election campaign did show an even greater lack of interest in foreign politics than otherwise. Ex-president Richard M. Nixon said shortly before the summer of 1992 that in 44 years he had never seen a campaign in which foreign politics was so little discussed.²⁷³¹ Attempts by Bush to make leeway with his successes in foreign politics were not very successful, partly because some of the American voters condemned Bush for not having pushed on to Baghdad at the end of the Gulf War for reasons of international politics, with the consequence that Saddam Hussein was still giving off signals of contempt for the West.²⁷³²

At the end of July Clinton decided that it might be to his advantage to launch an attack on President Bush’s foreign policy. He observed that he could sow dissent in Bush’s camp by raising the possibility of air strikes on Serb troops in Bosnia, since some of the Republican politicians were also in favour of them.²⁷³³ As a result of Gutman’s articles, Clinton and several Democratic representatives urged the American government to try to persuade the Security Council to use force to stop the violation of human rights, without ruling out the deployment of American armed forces. ‘If the horrors of the Holocaust taught us anything, it is the high cost of remaining silent in the face of genocide’, said Clinton.²⁷³⁴

Gutman’s articles about the camps, which were soon to be followed by others, led the media to ask a question which was awkward for the authorities, namely how much they had already known about the camps before Gutman published his reports. Had private individuals exposed what the authorities had wanted to keep secret?²⁷³⁵ Or was the attitude of the Western governments inspired by the old adage ‘I’ll believe it when I see it’?²⁷³⁶ Gutman himself could not believe that in an era of espionage satellites he had been the first to see anything of the camps. According to him the American government had wanted to keep quiet about the camps because if the public at large had known about them the government would have been forced into active intervention.²⁷³⁷ To support his conviction Gutman could point to remarks such as that made by Bush at the beginning of July, after the economic summit of the G7 in Munich, when he said that the American government did not intend to send troops to every ‘hiccup here or there’.²⁷³⁸

²⁷³⁰ Bill Carter, ‘Networks Cutting Back on Foreign Coverage’, *The New York Times*, 10/06/92.

²⁷³¹ H. Lenselink, ‘Buiten onze grenzen’ (‘Outside our borders’), *De Banier*, 14/05/92, p. 13.

²⁷³² S. Friedman, ‘Focus On. The Shaky New World Order’, *Newsday*, 18/08/92.

²⁷³³ George D. Moffett III, ‘Bush Dilemma in Balkan Crisis Seen Benefiting Rival Clinton’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 10/08/92.

²⁷³⁴ J. Friedman, ‘The UN Demands Access’, *Newsday*, 05/08/92.

²⁷³⁵ M. Kempton, ‘War Crimes Beneath Notice’, *Newsday*, 09/08/92.

²⁷³⁶ Hans Leber, ‘Laat ze de oorlog uitvechten’ (‘Let them fight the war out’), *Twentsche Courant*, 05/08/92.

²⁷³⁷ Gutman, *Witness*, pp. xiii-xiv.

²⁷³⁸ Quoted in Gutman, *Witness*, p. xvii.

Later it would emerge²⁷³⁹ that as early as mid-May President Bush had ordered the CIA to carry out an intensive investigation of the conditions in Bosnia. The results were intended to be for the benefit not only of the American government but also of UNPROFOR. The CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency had deployed both agents and espionage satellite for the purpose and tapped messages in the region. In June, on the basis of its findings, the CIA had informed the president of atrocities committed by Bosnian Serb armed forces, such as torture and executions, which had led to thousands of deaths. However, the American government decided not to make the results of the investigation public because they were fragmentary and not unequivocal, which made them no different from journalistic reporting. As the CIA had initially concentrated on the situation in towns and villages where ethnic cleansing was taking place, it was not until the end of July that the intelligence service began to focus their attention on the camps. However, the president did not give the service permission to deploy U-2 espionage aircraft, because it would be 'too provocative' for the Serb authorities. In fact, the American government still hoped to persuade Milosevic to adopt a more peaceful stance by diplomatic means. Then Keyhole satellites were deployed which did in fact localize camps, but their significance escaped the CIA. The American intelligence service is said to have thought that the camps were a logical result of the refugee flows which had been set in motion. Later the American diplomat Ron Neitzke denied this:

'There were photographs. We had them in 1992. If you looked you could see a little outbuilding suddenly blimping into a circus full of people. You would have reports, perhaps fragmentary, about a concentration camp at site X, and it would have been possible to look at site X and see. Somebody simply had to collate the fragmentary evidence from refugees and intercepts with the photographs. But we were determined not to see it because all this could lead to pressure for intervention... It was not a technical screwup that we did not see the camps. This was willed. In the end, the Central Intelligence Agency is a political tool of the administration.'²⁷⁴⁰

George Kenney, who worked at the Yugoslavia section of the State Department, said later:

'By June and certainly by July, we were getting reports from Northern Bosnia that, if we had wanted to look closely, would have been very disturbing. In July, we had maybe a dozen reports of really barbaric things being done by the Serbs. The reports were anecdotal, but they came from good local contacts who had proved reliable in the past.'²⁷⁴¹

Jon Western, who worked at the State Department on the human rights situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, also saw reports on atrocities which, as he himself said, looked very similar to what was familiar from accounts of the Second World War. Initially he and his colleagues thought it might be disinformation, but at a certain point a pattern emerged and it became possible to form a picture of the camps and the crimes which were being perpetrated there by collating the statements of witnesses.²⁷⁴²

It was the young diplomat Henry Kelly at the American embassy in Belgrade in particular who, thanks to telephone contacts with people in Banja Luka and Prijedor, was able to spark off a stream of reports on an almost daily basis which received wide distribution in the State Department. His reports

²⁷³⁹ The following passage is based on K. Royce and P.J. Sloyan, 'The U.S. Waited. Back in June, CIA Told Bush of Atrocities', *Newsday*, 14/08/92. See also Patrick Glynn, 'See No Evil', Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 134.

²⁷⁴⁰ Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 173.

²⁷⁴¹ Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 217.

²⁷⁴² Danner, 'Clinton', p. 58.

showed that a large number of Muslim men ‘disappeared’ in the area surrounding Banja Luka and Prijedor:

‘That they were disappearing into concentration camps was something that emerged incrementally. We would hear about ‘processing points’. By the end of May, ‘transit centres’. Then ‘detention camps’, then ‘factories and mines’- and it coalesced into the reality: a gulag. The names appeared: Omarska, Kereterm [Keraterm], Brcko.’²⁷⁴³

Western sent the gist of the reports he saw upwards in the hierarchy of the State Department to Minister Baker and to senior officials in the Pentagon and the White House. It was, said Western, as though his information vanished into a big black hole: ‘We could send things up and nothing would come back.’²⁷⁴⁴ Kenney tried in vain to persuade his superiors to use the word ‘genocide’ in official reports to refer to the atrocities which had been established.²⁷⁴⁵ Jim Swigert, second man at the American embassy in Belgrade, said about this: ‘As I’ve read the definition of genocide, this was genocide. But we did not want to say that. The marching orders from President Bush were that Yugoslavia was essentially a European problem and we were to stay out of it.’²⁷⁴⁶ Paul Williams, who in 1992 was working in the Office of the Legal Advisor for Europe and Canada at the State Department, said that it was impossible for American government spokesmen to disclose what was known about the camps:

‘The next question would have been: ‘And what is the US government doing about it?’ And the answer would have been: ‘Nothing.’ And since this was an unacceptable answer for political reasons, we simply didn’t make the public aware of the concentration camps.’²⁷⁴⁷

When in early August public indignation about the camps started to make things difficult for Bush, photo analysts were ordered to re-examine all the available satellite photos. One thing at least was shown by photos taken of the open mine in Omarska on 5 August, three days after Gutman’s ‘Deathcamp’ articles: by then there were no longer any prisoners there.²⁷⁴⁸

The problems caused for Bush by Gutman’s publications were exacerbated by the way Tom Niles, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, reacted during a routine session of the International Relations European Subcommittee of the House of Representatives on 4 August, when representatives asked him for information about the ‘death camps’ reported by Gutman. Niles’s defensive attitude annoyed the members of the subcommittee, especially the chairman, the Democratic representative Tom Lantos, who had himself survived a Hungarian concentration camp during the Second World War. It was particularly unfortunate for the American government that Richard Boucher, assistant spokesman for the State Department, had admitted to the press the day before that the American government was in possession of reports similar to those of the media about Serb camps in Bosnia where civilians were being tortured and murdered. He had also said that the American government had reports about camps run by Bosnian Muslims and Croats, although there was no evidence of maltreatment in those camps.²⁷⁴⁹ ‘Either Mr. Boucher is lying or you are lying’, Lantos told Niles.²⁷⁵⁰

²⁷⁴³ An official from the State Department, quoted in Ed Vulliamy, ‘Bosnia’s secret war’, *The Gazette*, 02/07/96.

²⁷⁴⁴ Danner, ‘Clinton’, p. 61.

²⁷⁴⁵ Ibid.; Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, p. 96.

²⁷⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁴⁷ Paul Williams, in: Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 313. See also the statements made by State Department official John Fox in Strobel, *Policy*, p. 151 and Danner, ‘Clinton’, p. 58.

²⁷⁴⁸ Cf. Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 220.

²⁷⁴⁹ Don Oberdorfer, ‘U.S. Verifies Killings in Serb Camps’, *The Washington Post*, 04/08/92; id., ‘State Dept. Backtracks On Atrocity Reports’, *The Washington Post*, 05/08/92; Strobel, *Policy*, p. 150.

When it also emerged that the American government's first reaction to the reports on the camps was that they were not prepared to do more than support the Red Cross in its attempts to gain access to the camps and to improve the prisoners' lot,²⁷⁵¹ Lantos remarked that the words 'Munich' and 'appeasement' just kept ringing in his head.²⁷⁵²

The press gained the impression that the American government had something to hide; their suspicions were strengthened by a remark made by General Lewis MacKenzie, commander of UNPROFOR II in Bosnia, who said on 4 August that during the previous five months his troops had received 'a ton of paper' from the Serbian and Croatian governments about camps where, as was claimed, thousands had allegedly been killed.²⁷⁵³ These were said to be 'sophisticated reports', not individual allegations. The Canadian general stated that he had sent the information on through the UN command line, but that hardly any action had been taken because it was too dangerous to visit the camps in Bosnia because of the combat taking place in the surrounding areas. The UN headquarters in New York denied ever having received such reports. In other words: the information had never left the headquarters of UNPROFOR Commander Nambiar in Zagreb. UN spokesmen said that the commander had evidently ignored the information because an inquiry into excesses of this nature did not fall within the scope of his mandate.²⁷⁵⁴

However, the Bosnian mission at the UN claimed that they had long since passed on information about the camps.²⁷⁵⁵ According to later (inconsistent) statements by the Bosnian UN ambassador Muhamed Sacirbey, he had given information about camps to Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali from the end of April on²⁷⁵⁶ or on 15 May.²⁷⁵⁷ There is no known written document confirming this. However, it is clear that Muhamed Sacirbey, the Bosnian UN Permanent Representative, submitted the list of the 94 plus 11 camps to the chairman of the Security Council on 29 July.²⁷⁵⁸ According to an American official, the reaction at the UN had then been: 'It's from the Bosnians, therefore exaggeration.'²⁷⁵⁹ On 12 August the same list was sent to all missions of the CSCE, dated 26 July²⁷⁶⁰, so that it can be assumed that it was not until the end of July that the government in Sarajevo informed its diplomatic representatives abroad of the existence of the list.

Due to the remarks of MacKenzie and Sacirbey, now the UN came under fire as well as president Bush. At the beginning of August it was made known that the report sent by UNHCR to UNPROFOR and other organizations on 3 July had never reached the UN headquarters in New York either.²⁷⁶¹ It was implied that this was a consequence of Boutros-Ghali's attitude; he had, after all, accused the Security Council of concentrating on 'the rich man's war' in the former Yugoslavia.²⁷⁶²

Rapporteurs of the American Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations later said that the lack of initiative on the part of the United Nations after the UNHCR report of 3 July was typical of the organization's systematic incapacity to react to large-scale human rights crises. Reporting violations of

²⁷⁵⁰ Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 174.

²⁷⁵¹ David Binder, 'No U.S. action seen on prison camps', *The New York Times*, 04/08/92; Don Oberdorfer, 'U.S. Verifies Killings in Serb Camps', *The Washington Post*, 04/08/92; J. Friedman, 'The UN Demands Access', *Newsday*, 05/08/92.

²⁷⁵² Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 174.

²⁷⁵³ J. Friedman, 'The UN Demands Access', *Newsday*, 05/08/92; 'VN-generaal wist van excessen' ('UN general knew of excesses'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/08/92.

²⁷⁵⁴ 'VN-generaal wist van excessen', *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/08/92. See also Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 119.

²⁷⁵⁵ J. Friedman, 'Report Secret. UN unit knew of Bosnia detentions; so did U.S.', *Newsday*, 06/08/92.

²⁷⁵⁶ Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 251-252.

²⁷⁵⁷ Ed Vulliamy, 'Bosnia's secret war', *The Gazette*, 02/07/96; Silber & Little, *Death*, pp. 251-252.

²⁷⁵⁸ VN, S/24365.

²⁷⁵⁹ Ed Vulliamy, 'Bosnia's secret war', *The Gazette*, 02/07/96.

²⁷⁶⁰ OVSE Vienna, 07 34.4, I Bosnia Herzegovina [April-August 92, CSCE Communication no. 234 to the points of contact, 12/08/92 with the List of Concentration Camps and Prisons at the Territory of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an appendix, 26/07/92]

²⁷⁶¹ CNN, *News*, 'ITN Reporter Was Allowed in Serb Detention Camps', 06/08/92; 'Polemique à l'ONU autour de la diffusion interne des informations sur les camps de detention', *Agence Franse Presse*, 07/08/92.

²⁷⁶² Aengus Finucane, 'The Changing Roles of Voluntary Organizations', Kevin M. Cahill (ed.), *Framework*, p. 253.

human rights fell outside UNPROFOR's mandate and was not the task of the UNHCR, whose job was to supply relief and humanitarian aid for refugees. The rapporteurs therefore recommended that the United Nations set up a special human rights unit which would react immediately to incipient crises in the field of human rights.²⁷⁶³

It was not only that something had gone wrong in the line of communication from UNPROFOR to the UN headquarters; the question also arose why UNHCR, which had itself drawn up a report about the camps at the beginning of July, had not reacted more promptly. Mendiluce defended UNHCR by saying that the High Commission did not have a mandate to visit camps and had done what it could by handing over the data it had to the ICRC. 'We were up to our eyeballs in thousands of expulsions and two million refugees', said the organization's spokesman, Ron Redman.²⁷⁶⁴ Moreover, added Mendiluce, media interest in the camps was to some extent misplaced, since most of the crimes took place during attacks on towns and villages in the framework of ethnic cleansing and not in the camps themselves: 'The whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina is becoming a sort of concentration camp. This has been well known.'²⁷⁶⁵

So Mendiluce passed the responsibility on to the ICRC, which defended itself by saying that it would have been refused access to the camps if it had given too much publicity to their existence.²⁷⁶⁶ 'If we had seen extermination camps, we would have shouted', said Pierre Gauthier, spokesman of the ICRC, in defence of his organization.²⁷⁶⁷ The ICRC refused to say anything else about what it had done with the information.²⁷⁶⁸ But in fact the ICRC had sent on all the information it had about camps to the American State Department and to other diplomats involved, 'not just the Americans', from mid-June on. Throughout the whole month of July the ICRC passed on information to the American, British and French diplomats about the atrocities taking place in the Bosnian-Serb camps.²⁷⁶⁹

There was another authority which had apparently known more about the Serb prison camps in Bosnia. On 7 August the Vatican issued a statement saying that it had at its disposal 'more than certain reports' confirming the existence of camps in which thousands of Bosnians were imprisoned. It made several details known about persecuted Catholic leaders and faithful. For example, the Vatican knew that the priest of Ljubica was imprisoned with several of his parishioners in the camp at Omarska. Unlike the UN, the Vatican was able to escape criticism by calling for immediate military intervention. 'Keeping quiet without doing everything possible to stop the aggression against a helpless population, is a sin of omission', according to a statement issued by the Holy See on 7 August. In the opinion of the Vatican, in this case military intervention did not mean 'heading for war, but preventing war'.²⁷⁷⁰

8. The warring factions' public relations

Around the end of July more attention was devoted to the phenomenon of the camps in Europe than in the United States, where at that time Gutman was conducting his solitary journalistic crusade. For example, on 29 July an article about camps in northern Bosnia by correspondent Maggie O'Kane appeared in *The Guardian*. She wrote about several camps, including the one at Trnopolje, which according to her – although she had not actually visited it herself – was the best of all the camps. There was food for the inmates and villagers could also bring food to the camp. She had talked to a woman,

²⁷⁶³ United States Senate, *Cleansing*, p. 12.

²⁷⁶⁴ J. Friedman, 'Report Secret. UN unit knew of Bosnia detentions; so did U.S.', *Newsday*, 06/08/92. See also M. Kempton, 'The UN's Silence Shall Be Its Shame', *Newsday*, 13/08/92; M. Schram, 'Denying the Horror That's Beyond Bosnia', *Newsday*, 13/08/92.

²⁷⁶⁵ Stephen Engelberg & Chuck Sudetic, 'Conflict in the Balkans: In enemy Hands', *The New York Times*, 16/08/92.

²⁷⁶⁶ Ed Vulliamy, 'Bosnia's secret war', *The Gazette*, 02/07/96. See also Ignatieff, *Honor*, p. 134.

²⁷⁶⁷ Con Coughlin & Philip Sherwell, 'Death in the Balkans', *Sunday Telegraph*, 09/08/92.

²⁷⁶⁸ R. Howell, 'Outrage. At UN, Pressure For Armed Reply', *Newsday*, 07/08/92.

²⁷⁶⁹ Ed Vulliamy, 'Bosnia's secret war', *The Gazette*, 02/07/96.

²⁷⁷⁰ Marc Leijendekker, 'Vaticaan dringt aan op interventie in Bosnië' ('Vatican urges intervention in Bosnia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/08/92.

Rozalija Hrustic, who had been brought to the camp with her family from Kozarac. Later they were released without being harmed in any way. However, some of their friends had to stay. Her 62-year-old husband later decided to revisit these friends at the camp. When he went there, he saw a large group of women and children being transported to Zenica in cattle trucks. Because the trucks stood still in the burning sun for long periods during the journey, and the Serb guards did not allow other Muslims to bring water for the women and children, four women and seven children died on the way. In her article, O’Kane referred to Trnopolje several times as a concentration camp.²⁷⁷¹ The term ‘concentration camp’, especially in English, has a technical meaning and dates from the Boer War in Africa. But the phrase ‘concentration camp’ is also associated with a specific era: it is generally used to refer to the Nazi camps of the Third Reich and in particular to extermination camps such as Auschwitz en Treblinka. Referring to the prison camps as concentration camps drew European journalists to northern Bosnia like a magnet. ‘Concentration camp’ was a catchword.²⁷⁷²

However, one day earlier, on 28 July, a small group of British journalists had already set out for the former Yugoslavia whose reports were to make history. When Gutman’s first articles appeared, Karadzic and Koljevic were in London for talks led by the United Kingdom which held the EU presidency at the time. The press in the British capital confronted the Bosnian Serb leaders with the reports on the concentration camps. However, Karadzic repeatedly denied the existence of concentration camps to the media. According to him there were prisoner of war camps, but so there were in every war, he said. But the press persisted and then Karadzic did something he must have deeply regretted later.

Both the civilian and the military authorities in Serbia and the Republika Srpska had devoted relatively little attention to their PR abroad,²⁷⁷³ unlike the other conflicting parties in the former Yugoslavia. In Chapter 1 the PR successes of the Slovenian government in June and July 1991 were discussed. Soon after, the Croatian Authorities managed to mobilize the entire population for a campaign intended to manoeuvre the country into a victim role vis-à-vis the Serbs in the eyes of Westerners.²⁷⁷⁴ In fact, in the summer of 1991 the Croatian government’s goal was to get as many foreign journalists as possible to come to Zagreb.²⁷⁷⁵ Croatian generals liked to take journalists with them to the front, something Serbian generals hardly ever did. The consequence was that during the conflict in Croatia journalists were active mainly on the Croatian front.²⁷⁷⁶ And whereas in the summer of 1991 the Croatian public relations machinery was sending the song *Peace in Croatia* out into the world, accompanied by a glib video clip, the Serbs restricted themselves to ‘statements in armoured language, proclaimed by men with martial moustaches’, as two Dutch journalists put it.²⁷⁷⁷

To polish up their countries’ image in the United States, the Slovenian and Croatian governments had turned to American PR firms such as Ruder Finn Global Public Affairs, Hill and Knowlton, and Waterman & Associates, which could influence the American press, policy makers and ‘think tanks’.²⁷⁷⁸ On 18 May 1992 the Bosnian government also entered into a contract with Ruder Finn. However, the Serbian government’s PR office in the United States, Bill M. Wise’s *Wise*

²⁷⁷¹ Maggie O’Kane, ‘Muslims’ nightmare under the long hot Yugoslav sun’, *The Guardian*, 29/07/92.

²⁷⁷² According to one journalist, within 24 hours of the appearance of O’Kane’s article, as many as 350 journalists set out for northern Bosnia. Phillip Knightley, ‘Es stellt sich heraus, dass der Stacheldraht nur ein Symbol war’ (‘It turns out that the barbed wire was only a symbol’), *Novo*, (1997)27(March/April).

²⁷⁷³ Interview M. Milutinovic, 20 and 22/03/00; Sremac, *War*, pp. x, 2, 4, 5, 21, 60, 72.

²⁷⁷⁴ Ugresic, *Cultuur*, pp. 105-107.

²⁷⁷⁵ Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘In Kroatië is de tijd van de keuzes voorbij’ (‘In Croatia the time for choices is over’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/07/91.

²⁷⁷⁶ Caroline de Gruyter, ‘In Kroatië is iedereen goed’ (‘In Croatia everyone is good’), *Elsevier*, 08/08/92, p. 32.

²⁷⁷⁷ Arno Kantelberg and Bart Rijs, ‘Zonder helden of schurken’ (‘Without heroes or rogues’), *HP/De Tijd*, 13/09/93, p. 8.

²⁷⁷⁸ For the role of Ruder Finn see Dray, *Myth*; Jacques Merlino, ‘Da haben wir voll ins Schwarze getroffen. Die PR-Firma Ruder Finn’, Bittermann (Hg.), *Serbien*, pp. 153-158; Johanna Neuman, ‘Croats, Serbs wage media war in USA’, *USA Weekend*, 23/05/92; Tom O’Sullivan, ‘War: PR Battles in the Balkans’, *PR Week*, 13/08/92; id., ‘Truth is the first casualty in PR offensive’, *The Independent*, 21/08/92.

Communications, discontinued its activities in June 1992 because of the sanctions then imposed by the United Nations on Rest Yugoslavia.²⁷⁷⁹ Later other firms in the US also refused to work for the Belgrade regime, not only because of the sanctions, but also because they were afraid their other customers would leave if they accepted the job.²⁷⁸⁰ The lobbying firm Ian Greer Associates, which had spent nearly a hundred thousand British pounds on attempts to influence conservative MPs and Minister of Defence Malcolm Rifkind in particular on behalf of Milosevic's regime since 5 December 1991, also broke off its activities because of the sanctions.²⁷⁸¹

Without direct foreign advisers²⁷⁸² the Serb authorities in Belgrade and Pale made a mess of their public relations. Press conferences in Belgrade were seldom in English.²⁷⁸³ Serbian and Bosnian Serb propaganda efforts were almost entirely focused on domestic consumption or on the Serb diaspora,²⁷⁸⁴ which led to the comment from Serb critics that 'the "propaganda war" was not lost – it was not even waged in an organized fashion because of indifference to the "foreign factor"'.²⁷⁸⁵

For a long time Milosevic disregarded organized PR abroad. Personally, Milosevic had much less desire than the Croatian and Bosnian leaders to make use of the diaspora to further the interests of Serbia, their old homeland, because he had always distrusted the Serbian emigrants as being anti-communist.²⁷⁸⁶ An example of his disregard for PR took place at the end of 1991; the Serbian deputy Prime Minister Darko Prohaska had then made initial contacts with the renowned PR firm Saatchi & Saatchi. As soon as Milosevic heard about this, he fired Prohaska and the contacts were broken off.²⁷⁸⁷ It was not until 1998 that Milosevic observed that in his opinion his government's biggest problem with Washington was bad PR.²⁷⁸⁸

Foreign journalists who had dealings with Bosnian Serb authorities often found that they were treated rudely. For example, Todor Dutina, head of SRNA, the Bosnian Serb News Agency, had the habit of telling journalists when he first met them that in his opinion their profession consisted in principle of criminals.²⁷⁸⁹ The press centre in Pale, which was led by Karadzic's daughter Sonja, was often declared closed by the heads of the VRS at crucial moments in the war.²⁷⁹⁰ When it was open, its employees often tried to make journalists pay for information.²⁷⁹¹ Mladic proclaimed loudly that he did not need the press, 'because history will show that I am right'.²⁷⁹² On the other hand, like Minister of

²⁷⁷⁹ Tom O'Sullivan, 'War: PR Battles in the Balkans', *PR Week*, 13/08/92.

²⁷⁸⁰ Caroline de Gruyter, 'Kroaten rijgen kettingen van Servische vingers' ('Croats make chains out of Serb fingers'), *Elsevier*, 03/10/92, p. 48; Carol Matlack & Zoran B. Djordjevic, 'Serbian-Croatian PR war', *The National Journal*, 14/03/92.

²⁷⁸¹ For these activities see David Leigh & Ed Vulliamy, 'Sleaze: Blood money: How Serbia bought British favours', *The Guardian*, 16/01/97; id., 'Handel mit dem Tod. Wie und warum London für Milosevic nützlich war' ('Trade in death. How and why London was of use to Milosevic'), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 31/01/97.

²⁷⁸² After the furore which arose over the pictures from Trnopolje, the Serbian American National Information Network, abbreviated to SerbNet, was set up in Chicago, to propagate the Serbian position. SerbNet made use of two PR firms: McDermott & O'Neill & Associates, and David A. Keene & Associates, Gutman, *Witness*, pp. 168-171. SerbNet was set up by the American Member of Congress Helen Delich Bentley, who was of Serbian descent. For her PR activities on behalf of Serbia see Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, p. 84; Brad K. Blitz, 'Serbia's War Lobby: Diaspora Groups and Western Elite', Cushman & Mestrovic (eds.), *Time*, pp. 197-202. Another PR organization run by the Serbian diaspora in the United States was the Serbian Unity Congress (SUC), which was founded in 1991 and made use of the PR firm Manatos & Manatos from 15 September 1992 on. For the SUC see Blitz 'War', pp. 204-213 and 222-229.

²⁷⁸³ Sremac, *War*, p. 72.

²⁷⁸⁴ Vojin Dimitrijevic, 'The International Community and the Yugoslav Crisis', Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 638; Brad K. Blitz, 'Serbia's War Lobby: Diaspora Groups and Western Elite', Cushman & Mestrovic (eds.), *Time*, pp. 195-196.

²⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 639.

²⁷⁸⁶ Sremac, *War*, p. 72.

²⁷⁸⁷ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 139.

²⁷⁸⁸ Sremac, *War*, p. 6.

²⁷⁸⁹ Bell, *Way*, p. 102.

²⁷⁹⁰ Bell, *Way*, p. 110.

²⁷⁹¹ Judah, *Serbs*, p. 221.

²⁷⁹² Bell, *Way*, p. 104.

Defence Kadrijevic,²⁷⁹³ he complained that the Croatians had bought themselves good PR in the West, and that the Serbian people had not understood that this was a prerequisite of modern warfare.²⁷⁹⁴

This negative attitude on the part of the Serbian leaders towards foreign media was reinforced by the fact that both in the Republika Srpska and in Serbia itself there was a feeling that the Serbian nation was victimized and misunderstood by the rest of the world. In other words: public relations would not be of any help in the West anyway.²⁷⁹⁵ Moreover, on the Serbian side there was a lack of familiarity in dealing with free media and public opinion which dated from the communist era.²⁷⁹⁶ The Bosnian Muslims, on the other hand, were less tainted by the communist past, and immediately sensed the importance of good relations with journalists. 'I am not saying they deliberately abused us, I am saying they used us intelligently,' said the French General Morillon.²⁷⁹⁷

If an attempt was made on the Serbian side to do something about PR, it was often done amateurishly. Serbs often failed to understand that the Western media, focused as they were on sound bites and one liners, were not interested in lengthy expositions about six centuries of victimization dating from the Battle of Kosovo,²⁷⁹⁸ a chapter of history which according to the American journalist Peter Maass to the Serbs seemed to be as familiar as mother's milk.²⁷⁹⁹ Nor were Western journalists interested in propaganda films full of atrocities committed against the Serbs during the Second World War which were supposed to serve as a justification for their actions in 1992. 'If there was an Academy Award for the Crudest, Goriest Propaganda Film, then the Serbs would win, hands down', said Maass.²⁸⁰⁰

Serbian and Bosnian Serb authorities also hindered themselves in their efforts to create a positive image abroad by the way they tried to deter Western intervention. In order to do this they had to portray themselves as bogeymen. For example, they pointed out that they were in a position to create a second Vietnam²⁸⁰¹ or to avenge themselves by attacking Western capitals and nuclear power plants.²⁸⁰² By choosing this 'top dog' position, they confirmed the victim role of the Bosnian Muslims by implication.²⁸⁰³

Worried by the negative reporting and the first accounts of Serb internment camps, the government of the Republika Srpska decided in the summer of 1992 to do a remarkable about-turn: they launched a publicity offensive.²⁸⁰⁴ Karadzic and his associates hoped to achieve success by staging a grand disappearing act. If they could wipe out the traces of their crimes as thoroughly as possible, the West would have to admit that nothing could be proved. It was a campaign which seemed to dovetail

²⁷⁹³ Kadrijevic, *Vien*, p. 137.

²⁷⁹⁴ Bulatovic, *Mladic*, p. 89.

²⁷⁹⁵ See for example the interview with M. Toholj, 14/12/99; Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 315; Simic, 'Yugoslavia', p. 46.

²⁷⁹⁶ Cf. Peter Brock, 'Meutenjournalismus', in: Bittermann (Hg.), *Serbien*, p. 21; Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, p. 32; Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 177.

²⁷⁹⁷ Morillon, *Croire*, p. 133.

²⁷⁹⁸ Sremac, *War*, p. 29; interview M. Milutinovic, 20 and 22/03/00.

²⁷⁹⁹ Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 91.

²⁸⁰⁰ Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 88.

²⁸⁰¹ Even Milan Panic did this, 'Bosniërs vinden plannen V-raad onvoldoende' ('Bosnians consider Security Council plans inadequate'), *Het Parool*, 11/08/92.

²⁸⁰² See for example the repeated threat by the Bosnian Serb leaders to make terrorist attacks on nuclear power plants in Western Europe: 'Belgrado noch Sarajevo blij met VN-resolutie' ('Neither Belgrade nor Sarajevo pleased with UN resolution'), *Trouw*, 12/08/92; 'Karadzic: aanslagen' ('Karadzic: attacks'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/08/92 or the threat from Belgrade to strike Rome, Vienna, Budapest, Zagreb and the nuclear power plant in Krsko, Guikje Roethof, 'Krijgshaftig. Hoe wil Ter Beek eigenlijk aanvallen?' (Martial. But how does Ter Beek want to attack?) *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 02/09/92.

²⁸⁰³ Cf. Norman Cigar, 'Serb War Effort and Termination of the War', Magas & Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 217.

²⁸⁰⁴ See for example the statements made by the Bosnian Serb commander of Bratunac Dimitri Sibalic or Šibelic, 'In mijn gebied heerst totale informatie-vrijheid' ('In my area there is complete freedom of information'), in: Bart Rijs, 'Sporen van een massamoord' ('Traces of a mass murder'), *HP/De Tijd*, 28/08/92, p. 11, and 'Buitenlandse journalisten! Mooi! Heel mooi! Dan heeft de waarheid eindelijk de kans!' ('Foreign journalists! Great! Just great! Then truth will finally have a chance'), Bart Rijs, 'Reis naar het einde van Bosnië' ('Journey to the end of Bosnia'), *HP/De Tijd*, 04/09/92, p. 22. See also, Bell, *Way*, p. 140; Silber & Little, *Death*, p. 249.

with the idea of ‘plausible deniability,’ which had been the rationale behind many Serb crimes, such as the habit of putting as little as possible on paper and making victims of ethnic cleansing sign documents stating that they voluntarily gave up their property.

So Karadzic took the plunge and invited journalists to come and see for themselves if there were concentration camps. The television feature *ITN News* and the newspaper *The Guardian* accepted the challenge. Penny Marshall of *ITN News at Ten*, her cameraman Jeremy Irvin, and Ian Williams of *ITN Channel 5 News* flew to Belgrade on 28 July, the day before the appearance of O’Kane’s controversial article. They were also joined by Ed Vulliamy, reporter for *The Guardian*, who had covered the war in Yugoslavia from as early as the summer of 1991 and who had let the chance slip to report on the Manjaca camp a few weeks earlier.

9. Trnopolje: the famous pictures

‘Ironically, the first television images that shocked the world came from Trnopolje, the ‘best’ camp. No one ever saw the worst camps when they were at their worst.’²⁸⁰⁵

When the British journalists were held up by red tape in Belgrade for several days, they took the opportunity to visit two of the camps in Serbia which were on the list of 94 plus 11 and to film there: the recreation centre at Loznica, where according to the list 1380 prisoners were detained and Subotica, where there were said to be 5000. However, both of these turned out to be purely refugee camps, in which Serbs were also accommodated. On 3 August the British journalists were able to fly from Belgrade to Pale. There they managed to obtain permission from Karadzic, who in the meantime had returned from London, to visit Omarska and Trnopolje. A visit to a prison in the vicinity of Pale, at the invitation of Karadzic, failed to supply proof of the existence of death camps.

On 5 August the ITN team and Vulliamy reached Banja Luka, from where they were taken to Omarska and Trnopolje under Bosnian Serb military escort. Omarska made an unpleasant impression on the British reporters, but they found no incontrovertible evidence that it was an extermination camp. However, there were several buildings to which the British journalists were not given access. What Marshall and her fellow travellers did not know was that almost immediately after the appearance of Gutman’s article about Omarska on 2 August, the Bosnian Serb authorities had decided to shut down the camp as soon as possible. When the ICRC was permitted to visit the camp on 12 August, one week after the British journalists, there were ‘only’ 173 prisoners left. By the time Vulliamy and the ITN team arrived, most of the prisoners, like those of Keraterm, had been taken to the Manjaca and Trnopolje camps,²⁸⁰⁶ which was to give the British journalists’ trip a twist which had not been intended by the Bosnian Serb authorities. After the visit to Omarska on 5 August they had only one more opportunity to find the proof they were looking for: Trnopolje.

The camp at Trnopolje covered a large area on which several buildings stood, including a school. It was originally not a prison camp but a transit camp for women, children and older men, mainly from the district of Prijedor and in particular from the town of Kozarac, which had 15,000, mainly Muslim, inhabitants.²⁸⁰⁷ After the Bosnian Serb army had shelled Kozarac in the spring, soldiers had told the Muslim inhabitants that they would be safe if they went to Trnopolje, where the primary

²⁸⁰⁵ Maass, *Neighbor*, pp. 41-42.

²⁸⁰⁶ Gutman, *Witness*, pp. xiii and xxxii; Ian Traynor, ‘We moesten over lijken en hersenen stappen’ (‘We had to step over corpses and brains’), *de Volkskrant* 07/10/92; Van Cleef, *Wereld*, pp. 137-138. In that same month the Bosnian government had quoted a figure of 11,000, eyewitnesses a figure of 8000, Amnesty International, ‘Bosnia-Herzegovina. Gross abuses of basic human rights’ (AI Index: EUR 63/01/92), p. 23; R. Gutman, ‘Deadly Transfer. Many reported killed, missing in move from Serb camp’, *Newsday*, 26/08/92.

²⁸⁰⁷ Cf. Van Cleef, *Wereld*, pp. 95-96.

school had been set up as a camp.²⁸⁰⁸ Groups of men who had been imprisoned in Omarska and had been classified by the Bosnian Serb camp leaders there as ‘not dangerous’ were also taken to this camp.²⁸⁰⁹ Shortly before the arrival of the ITN team, prisoners from Omarska and Keraterm who had to be removed from the eye of world opinion after Gutman’s articles had also been brought here to Trnopolje. So at the beginning of August there were several thousand people at Trnopolje.²⁸¹⁰

The camp was guarded mainly by Serbs from the direct vicinity. Some of those at Trnopolje, including some men of fighting age, had themselves chosen to stay in the camp because the situation outside the camp was even more dangerous.²⁸¹¹ Vulliamy recorded the story of a man who had tried to reach Trnopolje, but had been picked up by soldiers on the way and taken to Omarska.²⁸¹² Several people who had left the camp to revisit their houses or farms did not return, so that those in the camp thought it was safer to stay there. Marshall was later to say in her report that the people who had been brought to the camp did not really know themselves whether they were prisoners or refugees.²⁸¹³ The American journalist Peter Maass, who visited Trnopolje a few days after the ITN team, observed that apart from former prisoners of Omarska and Keraterm the inmates of the camp were mainly women and children from the direct vicinity, and that they were there voluntarily:

‘Yes, voluntarily. It was one of the strangest of situations in Bosnia – people seeking safety at a prison camp. Trnopolje was no picnic, but the known brutalities dished out there were preferable to the fates awaiting Bosnians who tried to stay in their homes.’²⁸¹⁴

Although the situation in the camp was much better than in the other camps in north-west Bosnia,²⁸¹⁵ this does not mean that the Trnopolje camp offered complete protection to its inmates. There were incidental cases of rape²⁸¹⁶ and on one evening a gang referred to as El Manijakos is said to have carried out mass rape. According to a report by Amnesty International issued in October 1992 on serious violations of human rights in Bosnia between April and August 1992, reports of rape reaching this organization came mainly from the camp at Trnopolje.²⁸¹⁷ The Yugoslavia tribunal was later to establish that ‘[b]ecause this camp housed the largest numbers of women and girls, there were more rapes at this camp than at any other’.²⁸¹⁸ Men were also tortured and murders took place in the camp, mainly among the local Muslim elite.²⁸¹⁹ People from the camp were sometimes allowed out of the camp for half an

²⁸⁰⁸ Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 66.

²⁸⁰⁹ See for example Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 67; Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 103.

²⁸¹⁰ According to the ITN bulletin there were 2000 prisoners there when Penny Marshall visited the camp. During a visit six days later, the ICRC counted approximately 4000 internees, Amnesty International, ‘Bosnia-Herzegovina. Gross abuses of basic human rights’ (AI Index: EUR 63/01/92), p. 23.

²⁸¹¹ See for example Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 105.

²⁸¹² Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 102.

²⁸¹³ Nightline, *ABC News*, 06/08/92.

²⁸¹⁴ Maass, *Neighbor*, pp. 41-42.

²⁸¹⁵ United Nations, S/1994/674, Appendix, clause 171. For the nature of the camp see also ‘Trnopolje detention camp. *Helsinki Watch Report*, October 1992 –February 1993.

²⁸¹⁶ R. Gutman, ‘Bosnia Rape Horror’, *Newsday*, 09/08/92; Gutman, *Witness*, p. 64; Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 66.

²⁸¹⁷ Amnesty International, ‘Bosnia-Herzegovina. Gross abuses of basic human rights’ (AI Index: EUR 63/01/92).

²⁸¹⁸ Quoted in Ed Vulliamy, ‘We are all guilty’, *The Observer*, 11/05/97. See also the tribunal’s charge against Simo Drljaca and Milan Kovacevic, case no. IT-97-24-I.

²⁸¹⁹ Trnopolje detention camp. *Helsinki Watch Report*, October 1992 –February 1993. According to the Yugoslavia tribunal’s charge against Slobodan Kuruzovic, commander of the camp at Trnopolje, hundreds of men were tortured and murdered there, Hartmann, Milosevic, p. 288. Cf. Van Cleef, *Wereld*, pp. 96-97, 251, 254. According to the main text of the Bassiouni report: ‘Rapes, beatings and other kinds of torture, and even killings, were not rare.’, United Nations, S/1994/674, Appendix, clause 171. According to an appendix of the same report a large number of men were murdered. This allegation does not include any indication of time, United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, IV.A.32. Sells, *Bridge*, p. 19 classifies Trnopolje along with Manjaca and Batkovic as concentration camps as opposed to the ‘killing camps’ Omarska, Brcko-Luka, Susica and Keraterm: ‘killings and torture were common, but the majority of detainees did

hour or an hour to look for food. If they were given permission to do this, they always had to leave something of value behind in the camp. If they came back too late, they were beaten up or killed. If they did not come back at all, they were shot dead as soon as they were found.²⁸²⁰ Diphtheria was also rife in the camp.²⁸²¹

The British journalists visit the camp

‘In war reporting access is everything, or nearly everything.’²⁸²²

In Trnopolje, unlike Omarska, the ITN team was allowed to film everywhere. In the school building the team filmed blankets on the floor and belongings marking off sleeping places. According to pictures which were never broadcast, the ITN team talked to a nineteen-year-old Serb guard called Igor, the son of the camp commander cum Red Cross Official (!) Pero Curguz.²⁸²³ Igor, who had been stationed in Knin since 1991, had been appointed as bodyguard of camp commander Slobodan Kuruzovic a few days previously. He told the team that the Bosnian Serb army brought food and water for the people in the camp and asked the film crew to talk to a group of people standing in the shade of a tree behind a low fence. Igor explained that the group included some friends of his who were staying at the camp and a former teacher of his.

‘Do you want to live together again?’, asked the ITN team. ‘I want’, answered Igor, ‘now a very big problem.’ Then the interviewer asked one of the men behind the low fence, without barbed wire, Azmir Causevic, who had been introduced as a friend of Igor’s: ‘Is he a guard?’ Answer: ‘Yes.’ ‘Is he your friend?’ Answer: ‘Yes.’ He said that they used to play in the street together. ‘Are you prisoners?’ ‘We are not in jail.’ Then another friend of Igor’s arrived on the other side of the fence and shook Igor’s hand. The film crew asked him: ‘What are you doing here? What is this place?’ But the man they addressed did not seem to understand. Then the ITN team turned to Igor again: ‘Are you here to keep people in?’ ‘No, I have a commander. He says I am here to protect, first me and these people.’ Then the cameraman filmed some of the little tents the people in the camp had set up to protect themselves from the blazing sun.²⁸²⁴

The Serb camp commander cum Red Cross official Pero Curguz told the Britons that new inmates had arrived at the camp that day. They were a group from the Keraterm camp. At the medical centre the British journalists asked the interned doctor Idriz Merdzanic: ‘Have there been beatings?’, at which he nodded his head. He did not want to answer the next question, ‘Many?’ Later at an unguarded moment he gave the British journalists an undeveloped film with pictures of men’s tortured upper bodies.²⁸²⁵

Then the camera crew made its way to the southern side of the camp. There was a small field there with a transformer house, a barn and farm equipment. Between this field and the northern side of the camp there was a fence made of chicken wire and – from chest height up – barbed wire. Along the other sides of the field where the men who had been transferred from Keraterm and Omarska had been taken there was a wall, a low fence, or no boundary at all between the site and the road going past

survive’. Report of murders also in Gutman, *Witness*, p. 85; Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 67. Report of the torture of a man in the Trnopolje camp in United States Senate, *Cleansing*, p. 23.

²⁸²⁰ Supplemental United States Submission of information to the United Nations Security Council in Accordance with Paragraph 5 of Resolution 771 (1992) and Paragraph 1 of Resolution 780 (1992), released on October 1992.

²⁸²¹ ‘Trnopolje detention camp. *Helsinki Watch Report*, October 1992 –February 1993’.

²⁸²² Bell, *Way*, p. 162.

²⁸²³ For father Curguz’s curious double function see also Van Cleef, *Wereld*, pp. 249-251.

²⁸²⁴ Information about the footage which was not aired has been taken from <http://www.srpska-mreza.com/lm-f97/deichmann-press.html>, ‘ITN vs Deichmann and Truth – Report on Jan. 31 press conference’.

²⁸²⁵ Nightline, *ABC News*, 06/08/92; T. Deichmann, ‘*Es war dieses Bild, das die Welt in Alarmbereitschaft versetzte*’ (‘It was this picture that put the world on alert’), *Novo* (1997)26 (January/February). The photos were published in the *Daily Mail* on 07/08/92; ITN’s Penny Marshall tells how she made the world wake up’, *Sunday Times*, 16/04/92.

it, but there were armed Serbs on guard (see map of the camp in this section).²⁸²⁶ The Britons stepped through a gap in the fence. In the camp itself, on the other side of the barbed wire, a crowd of curious people assembled, including those who had recently arrived from the Omarska and Keraterm camps. Penny Marshall first had a conversation with a Muslim on the other side of the fence called Mehmet, who spoke a little English. Later, in the bulletin which went on air, he would hardly appear at all, but in the film he was clearly visible next to the person who was to become the main figure of the ITN broadcast. Mehmet told Marshall that everything was ‘very fine, nothing wrong, but it’s very hot’.²⁸²⁷

Then one of the Britons pointed to a person who was coming forward from the background, a man with his T-shirt in his hand, whose ribs were clearly visible in his bare upper body.²⁸²⁸ The cameraman zoomed in on him. This was to become the familiar picture of the emaciated Muslim Fikret Alic. The pictures also show clearly that there were three strands of barbed wire only at the top of the fence from behind which the cameraman was filming; below them was chicken wire. Then Marshall began a conversation with Alic.

On 6 August the British *Channel 4 News* broadcast the pictures at 7 pm, followed three hours later by ITN’s *News at Ten*. In the pictures broadcast on television the emaciated Alic was the central figure. Both broadcasts bore the character of eyewitness accounts, by Penny Marshall and Ian Williams respectively. In their commentaries, Marshall and Williams said that these people were refugees who had lost their homes and belongings, but that there was no first-hand evidence of atrocities in the camp. Later a sharp controversy would arise as to whether or not the pictures had been doctored; this will be discussed at greater length in section 11.

However, the text was not entirely free of suggestion. Marshall began her report by saying ‘The Bosnian Serbs don’t call Omarska a concentration camp’, thereby implying that others might well have a different opinion. Williams said that he had visited ‘seven alleged camps which were on the original Bosnian list of alleged concentration camps.’ Of five it could be said that ‘they are not concentration camps, at most they are refugee collection centres’, but there was ‘grave concern’ about ‘severe mistreatment’ in two of the others. Again, it seemed to be implied that Omarska and Trnopolje were in fact concentration camps.

Williams’s report was followed on ITN by a background story entitled ‘Crimes of war?’, in which black and white pictures of prisoners of war were shown and it was explained that war crimes had been prohibited after the horrors of the Nazi era. Then American politicians were asked for their reactions to the ITN films of Omarska and Trnopolje. They included the presidential candidate Bill Clinton, who reacted by saying: ‘you can’t allow the mass extermination of people and just sit by and watch it happen’.²⁸²⁹ In a lengthy interview Democrat and concentration camp survivor Tom Lantos said that ‘those horrendous pictures’ reminded him of ‘the concentration camps that the Nazis had during World War Two, minus the gas chambers (...)The civilised world stood by during the early 1940’s because they didn’t know what was going on. Well, we now know what is going on.’ In ITN’s *News at Ten* the influential American senator Alfonso d’Amato made similar statements.²⁸³⁰ Lantos also appeared on the programme and said that by 1992 the world should be able to distinguish the Churchills from the Chamberlains.

²⁸²⁶ Ed Vulliamy, ‘Poison in the well of history’, *The Guardian*, 15/03/00; Eric Alterman, ‘Bosnian camps: a barbed tale’, *The Nation*, 28/07/97.

²⁸²⁷ This paragraph is based on the account of Phillip Knightley, who saw the uncut ITN tapes, ‘Es stellt sich heraus, dass der Stacheldraht nur ein Symbol war’ (It becomes clear that the barbed wire only a symbol was), *Novo*(1997)27(March/April).

²⁸²⁸ Photos taken by Ron Haviv prove that this man, Fikret Alic, was by no means the only emaciated man in the camp’, *Blood*, pp. 87-89.

²⁸²⁹ Don Oberdorfer & Helen Dewar, ‘Clinton, Senators Urge Bush to Act on Balkans’, *The Washington Post*, 06/08/92.

²⁸³⁰ See also ‘Nightline’, *ABC News*, 06/08/92.

Comparisons with Jews and Nazis

‘We are not paid to moralize.’²⁸³¹

The impact these pictures made as they went around the world was enormous. After seeing just 45 seconds of uncut ITN footage by satellite, Tom Bettag, producer of the American television network ABC’s programme *Nightline* decided to scrap the programme planned for that evening in favour of one featuring the ITN pictures. ‘We knew those pictures would have enormous impact. It has clearly changed the political climate’, he was to say scarcely 24 hours later.²⁸³² ‘They are the sort of scenes that flicker in black and white images from 50-year-old films of Nazi concentration camps’, wrote the *Daily Mail* the morning after the broadcast.²⁸³³ This was ‘footage reminiscent of scenes from Nazi concentration camps’, wrote Gutman’s paper *Newsday*.²⁸³⁴ Above the photo of Alic on its front page, the *Daily Mirror* placed the heading ‘Belsen 92’, and the *Star* ‘Belsen 1992’. With the pictures of Serb ‘concentration camps’, everything suddenly became “‘crystal clear” in the West. Metaphorically speaking, the Serbs became the Nazis, and the Muslims became the Jews of World War II’.²⁸³⁵

This was a reversal of the alliances that had existed until then. The regime in Belgrade had constantly emphasized that in the past there had always been close ties between Serbs and Jews and that in their historic role as ‘victims’ the lot of the Serbs was very similar to that of the Jews.²⁸³⁶ After the Jews, the Serbs were believed to be the people who had suffered most during the Second World War. It was not without reason that the nationalist Dobrica Cosic had been one of the founders of the Association of Serb-Jewish Friendship. In the United States, Serbs had run an aggressive campaign in an attempt to win the support of the Jewish community for their side, realizing that it was the best organized ethnic lobby in the country.²⁸³⁷

Traditionally, Belgrade considered Israel, Russia and Greece as its best friends. The state of Israel had in fact always taken a strongly pro-Serb position.²⁸³⁸ In the autumn of 1991 Serbia had successfully placed a large secret arms order in Israel.²⁸³⁹ It was not until 5 August 1992 that Israel had decided to offer humanitarian aid to Bosnia.²⁸⁴⁰ On the same day Deputy Minister Yossi Beilin had broken the silence observed by the Israeli government since the outbreak of the hostilities. He then sharply condemned the reports about the camps, but added at once that Israel would never forget the special ties which had existed in the past between Serbs and Jews.²⁸⁴¹

The day after the pictures of Trnopolje were broadcast, the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said that the Jews, who remembered the Holocaust, were particularly afflicted by the reports, though he immediately added that in comparison with the extermination of the Jews during the Second World War, the murders in the Balkans were ‘on a very small scale’.²⁸⁴² Nevertheless, it was a remarkable reaction from a government and a nation which during practically the entire conflict from 1991 to 1995 had painstakingly avoided offending the Serbian regime and its henchmen, on the basis of the incorrect and unjustified view that during the Second World War the Serbs, unlike the Croats and

²⁸³¹ James Harff, director of PR firm Ruder Finn, quoted in Nadja Tesich, ‘New and old disorder’, *NATO*, p. 188.

²⁸³² Quoted in: R. Ciolli, ‘Bosnia Reports Prompt Outrage. Prison camp images drive home urgency’, *Newsday*, 08/08/92.

²⁸³³ ‘The Proof’, *Daily Mail*, 07/08/92.

²⁸³⁴ R. Howell, ‘Outrage. At UN Pressure For Armed Reply’, *Newsday*, 07/08/92. Similar utterances in Sandra Sanchez, ‘Horror in Serbian prison camps’, *USA Today*, 07/08/92.

²⁸³⁵ Mestrovic, *Balkanization*, p. 51.

²⁸³⁶ Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, pp. 15-17, 53, 259-260, 273; Sremac, *War*, pp. 30 and 61; Daniel Kofman, ‘Israel and the War in Bosnia’, Cushman & Mestrovic (eds.), *Time*, p. 93.

²⁸³⁷ Carol Matlack & Zoran B. Djordjevic, ‘Serbo-Croatian PR War’, *The National Journal*, 14/03/92.

²⁸³⁸ See also Daniel Kofman, ‘Israel and the War in Bosnia’, Cushman & Mestrovic (eds.), *Time*, pp. 91-92.

²⁸³⁹ Gajic Glisic, *Vojvka*, pp. 23 and 47.

²⁸⁴⁰ Gwen Ackerman, ‘Israel Breaks Silence, Offers Aid to Distressed Yugoslavia’, *The Associated Press*, 05/08/92.

²⁸⁴¹ Gwen Ackerman, ‘Israel Breaks Silence, Offers Aid to Distressed Yugoslavia’, *The Associated Press*, 05/08/92.

²⁸⁴² R. Howell, ‘Rabin Calls On World for Action’, *Newsday*, 08/08/92. See also Hugh Orgel, ‘Israeli cuts Bosnia mission short as Rabin demands end to atrocities’, *The Ethnic NewsWatch. Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 11/08/92.

the Muslims, had been on the side of the Jews.²⁸⁴³ This statement of Rabin's also reflected the divided reactions of the Jewish community, in which on the one hand Jewish organizations said that they observed the same indifference on the part of the world community as at the time of the extermination of the Jews during the Second World War,²⁸⁴⁴ while on the other hand someone like Simon Wiesenthal thought that any comparison with the Nazi extermination camps was completely misplaced.²⁸⁴⁵

In the United States the Jewish mood turned against Serbia as a result of the reports and pictures of the camps. James Harff, director of the PR firm Ruder Finn regarded this about-face as the greatest success in enhancing the image of his customers in Zagreb and Sarajevo.²⁸⁴⁶ In the past, Tudjman had made anti-Semitic remarks and Izetbegovic was initially not an obvious protégé of the Jewish community. All this had now changed. After Gutman's articles, on 5 August two hundred demonstrators led by the Anti-Defamation League and the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors held a protest march in front of the United Nations building in New York, with the support of twenty American Jewish organizations. The national director of the Anti-Defamation League, Abraham H. Foxman, himself a survivor of the Holocaust, pointed out to the demonstrators that what was going on in Bosnia was not the same as what had happened during the Holocaust. But in his opinion there were so many similarities that an international military force should be sent if necessary.²⁸⁴⁷ Maynard Wishner, chairman of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council called on Boutros-Ghali to begin at once with mobilizing 'whatever U.N. peacekeeping forces are appropriate'.²⁸⁴⁸ Nobel prize winner Elie Wiesel wrote a letter informing the demonstrators that Jews in particular, who had such vivid memories of persecution, should take action in the free world against the systematic torture and murders.²⁸⁴⁹ On 5 August Harff also managed to persuade the B'nai Brith Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress to put an advertisement in *The New York Times* under the heading 'Stop the Death Camps'.²⁸⁵⁰

On 7 August the *ITN Lunchtime News* again devoted attention to Trnopolje. This time the British television company showed pictures of Dutch, Turkish and American broadcasts in which the camps were compared with photos of Nazi concentration camps. ITN quoted from the commentary of the ABC broadcast: 'Faces and bodies that hint at atrocities of the past. But this is not history, this is Bosnia. Pictures from the camps: A glimpse into genocide.' and: 'The Dutch talked of concentration camps. In Muslim Turkey they said ITN's pictures resembled Hitler's camps and brought the greatest disgrace to mankind. And the Germans said the pictures were reminiscent of World War Two.' Against a background of British morning newspapers and the familiar picture of Alic behind barbed wire, ITN reported that 'today's British press was unequivocal in its interpretation of the pictures, adding more pressure on the government to take action to intervene in the Yugoslav crisis.'

²⁸⁴³ Cf. Igor Primoratz, 'Israel and genocide in Croatia', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, pp. 195-206.

²⁸⁴⁴ G. DeWan, 'Newsday Student Briefing Page on the News', *Newsday*, 11/08/92. See also 'A Demand for Action', *The Ethnic NewsWatch. Northern California Jewish Bulletin*, 07/08/92; 'A Terrible Throwback', *The Ethnic NewsWatch. Baltimore Jewish Times*, 07/08/92; Nancy Hill-Hotzman, 'Balkans: Jewish groups react to reports of tortures and murders', *Los Angeles Times*, 08/08/92; Cohen, *War*, p. 122.

²⁸⁴⁵ F. Bruning, 'Human-Rights Probe of Serbia Urged', *Newsday*, 14/08/92. For a more detailed survey of the Jewish and Israeli attitude to Serb war practices in the early 1990s see Cohen, *War*, pp. 122-128; Primoratz, *Israel*.

²⁸⁴⁶ Jacques Merlino, 'Da haben wir voll ins Schwarze getroffen.' Die PR-Firma Ruder Finn', Bittermann (Hg.), *Serbien*, pp. 155-156.

²⁸⁴⁷ 'Jewish Community Rallies for Action to End Atrocities in Bosnia', *U.S. Newswire*, 05/08/92.

²⁸⁴⁸ Debra Nussbaum Cohen, 'Jewish groups express outrage over atrocities in Bosnia', *The Ethnic NewsWatch; Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 05/08/92.

²⁸⁴⁹ Cheong Chow, 'US Jews calling on Bush, UN action for camps', *The Boston Globe*, 10/08/92.

²⁸⁵⁰ Allison Kaplan & Tom Tugend, 'US Jews call for action against Serb atrocities', *The Jerusalem Post*, 06/08/92.

Impact on public image

With this bulletin, ITN itself raised the question of the impact made by its pictures. The pictures strengthened a feeling that had been present for some time, namely that this time the population of the free world would not be able to say, as they had during the Holocaust, that they had known nothing of the mass slaughter which was taking place. As the Dutch commentator W.L. Brugsma would later write: 'Due to the disastrous invention called television, the saying "What you don't know won't hurt you" no longer applies.'²⁸⁵¹

Nevertheless, this is only relative. Television is highly dependent on the possibilities of visualizing a situation. As far as television newsrooms are concerned, if there are no pictures of a subject, it cannot be news.²⁸⁵² 'What cannot be shown in images, receives little attention (...) For instance, we were inadequately informed about the genocide in Congo because no cameras were set up there', said the Belgian philosopher Bart Pattyn, an expert in media ethics.²⁸⁵³ The difference in Bosnia was that the cameras there had found the pictures the West was looking for.

Even before the pictures of Fikret Alic behind barbed wire had been broadcast Milosevic had been compared with Hitler,²⁸⁵⁴ the Muslims' lot with that of the Jews in the Holocaust,²⁸⁵⁵ the actions of Croatian and Bosnian Serbs with those of the Sudeten Germans in the late 1930s²⁸⁵⁶ and incidents such as murder, rape, ethnic cleansing and deportation with those of the Second World War in general.²⁸⁵⁷ But thanks to the pictures of the emaciated Fikret Alic behind barbed wire, the image of the aggressive Serbs could be definitively linked to the actions of the Nazis during the Second World War. In the course of almost fifty years of peace in Europe, the Second World War had become a frame of reference for right and wrong. How much more effectively it could be used to make a divide between rogues and heroes, now that there was a war going on with ethnic cleansing which looked very similar to the pictures in *Schindler's List* and now that there were again camps which evoked memories of what an earlier film had made known as the Holocaust?²⁸⁵⁸

The pictures of Fikret Alic behind barbed wire were an answer for journalists and newsrooms who were wrestling with the problem that the public at large had lost track of the war in Bosnia.²⁸⁵⁹ The reports about refugees had already offered some elements the public could identify with, but it was not until the picture of Fikret Alic in the camp that there was something they could grasp hold of, in the form of a human figure.²⁸⁶⁰

An analogy with the Nazi concentration camps and in particular the death camps or extermination camps of fifty years earlier was soon made. Even those who queried such a comparison admitted the possibility that it might as yet turn out to be justified. In *Newsday* for example the following appeared:

²⁸⁵¹ W.L. Brugsma, 'Wat weet dat deert' ('What you know hurts you'), *HP/De Tijd*, 27/08/93, p. 46.

²⁸⁵² Liesbet Walckiers, 'De media en de derde Wereld' ('The media and the third world'), Becker (red.), *Massamedia*, p. 129.

²⁸⁵³ Bart Pattyn, 'Verveling en mediagebruik' ('Boredom and media custom'), Becker (red.), *Massamedia*, p. 91.

²⁸⁵⁴ See for example 'Milosevic Isn't Hitler, But...'; *The New York Times*, 04/08/92. The American senator Bob Dole had even said that Milošević was worse than Hitler, Maarten Huygen, 'Bosnië plaatst VS voor dilemma' ('Bosnia places US in a dilemma'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/06/92.

²⁸⁵⁵ See for example John Omicinski, 'War in Yugoslavia: The new Holocaust? Is Slobodan Milosevic the Hitler of 1992?', *Gannett News Service*, 29/07/92.

²⁸⁵⁶ 'Belgrado niet immuun' ('Belgrade is not immune'), *de Volkskrant*, 29/05/92.

²⁸⁵⁷ Richard J. Sideman, chairman of the American Jewish Committee, San Francisco, 'Brutalities in Bosnia', *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 30/07/92.

²⁸⁵⁸ For a striking example of this 'almost parallel' see T. Cushman and S.G. Mestrovic, 'Introduction', id. (ed.), *This Time*, especially pp. 6-9.

²⁸⁵⁹ Caroline de Gruyter, 'In Kroatië is iedereen goed', *Elsevier*, 08/08/92, p. 32.

²⁸⁶⁰ Michael Schiffler, analyst at the Center for War, Peace and the Media in New York, a few days after the broadcast of the ITN pictures, cited in R. Ciolli, 'Bosnia Reports Prompt Outrage. Prison camp images drive home urgency', *Newsday*, 08/08/92.

‘Is this the same as 1942? Is this a Final Solution? The answer to that is no. This is not systematic annihilation. (...) The Serbs, while imprisoning the Muslims, are not systematically killing them, though the conditions in which they are keeping them guarantee that many will die. (...) Yet, to some degree, this analogy is irrelevant because this is not a question of comparative suffering. The direct historical parallel to the Holocaust is to be found in the actions of the perpetrators and the bystanders (...) What is going on in Bosnia is not yet a Holocaust and we must ensure that it does not become one.’²⁸⁶¹

Nevertheless the analogy with the Nazi camps persisted for a long time. At the beginning of December 1992 the otherwise so diplomatic former American Minister of Foreign Affairs George Shultz advised television makers to show films of concentration camps from the Second World War the next time they devoted attention to Bosnia: ‘The message is the same.’²⁸⁶² A year after the ITN broadcast the British newspaper *The Independent* wrote: ‘The camera slowly pans up the bony torso of the prisoner. It is the picture of famine, but then we see the barbed wire against his chest and it is the picture of Holocaust and concentration camps.’²⁸⁶³

The notion upheld by Serb propaganda that Croats and their Muslim confederates had been fascists in the Second World War and that ‘therefore’ everything that Croats and Bosnian Muslims did in the 1990s should be regarded with the deepest suspicion vanished into thin air in the West. The dichotomy between Serb war criminals and Bosnian Muslim victims became a fixed idea.

The reports of Serb outrages made many outside Serbia deaf to any further Serb arguments. According to some, the Serbs had lost their right to be heard.²⁸⁶⁴ The reasoning was that their statements could not be trusted. Because the Serb camps were put on a par with concentration camps in the Second World War, anyone who asserted a different point of view was suspected of being a revisionist.²⁸⁶⁵ After the Bosnian Serb authorities had given the International Committee of the Red Cross permission to inspect Trnopolje, the American Assistant Secretary of State for international organizations John Bolton commented that during the Second World War the Nazis had also managed to mislead the Red Cross during visits to concentration camps. In his opinion it was also unlikely that much interest could be aroused in Croat or Muslim camps in which Serbs were held prisoner²⁸⁶⁶ and which, as was the case in the Croat-run camp in Mostar and the Muslim-run camp at Celebici fifty kilometres west of Sarajevo, were no less or little less atrocious than those of the Bosnian Serbs.²⁸⁶⁷ An ICRC report of 4 August, in which it was concluded after visits to ten camps in Bosnia that all parties in the conflict were guilty of serious human rights abuses was to a large extent snowed under in the

²⁸⁶¹ D. Lipstadt, ‘Bosnia’s Horror Is Not a Holocaust. But the outrage also is not a question of comparative suffering’, *Newsday*, 13/08/92. See also Patrick Cockburn, *Independent on Sunday*, 09/08/92; Allcock & Milivojevic & Horton (eds.), *Conflict*, pp. 73-74.

²⁸⁶² E. Sciolino, ‘Clinton faults Bush over Bosnia policy’, *New York Times News Service*, 11/12/92, 2053EST. See also *Wall Street Journal*, 23/02/93, p. A1: ‘Nazi-like detention camps’, quoted in T. Cushman and S.G. Mestrovic, ‘Introduction’, id. (ed.), *This Time*, p. 20.

²⁸⁶³ *Independent*, 05/08/93.

²⁸⁶⁴ See Thomas Cushman/Stjepan G. Mestrovic, ‘Introduction’, id. (eds.), *Time*, p. 15: ‘(...) the Serbs relinquished the right to be heard. Genocide committed by Serbian leaders in the name of Greater Serbia has nullified their right to be heard as an equal in the community of nations.’ Cf. M. Borogovic and S. Rustempasic, ‘The white paper on Alija Izetbegovic’, http://www.xs4all.nl/~frankti/Bosnian_congress/izetbegovic_white_paper.html consulted on 17/02/00, which finds the crimes committed by the Serb leaders against Bosnia so heinous ‘that they take away the right of their perpetrators to belong to the human race, let alone accuse anyone of anything.’

²⁸⁶⁵ Jacques Merlino, ‘Da haben wir voll ins Schwarze getroffen.’ *Die PR-Firma Ruder Finn*, Bittermann (Hg.), *Serbien*, p. 156.

²⁸⁶⁶ Cf. Peter Brock, ‘Meutenjournalismus’, in: Bittermann (Hg.), *Serbien*, pp. 29-30; Dorothea Razumovsky, ‘Gott will es!’, in: *ibid.*, p. 98.

²⁸⁶⁷ For Mostar see Allcock & Milivojevic & Horton (eds.), *Conflict*, p. 75; for Celebici see Marlise Simons, ‘A War-Crimes Trial, but of Muslims, Not Serbs’, *The New York Times*, 03/04/97; Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 180.

media uproar.²⁸⁶⁸ There was also practically no interest in reports from (Bosnian) Serb leaders that possibly thousands of Serbs had died in Bosnian prison camps.²⁸⁶⁹ Shortly before the appearance of the films made at Trnopolje a Reuter photographer had printed a photo of Serb prisoners of war being forced by Bosnian Croats to give the Hitler salute; this was certainly also a picture evoking memories of the Second World War. However, this photo was scarcely shown in the West.²⁸⁷⁰

When the ITN images appeared, they were, in the words of the then acting desk officer for Yugoslavia of the State Department George Kenney, 'ruinous for the Bush administration's hands off policy'. The pictures 'could not but result in significant US actions'.²⁸⁷¹ This seemed correct; a whole range of measures taken by national governments and international organizations followed in the wake of the pictures of Trnopolje. Immediately after hearing about the report, the American President George Bush, in a hastily convened press conference, urged a Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force in order to make sure humanitarian convoys reached their destinations.²⁸⁷² On the evening of 6 August the NATO Political Committee decided to make plans to open corridors for humanitarian convoys. The member states were asked to indicate what resources they would be able to deploy.²⁸⁷³ On 13 and 14 August the UN Human Rights Committee held an emergency meeting for the first time since its foundation, with the situation in the former Yugoslavia as the sole point on its agenda. In fact the American government had already put forward a proposal for a meeting of this kind, which had been supported by the twelve EC countries, before the ITN broadcasts of the pictures of Trnopolje.²⁸⁷⁴ The motive for the American initiative was the American government's deep concern about the mounting atrocities in the former Yugoslavia and the difficulties confronting the ICRC there. The government in Washington also saw this initiative as a gesture towards the Islamic countries.²⁸⁷⁵

Mazowiecki is appointed rapporteur; the call for military intervention is heard

The committee demanded the release of all prisoners who were being held arbitrarily and also immediate free access for the ICRC to all camps and prisons. It decided to appoint the former Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki as special rapporteur on the former Yugoslavia, with the task of reporting on human rights abuses and war crimes. His reports were also to be sent to the Security Council. On 13 August the Security Council passed Resolutions 770 and 771. Resolution 770 demanded access to the camps for aid organizations. The resolution also authorized the nations to make it possible to deliver humanitarian relief to Sarajevo and other places in Bosnia-Herzegovina if necessary, either on a national basis or through regional organizations, and 'by all possible means'.

Resolution 770 was the first to authorize the use of force by the international community in Bosnia, in order to deliver relief supplies, but it did stipulate that this should take place 'in co-operation with the United Nations'. It was only the second time in the UN's existence that the organization had used the phrase 'by all possible means' in a resolution. The first time had been in the resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq, after troops from that country had invaded Kuwait. Resolution 771 held out the prospect of punishment for war criminals from the former Yugoslavia.

²⁸⁶⁸ See for example F. Bruning, 'Human Rights Probe of Serbia Urged', *Newsday*, 14/08/92.

²⁸⁶⁹ 'Serbs Vow Fresh Offensive', *Newsday*, 10/08/92; R. Howell, 'Outrage. At UN, Pressure For Armed Reply', *Newsday*, 07/08/92; Sremac, *War*, pp. 116-117.

²⁸⁷⁰ Caroline de Gruyter, 'In Kroatië is iedereen goed', *Elsevier*, 08/08/92, pp. 32-33, where the photo was in fact shown.

²⁸⁷¹ G. Kenney, 'How media misinformation led to Bosnian intervention', <http://www.suc.org/politics/conc-camps/html/Kenney.html>, consulted on 26/02/00.

²⁸⁷² 'World News Night with Peter Jennings', *ABC News*, 06/08/92; Jonathan Miller, 'Death-camp scoop made the world sit up', *Sunday Times*, 09/08/92; ITN's Penny Marshall tells how she made the world wake up', *Sunday Times*, 16/08/92.

²⁸⁷³ Stephen Robinson & Peter Almond & John Hibbs, 'NATO orders relief plan for Bosnia', *The Daily Telegraph*, 07/08/92.

²⁸⁷⁴ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844.COREU The Hague, 06/08/92, cpe/hag 439; Wagenmakers 564 to Van den Broek, 06/08/92.

²⁸⁷⁵ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Meesman 740 to Van den Broek, 06/08/92.

On 14 August the French government announced that it would make 1100 troops available for Bosnia. Confronted with a temporary consensus in British public opinion and the media as to military intervention²⁸⁷⁶ and with strong domestic criticism of his leadership with respect to the Bosnian crisis,²⁸⁷⁷ the British Prime Minister John Major cut short his holiday and called for an emergency Ministerial Council meeting on 18 August, at which it was decided to supply 1800 light infantry troops for the security of the UN convoys. Chancellor Kohl said that the German constitution, which prohibited the deployment of military troops outside the NATO area, should be revised.

The camps after the furore

Before going into the impact of the pictures in further detail, it seems appropriate to discuss what happened to the prisoners in the camps. After the TV broadcasts about Omarska and Trnopolje, the Red Cross was allowed to visit many Bosnian Serb camps. Camera crews of other television companies, UNHCR representatives and well-known people such as the French Minister Kouchner and the Israeli peace activist Elie Wiesel followed in the footsteps of ITN and the Red Cross. Inasmuch as people continued to be imprisoned in Serb camps, in general their lot immediately improved as a result of visits and inspections like these.²⁸⁷⁸ The women and children who had been in Trnopolje were permitted to leave a few days after the ITN pictures. Room had to be made for yet more prisoners from the Omarska and Keraterm camps, which had to be displayed to the world press in a spotless condition. On 13 August, eight days after Marshall and Williams made their films, Fikret Alic managed to hide amidst a transport of women and children and to escape from the camp. Later he ended up in Denmark. Reporters who visited Trnopolje one and a half weeks after the ITN teams, observed that the newly arrived men were allowed to go to houses and gardens in the vicinity under supervision in order to get hold of food, although by then there was practically nothing left except maize.²⁸⁷⁹ A few weeks later these internees were released and taken to Croatia.²⁸⁸⁰ After the furore over the camps, caused first by Gutman's and O'Kane's articles and later by the ITN broadcast, the inmates of the camps were generally no longer in direct bodily danger, although some former camp detainees still died in incidents during transports.²⁸⁸¹ These transports were in fact the final episode of ethnic cleansing.

Between July and December 1992 the Red Cross visited 10,800 prisoners in 16 camps: 8100 imprisoned by Bosnian Serbs, 1600 in the hands of the Bosnian government and 1100 detained by Bosnian Croats.²⁸⁸² Gradually they were released and on 1 October the ICRC concluded an agreement with the Bosnian Serb authorities stipulating that the remaining 7000 prisoners in 11 camps were to be released at the end of that month.

However, the ICRC was faced with a dilemma in relation to the prisoners' future lot. If the Red Cross and the international community succeeded in getting the prisoners released, they would not be able to return to their homes. Even if those homes were still fit to live in, it was still too dangerous. For example, of a group of 15 people who were released from Manjaca, 13 were murdered when they returned to their homes.²⁸⁸³ But if the prisoners could not go back to their homes, the question was, where could they go? The governments in their Europe were not eager to welcome the former camp inmates.²⁸⁸⁴

²⁸⁷⁶ Simms, *Hour*, p. 44.

²⁸⁷⁷ See for example Michael Binyon, 'Evidence mounts of executions and beatings in Serb-run camps', *The Times*, 07/08/92; Craig R. Whitney, 'Balkan Scenes Stir Europe, But Action Remains Elusive', *The New York Times*, 08/08/92.

²⁸⁷⁸ Ian Traynor, 'We moesten over lijken en hersenen stappen', *de Volkskrant* 07/10/92.

²⁸⁷⁹ Marjolein Sebregts, 'Vannacht waren het er tien' ('Tonight there were ten of them'), *Elsevier*, 15/08/92, p. 29.

²⁸⁸⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Statement by Ogata, Geneva, 09/10/92.

²⁸⁸¹ See for example Vulliamy, *Seasons*, pp. 107 and 158; Gutman, *Witness*, p. 101.

²⁸⁸² Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 226 n. 23.

²⁸⁸³ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 113.

²⁸⁸⁴ Nina Bernstein, 'Too dangerous to release Bosnian captives', *Newsday*, 30/08/92.

The human rights organization Amnesty International also pointed out these problems in a report issued on 23 October.²⁸⁸⁵ Amnesty International admitted that the fate awaiting the prisoners upon their release might well offer them little more security than they had had during their imprisonment. They therefore called on the international community to monitor the safe return of the former prisoners to their homes or, if those released did not want this because they feared for their safety, to ensure there was 'an appropriate place of refuge'.²⁸⁸⁶ However, there was not a single European country that guaranteed to accept former camp internees on any significant scale.²⁸⁸⁷ After the first large group of released prisoners, 1560 people from Trnopolje, had arrived in a transit camp at Karlovac in Croatia, it turned out that there was not a single country that was prepared to take them. This meant that no new prisoners in Bosnia could be picked up by the International Committee of the Red Cross, because in Karlovac they would have to take the place of the group of 1560. The result of the attitude of the governments in the countries outside Bosnia-Herzegovina was that the ICRC had to ask the Bosnian Serb authorities to keep camps like Trnopolje open for months longer than the end of October, the date the Bosnian Serb leaders and the Red Cross had eventually agreed on.²⁸⁸⁸

In the autumn of 1992 the Bosnian Serb authorities were even forced to open a new camp in Kotor Varos, on the outskirts of Banja Luka, to relieve Croats and Muslims who were trying to escape from the intimidation and incidental murders in their home surroundings. Every time the ICRC succeeded in getting a number of inmates out of the Bosnian Serb camps, their places were immediately filled by others who preferred the relative safety of the camp to the 'freedom' outside.²⁸⁸⁹ It is unpleasant to have to acknowledge that the pictures which caused such a commotion in the West had so little effect on international readiness to accept victims of the camps.

In the following months, thousands more prisoners were in fact released from the Bosnian Serb camps. On 18 December the last 418 prisoners from the Manjaca camp were released and taken to Karlovac in Croatia under supervision of the ICRC.²⁸⁹⁰ According to the ICRC, by about 1 January 1993 all but 2700 of the internees had been released from camps whose existence had been confirmed.²⁸⁹¹ Then the CIA produced a report, which found its way to various newspapers, that approximately 70,000 more people were being detained in camps run by all three parties in Bosnia.²⁸⁹² According to the CIA, information obtained by satellite espionage, conversations with prisoners who had been released or had run away, and reports made by humanitarian organizations seemed to indicate the existence of previously unknown camps.²⁸⁹³ However, this figure was entirely unfounded.²⁸⁹⁴ Apparently the American authorities, who had kept their knowledge of the camps silent for so long in the past, now wanted to give the impression that they could search better than the ICRC and other humanitarian organizations. In August 1993 the Red Cross named the figure of 6474 detainees still remaining in 51 camps, distributed throughout Bosnia.²⁸⁹⁵ In reports issued in April 1993 and addressed to all three parties in the Bosnian conflict, the International Committee of the Red Cross stated in bold terms that the conditions in which these people were detained were still no better than they had been in the summer of 1992.²⁸⁹⁶

²⁸⁸⁵ Amnesty International, 'Bosnia-Herzegovina. Gross abuses of basic human rights' (AI Index: EUR 63/01/92).

²⁸⁸⁶ p. 13.

²⁸⁸⁷ Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 115; Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 113; Gutman, *Witness*, pp. 87 and 105-107.

²⁸⁸⁸ Mercier, *Crimes*, pp. 64-65; Vulliamy, *Seasons*, pp. 113 and 158.

²⁸⁸⁹ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, pp. 113-114.

²⁸⁹⁰ 'Veiligheidsraad veroordeelt verkrachtingen' ('Security Council condemns rape'), *Brabants Nieuwsblad*, 19/12/92.

²⁸⁹¹ Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 226 n. 23.

²⁸⁹² Gutman, *Witness*, p. 141.

²⁸⁹³ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

²⁸⁹⁴ Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 117.

²⁸⁹⁵ Allcock & Milivojevic & Horton (eds.), *Conflict*, p. 74.

²⁸⁹⁶ Mercier, *Crimes*, pp. 116-117.

10. The consequences of the pictures in the Netherlands: a stronger call for intervention

Dutch newspaper readers, radio listeners and television viewers were not entirely dependent on foreign coverage of the war in Bosnia. Dutch journalists such as Raymond van den Boogaard, Dick Verkijk, Harmen Roeland and soon Willem Lust as well were on the spot when the war began. Nicole Lucas was still in Belgrade as a correspondent for *Trouw*, and Theo Engelen in Ljubljana for *NRC Handelsblad*. The last article from Belgrade by Ulrike Rudberg, who had been a correspondent for *De Volkskrant* in the Serbian capital since 1988, appeared in that paper on 7 July 1992.²⁸⁹⁷

The Dutch journalists in the region were also much more inclined to take a stand in the conflict in Bosnia than during the war in Croatia the previous year. Harold Doornbos, correspondent for Zuid-Oost Pers and Radio 1, commented: 'It is not that I would defend the Bosnian government, but in the broad political spectrum they are in the right. It has been a war with a clear aggressor.'²⁸⁹⁸ Herman van Gelderen, who worked for RTL Nieuws, thought that it was 'completely understandable' that he supported the Bosnian Muslims, considering how they had been victimized: 'Besides, the Croats were on the wrong side in the Second World War and the Serbs were communists. In that sense you do have prejudices and I had little affinity with those two parties. That may be a subconscious factor in your reports.'²⁸⁹⁹ At the end of 1992, radio reporter Dulmers took a strange decision for a reporter: he decided not to report the unloading of weapons destined for Croats and Muslims from an Iranian plane at the Zagreb airport, which constituted a violation of the UN embargo: 'At that time the relations [between the conflicting parties] were so lop-sided that I thought it was relevant not to report it.'²⁹⁰⁰

From June on reports on refugees from Bosnia also started to feature in the Dutch press. Articles appeared about the refugee camps and buildings in Croatia, where by the beginning of June more than a quarter of a million refugees from Bosnia had already been received. The topic led to graphic descriptions of gym halls where the air conditioning was unable to dispel 'the stifling stench', of the insufficient number of showers and toilets and of excrement lying around.²⁹⁰¹ The refugee stories were a godsend to the journalists in the region, who had always found it very difficult to describe the complexity of the conflicts in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Thanks to the refugees, the war even came closer. Dutch journalists scoured the asylum seekers' centres in their own country in search of newsworthy stories. The human interest element in the reports on the former Yugoslavia rose.²⁹⁰² In the NOS news bulletins supplementary reports on human suffering made their appearance at the same

²⁸⁹⁷ Ulrike Rudberg, 'Wat heeft u eigenlijk bij ons in Belgrado te zoeken?' ('What are you actually doing here in Belgrade?'), *de Volkskrant*, 07/07/92.

²⁸⁹⁸ Quoted in: Karskens, *Pleisters*, p. 263.

²⁸⁹⁹ Quoted in: Karskens, *Pleisters*, p. 263.

²⁹⁰⁰ Karskens, *Pleisters*, p. 263.

²⁹⁰¹ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Ondanks de air conditioning stinkt het' ('In spite of the air conditioning, it stinks'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/06/92. See also Nicole Lucas, 'Laat ons, we hebben te veel meegemaakt' ('Leave us alone, we've been through too much'), *Trouw*, 01/07/92.

²⁹⁰² See for example Alfred van Cleef, 'Ik wil niet doden en ik wil niet gedood worden' ('I don't want to kill and I don't want to be killed'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/06/92; id., 'De trein rijdt weg en niemand zwaait' ('The train is leaving and nobody is waving'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/07/92; 'Het gezin Alihagic heeft alleen nog wat foto's' ('The Alihagic family has only a few photos left'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/07/92; Harm van den Berg, 'Bosniërs overnachten in bus' (Bosnians spend the night in coach), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/07/92; id., 'Vluchtelingen Sheila niet gerust op vertrek uit Bosnië' ('Refugee Sheila feels anxious about leaving Bosnia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/07/92; Anneke Visser, 'Ik ben ongelukkig want mijn vader is nog aan het front' ('I am unhappy, because my father is still at the front'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/08/92; Jan Sloothaak, 'Berooid en vermoeid, maar veilig in Zeewolde' ('Destitute and weary, but safe in Zeewolde'), *Trouw*, 03/08/92; 'Serviërs hebben mijn hele dorp afgeslacht' ('Serbs massacred my whole village'), *Trouw*, 04/08/92; 'Ontheemde Bosniërs zwerven opgejaagd rond door Europa' ('Homeless Bosnians roam anxiously around Europe'), *de Volkskrant*, 21/07/92; Ineke Jungschleger, 'Janny zwerft al sinds half april' ('Janny has been wandering around since mid-April'), *de Volkskrant*, 31/07/92; Rob Gollin, 'Bosniërs veilig, maar te moe om blij te zijn' ('Bosnians safe, but too tired to be glad'), *de Volkskrant*, 03/08/92; Frans van Deijl, 'Ik hou van jou, mijn Bosnië' ('I love you, my Bosnia'), *HP/De Tijd*, 14/08/92, pp. 24-27.

time as the streams of refugees²⁹⁰³ and the current affairs programmes on television also devoted a great deal of attention to the refugees.²⁹⁰⁴

When the Dutch media sent reports of their own from Bosnia, almost all of them came from Sarajevo. Of the three major daily newspapers, *NRC Handelsblad*, *De Volkskrant* and *Trouw*, it was *Trouw* that made the most exceptions to this pattern. For example, after Mostar was proclaimed capital of Herceg-Bosna, the Croat community in Bosnia, Nicole Lucas sent reports from there. One of her reports on that city opened with the sentence: 'Only the old bridge, from which daredevils used to jump down into the Neretva for a few cents, does not need to be removed from the travel books.'²⁹⁰⁵ Sixteen months later that bridge too was bombarded into rubble. Another report in *Trouw* about the situation elsewhere in Bosnia was a short article pointing out to the reader that although it had been the siege of Sarajevo that had led to the most indignation in the West up to that point, the East Bosnian town of Gorazde, where 70,000 people had been packed together under heavy artillery fire for three months, was 'possibly the symbol of the greatest horrors of the conflict' and looked like becoming a second Vukovar.²⁹⁰⁶ In Gorazde, according to a Bosnian observer who was quoted, there was by then 'nothing left to destroy'.²⁹⁰⁷ From the end of July on, reports by the British war correspondent Maggie O'Kane appeared in *De Volkskrant*, providing information about the fortunes of the encircled town of Gorazde and about Foca, which had been 'cleansed'.²⁹⁰⁸ On 31 July her article about the concentration camps, which had appeared two days previously in *The Guardian* and had caused such an uproar, also appeared in *De Volkskrant*.²⁹⁰⁹

Up to the end of July, in the written media there was no significant pressure to intervene in Bosnia-Herzegovina. A commentary by a senior editor in *NRC Handelsblad* on 16 June still voiced the opinion that it was 'almost hopeless' for the outside world to undertake anything in the former Yugoslavia: 'conferences mean time gain for conflicting parties and sanctions make warring leaders popular rather than controversial in their own countries'. According to this newspaper, an intervention force would soon be compelled to fly for safety itself. 'The conclusion is that the outside world cannot influence conflicts such as that in the former Yugoslavia (...), except by giving the conflicting parties the opportunity to talk and to offer humanitarian aid. Apart from that the outside world – unfortunately – is helpless.'²⁹¹⁰

De Volkskrant had struck a note in favour of intervention a few days earlier. If the sanctions had no effect, then according to an editorial of 13 June the time for military intervention was approaching. *De Volkskrant* took a stand against the idea that for troops from other countries Sarajevo was not worth dying for because there were no vested interests. 'It reminds one,' the newspaper reprimanded supporters of this idea, 'of the discussion just before the Second World War about dying for Danzig, the free city claimed by Nazi Germany. That was not necessary either, the European democracies thought at the time. That conclusion was morally reprehensible and turned out to be politically short-sighted. The same is true of Sarajevo today.'²⁹¹¹ The newspaper supported the EC decision made in

²⁹⁰³ Willemse, *Joegoslavië*, p. 213.

²⁹⁰⁴ IKON, *Kenmerk*, 20/06/92; EO, *Tijdsein*, 07/07/92; NCRV, *Hier en Nu*, 20/07/92; Veronica, *Nieuwslijn*, 30/07/92 and 06/08/92; KRO, *Brandpunt*, 02/08/92.

²⁹⁰⁵ Nicole Lucas, 'Mostar is geen bezienswaardigheid meer' ('Mostar is no longer a place worth seeing'), 08/07/92. See also Nicole Lucas, 'In tijd van oorlog' ('In times of war'), *Trouw*, 25/07/92.

²⁹⁰⁶ 'Niemand kent Gorazde, maar het is er erger dan in Sarajevo' ('Nobody knows Gorazde, but it's worse there than in Sarajevo'), *Trouw*, 16/07/92.

²⁹⁰⁷ 'EG en VN pogen vredesoverleg Joegoslavië te coördineren' ('EC and UN attempt to coordinate peace talks Yugoslavia'), *Trouw*, 24/07/92.

²⁹⁰⁸ See for example Maggie O'Kane, 'Gorazde wordt tweede Vukovar' ('Gorazde is becoming a second Vukovar'), *de Volkskrant*, 24/07/92; id., 'Welkom in Foca, 'gereinigd' van Bosnische Islamieten' ('Welcome to Foca, "cleansed" of Bosnian Muslims'), *de Volkskrant*, 28/07/92.

²⁹⁰⁹ Maggie O'Kane, 'De school is nu een concentratiekamp voor Islamieten' ('The school is now a concentration camp for Muslims'), *de Volkskrant*, 31/07/92.

²⁹¹⁰ 'Twee burgeroorlogen' ('Two civil wars'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/06/92.

²⁹¹¹ 'Sterven voor Sarajevo' ('Dying for Sarajevo'), *de Volkskrant*, 13/06/92.

Lisbon at the end of June: ‘The international community will not be able to put an end to the civil war by means of military action. The situation in Bosnia-Hercegovina, with its three population groups and different militias, is too complicated for that. But the international community does have the moral duty to rescue the 300,000 inhabitants of Sarajevo, if necessary with the help of military force.’²⁹¹² A month later an editorial in *De Volkskrant* said it was ‘understandable’ that the major powers did not want to deploy ground troops to intervene in Bosnia-Hercegovina, but according to the newspaper they could try to eliminate the Serb artillery from the air. And they should also ensure a complete sea and air blockade.²⁹¹³

There were few opinion articles in the major Dutch newspapers in the months of June and July 1992. Those that did appear were often by foreigners. It is striking that in this phase Serbs were allowed to voice their opinions in the Dutch opinion pages, complaining about the UN embargo.²⁹¹⁴ *De Volkskrant* even gave ample space to the foreign affairs adviser of the Yugoslav president Cosic, Svetozar Stojanovic, stating only that the author was ‘a Serbian sociologist’.²⁹¹⁵ Stojanovic said that it was ‘incomprehensible that of all peoples the Serbs, who had lived through a horrific genocide, now had to sacrifice itself for higher interests and yield voluntarily. Was it not much more the case that a people which has undergone a lot like this had earned a special status and special guarantees from the international community?’²⁹¹⁶

On 3 July it was again Hylke Tromp who called for intervention. He declared himself against a step-by-step approach, beginning with military supervision of humanitarian convoys. In his opinion the politics of Belgrade needed to be changed and this would only be possible if the same overwhelming force was used as that used against Iraq a year earlier. He thought it was not impossible that Milosevic would then make the best of a bad job and yield before military operations actually began.²⁹¹⁷

Hylke Tromp’s brother Bart thought that if the West did not undertake military intervention, the war in the former Yugoslavia would escalate into a third ‘real Balkan war which would eclipse the preceding ones in size, duration and consequences’.²⁹¹⁸

The existence of camps in the framework of ethnic cleansing was initially ignored in the Netherlands, as elsewhere. For example, *Volkskrant* reporter Hans Moleman had seen long lists in Sarajevo of missing Muslims who had been killed or imprisoned in camps. He did nothing about them. ‘Somehow or other everybody ignored those lists. Why was that? I think because as a journalist there you spent the whole day organizing things, to survive as a journalist and to write your stories of that moment. At that time you didn’t have the perspective.’²⁹¹⁹ EO reporter Emerson Vermaat knew of another reason why journalists like himself did not visit the camps: ‘Even if you knew where they were. You just didn’t get there. Your guide is scared and he charges four hundred German marks a day and that is a lot for the budget.’ Moreover, the EO reporter was hampered by the prejudices of his editors. Programme maker Feike ter Velde was not so interested in crimes against Muslims, he told Vermaat: ‘Those Serbs are Christians too, aren’t they? Must you take the side of the Muslims?’²⁹²⁰ The stand taken by the EO editors was unique. At other newsrooms in the Netherlands the war in Bosnia was ‘a handle (...) for all sorts of moral views’, but certainly not in favour of the Serbs. According to NRC

²⁹¹² ‘Lissabon en Sarajevo’ (‘Lisbon and Sarajevo’), *de Volkskrant*, 29/06/92.

²⁹¹³ ‘Stop verdrijving’ (‘Stop expulsion’), *de Volkskrant*, 29/07/92.

²⁹¹⁴ See for example Slavko Curuvija, ‘Isolment van Servië is geen oplossing’ (‘Isolating Serbia is not a solution’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/06/92.

²⁹¹⁵ Nevenka Tromp-Vrkic pointed out this omission, ‘Servische politiek is zelf debet aan slecht imago in de wereld’ (Serbian politicians have themselves to blame for their bad image in the world’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/07/92.

²⁹¹⁶ Svetozar Stojanovic, ‘Het Westen sluit de ogen voor de rampspoed van Servië’ (‘The West turns a blind eye to the misfortunes of Serbia’), *de Volkskrant*, 29/06/92.

²⁹¹⁷ Hylke Tromp, ‘Conflict Joegoslavië vraagt om herhaling van Desert Storm’ (‘Conflict in Yugoslavia requires a repetition of Desert Storm’), *de Volkskrant*, 03/07/92.

²⁹¹⁸ Bart Tromp, ‘Derde Balkanoorlog is in voorbereiding’ (‘Third Balkan war is in preparation’), *Het Parool*, 25/07/92.

²⁹¹⁹ Moleman, quoted in: Karskens, *Pleisters*, p. 261.

²⁹²⁰ Vermaat, quoted in: Karskens, *Pleisters*, p. 261.

Handelsblad correspondent Raymond van den Boogaard there were times when the editors regarded any query as to the Muslims being in the right as ‘suspicious’.²⁹²¹

The reports about the camps had not escaped the notice of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but their reaction was extremely cautious. On 4 August the management of the Information Service had suggested to Van Walsum, Director-General of Political Affairs should say that officials of the Ministry in contacts with the press – if asked – that the Dutch government was ‘deeply concerned’ about the press reports of human rights abuses in ‘prison camps in the former Yugoslavia’. However, it was added that there were no data ‘which can be regarded as conclusive evidence’. According to the draft statement, the government appealed to ‘the parties in the conflict’ to give the UNHCR and the Red Cross access to the camps. The draft’s absolute neutrality with respect to the conflicting parties was at least as remarkable as the cautious wording.²⁹²²

This was soon to change. On the same day, 4 August, the NOS television news bulletin broadcast an interview with the Bosnian UN Ambassador Muhamed Sacirbey, in which he said that Serbs were torturing Croats and Muslims in ‘concentration camps’.²⁹²³ The next day the CDA MP Jaap De Hoop Scheffer, who had seen the television pictures from his holiday accommodation in North Brabant (Netherlands), requested a debate with the Ministers Van den Broek, Ter Beek, D’Ancona (Welfare, Health and Culture) and Junior Minister Kosto (Justice), the last two because they shared responsibility for the relief of refugees. De Hoop Scheffer thought that interrupting the summer recess ‘pales into insignificance in relation to the barbaric situation in the region concerned, as expressed in phenomena such as concentration camps, ethnic cleansing and apartheid politics’.²⁹²⁴ He wanted to exchange ideas with the government about the deployment of Dutch armed forces in UN operations ‘to alleviate the unfathomable human tragedy in the Balkans’.²⁹²⁵ In his opinion, the Dutch government should be prepared to co-operate with ‘unorthodox solutions’.²⁹²⁶ However, he was opposed to deploying ground troops, which would have to consist of half a million troops who would have to operate in wooded and mountainous territory, in a complex conflict with numerous parties. ‘Besides, the war has strong religious overtones. You can’t solve it.’²⁹²⁷

One of the topics De Hoop Scheffer wanted to raise in the debate with the government was the possibility of creating ‘places of refuge (...) in the region itself’.²⁹²⁸ This idea was beginning to find wide support among Dutch politicians. On 4 August, even before the interview with Sacirbey was broadcast, PvdA MP Valk had argued in favour of solving the refugee problem by creating ‘safety zones’, on the lines of those for the Kurds in northern Iraq.²⁹²⁹ In the same broadcast Frits Bolkestein, leader of the VVD parliamentary party in the Parliament, had said in response to reports of the existence of concentration camps in the former Yugoslavia that if sending international observers could not put an end to these abuses, the United Nations would have to intervene actively: ‘Surely you cannot accept the fact that people are slaughtering each other on a large scale without trying to do anything about it.’²⁹³⁰ Valk did not want to rule out the use of force in setting up the safe zones.²⁹³¹ On 7 August, the day after the ITN pictures had been broadcast, Ria De Bruijn Beckers, chairman of the GroenLinks (Green Left) parliamentary party in the Parliament, said she was in favour of deploying military resources to

²⁹²¹ Quoted in: Karskens, *Pleisters*, p. 264.

²⁹²² ABZ, arch-DVL/BZ. Memorandum from DVL/Foreign Affairs to DGPZ via DEU/OE, 04/08/92, no. 838/92.

²⁹²³ NOS-T.V. *Journal*, 04/08/92.

²⁹²⁴ TK, 1991-1992, 22181, no. 22, p. 1; see also Radio 1, NOS, *Radiolympia*, 05/08/92, 12.05pm; ‘Kamerleden terug van vakantie voor Joegoslavië-debat’ (‘MPs back from holidays for Yugoslavia debate’), *de Volkskrant*, 06/08/92.

²⁹²⁵ ‘Kamerleden terug van vakantie voor Joegoslavië-debat’, *de Volkskrant*, 06/08/92.

²⁹²⁶ Rob Meines, ‘Verdeeldheid over ingrijpen in Bosnië’ (‘Dissension over intervention in Bosnia’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/08/91.

²⁹²⁷ ‘Kamerleden terug van vakantie voor Joegoslavië-debat’, *de Volkskrant*, 06/08/92.

²⁹²⁸ Radio 1, NOS, *Radiolympia*, 05/08/92, 12.05pm.

²⁹²⁹ Radio 1, NOS, *Radiolympia*, 04/08/92, 5.05pm.

²⁹³⁰ Radio 1, NOS, *Radiolympia*, 04/08/92, 5.05pm.

²⁹³¹ Rob Meines, ‘Verdeeldheid over ingrijpen in Bosnië’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/08/92.

create safety zones, and also referred to the Kurds in northern Iraq. She was also in favour of using military force to ensure the safety of food convoys and to liberate the concentration camps.²⁹³²

The pictures in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands Gutman's article about the Omarska and Brcko camps, published in *Newsday* on 2 August, attracted a great deal of attention.²⁹³³ However, in *NRC Handelsblad* Peter Michielsen warned that caution should be observed. Reports about 'concentration camps' where Serbs were detaining thousands or possibly even tens of thousands of civilians, and where torture, starvation and summary executions were said to take place, had been circulating for many months, he wrote. 'That the concentration camps are there has no longer been doubted by anyone for a long time', but there was no concrete proof of brutalities having taken place in them.²⁹³⁴ Notwithstanding the lack of proof, it may be regarded as striking that the *NRC Handelsblad* had not previously devoted any attention to the reports about camps.

On 7 August many newspapers placed photos from the ITN broadcast on their front pages.²⁹³⁵ It can be safely said that there was a huge increase of attention for the war in Bosnia. For example, the time devoted to the former Yugoslavia in the current affairs programmes on Dutch television soared after the ITN pictures. In the preceding period the subject of Yugoslavia was raised six times per month in these programmes, whereas in August 1992 this was suddenly 19 times (see Table 1). In the major newspapers more than twice as many articles appeared in August as compared with the average per month over 1992.²⁹³⁶

Table 1: number of times attention was devoted to the former Yugoslavia in current affairs programmes on Dutch television, 1991-1993²⁹³⁷

2 nd half 1991	35	September 1992	11
January 1992	-	October 1992	6
February 1992	2	November 1992	2
March 1992	2	December 1992	8
April 1992	4	January 1993	8
May 1992	6	February 1993	13
June 1992	6	March 1993	7
July 1992	6	April 1993	5
August 1992	19		

According to Kees Schaepman, journalist of the weekly *Vrij Nederland*, 'the desire to teach the ex-Yugoslavs, and especially the Serbs, a lesson, only really flared up after the television pictures of thin men behind barbed wire. Concentration camps!²⁹³⁸ In retrospect, Dutch politicians and civil servants also believed that 'the pictures of Omarska' (which were really of Trnopolje) had been of great

²⁹³² Radio 1, NOS, *Radiolympia*, 0708/92, 12.04pm.

²⁹³³ 'Rode Kruis eist toegang tot kampen Bosnië' ('Red Cross demands access to camps in Bosnia'), *de Volkskrant*, 03/08/92; 'Opschudding over concentratiekampen' ('Uprouar over concentration camps'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/08/92.

²⁹³⁴ Peter Michielsen, 'Excessen in Bosnië: wel aanwijzingen, maar geen bewijzen' ('Excesses in Bosnia: indications, but no proof'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/08/92.

²⁹³⁵ On that day *Trouw* placed a photo of a starving child in Somalia on the front page, 'Somalië, 1992' ('Somalia, 1992'), *Trouw*, 07/08/92. The photo of Fikret Alic and his fellow-sufferers appeared on the front page the next day, 'Levende geraamtes in gevangenkamp' ('Live skeletons in prison camp'), *Trouw*, 08/08/92.

²⁹³⁶ Appendix Scholten & Ruigrok & Heerman, *In Sarajevo wordt geschoten* (They are shooting in Sarajevo), p. 195, appendix on the CD-ROM that goes with the Dutch version of this report.

²⁹³⁷ Based on Willemse, *Joegoslavië*, pp. 244-257. The programmes included in the survey were: *Aktua* (TROS); *Brandpunt* (KRO); *Diogenes* (VPRO); *Hier en Nu* (NCRV); *Kenmerk* (IKON); *Nieuwslijn* (Veronica); *Televisier* (AVRO); and *Tijdsein* (EO).

²⁹³⁸ Kees Schaepman, 'De vredeshaviken willen actie' ('The peace hawks want action'), *Vrij Nederland*, 19/09/92.

influence on public opinion with respect to the conflict in Bosnia. According to the then vice-premier Wim Kok they had ‘a tremendous catalytic, galvanizing effect’.²⁹³⁹

The pictures came as a shock, often bringing memories of the Second World War to the surface. For example, for Bishop Bär of Rotterdam, and Bishop of the Army, they evoked memories of the time he himself had spent in a Japanese camp during the Second World War. He said on the radio that the ‘civilian internment camps (...) just [had to be] removed by the international community with all its might’.²⁹⁴⁰ In *HP/De Tijd*, Gerard Driehuis spoke of ‘the Dachau-like pictures from the Serb concentration camps’.²⁹⁴¹ The SGP (one of the Christian parties) MP B.J. van der Vlies found it ‘shocking (...) to have it confirmed by real pictures through the media that not so very far from our country concentration camps have been set up again’. And at the very moment, he wrote in the party paper, that there was an invitation lying on his desk from the PTT (Dutch Post Office) to attend the ceremony marking the issue of a postage stamp commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the first deportation trains from the camp at Westerbork.²⁹⁴²

In the *Nederlands Dagblad* a photo collage from the Second World War was placed to accompany an article about the crisis in Yugoslavia, with the caption: ‘The atrocious misery of the concentration camps of the Second World War: category once but never again’.²⁹⁴³ The article pointed out that before the broadcast of these pictures, Dutch public opinion had been fairly unmoved by television images of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. ‘Just like the weather and sports, they were part of the ritual of news bulletins.’ What was going on in Somalia and the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, for example, was no less terrible, said the paper, ‘until last week Auschwitz, Birkenau and Sobibor loomed on the screen again.’ According to the paper, the pictures had touched on Dutch feelings of guilt in relation to minorities, caused by the Second World War. It may have been ‘a very sound feeling, but it has very little to do with the actual situation in Yugoslavia. It strikes at the self-image of the West – and of the Netherlands in particular – as a model of peacefulness, progressiveness and tolerance’.²⁹⁴⁴

Stichting 40-45, an organization involved in providing aid for people who had been in the resistance and war victims, wrote a letter to the government because of the similarities between the pictures shown and the experiences of the Second World War. Social workers employed by this organization were confronted with problems their clients had with the pictures. The deputy director of the organization, Koolster, hoped that at least there would be a rapid solution to the problems in Yugoslavia, because this time nobody could say, as they had in the 1930s with respect to German Jewish refugees: ‘We did not know’.²⁹⁴⁵

In favour of intervention or against?

In response to the pictures from Trnopolje, the media in the Netherlands also flung themselves into the problem of: ‘To intervene or not?’ One device employed by the weeklies in particular to contribute to the discussion was to consult various ‘experts’, asking them whether or not they thought there should be military intervention. This rather unspecified question usually produced a broad spectrum of answers, often making it difficult to attach a conclusion to the summary of collected opinions.

²⁹³⁹ Interviews W. Kok, 08/05/00. Similar information in interviews with J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00 and E. van Middelkoop, 08/10/99.

²⁹⁴⁰ Radio 2, AVRO, *Radiojournaal*, 09/08/92, 1.04pm; see also Kees Schaeapman, ‘De vredeshaviken willen actie’, *Vrij Nederland*, 19/09/92.

²⁹⁴¹ Gerard Driehuis, ‘De leed-formule’ (‘The suffering-formula’), *HP/De Tijd*, 14/08/92, p. 7.

²⁹⁴² B.J. van der Vlies, ‘Kort en bondig’ (‘Short and snappy’), *De Banier*, 20/08/92, p. 5.

²⁹⁴³ Willem Bouwman, ‘Wijzelf staan op het spel; actie is geboden’ (‘We ourselves are at stake; action is needed’), *Nederlands Dagblad*, 15/08/92.

²⁹⁴⁴ Willem Bouwman, ‘Wijzelf staan op het spel; actie is geboden’, *Nederlands Dagblad*, 15/08/92.

²⁹⁴⁵ Radio 1, NOS, *Radio Olympia*, 14/08/92, 12.04pm.

The first category of experts consisted of military or ex-military staff, mostly retired generals. Although Resolution 770, which was passed on 13 August, authorized the use of force to support humanitarian operations, interviews with Dutch ex-military staff indicated that they were not enthusiastic about this idea. Firstly it was not clear to them what goal the international community was aiming to achieve in Yugoslavia.²⁹⁴⁶ ‘Protecting a convoy is not a goal’, said ex-Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army and former Chief of Defence Staff General C. de Jager.²⁹⁴⁷ Retired General H. Roos, who had been Army Commander until 1985, thought that it was not only a clear objective that was missing; there was also no ‘worst case scenario’ in case the Serbs continued to fight for a long period. A second objection of the ex-military staff had to do with the restrictions imposed on the use of force by the UN military. ‘There is no such thing as waging a little bit of war’, said De Jager. Roos objected to a mandate which did not authorize ‘peace enforcing’. He had himself been active in Lebanon, where restricting action to peacekeeping had led to UNIFIL being compelled to leave prematurely: ‘A built-in ceiling as far as the use of force is concerned is always dangerous.’²⁹⁴⁸ The former Commander of the First Army Corps, Lieutenant General (retired) W.J. Loos, also believed that restricted intervention was impossible. If corridors for humanitarian convoys needed to be made safe, then force had to be authorized to control the flanking territory. A third objection of the ex-military staff derived from the approach they favoured: they thought there were too few troops available. If half a million troops who had been able to be deployed and trained in peace and quiet had been needed to liberate Kuwait, ‘a bare expanse of sand’, then in Bosnia, in view of the nature of the terrain, considerably more would be needed, said Loos.²⁹⁴⁹ Lieutenant Colonel I. Duine, tactics lecturer at the Royal Military Academy (KMA) in Breda (Netherlands), thought that the territory surrounding the last twenty kilometres of the road from Split to Sarajevo, which were in the hands of the Serbs, were perfectly suited to guerrilla operations. The deployment of planes and helicopters by the West would certainly not stop Bosnian Serb fighters from carrying them out. For example, they would be able to lay mines at night.²⁹⁵⁰ The former military attaché in Belgrade, the retired Colonel S.W. Schouten, foresaw a dilemma in establishing the number of troops that needed to be deployed: if too few troops were deployed, then the West would run military risks; if too many were deployed, then the resistance of the parties in the conflict would rise in proportion.²⁹⁵¹ It was difficult to advise those who did want intervention. General Berkhof said, ‘I think we should intervene, but I haven’t the faintest idea how’.²⁹⁵²

Of 11 Korea veterans whom *Vrij Nederland* asked for their opinions on military intervention, the majority also reacted negatively. One of these was the former military attaché in Belgrade J. Bor, who commented: ‘Let’s start digging graves, because any military involvement in Yugoslavia will be a disaster.’ According to him, in Bosnia-Herzegovina alone there were six different armies, which would be out to get hold of the UN military’s equipment. Others spoke of ‘a fatal adventure’ and the danger that UN military troops would become sitting targets.²⁹⁵³

After the pictures of Fikret Alic were broadcast, the Association of National Servicemen (VVDM) expressed the fear that the government might make a rash decision to take part in military intervention on the grounds of the pictures. The VVDM warned that the Dutch national servicemen did not have the training for a ‘guerrilla war’ in the former Yugoslavia and that the risks were still

²⁹⁴⁶ See for example also the military historian Colonel J. Schulten in *NOS Laat*, 12/08/92.

²⁹⁴⁷ Remco Meijer, ‘Een harde job’ (‘A hard job’), *Elsevier*, 22/08/92, p. 33, in which similar remarks were also recorded by the retired Lieutenant General W.J. Loos.

²⁹⁴⁸ Remco Meijer, ‘Een harde job’, *Elsevier*, 22/08/92, p. 31.

²⁹⁴⁹ Remco Meijer, ‘Een harde job’, *Elsevier*, 22/08/92, pp. 31-32.

²⁹⁵⁰ Hans Moleman, ‘Krachtiger VN-optreden in Bosnië riskante onderneming’ (‘More forceful UN action in Bosnia dangerous undertaking’), *de Volkskrant*, 11/08/92.

²⁹⁵¹ Remco Meijer, ‘Een harde job’, *Elsevier*, 22/08/92, p. 32.

²⁹⁵² ‘Ingrijpen of niet?’, *Elsevier*, 15/08/92, p. 30.

²⁹⁵³ EV, ‘Militair ingrijpen. Was het de moeite waard?’ (‘Military intervention. Was it worthwhile?’), *Vrij Nederland*, 14/08/92, p. 10.

inadequately known.²⁹⁵⁴ Jan Blokker wrote that he had not expected anything else from the national servicemen's lobby, but he wondered when they would have to yield 'to the Tromps, to Van den Broek, to the editorial writer of *De Volkskrant*, or even to Mient Jan Faber'.²⁹⁵⁵

The Dutch media also devoted plenty of attention to the opinions of the retiring UN Commander General Lewis MacKenzie. According to *HP/De Tijd* he said that any military intervention, not excluding the supervision of convoys, would lead to 'getting bogged in a quagmire', and 'an escalation of combat and still more deaths'.²⁹⁵⁶ According to *Elsevier* he thought that to bring peace to Bosnia a million troops would be needed.²⁹⁵⁷

Mixed reactions emerged from diplomatic circles. The former NATO Permanent Representative C.D. Barkman was prepared to go a long way: liberation of the camps if possible, safeguarding humanitarian relief, selective air strikes, supplying arms and Dutch military training for Bosnian Muslims and Kosovo Albanians.²⁹⁵⁸

It turned out that the largest number of advocates of some form of intervention was to be found among scientists, but the majority were 'old hands', people who had argued in favour of intervention at an earlier stage: Voorhoeve and Van den Doel, director and temporary staff member (seconded by the Royal Netherlands Army) of Clingendael respectively, wrote an article in *De Volkskrant* as early as 5 August under the title 'The Netherlands must take the first step towards action in Bosnia'. It was the clearest and most far-reaching plea for military intervention up to that point, a statement in the true sense of the word. According to them, the 'massacres' were no less heinous than the crimes committed by the Nazis in Poland in 1939. Even if not all the available reports were true, according to these two authors the genocide treaty had been violated, which meant that other countries were bound to intervene.

As was mentioned in Chapter 2, Voorhoeve had already expressed the opinion that this treaty offered grounds for intervention at an earlier stage, namely on 29 June 1991, during the Slovenian war. Since then, according to Voorhoeve and Van den Doel, the EC, the CSCE and the UN had 'failed dismally'. They thought that now at long last 'moral obligations [should] outweigh any objections that might be made against intervention on the grounds of "national sovereignty" or "military risks"'. Military intervention should focus on creating Safe Areas under international supervision protected by lightly armed units, the liberation of prisoners from the 'concentration camps' and safeguarding the supply and distribution of humanitarian aid. Voorhoeve and Van den Doel did not rule out the use of force in ensuring the safety of the refuge areas and the access corridors. They were aware of the heavy demands which would have to be met if the camps were to be liberated: firstly demilitarization of the Serb zones in Croatia, so that operations could be carried out from those areas; the deployment of fighter aircraft to achieve supremacy in the air above Bosnia; and the elimination of artillery and mortar in a wide radius around the area of operations. Then commandos and special forces would have to carry out the operations. Possibly the military intervention would have to be carried out by NATO, the WEU or an ad hoc coalition without the permission of the UN. 'The CSCE will probably not be able to reach an agreement about it either. But crime cannot be fought by paralysis.' If the government in Washington was not willing to take the lead in action of this sort, then the government in Paris would have to do it.²⁹⁵⁹

Elsewhere Voorhoeve also stated that he realized that the liberation of the camps was a difficult job, but that it had to happen: 'With a 100,000 troops rather than 10,000.' And he used an argument

²⁹⁵⁴ 'Van den Broek acht militair ingrijpen in Bosnië noodzakelijk' ('Van den Broek deems military intervention in Bosnia necessary'), *de Volkskrant*, 08/08/92.

²⁹⁵⁵ Jan Blokker, 'Consistent', *de Volkskrant*, 11/08/92.

²⁹⁵⁶ Frans van Deijl and Auke Kok, 'Mission impossible', *HP/De Tijd*, 21/08/93, p. 18.

²⁹⁵⁷ Remco Meijer, 'Een harde job', *Elsevier*, 22/08/92, p. 32.

²⁹⁵⁸ 'Ingrijpen of niet?' ('To intervene or not?'), *Elsevier*, 15/08/92, p. 30.

²⁹⁵⁹ J.J.C. Voorhoeve & M. van den Doel, 'Nederland moet initiatief nemen tot actie in Bosnië' ('The Netherlands must take the first step towards taking action in Bosnia'), *de Volkskrant*, 05/08/92.

which was in fact seldom heard in the Netherlands: he wondered if people realized what the consequences would be for Europe if there was a large group of Muslims without a homeland but with the support of Islamic countries²⁹⁶⁰ In other words: did Europe want a second PLO?²⁹⁶¹ At the end of August, in an opinion article written jointly with Clingendael staff member R. Apeslagh, Voorhoeve added another point to his action list, namely that a Safe Area should be set up in Vojvodina to protect the Hungarian population there.²⁹⁶²

In August 1992 Voorhoeve became the champion interventionist, publishing numerous articles. One of the most striking features of his articles is the tone used towards other countries. In this sense too Voorhoeve was in the forefront. As it became increasingly clear that the governments in other countries wanted something quite different from the interventionists in the Netherlands, their attitude towards other countries soured. For example, Voorhoeve criticized the 'weak' foreign politics of the United States in recent times. Prime Minister John Major of the United Kingdom, 'the greatest obstructionist', was 'hypocritical'. If, as he said, the situation in Bosnia was comparable with that in Northern Ireland and was therefore not suitable for intervention, then the British troops should also withdraw from Northern Ireland, according to Voorhoeve.²⁹⁶³

Clingendael staff member Van den Doel had done an about-face, from being against to being in favour of military intervention. In June and July he had still been opposed to intervention. In June he had pointed out that in his view this conflict, which was taking place in a wooded and mountainous territory, had the character of guerrilla warfare, which made ground operations difficult, whereas they were exactly what would be needed. In his opinion, using only naval blockades and air strikes would not lead to results. It was not clear what solution they were expected to achieve. On the other hand, he did not believe that the West would be able to supply enough troops for a ground operation.²⁹⁶⁴ Even in July he had impressed upon supporters of military intervention that an analogy between the conditions in Kuwait during the Gulf War and the situation in the former Yugoslavia was false. In his opinion the situation in Yugoslavia was different, for example, because there was not just one opponent, but many warring groups, which moreover would not obey Milosevic; the terrain was mountainous and wooded rather than a sandpit; and according to him the fighters in Yugoslavia used guerrilla methods which could only be combated by Russian and American elite troops. At that stage he had therefore still thought it would be better for the West to limit itself to psychological warfare.²⁹⁶⁵ At the beginning of August he no longer ruled out 'limited, humanitarian action which could be executed very rapidly'. Like his director Voorhoeve, he became a fervent supporter of such action.²⁹⁶⁶

Oostlander on the other hand was a veteran interventionist. He proposed European military actions from the air and the sea with simultaneous material support from the Bosnian government

²⁹⁶⁰ 'Ingrijpen of niet?', *Elsevier*, 15/08/92, p. 30. See also J.J.C. Voorhoeve & M. van den Doel, 'Argumenten tegen ingrijpen in Bosnië zijn niet sterk' ('Arguments against intervention in Bosnia are not strong'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/08/92.

²⁹⁶¹ Voorhoeve, quoted in: Caroline de Gruyter, 'Wachten op een Churchill' ('Waiting for a Churchill'), *Elsevier*, 15/08/92, p. 32.

²⁹⁶² R. Apeslagh & J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 'Westen moet uitbreiding van burgeroorlog voorkomen' ('West must prevent expansion of civil war'), *de Volkskrant*, 27/08/92.

²⁹⁶³ Alexander Münninghoff & Martijn Delaere, 'De Serviërs gedragen zich als de nazi's' ('The Serbs behave like Nazis'), *Haagsche Courant*, 08/08/92.

²⁹⁶⁴ Michiel Zonneveld, 'Actie in Joegoslavië kan jaren duren' ('Action in Yugoslavia may take years'), *Het Parool*, 10/06/92.

²⁹⁶⁵ M. van den Doel, 'Koewit en Joegoslavië zijn onvergelykbaar' ('Kuwait and Yugoslavia are incomparable'), *de Volkskrant*, 07/07/92. For another reaction to Hylke Tromp's article, see Wil van Daalen, 'Militaire interventie zal Joegoslavië niet helpen' ('Military intervention will not help Yugoslavia'), *de Volkskrant*, 08/07/92: 'Als ik dergelijke taal lees, staat mijn verstand stil en zou ik bijna terug gaan verlangen naar het machtsevenwicht van de Koude Oorlog.' ('When I read language like this, my mind freezes and I would almost like to return to the Cold War power balance').

²⁹⁶⁶ Laurent Heere, 'Militaire actie in Bosnië onvermijdelijk' ('Military action in Bosnia inevitable'), *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 06/08/92; id., 'Tijd van praten is voorbij' ('Time for talking is over'), *Haagsche Courant*, 07/08/92. See also M. van den Doel, 'Verkeerd signaal VN aan Servië' ('Wrong signal from UN to Serbia'), *Het Parool*, 17/08/92; M. van den Doel, 'Westen dient snel te interveniëren in conflict Balkan' ('West must intervene rapidly in Balkan conflict'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/08/92; Laurent Heere, 'Militaire actie in Bosnië onvermijdelijk', *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 06/08/92.

troops. ‘The Netherlands has not been a trend setting nation for a long time, but there is nothing wrong with taking the lead to some extent with a view to convincing our EC colleagues.’²⁹⁶⁷ And the main editorial of *De Volkskrant* on 13 August asserted that in fact the Netherlands could and should exert influence, as it had when the placement of cruise missiles had been an issue.²⁹⁶⁸ Jan Blokker had the impression that the desire to lead the way was mainly in the interest of domestic goals: ‘The Netherlands is very good, from wall to wall – perhaps with a tiny exception in the case of Green Left: this is the great consolation for what is going on in Yugoslavia – that as far as collective moral indignation is concerned we have not been left completely empty-handed after communism’.²⁹⁶⁹

Koen Koch thought he could detect a similar need for self-congratulation in a certain complacency surrounding the willingness of private citizens to take in refugees. He was not much in favour of military intervention: now that ethnic cleansing by the Bosnian Serbs was apparently almost complete, intervention would come too late.²⁹⁷⁰ Columnist Paul Scheffer compared “‘limited” intervention (...) to at best wishful thinking, at worst a cheap salving of people’s own consciences’.²⁹⁷¹ Bart Tromp thought that military intervention had become ‘inevitable’ after the television pictures of Serb prison camps.²⁹⁷² Because he was apparently not completely sure of this inevitability, he summed up seven consequences of failure to intervene: the war in Croatia would be resumed, because Serb aggression in Bosnia was also a threat to Croatia; acceptance of the partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina would have consequences for the situation in Kosovo; the Islamic world would blame the Western world for negligence; Turkey would get involved in the matter, so that there would be a threat of confrontation with Greece; the example of ethnic cleansing might be imitated in the countries of the former Soviet Union; and finally the pretensions of the European Community, the United Nations and the new world order would receive a blow.²⁹⁷³ Hylke Tromp thought that only an ultimatum imposed on all conflicting parties in the form of the threat of ‘total deployment of military resources’ might still lead to a ceasefire in Bosnia. Anything else, starting with Resolution 770, would lead to prolonged bloodshed.²⁹⁷⁴

Of the newspapers *NRC Handelsblad*, *Trouw* and *De Volkskrant*, the last continued to be the most fervent supporter of more radical intervention. The senior editorial commentary of the *De Volkskrant* voiced the opinion that military protection of humanitarian convoys only, as laid down in Resolution 770, was not enough. The newspaper warned that the action taken might prove to be ‘too little, too late’²⁹⁷⁵ and said that in passing Resolution 770 the Security Council had behaved like the mountain that had brought forth a mouse.²⁹⁷⁶

De Volkskrant journalist Anet Bleich joined the interventionists again. Although she admitted that she was ‘no authority on the military metier’, in her opinion the answer to the question of what the international community, and Europe in particular, should do with regard to Bosnia-Herzegovina was ‘devastatingly simple’: an end should be put to the war by deploying military resources ‘on as large a scale as necessary’.²⁹⁷⁷

²⁹⁶⁷ Arie M. Oostlander, ‘Europa moet in Bosnië geweten laten spreken’ (‘Europe must follow conscience in Bosnia’), *de Volkskrant*, 11/08/92. See also Arie M. Oostlander, ‘Scenario van de jaren dertig’ (‘1930s scenario’), *Trouw*, 07/08/92.

²⁹⁶⁸ ‘Nederlandse keuze’ (‘Dutch choice’), *de Volkskrant*, 13/08/93.

²⁹⁶⁹ Jan Blokker, ‘Dom, slecht, slim’ (‘Stupid, evil, clever’), *de Volkskrant*, 15/08/92.

²⁹⁷⁰ Koen Koch, ‘Een huis op zand’ (‘A house on sand’), *de Volkskrant*, 22/08/92.

²⁹⁷¹ Paul Scheffer, ‘Rechtsgevoel tegen nultarief’ (‘A sense of justice at zero rate’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/08/92.

²⁹⁷² Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 38.

²⁹⁷³ Tromp, *Verraad*, pp. 40-41 (19/08/92).

²⁹⁷⁴ Hylke Tromp, ‘Huidig interventiebeleid leidt tot langdurig bloedvergieten’ (‘Present intervention policy will lead to prolonged bloodshed’), *de Volkskrant*, 14/08/92; Berry Kessels, ‘Beperkt ingrijpen Bosnië wordt ramp’ (‘Limited intervention Bosnia will be a disaster’), *De Gelderlander*, 13/08/92.

²⁹⁷⁵ ‘Partij kiezen’ (‘Taking sides’), *de Volkskrant*, 12/08/92.

²⁹⁷⁶ ‘Verstopperij spelen’ (‘Playing hide-and-seek’), *de Volkskrant*, 15/08/92.

²⁹⁷⁷ Anet Bleich, ‘Partijen Bosnië vechten voor bloed en bodem’ (‘Parties in Bosnia fight for blood and soil’), *de Volkskrant*, 18/08/92.

Looking over the opinion pages and editorials, nothing much had changed. The arguments in favour of intervention – moral reasons: the risk of escalation to Kosovo or outside the former Yugoslavia; the possibility of creating a precedent for not intervening in situations elsewhere; damage to the image of the EC, the UN and the NATO in particular; reactions from the Islamic world – were for the most part not new. Nor were most of the names of the advocates of intervention. But the frequency of the appearance of interventionist articles had risen sharply. ‘Since the television pictures of the camps in Bosnia two out of three of the Dutch have been in favour of direct military intervention in what was once Yugoslavia. Professors, MPs, columnists make warlike utterances’, as Kees Schaepman summarized the mood in *Vrij Nederland*. ‘There is only one group that is not so keen: the military, who in choosing their profession must surely have taken the possibility of war into consideration. What good to us are soldiers who are not keen on fighting if that is exactly what we want them to do? (...) It is like an *Umwertung aller Werte*: the warmongers are professors or MPs, reflection and sense are wearing uniforms.’ Schaepman thought there was a sort of ‘Yugo-storm’ going on in the Netherlands, which reminded him of a stage war: ‘always the same extras, who after walking around in the wings for a while storm onto the stage again to give the impression that a real army is advancing.’²⁹⁷⁸

The Dutch public and the refugee issue

But there was more involved. Both in the days just before and in the weeks after the Trnopolje pictures, the reports of the existence of camps led for the first time to a substantial stream of letters from private individuals being published in papers.²⁹⁷⁹ In general, the letter writers did not understand why ‘the mighty powers of the earth, placed on their thrones of justice and peace by our mandate,’ permitted the daily violation of the most elementary human rights.²⁹⁸⁰ According to Hylke Tromp the Dutch population had taken their politicians in tow: ‘I cannot remember such – rightly – enraged statements about any political conflict whatsoever since 1945.’²⁹⁸¹ However, it was remarkable that a demonstration on the Beursplein in Amsterdam on 14 August, organized by the Yugoslav peace group *Mi za Mir*, drew fewer than a hundred protesters. The majority of those who did come were Croats, Muslims and Serbs.²⁹⁸²

However, the most important gauge of the Dutch public’s attitude was the reaction to the refugee issue. Like Valk, in the days following the broadcast of the Trnopolje pictures, De Hoop Scheffer declared his support for the admission of more refugees to the Netherlands, as a supplement to the ‘safe havens’ in the region itself.²⁹⁸³ In anticipation of the consultation with the Parliament which De Hoop Scheffer had requested, Minister D’Ancona and Junior Minister Kosto declared that the

²⁹⁷⁸ Kees Schaepman, ‘De vredeshaviken willen actie’, *Vrij Nederland*, 19/09/92.

²⁹⁷⁹ See for example Jaco Rosenbach, ‘Vluchtelingen’ (‘Refugees’), *de Volkskrant*, 04/08/92; ‘Geachte redactie, Waarom wordt er niet ingegrepen in Bosnië?’ (‘Why is there no intervention in Bosnia?’), *de Volkskrant*, 05/08/92; M.J. van Haaster, ‘Servië’ (‘Serbia’), and M. Buurman, ‘Neutraliteit’ (‘Neutrality’), *de Volkskrant*, 06/08/92; Marcel Buurman, ‘Guerrilla-oorlog’ (‘Guerrilla warfare’), *de Volkskrant*, 10/08/92; ‘Geachte redactie. Alleen Joegostorm kan overslaan vuur voorkomen’ (‘Only Jugostorm can prevent the fire from spreading’ and ‘Soms geloof je je ogen niet’ (‘Sometimes you cannot believe your eyes’), *de Volkskrant*, 12/08/92; ‘Wereldbestuurders lieten geweld escaleren’ (‘World leaders allowed violence to escalate’), *de Volkskrant*, 15/08/92; ‘Geachte redactie. Slachtoffers Servië hebben niks aan ongewapende vredesmacht’ (‘Unarmed peace force is of no use to victims of Serbia’), *de Volkskrant*, 26/08/92; ‘Brieven’ (‘Letters’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/08/92 with meaningful headings such as ‘Niks neutraliteit’ (‘No to neutrality’), ‘Holle retoriek’ (‘Hollow rhetoric’), ‘Concentratiekampen’ (‘Concentration camps’), ‘Ingrijpen kan’ (‘Intervention is possible’), ‘Smakeloos’ (‘Tasteless’), ‘München’ (‘Munich’), ‘Geen oliebelangen’ (‘No oil interests’) and ‘Niet zwijgen’ (‘Do not be silent’).

²⁹⁸⁰ André Kusters, ‘Sterven voor Sarajevo’ (‘Dying for Sarajevo’), *Elsevier*, 22/08/92, p. 7. For a detached reaction from a private individual see Koos Nuninga, ‘Joegoslavië is echt geen Koeweit’ (‘Yugoslavia is really not Kuwait’), *de Volkskrant*, 14/08/92

²⁹⁸¹ Berry Kessels, ‘Beperkt ingrijpen Bosnië wordt ramp’, *De Gelderlander*, 13/08/92.

²⁹⁸² ‘Joegoslavisch protest’ (‘Yugoslav protest’), *de Volkskrant*, 15/08/92; ‘Lubbers wil snel troepen sturen naar Bosnië’ (‘Lubbers wants to send troops to Bosnia quickly’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/08/92.

²⁹⁸³ Radio 2, *AVRO*, Radiojournaal, 09/08/92, 1.04pm.

Dutch government was prepared to accept several thousand extra refugees from the former Yugoslavia.²⁹⁸⁴

The pressure of public opinion to do more for the refugees was great. In August 1992, moved by the pictures in the media, within a fortnight 7000 host families and 3000 volunteers offered their services for the relief of displaced people, in response to a campaign held by the Dutch Refugee Association in consultation with the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Culture, and after a call from the Dutch Bishops and the Dutch Deaconate of the Reformed churches.²⁹⁸⁵ Town councils and housing corporations also made housing available.²⁹⁸⁶ By mid-August, according to a questionnaire presented by the broadcasting company Veronica, as many as 1.9 million people were prepared to take Yugoslavs into their homes.²⁹⁸⁷ Later it turned out that most of the refugees preferred central accommodation amidst fellow refugees, so that in the long run only 230 of the offers made by host families were taken up, by a total of six hundred former Yugoslavs.²⁹⁸⁸ In almost all of these cases considerable irritation and tension arose between the host families and their guests. Of those 230 families, 170 gave up after three months, partly on the advice of the Dutch Refugee Council, partly at their own request. The refugees who had been staying with these host families then returned to the Temporary Relief Centre. On evaluation, the Dutch Refugee Council decided that the project was not worth repeating.²⁹⁸⁹ Anyway, in general the stream of Yugoslavs arriving in the Netherlands remained limited. While the Ministry of Justice had announced in mid-July that three unoccupied barracks in Zuidlaren, 's-Hertogenbosch and Roermond were being made ready to receive an extra 1500 Yugoslavs,²⁹⁹⁰ the

²⁹⁸⁴ TV, Nederland 2, NOS Journaal, 10/08/92, 6.00pm; also in the 8.00pm NOS-Journaal on Nederland 3, that same day; TV, RTL4, Nieuws, 11/08/92, 7.30pm. See also Willem Offenbergh, 'Nederland te terughoudend' ('The Netherlands too reserved'), and 'Kosto'enkele duizenden vluchtelingen welkom' ('Kosto says several thousand refugees are welcome'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/08/92; 'd'Ancona meer vluchtelingen naar Nederland' (Dd'Ancona more refugees to the Netherlands'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/08/92.

²⁹⁸⁵ Marianne Fennema, 'Opvang vluchtelingen' ('Reception of refugees'), *CD/Actueel*, 05/09/92, p. 12; Dutch Refugee Council's 1992 annual report, pp. 15-16. Cf. objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 20/08/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study. See the Dutch Refugee Council's advertisement in the framework of this campaign in for example *NRC Handelsblad* and *de Volkskrant*, 13/08/92. And further 'Veel animo voor opvang Bosniërs' ('Much enthusiasm for taking in Bosnians'), *Trouw*, 17/08/92; 'Ruim vierduizend gastgezinnen willen Joegoslaven opvangen' ('More than four thousand host families willing to take in Yugoslavs'), *de Volkskrant*, 20/08/92; Jeroen Trommelen, 'Bedje en zitje beter dan kale kamer' ('Bed and sofa better than bare room'), *de Volkskrant*, 27/08/92; 'Kerkleden opgeroepen voor vluchtelingenwerk' ('Church members called upon for refugee work'): *Trouw*, 14/08/92; Wilma Kieskamp, 'Gastvrijheid zonder fruithapjes' ('Hospitality without fruit puree'), *Trouw*, 03/09/92; Anneke Visser, 'Veel onduidelijkheid bij gastgezinnen over opvang vluchtelingen' ('Much about reception of refugees not understood by host families'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/08/92.

²⁹⁸⁶ See for example 'Leiden bereid om meer Bosniërs op te nemen' ('Leiden prepared to accept more Bosnians'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/08/92; 'Leiden maakt plaats voor vluchtelingen' ('Leiden makes room for refugees'), *PRO*, vol. 1 (1992) no. 2, pp. 8-11; 'Bij 470 gezinnen Joegoslavisch kind welkom' ('470 families prepared to welcome Yugoslav child'), *de Volkskrant*, 07/08/92; 'Corporaties gevraagd om huizen voor vluchtelingen' ('Corporations asked for houses for refugees'), *Trouw*, 12/08/92.

²⁹⁸⁷ Wilma Kieskamp, 'VluchtelingenWerk: we kunnen het aan' ('Dutch Refugee Association: we can cope'), *Trouw*, 19/08/92.

²⁹⁸⁸ 'Liever niet in gastgezin. Minimaal aantal Joegoslaven wil particuliere opvang' ('Preferably not in a host family. Minimum number of Yugoslavs wants shelter in private homes'), *Trouw*, 28/09/92; Dutch Refugee Council's 1992 annual report, p. 16; Dutch Refugee Council's 1993 annual report, p. 24.

²⁹⁸⁹ Jeroen Trommelen, 'Gastgezin is mooi, maar het moet niet te lang duren' ('Host family is fine, but it must not go on for too long'), *de Volkskrant*, 14/12/93. There had been an earlier warning against this course of events: Paul Oosterhoff, 'Gezinsopvang van vluchteling brengt niets dan ellende' ('Reception of refugees in families will bring nothing but trouble'), *de Volkskrant*, 28/08/92.

²⁹⁹⁰ 'Scherpe kritiek op opvang Joegoslaven' ('Keen criticism of reception of Yugoslavs'), *Trouw*, 17/07/92; 'Regering wil Joegoslaven onderbrengen in kazernes' ('Government wants to house Yugoslavs in barracks'), *de Volkskrant*, 17/07/92; 'Rode Kruis klaar voor opvang ontheemden uit voormalig Joegoslavië' ('Red Cross ready to receive Displaced Persons from the former Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/07/92. Prime Minister Lubbers made a personal effort for the reception of refugees in Zuidlaren by urging Wilpstra, the mayor of that town, to provide shelter for Displaced Persons from Yugoslavia,

curious situation arose that the existing central reception capacity was not fully utilized. During the Ministerial Council meeting of 20 August 1992, one of the ministers voiced the opinion that the government could no longer use the argument that the admission of Yugoslav displaced people should be restricted because it was tantamount to complicity with ethnic cleansing. According to this minister this damaged both the image of the Netherlands abroad and the credibility of the government's policy on the former Yugoslavia. The policy of the government meant in practice that the admission of refugees from Yugoslavia was to an ever-increasing extent supplementary to efforts to offer people a safe abode in the region itself.²⁹⁹¹

In the third week of August Kosto and D'Ancona wrote to the Parliament that in their opinion the EC should set up refugee camps along the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina. With this idea, the Netherlands was one step ahead of the rest of the Community, according to Kosto. The Ministries of Justice and of Welfare, Health and Culture went even further; on 25 August, even before a reaction from the EC partners had been announced and even before the Dutch government had been able to talk about it, they sent a mission to Zagreb to find out how this plan could be implemented.²⁹⁹² The delegation selected about 2000 refugees on the spot who would be allowed to come to the Netherlands, and kept open the possibility of re-uniting families, which might have led to an additional 1000 admissions. After the gates of the Netherlands had been opened for these individuals, the principle of relief in the region itself would again be given priority.²⁹⁹³

As has already been discussed, this position led to problems when the UNHCR started to look for countries which were prepared to accept people from the prison camps. In October 1992 the UNHCR appealed to the Dutch government to accept 1600 Bosnians. However, the government said they first wanted to concentrate on the 6000 Displaced Persons already in the Netherlands. Soon after, UNHCR asked the Dutch government to accept 1750 Displaced Persons at short notice, while Ogata announced that soon after that another 3700 Displaced Persons in all would have to be accommodated in third countries, thereby implying that the Netherlands should also accept some of them.²⁹⁹⁴ During the Ministerial Council meeting of 30 October there was talk of a number of 200 people whom the Netherlands would be able to accept. This was thought to be enough to induce other EC member states to take their share of these refugees. This proposal led to critical remarks by various ministers who pointed out that the High Commissioner's request was about people from camps, who were daily at risk of being murdered, and who might also include rape victims. These problems turned out to be a matter of daily concern to the government, which along with the German government made efforts to

Wim Phylipsen/Grazielle Runchina, 'Soldaten maken plaats voor vluchtelingen' ('Soldiers make room for refugees'), *de Volkskrant*, 29/07/92.

²⁹⁹¹ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 20/08/92, 27/08/92, 04/09/92 and 13/11/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

²⁹⁹² Radio 1, *Veronica Nieuwsradio*, 24/08/92, 6.05pm. The mission consisted of: Hilbrand Nawijn, director of Immigration Affairs at the Ministry of Justice, Eddy Engelsman, director of Refugees, Minorities and Asylum Seekers at the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Culture, Klaas van den Tempel from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ton Teunissen from the Red Cross, Jaap Hoeksma, vice-chairman of the Dutch Refugee Council, Ahmed Aboutaleb, public relations official at the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Culture, Gert Riphagen, spokesman for the Ministry of Justice, and Dragan Sakovic, civil servant at the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Culture, who also functioned as interpreter.

²⁹⁹³ For this subject see also Max van Weezel, 'De verfijnde Balkan-oorlog tussen WVC en Justitie' ('The subtle Balkan War between Welfare, Health and Culture, and Justice'), *Vrij Nederland*, 03/10/92, pp. 7-11; Louis Cornelisse, 'Dit is natuurlijk mensonterend' ('This is of course degrading'), *Trouw*, 27/08/92; id., 'Op zoek naar de 'meest kwetsbaren'' ('Looking for "the most vulnerable people"'), *Trouw*, 28/08/92; Ward op den Brouw, 'Missie naar Kroatië stuit bij grens al op strubbelingen' ('Mission to Croatia runs into trouble even at the border'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/08/92; id., 'Delegatie ziet meest in opvang in Kroatië' ('Delegation has most faith in reception in Croatia') and 'Nederland zegt opvang 2.000 vluchtelingen toe' ('The Netherlands agrees to accept 2,000 refugees'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/08/92; Ward op den Brouw, 'Nederlandse delegatie met granaat beschoten' ('Dutch delegation shelled'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/08/92.

²⁹⁹⁴ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 23/10/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

procure an international agreement at least to liberate all inmates of camps.²⁹⁹⁵ However, these efforts had very meagre results.

The reactions of Dutch politicians

Before the emergency debate requested by De Hoop Scheffer, politicians had already been asked for their reactions to the pictures of the Trnopolje camp. According to Rinus Ferdinandusse, senior editor of *Vrij Nederland*, the citizens of the Netherlands expected their politicians, now that ‘every evening there was murder, slaughter and sorrow on the screen, if there are concentration camps and rumours of concentration camps’, to ‘take charge. Even if they do not know what to do themselves.’²⁹⁹⁶ However, the ministers were out of the country; it was the holiday season and there were Olympic Games on. Not to worry. On 7 August the media visited the members of the government to ask for their comments on the pictures broadcast the previous evening. NOS radio reporter Ruud de Wit found Prime Minister Lubbers in Barcelona, where he was attending the semi-final of the Dutch volleyball team at the Olympic Games, and asked him: ‘I don’t know if you saw the pictures on television yesterday evening of concentration camps, the mutilated children (...) Isn’t it about time we, as the European Community, did a little more in Yugoslavia?’ The Prime Minister replied that he thought it was better not to react, because he was having ‘a little time off’. The broadcast of the report clearly implied that the Prime Minister was ‘undoubtedly having a great time’ and that the listeners had been able to hear for themselves that Lubbers had given no substantive reaction to the pictures.²⁹⁹⁷ On his return to the Netherlands the Prime Minister was also asked if he thought the Olympic Games should have carried on after the pictures of ‘concentration camps’ had been shown; Lubbers said he thought they should.²⁹⁹⁸

Minister Pronk of Development Co-operation did not see the pictures himself immediately, because at that moment he was in Tanzania. Unaware of the pictures, on 7 August – following in the footsteps of Boutros-Ghali – he expressed criticism of the Western world, which in his opinion devoted too much attention to Yugoslavia and too little to Somalia.²⁹⁹⁹ However, three days later, back home again, the minister gave an analysis of Milosevic’s ‘Hitlerite politics’ during top-level talks of his party, the PvdA.³⁰⁰⁰

In the television programme ‘*NOS Laat*’ on 7 August Van den Broek said he expected that the pictures ‘[would] not fail to have an effect and [that] the pressure to arrive at stronger measures now and perhaps also to take a few more risks in the matter, [would] only [be] reinforced’.³⁰⁰¹ In the same broadcast anchor woman Maartje van Weegen asked De Hoop Scheffer for his comments on the pictures.³⁰⁰² Both Van Weegen and De Hoop Scheffer said that the pictures were indeed terrible, but at the same time both warned that these ‘concentration camps’ were not extermination camps.

Van Weegen asked if De Hoop Scheffer did not find it curious that at such a crucial moment Lubbers and Kok were out of the country. De Hoop Scheffer expected that they would return soon: ‘I

²⁹⁹⁵ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 30/10/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

²⁹⁹⁶ Rinus Ferdinandusse, ‘Kampen op de Balkan’ (‘Camps in the Balkans’), *Vrij Nederland*, 08/08/92.

²⁹⁹⁷ Radio 1, NOS, Radio Olympia, 07/08/92, 1.04pm.

²⁹⁹⁸ Radio 1, NOS, Met het oog op morgen, 14/08/92, 11.07pm.

²⁹⁹⁹ ‘Beter ingrijpen in Somalië’ (‘Better to intervene in Somalia’), *Trouw*, 08/08/92. Van den Broek supported Pronk on this matter, Radio 1, NOS, Radiolympia, 07/08/92, 5.07pm.

³⁰⁰⁰ Max van Weezel, ‘De verfijnde Balkan-oorlog tussen WVC en Justitie’, *Vrij Nederland*, 03/10/92, p. 11; Leonard Ornstein/Max van Weezel, ‘Het warme bad en de koude douche van Relus ter Beek’ (‘The hot bath and the cold shower of Relus ter Beek’), *Vrij Nederland*, 12/12/92, p.11. According to Valk, after the pictures Pronk radiated a sense of: ‘what is going on here is the purest fascism!’, interview G. Valk, 15/10/99.

³⁰⁰¹ TV, Nederland 3, NOS, Laat, 07/08/92, 10.25pm.

³⁰⁰² The other interviewees were Joris Voorhoeve, director of Clingendael, the publicist Paul Scheffer and the retired Major General Vogel, of whom the first two, like Van den Broek, were afraid that if the West was not prepared to undertake some form of military action, the conflict threatened to escalate; Vogel saw no definite indications of this.

presume that the Prime Minister and the vice-premier will soon be back in the Netherlands, because these pictures, but also the rest of the developments, will have to lead to government policy'. He urged the deployment of military troops: 'they will have to make it possible to collect the huge numbers, the hundreds of thousands, possibly millions of refugees there, in sanctuaries, in camps, protected by military troops. Just think for a moment of the Kurds in northern Iraq.'³⁰⁰³

After the coverage of the camps, the CDA parliamentary party deliberately chose to support a 'hard line' in the Yugoslav conflict.³⁰⁰⁴ This meant that the 'surgical intervention' favoured by Kok and Oostlander in the preceding months, was 'a stage already passed'.³⁰⁰⁵ After the Trnopolje pictures the question of military intervention led to differences of opinion within GroenLinks. At the end of August 1992, the executive committee of 'Green Left' concurred with the declarations of the Security Council demanding access to all prison camps and advocating the possibility of military protection for aid convoys in Bosnia. The committee also argued in favour of other measures, including reinforcing the monitoring of economic sanctions against Serbia. However, in spite of pressure from within the party, the leaders of 'Green Left' were not yet ready for large-scale military intervention. Maarten van Poelgeest, a member of the executive committee, said:

'Military intervention, if necessary on a large scale, is morally justified – *if* it helps. But that is the problem. Various politicians are crying out for intervention much too readily. But will it not lead to escalation? That is my biggest problem with it. I am pessimistic about the conflict, the mutual hatred runs so deep. I do not think it can be solved in this way. Intervention might lead to a sort of Lebanon, so that you might be stuck in a bloody conflict for years.'³⁰⁰⁶

The parliamentary consultation on 12 August: pressure for Safe Areas

On 11 August Van den Broek and Ter Beek sent a letter to the permanent parliamentary committees in preparation for the consultation requested by De Hoop Scheffer.³⁰⁰⁷ In this letter the ministers ascertained the deterioration of the humanitarian situation due to the escalation of fighting in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, ethnic cleansing and concentration camps, for which Serbia was held mainly responsible. In view of the international situation the ministers were not really able to do much more at that moment. The Security Council was still working on UN resolutions, NATO and the WEU were still engaged in making plans for the military support of humanitarian relief and for the monitoring of heavy weapons, and the EC conference on Yugoslavia was on its last legs now that the British government had announced that in the near future they wanted to conduct these talks on a broader basis. As far as its own measures were concerned, the government could only report that since the beginning of July an F-27 had been flying to Zagreb and Sarajevo regularly with aid supplies and that the offer of a transport unit – about which the Parliament had not previously been informed – was still open.

³⁰⁰³ TV, Nederland 3, NOS, Laat, 07/08/92, 10.25pm.

³⁰⁰⁴ CDA Secretariat, Foreign Affairs Committee, working group for Central and Eastern Europe, July – December 1992, H9.729, report by the working group for Central and Eastern Europe, 02/09/92.

³⁰⁰⁵ CDA Secretariat, Foreign Affairs Committee, working group for Central and Eastern Europe, July – December 1992, H9.729, report by the working group for Central and Eastern Europe, 02/09/92.

³⁰⁰⁶ Hansje Galesloot, 'Heftige discussie in GroenLinks over militaire interventie. Volstaat humanitaire hulp Bosnië?' ('Heated discussion in GroenLinks on military intervention. Is humanitarian aid in Bosnia enough?'), GroenLinks, August/September 1992. For the discussion in GroenLinks see also 'Debat over nut en nadeel van militaire interventies. Wapens en mensenrechten, een ongemakkelijk duo' ('Debate on usefulness and drawbacks of military interventions. Weapons and human rights, an uneasy duo'), *GroenLinks*, October 1992. See also Gudrun Gutovski/Hans Feddema, 'Vuur is niet met vuur te blussen' ('Fire cannot be extinguished by fire'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/08/92.

³⁰⁰⁷ TK 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 22, pp. 15-21.

The letter found no favour in the eyes of most MPs. The general impression was that it was too lukewarm. This was the first time since the outbreak of the hostilities in the former Yugoslavia that there was a clear difference in views between the government and the Parliament. On the eve of the debate, Blaauw had declared in response to the ethnic cleansing: ‘This cannot go on, it may not go on and something must be done about it’. The next day, before the Parliamentary debate, stumbling over his own words, he said on the radio of the government’s letter:

‘A letter full of good intentions, good possibilities, lots of conferences announced, many inquiries started up again, but direct, practical measures get stranded again and again either because there has to be agreement in a wider context or because there must first be a Security Council resolution, and so we just muddle along and the population in Bosnia is under artillery fire, is being displaced, ‘ethnically cleansed’ to use an abominable word, and so on.’

De Hoop Scheffer thought there were ‘many weak passages’ in the letter.³⁰⁰⁸ Valk (PvdA) expressed a less critical opinion of the contents of the government’s letter, although he did think it was couched in a ‘somewhat nebulous, typically Foreign Affairs kind of prose’.³⁰⁰⁹

There was an unusually large amount of public interest in the parliamentary debate on 12 August. The Parliament itself also showed interest: whereas normally only a handful of parliamentarians turn up at oral consultations of this kind, in this case more than thirty MPs had broken off their holidays in order to attend the consultations.³⁰¹⁰ An exceptional feature of this General Consultation, which did not take place in the plenary hall but in the Troelstra Room in the new Parliament building, was that there was a shortage of chairs. The public gallery was fully occupied. Extra chairs had to be brought for the MPs and D66 (Democrat Party) MP Hans van Mierlo, who arrived late, even had to remain standing. ‘It was clear that the People’s Representatives were experiencing a Historic Day’, wrote Auke Kok in *HP/De Tijd*.³⁰¹¹ It was also exceptional that this General Consultation was reported on the front pages of the major newspapers. With all this attention, the mood of the debate on the afternoon of 12 August was unmistakably more emotional than on previous occasions. It was characterized by a grim “‘this-has-got-to-stop” note’, as one journalist reported³⁰¹² and the main editorial of *De Volkskrant* saw in the debate ‘an end to Dutch aloofness’.³⁰¹³

A curious situation arose as a result of the MPs’ criticism of the government’s letter. On 17 June the MPs had already said during an oral consultation of the permanent parliamentary committees of Foreign Affairs and Defence that they could see military intervention approaching, but did not want to urge it yet.³⁰¹⁴ At the NATO summit of 4 June Van den Broek had welcomed the American suggestion of military protection for humanitarian convoys. During the EC summit in Lisbon a few weeks later, Van den Broek and Lubbers urged colleagues from the United Kingdom, France and Belgium, who had seats in the Security Council, to work on a resolution authorizing the use of military force to support aid convoys. The government had maintained this position. On 7 August, for example, the Director-General of Political Affairs Van Walsum had complained to Jeremy Greenstock, the British Deputy Director of Political Affairs at the Foreign Office, about the helplessness displayed by the EC under British presidency. He had intimated that by then it was about time for action to which

³⁰⁰⁸ Rob Meines, ‘Nederland kan Servie niet alleen stoppen’ (‘The Netherlands cannot stop Serbia alone’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/08/92. See also Auke Kok, ‘Helden op het Binnenhof’ (‘Heroes in the Binnenhof’), *HP/de Tijd*, in which De Hoop Scheffer called the letter ‘much too weak’.

³⁰⁰⁹ Radio 1, VARA, *Wednesday edition*, 12/08/92, 12.04pm.

³⁰¹⁰ ‘Kamer en kabinet voor VN-actie in Bosnië’ (‘Parliament and government in favour of UN action in Bosnia’), *de Volkskrant*, 13/08/92.

³⁰¹¹ Auke Kok, ‘Helden op het Binnenhof’, *HP/De Tijd*, 21/08/92.

³⁰¹² Rob Meines, ‘Nederland kan Servie niet alleen stoppen’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/08/92.

³⁰¹³ ‘Nederlandse keuze’, *de Volkskrant*, 13/08/93.

³⁰¹⁴ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 27.

Serbia did not consent. However, Greenstock had countered that the British Prime Minister John Major was personally opposed to any ‘slipping’ into military intervention.³⁰¹⁵ The Dutch government could hardly be accused of a lack of will and effort.

Now, almost two months later, on 12 August, the parliamentarians were for the first time urging active intervention on a larger scale in view of humanitarian aspects of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to Valk, the reason for this more rigorous position was ‘continued firing in cities such as Sarajevo, pictures of prison camps and concentration camps and the merciless ethnic cleansing:

‘Europe cannot allow people to be driven from house and home, imprisoned, tortured or executed on the grounds of their ethnic or religious backgrounds. Acceptance of this would create a precedent for other regions. If this conflict is not controlled, it may spread to other regions, Islamic reactions may be provoked and a Balkan war could even be sparked off. The credibility of international security organizations is also at stake. It must also be borne in mind that in this whole situation there are unreliable opponents involved, who resort to blackmail and will not yield to purely political pressure.’³⁰¹⁶

As Valk later said, the pictures of the camps had ‘set public opinion ablaze’. At that time he received dozens of telephone calls from people begging for the borders to be opened to the refugees from Bosnia. If the politicians were also overwhelmed by emotions, then he was not ashamed of it: ‘I am glad emotions play a role in politics. If this is interpreted as “emotions have blinded us,” then I do not agree.’³⁰¹⁷ De Hoop Scheffer shared this opinion: ‘In politics emotions may, no, must play a role’.³⁰¹⁸ Valk’s fellow party member Van Traa was later to assert that it was ‘easy to say that parliamentarians should not let themselves be carried away by public indignation in this way, but the daily reality was that we were bombarded with telephone calls and letters from people who wanted us to do something’.³⁰¹⁹ Sipkes (Green Left Party) also received telephone calls: ‘It was close. For many Dutch people it was a holiday country. Of course you are sensitive to these things in politics. Sensitive to what comes from the population. It was so close. “Do something about it!” “Surely this can’t go on!” “I camped there,” “I stayed there.” This is the sort of messages and phone calls you get.’³⁰²⁰ She herself had been on holiday during the first half of August, so that she had not immediately seen the pictures of the camps and at the debate on 12 August not she but Beckers, the chairman of her parliamentary party, spoke. When Sipkes came back from her holiday, she noticed the change the pictures had caused among Dutch parliamentarians: ‘Something had completely changed. I experienced this myself when I came back. “What is different exactly? Where did this intensity suddenly come from?” Then it eventually turned out that it had in fact been the pictures.’³⁰²¹

Minister Van den Broek, who had not failed to take note of the MPs’ disparaging assessment of the government’s letter, saw in it, according to one of the reporters who was present at the parliamentary debate there at the time, ‘the sign to go all out’.³⁰²² Van den Broek shared the ‘feelings of shock, rage and horror’ experienced by the MPs; according to the report of the consultations, ‘the ethnic cleansing and deportations which are the result of Serbian expansionist politics in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina reminded him of the blackest period in recent history.’ On the other hand he

³⁰¹⁵ ABZ, coll. Van den Broek, box 12 (1992). Memorandum DGPZ to Van den Broek, 07/08/92, no. 115/92.

³⁰¹⁶ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 22, p. 3.

³⁰¹⁷ Interview G. Valk, 15/10/99.

³⁰¹⁸ Auke Kok, ‘Helden op het Binnenhof, *HP/De Tijd*, 21/08/92.

³⁰¹⁹ Both, *Indifference*, p. 241 n. 1

³⁰²⁰ Interview L. Sipkes, 24/01/00.

³⁰²¹ Interview L. Sipkes, 24/01/00.

³⁰²² Jaap Jansen, ‘Vragen van leven en dood’ (‘Questions of life and death’), *Elsevier*, 22/08/92.

thought that the latest developments were not entirely unexpected.³⁰²³ At earlier points the international community had also been unable to solve the conflict in the former Yugoslavia by political, diplomatic or economic means. However, recent events had brought about a change in the attitude of the international community, said the minister. In the opinion of Van den Broek, military intervention was necessary for humanitarian reasons, as a precedent, for the sake of stability in the neighbouring countries and to prevent the conflict from spreading, for example to Kosovo. But Van den Broek was definitely opposed to unilateral lifting of the arms embargo in favour of Bosnia-Herzegovina.³⁰²⁴ Ter Beek also thought that 'both for humanitarian reasons and to prevent creating a precedent passivity (...) was entirely inappropriate'.³⁰²⁵

A cautious note in these consultations was struck by the SGP MP Van Dis. Military protection of aid convoys might lead to escalation. According to the report of the oral consultations, this caused him to feel 'some hesitation'.³⁰²⁶ He made a plea for first exhausting all political and diplomatic resources. What he thought could be done, was to set up protected areas on Bosnian territory for the relief of Displaced Persons. According to the party paper *De Banier* Van Dis also remarked that the consequences of possible military action should first be known, 'because once we have agreed to a military intervention, we cannot opt out later. The risks entailed in military intervention in a complicated and obscure civil war are great'.³⁰²⁷

However, Minister Van den Broek said he thought the risks entailed in doing nothing were considerably greater than those attached to a military effort. He even warned MPs that a detailed discussion of the dangers involved in military intervention might make an undesirable impression on the government in Belgrade.³⁰²⁸ Ter Beek was more cautious: Defence personnel would have to be certain at all times 'that only acceptable risks will be taken'.³⁰²⁹

In general the MPs thought that any form of military action should take place in the framework of the UN. The Netherlands might well have to make a contribution, but the discussion as to the goal and nature of this contribution, and the size of the units to be deployed would have to take place in Parliament beforehand. During the debate, De Hoop Scheffer said that he had been particularly annoyed by the lack of European decisiveness: 'Did it really have to be left to the United States to submit resolutions to the Security Council?'³⁰³⁰ That very morning a colleague had shown him a picture of a concentration camp dating from 1933. Then the world had also waited too long to do anything about the situation.³⁰³¹ He asked if the organization of safe havens for refugees was also covered by the resolutions.³⁰³² If it was not, then the Dutch government should make sure that it was. The NATO, which had the requisite troops and command structure at its disposal, would have to implement the UN resolutions. De Hoop Scheffer also pointed to the danger of UNPROFOR troops being taken hostage and therefore asked for a different mandate, 'with proportionate safeguards'.

Valk also thought more should be done. The West should not acquiesce to ethnic cleansing, he said. He could not immediately think of a political solution, but he did think that in the meantime economic and military pressure on Serbia should be stepped up. Furthermore, he was in favour of providing protection for humanitarian convoys, sending observers to concentration camps, and inasmuch as civilians were detained in these camps, liberating them, and setting up and protecting safety zones.

³⁰²³ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 22, p. 11.

³⁰²⁴ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 22, p.13.

³⁰²⁵ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 22, p. 13.

³⁰²⁶ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181 no. 22, p. 7.

³⁰²⁷ 'Oorlog op Balkan heeft ook gevolgen voor Nederland' ('War in the Balkans also has consequences for the Netherlands'), *De Banier*, 03/09/92, pp. 6-7.

³⁰²⁸ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 22, p. 12.

³⁰²⁹ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 22, p. 13.

³⁰³⁰ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 22, p. 2.

³⁰³¹ Auke Kok, 'Helden op het Binnenhof', *HP/De Tijd*, 21/08/92.

³⁰³² TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 22, p. 2.

However, somewhat contrary to the Dutch reaction in response to the UNHCR conference of the end of July, Minister Van den Broek was not overjoyed at the idea of safe havens: ‘Setting up so-called safe havens for refugees might give the Serb leaders the impression that the international community is willing to make provisions for the people they are forcibly expelling from the areas they have conquered.’³⁰³³ If it proved necessary to set up Safe Areas of this nature for humanitarian reasons alone, it would have to be made clear that the facilities were temporary.

Judging by the objectivized minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting, the debate, in which such a new mood and such a thirst for action on the part of Parliament had emerged, made a great impression on the government.³⁰³⁴ After the Ministerial Council meeting of 14 August, Prime Minister Lubbers stated: ‘It is better not to watch passively.’ And contrary to the usual principle, he declared: ‘In case of doubt we should do something.’ The Prime Minister did rightly point out that this had already been the opinion of the government even before the summer holiday. However, he said it was ‘very important’ that in the parliamentary debate two days earlier it had emerged that there was ‘national consensus’ on possible military intervention. The Prime Minister also wanted ‘some haste’ in providing humanitarian support for the population of Bosnia.³⁰³⁵ After the parliamentary consultations and the Security Council’s adoption of Resolution 770, authorizing the military protection of humanitarian convoys, the Dutch government strove after rapid implementation of the resolutions by the NATO and the WEU.³⁰³⁶

11. Doubts about the images from Trnopolje

‘Es war dieses Bild von diesem Stacheldraht, und diese ausgemergelten Männer, das Alarmglocken in ganz Europa läuten liess. Ich glaube, wäre der Bericht ohne dieses Bild vermittelt worden, wäre die Wirkung längst nicht so stark gewesen, obwohl sich nichts an den Fakten geändert hätte.’ [It was this image of barbed wire with these emaciated men that caused the alarm to be sounded all over Europe. I think that if they had reported the news item without this image, it would not have had such an impact, even though the facts would have been exactly the same]³⁰³⁷

My mother got that boy with the pan to walk past four times because she wanted to make a symbol.

True pictures are nonsense. Only amateurs think they have to be natural. A professional can go a long way towards creating a scene.³⁰³⁸

Six months after the images from Trnopolje media expert Jaap van Ginneken said in the Nieuwslijn programme, broadcast by the Dutch TV channel Veronica, that the images recorded proved nothing about the existence of concentration camps, let alone extermination camps: ‘All you know is that a man

³⁰³³ TK, 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 22, p. 12.

³⁰³⁴ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 20/08/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

³⁰³⁵ ‘Lubbers: heel gauw beroep op Nederland. Premier wil meer druk op Servië’ (‘Lubbers: very soon appeal to the Netherlands. Prime Minister wants more pressure on Serbia’), *Het Parool*, 15/08/92.

³⁰³⁶ Radio 2, *AVRO*, Radiojournaal, 14/08/92, 6.00pm; Radio 1, *KRO*, Echo Magazine, 20/08/92, 6.10pm.

³⁰³⁷ Penny Marshall in documentary broadcast by the German television channel Südwestfunk ‘*Kozarac – Etnisch gesäubert*’ (Kozarac – ethnically cleansed), quoted in T. Deichmann, ‘Es war dieses Bild, das die Welt in Alarmbereitschaft versetzte (It was this picture which alerted the world)’, *Novo*, (1997)26 (January/February).

³⁰³⁸ Joost Elffers, son of Emmy Andriess, who in 1944 took the photo of the little boy with the pan that became the symbol of the Hunger Winter in the Netherlands, in: Marie Louise Schipper, ‘Daar staat Pim weer met z’n pannetje’ (‘Pim is standing over there holding his little pan again’), *de Volkskrant*, 04/05/00.

is standing there with an emaciated torso behind barbed wire. That is what you see. You still don't know what it means'.³⁰³⁹ Indeed, there was some room for doubt.

Ed Vulliamy went to Trnopolje as a newspaper journalist with the ITN team. On 7 August, the morning after the ITN programme, *The Guardian* published his account. The story in no way radiated the sensation that the pictures from Trnopolje were giving rise to in the other media at that same time. Literally Vulliamy wrote the following: 'Trnopolje cannot be called a "concentration camp" and is nowhere as sinister as Omarska: it is very grim, something between a civilian prison and transit camp. The Yugoslav Red Cross has a small station here, and there are meagre cooking facilities.' Vulliamy also quoted Fikret Alic in his article: 'It is a prison camp, but not a PoW [Prisoner of War] camp. We are not fighters. They came to our village, Kozarac (...) they put us on the buses and brought us to Kereter [Keraterm] for a while, and then here.' Vulliamy further reported that a few other people had come voluntarily to the camp to escape the fighting going on around their villages. 'Here is complete confusion – political and physical. The camp is a ramshackle fenced-in compound around a former school. The men stand stripped to the waist, in their thousands, against the wire in the relentless afternoon heat (...)' He quoted the Bosnian Muslim Inar Gnoric, who told him that though conditions in the camp were certainly hard, it was safer there than in the surrounding neighbourhood: 'We are refugees, but there are guards and the wire fence'. Vulliamy also reported in his piece that there were camps where, according to the Bosnian Serb authorities, Muslims were holding Serbs prisoner.³⁰⁴⁰

Consequently Vulliamy was not very happy with the way the ITN report was received by other newspapers. He later complained that the day after the ITN images had appeared on the screen he had to give 54 television and radio interviews in the course of which he had to spend more time stating that Omarska was neither an Auschwitz nor a Belsen than in telling about the atrocities he had actually discovered in the camps.³⁰⁴¹ When an American radio station called him and he thought he could hear background noises from an NSDAP gathering in Nuremberg and the announcement 'There are still extermination camps', he put the phone down.³⁰⁴² A few weeks after the broadcast Ian Williams, a member of the ITN team, said; 'The power of the images seemed to be two steps ahead of the proof they were supposed to provide'.³⁰⁴³ A year after the programme Penny Marshall also said that she had had a great deal of difficulty in removing the sensational side from her reporting about Trnopolje: 'I bent over backwards, I showed guards – Bosnian Serb guards – feeding the prisoners. I showed a small Muslim child who had come on his own volition. I didn't call them death camps. I was incredibly careful, but again and again we see that image being used'.³⁰⁴⁴

The American journalist, Peter Maass, who visited the camp a few days after the ITN team and Vulliamy, saw no barbed wire. 'A few thousand Bosnians were penned in, not by barbed wire but by the roaming presence of armed guards and the knowledge they had nowhere to flee to. The entire countryside was in the hands of the Serbs'.³⁰⁴⁵ Nor did Penny Marshall see any barbed wire on her return to the Trnopolje camp a week after her first visit; she wrote that it must have been removed in the meantime.³⁰⁴⁶ But Maass too saw emaciated people. 'I was surprised at the mere fact that they still

³⁰³⁹ TV, Netherlands 2, VOO, *Nieuwslijn*, 23/02/93, 10pm.

³⁰⁴⁰ Ed Vulliamy, 'Shame of Camp Omarska', *The Guardian*, 07/08/92.

³⁰⁴¹ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p.xii; Eric Alterman, 'Bosnian camps: a barbed tale', *The Nation*, 28/07/97. See for instance Vulliamy in Harry Smith & Paula Zahn, 'CBS this morning', 7August1992, 7.00E.T.: "And apart from this one camp Omarska, none of them, although they were pretty ghastly – they were no holiday camps – would – could be called concentration camps." "These are rather grotesque analogies of Auschwitz and Dachau and so on, which are very unhelpful in my view."

³⁰⁴² Vulliamy in BBC report on war reporting in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, broadcast by AVRO Televisier, 16/02/93.

³⁰⁴³ Quoted in Aart Brouwer, 'De nieuwe censor' ('The new censor'), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 30/04/97.

³⁰⁴⁴ *The Independent*, 05/08/93. Similar words from Ian Williams, quoted in Julia Hartley-Brewer, 'ITN reporter 'bent over backwards for accuracy'', *The Guardian*, 01/03/00.

³⁰⁴⁵ Maas, *Neighbor*, p.41.

³⁰⁴⁶ 'ITN's Penny Marshall tells how she made the world wake up', *Sunday Times*, 16/08/92. For images of this second visit see NOS Journaal (Dutch national TV news), 12/08/92.

could talk. Imagine, talking skeletons!³⁰⁴⁷ He was of the opinion that the emaciated individuals were former prisoners from Omarska and Keraterm.

The (Bosnian) Serb authorities were shocked at the enormous public relations damage that the ITN reports had caused abroad.³⁰⁴⁸ But after the images had been broadcast, attitudes in the West were still not so black-and-white that there was nobody prepared to state their doubts. The first to do so was the American journalist Peter Brock who, following a procedure much loved by the protagonists in the conflict,³⁰⁴⁹ tried to swap the ethnic labels. He stated that the emaciated figure behind the barbed wire in the ITN film was not a Muslim but a Serb.³⁰⁵⁰ It was easy enough to disprove his statement. Alic had escaped to Denmark, where he arrived as a refugee. Then Brock said that he had been mistaken and that his statement had referred to a thin man pictured in *Newsweek* of 17 August 1992. According to Brock this man was the Serbian Slobodan Konjevic, arrested for plundering, who looked so thin because he had been suffering from tuberculosis for ten years.³⁰⁵¹ The *Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker* was, however, able to trace this man too. He was the Muslim Ilijas Garibovic, who meanwhile had moved to Switzerland.³⁰⁵² But that was not the last word to be said on the subject of the Trnopolje camp.

In 1996 the UN Tribunal for The former Yugoslavia sat several times, with Dusan (Dusko or Dule) Tadic in the dock. Tadic was a Bosnian Serb who had taken part in ethnic cleansing in Prijedor and Kozarac. He had been arrested in Germany in February 1994 and handed over to the Tribunal in The Hague. He was eventually found guilty of murder, torture and ill-treatment in Omarska and of the deportation of people to the Omarska, Keraterm and Trnopolje camps. There was only one witness who alleged that Tadic had also been responsible for atrocities in Trnopolje. This witness, originally designated as witness L, was a certain Dragan Opacic. In the course of the trial, however, the prosecutor had to withdraw Opacic as a witness because it had become clear that his allegations were not based on fact. According to Tadic's defence counsel, M. (Mischa) Vladimiroff of the then law firm Vladimiroff and Spong, this witness was acting on instructions from the Bosnian police.³⁰⁵³

The ITN images were also used in the courtroom. On 6 and 7 June Vulliamy was called as witness for the prosecution and he was asked to comment on the unedited film material shot by ITN. In the interests of the defence Vladimiroff wanted an expert to underline the media's interest in Tadic prior to his trial in order to prove that witnesses might have been influenced by earlier press reporting. To this end he called Thomas Deichmann, a free-lance journalist from Frankfurt and co-founder of the magazine *Novo*, that called itself an advocate of value-free debate 'in einer Zeit der Risikoscheu und des Kulturpessimismus', conformism, (self)censorship and state control,³⁰⁵⁴ but was, in fact, a Trotskyite magazine with a limited circulation.³⁰⁵⁵ Deichmann had been trained as an engineer but had gone into journalism at a later stage and had had experience with media research. In the German magazine *Die Woche* he had earlier sown doubts about the claim by a Croatian woman who said that she had been raped in camp Omarska but who, according to Deichmann, was a member of the Information Service of the Croatian government. That article had been a direct attack on Gutman, the journalist who put

³⁰⁴⁷ Maas, *Neighbor*, p.41.

³⁰⁴⁸ Esad Hecimovic, 'Karadžić priznaje samo zlocine koje su počinili pojedinci i paravojne grupe', *Ljiljan*, 18/02/98, pp.30-31; Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p.107; 'Laat ze maar komen, die Amerikanen' ('Let the Americans come'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/08/92.

³⁰⁴⁹ See for instance Tom O'Sullivan, 'War: PR Battles in the Balkans', *PR Week*, 13/08/92.

³⁰⁵⁰ P.Bock, 'Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press', *Foreign Policy*, (1993)93(December).

³⁰⁵¹ Brock in: Bitterman (Hg.), *Serbien*, p.16sq.

³⁰⁵² Nonetheless in the Netherlands anthropologist René Grémaux and historian Abe de Vries were still claiming in 1995 that he was Slobodan Konjevic, René Grémaux & Abe de Vries, 'Het falen van de media in de Bosnische oorlog' ('The failure of the media in the Bosnian war'), *Trouw*, 20/07/95.

³⁰⁵³ 'They were looking for the best picture', *LM* 97. On Vladimiroff's defence of Tadic see also the television documentary *De Duivelskunstenaar* by Jan Reiff.

³⁰⁵⁴ For *Novo*'s official aims see 'Dafür steht Novo', <http://www.novo-magazin.de/daafuehrstehtnovo.htm> and 'Wilkommen bei Novo', <http://www.novo-magazin.de> both visited on 27/02/00.

³⁰⁵⁵ Paul Stoop, 'Bilder lügen nicht – oder vielleicht doch?' (Images don't lie – or do they?), *Der Tagesspiegel*, 06/02/97; Luke Harding: Second front: A shot that's still ringing?, *The Guardian*, 12/03/97.

out the first reports on the concentration camps. The article was published at a time when the German government was wondering whether to hand Tadic over to the Yugoslavia Tribunal in the Hague and, after some savage attacks in the initial stage, ended with words that placed serious doubts on the usefulness of publication: *‘Möglicherweise wurde sie tatsächlich vom Lagerleiter in Omarska und anderen Wachposten vergewaltigt. Doch Zweifel an ihrer Glaubwürdigkeit sind angebracht’* Maybe she was indeed raped by camp commanders in Omarska and other guards. But doubts have arisen about her credibility).³⁰⁵⁶

When Deichmann appeared as an expert witness he turned out to have had doubts about the ITN report. At a later stage Deichmann gave various versions about how he started to have these doubts. According to one version it was Deichmann’s wife who first pointed out something curious in the ITN film. When she was watching the film with him one evening she is alleged to have noticed that the barbed wire was fixed to the fence posts on the same side as Alic. Normally speaking, according to Deichmann, the barbed wire should have been attached on the outside of the posts.³⁰⁵⁷ Elsewhere Deichmann claimed that he, *‘[a]ls studierter Bauingenieur mit praktischer Berufserfahrung auch im Gärtnereibetrieb’* (being a civil engineer who also had professional experience in gardening), had immediately noticed the unusual method used to fix the wire.³⁰⁵⁸

When Deichmann discussed this discovery with Vladimiroff, the latter is alleged by Deichmann to have said that he had himself done an on-site check on Opacic’s allegation that there had been wire around the entire camp – witness L had even made a drawing of it – and had found no proof.³⁰⁵⁹ For Deichmann this had been a reason to go there and check for himself. He discovered that there had once been a barbed wire fence around the area where the transformer housing and the shed stood in the southern part of the camp, but not around the camp area itself. His conclusion had therefore been that it was not Fikret Alic and his fellow-sufferers who had been standing behind the barbed wire but, in fact, the ITN team when they were shooting their famous film (see sketch on page in this section).

Deichmann’s findings appeared in *Novo* in January 1997 and, around the same time, in various German, Italian, Swiss, Austrian and Swedish publications. In the Netherlands the article appeared in *De Groene Amsterdammer*.³⁰⁶⁰ The article stated that the ITN team had framed the emaciated man behind the barbed wire both figuratively and literally while knowing that the barbed wire had a function completely different from the one suggested. In addition Deichmann took the ITN team to task for never attempting to correct the erroneous associations that their images had created. In fact, according to Deichmann, Trnopolje had not been a prison camp, let alone a concentration camp, but an assembly station set up spontaneously by Muslim refugees themselves, local Bosnian Serbs subsequently providing security guards. Deichmann admitted that civilians had been mistreated in the camp and that there were ‘reports’ of a few rapes and murders, but that without the camp the number of Muslim victims would have been much larger.³⁰⁶¹ The comparison with the Nazi concentration camps was, for him, a step too far. He called on the television makers to return the prestigious prizes they had been awarded for their reporting.³⁰⁶²

³⁰⁵⁶ Thomas Deichmann, ‘Wurden westlichen Medien zu Handlangern der Propaganda? Der Fall der Kroatin Jadranka Cigelj legt dies Verdacht nahe’ (‘Have the western media become the henchmen of propaganda? The case of the Croatian woman Jadranka Cigelj reinforces this suspicion’), *Die Woche*, 04/11/94. In the Netherlands, his point of view is reflected in, for instance, Abe de Vries, ‘Het journalistieke risico’ (‘The journalistic risk’), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 31/01/96.

³⁰⁵⁷ Thomas Deichmann, ‘The picture that fooled the world’, *LM 97*.

³⁰⁵⁸ T. Deichmann, *‘Es war dieses Bild, das die Welt in Alarmbereitschaft versetzte’*, *Novo*, (1997)26(January/February).

³⁰⁵⁹ T. Deichmann, ‘The picture that fooled the world’, *LM 97*. ‘They were looking for the best picture’, *ibid*. In 1996 Vladimiroff visited the Trnopolje camp, with thanks to J. Reiff for the unedited film material of this visit.

³⁰⁶⁰ T. Deichmann, ‘Het beeld dat loog (The picture that lied)’, *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 22/01/97. In Germany the article appeared in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Tagespiegel*, *Leipziger Volkszeitung* and *Konkret*; in Italy in *Il Corriere della Sera*, *l’Unità* and *Il Sole*; in Switzerland in *Weltwoche*; in Austria in *Wiener Standard*; and in Sweden in *Helsingborgs Dagblad*. See also Thomas Deichmann, ‘Misinformation: TV Coverage of a Bosnian Camp’, *Covert Action Quarterly*, (1998)65(Fall), pp.52-55.

³⁰⁶¹ Thomas Deichmann, ‘The picture that fooled the world’, *LM 97*.

³⁰⁶² The ITN team gained awards including the British Association of Film and Television Award (BAFTA), the Royal Television Award and prizes at the Film and TV Festival in New York and the Scoop and News Festival. Vulliamy was

On 23 January the British magazine *LM* announced that it was shortly to print Deichmann's article, meanwhile already published in many places outside the United Kingdom, under the heading 'The Picture That Fooled the World'. *LM* was a magazine with approximately ten thousand subscribers. It was founded in 1988 as *Living Marxism*, the party organ of the British Revolutionary Communist Party and became *LM* in 1997. The party and its magazine had always opposed Western interference in the Balkans. Rather than a lack of interest in the West, the magazine claimed that it was precisely the pursuit of national interests in the Balkans by various Western countries that had led to war in the former Yugoslavia, a thesis also borne out willingly in Belgrade. The groups behind *LM* attempted to minimize Serb misdeeds and laid a great deal of emphasis on 'Muslim atrocities'.³⁰⁶³

By announcing publication of the article, Deichmann and *LM* were entering territory in which ITN could make use of the stringent British libel laws. On 23 January ITN made it known that the company was sticking to its reporting on 'the detention camps, which were not referred to as "Nazi-style concentration camps"'. The following day, before *LM* went on sale, its editors received a fax from ITN's lawyers, Biddle & Co, warning them not to distribute but to destroy the February issue of *LM*, in which Deichmann's article was to appear, and to offer an apology to ITN. The editors took no notice of the warning. ITN, Penny Marshall and Ian Williams then proceeded to a libel action against *LM*. ITN warned other media in the United Kingdom not to follow *LM*'s example. Subsequently all the major media kept silence on this sensitive matter since a libel conviction in the British courts can lead to sky-high damage claims.

On 31 January 1997 the editor of *LM*, Mick Hume, and Deichmann held a press conference on the occasion of the publication of the latter's article. During the conference Deichmann said that he had the complete unedited tapes of the ITN team in his possession, from the team's arrival in Belgrade up to and including Marshall's second visit to Trnopolje, shortly after the first.³⁰⁶⁴ Deichmann showed some of the material during the press conference, as well as a film he himself had made on location in late 1996. How Deichmann got hold of the raw ITN tapes he could, 'naturally' not say,³⁰⁶⁵ but it has been alleged that he obtained them via Tadic's defence attorney.³⁰⁶⁶

Vulliamy was the only one of the original visitors to Trnopolje to react in the press to Deichmann's criticism, that mainly related to the nature of the camp and the significance of the barbed wire. In his article published on 7 August 1992 in *The Guardian* Vulliamy had himself referred to the multi-functional nature of the camp. But Vulliamy had been marked by the war in Bosnia. He belonged to that group of journalists who, during the war, had been of the opinion that neutrality was not a virtue appropriate to journalists. In the course of a 1999 congress on norms of conduct applicable to journalists he had stated to his audience: '[N]eutrality is supposed to be the bedrock of our profession. So what do we do when we get to these points in history when neutrality, as any good Swiss gold banker will tell you, is not neutral at all but *complicity in the crime?*' By remaining neutral, claimed Vulliamy, a journalist would play along with 'the bullies of history and discard the peace and justice promised us by the generation that defeated the Third Reich. We create a mere intermission before the next round of atrocities. There are times when we as reporters have to cross the line.'³⁰⁶⁷

given the Amnesty International Award for Journalism in the Interest of Human Rights and the James Cameron Award and was acclaimed International Reporter of the Year.

³⁰⁶³ For the links between circles in Belgrade, the Revolutionary Communist Party and *LM* see Luke Harding, 'Second Front: a shot that's still ringing', *The Guardian*, 12/03/97; Daniele Conversi, 'Moral Relativism and Equidistance in British Attitudes to the War in the Former Yugoslavia', Cushman & Mestrovic (eds.), *Time*, pp.256 and 278 n. 52.

³⁰⁶⁴ <http://www.srpska-mreza.com/lm-f97/deichmann-press.html> 'ITN vs. Deichmann and Truth – Report on Jan. 31 press conference'.

³⁰⁶⁵ Paul Stoop, 'Bilder lügen nicht – oder vielleicht doch?', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 06/02/97.

³⁰⁶⁶ Eric Alterman, 'Bosnian camps: a barbed tale', *The Nation*, 28/07/97.

³⁰⁶⁷ Vulliamy, 'Neutrality'. See also summaries of the presentations and discussions of the Journalist Covering Conflict: Norms of Conduct congress, sponsored by the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict at the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, New York, 28/04/99,

In the introduction to his book, *Seasons in Hell*, published in 1994 and based on his war reporting from Bosnia, Vulliamy wrote that he had originally refused to use the term 'concentration camp' for the camps in Bosnia because of the echoes of the Holocaust in the term. Later he abandoned his objection since, in the strict sense of the term, the Bosnian camps were concentration camps, though not on the scale of the Nazi camps, for which he believed the terms 'extermination camps' or 'death camps' should be reserved.³⁰⁶⁸ In 1996, in an article in *The Nation* published in Washington, he once again described the 1992 camps, with particular reference to Omarska, as 'a network of such camps – with their echo of the Third Reich'.³⁰⁶⁹ It failed to introduce any further clarity into the debate with Deichmann, particularly because in his reaction to Deichmann's claims Vulliamy did not always advance the most rational of arguments. For example, he said it came as no surprise to him that criticism of the ITN pictures came from a country with a tradition of denial as regards the existence of concentration camps.³⁰⁷⁰

On 2 February 1997 in *The Observer* Vulliamy dealt extensively with Deichmann's article in *LM*. He accused the German journalist of revisionism à la David Irving, the Holocaust-denier, and suggested that he alone knew what the situation had been on 5 August 1992 in Trnopolje, and not Deichmann. According to Vulliamy the Omarska, Keraterm and Trnopolje camps and others were not well-organized extermination camps such as the Nazis had set up. They were 'camps in which civilians were concentrated prior to deportation, meanwhile tortured, beaten, raped, mutilated or murdered'. Vulliamy thus distanced himself from comparisons with the Third Reich's death camps but, on the other hand, he watered down his stated point of view by continuing to talk of 'a tin-pot version of the Nazi pogrom' and by writing in his English-language text that the Bosnian Serbs had made their region 'Muslimfrei' (with an implicit reference to the Third Reich's *Judenfrei* slogan).

With reference to the barbed wire fence he wrote that the men who had come to Trnopolje from Keraterm and Omarska were to be found in 'a small fenced-in area. They were not able to move around, and were watched by armed guards. One of the four sides of this area was made of barbed wire. It was an existing fence on one side of a garage area which had been reinforced with new barbed wire and chicken wire'.³⁰⁷¹ This last signalled a fairly close approach to Deichmann's claims. Vulliamy withdrew behind the statement: 'ITN filmed that which was before our eyes. The prisoners were there, the fence was there'.³⁰⁷² In early August 1992 he had not been preoccupied with 'myopic obsessions as to which side of which pole the old barbed wire or fresh barbed wire was fixed'. For him, what was more important was the account given by Fikret Alic concerning the murder of 250 men that he had witnessed in Keraterm.³⁰⁷³ Vulliamy's consideration was justified, but of course missed completely the fact that it was not Fikret Alic's story that had shocked the world, seeing that his account had scarcely received any attention in August 1992, but rather it was the man's emaciated body behind barbed wire. Later Ian Williams was to say that the ITN report had never suggested that there had been barbed wire around the entire camp: 'What it showed was that there was a compound in which men were clearly imprisoned'.³⁰⁷⁴

Vulliamy believed that *LM* had poisoned the wells of history and had succeeded in reducing the genocide – as he saw it – in Bosnia to the level of a media debate and chatter among jaded intellectuals, a form of post-modern ennui.³⁰⁷⁵ Richard Tait, ITN's editor in chief and driving force behind the libel

<http://www.ccpdc.org/events/journalists/report.htm> visited on 27/02/00; Ed Vulliamy, 'I must testify', *The Guardian*, 22/04/98.

³⁰⁶⁸ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p.xii.

³⁰⁶⁹ E. Vulliamy, 'Middle Managers of Genocide', *The Nation*, 10/06/99.

³⁰⁷⁰ Ed Vulliamy, 'Diary of the Damned', *The Observer*, 20/04/97.

³⁰⁷¹ E. Vulliamy, 'I stand by my story', *The Observer*, 02/02/97.

³⁰⁷² 'Now for the moment of truth', *The Guardian*, 21/02/00.

³⁰⁷³ Ed Vulliamy, 'Poison in the well of history', *The Guardian*, 15/03/00.

³⁰⁷⁴ Julia Hartley-Brewer, 'ITN reporter bent over backwards for accuracy', *The Guardian*, 01/03/00.

³⁰⁷⁵ Ed Vulliamy, 'Poison in the well of history', *The Guardian*, 15/03/00.

action against *LM*, believed that Deichmann and *LM* had managed to divert attention away from the crimes committed by the Serbs in the camps towards wild claims about what the ITN team might or might not have seen in Trnopolje.³⁰⁷⁶

Meanwhile ITN had been bringing up the heavy guns to bear on Deichmann's story. The TV company let it be known that any organ of the press that dared to follow the example of *LM* and publish Deichmann's story would have to reckon with legal procedures. The *Independent on Sunday* had invited the British author Phillip Knightley to write an article on the ITN affair, which was to be published on 2 February. In this article, Phillip Knightley attempted to clarify the complex status of the inmates of the Trnopolje camp (simultaneously a refugee, prison and transit camp) and wrote that the barbed wire in ITN's film should be seen as a symbolic representation of reality. However, the newspaper no longer dared publish the article.³⁰⁷⁷

So the discussion about the barbed wire was not insignificant to the extent that it opened up the fundamental question of whether journalists are expected to reveal reality in so far as possible or are allowed to give snippets that would suggest a reality perhaps happening elsewhere but not amenable to presentation at that precise moment. Opinions were divided, as illustrated by a famous television debate, in response to Deichmann's criticism, between the Amsterdam professor of communication sciences, Cees Hamelink and the editor in chief of the Dutch TV current affairs programme *Netwerk*, Cees Labeur. Labeur regarded the actions of the ITN team legitimate in the context of committed journalism. Hamelink said, on the contrary, that the reader and viewer would never again be able to trust the journalist if the latter went to work in this way.³⁰⁷⁸ Labeur's point of view was shared by several other Dutch television makers. Peter Tetteroo, editor of the KRO's *Brandpunt* current affairs programme, for example, speaking of reporting from Yugoslavia in general, said: 'You are constantly on the lookout for the man, the woman, the thing that can stand as a symbol for what you want to say. And it doesn't matter if the parties in the conflict refuse to let you see this, that or the other, because in this way you still succeed in getting your story across. (...) Editing and communications technology provide you with more than enough opportunities to put across what you want to say (...)'.³⁰⁷⁹

Meanwhile in London it was no longer a question of debate but of a bitter legal wrangle. On 20 February ITN sued the Two-Ten Communications company, part of Press Association, for libel and demanded a courtroom apology because the company had put out a press release about *LM* and Deichmann's forthcoming article. On 24 February *LM*'s printers, Russell Press in Nottingham, were warned by ITN's lawyers that they could expect to face legal action should they print any future copies of *LM*. In April 1997 Two-Ten Communications decided to offer a courtroom apology.

Three years after ITN had dragged *LM* before the courts because of Deichmann's article the case came before the High Court in London in late February/early March 2000. For hours the jury and judges pored over ITN's film material. Here a major factor was the testimony of Idriz Merdzanic, the doctor interned in Trnopolje who had given to the ITN team the roll of photographic film with the images of torture. He stated to the court that Trnopolje was not a centre for people driven from their homes but an internment camp where people were tortured, raped and murdered.³⁰⁸⁰ *LM* itself had been unable to find a witness to support Deichmann's version. The court ordered *LM* to pay damages of GBP 375,000 to ITN, Penny Marshall and Ian Williams. In addition the magazine was ordered to pay costs amounting to GBP 300,000. *LM* had found support in the shape of such luminaries as Noam Chomsky, Margaret Drabble, Doris Lessing, Paul Theroux and Fay Weldon, who believed that freedom

³⁰⁷⁶ Eric Alterman, 'Bosnian camps: a barbed tale', *The Nation*, 28/07/97.

³⁰⁷⁷ It was later published as 'It turns out that the barbed wire was only a symbol', *Novo*, (1997)27 (March/April), pp.24 sqq. On 2 February 1997 *The Independent* did publish an apology for the impression it gave of Deichmann's claims in the article 'ITN 'may sue over article'', 'ITN coverage of Bosnia, 1992', *The Independent*, 02/02/97.

³⁰⁷⁸ *Middageditje*, 09/06/97.

³⁰⁷⁹ Willemse, *Joegoslavië*, p.225.

³⁰⁸⁰ 'Die Wahrheit vor und hinter dem Stacheldraht' ('The truth on either side of the barbed wire'), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 16/03/00.

of the press was under threat, but their – partly financial – support was unable to prevent *LM* going bankrupt.

During the trial the judges had stated that under British libel law it was not a question of whether the ITN report had been ‘inaccurate, unfair or misleading’ but whether Deichmann’s claim was correct when he stated that Marshall and Williams had ‘deliberately’ given a distorted representation of the facts.³⁰⁸¹ The twelve-member jury decided that such had not been the case. In his closing speech Judge Morland said: ‘Clearly Ian Williams and Penny Marshall and their television teams were mistaken in thinking they were not enclosed by the old barbed-wire fence, but does it matter?’³⁰⁸² The jury and judges, like Knightley had actually already done in his article that the *Independent on Sunday* had decided not to publish because of ITN’s threats of legal action, opted not for the factual but for the symbolic value of the images.³⁰⁸³

The (im)potent media

‘If the journalists had not done their *J’accuse!*-like work, the Bosnian Serbs would never have been chased off by bombs.’³⁰⁸⁴

Can it be said, in the aftermath of the ITN images of ‘Omarska’, that the media played a crucial role with regard to policy on Yugoslavia? ‘[W]e are all brought right to the battlefield, right to the cemetery, right to the death camps. The people react, and then the people in power react’, stated the Democratic Senator of Connecticut, Joseph Lieberman who, after seeing the pictures, sharply criticized President Bush because of the latter’s hesitant attitude towards the conflict.³⁰⁸⁵

With regard to the relationship between the media and politics in general,³⁰⁸⁶ and the decision-making relative to (former) Yugoslavia in particular, there are four main schools of thought which, put briefly, come down to the following:

1. the media had no influence on politics;
2. it was politics that influenced the media rather than the other way round;
3. the media and the politicians followed the same line;
4. the media most certainly influenced politics.

The first school of thought, well represented among the journalists who worked on the front lines in Yugoslavia, states that all the media interest in the conflict had little if any influence on policy-making.³⁰⁸⁷ Frank Westerman, who worked for *De Volkskrant* in Belgrade, was of the opinion that ‘If you measure things in terms of influence, you come to the conclusion that it could all have been done in the former Yugoslavia with one tenth the number of journalists who were there. Because it didn’t

³⁰⁸¹ Julia Hartley-Brewer, ‘ITN wins damages in libel victory’, *The Guardian*, 15/03/00; Aart Brouwer, ‘Bizarre smaad’ (‘Bizarre case of libel’), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 22/03/00. H. Seifert, ‘Nach dem Prozess vor dem Ruin’ (‘After the trial the run up to the ruins’), *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 17/03/00.

³⁰⁸² Helen Guldberg, ‘Media: Question and be damned’, *The Independent*, 21/03/00. ‘Bosnië-foto niet in scène gezet’ (‘Bosnia photo not created’), *de Volkskrant*, 16/03/00, gave a wrong impression of the situation.

³⁰⁸³ Vgl. Henri Beunders, ‘Oorlog’ (‘War’), p.21.

³⁰⁸⁴ Cees Labeur in TV programme *Middageditje*, 09/06/97.

³⁰⁸⁵ R. Ciolli, ‘Bosnia Reports Prompt Outrage. Prison camp images drive home urgency’, *Newsday*, 08/08/92. See also D. Lipstadt, ‘Bosnia’s Horror Is Not a Holocaust. But the outrage also is not a question of comparative suffering’, *Newsday*, 13/08/92: ‘Unlike previous generations we cannot say ‘we didn’t believe’. We cannot claim we did not know’.

³⁰⁸⁶ On this, see also Appendix, Jan Wieten, *Srebrenica en de journalistiek*.

³⁰⁸⁷ Cf. Karskens, *Pleisters*, p.255.

matter a damn whether you reported it or not (...) It was the politicians who hesitated to intervene for years, no matter what we wrote, whatever pictures we took'.³⁰⁸⁸

This attitude often expresses disillusion on the part of journalists who, when they first started work in the former Yugoslavia, had still believed 'that if you showed enough people something that was flagrantly evil, they would react to try to stop it'.³⁰⁸⁹ The war in Bosnia, where journalists were not reined in by strict military censorship – as was the case during the Gulf War, was the first real TV war.³⁰⁹⁰ '[N]o slaughter was more scrupulously and ably covered', said Rieff,³⁰⁹¹ and yet many journalists felt that politicians in the West refused to let the media force them into war or military intervention. In the long term the images of violence and victims led, according to Rieff, more to indifference than to indignation on the part of the wider public.³⁰⁹² Journalists deprived of their original notion that they could influence policy on Yugoslavia, often speak in terms of having lost a fight with the Western politicians, diplomats and military men: 'We lost. They won. The hollow men usually do'.³⁰⁹³ 'That campaign has been lost'.³⁰⁹⁴ Despite all the risks to life and limb taken in order to get the war down in print or on film. This sense of disillusion often led to the journalists in question becoming demotivated. As in the case of Peter Maass, who came to the conclusion that in the end all he was hunting for was 'war porn': the woman who had been raped almost every day for two months; the man who crawled across a minefield after his legs had been blown off; the doctor who amputated limbs without anaesthetic, and so on: 'You were on the lookout for these stories, not because anybody back home was going to do anything about it, but because it was good copy. The agony of Bosnia was being turned into a snuff film'.³⁰⁹⁵ And when journalists from this group did not themselves become disillusioned, they would be confronted by the disappointment of the inhabitants of Sarajevo that all the words published by the journalists had not created any greater readiness on the part of the West to intervene. When Rieff returned after a brief leave, for example, he was asked by a friend of his in the Bosnian capital: 'Another safari? What do you hope to see this time? More corpses, more destruction? We should charge you admission'.³⁰⁹⁶

A second school of thought said that the news tracked policy and not the other way around:³⁰⁹⁷ 'Martin Bell's brilliant work in Bosnia did strike a chord with the general public, but such gems are unlikely to speed a change in policy unless diplomacy is already moving in that direction'.³⁰⁹⁸ It was also alleged that politicians used the media to realize their own aims.³⁰⁹⁹

A third school of thought suggests that the message voiced by the media with regard to intervention was not different from that of the politicians, but that the media ran with the hare and hunted with the hounds. This school of thought finds reinforcement for its ideas in research that shows that in general the media follow rather than form opinion when it is a question of military conflict.³¹⁰⁰

According to a fourth school of thought, finally, the Western media most certainly did influence policy with regard to (former) Yugoslavia in the direction of (greater) intervention.³¹⁰¹ It is mostly assumed that the influence exerted itself on members of parliament, who, in turn, passed the pressure

³⁰⁸⁸ Quoted in: Karskens, *Pleisters*, p.268.

³⁰⁸⁹ Loyd, *War*, p.111. See also Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p.216.

³⁰⁹⁰ Moorcraft, *Conflict*.

³⁰⁹¹ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p.223.

³⁰⁹² Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p.216.

³⁰⁹³ Loyd, *War*, p.112. Cf. Bell, *Way*, p.22

³⁰⁹⁴ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p.10. See *ibid.*, pp.41 and 222.

³⁰⁹⁵ Maass, *Neighbor*, p.247.

³⁰⁹⁶ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p.224.

³⁰⁹⁷ Seib, *Politics*, pp.62-63.

³⁰⁹⁸ Moorcraft, *Conflict*.

³⁰⁹⁹ Seib, *Politics*, pp.62-63.

³¹⁰⁰ H. van Dort, 'Sterven voor Srbica?' ('Dying for Srbica?'), *Carré* (1999)6, p.18; Michael Ignatieff, 'The Stories We Tell. Television and Humanitarian Aid', Moore (ed.), *Choices*, p.299.

³¹⁰¹ See, for instance, Silber & Little, *Death*, p.252.

on to the government. Parliamentarians have regularly said that they were subjected to great influence and even pressure from the reporting, particularly that published in *De Volkskrant* and *NRC Handelsblad* and shown on television.³¹⁰²

Adherents of this school of thought often point to the steadily stronger distortion that they allege television has been showing in the last few years. Real-time reporting, made possible by satellites, and increased commercial competition, it is alleged, have taken away that moment of critical journalistic reflection, a development that has already led to calls for journalists to slow down.³¹⁰³ As a result, the distance between information and manipulation, it is said, has been reduced. The commercial television companies in the Netherlands and abroad³¹⁰⁴ are also accused of having contributed to a more emotion-based presentation.³¹⁰⁵ “Emo-television” floods not only the reporting of home-grown stories but it has also become difficult to “sell” a subject from abroad if it is not accompanied by a stiff dose of emotion. Of course, this applies first and foremost to television. But the other media do not escape this evolution’, states radio journalist Liesbet Walckiers of Flemish Radio and Television (VRT). In fact it is television that sets the agenda as far as the news is concerned.³¹⁰⁶

Adherents of this school of thought speak of a so-called CNN effect, that limits the elbow-room for policymaking on the part of governments because the media pushes them at least to do ‘something’ with regard to situations crying to heaven for intervention.³¹⁰⁷ Various Western military men, diplomats and politicians have felt extremely annoyed, partly following the crises in Yugoslavia, at this alleged media influence on foreign policy. The *End of Mission* report delivered by Force Commander Janvier of UNPROFOR accused the media of having been ‘the self-appointed leaders of the “something must be done” group’, who exerted enormous pressure on the UN and the troop-contributing nations.³¹⁰⁸

The British Minister of Foreign Affairs, Douglas Hurd, also complained in September 1993 about foreign correspondents whom he called ‘founder members of the ‘something must be done’ school’. Of all the conflicts in the world they had picked out the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina for intervention. ‘But nothing more clearly separates the commentator from those who carry the responsibility for the decision,’ said Hurd.³¹⁰⁹ He stated that there was nothing new in mass rapes, firing at civilians, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and the torching of towns and villages. The only thing that was new was that a selection of these crimes could be seen in another part of the world within hours.³¹¹⁰ Hurd’s French counterpart, Hubert Védrine, alleged that the French intellectuals had formed an alliance with the media in order to plead for intervention.³¹¹¹ In May 1993 Boutros-Ghali expressed the opinion that simplifying and exaggerated reporting on television had caused public emotions to arise

³¹⁰² See, for instance, Jan Hoekema, quoted in Both, *Indifference*, p.50; review by Gerrit Valk of Klep & Van Gils, *Korea*, in: *BMGN* vol. 115, issue 4, p.657.

³¹⁰³ Joan Hemels, ‘Journalisten: spelbrekers en onruststokers in de samenleving?’ (Journalists: society’s killjoys and troublemakers?) Becker (red.) *Massamedia*, p.35; Marc Hooghe, ‘Neutraliteit en betrokkenheid. Evoluties in de Vlaamse journalistiek sinds de zaak Dutroux’ (Neutrality and involvement. Evolutions in Flemish journalism since the Dutroux case), *ibid.*, pp.57 and 60-61.

³¹⁰⁴ For this development in Belgium see, for instance, Marc Hooghe, ‘Neutraliteit en betrokkenheid. Evoluties in de Vlaamse journalistiek sinds de zaak Dutroux’, Becker (red.), *Massamedia*, pp.50-51 and 55.

³¹⁰⁵ Richard Schoonhoven, ‘New Concessions Act presents broadcasting companies with a complex dilemma. Tensions between collaboration and autonomy’, Becker (red.), *Massamedia*, pp.16-17; Joan Hemels, ‘Journalisten: spelbrekers en onruststokers in de samenleving?’, *ibid.*, p.30.

³¹⁰⁶ Liesbet Walckiers, ‘De media en de derde Wereld’ (‘The media and the Third World’), Becker (ed.), *Massamedia*, pp.128-129.

³¹⁰⁷ Callahan, *Wars*, p.78; Jett, *Peacekeeping*, pp.29-30; Seib, *Politics*, pp.60-61.

³¹⁰⁸ Headquarters UNPF, Force Commander’s End of Mission Report, 31/01/96, Executive Summary, par. 14.

³¹⁰⁹ William Russell, ‘Public debate run by media, not by events, says Hurd’, *The Herald*, 10/09/93. See also Hoge, *Pervasiveness*, p.138; Hugo Young, ‘Commentary: Hurd’s world in camera, not in the camera’s’, *The Guardian*, 14/09/93.

³¹¹⁰ Hurd quoted in Bell, *Way*, p.137.

³¹¹¹ Védrine, *Mondes*, pp.625-643.

that undermined the work of the UN.³¹¹² The Japanese Yasushi Akashi, appointed at the beginning of 1994 as Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN for the former Yugoslavia, later complained that the UN had allowed itself to be led in the conflict largely by 'a media-driven agenda in reaction to public opinion'. The need 'to do something' and the desire on the part of some to adopt a high profile towards the press had, he claimed, led to a proliferation of unenforceable mandates.³¹¹³ Finally the experienced American diplomat George Kennan had already been grumbling in 1992 that if this media trend continued there would be no room left for 'what have traditionally been regarded as the responsible deliberative organs of our government'.³¹¹⁴

Many media experts reject the pessimism of politicians and diplomats such as Hurd, Védrine and Kennan when they complain that their policy is determined by the media. These experts believe that politicians themselves can temper the emotional effect produced by television if they set out a clear political course, explain it and subsequently stick to it.³¹¹⁵ Then they can quietly 'sit out' the media storm that sometimes blows up.³¹¹⁶ It is only when authorities fail to sketch the background against which a foreign political crisis should be interpreted, if they themselves do not have any clear policy in mind or are unable to explain their policy clearly to the public, that the media come along and fill the vacuum by directing attention to alternative policies.³¹¹⁷ Seen from this angle, complaints of politicians about media influence are at the same time complaints against themselves, and the influence of the media is only possible because of the politicians' lack of political courage, clarity and consistency. In the concrete case of Bosnia, it can be added that many Western governments made themselves extra dependent on reporting in the media by taking so long to open diplomatic missions after Bosnia-Herzegovina had been recognized, missions that could have provided them with their own direct information.³¹¹⁸

In view of the fact that the relationship between the media and policy is evidently subjected to the attitudes of politicians and thus can vary from day to day, it is understandable that in their descriptions of the effect of the media, authors writing about policy towards Yugoslavia advance elements from various schools of thought simultaneously. Thus, for example, in the book written by Both, who studied Dutch policy towards the wars in Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1995, we find the third and fourth schools of thought. On the one hand Both seems to espouse the third school of thought (media and foreign policy following the same line) when he writes: 'Editorials, television interviews, opinion polls, parliamentary debates and the advice emanating from the officials in the Foreign Ministry all pointed in the same direction: giving moral, political and military support to the Bosnian Muslims'.³¹¹⁹ On the other hand, in line with the fourth school of thought (the media certainly had an influence), he suggests that the 'Omarska' pictures when seen in the Netherlands led, just as in

³¹¹² John Burns, 'The Media as Impartial Observers or Protagonists. Conflict Reporting or Conflict Encouragement in The former Yugoslavia', Gow & Paterson & Preston (eds.), *Bosnia*, pp.1992-93.

³¹¹³ Akashi, *Limits*, p.1992.

³¹¹⁴ Quoted in Seib, *Politics*, p.61. The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, J.J. Van Aartsen, made similar statements in 1999, J.J. van Aartsen, 'Buitenlands beleid moet zich niet laten leiden door CNN' ('Foreign policy must not be guided by CNN'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/09/99.

³¹¹⁵ Cf. Hoge, *Pervasiveness*, pp.142 and 144.

³¹¹⁶ Moorcraft, *Conflict*.

³¹¹⁷ Bell, *Way*, pp.142-143; James Gow/Richard Paterson/Alison Preston, 'Introduction', idem (eds.), *Bosnia*, p.7; Haas, *Intervention*, p.86; Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p.14; Warren P. Strobel, 'The Media and U.S. Policies Toward Intervention. A Closer Look at the 'CNN Effect'', Crocker & Hampson with Aall (eds.), *Chaos*, pp.358 and 360; Strobel, *Policy*, pp.219 and 225; R.H. Sandee, 'Zorgvuldig en weloverwogen. De besluitvorming over crisisbeheersingsoperaties' ('Careful and well-considered. How decisions are taken on crisis management operations'), *Carré*, 21(1998)12, p.29; Rob de Wijk in Marijnissen & Glastra van Loon, *Oorlog*, pp.1992-93.

³¹¹⁸ Cf. Bell, *Way*, p.39.

³¹¹⁹ Both, *Indifference*, p.147.

France, the United Kingdom and the United States, to pressure being put on the government to initiate military intervention.³¹²⁰

The historian Michael Ignatieff puts forwards an explanation that links together the latter two schools of thought – the media and the politicians were following the same line and the media influenced politics.³¹²¹ According to his notion, television does indeed follow current moral judgements but the medium also has certain distorting effects. Television has a tendency, for instance, to create a feeling of identification in the viewers. To this end individuals, such as Fikret Alic behind the barbed wire of Trnopolje, are pictured without any clarification of the extent to which such an image is representative. The medium of television also omits to mention the mechanisms that underlie victimhood and offers little room for statements or explanations regarding the political context of which the victim is part.³¹²² Ignatieff is of the opinion that the television images themselves did not cause Western policymakers to change their view on intervention in Bosnia but they certainly provided the supporters of intervention, who had long been crying scandal at the lack of large-scale military action on the part of the West, with material that enabled them to swell their ranks. Thus ‘the moral stories we tell through television are less influential than their visual impact would suggest, but they are not as unimportant as sceptics would imply; and (...) they do play a continuing role in structuring the interventions, humanitarian and otherwise.’³¹²³

Nick Gowing, in the context of a research project for the Harvard University John F. Kennedy School, interviewed more than a hundred diplomats and senior military men about the role that they thought the media had played in forming the policy towards Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and concluded that the idea that shocking images of ethnic conflicts determine foreign policy is ‘a self-perpetuating myth’. He pointed out that the bombing of Vukovar or Dubrovnik, for instance, had not led to military intervention. The idea that images did have influence was reinforced by politicians who pretended they were ‘doing something’. The only effect brought about by the television images was to highlight the lack of will and the impotence of Western leaders. Images on television sometimes threaten to thwart the agenda of policy makers by arousing reactions from the public. Partly for this reason they are tempted to reject such images as emotional and fleeting.³¹²⁴ The Dutch political scientist Philip Everts believed at an earlier stage that the influence of the media on foreign policy consists mainly in setting the political agenda. The media, he claimed, do not determine what people think but what they think about.³¹²⁵ Finally the parliamentary journalist with *Trouw*, Willem Breedveld, interviewed for this report, gave a similar explanation for the link between the third and fourth schools of thought, in what one would be tempted to call a formula: ‘News is that which confirms an expectation. Preferably in a surprising manner’.³¹²⁶

12. Increasing readiness to initiate military intervention before the Trnopolje images

With these four schools of thought as background, we will now examine the influence of the television images of Fikret Alic in the Trnopolje camp on public opinion and policy. Here the main emphasis is on the situation in the Netherlands, but where possible comparisons are made with what was

³¹²⁰ Both, *Indifference*, pp.145-146; “What really engaged the Dutch, as well as Western, moral consciousness, were the TV images of Serb-run concentration camps full of emaciated non-Serb prisoners. ITN’s television production of 6August1992 triggered the kind of response that neither written journalism, nor the siege and fall of Vukovar, nor events in Bosnia until then had provoked. ... Like in Britain, France or the US many Dutch commentators now argued the case for a military intervention against the Serbs ...”

³¹²¹ Michael Ignatieff, ‘The Stories We Tell. Television and Humanitarian Aid’, Moore (ed.), *Choices*, pp.287-302.

³¹²² Michael Ignatieff, ‘The Stories We Tell. Television and Humanitarian Aid’, Moore (ed.), *Choices*, pp.293-295.

³¹²³ Michael Ignatieff, ‘The Stories We Tell. Television and Humanitarian Aid’, Moore (ed.), *Choices*, p.300.

³¹²⁴ Nick Gowing, ‘Behind the CNN Factor’, *The Washington Post*, 31/07/94; Gowing, *Pictures*.

³¹²⁵ Everts (ed.), *Controversies*, p.56.

³¹²⁶ Interview W. Breedveld, 11/10/00.

happening in other countries. Three aspects are dealt with. First, the question of the extent to which, prior to the broadcast of the images, public opinion in the West had been charged with emotion and whether this had been accompanied by comparisons between the Serbs and the Nazis. The second aspect is the extent to which there were individuals questioning the strong reactions to the images. And, in the third place, the question of the influence of the images on the actions of politicians in the West. Here influence is defined as a mechanism that moved politicians to do something that they would not have done had the images of Trnopolje not been shown on television. Some of the matters in the previous paragraph will receive special attention, such as the role of parliament as mediator between public opinion and government, any impotence on the part of politicians demonstrated by the ITN documentary and the follow-up to that in the media and, finally, the question as to whether the media set the agenda of the public and political debates.

Well before the ITN programme went out on 6 August a break in the trend could be seen in American journals as regards the amount of interest shown by the printed press in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. As early as in June 1992 the number of articles about the war published in the main printed media had more than doubled in comparison to previous months. This trend continued quietly in July and August and then subsided somewhat.³¹²⁷ Not only did the quantity increase but the content of the articles also changed. Many American commentators expressed their indignation at the lack of activity on the part of European leaders with regard to Yugoslavia, but also criticized their own President Bush, who allowed his re-election campaign to take pride of place over a more active attitude to Yugoslavia.³¹²⁸ Something similar was happening in Europe. As early as the end of June American journalists concluded that public indignation in Europe regarding the events in Bosnia was growing as a result of 'a barrage of television images' that illustrated the Serb attacks on Sarajevo with bloody pictures.³¹²⁹

The resultant ethnic cleansing and streams of refugees led to pressure on Western governments to do more. In the United Kingdom, prior to the broadcast of the ITN film, the former Labour Foreign Minister Lord Owen, the Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown and former premier Margaret Thatcher had criticized the then Prime Minister, John Major, for what they saw as too little effort to stem Serb aggression in Bosnia.³¹³⁰ Owen, who was very impressed by Maggie O'Kane's 29 July article had, for instance, written an open letter to Major the following day in which he drew a comparison with camps in 'the early stages of the Nazi holocaust'. He called for NATO air attacks on artillery, tanks, armoured cars and aircraft in the former Yugoslavia.³¹³¹ This produced a reaction from Major in which he stated that the British government's efforts were focused on humanitarian help and on exerting pressure on the warring factions to negotiate, followed by the announcement 'This may take time'.³¹³² This answer did not, at any rate, satisfy Major's predecessor, Margaret Thatcher. In an article in *The New York Times*, published on 6 August before the ITN broadcast of the same date, she called ethnic cleansing a combination of cruelties that Hitler and Stalin had used on other peoples. She therefore argued for the lifting of the weapons embargo imposed on the Bosnian government and for NATO military action against Serbia. Alliance aircraft should, she said, bomb objects such as bridges

³¹²⁷ Sadkovich, *Media*, p.111.

³¹²⁸ See, for instance, William Pfaff, 'Before Any Intervention, Clarify the Political Goal', *International Herald Tribune*, 18/06/92; idem, 'Europe Can't Afford to Appease Serbia', *International Herald Tribune*, 03/08/92; Anthony Lewis, 'Joegoslavië laat Bush'falen als president zien' ('Yugoslavia shows Bush's failure as president'), *de Volkskrant*, 04/08/92; Daniel Johnson, 'Europe's bloodstained lies', *Times*, 05/08/92.

³¹²⁹ Stanley Meisler & Duyle McManus, 'Allies talk of using force to aid Sarajevo', *Los Angeles Times*, 26/06/92.

³¹³⁰ See, for instance, Hans Nijenhuis, 'Wil het Westen ingrijpen?' (Does the West want to intervene?), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/08/92.

³¹³¹ Owen, *Odyssey*, pp.15-16.

³¹³² Owen, *Odyssey*, pp.19-20.

over the Drina and Serb military convoys and the heavy guns stationed around Sarajevo and Gorazde.³¹³³

Spoken and written words about the activities of the Serbs in terms referring to the Third Reich and the Second World War were also apparent before the ITN broadcast. Oostlander, writing in the *NRC Handelsblad* as early as 11 May said that there was little difference between the regime of Karadzic and that of Hitler. In that month he called for a surgical military strike on the part of the WEU, without ground troops, against the Serb ‘national socialists’, since that was the only language they would understand.³¹³⁴ In other newspapers too comparisons were drawn with fascism and the Second World War.³¹³⁵ In a broadcast put out by the Dutch television programme NOS Laat on 27 July the vice-chairman of the *VluchtelingenWerk* (Refugee Work) organization made several comparisons between the circumstances of the refugees from Yugoslavia and the fate of refugees from Hitler’s Germany in the 1930s, following which presenter Charles Groenhuijsen closed the subject saying that it was typical of the problem that his studio guest had had to refer several times to the Second World War.³¹³⁶ Two days later Minister H. Schoor of the German federal state North Rhine-Westphalia did the same in the TV programme *NOS Laat*.³¹³⁷ ‘More and more the actions of the Serbs in Bosnia are being compared to Nazi practices in the Second World War’, wrote *NRC Handelsblad* on 5 August.³¹³⁸

The Dutch media had also argued for more effective action on the part of the West in Bosnia prior to the broadcasting of the images from ‘Omarska’. Examples of this were, for instance, the pleas for some form of military intervention voiced by De Kok, Oostlander, Faber and the brothers Tromp. The interventionist core-piece by Voorhoeve and Van den Doel also appeared before the ITN broadcast: on 5 August. On 29 July the editorial in *Trouw* called for WEU and NATO intervention with the use of force to create the desired situation in the former Yugoslavia rather than leaving the territory to its fate.³¹³⁹

As early as the beginning of July the *Legerkoerier* noted that ‘minds’ were slowly turning to thoughts of military intervention.³¹⁴⁰ While the majority of (former) army staff were still resisting the idea of military intervention, there were some among them who began to feel some sympathy for action. Retired general Govert Huyser, for instance, who had advised against intervention in June because of the lack of a clear goal and an obvious enemy,³¹⁴¹ was now wanting to go further. He thought an action involving a hundred thousand men plus tanks and artillery would be advisable. From Sarajevo they should deal ‘a rapid, hefty blow’ and liberate the prison camps. At the same time barracks, weapon depots and communications centres of the Yugoslavian Army and the Ministry of Defence in Belgrade should be taken out. In brief: ‘The military command structure should be completely paralysed’.³¹⁴² At the end of July Van Eekelen also called for a massive intervention on the part of WEU ground troops to protect aid convoys and actually return fire.³¹⁴³

³¹³³ Margaret Thatcher, ‘Stop the Excuses. Help Bosnia Now’, *The New York Times*, 06/08/92. Margaret Thatcher appeared in print in almost identical terms, ‘Nog even en het is te laat voor een actie tegen Servië’ (‘Just a little longer and it will be too late for a campaign against Serbia’), *de Volkskrant*, 10/08/92.

³¹³⁴ Arie Oostlander, ‘De onverantwoordelijkheid van Europa’ (‘The irresponsibility of Europe’), *CD/Actueel*, 23/05/92, p.21.

³¹³⁵ Ten Cate, *Eén*, pp.106-107.

³¹³⁶ NOS Laat, 27/07/92.

³¹³⁷ NOS Laat, 29/07/92.

³¹³⁸ Hans Nijenhuis, ‘Wil het Westen ingrijpen?’ *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/08/92.

³¹³⁹ ‘Vluchtelingen (1) and (2)’, *Trouw*, 29/07/92.

³¹⁴⁰ Wiebren Tabak, ‘Het collectieve geweten van de wereld’ (The collective conscience of the world), *Legerkoerier*, 07/07/92, p.22.

³¹⁴¹ Generaal b.d. Govert Huyser, ‘Interventie in Joegoslavië is niet realistisch’ (‘Intervention in Yugoslavia unrealistic’), *Limburgse Courant*, 10/06/92.

³¹⁴² Laurent Heere, ‘Militaire actie in Bosnië onvermijdelijk’ (‘Military campaign in Bosnia unavoidable’), *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 06/08/92; idem ‘Tijd van praten is voorbij’ (‘Time for talking is over’), *Haagsche Courant*, 07/08/92.

³¹⁴³ Bart Tromp, ‘Derde Balkanoorlog is in voorbereiding’ (‘Preparations for third Balkan war underway’), *Het Parool*, 01/08/92.

At the end of July the former military attaché in Belgrade, retired Brigadier General De Vogel, who in 1991 had still been hesitant about interference in Croatia (see Chapters 2 and 3), revealed himself as a supporter of limited intervention in Bosnia. This should be based on air strikes on Serb targets and on the barricading of the Yugoslavian navy in the bay of Kotor. He did not support large-scale use of ground troops: 'Otherwise you land in the morass of a civil war where friend and enemy can scarcely be distinguished one from the other'.³¹⁴⁴ Comparisons between Yugoslavia in the Second World War, Vietnam and Afghanistan, he said, came immediately to mind.³¹⁴⁵

The debate on intervention heated up particularly in the week prior to the television transmission of the images from Trnopolje, with the ranks of the interventionists on the increase³¹⁴⁶. The Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' played an important part here with a great number of publications and interviews with Voorhoeve and Van den Doel. At the beginning of July Dick Leurdijk, Clingendael's UN specialist, had also called for precision bombing of military targets in Serbia and on the Serbian militia in Bosnia-Herzegovina.³¹⁴⁷

On 4 August the historian Hermann Walther von der Dunk wrote in the *NRC Handelsblad* criticizing 'the hollow rhetoric' of the West in the face of the crimes committed in the name of Greater Serbia. Without solid military intervention, he wrote, the ethnic cleansing and murders on the part of the Serbs would not be halted. In his view the Netherlands occupied a special position among the countries of the West because of its 'loud-mouthed cowardice' whose origins were to be found in the country's pre-war policy of neutrality and its post-war slavish attitude towards the United States.³¹⁴⁸

On 5 August the dailies and weeklies offered a wide spread of contributions to the intervention debate. Not only did Voorhoeve and Van den Doel publish their views in *De Volkskrant*, but editor André Roelofs concluded on the same day in the same morning daily that limited military intervention, at least taking out the Serbs' heavy arms and possibly creating safe havens, now seemed inevitable.³¹⁴⁹ On 5 August *NRC Handelsblad* contained several contributions on the subject of military intervention in the former Yugoslavia. The editorial on that day was the first in which *NRC Handelsblad* made an unbridled plea for immediate military intervention: 'Each day that passes means so much less to protect'.³¹⁵⁰ In his contribution that day columnist Henk Hofland called it a 'scandal' that the West was doing nothing about the 'brutal behaviour' of the Serbs in Bosnia.³¹⁵¹ And also on that day *NRC Handelsblad* published a contribution of two authors on the question of whether the West was willing and able to intervene.³¹⁵²

It was clear that the press was one of the initiators of the intervention debate. For example *De Groene Amsterdammer*, in its 5 August issue, published the results of a discussion on intervention organized by the paper between Hylke Tromp, General De Vogel, the Utrecht professor of human rights Peter Baehr, and the publicist Paul Scheffer. Tromp was, as could be expected after his previous statements, a supporter of large-scale military intervention since 'further muddling through' would lead to a second Vietnam.³¹⁵³ Scheffer did not wish to exclude military intervention but, he said, the aims would have to be clear: was it about stopping the ethnic cleansing or getting rid of Milosevic? Baehr

³¹⁴⁴ Max Arian and Joke van Kampen, 'Te wapen' (To arms), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 05/08/92, p.4.

³¹⁴⁵ J.C.A.C. de Vogel, 'Een strategie voor militair ingrijpen in Joegoslavië' ('A strategy for military intervention in Yugoslavia'), *Vrij Nederland*, 25/07/92, pp.10-11.

³¹⁴⁶ See Ten Cate, 'Eén' ('One'), p.105.

³¹⁴⁷ Wiebren Tabak, 'Het collectieve geweten van de wereld', *Legerkoerier*, 07/07/92, p.22.

³¹⁴⁸ H.W. von der Dunk, 'Lauwheid omdat Balkan niet in politiek schema past' ('Tepidity because Balkans do not fit into political programme'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/08/92.

³¹⁴⁹ André Roelofs, 'Kunnen we nog blijven zuchten en protesteren?' ('Can we carry on sighing and protesting?'), *de Volkskrant*, 05/08/92.

³¹⁵⁰ 'Ingrijpen noodzakelijk' ('Intervention necessary'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/08/92.

³¹⁵¹ 'Sterven voor Sarajevo' ('Dying for Sarajevo?'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/08/92.

³¹⁵² Hans Nijenhuis, 'Wil het Westen ingrijpen?' and Peter Michielsen, 'Kan het Westen ingrijpen?', *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/08/92.

³¹⁵³ Max Arian and Joke van Kampen, 'Te wapen', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 05/08/92, p.4.

was of the opinion that international law did not allow for military intervention and that Tromp's argument of systematic violation of human rights would imply interventions in all parts of the world. Moreover, he and Scheffer believed, there was the risk of more people being killed because of the escalation that would follow intervention.

Also on 5 August the Nijmegen polemologist Leon Wecke called for limited intervention: 'Perhaps the failed peacekeeping force should be called back and we should bomb the Serb mortars in the Sarajevo hills in order to get them to stop their messing about'. In addition he called for action to liberate the prison camps, provided – of course – that they existed, which would not surprise him in view of the nature of the conflict. He was opposed to sending ground troops. There was no readiness on the part of the West to supply sufficient men. The situation on the ground was too complex. It was better to let the war be fought to a standstill since then at least would the balance of powers be set.³¹⁵⁴

On the morning of 6 August *Trouw* thus correctly commented that the call for military intervention was becoming louder. The paper gave the following reasons: the reports of starvation in besieged towns in Bosnia, ethnic cleansing and deportation, the floods of refugees and the 'concentration camps' where torture was practised.³¹⁵⁵ The paper claimed that the politicians' readiness to intervene was growing at the same pace as the flood of refugees.³¹⁵⁶

It was not only among the speech-making elite, who filled the opinion and commentary pages of the Dutch press, that one could speak of an increasing preparedness to undertake some kind of action in the interests of Yugoslavia, a preparedness that was leading to growing preference for military intervention. The *VluchtelingenWerk* association for refugees indicated that incoming telephone calls showed growing involvement, with private individuals calling to offer shelter for refugees from the former Yugoslavia. Since mid-July the organization had been receiving ten to fifteen such calls a day.³¹⁵⁷ The *Mensen in Nood* (People in Need) foundation in Den Bosch, that had started collecting clothing offered by private individuals for Yugoslavia on 29 July, said that on the first day the phone had not stopped ringing right from the start.³¹⁵⁸ But the Dutch Interchurch Peace Council (IKV) – just like Pax Christi – proved unable to mobilize people. Either they were on holiday or they were watching the Olympic Games in Barcelona, stated secretary Mient Jan Faber.³¹⁵⁹ Foreign affairs commentator J.L. Heldring therefore asked in the *NRC Handelsblad*, with reference to the large-scale demonstrations that the IKV had succeeded in organizing in previous years against the placing of medium-range missiles and against the Gulf War, where the demonstrations were now.³¹⁶⁰

An AVRO/Nipo poll on 6 August, the day the ITN images were shown, provided proof of what the silent majority was thinking. The poll showed that 22% of those questioned were already closely following the reports from Yugoslavia, 56% reasonably closely and 18% scarcely at all. It further emerged that 83% of the Dutch population supported a more generous attitude towards the admission into the Netherlands of refugees from the former Yugoslavia. Of this representative sample of the Dutch population 87% agreed with Dutch participation in military intervention in the former Yugoslavia. Two-thirds of those questioned said that they would maintain this view even if Dutch soldiers were killed. More than 60% of the respondents even wanted military action designed to put a complete stop to the war in the former Yugoslavia.³¹⁶¹

³¹⁵⁴ Hans Leber, 'Laat ze de oorlog uitvechten' (Let them fight their own war), *Twentsche Courant*, 05/08/92.

³¹⁵⁵ 'Interventie vergt offers (1)' (Intervention translates into casualties), *Trouw*, 06/08/92.

³¹⁵⁶ 'Interventie vergt offers (2)', *Trouw*, 06/08/92.

³¹⁵⁷ J.A. Hoeksma, vice-chairman of the VluchtelingenWerk association in NOS Laet, 27/07/92; 'Particulieren bieden hulp bij opvang Bosniërs' (Private individuals offer help in receiving Bosnians), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/07/92.

³¹⁵⁸ 'Particulieren bieden hulp bij opvang Bosniërs', *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/07/92.

³¹⁵⁹ 'Particulieren bieden hulp bij opvang Bosniërs', *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/07/92.

³¹⁶⁰ J.L. Heldring, 'Waar blijft het protest?' ('Where's the protest?'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/07/92 and 'Schijnheiligheid troef' ('Hypocrisy laid bare'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 31/07/92.

³¹⁶¹ Radio 2, AVRO, *Radiojournaal*, 09/08/92, 1.04pm; De Boode & Everts, 'Ontwikkelingen', pp.187-188; Nederlanders keuren militair ingrijpen in ex-Joegoslavië goed' ('Dutch approve of military intervention in ex-Yugoslavia'), *de Volkskrant*, 10/08/92. Six months later 66% of those interviewed in a NIPO poll were still of the same mind, 'Slachtoffers aanvaardbaar

In so reacting, the Dutch population went much further than the ‘humanitarian help with a military fringe’ under the UN umbrella which, at the time, was as far as the Dutch parties of the coalition government – CDA, PvdA and VVD – were prepared to go.³¹⁶² Nonetheless support among members of parliament for harder action seemed to be growing even before the ITN footage was broadcast. *NRC Handelsblad* summarized the mood among parliamentarians on 6 August, a few hours before the programme went out, as follows: ‘The senseless violence must at some time be brought to an end; and if it cannot be negotiated, then by the use of force’.³¹⁶³

The conclusion is therefore justified that broader public opinion in the Netherlands was far and away in favour of military intervention even before the showing of Trnopolje images and was even in favour of very strong action. A debate about intervention had already started. The parliamentarians too had shifted in that direction, though less far than public opinion.³¹⁶⁴ The parliamentary debate that took place on 12 August had already been requested by De Hoop Scheffer before the ITN programme was broadcast, following claims made by Sacirbey about the existence of camps. During the debate on 12 August it became apparent that the members did not think that the government had gone far enough in adopting a position towards Bosnia-Herzegovina. And yet this was more an optical than a fundamental difference. There had been a basic readiness on the part of the Dutch government, even before the summer, ‘to do something’ to contribute towards a solution in the former Yugoslavia that could be regarded as just. The question as to whether the international community and, more specifically, the Netherlands should do something about the war in Bosnia had not been, as the then vice-premier Kok later put it, ‘not really relevant’ for the Dutch government:

‘The question of whether we should do something or not, that is: are we going to let this slip away, as it were, - an incident in history in which we have no involvement and for which we have no responsibility - this question has roughly speaking never been subjected to critical discussion – in the sense of: surely we can leave it to others to deal with.’³¹⁶⁵

In late July/early August there was, nonetheless, some sort of bottom-up movement to get the Dutch government to do more, and this was apparent in the readiness of local councils, housing associations and private individuals to offer accommodation and thus exert pressure to admit refugees from the former Yugoslavia. The movement started, however, before the images from Trnopolje were broadcast. It had been partly set in motion by information in the press about the existence of the camps but, as far as can be judged, also by reports of ethnic cleansing, floods of refugees and the bombing of Sarajevo. Comparisons with the situation under the Third Reich and during the Second World War were also not uncommon. In that sense the Trnopolje pictures added to Breedveld’s ‘formula’ that news is that which confirms an expectation in a surprising manner.

bij actie in ex-Joegoslavië’ (‘Casualties acceptable in campaign in ex-Yugoslavia’), *de Volkskrant*, 02/02/93. This opinion was diametrically opposed to Wecke’s opinion that support would dwindle if there were more victims, Hans Leber, ‘Laat ze de oorlog uitvechten’, *Tweentsche Courant*, 05/08/92. See also L. Wecke, ‘Als er veel soldaten sneuvelen is het uit met steun voor de actie’ (‘If a lot of soldiers fall, support for the campaign will crumble’), *Trouw*, 23/02/93.

³¹⁶² Van den Broek in *NOS* TV news, 07/08/92; De Hoop Scheffer and Valk in *Radio 2, Avro Radiojournaal*, 09/08/92, 1.04pm; Blaauw and De Hoop Scheffer in *TV, Nederland 3, NOS Laat*, 11/08/92, 10.30pm; ‘Kamerleden terug van vakantie voor Joegoslavië-debat’ (‘MPs back from vacations for debate on Yugoslavia’), *de Volkskrant*, 06/08/92; Rob Meines, ‘Verdeeldheid over ingrijpen in Bosnië’ (‘No unanimity on intervention in Bosnia’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/08/92.

³¹⁶³ Rob Meines, ‘Verdeeldheid over ingrijpen in Bosnië’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/08/92.

³¹⁶⁴ Cf. ‘Groeicende verdeeldheid over ingrijpen in Bosnië’ (‘Growing willingness among politicians to intervene’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/08/92.

³¹⁶⁵ Interview W. Kok, 08/05/00.

13. Opponents of intervention after the images of Trnopolje

In many ways the influence of the images of Trnopolje can be put in perspective. In the first place there were some who continued to object to the emphasis that many media were placing on the Bosnian conflict, at the expense of interest in the civil war in Somalia. In the United States, in the days following the broadcasting of the Trnopolje images, commentary appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and a broadcast by ABS News which defended this position earlier adopted by Boutros-Ghali.³¹⁶⁶ Minister Pronk in the Netherlands expressed similar thoughts. The sociologist Jacques van Doorn, writing in *HP/De Tijd* of 21 August, called the conflict in Bosnia a major drama in European terms but modest in terms of – for instance – the Caucasus, Afghanistan, Cambodia, East Timor and various African countries. He did not think anything could be achieved by a military intervention on the part of the United Nations or the European Community since it is national interests that prevails in those international organizations. Bosnia, he said, was like a house on fire. ‘Looking on helplessly is insufferable, but it has become too risky to enter the house (...) It means that we have to wait until the flames die out for lack of fuel, a prospect that is scarcely acceptable. Thus the discussion will drag on and with the courage of despair sporadic attempts will be made to save what can be saved.’³¹⁶⁷

Secondly, focusing again on the debate in the Netherlands, even after the showing of the Trnopolje images, there remained opponents of intervention. They warned against a lack of long-term aims for Bosnia, the lack of military means for an effective approach, the difficulties posed by the terrain, the many-sided character of the enemy, the risk of a guerrilla war and tensions within the EC and NATO should too many disagreements arise between countries for and against intervention.³¹⁶⁸ In addition, according to some writers, modesty suited the Netherlands in the international debate on intervention. For example, professor of social history Henri Beunders referred to the pro-intervention calls made by Voorhoeve and Van den Doel as ‘remarkable, if not superficial’.³¹⁶⁹

According to foreign affairs commentator G.B.J. Hiltermann in *de Telegraaf* the otherwise ever-careful Clingendael institute had turned into ‘a pugnacious political non-think tank’. He warned of the guerrilla war that would be waiting for a Western intervention force in the ‘scarcely accessible terrain’, in the same way that life had been made difficult for Hitler’s ‘37 divisions’.³¹⁷⁰

The journalists Frans van Deijl and Auke Kok reacted in *HP/De Tijd* to Voorhoeve’s proposals to have the Serb ‘concentration camps’ liberated by commandos. According to the two journalists the Dutch commandos were not the Rambo-types capable of doing such a thing. They were trained mainly as observers and reconnaissance troops. Commandos from other countries could perhaps liberate the camps without too much difficulty, but would then find themselves in dangerous enemy territory with the freed detainees. Van Deijl and Kok reckoned that 400,000 soldiers would be required to ensure safe conduct for the convoys ‘and even then success is not guaranteed’. Thus it was a ‘mission impossible’.³¹⁷¹ According to the two journalists the chances of success of any air support were doubtful because of the probable presence of anti-aircraft missiles, that could be fired from the shoulders of Serbian ‘wild men’ operating around Sarajevo. And should the West be prepared to use military means to deliver an ultimatum to all the warring factions, they would have to anticipate ‘a death toll that would far surpass the consequences of the clean war against Iraq – 100,000 victims’.³¹⁷²

³¹⁶⁶ Strobel, *Policy*, p.138.

³¹⁶⁷ J.A.A. van Doorn, ‘Een pleidooi voor rekolonisatie’ (‘A plea for recolonisation’), *HP/De Tijd*, 21/08/92, p.12.

³¹⁶⁸ Peter Michielsen, for example, was of the opinion that military intervention to stop or reverse the ethnic cleansing would require such a large military contingent that it was unrealistic, Peter Michielsen, ‘Etnisch zuiveren: Servisch patent’ (‘Ethnic cleansing: Serb patent’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/08/92. For a similar opinion see J.W. van der Meulen, ‘Militaire interventie op Balkan kan weinig uitrichten’ (‘Military intervention in Balkans can accomplish little’), *Het Financieele Dagblad*, 21/08/92.

³¹⁶⁹ Henri Beunders, ‘Prijs Balkan-interventie is te hoog’ (‘Price of Balkan intervention is too high’), *de Volkskrant*, 07/08/92.

³¹⁷⁰ G.B.J. Hiltermann, ‘Onmacht van de ‘beschaafde wereld’ (‘Impotence of the “civilised world”’), *de Telegraaf*, 22/08/92.

³¹⁷¹ Frans van Deijl & Auke Kok, ‘Mission impossible’, *HP/De Tijd*, 21/08/93, p.18.

³¹⁷² Frans van Deijl & Auke Kok, ‘Mission impossible’, *HP/De Tijd*, 21/08/93, p.20.

In his response Beunders qualified the small piece' by Voorhoeve and Van den Doel published in *De Volkskrant* on 5 August as 'an example of *Gesinnungsethiek* that places good intentions above consequences'. As possible consequences of the proposals made by Voorhoeve and Van den Doel Beunders saw conflict escalation, internationalization, a rift in NATO, the WEU or the EC, while it was not possible to indicate what the final aim was to be in Bosnia. Ethnic cleansing using peaceful methods, for instance, could lead to long-term irredentism. And thus Beunders called for 'caution, especially for a small country such as the Netherlands', whose concrete military contribution Voorhoeve and Van den Doel had been unable to specify. Voorhoeve, whose doctoral dissertation was entitled *Peace, Profits and Principles*, should have known better, claimed Beunders: 'The self-preservation of a small country such as the Netherlands, dependent on trade and surrounded by large neighbours, requires us not to march at the front in military interventions but to provide humanitarian help and to continue to bang the drum for diplomatic solutions'. The call for military intervention, stated the Rotterdam professor, came from people unable to stand impotence and wanting to do something without being prepared to think about the consequences. In view of the limited capabilities of the Netherlands, he called for 'an exercise in impotence'.³¹⁷³

H.J. Neumann, chairman of the CDA (Christian Democrat) Foreign Affairs Committee, expressed the opinion that the politicians needed to think about the consequences both of doing nothing and of military intervention. As regards the latter, he felt that both government and parliamentarians had better seek the advice of military experts and experts on the region.³¹⁷⁴ In *Trouw* the parliamentary journalist Willem Breedveld wrote that military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina was 'not only a question of morality or justice but above all a matter of effectiveness and efficiency': 'It is like a fire brigade commandant, from whom you cannot and may not expect that he should send his men blindly into a burning house'. First the risks and consequences have to be weighed, not only for his own men but also for the neighbouring buildings. He warned Dutch parliamentarians that the strong moral awareness that the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia could not be allowed to form a precedent did not give them *carte blanche* to ignore the promptings of their intelligence.³¹⁷⁵ The editorial in *NRC Handelsblad* had disagreed with this position a few days before: 'The military strategist and the diplomatic politician may in their wisdom decide that all that can be done is hose down the neighbouring buildings, but the agitated citizen wants to get into the burning house to save whatever he can'. The *NRC Handelsblad* commentator agreed that foreign policy based only on conviction and not on the consequences of political and military action was irresponsible, but in his view, there was more. The West's own interests were at stake. Every day that passed without intervention undermined the authority of the EC and NATO.³¹⁷⁶ According to some, this affected not only the image of NATO in the eyes of the world but also in the eyes of citizens in the member states. 'The Yugoslavia question', wrote columnist Hofland in *NRC Handelsblad*

'is by no means any longer confined to the civil war and the question of blame. It has become a European question because it shows the extent of the gap between peoples and governments. The political elite doubts its electorate because they do not know to what extent the people are prepared to have their peaceful and comfortable lives taken away. The electorate doubts the decision-making capacities of the politicians because the latter have already

³¹⁷³ Henri Beunders, 'Prijs Balkan-interventie is te hoog', *de Volkskrant*, 07/08/92.

³¹⁷⁴ H.J. Neumann, 'Bosnië dwingt tot keuze tussen schande of oorlog' ('Bosnia forces choice between shame or war'), *de Volkskrant*, 12/08/92.

³¹⁷⁵ Willem Breedveld, 'Ingrijpen uit morele verontwaardiging is niet genoeg' ('Intervention out of moral indignation is not enough'), *Trouw*, 29/08/92.

³¹⁷⁶ 'Europa en de Balkan' ('Europe and the Balkans'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/08/92.

demonstrated that they are unable to put a stop to a bloody crisis that horrifies everyone'.³¹⁷⁷

The political philosophers Ido de Haan and Tsjalling Wierstra reacted violently to the 'realists' who were against intervention. They stated that the realists first created their own facts and then used them as a basis for preferring non-intervention. And this, they said, was some kind of 'moral perversity': 'If this sort of despicable attitude is supposed to represent high-ground morality, then it is clear that a sense of reality is perhaps good but not the sort of thing you can leave to realists'.³¹⁷⁸

These animated reflections demonstrated the tensions existing between the supporters of intervention and those in favour of doing nothing. The comparisons with guerrilla-like and bogged-down situations such as Yugoslavia in the Second World War, Vietnam and Lebanon and the calculations that stated that a hundred thousand soldiers or more would be the minimum requirement for intervention failed to impress the interventionists but simply increased their feelings of impotence, an emotion that came back time and time and again in the pages of the newspapers in August 1992.³¹⁷⁹ It was scarcely possible for the two parties to convince one another. For those who wanted more action than politicians or military regarded as possible 'politics stinks (...) through the deodorant of caution', as Hofland put it.³¹⁸⁰ A stalemate had developed in which the arguments on both sides were used again and again. A debate in which alternatives to military intervention would be sought did not take place and it was remarkable how, for instance, the limited readiness of the Dutch government to accept refugees was completely banished to the background. Exceptions were the professor of modern history at the University of Amsterdam, M.C. Brands and the reporter with RTL 4 Nieuws, Michiel Bicker Caarten, both of whom said that they thought that military intervention made no sense, because the aim was unclear, but at the same time pointed out that the Netherlands most certainly could do something by accepting refugees.³¹⁸¹

The majority of the best-known opinion-makers in the Netherlands, when confronted with the question 'intervention: yes or no?' began to be more clearly defined as being pro-intervention. In favour were particularly: Voorhoeve, Van den Doel, Leurdijk, the brothers Tromp, Wecke, Oostlander, Faber, Van Eekelen, Huyser, De Vogel, Bleich, Von der Dunk and Hofland. Against were: most of the military, Beunders, Brands, Van Doorn, Koch, Hiltermann, Michielsen, Scheffer and Jan Marijnissen, chairman of the Socialist Party.³¹⁸² In addition Van den Doel, Huyser and De Vogel had shifted from an anti-interventionist point of view to an opinion calling for intervention.

Nuances in images

A third remark that places the effect produced by the ITN images of Trnopolje in perspective relates to the effect they had on the visualization of the conflict by people themselves. While it has been shown, on the one hand, that even before 6 August comparisons had been made between the actions of the Serbs and events under the Third Reich, after that date there were individuals who criticized this analogy. Moreover it continued to be said, at least in the Netherlands, that the Serbs were not the only

³¹⁷⁷ H.J.A. Hofland, 'Het dragelijke van de ondragelijkheid' ('The bearable part of what is unbearable'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/09/92.

³¹⁷⁸ Ido de Haan & Tsjalling Swierstra, 'Realisten praten in Balkan-debat recht wat krom is' ('Realists in debate on the Balkans argue what is wrong is right'), *de Volkskrant*, 28/08/92.

³¹⁷⁹ For the latter cf. Appendix Scholten & Ruigrok & Heerma, *In Sarajevo wordt geschoten*, p.250.

³¹⁸⁰ H.J.A. Hofland, 'De politiek stinkt' ('Politics stink'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/08/92.

³¹⁸¹ M.C. Brands, 'Militair ingrijpen vereist heldere doelen' ('Military intervention requires clear objectives'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/08/92; Michiel Bicker Caarten, 'Servië is geen nazi-Duitsland' ('Serbia is no Nazi Germany'), *de Volkskrant*, 07/08/92.

³¹⁸² For the latter see Jan Marijnissen, 'Rampzalig waanidee' ('Disastrous delusion'), *Trouw*, 20/08/92; idem, 'Nieuwe kruistochten? SP tegen militaire interventie in voormalig Joegoslavië' ('New crusades? SP against military intervention in the former Yugoslavia'), *Tribune* 17 (1992)(11September), pp.14-15.

guilty ones in the conflict. The Dutch press, for instance, made little use of the term ‘concentration camps’. In general the Dutch media stuck to the term ‘prison camps’.³¹⁸³ It is known that the editorial staff of *NRC Handelsblad* consciously did everything they could to avoid the use of the term ‘concentration camp’.³¹⁸⁴

Vulliamy and the ITN journalists themselves were not alone in rejecting the comparison drawn between the images of Trnopolje and the Second World War concentration camps. Stephen Engelberg and Chuck Sudetic, for example, writing in *The New York Times*, said that the camps were part of the series of measures aimed at removing other ethnic groups from the territory claimed by the Serbs. They were not meant as places of extermination. Nor did the murders that occurred there have the systematic character of the Third Reich’s extermination camps. Many deaths were caused by drunken Serb soldiers beating their victims. Sometimes small groups were executed. And detainees died from sickness, hunger and bad hygiene. According to the reports they had, some hundreds of detainees had died in the camps and not the 17,000 that the Bosnian authorities had started to report. And thus they refused to use the word ‘genocide’.³¹⁸⁵ The American weekly *Time* expressed itself in similar terms. According to Western diplomats, quoted in the magazine, most of the camps were ‘harsh but not murderous detention sites where enemies, civilian and military, are warehoused before expulsion or exchange’.³¹⁸⁶

In *NRC Handelsblad* Peter Michielsen wrote that there was no question of the camps being extermination camps. ‘One should bear in mind that the stories of abuse originated with individuals who had been *set free*, not with people who had escaped. How many Jews were let out of Auschwitz?’³¹⁸⁷ Arie Elshout and Bert Lanting wrote in *Het Parool* that no matter how reprehensible their behaviour might be, the Serbs were not pulling in members of other ethnic groups from all over the former Yugoslavia to a camp in order to destroy them. They preferred to see them leave.³¹⁸⁸ The editor in chief of *Vrij Nederland* Rinus Ferdinandusse did, however, want to draw a comparison with the Second World War, but not the usual one: ‘They are not mass extermination camps, but handy storage sites such as each party constructs when wishing to isolate another. The Netherlands too put its members of the fascist NSB and the SS in a camp, and that is a black page in our history. But during and because of war no human standards apply’.³¹⁸⁹

As in other countries, the reports about the camps caused the Serbs to be highlighted in the Netherlands as the major violators of human rights. In almost 80% of the headlines and opening paragraphs where *NRC Handelsblad*, *de Telegraaf*, *Trouw* or *De Volkskrant* reported in August 1992 on human rights violations in Bosnia, such as camps, ethnic cleansing and deportation, a link was made to the Serbs, in something over 10% to the Croats and in more than 4% to the Muslims.³¹⁹⁰ But it would seem, however, that this is not essentially different from the situation before the images were broadcast. It is only the frequency of the total number of reports on human rights violations – and thus on the Serbs’ responsibility – that shows a rise. It is, in fact, remarkable how there was still space in the Dutch newspapers after ‘Trnopolje’, especially in the opinion-forming contributions, for voices putting into perspective the Serb violations of human rights either by questioning their nature and extent or by highlighting the behaviour of other parties in the conflict. Among the latter the Croats were indeed second worst.

³¹⁸³ Appendix Scholten & Ruijgrok & Heerman, *In Sarajevo wordt geschoten*, p.198.

³¹⁸⁴ Appendix Jan Wieten, *Srebrenica en de journalistiek*, pp.55-56.

³¹⁸⁵ Stephen Engelberg & Chuck Sudetic, ‘Conflict in the Balkans: In enemy Hands’, *The New York Times*, 16/08/92.

³¹⁸⁶ J.F.O. McAllister, ‘Atrocity and Outrage’, *Time*, 17/08/92.

³¹⁸⁷ Peter Michielsen, ‘Het geweten spreekt wel wat laat’ (‘Our pangs of conscience have come a bit late’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/08/92.

³¹⁸⁸ Arie Elshout & Bert Lanting, ‘Servië moet voelen als het niet luistert’ (‘Serbia must feel the consequences if it does not listen’), *Het Parool*, 06/08/92.

³¹⁸⁹ Rinus Ferdinandusse, ‘Nederland grijpt in’ (‘The Netherlands intervene’), *Vrij Nederland*, 14/08/92,

³¹⁹⁰ Appendix Scholten & Ruijgrok & Heerman, *In Sarajevo wordt geschoten*, pp.195-196.

Mient Jan Faber, who travelled through South Serbia in early August and visited the refugee camps there, declared on his return to the Netherlands that he supported military intervention to protect helpless people but that intervention should also take place ‘at places where the Muslims operate under the banner of hard religious nationalism’, and Faber had understood from UN military personnel ‘that it is extremely difficult to enter into agreements with the Muslims because they do not stick to their word’.³¹⁹¹ In the NOS newscast he declared that Serbs, Croats and Muslims were all guilty of serious human rights violations.³¹⁹²

For the cultural anthropologist René Grémaux, who had resided several years in Yugoslavia for study purposes and was to become a trainer at the Dutch *Centrum voor Vredesvraagstukken* (Peace Research Centre) it was not even a question. In his opinion Europe had been ‘for months in the firing line of a propaganda war waged by Croats and Muslims using the big guns’. He rejected the black-and-white picture of ‘Serb attackers’ and ‘Bosnian defenders’ that dominated the judgement of politicians and military via the media. He gave the Serb authorities carte blanche for future wrongdoing by stating: ‘If the demonization of everything Serbian predominates and increasingly determines the policy pursued by international bodies, we should not be surprised if Serbs behave in accordance with the image we have accorded them’. He turned against the characterization of the Serb detention centres as concentration camps, though he did admit that one should have no illusions about the treatment meted out to the detainees ‘and certainly not in the case of those with blood on their hands’. They were presumably ‘ordinary camps (...) which belong to the usual horrors of war’. He preferred to place the Serbs and the Jews on the same level: ‘The understanding shown for Israel’s use of force in order to prevent Jews ever again going like lambs to the slaughter is quite evidently not shown to the Serbs’.³¹⁹³

Dutch journalists did their own limited research into camps in Bosnia and the results were relatively harmless for the Serb image. The NOS newscast on 7 August carried an interview, from the Willem I barracks in Den Bosch, by Betty Lamers with a Bosnian woman refugee who had been in the Trnopolje camp. She declared that she had not been beaten there.³¹⁹⁴ On the same day the NOS newscast showed pictures of a Serb internment camp in Butmir, where the inmates looked reasonably well. Karadzic was given the opportunity to say that human rights had not been violated in the Serb camps and that any reports that this was the case could be ascribed to Muslim propaganda.³¹⁹⁵ Raymond van den Boogaard also took a look at this place and described it as: ‘The Serb prison with probably the best imaginable conditions in Bosnia’. The Muslims he found there were not underfed. Their main problems were boredom and isolation.³¹⁹⁶ After the images of Trnopolje the NOS television news repeatedly showed images of other Serb camps such as Manjaca, Omarska and Bosanski Brod. Each time it appeared that the prisoners looked well.³¹⁹⁷ A few days after the broadcast of the Trnopolje film the journalist Ewoud Nysingh (*De Volkskrant*) was the first to succeed in visiting a camp of the extremist Croatian Defence Force (HOS) in Capljina, south of Mostar, where Serbs were held

³¹⁹¹ ‘Faber bepleit militair ingrijpen ter bescherming burgers’ (‘Faber urges military intervention for protection of civilians’), *de Volkskrant*, 08/08/92.

³¹⁹² *NOS Journaal*, 07/08/92, 10 pm.

Bart Rijs, who had recently visited Srebrenica and the nearby Bratunac, where a slaughter of Muslims by Serbs had just taken place, wrote at the end of August that horror stories of ethnic cleansing could be heard throughout Bosnia, ‘from both Serbs and Muslims’. But eye-witnesses could seldom be found and in Bratunac and Srebrenica he had found no further trace of woundings. He put this question to his readers: ‘Is it really now possible to speak of genocide being committed on Bosnian Muslims? Or is it exaggeration and war propaganda meant to induce foreign intervention?’ [Bart Rijs, ‘Sporen van een massamoord’ (‘Traces of mass murder’), *HP/De Tijd*, 28/08/92, p.11.]

³¹⁹³ René Grémaux, ‘Positie Serviërs door propaganda eenzijdig belicht’ (‘Biased portrayal of position of Serbs by propoganda’), *de Volkskrant*, 14/08/92.

³¹⁹⁴ *NOS Journaal*, 07/08/92, 8.00 pm.

³¹⁹⁵ *NOS Journaal*, 07/08/92.

³¹⁹⁶ Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Butmir, Sevische gevangenis dient als modelinstelling’ (‘Butmir, Serbian prison serving as a model institution’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/08/92.

³¹⁹⁷ *NOS TV-Journaal*, 08/08/92, 09/08/92, 11/08/92.

prisoner. The prisoners, who looked thin, did not dare to talk to Nysingh because of the presence of the Croatian Major General Blaz Kraljevic. Nysingh did not learn much from his visit and in the end was afraid that his presence was endangering the lives of the prisoners.³¹⁹⁸

14. The somewhat longer term after Trnopolje: the Netherlands is willing, but the rest of the world ...

Not only had the 'public' visualization of the situation and public opinion been strongly influenced before the ITN images went out across the world, other things were going on in the field of policy. On 6 August, prior to the ITN programme, the EC for instance demanded that the Bosnian-Serb authorities allow Red Cross observers to visit the camps.³¹⁹⁹ And after the programme the influence on policy outside the Netherlands – two UN resolutions, the making available of 1,800 British and 1,100 French troops – was not great. Resolution 770, which permitted the use of force accompanying humanitarian aid, in fact expressed the viewpoint already adopted by the EC during the Lisbon summit, after which Mitterrand's visit to Sarajevo removed the reason. In *The New York Times* of 8 August readers were told that while it was true to say that on television, in newspapers and in magazines pressure was being applied to European politicians to do more about the Serb aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina, there had not yet been any demonstrations in the major European cities and the European leaders were showing little appetite for firmer action.³²⁰⁰

The pictures from Trnopolje seemed to have practically no effect on American policy. Bush stated forcefully that he refused to have his policy set by emotions called up by the images. On 8 August he declared: 'I don't care what the political pressures are. I am not going to get bogged down in some guerrilla warfare'.³²⁰¹ The American president did not argue with the fact that 'the shocking brutality of genocide in World War II, in those concentration camps, are burning memories for all of us, and that can't happen again'. And the American government would continue to insist that the international community be given access to the camps. But at the same time he also said that everyone calling for the American military to be sent in was not carrying his presidential responsibilities. 'Before one soldier is committed to battle, I want to know how that person gets out of there', stated the American president.³²⁰²

Bush knew that he had the support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who confirmed that support via the chairman's assistant, Lieutenant General Barry R. McCaffrey, when he announced to the Senate that if the West wished to do more than supply humanitarian aid the line between peace-keeping and peace-enforcement would soon be crossed.³²⁰³ McCaffrey said that 400,000 soldiers would be needed for peace-enforcement and he sketched in powerful terms the difficulties that an army of this size would encounter: 'You are dealing with 23,000 square miles of a country slightly larger than South Vietnam. It is four times bigger than Northern Ireland, with 200,000 armed people in it, and so if you ask me how long it would take to subdue those combatants or disarm them, or deter them, it would be a tremendous military challenge on broken-up ground and forested terrain'.³²⁰⁴

³¹⁹⁸ Ewoud Nysingh, 'Kamp voor Serviërs: lijkt verdomme wel een hotel' ('Camp for Serbs 'looks an awful lot like a hotel') and 'Geloof niets van wat hij zegt' ('Do not believe anything he says'), *de Volkskrant*, 11/08/92.

³¹⁹⁹ 'EC demands access to Serb detention camps', *Press Association Newsfile*, 06/08/92.

³²⁰⁰ Craig R. Whitney, 'Balkan Scenes Stir Europe, But Action Remains Elusive', *The New York Times*, 08/08/92.

³²⁰¹ Maggie Fox, 'Public opinion moves towards military intervention', *Reuter, B-wire*, 09/08/92, 15:58:59. See also Tony Smith, 'New Reports of Atrocities; Bush, U.N. Commander Counsel Caution', *The Associated Press*, 07/08/92; J. Sirica, 'Crisis and politics. Bush hits back at aid criticism', *Newsday*, 08/08/92.

³²⁰² J. Sirica, 'Bush: No Quick Solution. Balks over troops for Bosnia relief', *Newsday*, 09/08/92.

³²⁰³ United States Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Situation, p.30; S. Friedman, 'View From Pentagon. Aide: Force could be used to get to camps', *Newsday*, 12/08/92.

³²⁰⁴ United States Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Situation*, pp.39-40; Steven L. Burg, 'The International Community and the Yugoslav Crisis', Esmen/Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p.256; Adolf Carlson, 'No Balm in Gilead: The Employment of Military Force in the War in The former Yugoslavia and Prospects for a Lasting Peace', Blank (ed.), *Wars*, p.77.

Even Clinton went no further in his criticism of Bush than to insist on sending in air power, a call that earned him blame on the part of the media for wanting to 'combat genocide on the cheap'.³²⁰⁵ But a few days after the ITN images had been broadcast the Senate did agree, by 82 votes to 13, to the use of military means by the UN to get the humanitarian aid into Bosnia and to the insistence that the camps be opened for international inspection. But Bush's announcement in May to Boutros-Ghali that the American government, with an eye to Congress and the electorate before the presidential elections in November, would give no more money to the UN, remained in force, which meant that large-scale use of UN military in Bosnia was in effect made impossible.³²⁰⁶

Probably the most tangible contribution to American policy made by the indignation that arose through the reporting on the Bosnian-Serb camps was the readiness shown by the American government to agree to the establishment of a commission of experts to collect evidence for a possible war tribunal.³²⁰⁷ However the intention to set up a commission of this type had already been there before the transmission of the ITN images.³²⁰⁸

Even though after the reports about concentration camps the American newspapers and weeklies gave considerably more space to the war in the former Yugoslavia than in the previous eighteen months,³²⁰⁹ this scarcely had any effect on the American government's preparedness to contemplate military action. As stated by the American diplomat Zimmermann: even if American television had broadcast round-the-clock reports of Serb atrocities the Bush government would not have budged.³²¹⁰ American policymakers declared that all they had done after the Trnopolje pictures had been shown was give the *impression* that they were doing something.³²¹¹ National security adviser Scowcroft said of the media storm following the ITN images: 'We just sort of rode it out'.³²¹² Gutman too was of the opinion that his contributions and that of ITN about the camps had had 'zero' effect on American policy.³²¹³ The American public was more inclined to follow its president than the media. It was only in a poll held on 6 August that supporters of Bush's policy towards Yugoslavia and its opponents were in balance (38% each). Subsequent polls in August, however, showed a majority for those in support of the presidential policy. In fact, from August the public continued to follow the president, first Bush and then Clinton, whether he was more or less inclined to intervene.³²¹⁴

In the United Kingdom public opinion was even more tepid than in the United States.³²¹⁵ After the enormous reverberations caused by the Trnopolje images in the morning papers on 7 August, the effect quickly ebbed away. In any case, in the period up to September 1993 the British newspapers gave even more space to opinions against than for intervention. And although Bosnia took pride of place on British television, a great deal of attention was also paid to other disaster areas, especially Somalia and

³²⁰⁵ J. Schell, 'Fighting Genocide on the Cheap', *Newsday*, 09/08/92.

³²⁰⁶ Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, pp.72-73.

³²⁰⁷ F. Bruning, 'Human-Rights Probe of Serbia Urged', *Newsday*, 14/08/92; K. Royce and P.J. Sloyan, 'The U.S. Waited. Back in June, CIA Told Bush of Atrocities', *Newsday*, 14/08/92.

³²⁰⁸ 'VS onderzoeken oorlogsmisdaden in ex-Joegoslavië' ('US investigates war crimes in ex-Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/08/92.

³²⁰⁹ James J. Sadkovic, 'The response of the American media to Balkan neo-nationalisms', Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide*, pp.121-125.

³²¹⁰ Quoted in Warren P. Strobel, 'The Media and U.S. Policies Toward Intervention. A Closer Look at the 'CNN Effect'', Crocker & Hampson with Aall (eds.), *Chaos*, p 367; Strobel, *Policy*, p.148 with supporting references to Eagleburger, Scowcroft and Kenney.

³²¹¹ Strobel, *Policy*, pp.147, 152 and 219; Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, p.95. Michael N. Barnett, 'The Politics of Indifference at the United Nations and Genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia', Cushman & Meštrovic (eds.), *Time*, p.150.

³²¹² Strobel, *Policy*, p.148.

³²¹³ Strobel, *Policy*, pp.152-153.

³²¹⁴ Richard Sobel, 'U.S. and European Attitudes toward Intervention in the Former Yugoslavia: Mourir pour la Bosnie?', Ullman (ed.) *World*, pp.147, 149, 150 and 163; Major, *Autobiography*, p.539; Simms, *Hour*, p.56.

³²¹⁵ Owen, *Odyssey*, p.21.

the Sudan, sometimes Angola and Georgia. According to Young the variety and quantity of attention was fatal rather than stimulating for pro-intervention public opinion.³²¹⁶

According to Prime Minister Major himself the wide spectrum of opinions in his country ensured that there was no proposal of a serious alternative to the fairly cautious attitude of his government to intervention in the former Yugoslavia.³²¹⁷ Scarcely a word of opposition to the Major government's cautious policy was uttered by his own Conservative Party,³²¹⁸ An important exception was Margaret Thatcher, who believed that the West should guarantee multi-ethnicity in Bosnia or lose its credibility. For her it was clear that the international community was dealing with Serb aggression and not with civil war. She called not only for military intervention but also for a lifting of the arms embargo imposed on the Bosnian government. At the time of the Serb attack on Srebrenica in early 1993 she advanced, in her usual powerful manner, that this was happening 'in the heart of Europe and we have not done any more to stop it. It is in Europe's sphere of influence. It should be in Europe's sphere of conscience'.³²¹⁹ Her statements sometimes even made some on the left long for her return as leader. However her successor, John Major, hit back hard by saying that as regards Bosnia nobody had the monopoly of care or conscience. And the British Minister of Defence, Rifkind, dismissed Thatcher's statements as 'emotional nonsense'.³²²⁰ During the entire period of the war in the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1995 the British parliament paid relatively little attention to the situation there. It took almost six months after the declarations of independence by Croatia and Slovenia before the British parliament dealt with the Yugoslavia question on 12 December – at half past three in the morning. After that there was scarcely any opposition to government policy either. During the entire conflict in Bosnia the Labour Party was opposed to military intervention.³²²¹ Despite very solid reports from Bosnia itself most of the newspapers in the United Kingdom were just as reluctant to take up a clear anti-government position.³²²²

In France a clique of intellectuals, journalists, artists and other opinion-makers appeared to be exerting major influence on the government through debates.³²²³ Unlike in the Netherlands, however, the French parliament was in a weak position. The role of the representatives of the French people in determining policy on peace operations could even be said to have been 'non-existent'. At best the French parliament served as a sounding board for the government in this area of policy.³²²⁴ The French parliament could therefore not act as a sounding board for public opinion.

The German public was very involved in the developments in the former Yugoslavia. In late 1992, for example, 85% of the German population were of the opinion that the question of Yugoslavia was the most important international problem of the day.³²²⁵ However there was at the same time a somewhat widespread feeling that for constitutional and historical reasons German troops would not be called upon.

³²¹⁶ Hugo Young, 'Commentary: Hurd's world in camera, not in the camera's', *The Guardian*, 14/09/93.

³²¹⁷ Major, *Autobiography*, pp.535-536.

³²¹⁸ Simms, *Hour*, p.49.

³²¹⁹ Simms, *Hour*, p.50.

³²²⁰ Simms, *Hour*, p.51.

³²²¹ Simms, *Hour*, pp.297-299.

³²²² Simms, *Hour*, pp.300-306.

³²²³ Confidential report (1); interview H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00; Védrine, *Mondes*, pp.627-629; Lionel Charles & Gérard Toulouse, 'Genèse d'un colloque', Allain e.a., *Ex-Yugoslavie*, p.13; Marie-Claude Smouts, 'Political aspects of peace-keeping operations', Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, p.37; Martin Sommer, 'Niet mee eens – petitie volgt' ('Disagreement – petition forthcoming'), *de Volkskrant*, 26/01/01.

³²²⁴ Marie-Claude Smouts, 'Political aspects of peace-keeping operations', Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, p.32-33.

³²²⁵ Everts, *Duitsland*, p.190. SE further, for instance, Axt, *Jugoslawien*, p.354; W. Beusekamp, 'Duitse leger moet naar Bosnië' ('German army must go to Bosnia'), *de Volkskrant*, 04/02/93; Maull, *Germany*, pp.121-123; Heinz-Günther Stobbe, 'Realpolitik' und dritter Balkankrieg. Thesen zum Versagen der europäischen Politik auf dem Balkan', Bremmer (Hg.), *(Sch)erben*, pp.113-115; Martin Lettmayer, 'Da wurde einfach geglaubt, ohne nachzufragen', Bittermann (Hg.), *Serbien*, pp.37-49.

The British and French governments continued to oppose any form of military intervention. They were prepared to do no more than place more emphasis on humanitarian aid than had already been the case since Mitterrand's solo visit to Sarajevo.³²²⁶ Moreover the governments of both countries, just like the United States, referred to the Security Council in matters of action – and they were all members of the Council with the right of veto.³²²⁷

The Major government, true enough, had made 1,800 troops available, but under strict conditions. The offer of 1,800 men had been a compromise 'between what is militarily desirable and what public opinion was demanding'.³²²⁸ Prior to the ITN broadcast Prime Minister Major had adopted the stance that the situation in the former Yugoslavia was such that solutions imposed from outside were impossible³²²⁹ and he did not waver from that opinion. The Minister of State of the British Foreign Office Douglas Hogg stated to the assembled press on 13 August during a visit to Sarajevo that he had made it clear to the Bosnian government 'that there was no cavalry over the hill. There is no international force coming to stop this'.³²³⁰ The British military would be going primarily to protect the humanitarian convoys. The basic principle was 'to do all in our power to limit the conflict'. The British government was not prepared to do more. The American and British Chiefs of Staff had calculated that it would take 400,000 troops – three times the size of the British army – to keep the three warring factions apart.³²³¹ British experts had calculated that an intervention force of no more than 60,000 troops would cost an annual amount of GBP2.5 billion.³²³² The British Minister of Defence, Rifkind, also let it be known that as soon as British troops were fired on the contingent would be withdrawn.³²³³ The British point of view remained that in Bosnia there was no question of 'objectives worth dying for'.³²³⁴ Moreover it took until the end of October, almost two-and-a-half months, before the troops promised by the United Kingdom arrived in Bosnia.

Nor did the UN take more action after the images. The deputy commander of UNPROFOR, General P. Morillon, warned against military intervention immediately after the broadcast. It would, he said, cost more than a hundred thousand dead and wounded.³²³⁵ On 12 August Boutros-Ghali wrote in a letter to the Security Council that the safety of the UN troops already present in the former Yugoslavia would be threatened if there should be military intervention.³²³⁶ A day later the French president Mitterrand declared that not a single member of the Security Council was considering a military intervention and the French government would not propose it: 'ajouter la guerre à la guerre ne résoudra rien' ('adding another war to the war will not solve anything').³²³⁷

As early as 6 August the North-Atlantic Council had given the Military Committee the green light to examine possible ways of putting troops in. There were three options on the table: reinforce the monitoring of economic sanctions; monitor the handing in of heavy weaponry; military support for the aid transports.³²³⁸ A decision was to be taken a week later. But on 14 August the NATO Secretary-

³²²⁶ Cf. Tardy, *France*, pp.161-162.

³²²⁷ See, for instance, Michael N. Barnett, 'The Politics of Indifference at the United Nations and Genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia', Cushman & Meštrovic (eds.), *Time*, p.150; Tardy, *France*, pp.163-165 and 169.

³²²⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02053. Loudon 409 to the Foreign Affairs ministry, 19/08/92.

³²²⁹ Letter from Major to Ashdown dated 4 August 1992, quoted in Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p.119.

³²³⁰ Geciteerd in Almond, *War*, p.250.

³²³¹ McCaffrey in United States Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Situation*, p.38; Major, *Autobiography*, p.535.

³²³² Calic, *Krieg*, p.161.

³²³³ Sharp, *Balkans*, p.14.

³²³⁴ This was how British diplomat Greenstock thought to put into words the standpoint of the British government and public opinion during a meeting of the Permanent Council of the WEU, ABZ, 999.21, part 74, Hoekman 676 to Van den Broek, 09/12/92.

³²³⁵ Tony Smith, 'New Reports of Atrocities; Bush, U.N. Commander Counsel Caution', *The Associated Press*, 07/08/92.

³²³⁶ 'UN approves use of force in Bosnia', *The Gazette*, 14/08/92.

³²³⁷ Mitterrand interview with *Sud Ouest*, 13/08/92, quoted in Tardy, *France*, p.168.

³²³⁸ United States Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Situation*, p.25; 'Bush wil militairen inzetten in Bosnië, Navo maakt plan' ('Bush wants to deploy military in Bosnia, NATO makes plans'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/08/92; 'NAVO bestudeert

General Wörner announced that his advisers needed a further ten days to study various scenarios. The images of Trnopolje, therefore, had not led to a feeling of urgency even within NATO. A NATO diplomat told the press that there was still a long way to go before NATO really would send troops to Bosnia. ‘And it might even never come to that.’³²³⁹

This delay irritated both the Dutch government³²⁴⁰ and the Dutch parliamentarians. They complained that NATO could have suspected from the Lisbon summit that a resolution was about to be adopted that would permit the use of force for humanitarian ends. Why, then, did they need so much time? Blaauw, for example, was ‘saddened’ and ‘embarrassed’ by this ‘blow in the face not only for the prestige of the UN and the Security Council but also of NATO’. He advised Lubbers and his colleague Major to make a visit and take with them his soul-mate Kohl: ‘And then the Conservative-Christian-Democrat family can get round the table and discuss how we are to solve this problem in Europe.’³²⁴¹

In the NATO discussions held in Brussels there was a heavy option on the table: send 115,000 soldiers to escort transport convoys from Split to Sarajevo. The Netherlands let it be known that lighter options should be considered, even though it realized that this would bring greater security risks.³²⁴² Since that also represented the standpoint of other countries, the North-Atlantic Council ordered the military to elaborate a plan based not on holding a route but on escorting aid convoys. The WEU was also engaged in similar planning at the time. Both organizations calculated that five to six thousand troops would suffice for a light option of this type. The international community would then have to accept the fact that the guards at the roadblocks in Bosnia would decide whether and at what rate the convoys would be allowed to pass through.³²⁴³ On 25 August the NATO Council gave its approval to this option.³²⁴⁴ It was a pretty slim result.

Keep quiet, unless...

Discussions in NATO and the WEU were going too slowly, a fact noted not only by Dutch parliamentarians but also on 20 August by the Dutch Ministerial Council meeting.³²⁴⁵ And thus Minister Van den Broek and Premier Lubbers launched the plan to implement military operations, outside NATO and the WEU but with UN permission, to protect humanitarian aid to Bosnia.³²⁴⁶ Van den Broek’s list included Belgium, Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and Turkey. With this intention the government, that had still been feeling parliamentary pressure on 12 August,

mogelijk gebruik geweld in Bosnië’ (‘NATO studying possible use of force in Bosnia’), *de Volkskrant*, 07/08/92; ‘Inzet grondtroepen zal minimaal zijn’ (‘Deployment of ground troops will be limited’), *de Volkskrant*, 12/08/92.

³²³⁹ ‘Bosnië’ (‘Bosnia’), *de Volkskrant*, 15/08/92. See also ‘Navo huivert bij gedachte aan optreden Bosnië’ (‘NATO shudders at thought of duties in Bosnia’), *Trouw*, 14/08/92; Folkert Jensma & Jan Gerritsen, ‘Navo stelt besluit over Bosnië uit’ (‘NATO delays decision on Bosnia’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/08/92. ‘Navo ‘bestudeert’ resolutie’ (‘NATO ‘reviewing’ resolution’), *Trouw*, 15/08/92.

³²⁴⁰ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 20/08/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

³²⁴¹ NCRV, Hier en Nu, 16/08/92, 13.10 uur. In diezelfde uitzending sprak ook De Hoop Scheffer zijn terleurstelling uit.

³²⁴² Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 20/08/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

³²⁴³ ‘NAVO maakt plannen voor Bosnië minder ambitieus’ (‘NATO making less ambitious plans for Bosnia’), *de Volkskrant*, 21/08/92; ‘NAVO-top wil 6000 man naar Bosnië sturen’ (‘NATO leaders want to send 6,000 troops to Bosnia’), *de Volkskrant*, 25/08/92.

³²⁴⁴ ‘Serviërs en moslims stellen zich hard op’ (‘Serbs and Muslims take a hard line’), *Trouw*, 26/08/92.

³²⁴⁵ See also Van den Broek in Radio 1, *VARA*, Friday edition, 14/08/92, 5.05pm, where he said that he did not know whether other countries or organizations were at that stage, but that he had put in a strong plea that the WEU and NATO should consider the implementation of the recent Security Council resolutions.

³²⁴⁶ Ewoud Nysingh, ‘Bosnische president wordt grote verliezer in Londen’ (‘Bosnian president will be the big loser in London’), *de Volkskrant*, 25/08/92; ‘Nederland kondigt initiatief Bosnië aan als besluitvorming in Navo nog lang duurt’ (‘The Netherlands announces Bosnian initiative – if decision to be taken within NATO takes much longer’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/08/92.

surpassed parliament in dynamism. Now the members of parliament began to be somewhat wary. Parliament fully approved of Van den Broek's plan as long as it was only designed to put pressure on NATO and the WEU, but as soon as it became reality, said CDA, PvdA and VVD members, the United States should be added to the list.³²⁴⁷ Surprise was also expressed in the *Vrede en veiligheid* (Peace and security) working party of the CDA's Foreign Policy Committee at this 'forceful' language on the part of the government.³²⁴⁸

Van den Broek's intention was 'not wrong', wrote the *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 'but the question is whether the tone is not a little too shrill in contrast to the contribution that our country can really make. If Great Britain, France and Italy fail to adopt this line, our pluckiness will look a little ludicrous'.³²⁴⁹ 'If nobody apart from France and a couple of other countries participate, Dutch readiness could perhaps seem a little gratuitous', wrote Jaap Jansen in the *Elsevier* weekly. 'Or is the Netherlands about to take up arms without further thought and will the Royal Netherlands Army be providing Europe's mercenaries?'³²⁵⁰

Almost immediately after Van den Broek's plan was announced an historic interview with the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Brigadier General Willink, was published in both *De Telegraaf* and *Het Binnenhof*. He stated that the Netherlands would be unable to supply fighting units because it was impossible to send conscripts unwilling to go.³²⁵¹ This led many organs of the press to comment that it would be better for the Dutch government to leave aside the rhetoric.³²⁵² In fact on 6 August *Trouw* had already asked the question of whether the Dutch parliamentarians had sufficient oversight of the consequences of intervention, especially the sacrifice in terms of Dutch lives, and whether they were prepared to accept such consequences. Was that not the case, the politicians would do better to keep quiet, no matter how embarrassing that might be.³²⁵³ The retired Brigadier General E.P.B. Tomasso, ex-commander of the Dutch UN battalion in Lebanon, expressed similar sentiments. The only solution in Yugoslavia, he said, was massive intervention. Were 'we, spoiled Europeans' not prepared to do such a thing, 'we should stop right now with that very noncommittal philosophizing about military intervention in the hell's kitchen of the Adriatic'.³²⁵⁴

'The Netherlands is faced with (...) the question of how to get the military fist to the spot where the political mouth has been shouting in strong terms for some time now', was the conclusion reached by the editorial in *NRC Handelsblad*.³²⁵⁵ But the start to an answer had already been given. On 22 August in an interview with *Trouw* Minister Pronk had shown himself to be a supporter of military intervention going beyond the protection of aid convoys. The military, he said, should take a look at how best an intervention could be organized. 'As an amateur' the minister himself was not a good judge of this. But he did think that as soon as possible his colleague Ter Beek should be able to make

³²⁴⁷ 'Kamer wil Van den Broeks plan voor actie in Bosnië eerst zien' ('Lower House wants to see Van den Broek's plan for campaign in Bosnia first'), *de Volkskrant*, 22/08/92.

³²⁴⁸ CDA-secretariaat, Commissie Buitenland, werkgroep Vrede en veiligheid, 1992, H4.184, agenda point 3, report of the working party, 24/08/92.

³²⁴⁹ 'Krijgshaftige dadendrang' ('Bellicose thirst for action'), *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 21/08/92.

³²⁵⁰ Jaap Jansen, 'Vragen van leven en dood' ('Questions of life and death'), *Elsevier*, 22/08/92.

³²⁵¹ Guido van de Kreeke, 'Zandhaas heeft weer toekomst' ('Foot-slogging has future again'), *De Telegraaf*, 22/08/92; Rik in 't Hout, 'Generaal Wilink onthult: 'Nederland niet in staat snel troepen te leveren' (Generaal Wilink discloses: 'The Netherlands is incapable of contributing troops quickly'), *Het Binnenhof*, 22/08/92.

³²⁵² Solo-actie uit den boze ('Solo campaign absolutely forbidden'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 22/08/92; the former commander of the first army corps, retired Lieutenant General W.J. Loos in Remco Meijer, 'Een harde job' ('A hard task'), *Elsevier*, 22/08/92, pp.31-32; J.L. Heldring, 'De Brezjnev-doctrine van Jan Pronk' ('The Brezhnev doctrine of Jan Pronk'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/08/92; Guikje Roethof, 'Krijgshaftig: Hoe wil Ter Beek eigenlijk aanvallen' ('Bellicose – How does Ter Beek actually want to attack?'), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 02/09/92.

³²⁵³ 'Interventie vergt offers (2)', *Trouw*, 06/08/92.

³²⁵⁴ E.P.B. Tomasso, 'Bittertafelstrategen' ('Cocktail strategists'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/08/92.

³²⁵⁵ 'Het Nederlandse Leger' ('The Royal Netherlands Army'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/08/92.

available an airmobile brigade for rapid intervention.³²⁵⁶ This idea was enthusiastically supported by Rob Meines in *NRC Handelsblad* and Kees Lunshof in *de Telegraaf*.³²⁵⁷ It prompted Ter Beek to remark that Pronk had good insight into the future of the Royal Netherlands Army.³²⁵⁸ This put the Airmobile Brigade in the interventionists' sights.

15. Sights on the airmobile brigade

In the Dutch government's White Paper for Defence memorandum for 1991, which had seen the light at the end of March 1991, the government had expressed its intention of setting up an airmobile brigade. The idea was that this would make available a unit that could be called on rapidly in times of crisis management operations, i.e. operations falling outside the system of collective defence in a NATO context. The memorandum characterized the unit as consisting of one of the armoured infantry brigades transformed into an airmobile brigade fitted out with fighter and transport helicopters. In that way the Netherlands hoped to remain a significant ally, one that not only was making severe spending cuts but also and at the same time was in a process of modernization. The Airmobile Brigade would be part of the NATO rapid intervention force. It would act as a sort of fire brigade prior to the sending in of mechanized units. The transport helicopters required for the Airmobile Brigade were to be acquired in the period up to and including 1995. In the beginning they would be leased. After 1995, according to the memorandum, 40 helicopters would be purchased. Detachments from the existing Airmobile Brigade consisting of three light infantry battalions could be rapidly deployed for UN peacekeeping operations because of their complete readiness and because it would be the only unit in the Army completely manned by volunteers.

The operational personnel of this brigade would then form the first contribution to the increased Dutch participation in UN peace operations (see Chapter 4). The brigade linked up with the French airmobile concepts (experience in Algeria), those of the United States (Vietnam), the United Kingdom (Falklands) and Germany (Fallschirmjäger).³²⁵⁹ The concept was based on the idea that the tank, that had played a major role in the idea of large-scale war, had come to the end of its development and that large-scale movements of troops over the ground could easily be discovered by satellite. Helicopters had, in recent years, shown major developments with the addition of night-vision equipment, greater load-bearing capacity and fitting out as a weapons platform. A tank had a range of only three kilometres, an Apache helicopter eight. Moreover, in view of developments in the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, it could no longer be expected that an attack from the East would take place across a broad front without a long warning time. And thus some people in the Royal Netherlands Army wanted to get away from the unilateral fixation on mechanized fighting (with track vehicles rather than wheeled), that had characterized the Army as long as they could anticipate engagement on the lowland plains of northern Germany.

In the Netherlands the great defender of the airmobile concept was infantry Brigadier General J.W. Brinkman. Until April 1993 Brinkman had been deputy head of the Planning department of the Royal Netherlands army and, later, commander of the Airmobile Brigade. Brinkman's finest hour was probably when the Airmobile Brigade was first mentioned publicly in the White Paper of Defence of 1991. At the time the brigade was given a double task. On the one hand, it was to contribute to a rapid

³²⁵⁶ Willem Breedveld & Louis Cornelisse, 'Jan Pronk bekeerd: Soldaten tegen Servië' ('Jan Pronk for, soldiers against Serbia'), *Trouw*, 22/08/92.

³²⁵⁷ Rob Meines, 'Ander Nederlands defensiebeleid vergt nog meer durf van politici' ('A different Dutch defence policy requires even more nerve from politicians'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/08/92; Kees Lunshof, 'Politiek kleineert risico's in Bosnië' (Political circles play down risks in Bosnia), *de Telegraaf*, 25/08/92. See also A. van Staden and J.B. Veen, 'Defensie is nog steeds een grabbelton' ('Department of Defence is still a lucky bag'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/09/92

³²⁵⁸ 'Ook de PvdA weet het niet' ('Even the PvdA is uncertain'), *Trouw*, 31/08/92.

³²⁵⁹ For foreign precursors of the Dutch airmobile brigade concept see colonel of the grenadiers R.J. van Vels, 'Helimobiliteit, een nieuwe dimensie?' ('Helicopter mobility, a new dimension?'), *Carré*(1992)2/3, pp.29-32.

concentration of NATO forces in response to a Warsaw Pact troop concentration. On the other, the brigade was to have been deployable for UN peace-keeping operations.

Practically from the start of the conflict in Yugoslavia, therefore, the Airmobile Brigade was referred to as a unit to be deployed. In the summer of 1991 retired Brigadier General De Vogel wrote that a lightly armed battalion of the airmobile brigade would be preferred for deployment in the former Yugoslavia rather than an armoured infantry battalion equipped with armoured vehicles, heavy mortars and anti-tank weapons since it would have a provocative rather than a dampening effect on the warring factions. At the same time he also pointed to the problem: a battalion of that sort was not yet operationally available.³²⁶⁰ Polemologist Wecke wrote soon afterwards that the GroenLinks ('Green Left') political party was taking an inconsistent standpoint by stating that it was in favour of military intervention in times of flagrant crimes against human rights but was against the Airmobile Brigade: 'If the Airmobile Brigade, seen by GroenLinks ('Green Left') as undesirable, is nonetheless created, the same brigade will most certainly be a factor to keep in mind elsewhere for peacekeeping or peace enforcement where rapid deployment is required.'³²⁶¹ As early as autumn 1991 Polemologist Hylke Tromp, speaking in the television programme *Het Capitool* had put the case for military intervention in Yugoslavia, with the argument: why, otherwise, does the Netherlands have its new Airmobile Brigade?³²⁶²

From early 1992 recruitment for the brigade started with spectacular TV spots commissioned by the Royal Netherlands Army showing helicopter landings on a dam, and adverts were placed in weekly and monthly magazines. In April 1992 the commander of the Air Mobile Division for Central Europe (still existing only on paper), of which the Dutch Airmobile Brigade was to become part, the Dutch Major General Pieter Huijsman, said in an interview with *Elsevier*: 'If my division had existed it is not unimaginable that they would now be deployed in Yugoslavia'.³²⁶³

In a long television interview of Ter Beek by Ton Elias and Catharine Keijl on 21 June 1992 the possibility of deploying the Airmobile Brigade for peacekeeping was also discussed. The minister said that the marines and the new brigade would be able to complement one another very nicely. 'In addition, we currently have two marine battalions. With their deployment in Cambodia (...) the remaining forces in the Netherlands that can undertake this sort of activity are pretty limited.' From this, Elias had drawn the conclusion that the army was therefore changing into 'a flexible unit that can be deployed everywhere. Say Yugoslavia, say northern Iraq'.³²⁶⁴ Two months later Wilmink said – in the interviews already referred to – that in view of the problem posed by the conscripts, only the Airmobile Brigade could be deployed for missions such as represented by ex-Yugoslavia. But this would not happen before 1994 because only then would the Brigade be up to strength and operational.³²⁶⁵ Whether intentionally or not, Wilmink (who was on the point of retiring) had set politicians, press and experts on a track: it was not possible to deploy fighting troops until the airmobile brigade was a fact. The countdown could begin.

16. The London conference

At the 7 July G7 meeting in Munich Mitterrand had proposed calling a wider conference on Yugoslavia, intended to co-ordinate the activities of the EC and the UN. In addition a conference of this kind

³²⁶⁰ J.C.A.C. de Vogel, 'Zo'n Europese vredesmacht staat niet zo gauw in het lid' ('Such a European peace force does not stand in line that quickly'), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/08/91, pp.26-27.

³²⁶¹ Leon Wecke, 'Het glibberige pad naar de nieuwe wereldorde' ('The slippery path to the new world order'), *de Helling* 4(1991)3, p.19.

³²⁶² Daan Dijksman, 'Een héél rare oorlog' ('One very strange war'), *HP/De Tijd* 07/02/92, p.7.

³²⁶³ Bert Bommels, 'Landmacht de lucht in' ('Army takes to the skies'), *Elsevier*, 04/04/92, p.23.

³²⁶⁴ TV, RTL4, *De Vierde Kamer*, 21/06/92, 11.05pm.

³²⁶⁵ Rik in 't Hout, 'Generaal Wilmink onthult: "Nederland niet in staat snel troepen te leveren"' ('Generaal Wilmink reveals: 'Netherlands incapable of contributing troops at short notice') and idem., 'Zonder dienstplicht zakt leger volledig in elkaar' ('Without compulsory military service the army will collapse entirely'), *Het Binnenhof*, 22/08/92.

would provide an opportunity for involving the Muslim countries, the United States, Russia and Turkey in the approach to the problems. Initially the government in London did not react positively to the proposal, feeling that it was by way of criticism of Carrington. After the row between the British government and Boutros-Ghali, in which the latter had stated that 'he was not just going to be steamrolled by the British', the British government had, however, perceived that better agreement was required between EC and UN initiatives³²⁶⁶ and Hurd announced the conference on 25 July.³²⁶⁷ Thus the conference was in no way called, as has been claimed,³²⁶⁸ because of pressure exerted by the images of Trnopolje. A total of forty countries were invited to the conference, held on 26 and 27 August 1992 in London under the joint chairmanship of UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali and the United Kingdom as chairman of the EC. As well as the member countries of the EC, participants included the five permanent members of the Security Council, the G7 countries, the troika countries of the OSCE, the Islamic conference and the countries bordering on the former Yugoslavia.

One problem was the representation of Serbia and Yugoslavia at the conference. Milosevic, who naturally understood that the Serbs would be given a dressing down at the conference, started off by making his presence and that of the president of Montenegro Bulatovic dependent on at least de facto recognition of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) that had come into being at the end of April. The West, however, was not prepared to recognize the FRY, which could have led to Milosevic staying at home. The British government was keen to have Cosic and Panic, president and premier of the FRY, attend the conference at least as private persons so that the Belgrade regime would be bound as widely as possible by the results of the conference.³²⁶⁹ By way of solution Germany suggested that Cosic and Panic should be allowed to participate as leaders of a combined Serb-Montenegrin delegation, which could also include Milosevic.³²⁷⁰

This still did not go far enough for Panic. He was dead set against Milosevic going to London. In contrast to Serbia, with its presidential system, the federation of lesser Yugoslavia had a chancellor-based system where the prime minister had the weightiest function. On these grounds Panic claimed for himself the leadership of the delegation from rump-Yugoslavia. He was irritated about the fact that the West kept Milosevic on his feet by continuing to accept him as a partner in discussions and negotiations. He believed that Yugoslavia's foreign relations were the prerogative of the federal premier and thus there was place for Milosevic in his delegation. But the British government insisted that Milosevic attend the conference.³²⁷¹

In consequence the conference was faced with a divided Serbian leadership. Cosic, Panic and Milosevic were all three present but failed to radiate harmony. Of the three, indeed, the West was still inclined to regard Milosevic as the most serious partner in the discussions. And though Cosic believed that it would be to Serbia's advantage if he were to explain Belgrade's point of view to the foreign powers, the representatives of the international community had different ideas. And Cosic gave every reason for this. In his expressions of nationalism he was certainly as cutting as Milosevic. When questioned by a foreign journalist he declared, for instance, that of course there were Serb camps, but they were detention camps such as existed in all wars:

'Of course I do not deny that cruelties could take place. But in the Croatian camps, which are also very numerous, even greater crimes are committed,

³²⁶⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01813. Memorandum from Director-General of Political Affairs at the Foreign Ministry (DGPZ) to Van den Broek, 13/08/92, no. 121/92.

³²⁶⁷ 'Partijen Bosnië nemen deel aan humanitair overleg' ('Bosnian parties participate in humanitarian discussions'), *de Volkskrant*, 30/07/92; Woodward, *Tragedy*, p.302.

³²⁶⁸ See, for instance, Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p.296.

³²⁶⁹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01813. Engels 257 to Van den Broek, 14/08/92.

³²⁷⁰ ABZ, DIE/2001/00023. Memorandum from chief of DEU to DGPZ, 18/08/92, no. 151/92; ABZ, 345170, Loudon 412 to Van den Broek, 20/08/92.

³²⁷¹ Djukic, *Milosevic*, p.57; Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p.157

which I dare not describe to you. As regards the Muslims, they do not take any prisoners: they simply kill or murder.³²⁷²

In the same discussion he qualified the opposition between Croatia and Serbia as opposition between a religious state and a democracy, between fundamentalism and tolerance.³²⁷³ The Serb was the new Jew.³²⁷⁴ Germany was occupied in realizing its intentions, dating back to 1918, by smashing Yugoslavia.³²⁷⁵ Consequently, Cosic had little international credit.

At the same time many governments began to harbour scepticism about the level of authority that the conference could accord to Panic.³²⁷⁶ In the eyes of many Western policy makers Panic was 'a loose cannon'³²⁷⁷ and the general expectation was that he would always lose to Milosevic if it came to the crunch.³²⁷⁸

The disunity between Cosic, Panic and Milosevic led to unusual scenes in the course of the conference. When, in his capacity as chairman, Major asked Milosevic at a given moment if he could agree with the declaration on Bosnia-Herzegovina drawn up by the conference, Panic reacted by saying that it was not Milosevic but he himself who spoke on behalf of the delegation and that Milosevic was not permitted to speak until he, Panic, had given him permission to do so.³²⁷⁹ Before the eyes of the conference delegates Milosevic reacted stoically.³²⁸⁰ But behind the scenes he wrangled with Panic and even threatened to hit him.³²⁸¹

The official aim of the meeting was to increase and broaden international pressure on the warring factions in Bosnia. The British government hoped that this would lead to the acceptance of a number of principles. These included: a stop to the fighting and to the ethnic cleansing; respect for human rights and the rights of minorities; changes to borders would only be made after mutual agreement; and further negotiations would be started, while sanctions would still apply.³²⁸²

Despite these express intentions it was unclear in many capitals what precisely the government in London wished to achieve with the conference.³²⁸³ There seemed to be several mutually exclusive aims. In the first place, the delegations present would have to express their condemnation, in short declarations, of the Serb activities in Bosnia and Croatia. Secondly, a declaration of principles would have to be accepted by the conference participants, preferably also by Serbia. Third, a plan of approach to Bosnia-Herzegovina must be drawn up. Fourth, the conference would have to create a permanent structure under international supervision for negotiations between the parties to the conflict as a replacement for the EC's Yugoslavia conference. Fifth, there would need to be discussions on tightening the sanctions. Sixth, the settling of the long, drawn-out problem of the elimination of Serbian heavy weaponry, either by diplomatic or by military means. And finally it would be a good thing if the conference could finally ensure a lasting ceasefire in Bosnia. Six days before the start of the

³²⁷² Schiffer, *Temps*, pp.25-26.

³²⁷³ Schiffer, *Temps*, pp.22-23.

³²⁷⁴ Schiffer, *Temps*, p.30.

³²⁷⁵ Schiffer, *Temps*, pp.24-29.

³²⁷⁶ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 20/08/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

³²⁷⁷ Owen, *Odyssey*, p.28. See also Peter Michielsen, 'Milan Panic: veel woorden, maar weinig macht' ('Milan Panic. Many words, but little power', *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/08/92.

³²⁷⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01813. Engels 257 to Van den Broek, 14/08/92.

³²⁷⁹ Doder & Branson, Silber & Little, *Death*, p.260; ABZ 345170, Loudon 421 to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28/08/92.

³²⁸⁰ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p.158.

³²⁸¹ Silber & Little, *Death*, p.258.

³²⁸² ABZ, DPV/ARA/02051. COREU British chairmanship of EC, 20/08/92, cpe/pres/lon/1004; PV New York to Van den Broek, 21/08/92, fax 5731A; PV New York to Van den Broek, 21/08/92, fax 5802, Statement by the Representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Community and its members on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 24/08/92.

³²⁸³ Ed Vulliamy, 'Bosnia – The Secret War: Tragic Cost of Allies' Hidden Hostility', *The Guardian*, 21/05/96; ABZ, DPV/ARA/01813. Van den Broek 241 to Moscow embassy, 18/08/92.

conference the British director of Political Affairs at the British Foreign Office, Appleyard, during a *Comité Politique*-discussion, qualified the conference as an ‘unpredictable exercise’ and a ‘high risk operation’.³²⁸⁴

An advantage, perceived by Dutch authorities, of better co-ordination between the EC and the UN was that in future any agreements not adhered to by the warring factions could be much more quickly dealt with by concrete measures taken by the Security Council.³²⁸⁵ At the same time, prior to the conference, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs had considerable objections to the cautious attitude of the British government, which seemed to indicate a policy of even-handedness, something that would be to the Serbs’ liking. The declaration in the ‘statement of principles’ sent round on the evening before the conference offered less than other statements made by the EC on such essential questions as minorities, the international status of Yugoslavia and the sanctions.³²⁸⁶

The government in The Hague was not particularly happy with this. It was of the opinion that the international community was exerting too little pressure on the regime in Serbia. Van den Broek wanted the conference to issue a strong condemnation of the Serb policy of ethnic cleansing, should accept the principle that peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina should not be based on a division of the region into ethnic areas and should insist on the perpetrators of human rights crimes being brought to trial.³²⁸⁷ It turned out that for support of his harder position Van den Broek could only count on the German and – to a lesser extent – the Danish government. After the meeting of the British cabinet on 18 August, in the course of which it was also decided to deploy 1,800 British soldiers, the position of the government in London appeared to change and it turned out to be prepared to underline more clearly in the draft declaration of principles Serbian responsibility for the events in Bosnia and particularly the ethnic cleansing. The text also pointed explicitly once again to the responsibility on the part of states, as mentioned in resolution 771, to gather information about human rights offences.³²⁸⁸

The governments of France, Spain, Italy and Greece wished however that the London conference should not lead to a direct condemnation of Serbia. They were of the opinion that it would be better to involve in the results of the conference all the parties in the Bosnian conflict in order to end the war there.³²⁸⁹ It was clear that there was still severe disunity in the European Community regarding the way in which Serbia should be approached. And disunity over the attitude to be adopted vis-à-vis the FRY was no less great. While some countries, such as France, supported suspending Yugoslavia from international organizations, the Dutch government – for example – stuck to the view that Yugoslavia no longer existed and that the FRY had to make a fresh application for membership of international organizations.³²⁹⁰ Despite the British concessions to the Dutch view, therefore, prior to the conference the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague felt that ‘we would have to rely entirely on ourselves’ during the conference.³²⁹¹

The conference produced an enormous quantity of declarations and agreements. For example, the parties to the conflict agreed to a Programme of Action regarding Humanitarian Questions, where they once more declared that they were bound by the Geneva Convention and the Additional Protocols. A declaration of principles laid down thirteen principles that a peace agreement would have to satisfy, including: the integrity of all state borders; the regulation of questions of state leadership

³²⁸⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01813. Van den Broek 120 to London embassy, 21/08/00.

³²⁸⁵ See, for instance, ABZ, DEU/ARA/00085, Biegman 886 (Van den Broek) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23/09/92; COREU Den Haag, date and number unknown. [Assign. DGPZ 29/09/92.]

³²⁸⁶ ABZ, DIE/2001/00023. Memorandum of chief DEU to DGPZ, 18/08/92, no. 151/92; ABZ, 245170, COREU The Hague, 18/08/92, cpe/hag/461.

³²⁸⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01813. COREU The Hague, 21/08/92, cpe/hag/471; ABZ, 508360, Van den Broek 211 to PV New York, 21/08/92.

³²⁸⁸ ABZ, 508360, D’Ansembourg 796 to Van den Broek, 21/08/92. See also *ibid.*, D’Ansembourg 797 to Van den Broek, 24/08/92. See also ABZ, 345170, Loudon 412 to Van den Broek, 20/08/92.

³²⁸⁹ ABZ, 345170, Loudon 412 to Van den Broek, 20/08/92.

³²⁹⁰ ABZ, 345170, Loudon 413 to Van den Broek, 20/08/92.

³²⁹¹ Hoekema quoted in Both, *Indifference*, p.148; Dutch-language quotation in 1999 version, p.247 n. 9.

through consensus and arbitration; the refusal to recognize territory gained by force; opposition to and reversal of ethnic cleansing; allowing the international community access to the camps and their closure over time; and guarantees of human rights and the rights of minorities.³²⁹² In fact the principles stated nothing new when compared to countless other previous declarations, as Ministers Kinkel and Van den Broek observed.³²⁹³

There was no reference at all to sanctions on failure to observe the principles, while the declaration proclaimed that if Serbia and Montenegro observed the principles they would once again become valued members of the international community.³²⁹⁴ In addition it was agreed that the current embargo would be made even stricter and observers would be stationed at the Serbian borders to monitor compliance.³²⁹⁵ An CSCE commission led by the British Sir John Thompson would investigate the situation in the camps. Moreover it was agreed that a study would be made of the possibility of establishing Safe Areas.

The British Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Douglas Hogg, signed a document together with Karadzic and Koljevic stating that the Bosnian-Serb leadership promised to notify the positions of all the heavy artillery – further specified as all 82 mm mortars and heavier guns – that were to be grouped around the four towns of Sarajevo, Bihac, Gorazde and Jajce. This concentration would have to take place within seven days, after which the weapons would be placed under UN control.³²⁹⁶ The Bosnian Serbs further promised that they would withdraw from a further unspecified ‘substantial’ part of the territory they had occupied.

One of the aims of the London conference was to create a permanent consultative structure to replace the EC peace conference. At the start of the conference it was announced that Lord Carrington was quitting his post as mediator on behalf of the EC. Some believed that this had occurred at the insistence of Boutros-Ghali, who had made his co-chairmanship of the conference dependent on Carrington’s departure, since he had still not forgiven him for his performance in mid-July.³²⁹⁷ Boutros-Ghali denied having played this part. He stated that Carrington was sick of the lack of concessions on the part of Croats, Muslims and Serbs.³²⁹⁸

A new mediator: Lord David Owen

Carrington’s successor was David Owen. He was to form a duo with Vance, Boutros-Ghali’s representative in the peace process. Vance and Owen had got to know one another in the late 1970s, when they had attempted jointly, as foreign ministers of the United States and the United Kingdom respectively, to solve the Rhodesia question. The choice of Owen was remarkable for two reasons. First because shortly beforehand he had written an open letter to Major in which he called for the bombing of Serb positions. That had been sufficient reason for the French foreign minister, Dumas, to express a ‘réservation mentale’ with regard to Owen. When he noticed that he was getting little support in this, he left the meeting room demonstratively.³²⁹⁹ Owen’s appointment was even more remarkable since he was generally regarded as ‘undiplomatic’³³⁰⁰ and to be the possessor of ‘an unlimited capacity for bluntness’.³³⁰¹ He had the reputation of being ‘an unbelievable know-all, difficult to work with, vain,

³²⁹² Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp.3-4 and 33-34.

³²⁹³ ABZ, 345170, Loudon 416 to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26/08/92.

³²⁹⁴ Silber & Little, *Death*, p.262.

³²⁹⁵ Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp.43-45.

³²⁹⁶ Ramcharan, *Conference*, p.39.

³²⁹⁷ Glenny, *Fall*, p.215.

³²⁹⁸ Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, p.48.

³²⁹⁹ ABZ, 345170, Loudon 416 to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26/08/92.

³³⁰⁰ O. Garschagen, ‘Clinton geeft Bosniërs slechts moreel gelijk’ (‘Clinton agrees with Bosnians only on moral issues’), *de Volkskrant*, 06/02/93.

³³⁰¹ Hieke Jippes, ‘David Owen: zo bot als nodig’ (‘David Owen. As blunt as necessary’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/08/92.

and a man who makes no attempt to hide his feelings'.³³⁰² The British shadow foreign minister remarked on Owen's appointment that he was known for his 'many qualities, but not as a mediator. Indeed, he has Balkanized a few political parties himself'. He had just about ruined everything that he himself had striven for.³³⁰³

He first gained his reputation as 'kamikaze pilot' and 'enfant terrible' when, at the end of the 1970s as Foreign Minister of the Labour party, he had antagonized the anti-Europeans in his own party. Out of dissatisfaction with what he regarded as the too leftist developments in Labour he left the British workers' party and in 1981 was co-founder of the Social Democratic Party which, after a very promising start, had only moderate success – partly because of the British constituency-based electoral system. His then fellow party member Roy Jenkins compared him to the tree in an English fairy story that killed off all life for miles around.³³⁰⁴ 'Appointing Owen as dove of peace', sneered the Dutch weekly *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 'is like sending a pyromaniac to do repairs in an oil refinery'.³³⁰⁵ However Owen did seem to stand as symbol for the changes that British policy towards Yugoslavia was alleged to have undergone in mid-August. At the end of September, for example, he declared that the Bosnian Muslims must not become the victims of '*Realpolitik*'. If the West were to allow that to happen, the entire Muslim world would react, 'and rightly so'.³³⁰⁶

The birth of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY)

It was agreed in London that the meeting would be followed by a peace conference in Geneva, under the joint chairmanship of the EC chairman and the UN Secretary-General, to be known as the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, (ICFY). Owen (for the EC) and Vance (for the UN) would be joint chairmen of the conference Steering Committee, which would consist of the countries that had also taken part in the London conference. The Steering Committee would mainly serve as an advisory body, coming together approximately ten times in the subsequent three-and-a-half years, and would never take a formal decision. The actual activities involved in the negotiation process lay with Owen and Vance, who informed the members of the Steering Committee verbally and in writing of the progress of discussions with the leaders of the parties to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. There were to be six working parties dealing with parts of a peace plan based on the principles agreed in London. The working parties would occupy themselves with, respectively: Bosnia-Herzegovina; humanitarian aspects; ethnic and minority problems, including Kosovo, Vojvodina, Sandzak and Macedonia; succession of states and the distribution of the assets of the old Yugoslavia; economic questions; confidence-inspiring measures and verification. The principal working parties were the Bosnia group under the leadership of the Finn Matti Hisaari and the humanitarian aspects group chaired by High Commissioner for Refugees Ogata.

During the conference it became clear that the British government intended it to serve as a safety valve. In the words of the American diplomat Victor Jackovitch, who attended the conference as representative of the State Department, the British design more or less amounted to allowing the Serb leaders to make promises that both the British and other governments knew beforehand they would never keep: 'It was a landmark in handling the war (...) a beginning of the policy of doing nothing'.³³⁰⁷ It was clear that of the two schools of thought at the conference, the one that gained the upper hand

³³⁰² W. Rebergen & W. Jansen, 'David Owen en Cyrus Vance: vreemd koppel op oorlogspad' ('David Owen and Cyrus Vance. Strange couple on the warpath'), *Trouw*, 13/02/93. Tromp, *Verraad*, p.46 (02/09/92) called him "the most brilliant failure in British politics since Randolph Churchill". See also Maas, *Neighbor*, p.254.

³³⁰³ Simms, *Hour*, p.137.

³³⁰⁴ Ko Colijn & Paul Rusman, 'David Owen wil de Nobelprijs voor de vrede' ('David Owen wants the Nobel Peace Prize'), *Vrij Nederland*, 11/09/93, p.15.

³³⁰⁵ Misha Rasovich & Hans van Willigenburg, 'David Owen: werelddokter op huisbezoek in Bosnië' ('David Owen. World's doctor making a house call in Bosnia'), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 05/05/93, p.15.

³³⁰⁶ Quoted in Almond, *War*, pp.260-261.

³³⁰⁷ Ed Vulliamy, 'Bosnia – The Secret War: Tragic Cost of Allies' Hidden Hostility', *The Guardian*, 21/05/96.

was that which was striving for the Belgrade regime's agreement to end the conflict in the former Yugoslavia rather than that whose supporters wanted Serbia to be dealt with firmly. The first school of thought included such people as Boutros-Ghali, who set the tone of the conference with a speech totally lacking in criticism of Serbia.³³⁰⁸ The Dutch delegation, led by Minister Van den Broek, belonged to the latter school of thought together with the delegations of the United States, Canada, Germany, Austria, Slovenia and Turkey. In his first speech the Dutch minister demanded that strong pressure be put on Serbia as the party mainly guilty of ethnic cleansing. For him the conclusion was clear: immediate and full implementation of resolutions 770 and 771, the placing of the heavy weapons under international surveillance, the admission of international observers into Kosovo, a tightening of the trade embargo, exclusion of Yugoslavia from all international bodies and the setting up of a war crimes tribunal to deal with the former Yugoslavia. He was not prepared, in the worst-case scenario, to exclude military intervention.³³⁰⁹ Apart from Van den Broek, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hikmet Cetin, was the only other delegation leader not to exclude the use of force against Serbia.³³¹⁰

The fact that in the end Prime Minister Major made a powerful closing statement was, as reported by the Dutch delegation, 'particularly the result of the forceful joint performance on the part of the Dutch and German delegations'. Despite British, French and Italian opposition both delegations had also succeeded in persuading the Twelve to support the idea of a black list of individuals guilty of serious breaches of human rights. Van den Broek, Kinkel and Eagleburger also supported Silajdzic in his opposition to the description of the conflict in Bosnia as a spontaneous civil war. They succeeded in having an indirect reference to the Serb aggression included in the declaration on Bosnia.³³¹¹

Meanwhile the FRY delegation had let the British chairman know that they would leave the meeting if a declaration on Serbia should be drawn up in the form of the condemnation wished for by the Netherlands and Germany. Within the delegation itself it was Milosevic who mainly opposed the requirement that Serbia should recognize the borders of the former Yugoslav republics. He stated that he had no problem with any of the other points, such as halting Serbia's interventions in Bosnia and Croatia and the restoration of the constitutional rights of the inhabitants of Kosovo and Vojvodina.³³¹² Boutros-Ghali was absolutely determined to prevent the FRY delegation from leaving the conference and the British chairmanship, supported by Eagleburger, believed that Karadzic and Izetbegovic had promised too much to allow this to be marred by the departure of the FRY delegation. From the British side, therefore, a proposal was put before the Dutch and German delegations that Major would be satisfied with a verbal warning to Serbia at the close of the conference. Van den Broek was strongly opposed to the idea. 'Hardliners' such as Minister Kinkel and himself, as Minister Van den Broek qualified them, had repeatedly submitted points in the course of the conference with the assurance that they would be included in a separate declaration on Serbia. If the declaration failed to get off the ground, Van den Broek believed that little would be left of the essential pressure on Serbia. He thus made his 'dissatisfaction' known to Hurd 'in unmistakable terms'.³³¹³ After enormous pressure from Hurd and Eagleburger (let's grab this text and run) Van den Broek finally agreed to a somewhat watered-down British text, mainly because in its closing passages it stated that if the Serbs failed to cooperate in the implementation of the London agreements, the Security Council would be asked to apply severe sanctions against the Serbs 'leading to their total isolation'.³³¹⁴

Premier Major then solved the question further by making the statement at the very last moment and then immediately closing the meeting, without further discussion or voting. In that way

³³⁰⁸ Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp.58-64.

³³⁰⁹ Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp.145-148; ABZ 345170, COREU of the British chairmanship of the EC, 27 August 1992, cpe/pres/lom 1080; Loudon 416 to BZ, 26/08/92; Both, *Indifference*, pp.148-149. Cf. Major, *Autobiography*, p.537.

³³¹⁰ Ramcharan, *Conference*, p.115.

³³¹¹ ABZ, 345170, Loudon 421 to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28/08/92.

³³¹² For the declaration see Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp.53-54.

³³¹³ ABZ, 345170, Loudon 421 to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28/08/92.

³³¹⁴ ABZ, 345170, Loudon 421 to Van den Broek, 28/08/92.

the declaration became part of the conference documentation but it was not submitted to formal acceptance.³³¹⁵

After the conference a triumphant British premier Major said that the parties in the conflict in Bosnia had now accepted a yardstick 'by which they would be judged'.³³¹⁶ But he soon began to manipulate the yardstick himself by declaring on television that not everything that had been agreed would be implemented exactly that way and as quickly as agreed: 'Some people may not be able to deliver immediately or in full'.³³¹⁷ A British ambassador at the Foreign Office was, however, markedly more critical and said that everything achieved in London 'rested on the sands of Milan Panic's promises'.³³¹⁸

'Verbal agreements are one thing; deeds are something else', said Bosnian president Izetbegovic when he left the London conference.³³¹⁹ What counts is what the coming weeks really bring, was what the British Foreign Minister Hurd seemed to think too, and his German colleague Kinkel was sceptical.³³²⁰

Remarkably enough, Minister Van den Broek was not so sombre. 'Time will tell what the conference was worth', was his judgement. At any rate, he was pleased that the EC no longer carried all the responsibility for a Yugoslavia conference that had 'dominated and sickened' the work of the Twelve. What he did fear, however, was that the United Kingdom would in future allow its attitude to Yugoslavia to be dominated more by its position as permanent member of the Security Council than as EC member state.³³²¹

In the Dutch media there was intense disappointment with 'London'. The general conclusion was that more than a year after the conflict in Yugoslavia had broken out the international community had issued a heap of statements without any means of enforcing them and had thus not advanced a single step.³³²²

But the conference had achieved precisely what the American delegation leader Eagleburger had had in mind. On 13 August Eagleburger was presented as interim Minister of Foreign Affairs because Baker had gone off to lead Bush's election campaign. Eagleburger was considerably less inclined than Baker to involve himself with Bosnia. He was deeply convinced that the West should not really get involved with the former Yugoslavia again until the warring factions had exhausted themselves.³³²³ As he stated in mid-September: 'I have said this 38,000 times and I have to say this to the people of this country as well. This tragedy is not something that can be settled from outside and it's about damn well time that everybody understood that. Until the Bosnians, Serbs, and Croats decide to stop killing each other, there is nothing the outside world can do about it'.³³²⁴ Since there was lack of international preparedness to intervene militarily he supported a mechanism that would keep itself permanently occupied with the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, more humanitarian help, stricter sanctions and preventive diplomacy in the neighbouring countries and those areas of the former

³³¹⁵ Major, *Autobiography*, p.537. According to Silber & Little, *Death*, p.260, this was a proposal made by the Russian minister of foreign affairs Kozyrev.

³³¹⁶ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, pp.159-160. Cf. Silber & Little, *Death*, p.260.

³³¹⁷ Quoted in Almond, *War*, p.262.

³³¹⁸ Glenny, *Fall*, p.217.

³³¹⁹ Carol J. Williams, 'Western leaders concede failure to halt Bosnia strife', *Los Angeles Times*, 29/08/92.

³³²⁰ Steve Crawshaw & Tony Barber, 'Inside Story: Peace? What Peace?', *The Independent*, 30/08/92.

³³²¹ ABZ, 345170, Loudon 421 to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28/08/92.

³³²² See, for instance, 'Realpolitik in London', 'Kroniek van een jaar EG-bemoeienis' ('Chronicles of a year of EC meddling' and Ewoud Nysingh, 'De onderhandelaars zijn weer terug bij af' ('The negotiators are starting all over again'), *de Volkskrant*, 29/08/92; Joris Cammelbeeck & Martin Sommer, 'Thirst for action and powerlessness', *de Volkskrant*, 29/08/92; Folkert Jensma, 'Londoen' biedt weinig ruimte voor euforie' ('London' offering little room for euphoria), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/08/92; 'Een papieren zwaard' ('A paper sword'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/08/92; 'De hoop van de wanhoop (1) en (2)' ('The hope of despair (1) and (2)'), *Trouw*, 29/08/92.

³³²³ Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitiek*, p.95.

³³²⁴ Quoted in Danner, *Clinton*, p.66.

Yugoslavia that had not (yet) been dragged into a crisis.³³²⁵ And that was exactly what the conference had agreed on.

Back in Belgrade Milosevic recovered from the bruising he had suffered as a result of the behaviour of Panic during the conference. He denied having agreed to anything at all in London.³³²⁶ During a meeting with his closest confidants held in his weekend house in Pozarevac the decision was taken that Panic had to be removed from the scene as quickly as possible. On 31 August Seselj submitted a motion of no confidence in Panic in the Yugoslav parliament. But Cosic gave a powerful speech in favour of Panic, and the Montenegrin representatives made clear that they would not support the motion.³³²⁷ The whole affair thus seemed to turn against Milosevic. At that Milosevic's spokesman announced that his party, the SDS, would not support the motion. After three days of violent opposition to Panic and the outcome of the London conference that he had accepted, the parliament finally had to vote in favour.

17. Debate in Parliament, 27 August: resistance to 'hypocrisy'

The images of Trnopolje had aroused a sentiment of powerlessness among Dutch parliamentarians. A year's experience with the problem of Yugoslavia had also contributed: nothing that the international community did seemed to have any effect. On 12 August the members were still working off their frustrations on the government, but it had meanwhile become clear that it was not the government that needed urging on.³³²⁸ On the evening of 27 August during an emergency debate, this time instigated by the VVD, the report of the memorable emergency discussions of 12 August came up in a plenary session of the Lower House. It occurred at a time that the conference was still going on in London. At that moment Van den Broek was struggling to get a severe condemnation of Serbia, but the house was unaware of the fact. And the next day the WEU was to meet to decide its position with regard to military protection for humanitarian convoys. Because of this the debate seemed more designed to give the speakers in the house free rein to express their longings than to lead to a real exchange of thought with the government. And what the parliamentarians had to say seemed mainly directed at foreign heads of government. This trend had become clear among politicians shortly before in an interview with De Hoop Scheffer in *Vrij Nederland*. Though prior to the discussion in the house on 12 August he had given as motive for requesting the debate the need to exchange thoughts with the government regarding the deployment of Dutch soldiers and the creation of Safe Areas, in an interview shortly after the debate he said that he had wanted to show how divided Europe really is. 'A debate of this kind forces the Dutch government to adopt a position in public', he said. 'Then we'll see how divided Europe is on the question of Yugoslavia. Then the cracks in Europe can be seen for what they're really worth.'

The British chairmanship in particular had made 'a very poor impression' on him. The caution exhibited by the Bush government had also been a thorn in his side.³³²⁹

The disappointment at the attitude of the international community with regard to the former Yugoslavia was spoken about on 27 August pretty well the length and breadth of the house. According to Van Middelkoop (GPV) 'the overwhelming political emotion (...) was one (...) of considerable powerlessness'. He recalled the words that premier Lubbers had spoken two weeks before, that in the case of doubt it was better to do something, but of this not much had been seen apart from international meetings.³³³⁰ Various politicians did not shrink from condemning the rest of the world

³³²⁵ See Eagleburger's speech in Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp.116-120.

³³²⁶ Doder/Branson, *Milosevic*, p.158.

³³²⁷ Djukic, *Milosevic*, p.57.

³³²⁸ Interview E. van Middelkoop, 08/10/99.

³³²⁹ Leonard Ornstein, 'CDA'er De Hoop Scheffer bleef in zij vakantie doordenken' ('CDA [man] De Hoop Scheffer still thinking things over during his vacation'), *Vrij Nederland*, 15/08/92.

³³³⁰ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings, p.6151.

from their seats in The Hague. The VVD parliamentarian Blaauw expected nothing from the agreements that were now known to have been arrived at in London. In fact, they were worthless if they were not enforced, ‘certainly not as far as the negotiators from the former Yugoslavia are concerned’.³³³¹ ‘Little has changed in the last two weeks’, Blaauw complained. He was of the opinion that ‘hypocrisy reigns’ in the international community and ‘people are speaking with forked tongues’ and the community ‘sat there with its arms folded’. This constant ‘passivity and half-baked activity are nothing less than a form of international provocation that can lead to long and cruel conflicts’.³³³² Sipkes considered that the performance of the EC and NATO was slowly but surely ‘turning into a travesty’.³³³³ It was ‘just a bit too much’ for her that individuals who belonged in a war trial setting were flying home from London ‘with all signs of deference’.³³³⁴ De Hoop Scheffer believed that the international community had come together at that moment in London to do ‘a re-sit’: ‘We all know that you fail if you don’t pass the re-sit’. The European Community had, he believed, awarded ‘a degree in inaptitude’.³³³⁵ Leerling (RPF – one of the Christian parties) asked the government whether NATO, that had always stood ready during the Cold War, was suddenly overpowered by fear: ‘Surely Serbia isn’t a superpower?’³³³⁶

Against this background it was understandable that members of parliament supported the government in its stance in international bodies, a stance described as ‘activist’ (Valk)³³³⁷ or ‘assertive’ (Van Middelkoop)³³³⁸. It was ‘right that the Dutch government should continue to insist on achieving a result in all the international forums of discussion’ (De Hoop Scheffer).³³³⁹ Leerling too understood ‘that the Dutch government wants more than can be achieved internationally at the moment. My compliments to the government for this’.³³⁴⁰

A number of parliamentarians reached far back into history looking for moral justification for the Dutch attitude: it was found in the Second World War. Blaauw thought that the Netherlands was duty bound to carry heavy international responsibilities ‘towards those who paid the ultimate price, whether in concentration camps, before the firing squad, on the Normandy beaches or wherever else, for our freedom and our human rights’.³³⁴¹ Van Middelkoop, speaking against the background of the disunity in the EC and NATO, wondered ‘where, at the time, the Americans, the Canadians and many others found the courage and the willingness to sacrifice themselves in order to liberate Europe from the scourge of national-socialism’. He wanted to know once and for all where the retired generals were who had known it all so much better than anyone else during the Gulf War.³³⁴²

It was noticeable that in order to take the proposed measures the Netherlands had to lean heavily on France and the United Kingdom. This was seen, for instance, in the range of suggestions for more involvement proposed by Blaauw. He asked for strict application of the embargo against Serbia and Montenegro. Blaauw wanted the government to find out whether it could make units available for the provision of military protection for the promised transport units. He realized that the willingness of conscripts would be a problem. For this reason it could at first be British and French troops who would provide protection but then the Netherlands could offer a unit to relieve those already there. In addition the Netherlands could make F-16s available, both for enforcing a ban on flights over Bosnia and for protecting the aid convoys. And a halt should be called, using force if necessary, to the camps.

³³³¹ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6148.

³³³² TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6147.

³³³³ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6149.

³³³⁴ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6150. Leerling made a similar remark, *ibid.*, p.6154.

³³³⁵ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6152.

³³³⁶ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6154.

³³³⁷ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6150.

³³³⁸ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6152.

³³³⁹ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6152.

³³⁴⁰ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6154.

³³⁴¹ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6147.

³³⁴² TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6152.

For this Blaauw thought of ‘air mobile units, not available in our country; and so for this too we will need allies’.³³⁴³ Blaauw said he was fully aware of the risks for the troops deployed, including Dutch soldiers, as a result of this stance. Which is why he wanted a decision on deployment to be taken exclusively in a plenary meeting.³³⁴⁴

From the point of view of the constitution this argument was not airtight. In fact the government had to take the decision, not parliament. However, there was a great deal to be said for the argument that the house should only speak on such a decision in a plenary session. However the discussion on the government decision to deploy the airmobile brigade more than a year later was not conducted in a plenary session but in the course of verbal consultations. Like Blaauw, Valk and De Hoop Scheffer insisted on stricter application of the embargo and the introduction of a ban on flying.³³⁴⁵ They repeated their preference for the setting up of safe havens, with military protection if needs be.³³⁴⁶

Leerling warned against aiming too high. He could not imagine that the hundreds of thousands of refugees could ever return home. A military force of several hundred thousand would be needed for that and it was unrealistic to expect that this would be forthcoming. But he did have difficulty with having to recognize that violence evidently paid off. At any rate, military intervention was perhaps necessary to liberate the camps: ‘Whatever the case, we can’t look on helplessly’.³³⁴⁷

Eisma, member of parliament for D66, took a different line. He warned his colleagues that ‘it [would be] wrong from a moral point of view for us to put together recommendations mainly based on emotions. In such a case we would possibly be taking insufficient account of the undesirable consequences of the actions we are calling for. So much is at present certain: we can do a lot less than we would like to do’.³³⁴⁸ He thought that preventive measures in areas such as Vojvodina and Kosovo should have the highest priority.³³⁴⁹ Eisma’s words were characteristic of the moderate opinion of D66’s lower house members in these years. The former Yugoslavia dossier was dealt with mainly by the triumvirate formed by the spokesmen for Foreign Affairs and Defence, Eisma and Ter Veer respectively, and party chairman Van Mierlo. This trio, according to Eisma, was able to resist fellow party members who wanted intervention because of the reports in the media. Eisma continually alluded to the unclear political context in Bosnia. He wanted to prevent the Netherlands from sending out troops without the participation of other countries. And Van Mierlo, who had ambitions regarding the ministerial post of Foreign Affairs, constantly told his party members: ‘Be careful, because soon I will be on that post and then of course I’ll have to be able to bring about what we’re now calling for’.³³⁵⁰ In the debate on 27 August Van Dis (SGP) somewhat echoed Eisma: ‘Our heart says: help! Put right what is wrong! But common sense will have to count the cost very carefully. Is that not what the dilemma is and is it not proof of our own impotence?’³³⁵¹

But the stance adopted by Eisma and Van Dis was in the minority, so that Minister Ter Beek was able to conclude that the principal significance of parliament’s contribution as far as the government was concerned was: ‘Do something, don’t sit back, don’t be passive but do something’.³³⁵² Minister Lubbers, acting as interim Foreign Minister while Van den Broek was in London, said that he was in ‘the remarkable situation’ of having heard the house put forward a proposal containing nothing the government was unwilling to do.

³³⁴³ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6148.

³³⁴⁴ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6147.

³³⁴⁵ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings pp.6150-6153.

³³⁴⁶ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings pp.6150 and 6152.

³³⁴⁷ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6155.

³³⁴⁸ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6155.

³³⁴⁹ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6156.

³³⁵⁰ TCBU, discussion with Eisma, 06/04/00, pp.3 and 6.

³³⁵¹ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6157.

³³⁵² TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6158

‘In former times it sometimes came about that our Minister of Foreign Affairs too, on behalf of the Dutch government, made statements and set conditions regarding instrumentalization; which body should act in a particular situation. The house will note that he has repeatedly stated here that he would set this aside if matters could be settled as quickly as possible. That is therefore my response to the suggestions and questions.’³³⁵³

Parliament’s message was understood. On 1 September Van den Broek wrote a letter to the house stating that the Dutch government was moving towards the opinion that only external military intervention could bring about a solution to the conflict; the economic, political and diplomatic tools were pretty well exhausted.³³⁵⁴

18. Conclusion

The months of June, July and August had shown that the international community had little taste for military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In June Minister Baker was able to prolong this attitude against the wishes of the Pentagon, but the American initiative to take armed action was headed off by Mitterrand’s solo visit to the Bosnian capital. After that any American enthusiasm for military action ebbed away. The toothless nature of the international community’s approach was illustrated by the decision to monitor temporarily only at sea to check whether the embargo against rump-Yugoslavia was being adhered to. There was no question of enforcement and opportunities for getting around the embargo long persisted via the overland route or along the Danube.

The pictures that the British ITN television company had taken in Trnopolje raised a substantial echo in the media and had shocked public opinion, but they failed to lead to military intervention. On the contrary, it had become clear – though in August 1992 it was far from being as clear as outlined here – how cynical the attitude of the American government was with regard to the gross violations of human rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina since they had suppressed the reports in order not to be forced into military intervention. What also became obvious was the lack of alertness of parts of the UN in their reaction to this sort of report.

The media also played a remarkable role. At first they failed to examine the available information and when, eventually, the words ‘concentration camps’ and ‘death camps’ had been uttered the headlines screamed them out and the ITN film was shown time after time on television.

In fact the effect occasioned by those images should be put into perspective. In the case of the Netherlands it appeared that the debate on military intervention had already been gaining momentum before the pictures were shown and before the newspaper reports of Serb camps. This can mean two things. Either the sombre opinion of some representatives of the printed media that they had so much less influence than television³³⁵⁵ is not supported by the chronology of the Dutch debate on military intervention. Or the cumulative effect of pictures of the shelling of Sarajevo, of famine in the Bosnian capital and of floods of refugees had already had an influence earlier. At any rate, the pictures shot in Trnopolje at most intensified the discussion about intervention but the number of media participants in the discussion remained limited to a few dozen. The outcome of this investigation thus further underlines the findings of the investigation carried out by political scientist P. P. Everts into the relationship between Dutch foreign policy and public opinion. Everts believes that Dutch foreign policy, as in most other countries, is still a matter decided by an elite.³³⁵⁶

In the weeks following the commotion about the camps the British and French governments promised respectively 1,800 and 1,100 soldiers, not for military intervention but to protect the aid

³³⁵³ TK 1991-1992, Proceedings p.6161.

³³⁵⁴ TK 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 24, pp.1-2.

³³⁵⁵ See, for instance, Glenny, *Fall*, p.210.

³³⁵⁶ Everts, *Laat*, p.243.

convoys. It became very clear that the British government had placed severe restrictions on the actions of its own troops. The next chapter will show that the idea that resolution 770 would permit the use of force had very little value. The member states of NATO and the WEU were prepared to provide troops only for a limited implementation of the resolution.

And in the summer of 1992 Boutros-Ghali also indicated that he regarded the conflict in the former Yugoslavia more as a stumbling block than as an opportunity for the UN to adopt a high profile. The extension of the Yugoslavia conference, born during the London conference, scarcely held any promise as far as that was concerned. This was again emphasized when it turned out to be difficult during the conference even to repeat in statements what had earlier been advanced as a demand made on Serbia by the international community. In addition, not a single one of the agreements was accompanied by sanctions. It was clear that the international community was prepared to put in humanitarian effort, but no more than that. It provided space for governments to bow to some extent to the pressure of public opinion so as to give the impression that they were doing something.

The Dutch government and parliamentarians did not resign themselves to this sort of limited action. Statements such as those made by L. Metzemaekers in *het Financieele Dagblad*, that all discussions about military intervention were academic because of the refusenik attitude of the international community,³³⁵⁷ or by D.-J. van Baar, that as long as other countries refused to undertake real military action, the Netherlands should not engage in such ‘tough talking’,³³⁵⁸ were not appreciated by the Lower House.

In mid-August *De Groene Amsterdammer* noted that while ‘the whole of the Netherlands’ was in agreement about armed intervention in Bosnia, in other European countries such enthusiasm was limited – in the United Kingdom, for instance, where not even 30% of the population were in favour of military intervention. Military experts in France and the United Kingdom were pointing out the dangers; putting in German troops was, in view of the past, not a sensible option; and Russia was dead set against intervention.³³⁵⁹ On the other side of the media-political spectrum *de Telegraaf* also noted that the Netherlands ‘has been pretty well in the vanguard’ by announcing a military contribution towards humanitarian aid in Bosnia. This morning daily said that it was ‘a relief, after our country in the past, under pressure from the Left, often had to play a minor role in the military-political field and was only too ready to leave to others the defence of values which are also ours’.³³⁶⁰

The impression grows that the arguments put forward by the interventionists in the Netherlands passed over to the people’s representatives and the government more easily than in other countries. And articles in the major Dutch newspapers in August 1992 carried the conviction that other countries and international organizations were more cautious than the Dutch political world and society in general.³³⁶¹ ‘When it is a question of relieving need in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Netherlands tops the list. At least, that is the impression that comes across from the tone with which any possible intervention is discussed’, wrote Guikje Roethof in *De Groene Amsterdammer* at the beginning of September. She blamed the Dutch ministers and parliamentarians for ‘playing up to the public’ and ‘practically expressing the voice of the people’.³³⁶²

The question is whether it was really so, and whether ministers and parliamentary representatives were parroting the public. Unfortunately there are no public opinion statistics for the period prior to the summer of 1992, so that it is difficult to determine when public opinion showed a majority in favour of military intervention. But it is certain that Ministers Van den Broek and Lubbers were already supporting harder action against Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs in June.

³³⁵⁷ L. Metzemaekers, ‘Discussie Joegoslavië en militair ingrijpen is louter academisch’ (‘Discussion on Yugoslavia and military intervention is merely an academic exercise’, *Het Financieele Dagblad*, 05/08/92.

³³⁵⁸ Dirk-Jan van Baar, ‘Nederland gidsland’ (‘The Netherlands, lead country’), *Intermediair*, 14/08/92.

³³⁵⁹ Jake van Kampen, ‘Op de plaats rust’ (‘Stand at ease’), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 19/08/92, p.7.

³³⁶⁰ ‘Niet te karig’ (‘Not too frugal’), *de Telegraaf*, 21/08/92.

³³⁶¹ Cf. Appendix Scholten & Ruigrok & Heerma, *In Sarajevo wordt geschoten*, pp.205-207.

³³⁶² Guikje Roethof, ‘Krijgshaftig’ (‘Bellicose’), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 02/09/92.

This conclusion seems to match up with the statements made by decision-makers in the year 2000 to the *Tijdelijke Commissie Besluitvorming Uitzendingen van de Tweede Kamer* (The Interim Parliamentary Committee for Decision-making regarding Deployment), otherwise known as the *commissie-Bakker* (the Bakker Committee). Although it is true to say that for their motivation and actions relative to the deployment of the military to the former Yugoslavia they make reference to heart-rending scenes pictured in the media, they also state that these images merely reinforced them in the convictions they already had.³³⁶³ At any rate, the ministers were a step ahead of organized public opinion. The debate on intervention did not start in the Netherlands until July. Because the verbal discussions of 12 August took place at an unfortunate time – unfortunate in view of the fact that things had still not crystallized out in the major international forums – the government wrote a letter to parliament that occasioned the optical illusion that the house had overtaken the government in the debate on intervention. It would seem much more likely that on 12 August parliament, in its capacity as link between general public and government, jacked itself up to the level of readiness to intervene that had already been achieved by public and government.

Shortly after that the government seemed to take yet another step forward – in case of need intervene outside the confines of NATO and the WEU – a step parliamentarians were reluctant to take. At the end of August it was clear that the Dutch parliament and government had little more to say to one another. It was the refusal of the international community that had to be given impetus – but how? The feeling of powerlessness in the matter led Dutch politicians to adopt ever shriller tones towards other national governments and international organizations, perhaps not the most effective way of achieving their end and, moreover, a dangerous occupation. An obvious reaction, in popular terms, is ‘Do it yourself’. And, as it turned out in August 1992, the Netherlands could not deploy a fighting force as long as the airmobile brigade was not set up. That required a wait of eighteen months.

The Dutch stance on intervention: ‘eventually the rest will follow’

Then there remained the question of the origin of the difference in readiness to intervene between the Netherlands and other countries. ‘The Dutch politicians’ enthusiasm for military involvement is difficult to explain’, wrote Kees Lunshof in *de Telegraaf* on 25 August.

‘Their enthusiasm was already present before the general public had become seriously concerned at seeing the pictures of the concentration camps. So that was not the origin. It also had nothing to do with power politics or commercial considerations. There are no immediate Dutch interests at play in Yugoslavia. It would seem to have been mainly inspired by feelings of idealism and solidarity, factors that have always played an important part in Dutch foreign policy. And participation is also fitting in encouraging international justice. That too is something highly valued in the Netherlands. (...)’

Our taste for involvement also has some political spin-off. The Netherlands likes to make clear its place on the world map, something that is especially a driving force in the foreign ministry. At the same time it blew new life into the defence machine that had lost its bearings after the fall of communism (...) At the same time we thereby constitute an example for our large neighbour, Germany, that does so little in the international military field.³³⁶⁴

A number of explanations listed by Lunshof can certainly be endorsed. Some individuals believe that the Netherlands has a greater tendency than other countries to adopt an idealistic stance in foreign

³³⁶³ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt I*, p.444.

³³⁶⁴ Kees Lunshof, ‘Politiek kleintert risico’s in Bosnië’, *de Telegraaf*, 25/08/92.

policy. Some years ago, before the conflict in Yugoslavia broke out, Van der List wrote that the relative lack of influence and responsibility enjoyed by the Netherlands beyond its own borders was the cause of the ground swell in ‘Gesinnungsethik’ in this country. The field of Dutch foreign policy constituted a ‘playground for people who, though they are doubtless sincere in their concern at suffering in the world, have little comprehension of the complexity of international politics’.³³⁶⁵ Piet Dankert, Junior Minister for foreign affairs in the Lubbers/Kok government said shortly after his resignation ‘The Netherlands is relatively isolated from the rest of the world. We are internationalists, but on an abstract level. And we suffer from an over-estimation of ourselves, since we have too little realization of the extent to which we need other countries politically speaking’.³³⁶⁶

As early as 1971 the later Foreign Minister Max van der Stoel wrote, in an article about intervention, that the tendency on the part of the Netherlands to involve itself critically in the affairs of other countries was very strongly developed.³³⁶⁷ And here we see the incapacity on the part of Dutch opinion-makers and decision-takers to imagine that their opposite numbers in other countries do not share their thoughts, can cause problems.

The former diplomat and ex-secretary of state at the foreign office E.H. van der Beugel remarked in 1985 that there was also a gap between the way the Netherlands saw itself and how others perceived the country: ‘In consequence we often over-estimate our own role, which constantly leads to errors of judgement, misunderstandings and irritation’. He quoted Van der Stoel, meanwhile ex-Foreign Minister, who said that as soon as he crossed the Dutch border he turned a switch ‘because outside the Netherlands there was nobody who thought about foreign policy as we did’.³³⁶⁸

This type of self-limitation would seem no longer to be present in the Dutch politicians responsible for policy in the early 1990s. Evidently it had become too difficult to perform the gymnastics involved in activities abroad and defending such actions to parliament. With regard to areas such as human rights and development co-operation the Dutch politicians regarded their country as leading the field. Thus the council adviser to the Ministry of General Affairs charged with foreign and security policy, J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, did not find it at all strange that with regard to Yugoslavia there was a yawning gap between what the Netherlands wanted and what the rest of the world wanted. A gap of this type was not uncommon, and did not necessarily cause problems: ‘Eventually the rest will follow’.³³⁶⁹ According to premier Lubbers it was a usual pattern in Dutch behaviour for the country itself to undertake something and then assume that this would spread automatically like a patch of oil on water.³³⁷⁰ Evidently the Dutch government had not learned its lesson on Black Monday, when it turned out that the rest of the EC was not as docile as had been expected. Moreover a fault of Dutch diplomacy frequently noted is the failure to convince others in the international circuit, working on the assumption that others will follow the Dutch proposals or at least not block them.³³⁷¹

In former years, relative to areas of policy other than that on Yugoslavia, Dutch diplomacy had developed the habit of taking the most far-reaching stance inside the EC in the knowledge that one or more of the other member states would not go so far in community decision-making. This then enabled the Dutch government, for instance, to boast back in the home country that: ‘we were quite prepared, but the others were not – unfortunately’. In this way Dutch representatives to the EC were able to place the blame squarely on other countries who, moreover, often had to do the subsequent dirty work.³³⁷² This does not mean that Dutch diplomacy was working in a similarly calculating way in the Yugoslavia question. Emotions relative to the matter were too sincere for that. But it could indicate

³³⁶⁵ Van der List, *Mensenrechten*, p.96.

³³⁶⁶ Dankert in: Rehwinkel & Nekkens, *Regerendernijds*, p.143.

³³⁶⁷ Van der Stoel, *Aspecten*, p.115.

³³⁶⁸ Van der Beugel, *Nederland*, p.131.

³³⁶⁹ Interview J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00.

³³⁷⁰ Interview R.F.M. Lubbers, 13/10/00.

³³⁷¹ Castermans-Holleman, *Mensenrechtenbeleid*, p.265.

³³⁷² Van Walsum, *Nederland*, pp. 47-48; Everts, *Nederland*, p. 1.

that to a certain extent Dutch diplomacy had more of an eye for the desirability than for the feasibility of its own proposals in international negotiations. The awareness that they were playing for their own home front instead of in an international arena could thus have been reinforced.

In May 1992 foreign commentator J.L. Heldring stated that Dutch ministers who preached morality abroad, and consequently aroused irritation there, were doing a wonderful job of representing Dutch culture. 'But whether they do a wonderful job of representing our interests is another matter.'³³⁷³

This stance, characterised by being in the vanguard abroad, could perhaps be a reflection of political culture in the Netherlands itself. The sociologist-philosopher J.W. Duyvendak once stated that new political issues get onto the political agenda much more quickly in the Netherlands and Germany than in France. Moreover, he writes, politicians in the Netherlands often lead the way in changes to politics and mentality, 'if only from fear of being accused of backwardness'.³³⁷⁴ In the Netherlands the formers of public opinion found it relatively easy to get the question of intervention in Yugoslavia onto the political agenda. Once the Cold War was out of the way, some of the Dutch opinion-formers and decision-makers were given the opportunity of replacing security policy with peacemaking policy.

Another internal explanation of avant-gardism abroad could be that the extent to which governments support human rights issues is connected to the extent of secularization in a society. Some authors believe that public indignation regarding violations of human rights increases because human rights questions in a secularizing society replace the framework of moral concepts that religions used to provide.³³⁷⁵ In its capacity as a strongly secularized nation the Netherlands would, it is said, almost automatically be a jump ahead of other nations in questions affecting human rights.

A further remarkable fact is that Dutch politicians, in hindsight too, so emphatically retained the right to showing emotions with regard to the humanitarian problem as posed in the former Yugoslavia. Even Kok, the then vice-premier and leader of the social-democratic fraction in the government, stated:

'In your capacity as leader too, at one stage you are rational, and you think: no, of course we must first do this or that. The next minute you are more emotional. You are also a citizen, a person, and in that sense you have to assume your responsibilities.'³³⁷⁶

The admission of emotions, including into the field of foreign policy, meant that in the Netherlands the concept of national interest or some other form of etatism was not very strongly developed. 'In the Yugoslav case (...) Western media (...) failed to penetrate the armoury of "national interest" which continues to shield foreign policy-making from appeals to humanitarianism.'³³⁷⁷ But it would seem fairly clear that not much penetration was required in the Netherlands.

According to R. (Rob) de Wijk, the lack of a developed feeling of national interest explains why, in the Netherlands, emotions are so often decisive in deploying units in a crisis area.³³⁷⁸ At the beginning of this chapter it appeared that many countries failed to see the happenings in the former Yugoslavia as a problem affecting their own national interests. In the Netherlands, on the contrary, idealistic aims in foreign policy are tightly interwoven with questions of national interest. The government can hardly retreat into a position stating that ideals are all well and good but that national interest requires a different stance. Article 90 of the Dutch constitution states: 'The Netherlands

³³⁷³ J.L. Heldring, 'Onze cultuur weerspiegeld' ('Reflections of our culture'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/05/92.

³³⁷⁴ Duyvendak, *Sonplessse*, p.67. See further *ibid.*, pp.68-72

³³⁷⁵ See, for instance, A.H.M. van Iersel, 'De inzet van Pax Christi in de brede maatschappelijke discussie over Defensie', Van den Berg & Boerefijn & Weerdenburg, *Wijis*, pp.55-56.

³³⁷⁶ Interview W. Kok, 08/05/00.

³³⁷⁷ Carruthers, *Media*, p.218.

³³⁷⁸ Rob de Wijk, 'Nationale belangen en prioriteiten in het buitenlands en veiligheidsbeleid', Instituut Defensie Leergangen, *Criteria*, pp.43-44. See also J.L. Heldring, 'Nederland marginaliseert zichzelf' ('The Netherlands is marginalising itself'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/02/92.

encourages the development of international justice'. And article 98: 'There is a fighting force to defend the interests of the state'. At the time the government pointed out that the interests stated here also implicated article 90.³³⁷⁹ In this way the Dutch government committed itself in principle to the international system of justice. The question now is whether that means that this basic assumption is scarcely distinguishable from other vital interests of the country.

There is a major lack of clarity in this area. The well-known commentator on foreign policy, J.L. Heldring, stated as early as 1973 that the striving for international justice, constituting such an essential element of Dutch foreign policy, did not spring from 'the brain or the inspiration of the Dutch people, but (...) to a large extent [is] inspired by the Dutch state's own interests, since the country is so much smaller than its neighbours'.³³⁸⁰

In the details provided in 1995 by the Dutch government to Parliament, accompanying the tools for assessing whether a military peace mission should be deployed, there is just as much confusion of concepts relative to the question of whether the establishment of an international system of justice should also be regarded as a national interest. On the one hand, the government writes that the promotion of human rights and international justice '[must] not be seen exclusively as an ideal to be striven for but also as a national interest'.³³⁸¹ On the other hand, the government speaks of two separate aims which, however, are so tightly interwoven that the government regarded it as 'undesirable to make a sharp distinction between the two'.³³⁸² The Dutch government still had insufficient grasp of the fact that its own interpretation of the encouragement of the international system of justice as a national interest was not shared to the same extent by other countries. Despite the rhetoric about a new world order, the inadmissibility of war on European soil, the importance of multi-ethnicity and suchlike, in the 1990s most countries let themselves be guided by their national interest in the narrow sense of the term.³³⁸³

After a series of errors of judgement on the part of the foreign affairs ministry, including the attitude of Minister Van den Broek with regard to Yugoslavia during the EC chairmanship in 1991, the editorial in *NRC Handelsblad* on 1 April 1992 concluded that an appeal 'to self-evident moral rightness plays no part outside the national borders, or at least does so to a much lesser extent than The Hague hopes (...) This lesson in self-relativization will have to be taken to heart by the Netherlands to avoid any new international pitfalls'.³³⁸⁴

A further factor was that Dutch history following the police actions in the Netherlands' East Indies at the end of the 1940s had seen no further independent intervention on the part of the Royal Netherlands Army in conflicts of any significance. 'High points' of Dutch military history were the limited conflict with Indonesia over New Guinea in 1962 and the deployment of marines to stop riots on the island of Curaçao in 1969. Dutch governments and politicians had for decades been able to comment on deployment by other nations without themselves having to carry immediate responsibility. In those other countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, there was a deep understanding, based on experience, of the dangers of politics based on *Gesinnungsethik*. Thus Stephen J. Hadley, American Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy, declared in August 1992 during a hearing of the American Senate:

'...that our Nation has learned to be careful about committing its military forces and risking the lives of the men and women in uniform who serve this Nation.

³³⁷⁹ TK1992-1993, p.5014 (Ter Beek, 19/05/93); Coolen, *VN-operaties*, pp.43-44; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, I, p.23.

³³⁸⁰ J.L. Heldring, 'De staat is amoreel', Heldring (red.), *Moraal*, p.54. Cf. M. van der Stoel, 'Koopman en dominee', *ibid.*, p.82.

³³⁸¹ TK 1994-1995, 23 591, no. 5, pp.7-8.

³³⁸² *Ibid.*, p.9. Cf. also the first point of emphasis: 'Uitzending van militaire eenheden geschiedt op grond van Nederlandse belangen (waaronder de bescherming van de internationale vrede en veiligheid) en/of de bevordering van de internationale rechtsorde.' *Ibid.*

³³⁸³ Cf. Weiss, *Interactions*, p.7.

³³⁸⁴ 'Buitenlandse zaken' ('Foreign affairs'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/04/92.

We have learned to weigh our international responsibilities and the national interest at stake against the potential loss of life and the availability of other means to achieve its objectives. We have learned to insist on clearly stated objectives for the use of military forces, objectives that are realistically attainable, with a clear understanding of (...) what constitutes success.³³⁸⁵

A further explanation can be that it was precisely the feeling of a lack of heroism earlier in the twentieth century that played a role. Examples advanced included the feeling of shame at the lack of assistance given to Jews during the Second World War: ‘This time we’ll hold our own them!’³³⁸⁶ From that point of view the comparison drawn between the Serb operation in Bosnia in 1992 and the behaviour of the Nazis would have provided an extra stimulus encouraging the Dutch population ‘to do something’. It is, for instance, remarkable how prominent a part was played by references to the Second World War as an explanation for people’s stance – as, for instance, during the parliamentary debate on 27 August. Premier Lubbers referred to the Hunger Winter of 1945 as an explanation for his own forceful performance at the Lisbon summit at the end of June. He was to do the same again in December 1992 at the EC summit in Edinburgh. In all the comparisons drawn between the situation in Bosnia in 1992 and the Second World War this variant was scarcely heard, which can allow us to assume that it was an authentic statement of the Dutch premier. In one of his discussions with the NIOD Lubbers also stated that Van den Broek and himself were ‘marked’ by the Second World War, Van den Broek because his father spoke to his occupied fatherland from London as ‘The Rotterdammer’ for Radio Oranje and Lubbers because his father was taken hostage during the war.³³⁸⁷

Still more can be said about these two politicians who represented the Netherlands at the top in international bodies. In Chapter 1 it has already been stated that both men had an exaggerated opinion of their own status abroad, resumed in the statement by Lubbers that the Dutch government was not occupied with building up a position in the Yugoslavia file as chairman of the EC: ‘The Netherlands already *had* a position’.³³⁸⁸ It was pointed out that that led to a *noblesse oblige* attitude on the part of the Dutch government, meaning that the Netherlands should take a more active stance than countries such as Ireland or Austria. In August 1992 Kees Lunshof noted in *de Telegraaf* that Lubbers and Van den Broek, ‘who, with support from Ter Beek, have long been advocating a strong military intervention on the part of the world community, including the Netherlands’, were no longer having the brake put on them – as during the Gulf War – by vice-premier and PvdA leader Kok.³³⁸⁹ In Van den Broek’s case there was another exceptional factor in that as chairman of the EC he had made a major emotional investment in the Yugoslavia question. In case it had been forgotten, during the Parliament’s debate of 27 August premier Lubbers ‘called to mind that the Dutch government, particularly in the person of Minister Van den Broek, was involved at a very early stage and intensively in this problem. I recall his intensive involvement, in terms of mental effort and time’.³³⁹⁰

The way in which the government and parliament finally found agreement on 12 August, and most certainly in the 27 August debate, reminds one of the relatively docile – even if not laudatory – attitude of parliament towards Van den Broek during the Dutch chairmanship of the EC. Perhaps the feeling of ‘an un-Dutch large measure of unity’ played a part, as the *Algemeen Dagblad* put it after the parliamentary discussion of 12 August,³³⁹¹ in the field of policy on security. The 1980s had seen major political splits in the years-long debate about the medium-range missiles. During the Gulf War the

³³⁸⁵ United States Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Situation*, p.17.

³³⁸⁶ Auke Kok, ‘Helden op het Binnenhof’ (‘Heroes in the Binnenhof’, *HP/De Tijd*, 21/08/92).

³³⁸⁷ Interview R.F.M. Lubbers, 15/10/99.

³³⁸⁸ Interview R.F.M. Lubbers, 13/10/00.

³³⁸⁹ Kees Lunshof, ‘Politiek kleineert risico’s in Bosnië’, *de Telegraaf*, 25/08/92.

³³⁹⁰ TK1991-1992, Proceedings, p.6161.

³³⁹¹ ‘Kamerdebat verhelderend’ (‘Parliamentary debate revealing’, *Algemeen dagblad*, 13/08/92).

PvdA had at first been cautious. In the summer of 1992 there was a new consensus. The feeling of unity lent itself less to critical voices.

Finally, two points should be mentioned as worthy of attention, with an eye to chapters still to come. First of all, August 1992 saw the birth of a new conflict in the Netherlands: 'Cautious generals versus impatient politicians'.³³⁹² Secondly, because of the rise of public opinion a geographical shift in accent had taken place with regard to Dutch reporting on the former Yugoslavia. Up till then, while the newspapers carried fewer reports on Yugoslavia, the reports had been coming mainly from the region itself. The expansion of the number of interested parties, however, led to the former Yugoslavia being given a steadily more domestic Dutch policy character, that required interpretation in the direction of policy on Yugoslavia. While those for and against military intervention bombarded one another with a limited series of arguments already advanced, it sometimes seemed as if it was only old national Dutch conflicts that had to be settled – for instance when Heldring assessed the readiness for action among supporters of the IKV, or when André Roelofs, who was of the opinion that Heldring had not clearly stated whether he was for or against military intervention, reacted with a further question: 'When will Heldring determine his position?'³³⁹³ Wrestling with Yugoslavia became more; the Netherlands wrestling with itself.

³³⁹² H.J.A. Hofland, 'Het Joegoslavische debat' ('The debate on Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/08/92. See also J.L. Heldring, 'Bezint eer gij begint' ('Look before you leap'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/08/92.

³³⁹³ André Roelofs, 'Waar blijft de vredesbeweging deze dagen?' ('Where is the peace movement hiding these days?') *de Volkskrant*, 08/08/92.

Chapter 7

The Autumn after 'London': September 1992 – October 1992

1. After 'London'

Although there were people who thought the Conference of London a triumph for the Netherlands - if perhaps a short-lived one - because Dutch Foreign Minister Van den Broek managed to get a sharp condemnation of Serbian policy included in the conference documents, the prevailing feeling among the Dutch members of Parliament was frustration at the absence of any visible results. In October Maarten Van Traa declared that Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers should for once make that exasperation known to John Major.³³⁹⁴ If disappointment in the Netherlands about the results of the conference was already considerable, it could only grow greater, with the leadership of the Bosnian Serbs failing to comply with all the agreements in turn while the major Western powers, with Great Britain in the lead, did little to persuade the Bosnian Serbs and Serbian authorities to be more cooperative.

Illustrative of the degree to which the agreements at the London conference had become bogged down were two discussions between the Dutch Director General of Political Affairs, Van Walsum and his French colleague Dejammet on 8 and 9 September 1992. The discussion of 8 September took place after Van Walsum had raised the question in the *Comité Politique* of whether the measures agreed on in London about heavy weapons for instance had any chance of succeeding as long as the EC had not reached any position on imposing sanctions in the case of non-compliance. Dejammet told Van Walsum that any reference to more far-reaching measures would arouse the hopes of Izetbegovic and his entourage that the international community would sooner or later decide to intervene militarily; the Twelve, he said, were playing with fire if they encouraged the Bosnian Muslims in this idea. According to Dejammet UNPROFOR had more to fear at that moment from the Croatian and Muslim sides than from the Serbs. In his view international recognition had 'gone to Izetbegovic's head and he now imagined he could lay claim to the whole territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina'.³³⁹⁵

Van Walsum appealed for an understanding of the Croatian and Muslim position because the involvement of the UN up till then had mainly contributed to the consolidation of the Serb conquests. 'Of course no-one was arguing for Tudjman reconquering the whole of Croatia or Izetbegovic doing the same with the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina', said Van Walsum, but after all the statements that the Serbian conquests would not be accepted, one could not suddenly just go along with the status quo. In any eventual ruling the Serbs would have to give up a good deal of territory, because otherwise resentment about their territorial claims would simmer for years among the Croats and Muslims. Van Walsum doubted whether the Serbs would accept a surrender of territories without more far-reaching military steps being taken against them by the international community.³³⁹⁶

After the discussion between Van Walsum and Dejammet on 8 September, the news came that two of the French UN troops had been killed by Muslim fire. Next day therefore the French diplomat could argue with all the more conviction to Van Walsum that any play with more far-reaching military measures would only make Izetbegovic 'more aggressive and irresponsible'. Jeremy Greenstock, the official in charge of formulating Yugoslav policy at the British Foreign Office, also took up the position that everything should be avoided that might give Izetbegovic any false hopes of military intervention.³³⁹⁷

³³⁹⁴ Radio 1, VOO, *Nieuwsradio*, 12/10/92, 18.10 p.m..

³³⁹⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01813. Van den Broek to the embassy in Paris, 10/09/92, celer, 062.

³³⁹⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01813. Van den Broek to the embassy in Paris, 10/09/92, celer, 062.

³³⁹⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01813. Van den Broek to the embassy in Paris, 10/09/92, celer, 062.

From these discussions it emerged that the European Community was still following the course of the Cutileiro Plan, namely that of a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines. According to the British journalist and Balkan expert Micha Glenny, Izetbegovic himself abandoned his hope of a multi-ethnic Bosnia as a result of the Conference of London, and accepted that a division of the territory between the three ethnic groups was unavoidable.³³⁹⁸ The Dutch Foreign Minister Van den Broek must have got a similar message. When he attended the General Assembly of the UN in September 1992 and spoke to Izetbegovic, he thought he was doing the right thing towards the Bosnian president in stressing that he should continue to make it very plain 'that it is not his intention to found a unitary Muslim state. This was also necessary to dispel any unfounded fears by Bosnia's neighbours and the Russian federation.'³³⁹⁹ The question of what Izetbegovic's intentions actually were – a multi-ethnic state or a smaller Muslim one – would long continue to torment Western politicians and diplomats.³⁴⁰⁰

The Bosnian government under Izetbegovic's leadership had however for the time being not much choice in the matter. While the Bosnian Serbs had control of about seventy per cent of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Bosnian Croats, who had proclaimed their autonomous Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna on July 3, had control of about fifteen to twenty percent of Bosnian territory, even though a large number of Muslims were still resident in the Croatian region. The real authority of the Bosnian government was confined to a mere ten to fifteen percent of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Muslims were confined to cities such as Sarajevo, Tuzla and Gorazde and they had control over territory around Srebrenica, Zepa and Cerska and in the Bihac region.

Bosnian Croats versus Bosnian Muslims...

After sporadic encounters over the preceding half year,³⁴⁰¹ the situation became even worse for the Muslims when fierce fighting broke out in October 1992 with the Croats, who up till then had taken the side of the Bosnian government. The war zone was mainly in and around Travnik, Novi Travnik and Vitez in Central Bosnia where Croats and Muslims lived side-by-side. The fighting resulted initially from differences of interpretation about the long-term constitutional future of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The leaders of the Bosnian Croats hoped that in the long term they would be able to bring about a union with Croatia of their autonomous 'Croatian community of Herceg-Bosna', in which the Muslims were increasingly second-class citizens. Fighting was only exacerbated by the fact that no fusion between the forces of the Bosnian Muslims (ABiH) and the army of the Bosnian Croats (HVO) had occurred, since both organizations had preserved their separate military structures. After what initially seemed like a basically good collaboration, the HVO and the ABiH started increasingly accusing each other of betrayal and desertion in the summer of 1992.³⁴⁰² In part the conflict was fuelled by quarrels between Croats and Muslims about the control of the corridors along which weapons and humanitarian convoys could enter Bosnia and by which refugees attempted to leave the country. Those who had control of these routes were able to exact payment.³⁴⁰³

A role was also played by Croatian irritation about the arrival of Arabic fighters in Central Bosnia to reinforce the Bosnian Muslims.³⁴⁰⁴ To an important extent fighting between Croats and

³³⁹⁸ Glenny, *Fall*, p. 216.

³³⁹⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05244. Biegman 884 (Van den Broek) to Foreign Affairs, 22/09/92. See also H. van den Broek, 'Hollands Dagboek' (Dutch Diary), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/09/92.

³⁴⁰⁰ See also Chapter 12.

³⁴⁰¹ See for instance Matijan, 'War', p. 167; Andrejevich, 'Bosnia', p. 4.

³⁴⁰² Detrez, *Sloop*, p. 283. See also Heller, *Brasiers*, pp. 146-149.

³⁴⁰³ Cf. Theo Engelen, 'Kroaten en moslims ook in gevecht om financieel gewin' (Croats and Muslims also in conflict for financial gain) and 'Aan oorlog in Bosnië wordt veel verdiend' (Plenty of money is made from war in Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/10/92.

³⁴⁰⁴ Cf. Moore, 'Month', p. 4; Ed Vulliamy, 'Arabische strijders in Bosnië als "pinguïns in de woestijn"' (Arab fighters in Bosnia like 'penguins in the desert'), *de Volkskrant*, 17/09/92.

Muslims was also the result of tensions that arose because many Muslims in North-West Bosnia who had been purged by the Bosnian Serbs sought refuge in Central Bosnia. Not only did the ethnic demographic balance change as a result; the same was true of the military balance between the HVO and the ABiH.³⁴⁰⁵ In response the Croatian forces began ‘cleansing’ the Muslim population in the towns of Prozor and Gornji Vakuf. The result of these engagements was that the Muslims in Central Bosnia were pressed even harder.

...and Bosnian Croats with Bosnian Serbs against Bosnian Muslims

Meanwhile after a meeting between Boban and Karadzic in Graz at the beginning of May 1992 discussions continued between the Bosnian Croats and Serbs over a partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The two parties attained a reasonable degree of agreement, on points including the military support they would lend each other in their struggle against the Muslims.³⁴⁰⁶ On 5 October the president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Cosic and the Croatian president Tudjman were in agreement about an ‘orderly’ exchange of populations between the Croatian and Serbian territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina.³⁴⁰⁷ It has been asserted that in the framework of this partnership the Croats would withdraw almost immediately from Bosanski Brod in the strategic Posavina corridor and that in exchange the Serbs would surrender the peninsula of Prevlaka to the south of Dubrovnik to the Croats.³⁴⁰⁸ Others assert that this exchange dated back to an agreement in May or July and that the surrender of Mostar by the VRS at the end of July also formed part of this exchange.³⁴⁰⁹ It is unclear whether an exchange was really agreed on or whether the military balance of power was the decisive factor, in particular the Serbian artillery and tanks.³⁴¹⁰ In any case the strategically important Posavina corridor was now firmly in Bosnian-Serb hands.

The conflicts between Croats and Muslims also made it possible for the Serbs to capture the town of Jajce in Central Bosnia at the end of October. The Croats and Muslims had defended Jajce against the VRS for five months. After the fall of Jajce fighting between Croats and Serbs virtually ceased in Bosnia. The Muslims on the other hand found themselves in a war on two fronts that became even more ferocious at the beginning of 1993 due to Croatian actions.³⁴¹¹

The failure to comply with the agreements of London

The agreements of London called for various points to be implemented -- the concentration of heavy weapons, the setting-up of escorts for convoys, the implementation of a no-fly zone over Bosnia and a stricter application of economic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro. In London Karadzic had agreed to the VRS providing information about the positions of all heavy weapons within four days; these would then have to be grouped around four cities, namely Sarajevo, Bihac, Gorazde and Jajce within a few days, after which the weapons were to be put under UN control. From the start however

³⁴⁰⁵ Marijan, ‘War’, p. 169; Ed Vulliamy, ‘Arabische strijders in Bosnië als “pinguïns in de woestijn”’, *de Volkskrant*, 17/09/92; Heller, *Brasiers*, pp. 157-160.

³⁴⁰⁶ ‘The unholy alliance’, *Bosnia report*, new series no. 1, November/December 1997.

³⁴⁰⁷ ‘Transferts de population entre la Croatie et la Serbie’, *Agence France Presse*, 05/10/92. See also ‘Un mouvement contre la démilitarisation de la presqu’île de Prevlaka s’organise au Montenegro’, *Agence France Presse*, 05/10/92.

³⁴⁰⁸ Detrez, *Sloop*, p. 282; Meier, *Jugoslavië*, pp. 373-374; Mønnesland, *Land*, pp. 394-395; ‘Val Bosanski Brod zou resultaat zijn van deal Servië en Kroatië’ (Fall of Bosanski Brod may be result of deal between Serbia and Croatia), *de Volkskrant*, 08/10/92.

³⁴⁰⁹ See for instance Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 283.

³⁴¹⁰ According to Marijan, ‘War’, pp. 164-165 and Judah, *Serbs*, p. 208 the latter was the case. The defenders were unable to withstand the Serb artillery and tanks. The Bosnian government first assumed that the decisive factor must have been the military balance of power, Press Conference by the Delegation of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Federal News Service*, 16/10/92, but later came to the conclusion that there must have been a ‘deal’, Paul Lewis, ‘Belgrade Signs 2nd Pact With Croatia’, *The New York Times*, 21/10/92; Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 138.

³⁴¹¹ See Chapter 9.

the Bosnian-Serb leaders obstructed the implementing of the agreement. Deadlines were not met and definitions were altered.³⁴¹² In the end the VRS only put a limited amount of the heavy weapons under the control of international observers, saying that they would use them again whenever they needed them.³⁴¹³

The control of heavy weapons was in practice watered down not just because the Bosnian-Serb leadership reneged on the agreement, but mainly because the British government that also held the chairmanship of the EC was averse to every form of additional military involvement in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The UN moreover had insufficient personnel and finances to supervise the heavy weapons. Initially the Security Council therefore wanted to make their control part of the operations for escorting the convoys.³⁴¹⁴

On 14 September the Security Council passed Resolution 776, by which UNPROFOR, that had done nothing till then except keep the airport of Sarajevo open, was given new tasks with regard to the carrying out and protection of humanitarian aid convoys and the escorting of prisoners released in Bosnia-Herzegovina to be evacuated by the Red Cross. The idea in Resolution 770 of individual countries or other international organizations, such as NATO or the WEU, protecting these convoys was thus abandoned.

Besides an expansion of tasks, the resolution also expanded the territory in which UNPROFOR II was to be active. Its operations were no longer confined to Sarajevo and its airport; theoretically, they were expanded to cover the whole of Bosnia.

A reference in a draft of the resolution to the supervision of heavy weapons was scrapped at the request of the British government. London's preferred option was for a phased approach to the implementation of the points agreed upon in London and it wanted to treat this issue and that of the no-fly zone over Bosnia separately. The UN Secretariat also argued for first seeing if Karadzic kept his word about the concentration of heavy weapons and met with his demands by stating that the weapons did not need to be concentrated in the whole of Bosnia but only around the four points initially designated as concentration points for the whole of Bosnia - Sarajevo, Bihac, Gorazde and Jajce.³⁴¹⁵

The caution of the British chairmanship was also displayed with regard to the tightening of EC sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro. Germany, Spain, Holland and to a lesser extent Denmark were in favour of providing a political signal with a resolution about stricter implementation. The British government however exploited the conflict between the advocates of an immediate political signal and those members who stressed the feasibility of a sanction ruling.³⁴¹⁶ This provoked great irritation in the Dutch government that was a keen advocate in both the EC and the CSCE of tightening the sanctions.³⁴¹⁷ During the meeting of EC Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Luxemburg on 5 October Van den Broek therefore insisted that measures should be taken against those who did not comply with the agreements of London, such as the immediate implementation of a flight prohibition

³⁴¹² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00085. Highly confidential memorandum, hfd DAV/MS, 'Militaire maatregelen i.g.v. niet-naleving van in Londen gemaakte afspraken' (Military measures in case of failure to comply with agreements made in London), 08/09/92; 'VN en Europa zetten Serviërs onder tijdsdruk' (UN and Europe give Serbians a deadline), *de Volkskrant*, 07/09/92.

³⁴¹³ Moore, 'Month', p. 2.

³⁴¹⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00142. Biegman 820 to Van den Broek, 02/09/92; Van den Broek 227 to PR New York, 04/09/92; Biegman 828 to Van den Broek, 04/09/92; Van den Broek to PR New York, 08/09/92, celer 230; Biegman 832 to Van den Broek, 09/09/92; 'Navo biedt 6.000 militairen aan voor VN-macht Bosnië' (NATO offers 6,000 troops to UN peacekeeping force in Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/09/92.

³⁴¹⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00142. Biegman 830 to Van den Broek, 05/09/92; Biegman 832 to Van den Broek, 09/09/92; Biegman 856 to Van den Broek, 14/09/92.

³⁴¹⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01802. Kronenburg 253 to Van den Broek, 27/08/92; PR, EC to Van den Broek, 28/08/92, bre 1330.

³⁴¹⁷ See for instance ABZ, DPV/ARA/01802. The evasion of the embargo on trade with Serbia and Montenegro by Dutch firms, 01/09/92.

over Bosnia, the supervision of heavy weapons, a tightening of the sea blockade and taking measures against the FRJ (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) in all international bodies.³⁴¹⁸

Meanwhile on 22 September the former Yugoslavia was in fact debarred from the UN, a measure that the Dutch government had always advocated. However, even on this issue no agreement could be reached – the governments of France and Greece felt that the term ‘debarred’ went too far. Accordingly, the wording chosen was that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia ‘will no longer take part in the activities of the General Assembly’.³⁴¹⁹

2. Humanitarian aid after London

‘Historians will show that the most important allies of the Bosnian Serbs have been the peacekeeping forces of the United Nations. Their strategic role in this conflict has essentially been to act as hostages. They provided the cover that the slaughter needed.’³⁴²⁰

Operations of the emergency-relief type display the character of a ‘mission impossible’ almost right from the start. It is human need here that forces one to pursue courses that would be impermissible under other circumstances’.³⁴²¹

In reality UNPROFOR II had a double task from August 1992 onward: firstly, facilitating humanitarian supplies and secondly the creation of a climate that would make negotiations possible. The word ‘peacekeeping’ that is often used as a hallmark of the mandate of the UNPROFOR II operation is therefore not actually correct. The support of humanitarian tasks is not any normal part of peacekeeping, even if it does occur in practice; normally speaking it only takes place when the required climate for negotiations has already been created. It was also by no means the case that UNPROFOR II kept the conflicting parties separate, as would occur with a traditional peacekeeping operation. Hostilities continued, occasionally interrupted by short armistices.

In its dual task UNPROFOR had to focus its attention on both UNHCR, which it supported in its humanitarian activities and on the negotiators Owen and Vance, who were already acting with a mandate from the European Community and the UN. Both UNHCR, that needed permission from the warring factions in order to get aid to its destination, and the mediators aimed to achieve good relations with all the different groups involved in the conflict. This meant that both bodies imposed strict restrictions on any use of force by UNPROFOR. Humanitarian efforts were given the utmost priority, over and above all the tasks the Security Council had laid down in its mandates.³⁴²² Furthermore, UNPROFOR that only had a few thousand troops was both protector to ensure the provision of aid and a potential victim of any reprisals taken by the warring parties.

There was a great deal of criticism of this choice for humanitarian action over either military intervention or a complete abandonment of the theatre of war to the warring factions. The Bosnian Permanent Representative to the UN, Muhamed Sacirbey, would level the charge that ‘the humanitarian agenda has been hijacked by those prepared to use humanitarian ideals as a means of promoting inaction’.³⁴²³ In Holland the Director General of Political Affairs, Van Walsum, was for the same reason not very enthusiastic about the deployment of Dutch soldiers for what he called ‘grocery

³⁴¹⁸ ABZ,DVN/2007/00001. Van den Broek 12 to the embassy in Luxemburg, 06/10/92. The minister was urged to adopt such a position in ABZ, DEU/ARA/01248. Memorandum DEU/OE for Van den Broek, 30/09/92, no. DEU/OE-120.

³⁴¹⁹ R. Meines, ‘Compromis in VN over Joegoslavië’ (UN compromise over Yugoslavia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/09/92.

³⁴²⁰ The editors, ‘The Abdication, Cont’d’, in: Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 173.

³⁴²¹ Kooijmans, ‘VN-vredesoperaties’, p. 46.

³⁴²² Cf. Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 164.

³⁴²³ Minear et al., *Action*, p. 100.

deliveries'.³⁴²⁴ British diplomats are said to have told their American counterparts that the presence of UNPROFOR ground forces for humanitarian purposes was deliberately intended to prevent the air force from being used. If it were, it might have provoked attacks on or hostage-taking of UN personnel on the ground.³⁴²⁵

Although this looks too much like speaking with benefit of hindsight, it is a fact that once the ground troops were there, they did indeed have that effect. It became a mantra for the West to say that military intervention would jeopardize the humanitarian aid.³⁴²⁶ The Bosnian government stated that when it came down to it they would have preferred the humanitarian efforts to be stopped and the arms embargo lifted instead.³⁴²⁷

Furthermore, the aid only reached those it was intended for to a very limited degree. In June 1992 UNPROFOR and the Bosnian Serb leadership had reached an agreement by which 23 percent of all the aid supplies flown to Sarajevo would be given to the Bosnian Serbs, regardless of whether they needed them or not. Under the same agreement the Bosnian Serbs were entitled to inspect all humanitarian supplies arriving by air or land and to prevent parts of them getting through should they wish.³⁴²⁸ Between 1992 and 1994 another thirty to fifty percent of the humanitarian aid was 'lost' at roadblocks.³⁴²⁹ At the beginning of 1994 only twenty percent of all aid reached its destination, while half of all aid ended up with the troops of the warring factions.³⁴³⁰

The Bosnian Serb government also exacted a fee from UNHCR for allowing lorries to pass through. In the summer of 1993 it paid \$350 per truck. For military escort vehicles the price was even higher.³⁴³¹ According to a statement of the ICRC at the end of 1993 only ten percent of all humanitarian aid reached its destination.³⁴³² Humanitarian aid thus helped to keep both the armies and the other military elements in existence, providing them with an economic argument for continuing the war.³⁴³³ An anonymous official of an important NGO complained at the end of 1993 that: 'We've prolonged the war by being here. If there had been no humanitarian intervention, the war would have been over sooner. It might have been ugly, but it would be over.'³⁴³⁴

The warring parties meanwhile violated the agreements made in London to the effect that nothing would be done to impede aid convoys. At the beginning of September an Italian transport plane was shot down in Sarajevo with the death of the crew of four. A few days later the army of the Bosnian government fired on a convoy bringing food, water and fuel to the peacekeeping force in Sarajevo. Two French soldiers were killed, which had the above-mentioned effect on the second discussion between Van Walsum and his colleague Dejammet. Five others were wounded in the same incident.³⁴³⁵

On 21 September Serbian women and children blocked an aid convoy of eighteen UN trucks, accompanied by French troops at Bratunac and Milici making the short journey to Srebrenica. They said that they had lost their menfolk due to the activities of Muslim combatants from Srebrenica and

³⁴²⁴ Interview A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00.

³⁴²⁵ Simms, *Hour*, p. 81.

³⁴²⁶ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 15.

³⁴²⁷ Simms, *Hour*, p. 78.

³⁴²⁸ Gjelten, 'Professionalism?'

³⁴²⁹ Bougarel, *Bosnie*, p. 125; Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 96 and 101.

³⁴³⁰ Weiss, *Interactions*, pp. 120-121.

³⁴³¹ Almond, *War*, p. 398 n. 18.

³⁴³² 'Tien procent van hulp bereikt burgers Bosnië' ('Only ten per cent of aid reaches Bosnian civilians'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/12/93.

³⁴³³ Cf. 'Een akelig dilemma (1)' (A distressing problem (1)), *Trouw*, 09/09/92; Charles Dobbie, 'Humanitaire bijstand kan oorlog verlengen' (Humanitarian aid can prolong war), *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/07/95; Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, pp. 96-97 and 102.

³⁴³⁴ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 121.

³⁴³⁵ Theo Engelen, 'VN stellen moslims verantwoordelijk voor dood VN-militairen' (UN holds Muslims responsible for death of UN soldiers), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/09/92.

that they had been forced by the Muslims to leave their homes in Srebrenica. The convoy had to return to Sarajevo, mission unaccomplished.³⁴³⁶

Meanwhile gloomy assessments were heard of the number of people in Bosnia who would die from hunger and cold in the approaching winter. Figures ranged from 400,000 to a million.³⁴³⁷ The UNHCR and UNPROFOR decided that aid should be focused on the areas where large concentrations of Muslims still lived. Apart from Sarajevo, these were Bihac, Banja Luka, Mostar and Tuzla. To avoid exclusive dependence on air transport, the port of Split had to be put to use to convoy vital necessities by road. The infantry battalions promised by France, Great Britain, Canada and Spain would be deployed along with a transport battalion and a French engineers battalion.

3. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo

Resolution 776 of 14 September reinforced the humanitarian character of the UNPROFOR operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina even further. It gave UNPROFOR new tasks with regard to the carrying out and protection of humanitarian aid convoys and also the conveying of released prisoners to be evacuated by the Red Cross. At the same time the number of UN soldiers in Bosnia was increased from 1500 to 7500. For this operation a special headquarters was to be set up in Bosnia-Herzegovina to be under the command of the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb. The relation between the two headquarters would prove a difficult one.³⁴³⁸ The operation in Bosnia ended up being led by the French General Philippe Morillon, who up till then had been Nambiar's Chief of Staff.³⁴³⁹ However, it was not until the end of October and the beginning of November that the headquarters of UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina became operational.

The headquarters ('Main') of UNPROFOR was called 'Bosnia-Herzegovina Command' and was established in the Dalmacija hotel in Kiseljak, about 25 kilometres West of Sarajevo at the crossroads leading to Mostar, Vitez and Tuzla. The hotel, built for the Winter Olympics of 1984, was more or less converted into a fortress, where 600 soldiers and civilians worked and slept in accommodation originally intended for a maximum of 200 hotel guests. The headquarters consisted in practice of the staff of the Northern Army Group (Northag) of the NATO, that in the context of troop reductions was about to be disbanded and was thus immediately available. The advantage of using this former NATO staff was the shared language (English) and familiar procedures. It initially consisted mainly of British, Belgian, Dutch and a few American officers. The Germans did not move to Kiseljak for political reasons.³⁴⁴⁰ Later, the other troop-contributing nations also claimed their share of the staff. The headquarters was initially led by Morillon's Chief of Staff, the British officer Rody Cordy-Simpson and later by Brigadier General Vere Hayes.

Besides Headquarters Main there was 'Headquarters Forward', stationed in Sarajevo in the Delegates Club, the former residence of the president of the Communist Party of Bosnia. The location of Headquarters Forward was a tacit acknowledgment that the commander in chief in Bosnia was mainly concerned with political issues. The commander of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command was therefore usually resident in Headquarters Forward.

Not only did the headquarters take a while to set up, the same was true of the deployment of the promised troops. High Commissioner for Refugees, Ogata, urged the contributing governments to

³⁴³⁶ 'Servische vrouwen en kinderen werken VN-konvooi tegen' (Serbian women and children block UN convoy), *de Volkskrant*, 22/09/92.

³⁴³⁷ See LL. French report, Bosnia Herzegovina, contribution of Morillon's chief of staff, enclosure 2 for letter no. NLO 93/075/360, 24/11/93; Morillon, *Croire*, p. 99; Press Conference by the Delegation of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Federal News Service*, 16/10/92.

³⁴³⁸ Cf. Gow, *Triumph*, p. 115.

³⁴³⁹ For the setting up of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command see Morillon, 'Operations'.

³⁴⁴⁰ See also Folkert Jensma, 'Navo mag geen Navo heten' (NATO is not allowed to be called NATO), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/10/92.

send them with dispatch, because she expected their arrival to have a restraining effect on the ethnic cleansing of the Serbs that was apparently still increasing especially round Banja Luka. The need for humanitarian aid in Central Bosnia was also becoming more pressing due to interruptions in air traffic in Sarajevo as a result of shelling and the lack of trucks.³⁴⁴¹ The High Commissioner's appeal received full backing from the Dutch government.³⁴⁴²

Eventually out of the units promised, the new French battalion was deployed in Bihac so that France now had two battalions in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Sarajevo and Bihac) and two in Croatia. In December a French battalion of engineers was to be stationed in Kakanj. The British battalion set up camp between Vitez and Tuzla, and a Spanish battalion was deployed in Mostar. The Canadian battalion was to be deployed in Banja Luka, something that the UNHCR had wanted for some time to avoid the criticism that the international community was only bringing aid and protection to Croatian and Muslim territories. However, the Bosnian Serb command was against any posting of foreign troops on Serbian soil. UNPROFOR therefore decided to station them in the vicinity of Kiseljak, where they could, if required, intervene in Sarajevo, or else in Tuzla.³⁴⁴³ The position taken by the VRS meant that any deployment in North-West and East Bosnia was out of the question. This meant that ethnic cleansing and fighting could be carried on in these areas largely outside the gaze of world opinion, for instance around the Muslim enclaves of Srebrenica, Zepa en Gorazde.

4. To shoot or not to shoot?

‘The UN might as well have deployed women and children.’³⁴⁴⁴

The British government was initially opposed to Resolution 770,³⁴⁴⁵ because according to its estimates it would need a hundred thousand troops to carry out a policy that allowed for the use of force to ensure that food supplies reached their destination. If there was a switch to the use of firepower with any smaller force it could eventually only lead to UNPROFOR having to back down. The British government was of the opinion that a convoy should only be allowed to proceed after negotiating with the people who manned the roadblocks.³⁴⁴⁶

In order to ensure the peaceful character of humanitarian aid the British government had adopted the position that the operation to implement resolution 770 should take place under a UN umbrella and not under that of the CSCE, which might have led to NATO or the WEU getting involved. However, the British approach could not be implemented straightway because Boutros-Ghali preferred to ensure the free passage of goods by means of agreements with the warring parties. He did not want UN units to resort even to such force as was permitted in the words of Resolution 770 - ‘all measures necessary’.³⁴⁴⁷ UNHCR, the organization primarily responsible for the humanitarian aid in the former Yugoslavia, backed by the governments of France and Great Britain, initially feared that any military protection of convoys would in fact attract violence.³⁴⁴⁸

³⁴⁴¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00142. Ogata to Van den Broek, 28/09/92.

³⁴⁴² ABZ, Yugoslavia/UNSC. Resolution 771 (1992), COREU The Hague, 01/10/92, cpe/hag 586; memorandum from DEU for Van den Broek, 08/10/92, no. 222.

³⁴⁴³ Morillon, *Croire*, pp. 130-131.

³⁴⁴⁴ The editors, ‘The Abdication, Cont’d’, in: Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 173.

³⁴⁴⁵ ‘Westen verdeeld over optreden in Bosnië’ (West divided over Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/08/92.

³⁴⁴⁶ ABZ, Yugoslavia, resolution 770 (1992). Memorandum DGPZ for head of DEU, 19/08/92, no. 152/92; Text of a message from John Major to Lubbers, 19/08/92; Loudon 409 to Foreign Affairs, 19/08/92.

³⁴⁴⁷ ABZ, PVNY. Bosnia-Herzegovina/emergency aid, May 1992 – August 1995, S/24000, 26/05/92.

³⁴⁴⁸ ABZ, PVNY. Bosnia-Herzegovina/emergency aid, May 1992 – August 1995, Van Schaik 604 to Van den Broek, 24/06/92; Van Schaik 607 to Van den Broek, 25/06/92; Van den Broek to PV New York, celer 178; ABZ, 00064, Boddens Hosang 481 to Van den Broek, 24/06/92; Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Veiligheidsraad: meer militairen naar Bosnië’ (Security Council: more troops to Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/09/92.

Deputy Secretary General for peacekeeping operations Goulding was also of the opinion that if the use of force were permitted in escorting convoys, for instance by returning sniper fire, the UNPROFOR operation would cease to be a 'peacekeeping' operation and become a 'peace-enforcing' one.³⁴⁴⁹ To get Boutros-Ghali to relent and agree to a UN operation to implement Resolution 770, the option of resorting to force had therefore to be renounced.³⁴⁵⁰ The relations between the British government and Boutros-Ghali, that were strained in mid-July, were excellent a month later with respect to this issue. Together they stood as guarantors that no force would be employed to get the humanitarian convoys to their destination.³⁴⁵¹

While a number of parties assumed that the phrase 'all measures necessary' included the use of force to get the emergency aid to its destination, in practice it was decided not to resort to this possibility. When aid convoys were stopped for long periods at roadblocks the troops must have felt enormously frustrated, but most of the politicians, diplomats and soldiers did not want to employ force to get through these blockades because they were opposed to any blurring of the boundaries between the two sorts of peacekeeping operations – 'peacekeeping' and 'peace-enforcing'.³⁴⁵² The former was based on impartiality, while the latter meant that one side inevitably ended up in the role of enemy.³⁴⁵³

However, not every organization was against a shift from peacekeeping to peace-enforcing. In fact the French government had always assumed that there was a continuum between the two types of operation. This was also the reason why the French government had always opposed any intervention on the part of the General Assembly of the UN in peacekeeping operations. Exactly because they could end up as peace-enforcing operations it argued that the Security Council alone should be concerned with peacekeeping operations.³⁴⁵⁴

In the new optimism about the potential role the United Nations could play after the Cold War was over, the chance increased that the gap between peacekeeping and peace-enforcing would be filled. Around New Year 1993 Boutros-Ghali wrote that the UN operation in Bosnia had opened up a new dimension with regard to the traditional peace operations, namely on the issue of the provision of humanitarian supplies and in particular that of the circumstances under which UN troops were permitted to open fire. He stressed that the instructions now permitted the use of force if armed persons prevented the execution of their mandate: 'This license, used sparingly in the past, may be resorted to more frequently if the United Nations is to assert the Security Council's authority over those who, for personal gain or war objectives, try to rob or destroy humanitarian supplies destined for suffering civilian populations.'³⁴⁵⁵

While Boutros-Ghali appeared to make more room for the use of force with this statement, the British government remained absolutely against the use of every form of force in breaking through the roadblocks.³⁴⁵⁶ The fact that the UNPROFOR escorts for convoys never resorted to firepower to get them past these blockades provoked a good deal of criticism in the press. What was the point of having troops escorting convoys? Convoys of religious groups or private aid organizations managed without military aid and still arrived at their destination.³⁴⁵⁷

³⁴⁴⁹ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Van Schaik 758 to Van den Broek, 11/08/92. See also C. de Gruyter, 'Wachten op een Churchill' (Waiting for a Churchill), *Elsevier*, 15/08/92, pp. 31-32.

³⁴⁵⁰ ABZ, Yugoslavia, resolution 770 (1992). D'Ansembourg 783 to Van den Broek, 19/08/92.

³⁴⁵¹ PVNY. Bosnia-Herzegovina/emergency aid, May 1992 – August 1995, Van Schaik 753 to Van den Broek, 07/08/92; D'Ansembourg 783 to Van den Broek, 19/08/92.

³⁴⁵² See for instance Brigitte Stern, 'Introduction', in: Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, p. 3.

³⁴⁵³ See for instance Biermann & Vadset, *Workshop*, p. 9; idem, *2nd Workshop*, p. 35.

³⁴⁵⁴ Brigitte Stern, 'Introduction', in: Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, p. 5; Marie-Claude Smouts, 'Political aspects of peace-keeping operations', *ibidem*, p. 19; Yves Daudet, 'Legal aspects', *ibidem*, pp. 43-44.

³⁴⁵⁵ Boutros-Ghali, 'Nations'.

³⁴⁵⁶ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 159.

³⁴⁵⁷ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 205.

'The Force shall not use force...'

Another problem was that Resolution 776 did not provide any clarity about the use of force. While it was intended to supplement Resolution 770 that had made the use of force for the protection of the transporting and distribution of humanitarian aid possible, Resolution 776 unlike Resolution 770 did not make any reference to Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Even the clarification that the implementation of the resolution would be carried out with 'all measures necessary' as was stated in Resolution 770 was absent from Resolution 776.

Resolution 776 stated that the rules for traditional peace operations about the use of force should apply. While this difference between the two resolutions might have provoked some astonishment in anyone not privy to the underlying motives of Boutros-Ghali and the British government, there was still more uncertainty about the use of force in Resolution 776. On the one hand it granted the UN observers an exceptional task in negotiating with the liaisons of the warring parties and local warlords to ensure that convoys reached their destination.³⁴⁵⁸ In other words, the principle of 'words instead of bullets' was adopted. On the other hand the Security Council decided that UNPROFOR in carrying out its humanitarian task in Bosnia did not have to restrict itself to force in self-defence, but could also use it if UNPROFOR was prevented from carrying out its mandate. In Boutros-Ghali's report that the Security Council accepted in passing Resolution 776 it was added that this interpretation was 'particularly relevant' given the tense situation in the territories in Bosnia in which UNPROFOR had to operate under the new mandate.³⁴⁵⁹ Shortly after the resolution was passed General Nambiar managed to muddy matters even further by stating that the rules concerning the use of force would be interpreted very strictly, but that a looser interpretation, more deterrence of aggression, was conceivable.³⁴⁶⁰ The French General, Morillon, who was in charge of the UN operation in Bosnia after MacKenzie's departure made things plain as a pikestaff however: 'we have absolutely no intention to force our way through blockades'.³⁴⁶¹

The notion that self-defence also justified force against people trying to obstruct the execution of the UN mandate was not new. In 1964 the Secretary General of the UN had issued a memorandum on operational questions for the peacekeeping operation in Cyprus; it contained a detailed passage about the principles of self-defence. He upheld existing notions such as: peacekeeping troops should not take the initiative in using force; they should only resort to it in the last instance; and the force used should be restricted to a minimum. He also stipulated that peacekeepers were entitled to defend their positions and resist any attempt to disarm them; in general they were permitted to oppose any violent attempts to prevent the execution of the mandate of the peacekeeping force. Since then the following formula has been consistently used for peacekeeping operations: 'The Force shall not use force except in self-defence. Self-defence would include resistance to attempts by forceful means to prevent it from discharging its duties under the mandate of the Security Council'.³⁴⁶² It was the norm for UN peacekeeping operations that 'self-defence' was also understood to include 'mission defence'. This norm was also included in the setting up of UNPROFOR, the rules for the use of force by the peacekeeping forces – the 'Rules of Engagement'.³⁴⁶³

Before examining the lack of clarity that arose in the Netherlands about this instruction on the use of force, it is worth taking a look at some later developments in the UNPROFOR operation on this issue. It was once more raised in February 1993 with regard to the extension of UNPROFOR's mandate in Croatia. At a meeting of troop-contributing nations held in London on 8 February, the

³⁴⁵⁸ See also ABZ, DPV/ARA/00142. J.M. Baril, 'Tasks of military observers for the implementation of Security Council, res. 776 of 14 Sept. 1992', 15/10/92.

³⁴⁵⁹ UN, S/24540; S/1995/444.

³⁴⁶⁰ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Veiligheidsraad: meer militairen naar Bosnië', *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/09/92.

³⁴⁶¹ Quoted in Moore, 'Month', p. 3.

³⁴⁶² Siekmann, 'VN-vredesinstrumentarium', p. 139. See also Harrison & Nishihara (eds.), *UN Peacekeeping*, p. 50.

³⁴⁶³ See LL. Exh. S92/061/1380. Operation directive, no. 21 of the BLS, appendix F: UNPROFOR Force Commander Directive Nr. 1: Rules of Engagement, 24/03/92.

United Kingdom once more repeated its objections to fighting its way through with the aid convoys. The British were supported in their position by Goulding, who was present at this meeting. According to him this approach would call for a different mandate and different means. There could only be a question of an approach like this, if UNHCR had indicated that it could no longer carry out its activities.³⁴⁶⁴

However, four days later at a meeting in New York with representatives of troop-contributing nations to UNPROFOR, Goulding again stated explicitly that the UNPROFOR mandate did allow the use of force if it was prevented from carrying out its task. An obstacle here, however, was the standard equipment and lightly armed character of a UN battalion that the Secretary General normally asked for. With an appeal to the security of the peacekeeping forces, the French government had even announced that it could only agree to any extension of the mandate of UNPROFOR I if heavier arms were permitted than was normally the case with UN peacekeeping operations.³⁴⁶⁵ On 12 February 1993 Goulding informed the representatives of the troop-contributing nations that Boutros-Ghali had in the meantime responded positively to the wish of countries like France to increase their capacity for self-defence.³⁴⁶⁶ In extending the mandate of UNPROFOR I on 30 March 1993, Resolution 815 also referred explicitly to Chapter VII to guarantee the security and freedom of movement of UNPROFOR. On this occasion China gave a motivation for its vote in which it pointed out that the reference to Chapter VII could only have a bearing on UNPROFOR I in Croatia and should not serve as a precedent for any other regions of the former Yugoslavia. Including Bosnia.³⁴⁶⁷

In July 1993 the Rules of Engagement for UNPROFOR II were altered due to the expansion of the mandate to include the protection of Safe Areas. In this new protocol the standard formulation for the use of force was virtually identical: 'The UNPROFOR troops may use their weapons to resist attempts by forceful means to prevent the Force from discharging its duties.'³⁴⁶⁸ This brief about the use in force did therefore in principle leave open the possibility for breaking through an armed roadblock using firepower. However, the governments of most countries backed the position that was also that taken by the Director of Legal Affairs of the Dutch Ministry of Defence, S.B. Ybema, namely that this definition of self-defence was 'much too broad and thus undesirable': 'Self-defence is merely responding to force that is used against one's own troops.'³⁴⁶⁹ Some critics were of the opinion that in Bosnia what was involved was not a UN Protection Force, but a UN Self-Protection Force.³⁴⁷⁰

5. The transport company and the Dutch image problem

The question of the UNPROFOR briefing on the use of force also had implications for the Dutch government, because there was still an offer open to provide a transport unit. The actual realization had been delayed by the very question of the extent to which and the way in which this unit would receive protection. On 14 September, the day when resolution 776 was adopted, Defence Minister ter Beek, who had just returned from a visit to the Dutch marines in Cambodia, informed reporters of *De Volkskrant* that the West should not commit itself now to sending ten thousand troops to the former Yugoslavia: 'The answer is no. And I'm also telling you that on the basis of my responsibility for the people I would send there.'³⁴⁷¹ The minister felt that a clear political purpose was lacking, without

³⁴⁶⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00142. Kooijmans 011 to embassy in London, 09/02/93, Strictly confidential.

³⁴⁶⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00141. Wijnaendts to Kooijmans, 08/02/93; Kooijmans to PR New York, 18/02/93, celer 36.

³⁴⁶⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00141. Biegman 142 to Kooijmans, 12/02/93.

³⁴⁶⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00141. PR New York to Kooijmans, 29/03/93, nrv 3492.

³⁴⁶⁸ Force Commander's Policy Directive No. 13: Rules of Engagement, printed in Berkowitz, 'Rules', p. 637-646. See also Siekmann, 'VN-vredesinstrumentarium', p. 140.

³⁴⁶⁹ BDL. BDL, no. 92027270/252, memorandum Ybema for the CDS, 06/05/92, no. JZN92/0279/IJB. See also Harrison & Nishihara (eds.), *UN Peacekeeping*, p. 50, 67 n. 47.

³⁴⁷⁰ Weiss, *Interactions*, p. 113.

³⁴⁷¹ Wio Joustra & Jan Tromp, 'Er bestaan geen militaire operaties zonder risico's' ('There is no such thing as a military operation without risks'), *de Volkskrant*, 15/09/92.

which, in his view any military operation would end up literally and figuratively in a minefield. The minister also saw the prospect of a switch in public opinion: ‘The climate with regard to Yugoslavia is currently defined by TV images of atrocities. But it could soon be dominated by images of dead UN soldiers.’³⁴⁷² Then too, as minister he would have to be able to answer for his choices.

While the Dutch Minister of Defence was primarily concerned with the safety of any Dutch troops (self-defence), the Dutch Foreign Office was above all unhappy about the obstacles that the warring parties in Bosnia might employ to block humanitarian convoys. Out of frustration about the UNHCR’s ‘roadblock by roadblock’ approach, the ministry and its diplomats even started to demur on the position of UNHCR as the leading agency in Bosnia-Herzegovina in favour of a stronger role for the Deputy Secretary General of the UN, Jan Eliasson, who was director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.³⁴⁷³ But to no avail.

After the Security Council passed Resolution 770 on 13 August and the United Kingdom and France had offered 1800 and 1100 soldiers respectively to carry out the resolution, the possibility arose that the Dutch transport unit would be deployed as an UNPROFOR unit for the benefit of UNHCR. With that, all the problems associated with the deployment of Dutch troops under the UNHCR flag ceased (see Chapter 6). The Dutch government contacted the British and French governments to fit in the Dutch offer of forty to fifty trucks with the undertaking of those countries to protect the convoys.³⁴⁷⁴

On 18 August Van den Broek instructed Wagenmakers, the Dutch Permanent Representative in Geneva, to inform UNHCR that the earlier offer of thirty trucks with a capacity of 250 tons and 120 drivers could be raised to sixty with a potential load of 500 tons and 200 drivers.³⁴⁷⁵ On 19 August he informed Van Schaik, the Permanent Representative in New York, that he hoped that consultations of the military experts of the UN, the United States, France and the United Kingdom would be productive, given the extremely limited progress in other international organs such as NATO and WEU with regard to the implementation of Resolution 770. The idea apparently fitted in with Van den Broek’s concept of forming if need be a coalition of the willing outside NATO and WEU (see Chapter 6). With the Dutch offer of a transport unit in mind, the course of these discussions was of some weight for the Netherlands and the Rules of Engagement in particular were ‘of vital importance’ for the Dutch government.³⁴⁷⁶

After the Conference of London the Dutch government raised its offer of sixty trucks and about two hundred troops yet again. On 1 September the Permanent Representative in New York received instructions to inform the UN secretariat that the Dutch offer could if required amount to a hundred trucks with a staff of 250.³⁴⁷⁷ Just over a week later, on 10 September, the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, Lieutenant General H.G.B. van den Breemen, visited the UN, where he offered the military advisor to the UN, general M. Baril, an autonomous transport unit of about sixty vehicles with a total capacity of five hundred tons and three hundred personnel. In the long term the offer could even be raised to a hundred trucks (750 tons) and five hundred personnel. To the request of the UN for a signals unit for UNPROFOR II, Van den Breemen promised 75 personnel and twenty observers to supervise the heavy arms.³⁴⁷⁸ A short while later the Belgian government through its Chief of Defence Staff let it be known that it would gladly cover UNPROFOR II’s total transport requirements jointly with the Netherlands – seven hundred troops and a hundred trucks. They would be able to

³⁴⁷² Wio Joustra & Jan Tromp, ‘Er bestaan geen militaire operaties zonder risico’s’, *de Volkskrant*, 15/09/92.

³⁴⁷³ PVNY. Bosnia-Herzegovina/emergency aid, May 1992 – August 1995, Van Schaik 604 to Van den Broek, 24/06/92; Van Schaik 607 to Van den Broek, 25/06/92; ABZ, DIO/2003/00062. Boddens Hosang 379 to Van den Broek, 03/06/92.

³⁴⁷⁴ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 20/08/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study; PVNY. Bosnia-Herzegovina/emergency aid, May 1992 – August 1995, Van den Broek 209 to PR New York, 19/08/92.

³⁴⁷⁵ PVNY. Bosnia-Herzegovina/emergency aid, May 1992 – August 1995, Van den Broek 211 to PR Geneva, 18/08/92.

³⁴⁷⁶ ABZ, Yugoslavia, Resolution 770 (1992), Van den Broek 209 to PR New York, 19/08/92.

³⁴⁷⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155. Van den Broek to PR New York, 01/09/92, celer 224.

³⁴⁷⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155. Biegan 839 to Van den Broek, 10/09/92.

supply a comparable but smaller unit than the Netherlands. The commander of the unit would be Dutch and his deputy a Belgian.³⁴⁷⁹ The Dutch government endorsed this proposal.³⁴⁸⁰ The protection of the Belgian-Dutch transport battalion thus created would be the responsibility of the British battalion.

In a memorandum for Ter Beek, Waltmann, the Deputy Chief of Operations and Command and Information Systems, remarked with regard to the danger that personnel of the Dutch transport unit might run that: 'There is always a risk of a mine or a sniper. But the danger is greater for the escorting personnel than for the driver of a truck.'³⁴⁸¹ In the Ministerial Council meeting of 20 August 1992 it was warned that the Netherlands would suffer from an image problem if the impression was raised that the Dutch government was willing to supply drivers, while letting the dirty work be done by the escort units of the United Kingdom and France. The Council also stated that due to the principle of voluntary participation for conscripts, the Netherlands was not in a position to supply any combat unit.³⁴⁸² Two days later this position was announced publicly in interviews with the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Wilmink (see Chapter 6).

The risk of the Netherlands being saddled with an image problem could be seen for instance when Gomersall, the deputy head of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs of the British Foreign Office visited his counterparts in The Hague on 14 October. Gomersall rejected far-reaching military measures. The Directorate, however, thought that threatening the Serbs with reprisals would have a deterrence rather than an escalatory effect. It did not look very good that at the same time the Directorate had to urge the British infantry battalion to speed up its preparations for deployment in Bosnia, because the personnel of the Dutch transport unit depended on them for protection.³⁴⁸³ As the Dutch government made abundantly clear to the UN and UNHCR, they would not deploy the promised transport company until this protection was available.³⁴⁸⁴ Meanwhile on 1 October the Dutch government had received a formal request from Boutros-Ghali to send extra Dutch troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina to contribute to the implementation of Security Council Resolution 776.³⁴⁸⁵

New criticism of the other powers by the Dutch Parliament

Prior to this a full debate was held on 16 September in the Dutch Parliament, characterized by frustration at the international community's failure to make any progress with regard to the former Yugoslavia.³⁴⁸⁶ The Dutch Parliament's criticism of the other powers was again fairly biting. 'The impression slowly begins to dawn that the more diplomatic measures are taken with regard to the contending parties, the worse the fighting gets', said Sipkes.³⁴⁸⁷ According to her the EC lacked any clear policy. 'EC policy changes almost every day.'³⁴⁸⁸ She thought that Foreign Secretary Van den

³⁴⁷⁹ BSG, Memorandum Defence Staff for Ter Beek, 18/09/92, no. S92/061/2881.

³⁴⁸⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155. Van den Broek to PR New York, 18/09/91, celer 246; 'Nederland en België bundelen hulptransporten naar Sarajevo' (Netherlands and Belgium provide joint relief transport to Sarajevo), *de Volkskrant*, 26/09/92.

³⁴⁸¹ Guikje Roethof, 'Krijgshaftig. Hoe wil Ter Beek eigenlijk aanvallen?' (Warlike language, but how does Ter Beek intend to put it into practice?), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 02/09/92.

³⁴⁸² Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 20/08/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

³⁴⁸³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Van den Broek 158 to the embassy in London, 15/10/92.

³⁴⁸⁴ ABZ, DIO/2003/00063. Loudon 418 (Van den Broek) to Foreign Affairs, 26/08/92; Van den Broek 252 to PR Geneva 13/10/92; DPV/ARA/00154, Van den Broek 296 to PR New York, 12/10/92; head of DPV to PR New York, 13/10/92, DPV-1741/92; Biegan 1003 to Van den Broek, 13/10/92; note DIO/Yugoslavia – transport battalion/UNPROFOR II, 23/10/92.

³⁴⁸⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00154. Boutros-Ghali to the Dutch Permanent Representative 01/10/92.

³⁴⁸⁶ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings pp. 54-79.

³⁴⁸⁷ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings p. 54.

³⁴⁸⁸ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings p. 55.

Broek, whose criticism was mainly addressed to Serbia should be sharper about the absence of any coherence in the actions of the EC, NATO and WEU.³⁴⁸⁹ De Kok described the measures taken by the international community against Serbia as ‘unimpressive’.³⁴⁹⁰ Blaauw could not help thinking that the UN, ‘the last bulwark for the protection of individual rights and human rights’ was as spineless as its predecessor the League of Nations.³⁴⁹¹ Van Traa felt that in the discussions with the international community the Dutch government should make it quite clear that the ships in the Adriatic Sea in charge of monitoring the UN embargo against Serbia and Montenegro, ‘were not sailing around just for fun’. If the international community did not apply the sanctions more seriously the Dutch government should recall their frigate.³⁴⁹² He also thought that the entire Dutch Parliament was prepared to run the risk of Dutch soldiers being wounded or killed in Bosnia. According to him the question was not ‘whether we are taking too big a risk, but whether the international community was prepared to take any risk at all’.³⁴⁹³ According to PvdA (Labour) member Van Traa, it had sometimes looked in the preceding period as though only the Netherlands was capable of bringing peace to Bosnia.

‘That was almost like an echo of the discussion of previous years about the Netherlands as a model country. This is of course not the case. We do indeed have the responsibility to participate vigorously in what is possible. But we are still dependent on the willingness of a credible coalition and this willingness does not add up to very much. (...) It is of course important that the government is undiplomatic enough to call a spade a spade. In a sense it might now be timely to sound the alarm in Europe. That is something you can only do once (...) You could wonder whether within the European Community it isn’t perhaps the smaller countries (...) that ought to try something.’³⁴⁹⁴

Minister Van den Broek, who had been absent from the previous debate on 27 August because he was at the Conference of London, did however have an excellent grasp of the atmosphere that had prevailed over what was now three debates – on 12 and 27 August and now again on September 16. He told Parliament that the government did not blame Parliament for its ‘tone of frustration, impatience and a certain sense of impotence’. ‘In any case we think we have the right, within the political context, to interpret this in such a way that these cries of distress and encouragement are aimed over our heads at the international community as a whole’. According to him, ‘there really wasn’t very much difference of opinion between Parliament and the government’ throughout the three debates.³⁴⁹⁵

Ter Beek also thought that the position of the government and parliament was the same. He thought that this was ‘also important when what is involved is discharging the responsibility for the dispatch of Dutch troops, which was primarily the task of the Minister of Defence, but also of the government and the members of Parliament that support the policy’.³⁴⁹⁶ Once again he was confirmed in his opinion that the Dutch contribution to the peacekeeping operations of the UN, that he saw as a substantial one, enjoyed broad political and social support.³⁴⁹⁷ And the government too was impatient about the tardiness of the international community in taking new measures against the aggressors in the former Yugoslavia, because as Van den Broek said, ‘we get the feeling that with every day that passes

³⁴⁸⁹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings p. 76.

³⁴⁹⁰ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings p. 56.

³⁴⁹¹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings p. 66.

³⁴⁹² TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings p. 79.

³⁴⁹³ TK, 1991-1993, Proceedings p. 63.

³⁴⁹⁴ TK, 1991-1993, Proceedings, p. 63.

³⁴⁹⁵ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 67.

³⁴⁹⁶ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 72.

³⁴⁹⁷ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 73.

the politics of facts on the ground pursued by certain parties and particularly the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina becomes more entrenched'.³⁴⁹⁸

6. Confusion about the Rules of Engagement

During the debate a number of the parties asked the minister for more clarity about the Rules of Engagement under Resolution 776. They wanted to know whether besides self-defence, the defence of tasks assigned to the peacekeeping force in its mandate was included and whether deterrent action was permitted if there was a threat of aggression.³⁴⁹⁹ Ter Beek had apparently been misinformed by Ybema, the head of Legal Affairs of his department who was of the opinion that the defence of the mandate as an element in self-defence was an innovation.³⁵⁰⁰ Furthermore, the Minister of Defence appeared not to be aware of the news that the Dutch Permanent Representative at the UN had sent to The Hague some days after the passage of Resolution 770 in which it appeared that Boutros-Ghali in fact rejected all forms of force except pure self-defence.³⁵⁰¹ Apparently the Defence Department also did not realize that the wording of Resolution 776 was so different from that of Resolution 770 with regard to the use of force that a broad interpretation of the notion of 'self-defence' could not be taken for granted, let alone by the British infantry troops supposed to defend the Dutch transport unit. In his answers to the questions in Parliament, Ter Beek referred to the wording in the report of Boutros-Ghali on which Resolution 776 was based, which still operated on the basis of the 'broad' definition of self-defence.

The minister therefore informed Parliament that the Secretary General of the UN had indicated that self-defence also implied defence of the mission. In his own interpretation the minister went to quite an extreme. First of all he thought that since self-defence was interpreted as meaning the defence of the mandate, one could speak of an expansion of the Rules of Engagement, which was certainly not the case; since Cyprus 1964 this definition of self-defence had been the norm. But he also believed that under this 'expansion', it was henceforth permitted to 'disarm combatants who were clearly trying to prevent UNPROFOR by force from carrying out their tasks, or who had already done so. In such situations UN troops were permitted to use force, even if it had to be at the lowest viable level and proportionate'.³⁵⁰² The UN soldiers could then hand the disarmed combatants over 'to the competent authorities'.³⁵⁰³ According to the minister deterrent force was also permitted.³⁵⁰⁴ When Sipkes remarked that in her opinion the moment had already come for the UN troops in Bosnia to use deterrent force, Ter Beek replied that it was not for him, but for the commander on the spot to judge that. He added that the rules were not being expanded so far as to amount to peace-enforcing,³⁵⁰⁵ as Van Middelkoop understood it.³⁵⁰⁶ The Rules of Engagement were merely 'expanded' to increase the safety of personnel.³⁵⁰⁷ Eisma thought that if it were true what the minister was saying – that the UN troops were entitled to make use of deterrent force – the chance of escalation was 'enormous'.³⁵⁰⁸ The minister was not willing to go into specific instances – for instance the one raised by CDA (Christian Democrats) member De Kok as to what would happen if the UN headquarters in Bosnia came under fire. 'Will nothing be done then either?'.³⁵⁰⁹ This excessively broad interpretation of the concept of self-

³⁴⁹⁸ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 69.

³⁴⁹⁹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 55 (Sipkes), p. 57 (De Kok), p. 60 (Eisma), p. 61 (Van Middelkoop), p. 66 (Van Dis).

³⁵⁰⁰ DV. BDL, no. 92027270/252, memorandum from Ybema for the CDS, 06/05/92, no. JZN92/0279/IJB.

³⁵⁰¹ ABZ, Yugoslavia, resolution 770 (1992), D'Ansembourg 783 to Van den Broek, 19/08/92.

³⁵⁰² TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 74.

³⁵⁰³ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 75.

³⁵⁰⁴ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 75.

³⁵⁰⁵ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 75.

³⁵⁰⁶ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, pp. 61 and 72.

³⁵⁰⁷ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 75.

³⁵⁰⁸ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 75.

³⁵⁰⁹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 74.

defence in the international political situation would inevitably lead in future to even more frustration among Dutch MPs when UNPROFOR failed to respond more vigorously in the case of road blocks.

The lack of clarity about the use of force was not confined to Parliament. UNPROFOR troops in Bosnia also had difficulties with it. General J.W. Brinkman, the Commander of the Airmobile Brigade from April 1993 to September 1994 and then Chief of Staff of BH Command, later wrote:

‘Is actively looking for and then eliminating a sniper covered by the right to self-defence or is one supposed to wait till the next person is killed? And what is supposed to be one’s response if a logistical convoy is at risk of being plundered? Does this fall under the right to self-defence and are the troops allowed to protect their own materiel and goods? In the civil war in Bosnia it was significant that the more experience a country had of this sort of operation the more loosely it interpreted the UN mandate, the usual result being that they were much tougher. Generally speaking the warring factions respected this.’³⁵¹⁰

In the interpretation of the Rules of Engagement by the different national units in Bosnia the briefings they received from their national capitals also played a role. For instance, there was a considerable difference in the use of force of the French battalion in Bihac that was given plenty of freedom by Paris and the British contingent in Vitez, that had a strict interpretation imposed by London.³⁵¹¹ Nonetheless the British battalion did not hesitate to fire back if they were first attacked. Between November 1993 and May 1994 the British battalions escorting convoys answered fire from one of the warring factions 67 times, using heavy 30 mm cannons for this purpose.³⁵¹²

Confidential briefings of the Dutch Parliament

Another interesting aspect of the debate of 16 September was that Eisma asked Ter Beek whether they could be kept informed, if need be confidentially, about the advice of the military regarding the risks attached to the operations that Dutch UN soldiers were engaged in.³⁵¹³ It was an interesting request, on the one hand because it meant that a member of parliament was fishing for military expertise, different from anything he could get from the dailies and weeklies, so as to form his own opinion. On the other hand, there was the risk that Parliament in asking for the advice was coming dangerously close to being a partner in shaping policy. That desire was also implicit in the arguments Eisma employed: ‘Why, when it is our job to prepare a decision in partnership with the government and if need be give our consent to that decision, should we not have access to these reports?’³⁵¹⁴ Whatever the case, Ter Beek showed little enthusiasm for this request :

‘It may be disappointing for Mr Eisma but he’ll have to make do with me and not with the briefings of military experts, because it is on the basis of these briefings that I decide on a position. It is my task to give an account of this and Mr Eisma should say whether he agrees or not. But he can’t enter by way of me (...) into discussion with the military experts, because he is in discussion with me.’ ‘(...) After all, I don’t ask you how you have been briefed by your party staff before debating with you, do I?’³⁵¹⁵

³⁵¹⁰ J.W. Brinkman, ‘Plaats en betekenis van moraliteit in het maken van afwegingen. Een militaire invalshoek’, *Interventie. Kernvraag* (2000) 3, pp. 50-51.

³⁵¹¹ Gow, *Triumph*, p. 112.

³⁵¹² Gow, *Triumph*, pp. 128 and 180 n. 68.

³⁵¹³ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 59.

³⁵¹⁴ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 59.

³⁵¹⁵ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 59.

Constitutionally speaking Eisma called the comparison ‘not entirely appropriate’.³⁵¹⁶ He stuck to his point that Parliament should be given a briefing ‘with all the information and all related military matters (...) We have had a briefing for less important matters.’³⁵¹⁷ In the end Ter Beek declared that if the Permanent Committee asked him he would arrange for such a briefing ‘with conviction and pleasure’.³⁵¹⁸

In a letter of 6 October 1992 Van den Broek and Ter Beek informed Parliament that they had replied to the request of Boutros-Ghali for Dutch troops to implement Resolution 776. The Netherlands would provide two transport companies with a total of about 385 men as a contribution to a combined Dutch and Belgian transport battalion, to be quartered in Vitez and Banja Luka; 95 signals personnel to supplement the 380 signals corps already there; twenty observers and forty officers and other personnel for the UNPROFOR headquarters that was being set up in Bosnia-Herzegovina.³⁵¹⁹ With the dispatch of these 540 troops the total Dutch contribution to the UN force in the former Yugoslavia came to about 940. With the dispatch of still more troops the number would rise to 1100 at the beginning of 1993.³⁵²⁰ As the reason for this considerable effort the government gave ‘the grave injustice that has been and is being done to many people in Bosnia-Herzegovina’, the expectation that an expanded international force in Bosnia could have a deterrent effect on the violation of human rights and the possibility that an UNPROFOR force of some scope might contribute to a political solution to the problem.³⁵²¹ It was the government’s idea that in supplying these troops what was involved were ‘responsible and acceptable risks.’ ‘Conclusive guarantees of safety’ were however impossible.³⁵²² In its letter the government mentions that under the self-defence of UN forces, ‘situations were also included in which persons attempted with force to prevent the UN forces from carrying out their mandate’.³⁵²³ The entire Ministerial Council, which a month earlier had authorized Prime Minister Lubbers, Deputy Prime Minister Kok and Ministers Ter Beek and Van den Broek to deploy the troops,³⁵²⁴ was only informed about the decision to do so on 9 October, three days after Parliament was informed. They gave their consent.³⁵²⁵

On 7 October 1992 the Standing Committee for Defence did indeed request and receive a confidential briefing from military experts of the Ministry of Defence.³⁵²⁶ It was the first of a series of confidential briefings concerning operations in the former Yugoslavia. On 22 February 1994 the Committee would receive a briefing about the security and weaponry of Dutchbat. The Parliamentary Committees for Defence and Foreign Affairs jointly received a briefing on 18 October 1994 about the impossibility or otherwise of Dutchbat pulling out of Srebrenica³⁵²⁷ and on 31 May 1995 another confidential briefing followed.

Ter Beek himself was not present at these briefings but wished to be informed by the Defence Staff about the meetings afterwards: ‘I was not so much interested in what the ministry briefers told the members of parliament – of course I knew about that – as I was in what the members of parliament

³⁵¹⁶ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 59.

³⁵¹⁷ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 76.

³⁵¹⁸ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 78.

³⁵¹⁹ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 29.

³⁵²⁰ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 31, p. 6.

³⁵²¹ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 29, p. 1.

³⁵²² TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 29, p. 4; TK, session 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 816 (Ter Beek, 22/10/92).

³⁵²³ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 29, p. 4.

³⁵²⁴ BSG, Besluitenlijsten Politiek Beraad (lists of decisions Political Consultations) 1992-1996. Besluitenlijst, 14/09/92.

³⁵²⁵ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 09/10/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

³⁵²⁶ Those present were: Achttienribbe-Buijs (PvdA), Blaauw (VVD), Van Dis (SGP), Eisma (D66), Van Heemskerck Pillis-Duvekot (VVD), De Hoop Scheffer (CDA), De Kok (CDA), Frinking (CDA), Leerling (RPF), Sipkes (GL), Van Traa (PvdA), Valk (PvdA), Ter Veer (D66) and Van Vlijmen (CDA). During these and other confidential briefings there were no staff of Dutch Intelligence present.

³⁵²⁷ Cf. Both, *Indifference*, p. 260.

thought of them. I hoped in this way to profit from them.³⁵²⁸ Another way that the Defence Department might profit from the confidential briefings was that it meant that the Foreign Office, with which in other matters it acted jointly in Parliament, would not be able to keep an eye on it. The Foreign Office, however, was well aware of this risk - it was one reason why this ministry sent 'a "spy"' to the briefing.³⁵²⁹ On the other hand these confidential briefings and the absence of Ter Beek was advantageous for the members of parliament because the military men responsible were much more open about their hesitations in these private sessions. In public sessions of the committee they would have been less inclined to speak out.³⁵³⁰

During the briefing of 7 October 1992 Commander J. Waltmann of the Defence Staff and Brigadier General Bastiaans, Deputy Chief of Operations of the Royal Netherlands Army informed the members present about the political and military situation in the former Yugoslavia, the options with regard to the deployment of UN troops, UNPROFOR's mandate, the activities of the different international organizations active in the region and the Dutch contribution to them. The information was generally known and the members' interest was correspondent, according to an internal report of the Defence Department. The only time it really became exciting was when members of parliament had the opportunity to ask questions and make comments. Frinking, De Hoop Scheffer, De Kok and Van Traa requested information about the powers accorded to the new command structure in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In Van Heemskerck's opinion – mistakenly as we saw above – the Rules of Engagement went further than was normally the case with peacekeeping. She asked whether the light arms the force possessed were sufficient and whether the choice here was a political or a military one.

In response Waltmann explained that UN troops were not permitted to intervene in the case of breaches of human rights – their mandate in Bosnia did not go as far as this. There was also no question of protection by air power, except for the removal of the wounded by transport helicopter. Bastiaans described the humanitarian aims as primary. Any military activity would have to remain modest, so that it would still be possible for neutral UN troops to provide aid 'tomorrow and the day after'. According to the heads of the Defence department the result of the briefing was that the initially 'forceful language' of a number of members of parliament made way for concern about the risks to Dutch troops.³⁵³¹

During a full debate on 22 October 1992 the members of parliament with the exception of the member for the extreme right-wing party, Hans Janmaat, endorsed the decision of the government to send troops, something that was hardly surprising after their 'great impatience in August', as the PvdA member Van Traa described it.³⁵³² Apparently impressed by the confidential briefing held two weeks earlier, the members of parliament set great store during this debate by the personal safety of the Dutch

³⁵²⁸ TCBU, interview A.L. ter Beek, 23/03/00, p. 15; see also TCBU, Vertrekpunt I, p. 104.

³⁵²⁹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00154. Memorandum from DPV for Van den Broek via DGPZ and S, 06/10/92, no. DPV-1689/92.

³⁵³⁰ TCBU, interview D. Eisma, 06/04/00, p. 4.

³⁵³¹ According to the Bakker committee set up by Parliament that enquired into the decision-making process around the deployment of Dutch troops to peacekeeping operations, there is no report of this meeting. TCBU, Vertrekpunt I, p. 104. The NIOD, however, found written reports of the two introductions both in the Ter Beek collection and in the archive of the Groen Links (Green Left) Parliamentary party: 'Briefing Yugoslavia', confidential and 'Military situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina', confidential, both undated. In the first report a general survey is given of Yugoslavia and its history; of the political situation in the countries that formerly belonged to Yugoslavia and also of the situation in Kosovo and Vojvodina; of the strength and arms of the different parties to the conflict; the activities of international organizations with regard to the former Yugoslavia; and finally of the Dutch contribution. The second report gives a summary of the military situation in the different parts of Bosnia; the combat resources of the different parties, their attitude to UNPROFOR, UNPROFOR itself; the concept of operations of the Dutch/Belgian transport battalion; its deployment and the risks aid convoys incurred in Bosnia. The second report is also found in the Kreemers collection. The presentations were accompanied by slides. Also found was: NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek, confidential memorandum by Frans Princen, 'Impressie van de vertrouwelijke briefing van de Vaste Commissie voor Defensie van de Tweede Kamer op 7 oktober 1992' (Impression of the confidential briefing of the Permanent Committee for Defence on 7 October 1992), 08/10/92.

³⁵³² TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 811.

troops.³⁵³³ However, they were persuaded by Ter Beek that through agreements with the warring factions, the command structure on the spot, the protection provided by British and Canadian infantry battalions, the location and the routes used by the convoys and the protective measures taken with regard to the equipment of trucks and drivers, everything had been done to keep risks to an acceptable level - acceptable that is in relation to the appalling situation of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina. On 1 March 1993, to emphasize the importance it attached to the safety of Dutch military personnel in the region, the government also attached the frigate Abraham Crijnssen to the British task group Ark Royal in the Adriatic Sea that would provide cover for UNPROFOR troops in the event of an evacuation.³⁵³⁴

During the debate on 22 October 1992 De Kok requested more clarity over the powers the Minister of Defence had with regard to the UNPROFOR command structure: 'Does he have an insight into what is going on? Does he have an emergency brake for unexpected circumstances?'³⁵³⁵ According to Ter Beek he did have such a brake on the grounds of the supreme authority of the Dutch government over the deployment of Dutch troops (article 98 of the constitution. See also Chapter 5). He was empowered if need be to recall the Dutch contingent, but he acknowledged straightway that it was not a decision he would take lightly. Decisions about the data and routes of convoys were the task of the UN commanders in consultation with the representatives of UNHCR. Ter Beek also pointed out that Dutch officers were present at virtually all the levels of the UNPROFOR command structure.³⁵³⁶ With Parliamentary approval 160 quartermasters of the Dutch transport unit departed on 31 October, followed on 7 and 10 November by the main force.

Lack of clarity in the Netherlands about how to deal with roadblocks

Despite the fact that, as early as August, the UN, UNHCR and Britain were adamantly opposed to the use of force when convoys were stopped at roadblocks, both the Dutch Parliament and Government continued to ask questions on this subject in August. On 19 August, the day after Van den Broek had instructed him to make the higher offer of sixty trucks and two hundred drivers to UNHCR, Wagenmakers, the Dutch Permanent Representative in Geneva, asked the High Commissioner what significance should be given to the words 'all measures necessary' in Resolution 770. UNHCR's answer stressed that the only realistic way of ensuring that convoys could continue on their way consisted of frequently exhausting negotiations with the warring factions. For the sake of ongoing aid UNHCR thought it of the utmost importance that the parties saw the stance of the aid workers as impartial and neutral.³⁵³⁷

In the margins of the London Conference Van den Broek raised the issue of the military escorting of convoys with Ogata. She said that she would have no objection if UNHCR on the spot deemed it necessary; it would then need to be a 'non-offensive use' of troops. She continued to argue for lengthy and difficult negotiations if necessary to ensure that the convoys reached their destination. Her preference, she told Van den Broek, was therefore for civilian drivers.³⁵³⁸

On 17 February 1993 CDA MP De Kok asked a question in Parliament about whether UN convoys were entitled to use force to reach their destination. Minister P.H. Kooijmans who succeeded Van den Broek as Minister of Foreign Affairs on 2 January 1993, replied that if a convoy protected by UNPROFOR was blocked, it was for the UNPROFOR commander to decide on the appropriate

³⁵³³ See also Hans Moleman, 'VN-missie moet met creativiteit Kamer nachtmerries besparen' (With creativity the UN can spare Parliament some nightmares), *de Volkskrant*, 23/10/92.

³⁵³⁴ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 33.

³⁵³⁵ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 806.

³⁵³⁶ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 819.

³⁵³⁷ PVNY. Wagenmakers 588 to Van den Broek, 19/08/92. See also ABZ, 2003/00063, Follow-up Committee on the Comprehensive Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in the Former Yugoslavia, Second Meeting, 04/09/92, Working Document. Advance copy, enclosure by PR Geneva to F. van Wulfften Palthe, 24/08/92, fax no. hum/gev-0579/92.

³⁵³⁸ ABZ, DIO/2003/00063. Loudon 418 (Van den Broek) to Foreign Affairs, 26/08/92.

action. Where possible he would consult the senior UNHCR official in the convoy. Up till now, the minister said, it had never proved necessary to use military means to force a passage, 'in order to ensure the safety of UN staff and to see that the relief operations in general were not endangered.'³⁵³⁹

On 9 March 1993 Parliament passed Van Traa's motion asking the government to find out whether measures were available if necessary to use force to ensure that UN convoys reached their destination.³⁵⁴⁰ Minister Kooijmans had no objection to the motion, although he also did not see that it would achieve anything. In fact Resolutions 770 and 776 already offered the possibility of the use of greater force, he said. The troop-contributing nations proved unwilling to do so however. For that they needed to be more heavily armed and have a broader mandate.³⁵⁴¹ Nonetheless the motion was passed a week later, with the PvdA, CDA, D66, Groen Links, GPV, RPF and SGP voting for it and the other parties against.³⁵⁴²

The Dutch Permanent Representative at the UN then informed Kooijmans that a contributing factor to the UNHCR position of negotiating instead of opening fire was that what was involved was usually not just one roadblock, but several on the same route. When force was resorted to at one road block, one would have to be prepared to engage in combat the whole length of that route. Furthermore, if that were to happen the road blocks further along the route would be reinforced in response. In fact, if a decision was taken to resort to force, a secure corridor would have to be achieved. The NATO and WEU plans for this situation of August 1992 had however concluded that to achieve this would require a force of a hundred thousand and no country envisaged the possibility of supplying or contributing to such a force.

Finally in the rejection of the use of force the commanders of the UNPROFOR units protecting the convoys were well aware that a confrontation at one spot could well lead to reprisals against UN personnel at another, entirely different one.³⁵⁴³ On 5 April Kooijmans therefore informed Parliament with regard to Van Traa's motion, that contacts with the UN Secretariat had indicated that UNHCR was opposed to the use of force to ensure that aid convoys reached their destination.³⁵⁴⁴ Prior to that answer to Parliament, some ministers had also expressed irritation during a Ministerial Council meeting about the non-violent response expected at these roadblocks.³⁵⁴⁵ Ter Beek said: 'if they come up against an obstacle, let them drive around it'; a viewpoint that Prime Minister Lubbers in particular did not feel very happy about.³⁵⁴⁶

It was not just UN diplomats and cautious governments who were against the use of force in the framework of Resolutions 770 and 776. The experience of the troops involved indicated that they regarded negotiations at roadblocks as being far preferable to force. At the beginning of 1994 the Dutch Army attaché in London noted down at the presentation of the commander of the British battalion for the period from May to November 1993 about his experience that riding in a Warrior (a heavy armoured vehicle) through a roadblock meant that the convoy could proceed straightway but that afterwards this might mean that they were denied the use of the road for days on end. A few hours delay as a result of negotiations was therefore preferable.³⁵⁴⁷ Opening fire would have even more serious consequences than just riding through. As Sergio Vieira de Mello, the highest civilian UN

³⁵³⁹ TK, 1992-1993, Appendix to Proceedings, no. 390.

³⁵⁴⁰ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 37.

³⁵⁴¹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3874.

³⁵⁴² TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3394 (16/03/93).

³⁵⁴³ ABZ, Yugoslavia Resolution 770 (1992), D'Ansemborg 264 to Kooijmans, 22/03/93.

³⁵⁴⁴ TK, session 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 44.

³⁵⁴⁵ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings on 26/03/93 and 02/04/93, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

³⁵⁴⁶ Interview R.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

³⁵⁴⁷ CRST. Colonel G.C.W. Soetermeer, Dutch Army attaché, a DOKL OZ, attn. H Sitcen, 28/02/94 no. 2602/1827, with supplement: 'Aantekening naar aanleiding van presentatie Britse BC over ervaring UK(VN-)bataljon in periode mei-november 1993' (Notes on the presentation of British commander about experience of a British UN battalion in period from May to November 1993).

administrator in Sarajevo from the end of 1993, once wrote: 'Shooting your way through only works once. After that you're at war, and for all practical purposes the humanitarian effort is over.'³⁵⁴⁸

An international enquiry of 1996 of UNPROFOR officers who had served in Bosnia showed that about eighty percent of them concurred with the attitude that patience was the best way of ensuring that humanitarian convoys reached their destination.³⁵⁴⁹ There were some officers who felt that at any rate threatening with force could do no harm. For instance, the Swedish Commander of the Norwegian battalion, Hendrikson said that if a convoy was stopped at a roadblock, 'I tell them they let me through or I'll blow their fucking heads off. Sure, sometimes they don't, and I have to go back, but it doesn't hurt to try it. You have to in the Balkans. You act the tough guy or they piss all over you.'³⁵⁵⁰ How cautiously UNPROFOR acted in reality can be seen from the fact that it was not until the beginning of November that UNPROFOR troops first resorted to the right to self-defence, after an aid convoy escorted by British troops came under heavy fire thirty kilometres south of Tuzla.³⁵⁵¹

7. The No-Fly Zones

In London the no-fly zone over Bosnia was proposed as one of the confidence-building measures. After the Conference of London the Dutch authorities were strong advocates of a Security Council resolution to set up a 'no-fly zone' over Bosnia. During an EPS lunch in New York on 22 September with the temporary Secretary of State, Eagleburger, Van den Broek spoke out for the deployment of flying radar stations, the 'AWACS', to record outlawed movements of aircraft. Later he recalled that almost all his colleagues were theoretically in favour of a no-fly-zone, but that there were many practical problems involved in making it stick. Once more Douglas Hurd took the lead in playing 'a discouraging role'.³⁵⁵²

At the beginning of October an American draft resolution was finally presented to the Security Council for enforcing a no-fly zone over Bosnia. The American government had been brought round after realizing that any interruption of humanitarian relief flights to Sarajevo would mean the deaths of many thousands of Muslims in the coming winter.³⁵⁵³ Since the Bosnian Muslims and Croats had very few if any planes, the prohibition was mainly directed at the Serbs who despite the agreements of London still bombarded residential and industrial areas in Bosnia repeatedly. Van den Broek was pleased with the explicit allusion to Chapter VII of the UN Charter and with the mention of enforcement in this draft resolution. He was also enthusiastic about the role assigned to NATO; he saw it as the only organization with the means and infrastructure to supervise and enforce a compliance with the resolution in the short run.³⁵⁵⁴

The allusion to Chapter VII proved unacceptable however to Russia and China, both permanent members of the Security Council. The British chairman of the Security Council aimed therefore for a two-stage approach.³⁵⁵⁵ UNPROFOR was asked to devise a 'suitable mechanism' to

³⁵⁴⁸ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 169.

³⁵⁴⁹ Biermann & Vadset, *2nd Workshop*, p. 30.

³⁵⁵⁰ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 169.

³⁵⁵¹ MID. MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, 83/92, 08/11/92.

³⁵⁵² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00085. Biegman 886 (Van den Broek) to Foreign Affairs, 23/09/92. See also ABZ, DEU/ARA/05244. Biegman 884 (Van den Broek) to Foreign Affairs, 22/09/92; PVNY. Van den Broek to Permanent Representative New York, 30/09/92, celer 263; J. Groen, 'V-raad studeert op meer stappen tegen Servië' (Security Council studying more measures against Serbia), *de Volkskrant*, 24/09/92.

³⁵⁵³ John M. Goshko, 'A Reluctant Expansion of Policy. Bosnia "No-Fly" Zone Needed to Protect Aid, Eagleburger Says', *The Washington Post*, 11/10/92. See also 'Vliegverbod boven Bosnië' ('No fly-zone over Bosnia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/10/92.

³⁵⁵⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Van den Broek 275 to PR New York, 05/10/92.

³⁵⁵⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Memorandum DGPZ to Van den Broek, 07/10/92, no. 161/92; ABZ,999.241 Yugoslavia, No Fly Zone. Confidential memorandum of DAV to Van den Broek, 06/10/92, no. MS-183/92.

supervise compliance. Enforcement of the no-fly zone would only become possible after violations had occurred and this required a new resolution.

This caution was prompted not merely by the position adopted by Russia and China, but mainly by the British and French governments that feared an escalation of the conflict if force were used straightway. They shared Boutros-Ghali's anxiety about the safety of UN personnel on the ground if the no-fly zone were enforced.³⁵⁵⁶ This approach resulted in Resolution 781, passed on 9 October, which proclaimed the prohibition without mentioning sanctions. It, for that matter, also referred to Resolution 770 and thus indirectly to Chapter VII.

The no-fly zone was instituted at once. Monitoring would be carried out by observers on thirteen airfields in Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro and by the NATO AWACS that were already present in the region to assist in the recording of violations of the embargo at sea over the Adriatic. From the beginning of November AWACS aircraft would also be stationed in Hungary, NATO's first out-of-area-operation. The stationing of observers at the airfields was made possible by its endorsement of the Yugoslav and Croatian Presidents, Cosic and Tudjman on 30 September in a joint statement in the presence of the mediators Owen and Vance.³⁵⁵⁷ Some weeks later Van den Broek spoke in noticeably sharper terms than presented in the resolution. He argued for selective military action in the form of vigorous enforcement of the arms embargo and the no-fly zone.³⁵⁵⁸

According to many insiders an enforcement of the no-fly zone would in fact have scarcely any effect on the war on the ground. After the resolution there were hardly any more bombing raids by the Bosnian Serbs.³⁵⁵⁹ The VRS did continue on a modest scale to make use of helicopters for transporting troops and supplies.³⁵⁶⁰ If these had been fired on, the lightly-armed UN troops on the ground would have been an easy target for reprisals. Finally enforcement would have jeopardized the neutrality the UN aimed to preserve with a view to negotiations. Bart Tromp wrote therefore that a resolution enforcing the no-fly zone was 'at best a gesture and at worst a military move that was politically stupid.'³⁵⁶¹

Without sanctions however the no-fly zone did not mean very much. A fleet of AWACS reconnaissance planes of the NATO recorded repeated violations.³⁵⁶² The follow-up resolution proposed in this case remained a distant prospect because the French and British governments did not want the Security Council to pass it until UNPROFOR II was fully operative in the region. With regard to violations of the no-fly zone then a minimalist approach emerged, with the international community turning a blind eye.

On 10 November the Security Council finally passed Resolution 786, making enforcement possible. Verification could now be carried out not just by the AWACS but also by stationing observers from the European monitors mission in three airports in Croatia and by UNPROFOR in Zagreb, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. Yet, thereafter the Serbs and – to a lesser degree the Croatians – continued to violate the no-fly zone and the Bosnian government refused to allow observers onto the airfield of Tuzla, where according to British sources Iranian planes flew in considerable quantities of weapons.³⁵⁶³ The failure of enforcement to materialize was exacerbated by consecutive elections in the United States, Russia, and Serbia in November and December 1992.³⁵⁶⁴

³⁵⁵⁶ Paulsen, *Jugoslavienpolitik*, pp. 99-100; Favier & Martin-Rolland, *Décennie*, p. 306.

³⁵⁵⁷ For the text of the statement see Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp. 456-458.

³⁵⁵⁸ Leonard Ornstein, 'Minister Van den Broek: Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg' (Van den Broek: 'I'd say, let's start with a shot across the bows'), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, pp. 9-10.

³⁵⁵⁹ United Nations Department of Public Information, *The United Nations*, p. 10.

³⁵⁶⁰ Gow, *Triumph*, pp. 132-133.

³⁵⁶¹ Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 49 (30/09/92).

³⁵⁶² See for example DPV/ARA/01806. Biegan 1001 to Van den Broek, 14/10/92; Van den Broek to PR New York, 30/10/92, celer 360.

³⁵⁶³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Biegan 1344 to Van den Broek, 04/12/92. See also appendix Intelligence, Chapter 4.

³⁵⁶⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Biegan 1143 to Van den Broek, 03/11/92; Biegan 1396 to Van den Broek, 16/12/92; Jacobovits 2005 to Van den Broek, 18/12/92.

One practical problem was that the troop-contributing nations had only provided 29 of the required 79 observers by the beginning of December.³⁵⁶⁵ It is a question though how much the UN really insisted on it. Boutros-Ghali had very little enthusiasm for the no-fly zone.³⁵⁶⁶

Both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and N.H. (Niek) Biegman, appointed Dutch Permanent Representative at the United Nations in September 1992, expressed great frustration about the inaction over violations of the no-fly zone on the part of the United States, France and the United Kingdom.³⁵⁶⁷ Biegman: ‘They don’t know nor do they want to know.’³⁵⁶⁸ During a CoPo-meeting Van Walsum remarked ‘that we shouldn’t allow ourselves to be totally hypnotized by the risks that would arise for UNPROFOR I and II if force were resorted to in implementing the ‘no-fly zone’. After all UNPROFOR I had done little more than consolidate the Serbian occupation of a third of Croatia, and the task of UNPROFOR II could be substituted through air supplies, even though weather conditions for flights over Bosnia were ‘far from ideal’.³⁵⁶⁹

8. En route to the Tribunal

From the beginning of October 1991 the EC and CVSE had adopted the position that those responsible for the violence in Yugoslavia should be made to answer for their deeds under international law.³⁵⁷⁰ Resolution 771 of 13 August 1992 had called on all the countries and relevant international humanitarian organizations to provide the Security Council with information about serious human rights violations in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Explicit mention was made of serious violations of the Geneva Conventions. At the same time the Security Council asked Boutros-Ghali to come up with proposals about what should be done afterwards on the basis of the information provided. The prospect thus emerged of bringing perpetrators of war crimes to trial.

While war prevailed in at any rate part of the soil of the former Yugoslavia and the international community was not prepared to enforce peace, the resolution made for an awkward situation. It was not inconceivable that among those with whom the West would have to deal to solve the conflict there would be people who might be considered for such a trial. After Resolution 771 was passed Western negotiators therefore ran the risk of incurring the odium of having sat down and talked with people seen internationally as war criminals. Potential suspects would gain nothing from cooperating in their own extradition or that of any of their accomplices who might compromise them. Their readiness to contribute to achieving peace in their own territories might even be reduced, because to do so might facilitate their own extradition or arrest.

Nonetheless the Netherlands spoke out within both the EC and the UN for gathering evidence about war crimes and setting up a UN tribunal for trying war criminals in the former Yugoslavia following the model of the tribunals of Nuremberg and Tokyo at the end of the Second World War.³⁵⁷¹

³⁵⁶⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. PR New York to Van den Broek, 10/12/92 nyy-10221.

³⁵⁶⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. D’Ansembourg 1418 to Van den Broek, 22/12/92.

³⁵⁶⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Van den Broek 404 to PR New York, 18/11/92; Biegman 1344 to Van den Broek, 04/12/92.

³⁵⁶⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Biegman 1143 to Van den Broek, 03/11/92.

³⁵⁶⁹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Memorandum DGPZ for Van den Broek, 09/12/92, no. 195/92.

³⁵⁷⁰ See for instance Frits Schaling, ‘Ultimatum EG aan strijdende Joegoslaven’ (EC ultimatum to conflicting parties in Yugoslavia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/10/91; Steven L. Burg, ‘Negotiating a Settlement: Lessons of the Diplomatic Process’, in: Blank (ed.), *Wars*, p. 41.

³⁵⁷¹ See for instance ABZ, DEU/ARA/03286. Van den Broek to PR Geneva, 25/09/92, celer 238; coreu Den Haag, 01/10/92, cpe/hag 584; 00001, memorandum from P. Peters for head of DIO/Joegoslavië, 30/09/92, no. 653/92; Van den Broek, 268 to PR New York, 01/10/92 508363, Van den Broek 141 to embassy London, 28/09/92; COREU Den Haag, 02/10/92, cpe/hag 594; Van den Broek 031 to PR Strasbourg, 19/10/92; 00085, COREU Den Haag, 17/09/92, cpe/hag 547; Meesman 896 to Van den Broek, 02/10/92; 0755, Van den Broek 142 to embassy London, 28/09/92; COREU Den Haag, 28/09/92, cpe/hag 576; TK 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 72; Wio Joustra, ‘Nederland wil internationaal tribunaal oorlogsmisdaden’ (Netherlands calls for international war crimes tribunal), *de Volkskrant*, 26/08/92.

In September 1992 the Netherlands made the first concrete proposals within the EC for an investigation into war crimes and the possible trial of the perpetrators. At the same time the American government declared itself in favour of instituting a UN commission for war crimes perpetrated in the former Yugoslavia. In October Washington was however not yet in favour of a tribunal. The American government feared that a UN tribunal for war crimes would have the effect of creating a precedent and therefore argued that war criminals should be tried by their own national courts.³⁵⁷² In the former Yugoslavia that might of course only happen once the political climate there had changed. According to the American approach the UN commission should initiate enquiries itself and draw up a report stating the responsibility of both public authorities and individuals. This would provide a basis for prosecution. The Assistant Legal Advisor of the State Department, Edward Cummings, informed Meesman, the Dutch ambassador in Washington, that reports such as these could ‘also have a deterrent effect’.³⁵⁷³ On Van Walsum’s advice, a coordination of the Dutch and American initiatives was attempted.³⁵⁷⁴

Cummings also told Meesman that UN negotiator Vance was no supporter of a UN commission for war crimes, ‘because he wanted to keep the possibility of an amnesty if that would improve the chances of a final solution to the conflict’.³⁵⁷⁵ David Owen too wanted to keep open the possibility of a general amnesty – ‘with a few exceptions’, as he said in a briefing for the EC ministers on 13 October.³⁵⁷⁶ The former Polish Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who had been appointed special reporter for the former Yugoslavia by the UN Commission for Human Rights in the middle of August to report on violations of human rights and war crimes, on the other hand, argued in favour of the institution of a commission for war crimes.

On 5 October a declaration was signed by the Twelve in Luxembourg supporting the Dutch proposal for a fact-gathering operation on war crimes. The next day, 6 October, the Security Council passed Resolution 780 that set up a committee of experts to report back to the Secretary-General of the UN about serious violations of the Geneva conventions and other violations of international humanitarian law. The chairperson of the committee of five was the Dutch emeritus professor of international humanitarian law, Professor Frits Kalshoven.³⁵⁷⁷

9. The continuation on the debate on intervention in the Netherlands

From the beginning of September the debate on intervention that had raged so fiercely in Dutch dailies and weeklies in August had more or less died down apart from a few brief flare-ups.³⁵⁷⁸ In the reports about Bosnia the emphasis was now on the events themselves (still mainly in Sarajevo) and the international debate.

In general the Dutch press judged the operations of the international community in Bosnia after the Conference of London to be powerless.³⁵⁷⁹ Commentator J.H. Sampiemon thought that it should

³⁵⁷² For Eagleburger’s reluctance over an international tribunal see also Cigar, *Genocide*, p. 116.

³⁵⁷³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00085. Meesman 896 to Van den Broek, 02/10/92. Also found in ABZ, 508363; ABZ, DVN/2007/0001. Memorandum from J.G. Lammers (plv. JURA) for Van den Broek, 02/10/92, no. 48/92.

³⁵⁷⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02054. Memorandum from plv. JURA for Van den Broek via S and DGPZ, 02/10/92, no. 48/92, marginal note by Van Walsum.

³⁵⁷⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00085. Meesman 896 to Van den Broek, 02/10/92.

³⁵⁷⁶ ABZ, DVN/2007/0001. Briefing Lord Owen: suggestion of amnesty in the context of a political solution, undated.

³⁵⁷⁷ For how his appointment took place see ABZ, DPV/ARA/02054. Van den Broek 282 to PR New York, 08/10/92.

³⁵⁷⁸ See for instance Major General L.P. van Oppen, retired. ‘Aarzelings om in te grijpen in voormalig Joegoslavië is terecht’ (Hesitation about intervening in former Yugoslavia is right), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 01/09/92; J. Emck, ‘Een keus uit twee kwaden. Militaire interventie of werkeloos toezien bij volkerenmoord? (A choice of two evils. Military intervention or standing by and doing nothing to stop genocide?)’, *Trouw*, 02/09/92; J.-P. Chevènement, ‘De enige oplossing is een confederaal Joegoslavië’ (The only solution is a Yugoslav confederation), *de Volkskrant*, 05/09/92.

³⁵⁷⁹ See for example ‘Ultimatum’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/09/92; W. Offenbergh, ‘VN kunnen geen vuist maken’ (UN is powerless) and Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Soldaten voelen zich schietschijf’ (Troops feel like target), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/09/92; J. Cammelbeeck, ‘Uitsluiten van Belgrado toont machteloosheid’ (The exclusion of Belgrade shows powerlessness), *de Volkskrant*, 26/09/92.

choose between winning the conflict in Bosnia or leaving, but in any case it could not just continue muddling along as it had done up till then.³⁵⁸⁰ At the end of October he declared his personal choice: 'It has transpired that the rather popular demand for intervention, which in any case should be under the UN flag and with the consent of the parties concerned has considerably limited the chance of success. The experience being gained at present with interference from outside in conflict areas such as Yugoslavia (...) suggests great caution.'³⁵⁸¹

In the *Volkscrant* Koen Koch detected a steep decline in concern for Yugoslavia and a lack of decisiveness. He explained it by pointing to the absence of any local Dutch self-interest in what happened in the former Yugoslavia. Henceforth in his opinion journalists should present any politician in favour of intervention with the crucial question of how many dead Dutch soldiers he thought acceptable.³⁵⁸² Voorhoeve and Van den Doel came up with suggestions for replacing the existing 'package of stopgaps': the enforcement of a total no-fly zone for the Yugoslav air force; the handing over of heavy weapons to the UN followed by their de-activation; the setting up of a demilitarized zone for refugees where the UN would also have a headquarters; embarking on a psychological war against Serbia and Montenegro to impress upon the populations there that it was in their own interest to bring the war to an end. Finally permanent observers should be stationed in Kosovo and Vojvodina.³⁵⁸³

Another member of the Clingendael Institute, the East European expert, Martin van den Heuvel thought by contrast that there was nothing left that the West could do. The Serbs had control of the territory they wanted. They would not just give it up. If the West still wanted to resort to military intervention, it would have to be prepared to accept hostage-taking in Serbian territory and terrorist attacks in their own cities.³⁵⁸⁴ Anet Bleich, on the contrary, thought that the new plea by Voorhoeve and Van den Doel perfectly reflected her own feelings on the matter. Only a 'disciplined superior force' probably containing 'considerably more than a hundred thousand troops' (...) 'will still have a chance of bringing the conflicting parties to their senses – in the first place the Serbs, but not only them – drunk as they were on their blood and soil philosophy'.³⁵⁸⁵

The reports of Theo Engelen and Raymond van den Boogaard in *NRC Handelsblad* displayed an increasingly critical tone towards Izetbegovic and the Bosnian Muslims. Engelen reported on the great indignation in the UN about the incident in which the Bosnian government army fired on a convoy transporting food, water and petrol for the peacekeeping force in Sarajevo, with two French soldiers being killed.³⁵⁸⁶ Raymond van den Boogaard wrote amongst other things about the power of the 'Muslim king of the underworld' Jusuf Prazina over the black market in the Bosnian capital³⁵⁸⁷ and about the terror that the Muslims were increasingly inflicting there on the Croats and Serbs. 'Notions of a "holy war"', that initially did not appear to play any role among the moderate Muslims of Bosnia were

³⁵⁸⁰ J.H. Sampiemon, 'Winnen of iets anders' (Winning or something else), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/10/92.

³⁵⁸¹ J.H. Sampiemon, 'De illusie van de nieuwe wereldorde' (The illusion of a new world order), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/10/92.

³⁵⁸² K. Koch, 'De schaamte voorbij' (Beyond shame), *de Volkscrant*, 11/09/92.

³⁵⁸³ J.J.C. Voorhoeve & M. van den Doel, 'Is het doek voor Bosnië gevallen?' (Is it curtains for Bosnia?), *de Volkscrant*, 16/09/92.

³⁵⁸⁴ Martin van den Heuvel, 'Vanuit Belgrado bezien is het Westen een tandeloze terriër' (Belgrade sees West as a dog that's all bark and no bite), *de Volkscrant*, 19/09/92.

³⁵⁸⁵ Anet Bleich, 'Lethargisch en benepen' (Lethargic and faint-hearted), *de Volkscrant*, 19/09/92. See also Anet Bleich, 'Andere tijden' (Other times), *de Volkscrant*, 03/10/92.

³⁵⁸⁶ Theo Engelen, 'VN stellen moslims verantwoordelijk voor dood VN-militairen' (UN holds Muslims responsible for dead UN troops), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/09/92.

³⁵⁸⁷ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Soldaten voelen zich schietschijf', *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/09/92; idem, 'Na elk Joegoslavisch akkoord meer strijd' (Conflict breaks out again after every pact in Yugoslavia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/10/92. See also Theo Engelen, 'Aan oorlog is Bosnië wordt veel verdiend' (Plenty of profit made in war in Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/10/92.

now clearly winning terrain under the pressure of their hopeless situation.³⁵⁸⁸ *De Volkskrant* too reported on the war profiteers from the Sarajevo underworld.³⁵⁸⁹

10. Conclusion

If it was already plain during the Conference of London that all the international commotion about the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina from mid-July to well into August had had little effect on the measures the West was prepared to take against Serbian aggression, the way the agreements of London were implemented made the conclusion inevitable that for the time being the VRS and the Bosnian Serb leadership had little to fear from the West. Barely two months after the images of Trnopolje were broadcast Bart Tromp complained:

‘The war in Yugoslavia has by now disappeared from the front pages. You get used to anything, everything becomes normal and what is normal is no longer newsworthy. Two months ago the recent reports about the systematic murder of three thousand Bosnians would have been newsworthy enough for leading articles. Now they don’t even get reported on the TV news. Gradually a process of total indifference is setting in.’³⁵⁹⁰

That may have been true of the international community as a whole, but it was not the case with the Dutch government and parliament. There at least passions were kept alight. The Dutch government chose the hard line for every possible measure against Serbia and the Bosnian Serb leadership without the members of Parliament urging any restraint. As was acknowledged in the privacy of the government, the government was increasingly suffering from an image problem, because it had not itself supplied any combat unit to be deployed in Bosnia. It is striking how many conditions the Dutch government attached to the deployment of a transport unit as part of a UN operation in comparison with the complete absence of any conditions later on in making the Airmobile Brigade available. One cannot help thinking that the latter stance may be explained by the former.

Meanwhile the war in Bosnia continued. Not only did the West do little to prevent the war, but some of its measures even fostered the conflict – such as the fact that a very considerable part of the humanitarian aid fell into the hands of the warring factions. In any case, at no point did the actions of the international community after the Conference of London give any unambiguous message that the Serb and Bosnian Serb leadership would be advised to seek a solution to the conflict by way of the negotiation table.

³⁵⁸⁸ Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Overleg begint met een schone lei’ (Discussions begin with a clean slate), *NRC Handelsblad*, 18/09/92.

³⁵⁸⁹ ‘Militaire’ patjepeeërs vullen Sarajevo’s machtsvacuüm’ (‘Military’ bullyboys fill power vacuum in Sarajevo), *de Volkskrant*, 22/09/92.

³⁵⁹⁰ Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 46 (30/09/92).

Chapter 8

Safe Areas as spin-offs from humanitarian action, November – December 1992

1. Apathy

Execution of the UN Security Council's resolution 776, passed on 14 September 1992, met with great problems. The Spanish and French presence – both countries had promised to provide a battalion in the framework of the resolution – proved to be less than expected. The main force from the Dutch B transport company arrived in Zagreb in early November. However, it took more than a month and a half to deploy it fully because the Bosnian Serb authorities did not allow the Dutch company and the Canadian battalion assigned to protect it access to Banja Luka, with the exception of 70 Canadian and 25 Dutch soldiers. Other UNPROFOR II units experienced similar problems. The Dutch A company and the accompanying staff and back-up company were not stationed in the same base as the British battalion assigned to protect them, as had been the original intention, but in Busovaca. Only this British battalion, the Dutch A company and the Belgian company in Pancevo were able to deploy themselves fully in November and make a start with aid convoys.³⁵⁹¹ Finally, the UN decided at the end of December that the Dutch B transport company should be deployed in the small town of Santici near Vitez.

Thus, the already fairly meagre action the international community had decided to undertake was largely thwarted by the Bosnian Serb authorities. International consultation in November about how to handle the problem of Yugoslavia was thus understandably marked by a certain apathy, and the parties to the consultation hardly bothered to hide this from one another. During an informal session following a meeting of the *Comité Politique* on 3 November, that had been largely devoted to the Yugoslav question, the directors of Political Affairs of the twelve foreign ministries aired their personal opinion that no single European country – including France and Great Britain who had so far been playing the major role – was yet prepared to fight a war on the ground in the former Yugoslavia. This meant that the international community was doing nothing more than 'a glorified humanitarian operation, aimed at limiting human suffering while accepting the inevitable', i.e. the creation of a Greater Serbia.³⁵⁹² The Dutch Director-General of Political Affairs Van Walsum and his German counterpart Chrobog found it difficult, however, to accept the *fait accompli* of ethnic cleansing passively. Non-recognition of the Serb territorial gains, 'indefinitely, if necessary' was 'the only weapon left in our hands', according to Van Walsum.³⁵⁹³ The Dutch report of a subsequent meeting of the *Comité Politique* devoted to a discussion of the former Yugoslavia also spoke of 'dossier fatigue and a feeling of frustration'.³⁵⁹⁴

³⁵⁹¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00209. Van den Broek 477 to PR New York, 15/12/99; DAV/MS-228/92, memo deputy DAV to DGPZ, 16/12/92. See also Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Bosnië-gangers de bergen in over rul zandpad' (Route to Bosnian destinations runs over sandy mountain paths) and "'De meesten zijn positief ingesteld'" (Most have a positive attitude), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/11/92; 'Eerste Nederlands konvooi in Bosnië verloopt soepel' (First Dutch convoy in Bosnia experiences no difficulties), *de Volkskrant*, 25/11/92.

³⁵⁹² ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. London to BZ, 05/11/92, 07:32, Hoekman 601.

³⁵⁹³ Ibid.

³⁵⁹⁴ ABZ, DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS/Joegoslavië/NAVO/Coördinatie/No Fly Zone/Joegoslavië/Operation Deny Flight/Sept-Dec 1992. Van den Broek 093 to PR EC Brussels, 18/11/92.

2. The idea of safe regions

Despite the sluggishness in international consultation arising from the frustration caused by the lack of progress after the London conference, the idea of creating safe regions for the Muslims in Bosnia came increasingly under discussion in the conference rooms of the international organizations. These regions were known under various different names, such as Safe Areas, safe havens and safe zones. The supporters of the idea often used the terms interchangeably, apparently without any clear understanding of the legal distinction between them.

In addition, the various plans came from different stables. As mentioned in Chapter 6, the idea of safe regions first achieved a really prominent place on the international agenda during the UNHCR conference on 29 and 30 July 1992. The Austrian government had however, as temporary member of the UN Security Council and within the framework of the CSCE, been propagating the idea of internationally protected zones for the Muslim population of Sarajevo and other Bosnian cities since mid-April 1992. According to Vienna, the international community could provide civilians within these zones with the necessities of life, and facilitate proper functioning of the Bosnian government.³⁵⁹⁵ There was initially little international sympathy for this idea of the Austrian government. One important reason why the authorities in Vienna kept on propagating this initiative forcefully was their growing fear of a flood of refugees from Bosnia. They hoped that the creation of safe regions might even facilitate the repatriation of refugees.³⁵⁹⁶

The growing flood of refugees also led other countries to study the idea more seriously; this explains why it was greeted so enthusiastically during the UNHCR conference at the end of July. The CSCE Steering Group on the Yugoslav crisis also had 'a substantive discussion' on 26 August to clarify the concept of 'safe havens', but they reached no concrete conclusions because of the complexity of the subject matter.³⁵⁹⁷

The CSCE Committee of Senior Civil Servants did however give its full support in early November to the creation of safe zones in Bosnia, especially in the regions where most Displaced Persons were living, 'in order to facilitate the safe return of refugees'.³⁵⁹⁸

The French government had also been thinking seriously since July about the concrete realization of the idea of safe zones (*zones sûres*). At the end of October, they launched the idea of building villages for refugees that would come under the protection of the French UNPROFOR battalion in Bihac. One of the advantages of this approach was that, according to the French government, it would not require a new mandate from the Security Council. The German government, which had no troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina itself, was prepared to take care of the accommodation and infrastructure for such a zone.³⁵⁹⁹ Various other Western governments remained chary of the idea of safe regions, because they could be seen as supporting the ethnic cleansing desired by the Bosnian Serb authorities. However, the Bosnian Minister of Foreign Affairs Silajdzic stated during a visit to the government in Bonn in mid-November that he was also in favour of the establishment of safe regions.³⁶⁰⁰

³⁵⁹⁵ Mock (ed.), *Balkan-Dossier*, p. 96 and 107.

³⁵⁹⁶ ABZ, 999.0 VN/Operaties/UNPROFOR/Joegoslavië/Oct-Dec 1992. 'Erklärung des österreichischen Vertreters im Konsulatausschuss des Konfliktverhütungszentrums' (Statement by the Austrian representative in the Consular Committee of the Conflict Prevention Centre), 23/11/92.

³⁵⁹⁷ CSCE Vienna, 07 34.4, I Bosnia Herzegovina April–August 92, Chairman's summary of the meeting of the CSCE Steering Group on the Yugoslav Crisis, 26/08/92.

³⁵⁹⁸ ABZ, 999.0 VN/Operaties/UNPROFOR/Joegoslavië/okt-dec 1992. 'Erklärung des österreichischen Vertreters im Konsultatiausschuss des Konfliktverhütungszentrums', 23/11/92.

³⁵⁹⁹ ABZ, 999.241/Joegoslavië/No Fly Zone/sept-dec 1992. PV New York to Foreign Affairs, 16/11/92, No. nyv/9360; MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie (Developments in the former Yugoslav federation), 79/92, 29/10/92.

³⁶⁰⁰ MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 86/92, 16/11/92.

One of the main advocates of safe havens for Displaced Persons in the autumn of 1992 was the Polish special reporter on human rights for Yugoslavia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki. In a report he had prepared, which appeared on 16 November 1992, he named ethnic cleansing as the main cause of the serious violations of human rights occurring in Bosnia-Herzegovina, such as attacks on civilian targets, arrests, ill-treatment and torture, rape, mass deportation and arbitrary summary execution.³⁶⁰¹ Mazowiecki spoke out in favour of safe havens in his report to the Commission on Human Rights of the UN General Assembly and in the introduction he gave during a special meeting of the Commission held on 24 November that was devoted to discussion of the report. He went so far as to say that if the Commission did nothing to further the creation of the safe havens, the whole meeting would be 'pointless'.³⁶⁰²

The International Red Cross, that had spoken out against the establishment of safe regions as late as the end of July because this would attract more refugees and thus simply increase the number of Displaced Persons requiring help and protection, came out in favour of the creation of protected zones at the end of October when its chairman Cornelio Sommarugua spoke to a meeting of senior diplomats in Geneva. He considered the agreement of the three parties involved to be of crucial importance in this connection. The Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Mock quickly adopted his idea – but without the essential condition that the parties concerned should give their agreement – and submitted to the Security Council (of which Austria was still a temporary member) the concept of safe havens protected by a new contingent of UN troops in the former Yugoslavia with a special mandate for this purpose, UNPROFOR III. In particular the permanent members of the Council showed little enthusiasm for the idea in this form, however. They were afraid that a very large force would be required to monitor the zones and enforce their safety.³⁶⁰³ The argument that the international community would be supporting ethnic cleansing by creating safe regions was also repeated, while in addition some countries feared that such regions would lead to ghettoization as was known to have happened in the Palestinian refugee camps in the Gaza strip. Mock did manage, however, to gain the support of a number of non-aligned countries such as Morocco and Venezuela. By way of compromise, on 16 November the Security Council passed Resolution 787, which invited Boutros-Ghali and Ogata to study the scope and requirements for the establishment of Safe Areas.³⁶⁰⁴ The International Red Cross was also involved in this study.³⁶⁰⁵ On 25 November, a conference of Balkan states, convened at the invitation of Turkey, likewise expressed its support for the establishments of safe regions.³⁶⁰⁶

The mediators Owen and Vance had let it be known in the meantime that they were 'very strongly opposed' to the concept of Safe Areas, which according to Owen was suddenly the flavour of the day with all those who thought that 'something' should be done in Bosnia.³⁶⁰⁷ Owen and Vance also believed that establishing such Safe Areas would lead to further ethnic cleansing, and would encourage the Serbs to commit further acts of aggression:³⁶⁰⁸ the Bosnian Serbs would go on driving the Muslims into smaller and smaller enclaves, which UNPROFOR would then have to defend and administer.³⁶⁰⁹

³⁶⁰¹ UN, A/47/666; S/24809.

³⁶⁰² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00585. Biegan 1286 to Kooijmans, 24/11/92.

³⁶⁰³ See e.g. the reservations of the British government in this connection, ABZ, DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS/Joegoslavië/NAVO/Coördinatie/No Fly Zone/Joegoslavië/Operation Deny Flight/Sept-Dec 1992. Van den Broek 093 to PR EC Brussels, 18/11/92.

³⁶⁰⁴ ABZ, 999.241/Joegoslavië/No Fly Zone/sept-dec 1992. PV New York to Foreign Affairs, 16/11/92, nyv/9360.

³⁶⁰⁵ The Austrian Foreign Minister again advocated Safe Areas to the chairman of the Security Council on 21 December 1992, ABZ, DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS/Joegoslavië/NAVO/Coördinatie/No Fly Zone/Joegoslavië/Operation Deny Flight/Sept-Dec 1992. D'Ansembourg 1418 to Van den Broek, 22/12/92.

³⁶⁰⁶ UN, A47/742; S/24869; MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 91/92, 27/11/92.

³⁶⁰⁷ Owen CD-ROM. Owen's Private Secretary to UK, EC Presidency, 26/11/92 re Visit of Lord Owen to Madrid, 25/11/92, 26/11/92.

³⁶⁰⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00585. Boddens Hosang 797 to Van den Broek, 27/11/92.

³⁶⁰⁹ Owen CD-ROM. Owen's Private Secretary to UK, EC Presidency, 26/11/92 re Visit of Lord Owen to Madrid, 25/11/92, 26/11/92.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, also had serious reservations about the idea of Safe Areas. She therefore insisted that the question of these areas should be dealt with within the framework of the conference on Yugoslavia by the working group for humanitarian issues chaired by herself, and not by the working group on human rights. In this way Ogata, in her dual capacity as High Commissioner for Refugees and as chair of the working group on humanitarian issues, ensured that she would have a firm grasp on the formulation of the standpoint in Geneva about the establishment of Safe Areas. The working group she chaired proved to share the concerns of those who expected that the Safe Areas would give rise to great military and political problems, such as the tendency to attract even more refugees and the moral dilemma of cooperating with ethnic cleansing. Moreover, the Safe Areas would lead to an increase in the number of people that were dependent on humanitarian aid. However, the main concern felt by the Yugoslavia conference was the fear that once the Safe Areas were established, the parties to the conflict in Bosnia might be less strongly motivated to seek a political solution. The working group therefore adopted the standpoint that safety should be brought to the population, and not *vice versa*.³⁶¹⁰

At the beginning of December, the International Red Cross and the UNHCR still disagreed strongly about the desirability of safe zones. The former took the view that the most important thing was to mitigate the humanitarian plight of the population in the most effective way. The organization therefore appealed to the international community in late October, and again in early December, to establish safe havens, in view among other things of the reluctance of Western governments to offer a new home to refugees.³⁶¹¹ Ogata's UNHCR was afraid, however, that such action would help to consolidate the results of ethnic cleansing.³⁶¹² And Owen and Vance warned Sommaruga (the chairman of the International Red Cross) that if the Security Council did embrace his idea it was to be expected that the parties to the conflict would not agree with the establishment of the Safe Areas, and would not demilitarize them.³⁶¹³

'A false feeling of security'

The concept of Safe Areas was under discussion in the Netherlands too. In particular the MP Valk from the PvdA (Labour) had been advocating this for some time, but the (Christian Democrat) CDA fraction also thought it was not a bad idea while Green Left characterized it as an attractive option, comparable with the measures used to deal with the plight of the Kurds in Northern Iraq. Prof. J.J.C Voorhoeve (director of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations - generally known as the Clingendael Institute from its location in Clingendael Park in The Hague - and later Minister of Defence) and M. Van den Doel (staff member of the Clingendael Institute, on temporary secondment from the Army) had already put the idea forward in August 1992, in their contributions to the debate on the possibility of intervention in the former Yugoslavia (see Chapter 6). Apparently encouraged by Security Council resolution 787, Voorhoeve (sometimes in cooperation with Van den Doel) returned to this issue repeatedly in the media. For example, the day after the resolution had been passed he said that he was in favour of deploying fifty to a hundred thousand well armed troops to establish at least two Safe Areas in Bosnia and to achieve a few more aims such as freeing prisoners from the camps by means of a hit-and-run operation.³⁶¹⁴ A few days later, he and Van den Doel argued for the establishment of one large demilitarized zone in central Bosnia that could serve as a base for the

³⁶¹⁰ Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp. 1403-1404.

³⁶¹¹ Owen, *Odyssey*, pp. 69-70; Ingrid Harms and Ursula den Tex, 'Kan de hulpverlening nog hulp verlenen?' (Can the aid organizations still supply aid?), *Vrij Nederland*, 12/12/92, p. 25.

³⁶¹² Newland, *Conflict*, p. 101.

³⁶¹³ Owen, *Odyssey*, p. 70.

³⁶¹⁴ H. Goudriaan, 'Toekijken werkt als boemerang' (Observation has boomerang effect), *Trouw*, 17/11/92.

transport of supplies to towns and for housing refugees.³⁶¹⁵ According to Van den Doel, air strikes might force the Serbs to cooperate. During the operations, the UN peacekeeping forces in Bosnia would have to be concentrated to reduce the risk of hostage-taking and humanitarian aid would have to be temporarily suspended.³⁶¹⁶

These calls to action by Voorhoeve and Van den Doel elicited a furious response from De Kok (from the CDA fraction in Parliament). In May of the same year, he and Oostlander (also from the CDA) had advocated surgical military intervention with precision bombardments of Serb lines of supply and artillery emplacements, which in their view would have made sense at the time. Van den Doel had responded then, however, that intervention was impossible (see Chapter 5). And now that the situation had been made even more chaotic by the attempts by the Bosnian Muslims to provoke UN intervention and the three parties to the conflict were fighting one another with the aid of foreign mercenaries, Van den Doel's director Voorhoeve had suddenly (according to De Kok) become an advocate of military intervention. De Kok does not seem to have been aware of the numerous contributions to the debate made by both Voorhoeve and Van den Doel since July, in which they revealed themselves to be the warmest possible advocates of intervention. In any case, he decided to refrain from being a forerunner in the call for military intervention in the future:

‘Is it possible to win such an unconventional war? This is surely the first question a general – but above all also a politician – must ask himself. Which Western general is capable of drawing up a feasible plan for military intervention on the basis of this complicated situation? What should the aims of a Western intervention force be? Moreover, the risk that such intervention would ignite the whole Balkan powder-keg is greater now than it has ever been. And the resulting damage in humanitarian terms could well be even greater than it is now.’³⁶¹⁷

In De Kok's opinion, ‘giving a display of impotence is not part of a politician's job description’.³⁶¹⁸ Nevertheless, impotence was very largely the feeling reflected in many comments on the situation made in the Netherlands in the autumn of 1992, including those coming from other members of De Kok's own CDA fraction. This was due to the fact that the Dutch government actually agreed with the views on intervention aired in Parliament, though other governments did not. Maarten van Traa, a member of the PvdA fraction in Parliament, therefore suggested that the Dutch government, together with e.g. Germany and Belgium, should try to persuade France and England of the need for military intervention. Blaauw would also like to see Van den Broek take action on the international scene, to persuade the Netherlands' partners in the international community to force through the flight embargo, naval blockade, elimination of heavy weapons, liberation of the prisoners being held in camps and creation of safe havens in Bosnia itself to offer refuge to the Displaced Persons. Van Middelkoop presented similar views in a debate in Parliament, because if no action was taken ‘we won't know where to hide our faces when the winter has gone by ... we will smother in our feelings of guilt’. The D66 (Democrats) and GroenLinks (Green Left) fractions had reservations, however. Eisma (D66) thought that military intervention in pursuance of humanitarian aims was ‘politically not feasible: why try it, when you know it isn't going to work? You need to opt for the most effective ways and means. Our

³⁶¹⁵ J.J.C. Voorhoeve and M. van den Doel, ‘Zonder VS geen oplossing voor conflicten in ex-Joegoslavië’ (No resolution of conflicts in former Yugoslavia without US), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/11/92.

³⁶¹⁶ Huib Goudriaan, ‘Schets voor ingrijpen met hoofdrol voor luchtmacht’ (Sketch for intervention with main role for air force), *Trouw*, 08/12/92.

³⁶¹⁷ T. de Kok, ‘Voormalig Joegoslavië. Militaire interventie is nu te laat’ (Former Yugoslavia. Military intervention is already too late), *CD/Actueel*, 12/12/92, p. 8.

³⁶¹⁸ ‘Westerse politici mede schuldig aan drama Bosnië’ (Western politicians bear the blame for the Bosnian drama), *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 19/11/92.

choice is limited objectives, for whose realization ample resources are available.’ Sipkes (Green Left) feared that military action on the ground in order to free the prisoners from the camps or to establish safe zones would cost more lives than it would save.³⁶¹⁹

The Dutch Chief of Defence Staff, General A.K. van der Vlis, was on the side of those who urged caution. Appearing in the TV programme *Het Capitool* on 22 November, he summed up the many arguments against the establishment of safe havens for Displaced Persons. This step would take the international community across the boundary between peacekeeping and peace enforcement, he claimed, since maintaining a safe haven means protecting people from one party against those from another party, if necessary by force. About a hundred thousand soldiers would be needed to ensure this. Effective logistic support would have to be arranged for them in a region where a guerrilla-type conflict was raging. Since a strong political will would be required to deal with such a complicated situation, leadership would have to come from the big countries. General Van der Vlis wondered whether such an operation would be possible without American participation. And finally, there was the moral objection that the establishment of safe havens could be seen as support for the Serb ethnic cleansing policy.³⁶²⁰ Arguments very similar to those presented by General Van der Vlis were also found repeatedly in analyses of the situation prepared by the Dutch military intelligence service MID.³⁶²¹

While Van den Broek had expressed some reservations about the idea of safe zones as late as August 1992 (see Chapter 6), the Dutch government argued during the EC summit held in Birmingham on 16 October 1992 that if the Serb prison camps in Bosnia were cleared up, the prisoners released should be cared for in the immediate vicinity of UNPROFOR concentrations.³⁶²² This solution was doubtless chosen for want of a better one, in view of the fact that the Western governments did not appear willing to absorb substantial numbers of ex-prisoners themselves. The Dutch proposal elicited no response at all from other EC member states, however.³⁶²³

A report issued shortly after that by the chairman of the International Red Cross, Sommaruga, showed the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs clearly just how big the problem was becoming: according to Red Cross estimates, there would soon be a hundred thousand Displaced Persons in Bosnia requiring aid. The Dutch ambassador-at-large C.R.J. Kröner stated during a meeting of the *Comité Politique* held mid-November that the only appropriate way of ensuring that these Displaced Persons did not present themselves on the doorsteps of potential European host nations was the establishment of safe havens – which would naturally require military protection. The only support he got was from the director-general for political affairs of the German Foreign ministry Chrobog, who said that the plight of the Bosnian Displaced Persons must be the ‘imperative humanitarian priority’ for the international community.³⁶²⁴ In fact, the Netherlands quite often found support for its far-reaching stance on the Yugoslav question from Germany; this had already appeared e.g. during the London conference. However, attempts by the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs to gain support from its counterpart in Bonn for its proposal to establish safe havens failed because the German ministry of Foreign Affairs felt unable to recommend peace enforcement while Germany was not contributing any troops itself.³⁶²⁵

³⁶¹⁹ Westerse politici mede schuldig aan drama Bosnië, *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 19/11/92.

³⁶²⁰ TV, Nederland 3, NOS, *Het Capitool*, 22/11/92, 12 noon: ‘Stafchef waarschuwt voor ingrijpen Balkan’ (Chief of Defence Staff warns against intervention in Balkans), *Trouw*, 23/11/92; ‘Generaal huiverig voor veiligheidszones Bosnië’ (General unhappy about idea of Safe Areas in Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 23/11/92; Van der Vlis: Pas op met veiligheidszones’ (General Van der Vlis says, ‘Take care with Safe Areas’), *Defensiekrant*, 26/11/92.

³⁶²¹ MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 79/92, 29/10/92; 80/92, 02/11/92; MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 87/92, 18/11/92; MID/CO. MID-CO, ‘Options in zet VN’ (Options for UN intervention), 30/11/92.

³⁶²² TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 812 (22/10/92).

³⁶²³ ABZ, 910 Joegoslavië/algemeen correspondentie/deel 4, July 1992-Feb 1993. Zendbrief DEU-82852, 10/11/92

³⁶²⁴ ABZ, DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS/Joegoslavië/NAVO/Coördinatie/No Fly Zone/Joegoslavië/Operation Deny Flight/Sept-Dec 1992. Van den Broek 093 to PV EC Brussels, 18/11/93.

³⁶²⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01820. Smit 538 to Van den Broek, 04/12/92.

The Dutch Ministers of Foreign Affairs Van den Broek and Defence Ter Beek also made a plea for the establishment of safe havens during the WEU meeting in Rome on 20 November.³⁶²⁶ Earlier in the same month, the Secretary-General of the WEU, Van Eekelen, had also advocated the establishment of Safe Areas in Bosnia by analogy with the situation of the Kurds in Iraq.³⁶²⁷ In response to this, the WEU Council of Ministers invited the WEU Contingency Planning Group (CPG) to study the possibilities of Safe Areas. It was hoped that this study might provide a basis for UN decision-making in this field.

In the meantime, Harm Hazewinkel, the head of the Eastern Europe office of the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs, had also initiated a study of the scope for the establishment of safe havens in the wake of the passing of Resolution 787. He thought that it might be possible to establish these safe havens on the basis of negotiation and according to him they should not last longer than six months, and should be linked either to the coast or to Zagreb via a humanitarian corridor and an escape route. If it proved impossible to reach agreement in the negotiation process within a fortnight – the onset of winter was already imminent – UNPROFOR might set up the safe havens itself. This option would require expansion both of UNPROFOR's mandate and of the number of troops at its disposal. A third possibility was to make use of areas which were in the hands of the Bosnian Muslims or the Croats, to designate these as safe havens and to protect them by means of a UN peacekeeping force. Hazewinkel mentioned Mostar and Srebrenica as possible candidates. According to him, a display of force might provide an effective defence of these enclaves. If necessary, this could be backed up by the threat of Western air strikes in response to heavier offensives. Hazewinkel was well aware that such safe havens might attract an increasing number of refugees and also recognized the risk that they might reinforce the process of ethnic segregation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but he claimed that there was no alternative. One could try to limit their scope by declaring them to be '*temporary emergency measures*,' intended to help one hundred thousand Displaced Persons through the winter.³⁶²⁸

When it appeared that the French government was thinking about establishing a *zone sûre* in Bihac with German assistance, the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs considered that this might provide a precedent for it to realise its own ideas about safe zones. Working along the same lines as the Franco-German joint venture, the ministry's Directorate for International Organizations (DIO) entered into consultation with the British Overseas Development Administration about the possibilities of setting up a big winter camp in Vitez which would provide room for about twenty thousand Displaced Persons, 'under the smoke of the UNPROFOR units'.³⁶²⁹

The Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs was however not without its doubts about the Franco-German approach. This appears from the report of a discussion Van Walsum had on 24 November with his French counterpart Dejammet about the interpretation of the concept of *zones sûres*. According to Dejammet, the French *zone sûre* was identical with the English 'Safe Area'. It was fundamentally different from a safe haven, which was supposed to be protected by a stationary military force with a special mandate from the Security Council. *Zones sûres*, on the other hand, were set up in the lee of an existing concentration of UNPROFOR II troops. Van Walsum asked Dejammet how safe such a *zone sûre* really was, since in the case of an attack on it the UNPROFOR troops in the vicinity would have neither the mandate nor the equipment to defend it effectively. Dejammet conceded this, but tried to reassure Van Walsum by stating that the relations between the various parties in the Balkans were all based on intimidation. He claimed that Karadzic would never dare to attack a *zone sûre*. Van Walsum

³⁶²⁶ Statement by Prime Minister Lubbers on TV, Nederland 3, Nova, 20/11/92, 11 pm.

³⁶²⁷ MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 80/92, 02/11/92.

³⁶²⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01820. Memorandum from head of DEU (drafted by head of DEU/OE) to DGPZ, 24/11/92, No. 286/92; underlined in original.

³⁶²⁹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01820. Memorandum from head of DEU to DGPZ, 24/11/92, No. 286/92; memorandum from DIO/Joegoslavië to M, 27/11/92, No. 847/92; ABZ, 2001/00023, memorandum from DEU to AP and others., 16/11/92, No. 278/92; memorandum from DEU to AP and others, 18/11/92, No. 283/92; memorandum from wnd. DEU to AP and others, 30/11/92, No. 290/92.

was not so sure about this. According to him, the very meek and mild stance adopted by the international community so far had reduced the deterrent effect of its forces almost to zero. Dejammet had to agree that if the Bosnian Serb forces did attack and start carrying out ethnic cleansing, the UNPROFOR units would have no mandate to intervene. This led Van Walsum to advise Foreign Minister Van den Broek to be cautious about following the Franco-German example: 'In my opinion, we must not get involved in an operation that creates a false feeling of security.' Since the Dutch UNPROFOR troops were unarmed, The Hague would have to find out whether the British were prepared to defend such a zone 'beyond the rules of engagement of UNPROFOR II'. Van Walsum therefore advised the minister to keep on aiming for real safe havens.³⁶³⁰

It soon became clear that the British plans for safeguarding the population in the vicinity of Travnik, Vitez and Zenica were unlikely to give this region the status of a *zone sûre*. Unlike Bihac, the region was not an enclave. The British were therefore ultimately more in favour of protecting the population in Central Bosnia by means of patrols. As long as uncertainty remained about the extent of the protection offered by the British, the DIO was not in favour of British-Dutch cooperation on the *zones sûres*, especially because the planned joint British-Dutch mission assigned to investigate the possibilities of such an operation would have to drive from Sarajevo to central Bosnia through the Serb front lines. 'This involves great security risks', according to a memo from DIO's department of Legal and Social Affairs, 'to which officials of this department should not be exposed.'³⁶³¹ This was not an argument that Foreign Minister Van den Broek wished to consider, however.³⁶³²

The DIO agreed with Van Walsum, moreover, that one drawback of the *zones sûres* was the lack of any real guarantee that the Displaced Persons seeking refuge there would not be subjected to external aggression. If one wished to avoid both this unsafe situation and a mass exodus of refugees from Bosnia, then according to the DIO the only solution was to establish safe havens, special zones under solid military protection. As the DIO put it, 'Safe havens are inevitable in this situation, and we would do well to make the necessary preparations for them as soon as possible.' The DIO was fully aware that the establishment of safe havens would lead to a need for peace enforcement, as would the humanitarian corridors required to maintain supplies to the safe havens. It concluded that both UNPROFOR's mandate and the number of troops at its disposal would have to be enlarged to meet these needs.³⁶³³ The very same day on which Van Walsum advised Van den Broek to aim at the establishment of real safe havens, 24 November, The Hague sent a COREU message advocating such 'genuine "safe havens", protected by UNPROFOR forces, mandated by a new Security Council resolution and equipped accordingly'. The Hague proposed that these questions should be discussed not only under the aegis of the EC, but also in the UN, NATO and WEU.³⁶³⁴

Two days later, on 26 November, the Netherlands made a plea in favour of safe havens in the EPC's ad hoc group on Yugoslavia.³⁶³⁵ It was stated in this connection that '[th]e choice was between offering a very large number of refugees the hospitality of our own country or ensuring that adequate facilities were in place to take care of them in Bosnia.' However, after the British diplomat Greenstock, speaking on behalf of his country which was currently chairing the EC, argued that the establishment of safe havens would lead to 'all out military intervention', the representatives of the other EC countries were very reserved in their response to the Dutch proposal. It was nevertheless decided to keep the matter under discussion.³⁶³⁶ The American government was not enthusiastic about safe havens or anything of that ilk either, arguing that they would support ethnic cleansing and that they would make

³⁶³⁰ PVNY. Memorandum from DGPZ to Van den Broek, 24/11/92, No. 184/92, Appendix to DGPZ to PR New York, personal, 24/11/92.

³⁶³¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Memorandum from DIO/Joegoslavië to Van den Broek, 03/12/92, No. 857/92.

³⁶³² ABZ, DPV/ARA/01820. Memorandum from Van Walsum to DAV, 07/12/92, No. 194/92.

³⁶³³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01820. Memorandum from DIO/Joegoslavië to M, 25/11/92, No. 842/1992.

³⁶³⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00755. COREU message from The Hague, 24/11/92, cpe/hag 735.

³⁶³⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00102. COREU message from EPC secretariat, 27/11/92, cpe/sec 1120.

³⁶³⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00755. Van den Broek to London embassy, 27/11/92, celer 179.

the Bosnian Muslims completely dependent on the international community.³⁶³⁷ When the Russian Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Churkin visited The Hague at the end of November, however, Van Walsum managed to get him to promise that the Russian government would support a Security Council resolution giving UNPROFOR a mandate for the establishment of safe havens. Churkin stated that the Russians would be prepared to cooperate in the light of the humanitarian emergency in Bosnia.³⁶³⁸ However, the Western permanent members of the Security Council remained opposed to the establishments of safe havens because of the risks of contributing to ethnic cleansing and of ghettoization, the need to increase the scale of military involvement and the switch from peacekeeping to peace enforcement.³⁶³⁹

Van den Broek had apparently – despite the public words of warning uttered by the Dutch Chief of Defence Staff – got his teeth into the idea of safe regions as the new panacea for the problems in Bosnia, and was not prepared to let go. The Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs was disappointed that, despite Dutch support, the Commission on Human Rights of the UN Economic and Social Council was not prepared to include the idea of safe regions in a draft resolution after discussion of the Mazowiecki report. Van den Broek ordered the Dutch Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, J.F. Boddens Hosang, to do all in his power to push through acceptance of this idea.³⁶⁴⁰ Boddens Hosang initially had little success with this initiative. UNPROFOR and the troop-contributing nations for the operations in the Balkans could not see where the extra troops needed to protect the Safe Areas would come from. Hence, the Netherlands failed to find support for practically every suggestion in this direction, even from the representatives of Austria which was generally regarded as ‘the father of the safe-area idea’.³⁶⁴¹

Boddens Hosang therefore turned to The Hague for further instructions. Should he remain out of step with all Western countries and the co-chairmen of the Yugoslavia conference? Or should he, in pursuance of the aim to get the Safe Areas included in the resolution, join forces with a number of Islamic countries under the leadership of Bosnia, Bangladesh, Iran, Jemen, Jordan, Pakistan and Tunisia? Boddens Hosang suggested that the latter position would show the world ‘very clearly’ that the Dutch view of Safe Areas differed from – and was more positive than – that of the other Western countries.³⁶⁴² During the weekend of 28 and 29 November Turkey and the United States, who had shared the initiative to call the meeting, finally decided after urging from the Bosnian government among others that a passage about the need for relief corridors, Safe Areas and security zones should be included in the resolution. The Netherlands was the first of the EC member states to co-sponsor the new draft text put forward by Turkey and the USA.³⁶⁴³ The Turkish-American draft resolution was finally passed with 45 votes in favour. Only Little Yugoslavia voted against, while Cuba abstained. Boddens Hosang was full of praise for ‘the unexpected change of course’ by the USA, ‘which we warmly welcomed’, and no less for the performance of his own country: ‘The Dutch intervention gave clear expression to our country’s stance, fully in line with the overall voting picture and contrasting sharply with the flat, uninspiring attitude manifested by the rest of the Twelve.’³⁶⁴⁴ The Commission on Human Rights also passed a resolution making states responsible for human rights violations committed by their citizens. It urged that persons who could be held responsible for crimes against humanity and serious human rights violations should be brought to trial. The Commission gave the Serbs the main responsibility for the conflict in Bosnia and put up the question in the resolution

³⁶³⁷ ABZ, 910 Joegoslavië/algemeen correspondentie/deel 4, July 1992-Feb 1993. Meesman 990 to Van den Broek, 24/11/92.

³⁶³⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01820. Van den Broek to PR New York, 27/11/92, celer 438.

³⁶³⁹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01820. Biegman 1323 to Van den Broek, 30/11/92.

³⁶⁴⁰ ABZ, DEU/2000/00585. Van den Broek 281 to PR Geneva, 26/11/92.

³⁶⁴¹ ABZ, DEU/2000/00585. Boddens Hosang 797 to Van den Broek, 27/11/92.

³⁶⁴² ABZ, DEU/2000/00585. Boddens Hosang 799 to Van den Broek, 28/11/92.

³⁶⁴³ ABZ, DEU/2000/00585. Boddens Hosang 806 to Van den Broek, 01/12/92.

³⁶⁴⁴ ABZ, DEU/2000/00585. Boddens Hosang 812 to Van den Broek, 03/12/92.

whether genocide had been committed in this region. On 18 December, the General Assembly of the UN went on to brand ethnic cleansing as genocide in resolution 47/121, and requested Boutros-Ghali to set up a tribunal for war crimes committed in Yugoslavia.

In the meantime, the WEU Central Planning Group had made a distinction between three types of safe regions:

- *Safe havens*, i.e. demilitarized zones 25 kilometres in circumference, in which the population could be protected against both internal and external violence and intimidation. This variant would require 100 to 300,000 troops, air support and a preparation time of about four months.
- *Safe Areas*: regions, which should preferably be substantially free of conflict beforehand, where refugees could be offered ‘a reasonable degree of security’ by a brigade of peacekeeping troops; and
- *Relief zones*: regions containing an existing UN battalion, which would only come into action in response to external violence aimed at the civilian population to be protected. In this variant, the UNPROFOR troops could not expect air support. The limited expansion of UNPROFOR II forces required for this variant could be achieved on the ground in about a month.³⁶⁴⁵

On 3 December, the WEU ad hoc group on political and military affairs in the former Yugoslavia rejected the safe haven option as unrealistic.³⁶⁴⁶

This decision worried Van Walsum, who was deeply concerned about the outcome of any scenario not involving safe havens. In his view, the West was still in the ‘appeasement’ phase in its dealings with Milosevic and Mladic, whom he saw as implacably continuing ‘their march towards a Greater Serbia’. As long as the West was not prepared ‘to cross the Rubicon between the “appeasement” phase and the “enforcement” phase’, Van Walsum claimed, ‘we are playing with fire in our experiments with half-hearted security zones’. Van Walsum was deeply troubled by the whole situation, since the WEU studies were seen as the result of a Dutch request while the two remaining options which the WEU intended to subject to further study were ‘so risky’ that Van Walsum wondered whether the Netherlands could ‘take the responsibility for them’.³⁶⁴⁷

Van Walsum started by discussing the matter with his British counterpart Appleyard, since the idea of a British-Dutch Safe Area in the region around Vitez was still under consideration. Appleyard told Van Walsum that it was not possible at that moment to get a guarantee from the British ministry of Defence that British UNPROFOR units would defend a Safe Area. On the other hand, Appleyard stated that he could not imagine that the British would fail to defend a Safe Area if the need arose. Van den Broek shared this conviction, and therefore wished the possibility of cooperation with the British to be subjected to ‘intensive’ further study.³⁶⁴⁸ The fact that Van Walsum had stood completely alone at the meeting of the *Comité Politique* on 2 December with his ideas on new steps in Bosnia did not seem to discourage Van den Broek at all. He is reported to have spread the message in the corridors of Parliament at this time: ‘We’ll just try, try, try again and you’ll see, we’ll get there one day’.³⁶⁴⁹

The Directorate for General Policy of the Dutch ministry of Defence (Dutch abbreviation DAB) and General A.K. van der Vlis, Chief of the Dutch Defence Staff, drew up a sort of interim balance sheet of the situation in the former Yugoslavia in a memorandum dated 8 December 1992, to provide background information for Dutch representatives at a number of international meetings

³⁶⁴⁵ NIOD, Ter Beek Collection, ‘Notitie over mogelijke uitbreiding van militaire operaties in voormalig Joegoslavië’ (Memorandum about possible expansion of military operations in former Yugoslavia), appendix to memo Barth to Ter Beek et al., 08/12/92, D92/555; ABZ, DPV/ARA/00585. Memorandum from Van Walsum to DAV, 07/12/92, No. 192/92; Wio Joustra, ‘WEU acht spoed met safe havens ondoenlijk’ (WIO thinks it is impossible to set up safe havens quickly), *de Volkskrant*, 09/12/92.

³⁶⁴⁶ NIOD, Ter Beek Collection, ‘Notitie over mogelijke uitbreiding van militaire operaties in voormalig Joegoslavië’, appendix to memo Barth to Ter Beek et al., 08/12/92, D92/555.

³⁶⁴⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00585. Memorandum from Van Walsum to DAV, 07/12/92, No. 192/92.

³⁶⁴⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00585. Memorandum from Van Walsum to DAV, 07/12/92, No. 194/92.

³⁶⁴⁹ Rob Meines, ‘Den Haag zoekt steun voor ingreep in Bosnië’ (The Hague seeks support for intervention in Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/12/92.

planned for the coming days. In the first instance, it was intended as briefing material for Prime Minister Lubbers and Minister of Foreign Affairs Van den Broek, who would be attending the EC Council of Ministers meeting in Edinburgh on 11 and 12 December.³⁶⁵⁰ According to the authors of this memorandum, the situation in the whole region was ‘dramatically bad’ and unstable.³⁶⁵¹ In Croatia, President Tudjman was threatening not to renew the mandate of UNPROFOR, which was due to expire in March. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, there was the risk of ‘a human tragedy of enormous extent’: according to UNHCR, hundreds of thousands of people could perish during the coming months due to ethnic cleansing, military conflict and the winter. In the meantime, US President Bush, who had been defeated by Clinton in the presidential elections and was in charge of a caretaker government in the period leading up to Clinton’s inauguration, had decided to contribute twenty to thirty thousand US troops to the UN force in Somalia. This was a deliberate choice on the part of the American administration, who believed that action in Somalia posed fewer risks to American military personnel than in the former Yugoslavia.³⁶⁵² According to the Directorate for General Policy and General Van der Vlis, this increased the pressure on the European states to do something in the former Yugoslavia. European intervention was also necessary to prevent Islamic countries from offering Bosnia-Herzegovina military support.

The authors of the memorandum did not regard peace enforcement as a feasible option, in view of the large number of troops it required and the lack of international consensus on the political objectives. They also thought that the scope of the operations involved in the *Safe Areas* option according to the WEU proposal led to a high risk of escalation of the conflict if this option was pursued. They therefore concluded that the Dutch government should think provisionally in terms of the use of ‘relief zones’, which could be set up quickly and with the aid of limited resources, before the winter started to take its toll. However, even relief zones, ‘by far the most realistic option’, would confront the decision-makers with difficult questions such as whether the international community would be able to provide the protection in the long term, what action should be taken in response to bombardment with heavy weapons and whether a relief zone should be completely demilitarized.

If the international community were to opt for the Safe Areas variant, the Royal Netherlands Army could do little more than supply supporting units as long as the Airmobile Brigade was not yet operational. An armoured infantry unit could not be sent, in view of the voluntary basis on which Dutch soldiers doing their National Service were deployed, and the marines were not available because they were already in Cambodia. The Dutch Air Force could supply a fighter squadron, and guided missiles if required, for air support of Safe Areas. As mentioned above, the WEU did indeed opt for the Safe Areas variant on 15 December.³⁶⁵³

The Directorate for General Policy and General Van der Vlis felt that there were serious objections to the idea of enforcing a no-fly zone – a plan which received strong support in particular from the American government.³⁶⁵⁴ This would lead to peace enforcement, and could have consequences for the UN personnel on the ground. Nevertheless, particularly in view of the

³⁶⁵⁰ BSG. Besluitenlijsten politiek beraad (List of decisions taken during political consultation of Dutch Parliament) 1992-1993, besluitenlijst (list of decisions), 07/12/92.

³⁶⁵¹ NIOD, Ter Beek Collection. ‘Notitie over mogelijke uitbreiding van militaire operaties in voormalig Joegoslavië’, appendix to memo Barth to Ter Beek et al., 08/12/92, D92/555.

³⁶⁵² A. Elshout, ‘VS tonen zich kieskeurige supermogenheid’ (US proves to be selective superpower), *Het Parool*, 03/12/92; M. Huygen, ‘Geen Amerikaan waagt het ingrijpen Somalië te hekelen’ (No American dares to criticize intervention in Somalia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/12/92; Tom Kuijt, ‘Amerikanen meten met twee maten’ (Americans apply double standards), *Het Parool*, 09/12/92; Paul Brill, ‘Een alibi om in Bosnië niets te doen’ (An alibi for inaction in Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 05/12/92; Patrick Glynn, ‘Why Africa? Anywhere but Bosnia’, *The New Republic*, 28/1/92; Tim Zimmermann, ‘The Crisis that’s too tough to tackle. Saving Somalia is easier than stopping Serbia’, *U.S. News & World Report*, 21/12/92; Strobel, *Policy*, pp. 138-139.

³⁶⁵³ NIOD, Ter Beek Collection. ‘Notitie over mogelijke uitbreiding van militaire operaties in voormalig Joegoslavië’, appendix to memo Barth to Ter Beek et al., 08/12/92, D92/555.

³⁶⁵⁴ See e.g. ‘UN chiefs urge no intervention in Bosnia’, *Press Association Newsfile*, 16/12/92.

psychological threat emanating from jet fighters, the Netherlands could make an F-16 squadron available.³⁶⁵⁵

Officials from Foreign Affairs made a number of critical comments on some of the ideas contained in this White Paper on Defence.³⁶⁵⁶ Relief zones were considered to be escalation-sensitive; only real safe havens would not be subject to this risk. Foreign Affairs did not think that the presence of international jet fighters would have much of a deterrent effect if the Serbs got to know their rules of engagement. Enforcement of the no-fly zone would have to be coupled with either air-lifts of the necessary supplies or better armouring for the convoys on the ground.

On the same day that the Directorate for General Policy and the Chief of Defence Staff presented their memorandum to Minister of Defence Ter Beek, the head of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs Van Eenennaam also submitted a new policy review to Foreign Minister Van den Broek.³⁶⁵⁷ The Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs was in favour of giving the Serbs a strong signal – somewhere in between the current situation and large-scale military intervention. Van Eenennaam pointed out once again that a proposal to deal with the Serb heavy weapons had been made several months before. According to that proposal, if these heavy weapons had not been concentrated at a specified location by a specified date, they would be taken out by air strikes. This would reduce the level of violence. Seen from this point of view, a no-fly zone was the ‘next best’ option. Van Eenennaam noted further that while the Netherlands was a front-runner in the efforts to boost Western effectiveness in Bosnia, its words were not very credible as long as the Dutch ministry of Defence could only offer to supply a few F16s. If the Netherlands really wanted to play a credible spearhead role, there were three options open to it according to Van Eenennaam: annulling the voluntary basis for the deployment of National Service troops, formation of an armoured infantry battalion in the short term or withdrawing the marines from Cambodia so that they could be deployed in the former Yugoslavia. The best option at the moment would seem to be for the Dutch Air Force to contribute to enforcement of the no-fly zone and for a start to be made with the creation of relief zones. Van Eenennaam thought that Van den Broek should put pressure on Defence Minister Ter Beek to make a contribution to this last-mentioned effort.³⁶⁵⁸

Subsequent interdepartmental consultation showed officials from Foreign Affairs clearly that the only option considered really safe by Van Walsum, that of the safe haven, was seen as unrealistic by their colleagues from Defence because of the lack of political will at an international level, because it would be impossible to put together a military force of the required size and because even if this did prove possible the troops would take too long to deploy. It was decided that it would be best to employ a step-by-step approach, starting with relief zones and making use of the UNPROFOR II battalions already present. While Van Walsum was not at all happy with the step-by-step approach, Van Eenennaam had in fact already betted on relief zones even before the start of the interdepartmental consultation. Another point revealed during this consultation, in response to questions from Foreign Affairs, was that the ministry of Defence would be unable to supply an operational unit (e.g. an armoured infantry battalion) in the short term. The head of the Directorate for Political UN Affairs J.T. (Jan) Hoekema commented that there was ‘a real problem (...)’ here, ‘if we are unable to deploy more forces in Yugoslavia to meet internationally agreed commitments’.³⁶⁵⁹

While officials at Foreign Affairs and Defence were subjecting the possibilities of establishing some form of safe regions to a joint review, UK Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd wrote a letter to Van

³⁶⁵⁵ NIOD, Ter Beek Collection. ‘Notitie over mogelijke uitbreiding van militaire operaties in voormalig Joegoslavië’, appendix to memo Barth to Ter Beek et al., 08/12/92, D92/555.

³⁶⁵⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Copy of ‘Notitie over mogelijke uitbreiding van militaire operaties in voormalig Joegoslavië’, 08/12/92, provided with marginal comments.

³⁶⁵⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Memo from head DAV to minister, 08/12/92, No. 92/1590.

³⁶⁵⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Copy of ‘Notitie over mogelijke uitbreiding van militaire operaties in voormalig Joegoslavië’, 08/12/92, provided with marginal comments.

³⁶⁵⁹ ABZ, DDI-DOA, 00463. Memorandum from head DPV to Van Walsum, 10/12/92, No. DPV-2225/92.

den Broek to inform him that the British government had decided against a joint British-Dutch Safe Area. Hurd mentioned the facts that the proposed Safe Area would in his opinion need a new UN mandate, and would also require a larger military force, as reasons for the decision. Moreover, the creation of a Safe Area could put UN neutrality at risk. According to Hurd, the presence of UNPROFOR II alone would be enough to make an area safe without the need for special measures. In fact, the region in central Bosnia where British and Dutch troops were currently operating had already become a 'relief area'.³⁶⁶⁰

While the British government thus rejected the idea of a British-Dutch Safe Area, the WEU ad hoc group on political and military affairs in the former Yugoslavia gave the WEU Central Planning Group a mandate a few days later, on 15 December, to study the scope for Safe Areas at locations where UNPROFOR troops were already present. Italy, then chairing the WEU, would also contact the UN concerning this matter.³⁶⁶¹ The WEU concentrated its study mainly on the idea of a Safe Area in or near Sarajevo. This was considered to need about 15,000 extra military personnel.³⁶⁶² On 18 December, the EPC ad hoc group on Yugoslavia also unanimously confirmed the need for 'the creation of Safe Areas (not safe havens)'.³⁶⁶³ On 1 February 1993, the WEU submitted a report on the possibility of a Sarajevo Safe Area to Boutros-Ghali, who forwarded it to UNPROFOR Force Commander Nambiar for advice.³⁶⁶⁴

In the meantime, on 17 December 1992, Sadako Ogata had sent Boutros-Ghali the UNHCR standpoint on Safe Areas, as requested in resolution 787. According to her, Safe Areas should only be created as a last resort. It would be much better to try to create a secure climate for all minority groups throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. It should be borne in mind that the parties to the conflict were either opposed to Safe Areas or wanted to use them to realize their own military objectives. Not only did the creation of Safe Areas consolidate lines of confrontation; at the same time, the various parties to the conflict would probably resist this process so that attacks both on and from the enclaves could not be excluded. The establishment of such Safe Areas would force UN troops into a peace-enforcement role, and could limit the freedom of movement of people in these areas and possibly also their right to asylum. Ogata wrote that the UNHCR standpoint had been arrived at after consultation with the International Red Cross, which had in the meantime set its sights lower as regards Safe Areas.³⁶⁶⁵ The meeting of the Follow-Up Committee of the Conference on the former Yugoslavia the day before had shown little sign of the latter, however. At this meeting, the International Red Cross had supported a solution in which towns where an ethnic minority was still present, such as Mostar or Zenica, would be declared Safe Areas. UN troops would be stationed there, and these towns would also offer shelter to people who had had to flee their homes and who had been unable to find refuge anywhere else. These Safe Areas should only be regarded as an emergency measure. The International Red Cross explicitly excluded the possibility that towns that were under siege could be declared Safe Areas. Other solutions (such as a ceasefire) would have to be found there.³⁶⁶⁶ At the same meeting, Cyrus Vance repeated his warning against the establishment of Safe Areas. He pointed out the confusion that had arisen between terms like safe havens and security zones. He and Owen still feared that Safe Areas would only contribute to the process of ethnic cleansing. Vance claimed that the best safe haven was a general

³⁶⁶⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01820. Message from the Foreign Secretary to Mr Van den Broek, appendix to R.P. Flower to De Gooijer, 10/12/92.

³⁶⁶¹ Van Eekelen, *Security*, p. 161; ABZ, 999.241. Embassy London to Van den Broek, fax No. 1023. WEU-restricted, 16/12/92.

³⁶⁶² Van Eekelen, *Security*, p. 161.

³⁶⁶³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00755. Van den Broek, 21/12/92, celer circ 849.

³⁶⁶⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05274. Italian chair of WEU to all WEU embassies, 03/12/92, weu/rom 404; Italian chair of WEU to all WEU members, 14/01/93, weu/rom 14; Italian chair of WEU to all WEU members, 11/02/94, weu/rom 24. See also DCBC, 2691. 'Safe Areas. Minutes of the meetings regarding study of Safe Areas for humanitarian purposes'.

³⁶⁶⁵ UNHCR, Fund 19, Sub-fund 6, File: Safe Areas, Ogata to Boutros-Ghali, 17/12/92; Mercier, *Crimes*, pp. 211-213.

³⁶⁶⁶ Mercier, *Crimes*, pp. 125-126 and 209-210; Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp. 231-232.

ceasefire.³⁶⁶⁷ Three days later, on 19 December, Vance again rejected the idea of Safe Areas in a speech to the Security Council because, he said, they meant cooperation with ethnic cleansing.³⁶⁶⁸

3. A month of meetings

Foreign Minister Van den Broek continued to adopt the active stance in the international arena also required of him by the Dutch Parliament not only with regard to Safe Areas but also more generally. During the meeting of the WEU Council of Ministers on 20 November in Rome, Van den Broek responded at length to a remark by the British Secretary of State Hamilton that the international community was doing more in Bosnia than some participants at the meeting seemed to be suggesting. Van den Broek appeared to take this remark personally, and said that he had never suggested this and in fact never could have suggested it as the representative of a country like the Netherlands that has made a (very) substantial contribution right from the start and at present has more than 1000 troops in the region, but that in the light of the massive human tragedy unfolding there, 'action should prevail rather than satisfaction'. We can all be grateful for all contributions made, but it is our duty to point out what still has to be done.

Van den Broek went on to say that at a given point the use of force might help to attain peacemaking objectives. His argument was supported by his Turkish and Portuguese counterparts.³⁶⁶⁹ It was clear that the moment when he would be prepared to countenance the use of force was no longer far off.

The month of December was full of meetings at international level where the topic of the former Yugoslavia was discussed. The Defence Planning Committee, the half-yearly meeting of the Ministers of Defence and the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the NATO member states, was planned for 10 and 11 December in Brussels, followed by the meeting of the EC Council of Ministers in Edinburgh on 11 and 12 December, the meeting of the CSCE Council of Ministers in Stockholm on 14 and 15 December, the WEU ad hoc group on the former Yugoslavia on 15 December, a ministerial conference on Yugoslavia in Geneva on 16 December as a follow-up to the conference on Yugoslavia held in London in August and the half-yearly meeting of the NATO Council of Ministers in Brussels on 17 December. This plethora of meetings offered the Dutch government an opportunity to try to get some momentum again into the Yugoslavia dossier.

First of all, however, the Organisation of Islamic States met on 1 December, with the position of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina as the main item on the agenda. There was great dissatisfaction within the Organisation about the Security Council's rejection in mid-November of their request for lifting of the arms embargo on Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Organisation passed a resolution repeating its demand for this embargo to be lifted and requesting that the UN should take military action against the Serbs, the concrete effects of which should start to be noticeable by 15 January 1993. In the absence of such action, the Organisation would take its own steps.³⁶⁷⁰ The Organisation of Islamic States, founded in 1971, was not considered however to be of much practical significance: its main value was as a platform for the expression of Muslim views. The only direct consequence of the above-mentioned resolution was that the UN General Assembly asked the Security Council on 18 December to lift the arms embargo on Bosnia-Herzegovina. The MID correctly characterized the position of the Organisation of Islamic States and the Arab League as follows some six months later:

³⁶⁶⁷ Ramcharan, *Conference*, p. 213.

³⁶⁶⁸ Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 150.

³⁶⁶⁹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01803. Hoekman 635 to Foreign Affairs, 23/11/92.

³⁶⁷⁰ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, deel V-VI (Yugoslavia. Political relationships and parties, part V-VI), May 1992–April 1993; MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 88/92, 20/11/92 and 93/92, 04/12/92.

‘Despite all the verbal support for the Bosnian Muslims, there is hardly any sign of independent military action by Islamic states (i.e. action not sanctioned by the Security Council) in favour of the Bosnian Muslims. On the other hand, these states will doubtless do their best to extract political and propagandistic advantage out of what they see as the lack of effective action by the West.’³⁶⁷¹

In the meantime, the attacks on Sarajevo actually intensified,³⁶⁷² which led the UN Commander for Sarajevo, the Egyptian Brigadier General Hussein Ali Abel Razek, to harden his stance. He commented openly in early December that the UN operation so far had been a failure. According to him, Western military intervention was the only way to protect the Muslims against Serb aggression.³⁶⁷³ Phillippe Morillon, Commander of the UN Forces in Bosnia, who had been opposed to military action against the VRS up to this time, seems to have changed his mind after the attacks on Sarajevo.³⁶⁷⁴ The French Chief of Defence Staff J. Lanxade supported Morillon’s standpoint after a visit to Bosnia. Lanxade characterized UNPROFOR’s mandate as practically inoperable, the command structures as malfunctioning and the discipline of some national contingents as below par, and concluded: ‘ou on emploie la force ou on se retire’ (either we use force, or we withdraw).³⁶⁷⁵

Dutch opinions

In the meantime, there was great disappointment in Dutch political circles about the stance of the British government (which had succeeded the Netherlands as chair of the EC) concerning the Yugoslav question. In an internal memo of the PvdA fraction in Parliament written in mid-November, Maarten Van Traa urged that Yugoslavia should be returned to the top of the Twelve’s agenda after the British chairmanship had expired. According to him, the international community’s lack of willingness to do anything about this issue was starting to assume ‘criminal traits.’³⁶⁷⁶ He thought that the Dutch government should use ‘undiplomatic means’, possibly in cooperation with the Belgian and German governments, in order to put an end to the ‘sit-on-the-fence’ attitude of France and the UK. Prime Minister Lubbers and Van den Broek might, for example, be able to achieve this by appearing on French and British TV.³⁶⁷⁷ During the debate on the budget for Foreign Affairs at the end of November in Parliament, the mood of the MPs about the former Yugoslavia was ‘practically uncontrollable’, according to Van Walsum.³⁶⁷⁸ On the other hand, the top figures in Foreign Affairs were not too unhappy about this trend since, as Van Walsum commented in retrospect, the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the leadership of Van den Broek, had to fight very hard against the

³⁶⁷¹ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, deel VII, May 1993-March 1994; MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 43/93, 29/06/93; cf. 56/93, 16/09/93. Cf. Calic, *Krieg*, p. 227. For previous involvement of this Organisation with the conflict in Bosnia see Moore, ‘Aspects’, p. 41; interview W. Claes, 12/03/01.

³⁶⁷² See e.g. ‘Serviërs beginnen offensief in diverse delen van Bosnië’ (Serbs start offensive in various parts of Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/12/92.

³⁶⁷³ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 189; “‘Vredesmissie van VN in Bosnië is mislukt’” (UN peace mission in Bosnia fails), *de Volkskrant*, 07/12/92.

³⁶⁷⁴ JF, ‘Croatian leader urges western action against Serbs’, *New York Times News Service*, 12/12/92, 1821EST.

³⁶⁷⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00141. Wijnaendts 486 to Van den Broek, 10/12/92; Marie-Claude Smouts, ‘Political aspects of peace-keeping operations’, in Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, p. 20.

³⁶⁷⁶ NIOD, PvdA Collection. Memo Maarten van Traa to PvdA committee on Foreign Affairs re committee meetings 19/11/92, 16/11/92, No. BUZA/029.92.

³⁶⁷⁷ NIOD, PvdA Collection. Memo Maarten van Traa to members of PvdA fraction, for purposes of policy discussions within the fraction 24/11/92, 20/11/92, No. F/111.

³⁶⁷⁸ Interview A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00. Cf. TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III (Starting point III), deposition by A.P. van Walsum, 22/05/00, p. 11. See also ‘Machteloos Nederland wil van alles in Joegoslavië’ (Impotent Holland has wide range of wishes in Yugoslavia), *Trouw*, 26/11/92; ‘Nederland staat nog alleen met plan voor Bosnië’ (Holland stands alone with plan for Bosnia) and Rob Meines, ‘Den Haag zoekt steun voor ingreep in Bosnië’ (The Hague seeks support for intervention in Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/12/92.

Dutch ministry of Defence – and in fact against just about all other European ministries of Defence – to gain any understanding of the need for military intervention.³⁶⁷⁹

After the relaxed mood that held sway in September and October 1992, a few voices were once again raised in the printed media in favour of intervention. Two elements played a role here: firstly, reports of the continuing humanitarian need of the population of Bosnia against the background of the problems faced by aid convoys in getting to their destinations³⁶⁸⁰ and secondly, the worries the international community was starting to feel about the possible spread of the conflict to Kosovo and Macedonia. The latter topic will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 9. It will only be discussed here insofar as this threat provided new fuel for the debate about intervention.

The main mood reflected in the printed media was outrage at the lethargy shown by the EC, NATO and UN in taking further steps against Serbia, while people in Bosnia were starving to death and being subjected to murderous attacks and torture. After the UN Security Council had voted in favour of tighter sanctions on 16 November, for example, a leader in *NRC Handelsblad* commented, ‘Maybe now we will see some, albeit slow, change. Of course, this all comes too late for the thousands who have already suffered death and maltreatment and for the countless victims who have been terrorized into leaving their homes and losing all their possessions. Nothing can be done to change that situation.’³⁶⁸¹ The main voice raised in the *NRC Handelsblad* against Western inaction was that of the columnist H.J.A. Hofland. In one article entitled ‘*Grenzen aan het gedogen*’ (The limits of tolerance) he wrote, for example,

‘The question arises again and again what Western political civilization thinks it can allow itself to permit, what must be vigorously rejected in theory while it can be tolerated in practice – even when the proofs of wide-scale criminality are delivered to our homes daily by the media.’³⁶⁸²

He called the toleration of the ‘incredible crimes’ that had been committed in the former Yugoslavia during the past year and a half, not only by politicians but also by intellectuals and artists,

‘The bankruptcy of Europe. While its consequences may be less severe than those of the Depression of the ‘thirties (though that remains to be seen), its content is actually even more depressing – if only because European pretensions have become so much grander in the intervening period. This bankruptcy is perhaps reflected most clearly by the feeling of futility, the vague suspicion that it is starting to get pathetic, even somewhat ridiculous, every time one prepares to write yet another of the long series of comments on Yugoslavia.’³⁶⁸³

He knew the arguments against military intervention, but ‘How long can we allow ourselves to keep on hesitating?’ The international community had showed its good intentions by increasing the severity of the blockade one year after it had first been instituted.

‘Would it not be wise, humane and in accord with European political civilization if even more of these ‘intentions’ were formulated? ... Who knows,

³⁶⁷⁹ Interview A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00.

³⁶⁸⁰ Cf. Anet Bleich, ‘Safe havens in Bosnië: een zinnig voorstel’ (Safe havens in Bosnia: a sensible suggestion), *de Volkskrant*, 24/11/92.

³⁶⁸¹ ‘Kalmpjes aan’ (More haste, less speed), *NRC Handelsblad*, 18/11/92.

³⁶⁸² H.J.A. Hofland, ‘Grenzen aan het gedogen’ (The limits of tolerance), *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/12/92.

³⁶⁸³ H.J.A. Hofland, ‘Grenzen aan het gedogen’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/12/92.

that might even lead to European honour being saved before the last house in Sarajevo is shot to rubble.³⁶⁸⁴

If even television viewers could see where the Serb gun emplacements round Sarajevo were located, it should not be beyond the ability of the Western military forces to put them out of action, Hofland argued.³⁶⁸⁵ He started to feel a bit more hopeful when in December Western awareness began to grow of a possible conflict in Kosovo that could form the seed of a Balkan war. This would make intervention in the former Yugoslavia not just a humanitarian action but a form of national self-interest. According to Hofland, the West was 'now in the first phase of self-defence'.³⁶⁸⁶ And that had the advantage that since the countries of Western Europe, according to the columnist, were unable either to undertake any significant intervention or even to defend themselves, the American government would have to step in.³⁶⁸⁷

André Roelofs similarly commented in *De Volkskrant* that the lack of military action by Western countries was due to the idea that the situation in the former Yugoslavia did not affect any of their essential interests. According to him, however, peace, security, stability and human rights in Europe were indivisible. In his view, intervention was inevitable 'for the sake of the victims, but also in our own interests.'³⁶⁸⁸

Mient Jan Faber, also writing in *De Volkskrant*, pointed out the risks of conflicts in Kosovo and Macedonia. According to him, this meant that the West would have to make large parts of the Balkans a protectorate and use military force to set up safe havens where Displaced Persons could be taken care of. Peace enforcement was the only means available to the West to avoid being confronted with a series of ethnic wars.³⁶⁸⁹ This elicited a response from within his own camp, from Erik Hummels and Jan Smit, members of the Quakers' segment of the Interchurch Peace Conference. They argued that the peaceful means for resolving the conflict in the former Yugoslavia had not yet been exhausted. According to them, peace enforcement would only lead to war enforcement because the Yugoslavs, who had long been accustomed to assume an independent stance in international politics, would see members of a UN military force as intruders. They believed, moreover, that the idea that the West could restore order in the Balkans had its source in a Western sense of superiority: 'The objective is not to salve our conscience, or to blow new life into the Dutch peace movement: those are all forms of Western ethnocentricity.'³⁶⁹⁰ The staff member of the Eastern Europe Institute at the University of Amsterdam Nevenka Tromp-Vrkic believed, however, that the establishment of a UN protectorate over large areas of the former Yugoslavia was probably the only possible solution.³⁶⁹¹

Yet another contributor to *De Volkskrant*, Anet Bleich, commented on the choice between 'to intervene or not to intervene' facing the European Community in a bantering, almost demagogic tone:

'Peace, democracy, economic growth, free trade, learning to live in a unified Europe, in old or new multi-ethnic and multicultural relationships? That's not really what we realists are bothered about, is it? Oilseeds and white wine, how

³⁶⁸⁴ H.J.A. Hofland, 'Grenzen aan het gedogen', *NRC Handelsblad*, 02/12/92.

³⁶⁸⁵ 'Een Saigon voor de VN' (A Saigon for the UN), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/12/92.

³⁶⁸⁶ H.J.A. Hofland, 'Meer dan humanitair' (More than humanitarian), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/12/92.

³⁶⁸⁷ H.J.A. Hofland, 'Europa 1993' (Europe 1993), *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/12/92.

³⁶⁸⁸ André Roelofs, 'Waarom doet Westen niets in Joegoslavië?' (Why does the West do nothing in Yugoslavia?), *de Volkskrant*, 19/11/92.

³⁶⁸⁹ Mient Jan Faber, 'Wanneer dringt de Balkan-hel echt tot ons door?' (When will we finally become aware of the Hell of the Balkans?), *de Volkskrant*, 16/11/92.

³⁶⁹⁰ Erik Hummels and Jan Smit, 'VN-interventie gooit slechts olie op het vuur' (UN intervention simply throws oil on the flames), *de Volkskrant*, 23/11/92.

³⁶⁹¹ Nevenka Tromp-Vrkic, 'Politieke oplossing voor ex-Joegoslavië komt zeker te laat' (A political solution for the former Yugoslavia will certainly come too late), *de Volkskrant*, 19/12/92.

to stay friends with the farmer and keep refugees out of our own back yard –
*that is the question.*³⁶⁹²

Nor was she much impressed by the arguments against safe havens put forward by General Van der Vlis. According to her, if the Allies had used the same arguments in 1944 they would never have undertaken the Normandy landings.³⁶⁹³ She regarded the stance of ‘our pacifist-minded generals’ as ‘pernicious’³⁶⁹⁴ and thought that the Dutch Parliament should ‘rise out of the swamp of largely self-induced impotence’. It should start by stating that it wanted to make a contribution to the safe havens option itself and should then send its Foreign Minister and Defence Minister, Van den Broek and Ter Beek, off to seek support for such an initiative from Washington, Paris, London and other capitals.³⁶⁹⁵ Alman Metten, a member of the socialist fraction of the European Parliament, wrote in *De Volkskrant* on the same day that, having regard to the war in the former Yugoslavia among other things, ‘the Netherlands [should] drop its modest attitude of ‘we’re only a small country’, play an activist role (if possible in a Benelux framework) and not be afraid of bold initiatives’.³⁶⁹⁶ A.M. Oostlander, member of the CDA fraction in the European Parliament, also tried to urge the Dutch Parliament to stop dragging its heels behind the lead given by the government, as it had been doing since August according to him. ‘Members are actually advocating a neutral course, which is incompatible with the Christian Democrat tradition of dealing with National Socialists.’ In fact, Oostlander had noticed that the Dutch Parliament had already adopted a more active stance, but it needed to go further and put other governments under pressure with the aid of public opinion in the countries concerned. In this context, it would be a good thing to ‘have Great Britain’s wretched Yugoslavia policy subjected to solemn condemnation’.³⁶⁹⁷

The leader article in the Protestant daily *Trouw* on Christmas Eve argued that military intervention in Bosnia was needed ‘without delay. The use of military force to create a no-fly zone above Bosnia can be no more than an initial move, especially in view of the fact that aeroplanes and helicopters play little or no part in the battles taking place in Bosnia-Hercegovina.’³⁶⁹⁸

While the voice of interventionists was not heard as loudly on the opinion pages as it had been in August, the opposition was even less noticeable. Hardly any arguments against intervention could be found in *Trouw* and *De Volkskrant*, while J.L. Heldring continued his lonely battle against interventionism in the columns of *NRC Handelsblad*. ‘Criticizing humanitarian missions is a thankless task’, he wrote. ‘You run the risk of being pigeonholed as an inhumanist.’ But he still did his best to do so. In his opinion, no operation should be started in the former Yugoslavia as long as its outcome is completely uncertain. Even if tens of thousands of troops did manage to create safe havens, the West had no guarantee that the population would not start butchering one another again when these safe havens were removed years later, ‘so such an intervention, though undertaken with the noblest of motives, could well turn out to be completely ineffective in the long run’.³⁶⁹⁹

EC summit in Edinburgh

The idea of Safe Areas, or safe havens, represented a concrete objective for the Dutch government, but it was making very little progress in persuading others of its feasibility. In the meantime, winter was

³⁶⁹² Anet Bleich, ‘Europa gaat steeds meer op de Balkan lijken’ (Europe is getting to look more and more like the Balkans), *de Volkskrant*, 17/11/92.

³⁶⁹³ Anet Bleich, ‘Safe havens in Bosnië: een zinnig voorstel’, *de Volkskrant*, 24/11/92.

³⁶⁹⁴ Anet Bleich, ‘Het funeste pacifisme van de generaals’ (The pernicious pacifism of the generals), *de Volkskrant*, 11/12/92.

³⁶⁹⁵ Anet Bleich, ‘Safe havens in Bosnië: een zinnig voorstel’, *de Volkskrant*, 24/11/92.

³⁶⁹⁶ Alman Metten, ‘*Crisis Europa vergen brutaliteit van Nederland*’ (European crises demand Dutch brutality), *de Volkskrant*, 24/11/92.

³⁶⁹⁷ Arie Oostlander, ‘Luchtaanvallen moeten de Serviërs dwingen in te binden’ (Air strikes needed to force Serbs to withdraw), *de Volkskrant*, 07/12/92.

³⁶⁹⁸ ‘Een trieste conclusie (2)’ (A sad conclusion (2)), *Trouw*, 24/12/92.

³⁶⁹⁹ J.L. Heldring, ‘Interveniëren of niet?’ (To intervene or not to intervene?), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/12/92.

approaching and it was feared that many tens or hundreds of thousands in Bosnia would not survive it. Van Walsum commented at the meeting of the *Comité Politique* held on 2 December that by this time he knew all the arguments against any proposal leading to harder action against Serbia by heart, but the overall result was that the Twelve were showing themselves to the rest of the world as passively accepting the use of force as a means of territorial expansion and ethnic cleansing. His French and British counterparts, on the other hand, argued that the international community had only two choices in dealing with the former Yugoslavia: either limiting itself to the protection of humanitarian aid, or waging all-out war.³⁷⁰⁰

Officials in Foreign Affairs' Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (Dutch abbreviation DAV) were of the opinion that international policy-making with regard to Bosnia-Herzegovina had got stuck fast because EC governments were only able to think about the options available in such black and white terms: it was either peacekeeping or all out war.³⁷⁰¹ The Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs tried to break this impasse by proposing what they called a 'passive enforcement operation'. While it was doubtless impossible at that moment to convince the West to undo all the Serb territorial gains in Bosnia-Herzegovina the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs suggested to Foreign Minister Van den Broek that it might well be possible to halt further Serb advances and at the same time to deal effectively with the humanitarian emergency in the regions that had not yet been conquered by the Serbs. Such an operation might be expected to lead to 'a sort of Cyprus situation' which would, it is true, doubtless call for a large body of troops to be stationed in the conflict zone for many years, but where a certain level of peace could also be restored.

The Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs considered this operation to be 'feasible, because the Serbs are unlikely to attack regions under such international protection.' The directorate realized that great powers of persuasion would be needed to convince decision-makers not only internationally but also at home – especially the Dutch Chief of Defence Staff - of the merits of this idea. It did not expect any support at all from within the EC. It was therefore suggested that Van den Broek should launch the plan in a newspaper like the *International Herald Tribune* or the *Financial Times*, so that he could appeal over the heads of his European counterparts to European political opinion, the Clinton government *in spe* and the Arab and/or Islamic states.³⁷⁰² The Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs had apparently already forgotten how irritated Foreign Affairs itself had been the year before when independent voices, in particular from Bonn, had been raised during the Dutch chairmanship of the EC.

Within this framework of creative thinking, Van Walsum wanted to make an attempt even before the EC summit to be held in Edinburgh on 11 and 12 December 'to breach (...) the solid front of those who believe that further action [in Bosnia] will inevitably lead to all out war'.³⁷⁰³ His eye fell on Srebrenica in this connection. On 22 November, General Morillon had demanded that aid convoys should be granted access within a week to Srebrenica and Gorazde, the two town in Eastern Bosnia that had been held under siege for months by the Bosnian Serbs and that had so far proved to be inaccessible for humanitarian aid convoys (see Chapter 7). If this demand was not met, the Security Council would have to make more troops available according to Morillon.³⁷⁰⁴ UNHCR even threatened to stop aid to Serbian towns in Eastern Bosnia until supplies were allowed to reach Srebrenica and Gorazde.³⁷⁰⁵ Talks between Morillon and Mladic yielded the concession that aid supplies would be

³⁷⁰⁰ ABZ, Communications archives. Bot 415 to Van den Broek, 02/12/92.

³⁷⁰¹ See also Rob Meines, 'Den Haag zoekt steun voor ingreep in Bosnië', *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/12/92.

³⁷⁰² ABZ, 999.0 VN/Operaties/UNPROFOR/Joegoslavië/okt-dec 1992. Memo DAV (DAV/MS/RM AHG) to M, 03/12/92, No. DAV/MS-218/92.

³⁷⁰³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Memorandum DGPZ to DEU, DAV, DPV and JURA, 03/12/92, No. 189/92.

³⁷⁰⁴ MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 89/92, 23/11/92.

³⁷⁰⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01803. 'Voormalig Joegoslavië - spreekpunt UNPROFOR II inzet transportbataljon' (Former Yugoslavia – agenda item UNPROFOR II deployment transport battalion), memo DIO/Joegoslavië for WEU Council of

allowed to get through to Srebrenica; however, the convoy from Belgrade bringing these supplies was held up at the Bosnian-Serb border by a mob of Serbs.³⁷⁰⁶ The convoy was finally allowed to complete its journey to Srebrenica on 28 November, where UNHCR found the population starving and without medical supplies.³⁷⁰⁷ The next convoy was also stopped on the way to Srebrenica, but finally reached its destination on 5 December. Van Walsum therefore ordered a study to be carried out of the possibility of air-lifting supplies to the hospital in Srebrenica.³⁷⁰⁸ The preliminary conclusion was that this idea was not feasible because of concerns about the safety of the aircraft used for the transport.³⁷⁰⁹ Besides, the next convoy reached Srebrenica a few days later, on 10 December.³⁷¹⁰

The Military Liaison office of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs sent Van Walsum a memorandum shortly after that, stating that air-lifting supplies ‘could not be wholeheartedly recommended’. The fact that even flights carrying aid supplies to Sarajevo, which had been agreed on by all parties, were nevertheless shot at made it clear that the air space above Bosnia was definitely not safe; in addition, the mountainous terrain round the Muslim enclaves made it difficult for the crew to determine the right approach path and to drop the supplies accurately, the VRS would probably object to military flights over strategic territory, and finally air-lifts were expensive and only delivered a limited capacity. The only remaining possibility, according to the Military Liaison office, was ‘more robust’ support for the convoys travelling by road.³⁷¹¹ As mentioned in Chapter 7, however, this was not an acceptable option either.

Foreign Affairs was not alone in its feverish search for ways of pulling international policy on Yugoslavia off the sandbanks. Dutch Prime Minister Lubbers had also been convinced since early December that the international community had not been doing enough about the region. He summed up the situation as follows: Milosevic’s regime had not been sufficiently isolated; the sanctions had not been enforced strictly enough; the no-fly zone had not been imposed; and aid convoys still experienced great difficulties in reaching their destinations.³⁷¹² Both the ministry of Foreign Affairs and the premier knew that the majority of Dutch public opinion shared their irritation and will to action. Just as had been the case a year before, at the end of 1992 sixty-six percent of those surveyed by the NIPO polling organization on 20 and 21 December no longer believed that the Yugoslav crisis could be solved by negotiation. The same percentage believed that the UN should undertake military intervention and that Dutch troops should take part in this action, even at the expense of a certain number of casualties.³⁷¹³ Even Hans Van Mierlo, the leader of the Social Democrat D66 fraction in Parliament, who together with Eisma and Ter Veer (also from D66) often did his best to temper the mood of the Dutch government and Parliament when they got too heated in their pursuit of a solution to the problems of Yugoslavia, stated during D66’s annual congress held at the end of November 1992 that the Netherlands must continue to keep in step with the international community ‘even though we are disappointed at the size of the steps they are agreed on taking’ but must at the same time ‘stubbornly go

Ministers, Rome, 20/11/92–VDT, 19/11/92; ‘VN binden hulp aan Serviërs aan voorwaarden’ (UN sets conditions on aid to Serbs), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/11/92; ‘VN ‘pokeren’ met hulp aan Moslims’ (UN turns aid to Muslims into a poker game), *de Volkskrant*, 25/11/92; ‘Konvooien van UNHCR naar Moslim-steden Bosnië fiasco’ (Fiasco of UNHCR convoys to Muslim cities in Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 26/11/92.

³⁷⁰⁶ ‘Gorazde wel, Srebrenica nog niet geholpen’ (Gorazde has already received aid, but Srebrenica has not yet), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/11/92.

³⁷⁰⁷ ‘Belegerde stad in Bosnië krijgt VN-hulp’ (Besieged Bosnian town receives UN aid), *de Volkskrant*, 30/11/92.

³⁷⁰⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Memorandum DGPZ to DEU, DAV, DPV and JURA, 03/12/92, No. 189/92.

³⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., memorandum DAV to DGPZ, 03/12/92, No. DAV/MS-220/92.

³⁷¹⁰ See also *ibid.*, memo deputy DAV to DGPZ, 16/12/92, No. DAV/MS-228/92.

³⁷¹¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Memorandum deputy DAV for DGPZ, 16/12/92, No. DAV/MS-228/92.

³⁷¹² *Nederland 3*, Nova, 04/12/92, 10.30 pm.

³⁷¹³ J. van der Meulen, ‘Veiligheid hier en daar’ (Security here and there), *Maatschappij & Krijgsmacht*, 16 (1994) 1, p. 2; De Boode & Everts, *Ontwikkelingen*, p. 188.

on advocating the taking of greater steps (...) even though this involves us in heavier military responsibilities. We can't go on as we are now.'³⁷¹⁴

The question was however what the Dutch government could achieve abroad. Why, for example did a country like Belgium not take as active a stance as the Netherlands? This question seems to underlie an interview the Dutch journalist Verbakel had with the Belgian Foreign Minister Claes in the political talk show *Het Capitool* on Dutch TV on the afternoon of Sunday 6 December, on the eve of the EC summit in Edinburgh. Verbakel asked the Belgian Foreign Minister the following question: 'Our Dutch Foreign Minister claims that the moment is approaching when we can no longer avoid taking forceful action. What do you think?' Claes's lengthy answer is worth citing *in extenso*, as he seems to be holding up a mirror in which his Dutch counterpart and the Dutch premier Ruud Lubbers could view themselves.

Claes: 'I believe we have to be very careful. It is not my job to interpret the attitude of my Dutch colleague. I completely agree with him when he says that we are making ourselves ridiculous, to the extent that the decisions we take are not respected and are not even carried out. (...) Whether the conclusion to be drawn from that is that you have to start developing a military scenario - a 'peace making' scenario in present-day parlance - is another matter altogether. I am not a specialist. But I know what the specialists from the Pentagon, the British General Staff and the French General Staff tell me. And also what certain Belgian generals tell me. Firstly, intervention in Bosnia is not guaranteed to yield success in the short term. Secondly, you are practically certain to suffer considerable losses among the troops you deploy. And thirdly, civilian losses will be high. The most important consideration, however, is the risk of sinking into a bottomless swamp as happened in Lebanon.'

'Verbakel: Isn't it strange that Mr. Van den Broek doesn't recognize that?'

'Claes: I can't really comment on that.'

'Verbakel: Lubbers appears to expect that a large number of countries will follow the Dutch lead at the European summit in Edinburgh?'

'Claes: I wouldn't like to make a prediction about that. However, I would sound a warning about excessive optimism with respect to the Security Council. It seems to me you can't simply say, 'We're off to war, hurrah! Long live violence', without legal backing from UNO and the Security Council.'

'Verbakel: You call yourself a socialist. They are much more cautious, much more detached than our Christian Democrat Minister of Foreign Affairs, aren't they?'

'Claes: I don't know if caution is the right word. I would prefer to speak of realism.'³⁷¹⁵

A few hours later, Dutch KRO television broadcast a special issue of the current affairs programme *Brandpunt*, entitled '*Joegoslavië exit – ingrijpen ja of nee*' [Exit Yugoslavia – do we intervene or don't we?] and lasting 2½ hours. Authorities like Van den Broek, Van Eekelen and Owen appeared on the

³⁷¹⁴ D66, party management documents, speech by Hans Van Mierlo at D66 annual congress in Nijmegen, 28/11/92.

³⁷¹⁵ Dutch TV, Nederland 3, NOS, *Het Capitool*, 06/12/92, noon.

programme, alongside prominent commentators and experts. They were accompanied by a wide range of well known Dutch personalities such as the actress and singer of Croatian origin Tatjana Simic, chess player Hans Böhm, cabaret artiste and TV presenter Jos Brink and programme-maker and author Boudewijn Büch. The programme could not be characterized as the acme of balanced TV debate. It was stated that the main theme of the evening was ‘how is it possible that the history of torture and deportation we went through fifty years ago seems to be being repeated today?’³⁷¹⁶ Viewers could phone up and say whether they were for or against military intervention in Yugoslavia or to put questions to experts like Dick Verkijk, a Dutch journalist with a good knowledge of Eastern Europe. The balance between yes and no votes was displayed on a barometer during the broadcast. At the start of the programme, 88 percent were for intervention and 12 percent against. At the end, 91 percent of the callers were for and nine percent against. Presenter Fons de Poel rounded off with the words, ‘Intervention or not? Let’s hope we never have to say, “*Wir haben es nicht gewusst*. [‘We never knew what was going on’ – a reference to the claims of innocence by the general German population in response to the revelations of genocide after the Second World War]’.

The programme showed many images of both Croatia and Bosnia, while refugees told their stories of ethnic cleansing, torture and executions. Some of the facts presented were distorted, however. For example, fragments from *Radio Television Novi Sad* of murders committed on Serbs by Croats and Muslims were used during the programme, while the accompanying commentary characterized the images as evidence of Serb crimes against Muslims. One viewer who phoned the broadcasting company to correct this was told that the programme makers were not interested.³⁷¹⁷ The Serb Information and Cultural Centre in the Netherlands later submitted a complaint about the programme to the Dutch Council for Journalism, claiming that the makers showed anti-Serb bias and failed to take due care that the commentary matched the images (for example, the commentary on pictures of a woman complaining about atrocities stated that she was Muslim while she was in fact Serbian). The Council stated in its ruling that the discrepancy between pictures and commentary did amount to the giving of false information. It concluded that the editors of *Brandpunt* had not done all they could to avoid errors, but regarded the errors committed as of minor importance. The Council found further that the editors could have made more effort to present the standpoint of the Bosnian Serbs, but concluded on balance that the limits of social acceptability had not been transgressed. The complaint was therefore rejected.³⁷¹⁸

This broadcast illustrated the increasingly activist mood of the Dutch public after a quiet interlude of more than three months. Many of the voices raised came from Church circles. For example, the Netherlands Council of Churches sent a letter to Foreign Minister Van den Broek early in December, urging military intervention to support the establishment of protected zones for civilians in Bosnia. The synods of the *hervormde*, *gereformeerde* and Lutheran churches supported this call in a letter to their congregations. The Ecumenical Action section of the Netherlands Council of Churches started collecting signatures for a petition requesting the government to raise its voice in favour of more European action on the former Yugoslavia. The IKV (Interchurch Peace Council) started a postcard campaign as part of an international campaign organized by the *Helsinki Citizens Assembly* for peace and human rights: pre-printed postcards were sent both to the Dutch government and to the joint UN/EC Peace Conference on the former Yugoslavia, urging the establishment of ‘safe havens’ and ‘open borders’ for the refugees in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Dutch Joint Aid Organizations announced that they were going to hold a collection campaign for the former Yugoslavia, with the aid of the Luxembourg broadcasting channel *RTL4* and

³⁷¹⁶ Ingrid Harms and Ursula den Tex, ‘Kan de hulpverlening nog hulp verlenen?’, *Vrij Nederland*, 12/12/92, p. 24.

³⁷¹⁷ DPPN, archives of D66 party secretariat. Incoming correspondence on Europe (Oost-Europa 1989-1993), M.K.-S. to D66 secretariat, 15/12/92, 192.3536.

³⁷¹⁸ ‘Het Servisch Informatie- en Cultuurcentrum tegen de redactie van KRO-Brandpunt’ (Complaint brought by Serbian Information and Cultural Centre against the editors of the KRO programme *Brandpunt*), *De Journalist*, 05/11/93, p. 36. See also Anstadt, *Servië*, p. 161.

the Dutch public broadcasting companies, in the second week of December They also called for military intervention, since they feared that their aid would not reach its destination without this intervention.³⁷¹⁹ The Red Cross, one of the participating joint aid organizations, had already made a plea in November for the establishment of safe havens under military protection.³⁷²⁰ The Roman Catholic, *gereformeerde* and *hervormde* churches in the Dutch province of *Noord-Brabant* announced that they were going to ring the church bells for five minutes at seven o'clock on the evening of Thursday 10 December in protest against the events in Bosnia.³⁷²¹

Against this background, Prime Minister Lubbers and Foreign Minister Van den Broek made their intended stance during the coming EC summit in Edinburgh perfectly clear. Van den Broek, who had also appeared in the *Brandpunt* programme about Yugoslavia on 6 December, stated during a meeting of EC ministers held the following day that 'some form of military intervention seems almost inevitable'. He was thinking in this connection about the use of force to create a no-fly zone above Bosnia, and the establishment of Safe Areas for refugees. According to him, 'a period of *laissez-faire*, broken promises and statements not backed up by force' had to be brought to an end.³⁷²²

In the second week of December, the Dutch weekly *Vrij Nederland* summed up the debate about intervention in Yugoslavia that had been going on during the past year and a half as follows:

'Things can't go on like this any longer. There has to be some form of intervention. It will take some time, however, before the powers that be make up their minds about how or where the action should be taken and by whom, whether it should be small- or large-scale and whether it should involve the use of land, sea or air forces. Only after all these decisions have been taken can the actual intervention start. And even then, it is uncertain whether such action will really bring peace and security.'³⁷²³

According to the authors, however, only one option was discussed to ease the lot of those suffering persecution and forced displacement in Bosnia:

'Relocation of refugees in protected zones in their own country. This appears to be a realistic option, at least from a political viewpoint. Opinions are strongly divided about whether it will prove to be feasible in practice. Is it really still possible to create safe havens now that winter has started and the war is continuing unabated? How do you get the troops there? Which troops are we talking about anyway? And how will they defend themselves? It is not clear whether the establishment of protected zones would not be the start of much more far-reaching military involvement.'³⁷²⁴

But on the other hand, 'Do we have to wait until all the pros and cons have been neatly debated to everyone's satisfaction? By that time, it will be too late.'³⁷²⁵

³⁷¹⁹ 'Militair ingrijpen moet: Kerken luiden noodklok over Bosnië-Herzegovina' (Military intervention necessary; Church bells ring alarm on Bosnia-Herzegovina), *Trouw*, 04/12/92; 'Ingrijpen in Bosnië. Hulporganisaties: Hulp komt anders niet ter plekke' (Intervention in Bosnia. Aid organizations say it's the only way to ensure aid reaches destination), *Trouw*, 08/12/92.

³⁷²⁰ 'Rode Kruis smeekt om actie' (Red Cross begs for action), *Trouw*, 19/11/92.

³⁷²¹ 'Militair ingrijpen moet: Kerken luiden noodklok over Bosnië-Herzegovina', *Trouw*, 04/12/92.

³⁷²² 'Navo waarschuwt Servië' (*NATO warns Serbia*), *Trouw*, 08/12/92. See also Jos Klaassen, "EG moet actie in Joegoslavië overwegen" (EC must consider action in Yugoslavia), *de Volkskrant*, 08/12/92; P. Lewis, 'U.N. Security Council closer to military action against advancing Serbs', *New York Times News Service* 09/12/92, 2026EST.

³⁷²³ Ingrid Harms & Ursula den Tex, 'Kan de hulpverlening nog hulp verlenen?', *Vrij Nederland*, 12/12/92, p. 24.

³⁷²⁴ Ingrid Harms & Ursula den Tex, 'Kan de hulpverlening nog hulp verlenen?', *Vrij Nederland*, 12/12/92, p. 25.

³⁷²⁵ *Ibid.*

Prime Minister Lubbers seems to have been in a similar mood. The day before the European summit in Edinburgh, he explained the role the Dutch government intended to play during the summit in extremely strong – or, as *De Volkskrant* put it, ‘distinctly un-Lubberian’³⁷²⁶ – terms during the debate on this topic in Parliament. He wanted to see firmer action to ensure adequate food supplies, and referred once again to his own experiences during the ‘hunger winter’ of 1944/45 in the Netherlands at the end of the Second World War.

‘So I think we have to step up the discussion. Of course, we have to take care not to make it too personal. And I am really not convinced that the Netherlands is on the defensive here. I am sure that people throughout Europe are starting to think more and more that we don’t need to be ashamed about being too impractical or anything like that. That is not so.’

It appears, thus, that Lubbers also wanted to appeal to the population of the EC member states over the heads of their governments. According to him, people had been feeling ill at ease for a long time about the uncertainty as to who should take the lead in dealing with the problems of the former Yugoslavia: the EC, the WEU or the UN Security Council. ‘Honestly speaking’, said Lubbers, ‘and to put it in very plain language, I don’t give a damn. It is scandalous to have wasted so much time on this matter.’³⁷²⁷ In response to comments about the emotional tone of his speech, Lubbers responded that that was how he was built.³⁷²⁸

Minister of Defence Ter Beek tried to slow things down, as cited in *Vrij Nederland*. General Van der Vlis had convinced him of the risks of measures that went further than pure humanitarian aid. He did not exclude a study on safe havens and a no-fly zone. ‘But we shouldn’t talk about these things too lightly.’

‘The Netherlands tends to speak in strong terms at international meetings, but we get hardly any support from other countries. The Germans point to their constitution, which does not allow them to deploy troops beyond their own borders. The English are even less prepared to go along with us. We are saddled with two big brothers who don’t want to take the lead. That can be irritating. But I don’t see the Netherlands marching into Yugoslavia on its own.’³⁷²⁹

Seen from the Dutch viewpoint, it looked as if Yugoslavia was the only point on the agenda at the European summit. In fact, however, the topics discussed in Edinburgh were mainly concerned with the financing of the European Community and the Danish question. The Danes had rejected the Maastricht Treaty in a referendum held on 2 June 1992. This was in principle a threat to the planned implementation of the Treaty on 1 November 1993, since this implementation required the consent of all EC member states. The result of this referendum was however overturned on 18 May 1993, when the Danes voted in a new referendum to accept the Treaty on condition that Denmark did not introduce the euro. The problem of caring for Displaced Persons from the former Yugoslavia was also

³⁷²⁶ ‘Lubbers roept EG in harde termen op tot ingrijpen in Bosnië’ (Lubbers issues forceful call to EC to intervene in Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 11/12/92.

³⁷²⁷ *Nederland 3*, Nova, 10/12/92, 10.30 pm. Cf. Martijn Delaere, ‘Eensgezind ten strijde’ (United into battle), *Het Binnenhof*, 19/12/92; Pascal Barollier, ‘Le Premier ministre néerlandais pour une intervention militaire en Bosnie’ (Dutch prime minister supports intervention in Bosnia), *Agence France Presse*, 10/12/92; ‘Nach dem Scheitern der Friedensbemühungen NATO erörtert Militärintervention in Jugoslawien’ (NATO considers military intervention in Yugoslavia after peace efforts fail), *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 11/12/92.

³⁷²⁸ Radio 1, NOS, *Met het oog op morgen* (With an eye on tomorrow), 18/12/92, 11.07 pm.

³⁷²⁹ Leonard Ornstein & Max van Weezel, ‘Het warme bad en de koude douche van Relus ter Beek’ (A hot bath and a cold shower for Defence Minister Relus ter Beek), *Vrij Nederland*, 12/12/92, p. 11.

placed on the agenda of the Edinburgh summit at the request of the Dutch government,³⁷³⁰ but this was certainly not the main topic of interest for the other European ministers.

The creation of a no-fly zone above Bosnia-Herzegovina announced by the UN was once more confirmed at the summit. It was also agreed that the EC would urge the United Nations to enforce this no-fly zone. The participants at the summit further confirmed that there could be no question of partitioning Bosnia; the acquisition of territory by force would not be recognized. The Dutch proposal to create safe regions was greeted with 'extreme reserve' by the Belgian Foreign Minister Claes, whose views were particularly important because Belgium was a temporary member of the Security Council at the time. Claes motivated his stance by mentioning his fear that Iranian manipulation could lead to formation of an Islamic republic in the southern part of the former Yugoslavia.³⁷³¹

It followed in his opinion that the best thing was to do nothing.³⁷³² It appears from the minutes of a Dutch government meeting held about this time that the United Kingdom was still not ready for military intervention because the British believed that this could only lead to escalation. They could expect Claes to back them up, since he expected more results from diplomatic activity. The French standpoint lay somewhere between that of the UK and Belgium on the one hand and the Netherlands on the other. A further problem in this connection was that France was not prepared to take part in a NATO operation. In brief, there was not enough support internationally for the Dutch standpoint that inaction was the worst conceivable option.³⁷³³

Applause for Defence Minister Ter Beek

Vice-premier Wim Kok thus had little good news about the Edinburgh summit to report to his party members during the PvdA party congress held in Amsterdam on Saturday 12 December:

'They will be asking us later where we were, where the whole Western community was. We have all seen what has been going on, as we watched the TV images in our own living rooms. Don't expect any easy answer from me. I don't find it easy to deal with the whole issue either. We will go on advocating action against events that we cannot allow to happen.'³⁷³⁴

The European summit in Edinburgh had however decided to urge the UN to enforce the no-fly zone. Defence Minister Ter Beek therefore stated at the PvdA congress that he was prepared to send Dutch F16 fighters if the Security Council did give a mandate for this operation: 'If they don't listen to our words, they will have to feel the consequences of our action. That seems to be the only language they understand.'³⁷³⁵ By taking a decision of this kind, the Dutch government passed in principle the boundary between peacekeeping and peace enforcement. As one retired Dutch general put it, as soon as one Serb plane was brought down, that meant war.³⁷³⁶ It was no coincidence, however, that Ter Beek, who had stated in the issue of *Vrij Nederland* appearing that very week that one should not speak lightly of the enforcement of a no-fly zone, felt obliged to make a gesture at the party congress by

³⁷³⁰ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 13/11/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

³⁷³¹ Claes had already said this on *Nederland 3*, NOS, *Het Capitool*, 06/12/92, noon. See also Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 142.

³⁷³² Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 14, 15 and 18/12/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

³⁷³³ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 15/12/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

³⁷³⁴ 'F 16's mogen van Ter Beek' (Ter Beek OKs sending of F 16s), *Trouw*, 14/12/92. See also the statements made by Vice-premier Wim Kok in the TV programme *Het Capitool* the day after, where he called the results of the Edinburgh summit as regards Yugoslavia 'meagre' (*Nederland 3*, *Het Capitool*, 13/12/92, 12.00 noon).

³⁷³⁵ 'F 16's mogen van Ter Beek', *Trouw*, 14/12/92.

³⁷³⁶ Wio Joustra, 'Van den Broek vecht tegen eerste natuurwet' (Van den Broek fights against the first law of nature), *de Volkskrant*, 10/12/92.

announcing the Dutch government's willingness to make a contribution to this initiative. Two years before, the PvdA congress had not been able to summon up much enthusiasm for participation in the Gulf War and Ter Beek, who had passed a difficult couple of hours on that occasion, had not forgotten.

The PvdA's attitude towards the former Yugoslavia was quite different, however. 'We have continually argued that more active steps should be taken than were ultimately taken by the international community', wrote the PvdA fraction in Parliament in its policy report for the years 1990-1992.³⁷³⁷ The question of Yugoslavia has been one of 'intense' concern to the fraction.³⁷³⁸ They found it difficult to deal with the fact that the Netherlands, as member of the EC and of the UN, shared the responsibility for the decisions taken by these bodies which, in the eyes of the PvdA fraction, were inadequate. They were also ashamed of the half-hearted implementation of the decisions that had been taken. The PvdA congress passed a resolution on 12 December 1992, regretting that the attitude taken by the Netherlands with respect to the former Yugoslavia 'has so far not been widely copied within the European Community'³⁷³⁹ and giving expression to the party's serious concern about 'the lack of an effective reaction from the international community'. The congress made a plea for, among other things, the use of military resources to enable humanitarian convoys to reach their destinations, the establishments of safe regions for refugees and 'the reception of more Bosnian refugees by the member states of the European Community. With the Netherlands in the lead.'³⁷⁴⁰

Defence Minister Ter Beek recalled later that he was able to speak openly at this congress about his readiness to do something for Bosnia. 'They applauded me at that congress. I have subsequently sometimes spoken bitterly about the different reception I got at the congress a couple of years before, when the Gulf War was under discussion. It was jeers then, and cheers now.'³⁷⁴¹ In fact, the PvdA was not the only Dutch political party advocating far-reaching measures in connection with the former Yugoslavia that weekend. The (Liberal) VVD party also held its congress during the same weekend, in Bussum, where the party leader Frits Bolkestein made a plea for precision operations to liberate those imprisoned in concentration camps, and the creation of safe havens.

Not everyone welcomed the offer Ter Beek made at the congress. The press reported that Foreign Affairs would have preferred the more mediagenic deployment of ground troops, e.g. marines. Ter Beek did not want to recall them from Cambodia, however.³⁷⁴² The Dutch military in the former Yugoslavia were not very happy about Defence Minister Ter Beek's premature announcement. The Dutch Commander of the UNMOs, Colonel J.H.L. Benda, told Junior Minister Baron B.J.M. van Voorst tot Voorst, when the latter visited Croatia and Bosnia two weeks later, that there was a noticeable hardening of the attitude of the Serbs towards the Dutch observers the day after Ter Beek announced his decision at the PvdA congress.³⁷⁴³

Serious unrest also arose among the troops in the Dutch communications and transport battalion when they noted a more aggressive attitude among the VRS soldiers at roadblocks.³⁷⁴⁴ And the former Commander of the Dutch UNPROFOR communications battalion, Lieutenant Colonel H. Vermaas, issued a warning in the Dutch press that enforcement of the no-fly zone could lead to hostage-taking of Dutch troops.³⁷⁴⁵ General H.A. Couzy, who had succeeded General Wilmink as

³⁷³⁷ Beleidsverslag PvdA (Policy report PvdA) 1990-1992, p. 149.

³⁷³⁸ Ibid.

³⁷³⁹ Beleidsverslag PvdA 1992-1994, p. 68.

³⁷⁴⁰ Idem, p. 69.

³⁷⁴¹ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99. See also Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 177.

³⁷⁴² Wio Joustra, 'Buitenlandse Zaken wil mariniers terug' (Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs wants to recall marines), *de Volkskrant*, 15/12/92.

³⁷⁴³ 'Nederlanders in Unprofor bezorgd over eventueel afdwingen vliegverbod (1)' (Dutch UNPROFOR forces concerned about possible enforcement of no-fly zone), 29/12/92, *ANP*, 19.41.

³⁷⁴⁴ G. den Elt, 'Onrust in VN-bataljon' (Unrest in UN battalion), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 30/12/92.

³⁷⁴⁵ 'Vrees voor gijzeling' (Fear of hostage-taking) and T. Lagas and L. Meijer, 'VN-commandant: Landmacht was niet voorbereid' (UN commander claims ground troops were unprepared), *Trouw*, 29/12/92.

Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army on 10 September and who had accompanied Baron Van Voorst tot Voorst during his visit, said that if the Netherlands did actually send F 16s to Bosnia, the Dutch troops and observers would have to be withdrawn from certain regions there which would cause the whole operation on the ground to be shut down.³⁷⁴⁶ The chairman of the Dutch Association of Officers (Dutch abbreviation NVO), Colonel Stuiver, also demanded that the Dutch troops should be withdrawn in such a case. He was not confident that the defence system would be able to continue to operate adequately under such circumstances. According to him, the Netherlands had embarked on this Yugoslav adventure 'without a proper organization, and without having been able to build up a proper attitude'. Furthermore, he claimed that Defence Minister Ter Beek did not even have the courage to clear things up within his own ministry.³⁷⁴⁷

On 9 December, the Security Council had announced in connection with the heavy fighting round Sarajevo that measures could be taken against those responsible if the fighting did not stop immediately. A few days later, Secretary-General Wörner of the NATO received a letter from Boutros-Ghali in which the latter requested NATO support for the implementation of future UN resolutions concerning the former Yugoslavia, among other things by making plans for the establishment of safe havens.³⁷⁴⁸

On 14 December, the NATO Council decided to ask the NATO Military Committee to prepare plans for enforcement of the no-fly zone, for safe havens and for measures to prevent the conflict from spreading to Kosovo.³⁷⁴⁹

The NATO Council of Ministers met on 17 December. Among other things, the Council declared at that time that NATO could carry out peacekeeping operations directly for the United Nations as well as for the CSCE (see Chapter 6). The alliance would moreover in principle react positively to requests from Boutros-Ghali for contributions to operations in the former Yugoslavia.³⁷⁵⁰

During this meeting, Van den Broek confirmed the Dutch government's readiness to contribute Dutch F-16s for enforcement of the no-fly zone above Bosnia-Herzegovina, on condition that other countries contributed ground troops for this operation.³⁷⁵¹ The Dutch ministry of Defence gave further details of this offer to SHAPE (the NATO headquarters) in late 1992 or early 1993, stating that the Netherlands was prepared to provide six F-16 aircraft for reconnaissance purposes, and twelve for interception.³⁷⁵²

The hard-line Dutch stance concerning the no-fly zone earned Van Walsum a reprimand from the Russian deputy minister of Foreign Affairs Churkin during a meeting of the Council for North-Atlantic Cooperation, the joint body in which NATO could discuss matters with members of the former Warsaw Pact. This meeting also took place on 17 December. The Russian reaction was surprising, since they had seemed perfectly willing to accommodate the Dutch stance on Safe Areas not so long before. Churkin told Van Walsum that the Dutch 'refusal to think about the consequences' of enforcement of the no-fly zone was in sharp contrast to the careful approach of the mediators Owen and Vance. This led to a heated discussion. Van Walsum replied that the Netherlands thought more than some other countries about the consequences of a failure to find an answer to violent territorial expansion and ethnic cleansing. Churkin pointed out that while the flight restrictions had already been violated more than two hundred times, the flights observed were of no military significance. Van Walsum appeared not to be interested in such facts, and said that it must finally be made clear to 'the

³⁷⁴⁶ Nederland 3, NOS, *Journal* (News), 29/12/92, 8.00 pm; Gerard den Elt, 'Onrust in VN-bataljon', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 30/12/92.

³⁷⁴⁷ AVRO, *Radiojournaal* (News), 03/01/93, 12.07 pm.

³⁷⁴⁸ Leurdijk, *Nations* 1994, p. 8.

³⁷⁴⁹ ABZ, 999.241. Van den Broek 501 to PR NATO, 17/12/92, Strictly confidential.

³⁷⁵⁰ Leurdijk, *Nations* 1994, p. 9.

³⁷⁵¹ ABZ, 999.241. Van den Broek circ 862, 30/12/92.

³⁷⁵² According to ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Vertrouwelijk memorandum van DAV aan Kooijmans (Confidential memorandum from DAV to Kooijmans), 07/01/93, No. MS-002/93, this occurred on 6 January 1993; according to *ibid.*, memorandum from DAV to Kooijmans, 22/03/93, No. DAV/MS-93/063, it occurred on 30 December 1992.

Serbs' that they had to take Security Council resolutions seriously. Churkin retorted that Russia would never tolerate action against Serbia.³⁷⁵³

US Secretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger, on the other hand, informed his British, French and Dutch counterparts that the United States was prepared to make air force units available not only for enforcement of the no-fly zone but also to protect UN ground troops.³⁷⁵⁴ The French government, however, did not wish all enforcement to come from NATO. It had had bad experience with this approach during the Gulf War. France wanted any actions that were undertaken to be under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the UN.³⁷⁵⁵ The United States, in its turn, did not feel much for this idea, especially as it was known that Boutros-Ghali had strong reserves about enforcement with special reference to the consequences this could have for UN ground forces.³⁷⁵⁶ Churkin's remark to Van Walsum about Vance and Owen's dislike of enforcement of a no-fly zone was correct. Vance had stated his complete opposition to the use of force, including the enforcement of the no-fly zone. Cosic, the President of the rump state of Yugoslavia, had threatened him with reprisals if the step to enforcement was taken. Another fact of equal importance was that Owen and Vance were nearly ready to go public with a peace plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Boutros-Ghali therefore asked the Security Council at the end of December to delay the passing of a resolution on enforcement of the no-fly zone 'for a reasonable period of time'.³⁷⁵⁷

In the meantime, the Dutch ministry of Defence had also been shocked by the effect that mere talking about enforcement of the no-fly zone could have on the security of UN ground troops.³⁷⁵⁸ Defence therefore urged Foreign Affairs to send a clear statement of the Dutch position on this matter to the relevant Dutch diplomatic missions, having regard among other things to the 'importance Parliament is likely to place' on the safety of UN ground troops.³⁷⁵⁹ The Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs therefore sent a circular to Dutch diplomatic representatives abroad, stressing that an operation aimed at enforcement of the no-fly zone would only be allowed to begin after adequate measures had been taken to protect the safety of UN ground forces. Even after such measures had been taken, 'serious consideration would have to be given' to possible risks to UN ground personnel.³⁷⁶⁰ The ministry of Defence issued similar instructions to Dutch NATO and UNPROFOR officers.³⁷⁶¹

Dutch isolation in Edinburgh

Dutch Prime Minister Lubbers and Foreign Minister Van den Broek had in the meantime made hardly any progress in persuading their fellow participants at the Edinburgh summit to do something about Yugoslavia. 'The will just isn't there', declared Van den Broek at the end of the summit.³⁷⁶² Lubbers

³⁷⁵³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Jacobovits 2004 to Van den Broek, 18/12/92.

³⁷⁵⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Jacobovits 2005 to Van den Broek, 18/12/92.

³⁷⁵⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Memorandum DGPZ to DPV, 22/12/92, nr. 202/92.

³⁷⁵⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. D'Ansembourg 1418 to Van den Broek, 22/12/92. For details of Boutros-Ghali's reserves about enforcement, see also in this dossier, D'Ansembourg 1422 to Van den Broek, 23/12/92 and D'Ansembourg 1426 to Van den Broek, 24/12/92.

³⁷⁵⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Boutros-Ghali to Gharakan, 30/12/92, appendix to PR New York to DPV/PZ, 30/12/92, nyv 10815.

³⁷⁵⁸ For the initially rather laconic position adopted by Dutch Defence staff see ABZ, DPV/ARA/00209, memorandum from head of DPV to DGPZ, 17/12/92, No. DPV-2272/92.

³⁷⁵⁹ ABZ, 999.241/Joegoslavië/No Fly Zone/sept-dec 1992. Memorandum from deputy DAV to DGPZ, 23/12/92, RM-63/92.

³⁷⁶⁰ ABZ, 999.241. Van den Broek circ 862, 30/12/92.

³⁷⁶¹ DS. Van den Breemen to Lieutenant General Folmer, Brigadier General Stoffels and Colonel Kampman, 24/12/92, S/92/061/3823; TCBU, Vertrekpunt I, p. 107.

³⁷⁶² 'EG en Navo weigeren ingrijpen in Bosnië' (EC and NATO reject intervention in Bosnia), *Trouw*, 12/12/92. The next day, his assessment was somewhat more positive: Van den Broek spoke of 'a number of concrete matters where progress was booked – though we would like to see it all happening faster', Radio 1, AVRO, *Radiojournaal* (News), 13/12/93, 1.10 pm.

told RTL4 TV reporters that he had felt like ‘one crying in the wilderness’ during his stay in the Scottish capital.³⁷⁶³ He told the Dutch Parliament that he had been the only one who had really been urging that something should be done. It became clear to me once more that the Netherlands occupies a separate position as far as its degree of involvement is concerned. That doesn’t mean that other people are unconcerned about the business, but the balance they draw between what is politically desirable and what they consider feasible, their risk analysis, apparently leads to different results than ours.³⁷⁶⁴

Lubbers was, as he put it himself, ‘traumatized’ by the international division on the subject of the former Yugoslavia; ‘everything the Netherlands argued for was only accepted six months later – and by that time the whole situation had changed (...) The Dutch foreign policy position can be characterized as eccentric.’ The Edinburgh summit was illustrative of the whole situation for Lubbers: ‘There we were, making our plea for action as we had done so often before. And you could see from the expression on the faces of the other participants that they were thinking “There they are again, with that bee in their bonnet!” You felt completely isolated, regarded as someone with the remarkable conviction that the issue of the former Yugoslavia should be treated with priority at the conference. (...) Any argument you put forward was met with counter-arguments.’³⁷⁶⁵

Van den Broek was not present at the government meeting of 15 December when the results of the Edinburgh meeting were evaluated. The mood there was also one of great disappointment about the results – or rather, lack of results – achieved at the EC summit as regards the former Yugoslavia. The Netherlands would not be able to take diplomatic initiatives in this field until the United States took the lead. It was expected that when this happened the UK, France and Belgium would shift their stance successively in the direction of military intervention. The only thing to be done at the moment, thus, was to wait for the USA. The government meeting feared, in the meantime, that the position adopted by the Twelve would have a demoralizing effect and would damage the credibility of the EC in the eyes of its own citizens. The current position of the European Community was compared with that of Europe in the 1930s.³⁷⁶⁶

One of the ministers made the suggestion during the government meeting that a military peacekeeping force should be stationed in Kosovo and Macedonia as a matter of priority in order to ensure that the violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which apparently could not be stopped, did not spread to these regions. It was felt, however, that it would be difficult to get support for this idea in the Netherlands, because the dominant mood was in favour of stopping the violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The minister in question felt that this mood was particularly noticeable in Parliament.³⁷⁶⁷ He seems to have forgotten what the government had said on this issue of its own accord during the preceding period.

While the results may have been disappointing in the eyes of the Dutch ministers, the stance taken by Lubbers and Van den Broek in Edinburgh did enjoy wide support from Dutch politicians in general. CDA spokesman Ton de Kok was ‘glad that our government in any case had the courage to say in Edinburgh what had to be done, even though they knew that the representatives of other countries would say nothing and apparently couldn’t care less.’³⁷⁶⁸ A few months later, De Kok would write that the Dutch ministers in Edinburgh ‘went to the limits of political acceptability. Had they gone

³⁷⁶³ TV, RTL4, Avondnieuws (Evening News), 11/12/92, 7.30 pm.

³⁷⁶⁴ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings (16/12/92), cited in De Ruiter, *Crisis*, p. 379.

³⁷⁶⁵ Max van Weezel and Leonard Ornstein, ‘Lubbers zit er niet om lellen uit te delen’ (Lubbers doesn’t mind giving everyone a clip round the ear), *Vrij Nederland*, 22/01/93.

³⁷⁶⁶ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 15/12/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

³⁷⁶⁷ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 15/12/92, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

³⁷⁶⁸ Martijn Delaere, ‘Eensgezind ten strijde’, *Het Binnenhof*, 19/12/92. For a further statement from the same author concerning the lack of progress in Edinburgh, see Dutch Radio 1, NCRV, Hier en Nu, 14/12/92, 7.07 am.

one step further, their behaviour would have looked suspiciously like political masochism.’³⁷⁶⁹ Maarten van Traa of the PvdA praised the Dutch attempt to put the topic on the agenda, and ‘the willingness to take risks which I was pleased to see them show. We can demonstrate this further by supplying aircraft, as Ter Beek rightly proposed.’ When the Dutch marines had completed their task in Cambodia, the Netherlands could according to him also offer to contribute combat troops for the operations in the Balkans. ‘Then we will have more than played our part, and will have shown enough readiness to share the risks involved to have a full say in all discussions.’³⁷⁷⁰ Brigadier General (retired) De Vogel - a self-styled spokesman on Defence matters – also expressed his agreement with this approach: ‘This is important, because otherwise we run the risk of appearing to want to take a moral lead without daring to share the risks.’³⁷⁷¹

Vice-premier Wim Kok did not regard the isolation that Lubbers and Van den Broek had experienced in Edinburgh as a reason to change course. A little more than a month after the summit, he said on Dutch radio:

‘Of course, the Netherlands cannot determine what other people think – we are only a medium-sized country in an international context – but we do have the right to our own opinion. And the right to continue our protest. Of course, the Dutch government has done that very clearly on past occasions, but the more the situation there escalates the more important it is that the voice of the Netherlands continues to be heard on the international stage, stating our opinion that things can no longer be left to develop under their own momentum.’³⁷⁷²

While Lubbers and Kok learned nothing from the events of the Edinburgh summit, Van den Broek realized that the Netherlands was not really free to go on airing its opinion on the international stage, no matter what the reaction. He welcomed the growing awareness in Parliament that the Netherlands ‘can no longer permit itself simply to raise an admonishing finger’.³⁷⁷³ But by the time that Van den Broek aired this conclusion, in mid-January 1993, he was no longer a minister.

4. Kooijmans takes over from Van den Broek

His participation at the Edinburgh summit was the last important act of Hans van den Broek as Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs. At that time – but that was ‘the best kept secret in The Hague for years’ – his nomination as European Commissioner for foreign and security policy had already been confirmed. He was replaced as Foreign Minister on 2 January 1993 by Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans, professor of International Law at the University of Leiden and, like Van den Broek, member of the CDA. Since Lubbers’ government had no more than a year and a half to run before the next general election, Kooijmans was regarded as a stopgap appointment when he took office.³⁷⁷⁴ His combination of proven

³⁷⁶⁹ T. de Kok, ‘Haagse politici valt over Bosnië geen passiviteit te verwijten’ (Dutch politicians cannot be accused of passivity about Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 25/03/93.

³⁷⁷⁰ Martijn Delaere, ‘Eensgezind ten strijde’, *Het Binnenhof*, 19/12/92.

³⁷⁷¹ Martijn Delaere, ‘Eensgezind ten strijde’, *Het Binnenhof*, 19/12/92. It may be mentioned that Brigadier General (ret) De Vogel had pointed out that military intervention was out of the question not long before that, at a meeting of the Atlantic Commission devoted to the Yugoslav conflict: ‘The terrain and the weather conditions, the multiplicity of parties involved ... and the surfeit of weapons available to the warring factions make successful intervention impossible The same reasons which make military intervention a very tricky business also hamper the present peacekeeping operations There is little point to peacekeeping in this form’ As cited by Venema, *Betrokkenheid*, p. 9.

³⁷⁷² Radio 1, KRO, Echo, 12/01/93, 7.07 am.

³⁷⁷³ J. Bron Dik, ‘De Hollanditis ligt gelukkig achter ons, er is weer internationaal respect (Thank goodness we are cured of Hollanditis and can once again enjoy international respect)’, *CD/Actueel*, 16/01/93, p. 4.

³⁷⁷⁴ P. Baehr, ‘Pleitbezorger van de mensenrechten. Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans (1993-1994)’ (Human rights advocate Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans (1993-1994)), in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 283 and 284.

expertise, independence of thought, ability to take quick decisions and the fact that he was not a ‘party baron’ predisposed many in his favour.³⁷⁷⁵ ‘A minister has seldom enjoyed such a smooth honeymoon’, *De Telegraaf* commented three months after his appointment. He was praised by both left- and right-wing commentators as ‘friendly, inspiring, well balanced, intelligent, courteous, almost charismatic’.³⁷⁷⁶

His main field of expertise as professor was human rights – a subject about which he also had strong personal convictions. He already knew the ministry, and the workings of the civil service system, well from his time as junior minister for disarmament affairs in the ministry of Foreign Affairs during the life of the government led by Joop Den Uyl (1973-1977) when he (Kooijmans) had still been a member of the ARP (the Dutch ‘Anti-Revolutionary’ Party). He had wide international experience, e.g. as delegate to the General Assembly of the United Nations (1967, 1973-1976), chairman of the Dutch delegation to the UN Commission for Human Rights (1982-1986 and 1992), chairman of this Commission (1984-1985) and UN observer on torture (1985-1992).

His ambitions as minister were initially modest, since he was well aware of the temporary nature of his appointment.³⁷⁷⁷ The experience of being in government gave him a taste for more, but this was hindered by the fact that the CDA lost its place in the coalition after the general elections of 1994.³⁷⁷⁸ The regal distance Kooijmans kept between himself and the nitty-gritty of politics also applied to the relationship between his department and the ministry of General Affairs (roughly equivalent to the Cabinet Office in the UK), which had been troubled during Van den Broek’s time by the disagreement between the Foreign Minister and Prime Minister Lubbers about who had the last word on foreign policy. Kooijmans also had an appreciably better relationship with Minister Pronk of International Development than his predecessor.³⁷⁷⁹

The department was happy with its new minister because he could listen to his civil servants better than Van den Broek and concentrated on the main lines of policy, leaving departmental staff more room for initiative.³⁷⁸⁰ Kooijmans took decisions on the basis of papers prepared by lower-level civil servants more often than his predecessor had.³⁷⁸¹ Parliament valued the interim minister’s thorough knowledge of his dossiers and his open style of consultation.³⁷⁸²

Kooijmans tried to steer an intermediate course between the pro-Atlantic stance of his predecessor and one with greater stress on a Europe-oriented policy. He was well aware that relations with the USA would be mainly determined by the ability of the European countries to maintain a common policy.³⁷⁸³ Kooijmans’ policy would, however, above all bear the stamp of his specialization as a human rights expert.³⁷⁸⁴ He had already shown as early as 1991 that he was prepared under certain

³⁷⁷⁵ Interviews M. Hennis, 09/03/99 and J.M Vos, 24/06/99.

³⁷⁷⁶ P. Nijman and E. Bode, ‘Tussenpauz denkt al aan verlenging. Hoogleraar Kooijmans heeft het naar zijn zin als minister van Buitenlandse Zaken’ (Stopgap minister is already thinking of prolongation. Professor Kooijmans likes his new job as minister of Foreign Affairs), *De Telegraaf*, 20/03/93.

³⁷⁷⁷ Interview M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

³⁷⁷⁸ P. Baehr, ‘Pleitbezorger van de mensenrechten. Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans (1993-1994)’, in: Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 292; C. Janssen and T. Ruigrok, ‘Peter Kooijmans’, *HP/De Tijd*, 12/03/93, p. 16; P. Nijman and E. Bode, ‘Tussenpauz denkt al aan verlenging. Hoogleraar Kooijmans heeft het naar zijn zin als minister van Buitenlandse Zaken’, *De Telegraaf*, 20/03/93.

³⁷⁷⁹ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99; Casper Janssen & Thomas Ruigrok, ‘Peter Kooijmans’, *HP/De Tijd*, 12/03/93, p. 16; O. van Boetzelaer, ‘Het is niet zinnig premier grotere rol op buitenlands terrein te ontzeggen’ (It is not a good idea to deny Prime Minister bigger foreign policy role), *CD/Actueel*, 28/08/93, p. 14.

³⁷⁸⁰ Interviews P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99; J.L. Sandee, 12/06/00; R. Swartbol, 24/02/99; and J.M. Vos, 24/06/99; D. Ishta geciteerd in C. Janssen and T. Ruigrok, ‘Peter Kooijmans’, *HP/De Tijd*, 12/03/93, p. 16; Dankert in Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendernijds*, p. 144.

³⁷⁸¹ Interview K. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

³⁷⁸² P. Baehr, ‘Pleitbezorger van de mensenrechten. Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans (1993-1994)’, in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, p. 291.

³⁷⁸³ P. Baehr, ‘Pleitbezorger van de mensenrechten. Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans (1993-1994)’, in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 289-290.

³⁷⁸⁴ P. Baehr, ‘Pleitbezorger van de mensenrechten. Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans (1993-1994)’, in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, p. 291; Dankert in Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendernijds*, p. 144.

conditions to advocate humanitarian intervention that was not sanctioned by international law. Respect for national sovereignty should not, according to him, be allowed to put a brake on compliance with humanitarian needs.³⁷⁸⁵ Moreover, Kooijmans was a strong advocate of the deployment of Dutch troops in UN peacekeeping operations.³⁷⁸⁶

Before he became Foreign Minister, Kooijmans had been on several missions to Yugoslavia. He had for example been a member of a CSCE mission that visited all the constituent republics and autonomous provinces of Yugoslavia from late 1991 to early 1992 in order to inventory the human rights situation there. He had thus also visited Bosnia on that occasion, and characterized it as ‘a peaceful place’ at that time.³⁷⁸⁷ During that visit, he had however spoken to someone in Sarajevo whose name meant nothing to him at the time, but who struck him by his ‘somewhat pathological style of argument’. He would often encounter this man’s name subsequently. It was Karadzic.³⁷⁸⁸

Later in 1992, Kooijmans also took part as observer on torture in the mission led by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, special reporter to the UN Commission on Human Rights. He had visited Kosovo during this trip. When he later wished to go to Banja Luka, to visit Omarska and Prijedor among other places, he was stopped at the border crossing near the river Una though he had a permit for his visit from the authorities in Pale. This taught him about the apparent existence of separate little ‘kingdoms’ in *Srpska*.³⁷⁸⁹ At the moment when Prime Minister Lubbers phoned him to ask whether he was prepared to take Van den Broek’s place, Kooijmans was sitting in the *Palais des Nations* in Geneva, writing his report for the UN Commission on Human Rights.³⁷⁹⁰

5. Appeasement or enforcement?

The passivity the representatives of the Dutch government had encountered in their foreign contacts in December 1992 was motivated by the expectation that the objectives of giving expression to a Greater Serbia idea in Bosnia had already been more or less accomplished, as W.F. Van Eekelen, the Secretary-General of the WEU put it.³⁷⁹¹ This same feeling led the French representative on the WEU Permanent Council to state on 9 December that in his ‘more personal opinion’:

‘“ethnic cleansing” is an irreversible process. The houses of those who have been chased out have after all been destroyed, and such terrible atrocities have been committed that the Displaced Persons will probably refuse to return. One day, we will have to take account of this reality on the ground.’³⁷⁹²

Precisely the same line of reasoning was expressed by the new Dutch Foreign Minister Kooijmans. Van Walsum had a talk with his new political master-to-be on the morning of 29 December, and wasted no time in asking Kooijmans whether he was going to sail an appeasement or enforcement course in dealing with the Yugoslavia dossier. Kooijmans began with a remark which is worth bearing in mind

³⁷⁸⁵ O. van Boetzelaer, ‘Rol Verenigde Naties’ (The role of the United Nations), *CD/Actueel*, 11/05/91; O. van Boetzelaer, ‘Kooijmans kan de juiste man op de juiste plaats zijn’ (Kooijmans could be the right man at the right place), *CD/Actueel*, 16/01/93, p. 10; O. van Boetzelaer, ‘Het is niet zinnig premier grotere rol op buitenlands terrein te ontzeggen’, *CD/Actueel*, 28/08/93, p. 15; M. Meijer, ‘Kooijmans: Verenigde Naties moeten bij vredesoperaties eigen grenzen kennen’ (Kooijmans says United Nations must know its own limits in peacekeeping matters), *CD/Actueel*, 28/10/95, p. 12.

³⁷⁸⁶ P. Nijman and E. Bode, ‘Tussenpaus denkt al aan verlenging. Hoogleraar Kooijmans heeft het naar zijn zin als minister van Buitenlandse Zaken’, *De Telegraaf*, 20/03/93.

³⁷⁸⁷ P. Nijman and E. Bode, ‘Tussenpaus denkt al aan verlenging. Hoogleraar Kooijmans heeft het naar zijn zin als minister van Buitenlandse Zaken’, *De Telegraaf*, 20/03/93. With regard to these CSCE missions, see Terrett, *Dissolution*, pp. 85-86.

³⁷⁸⁸ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

³⁷⁸⁹ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

³⁷⁹⁰ In this connection see TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5002 (19/05/93).

³⁷⁹¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01803. Hoekman 676 to Van den Broek, 09/12/92.

³⁷⁹² ABZ, DPV/ARA/01803. Hoekman 676 to Van den Broek, 09/12/92.

when considering his future stance. The minister-to-be thought that the argument for appeasement was in any case:

‘difficult to reject, (...) since it was unrealistic to think that the territorial *fait accompli* would never be recognized. Ethnic cleansing, no matter how detestable it may be, can after all never be completely undone, as it was hardly conceivable that the various ethnic groups would ever be able to live in peace alongside one another after all that had happened.’³⁷⁹³

Van Walsum countered this argument by claiming that the idea that the Serbs had already accomplished their territorial aims and the gains they had achieved must be recognized was an error, ‘since there are still plenty of terrible deeds that can be committed in the name of the Great Serbia idea. There were plenty of people, not only in Belgrade but also here and there among the boundaries of the Twelve, who would not be at all displeased if all Muslims were driven out of the former Yugoslavia.’

Kooijmans also thought that if it proved impossible to achieve international action against Serb expansion and ethnic cleansing, then the arms embargo on the Bosnian Muslims should be lifted.³⁷⁹⁴ This was a fairly original thought in a European context. The American Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger had tried to move the European Community to lift the arms embargo on Bosnia-Herzegovina two weeks before, during the CSCE conference – but without success, since the European countries were of the opinion that such a measure would lead to escalation of the violence caused by the war and would impede the peace negotiations.

6. Panic and the presidential elections in Serbia: a lost chance for the West?

‘If Europe is unable to distinguish between those Bosnian and Serbian leaders who pursue their interests by force of arms and those of us who are seeking to direct Yugoslavia on the path of peace and democracy, then we are all doomed to endless conflict and tragedy in the Balkans.’³⁷⁹⁵

While Kooijmans was getting ready for a peaceful take-over of office from his predecessor Van den Broek in the Netherlands, a fierce struggle for power was being waged in Serbia. Elections were due to be held on 20 December 1992 for the Presidency of Serbia, the federal parliament and the parliaments of Serbia and Montenegro.³⁷⁹⁶

Vance and Owen had hoped that Cosic would challenge Milosevic, but Cosic had stated at the end of October that he would not run as initially announced. The reason for this was his poor health. Cosic, who had already undergone three operations in previous years, had recently been operated on again, this time for a prostate complaint.³⁷⁹⁷ In addition, Cosic’s advisors told him that there was little point in contesting the presidency of Serbia. Even if he did win the election, the expectation was that Milosevic would get himself elected President of Yugoslavia the very next day by the Parliament (which he more or less had in his pocket), thus reversing both the roles and the balance of power.³⁷⁹⁸ Milosevic had already told Panic once, when the latter had expressed his surprise that the Serbian leader had

³⁷⁹³ PRNY. Memorandum from DGPZ to DEU, DAV and DPV, 29/12/92, No. 206/92.

³⁷⁹⁴ PRNY. Memorandum from DGPZ to DEU, DAV and DPV, 29/12/92, No. 206/92.

³⁷⁹⁵ Milan Panic, cited in Marcus Tanner, ‘Panic Exhorts Voters to Choose Peace Over War’, *The Independent*, 18/12/92.

³⁷⁹⁶ On these elections see e.g. Andrejevich, *Radicalization*.

³⁷⁹⁷ Owen, *Odyssey*, pp. 54-55 and 60; Owen CD-ROM. Owen’s Private Secretary to UK, EC Presidency, 26/11/92 re Visit of Lord Owen to Madrid, 25/11/92, 26/11/92; Stojanovic, *Autoritet*, p. 52; interview S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01; Djukic, *Milosevic*, p. 60.

³⁷⁹⁸ Interview S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

agreed to the nomination of Cosic as President of Yugoslavia, that it didn't matter was position he, Milosevic, actually occupied, since he was to the Serbs what Ayatollah Khomeini was to the Iranians.³⁷⁹⁹

Owen saw Federal Premier Milan Panic as the best alternative to Cosic, but considered that, as an outsider in Serbia, he would have no chance in the elections in a straight fight against Milosevic.³⁸⁰⁰ After the London summit, Panic had continued to work to promote agreement between the authorities in Belgrade and other parts of the former Yugoslavia.³⁸⁰¹ In mid-October, for example, he had made an (abortive) attempt to arrange talks with the Albanian leaders in Kosovo. In an address to the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee in November 1992, Panic said that if he managed to introduce democracy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina 'will not disappear. For me, it is another country, and we will recognize it.'³⁸⁰²

Although there had long been speculation that Panic might stand as a candidate for the presidency of Serbia, it was not until 30 November – only three weeks before the date of the elections – that he officially put his name forward, thus formally challenging Milosevic. That was rather late. Moreover, Panic only received open support from President Cosic at the eleventh hour.³⁸⁰³ After his new operation, Cosic was hardly able to support Panic's campaign. Since Cosic's illness and operation had been declared state secret, the public at large could easily interpret his absence during Panic's election meetings as a lack of support for Panic.³⁸⁰⁴ It may be mentioned by the way that sources from Panic's camp did inform the EC missions about the severity of Cosic's medical condition, which might even mean an end to his political career.³⁸⁰⁵ Moreover, Cosic seemed to have got cold feet. His argument that as President of Yugoslavia he should be strictly impartial hardly rings true against the background of the political relations prevailing in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at the time.³⁸⁰⁶

Panic promised both the Serbian voters and the international community that he would bring peace to the region if he won the elections. However, Western governments doubted whether he had much real power: after all, he had no party organization behind him, and depended on the support of the opposition. An important reason for the lack of confidence in the West about Panic's chances of electoral success was that Milosevic had once again shown clearly on 19 October that when it came to a struggle between himself on the one hand and Cosic and Panic on the other, he had the real power.

On that evening, the Serbian police occupied the Federal police headquarters. This building housed a huge British-made monitoring centre financed in 1990 by all the republics, with wire-tapping facilities making it possible to listen in to forty thousand telephone calls at the same time. It also contained files with details of the organization of paramilitary units and other information Milosevic did not want to fall into the hands of third parties.³⁸⁰⁷ The occupation took place while Cosic and Panic were in Geneva for talks hosted by Owen and Vance. When they complained about the affair to Milosevic on their return, he first pretended to know nothing about it and then treated it as a property question rather than as a veiled coup.³⁸⁰⁸

Cosic and Panic understood that normally speaking, they could not disregard this threat of usurpation. Part of the army would actually have been prepared to intervene and stage a counter-coup,

³⁷⁹⁹ Paul Williams & Norman Cigar, 'Bivsi pravni strucnjaci Pentagona u svojoj stugiji optuzuju: Slobodan Milosevic teski je ratni zlocinac i mora biti izveden pred sud u Haagu!', *Globus*, 30/08/96, p. 57.

³⁸⁰⁰ Owen CD-ROM. Owen's Private Secretary to UK, EC Presidency, 26/11/92 re Visit of Lord Owen to Madrid, 25/11/92, 26/11/92.

³⁸⁰¹ Cf. MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 64/92, 08/09/92; 68/92, 21/09/92; 74/92, 12/10/92; 5/92, 15/10/92; 80/92, 02/11/92.

³⁸⁰² Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 273 n. 67.

³⁸⁰³ See also MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 76/92, 20/10/92; 77/92, 22/10/92.

³⁸⁰⁴ Stojanovic, *Fall*, pp. 182 and 198; interview S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

³⁸⁰⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00102. Engels 357 to Van den Broek, 23/11/92.

³⁸⁰⁶ Dukic, *Vetra*, p. 220; Djukic, *Milosevic*, p. 61; Thomas, *Serbia*, p. 126.

³⁸⁰⁷ Dukic, *Vetra*, p. 215; Thomas, *Serbia*, p. 124.

³⁸⁰⁸ Cf. Djukic, *Milosevic*, p. 58.

but Cosic and Panic would not have dared to go so far at a moment when Serbs were at war.³⁸⁰⁹ According to Cosic himself, he did visit the General Staff to test their feelings on the matter, but when he asked them for their opinion no one replied. This did not give him the confidence he needed to reverse the action of the Serbian police.³⁸¹⁰ Milosevic had played for high stakes, and had won. This made it perfectly clear how the balance of power in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia lay.

Panic had already asked the West to relax the sanctions before he declared his candidature, as a sign that the population of Serbia and Montenegro could expect better times ahead if they voted for him instead for Milosevic. He did this e.g. in an emotional address to the European Parliament in early November.³⁸¹¹ The Western governments hesitated to support Panic, however,³⁸¹² and announced shortly after his departure from Brussels that the sanctions against Serbia would be tightened.³⁸¹³

Owen, on the other hand, had initially thought that Panic should be given a chance.³⁸¹⁴ He had urged in early October that the sanctions should be relaxed in order to improve the position of Cosic and Panic relative to Milosevic. This move did not appeal to the EC ministers at all, however, as long as the situation in Bosnia showed no marked improvement. British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd even felt obliged to gloss over Lord Owen's 'can-do' optimism by sketching Owen to his colleagues as 'an active man of independent spirit, who feels the need to put forward controversial ideas from time to time'.³⁸¹⁵ Within the EC, the governments of France, Italy and Spain supported the idea of relaxing the sanctions for humanitarian purposes, e.g. delivering fuel oil for heating, in order to strengthen the position of Cosic and Panic. Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in particular were against the idea, however.

While Van den Broek had been in New York to attend the UN General Assembly, he had asked Izetbegovic on 22 September what he thought of Panic. The Bosnian President had replied that he was convinced that Panic's intentions were good, but that he did not have much power. According to Izetbegovic, the existing sanctions should be maintained because of the links between the Yugoslav army and the VRS. Van den Broek agreed. He believed that relaxing the sanctions would only strengthen the position of Milosevic and Karadzic.³⁸¹⁶ Another important consideration was his conviction that Cosic and Milosevic largely shared the same views. It appeared from remarks that Cosic had made during a visit to Rome on 26 October that he would like to see Bosnia-Herzegovina divided into three parts; he also warned against the risks of Muslim fundamentalism in the region.³⁸¹⁷ According to Dutch diplomacy, it did not matter so much which particular person was in power at a given time: 'The Serbs have to learn that their behaviour is unacceptable.' This meant that the sanctions should not be relaxed; in fact, the possibility of tightening them should be investigated.³⁸¹⁸ On 16 November the Security Council passed resolution 787, authorizing a tightening of the trade embargo against Serbia and Montenegro that had been instituted in May. This resolution gave NATO and the WEU powers to intercept, search and send back shipping. It also prohibited the transit of a wide range of goods, including oil and petroleum products.

³⁸⁰⁹ Djukic, *Milosevic*, p. 59; interview V. Matovic, 02/08/01.

³⁸¹⁰ Dukic, *Vetra*, p. 216.

³⁸¹¹ Nicole Lucas, 'Milan Panic smeekt om steun EG' (Milan Panic begs EC for support), *Trouw*, 06/11/92.

³⁸¹² MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 66/92, 14/09/92; 68/92, 22/09/92; 69/92, 25/09/92; 71/92, 01/10/92; 76/92, 20/10/92; 82/92, 06/11/92; 83/92, 08/11/92; 85/92, 13/11/92; 87/92, 18/11/92; 91/92, 17/11/92; Carolne de Gruyter, "'Wie de man van de toekomst is? Ik!'" (Who is the man of the future? Me!), *Elsevier*, 19/12/92, p. 31; interview S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

³⁸¹³ Frank Westerman, 'Sancties zijn doodsteek voor Panic' (Sanctions are death blow for Panic), *de Volkskrant*, 10/11/92.

³⁸¹⁴ ABZ, 910 Joegoslavië/algemeen correspondentie/deel 4 juli 1992-febr 1993. Joegoslavië algemene, informele bijeenkomst van Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken (Gymnich) in Bocket Hall (informal meeting of Foreign Ministers (Gymnich) at Bocket Hall), 12-13/09/92; interview H. Jovanovic, 14/09/01.

³⁸¹⁵ ABZ, DEU/2002/0001. Van den Broek 12 to Luxembourg embassy, 06/10/92.

³⁸¹⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05244. Biegman 884 (Van den Broek) to Foreign Affairs, 22/09/92.

³⁸¹⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01802. Hoekman 592 to Van den Broek, 03/11/92; Van den Broek 152 to Belgrade embassy, 06/11/92.

³⁸¹⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01803. Hoekman 676 to Van den Broek, 09/12/92.

When Panic invited the diplomats present in Belgrade to the celebration of the first hundred days of his government, to be held on 24 October, the reaction of the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs was also very negative. According to Foreign Affairs, there was nothing to celebrate and all that Panic and his associates wanted was recognition of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The British government, which had initially wanted to promote the presence of the European partners as a gesture of support for Panic in his confrontation with Milosevic, finally decided to advise EC member states to disregard the invitation.³⁸¹⁹ As a result, the EC missions did not attend the celebrations, which displeased Panic.³⁸²⁰

However, signals arriving from Yugoslavia in October and later indicated that Panic did definitely have a chance against Milosevic. For example, an opinion poll commissioned by the publication *Borba* indicated that sixty percent of the inhabitants of Belgrade supported Panic while only 22 percent intended to vote for Milosevic.³⁸²¹ But even this sign of a possible change in what was left of Yugoslavia was not enough to persuade Western governments to adopt a more positive attitude to Panic, who asked in vain for at least a temporary, provisional lifting of the sanctions.³⁸²² The decisive point was that the American government believed that Milosevic would not accept a defeat at the polls by Panic, if this were to happen. Moreover, Washington was unsure whether the Yugoslav army would obey Panic's orders if he were to win the election.³⁸²³

Tension increased as the election date approached. Rumours circulated in Belgrade that the United States and Russia would lift the sanctions if Panic won the election, but would tighten them if Milosevic was re-elected.³⁸²⁴ The West gave no concrete promise to this effect, however, though Owen and Vance did urge the population of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to vote for a policy of peace, and not for one of war.³⁸²⁵ And the governments of the United States and Russia issued a joint statement in which it was said that the Serbian people had the choice between returning to the community of nations and remaining an internationally isolated pariah, with all the economic consequences that entailed.³⁸²⁶

Four days before the elections, on 16 December, US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger stated during a meeting of the Follow-Up Committee of the Conference on former Yugoslavia that Milosevic, the rabid nationalist Seselj and Karadzic should be put on trial for war crimes: 'They need, especially, to understand that a second Nuremberg awaits the practitioners of ethnic cleansing.' Eagleburger also mentioned war crimes committed by other parties in the Bosnian conflict, e.g. the Bosnian Muslim-Croat camp Celebici, where Serbs were killed in August 1992, and the massacre of sixty Serbian soldiers and civilians in September 1992 in Kamenica (near Srebrenica), for which Bosnian Muslims were responsible.³⁸²⁷

Seselj later stated that this attack by Eagleburger was the secret of his electoral success. According to Seselj, such remarks from one of the leaders of the wicked outside world actually encouraged many Serbs to vote for him. Even democrats in Belgrade believed that these remarks had

³⁸¹⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00085. Engels 317 to Van den Broek, 23/10/92 (two copies with different marginal notes); COREU message The Hague, 23/10/92, cpe/hag 656, COREU message British chairmanship of EC, cpe/pres/lon 1605; COREU message European Commission, 23/10/92, cpe/cee 415; COREU The Hague, 23/10/92, cpe/hag 658.

³⁸²⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00102. Engels 332 to Van den Broek, 05/11/92.

³⁸²¹ MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 72/92, 05/10/92. See also Ramet, *Babel*, p. 203.

³⁸²² Thomas, *Serbia*, p. 131.

³⁸²³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Jacobovits 2005 to Van den Broek, 18/12/92.

³⁸²⁴ Cf. MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in voormalig Joegoslavië 72/92, 05/10/92 and ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, deel V-VI, mei 1992-april 1993, MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 97/92, 14/12/92.

³⁸²⁵ Owen CD-ROM. Co-Chairmen's message on Yugoslav elections, 15/12/92; Ramcharan, *Conference*, p. 1220; Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 146.

³⁸²⁶ Eisermann, *Weg*, pp. 146-147.

³⁸²⁷ Owen CD-ROM. Intervention by Secretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger, 16/12/92; Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp. 232-236; Elaine Sciolino, 'U.S. names figures it wants charged with war crimes', *The New York Times*, 17/12/92.

only helped Milosevic and Seselj to win votes. Eagleburger himself was unapologetic about the possible adverse side-effects of his statements. He defended himself by saying that it was the last opportunity the administration of President Bush, which had been defeated in the November elections, had to speak out on this issue in front of a forum of this kind. Further, he did not believe that his statements had influenced the result of the election, 'and I frankly don't give a damn if it did because I think it was important to do and I hope we'll do some more of it.'³⁸²⁸

Svetozar Stojanovic, Cosic's foreign affairs advisor, was convinced that a remark of this kind was based on Western calculation. He saw evidence for this idea e.g. in the fact that the American government turned down a proposal from Cosic in the autumn of 1992. This proposal had been contained in a secret message conveyed to Washington at Cosic's request by Scanlan, one of Panic's advisors and former American ambassador in Belgrade, in which the Yugoslav President asked for American support in exchange for improvement of Yugoslav relations with the US.³⁸²⁹ According to Stojanovic, the rejection of this proposal could be explained on the basis of the consideration that, in the view of himself and Cosic, the West preferred to deal with the opportunist Milosevic, who only exploited the Serbian question for his personal ends and changed his standpoint from day to day, than with a confirmed nationalist like Cosic. Unlike the case with Cosic, the West could put Milosevic under pressure regularly by threatening to put him on trial, as Western diplomats had subsequently confirmed to Stojanovic.³⁸³⁰

Even without such a calculation on the part of the Western powers, Panic's election campaign was experiencing enough difficulties. He had to go the Constitutional Court twice after announcing his candidature, because the Electoral Commission initially declared his candidature invalid on the grounds that he had not been resident in Serbia for a full year before the elections. During his very short electoral campaign, Panic did not manage to convince the Kosovo Albanians that a vote for him would mean a major change in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Albanians decided that the elections had nothing to do with them, and decided to boycott them. A further big handicap for Panic during the election campaign was Milosevic's firm grasp of the media; for example, the state television was under Serbian, not Federal, control. Nevertheless, an opinion poll carried out a week before the election still gave Panic a six percent lead on Milosevic.³⁸³¹

What many people who hoped for changed failed to observe, however, was that while Panic had a lot of support in Belgrade and a few other big cities, the Serbian countryside (where media exposure was often limited to Serbian television) remained true to Milosevic.³⁸³² International observers further found evidence of serious electoral fraud.³⁸³³ Milosevic's final share of the votes was somewhat more than 53 percent, with 32 percent for Panic. In view of the handicaps under which Panic had laboured and the fraud committed by Milosevic's camp, it may be concluded that Panic had not done at all badly. Under only slightly different circumstances, Milosevic would have won less than half the votes. This would have made a second round of voting necessary, which would have given Panic a new chance.

Did Panic ever have a real chance of winning? The answer to this question depends on one's assessment of what Milosevic would have done if he had lost the election. Would he have accepted the voice of the electorate, or would he have seized power after all either by changing the constitution or

³⁸²⁸ Don Oberdorfer, 'A Bloody Failure in the Balkans', *The Washington Post*, 08/02/93.

³⁸²⁹ Interview S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

³⁸³⁰ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 215; Dukic, *Vetra*, p. 232. Cf. interviews S. Djukic, 04/08/01; S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

³⁸³¹ *Bosnet*, 15/12/92, 8:06:30PST.

³⁸³² Cf. Raymond van den Boogaard, 'Milosevic beheerst de provincie' (Milosevic controls the countryside), *NRC Handelsblad*, 18/12/92; F. Westerman, "'Milan Panic zal alleen van Belgrado president zijn'" (Milan Panic will only be President of Belgrade), *de Volkskrant*, 16/12/92; De Hoop, *Servië*, p. 441.

³⁸³³ Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 147; Thomas, *Serbia*, p. 135; Henk Hirs, 'Het is een rommeltje in Servische stembureaus' (Shambles in Serbian polling stations), *Trouw*, 21/12/92; idem, 'Milan Panic eist nieuwe verkiezingen in Servië' (Milan Panic demands new elections in Serbia), *Trouw*, 22/12/93. See also Doder and Branson, *Milosevic*, pp. 168-172; M. van Silfhout, 'Overledenen stemmen bij Servische verkiezingen' (The dead return to vote in Serbian elections), *Democraat* 26 (1993) 1.

by making use of his support among the police and the military? Western governments believed that he would have taken the latter course, and were therefore not prepared to give Panic any further support. The West was not only disinclined to intervene by use of military force in the developments in the former Yugoslavia; it also hesitated to intervene politically by supporting one of the candidates in the electoral struggle, e.g. by indicating that it might lift sanctions if their preferred candidate won.

Those who had hoped that the ballot box might bring about real change were even more disappointed by the results of the parliamentary elections. Milosevic's Socialist Party won 101 seats, while Seselj's party won another 73. The Serbian electorate was apparently not yet tired of war and nationalism. On 29 December, the parliament, dominated by Milosevic and Seselj, passed a motion of no confidence against Panic. He was allowed to stay on until a successor had been nominated. Milosevic forced him to resign in February 1993, and the pharmaceuticals magnate returned to the United States after six months as Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Cosic remained in power for longer, but after Panic's departure it was clear that he did not play a significant role. That applied not only to his position in domestic politics: he was also a spent force on the international political scene. At the end of a visit to the European Parliament on 30 March 1993, where he reacted to all criticism by replying that it was not true or that the MEP in question had never experienced the situation on the ground, the Spanish member of the European People's Party Concepcio Ferrer summed up the feeling of the House by telling Cosic: 'We do not speak the same language. That is the worst thing that can happen between peoples. You say you don't understand us. Well, we don't understand you.'³⁸³⁴ With the assistance of Seselj, Milosevic also managed to force Cosic to resign in May 1993, after the latter had been suspected of trying to persuade the army to stage a coup.³⁸³⁵ The man who had been so good at operating behind the scenes had proved that when elected to office, he did not have the skills needed to play the political game according to the rules applying in Belgrade.

7. Conclusion

As Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers said himself, the Dutch government had 'an eccentric foreign policy' with regard to the former Yugoslavia compared with its European partners. Even after the disappointing results at the Edinburgh summit, however, it was not prepared to change course. Both Lubbers and Foreign Minister Van den Broek seemed to expect that the rest of the European Community would follow the Dutch lead sooner or later. The only thing to do at the moment was to wait and see whether the new American government under President Clinton, which was due to take power on 20 January 1993, would follow a more forceful line. The Dutch government expected that if the government in Washington was willing to play a more active role, the British government would play along and other governments would follow in its wake.

The Dutch media, Parliament, the ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Minister Van den Broek shared the idea that Dutch ministers should appeal to public opinion in other European countries over the heads of their own governments. According to some proponents of this activist stance, the governments of these countries should actually be condemned *en passant* for their hesitation to take action with respect to the former Yugoslavia. In the meantime, the Dutch government was not prepared to try to influence the balance of power in the former Yugoslavia by a more cooperative attitude towards Panic in his electoral battle against Milosevic. Unlike some other European governments, the Dutch government did not expect any positive effect from this move.

On the other hand, the Dutch government did put a lot of energy into promoting the idea of Safe Areas, which it saw not only as a solution of the refugee problem but also as a possible route for

³⁸³⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00112. Bot 125 to Kooijmans, 01/04/93.

³⁸³⁵ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 352; Djukic, *Milosevic*, p. 62; Ramet, *Babel*, p. 203; Dukic, *Vetra*, pp. 227-229; Libal, *Serben*, pp. 185-186; Stojanovic, *Autoritet*, pp. 55-56.

action that might break the international stalemate between provision of humanitarian aid and all-out war. At the same time, Director-General for Political Affairs Van Walsum of the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs warned that this idea was associated with very high risks. As long as other countries were not prepared to take more military risks in the former Yugoslavia, no real guarantee could be given that the population in the 'Safe Areas' really were safe. Nevertheless, international planning, which had been initiated partly on the urging of the Dutch government, was aiming precisely in the direction of Safe Areas – which were clearly not as well protected as the safe havens which in Van Walsum's opinion offered the only really effective protection under the circumstances. The knowledge that the Netherlands itself could only supply support units and not combat units for the establishment of these areas means that the Dutch government had no other choice than to go along with this proposal even though it was realized that it did not offer the highest possible degree of safety. While the Dutch government tried to promote the realization of this idea on the ground, it was at the same time following quite another route by advocating the effective enforcement of a no-fly zone. The government in The Hague, in this case in particular the ministry of Defence, was rather late in giving signs that it recognized the risks Dutch involvement in such an operation could cause for the UN troops (including Dutch contingents) on the ground. However, the discussions of the establishment of Safe Areas and the enforcement of a no-fly zone above Bosnia, which got going in December 1992, would soon come to a halt as a result of the launching of the Owen/Vance peace plan.

Chapter 9

The rapes in Bosnia and the Vance-Owen peace plan, January-February 1993

1. Campaigns in the Netherlands

As mentioned in the previous chapter, churches were seething with activities related to Yugoslavia at the beginning of December 1992. The Secretary of the *Raad van Kerken* (Dutch Council of Churches), the Reverend W. R. van der Zee, noted with some regret at the time that a petition by the *Raad's* Ecumenical Campaigns Section and a postcard campaign by the *Interkerkelijk Vredesberaad* (Interchurch Peace Council Netherlands, IKV) were running in parallel. Van der Zee told the newspaper *Trouw* that he still wanted to unite the two campaigns under a single name.³⁸³⁶ At the same time Deventer PvdA (Labour) alderman Marian ter Velde came to the conclusion that there were so many Yugoslavia campaigns being run by individuals and small organizations that chaos loomed. She therefore took the initiative to organize a meeting at the RAI Congress Centre in Amsterdam on 12 December, which was intended to stimulate the creation of a co-ordinating point for all campaigns focusing upon the former Yugoslavia. During that meeting it transpired that even more petitions were in circulation, such as one to Junior Minister Hans Van den Broek about rapes with the title 'Meisjes werden geslacht als lammetjes' ('Girls were slaughtered like lambs').³⁸³⁷ Many of the campaigns – to collect clothing or Christmas parcels, for example – were local in nature. In this field, too, the *Samenwerkende Hulporganisaties* (United Aid Agencies) noted a proliferation of initiatives during December 1992.³⁸³⁸ In short, there was no lack of good intentions and activities.

It is unnecessary, and would be impossible, to mention all these activities here. Below is a concise summary, which has several purposes. Firstly, it is intended to provide some idea of the range of groups in the Netherlands that were focusing upon Yugoslavia, as well as their motives. Secondly, it looks at the nature of the activities being carried out. And thirdly, it provides an insight into the main areas upon which those activities focused at that time.

Not surprisingly given what was happening in the former Yugoslavia, the events there were a subject of interest for the Dutch peace movement and in particular for the two largest religious peace organizations, Pax Christi and the IKV.

Pax Christi

Pax Christi was active with regard to Bosnia-Herzegovina from the beginning of the war there.³⁸³⁹ A delegation from this peace movement was actually in Sarajevo between 3 and 11 April 1992, when the hostilities in the region broke out. The organization had a separate 'Working Group on Central Europe and the Balkans, the members of which included Jan ter Laak, Secretary of Pax Christi. Both the international organization and the Dutch section regularly held public meetings, as well as arranging visits by and to Yugoslavs. The movement maintained contacts with the Serbian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches in Yugoslavia. Contacts were later also established with the Muslim community. Pax Christi Netherlands participated in various demonstrations alongside other groups and sent letters to the government about ethnic cleansing, the reception of refugees and the need for safe havens. On 31

³⁸³⁶ 'Militair ingrijpen moet'. Kerken luiden noodklokken over Bosnië-Herzegovina' ('Military intervention a must'. Churches sound alarm bells over Bosnia-Herzegovina'), *Trouw*, 04/12/92.

³⁸³⁷ 'Coördinatie moet chaos bij hulp aan Joegoslavië voorkomen' ('Co-ordination needed to prevent chaos in aid to Yugoslavia'), *de Volkskrant*, 14/12/92.

³⁸³⁸ Romana Abels, 'Heel Nederland zamelt in' ('All the Netherlands is collecting'), *Trouw*, 12/12/92.

³⁸³⁹ For more details of this organization's activities, see its publications listed in the bibliography.

July 1992, for instance, the Dutch section of Pax Christi wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Junior Minister of Justice to point that the Netherlands had, relatively speaking, accepted only one fifth of the number of refugees taken in by Germany. The Netherlands and the other EC countries were urged to match German efforts.³⁸⁴⁰

Despite all these endeavours, Pax Christi Secretary Jan Ter Laak had to admit in early 1993 that the peace movement had been taken by surprise by the war in Yugoslavia. Since 1970, the organization had been building up contacts in Eastern Europe, an example followed ten years later by the IKV. Yugoslavia, however, had been neglected. Only in late 1989 had Pax Christi begun to pay attention to the Kosovo question, when a delegation of Kosovo Albanians visited the Netherlands at Pax Christi's invitation. Ter Laak described the fact that there was no Pax Christi organization in predominantly Catholic Croatia as 'remarkable'. He also noted that the IKV was more divided than was Pax Christi by discussions as to whether active military intervention in Bosnia was permissible. In April 1992, following his return from Sarajevo, he had himself said that he was not opposed in principle to this.

The Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (HCA), an international organization for peace and human rights founded in Prague in 1990 and to which both Pax Christi and the IKV were affiliated, had been concerned about the situation in Yugoslavia even before conflict broke out there.³⁸⁴¹ On 7 July 1991, shortly after the outbreak of war in Slovenia, the HCA organized a meeting in Belgrade under the title 'Disintegration of Yugoslavia – Integration of Europe', attracting about 150 participants from throughout Yugoslavia and from many European nations, the United States and Canada. One of them was the Bosnian academic Zdravko Grebo, who at the event warned that Bosnia-Herzegovina could not exist without Yugoslavia and that if the two were to split it would lead to a major catastrophe.³⁸⁴² As early as May 1991 the HCA had founded 'The Balkans' Peace and Integration Project', through which it tried to organize democratic groups in the region to maintain contacts with one another across national boundaries, frontlines and ethnic divisions. In so doing the HCA looked mainly to the lower echelons of Yugoslav society, since it believed that the atmosphere at the highest levels had already become too poisoned by ethnic nationalism. A culminating point in these activities came on 5-8 November 1992, with the 'Citizens' and Municipal Peace Conference' held at Ohrid in Macedonia. This meeting called for 'protected zones' under the auspices of the EC and the UN in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) in Croatia. Such areas should be demilitarized and efforts made to restore community life, the economy, government and justice. The Conference identified Sarajevo and Tuzla as cities which might be suitable for such an approach.³⁸⁴³ On 16 March 1993, the *Vereeniging Hugo de Groot* (Hugo Grotius Association) was founded as the Dutch arm of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly. This focused entirely upon Yugoslavia, with its activities including encouragement of the democratic media and support for women who had been raped.

The IKV

The *Interkerkelijk Vredesberaad* (Interchurch Peace Council Netherlands, IKV), which in the early 1980s had brought throngs of people onto the streets to protest against cruise missiles, was – as has already been discussed several times – under fire from all sides in the media because it was playing no conspicuous part in the Yugoslavia issue and had been unable to mobilize any demonstrators (see Chapters 3 and 6).³⁸⁴⁴ Although approximately two thirds of respondents in opinion polls since the

³⁸⁴⁰ Pax Christi International, *Cry*, pp. 20-21.

³⁸⁴¹ For a summary of HCA's activities pertaining to (former) Yugoslavia, see Ter Veer, *Assembly*, pp. 175-179.

³⁸⁴² S. Licht, 'Yugoslavia and Europe. What are the lessons Europe should learn?', Palau & Kumar (eds.), *Ex-Yugoslavia*, pp. 26-27; ditto, 'The book for peace', *ibidem*, p. 187.

³⁸⁴³ 'Final Declaration of the Citizens and Municipal Peace Conference CPC and MPC', Palau & Kumar (eds.), *Ex-Yugoslavia*, pp. 174, 181-183.

³⁸⁴⁴ See also, for example, H. Leber, 'Laat ze de oorlog uitvechten' ('Let them fight out the war'), *Tweentsche Courant*, 05/08/92; Schennink, *Bosnië-Herzegovina*, pp. 198-199.

summer of 1992 had been in favour of military intervention, it did indeed remain difficult to organize demonstrations about the situation in Yugoslavia. At those that were held, the number of participants often barely exceeded 100. The largest demonstration to date had taken place in early September 1991 to mark the opening of the Conference on Yugoslavia in The Hague. That attracted 10,000 people, but virtually all of them came from the former Yugoslavia. Dutch citizens were often few and far between at the other protests, too.³⁸⁴⁵ On Saturday 6 February 1993, a demonstration in Amsterdam organized by the 'Committee to Stop the Murders in Bosnia' attracted almost 10,000 protestors – who according to the press were all Muslims. Amongst other things, they were demanding military intervention in Bosnia and protesting against the rape of Bosnian women.³⁸⁴⁶ Less than two weeks later, a total of almost 3000 former Yugoslavs demonstrated at nine locations across the Netherlands against ethnic cleansing and for the demolition of the concentration camps.³⁸⁴⁷ Two days later came a national demonstration in Haarlem by approximately 2000 Bosnian refugees from asylum centres. They called upon 'Europe and the world' to stop the aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina.³⁸⁴⁸

Mi za Mir

On 3 October 1992, the *Mi za Mir* ('We for Peace') movement organized a 'solidarity meeting' on Dam Square in Amsterdam.³⁸⁴⁹ *Ma za Mir* had been founded almost a year earlier, on 13 October 1991, by young Serbians and Croatians who had fled to the Netherlands to escape the war and conscription. They were joined later by young Yugoslav Muslims. The objective of this movement, which began with 40 members and would eventually have some 150, was to make a contribution to ending the war and to preventing its spread to other parts of the former Yugoslavia. It also wanted to take in more people who had fled the violence.³⁸⁵⁰ Because it was the only ethnically-mixed peace movement of former Yugoslavs outside the region itself, *Ma za Mir* acted as a co-ordination point for reports about the war on behalf of radio stations and independent journalists in the former Yugoslavia. It also co-ordinated simultaneous demonstrations in different Yugoslav cities from Amsterdam. The movement organized regular discussion evenings, which were attended mainly by other young Yugoslavs.³⁸⁵¹ In the first year of its existence, *Ma za Mir* made a vain call to young Dutch people for solidarity.³⁸⁵² A protest by the group at the Beursplein in Amsterdam on 14 August 1992 attracted less than 100 demonstrators, hardly any of them Dutch.

However, the action organized by *Ma za Mir* on 3 October 1992 in solidarity with the victims of the war in the former Yugoslavia was able to count upon broad support from groups including the *Vereniging Dienstweigeraars* (Dutch Association of Conscientious Objectors), the *Amsterdams Studentenpastoraat* (Amsterdam Student Chaplaincy), the IKV, Pax Christi, *Vrouwen voor Vrede* (Women for Peace), the *Steunpunt Vredesgroepen in Voormalig Joegoslavië* (Support Centre for Peace Groups in the

³⁸⁴⁵ See, for example, Rob Meines, 'Even schrikken in Den Haag' ('A fright for The Hague') and ditto, 'EG-conferentie opent met harde beschuldigingen' ('EC conference opens with serious accusations'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/09/91.

³⁸⁴⁶ 'Bijna tienduizend moslims protesteren tegen gruweldaden in Bosnië' ('Almost 10,000 Muslims protest against atrocities in Bosnia'), *ANP*, 06/02/93, 16:52.

³⁸⁴⁷ 'Ex-Joegoslaven demonstreren in Den Bosch en Roermond' ('Former Yugoslavs demonstrate in Den Bosch and Roermond'), *ANP*, 18/02/93, 18:28 and 'Demonstraties ex-Joegoslaven' ('Former Yugoslavs demonstrate') *ANP*, 18/02/93, 20:19.

³⁸⁴⁸ 'Europa met elke doodgevroren Bosniër een illusie armer' ('Every Bosnian frozen to death makes Europe one illusion the poorer'), *Trouw*, 22/02/93.

³⁸⁴⁹ I. Jungschleger, 'Joegoslavische vredesgroep hoopt op steun jongeren' ('Yugoslav peace group hopes for youth support'), *de Volkskrant*, 05/10/92.

³⁸⁵⁰ NIOD, Coll. Blaauw., *Mi za Mir to Weisglas*, 09/12/91.

³⁸⁵¹ Anet Bleich, 'Hoe krankzinniger, hoe meer steun' ('The crazier they are, the more support they get'), *de Volkskrant*, 04/02/92. For more on this movement, see also Alfred van Cleef, 'Bruggehoofd voor vrede in Joegoslavië' ('Bridgehead for peace in Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/06/92.

³⁸⁵² Hugo Camps, 'Onze onverschilligheid is dodelijk voor Oost-Europa' ('Our indifference is deadly for Eastern Europe'), *Elsevier*, 24/10/92, p. 39.

former Yugoslavia), *Vrouwen tegen Kernwapens* (Women Against Nuclear Weapons) and the *Doopsgezinde Vredesgroep* (Mennonite Peace Group).

The peace movement gropes and fumbles

Notwithstanding that support, the turnout on the day was so miserable that the weekly *Vrij Nederland*, writing about the IKV's participation in the demonstration, mused that the organization would 'think three times' before using this means again.³⁸⁵³ The IKV now turned all its attention to the HCA's postcard campaign for open borders and safe havens (see Chapter 8).³⁸⁵⁴ This international action would eventually elicit some 160,000 cards, a large proportion of them from the Netherlands. Earlier in the same year, at the end of October, Amnesty International had also organized a letter-writing and postcard campaign calling upon the Dutch people to demand in their own words that the parties negotiating in Geneva protect human rights.³⁸⁵⁵

It seemed to be difficult to find appropriate forms of action. Another project devised by the IKV was an attempt to bring schools in the Netherlands and the former Yugoslavia into contact with one another. But IKV Secretary Mient Jan Faber complained in autumn 1992 that when he had asked the fifth form of a secondary school in Maassluis what Yugoslavia meant to them, he had received the reply, 'Holiday, mountains and lovely sea, sir'.³⁸⁵⁶ Even within the IKV, the fire had died: 'There is still sympathy with Yugoslavia, but it doesn't come out in any concrete form.'³⁸⁵⁷ Faber resisted the black-and-white view that the Serbs were solely and completely in the wrong, and the Croats unblemished, and turned on CDA (Christian Democrat Party) MEP Arie Oostlander, 'who regards Mr Izetbegovic, the President of Bosnia, as the one who is being sacrificed and so must be defended.'³⁸⁵⁸

Faber was also an opponent of sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro, because he believed that they were driving the population into the arms of the extremists and were unfair to the democrats still remaining in those regions. His constantly recurring complaint was that Western politicians and diplomats spoke only with nationalist leaders and not with democratic forces. Meanwhile, he did maintain contacts with representatives of churches, peace groups and democrats in the former Yugoslavia, but with many difficulties: 'We carry on, even though we are sometimes fighting a losing battle.'³⁸⁵⁹

A major protest planned by the IKV in Brussels in spring 1994 failed due to differences of opinion with Pax Christi and other, smaller peace groups over the desirability of military intervention and an international demonstration.³⁸⁶⁰ Moreover, the objective of the demonstration – to encourage the international community to take seriously agreements made with the warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina – seemed to have been achieved when NATO issued an ultimatum calling for the withdrawal of heavy weapons following the attack on the market in Sarajevo on 5 February 1994.³⁸⁶¹

³⁸⁵³ Ingrid Harms & Ursula den Tex, 'Kan de hulpverlening nog hulp verlenen?' ('Can the aid agencies still deliver aid?'), *Vrij Nederland*, 12/12/92, p. 26.

³⁸⁵⁴ See also 'Kaartactie voor safe havens Bosnië krijgt veel respons' ('Huge response to postcard campaign for safe havens in Bosnia'), *de Volkskrant*, 19/12/92.

³⁸⁵⁵ See, for example, the advertisement 'Mensenrechten zonder grenzen. Kom in actie voor Joegoslavië?' ('Human rights without frontiers. Take action for Yugoslavia'), *de Volkskrant*, 23/10/92.

³⁸⁵⁶ Hugo Camps, 'Onze onverschilligheid is dodelijk voor Oost-Europa' ('Our indifference is deadly for Eastern Europe'), *Elsevier*, 24/10/92, p. 39.

³⁸⁵⁷ Hugo Camps, 'Onze onverschilligheid is dodelijk voor Oost-Europa', *Elsevier*, 24/10/92, p. 40.

³⁸⁵⁸ J. Lagendijk, 'Herstel de multi-etnische samenleving!' ('Restore the multiethnic society'), *de Helling*, 5(1992) 3, pp. 11-12.

³⁸⁵⁹ C. Brendel, 'Boycot van Joegoslavië is onrechtvaardig: Faber: Vooral democratische en vredelievende krachten worden getroffen' ('Boycott of Yugoslavia is unjust. Faber: democratic and peace-loving forces are hardest hit'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 10/06/92.

³⁸⁶⁰ J. van Nederpelt and T. Pitstra, 'Joegoslavië. De pacifistische valkuilen van GroenLinks' ('Yugoslavia: GroenLinks' pacifist pitfalls'), *de Helling*, 9(1996) 2, p. 29; Schennink, *Betrokkenheid*, pp. 232-233.

³⁸⁶¹ Schennink, *Betrokkenheid*, p. 232.

And Faber, who had been one of the first interventionists, had faced criticism within the IKV itself in autumn 1992 from members who continued to assume a pacifistic standpoint (see also Chapter 8).³⁸⁶²

Politicians grope and fumble, too

‘Five-hundred thousand people demonstrated against cruise missiles (...) Only a few people are demonstrating against the genocide in Bosnia-Hercegovina,’ wrote Ton de Kok in December 1992.³⁸⁶³ A month later he remarked that if Dutch society really was in favour of military intervention in Bosnia, then ‘public opinion should express that far more clearly’.³⁸⁶⁴ But it was not easy for the IKV and other groups to organize demonstrations. The protests against the war in Yugoslavia were, after all, as the political scientist Andries van den Broek wrote at the beginning of 1992, already supported by the entire Dutch political establishment, including the government. ‘What particular, distinctive note did the peace movement have to add to this?’, he asked.³⁸⁶⁵

GroenLinks (Green Left) MP Leoni Sipkes also highlighted this problem. ‘You were fine! You didn’t have to demonstrate against the Dutch government, because we pretty much agreed with it. But as a parliamentarian, and as an ordinary citizen, you felt absolutely powerless.’³⁸⁶⁶ The Dutch government wanted action, but its European partners did not. With that in mind, Sipkes and PvdA MP Jantien Achttienribbe-Buijs decided on 11 December 1992 to send a letter to all their female fellow parliamentarians in the other EC member states and at the European Parliament. This asked them to ‘make every effort to create safe havens in the former Yugoslavia so that basic human rights can be restored there’ and to support the acceptance of refugees, in particular women who had been sexually abused.³⁸⁶⁷

In general, the activities of the national political parties with respect to Yugoslavia were, unlike the contributions from their parliamentary groups, modest in nature. The most active was GroenLinks. In a policy decision about the situation in the former Yugoslavia taken at the end of August 1992, the party executive backed the UN Security Council resolutions demanding access to all prison camps and calling for the possible military protection of aid convoys in Bosnia. Amongst other things, the GroenLinks leaders also demanded stronger checks upon observance of the economic sanctions against Serbia. Because the situation in Bosnia subsequently deteriorated further, the party executive hardened its standpoint in early December 1992. The GroenLinks leadership, which – as it had demonstrated at the time of the Gulf War – still contained a strongly pacifist element, now demanded strict enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia, ‘if necessary by the downing of aircraft which violate this ban’, an extension to the mandate of the UN troops escorting aid convoys, the transfer of prisoners to camps under international supervision and the creation of UN-mandated safe havens in Bosnian territory. On Thursday 17 December, the party organized a march in Amsterdam with torches and candles to show its solidarity with the people of Bosnia-Hercegovina.

This was the first in a series of torchlight marches, silent demonstrations and prayer services held during December 1992 and January 1993. Locations included The Hague, Utrecht and Westerbork (formerly the site of a Nazi deportation camp); the participants were Pax Christi, the *Anti-Discriminatie*

³⁸⁶² See also H. Feddema, ‘Debat over militair ingrijpen verlamt de vredesbeweging’ (‘Debate on military intervention paralyzes the peace movement’), *Trouw*, 24/10/92.

³⁸⁶³ Ton de Kok, ‘Voormalig Joegoslavië. Militaire interventie is nu te laat’ (‘Former Yugoslavia: too late now for military intervention’), *CD/Actueel*, 12/12/92, p. 8.

³⁸⁶⁴ ‘Joegoslavië’ (‘Yugoslavia’), *CD/Actueel*, 16/01/93, p. 18.

³⁸⁶⁵ Andries van den Broek, ‘Aan burgeroorlog in Joegoslavië valt voor vredesbeweging weinig eer te behalen’ (‘Little honour for peace movement over civil war in Yugoslavia’), *de Volkskrant*, 06/01/92. Schennink, *Betrokkenheid*, p. 230, also cites the drive of the Dutch government and elected representatives as a cause of the lack of political initiative in relation to (former) Yugoslavia by campaign groups.

³⁸⁶⁶ Interview L. Sipkes, 24/01/00.

³⁸⁶⁷ NIOD, Coll. GroenLinks, dossier ‘Yugoslavia – Women’. J. Achttienribbe-Buijs and L. Sipkes to colleagues, 11/12/92; interview L. Sipkes, 24/01/00.

Overleg (Anti-Discrimination Platform), *Vrouwen tegen Kernwapens* (Women Against Nuclear Weapons) and the *Appèlgroep Westerbork* (Westerbork Protest Group). These actions were co-ordinated by the provisional 'peace movement co-ordination centre' *Samen voor Vrede* (Together for Peace), participants in which included *Vrouwen voor Vrede*, the *Amsterdamse Vrouwen Initiatiefgroep* (Amsterdam Women's Initiative Group) and Women's Exchange Programme International. These silent demonstrations attracted more participants than was usually for protests against the wars in the former Yugoslavia. The first, on 26 December 1992, was attended by 4000 people.³⁸⁶⁸ From then on, the *Appèlgroep Westerbork* organized such an event on the last Sunday of each month. These continued to draw more people than most demonstrations: 5000 on 31 January and 2500 on 28 February 1993.³⁸⁶⁹

Additionally, GroenLinks joined the IKV/HCA postcard campaign demanding safe havens and open borders for refugees from the former Yugoslavia. Despite its higher degree of activism compared with other parties, some dissatisfaction did arise within GroenLinks' own ranks about the amount of its commitment to issues related to the former Yugoslavia. There was a prevailing sense of political paralysis, and no open discussion on the subject was triggered beyond the parliamentary party and the executive.³⁸⁷⁰ This was in marked contrast with GroenLinks' equivalent in Germany, the *Grünen*, which was actually in danger of splitting into *Pazifisten* and *Bellizisten* ('Pacifist' and 'Belligerent') factions.³⁸⁷¹ In a later analysis, GroenLinks senator Ton Pitstra and Jacques van Nederpelt, Lecturer in International Economic Relations at the *Hogeschool van Utrecht*, wrote in 1996:

'Instead of issuing firm statements as they did during the Cold War ("The Netherlands out of NATO!"), people in progressive circles now often keep their opinions to themselves. Rather than clear choices and slogans like 'Boycott Outspan!', there was now confusion and silence. The warm feeling of belonging which had united the Left during the turbulent years of the demonstrations against cruise missiles was lacking.'³⁸⁷²

On 28 November 1992, shortly before the PvdA Party Conference passed its resolution about the former Yugoslavia on 12 December (Chapter 8), the CDA Party Council adopted a resolution urging the governments of the European Community to be more generous in opening their borders to refugees from the former Yugoslavia than had been the case up until then. However, the CDA also came up against the inconsistency that seemed to exist between clear interventionist standpoints and a lack of political activism when it came to the former Yugoslavia. For example, the party was forced to cancel a planned public meeting on the issue – at which such political heavyweights as Professor H. J. Neuman, Chair of the CDA Foreign Affairs Committee, Minister Hans van den Broek and Member of Parliament Jaap De Hoop Scheffer were due to speak³⁸⁷³ – because of 'a very disappointing number of registrations'.³⁸⁷⁴ However, on 12 February 1993 a conference did go ahead on 'The National Question and the Violence in Yugoslavia'. This was organized by the CDA Academic Institute, in conjunction with the party's Foreign Affairs Committee and the European People's Party group in the European

³⁸⁶⁸ See also, for example, the advertisement placed by the Appèlgroep Westerbork to publicize this silent demonstration in *Trouw*, 19/12/92.

³⁸⁶⁹ 'Vijfduizend demonstranten tegen oorlog op Balkan' ('Five thousand demonstrate against war in Balkans'), *ANP*, 31/01/93, 19:05. See also 'Plan voor landelijke actie evacuatie gevangenkampen ex-Joegoslavië' ('Plan for national campaign to evacuate prison camps in former Yugoslavia'), *ANP*, 29/01/93, 14:17; 'Demonstratie 2500 mensen tegen oorlog op Balkan' ('Two-and-a-half thousand people demonstrate against war in Balkans'), *ANP*, 28/02/93, 20:26.

³⁸⁷⁰ Cf. Max Arian, 'Pacifiste' ('Pacifist'), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 17/03/93.

³⁸⁷¹ Cf. W. Beusekamp, 'Duitse leger moet naar Bosnië' ('German army must go to Bosnia'), *de Volkskrant*, 04/02/93.

³⁸⁷² Jacques van Nederpelt & Tom Pitstra, 'Joegoslavië: De pacifistische valkuilen van GroenLinks', *de Helling*, 9(1996)2, p. 29.

³⁸⁷³ NIOD, Coll. CDA. CDA Secretariat, Foreign Affairs Committee, Conferences 1991-1992, J.W. Wiggers to various, 22/09/92, H2.432/92/JG.

³⁸⁷⁴ Ditto, Wiggers to various, 01/10/92, H2.450/92/JJ.

Parliament. The speakers included Minister Peter Kooijmans, MEP Arie Oostlander and Pax Christi Secretary Jan Ter Laak.³⁸⁷⁵

As well as the established peace movement, smaller groups were also active – many focusing specifically upon the former Yugoslavia. For example, the activist movement *Tilburg Za Mir* (Tilburg for Peace), founded in 1992, provided material and moral support to independent peace, women's and human rights groups and media in the former Yugoslavia. It originally concentrated upon Croatia, Kosovo and Vojvodina, but later upon Bosnia-Herzegovina too. The movement organized visits by Yugoslavs to the Netherlands, raised funds and acted as an intermediary between organizations inside and outside Yugoslavia. Another movement, *Lopend Vuur* (Wildfire), was also founded in 1992 following a contact mission by a number of people from the Netherlands to various peace groups in the former Yugoslavia. This organization tried to support groups there that were working for a peaceful, democratic and tolerant society. It eventually developed 18 local sections, in places including Amsterdam, The Hague, Deventer, Enschede, Groningen, Maastricht, Nijmegen and Rotterdam, each of which maintained its own contacts with groups in Yugoslavia. Again, these were mainly in Croatia, Kosovo, Vojvodina and Macedonia.

In partnership with *Lopend Vuur*, from mid 1992 the group Socia Media distributed, by electronic means, information about the former Yugoslavia which was not being covered in the established media. According to its own mission statement, this was intended to dispel the ignorance and confusion surrounding the former Yugoslavia, and the apathy about the war in Bosnia.³⁸⁷⁶ Another press-related group, but this time one providing support to independent media in the former Yugoslavia, was Press Now. Founded in April 1993, this was based at *De Balie* in Amsterdam and counted Minister Kooijmans amongst the members of its Recommending Committee.

Whilst some peace groups or individuals within them evolved towards an interventionist standpoint in response to the situation in the former Yugoslavia, there were others which adopted such a stance from the outset. One such was the purely interventionist *Comité voor krachtig militair ingrijpen in voormalig Joegoslavië* (Committee for Forceful Military Intervention in the Former Yugoslavia), which was founded on 25 November 1992 and from the end of 1993 would be called *Politiek Comité Stari Most* (Old Bridge Political Committee). Its main activity was campaigning for an end to the weapons embargo against Bosnia-Herzegovina, for the relief of besieged cities, for the closure of concentration camps, for the creation of protected areas, and for military intervention to prevent the violence spreading to Kosovo, Vojvodina and Macedonia. The Committee demonstrated in The Hague on 16 January 1993, attracting between 100 and 150 supporters. Arie Oostlander addressed the demonstrators on the Binnenhof (The Hague).³⁸⁷⁷

Another rally was organized for 13 March 1993, on Dam Square in Amsterdam. This attracted 200 people and was addressed by VVD (Liberals) MP Jan Dirk Blaauw.³⁸⁷⁸ The Hilversum GroenLinks councillor Iede de Vries went even further, in autumn 1993 founding the *Comité Verdedig Bosnië-Herzegovina* (Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina Committee) which collected money for the Bosnian government to buy weapons.³⁸⁷⁹ Then there was the *Comité Voormalig Joegoslavië* (Former Yugoslavia Committee), which was launched on 12 May 1992 to lobby politicians to take a stand against ethnic cleansing and division.

³⁸⁷⁵ See, for example, Rob Meines, 'Europa verlamd door doemdenken over Joegoslavië' ('Europe paralysed by doom-mongering over Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/02/93.

³⁸⁷⁶ <http://www.sociamedia.nl/~boyd/datacom/joego/joego1.html> consulted on 07/12/01; Boyd Noorda to NIOD, 28/07/99.

³⁸⁷⁷ 'Demonstratie voor militair ingrijpen voormalig Joegoslavië' ('Demonstration for military intervention in former Yugoslavia'), *ANP*, 16/01/93, 15:35; 'Roep om ingrijpen in ex-Joegoslavië' ('Call for intervention in former Yugoslavia'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 18/01/93.

³⁸⁷⁸ Politiek Comité Stari Most, Background, 25/11/99; Max Arian, 'Pacifiste', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 17/03/93; Caspar ten Dam, 'Sarajevo-complex' ('Sarajevo complex'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/04/95.

³⁸⁷⁹ Jacques van der Bragt, 'Wapens tegen machteloosheid' ('Weapons against powerlessness'), *HP/De Tijd*, 19/11/93, pp. 14-15.

As well as those movements concerned mainly with idealistic goals, a large number of organizations focused upon material aid. Several of these had their origins in activities by Croatians and Bosnians resident in the Netherlands. For example, on 25 October 1991 a group of Croatians living in and around The Hague formed the *Stichting Vrienden van Kroatië/Zaklada Prijatelji Hrvatske* (Friends of Croatia Foundation) to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Croatia by collecting money and supplies from individuals and businesses. At the end of September 1992, Islam Telalovic – a Bosnian Muslim by origin – founded the *Stichting Hulp aan Bosnië en Hercegovina* (Aid to Bosnia and Hercegovina Foundation) in his adopted hometown of Rotterdam. Over the next few years this would send private aid convoys to Bosnia, mainly to the town of Zenica.³⁸⁸⁰ Early in 1993 *Vrienden van La Benovolencija* (Friends of La Benovolencija) was set up in the Netherlands to help the Jewish aid organization in Sarajevo which benefited from its ‘neutral’ position between the main ethnic groups in Bosnia.³⁸⁸¹

As well as activities focusing specifically upon Yugoslavia, established aid agencies such as the *Nederlandse Rode Kruis* (Dutch Red Cross) and *Artsen zonder Grenzen* (*Médecins Sans Frontières* Netherlands) tried to offer relief in the region. For example, between late 1991 and summer 1993 *Stichting Mensen in Nood* (Caritas Netherlands) sent NLG 6.4 million worth of food, medicines, clothing and the like to the former Yugoslavia. The bulk of this went to Bosnia and Croatia. During the same period, the *Stichting Oecumenische Hulp* (Dutch Interchurch Aid, SOH) provided support worth NLG 2.7 million and the *Stichting Memisa Medicus Mundi* (Memisa World Medical Foundation) offered NLG 2.4 million in medical assistance.³⁸⁸²

To summarize, it can be stated that up until the end of 1992 the principal themes of campaigns were peace initiatives, pleas for intervention and material aid. The means used by the campaign groups consisted mainly of writing open letters and media correspondence, collecting signatures on petitions, maintaining contacts with pro-democracy and peace groups in the former Yugoslavia and collecting cash and goods for direct aid. Demonstrations seemed less effective as a campaigning tool, probably in part because the Dutch public was under the impression that its own government did not need persuading in the same way as it had done during the Vietnam War and cruise missile debate.

The majority of public campaigning in the Netherlands would not begin until autumn 1993, at a time when the definitive decision to send an active-service unit had already been (more or less) taken. In any case, many of those activities were local in nature.³⁸⁸³

2. Rapes in Bosnia: a new theme in the media

Intensification in public campaigns was discernible in December 1992. Several factors played a part in this, including the more urgent need for aid with the impending onset of winter in Bosnia and the approach of the festive season. It was no coincidence that several campaigns were concentrated around Christmas. Moreover, like the Dutch government various groups saw a concrete opportunity for action in the call for safe havens. This had a greater appeal than enforcement of a no-fly zone or heavy weapons monitoring. From autumn 1992 the issue of women being raped in Bosnia-Hercegovina became a new theme in the public campaigns being conducted in the Netherlands.

In the period shortly before Christmas advertisements appeared in four major national newspapers³⁸⁸⁴ with the slogan ‘Stop (sexual) violence against women and girls in the former Yugoslavia’. This campaign was jointly organized by Medusa/Metis/Arachne in Utrecht and *Vrouwen voor Vrede* in Amsterdam.

³⁸⁸⁰ Interview I. Telalovic, 21/10/99.

³⁸⁸¹ Max Arian, ‘La Benovolencija’, *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 09/06/93, pp. 9-10.

³⁸⁸² NIOD, Coll. Blaauw. Mensen in Nood, etc. to the Parliamentary Permanent Committee on Foreign Affairs, 27/07/93.

³⁸⁸³ For an overview of public campaigns, see Pax Christi, *Oorlog*.

³⁸⁸⁴ *NRC Handelsblad*, *Het Parool*, *Trouw* and *de Volkskrant*.

One week after his appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs, a highly emotional³⁸⁸⁵ Peter Kooijmans attended a demonstration of 800 people protesting against the rape of Bosnian women, at which he accepted two petitions containing 20,000 signatures. These demanded the closure of the camps in Bosnia and aid for women who had been raped, as well as the recognition of rape as a war crime.³⁸⁸⁶ Kooijmans himself did not need to be convinced. He declared that he had already – late in 1992, when he had carried out research into human-rights abuses in the former Yugoslavia together with Tadeusz Mazowiecki – concluded that the rapes committed during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina had assumed a systematic character and were being used as a weapon.³⁸⁸⁷ The minister declared that the Netherlands would pay particular attention to this group of women within its existing asylum policy.

Below we shall examine the interest in the subject of rapes in Bosnia which existed from late 1992 in both the United States and Europe, and in particular in the Netherlands. This concern would reach its height during the first two months of 1993. The primary point considered is the extent to which reports about rapes contributed to an increased readiness to intervene – militarily or otherwise – in Bosnia, or to create safe havens for those under threat. A second consideration is how much this reporting created an even more negative image of the Serbs. Other interesting issues, such as the question as to the relationship between information about rapes and the establishment of a tribunal to try war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia, will not be considered in great detail here. Moreover, it must be emphasized that we have carried out no independent investigation into the rapes in Bosnia. We are primarily concerned with the reporting of and debate about them in the West, and the possible repercussions thereof for Western policy towards the former Yugoslavia.

Rapes began immediately after clashes broke out between Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia in April 1992. They sometimes occurred as isolated incidents, for example when combatants entered homes or when a group of guards at camp forced women under their control to perform sexual acts. But rapes were also committed in public, as part of the process of ethnic cleansing, in which case they appeared to have the same objective as the executions of local elites: to force the other ethnic group to leave with the intention that it never dare return. Houses or hotels were also converted into brothels, at which women were held for extended periods and raped repeatedly. The best known of these would be the ‘rape centre’ at the Partisans’ sports hall in Foca. This was set up in May 1992, with some women being taken from it to private homes.³⁸⁸⁸ A large proportion of the women who were held in brothels of this kind were later murdered. It should also be mentioned that not only were the women held in prison camps raped but also that many forms of sexual violence were used against male detainees.³⁸⁸⁹

The Bassiouni Committee would eventually count 162 places in Bosnia where women were detained and raped. Of these, 88 were run by Serbs, 17 by Croats, eight by Muslims and 14 jointly by Croats and Muslims. In 35 cases, it was not known who was in charge.³⁸⁹⁰

The first cases of rape in Bosnia became known as early as April 1992, with the arrival of women fleeing after the ethnic cleansing by the Serbs of Bijeljina.³⁸⁹¹ By the following month it

³⁸⁸⁵ Cisca Dresselhuys, ‘Ik vind mezelf eigenlijk een wat saaie man’ (‘I consider myself a rather boring man’), *Opzij*, June 1993, p. 87; S. Termeer, ‘Minister Kooijmans ziet weer uit naar het schrijven van een nieuw boek’ (‘Junior Minister Kooijmans looks forward to writing another new book’), *Mare*, 14/01/93, p. 5.

³⁸⁸⁶ ‘Massale protestactie tegen seksueel geweld in Bosnië’ (‘Mass protest against sexual violence in Bosnia’), *Trouw*, 11/01/93; Caspar Janssen & Thomas Ruijgrok, ‘Peter Kooijmans’, *HP/De Tijd*, 12/03/93, p. 16. On this matter, see also ABZ, DIO/JS/00002. Memorandum from DIO/Yugoslavia to Kooijmans, 07/01/93, no. 93/9.

³⁸⁸⁷ Cisca Dresselhuys, ‘Ik vind mezelf eigenlijk een wat saaie man’, *Opzij*, June 1993, p. 87.

³⁸⁸⁸ See the charges against Dragan Gagovich et al. and then the revised charges of 13/07/98 and 08/11/99 by the ICTFY against Dragoljub Kunarac with respect to the conduct of himself and his VRS reconnaissance unit, made up of Serbs and Montenegrans, in Foca, <http://www.un.org/icty/indictment/english/kun1a1980819e.htm> United States Congress, Committee on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Genocide*, pp. 16-17; Roy Gutman, ‘Rape Camps’, *Newsday*, 19/04/93; ditto, *Witness*, pp. 164-167.

³⁸⁸⁹ See, for example, Vranic, *Wall*, pp. 291-292.

³⁸⁹⁰ UN, S/1994/674, Appendix IX, par. 475.

³⁸⁹¹ Vranic, *Wall*, p. 186.

appeared from the reports supplied by the swelling number of refugees entering Croatia from Bosnia that rape was occurring on a large scale.³⁸⁹² At the beginning of summer 1992, rapes by Serb troops became a major topic in the Croatian newspapers.³⁸⁹³ However, these reports only trickled very slowly into the Western media. But occasional coverage of the rape of Muslim women by Bosnian Serbs did appear in the West from summer 1992.³⁸⁹⁴ Credible reports about systematic rapes were circulating in the US State Department at this time.³⁸⁹⁵ And in the Netherlands De Hoop Scheffer was confronted with stories about rapes during a visit to the Willem I barracks in Den Bosch, where Bosnian refugees were being housed.³⁸⁹⁶ However, the Western media and politicians paid little attention to the information, probably either because rape was regarded as a 'normal' phenomenon of war³⁸⁹⁷ or because the reports seemed exaggerated.³⁸⁹⁸ This latter attitude was reinforced by sensational earlier stories, also about rapes, for which evidence was never found.³⁸⁹⁹

Ed Vulliamy, who had visited Trnopolje camp on 5 August 1992 with the ITN television crew, remembered later that during his visit prisoners had spoken about girls who had been 'taken away' but that it had not occurred to any of the journalists at the time to ask about rapes.³⁹⁰⁰ Once again it was Roy Gutman who, as in his reports about Serbian prison camps, was ahead of the field in the West.³⁹⁰¹ As early as 9 August 1992, he had written that, 'Reports of rape have been so extensive that some analysts think it was systematic.'³⁹⁰²

However, reports of systematic rapes only really began to appear from 25 September, when Radio Bosnia accused Serbs of holding 10,000 Muslim women at special camps in Bosnia where they were raped 'in public' and then murdered.³⁹⁰³ Three days later the Women's Group Tresnjevka in Zagreb published a report about the rapes in collaboration with women's organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This emphasized their systematic character. The group wrote that, following the earlier discovery of 'Nazi-style concentration camps', it was now aware of 'rape/death camps'. Their locations were given in the report. And they were said to be part of a 'final solution'. According to the group, its sources stated that more than 35,000 women and children were being held in such Serb-run 'rape/death camps',

'enduring the most frightful methods of terror and torture. Such tortures include rapes, gang rapes, forced incest, the draining of the blood of captives to provide blood for transfusions for the needs of the criminals, setting children ablaze, and drowning babies. These are only a part of the daily death crimes.

³⁸⁹² Vranic, *Wall*, p. 234.

³⁸⁹³ Vranic, *Wall*, p. 186.

³⁸⁹⁴ See, for example, 'Vooral Moslims zijn slachtoffer van moorden in Bosnië' ('Muslims are principal victims of murders in Bosnia'), *de Volkskrant*, 24/06/92; Nicole Lucas, 'Laat ons, we hebben te veel meegemaakt' ('Leave us alone, we've been through too much'), *Trouw*, 01/07/92.

³⁸⁹⁵ Danner, *America*, p. 58.

³⁸⁹⁶ Leonard Ornstein, 'CDA'er De Hoop Scheffer bleef in zijn vakantie dóórdenken' ('CDA's De Hoop Scheffer continues to reflect, even on holiday'), *Vrij Nederland*, 15/08/92.

³⁸⁹⁷ Vranic, *Wall*, p. 265; Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 196.

³⁸⁹⁸ This was the case, for example, at the *BBC World Service*, 'A Letter to the BBC World Service from Vladimir Lojen, a former employee', <http://www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk/bosnia/bbcwor.html> consulted 06/06/00.

³⁸⁹⁹ 'Vrijlating brengt eerst euforie, dan depressie' ('Release first brings euphoria, then depression'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/12/92.

³⁹⁰⁰ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 196.

³⁹⁰¹ Gutmann, *Witness*, pp. xiv-xv, 25, 64-76; Roy Gutman, 'Mass Rape', *Newsday*, 23/08/92. See also Allen, *Warfare*, p. 65.

³⁹⁰² R. Gutman, 'Bosnia Rape Horror', 09/08/92; Gutman, *Witness*, p. 64.

³⁹⁰³ 'In Joegoslavië is grens tussen feit en verzinsel vaag' ('Boundary between fact and fantasy is vague in Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad* 30/01/93.

Females between 10 and 30 years of age are the primary objects of daily gang rapes. They are raped daily by between 40 and 50 Chetniks.³⁹⁰⁴

The group called upon international organizations and the women's movement abroad to help in the struggle against these crimes. A week later Radovan Karadzic and the Bosnian government's Commission for War Crimes accused one another's supporters of committing systematic rape.³⁹⁰⁵

Particularly in Germany, there was considerable interest in mass rapes in Bosnia after the journalist Maria von Welser featured interviews with victims and with Roy Gutman in the ZDF television programme *Mona Lisa* on 15 November, and journalist Alexandra Stiglmeier wrote about rape camps in the magazines *Weltwoche*³⁹⁰⁶ and *Stern*³⁹⁰⁷. Gutman went so far as to claim that there was not a woman aged 15-25 left in Bosnia-Herzegovina who had not been raped.³⁹⁰⁸ Croatian and Muslim agencies now put the figure at approximately 60,000 rapes.³⁹⁰⁹

Because it was primarily Muslim women under Serb control who were the victims of rape, an intensive discussion arose as to whether this was a 'normal' by-product of the war – based upon the idea that rape occurs in virtually every conflict – or whether it was a systematic form of violence intended to drive out the Muslims and strip them of their sense of identity and orientation. Adherents of the latter theory spoke of 'rape warfare'³⁹¹⁰ or 'strategic rape':³⁹¹¹

'This is a specific of the Bosnian case. Rape was used as a component of the Serb political and military strategy. This is a selected and refined weapon for attaining the goal of the war and a final political aim. This specificity sets apart mass rape in Bosnia from other cases, ranking it as the worst crime of its type.'³⁹¹²

In this respect, some people called the rapes a form of genocide. Others used the term 'gynocide': 'a deliberate attack on women as the bearers of children'.³⁹¹³ As one author put it, 'The world has never seen sex used this consciously, this cynically, this elaborately, this openly, this systematically, and with this degree of technological and psychological sophistication, as a means of destroying a whole people.'³⁹¹⁴

Some saw evidence for the systematic nature of the rapes in remarks made by perpetrators to their victims that they would carry 'Serbian seed'.³⁹¹⁵ The American Professor of Women's Studies Beverly Allen emphasized in her 1996 book, *Rape Warfare. The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*, that Serbs would hold victims whom they had made pregnant until such time as termination

³⁹⁰⁴ NIOD, Coll. Blaauw, Women's Group 'Tresnjevka, report, 28/09/92.

³⁹⁰⁵ 'VS geven vliegverbod boven Bosnië steun' ('US backs no-fly zone over Bosnia'), *de Volkskrant*, 03/10/92.

³⁹⁰⁶ Alexandra Stiglmeier, 'Die Demütigung as Waffe' ('Humiliation as a weapon'), *Weltwoche*, 05/11/92.

³⁹⁰⁷ See, for example, Cheryl Benard & Edith Schlaffer, 'Kleiner als ein Stück Dreck' ('Smaller than a piece of dirt'), *Der Spiegel*, 1992 no. 50, pp. 184-190. In the Netherlands see, for example, Anet Bleich, 'In Trnopolje wordt dagelijks verkracht' ('Rapes being committed daily in Trnopolje'), 'Complete families zitten vast in Servische kampen' ('Entire families held in Serb camps') and 'Meisjes werden geslacht als lammetjes' ('Girls were slaughtered like lambs'), *de Volkskrant*, 13/11/92; 'Europa's schande' ('Europe's shame'), *de Volkskrant*, 14/11/92; Anet Bleich, 'Bewakers kwamen 's avonds meisjes halen' ('Guards came at night to take away girls'), *de Volkskrant*, 16/11/92.

³⁹⁰⁸ Quoted in Calic, *Krieg*, p. 135.

³⁹⁰⁹ Calic, *Krieg*, pp. 135 and 137; Oliver Tolemein, 'Männerphantasie Frauen-Kriegsbewegung' ('Male Fantasies of the Women's War Movement'), Schneider (ed.), *Andruck*, p. 92. For even higher numbers from various sources, see *ibidem*, p. 93; Wolfgang Schneider, 'Aufklärung und Propaganda. Eine Kontroverse' ('Education and propaganda. A controversy'), *ibidem*, p. 84; ditto, 'Das vage Bewusstsein' ('The vague awareness'), *ibidem*, p. 102.

³⁹¹⁰ Allen, *Warfare*.

³⁹¹¹ Vranic, *Wall*, p. 316.

³⁹¹² Vranic, *Wall*, p. 317.

³⁹¹³ Sells, *Bridge*, pp. 21-22, 66.

³⁹¹⁴ Catherine A. MacKinnon, quoted in Vranic, *Wall*, p. 31.

³⁹¹⁵ See, for example, Sells, *Bridge*, p. 22.

was no longer possible so as to be sure that that ‘Serbian seed’ would bear fruit. ‘The *pregnancies*,’ she wrote, ‘and not the rapes alone, are a major weapon of the genocide. There may be “nothing unprecedented about mass rape in war”, but this is something new.’³⁹¹⁶ And, ‘Genocidal rape aimed at enforced pregnancy would seem to be a peculiarly Serb contribution to the history of atrocity.’³⁹¹⁷

According to Allen, pregnancy and the bearing of the rapist’s child destroyed the cultural identity of the victim, ‘The very characteristics that ostensibly made that person an enemy in the first place.’³⁹¹⁸

Jantien Achttienribbe and Leoni Sipkes thought the same. At the time of their initiative to send a letter to fellow parliamentarians in Europe, they stated that in the near future they wanted to visit women’s camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina with a delegation of Dutch women. They had already discussed this with Ministers Hans Van den Broek and Relus Ter Beek. Achttienribbe told the press that it might well be that women were raped in every war, ‘But this situation is unique, because the rapes are taking place with the premeditated purpose of making women pregnant and so ‘de-ethnifying’ the land.’³⁹¹⁹

Sipkes later reiterated the same point to the NIOD as follows. ‘So as soon as you as a Serb rape a Muslim woman, that’s even worse than when you simply rape a woman. Ethnicity came into it again... Yes. That ethnicity which came into it. “We make sure that that Muslim woman is raped,” and that was the worst thing you could do to her. In that way you also ensure that more Serb children come along. So that makes it even more horrific.’³⁹²⁰ Other women in the West who addressed the rape issue, such as Allen, rejected such statements because they thought that they reflected adoption of both the ethnic-nationalist frame of mind and, above all, a chauvinistic male notion of sexual reproduction, as if a woman was merely a biological container for the man’s sperm and subsequently bore *his* child.³⁹²¹

Others saw important evidence for the systematic nature of the rapes in claims by perpetrators that they had been acting under orders from their superiors and had even been forced to commit rapes against their will.³⁹²² ‘It is rape under orders, not rape by those who are out of control, writes Vranic.’³⁹²³ ‘It is controlled and deliberate rape. This fact definitively separates the “Bosnian case” from the context of random rape.’ However, this type of order always came from immediate superiors – for example, a camp commandant. This meant that no connection had yet been made with the highest levels of the Bosnian Serb command structure. It was inconceivable, though, given the scale upon which the rapes were taking place, that the political and military leadership was not aware of them. At the very least, it had not acted against them. Some authors therefore conclude that there was not only passive acquiescence but also active planning at the very top:

‘Without a uniform order given only by the highest authorities, mass-scale rape would not have been possible; neither would the systematic sexual abuse of camp and prison inmates be possible or the otherwise improbable concordance of acts (which includes the use of sexual violence) in the campaign of “ethnic cleansing” of territories under Serb control.’³⁹²⁴

On the other hand, other authors used comparisons with the extent of rape during other wars and the involvement of superiors in them to claim that statements about the unique nature of the practice in

³⁹¹⁶ Allen, *Warfare*, p. 91. See also *ibidem*, pp. vii and 100.

³⁹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 92.

³⁹¹⁸ Allen, *Warfare*, p. 101.

³⁹¹⁹ Elsbeth Kegge, ‘Steun van Kamer voor verkrachte vrouwen Bosnië’ (‘House supports raped women in Bosnia’), *Het Parool*, 10/12/92.

³⁹²⁰ Interview L. Sipkes, 24/01/00.

³⁹²¹ Allen, *Warfare*, p. 87. See also Carpenter, *Children*, p. 443.

³⁹²² See, for example, Tom Post et al., ‘A Pattern of Rape’, *Newsweek*, 04/01/93; the witness statements in Vranic, *Wall*, pp. 142 and 306; *NOS Journaal*, 22/01/93; UN, S/1994/674, pars. 250 and 498.

³⁹²³ Vranic, *Wall*, p. 304.

³⁹²⁴ Vranic, *Wall*, p. 308.

the Croatian and Bosnian wars should be viewed with a certain wariness.³⁹²⁵ Susan Brownmiller, who in 1975 had published the much debated rape study, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, wrote in early 1993:

‘Alas for women, there is nothing unprecedented about mass rape in war when enemy soldiers advance swiftly through populous regions, nor is it a precedent when, howling in misery, leaders of the overrun country call the endemic sexual violence a conspiracy to destroy their national pride, their manhood, their honor.’³⁹²⁶

Sorabji seriously questioned the systematic nature of the rapes. To her, the practices gave more an impression of chaos and confusion:

‘The much-publicized accounts of rape (...) include cases of women being assaulted in their homes, in military headquarters, in camps, on the road to exile, allowed to buy their way free with Deutschmarks, released after impregnation and the possibility of terminating the pregnancy had passed, killed after being assaulted, assaulted once, assaulted continuously, told by their perpetrators they had been ordered to rape, told they had to bear Serbian children, raped as part of a supposed interrogation, told that their men were raping Serbian women, or told nothing.’³⁹²⁷

And according to Linda Grant of *The Guardian* there was nothing unique about the wartime rapes in Bosnia. What was unique was that this was the first time a war was accessible to the feminist movement.³⁹²⁸

The reaction in the West to the rapes in Bosnia was indeed related not only to the events themselves but also to the situation in domestic society, in particular the position of women and the significance of sexual violence within it. In the reporting of the wars in Yugoslavia, people in the West sought things they could identify with. The images from summer 1992 of refugees and men behind barbed wire had already struck a general chord in this respect. They were compared with those from the Second World War. The coverage of rapes allowed certain women to draw parallels not with past events but their own era. This particularly applied to sections of the American women’s movement. As the American jurist Diane Conklin wrote in the introduction to a book containing the testimonies of Bosnian women who had been the victims of rape:

‘The rape of Bosnian women is the rape of myself. I identify with them because I could have been there. I could have experienced multiple rapes (up to 30 a day) for months and then been murdered. Or I could have survived the ordeal and then been forgotten.’³⁹²⁹

And Allen opened her book about rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia with section entitled ‘About Myself’.³⁹³⁰ Another author wrote that, ‘[p]rior to Bosnia, there was never an issue involving

³⁹²⁵ See, for example, Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 404; Allcock & Milivojevic & Horton (eds.), *Conflict*, p. 234; Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 170; Calic, *Krieg*, p. 139.

³⁹²⁶ Quoted in Allen, *Warfare*, p. 88.

³⁹²⁷ Sorabji, *War*, p. 83.

³⁹²⁸ Linda Grant, ‘Anyone here been raped and speak English?’, *The Guardian*, 02/08/93.

³⁹²⁹ Diane Conklin, ‘Special note’, Vranic, *Wall*, p. 19.

³⁹³⁰ Allen, *Warfare*, pp. 1-4.

women in other countries that preoccupied American women. Overnight, it seemed that the plight of Bosnian women had become a domestic issue to American feminists.³⁹³¹

But in the Netherlands, too, the rapes in the former Yugoslavia deeply troubled many women. No other aspect of the Yugoslavia issue generated such a stream of letters to the government, elected representatives and political parties. And almost all this correspondence came from women's organizations.³⁹³² Several petitions were also organized as a result of the sexual violence against women in the former Yugoslavia.³⁹³³

However long it took the media to pick up properly on the information about the rapes, once they did so the subject was embraced with a vengeance. Although the images of Fikret Alic had been burned into the consciousness of television viewers and newspaper readers for years, after a while they lost their power of expression for the media.

In any case, as shown in Chapter 7, the intervention debate had temporarily collapsed in the Netherlands after August 1992. Now the subject of rape provided a new focal point for the coverage of the former Yugoslavia. As the media expert Carruthers writes, 'Media try to counter 'compassion burnout' by repackaging each new humanitarian disaster in a new frame.'³⁹³⁴

Finally, the subject of rapes in Bosnia had a special significance for the West due to the discussions going on at the same time about the establishment of a special tribunal to try war criminals from the former Yugoslavia. This synchronicity opened up an opportunity for a campaign to have sexual violence in wartime 'upgraded' to the status of a war crime.³⁹³⁵ In the United States, the subject of the rapes in Bosnia was an active issue for the various women's organizations which together formed the Ad Hoc Women's Coalition Against War Crimes, one of the aims of which was international legal means to prosecute the perpetrators of rape. In some countries, the attempt to 'upgrade' rape to the status of a war crime also reflected a specifically domestic agenda. Sexual violence against women was not being viewed with sufficient seriousness by the prosecuting authorities and judiciaries in those states. It was hoped that the recognition of sexual violence during wartime as a war crime would automatically lead to sexual violence at home in peacetime being taken more seriously.³⁹³⁶

In the stories about rapes in Bosnia, it was once again the use of the word 'camps' which appealed most to the imaginations of journalists. But attempts to find those camps yielded no results. However, there were camps containing both men and women in which virtually all the women had been raped. One such was Omarska, which housed several dozens of women who had been raped repeatedly.³⁹³⁷ There were also, as already mentioned, hotels and smaller premises which appeared to be used exclusively as brothels.³⁹³⁸ In these it was rare for more than 15 women to be held at any one time.³⁹³⁹ Nevertheless, certain people and agencies clung firmly to the word 'camps'. Semantics had to be pressed into service to maintain the existence of special rape and death camps. Allen, for instance, defined 'rape/death camps' as follows:

³⁹³¹ Aryeh Neier, quoted in Carpenter, *Children*, p. 431.

³⁹³² See, for example, ABZ, DIO/ARA/00087. Arachne Vrouwenadviesbureau Overheidsbeleid (Arachne Women's Consultancy on Government Policy) to the Parliamentary Permanent Committee for Defence, 25/01/93; DIO/ARA/00089. Vrouwenkoor Cantabile (Cantabile Women's Choir), Denekamp, to Foreign Affairs, 08/03/93; H. de Koning-Peet, Chair of the Equal Opportunities Committee, Christelijk College Rotterdam (Rotterdam Christian College), to Kooijmans, 08/03/93.

³⁹³³ See, for example, ABZ, DIO/ARA/00089. Nederlandse ChristenVrouwenbond (Netherlands Christian Women's Union) to all sections, March 1993.

³⁹³⁴ Carruthers, *Media*, p. 237.

³⁹³⁵ Cf. Allen, *Warfare*, p. 108; Carpenter, *Children*, pp. 431-432.

³⁹³⁶ See, for example, Tamar Lewin, 'The Balkans Rapes: a Legal Test for the Outraged?', *The New York Times*, 15/01/93.

³⁹³⁷ Allen, *Warfare*, p. 64.

³⁹³⁸ United Nations, S/1994/674, 27/05/94, Annexe, pars. 248 and 249.

³⁹³⁹ Vranic, *Wall*, p. 300.

‘Buildings or enclosures where Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Croatian girls and women are kept and systematically raped for weeks or months at a time. These are restaurants, hotels, hospitals, schools, factories, peacetime brothels, or other buildings; they are also animal stalls in barns, fenced-in pens, and arenas.’³⁹⁴⁰

And Selma Hecimovic, a relief worker with raped women in Zenica, where many of the reports in the West about rapes had their origin, declared:

‘Maybe people out there think rape camps have to be camps of the kind we used to see in films about the Second World War, organised by the Nazis. There aren’t such camps. We regard a “camp” as a house or school or café or hospital in which they violated people.’³⁹⁴¹

In the case of rapes, the fixation with camps added an extra dimension when compared with prison camps, since their establishment would indicate the existence of a ‘rape system’. But reports indicating a lack of any evidence for rape on a large scale were given short shrift in the German press. Anyone pointing this out ran then risk of being labelled a *Vergewaltigungsverharmloser* (‘rape denier’) or *Serbenfreund* (‘Serb-lover’).³⁹⁴²

Germany became the springboard for wider European interest in the issue of the rapes in Bosnia. Between 11 and 15 November 1992, the International Women’s Peace Forum met in Oberhausen, with participants coming from 14 countries in Europe, Africa, North America and Central America. The Netherlands was represented by Adrienne van Melle-Hermans, ‘contact woman’ of the International Contacts Working Party of *Vrouwen voor Vrede*, which endeavoured to support peace movements in the former Yugoslavia.

At the end of its gathering, the Forum adopted a resolution stating that rape during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina was part of the military strategy of the former Yugoslav National Army and the paramilitary groups. A call was also made to regard rape as a war crime, to make every effort to close the ‘rape/death camps’ immediately and to organize support and relief for the victims of rape. The affiliated women’s movements took it upon themselves to demand national and international attention for the resolution, which they sent to bodies including the European Parliament, the United Nations Security Council and the German *Bundestag*.

In the Netherlands, the resolution was circulated to women’s organizations with the request that they collect signatures in support of it. These would be presented to the minister for Foreign Affairs early in 1993. Kooijmans did accept them on 9 January. In a letter accompanying the circular to women’s organizations, Van Melle-Hermans apologized for the fact that the resolution referred only to rapes perpetrated on the Serb side. In explanation, she wrote that it was ‘likely’ that most rapes were committed on that side and that the resolution had come about as a result of the ‘SOS’ from the Women’s Group Tresnjevka at the end of September.³⁹⁴³

At the European Community summit in Edinburgh in December 1992, Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany – where the rapes in Bosnia had attracted considerable attention – urged that Europe take action.³⁹⁴⁴ Other leaders also expressed their horror at reports about the existence of rape camps for Muslim women.³⁹⁴⁵ The European Council therefore decided at Edinburgh to send a mission headed by a former British diplomat at the United Nations, Dame Ann Warburton, to investigate the

³⁹⁴⁰ Allen, *Warfare*, viii.

³⁹⁴¹ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 201.

³⁹⁴² Cf. Martin Lettmayer, ‘Da wurde einfach geglaubt, ohne nachzufragen’ (‘It was simply believed without question’), Bittermann (ed.), *Serbien*, pp. 37-49.

³⁹⁴³ NIOD, Coll. GroenLinks, dossier ‘Yugoslavia – Women’. Women for Peace, International Relations, to Dutch women’s organizations and other, 30/11/92.

³⁹⁴⁴ See also ABZ, DEU/ARA/00102. COREU of the UK EU Presidency, 09/12/92, cpe/pres/lon 2008.

³⁹⁴⁵ See also ABZ, DEU/ARA/00102. COREU The Hague, 11/12/92, cpe/hag 785.

rape of Muslim women. This EC initiative was supported by the UN Security Council on 18 December 1992, when it unanimously adopted Resolution 798 which condemned the mass rape, primarily of Muslim women in Serb camps, as ‘acts of unspeakable brutality’. According to the Council, there existed ‘massive, organized and systematic detention and rape’.

The appointment of the Warburton Mission was the concrete action taken in respect of Yugoslavia at the Edinburgh summit. However, the Dutch government, politicians and civil servants regarded the Warburton mission as ‘unnecessary’. As far as they were concerned, enough was already known about what was happening in Bosnia. Maarten Van Traa described it as the ‘pinnacle of cynicism by the European Community (...) that we have decided to send a mission to Bosnia to see if women are being raped there.’³⁹⁴⁶

One interesting issue is how the EC declaration about the treatment of Muslim women was worded. Germany had submitted a draft declaration to the *Comité Politique* which included the words, ‘It [the EC] strongly condemns these acts of unspeakable brutality, which form part of a deliberate strategy to destroy the identity of the Muslim community in Bosnia-Herzegovina.’ But several member states, including France and the United Kingdom, objected to this wording because they said it came too close to the definition of genocide. At the suggestion of the Netherlands, the second part of the sentence was therefore changed to read, ‘which form part of a deliberate strategy to terrorise the Muslim community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in order to achieve the purpose of ethnic cleansing.’³⁹⁴⁷ The EC declaration also included a clause stating that those responsible for war crimes would be held personally accountable and ‘will be brought to justice’.

Achtienribbe and Sipkes – who had already written to fellow parliamentarians – decided several days later to send another letter, this time to the political leadership in Belgrade. In this they called upon it to bring to an end the atrocities being committed against women and children in Serb camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina ‘as part of an organized system’ designed to ethnically cleanse Muslims and Croats. ‘Sexual abuses in this context have modern precedents only in Nazi Germany,’ stated the parliamentary letter writers.³⁹⁴⁸

In both Serbia and the Republika Srpska, however, the reports about rape camps were denied. In mid December, for example, the Conference of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church declared that there existed no special camps in which Serbs were holding Muslim women prisoners. According to the ecclesiastical dignitaries, reports to the contrary were war propaganda designed to ‘demonize’ the Serb people.³⁹⁴⁹ On 23 December, however, the World Council of Churches reported that witness statements showed that ‘thousands of women’ were held in rape camps and that the rape was systematic, not a by-product of war.³⁹⁵⁰

3. ‘If oil is a reason to go to war, then these rapes certainly are’

The Warburton mission first consulted the main international humanitarian organizations in Geneva and then travelled on to Zagreb to conduct its investigations. All this took five days, 20-24 December 1992. During the final days of 1992, the mission stated in an interim report that there was a huge contrast between the extensive attention given to the rapes in the media and the lack of evidence for them provided by all relevant organizations, including the UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The mission itself never went any further than Zagreb. Nevertheless, it claimed

³⁹⁴⁶ Martijn Delaere, ‘Eensgezind ten strijde’ (‘United into battle’), *Het Binnenhof*, 19/12/92. A similar notion prevailed in the Council of Ministers, judging by the objectivized minutes of its meeting on 15/12/92; ABZ, DEU/ARA/00102, marginal notes on COREU London, 09/12/92, cpe/pres/lon/2008.

³⁹⁴⁷ ABZ, DEU/2002/00001. Van den Broek 187 to London embassy, 15/12/92.

³⁹⁴⁸ NIOD, Coll. *GroenLinks*, dossier ‘Yugoslavia – Women’. J. Achtienribbe-Buijs and L. Sipkes to Cosic, Milosevic and Panic, 17/12/92.

³⁹⁴⁹ RFE/RL, daily report no. 240, 15/12/92; Vranic, *Wall*, p. 308.

³⁹⁵⁰ ‘In Joegoslavië is grens tussen feit en verzinsel vaag’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/01/93.

that 'on the basis of evidence available to it' there must have been many thousands of rapes. The most well-reasoned estimate presented to the Commission gave a figure of about 20,000. It had repeatedly heard about camps or small detention centres such as houses, restaurants and police stations at which rapes were said to be taking place, but their existence had not – yet – been confirmed. The mission also claimed that rape, or the threat of it, could not be regarded as a by-product of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina but formed part of a Serb tactic of demoralization and terror directed against the Muslims in the interests of ethnic cleansing.³⁹⁵¹

The British newspaper *The Independent* managed to obtain a copy of this interim report, which had not yet been intended for publication.³⁹⁵² Once *The Independent* had published the provisional conclusions of the Warburton mission, both the report and the phenomenon of rape again attracted a great deal of attention from the press and parliamentarians in Europe.³⁹⁵³ The media gave little space to the dissenting opinion of mission member Simone Veil, former President of the European Parliament, who distanced herself from the figure of 20,000 rapes because it was based solely upon discussions with just four people.³⁹⁵⁴ Warburton would later say that her Commission had spoken with nine women who had been raped and also conducted dozens of interviews with direct witnesses.³⁹⁵⁵

The Dutch government certainly adopted the provisional conclusion of the Warburton Report, that there had been systematic rape by the Serbs, straight away. It proposed the gynaecologist Dr Gunilla Kleiverda, of the *Flevo Ziekenhuis* hospital in Almere, for the follow-up mission called for in the interim report; this should conduct investigations in Bosnia itself. Kleiverda had many years of experience in treating both victims of sexual violence and Muslim women in Amsterdam. She also enjoyed some renown at the time because she had drawn up a protocol for medical contact with Islamic women.³⁹⁵⁶ In addition to Kleiverda, several members from other countries were added to the original Warburton group for its follow-up investigation. The full mission met in Zagreb on 19-21 January, after which only the team of experts led by Warburton travelled on to Zenica in Central Bosnia, where it stayed from 22 to 26 January.

The political team, of which Kleiverda was a member, returned home after the meeting. In Zagreb the mission spoke with representatives from international organizations, with leaders of Catholic and Muslim groups and with both official and unofficial Croatian and Bosnian organizations. There were also contacts with the Croatian government. In both Croatia and Bosnia the Warburton mission visited refugee camps and hospitals, where its members spoke with aid workers and a limited number of victims and witnesses.

In her own report on the trip, Kleiverda – who had visited two reception camps for female war victims in Croatia with the Warburton mission – called its investigation 'one-sided' because its assignment was confined to studying the rape of Bosnian Muslim women. She stated that the members of the mission were well aware that Croatian and Serbian women had also been and were being raped 'on a large scale', although she added that Muslim women were the principal victims. Kleiverda wrote that it was difficult to establish whether the rapes were taking place on orders from above. But she called it 'striking' that in many cases the rapists were either known to their victims or members of local militias. Freed women had confirmed the existence of rape camps, according to Kleiverda's report. Whilst estimates of the number of rapes varied between 10,000 and 50,000, figures for the number of pregnancies resulting from them ranged from 900 to 1500. Fewer than 10 women in Zagreb had given birth to babies fathered by Serb rapists. And not a single such case was known of Split. There had been

³⁹⁵¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00102. COREU of the UK EC Presidency, 27/12/92, cpe/pres/lon 2123.

³⁹⁵² L. Doyle, 'Victims of cold, calculated cruelty' and 'Serbs raped 20,000 as a "weapon of war"', *The Independent*, 06/01/93.

³⁹⁵³ See, for example, 'Rapport verkrachtigen schokt EG' ('Rape report shocks EC'), *Trouw*, 07/01/93.

³⁹⁵⁴ Flounders, *Bosnia Tragedy*, p. 9.

³⁹⁵⁵ Lieke Noorman, 'Je kunt beter verkracht worden dan vermoord' ('Better to be raped than killed'), *HP/De Tijd*, 19/02/93, p. 32.

³⁹⁵⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00110. COREU The Hague, 05/01/93, cpe/hag 002; COREU The Hague, 12/01/93, cpe/hag 021.

abortions, but there was no systematic recording of whether those pregnancies were the result of rape.³⁹⁵⁷

Before the rest of the Warburton mission returned and before its final report was presented, Kleiverda organized a press conference at the *Flevo Ziekenhuis*. At this she declared that she shared the mission's conclusion that rape formed part of the system of ethnic cleansing: 'The Muslim population is being knowingly destroyed'. Her main recommendation was military intervention. 'We cannot continue just providing aid *ad infinitum* and not tackle the causes. If there is no intervention, the European Community and the rest of the world will be accessories.'³⁹⁵⁸ She admitted that she had been unable to win over the rest of the mission to her interventionist standpoint, but personally she was resolute in it: 'If oil is a reason to go to war, then these rapes certainly are.'³⁹⁵⁹

At about the same time Joris Voorhoeve – who was deeply affected by the reports of rapes – came to the same conclusion. He saw a new argument for military intervention by the European Community or the UN. 'The West can no longer look on idly or make feeble noises. It did not in fact interest Voorhoeve at all whether or not the mass rapes of Muslim women in Bosnia were the result of an official dictation from the government leaders there.'³⁹⁶⁰

So a whole range of individuals and organizations in the Netherlands had had absolutely no need of the Warburton mission to reach the conclusions that it reached. There was no doubt in the Dutch media about the (preliminary) conclusion that the rapes formed part of the Serbian and Bosnian Serb war tactics. Not that there was any proof of such a deliberate policy in the form of, for example, Serbian documents or speeches. Some also claimed that it would be difficult to obtain information from the victims because – according to some of these authors – openness about sexuality, let alone sexual atrocities, would conflict with their Islamic faith.³⁹⁶¹

Even as the experts in the Warburton mission were on their way to Zenica on 21 January, Amnesty International published two reports entitled *Bosnia Herzegovina. Rana u duši. A wound to the soul*³⁹⁶² and *Bosnia-Herzegovina. Rape and sexual abuse by armed forces*.³⁹⁶³ Although Amnesty stated that all sides in the conflict were guilty of sexual crimes, both of its reports pointed to the Bosnian Serb forces as the principal perpetrators of rape and identified Muslim women as the main victims. However, Amnesty International shied away from describing a deliberate tactic of rape on the part of the Serbs. It would go no further than stating that this 'appeared' to be the case.

The Warburton Mission released its final report on 29 January. The findings of the second mission had added little to those of the first. It stuck to the figure of 20,000 as the best estimate for the number of victims. This figure was now based upon an extrapolation of data about rapes in a number of ethnical-cleansed villages. The mission also assumed that the rapes had resulted in 1000 pregnancies, which usually resulted in a wish for abortion. And it maintained its opinion that the rapes were being committed in a recognizable pattern. The Commission avoided using the word 'systematic' in its report

³⁹⁵⁷ ABZ, DIO/ARA/00088. Report of the Warburton-II mission on rapes of Muslim women in Bosnia-Herzegovina, undated. See also Gunilla Kleiverda, "'Wij protesteren tegen manipulatie met slachtoffers'. Hulp verlenen aan Bosnische vrouwen vereist politieke keuzes'" ("We protest against the manipulation of victims." Helping Bosnian women demands political choices'), *Vrouw & Gezondheidszorg*, March/April 1993, pp. 7-10.

³⁹⁵⁸ 'EG-commissie stuit op 'walgelijke verkrachtingen' in Bosnië' ('EC commission stumbles upon "atrocious rapes" in Bosnia'), *ANP*, 26/01/93, 22:34; J. Holthausen, 'Arts: moslim-vrouwen bewust kapot gemaakt' ('Doctor: Muslim women deliberately destroyed'), *Het Parool*, 24/01/93; Romanda Abels, 'Verkrachtingen nopen tot ingrijpen in Bosnië' ('Rapes compel intervention in Bosnia'), *Trouw*, 29/01/93.

³⁹⁵⁹ R. Abels, 'Verkrachtingen nopen tot ingrijpen in Bosnië', *Trouw*, 24/01/93.

³⁹⁶⁰ 'Voorhoeve: 'Dit wordt in geen tien generaties vergeven' ('Voorhoeve: This won't be forgiven after ten generations'), *Dagblad De Stem*, 27/01/93. Voorhoeve also repeated his plea for intervention at around the same time in a dialogue with Beunders organized by *de Volkskrant*, A. Roelofs & J. Tromp, 'Is het zo belangrijk dat West-Europa buiten elk risico blijft?' ('Is so important that Western Europe avoids all risk?'), *de Volkskrant*, 25/01/93.

³⁹⁶¹ See, for example, 'A Pattern of Rape', *Nieuwweek* 11/01/93; A. Bouwmans, 'Verkrachting als wapen' ('Rape as a weapon'), *Leeuwarder Courant*, 23/01/93.

³⁹⁶² AI index: EUR 63/03/93.

³⁹⁶³ AI index: EUR 63/01/93.

because it had been unable to establish whether the rapes actually were being ordered from above. Following earlier criticism of the interim report for its emphasis upon Serb perpetrators, in its final report the Commission stated that rapes in Bosnia and Croatia were being committed by all sides – Croats, Muslims and Serbs – but mostly frequently by Serbs in their efforts to ethnically cleanse areas of Bosnia and Croatia. The Commission concluded by making a number of recommendations for the relief of and aid to the victims.³⁹⁶⁴

The debate as to whether or not the rapes were a matter of policy flared when, at almost exactly the same time, the conclusions of another investigation became known. This had been conducted in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina by four doctors on behalf of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights in the Former Yugoslavia. They came to the conclusion that whilst rapes may have taken place on large scale in Bosnia, exact numbers were impossible to establish and there was no way of telling whether there was a deliberate policy of rape.³⁹⁶⁵ Frits Kalshoven, Chairman of the UN Commission of Experts for the Violations of Humanitarian Law in the Former Yugoslavia, also expressed criticism of the Warburton Mission's findings. It said that the figure quoted was based upon information from groups in Zagreb. 'They have been able to convince the Commission that that is the correct number,' said Kalshoven. 'But I don't call that verification.'³⁹⁶⁶

A few weeks later, though, the Warburton Mission did obtain backing for some its findings from Mazowiecki. Reporting to the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, he said that he was deeply shocked by the systematic rape of women and girls. However, he did share the conclusion drawn by the doctors commissioned by him that it was impossible to state numbers of victims. But in his view it was beyond dispute that there were a lot of them.³⁹⁶⁷

Like Mazowiecki, Cherif Bassiouni – who succeeded Kalshoven – eventually agreed with the Warburton Mission. In its interim report of October 1993, the Bassiouni Commission stated that the number of rapes must have been considerably lower than the 20,000 mentioned in the Warburton Report. Jeri Laber of the American human rights organization Helsinki Watch also described the figure of 20,000 as 'exaggerated'.³⁹⁶⁸ But 18 months later, at a US congressional hearing, Bassiouni no longer described that 20,000 as 'a figure picked from thin air'. His Commission had investigated 1600 cases of rape. And those investigations had produced evidence of further cases, bringing the total to 4500. According to Bassiouni in 1995, it would be reasonable to multiply this number by four – bringing him close to the figure of 20,000.³⁹⁶⁹ In any case, in a letter to the Security Council in May 1994 UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali underlined the conclusion of the Bassiouni Commission's report 'that rape and sexual assault... have been carried out by some of the parties so systematically that they strongly appear to be the product of a policy.'³⁹⁷⁰

In the Netherlands, the Warburton Mission's report and its consideration on 18 February 1993 by the Equal Opportunities Committee of the European Parliament led to renewed major publicity. On 19 February no less than four programmes about the rape of Muslim women were screened on Dutch television within one 90-minute period.³⁹⁷¹ Of the press, the daily *NRC Handelsblad* in particular devoted

³⁹⁶⁴ UN, S/25240; ABZ, DIO/ARA/00087, EC Investigative Mission into the Treatment of Muslim Women in the former Yugoslavia, Report to EC Foreign Ministers; ABZ, 00110, COREU of the Danish EU Presidency, 29/01/93, cpe/cop 207; 'EG: meer hulp aan Bosnische verkrachtingslachtoffers' ('EC: more aid for Bosnian rape victims'), *Trouw*, 02/02/93; Lieke Noorman, 'Je kunt beter verkracht worden dan vermoord', *HP/De Tijd*, 19/02/93, pp. 32-33.

³⁹⁶⁵ 'Geen bewijs voor systematisch verkrachten' ('No proof of systematic rapes'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/01/93.

³⁹⁶⁶ 'Geen bewijs voor systematisch verkrachten' and 'Deze oorlog moet getoetst worden aan primaire rechtsregels' ('This war must be tried under basic law'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/01/93.

³⁹⁶⁷ UN, E/CN.4/1993/50 (this also contains the report by the four doctors, as Appendix II); 'VN-rapporteur zal opstappen als geweld in Bosnië niet stopt' ('UN Rapporteur will resign if violence in Bosnia does not end'), *de Volkskrant*, 11/02/93.

³⁹⁶⁸ 'Rape was weapon of Serbs, U.N. Says', *The New York Times*, 20/10/93.

³⁹⁶⁹ United States Congress, Committee on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Genocide*, pp. 7-8.

³⁹⁷⁰ UN, S/1994/674, 27/05/94. See also the Annex, pars. 253 en 313.

³⁹⁷¹ Peternel, *Joegoslavië*, p. 108.

considerable and serious attention to the relationship between fact and fiction with regard to the rapes in Bosnia during late January and early February 1993. This coverage included an interview with Heleen Habraken, the Dutch Assistant Executive in the Yugoslavia Department at the headquarters of Amnesty International in London. She explained to the newspaper that there was no proof of a systematic campaign of rapes and that in Croatia countless horror stories were doing the rounds which were difficult to refute because of the lack of witnesses and alleged locations of the crimes. According to Habraken, Amnesty International's greatest concern was 'that all those hysterical stories about rapes will ultimately prove counterproductive for the victims themselves'.³⁹⁷²

As well as propaganda in the region, Amnesty also had to contend with exaggerated expectations in the West. 'After our report appeared,' claimed Habraken, 'some people wondered why we had come out with 'all those boring cases' and not with one woman who – let's say – had been raped by a hundred soldiers.'³⁹⁷³ According to Habraken, 'suffering inflation' had set in: being raped once was no longer enough. And the fixation upon the total number of rapes – 20,000 or more – had the same effect, in her opinion. Not to mention the fact that this sensational interest in Yugoslavia distracted attention from other regions. 'I can imagine that this is difficult for workers who for years have been trying to draw attention to the systematic rapes in a country like Guatemala.'³⁹⁷⁴

Habraken also stated that it was a problem that victims in the former Yugoslavia did not want to talk, for example due to their Islamic background. But, she added, 'This is an advantage for those who want to whip up the situation, because they hide behind that argument.'³⁹⁷⁵ Nor, in her view, were the victims helped by insulting the culprits.³⁹⁷⁶ According to Habraken, the media were guilty of sensationalist reporting:

'Once, I couldn't enter a camp in Croatia because three TV crews were there before me – all looking for pregnant raped women. They stretch facts and take them out of context. In Croatia I spoke with a woman who had been raped by a guard at a prison in Vojvodina. According to her this was totally without the knowledge of the commandant but simply because the guard had felt like it. But a couple of days later that same woman was presented in a German television programme as a witness from a Serb rape camp. In such cases it is never clear where precisely a fact has become fiction, but what is clear is that that is happening on a huge scale.'³⁹⁷⁷

The scenes in which journalists pushed aside one another and aid workers were indeed sometimes disgraceful, as in the case when a British journalist and a French camera crew ended up squabbling over the hospital bed of a raped Bosnian girl.³⁹⁷⁸

Following extensive analysis, a team from the *NRC Handelsblad* comprising editorial staff members Peter Michielsen, Laura Starink and Hans Steketee concluded that neither the ICRC nor the UNHCR yet had any first-hand witness statements about the existence of special rape camps.³⁹⁷⁹

In a fairly unconvincing response to the statements by the *NRC* team, Habraken and Kalshoven, Gunilla Kleiverda stated that 'a figure of 20,000 [rapes] is possibly still on the low side'. Anyone doubting that was in danger of 'implicitly approving the atrocities which are still being committed'. As for whether rape was a matter of policy, she was now less certain: 'No verdict can be

³⁹⁷² 'Hysterische verhalen helpen de slachtoffers niet' ('Hysterical stories do not help the victims'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/01/93.

³⁹⁷³ *Ibidem*.

³⁹⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁹⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁹⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁹⁷⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁹⁷⁸ See also Linda Grant, 'Anyone here been raped and speak English?', *The Guardian*, 02/08/93.

³⁹⁷⁹ 'In Joegoslavië is grens tussen feit en verzinsel vaag', *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/01/93.

delivered about whether or not rapes are being committed “under orders” as long as the war continues.³⁹⁸⁰ But she saved the final attack in her contribution to the *NRC Handelsblad* for Habraken: ‘By confining ourselves solely to aid work, we reinforce the feeling that we are “at least making a useful contribution” and buy off our collective sense of guilt.’³⁹⁸¹

As Habraken had highlighted, media coverage of the rapes did indeed sometimes lack critical distance. The most extreme example of this was the story promoted by German CDU MP Stefan Schwarz, who claimed that women were being implanted with dog foetuses. This was picked by certain media in the Netherlands,³⁹⁸² and resulted in responses including a letter from the municipal executive in Eindhoven to Minister Peter Kooijmans calling for ‘an end to be made to the murderous insanity in the former Yugoslavia by the quickest and most effective means’.³⁹⁸³ Shortly afterwards, Schwarz himself attributed the story to translation and communication errors. But he did not really agree that he had sent an untrue story into the world. ‘OK,’ he said. ‘It wasn’t an experiment like those conducted in Auschwitz by the Nazi doctor Mengele. But to me it looks much the same and makes little difference. We’re looking on and doing nothing.’³⁹⁸⁴

Beverly Allen also wrote, in response to reports that videotapes were circulating showing rapes being committed by Serbs, that, ‘Whether they exist in fact or simply as a rumor, even the rumor of such tapes is a chilling aspect of this genocide.’³⁹⁸⁵

Some people showed a strong tendency to believe stories of sexual violence even when there was no evidence. One example is Slavenka Drakulic who, having asked a girl in a refugee camp in Croatia whether she had been raped and been told that she had not, responded, ‘But I doubted it. Perhaps if I came back another time she might tell me her real story.’³⁹⁸⁶ Of course, Drakulic could have been right that the girl was concealing that she had been raped – but the point here is her assumption that she already knew what the ‘real story’ was.

On 1 February 1993, the EC ministers accepted the findings of the Warburton Report. They declared that they were prepared to admit more victims of rape to the European Community and to offer physical and psychological help to those who remained in the Balkan region itself. The parties to the conflict were urged to put an end to the practice of rape.³⁹⁸⁷ Minister Kooijmans declared that the ultimate objective was to liberate the women from the camps,³⁹⁸⁸ but two weeks later a spokesperson from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that even inspection of the camps was ‘entirely dependent’ upon ‘further developments in the international political efforts with regard to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia’.³⁹⁸⁹

This was rather reminiscent of a statement at the beginning of January by French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas that, if necessary, France would act alone to end the existence of prison camps

³⁹⁸⁰ G. Kleiverda, ‘Cijfers over verkrachte moslimvrouwen niet uit de lucht gegrepen’ (‘Figures for raped Muslim women not plucked out of the air’), *NRC Handelsblad* 01/02/93.

³⁹⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

³⁹⁸² W. Beusekamp, ‘Artsen Servië doen proeven op moslimvrouwen’ (‘Serbia doctors conducting tests on Muslim women’), *de Volkskrant*, 04/01/93; *RTL Nieuws*, 04/01/93.

³⁹⁸³ ‘B en W Eindhoven: beëindig ‘moorddadige waanzin’ (‘Eindhoven Executive: end "murderous insanity"’), *ANP*, 05/01/93, 18:32. For a reaction to this letter from the Netherlands Department of Foreign Affairs, see ARA/DIO/00087, P.P. van Wulfften Palthe to Eindhoven City Council, 05/01/93, no. DIO-199425.

³⁹⁸⁴ Willem Beusekamp, ‘Duitse parlementariër Schwarz inventariseert misdaden Serviërs’ (‘German MP Schwarz audits Serb crimes’), *de Volkskrant*, 14/01/93. See also Marjolien Sebregts, ‘Hondefoetussen? Nooit van gehoord’. Geen bewijs voor medische experimenten in Bosnië’ (‘Dog foetuses? Never heard of such a thing. No evidence for medical experiments in Bosnia’), *Elsevier*, 23/01/93; A. Vaessen & O. Zimmermann, ‘Gegoochel met Servische wreedheden. Duitse politicus Stefan Schwarz krabbelt terug’ (‘Juggling with Serb atrocities, German politician Stefan Schwarz retracts’), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29/01/93.

³⁹⁸⁵ Allen, *Warfare*, p. 145, n. 3.

³⁹⁸⁶ Quoted in Allen, *Warfare*, p. 93.

³⁹⁸⁷ Lieke Noorman, ‘Je kunt beter verkracht worden dan vermoord’, *HP/De Tijd*, 19/02/93, pp. 32-33.

³⁹⁸⁸ ‘EG: meer hulp aan Bosnische verkrachtingsslachtoffers’, *Trouw*, 02/02/93.

³⁹⁸⁹ Lieke Noorman, ‘Je kunt beter verkracht worden dan vermoord’, *HP/De Tijd*, 19/02/93, pp. 32-33.

in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The next day it seemed that he had been misinterpreted: France would only act within the framework of United Nations and was not planning to use force in Bosnia. This, however, did not prevent Dutch Deputy Prime Minister Wim Kok from telling a PvdA meeting a week later that the Netherlands should support the French plan.³⁹⁹⁰ Dumas' original statement earned him a reputation for suffering from 'verbal incontinence'.³⁹⁹¹

Despite all the uncertainties and problems of proof, following the publication of the Warburton Report the figure of 20,000 or more would become generally accepted as the number of rapes committed in Bosnia.³⁹⁹² This could give the impression that there were few reports of new rape cases after its publication. And, indeed, according to the report of the Bassiouni Commission the majority of the rapes it recorded took place between April and November 1992, although during the 1993 conflict in central Bosnia between Bosnian government troops and the HVO – the Bosnian Croat army – supported by Croatian paramilitaries, many more Muslim women would be raped by Croatian soldiers and a number of rapes would also be committed by Muslim troops.³⁹⁹³

On the Serb side, the response to figures of tens of thousands of rapes was also scornful and showed little compassion for the victims. The standard rebuttal was that such acts were impossible for troops confronted by a numerically superior enemy.³⁹⁹⁴ In a typical reaction, General Ratko Mladic was quoted by an American reporter as saying, 'We would all have to be supermen to do this. We would have to be sexual maniacs worthy of an entry in the *Guinness Book of Records*.'³⁹⁹⁵ As far as Mladic and his associates were concerned, the West could take its pick: either rapes on this scale were physically impossible and so the West could not complain about them, or they had taken place on such a scale and so represented a formidable performance.

4. 'The objective has been achieved: everyone knows that it is happening'

On Monday 8 February 1993 Kooijmans sent the report by the Warburton Mission to the Dutch National Assembly, together with a supplement by Gunilla Kleiverda and a declaration on the report from the General Council of EC Foreign Ministers.³⁹⁹⁶ On the previous day, 7 February 1993, a delegation from the Parliamentary Permanent Committee on Equal Opportunities made up of Annemarie Jorritsma-Lebbink of the VVD, Minouche Janmaat-Abee of the CDA, Jantien Achttienribbe-Buijs of the PvdA and Leoni Sipkes of *GroenLinks* had taken part in the International Congress of Women's Solidarity in Zagreb. This was organized by the *Bürgerinitiative Perspektive Berlin* ('Berlin Perspective' Citizens' Initiative) and the *Ost-West-Europäisches FrauenNetzwerk* (East-West European Women's Network, OWEN).³⁹⁹⁷ And it was the first time in the Permanent Committee's ten-year history that its members had made such a trip abroad. According to Sipkes, it had taken them some effort to persuade their male colleagues before they were able to go.³⁹⁹⁸ An article in the daily *De Telegraaf* reported that in Zagreb, the Dutch MPs hoped to convince their fellow parliamentarians from

³⁹⁹⁰ 'Pleidooi Kok voor ingreep tegen Serviërs' (Kok calls for intervention against Serbs'), *Het Parool*, 12/01/93; 'Dumas zwakt standpunt over eventueel militair ingrijpen in Bosnië af' (Dumas softens stance on military intervention in Bosnia'), *ANP*, 12/01/93, 10:55.

³⁹⁹¹ Olivier Rolin, 'Pogroms en de politiek van het bluffen' (Pogroms and the politics of bluff), *de Volkskrant*, 18/01/93.

³⁹⁹² See, for example, United States Congress, Committee on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *United Nations*, pp. 2, 4 en 16.

³⁹⁹³ Rathfels, *Sarajevo*, pp. 139-140; Vranic, *Wall*, pp. 263 en 312-313.

³⁹⁹⁴ For example, interview V. Jovanovic, 14/09/01.

³⁹⁹⁵ John Burns, 'Serbian General Is Either a Snake or a Charmer, Depending on the Beholder', *The New York Times*, 08/08/93. Similar reaction in interview with M. Milutinovic, 20 and 22/03/00. Cf. Ian Traynor, 'Profile: Beast of Bosnia', *The Guardian*, 18/04/94. For denials by Karadzic, Milosevic and other Serbian and Bosnian Serb individuals and organizations, see Cigar, *Genocide*, pp. 91-92.

³⁹⁹⁶ TK, session 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 32.

³⁹⁹⁷ See the report in TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 34.

³⁹⁹⁸ Interview L. Sipkes, 24/01/00.

other countries to press their own governments for military intervention to put an end to the bloodshed in the former Yugoslavia, 'A standpoint long taken by the Dutch government and parliament but in which they stand virtually alone in Europe.' Jorritsma, who acted as leader of the delegation, said in an interview with the newspaper that the visit to Zagreb had come out of a need to do something, at least, with regard to the former Yugoslavia. In her position, Jorritsma was guided by the idea that 'we all know' that 'tens of thousands of women there are being deliberately raped, abused and mutilated. Should we just acquiesce to this? I never want to have the feeling in the future that we knew about it but did nothing to stop it.'³⁹⁹⁹

Although the 300 participants in the Zagreb congress included representative from various Western countries – Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom – the Netherlands was the only nation to send an official parliamentary delegation. On the other hand, the former President of the European Parliament, Simone Veil, and the President of the German *Bundestag*, Rita Süßmuth, had both decided not to travel to Zagreb for fear of being used for propaganda purposes by the Croatian authorities.⁴⁰⁰⁰ As well as the parliamentarians, the Netherlands was also represented by participants from the *Federatie van Instellingen voor Ongehuwde Moederzorg* (Netherlands Federation of Institutions for the Care of the Unmarried Mother and her Child, FIOM), the women's aid centre Metis, the sexual violence policy and aid development centre Medusa, *Vrouwen tegen Kernwapens* (Women Against Nuclear Weapons) and Women's Exchange Programme International. Pax Christi sent a message of support.⁴⁰⁰¹

At the time of the women's congress in Zagreb, the Croatian authorities were considerably more restrained in propagating stories about raped women than they had been previously. Major battles had now flared up between Croats and Muslims in central Bosnia and so the Zagreb government no longer had any interest in publicizing Muslim suffering. Meanwhile, women from Bosnia had themselves had enough of the constant rape stories and were reluctant to talk to the press. During the congress Western journalists were therefore, as one of their number put it, 'desperately' in search of raped women. So it was that at one point a pregnant German journalist was asked by an American television crew if she was by any chance a rape victim.⁴⁰⁰²

The congress itself ended in chaos when Croatian women present opposed both the presence of a Serbian speaker and a resolution which, although accusing the Serbs of being the main perpetrators of rape, also stated that all sides had been guilty of the crime. According to the Croatian women, the Serbs were the only culprits.⁴⁰⁰³

The Dutch delegation was deeply affected both by the deep feelings of hate they encountered and by the intense sense amongst the women present that they had been abandoned by the international community.⁴⁰⁰⁴ The representatives of non-governmental organizations from the

³⁹⁹⁹ M. Willems, 'Vrouwentribunaal in Voormalig Joegoslavië' ('Women's tribunal in former Yugoslavia'), *De Telegraaf*, 03/02/93.

⁴⁰⁰⁰ E. Nysingh, 'Servische mag praten over verkrachting' ('Serb can talk about rape'), *de Volkskrant*, 08/02/93.

⁴⁰⁰¹ ABZ, DIO/ARA/00088. Fiom, Medusa, Metis, Vereniging Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland (Dutch Refugee Council), Vrouwen tegen Kernwapens, WEP International, Internationale Vrouwen Solidariteitsbijeenkomst Zagreb 07/02/93. Verslag van de Nederlandse niet-gouvernementele organisaties; GroenLinks parliamentary party archive, dossier 'Yugoslavia – Women', Pax Christi to Perspektive et al., 02/02/93.

⁴⁰⁰² 'Zagreb gonst van geruchten over offensief Serviërs' ('Zagreb buzzing with rumours about Serb offensive'), *de Telegraaf*, 06/02/93.

⁴⁰⁰³ 'Vrouwentribunaal in Zagreb wordt strijdtooneel' ('Women's tribunal in Zagreb becomes battleground'), *ANP*, 07/02/92, 21:00; "'Etnische zuiveringen' Bosnië op andere leest?" ('New pattern for Bosnia "ethnic cleansing"'), *Trouw*, 08/02/93; E. Nysingh, 'Servische mag praten over verkrachting', *de Volkskrant*, 08/02/93; A. van den Berg, 'Vrouwen klagen aan in Zagreb' ('Women accuse in Zagreb'), *Vrij Nederland*, 13/02/93, pp. 22-23. For the pressure from, in particular, the Croatian authorities to identify the Serbs alone as perpetrators, see also Anet Bleich, 'Angst voor propaganda rond verkrachting. Kroatische vrouwengroepen: 'Onze jongens' doen het ook' ('Fear of rape propaganda. Croatian womens groups: "Our boys do it too"'), *de Volkskrant*, 05/02/93.

⁴⁰⁰⁴ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181 no. 43, pp. 1-3; Annemarie Jorritsma, 'Diepe haat in Zagreb niet te bevatten' ('Deep hatred in Zagreb incomprehensible'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 09/02/93.

Netherlands were also struck by the hatred between women from different ethnic groups. In their view comments like ‘I can’t talk to Serbian women because they are the ones who bear Cetniks’ were ‘totally at odds with the international solidarity between women which had prompted the organization of the congress’.⁴⁰⁰⁵

In an emotionally worded statement read out by Jorritsma and referring to the atrocities of the Second World War, the Dutch delegation expressed its embarrassment that it had not yet been able to persuade the international community to take action against the rapes in the former Yugoslavia.⁴⁰⁰⁶ The delegation urged that rape be recognized as a war crime and that refugee status be granted to raped women from areas in which they could be offered no protection. The Dutch representatives also called upon the international community to do everything possible to create safe havens in order to guarantee basic human rights.⁴⁰⁰⁷ They also backed the closing declaration in which the mass rapes by Serbs were described as part of a military strategy and which contained calls similar to those in the Dutch statement.⁴⁰⁰⁸ The Dutch government, too, fell in behind the demand for rape to become a war crime. As for safe havens, Minister Kooijmans made no comment on the issue in his response to the report by the Dutch delegation.⁴⁰⁰⁹

Finally, the Dutch government made available NLG 2 million to establish self-help groups in the refugee camps and to fund the training and supervision of local aid workers through the *Stichting Admira* (Admira Foundation). With this financing of aid work and the confidence that rape would in the near future be acknowledged as a war crime, reporting of rapes in Yugoslavia virtually ceased after March 1993.⁴⁰¹⁰ Adrienne van Melle-Hermans, a member of the *Vrouwen voor Vrede* movement and coordinator in the Netherlands of an international working group which provided aid to women in the former Yugoslavia, was not sorry. In late December 1993 she said:

‘The objective has been achieved: everyone knows that it is happening and it is on the political agenda. But the reporting was becoming sensationalist. I have witnessed disgusting scenes of journalists trying to interrogate raped women in search of sensational details.’⁴⁰¹¹

In a report from mid 1993, Mazowiecki also complained about the practices of some journalists. According to him, repeated interrogations by reporters had reduced the readiness of women to give evidence to experts from his commission:

‘Some of the women met by the team of experts felt exploited by the media and the many missions “studying” rape in the former Yugoslavia. Furthermore, health care providers are concerned about the effects on women of repeatedly recounting their experiences without adequate psychological and social support systems in place. The danger of subjecting women to additional emotional hardship in the course of interviews is a real one. There have been reports of

⁴⁰⁰⁵ ABZ, DIO/ARA/00088. Fiom, Medusa, Metis, Vereniging Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland, Vrouwen tegen Kernwapens, WEP International, Internationale Vrouwen Solidariteitsbijeenkomst Zagreb 07/02/93. Verslag van de Nederlandse niet-gouvernementele organisaties, p. 3.

⁴⁰⁰⁶ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 34, p. 4.

⁴⁰⁰⁷ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 34, p. 4.

⁴⁰⁰⁸ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 34, p. 5.

⁴⁰⁰⁹ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 36, p. 2.

⁴⁰¹⁰ Vranic, *Wall*, p. 235; Scholten et al., *Sarajevo*, p. 58.

⁴⁰¹¹ M. Bolwijn, ‘Verkrachting als oorlogsmisdaad. Juiste cijfers zullen nooit bekend worden’ (‘Rape as a war crime. True figures will never be known’), *Het Parool*, 29/12/93.

women attempting suicide after being interviewed by the media and well-meaning delegations.⁴⁰¹²

Moreover, Van Melle-Hermans – who travelled regularly to Bosnia – had the impression that rape was becoming less common as a result of all the publicity. Professor Tineke Cleiren, who had investigated the rapes for the Bassiouni Commission, was more cautious on this point. Reports were indeed declining, she said, and certainly those about rapes in camps, but such statements had been always been difficult to analysis. ‘The statements about where and when those rapes took place are not always clear. We are still charting them.’⁴⁰¹³

The debate about the rape of women was a vague one because, even more so than with that about the prison camps in the summer of 1992, it was obscured by a lack of concrete evidence. Just as the camps debate degenerated at a certain point into a discussion about the presence and location of barbed wire, so in the case of rape there arose a fixation with the accuracy of the 20,000 figure, with the existence of rape *camps* and with whether or not the rapes were systematic or policy-driven.⁴⁰¹⁴

The source material available provides little support for the claim that Serbs deliberately held Muslim women until they had passed the stage when abortion was possible. In most cases when it is known that women became pregnant as a result of rape, they were able to have an abortion.⁴⁰¹⁵ Seada Vranic, for example, established that 11 out of a research population of 175 raped women had become pregnant, and that in two of these cases abortion was no longer possible because of the late stage at which they came into contact with aid workers.⁴⁰¹⁶ Her book also contains testimony from a woman who was imprisoned at a rape location near Foca, which sheds a somewhat different light upon pregnancy as a result of rape:

‘Women were not exempt from rape and abuse if they were pregnant. Pregnancy brought no mercy, but in the house [where the women were held] led to the expectation that you would not end your life in a river or a mine. They constantly told that we would bear little Chetniks. And there was another reason why you lived in hope that you would survive: a pregnant woman could be exchanged for more captured Serb soldiers.’⁴⁰¹⁷

This testimony is supported by another comment from a woman who had been raped every night for several weeks, noted by Ed Vulliamy:

‘I became pregnant quite quickly, which in a certain sense was my good fortune because it meant that I was exchanged, together with 13 others. I was also lucky that I was early enough for an abortion, which was not the case for others.’⁴⁰¹⁸

The direct influence upon policy of the reports and discussion about rapes is difficult to assess, but it is true that the term ‘safe haven’ was frequently heard as a solution in this respect.

The thinking behind this seemed to be that women who had been raped on ethnic grounds should not be removed any further from their own home environment. Aid could better be provided there – possibly by local workers trained with Western help – than in the West itself. As a result, the idea of safe havens may have gained a wider acceptance. Certainly the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Cornelio Sommaruga, did not hesitate to use the point to again justify his

⁴⁰¹² Quoted in Allen, *Warfare*, pp. 94-95.

⁴⁰¹³ Marjon Bolwijn, ‘Verkrachting als oorlogsmisdaad. Juiste cijfers zullen nooit bekend worden’, *Het Parool*, 29/12/93.

⁴⁰¹⁴ For a criticism of this turn in the debate, see also A. Bleich, ‘Exacte cijfers’ (‘Exact figures’), *de Volkskrant*, 06/02/93.

⁴⁰¹⁵ See, for example, UN, E/CN.4/1993/50, Appendix II, paragraphs 11 t/m 13.

⁴⁰¹⁶ Vranic, *Wall*, pp. 248-249.

⁴⁰¹⁷ Vranic, *Wall*, p. 302.

⁴⁰¹⁸ Vulliamy, *Seasons*, p. 198.

safe havens idea. In February 1993 he declared that if the international community had agreed to them in the summer of 1992, a proportion of the rapes would not have happened.⁴⁰¹⁹

It is also striking that, despite reports pointing to the contrary, during the debate the Serbs were often presented as the sole culprits.⁴⁰²⁰ This contrasts – at least in the Netherlands – with the case of the prison camps, when there still was much greater scope for reporting the misconduct of other groups. Now there was barely any coverage of raped Serb women. The terms of reference of the Warburton mission even confined it exclusively to investigating the rape of Muslim women. An accumulation of primarily Serb atrocities – bombings, starvation, prison camps and sexual crimes – probably played a part in this bias. Moreover, in this case the lack of information about victims in general and about Serb ones in particular provided an easier breeding ground for one-sided condemnation of Serb misconduct.

5. A tribunal for Yugoslavia

On 23 February 1993 the UN Commission on Human Rights adopted two resolutions on the former Yugoslavia without a vote. The first condemned rapes and other forms of abuse against women as war crimes. The second condemned all breaches of human rights, but at the same time identified the Serbs as have the greatest responsibility for them.

Shortly after the formation of the Kalshoven Commission, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had declared himself a supporter of the appointment of an ad-hoc tribunal to try war criminals from the former Yugoslavia. However, given the divisions amongst the members of the Security Council about the desirability of such a tribunal, the UN Secretariat had not developed any further initiatives.⁴⁰²¹ But other bodies had, albeit not in a co-ordinated way. Both the European Conference for Cooperation and Security (CSCE) and the French and Italian governments studied the possibilities and the statutory conditions for establishing such a tribunal.⁴⁰²²

Once resistance in Washington to a special international tribunal began to ebb away following the inauguration of President Bill Clinton (see Chapter 8),⁴⁰²³ France submitted a draft resolution for a Yugoslavia tribunal to the Security Council.⁴⁰²⁴ In accepting this Resolution 808 on 22 February 1993, the Security Council decided to establish a special international tribunal to try war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia since June 1991, including ethnic cleansing and mass rapes.

Six days later, on 28 February, the Dutch Minister Peter Kooijmans told a meeting of the Partij van de Arbeid (Dutch Labour Party) that he could imagine the tribunal being based in The Hague,⁴⁰²⁵ even though for the time being he regarded the institution as being merely 'palliative'. Three-and-a-half years later he would still say that the Tribunal had been set up 'to conceal the impotence of the international community to do anything about the conflict in a politically effective way'.⁴⁰²⁶

This latter statement continued to reflect closely the feelings Kooijmans had expressed on 2 March 1993 at a meeting with the Parliamentary Permanent Committee on Equal Opportunities. In

⁴⁰¹⁹ Mercier, *Crimes*, p. 119.

⁴⁰²⁰ Cf. Scholten et al., *Sarajevo*, p. 66.

⁴⁰²¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02054. Kooijmans 002 to PR New York, 05/01/93; D'Ansembourg 004 to Kooijmans, 07/01/93; Biegman 78 to Kooijmans, 27/01/93.

⁴⁰²² ABZ, DPV/ARA/02054. Veenendaal 6 to Kooijmans, 18/01/93; Kooijmans 14 to Paris embassy, 20/01/93; Biegman 102 to Kooijmans, 03/02/93; Rome embassy to Foreign Affairs/JURA, 04/02/93, PA-ROM-198; Kooijmans to PR New York, 18/02/93, celer 35; Veenendaal 50 to Kooijmans, 18/02/93; Bassiouni, *Yugoslavia*, p. 414.

⁴⁰²³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02054. Meesman 55 to Kooijmans, 30/01/93; Cynthia Bunton to Van der Zwan, 25/02/93.

⁴⁰²⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02054. Biegman 150 to Kooijmans, 17/02/93; Biegman 155 to Kooijmans, 18/02/93.

⁴⁰²⁵ 'Den Haag mogelijk standplaats oorlogstribunaal Joegoslavië' ('The Hague possible location for Yugoslavia war tribunal'), *ANP*, 28/02/93, 18:07; ABZ, DPV/ARA/02054. Kooijmans 39 to PR New York, 02/03/93.

⁴⁰²⁶ M. Kwast-Van Duursen, 'Ik ben meer jurist dan politicus' ('I am more a jurist than a politician'), *CD/Actueel*, 18/01/97, p. 14. See also F. Halsema, 'Kleine stapjes. Het pragmatisch optimisme van Peter Kooijmans' ('Small steps. Peter Kooijmans' pragmatic optimism'), *de Helling*, 9 (1996)3, p. 5.

their turn, the MPs present showed their frustration at the limited action taken by the international community in the light of the very serious violations of human rights which had been taking place. As CDA member Riet Roosen-Van Pelt put it, 'UN resolutions are being walked all over and the dismantling of prison camps demanded by the UN is not happening. This could easily lead to the interpretation that the EC and the rest of the world is in fact an accessory to what is happening in the former Yugoslavia.'⁴⁰²⁷ Kooijmans pointed out, however, that there was no international readiness to intervene in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Particularly for the United States, an enforceable accord had to be in place before anything would be done.⁴⁰²⁸

6. The Vance-Owen peace plan

By the time Kooijmans spoke those words, a peace plan had been on the table for two months. After the London Conference, the Bosnia-Herzegovina Working Party of the Yugoslavia Conference headed by the Finn Martti Ahtisaari had started working on plans for the constitutional future of the region.

At the beginning of October 1992 there had been five options on the table. The first was for a centralized state. The second was a centralized federal state, but with important functions devolved to the provincial level. The third was a loose federal state made up of three ethnically based entities, each with territories spread throughout Bosnia. The fourth was a loose confederation of three ethnically based republics with a very large degree of autonomy. And the fifth involved the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, with predominantly Croat and Serb regions being incorporated into their respective 'motherlands' and an independent Muslim state created from what remained.

Owen and Vance decided to develop the second variant, a federal state with important functions administered at provincial level. There would be between four and ten of such provinces. Owen and Vance decided though that the state must be decentralized rather than centralized.⁴⁰²⁹ Various considerations would be taken into account in drawing the provincial boundaries, including ethnic, geographical and historical factors as well such aspects as economic viability and the existing infrastructure.⁴⁰³⁰ At the end of October Ahtisaari had a draft constitution ready, which would soon form the core of the Vance-Owen plan.⁴⁰³¹

On 2 January 1993, Vance and Owen succeeded in bringing the leaders of the three ethnic groups together around the same table for the first time since the conflict began. Up until then the two mediators had only conducted bilateral talks as an extension to the London Conference. Vance and Owen revealed their plan during this three-day meeting.⁴⁰³²

It consisted of three parts. Firstly, the constitutional principles which would turn Bosnia-Herzegovina into a decentralized state with a large degree of executive authority resting in the hands of ten constituent provinces. Secondly, there was a map showing the boundaries of the ten provinces. And, thirdly, there were military arrangements for a ceasefire to be followed by the phased demilitarization of all Bosnia.

The Vance-Owen map is reproduced in Part I, Chapter 9, Section 6. The Muslims would be given the provinces of Bihac, Tuzla and Zenica (in the Vance-Owenplan these provinces were numbered 1, 5 and 9 respectively), which included Srebrenica in Tuzla province. The Serbs were allocated the provinces of Banja Luka (2) Bijeljina (4) and Nevesinje to the south-east of Sarajevo (6), and the Croats would receive Bosanski Brod (3), Mostar (8) and Travnik (10). Province 7, Sarajevo, was not assigned to any of the parties.

⁴⁰²⁷ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 43, p. 4.

⁴⁰²⁸ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 43, p. 9.

⁴⁰²⁹ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 215.

⁴⁰³⁰ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 216.

⁴⁰³¹ Owen CD-ROM, '*Proposed constitutional structure for Bosnia and Herzegovina*', 25/10/92.

⁴⁰³² Owen CD-ROM, '*The Vance-Owen Plan*'.

The plan tried to reconcile a number of different principles as effectively as possible. First, Serb territorial conquests must not be accepted and so ethnic cleansing had to be undone. Second, the two mediators tried to build in opportunities for the people of Bosnia eventually to end their ethnic divisions.⁴⁰³³ Because there was little confidence that this could happen in the short term, some form of international supervision was needed. Finally, they wanted to stop the police and army forming a threat to the civilian population. It should be borne in mind that the Bosnian government was still seeking a unified state, whereas the Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat leaderships aspired to autonomy or even the possibility for their territories to break away completely.

To reconcile all these requirements, Owen and Vance presented a complicated constitutional plan in which certain matters were not yet finally settled and which would undergo numerous changes over the months to come. In fact, the plan was no more than a basis for further discussions.⁴⁰³⁴



In general terms, the plan involved the following. The government of Bosnia would be in the hands of a 'Presidium' with nine members, three from each main ethnic group. Their appointment would be subject to approval by Vance and Owen, who would station a permanent representative in Sarajevo. Not one of the ten provinces would be ethnically homogenous. They would largely restore the situation which existed before the outbreak of war, so ethnic cleansing would for the most part be reversed. Land and property seized from those driven out would be restored to the rightful owners. There would be freedom of movement within Bosnia, which would also help undo the effects of ethnic cleansing. Territorial enclaves occupied by members of one ethnic group would be connected by UN corridors. The provincial governments would reflect the ethnic composition of the local population, but all would contain at least one member of each ethnic group. Control over the police, the only armed force in the region, would rest with the provinces, which would also have extensive powers over the administration of justice and taxation. A host of courts, ombudsmen and the like – often with international personnel or under international supervision – would be put in place to guarantee the rights of minorities.

Each ethnic group would be in either the absolute or the relative majority in three provinces. Three would have an absolute majority of Muslims, two an absolute majority of Serbs and one an

⁴⁰³³ Cf. Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 229.

⁴⁰³⁴ Cf. Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 157.

absolute majority of Croats. In the remainder, ethnic majorities would only be relative. The tenth province, Sarajevo, with an absolute Muslims majority, would become a more or less open city under UN administration.

The plan was greeted extremely critically by many opinion-formers in the West on grounds of principle. Essentially, they believed that it rewarded Serb aggression and accepted ethnic cleansing. This, however, was certainly not the case: one of the stated principles of the plan was to actually reverse ethnic cleansing.

Because the provinces with a Serb majority would not be contiguous, it would not be easy for the Bosnian Serbs to unite their territory with Serbia itself or with the Serb areas in Croatia. The Croats would be in control of the Posavina region, which lay between Serbia and the Serb areas of Croatia and western Bosnia. Only in April would Owen propose the creation of a narrow UN corridor between the Serb areas near Brcko, but this solution was unacceptable to the Serbs since they would not control the corridor themselves.

Under the original Vance-Owen plan, the Serbs were allocated 43 per cent of Bosnian territory, excluding Sarajevo. This meant that they would have to give up approximately 40 per cent of the land they actually held. Moreover, those areas they could keep were the poorest in Bosnia-Herzegovina. For example, they contained only 18 per cent of the country's raw materials.⁴⁰³⁵ Of all the peace plans put forward, this was the one which came closest to combining peace with justice. That, however, was also exactly what made it so difficult to implement.

The Vance-Owen plan, as the proposal was soon to be called, was certainly not an ideal peace plan. Even Vance and Owen themselves admitted that, as soon as the microphones were off and the notebooks put away. 'A peace from Hell', is how Owen once described it.⁴⁰³⁶ Although the ideal was to restore the pre-war situation, it was difficult to imagine how this could actually be achieved in practice. Almost half of Bosnia's 4.5 million people had fled their homes. Towns allocated to the Muslims in the plan, such as Zvornik, Bratunac, Visegrad and Foca, were now under absolute Serb control. And even if the parties were to allow citizens to return to their homes, many would find them in ruins. It was common in ethnic cleansing for abandoned homes to be blown up, burned down or booby-trapped. On the issue of remigration, the Vance-Owen plan painted a highly optimistic picture. One version stated – perhaps with a typical British sense of understatement – that 'it is very likely to take more than a year for the many refugees and Displaced Persons to return to their homes'.⁴⁰³⁷ Also, the division of Bosnia into ten provinces would create long borders, along which interprovincial conflicts over attempts to annex neighbouring territory were all too possible. In theory, every provincial boundary was a potential front line.

Reactions to the plan in Bosnia

Of the three ethnic groups, only the Bosnian Croat leaders responded positively to the plan straight away. Although Croats made up only 17 per cent of the Bosnian population, the three provinces they would dominate accounted for a third of Bosnia, excluding Sarajevo. In places, they were allotted even more territory than they had asked for.⁴⁰³⁸ Moreover, although the three Croat provinces were not adjacent to one another, all bordered directly on Croatia itself. The Croatian magazine *Globus* called the plan 'the greatest triumph for Croatian politics of the 20th century'.⁴⁰³⁹ The initials of the Bosnian Croat army, the HVO, were reinterpreted by some standing for *Hvala* ('thank you') *Vance Owen*.⁴⁰⁴⁰

⁴⁰³⁵ Calic, *Krieg*, p. 205.

⁴⁰³⁶ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 118.

⁴⁰³⁷ Quoted in Bert, *Superpower*, p. 194.

⁴⁰³⁸ Hayden, *Blueprints*, p. 104.

⁴⁰³⁹ Quoted in Grémaux & De Vries, *Crisis*, p. 39.

⁴⁰⁴⁰ Loyd, *War*, p. 86.

The Croats immediately signed all three parts of the plan: the constitutional principles, the ceasefire and the map. Clearly, the tactic being used by Owen and Vance was that their plan would be accepted by the warring parties in three stages. It was deliberately made as attractive as possible to the Croats so that they could agree to it right away.⁴⁰⁴¹ The government in Sarajevo would then be persuaded to agree, so that finally the pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to accept all its proposals too could be stepped up.⁴⁰⁴²

The Serbs would have to give up a lot of territory, and had particular difficulty accepting that Eastern Bosnia – the fifth province in the plan – which bordered Serbia proper, would have a Muslim majority.⁴⁰⁴³ This would mean having to give up Milici, with its bauxite mine controlled by Rajko Dukic, one of the main financiers of the Serb Democratic Party, the SDS. Also lost would be Bratunac, the town which had, with great difficulty and at a high cost in casualties, resisted Muslim attacks from Srebrenica. Another objection for the Bosnian Serb leadership was the lack of any geographical link between Serbia itself and the Serb territory around Banja Luka. Finally, the Bosnian Serbs did not want a unified state but a Confederation of Bosnia-Herzegovina made up of three ethnically based states. They were prepared to accept an immediate ceasefire, but rejected the constitutional principles and the map.⁴⁰⁴⁴

The Muslims particularly deplored the fact that, in their opinion, the plan gave them too little territory and did not propose a centralized and unified state. In their opinion, the Vance-Owen plan rewarded the Serbs for part of their ethnical cleansing. Whilst Muslims made up 44 per cent of the population they were given only about a quarter of its territory, excluding Sarajevo. This may have been more than double the 11 per cent or so they actually held at the time, but it was still not much compared with the 43 per cent allocated to the Bosnian Serbs. Moreover, under the proposed Presidium system the Muslims would have to give up much of the power they held in the central government. Not only would they have to share power equally with Serbs and Croats at the national level, but authority in many fields would be devolved from the state to the provinces. Nevertheless, the Bosnian government originally responded enthusiastically to the plan. It originally wanted to express its support immediately but was dissuaded from doing so by Vance, who feared that the Serbs would then try to wrest more concessions.⁴⁰⁴⁵

After Owen and Vance had presented their plan to the warring parties over a three-day period, 2-4 January 1993, they gave the delegations an opportunity to consider the proposals. The two mediators would spend the rest of January trying to obtain the assent of all three sides to all three parts of the plan: the constitution, the ceasefire and phased demilitarization.

However, despite its original approval the Bosnian government soon began to voice objections. On 22 January they announced that they would refuse to sign the map because it sanctioned Serb conquests and because certain districts with a Muslim majority would fall within Croat-dominated provinces. They also wanted Sarajevo to become a Muslim-dominated province rather than a neutral territory. Izetbegovic said that he would be prepared to accept the constitution and the ceasefire, but he still did not sign them.⁴⁰⁴⁶

An important contributing factor in the Bosnian government's negative response was the impending change of administration in Washington, where Bill Clinton was about to succeed George Bush as president. This was expected to lead to a US military intervention which would benefit the

⁴⁰⁴¹ Cf. Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 219.

⁴⁰⁴² Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 154.

⁴⁰⁴³ See, for example, ABZ, 911.31, 'Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen' ('Yugoslavia. Political relationships and parties'), parts V-VI, May 1992-April 1993; MID, 'Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie' ('Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation'), 22/93, 25/03/93.

⁴⁰⁴⁴ Sremac, *War*, p. 140.

⁴⁰⁴⁵ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 222.

⁴⁰⁴⁶ Burg & Shoup, *War*, pp. 224-225.

Muslims.⁴⁰⁴⁷ Clinton's arrival in office was looked forward to expectantly in Bosnia during late 1992 and early 1993. Convinced that the new President would make good the expectations he had raised during his election campaign by calling for attacks on Serb targets, Muslims would greet Americans in Bosnia at the time with the words 'Clinton dobro' ('Clinton is good').⁴⁰⁴⁸

Lord Owen considered it necessary to temper the high hopes in Bosnia. In December 1992 he told the leaders of its government, 'Don't live under this dream that the West is going to come in and sort this problem out.'⁴⁰⁴⁹ However, immediately after the presentation of the Vance-Owen plan Izetbegovic travelled to the United States to consult with the Clinton camp, which at the time was preparing for the new president's inauguration and administration. Owen warned the Americans beforehand that they should avoid giving Izetbegovic any impression that they would provide military assistance, since this would reduce his readiness to negotiate. Nevertheless, Izetbegovic returned after holding talks with Vice-President elect Al Gore and other members of the Clinton camp under the impression that military intervention was imminent.⁴⁰⁵⁰ As a senator, Gore had already hit out fiercely at Milosevic. During the war in Croatia he had spoken of the 'moral stupidity' and lack of moral courage of the US government, which had cost thousands of Croats their lives.⁴⁰⁵¹ Within a week of being made Clinton's running mate, Gore had urged the future president to make Bosnia a priority in US foreign policy.⁴⁰⁵²

The Yugoslavia policy of the new administration was being anxiously awaited not only in the areas under the control of the Bosnian government, but also in the Republika Srpska. American reporters used to the Bosnian Serb leaders ignoring the standpoints taken by European governments found themselves being cross-examined about the intentions of the Washington administration during visits to Pale in the first few months of 1993. Critical reporting by them was resented out of fear that it might lead to US intervention.⁴⁰⁵³

7. Milosevic as an apostle of peace

To elicit acceptance of the peace plan by the Republika Srpska, the international community was dependent upon the leadership in Belgrade. On 6 January 1993, Christmas Eve in the Orthodox Christian calendar, President Cosic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia told the Serbian people in a television address that a failure to reach agreement at the Geneva negotiations would lead to military intervention by the US and European countries. This would not be confined to Bosnia, but also target Serbia and Montenegro. In addition, the results of the talks in Geneva would determine whether sanctions against what remained of Yugoslavia were lifted or tightened. 'Serbs therefore face a terrible dilemma,' said Cosic. 'Political and military capitulation or an attack by the world's mightiest powers.'⁴⁰⁵⁴

The issue of sanctions could indeed be an effective way of exerting pressure upon the regime in Belgrade. Economic conditions in Serbia and Montenegro continued to deteriorate. By early 1993 the Yugoslav dinar had fallen in value against the US dollar by no less than 11,000 per cent. Important foodstuffs like flour, sugar and salt were rationed. Exports in January 1993 were just a quarter of the figure one year previously.⁴⁰⁵⁵ Industrial production in Serbia in 1993 was a quarter less than in 1989.

⁴⁰⁴⁷ Cf. Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 223.

⁴⁰⁴⁸ See also Halberstam, *War*, p. 225.

⁴⁰⁴⁹ Sremac, *War*, p. 136. See also Simms, *Hour*, p. 138.

⁴⁰⁵⁰ Sremac, *War*, p. 137.

⁴⁰⁵¹ Patrick Glynn, 'What foreign policy? III: Yugoblunder; US support of Yugoslavia', *The New Republic*, 24/02/92.

⁴⁰⁵² Karan Tumulty, 'Gore's Role: Deep in the Details', *Time*, 14/06/99, p. 28; Drew, *Edge*, p. 150; confidential interview (14).

⁴⁰⁵³ John F. Burns, 'Bosnia Loses Any Hope of Being Saved', *The New York Times*, 25/07/93.

⁴⁰⁵⁴ Owen CD-ROM, 'Address of FRY President Dobrica Coic to the Yugoslav Public, Belgrade, 6 January 1993'; Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 273 n. 68. See also Stojanovic, *Autoritet*, p. 31.

⁴⁰⁵⁵ Dyker & Bojicic, *Impact*, p. 51.

The income per head of population was a mere 40 per cent of that four years previously. Only 40 per cent of the active population was in work,⁴⁰⁵⁶ and 4 million Serbs were living below the poverty line.⁴⁰⁵⁷

In 1992 Milosevic had expanded his police force by 20,000 men and equipped special units with armoured vehicles, helicopters and rocket launchers so as to tackle any unrest resulting from the sanctions.⁴⁰⁵⁸ A gulf was opening up between the Serbs in Serbia and those in Bosnia. The latter believed that their ethnic brothers and sisters on the other side of the Drina were not doing enough to help them,⁴⁰⁵⁹ whereas Milosevic in particular believed that the Serbian economy was cracking under the weight of the solidarity his government was showing towards the Bosnian Serbs.⁴⁰⁶⁰ This situation sometimes led to emotional outbursts by Milosevic against Karadzic and other Bosnian Serb leaders, whom he claimed were holding Serbia hostage with their 'idiocies'.⁴⁰⁶¹

Milosevic must have realized that if Milan Panic had been unable to achieve an easing of the sanctions, then it would certainly be impossible for him to do so following Panic's election defeat unless he changed his country's policy. So the Serbian president – who had been behind the conflicts with Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia – now cleverly manoeuvred himself into the role of 'apostle of peace'. He sided with Cosic, who was arguing that whilst the Vance-Owen plan might well contain many drawbacks for the Serbs, it should be accepted because improved arrangements for them – better than those outlined at the original presentation on 2 January – could be negotiated as the plan crystallized.⁴⁰⁶²

On 6 January Owen and Vance had a long conversation with Milosevic in which they urged him to convince the Bosnian Serb leaders that the peace plan was not unfavourable to them. It may not have offered them a Serb state within the Bosnian state, but both mediators emphasized the high degree of administrative decentralization proposed. Milosevic promised to do what he could and declared several times that it was vitally important for Serbia that peace came. He was very concerned about the state of his country's economy and repeatedly emphasized that an end had to be made to Serbia's isolation and the sanctions against it. Owen promised that, once the peace plan had been accepted, the isolation of Serbia would indeed come to an end.⁴⁰⁶³ Not only Milosevic but also his wife, Mira Markovic, subsequently reiterated publicly how important it was for the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Vance-Owen plan.⁴⁰⁶⁴ Meanwhile, in her diary notes which were published fortnightly during 1993 after having been read by her husband, Markovic regularly portrayed the Bosnian Serb political leadership as fascistic and mendacious because of its policies of ethnic cleansing and partitioning Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴⁰⁶⁵

The West was left in a quandary by Milosevic's new role as an apostle of peace. Had he repented, or did he simply want to rid himself of the sanctions against his country?⁴⁰⁶⁶ The new US administration found it difficult to believe that it would be possible to exert pressure on the Bosnian

⁴⁰⁵⁶ Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 193.

⁴⁰⁵⁷ Calic, *Krieg*, p. 172.

⁴⁰⁵⁸ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 293.

⁴⁰⁵⁹ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 123.

⁴⁰⁶⁰ Stojanovic, *Fall*, p. 201.

⁴⁰⁶¹ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 180.

⁴⁰⁶² Interview D. Cosic, 13/09/01.

⁴⁰⁶³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00110. COREU of the Danish EC presidency, 08/01/93, cpe/pres/cop 50; Owen CD-ROM, 'Coreu telegram: Report of ICFY Co-Chairmen's Visit to Belgrade and Zagreb – 6 January 1993'.

⁴⁰⁶⁴ Markovic, *Night*, p. 57 (04/05/93).

⁴⁰⁶⁵ For Markovic's criticisms of Karadzic and Biljana Plavis, see Markovic, *Night*, pp. 17-18 (20/01/93), 43 (29/03/93), 52 (27/04/93), 111-113 (10/09/93).

⁴⁰⁶⁶ Raymond van den Boogaard, 'De Servische vader des vaderlands redt de vrede in Bosnië' ('The Serbian Father of the Nation saves the peace in Bosnia'), *de Volkskrant*, 13/01/93; Nicole Lucas, 'Vredesakkoord stoelt op Servisch drijfzand' ('Peace agreement built on Serbian quicksand'), *Trouw*, 14/01/93; Dirk-Jan van Baar, 'Milosevic als vredesapostel' ('Milosevic as apostle of peace'), *Intermediair*, 29(1993)3; Jonathan Steele, 'Slobodan Milosevic lijkt echt naar vrede in Bosnië te verlangen' ('Slobodan Milosevic really seems to yearn for peace in Bosnia'), *de Volkskrant*, 19/07/95; Steve Crawshaw, 'Milosevic, de architect van de haat' ('Milosevic, the architect of hate'), *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 14/10/98.

Serbs to agree to the Vance-Owen plan through Milosevic. American officials suggested to the mediators that, 'It is almost impossible that there is not something else behind this'.⁴⁰⁶⁷

All this prompts the question of how much influence Milosevic actually had over Karadzic and Mladic. According to some sources he had a major and direct influence over Mladic and his VRS force, which would hardly be surprising given that its officers' pay was constantly being subsidized from Belgrade.⁴⁰⁶⁸ In the Dutch Department of Foreign Affairs, too, it was assumed that Milosevic pulled the strings in the Republika Srpska. However, his intentions were not very clear to departmental officials in The Hague.⁴⁰⁶⁹ Moral objections to negotiating with Milosevic were pushed to one side: one had to do business with him.⁴⁰⁷⁰

Tensions between Karadzic and Mladic had already appeared more than once during autumn 1992: Mladic and other military officers were unhappy with concessions made by Karadzic at the negotiating table which were disadvantageous to the strategic position of the VRS.⁴⁰⁷¹ Since then negotiators had noticed that Karadzic became nervous whenever he was asked to agree to anything he had not yet discussed with Mladic.⁴⁰⁷² In any case, it was apparent that Karadzic had no control over the VRS. The only person who did was Mladic.⁴⁰⁷³

Mladic also took umbrage at the fact that the Republika Srpska's Defence Ministry was controlled by the (Bosnian) Serb Democratic Party, the SDS,⁴⁰⁷⁴ and that it was forcing officers on the VRS who had been attached for political reasons. And he accused the SDS of constantly being out for plunder. Officers were also annoyed by the private militias run by politicians.⁴⁰⁷⁵

A difference in geographical orientation also appears to have played a part in the relationship between Milosevic, Karadzic and Mladic. Milosevic was primarily interested in Kosovo, where many aspects of the situation troubled him. Every time Milosevic raised the need to assert Serbian authority in Kosovo with foreign diplomats, they confronted him with the situation in Croatia, where President Tudjman wanted the same with the areas held by Serbia. Moreover, the sanctions against Serbia were partly linked to the situation in Croatia.⁴⁰⁷⁶ Kosovo, on the other hand, was for Milosevic not only the cradle of Serbian history but also the area in which his own political star had first risen in 1987.

For Mladic it was Krajina which was of the greatest importance. The general was emotionally attached to the region where for him the war had begun. Mladic regarded the Serb nation as single and indivisible, a belief which he saw confirmed in a treaty of mutual military assistance reached in 1992 between the Serb republics in Krajina and Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴⁰⁷⁷

Karadzic, on the other hand, was not so tied to the Serb regions in Croatia, which were making heavy logistical demands on the VRS. He would prefer to concentrate upon the Serb part of Bosnia, of which he was president.

The estrangement between Milosevic and Karadzic was thrown into the spotlight during a meeting in Belgrade on 9 January, at which Milosevic received a Bosnian Serb delegation. He demanded that their leaders accept the Vance-Owen plan. They, however, refused to bow to pressure from Milosevic and had still failed to reach agreement when they left by plane for Geneva, accompanied by

⁴⁰⁶⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00110. Biegman 112 to Kooijmans, 04/02/93.

⁴⁰⁶⁸ ABZ, 999.241, Engels 241 to Kooijmans, 26/03/93; interview M. Steiner, 06/07/00; confidential interview (4).

⁴⁰⁶⁹ Interview P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00.

⁴⁰⁷⁰ Interview H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

⁴⁰⁷¹ See, for example, MID. MID, 'Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie', 67/92, 17/09/92; 76/92, 20/10/92; 78/92, 26/10/92; 80/92, 02/11/92; 84/92, 11/11/92. Also confidential interview (4).

⁴⁰⁷² John Burns, 'Serbian General Is Either a Snake or a Charmer, Depending on the Beholder', *The New York Times*, 08/08/93.

⁴⁰⁷³ ABZ, 99.241, Engels 277 to Van den Broek, 10/09/92, state secret.

⁴⁰⁷⁴ Confidential interview (4).

⁴⁰⁷⁵ Interview M. Milutinovic, 20 and 22/03/00.

⁴⁰⁷⁶ Interview D. Milovanovic, 22/03/00.

⁴⁰⁷⁷ MID. MID, 'Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie', 12/93, 04/02/93.

Cosic.⁴⁰⁷⁸ In Switzerland Owen and Vance exerted heavy pressure upon Karadzic, through Milosevic and Cosic, to sign up to their plan. Milosevic informed Karadzic that he would no longer be able to count upon supplies from Serbia if he did not agree to it. Milosevic and Cosic also told Karadzic that if the war in Bosnia continued, the West would intervene with what a member of Yugoslav delegation described to a reporter from *The New York Times* as ‘weapons you can't even see’.

Under this pressure, Karadzic did finally agree to the Vance-Owen plan in Geneva on 12 January. He also said that he was certain the Bosnian Serb parliament would ratify his decision and promised to present the plan to it within a couple of days.⁴⁰⁷⁹ Karadzic did indeed persuade his parliament to accept Vance-Owen in principle on 20 January, by 55 votes to 15. However, strict conditions were attached to that approval. For example, the Bosnian Serb leadership was not prepared to give up the Posavina region nor Eastern Bosnia.⁴⁰⁸⁰ On 23 January Karadzic declared that he accepted in principle the foundations of the constitution outlined in the peace plan, but could not agree to the map.⁴⁰⁸¹

The negative attitude of the Bosnian Serb leadership towards the peace proposals was a problem not only from the perspective of the international community. Even viewed from the Serbs' own position, it is difficult to identify the rationale behind their thinking. A few months after the outbreak of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Serbs held approximately 70 per cent of the country – more than they had planned to capture. It was obvious that they would try to cash in on these military successes at the negotiating table. And obvious, too, the Bosnian Muslims would resist a diplomatic settlement when they were in such a weak position militarily. The question, then, is why the Bosnian Serbs were no longer inclined to accept the plan. In August 1994 Milovan Stankovic, a VRS commander, complained that:

‘Our policy has never defined the basic aims of the struggle-political, national, economic, military or regional aims. It has never clearly said what state it is, of what size, and what cities are to be taken. The policy that says that the border is as far as the army boot can reach is, to say the least, frivolous. A boot can easily slip.’⁴⁰⁸²

The Bosnian Serb leaders were thus unable to follow up their military conquests with a diplomatic endgame. And neither the West nor Milosevic could convince them of how important this was.

To Vance and Owen, January ended with the acceptance of the constitution of their plan by all three sides. Their map was accepted only by the Croats. The military agreement was signed by the leaders of the Bosnian Croats and Serbs, Boban and Karadzic. Izetbegovic refused to accept it, arguing that the controls it placed on heavy weapons were inadequate.⁴⁰⁸³ However, it seems more obvious to assume that he expected to benefit from a continuation of the war – either by making conquests in the field or from the propaganda gains to be achieved abroad by continued Serb bombardments of Bosnian towns and cities.⁴⁰⁸⁴

Only on 3 March did Izetbegovic finally relent and sign the military agreement,⁴⁰⁸⁵ after UN Force Commander Satish Nambiar had informed him that the heavy weapons would be placed under

⁴⁰⁷⁸ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 225.

⁴⁰⁷⁹ David Binder, ‘Leader of Bosnia’s Serbs, In Shift, Backs an Accord’, *The New York Times*, 13/01/93; Burg & Shoup, *War*, pp. 225-226.

⁴⁰⁸⁰ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 226; Cohen, *Bonds*, pp. 259-260.

⁴⁰⁸¹ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 226.

⁴⁰⁸² Quoted in Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 185.

⁴⁰⁸³ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 227.

⁴⁰⁸⁴ Cf. Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 155.

⁴⁰⁸⁵ UN, A/47/901 and S/25362; Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp. 1318-1320.

UN supervision.⁴⁰⁸⁶ Early in February Owen and Vance moved the talks with the leaders of the warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina to New York, so that they could elicit support for their plan amongst the members of the UN Security Council and use their good services to bringing those sitting around the negotiating table closer together. Moreover, in New York Owen and Vance could maintain closer contacts with the US government.⁴⁰⁸⁷ And that was badly needed.

8. The consequences of the change of administration in the United States

On 20 January, the same day as the Bosnian Serb parliament voted to accept the Vance-Owen plan in principle, Bill Clinton was inaugurated as the new President of the United States in Washington. It seemed that, now that Karadzic and the parliament of Republika Srpska had bowed in the face of the combined threat of Serbian sanctions and international intervention, with some pressure from the United States a final agreement on the plan was within reach.⁴⁰⁸⁸ The attitude of the US government was also of great importance because it was expected that, if Washington took a more active stance on the former Yugoslavia, so too would the British government.⁴⁰⁸⁹

In its final days before Clinton entered office, however, the outgoing Bush administration had responded negatively to the peace plan. This standpoint was based upon a number of factors. Firstly, so soon after the end of the Cold War the political policymakers in Washington had not in general been able to free their view of Eastern Europe from the black-and-white perspective of that era. During the Cold War, the struggle was between the capitalist 'us' and the communist 'them'. As far as the government in Washington was concerned, those in power in Serbia still represented the communists. Secondly, for the United States – itself a melting pot of cultures – the multicultural society was something natural. Any deviation from it was difficult to accept psychologically.⁴⁰⁹⁰ Moreover, the Bush administration considered that in essence the Vance-Owen plan represented the acceptance, if not the actual rewarding, of ethnic cleansing by the Serbs.⁴⁰⁹¹

This criticism from the government in Washington was broadly supported by the American public. Perhaps the most important objection, however, was the paradox that the Vance-Owen peace plan would require a greater military commitment on the part of the West than had hitherto been the case. Towards the end of 1992, NATO had calculated that implementation of the plan as formulated at that time would require a force of 75,000 troops.⁴⁰⁹² And, so Owen was eventually convinced, Washington was not prepared to make such a commitment.⁴⁰⁹³ Authoritative American commentators drew attention to the likelihood that military intervention to enforce the plan had little chance of success since in fact virtually the entire Bosnian population objected to it.⁴⁰⁹⁴

⁴⁰⁸⁶ Owen CD-ROM, 'Letter dated 1 March 1993 from UNPROFOR Force Commander Satish Nambiar to His Excellency President Izetbegovic'; Ramcharan, *Conference*, p. 1320.

⁴⁰⁸⁷ Cf. Owen CD-ROM, 'Lord Owen's report from New York of 6 February 1993 on progress of Vance-Owen Peace Plan'; UN, S/25248.

⁴⁰⁸⁸ Cf. the editors, 'Clinton and Milosevic', Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 164.

⁴⁰⁸⁹ Cf. Max van Weezel and Leonard Ornstein, 'Lubbers zit er niet om lellen uit te delen' ('Lubbers not there to deal out blows'), *Vrij Nederland*, 22/01/93.

⁴⁰⁹⁰ Cf. M.C. Brands and Ronald Havenaar, 'De Verenigde Staten en het probleemkind Europa' ('The United States and the problem child Europe'), Gijs de Vries et al, *Continent*, p. 65.

⁴⁰⁹¹ 'Lot Bosnië in handen van Veiligheidsraad' ('Bosnia's fate in the hands of the Security Council'), *de Telegraaf*, 01/02/93; 'VN-hulpkonvoien Bosnië gestaakt na dodelijke aanval van Serviërs' ('UN aid convoys suspended after deadly attack by Serbs'), *de Telegraaf*, 03/02/93; 'Owen en Vance doen vredesplan over aan V-raad. Zware gevechten na mislukken overleg Genève' ('Owen and Vance submit peace plan to Security Council. Heavy fighting after Geneva talks fail'), *Trouw*, 01/02/93; 'Owen laat hoop op vrede Bosnië nog niet varen' ('Owen not yet abandoning hope of Bosnia peace'), *de Volkskrant*, 01/02/93; 'Vance en Owen stuiten op verzet regering-Clinton' ('Vance and Owen encounter resistance from Clinton administration'), *de Volkskrant*, 03/02/93.

⁴⁰⁹² Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 161.

⁴⁰⁹³ Edward Mortimer, 'An exit with one regret', *Financial Times*, 02/06/95.

⁴⁰⁹⁴ See, for example, Pfaff, *Invitation*, p. 107; see also *ibidem*, pp. 99 and 105-106.

Would all this change once Clinton succeeded Bush? Everything seemed to indicate that it would. During his election campaign, Clinton had talked about lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims and about the possibility of bombing Serb military targets – a dual approach which would later become known as the 'lift and strike' policy. Furthermore, during both his campaign and the early days of his presidency Clinton showed a degree of interest in the United Nations which was highly unusual by American standards.⁴⁰⁹⁵ Madeleine Albright, the United States' Permanent Representative at the UN, was appointed to the cabinet in that capacity (!) and also became a member of the National Security Council. She was a great supporter of peacekeeping and emphasized the need for 'assertive multilateralism' in US foreign policy.⁴⁰⁹⁶ The post of Assistant Secretary for Peacekeeping and Democracy was created at the Department of Defense. In his inauguration address, Clinton also stated that the United States would resort to force if the will and conscience of the international community were defied.⁴⁰⁹⁷

During the months between his election and his inauguration, Clinton had let it be known that he believed the time had come for the West 'to turn up the heat a little' in Bosnia.⁴⁰⁹⁸ His thoughts were turning to aggressive enforcement of the no-fly zone, as announced at a press conference on 4 December.⁴⁰⁹⁹

In subsequent weeks the British government, with the backing of the government in Paris, let no opportunity pass to make it clear that it was opposed to this due to the potential for reprisal against British troops on the ground. This difference between the American stance and the refusal by the United Kingdom to allow its ground troops to become the indirect victims of the air strikes wanted by Washington would lead to what Prime Minister John Major later called 'the most serious Anglo-American disagreement since the Suez crisis'.⁴¹⁰⁰ American diplomats would be so frustrated by the British resistance that they almost came to regard the UK as a hostile power.⁴¹⁰¹ The consequences of this difference in approach are examined in detail in Part III.

A more active approach by Clinton to Bosnia was also hindered by a number of initiatives taken by the Bush administration in its final days. The first was the decision to deploy American troops in support of the UN peacekeeping force in Somalia. It was very unlikely that the US government would commit troops to two trouble spots simultaneously. The second part of the inheritance from Bush was a letter written in late December 1992 by the outgoing president, with Clinton's knowledge and approval, to Milosevic and the Yugoslav army Commander Zivota Panic.⁴¹⁰² This was prompted by intelligence reports that Milosevic wanted to unleash a wave of violence during the presidential transition in the United States and information that he was considering 'special actions' in Kosovo and Macedonia. Owen and Vance had already been warning since early November that violence could break out at any time in Kosovo and Macedonia, and had called for a force of at least battalion strength to be stationed in Macedonia as a preventive measure.⁴¹⁰³

⁴⁰⁹⁵ See, for example, R.W. Apple, 'U.N. and the Pentagon', *The New York Times*, 15/02/93.

⁴⁰⁹⁶ Drew, *Edge*, p. 145.

⁴⁰⁹⁷ Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 89.

⁴⁰⁹⁸ J.F., 'Croatian leader urges western action against Serbs', *New York Times News Service*, 12/12/92, 1821EST.

⁴⁰⁹⁹ E. Sciolino, 'Clinton faults Bush over Bosnia policy', *New York Times News Service*, 11/12/92, 2053EST; Owen, *Odyssey*, p. 83. See also Powell & Persico, *Journey*, pp. 547-548.

⁴¹⁰⁰ Major, *Autobiography*, p. 540.

⁴¹⁰¹ Ed Vulliamy, 'Bosnia – The Secret War: Tragic Cost of Allies' Hidden Hostility', *The Guardian*, 21/05/96.

⁴¹⁰² 'Bush dreigt Milosevic met militair ingrijpen' ('Bush threatens Milosevic with military intervention'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/12/92; 'VS dreigen Servië met geweld om Kosovo' ('US threatens Serbia with force over Kosovo'), *de Volkskrant*, 29/12/92.

⁴¹⁰³ Ramcharan, p. 1213; Owen CD-ROM, 'Summary of Lord Owen's speech and answers to questions at NATO, Brussels, 04/12/92'; 'Navo waarschuwt Servië' ('NATO warns Serbia'), *Trouw*, 08/12/92.

Owen's warnings were picked up by the media.⁴¹⁰⁴ Extension of the conflict into either Kosovo or Macedonia was a nightmare scenario for the West, because it could draw NATO partners Greece and Turkey into the hostilities. At the request of the Macedonian government, the UN Security Council therefore agreed to station 700 'blue helmets' in its territory as a preventive measure (Resolution 795 of 11 December 1992).

On 6 January 1993, 147 Canadian soldiers arrived in Macedonia. On 6 March they were replaced by a Scandinavian battalion made up of troops from Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. This force was part of UNPROFOR, but operated under its own Macedonia Command.⁴¹⁰⁵ In July 1993 the US government would add 315 of its own men. In his letter to Milosevic, Bush threatened air strikes against both Serbia itself and Serbs in Kosovo if Milosevic provoked war there.⁴¹⁰⁶ Both these actions formed part of the American policy to build a 'dam' against potential confrontations in the southern Balkans.⁴¹⁰⁷ The letter also stated that US air strikes would take place if Serbia violated the no-fly zone, attacked UNPROFOR in Bosnia or interfered with humanitarian convoys in Bosnia.⁴¹⁰⁸ Although this appeared at first sight to send a powerful signal, Milosevic could easily have inferred from it that Washington may not have been prepared to allow the fire in former Yugoslavia to spread any further but also did not intend to extinguish the flames already burning in Bosnia.⁴¹⁰⁹

Quite apart from this policy legacy from Bush to his successor, it was also expected that it would take Clinton some time to develop a specific policy of his own towards Bosnia once he had entered the White House. It took him a long time to put together his national security policy team. The man he had chosen as Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, was head of his transitional team and his intended National Security Adviser, Sandy Berger, was chief of staff in that team. So neither had much time at all to prepare the new president's foreign policy. Clinton himself, who in any case had little experience in foreign policy, was further hindered by his promise to the voters that he would be homing in on economic policy 'like a laser beam'.⁴¹¹⁰

But amidst all the hesitations and problems during his settling in, Clinton was sure of one thing: no American ground troops would be deployed and any US military action in respect of the former Yugoslavia would be conducted exclusively within a multilateral framework. The new president was quoted as saying as much in the magazine *US News & World Report* on the day after his inauguration.⁴¹¹¹

According to opinion polls, the American public was sharply divided over the issue of whether the United States should become involved in either military or peacekeeping operations in Bosnia. In any case, only a small percentage of Americans were interested in the Bosnian situation. The proportion

⁴¹⁰⁴ For a sample of the reports about Macedonia appearing in the Dutch press in late 1992, see Frank Westerman, 'De chauvinisten hier bouwen levensgevaarlijke luchtkastelen' ('The chauvinists here build life-threatening illusions'), *de Volkskrant*, 19/11/92; idem, 'Banaal incident kan strijd doen ontvlammen' ('Minor incident could ignite conflict'), *de Volkskrant*, 20/11/92; idem, 'Regering Macedonië is tevreden over komst VN-waarnemers' ('Macedonia government pleased with arrival of UN observers') and 'Macedonië opgetogen' ('Macedonia dressed up'), *de Volkskrant*, 26/11/92; idem, 'Niet erkend maakt onbemind' ('Unrecognized is unloved'), *de Volkskrant*, 04/12/92; Peter Michielsen, 'Europa speelt Russische roulette met Macedonië' ('Europe plays Russian roulette with Macedonia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/11/92; idem, 'In kampen Macedonië dreigt explosie' ('Explosion threatens in Macedonia camps'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/11/92; idem, 'Het bevroren hart van de Balkan' ('The froze heart of the Balkans'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/11/92; 'De Serviërs gebruikten ons bij hun opmars als levend schild' ('The Serbs used us a living shield in their advance'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/11/92; J.F. Hinrichs, 'Militair ingrijpen in Joegoslavië komt naderbij' ('Military intervention in Yugoslavia comes closer'), *Het Financieele Dagblad*, 09/12/92.

⁴¹⁰⁵ Peter Michielsen, 'VN voor het eerst preventief' ('UN preventive for the first time'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/12/92.

⁴¹⁰⁶ Callahan, *Wars*, pp. 117-118; Don Oberdorfer, 'A Bloody Failure in the Balkans', *The Washington Post*, 08/02/93; David C. Gompert, 'The United States and Yugoslavia's Wars', Ullman (ed.), *World*, p. 137.

⁴¹⁰⁷ David C. Gompert, 'The United States and Yugoslavia's Wars', Ullman (ed.), *World*, pp. 136-137.

⁴¹⁰⁸ ABZ, top secret codes, Van den Broek 511 to PR NATO, 29/12/92, state secret.

⁴¹⁰⁹ Cf. David C. Gompert, 'The United States and Yugoslavia's Wars', Ullman (ed.), *World*, p. 137.

⁴¹¹⁰ Drew, *Edge*, p. 138; Daalder, *Dayton*, p. 83; Maarten Huygen, 'De vraag is of Clinton wel tijd heeft voor buitenlands beleid' ('The question is whether Clinton has time for foreign policy'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/12/92.

⁴¹¹¹ Paulsen, *Jugoslaviëpolitiek*, p. 105.

who claimed that they were following events there almost always remained at a fairly steady 10-15 per cent throughout 1993 and 1994. Only American participation in aerial action and the distribution of emergency aid could count upon a virtually constant majority in favour.⁴¹¹² Leading American commentators like Leslie Gelb claimed that the Europeans should fight their own battles and that, 'If Europeans once again ignore genocide and evil and decline to be their brother's keepers, Americans may not want to be Europe's keepers for much longer either'.⁴¹¹³

Once Clinton had finally assembled his national security team – Christopher at the State Department, Les Aspin at the Department of Defense and Anthony Lake (not Berger) as National Security Adviser – they were unable to reach agreement about American policy towards Bosnia for a long time. That policy was principally a subject of discussion for the Principals Committee, which as well as Lake, Christopher and Aspin also included Colin Powell, CIA chief James Woolsey, Berger – now Lake's deputy – and Vice-President Al Gore's man on the National Security Council, Leon Fuerth. Clinton and Gore themselves also sometimes attended the Committee's meetings. The 'hawks' at these gatherings were Gore, who had long wanted action against the Serbs, Fuerth and Albright, who was allergic to anything that smacked of a 'new Munich'. Lake also wanted to punish the Serbs.⁴¹¹⁴ Aspin argued that results could only be achieved if forces were deployed on a massive scale. This stance reflected the opinion of his department, the Pentagon.⁴¹¹⁵

Christopher was the prototype of the diplomat used to traditional international relations, and who looked disfavouredly upon civil wars at the periphery of US foreign policy interests.⁴¹¹⁶ He had difficulty reaching a definitive standpoint on the issue of the former Yugoslavia, but eventually decided – like the previous administration – that Bosnia was really a European problem.⁴¹¹⁷ Clinton, hindered by his lack of foreign policy experience, did not lead the discussion.⁴¹¹⁸ Through 1993 he was buffeted back and forth between personal emotions about Bosnia and Gore's pressure to do something on the one hand, and reticence because of his desire to prioritize his domestic programme and the expectation that the American public would not support the deployment of ground troops on the other.⁴¹¹⁹ As a result, according to one senior official the long meetings of the Principals Committee in the White House Situation Room had little to do with policy formulation: 'It was group therapy – an existential debate over what is the role of America.'⁴¹²⁰

The policy of the government in Washington was made even opaque by its failure to choose whether in the first instance to back the Bosnian government – which wanted a just peace – or the European Community, which in general terms was seeking a rapid end to the war, just or not. The result of this veering approach by the Clinton administration was a lot of empty rhetoric which appeared to express US support for the Bosnian government in its struggle for a just peace.⁴¹²¹ Thanks to that rhetoric, Sarajevo continued to entertain hopes of an American intervention and increasingly regarded the UN as the institution which was resisting that longed-for development. At the same time, the US government withheld its support from peace proposals.

The fact that Vance and Owen had been in frequent contact with the European Community and the government of its leading member states, but had a very aloof relationship with both the outgoing and the incoming administrations in Washington, also had its repercussions.⁴¹²² Owen himself

⁴¹¹² Bert, *Superpower*, pp. 86-88. See also 'Clinton breekt vredesplan voor Bosnië open' ('Clinton blows open peace plan for Bosnia'), *de Volkskrant*, 11/02/93.

⁴¹¹³ L.H. Gelb, 'Foreign Affairs: Never again', *New York Times News Service*, 12/12/92, 1452EST.

⁴¹¹⁴ Drew, *Edge*, p. 142.

⁴¹¹⁵ Drew, *Edge*, p. 142.

⁴¹¹⁶ Callahan, *Wars*, p. 19.

⁴¹¹⁷ Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 102.

⁴¹¹⁸ Drew, *Edge*, pp. 144 and 145-146.

⁴¹¹⁹ Cf. Drew, *Edge*, p. 283.

⁴¹²⁰ Drew, *Edge*, p. 150.

⁴¹²¹ Cf. Callahan, *Wars*, p. 143; Christopher, *Stream*, p. 345.

⁴¹²² Ludlow, *Involvement*, pp. 1, 3.

came to this conclusion soon after the presentation of the peace plan, but any regrets about it were negated by his own bluntness over the lack of knowledge in Washington. He spoke of 'monumental ignorance' on the part of the American policymakers and, more than a month after its presentation, claimed that 'a crash course is needed to make it clear to the Americans what the plan actually entails'. An offer by the mediators to provide more information elicited no response from the Americans, however.⁴¹²³ They were livid at Owen's remarks and felt that they did not need to be taught a lesson by him.⁴¹²⁴ In fact, they would rather be rid of him altogether.⁴¹²⁵ There was a serious breakdown in communication between the two mediators and the US government.⁴¹²⁶ Most exchanges between them were conducted in the press. According to Pauline Neville-Jones, a senior civil servant in the Cabinet Office of British Prime Minister John Major, after this clash with the Clinton administration Owen became 'useless' for anything to do with Yugoslavia.⁴¹²⁷

Almost immediately after the Clinton administration took office, Christopher rounded on the Vance-Owen plan since it would reward ethnic cleansing and was practically unenforceable.⁴¹²⁸ He regarded it as a dead end, because he could not see how the Bosnian Serbs would be persuaded voluntarily to give up almost half the territory they held.⁴¹²⁹ As US National Security Adviser Anthony Lake would later say, '[H]e didn't think it was viable or made sense, it was so hoggedly-poggedly'⁴¹³⁰

9. Developments in Bosnia itself

In Bosnia itself, the peace plan was suffering the same fate as virtually every other proposed peace for the region. Months of negotiation and consultation followed, as each side tried to frustrate those parts of the plan it did not like. This was done by conducting military campaigns against areas promised to other parties or by starting or (continuing) ethnic cleansing in areas assigned to themselves according to the plan. Specifically, the Serbs renewed their offensive in Eastern Bosnia – which under Vance-Owen would go to the Muslims – and fighting broke out between Croats and Muslims in Hercegovina. The upshot was that the Bosnian Muslim forces, the ABiH, found themselves fighting a war on two fronts – or, as Burg and Shoup describe it more accurately, a war on multiple fronts against two different enemies.⁴¹³¹

The battles between Croats and Muslims were in large part a direct consequence of the proposals made by Owen and Vance for the gradual demilitarization of Bosnia-Hercegovina. Under these, the Bosnian Serbs could withdraw their forces into the three provinces allocated to them. That was a clear proposal. But the proposals with respect to the Croatian and Bosnian Croat troops were much less clear. They would have to withdraw to 'their' province 3, Bosanski Brod, and 'the remaining forces would hopefully reach agreement as to their deployment in provinces 1, 5, 8, 9 and 10'⁴¹³² – that is, Bihac, Tuzla, Mostar, Zenica and Travnik. Three of these, Bihac, Tuzla and Zenica, were Muslim provinces. But Mostar and Travnik were allocated to the Croats, at the time there were still both Croat HVO and Muslim ABiH units.

In this respect, the Vance-Owen plan failed to solve a huge problem. The Bosnian government insisted that its troops should remain in these two areas of western Hercegovina and central Bosnia, whilst the Croats insisted that their forces alone should govern areas which would have a Bosnian-

⁴¹²³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00110. Biegman 112 to Kooijmans, 04/02/93.

⁴¹²⁴ Cf. Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 233; Owen CD-ROM, 'Report from Lord Owen's Private Secretary from New York in Co-Chairmen's meeting with Secretary of State Christopher on 1 February 1993'.

⁴¹²⁵ Interview T. Stoltenberg, 22/09/00.

⁴¹²⁶ Simms, *Hour*, pp. 147-148.

⁴¹²⁷ Interview Dame Pauline Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

⁴¹²⁸ Daalder, *Dayton*, pp. 10-11; Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, p. 106.

⁴¹²⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00112. COREU Bonn, 08/05/93, cpe/bon 292.

⁴¹³⁰ Simms, *Hour*, p. 147.

⁴¹³¹ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 134.

⁴¹³² Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 222.

Croat majority according to the plan. Shortly after the presentation of Vance-Owen, the Bosnian Croats proposed that all military units in the provinces assigned to them be brought under HVO command. Conversely, Croat units in the provinces with a Muslim majority should place themselves under the command of the ABiH. The Bosnian government did not agree, however, since it feared that this would lead to the Croat provinces breaking away, thus effectively partitioning Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴¹³³

When the ABiH units in 'its' areas continued to operate independently, the Bosnian Croat leadership issued an ultimatum: they must place themselves under HVO command by 15 April. When this date passed without the demands being met, the Bosnian Croats began 'cleansing' their region – principally the province of Travnik in the Vance-Owen plan – of Muslims. In this region they were only a relative majority of the population: 45 per cent, compared with 41 per cent Muslims and 9.5 per cent Serbs. Effectively, therefore, the Bosnian Croats regarded the Vance-Owen plan as legitimizing the ethnic cleansing of the territory allocated to them.⁴¹³⁴

Fighting had begun immediately, in January 1993, in and around Vitez, Travnik and Jablanica. There were also heavy battles around Busovaca, which contained both the military headquarters of the HVO in central Bosnia and the base of the Belgian-Dutch transport battalion. The Bosnian Croat forces did not confine themselves to fighting, but also tried to cut off supplies to the Muslims. That led to such serious threats to international aid workers in central Bosnia that in mid January the UNHCR was forced to close its offices in Jablanica, Prozor and Gornji Vakuf. The Croats also tried to seize the Prozor-Fojnica-Kiseljak road, thus threatening the supply of food to Sarajevo. The ferocity of these battles was heightened in part by the fact that the ABiH received its first large-scale illegal consignments of weapons during spring 1993.⁴¹³⁵

The HVO at first managed to force the government forces in central Bosnia back to the area around Zenica, but in June 1993 the ABiH captured Travnik. From then on it unexpectedly made significant gains from the Croat forces, and by the end of the year had driven them out of a third of their territory. The government in Zagreb felt forced to send the equivalent of three or four battalions of the Croatian army itself, the HV, to lend support. But this did not help: between spring 1993 and March 1994, Croat-held territory fell from almost 20 per cent to barely 10 per cent of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Between 9000 and 13,000 Croats, both from Croatia and Bosnia, died in this conflict with the Muslims.⁴¹³⁶

The dispatch of regular units of the Croatian army, in contravention of UN Security Council resolutions, made Zagreb the subject of massive international criticism. But the international community was unable to be too hard on the Zagreb government for its actions in central Bosnia, because Western measures against Croatia could lead to the Tudjman government denying access to his country to the hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees from Bosnia who were fleeing there. And that would saddle Western Europe with the problem.⁴¹³⁷ Only in the United Kingdom was much attention paid to the fighting between Croats and Muslims in central Bosnia, this was mainly because Britain's UN troops were stationed there. Moreover, the conflict gave the British government – which always felt uneasy about any calls for more action against the Serbs – ammunition to claim that the Croats as well as the Serbs were responsible for committing serious crimes.⁴¹³⁸

Elsewhere in the West, however, the battles between Croats and Muslims went largely unnoticed by the general public. The media did not want to make the conflict too complicated for its audiences. In addition, the US government did not want to demonize the Croats too much because they had been given a key role in a strategy devised against the Serbs during 1993. The authorities in Sarajevo also preferred not to draw too much attention to the struggle against the Croats because it was

⁴¹³³ Burg & Shoup, *War*, pp. 227-228.

⁴¹³⁴ Cigar, *Genocide*, pp. 125 and 151.

⁴¹³⁵ Gow, *Forces*, p. 2.

⁴¹³⁶ Martin Spegelj in Magas & Zanic, *War*, p. 107.

⁴¹³⁷ Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 288.

⁴¹³⁸ Simms, *Hour*, pp. 33-34 and 145-146.

still counting upon their support against the Serbs. Moreover, a proportion of the illegal weapons shipments to the Bosnian government during this period were passing through Croatian territory.

Occasionally, reports of atrocities did break through this wall of silence. For example, the mass murder by Croat fighters in the Muslim village of Ahmici on 22 April. Of the 500 civilian residents, 104 were killed and their homes then set on fire with the bodies inside.⁴¹³⁹ On 10 May the Croats held up a convoy of aid destined for Muslims and murdered eight of the drivers.⁴¹⁴⁰ In June heavy fighting broke out for control of Mostar, a battle which attracted mainly international attention when Croat artillery fire destroyed the town's famous mediaeval bridge on 9 November. From time to time, in this conflict serious outrages were also committed by the Muslim side.

The fighting between Croats and Muslims, the threat from Croatia itself not to prolong the UNPROFOR presence on its territory, the Serb offensive in eastern Bosnia and the refusal by the Bosnian Serbs to accept the peace plan all led to Western diplomats lurching from one crisis to the next during the early months of 1993. Little came of the effort to implement a blueprint for peace. Even David Owen himself eventually stopped believing in one of the essential points of the plan he and Cyrus Vance had presented. His objective with regard to the conflict in Bosnia had become, as he himself described it, 'the lowest possible level of violence with the highest possible level of humanitarian relief'.⁴¹⁴¹ Or, to put it more bluntly, muddling through – a policy to which the West was condemned not only by the situation in Bosnia and Croatia themselves, but also by the increasingly obvious differences between Washington and the European Community over the best way to tackle the problems in Yugoslavia.

10. The Dutch response to the Vance-Owen plan

'Politics has given me broad shoulders,' said Lord Owen on 6 June 1995, in the fourth Cornelis van Vollenhoven Memorial Lecture at the University of Leiden, 'but I was still surprised by the vehemence and the nature of some of the criticism expressed in the Netherlands in 1992 and 1993 about the so-called Vance-Owen peace plan.'⁴¹⁴² According to Owen, his and Vance's plan was torpedoed not only by the US, but also by the Netherlands and to a certain extent Germany.⁴¹⁴³

In this assessment, Owen ascribes the Netherlands with a great deal of influence. It cannot be denied, the original response to the Vance-Owen plan from both Dutch politicians and the Department of Foreign Affairs was negative.⁴¹⁴⁴ This arose from the impression that the Muslims were being sacrificed to the Serbs, who would be given too much territory. The principle from the London Conference that military conquests should not be recognized was being undermined. However, not in every case, the criticism seems to have been based upon a good understanding of the plan; rather, it sometimes appears to have come from disappointment that more decisive action was not being taken against the Bosnian Serbs.

One of those who criticized the plan on a number of points was the Dutch Christian-Democrat MEP Jean Penders.⁴¹⁴⁵ In his view, the plan not only rewarded Serb aggression but also played into the hands of Serbs and Croats who wanted to partition Bosnia-Herzegovina. Acceptance of Vance-Owen would lead to ethnic cleansing spreading elsewhere: to Kosovo, Macedonia and the former Soviet

⁴¹³⁹ For a description see, for example, Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, pp. 118-125.

⁴¹⁴⁰ See e.g. Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, pp. 142-143.

⁴¹⁴¹ ABZ, archive links, COREU of the Danish EC presidency, 24/04/93, cpe/pres/cop 913.

⁴¹⁴² Owen, *Grenzen*, p. 372. See also Owen CD-ROM, Owen 'The Limits of UN Enforcement', The Fourth Cornelis van Vollenhoven Memorial Lecture, 06/06/95: 'Politics has given me broad shoulders (...)'; Van de Roier, *Frontdiplomaten*, p. 39.

⁴¹⁴³ For the surprised responses in the Netherlands to the amount of influence ascribed by Owen to the Dutch position, see, for example, 'Nederland in sleutelrol' ('Netherlands in key role'), and 'Van den Broek: niet eens met kritiek Lord Owen' ('Van den Broek does not agree with Lord Owen's criticism'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/06/95.

⁴¹⁴⁴ Cf. Scholten et al., *Sarajevo*, p. 97 (see CD-ROM with the Dutch version)

⁴¹⁴⁵ J.J.M. Penders, 'Het nationaliteitsvraagstuk en de veiligheid' ('The nationality issue and security'), *Christen Democratische Verkenningen* (1993)4, pp. 147-155.

Union. As a result, according to Penders, the moral authority of the EC would be harmed, particularly in its relations with Eastern Europe. Refugees would flood from Eastern Europe to the West, which in turn would offer a trump card to far-right groups in Western Europe. The instability which would be unleashed by the plan in Eastern Europe would threaten the progress and extension of European integration. And American irritation about European inability to solve the Yugoslavia problem would have repercussions for the transatlantic relationship. Instead of the Vance-Owen plan, Penders therefore called for 'an arrangement which will satisfy our sense of justice'.⁴¹⁴⁶ Such an arrangement should include the closure of the camps, the establishment of safe zones and the placing of heavy weapons under international supervision. The no-fly zone should be enforced and, possibly, aimed air raids carried out on Serb military targets.

Political scientist and commentator Bart Tromp also regarded the plan as rewarding Serb murderousness. He drew comparisons with 1938, when another aggressor had managed to achieve an *Anschluss*, 'also without a plebiscite'.⁴¹⁴⁷ Jan-Geert Siccama found a parallel in the 1930s, too: he compared Vance-Owen with the Laval-Hoare plan, which had been drawn up in 1936 in response to the occupation of much of Ethiopia by Mussolini's fascist Italy. That plan sounded the death-knell for the League of Nations as an effective security structure. If the United Nations did not watch out, it was now destined for the same fate.⁴¹⁴⁸ André Roelofs wrote in the newspaper *De Volkskrant* of a 'cynical operation' on the part of Owen and Vance, who were seeking 'a *Realpolitik* arrangement under which the Bosnian government would acknowledge its defeat and the Serbs would be satisfied with what they had so far conquered – or at least would *say* that they were satisfied.' When it turned out that Radovan Karadzic was not prepared even to do that, André Roelofs claimed that the West had been caught with its trousers down because it simply had not considered what to do if the Geneva talks were to fail.⁴¹⁴⁹ Writing in the newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, Sampienon called Vance-Owen a 'partition plan' in which the 'the right of the strongest was accepted' and with which the EC was trying to extract itself from the tragedy in Bosnia-Herzegovina 'at a bargain price'.⁴¹⁵⁰

However, there were less negative voices to be heard talking about the peace plan in the Netherlands. CDA parliamentarian Ton De Kok was inclined – reluctantly – to accept it. 'Unfortunately, it is evident that in this case aggression pays,' he wrote. 'The Muslim leadership will have to weigh up a choice between accepting the proposals tabled by Owen and Vance and looking at what gains can be made from continuing the war.'⁴¹⁵¹ De Kok's view broadly paralleled a comment made towards the end of 1992 by Peter Volten of the Institute for East-West Studies in New York that the West had lost the battle in Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to Volten, there was 'no longer any sense from a strategic perspective in achieving victory in a 'sideshow'. It was more important to force Serbia to its knees and dictate a peace at the 'negotiating table'.⁴¹⁵² Retired Brigadier General J.C.A.C. De Vogel went even further when, at around the same time, he objected to large-scale intervention. In his view, the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina had 'virtually no right to exist, so the question is whether there is any point in sustaining this fiction'.⁴¹⁵³

In his initial response to the Vance-Owen plan, Hans Sandee of the Eastern Europe Bureau at the Department of Foreign Affairs wrote that the Bosnian Serbs would gain a lot of territory under its

⁴¹⁴⁶ J.J.M. Penders, 'Het nationaliteitsvraagstuk en de veiligheid', *Christen Democratische Verkenningen* (1993)4, p. 149.

⁴¹⁴⁷ Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 53 (06/01/93).

⁴¹⁴⁸ J.G. Siccama, 'Laval-Hoare 1936/Vance-Owen 1993', *Armex*, April 1993, p. 6.

⁴¹⁴⁹ André Roelofs, 'Westen niet voorbereid op échec in Genève' ('West not prepared for stalemate in Geneva'), *de Volkskrant*, 13/01/93.

⁴¹⁵⁰ J.H. Sampienon, 'Vredehandhaving zonder vrede kan niet' ('Maintaining peace is impossible when there is no peace'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/02/93.

⁴¹⁵¹ 'Joegoslavië' ('Yugoslavia'), *CD/Actueel*, 16/01/93, p. 18.

⁴¹⁵² P.M.E. Volten, 'Ingrijpen ter wille van democratie' ('Intervene for the sake of democracy'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 31/12/92.

⁴¹⁵³ Infantry Brigadier General J.C.A.C. de Vogel (ret'd), 'Ingrijpen in Joegoslavië?' ('Intervention in Yugoslavia?'), *Carré* (1992)12, pp. 13-19. See also idem, 'Ingrijpen in Joegoslavië?' ('Intervention in Yugoslavia?'), *Vrij Nederland*, 09/01/93, pp. 7-8; idem, 'Er bestaat geen Bosnische identiteit' ('There is no Bosnian identity'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/03/93.

allocation scheme. Even though Owen and Vance assumed that the population would return to their original homes it was highly questionable whether that would indeed be the case, according to Sandee. He also described the fact that the plan made no mention of a central Bosnian government army as an 'ominous sign'.⁴¹⁵⁴

Brand-new Minister of Foreign Affairs Peter Kooijmans played a major role in determining the Dutch attitude towards the plan, which was launched on the same day he took office. Having visited the region, Kooijmans felt a strong emotional attachment to the Yugoslavia issue.⁴¹⁵⁵ He believed that the international community should be doing more⁴¹⁵⁶ and so in this respect – despite the original, somewhat different outlook expressed during his introductory meeting with Van Walsum (see Chapter 8) – continued to follow the line taken by his predecessor, Hans van den Broek, 'with complete conviction'.⁴¹⁵⁷ At the press conference to mark his appointment, the new Minister was asked what he regarded as the biggest problem in his new job. 'My biggest problem is Yugoslavia,' he replied, little realizing how deeply that remark would come to burden his period in office. During his 18 months at Foreign Affairs, the media would constantly remind Kooijmans of that comment.⁴¹⁵⁸ His attitude towards the Vance-Owen plan was determined in part by his difficulty in accepting that frontiers were gaining in significance in Eastern Europe and multi-ethnicity was becoming a thing of the past there. A few months before becoming Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kooijmans had described it as an 'absurdity' that, 'whilst we in Western Europe in many ways regard borders as out of date, people in the other part of Europe are shutting themselves off from one another'.⁴¹⁵⁹

In his efforts to achieve a just peace, Kooijmans was very inclined to listen to what the Bosnian government thought of the plan. 'The Bosnians were against and you have to listen to the people who have got to live with it,' he told Norbert Both in a May 1997 interview. 'We were in close touch with them.'⁴¹⁶⁰ In the same interview, Kooijmans also claimed that in Washington the Dutch government had urged military intervention as an alternative to the Vance-Owen plan. With the help of American troops, he said, it would be possible to obtain a more favourable map for the Muslims and the reintegration of Bosnia.⁴¹⁶¹ According to Both, the Dutch government would only embrace the Vance-Owen plan at the beginning of May, by which time it was virtually dead, and would then become 'a staunch advocate'.⁴¹⁶² Both's evidence is drawn partly from Owen, who in his written memoirs of his time as a mediator ascribed great significance to Dutch moral indignation. According to Owen, the Dutch government had a major responsibility for torpedoing the plan, among other things by the pressure put on Washington from The Hague.⁴¹⁶³ The Dutch responded to this claim with surprise: Owen's criticism was too flattering for a country like the Netherlands with limited international influence.⁴¹⁶⁴ But Both agreed with the British mediator:

'To some degree the Netherlands had carried responsibility for the continuation of war, the reduced solidarity between EC member states and the diminished credibility of the ICFY [the international conference on Yugoslavia]... Dutch

⁴¹⁵⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01813. Memorandum DEU to Kooijmans, 05/01/92 (should be: 05/01/93), no. 7/93.

⁴¹⁵⁵ Femke Halsema, 'Kleine stapjes. Het pragmatisch optimisme van Peter Kooijmans' ('Small steps. Peter Kooijmans' pragmatic optimism'), *de Helling*, 9(1996)3, p. 6.

⁴¹⁵⁶ Interview H.A. Schaper, 10/04/00.

⁴¹⁵⁷ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

⁴¹⁵⁸ Interview B. Hiensch, 13/07/00. See, for example, Rob Meines, 'Europa verlamd door doemdenken over Joegoslavië' ('Europe paralysed by defeatism over Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/02/93.

⁴¹⁵⁹ Kooijmans in an interview in *CD/Actueel*, 05/09/92, quoted in Olaf van Boetzelaer, 'Kooijmans kan de juiste man op de juiste plaats zijn' ('Kooijmans could be the right man in the right place'), *CD/Actueel*, 16/01/93, p. 10.

⁴¹⁶⁰ Both, *Indifference*, p. 153. the Dutch quote in Both, version 1999, p. 248 n. 32

⁴¹⁶¹ Both, *Indifference*, p. 155.

⁴¹⁶² Both, *Indifference*, p. 158; see also p. 159.

⁴¹⁶³ Owen, *Odyssey*, p. 91.

⁴¹⁶⁴ Both, *Indifference*, p. 152.

policy encouraged the Bosnian government – with whom the Dutch were in constant touch – to refuse acceptance of the VOPP [Vance Owen peace plan] at a stage where their hold on east Bosnian land was still considerable. The Dutch attitude also awarded a degree of European legitimacy to the American opposition to the plan.⁴¹⁶⁵ And, 'Bosnian-Dutch-American opposition proved the death knell for the VOPP.'⁴¹⁶⁶

The problem with these criticisms by Both is that they are based mainly upon interviews conducted after the event. He himself notes that the Dutch government did not voice its criticism publicly at the time.⁴¹⁶⁷ This is an inaccurate assessment in two respects. Firstly, the Dutch government certainly did make its views about the plan known, and secondly it soon dropped what limited criticism there was, like that formulated by Sandee. Kooijmans would defend Vance-Owen through thick and thin in the Dutch parliament. Both's comment that the Dutch government changed from being a fervent opponent of the plan to 'a staunch advocate' at the beginning of May also cuts no ice. In a conversation with Warren Christopher on 7 May (see below), Kooijmans concluded that implementation of the peace plan was no longer a priority. In the view of Both, he could therefore not have been 'a staunch advocate' for very long.⁴¹⁶⁸ In reality, the Dutch government very soon reached the conclusion that there may have been a lot to find fault with in Vance-Owen but that – at the time – it was the 'least worse' solution.⁴¹⁶⁹

On 8 January 1993 it was announced in the Dutch government that a 'decisive peace effort' would be made in Geneva on Sunday, 10 January. The results of those negotiations were expressed in pessimistic terms. It had been decided in advance that any failure would be the fault of the Serbs, not the Muslims. And if that happened the UN Security Council would again debate the enforcement of the existing no-fly zone. On the same day the government discussed the Memorandum of Priorities without – at least according to the objectivized minutes – making any mention of the current situation in the former Yugoslavia or the dispatch of Dutch troops to the region.⁴¹⁷⁰

On 25 January 1993 the Dutch Parliament informed the National Assembly that it regarded 'full and unconditional' acceptance of the Vance-Owen plan by all sides as being 'of essential importance'. 'Only acceptance of this plan,' stated the government, 'and its implementation in the field can contribute to a lasting solution being found.'⁴¹⁷¹ The government also used this occasion to declare that it was prepared in principle to allow Dutch F-16 fighter aircrafts to take part in an operation to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was not being observed at the time. 'In this case, for the government credibility is of major consideration,' continued its statement, 'especially now that the United Nations is taking on an increasing role in promoting international peace and security.'⁴¹⁷²

The first verbal consultations between the new Minister, Kooijmans, and the parliamentary foreign affairs and defence committees took place on 28 January 1993. Most MPs appeared to accept the Vance-Owen plan, albeit as a recognition of reality rather than as a flawless initiative in its own right. None of the parliamentarians was more direct than Van Middelkoop:

'Does this plan not in fact accept the results of the ethnic cleansing in recent months? Does it not in fact create homelands for the various ethnic groups? Is

⁴¹⁶⁵ Both, *Indifference*, p. 160.

⁴¹⁶⁶ Both, *Indifference*, p. 175.

⁴¹⁶⁷ Both, *Indifference*, p. 155.

⁴¹⁶⁸ See also Both, *Indifference*, pp. 158-159.

⁴¹⁶⁹ Cf. Also ABZ, DEU/ARA/00112. Memorandum 'Voormalig Joegoslavië. Achtergrond' ('Former Yugoslavia. Background') for Gymnich, 24-25/04/93, 22/04/93.

⁴¹⁷⁰ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 08/01/93, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴¹⁷¹ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 31, p. 2.

⁴¹⁷² TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 31, p. 5.

this not the introduction of ethnic apartheid into Europe? Does this plan not mean abandoning the political effort to restore a *status quo ante*? On the grounds of what international legal morality is this plan acceptable to the government? What future value does it have?⁴¹⁷³

The government, however, took the stance that the Vance-Owen plan was the 'only feasible' option at that stage and the acceptance of its basic principles by all the parties was 'at least a step in the right direction'.⁴¹⁷⁴ According to Kooijmans, the ethnic situation at the beginning of the war could not be restored. He also pointed out, rightly, that the plan certainly did not propose full ethnic partition. The provinces created would continue to have multi-ethnic populations, which in turn would maintain Bosnia-Herzegovina as a state. Moreover, said the Minister, the plan attempted to prevent the predominantly Serb provinces annexing themselves to Serbia proper. In other words, the plan tried 'to build a bridge between the irreparable *status quo ante* and the non-recognition of the results of ethnic cleansing'.⁴¹⁷⁵ There was little in those words to reflect the determined opposition which Owen and, in his wake, Both claimed to have detected from the Dutch government.

Apart from a modest sign that it took the no-fly zone over Bosnia seriously, the report of this meeting with Parliament shows that Kooijmans did not consider the international community to be in a position to exert military pressure. Given the stance being adopted by some permanent members of the UN Security Council, it was even doubtful whether aggressive enforcement of the no-fly zone as supported by the Dutch government was achievable. As a result, after the efforts made by the Netherlands in November and December 1992 to establish Safe Areas, Kooijmans had little confidence that they would come about quickly. 'After all,' he told the meeting of MPs, 'international ideas about safe havens, security zones and the like are still much too fragmented for the international community to be able to clench its fist.'⁴¹⁷⁶ In a memorandum written to brief Kooijmans for a conversation with his German counterpart, Klaus Kinkel, Department of Foreign Affairs official R. (Robert) in den Bosch of the Military Co-operation Bureau of the Directorate for Atlantic Co-operation and Security Affairs described the likely feasibility of Safe Areas as 'virtually nil'. On the one hand, the military situation in Bosnia did not allow for their creation, on the other no country was prepared to supply the additional troops needed to enforce them.⁴¹⁷⁷

11. Enforcement or implementation of the peace plan

The Dutch Ministry of Defence agreed to the deployment of F-16s to enforce the no-fly zone – this offer had been made public by Minister Ter Beek himself on 12 December. But the department was more reserved about any Dutch contribution for the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan. In addition to ECMM (European Community Monitor Mission) monitors, signals personnel might be available to be dispatched.⁴¹⁷⁸ However, UNPROFOR's need for such staff would decrease drastically with the implementation of a new communications system.

Kooijmans' pessimism about the potential for enforcing anything, with the possible exception of a limited no-fly zone, was well-founded. The chances that the Owen-Vance peace plan could be military enforced were small from the outset, because Russia and China opposed any armed

⁴¹⁷³ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 41, pp. 6-7.

⁴¹⁷⁴ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 41, p. 7.

⁴¹⁷⁵ TK, session 1992-1993, 22181, no. 41, p. 8. Were this peace accord ever accepted, according to Kooijmans the international community would 'be kept busy 'peacekeeping' for a long time in the same way as in Cambodia' [TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 41, p. 8.]

⁴¹⁷⁶ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 41, p. 8.

⁴¹⁷⁷ ABZ, 999.241, Background notes for visit by Minister Kinkel, 14/01/92 (should be: 14/01/93), Military aspects ex-Yugoslavia, z.d..

⁴¹⁷⁸ ABZ, DIE/2001/0023. Memorandum from Deputy DEU to AP et al., 10/02/93, no. 48/93.

intervention against the Serbs and because France and the United Kingdom feared for the safety of their 'blue helmets'.⁴¹⁷⁹

The development of military plans to implement Vance-Owen was also hindered by duplication and rivalry between the WEU and NATO. The Dutch Permanent Representative to NATO, Jacobovits, observed in a telegram sent to his Minister on 28 January 1993 that this duality threatened the decisiveness of the Western community because the various governments could play their cards on whichever was the most favourable option for them and the Security Council would always seem to have a choice between two alternatives: NATO plans and WEU proposals. In particular the French government which preferred not to give NATO too great a role repeatedly misused the situation to promote the WEU. This had already been the case during the discussions about the safe havens. At the NATO Council on 27 January, Jacobovits had urged that the WEU agenda in respect of the peace plan be introduced into the NATO consultations as a joint WEU position. He also proposed to Kooijmans that decisions of WEU working groups be put to the Union's Permanent Council so that co-ordination could take place at that level and the WEU's ad-hoc Yugoslavia group was not constantly submitting independent decisions to international fora.⁴¹⁸⁰

These recommendations from Jacobovits came rather late. Two days earlier, on 25 January 1993, the ad-hoc Yugoslavia group of the WEU had met in Rome. It was then decided to submit its plans in respect of the neutralization and protection of Sarajevo in accordance with Vance-Owen to the United Nations, European Political Co-operation (EPC) and NATO. It was also agreed that the ad-hoc group would hold its last meeting on 1 February. The dissolution of the Contingency Planning Group (CPG) was looming, too, since the Permanent Council was demanding a greater role for itself in deciding policy.⁴¹⁸¹ Shortly after that France abandoned the WEU as an instrument: it was dawning on Paris that Europe needed the Americans in any approach to the Yugoslav conflict, and that the WEU was unsuitable in that context.⁴¹⁸² This effectively marked the end of the WEU's role in the war in the former Yugoslavia, except in the enforcement of sanctions.

The possibility of enforcing the peace plan, and the readiness to do so, had now become an issue because Owen and Vance had been unable on their own, through negotiations, to achieve its acceptance by the warring parties. By early February, therefore, they were seeking support from the UN Security Council to enforce it. On 1 February the EC Foreign Ministers publicly expressed their support for the Vance-Owen plan at a meeting in Brussels.⁴¹⁸³ The EU had not consulted in advance with Washington about this standpoint. It was clearly hoping to put pressure upon the Clinton Administration, which had not declared itself in favour of the plan. And that pressure was not insignificant: the Brussels decision implied that if Washington rejected the plan, it would be accountable for the consequences.⁴¹⁸⁴ At the same time any difference in approach to the Yugoslavia question by the Western European nations and the United States would create serious tensions in the transatlantic relationship. On 31 January, NATO's despairing Secretary-General, Manfred Wörner, had already called upon the international community to make it clear to the warring parties in Bosnia that it was serious.⁴¹⁸⁵

The new American Administration, however, continued to have doubts about a plan which had not been accepted by all sides. Therefore, it put no pressure upon the Bosnian government to adopt it

⁴¹⁷⁹ 'Lot Bosnië in handen van Veiligheidsraad' ('Bosnia's fate in hands of Security Council'), *de Telegraaf*, 01/02/93.

⁴¹⁸⁰ NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek. Jacobovits 129 to Kooijmans, cc. Ter Beek, 28/01/93.

⁴¹⁸¹ NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek. Kooijmans to PR WEU and Rome ambassador, 26/01/93, circ. 62.

⁴¹⁸² Interview A.P.R. Jacobovits de Szeged, 21/09/00.

⁴¹⁸³ Owen CD-ROM, Statement by the EU Council of Foreign Ministers, 01/02/93; 'Amerikanen halen gewonden op uit Bosnische oorlog' ('Americans collect wounded from Bosnian war'), *de Telegraaf*, 02/02/93.

⁴¹⁸⁴ Daalder, *Dayton*, p. 11.

⁴¹⁸⁵ K. Koch, 'Joegoslavië, Oost-Europa en de strategie van neo-containment' ('Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe and the strategy of neocontainment'), Gijs de Vries et al., *Continent*, pp. 126.

– which, according to Owen, was the necessary step between acceptance by the Croats and pressurizing the Serbs.

Interestingly, it was at exactly this point that Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Kozyrev floated the possibility of limited military intervention. In an interview with the French newspaper *La Croix*, he talked about both enforcement of the no-fly zone and attacks on ground targets if international forces were attacked.⁴¹⁸⁶ He also called for sanctions against all parties which failed to accept the Vance-Owen plan.⁴¹⁸⁷ On this last point, the Russian government was supporting the EC's standpoint against that of the United States. To the government in Moscow, the Vance-Owen plan seemed the best guarantee against large-scale intervention against Republika Srpska or Serbia itself.⁴¹⁸⁸ Moreover, with a view to nationalist opposition at home it could do Russian president Yeltsin no harm to side with Europe so as to show that he was not tied to the United States.⁴¹⁸⁹

On 4 February, during a brief visit to Washington, the German Minister of Foreign Affairs Kinkel made an impassioned plea to the new US government to support the Vance-Owen plan. However, those he met – Clinton, Christopher, Aspin, Lake and several leading member of Congress – were disinclined to do so. Their stated objections to the plan were that it rewarded Serb aggression, would be difficult to implement, required a peacekeeping force which would have to be supplied largely by the Americans and that that would be unlikely to obtain in a majority in Congress. Moreover, Owen had seriously offended them with his anti-American comments.⁴¹⁹⁰

Although the Clinton Administration did not at first come out with any new policy, one was being developed behind the scenes. One of Clinton's first acts after entering the White House was to ask his National Security Team to revise American policy on Bosnia, because he wanted 'something' done against Serb aggression.⁴¹⁹¹ Perhaps stimulated by the first noises from Russia at the beginning of February and by a powerful call from Bonn for the US to back the Vance-Owen plan because there was no alternative,⁴¹⁹² on 10 February 1993 Washington finally announced a six-point plan. This sidestepped the real question, whether or not to support Vance-Owen. The plan contained little of substance, and so marked the start of period of almost two years in which Clinton's policy towards Bosnia consisted mainly of rhetorical fireworks, with few actual deeds.⁴¹⁹³ Under the six-point plan, the American government left open the possibility that it might send troops to Bosnia to monitor the implementation of any peace accord, but this would have to be 'a viable agreement containing enforcement provisions', acceptable to all sides and allowing for the deployment of a multilateral military force.⁴¹⁹⁴

The American Permanent Representative to NATO, former Undersecretary of State for International Security Affairs and Ambassador to Lebanon Reginald Bartholomew, was appointed by Washington as a special envoy to assist Vance and Owen. Almost immediately he gained a Russian counterpart, Vitaly Churkin, whom Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Kozyrev began using to put pressure upon Karadzic to accept the Vance-Owen plan.⁴¹⁹⁵ The involvement of both Russia and the United States in seeking a solution to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia thus became institutionalized.

⁴¹⁸⁶ 'EG: meer hulp aan Bosnische verkrachtingsslachtoffers' ('EC; more aid to Bosnian rape victims'), *Trouw*, 02/02/93.

⁴¹⁸⁷ 'Clinton geïsoleerd met aarzeling Bosnië-plan' ('Clinton isolated with hesitancy over Bosnia plan'), *Trouw*, 05/02/93.

⁴¹⁸⁸ Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 160.

⁴¹⁸⁹ Cf. Andrei Edemskii, 'Russian Perspectives', Danchev & Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, p. 39.

⁴¹⁹⁰ ABZ, 910, Yugoslavia general. Meesman 72 to Van den Broek, 05/02/93.

⁴¹⁹¹ Daalder, *Dayton*, pp. 8 and 87; Powell & Persico, *Journey*, pp. 548 en 561.

⁴¹⁹² Objectivized version of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting, 05/02/93.

⁴¹⁹³ Owen CD-ROM, 'Warren Christopher's Statement on US policy initiative, Washington, 10/02/93'. Cf. Daalder, *Dayton*, p. 10; Powell & Persico, *Journey*, p. 560.

⁴¹⁹⁴ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 233-234. See also 'VS gaan zich meer bemoeien met Bosnië' ('US to step up involvement in Bosnia'), *De Telegraaf*, 11/02/93; 'VS zetten overleg Bosnië onder druk' ('US puts Bosnia talks under pressure'), *Trouw*, 11/02/93.

⁴¹⁹⁵ Ludlow, *Involvement*, pp. 3-4.

The veiled refusal by Washington to enforce Vance-Owen was followed by a return to the severely tried means of finding a solution to the problems in the former Yugoslavia by negotiation. And it was now clear that the United States would only back a peace plan if it were acceptable to the Bosnian government. And as long as that government believed that it could achieve more success on the battlefield than at the negotiating table – as its army's recent victories over the Croats appeared to show was possible – it knew that it would be supported in its rejection. Even without American intervention, the Sarajevo government had been given *carte blanche* for intransigence at the negotiating table.

That did not make matters easier for Owen and Vance. It thwarted the three-stage strategy under which first the Croats and then the Bosnian government would accept the peace plan. The only chance for Owen and Vance to achieve that now would be to make more concessions to the Bosnian government.⁴¹⁹⁶ But the more they did that, the less likely it was that their third stage – acceptance by the Bosnian Serbs – would be achieved. Whilst the Bosnian Serbs already had a problem with the peace plan because they regarded it as denying them the Posavina corridor as a result of the province of Bosanski Brod being allocated to the Croats, Owen and Vance now tried to bring the Bosnian government on board by offering it a link between province 5 (Tuzla) and the River Sava through the same area. This would remove any possibility for the Bosnian Serbs to create a link between 'their' provinces along the Posavina corridor through an exchange of territory with the Croats. According to Owen, this was in fact the decisive factor in the Serbs' eventual rejection of the plan.⁴¹⁹⁷ When putting heavy pressure on the Bosnian Serb leaders to accept the plan on 12 January in Geneva, Milosevic, too, had told Owen and Vance that it would only be acceptable to him on the condition that a northern corridor be created between the Serb areas.⁴¹⁹⁸

One of the positive aspects of the American six-point plan was that in it the Clinton Administration declared itself prepared to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia. At the UN, Washington now also backed the rapid establishment of the war-crimes tribunal. For the British and French governments, though, probably the most important aspect of the six-point plan was that it did not include either air strikes or the abolition of the weapons embargo against Bosnia, both ideas which had been widely posited in the American capital in recent weeks.⁴¹⁹⁹

Despite the meagre substance of the six-point plan, the Dutch government applauded the greater American involvement now that Bartholomew had been appointed to 'help' Vance and Owen. The government in The Hague still hoped that a number of US objections to the Vance-Owen plan could soon be overcome, because it regarded American support for its implementation as essential.⁴²⁰⁰ In reality, however, Bartholomew would primarily act as a lobbyist for Izetbegovic during the talks led by Owen and Vance.⁴²⁰¹

At a special meeting of NATO Ministers held on 26 February it became clear that, despite the six-point plan, the American government still did not know what it wanted. Christopher may have stated that Washington was prepared to contribute to monitoring based upon a peace plan, but that must still represent 'a just, sustainable and enforceable arrangement' under which Bosnia-Herzegovina remained a unitary state. Christopher did not say whether such an American military contribution would include ground troops. An invitation to Christopher from Kooijmans to indicate what specific objections the Clinton Administration harboured in respect of Vance-Owen met with no success.

⁴¹⁹⁶ Cf. Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 234.

⁴¹⁹⁷ Van de Roer, *Frontdiplomaten*, p. 40. See also Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 235. See also Owen CD-ROM, 'Personal telegram from Lord Owen to Sir Robin Redwick, 29/01/93'.

⁴¹⁹⁸ Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 158.

⁴¹⁹⁹ Daalder, *Dayton*, p. 10.

⁴²⁰⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00887. Kooijmans to PR WEU, 15/02/93, celer 067; TK, session 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 35, p. 2; Both, *Indifference*, p. 156.

⁴²⁰¹ Owen CD-ROM, 'Direct governmental involvement in the search for a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, September 1992-July 1994, Part 1'; Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 236.

According to Christopher, the European nations must take the lead in implementing any peace plan, and redouble their efforts to that end. For him, the question was whether the Europeans possessed the political will to assume their responsibilities with regard to the former Yugoslavia. But Hurd and Dumas, continued to take the view that the Western attitude towards Serbia could go no further than 'persuasion backed by pressure' – with the pressure above all referring to sanctions. They had little time for peace enforcement. Dumas, moreover, wanted the peace plan to be implemented by the UN, not NATO as the Americans wished.⁴²⁰²

Meanwhile, the talks being led by Owen and Vance in New York barely managed to get off the ground. That was due not only to the attitude of the American government, but also to the warring parties. President Izetbegovic refused to go to New York to negotiate at the beginning of February, sending Silajdzic instead. But, as Owen told the permanent representatives to the UN of the EC member states on 4 February, Silajdzic represented a government which was hardly functioning. For example, the Prime Minister in the Bosnian government, Mile Akmadzic, was actually a member of the Bosnian Croat delegation to the talks.⁴²⁰³ This led to the bizarre situation that he claimed to speak in both his capacities – as Bosnian premier and as Croat leader – during the negotiations.⁴²⁰⁴ Akmadzic disputed the decision to send Silajdzic: according to him, the Bosnian government had never debated the appointment.⁴²⁰⁵ On 18 February, Akmadzic challenged Silajdzic's testimony before the European Affairs Subcommittee of the US Senate's Foreign Affairs Committee, telling its Chairman, Senator Joseph Biden, that Silajdzic might well be Foreign Minister in the Bosnian government but had failed properly to represent that government's standpoint. According to Akmadzic, Silajdzic represented only the Bosnian Muslims whereas the government had appointed a delegation made up of two Muslims, two Croats and two Serbs to represent it in contacts and negotiations abroad. Akmadzic also used the occasion to point out that Izetbegovic's term as President had expired on 20 December. And although he had extended that term under the State of Emergency, according to Akmadzic the prerogative to do so rested not with him as President but solely with the Presidium. So, just as Silajdzic did not speak for the government, so Izetbegovic did not speak for the Presidium, of which in any case he was under normal circumstances only the *primus inter pares*. In his letter to Biden, Akmadzic apologized for having to be so 'blunt' at a time when the Muslims in Bosnia were suffering so much, but nevertheless asked that the letter be distributed to Biden's Senate colleagues. He also requested Boutros-Ghali to circulate the letter in the General Assembly of the United Nations so as to make it clear there that, whilst the Bosnian government supported the peace process being conducted by Owen and Vance, it did not speak with one voice in the negotiations.⁴²⁰⁶

Owen, meanwhile, now had the feeling that not only did Silajdzic not really represent his own government, he did not reflect the feelings of the majority of Muslims, either. According to Owen, Silajdzic, together with Ganic was one of the 'hardliners' who did not want the war to end and who did not shrink from provoking Serb attacks on Muslims, hospitals, journalists, and so on.⁴²⁰⁷ In any case, Silajdzic had little more to say than that his government was not prepared to negotiate as long as heavy weapons were not put under supervision and humanitarian corridors were not opened. And Silajdzic was no longer available to the negotiators from 5 February. Then the Bosnian Serbs abandoned the talks on 11 February, with Karadzic claiming that they were pointless if Izetbegovic failed to attend.⁴²⁰⁸ And on 19 February Owen and Vance had their last meeting for the time being with the Bosnian Croat

⁴²⁰² ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Jacobovits NATO to Kooijmans, no. 336, 26/02/93.

⁴²⁰³ UN, S/25050, Appendix I.

⁴²⁰⁴ Owen CD-ROM, 'Lord Owen's report from New York of 6 February on progress of Vance-Owen-plan'. See also *ibidem*, 'Meeting in Sarajevo between Co-Chairmen and President Izetbegovic and Akmadzic, 20/01/93'.

⁴²⁰⁵ Owen CD-ROM, 'Report from Lord Owen from New York on 5 February on meeting with EC Ambassadors on Vance-Owen Peace Plan; S/25100, par. 21.

⁴²⁰⁶ UN, A47/899 en S/25360.

⁴²⁰⁷ Owen CD-ROM, 'Report from Lord Owen from New York on 5 February on meeting with EC Ambassadors on Vance-Owen Peace Plan. See also *ibidem*, 'Personal telegram from Lord Owen to Sir Robert Renwick, 29/01/93'.

⁴²⁰⁸ 'Karadzic verlaat vredesbesprekingen New York' ('Karadzic leaves peace talks in New York'), *ANP*, 12/02/93, 01:47.

delegation.⁴²⁰⁹ By now the position of the mediators had been further weakened by Vance's announcement on 16 February that he would be stepping down as Co-Chairman of the Yugoslavia Conference within a few weeks. He had originally wanted to leave at the end of February, but said that he would not turn his back on the talks at such a crucial time. On the other hand, he said that he could stay not stay on forever.⁴²¹⁰ Which, of course, was only human.

12. Conclusion

Owen and Vance's plan for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina was an attempt to combine peace with justice by countering the *faits accomplis* of ethnic cleansing as far as possible. It was a clever construction of the diplomatic drawing board, but one which proved difficult to explain in practice. Both the Bush and the Clinton administrations, as well as many commentators, saw it as an acceptance of Serb conquests and ethnic cleansing. That was not only a consequence of the plan's less than successful presentation, particularly by Owen, but also derived from the limited practical feasibility of the proposals. Most governments were careful not to say openly that they could or would not commit troops to enforce the plan, but that was probably the reality of the situation. The US government, which would have had to contribute significant ground forces, in particular were not eager to do so. At the same time it was clear that Europe would be unable to force a solution in Bosnia without American participation. It was unfortunate timing that the Vance-Owen plan was launched two-and-a-half weeks before the inauguration of a new US president who had announced categorically that domestic policy would be his priority.

The new American government demonstrated its immaturity in international politics by, on the one hand, keeping the Bosnian government's hopes of military intervention alive and so torpedoing Owen-Vance, and on the other hand proposing no real alternative to it. Owen and Vance thus felt themselves compelled to persuade the Bosnian government – which was increasingly becoming a purely Muslim one – by making a concession with regard to the Posavina corridor. However unsophisticated the realization by the leaders of Republika Srpska that they must have concrete territorial policy objectives and achieve these at the negotiating table may have been, it was beyond dispute that any summation of Bosnian Serb war aims would include the strategically important Posavina corridor. The original proposal from Vance and Owen may have allocated that corridor to the Croats, but the Serbs could always live in hope of gaining control of the Sava Valley through an exchange of territory.

When the Bosnian government was also offered a corridor through the region, thus creating a double barrier to the connection of Serb areas, Owen and Vance's proposals to all intents and purposes became unacceptable to the Bosnian Serbs. Owen and Vance would be able to continue negotiating for a few more months, but with little hope of achieving any results. Meanwhile, the American and Russian governments had also come to the negotiating table in the persons of Bartholomew and Churkin. It was still far from clear whether their presence would be a blessing or a curse.

For the time being the new Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs, Peter Kooijmans – who appeared to be strongly emotionally involved with developments in the former Yugoslavia – looked on. He and the Dutch government did not, as Owen claimed, and in his wake Both, torpedo the Vance-Owen plan. At the time he regarded it as the most feasible and a step in the right direction. Meanwhile, Kooijmans observed that, of the two tactics which had been widely discussed since late 1992, only enforcement of the no-fly zone still had any chance of immediate success. The establishment of Safe Areas, despite the support it had received from the women's movement in the

⁴²⁰⁹ Owen CD-ROM, 'Speaking Notes for Mr Vance at Informal Consultations of Security Council, 3/02/93'.

⁴²¹⁰ 'Vance wil binnen enkele weken uit Joegoslavië-overleg stappen' ('Vance wants to leave Yugoslavia talks within weeks'), *ANP*, 17/02/93, 02:04; 'Vance van plan snel af te treden' ('Vance plans to step down soon'), *Het Parool*, 17/02/93.

wake of the widespread rapes in Bosnia, still seemed a very long way off. However, it did not in fact take long before one safe haven of a sort was created – Srebrenica.

Chapter 10

Srebrenica under siege

1. Interdepartmental coordination

At the end of February 1993 NATO had plans for an international force of approximately 50,000 troops to remain stationed in Bosnia for ten years if the Vance-Owen peace plan was to be implemented. ‘Not an appealing prospect,’ was Theo Koelé’s opinion in *Trouw*.

‘What politician readily decides to place human lives in the balance for a period of ten years or longer? The risks are considerable, the objectives unclear. It is doubtful whether peacekeeping – maintaining the peace – will suffice. Will these troops not rapidly have to move to enforcing peace – using violence to achieve peace?’⁴²¹¹

On 28 February Minister Kooijmans was a guest at a Yugoslavia meeting held by the PvdA (Labour) in the Reehorst in Ede. According to press reports, when questioned by the foreign affairs editor of *De Volkskrant*, Anet Bleich, the CDA (Christian Democrats) government minister painted a gloomy picture of the potential for a UN-sponsored military intervention to halt the war. In order for the deployment of military force to be meaningful, he felt that there should first be a peace plan which was acceptable to all the parties involved. Once such a plan was in place, Dutch soldiers should also participate in any intervention, which could continue until 2000. In stating this, the Minister actually did not reveal more than what had been discussed at the NATO Council meeting on 26 February. In addition, Kooijmans announced that the Dutch government would offer the UN the opportunity to host the Yugoslavia tribunal in The Hague.⁴²¹²

B. (Bert) Kreemers, a spokesperson for Minister Ter Beek, later accorded Kooijmans’ statements far greater political clout than that which they originally carried. According to Kreemers, the Minister had indicated that he *supported* a “substantial, lengthy deployment” of additional Dutch troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴²¹³ As Kreemers conceded, his statements drew hardly any attention in the press. The articles that were published on the matter reported his announcement of the possible establishment of the tribunal in The Hague. Actually, they did not consider this to be newsworthy.⁴²¹⁴ Kreemers apparently noticed the mood developing between the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs and their respective departments with regard to the deployment of troops in Bosnia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs bore primary responsibility for foreign policy, including that pertaining to security.⁴²¹⁵ The Ministry of Defence was mainly responsible for the establishment, maintenance and operation of the armed forces. In the past it had disrespectfully been said that the Defence Department’s only *raison d’être* was to mind the hardware shop or alternatively ‘the boys and their toys’.⁴²¹⁶ Thus the Foreign Affairs Department traditionally occupied itself with security policy

⁴²¹¹ Theo Koelé, ‘Vlag met Navo-ster wappert nog lang niet boven Bosnië’ (Prospect of a flag flying the NATO star over Bosnia is still a long way off), *Trouw*, 26/02/93.

⁴²¹² ‘Tribunaal kan in Den Haag. Kooijmans biedt aan oorlogsmisdaden Bosnië hier te vervolgen’ (Tribunal may be hosted in The Hague: Kooijmans offers to try Bosnian war crimes here), *Trouw*, 01/03/93; ‘VN-tribunaal over oorlog Joegoslavië kan in Den Haag’ (UN Yugoslavia war tribunal can be hosted in The Hague), *de Volkskrant*, 01/03/93; ‘Den Haag mogelijk standplaats oorlogstribunaal Joegoslavië’ (The Hague is possible site for Yugoslavia war tribunal), *ANP*, 28/02/93, 6.07 pm.

⁴²¹³ Kreemers, ‘Aan de achterkant van de maan’, p. 14; W. Joustra, ‘Vredeshandhaving in Bosnië legt zware claim op krijgsmacht’ (Peacekeeping in Bosnia makes heavy demands on armed forces), *de Volkskrant*, 10/03/93.

⁴²¹⁴ Interview B. Kreemers, 16/04/99.

⁴²¹⁵ cf. Van Eenennaam, *Kruisraketten*, pp. 36-37.

⁴²¹⁶ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 167; cf. De Ruiter, quoted in: Van Eenennaam, *Kruisraketten*, p. 37; Berghorst, *News*, p. 26.

abroad, including matters pertaining to defence. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was very much inclined to express a desire on the part of the Netherlands to assert itself internationally and the country's willingness to play a role in promoting international security and the legal order. However, at the time of the discussion about the modernization of NATO's medium-range weapons in September 1981, Van der Stoep, the then Foreign Minister, and his colleague, Defence Minister Van Mierlo, had acknowledged 'the interwoven activities in the field of arms control and defence, and the impact their decisions had on each other's field of operation'. They concluded that they therefore bore a 'joint and special responsibility ... for closely coordinated policy' in the field of international security. Since then the Ministry of Defence has increasingly stressed the shared responsibility of the Defence and Foreign Affairs Departments for policy on security, where both departments were of course able to place their unique emphasis.⁴²¹⁷ Because the Foreign Affairs Department never really subscribed to this concept, in the 1990s the various Defence ministers and their officials still found it 'necessary to underline their joint responsibility with some regularity'.⁴²¹⁸

In the first place, the Minister of Defence needed to ascertain whether it was also possible for the Netherlands to achieve the objectives of its security policy with the military resources it had at its disposal. Moreover, he was responsible for the safety of the troops.⁴²¹⁹ This responsibility was not borne by the government ministers and officials of the Foreign Affairs Department. For example, Ter Beek was under the impression that, in the course of international consultations, the Foreign Affairs department had 'a natural predisposition to offer a squad of soldiers if at all possible' for the greater honour and glory of the Netherlands.⁴²²⁰ Or, in the words of the head of the Military History Section, P.H. Kamphuis, '...while the Defence Department pondered the risks to which its own personnel were exposed, the nation's diplomatic corps seemed to be evolving into a travelling salesman in soldiers'.⁴²²¹ As a result officials of the Defence and Foreign Affairs departments sometimes engaged in 'intense discussions' about the restrained approach adopted by the Ministry of Defence, in the process of which Ter Beek and the officials in his Ministry put it to their colleagues in the Foreign Affairs department that they would not need to provide families with explanations if body bags were to return.⁴²²² The rift between the Foreign Affairs and Defence departments was thus partly due to the distinction between foreign and domestic policy. The position adopted by the Parliament was of paramount importance to the Department of Defence. Parliament had to be reassured. It was there that support had to be nurtured for its policy. In fact, the Foreign Affairs Department did not ignore the question of potential casualties in its deliberations. Here too, some officials found the willingness to act in relation to Yugoslavia 'ghastly' at times. Dutch diplomats also wondered sometimes how settled public opinion would remain if body bags were to return.⁴²²³ Another source of friction between the Foreign Affairs and Defence ministries lay in the fact that the armed forces were being restructured, which made it often difficult to find units that could be deployed. It was all too easy for inability on the part of the Defence Department to be interpreted as unwillingness by Foreign Affairs officials, who saw military deployment as a means of enabling the Netherlands to count for something on the international stage.⁴²²⁴ This was linked to the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was particularly taken with operations involving NATO, while this was less pronounced in the case of the Department of Defence. Maintaining political contact with NATO was primarily the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign

⁴²¹⁷ See also Berghorst, *News*, pp. 26-27.

⁴²¹⁸ DAB. VN algemeen, memorandum from De Winter to the Minister, 05/10/98. Also the interview with J. de Winter, 20/07/00.

⁴²¹⁹ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 49.

⁴²²⁰ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁴²²¹ P.H. Kamphuis reviewing R. ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*. 'Herinneringen aan Plein 4', Amsterdam 1996, in *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 114 (1999)1, p. 166.

⁴²²² Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 176 and p. 205; interviews A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99 and F.J.J. Princen, 08/01/98.

⁴²²³ Interviews A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00 and H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00. See also the interviews with R. Swartbol on 24/02/99 and 08/07/00.

⁴²²⁴ Interview R. Swartbol, 24/02/99.

Affairs. In addition, NATO traditionally preferred a large-scale approach, whereas both pressure to cut costs and concern for its personnel meant that the Defence Department was more inclined to opt for a peacekeeping operation that required the commitment of fewer resources and reduced the chance of casualties amongst its own troops. Moreover, the Defence Ministry's Directorate of General Policy Matters (Dutch abbreviation DAB) felt that there was a much smaller chance of a reversal of international developments following the Cold War than the Foreign Affairs Department. This is to say that the Directorate for General Policy Matters was more inclined to assume that there was no chance of a major conflict with Russia for a very long period of time, than the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (DAV).⁴²²⁵ Due to this division of aspirations and responsibilities it was almost inevitable that the Foreign Ministry spearheaded the Dutch offer for involvement in international military operations, in particular peacekeeping missions, while the Defence Department gave the impression that it was applying the brakes.

In the meantime, as a result of growing Dutch involvement in UN operations, Ter Beek had started making numerous foreign trips and developing his own international network. This led to something of a 'jalousie de métier' in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴²²⁶ Especially the officials from the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs, who were the main people within the Foreign Affairs Department who maintained contact with Plein 4, and who were said to be Van den Broek's confidants, had to get used to the more assertive approach adopted by the Defence Ministry. Moreover, because Ter Beek had abolished the Defence Council, of which the head of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs used to be a member, they no longer had direct contact with the leaders of the various branches of the armed forces. In principle, Foreign Affairs officials were not supposed to deal directly with these branches. Their contact was to be routed through the Ministry situated on the Plein. It was only when discussing peacekeeping operations that officials of the Foreign Ministry's Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs and the Directorate for Political and UN Affairs (DPV) still had direct contact with Army representatives.⁴²²⁷

At the other end, Foreign Affairs officials viewed the Directorate for General Policy Matters as a competitor of their Ministry, a type of Foreign Affairs division within the Ministry of Defence, and preferred to deal with the Defence Staff.⁴²²⁸ The view held by the Department of Foreign Affairs coincided with how the Directorate of General Policy Matters saw itself, as expressed by Directorate for General Policy Matters official, J. de Winter: "Here at the Directorate for General Policy Matters we have a rather wide-ranging view as to what we are entitled to do in relation to the Foreign Affairs Department, because we feel that we know something about foreign policy and sometimes believe we are somewhat more familiar with it. Of course, this is quite arrogant but this is what we feel".⁴²²⁹ However, during the consultations held between the Foreign Affairs and Defence Departments the latter always succeeded in presenting a united position, despite any differences in the views held by the Defence Staff and the Directorate for General Policy Matters.

Unlike the situation that prevailed during the Gulf crisis and the Kosovo war, in the first half of the 1990s there was no interdepartmental structure comprising officials from the departments of General Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Defence in relation to the former Yugoslavia. Minister Van den Broek took a step in this direction at the very beginning of the UNPROFOR operation in March 1992 but this came to naught.⁴²³⁰ Early in March 1992 Van den Broek had voiced his concerns to his colleague, Ter Beek, about 'the Defence Department's increasing tendency to go its own way' in relation to policy on defence and security. Ter Beek declared that there were no grounds for concern

⁴²²⁵ Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, p. 156 and p. 168.

⁴²²⁶ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 224. See also *ibid*, pp. 36-37. cf. ABZ, Kabinetsarchief, Van den Broek coll. Corr. M/collegae 1992 (Defence), Van den Broek to Ter Beek, 01/04/92.

⁴²²⁷ Interviews R. in Den Bosch and F.A.M. Majoor, both on 19/04/00.

⁴²²⁸ Interview J.M. Vos, 24/06/00.

⁴²²⁹ Interview J. de Winter, 20 July 2000.

⁴²³⁰ ABZ, kabinetsarchief: Van den Broek coll. Memorandum from Van den Broek to DGPZ, 06/03/92, no.15/92.

but Van den Broek continued to note a tendency on the part of the Ministry of Defence to exclude the Foreign Affairs Department from a range of matters in respect of which this ministry was also supposed to play a role. On 1 April 1992 he sought from Ter Beek ‘urgent correction, if mutual trust is to remain intact, and what is no less important, unity of policy’.⁴²³¹

In the interim, the Ministry of Defence had assigned the Chief of Defence Staff responsibility for interdepartmental coordination and the Deputy Chief of Operations, and Command and Information Systems (SCOSIS) was charged with its implementation. The latter was required to ensure that policy was properly coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, if necessary in cooperation with the Directorate for General Policy Matters.⁴²³² However, in practice Foreign Affairs and Defence officials worked together on an ad hoc and personal basis.⁴²³³ For example, consultations were held about the substance of letters which the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence jointly sent to parliament, which was virtually always the case in connection with the (former) Yugoslavia.⁴²³⁴ Only at a relatively late stage – at the end of 1993 – was a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs admitted to the daily briefings of the Defence Crisis Management Centre in a bunker under the Department of Defence. The latter represented a deliberate ploy on the part of the Defence Ministry to gain a tighter grip on policymaking than had been the case during the Gulf War, when Foreign Affairs officials exercised considerable influence through the Gulf Team due to a lack of structure in the Defence Department.⁴²³⁵

Feeble attempts made by J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, a council adviser in the General Affairs Department who was responsible for policy on foreign affairs and security, to establish some form of interdepartmental coordination similar to what had existed during the Gulf War, floundered.⁴²³⁶ According to Merckelbach, one could point to a further reason for the different interdepartmental consultative structures that existed during the Gulf War and the situation in Yugoslavia. The Netherlands viewed the Gulf conflict as a war, whereas the Yugoslavian armed conflict ‘merely’ amounted to participation in peacekeeping operations. Such operations did not constitute a crisis and only became one at the time of the attack on Srebrenica in July 1995.⁴²³⁷

2. No willingness to enforce the Vance-Owen plan

On 2 March 1993 Minister Kooijmans pointed out to the Parliament’s Committee for Emancipation Affairs that the international community was still not willing to embark on a military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In particular, the USA insisted that this would need to be preceded by a potentially enforceable solution. In addition, a risk analysis would need to be conducted before any military intervention, according to the Minister.⁴²³⁸ Nevertheless, in the first week of March there again appeared to be reason for optimism about the discussions held by Owen and Vance. Close consultations took place in New York covering the peace plan presented by the two mediators. With the support of Clinton’s deputy security adviser, Sandy Berger, Vance and Owen held discussions with Izetbegovic, Karadzic and Boban. On 3 March Izetbegovic signed the military component of the agreement, with the result that Owen and Vance now had seven of the nine signatures required for the plan. Only those of Izetbegovic and Karadzic were still missing below the map. At the same time the

⁴²³¹ ABZ, kabinetsarchief: Van den Broek coll. Van den Broek to Ter Beek, 01/04/92.

⁴²³² DS. Memorandum from Van den Breemen to Ter Beek and Van Voorst tot Voorst, 19/03/93, S92/139/1056; Marstaf. Exh. 24/04/92, no. S14806/4431, Notes on information processing and Defence Staff coordination during the impending peace missions in Cambodia and Yugoslavia, 20/03/92.

⁴²³³ For example, interviews B.J. van Eenennaam on 22/08/00 and J.M. Vos on 24/06/00; BSG. Van den Heuvel to Isth, 02/04/92, V-350/92.

⁴²³⁴ See the TK document series no. 22181.

⁴²³⁵ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

⁴²³⁶ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

⁴²³⁷ Interview J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00.

⁴²³⁸ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 43, p. 9.

military staff at the NATO Headquarters in Brussels were drawing up plans for a peacekeeping force, which was to be deployed as soon as the plan was accepted. On 3 March senior NATO officials gathered in New York to consult leading UN administrators, such as the Undersecretary-General Annan, Lieutenant General Nambiar, Brigadier General Baril and the Boutros-Ghali's deputy military adviser, Colonel Purola.⁴²³⁹ In the meantime NATO Secretary-General Worner held discussions on the same subject with Warren Christopher.

On Saturday 6 March, the negotiations being conducted with Izetbegovic in New York were suspended until the end of the following week. If he were to follow the Croats and also agree to the overall peace plan proposed by Owen and Vance, also the map, then it would subsequently be possible for the international community to exert considerable pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to do the same. In this connection, a crucial role had since been set aside for the government in Moscow. It would need to induce Milosevic, who would himself probably no longer be willing to bear the yoke of sanctions (possibly more severe) on account of the Bosnian Serbs, to exert so much pressure on the latter that they would also agree to the peace plan.⁴²⁴⁰

A fresh development occurred at the beginning of March when Boutros-Ghali appeared to drop his objections to the use of force to execute the peace agreement⁴²⁴¹ and even thought of having the Vance-Owen plan implemented by a green-helmeted multinational force led by the Americans. Apparently, Boutros-Ghali saw this as an opportunity both to rid himself of the problem of Yugoslavia, which he believed was a millstone around the UN's neck, and to avoid a major item of expenditure on the UN budget.⁴²⁴² On 7 March 1993 the UN Secretary-General announced during a broadcast by the American television station, ABC: "Our objective is to secure the withdrawal of the Serbs and, if they fail to do so, we will have to take any measures that may be necessary."⁴²⁴³ On the same day Berger declared that the US was prepared to join a peacekeeping force and perhaps even commit ground troops. The intention appeared to be to persuade Izetbegovic to put his signature below the map of the Vance-Owen plan by undertaking to despatch a considerable UN military force. Sixteen NATO countries were to provide the core of the peacekeeping troops, which would have to silence the Serbian artillery with force if need be.⁴²⁴⁴ The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not allow the world to wait long in anticipation of learning what the Netherlands' position would be in such a case. On 4 March a spokesperson for the department declared that if the Security Council decided in favour of military intervention, the Netherlands would make a contribution.⁴²⁴⁵ When Minister Kooijmans spoke to Boutros-Ghali on 31 March, the latter still seemed to prefer outsourcing the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan to NATO. However, France in particular wanted a UN operation.⁴²⁴⁶

On 8 March Owen held a press conference in Brussels which was widely covered in the Dutch press. According to Owen, no country in the world was prepared to use military force to compel the Serbs to sign a peace agreement. If such an agreement was to be reached, a substantial international force would be required of between forty and one hundred thousand heavily armed troops. This was because the light armoured vehicles which the UN troops currently used, did not offer protection

⁴²³⁹ DS. Memorandum from Van den Breemen to Ter Beek, 9/03/93, SN93/216/1484.

⁴²⁴⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. COREU, 07/04/93, cpe/lon 268; COREU, 17/04/93, cpe/pres/cop 848.

⁴²⁴¹ 'VN-chef pleit voor harde actie Bosnië' (UN leader calls for tough action in Bosnia), *de Telegraaf*, 04/03/93; 'VN-chef Boutros-Ghali wil meer risico's nemen' (UN leader Boutros-Ghali wants to take more risks), *Haagsche Courant*, 04/03/93; Nicole Lucas, 'Amerikaanse actie te laat voor Cerska' (American action too late for Cerska), *Trouw*, 04/03/93; 'Geweld voor Bosnië' (Force for Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/03/93.

⁴²⁴² Owen CD-ROM: Notes of Lord Owen's reaction to the UN Secretary-General's attitude towards implementing the Vance-Owen Plan, 03/03/93. See also ABZ, DPV/ARA/01813. Biegmans 234 to Kooijmans, 11/03/92.

⁴²⁴³ Oscar Garschagen, 'VN en NAVO' vijftigduizend man naar Bosnië' (UN and NATO: fifty thousand troops to Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 08/03/93.

⁴²⁴⁴ J. Klaassen, 'Nederlandse deelname aan vredesmacht twijfelachtig' (Dutch participation in peacekeeping force doubtful), *de Volkskrant*, 09/03/93.

⁴²⁴⁵ 'VN-chef pleit voor harde actie Bosnië', *de Telegraaf*, 04/03/93.

⁴²⁴⁶ ABZ, DOA/ARA/00017, Kooijmans 75 to PV New York, 01/04/93.

against mortar fire.⁴²⁴⁷ *De Telegraaf* noted that, in view of the fact that no international support was forthcoming to enforce a peace plan against the Serbs' will, it remained 'uncertain for the time being' what should be done. 'This would mark the materialization of the greatest danger facing a UN mission in one form or another, namely, confusion about its mandate.'⁴²⁴⁸ Following EC consultations with Owen, Kooijmans was hesitant in his reply to questions about the possibility of the Netherlands participating in a military force designed to impose peace. The Minister declared that it was not him but the government who would decide this.⁴²⁴⁹

De Volkskrant seemed to know more because on the morning of 9 March it reported that it was 'doubtful' whether the Netherlands would be part of such a peacekeeping force.⁴²⁵⁰ The demand would mainly be for ground troops and, after deploying marines in Cambodia, the Netherlands would not have any more soldiers available. In addition, difficulties were apparently encountered in the same month in efforts to assemble sufficient troops to send the third and final battalion of marines to Cambodia.⁴²⁵¹

3. The Parliament debate of 9 March 1993

Against this background, the Parliament conducted an exceptionally interesting plenary debate on 9 March 1993. It had not invited Minister Ter Beek to join this debate, although the ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence almost always acted jointly in matters relating to Yugoslavia.⁴²⁵² This omission probably had something to do with the fact that the Parliamentary Committee for Defence was paying a visit to Dutch troops in Cambodia from 1 to 10 March. However, prior to the debate Kooijmans had already arranged with Ter Beek to itemise the possible ways in which the Netherlands could contribute to a UN peacekeeping force, which would need to be assembled if the peace plan were to be accepted.⁴²⁵³

This was the first time that Minister Kooijmans spoke in a plenary parliamentary debate about the former Yugoslavia. The Members of Parliament concluded that there appeared to be an impasse in the peace talks headed by Owen and Vance. The restrained approach adopted by the American government under Clinton, who had hinted at intervention during his election campaign, was particularly disappointing to them. In addition, the debate was strongly influenced by the statement made by Boutros-Ghali shortly beforehand, which the Parliament interpreted as a plea for the deployment of troops to impose peace.

Eisma anticipated that the Netherlands would only be able to make a modest contribution to any international peacekeeping force that might be established, if at all: 'This situation teaches us that we should adopt a more modest approach in the future. Modesty becomes a small country such as the Netherlands, which has little to offer.'⁴²⁵⁴ Such cautious statements were lost on F.W. Weisglas, who spoke on behalf of the VVD (Liberals). Weisglas availed himself of the opportunity to make much of his irritation about the situation pertaining to the former Yugoslavia. According to him, endless negotiations were being held and the only thing to show for them was the powerlessness of the international community in the face of the violence and violation of human rights being perpetrated by

⁴²⁴⁷ Theo Koelé, 'EG-bemiddelaar: nu nog geen interventie in Bosnië' (EC intermediary: no intervention in Bosnia yet), *Trouw*, 09/03/93; J. Klaassen, 'Nederlandse deelname aan vredesmacht twijfelachtig', *de Volkskrant*, 09/03/93.

⁴²⁴⁸ 'Owen tegen geweld bij afdwingen vrede' (Owen against using force to achieve peace), *de Telegraaf*, 09/03/93.

⁴²⁴⁹ Wio Joustra, 'Vredeshandhaving in Bosnië legt zware claim op krijgsmacht' ('Peacekeeping in Bosnia makes heavy demands on armed forces'), *de Volkskrant*, 10/03/93.

⁴²⁵⁰ J. Klaassen, 'Nederlandse deelname aan vredesmacht twijfelachtig', *de Volkskrant*, 09/03/93.

⁴²⁵¹ 'Ter Beek wil komende bataljon mariniers voor Cambodja inkrimpen' (Ter Beek wants to reduce next battalion of marines for Cambodia), *ANP*, 24/03/93, 6 pm.

⁴²⁵² TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3855, (09/03/93), Van Traa & De Hoop Scheffer.

⁴²⁵³ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 12/03/93 prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴²⁵⁴ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3850.

the Serbs in the main. Weisglas was also more critical than his fellow party member, Blaauw, had been several weeks earlier about the Vance-Owen plan, which he felt amounted to 'a premium ... on the violent territorial conquests of the Serbs and subscribed ... to the reprehensible principle of ethnic homogeneity'.⁴²⁵⁵ Weisglas produced a veritable litany of complaints. He wondered how one could discuss peace with people who could soon be primary suspects in war crimes proceedings. According to him, the lack of unanimity within the EC was contrary to the Maastricht agreement on pursuing a common foreign policy. The sanctions against Serbia were not effective. The UN troops did not appear to be able to protect the aid convoys. Weisglas also suggested that the safety of UN personnel was allowed to weigh too heavily.⁴²⁵⁶ This summary of irritation led him to conclude 'that one will not achieve anything with half-measures. And we will therefore need to opt for genuine involvement or withdrawal'. However, 'after Auschwitz', the latter option, which would lead to unbridled human rights violations, was no longer acceptable. Weisglas therefore repeated his plea for peace to be imposed in Bosnia, which he had made several months earlier when the Foreign Affairs budget had been debated. This should be done by NATO acting under the auspices of the UN. In addition, the Dutch government would need to draw the logical conclusions from its policy by assisting refugees as far as possible in their own region, namely, by establishing 'safe areas'.

De Hoop Scheffer could not imagine what political objectives would be served by the massive military intervention that Weisglas envisaged. He was of the opinion that there was no alternative to the Vance-Owen plan. Moreover, large-scale military intervention would not be feasible at an international level if it were not based on a peace agreement.⁴²⁵⁷ Nonetheless, what needed to happen was that previous agreements should be enforced: the prohibition of flights and economic sanctions. In addition, he referred to the establishment of 'safe havens' in Eastern Bosnia, for which he believed NATO had prepared plans. He called on the government 'to keep that item on the agenda at any rate. I know that there are few countries who agree to this but that does not mean that you should stop pressing for it'.⁴²⁵⁸ According to De Hoop Scheffer, if a peace plan was to be agreed and it needed to be 'enforced' by a large military force, the Netherlands should contribute to this. In a mini-debate with Weisglas, De Hoop Scheffer asked the VVD member of Parliament where he wanted to send the large contingent of troops he had in mind: 'Do you send them to Belgrade where Mr Milosevic is running the show directly or at any rate indirectly?'⁴²⁵⁹ Weisglas replied that they should be sent to those places where people were suffering most: '... to the concentration camps to close them down, to those places where refugees are not treated as such, because they are detained. Those are the places which you should turn into a safe haven, a Safe Area. That is my primary intention and to achieve it, you will need a larger, more extensive military deployment than has been the case until now'.⁴²⁶⁰ De Hoop Scheffer agreed with Weisglas in principle but raised the 'moral dilemma' as to whether deployment in one camp would not have negative implications for people in another camp.

Van Traa was of the opinion that this was not really the dilemma facing Parliament. More important was the question whether Parliament felt that force should be used, if necessary, in order to secure acceptance of the Vance-Owen plan, which admittedly was not ideal, because he did not anticipate that it would be in the interests of the Bosnian Serbs ('that bunch' as he referred to them) to offer wholehearted collaboration. He advised some restraint: 'I believe that we should be a bit modest in this respect, because in the final analysis the problem is not the extent of the risk *we* are prepared to

⁴²⁵⁵ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3852.

⁴²⁵⁶ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3853.

⁴²⁵⁷ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3854.

⁴²⁵⁸ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3854.

⁴²⁵⁹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3856.

⁴²⁶⁰ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3856.

take but rather that none of the larger countries wish to take any.⁴²⁶¹ It was clear to Van Traa that, if the Vance-Owen plan was implemented, it would result in a Safe Haven at the very least.⁴²⁶²

Ultimately, the three largest parties in Parliament agreed on the formula that the Dutch government should endeavour to secure an approach which would entail a willingness on the part of the United Nations to impose peace, following which the Netherlands would have to make a military contribution.⁴²⁶³ Van Traa made a fervent plea for the Dutch government to adopt an active approach. He asked Lubbers and Kooijmans also to take the initiative outside formal meetings in Brussels, for example, to approach Paris, Bonn, Brussels and Madrid. The PvdA (Labour) member had already given up on London: 'Unfortunately, the United Kingdom is a hopeless case.'⁴²⁶⁴ Opinions varied when it came to the question as to the nature of any Dutch contribution. Weisglas was of the opinion that, if necessary, the marines should be transferred from Cambodia to the former Yugoslavia. This idea met with major objections. The military felt that it was a foregone conclusion that any ground operations in Yugoslavia were a matter for the Army (Chapter 4). De Hoop Scheffer recommended that the absent Minister, Ter Beek, consider the possibility of an armoured infantry battalion, for example the first battalion of the Airmobile Brigade. Later De Hoop Scheffer announced that he had indeed discussed this idea with his parliamentary party first but had not discussed it with anyone else.⁴²⁶⁵ However, his colleague, De Kok, who was replaced by De Hoop Scheffer during this debate, held the view that De Hoop Scheffer 'had not come up with this idea himself. He must have done so in consultation with the minister'.⁴²⁶⁶

4. Pressure to deploy a 'grossly exorbitant showpiece'

Prior to the summer of 1992 the media had raised the idea of deploying the Airmobile Brigade in Yugoslavia on a number of occasions (Chapter 6). The Airmobile Brigade represented that part of the 1991 White Paper on Defence which was to guarantee not only the reduction of Army spending but also its simultaneous modernization. At the time the 1991 White Paper on Defence was dealt with the permanent Parliamentary Committee on Defence had unanimously agreed to the Airmobile Brigade, although it seriously questioned several investments at the time and later on, and expressly reserved its judgement on the purchase of heavily armed military helicopters for the brigade. The minister and the Army therefore knew that Parliament's watchful eye would be focussed on them where this brigade was concerned. For example, every six months the minister and his junior minister were required to report to Parliament on the progress made in establishing the brigade and the costs involved.⁴²⁶⁷

The substantial costs which the Airmobile Brigade accounted for had already been frequently seized upon by Oostlander, one of the foremost proponents of military intervention in Bosnia, in order to question the actual benefit that the brigade represented to the Netherlands. According to him, the

⁴²⁶¹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3857; emphasis added.

⁴²⁶² TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3858.

⁴²⁶³ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3857.

⁴²⁶⁴ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3860.

⁴²⁶⁵ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, 09/03/93, p. 3855; TCBU, *Vertretpunt*, III, hearing of J.G. de Hoop Scheffer, 29/05/00, p. 176.

⁴²⁶⁶ TCBU, *Vertretpunt*, III, hearing of A.C.H.M. de Kok, 25/05/00, p. 122.

⁴²⁶⁷ Wio Joustra, 'Kamer twijfelt aan tijdig gereedkomen brigade' (Parliament doubts timely readiness of brigade), *de Volkskrant*, 06/02/92; 'Ter Beek mag van Kamer doorgaan met luchtbrigade' (Parliament gives Ter Beek green light for Airmobile Brigade), *de Volkskrant*, 07/02/92; Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, 'Kamer heeft twijfels over luchtbrigade: stapsgewijze goedkeuring' (Parliament has doubts about Airmobile Brigade: step-by-step approval), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/02/92; 'Kamer voortaan sneller ingelicht over luchtbrigade' (Parliament to be informed sooner about Airmobile Brigade from now on), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/02/92; M. van den Doel, 'De luchtmobiele brigade dreigt nu al vleugellam te raken' (The airborne brigade is already in danger of losing its wings now), *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/03/92. See also TK, 1991-1996, 22 327, nos. 1-39.

Dutch Ministry of Defence would have been better off spending this money ‘on the establishment of a Franco-German fanfare’.⁴²⁶⁸ The political scientist and columnist, Koen Koch thought much the same:

‘Now this raises the very simple question as to why we really need that prohibitively expensive Airmobile Brigade, that showpiece of the restructuring of the Netherlands armed forces. The official justification is crisis prevention. Van den Broek views this ... differently. It is also clear that after Yugoslavia this brigade will never be deployed in a similar conflict because the risks are too great. All that money, all that money is being spent on the perpetuation of pretences which, when push comes to shove, we dare not live up to.’⁴²⁶⁹

Once the Airmobile Brigade had been included in the White Paper on Defence, the Army also began to doubt the usefulness of what was seen to be ‘the showpiece’ of the Defence Department and the Army.⁴²⁷⁰ Some people felt that the airborne concept was already obsolete before it was implemented. They pointed out that it really represented a Cold War approach.⁴²⁷¹ The Airmobile Brigade was designed to be flown in after an incursion of tanks in a major conflict, following which they were supposed to halt the attack until other units arrived. Airmobile troops would only be able to hold out for a brief period of time in view of their own limited protection.⁴²⁷² As the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Couzy was therefore in favour of establishing a multifunctional brigade in which both an airmobile and a mechanised component would be able to realize their full potential. However, Wilmink, the commander, had prevented him from elaborating on this idea. Wilmink argued that it had cost enough effort to convince Ter Beek of the benefit of having an Airmobile Brigade and that in turn the minister had had to devote a great deal of energy to persuading Parliament. It would take years to establish a new organization and this would threaten the Army’s purchase of helicopters in the interim. According to Couzy, Wilmink therefore issued orders that the Army should be ‘inflexible and unbending’ in its insistence that the airmobile concept was extremely feasible, even in the changed international circumstances.⁴²⁷³

12 January 1993 saw the release of Ter Beek’s Priorities Memorandum,⁴²⁷⁴ which served as a follow-on to the 1991 White Paper on Defence. The most important changes in this policy statement were the announcement of the suspension of compulsory military service on 1 January 1998 and the reversal of the order stated for the defence of national territory and alliance commitments for so-called crisis management operations. The Priorities Memorandum was based on the premise that the Soviet Union no longer constituted a major threat. Whereas ‘the major conflict’ constituted priority number one in the White Paper on Defence, crisis management operations forced it into second place in the Priorities Memorandum. Peacekeeping operations accounted for part of these crisis management activities. According to this policy statement, peace-keeping required that four units of battalion strength manned by professional personnel should be able to operate in four different areas for at least three years. In the case of peace-keeping, allowances should be made for the deployment of no more

⁴²⁶⁸ MdZ, ‘CDA’er ziet Satan in Bosnië’ (CDA member sees Satan in Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 22/09/92.

⁴²⁶⁹ Koen Koch, ‘Goed gebruld leeuw’ (Lion with a throaty growl), *de Volkskrant*, 25/09/92.

⁴²⁷⁰ Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 79; interview E.A.W. Koestal, 24/05/00; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of D.J. Barth, 31/05/00, p. 86; Brantz Diary, p. 6; M.C. de Kruijf, H.J. /05/ers and O.P. van Wiggen, ‘De luchtmobiele brigade: met beide benen op de grond’ (The Airmobile Brigade: with both feet on the ground), *Carré* (1993)9, p. 9; ‘De landmacht loopt het serieuze risico onder deze kostbare brigade te bezwijken’ (The Army runs a grave risk of succumbing to this costly brigade), *Nota zonder prioriteiten* (White paper without priorities), *Carré* (1993)4, p. 7; former infantry Lieutenant Colonel F.J.D.C. Egter van Wissekerke, ‘Een voortdurend déjà vu, deel 2’ (A continual déjà vu, Part 2), *Carré* (1998)6, p. 20.

⁴²⁷¹ Interviews H. Couzy on 7, 14 and 17/09/98, and with J. Lemmen on 17/10/01.

⁴²⁷² This criticism was also evident in the main editorial comment, ‘Hoeveel en waarvoor?’ (How much and what for?), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/04/92.

⁴²⁷³ Interviews H. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98 and 04/10/01.

⁴²⁷⁴ TK, 1992-1993, 22 975, nos. 1 and 2.

than one unit the size of a brigade. In view of the fact that only light and light-armoured units could be deployed for peace-monitoring, the three airmobile battalions, the two armoured infantry battalions and the reconnaissance battalion were eligible for these duties. Because every operational battalion required two others – one for refurbishment and the other for dismantlement and refuelling – the Airmobile Brigade, which was the only one that had three battalions for peacekeeping operations, appeared to be the ideal candidate. All of this was supposed to be possible although cutbacks were proceeding over and above those following the 1991 White Paper on Defence. According to the latter, personnel were to be reduced by 30% within seven years. The Priorities Memorandum increased this target to 44%. The peacetime strength of the Army was to be more than halved from 55,000 to 25,000 troops.

The White Paper on Defence was released virtually at the same time as international debate about the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan commenced. Because the airborne brigade was considered to be eminently suitable to act in crisis management operations and it had been announced that the first airmobile infantry battalion would be operational by mid-1993,⁴²⁷⁵ it was not difficult to relate this to the situation in Yugoslavia. As early as 10 December 1992, during consultations held with the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Defence, Junior Minister Van Voorst tot Voorst had noted that, 'purely hypothetically', it was conceivable that the Airmobile Brigade would be deployed in Yugoslavia, for example, if the Sarajevo airport was unusable.⁴²⁷⁶

On 25 February the first red berets were issued to those who had completed their training for the Airmobile Brigade. This also signalled the start of a campaign involving the erection of advertising billboards for the brigade throughout the Netherlands. In a column by Leon Wecke which appeared in *Trouw* on 23 February, the scholar from Nijmegen referred to the possible deployment of this brigade, incidentally warning against its excessively rosy portrayal in the survival advertisements. Its deployment in crisis situations could result in considerable loss of life, following which public support for involvement in such operations would rapidly diminish, according to Wecke.⁴²⁷⁷ De Hoop Scheffer had now become the first member of Parliament to moot the potential deployment of the Airmobile Brigade in the former Yugoslavia. Van Traa also appeared to have the brigade in mind, when he asked the government which sections of the Army would be considered for deployment 'also at a later stage if necessary'.^{4278 68}

The combination of Kooijmans and Parliament

In his reply to Parliament, Kooijmans was of the opinion that the members of Parliament had misinterpreted Boutros-Ghali's words, thinking that he supported moves to impose peace. According to the government minister, no country was prepared to enforce peace. The UN Secretary-General was only in favour of peace-keeping, Kooijmans assured them.⁴²⁷⁹ Although the question pertaining to the concrete nature of the Netherlands' contribution to the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan was something that he needed to discuss with his colleague, Ter Beek, Kooijmans felt that 'he could confidently state that, in view of the Netherlands' approach in the past, in principle the country was prepared to contribute to such a peacekeeping operation with the resources it had available for this

⁴²⁷⁵ TK, 1992-1992, 22 975, no. 2, p. 39.

⁴²⁷⁶ TK, 1992-1993, 22 327, no. 10, p. 13. See also *ibid*, p. 14, where the Junior Minister referred to possible deployment in a Bosnian scenario.

⁴²⁷⁷ Leon Wecke, 'Als er veel soldaten sneuvelen is het uit met steun voor de actie' (Support for action will end if too many soldiers die), *Trouw*, 23/02/93;

⁶⁸ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3858.

⁴²⁷⁹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3868.

purpose'.⁴²⁸⁰ With regard to its nature and size, Kooijmans assured Parliament that he would speak to Minister Ter Beek about this the following day.⁴²⁸¹ One of the important questions now was when the Dutch government should make such an offer. This was because Parliament had reproached the government for placing a squadron of F-16s on standby on Christmas Eve to help enforce a flight ban above Bosnia, even though no provision had yet been made for this.⁴²⁸²

In the second term De Hoop Scheffer asked the minister to examine the issue of safe havens again: 'Does he only envisage that they will be created by forcing through a peace plan *mano militari* [sic], hence using military resources? Or can he imagine a situation ... where this could also occur without a peace plan?'⁴²⁸³ Kooijmans recalled that the Dutch government had responded positively to the idea of safe havens already at an early stage. However, the idea had floundered 'on objections from countries which argued that one would also need to be prepared to protect those Safe Havens', and protecting them would require many ground troops, which were not available at that point in time. Nevertheless, according to the minister NATO and the WEU were discussing plans 'and I believe that the establishment of a Safe Haven as part of a peace agreement, particularly in the neighbourhood of Sarajevo, could be viable'.⁴²⁸⁴

On 9 March 1993, the day on which the parliamentary debate was held, Van der Vlis, the Chief of Defence Staff, sent a memorandum to Ter Beek dealing with the question as to what contribution the Netherlands could make to a UN force of 40,000 to 50,000 troops who would be charged with peace-enforcement. In view of the potentially dangerous situation and the possibility of escalation, the Chief of Defence Staff believed it essential to equip any units that were to be dispatched with armoured vehicles. However, the four armoured infantry battalions which were on standby were not considered, because they consisted mainly of national servicemen who could not be compelled to agree to deployment. It would only be possible to deploy the first battalion of the Airmobile Brigade on 1 November. Furthermore, Van der Vlis advised against deploying it because it first needed to be equipped with armoured vehicles, and one also needed to take into account that this battalion would have to replace the third battalion of marines in Cambodia at the end of 1993. According to Van der Vlis, the deployment of the marines in the former Yugoslavia would impose too much of a burden on them following their service in Cambodia. This would be contrary to the cycle of six months deployment in any period of eighteen months as stipulated in the Priorities Memorandum. Moreover, the marines also did not have any armoured vehicles. It was impossible to deploy a military engineers unit because their operations were being restructured. Apart from its current deployment of a signals battalion and transport unit, the most important contribution that the Netherlands could make would be in the form of a tailor-made logistics unit consisting of repair and supply components amongst others.⁴²⁸⁵ Here 'tailor-made' was supposed to refer to a response that would meet the specific requirements for logistic support which the UN secretariat formulated.

On the morning of 10 March 1993 *de Volkskrant* carried a news analysis by the parliamentary editor, Wio Joustra, replete with charts which showed that the Netherlands was already making a major contribution to the United Nations' peace operations. With 1829 personnel, the Netherlands was the seventh largest provider of UN troops (following France, the United Kingdom, Canada, Indonesia, Ghana and Poland). According to Joustra, the supply of combat units was out of the question for the time being, although it would be possible to 'scrape' together support troops from throughout the Army, who did not need to constitute an organic entity. According to the journalist of *de Volkskrant*, 'The Airmobile Brigade must offer a solution in the future,' but it could be almost a year before it

⁴²⁸⁰ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3865.

⁴²⁸¹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3866.

⁴²⁸² TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3865.

⁴²⁸³ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, pp. 3871-3872.

⁴²⁸⁴ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 3874.

⁴²⁸⁵ NIOD, Ter Beek Coll. Memorandum from Van der Vlis to Ter Beek, 09/03/93, SN93/216/1510.

would be ready to be deployed.⁴²⁸⁶ This article was based on information which the military adviser to the Netherlands' Permanent Representative at the UN, Colonel R. van Veen, who was on leave, had submitted to the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) the day before.⁴²⁸⁷ The publication of this information was designed to send a signal to Minister Kooijmans and his department, and it was for this reason that the Defence spokesperson, Kreemers, had 'leaked' this article on Minister Ter Beek's orders.⁴²⁸⁸

In the afternoon of 10 March Ter Beek met with Van der Vlis. Their discussion centred mainly on the question as to how realistic the chances were of achieving peace in Bosnia. Van der Vlis was exceptionally pessimistic about this. If the Vance-Owen plan was accepted by the leaders of all the parties involved, the Chief of Defence Staff felt that the local commanders would not comply with it, with the result that the agreement would need to be enforced, which he believed to be an impossible task.⁴²⁸⁹ Van der Vlis remained sceptical about the possibility of achieving peace in the former Yugoslavia throughout 1993. He felt that the Netherlands was doing enough by providing a signals battalion along with the contribution of a transport unit.⁴²⁹⁰ In particular, he opposed the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade because the restructuring process had not yet been completed in the Defence Department.⁴²⁹¹

Ter Beek shared the gloomy outlook of his military adviser in respect of the chances of achieving peace in the former Yugoslavia, but at the same time he felt Parliament – and the Foreign Affairs Department – breathing down his neck. On 10 March he asked the general to review all deployment alternatives again.⁴²⁹² While Van der Vlis compiled a new list, Ter Beek was paid a visit by Frinking and Van Traa, the spokespersons of the two governing parties. They made an impassioned plea for the minister to establish a combat unit for the former Yugoslavia comprising volunteers drawn from the various armoured infantry battalions. Ter Beek did not inform them that there were major objections to deploying such a unit, because the troops in question had not been trained to operate as a cohesive force.⁴²⁹³

Early in the evening of 10 March Minister Kooijmans, accompanied by Van Walsum and Van Eenennaam, then visited Minister Ter Beek, who was assisted by Van der Vlis and Barth. Kooijmans urged the deployment of combat units.⁴²⁹⁴ According to Minister Ter Beek, the discussion 'covered almost everything: tank squadrons, armoured infantry battalions, field artillery units, you name it.' Yet Ter Beek had to respond to every wish by saying that he could give no guarantees.⁴²⁹⁵ The difficulty lay in the principle of voluntary commitment on the part of national service personnel. This is why Van der Vlis' list did not feature a combat unit but only a tailor-made one comprising four hundred troops. Because the UN had not yet announced its requirements, it was decided not to reveal this offer yet.⁴²⁹⁶

Consequently, Kooijmans did not wish to disclose anything to the press after this discussion: 'For the simple reason that we drew up a list and nothing more'.⁴²⁹⁷ After these consultations Ter Beek

⁴²⁸⁶ Wio Joustra, 'Vredeshandhaving in Bosnië legt zware claim op krijgsmacht' (Peacekeeping in Bosnia makes heavy demands on armed forces), *de Volkskrant*, 10/03/93.

⁴²⁸⁷ Kreemers, 'Aan de achterkant van de maan', p. 9.

⁴²⁸⁸ Interview R.L. ter Beek on 01/12/99 and with B. Kreemers 16/04/99; Kreemers, 'Aan de achterkant van de maan' p. 10.

⁴²⁸⁹ Kreemers, 'Balkan-expres', pp. 4-5.

⁴²⁹⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 52.

⁴²⁹¹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 51.

⁴²⁹² Kreemers, 'Balkan-expres', pp. 4-5.

⁴²⁹³ Kreemers, 'Brigade', spring 1994, p. 5; Berghorst, *Opdracht*, p. 9.

⁴²⁹⁴ Kreemers, 'Balkan-expres', p. 3.

⁴²⁹⁵ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 97.

⁴²⁹⁶ Kreemers 'Balkan-expres', p. 5.

⁴²⁹⁷ TV, Nederland 3, NOS, *Den Haag vandaag* (The Hague today), 10/03/93, 11 pm.

said that he 'would like to exhaust all alternatives' but simultaneously announced that one should not count on more than support in the form of military engineering, communications and transport.⁴²⁹⁸

Little information was withheld from *de Volkskrant* readers at the time. On 11 March, the morning after the discussion between Ter Beek and Kooijmans, Wio Joustra announced that, following consultations in his department, Ter Beek had ordered the leadership of the Army to draw up a list of alternatives for the establishment of a battalion comprising combat units drawn from various sections of the Army. The Dutch battalion was to consist of the first company of the Airmobile Brigade that was ready, and two armoured infantry companies made up entirely of volunteers.⁴²⁹⁹ According to Kreemers, Joustra obtained this information from Frinking and Van Traa, who were said to have bumped into the journalist after their discussion with Ter Beek the day before. Kreemers says that both members of Parliament had given the impression that the minister had agreed to their proposal.⁴³⁰⁰

After the discussion between Ministers Ter Beek and Kooijmans, Van der Vlis received information which provided him with a clearer insight into NATO plans for the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan. Based on this, he drew up another list of alternative ways in which the Netherlands might contribute to the implementation of this plan. On 15 March he presented his list to Minister Ter Beek. NATO's plans were based on a peacekeeping operation, according to Van der Vlis, but they would act decisively to protect their own personnel, which was indicated by the use of words such as 'go in heavy', 'robust', 'with massive self-defence' and 'with excellent self-protection measures'. The plan envisaged three divisions: one American, one Russian and one European (from the East and West). Every division was to consist of ten to sixteen brigades, each of which would comprise a large number of battalions. In total, this force would amount to 55,000 to 75,000 personnel, of which 34,000 to 54,000 would be combat troops. As it happens, NATO headquarters only anticipated that little more than half of this force would be mobilised. Van der Vlis again cited a possible Dutch contribution comprising a tailor-made logistics battalion of approximately four hundred personnel in addition to the signals battalion and transport unit which were already there. Other alternatives summarized by Van der Vlis included the deployment of an artillery division with radar capacity for tracking down mortars. According to Van der Vlis, the deployment of combat units still floundered on the familiar problem pertaining to voluntary commitment on the part of national service personnel. He felt that the Airmobile Brigade would not be available for deployment, because NATO had clearly stated that there was no need for light infantry without armoured transport vehicles. However, it was possible to equip the first battalion of this brigade with YPR combat vehicles to transform it into an armoured infantry battalion, but Van der Vlis had major objections to this:

'This 'new' unit no longer fits in with the idea of an Airmobile Brigade in any way and undermines its normal establishment. There is a danger that the overall concept will be neglected as a result. The 'improper' deployment of an airmobile battalion as an armoured infantry battalion will project a negative image and will undermine the credibility of the Royal Netherlands Army's recruitment efforts. This solution must therefore be strongly discouraged.'⁴³⁰¹

After taking note of Van der Vlis' memorandum, Ter Beek nevertheless ordered the Chief of Defence Staff in the course of the so-called political consultations of the senior political and administrative

⁴²⁹⁸ 'Mogelijkheden voor extra bijdrage aan VN-acties gering' (Limited opportunities for extra contribution to UN campaigns), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 11/03/93. See also the ANP report, 'Ter Beek zoekt bijdragen VN-macht Bosnië' (Ter Beek searches for contributions to UN force for Bosnia), 10/03/93, 2116.

⁴²⁹⁹ Wio Joustra, 'Ter Beek stelt leger vredesmacht samen uit delen landmacht' (Ter Beek assembles peacekeeping force with parts of army), *de Volkskrant*, 11/03/93.

⁴³⁰⁰ According to Kreemers, the minister did not inform them about the list which he had ordered Van der Vlis to prepare. Kreemers, *Brigade*, spring 1994, p. 5. Kreemers' account does not explain how Joustra knew this anyway.

⁴³⁰¹ NIOD, Ter Beek Coll. Memorandum from Van der Vlis to Ter Beek, 15/03/93, SN93/216/1624.

management of the ministry to investigate whether armoured vehicles could be found, which could be added to the airmobile battalion at a later stage.⁴³⁰² Van der Vlis now produced a new memorandum which was completed on 17 March and which covered the premises that Ter Beek had formulated. The most remarkable premise was the statement that the Airmobile Brigade could not be deployed prior to 1 November 1993. The negative manner in which this premise was formulated barely concealed the fact that the Airmobile Brigade could be deployed after 1 November 1993. Further on, the memorandum also stated that the Royal Netherlands Army was unable to provide a combat unit ‘in the near future’, although in the meantime it was investigating whether the first battalion of the Airmobile Brigade could be equipped with armoured vehicles which the allies would have to provide: ‘This battalion would then become available for deployment at the end of the year’.⁴³⁰³ It is therefore indisputable that Ter Beek had issued a political directive to the Chief of Defence Staff and the Army to prepare for the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade.

According to the memorandum, the information provided in it was ‘relevant to further discussions with the Minister of Foreign Affairs’. On 19 March the substance of this memorandum was revealed in the course of consultations held by both the CDA and PvdA government ministers.⁴³⁰⁴ It did not take long before the Foreign Affairs Department began to parade the concession yielded by the combined pressure brought to bear on Ter Beek by Minister Kooijmans and Parliament. Once the prospect of having the Airmobile Brigade ready for deployment by the end of 1993 was presented, the Foreign Ministry began to ‘air’ the idea, as Ter Beek put it.⁴³⁰⁵ A diplomat would naturally never express it in this way. For this reason Van Eenennaam declared that Foreign Affairs officials began to discuss the potential deployment of the Airmobile Brigade in Yugoslavia ‘where the occasion presented itself’ in consultations held with accredited foreign diplomats in The Hague.⁴³⁰⁶ In April 1993 the British ambassador in The Hague reported to his government that the Dutch government was considering making an airborne battalion available for the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan.⁴³⁰⁷ Lord Owen recalled reading in a report from the British embassy in The Hague that it was Van Eenennaam who began making announcements about this to British diplomats at the beginning of April. Ministers Lubbers and Kooijmans are even said to have felt that the deployment of an airborne battalion was too limited but that the provision of an armoured infantry battalion appeared to be impossible owing to the problems pertaining to voluntary undertakings by national service personnel.⁴³⁰⁸

On 6 April the Defence Staff reported to the minister that so far only Finland appeared able to satisfy the need for armoured vehicles. It was decided that the airmobile battalion would not yet be offered to NATO for deployment to implement the Vance-Owen plan.⁴³⁰⁹ Two days later the Defence Department informed NATO about Dutch capabilities as formulated by Van der Vlis, omitting any reference to the Airmobile Brigade.⁴³¹⁰ The Foreign Affairs Department responded irritably. The Defence Ministry had not consulted either Kooijmans or Foreign Affairs officials about the nature of its statement. The Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs referred to the offer as meagre, certainly in view of the fact that the airmobile battalion was not yet mentioned in it. According to Foreign Affairs, NATO would:

⁴³⁰² TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 51. It is remarkable that the Bakker Committee barely mentions this exceedingly important turn of events in its report, although Van der Vlis had reported it when heard by this committee. In its report the committee moved directly from the memorandum of 15/03/ to that of 6/04/ and ignored the memorandum of 17/03/, which set out the change of policy. See TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 114.

⁴³⁰³ DS. Memorandum from Van der Vlis to Ter Beek, 17/03/93, SN93/216/1680.

⁴³⁰⁴ DS. Notes taken by Waltmann for BDZ, BLS and BDL, 18/03/93.

⁴³⁰⁵ Interview R.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁴³⁰⁶ B.J. van Eenennaam to NIOD, 05/12/01.

⁴³⁰⁷ Confidential information (29).

⁴³⁰⁸ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

⁴³⁰⁹ NIOD, Ter Beek Coll. Memorandum from Waltmann to Ter Beek, 06/04/93, SN93/225/2222.

⁴³¹⁰ ABZ, Kabinet, Correspondence of M – colleagues I, 1993, Waltmann to Kooijmans, 08/04/93.

‘definitely not be “impressed”. The same applies to the Americans, who will again be required to bear the bulk of the burden again, although they would expect a substantial European contribution as a prerequisite. Nor will our European partners be impressed by our “contribution”.’⁴³¹¹

5. Ter Beek’s visit to Bosnia

On 15 and 16 March Minister Ter Beek paid a visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina to familiarize himself with the situation in the event that any Dutch troops were to be deployed, if this were requested within the context of a peace agreement. In Zagreb he spoke to Nambiar’s successor, who had been appointed several weeks before. Nambiar had no longer seen much point in the operation. At the end of February he had openly asked the question ‘why men and women from distant countries should lose their lives for communities who themselves failed to show that they were prepared to agree on a settlement’.⁴³¹² At the beginning of March Nambiar had transferred command of UNPROFOR to the Swedish Lieutenant General Lars-Eric Wahlgren, who had prior experience of peacekeeping operations in Lebanon and Sinai. In the evening of his visit to Zagreb, Ter Beek’s dinner with Wahlgren was virtually a washout because the Swedish Lieutenant General was in almost constant communication with General Morillon, who found himself in difficult circumstances outside Srebrenica at that point in time. Following his visit to Zagreb, Ter Beek concluded that the deployment of new peacekeeping troops should occur gradually, because Wahlgren saw no benefit in the mass arrival of unprepared contingents. In addition, the general did not want to sideline the population from the peace process. Those countries which contributed troops would be committed for a very long period of time as a result. Wahlgren mentioned that a period of between fifteen and forty years would be required for a military and civil operation.⁴³¹³ Ter Beek’s visit made an impression on Wahlgren, because the former said that he was under considerable political pressure ‘to do something’ with regard to the former Yugoslavia.⁴³¹⁴ This is why apparently several hours before his departure to Zagreb Ter Beek had directed Van der Vlis to include the possible deployment of the Airmobile Brigade somewhat further on in the future in his memorandum. Now that Wahlgren had referred to a rather long-term deployment of peacekeeping forces, the fact that it would still be more than half a year before the first battalion of the Airmobile Brigade could be deployed began to seem less important. The next day Ter Beek spoke to Morillon’s deputy, the Spanish general, Prado, in Sarajevo. Although an 82 mm shell fell a mere ten metres from the office of the French general Philippe Morillon, where the government minister was staying, upon his departure from Sarajevo Ter Beek still described the risks to be run by any Dutch soldiers who were to be deployed, as acceptable.⁴³¹⁵

During his stay in Bosnia the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Major General R. Reitsma, who was accompanying the minister, developed a new solution to the ongoing demand for combat units. At the time he realised that it would be difficult to assemble a logistics unit, and launched the idea of an artillery unit. Such a unit would require little artillery practice

⁴³¹¹ ABZ, Kabinet, Correspondence M – colleagues I, 1993, note from DAV to Kooijmans, z.d. (8 or 09/04/93).

⁴³¹² Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Ex-Joegoslavië dreigt proeftuin van Europa te worden’ (Former Yugoslavia in danger of becoming Europe’s experimental field), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/02/93; ‘Commandant van VN-macht geeft lucht aan frustratie’ (Commander of UN force vents his frustrations), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 27/02/93.

⁴³¹³ NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek. Notes, ‘Discussions with Wahlgren, Prado, Cordy Simpson, z.d.’; ‘UNPROFOR-commandant verwacht doorbraak bij Srebrenica’ (UNPROFOR commander anticipates Srebrenica breakthrough), *ANP*, 16/03/93, 2.29 am; ‘Commandant tegen massale komst VN-soldaten in ex-Joegoslavië’ (Commander opposes massive influx of UN troops in former Yugoslavia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/03/93.

⁴³¹⁴ Interview L.-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

⁴³¹⁵ W. Nieuwenhuis, Sarajevo is nu eenmaal een onmenselijke barbarij’ (Sarajevo is quite simply inhuman barbarism), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/03/93; ‘Mortiergranaat mist Ter Beek op haar na’ (Mortar narrowly misses Ter Beek), *De Telegraaf*, 17/03/93; ‘Mortiergranaat slaat in vlak bij Ter Beek’ (Mortar explodes close to Ter Beek), *Trouw*, 17/03/93.

and its period of training could therefore be brief.⁴³¹⁶ He decided to inform his findings immediately to the Dutch journalists who accompanied the minister during his visit. In *NRC Handelsblad* Reitsma launched the idea of providing a number of artillery batteries equipped with 155 mm howitzers as support for the division which Europe was to supply within the framework of the Vance-Owen plan. 'The advantage of artillery is that you can strike a powerful blow and that you have firepower present. The politicians want this and we can supply it.'⁴³¹⁷ However, the despatch of an artillery unit did not tally with the peacekeeping operation which the UN envisaged at that point in time and the idea disappeared as quickly as it had been raised.⁴³¹⁸

While Minister Ter Beek later visited the transport battalion in Busovaca, the journalists who were present received an ANP report that Prime Minister Lubbers was to send a letter to Parliament in which he proposed that once national service personnel had agreed to deployment, they would not be allowed to reconsider at a later stage ('until the aircraft steps'). Ter Beek had not been notified beforehand of Lubbers' intention to send this letter to Parliament. The minister and his adviser, Kreemers, made frenzied attempts to obtain greater clarity from The Hague but to no avail. The seven journalists who had accompanied Ter Beek, wished to speak to him but the minister remained *incommunicado* in his hotel room and finally sent Kreemers with a message that there was no difference of opinion between Ministers Ter Beek and Lubbers. The underlying principle remained one of voluntary commitment. Restricting the opportunity for soldiers to reconsider a commitment they had previously given would not resolve the difficulties relating to deployment, because there were too few volunteers in the first place.⁴³¹⁹ However, this move on the part of the Prime Minister was one of the signs that Lubbers, who had achieved little success abroad with his plea for a larger Western deployment in the former Yugoslavia, was beginning to take a more active role in the implementation of Dutch policy. Apparently, the Prime Minister was beginning to have enough of the Defence Department's attitude of 'we are willing but unable'.

6. The Prime Minister and the Ministry of General Affairs

In principle, the Prime Minister and his officials in the Ministry of General Affairs had a role in coordinating the Foreign Affairs and Defence ministries in relation to Dutch security policy. However, the prime minister has traditionally played a modest role in the Netherlands. The constitution first made reference to the prime minister following its amendment in 1983. On this occasion the prime minister was assigned special responsibility for ensuring uniformity of government policy in his capacity as chairperson of the Ministerial Council. Nevertheless, ministerial autonomy has remained pronounced and the prime minister continues to be depicted as no more than *primus inter pares*.⁴³²⁰ He was subject to a sort of non-intervention principle in interdepartmental relations.⁴³²¹ Typical of this was the reply Prime Minister Lubbers gave his interviewer, Cees Labeur, when the latter asked him on 23 April 1993 whether military intervention had been discussed by the Ministerial Council that day: 'No, because Minister Kooijmans was not present'.⁴³²² The prime minister could also not give individual ministers

⁴³¹⁶ Interview R. Reitsma, 04/10/99; Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 184.

⁴³¹⁷ W. Nieuwenhuis, 'Nederland past grote broek gevechtspak Bosnië niet' (Netherlands unable to fill Bosnian combat boots), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/03/93. cf. interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁴³¹⁸ Interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

⁴³¹⁹ Interview W. Lust on 19/07/00; R. Reitsma, 04/10/99; Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, pp. 185-86.

⁴³²⁰ TK, 1987-1988, 20 559, no. 7, pp. 117-18; Van Thijn, *Retour*, p. 37; R.J. Hoekstra, 'De minister-president en Europa', Rehwinkel & Boven d'Eert & Hoekstra, *Positie*, p. 45. See, for example, the statement made by the VVD member of Parliament, G. Wilders in 2000: 'I am not saying that the Prime Minister should keep quiet but he is no more than the first amongst equals and this should remain the case.'; 'Parliament should not seek to govern', *de Volkskrant*, 04/10/00.

⁴³²¹ Van Thijn, *Retour*, p. 37.

⁴³²² TV, Nederland 3, NOS/VARA, Nova, 23/04/93, 10.30 pm.

directions.⁴³²³ During the debate arising from the animosity between Van den Broek and himself about their positions in the European Council at the end of 1990,⁴³²⁴ Lubbers formulated his role as follows:

‘The chairperson of the Ministerial Council must be able to act in such a manner that he does not in any way impede the ministers in the performance of their work due to a lack of communication, by getting in the way of his colleagues, by displaying excessive enthusiasm thereby overshadowing as it were the policy of his colleague to whom a particular portfolio has been entrusted. This is one side of the coin. The other side of the coin is that indeed the chairperson of the Ministerial Council, because of his capacity as such, bears primary responsibility for ensuring that policy remains on the move, for clarifying its internal correlation, and for implementing it in a coordinated fashion, not only in the domestic arena but also in an international context.’⁴³²⁵

However, the Ministry of General Affairs had done little to coordinate the Defence and Foreign Affairs departments’ policy on Yugoslavia.⁴³²⁶ At the beginning of the nineties the Prime Minister’s chief official advisers were eleven council advisers covering the various areas of policy which constituted the Prime Minister’s government. During this period J.P.M.H. Merckelbach was the adviser responsible for foreign affairs and security policy. Merckelbach explained that the General Affairs Department’s failure to coordinate policy on Yugoslavia was due to his efforts to exclude the Prime Minister from the affairs of other ministries. As long as he did not hear anything from the other ministries, he assumed that nothing untoward was happening.⁴³²⁷ Also according to other people involved, the General Affairs Ministry only came ‘on board’ when things really became exciting,⁴³²⁸ if there were noticeable differences of insight between ministries.

Neither Lubbers, Prime Minister since 4 November 1982 and en route to becoming the longest serving premier in the history of the Netherlands on 16 July 1993, nor his successor, Kok, felt a need to have the Ministry of General Affairs act as a type of shadow organization or super-Defence or super-Foreign Affairs administration which constantly monitors how relations develop between the two departments.⁴³²⁹ According to Ter Beek, the role played by Lubbers in directing defence and security policy was therefore ‘not a major one. This is putting it quite nicely. Now and then.’⁴³³⁰ As it happens, this restraint was not only attributable to the Prime Minister. Lubbers was known to other ministers for his willingness to ‘think through things with them’.⁴³³¹ Ter Beek:

‘Lubbers’ approach was ... always like this: he asked the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs to consider matters together. He assumed that they would agree at some stage, but if this did not happen, he was willing and able to think

⁴³²³ R.J. Hoekstra, ‘De minister-president en Europa’, Rehwinkel & Boven d’Eert & Hoekstra, *Positie*, p. 45.

⁴³²⁴ See the appendix dealing with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the CD-ROM that goes with the Dutch version of this report.

⁴³²⁵ TK 1990-1991, Proceedings, p. 1127, (08/11/93).

⁴³²⁶ Interview D. Barth, 08/10/99, P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00; B. Hiensch, 13/07/00; J.Th. Hoekema, 05/03/98; K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00; J.L. Sandee, 12/06/00; R. Swartbol, 24/02/99; A.K. van der Vlis, 13/02/98; H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

⁴³²⁷ Interview J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00.

⁴³²⁸ Interview B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00.

⁴³²⁹ Amongst other things, interview W. Kok, 08/05/00; 28/05/00. cf. ‘Bijlmerramp. Lubbers: afhandeling ramp was bij Van Thijn in goede handen’, *ANP*, 12/03/99, 3.01 pm; ‘Tweede Kamer. Kosto: Vreemdelingentoezicht via uitkijkposten en vliegende brigades’ (Kosto in Parliament: Supervision of foreigners using watch towers and flying brigades), *ANP*, 24/03/94, 11.43 pm.

⁴³³⁰ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁴³³¹ Interview J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00; Metze, *Stranding*, p. 63; W. Breedveld, ‘Het geheim van de spil’ (The secret of the linchpin), *Trouw*, 07/11/92.

things through with them. Usually, this was an incentive to reach agreement quickly, because if Ruud joined in, things always only became more complicated. He had thought of ten problems by the time you had thought that you had a solution. All very creative.⁴³³²

Despite all his yearning to find solutions for seemingly insoluble problems, Lubbers remained a hesitant, groping person.⁴³³³ Again and again he came up with ideas – big and small – with which he peppered his fellow ministers in the form of memos, sometimes to the point of distraction.⁴³³⁴ During so-called ‘brief bilateral consultations’ in the Prime Minister’s office, the Prime Minister presented himself as a mediator, someone capable of reconciling people. His statements were sprinkled with terms such as ‘with each other’, ‘together’ and ‘as we go’. However, for some it was far from clear in which direction they were going.⁴³³⁵ Although he may have had the reputation of a *Macher* due to his sometimes resolute statements,⁴³³⁶ to political insiders he was ‘anything but a tough guy. Lubbers lets matters take their course’.⁴³³⁷ Lubbers himself said that he was not Prime Minister ‘in order to dish out discipline’.⁴³³⁸

Contrary to the above, in March and April 1993 Lubbers began to involve himself increasingly in the positions adopted by the various departments towards the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. He is said to have concerned himself, amongst other things, with the question of voluntary commitment, statements made by the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Couzy, and developments relating to Srebrenica.

Voluntary commitment on the part of deployed national service personnel

The new security situation which emerged in Europe in about 1990, in which there was no longer a major threat but several smaller crises which needed to be managed, had occasioned a demand for flexible mobile units on standby. The White Paper on Defence only earmarked the Airmobile Brigade for crisis management. The Priorities Memorandum made it clear to professional soldiers that in the future they might be required to spend six of every eighteen months abroad for crisis management operations. Initially, career personnel were very enthusiastic about peacekeeping operations. According to a survey conducted by the Netherlands Institute for Public Opinion and Market Research (NIPO) in 1992, 91% of professional personnel were positive about them and 38% declared that they would volunteer for them.⁴³³⁹ However, in the spring of 1992 an editorial in *Carré*, the journal of the Netherlands Officers Association, stated that career personnel could only be expected to remain loyal when deployed abroad, if this occurred on the basis of well-considered policy accompanied by clearly defined objectives.⁴³⁴⁰ It was difficult to view this remark in isolation from the fact that in August 1992 two Dutch non-commissioned officers of the Corps of Signals had refused to return to their barracks in Sarajevo when the latter had come under mortar fire, saying that they found the situation too dangerous for the nine national servicemen entrusted to their care. They were sent back to the Netherlands and were sentenced to four months’ imprisonment by the Military Division of the Court

⁴³³² Interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁴³³³ Metze, *Stranding*, pp. 55-56.

⁴³³⁴ Metze, *Stranding*, p. 57.

⁴³³⁵ cf. H. Righart, ‘De meestergoochelaar’ (The master magician), *HP/De Tijd*, 24/04/92; Max van Weezel & Leonard Ornstein, ‘Lubbers zit er niet om lellen uit te delen’ (Lubbers is not there to dish out punishment), *Vrij Nederland*, 21/01/93.

⁴³³⁶ Willem Breedveld, ‘Het geheim van de spil’, *Trouw*, 07/11/92.

⁴³³⁷ Jan Tromp, ‘Lubbers is helemaal geen krachtpatser’ (Lubbers is absolutely not a tiger), *de Volkskrant*, 18/09/91.

⁴³³⁸ Max van Weezel & Leonard Ornstein, ‘Lubbers zit er niet om lellen uit te delen’, *Vrij Nederland*, 21/01/93.

⁴³³⁹ Elands, *Militairen*, p. 32. Zie ook T. Lagas & L. Meijer, ‘Jan Soldaat knijpt ‘m’ (GI Joe gets the wind up), *Trouw*, 30/05/92.

⁴³⁴⁰ ‘Inzet van beroepsmilitairen: een uitweg?’ (Deployment of career personnel: a solution?), *Carré* 15(1992)10, p. 5.

of Arnhem at the beginning of 1993. In addition, they were given a dishonourable discharge for gross dereliction of duty.⁴³⁴¹

At the beginning of March 1993 a survey conducted by the General Federation of Military Personnel revealed that more than half of the professional soldiers in the Netherlands were not favourably disposed towards peacekeeping missions as a relatively new task for the Netherlands Armed Forces. One third were even prepared to refuse involvement in them. Of the various branches of the armed forces, the Royal Netherlands Army was the one which accounted for the greatest resistance.⁴³⁴² According to *De Telegraaf*, this 'spineless (Jan Salie) mentality' was unacceptable and the only possible response to it was dismissal.⁴³⁴³ Minister Ter Beek agreed with this view and made this clear in a talk he gave to Eurofedop, the European association of military personnel, in Veldhoven on 22 March. He declared it to be unacceptable for career soldiers who refused duty in peacekeeping operations, to benefit from favourable redundancy arrangements.⁴³⁴⁴ In this he received support from the Dutch public. The AVRO-NIPO survey of August 1992 referred to above revealed that 67% of those people who supported Dutch involvement in any intervention in Yugoslavia, felt that only professional military personnel should participate, while 28% were of the opinion that national servicemen should also fight.⁴³⁴⁵ According to the NIPO survey conducted at the beginning of February 1993, 82% of the respondents were in favour of the compulsory deployment of career soldiers in Yugoslavia, but not of the deployment of national service personnel.⁴³⁴⁶ In another NIPO survey conducted in April 1993 65% of the respondents said that only professional soldiers should be deployed for military intervention in Yugoslavia, while 31% felt that the government should also be allowed to send national servicemen in such a case.⁴³⁴⁷

Following his discussion with Kooijmans on 10 March, Ter Beek had informed the press that voluntary commitment on the part of national service personnel imposed 'substantial limitations' on the deployment of combat units.⁴³⁴⁸

The voluntary commitment of national service personnel began to form a major obstacle to Dutch involvement in peacekeeping operations. Already when sending the signals unit abroad, the Army had encountered great difficulty finding two hundred national servicemen who were prepared to be involved. Allegations were made that the sergeants had gone to great lengths to ensure voluntary commitment. In this connection the soldiers' trade union, VVDM (Association of Compulsory Military Service Personnel), referred to 'press-ganging practices'.⁴³⁴⁹ The third contingent of the signals battalion was 'a battalion of signals volunteers herded together from other sections and consisting of a large number of volunteers from general operations who were rushed into readiness with the aid of crash

⁴³⁴¹ e.g. P. Ruigrok, 'Den Haag wist van niets, maar de onderofficieren móesten terug' (The Hague knew nothing but the NCOs had to return), *Vrij Nederland*, 30/10/93, pp. 10-12; J. Marijnissen, 'Werving militairen voor Bosnië is misleidend' (Recruitment of troops for Bosnia is misleading), *Brabants Dagblad*, 12/02/94; Van Wondergem, *Je komt*, pp. 113-15 and 128.

⁴³⁴² BSG. Memorandum from Kreemers to Ter Beek, 04/03/93, V-299/93/298, with appendices: AFMP press report, 03/03/93; 'Militairen doen VN-werk met lood in de schoenen' (Troops reluctant to perform UN duties), *Trouw*, 04/03/93; 'Geen gejuich voor VN-taken. Onzekere toekomst zit beroepsmilitairen dwars' (No cheers for UN duties: Uncertain future bothers career personnel), *Trouw*, 16/03/93. With regard to the hesitancy of professional military personnel in relation to peacekeeping operations, particularly in the former Yugoslavia, see also the *VARA* TV programme, 29/01/93.

⁴³⁴³ 'Jan Salie' (Ninny), *de Telegraaf*, 06/03/93.

⁴³⁴⁴ 'Ter Beek: geen regeling voor militairen met bezwaren tegen VN-operaties' (Ter Beek: no provision for troops who object to UN operations), *ANP*, 22/03/93, 3.05 pm; 'Geen pardon voor militairen. Weigeraars VN-taken krijgen geen aparte afvloeiingsregeling' (No pardon for troops. Objectors to UN duties will not be eligible for separate redundancy scheme), *Trouw*, 23/03/93.

⁴³⁴⁵ Radio 2, *AVRO*, News, 09/08/92, 1.04 pm.

⁴³⁴⁶ 'Slachtoffers aanvaardbaar bij actie in ex-Joegoslavië' (Casualties acceptable during action in the former Yugoslavia), *de Volkskrant*, 02/02/93.

⁴³⁴⁷ Boode & Everts, 'Ontwikkelingen', p. 188.

⁴³⁴⁸ TV, Nederland 3, NOS, *Den Haag vandaag*, 10/03/93, 11 pm.

⁴³⁴⁹ B. Bommels, 'De landmacht de lucht in' (Army goes airmobile), *Elsevier*, 04/04/92, p. 22; P. den Hollander, 'VVDM: Yoego-express rijdt te snel' (VVDM: Yugoslavia express travelling too fast), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 13/03/92.

courses,' according to Colonel, N. Stuiver, the chairperson of the Netherlands Officers Association (NOV).⁴³⁵⁰ In his annual address to the general meeting of this association, Stuiver had already exaggeratedly remarked that the situation could arise in which the Minister of Defence would have to tell the United Nations: 'I shall first ask the national servicemen if I can accede to your request'.⁴³⁵¹ In its chief editorial comment on 10 March, the day on which Kooijmans paid a visit to Ter Beek, *NRC Handelsblad* observed that if the obstacle of voluntary involvement were to be removed, the Netherlands would suddenly possess a 'military capacity which would give weight to its actions and enable it to put its words into practice. Even if this was only because maintaining peace in the relevant circumstances is as essential to our national interests as the defence of the kingdom within the Atlantic alliance was during the Cold War'.⁴³⁵²

In the Ministerial Council meeting of 12 March 1993 it was announced that Milosevic had been 'summoned' to Paris in connection with the approval of the proposed peace plan. He would be given to understand that, if Karadzic were to continue to refuse to approve the plan, the Security Council would decide on the complete isolation of Serbia and Montenegro. If the Serbs were to cooperate, then the peace plan would have to be implemented. In this case the UN forces would need to act in order to 'keep peace on the one hand, and enforce it on the other'. Vance and Owen had expressly referred to green instead of blue helmets because of the psychological threat implicit in the former. The peacekeeping force would therefore also need to carry heavier arms than was normal for a UN peacekeeping force. NATO was considering a peacekeeping force of 75,000 troops, namely, a division from the US, one from the former Soviet Union and a European division. Establishing the latter division would be 'an enormous task', as was noted by the Ministerial Council. This was because Germany and Italy would not be participating and the question remained as to whether a French unit could be included in the NATO command structure. The problem would be exacerbated if there were to be resistance not only from local leaders but also at a structural level. In this case 125,000 to 150,000 troops might even be required.⁴³⁵³

Nor would the Royal Netherlands Army be able to do all that much, according to one of the government ministers. There was an obstacle in the form of the Frinking resolution, which had been unanimously adopted by Parliament when the Compulsory Military Service Act (*Dienstplichtwet*) had been amended in 1987, and which only permitted the deployment of national service personnel on a voluntary basis. It was therefore impossible to provide an armoured infantry battalion. However, it was possible to despatch military engineers and signals troops, although quite a large number of them were already in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In reality, the Frinking resolution merely demanded that Parliament be given timely opportunity to express its views on the compulsory deployment of national servicemen outside the area covered by the NATO treaty.⁴³⁵⁴ However, in the course of time it became practice for the government and Parliament to acknowledge that there was a prohibition against the compulsory deployment of national service personnel.⁴³⁵⁵ One of the ministers felt that confidential consultations should be held with Parliament if the government were to decide to deploy national servicemen. Another minister did not consider this to be a useful approach and saw more point in seeking an interim solution in terms of which national servicemen would no longer be able to decline

⁴³⁵⁰ N. Stuiver, Colonel in the Dutch Airforce retired., chairperson of the NOV, 'De Nederlandse krijgsmacht op weg waar naar toe? Jaarrede 1992' (Dutch armed forces en route to where? Annual Address 1992), *Carré* 15(1992)12, p. 8.

⁴³⁵¹ N. Stuiver, Colonel in the Dutch Airforce retired, chairperson of the NOV, 'De Nederlandse krijgsmacht op weg waar naar toe? Jaarrede 1992', *Carré* 15(1992)12, p. 8.

⁴³⁵² 'Nederland en Bosnië' (Netherlands and Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/03/93.

⁴³⁵³ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 1203/93 prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study. cf. ABZ, 999.241, No Fly Zone, Part III. Jacobovits NATO 680 to Kooijmans, 23/04/93.

⁴³⁵⁴ TK, 1987-1988, 16 521, no. 13.

⁴³⁵⁵ R.C.R. Sieckmann, 'Geen verbod onvrijwillige uitzending' (No ban on dispatch of non-volunteer troops), *Trouw*, 20/03/93.

deployment at the very last moment but would have to make a legally binding commitment at an earlier stage.⁴³⁵⁶

After the Ministerial Council meeting Lubbers informed the assembled press that the option had not been excluded of partially suspending the voluntary involvement of national service personnel in any deployment outside the NATO treaty area with a view to despatching them to the former Yugoslavia in order to implement the peace plan. According to the Prime Minister, the Netherlands had ‘a moral duty’ to participate in any peacekeeping force which would have to enforce the Vance-Owen plan if required, and this would be awkward to achieve on the basis of absolute voluntary involvement.⁴³⁵⁷ In this connection, his thoughts were turning in the direction of the establishment of an armoured infantry battalion. Any national serviceman who upon commencement of his compulsory service voluntarily reported to a unit which was prepared to participate in armed campaigns outside NATO territory, would not be allowed to change his mind at a later stage.⁴³⁵⁸ Of the major parties, only the CDA appeared to support the Prime Minister. His fellow party member, Frinking, the spiritual father of the 1987 resolution, warned Lubbers that he would not easily obtain support for his proposal from Dutch members of parliament.⁴³⁵⁹ The General Association of Military Personnel in the Netherlands (AVNM) and the Dutch National Servicemen’s Association (VVDM) also rejected Lubbers’ ideas.⁴³⁶⁰ ‘Seldom has the Prime Minister sewn the seeds of so much confusion,’ wrote Wio Joustra a week later in *de Volkskrant*. ‘Terms such as “mercenary army”, “press-ganging practices” and “foreign legion” suddenly began to do the rounds.’⁴³⁶¹

When Lubbers raised the issue of voluntary involvement in a letter addressed to Parliament on 17 March, Ter Beek responded from Bosnia that, as far as he was concerned, everything remained the same as it had been. He had no need of people who were not properly motivated. Moreover, according to Ter Beek, it only happened sporadically that, once he had agreed, a national serviceman later changed his mind; the numbers involved were negligible. The problem was that initially too few national service personnel had immediately reported for deployment in peacekeeping operations. In other words, Lubbers was seeking a solution for a problem that did not exist.⁴³⁶² Lubbers’ proposal also

⁴³⁵⁶ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 12/03/93, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴³⁵⁷ ‘Kabinet zoekt wegen voor inzet dienstplichtigen bij VN-operaties’ (Government searches for ways to deploy national service personnel in UN operations), *de Volkskrant*, 13/03/93. See also Radio 1, TROS, *Aktua*, 12/03/93, 5.07 pm; TV, Nederland 3, *Nova*, 12/03/93, 11 pm; ‘Soldaat verplicht richting Bosnië. Vrijwilligheid dienstplichtige op helling’ (Mandatory military service in Bosnia: Voluntary service by national servicemen under fire), *de Telegraaf*, 13/03/93; ‘Ook dienstplichtige naar brandhaard’ (National service personnel also destined for inferno), *Trouw*, 13/03/93.

⁴³⁵⁸ ‘Soldaat verplicht richting Bosnië’, *de Telegraaf*, 13/03/93; ‘Kabinet zoekt wegen voor inzet dienstplichtigen bij VN-operaties’, *de Volkskrant*, 13/03/93; ‘Vrijwilligheid bij uitzending naar Joegoslavië ter discussie’ (Voluntary nature of service in Yugoslavia up for debate), *ANP*, 12/03/93, 6.50 pm; L. Meijer, ‘Waar de soldaat “nee” zegt’ (Where soldiers say ‘No’), *Trouw*, 19/03/93.

⁴³⁵⁹ ‘Kabinet zoekt wegen voor inzet dienstplichtigen bij VN-operaties’, *de Volkskrant*, 13/03/93; ‘Bolkestein tegen onvrijwillige VN-inzet dienstplichtigen’ (Bolkestein opposed to mandatory UN deployment of national service personnel), *ANP*, 15/03/93, 11.47 pm; ‘Kamer wil duidelijkheid over uitzending dienstplichtigen’ (Parliament wants clarity on deployment of national servicemen), *ANP*, 16/03/93, 1.31 pm; ‘Commandant tegen massale komst VN-soldaten in ex-Joegoslavië’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/03/93; ‘Ter Beek oneens met Lubbers. “Dienstplichtigen niet tegen hun wil naar brandhaard’ (Ter Beek disagrees with Lubbers: ‘National service personnel not to go to inferno against their will’), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 18/03/93.

⁴³⁶⁰ ‘Dienstplichtigenbonden voelen niets voor suggesties Lubbers’ (National servicemen not happy with Lubbers’ suggestions), *ANP*, 13/03/93, 3.15 pm; ‘Dienstplichtige moet kunnen weigeren’ (National service personnel must be able to refuse), *Trouw*, 15/03/93.

⁴³⁶¹ Wio Joustra, ‘Kabinet móet wel dienstplichtigen naar Bosnië sturen’ (Government must send national service personnel to Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 19/03/93.

⁴³⁶² ‘Verschil van mening Lubbers en Ter Beek over inzet dienstplichtigen’ (Difference of opinion between Lubbers and Ter Beek about deployment of national servicemen), *ANP*, 17/03/93, 7.42 pm; ‘Ter Beek ontzenuwt argument Lubbers over dienstplicht’ (Ter Beek refutes Lubbers’ argument about national service), *ANP*, 18/03/93, 12.43 am; ‘Ter Beek oneens met Lubbers: “Dienstplichtigen niet tegen hun wil naar brandhaard’’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 18/03/93; ‘Ter Beek wil dienstplichtige niet dwingen tot deelname VN’ (Ter Beek does not wish to force UN involvement on national servicemen),

appeared to contain an element of injustice. Compulsory military service was scheduled to be scrapped within five years. So why should the last few batches of national servicemen, who already had ‘bad luck’, have such a heavy burden added to their load? The question was even more pertinent in view of the fact that the period of national service had already been reduced to nine months, a period which was not long enough to permit both training and deployment. The implementation of Lubbers’ idea could perhaps even have an adverse effect. From now on those national servicemen who might be willing, could have second thoughts before signing up for peacekeeping operations.⁴³⁶³

It very much looks as though Lubbers not only actually attempted to do something about ‘voluntary commitment until the aircraft steps’ but mainly wished to send a political signal that the Netherlands would have to make an additional effort with the acceptance or enforcement of the Vance-Owen plan on the horizon. During his press conference on 12 March Lubbers said that the Netherlands felt ‘morally obliged’ to participate in any military intervention with ground troops.⁴³⁶⁴ If the Prime Minister’s intention was to send a political signal, then Lubbers succeeded in doing so. In response to his suggestion, the chief editorial comment in *Trouw* described the Parliament’s proposal to despatch a combat unit consisting of career personnel as ‘more realistic’.⁴³⁶⁵ Whether he intended to do so or not, the fact that Prime Minister Lubbers encouraged people to think about the Netherlands’ participation in the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan with his remarks about limiting voluntary involvement, is evident, for example, in an article published in *de Volkskrant* on 19 March 1993, which noted that the political dust had settled after a week:

‘The political discussion can now focus on the heart of the matter, which is that the Netherlands can simply not afford to remain on the sidelines if it is decided to establish a large armed force to supervise compliance with the peace plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina, which the negotiators, Vance and Owen, have drawn up. The Netherlands has been manoeuvred into this position by the loudly proclaimed need for military intervention Little will remain of the Netherlands’ international credibility if it lets other countries do the dirty work. Indeed, even the national electorate would not understand a shred of it and would become even more convinced of the CDA-PvdA coalition’s lack of decisiveness. For the moment, Parliament and the rest of the government are not satisfied with Ter Beek’s initial input, namely, support or logistics units such as those which the Netherlands has already provided to UNPROFOR I and II. We need to do all in our power to mobilise a battalion of heavily armed combat troops.’⁴³⁶⁶

De Telegraaf mainly questioned the timing of Lubbers’ announcement. The Dutch Government had favoured forceful action in Bosnia for some time. Why had this matter not been raised earlier? ‘The fact

de Telegraaf 18/03/93; Theo Koelé, ‘Ter Beek wil inzetten dienstplichtigen zo houden als het nu is’ (Ter Beek wants to retain status quo for the deployment of national service personnel, *Trouw*, 18/03/93; ‘Ter Beek niet eens met Lubbers over vrijwilligers’ (Ter Beek disagrees with Lubbers about volunteers), *NRC Handelsblad*, 18/03/93; interview Ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁴³⁶³ L. Meijer, ‘Waar de soldaat “nee” zegt’, *Trouw*, 19/03/93; Theo Koelé, ‘Ter Beek wil inzetten dienstplichtigen zo houden als het nu is’, *Trouw*, 18/03/93, and ‘Nederland wil veel, maar kan weinig’ (The Netherlands wants a lot but can only offer a little), *Trouw*, 20/03/93; W. Nieuwenhuis, ‘Nederland past grote broek gevechtspak in Bosnië niet’ (The Netherlands does not fit into the big combat boots required for Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/03/93.

⁴³⁶⁴ ‘Ook dienstplichtige naar brandhaard’ (National service personnel also to go to the inferno), *Trouw*, 13/03/93; Merckelbacht doubted whether Lubbers really wanted to send a political signal. According to him, Lubbers was a person who thought in highly pronounced organizational terms and who felt that he should be able to rely on people. Anyone who had said ‘Yes’ at some stage, should not be able to say ‘No’ later on. Interview J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00.

⁴³⁶⁵ ‘Dienstplicht en vrijwilligheid’, *Trouw*, 18/03/93.

⁴³⁶⁶ Wio Joustra, ‘Kabinet móet wel dienstplichtigen naar Bosnië sturen’, *de Volkskrant*, 19/03/93.

that this has not been done, amounts to gross negligence which does not enhance the credibility of the government's tough political position.⁴³⁶⁷ This credibility was further eroded at the time by the overt signs of differences between Dutch politicians and the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Couzy.

Couzy and freedom of speech for military personnel

Couzy also understood that the government had begun to move in favour of deploying troops. At the end of March it was revealed that he would be quoted in the following edition of *Twintig*, the VVDM magazine, as saying that he was not 'champing at the bit' to leave for the former Yugoslavia with combat units. According to the commander, enforcing peace could entail 'dozens of deaths' amongst Dutch troops and he suggested that Dutch parliamentarians were not paying enough attention to the implications. The question was whether fighting 'a bunch of men who think like bandits' was worth Dutch lives. He doubted whether he would be able to explain to the family of fallen Dutch soldiers that they had died for a good cause. He also had no illusions about the outcome of deployment in Yugoslavia. The politicians had not even defined a clear objective. In addition, the UN command structure did not function and UN troops were deployed without enough weapons. According to him, any operation should only be led by NATO or the United States and not the United Nations. Couzy was of the opinion that his comments did not entail that he was straying into politics. He himself was responsible for the safety of his personnel. As soon as it was threatened, he felt that 'he was first and foremost the commander and not a Defence Department member of staff'. The commander's statements were the source of considerable irritation amongst the major parties represented in Parliament, who felt insulted.⁴³⁶⁸ According to VVD MP Weisglas, they even reeked of 'anti-parliamentary sentiment'.⁴³⁶⁹ It was not the first time that Couzy had drawn the ire of politicians on account of his public statements.

The 1991 White Paper on Defence had in principle opted to delegate powers as far down the ranks as possible within the organization based on the principle of 'decentralized, unless'. In 1992 a corporate structure was introduced into the Defence Department in terms of which the Ministry became the executive body as it were and the various branches of the armed forces acquired the role of operating companies.⁴³⁷⁰ As a result, at the beginning of 1992 the command of each branch came to be held by a commander who assumed overall responsibility for the operation of 'his' service. The addition of a tight line organization with far-reaching delegation of powers, which was then implemented, represents a sound chain of communication from the top down and vice versa. In the case of the Defence Department this meant that the various services needed to be quite familiar with the policy requirements of their political masters, while at the other end the services had to provide the information required for the formulation of policy. The services therefore needed to have a clear understanding of the information which the government ministers required in order to bear political responsibility for the operation of the military apparatus. Because political responsibility could manifest itself on an ad hoc basis, the services needed to develop a 'nose' for political susceptibilities. In many cases this was asking too much of them or, as Minister Ter Beek put it, '... I have never managed to catch the Royal Netherlands Army displaying excessive political sensitivity'.⁴³⁷¹ Many military personnel

⁴³⁶⁷ 'Vrijwillig' (Voluntary), *de Telegraaf*, 16/03/93.

⁴³⁶⁸ 'CDA en PvdA hekelen uitspraken generaal Couzy' (CDA and PvdA denounce Couzy's remarks), *ANP*, 25/03/93, 5.50 pm; 'Generaal Couzy heeft twijfels over ingrijpen in Bosnië' (General Couzy has doubts about intervening in Bosnia), *ANP*, 25/03/93, 1.05pm; 'Waarschuwing Couzy valt fout in Kamer' 'Bevelhebber bezorgd om veiligheid Bosnië' (Couzy's warning irks Parliament: Commander concerned about safety in Bosnia), *de Telegraaf*, 26/03/93; 'Couzy', *de Telegraaf*, 27/03/93; 'Generaal vreest zinloze interventie' (General afraid of meaningless intervention), *Trouw*, 25/03/93; 'Waarschuwing Couzy schiet Kamer in het verkeerde keelgat' (Couzy's warning annoys Parliament), *Trouw*, 26/03/93.

⁴³⁶⁹ Quoted in P.G.M. van Even, 'Onparlementair' (Unparliamentary), *Armex*, 77(1993)5, p. 4.

⁴³⁷⁰ See the Appendix Dealing with the Defence Department in a changing world.

⁴³⁷¹ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99. See also Rosenthal et al., *Calamiteiten- en incidentenmanagement*, pp. 8, 11, 17 and 19-20.

felt that politicians should not interfere in matters affecting implementation. They also failed to understand the political decision-making process, which appeared to them to be laborious and not direct enough. They also held politicians' military expertise in low regard. 'The realization that final responsibility for the state of affairs within the armed forces is not borne by the commander but by the relevant government ministers, is not held by all military personnel to the same degree,' the head of the Ministry of Defence Information Directorate, H. van den Heuvel, noted cautiously in this respect. According to him, some military personnel were also under the misapprehension that they were doing their branch of the armed forces a service by playing it against the central organization.⁴³⁷² The various services had a tendency to close ranks, particularly if they realized that their performance had left something to be desired. At the other end, the central organization failed to communicate the political aspects involved in, for example, deployment for the purposes of peacekeeping operations.⁴³⁷³

The relationship between the central organization and the Royal Netherlands Army resembled that prevailing between 'elephants grinding against each other', as Minister Ter Beek put it. Within the so-called corporate model much depended on the relationship between the minister himself and the commanders, particularly after Minister Ter Beek decided to abolish the Defence Council, which had been the forum in which the political and official heads of the Defence Department met with the Chief of Defence Staff and the commanders. In his memoirs of his time as a minister, *Manoeuvres*, Ter Beek presents the view that his method of conducting separate discussions with the various commanders worked well.⁴³⁷⁴ However, it was a public secret that Ter Beek and Wilmink, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, found it difficult to get along with each other.⁴³⁷⁵

On 10 September 1992 General Couzy succeeded Wilmink. Couzy's image was one of a desk officer in The Hague who had little experience with the troops⁴³⁷⁶ and he made his entry at a time when major spending cuts had to be implemented in the Netherlands armed forces, particularly the Royal Netherlands Army. Consequently, there was a danger that the general might wish to portray himself as someone who stood up for his men and women, which could occur at the expense of his relationship with the minister.⁴³⁷⁷ At the same time Couzy sometimes encountered difficulties when seeking contact with Minister Ter Beek. When Couzy wished to oppose specific cutbacks, it appeared that the minister was shielded by his staff. According to Couzy, he found it difficult to gain access to Ter Beek 'and it was absolutely impossible if there were some chestnuts in the fire. I always had to beg and plead before an appointment could be made with him by the grace of God'.⁴³⁷⁸ However, the minister was always ready to assist him where operational matters were concerned, such as deployment in Yugoslavia.⁴³⁷⁹ According to Couzy, however, it sometimes happened that he and Ter Beek did not see each other for months at a stretch and did not even speak to each other on the phone.⁴³⁸⁰

'As the commander, I therefore had hardly any idea what the minister was up to and what he felt about important matters. I did not see him and hardly heard

⁴³⁷² BSG. Notes taken by Van den Heuvel for Voorhoeve, 'De val van Srebrenica en de beeldvorming van Defensie', 18/08/95, no. V95015937. See also Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, II, interview Voorhoeve, 31/08/98, p. 8; interview H. van den Heuvel, 05/11/01.

⁴³⁷³ BSG. Memorandum from Van den Heuvel to Voorhoeve, 24/08/95, no. V95016235. With regard to the latter cf. BDL. Major General B.A.C. Droste, future commander of the Air Force, to PCDS, 18/08/95, no. BDL 95.058.466/252.

⁴³⁷⁴ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 220.

⁴³⁷⁵ Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, 'Nederlandse generaal commandant NAVO' (Dutch general is NATO commander), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/06/92; F.J.D.C. Egter van Wissekerke, 'Verdient Ter Beek's beleid wellicht een beter onthaal?' (Does Ter Beek's policy deserve a better reception perhaps?), *Carré* 16(1993)4, p. 11.

⁴³⁷⁶ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 234; Couzy, *Jaren*, pp. 15-16; interview J.T. Bruurmijn, 07/04/99.

⁴³⁷⁷ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁴³⁷⁸ Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 14.

⁴³⁷⁹ Interview H. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98; Robijns, *Baas*, p. 12.

⁴³⁸⁰ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. File 8c, decision-making pertaining to the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade; interview H.A. Couzy, 21/04/95.

from him. At most, I met with him once every two months, although it was necessary for us to synchronise matters far more often than that.⁴³⁸¹

According to Ter Beek on the other hand, he and Couzy saw each other two to three times a month. He felt that matters were not hampered by the fact that Couzy could sometimes not reach him at times when crucial decisions needed to be made. In those cases he was familiar with the commander's views on the issue in question.⁴³⁸²

For his part, Ter Beek complained that he missed a transparent approach within the Royal Netherlands Army. According to him, the Army was used to playing its cards close to its chest, with the result that the minister always needed 'to tug and pull in order to find out certain things'.⁴³⁸³ Couzy, on the other hand, also felt that Ter Beek waited very long before he revealed what he thought: 'He first covered his political flanks and only then did he present his decision. You were never sure whether he would support genuine military interests if push came to shove'.⁴³⁸⁴ Van der Vlis also thought that the minister took a long time to play his cards.⁴³⁸⁵

Apart from this, Couzy did not have much feel for political relations and behaviour. He had a very direct approach.⁴³⁸⁶ This could present difficulties. At the beginning of the 1990s public freedom of speech for military personnel was still formally regulated by Article 12a of the Military Personnel Act 1931, which provided as follows:

'A military official shall refrain from any public disclosure of his thoughts or feelings, or from exercising his right to associate or meet with others, or to demonstrate, if it were no longer possible, in a reasonable manner, to ensure the proper fulfilment of his duties or the proper operation of public services in so far as the latter may be related to the performance of his duties, due to the exercise of such right.'

In 1992 a document drawn up by the Secretary-General for Defence, Directive for Contact with the Media, was released. This directive was based on the minimal exercise of freedom of speech. Contact with the media was reserved for the ministry's Directorate of General Information.

Couzy repeatedly obstructed Ter Beek by making public statements contrary to this directive.⁴³⁸⁷ The awkward relationship between Couzy and Ter Beek was not only due to the somewhat deficient

⁴³⁸¹ Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 107.

⁴³⁸² Robijns, *Baas*, p. 12.

⁴³⁸³ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/04/99.

⁴³⁸⁴ Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 13.

⁴³⁸⁵ Interview Van der Vlis, 12/02/99

⁴³⁸⁶ Interview J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99.

⁴³⁸⁷ See for example 'PvdA en VVD willen dat bevelhebber landmacht zwijgt' (PvdA (Labour) and VVD (Liberals) want army commander to be silent), *ANP*, 14/01/93, 7.14 pm; W. Joustra, 'Bevelhebber Couzy moet zich wel roeren' (Commander Couzy must get involved), *de Volkskrant*, 18/03/93; Wio Joustra, 'Sfeer tussen minister en generaal te rellig' (Mood between minister and general too antagonistic), *de Volkskrant*, 29/01/94; P. Petit and J. Warners, 'Legertop vreest hoog dodental' (Military leaders fear extensive casualties) and 'Ik een politiek onbenul, dan lach ik in mijn vuistje' (Me a political dimwit? I would be laughing up my sleeve.), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25/03/93; Marcel Reijmerink, 'Vooral luisteren naar de generaal' (Listen especially to the general), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 15/06/95; 'Slechte relatie tussen krijgsmacht en politiek verontrust PvdA en D66' (Poor relationship between the armed forces and politicians worries PvdA and D66), *de Volkskrant*, 09/11/95; 'Dwarsligger Couzy' (Couzy the trouble-maker) and Henk Bouwmans, 'Ter Beek liet probleem-Couzy achter voor opvolgers' (Ter Beek left the Couzy problem for his successors), *Het Parool*, 06/02/96; 'Weer Couzy' (Couzy again), *Dagblad de Limburger*, 06/02/96; 'PvdA dringt aan op aftreden Couzy' (PvdA urges Couzy's dismissal), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/02/96; 'Coup van Couzy' (Couzy's coup), *Elsevier*, 09/02/96; Ton Olde Monnikhof & Pierre Petit, 'De generaal is een taaie dwarsligger' (The general is a tough trouble-maker), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 10/02/96; A. van der Horst, 'De eigen oorlog van Hans Couzy' (Hans Couzy's personal war), *HP/De Tijd*, 16/02/96; Rudie Kagie, 'Het spreekverbod. Wat generaal Couzy wel en niet mag zeggen' (The ban on public statements: What General Couzy may and may not say), *Vrij Nederland*, 30/01/93.

communicative skills of the former, as Ter Beek suggested.⁴³⁸⁸ At a structural level communication between the armed forces and politicians was awkward. The abolition of various forms of consultation between the central organization, i.e. the top of the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces had narrowed communication to that between the minister and the commander, beyond which there was no recourse. As a result, there was a great temptation for members of the armed forces to use the press to air those of their views which they felt the central organization was paying little or no attention to.

On 10 November 1992, two months after assuming the position of commander, Couzy used the comments column of the *NRC Handelsblad* to air his criticism of the growing move to reduce the transitional period for the suspension of compulsory military service.⁴³⁸⁹ Couzy's statements appeared at a very unfortunate moment for Ter Beek. Within government he still needed to persuade Prime Minister Lubbers and Minister Van den Broek that compulsory military service should be suspended. In addition, Couzy's statements could give one the impression that Ter Beek hung on the commander's every word in relation to the transitional period, which could jeopardise the political acceptance of the Priorities Memorandum which was being prepared. Ter Beek therefore sought written evidence from Couzy that his statements were designed:

‘to support the policy pursued by the Minister of Defence. This also means that I unconditionally accept the decisions taken by the Minister about the future structure of the Royal Netherlands Army and compulsory military service, and am prepared to present and implement the relevant policy without reservation.’⁴³⁹⁰

In practice, this document, which had been drafted by Van den Heuvel and became known as a declaration of loyalty, became a bone of contention to the Army. In the eyes of the military, this incident made Couzy a martyr, which was to his advantage as it happens,⁴³⁹¹ and led the Army to despise the Directorate of General Information, which it felt chose sides with the Minister too often and underplayed the Army's views.⁴³⁹² It ensured that Couzy acquired a reputation as someone who was ‘solidly behind his people’, who idolized him.⁴³⁹³

On 14 January 1993 Couzy again made a controversial public announcement. On this occasion, two weeks after his visit to the Dutch troops in the former Yugoslavia, he said in the NCRV radio programme, *Goedemorgen, Nederland*, that military intervention in that region was ‘absolutely impossible’. Western soldiers would be faced with a guerrilla war there: ‘Then you will get a second Vietnam’.⁴³⁹⁴

⁴³⁸⁸ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 234; Leonard Ornstein, ‘Het eergevoel van Relus ter Beek’ (Relus ter Beek's sense of honour), *Vrij Nederland*, 18/03/95.

⁴³⁸⁹ H.A. Couzy, ‘Afschaffen dienstplicht vergt ruime overgangstijd’ (Abolition of compulsory national service demands long transitional period), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/11/92.

⁴³⁹⁰ F. Peeters, ‘Couzy verbergt zijn twijfels achter ferme uitspraken’ (Couzy conceals his doubts behind robust statements), *Het Parool*, 08/02/96.

⁴³⁹¹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Decision-making in relation to the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade, interview H.A. Couzy, 21/04/95; Rudie Kagie, ‘Het spreekverbod. Wat generaal Couzy wel en niet mag zeggen’, *Vrij Nederland*, 30/01/93; Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 234; Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 20; Ewoud Nysingh, ‘De pers over Defensie’, *Hoe communiceert defensie*, p. 18.

⁴³⁹² M. Reijmerink and P. Pierik, ‘Bij defensie dienen alsnog koppen te rollen’ (Heads still need to roll in the Defence Department), *de Volkskrant*, 02/09/95; interview H.P.M. Kreemers, 18/03/99.

⁴³⁹³ General Coopmans quoted in Debbie Langelaan, ‘De laatste in zijn soort. Generaal Couzy verlaat de actieve dienst als een omstreden man’ (The last of his kind. General Couzy takes leave of active service as a contentious figure), *De Stem*, 30/03/96. Identical terms were used by Bauke Snoep, chairperson of the Algemene Federatie Militair Personeel (General Federation of Military Personnel), in: H. Goudriaan, ‘Een om zich heen slaande generaal. Couzy veroorzaakt commotie, maar kan bij “zijn” landmacht niet stuk’ (A pugilistic general: Couzy caused a stir but cannot put a foot wrong in ‘his’ army), *Trouw*, 09/02/96, and by Bauke Snoep and Major General b.d. Schaberg in A. van der Horst, ‘De eigen oorlog van Hans Couzy’, *HP/De Tijd*, 16/02/96.

⁴³⁹⁴ Radio 1, KRO, Echo, 14/01/93, 1.10 pm; ‘PvdA en VVD willen dat bevelhebber landmacht zwijgt’, *ANP*, 14/01/93, 7.14 pm.

The PvdA MP, M. Zijlstra, repeated what he had already said in November 1992 in response to Couzy's statements about the transitional period for the abolition of compulsory military service: 'We have generals to command our troops and not to indulge in politics'.⁴³⁹⁵ Blaauw referred to the Commander's comment as 'a cheap comparison' and felt that it was time Couzy acquired some wisdom in relation to his public statements. He did not really feel like 'saying it is so frightening and dangerous. By saying that, we in the Western world would be putting our credibility up for grabs'.⁴³⁹⁶ The VVD MP thought that Ter Beek should ask Couzy 'to take his foot off the accelerator somewhat'.⁴³⁹⁷ However, Minister Ter Beek did not rap the commander on the knuckles this time. The former Defence ministers, Stemerdink, Van Mierlo and Bolkestein, also felt that the general had done no more than his duty.⁴³⁹⁸

The fear of casualties amongst Dutch military personnel while involved in a peacekeeping mission in the former Yugoslavia played a role in statements made by Couzy in the *Algemeen Dagblad* on 25 March 1993. Shortly before this Couzy had said in *Commentaar*, the CMHF magazine, that, as someone responsible for a 'company' and for 'his' people, he could allow himself to make more far-ranging public statements than policymaking officials, at least as long as no political decisions had yet been made. This challenging approach led Wio Joustra to present an analysis in *de Volkskrant* on 18 March to the effect that Couzy had now become like a 'wounded animal'. The minister would be chary about handing out a second yellow card to the commander whom he himself had appointed, because this would automatically amount to a red one. Moreover, in such a case Ter Beek would run the risk of a confrontation with 'the generals', according to Joustra.⁴³⁹⁹ Shortly before this, one of them had said that Couzy should never have signed the statement: 'If Ter Beek had thrown him out, I know for sure that more high-ranking officers would have threatened to resign. This would have put the minister on the spot'.⁴⁴⁰⁰

Perhaps encouraged by such inflammatory remarks, in an interview with the *Algemeen Dagblad* on 25 March Couzy stated that he had warned Minister Ter Beek that there would be 'a substantial number of casualties' if Dutch troops were made available to enforce the Vance-Owen plan. Although the minister did not treat the possible risks light-heartedly, this was different in the case of some parliamentarians, according to the general. In the same interview Couzy also entered the debate about the voluntary involvement of national service personnel in any deployment. He understood that it was appropriate for him to show 'considerable restraint' in this matter but if the situation remained as it was, it would be rather 'difficult' to make units available: 'Then we will not be going'.⁴⁴⁰¹

The Defence Ministry did not wish to become too concerned about the commander's remarks. The ministry even tried to calm the waters: 'Couzy made his statements within the context of his responsibilities. The minister was aware of this.' However, the members of parliament did not wish to be depicted as 'a bunch of madmen who are simply intent on throwing our boys to their death'.⁴⁴⁰² Not only did Couzy receive support from Ter Beek, assistance was also forthcoming from unexpected quarters. The *Podium* column in *Trouw* featured a piece by Faber, the IKV (Interchurch Peace Council) secretary, who expressed concern about the criticism levelled at the commander, because he detected

⁴³⁹⁵ PvdA en VVD willen dat bevelhebber landmacht zwijgt', *ANP*, 14/01/93, 19:14; R. Kagie, 'Het spreekverbod. Wat generaal Couzy wel en niet mag zeggen', *Vrij Nederland*, 30/01/93; Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 111.

⁴³⁹⁶ Radio 1, KRO, *Echo*, 14/01/93, 1.10 pm.

⁴³⁹⁷ Rudie Kagie, 'Het spreekverbod. Wat generaal Couzy wel en niet mag zeggen', *Vrij Nederland*, 30/01/93.

⁴³⁹⁸ Rudie Kagie, 'Het spreekverbod. Wat generaal Couzy wel en niet mag zeggen', *Vrij Nederland*, 30/01/93.

⁴³⁹⁹ Wio Joustra, 'Bevelhebber Couzy moet zich wel roeren', *de Volkskrant*, 18/03/93.

⁴⁴⁰⁰ W. Joustra, 'Bevelhebber Couzy moet zich wel roeren', *de Volkskrant*, 18/03/93.

⁴⁴⁰¹ P. Petit en J. Warners, 'Legertop vreest hoog dodental' and 'Ik een politiek onbenul, dan lach ik in mijn vuistje', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25/03/93. See also the news report on the Nederland 2 TV channel, 25/03/93, 6 pm.

⁴⁴⁰² Teun Lagas, 'Openheid generaal valt nu ineens blijktbaar goed bij minister Ter Beek' (Minister Ter Beek suddenly appears to appreciate the general's candour), *Trouw*, 26/03/1993. See also Van Traa in the news report on the Nederland 2 TV channel, *Journal*, 25/03/93, 6 pm: 'Wij zijn geen Don Quichottes, we zijn niet gek' (We are not Don Quichotte: we are not crazy).

too many indications in it that politicians were shielding their ears from the warnings of an expert.⁴⁴⁰³ During the Ministerial Council of 26 March 1993 various government ministers expressed their concern about Couzy's statements. They asked themselves why Couzy felt he should advise Minister Ter Beek in public and regretted the fact that he was creating the impression that the Dutch government did not carefully weigh up matters when deploying Dutch troops. At the same time mention was made during the Ministerial Council that Couzy was acting in accordance with his responsibilities by pointing out the possible risks involved in any action. He had not undermined the primacy of the political process.⁴⁴⁰⁴ After the meeting Lubbers announced on NOS television that 'generals are allowed to say something from time to time'. After all, other senior officials did this as well. However, the Prime Minister held the view that Couzy had gone a bit too far by suggesting that the members of Parliament had failed to have sufficient regard to the risks involved in any military intervention in the former Yugoslavia.⁴⁴⁰⁵

7. Srebrenica under siege

Morillon's position in Bosnia

While the Dutch minister, Ter Beek, was visiting Bosnia on 16 and 17 March, events occurred elsewhere which had major implications for further developments in that country. On board the same Antonov 32, which the Russian government had placed at the disposal of the UN, and in which Ter Beek had flown from Zagreb and landed in Sarajevo, the Bosnian president, Izetbegovic, left shortly afterwards for talks in New York. During his visit to Sarajevo Ter Beek was allowed to sleep in the bed of the French general, Morillon, who was visiting Srebrenica at that time. Philippe Pierre Lucien Antoine Morillon, 58 years old, was born in Casablanca. He was a former platoon commander in the French Foreign Legion at the time of Algeria's struggle for independence, later commanded the French army corps in Germany and finally became commander of the first French army corps in Metz. With his silver-grey hair and an athletic figure despite his age, he was known to be a charismatic, captivating and dedicated man. However, he could also act impulsively.⁴⁴⁰⁶

There was an ongoing difference of opinion between Morillon and his superiors in Zagreb and New York. The French general held the view that, while it was true that UNPROFOR needed to be impartial, the UN force was never allowed to tolerate ethnic cleansing. He was not a proponent of large-scale military intervention but, according to him, the UNPROFOR troops that were on the scene, had to be allowed to display their power in order to halt Bosnian-Serb aggression. Morillon could not accept that force was only permitted for the protection of his own troops and not for the population. He referred to the attitude of his UN superiors as perverse angelic behaviour. It irritated him when he was challenged to abide by the text of the UNPROFOR mandate. According to Morillon, one could interpret Security Council resolutions any way one wanted to. One could find evidence to counter everything they contained. He felt that the issue at stake was to act in accordance with the spirit of the mandate. Morillon himself maintained that he engaged in heated telephone conversations with the UN

⁴⁴⁰³ Mient Jan Faber, 'In hun eentje staan soldaten in Bosnië voor hopeloze taak' (On their own, our soldiers face a hopeless task in Bosnia), *Trouw*, 31/03/93.

⁴⁴⁰⁴ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 12/03/93, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴⁴⁰⁵ TV, Nederland 3, NOS, interview the Prime Minister, 11.05 pm; 'Joegoslavië. Lubbers kapittelt Couzy over sneuvelen militairen' (Yugoslavia: Lubbers lectures Couzy on military casualties), *ANP*, 27/03/93. See also TK, 1992-1993, schedule to the Proceedings, no. 462.

⁴⁴⁰⁶ With regard to Morillon see for example Henk Steenhuis, 'Philippe Morillon', *HP/De Tijd*, 21/05/93, pp.20-24; Stoltenberg and Eide, *Dagene*, p.p. 82-83; interview J. Zoutendijk, 6/04/01. Especially with regard to his impulsiveness see Cohen, *Hearts*, pp. 236-37.

staff in Zagreb every day, in the course of which he repeated that UNPROFOR needed to elicit respect, otherwise the peacekeeping force might as well withdraw.⁴⁴⁰⁷

Morillon had seen how rapidly the United Nations had lost credibility with the Bosnian Muslims. Although the first blue berets had been greeted by tram conductors ringing their bells in Sarajevo in March 1992 and they had always been offered drinks at the sidewalk cafés,⁴⁴⁰⁸ MacKenzie had been forced to move out in the face of threats. The population of the Bosnian capital had definitely not adopted a more welcoming approach towards the UN after a visit by Boutros-Ghali at the end of December 1992. The UN Secretary-General had appealed to his Muslim audience to start negotiations and not to wait for foreign intervention.⁴⁴⁰⁹ He was rewarded with widespread incomprehension. The inhabitants of Sarajevo accused him of being a fascist and a murderer.⁴⁴¹⁰ At the press conference he gave before departing from the Sarajevo airport, the United Nations Secretary-General told his audience that he could present them with a list of ten places in the world where the people were worse off. Those who were present, were so stunned into silence that no one asked him which places he was referring to.⁴⁴¹¹ It was a rude awakening for people who had really believed that the letters, PRO, in UNPROFOR, actually stood for 'protection'.⁴⁴¹²

Like MacKenzie, Morillon came to the conclusion in the course of 1992 that the various parties in the Bosnian conflict only differed marginally from each other in the pursuit of evil. As a UN official stated at the time, 'The Serbs are mass murderers, the Croats are assassins, and the Muslims are killers.'⁴⁴¹³ Morillon was also inundated with Muslim frustration with the United Nations, which appeared to stand in the way of military intervention to their advantage and simultaneously enforced an arms embargo, with the result that the Bosnian government found it difficult to act as a sovereign state.⁴⁴¹⁴ Morillon saw how the propaganda machine of the Bosnian Muslims attempted to pull the wool over the eyes of the world in order to secure military intervention. For instance, in the autumn of 1992 stories were doing the rounds of cannibalism in Zepa as a result of food shortages but, when the first convoys carrying humanitarian aid entered this enclave in December 1992, there appeared to be an abundance of cattle and poultry.⁴⁴¹⁵ At the same time 'spontaneous' demonstrations by the family members of the inhabitants of Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde were held outside Morillon's headquarters in Sarajevo. Towards the end of the year the UNPROFOR vehicles were targeted with snowballs containing stones and over Christmas Morillon's headquarters were shelled with mortars fired from positions held by the Bosnian government army.⁴⁴¹⁶

Relations between Morillon and the Bosnian government sank to their lowest when on 8 January 1993, several days after the presentation of the Vance-Owen plan, the Serbian militia shot and killed the Bosnian Deputy Prime Minister, Hakiija Turajlic, in an outer suburb of Sarajevo while being escorted in a UN armoured vehicle. Representatives of the Bosnian government accused Morillon of being the really guilty person.⁴⁴¹⁷ Muslim demonstrators portrayed him as a murderer, Izetbegovic sought his dismissal from the government in Paris, and journalists made things uncomfortable for

⁴⁴⁰⁷ E. Vulliamy, 'The general who told troops to tear up UN mandate' and 'Only passivity is dishonourable', *The Guardian*, 12/01/96.

⁴⁴⁰⁸ 'Militairen vertrekken naar Joegoslavië' (Troops leave for Yugoslavia), *de Volkskrant*, 28/03/92.

⁴⁴⁰⁹ Sremac, *War*, p. 136.

⁴⁴¹⁰ Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, p. 52; Maass, *Neighbor*, pp. 177-79.

⁴⁴¹¹ Owen CD-ROM, Press Conference of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, held on 31/12/92 in Sarajevo; Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, p. 53; Maass, *Neighbor*, p. 181; Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 24.

⁴⁴¹² Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, pp. 140-41 and 152.

⁴⁴¹³ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 220.

⁴⁴¹⁴ These anti-Morillon sentiments were still being expressed in 1998 in Bosnia. See also Sejo Omeragic, 'Svi Srbi i 'posteni' Morillon', *Ljiljan*, 25 /05/1998, p. 17.

⁴⁴¹⁵ Morillon, *Croire*, pp. 133-34.

⁴⁴¹⁶ Morillon, *Croire*, p. 141.

⁴⁴¹⁷ Morillon, *Croire*, p. 144.

him.⁴⁴¹⁸ But the French government maintained Morillon on his difficult assignment. From here Morillon continued to voice his scepticism regarding the possibilities of a military intervention. The sole solution for the conflict in Bosnia could only come from diplomatic negotiations.⁴⁴¹⁹

In mid-February Morillon angered the Muslim authorities again, when he said that he understood that the ferocity of the Bosnian-Serb offensive in Eastern Bosnia was partly due to the fact that, after capturing Kamenica the VRS (the military forces of the Bosnian Serbs) had discovered a mass grave containing dozens of Serbs who had been badly tortured in November 1992.⁴⁴²⁰ The reinterment of the corpses in Zvornik bore the characteristics of an official event and was attended by Karadzic, amongst others, who not only held the Bosnian Muslims responsible for the death of these Serbs but also the West. He said that following the discovery of this atrocity the last opportunity for Serbs and Muslims to live together ever again had been lost.⁴⁴²¹ At this time Mladic displayed signs of being extremely upset by the death of 1,500 Serbs in Bratunac and surroundings in the months before, which the Muslims of Srebrenica were guilty of, according to him. He said that it had made a great impression on him to fly in a helicopter – contrary to the ban on flights, incidentally – over places such as Tegari, Ratkovici, Fakovici and Skelani, where these murders had been perpetrated, and at the same time to see ‘fellow Serbs’ playing football on the other side of the Drina.⁴⁴²²

It had not escaped Morillon that there was more hatred to be found ‘in this remote corner of Bosnia’ than anywhere else. He was convinced that Mladic was intent on seeking revenge for the dead Serbs.⁴⁴²³ Reports began to appear in the press that thousands of Muslims had been killed during a Serb offensive in Cerska, a town with six thousand inhabitants,⁴⁴²⁴ after which Morillon personally visited the place on 5 March, three days after its fall. Following a brief inspection, Morillon reported that he believed no slaughter had occurred. There were several wounded people, who could be evacuated. His statement, ‘Je n’ai pas senti l’odeur de mort’ in the course of a press conference was one that the Muslims held against him for a long time.⁴⁴²⁵ The Muslims in the Drina valley took it as a sign that they could expect nothing from the French general.

At the beginning of March the Bosnian Serbs briefly opened a corridor for those Muslims who were in Cerska, Kamenica and Konjevic Polje. The Bosnian Serbs argued that they had decided on this humanitarian deed in the face of international pressure but in reality it represented one of the methods they used for ethnic cleansing in Eastern Bosnia.⁴⁴²⁶ On 6 March a British captain, David Bennett, an escort to Morillon, announced that the purpose of the French general’s visit to Eastern Bosnia was to remove as many Muslims as possible from those of their enclaves which had been surrounded: ‘If that encompasses the evacuation of all refugees, so be it’. This policy was supported by the UNHCR.⁴⁴²⁷ However, the Muslim authorities did not appreciate what they viewed as Morillon’s support for ethnic cleansing. On 11 March the political parties in Tuzla, the Citizens’ Forum and the Association of

⁴⁴¹⁸ See for example ‘Bosnische regering wil vervanging VN-bevelhebbers’ (Bosnian government wants UN commanders replaced), *ANP*, 11/01/93, 16.00. However, the French government retained Morillon in his difficult post. There he continued to express his scepticism about the potential for military intervention. According to him, diplomacy offered the only solution to the conflict in Bosnia (H. Steenhuis, ‘Philippe Morillon’, *HP/De Tijd*, 21/05/1993, p. 22).

⁴⁴¹⁹ H. Steenhuis, ‘Philippe Morillon’, *HP/De tijd*, 221/05/93, p. 22.

⁴⁴²⁰ T. Barber, ‘Generall Philippe Morillon – Bosnia, I am with you’, *The Independent*, 21/03/93; Janine di Giovanni, ‘Morillon takes flak in his finest hour’, *Sunday Times*, 04/04/93.

⁴⁴²¹ ‘Karadzic attends funeral in Zvornik of “massacred” Serbian victims’, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 24/02/93; Donald Forbes, ‘Karadzic renounces Muslim-Serb brotherhood on grave of “martyrs”’, *The Herald* (Glasgow), 23/02/93.

⁴⁴²² Sherman, *Zerschlagung*, p. 169.

⁴⁴²³ Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 234.

⁴⁴²⁴ See for example Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Bloedbad na val Bosnische stad Cerska’ (Bloodbath after the fall of the Bosnian town of Cerska), *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/03/93.

⁴⁴²⁵ Morillon, *Croire*, pp. 164-165; Hollingworth, *Christmas*, pp. 176-177; ‘VN-generaal: geen bewijs bloedbad’ (UN general: no evidence of a bloodbath), *HP/De Tijd*, 07/03/93; Thieu Vaessen, ‘Morillon roept kritiek op VN-vredesmacht over zich af’ (Morillon draws criticism of the UN peacekeeping force), *ANP*, 08/03/93, 14:32.

⁴⁴²⁶ Adrian Brown, ‘UN general braves fighting to help trapped Muslims’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 06/03/93.

⁴⁴²⁷ Adrian Brown, ‘UN general braves fighting to help trapped Muslims’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 06/03/93.

Bosnian Muslim Intellectuals, called on the government in Sarajevo to declare Morillon *persona non grata* because of his 'open support for the aggressor'.⁴⁴²⁸

Srebrenica

11 March was also the day on which Morillon left for a visit to Srebrenica, which was surrounded. Srebrenica was situated in a valley encircled by mostly forested mountains rising to between six hundred and a thousand metres about three kilometres from the Drina River. More than other parts of Yugoslavia, the Drina valley, which was known as the Podrinje, had been the scene of battles in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although the Drina formed the border between Bosnia and Serbia, the people living on both sides of the river, did not feel it was.⁴⁴²⁹ In the nineteenth century, when Serbia won independence, many Muslims had been driven out of it and had sought refuge on the other side of the Drina in Eastern Bosnia. Conversely, Serbs from Eastern Bosnia had sought sanctuary in Serbia. Those Serbs whose main territorial base was on the south bank of the river, subsequently found it easier to cross the river than the Muslims. Nevertheless, in about 1990 not only Serbian but also Muslim students from Eastern Bosnia went to school in Serbia and many of their parents travelled the same route to work on the other side of the Drina.⁴⁴³⁰ In times of want, for example, during the First World War, when the Serbs fought against the Austrians in this region, or during the Second World War, when the hilly, forested land of Eastern Bosnia was the terrain in which the partisans waged war against the monarchists, Croat extremists, Italian and German troops with varying success, the inhabitants retreated to either river bank as required and gave each other support.⁴⁴³¹ For instance, Serbs in the areas around Bratunac and Srebrenica volunteered for service in the Serb army in 1913.⁴⁴³²



⁴⁴²⁸ Ekrem Abdic in a report from Tuzla for Croat radio. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 11/03/93; Morillon, *Croire*, p. 165.

⁴⁴²⁹ See also, for example, Thomas, *Serbia*, p. 134.

⁴⁴³⁰ Frans van Deijl, 'Ik hou van jou, mijn Bosnië' (I love you, my Bosnia), *HP/De Tijd*, 14/08/92, p. 25.

⁴⁴³¹ See also Appendix Duijzings, *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnië*, passim, in particular, p. 18 et seq., p. 35, and p. 47.

⁴⁴³² Appendix Duijzings, *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnië*.

Nevertheless, the Serb population felt closer ties with their immediate neighbours on the other side of the river than with Belgrade, a situation which also existed in the first half of the 1990s. Neither the Serbs nor the Muslims in the Drina valley felt that they were part of a national state.⁴⁴³³ The Podrinje was actually a peripheral area, relatively isolated from both Belgrade and Sarajevo, and even from Tuzla. If Eastern Bosnia was isolated, than this was even more so in the case of Srebrenica.⁴⁴³⁴ This town was situated at the end of the Krizevica River valley. It could only be accessed from Bratunac, a place with approximately 7,700 inhabitants in 1991, which was situated 12 kilometres away. The hamlet of Potocari lay halfway between both towns. The town of Srebrenica was surrounded by numerous settlements where time appeared to have stood still even more so than in the surrounding areas. Many of the villages could only be accessed by almost impassable tracks and their population lived mainly off their own agricultural produce and cattle farming. Agricultural production barely exceeded subsistence levels. The proportion of the inhabitants of the Eastern Bosnian towns of Bratunac and Srebrenica that was employed abroad, was significantly lower than elsewhere. At the beginning of the 1980s a quarter of the population of both places was still illiterate.⁴⁴³⁵ The only reason why Srebrenica had drawn the attention of the central authorities in the past, was because of its strategic importance in the form of lead, zinc, bauxite and silver mines. It was this last type which gave Srebrenica its name, which literally means silver city.

There were virtually no Croats in Bratunac and Srebrenica, which probably contributed to the development of greater antagonism between the two ethnic groups. On the eve of the conflict in the 1990s Muslims accounted for two thirds of the Opstina Bratunac and Serbs one third.⁴⁴³⁶ In the Opstina Srebrenica almost 73% of the inhabitants were Muslim and more than a quarter were Serbs.⁴⁴³⁷ The population of the town of Srebrenica increased by more than a quarter in the 1980s, from 4,512 inhabitants in 1981 to 5,746 in 1991.⁴⁴³⁸ On the other hand, in the same period the number of inhabitants in the district of Srebrenica fell from 31,780 to 30,920. The Muslim population of Srebrenica experienced a spectacular rate of growth, rising by almost half, while the number of Serbs only increased by one sixth.⁴⁴³⁹

The events of the Second World War were well remembered in the area. Unlike developments elsewhere in Yugoslavia, hardly any people of the Srebrenica district were tried for misconduct during the war. Nevertheless, the local populace knew all too well which families had played an important role in the perpetration of blood baths.⁴⁴⁴⁰

Ethnic consciousness was said to be poorly developed amongst the young people of Bratunac.⁴⁴⁴¹ However, by the end of the 1980s ethnic and national sentiments had also become palpable in Bratunac and Srebrenica. To the Serbs the source of this was initially Milosevic's Belgrade, to the Muslims, Sarajevo. In a certain sense this had the effect of shifting the political orientation of these peripheral regions from their own locality to the metropolitan centres within the country. The major protagonist of the development of enhanced ethnic awareness amongst the Serbs in Srebrenica was the judge, Goran Zekic, who was soon competing with more extremist elements, however. Amongst the Muslims this role was played by Besim Ibisevic, the curator of the district museum. Ibisevic was soon joined by Ibran Mustafic, who later became his competitor. Both had studied in Sarajevo and had returned to the villages near Srebrenica where they had been born. These nationalist leaders found support mainly in the villages around Srebrenica, most of which were ethnically

⁴⁴³³ Smit, *Geography*, p. 391.

⁴⁴³⁴ For a more detailed account of the history of Srebrenica see appendix Duijzings *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnië*; Smit, *Geography*.

⁴⁴³⁵ Smit, *Geography*, p. 395.

⁴⁴³⁶ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 30.

⁴⁴³⁷ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 31; Hren (ed.), *Overlevenden*, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁴³⁸ Smit, *Geography*, p. 396.

⁴⁴³⁹ Smit, *Geography*, p. 396.

⁴⁴⁴⁰ UN, A/48/177 and S/25835, annex: Memorandum, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁴¹ Frans van Deijl, 'Ik hou van jou, mijn Bosnië', *HP/De Tijd*, 14/08/92, pp. 24-27.

homogenous. Prior to this, when no free elections were held, the communists had never worried much about these villages. Now the bulk of the Muslim villages supported the SDA and the Serbian ones opted for the SDS. Not only were the nationalist leaders responsible for a revolt against communism – where they went, the villagers removed pictures of Tito from the walls – but they also recalled the atrocities of the First and Second World Wars.

In Srebrenica rising ethnic consciousness was fuelled by conflicting economic interests, especially in relation to the question of allocating jobs in various companies. A media campaign was launched to expose the actual or supposed prejudice against the Serb community, while the Serbs interpreted their declining proportion of the population as confirmation of the way they felt themselves to be disadvantaged. This campaign was influenced by so-called leaks of confidential information about discrimination against Serbs by the Serbian national security service, the SDB. Despite acts of moderation on the part of the current community leaders in Bratunac and Srebrenica, polarization occurred between these ethnic groups. Social life was increasingly broken down in accordance with ethnic divisions. Anyone who tried to continue efforts towards mediation, received threats. Rumours began to circulate amongst Muslims and Serbs that the other group was secretly arming itself. Anyone who could afford to, left the district. As they had done so often before, the Serbs moved to the other side of the Drina. After the SDA and SDS made gains in the area around Srebrenica in the elections held in November 1990 – the first free elections since the Second World War – the two nationalist parties initially worked together, driven by the need to unite in order to eradicate the institutional and individual rule of the communists. The conflict in Croatia also cast a shadow over Srebrenica. Tensions rose when Ibisevic and Mustafic advised Muslims not to respond to a call-up from the Yugoslavian National Army in May and June 1991 not only because they did not consider the Serb cause to be worthy of Muslim lives, but also because Muslims would be required in Srebrenica if fighting were to break out. When they were therefore summoned to appear before the military tribunal in Sarajevo, they ignored this order. Government authority was increasingly ignored or undermined. Community property was stolen, such as electricity and wood. Serbs refused to pay rates to the municipal council in Srebrenica, in which Bosnians held the majority. The first major incident to take place in the region of Bratunac and Srebrenica occurred at the beginning of September 1991. This happened in Kravica, a hotbed of Serbian nationalism since time immemorial.⁴⁴⁴² This was the source of agitation for the expropriation of land from Muslim landowners after the First World War. In December 1941, during the Second World War, the inhabitants of Kravica used guns, knives and sticks to commit the mass murder of 68 Muslim residents of the hamlet of Sopotnik on the Drina. For their part, Croat extremists slaughtered more than a hundred Serbs in Kravica in July 1943. An incident had already occurred there in 1971 when a drunk Muslim from Konjevic Polje entered a pub in Kravica after visiting a fair in Bratunac. There he had remonstrated with the Serbs about their role in the Second World War. First he was stabbed with a knife but, when he pulled the latter from his side and began to wave it around menacingly, the barman shot him. Fatally wounded, he collapsed in front of the door to the pub. When his fellow villagers from Konjevic Polje arrived to collect the corpse, shooting ensued between the residents of Kravica and the visitors but no one was wounded. The military police acted in order to restore order.⁴⁴⁴³

In the autumn of 1990 Muslims hardly dared to travel through Kravica in the same way that Serbs hardly dared to pass through Potocari between Bratunac and Srebrenica. Barriers had been erected across the road in both places where members of the other ethnic group were checked.⁴⁴⁴⁴ In 1991 Kravica became the weapon distribution and training centre for Serbs from the surrounding settlements. Muslim daredevils began provocative drives through Kravica cursing the Serbs, waving green flags and playing loud 'Eastern' music. In order to 'teach them a lesson' three local Serbs, assisted

⁴⁴⁴² Appendix Duijzings, *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnië*.

⁴⁴⁴³ Interviews L. Bogdanovic and N. Stjepanovic, 20/10/00.

⁴⁴⁴⁴ Appendix Duijzings, *Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnië*.

by three policemen from Bratunac, fired on one of these cars on 3 September 1991, killing two Muslims. Thousands of Muslims then took to the streets to protest in Bratunac.⁴⁴⁴⁵ Following the referendum on the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina, ethnic tensions rose even further in Bratunac and Srebrenica.

In March 1992 Serbs slit the throats of two Muslims near Bratunac. Fear took hold of the people in and around Bratunac and Srebrenica from that time on. Hardly any men still went to work, discussing the situation on the street and in coffee houses instead. Others fled the area. At the beginning of April, when rumours spread that Serbs from outside Bratunac were planning to attack the Muslims in the town, a large group of Muslims left Bratunac and retreated to the mountains where they hid in the forests for days on end. Some fled to neighbouring towns while others sent their wives and children to safer areas.⁴⁴⁴⁶

In mid-April the Serbs gave the Muslims in Srebrenica and the surrounding villages an ultimatum. They were required to hand in their weapons before 18 April. When this ultimatum expired, the first mortars were fired on Srebrenica and surroundings. A large proportion of the population and several armed Muslims fled into the snow-covered hills surrounding the town. Only 365 Muslims, mainly older people, remained in there.⁴⁴⁴⁷ Militia from Arkan, Seselj, Beli Orlovi and groups from Bijeljina then entered Srebrenica under the guidance of local Serbs, including Goran Zekic, the Serbian representative in the parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴⁴⁴⁸ They plundered the place, set fire to various houses and murdered 27 people.⁴⁴⁴⁹

On 5 May troops from Arkan and Seselj surrounded Bratunac.⁴⁴⁵⁰ They were mainly troops that had previously gone on the rampage in Zvornik.⁴⁴⁵¹ Together with radical Serbs from Bratunac and surroundings, they chased the Muslims out of their homes in Bratunac and neighbouring villages, after which they confiscated all their valuable possessions. Anyone who tried to escape, was shot. They set fire to several villages. Several thousand Muslims were arrested. Approximately seven hundred of them were taken to the police station, where the troops from Arkan and Seselj were in control. The following day Serbian troops took several thousand Muslim women and children to the stadium of the local football club, Bratstvo. Several girls are said to have been moved to the local hotel, Fontana, where they were raped. Eventually, the women and children were taken by bus to Kladanj, which was held by the Bosnian government.

The men were taken to the gymnastics hall of the Vuk Karadzic primary school. While 150 to 200 armed Serbs surrounded the school, the imprisoned Muslims were horrifically tortured over several days. Many were beaten to death with clubs or hammers. People were cut with knives and forced to eat clothes. A total of several hundred Muslim men are said to have been murdered. Some of the corpses were burnt. The remaining bodies were thrown into the Drina. Finally, four hundred Muslims were exchanged for Serbian prisoners.⁴⁴⁵² On 23 May another seventy Muslims are said to have been murdered in front of the mosque of neighbouring Glogova led by the SDS chairperson of Bratunac, Miroslav Deronjic.⁴⁴⁵³

On 6 May Muslim fighters from Srebrenica launched a counterattack on the Serbs in this town. Goran Zekic was murdered on 8 May 1992. The Serbs allege that this was the work of a Muslim police

⁴⁴⁴⁵ See also 'Geweld breidt zich uit naar Bosnië' (Violence spreads to Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/09/91.

⁴⁴⁴⁶ F. van Deijl, 'Ik hou van jou, mijn Bosnië', *HP/De Tijd*, 14/08/92, p. 25.

⁴⁴⁴⁷ Hren (ed.), *Overlevenden*, p. 17.

⁴⁴⁴⁸ Hren (ed.), *Overlevenden*, pp. 58-59 and 103.

⁴⁴⁴⁹ Hren (ed.), *Overlevenden*, pp. 17 and 59-60.

⁴⁴⁵⁰ Williams and Cigar, III.C.1; United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2 (Vol. I), 28/12/94, Annex III.A, IV.A.10.

⁴⁴⁵¹ Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, 'Operations', par. 5.2.

⁴⁴⁵² Different figures are cited for the number of Muslims murdered, varying from two to several hundred. B. Rijs, 'Sporen van een massamoord' (Traces of mass murder), *HP/De Tijd*, 28/08/92, pp. 10-12; Westerman & Brug, p. 71; United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2 (Vol. I), 28/12/94, Annex III.A, IV.A.10.

⁴⁴⁵³ United Nations, S/1994/674/Add.2 (Vol. I), 28/12/94, Annex III.A, III.C, Forces of Miroslav Deronjic and IV.A.10.

officer in Srebrenica, Hakija Meholic.⁴⁴⁵⁴ This murder heralded the exodus of Serbs from Srebrenica, an event that was observed to occur on numerous occasions in the Bosnian conflict following the death of a prominent local figure. This exodus received added impetus in the form of two other Muslims, Naser Oric and Zulfo Tursonovic, who had assumed the role of commanders and who began to attack surrounding villages inhabited by Serbs and then advanced on Srebrenica. A large number of Serbian refugees found sanctuary in Bratunac. This nearby town, which had once had a Muslim majority, became a place that was almost entirely Serbian. In this way the logic of the process of mutual ethnic cleansing on the part of the Muslims and Serbs in this section of the Drina valley resulted in the physical division of these two groups. Now it was no longer only a question of Muslims against Serbs but a battle between those of Srebrenica and those of Bratunac, a situation exacerbated by the fact that there had already been animosity between the two towns for years, fuelled by the superior wealth of Srebrenica.⁴⁴⁵⁵

Throughout the remainder of 1992 the Serbs remained on the defensive in this region. Overall, Muslim fighters from Srebrenica attacked 79 Serbian places in the districts of Srebrenica and Bratunac. They followed a certain pattern. Initially, Serbs were driven out of ethnically mixed towns. Then Serbian hamlets surrounded by Muslim towns were attacked and finally the remaining Serbian settlements were overrun. The residents were murdered, their homes were plundered and burnt down or blown up. There was a preference to launch these attacks on Serbian public holidays (those of Saint Joris, Saint Vitus and the Blessed Peter, and Christmas Day), probably because least resistance was expected. Yet it simultaneously contributed to the development of profound Serbian grievances. Many of these attacks were bloody in nature. For example, the victims had their throats slit, they were assaulted with pitchforks or they were set on fire.

It is estimated that between 1,000 and 1,200 Serbs died in these attacks, while about 3,000 of them were wounded. Ultimately, of the original 9,390 Serbian inhabitants of the Srebrenica district, only 860 remained, mainly in the four villages of Skelani, Crvica, Petrica and Lijesce.⁴⁴⁵⁶ Serbian attempts to defend other villages met with little success. The Serbs in the district of Bratunac were largely driven back to the town of the same name. Faced with a constant shortage of troops, the authorities of the Republika Srpska (Serb Republic) showed little interest in defending the area. On the other hand, the Muslims of Srebrenica could not count on the authorities in Sarajevo showing much interest in them. Confronted with the remark that the Muslims in Eastern Bosnia had also committed atrocities, the Bosnian vice-president, Ganic, said, "The Muslims along the Drina have never received support from us. They obtained their own weapons."⁴⁴⁵⁷

Naser Oric from Potocari had already distinguished himself as a fearsome Muslim fighter, when the fighting broke out around Srebrenica and Bratunac. Oric was born in Potocari on 3 March 1967. He attended the police academy in Zemun near Belgrade and subsequently joined the anti-terrorism unit run by the Ministry of the Interior. After some time he became a bodyguard to Milosevic. When a warrant was issued for his arrest in Belgrade – for theft according to some, for murder according to others⁴⁴⁵⁸ – he went to Ilidza, where he stayed for six months. From there he returned to Srebrenica at the beginning of 1992 when tensions were rising in Bosnia. At the time he assumed the position of local police officer, which is said to have transpired upon the recommendation of the SDA official, Ibran Mustafic, a relative of Oric's mother. Together they are said to have used SDA funds to purchase

⁴⁴⁵⁴ With regard to questions surrounding Zekic's death, see Duizings, Appendix.

⁴⁴⁵⁵ Appendix Duizings, *Geschiedenis en berinnering in Oost-Bosnië*.

⁴⁴⁵⁶ For a detailed list of the attacks, victims, suspected perpetrators and witnesses, see UN, A/48/177 en S/25835, Annex: Memorandum, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁵⁷ Nicole Lucas, 'Bosnische vice-president: "Kroaten hebben ons nodig"' (Bosnian vice-president: "The Croats need us."), *Trouw*, 23/02/93.

⁴⁴⁵⁸ Based on the MID Archives, Directorate of Operations, Dutch Army, Department of Intelligence and Security, Intelligence Division, Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, no. 30370/4/021194, p. A-1 – for the murder of as many as seven people.

weapons, although it is doubtful whether the money and arms were always used for their original purpose, the defence of Muslims. Oric prepared for battle against the Serbs with 17 friends. Due to a combination of bravery and cruelty, at the start of hostilities Oric developed into a charismatic war hero who was in the vanguard of the attacks and division of any booty.⁴⁴⁵⁹ Although he was a master of ambush tactics, this did not make him a great strategist. In addition, he was no stranger to the idea that he could claim privileges in exchange for his valour. Initially, Oric was one of the local commanders of Srebrenica, and was primarily responsible for the northern section of the enclave. However, upon the insistence of the military leadership in Sarajevo and aided by his membership of the SDA, he soon acquired authority over the other commanders in Srebrenica. Despite achieving numerous military successes during the second half of 1992, Oric failed to link up with the Muslim area around Tuzla. In addition, he neglected to capture Bratunac, which would have enabled him to control a major supply route.

On 7 January 1993 Oric led a major attack of Muslims on Kravica during the Serbs' Christmas festivities. At the time the inhabitants of this Serbian village numbered 353 in total. 28 of them were killed, after which the place was reduced to rubble. This event was not noticed by the Western press at the time, unlike the attack on the Deputy Prime Minister, Turajlic, which occurred in Sarajevo almost simultaneously, where the representatives of the international media had assembled. At the end of January the Muslims of Srebrenica almost overran another Serbian village, Skelani. The area which the ABiH (the military forces of the Bosnian Muslims) held around Srebrenica, was now the largest it would become. After the Muslims of Srebrenica succeeded in establishing access to the Muslim area of Zepa, which was situated more to the south, in January they also managed to forge a line of communication with the enclave of Cerska to the west of Srebrenica. At that point in time the Muslim area of Eastern Bosnia was the largest it would ever be: approximately 900 square kilometres. The ABiH had advanced from various sides to within three kilometres of Bratunac.

The Serbian offensive in Eastern Bosnia and difficulties providing humanitarian aid

In the meantime, in October 1992 the VRS had launched an offensive against the Muslim enclave, which stretched from Cerska to Zepa and beyond at the time. This enclave and the one around Tuzla only allowed for a narrow opening near Zvornik for a line of communication between the Bosnian-Serb military forces and Serbia on the other side of the Drina. At the time units of the Yugoslavian army, the VJ, had joined the Serbian paramilitary forces in Bajina Basta on the Serbian side of the Drina. Targets within the area of Srebrenica were fired on from the slopes of the Tara mountains in Serbia.⁴⁴⁶⁰ The winter delayed the VRS offensive but in January it surged ahead with a massive attack on Konjevic Polje to the north of Srebrenica. This constituted part of the Bosnian-Serb plan to ensure that Eastern Bosnia would not become a Muslim area as provided for in the Vance-Owen plan. The Bosnian Serbs appeared to be bent on creating a situation which was to their advantage, and on presenting the international community with a *fait accompli*.⁴⁴⁶¹

Following heavy artillery bombardments the starving population in the Muslim enclaves were encouraged to evacuate to Tuzla through various corridors. As a result places such as Cerska, Konjevic Polje and Skelani fell to the Bosnian Serbs at the beginning of February. Thousands of Muslims did indeed avail themselves of this opportunity to make good their escape. At the same time Karadzic called for referendums to be held in the area along the Bosnian-Serb border marked by the Drina River to examine whether they wished to be part of the Muslim area or that of the Serbs.⁴⁴⁶² Other residents

⁴⁴⁵⁹ Amongst other things, interview P. Koring, 05/07/00.

⁴⁴⁶⁰ Cekic, *Aggression*, pp. 276-77.

⁴⁴⁶¹ 'Bosniërs wijzigen in de Drina-vallei de kaart van Vance en Owen' (Bosnians change the map of Vance and Owen in the Drina valley), *de Volkskrant*, 06/02/93; F. Westerman, 'Serviërs proberen door zuiveringen plan te wijzigen' (Serbs try to change plan through ethnic cleansing), *de Volkskrant*, 10/02/93.

⁴⁴⁶² "'Etnische zuiveringen' Bosnië op andere leest" (Ethnic cleansing? Bosnia on different lines), *Trouw*, 08/02/93.

of the Muslim villages that had been captured, fled to Srebrenica, with the result that the number of inhabitants of that town rose drastically.

Humanitarian conditions in Eastern Bosnia were appalling. Every day dozens of people perished from starvation and cold in Cerska, Gorazde, Srebrenica and Zepa. According to the Bosnian ambassador to the UN, signs of cannibalism had even been observed, although the UNHCR refuted this allegation as an example of 'the growing hysteria'.⁴⁴⁶³

In the meantime, Ogata, the High Commissioner for Refugees, had repeatedly sought attention for the extremely difficult circumstances in which aid had to be provided. On 15 January she appealed to Boutros-Ghali in the form of a letter in which she pointed out that the Bosnian-Serb authorities were denying access to the convoys, while the Bosnian government was adopting an increasingly critical attitude towards aid, because they viewed it as an obstacle to military intervention.⁴⁴⁶⁴ At the end of January the UNHCR had to halt all convoys to Sarajevo from the Dalmatian coast, because the Bosnian-Croat forces were stopping trucks loaded with aid supplies for the Muslims in Central Bosnia. At the end of January Ogata was given an undertaking by Cosic, Milosevic, Tudjman, Izetbegovic, Karadzic and Boban that they would do all in their power to allow the aid convoys through.⁴⁴⁶⁵ This had hardly any effect. Despite daily efforts to reach the eastern enclaves, no aid convoy had succeeded in reaching Gorazde since 19 January. In Zepa this had not happened since 17 January and the inhabitants of Srebrenica had not seen a convoy since 10 December 1992.⁴⁴⁶⁶

In mid-February the authorities in Sarajevo and Tuzla prohibited the distribution of aid supplies in these two cities 'in solidarity' as long as the Bosnian Serbs prevented the trucks carrying aid supplies from getting through to Cerska and Gorazde in Eastern Bosnia.⁴⁴⁶⁷ The action taken in Sarajevo was said to be a concession to a delegation from Srebrenica, who had demanded that the authorities in Sarajevo should draw the world's attention to the suffering in Srebrenica by killing a Serb in Sarajevo for every death in Srebrenica. The Bosnian government did not wish to go as far as that. It viewed the denial of food to its own population as a 'second-best' solution.⁴⁴⁶⁸

In the meantime the UN threatened to halt aid to the Bosnian Serbs if they failed to allow convoys through to the eastern enclaves. However, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republika Srpska, Todor Dutina, stated that the Serbs could not permit Eastern Bosnia to belong to the Muslims.⁴⁴⁶⁹ The Serbian press agency, Tanjug, was of the opinion that the aid went to the Muslim fighters in the enclaves instead of the residents. It suggested that it was difficult to accept that the survivors of Muslim 'atrocities' should permit 'their future murderers' to be fed.⁴⁴⁷⁰

The refusal to allow the food convoys through was reason enough for Ogata to halt all aid to the Muslims on 17 February. In addition, she did not want convoys to wait for permission at

⁴⁴⁶³ 'Getergde VN staken hulp voor heel Bosnië' (Annoyed UN suspends aid to all of Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 18/02/93; 'VN zet hulp aan Bosnië toch voort' (UN nevertheless resumes aid to Bosnia), *de Telegraaf*, 18/02/93.

⁴⁴⁶⁴ ABZ, DIO/2004/00075. Ogata to Boutros-Ghali, 15/01/93.

⁴⁴⁶⁵ ABZ, DIO/2004/00075. Ogata to Boutros-Ghali, 02/02/93.

⁴⁴⁶⁶ See for example ABZ, DIO/2004/00075. UNHCR Updates on Ex-Yugoslavia, 2/02/93 and 12/02/93.

⁴⁴⁶⁷ MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 15/93, 16/02/93; 'Pakhuizen overvol in Sarajevo' (Warehouses overflowing in Sarajevo), *Trouw*, 13/02/93; 'Serviërs houden hulp Oost-Bosnië tegen' (Serbians obstruct aid to Eastern Bosnia), *Trouw*, 15/02/93; 'Laatste bakkerij Sarajevo moet zijn deuren sluiten' (Last bakery in Sarajevo forced to close), *Trouw*, 16/02/93; 'Bewoners Sarajevo achter boycot VN-hulp' (Sarajevo residents back UN aid boycott), *Trouw*, 17/02/93; 'Nieuw dieptepunt Bosnië: spelletje met voedselhulp' (New deterioration in Bosnia: Food aid games), *Trouw*, 19/02/93; 'Serviërs blijven voedselhulp voor moslims tegenhouden' (Serbians continue to obstruct food aid for Muslims), *de Telegraaf*, 15/02/93; 'VN woedend over cynisch spel met hulpgoederen voor Bosnië', (UN angry about cynical games with aid for Bosnia) *de Telegraaf*, 17/02/93; 'Moslims in de aanval in Sarajevo' (Muslims on the attack in Sarajevo), *de Volkskrant*, 12/02/93; 'Hulpkonvooi voor Moslims opnieuw tegengehouden' (Aid convoy for Muslims obstructed again), *de Volkskrant*, 16/02/93.

⁴⁴⁶⁸ Hollingworth, *Christmas*, p. 168; Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 179.

⁴⁴⁶⁹ 'Serviërs willen oosten van Bosnië niet opgeven' (Serbians do not wish to abandon Eastern Bosnia), *ANP*, 15/02/93, 15:06; 'Moslim-enclave blijft van hulp verstoken' (Muslim enclave continues to be denied aid), *de Telegraaf*, 16/02/93.

⁴⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

roadblocks for days on end. The constant political obstacles to the provision of humanitarian aid were a thorn in her flesh. Two stranded UNHCR convoys that had been denied access to Cerska and Gorazde, returned. A convoy that was ready to travel to Zepa, did not leave.⁴⁴⁷¹

By taking this action Ogata astounded friend and foe alike. In a response to Ogata's decision, Morillon, who showed himself to be increasingly annoyed by the powerlessness of the peacekeeping troops, announced that UNPROFOR would then send its own convoy to the Muslims in Gorazde. He immediately left for Rogatica to negotiate with the Bosnian Serbs in order to secure the removal of the roadblocks en route to the Eastern Bosnian enclave.⁴⁴⁷² However, UN headquarters in New York wanted him to remain detached⁴⁴⁷³ and Morillon was overruled by Wahlgren.⁴⁴⁷⁴ The Security Council was piqued because it felt that the decision which Ogata had taken, fell within the council's prerogative and not that of the UNHCR.⁴⁴⁷⁵ Biegman, the Netherlands' Permanent Representative at the UN, termed it 'somewhat absurd' that the hunger strike in Sarajevo referred to in Ogata's statement was treated the same as the Serbs' months-long refusal to allow food through to Eastern Bosnia, a policy which amounted to enforced starvation in the areas that the Serbs did not yet hold: "It is an illustration of the ineradicable even-handedness that is adopted towards the aggressors and the victims, as well as towards the Croats and other profiteers in this conflict."⁴⁴⁷⁶ Izetbegovic responded to Ogata's decision to halt aid by asking the American government to airlift supplies to the Muslim towns that were surrounded.⁴⁴⁷⁷ In addition, he decided to boycott the peace negotiations in New York for as long as Bosnia did not receive any supplies.⁴⁴⁷⁸

Boutros-Ghali found it necessary to overturn Ogata's decision publicly.⁴⁴⁷⁹ On 21 February Ogata announced that aid convoys would be resumed after she had received guarantees from all three warring factions in Bosnia that they would no longer obstruct them.⁴⁴⁸⁰

The attitude adopted by the authorities in Sarajevo and the decision subsequently taken by Ogata had had an impact in the meantime.⁴⁴⁸¹ On 21 February a convoy was allowed into Zepa for the second time since the outbreak of war in Bosnia.⁴⁴⁸² The American government also decided to airlift supplies to the eastern enclaves, an operation which commenced on 28 February. The European Community felt overwhelmed by the rapid action taken by the Americans and initially failed to make any actual response. It was only a month later that French aircraft also began to participate in the food drops.

In its main editorial comment the Dutch morning newspaper, *Trouw*, complained that the Western European countries, 'are not moving a finger, that is to say they are not making any aircraft

⁴⁴⁷¹ ABZ, DIO/2004/00075. UNHCR Update on ex-Yugoslavia, 17/02/93; Boddens Hosang 176 to Kooijmans, 17/02/93; Hollingworth, *Christmas*, pp.166-168.

⁴⁴⁷² 'Flüchtlingskommissariat zieht Konvois Anet Bleich, Kontroverse in der UNO über Bosnien', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 19/02/93; John F. Burns, 'Bosnia Cheering Decision by U.N. to Resume Aid', *The New York Times*, 20/02/93.

⁴⁴⁷³ Hollingworth, *Christmas*, p. 166.

⁴⁴⁷⁴ Minear et al, *Action*, p. 88.

⁴⁴⁷⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Biegman 148 to Kooijmans, 17/02/93.

⁴⁴⁷⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Biegman 148 to Kooijmans, 17/02/93.

⁴⁴⁷⁷ 'Voor VN-helpers in Bosnië is grote wachten begonnen' (Long wait has started for UN helpers in Bosnia), *de Telegraaf*, 19/02/93; 'VS gekant tegen opschorten hulp' (US opposes suspension of aid), *Trouw*, 19/02/93.

⁴⁴⁷⁸ 'VN-chef gelast hervatting hulpoperaties in Bosnië' (UN chief orders resumption of aid operations in Bosnia), *de Telegraaf*, 20/02/93.

⁴⁴⁷⁹ 'VN-chef gelast hervatting hulpoperaties in Bosnië', *de Telegraaf*, 20/02/93; 'VN-chef haalt uit naar Japanse.

Hulpoperaties voor ex-Joegoslavië moeten worden hervat' (UN chief lashes out at Japanese woman: Aid operations for the former Yugoslavia must be resumed), *Trouw*, 20/02/93; Susan Chira, 'Japanese Diplomat Puts Refugees Before Politics', *The New York Times*, 07/04/93.

⁴⁴⁸⁰ ABZ, DIO/2004/00075. UNHCR Update on ex-Yugoslavia, 21/02/93.

⁴⁴⁸¹ Ejub Ganic: "It was the only way we could show solidarity. Moreover, the world needed to be woken up again." That happened he concluded with satisfaction...., Nicole Lucas, 'Bosnische vice-president: "Kroaten hebben ons nodig"', *Trouw*, 23/02/93.

⁴⁴⁸² The previous convoy had reached the town in mid-January 1993.

available to participate in this operation'.⁴⁴⁸³ The VVD (Liberals) member, Weisglas, felt it was a 'shameful situation' for the Americans to pull the chestnuts from the fire in Europe. For this reason, his parliamentary party – like that of the PvdA and the CDA – supported the proposal presented by Ministers Kooijmans and Ter Beek to support the American food drops with F-16s, although the members of parliament would have preferred to see the convoys on the ground breach the barricades with firepower.⁴⁴⁸⁴ A spokesman for the Defence Department stated that it would be possible to deploy the F-16s almost immediately: 'If the Americans say that they wish to commence the food drops in several days' time, we will be able to get involved straightaway'.⁴⁴⁸⁵ Washington immediately declined the offer.⁴⁴⁸⁶ Following a discussion with Boutros-Ghali, Clinton made it clear that this was to be solely a humanitarian operation and that the transport planes would not be escorted by fighter aircraft. The Bosnian-Serb leaders had undertaken not to attack these planes.⁴⁴⁸⁷

This rejection was painful for the Dutch government, which had already been turned down on two previous occasions when it had offered F-16s (at the time of the Gulf War and after the announcement of the flight ban). After all, the drops, only 30% of which reached their target,⁴⁴⁸⁸ were mainly intended to serve a symbolic purpose: they were to break the blockade of ground transport imposed by the Bosnian Serbs.⁴⁴⁸⁹

On 2 March, several days after the food drops had commenced, the VRS captured one of the areas for which they were intended, the enclave of Cerska, following a siege of ten months. According to some commentators, the Serbian triumph was due to the fact that the Muslim troops had deserted their posts to go in search of the food parcels that had been dropped.⁴⁴⁹⁰ After the fall of Konjevic Polje and Cerska at the beginning of March 1993, Srebrenica was virtually cut off from the outside world. As a result of ethnic cleansing in 1992 and the Bosnian-Serb offensive conducted from the autumn of that year, Muslims from Zvornik, Bijeljina, Visegrad, Bratunac, Vlasenica, Konjevic Polje, Cerska and numerous other nearby settlements fled to Srebrenica and Potocari, which boosted their original population by several tens of thousand. Consequently, there was a severe shortage of food while sanitary conditions deteriorated rapidly. The British doctor, Simon Mardel, an aid worker with the World Health Organization (WHO), who managed to reach Srebrenica on 6 March, reported that at least two thousand of the people there were sick or wounded. The last convoy to reach the enclave had arrived on 10 December. Every day forty people were said to be dying and about nine hundred children were reported to be living on the streets with their parents. According to Mardel, the situation could easily withstand comparison with countries such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Liberia. He saw families who had not eaten for an entire week. 'Children lay without stirring. Parents were indifferent.'⁴⁴⁹¹ He felt

⁴⁴⁸³ 'Absurde beelden' (Absurd images), *Trouw*, 02/03/93.

⁴⁴⁸⁴ De Kok and Valk on Radio 1, NCRV, *Hier en Nu* (Here and Now), 23/02/93, 1.10 pm; 'Kamer positief over aanbod Kooijmans en Ter Beek. Onze F16's naar Bosnië als steun voedseldroppings' (Parliament positive about the Kooijmans and Ter Beek offer: Send our F-16s to Bosnia to support food drops), *de Telegraaf*, ong. 23-25/02/93.

⁴⁴⁸⁵ 'Verdeelde reacties op plan VS voor droppen voedsel boven Bosnië' (Mixed response to US plan to drop food over Bosnia), *Trouw*, 24/02/93. See also 'Nederland wil voedseldroppings met F-16's steunen' (The Netherlands wishes to support food drops with F-16s), *ANP* 23/02/93, 4:08 pm.

⁴⁴⁸⁶ 'Kans op inzet Nederlandse F-16's in Bosnië uiterst klein' (Extremely small chance of Dutch F-16s being deployed in Bosnia), *ANP*, 24/02/93, 5:55 pm; 'Geen bijdrage NAVO-partners aan voedseldroppings VS' (No contribution from NATO allies to US food drops), *ANP*, 26/02/93, 3.47 pm.

⁴⁴⁸⁷ 'Voedseldroppen boven Bosnië wordt riskant voor vliegtuigen' (Food drops over Bosnia will be risky for aircraft), *Trouw*, 25/02/93; Theo Koelé, 'Vlag met Navo-ster wappert nog lang niet boven Bosnië', *Trouw*, 26/02/93.

⁴⁴⁸⁸ 'Moslims mogen uit Cerska. Karadzic neemt verholen driegement over terrorisme terug' (Muslims may leave Cerska: Karadzic retracts disguised threat of terrorism), *Trouw*, 05/03/93.

⁴⁴⁸⁹ American Defence Secretary, Les Aspen, quoted in 'Serviërs veroveren Cerska en eisen ontwapening moslims' (Serbs capture Cerska and demand that Muslims be disarmed), *de Telegraaf*, 03/03/93.

⁴⁴⁹⁰ 'Moslims slaan weer massaal op de vlucht' (Muslims flee again *en masse*), *De Telegraaf*, 04/03/93.

⁴⁴⁹¹ 'Wanhopige Moslims tot alles bereid om Srebrenica te verlaten' (Desperate Muslims prepared to do anything to leave Srebrenica), *ANP*, 31/03/93, 2.10 pm; 'VN-commandant wekt woede van Bosniërs' (UN commander raises Bosnian ire), *de Telegraaf*, 08/03/93; "'Geen massamoorden in Cerska.' Bosniërs woedend over snelle conclusie VN-commandant' ('No

the situation in Srebrenica was worse than what he had seen during civil wars in other parts of the world. According to him, some people even resorted to eating hay in order to stay alive.⁴⁴⁹² A special aid convoy that sought to evacuate a hundred heavily wounded people from Srebrenica, were, however, refused access to the enclave on 9 March.⁴⁴⁹³

In the meantime the VRS attacked Srebrenica. In doing so, the Bosnian-Serb army received support from the border town of Bajina Basta in Serbia. There eye witnesses saw the movement of large numbers of tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery, missiles, aircraft and helicopters, and they reported the involvement of the Titove Uzice and Valjevo Corps, both from Serbia. The operation was headed by General Ojdanic, the commander of the Uzice Corps.⁴⁴⁹⁴ At the same time Seselj's Cetniks led by Branislav Vukic advanced on Srebrenica from Skelani with the support of the MUP (Serbian Ministry of the Interior) official, 'Badza' Stojicic. Early in 1992 they had undergone training at the military base of Bubanj Potok near Belgrade and were later transferred to a new base at Bajina Basta, just on the Serbian side of the Drina close to Bratunac and Srebrenica. There they received further training from Frank ('Frenki') Simatovic from the Serbian Ministry of the Interior, who was stationed there with his own special troops. The Cetniks from Seselj were equipped with the best weapons that they had had until now: mortars, machine guns and sniper rifles fitted with night vision devices, after which Simatovic led them in strikes against the Muslims of Srebrenica. Arkan's Tigers were also active in this area.⁴⁴⁹⁵ An attempt made by the Bosnian government to do something about the precarious position of the Muslim fighters around Srebrenica failed when a convoy carrying thousands of Milan anti-tank missiles, which had been procured in Malaysia, was confiscated by Croat troops as part of the struggle that had broken out between Croats and Muslims in Central Bosnia.⁴⁴⁹⁶

On 11 March Owen and Vance held a five-hour meeting with Milosevic in Paris under the auspices of Mitterrand and Dumas. It was made clear to Milosevic that acceptance of the Vance-Owen plan could ensure that Serbia would regain a worthy place within the European community of states. On the other hand, its rejection would result in far-reaching sanctions and isolation. It became clear to his discussion partners that Milosevic was more impressed by economic than political arguments, and was easier to move in relation to Krajina than Bosnia-Herzegovina. Nevertheless, he finally promised that he would ask Karadzic, Mladic and Koljevic to go to New York for discussions on 14 March.⁴⁴⁹⁷ However, once he had returned from Paris, Milosevic noted that Karadzic had major objections to Mladic participating in the discussions in New York.⁴⁴⁹⁸ Mladic himself would have liked to go to New York, because he personally wanted to see what happened around the negotiating table to what he had achieved by military means. When Karadzic refused to take Mladic with him, the latter decided – according to his own account – to torpedo the negotiations with a fierce attack on Srebrenica.⁴⁴⁹⁹

mass murder in Cerska': Bosnians furious about UN commander's rapid conclusion), *Trouw*, 08/03/93; Holligworth, *Christmas*, pp. 174 and 178-83.

⁴⁴⁹² 'Evacuatie per helikopter uit Srebrenica' (Helicopter evacuation from Srebrenica), *De Telegraaf*, 15/03/93.

⁴⁴⁹³ 'Cosic Een multinationaal Bosnië zal kansloos zijn' (Cosic: A multinational Bosnia will not have a chance), *De Telegraaf*, 10/03/93.

⁴⁴⁹⁴ Comment by Senad Avdic, editor of *Slobodna Bosna*, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 08/03/93; Ekrem Abdic in a report from Tuzla for Croat radio, *ibid*, 11/03/93; interview N. Mujkanovic, 20/05/1999; Williams and Cigar, *War Crimes*, VB.1; Cekic, *Aggression*, pp. 277-78.

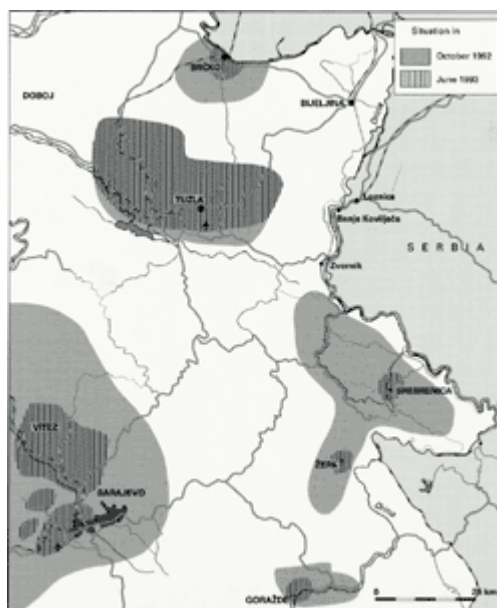
⁴⁴⁹⁵ Jonathan S. Landay, 'Belgrade Regime Tied to Alleged War Crimes', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 26/11/93; Julian Borger, 'Inside Story: The President's Secret Henchmen', *The Guardian* (London), 03/02/97; Williams & Cigar, *War Crimes*, III.B.2.

⁴⁴⁹⁶ John Pomfret and David B. Ottaway, 'U.S. Allies Fed Pipeline of Covert Arms to Bosnia', *The Washington Post*, 12/05/1996.

⁴⁴⁹⁷ Owen CD-ROM, note by Lord Owen's private secretary on co-chairmen's meeting with President Milosevic, Paris, 11/03/93; *ibid*, Lord Owen's assessment of the meeting in Paris on 11/03/93 with President Mitterrand and President Milosevic for the British Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, z.d.; ABZ, DPV/ARA/02050. COREU message from the Danish Presidency of the EC, 12/03/93, cpe/pres/cop 570.

⁴⁴⁹⁸ Owen CD-ROM, Lord Owen's note of co-chairmen's meeting with P5 Ambassadors, New York, 16/03/93.

⁴⁴⁹⁹ Bulatovic, *Mladic*, p. 170.



Finally, an instant hero

After the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in New York asked Morillon for information about the gravity of the situation in Srebrenica, the French general decided to investigate the situation personally.⁴⁵⁰⁰ He took UNHCR personnel along with him to survey the refugee situation, MSF (Médecins sans Frontières) staff to inspect the hospitals, two American soldiers to visit the places where food was dropped, five Canadian soldiers, two of his closest aides, and four UNMO (United Nations Military Observer) officials to inspect the security situation.⁴⁵⁰¹

Various stories later did the rounds as to Morillon's motives for visiting Srebrenica. Anonymous UN officials alleged that Morillon had decided to go to Srebrenica to get back at Ogata, who had previously suspended aid operations to Eastern and Central Bosnia. Morillon himself denied this.⁴⁵⁰² Furthermore, in the briefing given by Ogata to the Security Council on 11 March, one does not get the impression that there was any rivalry between UNHCR and UNPROFOR in relation to this concrete issue. There Ogata declared that Karadzic had promised her several times in the preceding weeks to grant UNHCR access to Konjevic Polje and Srebrenica in order to evacuate the wounded and other vulnerable categories of people from there. However, whenever negotiations occurred in the field new conditions were imposed which were unacceptable to UNHCR, such as the exchange of ethnic groups. In addition, Ogata stated that UNPROFOR could make some of UNHCR's tasks easier, especially in Eastern Bosnia.⁴⁵⁰³

Soon after his arrival in Bosnia in October 1992, Morillon had interpreted his duties to include the creation of conditions for the implementation of a peace plan in addition to providing support for humanitarian aid. He believed that in principle it would be necessary to end the siege of various areas in order to achieve this, as well as to restore the free movement of people and goods. However, according to Morillon, the most important reason for his mission was to counter any new ethnic cleansing, because this would raise obstacles for negotiations about the Vance-Owen plan.⁴⁵⁰⁴ For some time now

⁴⁵⁰⁰ Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

⁴⁵⁰¹ Hollingworth, *Christmas*, p. 188.

⁴⁵⁰² Morillon, *Credo*, p. 132; Ed Vulliamy, 'Only passivity is dishonourable', *The Guardian*, 12/01/96.

⁴⁵⁰³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Statement by Ogata to the Security Council, 11/03/93, accompanying PV New York to DPV/PZ et al, 12/03/93, fax no. 2767.

⁴⁵⁰⁴ Morillon, *Credo*, p. 132; Ed Vulliamy, 'Only passivity is dishonourable', *The Guardian*, 12/01/96; Janine di Giovanni, 'Morillon takes flak in his finest hour', *The Times*, 04/04/93; 'Morillon mag in Bosnië blijven' (Morillon is allowed to stay in Bosnia), *ANP*, 18/04/93, 9.52 pm; Morillon, *Credo*, pp. 138-40; idem, *Paroles*, p. 75.

he had been annoyed by the objections which the Bosnian Serbs raised against the provision of humanitarian supplies to Srebrenica and Zepa. He felt that this discredited UNHCR and UNPROFOR in the eyes of the Bosnian government.⁴⁵⁰⁵ Based on the map that was part of the Vance-Owen plan, the Eastern enclaves were situated in a Muslim province. If the VRS were to succeed in overrunning Srebrenica and the two other enclaves of Zepa and Gorazde, there would be a danger that there would no longer be any prospect of implementing the Vance-Owen plan. Moreover, the plan was based on the principle that everyone should be able to live where he would like to. However, Mladic seemed intent on transforming the west bank of the Drina into a homogenous Serbian territory.

On 11 March Morillon arrived in Srebrenica with his small band following difficult negotiations with the Serbian commanders in Zvornik to allow himself and an aid convoy through.⁴⁵⁰⁶ Morillon was only able to continue travelling to Bratunac and Srebrenica after calling on assistance from the Yugoslavian president, Cosic.⁴⁵⁰⁷ Once Morillon had familiarised himself with the situation in Srebrenica and wanted to leave, a crowd of Muslims, mainly women, prevented him from doing so. They demanded protection against the Serbian offensive and the arrival of humanitarian aid.⁴⁵⁰⁸ This abduction was almost a repeat of what had occurred a few days earlier in Konjevic Polje, when several British UN soldiers had been held for a day by angry Muslims because, after consulting the Serbs, they had only been prepared to evacuate women and children and not also the wounded men. According to some sources, the abduction had been called for by Murat Efendic, a former mayor of Srebrenica, who now lived in Sarajevo and maintained radio contact with his former place of residence.⁴⁵⁰⁹ Kumar points to Ejub Ganic as the person who issued the instructions but incidentally does not cite a source for this.⁴⁵¹⁰ According to yet another source, the decision was taken by Oric and the Opstina.⁴⁵¹¹ Morillon himself believes that Naser Oric had been ordered by Sarajevo to hold him. However, he does not mention the identity of the person in Sarajevo who gave the command.⁴⁵¹²

It is a fact that the government in Sarajevo and the military authorities in Tuzla found it difficult to accept that, by agreeing to the evacuation of Muslims from the eastern areas, the Bosnian Serbs would still manage to perpetrate ethnic cleansing. When the Serbian authorities had opened a so-called 'one-way humanitarian corridor' from Cerska at the beginning of February, thousands of people used it to flee to Tuzla. The place fell shortly afterwards. Apparently, the morale of the fighters who remained behind, weakened as soon as the women and children had left.

The Bosnian government was undoubtedly aware that the evacuation of Muslims who were in danger, had since become a deliberate policy on the part of the UNHCR. Following the fall of Cerska, on 2 March Ogata wrote to Boutros-Ghali stating that it was not enough to provide on-site aid to the victims of ethnic cleansing. In view of the fact that Srebrenica and villages around Cerska were also on the point of falling, a concerted effort was required to evacuate people to the area around Tuzla, 'which would appear to be the only remaining "Safe Area" for the Bosnian Muslim people in the region',

⁴⁵⁰⁵ Morillon, *Croire*, pp. 132-133.

⁴⁵⁰⁶ For a report of the discussions held on 10 March see the annex to the interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

⁴⁵⁰⁷ UN Archives, no. 87305, DFC, 3300 – Srebrenica, vol. 2, Mar 93, R. Denyft, 'Special report on situation in Srebrenica area', z.d., appendix to, Wahlgren to Annan, 15/03/93, UNPROFOR-Z-327.

⁴⁵⁰⁸ There are many reports and accounts of Morillon's abduction. See for example Morillon, *Croire*, pp. 172-73; CRST. Col. P. Leentjes (BH Comd Main Kiseljak to LN Der Zagreb, 12/03/93, 22200, Special sitrep Srebrenica 122200A Mar 93; UMYNY, DPKO, Coded Cables UNPROFOR, Wahlgren to Annan, 13/03/93, UNPROFOR Z-321, Special report on Gen Morillon's situation in Srebrenica; ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part V-VI, /05/1992 - /04/93, MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 20/93, 17/03/93; Morillon, *Credo*, pp. 112-13; McCarthy, *Fall*, p.33 and p. 111; Honig and Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 128-31; Henk Steenhuis, 'Philippe Morillon', *HP/De Tijd*, 21/05/93, p. 24; Hren (ed.), *Srebrenica*, p. 254; Hollingworth, *Christmas*, pp. 195-98.

⁴⁵⁰⁹ Hollingworth, *Christmas*, p. 214.

⁴⁵¹⁰ Kumar, *Divide*, p. 62.

⁴⁵¹¹ Interview N. Mujkanovic, 20/05/99.

⁴⁵¹² Morillon, *Paroles*, p. 75; Ed Vullima, 'Only passivity is dishonourable', *The Guardian*, 12/01/96.

according to Ogata.⁴⁵¹³ The Bosnian authorities should therefore take action to prevent Srebrenica from suffering the same fate as Cerska.

Being the strategist he was, Morillon followed up an unsuccessful attempt to escape at night⁴⁵¹⁴ by deciding to make a virtue of necessity. He let it be known that he was staying in the town of his own volition in order to boost the inhabitants' morale and to secure the arrival of the aid convoy. He proclaimed Srebrenica to be a protected UN area and demanded that the Bosnian-Serb army allow the wounded to be evacuated.⁴⁵¹⁵ This action on the part of Morillon elicited praise in France and beyond. The media believed that it had finally discovered a white dove in a conflict teeming with scoundrels.⁴⁵¹⁶ It was briefly forgotten that heroism could not be reconciled with the appeasement implicit in the UNPROFOR operation. 'Now, at last, we know what is right and what is wrong,' a relieved Tony Barber wrote in *The Independent*.⁴⁵¹⁷ Morillon's act was probably no more than an attempt on his part to secure his own release. In this connection, he probably considered that the political damage caused by his statement could not be great, because the plan envisaged by Owen and Vance provided for Srebrenica to be part of a Muslim-dominated province.

Morillon reached an agreement with the combatants around Srebrenica for the evacuation of Muslims from Srebrenica to Tuzla in exchange for the similar treatment of Serbs in the Muslim-controlled town. In addition, he decided to remain in Srebrenica until the first aid convoy arrived, which could then be used to start the evacuation.

In the meantime neither the food drops nor Morillon's stay led to a reduction of Serbian military pressure on Srebrenica. On the contrary. On 18 March the VRS troops had advanced to five kilometres from the town and Serbia still prevented a convoy from reaching Srebrenica. On 18 March Izetbegovic announced in New York that he would not be participating in any peace talks as long as the Bosnian-Serb offensive continued against Srebrenica.

In these circumstances Ejub Ganic and Naser Oric presented Morillon with a proposal to make Srebrenica an open city protected by UNPROFOR. Morillon announced that he supported this. In this case the town would need to be demilitarized.⁴⁵¹⁸

On 19 March a convoy carrying 175 tonnes of aid and medicine managed to reach Srebrenica with Morillon at its head. Again the media sang General Morillon's praises.⁴⁵¹⁹ The Bosnian Muslims were now prepared to forgive him for what they had previously accused him of. 'Thank God for General Morillon,' said the Bosnian ambassador to the UN, Sacirbey. 'We have had many differences with him. But it seems that one man with a blue helmet has more commitment and guts than the entire

⁴⁵¹³ ABZ, PV New York, *Joegoslavië/ algemeen*, September 1991 – December 1995. Ogata to Boutros-Ghali, 02/03/93, accompanying PV New York to DPV/PZ and DEU/OE, 03/03/93, fax no. 2571.

⁴⁵¹⁴ Morillon, *Croire*, pp. 173-74; interview N. Mujkanovic on 20/05/1999 and Lt. Colonel Burt Horn on 17/11/99.

⁴⁵¹⁵ Morillon, *Croire*, pp. 174-75; Hollingworth, *Christmas*, p. 198.

⁴⁵¹⁶ 'Steun Bosnië voor vredesplan. Serviërs willen hervatting vredesonderhandelingen uitstellen' (Support for Bosnian peace plan: Serbs want to postpone peace talks), *Trouw*, 15/03/93; 'VN-generaal in Bosnië is plots "een man met een missie" geworden' (UN general in Bosnia has suddenly become 'a man with a mission'), *Trouw*, 16/03/93; 'Evacuatie per helikopter uit Srebrenica', *De Telegraaf*, 15/03/93; 'VN-commandant beschermt in zijn eentje moslim-enclave' (UN commander protects Muslim enclave on his own), *De Telegraaf*, 16/03/93; 'Morillon, van potentate tot held' (Morillon: from potentate to hero), *Het Parool*, 16/03/93. See also the superlatives which the French press showered on Morillon as quoted in H. Steenhuis, 'Philippe Morillon', *HP/De Tijd*, 21/05/93, p. 24; Alan Riding, 'France Finds a Hero in Balkan Town', *The New York Times*, 20/03/93.

⁴⁵¹⁷ T. Barber, 'General Philippe Morillon – Bosnia, I am with you', *The Independent*, 21/03/93.

⁴⁵¹⁸ Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 133; UNPROFOR, Box 195, 2-5-2, Sitreps BH Command, Headquarters BH Command Kiseljak to UNPROFOR Headquarters in Zagreb, 18/03/93, 0240, Sirep for period 170001A to 172359A Mar 93; 'Morillon is de held van Srebrenica' (Morillon is the hero of Srebrenica), *De Telegraaf*, 20/03/93; 'Morillon zegeviert. VN-generaal brengt hongerend Srebrenica eten' (Morillon victorious: UN general takes food to starving Srebrenica), *Trouw*, 20/03/93.

⁴⁵¹⁹ 'Konvooi hulpgoederen bereikt Srebrenica' (Aid convoy reaches Srebrenica) and 'Morillon is de held van Srebrenica' (Morillon is the hero of Srebrenica), *De Telegraaf*, 20/03/93. See also the interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01; Tony Barber, 'General Philippe Morillon – Bosnia, I am with you', *The Independent*, 21/03/93.

United Nations.⁴⁵²⁰ Despite the euphoria UN observers wondered whether help had not arrived too late, because the town's fall appeared to be imminent.

A maligned hero

The outside world was not allowed to know that Morillon's heroic deed was occasioned by abduction. To many in the UN bureaucracy Morillon's actions therefore appeared to be more evidence of his intractability. Although Morillon had maintained radio contact with Kiseljak and through the headquarters there with Zagreb, Paris and New York while he was in Srebrenica,⁴⁵²¹ he had not in any way been authorised to proclaim the town a Safe Area.⁴⁵²² 'Personne d'autre que moi ne croyait à mes chances de succès,' he later wrote about his own actions following his abduction.⁴⁵²³ He also believed that he had saved the UN's honour 'en désobéissant à Srebrenica'.⁴⁵²⁴ If Morillon was not guilty of insubordination, at the very least he had exceeded his mandate.⁴⁵²⁵ At the beginning of 1996 he stated in a NOVA broadcast, 'It was my decision, because I was the only one in a position to take it. I was the only one who was familiar with the theatre, the actors, the situation, and in essence it was a logical part of my responsibilities as a commander in the field.'⁴⁵²⁶

Not everyone in the international community appreciated Morillon's initiative. Anonymous UN officials vented criticism and branded him as an unguided missile.⁴⁵²⁷ 'We would be able to contain our grief if he were to leave,' one of them remarked scornfully.⁴⁵²⁸ Another asserted that the religiously inclined general appeared to consult no one other than God before he undertook anything.⁴⁵²⁹ Boutros-Ghali is said to have personally reprimanded the general for 'exceeding his mandate'.⁴⁵³⁰ Morillon's act of proclaiming Srebrenica a 'safe area' had undermined the UNHCR's efforts to evacuate its inhabitants and the refugees who were there.⁴⁵³¹

Morillon's fellow officers in France were sharply divided about his actions. Some allowed him his sudden fame in the media, while others urged that he be replaced. The chiefs of staff in the military headquarters in Paris also held it against Morillon that he had failed to consult them. Their colleague's heroism appeared to irritate them and by acting as he did, he was said to have unintentionally exposed the shortcomings of the UN's operations. The French army leadership were therefore reported to have called for his replacement and to have even appointed one in the person of General Michel Zeisser, the commander of France's First Army in Metz.⁴⁵³² On 13 April the new French Minister of Defence, Léotard, announced that Morillon would be replaced at the end of April. According to Léotard, who had visited Morillon in Sarajevo several days before, this step should not be regarded as a punishment, yet the French minister also failed to provide a clear explanation for this sudden decision.⁴⁵³³ A day later, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alain Juppé, and the spokesperson of President

⁴⁵²⁰ T. Barber, 'General Philippe Morillon – Bosnia, I am with you', *The Independent*, 21/03/93.

⁴⁵²¹ Morillon, *Croire*, p. 186.

⁴⁵²² Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00; N. Mujkanovic, 20/05/99; M. Toholj, 14/12/99; L. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

⁴⁵²³ Morillon, *Credo*, p. 113. See also *ibid*, p. 143.

⁴⁵²⁴ Morillon, *Paroles*, p. 45.

⁴⁵²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 48.

⁴⁵²⁶ NPS, *NOVA*, 16/01/96.

⁴⁵²⁷ Janine di Giovanni, 'Morillon takes flak in his finest hour', *Sunday Times*, 04/04/93; Stoltenberg & Eide, *Dagene*, pp. 82-83.

⁴⁵²⁸ Jonathan C. Randall, 'France Likely to Recall General Leading U.N. Troops in Bosnia', *The Washington Post*, 14/04/91.

⁴⁵²⁹ Jonathan C. Randall, 'France Likely to Recall General Leading U.N. Troops in Bosnia', *The Washington Post*, 14/04/91.

⁴⁵³⁰ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 169.

⁴⁵³¹ Claire Tréan, 'Le conflit dans l'ex-Yougoslavie et l'éventualité du départ du général Morillon.', *Le Monde*, 13/04/93.

⁴⁵³² Charles Bremmer, 'Morillon limelight irks French officers', *The Times*, 10/04/93; Claire Tréan, 'Le conflit dans l'ex-Yougoslavie et l'éventualité du départ du général Morillon.', *Le Monde*, 13/04/93; Sharon Waxman, 'France pulls UN general out of Bosnia', *Chicago Tribune*, 14/04/93; Patrick McDowell, 'Likely Recall of Heroic General Provokes Outcry', *The Associated Press*, 16/04/93.

⁴⁵³³ 'Parijs roept Morillon tegen eind/04/ terug' (Paris to recall Morillon at the end of/04/), *ANP*, 13/04/93, 5.30 pm.

Mitterrand, Muriel de Pierrebouurg, revealed that claims to the effect that the Serbs wanted Morillon recalled, were incorrect.⁴⁵³⁴

However, Morillon received support from various quarters. His predecessor, MacKenzie was outspoken in his view of the UN bureaucrats who had branded Morillon as an unguided missile: 'I don't know what they're smoking, but it has to be pretty good.'⁴⁵³⁵ He felt that Morillon was right to take food and medicine to the Eastern Bosnian town himself after others had failed to do so. Moreover, MacKenzie did not believe that Morillon had acted entirely on his own initiative. According to him, no French officer did such things: 'It would stretch my imagination beyond the realms of possibility to suggest he was operating entirely on his own'.⁴⁵³⁶

On 14 April Morillon received public support from Boutros-Ghali, who emphatically announced to the media that Morillon had remained within his mandate.⁴⁵³⁷ The former British Prime Minister, Thatcher, also came to Morillon's support, saying that he had finally offered a ray of hope and had provided leadership in the Bosnian war, in response to which Western governments had shown themselves to be so passive that she did not hesitate to refer to 'complicity in a new holocaust'.⁴⁵³⁸ Thatcher's statement struck a chord with the general public in Europe but not with the British Secretary of State for Defence, Malcolm Rifkind, who said that the West needed to 'guard against decisions prompted by emotions'.⁴⁵³⁹

Several days after the arrival of the first aid convoy in Srebrenica since December 1992, Izetbegovic wrote a letter to the European Community, in which he expressed the fear that the fall of Srebrenica would lead to the mass murder of its civilian population.⁴⁵⁴⁰ This was reason enough for the committee to propose that those UNPROFOR troops that were now in Srebrenica, should also remain there after the aid convoys had arrived.⁴⁵⁴¹ According to reports presented by Judith Kumin, the UNHCR head in Belgrade, which also reached the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Srebrenica had actually fallen and the enclaves of Zepa and Gorazde would soon share this fate. Kumin also anticipated a 'mass slaughter' in Srebrenica. Partly at the request of the UNHCR an attempt was therefore made to arrange a meeting between Morillon and Milosevic, who needed to be persuaded to ensure that Mladic and the local commanders moderated their actions. Van der Zwan, the head of the Political Affairs Department of the Directorate of UN Political Affairs in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noted on this report, 'Mass slaughter forecast – what can be done?' An unknown person wrote underneath this, 'Pray!'⁴⁵⁴²

Evacuation or ethnic cleansing?

The trucks of the convoy that had entered Srebrenica on 19 March, were used to evacuate 674 wounded people the following day. This transport operation was chaotic. When the trucks were readied

⁴⁵³⁴ Michael Evans/James Bone, 'Morillon withdrawn for keeping too high a profile', *The Times*, 14/04/93; Sharon Waxman, 'France pulls UN general out of Bosnia', *Chicago Tribune*, 14/04/93.

⁴⁵³⁵ Alan Ferguson, 'MacKenzie blasts U.N. over recall of his successor', *The Toronto Star*, 15/04/93.

⁴⁵³⁶ Alan Ferguson, 'MacKenzie blasts U.N. over recall of his successor', *The Toronto Star*, 15/04/93.

⁴⁵³⁷ Hugh Nevill, 'M. Boutros-Ghali: 'le général Morillon a agi en conformité avec les résolutions de l'ONU'', *Agence France Presse*, 14/04/93.

⁴⁵³⁸ 'Internationale bemoeienis wijzigt verloop Bosnische oorlog niet' (International intervention is not changing the course of the Bosnian war), *ANP*, 16/04/93, 6.37 pm; Hugh Nevill, "M. Boutros-Ghali: 'le général Morillon a agi en conformité avec les résolutions de l'ONU'", *Agence France Presse*, 14/04/93; Patrick McDowell, 'Likely Recall of Heroic General Provokes Outcry', *The Associated Press*, 16/04/93.

⁴⁵³⁹ 'Tumult over kritiek Thatcher op optreden Westen in Bosnië' (Uproar following Thatcher's criticism of the West's actions in Bosnia), *ANP*, 14/04/93, 3.11 pm.

⁴⁵⁴⁰ ABZ, Communications archives. COREU message from the Danish Presidency of the EC, 24/03/93, cpe/pres/cop 653. This letter is also referred to in ABZ, 345169, COREU message from the European Commission, 24/03/93, cpe/cee 135.

⁴⁵⁴¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. COREU message from the European Commission, 24/03/93, cpe/cee 135.

⁴⁵⁴² ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Engels 83 to Kooijmans, 25/03/93.

for departure, people fought for places on them. UN staff could not contain the frenzied advance of the crowd. As a result of this chaos, the UNHCR was only able to take 40 of the 97 wounded people who should have been given priority during the evacuation.⁴⁵⁴³

An attempt to evacuate sick and wounded Muslim civilians from Srebrenica by helicopter was disrupted on 24 March when Bosnian Serb mortars fell on the landing strip. Three people were killed and six wounded, including two Canadian peacekeepers.⁴⁵⁴⁴ The Serbs refused to allow a French mobile hospital access to the enclave. Mortar fire resumed from the Tara and Zvijezda mountains in Serbia, amongst other places.

As a result of the VRS' escalating attacks on the Muslim enclave, the capture of Srebrenica appeared to be imminent.⁴⁵⁴⁵ The situation was all the more dangerous as both Serbia and Srpska seemed to have little concern for international opinion. Prominent Serbian leaders continued to declare with undiminished vigour that they did not want a Muslim-controlled area in Eastern Bosnia on their border. In the first half of April the Speaker of the Serbian parliament, Lilic, paid a visit to the Serbian area on the other side of the Drina opposite Srebrenica and fiercely condemned the Bosnian Muslims who were said to be firing on Serbian territory, a statement that appeared to legitimise Yugoslavia's growing involvement in the military struggle in Eastern Bosnia.⁴⁵⁴⁶ Yugoslavian officers openly conceded that armoured and reconnaissance units of the VJ had crossed the border between Bosnia and Serbia and had provided direct support to the VRS in Eastern Bosnia, because Serbia could not tolerate a Muslim-dominated area along its border as envisaged in the Vance-Owen plan.⁴⁵⁴⁷

In the meantime the peace talks conducted under the guidance of Owen and Vance between the Bosnian parties in New York were becoming seriously bogged down by developments around Srebrenica. Izetbegovic, who wrote that he feared a mass murder if Srebrenica were to fall, refused to speak to Karadzic. He confined himself to his hotel room and refused to participate in substantive negotiations until the Bosnian Serbs halted their offensive in Eastern Bosnia and Sarajevo.⁴⁵⁴⁸ This threatened to jeopardise the attempt of Vance and Owen to persuade the Muslims to accept their plan, as the Croats had previously done, after which it would be possible to impose the peace plan on the Serbs.⁴⁵⁴⁹

On 25 March Izetbegovic signed the comprehensive Vance-Owen plan, including the map and interim arrangements, albeit under considerable American pressure. However, he indicated that he would withdraw his signature if the Serbs failed to sign it as well. At the press conference which followed, Izetbegovic declared that he was not enthusiastic about the peace plan but other solutions would be even worse. He appeared to have abandoned the hope that the international community would sanction a military intervention in support of his government. The Bosnian president told the journalists that, having lost his trust in the rest of the international community, he still had unswerving faith in the good will and influence of the American government in Washington. Izetbegovic stated that

⁴⁵⁴³ Hollingworth, *Christmas*, pp. 211-13.

⁴⁵⁴⁴ 'Navo-plan voor vliegverbod af' (NATO plan for flight ban abandoned), *Trouw*, 25/03/93.

⁴⁵⁴⁵ cf. ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part V-VI, /05/1992 -/04/93. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 22/93, 25/03/93.

⁴⁵⁴⁶ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part V-VI, /05/1992 -/04/93. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 26/93, 15/04/93.

⁴⁵⁴⁷ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part V-VI, /05/1992 -/04/93. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 24/93, 05/04/93. cf. *ibid* 26/93, 15/04/93.

⁴⁵⁴⁸ 'Woedende Karadzic verlaat vredesoverleg' (Furious Karadzic leaves peace talks), *ANP*, 24/03/93, 1.45am; 'Verwarring rond vredesoverleg Bosnië in New York' (Confusion surrounds Bosnian peace talks in New York), *ANP*, 24/03/93, 6.34 am; ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part V-VI, /05/1992 -/04/93. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 21/92, 22/03/93 and 22/93, 25/03/93.

⁴⁵⁴⁹ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part V-VI, /05/1992 -/04/93. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 21/92, 22/03/93.

he had been assured by the Washington administration that the international arms embargo of his country would be lifted if Serbian aggression did not cease.⁴⁵⁵⁰

Almost immediately after Izetbegovic had signed the plan, the Security Council called on the Bosnian Serbs to sign it as well 'without delay' and 'with immediate effect' to cease 'the violence, military campaigns, ethnic cleansing and the obstruction of humanitarian convoys in Bosnia-Herzegovina'. The Council held up the prospect of 'taking the necessary steps that will be required to achieve a final peace settlement'. Christopher announced that, if the Serbs were to refuse, the American government would press for far-reaching UN economic sanctions against Serbia, such as cutting off its lines of transport, freezing its financial assets, and confiscating any means of conveyance which violated existing sanctions.⁴⁵⁵¹ The governments in London and Paris endorsed this objective immediately.⁴⁵⁵²

Following Milosevic's intervention, on 26 March Morillon reached agreement with Karadzic and Mladic concerning a ceasefire in Eastern Bosnia and the evacuation of all Muslims who wanted to, subject to the condition that they leave their arms behind.⁴⁵⁵³ After this it would be possible to start transporting people from Srebrenica to Tuzla. On 28 March a ceasefire came into effect throughout Bosnia.

On 29 March 20 trucks which had earlier delivered food and medicine to Srebrenica, were to take approximately 2,300 people from this place to Tuzla, being mainly women, children and the wounded. Upon their arrival it appeared that a number of those evacuated had suffocated to death.⁴⁵⁵⁴ Two days later another 2,000 people arrived in Tuzla. Again people died during the journey. Two children were trampled in Srebrenica when people stormed the trucks as they stood ready to leave. Although five ABiH soldiers were stationed on each truck before their departure, they were unable to prevent people from storming the empty trucks. Mothers who had lost hope of leaving themselves, threw their children on the trucks. At least four people died on the way.⁴⁵⁵⁵

Following the arrival of this convoy, the Second Corps in Tuzla announced that further evacuations were contrary to their military objectives.⁴⁵⁵⁶ According to these authorities, evacuation amounted to complicity in ethnic cleansing.⁴⁵⁵⁷ Moreover, the enclave gave the Bosnian government some leverage over the international community. Finally, the presence of Muslim troops in the enclave put pressure on the Bosnian-Serb front. The Bosnian authorities seemed prepared to put up with the fact that this meant that they were holding their own people in the enclave against their will. Abdulah Sabic, intelligence officer of the Second Corps, is reported to have said, 'We are prepared to sacrifice these people.'⁴⁵⁵⁸ In the future the trucks, which took food and medicine, were to return empty from Srebrenica. For his part, on 1 April Mladic informed the UNHCR that he was only prepared to permit

⁴⁵⁵⁰ 'VS dreigen Serviërs te isoleren' (US threatens to isolate Serbs), *ANP*, 26/03/93, 3.57 am; 'Izetbegovic tekent vredesplan uit wanhoop en pessimisme' (Izetbegovic signs peace plan in despair and pessimism), *ANP*, 26/03/93, 7.35 pm. Zie ook (ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part V-VI, /05/1992 -/04/93. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 21/93, 22/03/93; 23/93, 31/03/93; 25/93, 13/04/93, 26/93, 15/04/93; Part VII, /05/1993 to/03/94, 33/93, 13 /05/1993.

⁴⁵⁵¹ 'VS dreigen Serviërs te isoleren', *ANP*, 26/03/93, 3.57 am.

⁴⁵⁵² 'Druk op Serviërs om plan Vance-Owen te tekenen' (Pressure on Serbs to sign Vance-Owen plan), *ANP*, 26/03/93, 12.56 pm.

⁴⁵⁵³ 'Morillon: Milosevic wil Srebrenica helpen' (Morillon: Milosevic wants to help Srebrenica), *ANP*, 25/03/93, 11.34 pm.

⁴⁵⁵⁴ Hollingworth, *Christmas*, p. 217; Chuck Sudetic, 'Thousands Jam U.N. Trucks to Flee Bosnian Town', *The New York Times*, 30/03/93; Hren (ed.), *Overlevenden*, pp. 46-47.

⁴⁵⁵⁵ 'NAVO en Rusland zetten Servië onder druk om vredesplan te tekenen' (NATO and Russia pressure Serbia to sign peace plan), *ANP*, 29/03/93, 11.57 pm; 'VN stoppen evacuatie uit Srebrenica' (UN halts evacuations from Srebrenica), *ANP*, 31/03/93, 19:13; NIOD, Svensson Coll. UNHCR, Background Note on Situation in Eastern Bosnia, 01/04/93; *NOS Journaal* (News), 31/03/93.

⁴⁵⁵⁶ Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 136.

⁴⁵⁵⁷ cf. Janine di Giovanni, 'Morillon takes flak in his finest hour', *The Times*, 04/04/93; Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 209.

⁴⁵⁵⁸ Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 136. Both and Honig say the name of this officer was Basic.

evacuations. The UNHCR trucks were to be empty when they left for Srebrenica – without food or medicine – and were permitted to be full – of people – when they returned.⁴⁵⁵⁹

Under pressure from representatives of the international community, on 4 April Izetbegovic finally agreed to permit the evacuation of wounded civilians, people older than sixty and women with small children.⁴⁵⁶⁰ However, despite this undertaking given by Izetbegovic, no further evacuations from Srebrenica appeared to be possible. On the same day that the Bosnian head of state undertook to permit limited evacuations, eight trucks returned empty from Srebrenica. The local authorities in the town had prevented the transportation of people, arguing that they refused to collaborate in ethnic cleansing. The UNHCR, which had hoped to evacuate a further 15,000 of the 60,000 people or thereabouts in Srebrenica, saw its plans undermined.⁴⁵⁶¹

In order to eradicate the fear of the local authorities that Srebrenica would fall because too few people remained, Morillon decided to try and post 150 Canadian peacekeepers to the town. Their presence was to guarantee that the VRS would not capture it.⁴⁵⁶² In doing this, Morillon was acting in tandem with Ogata, who sent a letter to Boutros-Ghali at the same time, in which she wrote that efforts should be directed either towards ensuring that Srebrenica was a Safe Area by increasing the UNPROFOR presence there, or by providing humanitarian aid there on a much larger scale. If neither alternative was successful, then mass evacuation was the only solution.⁴⁵⁶³

In the meantime an overall humanitarian impasse threatened to envelop the town. While the Muslim leaders in Srebrenica refused to allow people to leave, the Bosnian Serbs refused to allow the transportation of 20,000 tents for refugees in the area. Morillon, who wished to travel to Srebrenica with an escort of 23 Canadian peacekeepers, was prevented from doing so by the VRS, because the Republika Srpska had never given its permission for UN troops to be stationed in or around Srebrenica. He was only permitted to continue his journey with ten people in an armoured vehicle. However, he had to abandon his attempt to reach Srebrenica when a crowd of 300 angry Bosnian Serbs obstructed him 40 km from the enclave. On 7 April the Muslim authorities in Srebrenica nevertheless gave permission for the evacuation of 1,600 women and children. The next day saw the departure of about 2,000 people, who again ignored the procedures which the local authorities had drawn up for the evacuation.⁴⁵⁶⁴ On the way this group was stoned in the open vehicles in which the people were seated, after which the local Muslim authorities no longer permitted departures on open trucks, because they felt this to be ‘inhuman in the prevailing cold and dangerous’. The UNHCR would have to return with closed trucks.⁴⁵⁶⁵ On 13 April another convoy left with 650 evacuees according to press reports of the time.⁴⁵⁶⁶

⁴⁵⁵⁹ ABZ, DIO/2004/00075. Ogata to Boutros-Ghali, 2/04/93.

⁴⁵⁶⁰ Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 138.

⁴⁵⁶¹ ‘Moslim-autoriteiten Srebrenica weigeren medewerking evacuatie’ (Muslim authorities in Srebrenica refuse to assist with evacuation), *ANP*, 04/04/93, 9.45 pm; L. Silber and R. Mauthner, ‘Moslims halt UN evacuation of Srebrenica’, *Financial Times*, 07/04/93; ABZ, DIO/2004/00075. Wagenmakers 343 to Kooijmans, 07/04/93.

⁴⁵⁶² ‘Morillon wil pogen compagnie blauwhelmen in Srebrenica te krijgen’ (Morillon wants to try and station a company of peacekeepers in Srebrenica), *ANP*, 07/04/93, 3.59 pm.

⁴⁵⁶³ ABZ, DIO/2004/00075. Ogata to Boutros-Ghali, 02/04/93; Wagenmakers 343 to Kooijmans, 7/04/93; ABZ, PVNY. Biegan 314 to Kooijmans, 03/04/93.

⁴⁵⁶⁴ Teddy Weir, ‘Refugees Fight Fiercely to Board U.N. Trucks’, *The Associated Press*, 09/04/93; UN, *Srebrenica Report*, par. 40.

⁴⁵⁶⁵ ‘Moslims verhinderen evacuatie uit Srebrenica’ (Muslims obstruct evacuation from Srebrenica), *ANP*, 10/04/93, 5.17 pm; ‘Moslims staan gedeeltelijke evacuatie Srebrenica toe’ (Muslims permit partial evacuation of Srebrenica), *ANP*, 7/04/93, 11.38 am; ‘Nieuw VN-konvooi op weg naar Srebrenica’ (New UN convoy en route to Srebrenica), *ANP*, 8/04/93, 10:11 am; ‘Bosnië vraagt om spoedzitting Veiligheidsraad’ (Bosnia calls for emergency session of the Security Council), *ANP*, 9/04/93, 6.14 am.

⁴⁵⁶⁶ ‘UN takes 650 out of Srebrenica’, *Chicago Tribune*, 14/04/93; John Daniszewski, ‘Hundreds Evacuated from Srebrenica’, *The Associated Press*; UN, *Srebrenica Report*, par. 40 refers to a figure of 800 evacuees.

8. Enforcing the no-fly zone

After the Bosnian Muslim leaders had accepted the comprehensive Vance-Owen plan on 25 March, as the Bosnian Croats had done before them, one could expect the Security Council to adopt a resolution supporting the peace plan and holding out the prospect of placing further pressure on the Bosnian Serbs as the only party who had not yet signed it. At that time two alternatives were being considered, both of which had been discussed for some time already: tightening the sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro, and enforcing the no-fly zone above Bosnia. The approach adopted by the American government was important in both cases.

On the same day that Izetbegovic signed the plan the section of the American government which was involved with policy on Bosnia decided that a choice should be made between either lifting the arms embargo and halting the air strikes or arranging a ceasefire, after which it would be possible to offer enclaves such as Srebrenica a certain amount of protection.⁴⁵⁶⁷ The American armed forces had major objections to the first solution. Apart from the leadership of the air force, who held the view that the Bosnian Serbs could be controlled from the air, the prevailing opinion was that there were too few substantial targets for large-scale air strikes. Only ground troops would really have an impact. Colin Powell tried to make it clear to Clinton what he had previously told Bush, namely, that only ground troops could really influence the actions of the Bosnian Serbs. Heavy bombardments would not be able to drive the Serbs from the areas they occupied. Limited air strikes would make little sense, because the Bosnian Serbs would have their tanks seek shelter in the forested areas and mists of Bosnia. Even if the terrain and weather did not help them, they could position their tanks and artillery close to civilian locations or take UN personnel hostage.⁴⁵⁶⁸ During a hearing held by the American Senate's Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense the Chief of Staff of the American air force, General Merrill A. McPeak, was forced to concede that ground and weather conditions made it considerably more difficult to launch air strikes over Bosnia than against Iraq during the Gulf War.⁴⁵⁶⁹ Apart from objections to air strikes in connection with their troops on the ground, the British chiefs of staff also felt that the mist which frequently gathered in the valleys of Bosnia, would make air strikes very difficult in practice.⁴⁵⁷⁰

There was considerable division within the American government and senior officials in the State Department as to the precise tools that were to be used.⁴⁵⁷¹ The Secretary for Defence, Les Aspin, and security adviser, Anthony Lake, followed Powell's line to the effect that there should first be a political objective or a diplomatic solution before American troops could be deployed. The American ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, was a leading proponent of military action.⁴⁵⁷² She sent a memorandum to the White House, in which she called for air strikes, from the USA alone if necessary, in order to protect the Muslim towns under siege from the VRS. At the same time 12 senior officials in the State Department who dealt with Eastern Europe or the UN, took a most unusual step in sending an emotional letter to Christopher, in which they referred to American policy on Bosnia as a fiasco. They also pleaded for attacks on the Bosnian Serbs in order to protect the Muslims against genocide and recommended that the arms embargo against the Bosnian government be lifted. Christopher met with these officials and told them very diplomatically that he did not view their plea as a revolt against his policy but as a healthy part of the process of determining policy.⁴⁵⁷³

⁴⁵⁶⁷ Daalder, *Dayton*, p. 12.

⁴⁵⁶⁸ Powell and Persico, *Journey*, p. 561.

⁴⁵⁶⁹ Elaine Sciolino, 'U.S. military split on using air power against the Serbs', *The New York Times*, 29/04/93.

⁴⁵⁷⁰ Major, *Autobiography*, p. 541.

⁴⁵⁷¹ Daalder, *Dayton*, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁵⁷² Powell & Persico, *Journey*, p. 561.

⁴⁵⁷³ Michael R. Gordon, '12 in State Dept. ask military move against the Serbs', *The New York Times*, 23/04/93; 'Toenemende druk voor militair ingrijpen tegen Serviërs' (Growing pressure for military intervention against Serbs), *ANP*, 23/04/93, 8.13 am.

In a discussion he had with the Danish EC President, Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, early in 1993, the Bosnian Vice-President, Ganic, had already let it be known that he was in favour of the international community enforcing the no-fly zone. It irritated him that the Serbians were still able to move their troops by helicopter. He did not show himself to be susceptible to the argument that this would endanger humanitarian aid. This aid was already 'too little, too late', according to the Vice-President. If the Serbs were to halt this aid because of air strikes, this would last about two to three weeks but Ganic was probably convinced that, after this, it would reach all areas for which it was destined, which was not the case at that point in time.⁴⁵⁷⁴

At a meeting held in London on 8 February for those countries who were providing troops, Nambiar and Goulding nevertheless raised serious objections against the enforcement of the flight ban, because it would endanger the UN's ground personnel. Goulding was of the opinion that peacekeeping on the ground and enforcement in the air represented an impossible combination. Nambiar even said, 'In that case pull us out of it.' Nambiar's successor, Wahlgren, also held the view that enforcing a no-fly zone could have major negative implications for both the provision of humanitarian aid and the safety of UN personnel on the ground. Like so many others, he pointed out that the violations of the flight ban had hardly any significant impact on the military situation. In general, the air transport of personnel was highly limited.⁴⁵⁷⁵ However, the French and British governments had since become convinced that an air dimension needed to be added to the UNPROFOR operations, irrespective of whether or not the Vance-Owen peace plan would meet with success.⁴⁵⁷⁶ Nevertheless, Owen and Vance wanted to use the flight ban as a means of bringing pressure to bear on the Bosnian Serbs to agree with their peace plan. They felt that this means should only be used once Izetbegovic had accepted the three elements of their peace plan.⁴⁵⁷⁷

In the five months following the imposition of the no-fly zone on 9 October 1992 UN personnel on the ground and AWACS aircraft in the air had detected 465 instances of its violation. According to Boutros-Ghali, no attacks on ground targets had been observed in this connection.⁴⁵⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Srebrenica repeatedly complained about attacks from Serbian aircraft from the autumn of 1992.⁴⁵⁷⁹ In the first ten days of February 1993 alone 56 people are said to have died in Srebrenica and more than a hundred are reported to have been wounded in these attacks.⁴⁵⁸⁰ On 13 March 1993, while Morillon was in Srebrenica, the villages of Gladovici and Osatica to the south of the town were attacked by three single-engine agricultural planes. Presumably, they took off from an airstrip near Bratunac.⁴⁵⁸¹ They dropped a total of nine bombs on the two villages, after which they disappeared out of sight over the Drina above Serbian territory, according to eye witnesses. These bombardments were reason enough for Vance and Owen not to delay the enforcement of the flight ban any longer with the negotiations in mind, and to call on the Security Council to commence the enforcement of the five-month old no-fly zone.⁴⁵⁸²

On 31 March 1993 the Security Council adopted resolution 816, which, referring to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, authorised member states to enforce the flight ban above Bosnia-Herzegovina. At the last moment the Russians managed to secure an undertaking that this action had to be confined

⁴⁵⁷⁴ ABZ, Communications Archive. COUREU message from the Danish presidency of the EC, 10/01/93, cpe/pres/cop 52.

⁴⁵⁷⁵ ABZ, 921.241. D'Ansembourg 266 to Kooijmans, 22/03/93.

⁴⁵⁷⁶ ABZ, Government Archives Stg. Secret codes. Kooijmans 011 to the embassy in London, 9/02/93, Stg Confi.

⁴⁵⁷⁷ Owen CD-ROM, Lord Owen's report of briefing meeting with EC ambassadors, New York, 4/03/93.

⁴⁵⁷⁸ United Nations Department of Public Information, *United Nations*, p. 13.

⁴⁵⁷⁹ See for example Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 170 and pp. 172-73; Hren (ed.), *Overlevenden*, pp. 127-28 and p. 170.

⁴⁵⁸⁰ Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 173.

⁴⁵⁸¹ NIOD, Jansen Coll., Briefing by Colonel F. Jansen to the Army Council, period of 22-29/03/93.

⁴⁵⁸² Owen, CD-ROM, Lord Owen's meeting with P5 Ambassadors, New York, 16/03/93; CRST. Letter from R.A. Cordy Simpson, BH Comd Main to Headquarters UNPROFOR Zagreb, 13/03/93, 2233; 'Serviërs betrapt op het bombarderen van doelen in Bosnië' (Serbs caught bombing targets in Bosnia), *Trouw*, 18/03/93; 'Geloofwaardigheid' (Credibility), *Trouw*, 19/03/93.

to Bosnian air space and was not applicable to Serbian air space. Attacks on ground targets would only be acceptable in connection with immediate self-defence. The resolution was to take effect seven days later and a further seven days would be required for NATO to organize these operations and to coordinate them with the UN. This transitional period was also intended to enable those countries with ground troops in Bosnia to take measures to protect their troops from any Serbian retaliation. On 8 April NATO assumed responsibility for the implementation of the resolution. Because Resolution 816 called for proper cooperation between the UN on the one hand, and the countries or organizations that were to perform the operation on the other, NATO posted communications officers to the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb and Kiseljak. For their part, UNPROFOR stationed liaison officers in Vicenza in Italy, from where the aircraft of the NATO countries operated. The NATO commander responsible was the Commander in Chief, Allied Forces Southern Europe (CINSOUTH), Admiral J.M. Boorda. On 12 March, four days after NATO undertook to implement the resolution Operation Deny Flight commenced under the command of NATO's Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force (5ATAF) in Vicenza. In addition to the USA and France, the Netherlands participated with 18 F-16 combat aircraft (twelve fighter and six reconnaissance planes), which operated from the NATO base of Villa Franca in Northern Italy. The 314 Dutch military personnel required for this deployment boosted the total number of Dutch troops serving in and around the former Yugoslavia to 1,750. Moreover, the six Dutch reconnaissance aircraft would soon be replaced by a further six interceptor jets.⁴⁵⁸³ Several weeks after the operation commenced, British and Turkish planes joined those of France, the Netherlands and the USA. Incidentally, the instructions governing the use of force which were issued for the planes participating in Operation Deny Flight, were highly restrictive. They were not allowed to violate Serbian air space. The NATO pilots were only permitted to take action against anyone who violated the flight ban, if they actually saw the plane or helicopter which committed the violation, engage in hostile action. In practice, violators heeded NATO pilots' warning to land. Then they waited on the ground until the NATO plane was forced to return to base.⁴⁵⁸⁴ As mentioned, attacks on targets on the ground were prohibited. In addition, almost all the Bosnian-Serb helicopters had a red cross painted on their side, irrespective of whether or not they were deployed for humanitarian or military purposes.⁴⁵⁸⁵

The resolution was therefore prompted not so much by the idea that the deployment of NATO aircraft would actually have an impact on the course of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was primarily designed to exert psychological pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to accept the peace plan but appeared to have met with little success in this respect. The only response from the Serbs, the Montenegrins, and the Bosnian Serbs was to produce threats of escalation of the war.⁴⁵⁸⁶ This therefore represented an initial step from peacekeeping to peace-enforcing. Shashi Tharoor, who headed the DPKO department which was responsible for the peace operation in Bosnia, declared that from now on UNPROFOR would be waging war and peace at the same time.⁴⁵⁸⁷

The Dutch parliament agreed with the government's decision to deploy the F-16s in Operation Deny Flight, although various representatives felt that this step had come too late.⁴⁵⁸⁸ The members of the Dutch parliament were now prepared to accept that the deployment of Dutch and other aircraft could have implications for Dutch ground troops, a risk which they had previously shown themselves to be aware of on numerous occasions.⁴⁵⁸⁹ In Blaauw's words, '... it should be clear that the

⁴⁵⁸³ Lutgert & De Winter, *Horizon*, pp. 125-27.

⁴⁵⁸⁴ Beale, *Bombs*, p. 20. See also Leurdijk, *United Nations*, p. 34.

⁴⁵⁸⁵ Gow, *Triumph*, p. 134.

⁴⁵⁸⁶ See for example ABZ, 999.241, No-Fly Zone, Pert III. PA Belgrado to DEU and DAV, 14/04/93, bel 791 and bel 801.

⁴⁵⁸⁷ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 165.

⁴⁵⁸⁸ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 49.

⁴⁵⁸⁹ See for example TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 27, p. 4 (Van Middelkoop); no. 28, p. 7 (Ter Veer); no. 28, p. 8 (Sipkes); Proceedings, p. 13-806 (Sipkes, 22 October 1992); Proceedings, p. 13-808/809 (Van Middelkoop, 22 October 1992).

Netherlands and the Dutch parliament dare to take this step.’⁴⁵⁹⁰ He also asked critical questions about the instructions issued to the pilots for the use of force: ‘... surely we cannot have a situation where a pilot has a target in his sights and must then first use various lines of communication to ask what he may and may not do? If the directions for the use of force are of such a nature, surely our credibility will be at issue?’⁴⁵⁹¹ In his reply Minister Kooijmans said that the flight ban was partly designed to serve as a signal to Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs that it was time for them to sign the Vance-Owen peace agreement. Although the minister could understand that the members of Parliament were disappointed about the late and inadequate response of the international community to the developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it was ‘simply a fact that no government in the world is currently prepared to take military action without a peace settlement’.⁴⁵⁹² The fact that UNHCR was not prepared to fight its way to Srebrenica, for example, in order to provide aid, was not the fault of UNHCR, according to the minister, but that of the governments that were participating in the operations. They were against this. According to Ter Beek, during interception operations NATO pilots maintained constant contact with AWACS aircraft, which in turn communicated with senior NATO commanders: ‘This approach represents a good balance between ongoing control of the operation and a desire to act as decisively as possible’.⁴⁵⁹³

Troops for the peace plan?

At the end of March Kooijmans paid an introductory visit to Washington, where he spoke to his counterpart Christopher, and the Security Adviser, Lake, amongst others. It must have become clear to the Dutch minister that the US did not wish to tie itself to the Vance-Owen plan. Following Kooijmans’ trip a remark was made in the Ministerial Council that a Dutch plea for the use of force to secure the adoption of the plan would not sound very credible, because it was precisely the Dutch troops that needed to be protected. It was precisely the governments of those countries that provided protection – Canada, France, the United Kingdom and Spain – which did not want to use force.

Nevertheless, another minister was of the opinion that the Netherlands must call for the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan and for the use of greater military force at the same time. Naturally, the implications of the latter were that the Netherlands would also have to be prepared to make a substantial contribution to this, as a third minister concluded.⁴⁵⁹⁴

A spokesperson for the American State Department, Richard Boucher, declared that, while the United States Government did indeed support the peace process, it did not wish to force a plan on the parties in question. This was because the American administration took account of the fact that Izetbegovic would indeed wish to revoke his signature to the Vance-Owen plan if the Bosnian Serbs failed to accept it in full. Washington also dropped the idea of new sanctions at the time, to the astonishment of, in particular, the Security Council members France, the United Kingdom and Spain. In view of Jeltsin’s shaky position in relation to opposition in his own country, the American government did not wish to go further than tightening the existing sanctions, although their description did afford some scope for manoeuvre.⁴⁵⁹⁵

In addition, the American government let it be known that the European countries would have to account for a share in any peacekeeping or peace-enforcing force equal to that of the Americans. In

⁴⁵⁹⁰ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 49, p. 6.

⁴⁵⁹¹ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 49, p. 6.

⁴⁵⁹² TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 49, p. 7.

⁴⁵⁹³ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 49, p. 10.

⁴⁵⁹⁴ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 02/04/93, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴⁵⁹⁵ ‘VN stoppen evacuatie uit Srebrenica’ (UN halts evacuation from Srebrenica), *ANP*, 31/03/93, 7.13pm; ‘VN-Raad bekrachtigt vliegverbod boven Bosnië’ (UN Council ratifies flight ban above Bosnia), *ANP*, 01/04/93, 6.57 am; Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 02/04/93, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

this connection, consideration was being given to France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Finland, Poland, Sweden and Turkey if necessary. A third division would need to be provided by Russia and perhaps several other Eastern European countries. In this case the US was prepared to contribute a division of 20,000 troops. The Washington administration warned that this figure should actually be multiplied by three bearing in mind the need for relief troops. Furthermore, Washington insisted that the parties to the conflict should give at least one indication of their agreement to the arrival of this force by, for example, withdrawing their troops or removing heavy weapons.⁴⁵⁹⁶

At virtually the same time the Kremlin appeared to be backing away from their previous willingness to provide a substantial contribution of manpower for the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan in the face of pressure exerted by the Russian opposition and financial difficulties.⁴⁵⁹⁷

During April it became clear to NATO that the European allies would only be able to provide several thousand troops. The British government revealed that it could provide little more than the 3,500 troops it already had stationed in Bosnia. A source within the British Defence Ministry moaned, 'We simply cannot send the forces needed by NATO because we haven't got the men, and if we had they wouldn't have the right equipment and if they did we wouldn't have the money to pay for the operation.' This led to an angry outburst from the American general, Powell, who asked the British Chief of Staff, Air Marshall Sir Peter Harding, on the phone, 'Are we the only country that cares about the future of NATO? We are the only country carrying the flag for NATO.'⁴⁵⁹⁸ Confronted with the unwillingness and inability of the Russians and Europeans, the American offer of ground troops faded into the background.⁴⁵⁹⁹

On 2 April Karadzic signed the Vance-Owen peace plan subject to the proviso that the Bosnian-Serb parliament would also need to agree to it. The same evening he advised the Bosnian-Serb parliament not to accept the plan. According to him, agreeing to it would 'give rise to ethnic cleansing at the expense of the Serbs ... on an unprecedented scale'.⁴⁶⁰⁰ On Sunday 4 April, this meeting rejected the peace plan by 81 votes to 68. This was the first but certainly not the last time the parliament rejected the plan.

9. Red alert for Srebrenica

When the Bosnian Serbs noticed that the Muslim authorities did not want any further evacuations from Srebrenica, they resumed their offensive against the town on 5 April. In the meantime, from as early as late March Wahlgren had urged Mladic and Karadzic to permit a UN infantry company and three military observers to be stationed in Srebrenica.⁴⁶⁰¹ A Canadian company was held on standby for this purpose. During the Easter holidays of 11 and 12 April the UNHCR in Belgrade began to be highly concerned that the VRS would soon attempt to capture Srebrenica. It was clear that the West was not overly inclined to take action against Serbia or the Bosnian Serbs in anticipation of a referendum that was scheduled to be held in Russia on 25 April dealing with the position of President Jeltsin and his policy. The West did not wish to assist the Russian opposition by adopting anti-Serb measures.⁴⁶⁰² Even if the West had attempted to do this, the Serbs still had a second line of defence within the Security

⁴⁵⁹⁶ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Meesman 204 to Kooijmans, 01/04/93.

⁴⁵⁹⁷ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part V-VI, /05/1992 -/04/93, MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 24/93, 05/04/93; ABZ, 999 NATO-WEU, Part 4. De Vos van Steenwijk 37 to Kooijmans, 31/03/93.

⁴⁵⁹⁸ James Adams, 'Bosnia mission causes NATO row', *Sunday Times*, 28/03/93.

⁴⁵⁹⁹ DAB. Memorandum from Barth to Ter Beek, 21/04/93, D93/200.

⁴⁶⁰⁰ 'Verwerping vredesplan door Bosnisch-Servische parlement vrijwel zeker' (Bosnian-Serb parliament virtually certain to reject peace plan), *ANP*, 03/04/93, 12.11 am.

⁴⁶⁰¹ ABZ, Yugoslavia UN ECOSOC Human Rights. PV Genève to DIO/Yugoslavia, 08/04/93, hum/gev-0615/93, addendum, Wahlgren to Karadzic, 04/04/93.

⁴⁶⁰² ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Engels 105 to Kooijmans, 13/04/93. See also Daalder, *Dayton*, p. 17.

Council: on 11 April rumours circulated within the UN that the Russian government was planning to make use of its veto in the Security Council for the first time since 1984, if a resolution were to be voted on for tougher sanctions.⁴⁶⁰³ The reports emanating from Paris that Morillon was to be recalled must have also given the Bosnian-Serb leaders the impression that they would not encounter much resistance from the West if they were to take Srebrenica. In London Defence Secretary Rifkind said that he was making allowances for the fall of the enclave, while simultaneously stressing that the British government was not overly inclined to deploy ground troops on a large scale.⁴⁶⁰⁴ Another development which appeared to play into the hands of the Serbs with regard to their attack on Srebrenica, was the outbreak of widespread hostilities between the Croats and the Muslims. The HVO (Croatian army) command had demanded that the ABiH withdraw from the Croat-majority areas designated as such in the Vance-Owen plan before 15 April. When this deadline passed fierce fighting broke out immediately in Vitez and Jablanica in Central and Southern Bosnia. As a result, the Muslims in Srebrenica could not count on receiving much support from the ABiH stationed outside Srebrenica.

On 9 April Mladic had expressed his willingness to Wahlgren and Morillon to meet the Bosnian army commander, Halilovic, under Wahlgren's guidance at the Sarajevo airport on 12 April to discuss one thing only: Srebrenica.⁴⁶⁰⁵ However, on 12 April Halilovic refused to put in an appearance following the heavy bombardment of the sports field at the secondary school in Srebrenica on the same day, Easter Monday. 56 people were killed in this attack and another 73 were seriously wounded.⁴⁶⁰⁶ Halilovic demanded that all hostilities should first cease. Mladic, who had arrived, did not want to tell Wahlgren whether he was planning to take Srebrenica. He only stated that he could have done so ten days earlier but that it had not been politically expedient to do so. Like Morillon before him, Wahlgren felt that Srebrenica was a test case for the viability of the Vance-Owen plan.⁴⁶⁰⁷ In the meantime Wahlgren had become convinced that the Muslims had provoked the mortar attack on 12 April and had felt that it was important to keep Srebrenica on the front page of the newspapers. Moreover, on 12 April Mladic was still unwilling ('over my dead body') to give Wahlgren permission to station a Canadian company in Srebrenica.⁴⁶⁰⁸

Against this background the seven most industrialised countries, the G7, took the view during their meeting in Tokyo on 14 April, that they needed to send a signal to show that there was a limit to the amount of Serbian aggression the West was prepared to put up with. While it is true that the seven decided to postpone the Security Council vote on resolutions relating to the Vance-Owen plan and the tightening of sanctions until 26 April, the day after the Russian referendum, they announced that they reserved the right to take other action if further developments occurred in Srebrenica.⁴⁶⁰⁹ This did not appear to help. The Serbs launched fierce attacks on Srebrenica. The Bosnian government made an urgent appeal to the Security Council to call a halt to this and asked Morillon to visit the town again. In addition, they threatened to withdraw their acceptance of the Vance-Owen plan if the Serbs were to capture Srebrenica.⁴⁶¹⁰

⁴⁶⁰³ 'Rusland wil uitstel sancties tegen Klein-Joegoslavië' (Russia want postponement of sanctions against lesser Yugoslavia), *ANP*, 11/04/93, 12.34 pm.

⁴⁶⁰⁴ Tim Witcher & Diplomatic Staff, 'French ready to recall Morillon with a month', *The Daily Telegraph*, 14/04/93.

⁴⁶⁰⁵ NIOD Collection (2).

⁴⁶⁰⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00141. UNPROFOR Press Release, 'UN Outrage at Atrocity in Srebrenica', 13/04/93; Hren (ed.), *Overlevenden*, pp. 128-29 and 190-92; Honig and Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 139-40.

⁴⁶⁰⁷ NIOD Collection (2).

⁴⁶⁰⁸ NIOD Collection (2).

⁴⁶⁰⁹ 'G7 besluit stemming Veiligheidsraad over Servië uit te stellen' (G7 decides to postpone Security Council vote on Serbia), *ANP*, 14/04/93, 8.03 am; 'Internationale bemoeienis wijzigt verloop Bosnische oorlog niet', *ANP*, 16/04/93, 6.37 pm; MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 16/93, 22/02/93; 'VN woedend over cynisch spel met hulpgoederen voor Bosnië', *De Telegraaf*, 17/02/93; 'Voor VN-helpers in Bosnië is grote wachten begonnen', *De Telegraaf*, 19/02/93; Alain Franchon, 'Alors que le général Morillon s'apprêterait à regagner la France les Occidentaux paraissent résignés à une victoire serbe en Bosnie', *Le Monde*, 12/04/93.

⁴⁶¹⁰ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part V-VI, /05/1992 -/04/93, MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 26/93, 15/04/93.

On Friday 16 April, the international media expected Srebrenica to fall at any moment.⁴⁶¹¹ Serbian troops were less than two kilometres from the town. Mortar fire peppered the main street, which resulted in many deaths and wounded.⁴⁶¹² The ABiH announced to journalists that it had intercepted a radio command that day from Mladic to a colonel who was heading the siege of the Eastern Bosnian town, which stated, 'Inform all units to enter Srebrenica tonight. Proceed directly to the town, no journalists, no reports, no announcement.'⁴⁶¹³ Murat Efendic, a representative of the Srebrenica council who was in Sarajevo and maintained constant radio contact with Srebrenica, said the town was lost and pleaded for the evacuation of civilians from Srebrenica to Tuzla. According to him, the Muslim soldiers should also leave 'with their weapons in their hands'.⁴⁶¹⁴ Ibrahim Džananović, a representative from Srebrenica in the government in Sarajevo, was gloomier. According to him, the people of Srebrenica could not escape. 'Some will be murdered, some will be taken to camps, and as far as the rest are concerned, I do not know what will happen.'⁴⁶¹⁵ The Deputy Commander of the ABiH, Stjepan Šiber, claimed there was a danger that the inhabitants of Srebrenica would be killed: 'Tens of thousands of innocent women, children and the elderly will be butchered and annihilated by tanks.'⁴⁶¹⁶

At a little past half past eight in the evening the ANP reported that 'to all intents and purposes' the Serbs had captured Srebrenica.⁴⁶¹⁷ It based its report on messages received from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Serbian television reported that Muslims in the outskirts of Srebrenica were surrendering.⁴⁶¹⁸ As a result of these new developments the fate of the civilians had 'become extremely uncertain'. In Pale, Karadžić, who was involved in talks with Morillon about the situation, had announced earlier in the day that, if the Muslim combatants in the town were to hand over their weapons to the 130 Canadian peacekeepers who were on their way there, the civilians would be allowed to leave and the VRS would not enter the town but merely 'pacify' it. If the Muslims failed to surrender their weapons, then the Bosnian Serbs would 'need to defeat them', according to Karadžić.⁴⁶¹⁹

The American government now threatened tougher sanctions against Serbia, if Srebrenica fell, and was considering large-scale air strikes against Serbian artillery, although it did not want to proceed with this without the consent of its European allies. The British government immediately let it be known that it was not keen on the idea: '... we still haven't seen any militarily achievable objectives for air strikes, apart from destroying things for the sake of it'.⁴⁶²⁰ For the first time since he assumed the role of EC negotiator, Owen also favoured direct military intervention now. He called for air strikes on bridges and roads to prevent supplies reaching the Serbian troops from Serbia.⁴⁶²¹ According to Owen, the time had come for the resolute confrontation of the Bosnian-Serb leadership by the world. If the Serbs were to take Srebrenica, they would have to withdraw from it. The British mediator again stressed that Srebrenica was 'a Muslim town in a Muslim area'.⁴⁶²²

⁴⁶¹¹ 'New York Times: Overgave Srebrenica kwestie van tijd' (New York Times: Surrender of Srebrenica is a question of time), *ANP*, 16/04/93, 6.04 am.

⁴⁶¹² 'Nederlandse AZG-arts: Srebrenica slachtoffer van terreur' (Dutch AZG doctor: Srebrenica is a victim of terror), *ANP*, 16/04/93, 8.53 am; Tim Judah, 'Reckoning time in valley of death', *The Times*, 17/04/93.

⁴⁶¹³ John Daniszewski, 'Serbs Reportedly Enter Srebrenica', *The Associated Press*, 16/04/93.

⁴⁶¹⁴ 'Srebrenica zur Kapitulation bereit', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 17/04/93; John Daniszewski, 'Serbs Reportedly Enter Srebrenica', *The Associated Press*, 16/04/93.

⁴⁶¹⁵ Michael Montgomery, 'Hope runs out in city of death', *The Daily Telegraph*, 17/04/93.

⁴⁶¹⁶ 'Val Srebrenica onafwendbaar' (Fall of Srebrenica inevitable), *ANP*, 16/04/93, 8.35 pm. With regard to Karadžić's statements, see also 'Karadžić: troepen zullen Srebrenica niet binnengaan' (Karadžić: troops will not enter Srebrenica), *ANP*, 16/04/93, 3.32 pm.

⁴⁶¹⁷ 'Val Srebrenica onafwendbaar', *ANP*, 16/04/93, 8.35 pm.

⁴⁶¹⁸ 'Serviërs vallen Srebrenica binnen' (Serbs enter Srebrenica), *ANP*, 16/04/93, 11.44 am.

⁴⁶¹⁹ 'Val Srebrenica onafwendbaar', *ANP*, 16/04/93, 8.35 pm. With regard to Karadžić's statements, see also 'Karadžić troepen zullen Srebrenica niet binnengaan', *ANP*, 16/04/93, 3.32 pm.

⁴⁶²⁰ Yigal Chazan & Ian Black & Martin Walker, 'Serbs enter Srebrenica', *The Guardian*, 17/04/93.

⁴⁶²¹ 'Owen roept op tot Westers bombardement op Serviërs' (Owen calls for Western bombardment of Serbs), *ANP*, 16/04/93, 1.59 pm; John Daniszewski, 'Serbs Reportedly Enter Srebrenica', *The Associated Press*, 16/04/93.

⁴⁶²² 'Srebrenica zur Kapitulation bereit', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 17/04/93.

There was little enthusiasm amongst Dutch members of parliament for Owen's call. De Hoop Scheffer expected the bombardments that were envisaged to yield more problems than benefits. He felt that it was no longer possible to avoid the imminent fall of Srebrenica and that bombardments could jeopardize further humanitarian action as well as the peace plan. Moreover, he was convinced that Russia would never agree to a resolution in favour of such bombardments. The D66 (Democrats) member of parliament, Ter Veer, anticipated that such bombardments would merely escalate the conflict.⁴⁶²³

Srebrenica in the Dutch Ministerial Council

In the Netherlands in the meantime interdepartmental consultations proceeded with the encouragement of Lubbers about the question as to whether increased military pressure should be brought to bear on the Bosnian Serbs and whether NATO could transform Srebrenica into a safe town. Because the officials involved were of the opinion that a new resolution would be required from the Security Council for air strikes such as those Owen was calling for, and Russia and the US were awaiting the outcome of the Russian referendum on 25 April, it seemed best not to do anything for the time being. The official advisers felt that the chance of preventing the fall of Srebrenica by means of external armed intervention must be considered to be 'virtually zero'.⁴⁶²⁴ In addition, previous deliberations of the NATO council had revealed that there was insufficient support for attacks on ground targets. Van der Vlis is reported to have said that he would find such action 'extremely unwise and unfortunate' at that point in time.⁴⁶²⁵ With regard to the question whether the Netherlands could itself do anything from a military point of view in the light of the emergency in Srebrenica, the answer was nothing other than help by providing medicine, food, funds and shelter.⁴⁶²⁶

Lubbers' questions were 'answered emphatically in the negative accompanied by reasons, both with regard to procedure and substance', as was revealed in the Ministerial Council of 16 April.⁴⁶²⁷ The conclusion of these deliberations was that the Security Council would first need to take action. The arguments were 'sufficiently persuasive to allow the matter to rest', albeit that this outcome was regrettable.⁴⁶²⁸ The Ministerial Council of 16 April also emphatically took into account that Srebrenica would fall during the next few days. One of the ministers shared his fear with his colleagues that in this case the Serbian attackers would kill the Muslim populace 'en masse'. The Ministerial Council felt that little could be expected from the UN before the Russian referendum on 25 April 1993. The minister in question wondered if action could be taken within the EC in order to knock out Serbian heavy artillery from the air.⁴⁶²⁹

In the evening of 16 April London sent a COREU message which reported that it was maintaining contact with UN organizations to do everything possible to prevent a mass murder once Bosnian-Serb forces captured Srebrenica. The CoPo (from the French 'comité politique'), which was to assemble on 21 April, was to prepare statements, if necessary, warning the Serbs against committing atrocities and urging them to cooperate with UNPROFOR and the UNHCR. In addition, London wished to arrange an orderly evacuation because the Foreign Office expected about 60,000 refugees to make their way to Tuzla if Srebrenica were to fall. However, London had understood that, if Srebrenica

⁴⁶²³ 'Kamerleden reageren terughoudend op suggestie Owen' (Reserved response from MPs to Owen's suggestion), *ANP*, 16/04/93, 5.13 pm.

⁴⁶²⁴ AAZ. Memorandum from DAV head to Visser and Waltmann, 16/04/93.

⁴⁶²⁵ AAZ. Memo from Waltmann and Princen to Ter Beek, 16/04/93, incl. remarks by Van der Vlis, 16/04/93.

⁴⁶²⁶ AAZ. Memorandum from DAV head to Kooijmans about the Netherlands' contribution to Srebrenica, z.d.

⁴⁶²⁷ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 16-17/04/93, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴⁶²⁸ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 16-17/04/93, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴⁶²⁹ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 16-17/04/93, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

were to fall, the UNHCR had a contingency plan for the refugees both during their move and their arrival in Tuzla. The United Kingdom also called on the other EC member states to provide food, transport and engineering facilities to cover such an eventuality.⁴⁶³⁰

Preventing the fall

While Srebrenica seemed to be yielding to the pressure of the Bosnian-Serb attack and the world appeared to have few illusions about the events that would ensue, various developments had occurred which would yet lead to a settlement. Now that they found themselves at the very brink, the authorities in both Srebrenica and Sarajevo appeared to be willing to make concessions. Naser Oric sent a secret message to the UN peacekeeping force that he agreed to surrender subject to three conditions. Wounded combatants had to be evacuated by helicopter and all the civilians had to be taken to safe surroundings. He demanded a guarantee that the Muslim fighters be allowed to withdraw unopposed to Tuzla. It was assumed that Oric had made this offer without consulting the government in Sarajevo.⁴⁶³¹

On the afternoon of 16 April Karadzic let it be known to the world that the war would be over as soon as the Muslims relinquished Srebrenica.⁴⁶³² Karadzic uttered these words after consulting Milosevic. The latter also expected a bloodbath in Srebrenica owing to the desire for revenge on the part of the Serbs following the death of thousands of Serbs as a result of the attacks carried out by Oric and his men. Milosevic feared the resolution which the Security Council was currently considering with a view to toughening its sanction against Serbia. After all, the G7 countries had made it clear that it would be dealt with if serious developments occurred around Srebrenica. For this reason Milosevic told Wahlgren in a telephone call that he should immediately send the Canadian company to Srebrenica, which he was holding on standby. Milosevic announced that he had already been in touch with Karadzic about this and that the latter had agreed to it.⁴⁶³³

During the night of Friday 16 April to Saturday 17 April, Karadzic explained what he had meant by his previous reference to 'pacifying' the town. The residents of Srebrenica would be able to choose whether they wished to continue living peacefully in the town or wanted to be evacuated.⁴⁶³⁴ Later that Saturday Karadzic gave an assurance that the VRS would not enter Srebrenica. The army merely wanted the local Muslim troops 'neutralised, so that they can no longer attack us in the region'.⁴⁶³⁵

Fighting in and around Srebrenica still continued on 17 April. An amateur radio operator, Becirovic, reported the occurrence of man-to-man fighting in the town and heavy bombardments. The streets were said to be littered with corpses.⁴⁶³⁶

The question was how Izetbegovic now thought about matters. In mid April he had made varying private and public statements about the significance he would attach to the fall of Srebrenica. On 14 April, when the press asked him following a visit to Egypt and several Gulf states what his response would be to the fall of Srebrenica, he said that it would be 'a catastrophe'. However, it would have few implications for his attitude towards the Vance-Owen plan. He said that he no longer

⁴⁶³⁰ ABZ, Communications Archive. COREU message from London, 17/04/93, cpe/lon 292. The transmission time listed by the COREU system was 16/04/93, 7.23 pm and the time it was received, is listed as 17/04/93, 8.36 am.

⁴⁶³¹ 'Onduidelijkheid over val van Srebrenica' (Confusion about the fall of Srebrenica, *ANP*, 17/04/93, 1:53am; AZ, memo from DAV head to Kooijmans, 16/04/93, no. 93/546; UN, *Srebrenica Report*, par. 54.

⁴⁶³² 'Karadzic: troepen zullen Srebrenica niet binnengaan', *ANP*, 16/04/93, 15:32; 'Srebrenica zur Kapitulation bereit', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 17/04/93.

⁴⁶³³ Honig and Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 141; NIOD, Coll. Wahlgren. Wahlgren to Annan, 16/04/93, UNPROFOR Z-490.

⁴⁶³⁴ Rouba Kabbara, 'Radovan Karadzic affirme que les Serbes ne sont pas entrés à Srebrenica', *Agence France Presse*, 17/04/93.

⁴⁶³⁵ 'VN: Zware gevechten in Srebrenica' (UN: Heavy fighting in Srebrenica), *ANP*, 17/04/93, 10.07 pm.

⁴⁶³⁶ 'VN: Zware gevechten in Srebrenica', *ANP*, 17/04/93, 10.07 pm; 'Bestand Srebrenica lijkt voorbode van capitulatie Moslims' (Srebrenica settlement appears to herald the Muslims' surrender), *ANP*, 18/04/93, 9:24pm.

considered himself to be bound by his signature to the plan. In the future the Bosnian government's approach to further negotiations would be a matter of 'good will'.⁴⁶³⁷

On 16 April the spokesperson for the Bosnian president, Kemal Muftic, announced that negotiations were being conducted to arrange the surrender of Srebrenica. According to him, the town's fall was inevitable. The most important issue at that point in time was to avoid a mass slaughter. For this reason the leadership in Sarajevo wished to proceed with the complete evacuation of Srebrenica. If this town were to fall, the peace plan would be 'dead', according to the spokesperson.⁴⁶³⁸

While on a trip through Scandinavia, Izetbegovic was visiting the Danish Prime Minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Niels Helveg Petersen, in Copenhagen on 17 April. In the presence of the Bosnian chargé d'affaires in Stockholm, Serder, the legal adviser, Haris Nanic and the unofficial representative of Bosnia in Denmark, Professor Tanovic, Izetbegovic told both government ministers that the situation in Srebrenica was 'desperate ... but even if it should fall, it would not be the end of Bosnia-Herzegovina'. At no point during the meeting did he indicate that the fall of Srebrenica would lead him to withdraw his acceptance of the Vance-Owen plan. However, during the press conference that followed, he stated that the fall of Srebrenica should lead to this but, according to him, this was for the Bosnian government to decide. At the same time, he said that he still hoped that the peace plan would succeed.⁴⁶³⁹

At the request of the Commander of the ABiH, Halilovic, in the afternoon of 17 April the meeting with Mladic that had not proceeded five days earlier due to his refusal to appear, went ahead at the airport of Sarajevo in the presence of Wahlgren, Morillon and the representative of the UNHCR in Bosnia, José-Maria Mendiluce.⁴⁶⁴⁰ The reason for the refusal had been the Serbian attacks on Srebrenica. Now it was precisely these attacks that constituted the main topic of this meeting. The talks commenced at two in the afternoon and continued for 12 hours. During this meeting Mladic and Halilovic agreed on a ceasefire which was to start at midnight early in the morning of 18 April. In addition, the two commanders agreed on the deployment of 130 to 150 Canadian peacekeepers in Srebrenica and the evacuation of the wounded by air. The Bosnian Muslims were to demilitarize the area and the Bosnian Serbs would allow UNPROFOR freedom of movement. This agreement was finally signed early in the morning of 18 April.⁴⁶⁴¹

The question arises as to why Mladic did not proceed and capture Srebrenica in April 1993, even though the town had virtually fallen. Owen believed it was likely that Mladic had been restrained by Milosevic, to whom he remained as loyal as ever. It did not seem likely to Owen that he had allowed Karadzic to hold him back. The latter appeared to have forfeited his control over Mladic.⁴⁶⁴² Later on Mladic himself said that he had been restrained by 'more senior individuals'.⁴⁶⁴³ In addition, he had received an undertaking from UNPROFOR that the population of Srebrenica would be evacuated and that any war criminals amongst them would be tried at a later stage.⁴⁶⁴⁴

According to Owen, once Mladic had made a concession in respect of Srebrenica, consideration needed to be given to the fact that he would attack other areas now that he was in a winning mood

⁴⁶³⁷ Hugh Nevill, 'M. Boutros-Ghali: 'le général Morillon a agi en conformité avec les résolutions de l'ONU'', *Agence France Presse*, 14/04/93.

⁴⁶³⁸ 'Srebrenica zur Kapitulation bereit', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 17/04/93; Chazan & Black & Walker, 'Serbs enter Srebrenica', *The Guardian*, 17/04/93.

⁴⁶³⁹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. COREU message from the Danish Presidency of the EC, 17/04/93, cpe/pres/cop 848; 'VN: Zware gevechten in Srebrenica', *ANP*, 17/04/93, 10.07 pm.

⁴⁶⁴⁰ 'Bosnische Moslems willen niet praten' (Bosnian Muslims do not wish to speak, *ANP*, 11/04/93, 10.32pm; 'Boutros Ghali veroordeelt aanvallen op Srebrenica' (Boutros-Ghali condemns attacks on Srebrenica), *ANP*, 15/04/93, 1.13 pm.

⁴⁶⁴¹ See amongst others ABZ, DIO/2004/00075. 'Agreement for the demilitarization of Srebrenica', accompanying PV Genève to DIO/Joegoslavië, fax no. hum/gev-0574/93; UN, *Srebrenica Report*, par. 59-60.

⁴⁶⁴² ABZ, Communications Archive. COREU message from the Danish Presidency of the EC, 24/04/93, cpe/pres/cop 913.

⁴⁶⁴³ Bulatovic, *Mladic*, p. 93.

⁴⁶⁴⁴ Bulatovic, *Mladic*, pp. 93-94.

following recent military successes. In this respect, the question was whether he would opt for an offensive against Zepa and Gorazde or to reduce the pressure on the Posavina corridor.⁴⁶⁴⁵ Heavy fighting had ensued in the Posavina corridor from the first week of April.⁴⁶⁴⁶ In the prevailing circumstances Mladic preferred to achieve total control over the Posavina corridor around Brcko,⁴⁶⁴⁷ which constituted the ‘Achilles’ heel of the Serbian military campaign’.⁴⁶⁴⁸ If they were to seize the area, which the Vance-Owen plan did not assign to the Bosnian Serbs but which they wanted to control, then the Posavina corridor enjoyed top priority,⁴⁶⁴⁹ certainly for Mladic, who was deeply concerned about the fate of the Serbs in Croatia, and did not wish to draw a distinction between the Serbs in Serbia, Bosnia or Croatia.⁴⁶⁵⁰ Srebrenica had since become a much smaller enclave within Bosnian-Serb territory and the VRS controlled all the access routes to it. If the presence of the UN in Srebrenica could lead to a reduction in the operations of the ABiH fighters who were still active in the area, the VRS, faced with an ongoing shortage of personnel, would be able to maintain only a small number of troops around the town. The situation appeared to be ‘frozen’ for the time being. After the VRS finally ceased its attacks on Srebrenica on Sunday, 18 April, as expected the Bosnian-Serb offensive was immediately intensified in the north of Bosnia in the night of Sunday to Monday.⁴⁶⁵¹ If the Bosnian government and army commanders had not already realized it, it must have now become apparent to them that a demilitarized zone in one area meant an increase in Bosnian-Serb military power in another. Relief following the rescue of Srebrenica would therefore soon turn to exasperation. Whatever the case, as long as the war continued in Bosnia, the Bosnian government and the ABiH had little interest in matters really remaining quiet in the vicinity of Srebrenica.

10. A Safe Area

Faced with the threat of Srebrenica falling, the Security Council had also met. It assembled to consider a proposal submitted by five Third World countries, namely, Djibouti, Cape Verde, Morocco, Pakistan and Venezuela, to declare Srebrenica a Safe Area. Initially, it was assumed that there was no chance that this resolution would be adopted, because it would encounter resistance from the permanent members of the Security Council.⁴⁶⁵² Yet the Council adopted Resolution 819, in which it declared Srebrenica to be a Safe Area and UNPROFOR was mandated to assume responsibility for the humanitarian situation in the town. No further attacks on the town were to be countenanced and the paramilitary units around it would have to withdraw. The resolution referred to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which permits military action against ‘threats to peace’. In the course of informal consultations about the draft of the resolution the EPC members of the Security Council and the US had scrapped the term safe haven. This was because a safe haven guaranteed ‘full protection’. The study conducted by the WEU into the establishment of a safe haven in Sarajevo, which had previously been presented to Boutros-Ghali, had shown that 15,000 ground troops would be required for this purpose. Because it had since become clear how difficult it was to raise such a force, the representatives of the EPC countries and the US had decided to replace the term, safe haven, with ‘a Safe Area which should be free from any armed attack

⁴⁶⁴⁵ ABZ, Communications Archives. COREU message from the Danish Presidency of the EC, 24/04/93, cpe/pres/cop 913.

⁴⁶⁴⁶ ‘Bosnië vraagt om spoedzitting Veiligheidsraad’, *ANP*, 09/04/93, 6.14 am.

⁴⁶⁴⁷ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part V-VI, /05/1992 -/04/93. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 29/93, 26/04/93; 30/93, 28/04/93; Part VII, /05/1993 to/03/94, 31/93, 6 /05/1993; 36/93, 27 /05/1993.

⁴⁶⁴⁸ Giersch, *Konfliktregulierung*, p. 279.

⁴⁶⁴⁹ Gow, *Triumph*, p. 247.

⁴⁶⁵⁰ Bulatovic, *Mladic*, p. 39.

⁴⁶⁵¹ ‘Gevechten verplaatsen zich naar noorden Bosnië’ (Fighting moves to the north of Bosnia), *ANP*, 19/04/93, 9.42 am. According to this ANP report, fighting stopped at about midday. Mladic says this happened at 4.59 am. Bulatovic, *Mladic*, p. 96.

⁴⁶⁵² ‘Onduidelijkheid over val Srebrenica’ (Confusion about the fall of Srebrenica), *ANP*, 17/04/93, 1.53am.

or any other hostile act'. In other words 'full protection' would not be provided but only a 'certain degree of security'.⁴⁶⁵³ This marked the beginning of a great deal of confusion, more so because no provision of international law stipulated what a Safe Area was. Much would depend on the concrete implementation of the term.

In Resolution 819 the Security Council requested Boutros-Ghali to strengthen the presence of UNPROFOR in Srebrenica and to take steps that would lead to the evacuation of the sick and wounded from the town. Finally, the Council required unimpeded access to Srebrenica for humanitarian aid. Later, on Saturday 17 April, the Security Council, acting in the light of the events that had occurred around Srebrenica, agreed to tighten sanctions against Yugoslavia, unless the Bosnian Serbs accepted the Vance-Owen plan in the near future. Amongst other things, the Council ordered the prohibition of transit traffic through Yugoslavia, the proclamation of a comprehensive naval blockade, the freezing of the international financial assets of the rump Yugoslavia, and the confiscation of all Yugoslavian aircraft and other means of transport (Resolution 820). The Russian delegation abstained, as did the Chinese one. In order to spare the Jeltsin government which was to be subject to a referendum on 25 April, the sanctions were only to come into effect on 26 April if the Bosnian-Serb leaders had not agreed to the Vance-Owen peace plan in the interim.

Early in the afternoon of Sunday 18 April 145 Canadian troops entered Srebrenica. Their heaviest weapons were .50 machine guns. They were required to supervise the ceasefire and the Muslims' surrender of their weapons. The latter was supposed to occur within 72 hours. If this deadline was not met, 'all the obligations of the (Bosnian-) Serb army towards the Muslims' would cease to apply, according to Mladic.⁴⁶⁵⁴

Ultimately, the demilitarization was confined to the town itself. Although the Muslims only handed in a modest amount of weapons (two tanks, an armoured vehicle, 23 pieces of artillery and mortars, and 260 handguns), on 21 April Wahlgren declared that the demilitarization of the town had been completed. He was able to do this because the day before a VRS team had approved the demilitarization, although it must have been no secret to the team members that the nature of the disarmament was rather limited. The reason why the VRS nevertheless agreed to this imperfect demilitarization was probably because they would otherwise have had to allow two additional platoons of Canadian troops into Srebrenica, which UNPROFOR had stated would be needed to ensure that the demilitarization process was properly implemented. However, the VRS did not want to allow in any more peacekeepers.⁴⁶⁵⁵ On 23 April Kofi Annan, who had succeeded Goulding as head of the DPKO, directed Wahlgren not to commence demilitarization too energetically. This was because he understood disarmament to mean that, 'UNPROFOR takes on a moral responsibility for the safety of the disarmed that it clearly does not have the military resources to honour beyond a point.' He advised against searching homes for weapons: 'You will undoubtedly be made aware by the visiting Security Council delegation (of Diego Arria, the Permanent Representative of Venezuela) of the strong feeling amongst several members that UNPROFOR should not participate too actively in "disarming the victims"'.⁴⁶⁵⁶

In addition, Mladic and Halilovic had agreed that 500 wounded people would be allowed to leave Srebrenica by helicopter. In the end, a total of 489 wounded people were evacuated from Srebrenica by helicopter. Probably acting as ordered by Sarajevo, Naser Oric prohibited the evacuation of civilians from the enclave by road, fearing that this could lead to the depopulation of the town.⁴⁶⁵⁷ A week later a further 150 wounded people were to be moved to Tuzla. Between the arrival of Morillon

⁴⁶⁵³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00112. DEU (coordination), memorandum, '*Voormalig Joegoslavië. Achtergrond*' (Former Yugoslavia: Background) for Gymnich, 24-25/04/93, 22/04/93.

⁴⁶⁵⁴ '*Bestand Srebrenica lijkt voorbode van capitulatie Moslims*', ANP, 18/04/93, 9.24 pm.

⁴⁶⁵⁵ Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/ 2001; NIOD, Wahlgren coll. Wahlgren to Annan, 21/04/93, UNPROFOR Z-517, Security Council Meeting on Srebrenica.

⁴⁶⁵⁶ Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 100; Honig and Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 154.

⁴⁶⁵⁷ '*Autoriteiten Srebrenica weigeren nieuwe evacuatie*' (Srebrenica authorities refuse new evacuation), ANP, 19/04/93, 2.57 pm; interview J. Zoutendijk, 6/04/ 2001.

in March and the end of April a total of between 8,000 and 9,000 people were evacuated from Srebrenica. Several tens of thousands remained behind in the enclave.⁴⁶⁵⁸

Following the adoption of Resolution 819, the French government found it difficult to give the Srebrenica hero, Morillon, the push. On Sunday 18 April, the French Prime Minister, Edouard Balladur, announced that the general would no be recalled.⁴⁶⁵⁹ Emboldened, Morillon swore to the press that same day that he would keep the Serbs out of Srebrenica. Once the Canadian peacekeepers had arrived, a Serb attack on Srebrenica would amount to 'an attack on the entire world', according to the French general. He was convinced that the Bosnian Serbs would not dare to do this.⁴⁶⁶⁰

Wahlgren felt it was nevertheless better to issue a public warning intended for Serbian ears: 'Our orders are to protect this demilitarized zone as peacekeepers,' said the Swedish general. 'This means that, if anyone tries to enter by force, the United Nations troops will use force for the purposes of self-defence.' According to Wahlgren, the 150 Canadian troops were sufficiently well-armed to defend the enclave.⁴⁶⁶¹

However, on 23 April Wahlgren wrote a more considered report to Annan about what the Canadian troops would do if they were attacked in Srebrenica:

'They would fire back in self-defence; this includes defence of their mission, i.e. they would use force if armed elements attempted by force to intrude into the demilitarized area. However, as you have also stressed to us, UNPROFOR has deployed in Srebrenica with the agreement of the parties and the threat of the use of force in this context is intended to apply in a situation where a small number of armed elements violate this agreement. We understand, of course, that 145 peace-keepers cannot be expected to resist a full-scale invasion by the Bosnian Serb Army; and that should heavy artillery shelling occur, UNPROFOR will take shelter like everyone else.'⁴⁶⁶²

A day later the British government offered to use air strikes to assist the 150 Canadian peacekeepers, if they were to become the target of VRS attacks.⁴⁶⁶³

Any more Safe Areas?

Following the conclusion of the agreement between Halilovic and Mladic, and the adoption of Resolution 819, UNHCR declared that it now supported Safe Areas, whereas it had opposed them so much in December 1992. The refugee agency proposed that Zepa and Gorazde also be declared Safe Areas. This would require a 'large UN presence, mostly military'.⁴⁶⁶⁴ Ogata, who had resisted the combination of humanitarian aid and military enforcement for so long, now inclined towards UNPROFOR.

The Dutch government had sought the establishment of Safe Areas for some period of time. When the Dutch Ministerial Council met again on Saturday, 17 April, it was able to note with relief that the Security Council had adopted Resolution 819. However, the Ministerial Council was divided as to

⁴⁶⁵⁸ UN, *Srebrenica Report*, par. 40; Hren (ed.), *Overlevenden*, p. 19.

⁴⁶⁵⁹ 'Morillon to stay in Bosnia', *Press Association Newsfile*, 18/04/93.

⁴⁶⁶⁰ 'Morillon mag in Bosnië blijven', *ANP*, 18/04/93, 21:52.

⁴⁶⁶¹ 'VN-chef: zenden VN-grondtroepen mogelijke enige oplossing' (UN chief: sending UN ground troops is possibly the only solution, *ANP*, 22/04/93, 4.01 pm.

⁴⁶⁶² NIOD Collection (2).

⁴⁶⁶³ 'EG neigt naar militaire actie' (EC inclines towards military action), *ANP*, 24/04/93, 9.36 pm.

⁴⁶⁶⁴ ABZ, DIO/2004/00075. UNHCR, 'Note on Bosnia-Herzegovina', 19/04/93, accompanying PV Geneva to Kooijmans, 22/04/93, fax no. hum/gev-0574/93; Wagenmakers 380 to Kooijmans, 23/04/93; ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part V-VI, /05/1992 -/04/93. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 28/93, 22/04/93.

the next step. On the one hand, there were ministers who found that the resolution imposed a duty to do something to guarantee the safety of the inhabitants of Srebrenica, otherwise the credibility of the international community would be eroded. On the other hand, there was one minister in particular who supported the mass evacuation of the population. Finally, it was decided that the Dutch government would inform the American government that the Srebrenica resolution implied a moral obligation to render the town a Safe Area. This meant that the evacuation should not proceed.⁴⁶⁶⁵ Later that day Kooijmans addressed a CDA conference in Gouda devoted to foreign policy, where he referred to the Security Council resolution to establish a Safe Area in Srebrenica as ‘a ray of hope’. Nevertheless, the minister said that he expected the town to fall soon, because the Council had failed to provide the resources required to secure its safety at the same time. In a wider context the minister noted that the Western world would have to get used to the idea of deploying military resources, even though the ultimate goal may not be immediately clear.⁴⁶⁶⁶

Barth, the Head of the Directorate for General Policy Matters in the Ministry of Defence was more positive towards Resolution 819. According to him, the ‘most realistic “military” option’ open to the West in Bosnia-Herzegovina was to implement Safe Areas. He felt that this represented the proper performance of the primary duties of UNPROFOR II: help alleviate intense humanitarian suffering wherever possible. In addition, Barth felt that by providing the Bosnian people with aid, they need ‘not wait (in vain?) for the Vance-Owen plan’. However, according to him, one would need to consider within an international context what technical resources and/or observers could be used to determine which party bombarded the Safe Areas. ‘This must be done partly to ensure that Muslim fighters do not attempt to provoke international military intervention by attacking their “own” towns.’⁴⁶⁶⁷

Moreover, at the time the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs received reports from the American government that it was interested in the idea of Safe Havens. This was reported by both the political adviser to the American embassy in The Hague, Holm,⁴⁶⁶⁸ and by Ralph Johnson, who had accompanied Bartholomew on a mission to the former Yugoslavia. According to Johnson, the Americans had already investigated the practical aspects of establishing Safe Havens in Bosnia and questions remained as to their precise location, size, degree of protection and the question whether Serbian artillery stationed around the areas could be removed by force.⁴⁶⁶⁹ According to an article published in *The Guardian* on 12 April, the report produced by the experts who had visited Bosnia, had however received a cool reception from the State Department and the National Security Council.⁴⁶⁷⁰

Greater value could be attached to the announcement by Holm that American policy tended more towards ‘lift and strike’, lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian government and the deployment of air power for major attacks.⁴⁶⁷¹ According to Holm, lifting the arms embargo and deploying air power would constitute a logical complement to the superior manpower which the Bosnian government had at its disposal. Such a policy would have created a similar situation to that prevailing in Kosovo at the end of the 1990s when allied forces carried out bombardments and the UCK, the Albanian army, engaged in ground battle. As early as the summer of 1992 the Bosnian government had tried to make it clear to the West that it would be satisfied with a policy of ‘lift and strike’. It felt that not a single non-Bosnian would need to be deployed.⁴⁶⁷² At a later stage it would also be possible for Safe Havens to constitute part of the policy proposed by the American government,

⁴⁶⁶⁵ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 16-17/04/93, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴⁶⁶⁶ ‘Veiligheidszone Srebrenica “lichtpuntje”’ (Srebrenica safe area is ‘a ray of hope’), *ANP*, 17/04/93, 11.04 am.

⁴⁶⁶⁷ DAB. memorandum from Barth to Ter Beek, 21/04/93, D93/200.

⁴⁶⁶⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00887. Kooijmans to the embassy in Washington, 20/04/93, celer 065.

⁴⁶⁶⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00887. Bentinck 259 to Kooijmans, 24/04/93.

⁴⁶⁷⁰ Michael Gordon and Stephen Engelberg, ‘Experts urge US to intervene in Bosnia’, *The Guardian*, 12/04/93.

⁴⁶⁷¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Kooijmans to the embassy in Washington, 20/04/93, celer 065.

⁴⁶⁷² Simms, *Hour*, pp. 77-78.

according to Holm, but he stressed that it would be difficult to guarantee their safety without the deployment of more ground troops.⁴⁶⁷³

Prior to the CoPo in Brussels on 21 April, Hattinga van 't Sant headed a team in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which formulated the principles underlying Dutch policy in relation to Bosnia. With regard to what was said to be the most pressing problem, Srebrenica, the following was determined: there should be no complicity in the ethnic cleansing of Srebrenica; Srebrenica should become a Safe Haven and maximum efforts should be made to provide humanitarian assistance. Tuzla should also become a Safe Haven. Economic sanctions still appeared to be the best means of putting pressure on the Serbs to accept the Vance-Owen plan. Military action represented a last resort and acquiescing to Serb conquests represented 'a second Munich' which 'would throw the door wide open to the creation of chaos in many parts of Europe'.

On 23 April Kooijmans directed the Netherlands' Permanent Representative to NATO, L.W. Veenendaal, who had succeeded Jacobovits de Szeged shortly beforehand, to lobby the allies for the transformation of the Safe Area of Srebrenica into a Safe Haven, which would offer much greater military protection to its residents. In addition, Veenendaal was to raise the question as to what provision should be made for the protection of Zepa and Gorazde, and also Tuzla if possible, in order to prevent those areas from facing the threat of falling into the hands of the VRS like Srebrenica.⁴⁶⁷⁴

However, the European Community was more interested in the concept of Safe Areas following the adoption of Resolution 819 and in view of the fact that UNHCR had been 'converted'. During the weekend of 24 and 25 April, a week after Srebrenica had almost fallen, the EC Ministers of Foreign Affairs assembled for informal consultations in the Hindsgavl castle in Middelfart in Denmark. This meeting was largely dominated by the scheduled visit of the American Secretary of State, Christopher, to Europe, during which he was expected to outline the policy which the Clinton administration had finalized on the former Yugoslavia. In the meantime rumours were circulating that this policy would comprise the elements of 'lift and strike'. The British government, in particular, was fiercely opposed to this. It held the view that lifting the arms embargo would result in all-out war. According to the government in London, air strikes would endanger the provision of humanitarian aid and simultaneously fail to delay aggression. In addition, the Major government wished to keep its diplomatic lines of communication with Belgrade open.⁴⁶⁷⁵ With this as their starting point, the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the 12 EC member states were very successful in agreeing that no option, including the military one, should be excluded if the Vance-Owen plan was not accepted.⁴⁶⁷⁶ During their weekend in Middelfart the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the 12 EC member states mainly considered the closure of their embassies in Belgrade and limited air strikes. Furthermore, they agreed that it would be advisable to exclude Yugoslavia from UN-related meetings. Hurd called for an examination of the possibility of creating Safe Havens, especially around Srebrenica.⁴⁶⁷⁷

Naturally, Kooijmans agreed with this and he pleaded that the enclaves of Gorazde, Zepa and Tuzla should also acquire the status of well-protected Safe Havens. Of course, more ground troops would be required for this. If it was impossible to mobilize them, then Kooijmans felt they should settle for Safe Areas or Relief Zones, which offered significantly less protection. Kooijmans argued that it would be possible to provide the enclaves with better protection from the air. However, he received little support for his views.⁴⁶⁷⁸

⁴⁶⁷³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Kooijmans to the embassy in Washington, 20/04/93, celer 065.

⁴⁶⁷⁴ ABZ, 999 NAVO-WEU, isn 1197, Part 04. Kooijmans to PV NAVO, 23/04/93, celer 194.

⁴⁶⁷⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Hoekman 127 to Kooijmans, 22/04/93.

⁴⁶⁷⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Kooijmans to PV EG, 26/04/93, celer 041. It was apparently of great importance to the 12 EC member states to avoid harming trans-Atlantic relations. ('EC ministers brace for clash with US over Bosnia action', *The Guardian*, 26/04/93.

⁴⁶⁷⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Kooijmans to PV EG, 26/04/93, celer 041.

⁴⁶⁷⁸ ABZ, 999 NAVO-WEU, isn 1197, Part 04, Kooijmans 206 to PV NAVO, 28/04/93. See also the interview with P.H. Kooijmans, 10 September 1999. The Netherlands had also raised this matter during the CoPo meeting on 21/04/. ABZ, DPV/ARA/00112, memorandum, 'Voormalig Joegoslavië. Achtergrond' for Gymnich, 24-25/04/93, 22/04/93. See also

Public opinion in the Netherlands

Apart from covering the camps and the rapes, the media had been informing the Dutch public about the course of the conflict since the summer of 1992. In 1993 the war in Yugoslavia continued to feature prominently in the international reports carried by the printed press. In the case of the six major daily newspapers (*Algemeen Dagblad*, *NRC Handelsblad*, *Het Parool*, *De Telegraaf*, *Trouw* and *De Volkskrant*) news about the former Yugoslavia made it to the headlines 222 times, followed at a distance by the former Soviet Union (128 times) and relations between Israel and the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) (73 times). The same order was discernible in the case of leading articles (123, 94, 49) and political illustrations (89, 53, 23).⁴⁶⁷⁹ In a survey conducted amongst young people by the *Stichting Krant in de Klas* (Foundation for Newspapers in the Classroom), it appeared that the war in Bosnia accounted for the most important news to them in 1993.⁴⁶⁸⁰ According to another survey, in April 1993 25% of adults followed reports on the former Yugoslavia very closely, 56% did this to a reasonable degree and 18% hardly at all. These statistics barely differed from the responses to the same question in August 1992, when the debate on intervention peaked (22%, 57% and 18% respectively).⁴⁶⁸¹

However, the reports continued to emanate frequently from the Bosnian side of the lines. Yet this could also offer clarity to both the supporters and opponents of military intervention. For instance, Zeljko Knez, the commander of the Second Army Corps in Tuzla provided the Dutch freelance journalist, Clifford Cremer, with an excellent portrayal of the relative strengths of the ABiH and the VRS. Only one in every three ABiH soldiers was armed, according to Knez:

‘We are fighting against tanks with bows and arrows as it were. We have the numbers on our side and they have technology on theirs. In addition, their morale is very low. The only thing they are fighting for is a corridor to Krajina. They are therefore not fighting for their own land, as we are. They find it necessary to recruit increasingly younger boys or crooked old men. Yet they can still rely on the federal army for heavy artillery and tanks if things go wrong. This is why they can go on.’

Asked about a Western military intervention, Knez said that it was better for the Bosnians to solve their own problems:

‘Moreover, I would not like to see European boys killed on account of the policies of a few crazy politicians in Belgrade. We have enough manpower, only we do not have the weapons.... With heavy tanks and artillery we would throw the aggressors out of Bosnia without any difficulty! In order to end this war quickly, three things are necessary: one, a total flight ban above Bosnia; two, lift the arms embargo against Bosnia; and three, completely boycott Serbia.’⁴⁶⁸²

However, once conflict broke out between the Croats and Muslims in Central Bosnia, it became more difficult to explain matters to readers.⁴⁶⁸³ The then RTL journalist, Willem Lust, later complained:

DEU (coordination), memorandum, ‘Voormalig Joegoslavië. Achtergrond’ for the CoPo 21/04/93, 20/04/93; ABZ, 999.241, No Fly Zone, Part III. Kooijmans 29 to embassy Ankara, 29/04/93.

⁴⁶⁷⁹ Jan van de Plasse, ‘Meer lezers, minder annonces. De landelijke zes in ‘93’ (More readers, fewer advertisements: The national six in ‘93), *De Journalist*, 11/02/94, p. 25.

⁴⁶⁸⁰ This was to be the same again in 1994. ‘Belangrijk nieuws’ (Important News), *De Journalist*, 10/02/95, p. 7.

⁴⁶⁸¹ De Boode and Everts, *Ontwikkelingen* (Developments), p. 187.

⁴⁶⁸² Clifford C. Cremer, ‘Met pijl en boog tegen tank’ (Using bows and arrows against tanks), *HP/De Tijd* 15/01/93, p. 12.

⁴⁶⁸³ cf. Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Lessen van de oorlog op de Balkan’ in Van Es, Sampiemon and Starink (eds.), *Redacteuren*, p. 215.

‘Everyone I spoke to in the Netherlands, said, ‘Could you explain it again, because I do not understand a word of it!’ Look, sorry. You will simply have to read the newspaper. It is all in there. Many of the people who said that they did not understand it at all, were able to list the names of the Dutch national football team. It depends on what you are interested in. If you are not interested in it... Although I must say that we once ... hung up a small map of Bosnia listing all the battles going on in just about every valley. At a certain point the Serbs were fighting the Muslims and the Croats were fighting the Serbs. The next moment it was the Muslims against the Croats. We enlarged it and hung it on the wall. People thought it was a joke. That was the way things were. At a certain point you had different coalitions in each valley. It was difficult to make sense of everything.’⁴⁶⁸⁴

Nicole Lucas, the foreign editor and Balkan specialist at *Trouw* said that it also became increasingly difficult to determine who you could still believe in the conflict. ‘All you want to do is write about the events in the former Yugoslavia properly but that is almost no longer possible.’⁴⁶⁸⁵ Caroline de Gruyter referred to the conflict in *Elsevier* as ‘a war without goodies or baddies’.⁴⁶⁸⁶

According to *De Journalist*, the periodical of the NVJ (Netherlands Association of Journalists), the lack of transparency in the conflict and the many conflicting interests confused journalists, public opinion and the politicians in equal measure. At the end of 1993 one could therefore detect a certain weariness in the media in relation to the war in Bosnia, a fatigue which had its source mainly in its powerlessness to galvanize the politicians into action.⁴⁶⁸⁷ Van der Horst felt that ‘the Dutch’ had not known which side to back in the former Yugoslavia for some time already: ‘Despite international involvement and the constant presence of television cameras, the conflict has become incomprehensible. Granted, we do want to send food or money for the victims and, if necessary we will send off our boys who serve in the Royal Netherlands Army’.⁴⁶⁸⁸ In particular, the editorial introductions in *HP/De Tijd* regularly referred to powerlessness and indecision in relation to Bosnia, but at the same time it was stated that there were hardly any opportunities for intervention.

However, there were few indications in the public opinion polls of a declining preference for military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In a survey conducted by the NIPO in April 1993 three quarters of the respondents were in favour of military intervention with the sole aim of supporting the provision of aid. Barely fewer people favoured military intervention in order to halt the war: 71%. In August 1992 the corresponding figures had been 68% and 63% respectively. The most remarkable development was an about-turn on the part of GroenLinks (‘Green Left’). Those of its members who supported military action for the purposes of aid, rose from 50% in August 1992 to 88% in 1993, and for the purposes of ending the war, from 22% to 68%. 88% of all the respondents felt that Dutch troops should also be part of any military intervention, and 80% said that it was acceptable if Dutch soldiers died in the process.⁴⁶⁸⁹ On 25 January 1993 the NCRV current affairs television program *Hier en Nu* began to present a series of weekly overviews which was to continue until 21 February 1994, and which invariably ended with the words, ‘And still there is no intervention’.

The Professor of History from Utrecht and columnist for *HP/De Tijd*, Hans Righart, therefore felt that public opinion was exerting increasing pressure on the politicians to decide on military

⁴⁶⁸⁴ Interview W. Lust, 19 July 2000.

⁴⁶⁸⁵ PvdK, ‘Onbekende stemmen van het front’ (Unknown voices from the front), *De Journalist*, 23/04/93, p.10.

⁴⁶⁸⁶ Caroline de Gruyter, ‘Europa gruwet van “solo-actie van Clinton”’ (Europe abhors ‘Clinton’s solo action’), *Elsevier*, 08/05/1993, p. 39.

⁴⁶⁸⁷ Frits Baarda, ‘Foto’s uit Bosnië veroorzaken niets’ (Photographs from Bosnia have no effect), *De Journalist*, 19 November 1993, p. 18.

⁴⁶⁸⁸ A. van der Horst, ‘Tenten kun je niet eten’ (You cannot eat tents), *HP/De Tijd*, 23/04/93, p. 10.

⁴⁶⁸⁹ De Boode & Everts, *Ontwikkelingen*, pp. 187-88.

intervention, although he did not actually see any point in this. Action should really be directed against people such as Milosevic and Karadzic, who he believed were playing the roles of Hitler and Mussolini in ‘the dirty war of conquest waged by Greater Serbia’.⁴⁶⁹⁰

Nevertheless, the debate on intervention as pursued by the printed media had lost steam. The complexity of the Vance-Owen plan and the discussions held within NATO about the composition of an armed force, which occurred outside public scrutiny, led to a form of resignation on the part of those in favour of intervention. Now it was mainly the warnings uttered against intervention that resonated in the press. There was a growing disparity between organized public opinion as it was presented in the daily and weekly publications, and unorganized public opinion. In view of the broadcasts of current affairs programme *Hier en Nu*, television appeared to have chosen the side of the wider public.

Writing in *NRC Handelsblad*, Major General A.J. van Vuren stated that it would be better if the West were to desist from moving resolutions in the Security Council as long as there was no political will to implement them. The UN’s authority was only being eroded as a result.⁴⁶⁹¹ Prof. Dr. F.A.M. Alting von Geusau expected any intervention by the West in Bosnia to have an escalating rather than a calming effect.⁴⁶⁹² The journalist, Henri de By, wrote an editorial comment in *HP/De Tijd*, in which he noted that, however powerful NATO might seem to be, the question may be posed as to whether the alliance was equipped for the conflict in Bosnia:

‘In spite of all the Airmobile Brigades, the transformation from defence against a massive lightning attack from the East to a surgical intervention in a civil war does not seem to be a piece of cake. Saving innocent lives is most certainly an honourable goal but the ... question arises: at the cost of how many other lives? And whose? That of the neighbour’s boy, your own son or your daughter?’⁴⁶⁹³

The well-known journalist and columnist, W.L. Brugsma, was totally opposed to intervention: ‘If we see the unbearable images of Bosnia appear on our screens, it would be better for us to switch channels with the remote control than to intervene’. According to him, soldiers simply only fight well when they are defending their own relatives and country. ‘A humanist who cannot cope with these images, is at liberty to buy a one-way ticket to Sarajevo with space in the luggage rack for his rifle. He is not at liberty to send his female neighbour’s son there to defend something which is also not part of his territory from a humanitarian perspective.’⁴⁶⁹⁴ According to Lieutenant General Gé Berkhof retired, NATO military personnel shrank from deployment in the former Yugoslavia, because they feared an unclear mandate and a stay in Bosnia that might last years if not generations.⁴⁶⁹⁵

Even former supporters of military intervention found their appetite for it eroded by the Vance-Owen plan. De Kok, who had pleaded for air bombardments of the Serbian military industry and infrastructure in June 1992, stated as early as December 1992 that military intervention to end the conflict was undesirable and impossible. It was not clear what political objective intervention was to serve. There was a good chance of matters escalating in the Balkans, according to him. In addition, it could ruffle the feathers of Russian conservatives.⁴⁶⁹⁶ Mient Jan Faber declared, ‘Imagine that the

⁴⁶⁹⁰ H. Righart, ‘Het Bosnische moeras’ (The Bosnian swamp), *HP/De Tijd*, 16/04/93, p. 15.

⁴⁶⁹¹ A.J. van Vuren, ‘Aanscherpen van VN-sancties tegen Bosnië niet zinvol’ (Toughening UN sanctions against Bosnia makes no sense), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/01/93.

⁴⁶⁹² O. van Boetzelaer, ‘Naleving Verenigde Naties-resoluties’ (Compliance with United Nations resolutions), *CD/Actueel*, 6/02/93, p. 15.

⁴⁶⁹³ Henri de By, ‘Götterdämmerung’, *HP/De Tijd*, 30/04/93, p. 7.

⁴⁶⁹⁴ W.L. Brugsma, ‘De cultureelrijke staat van de mens’ (The cultural condition of humankind), *HP/De Tijd*, 11 June 1993, p. 64.

⁴⁶⁹⁵ Guikje Roethof, ‘In staat van ontbinding’ (In the process of decomposition), *HP/De Tijd*, 30-04/93, p. 26.

⁴⁶⁹⁶ T. de Kok, ‘Voormalig Joegoslavië’ (Former Yugoslavia), *CD/Actueel*, 12/12/92, p. 8; ‘Voormalig Joegoslavië’, *CD/Actueel*, 24/04/93, p. 19.

Vance-Owen plan is accepted anyway and that NATO provides troops to implement it. This plan is so poorly put together, that the operation could simply turn out to be a major fiasco.⁴⁶⁹⁷ In an article in *De Volkskrant* entitled ‘Nederland heeft in Bosnië niets te zoeken’ (The Netherlands has no business to be in Bosnia), he wrote that he was disturbed by the ease with which Parliament pleaded to send Dutch troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Writing about the Vance-Owen plan, he posed the question as to whether Dutch troops were required to defend and perpetuate ‘this discriminatory monstrosity for many years to come’.⁴⁶⁹⁸ Lieutenant Colonel M. van den Doel, of the Instituut Clingendael (Clingendael Institute), the former military attaché in Belgrade, Brigadier General J. de Vogel retired, and the Slavic scholar from Leiden, Willem Vermeer, said that the Vance-Owen plan was too complex to produce lasting stability.⁴⁶⁹⁹

The lack of willingness on the part of the American government to contribute ground troops and the powerlessness of the European countries to make a stand for peace played into the hands of those who wished to warn against intervention. The former CDA member of Parliament, Joep de Boer, warned that any military intervention would require the involvement of the United States and Russia, a clearly defined objective and a centralized command structure. More like 100,000 troops would be required rather than 10,000 for such an operation. ‘Anything else is highly dangerous nonsense.’⁴⁷⁰⁰

Dr. Paul Hoebink, an associate of the *Derde Wereld Centrum* (Third World Centre) of the Catholic University of Nijmegen, was of the opinion that hardly any serious discussion still ensued in the Dutch media about the possibility and impossibility of intervention and its advantages and disadvantages.⁴⁷⁰¹ The journalist, Jan van der Ven, wrote in *Het Parool* that in view of the fact that the intervention debate had died down, he expected parliament would also express itself ‘in more moderate and realistic terms’. The repetition of its previous verbal abuse would ‘only highlight the impotence of small Holland, thereby casting shame on the national political process’.⁴⁷⁰² Joris Cammelbeeck noted in *De Volkskrant* that those favouring intervention always fell silent when the issue of ground troops was raised. However, as long as they refused to consider this option, Cammelbeeck felt that their calls for military intervention were ‘free of obligation’. According to him, there was little left to do other than ‘not intervene and hope that it blows over soon’, because he felt that a failed intervention would be worse than doing nothing. Now that the politicians had realized that one cannot create a society, Cammelbeeck believed that politicians should not continue to produce the illusion that there were indeed simple solutions for international problems.⁴⁷⁰³ Arie Elshout wrote in the same newspaper that pleas for intervention were beginning ‘to be boring’ after the former British Prime Minister, Thatcher, was reported in the BBC news on 13 April to have accused the West of cowardice and of being devoid of any conscience,⁴⁷⁰⁴ because it had not intervened forcefully in Bosnia. Because those favouring intervention never mentioned how great a chance there was that the action they recommended would even achieve anything, he wondered whether those politicians who said they were in favour of intervention, actually meant that or simply needed to say something. He quoted the American Professor of International Relations, Stephen John Stedman, who warned ‘against human hubris: the

⁴⁶⁹⁷ Guikje Roethof, ‘In staat van ontbinding’, *HP/De Tijd*, 30/04/93, p. 30.

⁴⁶⁹⁸ Mient Jan Faber, ‘Nederland heeft in Bosnië niets te zoeken’, *de Volkskrant*, 17/03/93.

⁴⁶⁹⁹ A. van der Horst, ‘Het misbaksel van Vance en Owen’ (The Frankenstein of Vance and Owen), *HP/De Tijd*, 21/05/1993, pp. 13-14. In relation to Van den Doel’s point of view see also Pieter den Hollander, ‘Het westen zwemt fuik van geweld binnen’ (The West stumbles into bloodbath), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29/04/93

⁴⁷⁰⁰ Joep de Boer, ‘Wel of geen interventie in Joegoslavië’ (To intervene or not to intervene in Yugoslavia), *CD/Actueel*, 27/02/93, p. 20.

⁴⁷⁰¹ ‘Dr. Paul Hoekink: “Demokratie kun je niet afdwingen met militair ingrijpen”’ (Dr Paul Hoekink: ‘You cannot enforce democracy through military intervention’), *Tribune* (1993)2, 26/02/93, p. 14.

⁴⁷⁰² Van der Ven, ‘Machteloosheid’ (Impotence), *Het Parool*, 06/03/93.

⁴⁷⁰³ J. Cammelbeeck, ‘Mislukte interventie is erger dan niets doen’ (Failed intervention is worse than doing nothing), *de Volkskrant*, 30/04/93.

⁴⁷⁰⁴ Hieke Jippes, ‘Lady Thatcher valt uit naar Westen over oorlog in Bosnië’ (Lady Thatcher attacks West in relation to war in Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/04/93.

overconfidence in the ability of the world community to take over “God’s work” and establish peace and tranquillity throughout the world through its intervention’.⁴⁷⁰⁵ Raymond van den Boogaard also believed that ‘probably well-intentioned’ politicians were attempting to do something about their feeling of disquiet in relation to the war in Yugoslavia ‘mainly in the form of empty promises’. He raised the question whether it was not time for those who influence public opinion, to convince their compatriots that war ‘is a fact of life under the circumstances’. He had few illusions about Western intervention at that point in time: ‘No one has ever helped an alcoholic abandon drink while he was determined to continue drinking’.⁴⁷⁰⁶

Oostlander was one of the few people who supported intervention and still let himself be heard. He believed that, in order to avoid an ‘Endlösung der Bosnienfrage’ by the Serbs, the CDA should support the lift-and-strike policy advocated by the American government instead of continuing to pursue the ‘third-rate politics’ of the United Nations and the European Council of Ministers.⁴⁷⁰⁷

The question was whether the change of organized public opinion – that is, the about-turn in the intervention debate – would have any effect on the Dutch parliament and the government. De Kok suspected that it would not, because he said that he expected Parliament to be more willing than the Dutch public, for example, if Safe Havens needed to be fought for. In such a case he predicted that parliament would consent to the deployment of Dutch ground troops, but he would still need to see how the Dutch public would respond if there were any casualties. ‘I think that many, very many Dutch people will wonder out loud whether those people in The Hague have not had their brains bashed in, simply to allow our boys to be shot to bits by a bunch of bandits.’⁴⁷⁰⁸

During those months the government adopted a different position from that of organized public opinion in respect of two points. In the first place, it accepted the Vance-Owen plan as its starting point, and secondly, it was quite prepared to deploy Dutch troops for this purpose. At the end of April Minister Kooijmans seized on a description of himself penned by Rob Meines in *NRC Handelsblad* to contrast his position against that of the Dutch critics of the peace plan. He said that for months he had let it be known that the Vance-Owen plan was the only one there was. According to him, the critics had never presented an alternative. Kooijmans felt they were certainly entitled to continue highlighting the morally reprehensible aspects of the plan, ‘because if you lose sight of the moral aspects to this type of awful issue, you will begin to get used to it as it were’. However as a minister, he had to base his decisions on different grounds, even though he sometimes found this difficult to do.⁴⁷⁰⁹

Conclusion

Apart from obtaining Izetbegovic’s signature to the map on 25 March – a signature which he felt he could withdraw at any point in time – Owen and Vance had hardly made any progress in negotiations about their peace plan since the beginning of March. Responsibility for this lay with the Bosnian-Serb leaders in the first place. While it was not new to see them defy the world, it was new that they did not appear to be susceptible to the pressure brought to bear on them by Cosic, Milosevic and Bulatovic. In addition, there were still differences between Karadzic and Mladic, which even seemed to contribute to

⁴⁷⁰⁵ Arie Elshout, ‘De illusie van het interventionisme’ (The illusion of ‘interventionism’), *Het Parool*, 26/04/93.

⁴⁷⁰⁶ Raymond van den Boogaard, ‘Ex-Joegoslavië dreigt proeftuin Europa te worden’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/02/93.

⁴⁷⁰⁷ Arie Oostlander, ‘Overzicht Serviërs met militaire middelen teniet doen’ (Destroy Serbian dominance by military means), *CD/Actueel*, 15 /05/1993, p. 15. See also Frénk van der Linden, ‘Arie Oostlander: Vance en Owen bedrijven apartheidspolitiek in Bosnië’ (Arie Oostlander: Vance and Owen are pursuing an apartheid policy in Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/01/93; A.M. Oostlander, ‘Symbolisch nepbeleid is voor militairen levensbedreigend’ (Symbolic pseudo-policy is life-threatening to troops), *Trouw*, 01/05/1993.

⁴⁷⁰⁸ Ton de Kok, ‘Haagse politici valt over Bosnië geen passiviteit te verwijten’ (one cannot accuse the politicians in The Hague of being passive in relation to Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 25/03/93.

⁴⁷⁰⁹ Rob Meines, ‘De bevlogen diplomatie van minister Kooijmans’ (Minister Kooijman’s enthusiastic policy), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/04/93.

a move on the part of the Bosnian-Serb army commander to torpedo the Vance-Owen peace plan by launching an offensive against Srebrenica.

Another obstacle for Owen and Vance was that it turned out to be impossible to mobilize troops to implement their plan. The American and Russian governments seemed to have agreed to this in principle in March 1993 but, when the European countries appeared to encounter difficulties making more than a few thousand troops available, enthusiasm waned rapidly in Washington and Moscow. It was telling that even someone like the American General, Powell, who absolutely did not support the deployment of troops, maintained that the Europeans were barely able to contribute to an armed force. It indicated that a major depression was about to move into the Atlantic Ocean. The European Ministers of Foreign Affairs felt this too, when they decided to keep all options on the table in connection with the former Yugoslavia at the end of April with a view to the arrival of their American counterpart, Christopher. They were under the impression that, if they did not do this, the trans-Atlantic relations would be disrupted.

The American administration's intention to wait for an agreement that was acceptable to the three warring factions in Bosnia, not only made it possible for the Bosnian government to drag out the negotiations in order to create a more favourable position for themselves in the meantime. Although not intended, the Bosnian Serbs were able to play the same card. It was eminently clear that the Clinton administration was not in too much of a hurry to intervene in developments in Bosnia. It was typical that three months after Clinton was sworn in, the American government still had not formulated a clearly defined policy on the former Yugoslavia.

It meant that the West did not determine what happened in Yugoslavia but that developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina dictated its policy. For instance, the Security Council adopted three resolutions in succession in response to events in Bosnia, namely, to enforce the flight ban, to establish Srebrenica as a Safe Area, and to tighten sanctions. The establishment of a Safe Area was particularly noteworthy. There appeared to be few people who supported this as late as early 1993. As Minister Kooijmans informed the Dutch Parliament, he saw few opportunities to promote the idea. The near fall of Srebrenica led to the sudden embrace of this idea, even though few people were aware of exactly what it was that the Security Council had embraced. In addition, no one had asked the parties on the ground whether they agreed to the establishment of a Safe Area. This meant that, in principle, one could not exclude Bosnian-Serb aggression against Srebrenica at a later stage. The overall idea that the area needed to be secured, naturally implied that it had to be protected against a certain party, in this case the Bosnian Serbs. The proclamation of a Safe Area therefore implied an element of enforcement. This element would become more pronounced if Minister Kooijmans were to obtain more support for the proposal that he presented to his European counterparts at the end of April, namely, to provide air protection to Srebrenica and any other Safe Areas against possible attacks. Naturally, the implementation of the no-fly zone also entailed a form of enforcement in UNPROFOR's peacekeeping operations, even though the rules of engagement for the pilots who were deployed were aimed at minimising the chance of an armed confrontation.

In the meantime, relations between UNPROFOR and the people whom they were supposed to be helping, had not turned out well. Clashes with the Bosnian government also occurred with growing frequency. UNPROFOR was constantly under the impression that the Bosnian government would have preferred to see it leave. The differences between the policy objectives of UNPROFOR and UNHCR on the one hand, and the Bosnian government and the ABiH on the other, were succinctly illustrated in the difficulties encountered in evacuating people from the hard-pressed town of Srebrenica, for example. Although everything was in favour of this for humanitarian reasons, the government in Sarajevo and the troops in this city, Tuzla and Srebrenica viewed it as collaboration in the process of ethnic cleansing and the achievement of the military objectives of the Bosnian Serbs. This contradiction merely presaged the difficulties which could arise between UNPROFOR and the Muslim authorities in the enclave.

When the Dutch government was investigating its potential contribution to the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan in March 1993, it again became apparent just how small this could be.

Although it had been repeatedly asserted in comments in the media from the summer of 1992, it seemed as though the government only really became aware of this in March 1993, particularly in the case of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister Lubbers. Minister Kooijmans was rather calm and businesslike when he assumed office, although it was clear that the issue of Yugoslavia was easily capable of moving him. However, he initially guarded against making excessively assertive comments and pointed out to parliament and the press that there was not much willingness on the part of the international community to take action. Nevertheless, Kooijmans displayed emphatic behaviour on two occasions. The first time was early in March when, urged on by his officials and parliament, he called on Minister Ter Beek to provide more units for the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan. The second time occurred at the end of April, when he wanted to go much further than his European counterparts by pleading to upgrade the Safe Area of Srebrenica to the status of Safe Haven, and for the extension of this status to more areas. The pressure brought to bear by the Foreign Ministry and parliament at the beginning of March in favour of a larger Dutch contribution to the possible implementation of the Vance-Owen plan had the effect of moving Minister Ter Beek to give a signal to the Chief of Defence Staff and the Royal Netherlands Army to consider the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade as soon as the first battalion was ready for this. The Airmobile Brigade represented Ter Beek's response to the message of 'We are unable', which the Defence Department had constantly been forced to utter as a result of the expenditure cuts and the problem pertaining to the voluntary deployment of national service personnel. This Airmobile Brigade also had to be the answer. This was because it was simultaneously the showpiece of the restructured Royal Netherlands Army and its 'most expensive toy'. In this, not only was the Airmobile Brigade an eligible unit in the eyes of its protagonists, but also of those who argued that Dutch taxpayers sometimes wanted to see value for their money.

Finally, Lubbers began to play a more active role in March and April. The question of Yugoslavia had continued to have an impact on him but until then the Prime Minister had devoted most of his energy into calling for more to be done or for tougher action during international conferences or on Dutch radio and television. Now other ministers were also beginning to feel the impact of his involvement, primarily Ter Beek, who noted that Lubbers was beginning to 'think through things with them'. This was very clearly expressed in Lubbers' letter calling for a 'solution' to the question of the voluntary deployment of national service personnel, while Ter Beek was in Bosnia. Ter Beek needed to be prepared for what Lubbers and his other colleagues had in store for him.

Chapter 11

Bankruptcy of the international community – the Netherlands as a catalyser: May to July 1993

1. Gloomy prospects for the Vance-Owen plan

From 21 to 25 April Owen conducted a number of intensive discussions with Cosic, Milosevic and Bulatovic, the presidents of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro respectively. These discussions occurred in the face of the threat represented by the Security Council's Resolution 820 of 17 April, which held out the prospect of tougher sanctions if the Bosnian Serb authorities failed to accept the peace plan by 26 April. In the course of these discussions Owen emphasised that he would not accommodate the Bosnian Serbs' desire for a northern corridor. However, it would be possible to have the Vance-Owen plan provide for the road from Brcko to Derвента to be placed under UN supervision. In this case a five kilometre strip on either side of it would become a demilitarised zone. Owen made a second concession to accommodate the Bosnian-Serb position by guaranteeing that only UN troops would be stationed in Serbian areas in Croat or Muslim dominated provinces following the withdrawal of the VRS (Serbian armed forces) from those areas, and not the ABiH (Muslim armed forces) or the HVO (Croatian armed forces). However, the administration of such cities and towns would be the direct responsibility the provinces. This was because Owen was not keen on a repeat of the situation involving the UNPAs in Croatia, where UNPROFOR was responsible for their administration but was unable to act against the Serbian police force.⁴⁷¹⁰ According to Owen, all three presidents were interested in hearing about these changes, especially because Milosevic feared the stricter sanctions that had been announced.⁴⁷¹¹ On 25 April Milosevic invited Karadzic, the President of the Republika Srpska, and the Praesidium member, Krajisnik, to Belgrade for a joint meeting with Owen. Krajisnik's presence was important, because, although Karadzic might personally be prepared to accept the Vance-Owen plan, on account of his Montenegrin origin he did not wish to adopt a less militant approach than Krajisnik, the 'real Serb'. The latter was known as Mr No.⁴⁷¹² He appeared to be utterly opposed to the plan, thereby preventing Karadzic from accepting it.⁴⁷¹³ During the meeting that Owen and Milosevic held with Karadzic and Krajisnik, the two Bosnian-Serb leaders seemed to agree to the Vance-Owen plan.⁴⁷¹⁴

Immediately afterwards they left for the Bosnian-Serb parliament, which had assembled in Bijeljina that day to discuss the plan, which it had previously rejected during the weekend of 3 and 4 April. In the course of the evening Milosevic received reports from Bijeljina that the Bosnian-Serb Parliament's opinion was not particularly favourable with respect to the peace plan.⁴⁷¹⁵ The presidential trio of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, that is to say, Cosic, Milosevic and Bulatovic, drew up a letter at about midnight, in which they bluntly urged acceptance of the Vance-Owen plan and warned that its rejection would lead to the international isolation of the rump Yugoslavia and the Republika Srpska. The Bosnian Serbs were told that they were no longer entitled to expose the 10 million

⁴⁷¹⁰ Owen CD-ROM, From Lord Owen to Douglas Hurd, 21/04/93; Lord Owen's message to foreign minister Kozyrev, 27/04/93.

⁴⁷¹¹ Owen, *Odyssey*, p. 153.

⁴⁷¹² P. Michielsen, 'Momcilo Krajisnik. Doorgewinterde extremist' (Momcilo Krajisnik: Veteran extremist), *NRC Handelsblad*, 4/4/ 2000.

⁴⁷¹³ Interview V. Jovanovic 14/09/01. The fact that Krajisnik was a hawk, is also clear from the interview V. Matovic, 16/12/99.

⁴⁷¹⁴ Owen, *Odyssey*, p. 153.

⁴⁷¹⁵ Owen, *Odyssey*, p. 153.

inhabitants of Yugoslavia to sanctions through their stubborn attitude. The Foreign Affairs Minister of the rump Yugoslavia, Jovanovic, was sent to Bijeljina by helicopter to read it out in the Parliament early in the morning. After this, the Parliament decided not to make any decision itself about the plan but to present it to the people of the Republika Srpska three weeks later in the weekend of 15 and 16 May.⁴⁷¹⁶

Every postponement of a decision about the plan was a disaster. The military relations between the parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina were becoming more complex with each passing day. At the end of April fighting broke out between the Muslims and Bosnian Croats in Mostar. Apart from the latter, these parties were also battling each other in Maglaj, Vitez, Fojnica, Kiseljak and Jablanica. On the other hand, in Tuzla and to the north of it they were fighting together against the VRS. To make it even more complicated, the Croats received support from the VRS in Maglaj.

In the meantime Vance withdrew as a mediator as he already had announced he would in February. On 1 May 1993 he was succeeded by Thorvald Stoltenberg, who had acted as Norway's Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1987 to 1993 and had played an important role as a mediator in the Middle East. The choice of Stoltenberg as a mediator was unfortunate. At first glance it seemed to be an advantage that he had served as a diplomat in Belgrade between 1961 and 1964. However, this background and statements Stoltenberg is said to have made to the effect that the Bosnian Croats and Muslims were in fact 'ethnic Serbs' and that the war in Bosnia was a socio-economic conflict between poor Serbian farmers and wealthy Muslims,⁴⁷¹⁷ soon earned him a reputation as a Serb supporter.⁴⁷¹⁸ In addition, Stoltenberg had little perception of developments in Bosnia itself, where he was represented by Sergio Vieira de Mello in Sarajevo.⁴⁷¹⁹ He therefore enjoyed little prestige and authority as a UN envoy.⁴⁷²⁰

On 1 May two important Americans travelled from Washington to Europe. The first was Christopher, who was to visit various European capitals in an attempt to synchronise American and European endeavours with regard to the manner in which they approached the former Yugoslavia. The second was Bartholomew, who was en route to Athens. The Greek Prime Minister, Konstantin Mitsotakis, had invited Karadzic and Koljevic to persuade them to agree to the Vance-Owen plan in the presence of Milosevic, Cosic, Bulatovic, Owen and Stoltenberg. Karadzic again came under intense pressure from Milosevic and Cosic during the meeting in Athens. Finally, Karadzic yielded on 2 May but he also mentioned that the Bosnian-Serb parliament would need to do likewise in several days' time.

2. The Dutch Government en route to the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade

On 28 April the Dutch Minister of Development Aid, Pronk, announced on the radio that the Bosnian-Serb authorities would 'probably' only start taking the negotiations seriously again following 'large-scale military operations'. He felt that the international community was evading its responsibility by constantly asserting that military intervention would endanger humanitarian aid.⁴⁷²¹ Pronk publicly expressed the mood currently prevailing within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The day before the *directie Europa* (European directorate) had already concluded that there was little point in pursuing the negotiations headed by Owen and Vance. According to the directorate, the Security Council needed to adopt a resolution which permitted air strikes on Serbian supply routes and heavy artillery. The

⁴⁷¹⁶ Owen CD-ROM, Message from Cosic, Milosevic and Bulatovic to the Bosnian Serb Parliament, 26/04/93; Ramcharan, Conference, pp. 1334-37; interview V. Jovanovic 14 September 2001; ABZ, DEU/ARA/00112. COREU message from the Danish Presidency of the EC, 27/04/93, cpe/pres/cop 923. With regard to the negative response of the Bosnian Serbs to the letter, see Buha, *Arguments*, pp. 109-10.

⁴⁷¹⁷ Cuvalo, *Dictionary*, p. 231.

⁴⁷¹⁸ Interview B. Pellnass, 03/11/99.

⁴⁷¹⁹ Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00.

⁴⁷²⁰ ABZ, Kabinetsarchief: Coll. Van den Broek. Correspondence M/colleagues (Defence Department) 1994, Voorhoeve to Van Mierlo, 31/08/94.

⁴⁷²¹ Radio 1, *VARA*, Woensdageditie (Wednesday edition), 28/04/1993, 7.07 am.

anticipated alternative was that the Bosnian Serbs would not be prepared to cooperate in the implementation of any peace plan. In order to protect the Bosnian Muslims more Safe Areas needed to be established and the UN member states would have to be asked to provide ground troops for this purpose.⁴⁷²² In a directive which he issued to the Netherlands' permanent representative to NATO, Veenendaal, on 28 April, Minister Kooijmans went along with this policy and added that consideration should be given to lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian Government with a view to changing the relations of power in Bosnia.⁴⁷²³ As it happens, shortly before this the DAV (Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs) had again listed all the benefits and drawbacks of lifting the embargo. In this respect the disadvantages had still outweighed the advantages.⁴⁷²⁴

Partly in response to the statements made by Minister Pronk, the D66 member, Eisma, had requested a parliamentary debate to ascertain whether the Minister's remarks were shared by the government. In addition, he wished to be informed about the outcome of European deliberations in Denmark and about the possible enforcement of the Vance-Owen plan.⁴⁷²⁵ Throughout 1992 Ter Beek had felt that during Cabinet meetings Van den Broek and Pronk had wanted to go much further than he did in relation to the Netherlands' military deployment in the Yugoslavian conflict.⁴⁷²⁶ As he perceived it, he felt that those he faced were 'almost all hawks'.

'Who was in the vanguard? There was Pronk and Ien Dales, and they were almost always supported by Hirsch Ballin. He did not often get involved in the discussions but, if he did, he usually agreed with Pronk. I can recall a discussion during a Cabinet meeting in which our moral temperature was taken, particularly by Ien Dales of *Kerk en Wereld* (Church and World) ... that one could not simply allow all these things to happen.'⁴⁷²⁷

In addition, Ter Beek felt that Lubbers and Kooijmans 'were constantly inconvenienced in that they wanted more but the Minister of Defence could not deliver it'. The line of reasoning always amounted to this: 'How is it possible that such a large military force is unable to do more?'⁴⁷²⁸ Pronk conceded this later on: 'Then there were no pilots or the army did not have the means. It could therefore never be deployed. There was always something. This represents a bit of the impatience of someone who is not a Defence specialist.'⁴⁷²⁹ Van der Vlis also believed that Lubbers 'was very clearly one of those who felt that more needed to be done'.⁴⁷³⁰

Another Cabinet meeting was held again on 3 May, during which the situation prevailing in the former Yugoslavia was discussed extensively. However, this time Ter Beek acknowledged defeat in advance. The day after Pronk made his statements about large-scale military intervention Minister Ter Beek announced that he supported Pronk's position in the course of a speech given on the occasion of the university days for peace in Groningen on 29 April. Ter Beek stated that he was also in favour of military intervention to end the war in the former Yugoslavia. In addition, he described the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade as indispensable to ensure compliance with international peace agreements as in Cambodia and Yugoslavia: 'It represents a means with which the Netherlands can express its involvement. This involvement is more urgently required than ever before. Political declarations and

⁴⁷²² ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Memorandum from DEU to Kooijmans, 27/4/ 1993, no. deu/122.

⁴⁷²³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Kooijmans 206 to NATO permanent representative, 28/4/ 1993.

⁴⁷²⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Memorandum from DAV to Kooijmans, 21/4/93, MS-90/93.

⁴⁷²⁵ Radio 1, NCRV, *Hier en nu* (Here and now), 28/4/93, 5.07 pm; 'Kamer wil duidelijkheid over militair ingrijpen Bosnië' (Parliament wants clarity about military intervention in Bosnia), *ANP*, 28/04/93, 3.48 pm.

⁴⁷²⁶ L. Ornstein and M. van Weezel, 'Het warme bad en de koude douche van Relus ter Beek' (A hot bath and cold shower for Relus ter Beek), *Vrij Nederland*, 12/12/92, p. 10.

⁴⁷²⁷ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁴⁷²⁸ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁴⁷²⁹ Interview J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

⁴⁷³⁰ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview A.K. van der Vlis, 30/03/95.

financial aid are not enough.⁴⁷³¹ Deputy Prime Minister Kok also aired his views before Cabinet met. During the PvdA's Labour Day festivities in Wageningen he stated that the Netherlands should cooperate with any military intervention in Bosnia if the Bosnian-Serb Parliament, which was scheduled to sit again on 5 May, rejected the Vance-Owen plan.⁴⁷³²

When the situation in ex-Yugoslavia was dealt with in the Cabinet meeting of 3 May, one of the ministers said that he was not optimistic about the chances of the Bosnian-Serb Parliament accepting the plan, even after Karadzic's about-turn in Athens. If Karadzic would indeed reject the plan, he supported the idea of the UN establishing 'safe areas', which could be protected with the aid of air strikes, amongst other things. As it happened, this minister did not consider it likely that the American Government would support the idea of 'safe areas'. According to him, Washington was on course towards lift-and-strike bombardments of Serbian supply lines and positions, and towards lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴⁷³³

During this Cabinet meeting another minister showed himself to be a master in outlining other dilemmas. He noted that it appeared from the repeatedly disappointing experience of the European Council, that the latter lacked any feeling of responsibility for developments in the former Yugoslavia. The role of the United Nations and the Security Council, in particular, was overestimated, he felt. The relevant minister received support from one of his colleagues for his idea that it would be better if NATO were to act. However, this speaker held the view that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was experiencing an identity crisis, with the result that NATO generals did not have a political frame of reference. Another minister added that it would be risky to raise the Yugoslavia issue in a NATO Council meeting at that point in time, because this would probably reveal the existence of a closed front of European countries which were not very keen on far-reaching action. According to him, it would be best first to await the bilateral discussions with Christopher which were scheduled to occur within several days' time.⁴⁷³⁴

The Cabinet meeting created the opportunity to agree to both the establishment of 'safe areas' and attacks on Serbian supply routes, if the Vance-Owen plan was rejected. In addition, the Foreign Affairs and Defence Departments were to engage in interdepartmental consultations about the Netherlands' contribution to an implementation force, for which NATO now estimated it would require at least 75,000 troops,⁴⁷³⁵ in the event that the peace plan was accepted. However, it was noted in the course of the Cabinet meeting that at that stage the European allies had not yet managed to raise more than 40% of the division which they would be required to provide in this case. This was due to the fact that no contribution could be expected from Germany, Italy and Greece, while any input from Turkey would raise problems owing to anticipated resistance on the part of the Serbs. If no European division was available, it was probable that the American Government would also not provide a division. A Russian division could only be requested, if there was certainty about the American and European divisions.⁴⁷³⁶

According to one of the ministers, the signals and transport which were already active as well as an additional logistics unit of 400 troops, meant that the Royal Netherlands Army had reached the limits of what it could contribute, in view of the requisite voluntary nature of the deployment of national service personnel. If it was decided to conduct aerial bombardments, the Netherlands could

⁴⁷³¹ 'Ter Beek: pas ingrijpen als effecten duidelijk zijn' (Ter Beek: Only intervene once the effects are clear), *ANP*, 29/04/93, 6.48 pm.

⁴⁷³² 'Kok wil militaire ingreep in Bosnië' (Kok wants military intervention in Bosnia), *De Telegraaf*, 03/05/93. See also Kok's statements on Radio 1, *AVRO*, radio news, 03/05/93, 12.05 pm.

⁴⁷³³ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 03/05/93, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴⁷³⁴ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 03/05/93 prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴⁷³⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05274. Jacobovits NATO 680 to Kooijmans, 23/04/93.

⁴⁷³⁶ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 03/05/93 prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

contribute the F-16s that were stationed in Italy as part of Operation Deny Flight. These aircraft, which were equipped for air combat at that point in time, could be fitted with weapons for bombardments within 24 hours.⁴⁷³⁷

Various ministers emphatically asked whether this indeed represented all that the Defence Department was capable of doing. One of them reminded the meeting that Government policy had always been that the Netherlands would be prepared to do all that it was technically capable of accomplishing in order to tackle the conflict in Yugoslavia, with the exception of lifting the arms embargo. Another minister remarked that he had heard that the Defence Department would be able to provide the Airmobile Brigade at some time in the future.⁴⁷³⁸ Minister Ter Beek later said that there was a collective sigh of relief in the meeting when he announced that the prospect of having the first battalion of the Airmobile Brigade ready for deployment by the end of 1993, could be presented during international consultations about the Netherlands' contribution to an armed force for the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan. 'It was,' said Minister Ter Beek, 'an announcement that alleviated any feeling of discomfort on the part of many who attended the meeting: "Now why can we not do anything?"'"⁴⁷³⁹ Once Ter Beek had made this remark, the Cabinet meeting urged the Defence Department to do everything in its power to increase the Netherlands' contribution.⁴⁷⁴⁰ This final passage in the minutes of the meeting was a source of encouragement for everyone to do all in their power to achieve this, even the officials who read these minutes.⁴⁷⁴¹

It appeared that Minister Ter Beek had already decided in mid-March to indicate to Van der Vlis and Couzy that they needed to make allowances for the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade in ex-Yugoslavia in the future. However, at the beginning of April, it was decided to refrain from mentioning this possibility to NATO, to the disappointment of the Foreign Affairs Department. Nevertheless, one or more Foreign Ministry officials – presumably Van Eenennaam in any case – had already suggested this possibility in the course of contact with diplomats accredited to the Dutch Government. This became the official line after this Cabinet meeting. If it had not yet been understood in the Defence Department, the need for the expeditious preparation of the Airmobile Brigade was clear after this meeting.

Another position adopted by the Cabinet meeting that needs to be addressed briefly, is the different view assumed by the Dutch Government towards selectively lifting the arms embargo. Although the Dutch Government found it very important to involve the American administration in the search for a solution to the problems in Bosnia,⁴⁷⁴² it did not wish to budge in this respect. The possibility of lifting the arms embargo had been discussed in the Dutch Foreign Ministry shortly before this, but again the disadvantages appeared to outweigh the benefits in the eyes of the relevant Dutch officials. It was anticipated that lifting the arms embargo would not turn the military tide in favour of the Bosnian Government forces immediately nor perhaps in the long term either. It was felt that there was a risk that the Russian Federation would respond by supplying weapons to Serbia, which would render the situation entirely unmanageable. In addition, the supply of arms to the Bosnian Government could increase tensions between the Muslims and the Croats, whom the former merely considered to be tactical allies in the most favourable case.⁴⁷⁴³

⁴⁷³⁷ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 03/05/93 prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴⁷³⁸ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 03/05/93 prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴⁷³⁹ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁴⁷⁴⁰ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 03/05/93 prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴⁷⁴¹ Interview W. Kok on 08/05/00 and A.L. ter Beek on 01/12/99.

⁴⁷⁴² Cf. interview W. Kok, 08/05/00.

⁴⁷⁴³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00112. Memorandum, 'Voormalig Joegoslavië. Achtergrond' (Former Yugoslavia: Background) for Gymnich, 24-25/04/93, 22/04/93. See also the memorandum, 'Voormalig Joegoslavië. Achtergrond' for the CoPo 21/04/93, 20/04/93.

3. The rejection of the Vance-Owen plan

On 5 and 6 May Bosnian-Serb Parliament assembled in Pale to discuss the Vance-Owen peace plan for the third time. Those present included Milosevic, Cosic and Bulatovic, who apparently did not want to be surprised again as they had been on 25 and 26 April. The Greek Prime Minister, Mitsotakis, who was the guiding hand responsible for Karadzic's conditional agreement to the plan, also attended this parliamentary session. Karadzic explained why Parliament should accept the plan. However, it was a feeble presentation. Mladic, on the other hand, squarely opposed the plan.⁴⁷⁴⁴ Plavsic, who had already insulted Jovanovic on 26 April, when he read out the letter from the three presidents,⁴⁷⁴⁵ again revealed her opposition, amongst other things, by refusing to shake Milosevic's hand upon his arrival in Pale. All the guests who were in attendance, strongly urged Parliament to accept the plan. Milosevic spoke twice but was under the impression that Mladic had more influence over the delegates than he did, and in the course of his second address said, 'I really do not know what else you want'. According to him, the hostile attitude adopted by the Bosnian Serbs would give Izetbegovic exactly what he really wanted: military intervention.⁴⁷⁴⁶ After meeting for 17 hours the parliament rejected the plan by 51 votes to two with 12 abstentions. However, it proposed to give the Serbian people the final say in the previously agreed referendum scheduled for 15 and 16 May.

Milosevic was utterly astounded that the Bosnian Serbs did not do as he wished.⁴⁷⁴⁷ He was so angry that he called them everything under the sun.⁴⁷⁴⁸ For example, he described Mladic as 'clinically insane'.⁴⁷⁴⁹ According to a Serbian journalist, Milosevic was 'radioactive' with rage at the end of the debate.⁴⁷⁵⁰ This anger was not feigned.⁴⁷⁵¹ Milosevic was enraged with the Bosnian Serbs for allowing Serbia's economic problems to persist because of their position. That very same day he closed the border between Serbia and Bosnia, making exceptions only for food and medicine. Bosnian-Serb leaders were denied access to Serbia. It is debatable whether Milosevic's embargo against the Republika Srpska was effective. In interviews with the NIOD various international observers have expressed the view that Belgrade's sanctions had little effect.⁴⁷⁵² Nevertheless, at the time independent observers assumed that no more than 5% of Serbia's sharply reduced gross domestic product found its way to Krajina and the Republika Srpska.⁴⁷⁵³ In any event Serbs in the Republika Srpska were deeply offended by Milosevic's official decision and the obstacles this raised for the movement of highly placed Bosnian Serbs.⁴⁷⁵⁴ Milosevic had apparently had more than enough of the attitude of the Bosnian-Serb leaders. Already before the rejection of the Vance-Owen plan, General Radovan Radinovic, a senior general in the Yugoslavian army who maintained close ties with Milosevic, had revealed that, while the Belgrade authorities would indeed consider the lifting of the international arms embargo against the Bosnian Government as a negative step, they would not regard it as an act of war.⁴⁷⁵⁵

⁴⁷⁴⁴ With regard to Mladic's actions during this meeting, see for example Charles Lane, 'Dateline Bosnia: Beyond Pale' in Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 86.

⁴⁷⁴⁵ Interview V. Jovanovic, 14/09/01; Doder and Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 182.

⁴⁷⁴⁶ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 264.

⁴⁷⁴⁷ Stojanovic, *Fall*, pp. 172-73.

⁴⁷⁴⁸ Interview S. Djukic, 04/08/01.

⁴⁷⁴⁹ Djukic, *Milosevic*, p. 70.

⁴⁷⁵⁰ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 264.

⁴⁷⁵¹ Morillon, *Credo*, pp. 140-41; idem, *Paroles*, p. 77.

⁴⁷⁵² See for example, the interview B. Ashton, 30/05/00; confidential interview (9).

⁴⁷⁵³ Calic, *Frage*, p. 150.

⁴⁷⁵⁴ Interview M. Deronjic on 03/11/99 and D. Milovanovic on 22/03/00. See also Doder and Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 187; 'Karadzic in Servië ongewenst persoon' (Karadzic persona non grata in Serbia), *Het Parool*, 10/05/93.

⁴⁷⁵⁵ Simms, *Hour*, p. 82.

4. Parliament almost unanimous in requiring the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade

After the Cabinet meeting on 3 May Kooijmans reported to Parliament that the heightened fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, amongst other things, the Serbian attacks on the Muslim enclaves in Eastern Bosnia, underscored the need for the international community to do its utmost to end the war there. The Vance-Owen plan should remain the basis for doing this.⁴⁷⁵⁶ During subsequent consultations with the Foreign Affairs and Defence committees on 6 May 1993 Kooijmans expressed the Dutch Government's great disappointment following the Bosnian-Serb parliament's rejection of the Vance-Owen plan in Pale. As a result the chance of mobilising a peacekeeping force to supervise the implementation of the plan was 'noticeably smaller'.⁴⁷⁵⁷ The alternative establishment of Safe Areas had only become more relevant as a result, according to the Minister. He hoped to discuss this the following day with his American counterpart, Christopher, who had been travelling around Europe for bilateral contact for several days, and also hoped to encourage their establishment during the meeting of the EC's General Council on 10 May 'because this would have the most immediate humanitarian effect' and 'in spite of the fact that insufficient troops were available for the protection of these areas'.⁴⁷⁵⁸ Moreover, these Safe Areas – in this respect the Minister was mainly considering Zepa, Gorazde and Tuzla – could be protected from the air. The Members of Parliament agreed with the Minister that the time was not yet ripe to lift the arms embargo against Bosnia-Herzegovina. They also agreed to the possible deployment of Dutch F-16s for the establishment of safe havens.

In addition, they wondered whether the government or the Netherlands could offer assistance in the form of ground troops. Some members of Parliament were annoyed that suggestions had been published in the press, such as those made by Pronk, without parliament having been notified. De Kok pointed out that the junior minister for Defence had initially announced that the Dutch Government could not provide any more troops but a day later stated that perhaps 300 logistics personnel might be available. He asked whether an armoured infantry battalion could also perhaps be deployed.⁴⁷⁵⁹

Valk felt that the time had come for the Western community to say 'Enough is enough'. He was in favour of increasing pressure on the Bosnian Serbs, because he felt that the credibility of the international community was now at stake. In addition, he called for the rapid establishment of 'safe areas' in parts where Muslims still lived. The PvdA member did not incidentally wish to preclude the possibility that the Vance-Owen plan might yet be implemented. In this connection, he again asked the minister of Defence to examine whether the Netherlands could make an additional military contribution, even though it was already doing a great deal: 'For instance, we could examine whether the Airmobile Brigade could start exercising with heavy equipment in the coming months, after which units of this brigade could perhaps commence action'.⁴⁷⁶⁰

Blaauw also felt that the position of the Bosnian Serbs 'had reached ... the mark ... even ... overstepped it'.⁴⁷⁶¹ The international community now had to ready military resources in order to implement the Vance-Owen plan once a resolution to this effect had been adopted by the Security Council. Apart from deploying the Dutch F-16s to secure the Safe Areas, for example, the VVD member felt that the Netherlands should also be prepared to send in ground troops. In this connection, he was also considering the first battalion of the Airmobile Brigade, which had originally been destined to relieve the marines in Cambodia at the end of 1993. Perhaps this would no longer be required by that time and this battalion could comprise the infantry component of a mechanised armoured battalion. This brigade therefore needed to learn how to operate armoured vehicles, so that they might

⁴⁷⁵⁶ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 46.

⁴⁷⁵⁷ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 51, p. 1.

⁴⁷⁵⁸ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 51, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁵⁹ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 51, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁶⁰ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 51, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁶¹ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 51, p. 4.

perhaps be deployed to protect Safe Areas within four to six months or to provide greater protection for humanitarian convoys.⁴⁷⁶² Sipkes also asked whether the troops of the Airmobile Brigade could be deployed following supplementary training.⁴⁷⁶³ Whereas two months earlier De Hoop Scheffer had been the only Member of Parliament to call for the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade explicitly, Parliament was now almost unanimous in its desire for this. The only Member of Parliament who was reluctant to see the deployment of ground troops for Safe Areas, was Van Middelkoop. He wanted to know what long-term goal was envisaged for the Safe Areas: 'It is one thing to start this but what steps will need to be taken subsequently?'⁴⁷⁶⁴

In his reply Minister Kooijmans again recommended Safe Areas. According to the Minister, their structure would be defensive: they will 'after all, only be used to defend the civilian population',⁴⁷⁶⁵ In addition, they would be situated in areas which would largely have a Muslim majority according to the Vance-Owen plan: 'The ultimate objective of establishing Safe Areas is therefore to ensure that it remains possible to implement this plan if it is accepted in due course'.⁴⁷⁶⁶ Ter Beek sided with this position *expressis verbis*.⁴⁷⁶⁷

The Minister of Defence declared that, if the Vance-Owen plan were to be accepted, the Netherlands would be prepared to provide ground troops to implement it. In addition to the communications and transport battalions, the Netherlands would provide a tailor-made logistics battalion comprising some 400 troops. Ter Beek said it was impossible to send in an armoured infantry battalion, because it appeared that not enough national service personnel were available for this. An armoured infantry battalion consisting exclusively of career personnel would only be available in 1996.⁴⁷⁶⁸ Ter Beek informed Parliament that the first battalion of the Airmobile Brigade was scheduled to complete its training in November. An additional period of training of two months would be required if it was to be deployed as an armoured infantry battalion. '... We are investigating the possibility. I am not saying it is impossible,' Ter Beek is reported to have said during the debate. According to a journalist: 'In the face of considerable pressure from Parliament, Minister Ter Beek (Defence) undertook to examine whether the Airmobile Brigade could be deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina'.⁴⁷⁶⁹ The general language in which the report of this debate was formulated, is less explicit on this point. Nevertheless, the announcement which the Minister is reported to have made, to the effect that international alternatives were being examined to use armoured vehicles which were not part of the Netherlands' equipment, constituted a clear indication to a discerning reader of what the Minister intended to do.⁴⁷⁷⁰ Apparently, there was no need for Parliament to exert such heavy pressure. The Minister was already doing what Parliament was asking of him.

5. Christopher's trip

At the end of April a Security Council fact-finding mission headed by the Venezuelan diplomat, Diego Arria, had paid a visit to the former Yugoslavia. It also visited the Srebrenica enclave. Although the mission concluded that Srebrenica resembled an open-air prison, it also recommended that the 'safe area' concept be extended to enclaves such as Gorazde, Zepa and Tuzla.⁴⁷⁷¹ Because some of these areas – Zepa in particular – were on the verge of falling to Bosnian-Serb aggression, just as Srebrenica had been in the past, in the night of 6 to 7 May the Security Council adopted Resolution 824, in which

⁴⁷⁶² TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 51, p. 5.

⁴⁷⁶³ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 51, p. 7.

⁴⁷⁶⁴ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 51, p. 8.

⁴⁷⁶⁵ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 51, p. 9.

⁴⁷⁶⁶ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 51, p. 10.

⁴⁷⁶⁷ Ibid. This view was repeated in TK, session of 1992-1993, 22 151, no. 50, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁶⁸ See also TK, session of 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 48.

⁴⁷⁶⁹ 'Kans op inzet in Bosnië van onze brigade' (Chance that our brigade may be deployed in Bosnia), *De Telegraaf*, 07/05/93.

⁴⁷⁷⁰ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 51, p. 12. cf. TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 98.

⁴⁷⁷¹ UN, S/25700; interview D. Arria, 10/05/00.

it also declared Sarajevo, Zepa, Gorazde, Tuzla and Bihac to be Safe Areas in addition to Srebrenica. No further attacks against these areas were to be allowed and the VRS troops were to be withdrawn so far away from them that they no longer constituted a threat to them. In addition, the resolution required that UNPROFOR personnel be afforded unimpeded access to these areas. The resolution did not refer to the demilitarisation of Safe Areas. An additional 50 military observers were to be deployed to monitor the humanitarian situation in these areas. As a result the Serbs were still able to treat these areas as targets. In addition, the non-aligned countries, who supported this resolution, were aware that the United Nations did not have enough resources to deploy in these Safe Areas. The idea was that only 20 to 30 troops would be deployed in each Safe Area as a symbol of UN involvement in securing the well-being of the people concerned. 'The idea would not be to physically protect the town but raise the political price of any aggression,' Annan wrote to Wahlgren.⁴⁷⁷² Apparently, not everyone was sure that the Bosnian-Serb authorities had any respect for the international community. Following the adoption of this resolution, America's permanent representative to the UN, Albright, made things quite clear by saying that the actions of the Serbs would determine whether the use of force by the international community would be inevitable.⁴⁷⁷³

UNPROFOR Commander Wahlgren was not jubilant about the new resolution. However limited the duties of UNPROFOR troops might be in a Safe Area, he felt that at least a company needed to be stationed in each area. This deployment would draw troops away from UNPROFOR's primary duties, the protection of humanitarian aid convoys.⁴⁷⁷⁴ In addition, Wahlgren thought that, owing to their limited numbers, the UN troops stationed in the enclaves could fall victim to acts of violence perpetrated by either Serbs or Muslims.⁴⁷⁷⁵ On 3 June Wahlgren warned New York that the Safe Areas could act as bases for attacks by Muslim fighters. The Serbs would want to attack them for the same reason. There was a danger of the conflict intensifying. He drew a comparison with the war in Vietnam.⁴⁷⁷⁶

The resolution came too late for the Dutch morning newspapers of 7 May. They could only report on the position adopted by Minister Kooijmans in Parliament the day before. 'If Dutch politicians were able to control the world at some stage, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia would not have got so out of hand as it has,' Leonoor Meijer wrote with irony in *Trouw*.⁴⁷⁷⁷ Foregoing irony, the leading article in that morning's *Algemeen Dagblad* concluded in response to the Bosnian-Serb parliament's rejection of the Vance-Owen plan that one had to seriously doubt the ability of the international community 'to respond to this idiocy'. It was clear to the commentator that, if no military intervention followed now, 6 May 1993 would enter history as a black day. It would 'not be easy to explain this disgrace to the generations that follow us'.⁴⁷⁷⁸

While these morning newspapers were falling on Dutch doormats, Minister Kooijmans found himself in Bonn for a discussion with Christopher. During a meeting held by President Clinton with his most important formulators of American policy on ex-Yugoslavia on 1 May, almost everyone present had appeared to support a policy of lift and strike. Only Aspin was opposed to this, as was the American Intelligence Service, who feared that such a policy would incite the Albanians in Kosovo to revolt.⁴⁷⁷⁹ With the knowledge that lift and strike represented the dominant policy preference in Washington, Christopher had left for Europe several hours later.⁴⁷⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁷² Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 101.

⁴⁷⁷³ Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 100.

⁴⁷⁷⁴ Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 101.

⁴⁷⁷⁵ Stoltenberg and Eide, *Dagene*, p. 92.

⁴⁷⁷⁶ Honig and Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 167.

⁴⁷⁷⁷ L. Meijer, 'Nederland in drama Bosnië machteloos' (The Netherlands is powerless in Bosnian drama), *Trouw*, 07/05/93.

⁴⁷⁷⁸ 'Zwarte dag' (Black day), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 07/05/93.

⁴⁷⁷⁹ Patrick Glynn, 'See No Evil' in Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 136.

⁴⁷⁸⁰ Daalder, *Dayton*, pp. 15 and 87; Drew, *Edge*, p. 155.

Christopher's trip was typified by inexperience on the part of Clinton, who did not fully understand the extent to which the rest of the world waited for America to take the initiative.⁴⁷⁸¹ While Christopher was en route, Clinton told his advisers in Washington that he was impressed by the book, *Balkan Ghosts*, by Kaplan, from which he had drawn the conclusion that it would be better for the United States not to become involved in the conflict in view of how deep-seated violence was in the Balkans. Christopher was immediately informed that the president no longer fully supported the policy which had been virtually unanimously adopted on 1 May.⁴⁷⁸² Indeed, it had already been decided beforehand that Christopher would not be permitted to present America's preferred policy of lift and strike as a *fait accompli* in the European capitals.⁴⁷⁸³ It would probably have been possible for him to persuade the Western European leaders with a single utterance of power, but this would have made Bosnia America's problem and the Clinton administration definitely did not want this.⁴⁷⁸⁴ To Washington the Yugoslavian issue remained a European problem. The American Government was prepared to make a contribution to a multilateral approach at most. As his briefs for discussion in London indicated, Christopher had come 'in a listening mode'.⁴⁷⁸⁵ This gave both the Europeans and the Americans the impression that the Washington administration sought support for a policy they did not wish to fight for.⁴⁷⁸⁶

Together with the fact that the European leaders still needed to get used to Christopher's soft-spoken attitude, the American approach merely sewed the seeds of confusion in the capitals of Europe, which were used to America dictating the way.⁴⁷⁸⁷ Karadzic had contributed to this confusion by agreeing to the Vance-Owen plan in Athens on 2 May.⁴⁷⁸⁸ Even though there were reasonable doubts as to how firm Karadzic's agreement was, Christopher now had to make allowances for two policy options. Either the Bosnian-Serb parliament would not agree to the peace plan and lift and strike remained a possibility, or the people's representatives would agree to the plan and there would be no room for a policy of lift and strike. In the latter case an implementation force would need to be mobilised as soon as possible. The indecisiveness which was so typical of Christopher's trip appeared to have contributed to the rejection of the Vance-Owen plan. In Pale it soon became obvious that Christopher was not wielding a club when he travelled to Europe.⁴⁷⁸⁹

In London, the city which was Christopher's first port of call on his round trip, Prime Minister Major stated that he was utterly opposed to a lift-and-strike policy. He believed that his government would fall if he were to present this to Parliament.⁴⁷⁹⁰ As soon as Christopher left London en route for Paris, the media immediately began to report that the Americans had not decided on a policy for Bosnia and had no idea what was happening there.⁴⁷⁹¹ The French Government told Christopher that in itself it understood America's preference for lift and strike but believed that, if this policy were to be implemented, French troops in Bosnia would fall victim to Serbian retaliation.⁴⁷⁹² President Yeltsin and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kozyrev, were fiercely opposed because at that point in time they believed that a breakthrough was imminent in respect of the Vance-Owen peace plan, as the parliament

⁴⁷⁸¹ Michael Dobbs, 'Bosnia Crystallizes U.S. Post-Cold War Role', *The Washington Post*, 3 December 95.

⁴⁷⁸² Christopher, *Stream*, p. 347; Drew, *Edge*, p. 157; Michael Dobbs, 'Bosnia Crystallizes U.S. Post-Cold War Role', *The Washington Post*, 03/12/95. See also Chapter 2.

⁴⁷⁸³ Christopher, *Stream*, p. 346. cf. ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Jacobovits 284 to Kooijmans, 03/05/93.

⁴⁷⁸⁴ Drew, *Edge*, p. 156.

⁴⁷⁸⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. COREU, 03/05/93, cpe/lon 335; Walker, *President*, p. 265.

⁴⁷⁸⁶ Paulsen, *Jugoslavienpolitik*, p. 136.

⁴⁷⁸⁷ Daalder, *Dayton*, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁷⁸⁸ Christopher, *Stream*, p. 346 n. 2.

⁴⁷⁸⁹ John F. Burns, 'Bosnia Loses Any Hope of Being Saved', *The New York Times*, 25/07/93.

⁴⁷⁹⁰ Christopher, *Stream*, p. 346; Drew, *Edge*, pp. 155-56; Halberstam, *War*, p. 227.

⁴⁷⁹¹ Halberstam, *War*, p. 227.

⁴⁷⁹² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00112. COREU message from the French government, 06/05/93, cpe/par/315; Védérine, *Mondes*, pp. 653-55.

in Pale was still to make its decision.⁴⁷⁹³ In Rome Christopher was informed that lift and strike would inflame the Bosnian conflict. Although the government in Bonn was prepared to consider lifting the arms embargo, it did not wish to make any statements about air strikes, because it felt that constitutional and historical reasons prevented it from becoming involved in this.⁴⁷⁹⁴

After this it was Kooijmans' turn to speak to Christopher, being the reason why the Dutch Minister had travelled to Bonn. Christopher could expect the Netherlands mainly to raise the issue of Safe Areas as a policy option. At the end of April Deputy Prime Minister Kok had already indicated the Netherlands' preference for this in a discussion with the American Vice-President, Al Gore. In this connection he had pointed out that not only ground troops would be required for this, but also air support in order to protect both the UN troops and the people in the Safe Areas.⁴⁷⁹⁵ Kooijmans was aware that the American Government was not enthusiastic about the Netherlands' preference for Safe Areas. Several days before the Minister's talks with Christopher, Jacobovits, the Netherlands' permanent representative to NATO, had reported to him that D.A.S. Calwell, an State Department official, had stated that the American Government was opposed to safe havens:

‘because the American military did not believe it would be possible to defend them with air strikes. Ground troops would be required for this. If one deployed ground troops, however, one ran the risk that they would have to remain there *ad calendas graecas*. This would amount to the establishment of new UNPAs and this is precisely what the US sought to avoid.’⁴⁷⁹⁶

Christopher had said much the same in his consultations with the EC troika on 6 May. He stated that the American Government did not want a repeat of anything similar to what had befallen the Canadian troops in Srebrenica, who had been entirely dependent on the benevolence of the Bosnian Serbs. A report of this discussion was sent to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the same day.⁴⁷⁹⁷

In the one and a quarter hours of talks between Christopher and Kooijmans, which took place at the Dutch embassy in Bonn on 7 May, the American Secretary of State began by saying that, while it was true that the Vance-Owen plan was not dead following its rejection by the parliament in Pale the day before, it was now ‘at most something for later’. He said that he expected to receive support for this conclusion from the Dutch Government, unlike the EC troika, whom he had spoken to the previous day and who had stated that they still supported the mediators' plan. According to Christopher, sanctions had to be maintained but would only have an impact in the long term and that could be too late for the Bosnian Government army, which found itself in a rather unfortunate position. A truce based on the existing situation was something Christopher referred to as immoral. Air bombardments carried the risk of collateral damage. Moreover, it was doubtful if this would be enough to induce the Serbs to accept and implement the peace plan. A combination of lift and strike therefore appeared to be the only alternative, according to Christopher.⁴⁷⁹⁸ By pursuing such a policy the Americans expected to restore a ‘balance’, after which new negotiations could be opened about an entirely different peace plan. The Americans envisaged that the Muslims would need to protect their own Safe Areas.⁴⁷⁹⁹

Kooijmans was largely in agreement with his discussion partner. However, the Dutch Minister felt that lifting the arms embargo was a last resort, because it could lead to escalation, not only between

⁴⁷⁹³ Christopher, *Steam*, p. 346.

⁴⁷⁹⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00112. Bonn COREU, 08/05/93, cpe/bon 292.

⁴⁷⁹⁵ ABZ, 910, Yugoslavia in General. The Netherlands' views on the situation in Bosnia. Agenda for talks between Deputy Prime Minister Kok and Vice-President Gore about Yugoslavia and Bosnia.

⁴⁷⁹⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Jacobovits 248 to Kooijmans, 03/05/93.

⁴⁷⁹⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00112. COREU message from the EPC secretariat, 06/05/93, cpe/sec 508.

⁴⁷⁹⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00887. Kooijmans 42 to the embassy in Bonn, 09/05/93.

⁴⁷⁹⁹ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council of 07/05/93 prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study

the Muslims and Serbs but also between the Muslims and Croats. Kooijmans feared that air strikes would have consequences for both UN and Muslim targets. As expected, he raised the option of Safe Areas with a symbolic force present in them and protection afforded them through air support provided by the aircraft already stationed in the region. One of the benefits of Safe Areas which Kooijmans cited, was that they left the Vance-Owen plan intact, because they would be part of the Muslim provinces.⁴⁸⁰⁰

Christopher raised an objection in that the American army command considered Safe Areas to be 'militarily unsound'. They were certainly not prepared to provide ground troops for this purpose. According to Kooijmans, the concept of a Safe Area was working in Srebrenica and he did not expect the Bosnian Serbs to dare attack such areas. Christopher ended the discussion by stating that he hoped the 12 EC members could agree on a single policy and would not reject America's ideas.⁴⁸⁰¹

Herman Schaper, who attended the meeting, recalled that the Dutch delegation to the talks were later 'perplexed' by the failure of the US to reveal any driving force. Christopher's attitude of 'So tell me! What do you think of it?' was unheard of on the part of the world's leading nation.⁴⁸⁰² Van Walsum, who had just been appointed ambassador in Bonn and had also been part of the delegation, was also astounded by the Americans' lack of knowledge.⁴⁸⁰³ Christopher therefore left them with the impression that the 'holiday from leadership' which the Bush administration had given itself following the outbreak of the war in Yugoslavia, had still not ended under his successor almost two years' later.⁴⁸⁰⁴ After the talks the Dutch delegation revealed their conclusion that the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan no longer enjoyed priority.⁴⁸⁰⁵ Because the relevance of this plan had ebbed, the Dutch delegation had not raised the question of the Netherlands' contribution to its implementation, as was revealed in the Cabinet meeting held on the same day. One member of the Cabinet was now in favour of dividing Bosnia into three sections and of providing the Muslims with weapons to defend themselves. Another minister responded by saying that, while he was not quite that far, he did not discount the possibility of getting there, because he felt that it was morally indefensible to deny the Muslims the opportunity to defend themselves for a protracted period of time.⁴⁸⁰⁶

By the end of his trip Christopher was under the impression that the Dutch Government was the most amenable to America's plans.⁴⁸⁰⁷ It bore least responsibility for the fact that Christopher returned with 'bullet holes all over him', as one American journalist put it.⁴⁸⁰⁸ Christopher, himself, summarised the achievements of his trip concisely by stating, 'I haven't changed my views; I just don't know if I've changed anyone else's.'⁴⁸⁰⁹ According to the American Secretary of State, it took two years before the negative effects of this trip to Europe had dissipated. According to some people close to him, Christopher himself never recovered from this failure at the beginning of his term in office.⁴⁸¹⁰

After Christopher's trip it was clear that lift and strike would have no chance. Nevertheless, the Washington Government continued to present this alternative frequently.⁴⁸¹¹ Aware that the European heads of government objected to this policy, the American administration could afford to continue uttering these tough words, sure in the knowledge that it would never be called on to live up to

⁴⁸⁰⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00887. Kooijmans 42 to the embassy in Bonn, 09/05/93.

⁴⁸⁰¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00887. Kooijmans 42 to the embassy in Bonn, 09/05/93.

⁴⁸⁰² Interview H.A. Schaper, 10/04/00.

⁴⁸⁰³ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

⁴⁸⁰⁴ The description of the American government's hesitant approach to Yugoslavia as a 'holiday from leadership' comes from Shalikhshvili and is quoted in Halberstam, *War*, p. 88.

⁴⁸⁰⁵ 'Kooijmans breekt lans voor 'veilige gebieden' in Bosnië' (Kooijmans champions 'safe areas' in Bosnia), *De Telegraaf*, 08/05/93.

⁴⁸⁰⁶ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 07/05/93 prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴⁸⁰⁷ Drew, *Edge*, p. 156.

⁴⁸⁰⁸ Quoted in Halberstam, *War*, p. 228.

⁴⁸⁰⁹ Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, p. 131.

⁴⁸¹⁰ Halberstam, *War*, p. 230.

⁴⁸¹¹ Daalder, *Dayton*, p. 18.

them.⁴⁸¹² This represented ‘alibi diplomacy’, according to the former American ambassador in Belgrade, Zimmerman.⁴⁸¹³ At the same time the Americans’ reproach that the European governments objected to lift and strike, poisoned relations between America and Europe.⁴⁸¹⁴

6. The Airmobile Brigade in the debate about the Priorities Memorandum

In a letter addressed to Parliament on 12 May which followed on from the debate of 6 May, the Dutch Minister, Ter Beek, explained that it would be impossible to deploy an additional armoured infantry battalion in view of the political principle of voluntary involvement on the part of national service personnel. The Minister went on to state that the first infantry battalion of the Airmobile Brigade (consisting of professional personnel) would only be available in November 1993. Moreover, this battalion would require supplementary training with armoured vehicles for a period of at least two months. In the short term, the Minister wrote, it would be possible to offer a logistics battalion comprising 400 troops.⁴⁸¹⁵

Apparently, not everyone in the Dutch Ministry of Defence was pleased with the new duties which the government and Parliament had assigned to the Airmobile Brigade. A senior official in the department sighed, ‘Now what sort of foolishness is this, deploying the Airmobile Brigade in the former Yugoslavia as a type of armoured division? This is the same as saying to a volleyball team just before the Olympic Games, “We would prefer you to play ice hockey.”’⁴⁸¹⁶ The Chief of Defence Staff, Van der Vlis, found it necessary to voice his aversion to the new duties for the ‘Airmobile’ in public before the parliamentary debate about the Defence White Paper in an interview with the daily newspaper, *Trouw*. His greatest concern was that the brigade’s new duties would put paid to the purchase of attack helicopters for it, which he felt would deal ‘a fatal blow’ to the concept of ‘airmobile’. To be sure, there appeared to be reason for concern, because, while it is true that Minister Ter Beek said that he was bent on purchasing both transport and attack helicopters, Prime Minister Lubbers revealed that the procurement of the attack helicopters would again need to be reviewed when a new government was formed.⁴⁸¹⁷ If no helicopters were forthcoming, the Chief of Defence Staff believed that this would remove the core of the Priorities Memorandum: flexibility. It would also amount to tampering with the restructuring of the armed forces that had commenced, and he anticipated ‘chaos’ within the Royal Netherlands Army. In addition, it was a source of concern to Van der Vlis that there was no international agreement about the long-term objectives in the former Yugoslavia. According to him, they needed to go further than merely stating, ‘We want Safe Areas’.⁴⁸¹⁸

On 13 and 17 May the permanent committee on Defence in Parliament considered the Priorities Memorandum. The plenary debate followed on 18 and 19 May.⁴⁸¹⁹ In the course of this debate the government gave an undertaking that the Netherlands would provide ‘a battalion with relief capacity’ as soon as possible. Such a gesture was also to serve as a means of persuading those countries that had such a battalion but did not have any relief capacity.⁴⁸²⁰ By doing this, the government hoped

⁴⁸¹² cf. Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, p. 87.

⁴⁸¹³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 225.

⁴⁸¹⁴ Owen CD-ROM, Direct governmental involvement in the search for a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina with special reference to the Contact Group, September 1992 – July 1994, Part 1.

⁴⁸¹⁵ TK, session of 1992-1993, 22 181 no. 48

⁴⁸¹⁶ T. Lagas & L. Meijer, ‘Als wereldorde niet werkt, hebben we een groot probleem’ (If the world order breaks down, we will have a major problem), *Trouw*, 12/05/93.

⁴⁸¹⁷ B. de Ruiter, ‘Komt de Luchtmobiele brigade ooit van de grond?’ (Will the Airmobile Brigade ever see the light of day?), *Democraat*, 26(1993)4, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁸¹⁸ T. Lagas and L. Meijer, ‘Als wereldorde niet werkt, hebben we een groot probleem’, *Trouw*, 12 May 1993.

⁴⁸¹⁹ In so far as nothing else is mentioned, these references are to the views recorded during the plenary debate. For the report of the committee meeting see TK, 1992-1993, UCV 27 (13/05/93) and UCV 28 (17/05/93).

⁴⁸²⁰ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 52, p. 3.

to prevent a situation from arising where the Netherlands commented on the situation but did not make any military contribution to the operation in ex-Yugoslavia.⁴⁸²¹

The question was whether this could be interpreted to refer to an airmobile division. The debate reflected the differences that existed within the Armed forces themselves (see Chapters 13 and 15) between those who supported the Airmobile Brigade and those in favour of armoured infantry. According to the Priorities Memorandum, the number of army brigades, which had already been cut from ten to seven in accordance with the Defence White Paper of 1991, was to be further reduced to four. Some members of Parliament, who were already critical of the substantial expenditure on the Airmobile Brigade, wondered whether it would not be better to use the relevant funds to maintain armoured infantry, which were set to disappear in accordance with the Priorities White Paper. For instance, voices were heard within the SGP (a small right-of-centre political party) to the effect that units would be required in any military intervention in Bosnia which were more heavily armed than an Airmobile Brigade, 'for example, an armoured brigade'.⁴⁸²² At the time it was also suggested in the D66 Security and Defence Project Group, which met with Jan Willem van Waning, a retired naval Captain, in the chair and included Kees Homan, a Colonel in the marines, Bram Schulte, a retired army General, and Karel Hilderink, a Colonel in the air force, that the armed force which would be required to implement the Vance-Owen plan, mainly needed to consist of traditional, mechanised, armoured infantry units. So what was the value of airmobile?⁴⁸²³ This question was thus raised by the D66 Member of Parliament, Ter Veer, during the debate on the Priorities White Paper.⁴⁸²⁴ He was not the only one to do so. Already at an early stage of the conflict in Yugoslavia Sipkes had said that he doubted the usefulness of an Airmobile Brigade in situations such as those prevailing in that country.⁴⁸²⁵ When the Priorities White Paper was dealt with, she said that she had heard talk that the Airmobile Brigade would not be equipped for peacekeeping operations, 'that it is too lightly equipped and also ridiculously expensive'.⁴⁸²⁶ She therefore tabled a motion calling on the government not to purchase attack helicopters for the Airmobile Brigade. According to her, it would be better to use the money that would be saved as a result, for peacekeeping operations.⁴⁸²⁷ This motion was exactly what Van der Vlis had feared, although only Groen Links (a left-of-centre environmental political party) voted for it.⁴⁸²⁸

Van Heemskerck Pillis-Duvekot pointed out that UN peacekeeping was moving towards peace-enforcing. An armoured infantry battalion was more appropriate for such types of operations than an airmobile one.⁴⁸²⁹ She therefore requested that, like the Airmobile Brigade, armoured infantry units also be allowed to complete an entirely independent cycle of one and a half years for peacekeeping operations. Instead of the two armoured infantry battalions which were provided for in the Priorities White Paper, she therefore wanted three included and tabled a motion to this effect.⁴⁸³⁰ This motion only received the support of Groen Links and the smaller parties on the right, and was thus rejected.⁴⁸³¹ She was also favourably disposed towards the idea of converting the eleventh armoured infantry brigade into an airmobile one 'keeping pace with the actual availability of the attack helicopters'. In other words, part of the Airmobile Brigade would need to continue using the equipment of the

⁴⁸²¹ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 52, p. 3.

⁴⁸²² F.W. den Boef, 'Defensiepersoneel geen kind van de rekening' (Defence personnel should not be left holding the baby), *De Banier*, 08/04/93, p. 18.

⁴⁸²³ B. de Ruiter, 'Komt de Luchtmobiele brigade ooit van de grond?', *Democraat*, 26 (1993) 4, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁸²⁴ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 4970 (18/05/93).

⁴⁸²⁵ TK, 1991-1992, 22 327 no. 3, report of consultations held on 06/02/92, p. 9.

⁴⁸²⁶ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 4965.

⁴⁸²⁷ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5038 (19/05/93).

⁴⁸²⁸ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5072 (25/05/93).

⁴⁸²⁹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 4977 (18/05/93).

⁴⁸³⁰ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5044.

⁴⁸³¹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5072 (25/05/93).

eleventh armoured infantry brigade as long as the helicopters were not available.⁴⁸³² Leerling noted that his scepticism about the Airmobile Brigade – he had always been opposed to it – was shared by a growing number of people. He felt that a small country such as the Netherlands was aiming too high with this expensive brigade. He therefore said that he was in favour of a fifth mobile brigade which could be financed with the savings made on the airmobile one.⁴⁸³³

7. The Van Vlijmen and Van Traa motion

Van Traa was also of the opinion that the extent of the investments required for the Airmobile Brigade needed to be offset against the capital losses occasioned by the decommissioning of a number of armoured infantry and mechanised brigades. According to him, the Airmobile Brigade would be too lightly armed to act in operations involving genuine acts of war. It was precisely Yugoslavia that had shown how peacekeeping could move in the direction of peace-enforcing. For this reason he felt that the Airmobile Brigade and the armoured infantry brigades should conduct joint exercises and consideration needed to be given to the question whether it was not ‘wiser and cheaper’ to keep a larger number of armoured vehicles than that provided for in Priorities White Paper. In addition, Van Traa urged that, ‘in view of the need to make allowances for the eventuality of making a contribution to a peacekeeping force in Bosnia’, the first operational airmobile battalion, which was to be established as the first combat unit consisting exclusively of volunteers, be provided with adequate training and instruction using armoured vehicles as soon as possible.⁴⁸³⁴ Attention needed to be devoted to ensure that it was possible to deploy the Airmobile Brigade as soon as possible for duties covering the upper ‘spectrum of force’. In this connection his thoughts ‘naturally turned to Yugoslavia’. To this end, he and the CDA Member of Parliament, Van Vlijmen, tabled a motion asking the government ‘to ensure that the Airmobile Brigade was also suited for action in foreseeable UN operations by providing operational battalions with adequate training and instruction using heavier equipment, including armoured vehicles, as soon as possible’.⁴⁸³⁵ In response to a question from Van Middelkoop, Van Traa, who was closely involved in the events in the former Yugoslavia,⁴⁸³⁶ confirmed that the PvdA and the CDA were prepared to make a contribution to peace-enforcement in that country.⁴⁸³⁷

Kooijmans seized on the remarks of Heemskerck and Van Traa indicating a shift from peacekeeping to peace-enforcing to say that development in Yugoslavia showed ‘that there is a need for a more substantial deployment of more heavily equipped – hence armoured – units’.⁴⁸³⁸

‘The boundary between blue and green helmets is therefore less clear-cut as a result. Yet even if the parties agree, in many instances it will be necessary to deploy extensive military resources as a precaution and a deterrent in view of the insecure situation on the ground.’⁴⁸³⁹

Ter Beek stated that he could not see the point of an Airmobile Brigade without attack helicopters, although he could imagine that the ground component of this brigade could be deployed for both peacekeeping and peace-enforcing. In the latter case incidentally, the Airmobile Brigade would only be deployed in its entirety.⁴⁸⁴⁰ He said that, like Van Traa, he experienced discomfort that there was only

⁴⁸³² TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 4979, p. 5016 and p. 5045.

⁴⁸³³ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 4981.

⁴⁸³⁴ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 4994.

⁴⁸³⁵ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5052; 22 975 no. 22.

⁴⁸³⁶ Interview G. Valk, 15/10/99.

⁴⁸³⁷ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5053.

⁴⁸³⁸ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5002.

⁴⁸³⁹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5003.

⁴⁸⁴⁰ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5022-5023.

so little the Netherlands could do for Yugoslavia.⁴⁸⁴¹ In response to the Van Traa and Van Vlijmen motion, the Minister noted that the first battalion of the Airmobile Brigade would be ready in November, following which there would be ‘additional training as required covering the use of armoured vehicles’. The Minister recalled the debate of 6 May in the course of which he had stated that the government was involved in an international search for such vehicles.⁴⁸⁴² Ter Beek said that he was content with the motion, provided that the airmobile battalion was not converted into an armoured infantry one. For the rest, he assumed that this battalion would be deployed to implement a peace plan. By stating this he was incidentally not saying anything new: he had said the same during the debate of 6 May.⁴⁸⁴³ Only the GPV (a small right-of-centre political party) and the SGP voted against the Van Vlijmen and Van Traa motion.⁴⁸⁴⁴

Some people believe that the Van Vlijmen and Van Traa motion played a major role in relation to the decision to deploy the airmobile battalion.⁴⁸⁴⁵ According to Van der Vlis for example, this motion was ‘the dominant factor ... in the decision to go to Srebrenica’.⁴⁸⁴⁶ In his ministerial memoirs Ter Beek wrote that ‘Whatever I tried, I could not distance myself from that motion’.⁴⁸⁴⁷ It is clear from the above that the Minister did not try much. The PvdA Member of Parliament, Valk, later remarked that, if Ter Beek had had major objections to the motion, he should have shown this in some way. This had not been the case.⁴⁸⁴⁸ Valk rightly noted that Ter Beek had actually not said ‘No’ to the deployment of the airmobile battalion in the general debate on 6 May. The motion in the plenary session was merely ‘the icing on that cake’.⁴⁸⁴⁹ In 2000 even the leader of the PvdA and then Deputy Prime Minister, Kok, could not recall that pressure had been brought to bear on him within his own party and the media in relation to decision-making pertaining to the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade. As Kok put it, the Van Traa and Van Vlijmen motion was ‘not something which inspired any ideas in Cabinet’. According to him, this motion followed on from Parliament’s need to outline its own position, to indicate that the people’s representatives also felt that the time was ripe to ready the Airmobile Brigade for deployment in Bosnia.⁴⁸⁵⁰ Later on Couzy also stated that it was true the motion played a role in relation to the decision to deploy the Airmobile Brigade ‘but the Cabinet also felt that something needed to happen’.⁴⁸⁵¹ Van Vlijmen, the co-author of the motion, later downplayed the importance of the motion by pointing out that not only Parliament but also parts of the army itself were urging Ter Beek to deploy the Airmobile Brigade.⁴⁸⁵²

The Van Vlijmen and Van Traa motion has therefore been wrongly credited with having been a driving force in the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade in the former Yugoslavia. The media had already suggested this alternative on numerous occasions since the outbreak of hostilities in this country. In December 1992 Junior Minister Van Voorst tot Voorst had proposed this alternative in Parliament. In mid-March Minister Ter Beek had even directed Van der Vlis to include the brigade in his list of units which the Dutch Government could make available for a force to implement the Vance-Owen plan. The Foreign Affairs Department subsequently suggested this alternative to diplomats in the legislative capital. In a talk he gave in Groningen at the end of April Minister Ter Beek had described the Airmobile Brigade as indispensable for ensuring compliance with international peace agreements, such as that in Yugoslavia. On 3 May Cabinet had actually opted to offer the Airmobile

⁴⁸⁴¹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5060.

⁴⁸⁴² TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5061.

⁴⁸⁴³ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5063.

⁴⁸⁴⁴ TK, session of 1992-1993, Proceedings, p. 5072 (25/05/93).

⁴⁸⁴⁵ See for example Brabander and Metselaar, *Verstrikking*, p. 8.

⁴⁸⁴⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 52. See also Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 137.

⁴⁸⁴⁷ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 170.

⁴⁸⁴⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of G. Valk, 31/05/00, p. 252.

⁴⁸⁴⁹ Interview G. Valk, 15/10/99.

⁴⁸⁵⁰ Interview W. Kok, 08/05/00. cf. B.J. van Eenennaam to NIOD, 05/12/01.

⁴⁸⁵¹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 61.

⁴⁸⁵² Interview M.B.M.J. van Vlijmen, 14/10/99.

Brigade for an implementation force and had stated that this option could be referred to in any international contact. Indeed, the Van Vlijmen and Van Traa motion did not give the government any ideas. It already had one of its own. The Foreign Affairs Department also assumed that the motion was part of a broader consensus to which the government was party, that it was desirable for the Netherlands to have a more pronounced presence in Bosnia than the transport battalion. The motion served more to profile Parliament than to accommodate the government's need to be spurred on.⁴⁸⁵³ If Parliament exerted any pressure which led to the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade, this did not happen in May as a result of the Van Vlijmen and Van Traa motion, but on 9 March when the parliamentary debate amounted to firm support for Minister Kooijmans when he urged Minister Ter Beek the following day to deploy additional resources for the former Yugoslavia. In November 2000 Ter Beek informed the Bakker Committee that once this motion had been passed, he gave 'very express orders' to ready the first airmobile battalion for deployment.⁴⁸⁵⁴ However, Cabinet had already decided on this on 3 May.

8. A joint programme of action

In the Bosnian-Serb referendum on the Vance-Owen plan held on 15 and 16 May as many as 96% of the 70% of the Bosnian Serbs who voted, rejected the plan and opted for an independent state. An hour after the polling booths closed, Karadzic announced that the peace plan was definitely 'dead' now. The signature that he had put to the plan in Athens, was no longer valid. According to him, it was now time to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina into three separate states. He did not wish to wait a moment longer. 'I am no longer the representative of the Bosnian Serbs. I now represent the Republika Srpska,' Karadzic stated. The borders that were current at the time, were also to be the final ones. Seselj could not but add his contribution. He travelled to Pale where he informed the world that, if the West intervened, his Cetniks would destroy Sarajevo 'in a flash'.⁴⁸⁵⁵ Russia's attitude represented a ray of hope to the West at that point in time. Minister of Foreign Affairs Kozyrev announced that the peace plan must be implemented despite the outcome of the Serbian vote.⁴⁸⁵⁶

Some of the countries of the West had not even waited for the results of the referendum and had contemplated new policy immediately after the Bosnian-Serb parliament had rejected the Vance-Owen plan. On 10 May the French Government presented a draft resolution of Safe Areas to the United Kingdom, the United States and Russia. This proposal was supposed to result in a resolution which would make it possible to implement Resolution 824 covering the six Safe Areas. On 14 May the EC's ad hoc group on Yugoslavia met.⁴⁸⁵⁷ It postulated the following objectives for EC policy: strict compliance with sanctions and the creation of Safe Areas in accordance with Resolution 824. Germany and France were now calling for the idea of Safe Areas. The Germans now considered these areas necessary for humanitarian reasons – 'to secure the survival of the Bosnian (Muslim) people' – because waiting any longer would make it difficult to implement the Vance-Owen plan, and also to ensure that there was no increase in the criticism levelled by the Islamic world against Western restraint in the conflict.⁴⁸⁵⁸ The Netherlands naturally supported this interest in Safe Areas and stressed the desire to protect them from the air.⁴⁸⁵⁹ As it happens, it was also determined in the course of this meeting that

⁴⁸⁵³ Interview O. Hattinga van 't Sant on 18/07/00 and H.A.C. van der Zwan on 12/04/ 2000.

⁴⁸⁵⁴ TCBU, talk with A.L. ter Beek, 23/03/00, pp. 25-26.

⁴⁸⁵⁵ John Pomfret, 'Peace Plan Dead, Serb Leader Says', *The Washington Post*, 17/05/93.

⁴⁸⁵⁶ John Pomfret, 'Peace Plan Dead, Serb Leader Says', *The Washington Post*, 17/05/93.

⁴⁸⁵⁷ For a report of this meeting see ABZ, DEU/ARA/00754. Kooijmans, 17/05/93, celer circ 356; ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. COREU message, 18/05/93, cpe/sec 577.

⁴⁸⁵⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00754. Kooijmans, 17/05/93, celer circ 356.

⁴⁸⁵⁹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. COREU message, 18/05/93, cpe/sec 577; ABZ, DEU/ARA/00754. Kooijmans, 17/05/93, celer circ 356.

these Safe Areas constituted a '*mesure conservatoire*' and were in no way a substitute for a political settlement.⁴⁸⁶⁰

On 19 May the French Government circulated its final proposal for Safe Areas. It described a 'safe area' as 'a besieged area with a precisely defined perimeter, placed under the protection of the United Nations, in which the delivery of humanitarian assistance is ensured and all acts of aggression (are) banned'. The general purpose of the Safe Areas was to halt Bosnian-Serb aggression and to facilitate a peace settlement. The French Defence White Paper drew a distinction between light, medium and heavy options. In the first case the aim was to deter aggression, monitor a ceasefire and make it possible to supply aid to the people. The medium option provided for UNPROFOR to assist with the provision of aid itself and also to take control of important positions on the ground. According to the heavy option, UNPROFOR would need to counter every form of aggression and hold corridors open for the passage of assistance convoys. It would also need to ensure demilitarisation pursuant to this option. According to the Defence White Paper, only the participation of the P4 – the permanent members of the Security Council sans China – on the ground and close cooperation of ground and air forces would lend credibility to the light option.⁴⁸⁶¹ This option would also require 9,600 troops while 35,000 to 40,000 were felt to be needed for the heaviest.⁴⁸⁶²

On 19 May the WEU held its spring Ministerial meeting in Rome, which was entirely devoted to the situation in Yugoslavia. The ministers concluded that a political solution based on the Vance-Owen plan might offer a way forward. There was no alternative. The establishment of Safe Areas as envisaged by the French Government deserved to be accorded priority. On this occasion it appeared that even Hurd supported this.⁴⁸⁶³ The following day Ter Beek again stressed in the course of the WEU Forum of Consultation that all international political, diplomatic, economic and military efforts made in respect of the former Yugoslavia should be directed towards the unconditional acceptance of the Vance-Owen plan by all the parties: 'If adequately protected by international troops, Safe Areas could make a substantial contribution to the creation of the conditions required for further steps in this direction, and could also help relieve the unacceptable humanitarian situation prevailing on the ground'.⁴⁸⁶⁴ Those ministers who were present, mandated the Permanent Council of the WEU to conduct a study into the establishment of different Safe Areas as referred to in Resolution 824.⁴⁸⁶⁵

However, the French plan for Safe Areas initially ran into unwillingness on the part of the American Government.⁴⁸⁶⁶ After Christopher's return from Europe it delayed new policy initiatives until the outcome of the Bosnian-Serb referendum was known. However, it was a fact that America was not making a major effort to do anything about the conflict in Bosnia. 'This is a problem, after all, that's in Europe's backyard,' President Clinton said after Christopher's trip to Europe.⁴⁸⁶⁷ The American Government did not wish to deploy any ground troops in Bosnia and was only prepared to contain the conflict.⁴⁸⁶⁸ It would only try to ensure that the conflict did not spread to Albania, Greece and Turkey. This concern was again confirmed by the announcement on 12 May that 325 American troops were to be stationed in Macedonia for preventive duties.⁴⁸⁶⁹ Although Clinton persisted in his rhetoric in the media against ethnic cleansing, during a photo session on 17 May he said that he would not be sending American ground troops into a 'shooting gallery'.⁴⁸⁷⁰ A day later Christopher told the

⁴⁸⁶⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. COREU message, 18/05/93, cpe/sec 577.

⁴⁸⁶¹ S/25800; ABZ, PVNY. New York permanent representative to Heijkoop (embassy in Washington), 19/05/93, fax no. 5008, addendum: French memorandum relative to safe areas.

⁴⁸⁶² ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Jacobovits 328 to Kooijmans, 17/05/93.

⁴⁸⁶³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Veenendaal WEU 865 to Kooijmans, 21/05/93.

⁴⁸⁶⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Kooijmans to PV WEU, 25/05/93, celer 246.

⁴⁸⁶⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Weurom/175, 29/05/93.

⁴⁸⁶⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Jacobovits 328 to Kooijmans, 17/05/93.

⁴⁸⁶⁷ Cragg Hines, 'U.S. plan would draw a line in the Balkans', *The Houston Chronicle*, 12/05/93.

⁴⁸⁶⁸ See for example Elaine Sciolino, 'U.S. Goal on Bosnia: Keeping War Within Borders', *The New York Times*, 19/05/93.

⁴⁸⁶⁹ Callahan, *Wars*, pp. 118-19.

⁴⁸⁷⁰ Daalder, *Dayton*, p. 18; Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 102.

American Congress that Bosnia was ‘a problem from hell’, a ‘morass’ of centuries of hatred in which all three parties had committed crimes, concluding, as had Clinton, that ‘at heart, this is a European problem.’⁴⁸⁷¹ Both Christopher and Clinton wanted to ensure that the American president could devote all his energies to American domestic politics without stumbling into the problems of Bosnia.⁴⁸⁷² In addition, the disagreement with the European countries that had come to light during Christopher’s trip,⁴⁸⁷³ had to be resolved.

The American Government therefore torpedoed a Security Council debate initiated by Russia on the further involvement of the UN in the situation in the former Yugoslavia. The Russian Government had wanted to raise the possibility of a step-by-step implementation of the Vance-Owen plan, which would start in those areas that were reasonably calm, after which this approach would be able to spread steadily across the rest of Bosnia.⁴⁸⁷⁴ According to the American Government, such a discussion would only highlight the differences between the members of the Council and, in particular, the countries of the West.⁴⁸⁷⁵ For this reason the American Government invited Kozyrev and representatives of the three Western members of the Security Council, namely, France, the United Kingdom and Spain, for talks in Washington. Following several days of intensive consultations in the American capital⁴⁸⁷⁶ on 22 May 1993 France, the Russian Federation, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States, all of whom were members of the Security Council, adopted a *Joint Action Programme* for Bosnia-Herzegovina, which finally brought Europe, the United States and Russia into line with each other.⁴⁸⁷⁷ In itself, this was a fine outcome. First of all, the plan was designed to ensure that the tense relations within the alliance of America and Europe no longer persisted.⁴⁸⁷⁸ In the words of the American Defence, Minister Aspin, ‘We have moved from criticising each other’s ideas to joining in a common action programme to address the most critical problems.’⁴⁸⁷⁹

However, the new programme was to deal a fatal blow to the Vance-Owen plan. Owen himself saw this programme as a means for Washington to extricate itself from any commitment to implement his and Vance’s peace plan.⁴⁸⁸⁰ He anticipated that the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina would be completed soon, even though the European countries involved in this programme stated that it only applied to the short term and that the Vance-Owen plan continued to retain its value for the long term.⁴⁸⁸¹

The programme accepted the Safe Areas but the United States only undertook to provide air support for the UNPROFOR troops in these areas. According to a senior British diplomat this represented the common denominator which had enabled the various powers to agree with each other. By accepting Safe Areas the European countries believed that they could prevent the Americans from

⁴⁸⁷¹ Drew, *Edge*, p. 162. See also Maarten Huygen, ‘VS nemen steeds meer afstand van kwestie-Bosnië’ (USA distances itself even further from the issue of Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/05/93; ‘VS trekken handen af van oorlog in Bosnië’ (USA steps back from war in Bosnia), *Het Parool*, 19/05/93.

⁴⁸⁷² Drew, *Edge*, p. 162; Paulsen, *Jugoslaviëpolitiek*, p. 132.

⁴⁸⁷³ See for example ‘VS en EG pogen ruzie over Bosnië te verdoezelen’ (USA and EC attempt to gloss over quarrel about Bosnia), *ANP*, 12/05/93, 8.26 pm; ‘Anglo-U.S. love lost as Clinton drifts’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 17/05/93; ‘VS en Europa verdeeld over aanpak Bosnië’ (USA and Europe divided on approach to Bosnia), *ANP*, 18/05/93, 10.22 pm.

⁴⁸⁷⁴ With regard to the strong points of this approach see Gow, *Triumph*, pp. 248-52. In the Netherlands such a solution was propounded by Van den Doel & Leurdijk & Voorhoeve, *Oplossing*, p. 313.

⁴⁸⁷⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01803. Veenendaal NAVO 850 to Kooijmans, 18/05/93.

⁴⁸⁷⁶ See for example ‘VS en Rusland bespreken gezamenlijke aanpak Bosnische crisis’ (USA and Russia discuss joint approach to Bosnian crisis), *ANP*, 20/05/93, 10.04 pm; Elaine Sciolino, ‘U.S. and Russia Agree on Strategy Accepting Serbian Gains for Now’, *The New York Times*, 21/05/93.

⁴⁸⁷⁷ For the text see ‘Tekst actieplan Bosnië-Herzegovina’ (Text of plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina), *ANP*, 23/05/93, 12.11 am; Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp.1337-39.

⁴⁸⁷⁸ Cf. ABZ, the embassy in Washington. Veenendaal NATO 891 to Kooijmans, 27/05/93.

⁴⁸⁷⁹ ABZ, the embassy in Washington. Kooijmans, 27/05/93, circ 375.

⁴⁸⁸⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Faber 13 to Kooijmans, 08/06/93.

⁴⁸⁸¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. COREU message from the EPC secretariat, 02/06/93, cpe/sec 623.

bombarding the Serbs.⁴⁸⁸² On the other hand, the American Government agreed to Safe Areas without being obliged to supply ground troops. Unlike the Vance-Owen plan, which demanded that the Serbs vacate part of the terrain they held, this programme appeared to resign itself to the results of ethnic cleansing. This was also precisely the reason why the Bosnian government fiercely opposed this plan.⁴⁸⁸³ According to Izetbegovic, the Safe Areas resembled 'reserves'.⁴⁸⁸⁴ The *Joint Action Programme* was therefore actually a 'do-little' plan.⁴⁸⁸⁵ The American Government would be able to lean back largely and let the EC and the United Nations take the initiative.⁴⁸⁸⁶

Karadzic therefore praised the programme as 'more realistic' than the Vance-Owen plan.⁴⁸⁸⁷ The latter and the threat of large-scale military intervention no longer applied now. Karadzic announced that his troops would not stand in the way of the establishment of the Safe Areas, provided that the 'sovereignty of Serbian territory' was respected.⁴⁸⁸⁸

On 24 May the ministers of Foreign Affairs responded positively to this programme in the North-Atlantic Council. The ministers of Defence were considerably more critical the following day. The final statement merely indicated that the plan had been 'discussed'. The German Minister of Defence, Volker R  he, was utterly opposed to it, because he felt that the establishment of Safe Areas amounted to acquiescence to ethnic cleansing.

UNPROFOR circles also warned that the Safe Areas would play into the Serbs' hands. For instance, the VRS had been able to withdraw most of its troops around Srebrenica and deploy them around Brcko and Zepa. On the other hand, the Safe Areas could serve as bases for terrorist attacks.⁴⁸⁸⁹

The latter consideration was probably fuelled by the fact that Mladic had since protested strongly against the inadequate demilitarisation of Srebrenica. In a formal protest lodged with UNPROFOR, he warned of 'additional steps' if the Muslims continued to ignore the ceasefire.⁴⁸⁹⁰ According to the Dutch Military Intelligence Service, MID, this threat meant that 'there was still a possibility of direct conflict between UNPROFOR and the Bosnian-Serb armed forces in Eastern Bosnia'.⁴⁸⁹¹

Neither was the Dutch Government particularly pleased with the programme of action, because it lacked any notion of a lasting political solution now that the Vance-Owen plan definitely appeared to have been abandoned. Although Minister Kooijmans seemed to have rather little difficulty distancing himself from this plan during his meeting with Christopher in Bonn, after the release of the programme of action the Dutch Government let it be known in the EC and the alliance that it did not see an alternative to the Vance-Owen plan as the basis for a peace settlement.⁴⁸⁹² In a telephone conversation

⁴⁸⁸² Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 217.

⁴⁸⁸³ 'Bosni   en Klein-Joegoslavi   wijzen actieplan voor Bosni   af' (Bosnia and Lesser Yugoslavia reject programme of action for Bosnia), *ANP* 23/05/93, 9.01 pm; 'VN: Veilige zones Bosni   bron van onrust' (UN: Bosnian Safe Areas are source of unrest), *ANP*, 25/05/93, 2.49 pm; K. Koch, 'Joegoslavi  , Oost-Europa en de strategie van neo-containment' in Gijs de Vries et al., *Continent*, pp. 122-23. cf. J.C.A.C. de Vogel, 'Het "Actieplan voor Bosni  " hoeft geen loos gebaar te zijn' (Bosnian programme of action need not be an empty gesture), *Vrij Nederland*, 19/06/93, p. 30.

⁴⁸⁸⁴ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavi  . Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part VII, May 1993 to March 1994. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 35/93, 24/05/93.

⁴⁸⁸⁵ Edgar O'Ballance, quoted in Gr  maux and De Vries, *Crisis*, p. 40.

⁴⁸⁸⁶ Daalder, *Dayton*, p. 87.

⁴⁸⁸⁷ 'Karadzic schikt zich in plan voor beveiligde gebieden' (Karadzic goes along with plan for safe areas), *ANP*, 23/05/93, 4.52 pm.

⁴⁸⁸⁸ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavi  . Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part VII, May 1993 to March 1994, MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 35/93, 24/05/93; K. Koch, 'Joegoslavi  , Oost-Europa en de strategie van neo-containment' in Gijs de Vries et al., *Continent*, pp. 123.

⁴⁸⁸⁹ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavi  . Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part VII, May 1993 to March 1994. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 36/93, 27/05/93.

⁴⁸⁹⁰ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavi  . Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part VII, May 1993 to March 1994. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 33/93, 13/05/93.

⁴⁸⁹¹ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavi  . Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part VII, May 1993 to March 1994. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 33/93, 13/05/93.

⁴⁸⁹² TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 50, p. 2.

with his French counterpart, Alain Juppé, Kooijmans used virtually identical words to those with which Izetbegovic had rejected the programme of action: the Safe Areas would become ghettos.⁴⁸⁹³ Moreover, the Dutch Government took umbrage because those who had taken the initiative, had bypassed the EC, the WEU and NATO, as well as the Netherlands, which bore a military involvement in the former Yugoslavia that was not insignificant. The government felt that this was not the way in which EC member states were supposed to be dealing with each other within the context of European Political Cooperation.⁴⁸⁹⁴ However, Juppé managed to persuade the Dutch Government not to publicly disclose its sharp criticism of the plan.⁴⁸⁹⁵

During a debate on 2 June 1993 the Dutch Members of Parliament sided with the government's criticism. De Kok described the programme of action 'as a low point in diplomatic relations in recent months'. If the international community was unable to think of anything better, the CDA was even prepared to lift the arms embargo against Bosnia-Herzegovina now.⁴⁸⁹⁶ Van Traa felt that the programme of action was 'a slap in the face for European cooperation in the area of foreign policy'. He called for the Netherlands to send as clear a signal as possible to the US through the European Council, indicating that the authority of the international community needed to be restored for the establishment and protection of Safe Areas, which could serve as a starting point for the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan.⁴⁸⁹⁷ Replying on behalf of the government, Kooijmans stated that, if one were to abandon the implementation of this plan, the aim of establishing the Safe Areas would no longer be clear: 'For this reason the establishment of the Safe Areas must be extricated from the programme of action and, more importantly, should be embedded within the context of the Vance-Owen plan...'.⁴⁸⁹⁸ In spite of all his criticism, Kooijmans stressed that the Safe Areas represented the positive element of the programme of action. While it is true that until then the international community had not done much more than declare certain parts to be Safe Areas, Kooijmans believed that Srebrenica, where a mere 150 Canadians were stationed who could rely on British support in the event of an attack on the enclave, constituted proof that even such a minimal act could have a moderating effect on the warring factions. In the course of this debate Minister Ter Beek again mentioned that, following supplementary training in the use of armoured vehicles, it would be possible to deploy the first airmobile battalion – also for duties in Yugoslavia – by about the end of the year or beginning of the next.⁴⁸⁹⁹

9. Detailing the concept of 'safe areas'

The Safe Areas could therefore only exist with the approval of the Bosnian Serbs and the Muslims. Even the demilitarisation could ultimately only be the result of agreement between the two warring factions. The United Nations troops that were stationed in the enclave, could only serve as a trip wire in the event of an attack by the Bosnian-Serb army. Ultimately, the protection of the enclaves would depend on air support.

On 28 May Boutros-Ghali sent a working paper on 'safe areas' to the Security Council. This paper drew a distinction between safe zones, safe havens and Safe Areas. According to this paper, 'safe zones' were areas in which security and humanitarian aid were provided to people who still lived in their own homes. The same happened in 'safe havens', except for the fact that people had already fled and were threatened with further persecution. The concept of a 'safe area' covered both of these categories. According to Boutros-Ghali, Safe Areas depended on the agreement of the parties

⁴⁸⁹³ Both, *Indifference*, p. 160; Impartial version of the government meeting of 28/05/93.

⁴⁸⁹⁴ See also TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 52, p. 7.

⁴⁸⁹⁵ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 28/05/93 prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁴⁸⁹⁶ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 52, p. 1.

⁴⁸⁹⁷ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 52, p. 2. cf. PvdA policy paper 1992-1994, p. 39.

⁴⁸⁹⁸ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 52, p. 7.

⁴⁸⁹⁹ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 52, p. 11

concerned. An effective ceasefire was therefore required. Based on this paper, a Safe Area would therefore need to be adequately demilitarised in order to ensure that the protected party did not derive any military benefit from it. A Safe Area would need to be surrounded by a secure perimeter 30 km wide which would have to be heavily patrolled.⁴⁹⁰⁰

In the meantime UNHCR warned that the Security Council and the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command were focussing exclusively on the military security of Safe Areas. One needed to ensure that there was a properly functioning civil administration and that the people had long-term access to food. UNHCR had since learned from its experience in Srebrenica that nothing 'which resembles normal life' was to be found there. The residents lived in isolation, heaped together in a small area and without any future. Their actions were increasingly limited to acts of violence, black market trade, prostitution and theft. There was considerable tension between the original population and the refugees.⁴⁹⁰¹

In addition, at the end of June 1993 Kumin, the head of the UNHCR in Belgrade, expressed her concern about the food situation in Srebrenica to Engels, the Dutch deputy chargé d'affaires in the Serbian capital. The aim of 530 grams of food per person per day was not being achieved, while the prospects of doing so were even poorer. The Serbs and Bosnian Serbs were providing diminishing cooperation in respect of the convoys. There was a water shortage amounting to one litre per person per day and there were sanitary and medical problems. According to Kumin, it was necessary to evacuate 20,000 of the 51,000 residents.⁴⁹⁰² On both occasions UNHCR expressed grave reservations about the concept of 'safe areas', because they could become permanent refugee camps. If they were to be established or to remain, far more aid would be required from the international community, not only in the form of food and medicine, but also administrative facilities, for example.

Early July, Stoltenberg and Ogata were also of the opinion that a number of Safe Areas were not viable. In this connection, Ogata mainly had Srebrenica in mind, which the Japanese High Commissioner believed could only hold 12,000 people but was currently home to between 45,000 and 50,000. If the Serbs were not to change their approach to the aid convoys destined for this enclave, a mass evacuation would still be required.⁴⁹⁰³ More than a week later the High Commissioner for Refugees again informed the international community that she believed that Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde were not viable and that evacuation in the near future might perhaps be the only solution.⁴⁹⁰⁴

10. Resolution 836: What protection?

'L'enfer est pavé de bonnes résolutions.'⁴⁹⁰⁵

On 1 June the French permanent representative to the UN, J.B. Mérimée, presented a draft resolution on the Safe Areas. The non-aligned countries tabled their own resolution, which provided for a robust protection of the Safe Areas. At the time they viewed the activities of those countries that were party to the Joint Programme of Action with a great deal of suspicion.⁴⁹⁰⁶ They operated as a closed front and D. Arria acted as their spokesperson. However, Mérimée managed to detach Brazil from this front employing a streak of high school diplomacy, after which the French draft resolution 'prevailed'.⁴⁹⁰⁷ It was to become known as Resolution 836 and moved the concept of a 'safe area' from the political

⁴⁹⁰⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Safe Areas. Working Paper by the Secretariat, accompanying New York permanent representative to DPV/PZ and DEU/OE, 28/05/93, fax no. 4927.

⁴⁹⁰¹ ABZ, DIE/2004/00075. UNHCR Belgrade to UNHCR Geneva and UNHCR Zagreb, 22/05/93, accompanying PV Geneva to DIO/Yugoslavia, 27/05/93, hum/gev-0770/93. See also ABZ, DPV/ARA/00782. Wagenmakers 435 to Kooijmans, 27/05/93.

⁴⁹⁰² ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Engels 172 to Kooijmans, 29/06/93.

⁴⁹⁰³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Boddens Hosang 521 to Kooijmans, 08/07/93.

⁴⁹⁰⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Boddens Hosang 536 to Kooijmans, 19/07/93.

⁴⁹⁰⁵ Morillon, *Credo*, p. 132.

⁴⁹⁰⁶ Interview D. Arria on 10/05/00 and A. Erdos on 11/05/00.

⁴⁹⁰⁷ Interview D. Arria, 10/05/00.

sphere accorded to it in Resolution 824, which only made 50 military observers available for the six Safe Areas, to one of a more military nature. Article 9 of the draft resolution empowered UNPROFOR in Bosnia:

‘acting in self-defence, to take the necessary measures, including the use of force, in reply to bombardments against the Safe Areas ... or to armed incursion into them or in the event of any deliberate obstruction in or around those areas to the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR or of protected humanitarian convoys.’

The resolution permitted member states to deploy aircraft in order to permit UNPROFOR to carry out its mandate. However this was subject to the condition that the Security Council would need to request this support. In addition, the resolution permitted the Bosnian Government to maintain military and paramilitary units in the enclave. This provision appeared to be contrary to the demilitarisation agreement concluded between Generals Halilovic and Mladic on 17 April and a subsequent demilitarisation agreement of 8 May 1993,⁴⁹⁰⁸ but in view of the position adopted by non-aligned countries, it was not anticipated that they would agree to the unilateral disarmament of the Bosnian Muslims in the enclave. At the same time this was an indication of how unstable relations remained in and around those areas designated as safe. Already while Resolution 836 was being prepared, the UN Situation Centre warned that it would be difficult to translate it into instructions which could be carried out by the troops.⁴⁹⁰⁹ Mladic had informed Morillon that he did not have any intention of withdrawing the heavy and other weapons the VRS had stationed around the Safe Areas as long as the latter were not actually demilitarised. In addition, if any aircraft were to attack the Serbs while they were defending themselves against aggression emanating from the enclaves, the VRS would treat UNPROFOR as an enemy, according to the Bosnian-Serb general.⁴⁹¹⁰ Moreover, Wahlgren feared that air strikes would herald the end of humanitarian aid: ‘One cannot make peace and war at the same time’.⁴⁹¹¹ Paragraph 9 of the resolution was now amended to empower UNPROFOR ‘acting in self-defence to take the necessary measures including the use of force’ and nothing else was added. The duties of the troops stationed in an enclave were now ‘to deter attacks’ and ‘to promote withdrawal’ of any troops positioned around it. The duties of UNPROFOR troops stationed in a Safe Area would therefore not be to defend or secure the withdrawal of an attacking force.

It was also very important that Resolution 836 only stated that safe areas ‘*should* be safe from attack’. This entailed an entirely different commitment from that if ‘*shall*’ had been used. The resolution did not impose any duty on the Bosnian-Serb army not to attack but assumed that they would not do so. Indeed, the Bosnian-Serbs had to weigh up the benefits of any *coup-de-main* against Srebrenica and the other Safe Areas against the strategic drawback of incurring the wrath of the world community. On the other hand, the policy of Safe Areas represented a form of bluff which was based on the assumption that there could be no other reason for Serbian leaders to capture it, such as revenge, compensation for defeats on other fronts, a desire for personal prestige, and so forth. Thirteen members of the Security Council voted in favour of Resolution 836 on 4 June. Pakistan and Venezuela abstained because they felt the resolution was too toothless. Albright announced that she was voting in favour on behalf of the USA ‘with no illusions about its ultimate consequences. It is an intermediate step – no more, no less’. In his coded message to The Hague, the Netherlands acting permanent representative to the UN, D’Ansembourg, noted that the temporary nature of Safe Areas could cover a very lengthy period of time.⁴⁹¹²

⁴⁹⁰⁸ See Part 2, Chapter 3.

⁴⁹⁰⁹ Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 102.

⁴⁹¹⁰ Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 103.

⁴⁹¹¹ Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 110.

⁴⁹¹² ABZ, DEU/ARA/05274. D’Ansembourg 567 to Kooijmans, 04/06/93.

In a meeting of the EC's General Council on 8 June Hurd nevertheless stated that Resolution 836 was a temporary measure 'which keeps people alive, whilst we look for a real solution'. On this occasion it also appeared that the resolution was still not only to serve to protect UNPROFOR but also the local population, according to Juppé. Various speakers emphasised that the joint programme of action had not put an end to the Vance-Owen plan. Like Hurd, Minister Kooijmans stated that Resolution 836 was only of a transitional nature and that the search for a permanent solution should continue. In this connection, he sought a prominent role for the Netherlands by requesting appreciation of:

'the fact that it was impossible for a country such as the Netherlands, with such a substantial on-site involvement, not to be involved in the relevant decision-making. This involvement was also indispensable with a view to securing political support.'

According to Kooijmans, when implementing Resolution 836 the international community should operate in a manner that was 'not maximized but pragmatic'. This meant that the consent of local parties was indispensable for the 'safe area' concept, otherwise there would not be enough UN troops. The minister felt that 'air support was essential also because of its deterrent effect.'⁴⁹¹³

In the midst of the relief occasioned by European unity in the form of consensus on the pursuit of the Vance-Owen plan, the strict compliance with sanctions, and the implementation of Resolution 836, Owen was the person whose utterances were the most admonitory. He believed that the European ministers needed to realise that the Muslims would not balk at using anything to involve UN troops in the conflict. For this reason the Belgian Minister, Claes, called for clearly defined rules of engagement which left no doubt as to what the warring factions in Bosnia were able prepared and capable of doing.⁴⁹¹⁴

The following day, on 9 June, the EC ministers were scheduled to meet Christopher in Luxembourg. He too said that he did not see any discrepancy between the programme of action and the Vance-Owen plan. The programme of action and the Safe Areas were to serve as interim measures, while the Vance-Owen plan represented a long-term prospect.⁴⁹¹⁵ While Christopher and the European ministers displayed consensus in Luxembourg by embracing Safe Areas, on the home front the CIA warned against their establishment. In the course of time they would appear to be poor refugee camps in which a form of lawlessness would prevail along with animosity between the original inhabitants and the refugees, according to analysts in the American Intelligence Service. Furthermore, they foresaw that the Bosnian Serbs would delay supplies to these areas. In short, the international community was busy establishing 'six little West Banks'.⁴⁹¹⁶

11. Security with the aid of air support

Resolution 836, which was adopted on 4 June, permitted UN member states, either on their own or as part of an alliance, to support the UNPROFOR units in its operations to carry out its mandate 'through the use of air power' in and around the Safe Areas. During NATO talks on 25 and 26 May most of the countries that were participating in Operation Deny Flight appeared to be prepared to increase the number of fighter aircraft which they had made available, for the performance of duties in relation to the Safe Areas. However, France and the United Kingdom only wished to deploy these aircraft for the protection of UN personnel in the enclaves, while the other European member states felt that they

⁴⁹¹³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Faber 13 to Kooijmans, 08/06/93.

⁴⁹¹⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Faber 13 to Kooijmans, 08/06/93.

⁴⁹¹⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. cpe/sec 669, 11/06/93; ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Bot 214 to Kooijmans, 09/06/93.

⁴⁹¹⁶ Michael R. Gordon, 'U.S. Experts Say 'Safe Havens' Won't Help Much', *The New York Times*, 10/06/93.

should also defend their residents.⁴⁹¹⁷ According to a report dated 5 June from Jacobovits, the Dutch ambassador in Washington, the American authorities were also of the opinion that they were only providing aircraft for the protection of UNPROFOR and not for the defence of the Safe Areas 'because the military experts believe that it is impossible to defend Safe Areas from the air alone'.⁴⁹¹⁸

During the NATO Council meeting in Athens on 10 June the USA and its European allies produced a formula which purported that there was again consensus within NATO in relation to the former Yugoslavia. They announced that they had agreed that the Safe Areas should constitute a temporary measure, which was to lead to a settlement achieved through negotiations. The principles embodied in the Vance-Owen plan were still to apply in the case of such a settlement, namely that the full sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina had to be guaranteed. NATO undertook to provide UNPROFOR with air support if its members were attacked while acting in accordance with their mandate in relation to the Safe Areas. The question as to exactly what the air force was supposed to protect – UNPROFOR, the people or the Safe Area – was resolved with a compromise stating that the air force would protect UNPROFOR 'in the performance of its overall mandate'. This also covered the protection of the civilian population, a point which had been strongly argued for mainly by the Turkish Minister, Cetin.⁴⁹¹⁹ On 12 June NATO announced that it was prepared to provide the air support which was required for UNPROFOR to prosecute its mandate in accordance with Resolution 836. However, Christopher proclaimed that this air support would cover UNPROFOR units throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina 'but not protection for the civilian population in case of an attack'.⁴⁹²⁰ Christopher thus extended the scope of this support on the one hand – covering all UN troops in Bosnia – and simultaneously reduced it – not including the people. In the end, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States provided 19 aircraft for the protection of the Safe Areas. Several AWACS and other reconnaissance planes were added, thereby bringing the total number of aircraft involved to more than 100. The necessary arrangements were made within a month. The use of air support was supposed to remain within the confines of a peacekeeping operation, this is to say, to achieve one's objectives with a minimum of force, to issue a warning before using any force, to ensure a proportionate use of force, and to keep collateral damage to a minimum. In addition, a sharp distinction was drawn between Close Air Support and air strikes. 'Close Air Support' was only intended to be used to defend UNPROFOR troops and to deter attacks on Safe Areas. 'Air strikes', on the other hand, were of an offensive and strategic nature and were designed to destroy part of the fighting capacity of the warring factions, either for military or political purposes.

As of 22 July the NATO aircraft were ready to provide Close Air Support. After this, it was a question of waiting for the UN to give the green light. However, Boutros-Ghali asked NATO to delay operations above Bosnian terrain, including practice flights, as long as the forward air controllers (FACs), who were to track down targets on the ground and guide the pilots to them, were not in the field.⁴⁹²¹

It would therefore be possible to provide air support for the Safe Areas in the event of an emergency. On paper, the ability to summon air support appeared to be a powerful tool but there were a number of objections to it. For instance, the move from offering resistance on the ground using light arms to the deployment of airmobile weapons represented a major psychological step up the ladder of escalation.⁴⁹²² On 17 October 1995 the Director of the Legal Affairs Office of the Dutch Ministry of

⁴⁹¹⁷ Lutgert & De Winter, *Horizon*, pp. 193-95. See also ABZ, the embassy in Washington. Veenendaal NATO 891 to Kooijmans, 27/05/93.

⁴⁹¹⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Jacobovits 382 to Kooijmans, 04/06/93.

⁴⁹¹⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05274. Vijverberg 91 (Kooijmans) to the Foreign Ministry, 11/06/93; interview W. Claes, 12/03/01.

⁴⁹²⁰ Quoted in Leurdijk, *United Nations*, p. 37.

⁴⁹²¹ 'NAVO-jagers nog niet ingezet voor beschermingstaak' (NATO fighters not yet deployed for protective duties), *ANP*, 23/07/93, 12.40 pm; 'NAVO kan begin volgende week beginnen met luchtoperatie Bosnië' (NATO can commence air operations in Bosnia next week), *ANP*, 28/07/93, 7.25 pm.

⁴⁹²² Cf. Colonel J.H. de Jonghe in: Frank Westerman, 'VN-missie berust op denkfouten' (UN mission conceptually flawed), *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/05/95.

Defence, Ybema, gave a lecture on the Conference on Rules of Engagement and the Law of War at the *Koninklijke Militaire Academie* (Royal Netherlands Military Academy) in Breda. In the draft of his talk he wrote that it is true that Resolution 836 explicitly permits the use of air support to counter any threat to a Safe Area. While there was nothing wrong with this from a legal point of view, Ijbema felt that the situation was different from a political perspective. At the international level there were rather significant differences of opinion about the wisdom and advisability of deploying airmobile weapons. According to Ybema, a UNPROFOR commander would therefore need to take account of the international and political consequences of his actions when making a decision in relation to air support.⁴⁹²³ In other words, deploying airmobile weapons was definitely not a reflexive act and its rationale was more political than military.

12. Troops for the Safe Areas

‘Deterrence is almost always preferable to fighting a war. But the decision to deter is one that should only be taken with great care, for with it comes the responsibility to make good on the commitment.’⁴⁹²⁴

On 7 June Annan spoke to representatives of the five countries responsible for the programme of action of 22 May and Canada, in order to ask them for troops (additional or otherwise) for the implementation of Resolution 836 covering Safe Areas. He said that a military personnel study conducted by the UN had shown that 34,000 troops would be required for a credible implementation of the resolution. None of these countries appeared to be prepared to offer a helping hand. The French wanted to continue to focus on Bihac and Sarajevo, and refused to accept responsibility for a third Safe Area. The British Government did not want any other tasks assigned to its troops over and above their existing ones in Central Bosnia. The United States and Russia bluntly refused to provide any troops. In the meantime it had been revealed that the Canadian Government wished to withdraw its troops from Srebrenica. The representatives of the five countries that had accepted the joint programme of action attempted to prevent Boutros-Ghali from presenting recommendations for decisive action or at least options for such action in his report on the implementation of the resolution. This was one of the numerous indications of a ‘game’ in which the major powers sought to hide behind the United Nations, while being the first to deprive the latter of arms, so as to enable Clinton to declare at a later stage, for example, ‘We have done everything the United Nations has asked us to do’.⁴⁹²⁵ The five responsible for the programme of action and the UN Secretariat agreed that, while it was true that Resolution 836 had been adopted in accordance with Chapter VII of the UN Charter, agreements would nevertheless be required at the local level. According to countries behind the programme of action, the phrase, ‘to deter attacks against the Safe Areas’, which in itself represented a dilution of the draft resolution, had to be interpreted narrowly. It did not entail the comprehensive defence of these areas. The task, ‘to promote the withdrawal of military or paramilitary units, was therefore not to be performed with the aid of weapons but was to be the subject of consultations with the parties involved. The permanent representatives of France and the United Kingdom were of the opinion that, following the amendment of Paragraph 9 of the draft-resolution, a light option was possible, only requiring about 7,000 soldiers.’⁴⁹²⁶

On 14 June Boutros-Ghali sent his report on the implementation of Resolution 836 to the Security Council.⁴⁹²⁷ It stated that, although 34,000 troops were required to deter attacks on the Safe Areas effectively, 7,600 would suffice for a minimum deterrence. Instead of deterrence through

⁴⁹²³ DJZ. Ybema to Voorhoeve, 13/10/95, no. 95001055.

⁴⁹²⁴ Haass, *Intervention*, p. 79.

⁴⁹²⁵ The editors, ‘The Abdication’ in Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 171.

⁴⁹²⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00141. Biegman 577 to Kooijmans, 09/06/93.

⁴⁹²⁷ UN, S/25939.

strength, which would require 34,000 troops, there would now be deterrence by presence involving 7,600. The latter option would only be possible if the warring factions consented to the establishment of Safe Areas and if there was a threat of airmobile action in the event that any party nevertheless attacked a Safe Area. Airmobile action would take the form of Close Air Support which would simultaneously serve to defend the UN troops and act as a deterrent against attacks on Safe Areas. In addition, this light option was based on the consent and cooperation of the warring factions. Four days later the Council adopted Resolution 844, which approved the smaller number of troops. However, it said a lot that this number did not seem to be determined so much by the circumstances prevailing in and around the Safe Areas but, as Boutros-Ghali, had stated in his report of 14 June, on commitments 'which can realistically be expected from member states'.⁴⁹²⁸

Apart from the group of five, there also appeared to be little enthusiasm in the rest of the Western world to provide troops for the implementation of Resolution 836. Only the Swedish Government reported that it was considering an offer. For the rest, there were offers from Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, thus Islamic countries, something the secretariat was not entirely pleased about given the anticipated Serbian response to this.⁴⁹²⁹ In the period that followed the Islamic countries were to make commitments which the UN Secretariat found embarrassing. For instance, on 13 July seven Islamic countries offered a total of 18,000 troops for the Safe Areas, including Iran, which presented a complete division of 10,000 soldiers.⁴⁹³⁰ Boutros-Ghali felt it necessary to decline these offers.⁴⁹³¹

Several days after Resolution 836 was accepted, the military adviser to the Netherlands' permanent representative, Colonel R. van Veen, was invited to a working level meeting at the UN Secretariat on 9 June to acquaint the representatives of those countries that could probably supply troops, with the UN's needs in relation to the implementation of the resolution. At the same time Annan approached the Dutch permanent representative, Biegman, with an informal question, which he was at liberty to interpret as a request, as to whether his information was correct that the Dutch Government was prepared to provide a logistics unit of approximately 400 personnel. Following consultations with the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Staff, it was decided that Van Veen would exercise restraint during the meeting.⁴⁹³²

13. 'Silly Sod' and the Netherlands' role as a catalyser

On 11 June Biegman reported that he and Van Veen had attended a meeting of 'troop contributors' chaired by Annan. According to him, a reference to 'non-contributors' would have been more appropriate. An embarrassing silence had fallen when Annan had asked for contributions. Biegman therefore urged that the logistics unit be offered. Not only would the Netherlands curry favour with the UN as a result, but it could also influence other potential contributing countries to get involved in the implementation of Resolution 836.⁴⁹³³

Several days later on 16 June Kooijmans informed the permanent representatives to the UN and NATO that the Netherlands was prepared to make an additional contribution to UNPROFOR for the Safe Areas in the form of a logistics unit, which the UN was to merge with contributions from

⁴⁹²⁸ UN, S/25939.

⁴⁹²⁹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00141. Biegman 577 to Kooijmans, 9 June 1993; Biegman 579 to Kooijmans, 08/06/93.

⁴⁹³⁰ 'Moslimlanden overbieden VN-verzoek om blauwhelmen voor Bosnië' (Muslim countries' over-zealous response to UN request for peacekeepers in Bosnia), *ANP*, 13/07/93, 6.06 pm; ABZ, DPV/ARA/00141. Biegman 733 to Kooijmans, 22/07/93.

⁴⁹³¹ DCBC, 2125. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, June 1994, 31/01/94; DCBC, 2125. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, June 1994, 31/01/94; 2122, September 1994, 11/02/94; 2118, 13/94, 25/02/94.

⁴⁹³² ABZ, DPV/ARA/00141. Biegman 579 to Kooijmans, 08/06/93. For a report of the meeting itself see ABZ, 00782, Biegman 580 to Kooijmans, 09/06/93.

⁴⁹³³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00782. Biegman 601 to Kooijmans, 11/06/93.

other countries into a unit that was appropriate for the concrete requirements of the other units which were to be made available for the Safe Areas: hence a so-called tailor-made unit. This meant that the tailor-made logistics unit which had been offered to NATO for the armed force that was to implement the Vance-Owen plan, was now earmarked as a contribution for the Safe Areas. Because at the time the Dutch Government made its new offer, it was not yet known what other offers the UN would receive and accept, it was also not known what logistic requirements these other units would have. A final decision was expected in September and would depend on both the overall political situation as well as local security conditions and the willingness of other countries to contribute troops. Based on its offer, the Netherlands thought that a repair unit would probably be requested. Because the Netherlands had already contributed a transport battalion, offering another was at any rate impossible. At the same time it presented its offer of a logistics unit, the Dutch Government announced that it was prepared to release six of the 18 F-16s that were currently deployed as part of Operation Deny Flight, for the protection of the Safe Areas.

Finally, the Dutch ambassadors were able to indicate:

‘that the Netherlands is retaining the option of having the first battalion of its Airmobile Brigade ready for possible deployment in Bosnia-Herzegovina as of the beginning of 1994, once it becomes operational in November 2000 and completes a further two months of training using Dutch armoured vehicles. In this connection, we are expressly not considering the Safe Areas, which are, after all, to serve as an eminently appropriate temporary measure, but its possible deployment in the broader context of the implementation of a ‘negotiated settlement on the basis of the principles of the Vance-Owen plan’.

As it happens, it would not have been possible to deploy the logistics unit and an airmobile battalion simultaneously, because the latter would require a logistics component, which would not be possible to achieve if a logistics unit of 400 personnel were to be sent elsewhere. The Dutch Government wanted this announcement to serve as a political signal to break the impasse affecting the establishment and implementation of a peace settlement. In other words, the offer was to serve ‘as a catalyser’ to induce other countries to offer troops as well. This was because the prospect of achieving a peace settlement would remain limited as long as no troops were forthcoming.⁴⁹³⁴ On 17 June Biegman informed both Annan and the permanent representatives of the EC member states of this offer and explicitly added ‘that by making this offer, the Netherlands hopes that it will also encourage other non-Muslim countries to front up and contribute additional troops’.⁴⁹³⁵ Feith, the deputy permanent representative to NATO accompanied his announcement of the offer with a call to the countries of the North-Atlantic Council for Cooperation to provide the necessary units and resources as well in the interests of ensuring a speedy peace settlement.⁴⁹³⁶ On 18 June it was reported in Cabinet that this new offer had been made to the UN. In this connection, it was noted that the logistics unit had indeed initially been offered for the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan. This condition therefore no longer applied. The airmobile brigade – and this was stated here again – was only to be deployed for the implementation of any peace plan.⁴⁹³⁷

The observation that a lack of troops had hindered the West from forcefully pursuing a peace settlement was correct. However, the timing of the Dutch Government’s attempt to break this impasse was strange. Such an attempt would have been logical at the end of March or the beginning of April. At that time the American and Russian Governments were in principle still prepared to provide troops for

⁴⁹³⁴ ABZ, PVNY. Kooijmans to New York and NATO permanent representatives, 16/06/93, circ 428.

⁴⁹³⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00209. Biegman 623 to Kooijmans, 17/06/93.

⁴⁹³⁶ ABZ, the embassy in Washington. Feith NAVO 981 to Kooijmans, 17/06/93.

⁴⁹³⁷ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 18/06/93 prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

a force to implement a peace settlement. While it is true that Minister Ter Beek had allowed the Airmobile Brigade to be included in the list of resources for such a force at the time, NATO was not supposed to be informed of this alternative. At the time officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs were disappointed with the meagre offer that the Dutch Ministry of Defence was able to make. By mid-June the Vance-Owen plan was dead, irrespective of the fine words chosen by the representatives of the countries that had brought about its demise, to maintain that it could again play a role at some time in the future. The Dutch Government appears to have refused to see this. On the same day that Kooijmans issued his directive, Presidents Tudjman, Milosevic and Izetbegovic met to discuss a confederate structure for Bosnia-Hercegovina, which marked the start of a new peace plan. The United States was to have been the major contributor of an implementation force yet it was utterly clear from the statements made by Clinton and Christopher following the latter's return from his tour of European capitals in the first week of May that one could not count on the deployment of American ground troops. The position adopted by the USA, France and the United Kingdom to the request for troops for the Safe Areas was indicative. If the Dutch Government had wanted to break the impasse by offering troops in mid-June, it should not have been an offer for an implementation force but for the Safe Areas. However, the Dutch Government assumed that at the beginning of 1994, when the first airmobile battalion was scheduled to be ready for deployment, there would be no further need for it to be sent to the Safe Areas, which were intended to be a temporary measure.

On the other hand, the fixation on the Airmobile Brigade which had gradually developed, came to assume such proportions that it began to seem almost inevitable that the Dutch Government would deploy it in Yugoslavia as soon as it was ready for this. The more the moment of actual decision-making about the deployment of a Dutch unit was delayed, the closer it came to the time – the end of 1993 or beginning of 1994 – when the Airmobile Brigade would technically be ready for deployment.

Yet would it be possible to continue to differentiate between the logistics unit for the Safe Areas and the airmobile battalion for a force to implement a peace plan? This would be difficult for two main reasons, firstly because of the pressure emanating primarily from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure the credible implementation of the concept of 'safe areas', and secondly, the problems that the Netherlands was encountering in its efforts to establish the logistics unit it had promised for the Safe Areas. In view of the renewed consensus that had become visible within the EC at the beginning of June, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs attached great importance to 'the issue currently meriting attention, namely, the protection of the Safe Areas, which the Netherlands, in particular, has pleaded for so strongly since the start'.⁴⁹³⁸ Despite this apparent consensus, that was taking shape in early June among EC-members the Dutch Government continued to demand more than its European partners in relation to the former Yugoslavia. On 22 June Minister Kooijmans informed television presenter, Maartje van Weegen, and her Dutch television audience that in the course of international consultations he was gradually being overcome by the feeling that 'I am a silly sod to stand here screaming ... for so long'. Nevertheless, Kooijmans felt that the Dutch position had eventually yielded results, such as the resolution providing for air protection for the Safe Areas.⁴⁹³⁹

Kooijmans said this following a meeting of the European Council, which the Danish Presidency of the EC had convened on 21 and 22 June to discuss the latest developments in the negotiations in Geneva. The Vance-Owen plan had since been abandoned there. On 16 June 1993 Milosevic and Tudjman had met with Izetbegovic and had proposed that Bosnia-Hercegovina be split into three. The Bosnian Muslims had always resisted this and on this occasion Izetbegovic had merely listened.⁴⁹⁴⁰ During the meeting in Copenhagen⁴⁹⁴¹ Owen mainly blamed 'the tactless actions of Izetbegovic' for the

⁴⁹³⁸ NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek. Kooijmans to New York and NATO permanent representatives, 16/06/93, circ 428.

⁴⁹³⁹ NOS, NOVA, Interview Kooijmans conducted by Maartje van Weegen, 22/06/93, 10.30 pm.

⁴⁹⁴⁰ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part VII, May 1993 to March 1994. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 43/93, 29/06/93; 44/93, 05/07/93; 45/93, 13/07/93; 47/93, 03/08/93; ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Smit 217 to Kooijmans, 18/06/93.

⁴⁹⁴¹ For a detailed report of the meeting in Copenhagen see ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Kooijmans, 25/06/93, circ 446.

new situation.⁴⁹⁴² According to the British negotiator, the Bosnian president had himself driven the Croats and Serbs into each others' arms, with the result that the Vance-Owen plan 'has been torn to pieces before our eyes'.⁴⁹⁴³ Owen was of the opinion that the plans of the Croats and Serbs were not in themselves to the Muslims' disadvantage and he wished to negotiate further on that basis but no longer with Izetbegovic, whom he described as 'undemocratic'. He only wished to speak to the Bosnian praesidium. Owen felt that there was scope for negotiations in this case. If negotiations were no longer to ensue, the Croats and Serbs would impose their will on the Muslims.

Minister Kooijmans was highly critical of Owen's address. He had been left with 'an "Alice-in-Wonderland" feeling'. At the beginning of June the European Council had still asserted that the Vance-Owen plan constituted the cornerstone of the EC's policy on Bosnia and the joint programme of action of 22 May represented a step towards this. Now, less than two weeks later, the Vance-Owen plan was declared to be dead by one of its authors. The same author was now urging the EC ministers to support another plan 'where the probable victims of the plan for division were simultaneously branded as the primary cause of all this misery. On behalf of whom and in accordance with what mandate were negotiations now actually being conducted in Geneva?' Kooijmans asked.⁴⁹⁴⁴ According to the Dutch Minister, there was a need to abide by the principles stipulated during the conference held in London in August 1992 and 'whatever the case, the Muslims should not be left holding the baby'.⁴⁹⁴⁵ This view was shared by European Commissioner Van den Broek and the German Minister, Kinkel. However, Kooijmans was disappointed to note that his other foreign counterparts displayed 'a frequent mixture of cynicism and despondent resignation'.⁴⁹⁴⁶

Urged by the Dutch delegation, the Council issued a statement calling for a 'fair and viable' peace settlement acceptable to all three parties. A Serbian and Croatian *diktat* would not be countenanced, according to a free translation of the mandate which the EC gave the mediator, Owen.

At Clinton's request, Kohl again raised the question of lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian Government during the meeting in Copenhagen.⁴⁹⁴⁷ In this way the American Government indirectly supported the request for the embargo to be lifted, which the Bosnian President, Izetbegovic, addressed to the European Council.⁴⁹⁴⁸ Most member states felt that this could only be done if all hope was abandoned of finding a solution through negotiations.

The Council also discussed the member states' potential contribution in response to Boutros-Ghali's request for the supply of troops that were required for the protection of the Safe Areas as provided for in Resolution 836. In principle, the Council was favourably disposed towards this request. The EC countries undertook to respond favourably 'within their power' to the UN Secretariat's request for additional troops for the purposes of Resolution 836. At the same time they called on other countries to do the same.⁴⁹⁴⁹ In the course of heated discussions, the Government leaders realised that it had to be one or the other: either the international community would provide troops to protect the Safe Areas or they had to lift the arms embargo imposed on the Bosnian Government. The French President Mitterrand linked the two points together by stating that, if the troops required for the Safe Areas were not assembled soon, the embargo would be lifted.⁴⁹⁵⁰ However, the Netherlands was the

⁴⁹⁴² ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Kooijmans, 25/06/93, circ 446.

⁴⁹⁴³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Kooijmans, 25/06/93, circ 446.

⁴⁹⁴⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Kooijmans, 25/06/93, circ 446.

⁴⁹⁴⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Kooijmans, 25/06/93, circ 446.

⁴⁹⁴⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Kooijmans, 25/06/93, circ 446.

⁴⁹⁴⁷ 'Clinton vraagt hulp Kohl voor opheffing wapenembargo Bosnië' (Clinton requests assistance to lift Bosnian arms embargo), *ANP*, 22/06/93, 6.28 am; ' Clintons Brief an Kohl stiftet neue Verwirrung', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24/06/93; Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, p. 145.

⁴⁹⁴⁸ 'Bosnische president wil af van wapenembargo' (Bosnian president wants arms embargo dropped), *ANP*, 21/06/93, 8.35 pm.

⁴⁹⁴⁹ European Council in Copenhagen – 21-22/06/93: Conclusions of the presidency, Appendix III Statement on Bosnia-Herzegovina, *RAPID*, 22/06/93.

⁴⁹⁵⁰ Lionel Barber & David Gardner, 'EC promises more troops for Bosnia peacekeeping role', *Financial Times*, 23/06/93.

only country to make a concrete proposal: the 400 logistics personnel who were originally offered as part of the Vance-Owen plan but who were now to be made available for the protection of the Safe Areas.⁴⁹⁵¹ The French Government also seemed to make an offer of 1,000 troops but it later turned out that, while it was true that it had ultimately proposed as many as 1,450, it was to simultaneously withdraw 1,308 from Croatia, with the result that it would only be making an addition of 142 men available.⁴⁹⁵² Moreover, the French Government made significant gains in return for this cosmetic offer. It had initially made its offer dependant on the willingness of Boutros-Ghali to replace Wahlgren as the UNPROFOR Commander with a French general.⁴⁹⁵³ Boutros-Ghali agreed to this, after which General Cot succeeded Wahlgren at the helm in Zagreb on 1 July, and replaced Morillon with the Commander of the BH Command, his old friend the Belgian General F. Briquemont.⁴⁹⁵⁴ The Italian Government later offered a unit comprising 1,700 troops but Boutros-Ghali turned it down, firstly, because Italy was historically burdened by its role as occupier in Yugoslavia during the Second World War and, secondly, the UN Secretary-General did not wish to create a precedent for other neighbouring or nearby countries, in which connection he appeared to have Turkey in mind.⁴⁹⁵⁵ The United Kingdom and Spain explicitly excluded the possibility that they would provide troops for the Safe Areas.⁴⁹⁵⁶

According to a subsequent report about Dutch decision-making in connection with the former Yugoslavia, the Dutch Government made its offer during the EC summit again because of 'the exemplary function it was expected to have'.⁴⁹⁵⁷ If the Dutch Government intended to act as a catalyser by offering troops in Copenhagen, then the country's diplomats should have sounded out opinion in the European capitals prior to that summit. The Foreign Ministry directorate had apparently failed to learn any lessons from 'Black Monday' one and a half years earlier, when the Netherlands' proposal for a European Political Union had failed to gain support, partly owing to a lack of consultation beforehand. In addition, the difficulties encountered in coordinating the efforts of the Ministries of General and Foreign Affairs in relation to foreign policy probably also played a role. The General Affairs Department was entitled to assume that Dutch diplomats abroad had performed preparatory work. On the other hand, the Foreign Affairs Department held the view that the Prime Minister should himself use the offer to ensure that other countries were prepared to provide troops. It was only there that business was done. According to the Foreign Ministry, not a single European capital would be willing to reveal its own position prior to such a summit.⁴⁹⁵⁸

As it happens, the purpose of this offer was not merely to induce other countries to follow the Dutch example. It was also done because the Dutch Government apparently felt embarrassed by the discrepancy between its own words and deeds. In 1992 Van den Broek had already found that his insistence on a credible threat against the Serbs, in respect of which he had been relatively isolated internationally, was felt to be 'relatively easy' by his foreign counterparts, because the Netherlands itself had little to offer. According to the then Deputy Prime Minister, Kok, during the summit of Copenhagen 'a certain awkwardness ... began to emerge: a number of things really needed to be offered then'. 'And if we are so critical about the overall situation, that much is said but too little is done, let us then display a visible presence using the best possible resources that we have for this

⁴⁹⁵¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01820. Kooijmans to New York permanent representative and PV NAVO, 24/06/93, circ 444.

⁴⁹⁵² NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek Memorandum from Waltmann to Ter Beek, 09/07/93; confidential interview (1).

⁴⁹⁵³ ABZ, government files: Stg. Secret codes. D'Ansembourg 097 to Kooijmans, 01/07/93; ABZ, DPV/ARA/00209. Kooijmans, 30/06/93 circ 462; Adolf Carlson, 'No Balm in Gilead: The Employment of Military Force in the War in Former Yugoslavia and Prospects for a Lasting Peace' in Blank (ed.), *Wars*, p. 84; Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 112; interviews B. Boutros-Ghali on 30/01/01 and E.L. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

⁴⁹⁵⁴ Briquemont, *Do something*, p. 14.

⁴⁹⁵⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05274. Kooijmans, 09/07/93, circ 494.

⁴⁹⁵⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05274. Memorandum from DAV to Kooijmans, 23/06/93, no. DAV/MS-148/93; 2001/00023, Impression of part of the European Council deliberations on Bosnia-Herzegovina, enclosed with memorandum from plv. DEU to AP et al., 24/06/93, no. 77.

⁴⁹⁵⁷ TK, session of 1995-1996, 22 181, no. 149, p. 9.

⁴⁹⁵⁸ Interview O. Hattinga van 't Sant, 18/07/00.

purpose.⁴⁹⁵⁹ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in particular, held a widely shared view ‘that we cannot preach that everyone needs to make a contribution and then ourselves ... do nothing’.⁴⁹⁶⁰

‘Something needs to be done. We cannot remain on the sidelines. We made this clear in Europe. We made this clear in New York. We have tried to induce the international community to take action.... Now we have a duty if we are to maintain our credibility, to make a gesture, a symbolic gesture, because again, it was nothing more than that.... In the hope of ... yes, at a certain point our other partners were irritated to a certain extent about the Netherlands’ fair weather games.... All our talk was cheap....⁴⁹⁶¹

If you do not make a material contribution in one way or another, you will count for little very soon. So it is not a question of emotion alone or anything like this, or we really have to, or whatever. No, it is also a question of the Netherlands having an international role to play. But if we wish to live up to this more or less, we will also need to show that we have something to contribute.⁴⁹⁶²

14. The logistics unit not achievable

If Prime Minister Lubbers had presented his offer of a logistics unit to the army before he did that in Copenhagen, he would not have done the latter, according to the former Brigadier-General G.J.M. Bastiaans, who worked for the Army Staff.⁴⁹⁶³ This was because shortly after the Foreign Affairs Department had issued its directive concerning the offer to the permanent representatives to NATO and the UN on 16 June, the Commander of the First Army Corps, Lieutenant-General M. Schouten, had reported to General Couzy, the Chief of the Army that it would not be possible to establish a logistics unit of 400 personnel, which had been referred to since Van der Vlis had drawn up his first list at the beginning of March. The main reason was that there were not enough heavy vehicle drivers available. Couzy then approached Van der Vlis with this unpleasant news.⁴⁹⁶⁴ This occurred shortly before Lubbers made his offer in Copenhagen. Couzy did not know whether the information had reached Ministers Ter Beek and Lubbers in time.⁴⁹⁶⁵

On 23 June, the day after the summit in Copenhagen, the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (DAV) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs directed that a Priorities White Paper be urgently presented to Minister Kooijmans to the effect that the Defence Staff doubted whether the Dutch logistics unit could consist of 400 personnel. The DAV stated that Lubbers had since made this offer on various occasions and that it would be difficult for the Dutch Government to go back on this now. The Directorate of General Policy Matters (DAB) in the Defence Department wished to consult the Ministers of General Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Defence about this.⁴⁹⁶⁶

This alarming news did not prevent Kooijmans from informing Biegan on 24 June that the latter could offer 400 troops that same day during the meeting which Annan had arranged with representatives of those countries that could possibly contribute to the implementation of Resolution

⁴⁹⁵⁹ Interview W. Kok, 08/05/00.

⁴⁹⁶⁰ Interview O. Hattinga van ‘t Sant, 18/07/00. See also the interview P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99 and R. Swartbol on 24/02/99.

⁴⁹⁶¹ Interview H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

⁴⁹⁶² Interview P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00.

⁴⁹⁶³ Interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

⁴⁹⁶⁴ Interviews H.A. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98.

⁴⁹⁶⁵ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

⁴⁹⁶⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05274. Memorandum from DAV to Kooijmans, 23/06/93, no. DAV/MS-148/93.

836.⁴⁹⁶⁷ During this meeting Biegman therefore made an offer on behalf of the Dutch Government of a tailor-made logistics unit of 400 personnel to be deployed for the purposes of the Safe Areas.⁴⁹⁶⁸

At that point in time the UN had only received a definite commitment – of 1,200 troops – from Bangladesh, as well as unconfirmed offers from Indonesia, Pakistan, Tunisia and Sweden. In itself, the offer must have been welcome to Annan, in particular its subject, a logistics unit. The UN experiences a chronic shortage of logistics in relation to its peacekeeping operations. This is because poor countries, which provide many troops, find it relatively easy to mobilise infantry, but rarely a communications battalion or a divisional hospital. The UN views logistics as a ‘force multiplier’. A military unit can do nothing without logistics but so much more with the latter. No wonder therefore that as early as 25 June, the day after the meeting chaired by Annan, the UN Secretariat formally submitted a request to the Dutch Government to provide a logistics unit.⁴⁹⁶⁹

There is no such thing as a logistics battalion. The offer of a logistics unit of 400 personnel meant that troops had to be pulled from numerous units. The Defence Department and the Army therefore informally referred to this logistics unit as a ‘culled option’. Culling personnel from other units meant that the latter would no longer be operational. In this sense the offer of a logistics unit represented a ‘show-stopper’ for the rest of the Royal Netherlands Army. Moreover, it had to be possible to offer a unit for a longer period of time. This is to say that after six months, which was considered to be a normal tour of duty, it had to be possible to relieve the troops in question. In other words, there had to be what is known in military jargon as sustainability. Apparently, this was a problem that the army realised at a late stage.

On 28 June Van der Vlis and Couzy had a talk about notes made by Bastiaans dealing with the difficulties that had arisen. The Deputy Commander of the Army, Major-General R. Reitsma, had informed Bastiaans that same day that a political loss of face needed to be avoided. By no later than the end of the afternoon of 6 July the Royal Netherlands Army would need to inform Van der Vlis what it could provide in order to fulfil the UN’s stated logistic requirements.⁴⁹⁷⁰ It then appeared that the previous figure of 400 troops was due to a duplicate count. Only 220 troops would be available, of whom 100 were national service personnel.⁴⁹⁷¹ This report was communicated to Major E.A.W. Koestal, the deputy military adviser to the Dutch permanent representative in New York. Koestal in turn immediately notified the UN Secretariat, because on 7 July Biegman reported to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs that, owing to a difference from the original commitment, ‘the DPKO had placed several question marks next to the Dutch offer’. Biegman anticipated a major blow to the Netherlands’ credibility, because it had first asserted the need to set an example and then threatened to go back on this.⁴⁹⁷² Kooijmans informed Biegman that he should not withdraw the offer he had made to the UN Secretariat. Biegman was to view the number of 200 to 250 as ‘a provisional figure that is merely based on an initial assessment of needs following contact with UNPROFOR assuming current data’.⁴⁹⁷³ On 8 July the minister again confirmed the offer, this time to his counterpart, Juppé, in person.⁴⁹⁷⁴

The question is whether Ministers Ter Beek, Kooijmans and Lubbers were aware of the army’s discovery that a logistics unit of 400 military personnel was not feasible prior to the summit in Copenhagen. Couzy said that he did not know. It could have been possible. According to Drea Berghorst, who studied the decision-making process involved in the deployment of the Airmobile

⁴⁹⁶⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01820. Kooijmans to New York and NATO permanent representatives, 24/06/93, circ 444.

⁴⁹⁶⁸ ABZ, PVNY. Biegman’s notes for the meeting of troop contributors in connection with Security Council Resolutions 836 and 844; ABZ, DPV/ARA/00209. Biegman 686 to Kooijmans, 07/07/93.

⁴⁹⁶⁹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00209. Biegman 663 to Kooijmans, 25/06/93.

⁴⁹⁷⁰ NIOD, Coll. Reitsma. Confidential memorandum from Major-General Reitsma to Brigadier-General Bastiaans, 28/06/93.

⁴⁹⁷¹ NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek. Memorandum from Waltmann to Ter Beek, 09/07/93; Kreemers, *Balkan-express*, p.15.

⁴⁹⁷² ABZ, DPV/ARA/00209. Biegman 686 to Kooijmans, 07/07/93.

⁴⁹⁷³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05274. Kooijmans 185 to New York permanent representative, 08/07/93.

⁴⁹⁷⁴ ABZ, government files. Kooijmans to Juppé, 08/07/93.

Brigade, Prime Minister Lubbers was not aware that it was uncertain as to whether or not enough national service personnel could be mustered for a logistics unit.⁴⁹⁷⁵ However, various statements made by people who were involved, indicate that this was indeed the case. According to H.A.C. van der Zwan, the head of the Political Affairs Office (*bureau Politieke Zaken*) of the Directorate for Political and UN Affairs (*directie Politieke VN-Zaken*) in the Department of Foreign Affairs, Ter Beek and Kooijmans knew before the Copenhagen summit that it would probably not be possible to assemble enough personnel for the logistics unit.⁴⁹⁷⁶ In Copenhagen Prime Minister Lubbers referred to the offer as ‘a political commitment’ and ‘a general undertaking’: ‘In Copenhagen the matter was not specified ... in terms of those troops and that manner’.⁴⁹⁷⁷ According to Ter Beek, the main thing that happened in Copenhagen, was that a political signal was given to the effect that the Netherlands felt that something should happen.⁴⁹⁷⁸ Once consensus on the approach to Safe Areas had been achieved, Lubbers felt that the Dutch Government had ‘to do something in a flash, because it might not be possible one way and would have to happen another’.⁴⁹⁷⁹ Hoekema, Van der Zwan’s departmental superior, also believed that the main purpose of the offer of a logistics unit was ‘to exert political pressure on others.... Just as though the Netherlands knew that it was never going to provide that unit. The stakes were quite high and a great many alternatives were held open in the period June and July 1993’.⁴⁹⁸⁰ Actually, there were only two alternatives: the logistics unit which had been offered for the Safe Areas, and the Airmobile Brigade, a prospect cited for the implementation of a peace settlement. What if one were to become impossible now, would the other then...?

The answer was provided as early as the day after the European Council meeting in Copenhagen, issuing from Minister Kooijmans’ mouth during the conclusion of the debate on the summit in Parliament:

‘With regard to the airmobile battalion which could be ready by 1 January – actually even earlier – last week the Minister of Defence also announced that it could be deployed for the implementation of any peace plan that is agreed. If the Safe Areas still need to be protected at that time, it could also be used for this purpose if necessary.’⁴⁹⁸¹

In view of the fact that it was a question of either or, either the logistics unit or the airmobile battalion, it seems highly likely that Minister Kooijmans had already taken the mental step from the deployment of a logistics unit for the Safe Areas to that of an airmobile battalion for these areas. From a memo drawn up by Barth and Van den Breemen in mid-August 1993 (see Chapter 13) it emerged that Ter Beek was indeed already aware before the Copenhagen summit that the logistics unit could not be realized and that he had also communicated this fact to Kooijmans.⁴⁹⁸² The offer that had been made in Copenhagen, was therefore indeed worth no more than a political signal. The Dutch Government endeavoured to persuade other countries to provide units as well and it showed that it was prepared to put its money where its mouth was. In Copenhagen it mentioned the offer of a logistics unit, even though it was already aware that it would not be feasible, yet how many months were still to pass before the first airmobile battalion would be ready to be deployed? No more than six. Perhaps it would be possible to bridge this period and the Dutch Government could replace a logistics unit with an airmobile battalion at any point in time. Various key players and analysts have endlessly quibbled about

⁴⁹⁷⁵ Berghorst, *Opdracht*, p. 10.

⁴⁹⁷⁶ Interview H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

⁴⁹⁷⁷ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of Lubbers, 25/05/00, p. 133.

⁴⁹⁷⁸ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁴⁹⁷⁹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of Lubbers, 25/05/00, p. 133. Similar sentiments were expressed in an interview C. Minderhoud on 02/06/00.

⁴⁹⁸⁰ TCBU, interview J.T. Hoekema, 07/03/00, p. 20.

⁴⁹⁸¹ TK, 1992-1993, *Proceedings*, p. 6041.

⁴⁹⁸² NIOD Coll. Ter Beek, Memo from Barth and Van den Breemen, 17/08/93, D93/326.

the question as to whether the Netherlands offered a battalion of its Airmobile Brigade for the Safe Areas or as part of a peace settlement, and whether this changed in the course of time. Well then, the last change occurred in Parliament on 23 June. At the time Minister Kooijmans stated that the airmobile battalion could be used for either purpose but, in view of preceding events, everything pointed in the direction of the Safe Areas. Although it had been formally offered, it was not possible to achieve this and it would have to be replaced with the airmobile battalion at any moment.

A formal reason can be added to this. From a formal perspective, the Netherlands' offer to the United Nations was only possible in response to a statement of need by the latter. Such a statement was only permitted on the basis of a resolution adopted by the Security Council. Well then, the Council adopted resolutions covering the Safe Areas in 1993. No resolution had been adopted for a force to implement a peace plan. If the Dutch Government made an offer in 1993, it could only have been done so for the purposes of the Safe Areas. This meant either deployment in an actual Safe Area or a role in the protection of convoys destined for such an area.

From the perspective of the Dutch Government, one may also add that it held to the idea embodied in the preamble to Resolution 836, to the effect that the Safe Areas did not constitute a goal in themselves but were part of the process of negotiations headed by Vance and Owen, and were an initial step towards a permanent political solution. For this reason the Dutch Government regarded Safe Areas as the first move towards a peace settlement which it expected until the end of September. It would be possible to link the Safe Areas to Bosnian terrain with the aid of corridors as part of a peace settlement.⁴⁹⁸³ In view of the above, any discussion about the question as to whether the Dutch government offered the Airmobile Brigade as part of an impending peace settlement or for the purposes of the Safe Areas, assumes an academic nature. Alternatively, as Minister Ter Beek viewed it, the Airmobile Brigade was intended for the UN:

‘The fact that the Airmobile Brigade was treated as an implementation force at one stage and as something for the Safe Areas at another, was largely determined by the time when it was mentioned. This is because it was simply determined by the political circumstances that were prevailing there at that time.’⁴⁹⁸⁴

For this reason any further reference will reveal the purpose stated in respect of any offer at the time but no significant implications will be drawn from this. Ostensibly entirely in line with the position adopted by his minister, Commodore H.J. Vandeweyer, the Chief of Operations of the Defence Staff, conceded off the record in a conversation that he and the head of the Military Collaboration Office (*bureau Militaire Samenwerking*) of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs, K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, had with Canadian diplomats on 7 June, that it would be possible to deploy the Airmobile Brigade for the Safe Areas.⁴⁹⁸⁵

In the course of the debate about Copenhagen on 23 June there was general agreement on the offer of the logistics unit. However, there was also a good deal of criticism because only the Netherlands and France – as was then still thought to be the case – had made a concrete offer. Moreover, Parliament suspected that the negotiations which Owen had since begun, would produce an inferior settlement for the Muslims than that envisaged in the Vance-Owen plan, and would abandon the principles of the London conference. Various members of Parliament expressed the view that the EC was nearly or actually morally bankrupt.⁴⁹⁸⁶ In particular the CDA parliamentary party believed that,

⁴⁹⁸³ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99 and 13/01/00; O. Hattinga van 't Sant, 01/08/97 and 18/07/00, with P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99; H.A.C. van der Zwan on 12/04/00.

⁴⁹⁸⁴ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁴⁹⁸⁵ DFAIT, Ottawa, File No. 21-14-6-UNPROFOR Vol. 32, from 930604 to 930615, Hague to YWGR0553. Bosnia SA: 836. (4 p.), 07/06/93.

⁴⁹⁸⁶ TK, 1992-1993, *Proceedings*, pp. 6013 (Sipkes), 6015 (Van Middelkoop), 6027 (Van Traa and Eisma), 6028 (Van Traa).

in view of the fact that Copenhagen had failed to provide sufficient guarantees for the Muslims, the arms embargo applying to them should be lifted. Other members of the house also tended towards this view. Lubbers became irritated, because the approach adopted by the house conflicted with the line that he and Kooijmans had taken in Copenhagen: induce other countries to commit troops for Resolution 836, otherwise the arms embargo would be lifted. They had actually pleaded for Safe Areas and against the arms embargo being lifted. Which country would be prepared to send troops to the Safe Areas if the arms embargo was lifted? The tenor of Lubbers' response was that if Parliament wished to undermine the security of the Safe Areas, it should simply continue in that vein. On the other hand, his position was difficult, however, because he could not guarantee the house that the other EC countries would actually ensure that enough troops were provided for the Safe Areas.⁴⁹⁸⁷ This was the way in which the Dutch Government greeted the summer of 1993.

The offer made by the Dutch Government in Copenhagen also failed to have a catalytic effect in the weeks that followed. The offer made by the French during the EC summit turned out to be cosmetic, because it actually amounted to a relocation of troops. Outside the EC only Bangladesh (1,250 troops) and Pakistan (300 personnel) made concrete offers. A number of other Islamic countries also seemed willing to provide troops. 'Will it really be the case that an armed force headed by a NATO general will be made up of French, Dutch, Pakistani, Bengalese, Tunisian and Algerian troops for such a risky mission?' Wio Joustra sarcastically inquired in *The Volkskrant* of 15 July 1993, and immediately answered the question himself by referring to a 'mission impossible':

'The question is whether we have not gradually lost sight of the relationship between the end and the means in Bosnia. Combat aircraft are being readied to protect 'safe areas'. And the latter are precisely those areas where the fighting is heaviest. The arrangement of ground protection is further away than ever. The Netherlands is in danger of involving itself in a concept that does not exist, and of doing so under the auspices of a Minister of Foreign Affairs who has constantly sought to ensure that a Dutch contribution must depend on a clearly defined political objective.'⁴⁹⁸⁸

After bargaining for troops for several months Annan had received undertakings accounting for 24,000 troops, more than three times the amount of 7,600 which the Security Council had authorised. However, most of these troops had no equipment at their disposal. Countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Belgium made equipment available but the troops needed to be trained to use it, with the result that it was only possible to deploy the Pakistani troops a year later, for example. In other cases, absolutely no equipment was provided, with the result that Bangladesh and Tunisia had to withdraw their commitment to provide troops. As a result it took almost a year before Boutros-Ghali had assembled the required number of 7,600 troops.

Following the Copenhagen summit the Dutch Government was irritated by the lack of undertakings from other countries. At the same time the Netherlands could do little other than continue to provide a good example.⁴⁹⁸⁹ As a result, the country was under great pressure to live up to its promises.

The question arises as to what room for manoeuvre the Dutch parliament still had following Lubbers' offer in Copenhagen and its consent to this. If the Dutch Government failed to honour this commitment, the Netherlands' credibility abroad would plummet. The offer itself was the product of the realisation that words need to be backed up by deeds. The Dutch Government realised that it needed to do something. Withdrawing its offer would have been disastrous. The PvdA Member of

⁴⁹⁸⁷ TK, 1992-1993, *Proceedings*, pp. 6013-6041. See also 'CDA ruziet over beëindiging wapenembargo tegen Moslims' (CDA squabbles about lifting arms embargo against Muslims), *de Volkskrant*, 24/06/93.

⁴⁹⁸⁸ Wio Joustra, 'Strategie voor inzet F-16's in Bosnië ontbreekt' (Strategy absent for deployment of F-16s in Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 15/07/93.

⁴⁹⁸⁹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of Lubbers, 25/05/00, p. 132.

Parliament, Valk, was to acknowledge this to the Bakker Committee at a later stage. With regard to the debate of 16 November 1993, during which Parliament approved the despatch of a battalion of the Airmobile Brigade, he wondered, 'How much room for manoeuvre did Parliament still actually have for its decision at the time, in view of the fact that it had urged even greater military involvement months or perhaps even years beforehand?'⁴⁹⁹⁰ If it was impossible to deploy a logistics unit, the Dutch Government's only alternative was to outdo its offer.

15. The preparation of the Airmobile Brigade for deployment in Bosnia

In the spring of 1993 it was still assumed that the Airmobile Brigade would be sent to Cambodia at the end of 1993, when the deployment of the last of the three marine battalions was due to expire. As late as June 1993 the brigade's magazine, *Falcon*, published an article about its possible deployment in South-East Asia. A number of officers had been sent to Malaysia to attend a jungle course and a reconnaissance mission to South-East Asia had been planned.⁴⁹⁹¹ However, elections proceeded in Cambodia in May 1993 without any major problems, with the result that it was possible for the Dutch troops who had been sent there, to return home without the need to relieve them.

The army leadership then began to make preparations for an alternative deployment of the Airmobile Brigade. At the end of June Couzy issued a so-called planning order to the Airmobile Brigade: 'Prepare for deployment in Bosnia-Herzegovina' as of 1 January 1994.⁴⁹⁹² This actually happened while the orders for Cambodia were still current.⁴⁹⁹³ Issuing planning instructions represents sound operational practice to initiate military projects at an early stage. They open doors that would otherwise remain shut. The relevant unit receives more ammunition, is accorded priority for the use of exercise facilities, and its training is accelerated.

While it was clear that the Dutch Government would not be able to deploy both a logistics unit and the Airmobile Brigade under any circumstances, and that it had offered a logistics unit both in New York and Copenhagen, the army began to plan for the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade under orders from Couzy. The army reasoned that Parliament had expressly called for the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade and that Minister Ter Beek would not oppose this either. Moreover, preparations were required, because an airmobile battalion would virtually have to be ready the moment it received the green light for its deployment.⁴⁹⁹⁴

On 1 July the daily newspaper, *De Gelderlander*, reported that the 800 troops of the 11th *Infanteriebataljon Luchtmobiel Garde Grenadiers* (Grenadiers Guard Airmobile Infantry Battalion) had been notified that they had to make preparations in Schaarsbergen for deployment in Yugoslavia before 1994. Apart from Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia were also cited as possible arenas for deployment. The paper also reported that the airmobile troops were to be equipped with model YPR 765 armoured vehicles.⁴⁹⁹⁵ Once the press release had been included in the Defence Information Department's files, Minister Ter Beek intervened. He ordered that the planning directive be withdrawn immediately. He said that he appreciated the army's ability to anticipate matters, but he interpreted it as 'a certain eagerness to set off with the Airmobile Brigade'. Thinking ahead was not to turn into dictating policy.⁴⁹⁹⁶ Couzy later stated that he had also understood that the planning order would be politically sensitive. He had therefore '...consulted General Van der Vlis closely' about the order and had

⁴⁹⁹⁰ TCBU, *Vertretpunt*, III, hearing of G. Valk, 31/05/00, p. 253.

⁴⁹⁹¹ Christ Klep, 'De weg naar Srebrenica' in Jellema, *First-in*, p. 17 and p. 21; Kreemers, *Balkan-express*, p. 14; interview C. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.

⁴⁹⁹² Kreemers, 'Aan de achterkant van de maan', p. 13.

⁴⁹⁹³ Interview Chr. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.

⁴⁹⁹⁴ Interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

⁴⁹⁹⁵ 'Luchtmobiele Brigade bereidt zich voor op ex-Joegoslavië' (Airmobile Brigade prepares for the former Yugoslavia), *Gelderlander*, 01/07/93.

⁴⁹⁹⁶ Interviews A.L. ter Beek, 1/12/99 and 13/01/00.

assumed that the latter would have informed the minister.⁴⁹⁹⁷ However, Ter Beek said that he knew nothing about the matter until he read the cuttings file.⁴⁹⁹⁸

According to Bastiaans, the Minister was only annoyed that the order had featured in the newspaper.⁴⁹⁹⁹ Couzy also believed that the minister must have been surprised that the order had reached the press: 'He thought that it would remain low key but naturally you cannot keep something like this secret, if more than 1,000 people are involved'.⁵⁰⁰⁰

16. The protection of the Safe Areas: 'I think that that will work'

In the meantime there was much that was not clear as to what the protection of a Safe Area precisely entailed. The then spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated:

'I never understood what a Safe Area was.... It was declared to be a Safe Area and that was that, just as you can say this chair is green. But if you do not paint it green, it will never be that.'⁵⁰⁰¹

Neither did the Dutch authorities really know whether the troops that were deployed, had to protect people, an area or a combination of both.⁵⁰⁰² Was a UN unit stationed in a Safe Area required to protect an area or the people? Or should it only act as a trip wire? Would world opinion be mobilised due to the presence of UN troops, as soon as the Bosnian-Serb troops positioned around an enclave, were to commence their attack? Yet in such a situation there was also the question as to when a trip wire commenced operation: when the area was attacked or its residents? Radio and television interviews conducted with ministers at the time reveal that the Dutch Government also counted on the fact that the Bosnian-Serb authorities would not have the effrontery to defy the international community. At the end of the weekly Cabinet meeting on 7 May when Prime Minister Lubbers was asked how far the military protection of the Safe Areas would extend, he replied:

'Those are two questions. You need a limited number of people on-site. Why limited? Because you may assume that the United Nations does have some authority.... Essentially, you also have aircraft as a backup.'

The interviewer, Beckx of *TROS Aktua*, then posed the following question:

'Yet now we are hearing the Serbs say, 'We are not at all afraid of the United Nations. We do not care what it does. Perhaps intervention may be required in such circumstances. If so, how far do you go?'

Lubbers: 'I am not going to respond to if, if, if – if you do not mind. Naturally, it is certainly interesting if we are having a conversation with each other but you asked what the Cabinet's position is.'⁵⁰⁰³

Following the meeting in Copenhagen, Minister Kooijmans spoke to Van Weegen on the television programme, NOVA, saying that the summit had yielded more than he had expected, namely:

⁴⁹⁹⁷ Interviews H.A. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/10/98.

⁴⁹⁹⁸ Robijns, *Baas*, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁹⁹⁹ Interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

⁵⁰⁰⁰ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

⁵⁰⁰¹ Interview B. Hiensch, 13/07/00.

⁵⁰⁰² Interview R. van Veen, 16/08/00.

⁵⁰⁰³ Radio 1, *TROS Aktua*, 07/05/93, 5.07 pm.

‘that the mandate of the troops who are stationed there in the Safe Areas – which is focussed primarily on self-defence at present – will also come to include the protection of the population and, if this is not enough, protection can also be provided from the air. We have been pressing for this for months now and it has now happened.... I consider this to be a gain for Copenhagen, even though I am not entirely happy with what happened there. We have now said – and I hope that we will really live up to this – Europe’s credibility is now at stake: if the Safe Areas are attacked, we are prepared to act against those who attack them, and I think that this will work.’

Van Weegen: ‘Even now the Safe Areas are being attacked and people are dying. Following Copenhagen, what will be different tomorrow from yesterday or tonight?’

Kooijmans: That is not true.... In those Safe Areas where UN troops are currently stationed, those besieging them have baulked at attacking them until now. This means that they have therefore also baulked somewhat at really challenging the entire international community and causing casualties.⁵⁰⁰⁴

At other points in the interview the Minister again repeated that the troops destined for the Safe Areas were going there ‘in order to save human lives, to protect people’.⁵⁰⁰⁵

Now the European Council is not exactly the place where mandates and instructions for the use of force by UN peacekeeping troops are determined. On 9 June during a working level meeting of the representatives of those countries that were potential suppliers of troops, which was attended by Colonel Van Veen on behalf of the Netherlands, it was explained that in accordance with the rules of engagement self-defence covered:

‘measures necessary to protect their own lives, other UN lives, the lives of persons under their protection, or the integrity of areas under their protection against direct attack on the orders of the senior person present.’⁵⁰⁰⁶

In other words, the UN troops in the enclaves were required to protect both the terrain and the people of the Safe Areas.

Beyond the view of the television cameras, however, Kooijmans stated his conviction that the UN troops in the Safe Areas would be able to do little more than offer ‘political and psychological protection’. This was the reason why he was so keen on air support for the troops on the ground.⁵⁰⁰⁷ In 2000 this was also the assessment of the Foreign Ministry official who coordinated the files on Yugoslavia, Hattinga van ‘t Sant. According to him, the troops who were deployed in accordance with the resolution, offered mainly ‘psychological protection’.⁵⁰⁰⁸

During the meeting held on 24 June with the representatives of those countries that were expected to provide troops where Biegman offered a logistics unit, Annan also presented a view of the protection that the UNPROFOR troops would be able to provide, which was similarly devoid of optimism. Annan stated that, even after expanding UNPROFOR to include the troops for the Safe Areas, the UN forces would not be able ‘(to) effectively deter aggression against them’. Negotiations would therefore constitute the only way of keeping the Safe Areas intact, also because UNPROFOR

⁵⁰⁰⁴ NOS, NOVA, Interview Kooijmans conducted by Maartje van Weegen, 22/06/93, 10.30 pm.

⁵⁰⁰⁵ NOS, NOVA, Interview Kooijmans conducted by Maartje van Weegen, 22/06/93, 10.30 pm.

⁵⁰⁰⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00782. Biegman 580 to Kooijmans, 09/06/93.

⁵⁰⁰⁷ ABZ, the embassy in Washington. Kooijmans 27/05/93 circ 375.

⁵⁰⁰⁸ Interview O. Hattinga van ‘t Sant, 18/07/00.

would be similarly unable to secure the provision of supplies to them. The limited number of additional troops available for the implementation of Resolution 836 meant that UNPROFOR could do no more than enter into agreements with the parties to the conflict. It was clear from Annan's address that UNPROFOR would continue to depend on the Bosnian Serbs' goodwill. Their consent was crucial to ensure supplies: 'There is little benefit to establishing Safe Areas if the people in them cannot be fed'.⁵⁰⁰⁹

At the same time the former military attaché in Belgrade, Brigadier-General De Vogel retired, pointed to the weaknesses of the Safe Areas in *Vrij Nederland*. Apart from any difficulties that might occur in the provision of supplies to the enclaves through Bosnian-Serb terrain in the form of military goods and elementary necessities of life for the civilian population, the possibility could not be excluded – based on experience – that the Serbs would return on their prior consent to the Safe Areas. This meant that the symbolic presentation of UN troops would not suffice. Active security was demanded, which the former general felt would require an average of three mechanised infantry battalions for each Safe Area along with combat and logistic support, or put another way, 3,000 troops for each area. In addition, the rules of engagement would need to be stated more broadly to be able to respond to any artillery fire on the part of the Serbs. However, broader rules of engagement would heighten the risks involved. For this reason those countries providing troops would probably not be keen on this. Thus the circle was complete and a half-baked solution was embedded in the Safe Area concept.⁵⁰¹⁰

As a result of the vague formulation of Resolution 836 and its limited implementation, many of the organisations and people involved did not have a clear idea of the point at which the 'deterrence' afforded by UNPROFOR troops in a Safe Area would need to come into effect. In December 1994, one and a half years after Resolution 836 was adopted, Boutros-Ghali endeavoured to provide clarity: 'The intention of Safe Areas is primarily to protect people and not to defend terrain'.⁵⁰¹¹ However, NATO continued to think mainly in terms of defending terrain.⁵⁰¹² Even after 1994 lawyers in the Netherlands and elsewhere concluded that the rules of engagement issued to the UN troops in the Safe Areas only permitted self-defence. On 19 July 1993 the existing rules of engagement, which included a provision amongst others to the effect that 'UNPROFOR troops may use their weapons to resist attempts by forceful means to prevent the Force from discharging its duties' (see Chapter 7), were supplemented with one in view of the establishment of Safe Areas: 'to resist deliberate military or paramilitary incursions into the ... Safe Areas'.⁵⁰¹³ A lawyer who was part of the Crisis Action Team at the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb in 1994 and 1995, was of the opinion that the term, 'acting in self-defence', as stated in Resolution 836 had to be interpreted in its broadest sense: not to be impeded in the execution of its mandate. He felt that the concept of a 'safe area' would be utterly ridiculous in the light of any other interpretation. When he was required to consider the revision of the rules of engagement at the beginning of 1995, it was not clear to him from their formulation whether the terrain of a Safe Area had to be defended, its population or only UN personnel. He held the view that as then formulated, the rules only permitted the UNPROFOR personnel stationed in the Safe Areas to defend themselves. He felt that the population should also be defended in a Safe Area and that this should also be stipulated explicitly but was told that he was not allowed to amend that provision.⁵⁰¹⁴ The Dutch Lieutenant-Colonel K.R. Lo-Fo-Wong, a lawyer attached to the staff of the commander in chief of the

⁵⁰⁰⁹ ABZ, PVNY. Meeting with potential troop and equipment contributors for the implementation of the SCRs 836 and 844, Introduction by Kofi Annan, 24/06/93, enclosed with letter 6151 from the New York permanent representative to Kooijmans, 25/06/93.

⁵⁰¹⁰ J.C.A.C. de Vogel, 'Het "Actieplan voor Bosnië" hoeft geen loos gebaar te zijn' (The 'Action Plan for Bosnia' need not be an empty gesture), *Vrij Nederland*, 19/06/93, p. 30.

⁵⁰¹¹ VN, S/1994/1389, par. 43.

⁵⁰¹² Interview W. Claes, 12/03/01, L. Smith, 06/06/00 and J. Shalikhavilli on 07/06/00.

⁵⁰¹³ Berkovitz, *Rules*, p. 638.

⁵⁰¹⁴ Interview G.F. Collins, 08/06/00.

Royal Netherlands Army, was to state in the summer of 1995 following the fall of Srebrenica that the idea of territorial defence was completely contrary to the nature of the peacekeeping operation conducted in Bosnia. Territorial defence amounted to peace-enforcement. Therefore he believed that the Safe Areas did not permit territorial defence, nor did it allow the protection of their population: 'In this case every shelling of the population would lead to a countermeasure by the UN'.⁵⁰¹⁵

It may be concluded that the concept of a 'safe area' was open to a wide range of interpretation and raised too many expectations in relation to the security of the people located within it. There was an erroneous idea that the UNPROFOR troops that were stationed inside the enclaves, would mount a defence against a large-scale attack by the VRS. It was possible for this illusion to survive mainly because only a few people believed that the Bosnian-Serb leaders would dare to defy the international community by entering an area which the United Nations had proclaimed to be safe. The possibility of attack was precluded by thought, as it were. For this reason it was not necessary to consider the type of action that would be required in the event that an attack occurred. Of the entire history of UN involvement in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the establishment of the Safe Areas represents the example of two views of reality at odds with each other: the reality of the diplomats in New York who had settled on a formula to allay the situation with which they could all agree, and that of the situation in Bosnia where the various parties were locked in a life-and-death struggle paying no heed to humanitarian law, and where the troops deployed by the UN had insufficient means available to fulfil the expectations of diplomats, politicians and the public in the West.

17. 'The bankruptcy of the international community'

It was not only the government of the Netherlands that was concerned about the slow pace at which troops were offered for the Safe Areas. In addition, the VRS appeared to have tightened its hold on the city of Sarajevo. In mid-July the *Hugo De Groot Vereniging (HCA Nederland)* (Hugo de Groot Association (HCA The Netherlands)) called on Parliament to conduct an emergency debate on the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The association suggested action such as food drops above Sarajevo, the construction of a landing strip in the city, or a secure corridor between the airport and the centre.⁵⁰¹⁶ In response, Groen Links (Green Left) requested an emergency debate.⁵⁰¹⁷ On 29 July 1993 Parliament therefore reconvened during its summer recess for the third consecutive year in connection with the former Yugoslavia. On the day of the parliamentary debate the Hugo de Groot Vereniging notified the members of the House of its concern that, in view of the Croatian and Serb plans for the division of Bosnian territory, the international community was offering up the 'Muslim state'. It therefore asked the members of the House to commence the protection and reconstruction of a multi-ethnic Sarajevo.⁵⁰¹⁸

This time the announcement of consultations to be held by the Permanent Parliamentary Committees for Foreign Affairs and Defence elicited letters from various private organizations. These letters repeatedly urged the provision of more effective aid and the establishment of Safe Areas. The *Stichting Mensen in Nood* (Foundation for People in Need), *Caritas Neerlandica*, the *Stichting Oecumenische Hulp* (Foundation for Ecumenical Aid) and the *Stichting Memisa* stated that three views were struggling for supremacy amongst the Dutch public. Briefly put, they were 'What is happening there, is a

⁵⁰¹⁵ SMG, 1004. Report produced by C. Klep of a discussion with Ikol Lo-Fo-Wong in reply to written questions on 28/07/95, 01/08/95.

⁵⁰¹⁶ NIOD, Coll. Blauw. Press release 'Spoeddebat over het voormalige Joegoslavië, in het bijzonder over de situatie in Sarajevo' (Emergency debate on the former Yugoslavia, in particular, the situation in Sarajevo), 19/07/93.

⁵⁰¹⁷ 'Kamer terug van vakantie voor debat Sarajevo' (Parliament back from holiday for debate on Sarajevo), *ANP*, 21/07/93; 'Kamerreces op zijn retour' (Parliamentary recess is over), *ANP* 21/07/93, 6.03 pm; 'Kooijmans en Ter Beek bij overleg Tweede Kamer over ex-Joegoslavië' (Kooijmans and Ter Beek attend Parliament debate on ex-Yugoslavia), *ANP*, 27/07/93, 9.57 pm; NIOD, Coll. Blauw. Clerk of the Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Development Aid, 20/07/93 plus appendix by Van Ojik for the chairpersons of the these committees, 19/07/93.

⁵⁰¹⁸ NIOD, Coll. Blauw. Hugo de Groot Vereniging to Tweede Kamer, 29/07/93.

disgraceful scandal', 'Why aren't they doing anything about it?' and 'What can I do if a dozen women are capable of obstructing a large convoy of aid en route?'. According to the foundation, the latter view explained why there was less willingness to provide donations for the former Yugoslavia than Africa, for example. Humanitarian aid, the foundation observed, had become an instrument of war. The international community was partly to blame for this, for example, because the foundations felt that UNPROFOR looked on without doing anything when the free transport of aid was halted. For this reason the four charity organisations asked the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs not only to devote attention to the requisite level of aid in its debate, but also to the meaningful provision of this aid in particular.⁵⁰¹⁹ On 28 July the *Landelijk Bureau VluchtelingenWerk* (National Office for Refugee Affairs) also approached the Committee with the question as to what steps the EC and the Netherlands were preparing in order to save as many human lives as possible if international political consultations failed to produce results.⁵⁰²⁰ *Artsen zonder Grenzen* (Doctors without Borders) called for the parliamentary debate to focus attention on the admission of humanitarian aid, the protection of the population and the provision of enough troops for the Safe Areas.⁵⁰²¹

In the course of the consultations held before the Committees, for Foreign Affairs, Defence and this time also Development Aid, various speakers expressed the view that the EC's credibility in relation to ex-Yugoslavia was on the line. For instance, Sipkes observed that the EC's foreign policy was 'bankrupt'. She felt that nothing could be expected from the Community now that the European Council had stated that 'a tour of the region should make it clear that the EC and its member states are still – and want to continue being – actively involved in the search for solutions to the problems in the former Yugoslavia'.⁵⁰²² Blaauw also referred to bankruptcy on the part of the international community. Because he felt that the promised deployment of 7,500 troops would not be enough to protect the Safe Areas, he believed that the relevant activities should be concentrated in Sarajevo, in the first place, secondly, in Tuzla and thirdly in Srebrenica.⁵⁰²³ He was of the opinion that this was:

'the last chance to intervene. Waiting for the outcome of the peace conference will take too much time and is unacceptable. The Western world cannot and may not turn its back on the civilian population of the former Yugoslavia. This would represent the bankruptcy of Dutch policy, of European policy, of NATO' policy, and of the policy of the United Nations....'⁵⁰²⁴

Valk wanted protection for the Safe Areas as soon as possible, with ground troops if possible and also air support. Incidentally, he felt that the air force should not only strike if UN troops came under fire but also if the people in the Safe Areas were attacked. Minister Kooijmans was of the opinion that the term, 'acting in self-defence', in Resolution 836 also permitted the use of force in the event that the areas were attacked.⁵⁰²⁵ However, Minister Pronk, who had visited Croatia and Bosnia shortly beforehand to itemise the aid required and to investigate whether aid was being used effectively, downplayed excessive expectations in connection with the degree of protection which the West could offer Bosnia: 'Terms such as "safe haven" are primarily indicative of objectives and are not based in reality. The people of Sarajevo do not feel that they are protected but that they have been betrayed by Europe'.⁵⁰²⁶ Minister Ter Beek again announced that the first battalion of the Airmobile Brigade would

⁵⁰¹⁹ NIOD, Coll. Blaauw. Mensen in Nood, et al. to the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, 27/07/93.

⁵⁰²⁰ NIOD, Coll. Blaauw. F. Florin to the permanent Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, 28/07/93

⁵⁰²¹ NIOD, Coll. Blaauw. Artsen zonder Grenzen to Blaauw, 27/07/93.

⁵⁰²² TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 60, p. 2.

⁵⁰²³ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 60, p. 5.

⁵⁰²⁴ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 60, p. 6..

⁵⁰²⁵ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 60, p. 10.

⁵⁰²⁶ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 60, p. 15.

be ready to be deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina by the new year. It was to be equipped with YPR armoured vehicles.⁵⁰²⁷

Several days before the debate the representatives of the five major parties (Sipkes of Groen Links (Green Left), Valk of the PvdA (Labour), De Kok of CDA (Christian Democrats), Blaauw of the VVD (Liberals) and Eisma of D66 (Democrats))⁵⁰²⁸ sent a letter to their fellow Members of Parliament in the member states of the European Community. In it, they observed that the international community and the EC, in particular, had done little until then in relation to Bosnia-Herzegovina. They asked their counterparts to urge their governments, amongst other things, to bring about a rapid peace settlement, to provide genuine protection for the Safe Areas and relief for the Muslim enclaves, to arrange for the withdrawal of the Serbs from their artillery positions around Sarajevo, and to establish a protected corridor between Central Bosnia and the Adriatic Coast.⁵⁰²⁹

18. Conclusion

By mid-May the Vance-Owen plan was to all intents and purposes dead. This was first of all due to the position adopted by the Bosnian-Serb authorities, primarily Mladic. It was also attributable to the West's failure to provide a clear indication that it had an implementation force ready, let alone that it was prepared to exert more pressure on Pale to accept the plan. It was not prepared to do more than tighten sanctions. The months of uncertainty about American policy towards Bosnia represented a major difficulty. When that finally appeared to crystallise into the approach of lift and strike, it was presented to the European allies in a gentle – un-American – manner. Christopher's tour of the European capitals to promote this approach was a downright diplomatic disaster. It contributed to an unprecedented estrangement between the United States and Western Europe. Finally, this was partially healed through the joint action programme through which the United States and Europe reached agreement on the issue of Safe Areas. The outcome therefore had less to do with the reality of Bosnia than with the need to restore trans-Atlantic relations. This also explains why the countries involved did not manage to produce much enthusiasm for the practical implementation of the Safe Areas. The concrete definition of the concept of 'safe areas' was consequently kept vague, thereby ensuring that they became many things at the same time. They represented a response to the humanitarian needs of the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the demands of people outside Bosnia to alleviate them. To Western governments they also represented an alternative to far-reaching military intervention. According to some people, they were also a preliminary step towards a peace settlement. Yet others felt that they were open-air prisons, reserves or concentration camps maintained by the United Nations.⁵⁰³⁰ Already when the Safe Areas were established, it was thought that the UN troops within them would become hostage to the warring factions, both the Bosnian-Serb troops outside the enclaves and the ABiH fighters within the areas, who were after all barely disarmed or not at all.⁵⁰³¹

The lack of demilitarisation was also evident in the fact that weapons production actually occurred in some of these areas. Reference has already been made in Chapter 5 to the extensive production of mortar shells in Sarajevo. In Gorazde explosives were manufactured in the Pubjeda ammunition factory, part of which was underground. Demilitarisation could only have been effective if it had been possible to rid the residents of the Safe Areas of their fear of the threat emanating from the Serbs who surrounded them. To achieve this, the international community had to provide real

⁵⁰²⁷ TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 60, p. 13.

⁵⁰²⁸ A draft had circulated in Dutch which was signed by 'all the democratic parliamentary parties'. In addition to the five mentioned it included the names of Van Dis (SGP, Leerling (RPF) and Van Middelkoop (GPV). Their names were not included in the English letter that was sent. The draft is kept in the Blaauw file.

⁵⁰²⁹ NIOD, Coll. CDA. CDA party executive. Foreign Affairs Committee, 9310370, Open letter to members of parliament in all EC member states, 03/08/93, accompanying J.W. Wiggers to R. Stuth, 16/08/93.

⁵⁰³⁰ See for example the criticism of George Soros, quoted in Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 23.

⁵⁰³¹ Shawcross, *Evil*, pp. 23-24.

protection. The combination of planned demilitarisation and the presence of troops whose mandate entailed deterrence rather than defence or protection, could not work, not in the eyes of the Bosnian Muslims in the Safe Areas nor in those of the Bosnian Serbs around them.

The protection of the Safe Areas with air support diminished the will of the Bosnian Serbs, against whom air strikes would have been targeted, to cooperate any further with UNPROFOR and the UNHCR. They announced that, in response to UN sanctions, they would impose their own sanctions against the United Nations. As a result, UNPROFOR was obstructed in its freedom of movement and its ability to provide supplies.⁵⁰³²

With the establishment of the Safe Areas, the Dutch Government appeared to have achieved what it had been calling for at an international level for a long period of time. It was frustrating for it to see that other countries were, to put it mildly, not very willing to provide troops for this purpose. During the meeting of the European Council in Copenhagen the Dutch Ministers, Lubbers and Kooijmans, endeavoured to encourage their European partners to provide troops as well by presenting their own offer. When they made this offer – a logistics unit comprising 400 personnel – both Ministers were aware that it was highly likely that the Royal Netherlands Army would not be able to establish such a unit. Even when this must have become incontrovertibly clear to them, they continued to present this offer. The day after the meeting in Copenhagen Minister Kooijmans had already informed the Lower House that the closer they came to the time of actual deployment, the greater the chance that the offer of a logistics unit would be replaced with an airmobile battalion.

The government had already decided at the beginning of May that it would deploy this battalion in the former Yugoslavia if necessary. The Van Vlijmen and Van Traa motion which was adopted during the debate on the Priorities White Paper several weeks later, had little impact on this decision. In adopting it, Parliament merely indicated that it also felt that the Airmobile Brigade should be considered for deployment in ex-Yugoslavia. Once the offer of the logistics unit had been presented, it was a question of waiting until such time as the UN Secretariat asked the Dutch Government to make good its promise. The longer it took for this to happen, the closer the focus shifted to the Airmobile Brigade. More to the point, at the end of June the army issued a planning order for this battalion. However, once this appeared in the press, Minister Ter Beek suddenly directed that this order be rescinded. Anticipating policy was commendable, dictating it was less admirable, the Minister felt. In the meantime, the purpose for which the logistics unit which the Netherlands was to provide, was still not clear. It could have been for the Safe Areas or a new peace plan. Presidents Milosevic and Tudjman had since tabled such a plan. The question was to what extent it would be acceptable to the Izetbegovic administration. The question also remained as to how far the international community, which many Dutch Members of Parliament felt to be morally bankrupt already, would be willing or able to ensure that such a peace was also just.

⁵⁰³² Kofi A. Annan, 'Peacekeeping, Military Intervention, and National Sovereignty in Internal Armed Conflict', in Moore (ed.), *Choices*, p. 65.

Chapter 12

The Owen-Stoltenberg plan: June 1993 - September 1993

1. The strangulation of Sarajevo and the NATO decision

In late July the NATO planes were still waiting for the green light from the UN to be allowed to provide Close Air Support. In the meantime the VRS (the military forces of the Bosnian Serbs) tightened the stranglehold around Sarajevo with an offensive in which the Romanija division took the Igman and Bjelasnica mountains in the early days of August. This gave them control of the last remaining summits around the Bosnian capital and cut off the last overland access route to the city. This was the reason why on 29 July Minister Kooijmans, supported by the Dutch Parliament, urged Boutros-Ghali to allow Close Air Support as soon as possible. The Dutch minister believed that without this form of Close Air Support the Safe Areas would not be able to continue to exist.⁵⁰³³ However, he did not need to worry about this as a lot of work was being done behind the scenes. In the weekend of 24 and 25 July 1993 Lake and Bartholomew flew secretly to Europe in a small plane for discussions with the British and French governments. They brought the message that the American administration wanted to seriously seek a solution for the Bosnian crisis which would also be acceptable to London and Paris. Washington feared that if no action were taken and Sarajevo were to fall, as the CIA foresaw,⁵⁰³⁴ the planned NATO meeting in January would be a farce and transatlantic relationships would come under pressure. In addition, Western credibility in the Muslim world would be seriously damaged. President Clinton, who had been shocked by the television pictures of the siege of Sarajevo,⁵⁰³⁵ had therefore decided on air strikes to end the siege of Sarajevo and of the other Safe Areas and to force the Bosnian Serbs to enter into serious negotiations. This was therefore an extremely broad interpretation of the use of force which was permitted under Resolutions 770 and 836.⁵⁰³⁶ Clinton had authorized both his representatives to hint that the American administration would act alone if necessary.⁵⁰³⁷ On 2 August the North Atlantic Council held an emergency meeting to discuss the American proposal. The meeting, which lasted 12 hours, was described by an American official as 'as bitter and rancorous a discussion as has ever taken place in the alliance'.⁵⁰³⁸ In particular, the American position to conduct air strikes without UN permission if necessary encountered strong objections from the allies.⁵⁰³⁹ Boutros-Ghali had also strongly objected to this, because of the potential consequences of unauthorized NATO actions on UN staff on the ground, on humanitarian aid and on the negotiations.⁵⁰⁴⁰ Finally, the Council decided to agree on possible air strikes. An important factor in this decision was the fact that, shortly before, French UN troops had come under fire from Bosnian-Serb artillery. This helped the French government to agree to this NATO role.⁵⁰⁴¹ It was decided that if the 'strangulation' of Sarajevo and the other Safe Areas continued, air strikes would follow. Plans would

⁵⁰³³ ABZ, PVNY. Biegman to Boutros-Ghali, 29/07/93; Biegman 752 to Kooijmans, 29/07/93.

⁵⁰³⁴ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 142.

⁵⁰³⁵ Drew, *Edge*, pp. 273-274; Bert, *Superpower*, p. 204.

⁵⁰³⁶ For a discussion of this material see ABZ, DEU/ARA/02575. Memorandum from DPV/PZ to acting head of DGPZ, 02/08/93, DPV-PZ/1821-93.

⁵⁰³⁷ Daalder, *Dayton*, p. 21; Drew, *Edge*, p. 277; Major, *Autobiography*, p. 543.

⁵⁰³⁸ Quoted in Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, p. 156. See also 'NATO puts brakes on US plans to relieve Sarajevo', *ANP*, 03/08/93, 00:00.

⁵⁰³⁹ Francis Harris, 'War in Bosnia: America pushes for intensive air strikes', *The Daily Telegraph*, 04/08/93; Douglas Jehl, 'Conflict in the Balkans; U.S. Turns Bosnia Threat Into a Near Ultimatum', *The New York Times*, 04/08/93.

⁵⁰⁴⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05275. Boutros-Ghali to Wörner, 04/08/93; D'Ansembourg 756 to Kooijmans, 04/08/93; Boutros, *Unvanquished*, pp. 89-90.

⁵⁰⁴¹ Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, p. 156.

be developed to this end to be submitted to the NATO Council one week later. However, mainly on French insistence, a central role in the decision-making was allocated to the UNPROFOR Commander, meaning that the American administration backed down from its idea that NATO should be allowed to conduct air strikes independently.⁵⁰⁴²

The NATO Council meeting on 9 August once again stated that air strikes would only be launched if the UN Secretary-General authorized them.⁵⁰⁴³ In this way, a dual key system was developed: any form of air strikes required approval from both the NATO Commander for the southern part of the NATO Treaty Area, (in military terms: CINCSOUTH) and from the UNPROFOR Force Commander. In respect of the use of Close Air Support the final approval would have to be given by the UN Secretary-General, although operational control would be delegated to the subordinate commanders on the ground. This type of air support would only be deployed as a last resort (*ultima ratio*).⁵⁰⁴⁴

Two chains of command had now been created. One went from the NATO aircraft via a C-130 command plane in the air to the Combined Air Operations Centre in Vicenza, where the Combined Air Component Commander gave permission for an operation. The other went from the Forward Air Controller to the Bosnian Air Support Operations Centre in Kiseljak and from there to Zagreb, where the UNPROFOR Commander requested permission from UN Headquarters in New York. One problem in this second chain of command was the seven-hour time difference between Zagreb and New York. In addition, there was no permanently staffed situation centre in New York. UNPROFOR commanders had experience of trying to contact UN headquarters in New York on a Friday, to be told that they could call back on Monday.⁵⁰⁴⁵ In respect of the command structure, the main difference between Close Air Support and air strikes was that air strikes also had to be authorized by the NATO Council. For both types of air operations, the initial deployment had to be authorized by the UN Secretary-General, who first had to consult the Security Council.⁵⁰⁴⁶

A number of people have seen this dual key procedure as an attempt by London and Paris to manipulate the threat of air strikes in line with their own national interests.⁵⁰⁴⁷ However, the question is whether it would have been reasonable to deprive the UN Secretary-General and the Security Council of any say in air strikes, whilst the UN staff on the ground would be faced with the consequences. In any case, the Bosnian Serbs now knew that they would have to allow just enough food through to prevent 'strangulation'. In mid-August an anonymous American official stated that: 'I'm worried about the British and French - that a time may come when we say this is the time to bombard them, they say the supplies are getting through.'⁵⁰⁴⁸ Briquemont and his deputy, the British Brigadier General Guy de Vere Hayes, had managed to persuade Mladic to withdraw his troops from Igman and Bjelasnica as a means to prevent air strikes. UNPROFOR troops took their place. For a very brief period it looked as though the West was still going to take a stand, but this threat against the Bosnian Serb leaders soon receded.⁵⁰⁴⁹ During the NATO Council on 9 August the decision taken a week earlier was substantially weakened because it was decided that air strikes must be limited to support for humanitarian aid operations. They should not be interpreted as 'a decision to intervene militarily in the conflict'.⁵⁰⁵⁰

⁵⁰⁴² DCBC, 2272. Veenendaal NATO 1256 to Kooijmans, 03/08/93. Daalder, *Dayton*, pp. 22-23 takes the view that it was chiefly the United Kingdom that advocated a UN role in the decision-making.

⁵⁰⁴³ Trifunovska, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 183-184; 'NAVO geeft laatste woord aan VN over luchtacties tegen Serviërs' ('NATO gives the final word to UN on air strikes against Serbians'), *ANP*, 09/08/93, 23:13.

⁵⁰⁴⁴ Confidential information (84).

⁵⁰⁴⁵ Dore, *Japan*, p. 133.

⁵⁰⁴⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05275. D'Ansembourg 805 to Kooijmans, 12/08/93.

⁵⁰⁴⁷ See for example Daalder, *Dayton*, p. 23.

⁵⁰⁴⁸ Drew, *Edge*, p. 279.

⁵⁰⁴⁹ 'Kans op spoedige luchtaanvallen NAVO klein' ('Little chance of early NATO air attacks'), *ANP*, 09/08/93, 18:36.

⁵⁰⁵⁰ Lutger & De Winter, *Horizon*, p. 216; ABZ, NAR(93)52. Decisions taken at the meeting of the NAC on 09/08/93, Press release (93)52.

On 18 August Boutros-Ghali was able to report to the Security Council that NATO support of the UN troops was operational.⁵⁰⁵¹ On that day NATO conducted its first air support operation, which consisted of aggressive low flying. At that time UNPROFOR saw little advantage in the deployment of air support, fearing that it would jeopardize its impartiality. There was no need to combine peacekeeping on the ground with enforcing from the air. In addition, they feared reprisals against UN soldiers on the ground. Furthermore Owen and Stoltenberg did not want their negotiations to be undermined by air operations.⁵⁰⁵² A typical example of the attempts which UNPROFOR made to avoid any kind of provocation of air operations was the statement in mid-August by the Canadian spokesman for UNPROFOR II, Barry Frewer, that Sarajevo was not besieged, but that the VRS had simply taken a 'tactically advantageous position'.⁵⁰⁵³ UNPROFOR authorities were so unanimous in their attempts to keep the word 'siege' out of the papers⁵⁰⁵⁴ that it can be assumed that instructions had been issued for press contacts on this matter.



However, at that time, the NATO decision in early August to block the stranglehold on Sarajevo was the best thing that could have happened to the Bosnian government. In all other respects they were in a poor position, for instance in the negotiations in the presence of Owen and Stoltenberg, which were heading towards a three-way split of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

2. The Owen-Stoltenberg Plan and the Western position

After the failure of the Vance-Owen Plan, Owen took the emphatic position that he would no longer actively negotiate. He then operated as a neutral chairman who left it to the parties themselves to put forward solutions.⁵⁰⁵⁵ One risk associated with that position was that the parties would make proposals

⁵⁰⁵¹ VN: 'Alles in gereedheid voor luchtaanvallen' ('UN: All set for air strikes'), *ANP*, 19/08/93, 02:56.

⁵⁰⁵² Paulsen, *Jugoslaviëpolitiek*, p. 153; 'Briquemont hekelt dreigen met bombardementen' ('Briquemont criticizes threat of bombardments'), *ANP*, 06/08/93, 2.56 p.m. ; 'Briquemont spreekt zich uit tegen NAVO-luchtaanvallen' ('Briquemont voices opposition to NATO air strikes'), *ANP*, 19/08/93, 10.31 a.m.

⁵⁰⁵³ Cigar, *Genocide*, p. 115.

⁵⁰⁵⁴ For examples see John F. Burns, 'A Siege by Any Other Name Would Be as Painful', *The New York Times*, 17/08/93.

⁵⁰⁵⁵ Edward Mortimer, 'An exit with one regret', *Financial Times*, 02/06/95.

which no longer bore any relationship to the London principles, which the European Community believed should serve as the starting point for the discussions and as the touchstone of the results.

On 16 June 1993 Tudjman and Milosevic presented a peace plan which, in effect, returned to the Karadjordjevo discussions of March 1991 and which pointed to a three-way partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which only 23 to 24% of the land would be left for the Bosnian Muslims. Owen and Stoltenberg took the plan into discussion, presenting a draft version on 29 July and a final version on 20 August 1993.

Under the Owen-Stoltenberg plan Croats, Muslims and Serbs would each be given their own republic within a loose confederation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The land of the Croats and Serbs would both consist of a single entity, the land of the Muslims would consist of two parts: one area in the centre of the country around Sarajevo, Tuzla and Zenica, and one around Bihac. The Bosnian Serbs would be given 52% of the Bosnian land, the Muslims 30% and the Croats 18%. The Drina valley would be Serbian, meaning that the Muslims would have to give up their eastern enclaves of Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde. The Serbs would also be given Posavina. A three-member presidium, in which a Croat, a Muslim and a Serb would take turns to be chairman, would head the Union of Republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Sarajevo would be governed for a period of two years by the UN, and Mostar would be governed for the same period by the EC.

The plan did not conform to the principles of the London Conference which assumed that the results of ethnic cleansing would not be accepted and that the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina would have to be guaranteed. However, the chances of the Western powers agreeing to a plan for an extremely loose confederation or even a partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the long-term were increasing. The longer it took to put an end to the war, the more the idea took root that this was the fault of the Bosnian government, which simply refused to make concessions. The West increasingly started to see the Bosnian government as obstructionist at the negotiations: it wanted to prolong the war in order to achieve better goals. However, the international negotiators were becoming frustrated. Why could not Izetbegovic and his people resign themselves to a peace, even if this were not ideal? It would at least put a stop to the bloodshed, and, by the way, to the frustrations of the Western negotiators whose reputations were crumbling with each successive failure.⁵⁰⁵⁶ There was a growing tendency to blame the victims for the continuance of the war, which became known as the 'blaming the victim' process.⁵⁰⁵⁷ It seemed as though Izetbegovic wanted to prolong the war for as long as he believed that it would improve his position, irrespective of the number of victims.⁵⁰⁵⁸

In turn Izetbegovic increasingly believed that the West, and in particular the American administration, was not prepared to intervene in favour of the government in Sarajevo. He believed that the international community was only prepared to take decisive measures if it came to prevention of a general Balkan war.⁵⁰⁵⁹ On 12 July the British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Hogg, explicitly stated in the House of Commons that nobody should give the Bosnian government the impression that the West would intervene militarily.⁵⁰⁶⁰ In this he was expressing the consensus prevailing at that time in the Western world (even the US Secretary of State Christopher participated this time) that Izetbegovic should not be given 'false hope'. In other words, Izetbegovic should simply accept the Milosevic and Tudjman plan, whether it was legitimate or not.⁵⁰⁶¹ Foreign Secretary Hurd spelled it out once again in a TV interview for Channel 4 on 2 August:

⁵⁰⁵⁶ Compare Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p., 175.

⁵⁰⁵⁷ Tom Gjelten, 'Blaming the victim: are the Muslims the aggressors?', *The New Republic*, 20/12/93; Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 221.

⁵⁰⁵⁸ George Kenney, 'Steering clear of Balkan shoals. American troops in Bosnia', *The Nation*, 08/01/96.

⁵⁰⁵⁹ Izetbegović, *Govori*, p. 5. See also John F. Burns, 'Bosnia Loses Any Hope of Being Saved', *The New York Times*, 25/07/93.

⁵⁰⁶⁰ Simms, *Hours*, p. 30.

⁵⁰⁶¹ Compare ABZ, 999.241 Yugoslavia/No Fly Zone part IV. Memorandum from DAV/MS, 22/07/93, no. MS-179/93.

‘The only thing which could have guaranteed peace with justice would have been an expeditionary force (...) And no government, no government has at any time seriously proposed that. And that I think is a line which should run through any analysis because it cuts out so much of the rhetoric which has bedevilled this.’⁵⁰⁶²

In late July the VRS launched an offensive on Sarajevo which was apparently intended to increase the likelihood of the Bosnian Muslims accepting a partition plan. In the third week of July Bosnian-Serb tanks advanced 30 kilometres south and south-west of Sarajevo and the bombardments of the Bosnian capital were renewed in what was the heaviest fighting around the city since the start of the war. UN commanders considered it a possibility that the ABiH might have to concede strategic defence points around the city.⁵⁰⁶³ UN Commander General Briquemont, who had arrived only a short time earlier and who was demonstrably deeply moved by the situation in Sarajevo, expressed his doubts as to whether Sarajevo could be preserved as a Safe Area. Having been in the area scarcely two weeks, he criticized the international community for creating Safe Areas without making the resources available which were necessary for implementing that policy. He believed that preservation of the Safe Areas would only be possible if political agreement were reached in Geneva.⁵⁰⁶⁴

The West’s unwillingness to come to Bosnia’s aid fitted easily into the Islamic and fatalistic vision of Izetbegovic. The Bosnian president was resigned to the fact that the West would make less effort to help Muslims than it would to help a Christian people in the same difficult circumstances. He was also resigned to his belief that a non-Islamic West was more easily inclined to hedonism and laziness than to struggle. In this respect he believed that there was a ‘passive conspiracy’ by the West against his government.⁵⁰⁶⁵

The logical conclusion was that the Bosnian government was left entirely to its own devices, as Izetbegovic told the Bosnian Parliament in late September,⁵⁰⁶⁶ but in order to shape that philosophy in a war, arms were needed. On 19 June the European Commission devoted a COREU (communication through a confidential EC telex network) to the tendency towards a three-way ethnic partition of Bosnia. The question was whether the Bosnian government would accept the facts or would fight on as a matter of principle. In the latter case, suggested the Commission, the EC should be prepared to lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian government.⁵⁰⁶⁷

In Chapter 11 it was shown that the European Council of Copenhagen, meeting a few days later, was not willing to grant Izetbegovic’s request to lift the arms embargo against him. The US administration was in favour, but did not want to go solo in public. In late June 1993 the UN debated the arms embargo against Bosnia. In the General Assembly 109 member states voted in favour of lifting the embargo, with 57 member states voting against. In the Security Council six members voted in favour, including the United States, thereby breaking a two-year tradition of always voting with France and the United Kingdom. However, nine members abstained, meaning that the majority required to lift the embargo was not reached.

Immediately following the presentation of the Tudjman and Milosevic plan on 16 June it became clear that the US administration was not unsympathetic to a partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina into three separate ethnic zones, if the three parties could agree on this.⁵⁰⁶⁸ As early as the beginning of

⁵⁰⁶² Quoted in Gow, *Triumph*, p. 179. See also Douglas Hogg, ‘Three good reasons to exercise caution’, *The Independent*, 06/08/93.

⁵⁰⁶³ John F. Burns, ‘Bosnia Loses Any Hope of Being Saved’ and idem, ‘Serbs Continue Assault on Sarajevo’, *The New York Times*, 25/07/93.

⁵⁰⁶⁴ John F. Burns, ‘Serbs Continue Assault on Sarajevo’, *The New York Times*, 25/07/93.

⁵⁰⁶⁵ Izetbegovic, *Govori*, p. 9.

⁵⁰⁶⁶ Bert, *Superpower*, p. 208; Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 164.

⁵⁰⁶⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Coreu, cpe/cee 273, 19/06/93.

⁵⁰⁶⁸ Bert, *Superpower*, p. 204; Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, p. 141, Oscar Garschagen, ‘VS aanvaarden opdeling Bosnië’ (‘US accepts partition of Bosnia’), *de Volkskrant*, 19/06/93.

June the CIA had already concluded that it was no longer possible to restore the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina and that the most probable result of the conflict would be a partition into separate Croat, Serbian and Muslim zones.⁵⁰⁶⁹ Washington was under the impression that the Muslims themselves were also aiming for such a solution, because they were thought to have reached the conclusion that time was not on their side.⁵⁰⁷⁰ However, as far as the American administration was concerned, the initiative had to come from the Bosnian government. As one commentator wrote on the position of the Clinton administration: "They were ready to live with partition, but they weren't ready to advocate it."⁵⁰⁷¹ In fact, the American administration had no desire to exert pressure on the government in Sarajevo because, as Walter Slocombe, a Pentagon official, was to say some months later: if pressure were to be exerted in Yugoslavia, then it would be on the Serbs and on no one else.⁵⁰⁷²

3. Izetbegovic in difficulties

Izetbegovic was already in great difficulties in the summer of 1993, when the proposals by Tudjman and Milosevic were under discussion. The reasons for this, apart from the changed position of the West, related mainly to the military situation at that time in Bosnia-Herzegovina. From late 1992 - early 1993, the hostilities between the Muslims and Croats had intensified to such a degree that in the spring of 1993 they developed into an all-out war between the two groups. Subsequently the three main ethnic groups fought against each other in changing compositions. This entailed the most disadvantages for the Muslims, who had earlier been able to maintain their position against the Bosnian Serbs thanks to Croat support. Some of the most appalling acts in the Bosnian war took place in the battle between Croats and Muslims in Central Bosnia, such as the Croat mass slaughter of Muslims from Ahmici in 1993, or the atrocities perpetrated by the ABiH forces against the Croatian inhabitants of the village of Uzdol, in the hills east of Gornji Vakuf in mid-September.⁵⁰⁷³ Another mass murder took place in Stupni Do, where people and cattle were set on fire by the HVO Bobovac brigade. These war crimes demonstrated the extent to which attitudes had hardened between the Croats and Muslims. This was partly due to the influence of the actions of the seventh brigade of the ABiH in Central Bosnia (which was renowned for its combination of strict observation of Muslim commandments and wild pillaging raids) and of the mujahedin, who were mainly operating in Central Bosnia. The hostile attitude of the Croatian forces also meant that convoy supplies to Sarajevo from the Adriatic coast were obstructed.

In June the Croat and Serbian leaders in Bosnia entered into a military coalition against the Muslims, which apparently ran parallel to the discussions on the Serbo-Croat proposal for a confederation. They largely stopped fighting amongst themselves and the Croats then concentrated their firepower entirely on the Muslims who, by that time, commanded less than 10% of the total ground area of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

After the outbreak of hostilities with Muslims in early 1993, the Croatian leaders in Bosnia paid less and less attention to the central command in Sarajevo. As early as 18 May the ad hoc EC Yugoslavia group stated that the Bosnian Serbs had achieved their territorial objectives in Bosnia and that the Croats were working on carving out their piece of Bosnia. In other words, there was a de facto

⁵⁰⁶⁹ Michael R. Gordon, 'U.S. Experts Say 'Safe Havens' Won't Help Much', *The New York Times*, 10/06/93; Paulsen, *Jugoslaviëpolitiek*, p. 140.

⁵⁰⁷⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Jacobovits 412 to Kooijmans, 17/06/93; Veenendaal NATO 1036 to Kooijmans, 28/06/93.

⁵⁰⁷¹ Callahan, *Wars*, p. 173.

⁵⁰⁷² Callahan, *Wars*, p. 173.

⁵⁰⁷³ See for example. 'Moslims slachten burgers af' ('Muslims butcher civilians'), *de Volkskrant*, 16/09/93; 'Kroaten nemen wraak na bloedbad' ('Croats take revenge after bloodbath'), *Het Parool*, 16/09/93. See also Robert Block, 'Doodseskaders in Mostar genadeloos' ('Death squads pitiless in Mostar'), *Het Parool*, 07/09/93; 'Gevangen moslims worden in kampen van Kroaten gefolterd' ('Muslim prisoners tortured in Croat camps'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/09/93; 'VN vragen om druk op Bosnische Kroaten' ('UN requests pressure on Bosnian Croats'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/09/93; Rudolf Gruber, 'Die Hölle von Mostar' ('The Hell of Mostar'), *Die Woche*, 26/08/93.

partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵⁰⁷⁴ In the EC General Council on 8 June Foreign Secretary Hurd said that it was 'all too clear that the Croats were trying to achieve secretly what the Serbs were aiming for publicly.'⁵⁰⁷⁵ On 28 August 1993 there was little secrecy left. On that day the 'Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna' was declared, with Mostar as its capital. The Croatian delegation was withdrawn from the Bosnian Parliament.

Another problem for Izetbegovic was division within his own ranks. In the first instance, there was Fikret Abdic, the man who controlled the enclave of Bihac and who was suspected of wanting to commit a coup at the beginning of the war whilst Izetbegovic was temporarily imprisoned by the JNA. The situation had remained relatively quiet around Bihac. At the start of the war the Bosnian Serbs had fired on Bihac for some months, but had made no serious attempts to take the town. From the autumn of 1992 it was even quite peaceful. This was a result of the smuggling activities of Abdic, who lived in the north of the enclave in a castle near Velika Kladusa.⁵⁰⁷⁶ In 1967, at an early age Abdic was appointed manager of the agricultural concern Agrokomerc in Bihac. He made a great success of this enterprise and its 13,000 employees revered him as their father ('Babo'). In 1987, however, he was arrested after it was revealed that his company had been issuing unsecured loans. This was quite a common practice in the former Yugoslavia, but Agrokomerc had been doing it on an unusually large scale. It was revealed that many of the leading members of the Communist Party in Bosnia had been aware of this. The resulting scandal led to charges being filed against the Communist Party of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which then lost a great deal of credibility. Abdic and a few others were given prison sentences. However, this did no damage to his reputation at all, quite the contrary. Many Muslims started to believe that he had been sacrificed because he was a Muslim. He was released in 1990 and was elected as one of the two Muslim representatives to the presidium later that year. He won more votes than Izetbegovic, which in fact gave him the right to become chairman of the presidium. However, Abdic gave the honour to Izetbegovic, who refused to comply with the rotation system and stand down in late 1991. After Izetbegovic managed to survive the suspected coup attempt in May 1992 without any political damage, Abdic withdrew to Bihac, where he became the undisputed leader.

During the war in Bosnia he organized the transport of numerous products from the Adriatic coast through Krajina to Bihac, which became a sort of distribution centre between the Croatian, Serbian and Muslim areas. As early as the spring of 1993 rumours were circulating that Fikret Abdic wanted to commit a new coup within the Bosnian government.⁵⁰⁷⁷ Conversely, there were rumours that circles close to Izetbegovic were trying to murder Abdic.⁵⁰⁷⁸ If Abdic regarded himself as an alternative to Izetbegovic, he was not the only one. Owen could also see the political potential of this Muslim who did business with Serbs in both Serbia and Bosnia with such ease. From as early as 1993 Owen kept him informed of progress in the peace talks.⁵⁰⁷⁹ The more Owen became frustrated at the intransigence of Izetbegovic (see Chapter 11), the more attractive it appeared to use Abdic, if only to break the deadlock. Abdic was in fact declaring his belief that there should be an end to the fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵⁰⁸⁰ Owen did all he could to reinforce Abdic's position.⁵⁰⁸¹ Finally this process led the local assembly of Velika Kladusa in Bihac - led by Fikret Abdic - to sever its links with Sarajevo on 27

⁵⁰⁷⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Coreu, 18/05/93, cpe/sec 577.

⁵⁰⁷⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. Faber 13 to Kooijmans, 08/06/93.

⁵⁰⁷⁶ Compare Detrez, *Sloop*, pp. 287-289; Judah, *Serbs*, pp. 242-247; Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, pp. 167-173.

⁵⁰⁷⁷ Kumar, *Divide*, p. 65; 'Bosnische regering verdeeld aan vooravond vredesbesprekingen Genève' ('Bosnian government divided on eve of Geneva peace talks'), *ANP*, 22/06/93, 20:25.

⁵⁰⁷⁸ 'Zagreb Daily on plan to assassinate Bosnian Muslim leader Abdic', *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 12/07/93.

⁵⁰⁷⁹ OWEN CD-ROM, Message from Lord Owen to Fikret Abdic, 02/01/93; *ibidem*, Letter from David Owen to Fikret Abdic, 13/01/93. See also *ibidem*, Report of Lord Owen's meeting with British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, New York, 04/03/93.

⁵⁰⁸⁰ *Bosnische Moslim-leiding voert openlijk ruzie* ('Bosnian-Muslim leaders arguing in public'), *ANP*, 16/07/93, 15:31.

⁵⁰⁸¹ Simms, *Hour*, pp. 163-164; Paul Lewis, 'Bosnians Divide Over New Talks To Split Country', *The New York Times*, 23/06/93.

September 1993 and declare Bihac the Autonomous Province of West Bosnia.⁵⁰⁸² Subsequently Abdic concluded an agreement with both the Croatian and Serbian leaders in Bosnia.⁵⁰⁸³ The Bosnian government, led by Izetbegovic, viewed his actions as treachery. Abdic was thrown out of the SDA and the presidium, and the government sent the Fifth Corps to deal with the renegade Muslims in Bihac. Abdic formed his army which, with the help of Croatian and Bosnian Serbs, fought against the Fifth Corps of the ABiH, led by general Dudakovic.

Abdic was not the only problem causing Izetbegovic sleepless nights. In Sarajevo itself there was growing criticism of Izetbegovic for his continuing indecisiveness after 15 months of war.⁵⁰⁸⁴ There was in fact good reason for that indecisiveness in relation to the political future of the area which Izetbegovic's government commanded. In this respect there were two or three camps in the Bosnian capital.

Because the land that was commanded by the Bosnian government had become smaller and smaller as a result of the ethnic cleansing, the multi-ethnic state which Izetbegovic had professed as his goal at the start of the war was becoming ever-more distant. In the spring of 1993 the Canadian historian Michael Ignatieff, who was considered an expert both on the Balkans and on peace operations, wrote that whilst ethnic apartheid might be anathema, and whilst the Vance-Owen plan was criticized in the West for that reason, he believed that the civilian victims of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina would hold no such scruples. The West had not been able to protect these civilians and could now hardly expect them to take much notice of Western principles of multi-ethnicity.⁵⁰⁸⁵

Almost a year from the start of the war, on the Bosnian Muslim side the goal of a multi-ethnic state of Bosnia-Herzegovina had therefore largely disintegrated.⁵⁰⁸⁶ In the course of the war the Islamization of the Muslims in Bosnia had continued, partly due to aid given by fellow Muslims from countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran and Algeria, who held more fundamental beliefs.⁵⁰⁸⁷ From June 1992 so-called mujahedin or 'holy warriors' from Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria, Turkey, Bahrain and Qatar fought on the Muslim side in the war in Bosnia. There were only a few hundred of them fighting in the war⁵⁰⁸⁸ but, more importantly, their involvement had the blessing of Izetbegovic.⁵⁰⁸⁹ In the course of the war prominent SDA figures turned against ethnic mixed marriages and demanded a prohibition on the broadcasting of Serbian music on radio stations in Sarajevo. Islamitic religious instruction was introduced in the schools.⁵⁰⁹⁰ Smoking and drinking in the ABiH were banned on religious grounds.⁵⁰⁹¹ Many Muslims observed fasting during Ramadan for the first time in their lives, and the mosques filled up.⁵⁰⁹² The area controlled by the Bosnian government was becoming increasingly a one-party state run by the SDA.⁵⁰⁹³

In early July Owen and Stoltenberg put heavy pressure on Izetbegovic to agree to the partition plan proposed by Milosevic and Tudjman. If he did not agree, that could mean the end of the peace talks and the UN presence in Bosnia.⁵⁰⁹⁴ During June a majority of the seven members of the Bosnian presidium, which consisted of Muslims, Croats, Serbs, a Jew and a Hungarian, had indicated their willingness to accept an ethnic partition as the basis for further peace talks.

⁵⁰⁸² Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp. 1351-1354.

⁵⁰⁸³ Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp. 1354-1357.

⁵⁰⁸⁴ John Pomfret, 'Bosnian Mourns "Tragic Reality" of Partition', *The Washington Post*, 06/07/93.

⁵⁰⁸⁵ Michael Ignatieff, 'Het kleine verschil en de grote gevolgen' ('The minor difference and the major consequences'), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 19/05/93, pp. 16-18. The article had previously been published in *The New York Review of Books*.

⁵⁰⁸⁶ Burg & Shoup, *War*, pp. 12-13

⁵⁰⁸⁷ Caroline de Gruyter, 'In de tang van de halve maan' ('Cornered by the crescent moon'), *Elsevier*, 14/11/92, pp. 68-69.

⁵⁰⁸⁸ UN, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, n. 47.

⁵⁰⁸⁹ UN, S/1994/674/Add.2(Vol. I), 28/12/94, Appendix III.A, II.B.2.

⁵⁰⁹⁰ Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 289; Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 196.

⁵⁰⁹¹ Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, p. 176.

⁵⁰⁹² Rathfelder, *Sarajevo*, pp. 176-177.

⁵⁰⁹³ Judah, *Serbs*, p. 218.

⁵⁰⁹⁴ NCA/Agence France Presse/Reuter/AP, A-wire, 08/07/93, 03:14:18.

According to journalists in the Bosnian capital, however, another group of military and political leaders in Sarajevo was increasingly prepared to push Izetbegovic out if he were to agree to an actual partition of the land area.⁵⁰⁹⁵

There was another, third, way between a multi-ethnic Bosnia and a smaller Muslim state. This was an integrated Islamic state of Bosnia, to which even Muslim areas beyond it could be added, such as Sandzak. This idea was supported by Vice-President Ejup Ganic, who came from Sandzak himself.⁵⁰⁹⁶

These tendencies were often even unified in a single person. Multi-ethnicity was the dominant theme favoured by many Muslims, but - if nothing else were possible - they could fall back on a Muslim nationalist perspective.⁵⁰⁹⁷ Although from the start of the war in Bosnia Izetbegovic had nearly always spoken in public of the integrity and multi-ethnicity of the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina,⁵⁰⁹⁸ the commander of the ABiH, Halilovic, claimed that, in private, he had long given up on this.⁵⁰⁹⁹ For instance, in November 1992 Izetbegovic and Ganic are said to have held discussions with the leader of the Muslims in Sandzak, Sulejman Ugljanin, on the possibility of giving up Eastern Herzegovina in exchange for Sandzak. Halilovic claims that in January 1993 Izetbegovic was persuaded by the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat that he should settle for that part of the area given to the Muslims under the Vance-Owen plan. Arafat is alleged to have told Izetbegovic that if he refused to agree to the territory allocated to him under that plan, he would later be left empty-handed.⁵¹⁰⁰ On 15 November 1993 Izetbegovic told Bosnian radio that a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina was no longer possible. He said that it was unacceptable that Serbs and Croats - he used the terms *četniks* and *ustashe* - would ever join Muslims in a common presidium. He said that land which could not be regained from the Bosnian Serbs through negotiations would have to be recaptured by force.⁵¹⁰¹ In March 1994 Izetbegovic was to publicly state that whilst multi-ethnicity sounded good, it was in all honesty 'a lie': 'because a soldier does not lay down his life so that ethnic groups can live together, but because he is defending his people.'⁵¹⁰²

In late June 1993 Owen made an attempt to do business with members of the Bosnian presidium who were prepared to negotiate on the basis of the Milosevic and Tudjman plan. It looked as though Izetbegovic was going to be beaten. The negotiation delegation of seven presidium members left for Geneva without him and without Vice-President Ganic.⁵¹⁰³ On 29 June the majority of the presidium members issued Izetbegovic an ultimatum: he should decide whether to continue to

⁵⁰⁹⁵ 'Bosnia's Muslim President faces appalling dilemma', Reuter B-wire, 09/07/93, 17:52:41.

⁵⁰⁹⁶ MID. MID, *Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie* (MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation), 67/92, 17/09/92; MID. MID, *Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie* (MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation), 78/92, 26/10/92; MID. MID, *Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie* (MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation), 03/93, 11/01/93; MID. MID, *Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie* (MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation), 47/93, 03/08/93; Nicole Lucas, 'Bosnische vice-president: "Kroaten hebben ons nodig"' (Bosnian vice-president: "Croats need us"), *Trouw*, 23/02/93; John F. Burns, 'Serbs' Attack on Sarajevo Keeps Bosnians From Talks', *The New York Times*, 23/07/93.

⁵⁰⁹⁷ Donia & Fine, *Bosnia*, p. 265.

⁵⁰⁹⁸ See also C. de Gruyter, 'Redder van Joegoslavië' (Saviour of Yugoslavia), *Elsevier*, 29/02/92, p. 44; Caroline de Gruyter, 'In de tang van de halve maan' (Cornered by the crescent moon), *Elsevier*, 14/11/92, p. 69.

⁵⁰⁹⁹ Halilovic, *Strategija*, pp. 18-19.

⁵¹⁰⁰ Halilovic, *Strategija*, p. 23.

⁵¹⁰¹ "'Bosnië moslimstaat'. Izetbegovic zet punt achter multi-etnisch bestuur' ("Bosnia Muslim state". Izetbegovic puts an end to multi-ethnic leadership), *Trouw*, 16/11/93; 'Bosnia: Izetbegovic says common Bosnia no longer possible', *Reuter Business Briefing*, 15/11/93, 07:45.

⁵¹⁰² Hannes Hofbauer, 'Neue Staaten, neue Kriege. Die Zerstörung Jugoslawiens (1991-1999)', idem (Hg.), *Balkankrieg*, p. 86.

⁵¹⁰³ 'Bosnische regering verdeeld aan vooravond vredesbespreking Genève' (Bosnian government divided on eve of Geneva peace talks), *ANP*, 22/06/93; Paul Lewis, 'Bosnians Divide Over New Talks To Split Country', *The New York Times*, 23/06/93; 'Ne, nismo izolirani', *Vecernji List*, 24/06/93; 'Bosnia-Herzegovina Presidency to secure equality of all three peoples', *Yugoslav Daily Survey*, 25/06/93.

represent the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or else be known in future as the spokesman of the Muslims.⁵¹⁰⁴

The fact that Izetbegovic sent his wife, two daughters and grandchildren to Turkey in late June, where the Izetbegovic family owned property, seemed to be linked to the internal political difficulties he was facing. The Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs felt compelled to quash the rumours and explain that the arrival of part of the family did not mean that Izetbegovic himself would also be leaving for Turkey in the near future to settle with his family in the town of Bursa in the north-west of the country.⁵¹⁰⁵

In the meantime, Owen was putting pressure on Izetbegovic to return to the negotiating table.⁵¹⁰⁶ In early July a visibly tired Izetbegovic changed track and said he was prepared to negotiate on the basis of the Milosevic and Tudjman plan for an extremely loose confederation consisting of three separate entities for Croats, Muslim and Serbs. In an interview with John Pomfret of *The Washington Post* he said: 'I can't accept it, but it seems that it is becoming an ugly, tragic reality.' 'All the cards are in my enemies' hands. Still, how can I surrender?'⁵¹⁰⁷ Shortly afterwards he said that he had reached the conclusion that continuing the war would lead to collective suicide of the Muslims, making acceptance of a partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina inevitable.⁵¹⁰⁸ On 17 August the Bosnian Permanent Representative to the UN, Sacirbey, told a press conference that Izetbegovic was still in favour of the principle of a multi-ethnic state, but that the Bosnian government 'found itself without any option but to concede the positions forced upon it': a plan for a three-way split of Bosnia was now being 'shoved down our throats'.⁵¹⁰⁹

4. The further progress of the negotiations

At the end of July Izetbegovic returned to the negotiating table and the real negotiations on a partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina started. However, from early August he stayed away again, stating that he would not return as long as the VRS were still occupying Mount Igman. When the Bosnian president returned on 17 August, he appeared to be willing to accept a three-way partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina within its existing boundaries. On 20 August 1993 Owen and Stoltenberg submitted a draft agreement to the three parties in the Bosnian conflict to which they were expected to respond within ten days. Apparently to prevent any real objections by Izetbegovic, Christopher sent him a letter insisting that he should support the plan.⁵¹¹⁰ The draft granted 52% of the land to the Bosnian Serbs, 17% to the Croats and 31% to the Muslims. At the level of the union of the three areas, there would be a presidium consisting of the presidents of the three constituent parts. The chairmanship of the presidium would rotate every four months. All decisions within the presidium would be taken unanimously. The most significant powers at the level of the union related to foreign policy and international trade. There would be a parliament of 120 members, to which each of the republics would elect 40 members. Just as in the 1974 constitution for the whole of Yugoslavia, it was stipulated that none of the constituent parts was allowed to withdraw from the union without the permission of the others. The question can be asked whether, in the light of the experiences from 1991 onwards, the stipulation would make much impression on the warring factions in Bosnia, in particular on the Muslims, who will also have taken account of the fact that the Serbs could easily flout the operations of the union by simply ignoring it.

⁵¹⁰⁴ 'Ultimatum aan Izetbegovic' ('Ultimatum for Izetbegovic'), *ANP*, 29/06/93, 23:06

⁵¹⁰⁵ 'Milliyet: Izetbegovic to move to Turkey', *Yugoslav Daily Survey*, 01/07/93; 'Izetbegovic allegedly going into exile to Turkey', *DPA, B-wire*, 30/06/93, 14:24:45; 'Izetbegovic's family to take shelter in Turkey', *DPA, B-wire*, 30/06/93, 17:26:30.

⁵¹⁰⁶ Vladimir Voronkov, 'Owen says Moslems running out of time to deal', *TASS*, 06/07/93.

⁵¹⁰⁷ John Pomfret, 'Bosnian Mourns "Tragic Reality" of Partition', *The Washington Post*, 06/07/93.

⁵¹⁰⁸ 'Bosnia's Moslem President faces appalling dilemma', *Reuter B-wire*, 09/07/93, 17:52:41.

⁵¹⁰⁹ ABZ, PVNY. Press conference by Bosnia and Herzegovina, 17/08/91, Appendix to PR New York to DPV/PZ and DEU/OE, 19/08/93 fax no. 7879.

⁵¹¹⁰ David Binder, 'U.S. Policymakers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992', *The New York Times*, 29/08/93.

From the late 1980s in Yugoslavia this had not been an unfamiliar phenomenon.⁵¹¹¹ The proposal was extremely disadvantageous to the Muslims, given their proportion of the population and the lack of an access route to the sea. The draft did provide for a corridor which would link the three eastern enclaves with the Muslim area in Central Bosnia.

Izetbegovic decided to continue with the negotiations and to accept conditionally the Stoltenberg-Owen plan. On 27 August 1993 he told the Bosnian Parliament: 'Our task now is to save what we can of Bosnia. That is our task, here and now - so that perhaps somewhere in the future the whole of Bosnia can be saved.'⁵¹¹² Ten days earlier he had already said that he was willing to accept a 'temporary' partition.⁵¹¹³ General Rasim Delic, who had succeeded Sefer Halilovic as commander of the ABiH on 10 June, advised the Muslim Parliament to accept the Owen-Stoltenberg plan because the Muslim forces had pretty much exhausted their reserves. Although the ABiH was scoring successes against Croats, at the same time they were losing to the Serbs.⁵¹¹⁴ Following these recommendations, the parliament agreed to Izetbegovic's compromise approach: agreement in the short-term in the hope of achieving greater gains in the long-term.

On 31 August the negotiations were resumed in Geneva. The Bosnian Croats and Muslims wanted further discussion about the geographical partition. The Muslims demanded four per cent more land. From the Serbs they wanted areas in Eastern Bosnia and the return of the cities of Prijedor and Sanski Most in the west. From the Croats they asked for Neum, which would give them access to the sea. This was difficult for the Croats to swallow, as it would cut through their own land on the Dalmatian coast. The Bosnian Serbs and Croats made insufficient concessions to the Muslim demands and the negotiations were suspended on 1 September.

In the second week of September Izetbegovic travelled to the United States to seek support in the American Congress. However, he was given a rude awakening because both President Clinton and the members of the House of Representatives he spoke to told him that the American administration would not come to his aid to strengthen his negotiating position. Izetbegovic's requests for American bombardments of Bosnian-Serb positions if the VRS refused to end the siege of Sarajevo before a certain date were rejected outright by Clinton. The American president stated that negotiations should now take the place of bombardments to bring a solution for Sarajevo. In fact, Izetbegovic's visit to Clinton was counter-productive, since the American president took the opportunity to set certain strict conditions for American participation in an implementation force for the peace agreement. For instance, the Americans would only take part if the troops came under NATO command.⁵¹¹⁵ Back in Bosnia, Izetbegovic was forced to make the best of a bad job. On 14 September Izetbegovic and Tudjman reached agreement to end all hostilities between Muslims and Croats in Bosnia with effect from 19 September.⁵¹¹⁶ Ultimately, Tudjman gained more from this agreement than from an alliance with the Bosnian Serbs. It allowed him to free up the Croatian government troops which he had deployed in the increasingly heavy fighting against the ABiH for a possible confrontation with the Serbs, who still held more than a quarter of the ground area in Croatia. It also allowed him to defy the

⁵¹¹¹ Compare Hayden, *Blueprints*, p. 108.

⁵¹¹² Ljiljan, no. 33, 1993, quoted in X. Bougarel, 'Bosnia and Hercegovina - State and Communitarianism', Dyker&Vejvoda (ed.), *Yugoslavia*, p. 106.

⁵¹¹³ *Izetbegovic: opdeling is tijdelijk* ('Izetbegovic: partition is temporary'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/08/93; MID. MID, *Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie* (MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation), 49/93, 18/08/93.

⁵¹¹⁴ MID. MID, *Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie* (MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation), 53/93, 03/09/93.

⁵¹¹⁵ Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 279; 'Clinton geeft Izetbegovic nul op rekest' ('Clinton turns down Izetbegovic'), *Het Parool*, 09/09/93; 'VN willen alleen met NAVO vredesmacht vormen voor Bosnië' ('UN not prepared to form peace force for Bosnia without NATO'), *ANP*, 09/09/93, 03:26. Clinton repeated this position in the weeks that followed. See for example. 'Clinton noemt voorwaarden voor Amerikaanse inmenging in Bosnië' ('Clinton sets terms for American involvement in Bosnia'), *ANP*, 27/09/93, 23:54.

⁵¹¹⁶ Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp. 1346-1348.

growing international criticism of his support of the Bosnian Croat violence, particularly in Mostar. On 16 September Izetbegovic reached a similar agreement with Milosevic, Karadzic and Bulatovic.⁵¹¹⁷ Owen and Stoltenberg used the agreement as an opportunity to resume the talks about their plan. On 21 September an agreement was reached on board the British aircraft carrier *HMS Invincible*. The agreement went further than the Owen-Stoltenberg plan in the direction of partition. Under the new agreement, referenda would be held in the separate ethnic zones on their status within two years of a territorial agreement being reached. This phrase was already included in the agreement made between Izetbegovic and the (Bosnian) Serb leaders on 16 September and demonstrated that Izetbegovic was resigned to a partition.⁵¹¹⁸ Apparently Owen and Stoltenberg were attempting to persuade the Croat and Serb leaders to concede a large area to the Muslims in exchange for the right to establish separate zones. On 21 September the parties met in Sarajevo to discuss this further.

An exchange for the eastern enclaves?

From late July the issue of the position of the eastern enclaves was high on the agenda at the talks co-chaired by Owen and Stoltenberg. If there were to be a partition of Bosnia, Karadzic, who had always had a strong regional connection with Eastern Bosnia within the VRS,⁵¹¹⁹ would lay claim to the Muslim enclaves of Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde, which were located there. Karadzic said that, in exchange, he would relinquish all Serbian claims to the capital, Sarajevo.⁵¹²⁰ However, Izetbegovic believed that the three enclaves should be part of a continuous Muslim area, and was supported by Owen and Stoltenberg.⁵¹²¹ Under their plans, the three Muslim enclaves would be linked together and then linked by a corridor to Sarajevo.

Following the agreement reached on the *HMS Invincible* Izetbegovic opened consultations with both Serb leaders and his own supporters over a land exchange with the Bosnian Serbs which would also include Srebrenica. Izetbegovic sent Muhamed Filipovic to Belgrade to negotiate on this question with Milosevic. He himself consulted with Krajisnik and held separate discussions with a nine-man delegation of Muslims led by Fahrudin Salihovic, who had been summoned from Srebrenica. As far as can be ascertained, the other members of the delegation, which travelled there and back in a UNPROFOR helicopter, consisted of Oric's deputy, Ramiz Becirovic, the doctor Avdo Hasanovic, police chief Hakija Meholic, Hajrudin Avdic, Mehmedalija Ustic, Ibrahim Becirovic, Nedžad Bektic and Dzermal Mastic. However, this delegation rejected the plan for an exchange between Srebrenica and Vogosca, a suburb of Sarajevo.⁵¹²²

The Bosnian Serbs say that, following this, an exchange of the eastern enclaves for part of Sarajevo was often discussed, both in international consultations and in direct contacts between Muslims and Serbs. For instance, Milosevic is said to have spoken by telephone to Izetbegovic about this on 11 November 1993.⁵¹²³ However, the Muslims were never able to reach a final decision on

⁵¹¹⁷ Ramcharan, *Conference*, pp. 1348-1351.

⁵¹¹⁸ Ramcharan, *Conference*, p. 1349.

⁵¹¹⁹ Bougarel, *Bosnië*, p. 64.

⁵¹²⁰ 'Karadzic nudi Sarajevo za Gorazde, Zepu i Srebrenicu', *Oslobodjenje*, 24/06/93; MID. MID, *Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie* (MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation), 43/93, 29/06/93.

⁵¹²¹ MID. MID, *Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie* (MID, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation), 43/93, 29/06/93; 49/93, 18/08/93.

⁵¹²² Halilovic, *Strategija*, p. 109; interviews S. Halilovic and S. Rustempasic, 17/04/98; H. Meholic, 19/04/98 and 21/05/99; H. Selmanagic, 07/08/97; S. Vilibic, 15/04/98; '5,000 Muslim Lives for Military Intervention', *Dani*, 22/06/98; Esad Hecimovic, 'Hoe ze Srebrenica hebben verkocht en de macht behouden' ('How they sold Srebrenica and stayed in power'), *Dani*, September 1998; Rusmir Mahmutcehajic in Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 237; Vanno Jobse, 'Srebrenica is al in april 1993 al gevallen' ('Srebrenica fell as early as April 1993'), *Het Parool*, 16/07/95; Documentary about Naser Oric, part 2, by Geertjan Lassche, *2Vandaag*, 26/02/01; 'Opnieuw vraagt eens rond inzet Dutchbat enclave Srebrenica' ('New questions on deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica enclave'), *Metro*, 26/02/01; 'Enclave viel door verraad' ('Enclave fell through treachery'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 24/02/01; UN report, par. 115.

⁵¹²³ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 314.

this.⁵¹²⁴ Conversely, Izetbegovic denies ever having spoken to the Serbs about a land exchange which would include Srebrenica in advance of the Dayton talks.⁵¹²⁵

However, a possible exchange of areas was discussed in contacts between Dutch officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Muhamed Sacirbey, the UN Permanent Representative for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Muhamed Sacirbey was born in Sarajevo in 1956. His family left Yugoslavia in 1963 and lived consecutively in Western Europe and North Africa before moving to the United States in 1967. Muhamed Sacirbey studied law there and obtained an MBA from the Columbia University School of Business in New York. Having worked for various large American companies, he was appointed the first Permanent Representative for Bosnia to the United Nations in May 1992. In this role he won the admiration of both friends and enemies for his powerful defence of the interests of Bosnia.⁵¹²⁶ Sacirbey, who at that time had a Dutch girlfriend, maintained extremely good relations with the Dutch Permanent Representative, Biegman, and was a regular visitor to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵¹²⁷

In talking to him it became clear to Dutch officials that an exchange of Srebrenica for part of Sarajevo, for instance, was taboo. Sacirbey indicated that the representatives from Srebrenica itself were against this and that it would also, in some ways, be politically impracticable for Bosnian Muslims to agree to give up the eastern enclaves. The officials from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs believed that the Bosnian Muslims were able to manipulate publicity so well that it would be unthinkable for the West to openly advocate a solution in which the Safe Areas would be given up in exchange for other areas. The idea was entertained, but it was always summarily dismissed as unfeasible.⁵¹²⁸

In February 1994 the American, Redman, who succeeded Bartholomew as special American representative to the peace talks, tried once again to propose an exchange of land between Srebrenica and Zepa (for the Muslims) and parts of Sarajevo (for the Serbs), but the Muslims did not take it seriously.⁵¹²⁹

According to Minister Kooijmans, discussions were held with the Bosnian government on evacuating the population from the eastern enclaves, but these continually resulted in the accusation that this would constitute collaboration with ethnic cleansing.⁵¹³⁰ This gave rise to a problem for the West that the parties in the region themselves would have to create a solution for the enclaves and that this would have to be achieved through negotiations, not through a military *fait accompli*. On their own, however, the Muslims were not able to reach a decision to exchange the eastern enclaves.

The Bosnian government embarks on a new course after rejecting Owen-Stoltenberg Plan

On 28 September a completely new institution met in Sarajevo to discuss the *Invincible* agreement: the Bosnian Assembly (*Bosnjacki sabor*), a meeting of 349 politicians, clergy, artists and intellectuals, which decided that the term Muslim would no longer be used as the official designation of the population group concerned, and would be replaced by the term Bosniaks. This indicated a change of policy. In 1990 the SDA had rejected every proposal which referred to a Bosniak identity, favoured at that time by Adil Zulfikarpasic. Zulfikarpasic had ultimately established his own *Muslimanska*

⁵¹²⁴ Interviews A. Buha, 17/12/99; D. Cosic, 13/09/01; D. Harland, 04/08/97; V. Matovic, 02/08/01; M. Steiner, 06/07/00; M. Toholj, 14/12/99. See also interviews H. Meholic, 19/04/98 and 21/05/99; Foreign Affairs, Cabinet archive: coll. Van den Broek. Voorhoeve to Van Mierlo, 25/10/94, with appendix: Wijnaendts 243 to Van Mierlo, 18/10/94 and Van Mierlo to Voorhoeve, 01/11/94.

⁵¹²⁵ Interview David Harland with Izetbegovic, 16/07/99.

⁵¹²⁶ Interviews A. Buha, 17/12/99 and B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00; Cuvalo, *Dictionary*, p. 205.

⁵¹²⁷ Interviews N. Biegman, 03/07/00; O. Hattinga van 't Sant, 18/07/00; F.A.M. Majoor, 19/04/00; C. Minderhoud, 02/06/00; P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00; J.L. Sandee, 12/06/00; H. Hazewinkel, 17/04/00; J.M. Vos, 24/06/99; and H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

⁵¹²⁸ Interviews O. Hattinga van 't Sant, 18/07/00; F.A.M. Majoor, 19/04/00; H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00. Also: Sacirbey was opposed in principle to any form of exchange: confidential interview (97); TCBU, *Vertretpunt*, III, hearing J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 31/05/00, p. 200.

⁵¹²⁹ Confidential interview (53).

⁵¹³⁰ Interview P. H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99

Bošnjačka Organizacija (MBO) (Chapter 3). Now the VRS suddenly embraced the term 'Bosniaks' to designate the inhabitants of the Bosnian state.

Although this meeting nominally accepted the *Invincible* agreement, it in fact rejected the plan, because acceptance was conditional on the Bosnian Serbs and Croats conceding all the land they had conquered to the Muslims. The next day the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina took the same position, with a special role being played by Army Commander Delic. Whilst only a month earlier he had been urging acceptance of the Owen-Stoltenberg plan because the army was exhausted, now, backed by Ganic, he was urging resistance to the *Invincible* agreement, because in the meantime the ABiH had achieved victories against the Bosnian Croats. They found the battlefield more attractive than the negotiating table. If need be, another 200,000 people would have to die in the coming winter, according to Ganic.⁵¹³¹

Izetbegovic, who realized that he would have to settle for less than the whole of Bosnia for the time being, but who had apparently not given up hope of getting his hands on the whole of Bosnia in due course, had now decided to follow the route taken by Tito and his partisans 50 years earlier. From a core area, he would try to conquer more and more land, with the whole of Bosnia as his ultimate goal. In November 1993 he said in an interview with Bosnian television that:

'We must learn a lesson from the things from the last war... when the *četniks* or *ustashe* arrived in a place, the population fled because those armies killed civilians; when partisans arrived, they did not flee... the partisans were cruel and extremely tough on their enemies, but we know that they never murdered women and children, and that's why they were victorious.'

He added:

'In the area which is controlled by the Bosnian army, we must create a space in which there is the rule of law, in which civilization is upheld and democracy is the order of the day, with the basic rule that no one in that area can be persecuted for their religion, their ethnicity or their political beliefs... then we will be capable of winning... and that will pave the way to the reintegration of Bosnia.'⁵¹³²

The green light for the new politics was given in the *Bosnjacki sabor*. A conscious attempt to push the more secular nature of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the forefront.

The tendency towards a movement which used human rights and democracy as a tactical resource also came to light with the appointment of Haris Silajdzic as Prime Minister on 25 October, prior to which he had been Minister of Foreign Affairs. Silajdzic was the son of the imam of the Begova mosque in Sarajevo.⁵¹³³ He had studied Islam and Arabic languages at the Garyounis University in Benghazi in Libya. He wrote his dissertation on American-Albanian relations between 1912 and 1939 and lived in Washington D.C. for a year during his research. He gained a second-class honours degree in history and political science from the University of Pristina in Kosovo. He then worked as a consultant for both Yugoslavian businesses in Libya and for Reis-ul-Ulema, the spiritual leader of the Muslims in Yugoslavia. Silajdzic was one of Izetbegovic's proteges, and had been a founding member of the SDA in 1990. Shortly after the 1990 elections he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs for Bosnia, a position he filled for three years. Silajdzic had a reputation as an aggressive diplomat, which

⁵¹³¹ Eisermann, *Weg*, p. 205.

⁵¹³² Quoted in Bougarel, *Bosnie*, pp. 68-69.

⁵¹³³ Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00.

earned him the professional admiration of his opposite number in the Republika Srpska, A. Buha.⁵¹³⁴ He was appointed Prime Minister on 25 October 1993, a job he was to keep until early 1996.

Within the SDA Silajdzic attempted to build bridges between the Islamic and pro-Western factions.⁵¹³⁵ Apparently his position between the two camps gave rise to a range of opinions about him amongst representatives of the international community. Some believed him to be in favour of an integrated multi-ethnic and multi-religious Bosnia,⁵¹³⁶ while others placed him in the fundamental Islamic camp.⁵¹³⁷ C. Bildt, who would later be a negotiator in the Yugoslavian conflict, considered him a cynic.⁵¹³⁸ Conversely, the Dutch Minister Kooijmans described him as 'one of the most reasonable': 'I wish they had all been like that'.⁵¹³⁹

Silajdzic had only agreed to accept his role after receiving a commitment that the authorities would take action against the criminal gangs run by Delalic and Topalovic, which had more or less become a state within the state.⁵¹⁴⁰ The day after he took office, the action against Topalovic took place (see Chapter 5). The Silajdzic government explicitly made human rights a central theme of its programme.

The developments in the ABiH were apparently at odds with the government programme. For instance, in the same period General Jovan Divjak, a Serb who had organized the defence of Sarajevo on behalf of the Muslims, was arrested. His arrest was designed to demonstrate that the ABiH would become a pure Muslim army or, even worse, a party army because, in fact, the army was subject to the SDA in that period.⁵¹⁴¹ The Croatian Chief of Staff of the ABiH, Siber, was suddenly removed from his job and appointed military attaché to the Bosnian embassy in Switzerland. And these were only the most important in a whole series of changes which swiftly put those Croats and Serbs who until then had served in the ABiH out of action.⁵¹⁴² The new army leader, Rasim Delic, wanted to ensure strict observance of the military hierarchy and put an end to all sorts of personal contacts maintained by Halilovic. He also removed all kinds of irregular groups and unsavoury elements which had been given a chance by Halilovic in the chaotic early days of the war. In early November the ABiH dissolved the HVO division which had participated in the defence of Sarajevo right from the start of the war, and arrested its commander, Slavko Celic. The ABiH then invited HVO troops to join a new Croatian division of the First ABiH-Corps in the Bosnian capital.

The transformation of the ABiH into a party army in a state which was increasingly turning into a one-party regime run by the SDA, and the human rights programme of the Silajdzic government, which aimed for better acceptance of military conquests, were rooted in the same philosophy: the SDA and the Bosnian army should behave in the same way as the Communist Party and partisans had in the Second World War. This was seen as the route to success. And just as Tito and his partisans had been in awkward situations at certain times but had eventually come out on top, so the SDA did not need to despair if Izetbegovic was forced to settle temporarily for a mini state. In the long-term, they still believed in an integrated Bosnia, which would be conquered through 'a struggle for liberation'.⁵¹⁴³

⁵¹³⁴ Interview A. Buha, 17/12/99.

⁵¹³⁵ Compare Čuvalo, *Dictionary*, p. 216.

⁵¹³⁶ Rogel, *Breakup*, p. 109; Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 194.

⁵¹³⁷ Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00.

⁵¹³⁸ Interview C. Bildt, 13/12/00.

⁵¹³⁹ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

⁵¹⁴⁰ J.F. Burns, 'New Horror for Sarajevo: Muslims Killing Muslims', *The New York Times*, 31/10/93.

⁵¹⁴¹ Mahmutcehajic, 'War', p. 19; Marko Attila Hoare, 'Civilian-Military Relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992-1995', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, pp. 179 and 190-192.

⁵¹⁴² See Djuro Kozar, 'Croats and Serbs are (Un)suitable', *Oslobodjenje-Svijet*, 02/08/96, <http://www.cdsp.neu.edu/info/students/marko/oslob/oslob7.html>

⁵¹⁴³ Compare Marko Attila Hoare, 'Civilian-Military Relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992-1995', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 193.

5. The Dutch response to the plan

During the Copenhagen Summit the Dutch Prime Minister described the Tadjman and Milosevic plan, as it was on the table at that time, as: ‘no laughing matter. On the contrary, it’s a very serious business.’⁵¹⁴⁴

However, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not clear about which course Izetbegovic planned to take. They did know that there were different schools of thought among the Muslims in respect of whether Bosnia-Herzegovina should maintain its integrity or whether there should be a smaller, ‘pure’ Muslim state, which the Bosnian Muslims themselves referred to as a *fildzan* state, a reference to the tiny cups in which Turkish coffee is served.⁵¹⁴⁵ The Ministry had the impression that the ‘soft’ Izetbegovic was having difficulty imposing his leadership on these two schools of thought.⁵¹⁴⁶

During a meeting of the ad hoc Yugoslavia group in Brussels in early July 1993, the Dutch government, together with Germany and France, took the position that the EC should not actively interfere in the negotiating process on the Owen-Stoltenberg plan, but should submit the results of the negotiations to the London Conference principles and the conclusion drawn by the European Council of Copenhagen. This position was adopted by the meeting. The Dutch did, however, indicate that the proposals made by the Croats and Serbs contained certain elements which gave cause for concern. Firstly, no mention was made of the return of Displaced Persons. Secondly, under these plans the three republics would be allowed to conduct international relations themselves, which pointed to a recognition that Bosnia would be broken up. Lord Owen also seemed to be going in this direction by trying to ensure that, when the geographical lines were drawn, the Muslim republic would be able to continue independently if necessary.⁵¹⁴⁷

During the CoPo meeting on 12 and 13 July the Dutch Director General of Political Affairs, J.M. Vos, repeated the Dutch government’s criticism of the plan and added that, according to the map under this plan, the enclaves in Eastern Bosnia were left hanging in mid-air with ‘the ever-increasing risk of degenerating into Muslim reservations’.⁵¹⁴⁸ On 28 July the head of DEU, Schaper, wrote a memorandum for Minister Kooijmans which reflected the strong indignation which could increasingly be seen in memos issued by the Ministry in the following weeks. Schaper remarked that the secret report written by Owen the previous day on the discussions in Geneva confirmed ‘the worst fears’ about what Owen and Stoltenberg were doing. They seemed to be intent on achieving a result in Bosnia as quickly as possible, bypassing all previous statements by the EC and the UN, for example in London and Copenhagen. The political integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina was no longer being maintained. Owen accused the Bosnians who refused to agree to this approach as being out-of-touch with reality. Schaper advised that in its public statements the Dutch government should emphasize that it would evaluate the results achieved in Geneva in the light of the statement by the European Council of Copenhagen, and should stress that the real problem in Bosnia was not the Muslims, but the Serbs and Croats.⁵¹⁴⁹ Shortly afterwards, Schaper branded the Owen-Stoltenberg plan as little more than ‘asset-stripping’.⁵¹⁵⁰

⁵¹⁴⁴ NOS, *Journal*, 21/06/93, 20.00.

⁵¹⁴⁵ Interviews P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00 and B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00.

⁵¹⁴⁶ Interviews P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00 and B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00.

⁵¹⁴⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00754. Kooijmans, 09/07/93, circ 493

⁵¹⁴⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00740. Kooijmans, 14/07/93, circ 515

⁵¹⁴⁹ ABZ, 911.13, Bosnia June 1992-September 1996. Memorandum from head of DEU to Kooijmans, 28/07/93, no. 222/93.

⁵¹⁵⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Memorandum from head of DEU to Kooijmans, 12/08/93, DEU-232/93; Schaper did not remove that term. See also ABZ, PVNY. Memorandum from head of DEU to Kooijmans, 19/09/93, no. 93/286. The term is also used in the report by the Coordinating group chaired by Hattinga van ‘t Sant dated 21/09/93, ABZ, DIE/2001/00023. Memorandum from acting head of DEU to AP and others, 24/09/93, no. 281/93 and in the objectivized version of the minutes of the Ministerial Council of 19/08/93.

On 29 July, the day on which the Owen-Stoltenberg plan was announced, Kooijmans sent a telegram to his Belgian opposite number W. Claes, who chaired the EC at that time, in which he referred to the fact that the plan was in conflict with the principles established in London and Copenhagen. He asked for a European Council meeting to be organized to discuss the negotiations in Geneva. However, Claes took the view that the negotiators should not be disturbed at this crucial phase of the talks.⁵¹⁵¹ On 9 and 10 August the German and Dutch governments supported each other's positions on this in COREU communications. Owen and other EC member states, however, took the view that, at that time, no better solution was possible.⁵¹⁵² On 19 August Kooijmans once again made clear in a COREU telex that the Dutch government strongly sympathized with Izetbegovic's desire for more land for the Muslims. He warned that there was a chance that the Dutch government would not make any Land Forces available for the implementation force, because the government in The Hague did not believe that this was a fair and viable solution.⁵¹⁵³

The Dutch position was probably influenced by its close contact with Mohamed Sacirbey. Sacirbey and his girlfriend at that time, Mabel Wisse Smit, are the only people referred to by officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as people outside the Dutch political and official circuit who exercised influence on the policy.⁵¹⁵⁴ For that matter, Sacirbey is said to have had more success with Biegan in this respect than with the Ministry itself.⁵¹⁵⁵ Sacirbey mainly made it clear that a separate Muslim state would not be viable and would become little more than a glorified enclave.⁵¹⁵⁶ At the Ministry in The Hague there was also some anxiety that a separate Muslim state would not be economically viable and could therefore be open to radical Islamic influences.⁵¹⁵⁷ In the meantime, a request from Kooijmans for a meeting of the European Council was dismissed even by the German government, which had virtually the same substantive criticism as The Hague, because such a meeting might put a spoke in the wheel of the negotiations co-chaired by Owen and Stoltenberg.⁵¹⁵⁸

In the meantime the US State Department informed the Dutch government that the Americans' initial view of the Owen-Stoltenberg plan was that it looked 'realistic'. It said that it would be regrettable 'if certain allies were to distance themselves from this agreement', all the more so since Izetbegovic appeared to be able to live with it.⁵¹⁵⁹ On 23 August Christopher sent a letter to Kooijmans which contained the following passage: 'In our contacts with the parties over the coming week, we should all emphasize the importance of approaching the package that has emerged from Geneva with realism and flexibility so that the tragic conflict can be brought to an end.'⁵¹⁶⁰ It was clear that the State Department was trying to temper the criticism of the plan expressed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague.

As a result of the criticism from Bonn and The Hague, Owen and Stoltenberg held separate meetings with Kinkel and Kooijmans on 25 August. Prior to their visit, the Ministry seems to have been spoiling for a fight. Hoekema states that the officials at Foreign Affairs were ready to 'give the negotiators a rocket' and make it clear to them that Dutch support would only be forthcoming if the peace agreement could stand the 'ethnic test'.⁵¹⁶¹ The points for discussion which Schaper drew up for

⁵¹⁵¹ Both, *Indifference*, p. 162; ABZ, Cabinet archive, letters abroad: A-K, 1993, Kooijmans to Claes, 29/07/93 and Claes to Kooijmans, 05/08/93.

⁵¹⁵² Both, *Indifference*, p. 162.

⁵¹⁵³ Both, *Indifference*, p. 163; ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. COREU The Hague, 19/08/93, cpe/hag/521.

⁵¹⁵⁴ Interviews O. Hattinga van 't Sant, 18/07/00; H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

⁵¹⁵⁵ Interview H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

⁵¹⁵⁶ Interviews O. Hattinga van 't Sant, 18/07/00; R. in den Bosch, 19/04/00.

⁵¹⁵⁷ Interview O. Hattinga van 't Sant, 18/07/00.

⁵¹⁵⁸ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meeting of 24-25/08/93, prepared for the purposes of the NIOD study.

⁵¹⁵⁹ ABZ, Washington Embassy. Bentinck 563 to Kooijmans, 13/08/93.

⁵¹⁶⁰ ABZ, Cabinet archive, Letters abroad L-Z, 1993, Message to Minister for Foreign Affairs Peter H. Kooijmans from Secretary of State Christopher, 23/08/93, appendix to M. Klosson to Kooijmans, 23/08/93.

⁵¹⁶¹ Both, *Indifference*, p. 163; Dutch language quotations in Both, version 1999, p. 251 n. 64.

the meeting on behalf of Minister Kooijmans stated that both negotiators had placed such emphasis on realism that the agreement gave far too much to the Bosnian Serbs and too little to the Muslims.⁵¹⁶² During their visit, the objections to the agreement raised by Kooijmans were that it was not sufficiently fair to the Bosnian Muslims, that the Croatian and Serb parts of the republic would be able to secede, that there was little chance that the Bosnian Muslim part would be viable and that he foresaw major difficulties in implementation. The Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs told the negotiators that this position would be 'of real significance' for the Dutch government's decision on Dutch participation in any implementation force for a peace agreement.⁵¹⁶³

The Dutch government could therefore completely understand that, without amendment, the Owen-Stoltenberg plan was unacceptable to Izetbegovic.⁵¹⁶⁴ Kooijmans reminded Owen and Stoltenberg of the Dutch government's responsibility to Parliament and to public opinion, an argument also used by Kinkel. Owen said that the only alternative to the plan was either chaos or 'lift and strike', which he labelled an 'absurd plan'. Furthermore, the West had not been prepared to use force to counter Serb territorial gains. Owen and Stoltenberg therefore believed that it was impossible to comply entirely with the London Conference principle that these gains should be totally unacceptable. Both negotiators were afraid that if the West were to indicate to Izetbegovic that the plan was unacceptable, he would continue to cling to false hopes of intervention.⁵¹⁶⁵

On the same day, Kooijmans sent a letter to Christopher in which he expressed his opposition to the way the Geneva negotiations were going. They appeared to be pointing to a result which would be in conflict with the London Conference principles and which could not be interpreted as fair and viable.⁵¹⁶⁶ The reaction from Washington was that the 'fairness' of an agreement must be balanced against the alternatives.⁵¹⁶⁷ It was clear that the Dutch government found little support for its resistance in Washington.

Following their meeting with Kooijmans, Owen and Stoltenberg believed that the Dutch Minister preferred continuance of the war in Bosnia to acceptance of their peace plan.⁵¹⁶⁸ The Minister himself said that the negotiators had not been able to remove all his doubts, a conclusion which had also been expressed as the expectation by the Dutch Ministerial Council in advance of the meeting.⁵¹⁶⁹ But, as Kooijmans added following the meeting, the Dutch government would suspend its final judgement until such time as the three parties involved in the conflict had given their views.⁵¹⁷⁰ However, Kooijmans' meeting with the two negotiators appears to have clarified things for the top officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and, if that were not the case, the ensuing press conference certainly did. Numerous foreign journalists had come to The Hague, attracted by the confrontation with Owen and Stoltenberg. They asked Minister Kooijmans whether he was aiming for a continuance of the war and other atrocities in Bosnia. According to Rob Meines, a journalist for *NRC Handelsblad*, by the end of the press conference Minister Kooijmans had 'already become so cautious that he said that he intended to include few details of his concerns in his letter to the Dutch Parliament'.⁵¹⁷¹ In the

⁵¹⁶² ABZ, Memorandum from head of DEU to Kooijmans, 24/08/93, DEU/243/9.

⁵¹⁶³ TK, session 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 58, p. 6.

⁵¹⁶⁴ TK, session 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 61, p. 1.

⁵¹⁶⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. Kooijmans 229 to PR Geneva, 25/08/93. See also OWEN CD-ROM, Bosnia: Co-chairmen's meeting with Dutch Foreign Minister Kooijmans and German Foreign Minister Kinkel, 26 (sic) August on Union of Three Republics; Stoltenberg/Eide, *Dagene*, p. 124; Both, *Indifference*, p. 164.

⁵¹⁶⁶ ABZ, 910, Yugoslavia (formally Bosnia), isn 2028, Kooijmans to Christopher, 25/08/93.

⁵¹⁶⁷ ABZ Washington Embassy. Jacobovits 604 to Kooijmans, 31/08/93.

⁵¹⁶⁸ OWEN CD-ROM, Bosnia: Co-chairmen's meeting with Dutch Foreign Minister Kooijmans and German Foreign Minister Kinkel, 26 (sic) August on Union of Three Republics.

⁵¹⁶⁹ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meeting of 24-25/08/93, prepared for the purposes of the NIOD study.

⁵¹⁷⁰ 'Kooijmans houdt twijfels over vredesregeling Bosnië' ('Kooijmans still has doubts on Bosnian peace settlement'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/08/93.

⁵¹⁷¹ R. Meines, 'Kritiek Den Haag op plan Owen raakt gevoelige snaar' ('Dutch criticism of Owen plan strikes painful chord'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/08/93.

letter which Minister Kooijmans sent to Parliament the following day concerning his discussion with Owen and Stoltenberg, the criticism was therefore largely limited to the size of the Muslim state and doubts about the implementation of the agreement.⁵¹⁷² A day later, on 27 August, the head of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security, F.A.M. Majoor, wrote a memo in which he stated that the Bosnian government had nothing to gain by rejecting the plan. This would not lead to a military intervention, as Sarajevo perhaps hoped, nor would it lead to air strikes or to a lifting of the arms embargo. And there was a strong possibility that, in the meantime, the Bosnian government would simply lose more ground.⁵¹⁷³ In fact, the Ministry should have been able to see for itself that there was little point to principled resistance to the Owen-Stoltenberg plan if the Dutch government was not capable of putting forward any alternatives itself.

It only remained to persuade Parliament. A meeting of the Foreign Affairs sub-committee on 2 September voiced considerable criticism of Owen, who, Dutch MPs believed, had exceeded his mandate. The majority of MPs viewed the agreement as neither fair nor viable, seeing it more as a plan for partition than a plan for peace. Van Middelkoop labelled Minister Kooijmans' statement that 'there is reason to doubt whether the plan complies with the London principles' the 'understatement of the month'.⁵¹⁷⁴ There was a great deal of sympathy for Izetbegovic, who was being forced to choose between an unfair peace and continuance of the war. Blaauw said that 'a tough warning' should be given that NATO air power would be used if the Serbs and Croats did not adopt a more conciliatory position.⁵¹⁷⁵

Eisma took a different view, stating that it was not a good idea for the Minister to have criticized the agreement before the parties involved had given their response. Furthermore, he asked, why had the EC ministers themselves not been able to keep more in touch with Owen? He also expressed the view that it was all too easy to criticize from the sidelines: 'Those who accuse Owen of arrogance should realize that, without any alternatives, they are guilty of greater arrogance!'⁵¹⁷⁶ Van Middelkoop also defended Owen in somewhat more restrained tones.

Minister Kooijmans, who earlier that day had been presented with a petition from the human rights groups *Appèlgroepen Westerbork* and *Vught* against the Owen-Stoltenberg plan and in favour of military intervention against the human rights violations in Bosnia, admitted that he had been quick to criticize the Owen-Stoltenberg plan. Defending his action, he said that it had been an attempt to influence the negotiations, albeit an unsuccessful one. In defence of Owen, it could be said that the British diplomat had reported virtually every day to the European ministers and the Commission during the last weeks of the negotiations. However, there was not enough support from the member states to call a European Council meeting. In answer to the question whether the agreement would be viable, the Minister said that this would depend mainly on the nature of the mandate, on the command structure, on which countries would participate in the implementation force, and finally on a request from the UN and the Bosnian government to supply Dutch troops. The Minister stated that the Netherlands had expressed its doubts about the possibilities for implementing the draft agreement in stronger terms than those used by other EC countries.⁵¹⁷⁷ Kooijmans said that the previous week he had met with Sacirbey who 'impressed upon him' that his government was prepared to accept a mini state in which there would be sufficient space for the same ethnic diversity as before the war. The Minister revealed that the Dutch government would face a 'moral dilemma' if the Bosnian government did in fact agree to the plan. If the Bosnian government accepted this plan, which rewarded ethnic cleansing, it would be

⁵¹⁷² TK, session 1992-1993, 22 181, no. 58.

⁵¹⁷³ Both, *Indifference*, p. 165.

⁵¹⁷⁴ TK, session 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 61, p. 6.

⁵¹⁷⁵ TK, session 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 61, p. 3.

⁵¹⁷⁶ TK, session 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 61, p. 4.

⁵¹⁷⁷ TK, session 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 61, pp. 6-8.

‘extremely difficult’ for the government in The Hague to reject the agreement.⁵¹⁷⁸ The Dutch government was apparently very well aware of what was good for Bosnia.

The Owen-Stoltenberg plan had sparked a revival of the media debate on the attitude of the international community towards the former Yugoslavia, and in particular on the question of what it remained for the Netherlands to do. The relatively successful campaign by the ABiH in Central Bosnia, which led to the flight of thousands of Croats, gave rise to the question whether Muslims were now going to indulge in the same practices used earlier by the Serbs and Croats. For instance, Brugsma was against a unilateral condemnation of the Serbs ‘... Croats and Muslims are also guilty of war crimes, albeit on a smaller scale. And not just genocide, but also starvation, torture and rape.’⁵¹⁷⁹ Professor Vojin Dimitrijevic, Professor of International Law and International Relations at the University of Belgrade, who had given a lecture in the Netherlands at the symposium on ethnic conflicts and human right violations in Europe, said in an interview with the periodical *Vrij Nederland* that the image of good guys and bad guys, which existed, for example, in Germany, was ‘of course’ ‘total nonsense’. The difference was that the Serbs possessed the greatest firepower, because of their links to the federal army. ‘But if other groups had gained the upper hand, exactly the same thing would have happened.’ He called Milosevic an opportunistic nationalist and Tudjman a fervent nationalist: ‘I don’t know which sort is the more dangerous.’ In late 1993 *NRC Handelsblad* correspondent Raymond van de Boogaard wrote in an anthology of articles from his paper: ‘scarcely have you started to feel a grain of sympathy or understanding for one of the parties to the conflict, before they too start to commit the most terrible crimes against the civilian population.’ He reserved his fiercest criticism for the ‘perfidious routine’ of the underdog parties - the Croats and Muslims - in attacking their ‘own’ people for propaganda purposes and to provoke intervention by the West.⁵¹⁸⁰

Not everybody agreed with these arguments. In late June *De Volkskrant* published an article by Ian Traynor entitled ‘Muslims still keeping their hands clean’ which clearly distanced itself from the view that all the parties were equally guilty of atrocities. ‘Most informed observers on the ground agree that with their detention camps, mass rapes, siege and starvation tactics, and the systematic and deliberate targeting of civilians, the Serbs are in a class of their own,’ wrote Traynor.⁵¹⁸¹ He claimed that there was little evidence for crimes committed by Muslims, and a great deal of evidence for crimes against Muslims. He agreed with the conclusions of Human Rights Watch that genocide was being committed against them. However, Payan Akhavan of the UN Centre for Human Rights warned that: ‘The Muslims have refrained from systematic ethnic cleansing, because they realize that this is fatal for a multi-ethnic state. But that self-control is disappearing, because they realize that they must now gain ground and keep it. They are losing their faith in the multi-ethnic society, which is why we could now start to see atrocities being committed by Muslims on a much larger scale.’⁵¹⁸²

One month later José Maria Mendiluce, who had worked since October 1991 as the special representative of the High Commissioner for Refugees to coordinate all humanitarian assistance from the UNHCR in the former Yugoslavia, questioned the view that all the parties were equally guilty. To describe the conflict as complicated would be ‘a perverse distortion of the facts. It is in fact quite simple: this is not an ethnic war and there *are not* three parties.’ He described the situation as one of a country with a government whose goal was multi-ethnicity and which was, at the same time, under attack from two sides whose goal was to take areas away from it and to make them ethnically cleansed states. In respect of the crimes committed there was ‘a world of difference’ between the Croats and Serbs on the one hand and ‘my Bosnian friends’, in other words all the people, including non-Muslims,

⁵¹⁷⁸ *Moreel dilemma Kooijmans: wellicht instemmen met slecht vredesplan* (‘Kooijmans’ moral dilemma: likely agreement to a bad peace plan’), *ANP*, 02/09/93, 18:44.

⁵¹⁷⁹ W.L. Brugsma, *De cultureel-morale staat van de mens* (‘The cultural state of mankind’), *HP/De Tijd*, 11/06/93, p. 64.

⁵¹⁸⁰ Raymond van de Boogaard, *De vele gedaanten van een burenmoord* (‘The many faces of kill thy neighbour’), in: Van de Roer/Steketee (eds.), *Vernedering*, p. 134.

⁵¹⁸¹ I. Traynor, *Muslims hebben nog altijd schone handen* (‘Muslims still keeping their hands clean’), *de Volkskrant*, 25/06/93.

⁵¹⁸² I. Traynor, *Muslims hebben nog altijd schone handen* (‘Muslims still keeping their hands clean’), *de Volkskrant*, 25/06/93.

who had remained faithful to the Bosnian government on the other hand. Mendiluce therefore strongly objected to the Owen-Stoltenberg plan: Serbs and Croats would aim to establish separate zones and the Bosnian government did not want a Muslim mini state. Furthermore, partition into three mini states would lead to further ethnic cleansing. The international community would legitimize the 'Final Ethnic Cleansing'. He believed it was high time for the West to use military power against the ethnic cleansers, which he claimed was the only language they understood.⁵¹⁸³

In the Netherlands the Owen-Stoltenberg plan was greeted with considerable distaste. A good example was the reaction of Righart, who had already expressed opposition to America's acceptance of a partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines in an article in *HP/De Tijd* on 25 June :

'By accepting ethnic cleansing we have returned to a state of pure fascist barbarism. The so-called partition of Bosnia along ethnic lines implies the triumph of the law of the jungle, and must only herald the start of even more murder and misery. The next hotbeds will probably be Kosovo and Macedonia and it is only a question of time before we see ethnic cleansing in Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union. And what kind of precedent will the Bosnian 'settlement' set for much older conflict situations in the world, such as in the Middle East or Northern Ireland? Who will dare to speak of morality in international politics after Karadzic and his Great Serbian murderous gangs have been so richly rewarded?'⁵¹⁸⁴

His article ended with an appeal to the United States, 'the last and strongest bastion of Western civilization in a world which is degenerating into the primitive violence of tribal wars': 'In short Mister President: where are the Yanks?'⁵¹⁸⁵

This was a rather unusual tone for the periodical, which until then had been extremely cautious in respect of intervention. It redressed the balance in August with an article by W.L. Brugsma. He rubbed the readers' noses in it that Colonel Duncan, of the British Institute of Strategic Studies, had expressed surprise in an interview with *Nova* that the Netherlands was the only country which had troops stationed in Bosnia and which was at the same time arguing for air attacks on Serbian positions. Brugsma also referred to a VPRO programme presented by Christoph Bertram in which an American, a Russian, a German and a Dutch general had advised against intervention in Bosnia. He criticized the Dutch daily newspapers which had accused Owen of weak-kneed politics against Karadzic. 'What a nice country we have: the Netherlands, the country of moral guidance. The best intentions. But just as Chamberlain, alias Lord Owen, would say: the road to hell is paved with good intentions.'⁵¹⁸⁶ He blamed Dutch interventionism on their lack of war experience. Based on the history of the last two centuries, the Netherlands was in the running for the 'world record in beating the retreat'. Countries such as Great Britain, France and Germany understood that a country should only deploy troops when its own vital interests were at stake, and not for the sake of human rights. Brugsma was not impressed by deployment for UN purposes: 'The exceptionally disunited United Nations contains a mixed bag of nice democrats alongside all sorts of riffraff ... it is a sort of bazaar in which changing coalitions barter with good intentions, bad intentions, aid and arms shipments '... 'a Minister of Defence who sends professional soldiers to Bosnia without there being any danger to our country itself, risks a reputation for committing peace crimes.'⁵¹⁸⁷ As to Dutch Members of Parliament, he accused them of playing games with an eye on the forthcoming elections by giving in to 'populist rage'. He was tempted to say

⁵¹⁸³ A. Bleich, 'Mensen in Sarajevo geven een schitterend voorbeeld' ('People in Sarajevo set a wonderful example'), *de Volkskrant* 29/07/93.

⁵¹⁸⁴ H. Righart, 'Meneer de president!' ('Mister President!'), *HP/De Tijd*, 25/06/93, p. 14.

⁵¹⁸⁵ H. Righart, 'Meneer de president!' ('Mister President!'), *HP/De Tijd*, 25/06/93, p. 14.

⁵¹⁸⁶ W.L. Brugsma, 'Wat weet dat deert' ('Ignorance is bliss'), *HP/De Tijd*, 27/08/93, p. 46.

⁵¹⁸⁷ W.L. Brugsma, 'Wat weet dat deert' ('Ignorance is bliss'), *HP/De Tijd*, 27/08/93, p. 46.

that war was too important to be left to politicians. ‘These days we have extremely sensible generals in the Netherlands and, almost without exception, they are *against* intervention in Bosnia.’⁵¹⁸⁸

In the same edition of *HP/De Tijd* the German essayist Hans Magnus Enzensberger argued passionately against sending peace missions to regions where civil wars raged: ‘The political costs are astronomical, the mandates are contradictory, the consequences are dubious.’ Peace missions could not remove the causes of civil wars. The governments which dispatch UN troops deny them their right to enforce their goals militarily. The question was what exactly politicians thought they could achieve with their ‘fantasies of omnipotence’ in all kinds of far-flung places where the dirtiest civil wars were being fought. ‘Even Christianity has always advocated helping ones’ neighbours, not those furthest away.’⁵¹⁸⁹

In late July *Vrij Nederland* decided to do another round of experts, in this case 19 academics, mainly in the field of international relations and international law, and three retired generals. The general tone was that the Netherlands could do nothing on its own. At the same time it was clear that, with the exception of France, the major countries were backing off. Few of them supported military action. And, even if that had been possible, it was probably already too late. It was now better to settle for humanitarian aid and supplying arms to the Muslims, which would give them the right to defend themselves so that a new balance could be created in Bosnia. Only a few of the experts talked about the Safe Areas. R.Th. Jurrjens, lecturer in international relations at the *Vrije Universiteit* in Amsterdam and vice chairman of the CDA (Christian Democrat) working group on Central and Eastern Europe, was against continuation of the enclaves in any form. Siccama, senior lecturer in war history in Utrecht, took the view that the ‘remaining reserves’ should be given the right to self-defence. Only the lecturer in human rights P.R. Baehr and Th. van Boven advocated implementation of the UN resolutions concerning the Safe Areas. Retired Brigadier General H.J. van der Graaf argued that both enforcing the no fly zone and the use of air support on behalf of the Safe Areas would be half measures which would only make the situation worse. Nor did he see any benefit in deploying thousands of ground troops to protect the Safe Areas: ‘nobody is saying this openly but none of us wants a major war about the Muslims in Bosnia.’⁵¹⁹⁰

A new round of interviews by *Vrij Nederland*, this time with eight generals shortly after it had been decided to dispatch the Airmobile Brigade, revealed little enthusiasm for military intervention in the former Yugoslavia. Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Reitsma stated that 18 months earlier military intervention might still have stood a chance. Now it was down to the politicians on the spot to find a solution. Lieutenant General Tjassens feared heavy losses: ‘Must we make Dutch mothers suffer because Yugoslavians filled with hate are killing each other?’⁵¹⁹¹ The ‘rounds’ showed that the Dutch press was increasingly emphasizing the internal political angles and paying less and less attention to the developments in the former Yugoslavia. Most journalists from other countries were also leaving Bosnia ‘because the war has been going on for so long, it’s just not interesting any more.’⁵¹⁹²

In the summer of 1993 Siccama observed that in each phase of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia the international community had attempted to rectify the errors made in the previous phase, an effort to catch up which, at best, did not make things any worse. Was it therefore not time for a moratorium on plans by the West, he wondered.⁵¹⁹³ At the end of June and with much gnashing of teeth - aggression seemed to pay - Ton de Kok accepted a three-way split of Bosnia, because this would probably create stable relations at last. He did not expect that the West would be capable of recruiting

⁵¹⁸⁸ W.L. Brugsma, ‘*Wat weet dat deert*’ (‘Ignorance is bliss’), *HP/De Tijd*, 27/08/93, p. 46.

⁵¹⁸⁹ Hans M. Enzensberger, ‘*De barbarij van alledag*’ (‘Everyday barbarism’), *HP/De Tijd*, 27/08/93, p. 65.

⁵¹⁹⁰ K. Colijn and P. Rusman, ‘*Wat moet Nederland met “Joegoslavië”?*’ (‘Why should the Netherlands bother about “Yugoslavia”?’), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/07/93, pp. 8-12. See also Philip Everts, ‘*Er is wel een draagvlak voor geweld*’ (‘There is support for violence’), *Vrij Nederland*, 07/08/93, p. 21.

⁵¹⁹¹ L. Ornstein, ‘*Het gevaar van een Rambo-leger*’ (‘The danger of a Rambo army’), *Vrij Nederland*, 20/11/92, p. 48.

⁵¹⁹² M. Smits, ‘*Kate Adie, een “tough lady” in Bosnië*’ (‘Kate Adie, a “tough lady” in Bosnia’), *Vrij Nederland*, 27/11/93, p. 27.

⁵¹⁹³ J.G. Siccama, ‘*Nogmaals: ex-Joegoslavië*’ (‘Once again: the former Yugoslavia’), *Armex*, July/August 1993, p. 5.

7000 men to protect the Muslims. Which is why he was not unsympathetic to lifting the arms embargo on the Bosnian government.⁵¹⁹⁴ People like Van den Doel and Oostlander were extremely negative about the Owen-Stoltenberg plan in the Dutch media. The plan was viewed as capitulation to the ethnic cleansers⁵¹⁹⁵ and as unfair to the Muslims. They were being given too little and, according to the writers, would not resign themselves to this forever, meaning that the plan would only give rise to instability in the long-term.⁵¹⁹⁶ Nonetheless, acceptance of the partition was implicit in some of the criticism; there was only criticism of what was considered to be an excessively small portion for the Muslims.⁵¹⁹⁷ The fiercest criticism was voiced by Michael Stein, editor of *NRC Handelsblad*, who, among other things, denounced Owen as he accepted the *Dick Scherpenzeel* journalism award. He believed that the Muslims had been offered an ‘Indian reservation chopped into little pieces’ by the Croats and Serbs and that, even worse, the West was putting them under pressure to accept it. Stein had clearly had enough of the Western ‘Pontius Pilate attitude’ and stated that it was fortunate the Americans had taken a different position during the Second World War. He handed over the prize money of NLG 5000 to Minister Pronk of Development Cooperation so that he could pass it on to the Bosnian government to help it buy arms to defend the state of Bosnia. Minister Pronk handed over the money to Sacirbey, quoting the Dutch government position on the arms embargo, and received assurances that the money would be put to good use.⁵¹⁹⁸ Hofland invited Minister Kooijmans to ‘persuade Lord Owen with all the diplomatic finesse he possesses that other functions in international diplomacy offer him a bright future’.⁵¹⁹⁹ EC Commissioner Van den Broek laid a great deal of blame at Owen’s door, labelling his diplomacy ‘a capitulation strategy’ which ‘legitimizes violence’.⁵²⁰⁰

In contrast, other people were resigned to the plan and hoped that it would in fact bring an end to the war. ‘In the last few weeks it has become quite the thing to denounce Lord Owen (...)’, Peter Michielsen wrote in *NRC Handelsblad* on 25 August, the day on which Kooijmans met with Owen and Stoltenberg. He believed that Lord Owen was being made a scapegoat for the actions of the warring factions and the guilty feelings of representatives of the international community who had done little up to that point. Owen should be praised because he worked from concrete opportunities and not from moral imperatives, wrote Michielsen.⁵²⁰¹ In an article entitled ‘The war is over, the spoils are divided’ a short time later, Michielsen wrote that Izetbegovic had insisted on a Bosnian unified state for 18 months, ‘a plan that was in fact already unrealistic before the war broke out in earnest in March last year, and which has only become more unrealistic since then with the military conquests by the Serbs

⁵¹⁹⁴ ‘Bosnië-Herzegovina’ (‘Bosnia-Herzegovina’), *CD/Actueel*, 26/06/93, p. 18.

⁵¹⁹⁵ A.C.A. Dake, ‘Bemiddelaars blameren EG’ (‘Negotiators accuse EC’), *Het Parool*, 09/08/93; Arie M. Oostlander, ‘Owen speelt het spel van het gewetenloze Engeland’ (‘Owen plays England’s morally bankrupt game’), *Trouw*, 01/09/93.

⁵¹⁹⁶ See for instance M. van den Doel, ‘Een schijnoplossing. Plan Owen-Stoltenberg maakt geen eind aan oorlog’ (‘A spurious solution: Owen-Stoltenberg plan won’t end the war’), *Trouw*, 05/08/93; B. Lanting, ‘Ethnische zuivering is ook geen ‘Realpolitik’’ (‘Ethnic cleansing is not “Realpolitik”’), *Het Parool*, 16/06/93. See also André Roelofs, ‘Beëindiging van strijd in Bosnië nog illusie’ (‘End to conflict in Bosnia still an illusion’), *De Volkskrant*, 15/07/93.

⁵¹⁹⁷ See also appendix Scholten, Ruigrok & Heerma, *In Sarajevo wordt geschoten* (‘Shots ring out in Sarajevo’), pp. 150-156.

⁵¹⁹⁸ For Stein’s speech see M. Stein, ‘Het Westen herhaalt in Bosnië het verraad van München’ (‘The West repeats Munich betrayal in Bosnia’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/06/93. See also S. Montag, ‘Overpeinzingen Michael Stein’ (‘Reflections of Michael Stein’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/06/93. At the time of writing Sacirbey was wanted by Interpol following Bosnian government allegations that he misappropriated large sums of money in his role as UN Permanent Representative.

⁵¹⁹⁹ H.J.A. Hofland, ‘Perspectief voor Lord Owen’ (‘Prospects for Lord Owen’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/08/95. See also H.J.A. Hofland, ‘Het “terecht” der realisten’ (‘The “correctness” of the realists’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/06/93; idem, ‘De onderwereld wint’ (‘The underworld wins’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/09/93.

⁵²⁰⁰ P. Michielsen, ‘Owen speelde Serviërs in Bosnië in de kaart’ (‘Owen plays into Serbian hands in Bosnia’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/08/93.

⁵²⁰¹ P. Michielsen, ‘De jacht op Lord Fraud maskeert het schuldgevoel’ (‘Hounding “Lord Fraud” masks guilt’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/08/93. For a comparable defence of Owen see Martin Woolcott, ‘The Demonizing of Dr Owen’, *The Guardian*, 13/08/93, which appeared in Dutch as ‘De onverdiende verguizing van David Owen’, *de Volkskrant*, 14/08/93. For an illustration of the criticism of Owen see André Roelofs, ‘De dokter en de psychiater’ (‘The doctor and the psychiatrist’), *de Volkskrant*, 12/08/93.

and the Croats and the wide-scale ethnic cleansing'.⁵²⁰² The editorial in the *NRC Handelsblad* on 22 July stated that Izetbegovic's one remaining option was to accept the partition of Bosnia:

'Continuing the armed struggle no longer serves any political purpose. The last enclaves' only chance of survival is when the fighting stops and the UN can resume the flow of humanitarian aid which is now staunch. The credibility of the international community is at an all-time low, but it is the only community which has something to offer the beleaguered people'.⁵²⁰³

Koen Koch wrote that the 'lamentations' of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs had become 'futile' now that even Izetbegovic appeared to accept the partition: 'there is absolutely no point in continuing to strive for something which was still meaningful 18 months ago, but which is now meaningless in the totally changed circumstances'.⁵²⁰⁴

In early May 1993 more than half of the Dutch population was still in favour of military intervention by the international community in the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. However, the different surveys presented a range of diverse statistics. In a NIPO survey of 500 Dutch people commissioned by the AVRO, 75% of the respondents believed that the Western countries should intervene militarily to end the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. 80% said it was acceptable that, if the Netherlands sent troops, there might be casualties.⁵²⁰⁵ A telephone survey of 5600 people for KRO's *Brandpunt* programme showed that 60% of the Dutch population was in favour of military intervention in the former Yugoslavia. A similar amount, 56%, believed that Dutch troops should participate in such an intervention. The same percentage of people believed that military intervention would bring an end to the war.⁵²⁰⁶ Surveys of public opinion by the European Commission, the so-called Eurobarometer, in the same month showed that of the EU member states, the Netherlands was second only to Italy in the number of people favouring military intervention. The European average was 55% in favour and 28% against. In Italy the percentages were 64 and 21 respectively and in the Netherlands 62 and 24. The largest groups of opponents of intervention were found in Denmark (47% against) and Greece (50% against).⁵²⁰⁷

But a survey carried out in early September by the *Studiecentrum voor Vredesvraagstukken* (Centre for Peace Studies) of the *Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen* (Nijmegen University) in collaboration with the NIPO showed that 53% of those surveyed considered partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina on ethnic lines to be acceptable. Only 15% were against and 32% claimed to have no opinion, which was a high percentage for a subject in which the category 'don't know' had definitely not been high in the previous two years. It appears that the Dutch population wanted to see a quick end to the war and no longer considered reversal of ethnic cleansing to be necessary. Pragmatism had triumphed over idealism, concluded the Head of the Centre for Peace Studies, L. Wecke.⁵²⁰⁸ The survey also showed that at least 42% of respondents believed that military intervention did not justify the death of a single Dutch soldier. Earlier surveys had revealed higher acceptance of possible casualties among the Dutch troops

⁵²⁰² Peter Michielsen, 'De oorlog is in feite voorbij, de buit verdeeld' ('The war is over, the spoils are divided'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/09/93. Compare A. Bleich, Gietelink, 'Bosnië heeft nooit bestaansrecht gehad' ('Bosnia has never had a raison d'être'), *Trouw*, 17/06/93.

⁵²⁰³ 'De laatste fase' ('The final phase'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/07/93.

⁵²⁰⁴ ⁵²⁰⁴ K. Koch, 'Bitter gelag' ('Bitter pill'), *de Volkskrant*, 25/09/93.

⁵²⁰⁵ 'Meer steun onder Nederlanders voor militair ingrijpen' ('More popular support in the Netherlands for military intervention'), *ANP*, 02/05/93, 12:59; 'Kok wil militair ingreep in Bosnië' ('Kok wants military intervention in Bosnia'), *De Telegraaf*, 03/05/93.

⁵²⁰⁶ 'Meerderheid bevolking voor militair ingrijpen' ('Majority of population in favour of military intervention'), *de Volkskrant*, 10/05/93.

⁵²⁰⁷ 'Meeste Europeanen voor militair ingrijpen in Bosnië-Herzegovina' ('Most Europeans support military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina'), *ANP*, 24/05/93, 18:14; Van der Meulen, *Verlangen*, p. 3.

⁵²⁰⁸ Leon Wecke, 'Zodra er doden vallen...' ('Once soldiers start to die ...'), *Trouw*, 09/09/93.

participating. ‘The only conclusion that can be drawn from this survey is that there is no support in public opinion in advance for the risky imposition of a peace plan that has been agreed and which must put an end to a war situation.’⁵²⁰⁹

6. Conclusion

After the rejection of the Vance-Owen Plan, the wait-and-see attitude of Owen and Stoltenberg in respect of the contribution by the warring factions themselves allowed President Milosevic and President Tudjman to grasp the initiative and make a proposal for an extremely loose confederation. The Bosnian President Izetbegovic originally refused to negotiate on this basis, but because of the attitude of the West, including the American administration, he resigned himself to partition from mid-June. In addition, Izetbegovic was experiencing political difficulties at home. He had to be prepared to deal with the possible ambitions of Fikret Abdic, who was supported by Owen, and be careful not to be manoeuvred into an impossible position between those who were prepared to settle for a mini Bosnia and those who harboured greater territorial ambitions.

Finally, in July, Izetbegovic declared that he was willing to negotiate on a partition. However, various statements by the Bosnian President show that he was only prepared to agree to such a solution on a temporary basis. He kept the option open to extend the area over the long term. What could not be won at the negotiating table, would have to be conquered by force. Military and political reorganizations in Sarajevo in the summer and early autumn of 1993 seemed to follow this strategy. In the meantime that part of Bosnia under Izetbegovic’s command was developing increasingly into a one-party state under the SDA. The Islamic character of this mini state was also growing, although not too much emphasis was given to this for opportunistic reasons.

In the context of the discussions on a partition, a possible exchange of Srebrenica and the other eastern enclaves for the Serb part of Sarajevo was also discussed. After a delegation of the population of Srebrenica had opposed this, the subject was closed, although it came up again frequently. The West did not wish to propose such an exchange because of the negative publicity it would generate, and it was impossible for Izetbegovic and his circle to take a decision on this independently.

All in all, the peace plan which took shape in the summer of 1993 was certainly not the model of a just peace and did not square with the principles laid down by the London Conference one year earlier. Its supporters described it as being informed by realism and pragmatism. And this was precisely why Minister Kooijmans and his officials objected to it. Within the EC, however, the Dutch government position was only supported by Germany, but, in contrast to the government in The Hague, Bonn did not wish to disrupt the delicate negotiations. Although the American administration and the Belgian chair of the EC attempted to persuade the Dutch government to temper its criticism, this did not work. Owen and Stoltenberg were compelled to provide explanations to Kooijmans and his German opposite number Kinkel. Kooijmans and the rest of the Dutch government then quickly fell into line because, right from the start, they had no alternative to offer. Furthermore the Dutch government was in a weak position because it appeared to want to resist a solution which Izetbegovic and his government were resigned to by that time. None the less, the Dutch government continued to attach a qualification to its contribution to the peace plan. It first wanted to know how the warring factions would react to it. This gave the impression that the offer to send the Airmobile Brigade still seemed to be up in the air.

Whilst a gap between the government and organized public opinion seems to have arisen sometime earlier, in the summer of 1993 a greater gap seemed to develop between the government position and general public opinion in respect of the former Yugoslavia. In early September, the Head of the Centre for Peace Studies at Nijmegen University, Wecke, wondered whether the government was aware of this. Whilst opinion polls showed that the population was tending towards support for a

⁵²⁰⁹ Leon Wecke, ‘Zodra er doden vallen...’ (‘Once soldiers start to die...’), *Trouw*, 09/09/93.

pragmatic partition of Bosnia, the government in The Hague continued to oppose the injustice imposed on the Muslims by the Owen-Stoltenberg plan. Based on the same opinion poll, Wecke concluded that there was insufficient support among the Dutch population for Dutch participation in an implementation force for a peace agreement.⁵²¹⁰ However, a few days before Wecke wrote these words, Minister Ter Beek had offered an Airmobile Brigade to Boutros-Ghali on behalf of the Dutch government, which would possibly be deployed even before such a peace agreement had been made.

If such a unit were to be deployed, it could end up being heavily dependent on the use of air power. In early August 1993 a new agreement had been reached on this issue between NATO and the UN after the American administration had even sought to exclude the UN entirely from decision-making in this matter. At that time major tensions were revealed, both between NATO and the UN, and within NATO itself. This did not bode well for the practical implementation of air operations.

⁵²¹⁰ Leon Wecke, 'Zodra er doden vallen...' ('Once soldiers start to die...'), *Trouw*, 09/09/93.

Chapter 13

Offering the Airmobile Brigade: August 1993 – November 1993

1. Presented with pride and accepted with gratitude

'I have stated previously (...) that military deployment needs to reflect clearly the objectives to be achieved. The political objectives should be the first priority. They should be formulated clearly and comprehensively. These political objectives will determine the required military resources, units, plans of operation and the like.'⁵²¹¹

He did not share their objections: Van der Vlis, Couzy and Ter Beek

The Dutch Minister Kooijmans of Foreign Affairs had been a strong advocate of the Safe Areas. After the Security Council designated Srebrenica as a Safe Area in Resolution 819 on 16 April, he had recommended assigning this status to other Muslim enclaves in international consultations. The higher echelons of the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Netherlands Army were less delighted with these so-called Safe Areas. On 22 November 1992, Chief of Defence Staff General Van der Vlis had listed his objections to safe havens on the television programme *Het Capitool* (see Chapter 8). In his view, their establishment would cross the line between peacekeeping and peace-enforcement, since protection meant protecting people on one side from people on the other side. About a hundred thousand military troops would be required. Their logistics would need to be managed in an area where guerrilla-style warfare was in progress. Because such a complicated situation demanded strong political resolve, it had to be handled by the major powers. Van der Vlis wondered whether such an operation was feasible without US involvement. Finally, he believed that the safe havens might be perceived as support for ethnic cleansing by the Bosnian Serbs. More than six months down the road, none of these arguments had become any less convincing following the Security Council adoption of resolutions 836 and 844, which established the concept of Safe Areas and determined the resources for this purpose. The military forces required according to Van der Vlis were far from being mobilized; the US government had refused to deploy ground troops for the Safe Areas; supplies for the Safe Areas were a serious problem due to resistance by the Bosnian-Serb authorities; the 'Safe Areas' were repeatedly fired upon; and military actions were launched from those areas because they were not fully demilitarized. Van der Vlis also doubted whether UNPROFOR could protect the Safe Areas. Barth, the head of the division of General Policy Affairs (DAB), agreed with him.⁵²¹²

Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Couzy did not feel that enough troops had been provided for the Safe Areas. He was under the impression that his counterparts in France and the United Kingdom wanted to withdraw their troops from the former Yugoslavia, since no prospects for resolving the conflict were apparent. Only the political leadership of their respective countries withheld them from doing so.⁵²¹³ This was why, as he later explained, he had felt the operation would be an impossible mission. He did not believe that the Netherlands should become involved in the operations in the former Yugoslavia for military reasons.⁵²¹⁴ Couzy had stated his objections to

⁵²¹¹ TK, 1992-1993, Proceedings p. 72. Minister Ter Beek, (16/09/92).

⁵²¹² TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of D.J. Barth, 31/05/00, p. 86.

⁵²¹³ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

⁵²¹⁴ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 60; interview with H. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. File 8c, besluitvorming uitzending luchtmobiele brigade (deciding about the deployment of an airmobile brigade), interview H.A. Couzy, 21/04/95.

participating in this conflict on several occasions. In late December 1992, he had said that if the Netherlands deployed F16s over Bosnia, the Dutch troops and observers there should be withdrawn (Chapter 8). A few weeks later, Couzy had described military intervention in the former Yugoslavia as ‘absolutely impossible.’ He believed that Western troops would be entering ‘another Vietnam.’ In March 1993 the commander noted that peace-enforcement might lead to ‘dozens of casualties’ among Dutch troops deployed there and doubted whether ‘a bunch of robber chiefs’ merited those Dutch lives (Chapter 10). In these last two cases, however, Couzy was referring to peace-enforcement. This was obviously different from Safe Areas, although those also entailed a measure of enforcement.

The problem for Couzy and Van der Vlis in conveying their objections to Minister Ter Beek was the Minister’s lack of political interest in whether or not the two generals approved of the idea of Safe Areas and its elaboration. Ter Beek, who was under enormous pressure from his peers in the government and the Parliament to do something for the former Yugoslavia, was interested primarily in whether Dutch troops to be deployed faced an acceptable risk. Both generals had assured Ter Beek regarding the issue of acceptable risks to ‘his’ people, which he considered crucial. They did not believe that the UN peacekeeping forces would be in serious danger in Bosnia.⁵²¹⁵ The minister did not care that neither of the two generals approved of the Safe Areas idea. Van der Vlis and Couzy had ‘consistently told [him] that the risks were acceptable. This is a separate issue and a different debate from the entire Safe Areas idea. My question to the commander and the Chief of Defence Staff was whether I could assume political responsibility for deployment, considering the risks to the personnel.’

Their affirmative response helped Ter Beek make up his mind.⁵²¹⁶

Van der Vlis had also objected to deploying the Airmobile Brigade in Bosnia. Back in mid-March, Minister Ter Beek had overruled him by instructing him to include the Airmobile Brigade in his inventory of units eligible for implementation of the Vance-Owen Plan. Prior to the debate about the White Paper on Defence Priorities, Van der Vlis had stated his objections in an interview with the morning daily *Trouw* (Chapter 11). A few days after the debate, on 23 May, Van der Vlis had stated once again on an NOS television broadcast that the Netherlands was willing to provide the UN with a logistic unit of 400 troops. He emphasized that the Netherlands would deliver combat units only after restructuring the Armed forces, when the military would consist of professional servicemen. During his television appearance, he also warned Parliament against undermining the essence of the Airmobile Brigade by purchasing cheap transport helicopters instead of expensive attack helicopters.⁵²¹⁷ Couzy’s main concern was that deploying the Airmobile Brigade too early might jeopardize the decision to purchase the attack helicopters, which might then be considered unnecessary.⁵²¹⁸ Or, as Ter Beek summarized the reluctance of Van der Vlis: ‘(...) perhaps we risk that if we go ahead with this battalion, it will prove to be a regular mechanized infantry battalion, and people will wonder why we need those expensive helicopters.’⁵²¹⁹ Van der Vlis’s view on this subject was not widely shared.⁵²²⁰ Neither Couzy’s deputy Major General Reitsma nor the Airmobile Brigade Commander Brigadier J.-W. Brinkman expressed this concern.⁵²²¹ The reason was not that Reitsma and Brinkman cared less about the Airmobile Brigade. Both were very eager for this division to prove itself in the former Yugoslavia.⁵²²² They believed that successful deployment of the brigade would be indisputable justification of its

⁵²¹⁵ On this issue, see the enlightening dialogue between Ter Beek and Couzy, Robijns, ‘Baas’, p. 16.

⁵²¹⁶ Robijns, ‘Baas’, pp. 16-17.

⁵²¹⁷ ‘Nederland heeft 400 man extra voor Bosnië’ (The Netherlands has an extra 400 men for Bosnia), *Haagsche Courant*, 24/05/93.

⁵²¹⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 53; Ibid., D.J. Barth, 31/05/00, p. 86; Ibid., hearing of R. Reitsma, 22/05/00, p. 43; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. File 8c, besluitvorming uitzending luchtmobiele brigade (deciding about the deployment of an airmobile brigade), interview H.A. Couzy, 21/04/95.

⁵²¹⁹ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99. Ibid. in interview H.G.B. van den Breemen, 20/05/98.

⁵²²⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 53.

⁵²²¹ Interviews J.-W. Brinkman, 11/10/99; A.K. van der Vlis, 13/02/98.

⁵²²² Interviews H.G.B. van den Breemen, 20/05/98; J.Th. Bruurmijn, 07/07/99; H.J. Vandeweyer, 19/01/98; A.K. van der Vlis, 13/02/98.

existence. ‘With the government and the Parliament on the verge of important decisions regarding the purchase of helicopters for this brigade, much of the army was aware of this’, explained Minister Ter Beek. Moreover, successful deployment would enhance the Army’s reputation and consequently boost recruitment for the brigade.⁵²²³ Lieutenant General M. Schouten, commander of the First Army Corps, believed it would be ‘very bad’ for recruitment for the Airmobile Brigade if this unit ‘had come no further than the heath at Ossendrecht and a practice session in Greece after two and a half years.’⁵²²⁴ Reitsma felt that the helicopters would eventually be purchased anyway.⁵²²⁵ Barth also expected, as he said, that the deployment process would be self-sustaining in this respect.⁵²²⁶ Couzy, who shared several of Van der Vlis’s reservations regarding the deployment in Safe Areas, found the use of material arguments improper and did not support Van der Vlis on this issue.⁵²²⁷ Minister Ter Beek understood Van der Vlis’s concern but must have felt that this argument would fail to impress a government and parliament calling for greater military deployment.⁵²²⁸

Advocates and opponents within the Army of the ‘airmobile’ deployment

Notwithstanding the decision on principle that Cambodia would be for the Marines and the former Yugoslavia for the Army (Chapter 4), the different military services started to consider each other with envy, as the decision did not appear to be cast in stone. On the one hand, deployment of the Airmobile Brigade had been anticipated in Cambodia to relieve the third marine battalion. This battalion had been difficult to assemble⁵²²⁹ and was therefore known as the leftovers battalion⁵²³⁰ and had ‘reached the end of its tether’ in Cambodia.⁵²³¹ On the other hand, deploying a marine battalion to the former Yugoslavia for a few months (chapters 10 and 11) had been suggested as a possibility until the first Airmobile Battalion was operational. To avoid further cutbacks, the military services wanted to ‘raise their profile’⁵²³² and prove that they were each indispensable.⁵²³³ Moreover, the Marines feared that formation of the Airmobile Battalion might lead to ideas that the Marines should abandon or at least curtail its infantry duties.⁵²³⁴ According to Van der Vlis, the Army was convinced that its turn had come.⁵²³⁵ Continuing to use infantry without assigning any responsibilities to the Army would not be right. Concerns about the willingness of conscripts rendered only the Airmobile Brigade eligible for deployment.

The chief proponents of deploying an Airmobile battalion came from a group of officers that was zealously involved in reorganizing the Army: Deputy Commander Reitsma, who called himself the Jan Timmer of the Army in reference to the man assigned to revitalize the Philips Company⁵²³⁶; the

⁵²²³ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 191.

⁵²²⁴ Interview M. Schouten, quoted in: Berghorst, ‘*Opdracht*’, p. 11.

⁵²²⁵ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of R. Reitsma, 22/05/00, p. 45.

⁵²²⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of D.J. Barth, 31/05/00, p. 86.

⁵²²⁷ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 59. See also TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 53.

⁵²²⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 98.

⁵²²⁹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 52.

⁵²³⁰ Bais, *Mijnenveld*, p. 58.

⁵²³¹ Interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

⁵²³² TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 95. See also interviews P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99; H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

⁵²³³ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁵²³⁴ On this view, see e.g. Infantry Major General (rtd.) J.P.A. van Buuren, ‘Te land, ter zee en in de lucht’ (‘By land, sea or air’), *Carré* 15 (1992) 12, pp. 21-22. Previously, Ter Beek had notified Parliament that ‘agreements indisputably existed between the airmobile brigade and the marine corps, but that each one had ‘a distinctive, individual mission’’, TK session 1991-1992, 22 327, no. 2.

⁵²³⁵ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 52.

⁵²³⁶ Leonard Ornstein, ‘Het gevaar van een Rambo-leger’ (‘The danger of a Rambo army’), *Vrij Nederland*, 20/11/93, p. 54.

First Army Corps Commander Schouten; and Airmobile Brigade Commander Brinkman.⁵²³⁷ Brinkman was a strong advocate of deploying his Airmobile Brigade. He believed deeply in the idea and aimed to ‘promote [his unit] and establish its reputation.’⁵²³⁸ Brinkman was the only one who later stated that he had not zealously supported the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade. He denied having lobbied in favour of deploying the brigade in 1999. He said that he regretted that the initial deployment of the brigade would not be airmobile but would concern a rather static conflict. ‘The child that was still growing up was simply thrown to the lions.’ He believed that this had thoroughly disrupted the training.⁵²³⁹ As will become clear below, however, Brinkman’s views had been different in the summer of 1993.

Some Royal Netherlands Army officers believed, as did some MPs, that the Airmobile Brigade was getting very expensive indeed, and that a lot of the armoured infantry was being eliminated as well. Moreover, they and others considered deploying armoured infantry units preferable to the Airmobile Brigade for peace operations in areas of turmoil.⁵²⁴⁰ Retired Brigadier General H.J. van der Graaf, for example delivered a lecture at the *Stichting Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht* (Society and Armed Forces Foundation) on ‘*De Nederlandse krijgsmacht onder VN-vlag*’ (Netherlands Forces under UN-command), in which he condemned the Airmobile Brigade. He considered it far too vulnerable in a war like the one in Yugoslavia. In a situation that was in between peacekeeping and peace-enforcement, classical armoured infantry was more appropriate. He opposed ‘perpetuating the vastly expensive Airmobile Brigade. Better to quit halfway than to become lost altogether!’ Van der Graaf believed that General Couzy, who had repeatedly got into trouble through his public statements himself, was silencing his people. Otherwise, Van der Graaf believed that officers in active service would be echoing his own views.⁵²⁴¹ Moreover, as stated in Chapter 10, Couzy as Deputy Army Commander had believed that the Airmobile Brigade idea was obsolete and had advocated forming a multifunctional brigade that would make optimal use of both the airmobile element and mechanized performance. Commander Wilmink had informed him, however, that for political reasons the Army had to insist ‘rigidly’ that the airmobile concept would also be very useful, even with the international changes.

Public debate did not thrive in the Army. This became apparent from the article by three majors of the armoured infantry in the September issue of *Carré*, the journal of the Netherlands Officers’ Association. The three authors seriously questioned the capabilities of the Airmobile Brigade.⁵²⁴² The editors explained that the article had originally been intended for the July/August issue of *Carré* but had been withheld at the request of the Airmobile Brigade Commander Infantry Brigadier General J.-W. Brinkman, pending simultaneous publication with a response article that he had written. The reason for this request was, considering that (political) decisions regarding (part of) the Airmobile Brigade were

⁵²³⁷ Interviews G.L.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00; Ter Beek, 01/12/99; J.-W. Brinkman, 11/10/99 and R. Reitsma, 04/10/99; Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 184.

⁵²³⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 60. See also the interview with Major E.A.W. Koestal, 24/05/00; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of R. Reitsma, 22/05/00, p. 44.

⁵²³⁹ Interview J.-W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

⁵²⁴⁰ NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. Memorandum ‘Bemoeienissen met het besluit tot uitzending’ (Interference in the decision to deploy), n.d. See also P.G.M. van Even, ‘Luchtmobiel naar Bosnië’ (Airmobile to Bosnia), *Armex*, 78(1994)3, p. 4.

⁵²⁴¹ SG. H.J. van der Graaf, ‘De Nederlandse krijgsmacht onder VN vlak. Draagkracht voor militaire missies. Organisatie, middelen en mentaliteit’ (The Dutch Armed forces under the UN flag. Support for military missions. Organization, resources and mentality). See also DJZ. Casteleijn to Ter Beek, 29/03/93, D93/158, with appendices. Verslag van de door de Stichting Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht georganiseerde conferentie ‘De Nederlandse krijgsmacht onder VN-vlag’ (Report of the conference organized by the Armed Forces and Society Foundation ‘The Dutch Armed forces under the UN flag’), 26/03/93.

⁵²⁴² M.C. de Kruif, H.J. Mayers and O.P. van Wiggen, ‘De luchtmobiele brigade: met beide benen op de grond’ (‘The airmobile brigade: with both feet on the ground’), *Carré* 16(1993)9, pp. 9-13.

being taken in this period, the desire to present the pros and cons of this sensitive issue simultaneously if possible.⁵²⁴³

The three majors mentioned the limited mobility of the airmobile infantry once grounded and the minimal means for continuation and resilience as the major weaknesses of the idea. Moreover, the Airmobile Brigade idea required a lot of infantry; only 36 attack helicopters were expected to be purchased. In this event, the limited number of attack helicopters would be used primarily for immediate firing support for the infantry. This would limit the action radius of the helicopters to a few kilometres and maximize the likelihood of detection. High consumption of munitions and fuel would limit the duration of deployment for the helicopters. Moreover, helicopters were extremely vulnerable to enemy air defence, planes and direct fire. In fact, planes would need to open an air corridor first before deployment of the brigade.

The authors assessed the value of the brigade for various forms of armed warfare. The first was securing or surveillance of an area by the airmobile infantry with patrols and observation posts. This situation resembled – unbeknownst to the authors at that time – the Srebrenica Safe Area, where three consecutive airmobile battalions would later serve. With a low level of force, according to the authors, surveillance would be possible across a relatively large area through helicopter reconnaissance flights. If the violence increased, the infantry would be able to secure only a small area. In the event of imminent confrontation with a larger hostile (mechanized) unit, the means for continuation and resilience would be insufficient. Possible helicopter evacuation of the infantry under enemy pressure would be ‘extremely perilous.’ The authors concluded: ‘With respect to security and surveillance of relatively large areas of land, where violence is imminent, other units of the Royal Netherlands Army would be more suitable, such as elements of the light brigade.’⁵²⁴⁴

In delaying or defensive combat operations, lack of protection would lead to ‘considerable losses’ on the part of the airmobile infantry, even on uneven terrain. Under these conditions the authors assumed that attack helicopters would participate in the battle, and that their presence or absence would be decisive for the strike force of the brigade. The tactical mobility (i.e. the ability to displace the infantry elements of the brigade across land) was poor, according to the authors, because of the vulnerability, the minimal firing ability and the lack of combat support. ‘This contrasts sharply with the state-of-the-art devices already abundant among the mechanized units of the Royal Netherlands Army.’ The three majors therefore proposed transforming the Airmobile Brigade into a standby 11th Mechanized Brigade and selecting an armoured infantry battalion of the brigade for potential airmobile deployment. Had the article been included in the July/August issue of *Carré*, it might indeed, as Brinkman anticipated, have promoted the debate over the Airmobile Brigade, albeit not in a manner to his liking. On 12 July Minister Ter Beek and Junior Minister A.B.M. Frinking, who had succeeded Van Voorst tot Voorst on 1 June, sent a letter to Parliament. In this letter they discussed the airmobile intervention idea extensively in connection with the decision to purchase helicopters for the brigade. They wrote that airmobile units could perform a wealth of tasks in a wide variety of situations: ‘They may, for example, be deployed effectively for humanitarian aid missions while securing and protecting Safe Areas.’ In the event of escalating warfare in which an airmobile unit was deployed – and according to the minister such escalation had occurred recently in Bosnia – it could be relieved by a mechanized unit. ‘Should continued deployment of the airmobile unit prove necessary under such difficult circumstances, then this unit will be equipped with armoured vehicles, known as UN vehicles, primarily for passive protection of the personnel.’⁵²⁴⁵

⁵²⁴³ The contents of the upcoming issue was announced in Perry Pierik/Marcel Reijmerink, ‘Nederland vertilt zich aan luchtmobiele brigade’ (‘The Netherlands bites off more than it can chew with airmobile brigade’), *de Volkskrant*, 26/08/93.

⁵²⁴⁴ M.C. de Kruijff, H.J. Mayers and O.P. van Wiggan, ‘De luchtmobiele brigade: met beide benen op de grond’, *Carré*, 16(1993)9, p. 11.

⁵²⁴⁵ TK session 1992-1993, 22 327, no. 13, p. 4.

In his response to the article by the three majors, Brinkman submitted that the armaments of the Airmobile Brigade did not differ substantially from those of the armoured infantry.⁵²⁴⁶ The main difference with respect to their equipment was that the armoured infantry was armoured and had a YPR-765 25 mm gun, unlike the Airmobile Brigade. If the Airmobile Brigade were assigned passive tasks and a limited mandate that excluded authorization to fire, as was the case with peacekeeping, several armoured ground vehicles could simply be added. Brinkman admitted that without armour the brigade would be vulnerable during long-term static deployment. Mechanized units were therefore better suited for holding ground. Brinkman concluded his article, which was not very convincing, with an appeal to stop blocking 'progress' and ended with: 'Majors, get your feet off the ground and come round!'⁵²⁴⁷

The tone conveyed perfectly Brinkman's zealous support for his brigade. A former staff member of the Operations Division of the Royal Netherlands Army remembered how in late 1993 he had growled at two journalists that they had better not express any reservations about the brigade. When the brigade became an issue, he was said to have written to the *NRC Handelsblad* under a pseudonym.⁵²⁴⁸ In January 1994, two officers of the Airmobile Brigade project desk, Lieutenant Colonel R.J.M. Veger and Major E.F.W. Bleeker, announced in *De Telegraaf* that criticism from the army about the brigade would be unwelcome. After all, public debate about such criticism might affect parliamentary decisions.⁵²⁴⁹

The switch

In early July Deputy Military Advisor Koestal at the Dutch Permanent Representation in New York had explained to DPKO that the Dutch government would probably be unable to realize the offer made a few weeks earlier of a logistic unit of 400 troops (Chapter 11). On 9 July the Defence Staff informed Minister Ter Beek that adding a staff contingent of sixty to a hundred troops might exceed the previous ceiling of 220 troops. This was still nowhere near 400, without even providing for substitutes. Therefore, according to the Defence Staff, all energies at that point 'were dedicated primarily toward meeting the need stated by the UN and were not focused on contrived numerical provision of 400 men.'⁵²⁵⁰ In July, a planning mission for a 'logistic battalion (minus)' for the Safe Areas was still under development.⁵²⁵¹ In mid-July, however, the departure of a reconnaissance mission for the unit was postponed.⁵²⁵²

By June the Army understood not only that it would not or would hardly be able to gather the 400 troops required for a logistic unit. Even if this effort were somewhat successful, deployment of scarce logistic personnel would compromise the restructuring of several important units, including the Airmobile Brigade.

⁵²⁴⁶ J.W. Brinkman, 'Reactie op "De luchtmobiele brigade met beide benen op de grond?"' (Response to "The Airmobile Brigade: with both feet on the ground"), *Carré* 16(1993)9, pp. 14-15.

⁵²⁴⁷ A subsequent response reflected a similar note: Major E.F.W. Bleker of supply and displacement troops and Lieutenant Colonel R.J.M. Veger of the Engineering Corps, 'De Luchtmobiele Brigade: met beide benen op de grond', *Carré* 17(1994)1, pp. 19-20. They considered publicly debating internal army issues unwise, since the politicians had already embraced the airmobile concept; such a course might jeopardize parliamentary discussions about army equipment. The authors hoped that their response would 'point everybody back in the right direction', *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁵²⁴⁸ M. Reijmerink, 'Voorluisteren naar de generaal' ('Listen to the general, whatever you do'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 15/06/95. See also M. Reijmerink & P. Pierik, 'Bij defensie dienen alsnog koppen te rollen' ('Heads should still roll at Defence'), *de Volkskrant*, 02/09/95.

⁵²⁴⁹ In *De Telegraaf* of 18/01/94, according to a reference in De Boode, '*Vrijheid*' (Freedom), p. 217.

⁵²⁵⁰ NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek. Memo from Waltmann to Ter Beek, 09/07/93.

⁵²⁵¹ DCBC, 2327. Intern memorandum van de Directie Operatiën van de KL (Internal memo from the Operations Division of the Royal Netherlands Army), 06/07/93; DCBC, 413. OZ, M.J.H. Bevers to Maj. Scheffer, 22/07/93, 1530B, no. 93/228; DCBC, 412. OZ, Bevers to Scheffer and Bakx, 27/07/93, no. 93/237.

⁵²⁵² 'Verkenningmissie nog niet naar voormalig Joegoslavië' ('Reconnaissance mission not yet off to former Yugoslavia'), *ANP*, 13/07/93, 17:39.

On 9 August the *NRC Handelsblad* ran an article about the Airmobile Brigade. In this item, Siccama and former Defence Ministers Van Mierlo and Stermerdink described the idea as costly and obsolete. In the same article, Brinkman asserted that the Royal Netherlands Army needed to use this unit in the heat of international conflicts, 'or you're not worth tuppence'.⁵²⁵³ In the same issue, an editorial appeared critiquing the Airmobile Brigade and calling for a cost-benefit analysis to examine the 'motives, recommendations and conclusions concerning the army's showpiece'.⁵²⁵⁴ On 10 August, the day after the two critical articles about the Airmobile Brigade were published in the *NRC Handelsblad*, the Defence Staff members met with the staff of the Army's situation centre to discuss what the Army could provide. The caustic commentary alleging that the Airmobile Brigade was extremely costly but yielded few returns, which the *NRC Handelsblad* had published the previous evening, cast a shadow over the deliberations.⁵²⁵⁵

By 23 June Minister Kooijmans had informed the Parliament that offering the Airmobile Brigade instead of a logistic unit for the Safe Areas might be better at some point. This idea became increasingly appealing for various reasons. The Parliament and press needed to be shown that the Airmobile Brigade was cost-effective. A logistic unit was difficult to mobilize.

A few days after Boutros-Ghali's official request for a 'maintenance and repair unit',⁵²⁵⁶ Colonel Van Veen sent word from New York that the UN wanted to reconsider the planned composition of the unit. In addition to the recovery unit offered, the UN now wanted transport capacity, a salvaging unit and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee for traffic management.⁵²⁵⁷ On 18 August this was communicated in writing in a message to the UN secretariat.⁵²⁵⁸ These needs were hard for the Netherlands to meet, since the Dutch transport units already claimed such logistic capacity.⁵²⁵⁹ This request meant that the Netherlands was expected to provide mechanics for equipment from the former East German army, which was to be allocated to a Pakistani battalion.⁵²⁶⁰ Hardly an attractive offer. The Dutch military troops would apparently serve as maintenance and repair workers for the Pakistani battalion, although they were not familiar with the equipment used. Most likely, this situation would lead to almost daily complaints.⁵²⁶¹ Reitsma had long believed that a logistic unit would fail to provide the Netherlands with the international recognition that the Airmobile Brigade would yield.⁵²⁶² The requirement stated by the UN was therefore, according to a concerned unnamed decision-maker, a 'blessing in disguise'⁵²⁶³: it offered the Dutch government an unsolicited way out of its previous offer.

This happened during the summer, when both Van der Vlis and Couzy were on holiday. Their deputies were aware of their objections to the operations in the former Yugoslavia in Safe Areas and deployment of an airmobile battalion, especially the ones that Van der Vlis had expressed in March during his inventory of the units available for deployment to the former Yugoslavia.⁵²⁶⁴ Van der Vlis had other specific objections to the combination of an airmobile battalion and deployment in a Safe Area.⁵²⁶⁵ He considered the mobile unit unsuitable for patrols with armoured vehicles as an armoured infantry unit and occupation of observation posts. He was also concerned about supplying the Dutch

⁵²⁵³ Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/08/93.

⁵²⁵⁴ 'Rode baretten' ('Red berets'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/08/93.

⁵²⁵⁵ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99; Berghorst, *News*, p. 64.

⁵²⁵⁶ CRST. CSKL 1993, Dutch participation, Boutros-Ghali to UNPR, 05/08/93.

⁵²⁵⁷ NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek. Memo from Barth and Van den Breemen to Ter Beek, 17/08/93, D93/326; interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

⁵²⁵⁸ ABZ, DDI/DPV/00209, D'Ansembourg to Kooijmans, No. 823, 18/08/93; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt I*, p. 125.

⁵²⁵⁹ NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek. Memo from Barth and Van den Breemen to Ter Beek, 17/08/93, D93/326.

⁵²⁶⁰ Interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

⁵²⁶¹ Interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

⁵²⁶² Interview R. Reitsma, 04/10/99.

⁵²⁶³ According to an anonymous respondent in Wolberink, *Luchtmobiel*, p. 23. Cf. TCBU, *Vertrekpunt I*, p. 125.

⁵²⁶⁴ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 53.

⁵²⁶⁵ Kreemers, 'Aan de achterkant van de maan', p. 13.

units in enclaves.⁵²⁶⁶ Couzy did not find the risk unacceptable: ‘Foreign units had been present for some time. Why should it be all right for them but not for our soldiers?’⁵²⁶⁷ This last argument, as will become clear, was just as effective at luring the Dutch troops into Srebrenica as the Dutch politicians who had urged that more be done in the former Yugoslavia at international gatherings and through letters to foreign counterparts.

Van den Breemen and Reitsma, deputies of Van der Vlis and Couzy, respectively, were more favourably disposed to deployment of the Airmobile Brigade.⁵²⁶⁸ They believed that the time had come to refuse, now that the UN had specified the need for the logistic unit. Barth advocated notifying Minister Ter Beek upon his return from his holiday on 17 August that the request from the UN was impossible to grant. Van den Breemen, ‘a true political general’,⁵²⁶⁹ understood that outright refusal would be unacceptable. Such a response would send an international message that the Dutch government had been insincere in New York and Copenhagen. Van den Breemen reviewed the memos that Van der Vlis had written in March and April. Over the months that had elapsed, the extended wait before deployment of the Airmobile Brigade had all but resolved itself. A solution was available for the armoured vehicles as well. The only remaining obstacles to deployment of the Airmobile Brigade were Van der Vlis’s political-strategic objections. Van den Breemen was convinced, however, that these objections could not withstand the immense political pressure in the Netherlands to deploy more troops for the peace operation in Bosnia.⁵²⁷⁰ On 13 August Schouten drafted a memo in which he proposed offering the UN airmobile battalion rather than the logistic unit.

Barth and Van den Breemen wrote a joint memo to the minister.⁵²⁷¹ In this document, they started to explain that providing a logistic unit of 400 troops was ‘even more problematic’ than anticipated. They reminded the minister of the inception of the offer and wrote that on the eve of the summit in Copenhagen where the Dutch government had disclosed the offer, the minister had discussed with Kooijmans that it was highly uncertain whether this offer could be realized. Ter Beek was said to have explained to his counterpart in Foreign Affairs that guaranteeing a tailor-made unit was extremely difficult when the tailor himself was unaware of the sizes and tastes of his clients, and that the supply of willing conscripts had been virtually depleted. Lubbers and Kooijmans had nevertheless made the offer ‘for political reasons.’ Because the moment of deployment of the – impossible – logistic unit was now so close to the point that the first airmobile battalion might be operational, Barth and Van den Breemen proposed offering the battalion together with its own logistic support. This would yield an expanded battalion of 900 to 1,000 troops. Such a battalion, equipped with YPR armoured vehicles, might be ready for deployment in early 1994. It would comprise 500 to 550 infantrymen, and the remainder would be support personnel. The minister would present the new offer to Boutros-Ghali during his visit to the UN Secretary-General on 7 September. Finally, the authors of the memo assumed that the Safe Area operation would soon be converted into implementation of a peace settlement.⁵²⁷²

According to Reitsma, he had not been consulted directly while Van den Breemen and Barth’s memo was being drafted.⁵²⁷³ He assumed that the Defence Staff and the Crisis Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army had been in touch. He did not remember whether he had attended the Army staff

⁵²⁶⁶ Kreemers, ‘Aan de achterkant van de maan’, p. 15.

⁵²⁶⁷ Kreemers, ‘Aan de achterkant van de maan’, p. 15.

⁵²⁶⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 61.

⁵²⁶⁹ Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, p. 154.

⁵²⁷⁰ NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. ‘Bemoeienissen met het besluit tot uitzending’, n.d.

⁵²⁷¹ According to an interview H.G.B. van den Breemen, 22/09/99, the drafters were Waltmann & Vandeweyer. NIOD, Coll. Vandeweyer. However, contains a Log-airmb file with an undated and incomplete memo to Van den Breemen (mediated by Waltmann) about deployment of a logistic unit and/or airmobile brigade battalion, in which the switch is proposed.

⁵²⁷² NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek. Memo from Barth and Van den Breemen to Ter Beek, 17/08/93, D93/326.

⁵²⁷³ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of R. Reitsma, p. 41. Cf. TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 125.

meeting on 10 August.⁵²⁷⁴ Admittedly, the contact with the Army staff had not been with Reitsma himself but with Brigadier General G.J.M. Bastiaans, the deputy head of Army Operations.⁵²⁷⁵ Nor did Reitsma see why Couzy should be surprised about the switch upon returning from holiday. ‘No, it was a concretization of previous analyses that were assessed according to their consequences,’ such as the equipment and the training programme (see Part II, Chapter 5).⁵²⁷⁶ Couzy vehemently disagreed: ‘Of course, there were analyses, but both of them – Van den Breemen and Reitsma – were well aware that their respective bosses felt entirely differently.’⁵²⁷⁷ Still, Couzy did not blame Reitsma. After careful consideration, Couzy believed that the situation would have been the same, even if he had not been away on holiday. The government pressure had been too strong to accuse Van den Breemen and Reitsma of attempting a coup.⁵²⁷⁸ Couzy’s only reservation about deployment of the Airmobile Brigade was that such a new unit was being deployed very early indeed.⁵²⁷⁹

Upon returning from his holiday to the ministry on 17 August, Ter Beek found the memo from Barth and Van den Breemen on his desk. That evening, the minister discussed the pros and cons of this recommendation with them over dinner.⁵²⁸⁰ After consulting Couzy, Reitsma and Schouten, Ter Beek took a decision. That very week, according to his statement, he proposed to Lubbers and Kooijmans and the Ministerial Council, which was meeting almost continuously to draft the budget at that point, that they present the UN with a new offer.⁵²⁸¹ Lubbers, Kooijmans and Pronk were delighted with the idea, according to Ter Beek.⁵²⁸² The objectivized versions of the minutes of the Ministerial Council do not reveal that Minister Ter Beek informed the plenary Ministerial Council during this period, although the former Yugoslavia or Bosnia did figure in the deliberations on 19, 24/25 and 26 August.⁵²⁸³ According to these documents, he did so only on 3 September, the day after the Parliament was notified. Based on the objectivized version of the minutes of the council from that date, Ter Beek reminded those present about the previous offer of a logistic unit of 400 troops for the Safe Areas. He subsequently mentioned that Resolution 836 had yet to be implemented, and that the UN now required more from the Dutch government. A few days later, he therefore made an offer to the UN on behalf of the Dutch government of the airmobile battalion with its own logistics component for a peace settlement.⁵²⁸⁴

The day after Ter Beek’s return to the Ministry of Defence, an amended version of Barth and Van den Breemen’s memo was generated, which Ter Beek submitted to Kooijmans in the margin of the Ministerial Council only nine days later on 27 August.⁵²⁸⁵ The purged memo did not mention the problems with recruiting a logistic unit of 400 troops. The criticism about the premature offer of this unit during the European Council of Copenhagen was deleted from the memo as well.⁵²⁸⁶ In the morning of 20 August, Ter Beek and Junior Minister Frinking met with MP Henk Vos (the PvdA spokesman for the Defence budget) and Thijs van Vlijmen (the CDA expert on Defence material). At this occasion, Ter Beek reported that they probably discussed that deployment of the Airmobile

⁵²⁷⁴ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of R. Reitsma, p. 42.

⁵²⁷⁵ Interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00; NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. Memorandum ‘Bemoeienissen met het besluit tot uitzending’, n.d.

⁵²⁷⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of R. Reitsma, 22/05/00, p. 43.

⁵²⁷⁷ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

⁵²⁷⁸ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 61.

⁵²⁷⁹ Interviews F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00; H.G.B. van den Breemen, 20/05/98.

⁵²⁸⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 99; interview with A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁵²⁸¹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 99.

⁵²⁸² Interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00; Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 193.

⁵²⁸³ Objectivized version of the minutes of the Ministerial Council of 19, 24/25 and 26/08/93.

⁵²⁸⁴ Objectivized version of the minutes of the Ministerial Council, 03/09/93. Cf. TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 127.

⁵²⁸⁵ ABZ, DDI/DPV/00209, memo from Barth and Van den Breemen to Ter Beek, No. D93/P/1273, 18/08/93; ABZ, ABZ, DDI/DPV/00209, memo from DAV and DPV to Kooijmans, DAV/MS-198/93, 30/08/93.

⁵²⁸⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 126.

Brigade in Bosnia would not affect the purchase of the helicopters.⁵²⁸⁷ In other words, Ter Beek tried to alleviate one of Van der Vlis's deepest concerns regarding the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade.

Couzy later asserted that upon returning from holiday he and Van der Vlis had spoken with the minister about their objections to the switch. According to Couzy, the minister had refuted all the arguments the two general raised. At one point, the minister asked Couzy whether he felt there were any prevailing security risks. Couzy said that he did not think there were. He mentioned that the sides in the Bosnian conflict generally avoided harming UN troops.⁵²⁸⁸ Ter Beek vehemently denied to the Bakker committee that any such conversation ever took place. He had to control himself when confronted with Couzy's statement. According to Ter Beek, Couzy 'apparently missed his calling as a novelist.'⁵²⁸⁹

Whether or not Couzy was present, Van der Vlis's return from his holiday on 24 August was a time of 'considerable upheaval,'⁵²⁹⁰ when Van der Vlis learned that Ter Beek had already initialled the letter from Van der Breemen and Barth and had arranged for General Bastiaans to travel to Zagreb to discuss the new offer in the margin of a conference of troop-contributing nations. Van der Vlis subsequently concluded 'that a point of no return had been reached.'⁵²⁹¹

Foreign Affairs and Defence at odds over the purpose of the offer to the UN

On 23 and 24 August, General Bastiaans did indeed attend a gathering of troop-contributing nations in Zagreb chaired by Kofi Annan. Bastiaans had been instructed to inform Annan that the Netherlands would be unable to supply the recovery unit that the UN desired. He was not authorized to tell Annan any more at the time. According to his own report of the meeting, his statement was roughly as follows:

'Discussions continue regarding the composition of the Dutch logistic unit. The Netherlands is presently exploring several options outside the logistic area as well. The Dutch government will consult the UNSG about this in the week of 7 September. The possible point of elaboration depends on the option selected, ranging from early November until the first half of January 1994.'

In response to Annan's question about what the options were, Bastiaans stated that he was not authorized to disclose them.⁵²⁹²

In a private conversation with Briquemont (Bastiaans insisted that Briquemont's aide be excluded), he did, however, offer prospects of an airmobile battalion.⁵²⁹³ On 30 August the directors of Political UN Affairs (DPV) and Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (DAV), Hoekema and Majoor, mentioned in a White Paper to Kooijmans that Ter Beek would speak to him again in the margin of the Ministerial Council about the offer of a battalion of the Airmobile Brigade. They feared 'partners and public' might think that the Netherlands was reneging by withdrawing the offer of a logistic unit for the Safe Areas. Several DAB staff members shared this concern.⁵²⁹⁴ They noted that both the offer and the objective had changed. Ter Beek's offer was valid for the Safe Areas as well as for a peace settlement. An offer

⁵²⁸⁷ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁵²⁸⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 61.

⁵²⁸⁹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 99. Cf. TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 126.

⁵²⁹⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 61. Cf. interviews with A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00 and H. Couzy, 04/10/01; NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. 'Bemoeienissen met het besluit tot uitzending', n.d.

⁵²⁹¹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 53.

⁵²⁹² DCBC 1665. Note from Bastiaans to Ter Beek, 27/08/93.

⁵²⁹³ Interviews G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00; F. Briquemont, 22/06/00; DEF 492, S93/061/2700, Note from Bastiaans to Ter Beek, 27/08/93; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 126.

⁵²⁹⁴ ABZ, DDI/DPV/00209, memorandum from DAV and DPV to Kooijmans, DAV/MS-198/93, 30/08/93; interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

concerning a peace settlement elicited objections at Foreign Affairs. At the end of his conversation with Owen and Stoltenberg, Kooijmans had expressed reservations about this very subject. In their White Paper, Hoekema and Majoor therefore mentioned four conditions for possible Dutch participation in a peace settlement, assuming there was one, since this seemed rather doubtful.⁵²⁹⁵

The next day, 31 August, Ter Beek had a letter drafted in which he informed Boutros-Ghali of the offer of the Airmobile Brigade and withdrew the one of a logistic unit of 400 troops. In his draft letter, Ter Beek offered to implement a peace settlement. The letter was not a *carte blanche*, however, but mentioned that the Dutch government wanted to know the details of the peace settlement and the mandate that would apply first. Nonetheless, the Dutch government was making the offer, according to the letter, to encourage other countries to pledge to contribute and thus to increase the pressure on the sides in the conflict.⁵²⁹⁶ The relationship with the Safe Areas was not considered. The draft letter was presented to DPV for transmission.

While Foreign Affairs was undoubtedly delighted that even Defence was casting the Netherlands as a catalyst, the switch in the purpose of the offer was unfortunate. The Dutch government had zealously supported the Safe Areas all along. At the European summit in Copenhagen, the Netherlands had offered a logistic unit for the Safe Areas to encourage other EU Member States in the hope of gathering the 7,600 troops that Boutros-Ghali deemed necessary. Less than a week earlier, Minister Kooijmans had expressed several reservations about the peace plan presented by Owen and Stoltenberg. Even with all the ifs, ands and buts in Minister Ter Beek's letter, the Dutch government's position at the vanguard with an offer for a peace settlement was remarkable, given that it had been the sole agent in international circles to question the settlement.

Foreign Affairs therefore blocked the draft letter.⁵²⁹⁷ Some have alleged that the letter was not sent because Foreign Affairs felt that only their ministry was authorized to correspond with the UN in New York, although this view had been somewhat undermined by assigning a military advisor to the permanent representation in New York and Dutch military officials in the DPKO.⁵²⁹⁸ The two ministries definitely competed with one another.⁵²⁹⁹ Nonetheless, sufficient intrinsic reasons were available for preventing dispatch of Ter Beek's letter, precisely because it referred to a peace settlement rather than to the Safe Areas. According to Hoekema, the opinion at Foreign Affairs was that this sensitive issue needed to be talked through between the two ministries first.⁵³⁰⁰ Little seems wrong with that position. A DPV staff member was said to have notified DAB staff member F.J.J. Princen that the letter would not be sent, when Princen brought Ter Beek's letter to Foreign Affairs (on 2 September).⁵³⁰¹ That same day, Hoekema, Majoor and deputy DEU chief Hattinga van 't Sant advised Kooijmans not to send the letter. Instead, they recommended that he consult Ter Beek and send detailed instructions to Permanent Representative Biegman in New York. According to the White Paper from the three division heads, Kooijmans had personally stated that he did 'not know of a letter and did not want such a letter to be sent.' The first and simplest argument from the division heads was 'that the Ministry of Defence cannot take matters into its own hands (via the Perm. Rep. New York) and send a letter about an important foreign policy issue to the UNSG.' The substantive justification

⁵²⁹⁵ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, II, J.Th. Hoekema to TCBU, 05/06/00, p. 60.

⁵²⁹⁶ ABZ, PVNY. Peacekeeping/Yugoslavia/UNPTOFOR/Dutch participation, December 1991-November 1995, Ter Beek to Biegman, 31/08/93, D93/145/24304, with appendices. Ter Beek to Boutros-Ghali, 31/08/93; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of D.J. Barth, 31/05/00, p. 87.

⁵²⁹⁷ See note 'not sent' on ABZ, PVNY. Peacekeeping/Yugoslavia/UNPROFOR/Dutch participation, December 1991-November 1995, Ter Beek to Biegman, 31/08/93, D93/145/24304, with appendices. Ter Beek to Boutros-Ghali, 31/08/93.

⁵²⁹⁸ Interview H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

⁵²⁹⁹ See also the appendix about Defence.

⁵³⁰⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of J.T. Hoekema, 24/05/00, p. 71.

⁵³⁰¹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of J.T. Hoekema, 24/05/00, p. 71; interview with F. Princen, 08/01/98.

for this recommendation was the political risk associated with the withdrawal of the offer for the Safe Areas.⁵³⁰²

All available information suggests that Barth was informed that Ter Beek's letter would not be sent on. Seven years later, Barth no longer remembered whether Minister Ter Beek was notified as well. Substantiating documents were lacking, except for the words 'no longer necessary' in the margin of the section where Minister Kooijmans was advised to consult his counterpart at Defence in the recommendation from the three division heads to the minister.⁵³⁰³

In their advice to Kooijmans, the three division heads continued to insist that the Dutch play a role in the Safe Areas, especially because they did not believe that the Netherlands should automatically commit to a peace settlement of which the content was unknown.⁵³⁰⁴ On 2 September Minister Kooijmans instructed – 'also on behalf of my counterpart at Defence' – Biegman to offer a battalion of the Airmobile Brigade as of January 1994 in keeping with the current UN resolutions, especially Resolution 836 (i.e. for the Safe Areas).⁵³⁰⁵ He added that if these Safe Areas were eventually included in a peace settlement, new consultation would become necessary about the battalion's possible deployment and task.

At this point the substance of such a peace settlement was rather uncertain. On 1 September the talks had been suspended in Geneva, as the Bosnian delegation felt that its territorial demands were receiving insufficient consideration. Prior to issuing these instructions, Foreign Affairs consulted Barth about their content. Besides Barth, Van den Breemen was also aware of the code issued by Foreign Affairs. Both pertained to the group that accompanied Minister Ter Beek a few days later on his trip to New York, where he told Boutros-Ghali again about the offer at the UN headquarters. In his statements to the Bakker Committee in 2000, Barth assumed that Minister Ter Beek had been informed about this code.⁵³⁰⁶ Ter Beek's group included Hoekema, who was also aware of this code. In New York Biegman's deputy J.M.V.A. Count de Marchant et d'Ansembourg, joined the group, which had complied with the instructions in the code and had reported to The Hague about the relevant conversation with Boutros-Ghali's military advisor General M. Baril. So when Ter Beek went to the UN headquarters, he was accompanied by four people who knew that instead of Minister Ter Beek's letter to Boutros-Ghali different instructions had been sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which according to the text came from the Minister of Defence as well. The main difference was that the Safe Areas had replaced a future peace settlement as the deployment objective.

Minister Ter Beek told the Bakker Committee that he had learned from this committee only in 2000 that his letter of 31 August 1993 had never been sent. He had become aware of the contents of the code of 2 September with instructions to D'Ansembourg 'only later.'⁵³⁰⁷

D'Ansembourg had been the one to carry out the instructions of 2 September because Permanent Representative Biegman was on holiday at the time. As was standard practice in this situation, D'Ansembourg conveyed the instructions in a White Paper.⁵³⁰⁸ On 3 September he notified The Hague that he been unable to speak with Boutros-Ghali or Undersecretary-General Annan at short notice. He had therefore presented the Dutch offer to General Baril. In the code that D'Ansembourg sent to The Hague, he wrote that Baril believed the Dutch offer of an extensive battalion of 1,100 troops would put the total offers for the Safe Areas above the 7,600 troops required

⁵³⁰² ABZ, PVNY. Memorandum from DPV, DAV and DEU to Kooijmans, 02/09/93, no. DPV-2095/93.

⁵³⁰³ ABZ, PVNY. Memorandum from DPV, DAV and DEU to Kooijmans, 02/09/93, no. DPV-2095/93; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, II, D.J. Barth to TCBU, 25/05/00, p. 44 and 05/06/00, pp. 56/57, *Ibid.*, J.Th. Hoekema to TCBU, 05/06/00, pp. 60-61. See also TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 128.

⁵³⁰⁴ ABZ, PVNY. Memorandum from DPV, DAV and DEU to Kooijmans, 02/09/93, no. DPV-2095/93.

⁵³⁰⁵ Def. DCBC, Kooijmans to Biegman, No. 242, 02/09/93.

⁵³⁰⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, II, D.J. Barth to TCBU, 05/06/00, p. 57; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 130.

⁵³⁰⁷ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, p. 100.

⁵³⁰⁸ TK session 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 149, p. 11; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of N.H. Biegman, 29/05/00, p. 187.

for the light options of the Safe Areas.⁵³⁰⁹ The UN thus assumed that the Dutch offer was for the Safe Areas.

Any disappointment that might have existed at the UN regarding the cancellation of the offer of a logistic unit was basically alleviated by the fact that the Dutch battalion would arrange its own logistics. The battalion would be self-sustaining. This was why the battalions of the Airmobile Brigade, which would ordinarily consist of about six hundred men, now comprised eleven hundred troops.

Because the press learned on 27 August of the offer of the airmobile battalion as of 1 January – i.e. that the Troops Commando Corps would supply a reconnaissance platoon for the Airmobile Brigade to be deployed in Bosnia in early 1994⁵³¹⁰ – Kooijmans confirmed this on 2 September, the very day the instructions were issued to D’Ansembourg in a meeting with the standing parliamentary committee for Foreign Affairs. The phrasing of the meeting report does not specify clearly whether Kooijmans said the offer was for a peace settlement or for the Safe Areas. The minister reported that the figure of 7,500 troops for the Safe Areas had been revised. Regarding the offer of the Airmobile Brigade, his statement in the record reads: ‘In that case there should obviously be a settlement for implementation that has yet to be evaluated by the Netherlands.’ This statement suggests that Kooijmans still assumed deployment for a peace settlement. He also reported that the UN would prefer something from the Netherlands other than the logistic unit of 350 troops offered for the Safe Areas. The report seemed to suggest that this offer was being replaced with a unit that was additional to the offer of the Airmobile Brigade, in part because of the words attributed to the minister: ‘There will be consultation on this subject.’⁵³¹¹ The contribution to the debate from Kooijmans was ‘without much qualification,’ as Barth wrote in a memo to Ter Beek, who had not attended the deliberations in Parliament.⁵³¹² The qualifications to the ministers concerned were either unclear or totally irrelevant. This was already apparent from the remarks by Minister Ter Beek that the offer was being made to the UN, and that the demand to be met depended on the current political situation. According to the objectivized version of the minutes from the Ministerial Council of 3 September, it was discussed at the meeting that Minister Ter Beek would offer Boutros-Ghali the airmobile battalion a few days later with a view toward a peace settlement. This statement was not contradicted.⁵³¹³

An offer without conditions

A few days later Minister Ter Beek departed for New York with a few advisors. According to Crisis Staff Chief F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, the crisis staff and Couzy had talked about the need for the Netherlands to impose conditions on the deployment of the Dutch battalion. The cases mentioned included the Norwegian battalion (which was to be deployed only in Tuzla) and the Spanish battalion (which was only to be deployed in Mostar). The crisis staff urged the Netherlands government to waste no time in claiming deployment of the Dutch battalion in Central Bosnia, as close as possible to Busovaca near the Belgian-Dutch transport battalion. This would facilitate logistics considerably. Also for logistic reasons, the battalion should avoid ending up in a Safe Area. According to Couzy, the specific intention was to avoid having the battalion stationed in Srebrenica.⁵³¹⁴ Another condition was that the battalion was not to be dispersed under any circumstances. For all Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse knew, Couzy and Reitsma had also discussed these conditions with Ter Beek. Moreover, he had

⁵³⁰⁹ DCBC. D’Ansembourg to Kooijmans, No. 917, 03/09/93.

⁵³¹⁰ ‘Commando’s bereiden zich voor op verkenningsstaken in Bosnië’ (‘Commandos prepare for reconnaissance assignment in Bosnia’), *ANP*, 27/08/93, 11:12; ‘Commando’s Roosendaal gaan verkenningsacties uitvoeren in Bosnië’ (‘Roosendaal commandos to carry out reconnaissance in Bosnia’), *De Stem*, 27/08/93. See also Pieter Nijdam, ‘Joego-actie voor de rode baretten’ (‘Action in Yugoslavia for the red berets’), *De Telegraaf*, 02/08/93; ‘Ter Beek stelt nieuwe landmacht-eenheden beschikbaar’ (‘Ter Beek makes new army units available’), *ANP*, 02/09/93, 10:13.

⁵³¹¹ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181 no. 61, p. 8.

⁵³¹² TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 127.

⁵³¹³ Objectivized version of the minutes of the Ministerial Council of 03/09/93.

⁵³¹⁴ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01; NIOD, Coll. Kremers. Interview H.A. Couzy, 21/04/95.

communicated the basic conditions to Colonel Van Veen, his predecessor as Crisis Staff Chief and military advisor to the Permanent Representation at the UN.⁵³¹⁵

Couzy later said that he did not feel comfortable about imposing conditions concerning the location before the decision to provide a unit. He had communicated this position to his staff as well. Moreover, he claimed that in the conversation that he and Van der Vlis had upon returning from their respective holidays with Minister Ter Beek – the conversation that had never taken place according to Ter Beek – the deployment had been an unresolved issue. According to Couzy, this was primarily because Ter Beek kept asking questions throughout this conversation, such as about their assessment of the risks.⁵³¹⁶ He had subsequently been notified by Van der Vlis that the minister was *en route* to Boutros-Ghali with the offer of the Airmobile Brigade. At that point, Couzy must have understood that the Ministerial Council had taken a decision, or at least that Lubbers had allowed Ter Beek to proceed. By then, it was obviously too late for Couzy to disclose the conditions.⁵³¹⁷

This course of events is improbable. First, whether such a conversation ever occurred as Minister Ter Beek has stated remains questionable. Second, Van der Vlis understood perfectly well following the conversation he had after his holiday ‘that a point of no return had been reached’ with respect to the decision to offer the airmobile battalion. And would Couzy not have been aware that his deputy Head of Operations Bastiaans had already presented this offer in Zagreb to General Briquemont, the UNPROFOR II commander? It thus appears that Couzy never communicated the conditions desired by the crisis staff to the Ministry.

Stating the conditions prior to providing a unit for a peace operation is extremely important. Ordinarily with peace operations, matters such as intervention, location and duration are agreed before a unit is provided. Transferring operational control means authorizing a UN commander to deploy units at his discretion in accordance with the agreed mission, resources and geographic restrictions. Deviating from the agreed objectives requires consultation with and approval from the nation supplying the troops.

In early 1995, B. van Lent, Esq., of the Judicial Affairs Division at the Ministry of Defence wrote in the *Militair Rechtelijke Tijdschrift*:

‘The Dutch government is able (and has an obligation) to impose conditions for provision of troops. These conditions may, for example, concern the objective and conditions of personnel deployment, preservation of criminal jurisdiction, financial aspects and the like. Such conditions are to be included in an agreement with the United Nations. Failure to comply with these conditions should lead the provision [of troops] to be revoked...’⁵³¹⁸

In 1979 the Parliament had severely reprimanded the contemporary Minister of Foreign Affairs C. van der Klaauw for providing an armoured infantry battalion for the UNIFIL operation without stipulating conditions.⁵³¹⁹ During the war in Yugoslavia, the Dutch had already encountered serious difficulties a year before Ter Beek offered an airmobile battalion due to the Dutch government’s failure to impose conditions concerning the area of their deployment. As a result, Dutch UNMOs were deployed exclusively in Bosnia (which was more dangerous) rather than in Croatia (where a ceasefire was in effect).⁵³²⁰ During this same period, the Dutch government proved perfectly capable of imposing

⁵³¹⁵ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵³¹⁶ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

⁵³¹⁷ Interview H.A. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview H.A. Couzy, 21/04/95.

⁵³¹⁸ B. van Lent, ‘Command and control’ in VN-vredesoperaties’ (‘Command and control’ in UN peacekeeping operations’), *Militair-Rechtelijke Tijdschrift* 88(1995)1, p. 21.

⁵³¹⁹ Vos, *Altaar*, pp. 71, 73, 77-78.

⁵³²⁰ Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

conditions, when it blocked realization of the transport unit offered for deployment in Bosnia, because its conditions had not been met, especially with respect to protection for the drivers.

On 7 September Minister Ter Beek, accompanied by Barth, Van den Breemen, Kreemers, Ter Kuile, Hoekema, D'Ansembourg and Colonel Van Veen, visited Boutros-Ghali at the UN headquarters. The UN Secretary-General, who had arrived from Europe by Concorde two hours earlier, opened the conversation with a wide range of subjects: discussions about the oil boycott against Iraq, extradition of Libyan suspects in the Lockerbie case, the Dutch contribution to UNTAC (the UN operation in Cambodia), the support for the Kalshoven Committee with a contingent of fifty troops, the location of the Yugoslavia tribunal to be established and ways to finance peace operations. First, Ter Beek raised the issue of the standby forces for the UN, which was current at the time. He then offered a battalion of the Airmobile Brigade 'for the Safe Areas,' according to D'Ansembourg's report of the meeting. Ter Beek mentioned very approximate figures of about a thousand troops and forty armoured vehicles.⁵³²¹ In the forty-minute conversation, only five minutes were devoted to the offer of the battalion.⁵³²²

According to the minister, Boutros-Ghali responded that this was 'very good news.'⁵³²³ In his response, the Secretary-General mentioned his recent conversation with NATO Secretary-General M. Wörner, 'which had also covered the force of troops required to implement the peace accord' that he hoped would be reached the next week in Geneva. He also noted that after three exercises, the response time for air strikes (including the go ahead that he had to issue) had been reduced to one hour. After discussion of a few more items, the conversation ended.⁵³²⁴

During the conversation, Ter Beek did not associate any conditions with deployment of the battalion.⁵³²⁵ He later stated that he had considered this unnecessary in such a formal conversation, since he assumed the Secretary-General would duly consider his letter of 31 August.⁵³²⁶ This letter had never been sent. Moreover, in September 1993 Ter Beek expected a peace settlement to be reached in the near future.⁵³²⁷ Because the offer was made without conditions, however, Ter Beek believed that the UN could assume afterwards 'that the Netherlands would also be willing to deploy this unit to protect the Safe Areas.'⁵³²⁸ Ter Beek saw no alternative. In June the Dutch government had offered 400 troops for the Safe Areas. Now that he was offering 1,100 troops instead, Ter Beek felt that he could hardly prohibit their use for the Safe Areas.⁵³²⁹ Later on, Van den Breemen did not recall whether the Safe Areas had been mentioned during the conversation. He believed that it had been assumed during the conversation that a comprehensive peace settlement would soon be forthcoming.⁵³³⁰ At Ter Beek's request, Van den Breemen visited the peace operations department at the UN to elucidate the new Dutch offer.⁵³³¹ Once again, no conditions were stated.⁵³³² Basically, the offer had been made for the Safe Areas and was unconditional.

The day after his visit with Boutros-Ghali, Ter Beek went to Washington, where he met with Perry and Lake. The American Defence Secretary and the National Security Advisor were delighted with the Dutch offer. They considered it an excellent step toward establishing a force for implementing

⁵³²¹ Kreemers, 'Aan de achterkant van de maan', p. 17.

⁵³²² Interview J.Th. Hoekema, 05/03/98.

⁵³²³ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁵³²⁴ DCBC, NYPR D'Ansembourg to Kooijmans, No. 925, 07/09/93.

⁵³²⁵ Kreemers, 'Brigade', Spring of 1994, p. 25; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 101 and hearing of D.J. Barth, 31/05/00; interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵³²⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 100.

⁵³²⁷ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 101.

⁵³²⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 104.

⁵³²⁹ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁵³³⁰ NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. Memorandum 'Bemoeienissen met het besluit tot uitzending,' n.d.

⁵³³¹ NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. Memorandum 'Bemoeienissen met het besluit tot uitzending,' n.d.

⁵³³² CSKL 1993. Dutchbat planning mission, Col. H.A.J. Bokhoven to Crisis staff CLF, 1035B, no. 93/350, 24/09/93, with appendices: H. Purolo, Note for file, 07/09/93.

a peace treaty.⁵³³³ Apparently, Ter Beek had assumed, as described in Chapter 12, that the offer had been made to the UN, which could deploy the battalion at its discretion. This could depend on the prevailing political circumstances. If a peace agreement was reached soon in Bosnia, the battalion could be deployed for this purpose. In the weeks following Ter Beek's visit with Boutros-Ghali, Foreign Affairs appears to have been in a state of confusion as well. This ministry, which in late August had objected to the letter that Ter Beek intended to send the UN Secretary-General on the grounds that the offer was not for the Safe Areas but for implementation of a peace settlement, now assumed that Ter Beek had offered the airmobile battalion to carry out a peace settlement.⁵³³⁴

2. Deterioration of international relations

Shortly after Ter Beek's offer of the Airmobile Brigade to Boutros-Ghali, however, two developments had major consequences for the setting in which the Dutch battalion would have to operate. While the peace negotiations had been suspended shortly before Ter Beek's visit to New York, Owen and Stoltenberg assumed that a treaty was still on the cards. The prospects for the Invincible Plan still appeared good, until it was effectively rejected by the Bosnian Parliament in late September. This course of events eliminated the possibility that the battalion would be deployed for implementing a peace treaty for the time being. Deployment to the Safe Areas was the only option left. Still, with a few months to go before the battalion's scheduled deployment, some believed that much could change and might enable the battalion to be deployed for a peace plan nonetheless.⁵³³⁵ Basing the military planning on this option, however, was not realistic. More likely scenarios included deployment to one of the six Safe Areas or a security assignment elsewhere for humanitarian aid to those areas.

Following the failure of the Invincible Plan, Owen and Stoltenberg started drafting a new plan targeting an integral solution for all problems in the former Yugoslavia rather than in Bosnia-Herzegovina alone. Negotiations with the parties in Bosnia continued during the final months of 1993. The Bosnian Muslims claimed areas in Western and Eastern Bosnia, where the majority had been Muslim before the war, while the Bosnian Serbs wanted the Posavina corridor to be broadened.

Van der Vlis later reported that he and Ter Beek felt that after the Bosnian Serbs⁵³³⁶ had rejected the peace plans, the Netherlands was no longer bound by its offer to provide the UN with an airmobile battalion for the time being either. Van der Vlis reversed the connection established in Resolution 836 between the Safe Areas and a peace settlement. Now that prospects for the peace settlement had disappeared for the moment, he felt that 'the Safe Areas concept had become a serious problem.'⁵³³⁷ In his memoirs about his term as a minister, Ter Beek has written that he, too, thought that deployment of the airmobile battalion had been called off for the moment.⁵³³⁸ Of course, the Dutch government was not in a position to simply withdraw its commitment.

On 5 November the German and French governments presented a plan to Willy Claes as the president of the European Union – as the former EC became known from 1 November onward – allocating the Bosnian Muslims three or four percent more land than they would have received under the Invincible Plan, or one third of the territory in the republic.⁵³³⁹ The plan also aimed for a *modus vivendi* between the Croatian government and the Croatian Serbs. If the Serbs co-operated with the plan's implementation, the sanctions against Serbia would gradually be lifted. Following approval from

⁵³³³ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99; Ter Beek, *Manoeuvreren*, p. 193; 'VS zien belangrijke rol Nederland in vredesmacht Bosnië' ('US sees important role for the Netherlands in Bosnian peacekeeping force'), *ANP*, 09/09/93, 17:04; 'VS zien Nederland als voorbeeld voor sterke Europese bijdrage' ('US sees the Netherlands as example for strong European contribution'), *ANP*, 09/09/93, 23:57.

⁵³³⁴ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 133.

⁵³³⁵ See e.g. Tromp, *Verraad*, pp. 87 (26/09/93) and 90 (11/10/93).

⁵³³⁶ He must have been referring to the Bosnian government.

⁵³³⁷ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 54.

⁵³³⁸ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvreren*, p. 194.

⁵³³⁹ ABZ, NYPR. Juppé and Kinkel to Claes, 05/11/93, appendices at DGPZ to New York PR, 09/11/93.

the rest of the European Union, this plan became known as the EU action plan. It was supported by the Dutch government,⁵³⁴⁰ which had consistently advocated more land in its efforts to achieve a fair peace settlement following the turn of events concerning the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan in late August. The support from the Dutch government may also have been motivated by the fear of international isolation, now that the German government had also changed its position, and the US government was expected to approve the plan as well.⁵³⁴¹ At a General Affairs Council of the EU on 22 November, Kooijmans acknowledged that the London principles were no longer an option.⁵³⁴² Nonetheless, the plan failed due to resistance from the Bosnian and – surprisingly – the US governments.

Once it had adopted this position, the Dutch government nevertheless tried to get the Clinton administration to support the plan. Without a peace settlement, a humanitarian emergency was imminent during the winter in Bosnia. The US government in Washington, however, was unwilling either to pressure Sarajevo or to lift the sanctions against Serbia.⁵³⁴³ On 9 December, in the margin of a meeting of the NATO Defence Planning Council, Ter Beek tried in vain to convince his US counterpart Les Aspin to provide troops for implementing the peace settlement. The Safe Areas were intended only as a ‘temporary arrangement’ pending a definitive settlement.⁵³⁴⁴ Also at Foreign Affairs, especially at DEU, there was a sudden drive to do away with the Safe Areas. Kooijmans seemed to understand that the longer the Safe Areas existed, the more anomalous they would become; ‘you need to embed them in a plan.’⁵³⁴⁵ The Safe Areas appeared to be an obstacle to a definitive peace settlement. Moreover, the Bosnian government was suggesting to the Netherlands, its ‘friend’ and ‘closest ally’ in the EU, that it would be amenable to an exchange of territory that also comprised the Eastern enclaves.⁵³⁴⁶

The problem was that neither the Bosnian government nor any of the Western governments would dare broach the idea in public of giving up the Eastern enclaves.⁵³⁴⁷ This would have brought moral discredit upon the West. The Netherlands tried to raise the matter discreetly at a CoPo council on 6 December 1993 but did not achieve any tangible results. Without US support and given the ongoing warfare of the Bosnian government, the EU Action Plan was doomed. Nevertheless, Kooijmans continued his efforts to convince the Americans until late January 1994, as the Dutch battalion would otherwise end up in an anomaly.

On 3 October, a few days after the Bosnian Parliament definitively rejected the Invincible Plan, an operation failed in Mogadishu in which the US elite unit the Rangers had attempted to arrest two officers of the local war lord Mohammed Farrah Aidid. Toward the end of the Bush administration on 9 December 1992, 1,800 US marines landed in Mogadishu. This action was part of a UN peace mission aimed at humanitarian objectives. It was the first time that US ground forces participated in such an operation.⁵³⁴⁸ The mission failed and changed from peacekeeping to peace-enforcing. The mounting violence forced Bush’s successor Clinton to deploy 400 Rangers. The abortive US operation yielded 18 American casualties and 78 injured. Total dead and injured Somalis probably exceeded 500. The presence of cameras enabled the entire world to witness the corpse of an American serviceman being dragged through the streets. The operation was the fiercest exchange of fire involving American soldiers since the Vietnam War. Its conclusion traumatized the American public once again. In late March 1994 the US troops were withdrawn from Mogadishu, and the entire UN mission was subsequently dismantled.

⁵³⁴⁰ P.H. Kooijmans, ‘Grimmig kaartspel’ (Gruesome card game), *Het Parool*, 08/12/93.

⁵³⁴¹ Both, *Indifference*, p. 168.

⁵³⁴² Both, *Indifference*, p. 169.

⁵³⁴³ Both, *Indifference*, p. 169.

⁵³⁴⁴ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 169-170.

⁵³⁴⁵ Interview Kooijmans, in: Both, 1999 version, p. 253, no. 87.

⁵³⁴⁶ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 170-171.

⁵³⁴⁷ Cf. Both, *Indifference*, p. 171.

⁵³⁴⁸ See e.g. Cees Homan, ‘Interventie in Somalië: het failliet van de “nieuwe wereldorde”’ (Intervention in Somalia: the bankruptcy of the ‘new world order’), Interchurch Peace Council/Pax Christi working group, *Interventie*, pp. 48-61.

Even during the weeks preceding the events in Mogadishu, the United States adopted considerable reserve toward the UN peace operations.⁵³⁴⁹ On 23 September 1993 at the National War College in Washington, D.C., Albright disclosed a list of five questions that the US government needed to ask before agreeing to support the UN peace operation:

Is there a genuine threat to international peace and security? Are the objectives of the proposed mission clear, and is their scope identifiable? Is a ceasefire in effect, and have the parties consented to the presence of UN troops? Are the required financial resources available? Can an end to the operation be defined? Four days later, Clinton repeated these questions in a speech before the UN General Assembly and indicated that he intended to make it harder for the United Nations to proclaim peace missions: ‘The United Nations simply cannot become engaged in every one of the world’s conflicts. If the American people are to say yes to UN peacekeeping, the United Nations must know when to say no.’⁵³⁵⁰

Following the incident in Mogadishu, Washington decided to stop getting dragged into ‘operation creep,’ in which the objectives changed from peacekeeping to peace-enforcing.⁵³⁵¹ Although the Rangers had not been under UN command in Mogadishu, Washington, eager to identify a scapegoat, reported it would never again place American troops under UN command. The US government became highly critical even of UN operations in which the US did not participate. Henceforth, the so-called Mogadishu line determined the American disposition toward the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Washington’s new reluctance toward peace operations was formulated in May 1994 in Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) 25, which demanded a clear objective, a chain of command acceptable to Washington, adequate resources and an operation of limited duration. In addition, there had to be a clear relation to American interests and sufficient chance of success. American troops would be deployed only where necessary for the operation to succeed.⁵³⁵² At any rate, Washington did not want the United Nations to become ‘a dumping ground for conflicts that the warring factions themselves lack the will to resolve.’⁵³⁵³

Not only was the US government deeply impressed by the events in Mogadishu. Within the United Nations the fiasco instigated doubt as to the prudence of the trend of doing more than with conventional peace operations that had emerged in the early 1990s. General willingness to resort to violence for UN operations diminished.⁵³⁵⁴ Even if a peace settlement were reached in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the short term, the likelihood that the US government would be willing to supply troops had dwindled.

The failure of the Invincible Plan and the changed US attitude toward peace operations were not cause for the Dutch government to reconsider the offer that Ter Beek had made to Boutros-Ghali. As Minderhoud said: ‘That would have an embarrassment! It would have been like saying ‘Yes, but the car crashed. I won’t drive anymore.’

3. Preliminary reconnaissance

Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse was shocked when Colonel Van Veen called him soon after Minister Ter Beek’s visit to Boutros-Ghali and informed him that the offer of deployment of the airmobile battalion had been unconditional.⁵³⁵⁵ He intended to launch a reconnaissance mission to Bosnia straight away.

⁵³⁴⁹ Cf. interview G. Ward, 01/12/00.

⁵³⁵⁰ Haass, *Intervention*, p. 17. Cf. Shawcross, *Evil*, p. 122; John MacKinlay, ‘Problems for U.S. Forces in Operations Beyond Peacekeeping’, Lewis (ed.), *Peacekeeping*, p. 30.

⁵³⁵¹ Cf. the interview J.A. Schear, 30/11/00.

⁵³⁵² For a concise account, see ‘Clinton Administration Policy’; M. Nishihara, ‘Japan-U.S. cooperation in U.N. peace efforts’, Harrison/Nishihara (eds.), *UN Peacekeeping*, p. 164.

⁵³⁵³ Anthony Lake, ‘The Limits of Peacekeeping’, *The New York Times*, 06/02/94.

⁵³⁵⁴ Michael N. Barnett, ‘The Politics of Indifference at the United Nations and Genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia’, Cushman & Mestrovi (eds.), *Time*, pp. 151-152.

⁵³⁵⁵ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

The day after Ter Beek offered the airmobile battalion in New York, Major F. Peermans, who was stationed as G3/Plans at B-H Command, informed the Dutch contingent commander Colonel M.J.H. Bevers with a view toward the upcoming visit from Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse that various options were available for deploying the Dutch battalion: helping secure freedom of movement for UNPROFOR in the Tarcin-Jablanica-Dreznica area; deployment in Zenica to stabilize the situation there, deployment in Sarajevo or in one of the Safe Areas at Bihac (together with a French battalion), Srebrenica or Gorazde.⁵³⁵⁶ On 13 September Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse wrote Couzy explaining that there were various options for deployment of the Dutch battalion. He listed only the first two. Why he did not indicate the other possibilities, which had been faxed to the Crisis Staff a few days earlier, remains unclear. The Chief of Staff wrote that he had elaborated both the options he mentioned and had informed General Schouten, commander of the First Army Corps, that he preferred Zenica.⁵³⁵⁷

Also on 13 September, Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse travelled to Bosnia for a few days with Lieutenant Colonel Chris Vermeulen, commander of the eleventh battalion of the Airmobile Brigade, which would be the first to be deployed. They were accompanied by Major E.R. Sinninghe of the 10th engineering corps combat group. At BH Command in Kiseljak, they inquired how and where the Dutch battalion would be deployed. Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse recalled that the BH Command G3 Operations officer, a French Canadian colonel, mentioned five deployment options to his Dutch guests: Zenica, Jablanica, Sarajevo, Visoko and Srebrenica. According to the White Paper that Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse wrote immediately following his return to the Netherlands on 19 September, Visoko was not listed, and Srebrenica had been mentioned together with Zepa.⁵³⁵⁸ The report drafted by Major Sinninghe a week later indicated the same.⁵³⁵⁹ The two travel reports deviated from what Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse later recalled in other respects as well. According to the White Paper, BH Command focused on the Zenica and Srebrenica/Zepa options.⁵³⁶⁰ Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse remembered the Canadian colonel that spoke with the Dutch battalion mentioning Srebrenica as a non-option: it would not happen. Dutchbat was most likely to be assigned to Zenica in Central Bosnia. The Dutch trio was told that the Bosnian Serbs would not allow them to travel to Srebrenica. As the area had been described as a non-option anyway, the urge to go there was also minimal, according to Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse. The Dutch then considered the first four options. In Visoko, where Canadians were billeted, they also inquired about the situation in Srebrenica. Vermeulen is believed to have received a description of the situation, such as the location of the Canadian observation posts.⁵³⁶¹ J. Champagne, the officer who spoke with them, later stated that Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse and Vermeulen seemed disinterested in his explanation about the difficulties in Srebrenica.⁵³⁶² That impression might be corroborated if Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse was right with respect to his subsequent assertion that the G3 in Kiseljak had said that Srebrenica was a non-option. But if his immediate record of first impressions of 19 September 1993 are right, according to which the Zenica and Srebrenica/Zepa options were emphasized, this attitude is incomprehensible. After this reconnaissance, Vermeulen was certain that his battalion would be deployed to Central Bosnia.

‘There were about six options. It must be in writing, but I was unable to find it again. (...) Five were marked with plus and minus signs, but not the last one.

⁵³⁵⁶ CSKL 1993 Dutchbat planning mission, Maj. Peersman, Commitment of Dutchbat in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 08/09/93, appendix with Col. Bevers to CLF Crisis Staff, 1105B, no. 93/321, 09/09/93.

⁵³⁵⁷ CSKL 1993 Dutchbat planning mission, internal memorandum from CS Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to CLF, 13/09/93.

⁵³⁵⁸ DCBC, Cabinet 13, File 3, First impression report of orientation visit to UNPROFOR by CS Dutch Army Crisis Staff morning paper, 1800, 19/09/93; TCBU, *Vertretpunt* I, p. 133.

⁵³⁵⁹ CSKL 1993, Internal memorandum from Sinninghe, 101 Engineering corps combat group, no. 10929, 27/09/93.

⁵³⁶⁰ DCBC, Cabinet 13, File 3, First impression report of orientation visit to UNPROFOR by CS Dutch Army Crisis Staff morning paper, 1800, 19/09/93; TCBU, *Vertretpunt* I, p. 133.

⁵³⁶¹ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵³⁶² Interview J. Champagne, 12/11/99.

That one was really not important. It was Srebrenica/Zepa. We had ‘BVTed’ about that one in advance in The Hague as well.⁵³⁶³ We were aware of a controversy among the staff in Kiseljak, between General Briquemont and his own staff. He kept saying that he wanted to send a unit, preferably the first one available, toward Srebrenica/Zepa.⁵³⁶⁴

Surely, this should have been cause for considering that option more seriously. The Royal Netherlands Army officers, however, continued to assume they would be deployed to Central Bosnia.

According to the logistic BVT that the Army officers compiled of Srebrenica/Zepa (see Part II, Chapter 5), the enclaves were too far apart for this option to be feasible. The Army called it the Michelin option because of the need to drive a hundred kilometre detour to reach Zepa.⁵³⁶⁵ That information made Vermeulen stop and think: ‘Darn, I hope they don’t screw me (...)!’⁵³⁶⁶ When the Dutch Major Peersman reported a few weeks later that the place assigned to the Dutch battalion was still unclear, and that the possible place of deployment kept changing,⁵³⁶⁷ those in charge of Defence became worried. Apparently, Van der Vlis was far less certain than suggested above that the Bosnian government’s rejection of a peace settlement allowed the Netherlands to withdraw its offer of an airmobile battalion.⁵³⁶⁸ On 8 October Van der Vlis wrote in a White Paper for the Political Council of the Ministry of Defence that the rejection of a peace settlement brought deployment for the Safe Areas closer than ever. In his White Paper the Chief of Defence Staff listed the four areas of deployment mentioned to Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse and Vermeulen during their visit to Bosnia: Zenica, Srebrenica/Zepa, Tarcin/Jablanica and Sarajevo. He recommended pressuring UNPROFOR not to station the airmobile battalion in Srebrenica. Zenica was the preferred place of deployment.⁵³⁶⁹ In a White Paper to the Political Council, the Chief of Defence Staff wrote: ‘The Srebrenica/Zepa option, which UNPROFOR strongly prefers with the anticipated withdrawal of the Canadians in mind, will, due to the site’s inaccessibility, present major logistic problems for the battalion.’⁵³⁷⁰ On 11 October the Political Council of the ministry seconded this conclusion of the Chief of Defence Staff.⁵³⁷¹

By then, the Intelligence Section of the Army had teamed up with Section 2 (Information) of the Airmobile Brigade to compile accounts of the military installations such as barracks, practice sites, storage facilities for munitions and fuel and airports, as well as checkpoints, roadblocks and tunnels for all four potential deployment areas mentioned to Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, Vermeulen and Sinninghe in mid-September. On 18 October this investigation was completed.⁵³⁷² On 26 October word arrived from New York from the military advisor Colonel Van Veen that the UN secretariat had assigned the airmobile battalion offered to Gorazde, Zepa and Srebrenica. UNPROFOR Commander Cot was considering a battalion subdivided into four companies. At least one company would operate in each area, leaving one company as an operational reserve for the battalion.⁵³⁷³

⁵³⁶³ ‘BVT’ stands for assessment of the situation.

⁵³⁶⁴ Interview Chr. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.

⁵³⁶⁵ Interview C. Haverhoek, 27/04/98.

⁵³⁶⁶ Interview Chr. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.

⁵³⁶⁷ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵³⁶⁸ See also Vandeweyer’s remark in Def. DCBC, memorandum from Vandeweyer to CDS, Update concerning deployment of the first airmobile battalion to former Yugoslavia, 30/09/93: ‘If no treaty is reached, the UN will undoubtedly revert to plans and offers made under previous resolutions.’

⁵³⁶⁹ NIOD, Coll.Ter Beek. Note regarding deployment of the first airmobile battalion to former Yugoslavia by Van der Vlis, 08/10/93, S93/061/3190; Van Aardenne-Van der Hoeven, TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, pp. 54 and 101.

⁵³⁷⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 54.

⁵³⁷¹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 134.

⁵³⁷² R.B. Barend to various parties, 18/10/93, no. 26996/041093, with appendices. List of installations and military objects in Bosnia-Herzegovina (in possible deployment areas of 11 (NL) Airmbl Brig.).

⁵³⁷³ CRST. CSKL 1993, Dutchbat planning assignment, Biegan to Kooijmans, No. 1283, 26/10/93. See also ABZ, DIE/2001/00023. Memorandum from DEU to AP et al., 02/11/93, 335/93.

Of the six Safe Areas, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo seemed to be in the least danger, especially after the US government announced in late July and early August that it would not permit the fall of the Bosnian capital. The city was so much the centre of world interest elsewhere that its fall was improbable, even in the unlikely event that the VRS managed to launch a successful attack. Tuzla also encompassed a fairly large area and appeared capable of defending itself. Bihac was a very special area, as all parties – the Croats, the Serbs and the Muslims under Abdic's leadership – seemed to acknowledge. The Eastern enclaves were the problem: Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde, precisely the areas where the airmobile battalion would be deployed, according to the report from Colonel Van Veen.

Srebrenica and its immediate surroundings often figured in the Dutch press, which had published several reports about the murder in Bratunac in April 1992.⁵³⁷⁴ In Bratunac the journalist Bart Rijs had witnessed Serb video and hearsay testimonies of over one hundred murders that the Muslims were believed to have committed against their population group. Whether or not they were true, Rijs wrote that such information plunged the inhabitants of Bratunac into:

‘.....a state that they are willing to commit such atrocities themselves. As a result, the next video and the next story need not be contrived or distorted, since the adversary is using the same tactics. Most of the people in Bratunac are consumed by hatred.

All Serbs have reason to hate the Muslims. The people from Bratunac are afraid of losing their homes and their loved ones, the refugees because of their desire for vengeance, and the many Serb volunteers because there might be something left to pillage, and because they simply enjoy hating others. We can easily imagine what will happen when the Serbs conquer the last Muslim villages.⁵³⁷⁵

In August 1992, Rijs and the photographer Kadir van Lohuizen reached Srebrenica. Working for the weekly *HP/De Tijd*, they were the first journalists to enter Srebrenica since the town had been under siege. They had met Oric there, ‘an amiable athletic fellow, with a frank expression,’ who had escorted them around Srebrenica for 24 hours.⁵³⁷⁶ He had shown them a town half in ruins with thirty thousand refugees swarming around each other like ants, where the inhabitants went to search for food daily near the enclave, where they might step on mines or encounter Serb patrols. Oric's soldiers could supplement their arms and munitions only through raids on Serbs. ‘They are aware that they cannot defend themselves against planes or a massive tank attack. Everybody has been through enough to know what lies in store after that.’ ‘That is why we prefer to die fighting.’⁵³⁷⁷

Srebrenica also received extensive television coverage in the Netherlands. On 28 November the Dutch public news (NOS) broadcast scenes of inhabitants of the enclave delighted at the arrival of a UN food convoy.⁵³⁷⁸ A few months later, the same news programme covered the US food droppings over Srebrenica,⁵³⁷⁹ the desperate shortages of food and medical supplies⁵³⁸⁰ and the Serb offensive against the town in March and April 1993.⁵³⁸¹ Like much of the Western media, Dutch television also broadcast Morillon's demands that the Bosnian Serbs admit aid convoys and his guarantees of safety to

⁵³⁷⁴ F. van Deijl, ‘Ik hou van jou, mijn Bosnië’ (‘I love you, my Bosnia’), *HP/De Tijd*, 14/08/92, pp. 25-27; Bart Rijs, ‘Sporen van een massamoord’ (‘Traces of a massacre’), *HP/De Tijd*, 28/08/92, pp. 10-12.

⁵³⁷⁵ Bart Rijs, ‘Reis naar het einde van Bosnië’ (‘Journey to the end of Bosnia’), *HP/De Tijd*, 04/09/92, p. 24.

⁵³⁷⁶ Bart Rijs, ‘Reis naar het einde van Bosnië’, *HP/De Tijd*, 04/09/92, p. 26.

⁵³⁷⁷ Bart Rijs, ‘Reis naar het einde van Bosnië’, *HP/De Tijd*, 04/09/92, p. 27.

⁵³⁷⁸ NOS, *TV Journaal*, 28/11/92.

⁵³⁷⁹ NOS, *TV Journaals*, 02/03/93 and 17/03/93.

⁵³⁸⁰ NOS, *TV Journaal*, 29/03/93.

⁵³⁸¹ NOS, *TV Journaal*, 07/03/92.

the inhabitants in mid-March.⁵³⁸² Morillon's action in Srebrenica in March 1993, when he had personally declared the area a UN enclave, met with approval in the Netherlands.⁵³⁸³ The disorganized evacuations from Srebrenica in March and April 1993, which involved casualties, appeared on Dutch television news as well.⁵³⁸⁴

Following the establishment of a Safe Area in Srebrenica, UNHCR had reported repeatedly that serious demoralization and anarchist conditions prevailed in Srebrenica as a result of the food shortage and the precarious situation there for relief workers. According to UNHCR, conditions were different in Zepa and Gorazde. The problems there were generally the same, but UNHCR was more in control. These reports had been conveyed to the Dutch government by Wagenmakers, the Dutch Permanent Representative in Geneva.⁵³⁸⁵

The Dutch military intelligence service (MID) also covered Srebrenica in its analyses of the course of events in the former Yugoslavia. Following the rise in shootings at the enclaves of Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde in October 1993, the MID wrote in a commentary in early November:

‘These shootings probably serve mainly to terrorize the civilian population and if possible to erode morale among the Bosnian troops. As far as the Safe Areas are concerned, Bosnian-Serb leaders have emphasized repeatedly that they will not tolerate Muslim areas along the border with Serbia. The shootings may also serve to drive the remaining Muslims away from the Safe Areas. The Serbs are unlikely, however, to take actions that will elicit a massive international response and consequently jeopardize their conquests of the past few months.’⁵³⁸⁶

According to the MID [Military Intelligence Service], Bosnian-Serb subjugation of the Muslim areas in the region along the border with Serbia was a long-term Serb political objective.⁵³⁸⁷ Colonel Van Veen, the military advisor to the Dutch permanent representation at the UN, had held this opinion from the outset.⁵³⁸⁸ Over a week later, the MID reported daily Serb shootings at the Eastern enclaves. The intelligence services noted, ‘however, that such shootings are often provoked by the Bosnian forces shooting at the Serbs from population centres.’ According to the service, Bosnian-Serb aggression toward the enclaves was ‘a distinct possibility.’ In the view of the MID, the Serbs aimed to control the Safe Areas through hostage taking.⁵³⁸⁹ Therefore, some awareness must have existed that Srebrenica and its surroundings were not as peaceful as the term Safe Area might suggest.

On 21 October Boutros-Ghali officially accepted the offer from the Dutch airmobile battalion for the Safe Areas, which was to be launched in early 1994.⁵³⁹⁰ In his response on 3 November, in which the government itemized the battalion provided, Kooijmans advocated launching the battalion in Central Bosnia near the Belgian-Dutch transport battalion.⁵³⁹¹ A parliamentary debate was scheduled

⁵³⁸² NOS, *TV Journaals*, 13/03/93, 16/03/93, 17/03/93 and 19/03/93. See e.g. also H. Steenhuis, ‘Philippe Morillon’, *HP/De Tijd*, 21/05/93, pp. 20-24.

⁵³⁸³ Cf. interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

⁵³⁸⁴ NOS, *TV Journaals*, 20/03/93, 21/02/93, 22/03/93 and 31/03/93.

⁵³⁸⁵ See e.g. ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812, Wagenmakers to Kooijmans, No. 435, 27/05/93.

⁵³⁸⁶ MID. MID, *Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie* [Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation], 62/93, 02/11/93.

⁵³⁸⁷ See e.g. MID. MID, *Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie* [Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation], 64/93, 10/11/93; 68/93, 07/12/93; 71/93, 21/12/93.

⁵³⁸⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of N.H. Biegman, 29/05/00, p. 189.

⁵³⁸⁹ MID/CO. MID, *Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie* [Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation], 64/93, 10/11/93. Cf. 66/93, 24/11/93.

⁵³⁹⁰ CRST. CSKL 1993, Dutch participation, Boutros-Ghali to UNPR, 21/10/93.

⁵³⁹¹ ABZ, DDI/DEU/05275 (HvhS) Kooijmans to New York PR, No. 403, 03/11/93; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 134.

for the evening of 16 November to discuss the situation in the former Yugoslavia and to inform Parliament about the deployment of the airmobile battalion.⁵³⁹²

With the parliamentary debate in mind, Minister Ter Beek decided to visit Bosnia from 9 to 11 November. A team led by General Brinkman and comprising DAB staff member Princen, Vandewijer of the Defence Staff and Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse preceded him. According to Van der Vlis, Ter Beek's trip was the outcome of his White Paper of 8 October, in which he had advised the minister not to agree to station the battalion in Srebrenica. Ter Beek wanted to investigate 'the opportunities and problems' in Bosnia himself.⁵³⁹³ Couzy did not believe such an open arrangement existed. He regarded the minister's visit primarily as 'window dressing'.⁵³⁹⁴ It was intended mainly to 'suggest that everything was receiving careful consideration'⁵³⁹⁵ and was 'a major theatrical production' directed by the minister.⁵³⁹⁶ Prior to the journey, it was already known that Briquemont would be absent during the minister's visit, as he would be on holiday.⁵³⁹⁷ Couzy was certain before the visit that Srebrenica would be the site of deployment. He believed that Minister Ter Beek must have known this as well. Since August, his staff had been telling him 'practically every week' that he should claim Central Bosnia to ensure that the Dutch battalion was not stationed in Srebrenica. 'Of course the Minister and the Chief of Defence Staff must have known this.'⁵³⁹⁸ At least, this sentiment emerged from Van der Vlis's White Paper of 8 October.

Brinkman's team departed with the open mission of assessing B-H Command's views on the area of deployment of the Dutch battalion.⁵³⁹⁹ In Kiseljak they spoke with the G3, a Canadian colonel that Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse and Vermeulen had also spoken with in September, and with the British Brigadier Ramsey, Briquemont's Chief of Staff and first deputy. They indicated two possible areas of deployment for the Dutch battalion: Central Bosnia or deployment in Srebrenica and Zepa. The Scandinavian countries were to be requested for the latter option, as they already had units stationed in Tuzla. Central Bosnia was considered interesting to the Dutch for the same reason: the Belgian-Dutch transport battalion was already stationed there.⁵⁴⁰⁰ Despite the shared preference, Brinkman contacted the headquarters of the Canadian battalion in Visoko. He spoke with a Canadian company commander who had just returned from Srebrenica and briefed Brinkman extensively about the problems that the Canadian troops encountered there with positioning their troops, getting supplies and aid to the population and guarding the status quo.⁵⁴⁰¹

According to Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, the Dutch did not get a clear impression of the intentions of UNPROFOR for the Dutch battalion from these conversations. The impression was that the battalion would be assigned a role in Central Bosnia, but whether it would be in Zenica or Kupres remained unclear. Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse reported that he and his travel companions received only one guarantee: deployment to Srebrenica would not happen. He vehemently denies the impression conveyed about this subject in Ter Beek's book *Manoeuvres*. Considering the allegations of other concerned individuals and the documents, as revealed below, Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse must be mistaken on this point.⁵⁴⁰²

Upon arriving in Zagreb on 9 November, Minister Ter Beek and his entourage learned from Brinkman that Briquemont had yet to determine the location. According to Ter Beek, Brinkman said

⁵³⁹² ABZ, DDI/DPV, memorandum from DPV and DAV to Kooijmans, DPV-2747/93, 05/11/93.

⁵³⁹³ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 54.

⁵³⁹⁴ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 62.

⁵³⁹⁵ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 60.

⁵³⁹⁶ Interview H.A. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98. See also NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. File 8c, *Besluitvorming uitzending luchtmobiele brigade* (Deciding about the deployment of the Airmobile Brigade), Interview H. Couzy, 21/04/95.

⁵³⁹⁷ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III hearing of H. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 62.

⁵³⁹⁸ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

⁵³⁹⁹ Interview J.-W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

⁵⁴⁰⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, II, J.-W. Brinkman to A.D. Bakker, 23/05/00, p. 43; interview J.-W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

⁵⁴⁰¹ Interview J.-W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

⁵⁴⁰² Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

that the UN commanders were considering two possibilities for the Dutch battalion: stationing it in Central Bosnia in the Zenica-Vares-Kladanj triangle, north of the Belgian-Dutch transport battalion, or stationing part of it in Central Bosnia and part of it in Srebrenica.⁵⁴⁰³ In the first case, the airmobile battalion would perform security tasks for humanitarian convoys. In the second case, part of the battalion would perform such tasks, while the other part would be stationed in Srebrenica. According to a White Paper that the advance party led by Brinkman faxed Ter Beek prior to the conversation, the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command preferred deploying the Dutch battalion in Central Bosnia.⁵⁴⁰⁴ Couzy was very reluctant about the Srebrenica option, considering the logistic problems anticipated.

According to Ter Beek, Couzy reprimanded Brinkman severely for remarking that the Netherlands could also handle this second option, since he had understood from the Canadian company commander that the mission was difficult but not impossible.⁵⁴⁰⁵ Other participants in the meeting have a different recollection of the incident. In the first place Brinkman, though Kreemers had later tried to convince him that Ter Beek's version was accurate.⁵⁴⁰⁶ According to Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, deployment to Srebrenica had not been an issue. Remarks on the subject therefore could not have been cause for calling Brinkman to order.⁵⁴⁰⁷ Barth maintained that Couzy had kept mum throughout Brinkman's presentation. Afterwards, Barth told Couzy that Brinkman's position had surprised him, as he (Barth) certainly preferred deployment to Zenica. Couzy was quoted by Barth as having said that he did not want to argue with Brinkman in the presence of the troop front.⁵⁴⁰⁸ Brinkman also remembered Barth asking Couzy what the commander intended to do with Brinkman. Couzy was believed to have responded that he would speak to Brinkman later, although Brinkman said that Couzy never brought the subject up again.⁵⁴⁰⁹ Couzy later stated that he had sat there fuming at the superlatives hurled back and forth during Brinkman's presentation.⁵⁴¹⁰ Afterwards, he had remarked that Brinkman's positive assessment of deployment to Srebrenica reflected insufficient consideration for the difficulties it entailed.⁵⁴¹¹ Princen supported this interpretation. He believed that Couzy considered Brinkman's position foolhardy and reminded the commander of the problems with logistic and medical care. Couzy did not, however, reject deployment to Srebrenica.⁵⁴¹² While Couzy was unwilling to be more outspoken with the minister present, the commander felt that his views on the matter must have been clear to discerning listeners, since he ordinarily remained silent during briefings.⁵⁴¹³ 'When we returned to our hotel rooms,' Couzy related, 'the delegation proved to have noticed that the briefing had not been entirely objective. "Will you be putting Brinkman before the firing squad or simply discharging him," a few members asked me.'⁵⁴¹⁴ Couzy himself later said that as soon as he understood prior to the trip that the deployment decision had actually already been taken, the location 'no longer mattered' to him. He had never resisted Srebrenica as the area of deployment.⁵⁴¹⁵

While Brinkman's group returned to the Netherlands, Minister Ter Beek travelled to Kiseljak the next day for a meeting. Unlike Brinkman's team, the minister and his entourage spoke not with

⁵⁴⁰³ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 102.

⁵⁴⁰⁴ NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek. Memorandum from Brinkman, Princen, Vandeweyer and Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse to MinDef plus UNPROFOR delegation visit, n.d.

⁵⁴⁰⁵ Kreemers, 'Balkan-expres', p. 22; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 102; Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 198.

⁵⁴⁰⁶ Interview J.-W. Brinkman, 16/05/00.

⁵⁴⁰⁷ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵⁴⁰⁸ Interview D.J. Barth, 08/10/99.

⁵⁴⁰⁹ Interview J.-W. Brinkman, 16/05/00.

⁵⁴¹⁰ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

⁵⁴¹¹ Interview H.A. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98.

⁵⁴¹² Interview F. Princen, 08/01/98.

⁵⁴¹³ Interview H.A. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98.

⁵⁴¹⁴ Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 142.

⁵⁴¹⁵ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 62.

Briquemont's first but with his second deputy, the Spanish Brigadier General Luis Feliz Ortega, who knew nothing and hardly spoke English.⁵⁴¹⁶ Ter Beek recommended that the Dutch battalion be deployed in the Vares-Kakanj-Zenica triangle, because it would not depend on Serb permission for supplies there, and the area was contiguous and adjacent to the Belgian-Dutch transport battalion.⁵⁴¹⁷ In retrospect, Ter Beek wondered whether UNPROFOR had already decided to station the Dutch battalion in Srebrenica.⁵⁴¹⁸ That was also the impression of Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, who made a third trip to Bosnia in November to get more information about the area of deployment. He believed that Srebrenica and Zepa were not explicitly mentioned as the sole location of deployment to the Dutch authorities, because this might very well have led the Dutch government to withdraw the offer of a battalion.⁵⁴¹⁹ Ter Beek and Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse appear to have been right. In the summer of 2000, Briquemont stated: 'From September-October a Dutch battalion in Srebrenica and Zepa looked like the only solution to me. (...) So from September-October I said: "The Dutch battalion should go to Srebrenica."⁵⁴²⁰ Only because the arrival of the Dutch battalion was constantly deferred, had he attempted to enhance the Nordic battalion in Srebrenica. His effort failed.

On 10 November General Bastiaans, now head of the UN military observers in Bosnia-Herzegovina, briefed Ter Beek in Busovaca about the options presented to the Dutch on the matter. Based on the reports from the Canadians, Bastiaans had formed an impression of the state of dependence of the UN military in Srebrenica. The VRS controlled the flow of supplies to the enclave and directed its fire to express its desires to the UN troops inside. If the political decision were taken to deploy Dutch troops in Srebrenica, Bastiaans believed it should be made clear that they would 'definitely not be calling the shots' there.⁵⁴²¹ The next day Bastiaans had an extensive discussion with the British Brigadier General Ramsay in Kiseljak about the place where the Dutch battalion would be stationed. According to the entry in his diary, placement in Zenica – or at least partially in Zenica – was the main idea.⁵⁴²²

4. Government decision to deploy

On the plane back from Zagreb to the Netherlands, Ter Beek and Couzy discussed the basic conditions for deployment. Couzy felt that deployment should not exceed two years. Moreover, the Dutch unit should operate in a contiguous area. The minister agreed to both conditions.

After being summoned to the airport that afternoon, Van der Vlis met the minister upon his return to Naval Airfield Valkenburg on 11 November. The two spoke until 2am.⁵⁴²³ Couzy was present, but only listened. He felt that the minister had made up his mind.⁵⁴²⁴ Van der Vlis soon got the same impression.⁵⁴²⁵ 'Like a Tibetan prayer mill,' the Chief of Defence Staff reiterated all arguments against deployment and especially against being stationed in an enclave. Ter Beek, however, did not find his highest military advisor's arguments politically convincing. Finally, Ter Beek asked Van der Vlis about the risks facing the troops to be deployed. Van der Vlis considered them acceptable, as he did not expect Mladic to assault the UN personnel.⁵⁴²⁶ Van der Vlis subsequently resigned himself to the

⁵⁴¹⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, p. 102; Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 199.

⁵⁴¹⁷ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 23/03/00, p. 32.

⁵⁴¹⁸ TCBU, conversation with A.L. ter Beek, 23/03/00, p. 32.

⁵⁴¹⁹ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵⁴²⁰ Interview F. Briquemont, 22/06/00.

⁵⁴²¹ Interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00; NIOD, Coll. Bastiaans. Diary entry of G.J.M. Bastiaans, 10/11/93.

⁵⁴²² NIOD, Coll. Bastiaans. Diary entry of G.J.M. Bastiaans, 11/11/93.

⁵⁴²³ Kreemers, 'Aan de achterkant van de maan', p. 23.

⁵⁴²⁴ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 62; interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 13/02/98.

⁵⁴²⁵ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 54.

⁵⁴²⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 54; interview with A.L. Ter Beek, 01/12/99; Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 143.

decision, although he questioned the duration of the deployment. Ter Beek then reduced its duration to eighteen months.

The main question that puzzled Couzy and Van der Vlis in their respective objections to deployment of the airmobile battalion was: how far can a military advisor – especially the highest military advisor – to the minister go in criticizing the decision-making? The prevailing view on the matter is that military advisors may express dissent during the policy preparation stage and must loyally execute decisions once taken.⁵⁴²⁷ If they still disagree with decisions and are unable to abide by them, they should accept the consequences and resign.

After returning from his holiday in late August 1993 to find the White Paper of 17 August and its approval by the Ministerial Council, Van der Vlis was under the impression that ‘the draft decision to deploy the airmobile battalion had effectively been taken.’⁵⁴²⁸ Nonetheless, he continued resisting deployment until 11 November, the day before its approval by the Ministerial Council. Only then did he face the decision between staying or resigning. Because this concerned operational deployment, he felt that loyalty among the forces should be beyond question. Nor did he consider such a moment opportune for a senior military officer to resign.⁵⁴²⁹ Couzy believed that the definitive decision, which he had to respect, had been taken earlier: the moment that Minister Ter Beek presented the battalion to the UN Secretary-General.⁵⁴³⁰

The question is whether the two generals abandoned their dissuasive efforts at the right time. The context for implementing the decision was highly dynamic. No information was available yet regarding important issues such as the area of deployment, even though Briquemont already knew. Was the Chief of Defence Staff not allowed to continue commenting on the subsequent developments, even publicly?⁵⁴³¹ The extended echoes of two incidents during the Den Uyl administration probably affected Dutch views about the informal relationships between members of the military and government ministers: the 1974 conflict of generals, when several high-ranking officers locked horns with Defence Minister Henk Vredeling and the flight of a few naval Neptunes over the government centre (Binnenhof) to protest cutbacks in 1976. Moreover, the consistent irritation in response to public statements from military officers, especially those of Couzy, attests to such over-sensitivity as well. Following the memorable nightly meeting at Valkenburg, Van der Vlis had made up his mind as well.

‘All that mattered to me anymore was to prepare this difficult mission that lay ahead as quickly as possible and to ensure that everything was in order. At one of the morning briefings, I told my staff: ‘People, you know where I stand on this, but the discussion is over. We all have to stick together on this and make sure that everything goes smoothly.’⁵⁴³²

The Chief of Defence Staff advised Couzy to follow this line as well.⁵⁴³³ This advice came a bit too late. Couzy had already spoken with *NRC Handelsblad* journalist Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, who reported in his newspaper the next day that Couzy objected to deployment of the Airmobile Brigade in Bosnia, because it allowed ‘insufficient leeway’ for the use of force.⁵⁴³⁴ He had noticed at the discussions in

⁵⁴²⁷ See e.g. M. van den Doel in: ‘Een militair in de politiek’ (‘A soldier in the political world’), *Carré* 18(1994)11, p. 30; ‘Storm in een glas water’ (‘Storm in a teacup’), *Carré* 20(1996)1, p. 24.

⁵⁴²⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, 22/05/00, p. 534.

⁵⁴²⁹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, p. 55-56.

⁵⁴³⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, II, Couzy to Bakker, 29/05/00, p. 47; interview H.A. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98; Robijns, ‘Baas’, p. 18.

⁵⁴³¹ Cavalry Major D.M. Brongers provided an affirmative answer to this question in ‘Luchtmobiele brigade: met beide benen op de grond?’, *Carré* 16(1993)12, p. 16.

⁵⁴³² TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, p. 56.

⁵⁴³³ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, p. 56.

⁵⁴³⁴ Willibrord Nieuwenhuis, ‘Nederlandse bevelhebber: Luchtmobiele brigade nog niet inzetten’ (‘Dutch commander: Don’t deploy Airmobile Brigade yet’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/11/93.

Kiseljak that the officers there wanted to 'keep the use of force to a minimum.' They were expected to refrain from force where required for military purposes to avoid tainting the humanitarian nature of the UNPROFOR operation in Bosnia.⁵⁴³⁵ Couzy appears to have misunderstood when to stop issuing recommendations through the media. According to the Ministry of Defence, however, Couzy did not disagree with the minister on this point: 'Couzy believes that the instructions about the use of force leave local soldiers few options.'⁵⁴³⁶ And Couzy stated following the publication in the *NRC Handelsblad* that he had 'no objections to the decisions taken by the minister of Defence.' He believed that broader instructions on the use of force would enable the crew of the armoured vehicles available to the airmobile battalion to use the machine gun mounted on them sooner.⁵⁴³⁷

On 12 November the Ministerial Council also approved the proposal to deploy the Airmobile Brigade for a year and a half. The two options reported to Minister Ter Beek during his visit to Bosnia the previous week were mentioned as possible areas of deployment; deployment to Central Bosnia or partial deployment to Central Bosnia and partial deployment to Srebrenica. The Ministerial Council preferred deploying the battalion in a contiguous area. Various ministers expressed doubts and concern about the operation. They therefore adopted a two-stage decision, which basically complied with Boutros-Ghali's official request but deferred implementation pending disclosure of the area of deployment and information about the participation of allies of the Netherlands.⁵⁴³⁸ On 3 December when the Ministerial Council saw Ter Beek's letter about the area of deployment, which proved to be Srebrenica and Zepa, the council apparently saw no cause for additional debate. The document was duly noted.⁵⁴³⁹

On 12 November the Ministerial Council decided to restrict the duration of the Dutch deployment to a year and a half, as Minister Ter Beek had determined the previous evening.⁵⁴⁴⁰ Only in June 1994, however, did Minister Ter Beek mention the time limit in a private conversation with Boutros-Ghali.⁵⁴⁴¹ Brinkman, who became the B-H Command Chief of Staff in September 1994, noted as such that the B-H Command was still unaware of this condition stated by the Netherlands.⁵⁴⁴² On 19 October the officials at Foreign Affairs established in their coordination meeting about the former Yugoslavia that 'a clear message' would need to be sent to the UN in early 1995 regarding the limited duration of the contribution with a battalion for the Safe Areas, since the UN was still under the impression that the Dutch contribution was for an indefinite period.

The Army probably felt little need initially to inform the minister of this shortcoming. Couzy did not view the duration of the deployment as 'a big deal.' Apparently, his view was that the matter was the concern of the ministry. He took 'notice' of the term.⁵⁴⁴³ According to General A.P.P.M. van Baal, the Army had understood 'from the outset,' upon the disclosure of Srebrenica as the location, that the term would probably not be enforceable. The Army knew that the Canadians had been expressing their desire to leave Srebrenica for 'quite a while,' but 'that no country was willing to go there,' except for the Netherlands. The Army was therefore pursuing a two-track policy. The first track concerned the political aspirations of Minister Ter Beek ('a year and a half, and then somebody else will have a turn'). The second track entailed military consideration for the departure of the 42nd battalion of Limburg fighters for Srebrenica as Dutchbat IV.⁵⁴⁴⁴

⁵⁴³⁵ Couzy zegt begrip to hebben voor "haast" Ter Beek', *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/11/93.

⁵⁴³⁶ 'Nederland stuurt 1100 militairen naar Bosnië' ('The Netherlands sends 1100 troops to Bosnia'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 13/11/93.

⁵⁴³⁷ 'Kabinet: troepen naar Bosnië' ('Cabinet: troops to Bosnia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/11/93.

⁵⁴³⁸ Objectivized version of the minutes of the Ministerial Council of 12/11/93.

⁵⁴³⁹ Objectivized version of the minutes of the Ministerial Council of 03/12/93.

⁵⁴⁴⁰ Objectivized version of the minutes of the Ministerial Council of 12/11/93.

⁵⁴⁴¹ DS. Memorandum from Kreemers to Verhoeve, no. V95021437, 14/11/95; interview R. van Veen, 16/08/00; Berghorst, News, p. 58; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, pp. 132-133.

⁵⁴⁴² Interview J.-W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

⁵⁴⁴³ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 62.

⁵⁴⁴⁴ TCBU, preliminary interview with A.P.P.M. van Baal, 15/03/00, p. 3.

5. Parliament decides

‘Remarkable how much more spiritual freedom exists in professional environments outside Parliament.’⁵⁴⁴⁵

The Parliament continued to receive good general information from the government about the decisions concerning the former Yugoslavia.⁵⁴⁴⁶ The government policy was set forth in letters to Parliament, which were discussed first within the government and subsequently submitted to Parliament. Some were presented even before the Ministerial Council had a chance to consider them.

One exception to this generally adequate information supply may have been that the ministers directly involved at the time the logistic unit was offered in Copenhagen in June 1993 were probably aware that this was not feasible. Moreover, the reports from the ministers were sometimes confused, such as the explanation provided for the Rules of Engagement.

On the other hand, the MPs themselves were rarely military experts. In the debates about the former Yugoslavia, Blaauw was often the specialist in this respect and was often selected by the other MPs to ask the technical questions.⁵⁴⁴⁷ De Kok had been a naval officer for ten years. He informed the Bakker Committee, however, that the CDA comprised three or four former military officers (at a certain point three colonels – Frinking, De Boer, Couprie – and a captain – De Kok) who knew that deployment to Srebrenica was a mission impossible but had to go along with the ‘pathological dispatch urge’ within the faction.⁵⁴⁴⁸

Nearly all discussions between the government and the Parliament, including the definitive deployment debate on 16 November 1993, were committee meetings. Eisma, one of the spokespeople in the Yugoslavia file, later stated:

‘I disapproved of this practice; far more should have been handled in a plenary format, with faction chairmen present. Such important decisions merited far more plenary consideration. In my day, [as an MP] the assembly was assumed to agree, if nobody placed the report of the oral consultation on the parliamentary agenda. As MPs, we understood all that and had few material concerns, but I think it was less obvious to the outside world. (...)’⁵⁴⁴⁹

Oral consultations tend to involve joint consideration of the problems by the government and MPs. The arrangement of the meeting room (the government and MPs sit around one table and chat over cups of coffee, as the Dutch enjoy doing) are conducive to this format. The rule is: no supervision without distance. The meeting is not intended for clear affirmative and negative responses. Rather, ‘yes, provided’ and ‘no, unless’ prevail. Reports of such meetings are general rather than literal and come available only weeks later. The opportunity for MPs to score points is therefore minimal, as is press coverage in most cases. The same held true for the preparations for these gatherings. At any rate, prior to deployment of the Airmobile Brigade, the PvdA prepared the debate for the oral consultation in the faction committee rather than as a plenary session.⁵⁴⁵⁰ Another reason for convening an oral consultation to discuss the Yugoslavia file was obviously that the respective positions of the government and the Parliament differed little in substantive respects. Moreover, the principle stands on

⁵⁴⁴⁵ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.C.H.M. de Kok, 25/05/00, p. 125.

⁵⁴⁴⁶ See e.g. also TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of E. van Middelkoop, 05/06/00, p. 293.

⁵⁴⁴⁷ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of E. van Middelkoop, 05/06/00, p. 298.

⁵⁴⁴⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.C.H.M. de Kok, 25/05/00, p. 122.

⁵⁴⁴⁹ TCBU, conversation with D. Eisma, 06/04/00.

⁵⁴⁵⁰ Interview G. Valk, 15/10/99. Nowadays, the gravity of the subject determines whether the entire PvdA faction or only a section is involved in the preparations.

foreign affairs tend to be fairly similar among the different parties.⁵⁴⁵¹ The meeting hardly addressed general policy (i.e. deployment of units) and focused more on implementation, such as equipment.

Members of the Foreign Affairs parliamentary committee returned from recess for three consecutive summers. However, Parliament generally adopted a wait-and-see policy. The government convened the meetings by sending a letter.

Some felt that the former Yugoslavia had hardly been covered in preliminary talks. De Hoop Scheffer maintained that contact with receptive ministers on the subject was infrequent: 'I would state as a fact that no regular talks really took place. Preparatory measures really did not figure in this context.'⁵⁴⁵² Nor did Lubbers recognize any of De Kok's assertions about him on this issue and viewed them as retrospective self-justification.⁵⁴⁵³ Presumably, however, De Kok had an experience he was unlikely to forget in May 1992, when he advocated military intervention in the former Yugoslavia and was called to order by his faction. By the early 1990s, the CDA, which had been traumatized in the early 1980s by the dissident stand of a few loyalists within its own faction, carefully managed its own parliamentary faction. Moreover, the Christian Democratic MPs felt that the directives from Prime Minister Lubbers' office of deliberations and the party leaders were restricting their freedom of movement. This was especially the case in the weekly *Catshuis* council of the party leaders chaired by Lubbers, where faction leader E. Brinkman provided little resistance.⁵⁴⁵⁴ Brinkman tried to project an image in the media of a counterweight to Lubbers but repeatedly instructed the faction to tone down or modify its stand.⁵⁴⁵⁵ He never expected any political consequences to arise from his decisive demeanour. 'At the time, under the aegis of Lubbers and party chairman Van Velzen,' deviant views among faction members would 'have signified political suicide,' according to a contemporary anonymous CDA MP.⁵⁴⁵⁶ The parliamentary press reported that the two CDA chiefs ran such a tight ship that even off-the-record criticism was rare under their leadership.⁵⁴⁵⁷ Van Velzen, who had become party chairman in 1987, attributed most of his control over the MPs to the selection procedures, performance reviews and quality assessments that he established for CDA representatives. Their deep imprint on the candidature gave rise to the term Christian technocracy.⁵⁴⁵⁸ In the autumn of 1990, CDA Senator Kaland had already reproached his fellow party MPs for voting in blocks.⁵⁴⁵⁹ De Kok did not believe that this accusation applied to him. In 2000 he stated before the Bakker Committee that he had recently understood once again

'...how powerless Parliament was. In the current political system, MPs have virtually no freedom. We were essentially an extension of the party leadership. We were not directly elected by the voters; we were basically appointed by the party leadership. Our position therefore depended greatly on them. MPs had virtually no spiritual freedom to perform their supervisory duties.'

His duties as spokesman for peace operations entailed maintaining

⁵⁴⁵¹ Van der List, *Mensenrechten*, p. 44.

⁵⁴⁵² TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of J.G. de Hoop Scheffer, 29/05/00, p. 177.

⁵⁴⁵³ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of Lubbers, 25/05/00, p. 134.

⁵⁴⁵⁴ 'Formatie. Biesheuvel: Lubbers hield CDA-fractie teveel aan leiband' ('Formation. Biesheuvel: Lubbers spoonfed CDA faction too much'), *ANP*, 05/05/94, 17:42.

⁵⁴⁵⁵ Metze, *Stranding*, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁴⁵⁶ Metze, *Stranding*, p. 43.

⁵⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁵⁸ Metze, *Stranding*, p. 147. See also D.-J. Eppink, 'De meesters van de macht' ('The power masters'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/05/92; *ibid.*, 'Democratie heeft behoefte aan nieuw type Tweede-Kamerleden' ('Democracy needs a new breed of MPs'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/7/92; Jan Tromp, 'Een rechtse bal, maar hij draait tenminste niet' ('A right-wing snob, but at least he doesn't turn'), *de Volkskrant*, 30/05/92; 'In Het Nieuws: Van Velzen, steile technocraat' ('In the News: Van Velzen, inflexible technocrat'), *De Limburger*, 08/03/94; 'Veel CDA-Kamerleden keren niet terug' ('Many CDA MPs won't be back'), *ANP*, 18/01/94, 14:35.

⁵⁴⁵⁹ Metze, *Stranding*, pp. 183-184.

‘....very intensive contact with the ministers. The information supply came through two channels; on the one hand through an ordinary, open letter and on the other hand through personal contact. We regularly had lunch or dinner with the ministers. That was where policy was elaborated. (...) None of us had the courage, the opportunity or the disposition to tell the minister of Foreign Affairs: now listen, we will not do that; we’re headed in the other direction. It never entered our mind. As I just explained, our political system does not operate that way. Those conversations served to exchange information, as well as to prepare debates thoroughly. The debates we conducted with the minister following such a discussion were staged. He knew what we knew and which concessions we would make and vice versa. So everything was rehearsed to avert any surprises during the debate.’⁵⁴⁶⁰

According to De Kok, the same situation existed within the PvdA as well: ‘My former colleagues, the late Messrs Van Traa and Vos, dealt with Minister of Defence Ter Beek in the same manner.’⁵⁴⁶¹ ‘Everything was rehearsed, especially in a combination that included Van Traa,’ explained De Kok.⁵⁴⁶² Valk did not, however, ‘recognize’ himself in De Kok’s account, ‘as if the Parliament was only a voting block and had to follow the dictates of the party leadership.’ According to him, the Parliament had played an individual, active role.⁵⁴⁶³ Although such contacts between ministers and MPs are difficult to trace outside the Parliament, a few indications are available. One instance was when Van Traa and Frinking consulted with Minister Ter Beek on 10 March about providing a combat unit for deployment in the former Yugoslavia. Another was when Minister Ter Beek consulted Van Vlijmen and Vos outside Parliament in mid-August about securing the helicopters for the brigade upon deployment of a battalion of the Airmobile Brigade in Bosnia.

De Kok believed that such private arrangements between the ministers and the MPs of the government parties put the opposition in a very difficult predicament. The opposition parties knew only what was stated in the letter and were therefore unable to respond adequately.⁵⁴⁶⁴ The faction members of D66 were on good terms with fellow party members among the officials at the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. D66 spokesman Eisma thus ‘compensated’ for being part of the opposition and, unlike the faction members of the government parties, being unable to maintain ties with sympathetic ministers.⁵⁴⁶⁵ Eisma also derived tremendous benefit from his membership of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe, which was far more involved with humanitarian security policy at the time. In this capacity he travelled to Sarajevo, which nobody from the Dutch Parliament had visited yet. The Council of Europe was also in a better position to dispatch fact-finding missions.⁵⁴⁶⁶ S. van Heemskerck Pillis-Duvekot derived information through her membership of the North Atlantic Assembly.⁵⁴⁶⁷

Another factor underlying the lack of parliamentary objections to the government policy appears to have been the fact that the Netherlands held the EC presidency during the second half of 1991, when the war in Yugoslavia first broke out. During such a period, the Parliament ordinarily maintains a low profile with respect to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and considers that this minister speaks not only on behalf of the Netherlands but also on behalf of the Twelve. The idea was to avoid making things too difficult for the minister. Moreover, both the ministers and the MPs often used

⁵⁴⁶⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.C.H.M. de Kok, 25/05/00, p. 121.

⁵⁴⁶¹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.C.H.M. de Kok, 25/05/00, p. 122.

⁵⁴⁶² TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.C.H.M. de Kok, 25/05/00, p. 124.

⁵⁴⁶³ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of G. Valk, 31/05/00, p. 249.

⁵⁴⁶⁴ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.C.H.M. de Kok, 25/05/00, p. 122.

⁵⁴⁶⁵ TCBU, conversation with D. Eisma, 06/04/00, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁶⁶ TCBU, conversation with D. Eisma, 06/04/00, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁶⁷ TCBU, conversation with S. van Heemskerck Pillis-Duvekot, 05/04/00, p. 2.

emotional terms to describe the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and how it needed to be resolved.⁵⁴⁶⁸ ‘We were extremely united about the former Yugoslavia in the Parliament,’ explained Sipkes. ‘In my view that remains the worst part of the decision-making process. (...) We all felt that something had to happen. No opposition came from Parliament.’ ‘We were far too united on this. Too concerned about everything happening there to figure out how to proceed without getting our fingers dirty.’⁵⁴⁶⁹

The consequence of the emotional urge to intervene in war-torn Bosnia became clear to various MPs when a delegation of the permanent committees for Defence and Foreign Affairs, comprising Blaauw, De Kok, Ramlal (CDA), Van Traa, Valk and Van Ojik (GroenLinks), visited Croatia and Bosnia from 1 to 5 October 1993. Repeated requests from Parliament for a visit were consistently rejected ‘on internal UN/UNPROFOR grounds.’⁵⁴⁷⁰ The visit was ‘eventually’ scheduled for July but was postponed twice after that as well.⁵⁴⁷¹ The delegation visited the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb, Sarajevo and Kiseljak and the Dutch units in Busovaca and Santici.⁵⁴⁷² Only then did the committee members start to realize how unsafe the Safe Areas really were. Following their return, Van Traa, one of the parties who submitted the motion to make the Airmobile Brigade more suitable for deployment to the former Yugoslavia, issued media statements questioning the wisdom of sending ground troops to Bosnia as part of a peace settlement. ‘I have always been a strong advocate of a peace settlement,’ explained Van Traa, ‘but I also have a duty to ask questions at this point.’⁵⁴⁷³ Perhaps, he admitted, the Parliament, including his own party, had been a bit too eager to prepare the Airmobile Brigade for a mission in that region.⁵⁴⁷⁴ The transport battalion, which the MPs included in their visit, was experiencing problems at the time. Between 24 September and 9 November 1993, sixteen troops from this unit were injured.

‘We were aware of all the problems, but what could we do? Withdrawing would have been worse,’ explained De Kok.⁵⁴⁷⁵ Nevertheless, he rang the spokesperson for the Ministry of Defence L. Kreemers on 4 November to express his concerns following the disclosure of the official request from Boutros-Ghali for deployment of the airmobile battalion. ‘Protecting’ the Safe Areas was highly complicated, and the Dutch battalion would be of little use there. According to a note from Kreemers, De Kok said that ‘perhaps Parliament had been a bit too eager in requesting that the Airmobile Brigade be equipped with armoured vehicles.’⁵⁴⁷⁶

‘Given the background to the humanitarian emergency in Bosnia-Herzegovina,’ the government informed Parliament on 15 November 1993 that it had decided to deploy the first operational battalion of the Airmobile Brigade, reinforced by about fifty armoured vehicles and a logistic unit, for an initial period of a year and a half. Deployment had been approved primarily on humanitarian grounds. The idea that military presence might be conducive toward achieving a peace settlement was secondary.⁵⁴⁷⁷ Deployment of these 1,100 troops brought the total Dutch contribution in the former Yugoslavia to 3,100. While the area of deployment had yet to be determined, the Dutch government preferred a contiguous area.⁵⁴⁷⁸ Use of force was authorized as the ultimate measure in case of self-defence and if a

⁵⁴⁶⁸ Cf. interview L.W. Veenendaal, 17/8/00.

⁵⁴⁶⁹ Interview L. Sipkes, 24/01/00.

⁵⁴⁷⁰ DS. exh. 19/07/93 no. S93/061/2307, memorandum from Olivier to New York PR, attn milad, 15/07/93 no. V93020694.

⁵⁴⁷¹ DS. exh. 19/07/93 no. S93/061/2307, memorandum from Olivier to New York PR, attn milad, 15/07/93 no. V93020694; ABZ, DDI/DIE/2001/00023 Memorandum from deputy DEU to AP and others, 05/07/93 no. 191.

⁵⁴⁷² A report appears in TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 63.

⁵⁴⁷³ ‘Twijfels bij Van Traa over deelname aan nieuwe vredesmacht’ (‘Van Traa has doubts about taking part in new peacekeeping force’), *ANP*, 05/10/93, 21:07. See also TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of G. Valk, 31/05/00, p. 252; interview with G. Valk, 15/10/99; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 141.

⁵⁴⁷⁴ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 205-206; Berghorst, *News*, p. 53.

⁵⁴⁷⁵ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.C.H.M. de Kok, 25/05/00, p. 125. On the experiences of De Kok during the visit, see also T. de Kok, *Kamerleden sprokkelen feiten in “Joegoslavië”* (‘MPs gather facts in “Yugoslavia”’), *Vrij Nederland*, 16/10/93.

⁵⁴⁷⁶ NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek. Memorandum from Kreemers to Ter Beek, 04/11/93.

⁵⁴⁷⁷ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 64, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁷⁸ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 64, p. 6.

UN unit was being prevented from carrying out its duties by force. The decision to resort to force rested with the UN commander concerned. Force would consistently be kept to a minimum.⁵⁴⁷⁹

In an AVRO/Nipo survey in August 1992, only 18 percent of those questioned believed that a simple parliamentary majority was sufficient for approving deployment. Thirty-nine percent wanted a two-thirds majority for such decisions, while 37 percent actually wanted unanimous parliamentary support for such a decision.⁵⁴⁸⁰ Most of the MPs who participated in the general discussion about the government decision to deploy the battalion appear to have been convinced that the exchange of ideas with the government was intended to rally support. Valk later stated that ‘all of us, including the government, benefit from the greatest possible consensus in such decisions. Otherwise, we will lack popular support for participating in these kinds of operations.’⁵⁴⁸¹

Opposition spokesperson Blaauw felt the same way.⁵⁴⁸² After the visit to Bosnia in October 1993, however, Parliament no longer dared question the deployment of troops and unanimously voted in favour.⁵⁴⁸³ In the past the SGP had expressed tremendous reserve about deployment of Dutch troops for the UN. This party believed that ‘in a world riveted by sin, where war will prevail until the end of time,’ thinking ‘that world peace was accessible to mankind was unrealistic.’⁵⁴⁸⁴ Parliament therefore adopted the view that ‘any effort, however premature, to establish a world government with its own combat forces is to be discouraged.’⁵⁴⁸⁵ Now, however, the party was agreeing through Van den Berg. Despite his premonitions of fear, De Kok even complimented the government for ‘remaining at the vanguard in Europe in taking responsibility for and aiming to alleviate the atrocities in the former Yugoslavia.’⁵⁴⁸⁶

Still, doubts existed among the MPs, although most were concealed. VVD faction members questioned the Safe Areas concept but agreed following lengthy internal deliberations because of the air support that would appear in case of emergency. Moreover, the VVD did not wish to send out a battalion ‘from a divided house.’⁵⁴⁸⁷

Valk was ridiculed by the other MPs, when he suggested making approval of the government decision contingent upon the location, which had not yet been disclosed.⁵⁴⁸⁸ Nor did Ter Beek welcome the attitude of Valk, whose actions he believed to be instigated by Van Traa’s horror at what he saw on his visit to Bosnia.⁵⁴⁸⁹ In its faction meeting on 16 November, the PvdA had belaboured the deployment.⁵⁴⁹⁰ The faction committees of Foreign Affairs and Defence, however, echoed the doubts that Van Traa had expressed upon his return from a trip to Bosnia with a parliamentary delegation in early October as to whether deploying ground troops in Eastern Bosnia was wise. Some reserve was therefore adopted regarding the location. A preliminary meeting took place between Ter Beek, Van Traa, Valk and Euro MP Jan Marinus Wiersma on the eve of the parliamentary meeting of 16 November.⁵⁴⁹¹ Afterwards, Valk clearly recalled that they had agreed to conduct a final debate as soon as the location was disclosed. Valk also consulted De Kok in advance on this issue.⁵⁴⁹² The next day, he felt as if one MP after another was bypassing him, and Ter Beek appeared to have forgotten the

⁵⁴⁷⁹ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 64, p. 7.

⁵⁴⁸⁰ Radio 2, *AVRO, Radiojournaal*, 09/08/92, 1.04 pm.

⁵⁴⁸¹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of G. Valk, 31/05/00, p. 257.

⁵⁴⁸² Interview J.D. Blaauw, 23/04/99.

⁵⁴⁸³ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 66, p. 1 and 22181, no. 67.

⁵⁴⁸⁴ F.W. den Boef, ‘Prioriteiten voor de krijgsmacht’ (‘Priorities for the Armed forces’), *De Banier*, 03/06/93, p. 7.

⁵⁴⁸⁵ F.W. den Boef, ‘Nederlandse deelname aan vredesoperaties na Srebrenica: tussen cynicisme en idealisme’ (Dutch participation in peacekeeping operations after Srebrenica: between cynicism and idealism’), *Zicht* 23 (1997) 2, p. 12.

⁵⁴⁸⁶ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 67, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁸⁷ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of J.D. Blaauw, 31/05/00, p. 220.

⁵⁴⁸⁸ Interview F. Princen, 08/01/98.

⁵⁴⁸⁹ Interviews A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99 and 13/01/00.

⁵⁴⁹⁰ G. Valk to NIOD, 31/05/00.

⁵⁴⁹¹ Interviews A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00 and G. Valk.

⁵⁴⁹² TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of G. Valk, 31/05/00, p. 252; interview G. Valk, 15/10/99.

agreement reached the previous evening. Then Valk realized that questions were apparently unwelcome during a deployment debate. Parliament was expected to stand behind the troops to be deployed. 'It would have been inconceivable for one of the major factions to say: "no way, José." Especially not following the preceding course of events.'⁵⁴⁹³

Van Middelkoop wanted to oppose the government position, because he felt the deployment was intended to provide peace of mind, because it seemed as if the Airborne Brigade had to prove itself, because the deployment lacked any long-term perspective, and because there was no guarantee that air support would materialize. In the faction deliberations, GPV faction leader Schutte informed him, however, that he could not be the only opposing force in a deployment debate. Van Middelkoop, who had already drafted his input for the debate, therefore transformed his negative conclusions into critical reservations by noting at the bottom of his pages of text that his faction supported the government despite the objections stated. He later recalled that the debate about deployment of the airmobile battalion had been the only moment in his political career in which he voted with the majority of the Parliament against his will.⁵⁴⁹⁴ Nonetheless, he remained the most critical MP throughout the consultation. He asked what reasons the government had for approving deployment at that specific moment. He also questioned whether the government had enough operational data to reach a carefully considered decision, 'to ensure an acceptable risk.'⁵⁴⁹⁵ In addition, he wanted to know the likelihood that air support would be used to protect Safe Areas.

Minister Kooijmans also felt that the Netherlands was at the vanguard of the efforts in the former Yugoslavia. He 'believed that the other [EC] Member States [had] at least a moral obligation to investigate what else they could have done to enable the EC to honour the commitments made (...) The Netherlands would admonish the partners not to lapse into non-committal positions (...)'.⁵⁴⁹⁶

Ter Beek could not yet provide specific information about the duties of the Dutch battalion and merely listed the general UNPROFOR duties. Stationing the Dutch battalion in Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde was, according to the minister, 'no longer an issue.' A reinforced company might, however, be stationed in Srebrenica to replace the departing Canadian company. Ter Beek listed his objections to this scenario: extended connections, which would complicate supplies and medical aid. He emphasized, however, that he had not made deployment contingent on location. The rules of engagement were similar to those of other UN units in B-H. More resolute conduct on the part of the Dutch troops had nothing to do with the instructions regarding use of force but would be the outcome of the resources with which the battalion would be equipped. Ter Beek guaranteed that the Dutch troops deployed would have kevlar helmets, bullet-proof vests and the like. If necessary, the battalion would be able to use crypto devices as well. Ter Beek mentioned the procedures for deploying air combat forces: the UNPROFOR commander would request authorization from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who would then 'undoubtedly' consult the Security Council before taking a decision. 'The minister did not have the impression that air strikes were receiving serious consideration.'⁵⁴⁹⁷ Except for Valk, who emphasized that Parliament reserved the right to reconsider deployment, should circumstances change, none of the MPs shared any remarks in the second round.

The Socialist Party 'squarely opposed' the deployment, because military interventions would lead to extension and escalation of conflicts.⁵⁴⁹⁸ Party members disapproved of the effort 'from GroenLinks (Green Left) to VVD on the right' to have the Netherlands 'participate' in the war in the

⁵⁴⁹³ Interview G. Valk, 15/10/99. This sentiment prevailed during other deployment debates in the 1990s as well, Megens, *Vredesoperaties*, pp. 78-79.

⁵⁴⁹⁴ Interview E. van Middelkoop, 08/10/99.

⁵⁴⁹⁵ TK 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 67, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁹⁶ TK 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 67, p. 7.

⁵⁴⁹⁷ TK 1993-1994, 22 181, no. 67, p. 9.

⁵⁴⁹⁸ T. Kox, 'Luchtmobiele Brigade naar Bosnisch slagveld' ('Airmobile Brigade to Bosnian battleground'), *Tribune*, 29(1993)12, p. 12. See e.g. also J. Marijnissen, 'Nieuwe kruistochten? SP tegen militaire interventie in voormalig Joegoslavië' ('New crusades? Socialist Party against military intervention in former Yugoslavia'), *Tribune* 28(1992)17, pp. 14-15; T. Kox, 'Interventie zal de lijdensweg verlengen' ('Intervention will draw out the agony'), *Tribune* 29(1993)8, pp. 18-19.

former Yugoslavia. The Dutch troops would become caught between the different sides, of which none had a 'reputation for moderation and compassion.'⁵⁴⁹⁹ But this party had not joined the parliamentary deliberations.

The news about the deployment decision quickly became submerged in the press. On the evening of 16 November 1993, CDA faction leader Elco Brinkman once again flexed his political muscles. At a speech in Groningen, he demanded that Parliament discuss the current disability benefits before the May elections. This issue was particularly sensitive, since the CDA and PvdA government had nearly fallen because of this issue in early 1993. Brinkman's unambiguous statements thwarted the strategy of Prime Minister Lubbers of securing approval for the proposals by the Buurmeijer Committee, which targeted a complete overhaul of the social security system in the long run. Brinkman's stand ushered in the fall from grace of Lubbers's crown prince, an electoral defeat for the CDA and an historic exile of the CDA to the opposition. Although this course of events had not been anticipated in the evening of 16 November 1993, the news was sufficiently explosive to sweep the deployment debate about the airmobile battalion under the carpet of parliamentary journalism.

⁵⁴⁹⁹ 'Interventie zal de lijdensweg verlengen', *Tribune* 29(1993)8, p. 18.

Chapter 14

Interim balance

1. Wrong perceptions

The declaration of independence by Croatia and Slovenia on 25 June 1991 did not come as a surprise in the West. However, Western Governments and media had no conception of the depth of the animosities brought about by a combination of nationalism whipped up by politicians and the media and the mixture of hate, greed, frustration and fear felt by the population of Yugoslavia. When the Yugoslav crisis erupted with the short-lived war in Slovenia, European leaders were able to proclaim in all naivety that 'Europe's hour had come'. Lack of knowledge of the country and the peoples of Yugoslavia would lead time and time again to incorrect assessments of the situation by Western Governments and organizations, so that the policy based on these assessments was inevitably also incorrect.

The European Community, which took the lead in the international approach to the crisis, believed that it could do business with the Federal authorities in Yugoslavia at a time when the power of the Federal Presidium and the government of Yugoslavia was already reduced to a fiction. There was insufficient understanding of the fact that Croatia and Slovenia were not the only ones with a desire for independence, but that Milosevic had also long ago accepted the dissolution of Yugoslavia. He simply tried to camouflage this fact for as long as possible. As a result, the European Community could believe that the withdrawal of the Federal troops from Slovenia was a success for its own diplomatic efforts, while in reality Milosevic and his immediate entourage were already making preparations for the next war. Similarly, while the West greeted the end of the war in Croatia in late 1991 and early 1992 with enthusiasm, the authorities in Serbia and Tudjman's government in Croatia were taking measures to prepare for the war in Bosnia. The West was always one step behind the conflicts breaking out in the former Yugoslavia.

One of the reasons for this was the failure to understand what Milosevic's real motives were. He was neither the convinced Communist some people saw in him, nor the fervent nationalist many others believed him to be. Personal power was his alpha and omega. The face of this power-crazy amoeba, who was known as the 'Babyface Killer', could turn in an instant into that of an angel of peace. It was not until the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina had been under way for some time that Western governments began to realize that opportunism was his trademark.

Some Western governments also had inadequate insight into the behaviour of other major actors in the Yugoslav drama. Especially in Germany and the United States, people tended to see Tudjman through rose-coloured glasses, as a democratic alternative to Milosevic, while in fact he was a convinced nationalist. It was difficult for the West to understand that while at war with Serbia, he was capable of working together with Milosevic to dismantle Bosnia-Herzegovina. The image people had of the Bosnian President Izetbegovic was also often too positive. He was seen as a symbol of the victim status of the Muslims, or of the will to maintain a multi-ethnic society in Bosnia. Too little was known about his leadership of a Muslim nationalist party and his personal views about the role of Islam in the state to realize that it was far from self-evident that he would be an effective president over all ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

There was equally little understanding of the position of the JNA (the Federal Yugoslav army). Some saw it as the last group propping up the old Yugoslavia, while others were convinced that it was simply a tool of Milosevic right from the beginning of the conflict. Neither of these views was correct. The JNA was in fact riven by extreme differences of opinion about the choice between these two options. This uncertainty only served to make its behaviour in Croatia even bloodier. Izetbegovic was also plagued by continual doubts, due among other things to the existence of several partly overlapping fractions within his own party (the SDA, or Bosnian Muslim Party of Democratic Action). There were,

for example, differences between those who supported the idea of an integral Bosnia, of a Muslim state extending beyond the boundaries of Bosnia and of a mini-Muslim state within Bosnia. There were further tensions between a clerical religious faction and one with more sectarian views. Differences of opinion also existed within the SDA about the extent to which (continuation of) the war in order to achieve the party's aims was acceptable. Hardly anything was known about all this in the West. It was in many respects not the efficiency of the various parties to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia but precisely their inefficiency which made these conflicts last so long and involve so much more bloodshed than the West had initially expected.

The Western governments, media and public turned to the past in an effort to explain all these puzzling and painful events. They pointed to the contradictions inherited from the Second World War, which certainly played a role in a Yugoslavia that had experienced the horrors of a civil war during the occupation by various Fascist powers, but also to what was called the age-old ethnic divisions, a 'Balkan mentality' or feudal patterns of power built up round local warlords. Many of these ideas had little connection with reality, because the orchestration of the violence from Belgrade was insufficiently recognized. Paramilitary groups were seen as isolated units, while they were in fact also tools of the Milosevic regime. As the notorious paramilitary leader Arkan put it, terror existed in order to make people aware of their (ethnic) identity. The manifestations might look old-fashioned to viewers who still had TV images of the Gulf War with its smart weapons imprinted on their retinas, but in reality it would be more accurate to characterize the violence encountered in the Balkan conflicts as modern rather than as 'age-old'.

The comparisons made between the JNA, the VRS, the paramilitary groups and the militias on the one hand and the Partisans and guerrilla fighters on the other also had little to do with reality. The morale of the regular troops was very low, with desertion figures running into tens of percents. The behaviour of the paramilitary and militia groups was characterized by disorder and drunkenness. They may have been efficient in the plundering and chasing away of defenceless civilians or other, poorly armed, militia groups, but they could not handle any serious resistance.

Exaggerated ideas of the degree of resistance Western forces might encounter in the case of military intervention in the former Yugoslavia hindered such intervention in the period between the declarations of independence of Croatia and Slovenia and the start of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, when such action would have been relatively feasible. In fact, Western governments showed very little readiness for military intervention at that time because the conflict in the former Yugoslavia had little impact on their basic interests. Comparisons with previous conflicts in the Balkans with the potential of exploding into a European war, as in 1914, thus lacked any basis. The wars raging on the territory of the former Yugoslavia were not the result of Western machinations, but of a lack of interest on the part of governments.

There was initially not much pressure for military intervention from public opinion either. The public often has little understanding of, or interest in, complex issues. Western journalists noticed this in the first few years of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. They complained continually about the lack of interest shown by readers and viewers in events and relationships which did not follow clearly recognizable patterns. The need for simple distinctions - communism versus democracy, nationalism versus multi-ethnicity, aggressor versus victim, villain versus hero - hindered the understanding of balanced reporting. Images were better than words in meeting this need for black-white contrasts: the pictures of the Trnopolje detention camp, rape victims telling their stories, UN Force Commander Philippe Morillon guaranteeing protection for the population of Srebrenica. Despite the highly evocative nature of some of these images, they proved to have little effect on the governments of Western Europe and the United States. These governments could often simply wait until the media storm had calmed or take measures that did not contribute directly to the military intervention called for, such as setting up a war crimes tribunal or providing humanitarian aid.

2. Faulty set of instruments

The failure of the West to intervene at an early stage in the former Yugoslavia was not just a question of lack of will, but also a question of incapacity. The period following the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 was one in which international security policy was being revamped. Wars and civil wars seldom come at a convenient time, but the conflict in Yugoslavia certainly came at a very inconvenient time for the international community. Various international organizations, and national governments, were undertaking a major reorientation of their structures and policies. The United Nations hoped to profit from the new post-Cold-War climate, in which it was hoped that the Security Council would less often be rendered impotent by vetoes. This led to ambitions for new types of peacekeeping operations, which were however hampered by the unwillingness of the member states to make the necessary resources available. This applied in the first place to the regular financial contributions, but above all to the supply of troops for operations in regions which were in effect still in a state of war. The UN headquarters was hardly equipped to provide leadership for such risky operations, and the impetus had to come from Security Council resolutions which were the fruit of compromises in New York, as a result of which they were not always adequate to deal with the situation on the ground in the former Yugoslavia. Moreover the UN was initially hesitant to act because of inability or indeed reluctance to interfere in the internal affairs of one of its member states.

As a result, it was mainly the European Community that took the lead in dealing with the Yugoslav conflict. This community, which had twelve member states at the time, had the same need to act on the basis of compromise as the UN. On the way to a common foreign and security policy due to be agreed in December 1991 within the framework of the Maastricht Treaty, the chair of the EC in the second half of 1991 (the Netherlands) was keen to avoid voices of dissent from the various European capitals. The attempts of the Dutch Foreign Minister Van den Broek to keep the twelve European sheep neatly in the same fold elicited resistance in particular from the government in Bonn, that had gained a new self-confidence after the reunification of Germany and had its own views about the approach to be taken to the problems of Yugoslavia which differed markedly from those of the Dutch chair. Even after the ratification of the Maastricht treaty, it was found that a common foreign policy did not necessarily lead to more rational decision-making. The requirement that any decision should be based on consensus actually meant in practice that a government with a strong opinion could impose its will on the other member states. This proved to be the case in late 1991 and early 1992, when Germany was able to force through recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, while Greece was able to block that of Macedonia.

The biggest handicap that the European Community suffered from was its lack of any 'stick' other than sanctions to enforce its decisions. The ineffectiveness of the 'carrot' approach, due to the endemic nationalism that had already established itself in Yugoslavia, had already become clear to the Community before the outbreak of the conflicts. The question was not only when sanctions could be applied, but above all what effect selective sanctions would have at a time when the Twelve still hoped that negotiations could bear fruit. This meant that it took a relatively long time before such sanctions were applied. Besides, sanctions could not be really effective if they were not backed up by UN approval. Finally, the EC had no way of enforcing sanctions by military means if that should prove necessary. This lack of its own armed force doomed EC diplomacy to impotence from the start. A further structural weakness of the EC was the lack of its own control and analysis centre. When joint analyses were needed, EC governments were forced in the first instance to call on the resources of the ministry of Foreign Affairs of the member state currently holding the chairmanship. In the case dealt with here, that was the Netherlands during the first half year of the Yugoslav crisis. It proved difficult not only for national governments to accept analyses coming from a resource centre in another country, but also for that resource centre to muster the personnel capacity needed to produce effective analyses.

Milosevic's only concern apart from sanctions was the possibility of American military action. He realized that he had little to fear from the European states in this respect. The government in

Washington had however decided that it was time for the European Community to show what it could do in the field of conflict management on its own continent. By the time that it became clear that the Community was so riven by internal disagreement that it was unable to solve the problem itself, the American administration was already operating in the shadow of the coming presidential elections. At that stage, President Bush and his government were not keen to expose American troops to risks in a terrain that was much less easy to oversee than the sandy plains of the Gulf War, in a conflict that was coming to look more and more like a civil war and where the political objectives on which any intervention would be based had not yet crystallized out.

After the elections, the new government team under President Clinton lacked experience in the field of foreign policy. Moreover, the new President had stated clearly during the election campaign that he wanted to concentrate on domestic economic policy. Not only was the situation in Bosnia a disturbing factor when it came to putting this commitment into practice, but the President's principal advisors were divided as to the correct approach to this situation while the President himself did not give any forceful leadership. As a result, it was not until late May 1993 that the contours of an American policy began to become visible. The non-interventionist attitude of the USA was a major element in the whole process.

The above-mentioned stance adopted by two successive governments in Washington had major consequences for NATO, where the American government traditionally leaves a clear stamp on decision-making. Moreover, NATO's scope for action was initially severely limited by the principle that the treaty organization could only undertake operations when the territory of one of its member states was threatened. This limitation was only removed in the course of 1992. Even then, NATO could only participate in operations involving the former Yugoslavia after consultation with the United Nations; the learning curve for this process proved to be quite steep. NATO was further hindered in taking any action by the fact that all its member states were busily cashing in the 'peace dividends' after the end of the Cold War. Reductions in troop levels were the order of the day, and a tendency to renationalization was initially more clearly visible than a readiness to undertake new international obligations. This became particularly clear in the course of 1993 when various peace plans requiring the formation of an implementation force were put forward. It proved extremely difficult to find Western European countries prepared to supply the necessary troops, especially since there were various reasons for not making use of the services of some member states such as Germany, Italy and Turkey.

The fact that European governments were unable or unwilling to make a military commitment led to severe irritation in Washington at the few moments when the American Government did feel disposed to military involvement in the former Yugoslavia, e.g. in late June 1992 when the visit of the French President Mitterrand to Sarajevo thwarted American action, and in early August 1992 when the European members of NATO made air strikes conditional on UN approval. The Yugoslav question thus threatened to split NATO at a time when it was looking for new legitimation for its existence after the end of the Cold War.

Another divisive factor in the equation was the fact that the French Government was initially mainly advocating action within a WEU framework. It was not until mid-1993 that the government in Paris accepted that the problems in the former Yugoslavia could not be dealt with without NATO involvement. While it is true that the WEU did participate in monitoring compliance with the embargo imposed on the new Yugoslavia and also played a part in military planning, its lack of a command structure like that of NATO made it largely ineffective. A few options for WEU involvement were discussed in the early days of the Yugoslav conflict, but they came to nothing largely because of opposition from the United Kingdom which was unable to commit itself to supplying appreciable military resources because of cuts in the overall manning levels in its armed forces and continuing commitments in Northern Ireland and Cyprus; besides, the UK's experience in these two regions led it to write off any form of serious involvement in the former Yugoslavia.

The CSCE had also had a certain level of involvement in the early days of the conflict. However, this organization – which was still at the start of its learning curve as far as conflict management was concerned – was hampered by its large size and its voting procedures. All decisions

initially had to be unanimous. Even though the less stringent condition of ‘unanimity minus 1’ was introduced in early 1992, this still left the organization (with its 52 member states after the accession of Bosnia-Herzegovina) not very efficient.

3. Shifting objectives

The question of what the West wanted to achieve in the former Yugoslavia raised its head fairly early in the conflict, when the Director-General for Political Affairs (Dutch abbreviation DGPZ) at the Dutch Foreign Ministry Peter Van Walsum sent a COREU message to the capitals of all EC member states suggesting that Yugoslavia’s internal boundaries should be open to discussion. This proposal met with a fairly massive ‘no’ from the other member states, however. The logical consequence was that the West would have to make efforts to protect the ethnic minorities within the existing boundaries. However, the Conference on Yugoslavia convened in early September 1991 under the auspices of the EC met with the problem when discussing this issue that Milosevic was not prepared to give the Kosovo Albanians the same rights in Serbia as those he demanded for the Serbs in Croatia; while Tudjman was quite happy to oppose what he saw as Serb occupation of Croatian territory, but still sent Croatian troops to Bosnia himself in order to reserve part of that terrain for the Croats. Milosevic’s attitude on this point effectively spelled the end of the conference.

Because it was difficult to delay recognition of Croatia and Slovenia indefinitely, it was not strange that the other EC member states finally gave in to German pressure in favour of recognition at the end of 1991. What was strange was that Croatia was recognized despite clear evidence that no effective measures to protect minorities had been taken there. At the same time, the recognition of another republic – Macedonia – which was known to have taken such measures was delayed for a long time because of Greek sensitivities. The government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which had also requested recognition, was told by the EC that a condition for this was that they should hold a referendum on independence the practical purpose of which was not at all clear. In fact, this referendum gave the nationalist parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina the opportunity to build up their stocks of weapons even further – a process which had been going on among Bosnian Muslims and Serbs since the spring of 1991, i.e. even before Croatia and Slovenia had made their declarations of independence.

By the end of 1991, the European Community was prepared to lay the hot potato of Yugoslavia in the lap of the UN. This was how the new Secretary-General of the UN from the start of 1992, Boutros-Ghali, interpreted these events too: the rich countries of Europe were saddling him with a question they could not handle themselves, as if there were not enough other conflicts in the world that required the attention of his organization. It was therefore with fresh reluctance that he implemented the Security Council resolution requiring the deployment of a peacekeeping force in Croatia. This force proved unable to achieve much. Ethnic cleansing, murder, rape, arson and the like were perpetrated literally under the eyes of the UN soldiers.

The same reluctance to get involved was shown after the outbreak of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. From the time when the airfield of Sarajevo was opened, the Western approach to the war in Bosnia acquired a mainly humanitarian character. Intentions were good – or looked good – but were certainly open to question. They were, for example, questioned by the government and population of Bosnia-Herzegovina, who often complained that the citizens of their country were enabled to die with full stomachs. What is even worse is that the humanitarian supplies often fell into the hands of the military or militia, who demanded payment for the passage of the goods. In this way, the humanitarian aid was actually contributing to the continuation of the war.

Within a few months after the start of the war, the Bosnian Serbs had managed with the aid of their Serbian brothers from the other side of the Drina to gain control of about 70 percent of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The process of ethnic cleansing associated with this had not only sowed a great deal of hatred – even among people who had originally believed in a multi-ethnic society – but had also led in many cases to the destruction of the houses people had been forced out of, or their occupation by others who in their turn had often been chased out of their own homes elsewhere.

That made the realization of a just peace which would involve reversal of the ethnic cleansing and conquest of terrain and a guarantee of the right of return for the refugees extremely difficult if the mediators (initially Owen and Vance on behalf of the EC and the UN respectively, and later Owen and Stoltenberg) lacked military back-up for their proposals. In fact, it looked very much as if the West would feel greatly embarrassed if the mediators really did manage to bring about a peace agreement, since that would have required a greater number of troops than was available for Bosnia at that moment.

If the situation at the negotiating table was so difficult, it might seem that one alternative was to leave matters to be decided on the battlefield. The Serbs were indeed able to translate their military superiority into territorial gains at the beginning of the war. The Bosnian Government was keen to win the conquered terrain back, but has hampered in achieving this aim by the arms embargo on all parts of the former Yugoslavia that the UN had announced at the end of September 1991. This led to the schizophrenic situation that while the international community recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992, it did not give the government of the new state the opportunity to defend itself against encroachment on its territorial integrity. It is hardly surprising that the Bosnian Government and people felt little sympathy for the UN troops who prevented them from waging war and thus helped to maintain the *status quo* achieved by the Serbs. This must have made the proclamation of the principle of impartiality by UNPROFOR sound very false in the ears of the Bosnian Government and the Muslims.

The Bosnian Government, which increasingly became a Muslim government in the course of 1993, was not very keen on accepting a peace that consolidated the existing conditions in part or in whole. They tried to regain terrain with the aid of clandestine arms supplies and attacks on Serb arms caches. As long as they saw some prospects of success in this process, they did not actually want peace. It is more difficult to explain why the Bosnian Serb leaders were so reluctant to accept peace. They had already conquered more than the 64 percent of Bosnian territory to which they had laid claim at the start of the war. One would have thought that they would have been delighted to agree to peace terms backed up by the West that would have legitimized their territorial gains. Although the Vance-Owen plan (and subsequent peace plans) did involve their giving up some of their gains, the remainder would have been recognized. Acceptance of the plan would have obliged the West to implement a very difficult plan which would in practice have given the Bosnian Serbs much that they had not been able to achieve at the negotiating table. Their acceptance of the plan would have left Izetbegovic holding the baby. As things turned out, it was the latter who agreed with the full plan at the end of March 1993 in order to place the Bosnian Serbs in a bad light as viewed from the West. The Serbs were never very good at such double bluffs.

The advantages the Serbs could gain from acceptance of a peace plan became clear when the Owen-Stoltenberg plan and the Invincible plan were laid on the table in the summer of 1993. The Western mediators and governments were getting so tired of their failures that they started to blame the victim by laying the responsibility for the continuation of the war on the Muslims. It was clear by this time that the West was more or less prepared to accept ethnic division of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in other words the suggestion that Van Walsum had made two summers ago and that had been roundly rejected at the time. All that remained were the Safe Areas, of which Van Walsum had already said in December 1992 that while the Netherlands had wanted them, they represented an enormous risk as long as the international community was not prepared to protect them – by force of arms, if necessary.

4. The Dutch approach to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia

In the summer of 1991, when Van Walsum made his proposal about the correction of Yugoslavia's internal boundaries, the Netherlands coincidentally happened to take over the chairmanship of the EC at just about the same time as the outbreak of the Yugoslav conflict. This caused Dutch Foreign Minister Hans Van den Broek, and to a lesser extent Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, to become directly involved in this conflict. Van den Broek was keen to make a success of the Dutch chairmanship, that was supposed to culminate in the ratification of the historic Maastricht Treaty, putting the seal on a

common foreign policy for the Twelve among other things. The Yugoslav question raised its head at an inopportune moment. Van den Broek put all his energies into looking for a solution, but owing among other things to a lack of insight into what was really happening in Yugoslavia, all his activity soon degenerated into the making of provisional fixes which only lasted a few days. Within little more than a month, the Minister himself became hopelessly frustrated while his image abroad suffered rapid damage.

Not in the Netherlands, though. Dutch MPs were full of praise for a Foreign minister who seemed finally able to show the world that a small country was capable of great deeds. The European Community has sometimes been criticized for overhasty involvement in the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, 'not because it had a solution or the necessary means, but because it hoped to acquire both'.⁵⁵⁰⁰ This statement, which referred mainly to the initial period of the Yugoslav conflict when the Netherlands chaired the European Community, is in fact quite a good description of practically the entire Dutch contribution to the debate on the former Yugoslavia from mid-1991 to the end of 1993. The relative insignificance of the Netherlands on the world stage and the low level of knowledge about the Balkans were actually seen as advantages by Dutch politicians and civil servants, since it meant that the Netherlands would not represent a threat to the various parties to the Yugoslav conflict. This attitude explains the marked tendency of Dutch decision-makers to transpose the harmony model, which worked so well in their own country, to Yugoslavia where a certain level of threat and possibly also of physical violence were almost inevitable in the initial phase of the conflict.

One of the main factors that led to the low effectiveness of the Dutch foreign minister as chairman of the EC in dealing with this question was the fact that, just a few days after the outbreak of the conflict in Yugoslavia, the German Government took a radically different course from that envisaged by the Dutch in their chairmanship of the EC. Moreover, the Paris-Bonn axis which had been damaged by this idiosyncratic German stance was back to its original state within a couple of months. This meant that Van den Broek was continually confronted by little plans cooked up jointly by the French and Germans which ran counter to his own intentions. Instead of accepting this fact and trying to bend it subtly to his advantage whenever possible, Van den Broek got annoyed. This certainly did not improve his relations with his German counterpart Genscher, who saw this as just one more reason to pay very little attention to the Netherlands as chair of the EC. The Dutch Parliament did nothing to correct Van den Broek's attitude but rather praised the minister who was being given such a hard time by his German counterpart.

In fact, Van den Broek had basically lost control of the situation by mid-August. Important decisions concerning the conference on Yugoslavia, such as the time at which it was due to start, the conditions for a ceasefire and the setting up of the Badinter Commission, were dictated by others. Van den Broek could only look on as Kohl and Genscher managed to arrange the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia by the EC without reference to him.

The experience gained during the Dutch chairmanship of the EC was important for the subsequent period in two respects. In the first place, Foreign minister Van den Broek had got his teeth into the issue. As a result, once he was freed of the obligations of chairmanship he went on advocating a hard line on Serbia and forceful intervention in Bosnia. Secondly, the Dutch Parliament took the traditional approach of not making things too difficult for the Foreign minister during their country's chairmanship of the EC. Dutch MPs knew that statements made by their Foreign minister were interpreted in other European capitals as the voice of the Twelve. Their attitude could be characterized as 'Van den Broek belongs to Europe for the moment, but at the same time he is very much one of us'. This led to a gradual blunting of Parliament's readiness to hold the government to account, which was accentuated by the fact that Parliament tended to discuss the policy with respect to (the former) Yugoslavia in a more informal manner, and hardly ever in a plenary debate.

⁵⁵⁰⁰ S.K. Pavlowitch, 'Who is 'Balkanizing' Whom?', p. 219.

It goes without saying that Dutch relinquishment of the EC chairman's gavel at the end of 1991, and the end of outright war in Croatia after implementation of the Vance Plan, took some wind out of the Dutch Government's sails for a time. However, when war broke out in Bosnia and some information on the excesses occurring there leaked out, Van den Broek – now firmly supported by Prime Minister Lubbers – became an outspoken advocate of firm intervention. The Dutch Government put forward this standpoint repeatedly in the international debate on the Yugoslav problem, despite frequent warnings in the media that it was unwise to adopt such a far-reaching stance when the Netherlands was unable to make a substantial military contribution itself to the ending – or at least the damping down – of the conflict.

While it is true that the Netherlands did contribute a signals battalion and a number of transport units, the very presence of the latter units underlined the need for deployment of a Dutch combat unit within the framework of the approach taken. When the Netherlands advocated more and harder action during the international debate in the summer of 1992, it was forced to go cap in hand to Paris and London to ask for protection for its transport units.

The spotlight then fell on the Dutch Airmobile Brigade, which was the first unit consisting entirely of regular servicemen that came into consideration for deployment, thus avoiding the problems the government might be faced with in connection with the fact that conscripts could only be deployed on a voluntary basis. However, the first battalion of this brigade would not be available until the end of 1993 or the beginning of 1994.

The situation thus arose that the Dutch Government had difficulty formulating an offer for the Safe Areas of which they had been such a strong advocate long before they came into existence. When it came to the bit, in June 1993, all that the government could offer was a logistic unit – and it was clear that even that was not operational at the moment the offer was made. Shortly before that, in April 1993, the government had not been able to commit itself to supplying a combat unit for the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan, though officials of the Dutch Foreign Ministry were stating off the record that it might be possible to make the Airmobile Brigade available in the long term. In early May, the government decided to do all it could to make the first battalion of this brigade ready for deployment as soon as possible. Once again, Parliament followed the government's lead. The motion proposed by Van Vlijmen (CDA) and Van Traa (PvdA), requesting deployment of the brigade in the former Yugoslavia, was not so much the spark that ignited the government policy as the crown on this policy.

Peter Kooijmans, who succeeded Van den Broek as Foreign Minister in early 1993, initially displayed a sense of reality about the likelihood of getting things moving internationally in the handling of the war in Bosnia, but after a couple of months he was following more and more in the footsteps of his predecessor. In March 1993, with the support of Parliament, he put pressure on Minister of Defence Ter Beek to realize a maximum commitment of units of the Royal Netherlands Army. This led Ter Beek, against the wishes of the Chief of Defence Staff, General A.K. Van der Vlis, to indicate the prospects of the Airmobile Brigade being available in the foreseeable future. Once Srebrenica had been declared a Safe Area, Kooijmans urged that other regions should be given the same status, and that the option of giving such enclaves protection from the air should be considered.

The Dutch Government's timing was not always optimal in the summer of 1993. For example, it stated in mid-June that it might be able to commit an airmobile battalion at some (unspecified) time in the future as part of the force required for implementation of a peace plan, in the hope of encouraging other countries to make similar commitments. This was, however, more than two months too late for the Vance-Owen plan. At about the same time as the Dutch Government was trying to use this promise of an airmobile battalion to catalyse the peace process, Milosevic and Tudjman announced suggestions for a new peace plan that conflicted strongly with the views of the Dutch Government because it involved ethnic partition of Bosnia.

When as expected the Netherlands failed two months later to comply with the UN's request to supply a logistic unit, the Dutch ministry of Defence did its best to cobble together a combined offer of an airmobile battalion with its own logistic component. Defence wanted to make this offer, which

would apply both to the Safe Areas and to the implementation of a peace plan, during a visit Ter Beek was paying to Boutros-Ghali. At practically the same time, Dutch Foreign Minister Kooijmans was explaining to the mediators Owen and Stoltenberg that it was by no means certain that the Netherlands would cooperate in the formation of such an implementation force in view of what he saw as the ethical shortcomings of the plan.

This was typical of the lack of coordination between the Dutch ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. Defence was starting to come out from under the wings of Foreign Affairs in the field of security policy, partly as a result of the increased tempo of the peacekeeping operations. Personal disagreements between Foreign Minister Van den Broek and Defence Minister Ter Beek in the past contributed to this state of affairs. The Dutch constitution did not make full provisions for the Prime Minister to arbitrate in such differences. The ministry of General Affairs (roughly equivalent to the Cabinet Office in the UK) had developed the habit of not intervening in such matters unless the ministers in question indicated that there were problems. The relations between Van den Broek and Prime Minister Lubbers in the early nineties were not such as to make it likely that Van den Broek would be readily disposed to bring a problem to Lubbers' attention. As a result of this attitude on the part of Van den Broek, the ministry of Foreign Affairs as a whole was more or less allergic to intervention from General Affairs. And Ter Beek was wary of involving the Prime Minister, because in his view Lubbers' propensity to creative thinking in solving other people's problems was more likely to make things worse than to improve them.

In fact, the day after the Dutch Foreign Ministry had decided that the new offer of the airmobile battalion applied to the Safe Areas the whole objective went by the board. Spokespersons from Foreign Affairs now changed their tune, and claimed that the offer applied to the implementation of a peacekeeping force. The ministry had apparently dropped its objections to a peace treaty quite quickly when Foreign Minister Kooijmans, asked for an alternative for the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan, was at a loss for an answer. Both Defence and Foreign Affairs seemed to have assumed after the offer of the airmobile battalion had been made that Safe Areas were in any case the prelude to a peace treaty, and that it would not be long before the Safe Areas were incorporated into a wider arrangement aimed at implementation of an agreed peace plan. When all hopes of such an outcome faded quickly after the end of September, the Safe Areas were all that was left, and in the words of Foreign Minister Kooijmans they had become an anomaly.

Anomaly or not, the Dutch Government had made an offer in connection with them. Initial reconnaissance seemed to indicate that if the Dutch battalion was to be stationed in a Safe Area, it was likely to be in Srebrenica. Chief of Defence Staff Van der Vlis and Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Couzy were far from happy about this idea, as they foresaw great problems in keeping the enclave supplied in view of expected Serb opposition. Since however they did not believe that Dutch soldiers would run 'unacceptable risks' in such a situation, Defence Minister Ter Beek did not regard their reservations as of decisive importance. On 12 November, the government agreed in principle to the deployment of Dutchbat, though they reserved the option of making a new decision about the location. When the destination was announced at the beginning of December, however, the Dutch Government wasted few words on it. Parliament voted unanimously in favour of the decision, though this unanimity masked more doubt than might appear at first sight. Valk from the *PvdA* fraction wanted to delay his definitive support till the destination was known, but he was silenced by the scorn of his fellow MPs who felt that a debate on the deployment of Dutch troops was not a suitable occasion for giving expression to doubts.

MPs were not the only ones to have doubts about the utility of and scope for deployment, and about the safety of the 'blue helmets', though it may be noted that the debate about intervention – at least that part of the debate that took the form of press articles and letters to the editor – was less lively after the summer of 1992. (It has to be noted though that the absolute number of people taking part in the debate was never very high.) The voices raised against intervention actually tended to predominate in the course of 1993, because of dissatisfaction with the objectives laid down in the peace plans and because it became clear that other countries were having trouble turning their promises to supply

troops into reality. There are even indications that unorganized public opinion, that had long been largely in favour of military intervention, showed a dip in the summer of 1993 – just when the government had committed itself to supply the airmobile battalion (the first Dutch combat unit to operate in the former Yugoslavia).

In fact, in the period preceding this decision the general mood of the Dutch public had been hardly, if at all, more in favour of military intervention than in countries like Germany or France. There was however a tendency for domestic outrage among Dutch politicians about what was going on in the former Yugoslavia to translate itself into demands on other countries. One of the reasons for this was that the Dutch Government made no distinction between ideal and material national interests. The maintenance and promotion of the international rule of law could in their eyes also be regarded as a Dutch national interest. Apart from the criterion that conscripts should only be sent on active military service on a voluntary basis, there were no reasons in principle against sending Dutch troops to Yugoslavia. For a country like Germany, it could be – and was – argued that military involvement was not permitted by the constitution, while there were also good historical reasons for not sending German troops to Yugoslavia in view of the events of the Second World War. Even though the Italian Government stated in the summer of 1993 that it would be prepared to overlook the last-mentioned concern as far as their own troops were concerned, Boutros-Ghali felt that it was still relevant. A special element in the equation was further the fact that many people in the Netherlands – including Van den Broek and Lubbers – were very sensitive to the similarities between the events in Yugoslavia and memories of the Second World War. The idea that the vow ‘never again’ that was repeated annually in the Dutch national commemoration of the events of the Second World War should be dishonoured was unbearable. It seemed that the Dutch sense of guilt for not having done enough during that war was now translated into the determination to be prepared to do no less than other countries.

It may be asked whether it might have been wiser for the Dutch Government to engage in ‘low politics’ rather than in ‘high politics’ in this connection. There was a tendency for both ministers and MPs not only to want to do more than other countries to manage and resolve the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, but also to criticize the governments of those countries for not doing enough – or even to play on the sympathies of the populace there in order to exert indirect pressure on their governments. Naturally enough, this irritated the governments in question. Even if their representatives did not put this feeling into words, Dutch ministers and officials still felt the implicit pressure on the Netherlands to prove that its level of (military) commitment was sufficiently high. It was not pleasant to be confronted with the (implied) criticism, ‘the Netherlands promises a lot, but its performance is poor’. The willingness to do something went so far that the Dutch Government set no conditions on its offer to deploy the airmobile battalion, but committed itself fully on the basis of its own words and emotions. Doubts about the effectiveness of the Dutch contribution would come later.

It might have been better if the energy that had gone into this military commitment had been invested in aid to refugees or maintaining contacts with democratic forces aimed at promoting a multi-ethnic society or dialogue. Starting in the summer of 1992, there was a great discrepancy between the big words being spoken about intervention and the fact that thousands of Muslims and Croats were languishing in Serb prison camps because no country was prepared to accept them. Democratic forces in the former Yugoslavia felt abandoned because the West appeared to be only willing to talk to the nationalist leaders. Opportunistic or formal considerations long prevented the Dutch Government from subsidizing such pro-democracy groups. It looks very much as if the Dutch Government failed to realize that this was a field in which a small country could have made a big contribution.

The need to make oneself heard in particular at high political level was not simply an expression of the desire of Dutch politicians, diplomats and senior military officers to be counted among the big boys. It was also derived from a tendency to idealism and solidarity with the poor and oppressed that has long characterized Dutch foreign policy. This attitude can however also lead to intellectual laziness. Representatives of the Netherlands had become accustomed to take the lead in international discussions, believing with a certain degree of arrogance that the others would automatically fall in line behind them, even if this took some time. And if they did not, the Dutch Parliament and public could

in any case be told that it was not the fault of the Netherlands that their advice had not been followed. As Piet Dankert, junior secretary for Foreign Affairs during the Lubbers-Kok coalition, put it, the Dutch had a tendency to behave as internationalists at an abstract level. They too often failed to realize that the Netherlands could not act in isolation from other countries: it might need them later. They were also sometimes unwilling or unable to put themselves in the other country's shoes. The assumption was that the governments of those countries should really also think just like the Dutch Government. In addition, when it came to the deployment of troops, the Dutch had relatively little recent experience of the behaviour of their own troops abroad. It would have been wise to pay more attention to the suggestions from countries that did have more experience in this field that discretion was the better part of valour in the case of Yugoslavia. The behaviour of Dutch ministers abroad in connection with the Yugoslav question suggests, however, that the ability not to overestimate their own importance was not their strongest point.

In fact, Dutch ministers did not pay much attention to the words of warning from their own generals either. The channels of communication between the military and the politicians seem to have been quite severely clogged. When senior military figures tried to get their message across via the media, since the politicians were apparently not prepared to listen, the same politicians tended to over-react. The Airmobile Brigade did however deserve a great deal of attention, not only because it was the first Dutch combat unit to be ready for deployment, but also because it was so expensive and was expected to show results as soon as it was (even partly) operational - if only because otherwise there might be a call for reconsideration of the choices that had been made during the reorganization of the Royal Netherlands Army (and which had led, among other things, to the creation of this new-style combat unit). A large part of the politicians, who were looking for an effective instrument, and the supporters of the Airmobile Brigade in the Army, who were looking for a worthwhile objective for their new unit, could at least reach agreement on this point.

5. Two kinds of ethics

'Bosnia was my main concern during the second half of my period as Foreign Secretary ... it actually consumed more intellectual and – let's put it this way – ethical effort than any other subject running at the time.'⁵⁵⁰¹

'Morality is neither functional nor rational. If one risks one's life by entering a burning house to save a neighbour's child and comes back carrying the dead child in one's arms, can we say that the action was worthless since it was unsuccessful? Morality is what gives value to this apparently useless sacrifice, to this attempt without success...'⁵⁵⁰²

'Pour moi, le premier commandement de la morale ou de l'éthique, quand on est à un poste de responsabilité, c'est précisément d'être responsable. De ne rien faire ni dire sans avoir pesé tous les termes de sa décision ou de sa déclaration, et être prêt à assumer toutes les conséquences qui pourront en découler. Est-ce anachronique? N'est-ce pas plutôt une exigence qu'il faudrait réhabiliter? ... Nous ne sommes pas devant un choix schématique entre morale et réalisme, mais devant la nécessité de marier les deux, de façon à être le plus efficace possible dans chaque cas particulier. ... Il n'y a pas aujourd'hui de tâche plus

⁵⁵⁰¹ Douglas Hurd, cited in: Simms, Hour, p. 45.

⁵⁵⁰² Izetbegovic, Islam, p. 109.

exaltante en politique étrangère que de faire une synthèse dynamique
des courants réaliste et idéaliste.⁵⁵⁰³

Round the time of the Russo-Turkish war of 1875-1878, the outcome of which was of such great importance for Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the British statesmen Benjamin Disraeli and William Ewart Gladstone disagreed strongly. The latter was of the opinion that the politics of national interest and the balance of power should be set aside and that the British Government should operate on humanitarian grounds: 'We have been involved in moral complicity with the basest and blackest outrages upon record within the present century, if not within the memory of man.'⁵⁵⁰⁴ Disraeli took issue with such 'shallow politicians ... who have allowed their feelings of revolted humanity to make them forget the capital interest involved'. And the interests at stake were according to him 'not affected by the question whether it was 10,000 or 20,000 persons who perished'.⁵⁵⁰⁵ In the same period, the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck stated that the Balkans were not worth the healthy bones of a single Pomeranian musketeer.⁵⁵⁰⁶

These differing views – those of Gladstone on the one hand and of Disraeli and Bismarck on the other – provide an excellent illustration of the distinction between the ethics of conviction or intention and the ethics of responsibility drawn in the Introduction to this part of the report.

It will be clear from the present report that the standpoint of Dutch politicians with respect to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia in the period 1991-1993 was largely based on considerations taken from the ethics of conviction. This appeared e.g. from the stance adopted by Prime Minister Lubbers on the eve of the EC summit in Edinburgh, when he told Parliament that he 'couldn't give a damn' which organization led the operations in Bosnia as long as something was done. It was also clearly illustrated by the reactions of Foreign Minister Kooijmans and his officials to the peace plans of Owen and Stoltenberg. Peace and stability on their own were not enough. It was also important that the peace should be a just one. However, Kooijmans was unable to reply to the mediators when they asked him whether he was prepared to state that he accepted a prolongation of the war in Bosnia. The fact that such a stance ultimately placed an obligation on the Dutch Government to make additional efforts to supply combat troops was accepted without complaint, and was even welcomed by some.

The ethics of conviction was not entirely absent in the debate about the former Yugoslavia that took place in countries like France and the UK, though the policy ultimately adopted was largely based on considerations of the consequences of the planned actions (and was thus more representative of the ethics of responsibility). For example, one analyst described the British policy as 'predominantly determined by international and regional practicalities'.⁵⁵⁰⁷ While the government in Paris was more generous than that in London as regards the deployment of troops, it still remained convinced up to the spring of 1995 that care had to be taken to ensure that Western military operations did not throw oil on the flames of the Yugoslav conflicts.

The dilemma of the choice between the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility came up repeatedly in the media in the period preceding the decision to send Dutchbat to (the former) Yugoslavia. In fact, this was the essence of the intervention debate. For example, the former defence attaché in Belgrade, Brigadier-General (retd.) De Vogel wrote at the end of 1992:

'Why would the Dutch Government actually want to intervene in the Yugoslav conflict? On the basis of the TV images appearing as if by magic on our screens every evening, this might seem to be a superfluous question. A little thought will show, however, that this question is not so superfluous: we do need a moral

⁵⁵⁰³ Védrine, Cartes, pp. 170-171.

⁵⁵⁰⁴ Fouad Ajami, 'In Europe's Shadows', in: Mousavizadeh (ed.), Book, p. 44.

⁵⁵⁰⁵ Niall Ferguson, 'Europa Nervosa', in: Mousavizadeh (ed.), Book, 128.

⁵⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 129.

⁵⁵⁰⁷ James Gow, 'British Perspectives', in: Danchev & Halverson (eds.), Perspectives, p. 88.

justification, based on logical arguments, for any intervention that may be undertaken. This logical basis is necessary not only to justify the policy that has been, or may be, arrived at but also in order to permit proper assessment of the level of risk one is prepared to run.⁵⁵⁰⁸

A few years later, in 1999, during the Kosovo crisis, the Dutch Foreign Minister at the time, Jozias Van Aartsen, wrote an opinionated article about the ‘CNN factor’, which threatened to turn into ‘a virtual Pied Piper’:

‘We are sometimes too easily bewitched by media reportage. Images of degrading conditions can whip up support for some cause or another among both the public and politicians within a matter of hours. Hard action is loudly called for. Good, effective foreign policy cannot however be based on primary emotions.’

In his opinion, thoroughly trained diplomats were better able ‘to pick out national or international interests from the tangled chaos of facts, and to get to the core of the problem’. And even that did not guarantee correct action, since ‘the scope for effective action in international relations is limited.’ The minister’s argument encapsulates in a nutshell the tension between the ethics of conviction – a call for hard action a few hours after the showing of images of degrading conditions – and a cautious approach with regard to the possible consequences of action. Van Aartsen did not leave it at that, however. He gave this tension a dialectic tail by asking whether it was right to acquiesce in such situations. In his view, the fifty-year-old Charter of the United Nations, with its stress on national sovereignty, put too many obstacles in the way of humanitarian intervention in the case of serious human rights violations. He therefore concluded his article with a call for courage to rethink the UN Charter and its place in international law.⁵⁵⁰⁹

Looking back on the policy of his predecessors and the rest of the Dutch Government in the period from 1991 to 1993, however, one can see little trace of such a synthesis of the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility. Not only the Foreign ministers at the time but also MPs showed on the one hand disappointment about the position adopted by other countries, and on the other a certain gratification at the thought that the Netherlands was taking a lead with its military commitment in the former Yugoslavia.⁵⁵¹⁰ The chairman of the Dutch Association of (Armed Forces) Officers (Dutch abbreviation NOV) rightly characterized the policy of the Dutch Government towards the former Yugoslavia at the end of 1992 as one of ‘premature willingness to contribute (without counting the cost)’.⁵⁵¹¹ When Bert Bakker of the Bakker Committee asked Van den Broek in 2000 whether the Netherlands had played a leading part in thinking about possible military involvement in the former Yugoslavia during the period when he was Foreign Minister, Van den Broek replied that he was not ashamed to admit that this had been the case.⁵⁵¹² According to Jaap de Hoop Scheffer (a prominent member of the CDA fraction in Parliament at the time), who also testified before the same committee, during the discussion about Safe Areas the Netherlands ‘rightly took a lead at that moment – and continued to do so – when it came to doing all that was possible to reduce the suffering of

⁵⁵⁰⁸ Brigadier-General (ret.) J.C.A.C. de Vogel, ‘Ingrijpen in Joegoslavië?’ (‘Intervention in Yugoslavia?’), *Carré* 15(1992)12, p. 13.

⁵⁵⁰⁹ J.J. van Aartsen, ‘Buitenlands beleid moet zich niet laten leiden door CNN’ (‘Foreign policy should not be led by CNN’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/09/99.

⁵⁵¹⁰ See e.g. TK, 1993-1994, 22181, No. 67, pp. 1 and 7.

⁵⁵¹¹ Colonel N. Stuiver, Royal Netherlands Air Force (ret.), chairman of NOV, ‘De Nederlandse krijgsmacht op weg waar naar toe? Jaarrede 1992’ (Where are the Dutch armed forces going? Annual lecture 1992), *Carré* 15(1992)12, p. 9.

⁵⁵¹² TCBU, Vertrekpunt (Starting point), III, deposition by H. van den Broek, 22/05/00, p. 24.

people in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Not only the Netherlands took an indisputable lead in this discussion; so did the Dutch Parliament, so did the CDA fraction, so did I.⁵⁵¹³

It should be noted, however, that as early as 1977 the head of DAV (the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security in the Dutch Foreign Ministry) at the time, and later Secretary-General of the WEU, Willem Van Eekelen, had written that Parliament had a duty to guide public opinion and ‘to ensure that *Gesinnung* (citing the German sociologist Weber’s term for moral conviction) does not gain the upper hand over *Verantwortung* (responsibility)’.⁵⁵¹⁴ If this applied to Parliament, it applied even more strongly to the government in view of the latter’s administrative responsibilities.

A third kind of morality also played a role in the West’s policy with regard to the former Yugoslavia. The Canadian author Michael Ignatieff called this ‘virtue by proxy’, an attitude in which conscience allows itself to be bribed into silence. He accuses e.g. the American Government of this because while they employed a great deal of rhetoric in their policy concerning Yugoslavia, they were quite happy to leave peacekeeping operations on the ground to other countries or to provide arms to the Bosnian Government so that the Bosnian people could do their own fighting.⁵⁵¹⁵ According to Ignatieff, the attitude which allowed troops to be deployed in peacekeeping operations can also be called virtue by proxy: these troops were the ‘mercenaries of our conscience’.⁵⁵¹⁶ Seen in this light, the deployment of Dutchbat was the sacrifice the Dutch Government brought on the altar of its own policy of conviction. Whether such a sacrifice is justified depends, according to Ignatieff, on the outcome of a form of moral bookkeeping. The sacrifice involved in the deployment, plus the number of dead and wounded among the troops deployed, on the debit side must be balanced by the credit entry of the reduction in suffering in the region where the peacekeepers were deployed.⁵⁵¹⁷ At the moment when the decision to deploy Dutchbat was taken by the Dutch Government and approved by the Parliament in The Hague, this balance appeared to be positive. Would this conclusion be confirmed in the long term?

⁵⁵¹³ TCBU, Vertrepunt, III, deposition by J.G. de Hoop Scheffer, 29/05/00, p. 175.

⁵⁵¹⁴ Van Eekelen, Parlement, p. 53.

⁵⁵¹⁵ Michael Ignatieff, ‘Introduction: Virtue by Proxy’, in Danchev & Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, pp. ix-x and xv.

⁵⁵¹⁶ Michael Ignatieff, ‘Introduction: Virtue by Proxy’, in Danchev & Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, p. ix.

⁵⁵¹⁷ Michael Ignatieff, ‘Introduction: Virtue by Proxy’, in Danchev & Halverson (eds.), *Perspectives*, pp. x-xi.

Chapter 15

Problems with implementation

‘The real moral of the story is that once an offer of that kind is on the table a whole lot has to happen before you withdraw it, even if the circumstances in which you envisaged deploying the battalion have changed completely.’⁵⁵¹⁸

Once the Dutch Parliament had agreed to the government’s decision to send out the airmobile battalion which was to become known as Dutchbat, until Dutchbat was deployed in March 1994 there were still five problems that could in principle give rise to major concern at government level, viz. the area where it was to be deployed; how heavily it should be armed; the guarantees of air support; political and military complications in Bosnia that could affect the deployment of Dutchbat; and any uncertainties there might be as regards the battalion’s remit. To conclude Part I we shall consider these five aspects.

1. The deployment area

‘An honourable, not easy but certainly feasible, task’

By the end of November the Dutch government still did not know where Dutchbat would be deployed, although it did receive an indication on 24 November from the Deputy Chief of Operations and Command and Information Systems, Major General Kolsteren, who was visiting Bosnia at the time. He had talked to the Deputy Operations Officer that morning, who had told him that the night before General Briquemont had listed the options for the Dutch airmobile battalion in order of priority:

- ‘1. The bat. in Srebrenica/Zepa (reason: in the event of a peace plan this area would form a large Muslim enclave which could be protected by one good battalion).
2. The bat. in the Vares-Kladanj-Tuzla area, possibly alternating with NORBAT in supplying a company for Srebrenica.
3. The Zenica-Kakanj-Vares option with a sub-unit in Srebrenica.’⁵⁵¹⁹

All the options included the name of Srebrenica. On 29 November a reconnaissance party consisting of 20 representatives of the Airmobile Brigade, the Support Command (the logistics component) and the Crisis Staff in The Hague set off for Split for a visit that was to last until 12 December.⁵⁵²⁰ The party was led by Colonel Lemmen, Chief of Staff of the Airmobile Brigade. The Commander of the first battalion of the Airmobile Brigade to be sent out, Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen, led the tactical part

⁵⁵¹⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of J.T. Hoekema, 24/05/00, p. 75.

⁵⁵¹⁹ DCBC, 1651. Kolsteren to DCBC, 24/11/93, 2135A.

⁵⁵²⁰ BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, Fax from head of Section G3, W.J.T.M. Jeurissen, p.p. Cdr 1-Lk, to DOKL Crisis Staff et al., 16/11/93 No. G3 OPN002.

of the reconnaissance, and Lieutenant Colonel Van Dullemen, the intended Deputy Commander of Support Command, the logistical part.

Despite the fact that the Deputy Military Adviser to the UN's Permanent Representation, Koestal, had sent a fax to The Hague a week before the departure of the mission saying that Dutchbat would be deployed in Central Bosnia,⁵⁵²¹ when the mission set off it was still assumed that there were two possible deployment areas, either the Zenica-Kakanj-Vares-Olovo area or Zenica, Kakanj and Srebrenica.⁵⁵²² The deployment area would be clarified following talks between General Reitsma, Deputy Commander of Land Forces, with General Briquemont on 1 December in Kiseljak. Reitsma was accompanied by Vandeweijer of the Defence Staff and Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse of the Dutch Army Crisis Staff. In the talks Reitsma was supposed to stress the Dutch preference for deployment in the Vares-Kakanj-Zenica triangle.⁵⁵²³ There were major objections to the other option – Zenica, Kakanj and Srebrenica –, in particular since it would be difficult to satisfy the requirements of rapid medical care, which was 'unacceptable' as far as Vermeulen was concerned.⁵⁵²⁴ Supplies would also be a problem, as the area in between was in Bosnian Serb hands. Hence the Deputy Commander of Support Command, Lieutenant Colonel Van Dullemen, considered that Briquemont had to be told that this option could not be supported logistically.⁵⁵²⁵ Once the deployment area had been decided, the party would reconnoitre it.

Shortly before leaving, Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse was handed a note indicating that General Bastiaans had dined with the Force Commander, General Cot, on the evening of 28 November and the deployment of the Dutch battalion had been discussed. Cot had said that the Scandinavian countries were willing to send one company to Srebrenica temporarily until Dutchbat arrived. After that 'strong consideration' was being given to deploying the main force of the Dutch battalion in Central Bosnia, with one company in Srebrenica.⁵⁵²⁶

At that time UNPROFOR Commander Cot was seriously concerned about Srebrenica. As he said later, the enclave was indisputably the black sheep among the Safe Areas.⁵⁵²⁷ A Canadian company had been deployed there on 18 April, but this cannot have been much to the Canadian government's liking. Three weeks earlier the Dutch Defence Attaché in Ottawa had been told that 'there was a growing feeling' among the Canadian defence authorities 'that the Canadians have done enough and it's time for someone else to take over'.⁵⁵²⁸ Just two days after 143 Canadians arrived in Srebrenica, on 20 April, the Canadian government began to be seriously concerned about the situation of its troops. Without adequate demilitarization the Serbs might feel they had the right to invade the enclave. It was far from certain whether they would allow themselves to be restrained by the presence of Canadian forces, the authorities in Ottawa gloomily surmised.⁵⁵²⁹ They were also concerned about the remote situation of Srebrenica, a long way from the rest of the area controlled by Bosnian government troops and close to Serbia. The Canadians were also not happy about the fact that their battalion had been split up between Visoko and Srebrenica.⁵⁵³⁰ Hence the Canadian Department of National Defence began working on plans for the withdrawal of the Canadian troops almost immediately after they had

⁵⁵²¹ CRST. Koestal to Defence Staff and Army Crisis Staff, 22/11/93, 1116.

⁵⁵²² BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, Fax from DOKL, Operational Affairs Section, Deputy CS Army Crisis Staff to G3-1 Lk et al., 24/11/93, 1400; Van Bouwdijk B., Head Operational Affairs Section, no date. This latter document is also in the Ministry of Defence archives, 395 OZ, dated 26/11/93, No. OZ/7313.

⁵⁵²³ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁵⁵²⁴ BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, Fax from 11 Infbat AIRMBL (APC) to Deputy BLS via Crisis Staff, 26/11/93.

⁵⁵²⁵ DCBC, 1172. Reconnaissance Party I, Internal memorandum from Deputy Chief SPTCMD W. van Dullemen to Deputy CS Crisis Staff Van Bouwdijk B., 26/11/93. See also Jellema, *First-in*, p. 56.

⁵⁵²⁶ CRST. Note from Deputy Chief Operations of Army Staff to DOKL c.c. CS Crisis Staff.

⁵⁵²⁷ Interview J. Cot, 19/04/00.

⁵⁵²⁸ ABZ, PVNAVO. De Vos van Steenwijk 35 to Kooijmans, 29/03/93.

⁵⁵²⁹ Interview Aaron Hywarren and Col. Tim Sparling, 12/11/99.

⁵⁵³⁰ Interview B. Fowler, 06/06/97.

arrived in the enclave.⁵⁵³¹ The Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister, Barbara McDougall, at once tried to persuade the British and French governments to station their troops in Srebrenica alongside the Canadians, but neither government was interested.⁵⁵³²

Meanwhile a second Canadian company had been stationed in Srebrenica, but the two of them were replaced on 11 October 1993 by a single company, the Infantry Company of the 22nd Regiment, which was only able to man eight observation posts and had to abandon five existing posts.

When UNPROFOR Commander Cot tried, at the end of September, to move part of the Nordbat 2 battalion, consisting of Swedish, Norwegian and Danish forces, from Tuzla to Srebrenica until the Dutch battalion arrived, the Swedish government refused point blank.⁵⁵³³ An attempt by Briquemont to get this unit to Srebrenica by issuing an order to the Swedish battalion commander was unsuccessful: the commander simply refused, saying he could not go there without permission from the Scandinavian governments.⁵⁵³⁴ In the first weekend of December UNPROFOR put in another request, this time to all three Scandinavian Foreign Ministers, for temporary placement of a company in Srebrenica to relieve the Canadian unit which was there awaiting the arrival of Dutchbat,⁵⁵³⁵ but the Scandinavian Ministers refused. They objected to the isolated location of Srebrenica, its situation in a valley and the large number of Displaced Persons in the enclave, and furthermore they insisted on being allowed to take tanks with them at the urging of the Danish Parliament.⁵⁵³⁶ Following this refusal Cot summoned the battalion commander to Zagreb to give him a personal order to direct his unit to Srebrenica. Upset at this, the Swedish Colonel, Ulf Hendrikson, told Cot, who took the matter seriously, that his government forbade him to do this as the parliaments of the participating countries had earmarked the battalion solely for Tuzla.⁵⁵³⁷ On 12 December the Swedish commander confirmed to the Dutch General Bastiaans, head of the UN observers, that he was not permitted to obey Cot's order without consulting the Scandinavian governments.⁵⁵³⁸

When Reitsma, Vandeweijer and Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse arrived in Zagreb on 1 December they found that direct talks with Briquemont could not take place. The UN contract with the pilots of the airline Sky Link, who had been contracted to provide transport for UNPROFOR between Zagreb and Sarajevo, had expired, and the pilots refused to take passengers from Zagreb to Sarajevo for the UN until they had been paid. Deep snowfall meant that Sarajevo could not be reached by road either, so Reitsma contacted Briquemont by telephone from the office of Bokhoven, the Commander of the Dutch Contingent. Before he did so, however, Bokhoven told him that it was certain as far as he was concerned that the Dutch battalion would be sent to Srebrenica.⁵⁵³⁹ In the telephone conversation, according to Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, Briquemont did not say 'it's to be Srebrenica' in so many words,⁵⁵⁴⁰ he merely said that Dutchbat would not be stationed in Central Bosnia but in a Safe Area.⁵⁵⁴¹ According to Bokhoven Briquemont was being 'shrewd', but it was clear from the telephone conversation that Srebrenica and Zepa would be the deployment area.⁵⁵⁴² Briquemont would not entertain a request by Reitsma to station the Dutch battalion in Central Bosnia, near the transport

⁵⁵³¹ Interview Aaron Hywarren and Col. Tim Sparling, 12/11/99.

⁵⁵³² Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 155-156.

⁵⁵³³ Eriksson, 'Intelligence', p. 17 n. 14; interview A.K. van der Vlis, 13/02/98. See also Briquemont, *Something*, pp. 213-214.

⁵⁵³⁴ Bais, *Mijnenveld*, p. 63; interviews G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00, and F. Briquemont, 22/06/00; UN report, par. 104.

⁵⁵³⁵ DOKL/OZ. Van der Vlis to Ter Beek and Frinking, 02/12/93, No. S93/061/3990.

⁵⁵³⁶ Interviews A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00; K. Hillingsø, 28/10/99; General K. Lyng, 29/10/99; B. Pelnäss, 03/11/99.

⁵⁵³⁷ Interviews J. Cot, 19/04/00; G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00, and F. Briquemont, 22/06/00; Bais, *Mijnenveld*, p. 63.

⁵⁵³⁸ Interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00; journal note G.J.M. Bastiaans, 12/12/93.

⁵⁵³⁹ Interview R. Reitsma, 04/10/99.

⁵⁵⁴⁰ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵⁵⁴¹ Interview R. Reitsma, 04/10/99.

⁵⁵⁴² Interview H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01; Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part II, Appendix 4, interview Bokhoven, 04/09/98, p. 7.

battalion.⁵⁵⁴³ In the conversation with Briquemont Reitsma did say that secure logistics and medical evacuation were ‘specific areas of concern’ for the Dutch government.⁵⁵⁴⁴

Briquemont subsequently stated that there was no government willing to send troops to Srebrenica, neither the British, the French, the Scandinavian nor the Spanish governments, and the Canadian government wanted to get its company out of the enclave as soon as possible. He was convinced himself that the Safe Areas were a bad idea and Srebrenica was too far to the east, but ‘I had to argue in favour of the deployment of the Dutch battalion in Srebrenica.’⁵⁵⁴⁵

Following this telephone conversation Bokhoven arranged for Reitsma to visit Cot.⁵⁵⁴⁶ Reitsma also went into this meeting ready to state the conditions that deployment had to be to a contiguous area and that the unit’s logistics and medical supplies had to be secure. While Briquemont could be said to have presented the deployment in Srebrenica and Zepa ‘shrewdly’ and not ‘in so many words’, Cot left no room for misunderstanding whatsoever. ‘He came straight to the point, bang!’, according to Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse.

‘I have only one priority, Srebrenica! There is only one task for the battalion. That’s how it came across to me. It was really ‘bang!’. Scarcely anything by way of introduction. Well, the three polite phrases, of course... He even used the word ‘*évident*’, I think. ‘*C’est évident*.’⁵⁵⁴⁷

As a result of failure to reach a political solution and lack of troops the French general had been obliged to prioritize the implementation of Resolution 836 on Safe Areas and Freedom of Movement in order to secure humanitarian aid and supplies to the UN forces. Meanwhile the UNPROFOR Commander had found a solution for almost all the safe areas and Central Bosnia. Britbat would keep the principal supply route to Central Bosnia open. The Canadians would protect the central part of the Muslim area and act as back-up in the event of an emergency evacuation of Sarajevo. The Scandinavian battalion would concentrate on the area around Tuzla. Protection was provided for Bihac by the French battalion there. Sarajevo was adequately protected by Egyptian, Ukrainian and two French battalions. A Ukrainian unit would protect Gorazde. This only left Srebrenica, from which the Canadian company wanted to withdraw as soon as possible, and Zepa. General Cot indicated, probably in an attempt at reassurance, that there were plans for exchanging areas, including the three eastern enclaves. Bokhoven was able to confirm this, as he had been present in October when Cot had talked to Izetbegovic and Silajdzic about the subject.⁵⁵⁴⁸ As Dutchbat would not be able to start deploying until the end of February/beginning of March, Cot had asked the Scandinavian battalion to take over Srebrenica temporarily. As was already clear, he did not have much success.

In response to Reitsma’s condition that Dutchbat should only operate in a contiguous area Cot said that he regarded the areas of Srebrenica and Zepa as a single entity. According to him the two areas were only 25 kilometres apart and a corridor between the two enclaves would be provided. Brinkman, Vandeweijs and Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse were well aware that it was not as easy as Cot presented it. But it was clear that Cot had only one option for the Dutch force. Any cautious objection on the part of Reitsma would elicit a response from Cot along the lines of ‘You’re not telling me that a Dutch battalion can’t manage that?’⁵⁵⁴⁹ In effect Cot faced Reitsma’s team with a ‘take it or leave it’ offer. The Dutch battalion could come, but only to Srebrenica and Zepa. An airmobile battalion would

⁵⁵⁴³ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part II, Appendix 4, interview Bokhoven, 04/07/98, p. 7; interview H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01.

⁵⁵⁴⁴ BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, Fax from Deputy BLS to Lemmen, c.c. L.Col. Van Hoorn Alkema and Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 01/12/93, 2130.

⁵⁵⁴⁵ Interview F. Briquemont, 22/06/00.

⁵⁵⁴⁶ CRST. Fax from DOKL to CDS d.t.v. SCOCIS (Kolsteren), 02/12/93, 0040; interview H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01.

⁵⁵⁴⁷ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵⁵⁴⁸ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, II, deel 4, interview Bokhoven, 04/09/98, p. 7; interview H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01.

⁵⁵⁴⁹ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

thus have to be deployed in two enclaves, access to which was controlled by troops known for delaying convoys. A battalion whose strategic advantage derived from its air mobility and the limited predictability of its deployment area was being turned into a sitting duck which simply had to guess whether there would be enough supplies to ensure its operational and tactical mobility.

There was nothing left for Reitsma other than to tell Cot that he would report to his minister.⁵⁵⁵⁰ If the Dutch Government had not been willing to send troops to Srebrenica, none would have gone there. As Minister Pronk said, ‘There was no alternative, unless no- one went there.’⁵⁵⁵¹ Briquemont considered with hindsight that the Dutch Government ought to have refused to deploy in Srebrenica:

‘Then the politicians would at last have had to review UNPROFOR’s operational strategy, and above all the blue helmets’UN peacekeepers’ mandate, if they wanted to retain the concept of safe zones.’⁵⁵⁵²

If the Dutch Government had refused it would indeed have faced the UN with a dilemma. But was it conceivable, given the substantial political pressure to do something, to give the Dutch presence a higher profile and to protect the Safe Areas, and after the promises made in Copenhagen and New York, that the Netherlands would say ‘no’ and withdraw its offer of the battalion? That Reitsma, in other words, would advise the Dutch Government against this course of action? Not according to Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse:

‘We felt we were faced with a *fait accompli*... The battalion was ready to go. The battalion wanted to go. The political pressure in the Netherlands was extremely strong. The Netherlands had shouted from the rooftops ‘We are going to take part!’ Parliament, the government, the Foreign minister, the Defence minister. The whole caboodle: ‘We’re going to take part!’ The Dutch press was urging ‘We must, we must!’ That pressure, of course, was paramount. Then there was the way Cot presented it. As a result we simply couldn’t go back.’⁵⁵⁵³

At Bokhoven’s office Reitsma, Vandeweyer and Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse drew up messages for the commander of the reconnaissance party, Colonel Lemmen, and the Army Staff.⁵⁵⁵⁴ At half-past nine in the evening Reitsma notified Lemmen by fax that his discussions that day had revealed that Dutchbat’s job would be to secure the Safe Areas of Srebrenica and Zepa.

Although Minister Ter Beek had not yet consented to this, the reconnaissance now had to be concerned solely with this deployment option. The exchange of information with the Canadian battalion in Srebrenica – ‘already partly done’ – and the Ukrainian battalion in Zepa had to be ‘deepened’.⁵⁵⁵⁵

At two minutes past midnight on the night of 1-2 December Reitsma sent a fax to the Army Staff⁵⁵⁵⁶ indicating that he had taken good note of the preference expressed by Parliament on 16 November for deployment in a contiguous area in Central Bosnia. He also reported that he had raised the need for proper logistical support and medical care with Cot. From the conversations with both Cot and Briquemont it was clear, however, that there was only one deployment option, Srebrenica and

⁵⁵⁵⁰ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵⁵⁵¹ Interview J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

⁵⁵⁵² Briquemont, *Something*, p. 225. See also Van Meteren, ‘Oud-VN-General: drama Srebrenica was onnodig’ (Ex-UN General says Srebrenica drama was unnecessary), *ANP*, 09/01/97, 21:37.

⁵⁵⁵³ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00. Similar communication in interview H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01

⁵⁵⁵⁴ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵⁵⁵⁵ BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, Fax from Deputy BLS to Col. Lemmen, c.c. Lt. Col. Van Hoorn Alkema and Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 01/12/93, 2130.

⁵⁵⁵⁶ BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, Fax from DOKL to CDS d.t.v. SCOCIS (Brigadier General Kolsteren), 02/12/93, 0040.

Zepa. Reitsma said that according to Cot the Dutch battalion's task in the Safe Areas would not be 'more dangerous or more difficult' than that of the other battalions in Bosnia. Because of the international pressure on Serbia, Reitsma continued in his fax, the Bosnian Serbs were not expected to attack the enclaves. 'On the contrary, there is more likelihood of negotiation than of confrontation.' He also noted that Cot did not exclude the possibility of an exchange of the eastern Safe Areas for areas around Sarajevo at some time in the future. Supplies ought not to be a problem either, according to Cot, as the combatants had signed an agreement on 29 November guaranteeing freedom of movement of convoys along three central routes in Bosnia.

Reitsma did not hide the fact that the assignment would be 'no easy task', pointing out the difficult terrain and the question of where to locate Support Command. Reitsma's fax followed Cot's assertion that Srebrenica and Zepa were a contiguous area, thus meeting Parliament's desires. On the same lines he maintained that the problem of adequate medical care could be solved by providing surgical facilities in one of the two enclaves.

Reitsma's conclusion was that the Netherlands, by deploying in the two enclaves, would make a valuable contribution to implementing Resolution 836: 'The Srebrenica and Zepa option is an honourable, not easy but feasible, task for the Dutch Army and fits in with the requirements of the government and Parliament's wishes.' He recommended that the locations that had been assigned be accepted quickly, for one thing to avoid speculation by the press and personnel.⁵⁵⁵⁷

Reitsma enclosed with his fax the declaration by the combatants on guarantees of freedom of movement for convoys along the routes Ploce-Metkovic-Mostar-Sarajevo-Tuzla, Belgrado-Sarajevo via Zvornik, and Zagreb-Sarajevo via Banja Luka. The signatories, who included Delic and Karadzic but not Mladic, acknowledged 'that should elements within their area of responsibility inhibit the inflow of humanitarian assistance and logistic supply, they acknowledge that UNPROFOR will use all available means including force to establish unimpeded flow.'

Just over half an hour after receiving Reitsma's fax the Army Staff sent it on to Van der Vlis.⁵⁵⁵⁸ Couzy substantively agreed with Reitsma.⁵⁵⁵⁹ He knew that there was no other country willing to send troops to Srebrenica. Asked in 2000 why he had not opposed this he opined that a country like the Netherlands could not refuse out of loyalty to the UN. Furthermore, 'If it was a question of gauging the risks to Dutch UN servicemen, Bihac and Sarajevo were more dangerous locations than Srebrenica and Zepa.'⁵⁵⁶⁰ And the mission was feasible in military terms.⁵⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁵⁷ With his subsequently much quoted words Reitsma, without realizing it, was probably referring to the 'honourable and difficult task' referred to almost eighty years earlier when a Dutch peace mission in another part of the Balkans, Albania, was completed and a Dutch Lieutenant Colonel, Lodewijk Thomson, died there. The journalist Doe Hans, quoted in Marcel Broersma, 'De held van Durazzo' (The Hero of Durazzo), *Historisch Nieuwsblad*, September 2000, p. 45.

⁵⁵⁵⁸ BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, Fax from DOKL to CDS d.t.v. SCOCIS (Kolsteren), 02/12/93, 0040.

⁵⁵⁵⁹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, pp. 63-64.

⁵⁵⁶⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 63.

⁵⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.



Reitsma's fax and the reactions of the Dutch military suggest that Srebrenica was relatively safe compared with the other option that had been on the cards for some considerable time, namely Zenica, and tactically that was indeed the case. At that time there was violent conflict taking place in Central Bosnia, not in Srebrenica. Operationally, however, Srebrenica was less safe because the Bosnian Serbs controlled the supply lines, so they could stop supplies and changeover of forces at any time they pleased.

'Somehow or other' Reitsma's fax never reached Van der Vlis, but it went straight to the minister, after which the Chief of Defence Staff was told that the minister wanted a rapid reaction from him.⁵⁵⁶² That same day, 2 December, Van der Vlis informed Minister Ter Beek that both he and Couzy stood by the description of stationing Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa as 'an honourable, not easy but feasible, task'. Van der Vlis was able to add that it had been 'relatively peaceful for some time now' in Srebrenica and Zepa.⁵⁵⁶³

On or around 2 December Brigadier General Bastiaans objected to the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica in a telephone conversation with the Deputy Chief of Operations or the Head of the Crisis Staff because of the difficulties the Canadian battalion had met with there.⁵⁵⁶⁴ This message did not reach Minister Ter Beek. At that time he heard no reservations 'from anyone' regarding the mission to Srebrenica. Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse too, on his return to the Netherlands, said he had not heard of any criticism of the choice of location. There was a lot of talk, he said, about the problem of the supply lines, but otherwise everyone proceeded to the order of the day, as there was not much time to prepare for the mission.⁵⁵⁶⁵ The Army's Head of Intelligence and Security, General Bosch, remembered that he and his staff were shown maps of the area and 'we agreed that these were difficult areas. But that's not unusual in itself, as there aren't any easy areas in Yugoslavia.'⁵⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁵⁶² TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.K. van der Vlis, p. 56.

⁵⁵⁶³ DOKL/OZ. Van der Vlis to Ter Beek and Frinking, 02/12/93, No. S93/061/3990.

⁵⁵⁶⁴ Interview G.L.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00; Bastiaans to NIOD, 12/12/00.

⁵⁵⁶⁵ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵⁵⁶⁶ Interview J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99.

On 2 December Ter Beek telephoned Lubbers, Kok and Kooijmans about the deployment in Srebrenica and Zepa, and they gave their approval.⁵⁵⁶⁷ After the Ministerial Council had also agreed,⁵⁵⁶⁸ on 3 December Parliament was notified of the deployment area in a letter in which the government stated that the Scandinavian battalion was originally to have been stationed partly in Tuzla, partly in Srebrenica, but a lot of importance was attached to reopening Tuzla airport. The international community had for some considerable time been pressing for the reopening of the airport to enable goods to be flown in, as otherwise there would be a 'humanitarian disaster' in Tuzla and the three eastern enclaves.⁵⁵⁶⁹ The Bosnian Serbs refused to permit its reopening, however, as they feared that Tuzla would be used for arms supplies to the Muslims.⁵⁵⁷⁰ On top of this, Briquemont wanted to have the Safe Areas of Srebrenica and Gorazde secured by the same battalion. It was against this background that the plan of stationing the Dutch battalion in Srebrenica and Zepa had been hatched. Logistical and medical support for the Dutch UN forces in the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves would require good preparation, said the government: 'use can in fact be made of the knowledge and experience already gained on the spot by Canadian and Ukrainian forces'.⁵⁵⁷¹ It is said that a passage that mentioned the presence of Bosnian Serb heavy arms around Srebrenica was scrapped from the draft on the orders of Van Eenennaam.⁵⁵⁷² The announcement of the locations Srebrenica and Zepa did not in fact attract much attention in the Netherlands and certainly did not produce any criticism.

The reconnaissance

Once it was known that Srebrenica and Zepa would be the deployment area, on 3 December in Visoko some of the Dutch reconnaissance party were given a 'well-organized briefing' by the commander of the Canadian battalion about the situation in Srebrenica, which answered 'almost all our main questions': about the combatants and their weaponry, the ceasefire violations (150 to 400 a day), the observation posts, the UN military observers and civilian UN police in the area, the demilitarization, the – disputed – boundaries of the enclave and the problems with supplies.⁵⁵⁷³ The Dutch reconnaissance team were told that the Canadian battalion commander had only once been given permission by the Bosnian Serbs to visit his company in Srebrenica.⁵⁵⁷⁴ The Dutch were also able to contact the company in Srebrenica briefly through the Operations Room. According to Reitsma there was even 'constant interchange with the Canadians about the actual situation in Srebrenica'.⁵⁵⁷⁵

However, no trace has been found of any contact between the Dutch and Canadian authorities in Ottawa about the deployment area prior to the deployment of Dutchbat,⁵⁵⁷⁶ and according to the Canadian authorities no such contact ever took place: neither at diplomatic nor at military level did the

⁵⁵⁶⁷ Interview R.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁵⁵⁶⁸ Objectivized summary of the Ministerial Council meetings of 03/12/93, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study; BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, fax from CSKL to LO DB G3 Plans BH Command Kiseljak, Soesbergen, 04/12/93, 2045.

⁵⁵⁶⁹ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen (Yugoslavia. The political situation and parties), Part VII, May 1993 to March 1994. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie (Developments in the former Yugoslav federation), 70/93, 15/12/93; 71/93, 21/12/93.

⁵⁵⁷⁰ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part VII, May 1993 to March 1994. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 71/93, 21/12/93; DCBC, 2128, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 03/94, 14/01/94; 2127, 04/94, 18/01/94; 2125, 06/94, 31/01/94; 2123, 08/94, 09/02/94; 2121, 10/94, 15/02/94; 2118, 13/94, 25/02/94; 2117, 14/94, 17/03/94.

⁵⁵⁷¹ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, No. 66, p. 2.

⁵⁵⁷² Interview J.T. Hoekema, 05/03/98.

⁵⁵⁷³ Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 69-70; interview F.J.A. Pollé, 08/03/00.

⁵⁵⁷⁴ Interview C. Vermeulen, 09/06/00

⁵⁵⁷⁵ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of R. Reitsma, 22/05/00, p. 47. See also BLS. Reconnaissance Party II, Fax from C.H.P. Vermeulen, C-DB, Lt.Col. of Grenadiers, 11 INFBAT AIRMBL GG (APC)/DUTCHBAT, to BLS Attn. Crisis Staff, 'Verkeningsrapport Srebrenica en Zepa', 001, 12/12/93, incl. Appendix: Situation Report Srebrenica.

⁵⁵⁷⁶ Interview T. Quiggin, 26/03/99.

Dutch Government consult the authorities in Ottawa or the Canadian Embassy in The Hague.⁵⁵⁷⁷ The absence of any contact with the Canadians about the deployment in Srebrenica is also remarkable in that the Canadian Government had in the past regularly supplied the Dutch Government at diplomatic level with information on the Canadian view of both the developments associated with UNPROFOR in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in general and the Canadian deployment. This took place either from the Canadian Department of National Defence to the Dutch Military Attaché in Ottawa or from the Canadian Embassy in The Hague to officials at the Dutch Foreign Ministry.⁵⁵⁷⁸ The lack of attempts to inquire about the Canadians' experience is illustrated by the fact that when the Canadian Prime Minister, Chrétien, buttonholed Lubbers on the fringe of the NATO summit in Brussels on 10 January 1994 and asked him whether the Dutch airmobile battalion was going to Srebrenica or Zepa, Lubbers and his Council Adviser Merckelbach did not know and had to check with The Hague.⁵⁵⁷⁹ In any event it became clear to Lubbers that the Canadian Prime Minister was relieved that the weary Canadian troops would soon be able to leave Srebrenica thanks, as he understood, to their replacement by the Dutch forces. Veenendaal, the Permanent Representative to NATO, gained the same impression from his Canadian counterpart.⁵⁵⁸⁰ No wonder, since at the time the Secretary-General of the Canadian defence ministry, Bob Fowler, was having nightmares that the Bosnian Serbs would overrun the enclave.⁵⁵⁸¹ The Canadians' experiences in the enclave were otherwise not discussed by Chrétien and Lubbers, however. The Dutch Prime Minister did not consider there was any reason to inquire into such matters. On the contrary, he was very pleased with the robust stand taken by NATO, which had again confirmed the decisions of 2 and 9 August 1993 on the possibility of air strikes to protect the Safe Areas, explicitly referring to the relief of the Canadian battalion by Dutch forces, which the Bosnian Serbs were still obstructing.⁵⁵⁸² At the same time the Dutch Military Adviser to the Permanent Representation in New York, Colonel Van Veen, noted his Canadian counterpart's relief regarding their departure from Srebrenica. However, the relief on the part of the Canadians should not necessarily have given rise to unrest on the part of the Dutch, in Van Veen's opinion: the Canadians had only had a company in Srebrenica, whereas the Dutch were arriving with a full battalion. 'That, of course, was certainly somewhat more realistic (...) than what they had there. That was just nonsensical.'⁵⁵⁸³

Nor did Dutch Intelligence make inquiries of its Canadian counterpart about conditions in and around Srebrenica.⁵⁵⁸⁴ According to Minister Ter Beek, Intelligence in fact played 'no explicit role' in the decision about the specific location.⁵⁵⁸⁵ Once the deployment area was known, the Army's Intelligence and Security Department did gather information on the terrain and the combatants, which was passed on to the Crisis Staff.⁵⁵⁸⁶ The department's advice on both the deployment area and the weaponry would have been unfavourable.⁵⁵⁸⁷

The need among the military to make inquiries in Ottawa was slight because the most important parameters for stationing in the Srebrenica enclave were known: it was a relatively quiet area, the supply routes to which were controlled by the Serbs, who could resort to chicanery.⁵⁵⁸⁸ The deployment of

⁵⁵⁷⁷ Interview Aaron Hywarren and Col. Tim Sparling, 12/11/99.

⁵⁵⁷⁸ See e.g. ABZ, PVNY. Van den Broek 395 to PR New York, 28/11/91; 00142; ABZ, DPV/ARA/00155. Van den Broek 44 to Embassy Ottawa, 22/10/92; ABZ, DPV/ARA/00142. Walkate 155 to Van den Broek, 22/10/92; ABZ, 999.241, *Joegoslavië, NO FLY Zone*, Part II. Memorandum from DAV to Deputy DAV, 23/02/93 No. DAV/MS-93/034; ABZ, PVNAVO. De Vos van Steenwijk 35 to Kooijmans, 29/03/93.

⁵⁵⁷⁹ Interview J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/02/00.

⁵⁵⁸⁰ Interview L.W. Veenendaal, 17/08/00.

⁵⁵⁸¹ Interview N. Biegman, 03/07/00.

⁵⁵⁸² Interview R.F.M. Lubbers, 13/10/99.

⁵⁵⁸³ Interview R. van Veen, 16/08/00.

⁵⁵⁸⁴ MID to NIOD, 01/98, File: RIOD:Doc, re RIOD investigation into Srebrenica, questionnaire to MID, Strictly Confidential; interview J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99.

⁵⁵⁸⁵ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00. Identical information in interview H.J. Vandeweijer, 19/01/98.

⁵⁵⁸⁶ Interview J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99.

⁵⁵⁸⁷ Confidential interview (36).

⁵⁵⁸⁸ Interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

Dutchbat there was based more on political than on military considerations. There were large sections of the Army, moreover, who thought that the Dutch with a battalion ought easily to be able to do what the Canadians had done with a company.⁵⁵⁸⁹ According to Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, once it was known that Srebrenica would be the deployment area the Dutch authorities were sent the Canadian situation reports from Srebrenica by the Dutch Major Peersman, who was in Bosnia-Herzegovina Command.⁵⁵⁹⁰ No traces of them have been found in the Dutch archives, however.

Scarcely was the deployment area known than a number of problems became apparent. On 6 December Lieutenant Colonel Van Hoorn Alkema reported to the Army from the headquarters of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command that the almost constant refusal of the Serbs to allow supply convoys through was causing great concern at HQ. He pointed out that this was probably what the future held in store for Dutchbat.⁵⁵⁹¹ Major Madern, who took part in the logistics side of the reconnaissance party under Lemmen, reported in mid-December that the only possible supply route to Srebrenica from Split ran north through Serb terrain. He pointed out that this made logistics support to the units in Srebrenica and Zepa 'extremely vulnerable', 'if not impossible', if the Bosnian Serbs refused to cooperate.⁵⁵⁹²

Srebrenica and Zepa, it furthermore transpired, were by no means the contiguous area Cot had talked about. As the crow flies the two areas were not far apart, but transports had to cover 210 kilometres of road.⁵⁵⁹³ A subsequent reconnaissance party took eight-and-a-half hours to reach Zepa by this route (via Zvornik, Vlasenica and Han Pijesak) on 29 January 1994. Nor could rapid evacuation of the wounded be guaranteed.⁵⁵⁹⁴

As if not to leave the reconnaissance party in any doubt as to the difficulties Dutchbat would face, the Bosnian Serbs refused to allow the party through.⁵⁵⁹⁵ This was a sign that the situation as regards freedom of movement was manifestly not as good as the agreement of 29 November had led to suppose.⁵⁵⁹⁶ The refusal of the Bosnian Serbs, according to Bokhoven, was due to irritation at the fact that the Bosnian Serb army had not been informed of the proposed stationing of the Dutch battalion in the two enclaves and its functions there.⁵⁵⁹⁷ According to a member of the Bosnian Serb Government the VRS feared that the Canadian battalion, on changeover, would leave its weapons in the enclave and that they would fall into the hands of the Muslim fighters.⁵⁵⁹⁸ As there seemed no point in waiting any longer the party decided to return to the Netherlands and had reached Gornji Vakuf when it was ordered by the Crisis Staff in The Hague to go back and continue to exert pressure. Some of the party, including the Commander, Colonel Lemmen, however, returned to the Netherlands on 10 December.

⁵⁵⁸⁹ Interviews A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99, and J.-W. Brinkman, 11/10/99; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers . Interview H.A. Couzy, 21/04/95; Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 212.

⁵⁵⁹⁰ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵⁵⁹¹ BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, Fax from HQ BH Command Kiseljak NLSNO (Van Hoorn Alkema) to Sitcen Army, 06/12/93, 1000.

⁵⁵⁹² BLS. Reconnaissance Party II, 'Verslag dienstreis verkenning in Bosnië Herzegovina t.b.v. Dutchbat' (Report of trip to reconnoitre Bosnia-Herzegovina for Dutchbat) by P. Madern, G4-Implementation, Army Crisis Staff *Ochtendblad*, no date.

⁵⁵⁹³ BLS. Reconnaissance Party II, Fax from C.H.P. Vermeulen, C-DB, Lt.Col. of Grenadiers, 11 INFBAT AIRMBL GG (APC)/DUTCHBAT, to BLS Attn. Crisis Staff, 'Verkeningsrapport Srebrenica en Zepa' (Report of Srebrenica and Zepa Reconnaissance), 001, 12-12-93, Appendix: Situation Report Zepa.

⁵⁵⁹⁴ BLS. Reconnaissance Party II, Fax from C.H.P. Vermeulen, C-DB, Lt.Col. of Grenadiers, 11 INFBAT AIRMBL GG (APC)/DUTCHBAT, to BLS Attn. Crisis Staff, 'Verkeningsrapport Srebrenica en Zepa', 001, 12-12-93, Appendix: Situation Report Srebrenica.

⁵⁵⁹⁵ BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, fax from Bouwdijk Bastiaanse (CS Army) to G3 Plans/LO Dutchbat (Major Soesbergen) c.c. Commander Dutch contingent, 07/12/93, 1030; Fax from Major Soesbergen to Lt.Col. Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 07/12/93, 2230; Kolsteren to Briquemont, Appendix to fax from Major Govaarts (DCBC) to Col. Bokhoven, 09/12/93, 1855; Ministry of Defence archives, Def 2581, Reconnaissance Party II, 'Verslag dienstreis verkenning in Bosnië Herzegovina t.b.v. Dutchbat' by Major P. Madern, G4-Implementation, Army Crisis Staff *Ochtendblad*, no date.

⁵⁵⁹⁶ BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, Fax from Bokhoven to Major Soesbergen, 07/12/93, 1051.

⁵⁵⁹⁷ BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, Fax from Milovanovic to UNPROFOR Command Kiseljak, 8-12-93; Reconnaissance Party II, Fax from C.H.P. Vermeulen, C-DB, Lt.Col. of Grenadiers, 11 INFBAT AIRMBL GG.

⁵⁵⁹⁸ Interview M. Toholj, 14/12/99.

On 16 December the remainder of the party were ordered to return home without having seen Srebrenica or Zepa.

Knowledge of Srebrenica

As we saw in Chapter 13, Srebrenica was not unfamiliar to attentive television viewers and newspaper readers in the Netherlands. But what did the Defence Staff and the Army know about it specifically? Not very much. Almost five months after the outbreak of hostilities in Bosnia, the Army's Intelligence and Security Department knew little about the conflict area. On 26 August 1992 Dutch UN observer Gerard van Wondergem in Sarajevo received a fax saying:

'(...) the position of the Royal Netherlands Army as regards information is very mediocre: to date there has been scarcely any contact with UNPROFOR. This was a nuisance in the period when the Intelligence and Security Department was holding informative briefings etc. in preparation for posting, but in the new situation, where the decision-making processes are taking place, it is highly unsatisfactory.'⁵⁵⁹⁹

The Netherlands Officers' Association, following a visit to the Signals Battalion by a delegation from the Central Consultative Committee (Centraal Georganiseerd Overleg) for the Armed Services, had in the autumn already laid down as a condition for loyal implementation of a posting decision that the Crisis Staff and the Parliamentary Permanent Committee on Defence must have situation reports from the military observers on the spot.⁵⁶⁰⁰ The Netherlands made no use of the experience of Dutch military observers, including in Srebrenica and Zepa. At the time it was not standard practice to debrief military observers supplied to the UN by the Netherlands. The Army did not even have a data file on the stationing of the Dutch United Nations Military Observers.⁵⁶⁰¹ Not until after October 1992, when thirty students from the Peace Research Centre (Centrum voor Vredesvraagstukken), which provided courses for UN observers, invited a returnee observer to talk about his experiences, did such visits become a regular feature of the Centre's curriculum.⁵⁶⁰² One of the students at the time, Captain Harold Jacobs, wrote a handout based on his experience in the former Yugoslavia in spring 1993, which was issued to prospective UNMOs.⁵⁶⁰³ Gerard van Wondergem, who had been a UN observer in Sarajevo and Croatia in the second half of 1992, was appointed to the Army's Crisis Staff on 1 March 1993 in order to help with the future training of observers and other personnel sent out on an individual basis. UNMO Marechaussee Colonel Van Dijk, who was involved in finalizing the ceasefire agreement around Zepa at the time, was to warn against deployment in the eastern enclaves in a briefing at the Defence Ministry at the end of 1993.⁵⁶⁰⁴ Van Dijk, who was also vice-chairman of the Netherlands Officers' Association, had previously reported in the Association's journal *Carré* on his experience of Zepa, a conglomeration of a few villages in a valley with a total area of about a hundred square kilometres, which was not so well known to the Dutch public as Srebrenica. He had described the devastation caused by Serb artillery fire shortly before his visit in May 1993 and the deplorable hygienic conditions in which the population were living, for the most part camping in the woods in caves and huts made of branches and sods. On the other hand, he had noted that in Zepa, thanks to the American food drops, there was no malnutrition and the Muslim troops were well-disciplined and

⁵⁵⁹⁹ Van Wondergem, 'Je komt' (You come), p. 114; Paul Ruigrok, 'Den Haag wist van niets, maar de onderofficieren móésten terug' (The Hague knew nothing but the NCOs had to return), *Vrij Nederland*, 30/10/93, pp. 10-12. Neither the fax itself nor any copy of it could be found at MID.

⁵⁶⁰⁰ 'Belangenverenigingen bezoeken UNPROFOR' (Pressure groups visit UNPROFOR), *Carré* 15(1992)12, p. 30.

⁵⁶⁰¹ Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01; W.A.M. van Dijk, 'Nogmaals: Karremans en Dutchbat' (Karremans and Dutchbat again), *Carré* 18(1995)11, p. 20. See also the complaint by returnee UN observer Air Force Major J. Brinkhof in Eric Vrijzen, 'Een massale invasie is onbegonnen werk' (A massive invasion is a hopeless task), *Elsevier*, 09/01/93.

⁵⁶⁰² Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

⁵⁶⁰³ See LL. Operations BLS, hand-out for UN observers.

⁵⁶⁰⁴ Both, *Indifference*, p. 185.

respected human rights. When the Ukrainian battalion, which arrived soon after Van Dijk, had been there a week some of the population returned to their homes, which they had made habitable again as best they could. Van Dijk had also described at length how nothing had come of the demilitarization of the area, partly because constant Serb sniping and the odd shell continued to make the Muslims feel unsafe.⁵⁶⁰⁵

Major Dekker, who had been responsible for Operations at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, also said at a briefing to the Intelligence Section of the Airmobile Brigade on 15 November that deployment of the Dutch battalion in Srebrenica and Zepa would be ‘not so desirable’. The big drawback with the enclaves was that they were difficult to reach. There was still a confrontation line in Srebrenica.⁵⁶⁰⁶

In its regular overviews of developments in the former Yugoslavia, the Military Intelligence Service made no special mention of potential deployment areas, not even when it had been decided that Srebrenica and Zepa would be the deployment area. Information on these areas did crop up sporadically, along with and mixed in with all sorts of other information. A report of 7 December, for instance, said that Intelligence considered a military attack on Srebrenica by the Serbs unlikely because of its designation as a ‘protected area’ by the UN. The Bosnian Serbs would therefore be willing to exchange it for part of Sarajevo. Intelligence did not expect Izetbegovic to accept the offer, however, ‘not least because the “protected areas” guaranteed international (military) involvement in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina’.⁵⁶⁰⁷ He could even hope to provoke foreign military intervention by exploiting the ongoing siege of Srebrenica and Zepa for propaganda purposes, said Intelligence, and furthermore Izetbegovic would not be prepared to relinquish access to the Drina.⁵⁶⁰⁸

There was no separate risk analysis of Srebrenica and Zepa as a deployment area carried out by the Military Intelligence Service. As Minister Ter Beek said, ‘There was no independent report. Never an independent report from Intelligence. As I said, there were these mini-reports’.⁵⁶⁰⁹⁵⁶¹⁰ Conversely, Intelligence was never asked for a risk analysis.⁵⁶¹¹ Asked whether it had drawn up a risk analysis before Dutchbat was sent out, Intelligence itself told the NIOD:

‘On the basis of the information available, in particular weighing up the military power balance on the spot, it was possible to describe the security environment, from which it could be concluded that the enclave was indefensible from a military point of view.’⁵⁶¹²

There is no indication that the higher echelons were informed of this conclusion.

On 14 December Minister Kooijmans visited Sarajevo. Firstly, he wanted to persuade the Bosnian Government to make do with less terrain in the peace talks: this was part of an agreement he had made with his German counterpart Kinkel to help bring about a peace agreement.⁵⁶¹³ Secondly, Kooijmans wanted to get information direct from President Izetbegovic and Prime Minister Silajdzic on the chances of reaching an agreement.⁵⁶¹⁴ The Bosnians were pessimistic about the chances of peace in view of the unwillingness of the Bosnian Serbs to make the territorial concessions demanded by

⁵⁶⁰⁵ W.A.M. van Dijk, ‘UNMO-actie naar Zepa’ (UNMO campaign to Zepa), *Carré* 16(1993)7/8, pp. 20-25.

⁵⁶⁰⁶ BLS. Airmobile Brigade, Section 2 of 11th Airmobile Brigade, Notes of conversation with Major Dekker, 15/11/93.

⁵⁶⁰⁷ MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie (Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation), 68/93, 07/12/93.

⁵⁶⁰⁸ MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 03/94, 14/01/94.

⁵⁶⁰⁹ The *intelligence summaries* or ‘*intsums*’.

⁵⁶¹⁰ Interview A.L. Ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁵⁶¹¹ Interview P. Kok, 07/06/00.

⁵⁶¹² MID to NIOD, 01/98, File: RIOD:Doc, re RIOD investigation into Srebrenica, the questionnaire to MID, Strictly Confidential.

⁵⁶¹³ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

⁵⁶¹⁴ For the report of Kooijmans’ trip see 19 1993-94, 22 181, No. 68.

Sarajevo. Also, the Bosnian Muslims wanted a route connecting the three eastern enclaves and Sarajevo, or one connecting Zepa and Srebrenica with Tuzla. Kooijmans did not manage to extract much more information from them, as there was to be a meeting in Brussels the next week, so the Bosnian Government were keeping their cards close to their chest. According to Kooijmans the stationing of Dutchbat in Srebrenica was scarcely mentioned during this visit.⁵⁶¹⁵ Following his talks with Silajdzic there was a small press conference in the lobby of the government building, at which Silajdzic commented that if there was one country that did not have to be ashamed after the end of the Bosnian war it was the Netherlands.⁵⁶¹⁶

Concern regarding lack of access to the enclaves

At Kooijmans' Ministry, meanwhile, concern had arisen that the Dutch reconnaissance party had not gained access to Srebrenica and Zepa. The Ministry had realized that a unit in an enclave would be dependent on the good will of the Bosnian Serbs, but nevertheless this first foretaste of what lay in store for Dutchbat came as a shock to them.⁵⁶¹⁷ The day after Kooijmans spoke to Izetbegovic and Silajdzic he sent a telegram to Biegman, the Permanent Representative to the UN, informing him of the Bosnian Serbs' refusal to allow the reconnaissance party through. Without reconnaissance, wrote the Minister, the proposed deployment in January 1994 could not take place according to plan. On 7 December, according to Kooijmans' telegram, the Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Brigadier General Hayes, had talked to the Chief of Staff of the Bosnian Serbs, Milovanovic, and permission had been promised, but the promise was not kept. Talks between Briquemont and Mladic at which this topic was also to be raised had meanwhile been cancelled several times by the Bosnian Serb army chief. Milovanovic, for his part, cited higher political authorities. As the Bosnian Serbs had nothing to gain from a strong UN presence, it could take a long time for the party to be allowed through, according to Kooijmans, 'if the reconnaissance unit ever is allowed through'. Meanwhile Van der Vlis, according to Kooijmans, had on 7 December informed Briquemont of the concern about the situation that had arisen. Kooijmans also asked Biegman to inform the UN secretariat of the Dutch Government's concern. The Minister reminded Biegman that the Netherlands would prefer deployment in Central Bosnia and noted that there were now two options: either the UN could stick with the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa, which could involve considerable delay, or the Dutch battalion could be assigned a new area, possibly moving to the Safe Areas later on. Biegman was asked to raise this matter at the UN secretariat.⁵⁶¹⁸ With this move the Dutch Government cannot have made a good impression on the UN secretariat: they were trying to get away from the area assigned to them at the first sign of difficulty. Nonetheless Annan promised to put the question to the Security Council.⁵⁶¹⁹ He went back on this at Stoltenberg's request, however, as the latter was scared that involving the Security Council in the deployment issue would interfere with discussions on a Christmas ceasefire. Annan said that in the meantime it was assumed that Dutchbat would deploy in Central Bosnia for the time being, pending deployment in the Safe Areas.⁵⁶²⁰

On 21 December Junior Minister Frinking, in verbal consultations with the Parliamentary Permanent Committees on Foreign Affairs and Defence, said that he was allowing for the possibility of deploying Dutchbat at an alternative location.⁵⁶²¹ On this occasion Van Traa expressed doubts as to whether the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa 'will turn out to be effective'. He could not *a priori* accept still stationing the Dutch battalion in Srebrenica and Zepa if this were to take on a

⁵⁶¹⁵ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

⁵⁶¹⁶ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

⁵⁶¹⁷ Interview H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

⁵⁶¹⁸ BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, Kooijmans 540 to PR NY, 15/12/93.

⁵⁶¹⁹ DDI/DEU/05275. Biegman 1656 to Kooijmans, 17/12/93.

⁵⁶²⁰ DDI/ARA/02016. Biegman 1665 to Kooijmans, 21/12/93; TCBU, *Vertretpunt* I, p. 148.

⁵⁶²¹ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, No. 73, p. 7.

different substance as a result of a peace agreement. He also wanted clarification of a newspaper report which suggested that UNPROFOR was not willing to defend the Safe Areas of Srebrenica and Zepa against the Serbs.⁵⁶²² Blaauw was mainly interested in logistical communications with Zepa and Srebrenica.⁵⁶²³ According to reporters present at the consultations, Frinking even said that posting to Eastern Bosnia was off. According to the media, Cot, following a two-day visit to Belgrade, where he had talked to the authorities *inter alia* about the stationing of the Dutch forces, had said in a statement that the airmobile battalion was a ‘welcome reinforcement’ for Central Bosnia. The newspaper *Het Parool* added that the previous days had seen the heaviest fighting of the past few months in that area, with dozens of fatalities.⁵⁶²⁴ Briquemont, however, let it be known at the end of December that, despite the attitude of the Bosnian Serb authorities, the only place where Dutchbat could be deployed was Srebrenica and Zepa. He intended to contact Karadzic about this and on 12 January 1994 the commanders of the Bosnian Serbs (VRS) and the Bosnian Muslims (ABiH).⁵⁶²⁵

At the beginning of January the stationing of Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa was postponed for two or three weeks. In principle, said the UN, there was a possibility of stationing Dutchbat in Central Bosnia, after which it might be stationed in the enclaves, but for the time being they would stick with the assignment to the Eastern Bosnian enclaves.⁵⁶²⁶ The problem had also come to the notice of Queen Beatrix: at the New Year Reception in the Palace in Amsterdam she asked General Brinkman, Commander of the Airmobile Brigade, referring to his men, ‘Haven’t you gone yet?’⁵⁶²⁷

Under the threat of NATO air strikes if the changeover between the Canadians and the Dutch was not allowed to take place, Akashi gained the consent of Milosevic, Karadzic and Mladic, on 10, 13 and 19 January respectively, for the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica. The UN now wanted a rapid departure by the reconnaissance party as a ‘demonstrative gesture’ to the Bosnian Serb authorities to make it clear that UNPROFOR was serious about deploying Dutchbat.⁵⁶²⁸ A second reconnaissance party set off on 21 January 1994 under the command of Major Peek (S3-Infbat). The party reached Srebrenica in four days and visited Zepa two weeks later.⁵⁶²⁹

2. The strength of the weaponry: .50 or 25 mm?

‘To be respected, we must be strong.’⁵⁶³⁰

‘Toujours est-il que cet angélisme pervers – oubliant les principes élémentaires qui appellent à montrer sa force pur ne pas avoir à s’en servir – régnait non seulement à New York mais chez la plupart des exécutants.’⁵⁶³¹

⁵⁶²² TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, No. 73, p. 2.

⁵⁶²³ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, No. 73, p. 2.

⁵⁶²⁴ ‘Nederlandse troepen toch naar Bosnië’ (Dutch troops to go to Bosnia after all), *Het Parool*, 23/12/93. See also ‘Brigade gaat niet naar Oost-Bosnië’ (Brigade not going to Eastern Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/11/93; ‘Frinking bevestigt uitstel van VN-missie’ (Frinking confirms postponement of UN mission), *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/12/93; ‘Locatie en vertrek van Luchtmobiele Brigade naar Bosnië onzeker’ (Location and departure of Airmobile Brigade uncertain), *ANP*, 21/12/93, 18:22; ‘UNPROFOR-commandant: luchtmobiele brigade hard nodig in Bosnië’ (UNPROFOR Commander says airmobile brigade badly needed in Bosnia), *ANP*, 22/12/93, 1624.

⁵⁶²⁵ ABZ, DDI/DEU/05275, Kooijmans to PR NY, 31/12/93, celer 553; BLS. Foreign Affairs (ed.: Van Stegeren according to DGPZ) to PR NY, 31/12/93. See also TCBU, *Vertrekpunt I*, p. 148.

⁵⁶²⁶ ABZ, DIE/2001/00023. Memorandum from Acting DEU to AP et al., 07/01/94, No. 012/94, conclusions of the Foreign Affairs coordination consultations, 05/01/94.

⁵⁶²⁷ Interview J.-W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

⁵⁶²⁸ BLS. Reconnaissance Party II, D’Ansembourg 044 (PR NY) to Foreign Affairs, 17/01/94.

⁵⁶²⁹ See also Part II, Chapter 5

⁵⁶³⁰ Philippe Morillon, ‘The military aspects of field operations’, Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, p. 84.

⁵⁶³¹ Morillon, *Credo*, p. 137.

The decision about the posting also involved the issue of how heavily the forces should be armed.

The battalion was sent out as a light infantry unit with a few additional resources. It was to be equipped with some heavy weaponry, e.g. nine TOW anti-tank weapons on carriages with a range of about three kilometres, 27 Dragon anti-tank weapons with a range of about a thousand metres, and nine 81 mm mortars with a range of about 3,500 metres. The additional resources included 49 armoured infantry vehicles with caterpillar tracks, type YPR 765, as the Airmobile Brigade did not have standard-issue protective equipment in the form of vehicles. The YPRs were to serve as protective means of transport or battlefield taxis, i.e. they were there to protect personnel against snipers and mines. They were not intended for tactical purposes.

The question was what weaponry to equip the YPRs with. The Army had different versions of YPR, e.g. with a TOW anti-tank system, with a 25 mm KBA automatic Oerlikon gun and with a .50 machine gun. The 25 mm gun was the standard weapon for vehicles used on armoured infantry duties. The YPRs equipped with .50 machine guns were from the former mobilizable 101st Infantry Brigade.

The 25 mm gun could knock out unarmoured or lightly armoured vehicles and troops under cover up to 1,500 metres. For this purpose the standard-issue YPR had three hundred armour-piercing cartridges on board. The weapon, which could fire up to six hundred rounds a minute, was vulnerable, however. Parts would have to be replaced regularly, as they tended to break. If supplies were to become a problem, these weapons would be unusable.

The .50 Browning machine guns, which had been in use in the Dutch Armed forces since 1950, had a maximum effective range against ground targets of a thousand metres and used half-inch (approx. 14.5 mm) ammunition. The piercing strength of the .50 ammunition was much less than that of the 25 mm gun: it could not penetrate tanks or armoured vehicles and was really only suitable for use against infantry advancing in the open. When using tracer ammunition it was easy to guide the weapon to the target. Also, unlike the other gun, the machine gun rarely if ever displayed defects. A big drawback of the .50 machine guns, on the other hand, was that the gunner was virtually exposed, whereas the gun, which was part of a turret system, could be operated while protected by armoury. To protect .50 gunners a special armoured turret had been developed which was rotated with difficulty using manpower, whereas the turret of the 25 mm version rotated electrically.⁵⁶³² This was a system that Colonel Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse had seen used by the Danes on his visit in September. He had taken photographs of it, and on returning to the Netherlands he urged that the Dutch YPRs be fitted with turrets of this kind.⁵⁶³³

The decision on how heavily to arm Dutchbat was taken at a very early stage, when it was certainly not clear that Dutchbat would be deployed in Srebrenica⁵⁶³⁴. The decision was never subsequently changed. When it was still assumed that Dutchbat would be deployed in Central Bosnia on territorial duties Van der Vlis, Couzy and the Commander of the First Army Corps, General Schouten, tackled the point at a meeting.⁵⁶³⁵ As to why Dutchbat was sent out with .50 machine guns instead of 25 mm guns, there are various explanations. Firstly, there was a training argument. Secondly, the UN aide-mémoire supposedly laid down that weapons such as the 25 mm gun could not be deployed. Thirdly, the Bosnian Serb Army would object.⁵⁶³⁶

According to Couzy and Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, training and the interchangeability of gunners were the decisive arguments. Training a gunner to use a 25 mm gun took five to ten days.

⁵⁶³² BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, Internal memorandum DOKL./Project Bureau Air Mobile action from H-PBLO/DOKL to C-11 LMB, 25/08/93; A.H.H. Geeraerts, *De taxi van Ter Beek* (Ter Beek's taxi), *Armex*, 78(1994)3, pp. 25-26; A. Sebes to NIOD, 20/06/01.

⁵⁶³³ Interviews F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00; C. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.

⁵⁶³⁴ See also e.g. CRST. Note on Deployment of first airmobile battalion from HOZ to PCDS, no date, with Appendix 'Safe Lion' Planning Assignment, 24/08/93.

⁵⁶³⁵ Interviews F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00, and H. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98.

⁵⁶³⁶ Cf. interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

Anyone could be trained to use a .50 within one day.⁵⁶³⁷ Another point that concerned Couzy was that the 25 mm guns required a lot of maintenance: if there were supply problems there might not be enough spare parts.⁵⁶³⁸ The independent defence journal *Armex* cast doubt on the training argument, saying that training a gunner to operate the 25 mm gun did not take that much more time than training someone to operate the .50 machine gun.⁵⁶³⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Groeneveld, who was on the Defence Staff at the time, was not convinced by the training argument either: if drivers could be trained separately, he saw no reason why gunners could not be trained specially to use the 25 mm guns.⁵⁶⁴⁰

Then there is the argument that the weaponry had to be light when operating in a UN context.⁵⁶⁴¹ This can be countered by the fact that the Security Council in the case of UNPROFOR I had permitted UNPROFOR personnel to be more heavily protected than was customary in UN peacekeeping operations, as a result of the Croatian offensive in parts of the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) in January 1993 and the Serb response. On 19 February 1993 the Council adopted Resolution 807, which invited the Secretary-General to take 'all appropriate measures to strengthen the security of UNPROFOR, in particular by providing it with the necessary defensive means'. Purely for that purpose the Resolution cited Chapter VII. Resolution 815 of 30 March 1993, which extended UNPROFOR's mandate in Croatia, used almost the same phraseology: 'Determined to ensure the security of UNPROFOR and its freedom of movement for all its missions, and to these ends acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations...' Against this background Boutros-Ghali wrote in February 1993 that countries who had asked to be allowed to arm their units more heavily were permitted to do so providing it was possible to explain to the combatants that the heavier weaponry was intended for self-protection.⁵⁶⁴²

The troop-supplying nations did not in fact take UN guidelines particularly seriously in Bosnia from the outset. The UN originally said, for instance, that the number of armoured vehicles per unit should be limited for budgetary reasons. The troop-supplying countries, however, considered this undesirable with a view to the safety of their personnel and sent more than were permitted.⁵⁶⁴³ MacKenzie, the Commander in Sarajevo *nota bene*, ensured that the Canadian battalion was supplied with projectiles for the TOW anti-tank system in spite of a UN ban.⁵⁶⁴⁴ As governments sending troops realized the dangers in the region, the more heavily they armed their units.⁵⁶⁴⁵ French units in Bosnia had 20 mm guns and even a few 90 mm guns. The British used Warriors with 25 mm guns and the Spanish 20 mm guns. Besides the Dutch, only the Canadians and Danes used .50 machine guns.⁵⁶⁴⁶ Denmark also sent a tank company in September 1993 equipped with Leopards for deployment near Tuzla, but by the beginning of December it had been held by the Serbs in Pancevo, the logistics base in Serbia, for ninety days.

The UN, meanwhile, simply accepted the inevitable fact that troop-supplying countries were sending heavier weaponry. Briquemont considered that it should be clear to everyone in November 1993 that he in fact wanted countries to send more heavily-armed forces, even though Mladic was constantly reminding him that anything heavier than a 12.5 mm machine gun was not permitted under the UN rules. He considered it 'regrettable' that he had not been able to convince the Dutch authorities. The choice of weaponry was a purely Dutch matter in his eyes.⁵⁶⁴⁷ Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse agreed. The UN argument did not pull any weight: 'There was an awful lot of leeway there. If you're

⁵⁶³⁷ Interviews F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00, and H. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98.

⁵⁶³⁸ Interviews H.A. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98 and 04/10/01.

⁵⁶³⁹ A.H.H. Geeraerts, 'De taxi van Ter Beek', *Armex*, 78(1994)3, p. 26.

⁵⁶⁴⁰ Interview J.C. Groeneveld, 17/02/98.

⁵⁶⁴¹ Interview M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00.

⁵⁶⁴² UN, S/25264, Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in the Former Yugoslavia, 10/02/93.

⁵⁶⁴³ See e.g. MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, p. 201.

⁵⁶⁴⁴ MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, p. 205 and 281.

⁵⁶⁴⁵ Hillen, *Helmets*, p. 151.

⁵⁶⁴⁶ CDPO/GNKD. Chief Army Crisis Staff to Junior Commanders and Directors of Army Staff, 11/02/94, OZ/7806.

⁵⁶⁴⁷ Interview F. Briquemont, 22/06/00.

talking about strength of weaponry you have to look at it purely from the Dutch point of view.⁵⁶⁴⁸ Various other people who were closely involved are also certain that the choice of .50 machine guns was not due to the UN placing restrictions on the strength of weaponry.⁵⁶⁴⁹ The military adviser to the Permanent Representation in New York, Colonel Van Veen, himself a member of the armoured infantry, was even badly disappointed when he heard that the 25 mm guns were going to be left at home: ‘.50 is not really a serious weapon’.⁵⁶⁵⁰

According to Ter Beek, one of the arguments put forward by Van der Vlis for light weaponry was that the Serbs should not be provoked. It had to be clear to them that the weaponry was merely for self-protection, ‘not for military defence of the enclave’.⁵⁶⁵¹ Briquemont told Bastiaans that the Bosnian Serb authorities had resisted allowing Swedish armoured vehicles with 20 mm guns into Srebrenica.⁵⁶⁵² Karadzic and the Parliament of the Republika Srpska said that they would not agree to the Canadian unit in Srebrenica being relieved by Dutchbat if the Dutch forces were more heavily armed than their Canadian counterparts.⁵⁶⁵³ But these pronouncements were made on 17 December 1993 and mid-January 1994,⁵⁶⁵⁴ long after the decision had been made in the Netherlands to send out the YPRs with .50s. According to the Army Staff Deputy Chief of Operations, Brigadier General Pollé, however, the Serbs’ objection was ‘known fairly soon. It was actually a factor when we were making plans.’⁵⁶⁵⁵ The Ministry of Defence’s Directorate of Information, on the other hand, emphatically denied to *Armex* that the troops were not armed with 25 mm guns because the weapon would have had a provocative effect.⁵⁶⁵⁶ Speaking to the NIOD, Couzy also denied that the argument that the Serbs would not have been willing to allow in 25 mm guns played any role in opting for .50 machine guns.⁵⁶⁵⁷

If there are doubts about the reasons often given for deploying .50 machine guns instead of 25 mm guns, was there perhaps some other reason for opting for .50s? The reason was that the airmobile battalion must not resemble an armoured infantry battalion.⁵⁶⁵⁸ In fact the debate on this was implicitly initiated in spring 1993 in *Carré*, the journal of the Netherlands Officers’ Association, when there was talk of possibly deploying a Dutch combat unit under the Vance-Owen Plan. The journal pointed out that only an armoured infantry battalion was heavily enough armed to operate in Bosnia; the airmobile infantry would be too lightly armed.⁵⁶⁵⁹ If the battalions of the Airmobile Brigade were to be heavily armed, there could be questions again about this Army showpiece and those who had argued in favour of more emphasis on armoured infantry battalions in the structure of the new army would be proved right. This, according to Reitsma, was why Couzy opted to equip the battalion as a light infantry unit with a few additional resources.⁵⁶⁶⁰ This argument also obtained for his deputy, Reitsma:

‘If we suddenly decide to transform a unit being set up for a particular purpose⁵⁶⁶¹ into another unit while it is in the process of being set up, making it

⁵⁶⁴⁸ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵⁶⁴⁹ Interviews E.A.W. Koestal, 24/05/00; H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

⁵⁶⁵⁰ Interview R. van Veen, 16/08/00.

⁵⁶⁵¹ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁵⁶⁵² NIOD, Coll. Bastiaans. Journal note G.J.M. Bastiaans, 17/12/93; interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

⁵⁶⁵³ MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 04/94, 18/01/94; Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 27/05/98.

⁵⁶⁵⁴ MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 04/94, 18/01/94; Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 27/05/98.

⁵⁶⁵⁵ Interview F.J.A. Pollé, 08/03/00.

⁵⁶⁵⁶ A.H.H. Geeraerts, ‘De taxi van Ter Beek’, *Armex*, 78(1994)3, p. 26.

⁵⁶⁵⁷ Interview H.A. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98.

⁵⁶⁵⁸ Interviews M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00; J.C. Groeneveld, 17/02/98.

⁵⁶⁵⁹ ‘Nota zonder prioriteiten’ (Memorandum without priorities), *Carré* 16(1993)4, pp. 5-6. See also J. Schaberg, ‘Het blijft nog behelpen met luchtmobiele brigade’ (Still make do and mend with airmobile brigade), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 27/04/93.

⁵⁶⁶⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of R. Reitsma, 22/05/00, p. 43.

⁵⁶⁶¹ I.e. the first battalions of the Airmobile Brigade.

look suspiciously like units the Dutch Army already has, what is the added value of such a unit?⁵⁶⁶²

Then all sorts of matters would be raised yet again, e.g. the acquisition of helicopters, the further development of the airmobile concept and the relationship with the air force.⁵⁶⁶³ If the helicopters were dropped, after having played such a major role in the commercials for the Airmobile Brigade, the unit would lose something of its prestige. According to Reitsma this was a factor in Van der Vlis's decision to arm the unit lightly, as Van der Vlis was seriously concerned about whether enough people could be recruited for a professional army.⁵⁶⁶⁴ The Army Crisis Staff Operations Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Felix, also said that the strength of the weaponry was due to concern that the debate about the Airmobile Brigade's *raison d'être* could flare up again.⁵⁶⁶⁵ This argument was indeed a factor for Van der Vlis. At a meeting of the Committee of the Chief of Defence Staff and Commanders on 24 May Van der Vlis said that 'if it were to be decided to deploy an airmobile battalion in the former Yugoslavia this battalion would certainly not be trained and deployed as an armoured infantry battalion'.⁵⁶⁶⁶ Couzy subsequently ruled that 'only YPR vehicles with .50s' were 'suitable' where airmobile battalions were being deployed.⁵⁶⁶⁷

So just as the provision by the Dutch Government of an airmobile battalion was influenced by interdepartmental politics, this was also the case with regard to the strength of the weaponry: the airmobile battalion must not be allowed to resemble an armoured infantry battalion.

Colonel Stuiver (retired), Chairman of the Netherlands Officers' Association, set the cat among the pigeons on 24 November 1993 with an address to the Association's general meeting in which he exposed the battalion's inadequate weaponry and protection. This won him enthusiastic applause and the resignation from the Association of Brinkman, Reitsma and Schouten.⁵⁶⁶⁸

The Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs also criticized the choice of weaponry, pointing to the British units that had deployed Warriors. The Directorate considered that an armoured infantry unit should have been sent to Srebrenica and took the view that the defects of the White Paper on Defence Priorities which was less than a year old, were now coming to light. The criticism of the strength of the weaponry gave the Directorate a chance to underline yet again how justified its criticism had been of the emphasis on lightly-armed troops, which the MoD had opted for in the white paper at the expense of mechanized and armoured units.⁵⁶⁶⁹ Minister Kooijmans also warned against the dangers of being lightly or too lightly armed. The Foreign Ministry asked the MoD to send 25mm guns instead of .50 machine guns. The MoD refused, arguing that this could have an escalating effect and the Bosnian Serbs would have to agree to it.⁵⁶⁷⁰ The MoD further said that heavier

⁵⁶⁶² TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of R. Reitsma, 22/05/00, p. 44.

⁵⁶⁶³ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of R. Reitsma, 22/05/00, p. 44.

⁵⁶⁶⁴ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of R. Reitsma, 22/05/00, p. 44.

⁵⁶⁶⁵ Interview M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00. According to Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse there had been a fear that an airmobile battalion would resemble an armoured infantry battalion, but in his view this had not been as important as the arguments about training and interchangeability, interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵⁶⁶⁶ CRST. Report of the 21st meeting of the Committee of the Chief of Defence Staff/Commanders, 24/05/93, S93/007/1945.

⁵⁶⁶⁷ CRST. Decision sheet of Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to DOKL, 23/07/93.

⁵⁶⁶⁸ Kreemers, 'Aan de achterkant van de maan', p. 25; interview J.T. Bruurmijn, 07/04/99.

⁵⁶⁶⁹ Interviews R. in den Bosch, 19/04/00; B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00; and K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 13/12/99; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview B.J. van Eenennaam, 12/05/95.

⁵⁶⁷⁰ ABZ, 999.241/DAV/MS/Yugoslavia/NATO/Coordination, 1995-96. Memorandum from DAV to S, 16/10/95, DAV 95/1123; ABZ, Cabinet archive Strictly Confidential Secret Codes. Secure fax from Klompenhouwer to Foreign Affairs, 15/11/95, BRN/668.

weaponry might in fact provoke aggression⁵⁶⁷¹ and pointed to the training aspect and the problems that the Bosnian Serbs would put in the way of allowing in heavily armed units.⁵⁶⁷²

Blaauw and the VVD (Liberal Party) considered that a YPR with a .50 did not accord with the possibility of robust action that the Dutch Government had talked about at the beginning of November,⁵⁶⁷³ but he thought it was 'going too far to table a motion for a gun'.⁵⁶⁷⁴ Blaauw did however ask Junior Minister Frinking at the verbal consultations on December 21 whether it was true that the conversion of the turrets on the YPRs meant that gunners' heads were now left unprotected.⁵⁶⁷⁵ De Hoop Scheffer also raised this point, but from a different angle: he described it as 'demotivating' for the servicemen being sent out that the Netherlands Officers' Association had started a debate on the matter 'at the last minute'. Members of the Airmobile Brigade who had visited the CDA (Christian Democrat Party) had said that the Association's criticism did not hold water.⁵⁶⁷⁶ Frinking agreed entirely with the comments on demotivation, which were based on 'inaccurate information and suppositions' and had been made by 'people who may be assumed to know it all'. A pointed letter from Minister Ter Beek to the Association on 24 November had evidently not been able to convince them, whereas the Commander of UNPROFOR, the Dutch Chief of Defence Staff, the Army Commander and the brigade commander concerned were convinced.⁵⁶⁷⁷

During verbal consultations on 1 February 1994 Van Traa returned to the question of weaponry. He wanted to know whether the equipping of the YPR armoured vehicles with .50 machine guns had been forced upon the Dutch by the Serbs. And would it not be possible for a few YPRs with 25 mm guns to be sent out as well? Blaauw wanted to know what the French, British and Spanish armoured cars in the former Yugoslavia were equipped with, and he asked the Minister to investigate alarming reports about the condition of the ordnance being sent.⁵⁶⁷⁸

De Kok was fed up with debates on the security aspects. These had already been discussed at length, and a visit to Bosnia had made it clear to him that a good deal of attention was being devoted to such issues. Any further debate on this subject would only increase the unease among the servicemen involved and their families.⁵⁶⁷⁹

Minister Ter Beek 'emphatically' denied that the light arming of the YPRs had been dictated by Serb conditions. The choice of the .50 machine gun was dictated by the fact that it was easier to operate and its use could therefore be taught to large numbers of soldiers more quickly, he said, backed up by the Chief of Defence Staff, Van der Vlis, who was present. There was no question of 'converting' armoured vehicles, as the Army had YPRs with both 25 mm guns and .50 machine guns. Given the remit, the threat, the other weapons there and the terrain, Van der Vlis considered that equipping the Dutch YPRs with .50 machine guns was 'entirely adequate'.⁵⁶⁸⁰ Parliament did not in fact ask whether the weaponry was adequate to defend the enclave; it was only interested in whether the Dutch servicemen could defend themselves and in evacuation plans.

⁵⁶⁷¹ Interview H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

⁵⁶⁷² Interview R. in den Bosch, 19/04/00.

⁵⁶⁷³ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of J.D. Blaauw, 31/05/00, p. 220.

⁵⁶⁷⁴ Interview J.-D. Blaauw, 23/04/99.

⁵⁶⁷⁵ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, No. 73.

⁵⁶⁷⁶ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, No. 73, p. 3.

⁵⁶⁷⁷ NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek. Ter Beek to Stuiver, 24/11/93; *ibid.*, NOV to members of the Parliamentary Permanent Committees on Foreign Affairs and Defence, 06/12/93; TK, 1993-1994, 22 181 No. 73, p. 7.

⁵⁶⁷⁸ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181 No. 74, p. 2.

⁵⁶⁷⁹ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181 No. 74, p. 2.

⁵⁶⁸⁰ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, No. 74, p. 6.

3. The expectations regarding air support

High expectations

In his report of 14 June 1993 implementing Resolution 836, Boutros-Ghali stated that the light option for the Safe Areas, which required a military force of 7,500, could not in itself completely guarantee the security of these areas, but was based on the threat of air strikes against the combatants.⁵⁶⁸¹ The responsible members of the Dutch Government such as Minister Kooijmans have also persisted in maintaining, since the fall of Srebrenica, that the resources with which Dutchbat was sent out were inadequate to defend the enclave, but that they had counted on air support appearing on the horizon if push came to shove.⁵⁶⁸² In a conversation with the NIOD, Kooijmans, who as the Foreign Minister in spring 1993 had argued that the security of the Safe Areas could be enhanced by air protection, was however of a different opinion:

‘We always knew that if a full-scale attack were to take place they (Dutchbat) would not be able to do anything. Unless there was Close Air Support, which would take over the deterrence function. But you’re not going to succeed even with Close Air Support if they decide to overrun the whole shooting match.’

Prime Minister Lubbers visited Srebrenica in May 1994 and noted that the enclave was scarcely defensible: ‘It’s almost threatening, seeing the mountains around you and you’re in the middle of them.’ After that, however, he went on to Villafranca, where he was confirmed in his conviction that air support at the right time would provide protection. None of the military personnel he spoke to during his visit to Srebrenica warned him about the situation Dutchbat found itself in, despite the fact that he made himself, in his own words, ‘very accessible’. The Dutch Prime Minister said that the trip had instilled in him a good deal of confidence.⁵⁶⁸³

For Dutch MPs too it was an established fact that air support would provide the solution in an emergency.⁵⁶⁸⁴ As Liberal MP Blaauw said to the Bakker Commission: ‘Air support, deployed at the right time, ought to have been enough, even with a lesser force in a safe haven.’⁵⁶⁸⁵ De Hoop Scheffer likewise told the Commission he had counted on air support. That was also why he had not consulted the government any further on the locations Srebrenica and Zepa.⁵⁶⁸⁶ Nor did the civil servants think any differently.⁵⁶⁸⁷ On this point there seems to have been no disagreement between the politicians and the military, as Couzy told the Bakker Commission that at the time he had even thought that the problems he foresaw with supplies to Srebrenica could be solved with the aid of air support. ‘Everyone thought that air power could be an effective tool.’⁵⁶⁸⁸

A NATO report published in 1994 again confirmed the expectations on the use of air support:

‘The deployments which UNPROFOR is compelled to adopt in order to carry out its peacekeeping duties make it very vulnerable to attack or interdiction. The particularly hazardous nature of the operation is only acceptable from the

⁵⁶⁸¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05274. S/25939.

⁵⁶⁸² See e.g. interview W. Kok, 08/05/00; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of W. Kok, 08/06/00, p. 390; M. Meijer, ‘Kooijmans: Verenigde Naties moeten bij vredesoperaties eigen grenzen kennen’ (Kooijmans says United Nations must know its limits in peace-keeping operations), *CD/Actueel*, 28/10/95, p. 13.

⁵⁶⁸³ Interview R.F.M. Lubbers, 13/10/00.

⁵⁶⁸⁴ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of G. Valk, 31/05/00, pp. 250-251 and 253; interviews L. Sipkes, 24/01/00, and G. Valk, 15/10/99.

⁵⁶⁸⁵ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of J.D. Blaauw, 31/05/00, p. 219.

⁵⁶⁸⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of J.G. de Hoop Scheffer, 29/05/00, p. 178.

⁵⁶⁸⁷ See e.g. interview B. Hiensch, 13/07/00.

⁵⁶⁸⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of H.A. Couzy, 22/05/00, p. 63.

soldier's point of view because he knows that in extremis, NATO air power is available to protect him.⁵⁶⁸⁹

The same report did however warn that there was a limit to the extent of the air power that could be used without endangering acceptance of the peacekeeping operation by all parties.

Low expectations

It was precisely for this reason that Couzy had not been as optimistic about air support in November 1993 as he was in his statements to the Bakker Commission a few years later. In the interview he gave to *NRC Handelsblad* journalist Willebrord Nieuwenhuis in November 1993 on the flight to the Netherlands, following his visit to Kiseljak with Minister Ter Beek, he said that the use of force, including deploying NATO air power from Italy, which included Dutch F16s, was an 'empty promise', as the UNPROFOR commanders – as he had experienced during his visit to Kiseljak – would avoid using force so as not to jeopardize the humanitarian operation.⁵⁶⁹⁰ Speaking to the NIOD, Couzy stated that his low expectations of air support were based on the fact that the UN did not want to deploy air power until there was a 'smoking gun', and because of the long chain involved in handling requests: 'Before you've got through the whole chain the weapon has long returned to a camouflaged emplacement so you can never find it again. (...) Plus the fact that they could easily take hostages, which makes your weapon very blunt.'⁵⁶⁹¹

Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse said that that was his sentiment at the time as well. He based his expectations on UN action, or rather the lack of it, on the experiences of roadblocks. In his view UN forces were very limited in what they did and the Bosnian Serbs knew precisely how far they could go without the UN taking action: 'They knew perfectly well that they were in charge. They not only thought that, they really were in charge.'⁵⁶⁹² He was also aware that there was often ground mist, which made Close Air Support impossible, since this always required good visibility. Nor was air power effective against infantry on the march. 'Or you would have to carpet-bomb', but that would have been difficult to square with a peacekeeping operation.⁵⁶⁹³ Looking back, Bastiaans described Couzy's pronouncements of November 1993 as 'honest'. Bastiaans also could not see 'how in heaven's name you can incorporate the use of air support with the consent of the parties while upholding the mandate. In peacekeeping in the traditional sense – which is what it was then – the use of air power is roughly comparable to the threat of a nuclear strike. Once you deployed it you would almost be on the losing side. (...) A strike, in the sense of a number of air attacks, would mean quite simply that you were taking sides, as any lay person would understand. That would spell the end of the mission for UNPROFOR.'⁵⁶⁹⁴ This was also the opinion of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in autumn 1993. Air strikes were incompatible, in the opinion of HQ, with the character of peacekeeping operations. Hitting a tank in the course of self-defence was acceptable, in the view of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, in a peacekeeping operation, but it regarded shooting at infrastructure, command posts and logistics as war.⁵⁶⁹⁵

General Brinkman too told the NIOD that he had been aware of the problems with air support at the time. He saw three preconditions for air support, all of which were problematic in Bosnia. Firstly, weather conditions had to be good, which was often not the case in those parts. Secondly, there had to be enough aircraft with enough fuel. That was also often not the case, given the flying distance between

⁵⁶⁸⁹ Confidential informatie (165)..

⁵⁶⁹⁰ 'Couzy zegt begrip te hebben voor 'haast' Ter Beek' (Couzy says he understands Ter Beek's 'haste'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/11/93.

⁵⁶⁹¹ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

⁵⁶⁹² Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵⁶⁹³ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵⁶⁹⁴ Interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00. Cf. Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, p. 87.

⁵⁶⁹⁵ Quoted in Hillen, *Helmets*, p. 143.

Italy and Bosnia. Thirdly, the aircraft had to be talked in to their targets, which often did not succeed. Furthermore, aircraft were not permitted to fly lower than five thousand feet for their own safety. Brinkman did say that he had not felt so strongly about these reservations because he had regarded the Safe Areas as a political, not a military, concept.⁵⁶⁹⁶

According to Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse the Army made these objections to air support sufficiently clear to the politicians.⁵⁶⁹⁷ Certainly the pronouncements of Couzy published in *NRC Handelsblad* on 12 November, four days before the parliamentary debate on the mission, could have been seen as a clear signal. MoD spokesman Kreemers was in fact astonished that Couzy expressed his reservations in the press but not in the appropriate quarters,⁵⁶⁹⁸ yet another proof of the lack of communication between the Army top brass and the upper echelons at the Defence Ministry.

Anyone who tried to picture air support over Bosnia could have been warned by the Turkish word 'Balkan', which literally means 'wooded mountains'. The concepts of the territorial and national defence of the former Yugoslavia had accordingly been based on the fact that hostile air supremacy would not mean very much. The Yugoslav fighters on the ground would take advantage of the mountains, ravines, dense woodland and caves, especially in Bosnia.⁵⁶⁹⁹ This led the top brass of the American Armed forces to go so far as General Powell's pronouncement 'We do deserts, we don't do mountains'.⁵⁷⁰⁰ On top of this there was indeed the ground mist that often hung in the valleys of Bosnia, which was one reason why the Yugoslav Armed forces, which had their ground forces concentrated in Bosnia, sited their military airbases mainly along the Adriatic coast. The Dutch Armed forces were well aware of the ground mist problem, which had repeatedly cropped up in trying to get supplies to Sarajevo, in which the Netherlands had been involved with an F27.⁵⁷⁰¹

Ex-Commander of the Army and former Chief of Defence Staff General De Jager had noticed in summer 1992 that air strikes over Bosnia were not a realistic option as they could endanger the UN forces on the ground. Both the terrain and the attitude of the Serb forces meant that little effect could be expected of an air strike: 'When you fly over, all you see is one big cauliflower. The men lie down at the side of the road until the noise has gone. Then they just carry on.'⁵⁷⁰² The Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs realized in December 1992, based on the enforcement of the no-fly zone, that the deployment of air power was 'not sufficient in itself' to control the situation on the ground, especially in mountainous terrain.⁵⁷⁰³ It had been noted elsewhere that it was very difficult in Bosnia to detect artillery from the air, especially in the summer, because of the dense leaf cover.⁵⁷⁰⁴ Other people had publicly pointed out the difficult terrain and climatic conditions in the former Yugoslavia: it had been pointed out, for instance, that it was difficult to use lasers to guide bombs towards their targets there because of the mountains and forests.⁵⁷⁰⁵ At the end of 1992, when considering the possibility of flying in supplies over Bosnia by air, Van Walsum wrote that the weather conditions over Bosnia were 'far from ideal' for aircraft movements.⁵⁷⁰⁶ When the American administration started supplying the Muslim enclaves in Eastern Bosnia by air, in February 1993, the newspaper *Trouw* warned: 'The weather conditions in the former Yugoslav Republic – treacherous

⁵⁶⁹⁶ Interview J.-W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

⁵⁶⁹⁷ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

⁵⁶⁹⁸ Interview B. Kreemers, 18/03/99.

⁵⁶⁹⁹ UN, S/1994/674/Annex II, Bassiouni report, Annex III, p. 13.

⁵⁷⁰⁰ Ed Vulliamy, 'The secret war', *The Guardian*, 20/05/96; Bert, *Superpower*, p. 172.

⁵⁷⁰¹ MID. MID, *Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie*, 72/92, 05/10/92.

⁵⁷⁰² Remco Meijer, 'Een harde job' (A hard job), *Elsevier*, 22/08/92, p. 33.

⁵⁷⁰³ ABZ, 999.241. Secret memorandum from Klompenhouwer (DAV/MS) to Chief DAV, 15/12/92.

⁵⁷⁰⁴ UN, S/1994/674/Annex VI, p. 11.

⁵⁷⁰⁵ Martijn Delaere, 'NAVO-acties is zo gepiept' (NATO campaigns a piece of cake), *Haagsche Courant*, 12/02/94.

⁵⁷⁰⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01806. Memorandum from DGPZ to Van den Broek, 09/12/92, No. 195/92.

winds, frequent mist and low cloud – make low flying difficult if not impossible.’ Aircraft flying at any height would also be vulnerable to Serb air defences.⁵⁷⁰⁷

The argument that lightly-armed ground forces could fall victim to air strikes had been put forward on numerous occasions, too.⁵⁷⁰⁸ On 29 December 1992 Couzy had indicated that if Ter Beek’s proposal to deploy F16s to enforce the no-fly zone were to be implemented the Dutch ground forces would have to be withdrawn (see Chapter 8). Wahlgren and the French and British Governments warned from the beginning of 1993 against armed enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia, as they considered that shooting down Serb or Croatian aircraft could easily result in reprisals against the UN peacekeepers on the ground: consequently, as a leading article in *Trouw* put it, ‘it is becoming increasingly clear that the United Nations cannot take military action in Bosnia because they have forces there.’⁵⁷⁰⁹ Public opinion in France was sharply divided as to the wisdom of using air power. A poll conducted on 9 January 1994 showed that 51 per cent of the French were against ‘tough military action, for example air strikes, knowing what the risks to our soldiers on the ground are’, as against 44 per cent in favour.⁵⁷¹⁰ The reason why the no-fly zone over Bosnia had not been enforced for months was indeed the risk of Serb reprisals against UNPROFOR forces.⁵⁷¹¹ At the last minute UNPROFOR Commander Wahlgren advised against passing the Security Council Resolution on enforcing the no-fly zone.⁵⁷¹² According to Dutch Intelligence, the possibility of Bosnian Muslim Armed forces taking action against Western aircraft to provoke Western intervention could also not be ruled out.⁵⁷¹³ In April 1993, when Belgrade and Pale feared Western air strikes as a means of putting a stop to the Serb attacks in Eastern Bosnia, the Yugoslav Defence Minister Bulatovic threatened reprisals against the perpetrators’ ‘vital targets’.⁵⁷¹⁴ ‘There can be no doubt that UN forces will be the target of counterattacks as soon as a Western combat aircraft shoots down one of the combatants’ aircraft or bombs military installations. They will then be caught like rats in a trap’, as the former UN Commander in Sarajevo, MacKenzie, put it in *De Volkskrant* at the beginning of February 1993. The Canadian general added that this nightmare scenario had haunted him throughout his entire period as Commander.⁵⁷¹⁵ In early 1993, when a Resolution on enforcing the no-fly zone was in the pipeline, the governments involved agreed that there had to be a period between the passing of the Resolution and its actual implementation to enable the UN troops on the ground to prepare themselves for reprisals.⁵⁷¹⁶

Air strikes, then, could result in the UN units scattered throughout Bosnia being taken hostage, or worse, but even without going that far the government in Pale was not particularly worried about NATO air power. In December 1992 the magazine *De Groene Amsterdammer* published an interview with

⁵⁷⁰⁷ ‘Voedseldroppen boven Bosnië wordt riskant voor vliegtuigen’ (Food drops over Bosnia getting risky for aircraft), *Trouw*, 25/02/93.

⁵⁷⁰⁸ E.g. by H. Tromp in Max Arian and Joke van Kampen, ‘Te wapen’ (To arms), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 05/08/92, p. 6.

⁵⁷⁰⁹ ‘Geloofwaardigheid’ (Credibility), *Trouw*, 19/03/93. See also e.g. ‘Heli-luchtbrug Bosnië van start’ (Helicopter airlift to Bosnia under way), *De Telegraaf*, 24/03/93; ‘Major ontraadt bombarderen Servië. Britse premier schrijft brief aan president Clinton’ (Major advises against bombing Serbia. British Prime Minister writes letter to President Clinton), *de Volkskrant*, 01/02/93.

⁵⁷¹⁰ Marie-Claude Smouts, ‘Political aspects of peace-keeping operations’, Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, p. 35.

⁵⁷¹¹ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Parts V-VI, May 1992 - April 1993, MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 93/92, 04/12/92 and 97/92, 14/12/92.

⁵⁷¹² ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Parts V-VI, May 1992 - April 1993, MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 22/92, 25/03/93.

⁵⁷¹³ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Parts V-VI, May 1992 - April 1993, MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 25/93, 13/04/93.

⁵⁷¹⁴ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Parts V-VI, May 1992 - April 1993, MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 29/93, 26/04/93.

⁵⁷¹⁵ L. MacKenzie, ‘Interventie zal in Bosnië geen vrede brengen’ (Intervention will not bring peace in Bosnia), *de Volkskrant*, 06/02/93.

⁵⁷¹⁶ ‘Hevige strijd in Bosnië, VN praten over vliegverbod’ (Violent conflict in Bosnia, UN talking about no-fly zone), *Trouw*, 19/03/93.

Karadzic in which the President of the Republika Srpska said he was not at all impressed by air power: unlike artillery, he said, aircraft always had to turn back within a few hours.⁵⁷¹⁷

Although Dutch politicians had great confidence in the protection that could be provided from the air if push came to shove in the Safe Areas, among the military the expectations were much lower. Their reservations related to the terrain, the ground mist, the height at which aircraft had to fly, the limited time aircraft could operate over Bosnia, the risk of ground forces being taken hostage, the unwillingness to deploy air power because it could mean the end of the humanitarian operations, and the long lines of command any request for air support had to negotiate. If the military did not inform the politicians of these objections, many of them could be found in newspapers and magazines.

The role of Akashi

The government's attention was focused mainly on the question of lines of command and competences as regards air support. Only days after NATO Secretary-General Wörner sent a detailed plan for Close Air Support to the UN, on 6 July 1993, and reported on 22 July that NATO aircraft in Italy were ready to provide it, informal consultations took place in New York between the countries involved in drawing up the Joint Action Plan. After the meeting the Deputy Military Adviser to the Dutch Permanent Representation, Koestal, was told that in the event of an initial incident General Cot could ask Boutros-Ghali for air support and that the latter could agree without consulting the Security Council.⁵⁷¹⁸

Another few days later NATO decided that air strikes could be undertaken in consultation with the UN. There was not much support for air strikes, strategic bombing for political ends, either at the UN or in NATO. Besides the United States,⁵⁷¹⁹ and at times France, the Netherlands was the only country with forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina that supported such air strikes in international forums. 'Other NATO Member States doubt the value of air strikes against Serb positions, presumably for fear of Serb reprisals against UNPROFOR personnel', said the Military Intelligence Service in a report dated 11 January 1994.⁵⁷²⁰

Early in January, Lubbers and Kooijmans visited President Clinton. The Americans saw the visit mainly as being in preparation for the NATO summit on the Partnership for Peace which was to be held on 10-11 January. The two Dutch Ministers, however, hoped above all to elicit pronouncements on the situation in Bosnia from the President. During the visit to the White House, Clinton, in Lubbers' opinion, gave a guarantee that air support would be provided to protect UN forces. Kooijmans thought he also remembered that the possibility of deploying American ground forces was raised but that Clinton's reaction was negative. As far as Lubbers recalled, Clinton promised air strikes if push came to shove in the Safe Areas. Kooijmans attached less importance to the undertaking than Lubbers; he considered that a guarantee of this kind already existed in the NATO decisions of 2 and 9 August.⁵⁷²¹

At the NATO summit in Brussels on 10-11 January 1994 the main items on the agenda were the Partnership for Peace, i.e. cooperation with the former Warsaw Pact countries, and the development of a European security and defence identity. On 11 January 1994, after the summit, NATO issued a statement in which the NATO Member States reaffirmed their willingness 'to carry out air strikes in order to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo, the Safe Areas and other threatened areas in

⁵⁷¹⁷ E. Limonov, 'Omsingeling' (Encirclement), *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 09/12/92, p. 13.

⁵⁷¹⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00141. Biegman 733 to Kooijmans, 22/07/93.

⁵⁷¹⁹ See e.g. ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen. M. Klosson, American temporary chargé d'affaires in The Hague, to Lubbers, 31/07/93, with Appendix: Clinton to Lubbers, 31/07/93; Klosson to Kooijmans, 31/07/93, with Appendix: Christopher to Kooijmans, 31/07/93.

⁵⁷²⁰ MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 02/94, 11/01/94.

⁵⁷²¹ Interview R.F.M. Lubbers, 13/10/99; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of Lubbers, 25/05/00, pp. 132 and 136.

Bosnia and Hercegovina.⁵⁷²² It explicitly referred to the reopening of Tuzla airport and the relieving of the Canadian company in Srebrenica by the Dutch UN forces. The Bosnian Serb top brass subsequently announced that air strikes would result in direct reprisals against UN personnel.⁵⁷²³ Whether the Canadian Prime Minister, Chrétien, was startled by NATO's resolute language or the Bosnian Serb military leadership is unclear; in any event he declared soon after the meeting that Canada would say 'no' to air strikes if it was consulted: after all, the soldiers in Srebrenica were Canadian.⁵⁷²⁴

If Prime Minister Lubbers, after the NATO summit, was impressed by what he regarded as a robust stand on the part of the alliance, a few days later fresh doubts arose as to how strongly air power would be used, following statements by the Japanese official Yasushi Akashi. At the end of 1993 Boutros-Ghali appointed Akashi his Special Representative for the UNPROFOR operation in the former Yugoslavia, replacing Stoltenberg. Stoltenberg had resigned from the post of Special Representative (but not from that of negotiator) following criticism from both Cot and the Bosnian Government. Cot's criticism was that Stoltenberg was constantly involved in the negotiations on a peace plan, which took place mainly in Geneva, as a result of which he was not really in touch with UNPROFOR and the situation on the ground in Bosnia and Croatia, and there were frequent quarrels between him and Cot.⁵⁷²⁵ The Bosnian Minister for contacts with the UN, Hasan Muratovic, even refused point blank to communicate with Stoltenberg because he was supposedly pro-Serb (see Chapter 11), effectively making Stoltenberg's situation unworkable.⁵⁷²⁶

The purpose of the post of UN Secretary-General's Special Representative had been to separate the political level of UN decision-making, i.e. the Secretary-General and the Security Council, from strategic decision-making. The Special Representative was the link between the two levels. He was also expected to coordinate all UN activities in the former Yugoslavia, which mainly boiled down to coordinating the political, diplomatic and humanitarian efforts with the military activities. Akashi's arrival was urgently needed after the UN had repeatedly failed to act in a unified manner in the former Yugoslavia in the preceding 22 months of the UNPROFOR operation. His arrival was particularly necessary, however, with a view to the contact the UN needed to maintain with NATO on the deployment of air support. Because Akashi, as the Secretary-General's Special Representative, had to coordinate the military activities with political, diplomatic and humanitarian efforts, his very appointment involved the risk that a military desire to deploy air support had less chance of being granted because the other interests were judged more important.

This became clear within a few weeks of Akashi's appointment. In a report dated 18 January 1994 Dutch Military Intelligence noted reports in the press that Akashi had argued against NATO attacks on Bosnian Serb targets in a confidential report because of the danger of reprisals against UN personnel and the risk of the Bosnian Serb Armed forces making it impossible for UNPROFOR to use Sarajevo airport.⁵⁷²⁷ Two weeks later Intelligence pointed out again that when deciding on requests for air support Boutros-Ghali would be heavily influenced by Akashi, who in recent weeks had stressed he saw 'little point in air strikes'.⁵⁷²⁸

With the appointment of Yasushi Akashi as Boutros-Ghali's Special Representative, UN policy on Bosnia-Hercegovina to a large extent fell under two Japanese, Sadako Ogata, head of UNHCR, and Akashi. The actions of Akashi, who was to remain at his post in Zagreb until autumn 1995, were determined by a number of factors. Having risen in the UN bureaucracy since 1957 he, perhaps more than others, had adopted the philosophy predominant in the New York offices that the organization

⁵⁷²² UN, S/1994/50, 18/01/94.

⁵⁷²³ MID. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 03/94, 14/01/94.

⁵⁷²⁴ Jos Klaassen, 'Canada weigert nu luchtaanvallen op stellingen Serviërs' (Canada now refuses air strikes on Serb positions), *de Volkskrant*, 12/01/94. Cf. interview R.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁵⁷²⁵ Interviews B. Pellnäss, 03/11/99, and F. Briquemont, 22/06/00.

⁵⁷²⁶ Interview H. Muratovic, 30/01/98.

⁵⁷²⁷ DCBC, 2127. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 04/94, 18/01/94.

⁵⁷²⁸ DCBC, 2125. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 06/94, 31/01/94.

that had been founded in 1945 to maintain peace and security hardly if ever had the right to use force in the course of a peacekeeping operation.⁵⁷²⁹

A short time previously, Akashi, again as Boutros-Ghali's senior envoy, had gained experience of the new type of UN peacekeeping operation in Cambodia. That operation differed from the one in the former Yugoslavia in various respects. The UN operation in Cambodia, UNTAC, was not a traditional peacekeeping operation but a form of peacemaking that had been made possible once the Paris agreement had been signed by the parties, King Sihanouk, the supporters of the Hang Sen, which had been put in power by Vietnam, and Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge. The purpose of UNTAC was to bring about a democratic society, inter alia by organizing elections. A major difference from the situation in the former Yugoslavia was that there was a peace agreement in the Asian state whereas there was 'no peace to keep' in the Balkan country. Another big difference was that the international community was not really divided about action in Cambodia, whereas it was divided about action in the former Yugoslavia. The UN mandate in Yugoslavia was also much more limited than that in Cambodia. Despite these relatively favourable conditions there was criticism of Akashi's actions as Boutros-Ghali's Special Representative in Cambodia: it was said that he had not managed the whole operation properly, for one thing in that he had not coordinated the various parts of it.⁵⁷³⁰ Akashi himself, on the other hand, saw his work as a success. He considered that the main objectives in Cambodia had been achieved: free and fair elections, assisting Cambodia with the transition to a democracy and social reconstruction.⁵⁷³¹ His own role, as he saw it, had been as follows:

'On the ground, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had almost unlimited authority over national institutions. However, due to his political judgement, he exercised his power in a limited and cautious manner, in order to place before the parties their full responsibilities for the final outcome of the peace process. In this way, he promoted a spirit of dialogue and compromise among the Cambodian leaders.'⁵⁷³²

He himself stressed that he had benefited considerably from the fact that the international community was broadly in agreement on Cambodia.⁵⁷³³ Asked about the secret of his success, however, he cited 'the Asian approach of seeking peace', which he admitted was time-consuming.⁵⁷³⁴

Akashi himself said that after his 'success' in Cambodia he set off for the former Yugoslavia with few illusions. He had realized when studying the documents in New York that the UN was adopting a very cautious stance in the conflict.⁵⁷³⁵ He subsequently had great difficulty adjusting to the attitude of the negotiators in Yugoslavia, which was so different from that in Cambodia.⁵⁷³⁶ Despite this he did not lose his tendency to think that everyone sitting across the table from him automatically became a diplomat.⁵⁷³⁷ Also, he had grown up with the Japanese peace constitution, which denied the country the right to wage war or have an army. Akashi found it hard to distance himself from that notion, as he admitted himself.⁵⁷³⁸ He had grave misgivings about the use of force.⁵⁷³⁹ Furthermore, from his arrival in Zagreb on 3 January 1994 he regarded the conflict in Bosnia as a civil war in which

⁵⁷²⁹ Interviews G.F. Collins, 08/06/00, and P. Galbraith, 23/06/99; Van de Roer, *Frontdiplomaten*, pp. 149 and 151.

⁵⁷³⁰ See e.g. Bais, *Mijnenveld*, p. 41; the final report by Brigadier General Robert Rideau to the Chief of Staff of the French Armed forces, quoted in Philippe Morillon, 'The military aspects of field operations', Brigitte Stern (ed.), *Operations*, p. 84.

⁵⁷³¹ Akashi, 'Limits', p. 88.

⁵⁷³² Akashi, 'Limits', p. 89.

⁵⁷³³ Akashi, 'Limits', pp. 89-90.

⁵⁷³⁴ 'Akashi leaves Bosnia job with mission incomplete', *Asabi News service*, 12/10/95.

⁵⁷³⁵ Interview Y. Akashi, 25/11/99.

⁵⁷³⁶ Interview E. Shitaka, 11/05/00.

⁵⁷³⁷ Interview G.F. Collins, 08/06/00.

⁵⁷³⁸ Interviews Y. Akashi, 25/11/99; G.F. Collins, 08/06/00; Van de Roer, *Frontdiplomaten*, p. 151.

⁵⁷³⁹ Interviews T. Banbury, 05/06/00; G.F. Collins, 08/06/00.

he had to adopt a neutral stance towards the three parties, for one thing because the use of force would stand in the way of the UN negotiations.⁵⁷⁴⁰ Many Western observers considered that his impartial attitude effectively made him a supporter of the Serbs and nicknamed him the 'Mitsubishi Chetnik' or the 'Senior Serb Liaison Officer'.⁵⁷⁴¹ With his – non-violent – heart in Japan and his – bureaucratic – head in New York, the question was what attitude Akashi would take to the use of air power in Yugoslavia now that the decision had been delegated to him.

Boutros-Ghali's visit

Besides Akashi there was the Russian factor. On 18 January Boutros-Ghali sent a letter to the Chairman of the Security Council from which it emerged that, following the NATO declaration of 11 January on the use of air strikes, the Russian Government had informed him that 'any use of force' in Bosnia would first have to be discussed by the UN Secretary-General with the members of the Security Council. Only then could a decision be made and only then could NATO be contacted.⁵⁷⁴² The letter from the Secretary-General raised a number of questions with Cornelia Minderhoud, who worked at the Dutch Permanent Representation in New York. In a memorandum dated 19 January she questioned whether Akashi and Ogata could be expected to agree to the deployment of air support if UN forces were threatened. She considered that the UN and a few troop-supplying countries would not be keen to embark upon any military operation as there was always the threat of a Russian veto on the use of air power.⁵⁷⁴³ She also had serious doubts as to the willingness of France and the United Kingdom to provide air support. The discussion about the difference between Close Air Support and air strikes, she said, was thus 'very vague'.⁵⁷⁴⁴

On 18 January Boutros-Ghali began a visit to the Netherlands which was to last a few days. On the evening of 19 January, at a dinner at the Catshuis (the Dutch Prime Minister's official residence), Ministers Lubbers, Kok, Kooijmans and Ter Beek asked him about his views on air support. The discussion resulted in a good deal of confusion, particularly because Boutros-Ghali did not distinguish between Close Air Support and air strikes but used the collective term 'air power'. At the time of this discussion the Foreign Ministry took the view, as before, that air support had to be granted without hesitation and was therefore keen to keep the Security Council out of the decision-making and to elicit a statement from the Secretary-General that he would take responsibility for air support. According to Kooijmans, Boutros-Ghali had a 'gadget' with him at the dinner on which he calculated that a request from a commander in the field could be answered within two hours from UN headquarters in New York. Kooijmans argued to Boutros-Ghali that the power to authorize air strikes could be delegated to his representative in the field. Kooijmans was in favour of the dual key, however, as he was apprehensive that NATO might go it alone and endanger UNPROFOR forces.⁵⁷⁴⁵

Caution as regards air strikes was in Minister Ter Beek's interest, in view of the imminent deployment of Dutchbat personnel in Srebrenica and – as was expected at that time - Zepa. He was not in favour of air strikes because they had an element of peace-enforcing which was incompatible with the nature of peacekeeping for humanitarian purposes which still dominated the UN operation in Bosnia. As regards Close Air Support (CAS) specifically to support Dutch troops, on the other hand, Ter Beek considered that the procedures must not be too complicated and must not take too long. Ter Beek took Boutros-Ghali's Indian adviser, Chinmaya Gharekhan, whom he knew, to one side several

⁵⁷⁴⁰ 'Akashi leaves Bosnia job with mission incomplete', *Asahi News service*, 12/10/95; Kenichi Miyata, 'Akashi's tricky balancing act in Bosnia', *Asahi News Service*, 23/10/95.

⁵⁷⁴¹ Mentioned in Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 166, whom Akashi himself described as 'a two-faced apologist for the Serbs', *ibid.*, p. 167.

⁵⁷⁴² UN, S/1994/50, 18/01/94.

⁵⁷⁴³ ABZ, PVNY. Memorandum from Minderhoud to temporary chargé d'affaires, 19/01/94.

⁵⁷⁴⁴ Interview C. Minderhoud, 02/06/00.

⁵⁷⁴⁵ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

times to communicate his views to the Secretary-General.⁵⁷⁴⁶ The Defence Minister, who was not in favour of over-hasty deployment of air power, with a view to the safety of the Dutch troops in Bosnia, had his mind put at rest by Boutros-Ghali's repeated explanation of the dual key principle. Ter Beek, like Kooijmans, was content that NATO was not likely to go it alone.⁵⁷⁴⁷

After the meeting, however, the opinions of the ministers present differed as to precisely what Boutros-Ghali had said. Ter Beek had gained the impression during his discussion with the Secretary-General that Lubbers and Kooijmans 'were not entirely clear as to what the difference was between Close Air Support and air strikes'.⁵⁷⁴⁸ Lubbers admitted that this was true as far as he was concerned but said that Kooijmans had explained the difference to him that night. Anyway the distinction was scarcely made in the discussion, according to Lubbers.⁵⁷⁴⁹ The annoying thing about the meeting as far as Kooijmans was concerned was that Boutros-Ghali was not at all au fait with the subject of air support: he had been amazed when Kooijmans explained to him that CAS was included in the mandate of Resolution 836.

Deputy Prime Minister Kok thought that Boutros-Ghali had been 'fairly vague' on the night of 19 January.⁵⁷⁵⁰ Kooijmans regarded his answers to the Dutch questions as 'unsatisfactory'.⁵⁷⁵¹ And Lubbers went home that night with the feeling 'Is this watertight and clear enough?'⁵⁷⁵² At the Foreign Ministry, the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs in particular had difficulty with the caution that Ter Beek had urged and Boutros-Ghali had confirmed would be exercised.⁵⁷⁵³

The next day Vos discussed the matter again with Boutros-Ghali's Special Adviser, Gharekhan. Vos rejected the idea that had come up during the dinner with Boutros-Ghali of the Dutch Government sending Boutros-Ghali a letter about delegating the power to authorize CAS. He considered that the domestic political support for sending Dutchbat was so substantial that there was no need to send any such letter: 'the deployment will go ahead as planned'. In Boutros-Ghali's camp, on reflection, they were also not so keen on the idea of a letter: he would have to consult the Security Council before replying. The position of the Russians on this point was well-known, so the answer might be unsatisfactory. Gharekhan assured Vos that if push came to shove the Secretary-General would decide on 'the deployment of air power' within one to one-and-a-half hours, 'whatever the Russians say'. If necessary he would even not inform the Security Council until after making his decision. As a result of this clarification there was no need, according to Vos, for a letter from the Dutch Government to Boutros-Ghali.⁵⁷⁵⁴

As a result of the conversation between Vos and Gharekhan the Secretary-General made a clearer pronouncement on air support, in the view of the Dutch Government, at a press conference on 21 January.⁵⁷⁵⁵ On that occasion Boutros-Ghali declared that he was personally in favour of the use of 'air power':

'If we receive a request, I will certainly give the green light after a consultation with the Security Council. (...) In my interpretation consultation means that I will inform the Security Council concerning the first time one uses air force. (...) Furthermore I have no objection to mandate my special representative, Akashi, to give the green light for using air forces in any operation in Bosnia.

⁵⁷⁴⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, pp. 104-105.

⁵⁷⁴⁷ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 213-214; interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99; TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of A.L. ter Beek, 24/05/00, pp. 104-105; Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, p. 205; interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 13/12/99.

⁵⁷⁴⁸ TCBU, conversation with A.L. ter Beek, 23/03/00, p. 33. The same opinion in interview B. Kreemers, 18/03/99.

⁵⁷⁴⁹ Interviews R.F.M. Lubbers, 13/10/99.

⁵⁷⁵⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of W. Kok, 08/06/00, p. 389. See also interview W. Kok, 08/05/00.

⁵⁷⁵¹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of P. Kooijmans, 25/05/00, p. 115.

⁵⁷⁵² TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of Lubbers, 25/05/00, p. 136.

⁵⁷⁵³ Both, *Indifference*, p. 215.

⁵⁷⁵⁴ ABZ, PVNY. Memorandum from DGPZ to Kooijmans, 20/01/94, No. 14/92.

⁵⁷⁵⁵ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of W. Kok, 08/06/00, p. 389; hearing of Kooijmans, 25/05/00, p. 115.

Again after consultation with the Security Council. (...) I will inform the Security Council. I will say: I have done this. After the use of the power, the next day the Security Council may decide to stop the mandate they gave me.⁵⁷⁵⁶

On top of this he recorded his standpoint, which satisfied the Dutch Government, in a letter to the Security Council on 28 January. That made a ‘considerable difference’ according to Deputy Prime Minister Kok.⁵⁷⁵⁷ In the letter Boutros-Ghali distinguished between CAS, the use of air power for the purpose of self-defence, and air strikes, the use of air support ‘for pre-emptive or punitive purposes’. And yet Boutros-Ghali’s letter still left a lot of questions unanswered. He wrote, for instance, that ‘air power would be used, if necessary, in self-defence against a deliberate attack upon UNPROFOR by any party’. And he would not hesitate to give authorization for Close Air Support. But these statements only related to the changeover in Srebrenica and the reopening of Tuzla airport. Similarly, the power to grant a request for CAS from the Force Commander would only be delegated ‘in the specific circumstances of these operations relating to Srebrenica and Tuzla’.⁵⁷⁵⁸ The Dutch ministers were satisfied after reading Boutros-Ghali’s letter. Hoekema, who took minutes at the meeting at the Catshuis, told the Bakker Commission:⁵⁷⁵⁹

‘We thought it had to work because we all wanted it to. At a meeting of that kind you don’t immediately envisage a worst case scenario. As I said, we assumed that the presence of the (UN) forces would deter the Serbs and, if push did come to shove, the threat of air power alone would be enough to deter the Serbs.’⁵⁷⁶⁰

Minister Pronk told the NIOD: ‘We thought we had guarantees. They were not given. What is a guarantee? You can’t go any higher than the Secretary-General of the UN.’⁵⁷⁶¹ Looking back, Pronk considered that at the time the Dutch Government had been too eager to seek a solution to the risks ‘in procedures rather than in protecting ourselves’.⁵⁷⁶²

At the Dutch Permanent Representation in New York there was a conviction right after Boutros-Ghali’s visit to the Netherlands that what the Dutch Government regarded as undertakings and guarantees from the Secretary-General was of little value. According to Biegman, who was also at the dinner, at that time the UN did not really distinguish between air strikes and Close Air Support,⁵⁷⁶³ nor did Boutros-Ghali at the dinner at the Catshuis. As far as he recalled, the UN chief thought that he needed the consent of the Security Council, i.e. of the Russians, for any use of air power, ‘especially if it’s the first time’.⁵⁷⁶⁴ Minderhoud too subsequently considered that Boutros-Ghali could not do anything in regard to air support without the Security Council, even if Resolutions gave him the power: any Secretary-General who acted differently would be out on his ear the next day, she thought.

According to Minderhoud air support was an issue that was decided on ‘the spur of the moment’. Everything depended on how indignant Mitterrand – and subsequently Chirac – was about specific events in Bosnia. As things changed from moment to moment, the main actors in the Security Council had no need of clear phraseology. Resolutions had to provide maximum room for manoeuvre. With hindsight Minderhoud was convinced that the dual key had been a ‘disguised British joke’ right

⁵⁷⁵⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt* I, p. 153. See also Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, p. 143.

⁵⁷⁵⁷ Interview W. Kok, 08/05/00.

⁵⁷⁵⁸ ABZ, PR NY. Boutros-Ghali to K. Kovanda, 28/01/94, enc. with fax from PR New York to DPV/PZ, DAV and DEU, 28/01/94, nyy-1145.

⁵⁷⁵⁹ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of J.T. Hoekema, 24/05/00, p. 77.

⁵⁷⁶⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of J.T. Hoekema, 24/05/00, p. 77.

⁵⁷⁶¹ Interview J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

⁵⁷⁶² Interview J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

⁵⁷⁶³ Interview N. Biegman, 03/07/00.

⁵⁷⁶⁴ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of N.H. Biegman, 29/05/00, p. 188.

from the start. The British Government, in her opinion, was dead against a major military responsibility without American participation. The dual representation of the United Kingdom and France, on both the Security Council and NATO, made it possible for London and Paris to manipulate the dual key.⁵⁷⁶⁵ When the American Permanent Representative, Albright, asked the United Nations Secretary-General some time after Boutros-Ghali's visit to the Netherlands why he was always so cautious about air support, he answered that he had no choice, as the UNPROFOR commanders took their orders from London and Paris.⁵⁷⁶⁶

On 27 January, on the occasion of the departure of 114 Dutchbat quartermasters from Schaarsbergen, Couzy described 'the discussions about air strikes' as 'completely crazy'. According to him this was an idea going around Dutch conference rooms and offices that bore no relation at all to the reality in Bosnia.⁵⁷⁶⁷ The MoD had to draw up a statement in haste for the commander to issue the next day 'to clarify his pronouncements'. The statement stressed the distinction between CAS and air strikes. The former was an additional guarantee of safety for the peacekeeping soldiers. The latter was a form of taking sides which could jeopardize the safety of the UN peacekeepers on the ground.⁵⁷⁶⁸ The statement ignored the fact that on 2 and 9 August 1993 the Netherlands had agreed to air strikes on condition that other countries with troops on the ground would be willing to take part in such action. Couzy, moreover, in spite of the clarification, continued to have reservations about any form of air support, as became clear from a telephone conversation he had with MoD spokesman Kreemers.⁵⁷⁶⁹

In a letter to Parliament on 26 January 1994 Ter Beek, also on behalf of Minister Kooijmans, stated that the government attached 'great importance' to Boutros-Ghali's statement during his visit to the Netherlands that he would certainly give the 'green light' if air support were requested by the UNPROFOR commander: 'We regard this possibility as an important additional guarantee of the safety of the Dutch UN forces, should it be necessary.'⁵⁷⁷⁰

The Foreign Affairs and Defence Permanent Committees discussed this letter on 1 February. Van Traa said he still agreed to the mission, albeit he considered with hindsight that it might have been better to hold the debate in a plenary session, as combat forces were being sent to the former Yugoslavia for the first time. He was also aware that in sending Dutchbat the Netherlands was rowing against the international stream, but he hoped that this would give a signal to France and the United Kingdom not to withdraw their forces unilaterally. He considered the security risks to be 'acceptable'. Should there be casualties among the members of the battalion this ought not to be a reason to review the decision to send them.⁵⁷⁷¹

Except for De Kok, all the spokesmen mentioned the uncertainty regarding air support. Van Traa noted that there was confusion about the terms 'air support' and 'air strikes'. To speculate about this would be pointless, in his view. The military would have to decide on the nature of air support operations. Also there was 'in general not much point in politicians constantly speculating about things that are not likely to happen'.⁵⁷⁷² However, now that the Netherlands was to provide the Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command of UNPROFOR from 1 March (Major General Van Baal),

⁵⁷⁶⁵ Interview C. Minderhoud, 02/06/00. Similar opinion given in interview P.M. Kurpershoek, 22/06/00. Cf. also interview P.C. Feith, 24/08/00, for the suspicion with which the British/French attitude in NATO was regarded in the Netherlands.

⁵⁷⁶⁶ Ed Vulliamy, 'Bosnia – The Secret War: Tragic Cost of Allies' Hidden Hostility', *The Guardian*, 21/05/96.

⁵⁷⁶⁷ 'Bevelhebber landmacht ziet niets in luchtaanvallen' (Army Commander sees no point in air strikes), ANP, 27/01/94, 23:46; 'Couzy ziet niets in luchtsteun voor VN'ers' (Couzy sees no point in air support for UN personnel), *Trouw*, 28/01/93; Kreemers, 'Brigade', June 1994, p. 35; Van Gils, 'Tweede Kamer steunt uitzending bataljon' (Parliament supports posting of battalion), ANP, 31/01/94, 14:56.

⁵⁷⁶⁸ 'Couzy verduidelijkt uitspraken over luchtaanvallen' (Couzy clarifies statements on air strikes), ANP28/01/94, 1327; Kreemers, 'Brigade', June 1994, pp. 35-36.

⁵⁷⁶⁹ NIOD, Coll. Ter Beek. Note from Kreemers to Ter Beek, 31/01/94.

⁵⁷⁷⁰ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, No. 70, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁷⁷¹ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, No. 74, p. 1.

⁵⁷⁷² TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, No. 74, p. 1.

consideration needed to be given to shorter lines of command and better coordination between the local planners and those in Brussels and New York, in case the troops needed air support.

Blaauw asked the minister how air support could be requested and whether this could also be done to protect Safe Areas.⁵⁷⁷³ Evidently he had not known this when he agreed to Dutchbat being sent. This shows his comment later on to the Bakker Commission, suggesting that if he had had doubts about air support his party would not have agreed to the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica,⁵⁷⁷⁴ in a strange light. For Sipkes too the question was whether the UN would be prepared to grant air support. If this was the case, would the Dutch Government be involved in authorizing it?

In his reply Minister Ter Beek mentioned Boutros-Ghali's letter of 28 January to the Chairman of the Security Council. To shorten the lines of command the UN Secretary-General had decided to delegate this power to his Special Representative in the former Yugoslavia, Akashi, said Ter Beek.

For eighteen months, in various debates, MPs had pointed out the risks air strikes entailed for UNPROFOR ground forces and the possibility of UN personnel in the former Yugoslavia being taken hostage.⁵⁷⁷⁵ The government's letter about Boutros-Ghali's statement, however, suddenly seemed to remove all the reservations and hesitations.

Blaauw subsequently stated that for him this was not just:

‘...about Boutros-Ghali. I was mainly dealing with the ministers, with the government, who gave the clear impression that air support was a very important element for them and that you could trust that. (...) (Then) you must have that trust. Otherwise consultations with the government are very difficult. Unless of course you yourself have information to the effect that you cannot trust the United Nations' undertaking that air support would be granted, but I did not.’⁵⁷⁷⁶

Van Middelkoop similarly stated:

‘What other choice do you have? ... The government states in a letter that the UN Secretary-General had promised the government that air support would be granted if requested. There comes a point where you just have to accept that.’⁵⁷⁷⁷

He admitted that he may have been too hasty in his acceptance.⁵⁷⁷⁸ Valk considered that Boutros-Ghali's statement was ‘a good guarantee’.⁵⁷⁷⁹

Thus the government accepted what Boutros-Ghali had stated, after having had some pressure exerted on him, and Parliament went along with this. The UN Secretary-General was taken at his word. It was not sufficiently realized that the UN was no more than the sum of its members and that among them the five permanent members played a dominant role. The diplomat Wijnaendts, asked by journalists from *De Volkskrant* in early February 1994 whether the Dutch Government, given the British and French Governments' opposition to air support, was not displaying ‘just a little too much

⁵⁷⁷³ TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, No. 74, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁷⁴ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of J.D. Blaauw, 31/05/00, p. 221.

⁵⁷⁷⁵ See e.g. TK, 1992-1993, 22 181, No. 27, p. 4 (Van Middelkoop); No. 28, p. 7 (Ter Veer); No. 28, p. 8 (Sipkes); Proceedings, p. 13-806 (Sipkes, 22/10/92); Proceedings, p. 13-808/809 (Van Middelkoop, 22/10/92).

⁵⁷⁷⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of J.D. Blaauw, 31/05/00, p. 221.

⁵⁷⁷⁷ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of E. van Middelkoop, 05/06/00, p. 293. Similar information in interview E. van Middelkoop, 08.10/99

⁵⁷⁷⁸ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing of E. van Middelkoop, 05/06/00, p. 294.

⁵⁷⁷⁹ Interview G. Valk, 15/10/99.

heroism' with the Srebrenica move, replied that the Netherlands was simply 'somewhat more principled than the others'.⁵⁷⁸⁰

The instructions to spokesmen on the posting of Dutchbat I distinguished between air strikes and Close Air Support. They said that in the event of air strikes the UN would be taking sides in the conflict, which would have repercussions for UNPROFOR ground forces and the humanitarian aid in Bosnia. Deploying this weapon would therefore require the consent of the North Atlantic Council '(i.e. the sixteen NATO countries)' and the Security Council. Close Air Support could also lead to repercussions, but if asked about this the spokesman should answer '... as you know we are trained and equipped to deal with all options as regards force'.⁵⁷⁸¹

The attack on Sarajevo

On Saturday 5 February 1994, just after noon, a shell exploded in Markale market in Sarajevo, near the cathedral. As a result of the attack 68 people died and about two hundred were wounded. It was the worst attack on the city since the start of the war. The market was strewn with blood and severed limbs. Western television companies did not broadcast a lot of the pictures that were available because they were too gruesome.

The incident came just when the major Western countries were revising their policies and some new protagonists had stepped onto the Bosnian stage. It was already noticeable at the NATO summit on 9-10 January that the American administration was reconsidering its standpoint on Bosnia. William Perry, who had succeeded Aspin as Secretary of Defense, and General John Shalikashvili, who had taken over from Powell, were more inclined to deploy air power than their two predecessors. From the beginning of January the French Government had been urging American 'intervention' in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵⁷⁸² During a visit to Paris by Warren Christopher on 24 January Juppé exerted strong pressure in favour of more American involvement in the crisis in Yugoslavia.⁵⁷⁸³ A week later, on 1 February, Hurd spoke to Christopher in Washington in similar terms. In a letter Minister Kooijmans also called upon his American counterpart to play a more active role with a view to the negotiations on Bosnia.⁵⁷⁸⁴ On 4 February Christopher told Lake that he was 'acutely uncomfortable' with his government's passive attitude and that it was time for a fresh initiative.⁵⁷⁸⁵ What happened at the market in Sarajevo on 5 February substantially facilitated the change of heart by the American administration.⁵⁷⁸⁶

This was also the case with Mitterrand, who told Juppé following the incident that it was impossible for France to conduct a policy guided by emotion. On the other hand the French President realized that the population of his country would not put up with *Realpolitik* in this case. He said he found choosing between the two types of policy extremely difficult after the incident.⁵⁷⁸⁷ At the same time he was glad that the American administration was willing, following the attack, to embark on the

⁵⁷⁸⁰ Paul Brill & Martin Sommer, 'Diplomatie op drijfzand' (Diplomacy in the quicksand), *de Volkskrant*, 05/02/94.

⁵⁷⁸¹ CDPO/GNKD. Chief of Army Crisis Staff to Junior Commanders BLS and Directors of Army Staff, 11/02/94, OZ/7806.

⁵⁷⁸² 'Frankrijk wil Amerikaanse interventie in Bosnië' (France wants American intervention in Bosnia), ANP, 04/01/94, 22:02; Van Gils, 'Kamer roept regering op Frans plan voor Bosnië te steunen' (Parliament urges government to support French plan for Bosnia), ANP, 07/01/94.

⁵⁷⁸³ Ridderma, 'VS wijzen Franse oproep af voor ingrijpen in Bosnië' (US rejects French call for intervention in Bosnia), ANP, 24/01/94, 22:04.

⁵⁷⁸⁴ Van Gils, 'Nederland vraagt om actieve rol in vredesoverleg Bosnië' (The Netherlands asks for active role in Bosnia peace talks), ANP, 03/02/94, 13:15.

⁵⁷⁸⁵ Danner, 'Point', p. 38; Daalder, *Dayton*, pp. 24-25.

⁵⁷⁸⁶ Danner, 'Point', p. 38; Cf. TK, 1993-1994, Proceedings, p. 3895 (Kooijmans, 16/02/94); Carruthers, Media, p. 216; Drew, Edge, pp. 410-411; Schoemaker, 'Oorlog', p. 30; Burg & Shoup, *War*, p. 164; Strobel, Policy, p. 155.

⁵⁷⁸⁷ Adler, *Année*, p. 83.

Bosnian adventure. This had always been a precondition for stronger French action as far as he was concerned.⁵⁷⁸⁸

Serbs and Muslims accused each other of being responsible for the attack.⁵⁷⁸⁹ At the end of July 1992 Bosnian Serb forces had destroyed a radar detection unit of a Ukrainian UN battalion near Sarajevo.⁵⁷⁹⁰ The unit had not subsequently been replaced, so UNPROFOR could never determine with absolute certainty which party had been shooting. Some commentators have suggested that this handicap was borne cheerfully by the UN,⁵⁷⁹¹ as it enabled them to remain 'impartial' in the conflict. After the attack on 5 February 1994, however, the Under-Secretary-General for peacekeeping operations, Annan, asked the Governments of France, Great Britain and the Netherlands to supply radar systems of this kind,⁵⁷⁹² but the Dutch Government refused to supply one of the seven Dutch weapon-locating radar units, which were capable of detecting artillery and mortars, to UNPROFOR because the soldiers who operated them were mainly conscripts whose willingness to be posted would be 'very slight' in the Army's view. Professional soldiers could be trained to use the radar within two weeks, after which they would have to take a one-month UN course.⁵⁷⁹³ Evidently something that would have been possible for the airmobile battalion was not possible for a radar unit.

In the absence of radar, UNPROFOR military and a team of international experts could only ascertain that the weapon was a 120 mm shell which had been fired from the north-east at a distance of two or three kilometres. They were unable to ascertain which of the parties was responsible, as Muslims and Serbs both had positions close together in the north-east of the city and both sides had this type of shell. On top of this the shell had first hit a rooftop, with the result that the crater was too shallow to enable the angle at which it had been fired to be calculated precisely. Nor could any information on the manufacturer of the shell be obtained. The British general Michael Rose, who had taken over from Briquemont as Commander of UNPROFOR II on 21 January, however, stated: 'I categorically claim there was no opening of fire from Bosnian Serb Army positions in that area at that time.'⁵⁷⁹⁴ And some of the press were no less categorical.⁵⁷⁹⁵ Anonymous UN officers subsequently said that there was a secret UN report which showed that the Bosnian Government authorities were responsible for the explosion.⁵⁷⁹⁶ Dutch Military Intelligence thought it most likely that the Bosnian Muslims, who had recently been trying harder and harder to provoke foreign military intervention, were responsible.⁵⁷⁹⁷ It was never officially established whether the shell was fired by the Serbs or the Muslims, however.⁵⁷⁹⁸

On the day after the explosion the Bosnian Government demanded that the Bosnian Serbs' heavy weapons around Sarajevo be pulled back and placed under UNPROFOR supervision.⁵⁷⁹⁹ The

⁵⁷⁸⁸ Adler, *Année*, p. 84.

⁵⁷⁸⁹ UN, S/1994/674/Annex VI, pp. 781, 789; Bodansky, *Offensive*, pp. 61-62; Danner, 'Point', pp. 35 and 37-38.

⁵⁷⁹⁰ 'Bosniërs willen door blokkade Sarajevo breken' (Bosnians want to break Sarajevo with blockade), *de Volkskrant*, 01/08/92.

⁵⁷⁹¹ See e.g. Tromp, *Verraad*, pp. 154-155.

⁵⁷⁹² Bstas. Defence Staff, exh., 22/02/92, No. S94/061/674, Annan, to Biegman, 10/02/94; ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Biegman 185 to Kooijmans, 18/02/94.

⁵⁷⁹³ Bstas. Memorandum from Defence Staff to Ter Beek, 17/02/94, S94/061/611.

⁵⁷⁹⁴ UN, S/1994/674/Annex VI, pp. 781-782. See also Danner, 'Point', p. 40; Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, pp. 188 and 219-220.

⁵⁷⁹⁵ See also Mira Beham, 'Die Medien als Brandstifter', publ. Bittermann, *Serbien*, pp. 119-121.

⁵⁷⁹⁶ Chuck Sudetic, 'Bosnia Army Said to Shell its Own Territory', *The New York Times*, 11/11/94.

⁵⁷⁹⁷ DCBC, 2123. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 08/94, 09/02/94.

⁵⁷⁹⁸ UN, S/1994/674/Annex VI, pp. 784, 787, 789, 796 and 801; Major, *Autobiography*, p. 543; Koet, 'Adviser', p. 37; Burg/Shoup, *War*, p. 166; C. Cremer, 'De ogen en oren van UNPROFOR' (The eyes and ears of UNPROFOR), *Armex*, 78(1994) 5, p. 21. British and American Intelligence are said to have established that the shell most probably came from the Muslim side. Interviews J. Cooke, 01/08/00, and C. Wallace, 04/05/00. Cf. interview R. Morgan, 25/11/00; John Sray, 'Selling the Bosnian Myth', *Foreign Military Studies*, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, October 1995. The same claim is made by an anonymous high-ranking British official, James Gow & James Tilsley, 'The Strategic Imperative for Media Management', Gow & Paterson & Preston (eds.), *Bosnia*, p. 111 n. 40.

⁵⁷⁹⁹ UN, S/1994/674/Annex VI, pp. 784.

American administration considered that the shell attack fitted into the pattern of the Bosnian Serb shelling of Sarajevo. As Albright, the American Permanent Representative to the UN, put it:

‘It’s very hard to believe that any country would do this to their own people, and therefore, although we do not exactly know what the facts are, it would seem to us that the Serbs and the Bosnian Serbs are the ones that probably have a great deal of responsibility.’⁵⁸⁰⁰

Spurred on by the government in Paris,⁵⁸⁰¹ she therefore requested NATO air strikes in Washington, and Boutros-Ghali did indeed ask NATO to consent to air strikes against the Serb artillery around the city.⁵⁸⁰² There was opposition from various quarters. Owen let it be known that he did not think this was the solution.⁵⁸⁰³ Karadzic said that if this were to happen, foreigners would not be safe in Bosnia.⁵⁸⁰⁴ On 7 February seven of the EC Foreign ministers voted against air strikes, with Germany abstaining. Only the Netherlands, France, Italy and Belgium were in favour.⁵⁸⁰⁵ The Russian Foreign Minister, Kozyrev, considered that a fresh decision by the Security Council was required for air strikes.⁵⁸⁰⁶ Both NATO and the Chairman of the Security Council, however, stressed that the Security Council Resolutions authorized the UN Secretary-General to approve air strikes.⁵⁸⁰⁷

At the suggestion of the Americans, on 9 February the North Atlantic Council set the Serbs an ultimatum, taking effect at midnight on 10 February, ordering them either to pull back their heavy weapons twenty kilometres from Sarajevo or to place them under UN supervision. If this were not done within ten days air strikes would ensue. The Bosnian Muslims were also called upon to place their heavy weapons under UNPROFOR supervision. After the ultimatum of 9 February the power to request air support for the whole of Bosnia, whether CAS or air strikes, was delegated to Akashi. Boutros-Ghali’s consent was only required the first time.⁵⁸⁰⁸ After that Akashi only needed to call upon the commander of NATO’s Southern Region for his support.

During a parliamentary debate on Sarajevo on 16 February following the NATO ultimatum, Minister Ter Beek assured MPs, in response to a question from Van Traa, that Boutros-Ghali had succeeded in substantially reducing the time it took for a request for air support to be granted.⁵⁸⁰⁹ However, on 12 March 1994, when a request for CAS from French forces in Bihac, after days of shelling by Bosnian Serb artillery, was granted, it took four-and-a-half hours from the initial request for Akashi to agree to CAS. Aircraft circled uselessly over the Serb targets for hours. By the time permission finally arrived the Bosnian Serb forces had disappeared. Because of the long time it had taken, Akashi ordered the authorization procedures to be streamlined to reduce the response time.⁵⁸¹⁰

Minister Kooijmans welcomed the NATO ultimatum: ‘With it the international community has adopted a more robust stance and left no doubt that the threat will be carried out.’ He admitted that ‘in principle’ there was ‘a certain risk’ to ground forces in the case of air strikes, but a more resolute stand

⁵⁸⁰⁰ Burg & Shoup (eds.) *War*, p. 169.

⁵⁸⁰¹ Gow, *Triumph*, pp. 147 and 219; Strobel, *Policy*, p. 157.

⁵⁸⁰² UN, S/1994/674/Annex VI, p. 785.

⁵⁸⁰³ UN, S/1994/674/Annex VI, pp. 785 and 789.

⁵⁸⁰⁴ UN, S/1994/674/Annex VI, pp. 788.

⁵⁸⁰⁵ UN, S/1994/674/Annex VI, pp. 788.

⁵⁸⁰⁶ DCBC, 2123. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 08/94, 09/02/94.

⁵⁸⁰⁷ DCBC, 2122. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 09/94, 11/02/94.

⁵⁸⁰⁸ TK, 1993-1994, Proceedings, pp. 3901-3902 (16/02/94).

⁵⁸⁰⁹ TK, 1993-1994, Proceedings, pp. 3901-3902 (16/02/94).

⁵⁸¹⁰ ABZ, PVNY. Background paper concerning the request for Close Air Support on 12 March 1994; Boutros-Ghali to Wörner, 22/03/94; ABZ, DPV/ARA/09144. Biegman 291 to Kooijmans, 16/03/94; *ibid.*, Biegman 326 to Kooijmans, 25/03/94; Bstas. Memorandum from Kolsteren to Ter Beek, S94/061/1024; Hillen, *Helmets*, p. 162; ‘Hoe een luchtactie niet doorging’ (How an air strike did not take place), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/03/94.

on the part of NATO would also have a deterrent effect on reprisals: '(...) as Akashi can ask NATO to take action in the event of aggression against the forces on the spot.'⁵⁸¹¹

It did not come to air strikes in Sarajevo, however. The Russian Government, which had great difficulty with air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs, had reached an understanding with the Bosnian Serb leadership to prevent this: the Bosnian Serb Army would pull back its heavy weapons and Russian UN forces would be stationed between the Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Serb forces near Sarajevo. As soon as the Russians had occupied their position on the outskirts of the city Mladic's mind could be at ease. The West would not be keen to carry out bombing that would kill Russian soldiers, and on arrival the Russian troops were indeed received with the celebrated Serb hospitality.⁵⁸¹² An exclusion zone was created and hundreds of UNPROFOR personnel were stationed along the front line to supervise the depots where the weapons were stored. Their scattered locations made the UN troops vulnerable to hostage-taking.

What had looked like a firm ultimatum, then, actually made UNPROFOR even weaker. In Washington, moreover, it was warned that the 'success' of the threat of air strikes around Sarajevo could not easily be repeated. As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Shalikashvili, said at the beginning of March 1994: 'There were very specific conditions around Sarajevo that lent themselves to the application of air power that don't exist in any other places in Bosnia today.'⁵⁸¹³ At almost the same time Defense Secretary Perry told the American Congress that the other Safe Areas could not be protected with air support alone as this would not have much effect on the infantry and light artillery that the Bosnian Serb Army had stationed around them.⁵⁸¹⁴ This was a sharp blow to the guarantee of air support that the Dutch Government thought it had been given.

The crisis in Gorazde

The results of this approach became clear one-and-a-half months later around the Safe Area of Gorazde. The fact that Gorazde was held by the Muslims had long been a thorn in the flesh of the Bosnian Serb leadership. There were two roads linking the northern and southern parts of the areas occupied by the Serbs, one via Sarajevo, the other via Gorazde. When the Serbs complied with the NATO ultimatum, in February 1994, they lost their link via Sarajevo. They were very keen to secure the other link, via Gorazde. In late March/early April the Bosnian Serbs attacked the Safe Area of Gorazde. This enclave was about 50 kilometres south of Srebrenica, where the rumbling of the Bosnian Serb artillery shelling Gorazde could sometimes be heard.⁵⁸¹⁵ The Serbs claimed that they were only responding to attacks from the enclave. According to Mladic, Muslims had been trying to create a link to Foca from the enclave.⁵⁸¹⁶ It was probably true that attacks took place from the enclave, but the Serb response was again disproportionate.⁵⁸¹⁷ There were reports of hundreds of fatalities and thousands of wounded.⁵⁸¹⁸

The question of how to respond to this Serb challenge threatened to cause a split in NATO. The Americans' initial response was lukewarm. The Chief of Staff of the American army, Shalikashvili, claimed that there were no heavy weapons in position at Gorazde. Defense Security Perry said that Prijedor and Gorazde should not be allowed to fall into Serb hands, but NATO would not take action:

⁵⁸¹¹ O. van Boetzelaer, 'Standvastiger NAVO-opstelling kan Servische vergeldingsaanvallen voorkomen' (More resolute NATO stance could prevent Serb retributions), *CD/Actueel*, 12/03/94, p. 22.

⁵⁸¹² Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, 186.

⁵⁸¹³ Callahan, *Wars*, p. 195; The editors, 'The Abdication, Cont'd', Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 173.

⁵⁸¹⁴ Callahan, *Wars*, p. 195; Haass, *Intervention*, p. 42.

⁵⁸¹⁵ Jellema, *First-in*, p. 130.

⁵⁸¹⁶ Bulatovic, *Mladic*, p. 107.

⁵⁸¹⁷ Cf. Marjon van Royen, 'Nederlandse generaal: Moslims lokten aanval Gorazde uit' (Dutch general says Muslims provoked attack on Gorazde), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/04/94.

⁵⁸¹⁸ Bulatovic, *Mladic*, p. 103.

‘we will not enter the war to stop that from happening. That is correct yes.’⁵⁸¹⁹ Prijedor had in fact been held by the Serbs for two years. The Bosnian Serbs now knew that the West was not prepared to show its strength in this case. For them this was ‘the green light to push on’, as an adviser to Karadzic put it.⁵⁸²⁰

The weekend of 16-17 April saw the departure of the Forward Air Controllers, who would have guided the bombs to their targets. For the population this was a sign that all hope was lost.⁵⁸²¹ *Médecins sans Frontières* accused the UN of ‘laxity’.⁵⁸²² After an UNPROFOR serviceman died as a result of Bosnian Serb shelling, air support was finally given: on 10 April two American F16s attacked a Serb tank and a ‘command centre’ (a few tents) just outside Gorazde. It was the first time since its inception that NATO had attacked ground targets. The next day an American F18 attacked a number of Serb armoured cars.

In response Karadzic said he would stop cooperating with UNPROFOR and warned Boutros-Ghali that from then on he regarded UNPROFOR as ‘a potentially hostile armed force’.⁵⁸²³ A series of incidents with UN forces ensued. In Srebrenica, for instance, the Bosnian Serbs broke off all contact with Dutchbat, which had meanwhile deployed there, and Bosnian Serb artillery was set up around the enclave. The situation scared a number of Dutchbat personnel to such an extent that they wrote letters of farewell to their families.⁵⁸²⁴ At the same time the events in Gorazde led to Muslim demonstrations in Srebrenica against the UN’s feeble approach to the crisis.⁵⁸²⁵ On 17 April the Bosnian Serbs occupied almost all of Gorazde.

The next day, 18 April, a heated telephone conversation took place between Mladic and Rose, with the Bosnian Serb Army leader demanding that there be no more air strikes and Rose demanding of Mladic that the shelling of Gorazde be halted. Finally Rose gave Mladic (‘you arsehole’) ten minutes to stop the shelling, and a quarter of an hour later it did indeed stop.⁵⁸²⁶

On 22 April NATO set the Bosnian Serbs an ultimatum, ordering them to withdraw to three kilometres from the centre of Gorazde and remove their heavy weapons from a 20-kilometre zone around the city. The Bosnian Serb forces then withdrew from the centre, on 23 April. Many people in the West concluded optimistically that the threat of air power seemed to have been effective again, after the events around Sarajevo in February.⁵⁸²⁷

The true lessons of Gorazde were less encouraging. When deploying NATO aircraft against some T55 tanks near Gorazde, NATO used old-fashioned, imprecise bombs. With the low cloud the planes had difficulty finding the targets. A few bombs missed their targets, some did not even go off. After Serb air defences brought down a British Sea Harrier in a third series of NATO air strikes the action was called off. NATO ascribed the loss of the aircraft to the fact that UNPROFOR had demanded that the pilot fly over the tank he was going to try and eliminate several times to make sure that it was indeed attacking. Admiral Boorda, the Commander of NATO’s Southern Command, who was responsible for the air operations over the former Yugoslavia, was so outraged that he said he would no longer approve tactical targets, only strategic targets.⁵⁸²⁸ This meant that any future requests for air support would be of an even more escalatory nature.

⁵⁸¹⁹ Quoted in ‘The Abdication, Cont’d’, Mousavizadeh (ed.), *Book*, p. 173.

⁵⁸²⁰ Frank Westerman, ‘Helpers Bosnië: ‘Nog even en ik pak een geweer’ (Bosnia helpers say ‘If this goes on much longer I’ll grab a gun’), *De Volkskrant* 22/04/94.

⁵⁸²¹ Frank Westerman, ‘Helpers Bosnië: ‘Nog even en ik pak een geweer’, *de Volkskrant* 22/04/94.

⁵⁸²² Frank Westerman, ‘Helpers Bosnië: ‘Nog even en ik pak een geweer’, *de Volkskrant* 22/04/94.

⁵⁸²³ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, I, p. 80; Steven Ratner & Masahiko Asada, ‘Peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peace enforcement. Legal underpinnings of the U.N. role’, Harrison & Nishigara (eds.), *Peacekeeping*, p. 57.

⁵⁸²⁴ Jan Westerhof, ‘Benauwde dagen voor Dutchbat in Srebrenica’ (Anxious days for Dutchbat in Srebrenica), *de Volkskrant*, 05/05/94.

⁵⁸²⁵ Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 135-136.

⁵⁸²⁶ Ian Traynor, ‘Profile: Beast of Bosnia’, *The Guardian*, 18/04/94.

⁵⁸²⁷ Even in TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, I, p. 80.

⁵⁸²⁸ UN report, par. 138. See also Rose, *Peace*, pp. 114-115.

If this alone was a blow to the credibility of air support, things got even worse when an assessment concluded that the Serb targets did not warrant the deployment of smarter bombs.⁵⁸²⁹ The chances of conventional bombs hitting their targets were low. In summer 1995 Feith, the Netherlands' Deputy Permanent Representative to NATO, was not aware of this decision. He expressed indignation that two 500-pound free-fall bombs had been used in the eventual air strike during the Bosnian Serb attack on Srebrenica, 'technology from the Second World War', whereas he had counted on precision weapons being deployed.⁵⁸³⁰

Another thing that emerged from this operation was that the UN restrained NATO from stronger action. When the Bosnian Serbs did not initially seem to be responding to the NATO ultimatum on 23 April, the alliance wanted to organize a major air strike with the secondary aim of bombing the Serbs back to the negotiating table, but Akashi refused to give his consent.⁵⁸³¹ Rose again urged proportionality in air strikes as this was a peacekeeping operation. While preparing for his command in New York he had said to Madeleine Albright that 'air power alone could not be used in Bosnia to defend Srebrenica'.⁵⁸³² Rose had difficulty convincing NATO commanders, who were used to thinking in terms of overwhelming force. As one of them said, 'Proportionality. I'll give you proportionality. Han Pijesak (the Bosnian Serb HQ) and the Pale ammunition dump and Lukavica barracks. That's proportionality!'⁵⁸³³ The Dutch Brigadier General Bastiaans, head of the UN military observers, also said following the crisis in Gorazde that he was in favour of caution as regards air strikes: 'Bombing changes the relationships. It shuts off the possibility of continuing negotiations. Anyone who thinks this is not the case is just not of this world.'⁵⁸³⁴

On top of this, in response to the air strikes the Bosnian Serbs took about 150 UNPROFOR soldiers hostage near Sarajevo. Following the crisis Gorazde had been held, but reduced to a much smaller area. Boutros-Ghali drew the conclusion that the events around Gorazde proved once more that there were problems with the concept of a 'Safe Area'. Neither the presence of eight UN observers in Gorazde nor that of an UNPROFOR company in Bihac had stopped the Bosnian Serbs from attacking. It was clear, according to a NATO assessment, that the Bosnian Serbs would only halt an offensive in response to 'the wider use of air strikes for which further political authority was required'.⁵⁸³⁵ For the Bosnian Muslim commander Rasim Delic it was now clear 'that the international community was not willing to defend the protected areas at any price and that they would pull back at the first difficult problem...'⁵⁸³⁶ Conversely, General Rose was convinced that the Muslim Armed forces had deliberately stopped resisting: 'I think they basically turned and ran and left us to pick up the bits.' 'They think we should be fighting for them.'⁵⁸³⁷ He also noted that Gorazde had been less badly hit than some earlier reports had suggested.⁵⁸³⁸ Rose went on to complain that supposedly wounded Bosnian Muslim soldiers who had been transported by helicopter later jumped out apparently unhurt.⁵⁸³⁹ Talking openly to Roger Cohen, head of the Balkan Bureau of *The New York Times*, about what he considered to be the two-faced nature of the Bosnian Muslims, he added: 'It is very hard to

⁵⁸²⁹ Colonel of Cavalry R.H. Sandee, 'Militaire besluitvorming bij crisisbeheersing' (Military decision-making in crisis control), *Carré* 18(1995)4, p. 15.

⁵⁸³⁰ Interview P.C. Feith, 24/08/00; TCBU, *Vertretpunt*, I, p. 81.

⁵⁸³¹ Paul Shoup, 'The Crisis in Bosnia Herzegovina: Past, Present and Future', Blank (ed.), *Wars*, pp. 8-9 and 20 n. 8.

⁵⁸³² Rose, *Peace*, p. 15.

⁵⁸³³ Bell, *Way*, p. 182.

⁵⁸³⁴ Marjon van Royen, 'Nederlandse VN-General: Moslims lokten aanval Gorazde uit', *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/04/94; 'VVD: uitleg Ter Beek' (Liberals demand explanation from Ter Beek), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/04/94.

⁵⁸³⁵ Confidential information (165).

⁵⁸³⁶ Report of explanation by Delic in September 1997 to the Bosnia-Herzegovina parliament of the causes of the fall of Srebrenica and Zepa, Appendix to MID. Vandeweyer to Voorhoeve, 10/11/97, DIS97005661.

⁵⁸³⁷ Bell, *Way*, p. 184. See also Rose, *Peace*, pp. 125-126; Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 261; Simms, *Hour*, pp. 189-195.

⁵⁸³⁸ Rose, *Peace*, pp. 124-125; Bulatovic, *Mladic*, p. 105; Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 261.

⁵⁸³⁹ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 188.

believe that the Muslim enclaves are viable in the long run.⁵⁸⁴⁰ The Dutch Brigadier General Bastiaans, who was head of the United Nations Military Observers, stated: ‘The Muslims have provoked the Serbs with shelling and harassment to such an extent that the latter had little alternative but to deploy heavy weapons.’⁵⁸⁴¹

A Dutch UN observer who had been in Gorazde during the Bosnian Serb attack contradicted the notion that the Muslims had provoked the Bosnian Serb attacks. He said it was true that there had been fewer casualties than the Bosnian Government wanted the world to believe.⁵⁸⁴² Bosnia-Herzegovina Command came to the conclusion that Bastiaans, right from the start of the crisis, had not taken the signals given by the five UN observers there seriously enough.⁵⁸⁴³ International aid organizations were severely critical of Bastiaans’ and Rose’s pronouncements. According to one of the aid workers they were trying, having not responded adequately themselves, to save ‘their arses’ by blaming the Muslims and criticizing the aid organizations for exaggerating the crisis in Gorazde.⁵⁸⁴⁴ The Dutch Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Brigadier General Van Baal, when asked to comment on Bastiaans’ claim that the Muslims had provoked the conflict, responded by saying that if anyone could tell him who had started it that would be an ‘awfully clever’ person.⁵⁸⁴⁵ The UN’s response to the crisis in Gorazde did not inspire much confidence in UNPROFOR’s reaction to any fresh attacks on the Safe Areas. *Médecins sans Frontières* demanded the resignation of Akashi,⁵⁸⁴⁶ who was still annoyed by the fact that the Muslims continued to count on intervention. Following the crisis in Gorazde he commented: ‘We can only hope that the failure of NATO to come to their aid around Gorazde will convince them that the US cavalry isn’t around the corner.’⁵⁸⁴⁷ Annan tried to protect Akashi and UNPROFOR against the storm of criticism⁵⁸⁴⁸ of the inadequate use of air power. He said that such action was designed

‘.....to protect lives – not just of the handful of UN soldiers who might be threatened by a given attack but the thousands of lightly armed peacekeepers and hundreds of unarmed relief workers, military observers and police monitors whose lives would be threatened by precipitous military action.’⁵⁸⁴⁹

Two things stand out from this observation. Firstly, the populations of the Safe Areas are not included among those whose lives were to be protected. Secondly, this pronouncement yet again underlined the fact that air strikes were not an automatic response but were considered in the broader context of the whole operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As Boutros-Ghali wrote in a report to the Security Council at the beginning of May, the Safe Areas could not be defended, not even with air support.⁵⁸⁵⁰

⁵⁸⁴⁰ Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 261.

⁵⁸⁴¹ Marjon van Royen, ‘Nederlandse generaal: Moslims lokten aanval Gorazde uit’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/04/94. See also Bodansky, *Offensive*, p. 63.

⁵⁸⁴² Leon Vankan, ‘Majoer Buisman: Moslims hebben niet geprovoceerd’ (Major Buisman says Muslims did not provoke attack), *De Telegraaf*, 29/04/94.

⁵⁸⁴³ Marjon van Rojen, ‘Kritiek van VN op generaal Bastiaans’ (UN criticism of General Bastiaans), *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/05/94.

⁵⁸⁴⁴ Marjon van Rojen, ‘Kritiek van VN op generaal Bastiaans’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/05/94.

⁵⁸⁴⁵ Marjon van Rojen, ‘VN medeverantwoordelijk voor Gorazde’ (UN shares responsibility for Gorazde), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/05/94.

⁵⁸⁴⁶ Marjon van Rojen, ‘Kritiek van VN op generaal Bastiaans’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 03/05/94.

⁵⁸⁴⁷ Quoted in Bert, *Superpower*, p. 166.

⁵⁸⁴⁸ See e.g. Wim Jans, ‘Yasushi Akashi. Zo lang mogelijk aan tafel met de duivel’ (Yasushi Akashi. At the table with the devil as long as possible), *Trouw*, 30/04/94.

⁵⁸⁴⁹ Quoted in Michael N. Barnett, ‘The Politics of Indifference at the United Nations and Genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia’, Cushman & Mestrovic (eds.), *Time*, p. 154.

⁵⁸⁵⁰ UN, S/1994/555.

The events around Gorazde had caused great concern in The Hague as well. Minister Kooijmans noted that ‘we were not able to respond effectively’.⁵⁸⁵¹ *CD/Actueel*, the magazine of the Christian Democrats (CDA), expressed the hope that Akashi, who had again been very cautious, had ‘learned’ that a request for air strikes had to be put in ‘before the Serb forces had pushed right through to the centre of an enclave’.⁵⁸⁵² As a result of the tense situation around Gorazde a visit by Minister Ter Beek to Sarajevo and to Dutchbat in Srebrenica planned for 11 April had not been able to take place. On 25 April 1994, during a visit to Washington, Barth expressed his concern about the protection of the Safe Areas which relied on NATO air support to Deputy Assistant Secretary Vershbow. He said that while the NATO ultimatum had worked in the case of Gorazde, next time more importance might be attached to UNPROFOR’s humanitarian remit than the desirability of NATO action. Vershbow did not by any means put Barth’s mind at ease: he showed ‘complete understanding of Dutch sensibilities’ in view of the presence of Dutchbat in Srebrenica, and he said he could imagine that ‘at the end of the day the question could arise as to which of the two missions in Bosnia was most important’.⁵⁸⁵³

4. Bad omens

After the decision had been made to send Dutchbat various developments took place in Bosnia which could have an adverse effect on the Safe Areas. After the Silajdzic Government came to power, on 25 October 1993, more and more important state posts fell into the hands of the SDA. With Halilovic replaced by Rasim Delic as army leader the strength of the Bosnian Government forces increased. This, plus increasingly strong indications that NATO would be willing to use air strikes, made it more unlikely that the Bosnian Government would work to achieve something at the negotiating table, as Dutch Military Intelligence noted.⁵⁸⁵⁴ On top of this UNPROFOR reports indicated that the Bosnian Armed forces were increasingly positioning their artillery near UN locations or in residential areas, evidently with the intention of provoking the Serbs and eliciting foreign military intervention through pressure of public opinion. It was probably for this reason, too, that Bosnian Muslims conducted military actions in UN uniforms.⁵⁸⁵⁵

Intelligence reported on 31 January 1994:

‘Bosnian Serb spokesmen have said they have indications that Muslims in the enclaves on the Bosnian Serb border (Zepa, Srebrenica and Gorazde) intend to shoot at aircraft and helicopters of UNPROFOR or other UN bodies so as to hold the BSA (Bosnian Serb Army) responsible. Although there are no indications that these reports are correct it is clear that the Muslims have been attempting in recent weeks to step up foreign military involvement in the conflict. They hope in this way to bring the achievement of their ultimate political objective, viz. to keep Bosnia-Herzegovina a unitary state, closer.’⁵⁸⁵⁶

On 15 November 1993, the date when the Dutch Government sent its letter on the deployment of an airmobile battalion to Parliament, Owen said that international interference in Bosnia was probably lengthening the conflict, as humanitarian aid was benefiting the fighters on all three sides.⁵⁸⁵⁷ He

⁵⁸⁵¹ Knol, ‘Oorlog’, p. 136.

⁵⁸⁵² ‘Gorazde’, *CD/Actueel*, 29/04/94, p. 11.

⁵⁸⁵³ ABZ, PVNAVO. Jacobovits 270 to Kooijmans, 25/04/95.

⁵⁸⁵⁴ DCBC, 2130. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 01/94, 07/01/94; 2127, 04/94, 18/01/94; 2125, 06/94, 31/01/94.

⁵⁸⁵⁵ DCBC, 212. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 04/94, 18/01/94; 05/94, 25/01/94.

⁵⁸⁵⁶ DCBC, 2125. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 06/94, 31/01/94.

⁵⁸⁵⁷ Belae, *Bombs*, p. 24.

proposed that in spring 1994, once the winter was over, all aid to Bosnia be halted and all UN forces withdrawn, if the parties themselves had not reached a peace agreement by then.⁵⁸⁵⁸

On 20 January the European Parliament with a slim majority adopted a resolution not to extend Owen's mandate now that the peace talks had reached an impasse. Owen did not take much notice; he had been appointed by the Council of Ministers, not the European Parliament.⁵⁸⁵⁹

It was not only Owen who urged that UN forces be pulled out of Bosnia. In November 1993 the British Government let it be known that the UN efforts in Bosnia could not go on indefinitely if the parties to the conflict did not adopt a more cooperative stance. It was not entirely clear whether these pronouncements were intended solely to put pressure on the Bosnian Government to agree to the Owen-Stoltenberg plan or whether they had a broader import.⁵⁸⁶⁰ At the end of 1993 the French Government repeatedly hinted at the possibility of pulling its troops out of UNPROFOR in spring 1994 if there were no visible signs of a peace settlement.⁵⁸⁶¹ Minister Kooijmans, however, was not in favour of withdrawing: 'Even speculating about withdrawal will only decrease the desire for peace.'⁵⁸⁶² Nor did his fellow Minister Ter Beek contemplate withdrawal.⁵⁸⁶³

On 4 January 1994 the Belgian UNPROFOR Commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Briquemont, who was originally supposed to remain until June 1994, resigned in frustration at the small number of men he had at his disposal to carry out his mandate. The resources designed to protect the Safe Areas were completely inadequate. He considered there was a 'yawning gulf' between the Security Council Resolutions and the means provided for implementing them,⁵⁸⁶⁴ and he had stated on various occasions that he therefore no longer read the Resolutions.⁵⁸⁶⁵ He was also annoyed that the governments in Paris and London were threatening to pull out their UNPROFOR units. Briquemont's resignation led Christian Democrat MP De Kok, speaking in Elst at a talk for the AVNM conscripts' association, to comment 'speaking for myself' that 'we as politicians need to seriously reconsider the mission of the Airmobile Brigade'.⁵⁸⁶⁶ His call met with no response.

Cot too criticized the 'lack of will' he perceived among the countries contributing to UNPROFOR to try and reach a political solution to the conflict.⁵⁸⁶⁷ Briquemont was succeeded on 24 January by Sir Michael Rose. The 54-year-old British general, who had been in the Coldstream Guards and the Special Air Service (SAS), had experience of the Middle East, the Far East, the Falklands War and the Northern Ireland conflict. As Commander of the staff college in Camberley he had set up the first officers' course on peacekeeping operations. He was welcomed by Cot with a warning that the limit of feasibility had been crossed in the Bosnian conflict. Cot was no less frustrated than Briquemont. He objected to the fact that he had to request authorization for air strikes from UN headquarters in New York. He declared that 'the humiliation of the forces of the international community has reached a limit and I can no longer accept it'. The UN peacekeeping force in Bosnia

⁵⁸⁵⁸ 'Bosnië wenst u ...' (Bosnia wishes you...), *Het Parool*, 08/12/93.

⁵⁸⁵⁹ Peter de Graaf & Wio Joustra, 'EG-parlement wil vervanging van Lord Owen' (EC Parliament wants Lord Owen replaced), *de Volkskrant*, 21/01/94.

⁵⁸⁶⁰ Simms, *Hour*, p. 31.

⁵⁸⁶¹ ABZ, 911.31, Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Part VII, May 1993 to March 1994. MID (Intelligence), Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 71/93, 21/12/93; 'Frankrijk wil geheel nieuwe aanpak van kwestie-Bosnië' (France wants completely new approach to Bosnia issue), *de Volkskrant*, 21/01/94.

⁵⁸⁶² 'Vlaanderen is politieker; Nederland meer ambtelijk' (Flanders is more political, the Netherlands more official), *Standaard*, 07/02/94.

⁵⁸⁶³ Peter de Graaf & Wio Joustra, 'EG-parlement wil vervanging van Lord Owen', *de Volkskrant*, 21/01/94.

⁵⁸⁶⁴ DCBC, 2130. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 01/94, 07/01/94; F. Jensma, 'Als er doden vallen stuur je geen rapporten' (If there are fatalities you don't send any reports), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/01/94; T. Koelé, 'De frustraties van een VN-generaal' (The frustrations of a UN general), *Trouw*, 29/01/94.

⁵⁸⁶⁵ Briquemont, *Something*, p. 31; C.J., 'New UNPROFOR command', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. I(1994)(January-February), p. 25; Hillen, *Helmets*, pp. 169-170.

⁵⁸⁶⁶ 'CDA-kamerlid ziet uitzending Lumob niet zitten' (Christian Democrat MP against Airmob posting), *Defensiekrant*, 13/01/94.

⁵⁸⁶⁷ DCBC, 2127. MID, Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische federatie, 04/94, 18/01/94.

had in his view degenerated into 'a goat tethered to a fence'.⁵⁸⁶⁸ Boutros-Ghali in turn considered that the French general had crossed the line by insisting that he should have the power to decide on air strikes and asked the French Government to remove him from his post.⁵⁸⁶⁹ On 18 January it was announced that Cot would soon be leaving. He was succeeded on 10 March by General Bertrand Guillaume de Sauville de Lapresle.

The American administration had since spring 1993 been urging the government in Zagreb and the Bosnian Croats to halt their struggle with the Bosnian Muslims.⁵⁸⁷⁰ The American Special Envoy to Bosnia, Charles Redman, considered that the key to a diplomatic solution in Bosnia lay in changing the power relationships on the ground, which entailed getting the Muslims and the Croats to join forces. This would also reduce the number of sides in the negotiations from three to two. The idea was to bring about a Muslim-Croat federation which would cover about half the terrain of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the other half comprising a Serb area within Bosnia.⁵⁸⁷¹ Redman was able to take advantage of the situation on the ground in Central Bosnia, where the Croat forces had difficulty standing up to the Bosnian Muslims in early 1994. The realization dawned in Zagreb that the Croatian Armed forces could not for long conduct a war on two fronts, against the Serbs in Croatia itself and against the Muslims in Bosnia.⁵⁸⁷² On 18 March delegations from the Bosnian Croats and Muslims accordingly signed an agreement in Washington to enter into a federation that could eventually be absorbed into a confederation with Croatia. Both the Muslims and the Croats thus gave up some of their aspirations, at least for the time being: the Muslims for a unitary state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Croats for the creation of a Greater Croatia. In the longer term, however, there was still the possibility of both an integrated, sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina and a Greater Croatia. In exchange for this agreement, Tudjman, who had been placed under considerable pressure to agree to the accord by the American administration, had been assured of American support to sort out the situation in Krajina, for which purpose he could use the men who could leave Bosnia-Herzegovina now that the accord had been signed.⁵⁸⁷³ An advantage of the Washington accord for the Bosnian Government, moreover, was that it made arms supplies to the Bosnian Muslims easier, as they no longer in principle had to cross enemy lines.

Although the partnership between the Croats and the Muslims offered fresh perspectives at the negotiating table, this did not necessarily mean an improvement in the prospects of the eastern enclaves. Peace plans often cast long shadows ahead of them during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to an analysis by the Dutch Internal Security Service at the end of April 1994, it was the expectation of an imminent peace breakthrough that had enticed the Serbs to attack Gorazde, speculating on the fear of the international community, in particular the United States, of becoming involved in fighting. The attack on Gorazde, according to the Service, could be 'the run-up to fighting around other Muslim towns such as Zepa or Srebrenica'.⁵⁸⁷⁴

The status of the enclaves in the case of a peace settlement was in fact unclear. In early 1994 both Redman and Owen tried to open discussions once more with the Bosnian Government on giving up Srebrenica and Zepa in exchange for other terrain, but again without success.⁵⁸⁷⁵ According to

⁵⁸⁶⁸ Cohen, *Hearts*, pp. 365-366.

⁵⁸⁶⁹ 'Frankrijk bevestigt aflossing VN-commandant Cot' (France confirms replacement of UN Commander Cot), *ANP*, 18/01/94, 22:00; 'Generaal Cot buigt voor Boutros-Ghali' (General Cot gives way to Boutros-Ghali), *De Telegraaf*, 19/01/94; C.J. 'New UNPROFOR command', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. I (1994)(January-February), p. 25; interview J. Cot, 19/04/00.

⁵⁸⁷⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01818. COREU, 07/04/93, Cpe Bonn 222; Scheffers, *Ambassadeur*, p. 26.

⁵⁸⁷¹ Daalder, *Dayton*, p. 27.

⁵⁸⁷² Gow, 'Forces', p. 2.

⁵⁸⁷³ Scheffers, *Ambassadeur*, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁸⁷⁴ BVD. 'Vredeskansen in ex-Joegoslavië en de gevolgen voor Nederland' (Chances of peace in ex-Yugoslavia and the consequences for the Netherlands), 22/04/94.

⁵⁸⁷⁵ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/00.

Minister Kooijmans it was ‘not the idea to maintain the Safe Areas ad infinitum, or until a miracle happened’.⁵⁸⁷⁶

Both military events and developments at the negotiating table, then, could affect the presence of the Dutch battalion in Srebrenica. It was unclear, however, which body in the Netherlands was responsible for monitoring developments around Srebrenica, in the former Yugoslavia and regarding crucial concepts such as ‘Safe Area’ and ‘air support’, and for considering the consequences for Dutchbat. This was primarily the responsibility of the Foreign and Defence Ministries, and they were responsible for properly allocating duties in this regard.⁵⁸⁷⁷ Continual monitoring was necessary, not only because peacekeeping operations such as UNPROFOR take place in a very unstable environment with the conflict still raging and it is unclear how much value should be attached to the sides consenting to the presence of a peacekeeping force, but also because it was clear that the Safe Areas were only of a temporary nature.⁵⁸⁷⁸ Once the decision to send in Dutchbat had been taken, the Foreign Ministry’s interest in the battalion waned. After this it was more a matter for the MoD, which is understandable as it was the Defence Minister who was politically responsible for the implementation of policy on peacekeeping operations.⁵⁸⁷⁹ The focus in this part of the Yugoslavia file moved from Foreign Affairs to Defence, which was responsible for training, equipping and sending the troops. The issues of security, force protection and supplies also involved a strong military component which could not primarily be regarded as the responsibility of the Foreign Ministry. When it came to spokesmen, too, the emphasis shifted from Foreign Affairs to Defence.⁵⁸⁸⁰ The deployment area was a matter that held little interest now for the Foreign Ministry, once it had been established that deployment in one of the Safe Areas had not been ruled out.⁵⁸⁸¹

The allocation of duties as regards monitoring politically relevant developments was unclear, however. Situation reports and threat analyses, provided for example by Intelligence, were discussed in the ‘bunker consultations’ between Defence and Foreign Affairs, but there was no clear-cut agreement on who should act on important information.⁵⁸⁸² In fact there is not much evidence of threat analyses in the archives. According to Defence Minister Ter Beek the MoD was responsible for the security risks to Dutchbat and the Foreign Ministry for surveying political shifts in the region that could affect Dutchbat.⁵⁸⁸³ Ter Beek, however, did not detect any increase in the attention paid to the area by the Military Intelligence Service:

‘What I mean by that is, the unstable situation and environment (...) of course existed right from the first moment we decided to participate, initially in UNPROFOR I in Croatia with our signallers and then with UNPROFOR II in Bosnia with our transport battalion. Sending in the airmobile battalion was not actually anything new. (...) that’s something I only fully realize now. Of course you could ask, why, after the Srebrenica decision, was the level of attention to developments not increased? That’s what I meant by no watershed. We just continued something that was already going on.’⁵⁸⁸⁴

This was a course of events that the Minister himself could of course have influenced. The Dutch Army’s Security Section only stepped up its work on Yugoslavia to a limited extent after Dutchbat was

⁵⁸⁷⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekepunt*, III, hearing of P. Kooijmans, 25/05/00, p. 114.

⁵⁸⁷⁷ Cf. interview W. Kok, 08/05/00.

⁵⁸⁷⁸ Cf. W.A.M. van Dijk, ‘Nogmaals: Karremans en Dutchbat’, *Carré*, 18(1995)11, p. 20.

⁵⁸⁷⁹ Cf. TK, 1995-1996, 24 605, Nos. 1 and 2, p. 6.

⁵⁸⁸⁰ Interviews B. Hiensch, 13/07/00, and R. Swartbol, 24/02/99.

⁵⁸⁸¹ Interviews O. Hattinga van ‘t Sant, 01/08/97 and P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

⁵⁸⁸² Interview H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

⁵⁸⁸³ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁵⁸⁸⁴ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

sent out,⁵⁸⁸⁵ not at all according to another source.⁵⁸⁸⁶ The Eastern Europe Department of the Foreign Ministry also evidently did not consider it had any responsibility for monitoring political developments that could be relevant to Dutchbat.

Aside from the fact that in the Dutch administration it is rarely appreciated if one Ministry looks over another one's fence and 'contributes ideas', a major factor in the failure to follow and point out developments relevant to Dutchbat was the fact that the policy-makers in the Netherlands could not imagine that the Serb forces would have the nerve to defy the international community after having agreed to the presence of UN troops in the region.⁵⁸⁸⁷ Even Development Cooperation Minister Pronk, who had shown in April 1993 that he seriously feared for the fate of the population of Srebrenica, was convinced, like Generals Van der Vlis and Couzy, that not much would happen to Dutchbat personnel:

'I never thought that. And nothing did happen (to Dutchbat personnel) throughout the whole conflict. The only thing that happened was that those people were taken hostage. Nothing else happened. There were accidents. There were isolated atrocities... but they were not systematic. They (the Serb leadership) knew they couldn't do that... The fear that was so strong in the Netherlands, that our soldiers would die there, is something I never shared. There was no reason to. After all, nothing happened. It would have been the first time.'⁵⁸⁸⁸

The Dutch Government authorities, however, more than the governments of other countries, assumed that once a unit had been sent out under the auspices of the United Nations it would be purely a matter for the international organization. There was a strong conviction that domestic interference in UNPROFOR was undesirable. It was not unknown that other governments did interfere, but for the Dutch Government this could not be a reason for perpetrating such wickedness.⁵⁸⁸⁹ Characteristic of the Dutch approach was to 'rely on the overall picture... The risks were gauged, but the solution was sought in someone else's intervention.'⁵⁸⁹⁰ That 'someone else' was the UN. This was the reasoning in Army Intelligence, for instance, too. The Army's Intelligence service did not send any reports to Dutchbat because it thought that the security of Dutchbat was not a national issue but a matter for the UN: '(...) it's absolutely none of your business. You've loaned them out, end of story!'⁵⁸⁹¹

This was a high-risk attitude, especially since the United Nations itself was averse to gathering intelligence.⁵⁸⁹² According to Van Veen Intelligence was 'not a topic for discussion in New York. They'd chuck you out of the building straight away!... That's how sensitive it is.'⁵⁸⁹³ Even where other governments were prepared to provide the UN with Intelligence – and the UN was prepared to accept it – it could not be seen as an objective cross-section of the totality of national information. Particularly in an issue such as the former Yugoslavia, on which the thinking and objectives of the United States and the European countries had long differed, any Intelligence provided was designed mainly to

⁵⁸⁸⁵ Interviews J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99, and 10/10/01.

⁵⁸⁸⁶ Confidential interview 23.

⁵⁸⁸⁷ Interviews A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00; H.A. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98; O. Hattinga van 't Sant, 18/07/00; K.A.R. Klompenhousers, 20/01/00; E.A.W. Koestal, 24/05/00; W. Kok, 25/05/00; P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99; F.A.M. Majoor, 19/04/00; C. Minderhoud, 02/06/00; R. Swartbol, 24/02/99; Ter Beek in J. Schepers/R. Siebelink, 'Relus ter Beek en zijn knauwende en wroegende vragen over Srebrenica' (Relus ter Beek and his biting and remorseful questions on Srebrenica), *Drentsche Courant*, 26/02/00.

⁵⁸⁸⁸ Interview J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

⁵⁸⁸⁹ This conviction was clear e.g. from the interviews D. Barth, 08/10/99; P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00; G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00; and H. van den Heuvel, 05/11/01.

⁵⁸⁹⁰ Interview J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

⁵⁸⁹¹ Interview J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99.

⁵⁸⁹² Appendix Intelligence, Chapter 1; Eriksson, 'Intelligence'.

⁵⁸⁹³ Interview R. van Veen, 16/08/00.

support national policy objectives. Each country therefore remained at least partly dependent on its own Intelligence.

The solution the Dutch authorities finally sought in order to keep a finger on the pulse of what was going on with regard to the Dutch forces was to try to create a national line of command within UNPROFOR with the aid of Dutch representatives in key positions.⁵⁸⁹⁴ The realization that this was necessary had not yet developed to any great extent among the Dutch authorities in late 1993/early 1994, unlike the British and the French for example.⁵⁸⁹⁵ In early 1994, however, the Dutch Government succeeded in bagging the post of Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command by referring to the major Dutch contribution to UNPROFOR.⁵⁸⁹⁶

5. Uncertainty as to the remit

On 4 November 1993 a new Mission Statement for the UN peacekeeping operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina was issued, based on Resolutions 824 and 836 and the Rules of Engagement. The Statement included maintaining the status of the Safe Areas, 'if necessary by the use of force, including air support'. The Dutch military lawyer on the staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Koet, considered on the other hand that there were no Safe Areas in Bosnia, for one thing since the condition that the parties must guarantee freedom of movement had not been met. He also considered that the Mission Statement was incompatible with Resolution 824, which did not refer to 'safe areas' but to areas regarded as safe. As the new Mission Statement had been issued while he was on leave in the Netherlands, he tried to get it changed on his return to Bosnia. With the support of the G3 he proposed the following amendment: 'Maintain the status of the "safe" or "demilitarised" areas ... *once they have been established*, if necessary by the use of force, including air support.'⁵⁸⁹⁷

Koet's criticism had its effect on Dutchbat's preparations. The plans for the airmobile battalion stated:

'The terminology Safe Area is not legally sound; in effect there is (as yet) no Safe Area, as the use of force to protect civilians in Dutchbat's Area of Responsibility is not permitted (yet)??, because the UNPROFOR RoE have not been amended. Action: SSO/Legal Dept (BLS/Legal Dept.) will investigate the legal significance of this term and the substance of the RoE regarding this term and then make recommendations (if necessary in consultation with legal adviser B/H Cmd) on the terminology to be used.'⁵⁸⁹⁸

And Vermeulen wrote to the Dutch Army Crisis Staff: 'According to the legal experts it is not permissible to refer to Safe Areas as there first needs to be agreement between the sides and this has never taken place.'⁵⁸⁹⁹ The Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, however, was not in favour of Koet's proposed amendment. A lot of work had gone into producing the text of the Mission Statement and it had meanwhile been sent to all jurisdictions. He decided to leave things as they were.⁵⁹⁰⁰

⁵⁸⁹⁴ Interviews G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00, and R.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁵⁸⁹⁵ Interview G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

⁵⁸⁹⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581, Kooijmans 004 to PR NY, 06/01/94; *ibid.*, Biegan 011 to Kooijmans, 07/01/94; Def, 2246, Boutros-Ghali to PR NY, 25/01/94, DPKO/MIL.

⁵⁸⁹⁷ Koet, 'Adviser', p. 36. The underlined text is the amendment.

⁵⁸⁹⁸ BLS. Reconnaissance Party I, Points for action following debriefing of log section of reconnaissance party and report of ops section of reconnaissance party, internal memorandum from Deputy CS to CS et al., 13/12/93.

⁵⁸⁹⁹ BLS. Reconnaissance Party II, Fax from C.H.P. Vermeulen, C-DB, Lt. Col. of Grenadiers, 11 INFBAT AIRMBL GG (APC)/DUTCHBAT, to BLS Attn. Crisis Staff, 'Verkeningsrapport Srebrenica en Zepa', 001, 12-12-93.

⁵⁹⁰⁰ Koet, 'Adviser', p. 36.

Over and against this internal uncertainty there was a desire not to show anything to the outside world. At the time of his mission to Bosnia in early November Brinkman spoke of:

‘...a robust presence there. You have to let the combatants know right away that you’re there. If I look at how the French do that and the British, I think we can manage fine. If you’re attacked you have to respond immediately. Only then do you command respect and they won’t take it into their heads to shoot at you a second time.’⁵⁹⁰¹

The robust action also featured in the government’s letter to Parliament on the mission, which stated that by sending in a combat unit, unlike in the case of the communications and transport units, Dutch soldiers would now play an active role in UNPROFOR’s self-defence. They were bound by the same Rules of Engagement, it is true, but because of their remit and weaponry the actions of the air mobile battalion could be ‘more robust’.⁵⁹⁰²

After the Ministerial Council had agreed to send in the airmobile battalion, on 12 November, Prime Minister Lubbers told the press that the Rules of Engagement could be ‘more robust’ as far as the government was concerned. What he meant by this, however, he was not willing to say.⁵⁹⁰³

Couzy said in an interview with the authoritative *Jane’s Defence Weekly* at the time Dutchbat was sent out that Dutchbat would take strong action if its troops were attacked: ‘If attacked, we will defend ourselves with our .50 machine guns. The UN’s Rules of Engagement are interpreted differently. There are countries which have a policy of sitting it out, closing the hatches and backing off. We on the other hand will be very firm.’⁵⁹⁰⁴ The instructions for spokesmen on the Dutchbat mission also discussed the Rules of Engagement. If asked about the rules on the use of force, a spokesman could refer to the last version of the Rules of Engagement of 19 July 1993, which mentioned the use of force ‘to offer resistance to determined incursions by soldiers and paramilitary units into UNPAs or Safe Areas’. According to these instructions the Rules of Engagement were ‘very clear’.⁵⁹⁰⁵

But things were not so clear: when the quartermasters set off on 27 January Battalion Commander Vermeulen distanced himself from the term ‘more robust action’, while at the same time saying that the Rules of Engagement permitted ‘only shooting to protect one’s own person, the persons of the population being protected and one’s own property’.⁵⁹⁰⁶ ‘I am permitted to regard people in my safe-keeping (this referred to the Muslims in Srebrenica) as mine’, said Vermeulen.⁵⁹⁰⁷ Soon after arriving in Srebrenica, Dutchbat asked Bosnia-Herzegovina Command how to respond in the event of a direct attack on the enclave: ‘Were we supposed, as a UN unit, to regard this enclave as a ‘Safe Area’ and therefore defend the area? Or should we just watch, and only pick up our weapons if the Bosnian Serbs threatened us directly?’⁵⁹⁰⁸ Dutchbat was not given any clear answer. They fell back on their Standing Operating Procedure (SOP), fixed instructions from the UN, which provided in such cases that Dutchbat would act as an onlooker if an enclave was captured.⁵⁹⁰⁹ There was a discrepancy, then,

⁵⁹⁰¹ Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, ‘Vragen over nieuw bataljon in Bosnië’ (Questions about new battalion in Bosnia), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/11/93.

⁵⁹⁰² TK, 1993-1994, 22 181, No. 64.

⁵⁹⁰³ Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, ‘Luchtmobiele brigade nog niet inzetten’ (Airmobile Brigade not to be deployed yet), *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/11/93.

⁵⁹⁰⁴ Delaere, ‘Interview’, p. 32.

⁵⁹⁰⁵ CDPO/GNKD. Chief of Army Crisis Staff to Junior Commanders BLS and Directors of Army Staff, 11/02/94, OZ/7806.

⁵⁹⁰⁶ ‘VN-bataljon vertrekt ondanks vage belofte van Karadzic’ (UN battalion to set off despite vague promise by Karadzic), *Trouw*, 28/01/94.

⁵⁹⁰⁷ Wio Joustra & Hans Moleman, ‘Ik wil niet dat mijn mannekens risico lopen’ (I don’t want my men to run any risk), *de Volkskrant*, 28/01/94. See also ‘Luchtmobiel bataljon ontfermt zich zonodig met geweld over burgers’ (Airmobile battalion takes care of civilians by force if necessary), *ANP*, 27/01/94, 12:35.

⁵⁹⁰⁸ Jellema, *First-in*, p. 136.

⁵⁹⁰⁹ Jellema, *First-in*, p. 137.

between the impression of Dutchbat's remit as given in the Netherlands and the battalion's own interpretation of its remit, which was subsequently to cause a lot of confusion and misunderstanding.

6. Conclusion

Once the government had decided to send out the airmobile battalion, and Parliament had agreed, there were a number of problems and uncertainties before the battalion deployed. Two weeks after the decision it was established that Dutchbat would be assigned Srebrenica and Zepa as deployment areas, two Safe Areas which other governments were not interested in, to put it mildly. Militarily these were not attractive locations as far as the Dutch Government was concerned either, but given the political history it was unlikely that the Netherlands would refuse this 'honourable, not easy but certainly feasible, task'.

Some officers, when considering the deployment of the airmobile battalion, had taken into account the fact that this part of the Army needed to prove itself and they had no desire to entertain the question of whether a wrong choice might have been made in the recent past at the expense of the armoured infantry. The decision Van der Vlis and Couzy made at an early stage, to opt for light weaponry in the form of YPRs with .50 machine guns instead of 20 mm guns, was in line with this step: the airmobile battalion must not come to resemble an armoured infantry battalion. Thus the decision made in the early 1990s as a matter of political strategy, in favour of airmobile and against armoured infantry, significantly influenced the nature of the mission to Srebrenica.

The fact that the airmobile battalion could not defend the 'safe area' of Srebrenica by itself was crystal clear to most politicians and military men, even if lack of clarity in the formulation of Dutchbat's remit might produce different expectations among the Dutch population. The Safe Areas were more a political than a military concept, however. Nevertheless ministers and MPs strongly believed in the feasibility of securing their defence with the aid of air support. At the time of the decision to send Dutchbat they ignored a host of problems with, and obstacles to, such support which were already well-known by then, such as the terrain, the ground mist, the height at which aircraft had to fly, the limited time aircraft had to operate over Bosnia, the risk of ground forces being taken hostage and the long lines of command any request for air support had to negotiate. What was particularly disregarded was the fact that the use of air support or air strikes was not a purely military decision: the use of air power, for instance, could not work if negotiations were taking place, or it could jeopardize the essentially humanitarian nature of the UNPROFOR operation in Bosnia. Couzy warned about this, in both November 1993 and January 1994, but after a series of previous public utterances from the Commander of the Land Forces the Defence Ministry and Parliament had developed a reflex to gag the General rather than inquire into what he had to say.

Despite worrying signals about events and developments that could be relevant to the presence of Dutch servicemen in Srebrenica there was no change in policy. The decision to send Dutchbat was in a way the almost inevitable result of the Dutch Government's stance, especially since summer 1992. Backing out after the decision had been made was even more difficult, and pulling the troops out of Srebrenica impossible, given the stand the Dutch Government had adopted hitherto and the expectations the Dutch presence had aroused among the population of Srebrenica. That the concern was no greater than it had been in April 1994 after the Gorazde crisis was due mainly to credulity. Firstly there was the trust in the UN, that what it did was well done. There was insufficient realization that the UN is the sum of the nations, not a harmonious whole. Secondly, trust in the therapeutic effect of the UN was projected onto the Bosnian Serb authorities: it seemed unthinkable that they would want to defy the international organization.

Such over-optimistic expectations also contributed to the failure of all but a few authorities in the Netherlands to feel responsible for monitoring relevant political and military developments, in the Yugoslavia region and internationally, and analysing them for their significance to the Dutch presence in Srebrenica. The strong independence of the Ministries also seems to have contributed to this. Once the decision to send Dutchbat had been taken, the emphasis as regards involvement shifted from the

Foreign Ministry to the Defence Ministry. The military Intelligence services of both the Ministry of Defence and the Army did not concern themselves to any appreciably greater extent with developments in the former Yugoslavia as a result of the Dutchbat mission. Individuals in the Dutch administration did undoubtedly concern themselves with the fate of the battalion after it was sent out at the beginning of 1994, but for the government as a whole it was to some extent a case of 'out of sight, out of mind'.

Part II

Dutchbat in the enclave

Chapter 1

The organizational structure of UNPROFOR

1. Introduction

When Dutchbat was sent to the former Yugoslavia, it became part of an organization which had a different structure than the familiar NATO one to which the units of the Royal Netherlands Army were accustomed. In this chapter, we describe in general the specific structure and mission of the UN peacekeeping operation, under which Dutchbat operated in the years 1994 and 1995. This chapter concentrates on the military structure and the chain of command. Three headquarters acted as nodes in this chain: UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb, followed by the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and third, the Sector North East headquarters in Tuzla. In this chapter, we also describe the arrangements and tasks of two other organizations with which Dutchbat had contact with during its mission in Srebrenica. These were the United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs) and the United Nations Civilian Police (UnCivPol). After describing the organizational structure we will discuss the operational rules to which the UN peacekeeping operation was bound, in particular the Rules of Engagement.

Normally, when Dutch troops are deployed as part of a NATO effort, there is a clear division of responsibility between the NATO authorities and the Dutch government. In these cases, there are clear agreements about command and control, the influence of national governments, the operational authority of the NATO Commander in Chief and about all the other aspects involved in the execution of a NATO operation. The execution of these operations is planned according to strict procedures and there are unambiguous rules about collaboration between national military authorities and the military arms of the NATO. The closely coordinated parties can thus proceed according to a fixed scenario. Dutch troops have prepared and trained to operate in such a context since the 1950s.

By contrast, a UN peacekeeping operation lacks this type of systematic planning and training. A completely different scenario applies. Once the Security Council has decided to begin a peacekeeping operation and has laid down the mandate of the peacekeeping force in a resolution, it is up to the UN Secretary-General to organize the operation from scratch. Below, we describe how this takes place.

The UN Secretariat's Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) draws up a provisional plan for the peace operation. The Secretary-General requests the member states to contribute troops and personnel for the operation and its staff. At the same time, the Secretariat builds up a civilian staff team, usually composed of people from the UN organization. Together, the military and civilian components form the peacekeeping mission. Important steps in this preparatory process are the appointment of the military Commander in Chief and other key officials. The most striking characteristic of this planning phase is its ad hoc nature. In general, three to four months pass from the moment that the Security Council accepts the resolution to the deployment of the first peacekeeping units in the operation area. The legal status of the peacekeeping corps is laid down in a Status of the Forces Agreement between the recipient state or states and the United Nations. In Bosnia, this agreement was not binding, because the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian Serbs did not recognize the UN's agreement with President Izetbegovic of Bosnia.¹

Of course the UN Secretariat in New York can tap into past experiences with previous peacekeeping operations, but each mission is nevertheless unique due to specific characteristics and difficulties concerning the nature of the conflict, the parties to the conflict and the region where it is taking place. Sometimes, the best option may be to deploy the troops of the permanent members of the Security Council, in other cases the UN will prefer to utilize troops from the same continent; in yet other cases troops from a certain country might not be welcome because one of the parties to the conflict has accused that country of being partial.

¹ J.W. Koet, 'Legal Advisor UNPROFOR Bosnia-Herzegovina' in: *Militair Rechtelijk Tijdschrift* 88 (1995), p. 33-35.

The foundations for a peacekeeping operation must therefore be laid with the utmost care. This preparatory operation has three main elements. First, it is necessary to establish a headquarters. Second, units must be recruited which are both adequately trained and equipped. Third, rules must be drawn up governing the implementation of the mission's mandate. With respect to this third point, two categories of rules can be distinguished. In addition to general rules about routine matters such as uniforms, modes of dispatch, transportation and behaviour, there is the operational brief addressing the execution of the peacekeeping task, and the internal and external security of the peacekeeping operation. The most important rules in this second category are the so-called Rules of Engagement (RoE) on the use of force. All rules are laid down in the Standing Operating Procedures (SOP). Each subordinate commander then translates these instructions into a standing brief for his operation area.

All these actions by the UN Secretariat culminate in a multinational peacekeeping force. The military component of this force cannot be compared with regular armed forces. On paper, a peacekeeping force might appear to have overlaps with a regular army, even though the former are typically equipped with only light weapons for self-defence purposes and do not have heavy weapons. But unlike regular armed forces, a UN peacekeeping force is made up of national contingents. Each has its own level of training, its own bearing and attitude, and often specific instructions from its national government with respect to its functioning in the operation area.

For all these reasons, headquarters cannot suffice with drawing up plans, giving orders and monitoring their execution. In practice, it is often impossible to use every component of the peacekeeping force for every task. Troop-contributing nations often lay down limiting conditions: sometimes, troops may only and explicitly be used in a certain region, or they may only be used to carry out a certain part of the peacekeeping mandate. The commanders of the national contingents of the peacekeeping force often maintain a direct line of communication with their national military authorities regarding orders given by the peacekeeping force command centre. These complicating factors clearly played a role in the construction of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

2. UNPROFOR Headquarters in Zagreb

UNPROFOR was established on 21 February 1992 by resolution 743 of the Security Council to implement a plan, developed by the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General Cyrus Vance, for the demilitarization and withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army from the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) in Croatia.² The international decision-making process which led to this was described extensively in Part I, Chapter 4. In early March 1992, the proposed leaders of UNPROFOR travelled to New York to consult with Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Undersecretaries-General Sir Murrill Goulding and Kofi Annan and the latter's righthand man Sashi Tharoor. This group of senior UN officials briefed the Force Commander, General S. Nambiar of India, his deputy, General Ph. Morillon of France and the Chief of Staff, General L. Mackenzie of Canada on the situation in the future operation area, Croatia. On the basis of the information provided, they proceeded to develop an operation plan.

The UN Secretariat's Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) decided to situate the UNPROFOR Headquarters in Sarajevo rather than Croatia, the area of operation, in order to stress the impartiality of the peacekeeping mission. The UN Secretariat also hoped that the choice for the Bosnian capital would bring some stability to Bosnia, where tensions were mounting fast.³ In practice, however, the establishment of the UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo was not a feasible solution, being too far removed from the areas where the peacekeeping force was in operation. There was not enough contact with those in the field and much time was lost in travelling and working visits. In April 1992, the political tension in Bosnia-Herzegovina culminated in all-out war between the three ethnic

² United Nations Yearbook 1992.

³ Srebrenica Report, 5 (para.14).

groups there. The international community put considerable pressure on UNPROFOR to intervene in this conflict, too. On 16 and 17 May of that year, in the heat of the Bosnian conflict, two-thirds of the Sarajevo headquarters staff under Force Commander Nambiar moved to Belgrado. This is discussed in detail in Part I, Chapter 5. The remaining one hundred military and civilian staff members in Sarajevo carried out admirable work in bringing about ceasefires and organizing humanitarian aid, without in fact having been mandated to do so.

In the summer of 1992, the UNPROFOR headquarters was established in the Croatian capital of Zagreb.⁴ Ultimately, UNPROFOR headquarters would become responsible for peacekeeping operations in much of the former Yugoslavia: with a resolution in June 1992 the Security Council extended its mandate to Bosnia-Herzegovina, and in November 1992 to Macedonia. Due to this accumulation of resolutions by the Security Council, UNPROFOR eventually found itself with a different mandate per area of operation.

General Nambiar led the UNPROFOR operation until he stepped down in March 1993. He was responsible for all aspects of the implementation of the peacekeeping operation. A different construct was introduced under his successor, General L-E Wahlgren of Sweden (see figure 1). This came about as follows: in May 1993, the UN's co-chair at the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia, Th. Stoltenberg was appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). As such, he acted as head of the UN mission in the former Yugoslavia and served as the first point of contact for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York. All contacts between UNPROFOR in Zagreb and the UN in New York had to run via his office. This also applied to the Force Commander's communications which did not mean, however, that the Force Commander had no direct contact with New York. The aim of having one person fill both positions of head of the UN peacekeeping operation and of co-chair at the peace negotiations in Geneva was to achieve a better synchronization of the UN's input at the peace talks and UNPROFOR's work in the field. As SRSG, Mr Stoltenberg was responsible for the coordination of all UNPROFOR operations, which also entailed assessments of the political implications of operational decisions as well as the actions of the conflicting parties.

In practice, this combination of tasks was impossible to juggle. A serious conflict is said to have occurred between Thorvald Stoltenberg and General Wahlgren's successor, General J. Cot of France. Cot was appointed in July 1993 in return for President Mitterrand's additional contribution of two French battalions.⁵ General Cot disagreed with Mr Stoltenberg about the latter's role as SRSG, and at the end of 1993 the two tasks were again split up. Mr Stoltenberg stayed on as co-chair of the peace negotiations in Geneva on behalf of the UN, and on 1 January 1994 the Japanese diplomat Y. Akashi was appointed SRSG responsible for all UNPROFOR operations in the former Yugoslavia. It was he who negotiated with the authorities of the conflicting parties. The Force Commander, usually a Lieutenant-General, continued to be responsible for all military matters and all military personnel of the national contingents came under his command. The Force Commander appointed areas of operation to the various contingents (taking into account any existing preconditions) and issued orders (in accordance with the Security Council's mandate).

In addition to the Force Commander, the Head of Civilian Affairs was also situated in Zagreb. The latter official was responsible for all negotiations and contacts with civilian authorities. He had a broad set of tasks, for example following and evaluating political developments, collecting information for the SRSG, giving legal advice, bearing responsibility for the return of refugees to their place of residence, and monitoring humanitarian affairs and respect for the rights of minorities and for human rights.

⁴ CRST. UNPROFOR aide memoire to Troop Contributing Nations. Chapter 1, Appendix F, pp. 2 and 5. Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, pp. 38-40; Mackenzie, *Peacekeeper*.

⁵ Interview B. Boutros-Ghali, 30/01/01.

The third authority under the SRSG at the UNPROFOR headquarters was the Chief Administrative Officer, with responsibility for the administrative, logistic and technical aspects of the operation as well as all financial affairs. Coming from the UN Department of Management and Administration in New York, this official had a lot of power and influence in the bureaucracy of the UN.⁶

The most important members of the Force Commander's staff were the Deputy Force Commander and the two Chiefs of Staff, one for operational affairs and one for logistics and administration. The Chiefs of Staff were responsible for the day-to-day concerns. The Chief of Staff for operational affairs was at the head of four sections which in accordance with common military practice were called: G2 (military information and cartography), G3 (operations, both on the ground and from the air, planning and policy), the engineering corps, and G6 (connections). The second Chief of Staff (Deputy Chief of Staff from March 1995 on) was responsible for the sections G1 (personnel and administration), G4 (logistics), for the coordination of activities undertaken by the Force Provost Marshall (military police) and by the Force Medical Officer. The Deputy Force Commander, which in UNPROFOR was always a general from a NATO country, was in charge of the day-to-day coordination between the military and civilian sections at headquarters, and coordination with NATO and other organizations such as UNHCR. The Deputy Force Commander monitored the activities of the United Nations Military Observers assigned to UNPROFOR and maintained direct contact with the military staff in New York.⁷ (see figure 2)

The primary tasks of the military branch of UNPROFOR headquarters were the coordination and support of activities conducted by the various regional headquarters, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Joint Operations Centre, a centre for general logistics, and a Monitoring and Close Air Support Coordination Centre were set up to enable the military branch at HQ to follow and coordinate actions at lower levels of command. Support activities mainly comprised distributing geographical information, organizing airlifts, making daily reports to the UN Secretariat in New York and other organizations, carrying out military police tasks and so-called specific logistic and medical tasks within UNPROFOR. Each of the troop-contributing nations were allowed to appoint a number of staff officials at the UNPROFOR headquarters and the three subordinate headquarters. These officials had to have a good command of the English language, completed training for staff positions and have the required experience and military rank.⁸

UNPROFOR's organization changed somewhat on 1 April 1995 when the peacekeeping force in Croatia was placed under the UN peacekeeping force for all of the former Yugoslavia. From the start of the peacekeeping operation, UNPROFOR headquarters had concentrated on the operation in Croatia. Yet a separate command centre for Croatia -- the oldest area of operation of the mission -- was not established at the headquarters until December 1994. This was the Headquarters United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation, or HQ UNCRO. In early 1995, the Croatian government announced that they did not intend to renew the mandate for the UN peacekeeping operation. Intensive negotiations between the Croatian government and UNPROFOR followed. These resulted in a formal name change of the peacekeeping operation for the former Yugoslavia. UNPROFOR became the United Nations Peace Forces (UNPF), with three subordinate regional commands: HQ UNCRO for Croatia, HQ UNPROFOR (previously the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command) for Bosnia, and thirdly HQ UNPREDEP (United Nations Preventive Deployment Force) for Macedonia (previously the FYROM Command established in December 1992). The new names caused some confusion, primarily because the term UNPROFOR continued to exist but now applied to the UN headquarters in Sarajevo rather than Zagreb. The old names continued to be popularly used for some time. This might become

⁶ CRST. UNPROFOR aide memoire to Troop Contributing Nations. Chapter 5, Command and Control, pp. 5-1. Gow, *Triumph of Lack of Will*, p. 101, Stoltenberg, *De tusene dagenen*, p. 143.

⁷ CRST. UNPROFOR aide memoire to Troop Contributing Nations. Chapter 5, Command and Control, pp. 5-1 - 5-2. UNPROFOR, *Force Commander's End of Mission Report*, pp. 60-61.

⁸ CRST. UNPROFOR aide memoire to Troop Contributing Nations. Chapter 5, Command and Control, pp. 5-2 – 5-3.

confusing in Part III of this report, therefore in that part we will refer to the various headquarters by the names of the towns where they were located. Finally, the term UNPROFOR was also used in the former Yugoslavia to refer to the troops of the peacekeeping operation rather than the operation command. Where this occurs in the report, we clearly show the context in which the term is used.

In response to one of the Croatian government's main demands, the renamed regional headquarters were given more independence than before. On 12 June 1995 a new command was created under UNPF, the Rapid Reaction Force (RRF). This was a 'green' combat unit made up of 12,500 British, French and Dutch troops equipped with tanks and high calibre artillery in order to increase the effectiveness and the credibility of the peacekeeping operation.⁹ The problems that arose when this unit was actually deployed is described in detail in Part III, Chapter 1.

3. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command

Since the beginning of March 1994, Dutchbat was under the operational command of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, UNPROFOR's headquarters for Bosnia-Herzegovina at two locations, Sarajevo and Kiseljak. The Sarajevo location was referred to as Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Forward and the Kiseljak division as Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Main.

The office of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander was located in Sarajevo in what had once been the club for high officials of the Bosnian Communist Party. It was situated near the presidential palace in the centre of Sarajevo. The rest of the Sarajevo section was housed in part of the building next door, which housed the intelligence unit of the ABiH Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Forward. Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose, who had been appointed Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander on 23 January 1994 was convinced that both buildings were so heavily bugged that they were only suitable for discussing matters which he wanted the Bosnian government to know about. When greater confidentiality was required, he preferred to meet outside the walls of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Forward.

UNPROFOR operations in Bosnia were directed by the Chief of Staff at the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Main in Kiseljak, while the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander in Sarajevo conducted negotiations with the conflicting parties at the strategic level. Communication between the two divisions was so poor that, 'for much of the time Rose and his Chief of Staff were out of touch with each other.'¹⁰

In addition to the military staff, the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command also consisted of a Civil Affairs section, headed by the Russian UN diplomat Viktor Andreev, and an administrative section. During negotiations with the conflicting parties, Andreev always acted in the same capacity as the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander. After he stopped in March 1995, his successors the Spaniard Enrique Aguilar and the American Phillip Corwin were unable to hold on to this position of equality. From then on, it was Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander General Smith and his military staff who more or less independently determined the course of the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia.¹¹

The Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had been formally established by resolution 776 of the Security Council on 14 September 1992. The actual organization came into being at the end of October 1992 under the direction of the French *général de division* Morillon, who had arrived in Sarajevo in March 1992 as the UNPROFOR Deputy Force Commander in Zagreb. After the start of the Bosnian civil war and the extension of UNPROFOR's mandate to Bosnia-Herzegovina, however, he chose to relinquish his position as deputy to General Nambiar in order to take on the command of this new operation area.¹²

⁹ UNPF, Force Commander's End of Mission Report, [Zagreb 1996] pp. 10-20.

¹⁰ Briquemont, Do something, p. 27. Rose, Fighting for Peace, pp. 18-19.

¹¹ Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00. Corwin, Dubious Mandate, pp. 6-7.

¹² Morillon, Croire et oser, pp.100-101.

The core of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command was formed by British, Belgian, Dutch and American members of the NATO Northern Army Group headquarters (Northag, an organization which would later be disbanded in an internal NATO rationalization process). NATO also supplied office equipment and means of transportation, but as Chief of Staff Cordy-Simpson put it, 'the ridiculous charade of de-baptizing any mention of NATO' was doggedly maintained in public. The Bosnia-Herzegovina Command was operational within three weeks of the passing of the resolution. Because of the underlying NATO structure, the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had more than the usual number of staff officers for a typical UN operation headquarters.¹³ The advantage of this was that one-third of the staff officers were familiar with each other's ways of working and could get started right away. They could also help new personnel get settled in their positions. In accordance with UN practice, these newcomers were from troop-contributing nations.

Under the direction of the Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Cordy-Simpson of the UK, the staff commenced its duties in the old UNPROFOR Headquarters building in Belgrade on 6 October.¹⁴ General Morillon was initially opposed to establishing the headquarters in Sarajevo, because of his negative experiences with the UNPROFOR headquarters there at the beginning of the civil war some months earlier. The establishment of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo, in Ilidza on the western through-road to Tuzla and Mostar, was also opposed by the Bosnian Serb army, the VRS. For military and political reasons, Morillon therefore decided to split up his headquarters, so that the operational headquarters of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command would be located well away from the conflict. Morillon decided on Kiseljak, 20 kilometres west of Sarajevo in the Croatian part of Bosnia. Having done that, he and his direct staff then established themselves in the Bosnian capital after all, under the name of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Forward, in order to demonstrate their confidence that the city would not fall in the near future.¹⁵

Under Morillon and his successor, the Belgian Lieutenant-General Briquemont, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command was a clearly structured organization. The usually staff sections for personnel and administration (G1), intelligence and cartography (G2), operations (G3), logistics (G4) and contacts with civilian authorities (G5) fell under the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander and his Chief of Staff. There were also sections for the engineering corps, medical corps, a special Air Operations Coordination Centre for all operations in the Bosnian air space, and a UNMO section for the UN military observers. The Chief of Staff also headed the officers who maintained contact with external organizations and other Commands such as Civil Affairs, UNHCR, the European monitoring operation ECMM, the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb, the fifth allied air force of the NATO in Vicenza and Comcen, the communications centre.

Acting on the instructions of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander, the Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Main in Kiseljak gave direct orders to all units in Bosnia and organized escorts for humanitarian convoys. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command was a fairly horizontal organization; within the headquarters many sections operated side by side under the direct supervision of the Chief of Staff. A number of battalions in the field also came under the direct responsibility of Command Main in Kiseljak, without an intermediate brigade commanding rank. The exception was the city of Sarajevo; Sarajevo was a distinct sector within Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and fell under the commander of the French contingent, who was also Deputy Commander for Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁶

On his appointment in January 1994, General Rose noted that the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had a number of serious shortcomings, despite its straightforward structure. First, there was no clear *plan de campagne* to implement the mandate. Also, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Main was burdened with a disproportionately high number of high-ranking officers. This was of course a direct

¹³ CRST. UNPROFOR aide memoire to Troop Contributing Nations. Chapter 5, Command and Control, p. 5-3. Sie LL. Fax NLO 93/075/360 contribution by Brigadier Cordy-Simpson, 24/11/93, (quote on p.113).

¹⁴ Morillon, *Croire et oser*, pp. 105-106.

¹⁵ Morillon, *Croire et oser*, pp. 107-110.

¹⁶ Briquemont, *Do something*, pp. 30-31. Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, p. 23. Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00.

result of the UN practice of 'rewarding' troop-contributing nations with the offer of HQ staff positions, an offer which these countries were not inclined to pass up. This practice, Rose noted, did not result in the required expertise and lacked efficiency. He felt that efficient management was impeded by the influence of the various national contingents within the headquarters. Officers from the various countries would relay the decisions of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander to their own national military authorities, which not uncommonly resulted in a counter-imperative. Rose wanted to put an end to this.¹⁷ Ignoring the scepticism of the residing Chief of Staff, the British Brigadier General A. Ramsay, Rose launched a thorough rationalization in which nationality became an irrelevant factor at the level of the individual officer.

Sector North East in Tuzla

The order to rationalize the organization had in fact been given much earlier by Force Commander Cot to Rose's predecessor Briquemont. For Rose, this brief formed the basis of his own campaign plan. He introduced a new commanding rank between Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and the various battalions in the field, which was a highly significant move from an operational perspective. Rose's decision was motivated to an important extent by the fact that, between October 1992 and February 1994, the number of mechanised infantry battalions had grown from four to eleven.

Rose decided to divide his operation area into three sectors. Sector Sarajevo remained as it was, encompassing the entire land area of Sarajevo, Gorazde and Zepa. The two new sectors were Sector North East with its headquarters in Tuzla and Sector South West with its headquarters in Gornji Vakuf (see map on page #). Each sector headquarters was run by a proportionally formed multinational staff. Rose believed that having a competent staff team in place in the shortest possible time prevailed over having an optimal balance between the contributing nations of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command.

The goal of the rationalization was to delegate as many tasks as possible to the sectors, so that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command could focus on a limited number of core tasks. In particular, the three new sector headquarters were to focus on integrating and coordinating political, humanitarian and military activities within and between the different sections for intelligence (G2), operations (G3) and contacts with civilian authorities (G5). They were to keep track of developments in their sector, gather intelligence and facilitate humanitarian relief, for example by organizing convoys and planning special activities such as humanitarian evacuations, ceasefires, the disengagement of conflicting parties and demilitarization. The sector headquarters were also responsible for planning evacuations, security, and resolving misunderstandings and conflicts with respect to the Freedom of Movement which UNPROFOR troops had been guaranteed.

In order to realize these objectives, the sector headquarters had to have a wide array of communications instruments (telephone, satellite and HF radio), easy and permanent access by road and helicopter, and direct contact with authorities in the operation area. In practice, this meant that sector commanders had to see to roads maintenance and monitor the supply of gas, water and electricity. Rose had ordered each sector commander to make a special effort to achieve a close collaboration with UNHCR, the International Red Cross, UNMO and ECMM, either by maintaining close contacts or sharing the same housing. In the sector command post, therefore, places were reserved for a UNHCR representative as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Bosnia-Herzegovina Command continued to bear primary responsibility for the administrative and logistic facilities for UNPROFOR units; the sector headquarters were to concern themselves as little as possible with these tasks.¹⁸

¹⁷ Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 14 and 23.

¹⁸ Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, p. 35. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 200, file Bosnia-Herzegovina Command 12 Feb – 17 Feb 94: fax 320/94, BH Comd G3 OPS to Britfor et al., 16/02/94. Order for the establishment of Sector Command Structure; Ibidem: Appendix A: Role of Sector HQ. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 59 file. Civil Affairs 2.5 Bosnia-Herzegovina Command: 01/03/94: A Campaign Plan for Bosnia Herzegovina, appendix 1 to Appendix E.

Since its establishment in March 1994, Sector North East in Tuzla had fallen under the command of reserve Brigadier General Ridderstad of Sweden. Two infantry battalions were located in his operation area, the Scandinavian Nordibat 2 and Dutchbat. A medical company and a Norwegian helicopter detachment were also stationed in this area. In addition to Ridderstad, the sector staff comprised Ken Biser, the Civil Affairs Coordinator, and representatives of the UNHCR and NGOs, as stated above. Five sections fell under the responsibility of the military Chief of Staff, which was always a Dutch officer. The four sections which usually made up a military staff had been merged into two: a small section for personnel, administration and logistics (G1/G4), and a larger section for intelligence and operations (G2/G3). There were separate sections for the engineering corps and civil-military matters (G5), respectively. Finally, a modest Headquarters Command section bore responsibility for a variety of matters, including communication connections.¹⁹

This completes our general overview of the chain of command in which Dutchbat operated. Within the Safe Area of Srebrenica, Dutchbat also worked with two other United Nations organizations which operated under UNPROFOR: the UNMOs and the UN police officers (UnCivPol), which we discuss below.

The United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs) organization

The United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs) are part of the military branch of UN peacekeeping operations. UNMOs are well-educated professional soldiers assigned to the UN by their countries in order to carry out liaison duties and monitor the conflicting parties in the peacekeeping operation area. UNMOs report on military developments by the conflicting parties. In the former Yugoslavia, an important part of their work consisted of establishing the facts about attacks on military or civilian targets and the scale of hostilities, which they did often at great personal risk. Five aspects distinguish UNMOs from the military peacekeeping corps: they are impartial as UNMOs are recruited from many different countries, they are unarmed, they operate independently in the area concerned, they are highly flexible and mobile, and finally they operate and live among the local population.

As 'the only real sensor (eyes and ears)' of the Security Council and the UN Secretary-General in the field, the UNMOs made professional military observations. Their weak point was their vulnerability to hostile acts by the conflicting parties. Nevertheless, their presence was vital; they were usually the first to arrive in an operation area and the last to leave hotbeds of conflict. After the expansion of the UNPROFOR operation area, the Security Council's first move was to deploy UNMOs in the new areas in order to establish the UN's presence. The first fifty UNMOs were loaned to the Secretary-General on 8 January 1992 (UN resolution 727). It was their task to improve the enforcement of the ceasefire between Croatia and the Yugoslav army.²⁰ Because of their particular interest in the activities of the conflicting parties, they were all but welcome and often carried out their duties at considerable risk to their lives. During the operation in the former Yugoslavia, one UNMO died in the course of his duties; seven other fatalities were due to road accidents.²¹

As the war spread over the former Yugoslavia, the number of UNMOs and their brief grew likewise. From the first deployment of UNMOs until April 1994, the Security Council deployed a total of 748 UNMOs. Because they had their own brief, the UNMOs were considered to be a distinct organization in UNPROFOR. They were headed by a Chief Military Observer, whose headquarters was

¹⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 200, file Bosnia-Herzegovina Command 12 Feb – 17 Feb 94. Fax 320/94, BH Comd G3 OPS to Britfor et al., 16/02/94: order for the establishment of Sector Command Structure; Ibidem: Appendix B: Task specification. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 59 file: Civil Affairs 2.5 Bosnia-Herzegovina Command: 01/03/94: A Campaign Plan for Bosnia Herzegovina, appendix 1 to Appendix E.

²⁰ UN doc S/23592. United Nations, United Nations Peace Force UNMO HQ Zagreb, UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF Post Mission Report (1992-1996) (Zagreb 1996), p. 4.

²¹ UNPROFOR, Force Commander's End of Mission Report, p. 20. United Nations, United Nations Peace Force UNMO HQ Zagreb, UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF Post Mission Report (1992-1996) (Zagreb 1996), Appendix 2.

located in Zagreb, and fanned out over the different regions of the operation area where they operated under their own distinct structure. Bosnia-Herzegovina was divided into five UNMO sectors: Bihac, North East, South West, Gorazde and Sarajevo. Sarajevo was the headquarters. The basic structure of the UNMO in each of the sectors comprised a multinational team of eight, including the commanding officer. Although formally the organization operated independently, the Chief Military Observer regularly consulted the UNPROFOR Force Commander in Zagreb about the deployment of the teams. Likewise, the commander of the UNMOs acted as advisor to the Force Commander and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Yashusi Akashi. The UNMO organization independently collected and analysed information and reported directly to New York.²² Formally, UNMO was part of UNPROFOR and an important source of information for the analyses of the Military Information Officer at UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb (see also Chapter 1 of the Appendix to this report regarding intelligence, C. Wiebes, Intelligence and the war in Bosnia). In practice, however, UNMO had sufficient freedom to operate independently from the Force Commander and Akashi.

The UNMO mandate was as complicated as UNPROFOR's mandate. The UNMOs had been given additional tasks that on the surface bore little relation to military observation and liaison. As a result, the conflicting parties mistrusted UNMOs' claim to impartiality. Accusations of espionage were made and UNMOs freedom to operate curtailed.²³ The UNMOs had to operate in the UNPROFOR area of operation and in Lesser Yugoslavia, controlling the airports to ensure the enforcement of the no-fly zone laid down in resolution 786.

There were several advantages to the deployment of UNMOs next to the regular peacekeeping forces. UNMOs were unarmed, impartial, independently operating teams of highly mobile experts. They made observations, helped bring about agreements, monitored violations of these, investigated the background to and facts of incidents and thus had frequent contacts with the conflicting parties. Carried out by experienced observers, usually officers, this work had a two-way effect. The first effect, and also the primary objective of deploying UNMOs, was that they provided reliable information to UN New York and to the peacekeeping force. A side effect of their functioning, however, was that they succeeded in reducing the mutual feelings of mistrust among the conflicting parties and assuaging the anxiety of the civilian population by countering the relentless flow of rumours with reliable information. As the UN's alert eyes and ears, they operated on the front lines and in inaccessible regions. One of their regular tasks was to verify all claims made by the conflicting parties and to establish what actually took place in confrontations. They were also regularly called on by UNPROFOR to analyse damage caused by mortar and artillery attacks. For example, in March 1993, when a few UNMOs from the Banja Koviljaca team (near Zvornik) accompanied General Morillon at his request to Srebrenica. In Srebrenica, UNMO observers were a constant, active presence from the arrival of the Canadian battalion in April 1993 until after the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995. Srebrenica was assigned its own independent UNMO team in November 1993. This team operated in the enclave as well as in the surrounding area controlled by Bosnian Serbs. The team was made up of six UNMOs and three interpreters, two Muslim interpreters for activities in the Safe Area and one Bosnian-Serb interpreter to facilitate contacts with parties outside the Safe Area, primarily the military forces of the Bosnian Serbs. The UNMOs, in conjunction with the liaison staff officers of the Canadian battalion (S5) and, later, Dutchbat, maintained contacts with the conflicting parties.²⁴

²² United Nations, United Nations Peace Force UNMO HQ Zagreb, UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF Post Mission Report (1992-1996) (Zagreb 1996), pp. 25-29.

²³ United Nations, United Nations Peace Force UNMO HQ Zagreb, UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF Post Mission Report (1992-1996) (Zagreb 1996), pp. 4-5.

²⁴ UNPROFOR, Force Commander's End of Mission Report, 20-21. United Nations, United Nations Peace Force UNMO HQ Zagreb, UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF Post Mission Report (1992-1996) (Zagreb 1996), pp.4-6 en pp. 14-15. Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 434, file: UNMO Srebrenica. TA to TX6A, 03/05/95, no. IN.365.

In Srebrenica and in other Safe Areas, UNMO was instructed to carry out the following five primary tasks:

- To provide military support to UNHCR and other recognized humanitarian aid organizations;
- Permanent presence in the area of operation;
- To observe the activities of all parties to the conflict;
- To monitor compliance with the ceasefire by investigating real and supposed violations thereof, inspecting weapon sites, controlling the withdrawal of heavy weapons and registering weapons at so-called Weapon Collections Points.
- To carry out special assignments given by own headquarters.²⁵

The United Nations Civilian Police (UnCivPol) and aid organizations

The United Nations Civilian Police, or UnCivPol, was the second organization under UNPROFOR with its own brief. UnCivPol was established simultaneously with UNPROFOR in February 1992. Its purpose was to ensure that local police forces in UNPROFOR protected areas treated all inhabitants equally and respected their human rights. Like UNPROFOR, UnCivPol's mandate would be extended in the course of time as a result of new resolutions by the Security Council. This is discussed in more depth further on in this report.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, UnCivPol operated only at Sarajevo airport, in Mostar and in Srebrenica. In accordance with resolution 819 of the Security Council and a subsequent agreement with the conflicting parties, UnCivPol monitored law enforcement and the humanitarian situation in the Safe Area. The organization maintained contacts with the local police, ensured that individual citizens' rights were respected and investigated reports of violations of human rights.

UnCivPol also provided support to authorized aid organizations such as UNHCR, *Médecins sans Frontières* (MSF) and the Swedish Shelter Project (which are all described in Part II of Chapter 4). In order to establish friendly relations with all the parties in the Safe Area, UnCivPol carried out regular patrols. UnCivPol ended its activities in Srebrenica in the Spring of 1995.²⁶

To summarize, the most important institutions in the UN structure in which Dutchbat would operate were: UNPROFOR in Zagreb, the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo, Sector North East in Tuzla, UNMO and UnCivPol. In carrying out their work, Dutchbat troops also had contact with the UNHCR and the non-governmental organizations in Srebrenica, mentioned above. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the UNHCR was the main organization for humanitarian relief. UNPROFOR's task was to create optimum conditions for UNHCR to carry out its tasks as best as possible.

As mentioned above, several non-governmental organizations were stationed in the Srebrenica Safe Area, the main ones being MSF and the Swedish Shelter Project. MSF, in cooperation with UNHCR, provided medical care to the population in the Safe Area. The Swedish Shelter Project ran in 1993-1994 and involved building homes for refugees on the southern border of the Safe Area. After completion of the houses, the name Swedish Shelter Project stuck.

4. Standing Operating Procedures and Rules of Engagement

At the beginning of this chapter, we noted that the chain of command within the military component of a peacekeeping operation cannot be compared with the situation in a regular army. In part, this is due to the enormous diversity of the participating military units in technical military, national and cultural terms. Such differences are not usually removed by laying down a system of formal instructions and rules. To some extent, however, the different chain of command is also due to the restrictions or

²⁵ United Nations, United Nations Peace Force UNMO HQ Zagreb, UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF Post Mission Report (1992-1996) (Zagreb 1996), 11.

²⁶ UNPROFOR, Force Commander's End of Mission Report, E-2 and E-7. UNHCR: fax, UNCIVPOL Commissioner Zagreb to UNCIVPOL commander Bosnia-Herzegovina Command etc, 19/01/94: Mandate of UNCIVPOL.

conditions which national governments attach to its contribution of troops for the peacekeeping operation. Common practice within NATO is that all national units fall under the operational command of the NATO commander. This large-scale transfer of command gives the NATO commander a large degree of freedom in the deployment of participating units.

In UN peacekeeping operations, however, only the more restricted operational control tends to be transferred to the UN commander, who can thus only deploy units within the restrictions of the mandate, in a certain area and for a certain period of time. For example, Nordibat could only be deployed in the Tuzla area, and an additional condition of the Danish government concerned the inclusion of a tank squadron.

According to the interpretation of the Netherlands' Ministry of Defence, the transfer of operational control meant that troop-contributing nations would be closely involved 'in the peacekeeping operation's progress, especially at times when the implementation of the mandate is under threat'. There could be no question of direct national intervention, but a constant dialogue 'would have to be maintained with all parties involved in order to secure the effectiveness of the operation'.²⁷

The transfer of operational control to the United Nations is usually laid down in a Transfer of Authority agreement. The assent of troop-contributing nations is required for any change in operational control. In principle, a government can decide independently to pull back a unit, even without consulting the UN. As described in Part I, Chapter 13, however, the Dutchbat battalion had been provided unconditionally to the UN to function as part of UNPROFOR.

Immediately on its arrival in the former Yugoslavia, Dutchbat came under the operational control of UNPROFOR. No conditions had been attached to the battalion's deployment. The Netherlands had agreed to its deployment in Srebrenica and Zepa, but did not object at a later stage to giving one Dutchbat company a different area of operation. This was a clear message that there were no national conditions regarding the location of the deployment of the Dutch battalion. Interestingly, we have been unable to trace any document containing a Transfer of Authority for Dutchbat. The Dutch government did not lay down conditions (of a different sort) until a later stage, when it stated that the deployment should not exceed 18 months and that Dutchbat was to be relieved in July 1995.²⁸

It is also important to note that Dutchbat received no operational instructions from the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. General Couzy's operational order to Dutchbat I and successive Dutch battalions merely involved an order to relocate and to commence its duties under the UNPROFOR Force Commander as soon as possible after its arrival in the former Yugoslavia. The Netherlands thus complied in full with the UNPROFOR Rules of Engagement without assessing them in the light of existing Dutch rules. This contrasts with the procedures followed in other NATO countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. These countries laid down their own rules with respect to the use of force on the basis of the peacekeeping operation's Rules of Engagement. The purpose of this was to prevent misunderstandings and soldiers taking action that conflicted with national legislation.²⁹

The fact that Dutchbat did not have a national operational order did not give UNPROFOR more influence over the battalion with respect to its operational command. But the absence of a clear protocol on which rules and laws applied, at which times and in which situations did result in

²⁷ DCBC. No. C95/277 95016171, Director of Dept. of Legal Affairs, Ybema, to Director of General Policy Affairs and Chief of Defence Staff, 23/08/95; appendix: Command and Control in UN operations.

²⁸ DCBC. No. 95000785, DJZ/IJB Van Lent to CDS/Chief of Operations Van Dam, 09/08/1995. ADEF Defensiestaf: no. C95/277 95016171, DJZ Ybema to DAB, 23/08/95. Klep en Van Gils, Van Korea tot Kosovo, p. 278. Vertretpunt Den Haag, I, pp. 131-134. For UNPROFOR Under-chain of command see: ADEF DOKL/OZ: no. OZ/7767 Scheffer to mailing list, 07/02/94 appendix: Operations order No.24 (DUTCHBAT UNPROFOR) BLS sub 5a2.

²⁹ DOKL/OZ. No. OZ/7767 Scheffer to mailing list, 07/02/94 appendix: Operations order No.24 (DUTCHBAT UNPROFOR) BLS sub 2. The orders to Dutchbat II (24A) and III (24B) are identical in this respect. Confidential Information (117). Parks, 'Deadly Force Is Authorized' in Proceedings (2001)(January), pp. 33-37. Kroon & Jacobs, 'Rules of Engagement' in: Military Spectator 166 (1997)3, pp. 129-130.

uncertainty with respect to the chain of command. This ambiguity existed, for example, in the application of the Rules of Engagement, in establishing sanctions on violations of this rule, and in the prosecution of violations considered punishable according to the Standing Operating Procedures of UNPROFOR but not according to Dutch military criminal law.

Since the early 1990s, the United Nations has had a code of conduct and set of orders for peacekeeping operations. These rules and orders cover both administrative and operational aspects. Within UNPROFOR, they were operationalized at every level of command into the organization's 'own' legislation. This usually involved a repetition of the rules applicable to the next higher level, and if necessary the rules were operationalized specifically for the level itself. The basis of all instructions laid down in UNPROFOR was formed by the Force Commander's Policy Directives, a general brief for the operational and administrative sub-units which arranged in detail all aspects of the operation in a given area. In addition to these were the Standing Operating Procedures, the UN's guidelines for the peacekeeping operation. Next to UNPROFOR's Standing Operating Procedures, the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo and Sector North East in Tuzla each had their own Operational Orders and Standing Operating Procedures. At the battalion command level, these instructions and orders were laid down in a so-called standing brief.

The administrative brief in particular was more or less fixed, while the operational brief was revised from time to time. This could be done for a variety of reasons: ambiguity in existing instructions, a change in the structure of the peacekeeping force, or the need for supplementary rules due to changes in the actual situation. Dutchbat had to comply with all the Force Commander's Policy Directives laid down by headquarters in Zagreb, and with the Standing Operating Procedures of Sarajevo and Tuzla. In this sense, UNPROFOR was like any other military organization. All these instructions ultimately served a single purpose: to ensure uniform conduct, action and dispatch by units in the areas of operation.

In an ad hoc multinational peacekeeping force, standardized rules and instructions were especially important to soften the effect of inherent differences in language, military doctrine, training and equipment, which complicated command and coordination.³⁰

A detailed description of the numerous briefs for the different levels of command would serve no purpose here. Some, concerning close air support, given by Akashi as part of the Standing Operating Procedures, are discussed in Part III of this report. In the Appendix 'Medical concerns: Dutchbat and the population', we discuss the brief on providing medical assistance. In Part IV we discuss the briefs concerning the protection of refugees and the violations of human rights and war crimes, respectively.³¹ The implementation of the operational brief in Dutchbat's 'standing brief' is discussed later on in Part II, Chapter 6 on the operational deployment of the Dutch battalion.

Here, we restrict ourselves to a discussion of the Force Commander's Policy Directive number 13 concerning the Rules of Engagement, and Sector North East's Security Directive of April 1994. These played a role in the peacekeeping operation as a whole, and were particularly important with respect to Dutchbat's line of action.

According to the Netherlands' definition of 1992, Rules of Engagement are 'a means for the competent authority to restrict the use of force by the units under that authority's command.'³² There are various reasons why rules might be laid down concerning the use of force. First, such rules aim to optimize the safety of the peacekeeping units by preventing incidents and containing conflicts. Another objective of the Rules of Engagement was to prevent civilian casualties, as this would undermine social

³⁰ Cumner, 'Challenges Faced by the Military in Adapting to Peacekeeping Missions', *Peacekeeping & International Relations* (1998) (January/February), pp. 13-14.

³¹ On medical relief: FCPD 22 / SOP 506. On refugees: BHC SOP 206 'on protecting persons seeking urgent assistance'. On violations of human rights and war crimes: BHC SOP 208 'on human rights and war crimes'. Not discussed: BHC SOP 504 on logistic affairs, SOP 202 on convoys, BHC SOP 105 'on Security of Documents' and BHC SOP 108 'on Communications and Infosystems'.

³² DJZ. Rules of Engagement. (Den Haag 1992)

and political support for the peacekeeping operation. Finally, for the sake of the peace negotiation process it was important that the negative backlash of using force was restricted as much as possible.³³ For the peacekeeping operation in the former Yugoslavia, the UN Secretary-General ruled that the use of force was to be kept 'to the minimum extent necessary', in other words only 'in self-defence'.³⁴

The Force Commander adopted this as the primary principle of his Rules of Engagement, laid down on 24 March 1992. The interpretation of the term self-defence played a crucial role in the implementation of the rule. The countries participating in the peacekeeping operation each tended to have their own interpretation and this hampered a clear understanding of the rule within UNPROFOR. This ambiguity ended when the rule was amended in June 1994, broadening the term self-defence to include direct attacks on persons falling under UNPROFOR's protection.³⁵ How this was put into practice during the fall of Srebrenica is discussed in Part III, Chapter 7.

Next to the substantive aspect of the Rules of Engagement, there is the legal status of such rules. Rules prescribing the conduct of soldiers may not conflict with the national laws of the participating countries, nor with international law. These effectively restrict the scope of such rules. The status of Rules of Engagement for a peacekeeping operation is not laid down in Dutch law, nor is there a procedure in case of violations thereof.³⁶ It is possible that the Dutch operational orders contained stipulations on this subject.

UNPROFOR's Rules of Engagement were laid down on 24 March 1992. It was first amended on 19 July 1993, followed by a second amendment on 24 June 1994. The actual rules of engagement were preceded by a general introduction. The Rules of Engagement were a brief as well as a guideline to be used by commanders at all levels of the peacekeeping force. In accordance with the brief given by the UN Secretary-General, the main principle of the Rules of Engagement was that the use of force should be kept to a minimum. The peacekeeping force was only equipped with light weapons for self-defence; retaliatory acts were strictly prohibited.

The use of weapons was allowed in exceptional circumstances. UNPROFOR soldiers were authorized to defend themselves, other UN personnel and persons or land under their protection in case of a direct attack, 'acting always under the order of the senior officer/soldier at the scene'. Weapons could also be drawn to resist violent attempts intended to stop UNPROFOR from carrying out its tasks. Finally, UN troops were authorized to use their weapons in the case of attempts by military or paramilitary troops to enter United Nations Protected Areas in Croatia or, after the amendments of July 1993 and June 1994, any of the other Safe Areas supervised exclusively by UNPROFOR. How these general principles were put into practice by Dutchbat during the fall of Srebrenica is described in detail in Part III, Chapter 7.

The 1992 Rules of Engagement comprised six rules, the amended versions seven. The main gist of these amended versions follows, below. Each rule provided at least two options, or standardized responses.

The first rule laid down the circumstances under which weapons could be or should be carried. The options were: may not be carried, and may be carried.

The second rule concerned the state in which the weapon could be carried. The two options were: semi-loaded, and loaded.

The third rule laid down how forces should respond to a hostile threat of force without using weapons. UNPROFOR gave three options for response: a) observe, report to superior officer and retreat in order to protect one's own unit; b) observe, report to superior officer, unit stays put and establishes contact with opponent and/or local authorities; c) observe, report to superior officer, unit

³³ Kroon and Jacobs, 'Rules of Engagement' in: *Military Spectator* 166 (1997)3, p. 125.

³⁴ United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Resolution 721 (1991), (appendix III para.4), no. S/23280, 11/12/91.

³⁵ Kroon & Jacobs, 'Rules of Engagement' in: *Military Spectator* 166 (1997)3, pp. 125-126.

³⁶ Kroon & Jacobs, 'Rules of Engagement' in: *Military Spectator* 166 (1997)3, pp. 129-130.

stays put, warns aggressor that it will use force if necessary and demonstrates that intention by loading weapons or taking combat positions.

The fourth rule prescribed the response to hostile action in which UNPROFOR troops were taken under fire. In that case, there were two possible responses. The first option for a unit under fire was to immediately take protective measures, make observations and report to superiors. The commanding officer on location would then warn the aggressor that force would be used and make necessary preparations for doing so (as option c of the third rule). The firing of warning shots was authorized. If the hostile action did not cease and the UNPROFOR unit was in a life-threatening situation, the next higher commanding officer could give the order to open fire. This last action in effect comprised the second option for responding to hostile action. Next to these options, the fourth rule also explicitly stated that retreating, breaking out or escaping were also allowed, as were staying put and defending oneself.

The fifth rule concerned self-defence against hostile action. In these situations, protective measures had to be taken immediately and direct shots could be fired.

Under the sixth rule, which concerned the disarming of civilians, paramilitary troops and soldiers, the use of force as a first option was prohibited. In the 1993 Rules, the second option allowed disarmament 'if failure to do so prevents the UNPROFOR from carrying out its task'. In the amended version of 1994, this provision was scrapped, effectively authorizing the use of minimum but necessary force - including direct firing - during disarmament in order to ensure that this took place as quickly as possible. The Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, however, almost immediately ruled out the use of force during disarmament.

The seventh and last rule concerned the controlled use of own weapon systems, such as mortars and guns. The first option prohibited the manning, preparing, positioning and firing of such weapons in the presence of the conflicting parties. Under the second option, these actions were allowed in the presence of the conflicting parties. In November 1994 this rule was changed to also allow the use of anti-tank weapons and artillery (see also Part III, Chapter 7).³⁷

For each rule, the Force Commander would decide which option would normally be appropriate. Lower ranking commanders could however decide to deviate from the Force Commander's instruction. In UNPROFOR, the standard procedure was to carry semi-loaded weapons when leaving the compound (rules 1 and 2, option b). In case of a hostile threat without force, UNPROFOR would remain in place (rule 3, option b); the standard response to a hostile threat with force was to give out a warning that force would be used and if necessary to fire warning shots (rule 4). In response to enemy fire, UNPROFOR would shoot in self-defence (rule 5), but would not disarm civilians, paramilitary troops or soldiers (rule 6, option a) and would not get its weapons ready in the presence of the conflicting parties (rule 7, option a).

To ensure that the use of force was kept to a minimum, UNPROFOR added three supplementary provisions to the seven rules above. First, before UNPROFOR soldiers were authorized to open fire in self-defence they were to give the aggressor a verbal demand to cease their fire. If this did not help, UNPROFOR soldiers were to fire in the air, and only if that action failed to have the desired effect would the commander be authorized to give the order to fire back.

There were other restrictions, too, to the use of weapons by UNPROFOR in self-defence. Soldiers could not open fire if there was a possibility of causing collateral damage, and UNPROFOR had to stop firing as soon as the aggressor did so, too. Any form of retaliation was strictly forbidden. UNPROFOR soldiers were allowed to open fire immediately without first firing warning shots only if their lives were at risk or if UN personnel or individuals under UNPROFOR's protection were at risk of serious injury. In theory, changes to the Rules of Engagement (indicating that a different option could be used in a different prescribed situation) were made by the Force Commander. The Bosnia-

³⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 116, file SNE Memo In Sep 94 – Dec 95. Commander SNE to Nordbat 2 and others, 04/06/95.

Hercegovina Commander was not authorized to change the rules for his area of operation until June 1994. Until that time, that authority was delegated to the sector commanders -- comparable with arrangements in Croatia - and Bosnia-Hercegovina Command's own operational responsibility was disregarded.³⁸

During UNPROFOR's mission in the former Yugoslavia, few changes were made to the Rules of Engagement. The wording of the seven rules and in particular the supplementary provisions governing the use of weapons clearly showed that force was intended to be used in exceptional circumstances only. In that sense, the Rules of Engagement were in harmony with the traditional peacekeeping spirit which coloured the whole UN approach to the former Yugoslavia. There was no question of stepping up the rules in view of the critical situation on the ground in Bosnia-Hercegovina. The amendments of 1993 and 1994 did not affect the core of the Rules of Engagement. In applying the Rules of Engagement, commanders had two choices when their unit was threatened: they could follow the principle of minimum use of force (in which case they would likely elect not to shoot) or take a strict interpretation of self-defence (in which case they would be more likely to decide to respond to the hostile act).

A commander's decision, in practice, was based on three elements: the unit's attitude and mentality with respect to the peacekeeping operation, its analysis of the conflicting parties and its estimation of what the consequences of its actions would be for the rest of the mission. Dutchbat's interpretation and application of the Rules of Engagement are described in Part II, Chapter 6.

Even before Dutchbat had been deployed in Bosnia-Hercegovina, clearly conflicting views had been exchanged on the substance of the Rules of Engagement between General Couzy, Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, and General Brinkman, Commander of the Dutch Airmobile Brigade. The latter believed UNPROFOR's presence should be 'robust' and that soldiers should respond immediately if attacked. General Brinkman felt that the rules were adequate and that the crux lay in their application. It was important, he felt, 'to let the conflicting parties know, right from day one, who they're dealing with'. By contrast, General Couzy felt that the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command strove for 'the lowest possible scale of violence' and that UNPROFOR should and could only threaten to use force if UN troops actually intended to carry through their threat.³⁹

The second permanent brief, or Standing Operating Procedure, relevant to Dutchbat was the Security Directive of Sector North East, which came about with the establishment of the sector headquarters in March 1994. The Sector North East brief was based on various existing Standing Operating Procedures laid down by the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command with respect to security, the tasks of staff officers, document security, communications and information systems. The Security Directive basically only repeated and regrouped existing rules, adapted to the specific situation within the sector and at Tuzla headquarters. The Security Directive laid down the responsibilities of the Chief of Security (G2) and the Chief of Personnel and Communications (G1/6). The Directive also prescribed the procedure for security incidents and contained provisions on military security. This comprised a series of measures to protect information, equipment and personnel. Interestingly, the Directive was rather casual on this point: it contained no stringent instructions or rules, only generally formulated admonitions to protect information, equipment and lines of communication and about admitting various categories of individuals onto the premises of Sector North East. The Security Directive did not synthesize and classify the provisions of the pre-existing Standing Operating Procedures of the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in any logical order; it thus remained a fairly inefficient brief on internal security. The aims of the document could only be understood with a background analysis of the preceding Standing Operating Procedures laid down by Sarajevo.⁴⁰

³⁸ BDL. Force Commander's Directive No.1: Rules of Engagement, 24/03/92. SMG, 1004. FCPD No.13 Rules of Engagement Part I – Ground Forces, 19/07/93. Ibidem: FCPD No. 13 Rules of Engagement Part I – Ground Forces, 24/06/94.

³⁹ P.G.M. van Even, 'Vierkant en robuust' in: *Armex*, 77(1993)12, p.4.

⁴⁰ CRST. UNPF stukken: Security Directive HQ Sector North East, 04/94.

The internal UNPROFOR briefs described above all aimed to facilitate the operational command of UNPROFOR. As mentioned earlier, the Dutch government had only transferred the operational control of Dutchbat to the UN. Just as the other troop-contributing nations, the Netherlands retained responsibility for personnel and administration, even in cases requiring the application of specific UNPROFOR rules; for example, the rules concerning leave, establishing violations punishable according to UNPROFOR, repatriation for medical, social or disciplinary reasons, reporting casualties and so on. The commander of the Dutch contingent in the former Yugoslavia was responsible for the monitoring and enforcement of these rules. In September 1994, these rules were brought together in a publication titled *Beleidsbundel Commandant Nederlandse Troepen in voormalig Joegoslavië*.⁴¹

This concludes our general sketch of the backdrop against which Dutchbat operated. In the UNPROFOR chain of command, Dutchbat occupied the fourth tier, with the sector commanders occupying the third tier. The fourth tier primarily had an operational task. Within this structure, Dutchbat was expected to operate as an independent unit with its own logistic arrangements. Dutchbat was dependent on the UNPROFOR organization to some extent for crucial supplies such as fuel. For the rest, it was expected to obtain its supplies from the Netherlands. From an organizational point of view, the battalion had two lifelines: UNPROFOR and the Royal Netherlands Army.

Dutchbat had been assigned responsibility for the Srebrenica Safe Area. Neither UNPROFOR nor Bosnia-Herzegovina paid much attention to Srebrenica, however. Srebrenica was situated in eastern Bosnia, which was geographically and mentally far removed from Sarajevo and Zagreb. The rest of the world was focused on the fight for Sarajevo and the peace process. As a Safe Area, Srebrenica only occasionally managed to attract the attention of the world press or the UN Security Council. That is why the Dutch troops there remained of secondary importance, in operational and logistic terms, for so long; and why the importance of the enclave in the battle for domination between the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims failed to be recognized for so long. In the next chapter, we describe the relations between Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims at the beginning of the war in Bosnia to enable a full comprehension of the relation between the two conflicting parties in Srebrenica.

⁴¹ CRST. *Beleidsbundel Commandant Nederlandse troepen in voormalig Joegoslavië*.

Chapter 2

The history preceding the conflict in Eastern Bosnia up until the establishment of the Safe Area

1. The economic and political crisis of the eighties

This chapter will describe the disintegration of Yugoslavia on the micro level of the local communities in Eastern Bosnia, among them Srebrenica.⁴² After the death of Josip Broz Tito (1980) Yugoslavia found itself in a downward spiral of economic decline and political and ethnic tensions which ultimately led to the dissolution of the multi-ethnic state. Tito had been able to keep the country together through his popularity and charisma, and he was one of the few Communist leaders who could really rely upon the mandate of the people. There was no one of his calibre to step into his footsteps and the unity of the multi-ethnic state quickly began to show cracks, which only became larger as the economic crisis in Europe increased in the eighties. Tito's death signalled the start of a moral and political crisis as well, one that toppled the Yugoslav socialist system he had built up. Not a year after his death, a revolt started in Kosovo among the Albanians who demanded their own republic, and there were nationalist tendencies in other places as well.

The economy of the country was affected by low productivity, lack of labour discipline, widespread corruption, and ever-increasing inflation. The Yugoslav system of labour self-management seemed incapable of solving the problems that had arisen. About the middle of the eighties various companies were on the brink of bankruptcy and were only able to survive through state subsidies. Financial scandals, such as the *Agrokomerc* affair in 1987, revealed the close and unhealthy ties between the regional and local party bosses and the local economy. The sorely needed political and economic reforms did not get off the ground because the Communist elite did not want to give up its control over the economy.

The crisis considerably affected the average Yugoslav's feeling of existential security and standard of living, so that a political crisis was inevitable. To combat this, Communist politicians at the end of the eighties began to play the nationalist card. The crisis also caused a growing rivalry between the various federal republics. Behind the official facade of 'Brotherhood and Unity', political life in the Communist

one-party state came increasingly under the banner of discord and dissension. More and more, the leaders of the federal states advocated the 'national' interests of their own republics, and in a multi-ethnic state like Yugoslavia this meant that nationalism and ethnic conflicts would irreversibly be a normal part of affairs. In the second half of the eighties, this rivalry between the republics led to a barely cloaked nationalism, whereby the leaders of the republics sought support from nationalist groups in their own republics instead of their fellow Communists in the other republics.

It was Slobodan Milosevic who let the genie out of the bottle by openly supporting the Serb interests in Kosovo and other parts of Yugoslavia, following the Serbian Orthodox Church and the nationalist opposition. He carefully played on the widespread feelings of insecurity among the common Serbs who were afraid of losing their jobs and incomes. He knew that in areas such as Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia there were enough desperate Serbs he could mobilize to put into Serb hands the control of factories, mines and other economic resources providing incomes or to keep it there once the republics would start on the path to independence. He cultivated and exploited the age-old theme of Serb

⁴² This chapter is based to a large extent on the Appendix of Ger Duijzings, *History, Memory and Politics in Eastern Bosnia*. For a more detailed description of the events (with extensive source references), see this appendix.

suffering and victimization - under the Ottoman 'Turks', the Croatian Ustashe, and most recently under Tito - that in times of economic crisis always fell on fertile soil.

The rising Serbian nationalism was a cause for unrest, particularly in multi-ethnic Bosnia, and the Bosnian authorities did all they could to try to restrain expressions of this sort, whether they came from the Serbian, Croatian or Muslim camp. That was no easy task in the Bosnian countryside, however. Despite earlier attempts of the Communist rulers to integrate the ethnic communities, life continued to be lived within one's own group. Bosnian Serbs and Muslims lived separately in villages that were ethnically homogenous. Only in the cities, and then primarily among younger people, was there anything that could be called a Yugoslav culture that was shared by all groups.

Demography of Eastern Bosnia

In Bosnia, and in Eastern Bosnia in particular, the ethnic tensions increased during the eighties because the ethno-demographic relationship shifted to the advantage of the Muslims. The share of Muslim population in the cities of Srebrenica, Bratunac and in particular Vlasenica (see map in this section) grew, while that of the Serbs decreased. In the first two cities, the Muslims gained a clear majority in their share of the population, whereas the relationship had been more or less equal. The share of Serbs dropped, in absolute numbers as well, because many of them moved to Serbia. In general in Bosnia, the Muslims outpaced the Serbs as the largest group at the beginning of the seventies.

At the same time, they started to play an increasingly important role in government and the economy, which ultimately was the result of the recognition of Muslims as a people in 1968. A growing self-consciousness among the Muslim elite went hand in hand with a cultural and religious revival which the Bosnian Serbs experienced as threatening. This resurgence went too far for the Communist establishment as well, which led to a reaction in the eighties against what was called emerging 'fundamentalism' and 'Muslim nationalism'. In 1983 a group of Muslim intellectuals (among them Alija Izetbegovic) was put behind bars for a number of years after a show trial in Sarajevo.

The fact that the tensions between the population groups increased as a result of the economic decline could also be seen on the local level in the form of envy towards those who did manage to keep their heads above water. Old rivalries and enmities reemerged about who would get a given job, a given apartment or whose children could go to Sarajevo to study. In the countryside, people were convinced that certain villages were privileged through their good contacts with people in regional government, while other villages without such contacts were believed to be treated poorly. The fact that the villages were mostly either Muslim or Serb strengthened the idea that it was in fact ethnic hostility behind this situation. In the town of Vlasenica in 1988 it came to an open conflict between the local authorities (mostly Muslims) and the Serb-dominated mining town of Milici.

The bauxite mines in Milici had grown in the seventies to become the largest in Europe and consequently a great deal of money poured into the till of '*Boksit Milici*', which to an important degree ended up for the benefit of the predominantly Serb population of the town. Since Muslims in Vlasenica had come to be the majority as of the seventies, the fear was great among the Serbs that Muslims would eventually call the shots politically and economically. Among local Serbs the call became stronger for Milici to be made a separate municipality again, as it had been in the fifties.

These fears were fed by the nationalist hysteria that took over Serbia when Milosevic began to raise his fist against the Albanians in Kosovo at the end of the eighties. There was talk of a renewed battle between Christianity and Islam that would be fought out in Kosovo. In the spring of 1989 all of this came to a climax when Milosevic carried out an intense campaign to abolish the autonomy of Kosovo. After he succeeded in this - which was celebrated on a large scale in June 1989 with the 600 year memorial of the Battle of Kosovo - Milosevic began to aim his sights at Bosnia as well. After the Serbian media had worked for a year on the mood against the Bosnian Muslims and on Islam in general, the Serbian regime began seriously to interfere in Bosnian affairs in the summer of 1989.

In August the media in Belgrade began to speak of 'ethnic cleansing' of which Serbs in Eastern Bosnia, in Bratunac and Srebrenica in particular, were the victim. The whole matter became front page

news when 'confidential' documents of the Serbian State Security Service, SDB, were leaked out; they spoke of Serbs being pushed out of Eastern Bosnia, in particular in areas around the Drina, under pressure from the Muslims. According to the documents, Muslim nationalists and fundamentalists controlled the municipal offices and local businesses of Srebrenica and Bratunac.

These accusations were denied vigorously by the authorities of Bratunac and Srebrenica who pointed out that the Serbian exodus was motivated primarily by economic reasons and not as a result of Muslim pressure. A number of local Serbian officials also expressed that opinion publicly, which was not appreciated by many Serbs (in the villages in particular). Despite the fact that important Muslim and Serbian Communist officials spoke out against the reports, the fuse had already been placed in the dynamite keg of ethnic relations. All it took was the nationalist press in Serbia to pour more oil on the fire. Reports appeared in the Serbian press which spoke of forced exodus and discrimination against the Serbian inhabitants of villages along the Drina and of a creeping Islamization of Srebrenica.



In some reports Eastern Bosnia was even called a second Kosovo. Moderate politicians were marginalized in the Serbian press, and if reference was made to them at all, they were depicted as naive, unrealistic or even dishonest. The Bosnian Government accused the Serbian State Security Service of interference for the purpose of destabilizing the republic. Parallels were drawn with the period just before the First World War when Serbia sent secret agents to Bosnia to prepare a revolt against the Austrian Government which would lead ultimately to the murder of the Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo. In Serbia similar historical parallels were drawn: the Bosnian authorities were said to be involved in the same kind of campaign against the Serbian people as the Austrians in 1914.

2. The 1990 elections in Bosnia

The Communist single party state fell in 1990 and a rapid process of pluralization began. New parties were set up, and in the course of that year free elections were organized all over the former Yugoslavia. In multi-ethnic Bosnia, there was the danger of disintegration and civil war if the political arena were dominated by the nationalists, and consequently the authorities tried to hold down nationalist aspirations for as long as possible. They made attempts to not allow parties based on ethnic or religious grounds, but this measure was revoked in the course of the year by the Bosnian High Court. Quickly, the political spectrum came to be dominated by newly established ethnic-national parties.

On the Muslim side this was the SDA under the leadership of Izetbegovic. On the one hand, the SDA was made up of a traditional, populist, village-oriented stream that appealed primarily to religious and Bosnian-national sentiments, and on the other a somewhat more enlightened and more urban stream that ultimately was given the short end of the stick. The counterpart to the SDA was the Bosnian-Serbian SDS, whose primary goal was, alongside the furthering of the interests of its own group in Bosnia, the integration of Serbian areas in Bosnia in what remained of Yugoslavia or in a Greater Serbia that they would form. The party was very religious and nationalistic in inspiration and had strong ties to both the political leaders in Belgrade and the Serbian-Orthodox hierarchy.

In the summer of 1990 the election campaign (on the municipal level and on that of Bosnia as a whole) was a source of increasing tension, particularly in Srebrenica. Due to the strained situation, the leaders of the Yugoslav Federal Army (the JNA) decided to empty the local arms depots to prevent the weapons from falling into the hands of the Muslims. The weapons were ultimately funnelled via the SDS to the Serb population, to the local Serb stronghold of Kravica for example. Ethnically motivated incidents and nationalist demonstrations fed the reciprocal animosity, such as the massive memorials of the massacres of World War II.

In September, the local SDA leaders in Eastern Bosnia also started plans to arm its own Muslim population. Although not much actually came of this, it showed that an atmosphere of fear and violence existed before the elections in November took place. This did not bode well for the future. It all seemed to revolve around the struggle for the control of companies and economic life in general in a time when society was moving from a collective to a capitalistic and market-oriented system.

It was clear to the two largest nationalist parties in Srebrenica, the SDA and the SDS, that the elections would be decided in the countryside. The population of the countryside formed the majority of the electorate and consequently was the key to political power. Thus, the local branches of the SDA and SDS concentrated their election campaigns on the villages, leaving the town of Srebrenica more or less aside because they knew they could gain little there. This strategy was, as it turned out, fruitful.

The elections of November 1990 were a great victory for the nationalist parties SDA, SDS and the Croatian HDZ that had formed a coalition on the overall level of the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina to prevent the old Communists from maintaining power. After their loss in the elections, the Communists were removed from power and the nationalist parties tried to divide up the positions that had become available, which quickly led to arguments and conflicts. This occurred on the republic level as well as on the local level. These conflicts turned quickly in the direction of an actual division of Bosnia among the three nationalist parties, because in every municipality the party that had gained the majority took over the actual power. In Srebrenica it was the SDA that assumed power.

The struggle for strategic positions and power was now in full swing, and this struggle took place against the background of a worsening economic situation. In the beginning of 1991 production collapsed and inflation rose to great heights. Not only did these developments increase tensions *between* the various nationalist parties, the struggle for power also caused a considerable battle *within* the nationalist parties themselves. The differences of opinion ran primarily along the line of moderates versus hardliners and city versus countryside.

Consequences of the elections for Srebrenica

The struggle between the SDA hardliners and the moderates in Srebrenica hardened quickly. It soon became clear that the first group had a much better position to win the battle because the election success was mostly owed to them. They gained the upper hand, partially because they mobilized their supporters in the villages to go to Srebrenica to achieve their ambitions. At the end of January 1991 the SDA hardliners led by Hamed Efendic, Ibran Mustafic and Besim Ibisevic won and took over the power in Srebrenica. Ibisevic became mayor of Srebrenica. The moderates led by Malik Meholic were forced out of the party. Such conflicts also existed, although to a lesser extent, in the SDS: Serb farmers accused the local SDS leader and attorney Goran Zekic of having been too indulgent with the SDA.

Srebrenica was now ruled by the local SDA hardliners. Serb directors of companies, schools and hospitals were given early retirement and SDA loyalists were put in their place. All of this fuelled the Serb fear that the SDA would completely take over the local economy and government and would place companies under Muslim control as soon as they were privatized. Similar tendencies were visible in all parts of Bosnia, but also just over the border in Serbia for example, where local companies sacked their Bosnian Muslim employees.

As a result, the tensions between Muslims and Serbs increased. Society disintegrated, citizens refused to pay municipal taxes, and minor local conflicts and incidents hurt the situation even more. Authority and order disappeared almost completely and economic crime escalated even more than

before. At the same time, a tug-of-war started up about the local police. In the summer of 1991 Naser Oric, an adventurer from Potocari, appeared as bodyguard, chauffeur and confidant of SDA hardliner Ibran Mustafic. He played an important role in a number of weapons deals and in the formation of a local Muslim paramilitary group.

At about the same time the wars in Slovenia and Croatia started up. Serbs and Muslims from Eastern Bosnia left for areas where hostilities were taking place and joined one of the warring parties. Bosnia was overrun by units of the Yugoslav Federal Army (JNA) and paramilitary groups that had taken part in the fighting in Croatia. Local militants became more and more open in their display of nationalist flags, symbols, photographs of nationalist leaders and extremists, as well as other paraphernalia. The situation was aggravated further through irrelevant conflicts between individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. Although such incidents would have been given little attention during peace time, they now served to increase the polarization.

At the end of August 1991 the tense situation threatened to turn into a veritable civil war. At first the JNA tried to gain possession of the draft and reservist files in Bratunac and Srebrenica, but this was thwarted by the SDA town leaders. In Bratunac it almost came to an armed incident between Muslim demonstrators and Bosnian units on the one side and local Serbs and JNA units on the other. Attempts were made by the Bosnian faction to organize defence by expanding the police force and by forming paramilitary units, but the Muslims were far behind the Serbs and found it almost impossible to acquire weapons.

Daily life in Srebrenica and Bratunac included more and more incidents, provocations and fights in cafes. Certain cafes were known as gathering places for Serb or Muslim nationalists who frequently stormed in to provoke fights and to tear the place apart. Groups of young people from such nationalist strongholds as Potocari and Kravica went around cafes in Bratunac every evening to stir up trouble. It came as no surprise in this volatile atmosphere when on 3 September 1991 the first deaths occurred.

A group of Muslim nationalists fell into a Serb ambush in Kravica; two of them were shot and killed. The next day the streets of Bratunac were full of protesting Muslims and it looked briefly as if the situation would get out of hand. Many Serb inhabitants of Bratunac, women and children primarily, moved out to Ljubovija in Serbia out of fear that matters would explode. Extra police troops from Tuzla and a number of Bosnian politicians who rushed to the scene restored order in Bratunac. After the Kravica incident local groups of Muslims and Serbians began to organize armed patrols in their own villages and neighbourhoods. Armed incidents occurred in other parts of Bosnia as well, in Visegrad for example (see map in section 1).

The paths of Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims diverge

In the autumn of 1991 Bosnia-Herzegovina took the first steps in the direction of independence. The Bosnian Serbs opposed this fiercely. They wanted to continue for the time being to be part of Yugoslavia and started to form the Serbian Autonomous regions. One of those regions was Birac which included the municipalities of Bratunac, Srebrenica, Zvornik, Vlasenica, Sekovici, Kalesija, Zivinice and Kladanj. In October the Bosnian Serbs formed their own parliament, and in a referendum in November they declared themselves against a sovereign Bosnia. On the local level the SDS started to set up separate Serbian municipalities that were partially 'cut out' of the existing and Muslim-dominated municipalities (such as was the case in the Serb-dominated areas of Skelani and Milici), while in other cases, parallel Serbian municipal structures were set up.

When it became clear that Bosnia-Herzegovina was heading towards independence, the Yugoslav Federal Army began to strengthen its positions in the Serbian villages that came under Srebrenica. The population of strategically positioned Serbian villages (such as Brezani, Podravanje, Orahovica and Ratkovici) were given weapons. In December 1991 Bosnia-Herzegovina submitted a request to the European Community for diplomatic recognition, while the Bosnian Serbs set up their own Serbian republic in January.

In the period before the Bosnian referendum on independence (planned for the end of February or beginning of March), security worsened every day. In Srebrenica antagonism increased when the local SDA demagogue, Ibran Mustafic, called on Muslims to settle the score with the Serbs. The Serbian press in Belgrade poured even more oil on the fire by writing that the SDA leaders in Srebrenica were preparing the mass murder of Serbs. Urged by their leaders, many Serbs fled the town.

3. The beginning of the war, April 1992

After the majority of the Bosnian population, that is to say the Muslims and Croats, had voted for independence in the referendum, the European Community recognized the independence of Bosnia on 6 April 1992; this referendum and everything related to it was considered in detail in Chapter 5 of Part I. The referendum was held without the approval of most of the Serb population who had boycotted it. The recognition that was about to be granted at the end of March/beginning of April led to large-scale animosity in Eastern Bosnia where paramilitary forces from Serbia, known as the 'Arkan Tigers' took over Bijeljina. Subsequently, the Yugoslav Federal Army (JNA) along with a large number of paramilitary groups started an offensive along the Drina, to gain control of the area that bordered on Serbia. Within a few days the attack on Zvornik and Visegrad was also begun. Zvornik was taken quickly, but the conquering of Visegrad was more difficult. Nonetheless, the JNA and other Serbian warring groups had seventy percent of Bosnian terrain under their control within a few weeks. Local SDS crisis committees were set up everywhere to plan and coordinate the ethnic cleansing. The normal pattern was for the JNA to take over strategic roads and intersections and then to fire at Muslim settlements, whereupon paramilitary groups would enter the village and plunder it. The population was terrorized, killed or chased out.

The primary goal of the Drina campaign was to gain control of Eastern Bosnia on the border of Serbia to assure that all of the 'Serb' areas in Bosnia could be coupled to one another and to Serbia. The main objective was, just as during the Serbian revolt at the beginning of the nineteenth century to obtain one, large, linked Serbian area in which Eastern Hercegovina, Romanija and the Bosnian Krajina would be connected to one another and to Serbia. That was only possible if Eastern Bosnia, which was dominated by the Muslims, also came into Serbian hands (see map in section 1). Thus, it is no surprise that the first large military campaign in Bosnia was along the Drina and was intended to obtain complete control over this area. The following objective of the Serbs was to cleanse these areas of their Muslim population.

War reaches Srebrenica

After the most important cities in Eastern Bosnia were brought under Serbian control, the next step was to conquer the smaller towns and villages where the majority of inhabitants were Muslims, so as to consolidate the hold on the area. It was only in this stage that the war reached Bratunac and Srebrenica. In Bratunac first of all, Serbian pressure led to a formal division of the municipal police on 9 April. Now that there was a Muslim and a Serbian police force, war psychosis began slowly to take hold. Next, the TV masts were blown up so that the populations of Srebrenica and Bratunac could no longer receive the Bosnian channels nor the federal Yugoslavian channel, Yutel (set up under the Markovic Government), only Serbian channels.

On 10 April the SDA leaders of Srebrenica yielded to the pressure of the SDS to divide up the town of Srebrenica, which was decided in an extraordinary town council meeting a few days later. Subsequently, the following day, 11 April, the police station in Skelani, a border spot on the Drina that was part of the municipality of Srebrenica, was forcibly placed under Serbian control. Next, on 17 April, Bratunac was overrun by units of the Yugoslav Federal Army and paramilitary groups from Serbia. The meeting between SDA and SDS leaders on that day which had been convoked in Srebrenica was held upon request of the Serbs 'for reasons of security' in Bratunac, where the mayor of Srebrenica, Besim Ibisevic, and a few other Muslims were given an ultimatum by the SDS. They had to

turn over the power in Srebrenica the following day to the SDS and see to it that all armed militias were disarmed. The authorities in Bratunac were presented with the same ultimatum.

When the Muslim delegation in Srebrenica returned and made clear to the population that Bratunac was now in the hands of the JNA and Serbian paramilitary groups, the population began to flee. Almost all of the Muslim elite of the town of Srebrenica, including the mayor, packed their bags and left in the direction of Tuzla. The following day in the afternoon, units of the Novi Sad corps of the JNA and paramilitary units took control of the town which had been abandoned and had offered no resistance whatsoever. Paramilitary units began to plunder the town. It was only in the town of Potocari and in Stari Grad (the higher, older section of the town of Srebrenica close to the Turkish citadel) that they did not dare to penetrate because of the Muslim militias hiding there.

Part of the population of Srebrenica took flight to the woods and hills in the surrounding area. In a number of villages around Srebrenica, the Muslim population began to organize local resistance groups. The first major act of resistance took place on 20 April in Potocari when Naser Oric ambushed a number of vehicles of the 'Arkan Tigers' and the local Serbian police. At least four Serbs were killed in this ambush. Right after, the JNA started artillery assaults on the Muslim stronghold Potocari and surrounding villages.

The Serbian conquest of Bratunac and Srebrenica signalled the beginning of large-scale ethnic cleansing. These acts of cleansing took place first of all in the surrounding villages and ultimately in the town of Bratunac itself where a great many Muslims were still in their houses. First, the head of the local SDS crisis committee of Bratunac, Miroslav Deronjic, sent ultimatums to the most important Muslim strongholds in this municipality, Voljavica, Glogova and Konjevic Polje (see map section 1) to disarm the population and to surrender all of the weapons. They were given until 1 May to meet this demand, and when they refused, the Serbs began that day with a large number of attacks on Muslim villages. The attacks were carried out and coordinated from two places, Bratunac and Milici. Instead of sending SDS delegations, paramilitary units and local SDS militias were sent to the villages; they chased the Muslim population out of their villages, killed them, plundered their houses and set them in flames. In Bratunac, the Bosnian-Serbian authorities began to pick up Muslims, political leaders and intellectuals primarily, also from Srebrenica, a large number of whom were killed. Some Muslim leaders from Srebrenica were followed as far as Montenegro. A number of them disappeared there, probably abducted and killed.

On 6 May, Muslims carried out their first counterattack on a Serb village, Gniona, to the north of the town of Srebrenica. It was the first Serb village to be attacked and captured by Oric in this way. It was of strategic importance because it offered access to another centre of Muslim resistance, Suceška, where Zulfo Tursunovic held sway. On 7 May, a number of Serbs were killed in Srebrenica where the militias of Hakija Meholic and Akif Ustic were fighting around Stari Grad. On the same day armed Muslims laid ambush near Osmace on the way to Skelani, an extremely important communication route for the Serbs. After first cutting off the road between Srebrenica and Bratunac in Potocari, the Muslims now closed off this important exit route connecting Srebrenica to the outside world. This marked the beginning of a long series of attacks on Muslim villages in the new Serbian municipality Skelani, led by the local SDS president Dane Katanic. The attacks began on 8 May 1992 and within a few days more than twenty Muslim villages were completely emptied. Hundreds of houses were set on fire, more than 1,300 Muslims were transported to Macedonia and another 900 were chased away to other Muslim villages in the direction of Srebrenica.

Despite these actions, the morale among the Muslim fighters was given a considerable boost when it became known that the SDS president of Srebrenica, Goran Zekic was killed in the afternoon of 8 May on his way from Srebrenica to Bratunac (on the mountain road by way of Sase). According to reports he was shot by Muslim fighters, although other sources suggest that the moderate Zekic was perhaps done in by SDS extremists. Although the responsibility for Zekic's death was not established with certainty, it was enough to inspire the Serbs to a new wave of violence against the Muslims, this time in the small town of Bratunac and surrounding villages.

On 9 May, sixty Muslims from the village of Glogova were driven into a field near the local mosque and executed. On 10 May, the Serbs forced thousands of Muslims from the town of Bratunac into the local sport stadium, separated the men from the women and children, and placed about seven hundred men in the gymnasium of a school, where one of the bloodiest and cruellest episodes of the war took place. Hundreds of men were tortured and killed, primarily by members of paramilitary forces who did not come from Bratunac. About half of the men did not survive the torture and executions, and the rest were transported a few days later out of the area and handed over.

The slaying of Zekic did have as a result that Srebrenica's last connection with the outside world was now considered by the Serbs to be unsafe. Shocked by the killing of Zekic, the Serb population fled the town in panic that very evening and night. On 9 May the Muslim militia of Akif Ustic were the first to enter the town. In the following days, the Muslims who had been hiding in the woods for weeks on end emerged and gradually returned to their houses. The Muslims held the town for about three years after this, while almost all of the Serb inhabitants fled to Bratunac or elsewhere. Although the Serbs had to abandon Srebrenica, they continued their attacks on the Muslim villages to the west, north and southeast of Bratunac. The Muslim population was herded together at various assembly points and the women and children were deported from there to Central Bosnia. The men were either killed, placed in the prison camp Susica near Vlasenica or were held at other spots. The Muslim villages along the Drina, to the southeast of Bratunac, were in a certain sense an exception to this pattern. Large numbers of the population withdrew into the mountains, in the direction of Srebrenica, to Muslim villages that had not yet been attacked by the Serbs. They were the first large group of Displaced Persons to enter the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica. They were housed in homes and apartments in the town that had been abandoned by the former inhabitants. Many Displaced Persons would follow.

4. The Muslims fight back

These new Serb actions were answered by the Muslims starting on 15 May with a series of coordinated attacks on Serb villages. The first targets were villages located close to Srebrenica: Viogor, Orahovica and Osredak (see map in section 1). The objective of these attacks was to establish a compact, connected area which would link the variously located Muslim resistance centres. This intent succeeded, and on 20 May it was agreed in the village of Bajramovici to put all of the resistance groups under the joint command of Naser Oric. A number of weeks later (1 July), a civil governing body was also installed, the War Presidium of the municipality of Srebrenica which was housed in the post office building. The first president of this wartime Government, called the War President of the Opstina (municipality) of Srebrenica, was Hajrudin Avdic; Hamdija Fejzic was the chairman of the Executive Board. Nonetheless, Naser Oric as commanding officer of the army and local hero was the most important power factor in the enclave.

Starting at the end of May, Displaced Persons who had been driven out of their homes and villages and who had hidden in the woods and hills, began to stream into the enclave from all directions. Other Muslim enclaves located nearby such as Zepa, Konjevic Polje and Cerska received large numbers of refugees as well. In the town of Srebrenica only about three to four hundred of the original inhabitants were left; the rest were Displaced Persons from nearby or more far-off places. From a Serbian point of view, the objective of purging Eastern Bosnia of Muslims was not at all a success. Even though the largest share of Muslims had been driven away from hearth and home, there was now a number of Muslim enclaves that represented a serious threat to the Serbs. The enclaves grew and also became more and more closely joined. The Serbs worked out their frustration over the unexpected Muslim successes through acts of revenge that were often exceptionally violent.

It became clear that the Serbs would suffer even greater losses because more and more Serb villages and hamlets were being attacked by the Muslims. Various Serbian commanding officers were killed or were seriously wounded in fighting, for example at Kravica and Konjevic Polje. Given the fact that villages in this region were for the most part ethnically homogenous and small in size, it was easy for large groups of Muslim attackers to distinguish Serb from Muslim villages. If it was a Serb

settlement, it was directly and without regard to persons plundered and burned down. In the summer and autumn of 1992, the sallies into the Serbian area became increasingly frequent and violent. Moreover, Muslims who had been driven out of their villages went back to pick up the food and possessions they had had to leave. The food situation in the enclave of Srebrenica became more and more acute, which was a strong incentive for carrying out raids. The Muslim forces were constantly looking for ways to strengthen their strategic positions. Finally, revenge also played a role. The regular troops were often unable to restrain the large groups of civilians who took part in the sallies, although the fear that these caused the Serbs was convenient to them.

After more than half a year of sallies, thirty Serb villages and seventy hamlets had fallen into Muslim hands and there were only a few places left that were Serb, among them Bratunac. Kravica was one of the last to fall into Muslim hands, on Orthodox Christmas (7 January 1993). There were at least a thousand Serb civilian casualties in all. Consequently, it is understandable that the Serbs saw the situation around Srebrenica as a war of aggression by the Muslims. They felt more and more threatened; many people had lost family or friends; and the humiliation and bitterness experienced as a result of the Muslim attacks was great. Most Serbs sought revenge if the opportunity presented itself.

The area under Muslim control continued to grow and the various Muslim resistance centres were connected and forged into a whole. The military leaders in the enclave kept working on the integration of the armed forces and the strengthening of defence. The whole area under Muslim control (including the enclaves that initially stood alone: Srebrenica, Konjevic Polje and Cerksa) were brought together in November 1992 under one military commando led by Naser Oric, whose seat was Srebrenica. The integration of the Muslim forces did not always proceed smoothly, however. There was friction between some of the commanding officers, for example between Naser Oric and Hakija Meholic, who did not unquestioningly accept Naser Oric as his superior. Aside from these frictions, there was also political opposition to Oric in the enclave, which was led by his former protector, the SDA leader Ibran Mustafic.

Since Mustafic had been present at the outbreak of war in Sarajevo, he did not go back to Srebrenica until December 1992 when he succeeded in returning to the enclave. The SDA wanted him to return because it wished to try to regain its influence in the enclave after almost all of the local SDA leaders had left and Oric had disbanded the SDA. This situation was not in any way unique. In other parts of Bosnia that had also suffered from acts of war, the SDA was marginalized as well. Local military bosses had seized power and taken on the organization of defence, which the SDA had neglected before the war. Upon his return, Mustafic found that guns ruled the enclave. He accused Oric of having gained power by means of a coup and having installed a military junta.

The following winter of 1992-1993 was the hardest one the Muslim inhabitants of the enclave of Srebrenica would experience during the war. There was little or no humanitarian help; that only got going after the institution of the Safe Area in April 1993. People died from starvation and exhaustion that winter. On 28 November, after seven months of war, the first UNHCR food convoy arrived to the jubilation of the desperate population. The food and medical situation in the enclave was wretched then already, as the journalists who travelled along with the convoy observed. Nonetheless, as the Muslims had greater numbers and were driven by hunger, they succeeded in driving the Serbs farther back. The area that the Muslims controlled at the end of December 1992 / beginning of January 1993 reached almost to the edge of the town of Bratunac. It was surrounded on three sides and found itself in an utmost precarious situation. Given that many on the Serb side feared that Bratunac was on the verge of falling into Muslim hands, military reinforcements were rushed in from Krajina in Northwestern Bosnia. The state of the local Serb defence was abominable and morale had sunk to a low due to the fact that many local Serbs had fled to Serbia for various reasons.

Although the population that had stayed behind saw these Serbs as deserters, the authorities called on them to join in the defence of the town. The authorities promised that any recruits would be taken into the regular army units and would not be led anymore by non-professional people as had been the case in the past. They were referring here to the local SDS leaders who had commanded the Territorial Defence units at the beginning of the war. Initially they were able to hide their lack of

competence through the large-scale support they had received from the JNA and the paramilitary units from Serbia. But as soon as the support left, it became clear that they were not skilled enough to defend Bratunac.

The Serb population was very frustrated about the situation in Bratunac, and some of them held the local SDS directly responsible for this. There was also dissatisfaction about the role of the paramilitary forces. Most were only present at the beginning of the war, when there was something to gain, but as soon as they had taken the booty they left. They had saddled the Serb population with an 'unsolvable' situation: the Muslims had not left and were living only a few kilometres away in an ever expanding enclave. Large groups of Serbs were now themselves living as Displaced Persons in Bratunac under the most miserable conditions and with little humanitarian help.

In the beginning of January 1993, the fall of the Serb stronghold Kravica, which in the past had always been an important symbol of Serb resolve, created a shock wave in Eastern Bosnia. The population of Bratunac panicked and the authorities had to close the bridges over the Drina to prevent people from crossing the river en masse. For the Muslims, however, the victory over Kravica was a considerable boost. This conquest allowed Oric to connect with the resistance forces in Konjevic Polje and Cerska, yielding one large Muslim terrain from Zepa and Srebrenica almost to Zvornik. However, the Serb call for vengeance was great. As a local Serb chronicler wrote, the Serbs were looking forward to the day they would finally be able to take revenge. After Kravica the Muslim attacks continued. Instead of opening a large offensive on Bratunac, Oric decided to strike Skelani first. The objective was to chase the Serb units out of this area and to destroy the bridge over the Drina to prevent the Serbs from gaining reinforcements from Serbia. The attack on Skelani took place on 16 January 1993, and at least 48 Serbs died in this battle. The attack failed and this marked the beginning of the end of Oric's successes. Public opinion in Serbia was alarmed by the fact that points inside Serbian terrain were targeted, and the VRS and the Yugoslavian army prepared a large joint counteroffensive, led by Ratko Mladic.

5. Consequences of the Serb counteroffensive for Srebrenica in the beginning of 1993

The advance of Naser Oric in the second half of 1992 prompted the VRS to improve its organization on the local level. As we have said, the local defence in Bratunac and elsewhere in the Bosnian-Serbian area originally relied too much on the units of the Territorial Defence that were subordinate to the local SDS party branches. The Muslim attacks in the autumn and winter of 1992-1993 made it clear that the Territorial Defence under the direction of the SDS in Bratunac was not equal to its task. A drastic change of tack was called for: the responsibility now came to rest primarily with the new local units of the regular army that were to be set up. This was a development that could be observed in all of the fighting parties: the army and command structures became better organized and centralized, and the paramilitary units and local militias were integrated into the newly established armies and stopped operating independently.⁴³

At first there were quite a few problems to overcome, primarily in the area of recruiting. The biggest problem for the VRS was the lack of manpower and, according to numerous articles in the local paper *Nasa Rijec*, there was a lot of bitterness about the fact that many Serbs from Bratunac and Srebrenica had fled to Serbia. They were called upon to return to help defend Bratunac; if not, they would lose their homes and possessions and their civil rights. A related problem was the low morale in the units: many Serbs who had been mobilized came from elsewhere and were demoralized because they were displaced and were not deployed in their own areas to defend or win back their homes. There

⁴³ This section is not based on Duijzings' appendix and therefore consequently contains references. The events related in the rest of this chapter have been discussed on the macro level in section I; here we are concerned with the micro level of Srebrenica.

was a large group of Displaced Persons from Zenica in Central Bosnia for example, who found themselves in Bratunac. Since many local Serbs had fled, the morale of those who were fighting, and especially of those who came from elsewhere, was seriously undermined. A related problem was that the status of VRS soldiers was unclear: the Republika Srpska had not officially declared war, which meant that combat active soldiers were not recognized as such and could not count on compensations or pensions for themselves or their families. In case of death or disability they or their family had nothing to fall back upon. It bothered many that war profiteers earned millions and could enrich themselves tremendously, whereas normal soldiers received an extremely low salary.⁴⁴

None the less, the VRS succeeded in gaining a grasp of the situation on the local level in Bratunac. Particularly after the town was closed in on almost all sides, improvements were implemented in the organization and coordination of defence. The first impulses for this came in November and December of 1992 with the formation of the Bratunac Brigade.⁴⁵ Reinforcements arrived from other parts of the Republika Srpska, from Krajina for example. The Yugoslavian army also became involved in the fights. The Muslim attack on Skelani and the shootings on the bridge over the Drina were seized by the JNA as a reason to take part actively in the actions against Naser Oric, which resulted in a complete turnaround in power. As of the middle of January 1993, the Serb troops succeeded in steadily pushing back the borders of the Muslim-controlled area. As we know, this led to their almost taking the enclave of Srebrenica in April 1993.

The large-scale counteroffensive that started on 20 January 1993 was carried out by regular troops of the VRS and the Yugoslavian army. According to Muslim sources, various corps of the Yugoslavian army (the Novi Sad, Uzice and Valjevo corps) were part of the actions which were led by Ratko Mladic and the commanding officer of the Drina corps, Milenko Zivanovic.⁴⁶ Various paramilitary groups were also set in. In particular the Panthers, a paramilitary unit from Bijeljina led by Ljubisa Savic - nicknamed 'Mauser' - played an important role in pushing back the Muslims between December 1993 and April 1994.⁴⁷ According to reports, Russian mercenaries also took part in these actions; these were Afghanistan veterans who deserted the Russian army after the takeover of Boris Yeltsin. They had their own headquarters on the mountain of Majejica and were primarily active in Eastern Bosnia, including the Bijeljina region.⁴⁸

Belgrade first strengthened its artillery positions on the Serbian side of the Drina; they posted artillery units in Bratunac on Bosnian terrain and brought special army and police units to Bajina Basta. These last units were mostly former paramilitary units that had been integrated into the army or police. Preparations were made for air support from the air force base in Uzice. A psychological war was also implemented: a propaganda campaign was started in the media to destabilize the military leaders in the enclave and to undermine morale. Pamphlets were strewn over the enclave to influence the Muslims to surrender, and loudspeakers mounted on army vehicles played a propaganda message on the front lines in the direction of the Muslims. Played to the music of the well known 'March to the Drina', the most famous World War I Serbian military march, the message called for the Muslims to stop the battle.⁴⁹

The attacks on the enclave came from four main directions: Skelani, Bratunac, Zvornik and Milici. Artillery attacks were carried out from Serbia on the Muslim-controlled villages along the Drina. On 30 January Jezero, a strategically important village, returned to Serb hands.⁵⁰ In February, the press service of the Uzice corps of the Yugoslavian army announced that the right bank of the Drina (the

⁴⁴ See the interview of the deputy commanding officer for moral, legal and religious matters of the Drina corps, Col. Slobodan Cerovic, gave to the newspaper *Interju*, 05/02/93, pp.10-11.

⁴⁵ *Nasa Rjiec*, 09/12/92, p.1; *Nasa Rjiec*, December 1993, p.2; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.126-127.

⁴⁶ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 93. See also Bassiouni, *Final Report*, Appendix IV, p.36. Milenko Zivanovic was born in Ratkovici (in the hamlet of Ducici) in the municipality of Srebrenica (Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.157).

⁴⁷ *Nasa Rjiec*, 04/03/93, pp.3 en 8; *Nasa Rjiec*, December 1993, p.2; See also Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.97.

⁴⁸ Bassiouni, *Final report*, Appendix III.a, p.134.

⁴⁹ Interview Boban Tomic 11/11/99.

⁵⁰ Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp.176-177.

Serbian side) was again completely safe. There was some incidental shooting at the hydro-electric plant in Perucac, but that was not seen as a real threat. The Uzice corps denied involvement in the fighting on the Bosnian side of the river.⁵¹

Out of Bratunac, the Serbs recovered first Voljavica and Zalazje from the Muslims in the beginning of February 1993, and in the middle of February many other villages along the Drina and in the hinterland. In March, the VRS advanced in a southerly direction along the Drina, slowly surrounding the eastern side of the enclave and making it possible for attacks in the direction of Srebrenica.⁵² Moving from Zvornik, Kamenica was the first to fall in the hands of the VRS, followed in March by Cerska and Konjevic Polje. Since the advance did not go as quickly as expected, the Serbs tried to break the Muslim resistance at the end of January by offering the civilians trapped in Cerska, Kamenica and Konjevic Polje free crossing through a corridor to Tuzla. On the first night, many civilians did succeed in getting away, but on the second day the Serbs attacked the column and began to fire, killing many Muslims. Others were captured and have been missing since. The rest had to turn around and go back to Cerska.⁵³

The humanitarian situation in Kamenica, Cerska, Konjevic Polje and Srebrenica became more acute every day, although it was not completely clear how grave the situation was. The Bosnian Government placed considerable pressure on the UN Displaced Persons organization UNHCR to bring aid to the Muslim enclaves. The Bosnian Government also pointed out that if Kamenica, Cerska and Konjevic Polje would fall completely into Serb hands, large numbers of Displaced Persons would try to go to Srebrenica, where the humanitarian situation would become even worse.

UNHCR worker Larry Hollingworth has described how he attempted to lead a convoy to Cerska in February 1993, the intention being to also offer assistance to Kamenica and if possible to survey the situation in Srebrenica. The convoy was initially held up in Zvornik because the Serbs were involved in conquering Kamenica at that moment. Large groups of Muslims were already fleeing through the snow in the direction of Konjevic Polje. In Kamenica the Serbs found a mass grave which they showed to the international press.⁵⁴

Since the UNHCR convoys to the Eastern Bosnian enclaves were constantly held up, the situation of the Displaced Persons degenerated rapidly. After a delegation from Srebrenica arrived in Sarajevo to sound the alarm, they started a hunger strike and said they would refuse all international aid if nothing was done about the situation in Srebrenica and the other eastern enclaves.⁵⁵ It was decided to organize airdrops to ease the painful situation. American planes dropped large amounts of food over Sarajevo and the eastern enclaves. Serbian sources maintain that the Muslims in Srebrenica also were given military equipment, weapons and ammunition.⁵⁶ The first airdrops to Cerska took place in the night of 28 February 1993, but since the Serbs had this area under their control by that time, a significant share of the goods came into their hands.

The first airdrops to Konjevic Polje took place on 2 and then 4 March.⁵⁷ Later there were many complaints that the drops actually hurt rather than helped the enclaves. They created chaos because the population went out en masse to find the dropped aid packages. Moreover, the aid only helped the strongest who were able to reach the spots the fastest and once there, fight off the others. In general, the principle of the 'survival of the fittest' applied. The Muslims maintain that this was one of the reasons that Cerska was taken by the Serbs directly the following day on 1 March 1993.⁵⁸ Fearing a humanitarian catastrophe, General Philippe Morillon, the Commander of the UN units in Bosnia,

⁵¹ *Interju*, 05/02/93, pp.10-11.

⁵² Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.94-97; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.176.

⁵³ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.97; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 132. See also Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.173.

⁵⁴ Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.151-66.

⁵⁵ Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.166-68.

⁵⁶ Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, p.118.

⁵⁷ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.118.

⁵⁸ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.98; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp.173-174.

wanted to take a personal look at the situation. Morillon invited Larry Hollingworth of UNHCR to come along to Zvornik to try to push through to the area where the fighting was going on. Morillon asked Hollingworth to take along a doctor from the World Health Organization (WHO). That was Simon Mardel from the UK. With a number of others, they left for Zvornik where they requested permission to continue in the direction of the fighting. After receiving permission, the convoy went on and arrived in Konjevic Polje where Morillon spoke with Oric and the local authorities.⁵⁹ There were many Displaced Persons from Cerska which had just fallen. Mardel indicated that he would like to continue to Srebrenica, and Morillon gave the green light.

A skilled climber, Mardel walked through the snow to Srebrenica that night with a small group of Muslims. The journey lasted six and a half hours. When Mardel arrived in Srebrenica he was taken immediately to the hospital where he was introduced to Dr. Nedred Mujkanovic, a young doctor and army captain who had been sent to Srebrenica by the ABiH; he arrived in the beginning of August 1992. He had carried out more than 1,300 operations, frequently without anaesthesia or medicine. Mujkanovic gave Mardel a tour through the hospital where the situation was worse than expected: there was no food, no medicine, and about twenty deaths a day. Mardel wanted to leave the enclave quickly, but the authorities would not let him go and refused to escort him back to Konjevic Polje. Mardel's presence in Srebrenica quickly became world news. After a few days he walked back on his own, and shortly before Konjevic Polje fell into Serb hands (15 March 1993), Mardel was evacuated. Konjevic Polje was still full of Displaced Persons at the time and was constantly under Serbian fire. Dozens of people died as a result.⁶⁰

Shortly before the fall of Konjevic Polje, thousands of Muslims left in the direction of Srebrenica, now overrun by a new stream of Displaced Persons. The Muslim forces then left their positions and joined the Displaced Persons, and the Serbs retook control of Konjevic Polje, Kravica and Glogova.⁶¹ Some Displaced Persons were taken in by families or friends, whereas the rest were housed in schools and factories, often under inhuman conditions. The last Displaced Persons to arrive in Srebrenica were forced to bivouac in the streets in the bitter spring cold.⁶² On 11 March, Morillon succeeded in taking a medical convoy, escorted by Canadian soldiers and accompanied by members of the UNHCR (among them Larry Hollingworth and Laurens Jolles), a UNMO team and three people from *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) along the mountain road from Bratunac via Zalazje to Srebrenica.⁶³

While Morillon was talking to Oric and the civil authorities of Srebrenica in the post office building, Hollingworth and his fellow UNHCR worker took a walk through the town. It was very cold (22 degrees below zero) and they saw Displaced Persons everywhere in the streets, sitting in circles around a fire; most of them had arrived within the last twenty-four hours from Konjevic Polje. Generally, they carried their possessions with them in a bag or a bundle, and there were only a very few with coats. Some did not even have shoes. Most of the Displaced Persons had not eaten in days; they were hungry, tired, confused and distraught. Some had been drifting since April and came from Zvornik, travelling through Kamenica, Cerska and Konjevic Polje before ending up in Srebrenica. People walked up and down the street with madness in their eyes, as Hollingworth writes.⁶⁴

Members of *Médecins Sans Frontières* inspected the situation in the hospital which they found indescribable. Operations were being done without anaesthesia or the most essential equipment. The operating theatre used during the war was improvised (the hospital had not carried out any operations before the war); worn-out equipment was boiled in a pan to sterilize it. Threadbare, spotted bandages hung to dry above a stove. Two bulbs mounted on a riding frame and attached by a thin wire to a car

⁵⁹ Morillon, *Croire et oser*, p.162.

⁶⁰ Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.170-83. See also Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.174.

⁶¹ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.99; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.174.

⁶² MSF, Brussel. 'Interview Dzema, aunt of Emira', 18/10/1995.

⁶³ Morillon, *Croire et oser*, pp.169-181. Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, p.184-86.

⁶⁴ Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.188-91.

battery formed the lights.⁶⁵ Nedred Mujkanovic, who had had hardly any surgical experience before the war, had become an experienced war surgeon. *Médecins Sans Frontières* reported that there was no water or electricity in the enclave, that many thousands of people had to go without health care and were threatened by starvation; the Displaced Persons were not prepared for the cold and lacked clothing and shoes, and warmed themselves by burning rubbish. Dozens of people died of starvation every day. There was a tremendous lack of everything: food, housing, medical care and sanitary facilities.⁶⁶ An annex to the hospital building, not far from the town hall, had been transformed into a ward where men with amputated limbs lay to recuperate. They made clear that they wanted to leave Srebrenica.⁶⁷

Hollingworth also witnessed the airdrops made in the vicinity of the town. The first took place on 6 March; they would continue for the whole month, mostly in the woods near the town and the village of Bajramovici. The precise locations were never known ahead of time. Every evening, the inhabitants of the town (including women and children) went into the hills to watch for American planes in the hope of obtaining some of the aid. Fires were built to draw attention. As soon as the packages were dropped, it was the law of the jungle. It was a chaotic situation; it was usually dark and everyone did all he could to gain some of the booty. 'It is survival of the fittest that prevails' according to the report of *Médecins Sans Frontière*. People fought for food, using knives even, and there was regular loss of life.⁶⁸ In the beginning whole pallets weighing several hundred kilos were dropped, sometimes crushing the awaiting people. A total of 35 to 40 people were killed by such incidents during the airdrops. Later, small packages were made with food and medicine and thrown out of the aeroplanes. People kept the food for themselves and brought the medicine to the hospital. Sometimes the Serbs fired upon the airdrop locations.⁶⁹

In his eyewitness report, Hollingworth describes the course of events at such an airdrop. He knew that it was every man for himself and that the authorities of the town complained about having no control over the distribution of the aid. Still, it was worse than he thought; Hollingworth drove to the spot where the drops took place and saw hundreds of men, women and older children run through the woods and fight over the aid. The largest and strongest grabbed the most and everyone screamed at one another. Within a few minutes everything was gone and there was nothing left for the local authorities to pick up. During the airdrop witnessed by Hollingworth four people died; three were crushed by pallets and one man was stabbed to death in a fight over the goods.⁷⁰

When Morillon wanted to leave the enclave on 12 March, the population refused to let him go. Morillon's vehicle was blocked by a large group of women. The authorities, who at first stood to wave goodbye to him, suddenly disappeared or said they could do nothing against the crowd. The following night, Morillon attempted to escape from the enclave but did not succeed. On 14 March, Morillon made the speech from the balcony of the hospital that was soon to become world news; he declared that from that point on the population was under the protection of the UN. Hollingworth stuck a UN flag out of the window and the crowd cheered and applauded. Instead of being a hostage, Morillon was suddenly a hero. He settled in the post office building and was given two rooms with a stove by the authorities.⁷¹ Not much later the authorities let Morillon leave. When he departed he left behind eight Canadian soldiers, nine United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs) and two UNHCR people.

On 18 March Mladic agreed to a temporary ceasefire. The following day in the afternoon, a large UNHCR convoy arrived made up of nineteen lorries bearing two hundred tons of goods. People

⁶⁵ Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.192-93.

⁶⁶ MSF, Brussel. MSF Brussels to UNHCR (Joan Edwards), 15/03/93. UNGE, UNHCR. Report on Srebrenica, Laurens Jolles, 11/03/93. See also Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.187-88.

⁶⁷ Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, p.194.

⁶⁸ MSF, Brussel. MSF Brussels (Alain Devaux), 14/06/93. UNGE, UNHCR. HQ Geneva Carminati to Girard (HCR Rhein-Main Air Base), 18 March 1993 re: airdrops.

⁶⁹ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.118-19. Interviews Nedred Mujkanovic 02/12/98, Ilijaz Pilav 31/01/98; Hatidza Hren 02/02/98.

⁷⁰ Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.200-01.

⁷¹ Morillon, *Croire et oser*, pp.172-74; Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp.195-200. Interview Burt Horn 17/11/99.

were waiting in the streets and cheered when the lorries arrived. Morillon led the convoy which was taken to a warehouse and unloaded there. The acute food shortage was solved in one fell swoop in this way.⁷² However, when the convoy wanted to return to Tuzla the next morning, chaos erupted when hordes of people tried to climb on the lorries and even children were crushed. The police shot into the air but ultimately almost seven hundred people went along to Tuzla.⁷³

At the end of March a following transport reached the enclave. When this convoy wanted to return to Tuzla, the same scene took place as two weeks previously. At least two children were crushed to death.⁷⁴ Up until the beginning of April a total of at least 5,560 people and a few hundred wounded were evacuated.⁷⁵ On 24 March, an airbridge was opened which was intended to evacuate critically wounded by helicopter, but this was stopped a few days later because the Serbs shot at the aircraft, resulting in a number of casualties and wounded.

Bosnian Government circles were not at all happy with the evacuations, and even the local government in Srebrenica wanted to call a halt to them. As of that moment, no one else was allowed to leave, not even those older than sixty. The convoys that went to the enclave on 6 and 7 April returned empty.⁷⁶

In the meantime, the Serbian advance continued. At the end of March various villages to the east of Srebrenica fell into Serb hands. The Serbs tightened the ring around Srebrenica slowly but surely and the town came under constant artillery fire and bombardment. Serbian artillery was set up around Srebrenica and in Serbia itself, and fighter bombers and helicopters carried out daily bombings.⁷⁷

On 12 April Zalazje and Zeleni Jadar (see map in section 1) fell into Serb hands. On 13 April the situation became more serious when, during firing on the enclave, at least fifty-six people were killed, among them fifteen children who were playing football on the schoolgrounds, and seventy-three seriously wounded. UNHCR official Louis Gentile was there when this happened and described the atrocity he had seen: the ground was bathed in blood, there were human parts against the fence, and one child had been beheaded.⁷⁸ Larry Hollingworth voiced the hope that the VRS commanding officer responsible for this would 'burn in the hottest part of hell'.⁷⁹ By around the middle of April the Serbs had advanced to 1,800 metres from the town centre of Srebrenica. From their positions on the hills Kvarac and Pribicevac they had a good command of Srebrenica.⁸⁰ Srebrenica was now on the verge of falling into Serb hands. Some people feared that this would be a bloodbath given the Serb desire for revenge after the events of the first year of war.

According to an official foreign document Milosevic too was exasperated and was extremely concerned that if the Bosnian Serb Armies entered Srebrenica there would be a massacre because of the tremendous bad blood that existed surrounding the Muslim leader that the Bosnian Serbs blamed for the Bratunac incident. Milosevic believed it would be a great mistake to take Srebrenica and personally instructed Karadzic not to do so.⁸¹

Naser Oric had actually given up the fight. When the Serbs had taken positions in the hills near the town centre, he realized that his troops could not resist any more. The Muslim-controlled area was reduced from 900 square kilometres to 140 square kilometres around Srebrenica and 110 square kilometres around Zepa. Bratunac was consequently almost completely in Serb hands.⁸²

⁷² Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.119; Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp. 209-10.

⁷³ Confidential information (111).

⁷⁴ Confidential information (112).

⁷⁵ Confidential information (109).

⁷⁶ Confidential information (113).

⁷⁷ Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp.157-58.

³⁷ Confidential information 114.

⁷⁹ Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, p.215.

⁸⁰ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.96; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp.177-179.

⁸¹ Confidential information 43.

⁸² Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.100.

On 15 April, the Muslim authorities sent a confidential message to the UN saying they would surrender if a number of conditions were met: evacuation of wounded soldiers and civilians and free passage for Muslim soldiers to Tuzla.⁸³ On 16 April 1993, however, the Security Council of the United Nations passed resolution 819 declaring Srebrenica a Safe Area. Events related to this UN decision will be discussed in the following chapter.

⁸³ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

Chapter 3

Srebrenica under UN protection: demilitarized and Safe Area (March - June 1993)

1. Introduction

In Chapter 10 of Part I we discussed the dramatic developments at the beginning of 1993 in Eastern Bosnia that were to result in the designation of Srebrenica as a Safe Area by the Security Council of the United Nations and the agreements between the ABiH and the VRS about the demilitarization of the area. That chapter also related how the commanding officer of UNPROFOR in Bosnia, the French general, Philippe Morillon, elicited the anger of the Bosnian authorities at the beginning of March when he stated after a visit to Cerska - a town to the north of Srebrenica that had been captured by the VRS a few days earlier - that he had seen no signs of mass murder, in contrast to what the media had reported.

When it became clear that the VRS was continuing its offensive against Srebrenica, and the Bosnian-Serb authorities continued to refuse to allow UNHCR convoys into the Muslim area, which was shrinking every day, Morillon decided to take action. He feared that the VRS offensive and the ethnic cleansing in Eastern Bosnia would end in a bloodbath, like the one in Vukovar in 1991. Just like the French government, he was convinced that a bloodbath in Srebrenica would deal a mortal blow to the Vance-Owen plan, which had been achieved after difficult negotiations. Morillon hoped that he could stabilize the situation by going to Srebrenica himself with an aid convoy and a few UNMOs, and in that way introduce a UN presence. Without consulting his Force Commander Wahlgren, he left his headquarters in Sarajevo on 10 March 1993 for Srebrenica by way of Tuzla with the consent of VRS commanding general Ratko Mladic.⁸⁴

Despite General Mladic's approval, Morillon was blocked in Zvornik. After negotiations with a strong Bosnian-Serb delegation of commanding officers from the Srebrenica area, he was allowed to continue his journey to Srebrenica. However, he was not allowed to take the UNHCR convoy with him. Only a truck from *Médecins Sans Frontières* with medical supplies and a group of 19 people were allowed to accompany him the following morning.

Morillon's journey with his company is described in Chapter 2 of this Part. The conditions under which that journey took place were important for the topic of that chapter: how the negotiations under Morillon and other UNPROFOR commanding officers took shape.

No matter how you look at it, Morillon's expedition was risky, because no measures had been taken for UNPROFOR support in case there were problems or in case the small convoy was attacked.⁸⁵ Morillon reached Srebrenica on 11 March 1993 from Zvornik and Bratunac by means of a snowy, undermined mountain road, because he had been told by his Bosnian and Serb counterparts that the Yellow Bridge between Bratunac and Potocari was damaged.

The following day, on instructions from the local authorities and the Bosnian government, the refugees in the enclave made it impossible for Morillon and some of his party to leave the enclave by completely blocking his YPR and the vehicles of his convoy. The UNHCR saw the blockade of Morillon by 1,500 women and children primarily as an act of desperation.

⁸⁴ Barros-Duchêne, *Srebrenica*, p. 75. Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 83-85. Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 45. Van Cant, *Lessen in waanzin*, pp.125-127. Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01. Interview L-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

⁸⁵ The group was made up of five Canadian soldiers, two American officers (for the food drops), three MSF workers, three UNHCR workers (L. Hollingworth, L. Jolles and Kojic), four UNMOs, his Cabinet chief, the British major Piers Tucker and his bodyguard and interpreter Mihailov. (S. Mardel, the WHO doctor reached Srebrenica by foot from Konjevic Polje a few days earlier than Morillon. (Morillon, *Croire et oser*, p. 168. Barros-Duchêne, *Srebrenica*, p. 78. Interviews Nedred Mujkanavic, 20/04/99 and J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01)

By taking the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander hostage, the Sarajevo authorities hoped to force UNPROFOR and the UNHCR to offer humanitarian help and to evacuate the wounded. At the same time they hoped to force the VRS and the leaders of the *Republika Srpska* in Pale to stop the offensive against Srebrenica. Morillon decided to make a virtue out of necessity. It was not made known to the outside world that the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander had been taken hostage. On 13 March, standing on the roof of his YPR, he announced that he would stay in Srebrenica out of solidarity with the refugees. This resulted in a slight relaxation of the hostile atmosphere. Morillon was given the top floor of the post office as his 'general's suite', and the others set up temporary quarters on the ground floor. On 14 March Morillon announced from the balcony of his 'suite' that the population of Srebrenica was under the protection of UNPROFOR. As a sign of this he had the UN flag raised at the post office.⁸⁶

In Morillon's words, Srebrenica was a hell.⁸⁷ There were many wounded as a result of the continual VRS firing. Refugees continued to stream into the town; they lived without cover in winter conditions; the food situation was very bad. The refugees especially suffered from hunger; there was hardly any medical help and only one doctor in the emergency hospital. In addition, the situation between the 5,000 original inhabitants of Srebrenica and the continual stream of refugees - estimated by UNHCR on 11 March as 9,000, on 25 March as 30,000⁸⁸ - was very tense. The town was completely desperate. The local government did almost nothing and there was absolutely no coordination in dealing with the stream of refugees. The original population was not concerned about the refugees and only worried about themselves. The only hope in this macabre existence were the American airdrops of food that had started a few days before Morillon's arrival.⁸⁹ However, as was described in the last chapter, the rule of the survival of the fittest saw to it that the aid did not find its way to the weakest or those who needed it most.

Morillon's arrival did have some effect on the VRS: the artillery firing stopped. Since he came with a truck filled with medical supplies, as well as a team from *Médecins Sans Frontières* and representatives of UNHCR, a quick start could be made to cataloguing what was needed, and initial preparations were carried out for evacuating the wounded. The four UNMOs who had come with Morillon were also able to start their work. Nonetheless, Morillon remained a hostage. The Srebrenican authorities did not want to let him go until sufficient goods had been provided and evacuation of the wounded had been organized.⁹⁰

In his statement of 14 March, Morillon placed great responsibility on UNPROFOR and the United Nations. The UNPROFOR mandate provided only for support of the humanitarian aid of UNHCR by protecting convoys and personnel of aid organizations. The Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander now forced the peacekeeping mission to protect an area and its inhabitants. For Morillon's staff that seemed like no more than a promise of convenience made to secure their release. No doubt that played a role, because Morillon was hit hard by his being held hostage.⁹¹ Personally, he expected that his agreement was only temporary, because the Vance-Owen Plan would put an end to the hostilities in all of Bosnia in the very near future. According to that plan Srebrenica would remain in

⁸⁶ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 131. Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, p. 179. Morillon, *Croire et oser*, pp.169-175. Barros-Duchêne, *Srebrenica*, p. 84. Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 84-85. Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 46. Interviews with Dr Nedred Mujkanovic, 20/04/99 and J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

⁸⁷ Morillon, *Croire et oser*, p.171.

⁸⁸ Confidential information (135).

⁸⁹ Confidential information (136). UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 – Srebrenica vol.2 Mar 93: appendix to Wahlgren to Annan Z-327, 15/03/93 'UNMO BiH North: Special Report on situation in Srebrenica area' drawn up by Cdt R. Denyft. Ibid: fax Cordy-Simpson (BH Comd main Kiseljak) to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 15/03/93. Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

⁹⁰ UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 – Srebrenica vol.2 Mar 93: fax Cordy-Simpson (BH Comd main Kiseljak) to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 15 March 1993. Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

⁹¹ Interview J. Segers, 16/06/00. Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00.

Muslim hands.⁹² Morillon's statement was a declaration of intent to improve the situation in the enclave. He had said that already on 10 March during his negotiations in Zvornik. In the beginning, his intentions about ending the fighting around Srebrenica and improving the living conditions of the refugees were not brought out all that clearly.

Other priorities arose: Morillon, the UNHCR and UNPROFOR had their hands full trying to relieve the acute need in Srebrenica, and consequently the first issue was to see to it that the UNHCR convoys were let through by the Bosnian Serbs and that the wounded could be evacuated. This process moved very slowly and as long as no UNHCR convoy arrived in Srebrenica, the civil and military authorities would not allow Morillon to leave. In their eyes, he was more useful as a means of pressure as a hostage in the enclave than as advocate and negotiator outside. On 15 March they allowed members of the *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the UNHCR teams and a few UNMOs to leave, but threatened to kill Morillon and 13 other UNPROFOR military personnel if the UNMOs did not return in two days with a convoy.⁹³ The first humanitarian convoy arrived in Srebrenica on 19 March, and Morillon himself remained another four days before he finally left on instructions of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York.⁹⁴

The realization of Morillon's promise to protect Srebrenica was not the work of UNPROFOR alone. Many parties played a role. The VRS and the authorities in Pale held important cards because they were winning on the battlefield. UNPROFOR and Morillon were also dependent upon the cooperation of both the Bosnian government in Sarajevo and the civil authorities and ABiH in Srebrenica. Outside of Bosnia, the Security Council played a role, in particular in the active participation of the non-aligned countries in the process. In essence, it had to do with creating a stable military situation on the basis of a ceasefire in order to set in motion humanitarian aid and the evacuation of wounded and refugees. Attention focused first of all on humanitarian aid and evacuation. It required a great deal of effort to get this action going at the highest international level.

This chapter will concentrate primarily on the question of how UNPROFOR in Bosnia tried to stabilize the situation and thus to assure the continued existence of the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica. UNPROFOR tried to achieve this stability through a demilitarization agreement based on the Geneva Convention of 1949, and to seal this agreement through UNPROFOR presence. In addition to the problems related to preparing the agreement and the difficulties of implementation, there was also the question of to what extent this approach was in line with the status of a Safe Area as designated for Srebrenica by the Security Council on 17 April 1993. UNPROFOR seemed to operate on the basis of a 'classic' peacekeeping concept, but ran into opposition over such elements as demilitarization and disarmament.

Thus, the question arises whether the UNPROFOR approach fit in this concept and if it did, why UNPROFOR did not succeed in finding support for it in New York. Was that the result of strictly military thinking and an implicit underestimation of the reality on the ground, or an overestimation of the existing possibilities? Three phases can be distinguished in the process of creating the Safe Area in Srebrenica in the spring of 1993. The first starts with the arrival of Morillon in Eastern Bosnia on 10 March 1993 and ends with the first demilitarization agreement for Srebrenica on 17 April 1993. The second phase covers the period of the implementation of this agreement and the evacuations through the second demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993. The third phase runs until the beginning of June when the situation stabilized although the envisioned goal of demilitarization was not reached.

⁹² Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 46.

⁹³ UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305: DFC 3300 – Srebrenica, vol 2 Mar 93: coded cable Z-237, Wahlgren to Annan, 15/03/93.

⁹⁴ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-394, 22/03/93, Annan to Morillon.

2. Ceasefire and demilitarization under UN presence (10 March - 17 April 1993)

A 'process of rumour and panic' as a 'reflection of fear' had - in the words of Morillon⁹⁵ - Eastern Bosnia in its grasp. The Muslims and the Bosnian Serbs lived in continual fear of massacre by the other party. The vicious circle of fear and panic, as Morillon put it in his meeting in Zvornik with regional Bosnian-Serb authorities on 10 March 1993, could only be broken by a ceasefire and the stationing of UNMOs as neutral observers. His phrase was: 'Against the mistrust we have to build confidence.'⁹⁶ Since the attention of the world was focused on Srebrenica, in Morillon's opinion the *Republika Srpska* would do itself a favour by allowing the evacuation of wounded in keeping with international agreements and giving up the blockade of the enclave.⁹⁷ Morillon made a similar statement to Naser Oric and the civil authorities in Srebrenica. Morillon would try to achieve a ceasefire and the arrival of humanitarian convoys. Oric and his ABiH forces would have to desist from provocations and Srebrenica would become a demilitarized zone. UNPROFOR would contribute to the stabilization of the situation by stationing UNMOs in the enclave. On 18 March, Oric agreed to this on behalf of the civil authorities and the government in Sarajevo.⁹⁸

In the following days Morillon continued - in Srebrenica - to develop his plans. In the short term he wanted to achieve a ceasefire to make it possible to evacuate the wounded; in the longer term he wished to have UNPROFOR protection through the stationing of a UNPROFOR contingent of UNMOs and a Canadian company, and through the establishment of a demilitarized United Nations Protected Area (UNPA), as had been done earlier in the Serbian areas of Croatia. Time was of the essence in carrying out these plans, because otherwise, in Morillon's opinion, Srebrenica would fall in four days (this was 15 March).⁹⁹

Morillon wanted to create a stable situation in three steps to bridge the period until the Vance-Owen peace plan would be implemented. As part of this, after the ceasefire (step one), Srebrenica would be a demilitarized zone (step two) and after that was achieved a UNPROFOR contingent would monitor the situation (step three). At the time this plan did not seem realistic. Morillon's primary problem in the first phase was acquiring VRS cooperation in a ceasefire. The VRS did not want to consider the situation in Srebrenica separately from the situation in Bosnia as a whole. The Bosnian-Serb army had been trying to achieve a ceasefire for all of Bosnia since November 1992, but according to the VRS every agreement had not lasted long because of ABiH infractions. In fact, both parties had begun an offensive to improve their positions on the ground during the preparation of the Vance-Owen plan. The ABiH tried to conquer the suburb of Ilijas near Sarajevo and had started a counteroffensive from Tuzla in the direction of Eastern Bosnia, as a response to a VRS offensive on Muslim areas, in particular the area around Srebrenica, that had started in the middle of February 1993.¹⁰⁰

After the arrival of Morillon, the VRS was still not interested in a ceasefire for Srebrenica alone. VRS Chief of Staff Milovanovic repeated this to Morillon on 15 March during a meeting at Yellow Bridge on the border between Muslim and VRS territory near Bratunac. The VRS attack on Srebrenica

⁹⁵ Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01; appendix: report of meeting of Morillon with Lukic et al in Zvornik on 10/03/93. (notes of Zoutendijk, who attended the meeting).

⁹⁶ Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01; appendix: report of meeting of Morillon with Lukic et al in Zvornik on 10/03/93. (notes of Zoutendijk, who attended the meeting).

⁹⁷ Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01; appendix: report of meeting of Morillon with Lukic et al in Zvornik on 10/03/93. (notes of Zoutendijk, who attended the meeting).

⁹⁸ Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 85. UNNY, file 87305 (DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 1993): fax Chief Press and Information BH Command Kiseljak to Chief Press and Information Zagreb, 13/03/93: appendix: press release of Morillon. Interview Nedred Mujkanovic, 20/04/99.

⁹⁹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 (DFC 3300 - Srebrenica, vol 2 Mar 93) fax BH Comd Main Kiseljak to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 15/03/93. Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 89-90.

¹⁰⁰ Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 81-82. Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, pp.172-173.

would stop - according to Milovanovic who was speaking for Mladic - as soon as the ABiH stopped its attack on Ilijas near Sarajevo and the offensive from Tuzla in the direction of Eastern Bosnia.

Two days later, during the meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group (MMWG) in Sarajevo, a negotiation group of the belligerents under UNPROFOR, it became clear that a ceasefire was still not a topic of discussion for the VRS delegation. Four days later Mladic's deputy, General Gvero, repeated to Morillon that he was only willing to consider a ceasefire for all of Bosnia. He was opposed to 'tactical ceasefires for [the] convenience of [the] Muslims'.¹⁰¹

Nor did the VRS want to agree to an increased UNPROFOR presence in Srebrenica. Morillon wanted to start on the placement of a large number of UNMOs and to back this up later with UNPROFOR troops. Mladic had flatly refused that idea. On 23 March, the day of Morillon's departure from Srebrenica by order of UN headquarters in New York, only seven UNPROFOR representatives and one UNHCR representative remained.¹⁰² There was not much hope of realizing Morillon's plan as long as the VRS would not budge. After Morillon left Srebrenica the VRS started its bombardments again. Assessments of the situation were very bleak. The special envoy of the UNHCR for the former Yugoslavia, J. Mendiluce expected a 'mass exodus, on foot, to Tuzla'. Morillon feared 'an irresistible BSA advance'.¹⁰³ The recently designated Swedish Force Commander, General Wahlgren, drew the conclusion from the intensified fighting that it would only be possible to achieve a pause or end to the VRS offensive against Srebrenica by placing heavy pressure on Mladic.¹⁰⁴

On advice of the Russian ambassadors in Zagreb and Belgrade, Wahlgren now tried to gain Mladic's cooperation through Milosevic for an agreement about Srebrenica. Wahlgren himself thought that Mladic could not ignore Milosevic's opinion because of the VRS's dependency on the Yugoslavian army, the JNA. During a discussion arranged by Milosevic on 26 March, Wahlgren and Mladic did indeed agree to a ceasefire for all of Bosnia which was to begin on 28 March.

Mladic and Halilovic confer

They also agreed that Mladic and the ABiH Commander in Chief, General Halilovic, would discuss an end to the hostilities on 6 April at the airport of Sarajevo in a meeting chaired by UNPROFOR. Mladic did not yet want to talk about increased UN presence in Srebrenica. He argued that consent of the *Republika Srpska* parliament was required for the introduction of more UNMOs and a UNPROFOR contingent. Mladic was not prepared to withdraw in any way from his strategic position around Srebrenica. He said he was willing to allow refugees to leave Srebrenica and humanitarian convoys to enter. The recurrent theme of the discussion was the Bosnian-Serb accusation emphasized by Mladic that the UN chose the side of the Bosnian Muslims and had no sympathy for the fate of the Serbian civilians in Muslim areas.¹⁰⁵

Mladic's refusal to allow a larger UN contingent in Srebrenica did not mean that the topic had been removed from the agenda. UNPROFOR did not submit a request to the Bosnian-Serb parliament, but Morillon proposed to use the calm of the ceasefire to send extra UN troops to Srebrenica without the approval of the belligerents. This was clearly intended as a counter move to hamper continuation of the VRS attack. The Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander tried to present this move as an advance step for the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan which included the deployment of extra troops and the opening of humanitarian corridors. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York, however, found this manoeuvre too dangerous for political

¹⁰¹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 (DFC 3300 – Srebrenica, vol 2 Mar 93): fax BH Comd Main Kiseljak to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 15/03/93. Confidential information (138). Quotation in: UNPROFOR: fax BH Comd Main Kiseljak to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 22/03/93.

¹⁰² UNNY, DPKO, code cables UNPROFOR: MSC-394, 22/03/93 Annan to Morillon. Confidential information (67).

¹⁰³ UNNY, DPKO coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-383, 24/03/93, Wahlgren to Annan.

¹⁰⁴ UNNY, DPKO coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-365, 21/03/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Ibid: Z-382, 24/03/93 Wahlgren to Annan. Ibid: Z-383, 24/03/93, Wahlgren to Annan.

¹⁰⁵ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-382, 24/03/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Ibid, Z-383, 24/03/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Ibid, Z-411, 29/03/93. Confidential information (68) and (138).

reasons.¹⁰⁶ Still, this did not mean that the option of sending in UNPROFOR reinforcements to Srebrenica without the cooperation of the VRS was eliminated.

After the VRS breached the ceasefire on 2 April, the High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, insisted on an immediate reinforcement of the UN presence in Srebrenica 'in order to turn the enclave into an area protected by the UN'¹⁰⁷. If that did not happen, the only remaining option was a large-scale evacuation of the population of Srebrenica. The chairman of the Security Council insisted in a statement on the implementation of Ogata's proposal. Wahlgren and his staff decided in consultation with Morillon and his chief-of-staff to take action. They decided not to negotiate with the VRS and the ABiH, rather announced their decisions as facts to the belligerents and New York. In a letter of 4 April 1993 Wahlgren demanded that the ceasefire be honoured and the siege of Srebrenica stopped. He announced the deployment of extra UNMO teams and a Canadian company, as well as the opening of a corridor for humanitarian aid and the evacuation of wounded.¹⁰⁸

Although the aid convoys and the evacuation of wounded now got underway, the Bosnian-Serb side continued to be very hostile towards UNPROFOR. They believed that UNPROFOR had chosen the Muslim side. This attitude was expressed in high-handed actions by local commanding officers. On 27 March, sections of the town of Srebrenica as well as the helicopter landing zone were fired upon from Bratunac, apparently to obstruct the evacuation of wounded that had begun a few days before. Two Muslims were killed and two Canadian soldiers wounded. Morillon himself was the victim of a well-planned 'spontaneous' attack of furious Serbs on his armoured vehicle in Zvornik. For the Bosnian-Serb authorities he was the embodiment of UNPROFOR's '[taking] the side (...) against [the] Serbian people'.¹⁰⁹

Since the VRS had begun firing on Srebrenica again after Morillon's departure on 23 March, the UNHCR thought that she could make an end to the humanitarian calamity by implementing a large-scale evacuation of 15,000 refugees out of Srebrenica. The UNHCR special envoy to Yugoslavia, J. Mendiluce, dismissed accusations of the Bosnian authorities that this would mean cooperating with the ethnic cleansing. According to his explanation, the UNHCR followed a two-pronged policy: evacuation of the refugees who wished to leave and the supply of aid to those who chose to remain in Srebrenica. To carry out this operation the UNPROFOR contingent in Srebrenica would need reinforcements.

After Karadzic refused his approval for this on 5 April, Wahlgren decided to send a Canadian company from Kisovo to Srebrenica to support the large-scale evacuation. Mendiluce tried in vain to convince the representative of the International Red Cross in Tuzla to declare Srebrenica as a protected area under the Geneva Convention by raising the Red Cross flag at the Srebrenica hospital. The idea was that this would have offered the combined UNHCR-UNPROFOR operation extra protection. In addition to international pressure, the military balance of power was also reason for the determination of UNPROFOR and UNHCR. The VRS offensive had stopped on 28 March as a result of the ceasefire and the bad weather conditions. After artillery firing started up again from the north, east and west on 2 April, UNPROFOR was afraid that VRS would continue, surround the enclave and take it.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-451, 30/03/93 Annan to Wahlgren and Morillon.

¹⁰⁷ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-482, 02/04/93. Appendix: letter.

¹⁰⁸ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-482, 02/04/93, Annan to Wahlgren. Ibid, Z-442, 04/04/93, Wahlgren to Annan). APVVN, file 910 Yugoslavia: coded message NYVU 314, 03/04/93.

¹⁰⁹ Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, pp. 188-189. Morillon, *Croire et oser*, pp.179-180. UNNY, DPKO coded cables UNPROFOR, Z-462, 08/04/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Confidential information (140). Quotation from: NIOD, Coll. Wahlgren: Karadzic to Wahlgren and Boutros-Ghali, 04/04/93. UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 – Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 93:fax BHC Morillon to HQ Zagreb, 13/04/93.

¹¹⁰ Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 92-93. Confidential information (125) and (126). UNGE UNPROFOR Box 195, file 2.5.2. HQ BH Command weekly Infosum no.23, 05/04/93. UNHCR, Fonds 11 Records of the Central Registry Series 3: classified Subject Files 1985-1995 File: 619.5 Protection and General Legal Matters. Protection and related problems Arising from the Civil War in Yugoslavia 1993, Binder Z9. Fax Morillon to Gvero, re: Situation in Srebrenica, 07/04/93. MSF: satcom Arjan Laan, 07/04/93.

Wahlgren held off with sending a Canadian company to Srebrenica because, after an initial meeting on 6 April in Sarajevo between the VRS and ABiH about details of a ceasefire, he wanted to have Mladic's endorsement. Wahlgren undertook direct negotiations with Mladic in Belgrade to try to bring an end to the VRS offensive against Srebrenica. The talks on 9 April yielded little results however. Mladic and his deputy Gvero used their talk with Wahlgren, Morillon, his Chief of Staff Thornberry and UNHCR representative J. Kumin primarily to blow off steam about the international attention on Srebrenica. They continued with their well-known complaint about insufficient support for the Bosnian Serbs and murderous attacks of the Muslims who did not keep their agreements. Wahlgren tried to pick up on this by saying that the international attention was a result of the VRS actions. According to him, the power to remove international attention was in Mladic's hands. This reasoning found as little response as Wahlgren's argument not to look at the past but to concentrate on the future. Mladic did not go along with Wahlgren's proposal '[to] break the escalation' and 'to deploy a company into Srebrenica and to demilitarize the town'. After the meeting he said to journalists about Wahlgren's proposal: 'Over my dead body, and the bodies of my family'.

Wahlgren had gained nothing in other words. Mladic had only agreed to renewing the ceasefire as of the following day, 10 April at 14:00 hours and to a meeting with ABiH leader Halilovic on 12 April in Sarajevo. Srebrenica would be the only item on the agenda. Mendiluce concluded that Mladic had again won time and that on 12 April the only item on the agenda would be the surrender of Srebrenica.¹¹¹ Halilovic boycotted the meeting out of protest against the continued VRS offensive against Srebrenica.

Again, the meeting between Mladic and Wahlgren on 12 April yielded nothing. Mladic refused all cooperation in relieving the UN personnel in Srebrenica and sending a Canadian company. The VRS Commander in Chief did not answer when asked whether he would take Srebrenica by force. He limited himself to the remark that it would not be 'politically expedient' and that - if he had wanted - he could have taken it ten days earlier. He remained willing to talk to Halilovic about a political solution for Srebrenica. Halilovic would not budge and the impasse seemed irresolvable.¹¹²

Srebrenica lost?

It seemed as if Srebrenica was lost. Morillon's promise of UNPROFOR protection on 14 March had done little for the enclave. The small international UNPROFOR detachment, UNMO, UNHCR, *Médecins Sans Frontières* amounted to only 15 people and could not offer any real protection against a VRS attack.¹¹³ Because of his strong military position, Mladic was able to dismiss all UNPROFOR proposals to end the battle around Srebrenica. In exchange for the ceasefire for all of Bosnia he was not willing to oblige UNPROFOR in any way concerning Srebrenica: no reinforcements of the UN presence, no discussions about demilitarization or the deployment of a company.

On 12 April the artillery and mortar attacks started up again, resulting in 56 deaths and 73 wounded. In the opinion of two UNMOs that was a response to the firing of mortar grenades on Bratunac by the ABiH.¹¹⁴ This brought a quick end to the cautious optimism of a month earlier. The VRS had come to within a few kilometres of Srebrenica on all sides: in the southeast Skendorovici, Pribicevec, Zleni Jadar and Banja Crni Guber were in their hands; in the northwest Bukunjlava was attacked; and in the north-east the road in-between Gradina and Zalazje was under fire (see map in the first section of Chapter 2).

¹¹¹ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp. 190-191; Confidential information (69); UNGE, UNHCR, F19 SF 6, binder Srebrenica protection 4. Fax Mendiluce to HC Ogata, 11/04/93.

¹¹² UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-480, 13/04/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Confidential information (129).

¹¹³ UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 – Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 93: fax BH Comd UNMO to UNMO HQ Zagreb, 13/04/93 re: Mission Report Srebrenica Garrison Commander/SMO.

¹¹⁴ Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

Given these circumstances the ABiH commanding officer, Naser Oric, came to the conclusion that Srebrenica was lost. On 14 April 1993 he informed representatives of international organizations that he wanted to surrender. He made three conditions for this: first of all, evacuation of wounded ABiH soldiers, evacuation of all civilians and finally 'guaranteed safe passage for all military personnel to walk to Tuzla'. The UNHCR representative brought this message personally to Belgrade on 15 April. The UNMO team announced it to the Bosnia-Herzegovina command in Kiseljak on the evening of 15 April on UNHCR radio.¹¹⁵ A complicating factor was that the authorities in Srebrenica had not talked to the government in Sarajevo about the decision and did not want it to be part of the negotiations. For this reason they had asked that the offer be treated as confidential. The confidentiality was short-lived however. The BBC intercepted the message and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations announced it during an informal consultation of the Security Council on Srebrenica.¹¹⁶

Morillon negotiated directly with the VRS about Oric's conditions and translated these into a number of steps. The most difficult point seemed to be the implementation of the surrender. He made a distinction between 'disposal of weapons' and 'move of combatants'. At 8:00 am the following morning, 16 April, Morillon informed the authorities in Srebrenica that as of 12:00 pm or earlier 'an absolute ceasefire' would be in force. 'We have agreement in principle to an airlift on Sat[urday] 17 April. (...) It is essential that the Moslem forces do nothing to provoke or precipitate a Serbian breaking of the ceasefire'. Negotiations were underway about the surrender of ABiH weapons to UNPROFOR. Morillon would discuss 'further details of a possible surrender' later that morning on the telephone with Mladic.¹¹⁷ Even though Mladic actually had the surrender of the ABiH in Srebrenica in his pocket, international pressure on him to halt the offensive increased.¹¹⁸ With the agreement of Karadzic, Milosevic now asked Wahlgren to deploy 'military monitoring teams' in and around Srebrenica as quickly as possible 'in order to report movements, fire, etc. in the area'.

Wahlgren then ordered a company of the Canadian battalion, CanBat, to move from Visoko to Tuzla to be able to enter Srebrenica the following day if possible. It was still not clear whether Mladic was willing to cooperate.

Negotiations on the basis of UN Resolution 819

The fighting continued until into the morning of 17 April 1993; the ABiH reconquered a number of villages around the town. Mladic showed up in Sarajevo for the talks with Halilovic, Wahlgren and Morillon at 12:30 in the afternoon, a half hour late. Mladic's favourable bargaining position had been undermined by Resolution 819 which had been approved a few hours earlier by the Security Council. The Security Council had acted under pressure from the group of non-aligned countries under the assumption that Srebrenica had fallen or would fall. The resolution called upon all parties to treat Srebrenica and environs as a 'Safe Area which should be free from any armed attack or any other hostile act'.¹¹⁹

The negotiations in Sarajevo lasted 14 hours, until 02:00 am in the morning of 18 April. Wahlgren and Morillon had difficulties with the interpretation of the Srebrenica resolution. The resolution had been purposely kept vague and included no definition of the Safe Area; thus, it was

¹¹⁵ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 195, file 2.5.2. Fax 16 0919 Apr 93, HQBH Command Kiseljak to BH Comd Fwd Sarajevo, 16/04/93. Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 95.

¹¹⁶ Confidential information. (70).

¹¹⁷ UNNY, DPKO coded cables: Wahlgren to Annan, Z-489, 16/04/93 with appendix: crypto fax 15 2249 Apr 93, HQ BH Command Kiseljak to BH Comd Sarajevo, 15/04/93. UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 53 File 1.2.6. HQ BH Command Weekly Infsum no.25 [11-17/4], 19/04/93. ADEF: DCBC: confidential memorandum 93/546 chief DAV to M via deputy DGPZ and S, 16/04/93.

¹¹⁸ Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 95-96. Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, pp. 205-206. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 135.

¹¹⁹ Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, pp. 206-207. Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 103-104. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Wahlgren to Annan, Z-490, 16/04/93. UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 53 File 1.2.6. UNMO HQ BH to HQ BH Comd re: Daily Situation Report 161800B APR – 171800B APR 93. Confidential information (71). Text of the resolution in *United Nations Yearbook 1993*, pp. 452-453.

unclear what UNPROFOR's task was in the implementation, and even the zone of the Safe Area was not defined. Sashi Tharoor, close associate to the chief of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Kofi Annan, had made it clear to Wahlgren and Morillon that Resolution 819 'creates no military obligations for UNPROFOR to establish or protect such a Safe Area'. What was clear was that on the basis of the mandate, UNPROFOR would have to increase its presence immediately in Srebrenica to monitor the humanitarian situation.¹²⁰ That had been attempted unsuccessfully in the previous weeks. It now seemed possible.

In actual fact Wahlgren, Morillon and Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, General Hayes, tried during the talks on 17 April to implement the three steps that had been sketched earlier: a ceasefire, deployment of a Canadian company and the demilitarization of Srebrenica. Realization of the plan to stabilize the situation with the agreement of both parties now seemed possible due to international pressure and the ABiH's capitulation offer. However, this was not without difficulties either. Mladic seemed to have come only to accept the surrender of Srebrenica. Morillon became increasingly irritated during the negotiations over the wild and coarse manner of Mladic, whose army was about to take the enclave. It seems that Morillon even considered calling Karadzic personally to ask him to sack Mladic.¹²¹ ABiH negotiator General Halilovic was calmness itself: according to Wahlgren, an intelligent man who understood the problems and ignored Mladic's provocations. Wahlgren tried to expedite the negotiations by talking to Mladic and Halilovic in different rooms.¹²²

Halilovic, on the other hand, found Wahlgren's basic principles, a ceasefire, deployment of UNPROFOR troops and demilitarization, acceptable. The ABiH commanding officer wanted to fix as many details as possible in the agreement: the border of the demilitarized zone, how it would be marked and the position of UNPROFOR's observation posts (OPs). He also wanted to define a larger area as demilitarized zone than that within the actual confrontation line. Mladic for his part demanded that the ABiH soldiers hand over their weapons and be prisoners of war.

Wahlgren wanted in any case to set the demilitarized zone. Finally, after 14 hours of stormy negotiations, an agreement was reached between ABiH and VRS in the presence of UNPROFOR that was in the spirit of Resolution 819 of the Security Council.¹²³

Core elements to the agreement included: a ceasefire on 18 April at 05:00 am; deployment of a Canadian UNPROFOR company in Srebrenica at 11:00 am of the same day; opening of an air corridor from Srebrenica via Zvornik to Tuzla as of 12:00 pm for the transport of wounded and seriously ill; demilitarization under the authority of UNPROFOR ('all weapons, ammunition, mines, explosives and combat supplies (except medicine) inside Srebrenica will be submitted/handed over to UNPROFOR') within 72 hours of the arrival of a CanBat unit, followed by verification by both parties; establishment of a working group under the direction of UNPROFOR for the working out and monitoring of the demilitarization; disclosure and cleaning up of mine fields; freedom of movement for UNHCR and the International Red Cross and admission of humanitarian help; transfer of all dead and wounded and preparation of the exchange of prisoners of war.

The agreement included a number of risky arrangements for UNPROFOR. The question was whether it would be possible to complete the demilitarization within 72 hours, whether it would be possible to maintain the demilitarized zone with a single Canadian company, whether it would be possible to establish the borders of the demilitarized zone, whether the exchange of prisoners of war would take place, and what would happen to the ABiH in the enclave. Nothing was determined about a free exit as Naser Oric had demanded. Mladic for his part had demanded but not received the surrender of all ABiH soldiers as prisoners of war.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ NIOD, Coll. Wahlgren. Annan to Wahlgren, MSC-607, 16/04/93.

¹²¹ Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 105.

¹²² Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 104-105. Interview L-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

¹²³ Interview L-E Wahlgren, 03/06/99. Interview V. Andreev, 07/07/00. Confidential information (65).

¹²⁴ Confidential information (72) and (73). UNNY, DPKO coded cables UNPROFOR: crypto fax Wahlgren to Annan, 18/4/93 appendix: *Agreement for the Demilitarization of Srebrenica*.

The demilitarization agreement for Srebrenica of 18 April 1993 was an important moment in the bitter contest between ABiH and VRS. From UNPROFOR's perspective, it achieved a number of points that had been indicated since Morillon's promise on 14 March 1993 as essential for a peaceful settlement of the Srebrenica conflict and a stabilization of the situation, namely a ceasefire, UNPROFOR presence and demilitarization. The fact that the agreement could be reached was due to the great international pressure on the *Republika Srpska*, the VRS and Milosevic on the one hand, and the hopeless military position of the ABiH in Srebrenica on the other. The ABiH had lost the military battle, but the defeat was masked by the political developments on the international stage; as a result Srebrenica remained a Muslim area. Mladic got less than was thought possible, but he went along with the agreement because he wanted to free up troops for the contest along the Posavina corridor.

The battle for Srebrenica was now over, but whether the agreement would be actually implemented depended upon the cooperation of the two parties. UNPROFOR was responsible for carrying out the central agreements (monitoring of compliance to the ceasefire, collection and storage of the weapons within 72 hours, evacuation of the wounded and sick, and monitoring of the implementation of demilitarization). UNPROFOR's position was strengthened so as to make that possible: its presence in Srebrenica would be increased, even though a company of 150 was insufficient for the extensive task of demilitarization in the required short time period.

A great deal would depend upon the cooperation of the VRS and ABiH in implementation. In that respect the omens were not good. There was no basis for trust between ABiH and VRS and neither army had worked all that loyally with UNPROFOR up to this point. UNPROFOR was frightened to take any action in Srebrenica without the prior agreement of the VRS because of the risks to its personnel in Srebrenica and elsewhere in the Bosnian-Serb area.

Thus, the prospects for implementing the agreement of 18 April 1993 were not favourable. Neither ABiH nor VRS had received what they had asked for: there were no arrangements for the withdrawal of ABiH and the demilitarized zone was not established as ABiH had wanted. The VRS was not given the ABiH forces as prisoners of war. In short, despite the agreement there remained more than enough conflicts in this extremely vulnerable construction.

3. Implementation of the demilitarization agreement of 18 April 1993

After the agreement on the demilitarization of Srebrenica was signed on 18 April, the company of Major Poirier of CanBat I received orders to move from Tuzla to Srebrenica. The company was made up of three infantry platoons, an engineering section and two groups with TOW anti-tank artillery, 150 men altogether. They left in 20 M-113 armoured personnel vehicles and arrived at 12:00 pm in the town, an hour later than instructed.

The Canadians were welcomed as saviours. Later in the day the CanBat commanding officer arrived in Kisovo, Lieutenant Colonel Geburt to lead the difficult assignment.¹²⁵ CanBat was the UNPROFOR name for a reinforced battalion of the 2nd Royal Canadian Regiment that had arrived in Bosnia in November 1992. Since deployment in the Bosnian-Serb area was problematic, the battalion had been stationed in Kisovo and used for all kinds of emergency assignments. According to UNPROFOR Commander in Chief Wahlgren this company was made up of 'well trained peacekeepers with heavy arms (...) the best that there was'.¹²⁶

By chance, a few men from CanBat had gone with Morillon to Srebrenica at the beginning of March. They were part of the military engineering detachment and just happened to be in Zvornik when Morillon needed a YPR to go to Srebrenica and borrowed one from CanBat. This small group,

¹²⁵ Taylor & Nolan, *Tested Mettle. Canada's Peacekeepers at War*, pp. 101-102. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 195 file 2.5.2. HQ BH Comd (Main) Kiseljak daily sitrep 18/04/93. Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, 148-150. (Stankovic made a dating error. He dates the arrival of CanBat in Srebrenica as Sunday 17 april instead of 18 april.) 'Canadian troops Sent to Besieged City' *The Toronto Star*, 17/04/93. Honig and Both, *Srebrenica*, p.106 say that 'a silent crowd had witnessed the entry of the Canadians'.

¹²⁶ Interview L-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

led by Sergeant Morrison stayed in Srebrenica until 18 April. During an evacuation of wounded on 25 March, two soldiers of the group were injured by VRS firing.¹²⁷

Without any specific preparation and almost totally unfamiliar with the area, the ceasefire line and the local conditions, the company of Major Poirier had the difficult task of demilitarizing Srebrenica. The assignment of Poirier's company was set out in an operations order from Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Their first assignment was clearing and securing a landing zone for helicopters for the evacuation of wounded, as well as the coordination and support of this. The company was also charged with supervising adherence to the ceasefire in the town, and outside with the charting and observation of VRS positions, the establishment of contact with local civil authorities and the military commanders of the opposing parties. Finally, CanBat was to start the demilitarization in the town and then in the surrounding area by collecting and guarding all weapons, ammunition, mines and explosives. Instructions about the destruction of these materials would follow. Given the volatile situation, CanBat was instructed to report every hour to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Kiseljak.¹²⁸

The evacuation of wounded from the enclave was slow in getting started. On 18 April British and French helicopters transported 133 wounded via Zvornik to Tuzla. On 19 April at the end of the day, 484 wounded had been evacuated by air. The week after that another 150 followed.¹²⁹ In actual fact, this was the only part of the agreement that was carried out to the letter. Naser Oric did not seem inclined to a smooth implementation of the agreement. He received no instructions from his superiors in Sarajevo to surrender or to carry out the demilitarization agreement. During the first meeting with Geburt, Naser Oric agreed to cooperate with UNPROFOR but he undercut that promise immediately by announcing that there was no question of evacuation of civilians.

Oric would allow no one to leave the enclave, including UN personnel. For the time being he did not make good his threats, however, and that evening the helicopters were able to leave for Tuzla without any problem.¹³⁰ Oric's announcement deterred the UNHCR from its plan to begin the next day, 19 April, with the evacuation of 25,000 refugees in two weeks. The civil authorities said that they were not interested in taking the refugees first to Tuzla if they were going to be able to go back to their villages within a few weeks - seemingly they expected that the Bosnian Serbs would accept the Vance-Owen plan as well. In their opinion, it would be better to bring back the 7,000 refugees who had gone to Tuzla since 19 March. They called for food and for building materials to repair the damage. A large-scale evacuation was no longer on the agenda.¹³¹

The biggest problems had to do with the implementation of the military parts of the agreement. The first days, the VRS and ABiH observed the ceasefire, but towards the end of April both parties started up fighting again on the ceasefire line. Demilitarization progressed with difficulty. No arrangements had been made in Sarajevo about implementation and CanBat had not received detailed instructions. The unit was too small to take charge itself of systematic collection of weapons and ammunition. UNPROFOR was dependent upon the cooperation of the ABiH for this crucial component of the plan. ABiH commanding officer Naser Oric wanted to put off the demilitarization of Srebrenica. To his mind, the CanBat contingent was not capable of defending the enclave against a VRS attack once the weapons would be handed over. Oric suspended cooperation until there would be reinforcements of CanBat. That was out of the question for the moment because the VRS refused to allow two extra Canadian platoons in Srebrenica.

¹²⁷ Taylor and Nolan, *Tested Mettle*, pp. 100-101. DFAIT, file 21-14-6-UNPROFOR vol 26: memorandum DNHQ, Sitrep re:Morillon, 17/03/93. NIOD, Zylab 21536, declassified DND, Srebrenica rotation, 02/04/93.

¹²⁸ UNNY UNPROFOR, file87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2 MAR 93: fax COS BH Comd Kiseljak to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 18/4/93 appendix: CG/6054/93 Demilitarization of Srebrenica.

¹²⁹ UNNY, DPKO coded cables UNPROFOR: Wahlgren to Annan, Z-517, 21/04/93. Interview Nedred Mujkanovic, 20/04/99. Confidential information (129).

¹³⁰ Stankovic, *Trustful Mole*, p. 147 en 152.

¹³¹ Confidential information (106).

To keep from affecting its own defence capacity in the enclave and still go along with the demilitarization, the ABiH decided to give its own interpretation. It used the discrepancies in terminology in the agreement. The agreement of 18 April did not include a precise description of the demilitarized zone around Srebrenica. It spoke of the 'demilitarization of Srebrenica' and of the ceasefire in 'the Srebrenica area'. The ABiH concluded from this that only the town had to be demilitarized and not the whole area in the 'achieved lines of confrontation'. In concrete terms, this meant that the ABiH took all modern and usable weapons and ammunition out of the town into the surrounding areas and turned over to CanBat only old and unusable weapons for which there was little or no ammunition. The result of the voluntary surrender by ABiH was extremely limited in other words. This put UNPROFOR in a precarious position.

To save the agreement, UNPROFOR was prepared to do everything possible to see to it that all weapons were handed over within 72 hours and that both parties would establish at 12:00 noon on 21 April that demilitarization was complete. It seemed unlikely that the VRS would agree. The previous evening Mladic said to Wahlgren that he estimated that the ABiH had 14,000 men in the enclave and that consequently CanBat had to take possession of at least 10,000 weapons. If that did not happen, he would take measures and would in such a case also demand the departure of UNPROFOR within 12 hours. That would mean the end of the demilitarization agreement. Wahlgren maintained that the demilitarization of Srebrenica was proceeding in accordance with the agreement. He suspected that in his anger about the chain of events, Mladic wanted to take the initiative again. Mladic said he wanted to conclude 'an honour deal' with ABiH Commander in Chief Halilovic, which Wahlgren suspected had to do with 'a surrender and free departure of Muslim troops'. Wahlgren assumed that it was too late for such a measure because he believed - incorrectly - that most of the ABiH soldiers had already escaped from the enclave.¹³²

Thus, the danger existed that demilitarization would fail due to lack of clarity in the agreement and differences of opinion about the size of the demilitarized zone and the number of weapons to be handed over. In the talks of the Mixed Military Working Group in Sarajevo on 19 April 1993 a great deal of time was spent without result on the definition of 'the Srebrenica area'. The ABiH maintained that it was not responsible for demilitarization of the town - Wahlgren would later say to NIOD that this was a 'typical Muslim way of acting'.¹³³ Wahlgren's report to New York indicates that the VRS and UNPROFOR - contrary to what is found in the report of the Secretary-General of the UN of November 1999¹³⁴ - maintained that it meant that the whole area was inside the ceasefire line. This difference in opinion concerning the exact position of the border of the Safe Area would continue for a long time.

A compromise temporarily put off an impasse. Since both parties agreed that the town of Srebrenica and its immediate environs 'from which direct fire weapons can shoot into the city' were in the 'demilitarized zone', that is where a beginning would be made with the surrendering of weapons and ammunition. CanBat was given instructions to start.

Wahlgren and his Chief of Staff, Hayes, wanted to try to achieve a more comprehensive compromise, but tensions were growing in Srebrenica itself. In the opinion of CanBat the VRS was cooperating with the implementation of the agreement. ABiH, on the other hand, threatened to end the agreement. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command feared that if ABiH continued to work against the agreement, the VRS would recommence hostilities. Consequently, Hayes flew on the following day, 21

¹³² UNNY, DPKO coded cables UNPROFOR: Wahlgren to Annan, Z-516, 21/04/93. UNGE UNPROFOR Box file 2.5.2. Fax HQ BH Command Kiseljak to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 20/04/93 re: report demilitarization of Srebrenica, appendix: Material delivered to UNPROFOR during demilitarization. UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 93: fax HQ BH Command Kiseljak to CO CanBat 2, 20/04/93 re: direction for CanBat force in Srebrenica. Ibid: fax 191518B, CPI BH Command to CPI Zagreb, 19/04/93 re: situation in BH. Ibid: fax 191645B, CPI BH Command to CPI Zagreb, 19/04/93 re: situation in BH. Interviews Smail Mandzic, 18/05/99 and Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98.

¹³³ Interview R-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

¹³⁴ *Report on Srebrenica*, § 60.

April to Srebrenica and after consulting with the CanBat commanding officer Geburt established the border of the demilitarized zone around the town on his own; this was an area of approximately six km². ABiH and VRS officials made an inspection the same day and determined that there were no military units or troops in this zone and that demilitarization in the area had been completed. The map on which the zone was drawn was added to the formal declaration on demilitarization and handed over to both delegations. The surrendered weapons and ammunition were stored and kept by UNPROFOR.

Neither of the belligerents was content with this result however. Hayes reported from Srebrenica that ABiH and VRS saw the declaration on demilitarization of the town as 'a first symbolic step', a remark that he borrowed from the official VRS commentary. The parties added their vision to the state of affairs in the commentary to their declaration. According to the VRS delegation, the real problem continued because ABiH units inside the ceasefire line had not been disarmed; that held primarily for the two brigades from Cerska and the one from Kula. According to VRS information, the ABiH had more than 16,000 weapons in the area inside the ceasefire line. Finally, the VRS delegation established that with its current strength, CanBat was not capable of monitoring the transport of weapons in the area inside the Srebrenica enclave ceasefire line.

The ABiH delegation stated in its comments that in exchange for the disarmament required by the VRS, VRS units should leave the Opstina of Srebrenica. That meant a withdrawal far behind the ceasefire line. The ABiH delegation also demanded an investigation into the possible presence of VJ units in the area, into violations of the ceasefire and into changes in the ceasefire line by the VRS.¹³⁵ In so doing, the ABiH brought the ceasefire line into discussion and implicitly claimed a larger area for the enclave.

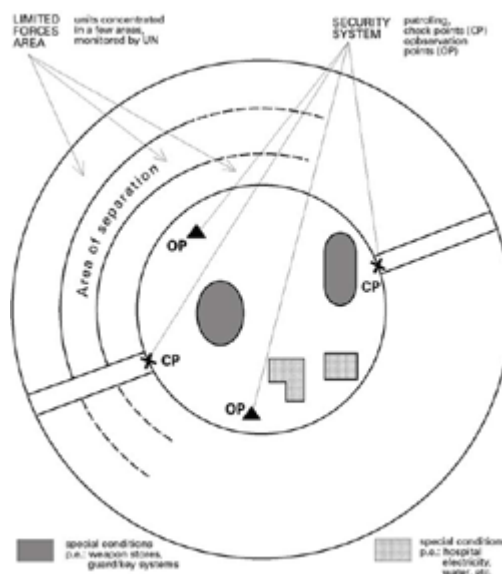
Despite the reciprocal distrust evident in the comments of both parties in the establishment of the demilitarization of the town of Srebrenica, the Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Hayes, was of the opinion that the basis for an improved situation had been laid. He wished to encourage that by taking a number of measures. First of all, he wanted reinforcements for CanBat. Secondly, he wanted to consolidate the demilitarization of the town and the ceasefire line, that is to say, he wanted to chart the border of the enclave. The CanBat reinforcements arrived on 27 April when the two platoons that had been detained were admitted. Hayes wanted to call in more reinforcements at the beginning of May with the rotation of Poirier's company. In addition, a regulation was needed about supplying CanBat's weekly provisions over the road, as well as an air bridge for daily liaison, evacuation in case of emergency, and emergency supplies. Hayes wanted to facilitate demilitarization by turning the unofficial declarations of 21 April into official documents. It was also necessary to mark the demilitarized area in conformance with the Geneva Convention. Lastly, he wanted to have UNMOs inspect the ceasefire line on the VRS side and ask for VRS cooperation in inspecting their artillery positions.¹³⁶

Hayes was overly optimistic however. The VRS had made it clear on 22 April already that they wanted to stand by their interpretation - endorsed by UNPROFOR - of the agreement on disarmament of 18 April which included the surrender of all weapons within the ceasefire line around Srebrenica. The results up until then had been 'just a farce' according to VRS Chief of Staff Major General Milovanovic. He insisted to Wahlgren and Morillon that UNPROFOR fulfil its obligations and see to a real disarmament of the 15,000 ABiH troops.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Wahlgren to Annan, Z-517, 21/04/93. UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2, Mar 93: fax 201800B, CPI BH Command to CPI Zagreb, 20/04/93. Ibid: fax 200119B, BH Command Hayes to Canbat 2, 20/04/93. Ibidem: fax CAC Andreev to DCM Zagreb Thornberry, 21/04/93. Ibid: fax 21 2059, HQ BH Command to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 21/04/93 re: Report on demilitarization of Srebrenica. UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 53, file 1.2.6. HQ BH Command daily infsum 20/04/93.

¹³⁶ UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2, Mar 93: fax 21 2059, HQ BH Command to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 21/04/93 re: Report on demilitarization of Srebrenica.

¹³⁷ UNNY, UNPROFOR, file87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2, Mar 93: fax 23.21.24 LO BH Command to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 23/04/93 appendix: letter 17/230-49, 22/04/93 Milovanovic to Wahlgren and Morillon.



The VRS did not continue to make an issue of the matter; however, nor did it cooperate with reinforcements for CanBat. That was a condition made by ABiH for demilitarization outside of the town. Consequently, the demilitarization process was deadlocked. By taking on a central role in demilitarization, UNPROFOR had put itself in a difficult position, for which there appeared no solution at the moment. There were no plans then for high level talks. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command was of the opinion that the presence of CanBat in Srebrenica would contribute to the stabilization of the situation and gradual improvement of relations in Srebrenica and thus would bring a solution closer at hand. Chief of Staff Hayes flew to Srebrenica a few times for this purpose. That did indeed contribute to a reasonable observance of the ceasefire and the supply of humanitarian aid, but had no effect on demilitarization.

Having discussed the first phase of the realization of demilitarization, we will now take a look at the contacts between UNPROFOR and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York. It is striking that as of 18 April UNPROFOR showed a greater degree of independence. That is evident from the complaints of Under Secretary-General Kofi Annan about insufficient information on the development of negotiations: Wahlgren had only sent the text of the agreement of 18 April. Information to New York concerning verification of the demilitarization agreement was therefore incomplete.

On other fronts as well communication did not seem to be clear. Wahlgren for his part did not appreciate having New York interfere with operational matters. A French offer to station 70 UNPROFOR soldiers in Srebrenica - made after the Canadian government expressed its concern about the situation of CanBat and had pressed for making the UN presence in the enclave more multi-national - was rejected straightaway by Wahlgren. After the Canadian company had been reinforced with two platoons and an engineering section on 27 April, Wahlgren made it known that the commanding officer of CanBat was against a 'mixed command' and that the present forces were sufficient.¹³⁸

It is also important to note that the opinion existed in New York that Wahlgren had followed his own course in concluding the 18 April agreement. There was no reference in the agreement to Resolution 819 of the Security Council. That aroused some distrust in the Secretariat or the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In their eyes Wahlgren had missed the opportunity to use the

¹³⁸ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-553, 28/04/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Ibid: MSC-666, 22/04/93 Annan to Wahlgren. Confidential information (66); UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 93: Ibid: fax ZAY 180, 24/04/93, Wahlgren to Annan appendix: fax BH Command (Hayes to HQ Zagreb, 24/04/93 re; reinforcement Srebrenica.

resolution to put pressure on the Bosnian Serbs. It called upon the belligerents to treat Srebrenica as a Safe Area, and that offered more possibilities to put pressure on the VRS than the agreement of 18 April. Annan explained his interpretation of the situation to Wahlgren, seemingly with the intention of informing him of the nuance of the vision in New York. Demilitarization was 'a step agreed by the parties, not one proposed by the UN'.

In Annan's words, UNPROFOR had offered its good services to save lives, 'to help both parties fulfil the commitment they have made to each other. This includes receiving weapons from defenders of Srebrenica for the purpose of demonstrating to the attackers that they have no reason to attack. In doing so, however, UNPROFOR takes on a moral responsibility for the safety of the disarmed that it clearly does not have the military resources to honour beyond a point.' According to Annan, this implied that CanBat would defend itself against small-scale attacks on the enclave. The underlying principle had to be, however, that UNPROFOR was deployed in Srebrenica 'in the context of an agreement, and that the onus remains on the *parties* to treat Srebrenica as a "Safe Area", as Resolution 819 demands'.

Annan continued by expressing the idea that the fact-finding mission of the Security Council, as determined in Resolution 819, undoubtedly would make the Force Commander aware of the 'strong feeling amongst several Member States' that UNPROFOR should not take an active part in 'disarming the victims'. Annan repeated his instruction that in the next meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, UNPROFOR should give high priority to the withdrawal of the VRS out of the area around Srebrenica.¹³⁹

While Annan was looking for ways to show the Security Council that Wahlgren also had used Resolution 819 as the underlying principle for his actions in Srebrenica, Wahlgren believed that the Department of Peacekeeping and Operations shared his preference for a demilitarized zone as the first step to a Safe Area.¹⁴⁰ The visit of the Security Council mission led by the Venezuelan Ambassador to the United Nations, D. Arria, did not bring the two points of view closer together. The mission was ill-informed about the situation in Srebrenica and seemed to be looking for confirmation of preconceptions about military intervention in favour of the Bosnian Muslims. Arria showed no actual interest in the situation in Srebrenica. To their displeasure, Arria was more interested in the media aspects of the visit and dismissed all UNPROFOR advice in that area. Some of Arria's statements were according to Hayes 'a little inflammatory and emotive', others 'open to misinterpretation'. The mission was primarily looking for 'Serbian intransigence'.¹⁴¹ Arria, for his part, found that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, and in particular Hayes did everything they could to obstruct the mission and to thwart a visit to Srebrenica. UNPROFOR was much too submissive to the VRS and according to Arria not prepared to implement Resolution 819.¹⁴²

All in all, the Arria mission did nothing to improve mutual understanding between the Security Council and the UNPROFOR commanders in Bosnia. Wahlgren and those around him were convinced that the UN peacekeeping force should not manifest itself as the ally of ABiH and the 'enemy' of the VRS in the implementation of Resolution 819, as Arria attempted. The Force Commander maintained demilitarization on the basis of the principle of neutrality as the starting point for the establishment of the Safe Area of Srebrenica. After the visit of the Arria mission, he saw no reason to set a different course. Kofi Annan supported his policy despite criticism of some of the non-permanent members of the Security Council.

After the Arria visit, Wahlgren tried to give his policy a legal basis as well. His legal advisor shared his opinion that article 60 of the first additional protocol of the Geneva Convention of 1949 was the best basis for the establishment of a Safe Area around Srebrenica.¹⁴³ When, on advice of the Arria

¹³⁹ Confidential information (102).

¹⁴⁰ Interview L-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/93.

¹⁴¹ *Report on Srebrenica*, 21 (para 63). Confidential information (141).

¹⁴² Interview D. Arria, 10/05/00.

¹⁴³ Interview L-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

mission, the Security Council wanted to declare other places in Bosnia as Safe Areas as well, Wahlgren stood by his opinion that demilitarization was the best method for doing so. He understood the intention of the Security Council in indicating five other Safe Areas in Resolution 824 as a political signal against further VRS aggression.

However, Wahlgren foresaw problems if the Safe Areas would allow the presence of army units and military activities of one of the belligerents - contrary to the purpose of a demilitarized zone. If a Safe Area was not demilitarized, according to his line of thinking, the peacekeeping force would be limited to monitoring and reporting on the developments in the area, but would certainly not be able to take responsibility for the safety of the area. Even that minimum task in the Safe Area would be dangerous because of the risk of being taken hostage by one of the parties. In Wahlgren's opinion, UNPROFOR units should only be stationed in a Safe Area after agreement of both of the belligerents.¹⁴⁴ General Hayes's concerns about concept Resolution 824 of the Security Council were more political in nature. He found the timing of the new resolution unfortunate because, in his opinion, the Bosnian Serb parliament would approve the Vance-Owen peace plan in a few days, whereupon after implementation of proposals of Vice President Koljevic of the *Republika Srpska*, the demilitarization of certain areas could be started. The government in Pale would consider a new resolution as additional proof of the UNPROFOR's partiality, whereas after the peace plan for all of Bosnia was approved, an atmosphere could be created in which the VRS would cooperate in the inspection of the ceasefire lines.¹⁴⁵

The discussion between New York and the UNPROFOR headquarters about the basic principles of establishing the Safe Areas continued for a time even after the endorsement of Resolution 824 on 6 May 1994. Although Wahlgren and his staff said that they followed the clear indications of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations concerning Resolution 824 as the basis for forming Safe Areas, demilitarization remained central in their view. Wahlgren indicated during the discussion with New York on Resolution 824 that it included the risk that 'the owners' of the territory of the Safe Area would use it for military purposes 'because it is a *Safe Area*.'¹⁴⁶

Wahlgren wanted to prevent this by means of a plan based on the following argumentation. The Safe Areas were intended as forerunners to the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan. Thus, it would be advisable to use the peace plan as a conceptual model. A comparison between the demilitarization following the Vance-Owen peace plan and Resolution 824 revealed that there were few differences between the definitions, except that the resolution demanded the withdrawal of all VRS troops for the realization of the ceasefire.

Wahlgren preferred to follow the peace plan model because it was accepted by all parties. In so doing, he indicated implicitly that this made the complicated negotiations concerning the acceptance of the latest Security Council resolution superfluous, and he himself gave greater priority to demilitarization than to the withdrawal of the VRS. The concept as Wahlgren had worked it out first gave a definition of a Safe Area: a clearly specified space within which safety is guaranteed by means of entry clearance, patrols, checkpoints and observation points. According to this definition, the area was surrounded by a Limited Forces Area separating the two parties. No heavy weapons were allowed in the zone, whereas UNPROFOR would collect and store the weapons inside the Safe Area. Admission to the Safe Area was only possible through corridors under UNPROFOR control. Special buildings inside the area, such as hospitals and utilities would be marked in conformance with the Geneva Convention (see attached 'Safe Area diagram'). UNPROFOR's presence would contribute to 'confidence building' and normalization.

¹⁴⁴ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-735, 04/05/93, Annan to Wahlgren. Ibidem: Z-588, 05/05/93, Wahlgren to Annan.

¹⁴⁵ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-588, 05/05/93 Wahlgren to Annan, appendix 2: fax 05 1629 May 93, Hayes to FC Zagreb.

¹⁴⁶ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-588, 05/05/93, Wahlgren to Annan.

Wahlgren wanted to implement this blueprint for a Safe Area in five phases. He took Resolution 824 as his starting point. The first phase included a ceasefire and negotiations on an agreement for the establishment of the Safe Area. In the second phase, the safety of the area would be guaranteed by the presence of UN personnel and there would be freedom of movement within the area. UN personnel would be allowed to enter and leave the Safe Area unhindered. Agreements about the Limited Forces Area, the separation of the belligerents and verification of this formed the third phase. Maintenance of the Safe Area through the deployment of UNPROFOR, UNMO and UnCivPol in numbers agreed to by the parties was the fourth phase of the implementation plan. After demilitarization was completed and a well functioning observation system in place, a last step could be a reduction of the UNPROFOR presence. Wahlgren added a list of specific UNPROFOR tasks. Given the limited availability of UN personnel he gave highest priority to Zepa and continued implementation in Srebrenica, two Safe Areas for which demilitarization agreements had been concluded.¹⁴⁷

Wahlgren's proposal stayed close to the plans drawn up in January and February 1993 by his predecessor Nambiar during the international discussion on Safe Areas. He did not try so much to obscure the differences between a demilitarized zone and a Safe Area, as to convince the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Secretary-General Boutros Ghali that misuse of the Safe Areas for military purposes was likely. He and his staff trusted that their arguments were understood, but later he told NIOD that the UN leadership lacked the necessary military insight.¹⁴⁸ It remains remarkable that in his blueprint, Wahlgren did not go into the consequences of the Safe Area model for implementing the demilitarization agreement in Srebrenica. Morillon was well aware that there were differences. He pointed out those differences in his elaboration of the UNPROFOR plan for the Safe Area. First of all, UNPROFOR was not responsible for the protection of civilians in the Safe Area, but only in the surrounding Limited Forces Area. No collection or destruction of weapons would take place in the Safe Area. Soldiers were allowed to continue to carry weapons, and heavy artillery would be stored under UNPROFOR supervision.¹⁴⁹ It is not clear in Morillon's concept instructions whether the application of this Safe Area concept had consequences for CanBat's instructions in Srebrenica.¹⁵⁰

In fact, Wahlgren and his staff carried out a rearguard action with the Security Council through the Secretariat. They could never win the discussion, despite the fact that their analysis might be militarily correct since they had taken into account the reality of the conflict and the viewpoints of the belligerents. The Security Council determined at the beginning of June 1993 which Safe Area concept the UN would follow in Bosnia. That concept was different than that of UNPROFOR in that it did not treat the belligerents on an equal footing. That lack of equality was evident in particular in the fact that the concept of the Security Council generally allowed the presence of the ABiH in the Safe Areas. That is not to say that the UNPROFOR concept was necessarily better or worse. That hypothetical question is difficult to answer after the fact. What is certain is that to carry out either concept, the cooperation of both parties was necessary. Without that cooperation Wahlgren's blueprint would have had no chance either. The events in Srebrenica in May and June 1993 were not encouraging in this respect. Experience in the other non-demilitarized Safe Areas was that they were often used for military purposes and that use resulted in continual reproaches from the VRS that UNPROFOR was partisan.

4. The second demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993

The exchange of ideas between UNPROFOR and New York about Safe Areas and UNPROFOR's role in maintaining them was directly related to the developments in Bosnia itself. After the Vance-Owen

¹⁴⁷ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-614 en Z-615, 10/05/93, Wahlgren to Annan. Ibid: Z-643, 18/05/93, Wahlgren to Annan.

¹⁴⁸ Interview L-E. Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

¹⁴⁹ 11Lumbi. BH Command: concept of *Safe Area*, 17/05/93.

¹⁵⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 56, File 2.1. Fax 12 1500 (T 1006), 12/05/93, Wahlgren to BH Command re: UNPROFOR OP Instruction 7-93 – *Safe Areas*.

plan was rejected by the Bosnian Serb parliament on 6 May 1993, the commanders of ABiH and VRS signed three agreements on 8 May 1993 in Sarajevo during a meeting chaired by Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Morillon. The first concerned a total ceasefire for all of Bosnia, the second the demilitarization of Srebrenica and Zepa, and the third was a general declaration on the ceasefire as a first step to enduring peace. The second document with its preamble and division into sections had all of the characteristics of a formal agreement. The preamble made reference to Resolution 824 of the Security Council and its demand that both places be treated as Safe Areas. The preamble also established that the Geneva Conventions and Protocols of 12 August 1949 concerning the protection of victims of international armed conflicts were applicable to the conflict in Bosnia. Agreements were set forth in the various articles of the document of 8 May more precisely than in the one of 18 April. The demilitarized zone would include the whole area within the ceasefire line and UNPROFOR would mark it with signs on which the following message would be given in English and Serbian: 'Demilitarized zone. Any military operation is strictly forbidden (article 66 Protocol 1 additional to the Geneva Convention)!'.

The agreement provided for demilitarization by the withdrawal of military units from the enclave and the handing over of weapons and ammunition to UNPROFOR. On 10 May at 17:00 pm representatives of both parties in Srebrenica would establish whether the process had been completed and set that forth in a joint statement. UNPROFOR would supervise the demilitarized zone with at least one company and supporting units. The peace force would be given freedom of movement inside and outside the enclave. Non-belligerent parties were not allowed to bring weapons or ammunition into the demilitarized zone or to loiter inside the area. The agreement also determined that all stipulations of the additional protocol concerning the protection of civilians were applicable. It also covered the participation of UnCivPol, medical evacuation and access for humanitarian aid. Finally, it included agreements about the charting of mine fields, prisoners of war, graves for the dead, and the withdrawal of heavy artillery in concentration areas and of infantry units to one and a half kilometres from the ceasefire line after demilitarization had been completed.¹⁵¹

Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had devoted a great deal of energy to the preparation of this agreement; that held in particular for the Bosnia-Herzegovina commander Morillon and his Chief of Staff Hayes. The history leading up to the agreement of 8 May was important for its implementation. This is true for both the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command of UNPROFOR and the belligerents; consequently, it is necessary here to take a step backwards in time to examine the situation. At the end of April Hayes had launched his proposal for a complete demilitarization of the Srebrenica Safe Area in his consideration of the concept of Resolution 824 for the designation of new Safe Areas. Hayes's proposal was made primarily out of concern about a resumption of fighting around Srebrenica, as there was 'very intense activity' on the ceasefire line. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command considered the situation 'a little difficult and delicate'. Headquarters could not determine with certainty the cause of this tension, but had the strong suspicion that increasing tension was a result of ABiH activities.¹⁵² CanBat had tried since 18 April to stabilize the explosive situation in the enclave. Many patrols marched through the town to demonstrate UNPROFOR presence; vehicle patrols were made outside the town up to the confrontation line/ceasefire line.

CanBat had set up observation posts on the border of the demilitarized zone around the town of Srebrenica to prevent weapons from being taken into the city. CanBat commander Lieutenant Colonel Geburt and Major Poirier tried to create a basis of mutual trust through regular contacts with the ABiH and VRS. Geburt went to Bratunac regularly to meet with the commanding officer of the Skelani brigade, Colonel Vukovic, who was also the VRS liaison officer for UNPROFOR. At these

¹⁵¹ *Agreement on the Demilitarization of Srebrenica en Zepa concluded between Lt Gen Ratko Mladic and Gen Sefer Halilovic on 8 May in the Presence of Lt. Gen. Philippe Morillon.* Text given in Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 269-272. Confidential information (130).

¹⁵² NIOD, Coll. Wahlgren. Fax 30 2050 (R 4685), Morillon to UN New York (for Lord Owen), 30/04/93. UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 93: fax 30 1115 (R4612), BH Command to HQ UNPROFOR, 30/04/93. Confidential information (131).

meetings they provided information about their activities, asked about certain events and stimulated adherence to the agreement. Geburt - and in his absence Poirier - met every evening in the town of Srebrenica with the mayor, UNMOs, UNHCR and NGO representatives. Set items for discussion were the events of the day and the patrol plan for the following day. Possible improvements to the living conditions in the enclave were also considered. The result of CanBat's active approach and its intensive contact with the various parties was a more stable situation in and around the demilitarized zone.¹⁵³

CanBat's action had almost no effect on the situation at the ceasefire line however. There continued to be an exchange of fire. As remarked above, considerable activity between the VRS and ABiH occurred on the ceasefire line at the end of April according to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Chief of Staff Hayes wanted to curb the situation through a drastic measure, namely the extension of the militarized zone to the ceasefire line. According to Hayes's reasoning, demilitarization of the Safe Area meant that the party in the enclave, the ABiH, would no longer have any weapons. This would end the many violations of the ceasefire, since Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had come to see ABiH as the primary source of the violations. Hayes set up an operation plan that would be carried out after the arrival of a second Canadian company in Srebrenica to relieve Major Poirier's company. The UNPROFOR contingent would then temporarily be double in strength which Hayes wanted to implement his plan without consulting the two parties.

That was going too far for Morillon, however, which is why he brought up the plan during a meeting with Vice President Koljevic of the *Republika Srpska* on 4 May. The following day in a meeting with Morillon in Srebrenica, Oric agreed to go along with the complete demilitarization of the Safe Area. On 7 May - one day after the decision of the Bosnian Serb parliament to put approval of the Vance-Owen plan to the people in a referendum - Mladic agreed in a meeting with Morillon on the implementation of Resolution 824 to allow the second Canadian company to go to Srebrenica. He gave UNPROFOR until 14 May to complete the demilitarization of Srebrenica. That was sufficient basis for Morillon to set forth the agreement in a new, improved document. The following day after a discussion chaired by Morillon, Commanders Mladic and Halilovic signed the agreement on the demilitarization of Srebrenica and Zepa.¹⁵⁴

In actual fact, the agreement of 8 May set out the same method for realizing demilitarization as that of 18 April. The main difference was that the preamble now explicitly coupled the status of Srebrenica and Zepa to Resolution 824, and the demilitarization to the provisions of article 60 of the Additional Protocol of the Geneva Convention. However, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York was less enthusiastic about the new clarity of the agreement reached under Morillon's leadership. In the opinion of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Security Council would find the agreement unacceptable, despite a reference to Resolution 824, because it did not in any way address the central point of the resolution, namely a first step to ending the VRS threat to the Safe Area through the withdrawal of its troops.¹⁵⁵ Core elements of the agreement remained the surrender of all weapons or the withdrawal of military units from the enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa, verification of the demilitarization by both belligerent parties and then withdrawal of VRS units from the ceasefire line as border to the demilitarized area.

After the experience with the agreement of 18 April, the intention of the 8 May accord was to eliminate misunderstandings about the area of the demilitarized zone. On the other hand, only three days were set aside for the demilitarization of this large, virtually inaccessible area. It is not clear why this was. One possibility is that Mladic ultimately went back on his offer to Morillon concerning completion of demilitarization on 14 May. What is clear is that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and

¹⁵³ Interview Th.K.D. Geburt, 18/11/99.

¹⁵⁴ UNNY, UNPROFOR, file 87305 DFC 3300 Srebrenica vol 2 Mar 93: fax (R 4549), BH Command to Canbat2 and Britbat, 03/05/93 re: Operation order for expansion of Srebrenica DMZ. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-588, 05/05/93, Wahlgren to Annan appendix 2: fax05 1629, 05/05/93, Hayes to Wahlgren. Ibid: Z-611, 09/05/93, Wahlgren to Annan appendix: BH Command to HQ Zagreb, 07/05/93. Confidential information (132).

¹⁵⁵ *Srebrenica Report*, § 69. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-760, 08/05/93, Annan to Wahlgren.

Morillon saw the agreement as a means of stabilizing the situation in Srebrenica and Zepa. Morillon operated from an assessment of the local situation and tried to establish an agreement between the two parties whatever was possible. He seized the chance to make use of a plan of his Chief of Staff - which originally would have been carried out without the knowledge of the ABiH and VRS - now with the endorsement of both parties. Morillon seemingly trusted that the assent of the ABiH commander of Srebrenica was sufficient basis for implementation of the agreement. The VRS could continue to follow the same course under the agreement: first the ABiH had to surrender its weapons and only then was it the VRS that had to make a move. Up until then the VRS could continue its military threat by keeping Srebrenica surrounded and had as ultimate means the renewal of attacks. Enlarging the demilitarized zone to the total area of the enclave might end up giving the ABiH less space for actions against the VRS on the ceasefire line, but it did not place it in a position in which it could not move. The ABiH could be confident about Resolution 824: the resolution did not forbid the presence of Muslim troops in the Safe Area and focused first of all on Bosnian-Serb aggression.¹⁵⁶

5. Failure of the second demilitarization of Srebrenica

An extra company of the second battalion of the Royal 22nd Regiment was made available for the demilitarization operation. Upon arrival, its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Desjardins, was given responsibility for the northern part of the enclave and immediately demonstrated his presence in the operation area, but the results of the demilitarization were not encouraging. The whole process of collecting arms lasted much longer than had been anticipated and was far from completed on 10 May, as is indicated in the available sources. In the existing demilitarized zone around the town of Srebrenica, a superficial demilitarization was carried out again by means of a house-to-house check by UnCivPol and the local police. Outside of the town, demilitarization began in three of the four sectors. Once again, the ABiH surrendered to the Weapons Collection Point old weapons or ones that did not function due to a lack of ammunition. Two T-55 tanks, which were out of petrol and ammunition, were turned over. Later, 4 anti-aircraft systems were added.

On 19 May, CanBat destroyed a portion of the surrendered ammunition. Usable guns, mostly hand guns were not surrendered on order of ABiH general Halilovic, rather carefully hidden in the enclave. The ABiH used the same argument for the surrender of only unusable weapons as during the first phase: the strength and armament of CanBat was insufficient to hold off a VRS attack. None the less, CanBat believed that it could round off this first phase on 24 May. The VRS delegation for verification of demilitarization, however, refused to testify to the complete surrender of weapons.¹⁵⁷

CanBat sets to work to meet the terms of the agreement

After extending the demilitarization to the whole area of the enclave on 10 May 1993, CanBat also made serious work of seeing to its monitoring. So as to work as efficiently as possible, CanBat divided the enclave into two parts, with two sectors each. A company of 5 officers and 111 soldiers were responsible for each part. CanBat established its headquarters in the post office building where Morillon had also been located in March. It hoped to reduce the level of violence between the belligerents inside the enclave by means of a 'demonstrable presence'. That was done primarily by being 'tough on the Muslims' and by taking seriously the complaints of the VRS.¹⁵⁸ Still, this did not mean that CanBat took a one-sided position against the ABiH. In the first weeks after the expansion of the demilitarized zone there were regular problems between CanBat and the VRS as well. On 12 May CanBat set its checkpoint post at Zeleni Jadar and demanded the withdrawal of the VRS infantry to 1.5

¹⁵⁶ *Srebrenica Report*, § 67.

¹⁵⁷ Confidential information (133). Interviews Nedred Mujkanovic, 10/03/99; Hakija Meholic, 02/02/99; Th.K.D. Geburt, 18/11/99 and P. Desjardins, 12/11/99.

¹⁵⁸ Interviews P. Desjardins, 12/11/99 and Momir Nikolic, 20/10/00.

km behind the ceasefire line. At the same time thirteen permanent observation posts (OPs) were established on the former confrontation line. During the summer these were rebuilt and turned into permanent reinforced posts.

In principle, CanBat placed these posts on the ceasefire line and only did not when another position offered a better view of the terrain and the two parties. This was the case with the observation post on the road between Srebrenica and Zeleni Jadar (OP-Echo or OP-E). Unlike what was said later by the Muslims, the post was set on VRS territory because the view of the terrain was better. Despite many allegations from the ABiH and Muslim side,¹⁵⁹ there is no hard evidence that CanBat moved its observation posts between April 1993 and March 1994 on the insistence of the VRS. UNPROFOR's discussion about the borders of the Safe Area and moving them was fed by the fact that there had never been an official marking of the area since there had never been official agreement about completing demilitarization. CanBat did draw up a map on which the border of the Safe Area was drawn in red, the red UNPROFOR ceasefire line. This ceasefire line had no official status.

Discussions in the Mixed Military Working Group in Srebrenica bogged down because the VRS was not willing to make any agreements until demilitarization was complete. In determining the border line, it was also significant that CanBat had to work from inside the enclave because the VRS did not allow any UNMOs or CanBat officers on their side of the confrontation line. Furthermore, CanBat assumed that the VRS infantry would pull back 1.5 km and its artillery 10 km from the border. That did not happen however: only in a few places did the VRS pull back its heavy arms.¹⁶⁰

Aside from observation of the ceasefire line, important tasks that CanBat fulfilled were compliance with the ceasefire and demilitarization. In the beginning, movement was not possible in all parts of the Safe Area because of mine fields, in particular in the north-eastern part of the enclave. The UNMOs took over some of the patrols. While CanBat tried to gain a grasp of the military situation in and around the enclave through manning of the observation posts and intensive patrolling, tensions between the Canadians and the VRS increased. On 12 May a CanBat soldier at the observation post at Zeleni Jadar was wounded by gunshot fire. CanBat responded with directed fire and killed probably two VRS soldiers. Afterwards as well patrols were regularly fired upon by snipers. In such incidents CanBat always returned directed fire. In fact such confrontations were nothing new; since their arrival in March, the UNMOs had also experienced that whoever came too close to the VRS lines or positions would be shot at.

A tense atmosphere came into being which was also expressed in threats and insults during discussions of the CanBat commander Desjardins with VRS Col. Vukovic in Bratunac. The ABiH contributed to the tensions by making use of CanBat's presence to set up positions inside and outside of the ceasefire line. According to the ABiH, the VRS regularly pushed into the enclave and was able to gain territory at critical moments. The Canadian commander checked on such reports personally; he would walk in the direction of the Bosnian-Serb army and summon the unit to withdraw. CanBat reported many violations of the ceasefire as of the end of May, without having any insight into the exact circumstances. Requests for intelligence from the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo went unanswered.¹⁶¹

Matters stabilized somewhat in June 1993 in that both parties seemed to be resigned to the situation. The VRS replaced its regular troops with local units. After the acceptance of Resolution 836, with its definition of the Safe Area and the establishment of the UNPROFOR mandate for those areas (for the circumstances leading up to this resolution, see Chapter 11 of Part I), the ABiH did not have to

¹⁵⁹ Interviews Nedred Mujkanovic, 10/03/99; Fahrudin Salihovic, 04/02/98 and Hazrudin Kisic, 17-18/05/99.

¹⁶⁰ Interview Nedred Mujkanovic, 10/03/99. Interview Fahrudin Salihovic, 04/02/98. Interview Desjardins, 12/11/99. Interview D. MacIssac (57th Engineer squadron), 16/11/99. Interview Hazrudin Kisic, 17-18/05/1999. Interview (VRS) Momir Nikolic, 20/10/00. Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

¹⁶¹ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-626, 14/05/93 Wahlgren to Annan. Confidential information (134). Interview P. Desjardins, 12/11/99. Interview Nedred Mujkanovic, 10/03/99. Interview Th.K.D. Geburt, 18/11/99. Interview J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/2001. Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/1998.

worry about any large-scale UNPROFOR attempt to force demilitarization. As Wahlgren had predicted, the ABiH used the Safe Areas as exercise and rest areas for its units and as a base for raids into the Bosnian-Serb area. Srebrenica was used as an exercise area for its units there and as a base for raids. In as far as could be determined, the VRS undertook little military activity and tried to keep the ABiH and the Muslims inside the enclave.

There were changes in CanBat as well. CanBat II, the first company of which arrived in Srebrenica at the beginning of May, was known as the *Vandoos*, a unit of swaggering French-speaking Canadians from Quebec, most of them under twenty, who attracted attention with their RayBan sunglasses and non-regulation clothing. CanBat II had a different way of doing things: patrols on foot were done away with and contact with the local population avoided. As a result of the decreased Canadian contingent in Bosnia, the two companies of CanBat II were replaced with one company. Consequently, the activities of CanBat had to be reduced as well. Five of the thirteen observation posts (OPs) were no longer permanently manned, which caused a great deal of disquiet among the ABiH.¹⁶² Although the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command reported the military situation almost every day as: 'Srebrenica: situation relatively calm and stable' that does not mean that it really was all that calm. There were many incidents between the belligerents along the ceasefire line.

CanBat reported violations of the ceasefire every day. In the period of 17 to 30 June 1993, CanBat reported 1,200 violations with small calibre weapons, mortars, tanks and artillery. In the period of 7 to 16 November the amount was 4,000, 1,836 on 13 November alone. Observation posts were shot at regularly and patrols came under fire. In addition there was directed fire on CanBat, an action that was consistently answered, in keeping with the *Rules of Engagement*, with .50 or other calibre weapons. This had little to do with peacekeeping. It was more survival under war circumstances because the demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993 was never really implemented.¹⁶³ In that sense the situation could be called 'stable'. This was the situation that DutchBat I would land in upon its arrival in the enclave in February/March 1994.

6. Conclusion

After the arrival of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Morillon in March 1993, the implementation of the accords for stabilization and demilitarization of the enclave foundered in May. After that a period of *drôle de guerre* followed. Given the situation in the Safe Area of Srebrenica as of the summer of 1993 it would be going too far to conclude that Morillon's actions did not actually achieve anything. His arrival in Srebrenica in March 1993 broke through an extremely precarious situation and prevented the town's immediate capture by the VRS.

A highly insecure and vulnerable situation did continue, but that was not simply due to the initiatives of UNPROFOR and its headquarters in Bosnia. UNPROFOR's actions in the light of the developments in the Security Council and the signals from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York were not always adequate. In hindsight, the significance of the second demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993 was not great: there were clear differences between the political desirability, such as had been formulated in the international political arena, in particular in the Security Council, and the military-political reality in Bosnia. Morillon and Hayes sought a possible solution from the point of view of this second factor; desirability was of secondary importance to them. In New York it was exactly the opposite and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the UN did not succeed completely in mediating between the two poles.

What remains essential, however, is that both parties frustrated a real implementation of the stabilization and demilitarization plans. Both parties were responsible for obstructing the

¹⁶² Taylor and Nolan, *Tested Mettle*, pp.104-105. Interview J. Champagne, 12/11/99; Sie LL. De strijd om Srebrenica, p. 64. Briquemont, *Do something General*, p. 224.

¹⁶³ DefatOttawa. Red Folder Secret, UNPROFOR Zagreb to NDHQ Ottawa: sitreps 17/06/93 – 30/06/93 and 07/11/93 – 16/11/93.

implementation of the agreements. The VRS remained the besieger and the ABiH remained the besieged with a correspondingly more difficult military position and with a fundamentally greater responsibility for the civilian population in its area. There was in actual fact a 'prisoner's dilemma' in which neither of the parties was willing to make a concession before the other out of fear that if they did, they would lose.

Neither the UN nor UNPROFOR succeeded in resolving that dilemma on the spot. The result was that all involved parties accepted an unstable *status quo* waiting for new developments. The VRS frustrated demilitarization by refusing to allow a larger UN presence. The ABiH contributed to this by placing the size of the demilitarized zone under discussion and by surrendering no or few weapons.

The fact that after some time some sort of 'safety' - as vulnerable as it was - came into existence was primarily a result of the actions of CanBat. However, the threat that the situation might deteriorate again was still great and constantly present. That threat had been there as of April 1993 due to limited UN presence. The tension between 'moral responsibility for safety' and insufficient 'military resources' for its implementation, which Kofi Annan had remarked at the end of April¹⁶⁴, continued in full force.

¹⁶⁴ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR, Annan to Wahlgren, MSC-676, 23/04/93.

Chapter 4

Srebrenica in the time of CanBat - the humanitarian situation and the arrival of the NGOs

1. The humanitarian situation

On 18 April 1993, the CanBat detachment arrived in Srebrenica, as we have described, with about 150 men, to protect the recently established Safe Area. This chapter covers the period of the Canadian battalion presence in the enclave, which was to last just under a year. The point of view is humanitarian; for a military perspective of this period, the reader is referred to the appendix 'CanBat in the Srebrenica enclave', attached to this report.

When the first Canadians arrived they were shocked by the state of the town and its inhabitants. They saw 'human skeletons' clothed in inadequate, dirty and totally threadbare clothing, who often walked the streets without shoes.¹⁶⁵ There was a stench; bodies of dead animals were lying in the streets, and the mountains of household rubbish lay in heaps in the river and the streams. Much of the town was damaged and most of the inhabitants made it clear that they wanted to get out of the enclave as quickly as possible.¹⁶⁶ CanBat officers moved into the post office building and the troops were housed in a textile factory 300 metres away. UN helicopters immediately carried out evacuations of the seriously wounded from the local football field.¹⁶⁷

CanBat's presence in Srebrenica meant a return to normal life to a certain degree. The Canadians divided the enclave into two parts, north and south; one company was assigned responsibility to each. CanBat placed 13 observation posts on the edge of the enclave and white signs to indicate the border of the demilitarized zone. The number of ABiH soldiers was drastically reduced as a result of the demilitarization. The weapons present in the enclave were forced out of the streets to a great extent, which increased the sense of security among the population and afforded a considerably calmer atmosphere.¹⁶⁸ CanBat tried as much as possible to restore calm and to gain the trust of the warring factions by organizing regular meetings with the most important military and civil leaders on both the Muslim and Serb sides.

Although calm returned to the enclave, other problems arose immediately. The number of inhabitants had grown considerably through the tremendous flow of refugees. Before the war, the town of Srebrenica had fewer than 6,000 inhabitants; now the number of people in the town was about 25,000. The total number of inhabitants in the enclave was not known precisely; the municipal authorities and aid organizations used a figure of about 43,000, which was the number after the evacuation of 7,700 women, children and elderly at the end of March, beginning of April 1993.¹⁶⁹

Initially, the two most important aid organizations, *Médecins Sans Frontières* and UNHCR used high numbers in their reports, namely 50,000 or more inhabitants. As of July 1993, *Médecins Sans Frontières* presumed 43,000 whereas UNHCR adjusted the figure in November to 44,000 inhabitants.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Scott and Nolan, *Tested Mettle*, pp.101-102. Others also generally responded with shock when they first entered the enclave. See the report of the Swedish NGO worker Richard Svärd (Becirovic, 'Zivjet cu').

¹⁶⁶ Interviews Thomas Geburt, 18/11/99 and Dan MacIssac, 16/11/99.

¹⁶⁷ Interview Nedred Mujkanovic, 20/04/99.

¹⁶⁸ Interview Muhamed Durakovic, 21/11/99.

¹⁶⁹ NIOD, Coll UNHCR, UNHCR, 5-13/04/93, re: Weekly Information on the former Yugoslavia.

¹⁷⁰ Thorsen, *UNHCR*, pp. 110-114. Material for this chapter and chap. 7 makes grateful use of reports written by Kirsti Thorsen upon request of NIOD on the activities of UNHCR and three other NGOs. These reports give detailed descriptions and analyses of the archival material made available to NIOD by these organizations. Wherever possible, reference is made to the original documents, but sometimes to the reports, because the relevant documents are organized

These sorts of numbers were also cited in other sources and probably came from the municipal government of Srebrenica. According to these figures, in round numbers, 11,000 people in the enclave were original inhabitants and 32,000 were Displaced Persons. Due to the evacuations of women and children, the number of men was higher than that of women, with a ratio of approximately 4:3.¹⁷¹ It is likely that the municipal government inflated the figures somewhat to be able to ask for more humanitarian aid, as the CanBat commander in Srebrenica, J. Champagne, suggested to NIOD.¹⁷²

To take an example, 2,000 people were recorded as 'original inhabitants', whereas no more than 366 returned to Srebrenica after Oric and his men had retaken control of the town (in May 1992). It should be remarked that a portion of this higher number used by the municipal authorities of 'original' inhabitants can be explained by the fact that many of them came from surrounding villages and had settled in the town at the beginning of the war. Actually, most of the civil and military leaders who ran the enclave during the war belonged to this category. They did come from the municipality, but not from the town of Srebrenica, and had moved into houses and apartments in the first months of the war that had been abandoned by the original inhabitants.

Nonetheless, a certain discrepancy remained between the figures of the Opstina (the municipal authorities) and the figures used by *Médecins Sans Frontières* for example. In May 1994, the figures used by this organization were an average of ten percent lower than those of the municipality of Srebrenica. In January 1995, the municipality stated that more than 43,000 people were in the enclave, whereas *Médecins Sans Frontières* suggested that the real figure was probably no more than 38,000.¹⁷³ Which figure was correct is difficult to establish after the fact, but that does not detract from the fact that the great majority of the inhabitants found in the town were Displaced Persons. There were more than 20,000 Displaced Persons in Srebrenica (the municipal authorities used a figure of 23,000) whereas the number of inhabitants who originated from the town was no more than a few hundred. In the countryside, the ratio of original inhabitants to Displaced Persons was much more even (of a total of almost 19,000 people, 8,500 were original inhabitants and somewhat more than 10,000 were Displaced Persons).¹⁷⁴

The town had received a number of Displaced Persons as early as 1992, for the most part Muslims who had fled their villages in the municipalities of Bratunac, Srebrenica and Vlasenica as a result of ethnic cleansing. In September, a stream of Displaced Persons arrived from Zepa which had been attacked and shelled by the Yugoslavian army, the JNA. As a result of the Serb counteroffensive in the spring of 1993, the enclave was again inundated with Displaced Persons: a large number of Muslims were forced into the enclave after Serb troops had considerably pushed back the territory controlled by the Muslims. Many of them had been wandering around for some time. There were many people who had first been driven out of Zvornik, Vlasenica, Han Pijesak or Visegrad, and had ended up in the Muslim enclaves of Cerska or Konjevic Polje, and from there fled farther in the direction of Srebrenica, but also a large group of people who came from the more immediate environment, from Muslim villages in the municipality of Bratunac for example. In April 1993, there were about 9,000 Displaced Persons from the municipality of Bratunac in the enclave.¹⁷⁵

thematically and are analysed. The titles of these reports are: 1. *Swedish Rescue Services Agency, Swedish Shelter Project in Srebrenica, 01/03/94 – 11/07/95* (report date 9 September 2000); 2. *Médecins Sans Frontières. Humanitarian Aid Programme in Srebrenica, 4/12/92 – 21/7/95* (23 January 2001); 3. *Norsk Folkehjelp (Norwegian People's Aid), Humanitarian Aid Programmes in Srebrenica and Bratunac, 1993 – 1995* (12 April 2001); 4. *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (15 July 2001). Reference to these reports will make use of the following acronyms (SRSA, MSF, NPA, and UNHCR).

¹⁷¹ Confidential information (74).

¹⁷² Interview J. Champagne 12/11/99. This suspicion was expressed by a number of other individuals who were interviewed for this report.

¹⁷³ MSF, Brussel. MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade (Eric, Graziella), 12/05/94; MSF Srebrenica, monthly report January 1995. Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 51.

¹⁷⁴ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 50.

¹⁷⁵ Of the Muslim inhabitants from the municipality of Bratunac, another 9,000 people were forced to flee to Tuzla. More than 3,000 people remained as refugees in other countries. Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 114.

Most of the Displaced Persons were embittered people who had lost all their worldly goods and often had missing family members or had seen them killed. One of them was someone called 'Semso', a former commander of a brigade in Konjevic Polje and Nova Kasaba, who later became Naser Oric's sub-commander. A DutchBat document describes him as follows: 'Hates Serbs because of the murder of his only child and parents. Would like most of all for UNPROFOR to turn over its weapons to him so that he can finish the job. Declares that he will spend his whole life chasing and killing off Serbs.'¹⁷⁶ Most of the Displaced Persons wanted more than anything to get out of the enclave but their exit was obstructed by the military and civil authorities who wanted to prevent the town from completely emptying. On 1 April 1993, Naser Oric and the civil authorities decided not to allow any more evacuations.¹⁷⁷

The increase of large numbers of Displaced Persons resulted in an acute housing problem in a town that under normal circumstances had no more than 6,000 inhabitants. Consequently, the Displaced Persons lived in the most wretched circumstances. They were living on top of one another in the large buildings that were still sufficiently intact to temporarily house large groups of people. The original inhabitants of Srebrenica still lived in their own houses, whereas the first stream of Displaced Persons who arrived in the town in the course of 1992 (from the surrounding villages) had taken possession of the best of the empty houses and flats. The Displaced Persons who came after them, certainly by the spring of 1993, had almost no other choice than to move into the seven large buildings that were being used as Displaced Persons' Centres (two school buildings, a community building and a number of businesses) or in damaged houses (both lightly and heavily damaged), cellars, garages, or even containers and automobile wrecks.¹⁷⁸

The conditions in which most of the Displaced Persons had to live were inhuman. They stayed in dark, dirty and often partially destroyed places that had no water, electricity or sanitary facilities. If there were windows in the rooms, they were generally broken as a result of the Serb artillery bombardments. About six or seven people lived in the same room on average, but it also occurred that small rooms of barely 16 m² offered shelter to more than 15 people. In many cases, one living space housed several families, and the complete lack of privacy was a continual problem. In the classrooms of the school that were used as housing, there were sometimes fifty to sixty people.

According to information from *Médecins Sans Frontières*, in June 1993 the Displaced Persons had an average of 1.5 m² per person at their disposal. There was no water or electricity; there were no mattresses, blankets, cooking utensils, not enough ovens or heating stoves; and there were no toilets or showers in the buildings, nor any soap or detergents. It was impossible to get or keep the buildings clean, with all of the disastrous results this entailed for hygiene.

The spaces in which the Displaced Persons stayed were mostly heated by provisional wooden stoves, which brought with them a great danger of fire and caused a serious smoke problem.¹⁷⁹ The *Médecins Sans Frontières* physician, Dr. René Caravielhe wrote: "The heating and cooking systems used by the Displaced Persons, no matter how ingenious, are not secure neither economical. The rudimentary look of these installations leaves you to fear for the worst (suffocation/asphyxia, fire) for a ridiculous[ly] small amount of heating'.¹⁸⁰ Given the fact that there was no electricity in the enclave, generators were used and a large number of batteries were available from the battery factory in Potocari. These were recharged by numerous small water power stations that the inhabitants of the

¹⁷⁶ NIOD, Coll MIDKL, *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinjo*; July 1994 (MIDKL Dossier 1589); appendix 'BIH personages binnen enclave Srebrenica'.

¹⁷⁷ Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 136. Interview Thomas Geburt, 18/11/99.

¹⁷⁸ According to figures of MSF, 10% of the more than 1,700 homes in the town were destroyed, 20% damaged by grenades, 50% slightly damaged, and thus, only 10% of the houses intact. In the villages 70% were intact, 5% destroyed, and 25% slightly to heavily damaged. Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 103.

¹⁷⁹ On 14 March 1995, for example, fire broke out in the UNHCR food storage place 'Radnik', in one of the adjoining spaces where refugees were living. NIOD, Coll UNCIVPOL, Uncivpol incident report 14/03/95, incident no. BO5-95-35 (Sandvik)

¹⁸⁰ NIOD, Coll MSF, MSF Srebrenica, René Caravielhe, monthly sitrep, 22/08/93.

enclave had built in the river. They were used to light a lamp, to be able to listen to the radio or watch television or a video.¹⁸¹

There were great differences between the original inhabitants (which includes here the inhabitants of villages surrounding Srebrenica who arrived right after the start of the war) and the large group of Displaced Persons who were the last to arrive as a result of the Serb counteroffensive in 1993. The last group lacked proper housing, was dependent on the UNHCR for food, and did not have proper clothing or footwear for the winter. Nor did the Displaced Persons have any influence on the municipal authorities. Power was in the hands of the civil and military authorities who all came from the city or municipality of Srebrenica (primarily Potocari).

According to a UNHCR report of August 1993, the authorities in Srebrenica were not very concerned about the fate of the Displaced Persons, who were not represented in the local council: "The atmosphere between the two populations is tense and the local authorities, organised in a war council [the Opstina] with no representatives of the Displaced Persons, are not paying attention to the most needed. In some respects I have a strong feeling that the authorities are not willing to work on the amelioration of the conditions of living environment. Maintaining the status quo seems to be their objective."¹⁸²

Displaced Persons ran into an unwillingness of the local population to help and, for example, to share the available food. In talks with *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers who were most concerned with their fate, the Displaced Persons complained about the lack of generosity among the population: they acted as if they had nothing or needed what they had for family members. When it came to health care, the Displaced Persons also fared worse than the original population. In the spring of 1993 *Médecins Sans Frontières* stated that the doctors in the hospital barely seemed to make an effort or to take responsibility for the treatment of Displaced Persons in the collective housing centres. A passage from an end of mission report of a Norwegian NGO worker, Katrine Ommang, who had worked in the enclave describes the situation well:

"The population in Srebrenica is mainly divided into two groups: the original inhabitants of the municipality, and the Displaced Persons. Among the 6,000 people who originally inhabited the town there are only 350 left. The original population takes pride in appearing clean and proper, and in trying to live a relatively 'normal' life. They despise the Displaced Persons who live from one day to the next, who do not wash, who steal, who have suddenly become highly religious, etc. Part of the conflict is also caused by the fact that Muslim Displaced Persons plundered and burnt Serb houses in Srebrenica, only to later find themselves without a place to live. The original population has an unfailing belief in 'Srebrenica after the war' and seeks to preserve and maintain everything, while the Displaced Persons are in transit and only wish to consume. Another reason for the conflict is that the Displaced Persons mainly come from small villages and have on average little education, marry early (14-15 years), have low hygienic standards, etc. There were big differences in the way of life between town and countryside even before the war, and the distance between the population groups has only been accentuated."¹⁸³

The greatest difference in the living conditions between the original inhabitants and the Displaced Persons was housing. The original inhabitants had houses, they had their own gardens, and they had more facilities than the Displaced Persons. The Displaced Persons worked sometimes for the original

¹⁸¹ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 100

¹⁸² NIOD, Coll MSF, UNHCR Belgrade (Ollier) to UNHCR Zagreb (Landgren), Srebrenica sitrep, 22/08/93.

¹⁸³ NIOD, Coll NPA, NPA (Ommang), end of mission report, 10/03/95.

inhabitants in exchange for food, and they were often exploited.¹⁸⁴ Most Displaced Persons lived on top of one another in the collective centres. *Médecins Sans Frontières* also remarked the overall lack of running water, usable toilets, showers and washing facilities. The situation was extremely critical in the eyes of that organization. Rubbish piled up everywhere in and around the buildings and people defecated in the hallways or on the stairways.¹⁸⁵ The overpopulation was a large problem and a continual source of concern for public health, even after the humanitarian aid arrived.

When *Médecins Sans Frontières* arrived in the enclave in the spring of 1993, it noted that the sanitary situation was disastrous everywhere. General hygiene had dropped to an alarmingly low level as a result of the overpopulation. The population was constantly plagued by scabies, lice, diarrhoea and skin infections because there was no soap, washing or cleaning products in the enclave. According to documentation of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, in the summer of 1993, 23% of the population had scabies and 20% lice. In the collective buildings that housed the Displaced Persons, these percentages were even higher. Lice was a particular problem when the weather became hot. There was also dysentery and hepatitis. At the beginning of March 1994 there was an explosion of hepatitis in the enclave; in a period of ten days the number of cases rose from 5 to 30. After heavy rainfall and flooding in May 1995, an intestinal infection broke out in Srebrenica, probably because the drinking water had become contaminated.¹⁸⁶

In May 1994, *Médecins Sans Frontières* carried out a large-scale study on the hygiene situation among 1,000 families of the town, and the results were shocking. It seemed that 83% of the families lived in only one room, while half of these families were made up of between 4 and 11 people. Soap was distributed only once every two months; only 2% of the families had shampoo and 17% had laundry detergent. About 60% of the families were infected with lice or fleas, and a similar percentage complained of mice and rats in the places where they lived. Fortunately, the publicity around this study led in June 1994 to the arrival of products to improve hygiene.¹⁸⁷

Many of the health problems were caused by bad diet, the lack of (clean) clothing (many people had only one set of clothes), insufficient and bad housing, and the great lack of even the most basic medicine. Good medical care was impossible. The hospital was full of patients and the hotels housed another several hundred sick and wounded. The beds were dirty; wounds were bandaged with sheets; and the seriously wounded died for lack of adequate treatment. There was a provisional operating theatre in which only one doctor functioned as surgeon, who had not been trained as such moreover. All that he could do was rough amputations, always without anaesthesia and making use of ordinary wood saws.¹⁸⁸

The hospital was heated by wood until the beginning of 1995 when an oil central heating system was installed. The smoke was a constant problem. Sterilization of medical instruments and bandages was almost impossible. The washing machines did not work and water had to be boiled in metal tins or barrels on wood fires. However, this was not sufficient to disinfect the sheets and blankets. There was not a proper mortuary and consequently all of the hospital rubbish (including amputated bodily parts) ended up in the smouldering containers near the hospital. Human body parts were freely available to homeless dogs, as the alarmed *Médecins Sans Frontières* told the world. Hygiene in the hospital also left

¹⁸⁴ NIOD, Coll MSF, MSF, Interview Dzema, aunt of Emira, 18/10/95.

¹⁸⁵ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 95.

¹⁸⁶ Thorsen, *SRSA*, pp. 11 and 23. NIOD, Coll SRSA, SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 10/03/94; SRSA Srebrenica (Andren) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade 11/06/95; SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 24/08/94.

¹⁸⁷ MSF, Brussel. MSF, press release 'Hygienic situation', May 1994; MSF Srebrenica, monthly report, June 1994.

¹⁸⁸ See Hollingworth for a description of how the amputations were carried out in Zepa: male patients had to drink as much alcohol as possible beforehand, and women were advised to do that as well. That was not done with children and consequently they died earlier. During the amputations, which were performed with normal wood saws, a group of people would hold the patient down, and the patient was advised to pray hard or to scream. They tried to saw as quickly as possible. Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, pp. 140-41.

much to be desired. The hospital personnel was often seriously overworked and frustrated; there were too few doctors to deal with all the problems.¹⁸⁹

One of the greatest problems in the enclave after the Safe Area was established was the lack of water. Srebrenica had a gravity-based water supply system: water was taken from the river Jadar and purified in a purification plant in Zeleni Jadar, eight kilometres south of the town before it was led into the town. Up until March 1993 there was sufficient water, but with the influx of large numbers of Displaced Persons from Cerska and Konjevic Polje, water became an acute problem. The water shortage became exceptionally acute after the water plant in Zeleni Jadar was taken by the Serbs and destroyed in April 1993.¹⁹⁰ As a result, the water supply to the town stopped completely. Afterwards, people got water from springs and small creeks that were not clean and consequently not all that suitable for drinking water. The water situation was less urgent in the villages since the population there had access to a large number of local springs and wells (which had often been the only source of water before the war as well). Water from the sources was not always drinkable, however, because of the metals in it. The water situation was one of the most urgent problems that the NGOs tried to do something about after they arrived in the enclave.

Finally, the food situation was a source of recurrent concern. By far the majority of the population was dependent upon the outside world for food. The situation was better in the villages because the farmers simply continued to till their land, were able to grow crops and raised various kinds of farm animals (cows, sheep and poultry). It seemed sometimes as if there was no war going on there. Still, working the land was not always without its dangers since the Serbs regularly shot at the farmers during the day. Consequently, the farmers could only work at night when they could not be seen. The Displaced Persons who stayed in the villages (and there were several thousand of them) lived under better circumstances generally than those in the town. They usually moved into houses with the local people and had sufficient water and food. In some villages they were allocated land to grow crops for the winter.¹⁹¹

Since there was sufficient food in the villages, Displaced Persons from the town sometimes went to the villages to find food, and that led to irritation among people in the countryside. There was little alternative to such forays, however, when little or no food was brought into the enclave. In the first thirteen months of the war (up until April 1993), only three UNHCR convoys arrived in the enclave (at the end of November, beginning of December and end of March). Many people walked to Zepa to try to smuggle food from there to Srebrenica. Due to the lack of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, many women stopped menstruating, which was sometimes traumatic for them. Some of them thought they were pregnant and others thought that they would never be able to be pregnant again.¹⁹²

The whole situation brought about other problems for the female population, in particular when it came to pregnancies and birth. There was a serious lack of contraceptives, which led to undesired pregnancies and all of the related dangers for the women in question. Unsafe sexual practices led to gynaecological infections and venereal disease. The high number of abortions and related complications were later a source of great concern for aid organizations such as *Médecins Sans Frontières*. At the end of 1993, an average of three to four abortions were performed a day. Given that many women did not have the money for this (an abortion cost 100 DM) they performed the abortions themselves, which again often led to complications. The killing of newborn babies also occurred, although it is not clear from the reports of *Médecins Sans Frontières* whether this happened regularly. In

¹⁸⁹ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 63.

¹⁹⁰ The water plant in Zeleni Jadar was also damaged by the Serbs in the beginning of the war, but the damage could be repaired during 1992. The water was no longer drinkable, however, but it could be used for cleaning and washing. Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 119).

¹⁹¹ MSF, Brussel. MSF Srebrenica (Monique Pont, Miguel), medical report, 29/06/93.

¹⁹² Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas*, p. 137.

June 1994, *Médecins Sans Frontières* received 15,000 condoms which were distributed through the gynaecological department of the hospital and outpatient centres.¹⁹³

A specific problem in the enclave was the lack of salt. The population lacked a natural source of iodine in their diet, which had always led in Srebrenica to thyroid dysfunctions (with the related physical and psychological consequences). The population of Srebrenica were often called the 'goitre people' because of the frequency of the affliction.¹⁹⁴ The Turkish traveller Evlija Celebi remarked on this problem already in the seventeenth century when he wrote that there was 'a river that flows through Srebrenica that contains a sort of cursed water that has its source by the silver mine; the inhabitants who drink this water suffer from goitre (...); it is the cause of many illnesses and physical disfigurements in both men and women'.¹⁹⁵

The problem was also known during the First and Second World Wars, when people walked from Srebrenica to Tuzla to obtain salt. After the First World War, the Bosnian government carried out a special salt programme to provide the population in the districts of Srebrenica, Vlasenica and Zvornik with the desperately needed salt.¹⁹⁶ Between 1993 and 1995 many people in the enclave again slowly became ill due to the lack of iodized salt. This was known by the Serb besiegers who constantly tried to prevent salt from entering the enclave. It is thought that there was a JNA plan for biological warfare in Srebrenica, an important part of which was the withholding of salt from the inhabitants. The inhabitants used road salt instead of cooking salt.¹⁹⁷ The UNHCR reported in August 1993 that groups of Muslims crossed the ceasefire line and tried to go to Tuzla to acquire salt, or to steal salt from the Serbs. Some of these fell into a Serb ambush and were killed.¹⁹⁸

The lack of food led to a flourishing black market which often operated on a barter basis. Although the German Mark was used as currency, the exchange value of foodstuffs and other products was generally given in cigarettes. Since there was a lot of smoking in the enclave, tobacco and cigarettes were worth gold. In March 1993, 1 kilo of tobacco cost 1,000 DM, and a package of cigarettes, 60 DM. In addition to tobacco and cigarettes, other products that were expensive were salt, sugar, cooking oil, wheat and flour, whereas meat, milk and alcohol were relatively inexpensive since they were in sufficient supply. Prices fluctuated greatly however.¹⁹⁹ Despite the tremendous restrictions in freedom of movement, there was a constant stream of goods, primarily between Srebrenica and Zepa where the Ukrainian battalion acted as the link in the trade between the Serbs outside and the Muslims inside the enclave. The food situation in the villages was generally better; UNHCR reported that farmers had a richer and more balanced diet than the refugees in the town. One drawback was that the villages often were located too far away from Srebrenica, so that they were inaccessible in the winter. Consequently, food aid and medical care could not always be guaranteed for the villages.²⁰⁰

2. The activities of the UN aid organizations and the NGOs

Messages coming out of the enclave made it clear quite quickly that the Safe Area construct was no solution for the long term. The logistics and infrastructure problems were too great, and the social and economic difficulties in the enclave would only increase in the long run.²⁰¹ Even so, UN aid organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) tried to make the situation as bearable as possible for the population.

¹⁹³ Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 80-82.

¹⁹⁴ Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, p. 139.

¹⁹⁵ Celebi, *Putopis*, p. 99.

¹⁹⁶ Beatovic, *Bratunac i okolina*, p. 59; Galic, *Veze narodnooslobodilackog pokreta*, p. 62.

¹⁹⁷ Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 23. Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p. 243. Interviews with Ilijaz Pilav 22/10/97, Nedred Mujkanovic 10/03/99, Almira and Zahira Ramic 06-10/11/99, Jerry Champagne 12/11/99 and Mehmed Zilic, 04/11/99.

¹⁹⁸ Confidential information (187).

¹⁹⁹ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 120-121. Interview with Dan MacIssac, 16/11/99.

²⁰⁰ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 53.

²⁰¹ Confidential information (153).

The two most important aid organizations were the UN Displaced Persons organization UNHCR which was concerned primarily with the supply of food aid, and the NGO Doctors without Borders (referred to by its original French name *Médecins Sans Frontières*) which was concerned with the health care in the enclave and everything related to health care. A number of other organizations were also active in the enclave with smaller but no less important projects, such as the Swedish Rescue Services Agency and the International Red Cross. And there were a number of organizations that tried to set up projects but were not very successful in their efforts, such as Norwegian People's Aid and the Spanish NGO, Movement for Peace, Disarmament and Freedom.

A significant amount of time in 1993 was devoted by the NGOs to preparations for the coming winter. Thousands of Displaced Persons had no roof over their heads, there was insufficient or no heating in most of the buildings, insufficient fuel, no electricity, no good drinking water, etc.

To be able to do their work, that is to say to gain permission from the Bosnian-Serb authorities to enter and leave the enclave, the NGOs were forced to help the Serbs as well. Thus, *Médecins Sans Frontières* for example, agreed to station a surgeon in Milici to help the Serb population in and around Bratunac. In May 1993, before the demilitarization accord was signed, *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker Hans Ulens provided the Serbs with medicine to make them receptive and to persuade them to let the convoys through.²⁰²

The Serbs treated the various NGOs differently: some received permission more easily than others, probably because the Serbs thought that a given organization did more for the Serb population than the others, or perhaps to drive a wedge between the organizations. The International Red Cross and the Swedish Rescue Services Agency were treated more generously than *Médecins Sans Frontières*, which was annoyed for example in September 1993 that the Swedes could move in and out of the enclave almost as tourists and could run frequent convoys, whereas *Médecins Sans Frontières* encountered much more resistance.²⁰³

UNHCR

Up until the establishment of the Safe Area, the UNHCR had done little for the Muslims in the enclave: during the first year of the war a total of only three UNHCR convoys arrived in Srebrenica. With the establishment of the Safe Area, however, the organization began immediately to play an important role. The UN Displaced Persons organization became the largest supplier of aid goods and also offered assistance to the other organizations. The UNHCR organized an average of two to three food convoys a week. Other goods were also occasionally supplied, such as seeds, shoes and other necessities. The goods were delivered to a warehouse in the town. CanBat assisted with this; one of CanBat's most important tasks was to make the humanitarian efforts possible and to protect and accompany the convoys. The UNHCR saw to the supply of fuel, which was always being siphoned from the tanks of the lorries.

Although the UNHCR provided large amounts of food and aid, it had no influence or control over local distribution which was left to the authorities in Srebrenica. The UNHCR had no personnel in the enclave most of the time, and consequently control was almost impossible. And even if the UNHCR had had more influence and control, the local authorities insisted on maintaining command of distribution. This often led to problems between the UNHCR and the council, but mostly the amounts of food requested by the authorities were provided by UNHCR without further verification.

It is probable that the authorities submitted inflated numbers for the Displaced Persons and inhabitants present to obtain more supplies from UNHCR. The foreign NGO workers and UNPROFOR personnel in the enclave had the suspicion that the amount of food was greater than the

²⁰² MSF, Brussel. Srebrenica (Stefaan Maddens, Jos) to MSF Belgrade, 12/05/93.

²⁰³ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade, 07/12/93.

actual need and that the surplus was traded by the authorities on the black market.²⁰⁴ Goods that went into the UNHCR Warehouse often went quickly out the back door. Part of the food went to Oric's troops and a recurrent Serb complaint - rightly or wrongly - was that the Muslims always started an attack within 24 hours after the arrival of a convoy.

Médecins Sans Frontières

This most active organization in the enclave itself was *Médecins Sans Frontières*. It concentrated on providing medical aid and on a series of preventive measures intended to improve the living environment and hygiene, in particular among the Displaced Persons. *Médecins Sans Frontières* was active in Srebrenica before the other NGOs had started to develop activities and it was also the last NGO to leave the enclave, in July 1995. Its first visit to the enclave was made together with the second UNHCR food convoy which took place on 4 December 1992, before the institution of the Safe Area. A Belgian *Médecins Sans Frontières* team provided first aid during the short stay. The team considered the situation at that moment as simply alarming.²⁰⁵

For that reason, the Belgian branch of *Médecins Sans Frontières* began to make preparations from its office in Belgrade for an extensive humanitarian programme concentrating on direct medical aid and improvement of the general health situation. The object was to create good hygiene and sanitary conditions for the population and the Displaced Persons, and to assist the local authorities in repairing the buildings that were being used as Displaced Persons' Centres. This programme was started in March 1993 when a second *Médecins Sans Frontières* team managed to reach the enclave together with Gen. Morillon, at the time that Srebrenica was still being shelled on a daily basis by the Serb forces. The first *Médecins Sans Frontières* surgeon, Dr. Thierry Ponthus, arrived on 21 March and began immediately to operate in the hospital of Srebrenica, until Morillon succeeded in leaving the enclave again; he left with Morillon. The Muslims did all they could to keep the UN, UNHCR and *Médecins Sans Frontières* personnel who entered the enclave as long as possible out of fear that the Serbs would start the assault of the town.²⁰⁶

The new *Médecins Sans Frontières* team, consisting of a surgeon, a GP, an anaesthesiologist and a hydraulic engineer, Hans Ulens, arrived in the enclave at the beginning of April 1993 during a brief ceasefire. The team worked hard in the following days to give the hospital a good cleaning and to put it in order, to restore the water supply, and to motivate the five local doctors to continue their work. They had to leave the enclave in the second week of April, however, due to the continual Serb bombardments. Ulens decided to stay behind to assist in the evacuation of the wounded. As it turned out, he remained until January 1994 and returned a few times in the following year. Along with Richard Svård of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, he was one of the few foreigners to spend so much time in the enclave.²⁰⁷

One of the first matters on which *Médecins Sans Frontières* and other aid organizations concentrated was the restoration of the town's water supply. There was a joint effort of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the International Red Cross led by Ulens. Lorries and fire engines were used to transport water from clean sources, even if this was not a permanent solution because they threatened to dry up in the summer. *Médecins Sans Frontières* also built water reservoirs with a number of places to draw from the supply near a source in the hills close to the town, but the yield from this source declined steadily. On 26 May 1993, Ulens sounded the alarm in a fax to the headquarters of *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Brussels, Paris and Belgrade in which he said that a solution would have to be found to the water problem in a few days. The only real solution, he said, was for the Serbs to withdraw from the water

²⁰⁴ *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*, July 1994 (MIDKL Dossier 1589); chap. 1, par. F6. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p. 26. Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 61.

²⁰⁵ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 8.

²⁰⁶ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 8.

²⁰⁷ Interviews Abdulah Purkovic 04/02/98 and Hans Ulens 06/08/97.

purification plant in Zeleni Jadar. In another message of the same day he reported that the inhabitants currently had to walk three kilometres for a small amount of water, and that the chance of skirmishes were increasing by the day. 'Urgent action should be taken to guarantee access today or tomorrow. An international presence in Zeleni Jadar is more than necessary, if not we will have to organise convoys of water (...) or evacuate at least 20,000 persons'.²⁰⁸

The following day, Ulens, along with the CanBat commander, had a meeting with VRS colonel Vukovic, who was guarding the southern border of the enclave for the Bosnian Serbs.²⁰⁹ Ulens asked for permission to put the water plant in Zeleni Jadar in order again. *Médecins Sans Frontières* and UNPROFOR had received a handwritten letter from the Bosnian-Serb general Milovanovic granting permission for this. However, Vukovic refused to allow them access to the plant and gave as his reason that the Muslims had not surrendered all of their weapons. When Vukovic heard that the first victims from the lack of water would be women and children, his only response was a digression about the Turkish domination of the Serbs.²¹⁰

It was only several weeks later, with the conclusion of a ceasefire between the Bosnian-Serb and Muslim forces in the third week of June, that the UN was granted access to Zeleni Jadar. When a team of *Médecins Sans Frontières* under the escort of CanBat went to see whether the plant could be started up again, it turned out that the Bosnian Serbs had blown it up, destroying it beyond repair.²¹¹ The only alternative now was to reinstate the old water purification plant at Pusmulici (four kilometres from the town), that had been shut down ten years earlier. The water from the Pusmulici stream was suitable as drinking water for the people in the enclave.

Médecins Sans Frontières and the International Red Cross worked closely together to put the Pusmulici plant back in working order. The old plant, which was located in the eastern part of the enclave had to be completely repaired. Many water pipes were broken or had disappeared, and the plant was polluted because Displaced Persons had used it as a toilet. The work would take at least two months. Ulens gained the support of the council which made available dozens of workers. In the meantime, the International Red Cross came up with an emergency provision by leading water to the town from the Goranovac stream. That water was not drinkable; it could only be used for washing. *Médecins Sans Frontières* also provided an emergency solution by building a dam in the Kutlici stream. Despite the fact that the Serbian besiegers constantly hampered the transport of building materials, the Pusmulici plant was ready for use in October 1993.

The Opstina decided, however, against the wishes of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, that the water had to be conveyed to the houses through the normal water mains system. In the opinion of *Médecins Sans Frontières* much water would be lost if this were done due to the numerous leaks and the excessive use of water by the households connected to the system. The organization wanted special public water collection areas that could be used by everyone, but this proposal was not adopted by the council. As a consequence, only some parts of the town and a limited number of families had running water. The rest of the population had to continue to be supplied by the fire engines. In December 1993, the Pusmulici plant provided about 20-30 litres of drinkable water per person per day, which theoretically was more than enough if it were available to everyone, but that was not the case. The repair and continued functioning of the water supply in the town of Srebrenica was Ulens's greatest contribution.²¹²

Another important activity of *Médecins Sans Frontières* was the provision of medical aid. The group saw to the organization of the hospital and pharmacy, the setting up of a psychiatric institution and some small health centres in the town and a number of villages (known as *ambulantas*).

Médecins Sans Frontières also protected the public health situation by carrying out regular epidemiological research to be able to recognize potential epidemics and other dangers as quickly as

²⁰⁸ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Ulens) to MSF Brussels, MSF Paris, MSF Belgrade, 27/05/93.

²⁰⁹ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Ulens) to MSF Belgrade (Dachy), 26/05/93.

²¹⁰ MSF, Brussels. UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade Sitrep 27/05/93.

²¹¹ Interview Dan MacIssac 16/11/99.

²¹² Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 90-94.

possible. Another contribution of *Médecins Sans Frontières* was the training of medical and nursing personnel. To be able to carry out the whole medical programme, *Médecins Sans Frontières* always kept a few people in the enclave, among whom were a number of doctors in varying combinations (GPs, surgeons, obstetricians, gynaecologists, anaesthesiologists, dentists) and nurses. They rotated on a regular basis. In addition to the team of foreigners consisting of four or five people, *Médecins Sans Frontières* had a local staff of about 12 to 14 individuals (e.g. interpreters, chauffeurs, cleaners and cooks).

Médecins Sans Frontières reorganized the hospital which was originally overly full with approximately 200 beds occupied. After the evacuation in March and April 1993, the number of beds occupied was reduced to about 80; this was a structural reduction of the number of beds by *Médecins Sans Frontières*. *Médecins Sans Frontières* was responsible for the general management and for cooperation with the hospital director and pediatrician Avdo Hasanovic. This Hasanovic was not very capable in the eyes of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the relationship between him and *Médecins Sans Frontières*, which had been difficult since the very start, became increasingly problematic. He opposed changes that *Médecins Sans Frontières* wanted to institute. Instead of concentrating on his specialty, paediatrics, he performed an increasing number of abortions, at a cost of 100 DM apiece. 'Dr. Abortion', as his nickname suggests, carried out many abortions, often in an unprofessional manner, for which he earned a great deal of money. *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers found that he was derelict in his real responsibility as doctor and hospital director.²¹³

Hasanovic also spread rather tendentious information about the health situation in the enclave and the role of *Médecins Sans Frontières*. In September 1994 the relationship between Hasanovic and *Médecins Sans Frontières* had sunk to an all-time low, because he had made remarks to the outside about the 'tragic' health situation in the enclave to which, he maintained, *Médecins Sans Frontières* had not responded sufficiently.²¹⁴

None the less, *Médecins Sans Frontières* had excellent relations with the five other doctors, Ilijaz Pilav, Ejub Alic, Dzevad Džananović and Branka Stanić, all junior physicians with one or two years experience.²¹⁵ Originally, there was also a surgeon working in the hospital, Nedred Mujkanović, who was not from Srebrenica, but had been sent from Tuzla to the enclave to perform operations. Mujkanović had to be flown out of the enclave by helicopter in the middle of April 1993 because he was completely drained.²¹⁶ Three weeks later a replacement was found, Mehudin Hadžiselimović, a surgeon working for the International Red Cross. The intention was for him to stay only a few days in Srebrenica, but as it turned out he remained several months because the Serbs would not allow him to leave the enclave. *Médecins Sans Frontières* praised Hadžiselimović profusely and called him a super surgeon who, for as long as he was in the enclave, led the hospital more or less alone instead of the director.²¹⁷ He was evacuated by helicopter finally in August 1993.

The repeated delaying of Hadžiselimović's departure made other doctors outside of Srebrenica reluctant to go to the enclave, out of fear that they too might not be allowed to leave. For that reason, Ilijaz Pilav was trained by *Médecins Sans Frontières* as a surgeon and two nurses were trained to administer anaesthesia. In May 1994, Pilav was able to carry out 80 to 90% of the surgical operations without assistance from *Médecins Sans Frontières*.²¹⁸

Fatima Dautbasić took over as head of obstetrics which was opened in January 1994. Sixty births a month took place here on average. *Médecins Sans Frontières* gave the mothers small packages with

²¹³ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica, monthly report, April 1994. Interviews Hans Ulens 16/06/98, Emira Selimović 21/10/97.

²¹⁴ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade, 25/09/94. Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 45.

²¹⁵ In the first year of the war there was a sixth doctor also working in the enclave, Nijaz Džanić, who was killed, however, in a Serbian bombardment in January 1994.

²¹⁶ Interviews Nedred Mujkanović 02/12/98 and Abdulah Purković 04/02/98.

²¹⁷ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Maddens), Srebrenica sitrep, 18/05/93.

²¹⁸ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 79.

baby bottles, baby shampoo, baby soap and the like. Hospital personnel – there were more than 100 employees, mostly doctors and nursing staff - were sometimes rewarded in this way for the work that they performed by *Médecins Sans Frontières*, even though none of them was employed by *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Now and again they were also given shampoo, soap, toothpaste and razorblades, which was actually nothing more than a symbolic gesture.

Even so, *Médecins Sans Frontières* had a number of difficulties in its dealings with the local hospital staff, which can be explained to a certain extent as a conflict in medical cultures. The biggest problem, however, was that the staff was completely drained, both mentally and physically, and consequently it was almost impossible to motivate them. Many non-urgent operations were postponed with all kinds of excuses. In the eyes of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the level of medical knowledge of the local doctors was sometimes insufficient, and the organization was also below par. Changing the existing 'Eastern European' routines was very difficult and frustrating for the *Médecins Sans Frontières* organizers. The local staff persisted with the same standards, routines, competencies and hierarchical structures that had existed before the war. Suggestions for change made by *Médecins Sans Frontières* were brushed away. The organization also disapproved of doctors asking for money for treatments, which meant that people who had no money would be helped later or not at all.²¹⁹

Reorganizing the pharmacy turned out to be another frustrating assignment. Local doctors had the long-standing tradition of prescribing a great deal of medicine, so that the supplies were quickly exhausted and shortages were a recurrent problem.²²⁰

In the spring of 1993 six *ambulantas* (small health centres) were opened in the town; this was a combined effort of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the International Red Cross and the local doctors. Six more *ambulantas* followed in the villages, first in Potocari and Suceška. They were staffed by untrained personnel, mostly members of the Women's Association who had been instructed by *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Each *ambulanta* was run by two women. They were given no salary; the municipality was expected to give them a meal every day, and such things as flour and sugar every month. *Médecins Sans Frontières* provided them with soap, shampoo and similar articles. The primary objectives of the *ambulantas* were to provide first aid, make preliminary diagnoses, offer information in the areas of hygiene and health, combat lice, scabies and diarrhoea, and treat minor infections and wounds. The *ambulantas* in the town evolved more and more into hygiene centres, concentrating particularly on combating lice and scabies.²²¹

As soon as it entered the enclave, *Médecins Sans Frontières* ordered large amounts of anti-lice shampoo, disinfectants and insecticides. The organization tried to combat lice and scabies by means of regular disinfection campaigns, in particular in Displaced Persons' Centres. The success of these actions was limited, however, due to the lack of water, but also to the fact that the campaigns were limited in scope and actually not sufficiently stringent to really defeat the problems. There was also a permanent shortage of pesticides and cleaning products, because the Serbs held these back.²²² As a result of these limitations, people were continually reinfected. The *ambulantas*, however, played an increasingly important role in combating scabies and lice. They provided information about hygiene and were responsible for the distribution of soap and similar products when these came into the enclave. Teams from the *ambulantas* also assisted in the disinfection of the buildings. After the *ambulanta* system was established, the percentage of people suffering from scabies was reduced from 50% in April 1993 to 20% in August 1993.²²³

Médecins Sans Frontières also instituted large-scale cleaning campaigns to improve the sanitary conditions in the enclave and, in conjunction with the municipal authorities, organized the collection of rubbish. As far as the cleaning campaigns were concerned, the first priority was the Displaced Persons'

²¹⁹ Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 42-45.

²²⁰ Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 68-69.

²²¹ Thorsen, *MSF*, p.72.

²²² Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 85-86.

²²³ Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 97-98.

Centres because the situation was by far the most critical there, through the lack of usable toilets, showers and washing facilities. As a consequence, many refugees in those buildings suffered from scabies or lice. The situation was the worst in the old school building, which is where *Médecins Sans Frontières* began to clean. A month later *Médecins Sans Frontières* was able to report that the situation had improved in the school building and that there were fewer cases of scabies and lice. The only remedy for scabies and lice, however, would have been to burn the blankets and mattresses, wash all of the clothing and move the population of Displaced Persons to a new location with new mattresses and blankets. That was impossible, and consequently the problems continued to arise.

The town itself was seriously polluted with mountains of rubbish everywhere in the streets and in the river, and there was no provision for dealing with the rubbish. It had not been collected for months. After the establishment of the Safe Area, Civil Defence carried out a three-day cleaning campaign which resulted in about 70% of the rubbish being collected.

Still, keeping the overpopulated town clean remained an enormous task. *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the council agreed to have the town cleaned regularly, for which the council would provide the workers and *Médecins Sans Frontières* the necessary fuel, equipment, protective clothing and boots for the people who would do the work. There was only one refuse lorry available. It was agreed that the rubbish would be collected every day under supervision of *Médecins Sans Frontières*. The refuse lorry broke down quite soon, however, and the rubbish started to pile up again almost immediately.²²⁴ In May there was another large-scale cleaning campaign in which the council, *Médecins Sans Frontières*, CanBat, UNHCR and the International Red Cross all participated. Afterwards, the rubbish collecting teams used normal lorries and small tractors to pick up the refuse, whereupon the hygiene of the town was considerably improved.²²⁵

Problems resulting from the central role of Médecins Sans Frontières

In time, *Médecins Sans Frontières* found that the council was neglecting its duties. In March 1994 the aid organization remarked that the hygiene in the town depended too much on the goodwill of the authorities. *Médecins Sans Frontières* found that the authorities did not sufficiently meet their responsibilities in this matter and that they were very difficult to move. *Médecins Sans Frontières* placed constant pressure on them. The council continued to ask for diesel fuel, more than was really necessary to keep the collection going, at least in the eyes of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, whereupon the council in turn became irritated by the control *Médecins Sans Frontières* continually exercised over the use of fuel. During a clean-up campaign at the end of Ramadan in 1994, *Médecins Sans Frontières* discovered that the council had deposited the rubbish at a spot close to the town that had not been agreed upon, at which point *Médecins Sans Frontières* stopped the supply of diesel fuel until the council would keep its agreements. Ultimately, a committee was set up in which both *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the council had representatives to oversee the quality of the service and make proposals for improvements.²²⁶

The extreme overpopulation complicated and worsened the situation, in particular in the buildings housing the Displaced Persons. An attempt was made to keep the buildings as clean as possible, but there was a constant lack of water, soap and cleaning products. Personal hygiene also suffered from the great lack of water, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, razor blades, sanitary towels and related articles. Such products did not make it into the enclave in sufficient quantities because the Serbs blocked them. Laundry washing was seriously complicated due to the lack of detergent, water and water tubs, and also by the fact that people simply did not have any other clothes to put on. *Médecins Sans Frontières* became frustrated by the fact that no other organization did anything about these problems, and found that UNHCR failed in its duty on this point.

²²⁴ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Maddens), Srebrenica sitrep 18/05/93.

²²⁵ Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 95-96.

²²⁶ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 96.

UNHCR was seen as the organization with primary responsibility for this, but it was sometimes months that it did not transport products to improve the sanitary conditions and personal hygiene. *Médecins Sans Frontières* became frustrated because it had the feeling that it constantly had to put pressure on other organizations and the local authorities to meet their obligations.²²⁷

One of the activities of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, which it felt was not really its responsibility, was the repair of the buildings in which the Displaced Persons were housed. Since the need was great and other humanitarian organizations had done nothing about these problems, *Médecins Sans Frontières* began to assist in this area. However, it found that the UN aid organizations were again neglecting their duty. *Médecins Sans Frontières* found that it carried an unreasonable burden on its shoulders, which could have been better shared. Furthermore, the various UN organizations present in the enclave (UNHCR, UnCivPol, UNMOs) often used *Médecins Sans Frontières* materials and facilities (such as stoves, blankets, the capsat, as it was called, a device for sending messages by satellite) rather than seeing to their own needs. This resulted in a certain amount of bad blood, which led one *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker to say that it was not the mandate of *Médecins Sans Frontières* to make up for all of the deficiencies of the UN.²²⁸

Although many of the activities of *Médecins Sans Frontières* in the enclave were financed by UNHCR, the *Médecins Sans Frontières* personnel was of the opinion that what it actually came down to was that the UN Displaced Persons organization had shunted its tasks into the lap of *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Some of the workers felt that *Médecins Sans Frontières* should have kept a greater distance from UNHCR and that pressure should have been exercised at a high level to have all the various organizations share the aid tasks in Srebrenica.²²⁹

Some *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers also had objections to the way in which UNHCR carried out some of the jobs it did take upon itself. In July 1993 a *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker wrote that the aid that UNHCR brought into the enclave was inadequate in both quantity and quality (too much flour), that the aid was badly planned (no calculations for the needed calories and proteins) and that it was badly distributed.²³⁰

Médecins Sans Frontières was sometimes dissatisfied with the collaboration with CanBat as well. CanBat refused, for example, to help with moving the sick within the enclave. Hans Ulens wrote an indignant letter about this to Col. Almström at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Kiseljak. He vented all his frustrations in this letter, among them that the Canadians refused to turn over fuel for the hospital generator and the water pump, whereas *Médecins Sans Frontières* provided the Canadian battalion with water and collected their rubbish. There was a serious imbalance in what the groups did for one another, Ulens wrote, and added that something would have to change soon. At the end of the month, the balance was somewhat improved.²³¹

The Swedish Rescue Services Agency and the Swedish Shelter Project

The only other aid organization that made a substantial contribution to solving the housing problems in the enclave was the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, a Swedish NGO with its main office in Karlstad in Sweden and subsidized by the Swedish government. This NGO arrived in the enclave in November 1993 to set up a housing project for the Displaced Persons in the enclave, which was known as the Swedish Shelter Project. The objective of this organization was to offer a roof over the heads of as many Displaced Persons as possible; it intended to do this by setting up new, prefabricated wooden

²²⁷ Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 89-90.

²²⁸ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Godain) to MSF-B (Tocker), MSF-F (Laoubbia, Salignon, Geneviev), activity report (mission report), 25/03/93.

²²⁹ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica, monthly report, April 1994.

²³⁰ MSF, Brussels. MSF, Srebrenica sitrep 7.

²³¹ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Ulens) to Colonel Almstrom, BH Command Kiseljak, letter cc. cooperation from CanBat, 05/10/93.

houses and by repairing existing houses and buildings that had been damaged by the combat. The activities of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency were coordinated from Belgrade where the organization had an office. The first and most important project was the construction of a large Displaced Persons' village in the southern part of the enclave, in Slapovici near Zeleni Jadar, which was given the name Novi Svedskigrad (New Swedish Town).

The project involved the building of 288 prefab houses as well as the construction of a primary infrastructure (roads and other public facilities, water pipes and sewers) and sanitary facilities (24 service units, 24 shower units and 3 toilet units). The houses were completely furnished with beds, furniture, stoves and ovens. Water was provided by means of pipes from sources in the hills above the village. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency had the use of good tools and heavier equipment such as lorries, but they also worked with horses. Much of the building materials came from Sweden. Normally, a convoy of this organization came to Srebrenica from Belgrade once a week, always dependent upon whether or not the Serbs would give them clearance. Later, materials were increasingly obtained from inside the enclave due to the continuing logistical problems.

The building of the Displaced Persons' village near Zeleni Jadar began in December 1993. Originally about 30 Swedish workers of Swedish Rescue Services Agency were involved and 80 local labourers. Later the number of Swedish workers was reduced to about seven.

The local workers were provided by the authorities. They were transported every morning from Srebrenica to the construction site. Medo Murathodzic, a construction engineer and director of the local construction company Radnik, coordinated the cooperation for the municipal authorities and saw to the local workers. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency paid no salaries, but promised to prepare one nutritious meal a day, and gave the workers bonuses now and then, in the form of rubber boots for example. The village was completed in the middle of June 1994 and the keys to the houses were officially handed over to the local authorities. Refugees moved into the houses immediately; there was a local municipal coordinator who assigned the houses and turned over the keys. In all probability, it was the local workers who were assigned the houses first. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency had no role in assigning the houses, and no mention is made in their daily reports about the manner in which the houses were assigned.²³²

The people who moved in were very happy with the new houses which, in the light of circumstances in the enclave, were most luxurious. One problem was that the village was located quite far from the town and close to the confrontation line. That meant that up until the fall of Srebrenica, the inhabitants regularly had to flee, to return later; this matter is treated in chapter 6 of vol. III. During the construction of the houses there were also security risks: at the beginning of March 1994 there were shooting incidents which resulted in the local work forces refusing to go to the location.²³³

When the project was finished in June 1994, the Swedish Rescue Services Agency continued its activities in Srebrenica. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency team moved to Hotel Domavia in the town. There it concentrated on the repair of schools and other public buildings that served as Displaced Persons' Centres, and with the reconstruction of private homes. For most of the time that the Swedish Rescue Services Agency was in the enclave, Richard Svård was project leader, a positive and hard-working Swede, who got along well with the local workers. He remained in the enclave more than a year. He allowed the local workers to decide on their working hours themselves and made Friday a day of rest, in keeping with Islam. He encouraged the men and succeeded in achieving a high work tempo from them; in his situation reports he spoke of them in terms of appreciation and even admiration.²³⁴ The financial means of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, which were provided by the Swedish government, were many times greater than those of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, which led

²³² Thorsen, *JRSA*, p. 13.

²³³ NIOD, Coll SRSA, SRSA Srebrenica (Svård) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 06/03/94.

²³⁴ Thorsen, *JRSA*, p. 10. See also the Interview Svård in Ljiljan (Becirovic, 'Zivjet cu').

sometimes to incomprehension among the authorities; they could not understand why *Médecins Sans Frontières* did not have the same means.²³⁵

The International Red Cross

A third organization that was active in the enclave was the International Red Cross, which played an important role in the beginning with the repair of the water supply, but which slowly but surely withdrew from the enclave and restricted itself to the reuniting of families and the setting up of a postal system between family members inside the enclave and those outside. International Red Cross workers arrived in Srebrenica for the first time on 18 April 1993 to assist with the evacuation of 650 wounded to the hospital in Tuzla. *Médecins Sans Frontières* had been in control of the hospital since March of that year, which left nothing for the International Red Cross to do there. Originally there were four workers of this organization in the enclave, including an engineer who helped to repair the water supply, but that number was quickly reduced to one, and in May 1994 he was called back as well.²³⁶ From that moment there were travelling representatives of the International Red Cross who entered the enclave now and again; otherwise, developments inside the enclave were reported by a local representative of the organization.²³⁷

The organization had about twenty local people working for it, concentrating primarily on the postal service. They received almost no remuneration for their work, although Hatidza Hren, who was head of the local office of the International Red Cross, discovered after the fall of the enclave in Tuzla that her local employees had the right to a salary. The postal service of the International Red Cross in Srebrenica processed approximately 25,000 letters a month, the majority of which went to family members in Tuzla.²³⁸ The family reunifications amounted to only a small number of people (35 individuals), among them a number of Serbs who were still in the enclave. The International Red Cross sometimes provided emergency aid in the form of blankets, shoes, clothing, mattresses, stoves, salt and detergents. In such cases, *Médecins Sans Frontières* was generally asked to take care of distribution. In 1994 and 1995 the International Red Cross also brought in seeds so that people could grow potatoes and vegetables, and agricultural plastic to cover the ground. This was a joint project with UNHCR and the world food organization FAO.

The International Red Cross played no significant role on the medical front; *Médecins Sans Frontières* was critical about the lack of cooperation from the International Red Cross in the medical evacuations out of the enclave.²³⁹

Smaller organizations in the enclave

Finally in this survey, two other NGOs need to be named that were only active in the enclave to a limited extent: the Norwegian People's Aid and the Spanish organization Movement for Peace, Disarmament and Freedom. As early as April 1993 the representative of Norwegian People's Aid, Marianne Øen, visited the enclave by helicopter. That was on invitation of UNHCR because Norwegian People's Aid had experience with the construction of prefabricated houses. She came back to the enclave at the end of August 1993 when all the humanitarian organizations were having a joint meeting to coordinate the preparations for the winter. Norwegian People's Aid decided to expand its activities from elsewhere in Bosnia to Srebrenica, and started to work on an aid programme that

²³⁵ Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 26-27.

²³⁶ This concerned a certain Dominique who had regular contact with the OPS officer of the B-Co. and a valuable source of information for DutchBat during the Gorazde crisis in April 1994. *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*, July 1994 (MIDKL Dossier 1589); chapter 6.

²³⁷ Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 24-25. Interview Hatidza Hren 18/06/98.

²³⁸ Interviews Hatidza Hren 02/02/98 and 18/06/98.

²³⁹ Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 25-26. *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*, July 1994 (MIDKL Dossier 1589); chap. 1, paragraph F6.

included the construction of a Displaced Persons' village (with prefabricated houses) for 1,500 people, and the setting up of social and community activities, in particular for the most vulnerable groups in the enclave, women, the elderly, traumatized individuals, children and ex-prisoners.²⁴⁰

The Norwegian organization encountered continual problems in obtaining permission from the Bosnian-Serb authorities to let through the convoys with building materials. The houses were stored in Belgrade, and the whole idea of building a village of prefab houses in Srebrenica was taken over by the Swedish Rescue Services Agency. During talks with the Bosnian-Serb authorities in Pale at the beginning of February 1994, it became clear that the Serbs were of the opinion that Norwegian People's Aid concentrated too much on the Muslim population in Bosnia; it would seem that the Swedes were more measured in their approach. It became quickly clear that the only solution was to first develop a project on the Serb side before there could be any thought of aid to Srebrenica. In May 1994, Norwegian People's Aid, along with UNHCR, decided to place the prefabricated houses in Kravica, partially because the Swedish Rescue Services Agency had made great strides in the meantime with the Swedish Shelter Project.²⁴¹

The psycho-social and community activities that Norwegian People's Aid wanted to set up for extremely vulnerable individuals did not get off the ground because the local authorities did not see the real point to it. In fact, they saw it as a sort of provocation that a humanitarian organization wanted to work on something like this before providing for the primary necessities of life of the population.²⁴² Ultimately, Norwegian People's Aid agreed with the authorities to set up a child care centre in the town, which became the principle concern of Norwegian People's Aid as of the beginning of 1995. The organization focused primarily on aid to young children between the ages of 3 and 7. Officially, there were 5,000 children in this age group in the enclave; orphans and traumatized children were given highest priority.²⁴³

In January 1995, in collaboration with DutchBat, Norwegian People's Aid started an information class for young people to increase their understanding of hygiene. The organization also gave English lessons to adults of the Displaced Person population.

The Spanish organization Movement for Peace, Disarmament and Freedom arrived in the enclave only in the spring of 1995 to start educational programmes in the schools, but did not succeed in getting the necessary materials into the enclave. The workers of this NGO played games with the children in the meantime and, on 15 June 1995, left the enclave when the necessary materials still had not arrived. The organization worked under the umbrella of UNHCR.

3. NGOs and their relationship with the Opstina

Most of the NGOs had regular contacts with the local authorities. *Médecins Sans Frontières* had to continually coordinate its activities with the various municipal functionaries who were responsible for such matters as health care, cleaning of the town, etc. In the period that the Canadian battalion was in the enclave, all of the NGOs and the UN organizations present at the time coordinated their activities with the council in weekly meetings; in the spring of 1994 this was reduced to once a month. The relations between the authorities and the NGOs were generally riddled with problems.²⁴⁴ The council's priority was to keep control of the enclave and the population in its hands in as much as possible, and that sometimes clashed with the interests of the refugees and the aid organizations. Differences in mentality and conceptions caused numerous complications and crises in the relations on both sides, which sometimes endangered the whole aid programme. Chapter 7 will deal with this question in greater depth.

²⁴⁰ Thorsen, *NPA*, p. 6.

²⁴¹ Thorsen, *NPA*, p. 5. Interview Marianne Øen, 22/09/00.

²⁴² NIOD, Coll NPA, NPA (Ommang) to NPA, end of mission report, 10/03/95.

²⁴³ Thorsen, *NPA*, pp. 6, 8-9.

²⁴⁴ Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 29-36. Interview Yvan Bouchard, 15/11/99.

The increasing political tensions outside or around the enclave sometimes affected the relationship between the NGOs and the authorities. In the summer and autumn of 1993, for example, the Serb blockade caused continual delays in the NGOs' humanitarian preparations for the winter. The authorities took out their fear and frustration on the international organizations; they accused the aid organizations and the international community of doing too little to improve the situation in Srebrenica.²⁴⁵ The population and the Displaced Persons who were dependent upon the international aid organizations also took out their frustrations and anger on the organizations. This was reinforced by the fact that the authorities frequently pointed the finger at the NGOs if something went wrong - partially to deflect criticism of their own failings. It was clear that in periods of tension and shortages, the NGOs had to take into account hostile reactions of the population or the authorities.

The civil authorities tried to grasp as much power as possible, which meant that they were not afraid of conflicts with the NGOs if they thought that their power position was being undermined. They were clearly under the influence of the political hardliners and the military authorities, in the last instance, Naser Oric of course. In October 1993, *Médecins Sans Frontières* reported that the local authorities in Srebrenica 'installed and controlled by the local military commander' were involved in an intimidation campaign against anyone who dared oppose their power position. NGO workers, both local and foreign workers, were intimidated and accused of all sorts of evils, as part of the attempts to have themselves replaced by people who - in their eyes - were loyal to the authorities. Oric went so far sometimes as to come to blows with NGO workers, the UNHCR worker Pierre Ollier for example. He supposedly was beaten up by Oric and threatened with murder after he protested that Oric had stolen all of the jogging suits from an aid shipment.²⁴⁶

The NGOs were of the opinion that the local authorities were constantly inventing problems and obstacles that slowed the progress of the aid projects. *Médecins Sans Frontières* in particular had difficulties with this because that organization did by far the most in the areas of water supply, sanitary conditions, health care and housing repair. Consequently, it had the most influence in the enclave which meant it was a threat to the authorities. One of the points of contention was that the authorities tried to monopolize the selection of local workers for the NGOs and UNPROFOR, which often resulted in favouritism. People who had obtained work from the municipality generally turned over a percentage of their salary to the municipality. The authorities sometimes put great pressure on international organizations that hired people without going through the municipality, which resulted sometimes in the sacking of the person in question. A Serb woman, for example, who was in the enclave and started working for DutchBat was sacked after three days because the municipality protested. She later went to work for *Médecins Sans Frontières*.²⁴⁷

Médecins Sans Frontières in particular refused to yield to the pressure of the Opstina, whereas most of the other organizations more or less put up with it. The constant tug-of-war between the authorities and *Médecins Sans Frontières* came to a peak in October 1993 when the local police confiscated a vehicle of *Médecins Sans Frontières* in an attempt to underline its authority. The reason that was given was that the vehicle supposedly had been driven too fast. The international organizations responded with a joint action: they ceased all activities. The hospital personnel joined them. This put the authorities in a difficult situation. Given the fact that they were concerned about reactions from outside, they gave the vehicle back. *Médecins Sans Frontières* then had a long talk with the mayor and the chief of police. *Médecins Sans Frontières* and UNHCR warned that in the future such actions would have consequences for carrying out the local programmes.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ MSF, Brussels. MSF Belgrade to MSF Srebrenica (Ulens), Srebrenica sitrep, 27/06/93.

²⁴⁶ Confidential information (154).

²⁴⁷ Interview Dana Ristanovic 22/09/98.

²⁴⁸ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Ulens) to MSF Brussels (Devaux), Srebrenica sitrep, 29/10/93. Interview Hans Ulens 16/06/98.

Still, the NGOs remained critical of the interaction with the council. Both *Médecins Sans Frontières* and UNHCR had difficulties with the inflexible attitude of the authorities. According to *Médecins Sans Frontières*, this had to do with internal politics.

CanBat officers as well were not always all that positive about the efforts of the Opstina. Sometimes CanBat had to hire people for work that the municipality actually should have done.

ABiH soldiers did not help either;²⁴⁹ in September 1993 a *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker listed a number of factors that influenced the fact that the authorities were not very cooperative when it came to carrying out aid programmes. These were: the legacy of a heavily bureaucratized system in which everything is delegated; the lack of people who are willing to take responsibility; and the rift between the original inhabitants and the Displaced Persons, which was intensified by the Displaced Persons' being shut out completely from municipal power. The Displaced Persons had a very weak and vulnerable position and could do nothing against the power block of municipality, army and police. According to this worker, the local authorities profited from the large Displaced Person population to put pressure on the international aid organizations for more aid, of which they could then appropriate a larger amount.²⁵⁰

It was above all the distribution of aid goods that frequently led to problems with the local council, which demanded complete control of this. *Médecins Sans Frontières* kept careful track of the goods it delivered, because it was assumed that otherwise the goods would end up in the wrong hands. It did not want to give the authorities a chance to pinch anything. UNHCR, on the other hand, left the distribution of aid goods to the local authorities, giving them a handle to exercise influence on the implementation of aid programmes, which caused so many problems for *Médecins Sans Frontières*.²⁵¹ *Médecins Sans Frontières* was partially dependent upon the mayor who had the authority for the distribution of goods provided by UNHCR, and that also included goods actually intended for *Médecins Sans Frontières*. The mayor often worked against UNHCR; that was frequently simply a matter of political obstruction to obtain something from the UN. Another matter in which the local authorities tried to exercise influence was the evacuation of the wounded and civilians, as became clear in April 1993. In general, the authorities wanted to keep these types of evacuations to a minimum.²⁵²

Time and again, *Médecins Sans Frontières* came to the conclusion that the interests of the local authorities were not compatible with the goal of *Médecins Sans Frontières* to reach all of the population. The authority over the aid goods became an important component of the exercise of political power in the enclave. Ulens wrote an angry letter to UNHCR headquarters in Belgrade in December 1993 saying that the authorities showed less and less respect for the humanitarian activities and the NGO personnel. In the beginning, *Médecins Sans Frontières* discussed its programmes with the authorities to try to achieve optimum cooperation, but recently, Ulens wrote, the Opstina refused to do this. The meetings with the authorities often ended in false accusations and insults of the NGO and international agency workers. There were constant points of contention which threatened to worsen the relations more and more. The authorities refused, for example, to provide shoes to the local workers of *Médecins Sans Frontières* who were rebuilding the hospital. UNHCR had provided the shoes for this purpose, but the authorities resisted because they had not been able to appoint or approve these employees. The workers went on strike and the construction stopped.

Ulens wrote that the initial good cooperation between NGOs and the authorities had been replaced by 'continuous sabotage of all relief activity which is not completely under their control'. He continued:

‘The local authorities do not seem to accept that humanitarian organisations are recruiting their own personnel and they want to force them always to pass

²⁴⁹ Interview Dan MacIssac, 16/11/99.

²⁵⁰ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Caravielhe), 02/09/93.

²⁵¹ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 23.

²⁵² Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 29-30.

through their channels. They want all relief goods which arrive in Srebrenica to be exclusively distributed by people appointed by themselves (...) We have the impression that the humanitarian aid is becoming increasingly the subject of an internal political power struggle and its real objectives are of secondary importance to it. [sic]²⁵³

Relations improved somewhat at the beginning of 1994, after the Christmas and New Year's festivities which had a good influence and led to a sort of reconciliation. The authorities even organized a Christmas party for the foreign workers, to which the NGO workers responded with similar gestures. That improved the atmosphere considerably.

Still, the struggle over authority continued, although *Médecins Sans Frontières* found a way for dealing with it. As *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker Graziella Godain wrote in her mission report at the end of March 1993:

'Médecins Sans Frontières' position in the enclave must remain independent from the power Opstina attempts to take within the programmes we run. The fact that we intervene in numerous domains seems to be felt as a threat for the municipality. They have difficulty accepting the role as collaborators and want to control and regulate our activities (...) Every day we receive several demands for construction materials, tools, etc. (...) The diplomacy thus consists in the capacity to make them believe that they are the ones who make the decisions while in fact *Médecins Sans Frontières* keeps the control. This 'diplomatic game' is exhausting but necessary.²⁵⁴

4. Conclusion: mood

The authorities continued to have very high expectations of what the NGOs could do and overwhelmed them with requests for aid goods, materials, tools and the like, which the NGOs could not always meet. When the foreign workers of the International Red Cross and UNHCR had left the enclave, the *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers were the ones to suffer most from this. This organization was the primary contact for the authorities when it came to things that they needed (such as fuel), but *Médecins Sans Frontières* could do little to satisfy their needs.²⁵⁵

Although conditions in Srebrenica improved considerably after the arrival of the NGOs, the situation remained extremely problematic. *Médecins Sans Frontières* reports spoke of a 'UN-safe hell'. Jan Maddens, a Belgian doctor, wrote at the end of June 1993 that 'Srebrenica as an enclave remains a disgrace to humanity. People live there in circumstances worse than our animals. It is heart breaking, distressing and unjust to be unable to end this imprisonment'.²⁵⁶

The winter of 1993-94 was again very hard for the majority of the population. The NGOs' planned winter programme encountered considerable difficulty from the Serb blockade, and some of its components only started in the middle of the winter. The arrival of DutchBat in the spring of 1994 made the situation bearable again. People were more active, worked the land, for example, and planted seeds. Building and reconstruction work on the houses and buildings could be restarted, as well as cleaning the town.

Life had more pleasant sides for some people. One of the *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers wrote in his mission report that he was having a good time with picnics, horseback riding and trout fishing. He added to his curious account the following:

²⁵³ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica to HCR Belgrade, 17/12/93.

²⁵⁴ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Godain) to MSF-B (Tocker), MSF-F (Laoubbia, Salignon, Geneviev), 25/03/94.

²⁵⁵ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 33.

²⁵⁶ MSF, Brussels. MSF-B (Maddens), mission report, 28/06/93.

‘Not to forget the abundance of the local Bosnian food with gaimac and cir, kebabcis and other delicious food with too difficult names to remember; we had a gastronomic invitation at least twice a week and from time to time the slivovic (...) got us in a real dancing mood. And there is plenty of opportunity to dance in Srebrenica: if *Médecins Sans Frontières* isn’t organising a party, then there is the local disco twice a week which serves a splendid mix of traditional Bosnian dances (...)and techno and hip-hop dance music. Of course this is the place to be to see the beautiful women of Srebrenica, although there’s plenty of occasions to admire them when you stroll down the main street. If you’re looking for a chess sparring partner, every man in Srebrenica knows how to play chess and there are some geniuses among them. What else can I say to convince you that Srebrenica is THE holiday place to be of this summer? There’s only one way to find out what it is really like and to have a superb holiday, and that is to contact the only tour operator who currently has a Srebrenica package: *Médecins Sans Frontières*.²⁵⁷

For the majority of the population, the enclave was far from a holiday resort. Srebrenica was experienced as one large prison, or one large concentration camp which no one could leave. The complete isolation from the outside world resulted in feelings of powerlessness, dependency and apathy. A large number of people had psychological problems as a result of the hopelessness, the feeling of insecurity and the constant stress of the war situation.

People had very little control over their lives: there was no work, they wandered around as if at an ordinary street market and tried to kill time. They cut wood for the winter and stood in line for food. Walking around was the primary activity of men, children and young people, only broken when a convoy entered the enclave or the International Red Cross brought the post. Women were often the only ones working and trying to keep the housekeeping going.

The enormous hopelessness and boredom were a big problem. The humanitarian organizations made frequent reference to the apathy, the mental fatigue and wearing down, and the lack of solidarity that had taken over the population. The fact that the Opstina and the population attempted so little to try to make something out of the situation was sometimes a source of great irritation to the NGOs and UNPROFOR. The same Jan Maddens wrote:

‘The main characteristic is apathy, mental weariness. Each individual is prepared to work for his own sake (collecting wood for cooking, clean own house). But there is little interest for community services (clean roads and ditches, public buildings, reconstruction of the town, water supply, etc.). Most Displaced Persons hope and believe to be gone before winter. Why should they make this effort after such a war winter? The native population doesn’t want to work for those 18,000 Displaced Persons. And so, human energy is restricted to a minimum. People stroll around on the streets, aimlessly gaping at others. Luckily there are exceptions. These people help to make a better life in town.’²⁵⁸

There was a great deal of smoking, even among young and very young children, to deaden the stress and hunger. A great deal of alcohol was also consumed, primarily the home-brewed sljivovica. In spite of everything, some sort of social activities were organized, sport competitions, horse races and discos and folk dancing for the young people. Small cafes and private movie theatres opened everywhere,

²⁵⁷ NIOD, Coll MSF, MSF-B (Vandelotte), mission report, 23/06/94.

²⁵⁸ MSF, Brussels. MSF-B (Maddens), mission report, 28/06/93. Interviews Omer Subasic 17/06/98, Peer Everts 05/04/01. See also the speech of DutchBat 2 commander Lt. Col. Everts on his stay in Srebrenica, printed in the *Militaire spectator* appendix *Mars in cathedra*, 1995, pp. 2970-2977.

where the population could watch video films in exchange for cigarettes or money. A group of very active women who had banded together in the Women's Association tried to organize special activities for women and children, but the activities often could not be realized because of the great lack of materials.²⁵⁹

In August 1993 a number of primary schools were reopened, in the town of Srebrenica, in Potocari, and the *Swedish Shelter Project*. To be able to teach children in the ages of 7 to 15 (approximately 3,600 in the enclave in all) in the limited space and with the limited number of teachers, classes were held in three shifts. However, the schools closed down again in bad weather because the Displaced Persons had to be able to sit inside. For this reason there were no classes in the winter. The lessons only started up again in April 1994. It seemed to do the children good, although *Médecins Sans Frontières* was concerned about the older children who received no instruction. It was about that group in particular that there were concerns about increasing criminality.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Interviews Omer Subasic 17/06/98, Hans Ulens 16/06/98. Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 54.

²⁶⁰ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 58; Thorsen, *NPA*, pp. 12-13.

Chapter 5

The preparation and dispatch of Dutchbat

1. Introduction

The Dutch government's decision to contribute a combat unit to the international peacekeeping force in the former Yugoslavia and its acceptance of the Safe Area of Srebrenica as the operational zone formed the preface to a battery of measures that were needed to prepare the unit for dispatch. These preparations were delegated to the Royal Netherlands Army, which then decided that the battalion would be provided by the Airmobile Brigade, which was still being formed at that time (see Part I, Chapter 13). In order to fully comprehend the actions of Dutchbat – as the battalion came to be known – and the problems it encountered it is necessary to obtain a clear insight into the preparation and training of these troops. This was not a routine operation: the last time that Dutch 'combat units' had participated in a peacekeeping operation was in the 1980s as part of the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Moreover, there was very little time: a mere seven months lay between the issue of the 'warning order' on 22 June 1993 and the target deployment date of 1 January 1994.

The actual preparations began with the warning order issued by the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army on 22 June 1993. Though the political responsibility lay with the Minister of Defence and the military responsibility with the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, the preparations were undertaken at the level of the Airmobile Brigade. This practice of decentralized implementation was part and parcel of the new operating procedure of the reorganized Netherlands Army.²⁶¹

Any description and analysis of these preparations must include an examination of the perception of the various parties of their future task, the information they received on the nature of the mission, the mandate, the rules of engagement and conditions on the ground. It is equally important to tackle the question of whether they tried to utilize the experience gained by others in the former Yugoslavia in order to optimize the preparations; which resources they thought were needed and whether these were made available; and which type of training was considered necessary and whether it was realized. These questions will form the central theme of this chapter, which will address the dispatch of Dutchbat, its subsequent deployment in Srebrenica and the training it received beforehand.

2. The planning for the dispatch of the Airmobile Brigade

This was not the first Dutch contribution to the international peacekeeping force in the former Yugoslavia. Dutch forces had been participating in the peacekeeping operations there on a lesser scale since the summer of 1991. Individual soldiers had been sent out in a civilian capacity to join the ECMM (the European Community Monitor Mission). Since 1992 the Royal Netherlands Army had been making officers and NCOs available for the United Nations Military Observers (UNMO). A signals battalion of the Royal Netherlands Army had been participating in UNPROFOR since April 1992 and a Dutch-Belgian transport battalion had been transporting aid for the UNHCR in Bosnia since November 1992. The Royal Netherlands Navy assisted with the enforcement of the UN embargo in the Adriatic, while F-16s of the Dutch Air Force helped to enforce the no-fly zone above Bosnia in Operation Deny Flight.²⁶²

²⁶¹ Interview H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

²⁶² Klep & Van Gils, *Van Korea tot Kosovo* (From Korea to Kosovo), pp. 103-104 and 288-296; W. Lutgert & De Winter, *Check the Horizon*, pp. 221-330.

The dispatch a Dutch combat unit to the former Yugoslavia was first considered at the start of 1993. It arose within a NATO context during the preparations for the implementation of the Vance-Owen Plan (see Part I, Chapter 9). The NATO planning was based on a concept styled on ‘go in heavy’, ‘robustness’, ‘massive self-defence’ and ‘excellent self-protection measures’ for the infantry and engineering units. A total implementation force of between 55,000 and 75,000 troops would include between 34,000 and 54,000 combatants. The infantry units – the cornerstone of the implementation force – had to be able to operate independently with access to adequate protection and fire power. Military actions would be performed mainly in companies; there was no place in this concept for light infantry without armoured vehicles. The Royal Netherlands Army took these criteria on board to determine how it could contribute to this implementation force. The circumstances were not auspicious, as the Royal Netherlands Army was currently in the throes of a reorganization programme, the result of the Defence White Paper of 1993 (see the appendix on the Ministry of Defence). The scope for participating in the NATO implementation force was circumscribed by the limited possibilities of sending out conscripts, the suspension of national military service and the changeover to a volunteer army.

The Chief of Defence Staff, A. van der Vlis, concluded that, in theory, either an existing armoured infantry battalion or a battalion of the Airmobile Brigade, equipped with armoured vehicles, could be eligible for this mission. But there were drawbacks to both options. Van der Vlis felt, for various reasons, that the option of an existing armoured infantry battalion was non-viable as intensive efforts were already underway to recruit conscripts for the transport and signals contingent in the former Yugoslavia. He believed that only strong financial incentives could win over more conscripts. But this would, effectively, cancel out the distinction between conscripts and regulars. He also strongly advised against the second option, the deployment of a battalion of the Airmobile Brigade with armoured vehicles, as this would interrupt the systematic formation of this new unit. In his estimation, “‘inappropriate’ deployment’ would send out the wrong signals and undermine the credibility of the efforts to recruit professional personnel for the Army.”²⁶³

Van der Vlis’ conclusion was not put to the political test because the Bosnian Serbs renounced the Vance-Owen Plan at the start of May 1993. This effectively meant that a NATO implementation force would not be deployed. However, the debate on potential deployment in the former Yugoslavia continued in the Netherlands and acquired a momentum all of its own. As explained in Part 1, Chapter 11, political pressure continued to mount for the dispatch of an infantry unit. This was apparent in, amongst others, the adoption of the Van Traa-Van Vlijmen motion (25 May 1993) at the end of the parliamentary debate on the Defence White Paper. The pressure intensified further with the three Security Council resolutions on Safe Areas in Bosnia in April/June 1993.²⁶⁴ Despite the objections of the Chief of Defence Staff, this merely increased the likelihood that a Dutch battalion would be deployed. However, as the Army could no longer form and dispatch an armoured infantry battalion of conscripts, an infantry battalion for Bosnia would have to consist of regulars. At that time the Airmobile Brigade was the only unit that fitted the bill.

The 11th Airmobile Brigade was trained according to an infantry concept which was new to the Netherlands. Now that the Cold War was at an end, participation in the ‘static defence of a limited area’ against Warsaw Pact troops was no longer the main task of the Army. The new approach was flexible deployment for crisis management in unprepared situations. According to the 1991 Defence White Paper, the distinguishing feature of this concept of ‘mobile contra-concentration’ was a ‘far more dynamic presence in a much wider area’. This envisaged deployment in crisis management and peace operations as well as under NATO. When this concept was introduced the Royal Netherlands Army

²⁶³ SG. Memorandum SN93/216/1624, CDS to Minister, 15/03/93; SG. Memorandum PD 93/0112, Director of National Service to Minister, 06/04/93.

²⁶⁴ TK, Parliamentary Session 1992-1993, 22 975, no. 22 and SCR 819, SCR 824 and SCR 836.

fell into step with the developments in other NATO countries.²⁶⁵ A separate airmobile brigade would be formed to implement the concept.

The first step was to convert the 11th Armoured Infantry Brigade of the 1st Army Corps into the 11th Airmobile Brigade, a unit of rigorously trained infantry troops which would be transported by helicopter. The three battalions of the new brigade had to be able to operate independently as an infantry unit if they were to attain the desired level of flexibility. They would be flown in their own helicopters to their operational zone, where they would move around without armoured vehicles and, if necessary, have access to special support units and their own logistical systems.²⁶⁶

The airmobile concept marked a radical change in two respects. The classic armoured infantry model was shelved and the ranks consisted entirely of volunteer serving professionals, i.e. 'short-term professionals' (STPs) instead of conscripts, while the NCOs and officers consisted of 'long-term professionals' (LTPs). The Airmobile Brigade had to be deployable within two weeks. It derived its flexibility and mobility primarily from a new organizational model, which prescribed leaner personnel, material and logistical support than in the existing infantry battalions. Each of the three infantry battalions consisted of 475 men; (parts of) a mortar company, an engineering company and a logistical unit could be called in at brigade level as reinforcements. The brigade would get its tactical mobility from transport- and fighter-helicopters.²⁶⁷

Not everyone in the Royal Netherlands Army endorsed the airmobile concept. Some of the staff officers saw it as a relic of the Cold War, because it seemed to be unilaterally geared to a large-scale strategic battle. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, what was really needed were units with multi-purpose training which could be used in crisis situations and peace operations.²⁶⁸

The high standards of the airmobile concept meant that, from the very start, the Airmobile Brigade would be an elite unit, distinguished by classic symbol of the red beret. The elite character was further accentuated by the continuation of the traditions of the *Garde Grenadiers* and the *Garde Jagers* – which had always been seen as elite infantry troops – by the 11th and 12th battalion respectively. The 13th battalion (Dutchbat III) continued the tradition of the Storm Trooper Regiment, which was formed during WW II.

At the start of 1993 the concept for an Airmobile Brigade had only been roughly drafted. Parts of the programme were developed and fleshed out according to a dynamic model during the training, which allowed plenty of scope for improvisation and experimentation. The attainment of the red beret was a precondition for every position in the Airmobile Brigade. The staff of the Airmobile Brigade and the 11th battalion was gradually manned. The basic red-beret training for the first group of regulars was held in January 1993 at the Training Battalion. A start was then made on forming the sections of the first airmobile battalion in April 1993.

The 11th airmobile battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel C.H.P. Vermeulen was the first Royal Netherlands Army battalion in the changeover to a volunteer (professional) army. The privates and corporals were all volunteers (STPs) and most of the NCOs and officers (LTPs) came from the 'old' Royal Netherlands Army. Vermeulen and his personally-appointed staff invested considerable energy in training and instruction. In the early months Vermeulen was also commander of the Training Battalion and in charge of the individual basic training. One of the officers described the start phase of the brigade as a 'circus' with people of all ranks who were 'highly motivated' and rediscovering the challenge in their work. The mentality, being different and harder than that of other Army units, led to a certain degree of isolation.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁵ *Defence White Paper 1991. Herstructurering en Verkleining. De Nederlandse krijgsmacht in een veranderende wereld.* (Restructuring and Downsizing, the Dutch armed forces in a changing world.) TK, Parliamentary Session 1990-1991, 21 991 nos. 2-3, p.111.

²⁶⁶ Interview J-W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

²⁶⁷ Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 15-17.

²⁶⁸ Interviews J. Lemmen, 17/10/01 and H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

²⁶⁹ Interviews J. Lemmen, 17/10/01 and M. van der Tweel, 27/04/01.

The deployment of the Airmobile Brigade in peace operations became a discussion topic in April 1993, when the Brigade received a warning order from the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. This order described a possible mission in the near future and gave concrete instructions for the preparations. The Airmobile Brigade had to gear up for a possible peace mission in Cambodia where it would relieve the Marine Corps on 1 December 1993, if the mandate of the UN peace force in Cambodia was renewed.²⁷⁰

The Van Traa-Van Vlijmen motion of 25 May 1993 also brought the possibility of deployment in the former Yugoslavia into view. At first, the Minister of Defence, Ter Beek, was less than enthusiastic about the prospect of the Airmobile Brigade as armoured infantry, but he nonetheless went along with a proposal from the Chief of Defence Staff and the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army at the end of June to equip the airmobile brigade with armoured vehicles if it was to be sent to the former Yugoslavia.²⁷¹

In the meantime, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, General H.A. Couzy, had started the preparations for the dispatch. A planning order sent by Couzy to the commander of the 1st Army Corps prompted Brigade Commander J.W. Brinkman to issue a warning order to his sub-commanders on 22 June. This document repeated the possibility of deployment in Cambodia but it also mentioned the former Yugoslavia as an option. Within a few days Cambodia was off the agenda because the peace mission was running so well there that there were no plans to continue it after November 1993.²⁷² This left the deployment of an airmobile infantry battalion with armoured vehicles in Bosnia, as part of UNPROFOR, after 1 January 1994. This was an indication that the first operational deployment of this brigade would not take the form of light airmobile infantry.

The fact that Bosnia was a real option was reflected in the guidelines for the implementation of the warning order. These gave a rough indication of the training programme and a timescale. The main activities in the combat-training curriculum were fire practice with all weapons, tending the wounded in the field, protection against nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, physical fitness, mine-awareness, including mine-clearance operations, and operations in inhabited areas. A platoon of heavy (120 mm.) mortars and a platoon of medics would also be involved in the battalion preparations. The armoured vehicles (APC 675s) would form a separate unit for the time being and would be seconded to the battalion at a later date, preferably 1 October 1993. A stringent timetable was drawn up for the implementation: the draft exercise programme had to be on the brigade commander's desk by 25 June, the organizational proposal by 2 July and the logistical plan by 9 July. After the sections of the 11th battalion were formed on 4 October 1993, the specific training for deployment in Bosnia would follow in the next two months. To make more time for the training the battalion would be exempt from barracks duty and other commitments.²⁷³

Though the political decision to send an airmobile battalion to Bosnia would not be taken until November 1993, the planning order from the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army to the Army Corps and the warning order from the brigade commander to the battalion heralded the start of the preparations for the dispatch. The warning order was not accompanied by instructions on who would be responsible for steering and implementing the preparations. Obviously, ultimate responsibility for the preparations lay with the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army but, under the Army's decentralized management concept, the 1st Army Corps played a key role in coordinating the personnel, logistics and training.²⁷⁴

The Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, part of the Army Commander's staff, also played a coordinating role in this process, while the staff of the Airmobile Brigade, being the link between the

²⁷⁰ AC. 1459th Army Council, no. 21/4/93, agenda point B 1.

²⁷¹ CRST. no. S/93/007/1945. 21st meeting Committee CDS/Commanders, 24/05/93. SG. Departmental meeting 25/05/93. *Ibidem*: Departmental meeting 23/06/93.

²⁷² TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, (Departure Point) pp. 70-71.

²⁷³ NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Warning Order Cdt 11 LMB to AA8, 22/06/93.

²⁷⁴ Interview H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

battalion, the Army Corps and the Army Crisis Staff, had to fulfil an important initiating and intermediary function. Later, Brigade Commander Brinkman said that the situation regarding the preparations for the dispatch became obscure, because the brigade staff was bypassed on all sides by senior staffs, and direct contact with the battalion was not exceptional.²⁷⁵ The importance of optimal coordination in the efforts to prepare for the dispatch would become clear several months later. The staff of the Airmobile Brigade concentrated first of all on fleshing out the warning order.

Brigadier General J.W. Brinkman presented the results of the planning of his staff to the commander of the 1st Army Corps on 29 July. The aim of his plan was to deploy an infantry battalion with support units (infantry battalion combat group) equipped with APC armoured vehicles in Bosnia after 1 January 1994. He made no distinction between operating as part of a peace plan implementation force and operating within UNPROFOR. The battalion's mission would consist of three parts: first to secure the operational zone against breaches of the ceasefire (violent and otherwise); second, to provide the population with limited humanitarian aid; and third, to take action in the event of aggression by one of the warring factions. Brinkman worked out the details for each part. The security task consisted of six activities: setting up observation posts, establishing static road blocks, the use of mobile roadblocks, foot patrols, (armoured) vehicle patrols, and finally the formation of a mobile reinforced reserve. The limited humanitarian assistance consisted of medical (outpatient) facilities for the local population, help with food distribution, infrastructural repairs and improvements, and escorting aid convoys.

Brinkman specified four types of action as an instrument against aggression by the hostile parties: clearing buildings and open terrain, eliminating artillery and mortar installations, anti-sniper operations and small-scale infantry offensives. The execution of this operation required, in addition to an airmobile battalion, support units from the Airmobile Brigade itself and from the 1st Army Corps. The Brigade itself would deploy an engineering platoon, a heavy-mortar platoon, a signals detachment and a helicopter detachment from the Dutch Royal Airforce. Brinkman asked the Army Corps for a platoon of the 108th Commando Company of the Commando Corps, because the airmobile reconnaissance platoon was still undermanned.²⁷⁶ A repair platoon, a reinforced supply platoon and a medical platoon would complete the logistical requirements, while a detachment from, amongst others, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit plus mortar-locating radar systems were advisable.

The Army Corps would also have to provide 52 APCs and act as guarantor for 85% of the materiel. The drivers and gunners would come from the ranks of the battalion. The brigade would be responsible for supplying the logistics. The Brigade Commander considered the multi-faceted infantry capacity (including the airmobile capacity), the good support and the armoured protection to be the strengths of this 800-strong unit. The weaknesses were the lack of experience of the drivers of the armoured vehicles and the absence of the option to act as a Quick Reaction Force.²⁷⁷

Brinkman's concept for an independently operating unit fitted in with NATO's vision of the structure of an implementation force. It also corresponded with the airmobile concept, which was clearly in evidence in many parts of his operational plan. This is most clearly exemplified in the addition of a helicopter detachment, but it is also reflected in the emphasis on the multi-faceted capacity of the infantry. There was no well-defined vision of the consequences of operating with armoured protection. Brinkman appeared to have distanced himself from the armoured infantry. The battalion would use the armoured vehicles for transport, as a sort of 'battlefield taxi'; further operations would take place only on foot with support from the guns. The Brigade Commander was not particularly specific about the implications of this operational concept for the training programme. He added a proposal for a final exercise in the American high-tech training facility in Hohenfels to the special combat-training points that he had already listed in the warning order.

²⁷⁵ Interview J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

²⁷⁶ When the brigade was formed it was the intention to man this platoon with contract renewers who had demonstrated their suitability for this unit. Interview J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

²⁷⁷ NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. C-11 Lumblbrig, Operational Concept, undated. *Ibidem*: message Vermeulen, 16/07/93.

Brinkman concentrated mainly on the bottlenecks in the training programme. These related, first of all, to the training of the drivers of the APCs and the trucks and the experience required of the drivers of the recovery, command and casualty evacuation vehicles. Finally, training was needed for artillery observers and forward air controllers for the purposes of air-power deployment. For the longer term he stressed the need to prepare the 12th and 13th battalion for the take-over of the duties of the 11th in the peace mission. This meant that officers and NCOs had to be assigned as soon as possible to these battalions. Other training obstacles were, in his opinion, the reservation of exercise terrains such as Hohenfels, Sennelager and the Infantry Shooting Camp in Harskamp and the purchase of the Miles system for shooting practice.

Brinkman also drew attention to the general personnel problems. First, the personnel of the 11th battalion needed to be stabilized. To ensure that everyone concentrated collectively on the new mission, transfers, individual secondments, career courses and competitions had to be put on hold. He also ascertained problems regarding the materiel, such as modifications to helicopters, the availability of armoured vehicles and other essentials including night-vision and telecommunications equipment, shrapnel-proof vests and helmets. According to Brinkman, the Commander in Chief – as well as the Army Corps – was responsible for sorting out these personnel and materiel problems. On the basis of these problems he made suggestions on the distribution of the APCs and the drivers' training programme and the realization of the preconditions. At the end of his presentation he discussed a timetable and pinpointed a series of decision-making moments regarding the preparations for the dispatch of a reconnaissance party in September 1993 and the start of the preparatory programme in mid-September.²⁷⁸

Brigade Commander Brinkman clearly showed in his operational concept that a lot of work was needed to get the 11th battalion ready for dispatch. When he presented his plan he spoke only of 'green' military-operational aspects and did not relate these at all to the future peace mission in Bosnia. He also did not address the political-military situation in Bosnia or the implications of the 'blue' peace mission for the preparation and training. Brinkman said that September and October would be needed for re-training the battalion and the attached units. He saw two immediate problems here: the hitherto inadequate availability of exercise equipment and facilities, and the lack of clarity about the future mission. The Army Corps and the Commander in Chief did their utmost to solve the bottlenecks, but time was perhaps the scarcest commodity of all.

3. The planning order for the dispatch of Dutchbat

After the Commander of the Airmobile Brigade had presented his operational concept, the 1st Army Corps went to work. On 24 August it produced a planning order called *Safe Lion*, which described how the preparations for the dispatch would be organized. This sizeable document explained the Army Corps' vision of the dispatch and assigned specific tasks to various sections for the execution of this operation. *Safe Lion* aimed to make the obstacles and decision-making moments visible. Hence, it was not a formal order for dispatch preparations. Within this broad framework the Army Corps – and the Airmobile Brigade – assumed that the troops would be deployed within UNPROFOR with the aim of implementing UN Resolution 836 on the Safe Areas. This assumption was premature, because no decision had yet been taken on this when Minister Ter Beek offered the battalion to the UN several weeks later.

The Army Corps also took on board the vision of Brigade Commander Brinkman, namely, to maximally utilize the airmobile character of the battalion by focusing on operations on foot and the use of armoured vehicles such as armoured personnel carriers (APCs; YPRs in Dutch). This intention was reflected in the name of the battalion: '11 Infbat (APC)'.

²⁷⁸ NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. C-11 Lumbbrig, Operationeel Concept, undated. *Ibidem.* message Vermeulen, 16/06/93.

The Army Corps Commander, Lieutenant General M. Schouten, did not adopt all the aspects of Brinkman's proposal. Instead of one infantry combat group, Safe Lion ordered the formation of a unit with two chief components: a reinforced infantry battalion (11 Infbat (APC)) with an operational task, and an Operational Support Command with a logistical task. Together they formed Dutchbat and fell under the commander of the infantry battalion. This construction made Dutchbat an independently-operating unit with its own logistical support.

11 Infbat (APC) would consist of a Staff and Support Company (SSC) and three infantry companies. In addition to its own staff the SSC would consist of the battalion staff and a range of support units, namely, a logistical component (a supply, recovery, and medical platoon), a signals platoon, a reconnaissance platoon (the previously mentioned 108th Commando Company), an engineering platoon, and an infantry platoon. No decision was yet taken on the assignment of a helicopter detachment, as the limited deployment possibilities had prompted serious doubts as to its use. The platoon of heavy mortars and the mortar-locating radar were shelved as they had no place in a peace operation.

The other main component of Dutchbat, Operational Support Command, would be responsible for all logistical elements that were not normally performed at battalion level. These involved four main tasks: first, the supply of food, post, spare parts, clothing, fuel, ammunition and medical items; second, the maintenance of materiel and the storage and management of a reserve stock of vehicles; third, medical facilities; and fourth, the building of observation posts, shelters and other infrastructure and the maintenance and renovation of buildings by the engineers.²⁷⁹

The plan for this separate logistical centre – a combination of a supply, repair and medical unit – had already been developed at the Army Corps at the start of 1993. It was one of the products of the Defence White Paper, which was based on the premise that in the near future the army would participate more in *ad hoc* crisis management and peace operations.²⁸⁰ A start was now made on developing the concept further for the dispatch of Dutchbat. In the spring of 1993 Brinkman was still opposed to the idea of a separate logistical unit alongside the airmobile brigade as he believed that this would restrict flexibility and hamper rapid deployment. He had stuck to this vision in his operational concept, but Safe Lion abided by the general vision of the Army Corps. The structure of Operational Support Command was based on the UNPROFOR *Aide Memoire* for the deployment of infantry battalions and on the timescales it set for the presence of supplies at the operational unit.

A second factor in the logistical planning was the deployment of the 11th Infantry Battalion in Central Bosnia and logistical support from the Netherlands. As long as there was no certainty about the future operational zone, the planners at the Army Corps Logistical Centre assumed a hypothetical distance of 200 km between the port of Split and the future base of Operational Support Command and a distance of some 75 km to the operational zone of Dutchbat. It followed the UNPROFOR guidelines for the level of supply. This Logistical Centre would be responsible for transporting equipment from Split (the reception port for goods arriving in the former Yugoslavia) via the Operational Support Command complex to Dutchbat, and also for the maintenance of materiel and medical facilities above battalion level. A detachment of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and an expert from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Service would also be stationed at Operational Support Command. As the APCs required intensive maintenance, Operational Support Command would consist of 400 men. If UNPROFOR were to assume responsibility for part of the supply, then 300 would be enough. An engineering detachment would be added to Operational Support Command for three months to build the infrastructure (accommodation and shelters) and assist in the construction of combat positions.

²⁷⁹ W. van Dullemen, 'Opzet, inrichten en "Lessons Learned" van het Support Command' (Structure, Lay-out and 'Lessons Learned' from Support Command). Lecture for the Army Service Corps In-Service Day 1994, p. 4.

²⁸⁰ Interview F.G. van der Hoof, 17/12/01.

Safe Lion was therefore based on a split between operational and support tasks. This model was also chosen because it was the intention to use Operational Support Command as a logistical centre for other Dutch units in Bosnia as well. It would not be certain whether this was feasible until a decision had been taken on the operational zone for Dutchbat.²⁸¹ The announcement at the start of December 1993 that Dutchbat would be sent to Srebrenica and Zepa did not lead to significant changes in the organization.

Some parts of Operational Support Command, namely, the casualty station and the engineering platoon, were detached to Dutchbat because of the distance between the Operational Support Command base in Lukavac and Srebrenica. The consequences of the assignment of Srebrenica as the operational zone will be discussed in detail later. It is, however, relevant to point out here that the calculated transport capacity proved totally inadequate because the distance between Operational Support Command and Dutchbat turned out to be twice as great as was anticipated and would create serious problems during the deployment.²⁸²

The Army Corps delegated the execution of this planning order to the Airmobile Brigade and the Army Corps Logistical Centre and assigned support tasks to the 11th Infantry Battalion, the Commando Corps, the Fighter Helicopter Group and the 101st Combat Engineer Group. The planning, preparation and training of Operational Support Command were placed in the hands of the Army Corps Logistical Centre and developed into an independent operation, of which even Commander in Chief Couzy was not aware.²⁸³ The Brigade had to draw up the task-based organization chart and authorization list (describing the required personnel and resources) and to define a task-based operational concept and a related exercise programme for the 11th Infantry Battalion. The brigade staff would use these documents to compile a list of decision-making moments and obstacles, and would themselves solve any problems as far as possible. The organization chart and the authorization list formed the parent document for the whole planning operation. These included all the information on the personnel composition for each unit, the job requirements and the assigned materiel. It was, in a sense, the DNA strand of the unit. The allocation of personnel and materiel within the Royal Netherlands Army was based on this document.

The brigade staff faced a complicated task when making the preparations. It had to delineate profiles of all the tasks and jobs for the separate sections and officials according to the specifications for a mechanized-infantry-battalion in the UN *Aide Mémoire* for UNPROFOR. It also had to determine which specific equipment would be needed for each of the constituent parts and the members of the personnel. If the organization chart and the authorization list were not professionally drawn up, this could reverberate on the quality of the personnel and the operational deployability.

The brigade staff took the existing organization chart and the authorization list as a departure point. It removed the 'green' elements (which were relevant only to airmobile operations) and added new elements which it considered necessary for the 'blue' peace operation. Most of these changes concerned the main lines, such as communications and the tasks of the participating units. The organization chart and the authorization list ran through a series of concepts, but the drafting turned out to be a task too complicated for the brigade. On 1 January 1994, the day that Dutchbat had to be ready for departure, there was still no final organization chart or authorization list.²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ DCBC, no number. Planning order *Safe Lion* dispatch 11 Infbat (APC) + OSC (Order no. 001 from C-1AC) 24/08/93; CDPO/GNKD. LLC Chief of Staff to C-1AC, no. 9322, 07/09/93; appendix: 'Safe Areas' OSC Lumbibat (YPR.50) Bosnia Hercegovina. Interview F.G. van der Hooft, 17/12/01.

²⁸² DS. Operation order no. 24 from BLS, appendix to no. OZ/7767, 7 February 1994, Director of Royal Netherlands Army Operations to dispatch list. Interview F.G. van der Hooft, 17/12/01.

²⁸³ Interview F.G. van der Hooft, 17/12/01. During a visit to the barracks in Grave in December 1993 Couzy remarked that personnel were walking around wearing blue berets. When he asked about this he was told that this was personnel of the OSC. Couzy was under the impression that all the Dutchbat personnel were being trained in Schaarsbergen.

²⁸⁴ CRST. Planning Order 'Safe Lion' dispatch 11 Infbat (APC) + OSC (Order no 001 from C-1AC, appendix B), 24/08/93. See LL. no.28206 09/02/94, RNLA National Logistic Command to Royal Netherlands Army MC DMKL Sc-Matd.

This did not mean that the entire process had gone haywire. Dispatch preparations were already underway at various levels before the 1st Army Corps issued the planning order on 24 August. However, the delegation of responsibility to both the Airmobile Brigade and the Army Corps Logistical Centre led to inadequate coordination. As already mentioned, this delegation of responsibility fitted in with the new army management model which Couzy had introduced as part of the reorganization programme. This was not a successful formula when it came to the preparations for the Dutchbat dispatch. Agreements were not honoured, and some elements deviated from the original intention or were duplicated. The Commander's Crisis Staff quickly intervened to smooth out the process, because the clock was ticking mercilessly. Every week, starting from 17 September 1993, the Crisis Staff held a work meeting on the preparations for Dutchbat at the Airmobile Brigade Headquarters in Schaarsbergen.

Permanent participants in this weekly meeting were the Chief of Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, a representative of the Airmobile Brigade, Commander Vermeulen of Dutchbat, the Chief of Staff of the Army Corps Logistical Centre and the prospective commander of Operational Support Command, Colonel F.G. van der Hooft, as well as the chairpersons of various working parties. An action list was drawn up, stating who was required to act before which date. The actions remained on the list until they had been carried out. On 25 March 1994, 80 actions had been completed. The meetings were chaired by the Chief of Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, Lieutenant Colonel F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse. His deputy, Major Scheffer, acted as project coordinator. Working parties were formed for various aspects such as armoured vehicles, ammunition transport and helicopter detachment.²⁸⁵

It was possible to form a rough estimate of the required personnel and materiel on the basis of the available knowledge of the climate, the terrain, the existing infrastructure, the war damage, the warring factions and the UNPROFOR mandate. Brinkman had spoken of these requirements in his presentation on 29 July. The specific details regarding, say, minimum supply levels and one-off materiel needed for building accommodation could only be determined when the operational zone was known. But the bulk of the preparations did not need to wait for this information. The work for the logistical preparations was based mainly on the general needs of the unit and current knowledge of the conditions in the deployment zone of Bosnia. This took place largely on the basis of rational considerations and took account of the experience of, amongst others, the Netherlands Signals and Transport Battalions. It was not until early December 1993, after the battalion had been assigned to Srebrenica and the Dutch had sent out reconnaissance missions in November/December 1993 and January 1994, that it became possible to determine the specific requirements of the operational zone.

4. The Dutchbat Equipment

The brigade and battalion staffs and the higher echelons of the Royal Netherlands Army (Army Corps, the Royal Netherlands Army Materiel and Personnel Commands, the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff and the National Logistics Centre) invested huge amounts of energy in the materiel preparations. This was the first dispatch of an infantry battalion and all the materiel would have to be ready for shipment in five months time. First of all, decisions had to be made on the quantities and composition of the package. Second, these decisions had to be implemented (delivery from Royal Netherlands Army stocks, new orders and delivery guarantees). Next, shipment had to be arranged; and finally, the personnel had to be taught to use the materiel. Dutchbat was completely re-equipped, right down to personal weapons. According to Brigade Commander Brinkman, it was a 'brand new show' because the

²⁸⁵ Interviews F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00; H. Couzy 04/10/01; F.G. van der Hooft, 17/12/01. CRST. Action list materiel for. Infbat (APC) and OSC, 20/09/93. The action lists are stored in various archives; many are in CRST. no.28206, 09/02/94 Commander NLC to DMKL Sc-Matd; appendix: 'Lessons Learned' preparing Dutchbat for deployment.

senior staffs apparently wanted to avoid all possible risks.²⁸⁶ An ‘exercise set’ was needed for training Dutchbat. This too created all sorts of problems, such as where to get 52 of the right type of armoured vehicles in a hurry, whether the competence and training of the troops in the use of new materiel was up to standard and how to organize any additional training.

The armoured vehicles formed one of the core problems during the preparations. The Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Couzy, had already decided at an early stage that Dutchbat would be equipped with APCs bearing only one .50 machine gun. The choice of weapon and the discussions about it are addressed in Part I, Chapter 15.

The efforts to implement Couzy’s decision ran into three problems. First, it was necessary to determine the right type and quantities and to find out whether they were available. Second, the specifications for the materiel (personnel transport, medical evacuation, supply and command) had to be worked out on the basis of how they would be used. Finally, maintenance was needed during the mission itself. On 12 August the Vehicle Section of the Royal Netherlands Army Materiel Command held its first meeting on the APCs. The aim was to draw up an inventory of the operational requirements, to ascertain the possibilities of realizing them and to compile a timetable. The first problem was that the APCs with .50 machine guns of the armoured infantry were no longer in use at the RNLA. The required type and quantity could still, however, be supplied from the remaining stock. After a prototype had been assembled with the standard modifications a loading test would be carried out.

While he was calculating the required quantity, the Head of the Operational Section of the Airmobile Brigade, Major P.J.M. van Uhm, assumed that the APCs would be used for transportation and not as combat vehicles. This meant that they would be supplied to the infantry companies and the direct support units: the Service and Support Company would not get APCs but trucks. Ten APCs were needed for each infantry company: six for the platoons, two for the commander and his deputy, one for the transportation of military materiel and one for the transportation of casualties. Hence, 30 APCs were needed for the three companies in the battalion. At the same time, he worked out that 22 APCs were needed for the battalion staff and the staff company, and ten were needed in reserve. As all the Dutchbat materiel would remain in Bosnia throughout the mission, another 52 sets were needed for exercises and at least 16 for driving lessons. Short-term delivery of this last group was the least of the problems as they did not require any modifications. They were therefore directly available from stock. The driving courses at the Royal Netherlands Army Driving School started on 30 August; 66 drivers were trained in two batches between this date and the end of November.

The modifications to the armoured vehicles presented a tougher problem. All the APCs – apart from two recovery vehicles – would be routinely fitted out with racks for sleeping bags, a large jerrycan holder, jump leads, snow blocks on the treads and a short-range anti-tank weapon. Except for the medical transport vehicles, all the APCs would have a dome with a .50 calibre machine gun and a gun shield (a metal plate to protect the gunner). The gun shield would – so it appeared initially – form a stumbling block as the delivery time was six months. No real problems were created by other parts of the preparation programme such as spraying the vehicles the white UN colour, replacing the drive shaft, preventive maintenance and a TNO test (Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research) to ascertain whether the underplate was mine-resistant. A decision on the installation of the communication equipment would follow later after the requirements had been drafted for the Dutchbat communication plan.

The Royal Netherlands Army Materiel Command feared that problems would crop up during all these activities. Stagnation in the modifications threatened to create an extra bottleneck because some of the APCs still had to go through the whole preparation process between 26 November and 20 December before they could be dispatched. The Materiel Command anticipated no maintenance problems in Bosnia. Dutchbat would, in principle, take care of this. Difficulties might arise when the

²⁸⁶ Interview J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

drive shaft needed to be replaced after 1,000 miles, but these would be sorted out at Operational Support Command.²⁸⁷ Despite the extremely tight deadline, the operation ran fairly smoothly. On 24 December the last APCs had been fitted with a gun shield and the communication equipment had been installed by the start of January 1994.²⁸⁸

As far as the rest was concerned, the logistical services concentrated on the purchase of new equipment. The brigade had submitted a long list of special equipment with varying degrees of availability. An extra canteen and a shrapnel-proof vest were easily solved. The night-vision devices prompted more discussion. In addition to thermal-imaging equipment in the vehicles the battalion wanted portable devices and unattended ground sensors. The Royal Netherlands Army was negotiating the purchase of both types of equipment and had no intention of scuppering this process for the sake of Dutchbat. The fact that the Planning Bureau wanted to treat thermal-imaging systems and ground sensors as a single entity was, in Vermeulen's opinion, 'horse trading', as it was not a question of a choice between the two. Dutchbat needed both.

The battalion commander was even more put out by the questions raised by the Intelligence & Security Section of the Royal Netherlands Army Intelligence Service regarding the purchase of a portable wire-cutting system and mine-detection equipment because – they said – there were no reports of the presence of wire obstacles or mines. The 'not necessary' from the Army Corps staff in response to a request for fleece jackets for protection against sub-zero temperatures and the 'not deemed necessary' to the request for multi-purpose knives were also greeted with indignation. The decision by the Intelligence & Security Section that the reconnaissance platoon could take along extra communication materiel but no special equipment such as sniper rifles or laser devices was more a question of principle: the argument was that, as this was a UN operation, it did not call for intelligence activities.²⁸⁹

The additions to the standard equipment came at the end of September after the Head of Logistics at the battalion had taken up contact with his counterpart at the first Transport Battalion which had been sent to Bosnia. The Transport Battalion drafted a list of practical recommendations, ranging from reserve combat rations for at least forty days (in case the supply lines ran into problems) to food-storage containers to supplement the equipment of the catering group. During a peace mission the canteen shop had to be able to sell camera films, toiletries and batteries for a wide array of personal electrical appliances. The Transport Battalion would bring in water for the compounds (the Dutchbat bases) in tank lorries. This water had to be boiled whenever it was used for preparing food. The 'wet prefabs' with showers and lavatories would be connected to the local water pipes or a tank lorry.

The list also contained advice on improving the accommodation by replacing tents with prefabricated units, on problems with tent heaters, the use of aggregates, the use of barbed-wire and tripwire fitted with a light signal, the use of winter diesel and the risks of insufficient engine maintenance, the minimum diesel stock and siphoning procedures, ammunition storage, and the strain on drivers due to manoeuvres in very heavy terrain. To maintain high levels of morale, considerable attention needed to be paid to sport and recreation: in addition to TVs, satellite dishes and decoders for Filmnet and RTL-4, each compound needed micro-waves for individual use, games, videos with tapes and a well-equipped gym.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁷ NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Memorandum Van Uhm, 13/08/93. *Ibidem*: Internal memorandum Royal Netherlands Army Planning Bureau to BVC, 11 August 1993 'Decision moments for 11 Infbat (APC)'. *Ibidem*, tab 7 YPRs: memorandum S3 from Uhm to C-11 LMBrig, 7 July 1993. *Ibidem*, MCRNLA/ARB/Sie Rvtgn to ST-11 Lumblbrig Maj. M. van Uhm, no. Rups Fax 93/3039B undated: Main points *ad hoc* meeting YPR 11 Infbat Lumbl. KDEF, CSKL, wnd CS Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to OCRNA, 23 July 1993. Internal Memorandum 'Decision Sheet'.

²⁸⁸ CRST. Scheffer to dispatch list working meeting on the formation of Dutchbat, 22/02/94, appendix Completed actions etc. 22/02/94, sub 14.

²⁸⁹ NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Internal memorandum Royal Netherlands Army, Planning Bureau to BVC, 11/08/93 Decision moments for. 11 Infbat (APC) appendix Materiel Requirements C-11 Lumblbrig.

²⁹⁰ NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Bottlenecks: memo Sie S4, 27/09/93.

A lot of attention was therefore paid to fitting out Dutchbat. It was important in this respect for the cooperation between Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen and the Commander of Operational Support Command, Van der Hooft, to be frank and amicable. As Chief of Staff at the Logistics Department of the Army Corps, Van der Hooft had his own network, which would be valuable for the logistical preparations of Dutchbat.²⁹¹ These non-operational elements were rated as highly important for gaining an optimal performance from the individual soldier and maintaining group morale. However, the first priority in the preparations was the operational deployment and the resources that were required to achieve this. Consensus grew on this point, despite the inevitable differences of opinion and irritations. Further specification of the materiel requirements could only take place after the deployment zone had been reconnoitred in the period between December 1993 and January 1994. No serious problems arose, but opinions continued to diverge on one point, namely, the deployment of a helicopter detachment.

According to the Safe Lion planning order of August 1993, the detachment of four helicopters to Dutchbat was dependent on the future operational zone. This standpoint stemmed from the 'Decision Moment Memorandum' of 11 August 1993 from the Royal Netherlands Army Planning Bureau. Only when the operational zone was officially announced, could a decision be taken on whether a helicopter detachment would be needed for the Dutchbat command, the operations of Forward Air Controllers and medical evacuations. The Planning Bureau saw advantages, especially in the long-term, for the teamwork between the Airmobile Brigade and the RNLAf Helicopter Group, which would later be transferred to the Army. One drawback was the huge financial and logistical efforts that were involved. These considerations resulted in a 'provisional planning order'.²⁹² There was also a strong desire in the battalion to take along the helicopter detachment. After a reconnaissance in early December 1993, Vermeulen suggested that the helicopters could carry out logistical transport and liaison flights in addition to the three already-mentioned tasks.

The preparations began in October, but were subject to certain provisions. As the Airmobile Brigade did not have its own helicopters, the Army struck a deal with the Dutch Royal Air Force whereby it would borrow five *Bölkows*, complete with crew and maintenance personnel, from the 229th Squadron in Deelen. The actual preparations were delegated to a special working party. The meetings paid special attention to logistical questions such as bullet-proof plating, extra protection for the crew, improvements to the navigation facilities, and a responsible maintenance programme. At the end of November, the dispatch of a helicopter detachment was more or less certain. It would only be abandoned if the current reconnaissance concluded that helicopters would be 'totally unusable'. No decision had yet been taken on where they would be stationed.

Totally in line with the ideas of the Royal Netherlands Army on the future operational zone, the working party assumed in November that Dutchbat would be deployed in the vicinity of Zenica. This changed to Srebrenica/Zepa, after these areas were definitively allocated by Bosnia-Herzegovina Command on 1 December 1993. On these grounds an Dutch Royal Air Force reconnaissance party advised in January 1994 that the helicopters be stationed in Srebrenica. On 17 February 1994 the helicopter detachment was formally transferred to the Army.²⁹³ Up till then, everything had been arranged quickly and effectively. However, the intended deployment was destined to come adrift due to resistance from the Bosnian-Serb Army.

²⁹¹ Interview F.G. van der Hooft, 17/12/01.

²⁹² CRST. Planning Order 'Safe Lion' dispatch 11 Infbat (APC) + OSC (Order no. 001 from C-1AC) sub 3rd, 24/08/93. CRST. Internal Memorandum from Royal Netherlands Army Planning Bureau to BVC, 11/08/93: 'Decision Moments' for 11 Infbat (APC), sub 2b.

²⁹³ Lutgert & De Winter, *Check the Horizon*, p. 331-333. DOPKLu. DOPKL Reitsma to DOPKLu, no.OZ/7136, 26/10/93. *Ibidem*: decision lists of the heli-element working party 19/11/93, 30/11/93, 17/12/93 and 24/01/94. BDL. no. 94016366/229, 17 February 1994 Operational instruction BDL 94/002. CRST. C-11 Infbat (APC) to BLS, no.001, 12/12/93: 'Reconnaissance Report on Srebrenica and Zepa.'

Despite the heavy time pressure, by 1 January 1994, the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, the Army Corps, the Materiel Command of the Army and the Airmobile Brigade had managed to more or less equip Dutchbat for dispatch to Bosnia. Dutchbat and Operational Support Command left as little as possible to chance. They tried to ensure that everything that was needed for the start and the execution of the operation was taken along right away. Dutchbat and the Brigade had worked closely together to make sure that they were optimally equipped and ready for any eventuality. Ultimately, both commanders managed to overcome bureaucratic opposition by taking up direct contact with the commander of the Army Corps.²⁹⁴ Nothing was left to chance as far as the materiel was concerned. However, optimal preparation proved less easy to realize when it came to the personnel.

5. The Dutchbat personnel

Building up the Dutchbat personnel proved a complicated task. In mid-1993 the Airmobile Brigade and its first battalion, the 11th airmobile battalion, were still being formed. The three infantry companies had their full complement of staff and officers and most of the ranks had been filled, but there were still vacancies in the SSC. These positions had to be filled as soon as possible so that Dutchbat could be dispatched on 1 January 1994. This was easier said than done because, as this was a peace operation, the personnel needed to have special skills. Two types of problem emerged. First, as it was not always possible to find personnel with the right professional qualifications; national service conscripts were the only solution. Second, it took so much time to find suitable professional personnel and provide them with any extra training, that they were not available at the start of the UN training programme for Dutchbat on 4 October. The same problems arose in units detached to the airmobile battalion.

However, the appointment of national service conscripts to the SSC posed a fundamental problem. General Couzy, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, had decided in June 1993 that professional personnel with a short-term contract (STPs – usually ranks and NCOs) would be accorded priority in manning the units for crisis management operations. He prohibited any mix of STPs with conscripts. Couzy maintained that it was better to postpone the deployment of a unit for two months to ensure that all the positions would be filled with the next group of STPs. He argued that a mixed unit constituted a risk for deployability: for, conscripts could always change their minds up to the moment of dispatch. Moreover, sending out conscripts would not project ‘the new panache that was needed for a better image’.²⁹⁵

In theory, these instructions would not present a problem for the 11th airmobile battalion. Nevertheless, they formed an insuperable stumbling block for Dutchbat four months later: it was easy enough to build up three infantry companies according to the Commander’s guidelines but it proved impossible in the case of the SSC. However, waiting for the next contingent of professionals – according to the letter of Couzy’s instructions – was out of the question as the warning order explicitly specified a dispatch on 1 January 1994. The problem was a shortage of personnel. A total of 29 positions needed to be filled: 9 in the supply group, 11 in the medical platoon and 9 in the signals platoon. The shortage was due mainly to a high turnover of professional personnel and insufficient training or experience in the available contingent. The army conscripts could provide enough candidates of quality for the peace mission in Bosnia.

Although this solved the problem in practical terms, the Army Corps did its very best to present the allocation of conscripts as a temporary measure, which would be sorted out in the operational zone by an exchange of positions between the SSC and the logistical Operational Support Command or by sending out professional personnel which became available at a later date.²⁹⁶ The main objection to this plan was not so much the formal allocation of the 29 conscripts to SSC but their actual detachment to

²⁹⁴ Interview J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

²⁹⁵ LR: nr. 22/4/93: report of the 1460th meeting of the Army Council, 29/06/93.

²⁹⁶ CRST. Internal Memorandum no.3759, Head of G1 1 AC to CS Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 15/10/93.

an infantry company. This kind of ‘mixing’ of conscripts and STPs on the ground was ‘not in the spirit’ of Couzy’s instructions, and the Army Corps did not want to go against these orders. But there was no alternative. In any case, if the – by now – specially trained conscripts were replaced by regulars this would seriously disrupt the Dutchbat training programme.²⁹⁷ It was therefore only logical that the problem be solved by deploying conscripts. The same problem arose to an increasing degree during the formation of the SSC company of Dutchbat II and III. Here too, conscripts seemed to be the only solution.

6. The Dutchbat training

This was not the only personnel and training problem that emerged in connection with the dispatch of Dutchbat. Every soldier who went on a peace mission had to follow a basic course in peace operations beforehand. This course was part of the basic training programme for new personnel and, needless to say, Dutchbat personnel were no exception. But many of the regulars were still to take this course. Those who formed part of the SSC followed it at the Training Battalion of the Airmobile Brigade. The personnel of the detached units went to the Centre for Peace Operations in Ossendrecht. There were, however, waiting lists for Ossendrecht as the Centre trained small groups and had only limited capacity.

There was yet another training problem. Personnel who had been recently allocated to Dutchbat and who needed job-related training at the military training centres had to be fitted into the current rosters. It was not always possible for them to complete this extra training before the start of Dutchbat’s own preparations. This extra training – known as the ‘work-up phase’ in military jargon – began for Dutchbat I on 4 October 1993. But the formation of Dutchbat was not yet complete on this date. This meant that individual members of the personnel were trained elsewhere outside the Dutchbat programme, also after this date.

As a result, not everyone was able to follow the full programme of his own unit or the general training programme and some could not participate in other exercises because they still had to follow the training. No further details are known about the numbers involved and the missed parts of the programme. Though it seems logical to expect that Dutchbat II and Dutchbat III would be less affected by this problem, as they had more time to prepare and could organize additional training earlier, this was not the case. There were more latecomers at Dutchbat II than at Dutchbat I and more at Dutchbat III than at Dutchbat II. It speaks for itself that this could reverberate on team-building and collective action.

In his Safe Lion planning order of 24 August the commander of the 1st Army Corps had instructed the Airmobile Brigade to draw up a ‘task-based operational concept’ and a training and exercise programme.²⁹⁸ The brigade had already revealed some elements of its vision in the internal warning order of 22 June 1993. After the completion of the routine combat training in platoons, companies and battalions and a final exercise based on the airmobile concept in September 1993, the battalion in the ‘work-up’ phase would give priority to exercises in operating the APC with the .50 calibre machine gun and actualize the peace-mission training set out in the basic programme.²⁹⁹ This was, in effect, nothing more than a general reference to the special work-up phase. Brigade Commander Brinkman had adopted this principle in its entirety when he presented his operational plan on 29 July. He had not specified how the brigade would tackle the preparations for the peace mission in Bosnia.

Operating as airmobile infantry took central place in the completion of the last part of the routine training in the period up to the end of September. To the outsider, this appeared, at first glance, to include very few components that could have any real meaning for peace operations.

²⁹⁷ CRST. Fax OCRNLA to DS/OZ Vandeweijer, 15/11/93: appendix: Internal Memorandum acting CS-Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to CS *et al.*, 20/10/93.

²⁹⁸ CRST. Planning Order ‘Safe Lion’ for the dispatch of 11 Infbat (APC) + OSC (Order no 001 from C-1AC) 24/08/93.

²⁹⁹ NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Warning Order Cdt 11 LMB to AA8, 22/06/93.

This was a serious problem: the personnel of the brigade and the 11th airmobile battalion did not experience the dispatch to the former Yugoslavia as a mission which had aims that deviated significantly from the general aim of the airmobile training. They were more of the opinion that the airmobile training offered an excellent preparation for the forthcoming peace mission.³⁰⁰

Later, the Commander of Dutchbat I, Vermeulen, said that thorough military training was essential in order to act successfully as a peacekeeper. During the training the soldiers assimilated a 'certain military posture' which gave them an 'aura of discipline and professionalism', which enabled them to command the respect of the warring factions.³⁰¹

Apparently, it was from this same perspective that Brigade Commander Brinkman issued orders that the exercise programme in final phase of the airmobile training for a possible dispatch to the Balkans include elements such as combat in villages and urban areas. However, there was scarcely any further differentiation in the exercise objectives from mid-1993. This was not possible, because there were still no concrete ideas at the start of October on deployment in peace operations, let alone converting these into an exercise programme. 'Everyone was working hard on this' at the battalion and the brigade, but the ideas on peace operations at senior levels of the Army Corps and the Army Staff still followed the 'classic' concept, which was based on monitoring a ceasefire which had been agreed between the warring factions. Judging from the daily reports in the media, anyone could conclude that this did not apply in the former Yugoslavia because the conflict was waging. So, neither the Army Corps or the Army Staff adapted their ideas on peace operations to fit in with the current circumstances; in other words, operating as part of a peace force in a volatile and violent conflict. In addition, the brigade and the battalion kept a tight rein on the training and sought hardly any information from the Army or UNPROFOR.

The 'work-up programme' in theory

The operational section of the brigade had compiled a training programme for the 'work-up' phase, which amounted to no more than a description of eleven main components. Basic combat training was described as 'the theory of convoy security, anti-ambush drills etc'; the communications training concentrated on knowledge of the relevant connections (FM 4600, UHF, handheld receiver and line communications) and the use of English as the *lingua franca*. Not a word was said on how these lessons were to be given.

Jellema, the Commander of the Bravo Company of Dutchbat I, went in search of information himself and drew up a list of teaching goals for his men. This programme consisted to two main elements. First, they had to learn how to operate the APCs. The aim of this course was to facilitate the transition from airmobile operations to limited armoured infantry operations. The second element was geared to the practical aspects of the peace mission in Yugoslavia and, to some extent, to the situations which the company might encounter in Bosnia. Close attention was paid to personal safety and the safety of the unit (from group to battalion level) and, of course, to the execution of the tasks of a peacekeeping force. This programme could be realized in the three infantry companies,³⁰² but the sticking point was the training of the SSC and other additional support units.

The question that now needs to be answered is where the staff of the Airmobile Brigade and the battalion got their information for the training and instruction. Contact with the Centre for Peace Operations (CVV) in Ossendrecht, which had played a key role in the preparations for the dispatch of the Transport and Signals Battalion, went no further than information-sharing. Vermeulen felt that the CVV concentrated principally on preparing individuals and had no experience with units. Dutchbat I

³⁰⁰ Interviews M. van den Tweel, 27/04/01; E. Wieffer, 07/05/01; J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

³⁰¹ Vermeulen, 'Humanitair optreden als militaire missie' (Humanitarian Operations as a Military Mission) in Baarda & Schoeman, *Werelden apart?* (Worlds Apart), p. 87.

³⁰² Jellema, *First In*, pp. 41-42. See LL. Manuscript Lessons Learned from Commander B Company Dutchbat, Chapter 'Voorbereiden op uitzending' (Preparing for Dispatch), pp. 13-16.

did, however, use the CVV draft syllabus entitled *Dreiging* (Threats). They also consulted returned Dutch UN military observers and officials from the Transport Battalion. The brigade staff had contacted the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps (RNLMC) and adopted its 'buddy' system for the development of the airmobile concept.³⁰³

As far as the rest was concerned, they tried to find their own solutions by consulting what were mainly British and US publications on Low Intensity Conflicts. When drawing up a syllabus for the peace-mission training the Head of the Operations Section of the battalion, Major H. Peek, worked closely with his counterpart at the Airmobile Brigade, Major M. van Uhm. As a young officer Peek had participated in the UN peace mission in Lebanon. The brigade and battalion also received occasional End of Mission Reports (evaluation reports) of foreign UNPROFOR battalions from the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff and the Army Operations Section. Finally, the information from the first reconnaissance mission of the battalion staff in November/December 1993 was integrated in the syllabus.³⁰⁴

Brigade Commander Brinkman had based his operational concept of July 1993 on airmobile operations. This is reflected in the explicit definition of armoured vehicles as 'battlefield taxis' and in the option to act as a Quick Reaction Force for UNPROFOR and to retain a Dutch Quick Reaction Force. Little thought had been given to the actual content of the peace mission. Chapter 8 of this part of the report explores in detail the preparations which did and did not take place for this task. The reports in the media and the information from returned Dutch soldiers suggested an area at war rather than a generally respected ceasefire. The airmobile training could be useful in this kind of environment. Nonetheless, given the military characteristics, the mission had to be executed mainly in an environment that was vastly different from a military-strategic deployment. It concerned an essentially different objective with specific requirements which had very little to do with purely military operations. This hybrid objective and the lack of systematic reflection would continue to impact on the Dutch peace mission in Bosnia.

From 4 October 1993 – which marked the beginning of the 'start-up' phase – all the added units were under the command of battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel C. Vermeulen. The discussions on the training for the peace mission centred primarily on the infantry companies, because they would perform the core tasks. The training would focus on four main elements: first, the security of the operational zone; second, provision of limited humanitarian aid and concrete actions against aggressive groups; and finally, training in the use of materiel and weapons for the peace operation. The training theory was based on the *Handboek voor de diensten bij Vredesmachten in Internationaal Verband* (Service Manual for International Peace Operations)³⁰⁵ After a short introductory chapter on peacekeeping this manual contains five chapters on the military aspects of UN peace operations. The basic skills cover orientation in the terrain, different types of patrol (including preparation and implementation), the lay-out and use of observation posts, blocking positions, roadblocks, guarding and securing objects, sealing and searching buildings, disarming and frisking, and directing mortar fire. The chapter on protection deals with general rules of safety, setting up field reinforcements in the form of obstacles and cover, and sustainable fortifications. The passages on stress prevention, first aid in the field, personal hygiene and preventive medicine, communications, and weapons were less exhaustive.

³⁰³ NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Thuisfront: 'Heel blijven bij alle veranderingen tijdens en rond de uitzending' (Home front: 'Staying in one piece during and around the dispatch').

³⁰⁴ Jellema, *First-In*, 42. Interviews C.Vermeulen, 09/06/99; J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99. DAB. LMB aftercare preparations, no. NLO 93/950/340, 29/10/93.

³⁰⁵ Royal Netherlands Army, VS 2-1393 (2nd edition *Handboek voor de Diensten bij Vredesmachten in Internationaal Verband* (Service Manual for International Peace Operations))

The 'work-up' programme in practice

The manual translated the four main tasks into eleven training priorities. The approach was no different from that of the airmobile training programme, which amounted to very little theory and plenty of practical exercises to transfer knowledge and skills.³⁰⁶ The main emphasis of the training was on group and platoon work. The combat training focused specifically on the differences between the mission of a UN soldier and normal military action.

The main difference was that the UN soldier had to carry out his mission as visibly as possible. This was totally at odds with conventional military operations where the whole point is to conceal action from the enemy. A peace mission was all about making intentions clear to the warring factions by acting openly and thereby helping to stabilize the situation.

The need for transparency during a peace mission did not mean, however, that other elements of military action no longer applied. Naturally, personal safety was still high on the agenda. The identification of non-military factors that could affect how the mission was conducted, was a third element that was specific to peace operations.

For example, the absence of civilians on a normally busy road could imply a possible risk or a potentially tense situation. This equally applied to avoidance of contact by the population or other behavioural signs that would not normally be relevant to military action. This new type of operation called for a totally different approach and formed, as it were, the main thread of the work-up phase. It had a bearing on elements such as movements (on foot or in vehicles), patrols (on foot or in vehicles), hazardous areas, field survival, attacks with limited targets, stalking and acting against ambushes, observation-post duty, and operating as the Quick Reaction Force of the company or the battalion.

During observation-post duty it was important for the group of nine soldiers led by the group commander to work according to a fixed procedure, to record their observations in a logbook and on a map of the immediate vicinity and to pass these on to the company. This meant that the next group could work according to the same procedure and that there would be a consistent flow of observations. The Quick Reaction Force was a unit (for a company consisting of two groups) which could be deployed to support other parts of the company in threatening situations; for example, when clearing landmines or if a patrol were to come under fire. Finally, map reading and the use of the Global Positioning System (a system for determining the coordinates of a location with the aid of satellites) were also important for the combat training.

The firearms training concentrated on handling personal weapons (pistols, FAL rifles and Uzis) and group weapons such as the Mag machine gun, the .50 calibre machine gun on the APC, the M-136 anti-tank missiles, the anti-tank weapons (Dragon and TOW) and mortars.

Contrary to standard practice, cross training would be introduced to teach the members of the battalion to use all the weapons so that the personnel could be flexibly deployed. The mine-awareness classes included general information on mines and explosives plus instructions on minefield operations and the detection and marking of landmines. The curriculum also covered protection against and combating chemical weapons. In the interests of personal health and the well-being of the immediate environment detailed attention was not only paid to standard first aid in the field, but also to hygiene and medical evacuations. Finally, it addressed the use of communications, which is vitally important in military operations. The troops had to be able to use different types of communication equipment and direct line connections and learn English radio-telephony procedures. To maintain high levels of physical fitness the training programme set aside time for team sports and condition training. It also taught man-to-man armed and unarmed combat.

In addition to these general elements, specific training was needed for people occupying new positions at the airmobile companies. Top of the list was the six-week training course for sixty APC

³⁰⁶ Interview M. van den Tweel, 27/07/01.

drivers and operators of the .50 calibre machine gun. There was also a course for infantry sappers and another in emergency first aid and general nursing.

All these elements were standard in that they were needed for every peace mission. An important part of the training focused on the smooth execution of drills in certain situations. In some essential cases this was more a question of ‘unlearning’ than ‘learning’. The peacekeeper had to temporarily forget military tenets such as secrecy, the element of surprise and escalation dominance and learn to act openly, predictably and with minimum use of force.³⁰⁷ This training slotted in as far as possible with the assumed situation in Bosnia. The starting point was knowledge of UNPROFOR’s mission and mandate in the former Yugoslavia, but the UNPROFOR rules of engagement (rules governing the use of force by UNPROFOR) were vitally important in individual actions. These rules have been discussed in Chapter 1 of this part of the report.

Other (non-military) aspects of the ‘work-up’ programme

Each Dutchbat soldier was issued with an instruction card setting out the Rules of Engagement. More detailed instructions on how these worked in practice were issued to the group commanders and senior officials.³⁰⁸ These rules of engagement and other subjects (mentioned below) formed part of the general work-up phase for all the members of Dutchbat. They consisted first of all of a brief history of the country and a description of the background and development of the conflict and the warring factions. In addition, they contained instructions related to humanitarian law in wartime (treatment of the civilians, war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide etc.). The climate and the landscape were also addressed with a view to individual operations. The officers followed a course in negotiating techniques so that they could deal effectively with the warring factions. The last part of the training covered personal information on legal matters and finance, the care for and contact with family and partners, media contact, stress management and finally, the ban on the use of drugs.³⁰⁹

The training discussed in this chapter pertains to the preparations for the operational aspects. However, it must be stressed that Dutchbat I, under Lieutenant Colonel C. Vermeulen, did not hear from UNPROFOR until 1 December 1993 (after the completion of the work-up phase) that its future operational zones would be the Safe Areas of Srebrenica and Zepa. It would be fair to assume that this had a negative effect on the preparations of Dutchbat I. Until then Dutchbat I and the senior army staff had assumed that the troops would be deployed around Zenica in central Bosnia. On the basis of the opinions of Vermeulen and Jellema, this effect should not be overestimated; two weeks after the handover in Srebrenica they concluded that – apart from the section on hostage-taking – all the incidents they encountered in practice correlated with the final exercise.³¹⁰ This exercise had been successful. It appears therefore that the battalion started the peace mission well-prepared.

In the work-up phase Dutchbat geared up for the final exercise. Dutchbat I – and its successors – followed a three-phase plan. In the first phase, attention centred on the skills, the actions of the groups within the unit and ways of combining the various skills. For example, during a patrol an infantry group would practise mine-awareness and, after encountering an undetected anti-personnel mine, would have to perform emergency first aid in the field, possibly calling in the company medics. During the same patrol a group might run into hostile members from one of the warring factions. Then it had to decide which response was allowed under the Rules of Engagement. The first phase ended with a company-led platoon exercise.

³⁰⁷ Vermeulen, ‘Humanitair optreden als militaire missie’ (Humanitarian Operations as a Military Mission), in: Baarda & Schoeman, *Werelden apart?* (Worlds Apart), p. 88.

³⁰⁸ The Instruction Card is included in *Handboek Voormalig Joegoslavië* (Manual for Former Yugoslavia) a publication of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff.

³⁰⁹ Sie LL. Manuscript Lessons Learned by the commander of B Company Dutchbat, Chapter ‘Voorbereiden op uitzending’ pp. 13-16.

³¹⁰ Jellema, *First-in*, p. 48.

The second phase concentrated on team-building in the company. From that moment a part of the battalion's Support and Services Company was attached to the company. This consisted of a casualty station, a signals group, a catering group, an engineering group and extra maintenance personnel. Most of the 26 men that made up this group were national service conscripts. This phase focused on integrated action by the platoons, the casualty station, the catering group and the engineering group; for instance, it determined whether the medical evacuation transport could reach a roadblock fast enough to collect the wounded; whether the radio messages that a group commander sent about a roadblock were clear enough to enable the engineers to take a decision on the use of clearance equipment; and the type of concrete threat posed by some noisy by lightly-armed civilians or para-militaries and whether the group that had encountered them could solve the situation under the Rules of Engagement or needed assistance from the strong arm of the company, the Quick Reaction Force.

The participants in the exercise were also confronted with extremely tense scenarios to test their competence; these included threatened executions at the compound gate, mine incidents and nocturnal medical evacuations. Junior leadership was stimulated among the platoon and group commanders; they had to learn to take their own decisions in unforeseen situations. Even if they had time to consult their superior, he would often be unable to accurately assess the situation. Efficient use of communications and reports according to a standard model was essential. The first phase laid the foundation for all of this; in the second phase communication was practised with the other units. *Blue Falcon*, the exercise at the end of the second phase, was the last stage in the process to build up company unity. It also led to the further standardization of reports, tighter procedures and instructions and a clearly defined task for the company's Quick Reaction Force. The final Dutchbat exercise – a week after the company exercise – had two aims: to show whether the units were capable of independent action and whether the battalion commander and his staff could cope with different situations at the same time. This was the first real practical exercise for the battalion staff: a test case for which the infantry company had prepared itself step by step.³¹¹

All things considered, the operational training for dispatch of Dutchbat to Bosnia was a rush job. It was a double operation in renewal: both the training of the airmobile battalion and the preparations for its dispatch as a part of UNPROFOR were experiments. In theory, it was a handicap for the battalion that, as a unit with no operational experience and, in some respects, a hastily completed training, it had no time to do more work on group cohesion. The peace mission was so urgent that it had to move on immediately to the next stage of the training.

With hindsight it is somewhat surprising that the dispatch of Dutchbat was seen as a purely military operation and did not address what the battalion would actually encounter in Srebrenica and how to deal with it. It should be noted here that the previous airmobile training did not run according to a ready-made scenario either. However, there was a certain basis to build upon. Some of the battalion officers had UNIFIL experience in Lebanon. The general information on peace operations offered plenty of openings for organizing the training in October and November 1993. It was undoubtedly a plus-point that the battalion itself did not see the dispatch as a disruption, but rather as a logical sequel to the airmobile training.

It would not become clear whether the re-training had been successful until the troops were actually stationed in the operational zone. The question of whether there was too much of a preponderance of military aspects in the preparations can also be asked in reverse: which elements could have been left out? At the end of the day, Dutchbat would have to operate in a truly dangerous situation in Bosnia, where the execution of military tasks was vital. The infantry could, to some extent, build on their airmobile experience, but they had to learn many other skills as well, such as working

³¹¹ Sie LL. Manuscript Lessons Learned van commandant B-Coy Dutchbat, Chapter 'Voorbereiden op uitzending', pp. 16-27 *passim*. Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 46-53 gives an account of the exercise that concluded the second phase and the final exercise in Hohenfels.

with armoured vehicles, manning observation posts and escorting convoys. These were what mattered most. Judging from the favourable assessment of the final Dutchbat exercise in Hohenfels, the re-training fulfilled the objective which had been set for the military-operational action. Generally speaking, the unit that left for Bosnia was well trained militarily, despite a few individual shortcomings. Was it a disadvantage that the future operational zone was not yet known when Dutchbat I completed its training? This was certainly so with regard to the psychological preparations. In December 1993, the troops had very little time to form an idea of life and work in the enclave. It is unlikely that the training would have been significantly different if more time had been available. Issues regarding the extent to which the training and preparations equipped them for the non-military peace tasks will be discussed in Chapter 8.

7. The formation and training of Dutchbat III

The work-up programme followed later by Dutchbat II and III was more or less identical to that of Dutchbat I. However, several details should be mentioned about the training of Dutchbat III.

On 31 August 1993 the Army Council had decided to form the third airmobile battalion by reorganizing the 43rd armoured infantry battalion. This decision marked the third and last phase of the formation of the Airmobile Brigade, together with the formation of a third mortar and engineering platoon. It would take place between March 1994 and December 1995. Every two months, starting from January 1994, the ranks (privates and corporals) for a platoon would come to the Training Battalion for training so that a prepared company could flow in after a period of ten months. The reorganization would be complete on 1 January 1996. Officers and NCOs would, in principle, flow from the old to the new unit and, of course, follow the red-beret training.³¹²

It is surprising that this reorganization plan took no account of the planning order of June 1993 for the dispatch of the Airmobile Brigade to the former Yugoslavia. This order, in effect, meant that the third battalion had to be formed a year earlier. As the dispatch was scheduled for the start of 1995, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army took steps to speed up the process, but this process was not without difficulties. It was hard to find professionals to fill the positions. As it was impossible to fill all the key positions with officers and NCOs from the old 43rd armoured infantry battalion, the disbanded 45th armoured infantry battalion from Steenwijk, and the Storm Troopers from Assen also provided personnel. In actual fact, the Dutchbat NCOs were assigned. The average age was higher than normal and people over the age of forty were hard pushed to obtain the red beret. Eventually, almost everyone did.³¹³

Battalion Commander Karremans and his staff became increasingly irritated by all the problems surrounding the manning and training of Dutchbat III. Their vexation was not only caused by the problems as such, it was also connected with the stationing of Dutchbat III (in Assen) and the specific character of the battalion. As Assen was far away from the headquarters of the Airmobile Brigade in Schaarsbergen, the contact between Dutchbat III and the Airmobile Brigade was less direct than in the case of Dutchbat I and II, which were also stationed in Schaarsbergen. Karremans and his staff saw the contact with the brigade as mainly one-way traffic: Brigade Commander Brinkman never or seldom showed up in Assen and his staff appeared on very few occasions.

This changed in August 1994 with a weekly visit from the acting Brigade Commander, Colonel J. Lemmen, but it is doubtful whether this did much to assuage the feeling at Dutchbat III that they were being neglected.³¹⁴ The staff of Dutchbat III felt that they had been left to their own devices and had to solve the problems mainly in collaboration with the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. These 'relational problems' between Dutchbat III and the Airmobile Brigade were also tied up with questions

³¹² LR. PO-HKL Boonstra to BLS, no. HKL/93-1345, 07/07/93, 31/08/93.

³¹³ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/06/98.

³¹⁴ Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

of self-image. The 13th airmobile battalion (Dutchbat III) saw itself as a battalion of straightforward, no-nonsense northerners.³¹⁵ This created a tendency towards isolation. In addition, the staff of the Airmobile Brigade felt that the staff in Assen always thought that they knew best; according to Schaarsbergen, they complained and whinged about other people's mistakes instead of getting on with the job of solving the problems and, if necessary, calling the brigade staff direct.³¹⁶

There were problems in abundance. They were, to some extent, the same as those encountered during the 'work-up' phase of the preceding battalions, but on a larger scale. An extra complication was that, during the work-up phase of Dutchbat III, the barracks in Assen were under renovation. As a result, only a limited number of buildings were available and the facilities for teaching large groups were far from ideal. Requests for special audio-visual equipment to compensate for this handicap were not fulfilled.³¹⁷ Another general problem at the start of the work-up phase was that Dutchbat's exercise set had been lent out to the *Cooperative Spirit* exercise of the Partnership for Peace until 27 October, and the specific training of the personnel could not run according to plan in the first three weeks.³¹⁸

The greatest problem was personnel. This was nothing new: it had also confronted Dutchbat I and II. But it was extra complicated in the case of Dutchbat III. To begin with, manning the 13th airmobile battalion proved a more laborious process. Despite an acceleration of the training programme, the last infantry company did not reach full strength until the end of August. In September 1994, five months before the dispatch, it transpired that, because of discontinuity in the training, 48 soldiers were still at the Training Battalion and would not join Dutchbat III until mid-November. Moreover, there were still 31 vacancies in supplementary detachment of 120. Candidates were sought primarily among conscripts. The search was expected to be complete by mid-December. Both factors caused interruptions in the training programme for the peace operation. Dutchbat III itself would organize a repeat programme for the first group but no solution had yet been found for the second group consisting of drivers (trucks and APCs), radio-telephonists, cooks and mechanics.

The evaluation of the dispatch of Dutchbat I concluded that some of the personnel recruitment problems were structural and could not be solved in the short term. As the Army Corps was unable to provide suitable candidates, personnel had to be found in other sections of the Army. A delaying factor was the absence of a good central overview of the training level of all Royal Netherlands Army personnel; hence, the need for additional training only became clear during the recruitment procedure.³¹⁹

Dutchbat III was hard hit by these problems. Seventy positions were still vacant at the start of the work-up programme on 10 October 1994. Various circumstances had prevented some of the current personnel from receiving specific job-related training. They had been absent for short or longer periods in order to follow a course and could not participate in the work-up programme. All the stops had to be pulled out to ensure that everyone could still complete his training.

This problem cropped up in another form among key members of the battalion. They and other NCOs provided numerous lessons, some of which aimed to teach the personnel skills that were not exactly part of their job but which could still be useful in Srebrenica. This applied to such skills as cross-training in weaponry. Everyone was taught how to use the .50 calibre machine gun on the APC. The infantry groups were taught how to operate the 81 mm. mortars and the TOW anti-tank missiles so that they could take over the tasks of the personnel of the mortar and artillery groups stationed at observation posts. The troops in each company were given lessons in how to operate the radio connections. Practice sessions were held on rescuing casualties from armoured vehicles and evacuating

³¹⁵ Interviews J.R. Groen, 05/07/99; E.G.B. Wieffer, 07/05/01; Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/06/98.

³¹⁶ Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

³¹⁷ Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 07/05/01.

³¹⁸ CRST. Internal Memorandum no. CRST/896, Brantz to BLS, OCRNLA and SC-O, 07/09/94.

³¹⁹ CRST. Fax Sie S3 11 Airmobile Brigade to G3 Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 28/04/94; fax G3 OPN Army Corps to DO Royal Netherlands Army/Crisis Staff, 26/04/94; fax Sie S3 Airmobile Brigade to Scheffer Royal Netherlands Army Crisis staff, 9/05/94.

the wounded by helicopter during the day and at night. The APC drivers were given extra hours to practise driving on rough terrain.

Some of the NCOs also played a management role in the work-up programme and, as a result, followed ‘none or only parts’ of it.³²⁰ Finally, there was not enough information from Dutchbat II on how the programme should be realized. The contacts with Srebrenica and Simin Han, where parts of the battalion were stationed, were not effectively organized. Other contacts did, however, exist at working level; also, personnel of Dutchbat II who were on leave were asked to come to Assen to talk about their personal experiences.³²¹

All these circumstances made the preparations look permanently hectic and confused. At the end of the work-up phase Karremans, the battalion commander, presented the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff with a list of what he believed had gone wrong. He concluded the list with some recommendations which were virtually self-evident. The battalion had to be at full strength at the start of the work-up programme and the personnel should have completed their job-specific training. Contact should be established at an early stage between the incumbent and the relief battalion to facilitate exchange of information. The development and supervision of the work-up phase should not be delegated to heads of personnel and operations at the battalion, and personnel from the units destined for dispatch should not teach classes.³²² Karremans’ recommendations more or less tallied with the evaluation of the training and dispatch of Dutchbat I; it appears therefore that the problems he diagnosed had not yet been solved. The fact that these problems lay primarily with personnel and were – as already mentioned – of a structural nature explains why they emerged again in the case of Dutchbat III. The consequences of this were a shortage of skills in the use of personal weapons and in first aid in the field.

As was remarked earlier, the problems were greater in the case of Dutchbat III and, in the opinion of the battalion staff, seriously disrupted the training of the unit. Even so, it is still difficult to gauge the influence of these problems on the actual training on the basis of the available information. They certainly slowed down the team-building process. But it would be going too far to describe these difficulties – which arose especially in the organizational domain and in the various parts of the battalion – as insuperable. It appears from Karremans’ list that steps were taken in the different units of Dutchbat III to ensure that certain groups could follow as many elements of the training as possible. Karremans believed that, all things considered, he left for Srebrenica with a well-trained battalion.³²³

The acid test was the final exercise, *Noble Falcon*, on the German exercise terrain of Vogelsang between 2 and 4 December 1994. The Airmobile Brigade led this exercise and bore responsibility for it. The programme was compiled on the basis of the Dutchbat I programme on the US exercise terrain of Hohenfels. The distribution over the various locations in Bosnia was simulated as far as possible. In addition to a central compound, Dutchbat III set up a compound for Bravo Company on the terrain; Alpha Company simulated its own camp in Simin Han on the vast Belgian exercise terrain in Elsenborn. Needless to say, the companies also set up observation posts and casualty stations. Sandbags were filled to protect the compounds and the observation posts. Members of Dutchbat I acted as the exercise party; in other words, they assumed the role of the local military and civil authorities, the ABiH, the local population, the VRS, et cetera.

The exercise was led by Major Van Uhm of the Operations Section of the brigade. A member of the brigade staff had been chosen on purpose, because the whole point of the final exercise of Dutchbat III was to simulate reality and confront the commanders – also at lower levels – with their

³²⁰ CRST. Fax 13Infbat Lumbl to Crisis Staff, appendix ‘Opleidingsverstoringen/extra lessen mbt het opwerkprogramma Dutchbat IIP’(Training disruptions/extra lessons for the work-up programme of Dutchbat III)

³²¹ Interview R. Rutten, 01/12/99 and 13/09/01.

³²² Royal Netherlands Army, Internal Memorandum Col. C.L. Brantz to BLS, OCRNLA, SC-O, no. CRST/896, 7 September 1994. KLCS 1994: fax 13 infbat Lumbl to Crisis Staff. Appendix: ‘Opleidingsverstoringen/extra lessen mbt het opwerkprogramma Dutchbat-IIP’ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/06/98.

³²³ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 30/11/00.

style of command and action. These confrontations took place at the daily evaluation meetings with the aid of video recordings.³²⁴ Though the intention was to simulate reality as far as possible, the final exercise was pushed for time and the programme was overloaded with an average of thirty incidents a day. This created additional stress and fatigue and detracted from the envisaged reality. One advantage was, of course, that the stress-resistance of the commanders was put to the test.

The attempts to simulate the actual situation in the enclave – which, as Chapter 8 will show, were based on completely stereotyped ideas – were not limited to acting out the roles of ‘beggars and traffickers from the local population’ who tried to get their hands on food and other articles at the gate and by climbing over the fence. During the exercise people became increasingly annoyed by the behaviour of the ‘locals’ and one person even wondered if this was really how things were in Srebrenica or whether ‘the guys [of the 11th Airmobile Battalion] were themselves looking for a bit more action’.³²⁵

At one point the bunker alarm sounded and everyone took cover in the shelter with their kit and personal weapon while the whole procedure for roll call, building checks and reporting to the Ops Room was carried out according to the book. Red alerts were practised: this meant that those who were resting had to lie fully dressed in bed with their shrapnel vest and helmet within arm’s reach while those on active duty had to wear their vests and helmets and ensure that their personal weapon was loaded. Leave convoys also left ‘Srebrenica’ and casualty transportation was carried out. The locals were provided with medical assistance. As in Srebrenica, the use of vehicles and oil heaters was rationed because of fuel shortages. Needless to say, incidents occurred with casualties so that the medics could come into action.³²⁶ If the quartermaster’s vehicle broke down the food could not be delivered, so there was nothing to eat.³²⁷

The liaison team negotiated with the local authorities and the VRS liaison officers. In keeping with the reality in Srebrenica Karremans occasionally engaged in negotiations. He became involved in negotiations with an imitation Oric (from the ABiH, the army of the Bosnian Muslims) and an imitation Vukovic (from the VRS, the Bosnian-Serb army). Some tough discussions took place between Karremans and the exercise leader. The battalion commander had difficulty with the criticism that Van Uhm and the brigade staff levelled at his style of command. He seemed unable to accept it and interpret it as constructive advice. He later admitted to the NIOD that he found it hard to take this kind of criticism from a fellow-officer who had absolutely no personal experience of peace operations, even though the leader of the exercise was, first and foremost the spokesman for the brigade in such matters.³²⁸

Despite this clash the final exercise was a success. For the first time, the whole machinery of Dutchbat III, from group to battalion level, had worked in a situation that aimed to simulate reality in Srebrenica. Considering the limitations of the exercise terrain, this had been successful. It was still, of course, a simulation: there were no real Displaced Persons, the geographical conditions were different and there was no actual confrontation with the warring factions. But this did, at least, figure in the background because, at the start of the final exercise of Dutchbat III, the hijack of a Dutchbat II leave convoy had still not been resolved. Generals Couzy and Brinkman (who was on leave from his UNPROFOR task in Bosnia) seemed very pleased with the progress of *Noble Falcon* during their visit to Vogelsang.³²⁹ Dutchbat III could start its mission.

³²⁴ Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

³²⁵ NIOD, Coll. Koremans. Diary Koremans, pp. 9-4.

³²⁶ NIOD, Coll. Koremans. Diary Koremans, pp.9-4 – 9-7.

³²⁷ Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

³²⁸ Interviews Th.J.P. Karremans, 30/11/00 and J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

³²⁹ NIOD, Coll. Koremans. Diary Koremans, pp. 9-5 – 9-7.

8. How Dutchbat came to be in Srebrenica

In principle, any military operation must be preceded by the collection of information. Sending a unit at random to a new operational zone is fraught with risks. This process of information gathering should consist of several steps. First, general geographical, political and military information needs to be collected on the area. This is followed by information on the operational situation and the organizational embedment.

Dutchbat did not have to gather its information from scratch. It could make use of the information on the former Yugoslavia that was available within the Royal Netherlands Army. The secondment of personnel as observers for the EC (ECMM) and military observers for the UN (UNMO), as well as the dispatch of a signals detachment and a transport battalion had very recently presented opportunities for building up an information position.

However, very little use was made of the knowledge of personnel who had recently returned from the former Yugoslavia. There were no systematic debriefings at the end of a mission. Knowledge was usually passed on through individuals and not through official channels.³³⁰ In addition, the Military Intelligence Service of the Central Organization and the Royal Netherlands Army (see, for example, the intelligence Appendix to this report for information on the relationship between these two agencies) had compiled informative reports on the developments and international intervention in the conflict.

Local reconnaissance is absolutely essential in building up an adequate information position. In his planning order of 24 August 1993 the commander of the Army Corps had also issued an order for 'preliminary orientation' in the future operational zone in the short term. A delegation consisting of five key officials (from Operations, Logistics, Engineering, and Operational Support Command) was instructed to visit an UNPROFOR battalion in a 'calm' region and in a 'tense' region.³³¹ The first mission had to collect information on the future operational zone and the logistical preconditions for the deployment in dialogue with the UNPROFOR command in Bosnia (Bosnia-Herzegovina Command). More detailed logistical and operational information could not be collected until the operational zone was assigned. Hence, a second reconnaissance mission led by the acting brigade commander, Colonel Lemmen, and the Dutchbat commander Lieutenant Colonel C. Vermeulen, would visit Bosnia in November and December 1993 for this purpose. As Srebrenica/Zepa was still closed due to Bosnian-Serb obstruction, a third reconnaissance mission would not be sent to the future operational zone until February 1994.

The first reconnaissance mission in Bosnia took place between 14 and 19 September 1993. It consisted of the Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, Lieutenant Colonel F.E.V.M. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, the Dutchbat commander Vermeulen, the Head of Operations at Operational Support Command, Lieutenant Colonel W. van Hunnik, and the representative of the 101st engineering combat group, Major E.R. Sinnighe. They concentrated on gathering general information on the UNPROFOR working procedures. The mission visited Zenica and Jablanica as well as the headquarters of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Kiseljak, and familiarized itself with the state of affairs at the Canadian battalion (Canbat) in Visoko.³³² It collected information on the deployment requirements for an infantry unit, the different types of operations, the problems surrounding the first deployment and possible assistance from Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Finally, the mission tried to get a clear picture of the actual nature of Dutchbat's future task.

The mission concluded on the basis of its reconnaissance that a hygiene specialist and a dentist needed to be added to the Dutchbat staff and that the liaison units needed reinforcement. The liaison units consisted of a group of officers who had to maintain contact with the local civil authorities. UNPROFOR would organize interpreters. The first reconnaissance mission also heard that the unit

³³⁰ Interviews E.A. Rave, 13 and 14/12/00 and 24/01/01; P. Everts, 12/02/97, 20 and 21/05/97 and 05/04/01.

³³¹ CRST. Planning Order 'Safe Lion' dispatch 11 Infbat (APC) + OSC (Order no. 001 from C-1AC), 24/08/93. Appendix B, item 9.

³³² Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

commanders would have to follow a course in negotiating techniques to enhance the effectiveness of their actions. UNPROFOR also explicitly stressed the importance of bringing along plenty of materiel, especially transport for their own logistical needs. As UNPROFOR could provide no logistical assistance at all, Dutchbat had to be self-supporting. It could cooperate with UNPROFOR battalions from other countries on an incidental basis. This meant that Dutchbat would need a sizeable engineering capacity, especially at the start.

Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had ‘emphatically’ pointed out to the reconnaissance mission that an engineering capacity was crucial both for construction activities for the benefit of Dutchbat and for carrying out UNPROFOR tasks (keeping routes open and road maintenance). The Canadian battalion in Srebrenica and the British battalion in Gorazde had an engineering company of some 250 persons for these activities. Moreover, the engineering unit had to arrive before the main Dutchbat force in order to install the most urgent facilities. At this point the reconnaissance mission identified the first problem: the materials that were needed for building the accommodation, the washing facilities, and the protective installations could only be at the location in five months. This would call for improvisation. The greatest short-term logistical problem would be the fuel supply. They could probably cooperate with other battalions as far as medical facilities were concerned.

Besides the logistical aspects, the question of Dutchbat’s future operational zone was raised at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Four deployment options were discussed during meetings with the Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Brigadier V. Hayes, (Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander F. Briquemont was unable to be present owing to a full agenda). The most likely operational zones were the area of Zenica in Central Bosnia or the Safe Areas of Srebrenica and Zepa in Eastern Bosnia.

On 18 September Bosnia-Herzegovina Command informed the mission verbally through the Dutch Head of Operations, Colonel Bevers, that Sarajevo would ask the Dutch Government via UNPROFOR in Zagreb to deploy one Dutchbat company in Srebrenica on 1 November or 1 December to replace the Canadian battalion that was currently stationed there.

The reconnaissance mission did not interpret this message as the announcement of a probable deployment in Srebrenica and Zepa, though, according to its report, it was at least aware during the visit that ‘the emphasis was focusing more and more on the first two options.’³³³ This does not square with the later statement of Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse that the talks at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had led the mission to regard Srebrenica and Zepa as a ‘non-option’. The reconnaissance mission had inferred from the discussions that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command would not take a final decision on the operational zone for Dutchbat until a month later. However, it underestimated the speed of the decision-making process at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command during that period. On 9 September the Operations Department had compiled a list of five deployment options for Dutchbat: Zenica, or one of the Safe Areas of Bihac, Srebrenica or Gorazde were still options 4 and 5 respectively at this juncture. However, by 17 September Zenica and Srebrenica had moved to the top of this list.³³⁴

The official request of 18 September for the deployment of one company in Srebrenica therefore emanated from the fact that Srebrenica and Zepa had become a serious option at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command within the space of one week. The Dutch mission had not fully realized this. Their misconceptions had not escaped the notice of UNPROFOR: the Dutch reconnaissance team had expressed a preference for Zenica or Jablanica/Tarcin as opposed to the preference of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command for Srebrenica and Zepa. According to UNPROFOR, the mission had agreed to respond promptly to the proposal to station a company in Srebrenica. UNPROFOR said that definitive decision on the Dutchbat operational zone would be taken by mid-October at the latest.³³⁵

³³³ CRST. First impression report preliminary visit UNPROFOR, 21/09/93.

³³⁴ NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Verkenningreis (Reconnaissance Trip) *ibidem*: HQ BH Comd: file G3 Plans/080993 and G3 Plans/110993. (In the Netherlands this document was only found in NIOD, collection Vermeulen. It is therefore assumed that the mission was aware of its contents.)

³³⁵ UNNY, DPKO UNPROFOR coded cables, Cot to Annan, Z-1175, 21/09/93.

There is no record of these details in the mission report. The report does, however, point out that these two options involved two completely different types of operation: in Zenica the troops would have to secure the area and escort UNHCR humanitarian aid convoys; in Srebrenica they would have to safeguard a demilitarized zone by setting up observation posts, securing a weapon and ammunition collection point, carrying out patrols and, to some extent, escorting convoys. It concluded that, given the differences in the type of deployment, the efforts to prepare Dutchbat for its future task could come under pressure due to lack of time.³³⁶

The reconnaissance mission did, however, take explicit account of deployment in Zenica or Srebrenica in the further materiel and practical preparations for the dispatch. The troops had to be trained for two different tasks: controlling areas and escorting convoys.³³⁷ On 27 September Major Sinninghe presented a proposal which addressed the implications of the reconnaissance report for the deployment of the engineers. He suggested that an engineering platoon with heavier materiel and its own staff be added to Dutchbat's own engineering capacity (a platoon). Sinninghe reckoned that an 80-strong engineering detachment for a period of three months would suffice provided that part of the engineering capacity of the Transport Battalion would also be deployed. Sinninghe suggested that the 115th Construction Company of the 11th Armoured Engineers Battalion form the basis for the engineering detachment. His idea was adopted by the 1st Army Corps.³³⁸

The second reconnaissance mission took place after the final exercise of Dutchbat I in the second half of November 1993. The mission was late because Bosnia-Herzegovina Command was still to announce its decision on the operational zone. UNPROFOR and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had needed a lot of time to formulate a sound deployment plan for new battalions.

Destinations other than Srebrenica

Srebrenica had still not been officially assigned to Dutchbat, but, on 1 December 1993, the definitive decision to assign Dutchbat to Srebrenica and Zepa was communicated in Zagreb to a Dutch mission headed by the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Major General Reitsma. This seemed to come as a surprise to Reitsma. But there were signs – also after 18 September – (as will emerge later in this section) that UNPROFOR was considering Srebrenica as a serious option, while the military authorities in the Netherlands continued to assume that the operational zone would be Zenica.

This is, however, at variance with the statement of Commander Couzy, who said: 'I wasn't at all surprised. I saw it merely as a confirmation'.³³⁹ In his opinion, the Army had feared since the summer of 1993 that a Dutch battalion would end up in Srebrenica; he thought that some officers tried to avoid this by speeding up the dispatch. According to Couzy, this accounts for the fixation with Zenica in Central Bosnia and the failure to pay serious attention to indications that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had other priorities.

According to a later statement by Van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, during a subsequent visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command early November 1993, it again appeared that 'Srebrenica was not on the cards'.³⁴⁰ This too is remarkable, because an official message had come from New York on 26 October stating that Dutchbat was scheduled for deployment in Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde on 1 January

³³⁶ CRST. First impression report preliminary visit UNPROFOR, 21/09/93. *Ibidem*, 101 Engineering Combat Group: Internal Memorandum no. 10929, 27/09/93. NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Document file 1, tab 20: Reconnaissance Trip *ibidem*. HQ BH Comd: file G3 Plans/080993 and G3 Plans/110993.

³³⁷ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

³³⁸ CRST. Fax Sinninghe to Deputy G3 1 LK Kamphuis, 27/09/93 appendix: no.10929 Engineering deployment for 11 (NL) Infbat Lumbl YPR.50 and OSC, 27/09/93. CRST. *Genieondersteuning Dutchbat. Lessons Learned*, (Engineering Support Dutchbat. Lessons Learned) pp. I-2 – I-3.

³³⁹ Interview H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

³⁴⁰ Interview F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00.

1994.³⁴¹ According to Couzy, the fear that Dutchbat might end up in Srebrenica could explain Reitsma's surprise on 1 December, a response that was shared by Minister Ter Beek.³⁴² It was, at any rate, known in The Hague that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command would announce the decision on 1 December.

The Army Corps and General Reitsma assumed two deployment options: either Zenica – Kakanj – Vares – Olovo or Zenica – Kakanj and the 'Safe Area of Srebrenica'.³⁴³ The senior staff at the Royal Netherlands Army and Dutchbat thought that the ultimate choice would be Zenica. This was reflected in the orders issued to the second Dutchbat reconnaissance mission, which was headed by the acting Brigade Commander, Colonel Lemmen, and the Dutchbat commander, Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen.

Srebrenica and Zepa?

The departure date of the reconnaissance mission, 29 November, seemed, at any rate, to be well-timed, because Lemmen, Vermeulen and the other members could now directly reconnoitre the operational zone that had been assigned to the Netherlands. But they returned home twenty days later without even having set foot in the enclaves of Srebrenica or Zepa: the VRS had categorically refused them permission to use the road.³⁴⁴ Nevertheless the logistical and operational reconnaissance was not entirely non-productive. At the location the team had to determine with the greatest possible accuracy how the mission was to be executed.

The Dutchbat commander specified five sub-tasks: observation and patrols, the availability of a Quick Reaction Force, the occupation of key points in the enclaves, deterrence through military presence, negotiations, and convoy escorts. The task of the reconnaissance mission was to supply information with a view to fine-tuning the organization, the training, the preparations, and the allocation of materiel and personnel within Dutchbat.

The key questions were: was the deployment plan feasible; were the logistical support and the coordination with UNPROFOR realizable; how could the organization and equipment of Dutchbat be more tailored to the mission; which organizational, materiel and personnel adjustments were needed to move from a 'worst-case' to a 'tailor-made' organization; had any contracts been signed – or could they be signed – for the infrastructure and the delivery of building materials, water, food and fuel; and finally, was any additional training needed.³⁴⁵

The reconnaissance party flew to Split on 29 November. On 1 December, while they were at the Transport Battalion in Busovaca, they received a telephone call from General Reitsma in Zagreb, informing them that the destination was Srebrenica and Zepa. This came as a disappointment to Dutchbat, as it would clearly have preferred Zenica. Captain Jellema described the destination as 'the no-go option'.³⁴⁶ The mission changed its reconnaissance plan. Lemmen and Vermeulen decided to contact the Canadian battalion in Visoko (which was responsible for Srebrenica) and the Ukrainian battalion in Sarajevo (which was responsible for Zepa). The members of Support Command would go to the Scandinavian battalion, Norbat, to find a suitable location for Operational Support Command.³⁴⁷ During the briefings and discussions at the headquarters of these three battalions the reconnaissance team gathered information on the future operational zone with the aid of a questionnaire.

³⁴¹ DCBC, 1654. Coded message NYVI1283 (Biegman 1283), 26/10/93.

³⁴² Interview H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

³⁴³ BLS. Director of Royal Netherlands Army Operations to dispatch list, undated: appendix: 'Taakstelling Verkenningsparty Dutchbat Unprofor' (Tasks of the Reconnaissance Party Dutchbat UNPROFOR) (p.2, item 3a), 25/11/93.

³⁴⁴ On 29 November 1993 the ABiH, the VRS and UNPROFOR signed an agreement in Geneva on restoration of *Freedom of Movement*. This document had little practical effect.

³⁴⁵ BLS. Royal Netherlands Army Director of Operations to dispatch list, undated: appendix: 'Taakstelling Verkenningsparty Dutchbat UNPROFOR' (p. 3, item 3b), 25/11/93.

³⁴⁶ Jellema, *First-In*, p. 57.

³⁴⁷ Jellema, *First-In*, p. 57.

What will it be like in the enclaves?

This is when the Dutch mission experienced UNPROFOR bureaucracy for the first time. It derived little encouragement from the cooperation of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Vermeulen summed up his negative experiences in his reconnaissance report under the heading: 'Currently identified facts and assumptions'. It transpired that the Chief of Staff at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Kiseljak did not yet know on 2 December that Srebrenica and Zepa had been assigned to Dutchbat; but this was put to rights on the same day. The commander of the Ukrainian battalion was under the impression that his battalion would soon be assigned to the three eastern enclaves of Gorazde, Zepa and Srebrenica. There were no written instructions for Dutchbat in the form of so-called 'Commander's Guidance'.

Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had also neglected to inform the VRS that the two enclaves had been assigned to Dutchbat. According to General Milovanovic, the VRS Chief of Staff, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command could not take this decision alone but needed political approval from Republika Srpska for stationing Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa and for gaining access for the reconnaissance mission. In short, according to Vermeulen, there was no question of any guidance at all or any further development of the decision by Bosnia-Herzegovina Command to deploy Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa.³⁴⁸

This also came to light in other ways. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command did not have any guidelines, either for operations in Safe Areas in general or for Srebrenica/Zepa in particular: each unit was expected to devise its own plan of action on the basis of the Security Council resolutions on the Safe Areas, the Standing Orders of UNPROFOR and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, and the Rules of Engagement. Vermeulen again stated emphatically that his report was based solely on contacts with the Canadian and the Ukrainian battalion because the VRS refused permission for on-the-spot reconnaissance.

The conclusion of this limited reconnaissance mission led by Van Lemmen and Vermeulen at the start of December was that each battalion operated independently within Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Therefore, each battalion had its own problems: logistics formed the main problem for the Scandinavian battalion, which was still working all-out on its logistical lines in the area around Tuzla. To the Dutch, this underscored the need for thorough logistical preparations: the Scandinavians still did not have their armoured vehicles and Leopard tanks at their disposal. They had also seriously compromised themselves by underestimating the fuel requirements by 100%. In view of the resistance by the warring factions the Scandinavians strongly advised Operational Support Command against setting up a base in the Serb area of Loznica. The stationing of a liaison officer was definitely needed in order to maintain effective cooperation with the headquarters of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo, Kiseljak and Zagreb, while the temporary placement in Srebrenica of a representative of the UNPROFOR Civil Affairs Department was advisable for negotiating contracts with local parties.³⁴⁹ Neither of these recommendations proved realizable. Only the former was acted on during the deployment period.

At the Canadian headquarters in Visoko, Lieutenant-Colonel Vermeulen and his team were extensively briefed on the situation in the enclave of Srebrenica, which would form Dutchbat's working environment. Vermeulen's notes suggest that there were three factions in the enclave: the mafia with its black market operations, the military faction (partly extremist), and the politicians. Srebrenica was officially demilitarized, but there was still illegal possession of weapons. As far as humanitarian aid was concerned, Dutchbat would have to respond to initiatives from the Displaced Persons; the Displaced Persons would not accept it if Dutchbat took the initiative itself. The people were not receiving enough food or salt because the VRS was cutting off the supplies. Dutchbat had to realize that supplies were

³⁴⁸ CRST. Commandant 11 Infbat Lumbl GG (APC)/Dutchbat to BLS, attn: SC Crisis Staff, 12/12/93, sub 2.

³⁴⁹ Sie LL. Lessons Learned by the Commander of B Company of Dutchbat in Srebrenica, Chapter *Verkenningen in Bosnië*, (Reconnaissance in Bosnia) pp. 38-39.

needed at least twice a week if they were to retain their own deployability. With two companies in Srebrenica Dutchbat could man thirteen observations posts.

The Canadian commander in Srebrenica, Major Y. Bouchard, drew attention to the social consequences of working in Srebrenica. He warned against the risk of stress due to the absence of telephone contact with home, the lack of televisions, insufficient food (the Canadians in Srebrenica only ate combat rations out of solidarity with the people) and the absence of showers. He also advised that each soldier in the compound be allowed only two beers a day and that the OPs be alcohol-free.³⁵⁰

Jellema also learned from the Canadian commander that there were between 150 and 400 ceasefire violations a day. Supplies coming from Visoko were not transported along the shortest route via Sarajevo, but via Tuzla and Zvornik: the VRS refused permission for the Visoko route. Sometimes the VRS also refused to allow the evacuation of wounded soldiers for days.³⁵¹

During its contact with the Dutch Transport Battalion in Busovaca the mission was introduced to all sorts of new and useful telecommunication systems. It saw for itself how the engineers could assist Dutchbat by constructing bunkers and installing security. It also met the local personnel in the compound and found out about the services for the Bosnian Muslims.³⁵²

In his reconnaissance report Vermeulen described the situation in the enclaves in greater detail. The access routes gave cause for great concern. There was one north-south connection from Tuzla to the enclave, measuring 100 kilometres, which was controlled by the Bosnian Serbs, who had to give permission for use. This permission was 'totally arbitrary'. It made the execution of the mission 'highly vulnerable' and could cause disruptions. Vermeulen reported that the information on the local and international organizations in Srebrenica was adequate (UnCivPol and UNHCR; interestingly, he did not mention *Médecins Sans Frontières*). In his opinion both sides to the conflict in and around Srebrenica had a good command structure. The ABiH in Srebrenica consisted of two lightly-armed brigades; the VRS was positioned around the enclave with three brigades and weapons ranging from AK-47 rifles to 155mm. artillery.

Food and fuel shortages, in particular, affected the mood and behaviour of the population, given the black market in these commodities. Vermeulen believed that, if the shortages continued, the large number of Displaced Persons could form a threat for Dutchbat. He reported that the warring parties did not respect either Security Council Resolution 824 or the demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993. Due to a lack of personnel the Canadians had cut the number of observation posts from thirteen to eight. If Dutchbat was to perform its task effectively, it would have to restore the original thirteen as soon as possible. Under normal circumstances it would take 45 minutes to travel by armoured vehicle from the command post to the most remote observation post. Vermeulen observed that there was a wide gap between the red ceasefire line of UNPROFOR and the confrontation line of the VRS.

Briefly, Vermeulen identified four points that were important to Srebrenica: the manning of thirteen (instead of eight) observation posts; getting supplies to the observation posts and the required transport capacity; the throughput time for the evacuation of casualties and *last but not least* the border of the enclave.³⁵³ His report on Zepa was less alarming, though the lack of a good road network could pose problems in terms of supplies. More observation posts would also be needed. Vermeulen's most important conclusion was, however, that according to the UNHCR, 70% more Displaced Persons were

³⁵⁰ NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Verkenningreis (Reconnaissance Trip) handwritten notes by Vermeulen on briefing Champagne, Cdr Cebrenica.

³⁵¹ Sie LL. Lessons Learned by Commander of Dutchbat B company in Srebrenica, Chapter *Verkenningen in Bosnië*, p. 37.

³⁵² NIOD, Coll. Vermeulen. Verkenningreis: Staf 1AC to DO at Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, no. G3OPN007, 23/11/93: handwritten notes by Vermeulen on briefing Champagne, Cdr Cebrenica.; *ibidem*: guidelines/action points Rec. Party Dutchbat, 24 November 1993. Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 55-73 *passim*. The commander of A Company, A. Jansen op de Haar, gave his own literary account of the reconnaissance mission in *De koning van Tuzla* (The King of Tuzla).

³⁵³ CRST. Commander 11 Infbat Lumbl GG (APC)/Dutchbat to BLS, attn: SC Crisis Staff, 12/12/93: Reconnaissance Report on Srebrenica and Zepa; sub sitrep Srebrenica

living in Zepa than were reported by the Ukrainian battalion and that therefore ‘goods were being swindled on a large scale’.³⁵⁴

On the basis of the collected information Vermeulen drew the following conclusions in his provisional plan for the operational and logistical deployment of Dutchbat in the two East-Bosnian enclaves. The principal elements of the future mission were: to set up observation posts (13 in Srebrenica and 8 in Zepa), to secure the compounds (two or three in Srebrenica and one in Zepa) and a Weapon Collection Point in both enclaves, to have a Quick Reaction Force on permanent stand-by, to carry out patrols inside the enclave and along the ceasefire line, to improve the infrastructure and the roads, as well as internal logistics. He rated the threat greater in Srebrenica because of the larger number of Displaced Persons and the greater possibility of hostile behaviour from the civilian population. The two enclaves were only 15 kilometres apart as the crow flies, but the route designated by the VRS was 210 kilometres long. This necessitated bi-location of the staff, which meant building up an independent staff capacity with its own logistical and medical support.

The sting was in the report recommendations and conclusions. Vermeulen stated that the implementation of his ‘unreconnoitred provisional plan’ would depend on whether the senior political and military echelons of Republika Srpska allowed Dutchbat entry and did not ‘seriously hamper’ the logistical support during the build-up and the execution of the mission. The weather would have to be favourable as well. As the road connection between Srebrenica and Zepa was so long, a shorter route would have to be found, or else an air corridor. However, military and political permission was required from the warring factions before helicopters could be flown between the two enclaves.

For the time being, the ‘real-time’ distance between the two parts of the operational zone still necessitated a split of the staff and the logistical capacity of Dutchbat and the detachment of a second surgical unit. As the distance between the observation posts and the compound was so great, the maximum time limit that the Netherlands set for medical treatment and transport to a casualty station (hospital) could not be guaranteed. Vermeulen concluded on the basis of this plan that Dutchbat could be deployed in four phases, as this would allow enough time for ‘honing a few things in mid- or late January’.³⁵⁵

Although they did not exactly say so, Vermeulen’s conclusions shaped the conditions for the execution of the mission. The main conditions were Freedom of Movement and the deployment of the helicopter detachment. He also pointed out that the personnel could not be provided with the required level of medical assistance. In a later statement to the NIOD Acting Brigade Commander Lemmen said that these conclusions were a signal to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and the Dutch authorities that they should decide whether a dispatch was actually workable under the prevailing circumstances.³⁵⁶

Some key decisions were taken on the basis of Vermeulen’s reconnaissance report. After consulting Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Dutchbat chose Lukavac as the base for the logistics centre. The surgical unit – the casualty station – would be based in Srebrenica. The helicopter detachment would also be stationed in the enclave for air transport between Srebrenica and Zepa. Finally, acting on the advice of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army – but contrary to Vermeulen’s proposal – the Minister of Defence decided to use the admission of the reconnaissance party to Srebrenica and Zepa as a test case. ‘If the reconnaissance party is denied access to the areas, then the battalion will not leave!’³⁵⁷ Clearly, neither Ter Beek nor Couzy wanted to run too many risks by ordering a deployment which had been inadequately reconnoitred.

³⁵⁴ CRST. Commandant 11 Infbat Lumbl GG (APC)/Dutchbat to BLS, attn: SC Crisis Staff, 12/12/93: Reconnaissance report on Srebrenica and Zepa, sub sitrep Zepa.

³⁵⁵ CRST. Commander 11 Infbat Lumbl GG (APC)/Dutchbat to BLS, attn: SC Crisis Staff, 12/12/93: Reconnaissance Report on Srebrenica and Zepa, sub Conclusions/Recommendations. Detailed appendices were attached to the report on engineering matters and the medical facilities.

³⁵⁶ Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

³⁵⁷ CDPO/GNKD. Handwritten remark on a copy of the Reconnaissance Report in SCGD, no.7188/5784, 16/12/93.

9. The Canadians move out, the Dutch move in

For the time being, however, it did not look as if Dutchbat would leave for Bosnia. Though Dutchbat was ready to depart on 1 January 1994, a mounting crisis between UNPROFOR and the VRS hampered further reconnaissance and delayed the dispatch. As already mentioned, the VRS Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Milovanovic, had denied the Dutch reconnaissance party permission to visit the enclaves in December 1993. This was caused by a conflict between UNPROFOR and the VRS on the placement of UNPROFOR battalions and freedom of movement. Despite the agreements of 18 and 29 November 1993 on the restoration of freedom of movement, the VRS regularly rejected requests to allow the convoys to pass. Moreover, the convoys that were allowed through frequently came under fire. UNPROFOR positions were also frequent targets for machine-gun and mortar fire. The VRS also claimed the right to approve the replacement of UNPROFOR battalions. In the course of December the conflict on this question concentrated on Srebrenica. In order to derive a clear understanding of this situation the circumstances that preceded it need to be explained.

As explained in Chapter 3 of this part of the report, the Canadian battalion arrived by pure coincidence in Srebrenica in March 1993. However, it was the intention of the Canadian Government from the start to ensure that the tour of duty of the Canadian battalion was as short as possible. Initially, this was not obvious to the outside world; especially as the first company was reinforced by a second in May 1993. However, in October 1993, the Canadian strength in this enclave was again cut to one company. This came about through the replacement of an infantry battalion with a reconnaissance battalion (which is smaller), but a key role was also played by the overall reduction of the Canadian contribution to UNPROFOR.

Politically, the government in Ottawa was even considering pulling out of UNPROFOR altogether as it was not happy with, amongst others, the Safe Area concept. Ottawa felt that this was not helping to solve the conflict and that it only offered 'a respite from the terror', while new problems would arise in the long term. The experience on the ground in Srebrenica merely confirmed this vision, as the situation had, as a whole, not improved since the start of the stationing. The safety of the peace mission was not sufficiently guaranteed with the result that any further presence of the Canadian troops in the Safe Area of Srebrenica was considered too risky.³⁵⁸ Besides, the living conditions were abysmal.³⁵⁹

The Canadian Government believed that the notion that the threat of air strikes could put pressure on Bosnian Serbs was based on a miscalculation of the reaction of the Bosnian Serbs. According to Ottawa, the American vision did not take sufficient account of the risks that air power implied for the safety of the UNPROFOR troops on the ground, especially units in isolated areas like Srebrenica. Public threats by the Bosnian-Serb to take UNPROFOR personnel hostage proved that these risks were realistic.³⁶⁰

Although the Americans had promised to evacuate the Canadians from Srebrenica in the event of an emergency, Ottawa still decided to pull out its troops. Its arguments were tied in with more general political considerations. Canada's dissatisfaction about its limited involvement in the international decision-making on the former Yugoslavia strengthened the wish to withdraw from UNPROFOR. Besides, the Canadians were considering a structural revision of their defence tasks. After the election of 27 October 1993 the new, liberal Prime-Minister, Jean Chrétien, announced at the start of January 1994 the Canadian plan to withdraw from UNPROFOR.³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Interview A. Hywarren and Col T. Sparling, Ottawa 12/11/99. ABZ, Embassy Washington. Huitzing 103 to The Hague, 08/09/93. Briquemont, *Do Something General*, pp. 223-224. Interview B. Ashton, 30/05/2000. Confidential information (188).

³⁵⁹ Interview T. Quiggin, 26/03/99.

³⁶⁰ Confidential information (189).

³⁶¹ Confidential information (190). Interview Aaron Hywarren and Tim Sparling, 12/11/99. Taylor & Nolan, *Tested Mettle*, p.144. ABZ, Embassy Ottawa. Code Huitzing 001, 05/01/94.

Force Commander Cot and Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Briquemont decided to respect the Canadian wish to leave Srebrenica by 1 December at the latest. Dutchbat would then be able to start building up a presence there on 1 January 1994. This would restore the UNPROFOR presence of at least two companies,³⁶² but there was a time lag between the departure of the Canadians and the arrival of the Dutch.

Sarajevo did not pursue its original intention to request that a Dutchbat company be stationed from 1 December 1993. This is why Briquemont, after consulting Cot on 12 October 1993, ordered the Scandinavian battalion to set up a company in Srebrenica.³⁶³ The battalion commander refused to follow this order and sought support from his government (Sweden). Cot and Briquemont took this 'refusal to obey orders' seriously and apparently decided to pursue this slight on their competence to the bitter end. On 15 October they reported it to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York. New York urged them to keep calm; there are no indications that Cot and Briquemont then reconsidered their original plan to deploy Dutchbat in Srebrenica; Sweden continued to refuse to send its troops there.

The furore settled down until the Commander of the Canadian battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Moore, announced that he and his company would be withdrawing from Srebrenica by 15 December at the latest. This was followed by telephone calls between Zagreb and New York. It is clear from the subsequent correspondence between Cot and Annan that Cot was counting on stationing Dutchbat in Srebrenica and was looking for political cooperation so that he could temporarily station a company of the Scandinavian battalion there.³⁶⁴ The relevant governments were prepared to cooperate, albeit reluctantly, but only under the condition that the Scandinavian battalion was fully equipped. Presumably this could not be arranged at the drop of a hat. Meantime, the Chief of Staff at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command saw the replacement of the Canadian battalion as 'top priority'.³⁶⁵ However, attempts to gently pressurize the Scandinavian battalion into deployment in Srebrenica proved unsuccessful.

Bosnia-Herzegovina Command also considered forming a multinational British-French-Canadian-Scandinavian unit of four platoons to bridge the gap in December. This plan likewise failed to get off the ground. Eventually, Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Briquemont issued a formal command to the Scandinavian battalion on 11 December to deploy in Srebrenica. This triggered great irritation at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and caused 'unnecessary embarrassment' to the three Scandinavian governments. Annan finally suggested that the British battalion in Gorazde be asked to temporarily assume the UNPROFOR mission in Srebrenica.³⁶⁶ The British Government was prepared to cooperate but the VRS refused permission, saying that their weaponry was too heavy for the enclave.

³⁶² Interview J. Cot, 19/04/00. Interview Fr. Briquemont, 22/06/00. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-1310, Cot to Annan, 15/10/93. Briquemont, *Do Something General*, 224.

³⁶³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, file 2.5 BH Command: Division of Civil Affairs, UNPF HQ. Fax no.115 from BHC Briquemont to Nordbat 2, 12/10/93. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-1310, Cot to Annan, 15/10/93. Briquemont, *Do Something General*, p. 224.

³⁶⁴ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC2231, Annan to Stoltenberg, 19/11/93. *Ibidem*: Z-1480, Cot to Annan, 23/11/93. *Ibidem*: MSC-2248, Annan to Stoltenberg, 23/11/93.

³⁶⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, file BH Command 1 thru 13 Dec 93 (box 198): fax BH Command Main, 3/12/93 re: Minutes of the COS daily meeting – 03 Dec 93.

³⁶⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, file BH Command 1 thru 13 Dec 93 (box 198): fax Nordbat 2 to BH Command G 3 OPS, 5/12/93. *Ibidem*: fax 062240 Dec 93 from HQ BH Command Kiseljak to Nordbat 2, 6/12/93. *Ibidem*: fax 061145 Dec 93, HQ BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 6/12/93. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: fax Nordbat S 2/3 to BHC G 3, 11/12/93. *Ibidem*: no.2381, Annan to Stoltenberg, 9/12/93. *Ibidem*: Z-1571, Cot to Annan, 12/12/93. *Ibidem*: MSC-2409, Annan to Stoltenberg (attn: Cot and Briquemont), 13/12/93 (also includes quote).

The VRS obstructs replacement in Srebrenica

The Bosnian-Serb resistance to the deployment of the heavy materiel of the Scandinavian battalion in its own area of operations around Tuzla was one of the core problems besetting UNPROFOR operations at the end of 1993. The VRS flouted the UN statement on Freedom of Movement issued in Geneva on 18/29 November³⁶⁷ and constantly tried to obstruct the deployment of new battalions. It justified its position on the deployment of the Scandinavian battalion and Dutchbat by saying that no political decision had been taken by the Bosnian-Serb Government in Pale. The real aim of these actions was to get a say in the arming of the UNPROFOR battalions (specifically, the Leopard tanks of the Scandinavians) and their locations in Bosnia.

According to UNPROFOR, political motives may also have been involved. One possible factor was the new Franco-German peace initiative and the inevitable associated discussions on a partitioning of territory. The Bosnian Serbs again suggested exchanging Zepa and Srebrenica for parts of Sarajevo.³⁶⁸ It is also conceivable that the VRS was trying to strengthen its own position by pulling out all the stops to impede the rotation of UNPROFOR battalions.

The VRS Chief of Staff explained why he had refused the Dutchbat reconnaissance by arguing that the government in Pale and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command first had to reach agreement on the task of the mission and on allowing it access. Later he claimed –wrongly – that the demilitarization agreement for Srebrenica and Zepa stated that only Canadian and Ukrainian troops would enter these enclaves. The VRS also blocked the replacement of the Canadians by the British with the – by now – well-known argument that the calibre of the British weapons was higher than those of the Canadians. The Canadians would be allowed to stay in Srebrenica, and only the Ukrainians would be allowed to deploy in the three eastern enclaves.³⁶⁹ ‘On the arguably wrong presumption that we will allow General Mladic to dictate what UNPROFOR forces can be deployed where’ Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and the commander of the Ukrainian detachment in Bosnia drew up a plan for the deployment of the Ukrainian battalion in the three eastern enclaves and Sarajevo.³⁷⁰

Briquemont and Cot became increasingly annoyed by the VRS’s attempts to obstruct the replacement of the Canadians in Srebrenica. They were afraid that the imminent departure of the Canadians would mean the end of the UN presence. This is why they were prepared to go to such lengths, even at the expense of inadvertently creating the impression that Mladic could dictate the deployment. Cot and Briquemont felt that Stoltenberg and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations were leaving the tough jobs to them. Cot remonstrated with Stoltenberg, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, asking him what he himself had undertaken at the highest political level ‘to help me to come out of this very difficult situation?’³⁷¹

Stoltenberg told the Force Commander that he had not been idle: on 9 December, after receiving a memo from Cot, he had strongly urged Karadzic and Milosevic to cooperate. On 17 December he had again spelled out the situation to both men in no uncertain terms. Stoltenberg would continue his efforts to get Karadzic and Milosevic to cooperate but – he reminded Cot – ‘there are no magic solutions available to any of us’. Cot was unconvinced and continued to believe that Stoltenberg should have done more than to impress upon Karadzic and Milosevic that ‘at odd moments their

³⁶⁷ Text of both statements in ABZ, DEU/ARA/05238. sec COREU to all COREU no.1432, 1/12/93.

³⁶⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 198, BH Command 01/12/93 – 13/12/93. Fax 170-199, Andreev to Thornberry, 1/12/93: weekly BH political assessment (no. 43).

³⁶⁹ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: no.2409, Annan to Stoltenberg, 13/12/93. CRST. Fax LO Dutchbat at BH Command G 3 Plans to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff (Bouwdijk Bastiaanse), 9/12/93. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 198, BH Command 11/12/93 – 16/12/93. Fax BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 13/12/93. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 59 file: Civil Affairs 2.5 BH Command. Cot to Annan, coded cable [no number], 17/12/93.

³⁷⁰ Confidential information (120).

³⁷¹ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-1602, Cot to Stoltenberg (infor Annan), 18/12/93.

behaviour was reprehensible'. 'Was that enough? Doesn't World Diplomacy have access to stronger deterrence?'³⁷²

Though Cot had vented his spleen, it had, of course, no effect at all on the situation. The issue was deadlocked for the time being. This view was shared by the Dutch Government, which then proceeded to draw its own conclusions. While the reconnaissance party was still in Bosnia, the Chief of Defence Staff, General Van der Vlis, had told Briquemont that Dutchbat could only be deployed after a reconnaissance of the operational zone. The Dutch Government persisted in this demand, despite the fact that Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen no longer found this additional reconnaissance necessary after his mission in early December.

Who takes over from the Canadians? An impasse

After the VRS demand for political approval, The Hague did not expect an initial reconnaissance of Srebrenica and Zepa to take place for the time being. The Dutch Government did not want to back down on its unconditional offer of the battalion to the United Nations, but it suggested on 17 December that Dutchbat be first allowed to do 'favoured deployment in central Bosnia-Herzegovina' with the option of transfer to the Safe Areas at a later stage.³⁷³

The question is whether The Hague was actually trying to tell the UN that it would rather that its troops did not go to Srebrenica. Cot derived the impression that the Dutch authorities were not interested in Srebrenica, which he considered to be 'the black sheep of the UNPROFOR locations'.³⁷⁴ The action of the Dutch Government made very little impression on New York. Shortly afterwards, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations asked the military advisor of the Dutch Permanent Representative in New York for a reconnaissance schedule, which would be immediately followed by the dispatch of a quartermaster group and the main Dutchbat force.

Further action on the part of UNPROFOR was prompted by a visit from Force Commander Cot to Bosnia and Srebrenica on 23 December 1993. Cot concluded that reinforcement of the Canadian battalion with another unit was a 'priority' if UNPROFOR was to offer sufficient protection to the enclave. Cot's request to Paris to make a French company temporarily available was rejected; according to him, this is the only time that Paris refused a request for troops. Cot told Briquemont to explain this to Mladic. The replacement of the Canadians by the Dutch 'must firmly be presented as the only alternative'.³⁷⁵ Briquemont then wrote to President Karadzic informing him that, like the Ukrainian battalion in Zepa, the Canadians would be leaving Srebrenica and that Dutchbat would take over the mission in both Safe Areas. A reconnaissance would take place in a few days.³⁷⁶

Karadzic replied that he had no objections and asked Briquemont to consult the VRS leaders to settle the details. However, a renewed appeal by Briquemont to the Bosnian-Serb President went unanswered when it appeared that Mladic and his Chief of Staff Milovanovic could not meet him before 10 January.³⁷⁷ Mladic also wanted the supply convoys for Srebrenica and Zepa to come from Belgrade. This prompted the Chief of Staff at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Brigadier General A.I. Ramsay, to question whether 'the concept of safe or demilitarized areas is a viable one or not' given all the obstructions by the VRS in the eastern enclaves. All possibilities of winning cooperation from the

³⁷² UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: fax CGZ 167, Stoltenberg to Cot, 20/12/93. Confidential information (118).

³⁷³ DS. Fax 647, DCBC to Col. Bokhoven, 9/12/93 appendix: Kolsteren to Briquemont. ABZ, DPV/ARA/00209. Coded cable Kooijmans 540, 15/12/94. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: MSC-2449, Annan to Stoltenberg, 17/12/93.

³⁷⁴ Interview J. Cot, 19/04/00.

³⁷⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, file Office of the FC, DFC and COS 4 Oct 93 – 26 Mar 94: fax ZAY-269, Cot to Briquemont, 27/12/93 (Summary FC's visit to BH Cmd 22-25 December 1993). Interview J. Cot, 19/04/00.

³⁷⁶ Confidential information (119).

³⁷⁷ CRST. Fax BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 01/01/94 (letter President Karadzic).

VRS had been exhausted. The use of force to get the convoys through could result in spiralling escalation and even the need to withdraw the UNPROFOR contingents.³⁷⁸

Though the stalemate now seemed irreversible, Yasushi Akashi, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General managed to achieve a breakthrough. On 10 February 1994 Akashi received a number of concessions from the Bosnian-Serb President Karadzic during their first meeting at Sarajevo airport. These related to the restoration of Freedom of Movement and an end to searches of personal baggage. Karadzic also reaffirmed that he would cooperate in the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa and of the Ukrainian battalion in Gorazde.³⁷⁹ Again, Karadzic said that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had to settle the details with the VRS leaders. This meant that a new meeting had to be arranged with Mladic. Much to the relief of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and the UN, on 18 January Mladic met the Chief Civil Affairs Officer of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, V. Andreev, and consented to the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa. He reaffirmed this consent two days later to Commanders Cot and Briquemont.³⁸⁰

UNPROFOR did not just sit and await developments in the nine days that elapsed between gaining the consent of Karadzic and Mladic. Two serious problems were looming: on 10 January 1994 the NATO heads of government decided to deploy ground troops supported by air strikes to bring an end to the Bosnian-Serb obstruction of the replacement of UNPROFOR contingents in Srebrenica and Zepa, and of the opening of Tuzla Air Base.³⁸¹ This decision triggered deep concern in the uppermost echelons of the UN and UNPROFOR, as such radical action was bound to jeopardize the relief in Srebrenica. In military terms the decision was untenable: UNPROFOR did not have the means to switch immediately from peacekeeping to peace enforcement. Besides, any military success would, in effect, create 'a hostage situation' for Dutchbat. A second – equally important – consideration was that this 'pre-emptive use of armed force' would 'destroy any credible perception of impartiality on the part of UNPROFOR'.

Despite everything, UNPROFOR was still reasonably confident that Dutchbat could be successfully deployed without any serious problems. A 'low-key approach' on the basis of Karadzic's consent seemed therefore the best solution. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command assumed that the VRS would acquiesce in the stationing of lightly-armed units which could not switch from being a peacekeeping force to an intervention force. Dutchbat and the Ukrainian battalion satisfied these preconditions. Any successfully enforced deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica 'would probably cause Dutchbat to fail in its mission' because it would find itself in a strongly hostile environment and the VRS would cut off the supply lines.³⁸² Akashi wanted to test Karadzic by sending out a new Dutch reconnaissance mission.³⁸³ In his talks with Mladic on 20 January Cot was willing to cooperate in this approach by translating the NATO position into 'a portrayal of resolve rather than an example of sabre-rattling'.³⁸⁴

UNPROFOR's second problem after gaining Karadzic's consent on 10 January was the uncertainty as to whether the Dutch were still prepared to participate in the deployment. The UN had not responded to the Dutch suggestion of 16 December 1993 regarding deployment in Central Bosnia. The Dutch saw this as a more attractive option than Srebrenica and Zepa. On 22 December, at the request of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, R. van Veen, military advisor to the Permanent Representative in New York, had submitted a timetable for the deployment of Dutchbat: the departure

³⁷⁸ CRST. Fax BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 01/01/94 (Eastern pockets).

³⁷⁹ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-030, Akashi to Annan, 10/01/94.

³⁸⁰ CRST. Coded cable Unprofor Z-069, Cot to Annan, 18/01/94; UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-087. Cot to Annan, 20/01/94.

³⁸¹ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 246.

³⁸² CRST. Fax BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 'Srebrenica: use of force by BHC', 15/01/94.

³⁸³ CRST. Unprofor inter-office memo, DFC MacInnes to SRSG, 15/01/94. (quotes); UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-055, Akashi to Annan, 14/01/94.

³⁸⁴ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-057, Cot to Annan, 15/01/94.

of the reconnaissance party from the Netherlands on 3 January and the departure of the first contingent with 25% of the personnel on 18 January 1994. On New Year's Eve the Ministry of Defence decided to postpone the dispatch of Dutchbat by at least two weeks. The dispatch of the first batch – including an infantry company – would now take place on 1 February 1994. 'Further decisions' on the deployment of the rest of Dutchbat would be taken after definitive orders had been received.

Postponement of the deployment of Dutchbat?

The reasons for this postponement do not entirely ring true. The Ministry of Defence had heard from its liaison officer at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Kiseljak that Briquemont was sticking to his decision to deploy Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa. As Briquemont would not consult Mladic on access for the reconnaissance party until 12 January 1994 he could not – according to the Dutch Government – provide Dutchbat with 'clearly defined orders' before this date.³⁸⁵ Without orders it was impossible to send out a reconnaissance mission.

It should be noted here that the reconnaissance mission in November-December was sent out without any information on the future operational zone. What is more, The Hague clearly held up the decision-making on the deployment of Dutchbat by only being prepared to discuss the dispatch of one infantry company to Srebrenica. The Ministry of Defence also made this distinction between the deployment of one company in Srebrenica and two in Central Bosnia in the second postponement decision (still to be discussed) of 14 January 1994. This is a clear indication that The Hague was clinging to the option of Central Bosnia. On 3 January the Permanent Representative in New York did no more than announce the Government's decision on postponement and ask two questions: was Central Bosnia still an option and was a draft version of the Dutchbat orders and task available?³⁸⁶

Two weeks later, on Friday 14 January 1994, the Minister of Defence, Ter Beek, acting on advice from the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army and the Chief of the Defence Staff – which was apparently based on information from the liaison officer at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command – again decided to postpone the deployment of a Dutchbat company in Srebrenica by a week. Before the coded cable was sent to New York it transpired that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had actually requested that the deployment be speeded up. According to the Deputy Permanent Representative in New York, Marchant et d'Ansembourg, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations suspected that the Dutch were procrastinating. He therefore requested permission to inform the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on the morning of Monday 17 January that the Dutch Government was still committed to swift deployment, but that guaranteed entry by a reconnaissance party to the area remained an 'absolute precondition'. As The Hague already knew that Force Commander Cot had asked Annan to urge the Dutch to send out a reconnaissance mission within four or five days, it decided to follow the advice of Marchant et d'Ansembourg.³⁸⁷

Accordingly, The Hague kept the Central Bosnia option open for a short while, but it soon conceded to the wishes of both New York and UNPROFOR to address the deployment in Srebrenica in the short term. This eased the strained relations between the Dutch Government and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNPROFOR just in time to make quick use of Mladic's consent of 18 January by giving the Dutch the guarantee they had requested. The military advisor to the Secretary-General, the Canadian Major General Baril, conveyed the request of Force Commander Cot on the same day, saying 'It is now crucial that UNPROFOR exploit this window of opportunity.' He asked that the reconnaissance party leave immediately, followed as soon as possible by the

³⁸⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00209. Celer 553 to Deputy New York, 31/12/93. DCBC: fax Royal Netherlands Army Operational Command to sub-commanders BLS etc., 31/12/93.

³⁸⁶ CRST. Fax no.93/515, Bokhoven (Zagreb) to Crisis Staff BLS, 04/01/94 appendix: fax no.3, Baril to Akashi, 03/01/94.

³⁸⁷ CRST. Fax LO/022, BH Command Kiseljak G3 Plans/LO Dutchbat to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 11/01/94. CRST. HOZ to SCOCIS/PCDS/CDS, [17/01/94]; quote in appendix C: code NYVU040, 14/01/94. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-057, Cot to Annan, 15/01/94.

quartermaster contingent.³⁸⁸ On 20 January Ministers Ter Beek and Kooijmans consulted the Chief of Defence Staff and decided to honour the request. The reconnaissance party left on the following day.³⁸⁹

10. The third reconnaissance mission: Srebrenica and Zepa (21 January – 10 February 1994)

On 18 January 1994 Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen received orders to get an operational and logistical reconnaissance party ready for departure to Srebrenica on 21 January. A group of fourteen persons left for Split on the same day under the command of Major Peek, Head of Operations at Dutchbat, and arrived in Srebrenica four days later. The aim of the reconnaissance was to collect additional information for the deployment plan that Vermeulen had drafted in December. The main points were embedded in a list of questions.

The first question was whether the three-phase development was acceptable to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and whether Split was a suitable debarkation point. The other questions related to the viability of the plan for logistical support by Dutchbat's own Operational Support Command; the possibility of assistance from Bosnia-Herzegovina Command with trailers and other heavy transport; contracts for infrastructural facilities; the recruitment of local contractors; the supply of ammunition, fuel, water and building materials; the incorporation of Dutchbat in the evacuation plan of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command; the possibility of transferring equipment from the Canadian and the Scandinavian battalion to speed up the deployment; arrangements for medical evacuation from Srebrenica during the build-up; and finally, any necessary additional training to ensure efficient implementation of the mission in the Safe Areas.³⁹⁰

The journey from Split to Srebrenica proceeded without a hitch. After four days of intensive reconnaissance and an initial encounter with the deplorable living conditions in the enclave Major Peek and his party left for Zepa on 29 January, travelling along a 125-kilometre route assigned by the VRS, to embark on the second stage of their mission. This part of the mission was less fluent: Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had to go to considerable lengths to secure VRS cooperation.³⁹¹

The reconnaissance party faxed its findings on Srebrenica to the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff in The Hague on 2 February. These consisted of a collection of eight, partly handwritten documents with detailed situational sketches. The conclusions were that, first of all, the eight existing observation posts (OP) needed to be manned and the daily patrols needed to be stepped up in order to make the enclave safe. This would require a total of 180 men.

'Para-flares' (light grenades), TOW anti-tank missiles, hinged telescopes and a Quick Reaction Force were needed to secure the safety of the personnel (at the OPs). Access to the observation posts presented a serious problem. There was 'one reasonably passable paved road' in the Safe Area; the rest were 'narrow, steep dirt tracks'. The movements of caterpillar vehicles in wintry conditions had made these tracks unusable and the OPs were now inaccessible to overland traffic. A caterpillar bulldozer was needed to restore these routes. As it took so long to reach the poorly accessible OPs (at least a half-hour and at most a two and a half hour walk) the deployment of helicopters was 'essential' for supplies, medical transport and for building new OPs. Dutchbat would also have to assume more operational responsibility than the Canadians, especially with regard to the protection of the Post Office building in the town (which the UNMOs and UnCivPol used as an office) and the UNHCR warehouse. It was also

³⁸⁸ ABZ, PVNY. Fax Deputy in NY Milad to Defence/DS, 18/01/94, appendix: fax Baril to Netherlands Mission, 18/01/94.

³⁸⁹ CDPO/GNKD. fax from Royal Netherlands Army Operational Command to sub-commanders of the BLS etc, 18/01/94. DOKLu STAOOPER. Fax from Royal Netherlands Army Operational Command to sub-commanders of the BLS etc. 19/01/94.

³⁹⁰ Jellema, *First-in*, pp.74-75; CRST. no. OZ/7654, from Bouwdijk Bastiaanse to dispatch list, 20/01/94, appendix: 'Taakstelling verkenningsparty Dutchbat UNPROFOR', 18/01/94.

³⁹¹ Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 75-81.

suggested – without further explanation – that, if necessary, Dutchbat could undertake part of the distribution of UNHCR goods.

An important aspect of the operational concept was the contact with the civil authorities and the parties to the conflict. According to the reconnaissance party, the contact between the Canadian battalion and the local authorities was scarce. Weekly meetings were held between the commander, UNHCR, the International Red Cross and other organizations, and the War President of the municipal council of Srebrenica, who acted as an intermediary to the Displaced Persons. The Canadians said that they had no contact with the ABiH. There were contacts with the VRS at command level and via a telephone line at a few OPs. All in all, the picture was too negative; more details will follow in Chapter 7 of this part of the report.

The reconnaissance party recommended that the contact with the warring parties be improved. Top priority was therefore accorded to the allocation of Dutch interpreters who ‘had no affiliations with any party’. It would then be possible to work seriously with the VRS and ABiH on the demilitarization of the enclave.

The second recommendation involved a thorough revision of the deployment plan. It was impossible to set up three compounds as envisaged in Vermeulen’s plan. B Company and not the SSC – as Vermeulen originally intended – would be stationed in the Canadian compound, which needed all-out renovation in order to improve safety and sanitation (there were no showers or properly working toilets). The other units (an infantry company, the SSC, the signals platoon, the helicopter detachment and a temporary engineering company) would be stationed in a large compound outside Srebrenica. The chosen location, a factory complex in Potocari close to the enclave border and the VRS positions, was hardly ideal, but the required safety level could be achieved by ‘heavy efforts by the engineers’. The reconnaissance party also proposed improving the Weapon Collection Point and moving it to a location outside the town of Srebrenica.

The deployment was planned in five phases. During the first phase, a quartermaster group from the engineers and some of the logistical personnel would be brought in to build the new compound in Potocari. In the second phase platoon and group commanders would be deployed for coordination with the Canadians. They would be followed by the first contingent of the main force (B Company, part of the SSC, part of the helicopter detachment and the signals platoon), which would pave the way for phase four – the relief of the Canadian battalion.

The final phase, the arrival of the second infantry company and the rest of the SSC, would come after the Canadians had left. The reconnaissance party did not venture a timetable for the deployment. Ultimately, the entire operation depended on three factors: the support of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command for the transportation of containers and heavy building materials from Split to Srebrenica, the weather conditions and, last but certainly not least, the attitude of the warring parties.³⁹²

The installation of Dutchbat

The installation of Dutchbat would prove to be an extremely large operation. The twelve-year-old complex of the battery factory in Potocari offered various advantages. It was large enough to accommodate the main force in the sheds, the factory hall and the office complex. It had a good internal road network and was enclosed by fencing. One disadvantage was that the complex had been seriously damaged by fighting at the start of the conflict and later by vandalism. According to the engineers, much of the ‘heavily’ damaged complex was unusable because of ‘asbestos and the presence of machinery’. There was a reasonable chance that the street lighting, the sewage and parts of the water system could be repaired. According to the results of analysis carried out in the Netherlands, the (partly chemical) waste was relatively harmless and could be easily cleared. The office building would house the

³⁹² BLS. Fax Canbatt 2 UNPROFOR (Peek/rec.party) to Crisis Staff/BLS, 02/02/94. Appendix A.

battalion staff and the casualty station. It had to be made water-resistant and draught-free and secured with a two-storey-high defence wall.

The Srebrenica authorities consented to the use of the factory complex as a compound; the UNPROFOR Civil Affairs Department in Sarajevo would finalize the necessary contracts. No extra materials were needed to repair the roof or make the building water-resistant and draught-free. Heating and sanitation needed to be installed throughout the complex. The greatest challenge would be securing the complex by means of a defence wall consisting of segments, concertina entanglement and five watchtowers. The need to bring materials from Lukavac (the base of Operational Support Command), possible obstruction by the VRS – through red tape and checkpoints – and the shortage of crushed stone, sand and gravel in the Safe Area precluded any predictions on the duration of the work.³⁹³

The reconnaissance provided very few new perspectives on medical care and hygiene. A plan had been drafted for the lay-out and renovation of the casualty station in the office building in Potocari. Specifications were drawn up for a standard medical kit for the observation posts and the compounds in Srebrenica and Potocari and extra medical equipment was requested for the casualty station and the company help posts. Information from the aid organizations of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the International Red Cross and UNHCR indicated that helicopter connections with Zepa were almost impossible. As it would take over eight hours to transport patients by road, a surgical team had to be stationed in Zepa to satisfy the stipulation that in peace time soldiers must be within a forty-five minute radius of a hospital. It would be possible to station the helicopter detachment and to lay a short airstrip for single-engine emergency landings on the south side of the compound.³⁹⁴

The medical part of the plan also addressed the humanitarian assistance that Dutchbat could provide in Srebrenica. It included a list of the medical equipment and doctors that were needed in the enclave. There were various ways in which Dutchbat could support the work of *Médecins Sans Frontières*: for example, by providing medical screening, medication, dressings and equipment and by offering the services of its own medical personnel and specialists on an *ad hoc* basis. Dutchbat could also help to improve hygiene by teaming up with *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the International Red Cross to combat scabies, fleas, lice and (tape-) worm, open TB, hepatitis A and diarrhoea. The installation of a rubbish tip or an incinerator to improve the waste processing would also help to raise levels of hygiene. Extra vitamins and protein, winter clothing and shoes for adults were necessary in order to improve the health of the Displaced Persons.³⁹⁵

The logistical part of the reconnaissance concentrated mainly on providing for the immediate needs directly after arrival in Srebrenica, the transfer of supplies from the Canadians and the transport of materiel from Split to Srebrenica. The containers and vehicles would be brought from Split to Lukavac, and then travel on to Srebrenica – on a priority basis – in at least two convoys of fifteen vehicles a day. All the APCs would be brought by trailer to Tomislavgrad and then be driven over ‘goat paths’ to Srebrenica. The caterpillar treads of the APCs therefore had to be adapted for driving through snow and on steep slopes.³⁹⁶

The engineering platoon would have to work intensively to get the roads, the OPs and the compounds ready for use. It was the scale of the operation rather than the materials that gave most cause for concern. This was partly due to the fact that the Canadians had always viewed their stay in Srebrenica as temporary and had only the bare minimum of facilities. The reconnaissance party also reported that the Canadians had carried out scarcely any maintenance. As a result, the necessary improvements to the existing OPs and the compound in Srebrenica would form a large-scale operation for Dutchbat. The main parts of the plan consisted of improvements to the safety of the locations by renewing or raising the bunkers and building defence walls, by laying sanitation and a safe electricity

³⁹³ BLS. Fax Canbatt 2 UNPROFOR (Peek/rec. party) to Crisis Staff/BLS, 02/02/94. Appendices B and G.

³⁹⁴ BLS. Fax Canbatt 2 UNPROFOR (Peek/rec. party) to Crisis Staff/BLS, 02/02/94. Appendices C and D.

³⁹⁵ BLS. Fax Canbatt 2 UNPROFOR (Peek/rec. party) to Crisis Staff/BLS, 02/02/94. Appendix C: humanitarian aid Srebrenica.

³⁹⁶ BLS. Fax Canbatt 2 UNPROFOR (Peek/rec. party) to Crisis Staff/BLS, 02/02/94. Appendix E.

grid and by paving the parking lot. The same activities were envisaged for the compound in Potocari, plus the construction of shelters and a parking lot for the APCs.

It was not possible to enlist local assistance. A start had been made on building a quarry, but large quantities of construction timber still had to be brought from the Netherlands. The possibility of purchasing other building materials in the region of Lukavac was not ruled out. Contingency funds of DM 150,000 were requested for this purpose. Extra sanitary units were also needed. The engineering report stated that a caterpillar bulldozer and a hydraulic digger were needed to restore and maintain the roads to the OPs. Also, the supply route between Zvornik and Bratunac was in an abysmal state; 50-centimetre-deep potholes were no exception. However, as there were other urgent jobs that needed doing inside the enclave, there was no way that this key logistical artery could be improved in the short term. Top priority had to go to the transportation of the engineering containers so that the first minimum improvements to safety, accommodation and hygiene could be realized.³⁹⁷

The reconnaissance report on Zepa was equally accurate and detailed.³⁹⁸ Radical action was also needed in Zepa to ensure responsible billeting, supplies and operational deployment for A Company. As Zepa was situated at an altitude of 1,000 metres, extra vehicles would be needed for movements through the snow-covered terrain in the winter. The compound was also in need of expansion and improvement and the OPs would have to be improved in the spring. Hence, a large engineering detachment was also required in Zepa. As A Company was not eventually deployed in Zepa but in the vicinity of Tuzla (see Section 12 below) this brief summary of the report will suffice here.

The reconnaissance report on Srebrenica formed the basis for the deployment of Dutchbat I. It delivered a wealth of new operational, logistical and engineering information. Many of the operational aspects were not discussed in detail in the contact with the Canadian reconnaissance party in December 1993. These now arose during the discussions in the actual operational zone. Visits to the OPs, participation in patrols and direct personal observations provided a clear picture of the situation and the working circumstances. The need to increase the number of OPs did not come to light until January 1994.

With thirteen OPs and intensive patrolling the operational plan was ambitious. Fundamental logistical and engineering decisions were now taken on the location and construction of compounds and on safety and supply lines inside and outside the operational zone, but no significant changes to the plan were necessary. Without this reconnaissance many decisions would have been taken several weeks later at the start of the deployment. Now at least some time had been gained to allow the military authorities in the Netherlands to respond. From this perspective, the demand of the Dutch Government for an *in situ* reconnaissance was certainly sensible. But it would be no guarantee for smooth deployment.

11. Departure and deployment: February – July 1994

The large-scale operation to take Dutchbat from the Netherlands via Split, Brela and Duvno to the base of Support Command in Lukavac and the operational zones of Srebrenica and Zepa began on 26 January 1994. The first stage went from the Netherlands to the Croatian port of Split. All the Dutchbat materiel was stored in hangars at the air base in Soesterberg where a shortage of expertise meant that it was not always skilfully packed in containers. The containers and the heavy materiel were then taken to the Dutch port of Flushing, where they were placed on two ships bound for Split. The first ship had engine problems and did not anchor in Split until 16 February – a week later than planned. The second had arrived two days previously. This created huge problems for Operational Support Command and

³⁹⁷ BLS. Fax Canbatt 2 UNPROFOR (Peek/rec. party) to Crisis Staff/BLS, 02/02/94. Appendix G.

³⁹⁸ CRST. Fax Barracks Command Oranje Barracks Schaarsbergen to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 15/02/94 Appendix: reconnaissance findings on Zepa [15/02/94].

the deployment, because the first ship was carrying the goods that were scheduled to go first to Lukavac and Srebrenica.³⁹⁹

The second part of the exercise involved the transport of 57 vehicles plus trailers as well as 114 drivers and escorts for the quartermaster group by rail from 't Harde to Zagreb on 27 January. This group arrived in Split on 31 January. On the same day the other 40 quartermasters were flown from Schiphol to Split. The journey from Split to Lukavac (395 km) formed the next stage. The quartermaster group made this trip first and arrived in Lukavac on 10 February. The main force would leave Split in its own vehicles and travel to Lukavac via Brela and Duvno in two days and then in one day to Srebrenica or Zepa. The first contingent of the 320-strong main force was flown to Split by Martinair on 8 February 1994; the second contingent followed on 22 February, a week later than planned due to stagnation in the unloading of the ships at Split.⁴⁰⁰

For various reasons the relocation of the materiel and delivery to the right place was a protracted and complicated operation. The Army Logistics Centre and Support Command had underestimated the enormous amounts of red tape connected with Customs and licence plates in Croatia and Bosnia and the problems of transporting vehicles along the narrow and poor roads in Bosnia. The unpacking of some of the materiel was also badly organized. The staff of Support Command had headed off too quickly for Lukavac and had not left enough information in Split on the contents and order of transportation of the containers. To complicate matters further, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and Zagreb provided only sporadic assistance for the transport of heavy materiel and containers. The chances of borrowing transport capacity from other battalions were limited: their own operations came first. Consequently, after several weeks, the containers destined for Dutchbat were still scattered across various intermediate stations – UNPROFOR bases – along the route from Split to Lukavac, notwithstanding the ample use that was made of the temporary surplus capacity of the Transport Battalion.⁴⁰¹

The entire logistical operation was also delayed by the chronic problem of Bosnian-Serb permission to use the roads. This came far less quickly than Dutchbat would have wished and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command was unable to speed up the process. As a result, the deployment took far longer than was anticipated. The bottlenecks in the deployment plan were pinpointed on 25 January by Major M.L.A. Boeren of Support Command, who formed part of the reconnaissance mission. According to Boeren, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command said that it was giving priority to 'bringing in Dutchbat', but he had seen no signs of this. He therefore anticipated huge problems with the transport of the containers. Boeren calculated that, with the fourteen vehicles provided by Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and the restrictions on the use of the roads, it would take 396 days to transport the engineering materiel. His conclusion was grim but clear: 'Dutchbat would have to get on with it themselves.'

Bosnia-Herzegovina Command shared Boeren's opinion: the Chief of Staff said that the deployment of two new battalions – the Dutch and the Malaysian – would 'be achieved in about a year' with the current logistical capacity of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command.⁴⁰² Bosnia-Herzegovina Command continued to give priority to the deployment of Dutchbat, because the Canadian Government was still pushing for the withdrawal of its battalion. Another background factor was that

³⁹⁹ W. van Dullemen, 'Opzet, inrichten en "Lessons Learned" of Support Command'; Voordracht voor Dienstvakdag Intendance, 1994, p. 7. Interview F.G. van der Hooft, 17/12/01.

⁴⁰⁰ DOKL/OZ. Operation order no 24 (DUTCHBAT UNPROFOR), 01/02/94, Appendix T: (Relocations); 'Eerste deel hoofdmacht 'Dutchbat' naar Bosnië' (First contingent of Dutchbat force to Bosnia), *Defensiekrant* 10/02/94; 'Grenadiers begin maart in Srebrenica' (Grenadiers in Srebrenica at the start of March), *Defensiekrant* 24/02/94; Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 83-84.

⁴⁰¹ W. van Dullemen, 'Opzet, inrichten en "Lessons Learned" van Support Command'; Voordracht voor Dienstvakdag Intendance, 1994, pp. 11-13. CRST. Satcom from C-1 (NL) UN Sptcmd to SC-O Crisis Staff, 10/02/94. CRST. Fax LO/051 BH Command G3 Plans/LO Dutchbat to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 10/02/94.

⁴⁰² CRST. Fax Boeren to CS Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 25/01/94. CSKL 1994: fax HQ BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 12/02/94.

NATO had still not ruled out the use of force to realize the military rotation in Srebrenica. UNPROFOR wanted to prevent this.⁴⁰³ All in all, this did very little to speed up the deployment of Dutchbat. As if that were not enough, the normal supply of Dutchbat had monopolized part of the container transport capacity from the moment it arrived in Srebrenica in early March.

At the end of July 1994, 157 containers destined for Dutchbat in Srebrenica were still standing at various intermediate stations.⁴⁰⁴ However, all these logistical constraints did not seriously affect the operational deployment; they were particularly evident in the first period (Dutchbat I), manifesting themselves in delays to the road repairs and the construction and improvement of the compounds and the OPs, shortages of spare parts and impassable roads to the observation posts.

In the longer term the ammunition supply became a vexed question: only 16% of the planned supply entered the enclave.

12. The operational zone of Srebrenica and Zepa changes to Srebrenica and Sapna-finger

The operational deployment encountered fewer problems. The quartermaster engineering detachment arrived on 28 February; the battalion commander, Vermeulen, Bravo Company, part of the SSC and part of the engineering detachment arrived on 1 March. C Company and the remainder of the other units joined them at the start of April. According to the deployment plan, C Company would go to Zepa. However, in mid-March Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had decided that it was more urgent to reinforce the UNPROFOR presence in the area around Tuzla. After consultation with the Dutch authorities, A Company was placed temporarily under the command of the Scandinavian battalion and directed to Tuzla Air Base, which would be reopened for UNHCR flights. UNPROFOR wanted to make sure that flights could resume without disruption by strengthening the peacekeeping force around the air base.

In the meantime, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had decided against replacing the Ukrainian detachment in Zepa with C Company of Dutchbat. This meant that Zepa was no longer on the cards as far as Dutchbat was concerned. On 15 March Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander, General Rose, spoke to the Dutch Chief of Defence Staff, General Van der Vlis, about stationing all the Dutchbat companies in Srebrenica after the end of the temporary mission at Tuzla Air Base.⁴⁰⁵ But it never came to this. The personnel at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command were thinking more and more about stationing A Company in the area known as Sapna-finger near Tuzla (see the map on page #). This relocation would form part of an UNPROFOR redeployment in Sector North East and give a 'more balanced covering'. The final decision was taken on this in mid-May.⁴⁰⁶

The result of this decision by Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and Sector North East was that B and C Company, and not A and B Company, would be deployed in Srebrenica and that A Company would be assigned a task in the vicinity of Tuzla. The definitive stationing of A Company in Sapna-finger meant that the separation of the Dutchbat companies was no longer temporary, but permanent. This had implications for the command structure. The reconnaissance report of December 1993 had assumed that some of the battalion staff would be stationed in Zepa. When A Company was assigned to the area around Simin Han Dutchbat became responsible for two operational zones and could not command A company – the part of the battalion that was not in the enclave – from Srebrenica. As

⁴⁰³ CRST. Fax 423/94, BH Command Kiseljak ACOS G3 Almstrom to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 24/02/94. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 200 file: HB Command 24 Feb thru 1 Mar 94. BH Command Kiseljak to NQ BH Cmd LO Dets, 24/02/94 appendix: Minutes of COS daily meeting 24 Feb 94.

⁴⁰⁴ CRST. Fax 754, staff Support Command to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis staff, 14/07/94. SMG, 1023, fax TPT 301, LCC Trogir to Dutch Spt Cmd, 31/07/94.

⁴⁰⁵ DCBC Sitrep Peace Operations no. 052/94, 15/03/94.

⁴⁰⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 214, file: BH Command 27/02/95 – 03/03/95. Fax BH Command Kiseljak to HQ Unprofor Zagreb, 07/04/94 (redeployment options).

there was no freedom of movement the battalion commander could not stay abreast of the situation in Sapna-finger and had to rely on the judgement of his second-in-command when viewing the situation.

Vermeulen then made the point that, as the Dutchbat commander, he continued to be responsible for A Company in Simin Han, but the only practical solution was to permanently delegate the operational responsibility. In order to implement this decision it was necessary to station some of his staff in Simin Han. His second-in-command had been with the company in Tuzla from the start; after mid-May Vermeulen transferred a few staff officers to Simin Han as well. These were the Head of Intelligence, Captain Van de Have, and some members of the operational section. The distribution of Dutchbat between two operational zones also meant that the headquarters of Sector North East wanted to deal direct with A Company and circumvent the formal line of command via Potocari.

The dual deployment also had certain advantages. The logistical support for A Company was greatly facilitated by the fact that it was stationed the vicinity of Tuzla. The forty-kilometre route between Lukavac and Simin Han was far shorter than the route between Lukavac and Srebrenica and did not pass through Bosnian-Serb territory. It would at least get better logistical support than Srebrenica and hence would have superior operational possibilities. The operations of A Company in Simin Han are not discussed in this report because they fall outside the spectrum of Dutchbat and the fall of Srebrenica.⁴⁰⁷ The troops worked in a different type of engagement under similar circumstances, which included direct attacks by the warring factions, sometimes resulting in serious injuries or permanent physical damage. Tragedy struck Dutchbat for the first time when Private Jeffrey Broere of the Dutchbat III Company in Simin Han was killed by artillery fire on 29 March 1995. His colleagues wrote in the Dutchbat book of remembrance: 'He was hit on the way to the bunker. He died of his wounds on the way to the Norwegian hospital. The personnel at the casualty station fought hard to save him but to no avail. We have lost in Jeffrey a colleague and a friend.'⁴⁰⁸

13. The Canadians are out of it – Dutchbat gets started

The Dutchbat quartermaster group that arrived in Srebrenica on 28 February met there part of the reconnaissance party from the end of January that had returned to Srebrenica from Kiseljak as an advance detachment on 6 February 1994.⁴⁰⁹ On 11 February, after arriving in the enclave, this team, led by the SSC Commander, Major Oerlemans, was in close contact with the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff in The Hague, the Dutch liaison officer at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, the battalion staff and Support Command in Lukavac about the further preparations for the deployment. Oerlemans' team arranged with the Canadian battalion that the command would be handed over after the arrival of the first group at the end of February; they also compiled an inventory of equipment and supplies that Dutchbat would take over from the Canadians, and worked out in detail how the accommodation would be organized during the build-up.

From an operational perspective it was important, in the three weeks prior to the official handover, for the team to meet the civil and military authorities and establish initial contacts with the VRS commanders. These 'chaperoned outings' with Canadian Major Bouchard and the UNMO team gradually led to input in the discussions. Apparently, towards the end of February Major Oerlemans, the head of the liaison department, Major A. Derksen and the intelligence staff officer, Captain Ten Have, had become the discussion partners for their Canadian counterparts. This introductory period allowed them to familiarize themselves with the problems in and around the enclave and to get to know the main players.

⁴⁰⁷ The Dutchbat II and Dutchbat III publications *Dutchbat on Tour* and *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace) discuss the operations in Sapna-finger.

⁴⁰⁸ *Dutchbat in vredesnaam*, p. 233.

⁴⁰⁹ Sie LL. Lessons Learned from Commander of B Company Dutchbat in Srebrenica by E. Jellema. Chapter: Verkenningen in Bosnië (Reconnaissance in Bosnia), p. 49.

The VRS was in two minds about the composition of Dutchbat. Colonel Vukovic, the VRS officer with whom the Canadians and Dutchbat had the most contact, said at the first meeting that he was 'very pleased' with the 'number of Dutchbat soldiers' as they could now start demilitarizing the enclave in earnest. Less enthusiastic was the response of a VRS delegation the next day in Milici during the handover of the Dutchbat deployment plan and organization chart. The prospect of a helicopter detachment and anti-tank weapons met with huge opposition. The delegation claimed that 'the treaty' prohibited weapons with a calibre greater than 12.7 mm. in the enclave. The VRS refused to allow helicopters under any circumstances, arguing that they would have a destabilizing effect, as the ABiH would shoot them down and then lay the blame on the VRS. Dutch proposals for the use of the main road between Zvornik and Bratunac and the allocation of a liaison officer to the VRS to assist at roadblocks were also greeted with little enthusiasm.⁴¹⁰ Permission from VRS headquarters on the helicopters and anti-tank weapons failed to materialize. Later Vukovic said that he would like to know the arrival date of Dutchbat so that he could welcome it.⁴¹¹

It became clear from the discussions that the VRS and the ABiH both feared that the other party would misuse the replacement of the Canadians by Dutchbat. The VRS feared ABiH provocation along the enclave border in order to incite Dutchbat intervention – these tactics had never worked with the Canadians. The ABiH, in turn, predicted that the VRS would try to push its positions forward across the ceasefire line and into the enclave, and that the Bosnian-Serb army would try to occupy the no man's land between Zepa and Srebrenica. Both parties offered unsolicited advice on the best sites for new observation posts.⁴¹² This is how the Dutch UN troops made their first acquaintance with the standpoints of both sides, the reciprocal distrust and the attempts to win the trust of Dutchbat or manipulate it even in the early contacts.

The convoys travelling from Lukavac to Srebrenica on 28 February and 1 March were not obstructed in their Freedom of Movement. The quartermaster group comprising 130 people and 56 vehicles drove into Potocari at 18.45 hours on 28 February, while the 238 members and 67 vehicles of B Company drove in a day later at 16.00 hours accompanied by an engineering group and part of the support and services company. This group of convoys and battalion commander Vermeulen were welcomed by VRS Captain M. Nikolic at Iron Bridge in Zvornik.

Dutchbat was scarcely given any time to acclimatize. Two and a half months had passed since the departure deadline of 15 December 1993, set by the Canadians. The incumbent troops therefore made haste with the handover. On 2 March, the day after the arrival of B Company, the Canadian battalion started transferring the observation posts, the signals centre and the command centre (a.k.a. the 'Ops Room') to Dutchbat. The formal ceremony in which Major Bouchard handed over command to B Company Commander, Jellema, was held at 15.00 hours on 3 March in the compound in Srebrenica.⁴¹³

The Canadian battalion planned to leave on 6 March. However, on the day of the handover the Muslim civil and military authorities in the enclave launched a strong protest against the VRS occupation of the 'corridor' between Zepa and Srebrenica. According to the Canadian commander, the existence of this corridor had never been formalized. UNPROFOR's hands were tied because the territory in question lay outside the Safe Area. The ABiH interpretation was that the Canadians had acquiesced in the change to the VRS positions. They claimed that Commander Bouchard had sold Muslim territory to the Serbs.⁴¹⁴ When UNPROFOR subsequently refused to open the Weapon Collection Point for the ABiH, the Canadian compound in Srebrenica was blockaded by a crowd that swelled by the day; 500 people on 4 March and 2,000 a day later. It was an orchestrated demonstration

⁴¹⁰ MID/Royal Netherlands Army. Milinfo Srebrenica, 151-152: meeting reports 12/02/94 and 13/02/94

⁴¹¹ MID/Royal Netherlands Army. Milinfo Srebrenica, 151-152: meeting reports 20/02/94.

⁴¹² MID/Royal Netherlands Army. Milinfo Srebrenica, 151-152: meeting reports 18/02/94, 20/02/94, undated, 27/02/94, 01/03/94. Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 96-100.

⁴¹³ DND. CCUnprofor sitrep 01/03/94. *Ibidem*, CCUnprofor sitrep 03/03/94.

⁴¹⁴ Interview Y. Bouchard, 15/11/99.

designed to impede the departure of Canbat and a sign that the authorities distrusted the newly arrived Dutchbat, which was seemingly unwilling to follow the ABiH interpretation of the situation. The bottom line was that the Canadians were trapped.

Consideration was given to implementing a secret evacuation plan that had already been drawn up in February. This plan had been compiled after the artillery attack on Markale market in Sarajevo and the NATO threat to use air strikes against the VRS (see Chapter 4 of the Intelligence Appendix). The Canadian Government was afraid that the situation would escalate and wanted to prevent the ABiH and/or the VRS from taking the company hostage in Srebrenica. So, they wanted to pull their troops out of Srebrenica as soon as possible. As the Canadian forces did not have the capability to carry out an independent evacuation, Ottawa struck a deal with the US Administration on a joint US-Canadian extraction operation, should this be necessary. In return for US cooperation the Canadians had agreed to stop opposing air strikes within NATO.⁴¹⁵

According to the February plan, the US Special Forces would carry out a nocturnal operation with fighter helicopters, supported by SEAD devices, to evacuate the battalion – as well as the Dutchbat Liaison Team that was present in the enclave at that time.⁴¹⁶ Major Bouchard was informed and took precautionary measures. On 2 March the secret plan for the operation was smuggled into the enclave. On the eve of the handover the population was – as already mentioned – demonstratively blockading the compound. The VRS, in turn, had refused to allow entry to a convoy of trucks and buses which had come to collect the departing battalion. The US-Canadian evacuation seemed the only solution. Eventually, the operation was called off because the ABiH abandoned its protest and the VRS let the convoy through. The first batch of the Canadian battalion left Srebrenica on 8 March and the second and last batch on 10 March 1994.⁴¹⁷

It is understandable that Canada wanted to get its company out of Srebrenica at any price. However, the ‘go-it-alone’ character of the planned US-Canadian operation is less understandable from the Dutch point of view. The first batch of Dutchbat would supposedly be evacuated at the same time. This is improbable as it consisted of a company. It would have meant at least doubling the capacity; not a readily available option in operations of this type. At all events, the Dutch Government knew nothing of the extraction plan.⁴¹⁸ It is also unlikely that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command was aware of it. If the plan had been implemented, Dutchbat would probably have found itself in an extremely perilous situation, caught between the enclave inhabitants and authorities on the one hand and the VRS around the enclave on the other.

B Company concentrated on its operational task. Until the arrival of C Company it was responsible for securing and guarding the enclave alone. This took place mainly from the eight observation posts. Commander Jellema had changed the structure of four platoons for this reason. The four platoon groups were reorganized into three larger groups.

Each platoon was assigned two OPs, which were manned by two of the three groups. The third group stayed in the compound and formed an *ad hoc* platoon with the three other groups. It was responsible for patrols and for guarding the compound, the Post Office building and the Weapon Collection Point. This manufactured deployment made heavy demands on the personnel of B Company. There was barely any time to rest and the living conditions were downright abysmal. Jellema held daily briefings for his platoon commanders, personally wrote the reports to the battalion, and paid

⁴¹⁵ Interview D. Moore, 15/11/99.

⁴¹⁶ Confidential information (64) and ‘Serbs stall Canadian withdrawal’ in: *The Toronto Star*, 04/03/94.

⁴¹⁷ Confidential information (64) and ‘Bosnian Muslims want Canadian troops to stay’ in: *The Toronto Star*, 07/03/94.

Interview Y. Bouchard, 15/11/99. DND Ottawa: Canbat sitreps 04/03/04, 05/03/94, 06/03/94, 07/03/94 and 09/03/94. Def, Sitreps. Sitreps Dutchbat: sitreps 08/03/94 and 10/03/94.

⁴¹⁸ Interview R. ter Beek, 23/12/99.

frequent visits to the observation posts to familiarize himself with the situation on the ground. He also established contact with representatives of other organizations inside the enclave.⁴¹⁹

The rest of the deployment progressed sluggishly. The VRS only gave sporadic permission for convoys to Srebrenica. Around 10 March the casualty station was partially operational. Owing to a shortage of building materials the construction of shelters had to be postponed for a long time. The transportation of casualties from observation posts to the casualty station was a sore point: the roads were in an extremely poor condition and the VRS refused permission to station the helicopter detachment in Srebrenica for transportation of the wounded. Two weeks after the handover Vermeulen tried to make a virtue of necessity by using rational arguments when asking the Drina Corps commander, General Zivanovic, for more VRS cooperation. Vermeulen told Zivanovic that 'I can only carry out my mission in the right way the moment I have all the assets at my disposal'. The VRS general could subscribe to this viewpoint and saw no problems about bringing the rest of the battalion to Srebrenica. This concession did not, however, prevent the VRS from refusing passage for three convoys which were to head for Srebrenica the next day.⁴²⁰

The refusal to let the convoys through was a source of great irritation to Vermeulen. He felt like 'a prisoner in the enclave'. In his situation report of 18 March – the daily report to Sector North East and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command – he wrote that he needed every single soldier and every piece of equipment in order to execute his mission.⁴²¹ His exasperation was to continue for the time being. According to Vermeulen, the permission procedure was seriously flawed: the so-called 'central coordination' from VRS headquarters was nothing short of a fake, because many sub-commanders arbitrarily refused passage to the convoys.⁴²² The logistics convoys entered the enclave at irregular intervals. At the end of March two caterpillar bulldozers arrived and a start could be made on improving the roads to the OPs. On 29 March a convoy carrying personnel and equipment for C Company was refused entry. It eventually arrived in Srebrenica two days later and deployment could proceed in line with Vermeulen's original operational plan.⁴²³

The arrival of C Company, the reconnaissance platoon of the 108th Commando Company and the second security platoon brought the operational deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica up to full strength. C Company and the SSC were billeted in the factory complex at Potocari. The operational emergency scenario of B Company for securing the Safe Area could be disbanded. Vermeulen implemented his operational plan; like his Canadian predecessor, he split the enclave into a northern sector for C Company and a southern sector for B Company. B Company remained responsible for the four southern observation posts, OP-C, OP-E, OP-F, and for the temporary OP-H near the Swedish Shelter Project on the southern border of the enclave at the River Jadar (see map on page #). From 7 April C Company was responsible for the observation posts in the northern sector, OP-N, OP-P (beside the northern entrance to the enclave on Bosnian-Serb territory), OP-Q and OP-R. Each company devised its own rotation system for manning the OPs and other duties.

B Company retained four other important tasks: it had to guard the Weapon Collection Point, the office of the UNMO and UnCivPol in the Post Office building, the UNHCR warehouse and the Swedish Shelter Project.⁴²⁴ The plan to increase the number of observation posts to thirteen was put on hold for the time being. The personnel must not be overburdened; this had already happened in March when B Company had had to bear the responsibility for eight observation posts. Instead of a system of thirteen permanent observation posts, some temporary posts were set up to supplement the eight permanent ones. These temporary posts were manned for short periods, unless tension started to

⁴¹⁹ Sie LL. Lessons Learned from the Commander of B Company Dutchbat in Srebrenica by E. Jellema. Chapter: Verkenningen in Bosnië, 49. Jellema, *First-in*, p. 184.

⁴²⁰ Def, Sitreps Dutchbat sitrep 17/03/94.

⁴²¹ Def, Sitreps. Dutchbat sitrep 18/03/94.

⁴²² Def, Sitreps. Dutchbat sitrep 19/03/94.

⁴²³ Def, Sitreps. Dutchbat sitreps 22/03/94, 29/03/94 and 01/04/94.

⁴²⁴ Jellema, *First-in*, p. 124.

mount. The advantage of temporary manning was that it dispensed with the need to keep a sergeant and eight soldiers on permanent stand-by. More intensive patrolling from the observation posts and the compound was introduced to tactically compensate for the limited number of observation posts.⁴²⁵ Opinions varied in the three successive battalions with regard to the effectiveness of this system of permanent and temporary observation posts in combination with patrols. These are addressed in Chapter 6 of this part of the report.

The helicopter detachment constituted the last problem in the deployment. The VRS had responded with surprise when this was mentioned by the advance detachment in Srebrenica and said that permission was needed from headquarters. Vermeulen stated regularly in his reports that the deployment of helicopters would enable him to reduce certain risks. He envisaged various uses. First, the wounded could be transported from remote observation posts to the casualty station in Potocari or a military hospital outside the enclave, until the battalion's own casualty station became fully operational. Helicopters could also be used to supply and relieve personnel at poorly accessible observation posts and to transport materiel from Lukavac to Srebrenica. He made no mention as yet on their use after deployment in Zepa.⁴²⁶

The Dutch Ministry of Defence had already decided in early March that deployment in Zepa would not be on the agenda until the detachment was guaranteed full freedom of movement. The Ministry could stick to this standpoint while A Company was temporarily stationed at Tuzla Air Base, but by mid-April it had softened its approach and was reviewing the mission of the detachment in case the VRS continued to refuse permission. The helicopters had been available in Tuzla since 13 March, but had still received no permission to fly on to Srebrenica.⁴²⁷ According to the ANP, high-placed military officials believed that the VRS would still take months to grant permission, despite the efforts of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. These merely irritated the VRS.

Chief of Staff Milovanovic explained the VRS position to his counterpart at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, the Dutch Brigadier General Van Baal: on 15 February Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose, Force Commander Cot and VRS Commander Mladic had agreed that all helicopter flights would be prohibited except for medical evacuations. If UNPROFOR wanted to deploy helicopters around Srebrenica and Zepa, then a new agreement would be needed. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command thought otherwise. Indeed, it pushed so often and so persistently for approval that Milovanovic, answered the umpteenth request from Bosnia-Herzegovina Command for helicopter flights by saying: 'Your everyday requests are getting provocative'.⁴²⁸

The VRS showed no signs of budging on this issue. It stubbornly continued to refuse and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command felt it had no choice but to resign itself to this state of affairs. But the deadlock did not mean that the helicopter detachment was permanently grounded. It still carried out incidental medical flights and flew now and then to Srebrenica with important guests such as Chief of Defence Staff Van der Vlis or Minister Ter Beek during their first visits to Bosnia in April and May. However, helicopter deployment in Srebrenica was out of the question; in September a decision was taken to return them to the Netherlands.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁵ Jellema, *First-in*, pp. 147-148. See LL. Lessons Learned from Commander B Company Dutchbat in Srebrenica by E. Jellema. Chapter: Bosbrand bij Crni-Guber (Forest Fire at Crni-Gruber), pp. 149-150.

⁴²⁶ DCBC sitreps Dutchbat.

⁴²⁷ ABZ, DIE/2001/00023. Memorandum 266/94, deputy DEU to AP *et al.*, 07/03/94; DAB. no.D154/92/11276, Minister of Defence to the Speaker, 15/04/94. SMG, 1012; CRST. Overview peace operations 17-24/03/94. ADEF DCBC sitrep Peace Operations 049/94, 10/03/94.

⁴²⁸ CRST. ANP message 09/03/94. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 59, file Civil Affairs 2.5 BJ Command. Fax BH Command Kiseljak to Unprofor Zagreb, 29/03/94.

⁴²⁹ Lutgert & De Winter, *Check the Horizon*, pp. 334-337.

14. Conclusion

According to a tight government timetable of mid- January 1994, Dutchbat could be operational at the end of March, if the third reconnaissance mission could leave for Bosnia shortly after 20 January.⁴³⁰ Though this estimation turned out to be fairly accurate, this does not mean that the deployment of Dutchbat went entirely according to plan. C Company and the last part of the SSC had arrived in the enclave on 31 March, but this did not complete the deployment. The timetable was also upset by the decision of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo to temporarily station the A Company of Dutchbat at Tuzla Air Base. The helicopter detachment for the enclave was also still in Tuzla.

So there was still no question of a complete deployment, not even in logistical terms. Many Dutchbat containers were still on their way to Lukavac or were stranded there at Support Command. A start had barely been made on the improvements to the buildings and the installation of new observation posts. The deployment operations were not running smoothly either, largely because the VRS doggedly refused to let the convoys pass.

It was, effectively, a long-drawn-out operation. For the soldiers this meant that in the initial months they had to work and live in poor conditions. The situation only began to stabilize somewhat in May and June 1994.

It became clear that A Company would not be coming to the eastern enclaves and that the operational use of helicopters was virtually impossible because the VRS refused permission

UNPROFOR did not therefore deploy Dutchbat in the way that was announced at the start of December 1993. Though Srebrenica was still the main task, there was no geographically connected operational zone. It was impossible to anticipate the future operational zone throughout the preparation period. Between the end of September and the beginning of December 1993 the military and political authorities had expected a deployment in their preferred option of Central Bosnia, but this was a miscalculation in which wishful thinking played a role. Signals from, for example, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command that the Dutchbat would be assigned to Srebrenica and Zepa were not taken seriously.

It is scarcely credible that the definitive assignment to the two eastern Safe Areas on 1 December 1993 really came as a surprise to the officials and military authorities. Nonetheless, this turned out to be the case: apparently, insufficient use was made of the Dutch officers at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in order to stay abreast of the decision-making on the stationing of new UNPROFOR battalions. Staff officers from Bosnia-Herzegovina Command never actually ruled out that Dutchbat would be stationed in Central Bosnia (which had long been the preference of the Dutch Government) but neither were the eastern enclaves described as a 'non-option'. There are clear indications that, since the end of September 1993, Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Briquemont and Force Commander Cot had destined Dutchbat for Srebrenica and Zepa.

It is a moot question whether the training, the information supply and the materiel preparations would have been tackled differently if Dutchbat had known at the start of October that it would be going on a peacekeeping mission to Srebrenica and Zepa. The logical answer to this question is yes, because Dutchbat would then have been able to prepare itself for the future working environment and conditions on the basis of specific information on the operational zone. The actual answer to this question points in another direction. After the announcement on 1 December 1993, the reconnaissance missions investigated what else was needed in addition to the equipment and training efforts that had already been undertaken. Their reports made hardly any mention of the need for supplementary training. On the other hand, they paid a great deal of attention to the logistical and operational aspects. The reconnaissance mission at the start of December mainly made use of the advice of the Canadian battalion, which had hands-on experience of Bosnia and Srebrenica, and of the Ukrainian battalion in

⁴³⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05257. Memorandum DAV/MS-94/007, DAV to S, 14/01/94.

Zepa, which, at that time, would presumably be the second enclave for the Dutch. This resulted in a list of additions and changes to the equipment but not to the training of Dutchbat II and III.

The mission of January/February 1994, the only reconnaissance mission that was allowed into Srebrenica, had a similar effect. Again, new requests came, mostly with regard to the construction and organization of accommodation inside and outside the compounds. Apart from this, it concentrated on specific equipment such as caterpillar bulldozers, cranes and high antennae. These further supplements and specifications of the equipment on the basis of reconnaissance results do not alter the fact that apparently, six months previously in July and August 1993, there was enough information available on the requirements for an independently operating mechanized infantry battalion in Bosnia. The bulk of the preparations were set in motion at that time. The resources that Dutchbat said it needed for the peacekeeping mission were made more or less fully available; the fact that they did not all arrive in the operational zone was another matter altogether.

This question is more difficult to answer in relation to the implications which the late announcement of the operational zone had for the training. The preparations were largely based on a combination of tasks, namely, the original UNPROFOR order to facilitate humanitarian aid and territorial security, also in Safe Areas. Obviously, there were differences in the tasks required for convoy escorts and those for territorial security, but these different types of deployment were, in principle, addressed by the training.

As far as the instructions on the use of force were concerned – absolutely crucial to action – the training made no distinction between escorting convoys and territorial security. This likewise applies to another essential element of peace-force operations, the ‘blue’ element. This involved open and visible operations as opposed to the ‘green’ operations of the airmobile training. The distinction between ‘blue’ and ‘green’ was included in the preparations, though there were gaps in the training in this respect. This is the theme of Chapter 8.

In the training for the peace mission in Bosnia a key role was played by the conversion of the dynamic airmobile concept into an operational unit with armoured vehicles. Both aspects called for a different approach and pattern of response. Aside from the specific skills for operating the vehicles, the infantry companies experienced this as an enhancement rather than a disruption of their solid basic training.

From the perspective of the military skills required for a peace operation there was also, with hindsight, little reason – after Srebrenica and Zepa had been assigned on 1 December 1993 – to incorporate new aspects in the training. The objectives had been realized in the start-up period (the extra training period for Dutchbat).

In practice, from March 1994, no mistakes appear to have been made because of gaps in the training. Be that as it may, it should be mentioned that the military training paid little attention to passing on specific knowledge of the area of operation, also in the case of Dutchbat II and III. The operations of A Company, which was stationed at Tuzla air base and later in Simin Han, show that this need not have presented problems. A Company had no knowledge whatsoever of this area and still functioned well. This argument is endorsed by a battery commander of the *Gele Rijders* (motorized artillery) who, after a peace mission to Kosovo, described solid infantry training as the primary basis for participation in a peace mission anywhere in the world.⁴³¹ But this does not mitigate the fact that specific problems arose in Srebrenica which were not covered by the training. These problems are discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

The point on specific knowledge of the operational zone should not only be discussed in general terms but also in relation to the different levels. It makes a difference whether one is talking about the individual soldier in the infantry group, the group commander, his platoon or company commander, or the members of the battalion staff. Important factors with regard to the individual

⁴³¹ P.G.F. Hoefsloot, ‘Ervaringen van een batterijcommandant Gele Rijders. De voorbereidingen’ (Experience of a battery commander of the *Gele Rijders*. The preparations) in: *Carré* 24(2001)3, pp. 16-19.

soldier's performance within the group are command of military skills and their practical application within the group context.

For the group commander other competencies were important besides military skills. The higher the rank, the greater was the importance of information on the operational zone and knowledge of the conditions. These skills also included the ability to respond to local circumstances; this would be particularly important in the Srebrenica enclave which had, amongst others, a huge population of Displaced Persons. It is always difficult to accurately assess the level of intelligence achieved. The Military Intelligence Service was of little use in this respect: neither the battalion staff nor the NCOs were (regularly) informed by the MIS/Royal Netherlands Army of the developments.

The questions posed at the beginning of this chapter on the perception of the future mission, the materiel preparations, the training and the collection of information have been addressed. It has clearly emerged that the materiel presented the least problems, and that more problems arose with regard to the training, the perception of the future mission and the information position. These elements also received less attention due to the pressure of time and because of the organizational framework of the Defence machinery; the involvement of many different agencies led to considerable bureaucracy.

It is clear that the emphasis on the military aspects of the training fitted in with the battalion's perception of its future mission. It was seen mainly as a military task. However, it is open to question whether this was an adequate assessment: operating as a peace mission soon turned out to involve more than just military action. It also called for interaction with the local population, the civil authorities, and the international aid organizations. Chapter 8 of this part of the report will discuss the extent to which attention was paid to these aspects in the preparations.

In short, where the preparations went wrong in practice was in manning the mission effectively, ensuring the consistency of the training, and the logistical debarkation at Split. Given the circumstances under which the preparation and deployment had to take place, these flaws and shortcomings are not, however, out of proportion.

Chapter 6

Operational performance of Dutchbat I, II and III in the Safe Area Srebrenica

1. Introduction

United States president Bill Clinton said in February 1995 that Dutchbat forces were ‘perhaps the most vulnerable of all the United Nations troops’.⁴³² The Dutch Government, the Chief of Defence Staff and the high command of the Armed Forces had also arrived at the same conclusion by that time. It was not without reason that, among the troop-contributing nations of UNPROFOR, the Safe Area Srebrenica was the least desired location.

The Canadian Government had decided to withdraw from Srebrenica several months after the stationing of the Canadian battalion there in April 1993. But the Dutch Government did not want to refuse UNPROFOR’s allocation of this area of operation to Dutchbat in December 1993. This does not alter the fact that the Army formulated preconditions for the effort in Srebrenica that were not met at any time before and during the mission.

Once in Srebrenica Dutchbat soon became aware of the full force of the reality in the enclave. On 8 February 1994, after his first night in Srebrenica, Captain H.C. van der Have, Intelligence Officer for Dutchbat I and member of the reconnaissance mission in January/February 1994, noted that: ‘Living conditions are very primitive (...) We are back in the Middle Ages, no electricity, no water and hardly any food. But the morale among our little group is good.’⁴³³

Srebrenica would make the same impression on visitors. The Chief of Defence Staff later said of his first visit on 15 March 1994, that ‘despite everything I knew, [I] still returned home shocked, because I found that we were involved in a task there that had little humanity left in it. What was Dutchbat? (...) A prison guard over a concentration camp.’⁴³⁴

On their arrival in Srebrenica, every soldier in Dutchbat experienced a psychological shock from face-to-face confrontation with the war-torn area: an experience that the scenes broadcast via the media could not fully evoke. Furthermore, the reception of Dutchbat, contrary to expectations, was decidedly chilly. The Bosnian Muslims resisted the departure of the Canadian battalion almost violently. At the same time, they overloaded Dutchbat with complaints about Bosnian-Serb violations of the status of the Safe Area and requested actions that did not appear to be compatible with the UNPROFOR mandate. In turn, the Bosnian Serbs of the VRS, through frequent refusal to grant permits for convoys to Srebrenica, made it clear that they were running the show around the enclave. After the arrival of the first Dutchbat company, the Canadian battalion pulled out very quickly. Within a week after arriving in Srebrenica, Dutchbat, still far below strength, was thrown in at the deep end.

The main focus of this chapter will be the performance of Dutchbat as executive of the UNPROFOR mandate in Srebrenica, from deployment until the end of May 1995. The period after the end of May 1995 will be described in Part III.

In this chapter the questions up for discussion will include: what were the Airmobile Brigade battalions to make of their operational task, which was after all mainly static? Did they succeed, for example, through strength of numbers in making Srebrenica a safer place than the Canadian battalion had been able to do in its final months? What was the contact like with the warring factions and how did Dutchbat try to find a solution to three closely related burning issues in the enclave – the determination of the ceasefire line/enclave border, the demilitarization of the area and the withdrawal

⁴³² NOS Journaal Nederland 3, 10pm, 28/02/95.

⁴³³ ‘From a letter from one of the six scouts in Srebrenica’, *Falcon Buddy Bulletin*, February 1994, p. 2.

⁴³⁴ Interview A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

of the VRS to a comfortable distance from the ceasefire line. Was there a clear line in the development of the operational situation – for better or worse – or were the operating conditions more characterized by fluctuation as a result of the very changeable and unpredictable attitudes of the two sides? The intention here is to present a dynamic view of the situation in the enclave.

The answers to these questions will be arranged thematically. Throughout this account, it should always be kept in mind that Dutchbat had to function in Srebrenica in the context of the rules and lines of command of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and UNPROFOR. Dutchbat operated in Srebrenica without a direct geographical connection to UNPROFOR units, but this did not diminish the fact that the battalion was operationally controlled from Sector North East (Tuzla) and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo/Kiseljak and, a greater distance away, from UNPROFOR in Zagreb. The chapter therefore opens with a consideration of the views of the Force Commander, General Cot, and the new Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander, Lieutenant General Rose, concerning the UNPROFOR mission. At the end of this chapter the question will be raised as to the extent to which the two headquarters realized operational control.

2. Struggling with the UNPROFOR mandate in Bosnia

At the time of the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica, a changing of the guard occurred within UNPROFOR. This change was important, because it was closely linked to the discussion about the nature of the UNPROFOR mission. On 1 January 1994, Stoltenberg handed over his function as Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) to the Japanese diplomat Yasushi Akashi, but stayed on as co-chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY). As reported in Chapter 1 of this part, this split at the top of the pyramid was aimed at bringing about better control and coordination between the Geneva negotiation process and the actions of UNPROFOR in its contacts with the warring factions, down to local level. Stoltenberg, in his double function, had scarcely got around to his task at UNPROFOR, to the great displeasure of Force Commander Cot, who contended that he was receiving insufficient political support.⁴³⁵

Additionally, General F. Briquemont stepped down as UNPROFOR's Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander in late January 1994. In late 1993, frustrated by the lack of a sense of reality among diplomats and politicians in handling the Bosnian dossier, he decided to depart in early 1994.⁴³⁶ He was succeeded by the British Lieutenant General M. Rose. Then, in early March, the French Force Commander, General J. Cot, resigned after expressing serious criticism of the refusal of Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali to delegate authorization for the use of Close Air Support to the Force Commander.⁴³⁷ This meant that there was a conflict between Zagreb and New York about the political control of the peace operation. Cot was succeeded by his compatriot, General B. de Lapresle.

Shortly before Christmas 1993, Force Commander Cot had presented his views of the action of UNPROFOR in his second Force Commander's Guidance and Objectives. He assumed that, with the appointment of the Special Representative Akashi, he could devote himself more to the military aspects of the peace mission, while Akashi would take on the coordination of the political talks in the former Yugoslavia and the fine-tuning with UN headquarters in New York. As he saw it, UNPROFOR ought to be focusing on supporting the peace process through concrete actions in the mission area. Cot formulated eight ground rules for this new approach, the most important being unity in action, credibility, safety, freedom of movement, communication and support for humanitarian organizations. Cot wanted to achieve an improvement regarding the esteem of UNPROFOR among the warring factions; by performing unequivocally, impartially and transparently on the one hand and, on the other hand, by direct response to aggression through strict application of the Rules of Engagement. Another

⁴³⁵ UNGE, ICFY Box 122 file: fax 29 Jan thru 17 March 1994: Z-216 McLeod ICFY Zagreb to Stoltenberg ICFY Geneva, 13/02/94.

⁴³⁶ Briquemont, *Do something*, pp. 214-216.

⁴³⁷ Interview J. Cot, 19/04/00.

instrument for a better performance by the peacekeeping force was intensification of contacts with the local population.

Cot's new approach was a reaction to the state of affairs in the first six months of his tenure of command in which, through the emphasis on the first part of Stoltenberg's double function as co-chairman of the peace conference in Geneva and Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the former Yugoslavia, coordination between the peace process and the peace mission had shown serious shortcomings. As a component of his new approach, Cot had charged Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Briquemont with strengthening the command structure and integrating new units, improving the escorts for humanitarian aid convoys, effectuating the establishment of Safe Areas and creating a timetable for the relief of the Canadian battalion in Srebrenica.⁴³⁸

Cot expected that UNPROFOR could better fulfil its mission through a different style of action and through an intensification of internal cooperation. Against the background of the serious problems between the peacekeeping force and the warring factions in late December 1993, this was an optimistic view. But there were some grounds for it in February 1994: the VRS, for example, became more accommodating after the deployment of Dutchbat. Also, under threat of NATO air strikes, they agreed to the withdrawal of heavy weapons from around Sarajevo by setting up a Weapon Exclusion Zone.

In early January 1994, Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Briquemont was much more pessimistic. As he now saw it, UNPROFOR could not solve the existing problems in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and both the mandate and the Safe Area concept should come under review. According to Briquemont, the ABiH had used the protection of UNPROFOR and humanitarian aid for reorganization, re-supply and training. The Safe Area concept was undermined, considering that the minimum strength needed for implementation was lacking. Safety in Sarajevo, Srebrenica and Zepa seemed to have increased through the presence of UNPROFOR, true enough, but it remained extremely worrisome, according to Briquemont, that the ABiH used these Safe Areas as bases of military operation.

In his view, the ABiH and the Bosnian Government had developed a fixed pattern of behaviour for such use: the ABiH launched an attack on the VRS from a Safe Area, the VRS generally responded by shelling the ceasefire line. UNPROFOR did not react. The Bosnian Government then accused UNPROFOR of neglecting to protect the Safe Areas and demanded air strikes against the VRS positions. In Srebrenica the ABiH had already been provoking the VRS for several months, mainly with shelling from the enclave. In the view of the VRS, a Safe Area was, in principle, a demilitarized zone, but it was precisely in the Srebrenica enclave that an impasse had arisen in implementing the demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993 (on the basis of Resolution 824).⁴³⁹ According to Briquemont, this eventually led to the conclusion that the UNPROFOR mandate for the Safe Areas was not feasible, unless an agreement could come about between the warring factions about the definition of the concept and its preconditions. The question was to what extent the new Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander, General Rose, would underwrite the vision of his predecessor.

Who was this new Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander? The fifty-three-year-old Lieutenant General Sir Michael Rose stood at the peak of an impressive military career. Born in India in 1940, he was the son of a British officer. After his studies in Oxford and at the Sorbonne in Paris, and after his training with the Royal Air Force was broken off, he joined the British army. He began his army career as an officer with the Coldstream Guards, later switching to the Special Air Service (SAS) Regiment. He served in Malacca and Oman. Under his command, the 22nd SAS Regiment moved into the international limelight by bringing an end to the siege of the Iranian embassy in London in 1980, and during the Falklands War (1982). He got acquainted with the phenomenon of civil war during his posting in Northern Ireland. As SAS Director he was responsible for all special operations of the SAS

⁴³⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 59 file: Civil Affairs 2.5 BH Command. Fax 681 FC Cot to BH Command, 21/12/93, appendix: FC Guidance and Objectives 20/12/93.

⁴³⁹. Confidential information (142).

and the Royal Marines' SBS. He then became Commander of the 2nd Infantry Division, thereafter taking charge of the Staff College in Camberley (1991-1993). Shortly after his appointment as Deputy Commander of British Armed Forces came the appointment to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Rose had led many and varied operations in his military career, but he was not from the circuit of generals who had served in a NATO connection or with the British Army of the Rhine. Rose had a powerful personality in all respects. He would not be trifled with and, directly after arriving in Sarajevo, caused a stir by going to the presidential palace on foot rather than in an armoured car. His intention was to break through the prevailing siege mentality.⁴⁴⁰

Rose supported the necessity of a different approach, but believed that this approach was possible on the basis of the existing mandate and the premises of the Guidance and Objectives of Force Commander Cot. On 1 March 1994 (the very date of the deployment of the first Dutchbat company in Srebrenica), he presented his views in a Campaign Plan for Bosnia Herzegovina that had been drawn up at the British Staff College in Camberley. The aim of this campaign plan was to provide a formula for reconciling the values of the warring factions (history, sovereignty, territory and religious integrity) with the interests of the United Nations and the international community (international stability, humanitarian welfare and collective awareness). In this peoples' war, the UN could not become a warring party itself. The ultimate objective of the plan was 'peace, security and creating the conditions for economic renewal for all peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina'.⁴⁴¹

The strategic objectives were: containment of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, improvement of the humanitarian situation, phased negotiations about a peace deal and support in creating a favourable climate for internal reconstruction and economic renewal and a peaceful and safe society. The central premise of the plan was 'the popular will of all parties – to fight or to make peace.' In order to realize this strategic objective a different, more positive attitude of the population was needed and a better coordination of the policies of UNPROFOR, UNHCR and the Yugoslav conference (ICFY). Rose, like Cot in his Guidance document of December 1993, pleaded for better mutual coordination of diplomatic and political pressure, economic sanctions, humanitarian aid and military actions as the way to achieve peace. Rose formulated a number of options for implementation: he rejected maintaining the status quo because the idea had lacked success; as to the option on the other side of the spectrum – peace enforcement – he characterized it as 'a non-starter'.

Rose chose the option 'towards peace' as 'a better way forward'. He set himself the goal of achieving an improvement in the efficiency of the ongoing humanitarian operation, through better synchronization of 'the activities of all UNPROFOR agencies and forces by actively seeking and perhaps compelling the cooperation of the belligerent parties and thereby making an indirect contribution to the peacemaking process' This approach was aimed at leading to ceasefire agreements and to setting up zones without heavy weapons (Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones) around cities.⁴⁴² Rose thus held to the supporting role of UNPROFOR in the peace process, but he also wanted to contribute to improvement of the living conditions of the population through more forceful action in the face of the warring factions and better synchronization of UN activities. Improving living conditions had to be the basis of all activities. If this plan succeeded, the option of implementation of a peace plan could come within reach. According to Rose, if the plan failed, the only remaining option for the UN peacekeeping force was withdrawal.

In his analysis of the situation Rose said that the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Croats had achieved their military objectives and wanted to end the war, but that this did not apply to the Bosnian Muslims. They still thought they could win more on the battlefield than at the negotiating table. Sarajevo wanted to draw the United States and NATO onto its side in the war.

⁴⁴⁰ Confidential information (142); Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 24-25; Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, pp. 228-230.

⁴⁴¹ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 71 file 2.2.6. Command Matters: no. CPLAN01.DOC: *A Campaign Plan for Bosnia Herzegovina Command*, 01/03/94, p.1.

⁴⁴² UNGE UNPROFOR Box 71 file 2.2.6. Command Matters: no. CPLAN01.DOC: *A Campaign Plan for Bosnia Herzegovina Command*, 01/03/94, pp. 1-3.

The strong points of the Bosnian Government lay with the army, the ABiH: there was no shortage of soldiers and ammunition, the army itself was growing, it was on the offensive and morale was high. The weak points on the side of the Bosnian Muslims were the population in the enclaves, the poor strategic position of the state, the food shortage and dependence on aid, the shortage of heavy weapons and military air power, poor military organization and command structure, unresolved differences of opinion between hawks and doves, a ruined economy and, finally, sensitivity to American pressure. Rose concluded that support for the 'doves' among the Bosnian Muslims could lead to the return of Sarajevo to the negotiating table. Aid and building the economy could be used to this purpose. The 'key precursor to any deal' was clarity from Washington that ruled out American intervention on the battlefield to the benefit of Sarajevo. After all, the Government in Sarajevo, was sensitive to media attention that could undermine the Bosnian position in the United States, according to Rose.⁴⁴³

Rose set himself the objective of regaining the initiative 'in the present, largely chaotic, situation'. The main instrument involved was an independent UNPROFOR 'information policy'. He hoped this would achieve a better relationship between the peacekeeping force and the population, and bring about greater confidence in the peacekeeping force. In his Campaign Plan Rose then indicated how he wanted to achieve his objective. As far as organization and policy were concerned, Rose followed the Guidance of Force Commander Cot: introduction of sectors as a new command level between Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and the battalions; greater unity of action internally through better coordination at all levels and, externally, through integration of the activities of UNPROFOR, UNHCR and NGOs. Regarding the supply of information, Rose wanted to take the initiative in putting an end to rumours and inaccurate reporting. UNPROFOR had to conduct a proactive policy in the face of the media and open its own radio station, so that the population would get reliable information and would know, for example, why aid convoys did not reach them. The second pillar of information policy was to use a large and open network of liaison teams for the exchange of information between the warring factions and UNPROFOR.

Bosnia-Herzegovina Command also wanted to institutionalize the contacts with the warring factions at all levels in order to make clear the intentions of the peacekeeping force and to take the local reactions into account. These Local Action Groups would consist of the UNPROFOR liaison teams, UNHCR and NGOs and local civilian and military representatives. Rose wanted to respond to hindrance or thwarting of execution of the mandate 'by a robust response including the selective use of force'. He put forward the suggestion of using 'attack helicopters as a complement to fixed-wing Close Air Support'. Freedom of Movement was essential to the execution of the UNPROFOR mandate. Finally, Rose wanted to improve the quality of humanitarian aid by distributing food under UN supervision, by protection and care for the sick, wounded and displaced persons and by safeguarding the repair of crucial public utilities.⁴⁴⁴

Rose's plan was ambitious. His departure points were almost identical to those of Force Commander Cot: UNPROFOR had to regain the initiative; it must take stronger action against the warring factions and compel them, with the use of force if necessary, to cooperate with the execution of the mandate; the cooperation between UNPROFOR, the UNHCR and the NGOs had to be improved and, furthermore, it was of great importance to try to win the hearts of the population. Cot, too, realized that UNPROFOR had to win the information battle but, unlike Rose, he had no plans in that area. The Rose plan, however, also had weak spots. First of all it had to be seen whether the ABiH, the VRS and the army of the Bosnian Croats (HVO) would change their behaviour in response to the threat that UNPROFOR was prepared to publicly denounce the warring factions for sabotaging the provision of humanitarian aid. Even if this were the case, it was very optimistic to assume that

⁴⁴³ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 71 file 2.2.6. Command Matters: no. CPLAN01.DOC: *A Campaign Plan for Bosnia Herzegovina Command*, 01/03/94; Annex C: the Belligerents.

⁴⁴⁴ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 71 file 2.2.6. Command Matters: no. CPLAN01.DOC: *A Campaign Plan for Bosnia Herzegovina Command*, 01/03/94.

dissemination of the true facts was sufficient to win over the international press and the regional media to his side – and, with that, to drive a wedge between the population and the political and military leadership. UNPROFOR had a poor relationship with the media and this shortcoming was not about to be remedied from one day to the next. Furthermore, the propaganda machines of the warring factions worked perfectly. Another drawback was that the part of the plan which stipulated that the peacekeeping had to be carried out robustly was received with scepticism by the staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Nevertheless, Rose persisted. He called a meeting with the commanders of military units and representatives of aid organizations to discuss the plan. He also put a more robust performance into practice in Sarajevo. The plan went into effect on 1 March 1994, after approval by Zagreb; it was converted into an operational order in May 1994.⁴⁴⁵

3. Dutchbat's order

In early January 1994, the order came in to the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff via the Dutch Permanent Representative in New York for the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Zepa and for setting up the logistical Support Command in Lukavac. The operational order had three components: (1) to give military assistance to the UNHCR and other aid organizations for humanitarian activities and for the repair of public utilities in the two Safe Areas; (2) the creation of favourable conditions for the evacuation of any wounded, for protection and care for the population, for improvement of their living conditions and for bringing an end to the hostilities; (3) maintenance of the demilitarized status of the two Safe Areas.

Bosnia-Herzegovina Command divided the order into five sub-tasks:

- the establishment and manning of UN observation posts;
- the improvement and expansion of 'liaison' with and between the warring factions, in order to prevent 'uncontrolled actions'. Dutchbat had to build a network up to VRS and ABiH brigade level and set up as many 'hotlines' as possible with the civilian and military authorities in the area of operation.
- the improvement of the process of Intelligence gathering. In a military regard by determining the objectives and plans of VRS and ABiH at all levels. In a humanitarian regard by pinpointing the locations of ethnic minority groups, refugees and displaced persons within the enclaves, with a view to their monitoring and protection by the UN and their treatment by the local authorities. Another part of the collection of humanitarian information involved making an inventory of local needs for food, heating, housing and medical care and passing this on to the UNHCR and other aid organizations and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command.
- assisting the UNHCR's distribution efforts by storing and guarding fuel and oil, by distribution to the population and by safeguarding the UNHCR storage sites.
- participation in the repair of public utilities such as electricity, gas and water.

Dutchbat began its task in Srebrenica on virtually the same day that the new Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander presented his campaign plan. This plan signified a different approach to execution of the mandate, but at this point the consequences of this change were barely felt at Dutchbat level. The setting up of regional commands – in the case of Dutchbat the Sector North East Command in Tuzla, which became operational from 1 April 1994 - was the first big change. Otherwise, little had changed in comparison with the approach taken by the Canadian battalion. Dutchbat, in any case, had departed for the area of operation with an order of an earlier date than the Campaign Plan of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose. The extent to which further instructions were given after deployment is not to be found in the available documentation. In designating Srebrenica and Zepa as the area of operation for

⁴⁴⁵ Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 23-24, 35 and pp. 39-40; CRST.HQ BH Comd Forward Sarajevo, OPO 02/94, May 1994.

Dutchbat in December 1993 UNPROFOR had not given any specific task description. Of course, the task was known in general terms: execution of the UNPROFOR mandate for Bosnia Hercegovina (Security Council Resolution 770) and for the Safe Areas (Resolutions 819, 824 and 836). The UNPROFOR Rules of Engagement which Dutchbat had become familiar with during the so-called UN reprocessing period, represented a more detailed expression of this task. This gave the general context but, at the start of its mission, the Dutch battalion lacked a specific operational order. During his reconnaissance mission in November/December 1993, the Battalion Commander, Colonel C.P.H. Vermeulen, had asked Bosnia-Hercegovina Command in Kiseljak to no avail for a written instruction in the form of a Commander's Guidance for Srebrenica and Zepa.⁴⁴⁶ It apparently did not exist. The documentation shows that the military authorities, through the mediation of Dutch officers, had asked for a Dutchbat task description. Early in January, a document of the kind summarized above was received via the official UN route – i.e. from Bosnia-Hercegovina Command via UNPROFOR in Zagreb, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York, the Dutch Permanent Representative in New York to the Dutch Foreign and Defence Ministries in The Hague. It is doubtful whether this document answered Vermeulen's expectations.

As a whole, the order to Dutchbat was not specific enough. The tasks listed, after all, applied in every area of operation and had hardly any relation to the current situation. In the operational orders of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command and Sector North East from late 1993 and early 1994 the order is set out in the same general formulations.⁴⁴⁷ The only specific part for Srebrenica involved the maintenance of the demilitarized status on the basis of an agreement between ABiH and VRS dated 8 May 1993. The order did not contain an evaluation of the situation in Srebrenica or concrete directions for tasks in the short term. The document met the official requirements of the Commander's Guidance desired by the Dutchbat I Commander Vermeulen, but it offered very little that was concrete in order to begin carrying out the mission in Srebrenica.

No official change was made in this order during the dispatching of Dutchbat but, on Dutch initiative, an unofficial change was made. This involved the provision of humanitarian aid: in the original, Dutchbat was only to facilitate humanitarian aid, not provide it. From the reconnaissance missions, it was already evident that Dutchbat wanted to make a contribution of its own. The reconnaissance mission of November-December, according to the mission report, considered the provision of medical aid to the population to be an obvious Dutchbat task.⁴⁴⁸

This view also prevailed among the authorities in the Netherlands. The Minister for Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk, made 500,000 guilders available for humanitarian aid projects in the enclave. Dutchbat responded positively, as was noted during the first visit of Defence Minister Relus Ter Beek to Srebrenica on 10 May 1994. In this way, Dutchbat expected to be able to win the confidence of the local population and to make a contribution to a sustainable improvement in the living conditions in the enclave.

From the explanatory notes on a spending proposal for the 500,000 guilders, it turned out that projects of Dutchbat's own belonged to the task, on condition that they were 'simple in nature' and could be executed within the mission period. Of course, they were not to be carried out at the expense of the operational effort.⁴⁴⁹ This meant that a humanitarian element had also become part of the task. In point of fact, the Commander of Dutchbat II, Lieutenant Colonel P. Everts, expressed a view that connected seamlessly with the March 1994 campaign plan of Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander Rose, even though any reference to it was lacking. According to Everts, providing humanitarian aid fitted 'very well' within the task. It served the strategy, after all, that was aimed at restoring the initiative to

⁴⁴⁶ DCBC. Commander 11 Infbat Lumbl GG (APC)/Dutchbat to BLS attn SC Crisis Staff, 12/12/93, sub 2.

⁴⁴⁷ CRST. BH Command OPO 02/94, May 94 sub 2. DJZ. Sector North East Operations Order 05/1994 05/12/94 sub 2.

⁴⁴⁸ DCBC. Commander 11 Infbat Lumbl GG (APC) Dutchbat to BLS attn CS Crisis Staff, no. 001, 12/12/93: Scouting report Srebrenica and Zepa, appendix B sub Civilian Health Care Aspects Srebrenica, point 3.

⁴⁴⁹ DCBC. no.v04013865, A. ter Beek to J.Pronk, 31/05/94; C-Dutchbat Srebrenica to Crisis Staff BLS (M. Felix), [27/06/94].

UNPROFOR, by contributing to the acceptance of UNPROFOR by the population. The aid would create goodwill for the battalion and also increase the motivation of Dutchbat personnel. But to be able to reap these benefits, Dutchbat had to restrict itself to a few projects that were directly visible to the population and actually reduced their problems. A project outside the enclave, for example, in the neighbouring northern Bosnian-Serb town of Bratunac, could provide the same effect and, with it, contribute to a better execution by Dutchbat of its own task.⁴⁵⁰

The question now is whether this was perhaps too broad an interpretation of the operational order. In any case, within UNPROFOR and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command the idea was also current that the task of the peace mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina should not be restricted to facilitating the provision of humanitarian aid and to the protection of the Safe Areas. As stated earlier, Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose, in his Campaign Plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina, saw an active role for UNPROFOR in improving the living conditions of the population as an important contribution to the peace process. In late 1994, Force Commander De Lapresle described the *raison d'être* of UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina as 'containing the conflict' and supplying humanitarian aid. The peacekeeping force had contributed to stabilizing the military situation and improving the living conditions of the population. De Lapresle emphasized that it was mainly the versatile humanitarian work of the battalions at local level, 'from assisting the most needy to repairing schools, hospitals and roads and caring for the wounded', that deserved the fullest attention.⁴⁵¹ De Lapresle too interpreted the task of UNPROFOR in Bosnia more broadly than the official mandate. The setting up of small humanitarian projects by Dutchbat certainly fitted within that interpretation.

The order of Dutchbat in Srebrenica, as we have seen, was no more than a general translation of the UNPROFOR mandate for the Safe Areas. This was aimed at providing protection to the enclave by securing its borders and through open relationships with the warring factions at all working levels. Within this task there was definitely room for a Dutchbat interpretation of possibilities for the improvement of living conditions (for example, by also making a contribution to the repair of the facilities for gas, water and electricity). The insight rapidly grew that, for Dutchbat to function well, a restricted number of humanitarian projects was a good, if not indispensable means of winning the confidence of the population.

4. The organization of Dutchbat

Prior to examining the performance of Dutchbat in Srebrenica in 1994-1995, here is a brief overview of the Dutchbat structure. Dutchbat consisted of two main components. The reinforced Airmobile Infantry Battalion was the operational component; the Support Command in Lukavac was the logistical component. Officially the two components came under the orders of the commander of Dutchbat in Srebrenica. In actual fact, they functioned as two independent elements. In the spring of 1995 the Support Command was officially cut loose from Dutchbat and converted into a logistical centre for the Dutch troops in Bosnia. As was indicated in Chapter 3, the reinforced airmobile battalion operated in two areas. During deployment in March 1994 the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose stationed A Company at Tuzla Air Base to reinforce the Scandinavian battalion and, from June 1994, this company was responsible for the area around Simin Han, the so-called Sapna Thumb (see Flowchart 1).

The main body of Dutchbat I and II, consisting of the staff company, the services company and two infantry companies, was stationed in the Safe Area Srebrenica. B Company was billeted in the former Canadian battalion compound in Srebrenica, the three other companies in a new compound at the battery factory in Potocari on the north side of the enclave. The staff company consisted of the battalion staff with its own signals unit, the company staff and the helicopter group. The battalion staff

⁴⁵⁰ CRST. Letter Everts to Sitten BLS, 29/09/94.

⁴⁵¹ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-1676. De Lapresle to Annan, 04/11/94, Appendix 4: Force Commanders conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina, p. 6.

consisted, along with the battalion commander, his deputy and the battalion warrant officer, of the usual sections for Personnel (Section 1), Intelligence and Security (Section 2), Operations (Section 3) and Logistics (Section 4). Another element here was a special section for contacts with military and civilian authorities in the area of operation (Section 5), as well as a detachment of the Explosives Disposal Unit (EOD) and of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and for religious and social-psychological care and information (see Flowchart 2).

The company staff consisted of the staff of the company commander, a reconnaissance platoon, two security platoons, a signals platoon and a first-aid location. The helicopter group consisted of a signals section and a maintenance group as well as the pilot group. The services company consisted, along with the command group, of four units: a supplies platoon, a repair platoon, a medical platoon and an engineer's platoon. In Dutchbat III these companies were combined into a staff company and services company. Segments of the staff company and the services company were assigned to the infantry companies. Along with the company staff, the B and C Companies each consisted of three infantry platoons, a mortar group and an anti-tank group (see Flowchart 3). Detached to each company was a group for medical assistance and transport of the wounded, a signals group of the staff company and a kitchen group of the services company. Because of the distance between Lukavac and the enclave several components of the Support Command were detached to Srebrenica. The two most important ones were the engineering construction company and the so-called first-aid location (the military field hospital with its surgical team).⁴⁵²

5. Rules and instructions for Dutchbat: Standing Orders

Chapter 1 discussed the organization of UNPROFOR, as well as covering the instructions of UNPROFOR and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command for the units under their command were mentioned too. It was said that, according to general organizational and military custom, general guidelines were always translated to a lower level. Within UNPROFOR the Force Commanders Policy Directive (FCPD) and the Standing Operating Procedures (SOP) were the most important instruments, whose content ultimately had its outcome in the standing orders of the battalions. Things were no different at Dutchbat. Dutchbat operated on the basis of a Standing Order 1 (NL) UN Infbat that, per section (Personnel and Administration, Intelligence and Security, Operations and Logistics), contained directions and instructions for performance. At company level, this was partly translated into a general instruction to the company commander for the carrying out of the order. The instruction focused on operational matters in most cases, because the responsibility for personnel, security and logistics basically belonged to the competence of the battalion.⁴⁵³

To embark on a full discussion of this substantial work would make little sense here. Much of it is of administrative and procedural significance. A few points should be examined, however, so that some insight might be gained into the day-to-day operational course of affairs at Dutchbat. It is also necessary to make a few remarks about the significance of the Standing Orders. To function efficiently, every large organization develops its own procedures and internal rules. These are aimed at creating an orderly and identical treatment of matters. Military instructions and regulations, such as Standing Operating Procedures and Standing Orders are documents of this nature. They are indispensable to an efficient course of affairs, in the administrative, operational and logistical process of the military operation, the peace mission included. Insight into the personnel strength of a unit, the granting of allowances and compensation for goods that have gone missing comes about in line with these same regulations. This also applies to the operational procedures.

⁴⁵² MID/KL. 'Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac /Tuzla' chapter 1B. Klep & Van Gils, *Van Korea naar Kosovo* (From Korea to Kosovo), pp. 280-281. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 266.

⁴⁵³ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat. An example of an operational order for a company in: Jellema, *First-In*, pp.179-187.

Every commander – from the sergeant group leader to the commander-in-chief – issues orders to his unit on the basis of a fixed matrix. This same principle of uniformity has been established for all forms of military action and they are generally put into practice. These orders and instructions are a blueprint for an optimal situation. In practice, they are subject to wear and tear. On the tenth issue of an order for a patrol, the patrol leader will treat the regularly recurring fixed elements in a very perfunctory way or perhaps not at all, because all members of the patrol are familiar with them. It is quite possible for a deviation from the fixed instructions to occur without a change being expressed therein. It is also possible that observance of rules may become less stringent and precise through lax control of observance.

In this process, the role of the commander as controller is of paramount significance. Where one commander, for whatever reason, can put great emphasis on the maintenance of uniformity in clothing, his colleague within the same unit can attach greater value to other aspects of his exercise of command and the functioning of his unit. It is therefore dangerous to use the Standing Orders as a kind of railway timetable. They contain procedures and instructions whose use and execution is less stringent and rigid in operational practice than they may look on paper. Maintaining the standard depends frequently on the seriousness and nature of the subject in question and on supervision of observance and the objectives of the commander.

What applies to the nature and significance of Standing Orders in general also applies to the Standing Orders of Dutchbat. This set of rules and procedures for conduct was a compilation of existing Dutch and UN rules and procedures, and regulations specially drawn up for the mission in the former Yugoslavia. The UNPROFOR Rules of Engagement discussed in Chapter 1 were part of this Standing Order. The Standing Order regularly referred, for more detailed information and instruction, to the Manual for Participation in International Peacekeeping Missions. The first part, about personnel matters, opened with a discussion of working hours.

The starting point for the operation of Dutchbat was continuous service: 24 hours per day for seven days per week, to be carried out in shifts. The basis was a division into active service, stand-by and rest. The seven-day working week with a work day of 11 hours (morning, afternoon and evening) also applied for personnel with supportive tasks. To the extent that work permitted, Sundays had a ‘different character’. In practice, the Sunday was generally respected and work in the compound began later and proceeded at a slower pace. There was no breakfast on Sundays, but there was brunch.⁴⁵⁴

Leaving the barracks area, the compound, was not permitted. Nor was receiving private visitors. Everyone wore, in principle, the prescribed military battledress (without the Dutch flag on the sleeve, in order to prevent any confusion with the Croat or Yugoslavian flag). Wearing sports clothes was permitted during periods of rest, but wearing civilian clothes was not. Fitness equipment was available in the compound. Two sports instructors were responsible for the physical condition of the personnel.⁴⁵⁵ In practice, the Dutchbat soldiers made extensive use of the sports facilities. The men also organized intramural competitions.

The Standing Order contained a number of stipulations about hairstyle and the wearing of earrings and other jewellery: men had to have short hair; ponytails and so-called Huron or Mohican haircuts were prohibited. Earrings and ear studs for men were also prohibited. The Standing Order, in line with UN regulations, also pointed out the risk that articles of UN equipment could fall ‘into the wrong hands’, and the need to prevent this. Trading in and exchanging articles of UN and military clothing was expressly forbidden.⁴⁵⁶

In practice, blue berets and other articles of military attire regularly disappeared. At Dutchbat III, those reporting losses gave theft as the cause of incidents, both in the compound and at the

⁴⁵⁴ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Koreman, ‘Experiences with Dutchbat III’, p.17/24.

⁴⁵⁵ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 1 subjects 1/02, 1/11 and 1/13.

⁴⁵⁶ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 1, subject 1/07.

observation posts. In a few cases, the stolen goods were returned via the local Muslim police or in one instance, in June 1994 through the mediation of Naser Oric.⁴⁵⁷

The part dealing with personnel matters contained a detailed procedure for action and reporting in the event of an accident or death.⁴⁵⁸ It also dealt with procedures for repatriation of personnel before the end of the mission for disciplinary, medical, social or psycho-social reasons.⁴⁵⁹ After provisions about Dutch criminal law and disciplinary rules and the UNPROFOR regulations in regard to what were 'major offences' (these will be discussed further in Chapter 9 on misconduct) came a section about discipline in the area of operation. The soldier had to behave as a 'guest (...) in another country' and respect all local customs. Dutchbat personnel were to show respect for local customs and religious traditions and were not to react to them as if offended or shocked. Special attention was given to the behaviour of female soldiers and interaction with women in the Islamic area of operation. These were no more than rules of thumb and, for optimal effect, of course, some knowledge of the local culture was necessary.⁴⁶⁰ Finally, the personnel and administrative component of the Standing Order dealt with a series of regulations for matters such as leave, postal traffic, travel, evaluations and ceremonial matters.

The chapter about Intelligence and Security was logically constructed, and had military security as its central topic. Military security, according to the Standing Order, aimed at the protection and keeping secret of data, equipment, personnel, activities and installations against espionage, sabotage, subversion and terrorism on the one hand and against theft, loss or unauthorized perusal on the other hand. Every commander (up to company level) was responsible, within his area, for military security and for drawing up a security order to this end. Within each unit an officer or non-commissioned officer was appointed Military Security Officer (MVO) and was charged with carrying out these instructions. The detailing of the regime of military security was generally done top-down, while the opposite tack was taken in reporting matters and events with a security aspect and security incidents of breaches of military security. In this respect, Dutchbat, was no closed circuit. In principle it applied the regulations of UNPROFOR, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and Sector North East and also reported in this chain of command.

Dutchbat, as peacekeeping force in Srebrenica, paid special attention to military security because of the unusual operational conditions (i.e. operating in an enclave in the immediate vicinity of two warring factions). This had its effect on the daily course of affairs, because there was a greater chance of transgressions. Although within the battalion and the company, the commander was responsible for military security, this responsibility was actually delegated to security officers. At battalion level this was the combat intelligence captain and his close colleagues, the sergeant-major for combat intelligence and the sergeant-major for military security; at company level the company's sergeant-major fulfilled this task. On this point, they were also responsible for intelligence and training within their units.⁴⁶¹

In the Standing Order, a number of rules were included for the effectuation of military security and the collection of intelligence. In security, a distinction was made between safeguarding buildings, documents and personnel. The buildings were permanently guarded by a sentry at the entrance and by admission checks, while permanent patrols were mounted along the perimeter of the compound. A separate regulation existed for the protection of weapons, calling for regular control of the presence of the personal weapon and ammunition.⁴⁶² The safeguarding of documents included, along with

⁴⁵⁷ Dutchbat situation report, 04/06/94. KMAR, Detachment Srebrenica: Mutatierapporten///Turnover reports January-July 1995, passim.

⁴⁵⁸ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 1 subject 1/21.

⁴⁵⁹ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 1 subject 1/17.

⁴⁶⁰ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 1 subject 1/14.

⁴⁶¹ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 2, subject 2/1.

⁴⁶² SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 2, subjects 2/7, 2/9 and 2/11.

classification and putting them away in a safe or secured space, key security and the protection of computer and crypto installations, and signal links.

The Standing Order applied the UN regulations for the classification of documents and crypto security. Otherwise, these regulations essentially corresponded with the instructions of the Netherlands Army. These instructions did not contain any guidelines concerning the admission of outsiders into the areas where operational Intelligence was available. This was an oversight, because it left access to the battalion and company Ops Room (Operations Room) open to interpreters and local cleaning personnel. A serious suspicion arose that the local personnel collected information for the ABiH. These personnel were selected by the Opstina (the local authority). According to some Dutchbat personnel, they had a fair command of German or English. Twice a day, three or four women cleaned the Ops Room of C Company (Dutchbat II) in Potocari and it was impossible to keep an eye on everything they did. Even though no classified information was kept in this Ops Room, UNPROFOR military information summaries were present. There were patrol timetables, duty and guard rosters on the walls, and a logbook lay open for incoming messages. The bag with outgoing mail also hung in the Ops Room. Empty envelopes were routinely thrown into the wastepaper basket and this allowed residents of the enclave to obtain the Netherlands address of Dutchbat personnel.

It did not surprise the officer charged with Military Security in The Hague that relatives of Dutch soldiers received mailed requests from Yugoslavians in the Netherlands to smuggle money into the enclave by mail. Local personnel were not checked on leaving the compound.⁴⁶³ This security risk was not recognized, in the first instance, and was only given more attention during the time of Dutchbat III. In B Company, after a number of thefts and suspicions of rummaging in personal possessions, access to the living quarters was denied. The work of the local personnel in the compound was restricted for reasons of military security.⁴⁶⁴ For the protection of personnel the Standing Order focused on knowledge of the security regulations, reporting departure and arrival at a military site, rules for taking personal photographs and making video recordings and rules for contacts with the local population. Signing in at one's own Ops Room or on departure from and return to the compound were mandatory. Taking personal photographs and making video recordings was only permitted within the compound. Outside it, photographing and recording were only allowed for operational objectives.⁴⁶⁵ It is not clear to what extent this rule was observed. Dutchbat personnel often brought costly equipment with them to Srebrenica and if they succeeded in getting it through the Bosnian-Serb control points in the enclave, they used it too. The books about the Bravo Company of Dutchbat I, Dutchbat on Tour and *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam* ('Dutchbat in the Name of Peace'), are richly illustrated. That the instruction was not always carried out to the letter is evident from the fact that, during the days of the fall of the enclave in July 1995, Dutchbat personnel used their own equipment to take photos of victims of executions; but by that time the chaos was so extensive that hardly any regulations were being observed any longer.

Contacts with the local population receded from the fairly frequent contacts of Dutchbat I to hardly any contacts for Dutchbat III. On this subject, it is important to state that a difference existed between the regulations and the reality, as will be discussed later in Chapters 8 and 9. Dutchbat II and III employed the rule that individual contacts with the local population were prohibited. In practice, this certainly did not mean that there was no contact at all. In certain situations, such as at the observation posts, it was difficult to make a distinction between business and personal contacts. Furthermore, not everyone observed the regulation strictly.

The other rules in the security Chapter of the Dutchbat Standing Order related to information. It concerned the collection of information for operational action and preventing information from falling into the wrong hands, particularly those of the warring factions and their Intelligence Services.

⁴⁶³ Archive 101 MID-C. Jawad to Van Dijk, debriefing report, 09/02/95.

⁴⁶⁴ Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.

⁴⁶⁵ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 2, subjects 2/8, 2/9, 2/12, 2/13, 2/14 and 2/15.

This preventive task required the application of security measures that related to the protection of the compound, weapons, documents and signal links. Censorship by the army postal service in communications with the home front was another available instrument, according to the Standing Order, but it was never used during the Dutchbat mission. The active gathering of information concentrated on five key subjects: the actions of the warring factions and any preparations for hostilities; the attitude of the residents of the enclave towards the UN; the attitude or reaction of political groups and individuals; the effects of the weather and the condition of the terrain and, finally, the status of convoy routes.

For all this, Dutchbat utilized a series of reports. Each day the battalion staff received a report from each company drawn up on the basis of a standard form: the situation report or 'sitrep' for short. Processed into these situation reports was the daily reporting from observation posts and patrols. On the basis of these internal reports, the battalion staff drew up the Dutchbat situation report for the headquarters of Sector North East. There was also a series of occasional reports, for example; patrol reports, shooting reports about gunfire observed, firing close reports for targeted firing on UNPROFOR personnel, overflight reports for sightings of aircraft and incident reports for accidents. Also in this context there were debriefings after each transport outside the enclave. Most of these reports have not been saved. Using information from these reports, Dutchbat Section of Intelligence & Security wanted to provide for its own intelligence needs and those of UNPROFOR.

In accordance with the fundamentals of UN peace operations the starting point of the duties of the Dutchbat information officer was not the active collection of Operational Intelligence. On a daily basis, he distributed general information in the Milinfo for the whole Dutchbat area of operation. It covered six subjects: a short weather report, a brief description of the situation in Bosnia and Sector North East (on the basis of the situation reports of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and Sector North East); the situation of Dutchbat; ceasefire violations (with specification per sector and calibre of weapon); an overview of talks conducted and, finally, the situation of the roads – actually an overview of the accessibility of the observation posts using different types of vehicles.⁴⁶⁶

A summary of the main elements of this internal Milinfo also went daily to Sector North East as an information report. In general this report was limited to the day-to-day events in Srebrenica and the Sapna Thumb. An attempt at making an analysis for a somewhat longer period was not written up in reports. It is not ruled out that this was done for security reasons: the reports were sent to Tuzla and the Netherlands using ordinary fax machines.⁴⁶⁷ The consequences of this method of information gathering for Dutchbat's intelligence picture in Srebrenica will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Operations Chapter of the Standing Order was created from material that had been collected for exercises of Dutchbat I and II and the School Battalion of the Airmobile Brigade. It was used during the exercises 'Blue Falcon' and 'Noble Falcon' and it was supplemented and altered on the basis of the experiences in Bosnia. This chapter was the pendant of the general instruction of the Royal Netherlands Army for peace operations, the first edition of which appeared in November 1991 and an updated version in 1993 (2-1393).⁴⁶⁸ This chapter of the Standing Order consisted of eight short sections about general subjects and 19 appendices. The first eight sections dealt with the main elements of an action and set down general rules of behaviour; in the appendices, the Standing Operating Procedures (SOP) of UNPROFOR were given in translation.

The section about general aspects of performance summarized the most important points about the positioning of Dutchbat checkpoints, the searches at checkpoints, the use of force in the compound and at observation posts, behaviour in response to threats to personnel and equipment and the main features of Safe Areas. The use of force was elaborated in a separate section on the basis of

⁴⁶⁶ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 2, subjects 2/3 and 2/12. Wiebes, *Intelligence and the war in Bosnia 1992 - 1995* (Chapter 1: UN and intelligence).

⁴⁶⁷ Wiebes, *Intelligence and the war in Bosnia 1992 - 1995* (Chapter 3: Dutchbat and intelligence gathering).

⁴⁶⁸ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, Chapter 3, subject 3.1. Netherlands Army, *Voorschrift (Instruction) 2-1393, 2^e edition. Manual for the services on peace missions in the international connection* (z.pl.? [1993])

the Rules of Engagement.⁴⁶⁹ According to the Standing Order, hostilities between the warring factions were prohibited in a Safe Area. Only one of the warring factions could stay in the Safe Area: the other was kept at a distance outside the demilitarized zone under supervision of UNMOs. Within the protected area, all weapons had to be stored under UNPROFOR supervision. Bearing arms was only permitted for UNPROFOR and UnCivPol.

This was indeed the official situation according to the letter of Security Council Resolutions 819, 824 and 836 and the demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993. The reality presented a different picture: the situation within the enclave was stable; there was no demilitarization, however; on both sides of the ceasefire line the warring factions remained militarily active. This interfered with the task of Dutchbat, manifesting itself mainly in the execution of the five ‘derived tasks or subtasks’. According to the Standing Order, these subtasks stemmed from the responsibility for the Safe Area: mounting patrols, setting up observation posts and checkpoints, guarding a Weapon Collection Point and escorting convoys.

According to the Standing Order, UNPROFOR was not responsible for the protection of the population in the Safe Area: after all, the main task was deterring attacks on the enclave and supervising observance of the ceasefire and the demilitarization process. In principle UNPROFOR could indeed help, but only if a direct threat arose to the personal safety of civilians and there were no other aid organizations at hand. The UN personnel could not run any unacceptable risks and the instruction on the use of force remained in effect in such situations. Providing support of this type meant that civilians (non-combatants, in military and international law terms) were equated in such cases with UN personnel. According to the details, the execution of the main tasks was not to be jeopardized nor was there to be ‘too great an involvement of the UN personnel in the conflict’. In the examples regarding this subject in the Standing Order, it appeared, in the first place, that it had medical assistance to individuals in mind.⁴⁷⁰ This also applied to the other two forms of aid mentioned in the Standing Order.

UNPROFOR could use UNPROFOR transport to move civilians out of a dangerous area, as long as the politically sensitive points were taken into account: the question of whether one would be cooperating with ethnic cleansing on the one hand or, on the other hand, whether the action would deny people the right to take flight. In the case of discovering the use of physical violence against civilians a UNPROFOR commander could ‘if *necessary* and *possible*’ decide to provide support on the spot.⁴⁷¹

The sections about the Rules of Engagement and the related definitions made it clear in wording and through the use of capital letters that firearms could be used ‘ONLY AS A LAST RESORT’. The application of the rules of conduct to bearing arms was linked to the so-called readiness phase and the place of residence. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command distinguished three readiness phases:

1. Green: an everyday situation with normal message traffic;
2. Orange: status of heightened alert with doubling of shifts, only essential movements, control of essential equipment, reserves ready for use within ten minutes and cancellation of leave; and
3. Red: full-scale alert with manning of all posts and alert positions, closing of the checkpoints and reserves immediately available for use.

For each alert phase, regulations were in effect for the personal weapon, the wearing of helmet and flak vest and for the protection of compounds and observation posts.⁴⁷²

The last subject dealt with the ‘emergency resupplying plan (Bluewind)’. This was part of the Military Security Plan of Sector North East that had been drawn up on the basis of the starting points

⁴⁶⁹ See for the content of the ROEs of Unprofor Part II, Chapter 1.

⁴⁷⁰ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, Chapter 3, subject 3.2 sub 4 (Safe Areas) and 5 (behaviour on threats to personnel and/or equipment).

⁴⁷¹ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, Chapter 3, subject 5 sub 5 e and f.

⁴⁷² For a scheme see Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 299.

of the central plan for UNPROFOR.⁴⁷³ Other than the name suggests, the plan was related to the operational effort in the event of a resupplying blockade. At Dutchbat it was known under the name ‘minimize [plan]’. Developed by Dutchbat II, the plan assumed that in the event of a blockade of resupplying, it would take at least fifteen days before the logistical flow could return to normal. Dutchbat should therefore have enough supplies for twenty days. The plan was essentially a timetable for rationing measures and restrictions on the operational effort and humanitarian service.

The first phase of the minimize programme began with rationing of water and food and reduction of the number of patrols on the third day. On the fifth day, liaison would be ended, the consumption of fuel restricted and personnel would be regrouped in order to ensure the continuity of operational tasks. Also on this day, preparations for the airdrops, which would occur two days later, would begin. On the tenth day, the patrols with vehicles and the transport of the wounded of non-UN personnel would come to an end. On the fifteenth day all engineering work would be halted and preparations would begin for execution of the evacuation plan, the next part of the Military Security Plan.⁴⁷⁴ Evacuation was thus considered a logical step once resupplying had come to a halt.

The principle part of the Operations Chapter of Dutchbat’s Standing Order consisted of the eighteen appendices in which the main Standing Operating Procedures of UNPROFOR were presented. In part, these appendices dealt with subjects that had already come up in the preceding section: the carrying out of controls, the actions taken at checkpoints and roadblocks. In fact, the major part dealt with new subjects: action in the event of hijacking and hostage-taking (Appendix 3), escorting high-ranking civilian and military authorities (Appendix 4), the setting up of cordons and mounting of search operations (Appendix 5), patrols (Appendix 7), air support (Appendix 12) and requesting fire support (Appendix 18). Reference was always made to the relevant chapters in the previously mentioned Manual for Participation in International Peacekeeping Missions. There was no reference to the specific UNPROFOR SOP. These Dutchbat Standing Operating Procedures – given in the appendices of the Standing Order – will be dealt with in the discussion of the work of Dutchbat in Srebrenica. The Operations Chapter of the Standing Order concluded with an appendix about Lessons Learned by the British battalion in the field of movements and convoys.⁴⁷⁵

The fourth Chapter of the Standing Order dealt with logistical matters. Dutchbat operated independently with regard to logistical matters and relied in large part on the Netherlands for its resupplying and maintenance. The Dutch regulations were therefore the point of departure. Amendments to these regulations were carried out on the basis of the Standing Operating Procedures for logistical matters (see Chapter 1) and the logistical instructions of UNPROFOR and the *aide-mémoire* of June 1993 for the troop-contributing nations of UNPROFOR. Along with sections about resupplying, equipment services and medical care, this part also had a section about rationing. It contained a specification from the Operations Chapter of the logistical aspects of the emergency resupplying plan. This rationing was limited to food and fuel in four phases of increasing restriction.⁴⁷⁶

The fifth and last Chapter dealt with notifications, reports and messages. Part of the reporting has already been discussed under Military Security and under Intelligence. In general, different types were called for, as well as different numbers and frequencies. Each company was responsible for twenty-one types of notification. Of the five written reports, the situation report was a daily obligation. The other four (shooting report, firing close report, over flight report and incident report) were occasional. Additionally the company was responsible for sixteen written reports. Four were a daily obligation (logbook, report of the command post, report of the patrol and the engineer’s report). One report was required weekly (the UN personnel list) and one monthly (the roll-call list). The other ten were only drawn up if there was something to report (for example, a debriefing after movement, a

⁴⁷³ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 249. SRSG to FC, Interoffice memorandum re: Security Planning Guidance, 01/09/93.

⁴⁷⁴ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 3, subject 3.7.

⁴⁷⁵ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 3, appendices.

⁴⁷⁶ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 4.

seizure of weapons and ammunition, explosives reconnaissance, a convoy report and obstacle reports). Furthermore, the services company was responsible for a daily logistical and medical report.⁴⁷⁷

The battalion staff was responsible for eight daily and nine periodical reports. The first category included the situation report, the information report ('infosum' in UNPROFOR language), the situation report of the engineers and the report about movement possibilities ('movsit' in the jargon), the logistical and medical report. Dutchbat reported weekly to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command on accommodation, military information, the personnel situation, the press and information, transport and maintenance. The battalion also submitted a weekly request for fuel and oil. On a monthly basis, it reported about the personnel present and about accidents. Finally, it reported, where cases occurred based on the reports of the companies, about shooting incidents, violations of the no-fly rule by the warring factions, accidents, shelling with artillery and mortars, obstacles and mines, convoys, the wounded and victims among the Dutchbat personnel and medical evacuations.⁴⁷⁸

From the extensive reporting requirement of Dutchbat as UNPROFOR unit it is clear that the operational performance, availability and general situation of Dutchbat had to be made known at the next highest level – to the extent, of course, that all relevant matters were reported – and a total picture emerged from the daily figures. The reporting about the situation in the Dutchbat area of operation went upward in the UNPROFOR line, of course, and was processed in the reporting of Sector North East and subsequently in that of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Along with written reporting, of course, there was also telephone contact with Sector North East in Tuzla and with Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Kiseljak.

The heart of the reporting continued to be the daily situation report. Its quality was indicative for making evaluations. In general, Dutchbat I reported in greater detail than its successors. This applied particularly to the contacts with the warring factions and the last point in the situation report, the commander's assessment. Through the tiered manner of reporting, the main lines of what was going on in the Srebrenica enclave were also known elsewhere. At the same time, the developments in the Safe Area Srebrenica found their place in the general picture of the peace operation in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia. In this way, reporting could play a role in determining the policy lines of UNPROFOR and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command.

The Dutchbat situation reports also found their way daily to the Army Crisis Staff in The Hague and from there to the staff of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army and of the Airmobile Brigade, among others. The information report also went directly from headquarters in Potocari to the Intelligence officer of the Crisis Staff in The Hague. This method of distribution of the daily Dutchbat reports, ensured that the responsible military commanders were well informed about the Dutchbat situation. The evaluations they made did not only depend on the information flow from Srebrenica. Thanks to the placement of senior Dutch officers in key positions with the UNPROFOR staffs in Zagreb, Kiseljak and Tuzla, it was possible to interpret and analyse in the broader context of the peace operation in the former Yugoslavia. However, this sketch of the information flows mainly presents the official regulations. Whether all the parties who received the reports actually read them and whether they regarded the content of the reports as a reason to take action is another matter.

The discussion of the Dutchbat Standing Order creates the picture of a large amount of rules and regulations for taking action as part of a peace mission in the Safe Area. In addition to the division of tasks between the battalion and the companies the Standing Order also makes it clear that, for the execution of the operational task, the key departments were the Operations section together with the Military Security and Intelligence section. This is not to dismiss the essential function of the logistics section. It is striking, however, that the important liaison section is left out of the picture in the instruction. Nevertheless, this admittedly small section of a few officers and non-commissioned officers was of great importance to the operational performance of Dutchbat, because the liaison section

⁴⁷⁷ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 5 subject 4.3.

⁴⁷⁸ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 5 subject 4.3.

maintained the contacts with the civilian and military authorities in and beyond the enclave. They worked in close cooperation with the UNMO team. The liaison task was assigned by the battalion commander to officers from the battalion staff. The task and the performance of this section will be discussed in greater detail later in Chapter 8.

The Standing Order was, as has already been stated, a manual with regulations, rules and procedures that were meant to ensure a uniform approach to day-to-day activities. It was applied within a hierarchical organization model. Of course, the commander was responsible for the overall course of affairs: the battalion commander for Dutchbat as a whole; the company commander for his own unit. Certainly the Support Command in Lukavac, but also the company in Simin Han, operated as more or less independent units. Along with the commander as official leader, the Operations Room (Ops Room in the day-to-day jargon) had central significance for a smooth course of events. This was the nerve centre where all lines of communication of the companies, convoys and Support Command came together and from which the battalion communicated with the outside world. Grouped around the Ops Room were the work areas of the key officers (battalion commander, head of the Operations section and head of the Intelligence & Security section), so that the required decisions could be taken quickly.

The Ops Room could be reached at all times. The running of the Ops Room was entrusted to the Duty Officer, a captain of one of sections of the battalion staff. He was supported by a non-commissioned officer and a private or corporal. The Ops Room received reports of wounded personnel, hostage-takings and accidents, the shelling of observation posts or patrols, the discovery of weapons or the obstruction of convoys. There were fixed procedures for dealing with these reports. Communication was via HF radio connections, telephone, fax and a satellite link. To this end, a signals platoon was stationed in the Ops Room, a communication centre called Comcen. A very small part of the signals traffic was secure. The protected connections were accommodated in a closed-off area, the crypto-room. This was only accessible to the communication centre personnel on duty, and to officers and cadre personnel authorized to read classified documents.⁴⁷⁹

Every infantry company had its own Ops Room on a more modest scale, but with a Duty Officer and Comcen in any case. Each company commander determined for himself who could serve as Duty Officer. For the B Company of Dutchbat I, for example, this was the commander, his deputy and the company's sergeant-major. For the C Company of Dutchbat III, the post was filled by the deputy company commander, the platoon leaders and the Forward Air Control officer.⁴⁸⁰ In principle, all data collected had to be noted in logbooks. All relevant information from the patrols was recorded in patrol diaries, so that it was possible to read them for analysis and the preparation of new patrols.⁴⁸¹ The Duty Officer, at the end of his 24-hour shift, gave a briefing to the platoon leaders, their deputies, the administrator, the company doctor (the head of the medical aid station), a representative of the engineer's detachment, the communication centre, the heads of the supply group and the maintenance group. The briefing consisted of an overview and analysis of the events of the last 24 hours and an overview of the work of the coming 24 hours.⁴⁸²

After outlining the organization of Dutchbat, it is necessary to present a more or less comparable outline of the organization of the two warring factions in the enclave. These were the parties that Dutchbat mainly had to deal with in the execution of its task. This went beyond monitoring the observance of the agreements made on a ceasefire and demilitarization and the maintenance of the Safe Area. The daily activities of the two parties in the enclave and its immediate vicinity were also of importance. From the outline, it will emerge that Dutchbat information was incomplete. The two parties had a vested interest in keeping certain information secret from Dutchbat.

⁴⁷⁹ SMG/Debrief. Dossier Standing Orders Dutchbat, chapter 1 subject 1/03; chapter 2 subjects 2/12, 2/13 and 2/15; chapter 5 subject 4.1 and 4.2.

⁴⁸⁰ Jellema, *First-In*, p. 187. Interview R. Rutten, 25/09/01.

⁴⁸¹ Dijkema, *Dutchman in Vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), p. 132.

⁴⁸² For the course of affairs on company level see Jellema, *First-In*, 187.

6. The ABiH in Srebrenica

Before the arrival of UNPROFOR and the Canadian battalion in March/April 1993 there was no orderly organization of the Muslim units in Srebrenica. At the start of the war, several small and improvised Muslim paramilitary groups were created within the enclave. Some of these groups consisted of residents of the municipality of Srebrenica, while others were made up of Muslims who had fled to Srebrenica. In the town of Srebrenica the most important group organized itself around the old Turkish Fort (Stari Grad) under the leadership of Hakija Meholic and Akif Ustic. In Potocari a second group was created around Naser Oric. Smaller fighting groups sprang up in villages such as Suceska (with Ramiz Becirovic as Commander), Bajramovici (with Hamdija Fejzic in charge) and Kragljivode (led by Nedzad Bektic and Sefik Mandzic). Within the county of Bratunac there was a comparable process of 'militia'-forming on a local basis. In Konjevic Polje, Velid Sabic formed a crisis committee with an armed paramilitary group.⁴⁸³ As described in Chapter 2, through the efforts of these groups a united Muslim area, with Srebrenica as centre, was created in the spring and summer of 1992. The militias of Srebrenica, Potocari and Suceska began to work together under the leadership of Naser Oric and his Deputy Commander Akif Ustic. They set up headquarters in the post office in Srebrenica.

As an increasingly larger area came under Muslim control the number of militias grew. In August 1992 these groups came into contact for the first time with the regular Bosnian army, the ABiH: a well-armed company wearing the ABiH uniform was drawn to Srebrenica through the VRS lines. This company was part of a Muslim brigade formed by Nurif Rizvanovic – the leader of a paramilitary group in Bratunac who fled to Tuzla – and made up of displaced persons from Bratunac. For the time being, there was no fixed military organization structure serving as umbrella. In mid-October 1992 three brigades existed: one in Potocari, one in Suceska and one in Kragljivode. Additional battalions were active in Osmace, Biljeg, Skenderovici, Luka and Srebrenica. In November 1992 the Muslim units of Srebrenica, Konjevic Polje and Cerska were brought under a single command. Naser Oric, the Commander of the units in Srebrenica, became Commander-in-chief of the new formation. From February 1993 Ramiz Becirovic acted as chief of staff. Meanwhile, the strength of the Muslim militias in the area around Srebrenica was roughly estimated at almost 15,000 men.⁴⁸⁴

Naser Oric became the undisputed Commander of the ABiH in Srebrenica. When the war broke out in Bosnia he was 25 years old. His family had lived in Srebrenica/Potocari since time immemorial. The flamboyant teenager Oric, who spent a great deal of time practising karate and lifting weights, left for Belgrade in 1988 after leaving secondary school and completing his national service. He took a training course as a police officer and became part of a special police troop force in Kosovo. He went on to become one of the bodyguards who were with the Serb president Milosevic as he made his notorious speech in June 1989 commemorating the Battle of Kosovo Polje. In July 1991, when the war broke out, Oric was working as a police officer in Sarajevo. Several weeks later the Bosnian authorities transferred him to Srebrenica with secret orders to organize a local Muslim militia.

At the start, Oric found few supporters and his small group of supporters could hardly be called impressive: they only had hunting rifles and automatic rifles from the police armoury in Srebrenica. Oric began to train his men as guerrillas in laying ambushes, knocking out tanks using Molotov cocktails and in hand-to-hand combat culminating in killing the opponent with a knife. In April, when the conflict also spread to Srebrenica Oric became the hero of the town within a matter of days, as he and his group of Muslim fighters succeeded in driving the Serbs from Srebrenica (April 1992). Along with these feats, his biography also reports a range of violent action against people and even involvement in murders. This was no hindrance to his performance as Commander of the Muslim fighting groups in Srebrenica, nor did it interfere with his involvement in the black market in the enclave.

⁴⁸³ Duyzings, *History, Memory and Politics in Eastern Bosnia*, Chapter 6.

⁴⁸⁴ Duyzings, *History, Memory and Politics in Eastern Bosnia*, Chapter 6.

Oric succeeded in enlarging the size of the enclave using guerrilla tactics. Just as important for his reputation was that he personally led his guerrillas in raids on Serb villages without sparing his earlier Serb friends. Oric was more than a local warlord. He operated in consultation with the high command of the ABiH, and thereby let military-strategic interests take priority above humanitarian concerns. For example, as described in Chapter 3, he resisted the planned large-scale evacuation of displaced persons in April/May 1993, because this would mean that a part of the Muslim area would have to be abandoned. Oric was the man who ran the show in Srebrenica, who was involved in the black market in the enclave and who had acquired a very violent reputation. The civilian authorities could not take a step without his approval.

Oric was an impressive phenomenon: well-muscled, powerful frame, bearded, he was generally seen with several bandoleers of ammunition crossed over his chest, and most often in the company of several bodyguards. Later on, he would often wear camouflage battledress, an armband on the right sleeve saying 'SREBRENICA 1' and another on the left sleeve saying 'AIRBORNE' and 'SPECIAL FORCES'. He kept up his sporting activities and was regularly seen in the enclave running with a large group or in unarmed hand-to-hand combat. Among outsiders, he often created the impression of having seen too many Rambo films.

The Bosnian Serbs saw him as the key figure in the attacks on Serb villages, responsible for massacres and mutilation of victims in the first year of the Bosnian war.⁴⁸⁵ Due to his role in the period 1992-1993, the population of the enclave, indigenous and displaced persons alike, saw him as the liberator and saviour of Srebrenica. At that time, people increasingly mythologized the person and role of Oric, which strengthened his political power base. He held to his promise to the displaced persons that everyone would be able to return to their places of birth. This made it impossible for him to make concessions to the VRS. For him, peace was not a subject for negotiation. In his perception, peace was only possible 'if the Bosnian Serbs [would] unconditionally meet the demands of the Muslims.'⁴⁸⁶

The demilitarization agreements of April and May 1993 brought an official end to the existence of Muslim units in the enclave Srebrenica. Armed men disappeared from the streets and in reports of the Canadian battalion and Dutchbat the correct official designation was the 'former Muslim warring faction' and its Commander Naser Oric. But, in point of fact, the military organization continued to exist; until April 1994, its headquarters was even located above the headquarters of the Canadian battalion, on the first floor of the post office. In May 1994, the Muslim guerrillas reorganized. The brigades in the enclave Srebrenica were attached as 8th Operational Group to the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla. Oric set up new headquarters in the former hunting lodge near the Turkish Fort. According to Dutchbat, the lodge was well-equipped, with workspaces for Oric and the members of his staff: the chief of staff Ramiz Becirovic, the head of operations Smajo Mandzic (25 years old), the security officer Nedžad Bektić (25 years old), the Intelligence officer – and childhood friend of Oric – Ekrim Salihović (23 years old) and the head of legal affairs Amir Salihović (31 years old). Oric formed four light brigades within the enclave, each with its own terrain and commander (with the rank of major), and all operating with a large degree of independence. The strength of these units varied between 500 and 1500 men. According to 1993 UNPROFOR estimates, the total strength of the ABiH in Srebrenica amounted to between 3000 and 4000 men; the assessment of Dutchbat I put the figure at between 2000 and 3000. Even with this reorganization, there was still no complete operational unit within the

⁴⁸⁵ Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, pp. 150-151 and 245. Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 77-81. Roth, *Endgame*, pp. 7-8 and 107-108; MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: Chapter 1 section D (6) (A). UNGE UNPROFOR Box 115, file: SNE CVAO. Fax out Jan-Jul 95: fax CAO Bezrouvchenko (Tuzla) to Luc Duchensne (CA BH Command), 20/03/94.

⁴⁸⁶ Sie LL. Info for Sie 5: lecture for LSO personnel 13 Infbat (lumbl) [probably by Major A. Derksen], 09/01/95, 14-15.CRST. Fax of HE Sector NE Maj. Dagelet to G1 Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 31/10/94, Appendix: Civil Affairs, Sector NE, Srebrenica Trip Report 21-24 September, 1994 [Ken Biser], undated, p. 2.

ABiH in the enclave. There were differences in strength per brigade and the loyalty to the person of the commander remained a vital binding factor.⁴⁸⁷

The northern half of the enclave was entrusted to the 280th Brigade; the area took in the observation posts OP-M in the north-west to OP-R in the east. Major Ibrahim Mandzic commanded the brigade, but the day-to-day leadership of the command post in Potocari was in the hands of Nasir Sabanovic. The Commander in the northern part, between Bukova Glava in the west and Budak in the east, was the 23-year-old Captain Zehrudin Osmic, known as ‘Zeke’. In the eyes of the staff of Dutchbat, Osmic was a reliable man with a lot of authority, in the sense that agreements could be made with him. The eastern part of the area of the 280th Brigade, in the neighbourhood of observation posts OP-Quebec and OP-Romeo, was run by Deputy Commander Jusuf Besic.

The south-western part of the enclave was the area of operation of the 281st Brigade of Zulfo Tursunovic. He was responsible for the area between Slatina in the west to Kutuzero/Bucje in the south. For contacts with the more southerly Muslim enclave of Zepa this area was of vital importance. Tursunovic was the only brigade Commander (his age was estimated at between 50 and 60 years). According to some descriptions, he was ‘harsh man’ with ‘black eyebrows’ who used ‘strong language’ with his people.⁴⁸⁸ He had been condemned for a double murder. He came from the area, and he therefore considered the area of operation of the 281st Brigade as his private domain and most often went his own way. His relationship with Naser Oric was tense and he maintained few contacts with UNPROFOR. Tursunovic’s Deputy, Avdo Husejnovic, and the eight local commanders, were also from the area, but of a younger generation. The majority had worked in Serbia and returned to their birthplaces shortly before the start of the war.⁴⁸⁹

The 1000-man 282nd Brigade was responsible for the south-eastern sector, where the town of Srebrenica was located. Since most villages in this area had been burned to the ground and abandoned, this brigade had no subcommanders. Leadership was in the hands of the 25-year-old Brigade Commander Ibro Dusic, who had achieved success as a Battalion Commander in 1992-1993 and wore a green beret. He was known as a brave fighter who avoided unnecessary risks. His Deputy was the 40-year-old Suljo Suljic, who lived in Pusuljici, a village south-west of Srebrenica that had been flattened during the war, but was rebuilt in mid-1994. In general, the 282nd Brigade made no active impression. This was partly the result of the actual demilitarization of the town of Srebrenica, but perhaps also because all kinds of activities in this area of operation were not attributed to the Dusic Brigade, but to smugglers and disorderly elements.⁴⁹⁰

The 283rd Brigade was the fourth brigade of the 28th Division in the enclave. It operated in the mountainous area south of the town of Srebrenica between Zalazje and the Cicevac River. The formation was a combination of units from Skenderovici, Biljeg and Voljavica with the fighting group of Hakija Meholic around Stari Grad in the town of Srebrenica.⁴⁹¹ This brigade was led by Huso Salihovic, from Bratunac, who had been involved in the fighting in this region since the beginning of the war.⁴⁹² The 284th Brigade, also called the Mountain Brigade, was the fifth and last component of the

⁴⁸⁷ MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: chapter 1; Sie LL. Info for Sie 5: lecture for LSO personnel 13 Infbat (lumbl) [probably by Major A. Derksen], 09/01/95; D. Jellema, *First-In*, p. 152.

⁴⁸⁸ MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: appendix BiH commanders within the enclave Srebrenica and chapter 7; Sie LL. Info for Sie 5: lecture for LSO personnel 13 Infbat (lumbl) [probably by Major A. Derksen], 09/01/95. NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. No.69/94, 07/03/94 ‘The Commando of the 8th Operative Group ‘Srebrenica’. NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Koreman, Experiences with Dutchbat, p.18/7.

⁴⁸⁹ MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: appendix BiH commanders within the enclave Srebrenica.

⁴⁹⁰ MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: appendix BiH commanders within the enclave Srebrenica. Sie LL. Info for Sie 5: lecture for LSO personnel 13 Infbat (lumbl) [probably by Major A. Derksen], 09/01/95. Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, p. 291.

⁴⁹¹ MID, CD-ROM: No.69/94, ‘The Commando of the 8th Operative Group ‘Srebrenica’, 07/03/94.

⁴⁹² MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: appendix BiH within the enclave Srebrenica. Rhode, *Endgame*, p. 75.

28th ABiH Division in Srebrenica. This reserve unit, unlike the other brigades, consisted entirely of units from outside the Opstina Srebrenica: the 114th East Bosnian Brigade from Bratunac, the 1st Ceranski Detachment and the 6th Detachment Kamenica. These units had linked up with the sub-region Srebrenica in November 1992.⁴⁹³



The 8th Operational Group of the ABiH in Srebrenica was no regular military unit. It was a mixture of volunteers, former conscripts and reservists plus a handful of professional personnel from the Yugoslavian National Army who wanted to participate in the defence of the enclave against the VRS. Aside from training, reconnaissance, building trenches and fortifications, the main activities mainly consisted of nightly actions against VRS positions outside the enclave behind the ceasefire line and keeping a watchful eye on UNPROFOR activities. From 1994 the quality of the units improved thanks to better organization, more intensive training and particularly due to better weapons and equipment. The equipment was supplied from central Bosnia, where the ABiH could command growing stocks of weapons despite the arms embargo.

Despite all this, the ABiH in Srebrenica retained its own character, which went together in part with the unclear position of the Bosnian Government army: officially the brigades no longer existed, but their presence was unmistakable. After the failure of demilitarization in May/June 1993 UNPROFOR did not overly concern itself with the brigades: it seized any weapons it discovered but did not actively search for them; UNPROFOR, because of its unclear mandate, allowed training without weapons and other military exercises. Setting up positions within the enclave was permitted to a limited degree. The ABiH in Srebrenica tried to keep out of the sight of UNPROFOR. For its part, UNPROFOR tried to use contacts with the local commanders to acquire as much information as possible about internal relations and intentions. At central level, there was regular contact between UNPROFOR and Oric or his chief of staff Ramiz Becirovic.⁴⁹⁴ The results of this contact, either at low level or higher level, were meagre. For, while profiting from the extensive reporting about the actions and the presumed intentions of the VRS, the ABiH maintained utmost silence about its own activities in and around the enclave.

⁴⁹³ MID, CD-ROM: No.69/94, "The Commando of the 8th Operative Group "Srebrenica", 07/03/94.

⁴⁹⁴ MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3. The frequency of these contacts is evident from situation reports of Canadian battalion and Dutchbat.

7. The VRS around Srebrenica

The Bosnian-Serb military organization around Srebrenica came into being later than that of the ABiH. Initially, it was poorly organized at central level and a great shortage of manpower prevailed as the result of desertion on a large scale. The actions against the Muslims in Eastern Bosnia were mainly carried out by paramilitary groups and local units under the command of local crisis committees. Compared with the fighting forces of the Muslims and the Bosnian Croats, *Vojska Republike Srpske* (VRS), elsewhere referred to as the BSA (Bosnian Serb Army), commanded the best professional officers and the best equipment, but it had a permanent shortage of infantrymen. The VRS consisted of seven regional corps. The area around Srebrenica came under the Drina Corps. This unit, under the command of General Zivanovic, had its headquarters in Vlasenica. In early 1993 better organization and coordination came about through the integration of the paramilitary units and special troops into the regular fighting forces under a centralized VRS command.⁴⁹⁵

In the area around Srebrenica this integration had already got off the ground in the autumn of 1992. It was coupled with the large shortage of well-trained officers among the paramilitary defenders of Bratunac. VRS units were sent there because of the increasing threat to the town by Muslim troops. The result was the founding of the Bratunac Brigade, on 15 November 1992, as a component of the Drina Corps.⁴⁹⁶ Shortly thereafter the Skelani Brigade and the Milici Brigade came into being. These three brigades, reinforced by other units of the Drina Corps, and with generous equipment support from Serbia, mounted an attack on Srebrenica in March and April 1993. After the demilitarization of May 1993 the regular troops of the three brigades were replaced by less seasoned units which consisted mainly of conscripted older Serb men from the region and of displaced persons from Serb areas elsewhere in Bosnia that had fallen into the hands of Muslims and Croats.⁴⁹⁷

The Bratunac Brigade consisted of four battalions under the command of well-trained and skilled officers. Two battalions were charged with guarding the north side of the enclave Srebrenica. The two other battalions could be used for other tasks. Presumably the Brigade also had a commando unit led by Mungos Prodanovic and a unit of border police for controlling the convoys of UNPROFOR and the UNHCR. The Commander of the Bratunac Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel Slavko Ognjevic, put the enclave Srebrenica in the hands of his Chief of Staff and Security Officer, the 43-year-Major Momir Nikolic. Before the war broke out, Nikolic had been a teacher in Bratunac; he had fought in Sarajevo. Dutchbat considered Nikolic, on the basis of its contacts, to be reliable and to the point. For Dutchbat he was important because he was also responsible for the Dutchbat convoy checkpoint for the northern entrance to the enclave at Yellow Bridge.⁴⁹⁸

The Milici Brigade was responsible for the area south-west of the enclave. The soldiers came from the Vlasenica and Milici. Dutchbat knew little about the organization of this brigade. It had two battalions – consisting of displaced persons and badly uniformed old farmers – on the south-western border of the enclave, but Dutchbat had only vague indications about the existence of other battalions, with young, well-clothed and well-trained soldiers. Brigade Commander Colonel Vicic had delegated responsibility for his sector of the enclave border to his chief of staff, the almost 40-year-old Major Sarkic. Sarkic wanted to build good relations with UNPROFOR, did not like idle chatter and was a hardliner where the Muslims were concerned. Captain Durhan Kovgovic was probably Commander of the first battalion, which was responsible for the area between observation post OP-ALPHA in the west and Cizmici, the northernmost point of the enclave. Captain Boskovic and his battalion were used in the area from observation post OP-Alfa to the south up to Mt. Hrustine (between OP-C and OP-D).

⁴⁹⁵ Duijzings, *History, Memory and Politics in Eastern Bosnia*, Chapter 6; Bassiouni, *Final Report*, annex III; MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: chapter 1 E.

⁴⁹⁶ Duijzings, *Memory and Politics in Eastern Bosnia*, Chapter 6.

⁴⁹⁷ MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: Chapter 1 E.

⁴⁹⁸ MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: chapter 1 E; Sie LL. Info for. Sie 5: lecture for. ISO personnel 13 Infbat (lumb) [probably by Major A. Derksen], 09/01/95.

The Skelani Brigade apparently consisted completely of displaced persons and men mobilized from Skelani. Because of the manpower shortage, the brigade obtained support from the border police in order to be able to man the positions. Probably because the Skelani Brigade had no other task, its Commander, Colonel Vukota Vukovic, was appointed as liaison officer between UNPROFOR and the VRS around Srebrenica. Because of his rank, Vukovic preferred to do business with the Dutchbat Commander, but in practice he did business with the head of the Dutchbat liaison team. His authority was limited. In important matters he could only negotiate on instructions from General Zivanovic or VRS headquarters in Pale. Vukovic (53 years old) had been an officer since he was 18. Before the start of the war he taught sociology and political science at the military academy in Sarajevo. After the fighting around Srebrenica in 1993, he became Commander of the Skelani Brigade, in what rumours called a punitive transfer on account of misconduct. Colonel Vukovic was anything but a soldierly type: he was well-spoken and showed great interest in cultural anthropology. He spoke readily and with verve about the living standards of peoples ranging from Eskimos to New Zealanders, as Dutchbat officers found out in their first meeting with Vukovic. The colonel sometimes showed himself to be spontaneous and cooperative on local matters.⁴⁹⁹

8. The Dutchbat information picture

It would be incorrect to assume that Dutchbat, from the start of its mission, had a clear picture of the warring factions in its area of operation and of the other factors that could influence operational performance. Dutchbat was only able to build up that picture gradually but, looking back, it was never sufficient at any time during the mission in Srebrenica. Immediately upon the deployment of Dutchbat I, Battalion Commander Vermeulen complained to the Army Crisis Staff and Sector North East about the lack of a three-dimensional information picture, because of which his view of the surroundings was 'very restricted'. The main problems this created were the impossibility of correctly anticipating the developments that were generated outside the enclave and, along with that, the lack of possibilities to verify information from the warring factions.

The information picture thus consisted mainly of information that was delivered in the enclave. The main sources were the military and civilian authorities, and the population. Dutchbat was also able to use local information that was delivered via the departments of international aid organizations in the enclave. Furthermore, information was gleaned from talks with the VRS. The common feature of information from these sources is that it was biased and, even worse, that it could not be checked. The UNMO team recognized this and qualified its information, if necessary, by saying whether it was information verified by the team or information received from third parties. Hardly any information flows from higher echelons such as Sector North East or Bosnia-Herzegovina Command were available, through lack of technical means, or were not delivered by Sector North East and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command because their information position was also unsatisfactory. Dutchbat did receive the daily situation reports of the two higher levels of command, but because UNPROFOR had to do without technical resources such as signals information, radar, aerial reconnaissance and unmanned reconnaissance aircraft, Dutchbat had no access to more information.⁵⁰⁰ Furthermore, Dutchbat worked with Yugoslavian maps that were ten years old. This made discussions about incidents or the determination of the ceasefire line difficult. After a visit to the enclave of the chief of staff of the Army Crisis Staff the maps were translated according to Dutch standards.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica/Lukavac/Tuzla Milinfo Sie 2/3: chapter 1 E. Ibidem: report on talks 12/02/94. Sie LL. Info for Sie 5:: lecture for. LSO personnel 13 Infbat (lumb) probably by Major A. Derksen], 09/01/95.

⁵⁰⁰ CRST. no. CRST/374, Brantz to BLS et al., 06/06/94, appendix: Report on trip to Bosna Hercegovina, p.2.

⁵⁰¹ CRST. no. CRST/374, Brantz to BLS et al., 06/06/94, appendix: Report on trip to Bosnia Hercegovina, p.3. This did not contribute to improvement of the communication between Dutchbat and the higher levels of command within Unprofor. They worked with maps that were made by Unprofor in Zagreb. There was a small difference between the Dutch maps and

Vermeulen did not receive much understanding for his problems from the Commanding Officer in The Hague. He withheld his approval of the proposal of the chief of staff of the Army Crisis Staff, Brantz, to clear away the shortcomings in the Dutchbat information picture with the aid of additional information from the Netherlands and to draw up a plan of action to this end. Couzy contended that it would be sufficient if the head of the Military Intelligence Service lived up to his promises to Dutchbat.⁵⁰² Couzy's decision stemmed from his conviction that Intelligence played no role in a peace operation. Couzy was not alone in this view. In the preparations for the Dutchbat mission, the subject of Intelligence never came up, nor did it come up during the various reconnaissance missions of Dutchbat I. Within the Netherlands Army, the responsible officials evidently assumed that the peace mission in the former Yugoslavia was a classical peace operation and that it did not require any Intelligence.

This point of view remains hard to understand, a point that will be returned to in detail in the Intelligence Appendix to this report. In a 'traditional' collective defence operation the emphasis lies on the study of the (measurable) military capabilities of the opponent (what can he undertake and where?). In peacekeeping operations and asymmetrical warfare, knowledge of the capabilities of the parties is subordinated to insight into their intentions (what do they want?) and their motives (why?) but, it should be said, without losing sight of capabilities. The intentions and motives can even be perceived as irrational in some cases.⁵⁰³ In peacekeeping operations Human Intelligence is of particularly great importance and valuable information can come from both the local population and military leaders and politicians. Refugees who have fled from a Safe Area can also often contribute important information via systematic debriefings. This also applies to staff of the NGOs that are active in certain areas. The military Intelligence requirements for a peacekeeping operation, however, will be more closely related to the circumstances surrounding a Low Intensity Conflict than to a conventional war. The threat in a peacekeeping operation (or in asymmetrical warfare) is generally more diffuse and more difficult to identify. Regular fighting forces play a subordinate role, while paramilitary 'volunteers', controlled or uncontrolled, have the initiative, as do other conflicting elements hard to distinguish, such as criminal groups.⁵⁰⁴

Intelligence about, for example, the general situation of the local population is at least as important in a Low Intensity Conflict as knowledge of the exact number of tanks in a region. Intelligence should also be collected about the ethnic, linguistic, social, economic and religious situation on the spot, in order to avoid cultural blunders and to find out, for example, whether a black market is in operation and who is running it. In such a conflict peacekeepers also have to keep in mind possible confrontations with 'barely controllable ethnic and criminal groups warring over a large area', as was the case in Bosnia. Once again, such a situation has consequences for the collection of Intelligence.⁵⁰⁵ It was also important that, in Bosnia, there was continuous asymmetrical warfare in which a party 'tries to focus one side's comparative advantages against its enemy's relative weaknesses'. UNPROFOR was always confronted with asymmetrical threats. This meant that a warring party was incapable 'either due to his own inabilities or the strength of the force opposed to him, of confronting an opponent in a conventional manner, using similar means or weapons to his opponent'.⁵⁰⁶ For example, the obstruction of convoys by the warring factions was an effective weapon for diminishing the fighting strength of UNPROFOR units.

the Unprofor maps. Because of this difference the helicopter of FC de Lapresle, on his visit to Srebrenica on 2 February, could only touch down on the ground in the compound on its third attempt. SMG, 1004. TA9A to TX8, 21/02/95.

⁵⁰² CRST. no.CRST/497, 22/06/94.

⁵⁰³ R. Theunens, 'Intelligence en vredesoperaties' ('Intelligence and peacekeeping operations'), in: *Militaire Spectator*, 170(2001)11, p. 601.

⁵⁰⁴ R. Theunens, 'Intelligence en vredesoperaties', in: *Militaire Spectator*, 170(2001)11, p. 599.

⁵⁰⁵ Pär Eriksson, 'Intelligence and Peacekeeping Operations', in: *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 10 (1997)1, p. 7.

⁵⁰⁶ Kevin O'Brien and Joseph Nusbaum, 'Intelligence gathering for asymmetric Threats, Part I and II', in: *Janes Intelligence Review*, October and November 2000.

Although there were signals that the reality in the UNPROFOR area of operation was different than was assumed on the basis of the existing view of peace operations, it is still somewhat understandable – from this viewpoint – that Dutchbat left for Bosnia without an Intelligence capability. More difficult to explain is why no attempts were made to do something about the shortcomings determined in June 1994. A check of other battalions from NATO countries active in Bosnia would have shown that the Scandinavian, Canadian and British battalions each commanded an Intelligence group of its own, and used it to analyse incoming information and make it usable for operational actions. This will also be dealt with in detail in the Intelligence Appendix to this report.

The June 1994 decision by Couzy not to let Dutchbat have its own Intelligence unit had far-reaching consequences. The decision blocked the making of an inventory of Dutchbat's intelligence needs. A direct link between Dutchbat and the Military Intelligence Service/Netherlands Army (MID/KL) for the exchange of information was expressly prohibited. Dutchbat received no information from the Netherlands about the situation in the former Yugoslavia, continued to be deprived of an Intelligence gathering unit on the scene and was thus not able to optimally process and analyse the available information. With that, it must be said that the Dutchbat leadership continued to complain about the shortage of information. However, they made no attempt to designate personnel to cope with this shortage, nor to train them for the task. Neither did they press for extra personnel to be made available for this purpose.

In principle Dutchbat needed general information about developments throughout Bosnia in order to obtain a good picture of the larger political and military context. This would enable Dutchbat to interpret developments in the enclave. Intensification of the activities of the warring factions in the enclave, for example, could be connected with the flare-up of fighting between ABiH and VRS in central Bosnia in the vicinity of Brcko. Knowledge of events in the immediate vicinity of the enclave was more urgently needed, for example in an adjoining radius of 5 to 10 kilometres.⁵⁰⁷ Sector North East and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command did not supply this information and the sporadic patrols outside the enclave of the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon, as carried out during Dutchbat I and II, could only fill this information need in a fragmentary way. The UNMOs could scarcely fill the gap either. Their freedom of movement was also restricted and they had just as little access to the Bosnian-Serb area. To what extent Bosnia-Herzegovina Command asked NATO to use training flights above Bosnia for aerial reconnaissance is not clear. The same is true of the deployment of other resources for aerial reconnaissance.⁵⁰⁸ In any case, Sector North East Commander Haukland received no NATO Intelligence from UNPROFOR. Sector North East, in its own words, was 'blindfolded in the dark'.⁵⁰⁹ In April 1995, for example, Haukland submitted five requests to NATO for aerial photos. NATO, however, refused to comply.⁵¹⁰

But it would be going too far to conclude that Dutchbat was completely blind in the area of Intelligence. Dutchbat I, through its frequent contacts with the warring factions and the displaced persons in the enclave, did have access to a great deal of information, which was also analysed. Vermeulen, in most cases, added a so-called Commander's Assessment to the situation reports, presenting his own evaluation of developments within the enclave, plus possible connections with external events and his short-term expectations. This was done to a lesser extent during Dutchbat II, due to such factors as the deteriorating relationship with the ABiH, and to an even lesser extent under Dutchbat III. For security reasons, Everts and Karremans prohibited contacts between the local population and Dutchbat soldiers. Not everyone consistently observed this prohibition; at OP-A, OP-M and OP-E there was regular contact with the local population.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁷ Interview E. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

⁵⁰⁸ Interview E. Wieffer, 18/06/99. Wiebes, *Intelligence*, Chapter 2.

⁵⁰⁹ Interview H. Haukland, 03/05/99.

⁵¹⁰ NIOD, Letter Minister J. Pronk to NIOD, 29/05/01.

⁵¹¹ *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 108 and 156.

Nevertheless, through the sharp drop in contact with ABiH and the VRS, an important source of information was lost. Karremans in fact followed the Couzy line and restricted his possibilities to gathering information about the immediate vicinity of the enclave by explicitly prohibiting patrols outside it to the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon and a group of British Joint Commission Observers (JCOs), from Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Nor did he try to obtain British Intelligence from Bosnia-Herzegovina Command via the JCOs. But there was cooperation in this area between Dutchbat and the UNMOs. In some cases they scouted VRS positions with a group from the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon.⁵¹² All in all, the information picture continued to be limited. Hardly any information about military developments in the area was available. This fostered the feeling of isolation in Dutchbat.⁵¹³

9. Demilitarization and the Ceasefire Line

In March 1994 there was still little evidence of that feeling of isolation. Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen and his battalion had departed enthusiastically for their area of deployment on the assumption that a useful task awaited them. It was clear that a gap existed between the official status of Srebrenica (and Zepa) as demilitarized Safe Areas and the real situation, in which there was no demilitarization and the safety of the area and its residents was anything but certain. There was no recognized ceasefire line and, on the border of the enclave, the fighting between the warring factions did not appear to have ended. The situation that Dutchbat encountered in the enclave Srebrenica is discussed below.

On 8 May 1993 agreements were made at national level on a ceasefire, demilitarization via the handing in of weapons by the ABiH and a subsequent withdrawal of the VRS to behind the ceasefire line. As stated in Chapter 3 of this part, very little of this actually occurred. There was great difference between the various interpretations of virtually all elements in the agreements, particularly with regard to the question of exactly where the ceasefire line (CFL) ran and under what conditions the ABiH would hand in its weapons and the VRS would withdraw. To begin with, there was even a conflict about the question of the significance of the ceasefire line: the VRS honoured the point of view that it was a border. As they saw it, the Muslims should stay within this ceasefire line; as the surrounding area was Bosnian-Serb terrain. The ABiH, on the other hand, saw the surrounding area as VRS-occupied terrain where the fighting had not yet ended; in their eyes the ceasefire line was not a border but only a line selected by UNPROFOR along which the fighting with the VRS had been halted for the time being.

Furthermore, the ABiH would continue to maintain that the front line in April 1993 encompassed a larger area than the 'red line' that UNPROFOR held to as ceasefire line around the Safe Area. According to Naser Oric, who repeatedly broached this subject, ABiH terrain had been lost, because the Canadian battalion had set up its observation posts within the ABiH front line.⁵¹⁴ On this point, though, Oric was wrong. After the ceasefire of 18 April 1993 the Canadian battalion had indeed held to the ABiH front line as ceasefire line, but the VRS had withdrawn at two points.⁵¹⁵ Close to Zalazje, an observation post had been set up to keep the road from Potocari to Srebrenica out of view of the VRS. In that area, the observation post OP-R had been set up so as to command a view of the VRS area. A few months later, the VRS asked for relocation of this observation post, but the Canadian battalion refused. Additionally, the VRS line at Zeleni Jadar (at the road exit to Milici and the Ikea wood factory) had been drawn back for the establishment of observation post OP-E.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹² SMG, 1001. Situatierapport (Situation report) UNMO Srebrenica, 09/02/95.

⁵¹³ Interview R. Smith, 12/01/00 and 08/02/00; Interview Le Hardy, 08/10/97; Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, p. 420.

⁵¹⁴ MID/KL. Milinfo Srebrenica 26/10/94 sub: report of talks: 18/02/94 with Oric in post office building

⁵¹⁵ Interviews T. Geburt, 18/11/99 and P. Desjardins, 12/11/99.

⁵¹⁶ Interviews T. Geburt, 18/11/99, J. Champagne, 12/11/99, D. MacIssac, 16/11/199 and J. Zoutendijk, 06/04/01.

Thus, the terrain of the Safe Area had not been reduced but actually enlarged as a result of the placement of the observation posts. Oric contended the opposite and was, furthermore, firmly convinced that the VRS would use the replacement of the Canadian battalion by Dutchbat to even further reduce the Muslim area.

However, the presence of UNPROFOR and the UNMOs seemed to have a positive effect. The VRS offensive was halted, UNHCR convoys came to the enclave, and demilitarization was more or less observed in the town of Srebrenica. According to the reports of the Canadian battalion, the situation in the enclave itself was 'calm', albeit that on the ceasefire line the war seemed to go on: there were shooting incidents at least one hundred times per day with small-calibre weapons and machine guns, along with exchanges of mortar fire. This situation could only change if the ABiH were persuaded to disarm and the VRS persuaded to withdraw further. In January 1994, it looked as if progress could be made in the talks to this effect. Vukovic, via the Canadian Battalion Commander Bouchard, offered a pause in the shooting, after which withdrawal from the ceasefire line could follow – this in exchange for the collection of all ABiH weapons in the enclave by the Canadian battalion.

Vukovic called this proof that the Bosnian-Serb population around Srebrenica wanted an end to the war and desired peace.⁵¹⁷ The reactions in the enclave to this proposal, however, were ambivalent. People there attached hardly any credence to the promise of the VRS to withdraw after weapons were handed in. Furthermore, according to Vice-President Hamdija Fejzic, too many people were earning money from the war and thus had no interest in seeing it end. But several subcommanders of the ABiH appeared, in spite of everything, to favour the plan. Zulfo Tursunovic, for example, who had scarcely shown himself to the Canadian battalion until then, declared his accord with the plan and promised to use his influence among others to this effect. A decision, however, failed to materialize. Bouchard still cherished some hope, but resumption of hostilities remained a continuous threat.⁵¹⁸ Naser Oric, for example, was convinced that a halt to VRS shelling only meant a calm before the storm. He was certain that the VRS was preparing for an attack in the area between Srebrenica and Zepa.

The two Safe Areas were separated by an uninhabited no-man's land. According to Oric, this area – as the result of an agreement between chief of staff Hayes of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and the Commander of the Drina Corps, General Zivanovic – was demilitarized.⁵¹⁹ According to the authorities in Srebrenica there even existed a corridor between the two enclaves. Nothing of this could be found in writing, however. Since September 1993, the Canadian battalion had travelled from Srebrenica to Zepa a few times, but always after obtaining the express and specific permission of the VRS – which made the idea of an agreement on a corridor unlikely.⁵²⁰ Oric contended that the VRS would avail itself of a number of skirmishes to occupy this area, whereby he demanded that UNPROFOR should take action against such a violation of the agreements. The Canadian battalion had ruled this out, though, because the area fell outside the mandate.⁵²¹

Dutchbat inherited this unclear situation when it relieved the Canadian battalion. Even during the first talks between the authorities in the enclave and representatives of Dutchbat, the unsolved problems were aired: the lack of clarity about the ceasefire line, the demilitarization agreement violated by the ABiH and the related refusal of the VRS to withdraw. It appeared highly likely that the two parties would make use of the changing of the guard to have Dutchbat take responsibility for the no-man's land.

⁵¹⁷ DND. Situation reports Canadian battalion 28/01/94 and 31/01/94.

⁵¹⁸ DND. Situation reports Canadian battalion 02/02/94, 04/02/94, 05/02/94 and 08/02/94; MID/KL. Milinfo Srebrenica 26/10/94 sub: report on talks: 13/02/93 and 17/02/94.

⁵¹⁹ MID/KL. Milinfo Srebrenica 26/10/94 sub: report on talks: 21/02/94, 02/03/94 and [03/03/94].

⁵²⁰ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/03/94. Interview J. Champagne, 12/11/99.

⁵²¹ MID/KL. Milinfo Srebrenica 26/10/94 sub: report on talks: 21/02/94.

In the days surrounding the transfer of command on 3 March 1994 Dutchbat put an end to any speculation: UNPROFOR was only responsible for the area within the enclave Srebrenica.⁵²² But that was not all.

Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen was afraid that the ABiH would provoke an incident at the ceasefire line in order to force UNPROFOR to enlarge the enclave 'until the borders they would like to have'.⁵²³ Oric indeed seemed to be taking this road: there were incidents from the moment that Dutchbat arrived, from which the Dutch would have to conclude that the VRS was actively making itself master of the no-man's land. As evidence of the VRS intentions, the Muslim authorities reported four murders and the disappearance of one hundred civilians from this disputed area. The VRS denied any involvement in the incidents, but did admit that the area between the enclaves was unsafe for civilians. UnCivPol later made an investigation on the basis of a list, drawn up by the Muslim authorities, of four murdered civilians and 23 civilians who had disappeared, but little came of it: one could only establish that a small number of people had been killed.⁵²⁴ Oric demanded the withdrawal of the VRS to the old positions and threatened Dutchbat with spontaneous action by former residents of this area if this did not happen.⁵²⁵ At the Swedish Shelter Project, incidents also occurred. According to the Canadian battalion and Dutchbat these were Muslim provocations intended to increase unrest along the southern border of the enclave. The number of ceasefire violations grew.⁵²⁶

The question is whether the ABiH misrepresented matters here. This was not the case, in any event, with regard to the activities of the VRS between the two enclaves. Aerial reconnaissance of the area showed VRS troops south of Srebrenica moving in a southerly direction to Zepa. Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen interpreted this as reinforcement of the VRS position in that area aimed at hindering Dutchbat from creating a link between the two enclaves. The consequences of the VRS move had an immediate effect in Srebrenica: the prices of goods doubled within a few days.⁵²⁷

The ABiH did not stop with a demand for the withdrawal of the VRS. Mayor Fahrudin Salihovic, in letters to the Security Council, General Rose, President Izetbegovic, the Bosnian Government and Dutchbat, demanded the withdrawal of the VRS to the positions of May 1993 and demilitarization of the area between Zepa and Srebrenica. The granting of particularly this last demand would have changed the situation profoundly, because it would have led to merging the two enclaves and enlargement of the intervening area under Bosnian control. That could only have been achieved through renegotiation of the demilitarization agreement of 8 May 1993. Salihovic asked for a delegation of the Bosnian Government and army and representatives of the UN and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command to come to Srebrenica to discuss the situation. There was no response to the proposal.⁵²⁸

Calm returned to the enclave from 9 March. The cooperation between Dutchbat and the local authorities improved and the Close Air Support training flights, according to Dutchbat, raised the

⁵²² Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat 04/03/94. NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. No.01-1/21-151, R. Delic to Presidium BiH, 08/03/94. Delic proposed to mention combining the Safe Areas Zepa and Srebrenica to the UN

⁵²³ Defence, Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/03/94.

⁵²⁴ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/03/94, 16/03/94 and 20/03/94.

⁵²⁵ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/03/9 and 17/03/94; Situation report Dutchbat to Crisis Staff BLS, 07/03/94; UNGE UNPROFOR Box 434, file: UNMO Srebrenica situation reports. UNMO Srebrenica to UNMO HQ BH North East, 10/03/94. Special Report on Recent Events in the Srebrenica Area, 3-8 Mar 94.

⁵²⁶ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 434, file: UNMO Srebrenica situation reports. UNMO Srebrenica to UNMO HQ BH North East, 10/03/94. Special Report on Recent Events in the Srebrenica Area, 3-8 March 94. Thorsen, 'Swedish Rescue Services Agency Swedish Shelter Project in Srebrenica', p. 28.

⁵²⁷ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 434 file: UNMO Srebrenica Situation reports. UNMO Srebrenica to UNMO HQ BH North East, 10/03/94; Special Report on Recent Events in the Srebrenica Area 3-8 Mar 94. Defence, Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/03/94, 16/03/94 and 22/03/94.

⁵²⁸ Def. Situatierapporten Dutchbat 07/03/94 and 11/03/94. UNGE UNPROFOR, Box 119 file: Civil Affairs SNE Situation reports 1994. Fax Bezrouchenko to Andreev, 20/03/94: Report for week ending 21 March, 1994. Defence, Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/03/94 (appendix in letter of Salihovic to Security Council et al.)

credibility of UNPROFOR.⁵²⁹ The ABiH, however, did not simply rest content with trusting Dutchbat completely. According to Vermeulen, the ABiH would continue to use provocations against the VRS to try to force Dutchbat to intervene for the benefit of the ABiH. Dutchbat was so convinced of this that it flatly let the Muslim authorities know that they should not imagine that UNPROFOR would make this mistake and risk the loss of its impartiality as peacekeeping force.⁵³⁰

The VRS also tested the position of Dutchbat with regard to the warring factions. On 16 March 1994 the VRS liaison officer, Colonel Vukovic, asked for permission to use the road at Zeleni Jadar so that it would be easier to reach VRS troops in Jasenova and other towns in the corridor between Zepa and Srebrenica. The Commander of the Drina Corps, General Zivanovic, relayed this request the next day to Vermeulen. Part of the road lay within the UNPROFOR ceasefire line. According to Zivanovic, this was a consequence of the withdrawal of the VRS troops in April 1993 over a distance of 750 to 1500 metres to enable UNPROFOR to disarm the ABiH. In essence, this was a correct description of the course of events around OP-Echo, but there was no talk at all of withdrawal over the whole line around the enclave.

According to Zivanovic, there was no reason to let the situation continue any longer, because the disarmament of the enclave had failed. Nevertheless, he did not ask for a return to the old situation: the VRS would respect the UNPROFOR ceasefire line, even though it did not recognize it officially. The road would remain under UNPROFOR control, on condition that the VRS could use it for military purposes. Vermeulen, however, foresaw problems with the local authorities, who would certainly also put demands for the use of the road. Nevertheless, he promised to discuss this proposal with Bosnia-Herzegovina Command on 19 March in Kiseljak. However, that discussion never took place because the VRS refused to give him permission to use the road. Nevertheless, the Drina Corps commander showed himself to be prepared to do business. He gave the impression that he had only good intentions and also proposed organizing a meeting with the authorities in Srebrenica (albeit without Naser Oric), and making direct communication links between OPs and VRS positions. He also gave Dutchbat permission for reconnaissance of the locations for observation posts along and on the ceasefire line.⁵³¹

In the weeks thereafter, the VRS also tried to promote its own interests in a clever way by showing some obligingness to Dutchbat. The most important instrument for this was granting permission for reconnaissance patrols on the ceasefire line and on the VRS side, accompanied by the VRS sector commanders. Along with pointing out suitable sites for observation posts, the VRS also used this reconnaissance to point out ABiH positions outside the enclave. Vermeulen realized that he would be powerless if the VRS compelled use of the road by force, but the situation seemed to be less forbidding. The ABiH agreed in principle to a meeting with the VRS, but no date was set.⁵³²

In late March, the crisis atmosphere of a few weeks earlier appeared to have subsided somewhat because both the ABiH and VRS were prepared, at least in principle, to discuss the problems surrounding the enclave under Dutchbat supervision. Apparently Dutchbat had stood the test in the eyes of both parties by both holding to its own order within the UNPROFOR mandate and listening at the same time to the wishes and suggestions for improvement of the situation. Of course, the respective interests of the two warring factions played the leading role and the two parties evidently thought they could achieve their goals with the help of Dutchbat. The central problems were tabled and it appeared possible to begin a discussion about them. This was more than the Canadians had been able to bring about.

The questions on the agenda were, one and all, charged and loaded subjects: the course of the ceasefire line and any changes, violation of the ceasefire and completion of demilitarization and, finally, the use of the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road by the Bosnian Serbs. These three dossiers were characterized

⁵²⁹ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/03/94.

⁵³⁰ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 21/03/94, 24/03/94, 26/03/94 and 28/03/94.

⁵³¹ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 16/03/94 and 17/03/94.

⁵³² Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 20/03/94, 22/03/93, 23/03/94, 24/03/94 and 27/03/94.

by great interconnectedness and could not be treated separately from each other. Additionally, each issue was so explosive that it could lead to a resumption of the fighting in the Safe Area. For Dutchbat this was a spectre, because it would no longer be able to maintain the Safe Area and provide the residents the safety that was expected of the peacekeeping force.

Therefore, Dutchbat had every interest in stimulating talks between the ABiH and the VRS and keeping them going in the hope that this process would result in agreements about acceptance of the existing UNPROFOR border, further implementation of the demilitarization agreement and use of the road south of the enclave by the Bosnian Serbs. Thus, a direct connection existed between these talks and the day-to-day work of Dutchbat in the form of patrols, observation of the border of the enclave and facilitation of humanitarian aid. Precision and accuracy in each day's operational work and frequent demonstrations of Dutchbat's presence could contribute to the stabilization of the situation in the Safe Area. Even so, the two parties probably only saw a settlement as a solution for the short term, in expectation of a peace settlement.

The contacts between the warring factions and the role of Dutchbat therein will be discussed separately, as will the operational action of the three successive battalions in the enclave. To the extent possible, the three subjects will be discussed independently. In this context other matters that came up in the talks between the VRS and the ABiH under Dutchbat supervision will pass in review. For a good understanding of the political and military context of the matter, there will also be discussion of the way in which the talks in Srebrenica were fed back to the higher echelons of the warring factions and UNPROFOR and the effect this had on the course of the talks themselves.

10. Dutchbat I and the Ceasefire Line

During its first three months in Srebrenica Dutchbat tried actively to bring about agreements between the VRS and the ABiH. In the first month, the signals from the two parties were contradictory but there was a remarkable turnaround in April. The VRS use of the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road appeared to have priority, while continuing demilitarization was now put on a back burner. After the negative response to the VRS proposal of early January, the ABiH did show interest in early April in possible demilitarization and a precise determination of the ceasefire line.

In late March, the VRS was spoiling for a fight again. Colonel Vukovic showed some officers from Dutchbat several ABiH positions in the Bosnian-Serb area of high ground in the neighbourhood of Kiprovo that, according to Vukovic, lay in Serb terrain. At the end of the reconnaissance Vukovic asked the Dutchbat delegation to convey the demand to the ABiH that these positions be evacuated the next day, 30 March, at noon. If this did not happen, the VRS would attack a series of ABiH positions in the Bosnian-Serb area between Donje Zedanjsko and Kiprovo, south of the ceasefire line. He made a direct link between the existing situation and the task of Dutchbat: as he saw it, the Dutch peacekeepers were responsible for implementation of disarmament of the ABiH and had to keep the Muslims within the enclave. On the proposal of Dutchbat the ABiH was given until 2 April. Dutchbat also promised to patrol more intensively along the ceasefire line in the neighbourhood of Donje Zedanjsko (in the vicinity of OP-C). With this ultimatum the Bosnian-Serb army aimed at putting Zeleni Jadar – Milici beyond the reach of the ABiH, because the VRS could use this road without coming under ABiH fire. Vermeulen understood that, through the ultimatum, the situation could escalate if the VRS should attack ABiH positions from outside the enclave. The risks for the enclave were evident. Dutchbat could not take any concrete steps, however. Vermeulen contended that, through frequent patrols along the ceasefire line in the south of the enclave, he could in any case show VRS and ABiH that 'we are aware of our responsibilities'.⁵³³

The ABiH would not directly respond to the demand of the VRS. The ABiH leadership did not deny the presence of positions in the VRS area, but said that they were not occupied by ABiH troops.

⁵³³ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 29/03/94 and 30/03/94.

The ABiH had no objection to talks with the VRS but the main point on the agenda should not be withdrawal from the challenged positions outside the enclave. The talks, according to the ABiH, should mainly concern the course of the ceasefire line, the setting up of a buffer zone, continuing with demilitarization and exchanging the bodies of the dead.⁵³⁴ Vukovic obtained the permission of the Drina corps to agree with holding talks on 9 April. It appeared that these developments were also followed at the highest level in Sarajevo by President Karadzic of the Republika Srpska and Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose. Meanwhile the VRS shelled several villages in the west of the enclave and several Dutchbat patrols and observation posts as well. On the ABiH side, rumours increased about an attack on the enclave from Kladanj. That was linked to the increasing tension around the third East-Bosnian Muslim enclave and Safe Area Gorazde where, according to the ABiH, the VRS had mounted an attack.⁵³⁵

Despite this sabre-rattling and the division within the Muslim ranks, the talks on 9 April went well. Even though it took ten hours to reach results on all important points the outcome signified a definite breakthrough in tense relations. A major UNPROFOR delegation led by Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen mediated between the VRS delegation and the Srebrenica delegation.⁵³⁶ Agreement was reached on 8 points. The first three dealt with the ceasefire line. VRS and ABiH would respect the 'red' UNPROFOR ceasefire line and support the setting up of observation posts 'where they can best achieve their task'. The VRS preferred placement within the ceasefire line, but would propose placement at three sites beyond it. The ABiH also wanted several observation posts outside this line 'at dominating points'.

Finally, it was agreed that the VRS positions had to be situated at a certain distance from the ceasefire line: 500 metres according to the VRS, 1000 metres according to the ABiH. There was also a series of agreements about improving and stabilizing the situation around the enclave. First of all, the Muslim authorities should implement demilitarization on the basis of the agreement of 8 May 1993 in return for the VRS promise not to endanger the safety of the residents. An end should be made to illegal departures of people from the enclave. The disputed Zeleni Jadar – Milici road would be opened under UNPROFOR supervision for 'commercial BSA [VRS] traffic only'. The Ikea wood factory and other factories in the vicinity of OP-E would remain under the protection of UNPROFOR. Finally, a full ceasefire would apply around the enclave 'during this period of renewed cooperation and further negotiations'.

To continue the contact made, a local Joint Commission of the ABiH, VRS and UNPROFOR would meet at a UN observation post once per week. The agreements were set down in a Protocol (in English and Serbo-Croatian).⁵³⁷ Because Vukovic had no proxy right to sign any document, the protocol was not signed by the ABiH and Dutchbat either. For implementation, approval at a higher political and military level was necessary. Sector North East headquarters doubted this. The Civil Affairs Officer in Tuzla, on the other hand, had determined after a visit to the enclave in mid-March that 'the problem of actual delineation of the Srebrenica DMZ [demilitarized zone]' was a matter for discussion at a high level. 'Obviously, it is not the level of the Dutchbat Commander.'⁵³⁸

⁵³⁴ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 30/03/94.

⁵³⁵ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 31/03/94, 01/04/94, 02/04/94, 03/04/94, 05/04/94, 07/04/94 and 08/04/94.

⁵³⁶ The Unprofor delegation consisted, along with Vermeulen, of S5 Major A. Derksen, S1 Capt. M. Verweij, ass. S5 sm E. Oskam, UNMO Lt.Cmdr. M. Foster and Major Th. Gottschalck. The VRS Drina corps delegation consisted of Col. V.Vukovic and Major N. Nikolic. The 'County of Srebrenica' delegation consisted of Fahrudin Salihovic, Vice-President Hamdija Fejzic, Naser Oric and his chief of staff Ramiz Becirovic. Appendix with Defensie, Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/04/94.

⁵³⁷ Three interpreters attended the meeting: Hassan (UNMO interpreter), Emir (Dutchbat interpreter) and Petar (VRS interpreter). Defensie, Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/04/94 sub 5.

⁵³⁸ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/04/94 with appendix: Protocol of a bilateral meeting between representatives of the Srebrenica enclave and 2 Drina corps held on 9 April 1994 at 12am local time in HQ Dutch Battalion,

The protocol of 9 April 1994 contained eight starting points that should be fleshed out during follow-up talks. Although it would be going too far to say that the protocol was a result of the agreement between the Canadian battalion and the VRS two-and-a-half months earlier, the elements of that agreement were reflected in the protocol: demilitarization of the ABiH and withdrawal of the VRS from the ceasefire line. The parties still had different opinions about the required distance, but accepted the principle of a buffer zone. Remarkably, nothing was agreed about the withdrawal of artillery and mortars: the VRS could easily cross those 500 or 1000 metres with its artillery and mortars to shell the enclave. Clearly, this was a transitional measure for the period of demilitarization. The withdrawal of artillery would only come in for attention afterwards. In this respect too, the VRS held to the agreement of 8 May 1993. Even so, it had indeed made concessions. It implicitly recognized the existence of the Safe Area and the role of UNPROFOR in the separation of the warring factions.

Nevertheless, the ABiH made the most concessions and, by so doing, had a weak starting position for the follow-up talks. Along with demilitarization, the army of Bosnia obliged itself to the restriction of freedom of movement within the UNPROFOR ceasefire line and allowed use of the Zelini Jadar – Milici road to the Bosnian Serbs, and exploitation of the bauxite mines along with it. UNPROFOR had its own interests in the result of the talks. With responsibility for use of the road south of the enclave, it took on a new obligation outside the area of operation. The gain was mainly in recognition of the UNPROFOR Red Line as ceasefire line and the recognition of placement of observation posts on the ceasefire line or in front of it in the Bosnian-Serb area. That weekly joint talks between the VRS and ABiH would take place under UNPROFOR supervision was also a positive result. It meant that UNPROFOR no longer had to act as intermediary between the two parties and thus reduced the risk that one of them would consider UNPROFOR to be partial.

Although the necessity was recognized of approval of the protocol at a higher level, the VRS and the ABiH exchanged ideas about implementing the agreements in the days following the meeting. From these meetings it appeared that the two parties saw the ceasefire line as the core of the problems. Both sides put their own solutions forward. By way of experiment, the Bosnian Serbs proposed withdrawing all VRS units between Kiprovo (CP 6279) and Zutica (CP 5286) 750 metres from the ceasefire line. The ABiH should withdraw from VRS terrain at the same time and, on the side of the enclave, civilians and the military would stay at the same distance from the UNPROFOR line.

Naser Oric rejected this proposal for the formation of a buffer zone according to the VRS model. His alternative meant that the VRS would stay at the existing positions in the area between Kiprovo and Zutica and refrain from actions. UNPROFOR would patrol between the VRS positions and the ceasefire line, while the ABiH would undertake the demilitarization of the enclave and would try to persuade the residents not to leave it. As far as he was concerned, the use of the Kiprovo – Zutica road for economic traffic was also discussible.

Oric would evidently not talk about abandoning the ABiH positions beyond the ceasefire line. He wanted to restrain the VRS by means of a ban on actions against the enclave and by UNPROFOR patrols outside the ceasefire line. This was mainly a tactical proposal and did not diminish the fact that, also for Oric, the course of the ceasefire line remained the central point. He now seemed to reconsider the recognition of the 'red' UNPROFOR ceasefire line in the protocol of 9 April, by repeating his earlier contention that the VRS had shifted its positions towards the enclave after 8 May 1993. In the same meeting with Dutchbat Oric put forward the idea of having a commission of the VRS and the ABiH under supervision of UNPROFOR to establish the border of the enclave and the Bosnian-Serb area. With the authorization of the two parties, UNPROFOR would take responsibility for maintaining the buffer zone between the two borders, a risky task on account of the existing animosity. There would be no talks on the proposals, however. This was a result of developments outside the enclave:

the crisis around Gorazde and the NATO air strikes. In response to these events, the VRS temporarily broke off all contacts with Dutchbat without tension increasing around the enclave itself.⁵³⁹

On 18 April 1994, after an interruption of one week, the talks between Colonel Vukovic and Naser Oric resumed under Dutchbat supervision at OP-E. Both showed evidence of good insight into the core problem: an arrangement concerning the ceasefire line and demilitarization. Both also made it clear that they could only negotiate with authorization from the higher commanders, something neither of the two had. However, the big handicap for talks about a ceasefire line and demilitarization continued to be, according to Dutchbat, that the warring factions did not trust each other. In the view of Vukovic, Oric could realize demilitarization on his own authority while Oric, in turn, was convinced that after demilitarization the VRS 'will move forward to the Ceasefire Line'.⁵⁴⁰ The VRS demand for immediate use of the road at Zutica offered the ABiH the opportunity to take a stand and show the VRS its teeth.

Dutchbat therefore did not rule out a confrontation over the road at Zutica. Sector North East headquarters in Tuzla shared this fear. Tuzla and UNMO advised short-term aerial reconnaissance to spot any possible concentration of VRS units (stationing the helicopter detachment was recommended) and a meeting of the Joint Demilitarization Commission under supervision of the chief of staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command – this in order to be able to hold onto the progress that Dutchbat had made in the talks between the VRS and ABiH. But despite the urgings in that direction by Civil Affairs in Tuzla and the Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen, response was not forthcoming from Bosnia-Herzegovina Command.⁵⁴¹

Meanwhile, the Dutchbat liaison-team regarded continuation of the talks between the VRS and ABiH as more important than achieving results on the core questions of demilitarization and the ceasefire line. As long as the two parties kept talking to each other, in the view of the liaison team, an escalation over the use of the road was less likely. After the Gorazde crisis the talks between Colonel Vukovic ABiH chief of staff Ramiz Becirovic were resumed on 4 May 1994. The result was an agreement about a procedure for a correction of the ceasefire line and the establishment of a buffer zone: both parties would draw in their proposals on maps. Two starting points applied: preferably natural borders (waterways and hills) and proposals for the allocation of houses, factories and agricultural areas. The maps were to be discussed during a subsequent meeting on 9 May and, after agreement, the exact course of the ceasefire line in the terrain would be determined.⁵⁴² The VRS thus seemed to be prepared to follow the proposal of Oric for a new delineation of the ceasefire line.

Becirovic handed over the ABiH map to Vukovic on 9 May. The Drina corps had prohibited Vukovic from presenting his map because the corps had not yet approved his proposal. This did not stop Vukovic from expressing his proposal orally. With the exception of the southern border, Vukovic's proposal followed the UNPROFOR Red Line. The borderline would be laid down to the north between Zeleni Jadar and Kiprovo, so that the three forks at the start of the road to Milici fell outside the enclave. The ABiH proposal allowed a part of the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road to fall right inside the enclave. Becirovic could not explain why the Muslims needed this road, so Vukovic broke off the talks: 'The Muslims only wanted to take instead of trying to find a solution'. But this was not yet the end of

⁵³⁹ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 10/04/94 and 11/04/94.

⁵⁴⁰ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 18/04/94. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 434, file UNMO SNE Srebrenica. Unmo HQ BH NorthEast to Unmo HQ Zagreb (MIO and BH Comd (MIO), [19/04/94]: Special report on meeting between representatives of BIH and BSA in Srebrenica.

⁵⁴¹ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 18/04/94, 26/04/94, 28/04/94 and 29/04/94. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 434, file UNMO SNE Srebrenica. UNMO HQ BH North East (MIO) to UNMO HQ BH Comd. and UNMO HQ Zagreb, [19/04/94] 'Special report on meeting between representatives of BIH and BSA in Srebrenica'. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 434, file UNMO SNE Srebrenica. Fax no.101 HQ Sector NE to BH Command Forward, 22/04/94: Military Activity in Srebrenica. This evaluation of the situation in Srebrenica during the Gorazde crisis was drawn up at the request of HQ Unprofor Zagreb of 20 April 1994. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 202 file: HBC faxes 30 March – 29 April 94. Fax BH Command Sarajevo to Unprofor HQ Zagreb, 23/04/94, attention MIO only.

⁵⁴² Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/05/94.

the talks. Dutchbat proposed consulting separately with each party and after Vukovic had obtained the green light from the Drina corps, they would all meet together again. According to Dutchbat, the issue was deadlocked, because the ABiH continued to obstruct the use of the road to Milici. Dutchbat was convinced that the VRS would agree to adjustment of the ceasefire line to the benefit of the Muslims in exchange for use of the road and, thus, for resumption of bauxite mining. Dutchbat therefore continued to urge Bosnia-Herzegovina Command for the meeting of a Joint Commission, because a solution was not possible at local level.⁵⁴³

There were no steps towards reactivation of the Joint Commission for Srebrenica, however. It is not clear whether this was connected with talks on a ceasefire at central level and the setting up of a network of Joint Commissions.⁵⁴⁴ Dutchbat continued to talk with the parties at the local level and tried to reach an agreement on correction of the ceasefire line. Dutchbat itself made a proposal and thereby avoided working out the departure points concretely on a map: adjustment of the course of the ceasefire line to the natural features of the terrain, without reducing the size of the enclave, but including economic use of the road to Milici by the VRS, with UNPROFOR control of part of it. Both parties judged it a 'fair' proposal. However, this qualification did not stop them, from coming up with additional demands for acceptance of the map. Vukovic once again brought up the necessity of the demilitarization of the enclave to Dutchbat. The internal ABiH talks resulted in a series of extra conditions, unacceptable to the VRS.

Dutchbat also tried to keep the talks going with its own proposal about completing demilitarization: handing in weapons at a UNPROFOR Weapon Collection Point would result in withdrawal of the VRS troops. In the event of a VRS attack on the enclave the possibility existed of asking for the return of the weapons. For Becirovic and Bektic this appeared to be an option but, after internal deliberations, handing in weapons was still not discussible. With that, this UNPROFOR proposal was also, in effect, dead.⁵⁴⁵ Oric, the de facto leader in the enclave, did not believe in a political solution for the problems in the Srebrenica enclave. At celebrations of the second birthday of the ABiH in Srebrenica on 25 May, he declared that only a military solution was possible.⁵⁴⁶ Resumption of the local Dutchbat-supervised talks on the three central issues (demilitarization, ceasefire line and the opening of the southern road) never occurred during the Dutchbat I mission. On a proposal by a representative of VRS headquarters in Pale at a subsequent trilateral meeting, the question of the border of the enclave and the use of the road was passed on to the military authorities in Sarajevo and Pale.⁵⁴⁷ The talks at local level did go on, but with a largely different agenda: exchange of information about missing people and exchange of the bodies of the dead, family reunification and possibilities for leaving the enclave.

For four months, in any case, UNPROFOR had tried to break through the impasse in the demilitarization of Srebrenica and also to settle questions such as the delineation and reconsideration of the ceasefire line, the establishment of a buffer zone, the placement of UNPROFOR observation posts and use of the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road. After the 'accord' of 9 April, however, the basis for an agreement had narrowed. The warring factions had stopped making proposals themselves and those of UNPROFOR broke down on rejection by the ABiH or VRS. This was not attributable to a poor negotiation strategy of the Dutchbat liaison-team. On the contrary, despite the conviction that the two parties theoretically could not reach agreement on account of a fundamental mutual distrust, one kept them at the negotiating table. The continuation of the talks was no panacea, of course, against resumption or intensification of the fighting, but aimed at building some confidence in the promises of the other party. This did not lead to a tangible result. That was not attributable to Dutchbat, but rather

⁵⁴³ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/05/94.

⁵⁴⁴ UNGE, ICFY, Box 128, Fax In 35. Fax Akashi to Milosevic, 28/05/94.

⁵⁴⁵ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 14/05/94, 15/05/94, 17/05/94, 20/05/94, 21/05/94, 23/05/94, 24/05/94, 27/05/94, 31/05/94, 02/06/94 and 10/06/94.

⁵⁴⁶ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 25/05/94.

⁵⁴⁷ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 13/07/94.

to the already-mentioned mutual distrust, to the relationship of the problems of the enclave Srebrenica to the situation elsewhere in Bosnia and to the lack of sufficient follow-up on the side of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. In any case, this active approach suited the new strategy of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose, even though this is not evident from any sign of interest from Sarajevo.

11. Dutchbat II and the Ceasefire Line

After the frequent talks under supervision of Dutchbat I, a change occurred in the approach to the problem of the ceasefire line and the related questions. The issue no longer had a primarily local character. Dutchbat I had seen many times that a real decision by the various parties could only be taken at a higher political and military level. In those regions there was evidently no need to really tackle the issue and solve it. In the talks of 13 July 1994, still under Dutchbat I, the impulse for a change of tack was brought about by the participation of a certain Pecanac, a representative of General Mladic headquarters, who, as citizen, played a dominant role on the VRS side, but whose identity remained unclear.⁵⁴⁸

The peace plan of the Contact Group cast its shadow as well. That plan provided the allocation of the three eastern enclaves to the Muslim-Croat Federation. ABiH Commander Oric assumed that the VRS wanted to sound out the ideas of the leaders in the enclaves. He expected that Srebrenica would be sacrificed by Sarajevo for peace; according to Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen a 'very strange' sound from the mouth of someone who, until that time, did not want to give up one square metre of enclave and talked of re-taking every piece of Muslim ground in Serb hands.⁵⁴⁹ On the urgings of Pecanac, the trilateral meeting decided to present a proposal for delineation of the ceasefire line to the two Commanders, Mladic and Delic. After their approval, a Joint Commission could determine the precise course in the field. The ABiH would draw up a written proposal plus map that would go to VRS headquarters in Pale by the mediation of Dutchbat. Pecanac would make efforts towards arranging a meeting between Mladic and Delic.⁵⁵⁰ This approach did not deliver much visible advantage: to Dutchbat it remained unclear whether the ABiH proposal had reached the two Commanders and, if it had, whether they had also discussed it. Apparently, the ceasefire line had been the subject of discussion between the chief of staff of Sector North East and his VRS colleague on 25 August. What they discussed remained unknown to Dutchbat headquarters.⁵⁵¹

On 22 September 1994 Lieutenant Colonel Everts, the Commander of Dutchbat II, received a wholly unexpected order from his superiors to go to OP-E for a meeting with the Vice President of the Republika Srpska, Dr Koljevic, the head of the operational staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Colonel Chuck LeMieux and the Civil Affairs Officer of Sector North East, Ken Biser. Several days earlier, the President of the Republika Srpska, Karadzic, had demanded use of the Zeleni Jadar –Milici road in a meeting with General Rose and the head of Civil Affairs of UNPROFOR, V. Andreev. Rose and Andreev had agreed to a meeting in Srebrenica. LeMieux and Koljevic wanted to settle the matter on the spot and then travel by road via Srebrenica to Bratunac. For the latter, Everts did not give permission. Together with Biser, he opposed a unilateral agreement about VRS use of the road. Koljevic made it clear that UNPROFOR had to make a gesture in return for other VRS concessions, such as permission for helicopter flights to the enclave and transport of the ill to Tuzla and Sarajevo. Koljevic saw no problem for UNPROFOR: a relocation of OP-E to the old position of April 1993

⁵⁴⁸ Def. Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 12/07/94. On questions to BH Command for information about Pecanac Dutchbat received no answers. According to Becirovic his order was to realize the clearance of the eastern enclaves. He had been involved in talks in Zepa and Gorazde. Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 08/07/94 and 20/09/94.

⁵⁴⁹ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 08/07/94.

⁵⁵⁰ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 12/07/94 and 13/07/94 appendix.

⁵⁵¹ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 31/07/94, 02/08/94, 07/09/94 and 08/09/94.

would be sufficient. This was an incorrect presentation of matters: as stated in the preceding chapter the VRS line had been shifted in April 1993.

The meeting took a remarkable course, because Rose and Andreev had apparently already agreed on the request. LeMieux therefore stood his ground despite the great objections of Everts and Biser. They supplied a series of arguments for their resistance against this agreement. The two contradicted Koljevic's contention that there was a standing local agreement about the use of the road: it was part of a more general arrangement. Biser explained to LeMieux, 'in short Anglo-Saxon terms', that UNPROFOR could not take a unilateral decision. The Government in Sarajevo had to be involved in an arrangement and guarantee the safety of the road, not UNPROFOR. The proposed relocation of OP-E would give the VRS the possibility to fire in the enclave and bring the VRS line dangerously close to the Swedish Shelter Project. Furthermore, the safety of Dutchbat would run a great risk as a result of reactions by the ABiH. Finally, it was decided, much against the wishes of Koljevic, who wanted to arrange the opening of the road on the spot, to convene a meeting of the Joint Demilitarization Commission in Srebrenica on 1 October. The meeting would be under the chairmanship of the Commander of Sector North East, Brigadier General Gunnar Ridderstad, with this subject as the only item on the agenda.⁵⁵²

Despite his tenacity during the meeting at OP-E on 22 September Colonel J.C. LeMieux incorporated all arguments of Biser and Everts into his recommendations to Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose: the Bosnian Government should agree with use and Rose should then give an instruction to Brigadier Ridderstad for the meeting of the Joint Demilitarization Commission.⁵⁵³ It is not known whether Rose brought about such an agreement. For other reasons, this issue disappeared from the agenda. In the last week of September 1994, relations between UNPROFOR and the VRS cooled considerably because of a NATO air strike on the village of Dobrosevici near Sarajevo and the threatened lifting of the arms embargo on 1 October.⁵⁵⁴ Biser suspected that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command hoped that, by agreeing to the use of the road between Zeleni Jadar and Milici, the VRS would make concessions in other areas. According to Civil Affairs in Sarajevo the VRS would be prepared to do something in return: offer the use of the Zepa – Srebrenica road. According to the same source, the Muslim canton of Drina-Tuzla had already agreed to this.⁵⁵⁵

Nor has it been ruled out that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command wanted to come to a decision quickly in order to put an end to the great political and media attention that the SDA had managed to generate on the situation in Srebrenica: according to Ken Biser, the superintendent of the hospital and Mayor Suljic said, in emotional and completely incorrect statements, that the enclave was being ravaged by epidemics, malnutrition and lack of medicines, food and salt.⁵⁵⁶ Whatever motives were at play in Bosnia-Herzegovina Command about opening the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road, the matter fizzled out like a candle. The VRS cancelled the 1 October meeting with the Joint Demilitarization Commission on account of the air strike and the perceived partiality of UNPROFOR. No new appointment was ever made.⁵⁵⁷ The Joint Demilitarization Commission for Srebrenica remained dormant.

⁵⁵² NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Meeting between Dr Koljevic, VP of 'Srpska' and Mr Ken Biser, SCvAO Sector NE and Col. LeMieux, ACOS G-3, BH Command Fwd, on 22 September, 1994', undated. Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 27/09/01.

⁵⁵³ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Memorandum from BHC HQ (ACOS OPS): Meeting Unprofor and BSA (incl. Prof. Koljevic), Srebrenica 22 Sep 94. Issue: '*Bosnian Serb access to the road from Zeleni Jadar*', 24/09/94.

⁵⁵⁴ For the air strike see Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 176-177 and Burg and Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, p. 152.

⁵⁵⁵ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120 file: Civil Affairs SNE BHC weekly situation reports 1994. CA SNE: CCA BHC to mailing list, no. CCA-BHC365, 15/10/94: Weekly situation report BH 8-15 Oct. NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Memorandum of BHC HQ (ACOS OPS): Meeting Unprofor and BSA (incl. Prof. Koljevic), Srebrenica 22 Sep 94. Issue: '*Bosnian Serb access to the road from Zeleni Jadar*', 24/09/94.

⁵⁵⁶ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 118 file: Civil Affairs SNE 1994-95: Srebrenica Trip Report, 21 – 24 September, 1994 [Ken Biser], undated

⁵⁵⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, file Civil Affairs-Sector North East. Fax, Biser to Andreev, 01/10/94: '*Cancellation of Joint Demilitarization Committee Meeting Srebrenica*' appendix: Milovanovic to Unprofor Command Sarajevo, no.09/20-891, 29/09/94. CRST. Ridderstad to Milovanovic, 02/10/94.

The cancellation of the meeting on 1 October meant more than the end of the talks concerning the road between Zeleni Jadar and Milici. Now there would also be no more talks on joint delineation of the ceasefire line, the continuation of demilitarization and, along with that, related matters such as setting up a buffer zone, relocation of observation posts and the withdrawal of VRS mortars and artillery. It also appeared in the summer of 1994 that an arrangement on these subjects could only come about at central level. Because, in the perception of the VRS, UNPROFOR had lost its impartiality by calling in NATO air strikes and withholding aid to the Bosnian-Serb area, the mediating role of UNPROFOR seemed to have come to an end.

Meanwhile, the trilateral talks in Srebrenica about less politically-charged subjects continued. Those talks had begun in July, shortly before the arrival of Dutchbat II. Attention shifted to practical matters such as the transport of the ill over Bosnian-Serb terrain to Tuzla and Sarajevo, family reunification, return to the enclave and the departure of students at the start of the new school year. The transport of the ill presented the fewest problems: in emergencies the authorities on the VRS side generally cooperated. If treatment of the ill was not possible in Srebrenica, an arrangement often came about for transport to a hospital in Tuzla or Sarajevo. Here, Dutchbat filled a facilitating role in contacts with the Bosnian-Serb authorities, while the International Red Cross and *Médecins Sans Frontières* bore the lion's share of the transport.⁵⁵⁸ The attempt to obtain permission for the departure of students for higher education facilities in Tuzla and Sarajevo failed, although in the first instance Pecanac gave the impression that he could arrange this in Pale. A likely contributory factor to this lack of permission was the fact that this group of a total of 78 students consisted for the greater part of young men of military age.⁵⁵⁹

Family reunification occasionally occurred and ran into many bureaucratic obstacles, also on the side of the international organisations.⁵⁶⁰ Talks about this subject were a part of the consultations between civilian and military Muslim authorities in the enclave and the VRS on the thornier issue of the exchange of war prisoners. This subject had already been brought up by the VRS in March 1994, but quickly disappeared from the agenda. In August the VRS asked Dutchbat II to organize a meeting on this subject with the local ABiH authorities. The battalion leadership speculated about the motives for this request. They wondered whether the VRS wanted to test whether UNPROFOR wanted to help with the exchange. The thought arose that Srebrenica was chosen because the ceasefire of 8 June in Geneva was still observed in Srebrenica, and because the VRS leadership there wanted to try to create an arrangement at local level.

Whatever the case, on 7 August 1994 at the Dutchbat compound in Potocari, the military section of the Drina Exchange Committee and representatives of the ABiH from the enclave made procedural agreements about the exchange and about missing persons. The two parties would draw up lists with data about these people, their current place of residence or the latest information on their whereabouts. In a follow-up meeting on 30 August the exchange of information went as desired, but the talks stalled when the ABiH delegation said that it had no prisoners of war. It was offered to involve war prisoners elsewhere in Bosnia in the exchange. The VRS wanted to move quickly with the exchange of bodily remains, but the ABiH were reluctant. Results were achieved at the next meeting: on 10 October, in the presence of UnCivPol and the International Red Cross, ten bodies would be exchanged at OP-P, on condition that a Muslim pathologist from Tuzla be present. The exchange ran aground on the latter point: the pathologist was not in Tuzla and the ABiH was not happy with a *Médecins Sans Frontières* physician.⁵⁶¹

This end to the talks about the exchange of bodily remains came shortly after the VRS cancellation of the talks about the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road. After that, no more attempts were ever made to arrange matters between the warring factions at the local level, with mediation of

⁵⁵⁸ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 14/07/94, 31/07/94, 13/09/94, 24/09/94 and 11/10/94.

⁵⁵⁹ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 13/07/94, 15/07/94, 11/08/94 and 24/08/94.

⁵⁶⁰ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 30/08/94 and 22/09/94.

⁵⁶¹ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 02/08/94, 07/08/94, 30/08/94, 22/09/94 and 04/10/94.

UNPROFOR. Of course, it can not be ruled out, that the parties had no more confidence in UNPROFOR as local mediator. Even so, another explanation is more obvious. It turned out for all subjects that, for the UN as well as for the VRS and ABiH, the agreement or approval of higher levels was needed and, furthermore, that this was difficult to obtain. Dutchbat I and II had the impression that there was hardly any interest in their efforts at the level of Sector North East of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Requests continued to be left unanswered. Conversely, Dutchbat was not informed at times that the headquarters in Kiseljak did concern itself with matters. The VRS often misused the idea of consultation with the higher level to delay talks, while both parties hid behind the higher level in order to wash their own hands in innocence. All these movements and arguments were part of the negotiation tactics.

The reality was that none of the parties wanted to create a separate arrangement for Srebrenica, not even for subject components that were practical in nature in UNPROFOR's view, such as the exchange of prisoners of war, the departure of students from the enclave, the use of the road to Milici or the delineation of the ceasefire line. The one exception was medical evacuation. In all other cases, every proposal for a subject component was linked by one or the other party to the arrangement of another matter or answered with a series of conditions generally unacceptable to the other party.

12. Operational action

For Dutchbat to function well as a component of the UNPROFOR peacekeeping force it was important, in the spirit of the Campaign Plan of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose, to bring the parties closer together in order to smooth away the rough edges of local relationships. Rose hoped this would make execution of the mandate more possible. After all, that was the main task. As stated in Section 2, it consisted of facilitating humanitarian aid, deterring attacks on the enclave through a military presence there, and improvement of the living conditions of the population. Dutchbat followed the same operational concept as the Canadian battalion: mobile control of the ceasefire line by means of patrols and observation of the ceasefire line and the area beyond it from observation posts (OPs). Additionally, patrols were mounted within the enclave. Dutchbat also maintained contact with UNHCR and the NGOs which worked in the enclave and with the local authorities. Where possible, assistance was offered.

The duties at the observation posts were the task of the two infantry companies. Dutchbat had taken over the eight permanent observation posts of the Canadian battalion. The enclave was divided in two sectors (see map on page #). C Company, billeted in the compound in Potocari, was responsible for the northern sector, the company in the compound in Srebrenica for the southern sector.⁵⁶² The division of tasks within a sector was a matter for the commander. There were two systems that the different Dutchbat companies applied at their discretion: the first used the principle of a permanent assignment of sectors and observation posts to platoons and, within them, to groups; the second applied the principle of a system of rotation of sectors and observation posts.

Both systems had advantages and disadvantages. The first resulted in great knowledge of surroundings and population and provided the possibility of building a bond with the population and a relationship of trust with the local ABiH commander; the disadvantage of a permanent work area was unfamiliarity with the rest of the company sector. For the second system advantages and disadvantages were the other way around: after a period of time, familiarity with the whole company sector was created, but there were fewer possibilities to put down roots at an observation post. Per platoon (30 men strong), a group of nine men always manned an observation post and two performed patrol and company duties in the compound. The latter involved both the guarding of the terrain and serving on standby as Quick Reaction Force of the company. A group at an observation post was relieved every week or fourteen days.

⁵⁶² For Dutchbat I and III this was Bravo company, for Dutchbat II Alpha company.

Life at the observation post had its own rhythm: making observations from the post and going on patrol. Occasional reports (shelling, accidents and observation of aircraft and helicopters) and periodic reporting (daily reports and ceasefire violations) were sent to the Ops room of the company.⁵⁶³ The work activities at an observation post formed a well-organized whole. The sergeant-group leader divided up the work and, thanks to the rotation system, every member of the group of nine men (eight infantrymen and a medic) knew his task. Control by special observation orders was done by the Ops room.

After the engineering detachment rebuilt the posts used by the Canadians, a Dutchbat OP consisted of two parts: the observation tower and the residential area. Both parts were located inside a reinforced defence wall of sandbags, bags of stones and barbed wire, with a protected area around it. At the start of the mission, the residential part consisted in most cases of a tent, later mostly replaced by a permanent construction with sitting-room, cooking area and storage space. There was also a shower and a toilet. For the storage of weapons, ammunition, helmets and flak vests there was a fixed and logical storage space. All in all the accommodation was austere. The tall observation towers flying the UN flag consisted of a workspace and another level for the antitank gun (TOW) with night-vision equipment. In the workspace was a panoramic sketch of the surroundings with orientation points in the terrain, positions of the warring factions and parts of the terrain out of the view of direct observation. There was also a distances map for the weapon positions. The last important operational document was the radio logbook in which radio contacts with the company Ops room, other observation posts or patrols were noted.⁵⁶⁴

Working at an observation post was popular among the soldiers. For the group commander it meant high responsibility: he worked with his group for long periods as an independent unit without all that much direct connection with the other two groups of his platoon. The group commander was responsible for the planning of patrol and duty schedules, drawing up a roster for household chores and observance of the standing regulations regarding safety and hygiene. A certain independence was involved in execution of the orders and how things went depended strongly on the leadership qualities of the group commander. He had to find a balance between concern in performing his tasks and genial contact with the soldiers, without relaxation of discipline and postponement or cancellation of tiresome tasks such as the filling of sandbags. Good motivation and timely announcement of work of this type had a stimulating effect.⁵⁶⁵ Each observation post was in touch with its surroundings. In one case it was restricted to members of the local population who did the odd jobs such as baking bread, washing clothes or buying vegetables and fruit. There was also sometimes a good understanding with the local ABiH commander or a VRS post, enabling discussion of particular events or incidents.

13. Patrols

Just as for the duties at an observation post, going on patrol was fairly popular among the infantry companies. Compared with the clarity of the work at an observation post, patrols were a complicated operational component. In principle, each company was responsible for mounting patrols within its part of the enclave. Arranging this was in the hands of an officer-patrol coordinator. He drew up a weekly schedule for mounting patrols, for observation posts and for the company in the compound. At battalion level, the Intelligence officer drew up the weekly patrol schedule in consultation with the companies. This schedule followed a fixed pattern in part, because it was necessary to let the UNPROFOR colours be seen in the field. In March 1995, after OP-M became a permanent observation post, three permanent patrols were mounted: a patrol along the ceasefire line towards OP-N; a second towards Brezova Njiva in the hinterland; and the third to Lekovici, even further into the

⁵⁶³ Jellema, *First-In*, p. 103 and 124. *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), p. 143.

⁵⁶⁴ KL, *Handboek Vredesmachtten*, pp. II-15-II-16. Jansen, *Dutchbat on Tour*, pp. 101-105.

⁵⁶⁵ Vogelelaar, *Leiderschap in crisissituaties*, pp. 36-38.

hinterland.⁵⁶⁶ The other, non-permanent patrols went to areas in the enclave where the situation was tense after incidents and to other places, mainly to show the UN presence. Reasons for patrols could be reports about VRS activities within the enclave, the building of ABiH positions, threats against the local population, multiple violations of the ceasefire truce and particularly VRS or ABiH reports about activities of the other party.

Aside from the infantry companies, other battalion units took part in carrying out the patrol plan. The platoon of the 108th Reconnaissance Company of the Commando Troop Corps was assigned to reconnaissance of routes and objects and a series of special tasks. The commander of this platoon worked closely with the Intelligence officer on account of the commander's specialized knowledge about performing reconnaissance missions and gathering Intelligence. In this respect, there was hardly any difference among the three battalions. The 2nd security platoon of the staff company also took part in the patrols; in the organization of the air mobile battalion this unit made up the 26-man strong reconnaissance platoon.

The battalion Intelligence officer determined the need for patrols in consultation with the battalion staff and the patrol coordinator of each infantry company. Patrols were mounted from four points. First of all, there were the patrols from the OPs; they took place in the immediate vicinity, most often along the ceasefire line of the immediate hinterland. The majority of the four to five patrols from an observation post followed fixed routes to check on fixed points. They were also used to verify observations made from the observation post itself. Patrols were also mounted from the compound of the company in the inner area of the enclave, or to an observation post. The patrols of the security platoon of the staff company came under the direct responsibility of the Intelligence officer. He formulated the orders for the security platoon of the 108th Commando Troop Company in consultation with the battalion commander.⁵⁶⁷

Gathering information was the main objective of the patrols. During the reprocessing period, patrols had been a regular part of the training programme, because this activity, in the context of a peace mission, differed strongly from the task of a normal patrol. Of course a patrol in Srebrenica could also receive orders to gather information on specific matters, but observation now covered a much broader range. For the mission in Srebrenica this not only involved military matters, but also demonstrated the presence of the peacekeeping force. The big difference between 'green' patrols and those in Srebrenica was that the latter, in principle, took place in all openness. In principle, night patrols were not held, although they were mentioned in the Standing Order.

This open action did not mean that concern for the safety of the patrol itself diminished. It remained of primary importance. This form of action had consequences for the effectiveness of the patrol. It was not possible to keep a patrol secret: departure from the gate of the compound and the vicinity of the observation posts were often reported to ABiH commanders in the enclave, so that they could take steps to keep military activities and weapons out of sight of the patrol. Nevertheless, a patrol could serve a varied series of objectives. To begin with, a demonstration of the UN presence or supervision of observance of the ceasefire or other agreements and observation of areas that lay beyond the field of vision of the OPs; also within this broad showing-the-flag range came so-called contact patrols between generally remotely situated observation posts or the manning of temporary observation posts.

Naturally, the collection of specific information was also part of the order. To reinforce the feeling of safety of the residents, patrols went to isolated villages and hamlets. In a period of mounting tension, patrols often served to offer protection to the local residents by preventing incidents during relocation. Patrols could also have a concrete military objective: a mobile checkpoint for tracing weapons, inspection of the positions of the ABiH and VRS (often to verify the reports of one side or

⁵⁶⁶ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), p. 109.

⁵⁶⁷ Interviews E.Wieffer, 07/05/01; R. Rutten, 25/09/01. Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, pp. 67-69 and 104. SMG/Debrief. *Standing Orders Dutchbat 2/3*, Chapter 3 Appendix 7.

the other), inspection of infiltration and exfiltration routes and blocking them. A patrol could also be deployed as a buffer between the two parties in instances of growing tension. Finally, so-called social patrols were mounted in the town of Srebrenica in order to promote contact between the population and Dutchbat.⁵⁶⁸

Despite their frequency, patrols had to be carefully prepared. Every member of a patrol had to be acquainted with the objective of the patrol, the route, the duration, possible dangers en route, important points during the patrol such as the positions or old positions of the warring factions, sites of mortar impacts and the like. The patrol commander made this type of data known during an issue of orders where additional points came up such as the weapons and observation equipment to bring along. The patrol reported in on departure and return to its own Ops room. This was also the contact point for regular and special reports. During the patrol, the actions taken followed a fixed pattern, also for spotting men with weapons, threats, shelling, a mine accident or an ambush. When a patrol ran into problems, the battalion commander could decide to use the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) of a company. This consisted of a group from an infantry platoon and was deployable on the short term, depending on the type of alert phase involved. Each member of the patrol knew what he had to do in what situation. Naturally, the correct use of the Rules of Engagement was of vital importance. After the end of the patrol, a debriefing took place.⁵⁶⁹

Despite their open character, the patrols served first of all for gathering the information which was needed for carrying out the Dutchbat order. Because this was one of the few means of acquiring information within the closed-off area, the frequency of the patrols was high compared with their role in regular army performance. Each company was responsible for multiple patrols per day. This frequency and the regular running of fixed routes could have a negative influence on sharpness of observation. That was also a danger because not every patrol could return to base with the information that it was sent to get. Spotting small everyday changes could also be significant. To let each patrol take action as a sharp observation instrument required good instruction and debriefing. The latter was done orally after every patrol, and in the form of a patrol report.

These reports have not been saved, so there is little to say about consistent elements in the mounting of patrols. Incidents such as the shelling of patrols found their way into the Dutchbat situation reports. That was also done for special observations, but it is not certain whether everything was reported. This was not the case for patrols that stepped over the ceasefire line against UNPROFOR instructions.⁵⁷⁰ Because of the serious suspicion that the two warring factions could read the UNPROFOR message traffic, it seemed unwise to report sensitive information in a situation report.⁵⁷¹ The mounting of patrols will come up for discussion again in treating the separate battalions.

14. The Dutchbat I period

The stay of Dutchbat I in Srebrenica was relatively short. B Company was there almost five months, C Company barely four months: from early April to 21 July 1994. In the eyes of Dutchbat II and III, each with six months in the enclave, the Dutchbat I mission had been a piece of cake: not only had its stay been shorter, but the conditions for the first battalion had been much more favourable: regular resupplying and an engineering detachment was available at all times. According to the general perception, Dutchbat I, with its ample supplies and extra engineering capacity, was said to have commanded more possibilities for humanitarian aid and maintaining good relations with the population and local authorities. In the general sense this qualification was justified, but stressing the black-and-

⁵⁶⁸ SMG/Debrief. *Standing Orders Dutchbat 2/3* Chapter 3 operations Appendix 7: SOP patrols.

⁵⁶⁹ SMG/Debrief. *Standing Orders Dutchbat 2/3* Chapter 3 operations Appendix 7: SOP patrols. Netherlands Army, Voorschrift 2-1393: *Handboek voor de diensten bij vredesmachten in internationaal verband*; chapter 21.

⁵⁷⁰ CRST. no. CRST/374. 06/06/9, Brantz to BLS et al., appendix: Report on trip to Bosnië-Herzegovina, p.4. Ibidem: C-KCT to CS Crisis Staff, 31/05/94. Interview Col. P.L.E.M. Everts, 27/09/01.

⁵⁷¹ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 19/04/94.

white contrasts between Dutchbat I on the one hand and Dutchbat II and III on the other could create a misleading picture.

For Dutchbat I, the first months of the mission were the most difficult. In the operational respect, uncertainty existed at the start about the area of operation and the dislocation. Since 1 December, the battalion had geared up for deployment in Srebrenica and Zepa, but this came unglued after arrival in Bosnia thanks to the decision of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose to deploy A-Company temporarily at Tuzla Air Base. Only in the course of May did the divided performance of Dutchbat take on a definitive character, with the allocation of Simin Han to A-Company and the extension of the stay of the Ukrainian battalion in Zepa. For the operational deployment of the other companies in Srebrenica this had no essential consequences, because Srebrenica and Zepa would not form a connected area of deployment. What did fall away were the advantages of the geographical proximity of each other's area of operation and the possibilities of gathering and exchanging information. Of more influence was the late arrival of C-Company, the engineering detachment and parts of the staff and service companies as a result of Bosnian-Serb refusal to grant the convoys permission to use the road. For the entire month of March, B-Company was alone in a completely new area of operation. It had to take on the operational tasks under relatively poor living and working conditions.

Improvement of the compound in Srebrenica got slowly under way and the stay at the observation posts in dome tents drew heavily on the stamina of the personnel. Along with the normal duties of patrols, manning the observation posts, and protecting the Dutchbat compound in Srebrenica, the Weapon Collection Point and the post-office building (headquarters for the UNMOs), the engineering detachment began the 'spring-cleaning' of the compound with the support of B-Company: to start with, an improvement of security by fencing off the compound with barbed wire, the installation of lighting and the building of new sentry posts. Within the compound this took the form of building a new Ops room, dining hall, kitchen and encampment, and hardening of the parking area surface. For the time being, the compound had to do without air-raid shelters.⁵⁷²

Other than provided for in the operational plan of Battalion Commander Vermeulen, Dutchbat I did not proceed to increase the number of observation posts from 8 to 13, as the Canadian Battalion Commander Bouchard had advised. In the first month, this was mainly a question of insufficient personnel capacity: in March 1994 Dutchbat was operating at the same strength as the Canadian battalion and, according to Company Commander Jellema, his unit had its hands full with the operational tasks in the entire enclave. After the take-over of the enclave by Dutchbat, performance in this still largely unknown area of operation demanded extra attention and care for two reasons: the previously mentioned tension in the enclave surrounding the departure of the Canadian battalion and the growing tension between the VRS and ABiH in the area between the southern border of the enclave and Zepa. In these first weeks, Dutchbat was tested by the two warring factions on the question of whether it tended to be accommodating or uncompromising. This was done both in a friendly and in a provocative way. In both variants the warring factions urged the building of more observation posts and showed their readiness to give advice to the newcomers. At the same time, both parties used military action to test Dutchbat's mettle.

The Canadian battalion had not maintained any direct contacts with the ABiH since its arrival in April 1993. It had held the view that the ABiH in the enclave had ceased to exist through official disarmament. The Canadian battalion leadership communicated with ABiH Commander Naser Oric and his people via the civil authorities in the enclave. Dutchbat, on the other hand, talked directly with the ABiH. The small group of quartermasters began doing so in February 1994. Good contact, said Captain Van de Have

⁵⁷² Jellema, *First-In*, 106-107. Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 10/03/94.

‘...was very much worth the trouble (...) even though (...) the possibility exists that we will be led up the garden path. Nevertheless they are people who have very great influence on the population and, in my view, it would not make sense not to accept them as interlocutors. Only in this way can we confront them with certain actions, without immediately being taken for the black sheep ourselves via the enormous gossip factory in Srebrenica.’⁵⁷³

In any case, these direct contacts at the military level switched off the filter of the civil authorities in communication between the VRS and ABiH and put Dutchbat in the position that it could convey messages without the intervention of a third party. Dutchbat could also bring up matters and evaluate the reactions they produced. This approach worked fairly well at the military level. The contacts were maintained by the Dutchbat liaison team, in cooperation with the UNMO team. In exceptional cases – such as a meeting with the Commander of the Drina corps, General Zivanovic, or an official meeting between the ABiH and VRS under chairmanship of Dutchbat – Dutchbat Commander Vermeulen took part in the talks.

This direct communication also had advantages for the warring factions. It enabled both parties to familiarize themselves with the reading of the other party about the facts behind incidents and gave them the chance to set off their own views against them. This created a better flow of information; it was possible to refute rumours and prevent the escalation of particular developments. In the general sense, this approach fit within the campaign plan of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose, but without being able to create a new climate between the two parties. After several weeks in the enclave Vermeulen noted that, despite all appearances of rapprochement, the climate of fundamental mutual distrust between the two parties continued to exist. To him it seemed impossible that in the circumstances a solution could come to essential questions such as the determination of the border of the enclave or the completion of demilitarization and the setting up of a buffer zone that would follow in its wake.⁵⁷⁴ Furthermore, Dutchbat felt handicapped by the order to practice impartiality in the context of the UN peace mission. To UNPROFOR, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and Dutchbat the idea applied to the same degree that any appearance of prejudice would bring the mission into discredit. The possibilities for action were therefore limited, but management of occasional tension was not ruled out in advance.

For Dutchbat, it was therefore essential to keep the trust of both parties. Despite its starting point of impartiality, Dutchbat occupied a different position for both parties. For the ABiH, Dutchbat primarily represented protection against the VRS, but evidently protection of relative value. Naser Oric did not want to trust the UN for the defence of the enclave against a VRS attack, despite an emphatic guarantee from Vermeulen. The lack of trust by the leadership of the ABiH was the consequence of a different view of the role of UNPROFOR: Naser Oric assumed that the UNPROFOR task was to oppose VRS aggression. He saw few instances of this in daily practice. Dutchbat did not respond actively to VRS penetration of the region of the Safe Area and was just as little prepared to take measures to reduce the Bosnian-Serb threat to the enclave. Dutchbat did rather the opposite: it hindered the ABiH in preparing the defence of its own terrain by seizing weapons, registering its protest against the construction of positions and taking action against the construction of positions and other activities of a military nature.⁵⁷⁵

Such perceptions were less defining for the position of Dutchbat towards the VRS. Officially, the Dutchbat responsibility for the enclave ended at the ceasefire line, behind which the Bosnian-Serb area began. For the performance of its task Dutchbat depended on the cooperation of the VRS. It needed the VRS to create and maintain a situation of order within the enclave and on the ceasefire line. At the same time Dutchbat depended on the cooperation of the VRS for its own resupplying and the

⁵⁷³ CRST. Superintrep enclave Srebrenica, appendix: Report on talks February-March 1994: meeting 27/02/94.

⁵⁷⁴ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 18/04/94 and 29/04/94.

⁵⁷⁵ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 13/05/94.

resupplying of the enclave itself. From its arrival in the enclave Dutchbat aimed at establishing a good working relation with the VRS and believed it had succeeded reasonably well in this. Vermeulen also had the impression that the VRS appreciated the active mediation of Dutchbat.⁵⁷⁶ However, he did not let him be lulled into a false sense of security. The Dutch Battalion Commander had also noted that the VRS used permits for convoys as a show of strength and to exert pressure. He parried VRS urgings to intensify patrolling and set up new observation posts along with the existing eight with a referral to letting through all convoys as the condition for optimal functioning of his battalion.⁵⁷⁷ It escaped him just as little that concealed behind the apparent VRS friendliness was the idea of keeping the enclave in a stranglehold. The VRS was prepared to put Dutchbat on the trail of ABiH activities outside the enclave, but it hid its own movements and intentions to a great degree.

Despite the frequent communication with the warring factions –albeit that these were different in nature –Dutchbat groped continually in the dark about the doings of both parties in and directly outside the enclave. The means to keep an eye on these activities were limited due to the lack of the necessary Intelligence. Within the enclave Dutchbat could use patrols to keep somewhat abreast of the activities of the ABiH and infiltrations by the VRS. The observation posts and patrols along the ceasefire line delivered some information about activities around the line. Both warring factions were interested in the use of these operational means by Dutchbat and at the start of its mission they gave their unsolicited advice for using them to the maximum.

Vermeulen did not reject such advice, as in the case of an offer by Oric. Oric knew the terrain like the back of his hand and so, on 27 February 1994 several officers of the quartermaster group accompanied him on reconnaissance in the south-western part of the enclave. Oric mainly pointed out sites in disputed territory and beyond the ceasefire line which, one after the other, would turn out to be highly useful positions for observation posts.⁵⁷⁸ Oric later advised placing a permanent observation post near the Swedish Shelter Project, but Dutchbat restricted itself in early March to stationing a YPR (a tracked armoured vehicle) there during the night on account of unrest on the south side of the enclave.⁵⁷⁹

The VRS liaison officer Vukovic also wanted to point out sites suitable for Dutchbat observation posts. To the disappointment of Dutchbat this did not mean a joint reconnaissance of the ceasefire line on the VRS side. Vukovic sufficed with handing over a map on 21 March on which proposals for UNPROFOR and VRS posts were indicated. The reaction to the proposals of both parties was identical: the Dutchbat commander would study the proposals and inform the parties of his decision.⁵⁸⁰ It is not clear what Dutchbat did with the ABiH and VRS proposals, but it could not have been much. Not even OP-Q was relocated to a higher position with a better view, despite the advice given on this matter.⁵⁸¹

There was also no expansion from 8 to 13 observation posts after the deployment of C-Company in early April. Execution of the original operation plan would mean that B-Company had to permanently man seven observation posts and C-Company six. Per company this would create too great a workload. On the initiative of both Company Commanders, E. Jellema and L. van Gool, and the Deputy Officer of Operational Affairs, Vermeulen decided to maintain the existing eight observation posts, i.e. OP-C, OP-E, OP-F and OP-H (near the Swedish Shelter Project) in the B-Company sector and OP-N, OP-A, OP-Q and OP-R in the C-Company sector.

⁵⁷⁶ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 14/05/94.

⁵⁷⁷ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 17/03/94 and 17/04/94

⁵⁷⁸ CRST. Supintrep enclave Srebrenica, appendix: Report on talks February-March1994: meeting 19/02/94, 26/02/94 and 27/02/94. Jellema, *First-In*, pp. 85-86.

⁵⁷⁹ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 07/03/94.

⁵⁸⁰ CRST. Superintrep enclave Srebrenica, appendix: Report on talks February-March1994: meeting 25/02/94. Defensie, Situatierapporten. Situation report Dutchbat, 09/03/94, 17/03/94 and 21/03/94.

⁵⁸¹ Jansen, *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 102.

On the basis of experience acquired in Lebanon with permanent and temporary posts, there also came temporary observation posts that were manned for a short period. Construction of these posts began in the course of May. These temporary observation posts - OP-M and OP-O in the northern sector and OP-B, OP-D and OP-G in the southern sector - were old observation posts of the Canadian battalion, which had abandoned them after the cuts in October 1993.⁵⁸² This change in the operation plan was the result of practical and operational considerations. Because returning soldiers on furlough stayed away longer through refusal of VRS safe passage permits and departing soldiers on furlough departed on time, there were fewer personnel available permanently than had been planned. Also, the deployment of as much capacity as possible at the observation posts would put other operational tasks in a tight corner.

The restriction of permanent posts to eight and the allocation of five temporary posts made it possible to guarantee the required manning by nine people and to use the remaining capacity for other tasks: guard duty and standby duty for the Quick Reaction Force, building the temporary posts, a more ample social patrol and other patrols and help in construction work. In this way rest and variation in tasks for the personnel were also possible. In the end, it remained possible to stay flexible in performance and capitalize on the wishes of the VRS. For example, in April, Vermeulen considered for some time new tasks resulting from the opening of the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road: escorting civilian traffic on the road to the bauxite mine and reinforcement of OP-E.⁵⁸³

15. Limited possibilities in times of tension

The change in the operational plan also stems from the experience of Dutchbat in the first weeks of its performance in Srebrenica. These had been uneasy weeks: they had begun with the unrest south of the enclave when the VRS had occupied positions in the no-man's-land between Srebrenica and Zepa. In the same early period, rumours circulated about counteractions by Muslims, the rumours had probably been inspired by Naser Oric. Shortly thereafter the VRS asked to use the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road, a request that in any case caused due unrest at Dutchbat: 'If the BSA [VRS] will use force to get access to this road then Dutchbat is unable to stop them.'⁵⁸⁴ The next signal came from the already mentioned rumours at the start of the crisis surrounding the Safe Area Gorazde about an ABiH attack on Srebrenica on 7 April, while the confrontations between the ABiH and the VRS also increased in the south-west of the enclave.

This was a process of action and reaction, to which proposals or requests were linked to action by Dutchbat. Through frequent talks with both parties, this seemed to be somewhat manageable. In most cases, Dutchbat responded to the increasing tension with more intensive patrolling. For reasons of safety, the patrol routes were scouted in most cases together with the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon and people from the Explosives Disposal Unit. From April 1994 Vermeulen regularly gave orders for intensive patrolling. In situations of unrest, this instrument indeed appeared to help as a signal to the warring factions. In the event of shelling by the VRS – as in Slatina in June 1994 – patrolling was also meant as a positive sign for the population. In early April, by intensive patrolling in the south-west of the enclave, Vermeulen demonstrated that he recognized the tension and wanted to restore order to the ceasefire line.⁵⁸⁵ Occupying a temporary observation post was also a means of giving a signal of alertness to the warring factions at times of increasing tension. That these means were not always sufficient to reduce tension was something Vermeulen found out for himself in June in the case of Slatina.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸² Interview D. MacIssac, 16/11/99.

⁵⁸³ Jellema, *First-In*, pp. 147-148.

⁵⁸⁴ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 20/03/94.

⁵⁸⁵ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 31/03/9403/04/94. Jellema, *First-In*, p. 127.

⁵⁸⁶ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 16/06/94.

Unrest and mounting tension were generally the consequence of external developments. As soon as political or military tension rose elsewhere in Bosnia, Srebrenica also prepared itself for escalation of the conflict. With the ABiH this was evidenced by the digging of new positions, the shelling of VRS positions and actions on Bosnian-Serb terrain. The VRS responded from its side by shelling ABiH positions, with threats of targeted fire, and one case with artillery shelling of the town when the ABiH persisted in certain activities on the ceasefire line or beyond it. Of course, not all tension arose through external impulses. A murder in the enclave or Muslim farmers mowing grass on or over the ceasefire line had the same effect. There was always something that occurred that was good for generating tension, blaming the other party or calling for Dutchbat action under compelling referral to the mandate of the peacekeeping force.

In fact, Dutchbat had few means to control unrest. It could not use any force of arms and it mainly tried to talk with both parties and the administration of the Opstina to improve the situation in the enclave. The liaison team succeeded in this in cooperation with the UNMO team in Srebrenica. That does not mean, it should be said, that the operational activity of Dutchbat I became easier in the course of the mission. There was a continual series of incidents that were caused by the warring factions. The shelling of observation posts, patrols and compounds was a much-used instrument.⁵⁸⁷ Further, the VRS could use the opening and shutting of the logistical tap to disrupt Dutchbat action. This happened mainly in March and April 1994 and primarily had a disruptive effect on the construction of observation posts and compounds. The negative effect on general resupplying was not great. However, this did not hinder Vermeulen, from keenly sharpening his reactions to the disruption of the rhythm of two convoys per week. He held strictly to the UNPROFOR regulation that supplies for at least two weeks had to be present. As soon as that point approached for the diesel stocks, i.e. a stock of 45,000 tons, he restricted the use of vehicles and switched to patrols on foot. From June 1994, Dutchbat had an ample stock position again.⁵⁸⁸

16. Organizational changes at Dutchbat II

On 21 July 1994 Dutchbat II took over the tasks of the battalion of Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen. The Dutchbat II Commander, Lieutenant Colonel P.L.E.M. Everts, approached the mission from the perspective of the continuity of his air mobile battalion. During training he had placed emphasis on the battalion as unit, where mutual cooperation was important – in part because his battalion would have to continue as an air mobile unit after the mission in Bosnia. From the beginning, therefore, Everts had distributed the new personnel that came from the School Company over his three companies, this in order to blend in the people of the different training groups. He saw the fact that one company had to go to Simin Han as breaking up this approach. He assigned B-Company to Simin Han because Major E. Hoogendoorn had experience as a Company Commander. Like his predecessor Vermeulen, Everts stationed the deputy battalion commander and several members of his staff in Simin Han, so that B-Company could act as an independent unit. Colonel Everts maintained the Dutchbat unit in his dealings with the headquarters of Sector North East in Tuzla: he did not allow direct orders to Simin Han and required that all business with B-Company go through him.⁵⁸⁹

17. Dutchbat II: a logistical squeeze and operations on foot

In March and April 1994, the refusal of permits for Support Command convoys from Lukavac to Srebrenica, meant that Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen had mainly experienced obstruction in the deployment and execution of engineering activities, but the stock level in general had continued to be

⁵⁸⁷ Jellema, *First-In*, pp. 100-170 passim gives numerous examples.

⁵⁸⁸ Various situation reports. Examples of Vermeulen protests about the stalled resupplying in Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/04/94, 13/04/94 and 02/05/94.

⁵⁸⁹ Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 27/09/94, Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 02/08/94 and 24/08/94.

satisfactory. Dutchbat I even turned out to be able to build up substantial stocks. This was evident, for example, from the 120 tons of diesel that Dutchbat I transferred to Dutchbat II on 21 July.⁵⁹⁰ But at Dutchbat II the frequency of refusal of permits for logistical convoys increased, so that the battalion ate into its stocks substantially from late July and the operational effort became hard-pressed as a result. Dutchbat II Commander Everts reported in late July that the VRS was trying 'to cut off the enclave completely';⁵⁹¹ a week later he feared that the operational level would have to drop through lack of diesel, oil and spare parts for vehicles and YPRs. In August he applied for the first time a new 'concept of operations' that would be used often and at length in the ensuing five months as a 'minimize program' and 'super-minimize program'.⁵⁹²

In the presence of Dutchbat II, the logistical situation became more and more problematic. The supply line from Lukavac to Srebrenica was long and went over Bosnian-Serb terrain to an important extent. The VRS authorities used to refuse permits to UNPROFOR convoys for a wide range of reasons. This was done mainly in situations of serious confrontation between UNPROFOR and the VRS, particularly after the provision of Close Air Support and switching over to air strikes elsewhere in Bosnia, as happened during the Gorazde crisis in April 1994 and the crisis in the Bihac in October-November 1994. The VRS also refused road use in reprisal against what it considered a pro-Muslim performance of UNPROFOR. Another much-used argument was that UNPROFOR did not want to pay for road use and the damage it caused. Apart from these centrally employed arguments, the decision of a local commander could also cause the temporary stagnation in resupplying.

Dutchbat was extra vulnerable due to the length of the supply route. Because UNPROFOR could only use a limited number of roads in Republika Srpska, each convoy from Lukavac had to make a big detour via Visoko around Sarajevo to Podromanija, Vlasenica and Zvornik and on to Srebrenica. This was a round-trip distance of 250 km for which a convoy needed four days under normal conditions.⁵⁹³ Alternative routes were suggested and considered, but they provided no solution to the problem because the gain consisted at most of a shortening of the journey over Bosnian-Serb terrain. A genuine reduction of the distance by driving from Vlasenica via Milici and Bratunac to Srebrenica was ruled out by the VRS: the road had tactical military significance for the VRS and, furthermore, the ABiH would make it unsafe by undertaking subversive activities.⁵⁹⁴

Several weeks after his arrival, Everts proposed developing a new supply route via Hungary through Serbia to Zvornik. His own recent experience was that occasional supply via Hungary proceeded satisfactorily.⁵⁹⁵ The VRS proposed an alternative northern route via Zagreb and Serbia, but Dutchbat said this would not be any improvement. Ultimately, Dutchbat concentrated on improving the existing route itself. It asked for the cooperation of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in safeguarding logistical convoys to Srebrenica via Sarajevo. After a raid on a convoy at Podromanija, Dutchbat requested a YPR escort for logistical convoys between Sarajevo and Podromanija.⁵⁹⁶ Aside from taking occasional steps, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command could also do little to improve the resupplying of Dutchbat. As long as VRS headquarters used permits for logistical convoys as a means to put UNPROFOR under pressure, the route did not matter. In that perspective, the problems of the route were of secondary importance.

The consequence was that the resupplying of Dutchbat became a structural problem from the summer of 1994. In August, requests for permits for road use were granted to only 9 of 38 applicant convoys. Only two of these 9 convoys were logistical convoys; the seven others transported soldiers on

⁵⁹⁰ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 21/07/94.

⁵⁹¹ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 24/07/94, 26/07/94 and 27/07/94.

⁵⁹² Def. Situation report Dutchbat 02/08/94 and 04/08/94.

⁵⁹³ Jansen, *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 75. Def., LL OPS BLS Box 4: no.LL/406/48, W. van Dullemen, 'Design, organization and "Lessons Learned" of the Support Command'. (Lecture for Annual Intendancy Support Group Meeting 1994), p. 4.

⁵⁹⁴ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 13/07/94

⁵⁹⁵ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 26/07/94.

⁵⁹⁶ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 20/07/94, 24/07/94 and 09/10/94.

furlough (three convoys), blood plasma (two convoys) and medical supplies (two convoys).⁵⁹⁷ The problems arose particularly with regard to fuel and foodstuffs, because two convoys per week were for the supply of these goods that were needed in normal resupplying. Diesel oil was a primary necessity of life for Dutchbat. Under normal conditions, it consumed 4000 litres per day in the enclave, 3000 under economizing conditions. The major part was needed for the use of vehicles (Mercedes-Benz jeeps, trucks and YPRs) but, because of the lack of electricity in the compounds, diesel was also essential to generate power for all kinds of equipment, for lighting and for heating workspaces and water. According to the UNPROFOR regulations the minimum stock was a two-week supply. Thus, Dutchbat had to stick to a minimum stock of 42,000 litres.⁵⁹⁸ Just as problematic was the supply of fresh food and other provisions. A modest part of this problem was solved by an agreement with the VRS about the purchase of soft drinks, beer, fresh vegetables and fruit in Bratunac.⁵⁹⁹

Dutchbat II geared itself up quickly to small stocks of fuel and food and developed an operational concept tailored to this – the already mentioned minimize program. In late July 1994, the use of vehicles became restricted at Dutchbat II. On 10 August the use of vehicles was halted altogether. A small improvement materialized with the arrival of a convoy with diesel oil and spare parts for wheeled vehicles but, nevertheless, the use of wheeled vehicles had to be prohibited for the first time in late August. All patrols were mounted on foot.⁶⁰⁰ Thereafter the minimize program took on clearer contours. It consisted of three phases. In the first phase, the use of generators was restricted to several hours per day. That meant cold showers, little electric lighting and no use of washing machines. In the second phase the use of vehicles was restricted to essential trips. All operational tasks such as patrols and resupplying of the compound in Srebrenica were done on foot; visits to and support for observation posts were no longer possible; UNMOs and UnCivPol received only a limited amount of diesel and road repairs in the enclave were halted.

In the third phase the restrictions went a step further. Resupplying of observation posts was restricted to once per week; only the battalion commander and the company commanders were allowed to use their vehicles; the use of personal coffee machines was prohibited and lights had to be used as little as possible. Humanitarian aid was also restricted. For example, during harvest time, the restrictions meant that the transport of threshed grain to the central storage shed could no longer be done automatically. The daily delivery of 135 litres of diesel to the Opstina for the nine mowing and threshing machines in the enclave was carried out as usual between 5 August and mid-September.⁶⁰¹

Except for small interruptions, the minimize programme was in effect in its different gradations from September until the departure in January 1995. On account of the connection with the poor food resupplying, the self-imposed restrictions drew heavily on the personnel. Almost all distances had to be walked and that required ‘a lot of energy’.⁶⁰² This could only be taken off the daily menu to a small degree. In late October, an end came to the supply of fresh food and also to the stock of combat rations provided by UNPROFOR – popularly known as the ‘French tinned fodder’ that did not appeal to Dutch tastes – visibly decreased. Meals were made up from the available supply and the individual ration was temporarily restricted from 26 October.⁶⁰³ Thereafter the supply of food improved somewhat compared with that for fuel, but there were never ample stocks or a regular supply of fresh

⁵⁹⁷ Def. Situation reports, Fax no.067, HQ Dutchbat to Netherlands Army Sitsen, 02/09/94 ‘Answers to questions for Col. Brantz’.

⁵⁹⁸ Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 27/09/01. Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 02/09/94 and 08/09/94. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 96-97.

⁵⁹⁹ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 03/08/94 and 09/08/94.

⁶⁰⁰ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 10/08/94, 14/08/94, 23/08/94, 26/08/94 and 28/08/94. For the threshing machines see among others Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 05/08/94 and 17/09/94. The Opstina and the farmers agreed that in exchange for the diesel oil the Opstina would receive 10% of the expected harvest of 1400 tons for general distribution. According to the mayor the Opstina had received 24 tons. Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 05/10/94.

⁶⁰¹ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 15/09/94 and 5/10/94.

⁶⁰² Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 25/10/94.

⁶⁰³ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 25/10/94, 27/10/94 and 28/10/94. Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 27/09/01.

food. Dutchbat II pointed out the operational consequences of the minimize programme from the very start. Limited vehicle use seemed rather innocent but soon Battalion Commander Everts made clear in his daily reports that the operational consequences deserved serious attention. The 26 August announcement of the restriction of the operational task to foot patrols was undoubtedly an overly concise picture of the activities. Everts' warning a few days later that the battalion 'will very soon not be in a position to perform its tasks as required' was followed two weeks later by the statement that the fuel shortage 'leads to a very decreasing performance'.⁶⁰⁴ From early October there was sufficient reason to recognize the long-term consequences of a fuel shortage. Mladic decided to block all UNPROFOR fuel convoys in response to Belgrade's closing of the border between the former Yugoslavia and the Republika Srpska.⁶⁰⁵

Dutchbat calculated that without resupplying of diesel it could still be able to function at minimum level until mid-October, and that carrying out its order thereafter would be 'no longer feasible'.⁶⁰⁶ Things did not reach that point, but a full resumption of the operational task would also fail to materialize. For the rest, the operational effort was dependent on more than diesel fuel; a shortage of spare parts also began to take its toll. Despite the irregularity of supply Dutchbat could still function somewhat. It had in fact already begun with the change-over to replacement of electricity generators and diesel-fuelled heaters by wood-fired stoves. A substantial stock of wood had been laid up at the observation posts. Chopping and splitting wood was a permanent part of the daily chores.⁶⁰⁷ In late November, at the compound in Potocari, construction began on a hydro-electric facility that could generate 8 KW for maintaining the communication links.⁶⁰⁸ Under these conditions only minimum task performance was still possible from 25 November 1994: patrols on foot to safeguard Dutchbat positions in the immediate vicinity of compounds and observation posts. After the arrival of a convoy on 5 December some improvement appeared slowly and there was a resumption of the operational tasks.⁶⁰⁹ The extremely lame resupply of fuel to Dutchbat was the result of a general VRS blockade. Since the blockade started in October, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had tried to persuade the VRS to let the fuel convoys through. UNPROFOR refused to go into the demand to transfer a part of the diesel, but was prepared to help in maintaining the roads during the winter.⁶¹⁰ The implementation of this agreement ran aground in mid-November because of the NATO air strikes against the VRS in Bihac. Almost all UNPROFOR and UNHCR transport in Bosnia came to a halt as a result. An emergency situation also prevailed in the other eastern enclaves and UNPROFOR 'largely ceased to function' but, according to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, the situation in Srebrenica was the worst: UNHCR had run out of stocks and the VRS had begun lightning raids on the enclave.⁶¹¹ Bosnia-Herzegovina Command also realized that the convoy of 5 December 1994 was just a drop in the ocean and that the UNPROFOR task in the enclave was seriously endangered by persistent VRS attacks, but was unable to do anything about it.⁶¹²

18. Observation posts, patrols and mine incidents

The lightning raids and minor attacks of November and December by the VRS within the enclave were not isolated events. Within three days after the transfer of command on 21 July Dutchbat II was

⁶⁰⁴ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 26/08/94, 30/08/94 and 12/09/94.

⁶⁰⁵ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120 file: Civil Affairs SNE BHC situation reports 1994: no. CCA/BHC-362, Weekly Political Assessment no. 87, 2 – 8 Oct 94, 08/10/94.

⁶⁰⁶ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 04/10/94.

⁶⁰⁷ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 05/10/94 and 24/11/94. Jansen, *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 63. Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 27/09/94.

⁶⁰⁸ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 29/11/94.

⁶⁰⁹ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 05/12/94.

⁶¹⁰ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120 file: Civil Affairs Sarajevo. Weekly Situation report 05/11/94 and 9/11/94.

⁶¹¹ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120 file: Civil Affairs Sarajevo. Weekly Situation report 26/11/94 and 03/12/94.

⁶¹² UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120 file: Civil Affairs Sarajevo. Weekly Situation report 10/12/94.

confronted with two firing close incidents at OP-F. They were the start of a number of confrontations of the battalion with VRS violence that culminated in mid-August in two serious casualties. On 26 July the compound was shelled and the medical station was also hit.⁶¹³

August began quietly. In the neighbourhood of OP-R at Zalazje a YPR armoured car of C-Company's Quick Reaction Force strayed onto Bosnian-Serb terrain during a route reconnaissance: the VRS asked politely that it return to the enclave. On 9 August the first two patrols were shelled.⁶¹⁴ The next day, Dutchbat discovered that the VRS had built a position within the enclave along the road to OP-R and had protected it with sixteen mines. From that vantage point the VRS had a view of the road from Srebrenica to Zalazje and also of the route to the observation posts OP-Q and OP-R. Dutchbat decided to clear the mines and destroy the position. Colonel Vukovic heard about the 'anger and irritation' this provocation caused when, alerted by his own soldiers, he showed up at OP-R.

Dutchbat placed a temporary observation post (OP-Z) at the site of the cleared VRS position. Dutchbat did not rule out that the VRS-provocation was either a conscious attempt to test the reaction of Dutchbat or to bring the observation posts under its control.⁶¹⁵ A week later a jeep en route to OP-R drove over an anti-personnel mine. After the discovery of two anti-tank mines, the detachment of the Explosives Disposal Unit went into action; it was protected by the Quick Reaction Force of C-Company under the command of Sergeant M. Jacobs. After clearance, work was broken off. However, while getting into the YPR, the Quick Reaction Force Commander stepped on an anti-personnel mine and was seriously wounded. Battalion Commander Everts took this incident very seriously; he saw it as a VRS response to the incident a week earlier, 'a deliberate hostility against Dutchbat'.⁶¹⁶

The next day, a YPR of the resupplying group was heavily damaged on the road to OP-R, but there were no injuries this time. The events at this observation post made a deep impression on Dutchbat II, because it was the first confrontation with wounded people in its own ranks. The same day, 18 August, this impression was further reinforced when the patrol commander of a platoon from the same C-Company was seriously wounded while inspecting ABiH positions during a patrol. Sergeant E. de Wolf survived thanks to effective action by a medic and transport by his own group on an improvised stretcher. His lower left leg had to be amputated.⁶¹⁷

With strict application of the Rules of Engagement Dutchbat II could have interpreted the VRS action of 10 August as an obstruction to the performance of its task, and the mine incident of 17 August as the use of force against UN personnel. Responding with force was ruled out, however, because retaliatory actions were prohibited according to the same rules of conduct. Dutchbat faced the question of whether serious incidents such as these ought to be tolerated. A 'normal' military response was ruled out by these same Rules of Engagement. A local protest and a request to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command to submit a protest against this attack on UN personnel to VRS headquarters in Pale were, in fact, the only possibilities for reaction against the VRS. It was also relevant to make it clear to the VRS that Dutchbat was keeping a sharp eye on new activities within the enclave. Therefore, a temporary observation post came into use for a week at the site of the accident at OP-R. Later a temporary observation post (OP-G) also went up more to the south in the vicinity of Crni Guber on account of possible new VRS positions within the enclave. With a view to the safety of Dutchbat, the road to OP-R was patrolled every morning from 18 August by an YPR equipped with a so-called sweeper that checked for the presence of mines.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹³ Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, pp. 34-35.

⁶¹⁴ Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 78. Def. Situation reports (NIOD doss. 331), Milinfo Dutchbat, 05/08/94.

⁶¹⁵ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 10/08/94 and 11/08/94. Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 79. Dutchbat was evidently unaware that the VRS had withdrawn from the vicinity of OP-R in April 1993 upon the determination of the ceasefire line. See Part II, Chapter 5.

⁶¹⁶ Milinfo Dutchbat, 18/08/94 and Def, Situation report Dutchbat, 17/08/94.

⁶¹⁷ Milinfo Dutchbat, 18/08/94 and Def, Situation report Dutchbat, 18/08/94.

⁶¹⁸ Def, Situationreports. Fax no.067, HQ Dutchbat to Netherlands Army Sitcen, 02/09/94 'Answers to questions for Col.Brantz'. Jansen, *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 81.

The mine incidents on 17 and 18 August were a climax to personal casualties through action by one of the warring factions. They brought the risks of participating in a peace mission into Dutchbat's own surroundings. Even so, these incidents were an exception in the use of force by the warring factions against Dutchbat II. Shelling of the compound, observation posts and patrols occurred much more frequently. The specific circumstances of many incidents is not easy to detail due to the loss of the 'firing close' reports themselves or by the gaps in the daily reports (Milinfos) saved. In most cases, the situation reports contain no more than a reference to the 'firing close' reports, letting a brief indication suffice. Nevertheless, on the basis of the daily reports a picture can be reconstructed of the seriousness of the incidents and the context in which they took place.

Hardly any 'firing close' incidents occurred in July and August.⁶¹⁹ In September the number rose to nine, as opposed to two in August. October and November were characterized by many incidents, 16 and 14 respectively; December, with 10 incidents, of which two on the same day and at the same location, was somewhat quieter. After the ceasefire brought about by former US President Carter went into affect, the final weeks of Dutchbat II proceeded without any incidents. Other than this, it is difficult to detect a pattern in incidents. Shelling of the compound in Potocari occurred more than once and the medical station was hit several times. Investigation by the Explosives Disposal Unit showed in most cases that the ordinance was fired from within the enclave. That 'people of the enclave are shooting at Dutchbat' aroused 'anger and disbelief' in the battalion, as stated in the situation report.⁶²⁰

After the confrontation in August 1994 no further incidents occurred around OP-R on the north-eastern side of the enclave. In general, more incidents occurred around the observation posts in the north-western part: OP-N, OP-A and OP-C. It was in this area that most shelling of patrols took place. Although the incidents were already serious in themselves, the reports create the impression that most were short in duration and caused no escalation of hostilities in the relationship between Dutchbat and the warring factions. In three cases a Quick Reaction Force was deployed without immediately signalling the end of the shelling, it should be said. On 31 October, OP-A was regularly shelled for half an hour. Neither the first response – firing flares – nor the second – firing warning shots over the heads of the attackers – had any effect. Deployment of the Quick Reaction Force also achieved no results. The shelling only ended after NATO warplanes had fired several flares in warning at the request of the Forward Air Control team.⁶²¹ Deployment of the Quick Reaction Force met with more success at OP-N in late November: the attackers of a C-Company patrol kept on firing after taking answering fire from the patrol. Only when the Quick Reaction Force appeared did the VRS withdraw.⁶²²

After each shelling, Dutchbat submitted a protest to the party that it held responsible. Both warring factions were guilty of shelling Dutchbat. Acceptance of responsibility was not common. The VRS regularly attributed the shelling of a patrol or observation post to the undisciplined behaviour or drunkenness of soldiers in VRS positions and announced punishment of the guilty parties or the issuing of clearer instructions. In most cases, the ABiH attributed incidents to the VRS and to groups that were not under their command. There was one essential difference: protests to the ABiH could always be conveyed; for the VRS it often cost a great deal of trouble to make an appointment with liaison officer Vukovic or Major Nikolic.

The question of whether Dutchbat responded alertly to incidents is difficult to answer in the general sense. In many cases these incidents involved one or several shots. The Rules of Engagement called for utmost care in the use of weapons. Dutchbat generally complied: in a single case, the available reports spoke of warning shots and there was sporadic response with targeted fire. In a small number of cases the Quick Reaction Force was deployed, with varying degrees of success. In exceptional cases,

⁶¹⁹ This reconstruction is based on the situation reports and milinfos of Dutchbat II and Jansen, *Dutchbat on Tour* (chronological overviews), *passim*.

⁶²⁰ Def. Situation report Dutchbat, 30/09/94.

⁶²¹ Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 114; Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 31/10/94

⁶²² Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, 130. Def. Situation reports. Situation report Dutchbat, 29/11/94.

alternative means were also used. Early September 1994, a shelling of OP-M came to an end after a Forward Air Controller team on a Close Air Support exercise asked two F-16s to fly over the area and drop flares. Sometimes the other warring party provided assistance: on 30 December a VRS post opened fire on two armed Muslims who had taken flight after warning shots from a Dutchbat patrol.⁶²³ Altogether, Dutchbat performance in ‘firing close’ incidents was very restrained. Each incident was analysed on its own merits. Dutchbat seldom found a link between the incidents. However, this did not diminish the irritation and anger prompted by such incidents, certainly not when, as on 3 November, the transport of a casualty was made impossible by the continuance of the shelling.⁶²⁴

The question arises of whether a different interpretation of the Rules of Engagement – with more emphasis on the element of obstructing execution of the mandate and the quicker use of force – would have been of influence on the warring factions and could have reduced the number of incidents. This question reverts back to the idea of some UNPROFOR commanders – such as Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose – that a rapid and clear response to violence against UNPROFOR with the use of weapons would win respect from the warring factions and impress upon them that UNPROFOR was not to be trifled with.⁶²⁵ Whether such robust action in the enclave Srebrenica would have changed the behaviour of the warring factions is not certain. It is important to see that the robust action called for by Rose and others only had effect in special situations and was never used, for example, in passing through checkpoints. In Srebrenica the ABiH and the VRS had other means at their command to respond to ‘robust action’ and to hamper Dutchbat in carrying out its tasks. The VRS could obstruct the resupplying of Dutchbat and the ABiH could create serious problems for Dutchbat by inciting the population against the battalion or by provoking the VRS.

There was another side to the coin in the non-‘robust’ application of the Rules of Engagement in the enclave. In accordance with the fundamentals of a peace mission, UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Dutchbat in Srebrenica adopted a stance as impartial, neutral mediator with a limited task that had been formulated by the Security Council. Other than the name of the peacekeeping force suggests, UNPROFOR in Bosnia was not in essence a ‘protection force’. As described earlier its primary task was to facilitate humanitarian aid by international aid organisations such as the UNHCR while, in the Safe Areas, UNPROFOR was there to deter attacks through its presence. The warring factions each interpreted this complicated mandate in their own way. On the Muslim side, the authorities said in general that the task of UNPROFOR was to call a halt to further aggression by the Bosnian-Serbs. In concrete terms, as they saw it, this would mean that UNPROFOR had to respond to every action of the VRS.

From this point of view, non-action obviously meant falling short in the protective task – that is to say, it could be seen as a deliberate attempt by UNPROFOR to abdicate its responsibilities. On the Bosnian-Serb side the conviction prevailed that the United Nations, and particularly UNPROFOR and UNHCR, were prejudiced. All humanitarian aid was directed at the Muslims and UNPROFOR did not take action against Muslim violations of agreements and Security Council resolutions.

In Srebrenica this complaint was divided over two issues: that, on the one hand, the Bosnian-Serb towns of Bratunac and Zvornik continued to be deprived of humanitarian aid and, on the other hand, that the demilitarization of the ABiH in the enclave remained incomplete and the ABiH carried out actions beyond the ceasefire line of the Safe Area. It is fully understandable that the population of Srebrenica interpreted the UNPROFOR presence as an international guarantee against Bosnian-Serb aggression. However, the Muslim authorities in Bosnia at least knew that the UNPROFOR mandate did not contain any such guarantee. This does not alter the fact that they tried to stretch or exceed the

⁶²³ Def, Situation report Dutchbat, 09/09/94. Milinfo Dutchbat, 30/12/94.

⁶²⁴ Def, Situation report Dutchbat, 03/11/94 and 05/11/94. Jansen et al., *Dutchbat on Tour*, p. 128.

⁶²⁵ Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 36-40.

limits of UNPROFOR impartiality or neutrality in Srebrenica and elsewhere in Bosnia by demanding action beyond the mandate.⁶²⁶

In Srebrenica the ABiH translated this demand into protection of the Muslim enclave mainly through maintaining its terrain according to the ABiH perception, which assumed an area that comprised more terrain than the ABiH had held in April 1993. In late 1994 – partly as a result of the refusal of access to UNHCR convoys – rumours, also among the population, sparked fear that UNPROFOR would withdraw. The ABiH blamed Dutchbat for not responding to VRS actions that damaged the integrity of the Safe Area. According to the head of the UNMO team, Major S.G. Donaldson, the population found this ‘utterly incomprehensible and inevitably feel that Dutchbat do nothing to protect them’ as a consequence of the pressing logistical situation. The VRS would take the non-response of Dutchbat as a licence to continue with actions against the enclave. In the eyes of the ABiH, Dutchbat played along with the VRS’s game in not doing anything about these actions. In turn, the ABiH took matters into its own hands by setting up new positions and occupying them with surreptitiously armed men. The critical Donaldson believed that Dutchbat was pursuing a rigid policy of disarming and destroying the positions. This spiral of confrontation could lead to an explosion if, at a certain moment, the ABiH refused to surrender their weapons.⁶²⁷

Dutchbat II saw the situation deteriorate in the six months that it stayed in Srebrenica. The talks between the warring factions became bogged down on all fronts and had produced no tangible results except in the area of medical evacuation. The steady decline had a number of causes. First of all, the deteriorating logistical situation had a considerable impact on Dutchbat: insufficient or non-supply of fuel, spare parts and food made an optimal effort impossible and the halting of vehicles resulted in a restriction on performance. A second cause was the deteriorating relationship with the VRS. The majority of the incidents (‘firing close incidents’, the shelling of buildings, observation posts and patrols) were caused by the Bosnian Serbs. During the crisis in Bihac in November, the VRS increased its activities within the enclave without Dutchbat being able to respond effectively. It was exactly under such escalating tensions that the ABiH expected a more alert performance on the part of Dutchbat and this was not forthcoming. That undermined the already poor confidence among the Muslims in protection by Dutchbat, which was another ABiH reason for a more active response. With the arrival of Dutchbat III in early January 1995, this tendency would manifest itself prominently during the so-called Bandera crisis.

19. Dutchbat III: confrontation instead of ceasefire - the Bandera triangle

In late December 1994, former American president Jimmy Carter came up with an agreement between the warring factions in Bosnia that appeared to offer more perspective for an end to the fighting than any mediator had managed to achieve since the start of the war. The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement arranged an end to the fighting during the first four months of 1995 and the resumption of the peace talks. The implementation of the agreement would be in the hands of Joint Commissions at national, regional and local level.⁶²⁸

For Srebrenica, too, this development seemed to offer a new perspective. It came several months after the cancellation of a meeting of the Joint Commission for Srebrenica on the determination of the enclave border and on the further implementation of the demilitarization agreement of May 1993. Now the possibility of an arrangement seemed to be coming within reach after all. In early January, Dutchbat sounded out the ABiH and the VRS on their readiness to cooperate with a meeting of the Joint Commission. On the VRS side Vukovic made few objections. But Oric and his

⁶²⁶ Interview Rasim and Sead Delic, 16/04/98. UNNY, DPKO UNPROFOR coded cables. no. 2995, Annan to Akashi, 14/09/94.

⁶²⁷ MID/Netherlands Army. UNMO team Srebrenica to UNMO HQ BH NE, 13/12/95 ‘Assessment as at 13 Dec 94 – Srebrenica enclave’.

⁶²⁸ Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 220-221. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 309-310.

chief of staff Becirovic appeared to be less accommodating: they first wanted to consult the Government in Sarajevo. As far as they were concerned, the stationing of a VRS liaison officer in the enclave was still out of the question. Furthermore, they had spotted a serious violation of the agreement: the VRS had set up new positions a short distance from the ceasefire line. Dutchbat had to report the violation and ensure that the VRS withdrew. If this did not happen, said the local ABiH leadership, the ABiH would have to solve the problem itself.⁶²⁹

While the ceasefire unexpectedly held in other parts of Bosnia - with the exception of Bihac and Sector North East – in Srebrenica, Dutchbat experienced a crisis in its relationship with the ABiH. Naser Oric saw more than just a favourable development in the materialization of the ceasefire agreement. Before the start of its implementation in the enclave, he wanted to restrict the authority of the local or regional Joint Commission and demanded personal consultation with the authorities in Sarajevo. He also made it clear that the departure of displaced persons from the enclave to their former homes in Bratunac, Konjevic Polje and other villages in the surrounding areas could be an option for a peace deal as far as he was concerned.⁶³⁰ For the time being, however, these matters were not under discussion.

On 11 January Oric informed Dutchbat that the VRS had relocated its positions to 100 metres from the ceasefire line at Podgaj and Osoje on the western border of the enclave (see the map on page #). He demanded guarantees from Dutchbat for a return to the old situation. When he was told that this was ruled out, he handed over a request for retrieving weapons from the Weapon Collection Point: Oric said he feared a VRS attack on the western side of the enclave. Between 4 and 5 o'clock the following morning, there was fierce fighting between the ABiH and the VRS: Dutchbat observed 30 explosions, 94 mortar hits and a great deal of machine-gun and rifle fire. Sector North East did not succeed in bringing about the intervention of the VRS upper command.⁶³¹ Bosnia-Herzegovina Command feared that the situation could escalate 'if a solution is not found by negotiations'.⁶³²

On 12 January the ABiH went a step further and held up a Dutchbat infantry group that was on its way to the temporary observation post OP-B in the area where the fighting had occurred. The ABiH denied Dutchbat access to the region between OP-B in the west, the more southerly OP-C and the area behind it in the south-western part of the enclave. As long as Dutchbat did not guarantee that it would take action against the setting up of new VRS positions, it would gain no access to this area, which was known as the Bandera triangle. The head of the UNMO team, Major S.G. Donaldson, thereupon filed an official UNPROFOR protest with the Drina Corps against the shifting of positions by the Milici Brigade in the direction of the ceasefire line. Lieutenant Colonel Everts presented the request for the emptying of the Weapon Collection Point to Sector North East. For the time being, he took no measures against the restriction of Freedom of Movement and waited for the result of the talks in the Central Joint Commission in Sarajevo on 19 January. The resulting wait made the ABiH impatient.⁶³³

The confrontation took place during the relief of Dutchbat II by Dutchbat III. After the transfer of command on 18 January 1995, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans and his staff immediately faced a problem that differed essentially from the difficulties that had occurred earlier with the ABiH. As already discussed, the relationship with the ABiH in the enclave had been gradually deteriorating as a result of the fundamental difference in the ABiH view of the UNPROFOR task.⁶³⁴ Out of conviction, Dutchbat had complied with the impartial stance of UNPROFOR as conceived by Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and wanted to guard against its abuse by the ABiH. Oric, in turn, believed that Dutchbat

⁶²⁹ Def, Situation report Dutchbat, 04/01/95, 09/01/95 and 10/01/95.

⁶³⁰ SMG, 1001. Situatierapporten UNMO Srebrenica 05/01/95 and 08/01/95.

⁶³¹ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 192 file SNE Daily Infosum: 12/01/95 and confidential information (115).

⁶³² Def, Situation reports Annex A (Milinfsum) to BHC Situation report, 12/01/95.

⁶³³ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 45. Def, Situation report Dutchbat, 12/01/95 and 18/01/95. DJZ. Fax Dutchbat Srebrenica to CO-HQ Sector North East, 02/05/95, appendix: Donaldson to Commander Drina corps, 11/01/95.

⁶³⁴ UNNY, DPKO. UNPROFOR coded cables, Z-1449, Akashi to Annan, 21/09/94.

was remiss in its duty and demanded that the unit respond actively to the relocation of VRS positions towards the ceasefire line.

Several months before, Oric had broken off contact with Dutchbat for several weeks, because the battalion had filled in newly built ABiH bunkers. The ABiH had considered this a hostile, pro-Serb act and now demanded a comparable performance by Dutchbat against the digging of VRS positions. Now the issue was the relocation of VRS positions close to the ceasefire line. Oric believed he had reason to demand UNPROFOR action because the relocation had begun after the ceasefire went into effect. He saw this as a provocation on the side of the Bosnian Serbs. Seeing that Dutchbat did nothing, Oric took matters into his own hands and prohibited UNPROFOR access to the Bandera triangle, the south-western corner of the enclave between the roads from Vasiljevici to OP-A and OP-C. This area was the domain of the 281st Brigade of Zulfo Tursunovic, the only Commander who did not let Oric get his own way. This prohibition was a breach of the Freedom of Movement that UNPROFOR enjoyed on the basis of the Status of the Forces Agreement between the UN and the Bosnian Government and the ceasefire of 31 December 1994. If Dutchbat III, upon its departure from the Netherlands, had cherished the hope that the ceasefire would have a positive effect in Srebrenica as well, that hope was dashed shortly after it relieved Dutchbat II.

Dutchbat assumed that the setting up of new VRS bunkers at OP-B was only a pretext for Oric's measure. Dutchbat therefore showed little interest in the VRS activities on the ceasefire line at Bandera and Buljin or in the intensification of VRS shelling. In the night of 25/26 January the VRS fired heavy artillery at the enclave for the first time in a year. The leader of the UNMO team, Major S.G. Donaldson, considered the restriction on the freedom of movement of Dutchbat as the ABiH response to the inactivity of UNPROFOR. In his view, it was an expression of the genuine fear by the ABiH of a VRS attack on the enclave and the preparation for preventive action.⁶³⁵ Nevertheless, in Srebrenica and the UNPROFOR headquarters in Tuzla and Sarajevo/Kiseljak, the peacekeepers continued to speculate on the possible ulterior motives for this action. They wondered whether it constituted an independent manoeuvre by the ABiH in Srebrenica, or whether perhaps some connection existed with the blockade of UNPROFOR compounds around Tuzla. Perhaps the military authorities on the Muslim side were trying to use a crisis in Srebrenica to put an early end to the ceasefire in all Bosnia.

When Karremans, after consulting with Sector North East in Tuzla on 24 January 1995, rejected the third ABiH request to take weapons from the Weapon Collection Point, the ABiH further extended the area off limits to Dutchbat: now patrols in the area south of OP-A were also prohibited. In line with the policy of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Karremans now decided to compel Freedom of Movement. After a detailed analysis of the situation he decided to send a patrol to the area. In accordance with the Rules of Engagement the patrol was ordered to move with high visibility, operate with extreme care and turn back immediately upon a confrontation with the ABiH. Near Misici around 11 a.m., the patrol led by the Deputy Battalion Commander Franken was ordered by the local ABiH to do an about-turn and stay out of the neighbourhood of ABiH positions for the time being. Around 12.30 p.m. the ABiH blocked a patrol at Zedanjsko (OP-C). Despite this first confrontation, Karremans decided to continue the patrols from OP-A and to send a member of the battalion staff along with each patrol.⁶³⁶

By means of the patrols, Karremans wanted to make it clear that he did not accept the closing of the Bandera triangle. Karremans did not have much time to think about his next move. The same afternoon he was ordered by Sector North East to restore Freedom of Movement in the enclave 'at the lowest possible level (...) and to press hard if necessary'. In consultation with his Intelligence and Operations sections, Karremans drew up an operation plan for Saturday 28 January – in retrospect it

⁶³⁵ SMG, 1001. UNMO team Srebrenica daily situation report 25/01/95 and 26/01/95.

⁶³⁶ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 273-277 (Appendix 5).

would turn out that he underestimated how highly impassable the terrain was. He informed ABiH Commander Oric in writing that he had received the order to restore Freedom of Movement.⁶³⁷

On 28 January Karremans carried out his plan. A patrol of the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon entered the Bandera triangle from the south. Its order was to scout out a new site for an observation post in the neighbourhood of OP-B and a road going to the new site. Later, this patrol would be followed by a patrol from OP-A in the north and OP-C in the south. The two observation posts stayed at alert phase Orange as long as the patrols were in the Bandera triangle. Medical assistance was at hand in the neighbourhood of the disputed area, all Quick Reaction Forces were on standby and the Forward Air Controller team had taken up positions.

The patrol movements led to a direct confrontation with the ABiH. The patrol of the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon ran into a group of 20 soldiers led by the local Commander Zulfo Tursunovic; the patrol of OP-C under Major Franken was ordered to turn back by a group of citizens armed with sticks and the OP-A patrol was surrounded by 35 unarmed Muslims and forced to go to Vasic. At 1.50 p.m. the ABiH blocked all roads to Vasic and pinned down the patrols between OP-A and Vasic. On the grounds of the accepted interpretation of the Rules of Engagement, the various patrols acquiesced in this. Along with the 10 men who permanently manned OP-C there were an additional 45 Dutchbat soldiers with 13 vehicles; at Vasic there were 11 men in the open field; between Vasiljevici and OP-C there were 21 men with 7 vehicles and lastly at OP-A there was the regular complement of 12 men. Oric demanded to speak with Karremans, a message that reached the Battalion Commander via the Dutchbat radio network.

Karremans spoke with Oric, Ramiz Becirovic and Zulfo Tursunovic in the centre of the enclave in the vicinity of Vasiljevici. The ABiH Commander said he was 'extremely disappointed in UNPROFOR'. He demanded to talk personally with Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Smith in the enclave the next day. Until then the 99 Dutchbat soldiers had to stay in the Bandera triangle: they were hostages. According to UNMO Srebrenica, which did not take part in the talks, Oric would hold to this demand, although he would probably be satisfied with the arrival in the enclave of the Commander of Sector North East.⁶³⁸ Karremans briefed Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and the Army Crisis Staff on the events. Despite multiple talks between Karremans, Oric and Becirovic matters did not improve: Oric permitted resupplying of the hostages and the departure of two who were sick. However, as far as he was concerned, release was not up for discussion without compliance with his main demand: withdrawal of the VRS positioned near the Bandera hill. Karremans' arguments about the media effect of the hostage-taking and the loss of sympathy for the Muslims made no impression on him at all.

After a three-day blockade, a solution was forced on 31 January. Oric was ordered by his Government to let the Dutchbat hostages return to their compounds with their equipment and to respect complete Freedom of Movement in the enclave. Execution of the order came a day late because Oric first had to persuade Zulfo Tursunovic - to whose terrain the Bandera triangle belonged - to cooperate.⁶³⁹ The ABiH soon regretted the release of the Dutchbat hostages. Karremans, after consultations with Tuzla, had promised that the Commander of Sector North East, Brigadier Ridderstad, would come to Srebrenica on 1 February. After the release of the hostages, he informed ABiH that the visit would not go ahead on account of 'lack of BSA [VRS] clearance'. According to the UNMO organisation in Srebrenica the ABiH considered this 'a bitter joke'. It could not imagine that UNPROFOR would let the VRS dictate matters despite its support from NATO on use of the air space above Bosnia. The cancellation 'destroyed any remaining good will between the ABiH and Dutchbat' because, according to the UNMO's Donaldson, the ABiH felt deceived.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁷ SMG/Debrief. Karremans to Oric, 27/01/95. Interview E. Wieffer, 07/05/01.

⁶³⁸ SMG/Debrief. Karremans to Commander HQ BH Sector NE Tuzla, no.TK9511, 28/01/95. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 47-51 and 280-282 (Appendix 7).

⁶³⁹ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 51-55.

⁶⁴⁰ SMG, 1001. Situations reports UNMO Srebrenica, 01/02/95.

The hostages returned to the compound. Although not a shot had been fired, they had undergone a psychological baptism of fire: being taken hostage by Bosnian Muslim soldiers was the last thing they had expected. Naturally, those members of Dutchbat involved received compliments for their performance, via the UNPROFOR line and from The Hague. Everyone was relieved at the good outcome. Nevertheless, something had fundamentally changed. At Dutchbat the hostage-taking in the Bandera triangle made a deep impression: it became unmistakably clear that Dutchbat's interests did not coincide with those of the Muslim leadership in the enclave. Mutual understanding had received a 'heavy blow'.⁶⁴¹ Protection by UNPROFOR and Dutchbat were evidently not appreciated by the population. This created a great psychological distance and promoted the development of a negative attitude, both with regard to the ABiH and Dutchbat's own task. Sergeant-Major K. Koreman phrased this feeling in his diary as follows:

It was a crazy situation, that we here in the enclave had more problems with the population than with the Serbs around the enclave outside. Perhaps it had been too long since they had taken a good beating. They had resigned themselves to this situation at first and now, under the protection of the UN, were busy taking action at our expense. If everything were to go wrong for the ABiH we, as the UN, would again be good enough to pull them out of real trouble in the worst case.⁶⁴²

This experience also promoted the feeling of a double threat: as expected from the Serbs outside the enclave but, surprisingly, also from the Muslims inside. It had the effect that Dutchbat III withdrew into itself and perhaps got along less easily with the population.

The hostage-taking of UNPROFOR units in the Bandera triangle was a unique event. The ABiH in Srebrenica did not make too much of it, Ramiz Becirovic said later: the ABiH mainly wanted to prevent Dutchbat from increasing its checks on ABiH activities by setting up a new observation post, while they undertook no action against the VRS in the Bandera triangle.⁶⁴³ Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and Sector North East had taken the issue more seriously: true enough, General Smith did not come to the enclave, but the Commander of Sector North East, Ridderstad, would go in his place on 1 February. On 2 February, shortly after the cancellation of that visit, Oric and Becirovic did get the opportunity to talk personally with the Force Commander, De Lapresle, during his visit to Srebrenica. Oric spoke for one hour with De Lapresle about the situation of the population and the tension in the western part of the enclave as the result of 'a BSA encroachment'. The Force Commander wrote in his report:

'Obviously, there is a need for a joint commission to delineate the Cease Fire Line. Mr. Oric, who appeared to fear that a kind of 'ground swap' would be agreed on, above him, between Sarajevo and Pale, asked UNPROFOR to transport him to Sarajevo in order to meet his authorities and receive guidance.'⁶⁴⁴

Oric was afraid that the Muslim authorities would bargain away the enclave and he therefore asked De Lapresle to take him in his helicopter to Sarajevo so that he could persuade them personally not to take such action.⁶⁴⁵ De Lapresle did not agree. Dutchbat drew little hope from the Frenchman's comment

⁶⁴¹ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 55.

⁶⁴² NIOD, Col. Koreman. *Dutchbat III. Dagboek(Diary)*, p.17-22.

⁶⁴³ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 15/02/98 and 18/04/98.

⁶⁴⁴ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 77, file 2.2.7. Situatierapporten SNE Feb-May 1995. Interoffice Memorandum FC to DFC et al., 06/02/95.

⁶⁴⁵ B. De Lapresle to NIOD Director J.C.H. Blom, 09/11/01.

that although the problem was not yet resolved, a repetition of the hostage-taking incident was unlikely.⁶⁴⁶ In any case, it was clear that the hostage-taking in the Bandera triangle not only had to do with the situation around the enclave, but also played a role in the broader context of the implementation of the ceasefire and the resumption of peace talks on the basis of the plan of the Contact Group.⁶⁴⁷

The problems in Srebrenica fitted a general pattern that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb recognized in the performance of the ABiH after materialization of the ceasefire on 31 December 1994. As mentioned before, there was an assumed connection between the events in Srebrenica and Tuzla. According to the Military Information Office in Zagreb the Bosnian Government deliberately obstructed the implementation of the ceasefire, because it would not accept the existing situation on the ground as the starting point for peace negotiations. In that regard there was no change with respect to the analysis of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose at the start of his mission in January 1994. According to Rose, the Bosnian Government wanted to improve its position at the negotiating table by retaking as much terrain as possible and therefore, according to this analysis, was working for a resumption of the fighting, probably even before the end of the ceasefire in late April. That explained why the Bosnian Government blocked the implementation of the ceasefire by setting up a meeting of the regional Joint Commissions.⁶⁴⁸ It also systematically rejected placement of VRS liaison officers in the Muslim-Croat Federation area. An offer by Mladic to allow 450 displaced persons to leave the three eastern enclaves turned out not to be open to discussion. The action of the ABiH in the Bandera triangle in Srebrenica appeared to connect seamlessly with this line of action and would not change after the crisis either. The pressure on UNPROFOR continued to be maintained by pursuing the restriction of movement in the Bandera triangle.

The demand for restoration of 'the integrity of Srebrenica Demilitarised Zone 'since the BSA [VRS] had made an incursion' was tabled again by the Bosnians during a meeting between Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Smith and President Izetbegovic on 20 February.⁶⁴⁹ According to the UNPROFOR analysts, Srebrenica played no great role in the general strategy of the Bosnian Government. Sarajevo apparently assumed that the enclaves ran no danger. According to the UNPROFOR analysts, the main attention was concentrated on other parts of Bosnia. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command tried to get the mechanism of the Joint Commissions started. That proceeded with difficulty. The UNPROFOR plan to set up a meeting of the Joint Demilitarization Commission for Srebrenica about the determination of the border, the repair of the electricity and water facilities and the access roads, had the approval of the Bosnian Government, but ran aground on Bosnian-Serb refusal to deal with Srebrenica in a separate commission outside of the regional commission for Sector North East.⁶⁵⁰

According to UNPROFOR analysts, the VRS wanted first of all to maintain the existing situation and, on this basis, negotiate on ending hostilities and cooperating in the implementation of the ceasefire. In the given situation, the VRS could afford to display generosity now and then, as with the offer to allow 450 displaced persons to leave the eastern enclaves. But such an obliging attitude was not to be seen in Srebrenica: the VRS continued to blame UNPROFOR for the failure of demilitarization, as well as for allowing the build-up of ABiH units in the enclave to a strength of 6000 men. According

⁶⁴⁶ *The Inner Circle*, no.4 02/02/95. NIOD, Col. Koreman. *Dutchbat III. Dagboek*, p.18/14.

⁶⁴⁷ In a meeting with Owen and Stoltenberg upon resumption of the talks about the Contact Group plan Karadzic said that the Republika Srpska Srebrenica and Zepa would be accepted as Bosnian enclaves, but not Gorazde. Confidential information (96).

⁶⁴⁸ Confidential information (97). NIOD: confidential collection (2).

⁶⁴⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 77, file 2.2.7. Situation Reports SNE Feb-May 1995. Interoffice Memorandum FC to DFC et al., 06/02/95; UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 115, file: SNE CVAO fax out Jan-Jul 1995. Memorandum MA to Commander Daniell, 20/02/95 re: Meeting General Smith / President Izetbegovic 20 Feb 95, sub 8.

⁶⁵⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 116, file SNE Memo in Sep 94 – Dec 94. fax Biser to Ridderstad, 03/02/95 'Notes from meeting with Mr. Muratovic'. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120, file BHC weekly situation reports 1995: fax BH Command Forward to BHC Rear et al., 06/02/95: 'Central Joint Commission Meeting'.

to VRS chief of staff Milovanovic, this had been the reason for moving the positions forward on the west side of the enclave.⁶⁵¹ UNMO interpreted the open stationing of a battery of artillery as a ‘deterrent to ABiH activity/patrols out of the enclave’.⁶⁵² Later, Dutchbat and the UNMO team in Srebrenica came to the conclusion that the VRS countermeasures went further than a reaction to the beefing up of ABiH forces in the enclave. The presence of artillery and tanks, the laying in of large stores of munitions and the deployment of several thousand infantrymen ‘indicate something more than simple confrontational posturing along the contact line – particularly as the build-up has continued long after the BSA [VRS] has established that the ABiH is incapable of permanently forcing them off the Bandera/Osoje feature.’⁶⁵³

The UNMO and Dutchbat did not rule out that the VRS would mount an attack on the enclave along the east-west axis with the aim of taking over the south-western area of the enclave. Controlling that area would enable the use of a large part of the Zeleni Jadar –Milici road and, with it the resumption of production in the bauxite mine. That would be to the benefit of the owner of Milici Bauxite, Rajko Dukic, a supporter of Karadzic. The analysis of the UNMO team and Dutchbat did not go into the possible reaction to a VRS attack on the enclave, but Dutchbat did try to anticipate the consequences for the population. The assumption was that a rapid attack, preceded by artillery shelling, would cause panic in the enclave: the population would not realize that the aim of the attack was a resumption of bauxite production, but would think that the offensive was targeted on the conquest of Srebrenica. The ABiH would then probably claim not only the weapons from the Weapon Collection Point, but ‘might possibly wish to take the weapons and ammunition of Dutchbat soldiers as well.’ The UNMO in Srebrenica presented this to Sector North East as ‘all just guesswork’, with the question of whether NATO aerial reconnaissance had come up with additional information.⁶⁵⁴

The UNPROFOR Military Information Office in Zagreb regarded a VRS attack on the enclave as very unlikely. Since the offensive in 1993, the situation around Zepa and Srebrenica had been fairly stable. In its judgement, a VRS action would much more likely focus on isolating the area around Tuzla and retaking Tuzla Air Base.⁶⁵⁵ Force Commander De Lapresle did not rule out an offensive against Srebrenica as part of an operation against Tuzla.⁶⁵⁶ However, his Intelligence officer believed that the concentration of troops and heavy weapons around Srebrenica was mainly intended ‘to demonstrate to the ABiH and UNPROFOR that they maintain the upper hand and the co-habitation of the enclaves within Serbian territory is [dependent] on the good will demonstrated by all involved parties.’ Along with this demonstration of military capacity, in the coming period the VRS would also show that it wanted to be the dominant factor in the area around Zepa and Srebrenica by refusing access of humanitarian aid and UNPROFOR. Against VRS predominance, the ABiH could mainly react by reinforcing its equipment position by means of the supply of weapons and equipment by helicopter flights to Zepa.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵¹ NIOD, Confidential collection (2): interoffice memorandum Analyst (Mehu to Theunens) to FC, 31/01/95 ‘Update on the situation in Sector Northeast’. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 214, file BH Command 27 Feb – 3 Mar 95: fax BH Command Fwd to BAC et al., 26/02/95 ‘Minutes meeting with BSA, 26 Feb 1995’.

⁶⁵² SMG, 1001 Situation Report UNMNO Srebrenica, 11/02/95.

⁶⁵³ MID/KL. 1995: Unmo team Srebrenica (Donaldson) to UNMO HQ BH NE, 12/02/95.

⁶⁵⁴ MID/KL. 1995: Unmo team Srebrenica (Donaldson) to UNMO HQ BH NE, 12/02/95.

⁶⁵⁵ NIOD: Confidential Collection (2): Military Information Estimate by Capt Wallace (G2 Ops), 19/02/95.

⁶⁵⁶ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 117, file: Commanders Conference 1994-1995: Memorandum of J.H.M. Engelen, 26/02/95 ‘Notes from Force Commanders Conference, 23-02-95’.

⁶⁵⁷ Confidential information (98). According to the VRS the ABiH was busy using helicopters to bring military supplies to Zepa and Srebrenica. UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 214, file BH Command 27 Feb – 3 Mar 95: fax BH Command Fwd to BAC et al., 26/02/95 ‘Minutes meeting with BSA, 26 Feb 1995’. In early February there was great interest in the Security Council in flights of several large groups of helicopters north and north-east of the enclave Srebrenica. UNPROFOR could not give the confirming answer to the question of whether these helicopters flew from former Yugoslavia to the Republika Srpska. The authorities in Belgrade denied any involvement. (UNNY, DPKO UNPROFOR coded cables, no. Z-211, De Lapresle to Annan, 06/02/95. MSC-402, Annan to Akashi, 06/02/95. UNNY, DPKO UNPROFOR coded cables, no. Z-215, De Lapresle to Annan, 07/02/95 Ibidem: MSC-448, Annan to Akashi, 09/02/95. Confidential information (100).

These analyses of the possibility of a VRS attack on Srebrenica had little effect on the situation in the enclave itself. The ABiH continued to refuse Dutchbat access to the Bandera triangle. Karremans, on the basis of his own analysis, had come to the same conclusion as the Military Information Office in Zagreb. He vainly tried to convince Oric that his expectation of a VRS attack was mistaken. Furthermore, he argued, the VRS could penetrate the enclave much more easily without the patrols of Dutchbat. Oric rejected proposals for cooperation with Dutchbat. Nor was the situation changed by the announcement on 23 February of the building of a permanent observation post, OP-B at Podgaj, and three new temporary observation posts.⁶⁵⁸ Consequently, Dutchbat continued to be restricted in its radius of operation. As a result, the already limited view on the activities of the VRS remained poor. Furthermore, the VRS had established itself within the enclave border north of OP-A to the west of Ravni Buljin. This also did little to enhance the prestige of Dutchbat among the warring factions.

However, it is unlikely that this situation could have been avoided. Perhaps the relationship with the ABiH would have been less sharp-edged had Dutchbat not so demonstratively ignored the ABiH restriction of movement in the Bandera triangle on 25 and 28 January 1995. However, that would have been against the instructions of Sector North East and, furthermore, created the impression that Dutchbat had resigned itself to the situation. It is not likely that a postponement of several days in carrying out this order would have contributed to moderation at the side of the ABiH. After all, there was no way that Dutchbat have gone along with the demand to undo the relocation of the VRS positions towards OP-B by means of an active response.

However, a full assessment of the situation in Srebrenica in late January 1995 remains difficult because there was no clear picture of the state of relations within the ABiH. The UNMO team leader Donaldson possibly had greater insight on this matter than the new battalion commander and his staff, but he was not involved in the decision-making process and negotiations. At the time, Dutchbat explained the late release of the hostages as a difference of opinion between Oric and his Deputy Commander in the Bandera triangle, Zulfo Tursunovic, but no confirmation of this statement could be obtained. Although it was known that the relationship between the two men had been tense and difficult since the start of the fighting around Srebrenica, it was and continued to be uncertain whether this divisiveness in leadership was the main reason for the approach taken by the ABiH in Srebrenica towards UNPROFOR and Dutchbat.

Aside from the local dynamic, the performance of the ABiH in Srebrenica fitted the policy of the Bosnian Government to obstruct the ceasefire. It remains unclear to what extent local aspects and motives played a role here. If the latter had been the case, this could have given Dutchbat some room to formulate its own approach to and resolution of the crisis. But the sparse contact there was between Dutchbat and the ABiH in this period proceeded with difficulty and there was no development at all. Beyond this both unclear and problematic local context the situation in Srebrenica was given the requisite attention within UNPROFOR. The UNPROFOR interest manifested itself mainly in following daily developments and in a series of analyses of the intentions of the warring factions. In late February, when the conclusion was drawn that the resumption of hostilities around Srebrenica was unlikely, the old pattern returned, with attention at higher level of command mainly being devoted to the restoration of Freedom of Movement.

20. More emphasis on observation from permanent points: new OPs

The restriction of Freedom of Movement in the Bandera triangle and the north-western corner around Buljin also continued after the end of the Bandera hostage-taking incident, despite the promises of the ABiH to abolish it. The UNMO team also ran into difficulties with its patrols. Karremans avoided a new confrontation by sending no further patrols to the two areas. For reasons of safety, patrols stayed

⁶⁵⁸ SMG/Debrief. TK 9592, Karremans to Commander HQ BH Sector NE, 23/02/95.

out of the adjacent areas as well.⁶⁵⁹ Dutchbat also began setting up new permanent and temporary observation posts. However, this was not a consequence of the Bandera crisis. The intention to do so had grown during Dutchbat III scouting of the future area of operation in October 1994.

The plan for a different approach was developed by the Commanders of B and C-Companies, Captains J.R. Groen and C.J. Mathijssen. They had proposed arriving at better performance of the Dutchbat task by setting up more observation posts and altering the movement of patrols. The observation posts were thinly distributed along two parts of the ceasefire line: on the southern border between OP-E and OP-C⁶⁶⁰ and in the north-western corner between OP-A and OP-N, where there was an even larger stretch of 10 kilometres. It had been restless in both areas since the arrival of Dutchbat and it was expected that setting up more observation posts could reduce activities in the ABiH-VRS border area. Furthermore, setting up more observation posts met the wish that had been regularly expressed by the ABiH in the past.⁶⁶¹ Groen and Mathijssen believed that making a clearer separation between observation from the posts and patrols would enable more efficient use of the personnel. At the observation posts a smaller group of six men would be sufficient.⁶⁶²

The Head of Operations and Major Franken drew up a plan that provided for the setting up of three new permanent observation posts in the area of operation of B-Company (OP-D, OP-H and OP-K) and one in the area of operation of the C-Company by changing OP-M from a temporary to a permanent observation post. The patrolling remained just as intensive, but Dutchbat III came up with a different distribution of tasks and greater coordination. The 108th Reconnaissance Platoon of Captain A. Caris mounted patrols on the enclave border and in several specific areas within the enclave. Unlike Vermeulen and Everts, Karremans expressly prohibited the platoon from running reconnaissance patrols outside the enclave.

B and C-Companies and the staff company and services company began paying more attention to patrols within the enclave itself, and around and between the different observation posts. Compared with the existing approach, the change mainly involved a reduction in the number of patrols between the observation posts. The existing numbers were only maintained for areas that were not covered by direct visual observation. The personnel capacity that became available as a result was used on patrols from posts in the area that lay beyond. The synchronization of the patrols of the three companies and the reconnaissance platoon was done by the Battalion Intelligence Officer. He drew up a patrol plan in consultation with the patrol coordinators.⁶⁶³

In addition to its own personnel Dutchbat could command even more specialized personnel for reconnaissance. These were three British Joint Commission Observers (JCOs), soldiers who were part of the Special Forces. They were used on special assignments by the British Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose at special places in his area of command. They were in direct contact with Sarajevo via satellite telephone. The nature of their assignment in Srebrenica remained unknown to Dutchbat. Nor did they give any information their reports to Sarajevo.

Their relationship with Karremans and the battalion staff was not good; according to a Dutchbat soldier, it was 'as if the battalion staff were afraid of the British and that they could cause the Third World War'.⁶⁶⁴ In early February – after the Bandera crisis – several JCOs came to Srebrenica. Karremans kept them on a tight rein and prohibited them from going on patrol by themselves: they were only allowed to accompany the 108th Reconnaissance Platoon. The Commander of this unit regretted that the Battalion Commander made no use of the small elite group to obtain extra

⁶⁵⁹ SMG, 1001. Situation report UNMO Srebrenica 05/02/95, 06/02/95 and 18/02/95.

⁶⁶⁰ *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), p. 132. Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.

⁶⁶¹ Interviews J.R. Groen, 05/07/99 and E. Wieffer, 07/05/01. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 116.

⁶⁶² *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), p. 132. Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.

⁶⁶³ Interviews E. Wieffer, 07/05/01 and R. Rutten, 25/09/01. CRST. Fax no.263 Karremans to G3 Crisis Staff, 13/03/95 appendix: step plan of Dutchbat III. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 116-117.

⁶⁶⁴ *Feitenrelaas*, p.66.

information from Bosnia-Herzegovina Command or to bring special matters to the attention of Kiseljak.⁶⁶⁵

Establishing new observation posts took some time. On 31 January, during the Bandera crisis the temporary observation post OP-G was set up in the enclave along the road from the town of Srebrenica to Zeleni Jadar; Karremans informed Oric and Becirovic about the move. On 9 February, this temporary observation post was abandoned and was never manned again.

During its short period of service, it turned out that the surroundings were stable and quiet. All visible VRS positions had been charted, so it made no sense to maintain the post any longer.⁶⁶⁶ A first step in implementing the provisional plan was setting up a temporary OP-D near Bijelo Polje on the southern slope of Mt. Kak, where there were outstanding possibilities for observing the bauxite mine area across the enclave border. On 11 February the post was opened with the positioning of a YPR with an extension tent, five infantrymen and a medic. The post was later made permanent and took on the appearance of a standard observation post with several prefabs for accommodation, a sea container as bunker, a free-standing observation tower and a defence wall.⁶⁶⁷ This structure of the observation post complied with the design that Groen had made himself and that he wanted to realize for all observation posts in his area. In his view, the design met the requirements of safety and efficiency much better than the existing posts. However, his construction programme came to a standstill due to the inadequate supply of building material.⁶⁶⁸

The second step in this plan was the conversion of OP-M in the north of the enclave into a permanent post in late February. Setting up new observation posts in other parts of the enclave took more trouble. Here Karremans followed an approach that he had introduced directly after the Bandera crisis; immediately informing the ABiH about his intentions in order to avoid new tension. This approach put him in a difficult position, because it gave the ABiH the opportunity to enter into discussion with Dutchbat about the new plans. Oric first used the argument that ABiH approval was needed for setting up new observation posts and that he therefore had to ask the permission of the 2nd Corps in Tuzla. After UNPROFOR had made it clear that ABiH approval was not needed, there was a fair degree of consultation about implementation of the step-by-step plan. In scouting out suitable sites, attention was also paid to the possibility of doing away with the need for patrols in a mountainous area by establishing an observation post there.

Early in March, Dutchbat decided to set up three more observation posts. The first, OP-H, was situated on a hill east of the town of Srebrenica and looked out over part of the eastern enclave border, an area where the VRS had laid many mines – including inside the enclave border. The site was discovered accidentally during a patrol. In addition to observation along the patrol routes, the six-man complement of this largely underground observation post could observe VRS positions, the town of Srebrenica and the house of ABiH Commander Naser Oric.⁶⁶⁹ OP-K was intended to close the gap between OP-D and OP-E in the southern part of the enclave. Establishing this post ran into ABiH resistance. Dutchbat positioned it in the middle of an area that was frequently used for smuggling trips to Zepa and evidently also as a raid route for ABiH actions outside the enclave. After the post went into operation on 29 April it indeed turned out to provide an outstanding view of the armed and unarmed groups that entered and left the enclave.⁶⁷⁰ Between OP-D and OP-C Dutchbat established a temporary observation post on Mt. Hrustine.

⁶⁶⁵ Interview A. Caris, 03/03/00.

⁶⁶⁶ Def, Situation reports, Milinfo Dutchbat 01/02/95 and 09/02/95. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 117. Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 160-161.

⁶⁶⁷ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 154-155.

⁶⁶⁸ Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.

⁶⁶⁹ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 162-163.

⁶⁷⁰ Def, Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 29/04/95 up to 25/05/95. Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 133 and 179-180.

In the western part of the enclave Dutchbat set up a new observation post to replace OP-B. During the Bandera crisis, this post became inaccessible due to the restriction of movement and had been imposed since then by the ABiH. After the crisis the third platoon of C-Company deployed several YPRs at Bukovica to set up a temporary roadblock with the intention of restoring calm to the area by means of this presence.⁶⁷¹ Setting up an observation post on a hill in the vicinity was not an option because of the poor access road. Ultimately, in mid-March, it was decided to establish a new observation post, OP-B-1, at the site of the earlier roadblock. Because permanent manning would draw too heavily on C-Company strength, the post was only manned for a few days per week. Dutchbat saw OP-B-1 as a temporary measure, because it hoped to be able to take over the old OP-B from the ABiH later.⁶⁷²

The expansion of the number of observation posts had several positive operational effects. Dutchbat certainly obtained a better view along the ceasefire line in the south, on the positions of the warring factions and could chart the changes there more easily. Since patrols could now focus more on the inner area of the enclave, Dutchbat acquired greater insight into the military activities of the ABiH and the VRS in and around the enclave. In any case, the population of the enclave was positive about the expansion of the number of observation posts. This also applied in a certain sense to the ABiH, which had been informed about the new posts being set up. However, the plan could ultimately contribute little to reducing the tense situation in and around the enclave in February. The tension did subside at the moment that C-Company manned the first new permanent observation post, OP-M. In the months that followed, the situation remained fairly quiet, when viewed as a whole. It is difficult to assess whether Dutchbat III was able to perform its task better as a result of this operational approach, because conditions changed fundamentally in another respect.

First of all, Karremans' battalion began with a very limited stock of diesel oil, a stock that would no longer be supplemented after 17 February 1995. This mainly signified a serious blow to the operational mobility of the battalion but, as the time without provisions became longer and longer, it came to affect all kinds of other facets to an increasing degree. Using vehicles to resupply the observation posts became impossible, necessitating the use of horses and mules. The possibilities for using all kinds of equipment in the logistical sector, e.g. for road maintenance, dwindled and such operations finally became impossible. A second essential change was the reduction of personnel strength caused by the refusal of the VRS to allow Dutchbat soldiers on furlough to return to Srebrenica from 26 April 1995. Ultimately, some 180 men were unable to return to the enclave from Zagreb.⁶⁷³ The result was a substantial reduction in the number of Dutchbat personnel in Srebrenica. Nevertheless, the manning of 13 observation posts continued to be the basis of operational performance in the ensuing months as well.

21. Dutchbat III and the warring factions

The first month of the deployment of Dutchbat III in Srebrenica had a lot in common with the opening of a Shakespeare play : many characters on the stage, a lot of sabre-rattling and verbal fireworks. Shakespeare used these effects to capture the attention of the audience. The confrontation in the Bandera triangle between Dutchbat III and the ABiH had the same effect on Dutchbat III and influenced its attitude towards the ABiH in the enclave. This attitude was less positive than that of the earlier battalions. But it would be rash to link direct conclusions about Dutchbat's performance towards the ABiH to the hostage-taking in the Bandera triangle. It is important to keep in mind that Dutchbat also had to deal with the VRS. It is certainly not the case that Dutchbat III saw the VRS differently or in a more positive light after the confrontation in the Bandera triangle.

⁶⁷¹ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 121-122.

⁶⁷² CRST. Fax no.263 Karremans to G3 Crisis Staff, 13/03/95 appendix: step plan of Dutchbat-III. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 116-117 and 121-124. Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), p. 89.

⁶⁷³ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), p. 204.

Even though the restrictions of the mandate kept the battalion leaders from taking any steps against the relocation of VRS positions towards the ceasefire line in the western and north-western part of the enclave, this did not mean that Dutchbat was indifferent or neutral to this development. In cooperation with the UNMO team, it took the reinforcement of VRS forces in the area of the Milici Brigade very seriously and came to the conclusion that a VRS attack on the enclave was among the possibilities. It maintained this assessment of the situation until late February 1995. In the judgement of the battalion leaders, the VRS activities formed a real threat to the application of the Safe Area concept in Srebrenica. This raised fears of a resumption of the fighting that had ended in April 1993. The action of the VRS also differed fundamentally from the attitude that the Bosnian Serbs had adopted since the arrival of Dutchbat in March 1994.

Through the changes in the stance of the two warring factions, Dutchbat III ended up in a different position than its two predecessors. This was evident in a variety of ways. Contact with the ABiH and the VRS continued to go via the same route as for Dutchbat I and II. The liaison team, together with the UNMO team, maintained the normal contacts and Battalion Commander Karremans took part in the talks in special cases. The meetings were less frequent than in the preceding period. The Dutchbat III liaison team had weekly meetings with both the ABiH staff and the Opstina. But it was clear in the enclave that something was awry. The relationship with the Opstina did not go well from the beginning. On 2 February 1995 at the end of talks about improvement and expansion of cooperation between the Opstina Srebrenica and the international organisations, Mayor Fahrudin Salihovic had characterized these organizations as 'just tourists' who would do best to leave the enclave, as far as he was concerned. Karremans refused to accept this. In a letter to Fahrudin Salihovic he characterised the tourist remark as a 'rather bold accusation', the suggestion about leaving the enclave as 'quite unprecedented'. The Battalion Commander took the view that the situation of the population of Srebrenica had improved since the arrival of the international organizations in the spring of 1993. He asked for clarification and an apology. He got the latter. On 27 February, the air had cleared to such an extent that a follow-up meeting was possible.⁶⁷⁴

In February and March, after the Bandera crisis, Karremans tried to improve relations with the ABiH through talks with Oric and Becirovic, but after a few meetings it became clear a deadlock had been reached: Oric made no promises about lifting restriction of movement in the Bandera triangle; Karremans rejected the need for approval by the ABiH for setting up new observation posts and he could not convince Oric that increasing the number of observation posts and more intensive patrolling within the enclave would provide effective protection against the VRS threat. The meeting on 12 March ended with the agreement to continue cooperation, but nothing more would actually come of it.⁶⁷⁵

The contacts with the VRS had an occasional character in which intervals of several weeks were not unusual. The liaison officer Colonel Vukovic and Major Nikolic were often difficult to reach. The UNMO team also had to contend with more difficult contact with the VRS. In the few talks that took place, Dutchbat tried to parry VRS criticism of the failing execution of its mission with the obstruction of the mission by the VRS itself, through restriction of Freedom of Movement outside the enclave, the refusal of convoys of fuel, food and medical supplies, and a series of other matters. The VRS said that resumption of talks with the Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica about the ceasefire line and other matters was not possible: any talks would have to take place in the context of the regional Joint Commission for Sector North East.

The only thing for which Nikolic could evidently still summon up a great deal of energy was bringing about regular trade between Bratunac and the Opstina, with Dutchbat serving as intermediary. Although Karremans had fundamental objections to this – he saw that Nikolic enriched himself by abusing his position – he did not offer any opposition. The Dutchbat liaison team realized the risks of a meeting, because the civil authorities of Srebrenica and Bratunac had had no contacts with each other

⁶⁷⁴ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 119-120 en 288-289. Def. Situation reports, Milinfo Dutchbat 28/02/95.

⁶⁷⁵ Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 13/03/95. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 120 en 290-291.

since 1992. After a period of fits and starts in the talks from early March, a basic agreement seemed to have been reached in late May. However, the hostage crisis and the NATO air strikes against Pale blocked implementation on the VRS side.⁶⁷⁶

The overall reduction of contacts with the warring factions made it more difficult for Dutchbat to interpret the developments in and around the enclave. One source of information more or less dried up: the complaints by the ABiH and the VRS about breaches of the status of the enclave by the other side. Dutchbat III had to base its assessment of the situation on its own observations. The relative calm of 1994 had vanished. In its daily reports, Dutchbat III increasingly had to qualify the word 'calm' with 'but tense' on account of the strained situation in a part of the enclave. In the concise reporting to Sector North East and the more detailed internal Milinfos of Dutchbat, several general developments can be observed. On the instructions of Sector North East at the time of Dutchbat II, a refinement was introduced on reporting ceasefire violations. It made a distinction between salvos within the enclave and so-called 'battle noise' on and behind the ceasefire line.

Dutchbat registered several hundred small calibre salvos per day, as well as one hundred or more shots with machine guns and the firing of at least a few mortar or artillery rounds. The majority of the salvos were fired by the VRS; the machine-gun and mortar fire seldom came from the ABiH. This pattern fitted in with the arms arsenals of the two parties around Srebrenica: the ABiH possessed mainly small calibre weapons and a small number of mortars; the VRS commanded an ample number of machine guns, mortars, artillery pieces and tanks. This was evident once again during and after the Bandera crisis. Using battle noise as criterion, it was not always possible for Dutchbat to determine what was going on between the ABiH and the VRS around the ceasefire line. The majority of the confrontations and exchanges of shelling came after darkness fell, when Dutchbat was manning its observation posts and not sending out any patrols. The number of incidents increased from April onwards.

A second activity that emerges from the daily reports concerns improvement of ABiH and VRS positions and trenches along the ceasefire line. This was not an ongoing activity, but it did take place with a certain regularity. Work was carried out carefully at the observation posts and charted by the Ops rooms. They focused on two locations; in the west in the vicinity of OP-A and in the north around OP-M and OP-N. The VRS dug trenches, but also set up positions for machine guns, mortars, artillery and tanks. On a few occasions, a Dutchbat patrol spotted a tank. Generally speaking, it was clear that the VRS was preparing itself for the battle around the Bandera triangle. The significance of the field reinforcements in the north is more difficult to explain; it could have been a reaction to ABiH activities in this area or the preparation for a possible offensive.

From its observation posts and by means of patrols, Dutchbat could follow the build-up of reinforcements by the ABiH more closely than the VRS activities, but it certainly did not have a complete view. The ABiH, after all, was continuing to deny the battalion access to the Bandera triangle. It also expanded the prohibited area around elevation 699 on the western enclave border and the village of Misici, where trenches were dug and positions set up. Dutchbat attempts to send a patrol to this village continually ran into ABiH blockades, whereupon there was nothing to do but withdraw.⁶⁷⁷ The improvement and reinforcement of positions were less intense in the southern and eastern parts of the enclave. In mid-March, the VRS cut down trees in the south-western corner and near the new OP-D.⁶⁷⁸ In April VRS artillery was observed south of the enclave.⁶⁷⁹ In late April the VRS dug a trench near OP-Q in the west.⁶⁸⁰ Dutchbat hardly ever observed the reinforcement or setting up of ABiH positions in these areas.

⁶⁷⁶ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, 120 en 292. *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 178-179. Def. Situation reports, Milinfo Dutchbat, 15/04/95.

⁶⁷⁷ The preceding is based on the situation reports and Milinfos of Dutchbat, February – May 1995.

⁶⁷⁸ Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 17/03/95 up to 19/03/95.

⁶⁷⁹ Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 23/4/95.

⁶⁸⁰ Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 24/4/95.

However, it did observe other, disturbing developments in the enclave. In the time of Dutchbat I and II, armed men were occasionally observed. Dutchbat took them to be soldiers of the ABiH. The weapons were seized in many cases. Dutchbat III spotted men with weapons much more frequently, individually at first, but later in groups as well – and not always in the vicinity of positions. Attempts to seize the weapons did not generally succeed, because their owners took flight. From April, it was no longer the exception for ABiH men to carry weapons openly: Dutchbat noted the presence of groups of men with guns. In early May, there was the additional factor that the ABiH had set up 50 training sites in the enclave for exercises and giving instruction.⁶⁸¹ The setting up and reinforcement of positions was thus supplemented by information about refresher training for ABiH men in the enclave.

From April, there were also an increasing number of indications that arms and ammunition were coming into the enclave via Zepa. Almost daily, OP-K noted groups of men coming into the enclave with heavily packed rucksacks and sometimes openly carrying weapons. Dutchbat had no doubt that the rucksacks contained weapons too.⁶⁸² Another indication of the growing stock of munitions in the enclave was the regular discovery of ammunition by patrols or by civilians. Sometimes a projectile had already disappeared before a team of the Explosives Disposal Unit arrived on the scene to disarm it.⁶⁸³ In late April, Dutchbat soldiers were warned not to accept munitions offered by the population, but have them deposit these munitions at a spot along the road at least 100 metres from the observation post, where the Explosives Disposal Unit could detonate them expertly.⁶⁸⁴

Dutchbat was mainly an observer in these developments, but certainly not a welcome observer. Instances of the ABiH sending back patrols has already been mentioned. Shooting at patrols and observation posts also occurred with a certain regularity. This mostly happened in the northern part of the enclave around OP-M and OP-N and in the western part around OP-A. Both warring factions, particularly the VRS, used this tactic as a deterrence against Dutchbat. The shooting came from their own positions, but also from VRS patrols in the enclave. Both parties were familiar with the gist of the Rules of Engagement, which seriously restricted Dutchbat's possibilities to respond.

Mines were laid as well; in two cases, this had terrible consequences for Dutchbat III soldiers. On 13 February Private M. Boonman drove over an anti-tank mine. He suffered head wounds and a broken heel bone and calf bone. Five days later, in the south of the enclave Lieutenant J. Verplancke stepped on an anti-personnel mine. His lower left leg had to be amputated.⁶⁸⁵

22. Conclusion

After the Dutch Government took the decision to deploy Dutchbat in November 1993, an Airmobile Brigade reconnaissance group determined that the mission to Srebrenica (and Zepa) was feasible provided a number of conditions were met. The reconnaissance group made no pronouncements about whether these conditions were indeed met. In their approach, it was up to their superiors to make that determination and draw their own conclusions. The main conditions were full Freedom of Movement and a guarantee of regular resupplying. At the start of the mission, it was already clear that there were extensive shortcomings in this respect. Naturally, it was not determined in advance that the mission was infeasible, but it was at least clear that it would not be undertaken under optimal conditions. This came in no way as a surprise to Dutchbat, nor to the responsible authorities: the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, the Chief of Defence Staff and the Minister of Defence.

Two elements played a role from the start of the mission. Dutchbat was split into two operational components and, other than foreseen, deployed in two different areas of operation: the main force in the enclave Srebrenica and one company in the Sapna Thumb in the vicinity of Tuzla.

⁶⁸¹ Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat, 25/04/95 and 27/04/95.

⁶⁸² The preceding is based on the situation reports and Milinfos of Dutchbat, February - May 1995.

⁶⁸³ Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat 17/02/95, 10/03/95, 10/04/95.

⁶⁸⁴ Def. Situation reports. Milinfo Dutchbat 25/04/95.

⁶⁸⁵ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), pp. 101-102.

This split operation had not been foreseen and despite the fact that both areas were situated in Sector North East, there was no central execution of operational command. The second element involved the isolation in which the main force had landed in Srebrenica. On his first visit there in mid-March 1994, the Chief of Defence Staff had the distinct impression that the task of Dutchbat was that of a 'guard in a concentration camp'. This characterization of the work in the enclave would remain in circulation at all levels in Dutchbat: Srebrenica was an 'open-air prison' and Dutchbat was in fact also locked up inside. This experience of the work environment also had its effect on the way of thinking and this was noted by outsiders: Dutchbat suffered from a 'siege mentality'.

From the beginning, that aspect exerted a strong influence: Dutchbat felt locked in by VRS encirclement of the enclave and limited in its operational possibilities by the VRS restriction on Freedom of Movement. This had had its repercussions during the deployment of Dutchbat I and led to delay in the building of the compounds and the observation posts. The restriction of Freedom of Movement – a phenomenon UNPROFOR was confronted with everywhere in Bosnia – was also felt in the regular logistical resupplying of Dutchbat from its arrival in March 1994. In fact, the VRS determined what resupplying occurred and when.

Although a certain arbitrariness existed in the disruption of the logistical flow from Support Command in Lukavac to Dutchbat in Srebrenica, tensions between UNPROFOR and the VRS were a factor of significance: every crisis between the peacekeeping force and the Bosnian-Serb authorities meant the logistical tap was turned off. The Bosnian-Serb response to the use of NATO airpower in Close Air Support or air strikes against the VRS, was full cancellation of all permits for road use for the longer or shorter term. Both the political isolation of the Republika Srpska in the second half of 1994 and the VRS perception that UNPROFOR was no longer impartial but a tool in the hands of the Muslim Government encouraged the turning off of the logistical tap.

This pattern of deteriorating relations between UNPROFOR and the Republika Srpska had direct consequences for Dutchbat in Srebrenica. Resupplying deteriorated throughout the entire period of the mission. This stemmed in large part from the previously mentioned developments at higher level, but developments around the enclave also played an important role under Dutchbat III. After the Bandera crisis, the VRS saw Dutchbat as no longer capable of fulfilling its function of 'prison guard' very well. Thus, for the VRS, the deteriorating logistical situation was a means of exerting influence on Dutchbat's operational capabilities. Because Dutchbat appeared increasingly less able to keep the ABiH under control, the squeeze on resupplying was an effective means of making that clear. However, it would be a fallacy to provide only this explanation. Naturally, the VRS conducted its own policy with regard to the three eastern enclaves and it is safe to say that this policy was not focused on the continuation of their existence. But upon the arrival of Dutchbat I in March 1994 that did not appear to be the top priority in VRS policy.

In early 1994, the VRS had shown interest in talks about the problems concerning the enclave. It therefore utilized the services of Dutchbat and the UNMO team and both had invested heavily in settling the issues that had dragged on, such as determination of the ceasefire line, completing demilitarization and possible use of the Zeleni Jadar – Milici road. This active approach was clearly related to the new policy of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose on the improvement of contacts between the warring factions through UNPROFOR. Although a settlement in the form of an 'agreement in principle' seemed possible in early April, the success achieved quickly evaporated. This had two main causes. Further agreements were essentially hampered by a basic mistrust of each other's intentions. It also became quickly clear that progress on these politically sensitive issues was only possible on the basis of agreement at the central political and military level.

In that respect Dutchbat felt left out in the cold: Bosnia-Herzegovina Command did nothing noticeable to move the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian-Serb authorities to action. The mistrust between the two parties made it impossible to reach agreements or implement agreements about exchange of the bodies of the dead, family reunification and the departure of students from the enclave. Dutchbat also had insufficient weight to close these dossiers as a way of bridging this substantial gap, not even through bilateral talks with each of the parties. After September 1994, the

mediation that had begun so enthusiastically dried up through a lack of results and the exhaustion of arguments. Due to the escalation of military confrontation between the VRS and ABiH in January 1995 it seemed just as impossible to create a local Joint Commission in the context of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

The end of the talks meant an impoverishment of Dutchbat contacts with the warring factions. From September, they concentrated mainly on military matters. This was an essentially different role, because it saw Dutchbat acting as an enforcer of the mandate and as controller, in which it made an appeal to the activities and responsibilities of the parties. Another part of this task – entirely in accordance with the policy of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose – was the conveyance of VRS complaints to the ABiH and vice versa and, if possible, checking the information they provided. This not only involved violations of the ceasefire agreement, but also the activities targeted at the peacekeeping force itself. This did not produce much in the way of satisfactory results. In the view of Dutchbat, both parties were masters at giving evasive answers or passing on unreliable information. In most cases, Dutchbat could not do much more than guess as to the real facts – and certainly not when it came to confrontations between the VRS and ABiH. Their own interpretations remained unsubstantiated due to the lack of reliable information. This was also a consequence of the lack of Intelligence. This was a handicap that Dutchbat had noted itself at the very start of the mission and that continued to exist, because the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army did not consider this operational resource suitable for a UN peace mission – an out-of-date view that was not in the least shared by the other troop-supplying NATO countries.

Initially, breaches in the status of the Safe Area were mainly perpetrated by the VRS. Dutchbat later noted similar breaches on the part of the ABiH – as it stepped up its military activities in the autumn of 1994 and began to operate more openly. A consistent Dutchbat response to these actions led to a cooling off of relations with the ABiH. After the Bandera crisis of January 1995 a downright frosty atmosphere continued to prevail between Dutchbat and the ABiH. In fact, a situation arose in which not only the VRS but also the ABiH believed that Dutchbat was not comporting itself in accordance with the UN mandate for the Safe Area Srebrenica. The ABiH took the view that the peacekeeping force had to keep the VRS out of and at a distance from the enclave, and essentially act as an ally to the ABiH. In the perception of the VRS, Dutchbat had to disarm the ABiH units, keep them from leaving the enclave and from undertaking any military action. These perceptions did not correspond with the task of Dutchbat and, furthermore, could also not be realized by Dutchbat in practice. In the view of the warring factions, this Dutchbat shortcoming emerged more and more clearly as military activities increased.

Generally, however, it cannot be maintained that Dutchbat therefore fell short in carrying out its task. From its arrival in March 1994, the Dutch battalions tried to carry out their task according to a fixed operational concept: observation of the ceasefire line and patrolling along the ceasefire line, and later also in the enclave itself. Dutchbat made a contribution to the improvement of the living conditions of the population. The fact that this was not always done optimally was primarily the consequence of the fuel shortage that resulted from the squeeze on resupplying by the VRS.

The lack of authority, manpower and means to properly respond to the activities of the warring factions in and around the enclave would become an increasingly weighty factor. Dutchbat could not resort to disarmament of the ABiH nor respond actively to its increasingly frequent training activities. Meanwhile the battalion lacked the resources for an effective response to VRS actions within the enclave. Dutchbat was caught between the far-reaching demands of the warring factions on the one hand and the lack of authorization, potential and – to a lesser degree – resources on the other hand. Due to the deteriorating conditions, Dutchbat simply became less and less able to perform its task.

Chapter 7

Dutchbat in the enclave – the local perspective

1. The Canadians relieved by the Dutch

On 3 March 1994 the Canadians officially handed over the torch to Dutchbat. As discussed previously in Chapters 5 and 6, the rotation took place anything but smoothly: the Bosnian Muslims did not allow the Canadians to depart, and the Bosnian Serbs also refused to allow the rotation to take place normally by denying the buses for the Canadians access to the enclave.

The Serbs also took advantage of the situation by moving their positions forward and seized the arrival of Dutchbat to cut off the connecting road between Srebrenica and Zepa for the Muslims. For the Bosnian Serbs it was of the utmost importance to obtain permanent control over the road between Milici and Skelani running through that area without Muslims continuously wandering through there. The VRS succeeded in isolating the two enclaves of Zepa and Srebrenica from each other on the first day that Dutchbat was there. To prevent any further Serb territorial gains, the Muslims organized night patrols which led to incidents, for example at Suceška. The events have been described above from the Dutchbat perspective; this chapter provides the local perspective and focuses on the living conditions of the population and the role of the various parties during the presence of the Dutch peacekeepers.

All of one day after the arrival of Dutchbat, Muslims blocked the compound in Srebrenica; the Canadian battalion was accused of having allowed the VRS to advance its lines.⁶⁸⁶ In the Swedish Shelter Project, there were even a number of shooting incidents in those days, which according to the Canadians and Dutchbat were intended to disrupt the rotation. It could not be ascertained, however, whether the fire had come from the Serbs or Muslims. First, on 3 March the Swedish personnel of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency came under fire, and then on the evening of 4 March a local police officer was hit by gunfire whilst another disappeared. Panic broke out among the population and many fled from the Swedish Shelter Project.

However, when the inhabitants saw that the Swedish NGO staff members stayed, they slowly returned. Due to the incidents, the local personnel of the Swedish Shelter Project refused to show up at their workplace. It appears otherwise that this was not an entirely spontaneous decision; evidently, they were urged by the municipal administration to ensure that the southern border of the enclave was secured.

After the incidents, UNPROFOR increased surveillance near the Swedish Shelter Project; two Swedish staff members decided to return to Sweden.⁶⁸⁷

On 5 March Muslims hemmed the Canadian unit in the compound in Srebrenica again, this time with more than 2,000 people. The Commander, Major Y. Bouchard, was accused of handing over to the Serbs the area that the VRS had captured by moving their lines forward. People held up banners demanding that UNPROFOR remove the VRS out of the area between the two Muslim enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa and declare the entire area a demilitarized zone. These demonstrations, too, took place upon the instigation of, or in any case with the approval of, the local authorities.⁶⁸⁸

It was clear that the authorities placed little faith in the Canadian battalion by then, and for this reason the arrival of Dutchbat was welcomed. The administrators expected better relations with the Dutch peacekeepers, as well as real protection of the Safe Area and more freedom of movement.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Sitreps. Declassified by DND, Briefing Note for COS J3, 07/03/94; 'Serbs stall Canadian withdrawal', in: *The Toronto Star*, 04/03/94.

⁶⁸⁷ NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, Security report, 818838, 05/03/94.

⁶⁸⁸ 'Bosnian Muslims want Canadian troops to stay', in: *The Toronto Star*, 07/03/94; Interview Yvan Bouchard, 15/11/99; NIOD, Coll. SRSA, SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 06/03/94.

⁶⁸⁹ Interview Fahrudin Salihovic, 04/02/98.

Chapter 6 describes how the arrival of Dutchbat gave the population new hope and that the Bosnian Serbs were also originally happy with the arrival of the Dutch, who were better equipped and greater in number than the Canadians. The VRS expected and demanded that the Muslims in the enclave would be finally disarmed for good. They threatened to resume shooting if that did not happen.⁶⁹⁰

More than one month later, the Serbs carried out their threat elsewhere by attacking and threatening to overrun Gorazde. This Gorazde crisis in April 1994 (see Chapter 10) also resulted in a great deal of uncertainty in the Srebrenica enclave. Orders came from on high in the ABiH to strengthen Muslim positions on the edge of the enclave, because the ABiH was uncertain that UNPROFOR could provide protection.⁶⁹¹ Most of the ABiH soldiers favoured resuming hostilities.⁶⁹² On 18 and 19 April 1994, two large mass meetings took place in Srebrenica, during which the mayor spoke to the population in an attempt to reassure it.

The hope of the population that the arrival of Dutchbat would bring about an improvement in their living conditions was quickly dispersed, because the Bosnian Serbs simply continued to shoot at and keep an iron grip on the enclave. The Muslims believed that Dutchbat did too little to change this situation and also did not appreciate that they continued to confiscate their weapons.⁶⁹³

In short, the Serbian encirclement of Srebrenica – with the objective of isolating the enclave as much as possible and starving it into submission – was maintained and even intensified. That fact had not only a major influence on the operational actions of Dutchbat, but also on everyday life in the Safe Area. The Bosnian Serbs continuously thwarted efforts to provision the enclave, regularly refusing even the Dutch convoys right of passage.

2. Living conditions in and around the enclave

Although life for the Displaced Persons in the enclave was very hard, conditions on the Serb side were similarly anything but easy. Since the beginning of the war, there was tremendous dissatisfaction with the lack of humanitarian aid for and international coverage of the afflicted Serb population. The prevailing opinion was that the Muslims wrongly obtained all the coverage and aid. The Serb chronicler of the war in Bratunac and Srebrenica, Milivoje Ivanisevic, for example, writes that between April and August 1993, in the initial months that the Safe Area existed, the Muslims received more than eighty kilograms of food aid and other aid goods per person (based on his estimate of the total population of 30,000). This estimate did not include the unknown amount of aid which they had received by way of airdrops. The approximately 20,000 Serbs, who lived in Bratunac, Skelani and Milici during the war, most of whom were driven out of their homes, received only fourteen kilograms of aid per person in the same period.⁶⁹⁴ The Serbs felt that the international community had let them down, that is with the exception of the Greeks. The Greek-Orthodox church, for example, arranged for sick and feeble Serb children from Bratunac, Milici and Skelani to recuperate for a number of months in Greece.⁶⁹⁵

Although the situation for the Serb population in Bratunac was anything but prosperous, their problems were by far less urgent than in the enclave. Aid always managed to find a way in, if not via the UNHCR, then from Serbia or abroad, organized by Serbs in the diaspora. The Serb complaints were in part even misplaced: after all, the UNHCR had continuously supplied the Serbs with aid for almost six months (between the end of June and the middle of December 1992), whilst the afflicted Muslim population in Srebrenica remained almost entirely without such in the same period. In the middle of December 1992, the UNHCR stopped supplying the Serbs in Bratunac, when they refused to grant

⁶⁹⁰ MID/KL. *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*; July 1994; annexed reports of discussions with BSA in February 1994.

⁶⁹¹ NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 19/04/94 and 20/04/94.

⁶⁹² NIOD, Coll SRSA, SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 19/04/94 and 20/04/94.

⁶⁹³ Interviews Ibrahim Becirovic, 05/08/97 and Abdulah Purkovic, 04/02/98.

⁶⁹⁴ Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp.117-118.

⁶⁹⁵ *Nasa Rijec*, April 1994, p.5; Ivanisevic *Hronika*, p.119.

UNHCR convoys access to the Muslim enclave. This organization resumed supplying aid to the Serbs in Bratunac in March 1993, when the convoys finally received permission to enter the enclave again.⁶⁹⁶

In addition, other western aid agencies made a contribution, such as the Norwegian People's Aid. In the second half of 1994, with the financial backing of the Governments of Norway, Sweden and Hungary, this organization built a refugee village of pre-fabricated housing in the largely destroyed Serb village of Kravica. In January 1995 Norwegian People's Aid officially handed over the keys to this village to the mayor of Bratunac.⁶⁹⁷ As regards the Serbian diaspora, one of the most active persons was Miodrag Stevic, a businessman from Berlin who succeeded in securing large sums of money for humanitarian aid for the Serb population in Bratunac.⁶⁹⁸

In Srebrenica itself the oncoming spring led to a slight improvement in living conditions after the hard winter of 1993-94. But everything was very relative, as a doctor of *Médecins Sans Frontières* wrote: 'there was always a serious lack of everything, in particular soap and shampoo; whereas there may have been enough food, it was usually of poor quality; and people used the paper of the letters delivered through the International Red Cross to roll cigarettes. There was no electricity; water mills for small hydroelectric power stations were built in the river, forests were felled, and firewood was piled up for the next winter. The thought that there was no future was very depressing for a large part of the population, particularly for the refugee population.'⁶⁹⁹

Near the end of the year the food situation worsened seriously due to the continuing Serb blockades, particularly at the end of November and the start of December 1994. People went out to beg for food in front of the warehouse in the city, where the UNHCR aid supplies were stored. The authorities started to request airdrops again, although this option had been dismissed in the past by practically all parties operating in the enclave (in particular by the NGOs). Relying on rumours that airdrops would in fact be carried out, people stoked fires in the hills to guide aeroplanes to the right places. Even in the spring of 1995, the supply of food, fuel, building materials, medicine, soap and other hygienic products remained a major problem for the NGOs. The lack of diesel and construction materials resulted, for example, in serious delays in the construction activities of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency.⁷⁰⁰

The uncertain supply situation forced the population to bring goods into the enclave through other channels. For example, there was lively trade in contraband between Zepa and Srebrenica. An important part of the goods which were traded in Zepa originated from Serbs who resold them to the Muslims through the Ukrainian UN battalion. In the beginning, the Bosnian Serb besiegers turned a blind eye to the smugglers, that is as long as it concerned contraband in small amounts per backpack. Later, when horses were used, the Bosnian Serbs routinely ambushed them. It often came to skirmishes between VRS troops and armed smugglers who wandered through Serbian terrain to reach Srebrenica.⁷⁰¹ Some of them were wounded or killed, others disappeared. Given that in this manner other goods were also smuggled into the enclave, such as weapons and munitions, Dutchbat set up OP-K to intercept people coming from Zepa.

According to a Dutchbat document, the contraband routes between Srebrenica and Zepa were primarily controlled by a certain 'Yusuf, alias Tarzan', who seemed to have connections with the Head of Srebrenica police Hakija Meholjic. Meholjic was a rival of Naser Oric. Whereas he collaborated with Oric to a certain degree, he could still be regarded as the so-called 'opposition' in the enclave. After the elections of November 1990, Hakija Meholjic's brother Malik Meholjic had been mayor of Srebrenica for a short period of time, but he was removed by hardliners from the SDA (the party of Izetbegovic),

⁶⁹⁶ See the interviews with the head of the Red Cross division in Bratunac, Cedomir Pavlovic, in the local Serbian paper *Nasa Rijec*, March 1993, p.2; *Nasa Rijec*, October 1993, p.5.

⁶⁹⁷ Miljanovic, *Krivi Bozic*, p.121.

⁶⁹⁸ Gajic, 'Miodrag Stevic'; Jovanovic, 'Dezinformacije'; Simic, 'Zbog istine'.

⁶⁹⁹ Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 53-54.

⁷⁰⁰ Thorsen, *SRSA*, pp. 24-25.

⁷⁰¹ Confidential information (74) and interview Bob Patchett, 19/11/99.

with whom Oric collaborated at that time. Malik had then left the SDA and established a local chapter of the moderate and more liberal MBO party, of which Hakija had also been a supporter. From that time on, Hakija (whose brother disappeared in Montenegro in the early stages of the war in 1992) could not stand the SDA hardliners and their accomplices who had brought the situation to a head in the city, and in particular the relations with the Serb inhabitants. Meholjic genuinely believed in peaceful co-operation and coexistence with the Serbs, although he himself was also one of the first to take up arms to defend the city and organize the local resistance against the ethnic cleansing by the Serb paramilitaries and the Yugoslav Army. Later, as head of the police, he would personally offer protection and help to the small group of Serbs who remained in the enclave.⁷⁰²

Oric and his men tended to side with the Muslims, although Oric, said a Serb inhabitant who remained in the enclave, certainly could not be described as a someone who hated Serbs. Oric had a Serbian girlfriend with whom he had radio contact and to whom he also sent money.⁷⁰³ The conflicts with Meholjic revolved around the reins of power in the enclave; due to his efforts to maintain a minimum of law and order in the enclave, Hakija Meholjic made life miserable for the municipal administrators who tried to enrich themselves along with Oric. The conflicts between Meholjic and Oric and the municipal administrators came to a head, when Deputy Mayor Hamdija Fejzic appropriated the car of Meholjic and gave it to Oric. After this incident Meholjic refused to communicate any longer with the municipality, aside from complaining about its corruption and lack of organization. During meetings of the Presidium, of which he was a member, he could not resist continuously reminding Oric and his accomplices of the damaging effects of their corrupt practices.⁷⁰⁴

According to Katrine Ommang, a Norwegian People's Aid staff member, it was an open secret that the civil and military authorities were corrupt:

‘Apart from deliveries of flour and rice, very few things actually reach those they were intended for. Andrei [Kazakov], the UNHCR representative, said that they no longer imported toys and similar equipment because it always ended up with those who already had a store of it and there was no alternative way of distribution. Furthermore, it is an “official secret” that Naser Oric “gets” a part of whatever is sold and bought [sic.] inside the enclave and money which is smuggled in to private persons.’⁷⁰⁵

Part of the goods which the UNHCR convoys brought into the enclave were channelled by the authorities to the ABiH to provide the troops with provisions. Another part was resold on the black market, and here too the military leaders exerted their influence.⁷⁰⁶ On the other hand, Meholjic and ‘Tarzan’ tried to keep open the contraband routes to Zepa against the wishes of the authorities. The authorities were not pleased with any form of trade by third parties with the Bosnian Serbs or with trade in contraband by the Displaced Persons, because that affected their monopoly as the only supplier of goods. Given that Hakija Meholjic’s police protected the Swedish Shelter Project on the south-side of the enclave, he was in a relatively good position to supervise and guarantee the trade in contraband with Zepa. The ABiH had, as such, little control over the trade in contraband.⁷⁰⁷

On the frontlines ‘unofficial’ contacts between Serbs and local Muslims took place on a regular basis, which not surprisingly occasionally led to direct trading activities with the Bosnian Serbs. The trade across the demarcation lines, often between people who still knew each other well from prior to

⁷⁰² Interview Djuka Micic, 10/06/98.

⁷⁰³ Interview Dana Ristanovic, 22/09/98.

⁷⁰⁴ NIOD, Coll. NPA. NPA (Ommang) to NPA, end of mission report, 10/03/95.

⁷⁰⁵ NIOD, Coll. NPA. NPA (Ommang) to NPA, end of mission report, 10/03/95.

⁷⁰⁶ Mrkic, ‘Predsjedništvo’, p.7-8. Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 31/01/98.

⁷⁰⁷ MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo; July 1994; Chapters 6 and 10, and annexe ‘BiH commanders in Srebrenica enclave’.

the war, largely circumvented the control of the authorities. This was a thorn in the eye for the ABiH and the authorities in the enclave, as well as for the Bosnian Serb authorities, and people were punished if they were caught.⁷⁰⁸ However, serious money could be earned: goods which were relatively cheap to buy from the Bosnian Serbs could often be traded at a multiple of the original price on the market in Srebrenica. Salt, coffee and oil were often brought into the enclave in this manner by means of the trade with the Bosnian Serbs in Bratunac.⁷⁰⁹ The Serbs were occasionally taken for a ride in the process. During a 1994 transaction involving salt, cigarettes and coffee worth DEM16,000, the Muslims robbed the Serb traders of their merchandise by overpowering them with a large group.⁷¹⁰

It also occurred regularly that the convoy drivers brought in scarce goods, such as salt, which they sold at extravagant prices on the black market. This happened, for example, with a Norwegian People's Aid convoy in May 1994. The local Swedish Rescue Services Agency project leader Richard Svärd was particularly concerned about this and decreed that this was no longer allowed to take place, since this involved tremendous risks for the Swedish Rescue Services Agency.⁷¹¹ People tried all kinds of ways to smuggle money from outside into the enclave; to this end, NGO staff members and Dutchbat personnel were also occasionally approached, if they were at home or on leave. This often involved substantial sums, even in the magnitude of more than DEM100,000, which, for example, were hidden in food parcels (such as in tins). Couriers who brought money in in this way generally demanded a certain percentage.⁷¹² Certain political heavyweights, such as the chairman of the SDA Hamed Efendic, were suspected by Dutchbat of bringing in large sums of money into the enclave and illegal trade on the black market.⁷¹³

During the Dutchbat period the NGOs largely continued their humanitarian activities, as described earlier in Chapter 4. In general the collaboration between the NGOs and Dutchbat was good. In a daily meeting in Srebrenica Dutchbat kept members of the other UN organizations (such as UNHCR or UNMO) and the NGOs abreast of incidents and warned them of certain security risks. Only the Swedish Rescue Services Agency staff members were not present initially, as they were busy building the refugee village on the south side of the enclave (the Swedish Shelter Project). They started, however, attending regularly from June 1994, when they moved to Srebrenica town. The NGOs provided each other with a lot of practical assistance, and when goods were scarce, they helped each other out. Electricity, for example, had to be generated by means of generators, and given that there were not enough of them, generators were lent back and forth between *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the International Red Cross and the Swedish Rescue Services Agency.⁷¹⁴ A number of projects continued to be carried out in mutual consultation and collaboration, such as the construction of the so-called 'psy-center' (a kind of psychiatric and geriatric nursing home) which was mutually established by the de Swedish Rescue Services Agency and *Médecins Sans Frontières*.

According to *Médecins Sans Frontières* sources, Dutchbat did much more than the Canadian battalion to assist this organization. Dutchbat had a surgical team which was primarily intended for its own people, but which could also be deployed if possible for people in the enclave. As a matter of fact, *Médecins Sans Frontières* also occasionally had surgeons in the enclave. Dutchbat also had six ambulances at its disposal which were often used for the population. The entire Dutchbat medical team offered substantial assistance to *Médecins Sans Frontières*. According to a *Médecins Sans Frontières* report from July 1994, the workload of *Médecins Sans Frontières* was reduced by one third as a result of the assistance of

⁷⁰⁸ Interview Vahid Hodzic, 04/07/97, 05/07/97. MSF, Brussels. MSF, interview Dzema, aunt of Emira, 18/10/95; MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo; July 1994, annexed report of meeting with Naser Oric and Ramiz Becirovic, 18/02/94.

⁷⁰⁹ NIOD, Coll. NPA. NPA (Ommang) to NPA, end of mission report, 10/03/95.

⁷¹⁰ Confidential interview (80).

⁷¹¹ NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 07/05/94.

⁷¹² Interviews J.R. Groen, 14/01/00; Nijaz Masic, 25/10/00; Omer Subasic, 14/06/98; Emir Suljagic, 20/09/99; and Hatidza Hren, 02/02/98.

⁷¹³ KMar. Uncivpol incident report no. BO5-94/040 (Aalders), 12/04/95.

⁷¹⁴ NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 21/04/95.

Dutchbat. However, as the situation in the enclave became more difficult, particularly in the spring of 1995, Dutchbat scaled down its level of assistance. During the last weeks prior to the actual fall, the Dutchbat command even stopped assistance to the hospital.⁷¹⁵

Médecins Sans Frontières sources also reveal that Dutchbat collaborated with the authorities when, for example, the river had to be cleaned and car wrecks removed. During the winter months Dutchbat ensured that the asphalt road in the city was cleared of snow.⁷¹⁶ The sanitary and hygienic situation in the enclave remained extremely precarious, as the Bosnian Serbs kept blocking the supply of cleaning agents and disinfectants. Still, efforts were continuously made to keep the city as clean as possible, and Dutchbat regularly assisted these efforts. However, the fact that the members of Dutchbat took photographs near the garbage dump of people who combed through the garbage led to tremendous indignation among the Muslims.⁷¹⁷

During the summer of 1994 Srebrenica was hit by a heatwave which resulted in a new epidemic of lice and scabies. The city was also afflicted by other insect plagues against which it was difficult to do something given the scarcity of available cleaning agents. *Médecins Sans Frontières* organized large campaigns to disinfect the hospital and some refugee centres, but they fought a losing battle. In July *Médecins Sans Frontières* talked of an emergency situation and called on the international aid agencies to lend assistance. The *Médecins Sans Frontières* team wrote how crying mothers knocked on their office doors, because their children could not sleep at night, as they were incessantly beset by fleas, cockroaches and other vermin. *Médecins Sans Frontières* sent pressing letters to the outside world that the need for the supply of large amounts of insecticides was now extremely urgent. *Médecins Sans Frontières* finally received a shipment of lice shampoo and other disinfectants, and it started immediately disinfecting buildings and the population, which made the suffering a little bit more bearable. The campaign, however, was not complete, so that, for example, residential housing could not be treated sufficiently. Insect and vermin plagues remained a continuous source of worry for the population and the humanitarian organizations.⁷¹⁸

After the Swedish Rescue Services Agency had completed the refugee village in Slapovici, the Swedish team moved to Hotel Domavia in the city of Srebrenica in June 1994, where they continued repairing schools, public buildings and private homes. The authorities had requested the Swedish Rescue Services Agency to do so in May 1994.⁷¹⁹ At the top of the wish list was the renovation of the school which had been hit by a grenade. In addition, the authorities wanted to request the Swedes to assist in renovating destroyed or gutted residences. In August 1994 the Swedish team started repairing the school in Srebrenica as well as other schools and public buildings throughout the enclave. The activities of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency included building a roof on a flour storage facility, repairing the roof and windows of the school in addition to supplying school furniture. These activities stopped in December 1994, when the Swedish personnel left, partly due to the difficult circumstances in the enclave, but also because the Swedish Government still had not come up with a new subsidy for the work the Swedish Rescue Services Agency performed in the enclave.

Local members of the personnel continued getting ready to renovate almost eighty residences in Srebrenica selected by the municipality pending the return of the Swedish personnel. The renovation of these houses would not only improve the living conditions of the more than 200 families already living in the residences, it would also create extra living space for an additional 1,230 persons who could move into the houses after the renovation was complete. In the end, this project could only be partially carried out. The Swedish staff members and the local personnel remained on very good terms with the

⁷¹⁵ Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 65-66. Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97. See also Chapters 8 and 9 of Part II and the annexe to Part III 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues'.

⁷¹⁶ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 96.

⁷¹⁷ Omeragic, 'Nakon 10 hiljada ubijenih', p.14.

⁷¹⁸ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica, monthly report, July 1994. Thorsen, 'MSF', pp. 98-99.

⁷¹⁹ NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 10/05/94. Thorsen, *SRSA*, p.7. For the work of SRSA in Srebrenica, see also the interview with Svärd in *Ijiljan* (Becirovic, 'Zivjet cu').

rest of the population, as confirmed by the reports. The Swedes were taken good care of in Hotel Domavia; as project leader Richard Svärd wrote: 'Our only problem here is that we have to make sure that we do not become too fat. As soon as we open our mouths, the hotel personnel try to fill them with food and drink'.⁷²⁰ The Swedish Rescue Service Agency staff members had good contacts with the personnel of the hotel as well as with the head of police Hakija Meholjic, who had his police headquarters in Domavia. The personnel and Meholjic invited them regularly to parties and dinners.⁷²¹

3. The internal political relations in the enclave

When Dutchbat arrived in the enclave, the civil municipal administration consisted of the War Presidency, headed by the War President, also referred to as the mayor by the NGOs and the international organizations, and an executive council chaired by the deputy mayor. The Presidium replaced the municipal council which was suspended at the start of the war, because a large number of municipal councillors had fled from Srebrenica. No meeting of the municipal council had been convened since then. For this reason, the affairs of the council were first looked after with effect from 1 July 1992 by the War Presidency, which consisted of seventeen members, representing all the parts of the enclave. Generally speaking, it took all the important decisions in the enclave. Hajrudin Avdic was appointed as the first War President of this administrative body. At that time the reins of power were already firmly in the hands of a group of people who were loyal to Naser Oric.⁷²² From the moment that the enclave was declared a Safe Area, the title War Presidium was changed to Presidium at the insistence of UNPROFOR, but the term War Presidency remained in vogue. On 9 July 1993 Avdic was replaced by Fahrudin Salihovic. This change was due to formal reasons – the term of office of War President was limited to one year in accordance with the municipal statute – although it would later become evident that Avdic would adopt a critical attitude toward Oric, which was likely an additional reason why he was sacked. At that time, political parties were still forbidden in the enclave.⁷²³

The executive council, headed by Deputy Mayor Hamdija Fejzic, was formally directly responsible for the municipal affairs and all kinds of practical matters, such as civil defence, the fire department, employment, healthcare, education, the police, the courts and the prison. During the war a number of executive council committees were created which focused on distributing humanitarian aid, housing (in particular for Displaced Persons) and repairing war damage. The head of the executive council, Hamdija Fejzic, was the liaison officer for the international organizations and the NGOs in daily consultations.⁷²⁴

None of the senior administrators came from the city itself. They had little experience in administration, and the allocation of their tasks was not surprisingly often rather vague, which led more than a few times to confusion among the NGOs and the other international organizations. According to the staff members of the NGOs and the UN organizations, a lot of time was wasted on unnecessarily long consultations with the authorities on subjects which were not really relevant in terms of resolving the most urgent problems.⁷²⁵ Although the authorities formally held the most important positions in the municipality, the reins of power were in fact held by the military. The key figure behind the scenes was and remained Naser Oric, who, as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, had the greatest influence in Srebrenica. A *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff member wrote in March 1994 that:

⁷²⁰ NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 13/06/94.

⁷²¹ Thorsen, *JRSA*, pp. 18-19.

⁷²² MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.23.

⁷²³ Interview Fahrudin Salihovic in the paper *Srebrenicki glas* which was printed in the enclave during the war, 20/12/93, pp.6-9. Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 31/01/98.

⁷²⁴ MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.23. Masic, *Srebrenica*, p.28. Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.154. Thorsen, *NPA*, p.16. Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

⁷²⁵ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Wilmart), mission report January-July 1994, 21/07/94.

‘The king of the place is without competition Commander Naser (...) Without his official consent, nothing can be done in this town! (...) He controls the black market, the prostitution and Opstina. All of this, of course, under the cover of the official authorities.’⁷²⁶

As the Canadian battalion found out right from the beginning, the War President and the deputy mayor never wanted to take a position on anything without first having consulted with Oric.⁷²⁷

It was not until the spring of 1994 that the political parties were permitted again and efforts were made to restore the pre-war political structures. The SDA also resumed its activities. In April 1994, at a meeting of the local SDA party chapter of Potocari, in which Naser Oric also had a seat, the former local SDA heavyweights Hamed Efendic, Ibran Mustafic, and Hamed Salihovic were relieved of all their positions in the party.⁷²⁸ The municipal council was reactivated in the summer of 1994, but because a large number of the original members of the council were no longer present, a so-called Interim municipal council was established, consisting of 55 of the original 70 seats, of which 45 were held by the SDA and the remaining 10 by the opposition parties (the SDS seats remained vacant). The places of municipal councillors who were no longer in the enclave were awarded to others on the list of candidates. The interim council was chaired by Osman Suljic and convened once a month. With his inauguration, Suljic became the War President of the municipality instead of Fahrudin Salihovic. This changing of the guard appeared to be politically motivated: Suljic seemed to be more on Oric’s leash than Salihovic.⁷²⁹

Known as one of the more honest administrators, Salihovic seemed to have been sidelined, but not for long. On 17 September 1994 he was appointed Head (*Nacelnik*) of the municipality; this was by all appearances a new position next to that of the War President and the Head of the executive council. This position was apparently the result of internal political differences. After all, in September 1994 there was a great deal of agitation at all levels, not only in the SDA, but also in the municipal administration, regarding the on-going exodus from the enclave. Able-bodied men tried to escape the enclave, often taking their weapons with them, because they placed little faith anymore in the authorities.⁷³⁰ The civil and military authorities were criticized, in particular Oric and the small group of persons who managed the UNHCR warehouse, in addition to those who enriched themselves with the UNHCR aid supplies. For this reason, the morale of many ABiH fighters fell to a new low in the course of 1994.⁷³¹

During meetings of the SDA and the municipal council prior to the appointment of Fahrudin Salihovic in September 1994, people such as Hajrudin Avdic and Hakija Meholic heavily criticized Oric and his accomplices. They insisted on a more honest distribution of aid supplies, as well as a reduction of the size of the black market in UNHCR goods. They expressed their fear that, otherwise, even more able-bodied men would leave the enclave. Meholic denounced the fact that at the start of the war the city’s civil authority was subordinated to the military and pointed to this as one of the most important

⁷²⁶ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica (Godain) to MSF-B (Tocker), MSF-F (Laoubbia, Salignon, Genevier), activity report (mission report), 25/03/94.

⁷²⁷ Interviews Yvan Bouchard 15/11/99, and Thomas Geburt, 18/11/99.

⁷²⁸ Minutes of this meeting can be found in NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic, a diary of SDA activist Zulfo Salihovic, which was found by the Serbs after the fall of the enclave.

⁷²⁹ Taljic and Becirovic, ‘Srebrenica’, p.5. Interview Fahrudin Salihovic, 04/02/98. Masic, *Srebrenica*, p.28. Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.154; NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic. Minutes of memorandum book of Zulfo Salihovic.

⁷³⁰ This view is confirmed by UNHCR sources, which reported on groups of men who succeeded in escaping and pressed on to Kladanj which was under the control of the Muslims. NIOD, Coll. SMG, UNHCR Tuzla to UNHCR Belgrade BH Desk, 15/09/94, ‘movement of people from Srebrenica to Tuzla’; Protection Unit UNHCR FO Tuzla, 16/09/94, ‘escape from Srebrenica’. UNHCR Tuzla to UNHCR Belgrade BH Desk, 22/09/94, ‘movement of people from Srebrenica’.

⁷³¹ This was also apparent from a number of ABiH documents which were seized by the Serbs, such as: NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic. Masic to all deputy commanders for the morale of the units in the enclave, ABiH, 8 OG, No. 130-28-83/94, Srebrenica, 22/06/94.

causes of the problems. The appointment of Salihovic as Head of the municipality was a direct result of these discussions and seemed to be a compromise which nevertheless was meant to set the house in order. In most sources, he is referred to as the Mayor from that time on.

Demands were also made in the municipal council for the establishment of a military court and military police which would bring an end to the crime, the abuse of power and the arbitrariness of the members of the military.⁷³² But nothing had yet been done about this by the start of June 1995. Meholic threatened at that point to resign, as the civil police could accomplish nothing in matters concerning ABiH members. Meholic felt like he was on his own in the battle against crime.⁷³³

The district court, which was reopened in July 1993 and headed by Mensud Omerovic, also could not perform properly, because the judges were constantly exposed to all kinds of pressure and threats which were occasionally even life-threatening. In March 1995, for example, judge Smail Klempic was threatened and shot at by ABiH Commander Ejub Golic, forcing him to flee from his own home. Due to the absence of military police and a military court, little could be done against such threats and actions of members of the ABiH.⁷³⁴

On 24 October 1994 the police arrested two members of the warehouse personnel after large quantities of humanitarian aid were found at their home. They were fired and the Committee for the distribution of humanitarian aid was set up. This also seemed to involve Hakija Meholic paying back the mafia and Deputy Mayor Hamdija Fejzic.⁷³⁵ The members of the warehouse personnel were indicted, which was greeted with approval by the population and the ABiH troops. Nijaz Masic, Commander for the morale of the ABiH troops in the enclave, reported on 16 November 1994 that the imminent exodus of ABiH troops and civilians which had already slowly started in September had been averted.⁷³⁶

There had been a hard core of opposition against Naser Oric and the sitting administration which came in particular from the former SDA heavyweights Ibran Mustafic, Hamed Salihovic and Hamed Efendic. They were the ones who at the outbreak of the war were completely marginalized, although Naser Oric, as chauffeur and right-hand man of Mustafic, had been on familiar terms with them. Mustafic led the opposition from the moment he returned to the enclave in December 1992.⁷³⁷ He had been sent to the enclave by the SDA in Sarajevo, which attempted to regain there through Mustafic some of the influence it had lost at the start of the war. In many of those parts of Bosnia where the war had been fought the fiercest, the SDA had had to relinquish its position to local warlords who turned out to be much better in organizing the local defences.⁷³⁸ In Srebrenica, the reins of power had been taken over by local hoodlums, such as Naser Oric and Zulfo Tursonovic, who originally could not be bothered by the politics of the SDA, except when Izetbegovic personally called from Sarajevo to consult with Oric.

Mustafic tried to gain some influence on the local civil administration in Srebrenica, but that turned out to be idle hope. Mustafic made no headway, just as little as the former SDA chairman Hamed Efendic, who, after Srebrenica had been declared a Safe Area, was jailed several times by the local rulers. Both of them were accused of having done nothing to prepare the population for war and having adopted a passive, wait-and-see attitude. Moreover, they were accused of having enriched

⁷³² NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic. Minutes of these meetings can be found in the diary of Zulfo Salihovic.

⁷³³ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. SJB Srebrenica (Meholic) to MUP-R BiH and CSB Tuzla, Depesa br. 36/95, Srebrenica, 01/06/95.

⁷³⁴ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. President of the district court (Omerovic) to the Ministry of Justice BiH, SU-28/95, Srebrenica, 24/05/95; NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. President of the district court (Omerovic) to the regional military court Tuzla, SU-25/95, Srebrenica, 20/04/95.

⁷³⁵ NIOD, Coll. CTKL, Kazakov to Tall, 31/10/94 re: theft of humanitarian aid from warehouse.

⁷³⁶ NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic. Masic to all deputy commanders for the morale of the units in the enclave, ABiH, 8 OG, No. 130-28-176/94, 16/11/94.

⁷³⁷ Interview Ibran Mustafic, 18/09/01.

⁷³⁸ Interviews Mehmed Pargan, 16/06/98, and Almir and Zahira Ramic, 06/11/99-10/11/99.

themselves by gunrunning.⁷³⁹ Mustafic could claim to hold a special position as the only politician from Srebrenica who was a representative in the Parliament in Sarajevo, a fact he repeatedly underscored in discussions with the UN. Nevertheless, the local rulers simply ignored him.⁷⁴⁰ He was blamed in particular for having ‘fled’ to Sarajevo at the start of the war; he had not joined in the fight. Mustafic, in turn, alleged that Oric had staged a coup and installed a military junta in Srebrenica; he also accused Oric and his accomplices of mafia practices.⁷⁴¹

Mustafic’s objective was to reactivate the municipal council, but he did not succeed as a result of the resistance of the sitting rulers, who did not decide to do so until the summer of 1994. Mustafic was supported by approximately twenty former leading SDA members, including Hamed Efendic (the former local SDA chairman), Hamed Salihovic (previously head of the police) and Ahmo Tihic (a well-known SDA activist originally from the region near Drina). In the three years prior to the fall of the enclave, this group formed the most important ‘opposition’ which attempted to restore its own rule (on the basis of the electoral victory of November 1990). Mustafic claims that during that entire period he strenuously opposed the attacks on Serb villages, as they would inevitably lead to a Serb backlash. This might explain in part why he was one of the very few who survived Serb captivity after the fall of the enclave. Another reason for his survival could lie in the fact that the Serbs knew that he was not in the enclave in the period from April to December 1992 when most of the attacks were carried out, and that he was an opponent of Oric, and for this reason might be useful at some point in the future. When Mustafic was captured, he was still recovering from the wounds he had sustained in the attack on his life which had taken place in May 1995 in the enclave.⁷⁴²

In his fight against Oric’s ‘military junta’ Mustafic appears to have also sought support particularly among the regular ABiH troops and the large group of Displaced Persons. The ABiH leadership in Srebrenica accused the former SDA heavyweights Ibran Mustafic, Hamed Efendic and Hamed Salihovic of undermining the morale among the ABiH troops by spreading ‘lies’ and ‘incorrect rumours’.⁷⁴³ Mustafic and his associates also sought support among the Displaced Persons, as their relations with the local administration and the original inhabitants who dominated it had never been particularly good. The Displaced Persons were constantly kept out of the decision-taking process by the local administration and the mafia, who by all appearances were absolutely ruthless. In May 1993, when UNHCR representative P. Ollier designated a number of representatives among the Displaced Persons to control how the convoys were unloaded, one of them, a refugee from Vlasenica, was murdered on the very same day. The rest of the representatives who had been designated by the UNHCR no longer dared to show up. This clearly showed once again that the warehouse and control over the delivered aid supplies were crucial for exercising power in the enclave.⁷⁴⁴

What also bred bad blood among the Displaced Persons was that Oric’s troops tended to treat Muslim fighters who had fled from elsewhere to the enclave as their inferiors, as they had failed, so to speak, to defend their villages. Consequently, they were often forced to do the dirty work, which also contributed to the decline in morale. According to a *Médecins Sans Frontières* source, Oric always sent them first to the frontlines, when the situation was clearly dangerous.⁷⁴⁵ It is rather plausible that the soldiers concerned tried to desert the army from such positions on the edge of the enclave. Such problems were noted concerning Zepa, where the original population treated the Displaced Persons poorly and male Displaced Persons were recruited against their will and sent to the frontlines. Of the 5,000 Muslims trapped in Zepa, 70% were Displaced Persons.⁷⁴⁶

⁷³⁹ MID/KL, *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*, July 1994; Chapter 1, section D5.

⁷⁴⁰ Interview Ibran Mustafic 16/04/98 and 18/09/01.

⁷⁴¹ MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.24.

⁷⁴² Interviews Ibran Mustafic 16/04/98, 18/09/01. See also Mrkic, ‘Predsjedništvo’, p.6.

⁷⁴³ NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic. ABiH, 8 OG, No. 115/94, Srebrenica, 10/03/94.

⁷⁴⁴ CTKL, Sitrep Srebrenica from P. Ollier, 21/05/93. Interview Hans Ulens, 16/06/98.

⁷⁴⁵ MSF, Brussels. MSF, interview Dzema, aunt of Emira, 18/10/95.

⁷⁴⁶ Sudetic, *Blood*, pp.113-114, 117-118, 131.

Mustafic probably thought he could capitalize on the poor treatment of the Displaced Persons in the enclave, thereby gaining support for the opposition he led. This was a logical strategy. It is a fact that from the moment the enclave filled up with Displaced Persons the local rulers and the ABiH heavyweights were apprehensive of the large numbers of Displaced Persons, more so since they brought in an unknown quantity of weapons with them. In one of the first discussions the military authorities had with Dutchbat in the enclave, it did not take long for them to incriminate the Displaced Persons as the ones responsible for the incidents in the border area in the east. This clearly showed even at that stage that the relations between the Displaced Persons and the authorities were not great, and that the authorities probably attempted to get Dutchbat to do their dirty work for them, keeping the Displaced Persons under their thumb in this way. Dutchbat was also requested to set up OPs outside the enclave's perimeter on the road to Zepa, so that the contraband route used by the Displaced Persons could be monitored better.⁷⁴⁷

After having returned to the enclave, Mustafic survived two attempts on his life. The first attempt took place on 25 May 1993 involving the use of a weapon to which only Oric could have had access, Mustafic said. The attempt failed. During the second attempt, which took place just before midnight on 19 May 1995, Mustafic sustained serious injuries, whilst fellow party member and former head of police Hamed Salihovic was killed. The former SDA party chairman Hamed Efendic remained unscathed.⁷⁴⁸ This attack was not an isolated event: in the spring of 1995 it had come to even more incidents and attacks aimed at the 'opposition'. The UN Civilian Police (UnCivPol) reports reveal that on 12 April 1995 an explosion occurred which was likely aimed at Ahmo Tihic, a SDA activist from the very beginning who sided with Mustafic. In a discussion with UnCivPol just days after the incidents, three SDA members complained about mafia practices and the corruption among the local police who had done nothing in response to a number of earlier incidents which had been aimed at these former SDA heavyweights. Other members of the SDA opposition had apparently even been threatened that they would be killed.

Hamed Efendic requested a meeting with Dutchbat Commander Karremans, which was arranged for 19 April. However, as soon as the authorities got wind of the discussions between UnCivPol and the former SDA heavyweights, as well as the planned meeting with the Dutchbat command, they protested strenuously. The mayor made it clear that the discussions were not appreciated. On 17 April an ABiH spokesman forbade Dutchbat to be involved in discussions with 'local people', adding that he could not guarantee the security of the UN personnel, if Dutchbat went ahead with the discussions. On 19 April, the municipal administration also forbade Dutchbat to speak with the expelled SDA leaders. The planned meeting between Dutchbat and the former SDA leaders was subsequently called off.⁷⁴⁹

It was clear that due to the siege, the departure of the majority of the pre-war political and economic elite, the scarcity of goods and the large numbers of Displaced Persons, the Safe Area was a breeding ground for a rugged social and political climate in which the primary task was to survive. It should be noted that less than one week after the Canadian battalion departed from the enclave, the Secretary-General of the UN, Boutros-Ghali, stated that the Safe Areas in Bosnia had become breeding grounds for crime, prostitution and despair.⁷⁵⁰ It was obvious that the municipal infrastructure was absolutely unprepared for the large numbers of Displaced Persons and the enormous problems this entailed. Right from the start of the Canadian period, there were numerous reports of violence, illegal

⁷⁴⁷ MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo; July 1994; annexed report of discussion with Ramiz Becirovic and Smajo Mandzic, 21/02/94.

⁷⁴⁸ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. SJB Srebrenica (Meholjic) to CSB Tuzla, MUP-R BiH Sarajevo, Depesa br. 31/95, 20/05/95. Interview Mustafic 16/04/98; see also: Anonymous, 'Glasna sutnja Ibrana Mustafica'; Mrkic, 'Predsjedništvo', p.8. Oric's brothers in arms later denied that he was behind these attacks. See Mandzic, 'Zlatni Ljiljani', p.37.

⁷⁴⁹ KMar. Incident report no. BO5-94/040 (Aalders), 12/05/95.

⁷⁵⁰ 'Bosnia's Safe Areas appalling', in: *The Toronto Star*, 16/03/94.

trade, prostitution and other problems.⁷⁵¹ Some of the local SDA heavyweights, such as Ibran Mustafic and the former mayor of Srebrenica, Besim Ibisevic, who had fled from the city in April 1992, consequently depicted the rule of Naser Oric as a black period in the city's history in which violence, murder, rape and large-scale fraud with humanitarian aid were commonplace.⁷⁵²

However, this is ultimately a somewhat oversimplified depiction which ignores the apparently inevitable processes involving the blurring of moral standards and the vulgarization of manners which always occur in such a war situation.⁷⁵³ Outsiders present in the enclave, such as the project leader of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency Svärd, recognized this. In an interview with the Bosnian paper *Ljiljan*, he pointed out that, among other things, the normal rules of behaviour no longer apply under such severe conditions. This problem was also recognized by company Commander Groen of Dutchbat III in an interview with the NIOD; he also pointed out that the ambience was substantially friendlier in the villages, where considerably fewer Displaced Persons were located.⁷⁵⁴ In fact, Oric's colleagues admitted after the war that a number of commanders under Oric had been in trouble with the police prior to the war and could therefore not be considered the most mild-mannered characters. Whereas they distinguished themselves on the battlefield through their exceptional bravery, they were occasionally very difficult to control. Only Oric was able to keep them in check, and sometimes with great difficulty. For example, Oric had to return from Zepa in March 1995, because one of his Commanders, Ejub Golic, had attacked the Srebrenica police station and liberated two of his associates from jail.⁷⁵⁵

In the opinion of many outsiders Oric and the clique surrounding him which ran the municipality (in particular Hamdija Fejzic and Osman Suljic) were one big mafia gang. The situation reports of the NGOs and Dutchbat refer to 'the mafia' or 'mafia practices'.⁷⁵⁶ As early as the Canadian period, a major increase in internal armed fights in the enclave had been observed which, Canadian Battalion Commander J. Champagne said, primarily revolved around Oric's mafia practices which regularly led to conflicts and power struggles.⁷⁵⁷

Some people who belonged to this so-called mafia also had nasty practices in other areas. Some ABiH heavyweights, such as Oric himself, used the prestige and power they enjoyed among a large part of the population to get young girls, often no older than 14 or 15 years old, to provide sexual services. They often had a number of brief relationships with girlfriends, whilst their wives were outside the enclave.⁷⁵⁸ There was a lot of prostitution and sexual abuse. From the moment the Canadian battalion arrived, reports came in of girls offering themselves to Canadian soldiers or being offered by their fathers or brothers in exchange for food, cigarettes and the like. Later, during the Dutchbat period, Oric's own soldiers appeared to be their most important clients.⁷⁵⁹

At the start of April 1994 the Serbs in Bratunac were surprised by the arrival of two teenage Muslim girls who had fled from the enclave, claiming that they had been raped repeatedly by Oric and his men. One of the girls was pregnant. They declared that they had reported the rapes to the Muslim police in Srebrenica who had not taken their complaints seriously, saying that they had consented

⁷⁵¹ Confidential information (191).

⁷⁵² See for example Ibisevic, 'Nisam pobjegao'. See also the interview with Besim Ibisevic in the Dutch daily *Het Parool*, 10/07/99.

⁷⁵³ See for example the interview with the SRSA project leader Richard Svärd in *Ljiljan* (Becirovic, 'Zivjet cu') who observes that under such severe war conditions the normal rules of behaviour no longer apply. In the villages, where there were considerably fewer refugees, the ambience was much friendlier.

⁷⁵⁴ Becirovic, 'Zivjet cu'; interview J.R. Groen 14/01/01.

⁷⁵⁵ Mandzic, 'Zlatni Ljiljani', p.37.

⁷⁵⁶ MSF, Brussels. MSF (Germain), mission report, 12/05/94.

⁷⁵⁷ Interview Jerry Champagne, 12/11/99.

⁷⁵⁸ MID/KL. Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo; July 1994 ; appendix 'BIH persons in Srebrenica enclave'.

⁷⁵⁹ NIOD, Coll. NPA. NPA (Ommang) to NPA, end of mission report, 10/03/95. Interviews Emir Suljagic, 20/09/99, Nijaz Masic, 25/10/00, Hans Ulens, 16/06/98. The existence of a prostitution problem was also recognized in the paper *Glas Istine*, which was printed in Srebrenica during the war, 08/02/94, pp.6-7.

willingly. Both girls returned to the enclave later that month after having made a few statements in front of the local press and Bosnian Serb television.⁷⁶⁰ Even though there was the long succession of negative characterizations which can be found in the documentation of the NGOs and the UN, some people also reported otherwise, such as the Canadian unit Commander, Major Bouchard. Despite the fact that Oric controlled the black market and prostitution, earning a lot of money in the process, Bouchard also described him as an outstanding military leader. What is more, Oric took good care of the population, Bouchard said; no one died of starvation.⁷⁶¹

It appears as if the local police, under the leadership of Hakija Meholic, attempted to suppress crime and mafia practices and combat prostitution, which often brought him into conflict with Oric. However, taking a real stand against the mafia seemed to be a hopeless task, as Meholic's own officers were often indebted to Oric for their jobs or, if they had the courage to act, were intimidated and subsequently left the force scared for their lives. The local police consisted of more than 150 persons, of whom 15 had actually been police officers prior to the war. Many police officers used to be Oric's brothers in arms.⁷⁶² They were clothed in blue jeans suits and could be recognized by the green armband with the text 'Srebrenica police' which they wore on their left arms. Although their performance was generally regarded as rather amateurish, they did provide the population with a minimum of order and security. In addition to the head office, which was located in the old police office 200 metres from the UNHCR warehouse, there were auxiliary branches in Potocari, Suceška and in the Swedish Shelter Project. The situation reports of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency show that the Swedes were generally satisfied with the collaboration with the police which did everything in its power to solve the thefts which had occurred on the site of the Swedish Shelter Project. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency was also very pleased with how the police had responded when there were shooting incidents in the Swedish Shelter Project at the beginning of March 1994. The officers had been scared, but had not left their posts.⁷⁶³

The activities of UnCivPol

The activities of the local police were monitored by a team of UnCivPol observers, consisting of police officers of various nationalities who tried to give guidance to the local police as best they could.⁷⁶⁴ These observers reported regularly to UnCivPol headquarters in Zagreb on events in the enclave and assisted the local police in solving incidents and serious offences, such as the murder of Hamed Salihovic on 19 May 1995.⁷⁶⁵ Sometimes UnCivPol intervened where the local police did not dare, for example when there was an attempt on someone's life at the end of November 1994. A UnCivPol policeman and a UNMO arrested the perpetrator, after it turned out that the local police did not dare to intervene.⁷⁶⁶

Approximately six UnCivPol monitors were always present in the enclave, and the UnCivPol station was located in the post office in Srebrenica town. Even though the collaboration between the local police and the UnCivPol team was generally good, Dutchbat suspected an unknown number of police officers of being black marketeers, and the head of the police Hakija Meholic was also referred to by Dutchbat as the 'king of the black market'.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶⁰ *Nasa Rijec*, April 1994, p.7. Interviews Zoran Jovanovic 03/11/99 and 19/10/00, Ivanisevic 03/02/98, Jovanovic 20/10/00. NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 25/04/94.

⁷⁶¹ Interview Yvan Bouchard, 15/11/99.

⁷⁶² MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.11, section 14.

⁷⁶³ NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 05/09/95 and 09/03/95.

⁷⁶⁴ MID/KL. *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*, July 1994; Chapter 1, section F5; MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.24.

⁷⁶⁵ KMar. Uncivpol memo (Aalders), 29/05/95, log no. 4160.8-436-95.

⁷⁶⁶ NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 30/11/94.

⁷⁶⁷ MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.24.

Although the local police complained about the lack of actual support when it came to combating the mafia in the enclave, and as a result could not accomplish much against organized crime, they did perform effectively in other matters, in particular with regard to curbing small crimes and protecting non-Muslims in the enclave. There was a lot of theft, for example on the construction sites of the NGOs and in Dutchbat's compound. In 1993 the plastic water pipes which *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the International Red Cross used to repair the water supply of the city were repeatedly stolen.⁷⁶⁸ In April 1994 several incidents involving the petty theft of construction materials of the Swedish Shelter Project led to the police patrolling there more intensively. The head of police also imposed a curfew on the construction site, and officers were permitted to shoot at anyone who was found there after the end of work. Several thieves were arrested and nails and glue returned, whilst a number of officers were fired.⁷⁶⁹ In addition, food and clothes were often stolen from the Dutchbat compounds for which people were occasionally arrested. The theft of an Uzi alienated from the Dutchbat site around that time was solved by Oric himself. The weapon was returned, and Oric brought the perpetrator in personally.⁷⁷⁰

Aside from a number of Croats and gypsies, there was a handful of older Bosnian Serb inhabitants in the enclave, who enjoyed extra attention from the NGOs. The UNHCR, the International Red Cross and *Médecins Sans Frontières* furnished them with packages of foodstuffs and other articles. Staff members of the International Red Cross and UnCivPol paid weekly visits to them, on which occasions the Serbs sometimes reported threats by Muslims, for example by Displaced Persons, to evict them from their living quarters. However, the local Muslim police led by Hakija Meholic attempted to take action against this type of threats. Serb inhabitants interviewed for this report were generally quite happy about the protection and help they received from Hakija Meholic.⁷⁷¹

Nevertheless, the UnCivPol reports contain a few complaints about the lack of protection for the Bosnian Serb inhabitants of the enclave.⁷⁷² Given the circumstances, however, these Serbs encountered fewer problems than one would have expected at first glance. Their Muslim neighbours often came to their aid, even though they had to be constantly on the alert for militant Muslims. Nevertheless, a number of Bosnian Serbs were killed in incidents. One of them was Slobodan 'Zec' Zekic, a relative of the local Bosnian Serb leader, Goran Zekic, who was killed at the start of the war. Zekic had stayed behind in the enclave together with his mother. Although he had many friends among the Muslims and the ABiH commanders, Zekic and his mother were killed at the end of 1994 by a drunk Muslim. Many other Muslims grieved his death, and Hakija Meholic did his best to arrest and try the perpetrator, who was picked up and sent to Tuzla by helicopter. Meholic handed over the two bodies to the Serbs.⁷⁷³ In the course of 1993 and 1994 a number of Bosnian Serbs were evacuated from the enclave with the aid of the International Red Cross.⁷⁷⁴

4. Conflicts between the NGOs and the authorities threaten the continuation of the humanitarian aid programmes

The frictions between the NGOs and the authorities would continue during the period that Dutchbat was present in the enclave. In the spring of 1994 this led to a serious conflict during which the NGOs even decided to drastically reduce the scope of their aid programmes. The problems primarily

⁷⁶⁸ Thorsen, *MSF*, p. 94.

⁷⁶⁹ NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 21/04/94.

⁷⁷⁰ NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade 05/06/94.

⁷⁷¹ Interviews Djuka Micic, 10/06/98, Dana Ristanovic, 22/09/98, and Boban Vasic, 06/07/98. This depiction is confirmed in UNHCR sources. NIOD, Coll. SMG, Loera to Linstad, 28/06/93, 'Sitrep Srebrenica'.

⁷⁷² NIOD, Coll. UNCIVPOL. Incident report (Gaardsøe & Hansen), 03/03/95

⁷⁷³ Interviews Hakija Meholic, 12/11/98, and Vasic, 06/07/98. Ivanisevic mentions the names of several Serbs and a Macedonian who were killed in the enclave. Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, p.65.

⁷⁷⁴ Interviews and conversations Hatidza Hren, 18/06/98, Boban Vasic, 03/09/98, and Marinko Sekulic, 11/11/98.

concerned members of the local personnel employed by the NGOs. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency in particular complained about the fact that the municipality did not keep its commitments concerning the care and remuneration of members of the local personnel. In March 1994 the local personnel of the Swedish Rescue Service Agency who were helping to build the Swedish Shelter Project threatened to go on strike, because they had received absolutely no form of remuneration from the local authorities. They were fed up with empty promises, as project leader Svärd wrote. Despite promises from the authorities that local personnel would be given priority when clothing, shoes and food were distributed, the problem was still not resolved later that month. Svärd then decided to do something for members of the personnel: he distributed a batch of rubber boots. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency also asked Dutchbat in May 1995 whether they were willing to give up something from their stocks for members of its local personnel. After endless rounds of meetings (in particular with Major Boering, who was in charge of civil-military contacts), a shipment of seven-kilogram pork steaks was delivered. As is well known by now, this led to bitter reproaches: 'Such an anti-climax and such ignorance of the Muslim culture,' said a bitter member of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency personnel.⁷⁷⁵

The fact that the municipality organized matters poorly and continued to delay keeping its commitments resulted in a great degree of impatience and irritation among the NGOs. It also did not go down well that the authorities requested things which did not in fact fall within the scope of the NGOs' responsibilities. For example, Salihovic wrote to the Swedish Rescue Services Agency asking whether it could rid the city of all the car wrecks.⁷⁷⁶ The Swedes responded that this was not one of their responsibilities. There was also resentment about the fact that the municipality neglected to have the necessary contracts drawn up which set out the mutual responsibilities. In November 1994 Svärd wrote to Belgrade in a fit of pique: 'It is evident that they do not want any help, they are just doing everything to counteract us. (...) My suggestion is we pack our things and go home if they continue to make hell'.⁷⁷⁷

The relations between *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the authorities did not improve either. In November 1994 there was a falling out because the authorities attacked one of the staff members *Médecins Sans Frontières* who had arrived in the enclave in October. She was accused by War President Osman Suljic of, among other things, drunkenness, drug abuse and unfriendly behaviour towards the local personnel.⁷⁷⁸ Although it was possible to resolve this problem, the tensions which arose from various matters between *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the administrators continued. *Médecins Sans Frontières*, for example, tried to exercise strict control of the distribution of the goods it delivered, because the organization was afraid that otherwise the goods would end up in the pockets of the wrong people. *Médecins Sans Frontières* always requested the authorities to give precise account of the needs they formulated, for example plastic and construction materials for the repair of houses, because materials would otherwise disappear. Subsequently, a check was carried out to see whether each address or breakdown was correct.⁷⁷⁹

In the spring of 1995 the largest crisis in the relations between the municipality and *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the other NGOs developed. The monthly Civil Affairs meeting became a platform for non-stop accusations, insinuations and insults addressed to the NGO staff members instead of a working meeting where commitments were made. For example, during a meeting on 2 February Dutchbat was accused of stealing materials from the battery and of destroying the building, whilst the UNHCR was told that since the food it handed out was always inedible, it had better leave. The

⁷⁷⁵ NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Andren) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 09/05/95.

⁷⁷⁶ NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Andren) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 18/05/95.

⁷⁷⁷ NIOD, Coll. SRSA. SRSA Srebrenica (Svärd) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 19/11/94.

⁷⁷⁸ MSF, Brussels. Opstina Srebrenica (Suljic) to MSF Belgrade, MSF-B, MSF-F, 13/11/94.

⁷⁷⁹ MID. DIS/94/021/2424 - Supintrep Enclave Srebrenica, p.25.

foreigners working for the NGOs were labelled tourists or spies. Karremans sent a letter to the municipality demanding an explanation; a new meeting was never agreed.⁷⁸⁰

The continuation of the projects was threatened by these tensions, and *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the other NGOs drastically reduced the scope of their activities. The problem revolved, in fact, around the issue of who could hire the local personnel. The municipality really wanted UNPROFOR and the NGOs to hire local personnel through them.⁷⁸¹ Right from the very beginning, however, *Médecins Sans Frontières* had selected and hired its local staff directly. The organization had spent a great deal of energy in finding good and trustworthy employees. The collaboration with the local personnel was generally good, and *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff members appreciated them tremendously. They were usually very trustworthy and loyal, and formed the collective memory of *Médecins Sans Frontières* at the site given the high turnover in foreign personnel.⁷⁸² However, the municipality wanted them to hire its own people to gain more influence on the work of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the other NGOs. The municipality became increasingly obstinate in its attempts to replace the local staff members and demanded furthermore that local members of the *Médecins Sans Frontières* personnel be registered in the army, making them eligible to be immediately drafted for military service.

This conflict only became more exacerbated in the following period. *Médecins Sans Frontières* was notified in February that the municipality was planning on replacing all NGO staff members before 1 May 1995. *Médecins Sans Frontières* responded to the authorities' pressure by reducing the scope of its activities. The supply of fuel to the municipality was limited, the distribution of sanitary and hygienic products was suspended and the supply of electricity for the school was cut off, because it was also used by the mayor. In the end *Médecins Sans Frontières* had to accept the municipality's measures: in March and April 1995 the local staff was replaced and their total reduced. In April the authorities sent a letter to all NGOs and international organizations regarding the rotation of local personnel, upon which *Médecins Sans Frontières* decided to suspend its logistics programme entirely and limit its medical activities to life-saving interventions. A letter was sent to the municipality and the population to inform them. *Médecins Sans Frontières* enjoyed the full support of the higher levels of the NGOs and the other international organizations, as well as of Dutchbat and the local doctors. *Médecins Sans Frontières* described the situation as psychological warfare.⁷⁸³

The situation appeared to improve slightly after brief visits by a number of high ranking officials of the UNHCR, the International Red Cross and *Médecins Sans Frontières* to Srebrenica. The local authorities indicated that they were prepared to reach a compromise, after the International Red Cross threatened to stop providing postal services. However, their willingness to reach a compromise did not last long: they had reassumed their old uncompromising attitude by May. Even though *Médecins Sans Frontières* continued suspending its activities, it achieved little success. The municipality persisted in its policy, no compromise was achieved and this situation continued until the fall of the enclave in July 1995.⁷⁸⁴

The political tug-of-war with the municipality led to the majority of aid agencies reducing the scope of their activities. Aside from the Serbs sharpening their blockade – which made it even harder for the population, as well as for Dutchbat, the other international organizations and the NGOs, to come by anything – the ruined relations between the municipality and the aid agencies and the suspension of their activities contributed to a further deterioration of the situation.

Adding to the worsening situation was the flooding at the end of May 1995 after the heavy rainfall which ravaged the enclave. The entire town turned into one large mud bath. Houses were damaged and crops which had been planted in the spring were destroyed. Most of the small electrical turbines were swept away, leaving the town darker than usual. Even the entire Swedish Shelter Project

⁷⁸⁰ NIOD, Coll. NPA. NPA Srebrenica (Vindheim & n Ommang) to NPA Oslo (Øen), sitrep week 5, 14/02/95.

⁷⁸¹ Interview Osman Suljic 04/03/98.

⁷⁸² Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 39-40.

⁷⁸³ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade, sitrep 15, 09/04/95.

⁷⁸⁴ Thorsen, *MSF*, pp. 34-36.

was inundated.⁷⁸⁵ At the start of the summer of 1995 the Srebrenica enclave had fallen prey to a general malaise as a result of all these factors.

The first chapter of Part III covers the issue of how the strategic situation developed around the enclave in the midst of these difficult circumstances; the next chapter focuses on the Dutch battalion in the enclave once again.⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸⁵ MSF, Brussels. MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade, monthly report May1995; NIOD, Coll SRSA, SRSA Srebrenica (Andren) to SRSA Karlstad/Belgrade, 28/05/95.

⁷⁸⁶ Srebrenica, p. 154. Thorsen, *NPA*, p. 16. Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98. NIOD, Coll. SMG, Loera to Linstad, 21/05/93, 'Overall report on Srebrenica'.

Chapter 8

Peacekeeping and humanitarian action

1. Peacekeeping in theory and practice

Peacekeeping is one of the instruments at the United Nations' disposal for acting in times of international crisis. Since the organization's foundation in 1945, peacekeeping has been concerned with supervising compliance with an agreement between two warring factions. Chapter 4 of Part I discussed the forms that keeping or enforcing peace has taken since the foundation of the UN. This chapter will first present a number of main themes in order to view the description of Dutchbat's peace duties in the Srebrenica enclave in the context of the history of peacekeeping operations. Attention will then be given to the training of the Dutchbat members who were to serve in Srebrenica.

Peacekeeping operations were originally intended as a temporary measure, on the basis of which neutral soldiers could be positioned between the warring factions, with their assent, as part of a ceasefire or a peace accord.

This traditional form of peacekeeping involved unarmed or lightly armed UN peacekeepers observing whether the parties were complying with the agreements, and if necessary acting to secure compliance. In the meanwhile, diplomats would have the opportunity to search for a more durable solution for what was ultimately a political and not a military problem. From its foundation until the end of the Cold War, the UN would only undertake peacekeeping missions if a number of conditions were complied with. In essence, the UN could not impose peace, but only resort to action following the prior consent of both parties. In this connection, there had to be a substantial, identifiable buffer zone and a ceasefire.

After the Cold War ended, the superpowers' grip on potential local centres of conflict weakened. Consequently, many small-scale conflicts arose, often of an ethno-political nature, which led to increasing calls for peace-supporting intervention. In 1992, the Secretary-General of the UN, Boutros-Ghali, issued the memorandum 'an Agenda for Peace', which formed the basis for a new peacekeeping concept.⁷⁸⁷ The point here was a more active and more comprehensive form of action. Boutros-Ghali argued for more opportunities for, if necessary, the armed imposition of peace (peace-enforcing), and for more opportunities to maintain the peace in the longer term (post-conflict peace-building). According to this report, UN missions would be carried out in a wider variety of ways than before.⁷⁸⁸

The execution of peacekeeping operations changed in practice when, in the early 1990s, the international community decided to intervene in bloody conflicts that culminated in humanitarian disasters in Yugoslavia, Somalia and Rwanda.⁷⁸⁹ The traditional points of departure for peacekeeping missions, such as the consent of the parties involved and a ceasefire, appeared no longer to apply in this sort of conflict. The fact was that in Yugoslavia and Somalia there was no peace arrangement to safeguard. It was said that a 'more robust' approach would have to be taken (discussions on this subject will be covered in detail in Part III), which would have an impact on the structure of the peace missions and also on the participating soldiers, who would be confronted with a completely different set of experiences. Participants in such operations, for example in Bosnia, were confronted with humanitarian

⁷⁸⁷ In 1995, however, he tempered the expectations that it created in his 'Supplement to an Agenda for Peace'.

⁷⁸⁸ In 1992 and 1993, the British army also started to develop the 'Wider Peacekeeping' idea, better known as the 'Dobbie-doctrine' after Colonel Charles Dobbie, who set down the basic ideas for Wider Peacekeeping in his book 'A Concept for Post-Cold War Peacekeeping'.

⁷⁸⁹ There are missions with more of a humanitarian orientation (often also with an emphasis on human rights) such as in Cambodia, Mozambique and Haiti, and missions with a more military orientation, such as in Somalia and Yugoslavia, or a combination of the two, as in Rwanda, Liberia and Angola.

dramas, war-like actions, threats to their own safety, and furthermore with war crimes and crimes against humanity. These soldiers were to operate in a dangerous environment and ran far greater risks than hitherto because of ambushes, mines, and exchanges of fire between the warring factions.

This new category of peace operation, referred to as second generation peace operations, comprised far broader terms of reference than traditional peacekeeping, such as guarding a buffer zone on Cyprus.⁷⁹⁰ Now, in Bosnia, disarming, protecting Safe Areas, escorting aid convoys and much else besides were also involved. The practical situation in which Dutchbat found itself actually called for a change of the mandate from traditional peacekeeping in the direction of armed intervention, with an agreement being imposed by means of military action (peace-enforcement).⁷⁹¹ Different sorts of action obviously demanded different preparation. Concepts such as peacekeeping, peace-enforcing, and armed action in combat situations each pose specific requirements on the preparation of participating soldiers.⁷⁹² There was much discussion on a more robust form of the peacekeeping mandate at a high level, but in practice the mandate did not change: it remained limited to traditional peacekeeping.

After peacekeeping in conflicts such as in Yugoslavia, in the short term the intervention may also involve 'after care' for the area to which the mission is oriented, which is referred to as peace-building. This involves putting an emphasis on social reconstruction through activities such as restoring the legal system, organizing elections, priming economic life, clearing mines and providing aid to war victims. The scope of peacekeeping therefore comprised more than strictly military matters, but also had the character of an economic, social and political intervention.

The Austrian author Franz Kernic raised the question of whether there is a correlation between the sort of mission and the sort of soldier that performs it. He asks whether there has been a shift from unarmed or lightly armed blue berets to the more recent warriors for peace. Kernic indeed considers that the traditional concept of peacekeeping had more to do with the diplomat in uniform or the peace angel, and that currently there is more need for a type of soldier that can be described as a global policeman or as a warrior for peace.⁷⁹³

Because the practice of peacekeeping changed, it also imposed other requirements on the preparation and training of participants in peacekeeping missions. The question is whether this was also evident in the practice of the training and further preparation of participants in peace missions. In any case, because of the situations with which they could be confronted, their task acquired more dimensions: they were confronted far more with combat situations and their consequences, in other words, with real war. Successful action in the changed practice of peacekeeping operations demanded not only the usual military skills and knowledge, but also an understanding of the extremely varied political, social, cultural and economic backgrounds of the conflict.

Blue and green

Although peacekeeping was assigned to soldiers, it is of great importance for an understanding of the UN action in Bosnia and elsewhere to recognize that peacekeeping ('blue' action, referring to the UN colour) differs fundamentally from the regular (or 'green') military action. The most important objectives, guiding values and activities of the two types of action are different: in contrast to 'normal' soldiers, peacekeepers are not partial, but attempt to be strictly neutral. Their presence on the spot is not the consequence of their power to use force or to threaten it, but generally comes about through

⁷⁹⁰ Some authors use the term 'Strategic Peacekeeping' for this type of operation, for example, James Gow and Christopher Dandeker in 'The Legitimation of Strategic Peacekeeping: Military Culture, The Defining Moment' in *Aspects of Peacekeeping* D.S. Gordon and F.H. Toase (ed.) (London, 2001) The Sandhurst Conference Series

⁷⁹¹ See 'Military Culture and Strategic Peacekeeping' by Christopher Dandeker in *Military Sociology: Global Perspectives* Leena Parmar (ed.) (Jaipur, 1999) pp. 117-138

⁷⁹² See for example 'Psychological Aspects of Peacekeeping on the Ground' by Christian Harleman in *The Psychology of Peacekeeping* Harvey J. Langholtz (ed.) (Westport/London, 1998) He used the term 'more robust performance'.

⁷⁹³ 'Peace Angels' versus 'Warriors for Peace' in *Military Sociology: Global Perspectives* Leena Parmar (ed.) (Jaipur, 1999) pp. 187-223

the consent of the warring factions. And in so far as peacekeepers do use force, it is only allowed in self-defence.

Peacekeepers in the traditional sense are expected to perform their mission as 'guests' and not as 'occupiers'. Their mere presence (showing the flag or deterring by presence) is even one of their primary duties. The nature of their mission means that their activities must be completely visible to all parties. This means a transparent mode of action, such as the establishment of clearly visible observation posts and action in white and blue colours as opposed to camouflage green.

The problem with action within the framework of a 'second generation' peace operation, which entailed more robust action, is that the potentially hostile environment makes it difficult to oblige soldiers to act as peacekeepers. Robust action is difficult to combine with neutrality. The task of peacekeepers is to prevent conflicts and to act to de-escalate the situation, as opposed to imposing the solution to a conflict by military means. Instead of confrontation, they therefore were to strive for collaboration, negotiation and mediation in other people's conflicts. Because of the need to remain impartial, and, where possible to bring about a de-escalation, soldiers on a mission such as in Bosnia are also expected to postpone the use of weapons as long as possible.

The action as peacekeeper in such an obscure conflict demands of soldiers a drastic change in thinking and attitude, and in daily practice this can easily lead to feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability. There is no longer an enemy, and neither is there a campaign to be won or lost. Company Commander J.R. Groen of Dutchbat III described the problem as follows:

'In many fields you are working in an extremely unnatural way. The men are aware of this too. You are going to make yourself very visible. You are deliberately going to patrol in a very open way. You are going to openly set up an OP. It is totally counter-intuitive for a soldier who actually always wants to find cover. These lads have been trained from the outset to respond to firing with immediate aggression'.⁷⁹⁴

Precisely in the practice of conflicts in which peacekeepers have been involved in the last decade, the peacekeepers need a large degree of professionalism and flexibility and have to be able to stand firm.

The difference identified here between 'green' and 'blue' action imposes particularly stringent requirements on the training and preparation of the units. Combat units and individual soldiers must be 'retrained' from professional combat soldiers into peacekeepers in a conflict that is less clear-cut than at the time of the Cold War. Psychological preparation is at least as important in this as physical training. Even before departure, soldiers must be prepared for the local situation and the de-escalating and monitoring role that is expected of them. Moreover, detailed information on the mission and extensive knowledge of the background to the conflict are necessary, because soldiers have to be able to deal with all warring factions. The essence of the peacekeeper in Bosnia was actually in the balancing function between the warring factions.

Military professionalism still remains indispensable for the execution of the task. The possession of skills such as observation, security, arms control and moving through poorly negotiable territory remains necessary. There are risks for the soldiers' own safety, and they must be trained to deal with the situation. They must therefore also receive 'green' training to be able to act effectively in dangerous situations. This was certainly true in Bosnia, where there actually was no ceasefire. The willingness to run such risks depends on the perception that the deployment serves a useful purpose; the situation in which peacekeepers find themselves must be such that soldiers have no cause to doubt the usefulness of the deployment. It is therefore impossible to put too much emphasis during the preparation on the central objective of the mission, with all the associated practical implications. If this fails to happen, there is a risk that soldiers will only perform tasks for which they have received explicit

⁷⁹⁴ Interview J.R. Groen 14/01/00.

orders. Such an attitude would be problematic especially for 'second generation' missions, because the conflicts associated with such missions, which are characterized by a high degree of unpredictability and uncertainty, make much greater demands on the personal understanding and judgement of individual soldiers than the familiar 'green' action.

During such a mission, the acquired professional rules and reflexes can be relied on far less than usual. For example, dangerous situations must be dealt with in a far different way during 'blue' action than during 'green' action. Because the mandate in Bosnia remained limited to peacekeeping, the application of force had to be avoided as much as possible. Instead of normal weapons, 'blue' action rather demands intellectual weapons, such as knowledge of the local population, of their culture, of warring factions and their conflict and, last but not least, self knowledge. Self knowledge in these operations is necessary because they must be able to control their own reaction to operating in a hostile environment.

A peacekeeper would ideally therefore be as much of a thinker as a doer. Without a thorough preparation on the sort of conflict in which a peacekeeper finds himself, there is a significant probability that the soldiers will continue to respond in their 'green' manner, which is diametrically opposed to the 'blue' objectives. Normal 'green' reactions to threatening situations, such as the shoot first, talk later reflex, are actually potentially harmful, because they can produce a spiral of violence. The escalation of violence is part of the normal military business, but precisely during this mission it has to be avoided at all costs, because it could endanger the painstaking peace talks and the humanitarian aid to the suffering population.

Peacekeeping under Dutchbat III

The deployment to Bosnia was unmistakably a peace mission of the 'second generation'. In the light of the specific requirements that this deployment imposed on the participants, it was of great importance for the composition of the Dutch battalions to be matched to the task. Given the fact that it was the Airmobile Brigade that was to supply the battalions, the composition was partly influenced by the way in which the recruitment was organized by the Brigade. The core of the unit consisted of an airmobile battalion, to which supporting units were added. The manning of Dutchbat I went fairly smoothly in this regard, because sufficient soldiers were available and the leaders were able to make choices, but 'recruiting problems' already occurred in the case of Dutchbat II. Dutchbat III - as described above in Chapter 5 - then had to be 'raked together' under great time pressure, which was particularly true for the supporting units. Many platoons were originally incomplete and had to be augmented with men from elsewhere. Battalion Commander Karremans recalls that they were mainly regular personnel on a fixed-term contract (BBT personnel), and that it was the first deployment for many regular soldiers: 'none of them had any idea. An additional complication was that the manning of the units was the result of pulling together as many as eighty different units'.⁷⁹⁵

At the start of the deployment of Dutchbat III, there could therefore be no question of a coherent unit and *esprit de corps*. This situation was reinforced because the Airmobile Brigade, with its red beret, considered itself to be an elite unit. The men received pure 'green' training in combat situations, with a strong emphasis on physical and combat skills. The self image matched the image of a new type of global elite soldier that was being cultivated and presented to the outside world (among other things through a cinema advertisement of the time, which had the slogan 'the time of your life'). They were modelled more on the commandos than on normal infantry units, although many ex-conscripts who applied for the 'Airmobile' had been in the infantry. 'They were proud to wear the red beret, and so to be an elite soldier within the Royal Netherlands Army'⁷⁹⁶.

⁷⁹⁵ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans 25 and 26/10/00.

⁷⁹⁶ Quote from '*Denkend aan Bosnia*' by the chaplain N. Meurkens, p.5, private collection.

Another factor was that it was a new unit, which, while it had no experience nor tradition, did have high expectations of its own performance. The training reinforced this expectation of their own performance. Many of the members of the battalion that became known as Dutchbat III expected to go on patrol each day and certainly to return fire if someone should dare to fire on Dutchbat. Dutchbat III Company Commander Groen describes the initial situation as follows:

‘We started on the normal training programme. The exercises that were planned were carried out as normal. But we did not choose the path of least resistance. Which was a conscious decision! It is always the case: a contest is always heavier than training. You have to undergo stiff training. You just know: an Airmobile unit does not exist to guard the gates, but is intended to be a sort of fire brigade for difficult assignments.’⁷⁹⁷

Dutchbat III's assignment would indeed be particularly difficult on all fronts.

With hindsight, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans thought that the majority of the battalion, in view of the 'blue' duties, were far too young and inexperienced: 'Experience of life 0.0. (...) they had only been through the School Battalion training'.⁷⁹⁸ This lack of experience of life could cause problems, precisely because the need for the associated self knowledge was so great. Furthermore, the recruitment and training were not demonstrably selective. Karremans had to make do with whatever personnel he was given, which meant a fairly difficult start for a Commander. Unlike his predecessors, neither was Karremans able to assemble his own battalion staff. Another problem for the three battalions was that the pressure of time left hardly any room for team building. Even during the special Psychological Care conference, officers were unable to attend because there were too many other matters to be dealt with.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of precisely what expectations Dutchbat members took with them to Bosnia, we will now - following on from the previous chapter - deal with specific aspects of the action that were oriented to the population as part of the peace mission.

2. Training and preparation of the three Dutchbat battalions

Broadly speaking, the training of an airmobile soldier consisted of general infantry training (the School Battalion), followed by a special airmobile training, which were both unrelated to the deployment. This was followed by special training for the mission in Bosnia, which was concluded with a final exercise. Members of the attached units underwent training in the Centre for Peace Operations (CVV) that existed at the time, and then took part in the final exercise.

There were significant differences in the training of the three Dutch battalions. In preparation, Dutchbat I was trained in Hohenfels (Germany) by Americans, where they were informed of all manner of cultural characteristics of the former Yugoslavia and of the tricks and traps they could expect from the side of the warring factions. In the first weeks, the battalion leaders felt that the reality in the enclave corresponded well with the scenarios that they had rehearsed in Hohenfels.⁷⁹⁹ Dutchbat I was also advised by the Military History Section (SMG) on the history of the Balkans, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and the UN. Dutchbat II and III had to make do without the instruction from the Americans and the staff of the Military History Section. Instead, the lack of time and logistics complications meant that they were brought up-to-speed by talking with the previous battalion. Otherwise they instructed themselves with equipment from the earlier period.

The additional training period in the Netherlands was distinctly 'green' in nature, in accordance with the prevailing idea that the Airmobile Brigade would regularly be involved in military action. A

⁷⁹⁷ Interview J.R. Groen 14/01/00.

⁷⁹⁸ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans 25 and 26/10/00.

⁷⁹⁹ K. Bais, 'De eerste commandant' ('The first commander'), *De Opmaat* 5 (1999) 4, pp. 4-6.

strict distinction was also drawn between soldiers and civilians. This emphasis on 'green' was also endorsed by some of the battalion leaders. Company Commander Groen of Dutchbat III stressed the necessity of practical exercises and opposed an overdose of 'theory'. With hindsight, Groen thought:

'Too much information was thrown at the battalion, you could not see the wood for the trees any longer. Certainly all those soldiers. They all had to take theory lessons. Soldiers usually just want to 'do', certainly the ones we had. They were all lads who had consciously opted for Airmobile. They were all fanatics. It is also perfectly possible to give a great deal of theory on site. It otherwise often just goes in one ear and out the other. (...) You may be able to send somebody into a situation with a blue hat on, but this does not mean that he is automatically able to perform his duty. They are actually only soldiers who are supposed to be able to do it. Now, their training has given them a certain attitude and outlook. You can't just switch this on and off.'⁸⁰⁰

Such scepticism about the non-green elements of the training, which were considered to be 'theoretical', was also shared, or at least perceived, by others within the Defence organization. Chaplain Meurkens had this to say about the attitude:

'Information on the country and culture was an afterthought. Something along the lines of: we have a couple of hours left. Unless we have to clean our boots now, we can talk about it. It was not properly integrated into the entire package of training.'⁸⁰¹

One could ask whether the expectation expressed by Groen, that the personnel could have been taught the blue action in practice on the spot, was not too optimistic. The nature of the preparation meant that they arrived on site with few clear ideas on the nature and background of the conflict, and with stereotypes and images of the local population that could seriously undermine their performance as peacekeeper.

The Centre for Peace Operations (CVV)

All attached units went for training and preparation to the Centre for Peace Operations (CVV) in Ossendrecht, which was set up to provide administrative support to units that were on a peace mission. Furthermore, the centre provided supplementary training for all categories of personnel to be deployed to the area of the peace mission. The CVV also took charge of the total personnel care (contact with the home front, counselling on return and suchlike). The CVV was emphatically not responsible for the initial building of the unit and making it operational: this was the task of the Army Corps. For professional soldiers, the supplementary training at the CVV took from one to two weeks. This part of the preparation prompted fierce criticism. The medical specialist H.G.J. Hegge of Dutchbat III was afterwards particularly critical of what was offered in Ossendrecht: 'You are then given an explanation of the historical and political situation. You are given a lecture about drugs. I have to be honest with you: I learned nothing there.'⁸⁰²

However, the information presented at the CVV actually did have a greater degree of reality than that of the Airmobile Brigade itself when it came to teaching something about the situation in which Dutchbat would find itself. It was stated clearly in the CVV's lesson on culture that Islam was

⁸⁰⁰ Interview J.R. Groen 05/07/99.

⁸⁰¹ Interview N. Meurkens 24/03/00.

⁸⁰² Interview H.G.J. Hegge 02/02/00.

not strictly observed among the Muslims in Bosnia, and certainly not in the cities.⁸⁰³ What the CVV information officials did identify as a serious issue in the Balkans was what was known as 'the tradition of violence'. It was said in the lesson block on culture 'that the Balkans have always had a primitive element', and that violence was palpable under the surface of daily life. This was followed by an explanation of vendetta and associated acts of mutilation. 'Violence in the Balkans has therefore long been a cultural expression, and the consequences were now clear for everyone'. By way of illustration, the information officers showed slides of mutilations and murders in World War II, mainly with pictures of the Croatian Ustashe concentration camp Jasenovac. The short Culture slide show contained nineteen slides of mutilations, cruelty and murders from World War II. The culture lesson ended with the warning that the 'violence there would severely tax their powers of comprehension'.⁸⁰⁴

The main themes of the training programme of the Airmobile Brigade itself were artillery exercises, first aid, information provision, mine-awareness and assistance to comrades. Lieutenant Colonel Karremans thought afterwards that the programme was too brief and incomplete in the first place; he particularly identified too little attention to immunity to stress and negotiating techniques. According to him, such a course would have been valuable to the group commanders especially. Furthermore, there was no time to practice under 'poor' conditions and to reflect calmly on the differences between 'green' and 'blue' action. Karremans said that the negotiating course at the Clingendael Institute in The Hague was good in principle, but unfortunately not appropriate for the circumstances. As a consequence, negotiation was only practised during the final exercise.⁸⁰⁵ The Airmobile training was rounded off with a final exercise, with an important place being given to the simulation of practical conflict situations. For Dutchbat III, the final exercise took place in Vogelsang (Germany).

Starting with Dutchbat II, the information components of the 'blue' training were 'self administered' and no longer followed at the CVV. For the second battalion, the Military History Section compiled a ready-made information package, which could be presented by any Warrant Officer or Sergeant Major. This package consisted of a video tape (lasting approximately 25 minutes) on the history of the UN, including the Dutch participation in UN operations. A text was also included as a commentary to the slides. This part was supposed to be rounded off by a discussion, which in practice did not happen because no one had sufficient background knowledge of the conflict.

This change in the structure gave the 'blue' education of Dutchbat II and III the form of a pre-programmed instruction, although Military History Section members had earlier observed that 'Yugoslavia' and 'the Balkans' were almost unknown quantities for most Dutchbat members, and that they lacked the most elementary relevant historical knowledge and insight. It was also true that for most Dutchbat members - except those who had been there on holiday - when they were shown the map of Yugoslavia it was often their first acquaintance.⁸⁰⁶ Under the 'self administration' of the brigade, this lesson programme also became steadily shorter: whereas for Dutchbat I it was still eight hours, it later became four, and finally two hours, because the instructors concerned spontaneously shortened it.⁸⁰⁷ This was a result not only of a lack of time and conflicting priorities, but also because of the background of the instructors. Whereas the soldiers were able to enter into discussion with the Military History Section trainer, or ask for additional background information, with their own instructors it was mainly a matter of listening to them grinding out their story.

It is clear that there was a strict separation between the 'green' and the 'blue' training sections. The 'green' action first had to be mastered, after which, if time permitted, the 'blue' aspect followed. In

⁸⁰³ CVV. Text of the lesson on Culture of the CVV by Section 2 CVV Lesson Block 3.

⁸⁰⁴ CVV. Text of the lesson on Culture of the CVV by Section 2 CVV Lesson Block 3.

⁸⁰⁵ Interview Th. J.P. Karremans 24/06/98.

⁸⁰⁶ Actually, they were not alone in this respect. When members of the investigation team in East Bosnia asked an American soldier if he had any idea why he was there, he answered that there was 'something going on at the border between Yugoslavia and Spain'.

⁸⁰⁷ Interview C.P.M. Klep 18/02/99.

this, there was a particular emphasis on the necessity of controlled action. A part of Dutchbat III adopted the position that the 'blue' aspects of the training would only lead to confusion in the battalion. For example, this was the opinion of the Deputy Company Commander of Dutchbat III, Major R. Franken. According to him, 'the normal operational thinking was cancelled out by blue fads'. According to him, this was apparent immediately at the start of the deployment, when in connection with the crisis in the Bandera Triangle - see Chapter 6 - Dutchbat was ordered by headquarters in Tuzla to 'press hard'. According to Franken, this order was totally incompatible with the 'blue, softie image' that the battalion had of its duties; the problem, however, was that the battalion actually had a 'blue' (UN) task. Franken and Karremans wanted to gain access to the area with military show: according to him, in the action in the Bandera Triangle there was no shooting only because Dutchbat 'had been drained through the blue colander'.⁸⁰⁸ In reality, however, Dutchbat was not allowed to use force to gain access to the area pursuant to the Rules of Engagement: force was actually only permissible in self-defence. What Tuzla meant by 'press hard' was that Dutchbat must make clear that UNPROFOR would tolerate no limitations imposed on its freedom of movement, and not that force should be used to exact it.

3. Stereotypes and 'Balkan Man'

It can be stated with hindsight that many stereotypes played a role in the training of Dutchbat, which did not materialize out of thin air, nor were reserved to the training and to the Armed Forces in general. It has already been stated in Part I that international politicians and diplomats viewed the Balkans, (ex) Yugoslavia and the population from oversimplified, stereotypical, and historically often incorrect standpoints. It is still a remarkable fact, at the end of the twentieth century, in which Europe had two world wars with tens of millions of victims, including six million deliberately exterminated Jews, and in which various European states fought bloody colonial wars, that so much emphasis was given to the notion that the Balkans had a 'different' way of dealing with violence.⁸⁰⁹

It is the utmost irony that, during the preparation at the CVV, reference was made to the pictures of the concentration camp Jasenovac to explain how extraordinary the violence was in the Balkans, while scenes had been played out everywhere else in Europe that were certainly not surpassed by the horrors in Jasenovac. In her book *Imagining the Balkans*, the author Maria Todorova criticizes the double standard by which these horrors, and in particular the Holocaust, are not attributed to the West's own culture and society.⁸¹⁰ On the other hand, the cruelty in the former Yugoslavia was too easily seen as an obvious outcome of 'a warrior ethos, deeply ingrained in the psyche of Balkan populations'.⁸¹¹

The Belgian General F. Briquemont on his arrival as Bosnia-Hercegovina Commander was informed of 'the Yugoslav traditions and the Slavic atmosphere' by means of songs, folk dances, films about significant acts of resistance with a great deal of brutality and a summary of the most gruesome passages from Andric's book *Een brug over de Drina* (A bridge over the Drina). This illustrates the image with which UN soldiers had to mentally prepare for the deployment. He wondered whether nothing had changed in the Balkans at the end of the twentieth century. Even though he knew 'that was the way in Yugoslavia', he said he had not expected it. Briquemont had done his best to prepare with history books on the southern Slavic peoples, but in his memoirs he constantly returns to Andric. Even beforehand, he viewed his stay in Bosnia as 'a baptism in an atmosphere of unbridled hatred, and life

⁸⁰⁸ Interview R. Franken 04/05/01.

⁸⁰⁹ 'Considering the record for violence of the members of the European Community in this century and the fact that one of them developed the art of ethnic cleansing to its perhaps ultimate degree of technical efficiency, the association of the Balkans with extreme violence is ironical at best', Robert Hayden 'Use' p. 216.

⁸¹⁰ Todorova, *Imagining*, pp. 130-140.

⁸¹¹ Todorova, *Imagining*, p. 137

surrounded by the terrible zeal of the Bosnian people.⁸¹² With these words he was literally quoting the introduction written by the translator of *Een brug over de Drina*.

The Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army at the time, Major General A. van Baal, referred likewise to the category of 'Balkan Man' in a discussion with General Couzy in 1995. According to Van Baal, it was usual, for example, for action to be covered pro forma with a signed report, as he explained to General Couzy in 1995: that 'is in these people's genes, regardless of whether you are talking about Serbs or Croats. They all do it and then they wipe their backsides with it. It is a standard part of their culture.'⁸¹³

The conviction that conflicts in the Balkans were always particularly violent and barbaric affairs, is also often encountered in the literature and in the media, and also in the training of the Dutch battalions. The step from a tradition of violence, to violent nature, to 'Balkan Man' was made quickly. The sociologist Bart Tromp refers to the psychological effect of this stereotype. He considers that it has a reassuring function, by feeding the idea that the war was taking place because 'the population of these areas are different from us. They are Balkan people: primitive, uncivilized, cursed with an age-old, barbaric attitude'. Tromp talks of 'the safe fence between us and them' - they, the Balkan people, are different from us, and therefore something of this nature can fortunately never happen here.⁸¹⁴

The information given to the men of Dutchbat III in their preparation for the situation in the enclave was received mainly from Dutchbat II personnel on leave, who were invited to say a few words and show some photographs. The staff members and company commanders did not have the analyses of the Military Information Service on the state in the former Yugoslavia at their disposal.

The information that Dutchbat III received from predecessors usually related to conflicts; during the final exercise in Germany, as usual in this sort of exercise, conflict situations were dominant, so that Dutchbat III was given the expectation that the atmosphere would be hostile. In the conflict simulations, their predecessors enthusiastically played the role of troublesome Muslims and Serbs. For earlier battalions, actors were hired in, who played their role in a somewhat more 'neutral' way.

An important aspect in the representation of the local situation for Dutchbat III was the information from the military security officer Major De Ruyter. According to Warrant Officer W. Dijkema, he taught the classes during the training course that the population in the enclave consisted of 'pure scum'. It is completely different in the Balkans from at home, and 'Balkan Man' was literally depicted as 'the Other'. An element in this was that De Ruyter was concerned that military safety would be compromised if there were too many contacts with the population. Dijkema: 'He said how we would be tricked.' De Ruyter therefore advised against contacts with the local population, because then Dutchbat would lose its impartiality and be open to blackmail: 'His talk really convinced us that we would have a hard time.' The rule against contact with the population was 'grimly adhered to' in the preparation. In practice, the boundaries would turn out to be 'absolutely fuzzy', however.⁸¹⁵ This made no mention of what chance of success a peace mission would have if the participating soldiers were to limit their contacts with the population to the bare minimum.

The Psychological Care meeting in Camp Lauwersmeer prior to the deployment of Dutchbat III, had the characteristic title: 'Stay in one piece'. During the conference, the subjects included the motives for volunteering for the deployment. To earn money, to gain experience, to help people, to get to know yourself and 'to find adventure' were given as important motives. The programme consisted otherwise of discussions, a more detailed acquaintance and stress prevention. A video was also shown of a traumatized Gulf War veteran. The buddy system was discussed, as well as the related problems.⁸¹⁶ In the last phase, the purpose of the presence in Bosnia was raised for discussion. Their personal

⁸¹² Briquemont, *General*, p. 34

⁸¹³ Couzy, *Bevelhebber*, p. 128.

⁸¹⁴ Tromp, *Verraad*, p. 147.

⁸¹⁵ Interview W. Dijkema, 21/09/98.

⁸¹⁶ This system was adopted by the marines. Every soldier chose a 'buddy' and the two of them kept an eye on each other, and could, at least in theory, always rely on each other.

standards and values were discussed, as was the necessity of respecting the standards and values of the population.

During the five day final exercise (*Noble Falcon*), two days were devoted to practising the moving and preparing of the equipment. This was followed by three days in which about thirty to forty incidents per day were acted out under tight control. The examples were derived from the experiences of the previous two battalions:

‘They told us that the Muslims were scum, more or less. That you would do well to have nothing to do with them. That actually the women and children were always nice. They were always helpful. But the men with their big mouths, you should have nothing to do with them. The lads told us that Serbian men were better to deal with than Muslim men. They were much better disciplined.’⁸¹⁷

The examples related, among other things, to demonstrations at the gate, shooting incidents, the removal of the severely wounded, border transgressions, yellow and red alarm phases, thefts, discovery of booby-traps and mines, and negotiation situations with the various parties. Exercises that included contact with the local population generally involved Muslims at the gate begging for food and suchlike. Dutchbat I officers played the local population, and tried to behave as irritatingly as possible. They took up positions in front of the fence and called out 'Hey mister, we want food for bambino' or they asked for the 'medical chief'. All this was supposed to prepare their colleagues as well as possible for the reality.

During the exercise, the medical personnel were told that it was 'forbidden' to treat civilians, and that they were only allowed to carry out life and limb saving treatment. It is noteworthy that this 'prohibition' contrasted with the information in the situation reports of the earlier battalions in Srebrenica: they made clear mention of (medical) assistance to the population. In practice, Dutchbat III would also provide such assistance.

There are video recordings of the final exercise, which offer valuable information on the manner in which an image of the enclave was presented. The roles of Muslim men were played in white robes and with turbans on their heads. Furthermore, the pictures invariably show them holding prayer chains in their hands, while shouting 'Allah' and reciting texts such as 'You are disturbing our prayers!' and 'Allah will punish you!'. Another striking aspect is that during the practise negotiations there is always an element of conflict. A regular ingredient is conflicts about punctuality, with texts such as 'three o'clock is not five o'clock' and suchlike. Serbs were usually portrayed screaming, lashing out and stamping their feet. Muslim soldiers appear mostly in a smart uniform with a Palestinian shawl, and the Bosnian Serb soldiers walk around in a variety of uniforms, but are always wearing a Russian fur hat. This portrayal of matters is the more remarkable because the Dutchbat I 'actors' knew from their own experience in the enclave that it was inaccurate.

According to Franken, Dutchbat III departed for Bosnia with the idea that in Srebrenica heavily veiled women walked around, the imam regularly called the population to prayer from the tower, and that a patrol would have to stop to avoid disturbing them. Afterwards he concluded that there was actually never any noticeable praying and the women often went around in Western clothes. It was also only clear to him on the spot that there were significant differences between Muslims from the town and from the mountain villages. However, there was hardly any question of clarifying the image on the basis of the experiences of the first two battalions, rather the contrary.

The Standing Orders to the battalions also show that the Defence Organization paid little attention to information on the local population. It may have been the case that most soldiers never cast their eyes on these Standing Orders, but they do show how scant the attention for the civilian

⁸¹⁷ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman, p. 3rd week 2.

population and its culture was. Under the heading of 'Local Customs', they state that a large part of the UN area in the former Yugoslavia was Muslim. Dutch UN women must therefore not wear offensive clothing, must keep their upper bodies covered, and avoid eye contact with Muslim men. Male soldiers were instructed to avoid eye contact with Muslim women, not to speak openly to Muslim women, nor to shake hands with them.⁸¹⁸ These orders sooner evoke associations with the situation in Iran or Sudan than that in ex-Yugoslavia and Bosnia in the 1990s.

In general, the order was that the Dutch soldier must treat all local customs with respect. This order overshot the mark, because the actual problem was that the soldiers were poorly informed, if at all, about the local customs. Moreover, the Field notebook for the former Yugoslavia, which was issued to all the personnel to be deployed, offered little relief. The section on aspects of local culture stated that 'the population of the former Yugoslavia is extremely proud (...) Many are short-tempered. Although they are basically friendly, they easily take offence.'

Furthermore, 'the various factions all have their own ideas about the presence of the Dutch UN units. But in principle they are all aiming to get the UN do their dirty work for them'. Furthermore, 'alcohol abuse is an everyday phenomenon in Yugoslavia. Prevent it yourself!' There was also an extremely generally formulated recommendation for the men soldiers about association with the local women: 'show respect for women, do not automatically assume that they appreciate your attention!'⁸¹⁹

This incorrect and oversimplified representation of the former 'Yugoslavia' and the warring factions conveyed certain stereotypes and a corresponding outlook to the soldiers to be deployed. These were not to be without consequences, because the manner in which people define reality to a large degree determines their actions, even though some in Bosnia discovered that reality is more subtle than the stereotypes suggested.⁸²⁰

The question now is to what extent the influence of these stereotypes was self-fulfilling. Much investigation has been carried out into the influences of stereotypes on social interaction.⁸²¹ The same applies to one of the possible consequences of prejudices, namely that people will tend to remember information that is consistent with existing ideas.⁸²² In this way, people uphold stereotypes - in other words: stereotypes can reinforce each other as a consequence of lack of experience (such as in the case of soldiers who almost never left the compound), but experiences can also reinforce the stereotypes.

The expectation expressed during the preparation that the Dutch soldiers would form their own view of the situation on arrival in Bosnia, and would therefore be able to put the coloured information about the population that had been presented in the training course into perspective, was greatly naive. It would actually have required a disabling of psychological mechanisms, which - certainly under the conditions of deployment - could not be expected of the people. It is also normal for people to divide the world into categories in which stereotypes are simple rules of thumb for coping with the complexity of the social information in everyday reality.⁸²³ In the case of the deployment to Bosnia, the following step in the process was involved: the attribution of characteristics to the categories. Then the stereotypes appear on the horizon together with the associated risk of assigning negative characteristics, which can impede an open approach to problems and conflicts. This is precisely what a training course or information programme should take account of, and not encourage stereotypes.

⁸¹⁸ SMG/Debrief. Standing Order 1 (NL) UN InfBat Chapter 1: Personnel Subject 1/14: Discipline p. 32.

⁸¹⁹ Field notebook for the former Yugoslavia 1.9, 1.10

⁸²⁰ This insight is known in sociology and anthropology as the 'Thomas theorem': 'Whatever people define as real, is real in its consequences'. Talking *about*, dealing *with* and giving shape *to* social reality go hand in hand with each other. In the 'new cultural history', this insight is usually referred to by the terms 'representation' or 'discourse'.

⁸²¹ See, for example, the article by Mark Snyder, Elizabeth Decker Tanke and Ellen Berscheid, 'Social Perception and Interpersonal Behavior: On the Self-Fulfilling Nature of Social Stereotypes' in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* Vol. 35(1977)9, pp. 656-666.

⁸²² See, for example, Jack Fyock and Charles Stangor, 'The role of memory biases in stereotype maintenance' in *British Journal of Social Psychology* (1994)33 pp. 331-343.

⁸²³ This description is used by E.J. Doosje' *Stereotyping in intergroup contexts*' Ph.D.thesis University of Amsterdam, 1995, p. 101.

The Dutch soldiers were fed with prejudices through the training, without those who were responsible for the training being aware of the dangers. According to the security officer of Dutchbat III, Sergeant Major A.E. Rave, the prejudices often originated in the terminology (in Rave's words: 'slogans') and the degrading stereotypes that were carried over from earlier battalions.

There had already been transport and liaison battalions in Bosnia. The experience that these units conveyed, for example following the presence in the Kiseljak pocket, was that the Croats were far more Western than the other groups. The Muslims, conversely, were said to wear clothes that were completely different from what the Dutch were used to. Even before they were deployed, the Dutchbat members were already talking about a 'goat path', as opposed to a sand path. Children 'begged', men 'were unreliable and told sob-stories'; all Muslim women wore 'pyjama trousers' and headscarves, and had 'moustaches' and 'typical Bosnian teeth'.⁸²⁴

Biased use of language plays an important role in propagating and maintaining stereotypes,⁸²⁵ and this shortcoming also crept into the training. Dutchbat members were told by their predecessors all sorts of stories there from Central Bosnia, Lukavac or Vitez, and stories about the 'real war'. For instance, group behaviour and 'coping' strategies for the individuals to develop an attitude and to protect themselves were conveyed through the training. Dutchbat III departed with certain ideas in their minds, and were better able to remember or process the observations that were consistent with them.⁸²⁶ This attitude subsequently leads to behaviour that corresponds with the earlier information, which is how self-fulfilling prophecies are created.

The Canadian researcher Donna Winslow points to such mechanisms in her study into the Canadian Airborne troops in Somalia. According to her, their cause was that combat soldiers are encouraged to hate the enemy during their training. This hostile image with respect to the Somalis in general, the us-them thinking, led in Somalia to the local population being viewed collectively as the enemy:

'Once people perceive an individual or group as an enemy, biases enter their processing of information in regard to the actions of that individual or group. Enemy image leads people to focus attention on and to remember the negative and threatening characteristics of an enemy rather than the positive and peaceful characteristics.'⁸²⁷

Winslow concluded that as a response to the hardships and uncertainties, the Canadian soldiers constructed negative stereotypes of Somalis and started to view them as enemies. This was to have extremely serious consequences for the Canadian mission in Somalia. Dutchbat members started to reproduce the prejudices that they had heard from their predecessors and trainers, without having much opportunity to refine them in practice. One may wonder whether it was sensible to allow predecessors to provide information to the departing groups without any supervision or control. It would appear that empirical experts are not necessarily more suited to being providers of information. The selection of experiences from colleagues in Bosnia appeared to be arbitrary, depending mainly on coincidence and personal relationships. For instance, it was a missed opportunity that someone such as the Dutch UNMO Major Zoutendijk, who had witnessed the entire establishment of the Safe Area of

⁸²⁴ An example was also the term 'local' that was used to refer to the residents of the enclave. Because of the negative, degrading connotation, this term was forbidden in the Dutchbat III dressing station. Interview A.E. Rave, 13/12 and 14/12/00.

⁸²⁵ D.H.J. Wigboldus '*Stereotyping, Language and Communication*' Ph.D. thesis *Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam, 1998, pp. 122-123.

⁸²⁶ In psychology, this is known as stereotype-consistent information.

⁸²⁷ B. Silverstein and C. Flamenbaum 'Biases in: the Perception and Cognition of the Actions of Enemies' *Journal of Social Issues* Vol 45(1989)2 pp. 51-72, quoted in Donna Winslow 'Should Combat Soldiers be Peacekeepers'.

Srebrenica from day one, and was very familiar with the local situation, was never engaged for information activities.⁸²⁸

A poem by a Dutchbat III soldier, which was read out during the stay in Srebrenica in a Radio Dutchbat programme, demonstrated that one individual at least recognized the 'transfer mechanism' for what it was:

Ossendrecht

You are going to have a hard time

Said the captain.

Everything is cold there, in every field a mine.

With a blue beret

To keep the peace.

Murder and death are all around,

Here and there a bomb is dropped.

Contact with the population is taboo,

They misuse you, and how.

But when you get here, it's not so bad,

With thanks to the information officers of the CVV.⁸²⁹

Humanist counsellor Major B. Hetebrij observed afterwards that Dutchbat III departed to the enclave with a false expectation that the Muslims would actually be pleased to see them.⁸³⁰ Only a few were able to explore the enclave for themselves, and they propagated divergent assessments and expectations.

Neither was much benefit gained from a major investigation carried out by the C Training Department of the Netherlands Army itself in 1993 into the experiences of officers returning from the former Yugoslavia.⁸³¹ Under the heading 'Points for attention in the training' it mentions a number of aspects to be given attention, or to be stressed, in the preparation for deployment, in the training courses for supervising officers. This list includes such matters as discussion techniques, local culture, team building, improved communication of the task and duties, and the use of dictionary and language proficiency.⁸³²

Investigation into the experiences of officers with the CVV also produced recommendations to pay more attention to an elementary understanding of the language, information on the country, backgrounds to the conflict, the attitude of and example given by the commander, and the significance for his leadership and negotiating strategies. An orientation visit in September 1993 to UNPROFOR

⁸²⁸ According to Zoutendijk, the Netherlands Army had no overview whatever of the positions of UNMOs. Interview J. Zoutendijk 06/04/01.

⁸²⁹ Dijkema, *Dutchbat*, p. 213.

⁸³⁰ Interview Bart Hetebrij included in the article 'Dutchbat verdient beter' ('Dutchbat deserves better') in: *Panorama*, autumn 1995 p. 20.

⁸³¹ DOKL/OZ. Army Staff COKL no. 7484/2556 10/01/94 from Staff COKL (signed by J.P. van Baal) to DPKL subject: Investigation into leadership in crisis and war conditions.

⁸³² DOKL/OZ. Investigation into leadership in crisis and war conditions, p. 19 and appendix 2 p. 2.

likewise produced a clear recommendation to the Army Crisis Staff that 'unit commanders must be trained in negotiating techniques'.⁸³³ It was also necessary to make the upper echelons aware that it was not sufficient merely to visit the unit deployed, but an attempt must also be made to give some substance to such visits.

As it happens, attempts were made through the newspaper *Tell-Joe* to meet the need for information among the soldiers. This publication was provided by the Intelligence section of the staff of the Airmobile Brigade. Although the intentions were good, the texts were fairly inaccessible, however: they contained a great deal of information, especially of a historical nature, and the newspaper was probably only read by highly motivated battalion members.

Looking at the training as a whole it can be seen that all the material assumed the fundamental difference between Dutchbat and its environment, whether this was concerned with the civilians in the enclave, the population of ex-Yugoslavia and the Balkans in general, or the warring factions between which they had to act, the ABiH and the VRS. No place whatsoever was reserved for the question of how the duties in the enclave could be carried out by means of forms of collaboration with people in the enclave (or with the warring factions). A significant role was played in this by the negative representation of 'the others'. It made Dutchbat members feel that they more or less had to rely on their own resources, which in some cases led to xenophobic behaviour.⁸³⁴

In the time in the enclave, the counsellors especially did their utmost to turn the tide, and they constantly tried to emphasize the similarities between the Muslim population and the Dutch soldiers, but this was to have hardly any influence the time. Otherwise, not all Dutchbat members were prejudiced against the Muslim population: one soldier would explain how different 'those people' were, and another would provide examples to show that 'those people' were actually exactly the same as themselves. This usually gave rise to divergent attitudes towards the population. Another point is that people can only be relieved of negative stereotypes (prejudices) if they are suitably motivated.⁸³⁵

4. Conclusion: was the training deficient?

The Netherlands Army paid little attention to the possible effects of stereotyped views with respect to the environment in which they would have to work. This also had a low priority in the training in view of the nature of the military undertaking in general and the Airmobile Brigade concept that was discussed in Chapter 5 in particular. Demanding criteria of military proficiency were set on this unit and on the men, which resulted in the Brigade being thought of as an elite unit. And this is how the soldiers thought of themselves. If you were in the Airmobile Brigade, you were special. This collective attitude also entailed the risk that the people involved would start to apply stereotypes to the outside world.⁸³⁶ However, the positive training objective of promoting group cohesion, team building and self-confidence can also involve negative phenomena, such as intolerance towards other groups. This impeded the power - once in the enclave - to respond openly to situations, which appeared to be highly relevant to performing the task in Srebrenica.

⁸³³ CRST. Appendix A to internal memo 101 Gngevvp, 27/09/93 no. 10929.

⁸³⁴ One of the leading articles in this area is 'The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior' by Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner in: *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, S. Worchel and W.G. Austin (ed.) 1986, pp. 7-24.

⁸³⁵ Moreover, it is harder to relieve people of negative than of positive stereotypes. See e.g. The article by Anneke Vrugt and Annette Rijkeboer, 'Het veranderen van stereotypen: zijn negatieve stereotiepe eigenschappen moeilijker te ontcrachten dan positieve stereotiepe eigenschappen?' ('Changing stereotypes: are negative characteristics harder to counteract than positive stereotype characteristics?') in: *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor de psychologie* (1998)52, pp. 196-204.

⁸³⁶ In his book 'The Warrior's Honour', the British author Michael Ignatieff elaborates on Freud, who links intolerance with narcissism and comes to the rapid and practical conclusion that 'We are likely to be more tolerant toward other identities only if we learn to like our own a little less. Breaking down the stereotypical images of others is likely to work only if we also break down the fantastic elements in our self-regard. The root of intolerance lies in our tendency to overvalue our own identities.' M. Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honour*, p. 62.

The training did not encourage a willingness to see the population of the enclave in particular as a collection of separate individuals - with extremely divergent personal backgrounds and experiences.⁸³⁷ This again arose because, in the case of Dutchbat III, only superficial attention was paid to the cultural backgrounds of the conflict in which the battalion was to become involved. The training cut back on precisely this part, and the stereotypes regarding the Muslim population were carried over from the earlier battalions. This would obstruct a clear understanding of the local situation. It must be borne in mind - as was observed in Chapter 5 - that the Airmobile soldiers themselves were in the first place interested in the 'green' sides of their training (the combat duties). This too made room for forming stereotypes with respect to the cultural backgrounds to the conflict.

Many Dutchbat members ignored individual differences. The distinction between 'us' and 'them' was paramount; making a distinction according to individuality would complicate the image of the Muslim population, so that it would be more difficult to cling to ready-made views and prejudices, which under difficult circumstances actually offer more of a foothold in interpreting the social reality.

The emphasis that the training placed on team building, team-spirit and group discipline in military operations was detrimental to the willingness to see 'the others' as separate individuals. This certainly applied to the red berets, who, according to Franken, were trained in an atmosphere of 'one for all, all for one'. This created a strong mutual bond, but it also caused them to react against outsiders.

5. The arrival of Dutchbat I, II and III in the enclave: an impression of the atmosphere

The way in which Dutchbat acted in the Srebrenica enclave and maintained contact with the authorities and population was not determined by the training and preparation for the dispatch alone. The battalion's first impressions on the journey from Zagreb and the arrival in the enclave were also important. The sight of the devastation, the wretched living conditions of the civilians, including countless Displaced Persons, not to mention the constant smell, was a powerful and shocking experience for many Dutchbat members. The battalion leaders quickly saw how difficult it is to prepare soldiers for such a situation. The confrontation with the misery in the enclave was absolutely the hardest aspect for the soldiers of B Company, who were stationed in the compound in Srebrenica town. The rest of the battalion came to see less of the Displaced Persons and the humanitarian emergency, because they were stationed either in the rural Potocari compound, or on Observation Posts (OPs).

In the winter of 1994, Dutchbat I C Company departed from Lukovac to Srebrenica, which was the start of one and a half years of Dutchbat in the enclave. At the confrontation line between Croats and Bosnian Muslims, close to Gornji Vakuf, the soldiers were deeply moved by the visible consequences of the war on the people and the environment. One of the men expressed his experience as follows: 'You can see this a hundred times on TV, but it means nothing'. According to the accompanying reporter, it was striking that no one waved at the UN soldiers. The hope that the white UN vehicles would be received like the allied soldiers in the Netherlands in 1945 was shattered immediately. On the contrary, the convoy was jeered at because almost nothing was thrown out of the vehicles.⁸³⁸

A Dutchbat II soldier wrote to his girlfriend:

'We arrived after 45 hours. It only became clear in the final kilometres what has happened. Ruined houses, cars with coffins on the roofs. Close to the compound, the people are happy to see the five UN buses on the move. It was

⁸³⁷ For the problem surrounding individuality, see also Ignatieff, *Warrior's Honour*, p. 63, who searches for an explanation for ethnic wars, such as in the former Yugoslavia.

⁸³⁸ E. Brouwer, *'Indrukwekkende route langs the poort van the hel'* ('Awesome route along the gates of hell'), *Defensiekrant*, 07/04/94, p. 2.

different up to *Yellow Bridge* (in Bosnian-Serb terrain). They spat, threw stones, made obscene gestures, which they did in the enclave too, for that matter.⁸³⁹

And social worker Dijkman described how the mood among the members of Dutchbat III changed when the battalion finally arrived in Srebrenica:

‘When we left Zagreb towards Bosnia we were checked by the Russians. It took forever, and then the grumbling about the UN started. In the vicinity of Zvornik we also lost some property to the VRS, so that the mood did not improve. It fell quiet in the bus after the first confrontation with the shelled-out villages. After a time, the hum of voices returned, the music started again, and there was an atmosphere of ‘they only have themselves to thank.’⁸⁴⁰

For Dutchbat III, the sense of powerlessness and humiliation therefore already started at the border of the Bosnian Serb controlled area, where the battalion members had to line up and wait endlessly to be checked. All their baggage was unloaded and the Bosnian Serb soldiers sought out whatever they fancied at their leisure. A consequence of this was, for example, that the Bosnian Serbs at the Zvornik bridge were all wearing Dutch Sam Browne belts after a short time. Bags, boxes and chests, everything had to be opened.

The same was true of convoys of soldiers on leave. If nothing special was found, it might not be so bad, but it could also happen that everything had to be opened. With a leave convoy of one hundred men with baggage and more than one hundred postbags, that could take a long time. Postbags were popular, because they contained parcels from family members for the Dutchbat members, and they were also opened at random. The battalion even had to permit, while waiting at a checkpoint, a VRS soldier siphoning off a few litres of diesel from the tank of a Dutch vehicle into his own Jerry can.⁸⁴¹ Similarly, the Dutchbat members were confronted immediately on arrival with the practical - and for them extraordinarily annoying - consequences of the UN Standing Operating Procedures and the Standing Orders derived from them, which prescribed extreme restraint in the event of confrontations.

The leaders of the first Dutch battalion in the enclave were aware of the precarious situation that Dutchbat had entered. The Commander of Dutchbat I, Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen, expressed this afterwards as follows:

‘In the first place we were busy surviving. You had to cover a logistical route of a hundred kilometres through Bosnian Serb terrain, where you could be fired on at any moment. You were constantly being stopped by Bosnian Serbs. They checked your papers for names, dates of birth and even weapon numbers. You had to have permission for everything. The UN had agreed to this, and in so doing had therefore already taken away an important instrument, Freedom of Movement. As a soldier, asking for permission is not something you look forward to eagerly. As a commander, you were constantly put to the test. From the outset I knew that deploying soldiers in Srebrenica could only be a temporary solution. General Morillon was right to jump in, but everyone knew that a monster had been created for the future. Any solution must be wanted by the two parties. I tried to make the parties negotiate, but the negotiations always ground to a halt. We were only postponing the inevitable.’⁸⁴²

⁸³⁹ Confidential collection NIOD (14).

⁸⁴⁰ Interview E.B. Dijkman, 29/07/99.

⁸⁴¹ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman, 19^e week 23.

⁸⁴² ‘De eerste Nederlandse commandant’, *De Opmaat* 5 (1999) 4, pp.4-6.

Lieutenant Colonel Everts, Commander of Dutchbat II, assessed as early as the first reconnaissance that the entire enterprise was hopeless in military terms. His experience was that everyone had to stick to the rules of the Bosnian Serbs and that otherwise Dutchbat could not even enter the enclave. What is more, when he eventually arrived after a day's journey via Hungary and many difficulties, he saw that Dutchbat I hardly left the enclave any more.⁸⁴³ The same was to happen to Dutchbat II and III.

Major Franken recalled clearly the feeling that came over him when he first drove into the enclave: 'How close the mountains were. Are the Serbs up there? Now if things get out of hand here, we are in for a real treat'.⁸⁴⁴

6. Contacts with the population of the enclave: an impression of the atmosphere

In the enclave, the three Dutch battalions found a population that had been rendered largely apathetic by mental and physical exhaustion. Ever since 1992, the people had to try to survive under extreme war conditions. Chapter 7 describes how a deep chasm existed between the Muslim part of the original population of Srebrenica town and the surrounding villages on the one hand, and the tens of thousands of Displaced Persons on the other hand. Individual civilians concentrated primarily on self-interest and survival, and there was very little enthusiasm left over for a 'general interest' such as cleaning, public works and reconstruction.

At the outset of his stay in Srebrenica, Commander Vermeulen of Dutchbat I met the leading figures in the enclave. In a poorly lit hotel he found the mayor, the UN observers and the military commanders. The initial contact was awkward: 'The military commander of the Muslims originally did not want to talk to me. Only when I showed signs of leaving did he rapidly move towards me'.⁸⁴⁵ The mood was problematic, but it did improve later, thanks in particular to the efforts of the liaison officer, Major Derksen, and the Dutch interpreter Paul Lindgreen.

Neither was the initial contact with the Displaced Persons particularly smooth. On arrival, the B company compound was blocked by approximately one thousand Muslims. In his preparation, Vermeulen had learned that the population had respect for older people, and he removed his helmet to show his grey hair. After that, the crowd of people moved aside, and he answered their many questions through the interpreter, after which the situation became more relaxed.

Afterwards, Commander Karremans of Dutchbat III thought that his men knew roughly what to expect, but were utterly unprepared for the poor state of the population. The Dutchbat members thought they would be moving into a military situation, but in the first instance they were confronted with a humanitarian emergency. They would be unable to solve the situation with military resources, and, at the outside, would perpetuate it. At least, the humanitarian emergency could not be approached in terms of their tasks and duties. The fundamental problem that the Dutchbat soldiers were confronted with was the question of how their military task related to the humanitarian task, and what practical consequences this had.

The contact with the civilian population did not generally pose any great problems: the Dutch soldiers generally perceived the population as friendly, although the younger and male Muslims were more surly than the older and female section. The difference between old and young showed itself in such situations as when a Dutch soldier drove over a mine. Older people stood watching in tears, but young people clearly gloated.⁸⁴⁶ Older people appear to be happy with the presence of the Dutch soldiers. There was certainly also a difference between the town and the countryside, where the population of the countryside were friendlier to Dutchbat than the town population.⁸⁴⁷ The good relations with the

⁸⁴³ Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 05/04/01.

⁸⁴⁴ Interview R. Franken 04/05/01

⁸⁴⁵ 'De eerste commandant', *De Opmaat* 5 (1999) 4, pp. 4-6.

⁸⁴⁶ Debriefing statement P.M. Sanders, 13/09/95.

⁸⁴⁷ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (4).

Muslim population usually deteriorated temporarily in the event of incidents. Again, it was then often younger Muslims, who verbally abused Dutchbat members or threw stones at them.⁸⁴⁸

A Dutchbat II soldier reported in a debriefing that he had got to know 'the Muslim' as a person with two faces. On the one hand there was the Muslim on the confrontation line, who wanted to shoot everything and everyone, and on the other hand there was the friendly hospitable Muslim in the enclave.⁸⁴⁹

Another member of the battalion stated how difficult he found it to make up his mind with respect to the population. For instance, he was originally inclined to quickly succumb to begging children, but later he and his colleagues became accustomed to that image and their attitude became harder and less generous. In social contacts too, the soldier found it difficult to make up his mind, because he had the idea that the people he was talking to had a double agenda and were out to get information.⁸⁵⁰ The Dutch soldiers interpreted the attitude of the enclave authorities and the local Muslim elite, which will be discussed in more detail below, as especially ambiguous. This also had repercussions on the image that they had of the entire population.

The opportunities to correct stereotypical ideas, which were derived from the training and preparation, depended in theory partly on the degree to which the Dutchbat members had the opportunity to actually get to know the Muslim population. Whether this was possible was mainly determined by the place where the blue helmets were stationed (there was less opportunity for this in the compounds in the town of Srebrenica or in the rural Potocari than on the scattered Observation Posts). It also depended on whether the men went outside the compound; in fact, most Dutchbat members hardly left the two compounds, and in so doing they formed a sort of enclave within an enclave.

Equally important was that the rules for social contact with the civilian population in the Dutch battalions were restrictive and strict. In the case of the first battalion there was still a degree of flexibility, but by the time of Dutchbat III this had changed: no one could leave the gate at will, and certainly not alone. Dutchbat members were usually glad to be able to go on patrol, to go to an OP, or to be allowed to go on a trip somewhere. For most Dutchbat members, these were the only ways to see a little more of life in the enclave and of its residents.

The section of the population with which all Dutchbat members came into contact were the people who appeared at the fence, and the local personnel in the compounds. The stereotypes about the local women in any case did not appear to apply to those who worked in the compound.⁸⁵¹ They were young girls, in modern clothes and well groomed. Contrary to expectations, they 'did not all have a moustache and Bosnian teeth' and neither did they all wear 'harem trousers'. The female personnel were therefore a source of concern for the commanders, who noticed that their men tended to be distracted by the ladies. Otherwise, the older women also often wore Western clothes, because the enclave had already been dependent on Western aid goods for three years, including clothing. These were more likely to be jeans than harem trousers.

Members of specialized units had more opportunity to make individual contacts with the population. This was true of the liaison team, the Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit, the counsellors, the engineers, the commanders, the medical personnel, the military police and members of the logistics team. On patrol, there was no possibility of individual contact, because patrols from the compound were always conducted in a group (and armed), and talking to the population was forbidden during the reconnaissance patrols. This did not apply if two soldiers were allowed out in a vehicle, as the counsellors and the civil-military relations section regularly did. Under these circumstances, the threshold for contact with the local population was much lower. The Dutchbat III chaplain, for example, maintained good relations with the head imam of the enclave; they regularly spoke and ate

⁸⁴⁸ 101MIPel. Reports of the debriefing of 12 infbat Lumbl 1-2 February Schaarsbergen 1995.

⁸⁴⁹ 101MIPel. Reports of the debriefing of 12 infbat Lumbl 1-2 February Schaarsbergen 1995.

⁸⁵⁰ 101MIPel. Reports of the debriefing of 12 infbat Lumbl 1-2 February Schaarsbergen 1995.

⁸⁵¹ Because the Opstina selected the personnel, these girls usually came from what were the urban elite.

together. When the fuel was low, this opportunity for contact also ceased to exist. Most contacts between Dutchbat and the civilian population revolved around logistical matters and the gathering of information.

In contrast with the soldiers in the compounds, Dutchbat members on the ten Observation Posts did have contact with the population, because this was considered to be 'functional'. Such contact was generally good, not least because the population enjoyed a certain protection because of the presence of the UN troops on the OPs, which they also realized. The population bartered goods or rendered services, such as doing the laundry and fetching water, in exchange for food. Muslim children regularly stood at the gate of OP-D, who asked if they could be 'the friend' of a soldier. These children ran errands for them, for which they were given money. After a few days, they would reappear, with packets of cigarettes or a bunch of leeks.⁸⁵²

Life on OP-M

The Commander of OP-M, Sergeant Mulder, reported good contact with the population of the village Jaglici, which consisted entirely of local people, and accommodated no Displaced Persons. Dutchbat III converted the temporary observation post into a permanent one. Previously there had been regular Serbian mortar fire from the north, but it stopped when this OP was set up. Mulder: 'on our arrival, the flag was put up!'⁸⁵³

In the last months of Dutchbat III, the local population's trust appeared to increase. People dared to go ever further into the fields, even within sight of the VRS positions. Contacts between the crew of OP-M and the local ABiH Commander, known as 'Envir', also ran smoothly.

On a number of OPs, the men of the population also received free bread. For other services such as laundry, road maintenance, fetching water, filling sandbags and setting up roadblocks, Dutchbat members made payment in the form of rations. The services also related to burning rubbish around the OPs. Every two to three days, the rubbish was collected in a pit and burned. After burning, a new pit had to be dug, and for this too, emergency rations were the usual wages.

The daily life on the OPs consisted mainly of patrolling, guard duty and gathering food - especially vegetables and mushrooms - by way of a change from tinned food. If many mushrooms were found, they asked the local population which ones were edible. Occasionally, a sheep would be also be bought in exchange for rations. Because no one in Dutchbat on OP-M had ever handled a sheep, after a couple of failed clumsy attempts, local help had to be obtained to slaughter it.

On some OPs, aid to the population was also part of the daily activities. For instance, Sergeant Mulder observed that the primitive sewer system in the village could be considerably improved with a few simple modifications. In order to raise this matter in a 'diplomatic' way, he took along his medical orderly, who presented the proposals for modification on the basis of medical and hygienic arguments. The proposal was accepted and subsequently executed with the help of the Dutch.

Whereas on OP-M there were usually few problems with the local population, problems occasionally did occur with people who were not from the local population. For instance, there was an incident involving men from Susnjari and Pale (not to be confused with the 'capital city' of the Republika Srpska). The village of Pale had the reputation of being a robbers' den: in Mulder's words, it was 'all Mafia, a bit like Tilburg - we even had someone from Tilburg'. The population also lived up to this reputation at OP-M.⁸⁵⁴ Unidentified persons - who later turned out to have come from Pale - had dug a tunnel at night into the OP and stolen 56 Jerry cans of diesel. This was a well-timed operation: the always alert OP dog Oscar had just given birth to five puppies and did not respond on that night. When the theft was discovered, the OP crew was given the tip to take a look in Pale. Ultimately, men from UnCivPol, the OP crew and commandos surrounded the settlement of Brezova Njiva (between

⁸⁵² Debriefing statement B.N. Pents 07/09/95.

⁸⁵³ Interview M. Mulder 06/10/98.

⁸⁵⁴ Interview M. Mulder 06/10/98.

Jaglici and Susnjari), and, after a raid, recovered 31 cans of diesel from a house . ABiH Commander 'Envir' subsequently advised Mulder in the event of trouble not to fire in the air, but to take aim. When shortly afterwards there was a new attempted robbery at night, the men followed this advice - apparently with success, because there were no attempted robberies after that.⁸⁵⁵

Life on OP-Q

On OP-Q, Dutchbat bartered coffee for bread, and for services such as fetching water, with a local family. The family also took the initiative to provide information on all sorts of events, such as reporting that a woman had been shot by Bosnian Serbs in the surroundings and had been wounded. A number of OP crew members subsequently went to the woman, but she turned out to be beyond help. The Dutchbat members did help the woman and several cows out of the range of fire of the VRS.

A local ABiH leader, a certain Nasir Sabanovic, came regularly to this OP to tell 'tall' stories about all the things he had done either with or against the Serbs. Sabanovic also regularly provided information on the movements of the Serbs outside the enclave, because he left it often on reconnaissance. When once he had been laying mines, he was considerate enough to inform Dutchbat of where he had done so, so that the men would take account of the fact during their patrols.⁸⁵⁶ According to Lieutenant Van Duijn of Dutchbat III, there was something of a basis of confidence between the Dutch and the ABiH in the surroundings of OP-Q. Therefore Muslims did not go to stand under the tower of the OP there, as they did at OP-A, with the intention of drawing VRS fire.⁸⁵⁷

Other OPs

The situation around the OPs was therefore subject to considerable variation. OP-E, for example, was close to the Swedish Shelter Project emergency accommodation, so that intensive relations developed with the population. There was also weekly contact with a VRS post further along the road. Around this OP, which fell under the responsibility of B Company, there were regular problems. The B Company soldiers are said to have sometimes acted fairly fiercely against Muslims, because they stole wood from a nearby factory, which was just inside Bosnian Serb terrain. This meant that they drew Serbian fire in the direction of the OP.⁸⁵⁸

Hardly any people lived in the surroundings of OP-F, so that contact with the population there was somewhat limited.

The ABiH looked less favourably on the building and manning of OP-K, because it was very close to the smuggling route to Zepa; the ABiH carried out a substantial number of activities there.

Numerous stories went into circulation through the OPs about night-time raids and smuggling practices, and they also reached the Dutchbat compounds.

Adjustment of the image of the Muslim population?

The contact with the local population around the OPs was therefore generally good, and in theory this could have led to breaking the stereotypes of the Muslim population. Nevertheless, a negative image of the population was often introduced in the 'translation' process of OP crews' stories about the population that were heard in the compound. The men usually had little to say about the normally good relations with the population, but were eager to report 'spectacular' events. This therefore presented a non-representative and potentially counterproductive image, while the majority of Dutchbat members

⁸⁵⁵ Interview M. Mulder 06/10/98.

⁸⁵⁶ Debriefing statement T.P. Lutke 08/09/95.

⁸⁵⁷ Interview L.C. Van Duijn 02/07/99.

⁸⁵⁸ Interview W. Dijkema 21/09/98.

who stayed in the compounds could not put this into perspective or correct it from their own observations.

For Dutchbat, it was actually a matter of enlightened self-interest to maintain good relations with the local residents, with a view to supplying the OPs and gathering Intelligence locally. For the population, the presence of an OP reduced the risk of Bosnian-Serb shelling considerably, and furthermore it created a welcome source of income through trade.

Patrols

Another activity that could result in contact with the population of the enclave was formed by the patrols. There were various different kinds.

Firstly, there were the reconnaissance patrols, about which Chapter 6 stated that their objective was to observe the warring factions, either along the borders of the enclave, or in the enclave itself.

There were also the 'social patrols', which were intended to serve a variety of objectives. One function was to give those members of the battalion who actually never left the compound the opportunity to see something of the surroundings. A second function was to make contact with the population, a third was to show Dutchbat's presence and a fourth was to gather Intelligence. The Battalion Commanders of Dutchbat I, II and III thought that it would be good for Dutchbat members to get out of the compound once in a while. It would enable them to move their horizons further than the compound fence, and it would help counter drudgery and boredom.

In spite of their name, according to Karremans, social patrols were still actually in principle military patrols: in other words, the Dutchbat members who participated were fully armed, and therefore 'not like Dutchmen on safari'⁸⁵⁹. One difference was that on social patrols the men were sometimes allowed to wear a beret as opposed to a helmet, and were allowed to talk with the population. Dutchbat members were also permitted, if the situation arose, to accept food or drink offered by the population. For instance, the occasional glass of slivovitz would be taken at the invitation of local civilians during social patrols at Pustumlici, and patrols often stopped for coffee with a friendly Muslim family in the Swedish Shelter Project. There were also some negative experiences, for example in the form of youths throwing stones at the patrols, but Dutchbat rather considered this to be mischief than aggression directed against the battalion.

As a source of information, the social patrols were not a resounding success. The participants usually managed to chat with the population, but this often remained limited to small talk. There was often no interpreter with the patrol, so that the social aspect actually materialized with difficulty. In addition to the language barrier, the social patrols were handicapped by the circumstance that both Dutchbat and the population were only accustomed to the usual reconnaissance patrols. Therefore, in practice, little came of the social patrols' subsidiary purpose of gathering Intelligence. A Dutchbat III non-commissioned officer also came to this conclusion: 'The chap is trained to go into the woods on patrol and to seek out the enemy. Then he suddenly has to go into the village on a social patrol, talking with people, gathering Intelligence. Things don't work like that.'⁸⁶⁰ Besides this, the Dutchbat members who went on social patrol were often members of non-fighting units, and therefore had a different background. There was the intention here for the 'blue' aspect to take precedence over the 'green', but one fundamental problem remained: as stated earlier in this chapter, the Dutchbat training and preparation were not oriented accordingly, and the population did not know what to think of the social patrols.

An Intelligence officer viewed the social patrols mainly from the standpoint of information gathering. Assuming that the participants of these patrols had not had any 'Intelligence' training, he decided to improve the information gathering by casting it in the form of specific assignments. This

⁸⁵⁹ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans 24/09/98.

⁸⁶⁰ Confidential interview (85).

involved, for example, the assignment to find out what was available on the market, or to ask for reactions to specific events or rumours. This approach yielded more results, but because of the language barrier and the uneasy attitude of the soldiers, it remained a tool of modest value.⁸⁶¹

The question remains whether the population did make a distinction between the social patrols with friendly intent, and the usual reconnaissance patrols. The difference was not easy to see for the untrained eye: for instance, Dutchbat III B Company originally took hand grenades on their social patrols.

When in 1995 the atmosphere between Dutchbat and the population became more menacing, there were also repercussions on the experiences of the social patrols. For a number of soldiers in the last months, this was a disappointing experience. One of them described how:

‘walking along the road from north to south, the locals looked icily at the umpteenth patrol and did not move a single step aside when they noticed that they were in the way. To keep the unit somewhat intact, some colleagues had to walk straight through and around groups of locals standing in the road.’

The Dutchbat members experienced such situations as threatening, from their assumption 'that the Muslims had nothing more to lose, but we did!'⁸⁶²

Other contacts with the population

Paying visits to the local population during Dutchbat I's stay was permitted, but only in the presence of an officer. Such visits were common, for example to the families of girls who worked in the compound. In the case of Dutchbat II, such 'non-functional' visits were forbidden by safety instructions, and that remained the case under Dutchbat III. In spite of the ban, this type of visit did take place regularly, however.

A medical specialist wrote to his successor:

‘Occasionally I disappear with supervision to a friendly family. Very pleasant, just being with the people at home. On the compound they behave as if they are lethal, but I had been received everywhere with hospitality and with open arms, without a single problem. If you ever experience it, the ritual is as follows: first Turkish coffee. You let it settle for a while and drink it very carefully, otherwise you get a mouthful of grounds. I think it is delicious. After that comes the slivovitz!’⁸⁶³

Members of the Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit also visited civilians at home. This happened, for example, if people found ammunition on their land. They were then received with hospitality.⁸⁶⁴ Contacts also came about through the medical surgery for the population that the Dutch held. The medical personnel were occasionally invited home by people to come and drink coffee by way of thanks for their help.

In addition, there were the literal 'borderline cases' in regulating the social contact with the civilian population. These were the contacts at the gate of the compound, where with great regularity children and adults would appear.⁸⁶⁵ The following fragment of a letter written by a Dutchbat member

⁸⁶¹ Confidential interview (85).

⁸⁶² NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman p 21st week 3.

⁸⁶³ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten.

⁸⁶⁴ Debriefing statement J.H. Kapel, 13/09/95.

⁸⁶⁵ A part of the contacts with the population at the gates were also those involving sexual services.

on guard duty to his girlfriend demonstrates that the formal contact rules could present the soldiers with practical problems:

‘I have to break off now, because there are some fans at the gate again, two girls about six or seven years old who want to know my name. But it is forbidden to make contact with the population, including with the children. Half an hour later. They have now been standing there singing songs to me for half an hour. This is terrible. Those children have nothing, only a set of old clothes, and we are sitting ten metres away with food, drink and even sweets. And you're not allowed to give them anything at all, because then the entire village would soon be at the gate.’⁸⁶⁶

In the compound in Potocari, civilians were occasionally given the opportunity to sell woodcarvings. That was stopped in March 1995 because woodcarvings had been sold with ABiH emblems.

There was much contact in the compounds in Potocari and Srebrenica with local employees, who performed a wide variety of tasks for Dutchbat, such as washerwomen, kitchen hands, interpreters, electricians, plumbers, rubbish collectors and a hairdresser. As discussed in the previous chapter, there were regular tensions between Dutchbat and the municipal executive on aspects of the employment of local personnel. The same applied to the other UN organizations and the NGOs. The hairdressers and the interpreters worked directly for UNPROFOR and had their own legal status. The others were recruited through the Opstina for a period of six months. This period started and also ended halfway through a battalion's stay, so that soldiers would not be in contact with the same local employees for more than three months. This rotation system was introduced immediately after the arrival of Dutchbat II. Local employees, in particular the kitchen and cleaning personnel, were given temporary contracts with a maximum period. The Opstina had insisted on this, to the great regret of the local employees who had previously worked for Dutchbat: they lost not only their income, but also their extra food and meaningful occupation. The administrators of the enclave allowed no other opportunity to resolve this long-term conflict.⁸⁶⁷

At the time of Dutchbat I, relations with the local personnel was better than under the following battalions. Sergeant Major Jansen of Dutchbat I B Company wrote in the *Buddy Bulletin*:

‘Another phenomenon in the compound is that local employees take care of a wide variety of matters for us: as washerwoman, as cleaner, as kitchen help, and the men take on the heavier jobs. The men have turned out to be skilled workers, so that they often assist the engineers in their activities. The girls in the compound have been adopted by the CSM [Company Sergeant Major] as ‘his daughters’, and not without reason. They are the best looking in the area, and with the little that they possess, they do their best to look good each day. To prevent problems, they have been given this status for the duration of our stay, because anyone laying a hand on the daughters of the CSM... There is still a pleasant atmosphere in the compound and the girls work hard: for 200 DM a month and a bite to eat with us in the canteen, and that six days a week from early in the morning until late in the evening. Try that some time in the Netherlands!’⁸⁶⁸

The staff of Dutchbat II had their own reasons for preferring the rotation of local personnel. Firstly there was the security aspect: local employees eventually became very familiar with the soldiers and

⁸⁶⁶ Quoted from a letter from a Dutchbat soldier from Potocari to his girlfriend, private archive.

⁸⁶⁷ GV chief military services chaplain. See report of Rev. Gijs Bikker DUTCHBAT II of 28/07/94.

⁸⁶⁸ ‘Compound Srebrenica’ by R. de Jong in Falcon *Buddy Bulletin* April 1994.

their working methods. Consequently, all sorts of relationships could be started, which were not functional and potentially entailed security problems. Furthermore, a humanitarian argument was put forward for rotation. Ideally, through rotation, more families would be able to enjoy the benefits connected with highly desired jobs on the UN compounds and with the international organizations. The Opstina agreed with the desirability of rotation, albeit for other reasons.

The enclave authorities preselected the approximately sixty men and women and proposed the applicants, after which Dutchbat could make a selection. Generally these were original residents of the enclave. In the group of Displaced Persons, which had the greatest need of the jobs and income, almost no one was lucky. Moreover, the people who were allowed to work for Dutchbat or NGOs had to make a payment to the Opstina, who could also withdraw people for a wide range of reasons from Dutchbat and the NGOs.⁸⁶⁹ When the Dutchbat leaders recognized it as a problem, the Opstina threatened that no one else would be allowed to work for Dutchbat if the battalion leaders stuck to their guns. Therefore, little or nothing came of the fairer distribution of jobs that Dutchbat envisaged.

The security problem, which was the basis of the rotation, was not imaginary. A Dutchbat II soldier said afterwards, from the standpoint of military security, that he found it highly remarkable that the local personnel also cleaned the C Company Ops Room (the command post). The Ops Room was cleaned twice a day by a team of three or four girls and it was impossible to keep an eye on what they were doing all the time. In the Ops Room, the patrol schedules, the leave schedules, the service and duty schedules, as well as a detailed map of the division into sectors, were on display. It also contained communication equipment, and the log book of received messages was open near the radio. There were no classified documents or telexes, but there were the so-called milinfo's from the UN. A bag containing all C Company's outgoing mail also hung in the Ops Room.⁸⁷⁰

On arrival and departure the employees were only subjected to a bag check; they were not frisked and did not have to empty their pockets. This information particularly disturbed the Military Security section. Against this background, it was also not surprising that family members of dispatched soldiers in the Netherlands were liable to be approached by Bosnian Muslims who appeared to know a great deal about the battalion member concerned.⁸⁷¹ For instance, the mother of a member of Dutchbat III B Company was approached in the Netherlands. She was requested to arrange for her son to take money to Srebrenica.⁸⁷² The same happened to various spouses of Dutchbat members.

Not only the freedom of movement, but also the duties of the local employees in the compound were a thorn in the side of some members of Dutchbat III:

'People were recruited to perform activities in the compound, without a specific description. We received reports from lads who had property go missing, and that people had been seen rummaging in the belongings. We put an immediate stop to that. We now keep our own gear and rooms clean. These ladies now only wash clothes and that sort of thing. Situations like that therefore did occur, and you can't actually blame them. It is understandable, but that is not to say that you have to tolerate it. We changed things then. No one entered the buildings any more: those people were assigned other activities. So that is how it was with Dutchbat I. In the case of Dutchbat II, I had the idea that they dealt with the people differently from Dutchbat I. Dutchbat I was really very friendly. They went there very pro-Muslim to help the Muslims against the bastard Serbs. That

⁸⁶⁹ Interview A.J. Derksen 10/04/01. This behaviour of the Opstina was the basis of the later conflict between *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) and the Opstina, which also involved Dutchbat.

⁸⁷⁰ 101MIPel. Debriefing report military DUTCHBAT II 9/02/95. However, when asked, the Commander of Dutchbat II categorically denied the correctness of this information.

⁸⁷¹ 101MIPel. Military debriefing report DUTCHBAT II 09/02/95.

⁸⁷² Information based on confidential debriefing statement (11).

is how it seemed to me. I had been led to believe that we were still a neutral UN unit'.⁸⁷³

Major Wieffer of Dutchbat III also thought with hindsight that these differences existed:

'Dutchbat II adopted a somewhat more detached attitude to the population. We then took this over, and perhaps it became even more detached with us, I wouldn't like to say. But it was no longer the way it had been with Dutchbat I. In our case it really was a matter, not of impartiality, but purely of neutrality.'⁸⁷⁴

The reference of Groen and Wieffer to the necessity of being neutral as UN personnel, seemed to underline the fact that Dutchbat II and III had departed for Srebrenica with a different picture of the conflict from that of the first Dutchbat I.

A very important factor in the contact between Dutchbat and the civilian population was, of course, the interpreters. Attempts to recruit Dutch interpreters for Dutchbat II and III failed for a variety of reasons.⁸⁷⁵ It was therefore necessary to work with local interpreters. The interpreter Vahid Hodzic worked from the outset for the Dutch. His work consisted of translating from Serbo-Croat to English and vice versa, and translating the radio news from Sarajevo and Belgrade for the Commanders. For this, he received on top of his salary, free food and accommodation. Another Dutchbat interpreter had the idea that he was considered to be a sort of translation machine: he was not treated as someone who was part of the group. When an excursion was arranged to an OP, they forgot to include a sleeping bag for him, and neither was he taken into account when food was prepared. The man felt that he was treated as an outsider and a beggar. The soldiers created a Dutch atmosphere, a Dutch cocoon, which he was not part of. Some bars in the compound even refused to serve drinks to the interpreters.⁸⁷⁶

The security aspect also played an important role here. The Dutch soldiers were aware of the links between the local interpreters and the population (and possibly also with the ABiH) and therefore wanted to avoid any risk. This meant that the local interpreters fell between two stools. They were not completely accepted, if at all, by the Dutch soldiers, and they also occupied a separate position relative to their own population. This was especially true in the case of Dutchbat II and III. The section for military-civil relations left the interpreters pretty well to fend for themselves, and only the counsellors concerned themselves professionally with their fate. As a separate issue, friendships were made on a lower level between Dutchbat members and local personnel.

However, all in all, there remained a deep gulf between them. The interpreters called the Dutchbat members 'showboys': they rode around in fancy jeeps, wore trendy sunglasses, had smart haircuts and usually had enough to eat. According to one of the interpreters the relationship between Dutchbat and the interpreters improved when the Dutch ran out of electricity and supplies: everyone was then in the same boat.⁸⁷⁷

7. Contacts with the Bosnian Serbs

The contacts between Dutchbat and Bosnian Serbs in the first place involved the Bosnian Serb army, the VRS, who manned roadblocks and checkpoints on the road to the enclave. There was also contact

⁸⁷³ Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.

⁸⁷⁴ Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

⁸⁷⁵ For that matter, it is not necessarily the case that national interpreters were always preferred to locals. Some soldiers actually argued for the use of local interpreters. See for a discussion e.g. Douglas M. Chalmers '*Faction Liaison Teams: A Peacekeeping Multiplier*' School of Advanced Military Studies United States Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2001, p. 48.

⁸⁷⁶ Interview Omer Subasic, 17/06/98.

⁸⁷⁷ M. Struyk, 'De showboys van Srebrenica', in *Loopgraven*, 1997, p. 18.

with the Bosnian Serbs in Bratunac, just outside the enclave, and with VRS soldiers on the other side of the enclave border. Prior to the stay, the Commander of Dutchbat I acquainted himself with the Bosnian-Serb commanders and deputy commanders that he might have to deal with. Vermeulen recalls 'groping, a sort of cockfight'.⁸⁷⁸ It has already been mentioned how deep the Dutchbat members had to grovel before the Bosnian Serbs even to gain entry to the enclave.

In the autumn of 1994, the command of Dutchbat I paid a visit to the lower school in Bratunac, where he handed over a symbolic gift on behalf of the Minister for Development Cooperation, which consisted of exercise books and pens. It was actually the intention that a part of the school material that arrived through the Ministry of Defence in the enclave would be given to the school in Bratunac.⁸⁷⁹ The contact with the Serbs in the north was difficult, because the VRS hardly allowed any convoys through there. To the south of the enclave, the atmosphere appeared a little more relaxed: a reconnaissance patrol was occasionally offered coffee. In spite of the language barrier, it resulted in some exchange of information. An invitation from the Serbs to accompany them on patrol was politely declined by the Dutch, however.⁸⁸⁰

During a marathon session in Bratunac on 6 January 1995, the new Dutchbat III team for military-civil relations (in military terms: section 5) was introduced to the local Bosnian-Serb military command, consisting of the Commander of the Drina Corps, General Zivanovic as well as Colonel Vukovic and the Majors Sarkic and Nikolic. The meeting took place on the orthodox Christmas Eve, and proceeded pleasantly. Zivanovic spoke for a long time (eight of the nine hours) on subjects including the demilitarization of the enclave, humanitarian aid and problems along the confrontation line.

Other contacts with the VRS were more austere. On OP-R, the Dutch soldiers mainly had contact by telephone with a nearby Bosnian-Serb post. The older Bosnian-Serb soldiers behaved very quietly, in contrast to the young people, who were more aggressive in their behaviour.⁸⁸¹ Like the Muslims, for the Serbs, age was a factor that noticeably determined the behaviour towards Dutchbat. In the words of a member of the reconnaissance platoon:

'Only very seldom, when we crossed the border, did a few Serbs come out. Drink some coffee, talk a little. But it depended very much on who was manning the posts. If they were regular troops: they were young lads. Aggressive, tough machos. We wanted nothing to do with them. But if they were reservists, you could chat.'⁸⁸²

The section 5 had particularly good contact with the commander of the Bosnian Serbs at *Yellow Bridge*, on the northern border of the enclave, who was known as 'Jovo' (Jovan Ivic). He was supplied with electricity from the compound. Dutchbat engineers had run a line alongside OP-P to *Yellow Bridge*. If the Serbs wanted to make contact with the Dutch, they could walk to OP-P. There was also contact by telephone between OP-R and the 'Dragan bunker', a house that served as a VRS battalion command post. The Dutchbat members on OP-E likewise had contact by telephone with the Serbs, and communicated using codes. They had a number of standard messages and questions. Because they were numbered, they could suffice with stating the numbers concerned.

⁸⁷⁸ 'De eerste commandant', *De Opmaat* 5 (1999) 4, pp. 4-6.

⁸⁷⁹ Information bundle *The Blue/Green beret* (1994)16.

⁸⁸⁰ Information bundle *Green/Blue* (1995) 25.

⁸⁸¹ 101MIPel. 15/06/95 Debriefing report UNMO observer for the period 26-10-1994-26-04-1995.

⁸⁸² Interview A.A.L. Caris 03/03/00.

8. Contacts with UN organizations and NGOs

The UN organizations in the enclave with which Dutchbat cooperated were - as stated in Chapter 7 - UnCivPol, the UNMOs and UNHCR.

UnCivPol had the task of 'monitoring' the local police. In practice this came down to UN policemen supervising the compliance of the local police with human rights. In this framework, UnCivPol visited the prison once a week. Another UnCivPol task was advising the local police, because only 10% of them were trained. UnCivPol also assisted the UNHCR in the execution of humanitarian aid projects. The most common infringement of the law in the enclave was stealing sheep. Dutchbat was also regularly robbed, but that mostly concerned clothing, diesel or food. Because UnCivPol had a different mandate and different authorities, they were allowed to enter places that were forbidden to Dutchbat and UNMOs, such as dwellings.⁸⁸³

The UNMOs' task was to gather information on the warring factions, the population and their living conditions for UN headquarters in New York. They also took part or assisted in negotiations. They also had aid-related tasks, such as supervising and mediating in the exchange of prisoners, medical evacuations and assisting humanitarian convoys. To facilitate this, they had almost daily consultation with Dutchbat and the various NGOs.⁸⁸⁴ The effectiveness and task performance of the UNMO team in Srebrenica varied greatly from one person to another.

UNHCR was responsible for the food, the clothing and the necessities of life of the Displaced Persons. UNHCR had therefore not only to arrange the entire food supply in the enclave, but was also responsible for the non-food products, such as clothing, bedding, mattresses, sowing seed, building materials, footwear, and so on. Dutchbat supervised the UNHCR convoys during their journey through the enclave to the unloading point, the warehouse in Srebrenica town. With much display, Dutchbat members were present at the unloading, but after that their task finished. The distribution was therefore the responsibility of UNHCR and not of Dutchbat.

9. Dutchbat's problems: what should be done and how should it be done?

In its relations with the population and the ABiH in the enclave, Dutchbat had to deal with a large number of widely varied problems. They were concerned with military-operational, logistics, socio-cultural and psychological issues, which, in the reality of everyday, ran through and affected each other. For a clear understanding of the development of Dutchbat's position, it is nonetheless important to consider them separately.

The military-operational problems were associated with the way in which action as part of the UN was organized. In the course of their presence, the successive Dutch battalions increasingly had the feeling that they were bound hand and foot to the UN mandate. In addition, the UN lines of command for the local units were not particularly transparent, and the regulations were subject to change, and sometimes also confusing, ambiguous, or difficult or impossible to execute. The force instruction of the UNPROFOR Rules of Engagement, for example, could not always be translated clearly into practice. The interpretations and practice therefore differed depending on the country and unit.

The Dutch battalions did have to guard an extremely inaccessible terrain of 150 square kilometres, in which approximately 40,000 malnourished and partly armed Muslims lived, without them having sufficient personnel or adequate weapons at their disposal. In view of the circumstances, the task of maintaining the peace and at the same time performing humanitarian action already far exceeded the gravity of normal peacekeeping. Furthermore, there was expectation in the Netherlands that Dutchbat members would perform additional humanitarian tasks, which were outside the UN

⁸⁸³ Interview by counsellor Bart Hetebrij with Peter Gaardse in *EGO* May 1995 pp. 3-4.

⁸⁸⁴ Interview by counsellor Bart Hetebrij with Jan van Dool in *EGO* May 1995 p. 5

mandate and the associated military-operational action. This arose partly from wishes that existed in the Dutch political arena, but they were barely feasible for the Dutch units on the spot.⁸⁸⁵

The execution of humanitarian projects by UN units was actually nothing new as such. On earlier missions in Cambodia and Lebanon, Dutch soldiers had executed small scale humanitarian projects. The urge to help people in need was natural. At the same time, it was understood that humanitarian projects could also generate goodwill among the population, which could be of benefit to the execution of the task and their own safety.⁸⁸⁶ Furthermore, it was very motivating for the units to carry out this sort of work, certainly if the sense of military action was not always clear, as was the case in Srebrenica.

How military and humanitarian matters related to each other precisely, and which had priority, was difficult to unravel for many of those involved. This was also the case in The Hague, as was evident from a large article in the *Defensiekrant* of 3 February 1994, which mentioned the following tasks: 'protecting the population in the Safe Areas, creating conditions for the transport of the wounded, reducing hostilities, improving the living conditions in the area and providing military assistance to UNHCR convoys.'⁸⁸⁷ Two months later, however, the same newspaper spoke of the 'true task: protecting the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica'.⁸⁸⁸

The Dutch soldiers also assumed that they were in the enclave in the first place to protect the population.⁸⁸⁹ However, the original UN mandate mentioned neither protecting nor defending the civilians in the enclave. UNPROFOR was supposed to 'deter attacks' through their mere presence and behaviour, and force was only to be used in self-defence. There are actually no occurrences of the terms 'protect' or 'defend' in the resolutions.⁸⁹⁰

The Rules of Engagement, from which the Standing Operating Procedures and the Standing Orders for Dutchbat were derived, were discussed in Chapters 1 and 3. Generally speaking, the commanders could work with these instructions, but their application was far from uniform, which was bound to have an influence on the way the members of the battalion viewed their duties. A Belgian soldier described their problem in a general sense with the words:

'I would definitely choose a war mission, because then at least we know what we are dealing with. But with the blue berets and the Rules of Engagement, they put doubts in our minds.'⁸⁹¹

The Rules of Engagement were in principle known to every soldier, because they were discussed during the preparation and announced at each briefing. For example, they had the effect that little could be done if the Bosnian Serbs fired over the heads of, or into the ground at the feet of, the members of a patrol. In the event of a shooting incident, the Rules of Engagement prescribed that they had to determine the exact origin of the fire before returning fire. This was almost impossible, however, because most of the firing came from a great distance.

Commanders on the spot therefore sometimes adapted the rules when they appeared hardly realistic. The leaders of Dutchbat II opted for a line of conduct that entailed avoiding confrontation with armed persons. Similar decisions were also made in the matter of the instructions for dealing with

⁸⁸⁵ These included, for example, what were known as the Pronk projects. The Minister for Development Cooperation made money available for junior schools in the region. The material could hardly enter the enclave, if at all, however, because the VRS would not give clearance. Nonetheless, Dutchbat did smuggle a number of items of school material in convoys.

⁸⁸⁶ Christ Klep wrote extensively about this in: Klep & Gils, *Van Korea tot Kosovo*, pp. 95-159.

⁸⁸⁷ E. Brouwer, 'Eenheid op maat gesneden voor Bosnie' ('Tailor-made unity for Bosnia'), *Defensiekrant*, 03/02/94, p. 3.

⁸⁸⁸ E. Brouwer, 'Indrukwekkende route langs the poort van the hel', *Defensiekrant* 07/04/94, p. 2.

⁸⁸⁹ For example in: '*Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*' in which the Commander of Bravo Company says 'It had been clear to us for some time that we were here for only one matter and that was the safety of the civilians.' p. 269.

⁸⁹⁰ See Part I, Chapter 11.

⁸⁹¹ Quoted in E. Muller 'Geweldsexcessen bij vredesoperaties: Somalië 1992-1995' ('Violent excesses in peace operations: Somalia 1992-1995'), *Militaire Spectator*, 168(1999) 9 p. 503.

suspected incidents of stolen UN goods. At company level too, they subsequently opted for their own interpretation of the regulations so as to be able to deal with matters as they saw fit.⁸⁹² The demilitarization task therefore threatened to be pushed aside: the UN could well order the disarmament, but the execution would be impossible in practice, if not suicidal. In this way, many general rules lost their meaning in practice, because the soldiers were forced to resort to their own judgement.

This was also the way in which Dutchbat executed the important order to secure the enclave and the enclave borders: 'deter attacks by presence'. However, Dutchbat missed a number of essential instruments for doing this adequately. They had insufficient personnel and also insufficient resources to operate, for example, at night, or in secret, so as to deter attackers, and anyway this was not permissible because 'identifiability' was an essential element of UN troops behaviour. Dutchbat was therefore instructed to return to quarters before sunset. The Muslims and Bosnian Serbs were aware of this, of course, and therefore both parties had free rein in the evening and at night. In this way, the Dutch found it especially difficult to gain insight into what was going on in military terms inside the enclave. What is more, Dutchbat was also forbidden to move outside the enclave borders, which further undermined the information position. From a military standpoint, the situation was hopeless in this regard.

10. Problems between Dutchbat and the warring factions

The military aspects of the duties involved supervising compliance with ceasefires between the Bosnian Government army, the ABiH, and the forces of the Bosnian Serbs, the VRS. When they arrived in the enclave, Dutchbat soon observed that there was no peace at all, but only a disputed ceasefire, which was constantly violated by both parties. There was a great lack of clarity about how to interpret the task in practice. The Commander of Dutchbat II, for example, wanted to know whether digging trenches was or was not permissible in a 'demilitarized' area. He requested clarification from headquarters in Sarajevo on three separate occasions, without receiving an answer. Finally only a half-hearted answer came from Tuzla, that put the problem back on the Commander's plate.⁸⁹³

The problems surrounding the demilitarization, the establishment of the enclave borders and the determination of the ceasefire line appeared to be insoluble in the short term, and they repeatedly reopened negotiations with both parties. The Dutch battalions adapted, as mentioned in the previous chapters, their policy to this situation. They preferred to remain in discussion and to preserve the mutual contact between the Bosnian Muslims and the Bosnian Serbs. Identical borders accepted by all parties existed at best on paper, but in practice there were three borders: those of the ABiH, of the VRS and of UNPROFOR. Because the demilitarization also came to a standstill, the leaders of the successive Dutch battalions found themselves increasingly falling between two stools. On the one hand, the VRS repeatedly complained about the inadequate disarming of the Muslims, and from that side they argued that Dutchbat was not carrying out its duties properly. On the other hand, the ABiH constantly insisted that Dutchbat did not react alertly to Serbian movements and border corrections, and was actually too conscientious in gathering weapons from the Bosnian Government army.

In the Dutch battalions themselves, this stagnation led to many frustrations. Dutchbat I ran into this problem immediately. According to Commander Vermeulen:

'if you saw a man with a weapon, you could shout '*stani pucam*' ['stand or I will shoot!'], but you were not permitted to shoot, because the Rules of Engagement did not allow it. If that man ran home fast enough and threw the weapon inside, you could put up a cordon around the house. You then had to call the

⁸⁹² Debriefing statement J.H.A. Rutten 06/09/95.

⁸⁹³ See Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 186.

local police, and they would say: 'I would have to be crazy, because then we would all be punished by Naser Oric.' You would then ask the UN police, who then said that they had had no mandate for it. It was a warped regulation.'⁸⁹⁴

The regulations did indeed require Dutchbat members to make a report if they found armed men in the enclave. Under no circumstances should they go off in pursuit. If the opportunity to make an arrest presented itself, they should do so, and subsequently indeed call in the UnCivPol. Frisking was forbidden, as was the searching of houses. They were allowed to 'secure' a house, which meant that they could set up a cordon around the house to await the arrival of UnCivPol. If such a situation should become 'threatening', then Dutchbat was to withdraw.⁸⁹⁵

Dutchbat was therefore not authorized to enter houses, and so the men who carried weapons, as Vermeulen described, could escape being disarmed by fleeing into a house. Sometimes, the blue helmets saw women leaving with shopping bags, in which they were probably taking the dismantled weapons to safety. UnCivPol and local police were allowed to enter the houses, but according to a number of Dutchbat members it was sometimes took hours for them to arrive.⁸⁹⁶ Furthermore, the probability was indeed extraordinarily small that the local police would find much, because of the reprisals to be expected from ABiH soldiers. Many ABiH soldiers had more respect for their own commanders than for the agreements that had been made with the UN and had to be executed by Dutchbat. They feared reprisals if they were to surrender their weapon, which was sometimes so abundantly clear that the Dutch offered to mediate: if 'Dutchbat could just have those weapons, then the liaison officer would talk with the Muslim commander, to avoid punishment'.⁸⁹⁷

The effectiveness of the Dutchbat action in this sort of matter was also seriously impeded by another cause. It quickly became apparent that as soon as a patrol left the compound, a sort of alarm system went into effect (via children and adults), which usually attained a higher speed than that of the patrols: 'They just knew: time to hide the weapons! Now the patrol is back inside. Get the weapons back out again.'⁸⁹⁸ According to patrol coordinator Captain Rutten, he did decide to pursue armed Muslims in a few situations. But:

'you can go after them on the risk that they know the terrain much better than you and, of course, disarming was not of much use. This gradually became clear to everyone. You took a weapon and you drew a certain risk to yourself. Because if you were to go into the same area later with a patrol, you ran the risk of being fired on by Muslims. I tried not to sidestep that, but in the orders I said: 'If you come across them [weapons], collect them. If you don't come across them, don't go looking for them! Is not worthwhile.'⁸⁹⁹

The regulations were so unclear that neither did the battalion leaders know whether the ban on searching houses was an unwritten rule or a UN rule. To prevent escalation of the confrontation between the ABiH and Dutchbat, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans decided, towards the end of the deployment, to leave large groups, who were walking around openly with weapons, undisturbed.

In brief, it is not surprising that Karremans remarked to the NIOD that in his opinion nothing ever came of demilitarization.⁹⁰⁰ During Dutchbat III especially, the execution of demilitarization measures formed an acute security problem, because the Dutch had little or nothing else to offer the

⁸⁹⁴ Interview C.H.P. Vermeulen 09/06/99.

⁸⁹⁵ SMG/Debrief. Ccie (NL) UN INFBAT Standing Orders Part III.

⁸⁹⁶ Interview R. Sensen 11/02/99.

⁸⁹⁷ Interview A.J. Derksen 10/04/95.

⁸⁹⁸ Interview E.G.B. Wieffer 18/6/99.

⁸⁹⁹ Interview J.H.A. Rutten 01/12/99.

⁹⁰⁰ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans 01/12/00.

population. Because the Bosnian Serbs would not allow through any more fuel, fresh food, or medical stocks, Dutchbat could hardly do anything more for the population. The situation was utterly hopeless, as the humanist counsellor Hetebrij said: 'You had to beat with a stick with one hand and give with the other hand, but we had nothing to offer'.⁹⁰¹

For the Dutch battalions, there was no doubt that the ABiH had weapons at their disposal in the enclave. There was regular shooting in and around the Safe Area. Especially in the evening and at night it was unclear where the firing was coming from. Unknown marksmen also fired over and at the compound in Potocari, and sometimes shots landed only a couple of metres away from the Dutch soldiers. This was nothing special for those who had regularly been on the shooting range, but it made others fairly nervous. On the compound, they assumed that ABiH marksmen were involved and they became increasingly amazed about what they had to put up with from the Muslims, who they were supposed to protect. The practice of 'drawing fire' by ABiH soldiers around the OPs was a permanent source of concern. Because the ABiH fired on Bosnian-Serb positions in the vicinity of Dutch OPs, there was a fairly large probability that the observation post would come under fire if the Serbs returned fire. This also did happen regularly. The Dutch assumed that the ABiH played this risky game to involve Dutchbat in the conflict.

In this way, the relationship between Dutchbat and the ABiH deteriorated in the course of time. This is also apparent from the manner of the response to the figure of Naser Oric. The first battalion still had mixed feelings about Oric, but the second and third battalions no longer had a good word for him. Oric also showed himself far less in the last period, and he was generally viewed as a criminal. On the other hand, a number of soldiers did have respect for him, and they were also not unmoved by his aura of invincibility and heroism. A Dutchbat III soldier relates his first acquaintance with Oric:

'I first met him on a patrol. We arrived at a stream; I no longer know what it was called. There was some kind of small water mill there. He was sitting there resting with a group of men. Because they were armed, I said to the sergeant: 'Shouldn't we take those weapons?' His answer was: 'If you really want, off you go! But that is Naser Oric.' He explained a little about who he was and what he had done before the enclave was established. That he had practically liberated the entire enclave from the Serbs with a small group of men. I then started to take a different view of the matter.'⁹⁰²

For the third battalion, the taking hostage of a large group of Dutchbat members in the Bandera Triangle, which was discussed in Chapter 6, was one of the first and immediately also one of the most perturbing experiences with the ABiH. This confrontation took only a few days, but did set the tone. From 28 January 1995, 100 men were detained at three locations in the western part of the enclave. Negotiations took place regarding a solution, and permission was even obtained for a supply trip to the detained unit. The local civilian population provided the men with fresh bread and snacks.⁹⁰³ Nevertheless, for the Dutchbat III personnel who had just arrived in the enclave, it remained totally incomprehensible that they should be taken hostage by the same Muslims who they had come to protect. This is how the view could become established that relations with the Muslims were more problematic than those with the Bosnian Serbs.

While the Dutchbat members were being held hostage, the village carpenter arrived in the compound to sell woodcarvings to their colleagues, at West European prices. This was the height of absurdity for the soldiers in the compound. Some wondered whether the money paid to the carpenter

⁹⁰¹ Interview with Bart Hetebrij in *Panorama*, autumn 1995, pp. 19-21.

⁹⁰² Interview A.E. Broeder, 03/5/00.

⁹⁰³ MID/RNII. Dutchbat Milinfo Sie 2/3 30/01/95.

was used to buy the weapons that made life miserable for Dutchbat.⁹⁰⁴ The experience of powerlessness, which is so disturbing for soldiers, was described by Captain E.G.B. Wieffer as follows:

'You just sat in the underdog position. That was the point. You were the underdog because you were in a remote location. You were the underdog because there was no possible way out. This was also well known. The battalion occasionally shouted: 'How can we do the job if matters really get out of hand?' You were also the underdog simply because you were bullied by both the ABiH - and I am not referring to the Muslims, but to the ABiH - and the VRS anytime they felt like it. And therefore you had no mandate, nor any position of power, and therefore no leg to stand on to participate there as UN. You were just a small boy there.'⁹⁰⁵

Dutchbat patrols were regularly apprehended by the ABiH and sent back. For example, a patrol from OP-A at the end of April 1995 was told by the local leader Imzah Begovic 'that they were no longer allowed to pass through the village of Sastafci'.⁹⁰⁶ Practices of this kind made the execution of the original task as good as impossible.

The assumption of the deployment - that Dutchbat was present 'with the assent of both parties' - seemed in practice to be becoming increasingly problematic. The fact that agreements had been signed did not necessarily mean that they were also carried out. In spite of agreements, it was not made very difficult for the warring factions to quietly continue going their own way. The procedure that prescribed how patrols were to respond if they came under fire, virtually invited misuse. In the event of shooting, the patrol actually had to lie on the ground, and after ten minutes someone was supposed to review the situation. If the situation was safe, the patrol could cautiously resume. However, if the shooting started again, the patrol had to turn back. This procedure certainly helped limit the escalation of violence, but at the same time it made it very simple for the ABiH to get rid of a patrol: just fire twice over their heads.⁹⁰⁷

Dutchbat III increasingly often observed large armed groups of ABiH, which it could not act against. At the end of January 1995, approximately 400 Muslims armed with rifles and bazookas even gathered in front of the gate of the compound in Srebrenica. An hour later they departed again to the south. It was a mystery to Dutchbat members what this action was supposed to mean, although most tended to interpret the incident as a show of strength.⁹⁰⁸

There was also great irritation about the maintenance of the weapons that the ABiH had actually handed in; it had been agreed that the ABiH was permitted to maintain these weapons. They were stored in the Weapon Collection Point, which was controlled by B Company. According to the ABiH, Dutchbat members refused to supply them with the necessary maintenance equipment, such as polishing cloths and oil, which were not part of the agreement. Several incidents took place during the maintenance sessions. For instance, on 21 March 1995 an ABiH soldier attempted to take away a dismantled Kalashnikov after a maintenance session in the Weapon Collection Point. This attempt was discovered, after which B Company removed all ABiH personnel from the compound.⁹⁰⁹

Apart from that, the ABiH also had numerous complaints about the military task performance by the Dutch battalions. Ramiz Becirovic, Deputy Commander of the ABiH in Srebrenica, blamed the Dutch soldiers for never being willing to believe what they had not seen with their own eyes. Becirovic once took a Dutchbat patrol to the Muslim village of Jasenova. He wanted to make the Dutch aware of

⁹⁰⁴ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman, 17th week 25.

⁹⁰⁵ Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

⁹⁰⁶ MID/RNII. Milinfo 30/04/95.

⁹⁰⁷ 101MIPel. Military debriefing report DUTCHBAT II 09/02/95.

⁹⁰⁸ Dutchbat Milinfo Sie 2/3, 29/01/95.

⁹⁰⁹ Dutchbat Milinfo Sie 2/3, 22/03/95.

infiltration by Bosnian Serbs in the village. While Becirovic was lying flat on his stomach in hiding, the Dutch stood surveying the situation. They could make no other observation than: 'We see that they are there, but we can't do anything about it.'⁹¹⁰ - this was a frustrating experience for Becirovic.

Under the circumstances in the enclave it was not simple for the Dutch battalions to observe the necessary neutrality or impartiality. This was even exacerbated by the material aid to the destitute population. The parties involved, in the midst of a conflict where the distinction between civilians and soldiers was often unclear, rapidly interpreted such aid as partiality. Humanitarian aid to civilians could in practice lead to indirect aid to the soldiers. The UN order stated clearly that the Dutch battalions must act in a 'neutral' and 'impartial' way. The views on the practical meaning of these concepts diverged somewhat, however, because they were not translated into clear rules. The consequence was that each (company) commander interpreted 'neutrality' and 'impartiality' in their own way.

In the period of Dutchbat I, Commander Vermeulen and Liaison Officer Derksen shared the view that neutrality meant that Dutchbat must not take sides and should try to get on well with all parties. This came down to 'never appearing vulnerable and not been swayed by either of the parties'. They were aware of the nature of the problems and they tried to familiarize themselves with them without taking sides.⁹¹¹ The way in which Vermeulen defined the term neutrality did not mean that his people were allowed no contact with the population nor dealings with anyone. Yet he was well aware of how difficult it was to keep a grip on neutrality and impartiality. After all, 'as soon you go in and sit down, you are with the Muslims and you are one with the Muslims, and you are the opposing party for the other party. You will never again be neutral.'⁹¹² According to Derksen, you have to preserve your impartiality, but this did not mean that you could not deal with people in a friendly way.⁹¹³

The Commanders of Dutchbat II and III felt obliged to define the position differently. They opted to keep more distance and limited themselves as much as possible to functional contacts. They were also more apprehensive of too intimate contacts between battalion members and the population, because this could endanger the neutrality. Partly on the basis of their experiences in Lebanon, Everts and Karremans practically forbade contact between Dutchbat and the local population. They themselves also hardly had contact with anyone, because in their eyes this was a prerequisite for 'neutral' action.⁹¹⁴ It had been driven home in the preparation that Dutchbat must act in a neutral way, and that keeping a distance appeared to be the simplest way to give substance to the concept of impartiality. However, Dutchbat members were occasionally allowed to play football with the population and to provide organized humanitarian aid.

The most far-reaching consequences of the order to be neutral and impartial were taken by the Commander of Dutchbat III B Company, Captain Groen. Groen wanted to distinguish two tasks within the framework of his main task. In the first place, according to him, came the care for his own personnel, and in the second place the safety of the Muslims. To perform the latter task as well as possible with the limited resources that he had available, it appeared to him to be advisable to remain as 'neutral' as possible. Based on what he had heard of the experiences of his predecessors, he thought that a 'neutral' attitude could also mean that, if necessary, he would have to protect his own people against the Muslims. Groen understood from the accounts that Dutchbat I arrived in the enclave very pro-Muslim, on the assumption that they were there 'to help the Muslims against those bastard Serbs'.

According to his own account, his view was different:

'I think that as part of the UN you have to be impartial. This was also officially the intention. To be a third party in the middle. But they clearly very openly took the side of the Muslim population, which is very understandable, because

⁹¹⁰ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02/02 and 05/02/98.

⁹¹¹ Interview A.J. Derksen, 10/04/01.

⁹¹² Interview C.H.P. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.

⁹¹³ Tabak, *Tussen hamer en aambeeld*, pp. 49-50.

⁹¹⁴ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 26/06/98.

you have the idea that you are in the misery together. But you do send a signal to the Serbian side who are surrounding you. As Dutchbat I, I would also not have approached this as they did.⁹¹⁵

It is striking that Groen apparently failed to notice that in addition to Dutchbat I's good contacts with the Muslims, they also maintained good contacts with the Serbs, and in this way therefore also acted in a 'neutral or impartial' way, except that it was not consistent with his own view. The commanders give their own interpretation of the principle of neutrality, but in the case of the last two commanders this entailed that they preferred to reduce contacts with the Muslims to a minimum. This can be partly attributed to the fact that the training paid no attention to how neutrality and impartiality were to be interpreted: this meant that it was unclear what was permissible and what not in the contacts with the warring factions. The matter was left to the capacities of the responsible officers, such as their insight into human nature, flexibility, creativity and social intelligence.

It appeared that Dutchbat II and III preferred to be safe than sorry, and avoided risks in this area as much as possible.⁹¹⁶ This was otherwise a consequence not only of a personal interpretation of orders by the Dutchbat leaders, but also of the worsening relationship with the ABiH and, in general, the increasing tension in and around the enclave. What was problematic in this line of conduct was that Dutchbat actually assumed that it was there for the benefit of the population in the enclave. At the same time, the battalion leaders deemed contact with the population to be so risky for the mission, that the enclave residents were kept as much as possible at a safe distance. This ultimately led to a paradoxical situation, in which it was actually forbidden to make contact with the Muslims, while they were to be provided with humanitarian aid.

In order to assess Dutchbat's situation, it is also necessary in general terms to raise the question of to what extent striving for neutrality is compatible with a peace mission with a strongly humanitarian element. Simply by being present, peacekeepers influence the existing relationships and the way in which the hostilities develop. The task of providing humanitarian aid to a less than clearly separated conglomerate of civilians and soldiers made this even more difficult. The UN intervenes politically and militarily to achieve its objectives and is therefore a party in skirmishes, fighting and aid. Upholding the principle of neutrality in such a situation is more of a wish than a reality, and it is even questionable whether it can serve as an adequate guide for action in a UN context.⁹¹⁷ The concepts are often interchanged, but it is possible to make a clear distinction .

Impartial or neutral?

According to specialists, the concept of 'impartiality' has appeared to be more workable for peace missions than 'neutrality', also for many NGOs.⁹¹⁸ Impartiality allows for being 'judgmental', which, roughly speaking, means acting as a referee. Neutrality is a more detached attitude. The author J. Pictet describes the difference as follows: 'the neutral man refuses to make a judgement whereas the one who is impartial judges a situation in accordance with pre-established rules'.⁹¹⁹ At the time of the deployment

⁹¹⁵ Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.

⁹¹⁶ The commanders of Dutchbat II and III have also repeatedly pointed out that through their experiences in Lebanon they had become extremely cautious and wished to act in a strictly neutral way.

⁹¹⁷ The author Hugo Slim explains the pitfalls of using concepts such as neutrality and impartiality extremely well in 'Positioning Humanitarianism in War: Principles of Neutrality, Impartiality and Solidarity' in: *Aspects of Peacekeeping* D.S. Gordon and F.H. Toase (ed.) (London, 2001) pp. 125-140, The author Stuart Gordon does the same in 'A Recipe for Making the Safe Areas Unsafe' in: *Aspects of Peacekeeping*, D.S. Gordon and F.H. Toase (eds.) (London, 2001) pp. 213-230 The Sandhurst Conference Series.

⁹¹⁸ see explanation by Hugo Slim in the article 'Positioning Humanitarianism in War: Principles of Neutrality, Impartiality and Solidarity' in: *Aspects of Peacekeeping*, D.S. Gordon and F.H. Toase (eds.) (London, 2001) p. 134.

⁹¹⁹ J. Pictet *The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross: A Commentary*, Geneva, 1979, p. 26. An American Air Force manual for dealing with NGOs contains the following clear and concise description of the difference between neutrality and

of Dutchbat, the problematic implications of the order to observe neutrality by the United Nations were still little recognized, let alone that account was taken of them in formulating the order for Dutchbat. The consequence was that each commander provided his own interpretation of these concepts. Vermeulen of Dutchbat I viewed 'neutral' as remaining on friendly terms with everyone; Everts and Karremans of Dutchbat II and III viewed it more as keeping distance from the parties.

Security measures in the contacts with the population and the warring factions

Dutchbat II and III aimed to avoid contacts between Dutch soldiers and the local population, also for reasons of military security, as much as possible. There had been regular problems in previous years. For instance, men of the Dutch transport companies sometimes took civilians along in convoys over the confrontation line, which could have endangered the entire convoy. Contacts with civilians could also easily have led to identification and taking sides, which was in conflict with aiming for neutrality. In the case of Dutchbat I and II, for example, it appeared that battalion members sent numerous parcels to civilians in the enclave. Rave, who, apart from being a member of the liaison team, was also a military security officer of Dutchbat III, wanted to stop this practice because it carried security and operational risks.⁹²⁰

For that matter, not all members of Dutchbat III fell under the explicit ban on contact with the population. However, it was advised in connection with the security risks to limit contact to what was strictly necessary and functional. In problems of this kind too, it came down to working according to individual discretion. According to an involved party, Rave solved this problem on the Potocari compound by means of the following line of conduct: 'Contacts are fine, but I do want them to be reported to me'. In this way he was able to check what specific contacts involved, and whether anything strange was going on.

Rave impressed upon soldiers to remain anonymous and therefore not to disclose their names. He was concerned about possible activities of Intelligence Services and criminals. Therefore, for example, Rave instructed no envelopes to be thrown away, in case addresses might be revealed. It became apparent that this was no groundless fear when half a year after Major Franken met with Colonel Jankovic (VRS), he received a Christmas card at his home address. The wife of the Dutchbat dentist once phoned the Situation Centre in The Hague because a package had been delivered to her home with the request to forward it to her husband in the enclave. Her husband was extremely concerned, and that possibly had consequences for his performance in the enclave.⁹²¹

The Dutchbat III B Company was the strictest with respect to security measures. The B men wore no name tags and were not allowed to speak to the local population. The probability of problems for this company was greater, of course, than for the other companies in Potocari, because Bravo was located in the middle of Srebrenica town. During the training of the battalions, military safety had already been raised for discussion. The lessons were repeated in Srebrenica and updated on the basis of new information and experiences. This especially concerned the risks associated with trading with the local population and exchanging equipment. In addition, the attempts to use Dutchbat for postal traffic into and out of the enclave was raised. The risks of maintaining contacts, entering into personal relations and 'taking sides' were likewise raised. Finally, alertness was called for in telecommunication. The ABiH warned Dutchbat that the VRS was intercepting all the message traffic that was sent over

impartiality: '*Neutrality implies that all parties will be equally affected by an action. But no peace operation, not even unarmed monitoring, will be likely to affect all parties equally and therefore none is neutral. Impartiality implies that the United Nations, normally the Security Council, believes that all parties share responsibility and therefore refuses to identify aggressor or victim. Peace operations are or should be impartial*', in: 'Strengthening the Partnership' Improving Military Coordination with Relief Agencies and Allies in: *Humanitarian Operations*. Prepared by Rand for United States Air Force by Daniel Byma. (et al.), Santa Monica, 2000, p. 105.

⁹²⁰ Confidential interview (85).

⁹²¹ Confidential interview (85).

open channels. This was confirmed by the British UNMO, Major Donaldson, who had been presented with a fax, which he himself had sent, by the Bosnian Serbs at Yellow Bridge.⁹²²

11. Logistics problems

Apart from the above-mentioned problems of a military-operational nature, there were also great logistical difficulties that limited Dutchbat's radius of action in the enclave. Practically all stocks had to be brought in from outside the enclave. It was described in Chapter 6 how problematic supplying Dutchbat was. This was also true of the humanitarian transports which were the enclave's lifeline and which Dutchbat was to protect through its presence. Dutchbat's logistics problems had repercussions not only on the battalion's own performance, but also on the possibility of performing the military and the humanitarian tasks in a reasonably satisfactory way. This in turn had a great influence on the relations that Dutchbat maintained with the two warring factions and their paramilitary units, with the administrators of the enclave, and with the civilian population in general.

Dutchbat III was confronted with dire and, under the circumstances, nearly insoluble supply problems as a consequence of the way in which the VRS dictated the supply. Under the first Dutch battalion, the resupply originally went fairly well and it was possible to build up stocks. The more the supplies were obstructed the less fuel and fresh food came in. In mid April 1994, the VRS closed all roadblocks to UN columns. Two supply transports and a convoy of personnel going on leave were therefore unable to leave. This was the original reason for cancelling the visit that Minister Ter Beek was to make to Srebrenica and Potocari. There was still enough fresh food for a few days: after that Dutchbat would have to draw on the reserves. There were still substantial stocks of canned food, water and fuel: the only shortages were of such items as razor blades, soap and nails.⁹²³

The situation was more serious for the population: for them there was only enough food in stock for one week. At the handover to Dutchbat II, on 21 July 1994, there was only fresh food for one day and fuel for four days in stock. The extremely problematic situation that Dutchbat III ran into has already been referred to and will be further elaborated in Chapter 4 of Part III. A comparison with the experiences of Dutchbat II shows that they actually had similar experiences, albeit in a less acute form.

It is clear that on arrival Dutchbat II immediately found itself with problems concerning supplies. In the first month of the stay in the enclave, a strategy had to be developed to deal with the situation. Because the food and medicine convoys were not allowed to bring medicines into the enclave, there was almost no possibility of humanitarian aid for the population any more. The Dutch relief personnel were body searched on passing the Serbian checkpoints and personal possessions such as penknives and transistor radios were confiscated. Car radios were also ripped out of the trucks.⁹²⁴ As soon as two days later, the patrols had to be cut back because there was no longer enough fuel. A group from the first Dutchbat battalion that was on the way to Zagreb, had to wait for six hours at the Yellow Bridge checkpoint on the enclave border, because all 250 bags were searched. Still no fresh food and essential components arrived.⁹²⁵ Another day later, the VRS refused access to OP-A.

On 27 July, *Médecins Sans Frontières* and UNHCR threatened to stop their activities, because they were no longer possible without fuel. The Commander of Dutchbat II then wondered how the situation would develop, and recognized the risk of the population turning against the Dutch soldiers.⁹²⁶ Dutchbat promised *Médecins Sans Frontières* as much diesel as possible from the UNHCR

⁹²² Confidential information (15).

⁹²³ *Defensiekrant*, 21/04/94.

⁹²⁴ Def. Sitreps. Sitrep 20 - 21 July 1994 from DUTCHBAT II to Sector HQ North-East ops offr G3 cc. Tuzla, Lukavac, Sitcen BLS and 11 Lumbbrig. From early August, these sitreps were also copied to the Dutch General Bastiaans, who was stationed at a HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb. He therefore had the opportunity to be completely informed of the difficult position in which the Dutch battalion found itself in Srebrenica.

⁹²⁵ Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II dispatch see above, 24/07/94.

⁹²⁶ Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 27/07/94.

reserve on the compound, to enable them to carry on a little longer. At the Serbian checkpoint in Zvornik, cameras, jackets, shoes and walkmans of Dutch UN soldiers were confiscated, and personal post was opened. There was still no fresh food, although some diesel did arrive, but still no oil and spare parts for vehicles⁹²⁷. Another day later, there was a meeting attended by all the UNMOs, *Médecins Sans Frontières*, UNHCR, UnCivPol, Opstina and Dutchbat on the humanitarian situation in the enclave. The Opstina needed diesel for harvesting, and *Médecins Sans Frontières* needed it for the hospital and the water supply. Company Commander Everts promised in both cases to meet their needs.⁹²⁸

On 2 August the Commander admitted that he could hardly function any more if no oil, spare parts, tyres and batteries were to arrive in the coming days. In that case practically all the vehicles would be immobile.⁹²⁹ However, still nothing arrived, and Everts found it necessary to draw a new operation plan on the basis of a minimize programme. The humanitarian aid was continued as much as possible. The farmers in the enclave were provided with fuel to enable them to bring in the harvest. On 9 August, the Commander again stressed that they were hardly able to continue using vehicles, which seriously threatened the execution of the tasks. To make matters worse, the convoy that was on its way to Srebrenica had to turn back half way because of lack of clearance.⁹³⁰ The following day the Commander issued the instruction to stop all tasks for which vehicles were necessary, because still no convoys were arriving.

Execution of duties according to the minimize concept was expected to be sustainable possibly for about three weeks. Because no more medical supplies were arriving either, the treatment of any seriously wounded among Dutchbat's own personnel was even at risk. For the population, the food situation deteriorated even faster than for the Dutch soldiers. There were stocks for only about five days, after which large groups would actually have to go without food. Moreover, infestations of lice and fleas were commonplace, which in combination with the extreme heat, poor water supply and the shortage of food, made the general health situation in the enclave particularly risky. Dutchbat considered these rapidly deteriorating living conditions for the population to be threatening, and they feared groups of starving people at the gate.⁹³¹

The next day, a UNHCR convoy did arrive, but it had little food on board. Dutchbat also received a convoy, so that the soldiers were again able to function normally for three to five days. Everts then urgently requested to be allowed to bring food from these reserves to the enclave in the hope that it would calm the population somewhat.⁹³² In the meantime, however, problems had arisen with the local manager of the warehouse during the unloading of the UNHCR-convoy - which, in the light of the distressing conditions, were rather remarkable. He was furious when he saw a couple of cans of meat with patches of rust, and he demanded, even after it had been shown that the contents were perfect, that the whole load of twelve tons be sent back to Belgrade. The president of the Opstina promised Dutchbat that it would have a word with the manager.

On 16 August, Dutchbat was again fully occupied with cleaning the town, and it again supplied diesel for the threshing machines.⁹³³ Because essential components for tracked and other vehicles still had not arrived, 'normal' functioning was impossible. The mood deteriorated when a Dutchbat member was seriously wounded in a mine incident. On 18 August, another Dutch citizen was seriously wounded in a mine incident; another mine damaged an APC. The mines were on a road that only Dutchbat used,

⁹²⁷ Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 30/07/94.

⁹²⁸ Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 31/07/94.

⁹²⁹ His irritation about the state of affairs was exacerbated when he concluded that the lines of command for HQ-NE were apparently still unclear after six months. He therefore also requested orders, messages etc. to be sent *directly* to HQ Dutchbat in Srebrenica and no longer only to all sorts of subordinate Dutchbat units elsewhere in the region, Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 09/08/94.

⁹³⁰ Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 09/08/94.

⁹³¹ Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 09/08/94 (again cc Dutch General Bastiaans HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb).

⁹³² Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 14/08/94.

⁹³³ Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 16/08/94.

and therefore this accident was interpreted as a deliberate VRS action against Dutchbat. The Dutch reckoned with increasing tension between Dutchbat and the VRS.

In the course of the entire month, on average approximately ten Muslim citizens were admitted to the hospital in the Dutch compound in Potocari. Because the VRS constantly blocked medical supplies, and Dutchbat itself had two seriously wounded, the battalion leaders informed headquarters that they would have to suspend the medical help to the population because the stock was practically exhausted. If a serious accident should occur, Dutchbat had sufficient medical supplies to operate on at most three of its own soldiers.⁹³⁴

This was how Dutchbat II's first month in the enclave progressed. At the end of August 1994, it was observed that because of the lack of fuel, all tasks would have to be minimized and the patrols could only be carried out on foot. If things were to continue in this way, it was unavoidable that all activities would have to stop at the end of August. The preparations for winter threatened to be brought into serious danger because of the lack of necessary material.⁹³⁵ With the exception of humanitarian aid, in September the assistance provided by the engineers to the population also had to be suspended. Meanwhile, the food situation for the population deteriorated rapidly: 2000 people were being provided with meals through the social kitchen, which was supplied partly by Dutchbat. The population and the international organizations waited desperately for the arrival of food convoys.

On 4 October, Commander Everts reported that the food situation in the enclave had become even more disastrous, because yet another UNHCR convoy had been refused. The Dutch battalion's situation also deteriorated again. As soon as the minimum stock of diesel was 6000 litres, Dutchbat II was to suspend all movements in the enclave and limit action to maintaining a presence only. If no convoy was to arrive in the following seven to ten days, then they would have to conclude that the mission was no longer feasible. On 21 November, Everts presented the matters even more starkly in his report: if by 24 November no diesel had arrived, he would be obliged to suspend all activities and he would do no more than secure his own compounds.

At that time they were busy making stoves and open hearths and cutting wood. Furthermore, there was no more hot water and no heating in the sleeping accommodation. Light was only available while they were working, and no longer in their free time, and Radio Dutchbat was also taken off the air.⁹³⁶ En passant, a convoy of soldiers on leave 'disappeared' for a couple of days: it turned out to have been captured by the Bosnian Serbs. On 29 November, it was clear that if no food convoy were to arrive within a couple of days, there would be acute hunger among the population. Dutchbat therefore requested the dropping of food by air and attempted to generate its own power by placing improvised water mills in the stream.

On 8 December, Everts told the *Defensiekrant* that the state in the enclave was 'abominable'. Within five days, the majority of the population would have exhausted their supply of food. Everts was particularly surprised that people in the Netherlands had the impression that life in the enclave was continuing as normal. He was also deeply concerned about the possible consequences for Dutchbat if the population were to run out of food completely.⁹³⁷ It was precisely in these days that Dutchbat II could finally be relieved and return to the Netherlands. Most of the men were exhausted and disillusioned. They had a strong feeling of being completely on their own for six months, without any support from the UN or from the Netherlands. The departing Battalion Commander expressed his heartfelt 'thanks' to the headquarters of UNPROFOR and all other parties concerned in one of his last sitreps, for 'all the interest in our problems.'⁹³⁸

⁹³⁴ Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 21/08/94.

⁹³⁵ Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 23/08/94.

⁹³⁶ Def. Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 21/11/94.

⁹³⁷ E. Brouwer, 'Dutchbat vormt erehaag voor konvooi' ('Dutchbat forms a guard of honour for convoy'), *Defensiekrant*, 08/12/94.

⁹³⁸ Def, Sitreps. Sitrep DUTCHBAT II, 02/12/94.

For Dutchbat II this meant a nearly constant lack of fuel, ammunition, spare parts, medicine and personnel, and no post. Disregarding the problems in the execution of military and operational tasks, nearly all everyday practices were influenced negatively directly or indirectly by these logistics problems. The Defence leaders were aware of the situation, but The Hague never made it publicly known in its information on the daily practice of the deployment of Dutch soldiers in Srebrenica. In this way, the home front was kept in the dark about the problems that so seriously impeded Dutchbat's performance in the enclave. Dutchbat III encountered similar problems: looking back, Karremans evaluated these problems as follows:

‘For the execution of a task, you need resources, and these resources were all present at the outset. We did have fuel then, so we could use the vehicles. We were able to assist the local population by giving them a generator, by carrying out the occasional repair, and so on, because in the beginning - and I am talking about January-February - convoys arrived regularly. This situation came to an end after 18 February. On 18 February, a fuel convoy was no longer permitted, and later no more medicines arrived. Then, soldiers due for leave were no longer allowed out. From mid April, those returning from leave were no longer allowed in. This ultimately grew to about one hundred men who wanted to return. After that no more spare parts arrived. Essential resources, which were necessary to carry out such matters, no longer arrived. If I consider the second aspect: humanitarian aid. At the start this went reasonably well. Everything arrived in ample quantities. Obviously, it can never be enough, that much is clear. But if at a certain moment even that stops, or only arrives in dribs and drabs, and the best is also skimmed off, then it is obvious that you have nothing left for the population. In actual fact, humanitarian aid stopped. We could continue reasonably well under these conditions, but the population could not, of course. They had been deprived of the kinds of normal things that you need to live, or, for the population, even to survive, for a considerable time.’⁹³⁹

The problems with the convoys had immediate consequences for Dutchbat II personnel due for leave, and even more so for those of Dutchbat III. According to Karremans, between sixty and eighty men in his unit never took leave. The fact that no more convoys arrived after mid April, and therefore no post, began to eat away at the men. Also, the lack of opportunity even to spend a week outside the enclave so as to recuperate in different surroundings, led to exhaustion. These circumstances are dealt with more extensively in the context of UNPROFOR in Chapter 4 of Part III.

Moreover, the position of impartiality was also brought into the discussion, because an anti-Serbian attitude started to arise. This was also the reason that Karremans even indicated in a report that Dutchbat was 'no longer willing, able and in a position to consider itself impartial due to the imputing policy of the Bosnian-Serb Government and the BSA [VRS].'⁹⁴⁰ The mood about the mission also became more negative. Naval Medical Captain Schouten warned about the far-reaching consequences of the logistics problems in his diary:

‘Therefore, never a light on in the evening, no TV, nothing. Reading and writing is therefore impossible after dark, except in the Intensive Care Unit, because there is still a patient there. No vehicles are running any longer, unless it is absolutely necessary. We are also bored to death. The atmosphere is irritable. Approximately half the group wants just one thing: to go home as

⁹³⁹ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/9/98.

⁹⁴⁰ SMG, 1004. Fax of 29/06/95, no. TK95105 from Th. J.P. Karremans to Commander B-H Command HQ Unprofor Sarajevo subject: Continual hostage of 1 (NL)UN Infbn in Srebrenica.

soon as possible. They live on messages and rumours. If the convoy would this, have they requested clearance yet Sunday, have you heard that ... you get sick of it. And when their hopes are dashed again, they collapse completely. The other half wants the same, as I do, but are just resigned to what happens and take what comes.⁹⁴¹

The immediate consequence of the logistics predicament was that the industriousness of the Dutch battalion sank to an ever lower level and the boredom and drudgery started to strike home. From mid May 1995, all convoys in or out of Srebrenica were refused, except for UNHCR and the UNPROFOR post vehicle. Dutchbat III received its last fuel in February 1995. All activities were cut back drastically. Because there was no fuel for refrigeration either, Dutchbat decided to distribute the frozen food that could no longer be kept.⁹⁴² This presented Company Commander Karremans with additional problems:

'It meant that the personnel of the supply platoon actually had nothing else to do. The company of drivers was also idle, because hardly any use was still being made of vehicles. They were only included in a schedule to participate in guard duty. This meant that an alternative had to be devised. Drudgery really breaks you up.'⁹⁴³

The supply platoon was also more or less without work because of the absence of the convoys. The battalion leaders attempted to come up with everything that might alleviate the drudgery and boredom, such as sport and activities. For example, the commandos gave mountaineering courses. If possible, the men were sent along with the escort of a UNHCR convoy or to an OP. There were also regular football matches on Sunday against the Muslims. A number of four-tonners then went along with personnel as spectators, so as to get out for once.

On 10 May 1995, Dutchbat III entered the state of 'superminimize', which meant that all lights were turned out ('the dark ages'), there was no more TV and hot water, and neither were there any normal meals. Electricity was still available only for the water treatment plant, the communication centres and the lighting of the compound fences. They also had to take cold showers and clothes could only be washed in cold water.

Paradoxically enough, the Serbs in Bratunac supplied diesel to the battalion, so that Dutchbat would continue to drive to Bratunac in a four-tonner to buy beer. The kitchen had no more fuel to cook with, and was limited to heating up emergency ration cans with hot water. It was also no longer possible to supply the village baker. Consequently, the only thing left to eat was biscuits. Because practically no vehicles were still able to run, Dutchbat members could only leave the gate on foot. To be allowed out of the gate, there had to be at least six people together, well protected and secured, and in possession of a communications device.

12. Socio-cultural and psychological problems

In addition to the problems that had a military and logistics background, problems for Dutchbat in the enclave also arose as a consequence of the indisputable socio-cultural differences between the Dutch soldiers and the Muslim population of the enclave. This complicated the relations and reinforced mutual irritations and reciprocal lack of understanding. This subsequently caused Dutchbat and the local population to drift further apart in the constantly worsening predicament, so that they could no longer cooperate well in coping with the situation.

⁹⁴¹ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten.

⁹⁴² UNGE, UNHCR, F 19, SF 6, order 1995 FYOO OPS 16. UNHCR sitrep 18-05-1995 Srebrenica to Belgrade.

⁹⁴³ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/9/98.

The capacity to emphasize with the state that the population found itself in was indispensable to a fruitful contact leading to good collaboration and fulfilment of the task, provided at least that they did not opt for an attitude of complete aloofness. The Dutch battalions did notice the problems of the population, but they had insufficient understanding of the fact that the Muslim population had endured the effects of physical and mental hardships over a succession of years. The impact that this had on the psychological state of the population - the apathy, the depressions and the total dedication to survival that such circumstances generally entail, were completely unknown in the prosperous and peaceful Netherlands of the 1990s.

For example, the filthiness of the enclave was a permanent source of amazement and annoyance for the Dutchbat members, especially in combination with the fact that thousands of men were hanging around on the street with absolutely nothing to do. This led to a lack of understanding among most of the Dutch, who thought in terms of 'roll your sleeves up' and 'just do something about it'. Many also came to think that the people were probably just as dirty as the town. In a trip report by Major L. van Beek, who visited the enclave in November 1994, observations of this kind are almost literally recorded: 'The filthy mess that the people live in is striking. It is incomprehensible that people can continue to live in their own mess, rather than keeping things clean'.⁹⁴⁴ The NGOs and Dutchbat made every effort - as is known - to clean up the town. The rubbish tip was moved to a location outside the town. The reasons were primarily hygienic, but they also wanted to discourage the population from searching for food on the rubbish tip.

Most Dutchbat members who went to the rubbish tip with the refuse truck during their deployment have very unpleasant memories of the experience. For many it was perhaps the most striking confrontation with the enormous difference between their own life in the Netherlands (and on the compound) and the life of the poorest group of Displaced Persons. The sight of people searching for food among their garbage left a deep impression on many. They also escorted the local drivers on the daily trip to the refuse truck, which they did in order to keep an eye on the local police, because they often acted with extraordinary harshness around the rubbish tip. A Dutchbat II soldier described the spectacle in a letter to his girlfriend:

I went with the refuse truck to the rubbish tip today, and what I saw there made a great impression on me. I don't think that I am exaggerating if I say that there were a hundred people waiting there. So there we were, two UN soldiers to hold back about one hundred people (...) five minutes silence. There was a girl among them who stood out, pretty, red lips among a mass of 'poor beggars'. I just thought, what are you doing here? But when the refuse truck hatch opened, she was one of the first to try to grab something. Everyone stood around the refuse truck and some even crawled under the container when it started to unload, and they, including that girl, got all that muck (with the most sickening smell) on their heads. And how happy they were with a piece of discarded meat from the kitchen. Sometimes there would be two or three grown men tugging at a rubbish bag. No, I will not forget that in a hurry.⁹⁴⁵

The first battalion did not quite know what to do about the rubbish problem. To prevent people from living in their filth, incinerating the rubbish was put forward as a solution. But this did not work, because people would retrieve red hot cans from the burned remains. After that, Dutchbat reverted to dumping the rubbish. 'Too old' canned food was the most cherished item, because food that was past the use-by date could no longer be given away, in contrast to food that was close to the expiry date.

⁹⁴⁴ Trip report of Major L. van Beek in *Buddy Bulletin*, December 1994.

⁹⁴⁵ Confidential information (14).

Therefore, such cans were thrown away. Dutchbat I Commander Vermeulen formulated the problem as follows:

‘I consider rubbish to be an ethical problem for a commander. What should I do with milk that is five days old. If I give it to the locals and someone gets sick, I will have the whole world on my neck. I am not allowed to give it to my men, and if I dump it I am criticized. There simply is no good solution. I consider it to be a great problem, a really great problem.’⁹⁴⁶

Throwing away food was the subject of much discussion within the battalions. Some thought they could help the population by actually throwing a large amount of food away, so that there would be a fair amount of edible material among the dirt. The Commanders of the last two battalions, Everts and Karremans, acted firmly against throwing away good food. They thought it ran counter to human dignity to feed people via the rubbish tip. Moreover, searching through the rubbish tip was certainly not devoid of danger for the population, because they could come under Bosnian-Serb fire. They issued instructions to give excess food - in particular bread - to the elderly person's home, the hospital or the social kitchen in Srebrenica, after packing it well. This would ensure that the food would arrive with those most in need, and they would no longer have to retrieve it from the rubbish. Another argument for this course of action was that the oldest and weakest were unable to make the long journey on foot to the rubbish tip, which was also the case with the food droppings of 1993. Under the two last battalions especially, attempts were made to deliver potentially excess food to the population before the expiry date. This also happened when 'some lunatic' sent 10,000 eggs to the enclave: Dutchbat did not wait until they inevitably rotted, but sent some immediately to the humanitarian bodies⁹⁴⁷.

Another source of irritation often mentioned by Dutchbat members was the Muslims' habit of 'endlessly hanging around and walking to and fro' in Srebrenica town. This is also an area where better information and more interaction could have helped. Precisely that 'doing nothing' was actually a great source of frustration for the population itself as well. The people could not work because there was no work for them, and furthermore there were many farmers among the Displaced Persons who had lost their land. What is more, the enormous lack of living accommodation meant that people lived in very cramped spaces, and often had to take it in turns to sleep. The other residents then had to take to the street. Otherwise, for some, this exodus was a reason to seek distraction by provoking Dutchbat. Especially in Srebrenica town, soldiers on guard duty received a large number of obscene gestures, and these provocations led in turn to a negative attitude towards the population.

The phenomenon of the great difference between poor and rich in the enclave and the attitude of the local elite were discussed above in Chapter 4, and they were a perplexing experience for the Dutchbat members. The elite of the local Muslim society were fairly well-off in material terms, and they had more than enough to eat. When Dutch people were invited to feasts by the military or civil Muslim leaders, they perceived this as a lack of solidarity with the destitute people in the enclave. The self-enrichment of the elite at the expense of the poorest groups usually met with a lack of understanding and aroused disgust. Even Karremans, who thought that his experiences in Lebanon had taught him to know what to expect, was surprised by the lack of mutual solidarity in the society in the enclave, the mutual harshness and violence.⁹⁴⁸ The lack of involvement of the elite in the fate of the rest of the population led the Dutch soldiers to question why they should help the population, if the people would not even support each other.

Dutchbat I had already observed that, while hunger was rife among the population, the warehouses that were under the control of the civil administration contained large stocks of food. For Major A. Derksen the epitome was that he was invited as liaison officer to a dinner at the home of the

⁹⁴⁶ Interview C.H.P. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.

⁹⁴⁷ Interview P. Lindgreen, 22/02/01.

⁹⁴⁸ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/06/98.

Vice-President of the Opština, Hamdija Fejzic, and was served by a waiter with a white napkin over his arm who put all manner of delicacies before him. A stones' throw away, people were living in the most miserable conditions in containers, and were dependent for help on this Fejzic.⁹⁴⁹

Because Srebrenica was dependent on the UNHCR convoys for the supply of food and other vital necessities, according to the local authorities there was an immediate life-threatening situation for the population in the event of a Bosnian Serb refusal to allow convoys through. It was repeatedly observed, however, that after a UNHCR convoy had been obstructed, the supply of UNHCR articles on the market nevertheless suddenly increased. The emergency therefore did not apply to the entire Muslim population: the privileged section had substantial reserves that could be sold for high prices.

The prices on the market varied considerably, in line with the supply. The articles came from UNHCR stocks or were brought in by smuggling from Zepa. In turn, the Bosnian Serbs bought the articles from the Ukrainian UN soldiers who protected this enclave. If the price on the market fell again in response to 'excessive' supply, it was not unusual for a number of smugglers to suddenly walk into an ambush. This reduced the supply, so that the prices rose again. In this way, the rulers in the enclave, possibly in collaboration with the Serbs, kept the local market prices high.⁹⁵⁰ This was 'business as usual' under the circumstances. The three successive Commanders perceived the attitude of the local administration as passive, obstructive and self-enriching: they felt that Dutchbat constantly had to take responsibility for everything.

The identities of the Bosnian Muslims

Such lack of solidarity of a part of the administration and the army met with considerable incomprehension from Dutch soldiers, who found it incredible that 'they' did not help each other. The lack of understanding regularly led to condemnation of the behaviour of the Muslims as a group. In the preparation as well as via the media, the impression was established among the Dutchbat members that the Muslims were a homogeneous group and that the war had meant that all other 'self-identifications' of individuals had ceased to exist.

However, it is a misconception that outside pressure automatically causes a group to become homogeneous and to exhibit solidarity. In reality, people do not readily shed other identities, such as that of 'town-dweller', 'intellectual' or 'soldier', as soon as a collective identity is thrust upon them from the outside. This also proved to be the case in Srebrenica. *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker Hans Ulens, who was in the enclave at an early stage, recounts how the original residents behaved as the local elite towards the Displaced Persons. They looked down with contempt on these 'bumpkins', and felt not the slightest compulsion to help them.⁹⁵¹ The Belgian UNMO, who entered the enclave with Morillon, was also surprised that the town-dwellers did so little for the Displaced Persons. Only under pressure of UNHCR official Larry Hollingworth were public buildings, cinemas and hotels opened for the thousands of homeless.⁹⁵²

Corruption

Dutchbat was also constantly confronted with the corruption of the local administration. Opportunism and self-enrichment were the rule rather than the exception for administrators. For example, when the diesel ran out in the enclave, the bread had to be taken by horse and cart. Ultimately, Dutchbat arranged for someone to do this for payment in food. It quickly appeared that the man in question had

⁹⁴⁹ Interview A.J. Derksen, 10/04/01.

⁹⁵⁰ A great deal of information is available on these smuggling practices, and this 'summary' is based on a discourse from 1996 by A.J. Derksen '*Ethiek op de werkvloer*', Fax Derksen to NIOD.

⁹⁵¹ Interview H. Ulens, 06/08/97.

⁹⁵² Cant, *Lessen in waanzin*, p. 147.

to surrender the coffee to the Vice-President Hamdija Fejzic, and that the horse also belonged to Fejzic.

An incident illustrated Fejzic's attitude. During a check of local personnel in the Potocari compound, a woman was picked up for smuggling. This woman turned out to a sister-in-law of Fejzic: she tried everything possible to wriggle out of being dismissed. The fact is that it would involve him in a considerable scandal. Major Franken made use of the situation to put the Vice-President under pressure and to impose demands on him. Fejzic succumbed and the woman therefore escaped dismissal.

The local administration and the ABiH ensured that the UNHCR-supplied food was not all that was 'skimmed off': it also happened with the non-food articles. In 1994 the local police suddenly started walking around in new blue uniforms. Fejzic had had them made from stocks of material that the UNHCR had earmarked for the Displaced Persons. The battalion leaders were also unable to comprehend the anger of the local elite when OP commanders gave away items to the population. Later it became clear that the Dutchbat members were distorting the market for the local leaders, who sold the same items to the population at exorbitant prices.⁹⁵³

Cultural differences also came to light in the communication between the Dutch soldiers and the local population. The Dutch were accustomed to a fairly direct and goal-oriented style of communication, but both the Bosnian Serbs and the Muslims in East-Bosnia expressed themselves less directly. In this area it was customary first to build up a good relationship and only then to get to the point. The relationship had to be established by exchanging information about the family and suchlike. This cost much time and patience, which some Dutch soldiers found easier than others, in particular the liaison section. The practice of six-monthly rotations exacerbated the problem: precisely at the moment when the relationship had been established, the officer left and everything started again from scratch. The rotation system used by the battalions made it impossible to keep social knowledge and experience at a satisfactory level.

Major Franken observed among the elite what he called 'a Muslim-like world where religion was turned on and off, according to what was convenient'.⁹⁵⁴ This was a problem for three Dutch battalions and a number of NGOs. They found that the Muslims would take decisions at the most unexpected times on the basis of their beliefs, which at other times appeared to play no role whatsoever. This caused much confusion and mistrust. An example was the introduction to the Muslim leaders, in which their Dutch opposite numbers were amazed by the enormous quantities of alcohol that were consumed: after all, they had been taught that Muslims are not allowed to drink alcohol. At the following meeting, Dutchbat was the host and they thought it would be appreciated if they offered alcoholic drinks. However, this time the drinks were indignantly refused, because they were Muslims. When Dutch help was called in to restart a generator in the bakery, there was great indignation when the machine was eventually repaired and fired, because it happened right on a religious holiday. Local leaders were also extremely angry when a UNHCR convoy arrived in the daytime during the period of fasting. However, Oric's men were still on the spot immediately to skim off their share.

Cultural patterns

Different cultural conventions and views around man-woman relationships were a regular source of friction between Dutchbat and the Muslims. Women happened to perform all the activities in the enclave, except cutting wood. They fetched water, tilled the land, collected food from the distribution points, washed clothes, cleaned and carried goods. Most men sauntered around, played chess or slept. This division of roles between the sexes caused amazement among the Dutchbat members and confirmed negative ideas about the Muslim men. A UN woman, who was in command, was not

⁹⁵³ Interviews with various Dutchbat officers.

⁹⁵⁴ Interview R. Franken, 04/05/01.

accepted by the Muslims at first. When a degree of pressure was brought to bear and a clear emphasis was placed on the superior position of the woman, collaboration was possible, albeit to a limited extent. The men usually then repeated that in their eyes they had been put in an absurd situation. This inflexibility on the point of the relationship between the sexes, which was more pronounced on the part of the men from the countryside than those from the town, caused much astonishment among the Dutch.⁹⁵⁵

The cultural differences hampered the relationship between Dutchbat and the Muslims. Added to this, the years of physical and mental hardship that the enclave residents had endured, as is usually the case, did not bring out the most attractive traits in the people. Lieutenant Colonel P. Venhovens, psychologist with the Netherlands Army and with Dutchbat III, viewed the situation as follows. According to him, the Dutch soldiers had great trouble with the inconsistent and sometimes unpredictable behaviour of those under pressure. Dutchbat went to the enclave with the naive idea that they would be able to count on waves of sympathy from the local population and that that would be a sound basis for a relationship. The population of the enclave had been engaged since 1992 in a bitter conflict with its besiegers, and therefore this expectation was fairly unrealistic.

Venhovens recalled that in those years grenades exploded in the enclave almost every day, and that the residents were shot at by snipers from the mountains. What is more, many residents were Displaced Persons from elsewhere who had lost all their possessions and many of their families in 'the ethnic cleansing': 'Don't demand of these people what is good or bad according to Western standards. They have a different priority: survival'. This priority justified everything, for example, stealing clothing from Dutchbat members, or from each other.⁹⁵⁶ Discussions with Dutchbat members show that little attention was paid in the training to the experiences and the psychological state of the population in the enclave. Insufficient attention was given to the fact that a group of ten thousand people, confined together in dreadful conditions, would obviously undergo a change in their social and moral standards. The hardening of the social relations in Srebrenica was often misunderstood by Dutchbat members and interpreted as 'typical Muslim' behaviour.

Conversely, the poor cultural understanding that Dutch soldiers had of many everyday situations also caused amazement and concern among the population. One of the Dutchbat interpreters said that he did not know whether he should laugh or cry when a liaison officer came to him with the story that ABiH soldiers fastened explosives around themselves. The objective of this 'action' was assumed to be to enter Serbian houses and blow them up in a suicide action. The interpreter then asked what kind of training the section had actually received in the Netherlands and what they really knew about the Muslims in the former Yugoslavia. It particularly irritated the interpreter that Dutchbat members so easily swallowed this kind of Serbian propaganda about 'the Muslims'.⁹⁵⁷

The UNMO interpreter Hasan Nuhanovic also observed that there were many misapprehensions about Muslims within Dutchbat. What struck him was that battalion personnel so often wanted to talk to him about religion, dress codes and fundamentalism.⁹⁵⁸ According to him, many, certainly when they were new in the enclave, were afraid of Muslims and fundamentalists, as well as everything that was unfamiliar. This can be partly explained by the training. In order to create an air of 'realism' in Dutchbat III's final exercise, Noble Falcon, a general call to evening prayer was sounded from the 'minaret' (a loudspeaker on a pole)⁹⁵⁹ Such an image of 'the Muslim world' in Bosnia created a far from realistic pattern of expectations. Most of the Muslims in Srebrenica were aware that they were

⁹⁵⁵ 101MIPel. Reports of the debriefing of 12 infbat Lumbl 1-2 February Schaarsbergen 1995.

⁹⁵⁶ Interview with P. Venhovens in article 'Dutchbat heeft niets van bevolking van Srebrenica begrepen' ('Dutchbat understood nothing about the population of Srebrenica') by C. van der Laan, *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 26/07/95.

⁹⁵⁷ Interview Mujo Nikic, 07/02/98.

⁹⁵⁸ Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 06/08/97.

⁹⁵⁹ *Falcon*, December 1994 p. 13.

Muslim, but did not know how they were supposed to pray, and neither had they ever been in a mosque.⁹⁶⁰

Doubts in Dutchbat about the value of the mission

Alongside a lack of understanding about the religious background of the population of the enclave, there were other phenomena that the Dutchbat members understood little or nothing about. For instance, it was clear to everyone that there was collaboration in the south of the enclave between Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims. The Serbs there earned a great deal of money by supplying goods to Muslim traders. There was also a suspicion that lively barter took place of weapons for food. This knowledge made it even less clear to Dutchbat members what their task in the enclave was, and fuelled the feeling 'that they should sort it out by themselves, and that certainly no Dutch soldiers should die for the cause'. It was incomprehensible for them that parties traded with each other during the day only to use the items they had traded to go after each others' blood in the evening and at night. In this light, B Company reported at the end of May 1995 that in past twenty-four hours in the surroundings of OP-K, 51 persons and 27 horses had left the enclave and 8 persons with 6 horses had entered. In the following report, 24 hours later, it was stated that 38 persons and 8 horses had entered the enclave and 53 persons and 18 horses left.⁹⁶¹ Otherwise, trips to Zepa were also involved, in other words 'the normal smuggling', and not only trade with the VRS.

The sort of contact that existed between the warring factions was hard for most Dutch soldiers to understand, because it had rather paradoxical elements. After endless string-pulling, Dutchbat I succeeded in April 1994 in arranging a meeting between VRS and ABiH in the Potocari compound. This meeting was to discuss the exchange of mortal remains, to establish borders and a number of other issues. It was attended by VRS Major Nikolic, Mayor Salihovic, ABiH officers and various others. During the break, the Chief of Staff of the ABiH, Major Ramiz Becirovic, asked the Bosnian Serb Nikolic whether he could bring him two containers of *jupol* (white paint) and coffee next time, because he was painting his house (which he actually did later). After that there was much laughter and the Muslim Commanders Becirovic and Oric and their opponent Nikolic clapped each other on the shoulders and told hearty *combat stories*.⁹⁶²

Another contact with paradoxical features was that between Dutchbat and the Bosnian Serbs. The major problems with supplying the enclave meant that often little or no fresh food would arrive. Therefore they ate out of tins. When they complained to the UN about the monotonous canned food, the battalion was given French tins for a change, which were even less appetizing. Dutchbat therefore occasionally bought food from Bosnian Serbs in Bratunac, where they also stocked up on cans of beer and soft drinks. This was a remarkable situation in its own right because the Bosnian Serb army was the actual cause of the stagnation in the supply. This purchasing in Bratunac was started under Dutchbat I, after the battalion had complained to Nikolic that no convoys were being allowed through. Nikolic expressed understanding for the situation and offered to arrange for the Dutch to be able to buy fresh food, beer and soft drinks through him. The Dutchbat leaders decided to accept the offer, albeit scantily, until the convoys started to run again. Because the supply problems only became more serious, the subsequent battalions continued the habit of buying from the Bosnian Serbs. The refusal to give convoys clearance was otherwise the responsibility of the VRS in Pale and not of Nikolic personally.

Dutch soldiers who took a view of the situation, quickly came to the conclusion that their presence in the enclave was sometimes absurd, in view of the attitude of the warring factions. On the one hand, discussions with the Bosnian Serbs repeatedly demonstrated that they would be happy to let the Muslims leave. Most Muslims in the enclave would also have been pleased to leave, but, during the entire enclave period, were not allowed to do so by their own government in Sarajevo. This fact also

⁹⁶⁰ Interview of counsellor Bart Hetebrij with Dutchbat interpreter in *EGO* April 1995, pp. 3-4.

⁹⁶¹ MID/KL. Milinfo 27/05 and 28/05/95.

⁹⁶² Interview P. Lindgreen, 22/02/01.

made it difficult for Dutchbat members to avoid being cynical about the entire state of affairs in the enclave - including their own presence.

While the battalion doubted the usefulness of the mission under these conditions, the Netherlands Army did not succeed in developing a clear vision of it, or at least not in conveying it to the unit in the enclave. This already came to light when Everts, the Commander of Dutchbat II, asked Couzy before his battalion's departure to Srebrenica: 'General, what should I do if the enclave is attacked?' The Commanding Officer's answer was as follows: 'Hold your position and act according to your own discretion.'⁹⁶³ This response largely determined the Dutchbat leaders' frame of mind. They realized that they had to rely on their own resources if something should happen in the enclave. When, in November 1994, Everts informed the Commander of the Army Crisis Staff, Brigadier General Pollé and the Chief of Staff of UNPROFOR in Tuzla, Colonel Brantz, by fax that the battalion was no longer able to perform its duties, on Everts' own account he received no response whatsoever from The Hague.⁹⁶⁴ Karremans also said he received no reply to his announcement in June 1995 that the operational and humanitarian situation was particularly serious and 'that if no change takes place in the short term in the state of affairs, a disaster cannot be ruled out'.⁹⁶⁵

The lack of understanding from The Hague for the local situation is also revealed in small but meaningful details. For instance, the military doctor W.J. Wertheim, who was one of the last outsiders to enter the enclave in May 1995, recalls: 'I will never forget it. It was a crazy event. A Warrant Officer had been sent with me. The situation then was already difficult! This was a Warrant Officer, who had been given the task of counting the number of televisions in the compounds!'⁹⁶⁶ For the Dutch soldiers, who only had candlelight in the evenings, who had to shower in cold water, had no more fresh food and had to walk every metre, this was the final proof that people in the Netherlands had no idea of the conditions they had to put up with in Srebrenica.

The information provision from The Hague to the battalions in Srebrenica was utterly poor. Not only was it unpleasant for the Dutchbat soldiers to hear news about themselves on the Dutch RTL 4 television channel - which could be received by satellite - and not directly from the Ministry of Defence, but there was an additional problem. Because of the - often incorrect - reporting and statements from The Hague, the home front often became alarmed. The soldiers on the spot then had to use the extremely expensive satellite telephone to call home to explain 'that things weren't so bad'.⁹⁶⁷ There was also to be a great deal of miscommunication in June 1995 surrounding the relief between the battalion and The Hague, as will be covered in Chapter 4 of Part III.

What particularly irritated the Dutchbat I and II leaders was the apparent lack of response to the repeated announcement that only 16 per cent of the necessary ammunition reserve was available. Neither did the report that what ammunition was available was more dangerous for the person firing it than for the enemy because it had been affected by damp lead to any reaction in The Hague that could be discerned in the enclave. More generally, both Everts and Karremans considered that the Ministry of Defence had not responded adequately to the negative developments in the situation in the enclave. They had counted on more response because they assumed that the Crisis Staff, who received the situation reports and were therefore in a position to be informed, would intercept the signals about the numerous problems and where possible would take steps or cause them to be taken. But whatever: from the enclave it was impossible to have a view of which body in The Hague was willing or able to take which responsibilities.

⁹⁶³ P.L.E.M. Everts, 05/04/01.

⁹⁶⁴ Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 05/04/01.

⁹⁶⁵ SMG/Debrief. Letter from Th. J.P. Karremans to C-Army Crisis Staff and Bgen Polle, subject : the state of affairs in Srebrenica., 05/06/95 letter no. TK9589.

⁹⁶⁶ Interview W.J. Wertheim, 14/02/00.

⁹⁶⁷ The first two battalions were allowed 5 minutes of free calls a month (and sometimes twice a month, if the post was held up for a long time after incidents). The third battalion were not allowed this privilege, pending a new telephone system, but were allowed to call home for DM 40 for 8 minutes.

It furthermore appeared that responsibilities were constantly being moved around within the Ministry of Defence. According to the former Deputy Director of the Public Information Department of the Ministry of Defence, Kreemers, the messages from Karremans (known as the TKs) about the situation in Srebrenica, which arrived at the Army Crisis Staff, even after repeated urging, were not forwarded from the Army to the Ministry of Defence. This situation existed both in the period leading up to the fall and afterwards.⁹⁶⁸

It should be clear that the formal responsibility for the mission and for solving the numerous problems resided strictly with the UN. Nonetheless, the battalion leaders counted on General Bastiaans especially, as Commander of the Airmobile Brigade, to feel and to show himself equally responsible. Precisely because of the great isolation and the substantial problems in which the Dutch unit found itself, the officers concerned thought that they had a perfect right to make a claim on sympathy, a creative contribution of ideas, and other forms of support from senior officials in the Ministry of Defence. They simply could not imagine that, for formal reasons, The Hague would remain purely passive, while the state of affairs constantly worsened. After all, they also had taken the responsibility to make the battalions available.

13. Peacekeeper stress

Although the interpretation of the duties and tasks varied according to the (company) commander and battalion concerned, primary objectives for each of the three successive Dutchbat battalions were that assistance was to be provided in humanitarian aid, a contribution was to be made to keeping the peace in Bosnia through their presence, and the Muslim population was to be protected. Tasks such as patrolling, crewing observation posts and reporting ceasefire violations derived from this. The two last battalions in particular arrived at the conclusion that that they had been sent on a practically infeasible mission. The fact was that there was no actual peace, which therefore could not be monitored. The parties in the area refused to comply with the UN resolutions that affected them, and the disarming of the ABiH was not feasible. Dutchbat attempted to perform its duties as well as possible, but the situation in and around the enclave only became poorer. No response whatsoever was forthcoming to the observations of actions of the warring factions, which were reported to the UN headquarters. An exception to this were the events surrounding the Bandera Triangle, when Sector North East said 'press hard', which, however, immediately led to 100 Dutchbat members being taken hostage.

The assistance in humanitarian aid, which most soldiers considered to be their most useful activity, became increasingly difficult because of the ever scarcer arrival of convoys. The fear of firing incidents increased, as did the frustration about the firing incidents that did occur. That was particularly true if the bullets probably came from the ABiH side, because Dutchbat reasoned that they were actually there to protect the Muslims. These developments made it increasingly difficult to answer the question of the meaning of the presence and the activities of Dutchbat in the enclave, and so it also became ever more difficult to motivate the men. Chapter 9 below reflects in greater detail on the problems surrounding the morale of the Dutch battalions. On the subject of the relationship with the task regarding the population of the enclave, we will now go into a number of stressful aspects of peace operations.

Peacekeeping operations differ in many respects from regular military action. This creates other problems and expectations, as well as a different kind of tension. Operations of this kind generally involve a small degree of violence, but this does not automatically lead to less stress.⁹⁶⁹ The psychiatrist Peijzel and the psychologist Jacobs mention confronting one's views of the world and humanity with those of a different reality as one forerunner to psychological problems. The change in social life and

⁹⁶⁸ Kreemers, *'Aan de achter kant van de maan'*, p. 5. Supplement from 2000.

⁹⁶⁹ See for example article I of Zeist 'Stress en Nazorg' ('Stress and after care') in: *Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht*, April 1996.

the awkward communication with the home front can also cause problems.⁹⁷⁰ Many authors also state that one can justifiably speak of a specific peacekeeper stress or even of a peacekeeper stress syndrome (PKSS), alongside the familiar Combat Stress Reaction.⁹⁷¹ There is also a clear distinction between traumatic stress and cumulative stress.⁹⁷²

Investigation has shown that a number of factors, which are specific to peacekeeping operations, can be identified as a cause of stress. In traditional peacekeeping operations, this particularly involved boredom, frustration, fear of illnesses and meaninglessness. The action in peace missions as has become customary in the last decade, entails other possible sources of potential stress.⁹⁷³ It can be caused by unclear, ambiguous or infeasible Rules of Engagement, a lack of clarity about the objectives of the mission, threatening situations in the execution of humanitarian tasks, lack of familiarity in operating from a position of 'turning the other cheek' as opposed to 'striking back', and also a hostile attitude on the part of the population, who are precisely the people you thought you came to help.⁹⁷⁴ The action has to take place in a way that runs counter to one's own professional expertise and such that one's own personnel are placed in greater danger than is strictly necessary from a military point of view.

On the other hand, additional tension can arise if the peacekeepers find themselves obliged to have their mandate and their own safety take priority over acting against common criminality and possible war crimes. The same happens if they have to collaborate with civilians or soldiers with a completely different background and training. This is particularly difficult for soldiers, because they are trained and socialized within a culture that is centred on individual initiative with all available means of force, as opposed to awaiting developments. Some researchers also refer to a specific 'post peace mission stress syndrome'. They consider that there is a clearly distinct mental clinical picture as a result of participation in peace missions. This tension is caused less by the fear of violence inflicted by others than by the fear that they will no longer be able to control their own aggression. The fact is that during such missions soldiers find themselves in situations in which their aggression is constantly stirred up and provoked without any adequate way for them to vent their feelings. In emotion-filled and life-threatening circumstances, they have to suppress both the fight and flight impulses and - against their own instincts - maintain a neutral attitude.

Another characteristic difference with the familiar military behaviour disorders as a consequence of combat situations is that peacekeeper stress often manifests itself a considerable time after the end of the mission.⁹⁷⁵ Especially for soldiers who are trained to act and to operate with all available means of force, having to await developments can create tension. Peacekeepers, especially in the kind of peace operations of the last decade, often find themselves in situations that stir and provoke their aggression without them being able or authorized to do anything.⁹⁷⁶ The soldiers had to behave

⁹⁷⁰ See B. Peijzel and R.W. Jacobs 'Stress, Trauma en Zorg' ('Stress, Trauma and Care') in: Baarda & Schoenman (ed.), *Werelden Apart?*, p. 161-162.

⁹⁷¹ The term peacekeeper (post-traumatic) stress syndrome said every bit as little as the term Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which is a collective name for the most diverse psychological and psychiatric consequences of shocking, traumatic events.

⁹⁷² Sten Martini 'Peacekeepers Facing Horrors of Civil War-like Conflict. Danish Lessons Learned in Preparing and Taking Care of Soldiers' in: Biermann & Vadset (eds.), *UN Peacekeeping in Trouble*, p. 333.

⁹⁷³ Brett T. Litz 'The Psychological Demands of Peacekeeping for Military Personnel' in: *NC-PTSD Clinical Quarterly* 6(1996)1, p. 1, 3-8, which can be read on Internet

http://www.ncptsd.org/treatment/literature/military/cq_v6n1b_peacekeeping.html

The site of the American 'National Center for PTSD' is a rich source of information on peacekeeping stress.

⁹⁷⁴ See Brett T. Litz and others' Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Associated With Peacekeeping Duty in Somalia for U.S. Military Personnel' in: *American Journal of Psychiatry* Vol. 154(1997)2, pp 178-184 and J.R. Schoenman, 'Peacekeeping als (non-traditionele) stressfactor' ('Peacekeeping as a (non-traditional) stress factor') in: *Marineblad* 106 (1996) 10 pp. 284-288.

⁹⁷⁵ See J.R. Schoenman, 'Veteranen van 'goede' en 'foute' missies' ('Veterans of 'right' and 'wrong' missions'), *Militaire Spectator* 169(2000)5, pp. 231-240. (see Schoenman 'Peacekeeping als (non-traditionele) stressfactor', *Marineblad* 106 (1996) p. 287).

⁹⁷⁶ This was clear from an investigation by the Netherlands Army as long ago as 1993 into the experiences of soldiers returning from the former Yugoslavia. 'The increasing tension with the civilian population, for example, when it was

passively, which is exactly the opposite of what a combat soldier normally does. An example of this was the endless humiliation and provocation that the Dutch soldiers had to put up with from the Bosnian Serbs during the 'checks' at the checkpoints.

Soldiers also had to remain passive, or 'impartial', while they found themselves in situations that could be described as organized inhumanity.⁹⁷⁷ They have to attempt to uphold humanitarian values in an environment characterized by violence and a violation of those standards and values. Often, the endeavour to observe those values meets with resistance from the warring factions. Being forced into a spectator role as a third party in an environment that is characterized by violence and a violation of human rights can have drastic consequences for individual soldiers. Soldiers can come into conflict with themselves if they have to observe excesses, especially if they are prevented from acting by the Rules of Engagement. Such experiences consist of a mixture of guilt, compassion, powerlessness, frustration, fear, anger and hostility.

This complex of often simultaneous emotions is referred to by the term bystander anxiety.⁹⁷⁸ This symptom occurs if people are not in a position to do anything about the violence in the surroundings. It is therefore particularly important for soldiers to know exactly what task derives from their mission, what position they have to take as a third party and how they are to interpret concepts such as neutrality, impartiality and humanity. It was therefore risky that there was no clear vision in the Netherlands Army during Dutchbat's mission on the question of how Dutchbat was to deal with situations that could occur in practice, and that much would depend on improvisation. This was partly because the Rules of Engagement did not contribute to clarity on the way in which Dutchbat was to position itself in the enclave. This again created the opportunity for different commanders to interpret the position of the battalion in different ways: the result was confusion among Dutchbat members regarding how they understood their duties, and misunderstandings among the NGOs with which they had to cooperate.

A complicating factor was that the existence of peacekeeper stress was accepted only reluctantly within the defence organization at the time. The rule was more the idea that: 'it's not a war, after all, so how can you get stress from it?' Interviews repeatedly attest to a great disdain for the 'shrinks' and even more for the soldiers who called on them. An example is the response of Marine Major Piepers in 1995 in Busovaca (Bosnia), quoted in an article by J.R. Schoenman, when a request was passed on for having the men talk to a psychologist. Major Piepers simply will not hear of it, with the argument: 'If there is a psychological need, which there isn't, then we will resolve it ourselves.' When the doctor and counsellor of the company attempt to point out to him that there probably were problems, he interrupts them by saying 'it just won't happen'. The visit of the psychologists was just a case of 'military tourism' and resulted from the idea 'that the marines' camp is a zoo'. According to Piepers, the men could possibly also be talked into problems.⁹⁷⁹

In view of the factors that can give rise to peacekeeper stress, it would appear likely that it would strike hardest in elite units, where the greatest change from warrior to peacekeeper or humanitarian had to take place.⁹⁸⁰ However, in the early 1990s, the Airmobile Brigade, as an intended elite unit within the army, fell between two stools, especially regarding preparation and after care. After

impossible to help them, also made the personnel more aggressive'. DOKL/OZ. Netherlands Army Staff COKL no. 7484/2556 10/01/94 from Staff COKL (signed by J.P. van Baal) to DPKL subject: Investigation into leadership in crisis and war conditions.

⁹⁷⁷ This term is used by Hugo Slim, 'Positioning Humanitarianism in War: Principles of Neutrality, Impartiality and Solidarity' in D.S. Gordon and F.H. Toase (eds.) *Aspects of Peacekeeping* (London, 2001) p. 127.

⁹⁷⁸ *idem* p. 127.

⁹⁷⁹ The quotation from Piepers is from Vrij Nederland, 30/09/95 included in J.R. Schoenman, 'Peacekeeping als (non-traditionele) stressfactor', *Marineblad*, 106(1996)10, p. 284.

⁹⁸⁰ J.R. Schoenman 'Peacekeeping als (non-traditionele) stressfactor', *Marineblad*, 106(1996)10, p. 287.

the events in Srebrenica, the attention for the psychological counselling of soldiers, before, during and after a mission, has actually increased in the Netherlands Army.⁹⁸¹

The question of how to prevent stress was asked by, among others, Air Force Medic Van Leusden, who was involved in the emergency aid operation Provide Care in Goma. According to him, such situations mainly come down to a great deal of flexibility and feeling, not only with respect to the local population but also to a person's own colleagues. Also, selection, support, team-building and attitude-forming are important. Van Leusden furthermore argues for acculturation courses, as given in multinationals and NGOs to personnel to be deployed.⁹⁸²

It is important to recognize that the training of the Airmobile Brigade was oriented to entirely different tasks from those that Dutchbat was to encounter in practice in Srebrenica. The emphasis during the training was especially on physical performance and on activities such as shooting, diving, and rock climbing. Parachute jumping and outdoor training are hardly any training for work as a peacekeeper in Bosnia, however: the men were trained to fight, while the nature of the mission obliged them to respond passively to violence. Not responding, the passivity with which they had to approach incidents, was diametrically opposed to the training and expectation of the average soldier and so could be a source of frustration and stress.

In theory, Dutchbat was well prepared to deal with individual psychological problems that might arise on the spot. This was the task of the Social Coordination Committee, consisting of a chaplain, a counsellor, a social worker, a psychologist and the battalion doctor. They met regularly under the chairmanship of the battalion's head of personnel to discuss current matters and individual cases, for example in connection with repatriation. The task of the Social Coordination Committee was 'the prevention, alleviation and minimization of problems in the psychological, medical and social area.'⁹⁸³

The overall division of tasks between the various Dutchbat III carers was as follows. The chaplain was based permanently in Simin Han, with A Company. The humanist counsellor was the regular carer of B Company in Srebrenica. Originally available to the combined presence of C Company and the staff and nursing company in Potocari, were the psychologist Lieutenant Colonel Sanders, Engberts and someone from the Social Service of the Ministry of Defence (MDD). After the leave period in April 1995, both the counsellor and the chaplain could no longer return to the enclave. In order to continue the support to the B Company under these circumstances, the social worker, Dijkman, and the psychologist, Sanders, took turns to staff this location.⁹⁸⁴

After each incident, the Social Coordination Committee drew up a plan. In the case of Dutchbat III, this started with the taking of hostages in the Bandera Triangle. This was followed by the two mine accidents in February, and on 29 March 1995 the death of soldier J. Broere of A Company in Simin Han. The death of a colleague knocked the bottom out of all hope of getting home together safely, and this event therefore also had a great influence on the atmosphere.

The daily work of the staff of the Social Coordination Committee consisted of doing a round of the compound, advising on repatriation, taking stock of the mood and refuting any rumours. They carried out discussions, mediated, conducted debriefings and extinguished social and psychological fires. The Social Coordination Committee therefore functioned as a relief valve for those, who, under the distressing conditions, became overcome with themselves or someone else. Apart from the conditions, this could also have to do with problems in the family sphere or relationship problems. A

⁹⁸¹ The army after care department is a separate issue, and the experience of many Dutchbat soldiers with it was extremely disappointing. Later in this report, we will pay attention to this issue.

⁹⁸² A.J. van Leusden, 'Ethiek bij Noodhulp. Reflectie op normen en waarden naar aanleiding van ervaringen bij recente (nood)hulpoperaties' ('Ethics in Emergency Aid. A reflection on standards and values in response to experiences in recent (emergency) aid operations'), *Military Spectator* 165(1996)4 pp. 156-163.

⁹⁸³ Interview SCC in *Falcon Buddy* bulletin June 1995.

⁹⁸⁴ Debriefing statement E.B. Dijkman, 12/09/95.

certain amount of creativity was called for in engaging soldiers in discussion: it did not fit in with the macho culture of the red berets to go to a counsellor.

For the staff of the Social Coordination Committee it was therefore a matter of walking around for themselves and actively speaking to people and not waiting behind their desks for customers. The very idea of attending a counsellor's surgery would have erected a large threshold. Although the Company Commanders and Karremans were originally rather hesitant about the presence of 'all those shrinks', with hindsight they were very happy that they had the counsellors with them. Karremans remarked that humanist counsellor Hetebrij, psychologist Sanders and social worker Dijkman in particular, 'were run off their feet and were worth their weight in gold'.⁹⁸⁵

The experience of powerlessness that played a background role with Dutchbat III, was not unique. The same was true for the psychological consequences of this type of situation and experiences that were more often manifest in the creation of a pure 'survival mentality' and being as detached as possible from the outside world. This attitude serves to put the surroundings 'at a distance' so as to prevent a fundamental disruption of the arrangement of a person's own conceptual and experiential universe. The original goal of creating a psychological distance is therefore self-protection in a broad sense, although the self-protection can also become a goal in its own right. The distance is usually created by starting to consider people in the outside world as beings from a different category from oneself. This can even apply to people who are in principle powerless and even victims of extreme violence.

The feeling of being threatened, precisely through the presence of victims, can be even greater when a person does not succeed in the mission of protecting these victims. This happened in the case of Dutchbat III, because the presence of the victims also put the desired self image in danger.⁹⁸⁶ In the extreme case, such a negative view can lead to dehumanization, which means that a certain category of fellow humans is no longer treated as human. It is then becomes understandable and even acceptable that other standards and values apply to the 'dehumanized', inferior group.⁹⁸⁷ In theory this also increased the risk of misconduct towards this group. This process was described by a former Dutchbat member: 'Perhaps it was also because the Muslims looked like animals, and sometimes also behaved like animals. Filthy and rotten. After a while that is what you start to call them. "I am going to fetch the cattle", is the way you talk about them'.⁹⁸⁸

General Brinkman, who worked in the area during the war in Bosnia as chief of staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command pointed to this phenomenon and quoted a British UN commander in Bosnia: 'War is an animal thing'. According to Brinkman, intervening in a war situation involves entering a more or less 'dehumanized' environment'.⁹⁸⁹ In this light, the socio-psychological problems that the Dutch peace soldiers developed as a consequence of the way in which their mission, and the problems that they encountered, exhibit a parallel with the military-operational side of the matter. While Dutchbat increasingly became an 'enclave in the enclave' because of the blockade, the shortages and the ever deteriorating relationship with the administration and the residents, Dutchbat members also became mentally isolated from the surroundings. The more often isolated phenomenon that Dutchbat became increasingly withdrawn into itself, feeling ever more powerless to assert an essential influence on developments in the enclave, had an undeniably negative influence on the motivation of the men.

⁹⁸⁵ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 25/01 and 26/01/01.

⁹⁸⁶ The literature on the concentration camps shows that the 'threatening' confrontation with the victims of violence often leads to placing these victims in a separate category. The author Bernard Wasserstein describes the response of allied soldiers on their first confrontation with the population of the camps. The shocking first acquaintance with the human evidence of the Nazi genocide caused pity and disgust at the same time. Bernard Wasserstein, *Vanishing diaspora*, London, 1996, p. 3.

⁹⁸⁷ In this connection, reference can also be made to the Japanese experience in World War II. The notorious 'Unit 731', that subjected prisoners of war to lethal 'medical' experiments on a large scale, labelled these prisoners as *maruta*, or as blocks of wood.

⁹⁸⁸ Quote from A. Kranenberg, 'Moord op de witte muizen' ('Murder of the white mice'), *De Volkskrant*, 22/07/00.

⁹⁸⁹ Jan Willem Brinkman in *Kernvraag* 2000/3 no. 125 p. 51.

14. Problems with the behaviour of Dutchbat personnel: the attitude towards Muslims

It was commonly assumed in the press and in the public debate that the Dutch battalions were fairly anti-Muslim, which was supposed to have had consequences for the behaviour of these units.⁹⁹⁰ What attracted particular attention was that, after the fall of the enclave, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, General Couzy, told journalists that he was shocked by the anti-Muslim sentiments and pro-Serbian attitude of the Dutch soldiers.⁹⁹¹ When he published his experiences in book form one year later, he expressed himself in the same vein: he was shocked 'by the extraordinary aversion to the Muslims' and was surprised that in general they 'spoke in disproportionately positive terms about the Bosnian Serbs'.⁹⁹² Couzy decided to raise the subject himself in The Hague, to prepare politicians and the media at an early stage for what they might hear from the Dutchbat members:

‘On arrival, the battalion was so terribly negative about the Muslims and so incredibly positive about the Bosnian Serbs that I was severely taken aback. And yet they had done so well and earned a reunion with the home front that had such different opinions. It was almost impossible to bridge that gap. I merely put myself in the middle. To halve the psychological gulf.’

There was certainly a strong feeling among Dutchbat II and III that the Netherlands Army top in The Hague had shown insufficient interest in the day-to-day problems. When, during his stay in Zagreb, Couzy wanted to show that he shared the men's feelings, they interpreted the commander's statements to the press, which paid considerable attention to them, actually as a lack of understanding for the difficult situation in which they found themselves. The events in Zagreb, immediately after the fall of the enclave, will be discussed in more detail in Part IV of the report. In this section of the current chapter, we question the nature and the background to Dutchbat's, or individual Dutchbat members', criticized attitude before the fall of Srebrenica. This involves investigating the attitude of the Dutch blue helmets towards the population of the enclave, and a possible connection with specific forms of misconduct towards the population.

Anyone investigating 'anti-Muslim behaviour', 'anti-Muslim expressions' or an 'anti-Muslim attitude', has to know exactly what was intended before discussing the possible consequences. During the training, attention was paid only to the outward aspects of Islam, but in practice in Bosnia there were few religious attributes such as mosques and mosque-goers to be seen. For instance, contrary to what was expected, far from all women wore headscarves. It was mainly the older women in the countryside who wore such headscarves, while as a rule the young women from an urban environment did not. Muslims were therefore not identified on the basis of religious characteristics, which raises the question of how much the behaviour that so upset Dutchbat was related to being Muslim. The term Muslim stood for the local population, and the term anti-Muslim referred to tensions between the soldiers and the population and not to a rejection of a religion. Moreover, in practice there appeared to be large differences in the behaviour of the ABiH, the local elite and the Displaced Persons. This distinction disappeared by the time that Dutchbat made comments about 'the Muslims', so that it appeared that the total local population of the Srebrenica enclave was always being referred to.

If the issue of the supposed 'anti-Muslim attitude' of Dutchbat is under discussion, then the first relevant question relates to the consequences of this attitude - for the relationship of the Dutch soldiers with the population of the enclave and for the fulfilment of Dutchbat's duties. It is also

⁹⁹⁰ E. Nysingh, 'Niet alleen Nederlanders anti-Moslim' ('Dutch not the only anti-Muslims'), *de Volkskrant*, 02/09/95.

⁹⁹¹ See for example D. Hos, 'Nederlandse blauwhelmen hebben veel sympathie voor de Serviërs' ('Dutch blue helmets have much sympathy for the Serbs'), *Trouw*, 25/07/95 and W. op den Brouw and H. Meijer, 'Sympathie voor Serviërs bij Nederlandse militairen' ('Sympathy for Serbs among Dutch soldiers'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/07/95.

⁹⁹² Couzy, *Bevelhebber*, p. 169. Couzy reiterated his observation in the programme: interview with NIOD 04/01/00.

important to recognize that Dutchbat and the local population shared the same fate in a certain sense. On the other hand, the Dutch had to deal with the Muslim population every day, and the pressure of the circumstances made the relationship increasingly complicated. If the situation had been reversed, with the Muslims outside the enclave and the Bosnian Serbs inside, then Dutchbat would probably have spoken in more negative terms about the Serbs and in more positive terms about the Muslims. According to the general experience in UN peace missions, frictions between the peacekeepers and the local population were sooner the rule than the exception.

The difficulties that had apparently arisen with Dutchbat in Srebrenica were definitely not unique. This was also confirmed by Major General (ret.) Van Vuren, who was acquainted with a large number of officers of the former UN headquarters in Kiseljak (Bosnia). Van Vuren told a journalist of *De Volkskrant* that all soldiers 'there became anti-Muslim (...) whether they were British, French, American, Belgian or Dutch.'⁹⁹³ He also pointed to experiences in Surinam and Lebanon. According to him, cultural differences and harassment in both directions between the civilian population in the area and the troops who were there to protect them often led to a show of military strength, so that the balance - unintentionally - could ultimately turn to friction and confrontations. An experienced Canadian *peacekeeper* also observed this phenomenon. At the end of each mission that he had been on, when everyone was tired, wanted to go home and the tension was building, intolerance and racist remarks became more common. Regardless of where he was, he was often witness to discriminatory remarks everywhere. On Cyprus there were 'those damn Greeks', in the Gulf 'that gang of Arabs', in Haiti 'the damn niggers' and in the former Yugoslavia there was a choice between 'the damn Serbs', 'the damn Croats' or 'the damn Bosnians'.⁹⁹⁴

On the one hand, this development is difficult to prevent, but on the other hand it was initially insufficiently recognized by the Netherlands Army, and the response was far from adequate. While, after the fall of the enclave, General Couzy exposed the anti-Muslim expressions as such, Lieutenant Colonel Everts, the Commander of the second Dutch battalion, attempted to place them in a broader context. On his return to the Netherlands, he publicly expressed - to the displeasure of the Ministry of Defence⁹⁹⁵ - his concerns about the attitude of the Dutch soldiers towards the local population. According to Everts 'everyone in the battalion developed a dislike for the people they were there to help: the Muslims in the enclave'. In Lebanon he had had the same experience, and he saw this as a general problem of peace missions. To his great frustration, his attempts as Commander to oppose this development remained fruitless, even when it concerned the attitude to children.⁹⁹⁶

Even if assumed 'anti-Muslim' behaviour in Srebrenica is part of the more general problem of friction between UN units and the local population, it remains necessary to ask whether misconduct towards the population can be related to an anti-Muslim attitude among the soldiers in the enclave. A number of forms of misconduct by Dutchbat members towards the local population were given publicity. There were also reports of extreme right-wing sympathies on the part of certain Dutch soldiers. A number of remarks have to be made in attempting to form a view of exactly what happened.

To begin with, it should be clear that neither 'the Muslims', nor 'Dutchbat' were homogeneous units, to which it is possible to ascribe a single collective attitude. It is very much the question which Muslims determined Dutchbat's attitude. Chapter 7 already spoke of large differences between the 'rich' original residents and the poor Displaced Persons, on the one hand, and between civilians and the ABiH on the other. Dutchbat members objected especially to the attitude of ABiH soldiers and leading figures in the enclave administration. But within Dutchbat too there were large differences in

⁹⁹³ E. Nysingh, 'Niet alleen Nederlanders anti-Moslim' (not only the Dutch are anti-Muslim), *de Volkskrant*, 02/09/95.

⁹⁹⁴ WO J.S.M. Forest, 'Preparations for peacekeeping missions'.

⁹⁹⁵ The remarks can be found in: P. Everts, 'Mars in Cathedra' (1995) p. 2975. The response of the Ministry of Defence after the lecture was to insist that Everts went around with an information officer. Unfortunately, the alarm was concerned with the messenger and not the message. NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Memorandum V95016779 from Information Section to Minister, 01/09/95.

⁹⁹⁶ P. Everts, *Mars in Cathedra*, p. 2975.

experiences and attitude, depending on the perception of the men. For instance, the image generally held by soldiers who were often on OPs or members of the medical team was different from that of the staff and medical support company. The image also differed according to the position of the individual concerned in the battalion. This determined which group or layer they had to deal with among the Muslims. In turn, Muslims also saw Dutchbat as a single entity, and this also increased the distance between Dutchbat and the Muslims.

The shortcomings identified above regarding training and preparation could have led to the Dutch men arriving in Srebrenica with a somewhat exaggerated picture of the significance of Islam for life in the enclave. In addition, because of the strict regulations on the relationship with the population, the soldiers had few opportunities to correct their image. Therefore, the mutual distance remained great, and a fairly one-sided perception of the local reality was able to mix with the prejudices and stereotypes that they had absorbed before the deployment. To this can be added the hardships, isolation, uncertainty and feeling of uselessness that sometimes gave rise to Dutchbat members reacting against the population. This cannot be seen so much as anti-Muslim behaviour as the difficulty experienced with, or the inability to deal with, a complex situation.⁹⁹⁷

Moreover, in discussing the attitude of Dutchbat members and the local population to each other, it is not a matter of a snapshot, but of a development in the course of time. There was indisputably an interaction in the relationship between the peacekeepers and the population of Srebrenica. It is also relevant that Dutchbat I originally had many opportunities to do something for the people in the enclave. In the first phase, the battalion had regular supplies and therefore had an ample stock of medical goods and maintenance material. This originally led to the Dutch being given a positive reception. The local population derived new hope for the future, also because five new OPs were established and an extensive system of patrols was set up.

When Dutchbat I arrived, the enclave had been a Safe Area for less than one year. The longer the Safe Area existed, the lower the expectation of the population of an improvement in conditions became. They started to wonder how long the isolation would continue, and hoped for rapid change. New Dutchbat units arrived, but no new hope of change; the Bosnian-Serb army continued to occupy its positions and obstructed the supplies increasingly often. At the time of Dutchbat II and III, the fear and the despondency among the population grew because the VRS increasingly took the enclave in its grip, so that ever fewer convoys arrived.

At the time of Dutchbat I, all parties still had to get accustomed to each other, and the situation was still somewhat open. At the time of the arrival of Dutchbat II, the contact rules had already been tightened up, and both the ABiH and the VRS units in and around the enclave were experienced in testing how far they could go with the Dutch blue helmets. In a debriefing in February 1995, a Dutchbat II soldier expressed the fear that the warring factions would walk all over the next battalion.⁹⁹⁸

It goes without saying that on its arrival, Dutchbat I was more open-minded than its successors. The fact is that there was hardly any question of information from previous units and the notions about the local state of affairs mainly came from the Dutch media and scarce Canadian information on the ground. At the time of Dutchbat I's departure to Bosnia, the drift was that the Serbs were the aggressors and the Muslims the victims.

All in all, Dutchbat I maintained reasonably workable relations with the local ABiH, and also with the surrounding VRS brigades. There were shooting incidents at the OPs, but they had no serious consequences. Nonetheless, the Dutch did find the local political situation 'nerve-racking'.⁹⁹⁹ By the time of the arrival of Dutchbat III, the situation had already deteriorated. There were few supplies, if

⁹⁹⁷ Interview C.P.M. Klep, 13/02/01.

⁹⁹⁸ 101MIPel. Military debriefing report DUTCHBAT II 09/02/95.

⁹⁹⁹ Sitrep 115 construction company in: *Genie* 7/94 p. 17.

any, which made it extremely difficult to provide the population with material help, and this was clearly not beneficial to the relationship.

This raises a fundamental problem in the relationship between attitude and views on the one hand, and actual behaviour on the other. This will be discussed in more detail when the morale of Dutchbat is considered in the next chapter. The assumption is that a specific attitude, for example the assumed anti-Muslim attitude, does not necessarily have to lead to corresponding behaviour. Neither does a particular behaviour always have to point to the existence of a particular attitude¹⁰⁰⁰. In principle there is no fixed connection between attitude and behaviour, neither individually nor collectively. Whether the attitude of Dutchbat members towards the Muslim population of the enclave can be related to forms of discrimination in Dutch society towards immigrants remains an open question. If indigenous Dutch in daily life have difficulty with the habits and customs of people of foreign origin, this could also apply to Dutch soldiers. This report, however, is exclusively concerned with the phenomena that could have influenced the performance of Dutchbat. Chapter 9 goes in more detail into the results of an investigation by the Royal Netherlands Army and the Public Prosecutor into the possible misconduct of Dutchbat members.

The main question must be what consequences did the attitude of the battalions towards the Muslim population and extreme right-wing tendencies have for the contact with the population of the enclave. In the reporting after the event, a direct connection is laid between extreme right-wing expressions and 'anti-Muslim-behaviour'. The question is whether the course of events justifies laying this direct causal link. The role played by Dutchbat officers is of great importance in this regard. It is expected of officers that they provide a clear command and a good example, and furthermore act against forms of misconduct towards the population. In this respect, a lack of empathy and respect, whether towards their own men or the local population, can be particularly harmful.

An example is the frequent use of the term 'locals' by UNPROFOR to refer to the civilian population. Some Dutchbat members objected strongly to this, because they considered it a condescending term, which was 'synonymous with the term native'.¹⁰⁰¹ On the Dutchbat III Dressing Station, the term was forbidden because of the negative connotation.

The everyday interaction between the blue helmets and the population must be weighed up in the assessment. The question then is whether the attitude of Dutchbat members towards the local population can be derived from the circumstances in which they jointly found themselves. Under the extreme circumstances in the enclave, for example, the care of soldiers for their personal hygiene played an important role in their attitude towards the local population. As soon as the peacekeepers began to see and experience the civilians as carriers of lice and contagious diseases, the danger emerged that the population itself would be branded as 'vermin'.

This survey leads to the following questions about the attitude and the behaviour of Dutchbat towards the population of the enclave: to what extent did the Dutch relate the behaviour to which they objected to the fact that the population was Muslim; to what extent could misconduct on the part of Dutchbat members be related to what could be referred to as an anti-Muslim attitude; to what extent did the population perceive anti-Muslim behaviour from Dutchbat, and did they find it objectionable; and: should or must expressions of right-wing extremism be considered to be anti-Muslim behaviour, or should it be concluded that this is a separate issue? Finally - all things considered - must account also

¹⁰⁰⁰ Christopher Browning's *Ordinary men. Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, New York, 1992 illustrates the problem under consideration, albeit in a far more extreme context. The participation of this battalion in mass executions of Jews in Poland could not be attributed to a clear anti-Semitic attitude of the members of this battalion. There were also a number of members of this battalion who did not want to participate in the executions, but their refusal does not indicate a Semitophile attitude.

¹⁰⁰¹ NIOD, Coll. Schouten .Diary Schouten.

be taken of the possibility that prejudices and a negative attitude can be neutralized in principle by a professional outlook.¹⁰⁰²

15. The extent of anti-Muslim behaviour

It is important for this discussion to distinguish 'regular' misconduct (such as dealing in drugs and weapons, prostitution, black market and smuggling) from misconduct directed against the population arising primarily from aversion to Muslims. Members of Dutchbat III came into contact with the population only through local personnel or in connection with patrols. The social control in such contacts meant that there was hardly any question of misconduct; practically the only opportunities were at the compound fence.

There was also a 'grey zone' in the behaviour that could possibly be deemed to be 'anti-Muslim' behaviour. This could vary from the Dutchbat member who stuck his tongue out at a Muslim woman, to a Dutch Major who sold his combat boots to a Muslim for DM 130 (more than they cost to buy new) shortly before the fall.¹⁰⁰³

The Commanders of the Dutch battalions, and in particular Karremans - at least if they were aware of the situation - acted forcefully against misconduct towards the population. The soldier who had stuck his tongue out at a Muslim woman was fined. Behaviour of this kind should also partly be observed and dealt with at company level. It cannot be established exactly how the various company commanders approached this situation, but information exists that indicates that the Commander of B Company in Srebrenica town, Captain Groen, followed his own line of conduct. His attitude is strikingly pragmatic (in the sense of 'the solution is always in the middle') and his attitude was little oriented to creating understanding for what the Muslim population perceived.

A typical example is formed by an incident involving Dutchbat T-shirts carrying a text and illustration that was offensive to Muslims: a UN soldier is grasping a small boy by the throat who is begging for sweets ('bon bon'), to which the Dutchbat member answers with the word 'Nema'. This incident became an issue when a member of the Social Coordination Committee visited a sick B Company soldier and saw the T-shirt in question. The officer concerned went directly to the Military Police to determine whether an offence had been committed; there was a staff meeting in the evening, and he announced what he had seen. The battalion staff were unaware of the matter, and they came to the conclusion that the T-shirts must have been made during the last leave of absence and brought into the enclave; a soldier on leave had indeed brought the T-shirts in. The Military Police approached Franken on this incident on 17 April 1995, but no action was taken. Major Franken did order Groen to confiscate all the T-shirts. In response to this, Groen ordered his men not to wear the T-shirts outside in future; indoors and as sportswear were permissible. This led to a new staff meeting on 18 April: Karremans and Franken were angry about the way in which Groen had executed the order. Another day later, Medical Lieutenant Colonel Wertheim, a staff officer with the Army Crisis Staff in The Hague, spoke during a visit with the Social Coordination Committee about the blurring of moral standards that had been observed in B Company. Wertheim undertook to take the matter up with the operational staff in the Hague. He took along a photo of the T-shirts concerned, but the Social Coordination Committee heard no more about the matter.¹⁰⁰⁴ To their great surprise, members of the Social Coordination Committee saw a soldier walking around with the T-shirt at the first Dutchbat reunion.

¹⁰⁰² This refers to the fact that it is certainly not unheard of in many professional groups for fellow professionals to speak their minds about clients, but that those clients themselves would never notice anything.

¹⁰⁰³ Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05/08 and 06/08/98.

¹⁰⁰⁴ When asked, Wertheim confirmed that he had handed the photo to General Pollé in The Hague, after which nothing more had been heard. Neither was any response forthcoming from The Hague on the report by the Dutchbat III military security officer.

The actual number of incidences of misconduct towards the local population - based on data from various investigations - does not seem to be particularly large. The T-shirt affair did acquire considerable political significance because it was referred to in the public discussion as 'anti-Muslim' behaviour. However, it was never made clear in the media who the reports of anti-Muslim behaviour related to. This happens to be of great importance, because a number of examples of actual misconduct - which we will return to in Chapter 9 - did not relate so much to Dutchbat, but to the transport company.

Most of the symptoms were limited to verbal remarks, mostly within their own group and not usually noticed by the population. The Dutchbat interpreters could possibly have passed on the comments, because they spent a considerable amount of time with the Dutch soldiers. Little emerged about this in the interviews conducted with them, however. The interpreters were also well-nigh permanently present in the compound.

In answering the question about the effect of 'anti-Muslim' behaviour on the relationship with the local population, it must be pointed out that for most Dutchbat members it was difficult to form an attitude towards a very mixed group of people who they were supposed to protect, but some of whom showed little gratitude.

On the one hand there were the Displaced Persons who desperately needed their help, and who also appreciated it greatly, while on the other hand Dutch soldiers were put into perilous situations by ABiH soldiers when they opened fire on the VRS from behind Dutch positions. Dutchbat members were therefore not very inclined to have much compassion for the ABiH soldiers: in their eyes they were soldiers, and they should also take the associated consequences, both positive and negative. Humanist counsellor Hetebrij recalls a mood among the Dutchbat members of:

‘.....hatred and contempt towards the Muslim fighters, especially those of their own age, between 15 and 25, who often behaved with open hostility towards the UN during patrols in the town; this was also evident in the mortar attack on the Srebrenica compound, where, in addition to Muslim citizens, ABiH soldiers were also wounded, and Dutchbat 'just left them lying there.’¹⁰⁰⁵

When asked about the background to denigrating remarks made by Dutchbat members towards the local population, the B Company Commander, Groen, considers that they usually would have been the result of frustration. Groen:

Frustration was a constant theme. There were so many sources of frustration, you had to lash out at something. The men could not even have a pleasant evening out. You think you're going to help people; then it turns out that the Muslim population who you are closely involved with just rummages through your belongings, and it seems that things go missing, that things are stolen, that washerwomen throw trousers over the fence to be taken away, that diesel is stolen from OPs: events like this make you look at the matter in a different light. If someone is then approached aggressively and sworn at in the town for the umpteenth time, then all these incidents build up until at a certain point, as an expression of frustration, the occasional insult may be uttered. Does that make you guilty of discrimination? If you call someone a bastard, then you are insulting him. But if you say 'Muslim cunt', then you are being discriminatory, although you're actually doing the same thing. It is as an expression of frustration. That is how I saw it.¹⁰⁰⁶

A. Vogelaar, a KMA trainer, attempted to analyse the factors that could lead to undesirable norm-transgressing behaviour by soldiers towards the local population. He points to individual character traits of the soldiers concerned, which could cause them to go off the rails. Among the possible causes of frustration are conditions such as heat, pain, too many people in a small space, fear,

¹⁰⁰⁵ Interview B. Hetebrij, 16/11/00, Hetebrij himself was not actually present at that time, and this is an account that was told to him.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.

boredom or the use of alcohol and drugs. He also sees a possible connection with the selection criteria that applied to the combat units in particular, which sought out people with a certain lust for adventure and psychological and physical hardiness. If soldiers with such a background start to get bored, problems are likely to occur, because they signed up in the first place because they were attracted by the military aspects of the work. However, their professional qualities become dysfunctional if the situation is different from what they expect.

Vogelaar continues by explaining that the training is oriented to building up the soldiers' self-confidence through 'skills and drills', heavy physical training and stimulating pride in their own unit. Such socialization practices are functional on the battlefield, because this is the way to deal with dangerous situations as a team and never give in. On the other hand, this cultivation of unit pride can give the soldiers the idea that they have to uphold the honour of the unit at the expense of everything else. Everyone from outside or inside who attacks the honour of the unit is seen as an enemy.¹⁰⁰⁷

To the extent that there was an element of an 'anti-Muslim' attitude in Dutchbat around the fall of the enclave, then it was mainly directed against the men of the ABiH. The departure of the regular ABiH troops from the enclave on 11 July, but especially the death of soldier Van Renssen, intensified the already existing anti-ABiH feelings in Dutchbat. The enthusiasm to do something for these units sank to a low point. Corporal Broeder recalls the consequences of the death of Raviv van Renssen as if it was yesterday:

The Muslims murdered Raviv. That came as a bombshell. It was as if everyone had been shaken awake. This was reality. But I think that no one was panicked by the thought that a Muslim had done it, by throwing a grenade at the turret, and not the Serbs. Because the Serbs had given them the chance to pack their things and go, everyone thought: those Serbs will probably do nothing to us. They are more likely to let us go or they will take us with them. One of the two. They wouldn't just shoot us up! Occasionally Muslim fighters came to the gate, and they could have a big mouth. 'If the Serbs come, we will shoot them to pieces! Then we will smash them down!' But when it actually started, we didn't see them, they had already gone. I was more afraid of the Muslims.¹⁰⁰⁸

However, as will be described in more detail in Part III of this report, many Dutchbat members, in particular B Company, which was stationed in Srebrenica town, also showed a great feeling of responsibility for 'their Muslims' during the fall of the enclave. However - as a consequence of all the events in the preceding months and the death of Van Renssen - this mainly involved women, children, the wounded and older people. Anti-Muslim remarks and feelings were primarily oriented towards the local ABiH, who were identified with 'the Muslims'.

In retrospect, other factors could also have played a role. One could be a certain feeling of guilt towards the population coupled with shame that Dutchbat had been unable to prevent the capture of the enclave by the Bosnian Serbs. A feeling of guilt can be accompanied by self-reproach: the idea that they should have had other ideas, or acted and felt differently. In extremely threatening situations people are often less able to think clearly, and they become paralysed or panicked by fear. After the event, they can start to think that the choices made because of fear or panic were actually deliberate and consciously taken. They therefore consider themselves to be guilty of the outcome of the situation. Such disillusion and the sense of their own failure is sometimes resisted by holding the victims themselves responsible for what happened. As the British author M. Ignatieff expressed it: 'Blaming the victim is one of the temptations of disillusion'.¹⁰⁰⁹

Nevertheless, opposite examples of 'anti-Muslim' behaviour by Dutchbat members there are also examples of helpful behaviour. There were soldiers who did much for civilians - and much more than they were obliged to in the line of duty. The Hague, however, was opposed in principle to 'individual relief actions'. In September 1994, the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal

¹⁰⁰⁷ See A.L.W. Vogelaar, 'Norm Violation during Peace Support Operations: a Social-Psychological Explanation' in: Vogelaar & Muusse & Rovers (eds.), *NL Arms*, pp. 131-132.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Interview A.E. Broeder, 03/05/00.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honour. Ethnic War and the modern Conscience*, London, 1998, p. 99.

Netherlands Army, Major General Reitsma, sent a letter to all commanders in the former Yugoslavia in which he set out the points of departure of the action. According to Reitsma, soldiers must be strictly neutral in their attitude and behaviour and, irrespective of their personal feelings, must refrain from any political - and also any unilateral social - activity. The instruction ended with the announcement that 'each (humanitarian) action organized by Dutch soldiers for residents of crisis management areas, how well-intended and understandable they may be, other than those supervised centrally from the Netherlands by the Ministry of Defence, is forbidden by me'.¹⁰¹⁰ Also, the Commanders of Dutchbat II and III were, as stated above, apprehensive of the individual help that was provided to the population by some soldiers, because it could encourage favouritism¹⁰¹¹

Such assistance to the population was provided not only by medics, but also by 'ordinary' soldiers. Almost every Bosnian Muslim interviewed by the NIOD could provide examples of an exceptional Dutchbat member who he or she had much contact with and who had done a great deal for him or her. Dutchbat members who maintained relationships with individual Muslims, in particular with Displaced Persons, often showed a more positive attitude towards the population than those who did not have such contacts. The first saw the Muslims less as a group that had collective characteristics, but more as a collection of individuals. Such involvement was present especially on the OPs, and with Dutchbat members who took initiatives to make the acquaintance of the population and to enter into friendships. It must be remarked here that such contacts were against the orders of the battalion leaders, who had actually forbidden contacts of this kind with the population.

An example of what form the individual help took in practice can be derived from a letter from a Dutchbat III doctor, containing recommendations to his (assumed) successor¹⁰¹²:

If you go to Srebrenica, you will be mobbed by children. They want sweets (bonbon), writing material (pen), cigarettes and, if necessary, your underwear. You will find yourself surrounded by thirty or so of them. There will be two boys among them: Nihad (we call him Nico) and Jasco. I 'adopted' Jasco. They both speak reasonable English, and we have often used them as interpreters. If you adopt them, they arrange everything for you. If you do not want to be surrounded by children, and you say so, they will be chased away. They are two little rascals who will fix everything for you that you ask. And small gifts maintain the friendship. A bag of sweets, a couple of pens, occasionally more expensive gifts (a packet of coffee for mother, or sugar, or salt) go a long way. They go to the intermediate school in September. I gave them exercise books and pens and calculators. I gave Jasco an old short wave receiver. He was delighted. If you want to hand out sweets, you give them to the boys, and if necessary you tell them: only for poor children, or for their friends. The occasional cigarette and cigarette papers help enormously. They are able to go to the 'cinema' for five cigarette papers or 1 cigarette. I thought Jasco was a fine chap. He cried out loud when we had to leave. Nico is a little bigger and older. Many families, certainly those with family in the Netherlands (and there are many of them) are eager to invite you into their homes. You could serve as a sort of halfway point between the two families. Officially it is forbidden, but so are many things here, so I didn't take much notice. If you start in that way, you would have to keep things on a very small scale.¹⁰¹³

There are many examples of individual acts of assistance. This could involve, for example, consignments of medicine, messages from family, clothing and cosmetics. After the fall, it was almost impossible for Dutchbat members to provide help because of the enormous chaos: an older Muslim woman related that on 12 July she asked a Dutchbat member in the compound for some headache pills, which he regretted that he did not have. Instead, he put his arms around her and kissed her on the forehead, as alternative medicine.¹⁰¹⁴ Finally, cases are known of where Dutch soldiers made strenuous

¹⁰¹⁰ CRST. Letter Major General R. Reitsma 26 September 1994 no. CRST/974 to distribution list.

¹⁰¹¹ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 01/12/00.

¹⁰¹² NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Letter Schouten 04 /05/95.

¹⁰¹³ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Letter from Schouten to his successor from Srebrenica 25/05/95.

¹⁰¹⁴ Interview Mehmed Malagic, 22/10/97.

personal efforts immediately after the fall of the enclave to arrange for people to travel to the Netherlands, which was sometimes also successful.

16. The attitude towards the Bosnian Serbs

In the discussion of the relationship between Dutchbat and the Bosnian Serbs, it is of great importance to recognize that the representatives of this group that the Dutch came into contact with usually came from a different social group. The question is whether the blue helmets recognized this sufficiently, and whether it influenced the picture that they had. On the way to Bosnia, the soldiers first passed through the apparently Western Zagreb, and subsequently they travelled through Bosnian-Serb terrain to the enclave. On the way there was 'the Serf Stefano', a hamburger bar that functioned as a stopping place for UN convoys. The owner attempted to pamper the men with hamburgers and drinks.¹⁰¹⁵ Moreover, Dutchbat dealt with well-dressed Bosnian Serb businessmen in Hotel Fontana in Bratunac, and with VRS soldiers. Dutchbat had no contact with the Bosnian-Serb population in the surroundings of the enclave, let alone with Bosnian-Serb Displaced Persons.

On the other hand, the Muslims that Dutchbat had to deal with were the extreme poor, and the Displaced Persons especially were in extraordinarily wretched circumstances. This distorted the difference between 'the Bosnian Serbs' and 'the Muslims'. In view of the circumstances, it was not surprising that the average Dutchbat member was struck by the fact that the Muslims that they encountered in the enclave 'stank' and 'begged'. The Dutch themselves would soon enough have undeniable problems with hygiene. Other views that quickly became heard were such generalizations as: 'the Muslims' looked terrible because they had nothing, they stole, they were unreliable and they were never on time. This negative stereotype contrasted with the more positive picture of the Bosnian Serbs with whom Dutchbat came into contact. They looked respectable, were well-dressed, had food to eat and were punctual. The Bosnian Serbs belonged to the middle class or above, while most of the Muslims compared poorly with them.

In addition, Bosnian-Serb soldiers, at least around Srebrenica, were more readily identifiable as regular soldiers than the men of the ABiH. Locally, the latter sometimes resembled an irregular combat group, which was consistent with an assumed 'Balkan tradition'. In this respect, the relationships between the two parties around the enclave were different from elsewhere in Bosnia. The psychologist Venhovens often observed an attitude of Dutchbat towards the appearance and organization of the VRS that verged on awe. He remarked that soldiers can usually get on best with fellow soldiers. They understand each other's professionalism and codes of behaviour, they are usually subject to a comparable discipline and think in the same language of strategy and tactics. The ABiH soldiers, on the other hand, were seen by Dutchbat not as professional soldiers, but as an 'irregular rabble'¹⁰¹⁶. At the start of the Dutchbat III deployment, the VRS regularly allowed supply convoys through, and at first sight, the daily problems with the population of the enclave were greater than with the Bosnian Serb army. This influenced the mood, although the increasingly inflexible attitude of the VRS towards the supplies would not remain without consequence.

Around the fall of the enclave, the contact with the Bosnian Serbs became more intensive as a consequence of the constraints imposed by the circumstances. VRS men stole from Dutch soldiers and took them hostage, but at the same time they gave them cigarettes and food. The treatment was apparently not as bad as might be expected, as is apparent from the statement of Sergeant Ceelen, who was taken hostage after the fall of OP-K, that he did not 'feel like a prisoner of war'.¹⁰¹⁷ The VRS

¹⁰¹⁵ Stefano's hamburger bar was an 'approved' stopping place for the UN convoys on the way from and to the enclave. The Dutchbat security department sometimes had concerns about Stefano because he spoke and understood Dutch reasonably well, and they were afraid of spying.

¹⁰¹⁶ Interview psychologist P. Venhovens in: C. van der Laan, 'Dutchbat heeft niets van bevolking Srebrenica begrepen', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 26/07/95.

¹⁰¹⁷ Interview A. Ceelen 02/07/99.

treated him and his men correctly and attempted to make their forced stay in Milici as pleasant as possible by offering soft drinks and cigarettes and providing the opportunity to phone the Netherlands. Otherwise, the Dutchbat members had no idea of the massacre at that time.

17. Humanitarian assistance in Srebrenica

General Cot, the Force Commander of UNPROFOR, paid a visit in December 1993 to the Canadian battalion in the enclave. Cot wrote an extensive report on his findings, and in early January 1994 Colonel Bokhoven forwarded the parts that related to the enclave from headquarters in Zagreb to the Crisis Staff in The Hague.¹⁰¹⁸ In his report Cot covered both the military and the humanitarian aspects of the mission and referred to a number of urgent problems. The General expressed his admiration for the NGOs, in particular *Médecins Sans Frontières*, and for the Canadian battalion. He mentioned the problems surrounding resupply by air, the still unresolved border issue and the state of affairs with the checks by the Bosnian Serbs, which the blue helmets found particularly degrading.

Cot recorded how difficult it was to demilitarize the enclave. He wrote moreover that the population felt insulated and let down: he feared that the humanitarian situation could only deteriorate because of the winter. He also referred to problems surrounding the Swedish Shelter Project, that had been built in a dangerous location.

Chapter 4 described how the UNPROFOR doctor worked closely with *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the local hospital. The French UN General asked the Norwegian battalion in Tuzla to allow medical specialists to go every week from Tuzla to Srebrenica to provide help. According to Cot, 'this task was very important to keep up confidence in UNPROFOR and should be given priority'.¹⁰¹⁹ Furthermore, he ordered UNPROFOR to bring material for *Médecins Sans Frontières* from Split and to deliver it to the enclave.

The care that the Force Commander took in the specific case of Srebrenica with the humanitarian and especially the medical relief was consistent with the new interpretation of the UN mandate in Bosnia-Herzegovina that took effect from late 1993. The way in which Dutchbat was to give shape to this humanitarian side of the mission was the subject of discussion before, during and also after the mission. This report contains a separate Appendix in Part III under the title Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues, which goes into various aspects in more detail.

Even before the departure of Dutchbat I, the Army Crisis Staff in The Hague already had the relevant parts of General Cot's report at its disposal. One month before, a Dutch reconnaissance team was furthermore sent to Srebrenica and Zepa. Because the Bosnian Serbs refused permission, that visit was unable to go ahead, however. The unit did produce a comprehensive reconnaissance report with the necessary plans, which was based on information from the Canadian and Ukrainian battalions, and from *Bosnia-Herzegovina Command*.¹⁰²⁰

This report contained an appendix on medical assistance, which stated that medical personnel could be employed in the treatment of the local population, under the responsibility of a local doctor or UNHCR, who must not be allowed access to military medical establishments. Under the heading of civil 'health aspects', it is stated moreover that military medical personnel were permitted to assist the local doctors under their responsibility in matters such as medical examination for evacuation. They could also provide specialist help to the hospital or the dentist and could issue supplies. The report concluded that 'the medical personnel can be used in support of civilian public health'.¹⁰²¹

A report by a reconnaissance team of Medical Major Ruikes, dated 12 February 1994, chose a rather looser wording:

¹⁰¹⁸ CRST. Fax to Crisis Staff from H.A.J. Bokhoven Zagreb, 04/01/94 no. 93/518 subject: situation in Srebrenica.

¹⁰¹⁹ *idem*, p. 5.

¹⁰²⁰ BLS. 'Reconnaissance report Srebrenica and Zepa' to BLS for the attention of CS Crisis Staff of 11 Infbat LUMBL GG (APC) / Dutchbat 12/12/93 signed by the C-Dutchbat C.H.P. Vermeulen.

¹⁰²¹ *Idem*, appendix B.

‘Within Dutchbat duties, there is an element of provision of humanitarian medical assistance to the local population. To this end, medical personnel can be used to provide medical treatment. This was to occur exclusively with the consent of the coordinating doctor of NGOs (*Médecins Sans Frontières*, UNHCR, and the International Red Cross). The medical responsibility resided with a local doctor, *Medicins sans Frontières* or UNHCR’.¹⁰²²

In late 1994, Cot's successor as Force Commander, General De Lapresle, also justified the presence of UNPROFOR in Bosnia with reasons including the delivery of humanitarian assistance. De Lapresle stressed that especially the many-faceted humanitarian work of the battalions on a local level 'from assisting the most needy to repairing schools, hospitals and roads and caring for the wounded' deserved all possible attention,¹⁰²³ even though strictly speaking this did not form part of the UNPROFOR mandate. Especially after the change in the political and military situation around the end of 1994, it was widely stressed on an international level that the importance of UNPROFOR lay especially in its ability to guarantee humanitarian relief. The broad interpretation that the Dutch battalions gave to the mandate was in any case in the line advocated by UNPROFOR and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Force Commander General Cot and the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander General Rose asked the policy question of how much space within the framework of the peace operation there must be for humanitarian relief, in the discussion on the interpretation of the UNPROFOR mandate.

Cot and Rose emphasized the importance of 'the battle for hearts and minds' in realizing the objectives of a mission. The fact is that local commanders had to encourage a good relationship with the local population, which was easier if they showed willing to do something for the population. Apart from the moral motive of helping people in need, a role was also played by ready military considerations in the area of Security and Intelligence. Major General of Marines E. Klop expressed this general insight in 2001, in a contribution to *NRC Handelsblad*.¹⁰²⁴ According to him, peace missions cannot succeed without the support of the local population. If they turn against the peacekeepers, the mission will fail. If only to achieve the mission objective, it is necessary for the units involved to be given the space to help the people on the spot.

During the deployment to Bosnia there were also ready moral and practical reasons for the UN to make every effort to offer humanitarian assistance to the distressed population of Srebrenica. The question remains as to whether the political and military consequences of such assistance, also for the unit on the ground, were actually sufficiently well thought out. Humanitarian relief in combination with peacekeeping, in spite of all good intentions, entails the danger that the first may contribute to the failure of the second.¹⁰²⁵ The warring factions will never consider assistance to be wholly neutral or impartial. The experiences of the UNHCR around Srebrenica - described in Chapter 4 - illustrate this problem. In the provision of food, local soldiers took priority over civilians and bought weapons with money that they earned with the trade in relief goods. The local population was less inclined to view the humanitarian relief as a gift from the international community, which saw itself as a 'neutral player', but sooner as from the unit stationed in the area.

Lastly, the problem also has a professional aspect: humanitarian relief is not the core business of soldiers. Such relief can form a particularly motivating and satisfying task for soldiers, especially if they doubt the possibility of realizing the main objective of the mission. This also applied to Dutchbat III in Srebrenica. At times when it was clear that the set task and duties were not feasible, the battalion

¹⁰²² CRST. Fax 12-2-1994 from Medical Major Ruikes to: C-infbat lumbl d.t.v. C-reconnaissance party Dutchbat subject: Medical care Dutchbat.

¹⁰²³ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-1676 De Lapresle to Annan, 04/11/1994, appendix 4: Force Commanders conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina, 6.

¹⁰²⁴ See interview with Klop, in *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/08/01.

¹⁰²⁵ See for this, for example, Dennis C. Jett, *Why Peacekeeping Fails*, New York, 1999, pp. 133-135.

leaders remained motivated by 'walking into town and looking at those wretches, and I would think: If we leave, things will definitely get out of hand, and that is why we are here'.¹⁰²⁶

By way of illustration, a parallel can be drawn from the literature with another peace operation. This concerns a study by two American researchers into the American experiences during the humanitarian operation Restore Hope in Somalia in 1992 and 1993.¹⁰²⁷ The American soldiers were 'trained to be warriors for national security' and were sent on an international humanitarian mission.¹⁰²⁸ The researchers describe three phases that the soldiers involved went through. The first phase, while they were still in the United States, was that of 'high expectations'. On the basis of poor information, the soldiers thought that the starving Somalian population would receive them with open arms and that they would be able to perform fantastic work. They had hardly any background knowledge of the causes of the catastrophic famine or of other local circumstances, such as the constant wars between various clans, anarchy, misuse of power and violence.

This led to a second phase in the operational area, that of disillusion as a consequence of lack of clarity about the end date, stress, health problems, a partly hostile population and incomprehensible events.¹⁰²⁹ In the first place, the units had to protect themselves, and in so doing they lost sight of the objective of the mission. Immediate assistance to the population was forbidden¹⁰³⁰ and only a small proportion of the soldiers actually came into contact with the distressed, starving population. Mixed feelings and mistrust of the population arose quickly, because it was unclear who were the good guys and who were the bad guys. The greatest problem for the Americans, however, was that they, who saw themselves as saviours in distress, were treated with hostility rather than with gratitude. The last phase was that of reconsideration, and consisted of two components. The first was that of the warrior strategy: the combat soldiers started to attribute the behaviour of armed members of combat groups and other troublemakers to the entire Somali population. This turned all Somalis into potential enemies. A second behaviour pattern arose from a 'humanitarian strategy': the soldiers who were actually involved in the relief tried to break negative stereotypes about Somalis. They attempted to avoid the use of force and to consider the political and cultural background of the behaviour of the population.¹⁰³¹

This American investigation shows a number of similarities between the mission to Somalia and the deployment of the Dutch battalions to Srebrenica. Firstly, in Bosnia too, soldiers who had been trained for large-scale military conflicts were required to facilitate and protect humanitarian relief. To this end, they were required to establish a workable relationship with the local population and its leaders. A second complicating factor in Bosnia was that the population also consisted of different groups, each with its own agenda and corresponding attitude to the foreign soldiers. Thirdly, the soldiers in Srebrenica were likewise unsure of the nature of their mission and the disposition of the local population. All this led, fourthly, to the Dutchbat members also dividing roughly into two camps regarding the attitude to the population.

¹⁰²⁶ Interview R. Franken, 04/05/01.

¹⁰²⁷ Laura L. Miller and Charles Moskos 'Humanitarians or Warriors? Race, Gender, and Combat Status in Operation Restore Hope', in: *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 21(1995)9, pp. 615-637.

¹⁰²⁸ Miller & Moskos, 'Humanitarians or Warriors? Race, Gender, and Combat Status in Operation Restore Hope'. in: *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 21(1995) p. 615.

¹⁰²⁹ For example, the population refused MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) from the American army, because they believed that the food would be harmful to the intestines of, or fatal for, people who had suffered hunger for a long time, as a result of a high cholesterol or protein content. It happened in Bosnia that Muslims refused American food parcels after food drops because they contained pork.

¹⁰³⁰ The most important task of the soldiers during Operation Restore Hope was the protection of NGOs, including Unicef, Oxfam, Care etc. It was difficult for many soldiers to accept that during this humanitarian mission they were not allowed to provide direct assistance to the population and were shot at.

¹⁰³¹ Miller & Moskos, p. 618. There has been other research into the subject of the changing attitude of soldiers in general, and peacekeepers in particular. Although the number of phases can vary, a clear phasing is evident in the research (e.g. into WW I, Vietnam, Cyprus or Sinai). In their article, Miller and Moskos briefly deal with a number of these investigations. It struck them that there had been almost no sociological investigation into humanitarian missions.

Some of them, because of negative experiences with a part of the population, came to consider the entire population as 'the enemy', and withdrew into the military part of their duties, which could put the humanitarian objective at risk. Others still tried to make a distinction between the soldiers and the profiteers on the one hand, and the actual destitute victims on the other. They had an open mind for the dreadful situation in which the Muslim population found themselves and tried to understand why the population of the enclave reacted as they did.¹⁰³² A factor in both Somalia and Srebrenica was that this category of soldiers had insufficient insight into the culture and history of the population group that they were dealing with. Because the training was not oriented to this aspect, they were unable to properly understand what was afoot, nor to sufficiently correct the defensive reaction of others.

18. The field of tension between the military and the humanitarian duties

After the fall of Srebrenica, Dutchbat was reproached from various sides that it had done little or nothing for the civilian population. This criticism was often couched in very general terms and it was moreover not always clear which period was being referred to. Therefore we provide here a list of the activities per battalion. The Dutch blue helmets were able to provide humanitarian relief mainly in the margin of their duties, and it should be noted that according to their terms of reference they were to facilitate humanitarian relief by third parties. The question as to whether they could also provide 'extra' help was relevant to promoting good relations with the population. Providing relief also gave soldiers a feeling of really doing something useful for the people in the enclave.

Nevertheless, a tension persisted between the idea that they could win over the population through humanitarian work and therefore make the operational action easier, and on the other hand the strict order from the Commanders of Dutchbat II and III to avoid informal contact with the population. In practice this led to a lack of clarity for the soldiers. A survey shows that the Dutch blue helmets developed a large diversity of 'own' activities, all of which could be placed under the heading of humanitarian relief. In addition to the normal tasks, there was medical assistance, support to the engineers, transport and a wide variety of support on the socio-economic front. If applicable, the following overview will deal briefly with the question as to what extent this influenced the performance of the duties.

An important part of the task was the supervision of UNHCR convoys. Dutchbat I started to develop humanitarian tasks in a later phase of its presence, because local conditions were then quiet, and such matters were possible. Furthermore, they attempted to give all involved a feeling of safety through the maximum visibility of the blue helmets. The battalion leaders felt that they should support the population where possible, for example through direct medical assistance and support from *Médecins Sans Frontières*. They did not ask for permission for the 'extra' activities from the UN, who nonetheless turned a blind eye. The costs were covered largely by the Netherlands. At the time of the first battalion, the engineers had to perform a large amount of work for their own unit, and therefore hardly had an opportunity to make capacity available for humanitarian purposes.

Politicians in The Hague constantly showed an interest in humanitarian relief. As early as the summer of 1994, Commander Vermeulen received a letter from the Ministry of Defence requesting information on the way in which the battalion interpreted UN instructions 'to establish conditions favourable to the improvement of the living conditions of people' and 'search for accurate information on local needs concerning food, heating, sheltering and medical care'.¹⁰³³ Vermeulen replied that discussions were held every week between Dutchbat, the various relief organizations and the local civilian authorities on the conditions in which the population in the enclave found themselves. Dutchbat identified two problem areas: that of the drinking water supply and the situation surrounding

¹⁰³² Miller and Moskos described these two groups as the 'warriors' and the 'humanitarians'.

¹⁰³³ CRST. Letter from Ministry of Defence 31/05/94, no. V94013865 to Dutchbat Commander.

the schools, and made recommendations for improvements in both areas.¹⁰³⁴ Specific humanitarian projects were the following: a toy project for orphans; a school supplies project, set up in the first instance by battalion chaplain Van der Heijden; improvement of the water supply for the local hospital; repair of water pipes and electricity supply; and repair and maintenance of the refuse truck. Furthermore, Dutch medics performed operations in the local hospital three times a week, there was a doctor's surgery ('*ambulanta*') three times a week, and, for the same purpose, the battalion doctors visited the surrounding villages twice a week.

Dutchbat II took these activities over and continued them. It now proved possible to engage the engineers in work on the infrastructure, especially road maintenance and improvement. The engineers took care of the power supply for the town's elderly and mentally handicapped people's nursing home, by tapping electricity from the compound in Srebrenica town. They also contributed to the building activities of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the Swedish Shelter Project. The Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit detected landmines and rendered them safe. The service also provided information to schools, in which the children were told of the dangers of various types of ammunition and mines.

The medical care was expanded in various ways. At the time of the second battalion, the battalion dressing station started to play a more important role in the relief. The dressing station only had the task of providing medical care to the unit itself, but relief was soon also provided to the local population. *Médecins Sans Frontières* started to make use of the expertise of Dutchbat's laboratory assistant, dentist, medical technician and X-ray assistant. Echo scans were performed on three afternoons a week for the local population. The doctors of the dressing station started a general practice surgery on Friday mornings in Potocari and on Saturday morning in Brosevici. They made use of the resources of *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Dutchbat II in turn supplied limited quantities of medicines to both the hospital and *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Medicines were also issued in emergencies to the Bosnian Serbs in Bratunac.¹⁰³⁵

The surgeon held a surgery every Monday afternoon in the hospital in Srebrenica town and shared the patients to be operated on with the surgeon of *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Eligible patients were operated on in the dressing station. An out-patient surgery was held on Wednesday afternoons and they also helped the wounded and sick who regularly came to the gate. In total, an average of 55 patients a week were treated at the dressing station, and 3 to 10 a week were operated on.¹⁰³⁶ Civilians or other sick residents were also taken back by ambulance after operations. After much effort and the necessary negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs, Dutchbat II succeeded in sending a total of approximately thirty civilians who were seriously ill or had life-threatening injuries to Tuzla or Sarajevo. Occasionally this would take place by helicopter or otherwise with a convoy.

Minister Voorhoeve of Defence said he was very impressed with Dutchbat's humanitarian activities during a visit to the enclave in September 1994. He asked his fellow Minister, Pronk, of the Ministry of Development Cooperation, to make 500,000 guilders available for humanitarian projects in Srebrenica and Bratunac. The *Defensiekrant* reported that 'with the donation from the Ministry of Development Cooperation it will be possible not only to make an improvement in the living conditions of the local population, but also to contribute to creating confidence in the blue helmets'.¹⁰³⁷ Voorhoeve also suggested, in the interests of a balanced approach, to offer humanitarian relief to the Bosnian-Serb population of Bratunac.

¹⁰³⁴ DCBC, 90. The relevant parts are 1.B pt 2c and pt !.C 5b. The message arrives from C-Dutchbat HQ Srebrenica: Crisis Staff BLS for the attention of LCol M.C.J. Felix archive Comcen Crisis Staff 178/42 undated probably summer 1994.

¹⁰³⁵ DCBC, 1114. Fax Army Crisis Staff (G2 Aoi Topper) to DCBC, 301625B Aug 95. Dutchbat II, deployment period from 110794 to 210195, summary of delivered humanitarian support in the deployment area. Author Head of Sie 1, Cap Van Dijk, 30/08/95.

¹⁰³⁶ Information from Jansen & Stinis & Smits (ed.), *Dutchbat on Tour*, pp. 93-94.

¹⁰³⁷ *Defensiekrant*, (1994) p. 24.

Pronk agreed, but he issued the guideline that no more than 40 per cent (originally 25 per cent) of the money was to go to the Bosnian Serbs. If it should happen that the share for the Serbs was greater, Pronk feared that the relief would overshoot its mark - which was to ease the burden on the population in Srebrenica. The Minister of Development Cooperation also wanted the Commander of Dutchbat 'to make it abundantly clear' to the Bosnian-Serb side that no humanitarian projects would be executed there unless it was possible at the same time to undertake projects for Srebrenica.¹⁰³⁸ Voorhoeve subsequently informed Pronk of the actual state of affairs in the area.¹⁰³⁹

Everts, the Commander of Dutchbat II, expressed pleasure with Pronk's offer, because he assumed that humanitarian relief would contribute to a better relationship with the warring factions. He felt that the relief could indeed alleviate the problems of the populations on both sides of the border, and expected more goodwill with the population and better motivation for the personnel. Everts proposed tackling the water treatment and schools for both parties, and also improving the orphans' home and nursing home in Srebrenica. The Battalion Commander did feel that UNPROFOR's neutrality principle assumed that the money would be distributed on a 50-50 basis. He wanted to prevent the Bosnian Serbs feeling badly done by. The local UNHCR was also in favour of such an attitude. Therefore the Commander himself applied the 50-50 distribution, as opposed to Pronk's proposed 60-40 ratio. This was accepted by all parties.¹⁰⁴⁰

Dutchbat II, from the ever shrinking reserves, also provided diesel for the ambulance, the water supply machinery and the refuse truck. When the harvest had to be brought in, the battalion leaders decided to make diesel available for agricultural equipment. The Dutch also contributed to the maintenance and repair of the agricultural machinery, the refuse truck, the fire truck and the ambulance. In order to make life in the enclave more pleasant and varied in another way, Radio Dutchbat started news broadcasts and Dutchbat organized sporting competitions and tournaments in which the Dutch also took part. The project for providing schools with teaching materials was a combination of private actions by individual soldiers.

Where possible, Dutchbat III continued the above-mentioned work of providing the population of the enclave with humanitarian relief.¹⁰⁴¹ This applied to the dressing station, the engineers, the Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit Service (EOD), the repair and medical platoon and the supply platoon. The Dutch battalion continued supporting the humanitarian organizations and contributed to maintaining the drinking water supply and the maintenance of roads and bridges. The toy project, the supply of teaching materials and the care for the orphans' home work continued under the third Dutch battalion. As its predecessors had done, the Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit attempted to educate the population of the enclave in dealing with unexploded missiles. For example, children had the habit of bringing missiles to the gate in exchange for sweets. The Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit decided only to reward the children if they took them to the place where they found the arms. Furthermore, the service provided information to schools. The Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit also had its frustrations: because the minefields counted as a defensive measure of the warring factions, they were not allowed to be cleared, in spite of the dangers for the local population.¹⁰⁴² Major Engberts worked hard to continue supplying the schools with teaching materials.

¹⁰³⁸ KAB. Letter from J.P. Pronk to J.J.C. Voorhoeve 22/11/94 reference NH-680/94.

¹⁰³⁹ Actions of this type - 'buying' access to besieged population groups by offering the same help to communities on both sides of the demarcation line - was not applauded by everyone. According to S. Wolfson, a UNHCR lawyer, this type of action represented a violation of the relevant humanitarian principles, in which 'need' was deemed to be the only criterion for providing relief. Contracts of this kind can furthermore, according to him, easily lead to a dangerous chain reaction. See: for example S. Wolfson 'Samen werken: UNHCR en de Krijgsmacht' in Ted van Baarda and Jan Schoenman (eds.) *Werelden Apart? Militairen en burgers: vredeshandhavers and hulpverleners*, Den Haag, 1997, p. 50.

¹⁰⁴⁰ DCBC, unnumbered. Fax from the Army Crisis Staff Col. Brantz to C-RNIA Crisis Staff 4 December 1994 no. CRST/1412 subject 'Hum. Relief DUTCHBAT'.

¹⁰⁴¹ An overview of the humanitarian activities of the Dutch battalions can be found in a DCBC, 1114. Fax from the Army Crisis Staff J. Topper to Col. Van Dam 30/625 B AUG 95.

¹⁰⁴² Interview of counsellor Bart Hetebrij with Ronald Geval in *Ego* 1995 pp. 6 and 7.

On 29 March 1995, Dutchbat supplied a total of 835 exercise books, 8 large exercise books, 31 thin exercise books, 2 small packages of 200 pens and 4 packages of photocopier paper. Attempts to bring in school books on a regular basis, via the Civil Affairs Department in Tuzla, stranded because the Bosnian Serbs deemed the Muslim books to be 'politically incorrect'.

The Dutch kept a close watch on relief of this kind to check whether the relief actually arrived with those for whom it was intended. They also had to keep an eye on another aspect of maintaining the balance between the two parties. To secure cooperation with the convoys carrying humanitarian goods and to demonstrate that the UN was impartial, in the winter diesel was also sent for heating the lower school in Bratunac. A form of a relief that became increasingly necessary was the food supply. The shortage of food in the enclave increasingly became a daily concern for Dutchbat.

In February the Dutch brought much food to the social kitchen of Srebrenica town. This was usually food that was close to the end of its shelf life, such as spaghetti, eggs, rice, potatoes, custard powder, sauce and turkeys. The social kitchen offered food to the most distressing cases. Before the war, the manager of the social kitchen was a bank manager, and he was very involved with the fate of the population. B Company in the town had more or less 'adopted' the nursing home for psychiatric illnesses and elderly people. If any food was left, it always went to that address, and this involved fairly substantial quantities: 20 February brought: 50 kilos of onions, 4 bags of potatoes, 1 bag of rice, powdered milk. On 30 March 23 bags of rice (25 kg. per bag) went to the social kitchen, as well as 61 bags of potatoes (25 kg. per bag), 30 turkeys, 41 boxes of 360 eggs.¹⁰⁴³ As their own stocks became scarcer, and the convoys stopped, relief of this kind also stopped, of course.

Battalion Commander Karremans explained at the end of April 1995 at the UN medal parade how important the humanitarian work was for the motivation of his men. What their work was ultimately all about, according to him, was as follows: 'trying to help the population. That is our motivation'.¹⁰⁴⁴ However, there was also tension as a result of the explicit ban by the battalion leaders of Dutchbat II and III on informal contact with the local population. The population considered the termination of the more or less amicable relationship as a hostile action. As mentioned, this was most forcefully applied by Commander Groen of Dutchbat III Bravo Company. While the Dutchbat II doctor still held a daily surgery in the compound in Srebrenica for both Dutch and Muslims, Groen made an end to this immediately after his arrival. Neither would he still give permission for holding surgery outside the compound. Neither did this meet with complete understanding internally: at a certain moment, the C Company ambulance drove into the B Company area to provide medical support to the population there.¹⁰⁴⁵

19. Medical assistance

The medical assistance to the population of the enclave raised a number of fundamental questions about the desirability, the opportunities and the priorities of the military doctors. Until the deployment in Bosnia, the Army's most recent experiences with organizing such relief went back to the Dutch participation in UNIFIL in Lebanon. The situation in Lebanon, however, was entirely different to, and less difficult than, in Bosnia. In Lebanon there was less violence and furthermore the medical infrastructure there was still more or less intact. In Srebrenica, on the other hand, the local population - as discussed in Chapter 4 - had to resort to the team of medics from *Médecins Sans Frontières*, who put public health back on its feet and worked in the local hospital. In UNPROFOR's conception, medical assistance to the population was a task for non-governmental organizations and not soldiers, except in emergencies. On the other hand, however, the two Dutch Ministers of Defence involved in the

¹⁰⁴³ Taken from the notebook of S5 A.E. Rave DUTCHBAT III, Col. NIOD.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *The inner Circle*, no. 27, 27/04/95.

¹⁰⁴⁵ KAB. Memorandum from MID CDRE H.J. Vandeweijer to Minister of Defence and SG 05/07/99 no. DIS99003213 subject: extreme right-wing behaviour Srebrenica, received: 05/07/99 no. 1444 Top Secret. Appendix C Strictly Confidential.

deployment, Ter Beek and Voorhoeve, were supporters of Dutchbat providing medical assistance to the population of Srebrenica.

Within the Dutch Armed Forces, there were no guidelines for providing humanitarian relief and medical assistance to the civilian population in missions such as in Bosnia. As a rule, these matters evolved in practice, and they depended on the initiative, engagement and judgement of the commander of the unit concerned.

The general question of whether military doctors should have to provide medical assistance to a civilian population in peace missions - and if so in what form - is not new. The Royal Netherlands Navy in Cambodia aided the local population as a 'regularly occurring' exception if they needed urgent medical assistance. Most patients there had been injured by landmines or other ammunition.¹⁰⁴⁶ The structural medical support to *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the population really got under way in the period in which Dutchbat II was in Srebrenica.

Wertheim, the medical contact in the Army Crisis Staff, was unable to give a general answer to the question of when medical personnel should have to help the population, but he felt that it was not a formal obligation. The Dutchbat III anaesthetist, Schouten, asked him for a definitive answer, to which he was told that 'If you should see no need at all to operate, then you don't have to, any more than you have to collaborate with *Médecins Sans Frontières*.'¹⁰⁴⁷

Questions relating to what could or could not form part of medical assistance also arose in the dressing station. In addition to regular medics, the Dutch battalion also had a dressing station, which consisted of an operating theatre, dispensary, intensive care and an X-ray department. This was set up in Potocari, because it was expected that, in addition to company doctors, the Dutch battalion would also need second-line health care (a dressing station with operating theatre). The Scandinavian battalion in Tuzla did have a hospital, but the distance from there to the enclave was too great, all the more so because the VRS had closed the shortest route from Srebrenica to Tuzla. Because the dressing station as such only needed to be brought into action if there were seriously wounded patients, the Dutch doctors had enough time to provide medical assistance to the population of the enclave. Because a medical orderly was required to accompany each patrol, this had the automatic consequence that there was a medical orderly at each OP, who also functioned as a doctor for the local population. If necessary, support could be requested from the OP from *Médecins Sans Frontières* or Dutchbat.

Commander Vermeulen of Dutchbat I was unable to gain an overall view in the first two or three weeks of whether he was able to provide the local population with medical care, and, if so, of what kind. He did not yet know the battalion's own needs and he assumed that the dressing station had not been brought along for the population. He did recognize that the doctors would have to maintain their skills, and that they had started to become bored. To counteract this boredom, the doctors let themselves go on their fellow soldiers. As a consequence, there were quite a few 'lads walking around with bits cut out of their faces, because every pimple or lump was cut out'.¹⁰⁴⁸

After an introductory period, it appeared that, with the dressing station, Dutchbat would be able to provide an additional 'humanitarian accent' to its presence. Vermeulen nevertheless wanted to avoid 'generating consumption', as it was referred to in the *Defensiekrant*, and he therefore felt that civilians should go in principle to the town hospital, or should be treated by Dutchbat only after being referred. He did want to make an exception for the severely wounded.¹⁰⁴⁹

The collaboration with *Médecins Sans Frontières* soon got under way. Three times a week, mobile surgeries were held in a village or in the local hospital, where Dutch doctors assisted *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Civilians could report for medical assistance to the Dutchbat compound with a note from the hospital in Srebrenica. After some time, however, it appeared that the hospital manager was charging

¹⁰⁴⁶ S. Stienstra, 'Noodbloed in het arsenaal van de militaire arts' ('Emergency blood in the military doctor's arsenal'), *Armed* 77(1993)10, pp. 21-23.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Interview A.A. Schouten, 21/02/00.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Interview C.H.P. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.

¹⁰⁴⁹ 'Continu spreekuur voor 'driving doctors' ('Continuous surgery for 'driving doctors'), *Defensiekrant*, 26/05/94 p. 4.

exorbitant prices for the notes, which prompted a change in the organization. The dressing station was closed for the population and exceptions were only made for serious cases or patients who were referred by *Médecins Sans Frontières* or the Dutch doctors. The dressing station doctors also carried out operations in the local hospital in Srebrenica. The practice described was developed and continued under Dutchbat II.

Dutchbat III originally continued the *ambulanta*. However, the practice ended in late May 1995, when a conflict arose between *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the Opstina (see the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues'). In Potocari the medical orderly on duty decided whether a wounded person was to be allowed in or sent to the hospital in Srebrenica. Some people had to be examined further or treated in the compound, for which they were given a special pass marked with the date and time. Others were referred to the hospital in the town. A list was drawn up every week of the sick or wounded who were in the hospital in Srebrenica or reported to the surgery. Because the number of accompanying family members of the patients concerned became ever larger, and the compound consequently became ever busier, each patient was limited to one accompanying person.

If there was a medical necessity, patients were admitted to the ward, but Dutchbat usually admitted them to the *Médecins Sans Frontières* hospital in Srebrenica. A guideline existed that help was only to be provided to civilians who arrived at the gate without an appointment if they needed life-saving or limb-preserving treatment. In practice it was usually wounded women and children who were treated.

The limited medical supplies meant that the personnel were able to provide less humanitarian relief than they would have liked, however. Civilians who could still walk were increasingly referred on, because Dutchbat's quantity of dressings and medicines was limited. It was always necessary to tread a fine line between the wish to provide humanitarian relief and the question of how many resources were available. The shortage of fuel also disrupted the provision of relief; it therefore had to be decided to no longer transport sick civilians.¹⁰⁵⁰ The search continued for ways for patrols to take wounded that were close to a patrol route.

A persistent question in medical assistance to the population was whether it was permitted under the UN rules: in the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues' this question is discussed in more detail.

The medical staff of Dutchbat felt that there was insufficient understanding in the Crisis Staff in The Hague of the difficult situation in which they had to work in the enclave. On 20 October 1994, for example, Medical Lieutenant Colonel J.H.G. Lankhorst of Dutchbat II received a memorandum from Major P. Madern of the Crisis Staff with regulations for requesting medical supplies.¹⁰⁵¹ The numerous rules appeared to be completely inapplicable to the daily practice in Bosnia and Srebrenica. Furthermore, the Major concluded with the remark to the doctors in Srebrenica 'that there was not much use in fighting the UN regulations'. Lankhorst in turn answered that if UN regulations were deviated from, there were always good reasons: according to him 'the practical experience that had been built up was so large that the lack of understanding, the interference and the lack of experience only made people laugh or made them angry.'¹⁰⁵² In an extensive commentary, Lankhorst further vented this mood. He wrote 'that what Dutchbat needed was not a detailed instruction, but someone who would bring an end to the pointless stream of faxes, full of nit-picking, inaccuracies and statements of the obvious'. He also drew the Crisis Staff's attention to a painful misunderstanding in the memorandum received from The Hague: Srebrenica was not a Serbian area, but a Muslim enclave, surrounded by a

¹⁰⁵⁰ DAB. Report of the Health Inspector p. 23.

¹⁰⁵¹ CDPO/GNKD. From g4 Dtch Army Crisis Staff P. Madern for o.m. 1 (NL) UN Infbat faxref. 4666/1 date 20 October 1994. The rules are given in appendix F (Medical service goods) under logistics instruction G4 Army Crisis Staff morning sheet for units under the command of UNPROFOR.

¹⁰⁵² CDPO/GNKD. From 1 (NL) UN SPTCMD LtCol Lankhorst MD to: G4 Crisis Staff 18/11/94 subject: defibrillators/Comments on fax 4666/1.

Bosnian-Serb area. Lankhorst concluded with the remark that 'there was no need for unworkable regulations dreamed up in an ivory tower.'¹⁰⁵³

Meanwhile it had become apparent that the extensive relief provided by Dutchbat was a thorn in the flesh of the UNPROFOR command. For the UN troops, the rule was that this, except in emergencies, was a task for the non-governmental organizations. Dutchbat, however, with the support of the Netherlands Army top and the Ministry of Defence, continued to adhere to its own view. Immediately after the arrival of Dutchbat III, Colonel Brantz as Chief of Staff of the Army Crisis Staff identified two main problems.¹⁰⁵⁴ The first was concerned with medical supplies to the battalion and the second the question of who was to pay. The best possible medical assistance to the population, as favoured by Minister Voorhoeve, proved to be no longer possible because of the lack of supplies. Because an increasing amount of medical assistance was being provided to the residents of Srebrenica, the battalion was rapidly running through its stocks, and the stocks were not being replenished by or at the expense of the UN.

The two Netherlands Army doctors, Colonel E.G. van Ankum and Lieutenant Colonel W.J. Wertheim, who paid a working visit to Dutchbat in January, responded to complaints from the battalion doctors about insufficient medicines by checking out the entire 'chain' of medical supply.¹⁰⁵⁵ The doctors themselves felt that this was attributable to roundabout application procedures, a limited range at the UN and limited import from the Netherlands. The medical specialists Colonel K. Schnabel and Colonel F. Kamerling of Dutchbat expressed the fear to Van Ankum and Wertheim that the care for their own soldiers was also in danger. They therefore had an emergency supply (known as an 'iron reserve'), which was sufficient for twenty operations on their own personnel.¹⁰⁵⁶ Van Ankum and Wertheim asked for a meeting with the Army Crisis Staff on these problems. They felt that there was a need to establish in principle whether medical assistance to the population should be allowed. There would then have to be firm agreements on the size of the reserves to be set aside for such purposes.

In the meantime, Battalion Commander Karremans was greatly concerned about the possible consequences of reducing or stopping medical support to the population. In a letter to the Commander of the Crisis Staff he therefore pressed to be allowed to continue this help. Karremans feared otherwise that the good relationship with the local administration and the population would be damaged and the execution of his duties would be put in peril. He called the medical assistance to the population the most visible part of Dutchbat's work, whether they provided it directly, or in collaboration with *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the other non-governmental organizations.¹⁰⁵⁷ The command of the Netherlands Army decided that the medical assistance could indeed continue, on the understanding that it must not lead to an erosion of the primary responsibility: the medical care of Dutchbat soldiers.¹⁰⁵⁸ This formulation contained the core of the problem that would arise around the fall of the enclave, almost a half year later, when the involvement of the doctors with medical assistance to the population would lead to great difficulties. This is covered in more detail in the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues'.

¹⁰⁵³ CDPO/GNKD. From 1 (NL) UN SPTCMD LtCol Lankhorst MD to : G4 Crisis staff 18/11/94 subject: defibrillators/Comments on fax 4666/1.

¹⁰⁵⁴ CDPO/GNKD. RNIA Crisis Staff internal memorandum: C.L. Brantz to: C-Army Crisis Staff, DOKL and BLS 26/01/95 no. CRST/1637 subject: 'the problems surrounding medical care'.

¹⁰⁵⁵ See CRST. Working visit UNPROFOR of Van Ankum and Wertheim January 1995.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Idem.

¹⁰⁵⁷ CRST. Letter from Commander DUTCHBAT III Karremans to C-NL Crisis Staff 22 January 1995 subject: humanitarian medical assistance to the local population.

¹⁰⁵⁸ DCBC, 2052. Memorandum PCDS (LGen Schouten) to the Minister and Junior Minister, 08/03/95, no. S95/061/1014.

20. Collaboration of Dutchbat with the NGOs

The United Nations peace mission in Bosnia had both security and humanitarian aspects. It was therefore fairly natural for the UNPROFOR military authorities to collaborate with institutions of the UN, specifically the UnCivPol police unit, the UNMO observer corps, as well as with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for assistance in the area, specifically the International Red Cross (ICRC), *Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)* and others. The activities of these relief organizations and their relations with the enclave administration were discussed above in Chapter 4. The battalion leaders opted to make a contribution especially in the medical area.

Dutchbat worked closely in the Srebrenica enclave with the various NGOs. It must be borne in mind that the assumptions and priorities can differ fundamentally between military and civil organizations, which can lead to conflicts of interest and disputes.¹⁰⁵⁹

The position of the NGOs was strictly neutral in principle, although the way in which they interpreted this neutrality could vary. The starting point of some organizations was that they had to help both parties in equal measure, whereas others felt that help must be concentrated where it was most needed. The question of whether collaboration with Dutchbat could be successful depended not only on the formal collaboration, however. The fact is that it was on the informal level that the personal qualities and professionalism of the people involved played a role in terms of creating a solid foundation for collaboration through the acceptance of the various objectives, points of departure and mandates.

Most NGOs considered collaboration with the UNPROFOR units to be a mixed blessing. On the one hand, they needed the information facility, security and assistance on a wide front, which Dutchbat was able to offer. On the other hand, they did not want to be too closely confronted with the military side of the UN action, because the warring factions did not consider the blue helmets to be neutral a priori. In certain situations, the NGOs needed a military guard or escort for their personnel, but were wary of, for example, using too many military transport resources, to prevent identification.

Information exchange between NGOs and blue helmets was also a sensitive point, not so much with respect to data on the humanitarian situation or the reporting of incidents, but more in connection with information of a military nature, such as the observation of firing positions or troop movements. As a relief worker expressed it: 'the farther we are from the guns, the better we feel'.¹⁰⁶⁰

It remains questionable whether the NGOs succeeded in maintaining the 'neutral' image in East-Bosnia. However, it can be observed that in Srebrenica the collaboration of the blue helmets with the various organizations was usually excellent. Relief workers and soldiers showed a great deal of appreciation for each other, probably inspired by the joint efforts to make something of the situation in spite of all the misery. The battalion did have to be on its guard not to take tasks over from the humanitarian organizations.

The obstructive attitude of the ABiH and the Opstina threw Dutchbat and the NGOs, as it were, into each other's arms. The three successive Dutchbat Commanders were prepared to give active support to these organizations. In the increasingly difficult circumstances in which Dutchbat, the NGOs and the population itself came to find themselves, Karremans also looked constantly for opportunities to support both the population and the relief workers. For instance, it was possible to achieve a military-civil collaboration that could go some way towards making daily life easier for many civilians.

Problems that had played a role elsewhere in the collaboration between soldiers and humanitarian organizations, were largely absent in Srebrenica.¹⁰⁶¹ The Dutch doctor H. Wijnhoven,

¹⁰⁵⁹ A number of examples are given in an article by S. Wolfson 'Samen werken: UNHCR en de krijgsmacht' in *Werelden apart? Militair en burgers: vredeshandhavers en hulpverleners*, Den Haag, 1997, pp. 43-52.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Daniel Byma (et al.), '*Strengthening the Partnership' Improving Military Coordination with Relief Agencies and Allies in Humanitarian Operations*. Prepared by Rand for United States Airforce, Santa Monica, 2000, p. 104.

¹⁰⁶¹ See for example . Wolfson 'Samen werken: UNHCR en de Krijgsmacht' pp. 43-52.

who had been dispatched by the Belgian department of *Médecins Sans Frontières* to Srebrenica hospital, felt that the enclave was one of the few places in Bosnia where relief organizations and soldiers cooperated very well.¹⁰⁶² He did observe some irritation in the relationship with the International Red Cross, which, because of its specific mandate in conflict situations, simply was not allowed to work directly with UN soldiers. The collaboration with UNHCR generally proceeded well, but Dutchbat protested from the outset against the black market practices of the drivers from this organization, and also against hiring in Serbian drivers. Dutchbat I also made video recordings to back up their accusations and confronted the UNHCR with them.

Furthermore, Srebrenica was of course a small-scale collaboration, in which the people involved got to know each other well. The contact was usually maintained by commanders of OPs, officers of the Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit and the doctors. The isolated position meant that the soldiers involved in the relief and the relief workers each depended on the other. The specific situation in the enclave also meant that it was not a problem if social contact existed between staff of the NGOs and blue helmets, because it was hardly visible. The relief workers' adage that 'walking into a bar with an officer can hurt our impartiality'¹⁰⁶³ was hardly applicable, if at all, which contributed to a good working atmosphere.

Colonel Vermeulen, the Commander of Dutchbat I, did want to make a distinction in this regard between the various NGOs. In contacts with his battalion, he did observe differences in professionalism, the will to collaborate and - correspondingly - the degree of success of that collaboration. The one organization was more inclined to see the blue helmets as an 'improper competitor', while the other was more pragmatic and saw the Armed Forces mainly as a source of information and safety. Vermeulen therefore recommended promoting mutual understanding and knowledge in the future by organizing joint training and reciprocal work exchanges well before a mission.¹⁰⁶⁴

The relief organization *Médecins Sans Frontières* worked closely with Dutchbat in the enclave. The organization was given regular briefings on the security situation and incidents that had taken place. Dutchbat also offered military protection for *Médecins Sans Frontières* activities at the edge of the enclave. The collaboration in the medical area was, as mentioned above, intensive. Immediately on arrival, the Dutch battalion made contact with *Médecins Sans Frontières* and raised the subject of the humanitarian ambitions of the mission. They discussed the proposal for repairing the water supply and for collecting school materials in the Netherlands for the lower school in the enclave. Plans also rapidly emerged for specific medical collaboration.¹⁰⁶⁵ A report from *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker Alain Wilmart from July 1994 provides a view of the relationship with Dutchbat; Wilmart advised his successors as follows:

UNPROFOR: 'Take care to entertain good relations with them, despite their military mentality, for the sake of both the medical and logistic assistance they are able to give us. From a logistical point of view, many promises of aid to the whole of the population were made but they have not as yet materialized. Only the medical company assists us fully with the medical visits and the operations.'¹⁰⁶⁶

and J.J. van Soest 'Lokale Hulporganisaties: Onbekend maakt Onbemind', pp. 75-83. Both in: Baarda & Schoeman (ed.), *Werelden Apart?* Donna Winslow also wrote an article here about 'NGOs and the Military. Strange bedfellows in Humanitarian Crises' in: *Militaire Spectator* 169(2000)10, pp. 525-534.

¹⁰⁶² 'Continu spreekuur voor 'driving doctors', *Defensiekrant* 26/05/94, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶³ Daniel Byma (et al.), *Strengthening the Partnership: Improving Military Coordination with Relief Agencies and Allies in Humanitarian Operations*. Prepared by Rand for United States Airforce, Santa Monica, 2000, p. 106.

¹⁰⁶⁴ C.H.P. Vermeulen, 'Humanitair optreden als militaire missie', in: Baarda & Schoeman (ed.), *Werelden apart?*, pp. 91-92.

¹⁰⁶⁵ MSF report Apr. 1994-25 included in K. Thorsen *Medecin Sans Frontieres. Humanitarian Aid Programme in Srebrenica* 4/12/1992-21/7/1995, 23/01/01.

¹⁰⁶⁶ MSF report 21/07/94-37 included in Thorsen.

The last *Médecins Sans Frontières* team arrived in the enclave in June 1995 and reported on their not entirely problem-free introduction to Dutchbat:

‘In terms of our first contact with them as a new team was very good. The liaison team and the Commander seem to be a bit cynical about *Médecins Sans Frontières* and not very supportive. On 27/6 they just forgot to tell us that they were going to blow up mines, so we are a bit uncomfortable.’¹⁰⁶⁷

The greatest problems between Dutchbat and *Médecins Sans Frontières* occurred during the fall of the enclave.¹⁰⁶⁸ This will be elaborated in the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues.'

The Bosnian doctor Dr I. Pilav, who worked in Srebrenica hospital told the Ministry of Defence after the fall of the enclave that he was initially impressed with the Dutch medical detachment. The Canadian battalion had only had first aid for its own people at its disposal; the Dutch had doctors, a field hospital and very good medical equipment. The Dutchbat doctors were keen to cooperate and he accepted their offer, because there was a lack, particularly of diagnostic equipment, in Srebrenica hospital. They operated jointly on Mondays, with the Dutchbat surgical team helping with diagnosis, echoes, X-rays and laboratory work.

This collaboration was not hindered by the three-monthly change of medical team. Pilav was the only civilian surgeon in the enclave and he therefore had the most contact with the military medics. Personal friendships were established with the surgeons, but ultimately, around the fall of the enclave, Pilav would become extremely disappointed in the collaboration with his Dutch colleagues. This matter will be dealt with in more detail in the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues'.

21. The military-civil liaisons: Civil Affairs

Comprehensive peacekeeping operations by the United Nations such as those in the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia, implied that blue helmets were involved in a wide variety of tasks that also fell within the competency of the civil authorities. Soldiers were used in jobs that did not actually exist in 'traditional' peacekeeping operations. Collaboration with the civilian administration and social organizations, medical and humanitarian relief, reconstruction of the infrastructure and society, escorting relief convoys by road and the protection of Displaced Persons all demand regular consultation in an effective and structured way. NATO used the term Civil-Military Cooperation to refer to this complex of tasks and jobs - oriented to both local authorities and NGOs. At the time of the UNPROFOR mission, the long-familiar UN term Civil Affairs was still in use, within the military part of the organization also known as G5 or, on battalion level, S5. This related to the officer, or the section, that maintained the contacts with representatives of the warring factions, the civilian administration and the international organizations in the field. They were also referred to less formally as the 'liaison officer' or 'liaison section'.

UNPROFOR, UNHCR and NGOs worked together in Bosnia intensively. To coordinate the performance of humanitarian relief duties as well as possible, an effective Civil Affairs section was very important.¹⁰⁶⁹ It is a fact that the commanders of the UN units demanded a large degree of flexibility in all possible areas. This firstly involved diplomatic capacities in dealing with the warring factions; in practice in Bosnia there was a lack of agreement between them on the presence of the UN. It was therefore of great importance during the mission to get the warring factions as much as possible to the negotiating table. Secondly, collaboration with the other UN organizations and NGOs demanded considerable organizational competence. Thirdly, the relationship with the population was important. It

¹⁰⁶⁷ MSF report 01/07/95-39 included in Thorsen.

¹⁰⁶⁸ MSF report 09/07/95-42 included in Thorsen.

¹⁰⁶⁹ See Edward Flint, 'Civil Affairs: Soldiers Building Bridges' in D.S. Gordon and F.H. Toase (eds.), '*Aspects of Peacekeeping*', London, 2001, pp. 231-252.

required knowledge of the local conditions, language and culture, and furthermore the necessary social skills and stamina. It was, for example, particularly useful to have someone in a unit who knew what public holidays or other special days were observed in a given district. Furthermore, they had to be alert that the distribution of relief goods did not arouse jealousy among different groups.

It was also important to understand that the UN mission started as a blank sheet of paper. Regardless of the hostilities between the warring factions, the various relief agencies were already present locally when the peacekeepers arrived. The local civil and military leaders had adopted their positions and any action that was considered could in principle involve long-term and complex negotiations. The arrival of a large group of soldiers in an area also entailed all manner of practical problems, which had an influence on the relationship with the civilian population and that must not put the success of the mission in danger: the employment of local people, prostitution, black market and the use and purchase of local resources such as wood, water and building materials.

In the battalions, negotiations were conducted in the first instance by the liaison officers. If they did not achieve a satisfactory result, the Deputy Battalion Commander was called in, and if that did not help, the Commander would have to find a way out. Otherwise, the Muslims and the Bosnian Serbs tried similar negotiating tactics. Of course, this could only succeed in the presence of good collaboration and considerable mutual trust between the battalion leaders and the liaison section.

A good Civil Affairs section could put a unit in a position to anticipate a wide variety of problems, or, if necessary, to solve them. A liaison officer could put military action into the context of a social background, so that the commander could have useful additional tactical information at his disposal, and the soldiers in the field could receive the necessary information and practical advice on the local conditions.

The Civil Affairs tasks were organized in a variety of ways by the various countries. Specific units exist in the American and more recently also in the British Armed Forces. Other countries entrusted this work to individual officers, who were assigned the task for the duration of a mission (mostly 6 months).

Douglas Chalmers, a former Civil Affairs officer of the British UNPROFOR troops in Bosnia in 1992, described his liaison task as peacekeeping multiplier.¹⁰⁷⁰ In 1992, the British, like the Canadians in Croatia, had established that a good liaison structure in the contact with the warring factions was also essential in Bosnia. The experience was that much more could be achieved through personal relations than through regulations or orders, especially with commanders of the warring factions. Good liaison officers acted as the 'ears and eyes' of their own commander and were an important source of information in an obscure environment. Chalmers used the term 'directed telescope', which he borrowed from the military historian M. van Creveld. Van Creveld goes even further by saying about the role of these officers that they:

'.....prevent the commander from becoming a prisoner of his staff (...) and would enable him to cut through the regular command hierarchy and take a look at any part of the army or obtain any kind of information that might be required at the moment.'¹⁰⁷¹

In the contact with the commanders of the warring factions, liaison officers were essential for the peacekeeping operation. It appeared that a good personal contact always offered an opening for negotiation, coordination and, if necessary, protest. Sometimes, simply finding the right commander as a discussion partner was a complex and time-consuming task. The individual liaison officers had the task of building trust with the different parties with whom they had to maintain contact. The British

¹⁰⁷⁰ Douglas M. Chalmers *'Faction Liaison Teams: A Peacekeeping Multiplier'*, School of Advanced Military Studies United States Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2001, p. II.

¹⁰⁷¹ Martin Van Creveld *'Command in War'* p. 97, quoted in: Douglas M. Chalmers *'Faction Liaison Teams: A Peacekeeping Multiplier'*.

and Canadians rapidly saw the crucial importance of effective liaison teams, which was based on the selection of the officers concerned. Weak or poorly performing liaison officers are in the most favourable case ineffective, but can even endanger the success of the entire mission. According to the study by Chalmers, it came down to such qualities as tact, initiative, resilience and self-confidence.¹⁰⁷² It seems logical to add intelligence, and insight into human nature.

At the time of the deployment to Bosnia, the Netherlands had no fixed rules for assigning the liaison or civil affairs tasks. In Lebanon, the contacts were maintained by the commanders or their deputies with the assistance of an interpreter, who was often Dutch. In practice, the interpreters relieved the commanders of much work, they prevented misunderstandings, and they sometimes even fulfilled the function of political adviser. When the first reconnaissance exercises took place in Bosnia for Dutchbat, it was decided on the recommendation of the Canadians to send a separate group for negotiation and mediation.

In September 1993, an orientation visit by the Chief of Staff of the Army Crisis Staff and the Commander of the 11th Infantry Company produced the recommendation that Dutchbat should take a section of liaison officers. Interpreters, however, would be made available by the UN.¹⁰⁷³ The liaison section was to maintain both military and civil contacts on behalf of the commander. After Lebanon, this was an innovation, because the commander and the section leaders there had maintained the contacts themselves. The liaison function had to be given shape in practice.

The selection of the liaison officers was formally a task of the forming unit, the brigade. In practice, the Army Crisis Staff designated the people. The staffing of this section was a great problem, especially for Dutchbat II and III, so that hardly any attention was paid to who ended up in a particular position, as long as someone did. This is how the crucial position of responsible liaison officer (S5), for which highly specific demands had to be made on the person concerned, came to be filled by arbitrarily assigned Majors, because it was deemed necessary for the task to be performed by a Major. A Dutchbat officer described this Netherlands Army system as 'making a pile of building blocks, not assigning tasks'.¹⁰⁷⁴ Therefore, the selection was not based on insights into human nature, judgement, social intelligence and background knowledge. It would appear that the responsible bodies were satisfied if they were able to find officers who 'would just go and sort the job out'; the question of whether they could collaborate productively with individuals from other (operational) cultures remained in the background.

Then there was the problem of communication. The Dutchbat II liaison officers were given a couple of hours of language training, whereas their colleagues in the first and third battalion received none at all. Because they could have a Dutch interpreter only in the initial period, convoys usually embarked without anyone who spoke the language. This problem became extremely pressing when a Dutchbat II relief convoy was held up in December 1994. It then proved impossible to talk with the Bosnian Serbs, because they spoke no English; only their commander spoke a couple of words of French. The convoy commander, who was also the liaison officer, spoke only a couple of words of Serbo-Croat and also a little French, which proved to be insufficient for an exchange of views, and after a number of attempts they had to give up.¹⁰⁷⁵

Because of the hybrid duties, a peacekeeping operation makes more demands on a liaison unit than a conventional military operation. Dutchbat had to perform its military task as well as actively working on an improvement in the living conditions of the population. The peacekeepers had to maintain contacts with the various civil and military parties as well as helping to facilitate the work of the relief organizations. There were also differences between 'green' and 'blue' action with respect to the

¹⁰⁷² He recommended that only volunteers be taken on for this position, and for their suitability to be assessed during the training.

¹⁰⁷³ CRST. Appendix A to internal memo 101 Gngevvp 27/09/93 no. 10929 'First impression report orientation visit UNPROFOR'.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Interview J.H.A. Rutten, 26/09/01.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Sie LL. Debriefing report SM Krouwel 1995.

liaison task. Captain Jellema of Dutchbat I describes this as follows: in 'green' exercises, the operations officer always functioned as the nerve centre. 'Blue' peace action set other requirements on the role of the staff officers: now it was mainly the liaison officer and the Intelligence officer who informed the battalion commanders which actions were appropriate.¹⁰⁷⁶

It was decided on these grounds to assign a Major and a Warrant Officer to Dutchbat I, who were to act as liaison section, reporting to section 1 (Personnel). In practice, two men proved to be too few, because the battalion was distributed over two areas (Simin Han and Srebrenica). Therefore, at the rotation with Dutchbat II, the liaison section was expanded to two soldiers in Simin Han and three in the enclave, both under the leadership of a Major. The section was then placed as an independent unit directly under the Battalion Commander. Dutchbat III also had two Majors and a non-commissioned officer in Srebrenica; although, in practice, the military security officer also acted as a member of the liaison section. The Dutch interpreter Captain P. Lindgreen, who served in both of the first two battalions, found the first construction clearer for all parties concerned.¹⁰⁷⁷ He felt that the Muslims also failed to understand a theoretical division between the civil and the military part of the liaison task: 'because it was war, everything was military in principle'.¹⁰⁷⁸

The task of the liaison section had to be given shape in practice. The officers made and maintained contacts with military and civil organizations inside and directly outside the enclave on behalf of the Battalion Commander. The consultation with the various relief bodies and the civilian population was also within its scope. They attended official meetings, celebrations, cultural evenings and sporting events. Occasionally there were also visits to people's homes. Successful collaboration demanded regular contact, and preferably involving the same people. Therefore, the Dutchbat II and III liaison officers arrived in Bosnia earlier than the rest of the battalion so as to have more opportunity to take over the laboriously built-up contacts and goodwill.

22. Liaison in Dutchbat I and II

It soon became clear to Dutchbat I that the military part of the task was very ambitiously formulated, and probably too ambitiously. With the resources available it would be practically impossible to effectively seal off the enclave and to secure the borders. Therefore they set themselves as a minimum the goal of maintaining the status quo in the enclave and creating calm. This meant that the population of the enclave would have to be given the opportunity to regain some prospects for their existence, and that the Bosnian Serbs would have to take account of the presence of Dutchbat. Captain H. ten Have arrived ahead of schedule in the enclave and started to investigate the military situation after consulting his Canadian counterparts. The head of the liaison section, Major A. Derksen, occupied himself in the first instance with the civil matters.

Battalion Commander Vermeulen and Derksen had to assume that Dutchbat was not in a position to respond to all incidents by military means. They therefore tried to identify the most useful attitude in the relationship with the population, and opted mainly to talk and to listen to them a great deal. In addition, the battalion should not adopt too high a profile; the attitude towards the local population was shaped by the idea: 'these men have been through terrible things, they have experience'.¹⁰⁷⁹

Part of the introduction was also that Dutchbat was confronted with all sorts of problems by the Bosnian Muslims and was also tested out. There were regular demonstrations at the gate of the compound, which were apparently centrally orchestrated. Dutchbat developed strategies to deal with issues of this kind. For instance, Dutch made video recordings, demonstrating, for example, possession

¹⁰⁷⁶ Jellema & Klep, *First-In*. p. 165.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Sie LL. Evaluation report Paul Lindgreen, 6/12/94. Internal Memorandum MID/KL. Personal and confidential.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Interview P. Lindgreen, 22/02/01.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Interview A.J. Derksen, 10/04/01.

of weapons. This meant that there was a record of events, which was a good starting position in discussions. These video recordings were also made of Serbian artillery around the enclave border.¹⁰⁸⁰

The first task of the liaison section was to establish contacts with the VRS and ABiH and to gather as much information as possible. This information was bundled in the highly informative volume *'Info t.b.v. Sie 5.'*¹⁰⁸¹ There was a weekly meeting with ABiH leaders in the enclave. The contact with the VRS was more difficult; a request had to be submitted first and it was always unclear whether the meetings would go ahead. In the beginning there was daily consultation with the civil authorities, because of the tense situation that prevailed, whereas later twice a week proved to be sufficient. Usually these were attended by the Vice-President and sometimes also the President of the Opstina. The contact with the humanitarian relief organizations was nearly a daily occurrence. In these meetings, they exchanged information and made agreements on collaboration.

In the first instance, Dutchbat I had only a Muslim interpreter available, and that made it difficult to make contact with the VRS. The Commander of the first battalion was very pleased that 'when I arrived with an endless lament, [I] was given a Captain Interpreter, who was worth his weight in gold, and gave us what we needed'.¹⁰⁸² This Dutch interpreter, Lindgreen, was formally allocated to the commander, but he would also take part in the liaison work and was involved in preparing for and conducting discussions. He was familiar with the culture and was therefore able to give the correct instructions and evaluate discussions. Lindgreen's knowledge of local customs and his mild-mannered nature enabled him to calm tempers or break the ice in a tense situation.

When he was on leave, the liaison section immediately felt the repercussions. As a Dutch interpreter, Lindgreen did not depend on the local rulers, and therefore the population dared to speak more freely with him than with the local interpreters. On the other hand, he could also take more liberties, for example, a true-to-life translation of Derksen's fit of rage.

The personal interpretation of liaison functions was extremely important. This was evident not only in Lindgreen's case, but also in that of Dutchbat I's formal liaison officer, Derksen, who was also commander of the commandos attached to Dutchbat. Derksen informed and coached his commander in negotiations and consultation. Vermeulen called Derksen 'a crucial figure', who had contacts on various levels in and around the enclave and was very well informed of the situation. Derksen was able to get on with everyone: with VRS Colonel Vukovic he talked about his fascination for Eskimos and with Oric about special forces.¹⁰⁸³ Naser Oric looked up to Derksen and addressed him as 'fellow commando-commander'.¹⁰⁸⁴ Derksen fulfilled his liaison function with support from Lindgreen, and during his leave he was replaced by the Intelligence officer, Ten Have.

The first battalion succeeded in getting the ABiH and VRS around the negotiating table a couple of times for discussions on such subjects as the borders of the enclave, the exchange of mortal remains, evacuations and family reunification. These meetings, by way of exception, took place in the compound. Consultation with the local authorities or with the ABiH leaders in the enclave usually took place in the PTT building in Srebrenica, where the UNMOs were based. Derksen also tried systematically to explain to the soldiers the meaning of respect for the population: for example, not throwing sweets, but simply handing them out. His assumption was that the blue helmets had arrived not as an occupation force, but as guests. This fact should determine their attitude and behaviour. Derksen also saw no problem if someone returned from leave with a present for a Muslim. This was later to be strictly forbidden.

In July 1994, the originally congenial atmosphere between the Dutch battalion and the ABiH began to turn. Members of the aid station team, after a report that a pregnant woman needed help, ran into an obstacle at the Swedish Shelter Project consisting of thirteen iron bars each with fourteen

¹⁰⁸⁰ Interview J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

¹⁰⁸¹ See archive Section Lessons Learned KL.

¹⁰⁸² Tabak (ed.), *Tussen hamer en aambeeld*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁰⁸³ Tabak (red.), *Tussen hamer en aambeeld*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Interview P. Lindgreen, 31/03/00.

spikes. The battalion decided to suspend medical assistance to the Swedish Shelter Project for a week to make clear that incidents of this kind were unacceptable.¹⁰⁸⁵

Derksen also faced the task of building a workable relationship with the Bosnian Serbs. He tried to find some sympathy for their rhetoric and showed willing to listen to hours of stories, sometimes without an interpreter, to be in a position to do business with them later. Derksen told the NIOD that he once threatened the VRS General Zivanovic that he would leave with the entire battalion when they started to curse him. In contacts with Muslims and Bosnian Serbs, Derksen tried where possible to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and a willingness to solve problems together. This occasionally led to success: when Bosnian Serbs smuggled ammunition into the enclave at OP-P, he succeeded in persuading VRS Major Nicolic to intervene.¹⁰⁸⁶

The bundle *'Info for Sie 5'*, which was prepared by the Dutchbat I Intelligence and liaison sections, contains a number of conclusions and recommendations. It firstly points to the significance of interpreters who form 'a terribly important link' in the conversation with the two parties. It also observes that 'acceptance of the liaison team by the parties involved in the conflict and being completely familiar with the prevailing problems is an absolute must'. There is also a recommendation 'to expand the organization of 12 Infbat (Airmobile), in other words the later Dutchbat II, on deployment to the former Yugoslavia by at least 3 liaison teams.'¹⁰⁸⁷ As mentioned, there would be an expansion, but not on the scale proposed.

At the time of Dutchbat II, the nature of the various contacts gradually changed.¹⁰⁸⁸ Consultation with the Bosnian Serbs was less frequent; Vukovic was still the most approachable. The weekly meetings with the Opstina were continued. The Vice-President of the Opstina, Hamdija Fejzic, was increasingly often the contact. In the first period of the deployment, the Dutchbat II liaison section still had the availability of the experienced Lindgreen. After his rotation, a Dutch soldier who spoke Serbo-Croat and could interpret was available. He was less in a position to fulfil the liaison role than his predecessor, but he too was able to contribute to the progress of the contacts.

At the time of Dutchbat II and III, it was increasingly the observation post commanders and the medics, as opposed to the liaison officers, who maintained contacts with the local population. The liaison officers concentrated ever more on civil and military leaders rather than on civilians in general.

After his stay in Srebrenica, Dutchbat interpreter Paul Lindgreen wrote an evaluation for the Dutch Military Intelligence Service and added recommendations for the following interpreters. The document reads as a lessons learned analysis, not only for liaison officers and interpreters, but also for all Dutch soldiers on a peace mission.¹⁰⁸⁹

Lindgreen advocated, for example, that the training should pay attention not only to superficial cultural differences, but also discuss the associated practical side. For example, blue helmets should not only take off their shoes before entering a Muslim house, but should also write their names in the shoes. The children of the family would often be told to clean guests' shoes, and this measure would save the owners endlessly searching for their own shoes. Lindgreen also advised that the men should always have an 'airmobile mug' with them, so that they could always drink from a clean mug if they were invited anywhere. It was very important now and again for peace soldiers to put themselves in the position of 'the other': 'How would you react, driven from hearth and home, your family murdered, and a foreigner comes and tells you what to do?' He wrote: 'remember that you are a guest in the most beautiful country in the world and with the nicest people'.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Jellema & Klep, *First-In*, pp. 165-166.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Interview A.J. Derksen, 10/04/01.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Sie LL. *'Info for Sie 5'*.

¹⁰⁸⁸ For the description of Section 5 within Dutchbat II, use is made of F.A. Ebbelaar, *'Sectie 5: modieuze 'uitzendballast'?* ('Section 5: fashionable 'deployment ballast?'), *Militaire Spectator* 164(1995)7 pp. 319-324.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Sie LL. Evaluation report P. Lindgreen 06/12/94 Internal Memorandum MID/Netherlands Army Personal and confidential.

Lindgreen also had comments on the way in which contacts with the warring factions were maintained. He pointed out that at Bosnian Serb or Croat checkpoints, the commander should be treated with complete respect, and was therefore always right. He had observed how tense or even anxious Dutch soldiers were in transit, and how officers sometimes appeared extremely irritated in confrontations. This made a poor impression on the soldiers of the warring factions. The crew of the checkpoints often understood well what the Dutch were saying to each other, because they always had someone among them who had worked in the Netherlands or Germany. What is more, he had noticed that, in addition to the Dutchbat men, several officers and non-commissioned officers had an insufficient command of English, which was a further obstacle for the battalion's external communication.¹⁰⁹⁰

Under Dutchbat I, it already rapidly became clear how much time and trouble was involved in building and maintaining a wide spectrum of contacts with the various parties in and around the enclave. It was therefore no luxury to have specialists for this work. In the civil area, there were furthermore so many diverse subjects involved that the liaison officers also had to coordinate within the unit. However, there were no clear terms of reference, and there was therefore a large degree of freedom in interpreting the task. In this way, significant differences developed in the accents applied by each officer and each battalion.

23. Liaison in Dutchbat III

Karremans, the Commander of Dutchbat III, felt afterwards that the preparation of his unit was deficient with respect to how the liaison task should take shape on the ground: 'I didn't have the faintest idea what they had to do'. According to him, the Netherlands Army provided too little substance in advance: 'It was a matter of trial and error, because we had never worked with an S5. I also just had them thrust upon me. The brigade or The Hague did the selection.'

The Dutchbat III liaison officers (S5s) concerned also perceived this lack of clarity and lack of training and information. They were assigned to be the liaison section of the battalion, while no one had a view of what their task should be and how the preparation could best be organized. Ultimately they raked together some information themselves and took advice from their predecessor from the first battalion.¹⁰⁹¹ They did follow the negotiating course at Clingendael, where they were taught how to deal with an interpreter. The ardent attempts made by Karremans before the deployment to have a Dutch interpreter allocated to his battalion failed, however. They had to resort to local interpreters. The training did not cover the possibly related problems.

In general, the Dutchbat III liaison section continued the practice of their colleagues in the previous battalion. The section held a coordination meeting every day in the Srebrenica PIT building with UNMOs, UnCivPol and NGOs. In addition there were weekly separate discussions with the VRS (Colonel Vukovic disappeared from the picture), the ABiH and the Opstina (usually in the person of Fejzic).

The ABiH appeared to be considerably less impressed with the Dutchbat III liaison section than with their predecessors. Ekrim Salihovic, the ABiH liaison officer, recalled that he found it difficult to work with the battalion's two liaison Majors; according to him, they did not listen, knew everything better and were patronizing towards Muslims.¹⁰⁹² The civilian administration was satisfied with the liaison officers. Irritations in the ABiH sometimes involved simple matters, which a properly trained liaison officer could have prevented. For instance, there was a severe shortage of salt in the enclave, which had immediate consequences for public health. The salt prices on the black market were also extremely high, up to DM 40 a kilo. Under these circumstances, it was perplexing for the Muslim

¹⁰⁹⁰ Sie LL. Evaluation report Paul Lindgreen 06/12/94 Internal Memorandum MID/Netherlands Army Personal and confidential.

¹⁰⁹¹ Interview P. Boering, 17/12/02.

¹⁰⁹² Interview Ekrem Salihovic, 02/12/98.

personnel in the compounds to see salt thrown on the floor in the kitchen after frying chips, to stop it being slippery.¹⁰⁹³ Karremans himself admitted that he would have preferred to have seen two liaison people with each of B and C Company, and six with the battalion staff (three civil and three military), and in addition a separate person for contacts with the NGOs. 'Which quickly brings you to ten people'.¹⁰⁹⁴ They were simply not available; the battalion therefore had to learn to live with this structural scarcity.

24. The psychology of the peacekeeper

The recent United Nations peace missions make great demands on the participating soldiers, in terms of both military qualities, and adequate preparation and mental stability. It has been shown above how much this was also applicable to the deployment of Dutchbat in Bosnia. By way of concluding this chapter on the civil side of the peace mission, there now follows a summary of a number of its problematic aspects, which will be related to insights from recent literature on peace missions in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere.

In the international literature on *peacekeeping* operations, attention has been paid to the consequences of deploying soldiers for peace operations. A much-repeated quote of the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammerskjöld, was made for good reason: 'Peacekeeping is not a soldier's job, but only a soldier can do it'. This adage suggests that peacekeeping is somewhat different from war. In addition to clearly military capabilities such as discipline, the ability to cope with violence, or to perform under difficult circumstances, supplementary skills are also required. This involves a wide spectrum of qualities: properties such as flexibility, social intelligence and knowledge, as well as skills including experience with negotiating techniques, language proficiency and the capacity to cope with provocations and threats. These qualities were all the more necessary in the conflict in Bosnia; with his statement, Hammerskjöld appeared to be way ahead of his time.

In an article, the Canadian anthropologist, Donna Winslow, who carried out an extensive investigation into Canadian peacekeepers in Somalia, assumes two fundamental differences between peacekeeping missions and regular armed operations. The first is the principle of 'impartiality', and the second the principle of 'non-coercion', which is the achievement of objectives without exacting them by force.¹⁰⁹⁵ In peace operations, the keywords happen to be 'patience', 'empathy' and 'diplomacy'.¹⁰⁹⁶ It is not about defeating the enemy but of controlling or if possible resolving a conflict. Winslow calls this problem 'a paradigmatic shift for the soldier involved, who now needs to see the conflicts as the enemy, not the belligerents'.¹⁰⁹⁷ The goal of the military action is therefore no longer the military victory over an enemy, but stabilization and elimination of the conflict.

The American Franklin Pinch addresses the problem that the decision whether and under what conditions to deploy soldiers in the first instance is a political one. The political decision-making will usually follow its own agenda, which can be in conflict with the 'train-up' time that is necessary for an effective deployment of troops. In particular, the creation of realistic expectations relative to the task to be performed is a very important part of the preparation, but also extremely time-consuming.¹⁰⁹⁸

In the case of Dutchbat, the plan and the preparation were partly problematic. The political string-pulling with the UN about Dutchbat's destination meant that it was impossible in the preparation

¹⁰⁹³ Confidential interview (85).

¹⁰⁹⁴ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 01/12/00.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Winslow, D. 'Should combat Soldiers be Peacekeepers?' in *Peacekeeping Canada*, Canadian Council for International Peace and Security, Ottawa, 1998.

¹⁰⁹⁶ See also A.J. van Leusden 'Ethiek bij noodhulp. Reflectie op normen en waarden naar aanleiding van recente (noodhulp)operaties' ('Ethics in emergency relief. Reflection on norms and values in response to recent (emergency relief) operations'), *De Militaire Spectator* 165 (1996).

¹⁰⁹⁷ Winslow, D. 'Should combat Soldiers be Peacekeepers?', p.4.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Franklin C. Pinch 'Screening and selection of personnel for peace operations: a Canadian Perspective, in: David R. Segal, *Peace Operations: Workshop Proceedings U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences*, Virginia, 1994, p. 59.

period to anticipate the situation on the ground, and the nature of the problems there. Practically all the available time and energy had to be spent on a 'conventional' manner of training and preparing, and this coincided with the main interest of the men. The preparation on the civil and humanitarian part of the mission was pushed aside, but it was actually extremely necessary. Dutchbat I could still take corrective measures, but the later battalions encountered increasing problems with this part as a consequence of the lack of people and resources.

During the training and preparation, there was hardly any time and attention for reflection on the meaning of the specific standards and values, historical and social background to the conflict, tolerance towards other cultures, language proficiency and related subjects. It is perfectly plausible that such skills should form part of regular training.

An evaluation of peace missions in the former Yugoslavia in fact observed the necessity for a reorientation:

'In a peacekeeping mission, the retraining of a combat soldier to a peacekeeping role is vital. Training of the mind is as important as physical training. Soldiers must be able to understand the culture and attitude of the local population and to de-escalate critical situations.'¹⁰⁹⁹

Insufficient insight into the social and political background to the conflict can lead, for example, to participants in a peace mission having insufficient respect for the worth of people in need. A notorious example is the way in which soldiers in Mogadishu (Somalia) threw bread from a truck to the starving population, as if they were feeding animals. An example of a respectful attitude, on the other hand, is the way in which Karremans dealt with the issue of waste food in Srebrenica. By having good food packed and sent to those most in need.

Winslow investigated the experiences of UNPROFOR officers, which revealed that nine out of ten officers found the standard military training insufficient as a preparation for deployment as a UN officer. They themselves identified the deficiencies in the training, such as the knowledge of local culture, training in how to remain friendly in hostile surroundings, and dealing with the media.¹¹⁰⁰ According to the American researcher Dana P. Eyre, soft skills such as training in cultural awareness and negotiation skills are among the most important instruments of peacekeepers, especially for those in command. According to Winslow, the Canadians also took along reservists for this reason, because they usually performed better in the relationship with civilians.¹¹⁰¹

Age and experience of life are of great importance. Major Wieffer, the Dutchbat III Intelligence and operations officer endorsed this for the deployment to Srebrenica:

'The problem is that you come into a world that in any case is not the world of an 18 to 21-year old - and that is the average age around there - and are unable to understand a number of things. Perhaps there are also a number of things you do not want to understand. Of course, this does not contribute to a correct view, a correct understanding.'¹¹⁰²

One of the Dutchbat members, who afterwards publicly admitted misconduct towards the Muslims, stated that it happened because of being too young to be deployed: 'I was still an adolescent, and then it is hard to comprehend a war that is not your own.'¹¹⁰³ An experienced Dutchbat III non-

¹⁰⁹⁹ Wolfgang Biermann and Martin Vadset (ed.), 'From UNPROFOR to UNPF. Peacekeeping with Peace Support but without Peace' in Biermann and Vadset (eds.), *UN Peacekeeping in Trouble: Lessons Learned from the Former Yugoslavia*, Aldershot, 1999, p. 55.

¹¹⁰⁰ Biermann & Ugland 'Lessons Learned in the Field', pp. 94-95.

¹¹⁰¹ Interview with Donna Winslow in the magazine *Civile/Militair* (2001)1, p. 5.

¹¹⁰² Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

¹¹⁰³ A. Kranenberg, 'Moord op de witte muizen', *De Volkskrant*, 22/07/00.

commissioned officer acknowledged with hindsight that many soldiers had difficulty accepting people as they were, in particular the inexperienced young people. When asked how you should train people to be peacekeepers he answered: 'First send them back to their mothers to learn normal manners, normal social behaviour'.¹¹⁰⁴

The mission in Bosnia that followed UNPROFOR and the Dayton accords was IFOR (Implementation Force), and it also involved Dutch soldiers. A study of their experiences shows how important the above is.¹¹⁰⁵ The investigation was set up with the negative experiences of the Dutch UNPROFOR soldiers in mind. The experiences of the IFOR soldiers were completely different: the mandate was clearer, the soldiers had more authorities, the mission was better led, they were more robustly armed and there was a peace agreement to maintain. It was possible to tailor the preparation to these more favourable circumstances, and likewise the motivation.

The Dutch blue helmets in the Srebrenica enclave had to contend with problems with motivation as a consequence of the lack of meaning given to the mission and the related 'working and living conditions'. The symptoms were not applicable exclusively to the experiences of the Dutch battalions and to the situation in Bosnia, as is apparent from studies from Canada, the United States, Great Britain and Sweden.¹¹⁰⁶ The Swedish researcher Eva Johansson studied the experiences of the Swedish UNPROFOR soldiers.¹¹⁰⁷ She concludes that the cumulative experiences of 'low intensity stress' formed a greater burden on the soldiers than the tension as a consequence of one-off confrontations, of shooting incidents or life-threatening situations. She assumes that experience of life, with an adequate preparation on all levels, is of great importance in performing missions of this kind well.¹¹⁰⁸

Johansson points out how important it is during the mission to keep informing the participating soldiers about the situation on the ground, and specifically also about the social and cultural aspects, traditions, and standards and values of the different population groups. It was evident in each succeeding Swedish unit how the tension between the unit and the local population increased the longer the stay lasted, and confrontations with the ABiH took place. The neutral attitude of the soldiers did not match the expectations of the population, and in their eyes they served the local interests insufficiently. Neither could the blue helmets fulfil the hope of peace and security. This created dissatisfaction and frustration among the population towards the soldiers, which they, in their turn, found it difficult to cope with.¹¹⁰⁹ Just as with the Dutch battalions, it appeared as if the first Swedish battalion had the most positive experiences and the successive later units had increasing difficulty. Johansson also identifies the following as capacities that can contribute to a successful peace mission: flexibility, patience, diplomacy, tolerance and modesty.¹¹¹⁰ A Swedish soldier quoted by her expressed even more succinctly what it was actually about: 'in the first place, to be a good human being, not just a good soldier'.¹¹¹¹

¹¹⁰⁴ Confidential interview (85).

¹¹⁰⁵ A.L.W. Vogelhaar, J.L. Soeters and J.B.G. Born 'Working and Living in Bosnia: Experiences of Dutch IFOR Soldiers', pp. 113-131.

¹¹⁰⁶ Paul T. Bartone and Mark A. Vaitkus, 'Stress, Cohesion and Morale in Peacekeeping Operations' *Proceedings of the International Stress Workshop*, pp. 38-42; Laura L. Miller and Charles Moskos 'Humanitarians or Warriors?: Race, Gender, and Combat Status in Operation Restore Hope. In: *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 21(1995)4, pp. 615-637.

¹¹⁰⁷ Eva Johansson 'The Role of Peacekeepers in the 1990s: Swedish Experience in UNPROFOR', in: *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 23(1997)3, pp. 451- 466 and E. Johansson 'Swedish Lessons from Bosnia' in *NL Arms* 1998 p. 193-202.

¹¹⁰⁸ E. Johansson 'Swedish Lessons from Bosnia' in *NL Arms*, 1998, pp. 196, 1998 and 201.

¹¹⁰⁹ Eva Johansson 'The Role of Peacekeepers in the 1990s: Swedish Experience in UNPROFOR' in: *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 23(1997)3, p. 459.

¹¹¹⁰ Johansson, E. 'Peacekeeping and military Professionalism-The experience of the Swedish Bosnian Battalion' Inter-University seminar on Armed Forces and society, paper presented at the Biennial international Conference, Baltimore 1995.

¹¹¹¹ Eva Johansson 'The Role of Peacekeepers in the 1990s: Swedish Experience in UNPROFOR' in: *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 23(1997)3, p. 464.

The skills and attitudes that soldiers have acquired to be able to operate and survive in possibly large-scale military conflicts are insufficient for coping with the problems of modern peace operations. It is not possible to rely purely on standard procedures, the chain of command and orders from above to deal with unexpected and unpredictable situations in the most productive way. Peacekeeping missions in obscure conflicts such as in Bosnia are often systematically associated with lack of clarity, in the form of vague assignments, unworkable Rules of Engagement, lack of knowledge of the circumstances on the ground and queries about the mission objectives and their own role in it. Concerning the giving of meaning, it is of great importance for peacekeeper activities to be blended in with the 'military self image'.¹¹¹² This also demands good preparation and training.

The psychological aspects of peacekeeping missions are of a completely different order than those of combat missions. In peacekeeping operations such as in Bosnia, there is often an element of multiple, difficult to distinguish parties, where the interrelationships are often also difficult to assess. The soldiers have to determine their attitude not only towards the warring factions, but also to a multitude of humanitarian organizations, UN institutions, national governments and media. In addition, they have to be constantly alert for shelling, other hostilities and the confrontation with barbarity. To be able to establish a position in this, the participating soldiers need more than the familiar distinction between 'the good guys and the bad guys'. The basic training also nearly always assumes a clearly identifiable enemy. Training and preparation that assumes a more complex situation is especially relevant to peace missions. For the participating soldiers this implies a great tolerance of complex situations and associated frustrations.¹¹¹³

Peacekeeping demands a different mental constitution of individual soldiers. Soldiers can no longer react according to customs and procedures learned during training. Furthermore, peace operations are on a smaller scale and therefore soldiers are much more directly confronted with the consequences of their actions and decisions. The Israeli military psychologist Reuven Gal points to contradictions between the mental preparation of soldiers on combat duties and the execution of peace duties. He points out that they are motivated and trained in principle for the first category. They have been professionally geared up for fight as opposed to flight; they work on the assumption of group cohesion, confidence in their commanders and involvement in the nature of the conflict.

Where peacekeeping operations are concerned, matters are entirely different. The fact is that in their profession soldiers are hardly trained to deal with civilians and civil organizations.¹¹¹⁴

The team spirit within the unit can also suffer through a lack of the familiar group cohesion. This was not an issue for Dutchbat, but units often functional in their composition and are drawn from several countries. Most soldiers then no longer work in the unit in which they were trained, and the commander is often not the original superior officer. A familiar orientation point such as patriotism can no longer function as a motivator, and the feeling that they are working for a good cause can rapidly be overshadowed by an obstinate reality.¹¹¹⁵

¹¹¹² See also Thomas W. Britt, 'Psychological Ambiguities in Peacekeeping' in: Harvey J. Langholtz (ed.), *The Psychology of Peacekeeping*, Westport/London, 1998, pp. 111-128.

¹¹¹³ See for example Franklin C. Pinch, 'Screening and selection of personnel for peace operations: a Canadian Perspective' in: Peace Operations: Workshop Proceedings David R. Segal U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioural and Social Sciences, Virginia, 1994, p. 59 and Winslow, D. 'Should combat Soldiers be Peacekeepers?' and Olivier A.K. MacDonals 'Peacekeeping Lessons Learned: An Irish Perspective in: *International Peacekeeping*, Vol 4(1997)47, pp. 94-103; see also A.J. van Leusden 'Ethiek bij noodhulp. reflectie op normen en waarden naar aanleiding van recente (noodhulp)operaties' in: *De Militaire Spectator* 165(1996)4.

¹¹¹⁴ According to Reuven Gal, this contains a double paradox. Much military action is diametrically opposed to human instinct and reflexes. This instinct involves flight in response to impending danger. However, it is expected of a soldier that he actually puts himself in that danger. He is therefore trained in unnatural behaviour. In peacekeeping operations, however, he must await developments again. In this sense, the profession of peacekeeper is doubly paradoxical. Reuven Gal in: J. Schoenman 'Peacekeeping als dubbele paradox' ('Peacekeeping as a double paradox'), *Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht*, August 1996, pp. 10-13.

¹¹¹⁵ J. Schoenman, Reuven Gal in 'Peacekeeping als dubbele paradox', *Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht* August 1996 pp. 10-13.

In 1999, Winslow and her Dutch colleague, Christ Klep, compared the peace operations in Somalia and East-Bosnia, with the telling title *Learning Lessons the Hard Way*.¹¹¹⁶ The reason was that at first sight there were many similarities in the reactions to the events by the soldiers, politicians, media and public opinion in both countries. While concentrating on the topics of military-civil relationships and the way in which military organizations deal with scandals and crises, they indeed identified a number of clear similarities. In both peace missions, 'combat soldiers' were deployed, but they were given no 'non-combat' training. The actual destination was only announced at the last moment. The decisions to deploy were taken under public and political pressure. In both cases 'airmobile' battalions were involved, which were given armoured personnel carriers, so that they were forced to act as armed infantry.

Furthermore, the missions were crippled by confusion about the Rules of Engagement, extremely deficient information, stress through difficult living conditions and the feeling of being threatened and deceived. The statements in the media and the public response also showed close similarities: in both cases it not only concerned the reputation of the Armed Forces and the deployed units, but there also appeared to be some erosion of national pride. What specifically was not discounted in this remote perception was a number of factors, which were identified above. As peacekeepers, the Dutchbat men had to rely on characteristics and capacities on which they were neither recruited nor selected. The men of the Airmobile Brigade were selected on physical qualities: for them, the service was mainly a sporting challenge, in which the core task consisted of applying force to achieve a particular objective. On the other hand, the Bosnian peace mission required in the first place patience, diplomacy, restraint, a clear understanding of unclear terms of reference and a knowledge of local issues.

25. Tension between the objective of the mission and the motivation of the participants

In Srebrenica, Dutchbat's duty was to safeguard the enclave against hostilities, to protect the population through its presence, to demilitarize the Muslims and generally to create conditions in which humanitarian relief could be provided. In practice, they took the last point to mean that the Dutch battalions should also provide humanitarian relief, which brought some of the soldiers into direct contact with the population. They tried to enforce protection against hostilities through regular patrols, manning observation posts and a very large number of reports. The units were sent on the basis of the time-honoured concept that their presence - showing the flag - would reduce hostilities between the warring factions and could so lead to peace negotiations. In practice, this proved to be infeasible: the battalions were in fact powerless. Although the presence was indeed important for the population of the enclave, the entire situation deteriorated more and more. The tasks that were executed by the battalions appeared to have an insufficient or undesirable influence on the warring factions.

In due course this was particularly harmful to the motivation of the participants. Sergeant Major W. de Wildt, who had often been deployed himself, confirmed that the Ministry of Defence fairly often fails in its preparation of what people were going into. He feels that above all people must be given realistic training, and that they must be told that they will be confronted with dilemmas. According to him, the Defence organization must ensure that soldiers are not given the idea that they 'are going to make the world a better place in six months'.¹¹¹⁷

The information on the everyday practice in Bosnia was inadequate, and the ABiH and the VRS showed no respect, not to mention appreciation towards the blue helmets. The VRS blocked the access

¹¹¹⁶ Christ Klep and Donna Winslow 'Learning Lessons the Hard Way-Somalia and Srebrenica Compared' in: *Peace operations between War and Peace*, Vol. 10 (1999) 2, pp. 93-137.

¹¹¹⁷ Interview W. de Wildt in: 'In zes maanden kun je de wereld niet verbeteren' ('You can't make the world a better place in six months'), R. Gerharts, *Carré* 22(1999)1, pp. 20-21.

roads and humiliated the men passing through; the UNPROFOR Rules of Engagement did not permit a forceful response and the Bosnian Serbs knew it.

While Dutchbat was deemed to protect the Muslims in the enclave, the ABiH in the enclave also fired regularly on the Dutch soldiers, obstructed them and denied them access to certain parts of the area. In this way, the Dutchbat members became increasingly overcome by the feeling that the way in which they carried out their duties - in so far as that was still possible - was no longer of much relevance.¹¹¹⁸ Under these circumstances, positive experiences with the civilian population could still have contributed to giving meaning to the mission, to the feeling that at least there was a group that had an interest in Dutchbat's presence. As has been mentioned, such contacts were strictly constrained with a view to impartiality and security.

The crises around the Bandera Triangle in January 1995 brought the issue of how to act against the warring factions sharply into discussion. The temptation to do so probably did exist in Dutchbat, but UN headquarters remained on the line of impartiality: the order 'press hard' came from Tuzla, but that did not imply the order to use force: according to the Rules of Engagement force was to be used if only their own unit was attacked, not to restore Freedom or Movement. As Major Franken remarked afterwards to the NIOD: 'I have a vivid imagination, but how do you present that to the soldiers?'¹¹¹⁹

The notion of keeping the warring factions apart through observation and patrols was furthermore unrealistic. There was no buffer zone between the warring factions. The reality that Dutchbat found in East Bosnia turned out to be different from what New York and The Hague had imagined. The warring factions did not uphold the UN resolutions and did not allow themselves to be disciplined by blue helmets. While the Dutch regularly had to put themselves in dangerous situations, they could often take no action against violations, because the Rules of Engagement did not permit it.

An important dimension of the problem was also in the tension mentioned above between the requirement of impartiality of the peace mission and the will to provide humanitarian relief to the population of the enclave. According to analysts, one of the most important lessons of the entire UNPROFOR operation in Bosnia was the risk of mission creep.

Formally, the task of the peace mission included facilitating humanitarian relief by UNHCR and other organizations through its presence. According to the VRS, neutrality or impartiality suffered when UNPROFOR started not only to protect aid convoys and civilians but even also wanted to help the people in the Safe Areas themselves.¹¹²⁰ Under such circumstances, the VRS resorted to restricting convoys just as much as an offensive act such as mortar shelling. This could lead to escalation and to a state in which the UN itself would be considered to be a party and no longer an impartial third party. The discrepancy between the formal and the actual mission became ever larger.

Altogether, for Dutchbat this meant that the battalion was unable to solve the problems in the enclave, but on the contrary would actually increasingly become part of the problem. Looking back on this development, General Van Baal pointed out in 1995 how important it was that for all Dutchbat members to be clear in advance whether they were participating in a purely humanitarian mission with limited military support or a peacekeeping mission with associated humanitarian aspects.¹¹²¹ Furthermore, according to him, the nature of the mission must not be changed without a corresponding change in the associated mandate: otherwise the soldiers would run the risk of becoming a plaything of the warring factions. The problem in Bosnia was actually that from the outset the nature of the mission and the mandate were unclear, so there was also considerable opportunity for Dutchbat to become the plaything of the warring factions.

¹¹¹⁸ See also: Dijkman (ed.) *Dutchbat in vredesnaam*, p. 328.

¹¹¹⁹ Interview R. Franken, 04/05/01.

¹¹²⁰ For example, Stephen M. Hill and Shahin P. Malik *Peacekeeping and the United Nations*, Aldershot, 1996, p. 191.

¹¹²¹ Van Baal quoted in: H. van den Vijver, 'Trends: dilemma's in humanitaire hulpverlening' ('Trends: dilemmas in humanitarian relief'), *Maatschappij en krijgsmacht* 17 (1995)1, pp. 11-17.

26. Evaluation of the deployment of 'airmobile' as peacekeepers

Th. Karremans, the Commander of Dutchbat III, afterwards answered a question from the NIOD whether the battalion should actually have been sent:

'Yes and no. In terms of training level I would say 'yes'. That is what I also told the parents. Also in view of the circumstances that we were then aware of I would say 'yes'. But with respect to the question of whether the battalion was operationally ready, I say 'no'. We should have arranged the final exercise differently. Being without medicines, ammunition (...) We never anticipated that. A possible transition back from 'blue' to 'green' was also never considered during the advance training. But at a certain moment you are caught up in a process. You know that the 12th [Airmobile Battalion, or Dutchbat II] is waiting anxiously for you. At that point you cannot ask for another two months extra preparation. If the upper level had judged the circumstances better, then they would have done so and we would have been better prepared for a worst case scenario. But I myself always thought that we would manage. And let's be honest: if the fall had not taken place, we would have heaved a deep sigh of relief and at most discussed internally that we had pulled through with the necessary good luck. That did not apply only to us. In that respect you could also place question marks on the deployment of Dutchbat II.'¹¹²²

The deployment of the Airmobile Battalions did not involve a conscious selection of Dutchbat I, II and III specifically: it was sooner a matter of them being the only available BBT units (fixed-term contract professional soldiers).

Opting to deploy Airmobile Battalions nonetheless had consequences because the 'Red Berets' were not selected on capacities that would assure the success of the mission. For instance, boredom and drudgery for them entailed a certain risk for a peacekeeping mission, because during their combat training the men had actually built up an aggressive disposition. Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen, Commander of Dutchbat I, says of this:

'There are some things that are not in your control. You have to wait and see. If in the battalion you have trained eager beavers, red berets, to be aggressive, and you have to keep putting up with so much. That really hurts, it really hurts those lads, too.'¹¹²³

In a discussion with the NIOD, Major Franken confirmed that fighting units prepared in this way were actually not suited to the task: according to him it is not good 'to train lads so severely and then to use them as car park attendants. You then spoil an elite unit and you are asking for problems'.

Franken was alluding here to a remark made by the American General Colin Powell in response to a reduction in the American troops in Bosnia. Powell had said that he could not ask 'his 82nd Airmobile Division to take children to the *kindergarten*, it would destroy those units.'¹¹²⁴ Other countries also experienced that typical warrior units are less suited for peacekeeping operations. Besides the American 82nd Airmobile Division, this also applied to the British Parachute Regiment and to the deployment of Canadian paratroopers in Somalia in 1994. The last case showed how serious the

¹¹²² Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 01/12/00.

¹¹²³ Interview C.H.P. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.

¹¹²⁴ Interview R. Franken, 04/04/01.

consequences can be 'when a formation equipped with an exaggerated war-fighting ethos is inserted into an operation in which such an orientation was inappropriate.'¹¹²⁵

Vermeulen also says that to carry out peacekeeping operations, the acquired 'green' skills must partly be unlearned again. If this was not made sufficiently clear to the men it could lead to confusion, all the more so because there definitely are 'green' capacities that can positively influence the success of 'blue' action: for example, discipline and a professional image are factors that are of great importance as a first step in commanding the respect that a peacekeeper needs for carrying out his duties.¹¹²⁶

The great differences between regular military action ('green') and working in a UN context ('blue') are the core of the problem for the Airmobile part of Dutchbat. For example, the fact that they had to be visibly present wrong-footed not only Dutchbat but all the units that were deployed. They ran up against the practical question of what precisely a UN soldier is. Captain Groen told the NIOD the following:

'The men were not quick to allow themselves to be intimidated if they were fired on in a patrol. This is extremely 'blue' action, in essence. These lads were trained from the outset to respond aggressively immediately. So that did not happen.'¹¹²⁷

According to Major Franken, in view of the situation in the area, a battalion should never have been sent without the necessary escalation capacity at its disposal, in the form of heavier weapons or tanks. According to him, the deployment to Bosnia was based on the idea that no major problems were to be expected there, otherwise the decision to deploy the Dutch was incomprehensible to him.¹¹²⁸

It has already been mentioned that, in Karremans' judgment, the men had little experience of life, the diversity of the unit was too large, as well as the emphasis on the physical elements in winning the red beret. Dutchbat II Commander Everts also acknowledged afterwards the problems attached to deploying young people, who were selected mainly on the motivation to do challenging work: 'Above all, we send them into such an environment and we appeal to feelings such as 'get stuck in.' He therefore does not find it surprising, but nonetheless extremely dangerous, that someone there would let go occasionally.¹¹²⁹

Dutchbat I still consisted of ex-conscripts, as opposed to the usually less highly educated BBT personnel (professional soldiers) of both Dutchbat II and III. They were ill-prepared for being away from home for so long. According to B. Snoep, the chairman of the General Federation of Military Personnel, they were too caught up in an 'eight-to-five mentality' and the experience that - also in the case of exercises on the north German plain - they would be away from home for no longer than fourteen days. According to him, the battalions also never learned to operate independently and in isolation in a hostile area.¹¹³⁰ The last two Dutch battalions in particular had problems caused by the short preparation time in combination with the late personnel recruitment and the youth of the soldiers.

The short preparation time was insufficient for the very necessary team building. The cultivation of group cohesion is of great importance to a properly functioning unit. It is not just a matter of keeping morale high, but also of maintaining their own standards and values. The fact is that they must dare to challenge each other on undesirable behaviour. On the other hand, too strong a team spirit can actually exclude others, even within the battalion, as was mentioned in the story about B

¹¹²⁵ See Christopher Dandeker, 'Military Culture and Strategic Peacekeeping', in: Leena Parmar (ed.), *Military Sociology. Global Perspectives*, Jaipur, 1999, pp. 117-138.

¹¹²⁶ C.H.P. Vermeulen, 'Humanitair optreden als militaire missie' in: Baarda & Schoeman, *Werelden apart?*, pp. 85-93.

¹¹²⁷ Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.

¹¹²⁸ Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.

¹¹²⁹ Interview Peer Everts in *Mars in Cathedra*, 1995, pp. 2973 and 1995.

¹¹³⁰ Interview B. Snoep, 26/03/99.

Company. The points mentioned have been identified as risk factors for success also in international evaluations of recent peace missions.¹¹³¹ There were also elements of the peace mission that were difficult to train for in practice. Examples include operating in life-threatening situations and the associated stress and mortal fear, but it also applies to being crammed together and isolated for months with a minimum of comfort, or the long-term separation from family, the drudgery and the boredom.

The Canadian researcher Winslow believes that her investigation into the experiences of Canadian peacekeepers shows that specific training is necessary also during missions. The preparations lasting a couple of months or weeks before the deployment appear to be insufficient to integrate the usual military skills with non-traditional soft skills.¹¹³² Combat units are trained to survive under severe conditions. This carries the risk that they resort to the military survival mentality as soon as the conditions in a peace mission become more difficult. A similar argument for amending the training and information was made by Ch. F. Turpijn in the early 1990s in the Netherlands. He argued for an expansion of the familiar instrumental values of the Armed Forces such as effectiveness and efficiency. According to him, other types of values including, for example, those of a humanitarian, expressive, social and affective nature should also play an important role for a soldier.¹¹³³

If peacekeeping becomes a fundamental task of the Armed Forces, then it is to be expected that the training will be oriented accordingly. The necessary social education and personality building, which, for example, has been part of police training for a considerable time, will then also be applied to the individual soldier. Police officers are trained in dealing with conflict situations without there necessarily being a question of being armed: their approach is more oriented to de-escalating and resolving conflicts. This is also reflected in the Netherlands Royal Military Police training. C. Vroom, a former professor at the Netherlands Royal Military Academy, feels that, also in this specific respect, the Ministry of Defence has insufficiently made the shift from the pure military exercise to preparation for peace operations. The soldier who is required to act as a policeman in a peace operation feels uncomfortable if the training was deficient in that respect. A soldier's job is to control violence, whereas that of a policeman or policewoman is to reduce violence.¹¹³⁴ For a soldier, what it comes down to is being stronger than the opponent, whereas the policeman has to see through a difficult situation and come up with a solution in order to maintain public order. In peacekeeping operations, the participating soldiers have no enemy, and they actually have to position themselves between the factions, which demands more 'police' insight and 'police' capacities.

For peacekeeping, it is of great importance that the soldiers are well trained and are able to work with clear Rules of Engagement and an unambiguous mandate. Information on the background of the conflict and the political and cultural relationships on the ground appear to be just as indispensable, however. Major of Marines P.A. Grootendorst, who was sent to Cambodia in 1992 as Company Commander of a marine battalion, sees thorough information on the political, cultural and historical aspects of the country and its population as a necessary supplement to military training. It also appeared to be necessary for senior officers to have clear insights and skills in dealing with interpersonal and intercultural aspects. According to him, respect for and knowledge of the local population is a prerequisite for a UN operation such as the one in Cambodia.¹¹³⁵

In February 1995 Everts was to clash with the department in The Hague when on his return he gave a lecture in which he reflected on the deployment. In this lecture, he first spoke about a growing

¹¹³¹ See e.g. E. Johansson *'Swedish lessons from Bosnia'* (1998) and A.K. MacDonald *'Peacekeeping Lessons Learned: An Irish Perspective'* (1997), E. Muller *'Geweldsexcessen bij vredesoperaties: Somalia 1992-1995'* ('Violent excesses in peace operations: Somalia 1992-1995'), *Militaire Spectator*, 168(1999)9 pp. 501-508.

¹¹³² Winslow, D. *'Should combat Soldiers be Peacekeepers?'*, passim.

¹¹³³ Ch. F. Turpijn 'Vorming tot Verantwoordelijkheid' ('Educating for Responsibility') in *Kernvraag* 1992 (99). In: *Peacekeeping Canada* (Ottawa 1998), Canadian Council for International Peace and Security.

¹¹³⁴ Interview C. Vroom in: 'Professor Vroom over toekomstdebat: Verstandige zet' ('Professor Vroom on the debate about the future: a sensible move'), J. Oosthoek, *Legerkoerier* 49(1999)2, pp. 13-15.

¹¹³⁵ Interview P.A. Grootendorst in: G.C. van der Klis, 'Een solide trits van opleiding, trainingen en oefeningen' ('A solid trio of training, practice and exercises'), in: *Kernvraag* 1996/1 no. 108 p. 15.

anti-Muslim sentiment among his men.¹¹³⁶ Everts stated that he had done everything possible to call his men to order, but, according to him, he was 'fighting a losing battle'.¹¹³⁷ In his lecture, Everts stated that apart from the animosity towards the Muslims, he had been confronted with a number of other problems in Srebrenica. He also addressed the question of what it meant for a commander to be responsible for the men during what he called 'a sentence in the largest open-air prison in Europe'. Everts described his deployment as heavy in comparison with other peace missions. He pointed out that the outside world automatically viewed Dutchbat II to be a professional battalion, while they had only been active for between half a year and a year. The expectation was, however, that an excellently prepared professional battalion was ready and waiting.

The response of the Ministry of Defence was an attempt at damage control with respect to the publicity. The problem that Everts raised was ignored, there was no investigation and neither were measures taken to try to prevent similar developments during future deployment to Bosnia. The Deputy Director of the Information Service informed Minister Voorhoeve and the Commander that texts written by Lieutenant Colonel Everts would in future be screened by him, and that Everts would be accompanied during lectures by someone from the Information Services Department staff.¹¹³⁸

In the relationship with the population of the enclave the Battalion Commander had to set the tone. The leaders had to impress on the soldiers that they had to behave correctly towards the population, and accept people for what they were. In times of tension, for example, it is inevitable that opportunities present themselves within their own group for making cynical jokes. If they are about people in a difficult position, then it goes without saying that they must not get to hear them. Violations in dealing with the local population must be punished, to hold up the standard to colleagues and to show the host country that disrespectful behaviour is not tolerated.¹¹³⁹ Military discipline is extremely important during peacekeeping operations, but it is questionable whether the rules are sufficiently tailored to individual behaviour, which can actually have consequences for the battalion as a whole. The fact is that the population sees the battalion as a unit. If one soldier does something objectionable to the population, the following week another soldier will have a stone thrown at his head.

Everts had arrived in the enclave with clear-cut ideas of how he intended to set to work. After spending some time in Srebrenica, he amended his ideas: the regime became less rigid, Everts became more flexible with respect to the local population and he made an effort to establish humanitarian projects to give new substance to the meaning of the mission.

The same happened during Karremans' command. After a time the rules became more flexible and Karremans attempted, in spite of the difficult situation, to do as much as possible for the population. It is noteworthy that out of many discussions with ex-Dutchbat members, it emerged that they did not think of Karremans as a 'man of the troops', but that he did have a great deal of heart for his personnel. The former can probably be explained by the commander's detached style of command and his personality. It was noticeable that Karremans spent little time with his soldiers in the evenings. The extraordinarily difficult conditions aggravated this: almost all his attention was taken up with arranging, telephoning, drawing up plans, and meetings.

¹¹³⁶ This lecture was given by Lieutenant Colonel P.L.E.M. Everts on 23 February 1995 at a meeting of the Netherlands Royal Association for Military Studies. The lecture was published in the journal *'Mars in Catbedra'* pp. 2970-2977. This item aroused the interest of the Ministry of Defence because a Volkskrant journalist quoted parts of the lecture in an article.

¹¹³⁷ E. Nysingh, 'Niet alleen Nederlanders anti-Moslim', *De Volkskrant*, 02/09/95.

¹¹³⁸ Memorandum from the Information Services Department H.P.M. Kreemers to Minister, SG BLS e.a. 1 September 1995 no. V95016779 subject 'Remarks made by Lieutenant Colonel Everts'.

¹¹³⁹ For this item use has been made of the written correspondence on the subject with Reinoud van den Berkhof. Van den Berkhof went to work with MSF after his career in the navy, and took part in many missions to war zones as a member of the Psycho Social Care Unit.

27. Evaluation: the training relative to the population of the enclave

The requirement that the training must provide a firm foundation for dealing with the local population obviously also applied to the mission to Srebrenica, where the Dutch soldiers, as it were, were held in a confined space with the local population.

In the deployment, however, little appears to have been learned from the experiences of the marines. The Royal Netherlands Army apparently wanted to reinvent the wheel. The marines in particular, on the basis of earlier missions, paid much attention to *team-building* and cultivating communication skills, and the Commando Corps had also started as early as 1993 on compulsory lessons in ethics, precisely as a preparation for deployment in crisis situations, which appeared to serve them well in Srebrenica. The Airmobile Brigade therefore lagged behind with respect to acquiring similar skills in training.

In response to the discussion on the need to establish a code of conduct in the Armed Forces, the supporters put forward the argument of the changed terms of reference of the Ministry of Defence, and the subject of relationships with others was also raised: this, however, was only in 1996. Otherwise it is an interesting question whether this imposed system of moral principles (standards and values) actually contributes to a reduction of the assumed blurring of moral standards. In some respects, the content of the code of conduct is oddly formulated. For instance, according to these rules, a soldier is supposed to have respect for his fellow humans, 'even if they belong to a different people'. Otherwise it is an interesting question whether this imposed system of moral principles (or standards and values) actually contributed to a reduction of the assumed blurring of moral standards. Even odder, certainly in view of the previous item on prejudices in the training, is the content of the code of conduct. For instance, it states that a soldier must have respect for his fellow humans, 'even if they belong to a different people.' It is also curious that similar problems again occurred in the mission in Eritrea and that no lesson was learned from Srebrenica: Minister de Grave announced that 'if he is in a position to do so, the soldier provides military assistance to fellow people in need, irrespective of their status or origin'.¹¹⁴⁰

According to Marine Commander Grootendorst, the power of a commander to correctly assess the local situation and to build up a network is just as important for the safety of a unit as bullet-proof vests, helmets and foxholes.¹¹⁴¹ The marines and commandos could usually assign somewhat older, better trained and more experienced soldiers, among whom the 'UN skills' initially generated more interest than among the young, often less highly educated 'Red Berets'. The starting level of marines and commandos was also higher, in terms of training, and mental and physical skills. The social work coordinator of the BNMO centre in Doorn, W.H. Barmantloo, likewise felt that there was little attention in the preparation for the political and social reality in the enclave. According to him, no questions were raised as to how the population of the enclave mentally braced itself against the long-term isolated and life-threatening situation and what the repercussions were on the behaviour of the population towards the peace soldiers, who came in the conviction that they could help. What, in their turn, the soldiers saw as 'typical Muslim behaviour', was largely determined by psychological reactions to the long-term stress situation.¹¹⁴²

During their training, the Dutchbat members were told that if they entered a Muslim's house, they should take off their shoes. It was added that it was impolite to refuse alcohol in Serbian (!) company. Nonetheless, it was at least as important to know the consequences of the war for the population, and to know what it is like to be a displaced person. In Srebrenica, the people were purely interested in survival, and that had an unmistakable influence on the way in which they dealt with the

¹¹⁴⁰ Draft rules of conduct, version 25/04/97.

¹¹⁴¹ Interview P.A. Grootendorst in: G.C. van der Klis 'Een solide trits van opleiding, trainingen en oefeningen', in *Kernvraag* 1996/1 no. 108, p. 16.

¹¹⁴² Interview W.H. Barmantloo, 17/08/01.

standards and values from peacetime. There was a considerable lack of insight into the social consequences of the conflict.

The consequence was that many Dutchbat members looked upon the events in the enclave through 'Western spectacles' and from, under the circumstances, too limited a perspective. They did observe hostility between the various groups, but particularly questioned the role of their own unit. No thought was given to the excessive use of force by the warring factions, not to mention the possibility of a massacre, because of the lack of knowledge about the conflict and its background.

Many Dutchbat members indicated afterwards that the preparation time of three months was too short. This was partly a consequence of the fact that the new battalion had been formed shortly before and they had still to become accustomed to each other and develop group cohesion. In the case of a unit that had existed for a longer time, the three month training period would perhaps have been sufficient.¹¹⁴³

On the other hand, for many soldiers the operational interest of the lessons on the culture in Bosnia was also unclear. Their attitude was that it was very nice to know about such matters, but they did not know what they were supposed to do with it. There was a need for clear examples drawn from the practice of peace missions. The order to avoid contact with the population impeded the development of greater understanding. Together with frustrations, this led to many Dutchbat members becoming detached from the population in the course of time, and for that matter also from the staff of other UN organizations and NGOs.¹¹⁴⁴

What certainly contributed to a negative attitude to the population of the enclave was the hardening that most soldiers underwent during the mission in Srebrenica, which was caused by factors such as becoming inured to all the misery around them, the urge for self-preservation and the need to work through shocking experiences. For a fairly large group of predominantly young soldiers the combination of pity and powerlessness formed a major problem. A - conscious or unconscious - way out was the creation of an enormous mental and emotional distance from the Muslims.

Captain Dijkman, the Dutchbat III social worker, originally did see much pity. Soldiers requested the home front to send packages. These mainly contained soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste because 'we naturally found them filthy and grubby'.¹¹⁴⁵ After a short time, the attitude of most Dutchbat members changed, however. A young battalion member described this process in *De Volkskrant*. In the beginning, the Muslim population - starving and dirty - did attract sympathy, but that sympathy turned into aversion. They then consciously started to torment Muslim children.¹¹⁴⁶ Such hardening and the underlying blurring of moral standards would affect some Dutchbat members, but others less so, or not at all.

Dutchbat found itself in increasingly difficult circumstances, and that nourished feelings of tension and frustration, both within the battalion and in relation to the population. For some, 'anti-Muslim' feelings were created during the deployment. These could be further reinforced by a wide variety of matters such as 'whining children' or theft, the action of the ABiH ('drawing fire' around the OPs, not cooperating in the demilitarization, the theft of relief goods and weapons, intimidation and suchlike) and through irritation with the local authorities. Some officers allowed self-interest to take an extremely high priority. There was much political intrigue and conflict of interest, as was discussed in Chapter 7. Dutchbat members were extremely offended when they saw how the measures of the Opstina sometimes ran directly contrary to the interests of the Displaced Persons. They reproached the Opstina for lack of solidarity with the poorest groups, and likewise reproached the ABiH in Srebrenica and its commanders.

¹¹⁴³ See e.g. Debriefing statement by L.J.L.M. van Meer, September 1995.

¹¹⁴⁴ 'Norm Violations during Peace Support Operations: a Social-Psychological Explanation' by A.L.W. Vogelaar in: *NL Arms Netherlands*, pp. 131-148.

¹¹⁴⁵ Interview E.B.Dijkman, 29/06/99.

¹¹⁴⁶ A. Kranenberg, 'Moord op de witte muizen', *De Volkskrant*, 22/07/00.

The Dutch soldiers - as stated above - found such lack of solidarity incomprehensible, and such a lack of understanding regularly led to prejudging the behaviour of the Muslims as a group. This built on the deficient and one-sided representation of the Muslims in the preparation of the deployment and in the media, especially that the Muslims formed a homogeneous group. As a consequence of these developments, the Dutchbat members became more detached from the population and hardened their attitude. The reverse side of this was that mentally they withdrew more into the unit itself. Dutchbat III in particular became increasingly introverted, and concentrated on its own misfortune. The capacity for empathy with the fate of the population declined, and they fixed their attention on their own performance. This is clearly apparent, for example, from the way in which Captain Groen of Dutchbat III B Company reflected on the mission in discussion with the NIOD:

‘That is really brilliant. I actually have very good memories of the deployment. I had a really good time there. It is absolutely the most important period of my military career. What I learned there and went through and experienced, was a wealth of experience. A thoroughly splendid time! Got on really well with all the lads. It is unfortunate that it is often all portrayed so negatively.’¹¹⁴⁷

28. Evaluation: the perspective of the commanders

The role of the commander in peacekeeping situations differs from that during military operations. The majority of the officers in the 1990s were still trained in the time of the Cold War and were prepared for a large-scale military encounter. Army units in that time actually only had experience with traditional peacekeeping such as UNIFIL in Lebanon. At that time, it still appeared fairly simple to politicians in The Hague to deploy soldiers as an instrument of foreign policy. However, when the deployment to Bosnia presented itself, it is questionable whether they understood that it would be a completely different type of mission.

The assignment given to the successive commanders of Dutchbat I, II and III was derived from the order given by the UN to the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander. In his memoirs, General Briquemont said the following about this:

‘My order came down to stopping the war without waging war (...) finally I had to help and protect the population without the necessary resources.’

He responded to these dilemmas with a military solution: ‘I was given an order and would do the impossible to fulfil it!’¹¹⁴⁸

Because the Lebanon experience was important for a number of significant Dutchbat officers for their view of the mission to Bosnia, it is useful to compare the missions. There are a couple of striking differences. In Lebanon there was a conflict largely involving two parties. The mission in Lebanon was never a mission impossible. The buffer task that UNIFIL had to fulfil was accomplished with reasonable success. For the population of South Lebanon the presence of the UN meant fewer actions towards Israel, therefore fewer reprisals, therefore more calm. UNIFIL was therefore perceived positively and was involved in many social activities of the population. The task of the Dutch in Lebanon was not isolated.

A completely different situation existed in Bosnia, in which Dutchbat members operated in a Safe Area which was like an island within the terrain of one of the parties. One party, the VRS, could impose all sorts of matters by force, such as the use of roads, supplies, and rotations. The other party, the ABiH and population, were with Dutchbat in the enclave and regularly behaved in such a way that

¹¹⁴⁷ Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.

¹¹⁴⁸ Briquemont, *General*, p. 48; U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. p. 93.

they provoked hostile actions from the VRS, which also had repercussions for Dutchbat. The consequence was a growing mistrust and antipathy towards the Muslims among the peacekeepers.

An important difference with the mission in Lebanon was that the battalion commander there always had two Dutch interpreters or regional experts at his disposal, who would act as advisors and mediators. They could separate the sheep from the goats and supported the commander with advice and assistance. As well as the battalion commander, the company commanders could also make use of these experts, who resolved incidents, developed social contacts with the population and gathered information. The Dutch battalions did much in the way of humanitarian projects so as to create goodwill with the population. In Lebanon, the local population was hardly, if at all, permitted in the compounds and posts, so that a number of matters that caused problems, such as theft and black market trading, also hardly cropped up.

Dutchbat II and III had more the idea that they were entering a war zone. They originally compared this with the situation in Lebanon and wanted to keep the danger as much as possible at bay. It was typical that the battalion staff never went into town without protective vests. The population perceived this attitude as fearful and tense. Ramiz Becirovic, the local commander of the ABiH in Srebrenica, felt that Vermeulen of Dutchbat I acted the most resolutely. Like his Canadian predecessor, in the event of conflicts on the occupation of certain positions, Vermeulen was liable to approach VRS soldiers, and if necessary to push them back. The later commanders no longer did so.¹¹⁴⁹ Nonetheless, it is clear that Everts and Karremans had a very positive attitude towards setting up humanitarian projects. It was clear for them, probably partly because of their Lebanon experience, that the blue helmets had to gain the confidence of the population.

Everts, the commander of Dutchbat II, arrived at a conclusion on the basis of his experience in Lebanon which he wanted to apply to the situation in Bosnia: the men must be trained as 'green' as possible, and only at the last possible moment 'blue'. The short training period meant that choices had to be made, and because it was war, they must in any case learn all skills and drills of the battlefield. It was furthermore essential to work hard on team-building. He decided on the basis of experience to have a rotation over the posts: the same people must not always remain at the same post. The battalion staff must also take part in operational tasks and it was important to maintain the unity of dress.¹¹⁵⁰

In this way, the Lebanon experience of a number of officers worked through into their anticipation of the state in Bosnia.¹¹⁵¹ It was not only Everts and Karremans who had Lebanon experience, but also Major Wieffer, the Intelligence and Operations Officer of Dutchbat III. Wieffer said to the NIOD afterwards that the Lebanon experience was actually no frame of reference for him for Bosnia. He had quickly come to understand that things would be different there because of the unclear mandate. According to him, the action of the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon was clear to all parties, as a consequence of a clear mandate, which made a curfew possible, for example. Anyone who failed to comply knew that he would be shot on site by UNIFIL. The force instruction was also much more clear: return fire with the same sort of fire.¹¹⁵²

In the recent UN missions, commanders sooner had to resort to their common sense, insight and diplomatic skills than on their weapons. Essential items were social intelligence, authority, negotiating techniques, knowledge of local culture and history, and knowledge of the working methods of international organizations and NGOs. A unique combination of attributes was demanded of the commanders; according to Winslow, they had to 'continue to train their people in military skills (...) but at the same time they must know how to deal with highly complex human relations and to work as a

¹¹⁴⁹ Interviews Ramiz Becirovic, 2 and 05/02/98.

¹¹⁵⁰ Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 05/04/01.

¹¹⁵¹ The current Commander in Chief General Van Baal referred to this briefly in general terms during a lecture in the autumn of 1996 by saying 'One warning; successful units in a specific peace support operation are probably not so successful under other circumstances. So select experience critically.' In: *Anglo-Dutch Peace Support Operations Seminar* Issued by Defensie Leergangen Rijswijk (Rijswijk, 1996) p. 54.

¹¹⁵² Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 07/05/01.

diplomat.¹¹⁵³ They did not have to win a fight, but to achieve de-escalation; they must negotiate, bring about ceasefires and build confidence among all parties.

Negotiating is a specialism in its own right. Preparation can be made by asking what the subject of the negotiations is to be, which promises can be made, what the internal role patterns are, and what follow-up is aimed for. The position they will adopt must be well thought out: courteous and respectful, or conversely imposing and threatening. Politeness and respect must be maintained during negotiations.¹¹⁵⁴ The conduct of negotiations can impose a great psychological burden, and the commander is also very dependent on his own negotiating team.

C. Homan pointed out in *NRC Handelsblad* that the soldier of today as well as being a warrior also has to be a diplomat, and must possess the associated qualities, such as enormous mental stamina, self-control and diplomatic talents.¹¹⁵⁵ This applied all the more to the battalion leaders. In the preparation of Dutchbat, the Commanders were offered a couple of hours of negotiation training at Clingendael, but it was not linked to knowledge of the local conditions or military culture. Such important background knowledge therefore remained underexposed. During the final exercise of Dutchbat III, the simulation of negotiations - as described in Chapter 5 - even led to a conflict between Battalion Commander Karremans and the exercise leader. Negotiating skills and social intelligence are 'like a physician's bedside manner or a lawyer's courtroom presence, it can make the difference between success and failure.'¹¹⁵⁶

The Dutchbat Commanders carried a particularly heavy responsibility. It included interpreting what was and was not necessary or permissible within the mandate; for example, to interpret the 'right of self-defence', because the practice constantly shifted. Another problem was the isolation of the three battalions, which were in fact closed off from the rest of the world and had great trouble in carrying out their work through the lack of freedom of movement. Everts saw the great lack of understanding in the Netherlands for the situation on the ground as a problem. Correction of the picture became an ever larger problem as the opportunities for communication deteriorated. As an example, he cites the battalion's evacuation plans, which were set down properly on paper. However, if it should come to it, he alone would have to carry the particularly great responsibility for the 700 soldiers that were to be evacuated.

The responsibility for the battalion weighed particularly heavily and could not be shared with others. According to Everts, a Commander, however much he might want to, cannot be one with the unit. He fulfils an official position, is the 'standard bearer' and the leader of the unit, who is personally responsible for all decisions. The Commander can appeal to his staff for support and advice, but must take decisions alone, and can hide behind no one. As a Commander in Srebrenica, he therefore experienced a 'special loneliness', 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for more than 6 months.¹¹⁵⁷ His predecessor Vermeulen expressed himself in the same vein:

It is indeed not easy to be there. The men plug in to the commander day in, day out. One moment of pessimism and the lads multiply it twenty times.

¹¹⁵³ Interview Donna Winslow in: *Civil Militair* (2001)1, p. 5.

¹¹⁵⁴ See in this connection also Christian Harleman, 'Psychological Aspects of Peacekeeping on the Ground' in: Harvey J. Langholtz (ed.) *The Psychology of Peacekeeping*, (Westport/London, 1998) pp. 101-110 and also David R. Segal and Robert J. Waltman, 'Multinational Peacekeeping Operations: Background and Effectiveness' In: James Burk (ed.), *The Adaptive Military. Armed Forces in a Turbulent World* (New Brunswick, 1998) pp. 183-199.

¹¹⁵⁵ C. Homan, '*Militairen hebben gedragscode nodig*' ('Soldiers need a code of conduct'), *NRC Handelsblad* 11/11/94. Otherwise, Homan linked to this the wish that the Dutch soldier on peace missions is able to act on the basis of a frame of reference of commonly accepted ethical standards and values, in which human rights must also be given a place.

¹¹⁵⁶ M.D. Capstick and D.M. Last, 'Negotiation training for peace operations: one unit's experience of translating theory to presence' in: David R. Segal, *Peace Operations. Workshop Proceedings* by (October 1994).

¹¹⁵⁷ Interview P.L.E.M. Everts, 05/04/01.

Decisions taken that are possibly irritating or can have a negative interpretation, reverberate ten times as loudly.¹¹⁵⁸

Everts and Karremans were forced by the circumstances to work endlessly on all manner of 'what-if scenarios'. It goes without saying that they needed support from the Ministry of Defence in The Hague, which they also received, albeit not always to their satisfaction. And this is how they were obliged to fight against the idea that they were engaged in the execution of an impossible task.

¹¹⁵⁸ Interview C.H.P. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.

Chapter 9

How Dutchbat functioned internally until the VRS attack

1. Introduction

Attention will be focussed in Part II on the units of Dutch battalions in the enclave carrying out their tasks under continuously changing, often difficult and increasingly very difficult circumstances. The actions and the experiences of Dutchbat III are highlighted here as it was this battalion that was ultimately forced by an attack of the Bosnian-Serb army to abandon its mission and to leave the enclave around 11 July 1995, while the conquerors were to bring about a humanitarian catastrophe and to commit mass murder in the vicinity.

Attention had been paid in the preceding chapters to the political decision-making surrounding the dispatching of battalions, the preparations for a peace mission, the training of three successive Dutchbats and the execution of the tasks. Attention has also been paid to ‘factors determined by the surroundings’; these are essential to any real understanding of the conditions under which the peacekeepers had to operate. This chapter concerns itself with the army units of the two warring factions inside and around the enclave, the conditions of life within the enclave, the attitude of the local authorities and the relationships with the humanitarian aid organizations there. It is not the intention either in Part II or in Chapter 9 to pretend wisdom after the fact by describing the total presence of Dutchbat III in the enclave as having been a factor that contributed to the conquest of the enclave and its calamitous consequences. It is clear that this battalion, in the course of its presence there, met with increasing difficulties in the proper execution of its tasks due to the blockade by the Bosnian Serbs. As less and less supply convoys entered the area and resupply finally ground to a complete halt, the functioning of the battalion spiraled downward.

The unit would become more and more isolated; it is no coincidence that the image of ‘an enclave within an enclave’ came to be used in describing the compound. The personnel thus became focussed primarily on themselves and began to look forward to the rotation of forces or to relief, which was expected in June but was obstructed again and again. This chapter addresses in a detailed way a number of questions concerning the mood, the motivation and the attitude of the Dutchbat I, II and III soldiers. These matters were addressed in public discussions both before the fall of the enclave and in the period after this reverse took place. They were put forth as partial explanation for the course of events and thus came to constitute a number of building blocks for what would later be called ‘the Srebrenica affair’. Available sources are being used to conduct an investigation into precisely what happened and how it can be interpreted.

Three things will be dealt with in succession. Perceptions of the morale and motivation of the soldiers concerned will come first. The upheaval in May and June of 1995 resulting from reports of misconduct, in the sense of breaking military criminal and disciplinary law, will follow. And finally, investigations conducted into reports of right-wing extremist utterances on the part of a specific group of soldiers will be discussed. The consequences of behaviour of this sort for the relationship with the local inhabitants and for the execution of their tasks by members of the succeeding battalions will be specifically gone into. The chapter ends with an intermediate evaluation, featuring in particular the differences between the three battalions and the mode of operation of the Dutchbat III battalion leaders. Questions are posed again and again. Is it possible to ascertain with precision what took place and which subunits were involved – were they Dutchbat units or not? What were the consequences for Dutchbat, in terms of executing its tasks and in terms of its the relationship to the inhabitants of the enclave, the warring factions and the humanitarian organizations there? How fully were the details known to both the UN and the Dutch military hierarchy and political leaders and what action did they take?

2. The problem of the morale

While Dutchbat was being dispatched and after it had been sent out, a number of voices, both within the country and outside it, stated that the third battalion in particular suffered from low morale. It was and is still being said that this influenced the catastrophic events that took place around the capture of the enclave by the VRS and the mass murder that followed. Two examples serve to illustrate this. The British newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph*, wrote in October of 1995 that Dutchbat was not only 'hopelessly outgunned' by the VRS, but that 'more significantly their morale was bumping to the bottom'.¹¹⁵⁹ How the newspaper acquired this information is not mentioned. *The Sunday Times* wrote in May of 1996 that Dutchbat morale had been low and that the leadership qualities of the senior officers were 'questionable'. After such a length of time without supplies, Dutchbat was said to have had enough of Srebrenica and of its unenviable position sandwiched between the warring factions: 'they desperately wanted out'. The newspaper pointed out too that the preceding battalion had acquitted itself well, but that many of the Dutchbat III soldiers had hated the Muslims and held them in contempt. The reasons for this were said to have been complex. The newspaper did not pursue this further than to suggest that the roots for the attitude could perhaps be found in Lebanon, where Lieutenant-Colonel Karremans had served earlier. The interpreter H. Nuhanovic and the British UNMO (United Nations Military Observer) Major G. Donaldson were the sources for *The Sunday Times*.¹¹⁶⁰

The term 'morale', which denotes a collective state of mind of the unit concerned in relating to the joint execution of its task, is rather easily used in common parlance. Usually it refers to the mood of the soldiers, to questioning whether sufficient perspective exists to allow the execution of the assignment and whether adequate motivation still obtains. All sorts of indicators that could answer the question as to this state of mind of the personnel and the leaders are then summoned up and used either implicitly or explicitly to reason toward a pre-determined result or to elucidate this same result. This section contributes to the discussion concerning the development of Dutchbat morale in relation to the circumstances under which the battalion had to execute its task. In contrast to other sections of this Part II of the report, it will reach forward where necessary to the events described in Part III surrounding the fall of the Safe Area.

The meaning of the concept 'morale'

For a good understanding of the course of events, it is important not to assume ahead of time that the mood of the personnel determined the result of the operation. It does not seem particularly useful to use a series of impressions of mood to reason towards a result to the effect that: 'the morale of the Dutch blue helmets was low and it is consequently no wonder that the enclave could be overrun by the Bosnian Serbs and that a mass murder would follow'.

It cannot be denied, however, that the whole series of events had a clearly observable influence on the mood and motivation of Dutchbat and of its leaders. And it cannot be ruled out that the state of mind and a number of events mutually influenced each other.

The term 'morale' refers in its original sense to ethical behaviour and is most easily described as attitude or state of mind. This suggests that one can speak of a collective state of mind for a few hundred people. That is in general problematic, but even more so if a rather long time period is added into the equation. More so than the Dutch term *moreel*, the English term 'morale' refers to the spirit of the soldiers concerned, something probably best translated with the terms just noted, 'state of mind' and 'mood'.¹¹⁶¹ These terms leave aside the question of whether or not there is a direct causal

¹¹⁵⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, 30/10/95.

¹¹⁶⁰ *The Sunday Times*, 10/05/96.

¹¹⁶¹ See for instance Laura L. Miller and Charles Moscos 'Humanitarians or Warriors? Race, Gender, and Combat Status in Operation Restore Hope. In: *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 21 (1995) 4, p. 636.

connection between morale and certain forms of behaviour. It is from this vantage point that the question about the experiences of the Dutchbat soldiers is being posed.¹¹⁶²

The concept 'morale' has three component parts: motivation, satisfaction and group cohesion. These elements will appear in the consideration to follow. A high morale is of importance for a unit because it reduces the chance of psychic collapse due to stress; low morale is worrying because it can undermine the performance effectiveness of a unit. For the peace mission in Bosnia, specific circumstances must be assessed in relationship to the morale of Dutchbat III. These revolve around the question of whether individual personnel and units within Dutchbat were still able to carry out meaningful tasks, given their isolation in the enclave and the absence of large portions of the usual supplies. The adverse circumstances in the enclave continually influenced the state of mind of the soldiers as well.

The motivation of the members of the three Dutch battalions suffered continually as these members experienced their powerlessness in the enclave in the face of their far-reaching dependence upon the goodwill of the warring factions. The lack of clarity as to the exact assignment, the obvious inability to carry out a number of its component parts and the lack of insight into the situation made it difficult to stay motivated. The psychologist attached to Dutchbat III, Lieutenant-Colonel Sanders, identified this problem:

'I knew that we were going to end up in an isolated situation. There were problems directly connected to one's presence in an enclave: the feeling of being confined, the continuous confrontation with one's own powerlessness and the humiliations, for instance, all the checkpoints when travelling. Still, the beginning was actually quite peaceful, in spite of what happened in the Bandera triangle.'¹¹⁶³

It is not easy to make well-founded statements about the morale of Dutchbat, especially not for their last months in the enclave. The fact remains that morale is also a subjective term and it is seldom mentioned in periodical reports. Adequate sources are few and far between; indicators must be treated with a healthy skepticism as to their authority. The NIOD has access to statements from interviews with those concerned, such as those from Sanders, diaries and journals, letters home, newspaper articles and information in the literature. Writers of journals such as Captain Surgeon A.A. Schouten and chronicler Koreman, who made their writings available to the NIOD, as well as letter writer, Warrant Officer P.H. Both, belonged to an older generation of soldiers and not to the Mobile Airbrigade. For this reason they are not solely insiders, but in a certain sense, also outsiders. There are also the memoirs of the Battalion Commander Karremans, unavoidably apologetic in tone and appearing under the title *Srebrenica, who cares?* The book collated by a number of authors under the title *Dutchbat, in vredesnaam* contains a collection of occasionally striking remembrances, but no general reflections.¹¹⁶⁴ These sources have been cited or employed where useful – exercising the necessary caution.

Another equally fragmentary category of observations concerning morale comes from visitors to the enclave; these are sparse however. Reports of visits were not always written down, or cannot always be located, but when they are available, it appears that they very seldom say anything about the morale. If visitors did send a note of thanks and happened to mention the situation in which they had observed the unit, then it is very difficult to judge whether what one is reading is simply polite phrasing or an actual impression. Negative impressions were, of course, not so quickly set down on paper.

¹¹⁶² Gerhard Kummel 'The Problem of Morale in the Armed Forces: Some Conceptual Reflections' in *Military Sociology. Global Perspectives*, Leena Parmar (ed.) (Jaipur, 1999) p. 299

¹¹⁶³ Interview P. Sanders, 12/12 and 13/12/00.

¹¹⁶⁴ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. *Dagboek (Diary) Schouten*; NIOD, Coll. Koreman. *Dagboek Koreman*; Veenhof, *Srebrenica: oorlogsdagboek of Piet Hein Both*, passim; Karremans, *Srebrenica, Who Cares?*, passim and Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam*, passim.

General Smith, after his visit to Dutchbat on 9 March 1995, wrote a polite thank-you note:

‘I found the battalion well motivated and in excellent heart. Despite all the problems you are encountering with the delivery of medical aid and supplies to the pocket you have not allowed this to stand in the way of your thorough professional approach to the operation.’¹¹⁶⁵

Smith had given the medical staff a boost by bringing along a supply of the most needed medicines in his car. However, very real doubts about Dutchbat and its leaders existed within the British company, also in General Smith's mind.¹¹⁶⁶ It was rumoured that the members of Dutchbat III did not form a solid, tight team. In his autobiography *Trusted Mole: A Soldier's Journey into Bosnia's Heart of Darkness*, Smith's interpreter, the British Captain Mike Stanley (Milos Stankovic), presents a much more negative impression:

‘Doom and gloom reigned. Morale amongst the Dutch seemed to be rock bottom and they didn't have a good word to say about any of the locals, either besieged Muslims or besieging Serbs.’¹¹⁶⁷

Smith's predecessor, General Rose, already had established earlier that many peacekeepers were suffering from what he called siege mentality, a feeling of being confined. Rose himself attempted to escape from this same feeling by establishing as much contact as possible with the local population, and by impressing upon others that life had to go on as normally as possible. Rose was also against the Blue Helmets wearing fragmentation vests and being transported in armoured vehicles with closed hatches when that was not absolutely necessary. Rose saw the vests and helmets as constituting a psychological barrier between the soldiers who wore them and the population, which could not avail itself of such protection.¹¹⁶⁸ The way in which Dutchbat mixed with the local population on its ‘social patrols’ did not match the concept adopted by Rose in Sarajevo. The Dutch walked these patrols fully armed, wearing fragmentation vests, in a way that could be interpreted as a show of force.

One of the few Dutch reports in which the morale of Dutchbat III is mentioned originated with the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Van den Breemen. He visited the enclave in the company of the Army Crisis Staff Commander, Brigadier General Pollé, on 3 and 4 April 1995. In his report to Minister Voorhoeve, Van den Breemen wrote:

‘The atmosphere in the battalion can still be called good. Morale is high and even seems to improve as circumstances minimize. Still, a crack is appearing in the motivation to help the Muslims, because they continue to sabotage these efforts. There is, as well, increasing anger directed at the Serbs, for their on-going refusal to allow clearances for convoys of soldiers on furlough. Alertness of all commanders is prescribed in this matter.’¹¹⁶⁹

A Dutch staff officer, who went along on this visit, noticed a stale atmosphere among the Battalion Staff. Communal spirit was lacking and communication among the ranks seemed to have reached low ebb; these matters did not escape the British visitors either. After a stay in the enclave, a lieutenant in the Army Crisis Staff reported that the relationship between higher and lower ranking officers and

¹¹⁶⁵ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Lieutenant General Rupert Smith to Lieutenant-Colonel Karremans, 09/03/95.

¹¹⁶⁶ Confidential interview (80).

¹¹⁶⁷ Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, p. 420.

¹¹⁶⁸ Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 25, 39 and 42.

¹¹⁶⁹ DS. No. S95/061/1517. CDS to the minister and the junior minister, 06/04/95.

NCOs within Dutchbat seemed poor, such that an unpleasant atmosphere prevailed. He stated that the Battalion Commander was seldom seen by the troops.¹¹⁷⁰

It was also noticeable during this visit that a conflict was brewing between the leaders of the battalion and the medical services. Lieutenant-Colonel Karremans clearly manifested himself as the commander during the visit, while Major Franken took the role of Chief of Staff and regulator. Matters of military tactics did not come up in the briefing of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), while a great number of quite obvious items concerning logistics and personnel did, including the rotation date. The visitors interpreted this as a self-absorbed attitude.¹¹⁷¹ Karremans himself made clear to the NIOD that he had, on more than one occasion, revealed to visitors that the further ‘in shit’ the battalion sunk, the more its morale seemed to improve. This was a paradox quite apt to the situation, in his view.¹¹⁷²

One of the last foreign visitors to be able to reach the enclave was the commander of Sector North East, the Norwegian, Brigadier General Haukland. On 19 April 1995, he succeeded in entering Srebrenica with a convoy. It was a short visit. Haukland inspected a number of OPs (Observation Posts); Karremans was on leave and Franken ‘who talked like an American Cowboy’, according to the Norwegian,¹¹⁷³ led him around. Haukland did not remark on anything out of the ordinary on that occasion. He did state that Srebrenica was a mission impossible. The most pressing problem at that point was already that of fuel use. A volume of 6500 litres per day was needed, while 350 litres were available.¹¹⁷⁴ A short while later, at the beginning of June, Haukland – he said he did so at the bidding of Smith – paid Karremans a compliment. Karremans paraphrased this as follows: ‘much admiration for the perseverance and the determination of Dutchbat’.¹¹⁷⁵

However, at the end of May 1995, General Nicolai had to vent, from UN headquarters in Sarajevo, his impression that ‘the morale of the Dutch is no longer what it was.’ He saw that everyone had had his fill of Bosnia and wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible. An atmosphere best worded as ‘none of the parties wants peace, why are we still hanging around here?’ permeated Bosnia.¹¹⁷⁶ From Zagreb, General Kolsteren also expressed the opinion that the morale of Dutchbat had suffered from the events of the last months of the stay. He too saw the frustration arising from an impossible mission and too few troops as the cause. Of the small number of troops available, one group was on furlough and these soldiers were not permitted by the Bosnian-Serb authorities to return. Some of the equipment could no longer be used because no permission was available for transport and accordingly, maintenance had become almost impossible. The cooperation of the Bosnian Muslims also left a lot to be desired, according to Kolsteren.¹¹⁷⁷

Visits ‘from outside’ were also meant to cheer up the Dutch Blue Helmets. In February of 1995, the Force Commander, General B. De Lapresle, surprised Dutchbat with a visit. To the amusement of the Dutch soldiers, it was only on his third try that the pilot managed to land the helicopter, bearing the Force Commander, on the right spot.¹¹⁷⁸ The French general was briefed by the battalion leaders as to the state of affairs in the enclave. Furthermore, a British UNMO brought him up to date on the question of the Bandera triangle and he was able to speak about this with Naser Oric and Ramiz Becirovic.¹¹⁷⁹ What De Lapresle thought of Dutchbat was not recorded.

¹¹⁷⁰ SMG, 1004. Report of talks between Lieutenant-Colonel E.G.M. Otterloo and SMG, 31/07/95.

¹¹⁷¹ Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

¹¹⁷² Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/09/98.

¹¹⁷³ Interview H. Haukland, 03/05/99.

¹¹⁷⁴ Interview H. Haukland, 03/05/99.

¹¹⁷⁵ Karremans, Srebrenica, Who Cares?, pp. 144-45. In contrast, an American who wished to remain anonymous, judged Dutchbat III and its leaders negatively. The person concerned was a former soldier and had been working in Bosnia since 1992. In the spring of 1995 he visited Srebrenica twice. Confidential interview (75).

¹¹⁷⁶ Haagsche Courant, 20/05/95.

¹¹⁷⁷ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

¹¹⁷⁸ The commandos thought this pilot had his very own interpretation of ‘slapdash’, Groen/Blauw, No. 21, 1995.

¹¹⁷⁹ Karremans, ‘Bezoeken aan Dutchbat III’ (Visits to Dutchbat III) in Dijkema, Dutchbat in vredesnaam, p. 196.

Some important guests were better than others at cheering Dutchbat up.¹¹⁸⁰ Karremans sometimes called their visiting activities ‘disaster tourism’. Brigadier General Brinkman, Chief of Staff of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and formerly commander of the Airmobile Brigade, dropped in, in February in connection with his farewell tour and was extremely negative that evening in the bar about the UN. One Warrant Officer, who knew as everyone did that the General would be leaving again the next day, replied to his complaint: ‘But General, we’ve still got four months to go, you know!’ Imagine everyone’s surprise when two weeks later in the *Defensiekrant* (Defence Newspaper) the selfsame Brinkman turned out to be the author of a story in which the UN was described as a wonderful operation for which it was a great privilege to work.¹¹⁸¹

The Director of Personnel of the Netherlands Army, Major General Warlicht, took a long, hot shower during his visit, while the Dutchbat soldiers themselves, due to the fuel shortage, could only take a short shower once a week and then communally. When a number of the soldiers tackled him about this, he reacted with incomprehension. In addition, Warlicht was served the best meal possible.

The already mentioned visit of Van den Breemen and Pollé at the beginning of April was well received. That took place soon after the death of Soldier, J. Broere, of A-Company in Simin Han as a consequence of a shoot out by VRS units. The visitors were present when the company got the chance to see film of the ceremony during which the soldier's body was airlifted by helicopter on its way to the Netherlands.¹¹⁸²

The visit of Prince Willem-Alexander on the 21 and 22 March was a high point, especially because he so clearly showed his attitude of being one of them, thus distinguishing himself from most other dignitaries. It made an impression when he refused to continue to sit in his armoured vehicle while everyone else was busy attempting to lift and push cars off the verge of a snowed-in road. The crown prince pitched in and worked with the others until the last car had been returned to the road. No reports have been found documenting his visit but there is an indication of his impressions because he met a delegation of the Dutch Parliament that could not make a working visit to Srebrenica, at the airport in Split. On that occasion, it is said that the prince indicated that the situation in Srebrenica was unpleasant but that Dutchbat morale was good.¹¹⁸³

Karremans is of the opinion that ‘The Hague’ did not feel concerned about the morale. The army's top brass did not see this as a problem, according to him. General Couzy empathized and made sure he was kept informed by the Commander of the Army Crisis Staff, Brigadier General Pollé, who also sometimes phoned the enclave.¹¹⁸⁴ Couzy told the NIOD that he had sometimes gone to the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff on an evening in order to phone Karremans and talk to him as an ‘understanding colleague’. He did not do that in order to make a point of what had to be done in the enclave, but ‘to make him feel better and simply to ask how it was going and how the morale of the soldiers was holding out.’ Couzy was of the opinion that the morale was mediocre; he was not blaming Dutchbat, simply making the observation. Dutchbat felt that it had been left in the lurch and the position into which the UN had been manoeuvred was, in Couzy's opinion, ‘horribly frustrating’.¹¹⁸⁵

3. The role of the Battalion Commander

Cohesion as a building stone for a unit's morale refers both to the cohesion among soldiers themselves and that between the commander and his personnel. There is a connection between the behaviour of the leaders and that of those under their command. The extent to which they can trust each other influences their readiness to exchange information. A climate of trust is necessary as well to allow units

¹¹⁸⁰ For a summary see: Karremans, ‘Bezoeken aan Dutchbat III’ in: Dijkema, Dutchbat in vredesnaam, pp. 194-202.

¹¹⁸¹ Interview W. Dijkema, 21/09/98.

¹¹⁸² Dijkema, Dutchbat in Vredesnaam, pp. 269-270.

¹¹⁸³ Interview L. Sipkes, 24/01/00.

¹¹⁸⁴ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 26/09/98.

¹¹⁸⁵ Interview H.A. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98.

to function well. Those in charge can create a climate of trust in many ways but one of these is to be present at moments demanding leadership. Skills, know-how and competence, just and honest actions, open communication about information and ideas, and approachability can all contribute to trust.¹¹⁸⁶

It is important here to address the issue of the relationships among leaders of the battalion and the Dutch Army top in The Hague. A clearly expressed feeling existed in The Hague that the Dutchbat III leaders were not completely capable of doing what was being demanded of them. It was, of course, commonly admitted that work satisfaction left much to be desired on account of the dead-end situation in which the population and the unit found themselves. The battalions had started their assignment rather enthusiastically, but as time went by, they could not help but see that their presence effected little change for the better. The halting of supplies paralysed not only the execution of their tasks but also the provision of aid to the population and that was an extra factor in deadening motivation. The Hague too observed feelings of frustration, powerlessness and cynicism and ascertained that the battalion had turned in upon it and was waiting to be relieved.

One of the few men who managed to visit all three Dutch battalions in the enclave was Brigadier General Brinkman. He was thus able to compare the battalions and their commanders with each other. He visited Dutchbat I when he was commanding the 11th Airmobile Brigade, and Dutchbat II and III when he was Chief of Staff Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Dutchbat III had only been in the enclave a short while when his visit took place. Even at the time of his very first visit, it was possible to ascertain that Dutchbat was isolated, dependent on the warring factions and experiencing difficulty supervising compliance with locally made agreements. These factors made the battalions susceptible to disillusionment.

Nevertheless, Brinkman found the morale of Dutchbat I, II and III high at the time of his visits. He did identify differences that had to do with the circumstances and the identity of the commander. Lieutenant-Colonel Vermeulen was a man from the very beginnings of the Airmobile Brigade. He was able to work with many, high-level, enthusiastic volunteers. All his requests were honoured prior to the sending out of the soldiers. Lieutenant-Colonel Everts profited less from these advantages. He differed from Vermeulen in being more of a General Staff officer and less a man of practical experience. Brinkman stated that he had affairs well under control. Karremans was also more of a general staff officer. Furthermore, Dutchbat III came from Assen and not from the home of the Airmobile Brigade, Schaarsbergen. Brinkman typified it as being hardly a seasoned Airmobile Battalion but much more an armoured infantry battalion. According to Brinkman, Karremans was not a proponent of 'the idea of air mobility' either and he tended to show how sceptical he was about the role in the beginning. However, it was said later on that he had shaken off this feeling.¹¹⁸⁷

Karremans, in turn, complained about the communication with the Airmobile Brigade. The only time that the commander of the Airmobile Brigade, Brigadier General Bastiaans, contacted Karremans in the Dutchbat III period was in the days after the death of Soldier, Van Renssen on 8 July 1995.¹¹⁸⁸

Karremans was not always positive about the military organization in the home country. The relationship with the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, the contact point for reporting problems, was good in the period in which the battalion was dispatched. At that point, Colonel C.L. Brantz was Chief of Staff. He was involved, showed great dedication, but was a know-it-all in Karremans opinion. No one in the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff had any experience in deploying units abroad and this meant that problems manifested themselves during the mission. Karremans felt at that point that he got very little support. There were conflicts about the system for relieving the soldiers and about how

¹¹⁸⁶ These observations are derived from: Royal Netherlands Army, 'De Nederlandse Moreelvragenlijst,' (The Dutch Questionnaire on Morale), Instituut voor Leiderschap, Media en Opleidingskunde te Breda (Institute for Leadership, Media and Training Competence at Breda, the Netherlands). The list refers, among others, to the models and research of Bos, Tibboel and Willigenburg (1994), Deluga (1977) and Butler (1991).

¹¹⁸⁷ Interview J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

¹¹⁸⁸ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 15/12/98.

to get personnel returning from Zagreb back into the enclave. The commander of the battalion criticized the desire of the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to determine who would be relieved first, 'while I thought that certain personnel should be allowed to go first for personal or business reasons. I only succeeded in getting my way after continuously forcing the issue,' and what's worse, 'I had many more problems with the Army Crisis Staff than with the local authorities. I certainly was fighting a losing battle.'¹¹⁸⁹

In spite of conflicts of this sort, communication with the commander of the Army Crisis Staff, Brigadier General Pollé, remained open. 'I could tell him things straight, even things that had gone wrong, like in Zagreb.' There were endless negotiations, particularly about the leave: 'I got a bit tired of it all'. Even in the days of the fall of the enclave, talks about the rotation continued, while between the scenes the repatriation of the body of soldier Van Renssen took place. Karremans found this strange indeed. Karremans did not feel that his parent unit, the Airmobile Brigade, adequately supported him. Even though no formal chains of command existed during the deployment, he had expected that more interest would be shown. 'This was also extremely difficult to explain to my subordinates when they asked if there had been signs of interest from the Netherlands.'¹¹⁹⁰ The Airmobile Brigade did not react in May of 1995 when alleged misconduct took place in the enclave; this had to do with the 'firefighter affair', which will be dealt with more extensively in this chapter. The problem here was not with Dutchbat III, but the battalion felt itself to have been wrongly discredited. Karremans said that he had had personal difficulties with this affair; a lot of radio stations phoned him up (in consultation with the Directorate of Information, though).

The only time that the Commander of the Brigade, Brigadier General Bastiaans, contacted him was a few days after the death of soldier Van Renssen (on 8 July 1995).

4. Sources of frustration and discouragement

To their frustration, the Dutch Blue Helmets experience in the enclave was that the warring factions continuously made it extremely difficult for them to carry out their task, without there being anything effective they could do to change this. This disconcerted and discouraged the soldiers, who, during their training, had been thoroughly persuaded of the idea that, in circumstances of crisis and war, initiative, fast action and – should the use of force be necessary – superiority in escalation were essential. In practice, they were reminded, day in and day out, in every possible way, that they were vulnerable. Sometimes this reminder was provocative (shooting just above the head), sometimes much more emphatic (the death of soldier J. Broere, in Simin Han, on 29 March 1995 and of soldier R. van Renssen on 8 July 1995, as well as the wounding of several soldiers).

The conditions under which the personnel had to work increased in difficulty. The operational quality of the unit was disadvantaged by shortages of basic supplies but it suffered further from the alternation of sometimes long-lasting periods of boredom with periods of stress and anxiety. Boredom, in fact, can be as stressful as overload. One way in which leaders can attempt to counteract boredom is by pretending that there is no lack of things to do and thus inventing work. Tightening discipline is also a technique. Subordinates do, however, usually feel this as the failure of the leaders to provide meaningful work.¹¹⁹¹

In Dutchbat III, the effects of boredom were visible in mechanics' and Intendance units; they had practically nothing to do because resupply had been halted. The kitchen staff, too, could do little more than boil water and warm up cans of food. It has been said that the Intendance group became a source of rumour; the fact that they were caged in in the compound influenced this behaviour. To get

¹¹⁸⁹ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 26/06/98.

¹¹⁹⁰ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 26/06/98.

¹¹⁹¹ J.M. Ambaum 'Do you want to talk about it? Psychological support in operational conditions' in: A.L.W. Vogelaar, K.F. Muusse and J.H. Rovers, eds. NL Arms: Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies 1998, Royal Netherlands Military Academy, Breda, 1998, pP. 174-176.

the personnel out of this rut, the battalion leaders decided to deploy them on 'social patrols'. On patrol it became evident that Dutchbat, in comparison to the majority of the populace, still lived in relative luxury.¹¹⁹²

Nevertheless, conditions of life for Dutchbat II and III were primarily determined by shortages of basic provisions such as warm water and light. It was necessary to live for weeks on rations. Dutchbat II had not reckoned on this scarcity because Dutchbat I had not experienced it and it had not then been reported. For some, the shortage of fresh food or cans of something to drink led to mutual comparisons of rations and to suspicion. Privacy was limited as well. This led on occasion to minor quarrels that were then quelled by officers, but that left a modicum of tension behind. Due to straitened living conditions and lack of privacy, the motivation of many Dutchbat II soldiers was sorely diminished in the last two months of the stay and they longed even more strongly for reprieve. This frustration was piled on top of a situation in which many no longer saw the point of the mission and in which they were already disheartened by numbing tasks. Some saw Srebrenica as a prison.

Dangerous situations added to the stress. Being on patrol meant being in danger of stepping on a landmine and being shot by either the VRS or the ABiH or both. Being under fire was to some extent a question of getting used to it, but the other side of the coin was that personnel had to ensure that they remained alert. In dealing with danger, the leaders had difficulty establishing to what extent they could subject their own soldiers to danger. They had to ask themselves whether the priority should be their own security or the protection of the inhabitants. The commander of the OP or the patrol made decisions about risks on the spot, but areas that were too dangerous were avoided. A number of personnel was seriously wounded and that always made a deep impression, which went hand-in-hand with feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, anxiety and revenge.¹¹⁹³

Many aspects of the situation in Bosnia in which the Dutch Blue Helmets found themselves were also chaotic and politically unclear. Many Dutch soldiers did not at all understand the attitude of the ABiH soldiers, who thwarted, tormented and manipulated them, as did the VRS. This made them see that it was too easy to speak of one guilty party and one victim in the conflict. The theme emphasized in Dutch media reporting was that of the victim; Bosnian Muslims were portrayed as underdogs. This boomeranged for Dutchbat and the Transport Battalion. People at home were expecting Dutchbat to help and protect the victims, while the original portrayal of the Bosnian Muslim group as an underdog needing protection sometimes gave way after just a few weeks to feelings of frustration, irritation and distrust towards all Muslims: citizens, refugees and soldiers.¹¹⁹⁴

Lack of insight into the Muslim culture played a role here and lack of insight into the experiences and needs of the refugees was added into the equation. The process of taking distance was encouraged because the battalion leaders had forbidden non-functional contacts with the population. The idea upon which this was founded was that the UN had to remain neutral and that contacts with the population could cause problems because favours could be asked for and relationships could be established.¹¹⁹⁵ As a matter of fact, there were positive experiences with the population, achieved through personal contacts, primarily at the OPs. Negative experiences seemed to manifest themselves most strongly in the town of Srebrenica. The Dutch soldiers were unable to form a picture of what the intentions of the warring factions were with respect to each other and to Dutchbat itself. The situation was often unpredictable for them; one minute would be peaceful and the next filled with the sound of shooting. Doubt about the usefulness of the mission crept in due to the fact that the warring factions profited from the humanitarian aid. There were no criteria by which to measure the success of efforts expended. That led to the question of whether Dutchbat unintentionally, by its simple presence, was maintaining the status quo and the conflict instead of protecting the Safe Area. The existence of questions of this nature did not make it easy for the leaders to continue motivating the soldiers.

¹¹⁹² Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/09/98.

¹¹⁹³ Vogelaar, et al, *Leiderschap in crisissomstandigheden* ('Leadership in situations of crisis'), pp. 52-60 and 165.

¹¹⁹⁴ Vogelaar, et al, *Leiderschap in crisissomstandigheden*, pp. 167-69.

¹¹⁹⁵ Vogelaar, et al, *Leiderschap in crisissomstandigheden*, pp. 30-34.

Frustration was fed by the insight that the designated tasks could not be carried out acceptably and that the intended goals thus could not be achieved. The informal goal of the last two battalions was readjusted again and again until it became, simply, getting the whole battalion home in one piece. Tasks were carried out because the personnel had been assigned to them, but no one still believed in the ideas behind such tasks: 'we could not secure the boundaries but we could guard them – that meant watching everyone who went in and out'.¹¹⁹⁶ It was certainly true for a unit like the Red Berets that the boring peacekeepers' existence in the enclave up to that moment was a disappointment. Dutchbat III at a certain moment especially found itself forced to strip its goals down to simply being present and protecting itself from the VRS and the ABiH. The absence of any form of UN support was further disconcerting reinforcing the feeling of being completely alone in East Bosnia.

Practically all the members of Dutchbat II would return to the Netherlands disappointed.¹¹⁹⁷ The thought that their presence alone would be enough to keep the peace and that their observation task and patrols would keep the warring factions apart was a mistake. The reality turned out to be something totally different than had been imagined ahead of time. The warring factions did not observe UN resolutions and the UN turned out to be powerless. Patrolling and observing did not improve the situation; quite the reverse was true, as the situation actually worsened. The soldiers became aware that hardly anything they did mattered but they were also regularly endangered. Quite a lot happened which demanded action but the Rules of Engagement did not permit action. Motivation was lost and the soldiers developed an aversion to the warring factions. This expressed itself gradually in a change of mindset which showed the company more and more directed to surviving the period in one piece and less and less to accomplishing the mission. Work that had to be done began to be done more often for the company itself and less often for the Bosnian population or the United Nations. To the extent that one could speak of motivated goals at the beginning of the UN mission, at the end it was quite clear that there were very few left. Frustration, lack of motivation and cynicism about the mission dominated.¹¹⁹⁸

Battalion commander Karremans sketches how the feeling of isolation in the enclave got its grip on Dutchbat III as well:

Just try to imagine how cooped up we felt from about the middle of April, when no one could get out and no one could get in. Pretty much as cooped up as the forty thousand Muslims present in the enclave. As far as that goes, our fate was almost the same, except that our manner of functioning and our relatively luxurious lifestyle compared to theirs made life a bit more acceptable. Nevertheless, all of this did begin to influence the morale.¹¹⁹⁹

Karremans made this very clear on 5 June 1995 in a letter to the Army Crisis Staff in The Hague: 'since the rotation of both infantry battalions in January 1995 in the enclave Srebrenica, 13th Airmobile Battalion (Dutchbat III) have had to cope with an accumulation of operational, logistic and humanitarian problems.' He emphasized once again that the population, given the increased threat from the Bosnian Serbs, was at its wits' end. It had become completely dependent on the battalion and had placed its fate in the hands of Dutchbat. 'In short, the battalion is confronted with a problem completely impossible to solve,' continued Karremans.¹²⁰⁰ The minimize program and the resultant great amount of walking taxed the soldiers both physically and mentally.

¹¹⁹⁶ Interview R. Franken, 04/05/01. For Dutchbat II, see further, Vogelaar, *Leiderschap in crisismstandigheden*, pp. 172-175.

¹¹⁹⁷ As published in: Vogelaar, et al, *Leiderschap in crisismstandigheden*.

¹¹⁹⁸ Vogelaar, et al, *Leiderschap in crisismstandigheden*, p. 174.

¹¹⁹⁹ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/09/98.

¹²⁰⁰ SMG. Letter from Th. J.P. Karremans to C- Army Crisis Staff and Bgen Pollé, subject: the situation in Srebrenica, 05/06/95.

Under these conditions, the relationship with the home front was very important for the battalion and any obstruction of this directly influenced morale. Those at home and those away usually communicated by telephone or post. Neither form of communication worked optimally. Telephone calls were limited to a maximum of three minutes. For a much higher price per minute, one could call for longer, but at one's own cost. Because no convoys arrived, no post got through. The home front committee of the third battalion tried to find out if there was anything it could do, when it became apparent that there was no point in sending post.¹²⁰¹ The cutting off of postal service benefits was a huge problem for the Dutchbat soldiers, and this was certainly so in combination with the knowledge that they simply could not get out of the enclave. Concern about the home front grew as the feeling of being totally isolated and left in the lurch dawned on them. There is little doubt that this increased the stress in the battalion. Media reports about misconduct of Dutch soldiers in Bosnia, to which subject this chapter will return, did not fail to have an effect either.

The families of the soldiers sent out to Srebrenica certainly viewed the situation in the enclave even more pessimistically than the soldiers themselves. The Dutchbat soldiers could at least partially follow the Dutch debate about the situation in the former Yugoslavia in the Dutch press. Newspaper articles were sent by fax from The Hague and information that got through to Dutchbat came from Radio Nederland Wereldroep (Radio Netherlands World Service), the RTL news and UN situation reports. Reports from the Netherlands often had a negative effect because public debate fed the insecurity in Srebrenica.

It had to wait until several years after the fall of Srebrenica before a home front investigation was undertaken to interview the partners of those who had served in Srebrenica.¹²⁰² This was focused on those who stayed behind. It did not go into the effects that worry on the home front had had on troop morale. The investigation did show that in the weeks just before the end of the deployment period, the home front started to count on the return of the soldiers. Earlier feelings of agitation, loss and despair experienced at the moment the troops were deployed returned at the moment that those staying behind began to expect the soldiers' return. Hopes ran high and emotions ranged from euphoria about the return to worry about the chance of disillusionment.¹²⁰³ The huge insecurity about troops relieving Dutchbat and the attack on the enclave by the Bosnian Serbs, combined with the lack of information, undoubtedly will have intensified the alternating currents of hope and anxiety on the home front in this period. And this will not have escaped the soldiers in the enclave.

Because the VRS refused its permission, between sixty and eighty Dutchbat III soldiers were not sent on leave in the period of their service there. Worsening perspectives as to rest and recreation had clear repercussions on the soldiers' state of mind. And the question of when Dutchbat would ever be able to get away began to be imperative as June 1995 began. At the beginning of June, the soldiers already had begun to clean up and pack as they waited for relief. As the month went on, the insecurity about what was going to happen steadily increased; it was unclear whether the 42nd Battalion Limburgse Jagers or an Ukrainian battalion would be relieving Dutchbat III. This will be gone into in more detail in Chapter 4 of Part III.

As a consequence of the severity of conditions in the enclave, practically everyone was mentally exhausted. The general health of the military had begun to worsen as well. Drinking water had to be rationed. Dutchbat had cut its task down to simply being present; the execution of other tasks had largely become impossible. The disarming of the population was stopped in order to prevent a further escalation of tension.

¹²⁰¹ 11 Lumbl. TFC Dertien, Buddy Bulletin, report of a meeting on 13/05/95.

¹²⁰² M. Schipper, 'Partner zijn en uitzending: een goede combinatie?' ('Being a partner and being sent out: is this a good combination?'), Kernvraag, (2000)1, pp. 33-41.

¹²⁰³ Erik L.J.L. de Soir, 'Hoe beleeft het thuisfront een uitzending? De emotionele stadia bij langdurige inzet' (How does the home front deal with the dispatch of troops? Emotional stadia during long-lasting deployment), Kernvraag, (2001)1, pp. 19-26.

On 11 June, General Couzy was forced to decide that all the stranded Dutchbat soldiers on leave in Zagreb would return to the Netherlands. No extra personnel would be sent to Srebrenica from the Netherlands for Dutchbat III and no one from the battalion could yet go on leave. Because supplies had reached the absolute minimum level, no humanitarian aid could be given to the population. By the middle of June it was clear that the battalion would simply have to wait out the last period until relief came, without being able to do anything meaningful. The frustration grew by the day as military personnel were forced to watch the population suffering more and more intensely from hunger and lack of medical aid, while they themselves were forced to be idle and forced to watch it happen. The food situation had never been worse since Dutchbat's arrival; the VRS had blocked practically all UNHCR food convoys, and the population was practically starved.

5. Differences in the morale per battalion

Afterwards most observers judged the morale of Dutchbat I to have been most positive. That is no wonder because the sense of being pioneers created a team spirit that made itself felt in the morale. Dutchbat 1 was also much more able than its successors to help the population, because, as a rule, there were more than adequate supplies of medical goods, food, diesel oil and maintenance equipment. What's more, the population welcomed the Blue Helmets positively. And the period of Dutchbat I's stay was the shortest of all. The succeeding battalions had more difficulty figuring out what their role should be because the pioneers' work had already been done. Compounds and OPs were already built; the work of the predecessors could only be improved upon. In such a situation, it is possible to see how an attitude of 'sitting out one's time' could come into being, complete with disparagements of the predecessors. At the time of Dutchbat II, anxiety and despondency had grown within the population because the enclave had fallen more and more into the clutches of the VRS and because the Bosnian Serbs were letting fewer and fewer supply convoys in. This battalion had to deal with the first serious casualties. Dutchbat III was confronted with the most difficult circumstances of all and it could not add very much to the work of its predecessors. Contact with the population had been reduced to a minimum since Dutchbat II and the atmosphere was more forbidding.¹²⁰⁴

There is no social science research available on non-operational circumstances of influence on the battalion's functioning. One study by the military psychologist, A. Vogelaar, and fellow researchers, examines the problems confronted by the leaders of Dutchbat II. It offers some insight into the specific problems, dilemmas and frustrations and their effect on the morale.¹²⁰⁵ These insights are not applicable in their totality, though, to the Dutchbat III experiences. It must be remembered that the two battalions did not find themselves in completely comparable positions; the position of Dutchbat III was clearly worse for a longer period. And it is necessary to take into account differences in personnel and in the person of the commander. Nevertheless, Dutchbat II did experience increasing provocation and more violence with time as well; more soldiers were wounded and supplies became more problematic as time progressed.

The longer Dutchbat II remained in Bosnia, the more disillusioned the battalion became about the usefulness of its own contribution to the UNPROFOR operation. The feeling gained ground that patrolling and reporting were of little use. Numerous reports signalling violations of the No Fly Zone had no effect at all and were sometimes even disputed by headquarters in Sarajevo. Everyone felt tied hand and foot by the Rules of Engagement and the relationship with the population worsened. Many of the Blue Helmets felt that the Muslims did not appreciate their protection and were misusing the Dutchbat presence to develop prohibited military activities. It was very bad for Dutchbat motivation that it could not actually start disarming the Muslims. Patrols or OPs were sometimes shot at without demonstrable reason. Humanitarian aid was sometimes misused for military goals. The Bosnian Serbs

¹²⁰⁴ Interview E.B. Dijkman, 29/06/99.

¹²⁰⁵ A. Vogelaar, et al, *Leiderschap in crisisomstandigheden*, the following paragraphs are wholly based on this.

blocked convoys, refused to grant permission to those on furlough to leave or enter the enclave and removed personal effects from the convoys. All these things negatively affected the motivation at all levels of personnel. Those in charge had difficulty sorting out positive aspects of the mission to continue motivating personnel.¹²⁰⁶ Negative aspects were reinforced by that already discussed in Chapter 8 regarding preparations and lack of contact with the population.

Lacking better instruments, a means of comparison between the battalions can be found by looking at how many soldiers returned from the mission area ahead of time and the reasons for this. There are disadvantages to this means of comparison also, because a strong commander would tend to send his personnel back home earlier than a weak one. And it also loses its meaning at the point that the VRS no longer allowed replacement personnel to enter the enclave. A comparison between the three Airmobile Battalions does not lead to significant differences. The numbers repatriated – between eleven and twenty – do not differ much, particularly when corrected for the wounded. Interesting is that no wounded personnel and not one non-commissioned officer had to return from Dutchbat I. Relative to the others, it was Dutchbat II which had most personnel and most NCOs returned. Two persons returned from Dutchbat II and one from Dutchbat III because of punishable offences. A comparison of the three battalions with the Communication Battalion, the Transport Battalion and Support Command shows that Dutchbat did not have people returning home for reasons of refusal to obey service orders, discipline, drug use or trafficking, prohibited weapon possession, theft or trade in personal kit or acts of violence; all these things occurred in great numbers in other units.¹²⁰⁷

6. Recapitulation concerning the morale

In this sketch of the morale of Dutchbat I, II and III and the circumstances of influence upon it, it has become apparent that feelings of frustration and powerlessness grew as time went on and that this led to cynicism and discouragement. This state of mind seems to have conflicted hardly at all with the exercise of the battalion's task: there are very few instances of this, a very small number of documented cases in fact, and the functioning of only a few soldiers suffered for a shorter or longer period as a result of shocking experiences. Colleagues and social workers helped those who did suffer in such a way that they could later resume work. To the very end, practically all assignments were carried out loyally and the personnel concerned took up risky blocking positions when the VRS threatened to overrun the enclave after 9 July.

Taking this into account, it would be much too easy to assume that reduced motivation, frustration or problems with state of mind would, as a matter of course, have affected the execution of tasks, particularly in the fighting units, as has been suggested. According to the Military Security Officer, Sergeant Major Rave, the morale of Dutchbat III was 'not bad at all, it was, in fact, very good'. Research carried out later also underscores the feeling of solidarity and its positive influence on the atmosphere. All activities kept right on going, in spite of the physical weaknesses and setbacks such as faltering rotations, postponed leave, post that failed to appear and lack of personnel. Rave did not observe any mental weakening. The fact that rations were pinched off meant that the general condition deteriorated and, with it, the speed of work. A certain indifference made its appearance, according to

¹²⁰⁶ Vogelaar, et al, *Leiderschap in crisismomstandigheden*, pp. 25-30.

¹²⁰⁷ DJZ (Director Legal Affairs). Summary prematurely returned military personnel from the former Yugoslavia, 24/05/95. Confi. The comparison fails to the extent that data for the enclave cannot be corrected for personnel of the battalions quartered in Simin Han and that the data for Dutchbat do not go further than 24/05/95. See also SMG 1020/1-4. Repatriation in the first year after deployment, *Lessons Learned*, 08/02/94, no. 27/Z/1975. An undated summary (08/05/95?) by LColonel, Dr. W. Wertheim (to Lars Poppe) mentions a total number of 273 repatriations, subdivided into BH-Command 5, ECMM 3, Dutchbat 45, Support Command 32, Transport Battalion 84, Communication Battalion 97 and Zagreb 7. By category of personnel, these were 133 conscripts, 88 BBT and 52 BOT. The reasons were 15 dysfunction, 92 medical, 75 psycho-social (including problems at home) and 91 punishable act. (Archive DJZ, file Gedragingen).

Rave: 'the longer you operate under circumstances of that nature, the more normal they become for you. Your own standards start to adapt and then you become more indifferent to certain things.'¹²⁰⁸

In spite of everything, a number of Dutchbat soldiers deemed the atmosphere good to the very end. The feeling of solidarity was improved by adverse circumstances and the differences between the Red Berets and supporting units lessened. The tense waiting undergone by those on leave in Zagreb proves this feeling of solidarity; practically all of the soldiers waiting there wanted to return to the battalion in Srebrenica.

7. Misconduct

In May of 1995, the first publications appeared in the Dutch press, alleging that Dutchbat had been guilty, in the enclave Srebrenica, of serious misconduct affecting the population. This very sensitive subject would continue after that time to catch public attention repeatedly. The Dutch Army and the Public Prosecutions Department began an investigation in May and June of 1995 into the accuracy of rumours about misconduct of Dutch UN personnel in the former Yugoslavia, but this did not lead to criminal proceedings. Nevertheless, the rumours continued to circulate because personnel home from Bosnia revealed new facts about misconduct to the media. This opened the results of earlier official investigations to question once more. The remainder of this chapter deals with the point at which the question arose, that is, with the developments in the months of May and June, until the beginning of July. In addition to the question as to which forms of misconduct were actually reported, the communication among the Ministry of Defence, the Dutch Army, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the Public Prosecutions Department are gone into, as well as the thoroughness of the investigation into alleged misconduct within Dutchbat III.

In preparing to dispatch the Dutch battalions, no one anticipated any special problems in the area of criminal and disciplinary law or any 'misconduct' against the Muslim population as arising from the peace mission. In training the Dutchbat soldiers, military criminal and disciplinary law effective during the period for which they were to be dispatched was dealt with in generalities; lessons were also given in humanitarian military law. The same rules and procedures were valid for the application of Dutch military disciplinary and criminal law during the period for which the personnel were dispatched, as were valid for the Netherlands or for operations in NATO context. Rules of conduct were laid down in Dutchbat's Standing Orders, and to break these could lead to criminal or disciplinary proceedings. UNPROFOR's own rules made up an integral part of these. The peacekeeping force observed a system of major offences, which included use of and possession of drugs, handling weapons and ammunition, trading in UN equipment, dealing on the black market and sexual assault.

Breaking the rules led to official reports being drawn up and possible repatriation to the Netherlands. It was obligatory to report every offence to the brigade of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in Zagreb. Whenever a commander judged that there was question of a criminal offence, according to Dutch military criminal and disciplinary law or UNPROFOR rules, he was obliged to report it directly to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Every soldier could report offences to his own commander.¹²⁰⁹

Within Dutchbat, the battalion and the company commanders were responsible for enforcing discipline. They were authorized to take disciplinary measures for light offences against the rules; for serious offences, it was requisite to involve the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Tasks of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee included all police matters such as traffic control, registration of offences and of criminal acts, and investigating these.

¹²⁰⁸ Interview A.E. Rave, 13/12 and 14/12/00.

¹²⁰⁹ CRST. Policy volume Commander Netherlands troops in the former Yugoslavia (September 1994). Chapter 1/7. Debriefing file: Standing Orders Dutchbat 2/3, Chapter 1/08.

The Force Provost Marshall was responsible for military police tasks for the UNPROFOR. The UN proceeded from the assumption that troop-contributing countries also sent out the necessary numbers of Military Constabulary and that these formed part of the organization of the Force Provost Marshall. These organizations jointly dealt with 19,000 cases, but further specification as to sort is not available.¹²¹⁰

Marechaussee units took action solely within the context of the national contingent. The Netherlands, as a troop-contributor, also contributed to the military police of UNPROFOR. For the exercise of Dutch military police tasks, a brigade of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee was stationed in Zagreb at UNPROFOR headquarters. Under the responsibility of this brigade, small posts of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee operated on the location of Dutch units in the former Yugoslavia.¹²¹¹ At the compound in Potocari, a post of two non-commissioned officers acted in this capacity, drawing up official reports of, for instance, traffic accidents, theft and persons missing and undertaking investigations on their own initiative or in response to a report by a commander. This post reported daily to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee brigade in Zagreb and contacted the Public Prosecutor in Arnhem, when necessary, to request advice for methods of dealing with these matters. Any possible 'misconduct' had to be dealt with within this context of the tasks and responsibilities of commanders and of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee.

The accusations

The assumption of misconduct became the center of public interest as of Friday, 5 May 1995, when the ANP (Dutch Press Agency) questioned the Department of Information for the Ministry of Defence 'whether or not it was true that the MID (Military Intelligence Service) had instituted an investigation into war crimes committed by Dutch Blue Helmets.' In discussions with General Couzy, the answer was provided that the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, in response to rumours about possible misconduct of Dutch soldiers, had commissioned a routine investigation. The Dutch commanders in Bosnia would carry out this internal and exploratory investigation. The moment a clearer picture of the facts and any possible 'violations of military criminal law' was obtained, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee would be called in.

The ANP report found the Information Officer for the Army to be extremely reserved in his statement; Lieutenant Colonel W.P.P. Hartman did not wish to specify 'which direction the suspicion of misconduct took, because 'even the direction could be false'. He was to say just as little about the units and about the time period the investigation was meant to target; it had to do with more than one incident and it involved more than one soldier. The misconduct was thought to have been directed at the local population.¹²¹²

The *Rotterdams Dagblad* of 5 May 1995, under the caption 'Allegations of misconduct undermine Dutch Blue Helmets' functioning – "They willfully enticed children into minefields with candies" revealed more details. It was said that the investigation into misconduct had been started because supervisors and commanders had raised the alarm in response to shocking stories of misbehaviour told, during their follow-up training, by soldiers who had returned from Bosnia.

'The soldiers were said to have been guilty of rape and the misuse of alcohol and weapons. They were even said to have willfully enticed children into

¹²¹⁰ UNPROFOR, Force Commander's End of Mission Report,' pp. 100-101.

¹²¹¹ P. van Keulen, 'Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Captain Colenbrander 'De eerste maand gaat nog wel' (You can get through the first month) in: *Achterbanier* 17(1995)4, pp. 6-8; Public Prosecutions Department Arnhem: Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, no. P.004/2000, 06/01/2000.

¹²¹² 'Defensie onderzoekt geruchten Nederlands wangedrag in Bosnië' (Defence investigates rumours of Dutch misconduct in Bosnia), ANP Bericht, 05/05/95. CRST. W.P.P. Hartman, 08/05/95, 'Notitie voor Secties communicatie KL'(Note for Communication Sections Dutch Army).

minefields by throwing candies into the fields. In this way, the soldiers could check whether or not the area was safe for them. Experts see the last-mentioned excesses as “very close to war crimes”.¹²¹³

Army spokesman Hartman had obviously been much less reserved in his statements to the Rotterdam newspaper than he had been with the ANP. He did point out that good contact existed between the Army top and the personnel as a means of intercepting rumour quickly. However, when asked, he did not deny that these rumours of misconduct had been going on for some time. The Army, he stated, did not tolerate misconduct in any event. Couzy wanted to get to the bottom of it. If things had taken place that did not pass muster, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee would be brought in. The investigation, according to Hartman, would not be limited to the units in Bosnia, but would also be directed at personnel already returned home ‘in order to eliminate the chance of failing to discover misbehaviour from an earlier date.’ The same article stated that ‘critical Army officers’, about whom it was only known that they had the rank of Major, Lieutenant-Colonel or Colonel, doubted whether this determined approach of the Army top would be successful. They stated that commanders in Bosnia were not aware of everything that had happened there. Moreover, they wanted to keep their dirty wash off the public line. There was a ‘culture of covering up for each other’, especially in the Airmobile Brigade, according to these spokesmen.¹²¹⁴

The national newspapers of Saturday 6 May followed the ANP press release of 5 May by reporting that the Army had begun investigating rumours of misconduct, but they did not as yet mention details of the report in the *Rotterdams Dagblad*. Those papers ran reports with more content on Monday, 8 May, based on a second ANP report, the contours of which resembled the piece in the *Rotterdams Dagblad*:

‘Soldiers who go too far and use their weapons unnecessarily. Rape. Children enticed into a possible minefield with a handful of candies. Are these wild rumours meant to discredit the reputedly extremely disciplined Dutch UN soldiers in Bosnia? Nevertheless, the Army finds the case serious enough to investigate.’¹²¹⁵

With this, a long-lasting discussion began about misconduct of Dutch soldiers in Bosnia. According to the second ANP report, twenty cases were involved, for deeds perpetrated in Busovaca, Lukavac and Srebrenica. This report mentioned soldiers had, not only taken their commanders in the follow-up training but also their supervisors, into their confidence. The Army’s Section of Intelligence and Security and the Department for Individual Aid seemed to be aware of stories of misconduct. Both General Couzy and his Netherlands Army Crisis Staff Commander, General Pollé, were said to have been aware of ‘possible abuses’ for some time. These reports said that Couzy had already decided at the end of April to instigate an investigation, at the initiative of a group of ‘alarmed officers’.

Couzy, and in his wake the spokesman for the Army, tried to turn the tide of the general conviction that ‘there’s no smoke without fire’ employing the adage, ‘one can communicate about facts but not about rumours.’¹²¹⁶ According to the ANP, it was presumed that company captains too had been aware of the incidents but had not taken any action. The same sources stated that primarily younger professional soldiers in part-time service had been involved in the ‘alleged incidents’.¹²¹⁷ This

¹²¹³ T. Haerkens ‘Beschuldigingen van wangedrag’(Accusations of misconduct), *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 05/05/95.

¹²¹⁴ T. Haerkens, ‘Beschuldigingen van wangedrag’, *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 05/05/95. CRST. W.P.P. Hartman, 08/05/95, ‘Notitie voor Secties communicatie KL’.

¹²¹⁵ G. van Gils, ‘Landmacht onderzoekt geruchten over wangedrag in Bosnië’(Army investigates rumours of misconduct in Bosnia), ANP Bericht, 06/05/95.

¹²¹⁶ CRST. W.P.P. Hartman, ‘Notitie voor Secties communicatie KL’, 08/05/95.

¹²¹⁷ G. van Gils, ‘Landmacht onderzoekt geruchten over wangedrag in Bosnië’, ANP Bericht 138, 06/05/95.

information from the ANP – apparently originating from the alarmed officers – together with the reference in the *Rotterdams Dagblad* about the closed culture in the Mobile Airbrigade, pointed strongly in the direction of Dutchbat, the only unit with many young BB'Ters (professional soldiers with contracts for a limited time).

The media gave a lot of space to news of the already initiated internal Army investigation. The misconduct had still been very little documented, but a number of examples appeared in public again and again, to the embarrassment of Defence. In addition to throwing candies into possible minefields, prohibited use of weapons and alcohol misuse, the examples of misbehaviour in the reports of 8 May were expanded to include prohibited visits to prostitutes outside the compound, drug use, the sale of military goods, and rude behaviour towards the local population. Reactions from military trade unions and from political parties to this news ran almost parallel; there was astonishment at the reported facts, emphatic support for the internal investigation and a criminal investigation if necessary. The trade unions, *Vereniging Belangenbehartiging Militairen* (Representation Association for Military Personnel) (VBM), the ACOM, *the Algemene Vereniging van Militairen* (AVVM) (General Association for the Military), right up to the *Vereniging van Dienstplichtige Militairen* (VVDM) (Association for Conscripted Soldiers) were surprised by the rumours though, because nothing of this sort had ever reached their ears.¹²¹⁸

Investigation of the allegations

Couzy had reported verbally to Minister Voorhoeve on 28 April that he had obtained information from Chaplain Service and Military Psychological Services concerning 'possible misbehaviour' on the part of dispatched Dutch military personnel. Voorhoeve requested a written report.¹²¹⁹ Head Army Chaplain J.G.C. Broeders sent confidential information from two chaplains in Bosnia about 'excessive behaviour of Dutch UN military personnel' on 1 May to Voorhoeve and Couzy, providing reason for an investigation.

Broeders said that his intention had not been to instigate a legal inquiry. He wanted to use the examples particularly to point out the huge importance of operational ethical education for Dutch UN military personnel before deployment. Broeders specified five examples of said excessive behaviour in his report to Couzy and Voorhoeve. In addition to the earlier mentioned incident of throwing the candies (or Esbit firelighters that, normally speaking, were used to warm up tinned food, wrapped up in a candy paper) into the possible minefield, he was concerned with soldiers accompanying food transports, who, fully aware of the danger, allowed Muslim children to run up against their moving trucks and with soldiers who offered shoe polish sandwiches or Esbit firelighters as food to Muslim children. He was also concerned with soldiers responding to parents' proposals of sexual relations with their young daughters in exchange for a package of cigarettes and, finally, with soldiers sprinkling leftover food with fuel on the way to the refuse dump and, as soon as the Muslims came closer, setting it alight, with all the consequent bodily harm.¹²²⁰

Broeders' report was enough to make Couzy instigate an investigation. On 2 May 1995, he reported to the Deputy Secretary-General of Defence that he had assigned the commander of the Dutch Forces in Bosnia, Colonel W.M. Verschaegen, to investigate the units in Bosnia. That investigation was not undertaken with speed though. It is not even clear at which point in time the

¹²¹⁸ 'Beschuldiging wangedrag' (Accusations of misconduct), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 06/05/95; 'Onderzoek naar 'wangedrag' (Investigation into 'misconduct'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/05/95. 'Defensie onderzoekt geruchten' (Defence investigates rumours), *De Telegraaf*, 06/05/95; 'Onderzoek wangedrag Nederlandse militairen' (Investigation misconduct Dutch military personnel), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 08/05/95; 'Mogelijke vervolging Dutchbat' (Possible prosecution Dutchbat), *Parool*, 10/05/95; 'ACOM distantieert zich van berichtgeving omtrent vermeend wangedrag' (ACOM distances itself from reports of alleged misconduct), *Persbericht ACOM*, 10/05/95.

¹²¹⁹ DJZ. Memorandum 'Onderzoeken naar vermeend wangedrag van Nederlandse VN militairen in voormalig Joegoslavië' (Investigations into alleged misconduct of Dutch UN military personnel in the former Yugoslavia), undated; DCBC. No. D 101/95/9200, Voorhoeve to Chairman Parliament, 09/05/95.

¹²²⁰ DJZ. No. 5178/CB, Broeders to Voorhoeve (copy to Couzy), 01/05/95.

assignment was issued to Colonel Verschaegen. On 5 May, the media assault began; it was through the media that Karremans first learned of the existence of the investigation. Even after these publications, the Dutch Army did not speed up the investigation, but then the Central Organization of the Ministry of Defence (also known as *Het Plein*) intervened. In this way, on 8 May, Karremans received an assignment directly from The Hague, and not from Busovaca, to instigate an investigation into misconduct by Dutchbat III personnel.¹²²¹ The difference in approach between the Dutch Army and *Het Plein* was apparent the next day, 9 May when Couzy told his Minister that he would need four weeks to carry out the investigation. At that point Voorhoeve stepped in with the words:

‘That is much too long. Then the innocent will be cast in a bad light for an unnecessarily long period and the guilty will have an enormous amount of time to cover their tracks. I want to decide at the end of this week to involve the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, if there are any grounds at all for the vile rumours.’¹²²²

And indeed, haste was made: by 11 May, Karremans and the commander of the Ordnance Battalion in Busovaca had reported directly to Couzy. Their reports made clear that they had not received identical assignments.

In Busovaca, a committee of six, headed by the acting battalion commander, investigated the allegations.¹²²³ This committee had asked discrete questions of the predecessors, colleagues and lower commanders subsequent to their having inventoried data from the archives (of the battalion, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Social Work and Mental Health Care). The committee came to the conclusion that there were no proofs, indicators, facts or rumours that made it plausible that personnel of the Ordnance Battalion had done ‘that alleged’. An investigation by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee into an incident of having offered Esbit blocks as candies had not led to a confession by the most important suspect. Therefore it was ascertained that there were too few concrete points of departure for further investigation.¹²²⁴

On his account, Karremans had put the investigation into Dutchbat III in the hands of a committee, consisting of the acting battalion commander, Major R. Franken, the Head of Personnel, Captain R. Voerman, and the official for military security, Sergeant Major E.A. Rave. In actual fact, Voerman and Rave carried out the investigation separately; Voerman was in the A-Company and could not get into the enclave whereas Rave was inside the enclave and could not get out. Both of these men reported to Franken.¹²²⁵ Karremans made sure to direct the assignment at the media. He established that the investigation primarily concerned itself with Dutchbat II, but that an investigation of Dutchbat III was also necessary. The battalion commander was of the impression that especially *De Volkskrant* (Dutch daily newspaper) had portrayed Dutchbat in a bad light and he wanted to put the allegations right by means of the investigation. Karremans ordered an investigation of the occurrence in Dutchbat III of eight specific forms of misconduct:

1. causing children to walk through trenches to check for the presence of mines in exchange for candies;
2. sending children into suspected minefields by throwing handfuls of candies;
3. offering Esbit blocks to children as candies;

¹²²¹ DJZ. Handwritten memorandum from the Deputy Secretary-general to Minister and Secretary of State (copies to CDS and DJZ), 02/05/95; Karremans, Srebrenica, p. 90.

¹²²² DJZ. Handwritten memorandum Voorhoeve, no. 723, 09/05/95.

¹²²³ Other members were: head and extra officer of the section Information and Security (S2), the commander of the post of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the company’s social worker and the chaplain.

¹²²⁴ DJZ. Fax Wnd C-1 (NL/BE) UN LOG/TBAT to C-Crisis Staff, ‘Verslag van gehouden onderzoek’(Report of investigation carried out), 11/05/95.

¹²²⁵ PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Ne.P.527/A/1999, 20/12/99, pp. 5-6.

4. bringing the safety and the tasks of the battalion into danger unnecessarily by giving medical aid to the citizen population, without the knowledge of the commander¹²²⁶;
5. lighting refuse, over which fuel had been poured, on the refuse dump, whereby a number of 'locals' were wounded;
6. speeding while driving the vehicles, knowing children pursued them and taking bets on the number of children hit;
7. using weapons unnecessarily against the Muslim inhabitants;
8. behaving roughly and aggressively toward and making offensive comments about the Muslims.

For each point, Karremans asked that it be explicitly indicated whether the allegations of misconduct were based on truth, or whether there was question of suspicions and rumours. Finally, he asked whether it had been entirely excluded that the subjects of the allegations were not a series of misunderstandings.¹²²⁷

Voerman and Rave spoke with a number of military personnel and well-informed local inhabitants in Simin Han, where the A-Company of Dutchbat was quartered, and in Srebrenica, respectively. The former group included commanders and their successors from the infantry platoons, the officers and NCOs and soldiers from the Ordnance platoons 'as known repositories of gossip and rumour', the battalion doctor and personnel from the medical post and, in Simin Han, the chaplain. In Srebrenica, the latter group included the local interpreters of UNPROFOR, UNHCR and *Médicins Sans Frontières* and the leaders of *Médicins Sans Frontières* and the head of the waterworks and municipal cleansing department, Junotze.

The Simin Han investigation resulted in denials for the first six questions. That was true of Srebrenica as well. In answering the third question, it was reported that, when Dutchbat III replaced Dutchbat II, stories had come out about Esbit blocks. Junotze was said to have known nothing of the incident on the refuse dump and to have further affirmed that something of that nature could not have happened without him knowing about it. Junotze mentioned another incident, involving solely Muslims and no Dutchbat soldiers.

Finally, in the matter of driving too quickly, reports stated that a Dutchbat III corporal had been prosecuted under disciplinary law 'for disrespectful behaviour in driving through puddles on purpose in order to splash the people walking there'.

The report did not address the two last questions; the reasons for this have not become clear.¹²²⁸

The investigations in Busovaca and Srebrenica did not indicate that the types of misconduct by Dutch military personnel in Bosnia named in the media reports had really occurred. The investigation in Busovaca had been restricted to the points named in the media; the report of Dutchbat III was silent on the last two points: use of weapons against the local population and rough and aggressive behaviour. The reports led readers to understand implicitly that battalion leaders in Srebrenica had been on the alert for appearances of misbehaviour and had punished it when it had occurred.¹²²⁹ Reports from the battalion commanders, in particular the data from Karremans, exonerated Dutchbat III. Should anything have happened, the culprit was Dutchbat II.

¹²²⁶ This specific point is being brought forward here for the first time in the context of an investigation into misconduct. It is most likely connected with the internal conflict in the battalion surrounding the medical care of the population, partly in the light of the crisis between the Local Municipal Administration and *Médicins Sans Frontières*. Karremans, either consciously or unconsciously, allowed this question to arise within his investigation assignment - see further the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues.'

¹²²⁷ Karremans, Srebrenica, pp. 185-186 (Appendix 9).

¹²²⁸ BStas. Dutchbat Srebrenica to Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, 11/05/95, Appendix: No. TK 9567, 'Verondersteld wangedrag NL-miln' (Alleged misconduct Dutch military personnel).

¹²²⁹ Daily reports of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in Srebrenica confirm the accuracy of the reported events. Driving through the puddles took place on 22 January 1995, the incident on the refuse dump on 23 February 1995. Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Brigade UNPROFOR Department Lukavac, post Srebrenica: transaction reports 22/01/95 and 23/02/95).

This reference to Dutchbat II was connected with the scheduled hearing by the Public Prosecutor's Department that had been announced in the interim, to examine misconduct by Dutchbat II. However, before this can be looked into, it is of importance to remark how the Army leaders and the Minister reacted to the reports from the units on location.

Reactions in The Hague to reports from Bosnia about misconduct

Acting Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Van Baal reported on the morning of 12 May to the Minister concerning the results of the investigation, in compliance with an agreement between him and the Chief of Defence Staff. Van Baal established that the investigation had been carried out with 'the greatest possible care' and that it had not produced any further points of departure concerning possible misbehaviour by both units in Bosnia. Van Baal wrote to the Minister to the effect that, since the Chief Public Prosecutor in Arnhem had decided in the interim to carry out a criminal preliminary investigation into misconduct by Dutchbat II, Van Baal had decided against further investigation into misconduct by Dutchbat II.¹²³⁰ In a letter to the Parliament, Voorhoeve adopted the conclusions of the 'thorough investigation' from the acting Commander in Chief. He established that there was no question of 'structural misconduct' by Dutch military personnel in the former Yugoslavia. Conspicuously enough, Voorhoeve also revealed that the Public Prosecutor in Arnhem shared his opinion.¹²³¹

Within one week of the first reports of misconduct, Voorhoeve seemed to have succeeded in clarifying the matter to Parliament and to the media, using the results of the investigation. He had also put himself out to quell the rancor and repressed anger of the soldiers in Bosnia surrounding the case. Firstly, he wrote to them on 10 May to say that only a thorough investigation could remove this slur on their reputation, that their work was enormously appreciated in the Netherlands and that these allegations probably only revolved around a few incidents.¹²³² Secondly, he wrote again, two days later, saying that 'structural misconduct was not indicated in any way' and that further investigation was unnecessary. His words were, 'this will be a great load off your minds. I am relieved and pleased that on the short term it has been established that no slur rests on the blazon of Dutch military personnel in the former Yugoslavia.'¹²³³

The Minister had shown himself to be more energetic than the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Couzy, who did not view a rapid investigation as the pre-eminent means to reduce the damage for the Army and the troops in Bosnia to a minimum. Couzy apparently felt it better to rely on an investigation that would take a long time and thus also allow the problem to subside with time. The 'first round' seemed to have been won, thanks to Voorhoeve, but in fact doubts had not been assuaged in the slightest. On the morning that Voorhoeve made the results known, *De Volkskrant* was ready with its rebuttal, stating that the file could not be closed thanks to positive results because it represented solely the findings of military commanders at battalion level and higher, who themselves would see very little advantage in 'admitting that they had not been able to control their personnel, let alone that they had been aware of criminal behaviour and did not report it.'

In the light of earlier reports about the closed culture of the Airborne Battalion, this remark was understandable. *De Volkskrant* cast doubt on the sense of duty and the reliability of the whole line of command of the battalions in Bosnia, up to and including the acting Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. An editor in The Hague, Hella Rottenberg, was obviously on to the difference in opinion between Voorhoeve and Couzy as to the required speed of the investigation. Couzy and the

¹²³⁰ DJZ. Handwritten memorandum from CDS (Chief Defence Staff) to Minister, 09/05/95. Ibidem: A. van Baal to Voorhoeve, 11/05/95.

¹²³¹ D 101/95/9413, Voorhoeve to Chairman TK (Parliament), 12/05/95.

¹²³² Letter No. V950096, cited in Karremans, Srebrenica, p. 90.

¹²³³ Letter No. V95009543, Voorhoeve to contingent commander Yugoslavia and commander Airmobile Brigade, 12/05/95.

Army, according to *De Volkskrant*, wanted to keep the actual state of affairs out of the public eye. In order to prevent ‘a trace of a hush-hush affair hanging on’ and in order to put paid to the rumours and to punish those possibly guilty, this newspaper considered a ‘fast and thorough’ investigation by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee necessary, because it could investigate the misconduct in a more independent way.¹²³⁴

The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee did indeed institute a preliminary inquiry on 12 May into the 12th Airborne Battalion (Dutchbat II), the source of the reports of misconduct. Van Gend, the Chief Public Prosecutor in Arnhem, gave his order for this preliminary inquiry on 9 May. That inquiry did not ensue formally from the turmoil of publicity but from an official report of misconduct from the post of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in Zagreb, made on 16 January 1995, at the request of a first lieutenant of Dutchbat II. The preliminary inquiry started a new storm of publicity: Voorhoeve was namely not aware of its existence. He was confronted with the information on the same day that he announced the internal investigation of the Army, during his press conference. When questioned during a press conference on 9 May why he had no knowledge of the official report of 16 January 1995, Voorhoeve was unable to answer. According to the rules, this official report should have been submitted to the Minister; it concerned a case with possible political and media consequences. Since January 1992, commanders of Army units had been obliged to inform the Director of the Legal Affairs Department – *Het Plein*

‘...in the event of facts or circumstances coming to light, the nature of which is such that the commanders think the Minister should be alerted; these must include, in any event, facts or circumstances, the nature of which is such as to anticipate political and/or media consequences.’¹²³⁵

This raises the question of why it had taken almost four months for the Public Prosecutor's Department to decide to institute an inquiry into the official report of the Royal Netherlands Military Constabulary of 16 January 1995. The facts of the matter can be reconstructed as follows.

The criminal investigation into misconduct by Dutchbat II

The post of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in Zagreb had instigated an investigation, at the request of a platoon commander of the staff company of Dutchbat II, into reports of ‘abuses’ by one soldier in his platoon. It concerned the purchasing of or trading in weapons and bayonets belonging to local Muslims, associating with local prostitutes, firing warning shots at Muslims and giving children poisonous (the assumption at least was thus worded) jam-covered Esbit blocks. During the hearing, it turned out that the soldier had not himself been witness to these happenings; he said that he would perhaps be able to provide names of his informants after he had been repatriated to the Netherlands. He did, however, give the names of three non-commissioned officers who were said to be aware of the infringements.

The investigation was to be continued in the Netherlands. In response to this information, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee carried out a thorough inspection of weapons in the baggage of Dutchbat II as they left Zagreb, to check for the presence of ABiH weapons, but no evidence of this sort was forthcoming.

After receiving the official report, the Secretary of the Public Prosecutor's Office for Military Affairs of the court in Arnhem gave the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee the assignment to further the investigation. According to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the Public Prosecutor requested

¹²³⁴ H. Rottenberg, ‘Onderzoek wangedrag heeft vervolg nodig’ (Misconduct investigation requires sequel), *De Volkskrant*, 12/05/95.

¹²³⁵ DJZ. No. CS92/0117 92001833. Secretary General Patijn to commanding officers and commander Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, 27/01/92.

thereby that the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee deal with the information ‘with the necessary caution’ on account of its vagueness and its sensitive nature. The Public Prosecutions Secretary and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee agreed that, the moment that was any concrete information, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee would contact the Public Prosecutor. However, due to the heavy workload of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in Arnhem and the previous failure of early investigations into similar rumours, this further investigation was not given high priority.

During the slow continuing investigation in the Netherlands, during a hearing by telephone, one of the three non-commissioned officers named by the soldier stated that he could not support the soldier's assertions. The other two were apparently not interrogated. After transfer of the file, another officer of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee interrogated the soldier again on 3 May and wrote up an official report, which did not contain any new facts.

On 9 May, the Public Prosecutor of the military section in Arnhem, Besier, had a detailed conversation with the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee commander, Major General D.G.J. Fabius. Perhaps as a result of this conversation – as it happened on the same day – Chief Public Prosecutor Van Gend was given the official report of 16 January from Zagreb to look into. That same day, 9 May, he gave the order for a criminal investigation after contacting the staff of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. The examining magistrates commenced the preliminary inquiry into Dutchbat II on 10 May.¹²³⁶

During the press conference of 9 May, Voorhoeve seemed to be caught unaware by the decision of the Public Prosecutor in Arnhem. He asked the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee to elucidate and, at the end of the afternoon, he received a memorandum from Fabius about how the official report from Zagreb was being attended to. Fabius provided him with the summary of the course of events since the official report had been written up in Zagreb and of other contacts between the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the Public Prosecutor's Office. He did not say anything about why the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigation had suddenly been given priority at the beginning of May.

The already mentioned instruction of January 1992 should have ensured that General Fabius had informed the Minister in February 1995 about the current investigation and that had not happened. On the advice of the Director of Information Services, Voorhoeve refrained from a supplementary press release, because it was first necessary to talk to Besier and Van Gend to check on the course of events as presented by Fabius. In the subsequent discussion with Voorhoeve, Van Gend said that a too hasty response by the Public Prosecutor's Office to rumours in January could have had negative consequences for the Forces and it was precisely that, that he had tried to prevent.

It is clear that communication here was exceedingly poor. The Public Prosecutor was not told of the internal Army investigation at the beginning of May. The Minister was not told of the official report from Zagreb. The Public Prosecutor did not know that the January investigation by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had been resumed on 3 May. And the Minister did not know that the Public Prosecutor was initiating a criminal investigation. This lack of communication, however, is insufficient to account for the fact that the internal Army investigation and the resumption of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigation at the beginning of May coincided. The immediate causes for each of these investigations differed. Couzy was operating on information derived from Mental Health sources most probably related to recent events, while the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee was resuming an investigation put on the back burner in February of 1995.

The Chief Public Prosecutor had decided on a criminal investigation after he had been presented, on 9 May, with the official report from Zagreb. This report, dating from 11 January, was doubtlessly presented after the staff of the Commander in Chief had asked the Public Prosecutor in

¹²³⁶ DJZ. No. CV 95/0501, Commander Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Fabius to Minister of Defence, 09/05/95. Ibidem: no. Ah 3220/533/95/pvds, Van Gend to Justice Minister, 11/05/95. Ibidem: memorandum department head Administrative, Criminal and Disciplinary law to Director Legal Affairs, ‘Conversation Commander Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, 17/07/95.

Arnhem for it earlier that day, subsequent to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Brigade from Zagreb having made the staff aware of the document's existence; it is possible that the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee was alerted by Fabius after he had spoken to Besier. The only link connecting both investigations was therefore the fact that the official report of 16 January was presented to the Public Prosecutor, subsequent to the staff of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army having asked for it. Probably the attention given to misconduct in the media on 5 and 6 May also played a role in the decision of the Chief Public Prosecutor. After all, nothing indicates that new data were available.¹²³⁷

This sums up the first internal Army investigation and the history prior to the decision of the Public Prosecutor on 10 May to carry out a preliminary inquiry into Dutchbat II.

The preliminary investigation itself would turn out to be extensive. Eight staff members of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee interrogated 43 Dutchbat II personnel. At the end of June, the Public Prosecutions Department decided that the findings of the preliminary inquiry did not occasion the institution of criminal proceedings. Minister Voorhoeve was very pleased with the result.¹²³⁸ He went to Schaarsbergen in person on 26 June 1995 to break the news to Dutchbat II. He was visibly relieved because the preliminary inquiry had not confirmed tales of misconduct directed at the Muslim citizens, such as the Esbit blocks in minefields and the rapes. The preliminary inquiry had turned up 'absolutely nothing', according to this government member:

'Nothing for which you or your colleagues in other battalions should be ashamed. The escutcheon of the Airmobile Brigade is unblemished. No facts have come to light and no witnesses have been found who could corroborate the rumours. (...) I hope, with all my heart, that the dailies, the radio and the television will pay a lot of attention to the positive results of the investigation. You have the right to this, given the generous attention paid earlier to the extremely damaging rumours that thus appear unfounded'.¹²³⁹

8. Back to square one: misconduct after all?

Anyone who had joined Minister Voorhoeve in thinking that the file 'Misconduct in Bosnia' could now be closed was mistaken. The very same evening, in the current affairs television program, 'Here and Now', a number of ex-Dutchbat III and Transport Battalion personnel appeared, accusing their predecessors anew of handing out Esbit firelighter blocks, of using drugs and causing traffic accidents by their reckless driving. Conscript M. Schouten said that, with his own eyes, he had seen Transport Battalion soldiers giving Esbit blocks to Muslim children 'as a joke'. He stated as well that Dutchbat chauffeurs had a bad reputation for dangerous driving. Schouten had first reported this on a debriefing form after being repatriated; later he had spoken to the MID (Military Intelligence Service) about it.

Corporal C. van Kammen said that, when he had been stationed with the Dutchbat III A-Company in Simin Han, he had seen sentries hitting children, who were playing near the gates, with rifle butts. He said that Couzy, during his visit to Busovaca, had shown no interest in his story. The Deputy Battalion Commander of Dutchbat III in Simin Han, Major P. van Geldere, however, repeated that nothing had been going on at all. His opinion, publicized in the *Algemeen Dagblad* (daily paper), was

¹²³⁷ DJZ. No. 95000416, memorandum from the head of international and legal policy affairs, Van Hegelsom, to Minister, 10/05/95. Ibidem: no. Ah 3220/533/95/pvds, Van Gend to Minister of Justice, 11/05/95. Ibidem: memorandum from department head Administrative, Criminal and Disciplinary law to Director Legal Affairs, 17/07/95 'Conversation Commander Royal Netherlands Marechaussee'.

¹²³⁸ DJZ. No. V 95012380, Voorhoeve to Chairman Parliament, 26/06/95.

¹²³⁹ DJZ. Text for an announcement of the Minister of Defence to military personnel of the 12th Airmobile Battalion, 26/06/95.

that Van Kammen's statements had to do with his disturbed relationship with other members of his group: Van Kammen had just been trying to 'get back at his pals'.¹²⁴⁰

Nevertheless, there were indicators that there was apparently more going on than the Minister of Defence, the Public Prosecutor and the Dutch Army could discover or wanted to admit. More questions forced themselves to the fore with these reconstructions: were these the only signs of 'misconduct' of Dutch personnel in the former Yugoslavia at that moment? Was such behaviour general for UN soldiers in Bosnia or was it concentrated in certain units? If it was concentrated, then to which extent did it occur in Dutchbat? And, finally – the crucial question – did the commanders trouble to observe this behaviour and to take action against it? These questions will be dealt with in the argument to follow.

The answer to the first question of the availability of information about misconduct is clear. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had access to more information than that which could be established as hard fact: they had already investigated comparable rumours, without result. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had information about specific incidents too. Royal Netherlands Marechaussee reports from the enclave mention incidents of Kalashnikov bayonets being purchased in the first half 1995 by Dutchbat soldiers from Muslims and of rude behaviour to the local workers and to the citizens. In those cases, action was taken, based either on a commander's report or on a Royal Netherlands Marechaussee initiative.¹²⁴¹

The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee was also aware of incidents in other places. In March 1995, a Support Command soldier from Lukavac was sent back to the Netherlands on the basis of an official report about a number of forms of misconduct against citizens, whereby three other suspects were also named. These reports and those of the other Royal Netherlands Marechaussee posts in the former Yugoslavia were sent to its Brigade in Zagreb. The Intelligence and Security Section of the Netherlands Army Military Intelligence Service was aware of this from their debriefings of returned personnel. The conscript who had reported the incident in Lukavac had spoken with an employee of Military Security, who, according to the soldier, seemed to be well up on the many sorts of misconduct against the population. This employee even concluded that within the Support Command, the matter of misconduct should be taken resolutely in hand, to prevent a proliferation of incidents. Should that not happen, then those opposing misconduct would lose their faith in the commander.¹²⁴²

Netherlands Army Crisis Staff was aware of the cases of misbehaviour but consciously kept these out of the weekly briefings of the Defence Crisis Management Centre because they viewed these as a matter for personnel.¹²⁴³ That types of misconduct occurred is certain, but the extent of their occurrence in different units is much more difficult to establish due to the lack of systematic investigation by the authorities concerned. To the extent that investigation did take place, it was limited in nature and scope. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee carried out a Dutchbat II investigation in May-June 1995 and misconduct was a theme as well when Dutchbat III was debriefed. The investigation just mentioned was formally only concerned with the period around the fall of the enclave. The fact that information sometimes extended further back in time, however, becomes apparent from the *Feitenrelaas* (Factual Account). This shows a number of cases of weapon misuse, such as firing a warning shot at a fleeing person in contradiction of the Standing Orders and pointing an unloaded pistol at persons younger than 14. A brawl between an officer and a Muslim in the

¹²⁴⁰ 'Militairen opnieuw in opspraak' (Military personnel once again discredited), *Twentsche Courant*, 27/06/95. 'Militairen spreken Voorhoeve tegen inzake wangedrag' (Military personnel contradict Voorhoeve about misconduct), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 27/06/95.

¹²⁴¹ Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Brigade UNPROFOR post Srebrenica: transaction reports January-July 1995, *passim*.

¹²⁴² D. Verbaan, 'Als je niet meedoet, schiet ik een kogel door je kop' (If you don't cooperate, I'll put a bullet through your head), *Haagsche Courant*, 12/08/95. DJZ no. 95000856, memorandum from acting DJZ de Keizer to Minister, 29/08/95; *Ibidem*: no. 950012019, acting DJZ to Minister, 2 3/11/95 Appendix: report of interview with N. Samara, 31/08/95.

¹²⁴³ Interview C.P.M. Klep, 18/02/99.

woodworks near OP-E is also mentioned; a weapon was used to keep other Muslims out of the woodworks. Provocative and macho behaviour is cited a number of times for B-Company in Srebrenica, behaviour that the Factual Account stated was ‘emphatically corrected later on’.

There were also stories of sexual contact with Muslim women. It is striking that those who were interrogated about this had never taken advantage of the proffered services and that they spoke of ‘hearsay’. To agree to offered prostitution was punishable because it was a violation of the prohibition of contact with the local population. Contact with the population in itself was viewed as punishable but did not qualify as ‘misconduct’.

The same goes for the violation of rules for alcohol use. They stated that in working hours no alcohol could be consumed and in free time a maximum of two glasses of beer per evening. The Factual Account mentions by larger number of violations of this rule. To control this sort of violation was, however, difficult because the number of bars within the compound Potocari made the rule hard to enforce. Professional contacts with the citizens at the observation posts moreover, led to visits to the local population, whereby so much hard liquor was taken that operational deployment of the personnel became impossible. Military personnel were able to get alcohol by bartering with the citizens or by purchasing it outside the enclave on furlough. A number of cases of punishment is reported on these points.¹²⁴⁴

Dutchbat vehicles in the former Yugoslavia were also involved in traffic accidents with the accompanying property damage and occasions of personal injury. In one case a child, who had been playing behind a Dutchbat parked car, died when the car was driven away without the driver having noticed. Different reasons were given as causes for accidents: training was too short resulting in insufficiently experienced chauffeurs, driving had to be done under difficult circumstances on narrow, bad roads in hilly and mountainous areas and, finally, some personnel drove recklessly.¹²⁴⁵ This could not be called misconduct but perhaps lack of discipline.

As to the candy or snack question, it has only been established that at Support Command in Lukavac, bags of chips were consciously stepped on to flatten them or that candies were eaten at the gates to tease the Muslim children. The commander turned out to have remained unaware of this for a long time.¹²⁴⁶ This is revolting and extremely improper behaviour, but cannot be characterized as misconduct bordering on ‘war crimes’, as was assumed after the first revelations in May of 1995.

Further investigation by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee

None of this is meant to obscure the fact that the Factual Account also made note of misconduct of a more serious nature. Between 1998 and 2000, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigated a number of cases of weapon misuse, excess alcohol consumption and one case of abuse of a Muslim. Their investigations cast more light on a number of incidents and, particularly for the OPs, were able to be used afterwards to condense many reported cases in the Factual Account to a number of concrete items, leading to hearings for those involved.

The investigations show that at the end of February 1995 at OP-F, a group commander had threatened some Muslim children with an unloaded weapon belonging to a person caring for the wounded.¹²⁴⁷ At OP-H and OP-K, warning shots were fired over the heads of young Muslims during an attempted robbery with an FAL gun. Some Dutchbat soldiers on site said that the single shot fired in both cases was meant simply to frighten the perpetrator. A signal pistol and tracer bullets were also

¹²⁴⁴ SMG/Debriefing. Factual Account, pp. 47-51.

¹²⁴⁵ P. van Keulen, ‘Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Captain Colenbrander, ‘De eerste maand gaat nog wel (You can get through the first month)’ in: *Achterbanier* 17(1995)4, pp. 6-8. DJZ. No. CRST/2601, wnd CS Army Crisis Staff to wnd SS-O and DS/SCOCIS, 27/06/95.

¹²⁴⁶ DJZ, no. 95001219, acting DJZ to Minister, 23/11/95 Appendix: report of interview with N. Samara, 31/08/95.

¹²⁴⁷ PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Sebra team. No. P. 526/1999, 19/11/99.

fired from OP-E in the direction of the woodworks when Muslims had entered it to steal wood.¹²⁴⁸ It had also become common usage to frighten Muslims by going through the motions of loading an FAL weapon, without a magazine, pointing it up in the air.

Dutchbat soldiers involved attempted afterwards to justify their actions with the argument that the Muslims were quite aware that they would not shoot at them: 'We were there for their protection, not to shoot at them.'¹²⁴⁹ At the end of April 1995, a sergeant/group commander had beaten a Muslim in the woodworks near OP-E. The woodworks lay, according to Dutchbat, outside the enclave and thus in an area prohibited for Muslims. The sergeant had had to send the same Muslim out of the woodworks several times before and stated that when the Muslim had reacted aggressively, he had beaten him. The sergeant wounded his hand doing this and was sent home to the Netherlands at the beginning of May on medical grounds.¹²⁵⁰

Finally, it has to be asked whether incidents were reported according to instructions. This is very likely the case for the warning shots and the use of the signal pistol. A short standard report via the radio to the company's operations room and subsequently to the battalion sufficed. The Royal Dutch Military Constabulary investigated the incident at OP-H because of the attempted robbery.¹²⁵¹ The Bravo Company Commander, Captain J. Groen, closed the subject of the abuse of the Muslim man in the woodworks himself, after speaking to the sergeant and those concerned in his group. He judged the use of force to have been 'in proportion and thus acceptable' within the Rules of Engagement. He stated later that the thought of this being a criminal offence had not occurred to him.¹²⁵² The threatening of Muslim children at OP-F was also reported within Bravo Company and the subject closed internally. In this case as well, both the company commander and the company's sergeant major judged that this did not fall under the terms of a possible criminal offence.¹²⁵³

The other cases mentioned were not reported but that does not mean that the staff was unaware of them. Battalion staff, in any case, and the medical platoon knew of the case of the sergeant abusing a Muslim in the woodworks.

After this sergeant had been quartered in Potocari for treatment, a number of Muslims at the gates were heard saying that 'a sniper had been ordered for him'.¹²⁵⁴ The personnel officer stated that deliberations had taken place to determine whether the sergeant should be placed with another company or repatriated because of his part in the incident. His wounds offered him a less loaded way in which to take his leave of the enclave.¹²⁵⁵

Firing warning shots and using tracer ammunition can be viewed as operational action, but the question remains whether the Rules of Engagement permitted such action. In general, it cannot be established without exception whether battalion staff was aware of the incidents recognized as 'misconduct' or not.¹²⁵⁶

9. Conclusions concerning misconduct

An analysis of data available in Royal Netherlands Marechaussee daily reports in Srebrenica, combined with data from investigations initiated after the fall of the enclave, does not portray Dutchbat III as guilty of structural or frequent 'misconduct' in the sense of having acted in conflict with the Rules of

¹²⁴⁸ PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Sebra team. No. P. 004/2000, 06/01/00, pp. 5-7 and 11-13.

¹²⁴⁹ PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Sebra team. No. P. 004/2000, 06/01/00, p.15.

¹²⁵⁰ PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Sebra team. No. P. 527/1999, 19/11/99.

¹²⁵¹ Royal Dutch Military Constabulary. Royal Netherlands Marechaussee brigade UNPROFOR post Srebrenica: transaction reports January-July 1995, 22/03/95 and 26/03/95.

¹²⁵² PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, No. P. 527/A/1999, 20/12/99, p. 2.

¹²⁵³ PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, No. P. 526/1999, pp. 22-23.

¹²⁵⁴ NIOD, Coll. Karremans, Dutchbat III and the fall of Srebrenica.

¹²⁵⁵ PPD Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, No. P. 527A/1999, p. 5.

¹²⁵⁶ The company archive was destroyed during the conquest of the enclave by the VRS, which has made it impossible to review the settlement by disciplinary law of actions that took place within the company.

Engagement toward local citizens or having committed criminal acts. Incidents did occur and one of these was serious, the fight in the woodworks. Incidents were reported internally to the company's staff – outside the order hierarchy – and action was repeatedly taken.

The B-Company commander did not, however, qualify a number of incidents as possible criminal acts, and did not therefore call in the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee to make a formal report. This is clearly a faulty and exaggerated interpretation of his own authority. To act in this way fits his style of dealing with matters internally within his own unit, by speaking personally with the soldier concerned, while keeping the issues from the battalion leadership. It remains nevertheless a transgression of his own authority.

Additionally, available information makes it apparent that the company's chaplain, social worker and psychologist were aware of what had happened and spoke to both those involved and to the commander about it. That does not denote an atmosphere in which events were covered up or in which persons making a report were stigmatized as snitches. It is clear that such issues did not go outside the company circle in the first instance.

The abuse of the Muslim man in the woodworks stands out as a serious affair, for which the leader of the battalion should have ensured that a Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigation took place, certainly after the soldier concerned was seriously threatened from within the enclave. This incident is, however, not even mentioned in the reports of alleged misconduct of 11 May 1995. The actions of the company commander and the battalion leaders in this case point to the existence of a 'closed culture', implying a strong tendency to handle issues internally and then consider them as having been dealt with.

This does not change the fact that insufficient reliable data are available to legitimately accuse Dutchbat III of structural and frequent 'misconduct'. That could be the consequence of sub-reporting by Dutchbat III itself, but that is unlikely. The Factual Account brought a number of cases of possible 'misconduct' to light, for which further Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigation in 1998-2000 showed that they had, indeed, been dealt with internally, even if the manner of doing so did not always comply with existing rules. In Bravo Company, these rules were decidedly not adhered to. It is significant that, despite emphatic further questioning by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in the hearings, no new incidents were brought to light.

The fact that reports of misconduct continued to come in was the result of the first reports about 'misconduct' having been exclusively coupled by the media with Dutchbat III, on location at that moment. The negative results of the internal investigation and the judicial preliminary inquiry, added to by the television show, 'Here and Now', at the end of June about 'misconduct' by the Dutchbat Company in Simin Han, all provided fresh grist for the mill of rumour. The Dutch Army was not able to provide sufficient information or openness to rebut such rumours. Dutchbat III and the Dutch Army were disadvantaged by not having reliable information at hand.

A clear definition of misconduct plays a role here, in addition to the lack of reliable information. Royal Dutch Military Constabulary investigation had to be occasioned by violations of either criminal or disciplinary law, in which the concept 'misconduct' does not appear as such. The media used 'misconduct' as a collective noun for punishable acts and undisciplined behaviour of military personnel in the former Yugoslavia. Some breaches of the rules, such as traffic accidents, excessive alcohol consumption and prostitution had nothing to do with misbehaviour toward the Muslim population. In many cases of this nature, it was feasible for the commander to satisfy the rules by taking disciplinary measures against the perpetrators. Military criminal and disciplinary law offer satisfaction for punishable acts through disciplinary measures. In the event of cases of this nature, the commander reported the case to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and it consulted the Public Prosecutor. That happened for instance at the beginning of February in the case of two Dutchbat soldiers who had received a Kalashnikov bayonet from inhabitants of the enclave in exchange for cigarettes. Formally, this could

have merited criminal proceedings, but consultations with the Public Prosecutor led to the decision that the commander would employ disciplinary measures in both cases.¹²⁵⁷

In a few of the earlier mentioned cases of weapon misuse against the local population, the punishable act was dealt with by the commander, as outlined above, without consulting the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee or the Public Prosecutor. This did not conflict with existing rules. Not all 'misconduct' was destined for criminal prosecution. A serious warning was issued in Srebrenica at the beginning of January 1995 against driving too fast and 'intentionally or unintentionally' driving through puddles and splashing local inhabitants; disciplinary action was threatened for any new offences.¹²⁵⁸ In such a case of 'misconduct' it was sufficient that the company commander had been instructed to take action and that disciplinary punishment had been announced as effected. These examples show just how broad the concept of 'misconduct' can be. After May of 1995, 'misconduct' became an umbrella term for a whole gamut of subjects covering not only blameworthy or punishable behaviour toward the population, but also behaviour expressing a lack of internal discipline and behaviour involved in 'normal' transgressions such as theft, excessive alcohol consumption or drug use. That served to confuse the discussion itself but it also contributed to creating an image of an undisciplined and badly managed Dutchbat in Srebrenica.

The preceding is a retrospective reconstruction based on facts available in 2002. The next question is whether a clearer image could have been produced by using the same facts in May and June of 1995. In other words, which information was then available?

It has been established that at the beginning of May 1995, much more information was available about the various incidents and instances of misbehaviour than was apparent from outside sources. That information was in the possession of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and units of the Dutch Army. The problem was that none of the authorities concerned made an effort to collect this information and analyze it. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had information about misbehaviour, even though its investigation had bogged down or had been ended for diverse reasons. Not one single report of misconduct was, after all, based on a personal observation or direct witnessing; those reporting were often unwilling to name their informers and, if they did, the informers themselves denied the incidents. These factors made the available evidence insufficient for criminal prosecution.

Should the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Brigade in Zagreb have followed a more active policy in investigating the transactional data of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee post in Srebrenica and in other locations, this would have produced more data, which is only now coming to light years later. Within the Dutch Army as well, more information was on hand than that contained in the limited reports from Srebrenica and Busovaca. Remember that information about misconduct was already available in April and May of 1995 from the Military Security Department of the Intelligence and Security Section of the Dutch Military Intelligence Service.

That Netherlands Army Crisis Staff was meanwhile of the opinion – extrapolating from the number of personnel repatriated to the Netherlands ahead of time during their term of service – that there was no question of an alarming situation within Dutchbat. From the point of commencement of Dutch participation in UNPROFOR in 1992, 29 military personnel had been repatriated due to alcohol or drug excesses but none of these was a Dutchbat soldier. Up to the end of May 1995, 46 Dutchbat soldiers had had to be repatriated for other reasons: 3 for an alleged punishable act, the fourth for reasons of dysfunction, and the other 42 for medical or psycho-social reasons or due to the home situation.¹²⁵⁹ This last group includes the sergeant from the brawl in the woodworks.

¹²⁵⁷ Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Brigade UNPROFOR post Srebrenica: transaction reports January-July 1995, 09/02/95, 10/02/95 and 16/02/95.

¹²⁵⁸ Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Brigade UNPROFOR post Srebrenica: transaction reports January-July 1995, 04/01/95.

¹²⁵⁹ DJZ. Zuidema to Buirma, 24/05/95, 'Overzicht voortijdig teruggekeerde miln uit het vm Joegoslavië' (Summary of prematurely repatriated military personnel from the former Yugoslavia). Ibidem: Wertheim to Poppes, undated.

It would seem that insufficient steering and coordination in both the Army and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee contributed to the extremely inadequate insight into the phenomenon ‘misconduct’ in May and June of 1995. There was no centralized mutual coordination of investigations and information sources. Army leaders omitted issuing a broad investigation assignment to the units in Bosnia. The Army top also omitted involving its own Army Crisis Staff and its own Military Intelligence Service in the investigation. They should have been a natural consequence of the task of debriefing returning personnel. The Army sufficed by offering Minister Voorhoeve reports of the Ordnance Battalion and Dutchbat III and thought it had acquitted itself of its obligations in that respect. Apparently too little need was felt to take the Mental Health workers’ signs of alarm seriously. Possibly one of the reasons this happened was that two internal investigations had proved hardly any misbehaviour and because the Public Prosecutor had taken over the Dutchbat II investigation.

As one takes the latter into consideration, it must nevertheless be pointed out that the deficiencies mentioned created a situation that could only work against the Army and the Minister as time went on. Because ‘misconduct’ came to be investigated several times and in an uncoordinated way, the Minister and the Army left themselves open to surprise attacks as the next Urban Legend or the next report of an isolated incident came along. Because they had to keep changing their explanation, they were simply inviting the stigma of being seen as disguising the real facts. They were not equipped to react with the required factual knowledge to press publications either. These press publications assumed increasingly that misconduct must have taken place on a broad scale. Perhaps negative reporting in the media could not have been held back, but the Army could have employed a substantially more energetic policy toward the investigation that was fully warranted by the seriousness of the accusations. They could then have conducted the ensuing discussion based on hard facts – primarily connected to Dutchbat II and Support Command issues – instead of rumour and reports, hastily put together and based on uncoordinated and insufficient investigation.

10. The B-Company attitude

The Bravo or B-Company, part of Dutchbat III and stationed in the city of Srebrenica, got a certain reputation for its negative attitude to ‘outsiders’ both within and outside the battalion. That already had been apparent earlier from how misconduct was dealt with in this company. The Bravo attitude would even result in accusations of misbehaviour directed at the citizens, partially prompted by alleged right-wing extremist convictions of certain soldiers. This sub-paragraph will examine the breadth of these phenomena and to what extent they influenced the functioning of B-Company, also as it impacted the citizens of the enclave.

Dominant members of B-Company, the ‘insiders’, were physically strong, blond, masculine, Dutch and infantrymen. ‘Outsiders’ were cooks, mechanics or doctors, but also anyone who was not white, who was a woman or who deviated in some way from the standard B-Company airmobile soldier. Captain Groen, the Commander, with his strict approach to uniform and discipline, helped create a strong feeling of solidarity among the ‘insiders’.¹²⁶⁰ As diverse personnel – called ‘extra noses’ – were added to B-Company, the original Airmobile Battalion group culture was disturbed.

B-Company was separated from the rest of Dutchbat III in the compound in Srebrenica. This gave battalion leaders little chance to keep their daily routine fully in sight. Fuel shortages made it increasingly difficult to reach the company in person to check on it. Visitors from staff quarters were not made to feel welcome either; an atmosphere prevailed at the B-Company compound in Srebrenica that was quite different from that in Potocari and Bravo soldiers were very much involved with each other and quite self-absorbed. Their approach to the local population was stricter. Blue Helmets were not permitted to speak to the citizens; they were not permitted to name names or wear nametags in

¹²⁶⁰ Interview A. Ceelen, 02/07/99.

their unit.¹²⁶¹ The Company Commander proceeded from the assumption that the citizens only had respect for a military show of power.

During the B-Company work-up period in the Netherlands (the period of extra schooling) hardly any attention was paid to factors arising from the surroundings, whereas Dutchbat III was already aware that this company would be isolated from the rest, in the center of the city. Karremans said afterwards that one of the largest problems battalion leaders faced was to convince the members of B-Company that it had to be able to get along with the local citizens. His concern was not only a respectful attitude in their dealings with the citizens, but also the prevention of security problems as a consequence of their rigid and hard-handed operating method. This mode of operation quickly led to confrontation with the local citizens. Battalion leaders saw enforcing the demand for demilitarization to the letter as extremely risky and frequently tried to correct Groen and to ask him to act with more restraint.

Karremans thought that weapons and Dutch kit in the hands of the citizens should, indeed, be confiscated. Yet, he was careful to impress upon the responsible officers to assess the highest priority from case to case and thus determine the most sensible mode of action.¹²⁶² Karremans interpreted 'sensible' to mean, for instance, that Dutchbat soldiers should not force a Muslim in a crowded marketplace to take off his shoes, even if it was suspected that they had once been stolen from Dutchbat. In such cases, it often turned out that the goods had been bought from or traded with soldiers of another UN battalion.

The question of whether UN blue caps should be seen as Dutch kit was indeed a moot one. The B-Company thought they should and went out on blue-cap hunts. Muslims, though, had had these given to them by the preceding battalion, Dutchbat II, after a soccer game. At this point, Karremans and the Military Security officer went into action, giving clear indications that the tone had to be changed.

On 13 February 1995, a hand grenade was thrown over a fence of the B-Company compound in Potocari. It exploded in an open space, about 20 meters from the main gate, without causing any damage. The Military Security officer interpreted this incident as a warning in response to the company's attitude. The ABiH leaders confirmed this in so many words; they stated that a bit of restraint on the part of B-Company would make this sort of reprisal unnecessary. Someone caring for the wounded attributed the incident, however, to a 'few right-wing comments', which had been made by some patrol commanders over their walkie-talkies. It has said that they had called out in German that they had just returned from a Sonderkommando.¹²⁶³ Company Sergeant Major, S.W. Bravenboer, was seething and went to see Groen, who then called the men concerned to account. This behaviour then stopped acutely.

No matter what, the citizens saw the change away from the friendly contact that had existed between them and the earlier battalions as inimical. The Dutchbat II Company in Srebrenica had kept up good contact with the citizens. After Dutchbat II's departure, no more Muslims were allowed in the compound and contact with local citizens was forbidden. Groen's policy of distancing – no more candies, no chit-chat with the population – led to lots of raised middle fingers and verbal abuse back and forth. The soldiers at the Field Dressing Station in Potocari were troubled by the dominant behaviour of B-Company. One of some noted in his diary:

I've heard that the Bravo Company is trying to take all that military stuff away from the citizens. While the 12th (Dutchbat II) went around handing it out! Bravo's no longer allowed to speak to the citizens. And they go on making the Serb victory sign. How crazy can you get? One of us will be shot down today or tomorrow just as we're setting off to help in the hospital. They're really Mobile

¹²⁶¹ Interview P. Sanders, 12/12 and 13/12/00.

¹²⁶² Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 01/12/00.

¹²⁶³ Interview A.E. Broeder, 03/05/00.

Airheads. You get scared to death hearing even a few words of what the Bravo doctor has to say.¹²⁶⁴

The distancing, the rudeness and the insensitivity expressed in the actions of B-Company personnel was not only directed at the population but also at non-military personnel and their own colleagues. What these military men thought was humour was seen by 'outsiders' as insulting and even as threatening. When the company got a new cleaning woman, remarks and jokes became the order of the day because some of the soldiers thought she stunk. Groen tended to wait a while in this sort of situation. He saw the fact that soldiers talked among themselves in this way as being a release valve for frustration and tension, as an innocent 'bit of humor'.¹²⁶⁵ If, during telephone calls, a colleague with dark skin was on the other end of the line, sometimes the soldiers would make jungle sounds. The commander assumed that 'everybody found it funny' and did not feel it necessary to attempt to interfere with this sort of behaviour. The female military personnel of the Bravo Company were regularly put to the test in this way. The men called incidents that the women found extremely painful 'a joke'. The men were known to have said that 'we teased the girls in the kitchen now and then. And they went ballistic.'¹²⁶⁶

An example is the tale of the cat belonging to the female battalion members, who worked in the kitchen. Groen said:

'That cat tale, now that's really something. The company's Sergeant Major gave in to them getting a cat. I think they gave that cat worm tablets or something and it got to be the house pet for the whole compound as time went on. By chance, we were busy at that same time building a whole bunch of bunkers and doing construction work on the compound. One of the guys – I was standing there watching when it happened – came up with a wheelbarrow full of sandbags, but he lost control of the thing. The barrow tipped over and all the sandbags fell on the cat by accident. The string the cat was tied to ended up under the stack of sandbags. The guy just stood there, his whole face screwed up with the question, 'what's going on'? It was such a comical sight that I couldn't help laughing and then he started too. The girls all came outside to see what was happening. And then the howling and endless tears began. 'They've killed the cat!' Complete nonsense, gimme a break! I was standing there watching and it was a complete accident. But it was such a funny sight – a cat as flat as a pancake. Yeah, with the girls reacting like that, you'd expect the guys to be meowing for a couple weeks in the dining room, wouldn't you, when the girls came in? If the guys know that someone's sensitive, that's where they aim their jokes of course.'¹²⁶⁷

11. Right-wing extremist behaviour in B-Company

The Bravo Company of Dutchbat III was named a number of times afterwards in connection with right-wing extremist behaviour of some of its soldiers. The Military Intelligence Service (Netherlands Army Department) and the office of the Public Prosecutor instigated an investigation into these allegations; this problem was also addressed at the time of the comprehensive debriefing in Assen. According to the Van Kemenade report, as recently as 2001, Minister De Grave is known to have said

¹²⁶⁴ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten.

¹²⁶⁵ Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.

¹²⁶⁶ Interview A.E. Broeder, 03/05/00.

¹²⁶⁷ Different versions of the cat incident exist, particularly the question of whether the sandbags ended up on top of the cat by accident or on purpose.

in an interview with *Vrij Nederland* (weekly), that right-wing extremist behaviour directed at the local population was an issue.¹²⁶⁸

For the sake of clarity, a distinction must be made between the question of what right-wing extremist behaviour exactly took place and what its repercussions were for the battalion's execution of its tasks and for its relationship to the local population. Caution must be exercised in coupling right-wing extremist behaviour and the actual behaviour toward the population. Misbehaviour directed at the citizens seems to have arisen from daily irritation, frustration and boredom rather than right-wing extremist convictions.

To examine right-wing extremism in B-Company, one must first be aware that the same applies to right-wing extremist behaviour as to misconduct, i.e. that if and when it took place in B-Company, incidents were dealt with at company level and not reported at battalion level. Thus details cannot be supported from available sources.

Moreover, it is important that the majority of misconduct reported and publicized concerned other units than B-Company under Dutchbat III, namely, as above, the Transport Battalion, the Signals Battalion and Support Command. And these incidents took place in the Dutchbat II term of service.

Finally, how should right-wing extremist behaviour be defined? The Military Intelligence Service asked in its investigation how the term was to be defined and circumscribed. This service makes a distinction between 'politically inspired' right-wing extremism and apparently politically neutral 'macho behaviour',¹²⁶⁹ which does not imply that this behaviour is not necessarily less awful.

This having been said, the Military Intelligence Service investigation reveals that, indeed, diverse incidents that had a right-wing extremist character occurred within B-Company of Dutchbat III. Officers or NCOs were involved, who openly used the Nazi salute, and two soldiers had a postcard, showing a swastika, hanging above their beds. Investigation sources called the manner used by those concerned in contacts with colleagues with a different skin color disturbing. Soldiers also made very negative comments about Muslims.¹²⁷⁰

Primarily colleagues experienced the usually verbally expressed right-wing extremist sympathies as confrontational and, with this in view, the behaviour becomes an internal problem. As far as is known, the citizenry – if it noticed this – reacted hardly or not at all. One example of this is the following: a cleaning woman for B-Company saw the soldiers greet each other with the Nazi salute every day, but stated that she took no offence because the boys always acted correctly to her.¹²⁷¹ That should, however, be kept in perspective: Muslim boys, not impressed by UNPROFOR, reacted to the passing of a patrol of Blue Helmets with yells of 'Heil Hitler' and the Nazi salute.¹²⁷²

Another example: during a working visit to B-Company, a member of the Social Coordination Committee read under a beam of the watchtower, close to its entrance, poems of right-wing extremist sentiment. Following complaints, these were removed.

Company Commander Groen told the NIOD that things always happen that need corrective action from a commander. His way of dealing with this was to ask himself each time whether or not an intention to offend lay behind the action.

¹²⁶⁸ Interview F. de Grave by C. Verbraak in *Vrij Nederland*, 19/05/01 2001, p. 44. Apart from the fact that the allegation is incorrect, is also puzzling that De Grave sites the Van Kemenade report to this end. Van Kemenade did not pay any attention to right-wing extremism. There is one paragraph about this in the Factual Account of the debriefing report. Probably De Grave confused the two reports.

¹²⁶⁹ This distinction comes from the Military Intelligence Service concept for the Confidential Annual Report 1996, To: members of the working group annual report. From: HV&D, No. DIS 97 000 412, Conf., p. 17, 28/01/97.

¹²⁷⁰ MID/CO. Memorandum from Commodore H.J. Vandeweijer to Minister of Defence and SG, 05/07/95, no. DIS 99003213, subject: right-wing extremist behaviour Srebrenica archive: Government Minister, arrived 05/07/99 no. 1444, Conf.

¹²⁷¹ Interview Almir Ramir and Zahira, 12/12 and 13/12/00.

¹²⁷² 101 MIDCIE. Debriefing report military, DB II, 09/02/95.

‘One sergeant, for instance, took to yelling over the radio: ‘Here comes the *Arbeitseinsatz* again!’ That was when we were building OP-H. We worked in shifts and the soldiers relieved each other in order to help out. When a shift came home in the evening, the guys got used to saying, ‘the *Arbeitseinsatz* has returned’. There was no intention to affront anyone. I heard about the radio stunt from the company's Sergeant Major and I called the Sergeant to account. I told them he would have to stop doing that because it was open to the wrong interpretation and could hurt certain people.’¹²⁷³

Groen only remembers the Nazi salute being used as a joke:

‘That's like in the series ‘Allo, allo’. That's the way it was with Herr Flick. It's a joke for the guys. We weren't a bunch of neo-Nazis constantly giving one another the Nazi salute. If that's the idea, then there's something seriously wrong. But this was totally innocent, just a joke. If it had been seen as serious, we would've done something about it. We were a sort of club there - there weren't all that many people around from outside. We laughed at this stuff and then we just carried on with our work.’¹²⁷⁴

The head of the Military Intelligence Service at that time, Commodore I. Vandeweyer, told the NIOD that he deemed this to be macho behaviour gone a bit far but not right-wing extremist behaviour in the political sense. He thought that the commanders at that time ‘had forgotten to get out the screwdrivers and fasten the loose screws in those guys, who were doing such crazy things.’ His idea was that the commanders did not act in an unequivocal way and this allowed the behaviour to continue and to spread. Vandeweyer also assumed that Groen preferred that sort of blinkered vision under his command.¹²⁷⁵

Karremans and the Social Coordination Committee said that a number of the battalion leaders and social workers knew in advance of deploying the soldiers that a small group known as the ‘motor club’ was headed out as well. These men tended to demonstrate their superiority by showing up minorities and by behaving in right-wing extremist ways. Because there was respect on all sides for how Groen led his company, this behaviour was probably put up with as ‘the lesser of two evils’. As far as it can be verified, a small group demonstrated the challenged behaviour and most of the stories concern members of a specific platoon.

The questions are: to what extent did a right-wing extremist attitude within the company set and dominate the tone? Or, can the challenged behaviour be better attributed to misconduct, not based on political ideologies?

The assumption is being made that, for a few officers and NCOs, this behaviour went further than ‘yelling’. One Dutchbat III soldier remembers, for instance, ‘a sergeant who more or less openly admitted that he was a bit right wing. He was a good guy outside of that, but I didn't share his ideas. I think that this was true of four or five persons, officers as well.’¹²⁷⁶ These officers left their mark on the unit and encouraged hangers on, who then began to behave in the same way.

Otherwise, this right-wing extremism appeared to be separate from factors determined by the surroundings; this sort of humor continued after repatriation. The group of NCOs, back in the Netherlands, was placed in the School Battalion of the Airmobile Brigade, where insulting everyone with a different skin color was the order of the day. The ‘humour’ was evidenced, for example, in the

¹²⁷³ Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.

¹²⁷⁴ Interview J.R. Groen, 14/01/00.

¹²⁷⁵ Interview J. Vandeweyer, 29/01/00.

¹²⁷⁶ Interview A.E. Broeder, 03/05/00.

use of coloured soldiers as occasional tables. Only after two officers, who had not been supported by their superiors when they complained, had left the unit, was anything done.

It can be assumed that a small number of members of the company in Srebrenica felt that there was room for behaviour of this sort, more so because the men of the company were packed in quite closely and the commander did not oppose the behaviour. The commander could have indicated, for instance, during roll call, that this behaviour would not be tolerated; in failing to do this, he gave the impression indirectly that such behaviour did not trouble him. The available data present an image of a company commander who, first and foremost, was concerned with his unit's military functioning. Groen made a strong stand in doing this in his own way and apparently did not take enough distance to ask himself how his unit's behaviour tallied with the standards in force at that location. In this way, it was quite possible that what he found innocent, based on his experience of those involved, did not pass muster in the eyes of colleagues or the outside world.

There are, however, no indications that the right-wing extremist behaviour within Dutchbat and, particularly, within B-Company led to muddled relationships with the citizens in the enclave or to systematic anti-Muslim conduct. The suggestion regularly made in the media of a connection between right-wing extremist behaviour and the actions of Dutchbat around the fall of Srebrenica cannot then be proved on the grounds of the facts discussed here either.¹²⁷⁷ The personnel of B-Company did often act in rude and degrading ways with regard to the citizens, but the group's culture within the company was, as far as it can be traced, not determined by right-wing extremist tendencies. B-Company actions toward the local population before the VRS attack seem instead to have been determined by exaggerated linear military behaviour, lack of empathy and faulty information.¹²⁷⁸

This was again partially the consequence of insufficient preparation for contact with the citizens of the enclave and the circumstance that B-Company could or was forced to define its own attitude in the relative isolation of the compound in Srebrenica city. The Company Commander saw the soldiers' expressions and actions as hardly or not at all problematic and therefore did not take corrective action or only very sporadically. This is not meant to deny the fact that, just as in other ways and in other places, incidents did take place that could be qualified as misconduct.

One must keep in mind that so-called jokes can be bitterly serious if the recipient does not see them as humorous but as harmful or threatening. Space existed internally for expressions evidencing rudeness, sexism, racism, lack of empathy and also right-wing extremism. In the first place, this was an internal problem that did not meet an adequate response.

The Bravo Company Commander operated as 'a green commander with a blue cap'. The flip side of the space he granted his company for these expressions was that, when the situation became really awkward, in taking up blocking positions to try to stop the Bosnian-Serb advance, Groen was resolute in action, self-confident and won everyone's respect. What had been characterized as macho behaviour before the attack on the enclave had as its flip side that the soldiers showed little fear and, in a number of cases, seemed prepared to stand by the population despite dangerous circumstances.

That their contacts with the citizens were not very close does not mean that members of B-Company were not devastated by what took place during the days of July 1995. One of the soldiers was in contact with a little boy, Noerian, whose family always offered coffee to the soldiers on patrol from OP-K, and to whom he had promised his running shoes when he left Srebrenica. This family was one of the very last to get into the buses in Potocari: Noerian's grandfather, mother, brothers and three sisters.

¹²⁷⁷ In this connection, it must be remarked that sources show that the tight group forming the club that indulged in right-wing extremist behaviour was not present at the fall. In: MID/CO. Memorandum from Commodore H.J. Vandewiejer to Minister of Defence and SG, 5/07/99, no. DIS 99003213 subject: right-wing extremist behaviour Srebrenica archive: Government Minister, arrived: 05/07/99, no. 1444 Secret. Appendix B Conf.

¹²⁷⁸ This seems also to be a possible explanation for the incident with the hand grenade.

‘We gave them some things to take with them. Some emergency rations, some dressings, some pills – things they might need. The mother often had headaches, so I got some pills for her from the kitchen and some gauze and that sort of thing. We put it all in a small bag. And they took it with them. They were the last ones to get into the bus. Then I let myself weep. A really long time. To get rid of some of the tension.’¹²⁷⁹

12. Summary concerning the internal functioning of Dutchbat I, II and III

Should the proposed rotation or relief of Dutchbat III eventually have taken place at the end of June or beginning of July, this would have been the spot to draw up the balance of the battalion's mission. But, from sheer necessity, the battalion stayed on in the enclave until after the capture of the Safe Area by the Bosnian Serb army, and it was not successful in bringing any significant influence to bear on the dramatic course of events. Therefore, what follows is an intermediate balance concerning the operation of Dutchbat in the enclave. This will compare the operation of Dutchbat III with its predecessors from the spring of 1994 up to and including May-June 1995, in the light of the role of UNPROFOR in Bosnia and the composition of the warring factions in and around the enclave.

Dutchbat I was in the most favourable position to do its work in the enclave. Firstly, Dutchbat I was in the enclave for the shortest period. The units left in January-February 1994, but were forced to stay for a period in Split because the Bosnian Serbs did not grant them permission to enter the enclave. They finally arrived there in March/April 1994. The local population thought that the Dutchbat I personnel all looked so good and that is understandable in the light of the extremely difficult winter the people in the enclave had just gone through. During that winter, the fresh Blue Helmets had enjoyed lots of sunshine in Split and had had time to stay fit. Dutchbat I was also the best put-together battalion because it had been possible to deliberate about the selection of personnel.

Dutchbat I kept up reasonably good relations with the local units of the ABiH and also with the VRS troops, quartered around the enclave. At the OPs, shooting incidents did take place, but without serious consequences. Dutchbat I leaders hoped to engage in local negotiations involving the warring factions thereby attempting to find solutions to the existing points of conflict. That turned out finally to be unsuccessful; the warring factions did engage in dialogue but the differences of opinion could not be bridged.

The fact that Dutchbat I did not experience any serious incidents was partially also a question of luck. That was apparent on 14 March 1999, when a Dutchbat Mercedes carrying medical personnel on its way to OP-E near Jasenova accidentally drove over the border of the enclave and ended up driving over two land mines.¹²⁸⁰ The fact that that had happened only became apparent to those in the vehicle afterwards.

Nevertheless, the Dutch forces experienced the local political situation as ‘extremely enervating’.¹²⁸¹ Dutchbat I patrols were allowed to establish their own contacts with the citizens and were thus able to gather information about the local situation. Individual military personnel also established relationships with residents of the enclave; members of the first battalion were able to visit with ABiH Commander, Zulfo Tursunovic, at home, where they shared food and talked.

When Dutchbat II took over the task in the enclave, the Commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Everts, thought that Dutchbat, as a part of UNPROFOR, had to be more pronounced in its neutrality and immediately prohibited all non-functional contact with the local citizens. To visit people at home was no longer possible. Later on in his term of command, Everts amended this slightly and tolerated a somewhat less strict compliance with his order.¹²⁸²

¹²⁷⁹ Interview A.E. Broeder, 03/05/00.

¹²⁸⁰ SMG, 1002. Sitrep, UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade, 15/03/94.

¹²⁸¹ Situational report 115 Construction Company in: Genie, 07/94 p. 17.

¹²⁸² Interview P. Lindgreen, 22/02/01.

A Dutchbat II soldier wrote in his debriefing report after repatriation that when the first battalion arrived, all the parties still had to get used to each other. When the second battalion arrived, the ABiH and the VRS felt able to try things out and began to attempt to find out what they could get away with. He predicted that the warring factions would simply walk over the next battalion when it arrived.¹²⁸³

Dutchbat II was destined to have a much more difficult time in Srebrenica than its predecessor. The motivation had been lost in the course of the mission. Relationships with the warring factions had worsened by degrees; local conflicts had turned out to be incapable of solution in that place because they were part of a military-strategic and political sparring match at a higher level. Concretely, the unit had to contend with the blocking of its supply convoys, something that influenced the lives and the functioning of the Blue Helmets in the enclave in every possible way. Practically no fuel or fresh food entered the enclave for a very long time. Patrols had to be carried out on foot. And it was disheartening that a number of soldiers had been wounded. The fact that the Bosnian Serbs detained a convoy of soldiers on leave did not improve matters.

Rutten, who coordinated patrols for Dutchbat III, had access to reports of his predecessors and was able to compare them to get a picture of the differences per battalion. He ascertained that both preceding battalions had had more contact with the citizens than his did:

‘The 11th battalion (Dutchbat I) even went out visiting in the evening. The 12th battalion (Dutchbat II) was already doing that less, but still had more contact with the local population than we did. This makes you ask yourself if it wouldn't have been clever on our part to have more contact with Dutchbat I and II. I'm trying to say that our relationship to them was actually cool and distant. We didn't want the same role as the 11th battalion. Everything was regulated. Everything we did had to have a goal.’¹²⁸⁴

He is of the opinion that Dutchbat 1 began its mission with an open mind. Those who followed, by contrast, had already been inundated by their predecessors with facts and information, opinions and interpretations about life in the enclave and had made their plans on this basis.

The level of working and living conditions would fluctuate for Dutchbat I, II and III, but it showed a clear downward line. As far as the relationship with the citizens and the political and military leaders of the enclave is concerned, the picture was even more complicated. The point of departure in making any judgment must be that the practical effect of peace missions is almost always a certain amount of friction between local citizens and the peacekeeping unit. Company Commander Groen saw it thus:

‘When Dutchbat I arrived there, the enclave had been in existence for a relatively short time. I think that the attitude of the Muslim population was completely different at that point. But the longer a situation like that lasts, the less chance those involved see for improvement. The population ended up wondering, ‘is anything going to happen or not? New units keep coming, but will any of them ever make a difference?’ It's only logical in that sort of situation that new units that are dispatched are confronted with increasingly difficult circumstances.’¹²⁸⁵

Dutchbat I could do more than its followers for the inhabitants of the enclave because it had access to enough supplies and there was regular replenishment. Medical supplies and maintenance equipment

¹²⁸³ 101 MIDCic. Debriefing report soldier, DB II, 9/02/95.

¹²⁸⁴ Interview J.H.A. Rutten, 26/09/01.

¹²⁸⁵ Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.

were amply available. Moreover, the inhabitants had become optimistic by virtue of their arrival. In the Dutchbat II period, however, the anxiety and despondency of the inhabitants began to increase, because the VRS had begun to build up its army and because less and less convoys were allowed into the enclave. In the Dutchbat III period, the situation was even less favourable. There were very few supplies and resupply was halted, and thus there was very little to give to the inhabitants, a fact that did not help the relationship. On top of this, problems existed that had directly confronted all three battalions as a result of the doings of ABiH units in the enclave. There was no real demilitarization, the ABiH attempted to draw fire, conducted raids outside the enclave or fired in the direction of the battalion.

The relationships of the Muslims to one another in the enclave became more and more problematic and corruption and black-market practices abounded. That aroused a great deal of Dutchbat resistance and finally little understanding remained for the local authorities identified with these practices. Leading figures in Bosnian Muslim circles also started a number of conflicts with the humanitarian organizations and with Dutchbat. In the eyes of the battalion leaders, they were behaving irresponsibly and allowing themselves to be led by their own interests, thus forcing the interests of the suffering population to the background.

In addition to general problems, Dutchbat III was confronted with a number of circumstances that weighed heavily both on their operational dedication and on their relationships with the population. These can, to a certain extent, be attributed to the training and preparation of the battalion. The problem of quality has been mentioned a number of times. Dutchbat III was comprised of many young, inexperienced soldiers and a relatively old group of officers. It turned out that there was too little cohesion in the group and this sometimes led to a too limited ability to self-correct. The actual formation of the unit was hampered by the problems surrounding its selection of personnel; a third of the personnel was only acquired four months before deployment. Dutchbat I did not have this problem; Dutchbat II to a much lesser extent.

The huge problems caused by the VRS through their permission policies for supply convoys led to a permanent lack of fresh food, fuel, reserve parts, ammunition and the like for Dutchbat III. This undermined the mood of the military as well because mail communications were cut off and it became less and less realistic to anticipate going on leave. From April on, no transports got through for Dutchbat and therefore the contact with the home front and the hope of leave and the consequent hope of relief were reduced to a minimum. Living conditions became more primitive as a result of lack of fuel. One serious consequence of dwindling supplies and the fuel deficit was that Dutchbat could offer less and less humanitarian aid. No supplementary food aid was possible any longer and, added to this, the doctors had stopped their consultations in the village as a consequence of the conflict between *Médicins Sans Frontières* and the Opstina (Local Municipal Council). The world in which Dutchbat lived continued to shrink due to all these factors. For some of the groups there was hardly a single meaningful task remaining; Dutchbat soldiers barely left the gates to the compound any longer because of fuel shortages and they were condemned to each other's company under rather primitive conditions.

The growing problem of motivation or, to put it differently, the diminishing feeling that one's actions had meaning is connected with the above. Dutchbat III was the third battalion on the same location and did not have much to do; all it could do was to carry on, with increasingly sparse and more limited means, in the situation they had encountered there. Boredom lay in wait, patrolling and guard duties were seen as extremely boring.¹²⁸⁶ The assumed reason for their presence – to protect the Muslim population of the enclave – was less clear than had been understood ahead of time. It was early in their period in the enclave that the hostage taking in the Bandera triangle took place; this led many military personnel to ask themselves whom they had actually come to protect and why the ABiH was acting in such a confrontational way. Great numbers of incidents with the ABiH in the enclave contributed to this mood, as did the incident of the hand grenade that apparently had been thrown over

¹²⁸⁶ Interview W. Dijkema, 21/09/98.

the compound gates as a consequence of displeasure about B-Company's actions in the town of Srebrenica. Doubts about whether their mandate was capable of execution thus arose, as did doubts about whether their personnel could protect the enclave and its citizens, given their limited numbers and the limited means.

Finally the focus of the battalion turned inward, according to the already mentioned remembrances and statements. There remained a number of officers and soldiers who did what they could, of course, but not everyone had a function within which they could be effective or showed the mental resilience to make the best of things in the face of extreme conditions. The conviction that it was impossible to exert a substantial influence on the course of events had already taken hold of Dutchbat II, with all its consequences for their motivation. Looking back, it is apparent that Dutchbat III went through a similar development, under conditions that certainly could be called worse. Daily living and working conditions and the escalation between both warring factions had worsened. These were conditions under which Dutchbat, and particularly the battalion leaders, had to anticipate.

13. The functioning of the Dutchbat III leaders

After the fall of Srebrenica and the return to the Netherlands of Dutchbat III, attention was focused on the actions of the Battalion Commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Karremans, and on the functioning of the battalion leaders. In Chapter 5 of Part IV, it has been argued that the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army visited Zagreb on 16 July 1995 partially in reaction to worries about the actions of Karremans and his staff. Karremans's management was also a topic of interest during the debriefing in Assen in September 1995; this will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 7 of Part IV. Continually recurring topics of discussion were Karremans' 'invisibility' and absence during the mission in Srebrenica, combined with the prominent role of the acting Deputy Battalion Commander, Major Franken. The debriefing report itself did not deal with issuing commands during the fall of the enclave as a separate subject.

Attention will be given here to the functioning of the Battalion Commander and his staff during the training and the first five months that the unit was dispatched in Srebrenica. The actions of the Battalion Commander must be seen in connection with the quality and cohesion of the battalion staff and its internal functioning. The co-operation with the Airmobile Brigade and the view that the brigade staff had of the battalion leaders are of importance here as well. Sources from the period itself containing usable data for investigation are only available in a limited way; most data have to do with the period of the fall of the enclave and its consequences, for obvious reasons. Observations or verbalizations by those concerned dating from the period after the fall have to be weighed with extra care due to the risk of retrospective wisdom.

Karremans parried criticism of his functioning afterwards by pointing out that his battalion staff was less strong qualitatively than that of the preceding battalions. In contrast to his predecessors, Vermeulen and Everts, he states that he was not given the opportunity to select the staff functionaries and the company commanders. His choice was limited to officers who became available when a number of armoured infantry battalions were discontinued in the north of the country. The role this played is discussed in Chapter 5 of this part. Preparation and selection for the mission were very seriously under pressure and the choice of officers was limited, also as a consequence of the staffing of the two earlier battalions. Nevertheless, Karremans' way of looking at things is somewhat overdone. Neither Vermeulen nor Everts was able to choose completely freely; they too had to make use of personnel made available by the discontinuation of armoured infantry battalions, in their case the Guard battalions in Schaarsbergen.¹²⁸⁷

Karremans was able to choose his Logistics Officer, Major Franken. The Battalion Commander thought that Franken had carried out the logistic detail of winding up the 43rd armoured infantry

¹²⁸⁷ Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

battalion excellently. Franken became and continued to be Karreman's confidant, to a much greater extent than the person formally fulfilling the role of Deputy Battalion Commander, Major Van Geldere. It was his role to provide leadership in the 'inaccessible' Simin Han. Franken was well up on what it meant to be an officer, he was a man of strong views and never lacked initiative. With his extremely dominant personality, he quickly built up an exceptional position beside the much less distinct Karremans. Franken was deeply respected by a group of officers within the battalion staff and there was apparently almost no one who dared to cross him.

Their way of working together, based on Karremans' huge trust in Franken, gave Franken a lot of room to take over battalion affairs and led to an unusual situation within the battalion staff. Apparently it was not the Battalion Commander who steered the process of decision-making and issuing commands but the logistics officer, who became the Deputy Battalion Commander in the enclave Srebrenica. That Company Commanders tended to go their own ways in this, did not contribute to forming a tight team at the battalion level. And sometimes there were affairs that should have been dealt with at battalion level but were insufficiently regulated there and passed on to execution level. Outsiders could also observe this phenomenon; things were seen as happening in different ways within Dutchbat III than they did in the other battalions, without there being anything wrong with what the companies did, for all that.¹²⁸⁸

The self-image of the battalion is also of importance for a good understanding of relationships within Dutchbat III. The 13th Airmobile Battalion, that would eventually produce part of Dutchbat III, was part of the 11th Airmobile Brigade but saw itself as being different because it was quartered in Assen, far away from brigade staff and the two other infantry battalions in Schaarsbergen. This quartering at the Johan-Willem Friso barracks in Assen created a natural distance that seemed to be growing even larger due to the 13th battalion's conviction that brigade staff never made the trip to Assen and that they, the 13th, always had to go to Schaarsbergen if anything came up. 'Assen' often felt that it had been cheated and thought that the brigade staff paid too little attention to its problems.¹²⁸⁹ The officers and NCOs of the 13th mobile Battalion saw their battalion as one of Northerners, people with a 'slightly different mentality' and 'an other culture' that manifested itself in their being law-abiding, punctual and particularly levelheaded.¹²⁹⁰

Airmobile Brigade Commander Brinkman was almost never seen in the barracks at Assen at the beginning of 1994. That changed when Colonel J. Lemmen became Deputy Brigade Commander in the summer of 1994; he replaced Brinkman when he was stationed in Sarajevo as Chief of Staff Bosnia Herzegovina Command. Lemmen made the trip to Assen every Monday from his own home in the neighbourhood of Zwolle. Even at that point, Lemmen could already spot the way in which relationships among the battalion staff deviated from the usual pattern due to Franken's extremely dominant role within the staff. He ascertained that Franken insisted on concerning himself with the affairs of other sections and disputed and amended decisions of the Battalion Commander. Not one of the battalion staff seemed equal to Franken or daring enough to confront him.

Colonel Lemmen stated to the NIOD that the relationship of the Battalion Commander to his Company Commanders was awkward and that battalion staff did not seem to work well. The staff gratefully left insufficiently regulated affairs to others to deal with but were quick to blame these others if something went wrong. However, nothing really important was proved as having gone wrong; the training was effectuated reasonably well, problems were solved within the parameters available and the resultant units and the work-up for dispatch abroad satisfied the demands in place.¹²⁹¹ Nevertheless, frictions within the battalion staff did not escape even newcomers to the battalion.

In talks, Lemmen tried to rouse Karremans to act more resolutely and more independently, but he felt he had not succeeded. His concerns were, in any event, also known to the Chief of Staff of the

¹²⁸⁸ Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01. Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 07/05/01.

¹²⁸⁹ Interview E.G.B. Wieffer, 07/05/01.

¹²⁹⁰ Interviews J. Lemmen, 17/10/01 and J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.

¹²⁹¹ Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

First Netherlands Army Corps and were eventually also heard by Army Commander Couzy. The possibility of replacing Karremans was not considered; the existing problems were not ‘serious’ enough to warrant this.¹²⁹²

This replacement of Karremans as Battalion Commander was to be considered after the final exercise of Dutchbat III in Vogelsang, according to A. Jansen op de Harr, the Commander of A-Company of Dutchbat I. At the beginning of 1997, he made considerations about replacing Karremans public.¹²⁹³ Both Lemmen and Couzy denied this in talks with NIOD: according to them a replacement for Karremans was not considered at that time, even though a conflict existed between Karremans and the coordinator of the final exercise in Vogelsang. Karremans had refused to negotiate any longer with imitation Muslims in a negotiation exercise that constituted part of this final exercise (see Chapter 5).¹²⁹⁴

The commander of a unit determines the operational action of his unit based on orders that he receives from a higher link in the chain of command. At lower levels, in carrying out assignments, commanders lead their unit in direct contact with its members. At the level of battalion commander and above, a very real change takes place in this. The battalion commander must delegate to his staff much work that is still done directly by the company commander himself. He determines the larger contours, maintains contact with the higher echelons and keeps his finger expressly on the pulse of his own unit by appearing in person among its members, keeping himself personally abreast of the course of events and, in a general social sense, keeping in touch with the sub-units and individual persons within his unit.

Karremans and Franken, however, made work agreements for their actions in Srebrenica that deviated from this pattern. They composed, within the battalion staff, a twin that in fact made the decisions. According to Karremans, he still bore and accepted the final responsibility. However, this was not clear for those on the outside. Franken was most often in the foreground in Srebrenica. He impressed many officers of the battalion staff because he made quick decisions and took resolute action. He played a prominent role in action taken during the Bandera crisis, while determined action taken by the commander of C-Company would have been more in line with normal expectations, because that was his area of operation. Franken also tended to take the lead quickly on other occasions.

A general complaint was that Karremans was invisible; he did not appear often enough in public, he entered the compound in Srebrenica very seldom and did not often visit the observation posts. In addition to his invisibility, his stiffness and awkwardness in contact gave occasion for complaint. This type of complaint can most likely be heard in other units too, under other circumstances about other commanders, but it is important here that lesser commanders had a very strong impression that Franken gave the orders and not Karremans.¹²⁹⁵

It is risky to proceed from impressions and opinions of Karremans volunteered after the fact, because the events that took place around the fall undoubtedly will have influenced all subsequent thinking. For this reason, Chapter 7 of Part III will return to the functioning of the battalion leaders. The unusual division of labor between Karremans and Franken, in itself, seems to have been productive in practice, but it still had certain repercussions on the way battalion staff worked. This division of labor particularly gave those on the outside the impression that it was Franken and not Karremans who was actually in charge. Karremans did not hesitate to repeatedly take the responsibility for decisions that had been made, but communication was not his strong point and this skill cannot easily be missed in a commander.

¹²⁹² Interviews J. Lemmen, 17/10/01 and H. Couzy, 07/09, 14/09 and 17/09/98.

¹²⁹³ A. Jansen op de Haar, ‘Het geheime dossier overste Karremans’ (The secret file on General Karremans), Het Parool, 31/01/97.

¹²⁹⁴ Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01 and H. Couzy, 07/09, 14/09 and 17/09/98.

¹²⁹⁵ SMG/Debriefing. Factual Account, p. 56.

Chapter 10

Srebrenica from the national and international point of view

1. Introduction

In the previous chapters attention was focused on Srebrenica from various perspectives. The developments up to June 1995 were discussed in those chapters. In this chapter the clock is turned back, as it were, to the spring of 1994, in order to gain a general picture of the international developments providing the framework for the subject of Srebrenica as a Safe Area in Eastern Bosnia. This chapter therefore forms the window between the isolation so strongly felt in Srebrenica and the outside world.

The deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica had been given broad coverage in the Dutch media. In those reports the isolation in which Dutchbat was operating was immediately apparent: the Bosnian Serb authorities had not allowed any Dutch journalists or television crews into the new area of operations. Only a few *Defensiekrant* (weekly publication of Netherlands Ministry of Defence) correspondents had come into Srebrenica with Dutchbat. Those first impressions were the only reports that came out, because the Bosnian Serb authorities persisted in their refusal to allow in journalists. A sort of dichotomy had consequently arisen between the world of Dutchbat in the enclave and the outside world.

The experience of the peace mission in Srebrenica for military personnel, who – apart from a few weeks' leave – spent five or six months without a break in the enclave, was almost impossible to communicate to those at home or to visitors. The visitors – amongst whom were Ministers of Defence Relus Ter Beek and Joris Voorhoeve, Junior Minister Gmelich Meijling, Chief of Defence Staff Arie Van der Vlis and his successor Henk Van den Breemen, Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Hans Couzy, Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Michael Rose and his successor Rupert Smith, and Prince Willem-Alexander – by and large gained a less rosy picture of the situation in the enclave, certainly from the autumn of 1994 onwards: the circumstances worsened, which had its effect on Dutchbat's state of mind.

The isolation in which Dutchbat was operating in Srebrenica led to the new 'purple' Government beginning to pursue an active policy with regard to Srebrenica from August 1994 onwards. The Government set itself the task of internationalization of the UNPROFOR contingent in Srebrenica for the remaining term of the mission, in addition to ending of the mission on 1 July 1995 through replacement by a battalion from another country. Internationalization meant that other countries would have to become more involved in alleviating the problematical situation of the Dutch battalion. Achieving this depended entirely on international context and cooperation.

However, it proved difficult for the Dutch Government to pursue such an active policy with regard to Srebrenica. The enclave could not be placed on the agenda internationally; there had only been brief international attention for Srebrenica in March/April 1993, on the establishment of the Safe Area, and in January/February 1994, when Dutchbat was first deployed there, on account of the refusal of the VRS to allow Dutchbat into the area. After that, however, international attention for Srebrenica waned again. If the enclave received any international attention, it was as one of the three eastern enclaves. The fact that the enclave was the least desirable operational area of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, as had become very clear in the meantime, was a further complicating factor for the fulfilment of the Dutch desire to pursue an active policy on Srebrenica. That fact was to emerge again in the search for a replacement for Dutchbat.

This chapter will discuss what the Dutch Government did to draw international attention to the precarious position of Dutchbat, and what concrete steps it took to solve the problems of Dutchbat. By wanting internationalization and by limiting the term of the mission in Srebrenica, the Dutch

Government seemed to want to run away from the commitments that it had entered into at the end of 1993. The question then is whether that also meant that, as a result of the problems of Dutchbat, the government lost its incentive to contribute to UNPROFOR or other peace missions. The answer to these questions cannot be given from within the Dutch context alone; insight into the international and regional developments is needed, because these developments partly determined the Dutch position.

Nationally and internationally, radical changes occurred between the beginning of 1994 and May 1995. The objectives of the peace mission and the policy of trying to contain the conflict remained the same, and the concrete problems – questions of humanitarian aid, negotiations on a peace plan, ending of the war by a ceasefire or a cessation of hostilities agreement, the task of UNPROFOR, deployment of air power to protect the Safe Areas, observance of the sanctions and lifting of the arms embargo – did not change either. There was, however, a change of mood in the international arena, due to the fact that confidence that a solution would be found to the conflict was dwindling, and there was no consensus on the question of how a solution ought to be achieved. A political solution to the conflict remained at the top of the international agenda, but compared with 1993, the year with three peace plans, the period 1994 – May 1995 was thin: only a partial solution was achieved by the formation of the Muslim-Croat Federation. Internationally, however, the greatest problem remained the differing views on the nature of the conflict.

Roughly speaking, at international level two scenarios were in circulation for solving the problems in connection with the conflict in Bosnia. In one scenario the Bosnian Serbs were the aggressors and the Bosnian Muslims were the victims of aggression. That meant that, on the basis of the Security Council Resolutions, tough action had to be taken against the Bosnian Serbs: the arms embargo had to be lifted, and air power had to be deployed ('lift and strike'). Aggression on the part of the Bosnian Serbs could not be rewarded, and a peace plan therefore had to be imposed upon the Bosnian Serbs. The US Government and Congress thought along the lines of this scenario.

In the second scenario the most important point was to achieve a peace plan through negotiations between the warring factions. UNPROFOR, as the peacekeeping force, fulfilled an important function in this respect: its neutrality and impartiality would enable UNPROFOR to prevent further escalation and bring about a dialogue between the warring factions. This did not rule out the deployment of air power, but the condition then was that its deployment would have to be in proportion to the violation committed by the Bosnian Serbs. The Western European countries, Canada (with troops on the ground) and the United Nations subscribed to this scenario.

The fact that both scenarios had important supporters from the start of the war in Bosnia meant that there were strong differences of opinion on the course that should be followed. However, owing to the fact that international decision-making was taking place on several stages, it was always possible to avoid open conflict between the UN (UNPROFOR) and NATO, or between Europe and Washington.

The most important change in 1994-1995 was without question the fact that in the peace process the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia presided over by the UN and the European Community lost its leading role in the peace negotiations to the Contact Group, which consisted of five superpowers.

In the autumn of 1994 a confrontation occurred concerning the means for bringing about a political solution to the conflict. Within NATO a crisis arose between Washington and the European countries on the use of air power, and relations between NATO and the UN/UNPROFOR also became very strained. Proposals from the United States, amongst other countries, on the lifting of the arms embargo had led earlier to discussion about the withdrawal of UNPROFOR, and the part that NATO ought to have in it. A modification of American policy in December 1994 prevented a debacle, but the discussion about the lifting of the arms embargo and withdrawal or reinforcement of UNPROFOR did not disappear from the international agenda in 1995 either. These remained prominent topics, because they were directly connected with the American role in the conflict.

A political solution to the conflict could be achieved in two ways; from 1992 onwards an attempt had been made to bring an end to the conflict through negotiations between the warring

factions by means of international mediation. Each of the parties would have to agree to the end result. That was the only course left, because there was insufficient international support for the enforcement of a plan after negotiations. This was because the US Government in particular opposed it. That situation remained unchanged in 1994-1995, so that the negotiations had to be continued.

The warring factions were trying not only to achieve their long-term objectives, but also to strengthen their positions by changing the balance in Bosnia itself. This happened particularly on the military plane, with the initiative generally from the Bosnian Muslims, who felt that they could make greater gains on the battlefield by increasing the terrain under their control than they considered achievable at the negotiating table. The ABiH was also increasingly capable of taking the initiative through an improvement of the organization and better weaponry. Furthermore, the formation of the Muslim-Croat Federation in March 1994 meant that the ABiH could put greater pressure on the VRS. The ABiH was not, however, able to make any radical change in the military balance. This emerged from various actions, most clearly in the Bihac region in October/November 1994, and from the spring offensive around Sarajevo in 1995: a successful offensive was followed in both cases by a VRS counteroffensive that reversed the ground gained again.

A complication in the developments on the battlefield was the fact that the Bosnian Government in Sarajevo had hoped in any case up to the end of 1994 that at some stage the US Government would intervene in the conflict. The VRS supported ending the conflict, in the hope that in the meantime they could claim the terrain that they had gained around the negotiating table. The Bosnian Serb army supported a ceasefire and a lasting cessation of hostilities agreement, because it was afraid that the geographical spread of its military resources and lack of sufficient and good infantry would mean that in the long run it would not be able to hold its own against its strengthening opponent. The VRS tried to maintain its superiority in two ways: by counter-campaigns with large-scale use of artillery, and by blocking of the humanitarian aid.

There were also changes in the political balance within Yugoslavia itself. The main change occurred on the Serbian side: in August-September 1994 Milosevic announced sanctions against Republika Srpska. He chose to do this in the interest of his own Rest-Yugoslavia and against the Bosnian Serb regime in Pale, which wanted to reject a new peace plan. Otherwise, this was not a complete split: the military cooperation did continue, and the political contacts also remained. The political situation within Republika Srpska was, however, unclear because of the differences of opinion between the factions. What is clear is that from the autumn of 1994 onwards Milosevic was urging VRS Commander Ratko Mladic to take over power from Radovan Karadzic. However, Mladic was not persuaded, despite his contempt for Karadzic and his entourage. The military and political effect of the isolation of Republika Srpska by Belgrade and the international community also remained uncertain.

In the midst of these parties UNPROFOR had to perform its mandate: facilitation of humanitarian aid by the UNHCR, and protection of the Safe Areas. UNPROFOR had to contend with totally different expectations and demands in this respect. The Bosnian Government applied its own criteria to the assessment of the role of UNPROFOR: it felt that UNPROFOR was responsible for the humanitarian aid and for protection from any form of Bosnian Serb aggression. In the opinion of the Bosnian Government, the peacekeeping force was seriously remiss in this respect, which meant that it had lost its impartiality. The Bosnian Government broadcast that point of view with fervour, both in the media and in confrontations with UNPROFOR. This had negative consequences for the reputation of the peacekeeping force and its actions. The VRS adopted the same attitude from the opposite angle: from that side too, UNPROFOR was accused of bias – in favour of the Muslims. As a countermeasure, the VRS took reprisals in the form of a ban on convoys, both for humanitarian aid and for regular supplies to UNPROFOR troops. The main objection for the Bosnian Serbs was, however, the cooperation between UNPROFOR and NATO for Close Air Support and air strikes. Constant violations of the regime for the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone around Sarajevo and the resumption of the conflict on other fronts meant that at the end of October 1994 UNPROFOR had fully lost control of the situation. All attempts to put an end to the fighting had foundered on the obstruction of the parties.

In this chapter the developments between March 1994 and May 1995 will be discussed, in particular from the point of view of international developments. The chapter starts by dealing with the actions of the Contact Group and its peace plan; the rejection of that peace plan provoked a discussion about the way to handle the peace process, with the lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia, taking tougher action against the Bosnian Serbs and withdrawal of UNPROFOR as the main topics. The intensification of the discussion during the crisis in Bihac in November 1994 and the attempts to strengthen the position of UNPROFOR are topics then considered. Dutch policy in this discussion is a topic that is dealt with, but the emphasis when discussing Dutch actions lies on the initiatives to improve the situation of Dutchbat in Srebrenica.

2. The Contact Group

At the beginning of 1994 the tension in NATO between the United States on the one hand, and France, the United Kingdom and Canada on the other about the use of force in the execution of the peace mission and about a peace plan had come to the surface again. Those differences of opinion had otherwise not prevented the NATO leaders meeting in Brussels at the beginning of January from threatening the use of air power if the Bosnian Serbs did not respect the Freedom of Movement of UNPROFOR. The Government leaders of NATO had also declared themselves in favour of the Canadian battalion in Srebrenica being replaced by Dutchbat, and of Tuzla airport being opened for the supply of humanitarian aid. The use of force to do this was permitted.

When barely a month later, after the savage shelling of the market in Sarajevo, NATO issued an ultimatum to the VRS about the removal of artillery beyond the range of the Bosnian capital, results had been achieved: the VRS agreed to the introduction of a Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone around the city. The Russian Government was very put out about this unilateral action by NATO. The transfer of a Russian battalion of the peacekeeping force – as rapid as it was unexpected for the outside world – from Croatia to the Serbian part of Sarajevo on 17 February 1994 was intended as a face-saving exercise for the Russians. The fact that the Russian Federation wanted to play a more active role had also already become clear from its participation in the discussions on a ceasefire between the Croats and the Croatian Serbs in the Krajina in February 1994.

More important was the fact that it was the Russian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Vitaly Churkin, in consultation with UNPROFOR, who had planned that transfer. Moscow had wanted to demonstrate by its diplomatic and military action that it wished to be more involved in the international decision-making outside the Security Council on the former Yugoslavia. There were no NATO air strikes: the VRS fulfilled its promises about the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone around Sarajevo, partly because the Serbs did not want to alienate the Russians, now that there was a Russian battalion in Sarajevo.¹²⁹⁶

The split within NATO on the face of it appeared to have been overcome by this satisfactory outcome of the crisis about Sarajevo. This was only on the surface, however, because the fundamental difference of opinion remained: Canada and the Western European members did not want to intervene in favour of one of the warring factions, on account of the risks for their UNPROFOR troops; Washington remained morally and politically on the side of the Bosnian Muslims and advocated tough action against the Bosnian Serbs as the aggressors in the conflict. The Americans were not, however, prepared to deploy more than the US Air Force and the US Navy under the umbrella of NATO for this purpose; after the debacle of the peacekeeping mission in Somalia, the Clinton Government was certainly not prepared to deploy ground troops and run the risk of American casualties again.¹²⁹⁷

The British Government had the most concerns about the opposing views within NATO concerning the solution of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Since the Clinton Government had

¹²⁹⁶ Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 148. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 267.

¹²⁹⁷ Bert, *Reluctant Superpower*, pp.75-76. Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, pp. 286-287.

taken office at the beginning of 1993, London had seen little of the 'special relationship' with Washington. Clinton's Washington seemed to be keeping its distance from its most important European ally, rather than taking London into its confidence as an important discussion partner. This was due to the fact that British Prime Minister John Major had supported the sitting president, George Bush, during the election campaign in 1992. The British Government became increasingly concerned about the chill in transatlantic relations, because it was also manifesting itself in other fields. British Prime Minister John Major therefore decided at the end of 1993, on the advice of Pauline Neville-Jones, his international and security policy adviser and chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee, to make an attempt to reverse the downward spiral in Anglo-American relations. In consultation with his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Douglas Hurd, he appointed Neville-Jones Political Director of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and charged her in particular with this task. Early in January 1994 she travelled to Washington and spoke to Clinton's chief advisers at the National Security Council, and with senior officials of the State Department and the Pentagon. Her conclusion was that there was a substantial difference in opinion about the conflict, stemming from differences in analysis and involvement. The Pentagon and the Intelligence community were closest to the European view. She felt that those differences could be bridged only by involving Washington in the discussions on a peace plan in Geneva.¹²⁹⁸

For the time being, Washington continued to go its own way. In March 1994, after intensive negotiations between the Bosnian Muslims and the Bosnian Croats, presided over by the American diplomat Charles Redman, with the support of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Muslim-Croat Federation was formed. This federation was very similar to the constitutional part of the Owen-Stoltenberg plan: a sovereign federation, with a minimum of central institutions, and with as many powers as possible vested in the component ethnic parts of Muslims and Croats.

Despite the scepticism about the Federation as a 'natural or artificial creation', the circle of negotiators expected it to have 'real potential' as a combination of anti-Serb forces in Bosnia. In the short term in any case, further confrontation between Croatians and Muslims had been prevented, and for Washington that, together with the strengthening of their position against the Bosnian Serbs, was the most important thing at the negotiating table.¹²⁹⁹

Stagnation in the meantime typified the peace process of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia in Geneva presided over by Stoltenberg and Owen. In 1992-1993 the conference had presented three peace plans to the warring factions – the Vance-Owen-plan, the Owen-Stoltenberg peace plan, and the peace plan of the European Union, the fruit of a Franco-German initiative. None of those plans had received the approval of all parties. The peace conference in Geneva seemed to have few remaining options. There were no longer any new variations on the main themes of a peace plan that had any chance of success: there were no possibilities for a different distribution of power between the three ethnic groups, and there was little scope for dividing up the territory between the three groups either. Owen and Stoltenberg felt that new proposals would share the same fate as the three earlier peace plans, because the warring factions knew that the UN and the European Union, as sponsors of the Geneva Convention, were not in a position to enforce a peace settlement.

A new plan would have some prospect of success only if all warring factions were put under the same degree of pressure resulting from American and Russian support of the proposal. Owen and Stoltenberg were aware of the need to involve the United States and the Russian Federation in the peace negotiations. This point of view was reinforced by the fact that Redman and Russian Special Envoy Vitaly Churkin took part in discussions in Pale, Sarajevo and Belgrade during the Gorazde crisis in the spring of 1994. For its part, the US Government wanted cooperation with the European Union, but not with the troika of the European Union or the twelve members individually. As permanent

¹²⁹⁸ Interviews P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01 and R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00.

¹²⁹⁹ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 268-269. Interview Ch. Redman, 15/10/01

members of the Security Council, France and Great Britain were, of course, partners in Europe, while for action from the Security Council it was also important to consult the Russian Federation.

Owen and Stoltenberg were faced with a dilemma. They had come to the conclusion that continuation of the negotiations on a settlement in the former Yugoslavia by the Geneva route was in fact at a dead end. They also felt that the EU and the Secretary-General of the UN were unlikely to buy the creation of a different framework for the discussions, in which they would not be playing a role. For the sake of combining forces, Owen and Stoltenberg wanted to return to the traditional cooperation between the superpowers most involved: the four members of the Security Council mentioned above, and Germany, because of its influence in Zagreb.

When he introduced his proposal, Owen deliberately did not put all his cards on the table before the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EU at the General Affairs Council of 18 April 1994. Had he done so, he would in fact have had to lay the common foreign and security policy of the EU and the role of the EU troika on the table, and that would have been counterproductive. He had assured himself beforehand of the support of Paris, London and Bonn, and decided not to speak openly to the EU Council.

Towards the end of the meeting, which was dealing mainly with the Gorazde crisis, he stated that it was not possible for Washington to operate within the framework of the Yugoslavia Conference (ICFY), and that Washington preferred contacts directly under the level of the co-chairmen. He explained that new 'coordinating mechanisms' were necessary to involve the United States and the Russian Federation in the consultation. The Council asked Lord Owen to do everything possible to talk to the US, bearing in mind the limitations mentioned. According to the Council, it was not necessary to indicate too precisely what exact form the contacts with the US should take.¹³⁰⁰ The next day Owen informed the ministers personally that, 'in the light of yesterday's [Foreign Affairs Council]' the co-chairmen of the Yugoslavia Conference (Owen and Stoltenberg) had decided to form a Contact Group, as a team of the Yugoslavia Conference, for cooperation with the United States and the Russian Federation. This team would act on behalf of the EU and the UN.¹³⁰¹

In The Hague, Yugoslavia coordinator Hattinga van 't Sant soon saw through Owen's bright idea. The three large members of the EU wanted to conduct the peace discussions with the United States and the Russian Federation without consulting the other nine members; that was a departure from the decisions taken by the General Affairs Council on 18 April. According to Joris Vos, the Director-General for Political Affairs, a board of directors had been formed with the Contact Group. Foreign Minister Peter Kooijmans did also see advantages: through the Contact Group, the EU would acquire a 'good monitoring system' for the negotiations if the Contact Group reported to the EU ministers; and it was a fact that Washington did not want to work with the troika presided over by the Greeks. There was, of course, criticism of Owen's high-handed action, but no tirade was launched against this violation of the common foreign and security policy of the EU. On the contrary, there was an expression of understanding for the formation of the Contact Group and hope for progress in the peace process.¹³⁰²

At the next meeting of the ad hoc group of the EU for former Yugoslavia, held on 26 April 1994, it is true that 'great resentment' was expressed about Owen's decision to form the Contact Group, but that did not prevent a British, French and German member from being appointed, and did not prevent the first meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the five members of the Contact Group from being held in London on that same day. Despite this feeling among the non-EU members of the Contact Group that they were up against the big boys, the meeting endorsed the view that there

¹³⁰⁰ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 275-277. ABZ, ARA/DEU/ 05239. Coded cable Bot 126, 19/04/94. Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01. Interview P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

¹³⁰¹ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (CD-ROM) document 180: Lord Owen Personal for Foreign Ministers, 19/04/94). ABZ, DEU/ARA/05239. Coded cable COREU athc868, 22/04/94.

¹³⁰² Notes by Hattinga van 't Sant on a meeting with Vos and Kooijmans on text of ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05239. Coded cable COREU athc868, 22/04/94.

was a need for ‘a strong re-invigoration of the negotiating process’, and saw the Contact Group as a new step towards that goal. The EU ad hoc group decided on a motion from the Netherlands that Owen would report to the EU on the talks held by the Contact Group.¹³⁰³ A discussion along the same lines was repeated in the Political Committee two weeks later: much wailing about the breach of the rules of the Treaty of Maastricht on common foreign and security policy, an attempt by the Dutch to strengthen the official link between the EU and the Contact Group during the negotiations on the former Yugoslavia, and insistence on the presence of the troika for all Contact Group meetings at ministerial level. The General Affairs Council accepted the existence of the Contact Group and thereby implicitly recognized that the Yugoslavia Conference, including the EU, was being sidelined.¹³⁰⁴

Apart from some EU mutterings from the sidelines, the Contact Group had therefore been formed without any great problems. Until the summer of 1995 this group was to form the core of the negotiating process for a settlement in Bosnia. The Contact Group was in any case more than a contact body of the Yugoslavia Conference for involving the United States and the Russian Federation in the talks in Geneva. The three members appointed by Owen formed only a small part of a tiered diplomatic consultation structure. After some time, the political directors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in London, Paris and Bonn, with the American and Russian members, formed the core of the Contact Group.

It was primarily a new consultation body of the five great powers involved in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. All other statements and explanations about the formation of the Contact Group were intended to sweeten the pill for the European Union and the United Nations. At the negotiations, from the moment that they wanted to lead the talks as a group, the five great powers returned to the earlier tried and tested diplomatic talks at intergovernmental level. The Contact Group, according to the French, was certainly not a ‘nouvel instrument de diplomatie multilatérale, multiforme et adaptable’ (a new instrument of multilateral, multiform and adaptable diplomacy).¹³⁰⁵ Alain Juppé, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, subsequently called it ‘une méthode de négociation’ (a method of negotiation), while one cynical academic described the group as ‘Emperors With No Clothes’.¹³⁰⁶ By continuing to use the Yugoslavia Conference as the official forum for talks with the warring factions, the Contact Group left the Yugoslavia Conference alone. In a political sense, however, the Contact Group took over the leading role in the peace process.

The Contact Group was more, however, than just an ad hoc consultation group of ambassadors of the five great powers – although they formed the hard core of the group. There was certainly no question of easy mutual relations between the five at the beginning: Vitaly Churkin, the Russian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, as a Minister of State, in fact did not wish to work with the three European representatives, an attitude which he shared with Charles Redman, the US Special Envoy, who for reasons that are otherwise not very clear considered his status higher. Churkin at any rate very soon arranged for his replacement by A.Nikiforov.¹³⁰⁷

This newly formed group of five tried to draw up a common policy for the peace consultations. To that end, it conducted talks with the parties in the former Yugoslavia, consulted Yasushi Akashi as the representative of the United Nations in the region, and coordinated policy within its own bureaucracy. With this high workload, working groups for sub-topics were also gradually formed, and met on a regular basis. Difficult questions were passed on to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, although initially it was denied that there was a direct link between the Group and this political top tier.¹³⁰⁸

¹³⁰³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05239. COREU pesc/sec 488, 27/04/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/2915. Coded cable Kooijmans 53, 27/04/94.

¹³⁰⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Bot 164, 11/05/94.

¹³⁰⁵ F. Boidevaix, *Une diplomatie informelle pour l'Europe. Le Groupe de Contact Bosnie (Paris [1997])*, p. 69. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 277-278.

¹³⁰⁶ Boidevaix, *Une diplomatie informelle pour l'Europe*, p.8. Gow, *Triumph of Lack of Will*, p. 260.

¹³⁰⁷ Interviews P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01; Ch. Redman, 15/10/01; M. Steiner, 06/07/00.

¹³⁰⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Bot 164, 11/05/94.

Despite the general conviction that the tide was in favour of the Contact Group taking action, there was absolutely no guarantee of success. Owen and Stoltenberg had correctly assessed the momentum during the Gorazde crisis: this was the right moment for involving the United States and the Russian Federation in the peace process, or in the words of Malcolm Rifkind, the British Minister of Defence and subsequently Minister of Foreign Affairs: 'Fast moving diplomacy needed that a minority led diplomacy.'¹³⁰⁹ Nevertheless, leading the peace talks was going to mean a fair amount of racking of brains. The only thing that united the five was their desire to play a role in the peace process, but in that respect they each, of course, wanted to achieve as much as possible of their own policies. The five great powers did not share much more than a common desire to put an end to the war in Bosnia and prevent its escalation to an international conflict. Only they were keen not to give the same divided and weak impression to the warring factions as they had before at the time of the Gorazde crisis in April 1994.

The Gorazde crisis had broken out at the beginning of April, after the failure of talks on a cessation of hostilities for the whole of Bosnia, as the first step towards a political settlement and the ending of fighting around Gorazde. This dashed hopes that the Bosnian Serbs had become more compliant after the NATO ultimatum of February 1994. Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Michael Rose suspected that American mediator Charles Redman had played a crucial role in that failure.

Immediately after the breakdown of the talks, the VRS had resumed the battle around the Safe Area of Gorazde. On account of threats against UN personnel, Rose used Close Air Support several times. When the VRS attack was resumed on 16 April, the US Government declared itself in favour of air strikes, for the sake of the credibility of NATO. The VRS aggravated the crisis further by taking UNPROFOR personnel hostage.

On 22 April 1994 NATO issued an ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs: withdrawal of all troops to a distance of three kilometres from the centre of Gorazde and of heavy weapons to a distance of 20 kilometres outside a Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone to be set up. The Russian Federation was angered again by this tendency towards unilateral action by NATO, and found that UNPROFOR was on its side. According to Commander Rose, the peacekeeping force ought not to be tempted to intervene in the conflict between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs, and that situation would arise if there were air strikes. Akashi blocked the air strikes and, with the cooperation of Milosevic, reached an agreement in Belgrade that put an end to the crisis. UNPROFOR units subsequently went into the city.¹³¹⁰

The Gorazde crisis had above all made it clear that the use of force without a clearly defined political strategy on the ending of the conflict was a tricky affair.¹³¹¹ International opinion was sharply divided on the degree to which force should be used. Washington adopted the most extreme position in that respect: it regarded the Bosnian Serbs as the aggressor, it did not want to recognize their territorial gains, and it stood morally behind the Bosnian Government. At the opening of the American embassy in Sarajevo at the beginning of May 1994 the US Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, expressed that solidarity. In her view, the American support for the Muslims had limitations: yes to the deployment of NATO air power, but no to the deployment of American ground troops.

Before the Gorazde crisis Washington had not had any clear course of action, because of internal divisions within the Government. In the interim, containment seemed to have a higher priority than solution of the conflict. Political discussion at home led to increased pressure to lift the arms embargo, while the use of NATO air power was seen as a means of forcing the Bosnian Serbs to make concessions.¹³¹² During the month of April some movement occurred in the American standpoint, coinciding with the start of the work of the Contact Group. According to Anthony Lake, National Security Adviser, a turning point had been reached, and Washington wanted to be more directly

¹³⁰⁹ Boidevaix, *Une diplomatie informelle pour l'Europe*, p. 11.

¹³¹⁰ Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 99-115. Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, pp. 146-150 and 299.

¹³¹¹ Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, p. 150.

¹³¹² Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, p. 299. Bert, *Reluctant Superpower*, pp. 212-213.

involved in solving the conflict in Bosnia. This was to be achieved through more intensive diplomatic cooperation with the European allies and the Russian Federation 'to engage the Serbs' in the 'painstaking, delicate and very difficult' negotiating process.

The main point would be the division of the territory, but Lake said nothing about the division mechanism to be applied. The Serbians and the Bosnian Serbs had to realize that there would be economic sanctions if there was 'continued intransigence'; Washington also tried to increase the effectiveness of NATO air power by improving the coordination with the United Nations; Lake hinted that the US Government wanted to drop the complicated dual key procedure and was in favour of a more direct role for NATO. Finally, he held out the prospect of American participation in an implementation force after the achievement of a peace settlement.¹³¹³

According to Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Vershbow, Washington continued to rule out participation in UNPROFOR, because it did not want to be 'confined' in a United Nations 'straitjacket'. The deployment of American troops for peace enforcement in Bosnia was not a consideration either; Washington wanted in principle to keep its hands free to enable it to intervene if necessary.¹³¹⁴

Moscow had been playing a modest, but effective mediating role in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia since the beginning of 1994, first in February, during the Sarajevo crisis, and then at the end of March, for a cessation of hostilities agreement in the Krajina. The special ties with the Serbians as fellow Slavs had played a role in any case. This carefully constructed special position of the Russian Federation in the region was seriously undermined during the Gorazde crisis by the unreliable action of the Bosnian Serbs. Moscow in its own estimation had suffered a serious loss of face because of that course of events.

For the time being, Moscow closed the chapter of solo performance in the region: it no longer wanted to talk to the Bosnian Serbs and decided to be tougher with Milosevic. Moscow expressly declared a desire to cooperate with the United Nations, the European Union and the United States in a common approach to the Bosnian crisis.¹³¹⁵ Moscow was frustrated by the American attitude, however, which according to Kozyrev was aimed primarily at intensification of the military action against the Bosnian Serbs. The Russian Government therefore definitely wanted to rule out independent NATO action: no use of air power without express UN approval, and only on the basis of Security Council resolutions. There could then be no repeat of the situation in Gorazde, where the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander had decided to use Close Air Support. In the view of the Russians, the use of air power had no influence on the situation on the ground, and only led to the warring factions adopting an inflexible attitude. The fact that Moscow was on its guard against further aggravation of the situation on the ground was also evident at the beginning of May from its opposition to the designation of new Safe Areas.¹³¹⁶

The position of the European members of the Contact Group was known. Their aim was first and foremost to contain the conflict, and preferably to end it quickly. The EU action plan at the end of 1993 remained the basis for a peace settlement for the EU; that was expressly repeated in the ad hoc group on the former Yugoslavia and the Political Committee after the formation of the Contact Group.

In the main, there was no essential difference of opinion between British, French and German standpoints on a peace plan. But there were differences about the means for applying pressure to achieve that objective, such as air power, sanctions and lifting of the arms embargo. Those differences of opinion were connected with the participation in UNPROFOR of France and the United Kingdom

¹³¹³ A. Lake 'Bosnia: America's Interests and America's Role' in: *Inside the Army*, 11/04/94, pp. 5-8. (text of speech at the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore (MD) on 7 April 1994) CSKL. Fax Lamat Washington to Sitcen BLS, 21/04/94.

¹³¹⁴ ABZ, Embassy Washington. Coded cable Jacobovits 270, 25/04/94.

¹³¹⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05239. Coded cable De Vos from Steenwijk 190, 20/04/94.

¹³¹⁶ UNGE ICFY Box 123 File: fax March 21 – May 3 1994. Annan to Akashi, coded cable 1294, 26/04/94; Appendix: Memorandum of the Russian Permanent Representative. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Veenendaal NATO 790, 11/05/94; Coded cable Biegman 447, 10/05/94. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, (CD-ROM: COREU on Co-Chairmen's talks in Moscow, 20/04/94).

and their *realpolitik* stance, on the one hand, and the more moralistic position of the Federal Republic of Germany, on the other; their position was similar to that of the Americans and was not tempered by risks to their own troops within the peacekeeping force.¹³¹⁷

Clearly, it was going to take a great deal of energy to draft a common policy from the diverging views and approaches of the five members of the Contact Group. Contrary to the high expectations of the outside world, the Contact Group was and remained mainly a discussion forum. Laudatory statements to the media could not disguise that fact.

At its first meeting in London on 26 April 1994, the Contact Group decided to concentrate on a total suspension of hostilities and the territorial 'bottom-line' of the Muslims, and to go to Sarajevo and Pale for talks two days later. These agreements were reached after difficult discussions. All participants agreed that they had to stake everything in order to succeed, but they considered that there was little chance of doing so. There was also little mutual understanding: Redman and Churkin, like Masset and Redman, treated each other with the usual mistrust. Redman and Churkin would have preferred to continue with their own attempts at mediation, while the state of affairs during the Gorazde crisis had also made them very sceptical and pessimistic about the possibilities for cooperation within the Contact Group. It was not surprising that there were very widely diverging opinions on how to tackle the negotiations. It took a great deal of effort on the part of the British and German participants to obtain Churkin's and Redman's approval of a decision on making an inventory of the Muslim 'bottom-line' without an agreement on the procedure after that. Redman automatically advocated support for a Muslim bottom-line of 51% of the territory. Churkin, on the other hand, wanted the Contact Group to have its own map, and the gradual lifting of sanctions in exchange for Bosnian Serb withdrawal to the new boundaries.¹³¹⁸

Under pressure to come up with some result within a few weeks and with fundamentally different views on the approach itself, the Contact Group conducted two rounds of talks in Bosnia at the end of April and beginning of May. The Bosnian Government agreed to a ceasefire of limited duration on three conditions: implementation of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone in Gorazde; closing of the border between Republika Srpska and Serbia; and setting up of some sort of Exclusion Zones along the front line/demarcation line, to permit adequate reactions to violations of the ceasefire. Pale wanted a ceasefire without time limit, and proposed withdrawing the VRS units from the front line (50 to 500 metres) and positioning UNPROFOR troops between the warring factions. Implementation of the agreements on Gorazde was guaranteed by Pale.

Both parties also imposed conditions for the resumption of the peace discussions. Sarajevo did not want to begin them until after a full settlement on Gorazde. It also demanded recognition of the territorial integrity of Bosnia and compensation in the form of more terrain on separation from the Serbian part. The territory of the Muslim-Croat Federation would have to comprise all territory where Muslims and Croats had formed the majority of the population before the start of the war. Izetbegovic promised that he would make a map.¹³¹⁹ Moreover, a settlement had to be reached within a specific time limit; if it was not, according to Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic, the lifting of the arms embargo and air strikes would have to follow. The Bosnian Serb authorities also laid down their condition: suspension of the sanctions. They did not, however, repeat their demand for recognition of

¹³¹⁷ Interviews P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01 and M. Steiner, 06/07/00.

¹³¹⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05239. Coded cable COREU athc913, 28/04/94; Fax Steiner to Hattinga van 't Sant, 27/04/94; Appendix: German coded message London diplo to Bonn, No.642, 26/04/94.

¹³¹⁹ Izetbegovic did not keep his promise. His intentions became clear on 11 May 1994, when the result of Muslim-Croatian talks on the territory of the Federation was signed in Vienna. The Federation claimed 58% of the territory. Izetbegovic had talked of 54% in his discussion with the Contact Group. On the American side, it was expressly stated that the demand for 58% was no more than a negotiating position. See: ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05239. Coded cable COREU athc925, 29/04/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Boddens Hosang 309, 13/05/94; Coded cable Boddens Hosang 310, 14/05/94.

Republika Srpska. Pale also rejected a percentage-wise division of the territory: it asked for division on the basis of qualitative criteria.¹³²⁰



As emerged from the talks with the parties in Bosnia, the Contact Group was still going to have to negotiate a few tough hurdles in order to be able to achieve the twin-track policy of a ceasefire and resumption of the peace talks. That called for political decisions in the short term, in order to put an end to the situation that was also perilous for UNPROFOR.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Kofi Annan, Yasushi Akashi and Force Commander Bertrand De Lapresle feared, like the US Government, that the peacekeeping force would creep 'from a humanitarian role into a combatant position'.¹³²¹ This led them to different conclusions. According to Washington, heavier artillery was definitely needed in order to make the Bosnian Serb authorities change their mind. That was the American input at the meeting held on 13 May between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the members of the Contact Group and the EU troika. After a long and difficult meeting, they reached agreement on a clear course for the continuation of the twin-track policy of the Contact Group. It had taken Christopher, Kozyrev, Hurd, Juppé and Kinkel four hours to agree on the communiqué, which after intensive Anglo-German mediation bridged the widely diverging Russian and American standpoints and also found a middle way between the demands of the parties in Bosnia itself.

The Contact Group was united and firmly resolved to work towards an 'early and durable solution' of the conflict at the negotiating table without military means, and promised to make every effort to implement a solution. The five ministers called upon the warring factions to agree to a full ceasefire and to begin parallel talks on a political solution. The ceasefire had to comprise a dispersal of the troops, the withdrawal of heavy weapons and the stationing of UNPROFOR units between the warring factions. The agreement would have to be for four months in the first instance (in accordance with the Muslim view), with an option for extension (a concession towards Republika Srpska). Monitoring of fulfilment of the agreement merited special attention and required reinforcement of UNPROFOR. With regard to the territorial question, the Contact Group pressed for an arrangement

¹³²⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05239. Coded cable COREU athc925, 29/04/95. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Memo DEU/OE – JLS-MEP, 11/05/94; Coded cable Boddens Hosang 309, 13/05/94.

¹³²¹ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 278. ABZ, Embassy Washington: Coded cable Jacobovits 270, 25/04/94.

along the lines of 51% for the Bosnian Muslims and 49 % for the Serbs. All Security Council resolutions had to be observed and implemented. The lifting of sanctions as a condition for the resumption of the talks was unacceptable. There could be a phased suspension of sanctions only if there was an implementation of a peace settlement, and in particular of the provisions on withdrawal to within agreed boundaries. Finally, the ministers invited the warring factions to start substantive talks within two weeks, presided over by the Contact Group.¹³²²

The communiqué had all the advantages and disadvantages of a compromise. The advantage was that the Russian Federation and the United States now also agreed to the percentage-wise division of the territory, the existence side by side of the Federation and Republika Srpska, and the phased suspension of sanctions. The disadvantage was the vagueness on the need for further negotiation, and that for the rest it contained nothing more than expressions of principle that the parties had already put aside in the past. That does not alter the fact that endorsement of the fundamental principles for the negotiations was an important step forward.

However, widely divergent views remained with regard to the treatment of the warring factions, the division of the territory and the suspension of sanctions. The acceptance of the Russian proposal for UNPROFOR units on the demarcation line and withdrawal of the heavy weapons 'to check the Bosnian Serb military machine' still did not mean that Kozyrev's aim of achieving equal treatment of the parties had been taken over. His proposal was in line with the American view that Republika Srpska was not to be trusted, and that thorough monitoring to ensure observation of a ceasefire was essential. That was also the reason why the other elements of the Russian proposal had not gone into the communiqué: withdrawal on the basis of a temporary map of the Contact Group and a start on the suspension of the economic sanctions. That was going much too far, for Washington in any case.

Conversely, the American support for the principle of 51% – 49 % did not yet mean that the Contact Group would be playing an active role in the plotting of the map. Washington wanted to leave that to the warring factions in the first instance. As far as Washington was concerned, the stage for the suspension of sanctions had certainly not been reached yet. Americans thoughts were going in the opposite direction. The State Department had in fact, in the weeks prior to the meeting in Geneva, tried to gain support within the Western camp for a stiffer sanctions regime, an action which, within the EU at any rate, had received no positive response whatsoever.¹³²³

The meeting of ministers in Geneva had in any case created a narrow base for the activities of the Contact Group on the basis of the twin-track policy. Akashi continued the talks on a ceasefire. Talks on an official cessation of hostilities were unsuccessful because of opposition from the Bosnian Government. After difficult negotiations, the parties agreed on 8 June in Geneva to a ceasefire for a month. For UNPROFOR that agreement was also important for other reasons. Since the Muslim-Croat Federation had been formed in March 1994 the ABiH had been able to deploy against the VRS 15 brigades that had first been at the front with the Bosnian Croats. The ABiH had also been receiving supplies secretly by sea through Croatian territory. According to UNPROFOR, both factors would strengthen the Bosnian Government's conviction that they could gain more on the battlefield than at the conference table, an observation that was perfectly in tune with the earlier mentioned analysis of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Michael Rose at the start of his mission in January 1994.¹³²⁴ The ceasefire did not last long: after one week the ABiH resumed the battle at Mount Ozren in central Bosnia and in Bihac, although that did not prevent an extension in July.¹³²⁵

¹³²² ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Communiqué of the Meeting of Foreign Ministers in Geneva, 13 May 1994.

¹³²³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05265: Dornbush to Kooijmans, 28/04/94 with Appendix Christopher to Kooijmans, 28/04/94.

ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05265. COREU pesc/pres/ath1019, 11/05/94 (text of letter of EU president to Christopher, 10/05/94). ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05265. Coded cable Jacobovits 285, 29/04/94.

¹³²⁴ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120, file: Civil Affairs Sector NE. Weekly BH political assessment (68), 27/05/94, pp. 1-2.

¹³²⁵ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR: Z-950, Akashi to Annan, 21/06/94. Z-1056, Akashi to Annan, 15/07/94. Burg & Shoup, War in Bosnia, pp. 302-303.

The Contact Group's road towards a result was longer. Because Washington had objected to the Contact Group drawing up its own map on the basis of the 51% – 49% principle, it started talks on a territorial division in Talloires in France with representatives of the Federation and Republika Srpska. For Washington this was already a concession, since the United States in fact wanted the Bosnian Government to have the 51% – 49% map drawn up, and wanted to present the map as a *fait accompli* to Pale after it had been approved by the Contact Group. Alain Juppé, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, had rejected this approach as 'asymmetrical and unfair'.¹³²⁶ After the failure of the talks in Talloires, the Contact Group set to work itself.¹³²⁷ The presentation of the Contact Group's map on 6 July made a resolute impression through the preconditions of the ministers: the Federation and Republika Srpska had to reply within two weeks with an unconditional Yes or No. Endorsement would be rewarded with 'incentives', rejection punished with 'disincentives'. At the end of July the ministers would meet for the third time in Geneva to discuss the consequences of the replies from Sarajevo and Pale.¹³²⁸

The map produced by the Contact Group was 'a reasonable balance'. For the members of the Contact Group, any modification would be possible only on the basis of mutual agreement between Sarajevo and Pale. After the fiasco of Talloires, that was no more than a diplomatic phrase. With the proposed division of the territory, the Federation was receiving more than the Muslim and Croatian entities would receive under the Owen-Stoltenberg plan.

None of the parties was satisfied with the map: ABiH and VRS both complained that their territory had been broken up into a number of unconnected parts. The main features were as follows.

Sarajevo and the surrounding area were not divided, but were placed under the administration of the United Nations. Brcko in the north went largely into the hands of the Federation and acquired a direct connection to the central part of the Federation. That meant an actual partition between the eastern and western part of Republika Srpska, instead of a connection by means of a land corridor. The Muslim region around the three eastern enclaves would be extended: Gorazde was acquiring a direct connection with the Sarajevo region, and Srebrenica and Zepa were to be connected with each other.

Nevertheless, the Bosnian Muslims were dissatisfied with the map. Places that they regarded as Muslim terrain, such as Bratunac, Zvornik and Prijedor, fell outside the allotted area. Besides, the map did not meet Sarajevo's demand of 58%, but that could be no surprise for Sarajevo, after it had accepted the principle of 51% – 49% as the basis for the division. Izetbegovic decided, however, to make a tactical choice: 'the plan is bad – it is an injustice – but the option of saying "no" would be worse for our people'. Besides, he assumed that the Bosnian Serb Parliament would reject the Contact Group's map, and that this rejection would deal the final blow to the map. The Parliament followed Izetbegovic on 18 July 1994.¹³²⁹

The reaction of the Bosnian Serbs to the map: neither Yes, nor No

What leaked out from the meeting behind closed doors of the Bosnian Serb Parliament on 18 July seemed to confirm the prediction of Izetbegovic. The plan was rejected in fierce nationalistic terms, because according to Vice-President Plavsic it was aiming for 'a complete destruction and vanishing of the Serb people'. This wave of emotion did not stop the debates late in the evening from tending towards a strategic option for acceptance under certain conditions. The object of this 'Yes, provided that' answer was that in that way they would remain involved in the peace process and still to be able to change the map.¹³³⁰ In an atmosphere of drama, the final answer from Pale went in a sealed envelope to

¹³²⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Jacobovits 309, 14/05/94.

¹³²⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. COREU pesc/sec659, 01/06/94.

¹³²⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. COREU pesc/sec 741, 07/07/94.

¹³²⁹ Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, p. 303. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120, file: Civil Affairs Sector NE. Weekly BH political assessment (76), 24/07/94, pp. 2-3.

¹³³⁰ Confidential information (166).

Geneva, to be handed over on 20 July. It stated that an answer to the Peace Plan was not possible because elements such as constitutional arrangements, the Sarajevo question, access to the sea for Republika Srpska, implementation of the peace plan and the lifting of sanctions were missing. The Bosnian Serb delegation had authorization to continue the peace talks, during which process the map 'can serve, in considerable measure, as a basis for further negotiations.'¹³³¹

Strictly speaking, this answer was not a Yes, and in the opinion of Charles Redman, the American member of the Contact Group, this was a case for applying the incentives and disincentives. On the other hand, Andrei Kozyrev, the Russian Foreign Minister, found the statement positive, regarded the demand for constitutional settlements 'reasonable' and saw scope for further negotiations.¹³³² The Contact Group seemed to have been torn apart by the answer from Pale.

However, the five members were not giving up that easily; in order to prepare for the meeting of the ministers in Geneva, the members made feverish attempts to paper over the cracks. At the instigation of the Russians, the Contact Group itself met in Moscow to discuss the joint answer.¹³³³ President Yeltsin sent his Minister of Defence to Belgrade to press Milosevic and a Bosnian Serb delegation (Karadzic, Mladic and Krajisnik) 'in no uncertain terms' to accept the plan. Milosevic wanted to accept the map, but Karadzic went no further than to promise to propose reconsideration of the decision at a new meeting of Parliament on 28 July.¹³³⁴ Probably concerned about the lack of action at the meeting in Moscow, Warren Christopher called two days before the meeting of ministers in Geneva on 30 July for a decision to be taken on disincentives in the form of at least tightening of sanctions and Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones.¹³³⁵

For the outside world, the third conference of ministers of the Contact Group showed unanimity. The communiqué repeated that the continued existence of a sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina within the recognized international boundaries and the right of Displaced Persons to return constituted the fundamental principles of the Contact Group's plan. They called upon the Bosnian Government to maintain its acceptance of the map. They called urgently upon Pale for reconsideration and a 'clear acceptance'. That was more than had been anticipated when the map had been presented at the beginning of July: Pale was not faced directly with concrete disincentives, but was given a description of what the Contact Group had in mind, which was sanctions and Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones. The sanctions package comprised extension of the sanctions by the Security Council against the former Yugoslavia, preparation of a resolution for the suspension of the sanctions, and a call for strict monitoring of the observance of the existing sanctions. In the case of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones, the Contact Group held out the prospect of strict enforcement and extension to other Safe Areas. Finally, they announced that a proposal to the Security Council for lifting of the arms embargo for Bosnia would be the answer to a 'continuing rejection' of the map by Pale, a decision that would also have consequences for the presence of UNPROFOR.¹³³⁶ This unequivocal language of the ministers did not, however, reflect more than the importance attached by the Contact Group to maintenance of the internal consensus and to the unacceptability of the Bosnian Serb answer. The communiqué uncovered serious differences of opinion within the Contact Group, also in the matter of sanctions. A decision to take military measures with regard to the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone was

¹³³¹ Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, p. 303. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. COREU pesc/pres/bon814, 21/07/94 (text of Bosnian-Serb delegation statement and quotation on p.2). UNGE UNPROFOR Box, file: Civil Affairs Sector NE. Weekly BH political assessment (76), 24/07/94, p. 3.

¹³³² Confidential information (166).

¹³³³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable COREU pesc/sec 803, 27/07/94.

¹³³⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. COREU pesc/pres/bon 896, 29/07/94. Karadzic thought after the discussion with the Russian Minister of Defence in Belgrade on 27 July that the Russian Federation would defend the RS if it came to a war after the rejection of the CG plan. See: Silber & Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, p. 379.

¹³³⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Celer circ 467, 29/07/94 (letter from Christopher to Juppé, Hurd, Kinkel and Kozyrev, 28/07/94).

¹³³⁶ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, CD-ROM: communiqué CG conference of ministers Geneva 30/07/94.

not taken either, because only the UN and NATO were competent to do so, and the consequences for the troops on the ground had to be examined properly first.¹³³⁷

The conference of ministers of the Contact Group on 30 July 1994 had used forceful language, but had certainly not taken a hard line: it had merely announced that measures were being prepared and had taken no decisions. In the political sense, the Contact Group seemed to have reached the limit of its possibilities: there was still consensus about the need for acceptance of the map by the warring factions, but opinions were greatly divided on the means to bridle the Bosnian Serb resolve. This was primarily due to the widely differing views discussed earlier on the nature of the conflict and on how it should be tackled. Despite the fury about the negative response, Moscow still wanted to try to win Pale over by implementing the suspension of the sanctions. The resolute stance of the Americans on tightening and extension of sanctions was offset by the hesitancy of the other four participants about the effect of parts of the list of mainly disincentives in the event of rejection of the map. That applied also to the extension of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones. Besides, Pale was stringing the Contact Group along by using the same tactics as it had in the Vance-Owen peace plan in May/June 1993: on 3 August the Parliament decided that a referendum on the map would be held on 27 and 28 August. The outcome of this was predictably negative.

On the face of it, the decision of the previous conference of ministers to encourage acceptance of the map with the list of incentives and disincentives was regarded as a positive instrument. The parties would know what they could expect if they accepted or rejected it. The proposal to link these incentives and disincentives to the proposal of the Contact Group came from Lord Owen, and was intended to sweeten the bitter pill of the map itself.

In the assumption that Pale would reject the map, Owen had proposed announcing the lifting of the arms embargo as a disincentive. He expected that, on account of the side effects (NATO air strikes and prior departure of UNPROFOR), Pale would opt to make the best of a bad job. That proposal was very much in line with the decision taken by the American House of Representatives on 9 June on unilateral lifting of the arms embargo by the Americans. The list of incentives and disincentives was finally drawn up by the Contact Group in Geneva.¹³³⁸ The points for that list seemed to be there for the taking: if the map was accepted, things that the parties had always been asking for were held in prospect. The Muslim-Croat Federation could count on implementation of the map being guaranteed internationally, and on help with reconstruction and a fund for the resettlement of Displaced Persons; for the Bosnian Serbs it would mean gradual suspension of the sanctions, linked with vacation of occupied terrain. If the map was rejected by Pale, the existing sanctions would be tightened, a resolution with new sanctions would be presented to the Security Council, and extension and 'strict enforcement' of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone would also follow. The next steps were lifting of the arms embargo and withdrawal of UNPROFOR.¹³³⁹

Little thought had been given to the feasibility of the list. That was not because of shortage of time, because the topic had been under discussion at a high military and political level since the beginning of June. Lifting of the arms embargo was a completely ineffective means of bringing acceptance of the map closer.¹³⁴⁰ After the presentation of the list, Akashi put his finger on the weak point of the list: most of the military elements were unrealistic, and their feasibility had obviously not been examined by experts. In the opinion of Akashi, the application of any disincentive would lead to the VRS losing its last vestige of trust in UNPROFOR, it would regard the peacekeeping force as an ally of the ABiH, and it would therefore approach UNPROFOR as an enemy. The proposed disincentives, in Akashi's view, would therefore lead to escalation and destabilization of the political and military situation in Bosnia and to undermining of the already crumbling position of UNPROFOR. He also warned about the consequences of the lifting of the arms embargo: the departure of

¹³³⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Stokvis 442, 30/07/94.

¹³³⁸ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 280-285.

¹³³⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable COREU pesc/sec741, 07/07/94.

¹³⁴⁰ UNNY, DPKO Coded Cables UNPROFOR. Code cable Z-798, Akashi to Annan, 02/07/94.

UNPROFOR would be inevitable, but the execution itself would come up against great problems.¹³⁴¹ In the opinion of the American, French and British military too, the plan of the Contact Group was militarily unworkable.¹³⁴²

That concern about the consequences of the disincentives and the complexity of the implementation of the Contact Group's map was also conveyed in a letter from the Secretary-General of the UN to the Security Council. If the Contact Group proceeded to apply the disincentives, he would propose withdrawal of UNPROFOR to the Security Council; if the map was accepted, implementation by NATO or an international task force was the obvious course, because the UN itself did not have the means for an operation of that scale.¹³⁴³

Decision-making on these matters was not on the international agenda for the time being. The Contact Group had its hands full with the preparation of two Security Council resolutions on the tightening and suspension of economic and financial sanctions. New financial sanctions met with opposition from the European Central Banks.¹³⁴⁴ The tightening (Resolution 942) was directed against Republika Srpska, the suspension (Resolution 943) related to the action against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Milosevic had decided to accept the map after his fruitless pressure on Pale. Since under strong international pressure the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had closed the border with Republika Srpska from 4 August onwards, after the establishment of international monitoring by a special mission of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia from 17 September onwards, he could lay claim to suspension of the ban on air traffic and cultural relations.¹³⁴⁵

On balance, the action of the Contact Group had not brought a political solution a single step closer. That was mainly due to the lack of internal cohesion: the driving force behind the formation of the group had been the desire for common action, but in practice there was no question of common action, or of similar interests. Washington and Moscow in particular sent signals to the parties in Sarajevo and Pale about the ultimatum-like character of the Contact Group plan that were misinterpreted.¹³⁴⁶

The rejection of the Contact Group's plan was due to a number of interrelated factors. The plan did not take into account the demands of Republika Srpska regarding self-determination and security guarantees. That meant that the Contact Group had not dealt with a possible point for compensation for the loss of terrain (Republika Srpska would have to vacate 20%). According to Akashi, this would have meant 'more legitimacy' in the eyes of Pale and could have been decisive in winning them over.¹³⁴⁷ In order to be able to put such a proposal to Pale, America would have had to put pressure on Sarajevo, but that was still impossible at that time. Finally, there was no credible threat of force for Pale in the event of a rejection. The Contact Group had not yet reached the stage of 'coercive diplomacy'.¹³⁴⁸

Another quite significant factor was that the Contact Group was in a hurry to achieve a result. In fact, the map required great concessions from both parties. The parties of the Federation kept their objections to themselves and gambled on a Bosnian Serb rejection. The leaders of Republika Srpska were given only two weeks to persuade regional communities on which they greatly depended to settle for 49%, while in their eyes 65% would be a reasonable portion. Besides, the allotted share did not come up to the mark in terms of quality (for example, too little infrastructure, and too few mineral

¹³⁴¹ Confidential information (86).

¹³⁴² Interview L. Smith, 06/06/00. Clark, *Waging Modern War*, pp. 37-38.

¹³⁴³ United Nations: Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Resolution 908 (1994), p.13. S/1994/1067, 17/09/94.

¹³⁴⁴ Confidential interview (14).

¹³⁴⁵ United Nations Yearbook 1994, pp. 555-558.

¹³⁴⁶ Karadzic thought after the meeting with the Russian Minister of Defence in Belgrade on 27 July that the Russian Federation would defend the RS if it came to a war after rejection of the Contact Group plan. See Silber & Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, p. 379.

¹³⁴⁷ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 125 file: 32 Fax In June - July 1994: Z-998, Akashi to Annan, 02/07/94. Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, p.306.

¹³⁴⁸ Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, p. 307.

resources and hospitals). According to the Bosnian Serbs, the Muslims were being given 80% of the economic resources.¹³⁴⁹

The impetus in the Contact Group's search for a political solution was of a temporary nature and reached stalemate after Pale's rejection of the map. That does not mean that from the beginning of September 1994 onwards the Contact Group's plan played no further role. The isolation of Republika Srpska had produced a situation that made it possible to increase the pressure on Pale. There was consensus on this within the Contact Group.

The isolation of Pale was otherwise not without risk. In UNPROFOR circles it was feared that the mindset among the Bosnian Serb authorities of being the victim of a Western plot would only be reinforced and would make it impossible to negotiate with them. The actual effectiveness of the isolation remained guesswork: the truth would emerge if Pale accepted the map. Pale let it be known in contacts with UNPROFOR and in public statements that it continued to adopt the standpoint that the Contact Group's map could serve as the basis for negotiations, but Karadzic also let it be known that he wished to discuss changes informally with the Government in Sarajevo.¹³⁵⁰

There was a difference of opinion between UNPROFOR and NATO, and within NATO between the United States and the troop-contributing members, about the use of air power as a means of increasing the pressure on Republika Srpska. In fact, this was the continuation of an old discussion on the basis of new developments, otherwise without much result.

After the failure of its first attempt to achieve peace, the Contact Group did not disappear from the international arena. It continued to function as the main exchange and coordination point for various parts of the Yugoslavia question. The peace plan in Bosnia also remained on the agenda, but the agreement that there could be no direct contact with Pale until the map had been accepted there too meant that there was little it could do.

The Bosnian Serb's rejection of the Contact Group's map did facilitate other developments. As explained above, an unforeseen side effect was the political division between Serbia and Montenegro, on the one hand, and Republika Srpska, on the other hand. With his embargo on military goods, Milosevic opted for a course with some prospect of suspension of the UN sanctions, and therefore closed the border with the republic of Karadzic and Mladic at the beginning of August.

The Contact Group's plan also strengthened the discussion on two crucial topics: further limitation of the military options of the VRS by the setting up of more Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones around Safe Areas and a more active use of NATO air power and the lifting of the arms embargo for the Muslim-Croat Federation and, as a consequence of this, the departure of UNPROFOR. The discussion of both topics brought the opposing views between both UNPROFOR and NATO and the United States and its European allies to light. In that discussion the Contact Group was able to fulfil a useful task as the centre for discussion and exchange of information on activities of members of the Group in the peace process.¹³⁵¹

3. Lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia-Herzegovina

The lifting of the arms embargo had been the most far-reaching of the disincentives in the case of the Contact Group's map. Placing it on the list had been a major concession of the other members to the United States. In the policy of the Clinton Government, lifting of the arms embargo combined with heavy use of air power against the Bosnian Serbs, known as 'lift and strike', had been a serious option.

¹³⁴⁹ UNNY, DPKO, coded cables UNPROFOR, No. Z-1002, de La Presle to Annan, 28/06/94 (report of the Force Commander's Conference). UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120, file: Civil Affairs Sector NE. Weekly BH political assessment 80, 20/08/94, p.4. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 208, file BH Command 26-31 August 1994. Fax HX BHC Sarajevo (Daniell) to HQ Unprofor. Confidential information (87).

¹³⁵⁰ CTKL, BH Command MA to Commander at HQ Zagreb, 18/09/94: 'Meeting Pale 18 Sep – Karadzic/Commander BHC'. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120, file: Civil Affairs Sector NE. Weekly BH political assessment 83, 11/09/94.

¹³⁵¹ Interview P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

In the discussion with the European allies after it had been presented in the spring of 1993, it emerged that countries with troops on the ground in UNPROFOR were opposed to the lifting of the arms embargo. The views and arguments expressed for and against in 1993 came up for discussion again in 1994. The legal argument that the arms embargo was a violation of the sovereign state of Bosnia-Herzegovina's right to self-defence was countered by the pragmatic arguments: lifting would result in a resumption of the war; Bosnia would not be able to defend itself and would be overrun by the VRS; a continuation of the UNPROFOR peace mission would no longer be possible and, finally, the war could spread to surrounding countries, in particular to Croatia and Macedonia.

For the US Government, the pressure from Congress to lift the embargo was politically an at least equally relevant fact. On 9 June 1994 the House of Representatives had expressed itself in favour of lifting. At the beginning of August the Senate voted for multilateral ending through the Security Council or, if necessary, by means of a unilateral American decision. This amendment of Senators Nunn (Dem., Georgia) and Mitchell (Dem., Maine) formed part of the US Defence Budget Authorization Bill; this bill obliged President Clinton at the time of signing (which he did on 5 October 1994) of this law on the defence budget for 1994-1995 to submit to the Security Council at the same time a draft resolution for lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia. If the proposal was not approved within two weeks, the government had to take unilateral measures to that effect. With the first mid-term elections for Congress coming up in November 1994, the Clinton Government could not ignore the wishes of Congress. Clinton announced that he would submit a proposal to the Security Council for a lifting of the embargo if Pale had still not accepted the Contact Group's plan on 15 October. He said that this did not rule out a unilateral American decision.¹³⁵²

The lifting of the arms embargo had a great attraction for the American political debate. First of all, it contained a moral call for the correction of 'a misguided policy' adopted at the start of the war. It was also a relatively cheap way of doing something about the Bosnian problem.¹³⁵³ Moreover, its simplicity offered every possibility of ignoring the complex situation in Bosnia itself and of fiercely criticizing the failure of UNPROFOR.

It was a public pretence that Clinton and Congress were in agreement. In fact, the US Government was against lifting the embargo. In Brussels the Americans had always said behind the scenes at the North Atlantic Council that there would be no change of policy without consulting the allies. Indeed, this consensus was not broken.¹³⁵⁴ President Clinton told the Dutch Prime Minister, Wim Kok, in mid-September that he endorsed his objections to the lifting of the embargo.¹³⁵⁵ According to the new Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, Richard Holbrooke, Clinton wanted to 'avoid the lifting of the embargo with its far-reaching adverse consequences'. The US Government was assiduously looking for alternatives.¹³⁵⁶

For the time being, however, the US Government was doing a dangerous version of the splits with its policy. The lifting of the arms embargo was part of a much greater problem: the Americans had not had a policy of their own since joining the Contact Group. Washington had accepted the fundamental principle of percentage-wise division of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but further departure from the policy pursued earlier had not been considered. That meant in practice that no analysis of the actual possibilities for a solution to the conflict had been made, but that the existing lines were being pursued. This had been reflected in the incentives and disincentives of the Contact Group.

In the short term, that produced tensions in two respects. The peace process led by the Contact Group became deadlocked owing to differences of opinion on the implementation of the ultimatum about the map. Furthermore, the announcement of tightening up and extension of the Heavy Weapon

¹³⁵² UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120, file: Civil Affairs Sector NE. Weekly BH political assessment No. 79, 13/08/94, p.2. Weekly BH political assessment No. 80, 20/08/94, p.3.

¹³⁵³ Bert, *Reluctant Superpower*, p. 179.

¹³⁵⁴ Interview L.W. Veenendaal, 17/08/00.

¹³⁵⁵ DJZ. No.D94/368, DAB to Minister of Defence, 20/09/94.

¹³⁵⁶ Confidential information (92).

Exclusion Zones and lifting of the arms embargo led to discussions on the effectiveness of these means of pressure and on the consequences of their use. Those discussions were conducted at various levels, first and foremost within UNPROFOR.

The first reaction was clear and simple: extension and tightening up of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones was militarily impossible. Lifting of the arms embargo would mean the deathblow for the peace mission itself, and the announcement of it would also initiate the planning of the withdrawal itself. At the same time, these two topics were discussed within NATO, which led to a clear confrontation between the American and the European/Canadian approach. Between NATO and UN/UNPROFOR there was a similar dividing line. Characteristic of these discussions was the fact that the military on the whole held the opinion that the chosen military disincentives were unsuitable for the political objective.

The Pentagon too had its doubts about the consequences of the lifting of the arms embargo. In the eyes of the planners of the Chiefs of Staff, its placing on the list of disincentives was another example of Clintonian decision-making. It might seem a good thing to decide 'to hit the Serbs hard', but military leaders thought that it was also necessary to know what to do if the strike did not have the desired effect, and that had not been worked out.¹³⁵⁷ The Pentagon therefore made its own analysis: an effective 'lift and strike' policy in Bosnia was not possible. Lifting the arms embargo would be very dangerous because of the consequences: the withdrawal of UNPROFOR. More time was also needed to teach the ABiH how to handle the weapons.¹³⁵⁸

On account of the enormous pressure from Congress in favour of lifting of the arms embargo for Bosnia, Clinton had not publicly opposed the lifting. He himself had been looking mainly at the domestic aspects of it, and he was not given any clear advice from his chief advisers on security and foreign policy because of their differences of opinion. Clinton played for time with a suggestion that a decision be taken to lift the embargo, but that its implementation be suspended for six months, in the hope that a political settlement would be reached during that moratorium. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic agreed to this proposal on 16 September 1994, in his address to the United Nations General Assembly. He did lay down his conditions: UNPROFOR and NATO were to take action against all Bosnian Serb breaches of Security Council resolutions. Izetbegovic's most important demand was that UNPROFOR should remain.¹³⁵⁹

The American draft resolution did not, however, have a ghost of a chance at the Security Council. In July 1994 the British Government had still been prepared to knuckle under and accept lifting of the embargo, on account of its 'special relationship' with Washington. However, the moratorium created scope, and that reinforced the opposition of the other permanent members of the Security Council to the American proposal. During the first informal discussion of the American proposal on 28 October 1994 US Permanent Representative Madeleine Albright's colleagues showed no appreciation whatsoever of the proposal. According to the British Permanent Representative, Sir David Hannay, and also according to his French colleague Jean-Bernard Mérimée, acceptance would mean that the Council was abandoning the peace option and was opting for war. The lifting of the embargo in their view was an act of despair that would unleash a chain reaction: UNPROFOR would withdraw immediately, and there would be hardly any humanitarian aid. Also, tensions would arise within the Muslim-Croat Federation, which would be reflected in Croatia and other countries; finally, the peace process of the Contact Group would cease, and the international pressure on Republika Srpska to accept the Contact Group would jeopardize the plan. The Russian Ambassador, J.M.Vorontsov, challenged Albright's claim that there was consensus within the Contact Group about lifting the embargo: the moment had not arrived for this far-reaching measure, which from Albright's point of view was 'a last resort', because the Contact Group was still in the middle of consultations

¹³⁵⁷ Halberstam, *War*, pp. 246-247.

¹³⁵⁸ Clark, *Waging Modern War*, pp. 39-41.

¹³⁵⁹ Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 220. Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Permanent Mission to the United Nations New York, Statement by Alija Izetbegovic at the 49th Session of the General Assembly, 27/09/94, pp. 5-6.

about the constitutional construction.¹³⁶⁰ During the public debate in the Security Council on 8 and 9 November it became clear that the draft resolution was not going to make it; it even seemed likely that it would not even gain a simple majority.

The Americans did not have time to gain more support for the draft resolution, because the time limit of fourteen days laid down by the Senate for acceptance had expired. The Clinton Government tried to limit as much as possible the damage arising from the failure to pass the resolution. The government announced that it would not be proceeding to a unilateral lifting of the arms embargo, and it did not commit itself to such a step six months later either.

The Nunn-Mitchell amendment also stipulated that American cooperation in the international supervision of compliance with the arms embargo against Bosnia had to end. The amendment therefore did not call for unilateral lifting of the embargo by the Americans, but committed them to withdrawal from the operation of carrying out voluntary supervision of compliance with the embargo. This led to special instructions for the American units in the case of Operation Sharp Guard in the Adriatic Sea. They had to cease their activities as soon as it was found that a ship was carrying weapons destined for Bosnia. All other American activities in the context of international cooperation with regard to the conflict in Bosnia, such as in Operation Deny Flight and NATO operations like Close Air Support and the supervision of economic sanctions, were not affected by the implementing measures of the Nunn-Mitchell amendment.¹³⁶¹ The American authorities had therefore found a middle way. According to the American authorities, the practical consequences of the measures would be 'nil', because the supply of weapons from particularly Pakistan and Iran to Bosnia was not by sea, but mainly by air. Since the beginning of Sharp Guard only three ships with weapons for Bosnia had been intercepted.

The US Government felt that it was doing everything in its power to minimize the damage for the allies.¹³⁶² In a practical and technical sense, that was true, but in a political sense the gulf between the American and the European view of the conflict had plainly surfaced again, and they were as sharply divided as ever. The fundamental standpoint of the US Government remained that the embargo 'had unfairly hurt the victims of the Bosnian conflict'.¹³⁶³ Washington continued to take this as the basis for arguments in favour of a tough approach to Pale, and continued to put pressure on UNPROFOR and NATO to deploy air power whenever there was a VRS violation of the Safe Areas and the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones regime. In the words of NATO Secretary-General, Willy Claes, after a visit to Washington in November 1994, the US Government was still 'extremely sympathetic' to the views of the European partners, while in the American Congress a lack of understanding for the policy of the allies prevailed. Even more disconcerting was the fact that the Republican leaders in particular, the great advocates of lifting of the arms embargo, lacked the most elementary knowledge of the state of affairs – for example, concerning the relationship between UN and NATO in the protection of the Safe Areas.¹³⁶⁴

The fear was justified that Congress would impose further policy on the lifting of the arms embargo on the US Government. The election results of November 1994 meant that the Republicans had gained a majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The new Congress was expected to be less receptive than the sitting one to arguments against lifting the embargo. According to the State Department, measures like the Nunn-Mitchell amendment would be an excellent way of showing dissatisfaction with the conduct of UNPROFOR and the UN. In November 1994 the direct practical consequences remained extremely limited – since Washington was continuing to take part in

¹³⁶⁰ Confidential information (93).

¹³⁶¹ Bstas. Memo D94/484, DAB to Minister and Junior Minister, 11/11/94.

¹³⁶² ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Coded cable Jacobovits 688, 11/11/94. ABZ, DDI/DEU/05277. Background information for Ministerial WEU Noordwijk, 14/11/94.

¹³⁶³ DAB. Memo D94/484, DAB to Minister, 11/11/94.

¹³⁶⁴ ABZ, DDI/DEU/05241. Coded cable Veenendaal 1881, 22/11/94.

all other NATO operations for the former Bosnia. The political repercussions were all the greater: a clear dent had been made in relations between the EU and the United States.¹³⁶⁵

For the actual supply of military equipment to the warring factions this made little difference. The official policy line in Washington remained that it would not supply weapons to any of the parties in the conflict. The Nunn-Mitchell amendment did, however, stipulate that Washington would consult with Sarajevo about unilateral lifting of the embargo and training of the ABiH. Those talks had begun on 15 November. This seemed to be the next step down a slippery slope. Washington had agreed earlier to the secret supply of weapons by Islamic states to Bosnia by way of Croatia (see Chapter 4 of the Intelligence Appendix to this report). The US Ambassador in Zagreb, Peter Galbraith, and the newly appointed Richard Holbrooke were the driving forces behind this deal.¹³⁶⁶ According to French sources, Washington was supplying heavy mortars to the ABiH.¹³⁶⁷ At informal 'briefing meetings' of the members of the NATO Council without Secretary-General Willy Claes present, the Americans tried to persuade other members, including the Netherlands, also to supply weapons to the ABiH and to participate in a training programme.¹³⁶⁸ American involvement in supplies of weapons to the ABiH was generally assumed, without the ins and outs of the matter being clear at that time.¹³⁶⁹

As already mentioned, the Dutch Government, through its newly elected Prime Minister, Wim Kok, had been able to inform Clinton directly in September 1994 of its objections to the lifting of the embargo. It deplored the American policy for two reasons. First, because of the political repercussions mentioned earlier. The submission of the draft resolution to the Security Council showed a break in the consensus of the Contact Group. With regard to the matter itself, the Dutch Government still felt that the disadvantages of lifting of the arms embargo outweighed the moral right of the Muslims to self-defence.¹³⁷⁰ This was not an immutable standpoint, but lifting the embargo did remain the last resort. The Government would opt for it only if it was found that, despite maximum pressure, the Bosnian Serbs were continuing to reject the Contact Group's peace plan.

Since the other disincentives, such as sanctions and enforcing Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones, had 'no quickly appreciable effect' on the policy of Pale, the moment did come for looking at lifting of the arms embargo.¹³⁷¹ A decision to lift would, however, have far-reaching consequences, it was felt at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The negotiating process would stop, the parties would resume fighting, UNPROFOR would probably withdraw from some parts of Bosnia, and large troop-contributing countries like France and Great Britain would withdraw. The consequences for the Bosnian people would therefore be purely negative.¹³⁷² Did Washington not see that the VRS would not wait until the spring of 1995 to strike its military blow? The Government in The Hague was extremely disappointed about the fact that the proposal for lifting the embargo did not form part of a 'comprehensive approach for Bosnia and Croatia', as had been promised earlier by Minister of State Kornblum.¹³⁷³ The Government in The Hague held back as much as possible during the debate about the lifting: it had rejected a request from the British to make a statement as a troop-contributing country at the Security Council meeting on 8 and 9 November.¹³⁷⁴ It obviously wanted to avoid a confrontation between the Dutch and American points of view.

¹³⁶⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05241. Coded cable Jacobovits 688, 12/11/94 with note from deputy DEU.

¹³⁶⁶ Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, pp. 307-308. Wiebes, Appendix on Intelligence, Chapter 4.

¹³⁶⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05241. Coded cable Wijnaendts 28, 28/11/94.

¹³⁶⁸ Interview L.W. Veenendaal, 17/08/00.

¹³⁶⁹ Interviews L.W. Veenendaal, 17/08/00 and N. Biegman, 03/07/00.

¹³⁷⁰ TK, Parliamentary session 1994-1995, letter 16/09/95.

¹³⁷¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05241. No. DEU-923, Deputy DEU to DGPZ, 28/11/94. ABZ, 999.4 WEU Yugoslavia part 8. Coded cable Celer circ707, 28/11/94.

¹³⁷² ABZ, DEU/ARA/03051. Discussion points for General Council EU 28/11/94. DJZ file Lekken: No.D94/450, DAB to Minister, 02/11/94 (re. interview Voorhoeve with Sacirbey on 26/10/94).

¹³⁷³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05241. Speaking notes for DGPZ and Minister, 07-08/11/94.

¹³⁷⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05241. Coded cable Biegman 1160, 04/11/94; Coded cable Van Mierlo 389, 07/11/94.

Lifting the arms embargo was mainly the topic of an internal American debate. That does not mean that it was passed over at the UN, UNPROFOR and the troop-contributing countries, but they could do little to influence it, because of the high level of American party-political ingredients. That does not mean that the debate on lifting of the embargo was conducted only in the United States. After all, its implementation would have direct repercussions for UNPROFOR and the troop-contributing countries. The fact is that from the moment that it was mentioned as a disincentive by the Contact Group the discussion of its possible consequences began. The main consequence would undoubtedly be the withdrawal of the peacekeeping force, with all the destabilizing consequences that this would have. However, after the rejection of the Contact Group's peace plan, the discussion between UN/UNPROFOR and NATO concentrated on the implementation of another disincentive, namely the setting up of Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones around all Safe Areas, and in that connection a more resolute use of air power in the course of monitoring whether the regulations imposed were being observed.

4. More robust use of air power?

Since Resolution 836 the use of air power in the form of Close Air Support and air strikes had been a topic of discussion between UN/UNPROFOR and NATO. It had acquired a new element after the setting up of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones in Sarajevo (February 1994) and Gorazde (April 1994). In both cases the zone had been set up as a countermeasure of UNPROFOR against VRS shelling of the Safe Area. As a measure against violation, UNPROFOR could decide to ask NATO to use air power.

As explained in paragraph 2 of this chapter, extension and stricter use of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone was one of the disincentives of the Contact Group in the event of a Bosnian Serb rejection of the map. According to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and Force Commander Bertrand de Lapresle, it was a question of a political response of the Contact Group to a political decision of the Bosnian Serbs: implementation would mean 'serious difficulties for UNPROFOR'. 'UNPROFOR would be perceived to be one of the combatants as a result of actions taken not by itself, but by the Contact Group'.¹³⁷⁵

The US Government pressed first and foremost for strict maintenance of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone regime. This amounted to every violation being directly responded to with an air strike. In practice, it appeared that UNPROFOR was not prepared to do this. Its task in the former Yugoslavia was not to enforce peace by armed means. According to Force Commander Bertrand de Lapresle, two conditions had to be met before any use of air power: the air power had to be directed against a specific violation in time and place, and had to be in proportion to the nature of the violation. An 'overly robust action' such as that envisaged by NATO 'would have a catastrophic effect' on the UN troops and on the situation in Bosnia itself. According to Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Michael Rose, there were also other, more peaceable ways of removing heavy weapons of the VRS discovered within the Safe Area of Sarajevo.¹³⁷⁶

In conjunction with the discussion on lifting of the arms embargo, this American pressure for rigorous use of air power led to great irritation among the NATO allies. The call for tougher action from the American side increased the risk for the allied troops on the ground and destroyed all hope of a withdrawal of UNPROFOR without resistance. Withdrawal from a hostile environment was a much more realistic scenario under those circumstances. It seemed achievable only in the form of a NATO operation with the participation of American troops.¹³⁷⁷ According to a plan of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, in a worst-case scenario three divisions would be needed for the evacuation of 6,000 men

¹³⁷⁵ DCBC: BH Command documents sent to Lt.-Col Metzelaar of DCBC, 26/07/94.

¹³⁷⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPROFOR Coded Cables. Nr. Z-1435, De Lapresle to Annan.

¹³⁷⁷ ABZ: DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Veenendaal 1335, 03/09/94.

from Sarajevo and the three eastern enclaves.¹³⁷⁸ That made it clear that more robust action required the preparation of a major withdrawal operation for UNPROFOR.

The discussions concentrated on the military planning, Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones and the consequences of the lifting of the arms embargo. A serious difference of opinion became apparent here between the United States and the troop-contributing allies. According to the Americans, the lifting of the arms embargo fitted into the approach of the Contact Group. They saw few advantages in cooperation with the UN in the planning of the evacuation of UNPROFOR.¹³⁷⁹ The main issue in the discussions was the deployment of American troops. On that point the US Government was not going to budge for the time being: there could be no question of it until after a peace settlement, and that could be achieved only by putting the Bosnian Serbs under pressure by strict enforcement and extension of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones and ultimately lifting the arms embargo.¹³⁸⁰

In fact, what it boiled down to was that in September Washington declared that it did not want to talk about possible consequences of the use of the disincentives and did not want to make any promise whatsoever on the deployment of American troops in a withdrawal of UNPROFOR from a 'hostile' environment. That could result in a grave debacle.

NATO was heading for a serious internal crisis, the worst since the end of the Cold War. That was also the opinion of a large number of those involved on the American side. Washington was pressing particularly for the use of more force, without having a good idea of what was in fact happening in Bosnia and what UNPROFOR was doing. The Pentagon was an exception to this. The Pentagon was afraid of a 'major rift in US-European relations'.¹³⁸¹ At the informal meeting in Seville on 29 and 30 September the Ministers of Defence tried to avert the crisis and plot a common course of action for NATO in Bosnia and for cooperation with UNPROFOR.

The discussion in Seville focused on the question of action to defend the Safe Areas and violation of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones. Although it was not difficult for the participants to agree to the proposal for 'more robust' action put forward by US Secretary William Perry, differences of opinion remained on the precise meaning of the term and to a certain degree also about its objective. That difference of opinion emerged in particular when it came to placing it in the context of the former Yugoslavia. British Minister Malcolm Rifkind and his French colleague Léotard argued from the point of view of UNPROFOR: the containment approach, granting of humanitarian aid and lasting peace through a, sadly enough, slow peace process. In addition to other means, a 'robust response' by NATO in the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones could promote acceptance of the peace plan put forward by the Contact Group, provided that there was a proportional use of military capabilities.

Perry showed his dissatisfaction about the recent use of air power by UNPROFOR and repeated that he wished to force the Bosnian Serbs by bombing to accept the Contact Group peace plan. He rejected the 'hesitant "tit-for-tat" approach' of UNPROFOR as well as an 'all-out air campaign'. Perry pleaded for taking a middle way by giving a more precise description in the existing NATO regulations of what 'robust enforcement' meant for the Weapon Exclusion Zone and the 'strangulation' of Sarajevo.¹³⁸²

The discussions revolved mainly around two points: the question of whether NATO should act independently or in consultation with the UN and UNPROFOR, and how to deal with the risks for UNPROFOR of a more robust action. The differences were clear. The US Government felt the growing pressure of Congress for lifting the arms embargo and wanted – with a postponement of this until the spring of 1995 as a realistic option – to bring about the peace plan proposed by the Contact Group before that time by a tougher approach, an essential part of which would be more robust action by NATO. Turkey and the Federal Republic of Germany supported the American standpoint. France,

¹³⁷⁸ UNGE UNPROFOR Box 208 file: BHCCommand 15-17 Aug 94. Fax HQ BHC to HQ UNPROFOR, 16/08/94.

¹³⁷⁹ Confidential information (170).

¹³⁸⁰ ABZ: DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Veenendaal 1344, 06/09/94.

¹³⁸¹ Interviews J. Pardew 30/11/00 and L. Smith, 06/06/00.

¹³⁸² ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Van Mierlo 377, 03/10/94; Coded cable Veenendaal 1534, 03/10/94.

the United Kingdom and other participants in UNPROFOR had less high expectations from more air strikes.

Vis-à-vis the media, the participants demonstrated above all their agreement on more robust action. Perry gave the impression that his entire proposal had been accepted. However, it also emerged from reports in Dutch newspapers that there was no unanimity yet concerning the specific details.¹³⁸³ Perry himself went to Split to brief Akashi and Force Commander Bertrand de Lapresle on the results of Seville.

Akashi was quite relieved to find that Perry was basing his position on the dual key and the leading role of UNPROFOR for the use of air power. According to Perry, the discussions in Seville had focused mainly on what NATO could do 'to be more constructive and supportive of UNPROFOR'. All participating NATO countries would offer conclusions from Seville to the Secretary-General of the UN and ask for 'appropriate guidance' to be given to UNPROFOR. The differences of opinion between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Republika Srpska were an important strategic change. The immediate withdrawal of UNPROFOR was dropped with the postponement of a possible lifting of the arms embargo until the spring of 1995. A peace agreement had to be on the table within six months now. Akashi found that the NATO timetable was tighter than that of UNPROFOR, in particular with regard to pressure on Republika Srpska. The UNPROFOR delegation also pointed out that Perry was reasoning from a different perspective. He believed in reaching a peace agreement by means of disincentives; UNPROFOR did not believe in the effect of military pressure. According to UNPROFOR, an economic, political and social blockade could achieve that.¹³⁸⁴

To recapitulate, the discussion within NATO had delivered only the appearance of agreement. The American course of a tough approach to Pale had still not been adopted by the NATO countries that were supplying troops to UNPROFOR. For them, pressure for increased use of air power was no problem, so long as the principle of the 'dual key' was retained. The decision remained up to UNPROFOR and ruled out independent action by NATO. That did not alter the fact that the discussion about the consequences of more robust action that had been opened within NATO was to lead to great tensions. The situation in Bosnia itself had also become more explosive as a result of the resumption of fighting in the summer, and had led to discussion on taking a tougher line.

5. The new Dutch 'purple' Government and Bosnia

On 22 August 1994, after lengthy negotiations, the first 'purple' Dutch Government took office. This Government of PvdA (Labour Party), VVD (Liberal Conservatives) and D'66 (Liberal Democrats) was presided over by Social Democrat Prime Minister Wim Kok, who had been the Deputy Prime Minister in the last Government of Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers. H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo, the political leader of D'66 (Democrats), became Minister of Foreign Affairs and Dr.J.J.C.Voorhoeve, former chairman of the VVD and since 1990 director of the 'Clingendael' Institute for International Relations, was given the Defence portfolio. The two new ministers had a differing knowledge of the Yugoslavia question.

The Catholic Hans van Mierlo had studied law in Nijmegen. He subsequently worked as a journalist in Amsterdam; he felt very much at home in the Amsterdam environment. He had been one of the founder members of Democraten '66, a new political party of the liberal left with sweeping views on state and political renewal: an elected prime minister, reintroduction of the districts system and the referendum were the main elements. Van Mierlo, at the time sometimes referred to as 'the Dutch Kennedy', became the political leader of D'66. He was popular, but not uncontroversial within the party. His ideas on the young party being merged in a progressive people's party met with resistance from other party members. Disappointed about the failure of the progressive cooperation, he resigned

¹³⁸³ 'NATO promises to take tougher action in Bosnia', NRC Handelsblad, 30/09/94. 'NATO going to take more 'robust' action against the Serbs', De Volkskrant, 30/09/94.

¹³⁸⁴ UNGE ICFY Box 127, file:Fax In file 34 13 Sep – 6 Oct 94. Coded cable Z-1512 Akashi to Annan, 04/10/94.

as party chairman and withdrew from politics. In 1981, however, he made his comeback as Minister of Defence in the Van Agt-II Government. He turned out to be a good national moderator in the heated national debate about the positioning of cruise missiles. In 1982 his political career appeared to be at an end again, and D'66 a doomed party. Under Van Mierlo, the party nevertheless began to recover in 1986, and won 24 seats in the 1994 elections. Van Mierlo had rational and personal motives for accepting the post of Foreign Affairs. First, he was the spiritual father of the 'purple' coalition; secondly, he saw this ministerial post as the crown of his political career.¹³⁸⁵

Voorhoeve had no experience whatsoever as a minister in 1994. His career up to 1994 had been on two tracks: that of the university and scientific institutes, on the one hand, and the party political, on the other hand. He had trained as an agricultural engineer in Wageningen, but during his study decided to specialize in the field of international relations. He became known in professional circles by a study on Dutch foreign policy after the Second World War, soon became an associate professor in international relations in Wageningen, and worked first at the Telders Foundation of the VVD, and later at the Scientific Council for Government Policy. Voorhoeve's political ambitions received a boost when in 1982 he became a member of Parliament and later the chairman of a sometimes sharply divided party. He proved unable to soothe the tensions within the party, and in the debates in Parliament did not always prove to be on the alert. He left the political arena and in 1990 became director of the Clingendael Institute, an environment in which he clearly thrived better. His internationalism and idealism were factors that in the debate on the former Yugoslavia led to his siding with the advocates of intervention for humanitarian reasons.¹³⁸⁶

When the Government was being formed in 1994 Yugoslavia had hardly played any role. The outgoing Lubbers Government in its final months had spoken of the general aspects of the Bosnia policy, but it had not been seriously worried about the situation of Dutchbat in Srebrenica. Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers had felt sure after a visit to the NATO base in Villafranca – purely from seeing the aircraft – that Close Air Support had been properly arranged. After a visit to Srebrenica in May 1994, Lubbers and Minister Relus ter Beek were convinced that Dutchbat was doing a good job and that the battalion felt the same.¹³⁸⁷

The new Prime Minister, Wim Kok, as the political leader of the PvdA (Labour) and Deputy Prime Minister, had been very familiar with the Yugoslavia dossier. At the time of formation of the government there had been no major developments in the region itself. During his discussions with Kok, who had been charged with forming the new government, Voorhoeve had spoken of Bosnia and his concerns about the situation of Dutchbat in Srebrenica, without making a political point of it. During the handover discussions which Voorhoeve had with Ter Beek and Van Mierlo had with Kooijmans neither Bosnia nor Srebrenica were discussed as an acute problem, nor was Bosnia discussed during the constitutional consultation of the 'purple Government'.¹³⁸⁸

That does not alter the fact that the Yugoslavia dossier had become complicated at the end of August 1994. The Contact Group's plan had been rejected by the Bosnian Serbs; the application of the disincentives was causing serious differences of opinion within the Contact Group; there were serious differences of opinion between UNPROFOR and NATO about the enforcement of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones; UNPROFOR had started the planning of the withdrawal; a unilateral lifting of the arms embargo by the Americans seemed imminent and, finally, within NATO a rift was growing between the American and European view on Bosnia policy; in Bosnia itself the situation had become unclear because of the Serbian embargo against Republika Srpska and its effects on Pale's policy. All this seemed good reason for Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve to draft a Dutch policy line. Their

¹³⁸⁵ D. Hellema, 'A charming government minister' in: Hellema, Zeeman and Van der Zwan (Ed.), *De Nederlandse ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken in de twintigste eeuw*, Den Haag 1999, pp. 295-308.

¹³⁸⁶ E. Nysingh, 'An idealist fails to save the day at Defence' *De Volkskrant*, 09/12/95.

¹³⁸⁷ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvring*, pp. 212-213. *Vertretpunt Den Haag*, p. 158. Interviews R.J.M. Lubbers, 14/10/99 and R. ter Beek, 23/12/99.

¹³⁸⁸ *Vertretpunt Den Haag*, pp. 158-159. Interviews J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 15/04/97; H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo, 19/05/00.

predecessors, Kooijmans and Ter Beek, had after all been strong supporters of the Contact Group's proposal and had advocated the use of the disincentives after Pale's rejection of the map.

In the first month after they took office, the new Government ministers, on the initiative of Voorhoeve, did in fact develop a perspective for Dutch policy in the former Yugoslavia. Voorhoeve had been greatly concerned with the Srebrenica dossier from the start. He was aware of the precarious situation of the population in the enclave and of the militarily dangerous situation of Dutchbat. At the end of August he had asked the Chief of Defence Staff to go to Srebrenica in order to look at whether, in consultation with the ABiH, a defence strategy could be organized for the enclave. 'It would be a hopeless task' was Van den Breemen's reply, as Voorhoeve recalled later.¹³⁸⁹

Voorhoeve had subsequently, on the advice of Van den Breemen, visited the former Yugoslavia together with Couzy from 9 to 12 September 1994. He called at all the points that were important to the Netherlands during this flying visit: Villafranca, Split, Sarajevo (for a talk with Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Michael Rose), Srebrenica, Lukavac (Support Command of Dutchbat) and, finally, Busovaca. The Chief of Defence Staff had advised Voorhoeve not to respond to a possible proposal by Rose – made during a visit to Dutchbat in Srebrenica shortly before – to station the company from Simin Han in the enclave too. That would not make the enclave more defensible and would only increase the logistical problems. Rose did not bring up the matter during his interview with Voorhoeve.¹³⁹⁰ In Srebrenica Voorhoeve discussed with the battalion staff – battalion commandant Everts was on leave - options for an 'evacuation from the enclave in a "hostile environment" from Srebrenica' of Dutchbat, UNMO, UNHCR, UnCivPol and the NGOs.¹³⁹¹

Nevertheless, Couzy returned disappointed: his expectation of being able to exchange views directly with the new minister during the trip were not fulfilled. After the official programme, the minister withdrew, and no exchange of views between the two occurred, contrary to the expectation of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army.¹³⁹² Couzy's statement that he had not managed to have a private talk with Voorhoeve was countered by Voorhoeve's view that Couzy was difficult to understand because he was open and friendly one time and adopted a hostile attitude the next.¹³⁹³

After returning to The Hague, Voorhoeve told Muhamed Sacirbey, the Bosnian Permanent Representative to the UN, that 'the current hopeless situation surrounding the enclaves' simply could not go on. He suggested by way of a solution that the population be moved to an area that was easier to defend.¹³⁹⁴

In order to coordinate the stance of Van Mierlo at the United Nations General Assembly and that of Voorhoeve at the informal meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence in Seville, they laid down policies at the instigation of Voorhoeve. These policies were directed at two main issues: the international reactions to the rejection of the Contact Group's plan by Republika Srpska, and improvement of Dutchbat's position in Srebrenica. The Netherlands needed to be more closely involved in the first place, and in any case needed to be better informed about the activities of the Contact Group through the appointment of a special contact. Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo put forward two arguments for this: the substantial Dutch contribution to UNPROFOR and the 'vulnerable position' of Dutchbat in 'isolated' Srebrenica. Priority was given in the policy to prevention of the lifting of the arms embargo, this being for a whole range of reasons: the inevitable resumption of the war would mean failure of the peace process; the negative repercussions for humanitarian aid would be incalculable; the Contact Group would probably break up, and the necessary withdrawal of UNPROFOR was not without its risks. According to Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo, the Netherlands

¹³⁸⁹ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97 and 15/04/97.

¹³⁹⁰ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.

¹³⁹¹ DCBC, CDS/OZ to CDS, no.joego.002, 16/09/94.

¹³⁹² Interview H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

¹³⁹³ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

¹³⁹⁴ DJZ file Lekken ('Leaks'): memo DAB D94/368, 20/09/94.

would press for clear agreements against unilateral withdrawal of national contingents, while at the same time a serious preparation of evacuation scenarios with the United States on the basis of coordination between UNPROFOR and NATO ought to begin. For the sake of the safety of the personnel, it would not be possible to take the decision to lift the embargo until after the completion of the planning and until there was certainty about the availability of sufficient troops – including American troops – for the performance of that operation. Apart from its rejection of the lifting of the arms embargo, the Dutch Government also opposed the ‘politically motivated’ extension of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones on account of its escalating effect. With regard to Dutchbat, the policy focused with great emphasis on Dutchbat being relieved on 1 July 1995 and on ‘risk and burden sharing’ through the stationing of contingents from several countries in the Safe Areas.¹³⁹⁵

During his visit to Srebrenica Voorhoeve had seen how Dutchbat was trapped. In talks with the battalion officers about a possible ‘hostile environment’ evacuation it had emerged that such an evacuation was not in fact possible, either by air or by road. Any preparatory measure by Dutchbat (withdrawal of observation posts; collection of personnel at the compound in Potocari) would be noticed by the Muslim population, who would undoubtedly prevent their departure. Withdrawal in those circumstances would claim victims both on the Muslim and on the Dutchbat side.¹³⁹⁶ The prospects were additionally bleak because there was still no agreement between UNPROFOR and NATO on this type of evacuation. The deployment of American troops – in Srebrenica, for example, for evacuation by air using Chinook helicopters – could be carried out only as part of a NATO operation. That led Voorhoeve to the conclusion that Dutchbat would remain in Srebrenica for the time being.¹³⁹⁷ This analysis had been reflected in the policy plan: stationing of a contingent of another country in addition to Dutchbat and quicker and better planning between NATO and UNPROFOR.

The policies of Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve were very much focused on the strengthening and continuation of international cooperation regarding the Bosnia question. In that respect there was no difference from the policy of the Lubbers Government, although there had been a shift in the priorities. Of course, a solution to the conflict on the basis of the Contact Group map remained the fundamental principle, but the conditions for this had worsened. That was due to a difference in view regarding the consequences of the use of the disincentives against Republika Srpska. Dutch policy had changed to the extent that the cautious support for the extension of the number of Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones to all Safe Areas at the beginning of August¹³⁹⁸ had changed to a rejection of this extension in the second half of September.

That change reflected a more cautious policy, because the discussion of the use of disincentives had also produced a lack of consensus within the Contact Group and differences of opinion between UN/UNPROFOR and the troop-contributing countries, on the one hand, and NATO and Washington, on the other. It revolved around the question of what to do if UNPROFOR could no longer fulfil its mandate because Republika Srpska regarded the peacekeeping force as a combatant on the Federation’s side. That would certainly be the case if the arms embargo were lifted and, in the view of UNPROFOR and the Western troop-contributing nations, also if the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones were extended. The Dutch Government feared that if UNPROFOR were withdrawn, there would be no common approach. France, Great Britain and Canada might even withdraw their troops from Bosnia off their own bat.¹³⁹⁹

¹³⁹⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Van Mierlo circ 552, 23/09/94.

¹³⁹⁶ DCBC. Background information for closed briefing for Permanent Commissions for Defence and Foreign Affairs, 18/10/94.

¹³⁹⁷ DCBC, CDS/OZ to CDS, No. Joego.002, 16/09/94.

¹³⁹⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/02078. Coded cable Kooijmans 292, 19/07/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05240. Coded cable Celer 127, 03/08/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 00797. Memorandum No.627/94, Acting DEU to Deputy DGPZ [Director-General for Political Affairs], 08/08/94.

¹³⁹⁹ The Canadian government had already told the US government in May/June that Canadian withdrawal would be ‘unavoidable’ if the weapons embargo were lifted. ABZ, DEU/ARA/02109. Coded cable Fietelaars 101, 26/09/94.

What the Netherlands wanted to achieve first and foremost with the new policy of Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve was the conclusion of clear international agreements on a possible decision to withdraw UNPROFOR, and for the execution of the withdrawal to be on the basis of an evacuation plan of UNPROFOR and NATO. For the Netherlands, a common evacuation plan was, of course, very important because of the presence of Dutchbat in Srebrenica. In that respect the policy of the two ministers in the Purple Government was new: investigation of possibilities for evacuation in the event of an emergency situation, and internationalization through stationing of a military engineering or medical unit of a different nationality.

The first opportunity for articulating this policy occurred at the informal meeting of the NATO Ministers of Defence in Seville and during Van Mierlo's stay in New York at the UN General Assembly. It emerged from conversations at the UN headquarters and in the lobbies that the discussion about the lifting of the arms embargo had been put on the back burner through the postponement of the decision until the spring of 1995. The differences of view about the use of air power had remained, and the discussions on this between the UN and NATO were still in progress. In the meantime, the planning for evacuation by UNPROFOR simply continued.¹⁴⁰⁰

In the short term the Netherlands did have some success in its attempts to be more closely involved with the Contact Group. Since the formation of the Group in April 1994 the Federal Republic of Germany had been keeping the EU informed fairly openly in briefings about the discussions in that Group. The Netherlands wanted to be more involved in the activities of the Contact Group through prior consultation on account of its military contribution to UNPROFOR, Van Mierlo had said in his address to the General Assembly. The Dutch were thinking along the lines of having their own special contact, or of frequent information being passed on by telephone or in personal conversations by those most closely involved. The Netherlands knocked at the door of the United States, and the matter was soon settled.

J. Vos, the Director-General for Political Affairs, broached the matter at the end of September 1994 in a discussion with Holbrooke in New York; Holbrooke referred him to Charles Thomas, the American member of the Contact Group. The result of the Vos discussions at the beginning of October at the State Department and at the National Security Council was the appointment of special contacts on the American and Dutch sides, Assistant Secretary J. Kornblum and Ambassador Jacobovits in Washington, respectively. The exact purpose of this special 'liaison' remained vague. The American discussion partners of Vos thought it remarkable that the Dutch Government had come knocking on Washington's door and had not gone to the European members of the Contact Group.¹⁴⁰¹ According to Vos, the Government in The Hague wanted to know at the earliest possible stage what had taken place in the Contact Group and in what direction ideas were going, 'so that we can make our desired contribution to it'. A factor of additional importance was that it had to be possible also to demonstrate to Parliament where necessary that the Netherlands was being involved more than in the past in the shaping of ideas and even decision-making in the Contact Group'.¹⁴⁰²

The special liaison was quickly created. It was not very effective, being mainly one-way traffic. P. de Gooijer, the Councillor for political affairs at the embassy in Washington, who had been involved in bringing about the agreement, said later about it: 'In practice nothing has actually come of it. (...) I think the answer must be seen as: if anything happens, you can phone.'¹⁴⁰³

¹⁴⁰⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Coded cable Biegman 919, 26/09/94; Coded cable COREU pesc/sec 957, 28/09/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Biegman 926, 27/09/94; Coded cable Biegman 927, 27/09/94.

¹⁴⁰¹ ABZ, PVNY, file 910 Yugoslavia/UNPROFOR/NL participation. Coded cable Biegman 949, 30/09/94. ABZ, Embassy Washington, Coded cable Celer 172, 30/09/94. ABZ, Embassy Washington file 910 Yugoslavia. Memorandum DGPZ to CdP Washington, 06/10/94.

¹⁴⁰² ABZ, Embassy Washington. Memorandum DGPZ to CdP Washington, 06/10/94.

¹⁴⁰³ Interview P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99.

There was no question of any initiative by the Netherlands for contributing its own proposals. It was primarily a question of prestige, according to Ambassador Jacobovits.¹⁴⁰⁴ It could hardly be said that there had been a thorough preparation of the initiative, or of its implementation. The Dutch Government, as a member of the North Atlantic Council and the European Union, had two good consultative bodies for collecting information on the state of affairs within the Contact Group and putting forward proposals. The German Government in particular could also be used for this; since April 1994 it had been informing the non-members of the Contact Group in detail about the state of affairs. In short, part of the policy plan of Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo had achieved success, but its significance was extremely vague.

In the decision-making on the international questions such as the peace process, more robust action against the Bosnian Serbs and possible lifting of the arms embargo, the Netherlands played no part. The government, as explained above, had its own view, but internationally that mattered little. The policy in these questions was restricted mainly to following the developments and putting forward the view that international involvement with the former Yugoslavia would be served by strong action against the Bosnian Serbs, and would only be damaged by discussions on lifting of the arms embargo and withdrawal of UNPROFOR. This standpoint was prompted only partly by fear for the position of Dutchbat in Srebrenica.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, the Dutch Government tried in vain to improve the position of Dutchbat. That did not mean that Voorhoeve's concern about Srebrenica resulted in a tendency to weaken the Dutch contribution to UNPROFOR. During the crisis in Bihac in October/November 1994 and the subsequent attempts to strengthen the peacekeeping force it emerged that the Dutch were still fully prepared to deploy resources and troops.

6. Crisis in the Safe Area Bihac and possible transfer of a Dutchbat company

Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had a chronic shortage of troops. The extra contingent promised for the Safe Areas in 1993 had not become fully available. Besides, there was a shortage of well-trained troops and of units with Forward Air Controller teams for assistance during the use of Close Air Support and air strikes. In fact, only units from NATO countries were suitable for that job. There had also been a reduction and redeployment of the national contingents. These factors left Bosnia-Herzegovina Command facing difficult decisions. In October 1994 it also looked as if certain countries with the idea of a possible withdrawal of or from UNPROFOR did not wish to commit themselves even further. Concentration of the national contingent in one region was a characteristic of this, combined with rejection of new operational areas.

After the French Government had fixed the upper limit of 6,000 for the French contribution to UNPROFOR, redeployment was necessary in order to strengthen the Sarajevo sector. The French contingent in Bihac handed over its task to a new battalion from Bangladesh on 18 October 1994. It had been equipped by UNPROFOR and trained with equipment from the former East-German army. Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Michael Rose wanted to deploy a company from a NATO country in addition to this new, inexperienced Bengali battalion. His commission for a British unit for deployment in the Bihac foundered on a rejection from London. Since only French and Dutch troops could now be considered for that task, General Brinkman, the Dutch Chief of Staff of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, approached the Dutch military authorities in The Hague.

Bihac was strategically an important area. This area in the north-west of Bosnia lay wedged between the Krajina in Croatia and the western part of Republika Srpska. Besides, the political and military situation in the enclave of Bihac itself was complicated. The south and south-east were in the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. The part that had remained in the hands of the Muslims bordered on Croatia, namely on the northern and western areas in the Krajina protected by UNPROFOR, where

¹⁴⁰⁴ Interview A. Jacobovits, 21/09/00.

UN units were stationed. The north-western part of this area, which was completely surrounded by Serbs, had been in the hands of a dissident Muslim group led by Fikret Abdic since the beginning of the war, this group cooperating with the VRS, the Krajina Serbs and the Croatian Government in Zagreb. Although Abdic was numerically in the minority, he was able to maintain his position, thanks to that support. According to the Contact Group map, part of the area occupied by the VRS would fall into the hands of the Federation, including Abdic's region.

In the summer of 1994 the 5th Corps of the ABiH started a campaign against Abdic, and at the end of August Abdic's army fled over the border with Croatia, to the Krajina. After a VRS attack from the Krajina had been repulsed in September, the 5th Corps resumed an offensive on 26 October, southwards from the Safe Area around the city of Bihac, a week after the Bengali battalion had taken over the task from the French. The ABiH scored rapid successes, but within two weeks of the start of the counterattack the VRS threatened the city of Bihac.¹⁴⁰⁵ In order to be able to deal with the situation, Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Michael Rose had set up a small Sector Headquarters in Bihac under the command of Colonel J.C. Lemieux, of his operational staff. He had also sent a group of Joint Commission Observers (JCOs) to the enclave, so that he could have reliable information on the events.¹⁴⁰⁶

The resumption of the conflict between the ABiH and the VRS in the Bihac, and in particular the counteroffensive of the VRS in November was to lead to a conflict between UNPROFOR and NATO on the use of air power and the continuation of the peace mission. Within NATO this led to a deep crisis. Washington and its allies with troops in UNPROFOR were diametrically opposed to each other. In the end, this confrontation led to a change in American policy, which ended the crisis within the alliance and led to discussions of a different approach. For those reasons, the discussion about the approach to the crisis in Bihac was important for the Netherlands. The crisis had an added dimension for the Netherlands, because the Government had been asked by Bosnia-Herzegovina Command at the end of October to transfer a Dutchbat company from Simin Han to Bihac.

The Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Brinkman, had asked the Defence Staff by telephone on 27 October, the day after the start of the ABiH offensive against the VRS, to transfer the Dutchbat company from Simin Han to Bihac. That request set off a rapid decision-making process, lasting a number of days. From the first moment it was clear that, compared with the hesitancy of government ministers, there was a certain eagerness on the part of the military.

On 7 November the government decided on the transfer without any consultation with Parliament. The arguments in the advice of the Chief of Defence Staff were carefully constructed. The main argument was the mission of the company: accompanying humanitarian aid convoys and deployment for drops of food supplies and Close Air Support of the Forward Air Controller team, acting as mobile observation posts, and at platoon level as a Quick Reaction Force. The company was ideal for this, provided that it had two helicopters at its disposal. The consultation by Brinkman with Dutchbat Commander Everts and the company commander showed their enthusiasm for the new assignment: this assignment was a new 'challenge' and would raise the 'morale of the personnel'. The transfer would also contribute towards a 'positive image of the suitability of Dutch units in Peace Support operations'.¹⁴⁰⁷ The risks of the stationing in Bihac were not great, according to the Defence Staff: the French had experienced few difficulties during their mission in 1993-94, and the ABiH-offensive would surely end soon because of the onset of winter.

However, the Directorate of General Policy Affairs, like the Netherlands Military Intelligence Agency (MID), felt that the developments in the region were unpredictable and that the company was in fact running a risk. Moreover, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had 'not convincingly' demonstrated the necessity for supporting the battalion from Bangladesh. Finally, there were logistical risks. The

¹⁴⁰⁵ Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, pp. 154-155. O'Shea, *Crisis at Bihac*, pp. 83-112.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, p. 199. The temporary Bihac Sector Command was extended to a permanent command under the Danish General P. Helsø. Interview P. Helsø, 28/10/99.

¹⁴⁰⁷ DCBC, No.2685. Fax Brinkman to Defence Staff, 01/11/94. Interview P. Everts 27/09/01.

Chief of Defence Staff did not refute these 'reservations', but advised Voorhoeve to accede quickly to the request of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose.¹⁴⁰⁸

Voorhoeve was not convinced. He wanted in particular to know why the British Government had refused, and what the added value of a Dutch company would be. He did not receive any satisfactory answer to those questions. He was concerned about the security risks and the stationing of a Dutch unit as the only NATO unit in Bihac. He wanted to prevent a situation like that in Srebrenica. The suggestion of Prime Minister Wim Kok on the stationing of an Anglo-Dutch unit did not go down well with the British Chief of Defence Staff and Malcolm Rifkind, the Minister of Defence.¹⁴⁰⁹ A final attempt by Van Mierlo with his colleague Douglas Hurd had no positive effect either. Hurd was not swayed by Van Mierlo's political argument that without Anglo-Dutch cooperation he would not gain parliamentary approval for the deployment in Bihac, or that Dutch support for UNPROFOR would quickly evaporate if there were victims later on.¹⁴¹⁰

It therefore proved impossible to produce an Anglo-Dutch unit for Bihac. The choice lay between rejection of the UNPROFOR request in accordance with the advice of the Directorate of General Policy Affairs at the Ministry of Defence, or consent in accordance with the advice of the Chief of Defence Staff. Prior to that decision, the group authorized by the government for that purpose was given a briefing on Friday 4 November by the Army Crisis Staff.¹⁴¹¹ All aspects were reviewed, and it was said with some emphasis that 'if the Netherlands also refuses (...) part of the UNPROFOR and B-H Command mission in this Safe Area cannot be fulfilled.' It was also recalled that when Dutchbat had been made available the Netherlands had not laid down any 'strict conditions' regarding the deployment area. At the final weighing-up of arguments for and against, the first factor mentioned on the credit side was the making of an additional contribution to the humanitarian mission of UNPROFOR.¹⁴¹²

The government delegation opted for transfer of the Dutchbat company to Bihac.¹⁴¹³ The Parliamentary Committees for Defence and Foreign Affairs agreed, after which the implementation could begin. During the General Consultation with Parliament the main questions raised concerned the existence of an evacuation plan, the safety risks, the need for additional equipment and heavier weaponry, and the use of air power. There was also criticism of the allies who were not prepared to take on this task. The general tone of the exchange of views was that the Netherlands could not refuse the request of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, despite the increased risk, because rejection would mean that 230,000 people would otherwise be going into the winter in wretched conditions. The situation in Bihac itself was hardly mentioned. The great question of that moment, namely the failure of a Bosnian-Serb counteroffensive to materialize and the likelihood of this, was not discussed either. For an assessment of the safety risk the answer to that question was crucial. Since the commission fell within the mandate and the warring factions had agreed to the presence of UNPROFOR, the Dutch Parliament did not consider that question relevant. They had obviously forgotten the quibbling of the VRS a year earlier about the reconnaissance and deployment of Dutchbat. The ministers did not deal with the small number of questions on the relevance of the conflict in Bihac for the peace plan of the Contact Group and the pro-Muslim stance of Washington.¹⁴¹⁴

The implementation of the transfer in fact foundered on account of the VRS counteroffensive, which had brought the troops of Mladic to within ten kilometres of the Safe Area and the city of Bihac on 17 November. The reconnaissance group from Simin Han did not manage to go further than

¹⁴⁰⁸ DCBC, No.198. Nr.S94/061/3731, CDS to Minister, 02/11/94. Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97.

¹⁴⁰⁹ DCBC, No.281/. No. S/94/061/3750 CDS to Minister, 03/11/94. DCBC. Fax BH Command to Army Crisis Staff, 06/11/94 Appendix: memo COS BH Command to CDS. ABZ. DPV/ARA/00581. Van Mierlo to Hurd, 07/11/94.

¹⁴¹⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Van Mierlo to Hurd, 07/11/94.

¹⁴¹¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Memorandum Van Ees (DPV/PZ) to Chief of DPV, 09/11/94.

¹⁴¹² DCBC, No.2684. Briefing of government ministers on Monday, 7 November 1994 [2 p.m.].

¹⁴¹³ TK, Parliamentary session year 1994-95, 22 181 No. 85.

¹⁴¹⁴ TK, Parliamentary session year 1994-95, 22 181 No. 87.

Zagreb, and the rapid transfer was therefore derailed. Moreover, the agreement of the warring factions would be needed for deployment of the company, and that could mean a long delay. The Defence Staff advised Voorhoeve on 17 November not to withdraw the decision to transfer yet, because that could create 'a negative image (...) for the prestige of the Dutch in the world.'¹⁴¹⁵

That advice was the conclusion of a bleak analysis of the military situation in Bihac. Because the VRS counterattack had pushed the ABiH back into the city, the Safe Area of Bihac was now in danger. That sparked off the discussion again on active intervention of UNPROFOR and the use of air power. Of course, following on from this, the chance of VRS measures against UNPROFOR, in addition to the existing ban on convoys, was discussed. The VRS also accused the peacekeeping force of partiality, and it was feared that as the front line neared the city of Bihac the VRS would begin to regard UNPROFOR as an 'undesirable complication'. The recent NATO resolutions on air strikes and the American withdrawal from monitoring of the arms embargo were psychologically of great importance, according to the Force Commander. The ABiH would feel strengthened by this; among the Bosnian Serbs the feeling of intimidation and isolation would increase further.¹⁴¹⁶ Mladic had already accused UNPROFOR of taking part in the ABiH offensive in Bihac.¹⁴¹⁷

The US Government wanted UNPROFOR to intervene between the two. If the peacekeeping force did not do that, there was a risk of escalation of the conflict in Bihac and of Croatian intervention. Washington proposed measures that were to the advantage of the Bosnian Muslims: setting up a Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone combined with a ceasefire in a 10-km radius around Bihac on Bosnian territory. Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose suggested restricting the zone to a radius of three km, approximately the area of the originally respected Safe Area, the boundary of which had never been exactly established.

The differing interpretation of the situation in Bihac also emerged during a conversation between Willy Claes, Secretary-General of NATO and UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in New York on 17 November 1994. According to the NATO delegation, the ABiH was in danger of being driven back into the city of Bihac; the battalion there was faced with the choice of following the ABiH to the city or withdrawal from the Safe Area. Military intervention in the form of air strikes and drops of food supplies were extremely risky for various reasons. Claes therefore advised Boutros-Ghali that the UN should take action: a strong signal to the Bosnian Serbs to cease their offensive against the city, and the threat of air strikes elsewhere in Bosnia. According to Boutros-Ghali, this was a break with the principle that air strikes had to be made in the region in which the violation had occurred.¹⁴¹⁸

Events took place in rapid succession. Bombing of Bihac on 19 November was responded to, at the request of UNPROFOR, on 21 November with air strikes by 21 aircraft against Ubdina airport in the Krajina, made possible a few days earlier by Security Council Resolution 958 on the use of air power in the Krajina. Two Dutch F-16s also took part in this first NATO air strike.¹⁴¹⁹ The unanimity between NATO and UNPROFOR was only temporary. On 22 November NATO bombed three VRS ground-to-air missile installations at Otoka and Dvor in Bihac with the approval of Force Commander Bertrand de Lapresle, as a response to the missile attack on the city.¹⁴²⁰ Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Michael Rose, who had not been consulted, was 'fuming', because a number of aid

¹⁴¹⁵ DCBC. Fax No.219/94 BH Command Fwd to Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 16/11/94. CDS 199. No. S/94/061/3940, SCOCIS Defence Staff to Minister, 17/11/94.

¹⁴¹⁶ CDS 1993. No. S/94/061/3940, SCOCIS Defence Staff to Minister, 17/11/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Scheffers 70, 14/11/94. DCBC. DS/OZ: Situation Report Peace Operations No.225/94, 15/11/94.

¹⁴¹⁷ UNGE UNPROFOR Box file 4.2.2. Fax 215/94 BH Command to HQ Zagreb, 15/11/194: letters to and from Mladic (letter Mladic to Akashi and Rose, 13/11/94).

¹⁴¹⁸ ABZ, PVNAVO Brussels. SG/04/860, Deputy SG to Permanent Representatives, 18/11/94 Appendix: meeting between NATO Secretary-General and UNPROFOR Secretary-General, 17th November 1994.

¹⁴¹⁹ International Herald Tribune, 19/11/94. 'None of the full of holes, the F16s did a precision job', De Volkskrant, 23/11/94.

¹⁴²⁰ Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 202-203. Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, pp. 156-157.

convoys were on Bosnian Serb territory in the meantime.¹⁴²¹ The Bosnian Serbs threatened UNPROFOR with 'war' if the strikes did not stop. The fact that they were serious about it emerged from UNPROFOR personnel and UN military observers being taken hostage, and from the total blockade of all UN traffic.

The VRS was at the border of the Safe Area of Bihac and was determined to destroy the 5th Corps of the ABiH. The American NATO Commander, Admiral Leighton Smith, for his part was intending to take out all ground-to-air missile installations of the VRS because they were preventing him from giving Close Air Support to UNPROFOR in Bosnia. According to De Lapresle and Rose, this was crossing the borderline between peacekeeping and war, but NATO seemed bent on it. The ending of the peace mission was in that case the only option, according to the Force Commander.¹⁴²²

It did not come to a confrontation, because this American proposal did not gain support within NATO; it was referred on to the military staff for advice. An air strike requested by Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Michael Rose against VRS tanks and artillery did not score a single hit because of a lack of targets. Although the VRS had gone beyond the boundary of the Safe Area set by the UN shortly before that, the city did not fall. The VRS was engaged in fighting on the outskirts of the city, but it was showing no signs of taking the city itself. On 3 December the situation at the front line stabilized: one third of the territory of the Safe Area was in VRS hands. Moreover, Republika Srpska appeared to be ready to talk about a cessation of hostilities. The fact that the NATO strike on the ground-to-air missile installations did not proceed meant for the United Nations and UNPROFOR that the dual key had been retained and that the peace mission still existed. (See Chapter 2, Part III for further information on this dual key.) In Washington in the meantime, on account of the opposition of the other NATO countries to American proposals for tough action, it had been decided to take a less aggressive line.¹⁴²³ This left the way open for consultation between NATO and the UN for better cooperation in the use of air power.

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York had strengthened the UN position compared with NATO by an unusual step: after receiving the standpoint of the Force Commander mentioned in the previous paragraph, that continuation of the peace mission was pointless after an air campaign by NATO against all ground-to-air missile installations in Bihac, the Secretary-General had not convened the Security Council. On the contrary, Kofi Annan called a meeting of the troop-contributing nations on 28 November.¹⁴²⁴ He asked for the opinion of the troop-contributing nations on a number of options: continuation of the mission under the existing mandate or the switchover to peace enforcement. He also named a third option: withdrawal of UNPROFOR in order to make way for 'more robust and decisive action by others'.¹⁴²⁵

This was, it should be noted, a sounding of the opinion of the troop contributors on three subjects on which the Security Council alone could decide. In any discussion that followed in the Security Council the result of that sounding could have an influence on a change in the mandate of UNPROFOR. Seventeen of the twenty-five representatives present, including the French, British and Russian envoys, declared that they were in favour of the existing mandate. The other eight were in sympathy with the idea of switching over to peace enforcement.¹⁴²⁶ Biegman, the Dutch envoy, made

¹⁴²¹ M. Evans & J. Brand, 'Serbs poised to take Bihac as Nato hits missile sites', *The Times*, 24/11/94.

¹⁴²² UNGE ICFY Box 129 file: Crypto faxes In 36: Nov-Dec 1994. Coded cable Z-1807, Akashi to Annan, 26/11/94. Appendix: Interoffice memorandum De La Presle to Akashi, 25/11/94. Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, p. 201.

¹⁴²³ Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, pp. 157-158. Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 204-210. United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35 (1998) 'Srebrenica Report', §§ 159-160. UNGE UNPROFOR Box 120 file: BHC OCA Weekly Sitreps, 03/12/94.

¹⁴²⁴ UNGE ICFY Box 129 file: Crypto faxes In 36: Nov-Dec 1994. Coded Cable Z-1807, Akashi to Annan, 26/11/94. Appendix: Interoffice memorandum De La Presle to Akashi, 25/11/94.

¹⁴²⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00580. Fax nyu No.11224, 28/11/94 Appendix: 'Remarks by Mr. Kofi Annan Meeting with Troop-Contributing Nations'.

¹⁴²⁶ United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35 (1998) 'Srebrenica Report', §§ 161-163. ABZ, DEU/ARA/05277. Coded cable Biegman 1289, 28/11/94.

critical comments about the action of UNPROFOR in Bihac. He felt that in Bihac it was not a question of responding to daily events, because an excuse could always be thought up for an attack on a Safe Area. The fall of Bihac would be disastrous for the credibility of UNPROFOR. He asked Kofi Annan to explain why the taking out of a number of Bosnian Serb missile installations was considered 'tantamount to going to war with the Serbs'. According to Biegman, the vocation of the UN was to be 'fair', but that certainly did not mean 'impartiality' in all circumstances. During the continuation of the consultation on the following day he repeated his view, and in doing so departed from the instruction from The Hague not to go deeper into the question of guilt on the situation in Bihac, but to focus on better cooperation between NATO and the UN.¹⁴²⁷

Then there is the question of what position the Dutch Government took during this crucial period in the confrontation between NATO and UNPROFOR. It had stuck its neck out with the decision to station a Dutchbat company in Bihac, a decision that in the view of the German member of the Contact Group was 'courageous'.¹⁴²⁸ However, that decision made little difference in the shaping of policy. In the first instance, Dutch policy had been aimed at bridging the differences of opinion between Washington and its European allies within NATO, and therefore also between NATO and the UN/UNPROFOR. At the ministerial meeting of the Western European Union on 14 November the Netherlands, which was presiding over the meeting, had tried to have the 'differences in emphasis' on the political repercussions of the American withdrawal from monitoring of the arms embargo against Bosnia in the Adriatic Sea (Operation Sharp Guard) 'reduced to their real proportions'.¹⁴²⁹ Unlike most other members of NATO, the Netherlands had in the first instance been 'favourably disposed' towards the American proposal for the setting up of a Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone of 10 km around Bihac.¹⁴³⁰

After the NATO action against Ubdina airport, it largely withdrew its support again by pointing out the problems involved in the implementation. It was important to consider what part air power could play and whether sufficient troops were available. Nevertheless, the concrete decisions for action in Bihac were not the central issue in Dutch policymaking. That place was reserved for the great differences of opinion within NATO. The objective of Dutch policy was a 'convergence of views' between the American pro-Bosnian standpoint and the 'strict policy of impartiality in the case of which (...) hardly any distinction is made between aggressor and victim' of the United Kingdom, Spain, Belgium and, to a more limited degree, France. From its 'finely tuned middle position' the Netherlands would advocate keeping up the pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to accept the peace plan put forward by the Contact Group. At the same time, the emergence of an uncontrollable military and political situation had to be prevented. The Government in The Hague had political sympathy for the ABiH operation in Bihac, but the safety of UNPROFOR had now been seriously jeopardized. The Government in The Hague now also found that the ABiH operation in Bihac was 'counterproductive'. The result was that the United States had now asked NATO to limit its consequences. The Dutch Government was afraid that the ABiH would begin new offensives after the winter break. In that situation the position of UNPROFOR would become even more difficult, and it would be necessary to consider the role of the peacekeeping force. That was not only an affair of the troop-contributing nations and the UN. The United States too had to 'expressly bear the responsibility for the role and the safety of UNPROFOR'. So long as no political solution was found, the role of UNPROFOR in the prevention of further escalation and giving of humanitarian aid remained essential.¹⁴³¹

There were not many possibilities for implementing this policy, so long as the United States advocated a tougher line than the NATO allies. In major confrontations on this issue the Netherlands

¹⁴²⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Biegman 1289, 28/11/94; Coded cable Celer 433, 29/11/94. ABZ, DPV/ARA/02915. Coded cable Biegman 1297, 29/11/94.

¹⁴²⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Coded cable Van Walsum 385, 23/11/94.

¹⁴²⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Van Mierlo 466, 22/11/94.

¹⁴³⁰ DCBC. Coded cable Veenendaal 1822, 15/11/94.

¹⁴³¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05277. Coded cable Van Mierlo 466, 22/11/94.

played no part; during discussions in the North Atlantic Council about NATO policy in Bosnia the Dutch contributions were marginal. From the policy objectives the Netherlands was able to do little more than press within the European Union for sticking to the positions adopted with regard to the withdrawal of UNPROFOR and the lifting of the arms embargo.¹⁴³²

This general policy had only limited significance for the handling of the offer of the Dutchbat company. What did have a direct influence was the taking hostage of 450 blue helmets by the VRS on 26 November. This group included 94 Dutch servicemen: 70 Dutchbat soldiers from Srebrenica were stuck in Zvornik; a fuel convoy with 20 military personnel had been taken hostage in the Papraca area, and 4 UNMOs were trapped in the region of Sarajevo. On 2 December the group in Zvornik was freed, and three days later the other twenty from a fuel convoy in Papraca (Eastern Bosnia) were also freed.¹⁴³³

On 29 November the Defence Staff and the Directorate of General Policy Affairs advised Minister Joris Voorhoeve to postpone of the transfer until after Dutchbat II had been relieved by Dutchbat III in mid-January 1995. In the advice doubt was also expressed about whether or not the transfer would be achievable: there were still no guarantees on medical care and the stationing and Freedom of Movement of a helicopter detachment; there was also doubt about safety guarantees for all three parties in Bihac.¹⁴³⁴ The advice of the Defence Staff therefore did not make any connection whatsoever with the taking of the hostages. Nor did Voorhoeve make that connection in his memorandum in which he took over the proposal. However, in a statement about the hostage-taking to the Dutch Parliament the next day during the discussion of the Defence budget he did explicitly make that connection. He announced that Van Mierlo and he would consult Parliament again in due course. The circumstances in Bihac had changed considerably since the decision at the beginning of November.¹⁴³⁵ The pronouncement of Kofi Annan that he was considering arranging for Banbat and Dutchbat to act as a buffer between the warring factions around the Safe Area of Bihac was also giving concern in The Hague. The Permanent Representative was instructed to point out to Kofi Annan that the company had been offered only for 'humanitarian tasks'.¹⁴³⁶ Bihac subsequently disappeared from the Dutch agenda.

In Bihac the situation stabilized from the beginning of December onwards. The VRS stopped its attack, the 5th Corps withdrew from the city and the shelling eased off. The first UNHCR convoy arrived on 8 December. For UNPROFOR, however, it was the start of an extremely difficult period, because Republika Srpska continued its tough stance towards the peacekeeping force: no convoys, shelling, continued hostage-taking. It was a limited state of war, and UNPROFOR could do little about it. The crisis in Bihac had caused UNPROFOR to lose much of its credibility. That loss, combined with the still difficult situation in finding a political solution, increased the pressure at national and international levels to end the peace mission. That was, however, a decision that would have unforeseeable consequences; the question then was what other options there were. First and foremost, there was better coordination between UNPROFOR and NATO with regard to the use of air power. Important steps had already been taken in this direction.

Reconsideration of UNPROFOR's mandate, particularly with regard to the Safe Areas, was a second option. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali put proposals on it to the Security Council on 1 December. He stated that the Safe Area concept suffered from inherent flaws. There were too few troops available to achieve the deterrence, and the use of air power had its limitations through lack of targets, the presence of ground-to-air missiles and the risk of UN personnel being taken hostage. A

¹⁴³² ABZ, DEU/ARA/2915. Coded cable Bot 424, 29/11/94.

¹⁴³³ 'Dutchbat is vuil maar vrolijk: "Vrij!"' ('Dutchbat dirty, but cheerful: "Free!)'), De Volkskrant, 03/12/94. 'Nog vier militairen vast' ('Another four servicemen trapped'), Algemeen Dagblad, 05/12/94.

¹⁴³⁴ DCBC No.139. Memo No.S/94/061/4117, deputy CDS to Minister, 29/11/94; memorandum Voorhoeve for PCDS, 29/11/94.

¹⁴³⁵ TK, Parliamentary session 1994-95.

¹⁴³⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Celer 433, 29/11/94.

second shortcoming was that the ABiH was carrying on military operations from the Safe Areas and that, with the exception of Srebrenica and Zepa, military installations had been established in the other four Safe Areas. Finally, there was no clear demarcation of the Safe Areas. According to the Secretary-General, the Safe Area concept was not meeting its main objective: protection of the civil population and delivery of humanitarian aid. Four measures could bring that objective closer: fixing the border of the area, demilitarization and a cessation of hostilities, the ending of acts of provocation in and around those areas together with transitional measures in preparation for a full demilitarization and, finally, full Freedom of Movement. For the implementation of those steps UNPROFOR needed additional resources. Last but not least, he pointed out that a mandate to UNPROFOR for enforcement of the Safe Area regime was incompatible with its peacekeeping task.¹⁴³⁷

The Secretary-General's report was a sharp analysis of the shortcomings of the Safe Area concept and also the proposed changes. Nevertheless, it did not help the discussion on an improvement of UNPROFOR's mandate – if there was a need for that at that time – along; the existing concept exhibited serious flaws in practice, and an improved concept would be incompatible with the peacekeeping mandate. Besides, his proposal for demilitarization of the Safe Areas had been superseded since the acceptance of Resolution 836 in June 1993. Sacirbey made that clear to the Security Council in no uncertain terms: no demilitarization without guarantees on additional capability for the defence of those areas.¹⁴³⁸ Therefore, from the point of view of the UN, no movement at all could be expected. The UN and UNPROFOR could not themselves solve this squaring of the circle of the Safe Areas.

The movement in the impasse came as a result of the decision by President Clinton to change his policy on Bosnia for the sake of cohesion within NATO. That occurred in the eve of a NATO Conference of Ministers on 1 December. Instead of the deployment of air power as the only means of forcing the Bosnian Serbs to accept the map, Clinton now decided on other instruments such as diplomatic consultation and incentives for winning over the Serbs.¹⁴³⁹ He tried to achieve that by toning down the adamant demand up to the end of November of unconditional acceptance of the Contact Group peace plan.

7. Concessions of the Contact Group

After Pale's rejection of the map at the end of July 1994 and the internal differences of opinion on the use of disincentives, the work of the Contact Group was put on the back burner in September and October. All of the members were convinced that the double isolation of Republika Srpska – internationally by the Contact Group, and in the former Yugoslavia by Belgrade after the closure of the border – would bear fruit. The big question was when that effect would emerge through the acceptance of the Contact Group's map. The Contact Group did not have much reliable information on the internal situation and developments in Pale. Pale was 'a book we cannot read', according to the French member. Akashi considered it a handicap that Milosevic was an important informant whose influence was less far-reaching than he himself suggested, and who was certainly 'suspect' with regard to Mladic and Karadzic.¹⁴⁴⁰ The Contact Group did not have direct, reliable information about the situation in Pale. It was not needed anyway, so long as they assumed that, through its isolation, Pale itself would come round and admit defeat. However, not all members of the Contact Group could manage such patience. From November 1994 onwards that was apparent.

In fact, the talks in the Contact Group had become deadlocked. With regard to the constitutional principles, they had only stated that Bosnia had to continue to exist as a sovereign state.

¹⁴³⁷ United Nations, document S/1994/1389, 01/12/94.

¹⁴³⁸ United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35 (1998) 'Srebrenica Report', § 174.

¹⁴³⁹ Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, pp. 311-312.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Confidential information (88).

They had never managed to agree on any further details. Moscow and the European countries were advocates of a 'balanced treatment'. In concrete terms, this meant that the Bosnian Serbs would receive the same special tie with Serbia as the Croatians with Croatia. Washington did subscribe to that principle, but wanted on no condition to record it in a document.¹⁴⁴¹

The situation had also reached stalemate in the field of sanctions. After the sanctions of Serbia and Montenegro against Pale, the Russian member had pleaded for easing of the sanctions, but the other members of the Group felt that Milosevic would then also have to assert his influence for a peace settlement in Croatia.¹⁴⁴² The three European members wanted to use the instrument of sanctions to break out of the impasse in the talks of the Group. After consultation with the EU, they drafted a plan for a peace settlement in the former Yugoslavia. By broadening the spectrum of the talks, it might perhaps be possible to achieve results all along the line. This proposal consisted of two elements: the existing one for Bosnia (plan A) and four demands to which Belgrade would have to agree (plan B). According to plan B, Belgrade would first of all have to recognize Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia; it would then have to commit itself to the implementation of the peace plan for Bosnia, while the Contact Group would give its support to the principle of 'balanced treatment' and the possibility of 'mutually agreed land swaps'. The third demand concerned supporting a regulation of the Yugoslavia Conference for the position of the Serbian areas in Croatia and, finally, continuation of international monitoring of Serbian sanctions against Republika Srpska and restriction of exports to the Krajina. Suspension and subsequent lifting of the sanctions would occur in parallel.¹⁴⁴³

The US Government supported this 'multitrack approach', because it broke through the one-to-one attitude of Milosevic to Pale and offered more scope for the handling of the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. That did not alter the fact that the American objections to 'balanced treatment' remained, which was a concept that could on no account be given a place in a peace settlement.¹⁴⁴⁴ On the Russian side there were unspecified objections. It emerged later that in particular Andrei Kozyrev, the Foreign Minister, himself had objections to the plan, namely because in the long run it did not appear acceptable for him and his government to make too great demands of Milosevic. With that, the multitrack approach was derailed.¹⁴⁴⁵

The Contact Group continued to steer the course of demonstrating at ministerial level at press conferences after each meeting the unity between the parties and progress in the substantive talks. It also did so after the meeting on 2 December at which the 'multitrack approach' had bitten the dust. It was, however, clear that the internal cohesion was under pressure. Whilst the lack of consensus did not affect the approach to Republika Srpska, the crisis about Bihac, the possibility of unilateral lifting of the arms embargo by Washington and the American withdrawal from monitoring compliance with the arms embargo for Bosnia, the possible withdrawal of UNPROFOR and, of course, also the crisis in NATO together constituted a formidable crisis. Against that background, their statement about an important step forward sounded hollow. Yet they had a reason for it. The usual militant demand that Pale accept the Contact Group's peace plan was followed this time by a further explanation regarding two important points. After the signing of the map, the parties could still come to mutual arrangements on changes by agreements on land swaps. There would be room in the constitutional arrangements for 'equitable and balanced arrangements for the Bosniac-Croat and Bosnian Serb entities'.¹⁴⁴⁶ After the earlier American opposition to the same, but differently worded principle, a point had in any case been scored. Washington did not describe it as a change of policy, but as an 'adjustment to the new

¹⁴⁴¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/02915. Coded cable Bot 365, 28/10/94.

¹⁴⁴² ABZ, DEU/ARA/02915. Coded cable Bot 365, 28/10/94.

¹⁴⁴³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. COREU pesc/sec 1086, 28/10/94.

¹⁴⁴⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Coded cable Bot 375, 07/11/94; Coded cable Veenendaal 1744, 07/11/94; Coded cable Van Mierlo 188, 08/11/94.

¹⁴⁴⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/02915. Coded cable Van Mierlo 115, 17/11/94; Coded cable Celer 125, 09//12/94.

¹⁴⁴⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Communiqué of Contact Group of ministers, 02/12/94; memorandum De Zwaan to deputy DEU, 02/12/94.

reality'.¹⁴⁴⁷ Indirectly, the Contact Group made it clear to Pale that signing would open the way to negotiations. That was in any case going in the direction of the condition that the Bosnian Serb Parliament had set at the end of August for acceptance of the map.

Great disunity was hidden behind this façade of unanimity of the Contact Group at the beginning of December. During talks in Belgrade and Zagreb at the end of November the permanent members had already given Akashi to understand that they were aware that a sign of goodwill was necessary to keep the peace process going. The Contact Group could not go much further because they had hardly any means of pressure for turning the peace process in the right direction. Another factor was that each member was making his own analysis of the crisis and drawing his own conclusions.¹⁴⁴⁸ Pale would agree to the map if it could be assured of certain changes. At the same time, as a result of their isolation, the readiness seemed to be growing to bend the peace process to their will at all costs. On account of these positive and negative signals, UNPROFOR thought it advisable to approach the Bosnian Serbs directly. Akashi wanted to take the initiative himself, but felt that coordination with the Contact Group was necessary. He did not want to interfere with the work of the Contact Group. His objective was to make a ceasefire in Bihac the stepping stone to a ceasefire for a few months throughout Bosnia. Coordination with the Contact Group was necessary to ensure that the peace process could be continued in that period.¹⁴⁴⁹ A handicap was that the Contact Group could not establish any official contact with Karadzic. That was in fact a crucial part of the isolation policy.

For Washington it did not seem a problem to break that rule. While the ministers of the Contact Group were still at the meeting in Brussels on 2 December, Charles Redman, the former American member of the Contact Group, left his embassy in Bonn for Bosnia for talks in Sarajevo and Pale. All that is known about the content of the conversation between Karadzic and Redman is what the Dutch ambassador in Washington was told by the State Department. Karadzic had shown no interest whatsoever in the decisions of the Contact Group. A closer link with Rest-Yugoslavia had obviously lost all its attraction since the sanctions of Belgrade. He was thinking more in terms of independence or at least far-reaching autonomy for the current Republic of Srpska within a loose Bosnian Union. He had been less reticent about the changes to the map: Pale wanted a broader corridor near Brcko, the three eastern enclaves and the area around Sarajevo. For the short term, the important thing was that, after rounding off the operation at Bihac, Karadzic wanted to agree upon a cessation of hostilities for a long period as part of a definitive arrangement. Since the Bosnian Government also wanted a temporary end to the conflict, this seemed a road with some prospects.¹⁴⁵⁰

The objective of Redman's mission was apparently to find out whether and on what conditions Pale wanted to cooperate in a political solution. According to Redman, Karadzic had not shown any interest in negotiations on the basis of the Contact Group plan. It is in any case striking that shortly after his visit the American standpoint on the Contact Group plan began to shift. The first indication of this was given by Thomas, the American member of the Contact Group, with his interpretation at the beginning of December on his way through Belgrade to a meeting with Milosevic. According to Thomas, it was not necessary for the Bosnian Serbs to place their signature under the map, because verbal acceptance was sufficient. The Contact Group plan was not an objective in itself, but had to serve as the basis for a ceasefire and further negotiations. All elements were negotiable except for the 49/51% division of territory. On 5 December 1994 the same statement had been made by the Contact Group in Belgrade to members of the Bosnian Serb Parliament.¹⁴⁵¹

The fact that Pale wanted to negotiate was clear from the course of the talks on a cessation of hostilities that Akashi had started. Karadzic himself presented his own peace plan before the CNN cameras on 14 December, which was followed by an announcement from former President Carter that

¹⁴⁴⁷ ABZ, Embassy Washington. Coded cable Jacobovits 741, 06/12/94.

¹⁴⁴⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Coded cable Bot 436, 02/12/94. Confidential information (89).

¹⁴⁴⁹ Confidential information (90) and (91).

¹⁴⁵⁰ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 308. ABZ, Embassy Washington. Coded cable Jacobovits 741, 06/12/94.

¹⁴⁵¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Coded cable Lenstra 249, 08/12/94. *International Herald Tribune*, 22/12/94.

he would go to Pale.¹⁴⁵² Even before the meeting with the members of the Contact Group in Zagreb on 16 December, Akashi had explained in detail to Karadzic during talks in Pale that there were still good chances for a diplomatic solution. The Contact Group plan was still on the table and Akashi's explanation of its status had a lot in common with that of US Ambassador Thomas: 'While it was still to be used as the basis for negotiations, acceptance of it was no longer a necessary precondition for negotiations. The Contact Group was willing to be a facilitator for adjustments to the plan which would, in the final analysis, have to be accepted by mutual agreement between the parties.'¹⁴⁵³

That Akashi was not acting upon his own authority to achieve a positive influence on the course of his talks on a cessation of hostilities emerged from the fact that the State Department had also told Carter before his departure for Europe that the plan was a basis for negotiations.¹⁴⁵⁴ The tough American stance had been toned down in order to make peace negotiations possible. There were several arguments for this. First of all, the fear that the new Republican Congress would force the government to supply weapons to the Muslims, with the risk that the United States would be dragged into the war itself. They also saw it as a new signal to the internally divided NATO that they were in fact very much in favour of a solution by peaceful means.¹⁴⁵⁵

The American unilateral shift caused confusion among other members of the Contact Group. The main question was how much of the rigid attitude would be given away. The British Government had no objection to starting negotiations 'on the basis of the Contact Group Plan', provided that its essence remained intact. It could not be a 'springboard for fresh discussions on matters of substance'.¹⁴⁵⁶ It did not, however, come to an actual test of the American intentions. Carter did succeed in rounding off the negotiations on a cessation of hostilities begun by UNPROFOR, including an agreement on the start of peace talks. The Contact Group plan would in this case, according to the agreement signed in Pale, be 'the basis for negotiation of all points'; according to the agreement with Sarajevo, the acceptance of that plan was 'a starting point'. The stalemate consequently remained, and negotiations did not get off the ground. Washington was still not prepared to put Izetbegovic under pressure. The result was that the talks in the Contact Group had reached total deadlock. The group continued to meet until the end of May, but agreement could not be reached.¹⁴⁵⁷

The cessation of hostilities agreed to on 20 December 1994 in any case brought a period of relative calm, which the US Government wanted to use to get negotiations under way. However, the Bosnian Government stuck to the acceptance beforehand of the Contact Group plan by Pale, but in mid-March that proved out of the question because of a statement of the Bosnian Serb Parliament. Within the US Government, the discussion continued about the objectives of its own policy. The pressure from Congress, led by Senator Dole, for the lifting of the arms embargo continued to grow. Within the government, Vice-President Al Gore and UN Permanent Representative Madeleine Albright opposed concessions to Pale or to Milosevic. For the fact that Izetbegovic was sticking to acceptance of the Contact Group plan by Pale meant that pressure on Karadzic by way of Belgrade was the only way forward. Milosevic wanted a reward, however, in the form of suspension of the sanctions. US Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke made every effort to reach a settlement on this point. Negotiations by his colleague, Robert Frasure, in Belgrade on behalf of the Contact Group failed at the beginning of June 1995. A package of proposals for recognition of Bosnia by Rest-Yugoslavia, easing and withdrawal of the sanctions and stricter monitoring at the border between Republika Srpska and Rest-Yugoslavia, was not acceptable to Milosevic. Washington decided to suspend the negotiations and

¹⁴⁵² Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 309.

¹⁴⁵³ UNGE ICFY Box 130 file: crypto faxes in 37 Dec 1994 Jan 1995. Code cable Z-1944, Akashi to Annan, 16/12/94.

¹⁴⁵⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05142. Coded cable Van Houtum 786, 23/12/94.

¹⁴⁵⁵ *International Herald Tribune*, 22/12/94.

¹⁴⁵⁶ DPKO, Code cable Z-1966, Akashi to Annan, 20/12/94.

¹⁴⁵⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05241. Fax Embassy Washington to DEU/DAV/DPV, 22/12/94. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 310-315. Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, pp. 319-320.

to wait and see whether the new EU mediator, Carl Bildt, would have any success.¹⁴⁵⁸ The Contact Group dealt the final blow to its own plan by deciding on 29 May that only unconditional acceptance was possible, and that it would not be a basis for negotiations, as had still appeared possible in December 1994.¹⁴⁵⁹

8. The meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff in The Hague: improvement of the effectiveness of UNPROFOR

The prevention of the withdrawal of UNPROFOR was an objective that had broad support within NATO. It was a way of preventing lifting of the arms embargo for Bosnia, an option that in any case remained a serious option for the new American Congress with a Republican majority. Certainly after the serious crisis in NATO at the end of November, Washington wanted to show its allies that it also considered it important for UNPROFOR to continue. UNPROFOR did have to act more effectively then.

With that objective, the NATO Chiefs of Defence Staff met, on the initiative of US Defence Secretary William Perry, in The Hague on 19 December, and their colleagues from other troop-contributing countries joined them the next day to discuss concrete proposals.¹⁴⁶⁰ The Force Commander and representatives of the military staff of NATO and of the UN secretariat attended the meeting, as did Vitaly Churkin, the Russian Ambassador to NATO, although this was against the wishes of the Dutch host, Henk van der Breemen.¹⁴⁶¹ The purpose of the meeting was to draw up a list of proposals with the necessary means for reinforcing the effectiveness and reducing the vulnerability of UNPROFOR.

After the crisis in Bihac, this meeting was a good instrument for the Netherlands to give new impetus to improving cooperation within NATO with regard to UNPROFOR. For the Netherlands, this meeting was significant for two reasons. First, the meeting emphasized the importance that the Netherlands attached to cooperation between NATO and the UN during the peace mission in the former Yugoslavia and to its continuation. In addition – and that was not entirely without self interest – it was a good framework for discussion of the problems of the Safe Areas, with Srebrenica, of course, being able to serve as an example. Safe Areas together with humanitarian aid and Sarajevo formed the main topics of the exchange of views. The British delegation adopted a reticent stance at the meetings. Improvement of the Freedom of Movement was important for the French and Americans. Force Commander Bertrand de Lapresle took the view that within the mandate measures for increasing the Freedom of Movement and resupplying were possible. The talks proceeded in a good atmosphere, and the final document meant a breakthrough in the impasse between NATO and the UN.

After the representatives of the Chiefs of Defence Staffs had worked through the night, at four o'clock there was a report on the table that was accepted the following morning. The result itself, according to SACEUR General Clark was nothing more than a 'menu of requirements and contributions that might help marginally. But we all knew that this would be no quantum improvement, even if fully implemented.'¹⁴⁶² The basis was formed by a British plan for a 'harder edge' in the execution of the existing mandate.¹⁴⁶³ The point of departure was a permissive, benign environment' because with the 'non-permissive, hostile' variant the proposed measures would have too much of an enforcement character.¹⁴⁶⁴ The thirteen recommendations were followed by a list of reinforcements for

¹⁴⁵⁸ ABZ, Embassy Washington. Coded cable Jacobovits 374, 02/06/94. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 322. Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, 321-322. Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, pp.39-40.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Stoltenberg, *De Tusene Dagene*, p. 102.

¹⁴⁶⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00580. Coded cable Veenendaal 2045, 14/12/94.

¹⁴⁶¹ Interview H. van den Breemen, 21/09/99.

¹⁴⁶² Interview H. van den Breemen, 21/09/99 and Clark, *Waging Modern War*, p. 43.

¹⁴⁶³ CSKL 1993. UNPROFOR – A more robust approach. A Note by the United Kingdom [16/12/94]

¹⁴⁶⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Van Mierlo 769, 27/12/94.

direct deployment. The participants would make clear as soon as possible what contribution they were going to make.

The recommendations were aimed at improving the quality of the UNPROFOR battalions and making additional equipment and personnel available. In this respect, the meeting was following the Force Commander: he did not need more infantry or heavier weaponry. In order to increase the self-defence capability, he asked for additional equipment such as radar, night-glasses and means of communication. In the recommendations sharpshooter teams and Tactical Air Control Parties were added. Additional observers (UNMOs and UnCivPols) and specialist military engineering personnel would increase the capacity for keeping the dialogue going between the warring factions. The increase in the effectiveness of UNPROFOR also had to come from better training of the units. In order to be able to parry the lack of freedom of movement, three squadrons of helicopters were needed for providing supplies to Sarajevo and remote areas. The proposals further provided for the building up of a mobile reserve (another word for Quick Reaction Force) per sector and demarcation and demilitarization of the Safe Areas. The list ended with proposals for NATO and UNPROFOR planning, together with the providing of supplies to Sarajevo and the enclaves (Bihac, Gorazde, Zepa and Srebrenica) by means of a corridor by road or by air. The last proposal had to do with improving the image of the peacekeeping force through better information. A recommendation on regrouping to counteract the vulnerability of UNPROFOR units was omitted from the report on the advice of De Lapresle, because this would lead to a resumption of the conflict at places from which units had been removed.¹⁴⁶⁵

In consultation with the Pentagon, the Dutch Government tried as far as possible to follow up the so-called 'shopping list' of the meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff. Internally, within the Army this was no problem. On the basis of the proposals for improvement of the effectiveness of the UNPROFOR battalions, a proposal was tabled for the improvement of humanitarian aid in the enclave and for increasing the safety of Dutchbat and the population by the deployment of more equipment. However, this did not get much beyond the planning stage, because it was expected that the VRS would block the placing of those additional weapon systems and other resources in the enclave.¹⁴⁶⁶ At the beginning of 1995, after the arrival of Dutchbat III, the topic disappeared from the agenda.

Maintaining the 'political momentum' internationally was a difficult task. After consultation with his American colleague William Perry, Voorhoeve with that objective wanted to call a meeting of Ministers of Defence in The Hague around New Year 1995, but that plan disappeared from the agenda.¹⁴⁶⁷ The US Government itself came up with an offer of equipment, but the other participants were slower off the mark. Through the representatives at NATO and the UN in New York, the Netherlands asked for a response from the participants to the shopping list and announced a meeting in New York on 10 January 1995 for a stocktaking of the harvest. The Netherlands wanted in particular to achieve the recommendations for humanitarian aid and resupplying by air as soon as possible, and pressed for the provision of transport aircraft and helicopters with or without crews. The Netherlands itself offered four liaison helicopters, mortar detection radar, two F-27s and twenty UNMOs.¹⁴⁶⁸ In the end it was found that the UN did not need the light Dutch helicopters.¹⁴⁶⁹

The constructive talks in The Hague had hardly any practical yield. When stock was taken of the contributions of participants on 10 January 1995 in New York it was found that not a single country had offered a squadron of resupplying or attack helicopters. France and Great Britain had not yet taken a decision. Of the other NATO countries, Spain promised a company. This was a paltry result for the

¹⁴⁶⁵ ABZ PVNY. Appendix to No.S94/122/4458, 22 /12/94: Informal CHODS meeting on UNPROFOR. Report. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Van Mierlo circ 769, 27/12/94.

¹⁴⁶⁶ II DE 0001 to 0192. Internal memorandum Brantz to Chief of Army Crisis staff, 21/12/94. BDL: memo C94/061/4497, Defence Staff to Minister, 23/12/94.

¹⁴⁶⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00580. Coded cable Van Mierlo 212, 22/12/94; Coded cable Van Houtum 793, 29/12/94.

¹⁴⁶⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00580. Coded cable Van Mierlo 509, 22/12/94. CSKL 1993. Coded cable Celer 2, 03/01/95.

¹⁴⁶⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Coded cable Biegan 096, 07/02/95.

members of an organization that had so emphatically wanted to take the lead. Islamic countries offered military observers, UnCivPols and military engineering capacity, in addition to new battalions. All in all the results were meagre. The American and Dutch representatives agreed at the end of it to have bilateral contact in order to try and achieve a better realization of the shopping list.¹⁴⁷⁰

Not much zest was evident among the allies. Van den Breemen subsequently attributed this to the differing analyses of the military, on the one hand, and politicians, on the other. Through the materialization of the cessation of hostilities agreement in Bosnia, which had been in force since 1 January 1995, and the apparent headway that was being made by the Contact Group in the peace talks, reinforcement of UNPROFOR had probably become less urgent for politicians.¹⁴⁷¹ A factor was that in any case the large European countries (France, the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany) would have been more prepared to increase their contribution if other countries had also done their share.¹⁴⁷²

Another factor that played a part was that UNPROFOR itself had set other priorities because of the implementation of the cessation of hostilities agreement: five mechanized infantry battalions. This head wind did not discourage the Dutch military authorities in any case. They drew up plans for a new Dutch contribution. The Defence Staff developed plans for the independent deployment of a few companies of the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, possibly combined with a unit of British marines or a cavalry reconnaissance unit. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in favour of keeping up the 'momentum', but found the objectives still too vague to take a decision.¹⁴⁷³ Van den Breemen put forward, without any effect, a proposal for a European multinational battalion consisting of British, French and Dutch components.¹⁴⁷⁴ In consultation with Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Brinkman, the Chief of Defence Staff discussed yet other options. At the beginning of February, however, the subject faded into the background.¹⁴⁷⁵

At the beginning of March, interest in the conclusions of the meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staffs in December 1994 in The Hague remained only in the Islamic countries. They suggested writing a letter to Boutros-Ghali together with Sweden, Germany, New Zealand and the Netherlands, pressing for more robust action to be taken. Although Ambassador Biegan was sympathetic to a number of specific proposals, he found the time totally unsuitable. In North Atlantic Council circles there was little enthusiasm for a new meeting such as the Dutch Government was keen to have. The US authorities wanted to keep that meeting in reserve in case the developments in Bosnia itself or in the US Congress made it opportune. Other NATO countries wanted for the time being to put all their energy into the military planning of the withdrawal that might be necessary because of the threat from Zagreb not to extend the mandate on 1 April 1995. Ambassador Veenendaal described the mood as follows: 'Pleas not to regard a doomsday scenario as already inevitable, but at the same time to consider under what circumstances UNPROFOR – reinforced or otherwise – would be able to remain, since withdrawal would not solve the problems, but rather aggravate them, are therefore treated with reserve by many.'¹⁴⁷⁶

Despite great effort, the Dutch Government proved unable to bring its attempt to achieve actual reinforcement of UNPROFOR to a successful conclusion. In fact, after the meeting in The Hague the tide began to turn. It was unlikely that it was merely a question of not enough sense of urgency among politicians, as the Chief of Defence Staff claimed. The motive for the American

¹⁴⁷⁰ CRST. Coded cable Schaper 20, 10/01/95.

¹⁴⁷¹ Interview H. van den Breemen, 21/10/99.

¹⁴⁷² DCBC No. 2038. Coded cable Schaper 24, 11/01/95.

¹⁴⁷³ DCBC, No.296. No. S/95/061/96, Van den Breemen and De Winter to Minister, 13/01/95. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 00797. Memorandum DAV/95-74, 16/01/95.

¹⁴⁷⁴ NIOD: letter from FCO to NIOD, 10/05/01, Appendix: 'HMG Response to NIOD Questionnaire on Fall of Srebrenica', under Question 12.

¹⁴⁷⁵ CRST. S/95/061/407, Van den Breemen to Minister, 30/01/95.

¹⁴⁷⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Coded cable Veenendaal 305, 01/03/95.

initiative had been first and foremost restoration of unity within NATO and, following on from this, better cooperation between NATO and UNPROFOR. In that sense, the objective had been achieved. The meeting in The Hague had been no more than a digression, and after that the international consultation had continued again in the normal organizations. Apart from that, the reinforcement of UNPROFOR no longer had high priority after the cessation of hostilities in Bosnia. Of course, another contributory factor was that, from the point of view of UNPROFOR, close cooperation with NATO in the formulation of a more vigorous execution of the mandate was not the first option after the serious clashes during the Bihac crisis. Dutch policy, which was determined mainly by Minister of Defence Joris Voorhoeve and Chief of Staff Henk van den Breemen, largely ignored those aspects. Apart from their own political motives – fear of a premature end of the peace mission, with all the consequences that would have, and a conflict within NATO – the intention of actual reinforcement of UNPROFOR was a major driving force behind their policy. That had emerged from the response to the shopping list and from the energy put into the development of new Dutch contributions. It does not alter the fact that it is remarkable that, after enthusiasm had waned following the first meeting, the Netherlands continued to aim for a second meeting. The results of that consultation are dealt with in Part III, Chapter 1, as part of a discussion of the changing strategic situation in May/June 1995.

9. Test criteria and the Van Middelkoop motion

Voorhoeve kept Parliament regularly informed in writing about all aspects of the operations in the former Yugoslavia, generally in letters and in oral discussions. An exceptional part of this regular contact was the briefing on 18 October 1994 of the Permanent Parliamentary committees for Foreign Affairs and Defence on the possible withdrawal of Dutchbat from Srebrenica.¹⁴⁷⁷ The consultation between government and Parliament undoubtedly met Parliament's wish to remain informed about the state of affairs and the government's plans for the increase in the Dutch contribution to UNPROFOR and improvement of the position of Dutchbat.

During this period Parliament also continued consultation with the government on greater involvement of Parliament in the decision-making about the deployment of Dutch military units, already discussed in detail in Part I. The Ministers of Defence and of Foreign Affairs had drawn attention in a memorandum in January 1994 to the increased practice of involving Parliament at the earliest possible stage in the decision-making, also in cases of a major change of objective. The government did not share Parliament's wish for deployment to be linked to an Act of Approval. It felt that the existing practice of providing information by means of a letter was sufficient.

The government had followed this procedure when taking the decision to transfer a company of Dutchbat to the Bihac. After the decision had been taken, it had informed Parliament by letter and had exchanged ideas on the matter. When the letter was being discussed on 9 November the procedure itself did not come up for discussion. It did on 21 December 1994. It emerged then that dissatisfaction about the procedure had continued to exist and that, with the exception of the VVD (Liberal Conservatives), Parliament remained in favour of a statutory right of approval. The government, through Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve, continued to reject the right of approval, but was prepared to set up a testing framework that it would use when taking a decision about deployment.¹⁴⁷⁸ Parliament would not settle for that, and in the Van Middelkoop motion asked the government to prepare a regulation on the official right of approval of Parliament for deployment. The VVD (Liberals) party voted against it. The government showed itself rather unbending. It merely promised to think about it.¹⁴⁷⁹

¹⁴⁷⁷ DCBD, No. 2777. 'Private briefing of the permanent parliamentary committees for Foreign Affairs and Defence on Tuesday, 18 October from 3pm to about 4pm.'

¹⁴⁷⁸ TK, Parliamentary session year 1994-1995, 23591, No. 2.

¹⁴⁷⁹ TK, Parliamentary session year 1994-1995, 23591, No. 3.

The setting up of the promised test framework took a long time. On 28 June 1995 the government presented a list of fourteen points.¹⁴⁸⁰ The points were subdivided according to aspects of political desirability and feasibility. In particular, the five points in the first group gave an insight into what was felt about participation in peace operations. Deployment would be on account of Dutch interests such as keeping international peace and security and promoting the international rule of law. It also had to be in conformity with international law, and had to be effected on the basis of a clear mandate from the UN or another international organization. In the decision-making, factors such as ‘solidarity, credibility and the spread of responsibilities, risks and burdens’ were also important. The Netherlands preferred a multinational approach and decisions to be taken on a case by case basis. The government pointed out that the list was merely an aid, because a mutual weighing-up of the criteria would be necessary in each case. The discussion started in November 1995. Parliament agreed to the test criteria.¹⁴⁸¹ This consultation between government and Parliament took place outside the concrete policy on the former Yugoslavia.

After the discussion of developments in the Dutch sphere, the account in the next paragraph returns to international developments. It picks up the thread of the discussion about, and the preparation for, the withdrawal of UNPROFOR, which was a consequence of the peace plan of the Contact Group in July 1994.

10. Withdrawal of UNPROFOR?

After the presentation of the Contact Group plan for Bosnia in July 1994, a discussion started about the withdrawal of UNPROFOR. This discussion was based on the assumption that the peacekeeping force could no longer function if a number of disincentives were used in the event of the peace plan being rejected. This applied in particular in the event of an extension of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones to all Safe Areas and the lifting of the arms embargo. The need for withdrawal was put forward first by UNPROFOR itself and was endorsed by the Secretary-General of the UN. Although the implementation of the two relevant disincentives – setting up of Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones in all Safe Areas combined with stricter monitoring of their observance and lifting of the arms embargo – was quickly dropped, the question of the withdrawal remained on the political agenda through a possible unilateral ending of the embargo by the Americans. That acute danger also faded away at the end of 1994. However, this did not lead to an end to the discussion about, and the preparation of, UNPROFOR. As stated in paragraph 2 of this chapter, these events had created an atmosphere in which the departure of UNPROFOR became a politically charged topic. The possible withdrawal of UNPROFOR brought a number of matters to the table that were closely related to the execution of the peace operation itself.

First of all, it clearly came to light that UNPROFOR had landed in a difficult situation because of the gradual extension of the mandate and the limited means. In the execution of each part of the mandate – facilitation of humanitarian aid, Safe Areas and Weapon Exclusion Zones – it had to contend with breach of the agreements by the warring factions, its own response to that and accusations of flawed execution of the mission. In fact, it was a matter of a gradually deteriorating situation and increasing powerlessness of UNPROFOR to cope with the situation. In the autumn the situation seemed to be running completely out of control: fighting had resumed at various places in Bosnia, and the Freedom of Movement for UNPROFOR and UNHCR had been violated by both parties.¹⁴⁸²

In this situation UNPROFOR itself could do relatively little. It could not force the parties to stop fighting, but could only try to persuade them to do so. It could not act against violations of the

¹⁴⁸⁰ TK, Paliamentary session year 1994-1995, 23591, No. 5.

¹⁴⁸¹ TK, Paliamentary session year 1995-1996, 23591, No. 6.

¹⁴⁸² Burg & Shoup, *War in Bosnia*, pp. 152-153.

Freedom of Movement by forcing a way through, because this would result in an outright war situation. From the UNPROFOR point of view, that also applied to Close Air Support and air strikes: those were instruments that could be used only to a limited degree.

The performance of UNPROFOR met with a great deal of criticism in international politics and among the warring factions. In purely military terms, each violation ought to have been followed by a response, but this often did not happen. The safety of UNPROFOR itself played an important part in that decision. There was a presumption that by using more force UNPROFOR would strengthen its position and command respect among the warring factions. According to the UNPROFOR command, that was a great misconception. The use of force in performing the task would lead to escalation and make fulfilment of the mandate totally impossible. This message was expounded repeatedly by Force Commander Bertrand de Lapresle and Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Michael Rose. Besides, the lightly armed peacekeeping force was not in a position to engage in that confrontation.¹⁴⁸³

UNPROFOR did not seize the possible lifting of the arms embargo or tightening and extension of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone system as an excuse for ending the mission in the former Yugoslavia as quickly as possible. Akashi and De Lapresle did, however, have serious concerns about a departure in those circumstances. From the beginning of its mission UNPROFOR had been making plans for a possible withdrawal. These plans were based on favourable circumstances, in which it would be possible by means of concentration in various regions to achieve an orderly departure from the area of operations without outside help. On the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica apparently there also existed such a plan for this area.

The chance of implementation of disincentives from the Contact Group plan put the planning in a different perspective. UNPROFOR did not have the facilities for carrying out military operations. According to the headquarters in New York at the beginning of September 1994, in an analysis of the military consequences of the Contact Group plan for UNPROFOR, it was a fundamental misconception that the peacekeeping force in conjunction with Close Air Support could operate as a fighting unit. It was therefore also not capable on its own of withdrawing from a hostile environment.

If in fact the United States withdrew in mid-November from monitoring of the arms embargo, the situation would rapidly deteriorate and necessitate withdrawal from a hostile environment. If negotiations on a departure failed, at least two airborne NATO divisions would be needed to evacuate UNPROFOR. The participation of American ground combat forces would be needed here.¹⁴⁸⁴

UNPROFOR consulted with the NATO base in Naples on 23 August about planning of the withdrawal, and then worked out a number of scenarios involving increasingly hostile environments. As usual, the military staff of NATO asked for instructions from the North Atlantic Council about the preconditions for the planning of this operation. The political context was also reflected in the preparation of the decision-making, but had hardly any influence on the discussion. In addition to Combined Planning with UNPROFOR, in other words coordination of the planning in order to avoid duplication of work, and the deployment of ground troops, it was further up to the military authorities to give substance to an evacuation plan for UNPROFOR.¹⁴⁸⁵

The speed at which a decision was taken on combined planning between NATO and UNPROFOR for the withdrawal from the former Yugoslavia was an indication of the gravity of the situation. The demand for national plans for evacuation did not come up in the discussion, although UNPROFOR had qualms about this. The consequence of the withdrawal for operations in the former Yugoslavia was not discussed either. In fact, no striking changes occurred. Canada announced at the end of September that it was extending its cooperation in UNPROFOR for six months. Should a situation that seriously threatened the safety of the contingent occur, then Ottawa would consider

¹⁴⁸³ Confidential information (172).

¹⁴⁸⁴ UNNY, DPKO, Coded cables UNPROFOR. Coded cable Z-1351, Akashi to Annan, 02/09/94 appendix: Military Impact on UNPROFOR of the Contact Group Proposals, 02/09/94.

¹⁴⁸⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Veenendaal 1335, 02/09/94; Coded cable Veenendaal 1344, 06/09/94; Coded cable Veenendaal 1372, 09/09/94.

withdrawal.¹⁴⁸⁶ After giving the assignment to the military staff, the NATO Council proceeded to the agenda. Not until December would the subject come up for discussion again in the Council.

At working level there were regular contacts between the staff of the Force Commander and the NATO Commander in Chief in Naples. Contacts were also established between the military staff and the UN Secretariat in New York. The advantage of these contacts was that a thorough discussion of matters was possible and many differences of opinion were resolved. The difficult problem was and remained the difference in culture and *modus operandi* between NATO and UN/UNPROFOR. NATO was essentially a military organization with a political aim; the UN was a political organization. NATO had difficulty in its cooperation with UNPROFOR in accepting that it was performing tasks at the request of the peacekeeping force. The differences became most clearly manifest in the demand of the UN that it fulfil the leading political role, while NATO was striving for the same role by means of the military Command and Control.¹⁴⁸⁷ Those differences were easier to bridge at working level than at the political level.¹⁴⁸⁸

The planning assignment for the withdrawal came up again in the Council at the beginning of December, in the middle of the impasse on Bihac and the arms embargo. During the discussions about those political guidelines to the military planners there was a totally different atmosphere from that in September. At that time there had been a certain resignation, and there was no discussion of the political context of the assignment. In November/December there was a sort of resolve about the need for ensuring that UNPROFOR continued its mission. Despite the great urgency, the regularly recurring message was that it was a matter of planning for a potential situation, not of the implementation of a specific resolution. The plan for the withdrawal was a matter for the whole alliance, a fact that was also emphasized by the US Permanent Representative. Establishing the political parameters of the assignment did not produce any fireworks. The fact that Washington promised to make a contribution in the form of troops for the operation had undoubtedly added to the easing of the tension. The military authorities were given the following guidelines for the planning. The strategic objective of the operation was a NATO operation to support safe, orderly and rapid withdrawal of UNPROFOR. In concrete terms it would be an operation involving the deployment of fighting units under NATO command. In the coordination, account was to be taken of Akashi's own powers.¹⁴⁸⁹

In The Hague there was in any case some pessimism before the start of the talks in Brussels. To put it briefly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was afraid in any case that the planning of the evacuation would become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The plan could also have a negative influence outside the circle of NATO. It could create the impression among the warring factions that NATO was focusing only on the evacuation. UNPROFOR could consequently end up in a downward spiral that for the peacekeeping force meant a serious threat to its safety. In that way UNPROFOR would be even less capable of fulfilling its protective and humanitarian task. The cooperation between NATO and UNPROFOR was in a serious impasse. In the view of the Dutch Government, it was more important to take UNPROFOR out of the downward spiral. The deliberations in The Hague had not produced any concrete solutions, but all the more questions about the positive effects of limiting the mandate and possibilities for a better command of NATO and UNPROFOR.

Briefly summarized, all questions tended towards strengthening of the position of UNPROFOR. The Dutch Government was in favour of this, but there remained the question of how it could be achieved. The Dutch Government did not yet have any clear ideas, apart from the conviction that increasing the number of battalions would not help. UNPROFOR would have to have

¹⁴⁸⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/ 02109. Coded cable Veenendaal 1495, 26/09/94.

¹⁴⁸⁷ UNNY, DKPO, Coded cables UNPROFOR. Code cable Z-1814, Akashi to Annan, 27/11/94. ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05274. Coded cable Biegman 1109, 01/10/94.

¹⁴⁸⁸ Confidential information (94).

¹⁴⁸⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded cable Veenendaal 1894, 23/11/94. DCBC. Coded cable Veenendaal 1960, 30/11/94.

better resources at its disposal. At the meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff in The Hague on 19-20 December the first steps had been taken in that direction. (See paragraph 8.)¹⁴⁹⁰

In any case this did not allay Dutch fears about signals going out as a result of planning for actual withdrawal. On the contrary, those fears were increased through the possible ending of the peace mission in Croatia on 1 April 1995. The Netherlands, together with other countries, opposed direct preparatory measures for the withdrawal of UNPROFOR. It used two arguments in this respect: preparatory measures could thwart negotiations on UNPROFOR remaining there; besides, the Croatian plan applied only to the task in the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs), and the UNPROFOR headquarters could remain with the logistical cluster. In the meantime, the Netherlands received support from other countries, such as Great Britain. However, the French Permanent Representative sounded a different note: steps by the US Congress towards lifting of the arms embargo indicated the continuing importance of the planning.¹⁴⁹¹

After the adoption of the general withdrawal plan codenamed Oplan 40104, a start was made, with an eye on Croatia, on planning for emergency evacuations. This involved an operation in a restricted area and execution in a short period of time. That set more stringent requirements with regard to the preparation. In the case of Oplan 40104 it had been primarily a paper exercise. In the case of emergency evacuations that would not do, and certainty was needed about the available resources through concrete promises from the Member States. This development gave the Netherlands the opportunity to demand attention for the situation in Srebrenica. At the end of April the Chief of Defence Staff was satisfied to find that in the elaboration of plans for the specific part of the Quick Response Options account had also been taken of Dutch wishes with regard to Srebrenica.¹⁴⁹² At the end of May it appeared that American units and an Anglo-Dutch unit would probably be available for an emergency operation for the evacuation of Dutchbat from Srebrenica.¹⁴⁹³

The preparation of the plans for emergency evacuation did not mean that the decision-taking on Oplan 40104 had been completed. All kinds of problems remained, both with respect to the military aspects and with respect to the political aspects, and these were solved in the course of the following months. Despite its scepticism about the preparation for the withdrawal, the Netherlands had gained some advantage through the plan for an emergency evacuation from Srebrenica. The question of whether the will or intention for withdrawal was also stimulated by the planning process itself, as the Dutch Government feared, is of a different order. It would not be fair to make a direct connection between statements of the French and British about a possible withdrawal and the planning process within NATO. Those statements had much more to do with the deteriorating situation in Bosnia. Besides, in those cases it was a matter of a unilateral withdrawal. Within the North Atlantic Council the planning began to play a part only from March 1995 onwards, after the military preparation had largely been completed in close cooperation with UNPROFOR. The planning acquired a topical character after the discussion of emergency evacuations, because these required concrete cases to be specified. The start of that planning indicated in any case that the situation concerned remained threatening, but also that the members of NATO intended jointly to face up to that situation.

11. Replacement of Dutchbat?

Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo had established in September 1994 that stationing of a company from another NATO country alongside Dutchbat in Srebrenica as an extra safeguard for the safety of the

¹⁴⁹⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277. Coded unnumbered minute (Van Mierlo), 02/12/94. CSKL 1993. Coded cable Van Mierlo 543, 15/12/94.

¹⁴⁹¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Coded cable Veenendaal 032, 11/01/95; Veenendaal 089, 19/01/95. ABZ, DEU Bosnia NATO. Coded cable Veenendaal 123, 25/01/95. DCBC, 1394. Coded cable Veenendaal 316, 03/02/95.

¹⁴⁹² DCBC: NATO DDP/95/258, 21/03/95. DCBC, No.138. Coded cable Feith 486, 29/03/95. DCBC, No./1835. No.Hipa.408, CDS to MinDef, 27/04/95.

¹⁴⁹³ DCBC, 1408. Coded cable Veenendaal 818, 24/05/95.

enclave could work. In their policy plan for Bosnia this internationalization or formation of a multinational unit constituted an important element. It was therefore primarily a point inspired by political considerations, and the operational consequences of which had not been given much thought. Since such another contingent, like Dutchbat, would be familiar with NATO procedures and rules, that would not cause any problems, they assumed. They had given little thought to aspects like language differences, coordination and the consequences for logistical care below battalion level.

The proposal itself did not gain a positive response in NATO and UN circles. Van Mierlo brought it up in September 1994 at the Department for Peacekeeping Operations in New York, but after consultation of UNPROFOR the answer told its own story. In the enclave of Srebrenica there was already a multinational presence, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York argued. UN military observers from five different countries were in fact stationed in the enclave alongside Dutchbat from the Netherlands. UNPROFOR had practical operational objections to the proposal. The main point was, however, that its implementation would lead to harming of the 'stability, continuity and consistency within the area of operation'. According to UNPROFOR, the disadvantages outweighed the advantages.¹⁴⁹⁴ Voorhoeve's own soundings among other NATO countries at a meeting in Seville at the end of September 1994 did not yield anything either: the French were going to study the proposal; The British drew attention to their task in Gorazde, and Denmark pointed out that it was already making quite a large contribution elsewhere in Bosnia.¹⁴⁹⁵ The question of internationalization of the UNPROFOR presence in Srebrenica was consequently not over and done with as far as the Netherlands was concerned. In 1995 it also put forward plans for achieving this objective a number of further times to the UN and other countries, but the UN and UNPROFOR continued to reject them.¹⁴⁹⁶

As far as Voorhoeve was concerned, internationalization was not the only option. One option was heavier arming of Dutchbat. According to the Chief of Defence Staff, this was not really an option, because the VRS would not allow in this heavier weaponry. Voorhoeve also explored possibilities for ending the mission of Dutchbat. This often took place in talks with Bosnian Permanent Representative to the UN Muhamed Sacirbey, who regularly visited the Netherlands for personal reasons and then also tried to talk to Voorhoeve or Van Mierlo. In his first interview with Sacirbey on 15 September 1994, Voorhoeve put forward the 'dreadful option' of moving the population to easily defensible areas under UN protection.¹⁴⁹⁷ In October the exchange of the eastern enclaves for Serbian territory around Sarajevo was discussed. During the Bihac crisis the conversion of the Safe Areas to a UN demilitarized zone by analogy with the Russian proposal for Sarajevo was discussed.¹⁴⁹⁸

Voorhoeve's way of tackling of the problem was clear. He wanted to strengthen the position of Dutchbat in the enclave and increase the safety of the population in the enclave. Supplying heavier weaponry, moving the population and conversion to a demilitarized zone were options that were not feasible in the autumn of 1994. That also applied to his plan for strengthening the Safe Area concept. At the annual *Wehrkundetagung* in Munich at the beginning of February 1995 he advocated a strengthening of the Safe Area concept in general by means of protection by NATO troops, demilitarization, tit-for-tat response to attacks, assured provision of supplies and taking out the VRS ground-to-air missile installations.¹⁴⁹⁹ As will emerge later, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was opposed to this idea because internationally it would just not be feasible. This meant that the replacement of Dutchbat in Srebrenica remained the most important option.

¹⁴⁹⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05276. Coded cable Biegman 926, 30/09/94; Kofi Annan to Van Mierlo, 07/10/94. UNNY, DPKO Unprofor coded cables, Z-1498, Akashi to Annan, 30/09/94.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Interview J.J.C Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.

¹⁴⁹⁶ TK, Parliamentary session year 1994-1995, 22 181, No.108, pp.7-8.

¹⁴⁹⁷ ABZ, DEU/2000/00354. Memo D94/368, Nota DAB, 15/09/94.

¹⁴⁹⁸ DJZ/BST. Memo D94/450, DAB to Minister, 26/10/94. CRST. Voorhoeve to Van Mierlo, 18/11/94.

¹⁴⁹⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05277. Voorhoeve to Van Mierlo, 07/02/95; Appendix: Needed: a joint new Bosnia policy.

On 1 July 1995 the Dutch Government was faced with the question of what to do about the ending of Dutchbat's mission in Srebrenica. When Dutchbat had been offered, the Government had not told the UN that it had been made available for eighteen months. Parliament had been told. The Netherlands had taken this fact for granted in its contact with the UN.¹⁵⁰⁰ Minister Relus ter Beek had announced that decision only in June 1994 'in a private meeting to the Secretary-General of the UN'. The Permanent Representative in New York had repeated it later in writing, because the UN secretariat continued to say that it was not aware of any restriction to eighteen months.¹⁵⁰¹

On the face of it, the announcement of the departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica did not accord with the training of Dutchbat IV, which the Army had begun. However, this was not thwarting the minister's policy. His ambition was to keep the Dutch contribution to UNPROFOR at the same level, and he assumed that the battalion would be deployed elsewhere in Bosnia after July 1995, preferably in a contiguous operational area for the three companies. A temporary deployment of Dutchbat IV might still be possible in Srebrenica after July 1995, while awaiting the arrival of the replacement. Voorhoeve therefore gave priority to the departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica. In his opinion, its replacement by a battalion from another country was a problem that the UN had to solve. According to Voorhoeve, that ought not to be too great a problem. In January 1995 a number of Islamic countries had offered new battalions for deployment for monitoring that the cessation of hostilities was being observed. Besides, when the UNPROFOR mandate in Croatia ended on 31 March 1995, as President Tudjman had announced, Eastern European battalions would also become available for deployment in Bosnia. In mid-February 1995 Voorhoeve asked the Defence Staff and Directorate of General Policy Affairs (DAB) to work out a number of options on the basis of a few clear instructions. The basic principle in this case was the departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica, but he also wanted to consider proposals for an extra term, provided, for example, that there would be internationalization.¹⁵⁰² So Voorhoeve also wanted to use the concept of internationalization in talks with the United Nations in 1995 about the replacement of Dutchbat.

In a clear analysis of seven options for the Netherlands on 1 July 1995 the conclusion was that the Netherlands had in fact little choice: the option of simply leaving Srebrenica was politically and morally out of the question; the offer of Dutchbat IV offered equally little possibility for departure from Srebrenica, and the prospects for a multinational peacekeeping force or improvement of the status of the enclave through the formation of a demilitarized zone or a UN-administered area were also nil.¹⁵⁰³ The conclusion that the Netherlands could not simply walk out of Srebrenica was also reached by a delegation from the Parliamentary Committees for Defence and Foreign Affairs on the basis of talks with Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rupert Smith, Force Commander General Bernard Janvier and Yasushi Akashi during a working visit to Croatia and Bosnia at the end of March 1995. As Akashi said, it was difficult to find a replacement.¹⁵⁰⁴

Voorhoeve's announcement to the Parliamentary Committees for Defence and Foreign Affairs on 9 March, that the Netherlands wanted to deploy the battalion elsewhere in Bosnia and that a part of it could possibly remain in Srebrenica if 'a country that was of political and military significance' wanted to share the responsibility in the Safe Area with the Netherlands, was described by his official advisers as wishful thinking more than anything else.¹⁵⁰⁵ They thought that such a partner was not to be found.

In the official advice, attention was also drawn to the risk that the Netherlands would suffer a serious fall in the ranking of troop suppliers if on its departure from Srebrenica UNPROFOR were to say that it did not need to station a Dutchbat IV elsewhere in Bosnia. Since the Netherlands itself

¹⁵⁰⁰ DJZ. 'Visit of Junior Minister Gmelich Meijling to Dutch units in the former Yugoslavia from 10 to 15 October 1994.'

¹⁵⁰¹ DCBC, 287. Memo DAB and CDS to Minister, 22/02/95 'Some thoughts on relieving the troops in Srebrenica.'

¹⁵⁰² DCBC, 381. Memorandum No.10/95, MinDef to CDS and DAB, 16/02/95.

¹⁵⁰³ DAB. Memorandum DAB and CDS to Minister, 22/02/95 'Some thoughts on relieving the troops in Srebrenica.'

¹⁵⁰⁴ TK, Parliamentary session year 1994-1995, 22 181, No.108, pp.3 and 7-8.

¹⁵⁰⁵ TK, Parliamentary session year 1994-1995, 22 181, No.92, pp.5-6. DAB. Memorandum DAB and CDS to Minister, 22/02/95 'Some thoughts on relieving the troops in Srebrenica.'

possessed ‘no credible means of pressure’ for achieving replacement of Dutchbat in Srebrenica, Voorhoeve had to ask the Secretary-General of the UN to press for that replacement. If Dutchbat IV were to be offered, clear agreements had to be reached on the preconditions, and preferably an agreement with the Americans on extraction in an emergency situation.¹⁵⁰⁶

Before his meeting with Boutros Boutros-Ghali on 17 March 1995, Voorhoeve was instructed by the government to press for the replacement of Dutchbat. The UN would have to find the successor, and the Netherlands was prepared to stay longer in Srebrenica only if a decision was taken to station a multinational peacekeeping force.¹⁵⁰⁷ However, Voorhoeve’s talks with Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan did not produce anything more than diplomatic pleasantries: praise for the quality of the Dutch contribution to peace operations, also outside Bosnia, and the promise of every cooperation, but without giving much hope of finding a replacement. It was striking that at the start of the conversation Kofi Annan did mention the possibility of internationalization of Srebrenica. A few months earlier he himself had rejected it out of hand. After all, the Dutch Government wanted to offer that option ‘only as a last resort’ after ‘an all-out effort by the UN’. Voorhoeve therefore did not respond to Annan’s suggestion and confined himself to announcing the departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica.¹⁵⁰⁸ The mutual standpoints were now clear, but there was really no prospect of a solution. The replacement of Dutchbat by a Pakistani battalion – a suggestion of US Secretary of Defence William Perry during a conversation with Voorhoeve a few days earlier – was an option with no prospects, according to the Dutch Government. The Bosnian Serbs would not allow in a battalion from a Muslim country.¹⁵⁰⁹

The Dutch Government first awaited action from the UN, but the UN did not want Dutchbat to leave. There was not much hope from that quarter either. After these first steps, there was a period of quiet, during which the Netherlands continued to hold the standpoint that the UN had to arrange for replacement. When that failed to happen, in the end the Dutch Government itself set about finding a replacement for Dutchbat from the beginning of May onwards. Voorhoeve played a leading and controlling part in this, as in the preceding phase. The possibilities were limited. It was clear that no candidates were available within NATO. In general, the proportion of western countries in UNPROFOR was falling, while that of non-western, in particular Islamic, countries was growing. The possibilities were further limited because the Netherlands did not want to approach an Islamic country: it was assumed that the Bosnian Serbs would not allow them to be stationed in Srebrenica. Attention was focused on four battalions that would become available through the redeployment of UNPROFOR in Croatia when the mandate was extended on 1 April 1995. Of these, only a Ukrainian battalion could in fact be considered.¹⁵¹⁰ The seeking of the cooperation of the Ukraine and the UN for the replacement of Dutchbat is discussed further in Chapter 4 of Part III.

12. A balance in Bosnia policy?

Dutch policy on troops in Bosnia was largely influenced by developments in the peace process and the international discussion on continuation or withdrawal of the peacekeeping force as a necessary consequence of a possible unilateral lifting of the arms embargo by the Americans. In parallel with this, but less politically explosive, were talks on the reinforcement of UNPROFOR.

¹⁵⁰⁶ DCBC, 287. Memorandum DAB and CDS to Minister, 22/02/95 ‘Some thoughts on relieving the troops in Srebrenica.’

¹⁵⁰⁷ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 10/03/95, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

¹⁵⁰⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Coded cable Van Mierlo 067, 16/03/95. ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Coded cable Biegman 212, 17/03/95.

¹⁵⁰⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Coded cable Jacobovits 192, 15/03/95. ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Coded cable Van Mierlo 067, 16/03/95.

¹⁵¹⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Coded cable Biegman 390, 05/05/95. ABZ, DPV/ARA/00580. Coded cable Biegman 428, 16/05/95.

In Srebrenica, Dutchbat was under the impression that little was being done in the Netherlands to improve its position in the enclave. The battalion felt abandoned to its fate. Communication with The Hague was difficult. On the other hand, the authorities could do relatively little to improve the position of Dutchbat. The logistical resupply, such as supplies of fuel and food, was a UN responsibility, but because of the Bosnian Serb restriction on freedom of movement providing supplies to the battalion had become an increasing problem. As explained in the Appendix 'Resupply by air', the UN authorities tried to arrange the resupplying in the spring.

It is difficult to establish to what extent in general the Netherlands put pressure on UNPROFOR to improve the situation in Srebrenica. There was regular contact between the military authorities in the Netherlands and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo and Kiseljak and UNPROFOR in Zagreb. That contact went mainly through the Dutch officers at those headquarters. However, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had few possibilities within the limits of the peacekeeping concept to do anything for Srebrenica, or Dutchbat in Srebrenica. In practice, it was found that attention could be drawn to the concern about the situation in Srebrenica only through the political line of the minister and contacts at the highest military level. Voorhoeve did that in his bilateral contacts and at ministerial meetings of NATO and the Western European Union. The Chief of Defence Staff and the Commander in Chief of the Netherlands Army followed the same course on the margins of international consultation. The same happened at UNPROFOR in Zagreb and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo.

It sometimes produced an unexpected positive reaction: when at the end of November Junior Minister Gmelich Meijling described the American withdrawal from Operation Sharp Guard as leaving in the lurch allies who had deployed their troops in Bosnia, US Defence Secretary William Perry spontaneously promised American support if Dutchbat got into difficulties.¹⁵¹¹ That did not, however, give solace regarding the everyday problems.

In The Hague, the authorities were therefore aware of the difficult situation in Srebrenica. Several political and military authorities had visited the enclave and were familiar with the situation and the working conditions. After his visit in September 1994, Voorhoeve was deeply affected and had drawn his conclusions: in the following months he tried to achieve two objectives. In the first instance, he tried to achieve 'internationalization' of the presence in Srebrenica by stationing of a contingent from another NATO country and ending the assignment in Srebrenica on 1 July 1995. He linked those objectives: if internationalization came about, as far as he was concerned continuation of the mission after 1 July was negotiable. Voorhoeve was convinced that the presence of troops from another NATO country would increase the safety of the Dutch contingent. With these objectives, he wanted to put an end to what he later called the 'hostage-taking situation'.¹⁵¹²

Voorhoeve's approach to the problem of Dutchbat in Srebrenica was in keeping with his view of the general policy in Bosnia. He was committed to the objective of the peace mission in the former Yugoslavia and was seeking ways of improving the quality of that mission. The quality in his view was permanently under pressure because of inadequate UNPROFOR resources. Fitting in with that line of thought were his proposals for reinforcing UNPROFOR and his readiness to assist with ad hoc measures in crisis situations. Reinforcement of UNPROFOR in his view was the central theme. With respect to this he was also looking for a construct in which the Netherlands could cooperate with another, preferably NATO country. Realization of the desired cooperation seldom proved possible in practice, because the potential partners were not interested, or were not in a position to increase their contribution to UNPROFOR. In the Netherlands too, the scope for increasing the contribution to UNPROFOR was limited, but the possibilities were thoroughly examined and translated into proposals.

¹⁵¹¹ Interview J.C. Gmelich Meijling, 04/12/01.

¹⁵¹² Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97.

Srebrenica and the reinforcement of UNPROFOR were cases in which Voorhoeve, despite all the restrictions, could conduct his own policy. Since the deployment of Dutchbat in March 1994 a de facto sharing of work had grown between the departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs. Defence dealt with the military aspects, Foreign Affairs with the political and international aspects. Coordination at official level took place mainly during the Defence Management Crisis Centre briefings in the bunker. After the Kok Government took office, the situation remained essentially the same, although Van Mierlo gave his colleague at Defence more scope. Political talks in the context of the European Union and NATO on the central issues of the Yugoslavia case remained the domain of Foreign Affairs. In those bodies the Dutch representative could express the Dutch point of view on the peace process, lifting of the arms embargo or withdrawal of UNPROFOR, but this had little effect internationally.

Defence in fact bore the responsibility for all other matters, also at international level. It involved above all lobbying for Dutchbat. Defence was aware of the fact that the possibilities for the Netherlands to exert international influence were very limited. In a recommendation on possible Dutch proposals, that awareness was put in a nutshell: 'The countries of the Contact Group determine the policy. The Dutch have little influence. That is a *fait accompli*.'¹⁵¹³ That did not mean, of course, that the Netherlands did not have its own view. Maintenance and strengthening of international cohesion were keywords for the Netherlands. In The Hague they were well aware that there was little question of this in reality. This produced a certain nervousness in the way in which the Dutch acted, expressed both in the call for strengthening of the cooperation within NATO and UNPROFOR and in the support for special initiatives such as the meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff in December 1994 in The Hague.

That nervous activity manifested itself at Defence particularly because of the concern for Dutch troops in Bosnia. Foreign Affairs, on the other hand, had in the meantime opted for a low-profile approach. In the rising tensions within NATO about the course of Bosnia policy and the path to a peace settlement it seemed best not to express an opinion any more than was necessary in the debate. The Dutch Government wanted to stand by Washington if it was a matter of taking a tough line on the Bosnian Serbs, but there were limits to that support. That emerged most clearly in the discussion on the arms embargo, but it was also evident in the regulation of a special status for Bihac in November 1994. Ultimately, there was no difference of view between Defence and Foreign Affairs about the objectives of the policy: UNPROFOR had to remain in Bosnia until a political settlement had been achieved. The continuation of humanitarian aid was a task which the Netherlands, NATO and the troop suppliers could not shirk. Conflicts within NATO on the execution of those tasks would have a counterproductive effect and therefore had to be reconciled.

The question of whether the high level of activity by Defence was also an indication of lack of confidence that the cohesion would be maintained by the West is difficult to answer. What is clear is that at the beginning of 1995 there were differences of view between Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo concerning the degree of activism that the Netherlands had to display in order to turn the tide. Although Foreign Affairs shared Voorhoeve's concern about the risks of the lifting of the arms embargo and the withdrawal of UNPROFOR, it advocated a not too assertive course. This difference of view was manifest in connection with Voorhoeve's proposal at the beginning of February 1995 for the publication of an article in an American newspaper on a new Bosnia policy. Voorhoeve had pointed out in Munich in February 1995 the acute danger of a resumption of the war in the former Yugoslavia in the event of the withdrawal of UNPROFOR combined with unilateral lifting of the arms embargo by the United States. He rejected out of hand criticism of the poor functioning of the peacekeeping force and called for a reinforcement of the Safe Area concept by means of protection by NATO troops, demilitarization, tit-for-tat response to attacks, assured resupply and taking out of the ground-to-air missile installations of the VRS.¹⁵¹⁴ All points of the proposal involved a toughening of the international line taken so far.

¹⁵¹³ DS. Note D95/073, DAB (De Winter) to Minister, 16/02/95.

¹⁵¹⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05277. Voorhoeve to Van Mierlo, 07/02/95; Appendix: Needed: a joint new Bosnia policy.

Van Mierlo advised against the publication of the article; Foreign Affairs officials felt besieged by this pleading for a change in the international line by way of a newspaper article. The reactions were harsh: it was an unfeasible proposal, its execution would mean war, and approval of the Government was needed on the basis of 'a well thought-out paper' from Defence and Foreign Affairs.¹⁵¹⁵

The background to this incident was not just a difference of view on the policy to be pursued. It also had to do with Voorhoeve's dissatisfaction about the lack of response from Foreign Affairs and Van Mierlo, as he subsequently stated. According to Voorhoeve, Foreign Affairs did not respond to his initiatives for policy changes after the establishment of a common line at the end of September 1994. What exactly Foreign Affairs therefore regarded as 'not feasible', 'not fitting in with international policy' or 'unsupported by the Bosnian Government' remained unanswered questions for Voorhoeve. That also applied to Voorhoeve's pleading in September 1994 for contact to be established with the Contact Group concerning preventive evacuation, and that of October 1994 concerning exchange of territory.¹⁵¹⁶ On the other hand, Voorhoeve himself had informed the Government about the gravity of the situation, but had never emphasized the need for attention to his problems with Foreign Affairs; it was not Prime Minister Wim Kok's style to take the matter in hand on his own initiative, according to a senior advisor of the Prime Minister.¹⁵¹⁷

This clash between Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo illustrates more than a difference of opinion concerning policy. It also makes clear that in the policy concerning Bosnia and Srebrenica Voorhoeve had in fact become the minister in the driving seat. He did this with great conviction and effort, but also in his own way, with the associated limitations: he had little need of advice, plotted his own course and regarded his official advisers mainly as implementers. Van Mierlo had a totally different style of tackling matters and, on the whole, less knowledge of the case. He gave Voorhoeve the scope that the latter wanted, but not the practical response or the support that Voorhoeve expected.

With regard to the international side of the policy, there was in fact little choice: up to the end of May they muddled their way through internationally. The Dutch complaints about greater cohesion and reinforcement of UNPROFOR had little effect. Internationally, there was little sign of movement in the first few months of 1995, even after the hectic final months of 1994. To everyone's surprise, the cessation of hostilities that had lasted for four months was still holding reasonably well, although the number of violations, particularly by the ABiH, was steadily increasing. However, likewise against everyone's expectations, there was little movement in the peace talks in the meantime. Bosnia did not disappear from the international agenda, but it had been put on the back burner. This situation did not change until after the end of the cessation of hostilities and the resumption of the war in May 1995.

¹⁵¹⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/ 05277 Voorhoeve to Van Mierlo, 07/02/95; Appendix: Needed: a joint new Bosnia policy. Handwritten comments on the appendix. Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 15/4/97.

¹⁵¹⁶ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.

¹⁵¹⁷ Interview J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 24/05/00.

Part III

The fall of Srebrenica

Chapter 1

The military and political situation in spring 1995

1. Introduction

A proper understanding of the series of events that resulted in the fall of Srebrenica on 11 July 1995 is not possible without a further discussion of the political and military-strategic developments since the spring of that year. Even within the United Nations some heated discussions took place. After all, there are arguments to support the conclusion that the Safe Area policy had become a failure. The Safe Areas had not been demilitarized as intended but, on the contrary, the warring factions were misusing them for military purposes.

That also made the UNPROFOR mandate and organization subject of discussion once again. In May 1995, the UN Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali, and Force Commander General Janvier, presented their ideas to the UN Security Council. However, their ideas stranded in the interplay of political forces in New York and in the capitals of the troops-supplying countries. Nevertheless the ideas of Janvier as well as those of Boutros-Ghali will be discussed further because they provide an insight into the situation of the mission at the time and into the ambiguities in the UNPROFOR mandate as laid down in the various Security Council resolutions. Those ambiguities influenced the effectiveness of the UNPROFOR mission and the warring factions' perception and the public opinion regarding the UN presence.

The matter will be approached from the Bosnian angle. That means hardly any attention will be given to developments in Croatia and Republika Srpska Krajina, the 'serb Republic' proclaimed by the Croatian Serbs in the Krajina.

This chapter focuses on the military operational and strategic aspects. That is because after the rejection of the Contact Group plan by the Bosnian Serbs, political activities to end the conflict in Bosnia were on the backburner. The cease-fire agreed on 31 December 1994, known as the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, that should have lasted until 1 May 1995, had not put a stop to the fighting. On the contrary, the hostilities continued with renewed intensity, also before the end of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. The political vacuum in which UNPROFOR found itself will also be discussed in detail. The political activities that did continue, such as the creation of the Rapid Reaction Force, will also be addressed.

In spring 1995 the military-strategic balance between the warring factions in Bosnia was shifting. That had two causes: firstly the creation of a military alliance within the Muslim-Croat Federation but, more importantly, the shift in balance between the military forces of the Bosnian Muslims (the ABiH) and those of the Bosnian Serbs (the VRS). This balance shifted in favour of the Bosnian Muslims: the ABiH had considerably more manpower than the VRS and over the course of time they became better armed, equipped and trained, while the VRS became more and more exhausted.

Also from an economic point of view the Serb Republic in Bosnia, Republika Srpska, proclaimed by the Bosnian Serbs, was taking a beating. The effect of the sanctions became apparent and fuel shortages had an impact on the mobility of the VRS.

In addition to visions of the military-strategic situation that prevailed in Zagreb, Sarajevo and other capitals, this introduction will also discuss the strategy of the Bosnian Muslims and the Bosnian-Serb intentions. Particularly the latter was an unknown element for UNPROFOR, just like for the ABiH. A major cause of that was that UNPROFOR did not have a properly functioning intelligence organization. Interviews by UNPROFOR representatives with politicians and soldiers of the warring factions, and interpretations of those, had to lead to the best possible assessment of the intentions of

the warring factions. In several cases that caused differences of opinion between the UN headquarters in Zagreb and Sarajevo.

Moreover, since 1995 these UN headquarters were under new command. Newcomers in 1995 were the French general Bernard Janvier, as Force Commander of UNPROFOR based in Zagreb, and the British general Rupert Smith in Sarajevo as Commander Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. They had to find their role at the Yugoslav scene amidst the players who were already there, including: the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (abbreviated: the SRSG), Yashusi Akashi from Japan; general Ratko Mladic at the Bosnian-Serb side; and general Rasim Delic on the side of the Bosnian Muslims. For UNPROFOR an important official within NATO was the American admiral Leighton Smith (not to be confused with general Rupert Smith). As Commander in Chief Allied Forces Southern Europe he was one of the people holding the key to Close Air Support.

Their visions, the differences between those, and the resulting disputes regarding the assessment of the military-strategic situation will receive special attention in this chapter. That is because these visions had an impact on the policy and its implementation. For that reason we will start with a characterization of the main players on the military-strategic stage. The two newcomers in Zagreb and Sarajevo have a prominent position among them: generals Janvier and Smith.

2. Force Commander general Bernard Janvier

Opinions differ widely on the French general Bernard Janvier who took office in February 1995. His way of acting can be described as careful and cautious, for which he was both praised and abused.

Among journalists, Janvier would soon be regarded as the man who later refused Srebrenica Close Air Support, thus causing the onset of the fall of the enclave. That left a mark on the appreciation for Janvier in later days.

However, on such qualifications it was often too easily forgotten that Janvier had a military responsibility that not only covered Bosnia, but also included Croatia and Macedonia. That means his assessments were also based on conditions outside Srebrenica.

There was more admiration for Janvier in Dutch military circles. That was caused by the fact that the safety of the peacekeepers, who of course had not been sent to Bosnia to fight, had his continuous attention. On various occasions Janvier pointed out that the safety of the UN personnel was more important than the implementation of the mandate; that also determined his attitude regarding Close Air Support. Janvier always tried to protect the soldiers on the ground. That was one of the reasons why for instance his substitute (Deputy Force Commander), the Canadian General-Major Barry Ashton, highly respected him.¹

Other people in Janvier's staff did show a more critical attitude towards the Force Commander. Nobody had any doubts that Janvier's concern for the UNPROFOR troops was genuine, but at the same time some people of his Zagreb staff saw it as an excuse to do nothing.²

Also within NATO for instance, criticisms of Janvier's attitude could be heard, though those could partly be explained by the differences in roles between NATO and UN. NATO Secretary-General Claes resented the fact that Janvier - and with him Akashi and Boutros-Ghali - were continuously holding back when it came to military action, though according to Claes it had not been much different with Janvier's predecessors Cot and De Lapresle. De Lapresle took the position that the peacekeeping character of the mission had to be maintained and, moreover, he did not want to put his troops at risk. For that reason he too resisted NATO's call for air strikes.³ Claes thought that firmer action had to be taken towards the Bosnian Serbs, but he got irritated by the lingering and the willingness to compromise on the part of Janvier and Akashi, the more so because Janvier had once

¹ Interview Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

² Interview Tony Banbury, 05/06/00.

³ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87302, File 3200-5, Vol. I, Air Strikes, 6 Aug 93-19 Dec 94. Interoffice Memorandum, De Lapresle to Akashi (Only), 25/11/94, UN Conf.

told him: 'I don't owe you an explanation: I am the UN'. Janvier could sometimes really pull rank, according to Claes.⁴

Janvier spent about half his time in Zagreb and the other half travelling. The latter for talks in the UN framework in Geneva or New York, with his subcommanders in Sarajevo, or in Croatia or Macedonia.

In addition to strictly military aspects, Janvier was also expected to be engaged in the link with the political-strategic decision-making process. Janvier considered his staff in Zagreb to be suitable for military affairs only. The military staff in Zagreb was hardly or not consulted regarding negotiations or direct contacts with Mladic or others. Janvier handled that with Akashi's political advisor.⁵

The language barrier

Generally speaking, the performance of French officers in peacekeeping operations and international staffs could sometimes be a problem, because mainly the higher officers in many cases did not speak any foreign languages. That hampered their performance in the communication with other members of international staffs. Working with interpreters was not always a solution.⁶ For instance, general Gobilliard, substitute of general Smith in Sarajevo and acting commanding officer of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command at the time of the fall of Srebrenica, did not speak any English at all.⁷ Janvier did not speak English fluently either, which had consequences for his work: meetings were in English, but Janvier apparently did not understand English as medium of communication sufficiently to take control of discussions and to recognize subtle differences. For that reason he surrounded himself outside official meetings with a number of confidants who did speak French.⁸

That mechanism also made itself felt more widely: also in New York Janvier had close relations with UN Undersecretary-General Annan and Director of Communications and Special Projects, Tharoor, mainly because the latter spoke French fluently. Conversely, people at the UNPROFOR head office in Zagreb who spoke English, preferred to discuss matters outside meetings with other English-speaking people and within the staff there was a strong tendency to quickly discuss minor matters with the Deputy Force Commander or the Chief of Staff without calling in an interpreter. Maybe that also resulted in Janvier not being aware of all ins and outs. But whatever could be said about Janvier: according to the military advisor to the UN Secretary-General, general-major F.H. van Kappen, he did not manipulate.⁹

One of Akashi's assistants, Tony Banbury, even went as far as stating that the language problem also influenced Janvier with regard to his perception of the Bosnian-Serb way of thinking. Partly due to the language problem, Janvier would hardly be able to handle the day-to-day affairs, according to Banbury. On occasions he would not have understood the situation because he often refused to use an interpreter at meetings and briefings so he could not properly follow the discussion and made few contributions¹⁰. EU negotiator Carl Bildt also mentioned Janvier's English as a problem. Sometimes he could not follow a line of thought and, according to Bildt, that caused him to become isolated. Janvier's predecessor De Lapresle didn't have Janvier's language problem.¹¹

However, not everybody considered Janvier's inadequate knowledge of the English language a problem for his performance. The Canadian major David Last, Military Assistant to the Deputy Force Commander, for instance, who often accompanied Janvier, thought positively about Janvier. According

⁴ Interview W. Claes, 12/03/00.

⁵ Interview Michel Guesdon, 07/06/00

⁶ Interview Michel Guesdon, 07/06/00

⁷ Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

⁸ Interview H. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

⁹ Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

¹⁰ Interview Tony Banbury, 11/05/00.

¹¹ Interview Carl Bildt, 12/12/00.

to him the general was 'mentally fine'. He saw a connection with the circumstances: everybody in Zagreb was exhausted in those days in July, said Last. They made days from six in the morning to late at night, while in many cases they were on the telephone with their international capitals till all hours. Last had never seen Janvier not alert or concentrated as a consequence, yet when Janvier was tired, his English gradually deteriorated and he had more trouble following the discussions.¹² Yet Janvier did realize that he had his shortcomings in this field. He insisted on appointment of an English-speaking Deputy Force Commander, after his predecessor De Lapresle pointed out to him that the position would no longer be held by a Canadian officer, but that it would be offered to the Netherlands. For that reason Janvier wrote to Annan: 'I have a personal requirement for a native English DFC, due to my present lack of fluency in English.' As a result, the Netherlands contributed the Chief of Staff (Kolsteren, as from June 1995), and Canada kept the position of Deputy Force Commander (Ashton got that post).¹³

In Kolsteren's perception, Janvier didn't miss much despite the language barrier and if he did miss anything, he asked his Military Assistant or his translator. Once when Janvier was accompanied by a different interpreter who still had to learn the jargon, he said: 'No, that is not how I said it.' That would lead the conclusion that he did have a reasonable command of English, but did not feel comfortable enough to speak it. Important briefings, such as those Janvier arranged for Akashi as his military adviser, were held by Janvier personally and alone, usually with an interpreter, Kolsteren said. Janvier did speak English with Kolsteren himself, but as soon as an Englishman or American was present, he didn't, apparently for fear of being at a relative disadvantage due to the language problem. Then Janvier would speak French and his interpreter translated for him.¹⁴

Janvier as Force Commander

There have been speculations about the extent to which Janvier's policy was spoon-fed by the French government. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Akashi, declared to the NIOD that Janvier was 'under some pressure from his government'.¹⁵ Consequently, Janvier would have shown little initiative and would have followed the national line too closely. Other French Force Commanders, who adopted an attitude that was more independent from the French government, would have operated more effectively: general Cot would have achieved more, and someone like De Lapresle would even have had Akashi and Boutros-Ghali in his pocket. In addition, he would have been able to direct the minds of these two to a great extent because they had no military experience, according to UN Assistant Undersecretary-General Manfred Eisele.¹⁶ Bildt too called de Lapresle 'extremely knowledgeable and intellectual'.¹⁷

However, when judging Janvier it should not be forgotten that he had great doubts about the effectiveness of Close Air Support, as he had to deal with it in more difficult circumstances than Cot and De Lapresle. The use of Close Air Support did not yield much tactical advantage in the opinion of Janvier, but did entail substantial risks for the UNPROFOR units.¹⁸ A similar story was heard from the Dutch military adviser to the UN Secretary-General, Van Kappen. In his opinion Janvier set great store by the proportionality and subsidiariness principle, and his judgement on requests for Close Air Support were based on that principle. Janvier adhered to the concepts thought out in New York, said Van Kappen. Only when UNPROFOR was under fire from heavy weapons and there were no other methods to solve the problem, Janvier was prepared to call in air power. In his opinion Janvier was

¹² Interview David Last, 05/06/00.

¹³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 06/03/95, No. Z-376.

¹⁴ Interview A.M.W.W. M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

¹⁵ Interview Yasushi Akashi, 25/11/99.

¹⁶ Interview Manfred Eisele, 14/10/99.

¹⁷ Interview Carl Bildt, 12/12/00.

¹⁸ Confidential interview (4).

strongly focused on ‘doing things right’ rather than on ‘doing the right thing’. He wanted to remain impartial as long as possible and not be carried away by the emotions of the moment. Janvier’s staff, as well as Smith in Sarajevo, were prepared to go much further than Janvier.¹⁹ However, Janvier himself was not a Machiavellian and he felt a strong responsibility for the soldiers.²⁰

The ideas about this attitude of Janvier seem to be obscured, at least in his environment. There the image prevails that Janvier had great problems taking part in the discussions and had little to contribute. That way Janvier created the impression that he didn’t have much to say. Yet that was not correct. Janvier did prove to be a good analyst, but he could not show it very often due to the language barrier.

Of course Janvier’s personality also had an impact. He had problems gaining people’s confidence²¹ and he was not easy to approach.²² Neither should he have been a man with ‘beaucoup de finesse’ who was always in control of the situation.²³

This meant that Janvier was of a whole different breed than general Smith in Sarajevo who came under him. Differences of opinion between Zagreb and Sarajevo were not purely of a strategic nature. Philip Corwin, Head of Civil Affairs in Sarajevo, pointed out the differences in background and character of the leading military figures. According to Corwin, Smith had known nothing but successes as a soldier. He had been shaped by his experience in the Gulf War and the Falklands War. In both operations the use of military force against a military inferior opponent had paid off. As an advocate of more forceful action, Smith felt supported by popular sentiments and the international press.

Janvier on the other hand, felt the pressure of the international community in Zagreb stronger than Smith felt it in Sarajevo. In addition, Janvier was wary of what he called Smith’s American-type ‘cowboy’ diplomacy and he was strongly influenced by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The French were shaped by a less glorious military past and the experience of Dien Bien Phu. According to Corwin, Dien Bien Phu had not been a coincidence and Janvier was aware of that, just like general André Soubirou, the Commander of the Rapid Reaction Force, on which more in section 13. Soubirou had emphasized the considerable similarity between the geographical circumstances in Sarajevo and Dien Bien Phu. That was because both Sarajevo and the three eastern enclaves were situated in valleys surrounded by mountains and, consequently, they were indefensible.²⁴

Janvier adopted a more cautious attitude regarding forceful action against the Bosnian Serbs than the other leading figure at the UNPROFOR stage, general Rupert Smith. There were major differences between the ways of thinking of the two leading figures. Bildt judged that general Smith was ‘far more intellectual’ than Janvier. He was an intellectual who could also command troops.²⁵ Occasionally, the two generals had differences of opinion. Still Janvier said not to have harboured any animosity towards Smith but, on the contrary, spoke highly of him. Smith was in favour of hard action but never succeeded in convincing Akashi and Janvier. Smith wanted to fight and to take the side of the Bosnian Muslims, among other things by using force to open a corridor to Sarajevo. However, Janvier did not want to do that because UNPROFOR was not adequately equipped for such actions. The two had carried on a fundamental debate on the subject and, according to Janvier, Smith had known that Janvier would refuse.²⁶

¹⁹ Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

²⁰ Interview H. de Jonge, 30/05/00.

²¹ Interview Emma Shitaka, 11/05/00.

²² Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

²³ Interview Michel Guesdon, 07/06/00.

²⁴ Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*, p. 160.

²⁵ Interview Carl Bildt, 12/12/00.

²⁶ *Mission d’Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica, Audition de M. Bernard Janvier*, 25/01/01.

3. Commander UNPROFOR general Rupert Smith in Sarajevo

The British lieutenant-general Rupert Smith, Commander in Bosnia after his predecessor, the also British general Sir Michael Rose, was the latter's counterpart in a number of respects. Rose mainly relied on his British personal staff and tended to ignore the rest of staff. Smith on the other hand did use his staff, which made the work pleasant for a Chief of Staff. That at least kept the staff informed and people could keep a grip on things. Apart from the fact that Smith was an extremely pleasant superior, he also was at a very nice human being, according to his Chief of Staff, the Dutch Brigadier-general C.H. Nicolai.²⁷

Also as regards vision and policy, Rose and Smith were somewhat on opposite sides. One of Akashi's policy officers called Rose a general who was not very receptive to advice: once he had taken in decision, he refused to deviate from it.²⁸ One of Akashi's other policy officers confirmed that Smith had been the better general of the two. Rose had continuously been busy embellishing the UNPROFOR image.²⁹ He would rather talk to the media than enter into a meaningful discussion. For Smith this was exactly the other way round.³⁰ Rose used Close Air Support with care³¹ while Smith advocated the use of more extensive force. In Smith's analysis UNPROFOR was the hostage of the VRS. That continuously put UNPROFOR in an inferior position while Smith on the other hand was trying to reach a superior position. According to Smith a psychological battle against the VRS was required rather than just military force. He wanted to take a number of subsequent measures to get the message across to the VRS that he was not be trifled with.³²

Shortly after he took office on 23 February 1995, Smith explained his way of thinking to his subcommanders during a Force Commander's Conference. He wanted them to think ahead and to elaborate on ideas on what could be done. Only few people had to be involved because of the sensitivity of the matter. His message was 'be creative, think and work options out'. Smith wanted to promote the following lines of thought about the VRS: 'if they do this, they might already have done what they could do if we would do something which they wouldn't like. So we should do this, because they played their cards already while we have ours in hand'. Realization of the actions was not so much his department: for actual implementation of an action he at least had to involve Janvier and Akashi.³³

One of Akashi's assistants considered Smith a wonderful analyst, a great soldier and 'intellectually dangerous'. In that respect he was no match for Akashi or Janvier, she admitted. Akashi was afraid that Smith was provoking a war. Smith would have made an excellent team with Janvier's predecessor, De Lapresle. He was 'brilliant' as well, he grasped the current situation of UNPROFOR and the negotiating process and in fact he was more than a troops general.³⁴

Smith versus Mladic: a war of nerves

General Smith and general Mladic were well-matched. A true war of nerves was going on between these two diehards. An example of the way Smith operated at the time of operation Deliberate Force (the operation against the Serbs that after the fall of Srebrenica brought the change that eventually would result in the Dayton Peace Accord) was, that he used six artillery guns (howitzers) for selected

²⁷ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99.

²⁸ Interview Tony Banbury, 11/05/00.

²⁹ Interview Tone Bringa, 13/07/99.

³⁰ Interview Manfred Eisele, 14/10/99.

³¹ Interview George Joulwan, 08/06/00.

³² Interview Tony Banbury, 11/05/00.

³³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 117, Civil Affairs SNE. Memorandum, Notes from Force Commander's Conference, 23-02-95. Compiled by colonel NLA J.H.M. Engelen.

³⁴ Interview Emma Shitaka, 11/05/00.

targets, and every time had a separate howitzer fire two grenades on Mladic's native town. This would not have remained without effect.³⁵

Meetings between the two generals could be rather heavy. After the air strikes at Pale late May, Smith said that it was not proper for a professional soldier to expose unarmed observers and to threaten them with 'televised death'. He demanded release and decent treatment, but did not want to negotiate about it. Smith urged Mladic to impose restrictions upon himself and his soldiers, and he also urged Mladic to think about the dangers of his course of action. Mladic urged Smith to do the same.

When two days later Smith took the opportunity to explain on the telephone that he did not command the NATO forces, but that he could only recommenced an action, and once more pointed out to Mladic what the difference was between air strikes and Close Air Support, Mladic hung up the phone. He said he didn't want to listen to these monstrous thoughts. Yet two days later Mladic still accepted Smith's offer to let the situation cool off, casually advising Smith to take a tranquilizer to enable him to take reasonable decisions.

Another illustrative moment in their relation happened when the French retook the Vrbanja bridge at Sarajevo. A number of Bosnian-Serb soldiers were killed there, after which Mladic said that Smith did not have the right to kill VRS soldiers. It weren't Africans like Smith had killed earlier in his career, Mladic said. If Smith were a civilized human being, he would have to write letters of condolence to the families of the dead VRS soldiers, after which Smith asked Mladic if he had done the same to the families of the French soldiers who were killed. After all, it had been the VRS that started the action.³⁶

The two were not only matched, but in a sense they were also condemned to each other. There was little development in the relations between the two generals. Late June for instance, in an interview in *Srpska Vojska* Mladic lashed out to UNPROFOR and general Smith. Because the West did not want to send troops to Bosnia, the Croatian and Muslim forces were executing the Western policy in the Balkans, Mladic alleged. UNPROFOR had made it clear that it considered the VRS as the enemy, encouraged the Bosnian Muslims to continue fighting and provided them with food, fuel and ammunition. Mladic described Smith as a person who did not understand the situation. He came to Bosnia as an arrogant man, showered with glory from the Gulf War. According to Mladic he needed time to switch from fighter to peacemaker. Mladic also contended that Smith had recommended the Muslim-Croat Federation to jointly wage war, and that the Bosnian Serbs were the enemy.³⁷ The latter was exactly what UNPROFOR was frenetically trying to avoid. On the contrary, it had to become clear to the Bosnian Serbs that UNPROFOR was not at war with them and had no wish to be so. The Bosnian Serbs seemed to live in a world of their own and to have confidence in their ability to resist NATO and the UN.³⁸

After some time Mladic understood that Smith was 'something entirely different' than Janvier. He may have thought he would be able to overcome Janvier, unlike Smith. For that reason Mladic decided not to talk to Smith anymore, but to Janvier.³⁹ Smith on this part also refused to do business with Mladic for some time, for a number of reasons: out of principle; because of the hostages that were being held; because Smith himself was holding four VRS soldiers; and because he believed that the VRS would not be interested in talking to him.⁴⁰ After the last hostages were released in June, Janvier subsequently asked Mladic to resume normal relations with Smith and his staff.⁴¹

³⁵ Interview Emma Shitaka, 11/05/00.

³⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Telephone Conversation Gen Smith / Gen Mladic: 28/05/95 UN Confi, attached to Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 29/05/95, No. Z-883.

³⁷ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Telegram Belgrade to FCO, 2616161Z June 95.

³⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Fax Deyan Mihov, Acting D-SRSG/CAC BH Command Sarajevo to Yasushi Akashi and Michel Moussali, HCA Civil Affairs, HQ Zagreb, Situation Assessment May 29 1995 mailed with Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 29/05/95, No. Z-889.

³⁹ Interview Tony Banbury, 11/05/00.

⁴⁰ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. SRSG's Meeting in Split, 09/06/95, Confi.

⁴¹ DPKO, UNPF Code Cables 14 June 1995-30 June 1995. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 20/06/95, No. Z-1025.

In fact the opposite was going on of what Mladic observed in the interview. UNPROFOR generally did not behave as an enemy of the Bosnian Serbs, but generally showed willingness to come to arrangements. For that reason a Western ambassador in Sarajevo concluded: 'UNPROFOR tended to side with the Serbs.' UNPROFOR's tendency to do business with the VRS rather than with the ABiH can partly be explained from the fact that the Bosnian Serbs had an organized army (uniforms and regular units), according to the standards of the soldiers who were in command of UNPROFOR. The VRS were 'soldiers like us', unlike the moderately equipped and less organized ABiH army. Another reason for that implicit choice was the continuous complaining by the Bosnian Muslims.

In fact, Smith was the first of the UNPROFOR Commanders who adopted a different attitude and chose the side of the victim: de Bosnian Muslims. Smith qualified this intervention with the words: 'I have broken the machine and nobody can repair it'. However, saying this he overestimated his own role a little; Smith's problem was that the Force Commander in Zagreb, Janvier, took the decisions and in many cases ignored the advice from the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander, Smith.⁴²

Smith and politicians

Smith had some reservations regarding politicians, who according to him did not always really have an idea of what was actually happening in Bosnia, and regularly failed to consult the military when taking decisions that did have military consequences. Before he was appointed in Bosnia, Smith in his position of British Operations Officer in London had become involved in the possible deployment of NATO forces in the former Yugoslavia. He had opposed it: in his opinion it was impossible for UN and NATO to operate at the same time in the same area. According to him, at the time no politician had consulted the UN desks or the military on declaring the No-Fly-Zone above the former Yugoslavia. That was an invention by politicians and, said Smith, the soldiers were then left to implement it.

Those politicians did make themselves heard in the meantime; Smith indeed had the problem that time and again he had to convince the government in London that his vision was correct, and that was not always easy.⁴³ Yet Smith was very open about those contacts with London. He quite regularly showed his Chief of Staff Nicolai messages he had exchanged with London.⁴⁴

An example of Smith's vision regarding political plans was that already at an early stage for military-operational considerations he was not enthusiastic about the plans NATO was designing to get UNPROFOR out of Bosnia in case of an emergency. The question he repeatedly asked was: how fast can we get away? His experience in the Gulf War had taught him that it could take four to six months to remove all vehicles and heavy equipment from the operating area. Another worry with regard to this was whether sufficient staging areas for the troops and the equipment could be found, i.e. places to take the troops and equipment on board, and whether sufficient vessels were available.⁴⁵

Another example of the different approaches of politicians and the military which Smith was dismayed at, was that the UN did not allow him to move artillery to Sarajevo. The British had artillery available, but that had to remain embarked on vessels in the Adriatic Sea and the UN did not allow it to be put ashore. In his opinion artillery would have been more useful than airplanes. Smith adopted a pragmatic approach in military affairs.⁴⁶

⁴² Confidential interview (3).

⁴³ Interview Tony Banbury, 11/05/00.

⁴⁴ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 09/07/99.

⁴⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 117, Civil Affairs SNE. Memorandum, Notes from Force Commander's Conference, 23/02/95. Compiled by Colonel NLA J.H.M. Engelen.

⁴⁶ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

4. The differences between Smith and Janvier

That also had an impact on his relation with Janvier. A clear example happened as regards the political decision to set up what was called the Rapid Reaction Force for Bosnia in June 1995. This Rapid Reaction Force will be discussed in more detail in section 13; what it roughly comes down to is that this Rapid Reaction Force was a 'forceful' military unit – read: with artillery and attack helicopters - with the objective of strengthening UNPROFOR in order to reduce the mission's vulnerability. Janvier's estimate was that the Rapid Reaction Force could be used for defensive purposes, but that it would be of little use for offensive action.⁴⁷ Janvier at least showed to be prepared to help thinking about the deployment of this unit.

However, it was also clear that a considerable risk existed that this Rapid Reaction Force would not be able to keep away from the battle that was going on. For instance sending supplies to the eastern enclaves was of course in conflict with the attrition strategy pursued by the Bosnian Serbs for these enclaves. It was also clear that general Smith anticipated extensive discussions on the exact implementation of the Rapid Reaction Force. For that reason Smith took the following clear position on this force: 'if I can't use it to fight, I don't want it'.⁴⁸

The - very broad - idea was that Smith mainly took the position of a soldier who thought that politicians did not sufficiently allow for the military reality in taking their decisions. Janvier on the other hand in his position of Force Commander had to take into account the political reality to a greater extent. Smith did not feel supported by Janvier and Akashi either, but as an exception he did by Annan in New York, although he said not to have sought support from the UN in New York. Smith admitted that there were differences between him and Janvier, although these were not in the first place personal according to him.⁴⁹

Differences of opinion between Smith and Janvier remained, but according to Smith they only really disagreed on two occasions. The first time a conflict between them developed 'about being forceful' regarding the use of helicopters for supplying the enclaves; see the extensive Appendix 'supplying by air' to this report. The second time the problem was the solution of the crisis regarding UN personnel taken hostage in May/June 1995. Smith thought that Janvier should not make a 'deal' with the Bosnian Serbs who had taken UN people hostage. More about this alleged 'deal' in Chapter 3.⁵⁰

However, the fact remained that Smith and Janvier fundamentally differed in their ideas about a more 'forceful' course of action against the Bosnian Serbs. For instance when the VRS stopped UN convoys, Smith wanted to use force to get them to their destination, but Akashi and Janvier prevented that.⁵¹ More in general Smith opted for a tougher course of action against the Bosnian Serbs, and he expected results from that. He thought that UNPROFOR had lost much of its credibility, and he certainly had a point there. For instance, the Bosnian Serbs (as well as the Bosnian Muslims) had set up many checkpoints for UN personnel. It had started with one checkpoint, but at a certain moment all of Bosnia was riddled with checkpoints. As a consequence, UNPROFOR had lost its Freedom of Movement, one of the starting points of the mission. More and more UN vehicles were seized. UNMOs were taken from their vehicle, undressed and robbed, and then they came walking back barefoot. All the time there were shooting incidents and these also deteriorated into shooting incidents towards UNPROFOR. And on top of all that it not only became impossible to supply the population, but it even became impossible to send supplies to the own UN personnel. For that reason Smith wanted to take a stand in order to change things radically. In his opinion there was only one language the Bosnian Serbs would understand: the hard hand. However, Janvier en Akashi were afraid of

⁴⁷ NIOD Coll. Banbury. SRSG's Meeting in Split, 09/06/95, Confi.

⁴⁸ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

⁴⁹ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

⁵⁰ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

⁵¹ Interview Tone Bringa, 13/07/99.

hostage-takings. The political leaders in Zagreb preferred the solution of bringing in a new negotiator to keep the staff in Sarajevo quiet for some time. People had to accept that, certainly while there still were hostages.⁵² According to Philip Corwin, Head of Civil Affairs in Sarajevo, Smith would rather face the battle with the Bosnian Serbs and he felt that he had the moral weight of the international community behind him.⁵³ However, it would appear that having a case was not the same as winning it.

There is no agreement on the question how far the opinions of Janvier and Smith differed. Akashi for instance thought that messages about major differences of opinion between Janvier and Smith were exaggerated.⁵⁴ He saw no reason to let his judgement on the relation between the generals be influenced by newspaper messages about major differences between Janvier and Smith.⁵⁵ Yet other people said that Janvier and Smith did not hit it off. Also according to a UN spokesman Smith and Janvier had a 'normal relationship', although he remarked on Janvier that rank and intellectual capacity did not match and that this had also been heard from French circles.⁵⁶ Swedish UN officers on the other hand were positive about Janvier: brilliant, honest, the safety of the troops always came first and he was a good Commander.⁵⁷

EU negotiator Carl Bildt analyzed that Janvier was mainly a troops Commander. Smith was less of a troops man than Janvier. He tried to be more analytical, to take everything in and to make proposals. Sometimes that clashed, but the lines between Sarajevo and Zagreb were open and operative. There was no other possibility, because the UN headquarters in Sarajevo could do nothing without that in Zagreb, for instance when calling in Close Air Support, for which the key was in Zagreb.⁵⁸ According to the American admiral Leighton Smith the relation between Smith and Janvier could be described as reasonable, although the two generals did have heated debates from time to time.⁵⁹

In practice the difference in attitude between Janvier and Smith appeared to solve itself because most decisions were taken in Zagreb. For that problem Smith, like Rose before him, tried to find a *modus vivendi*, for instance because he 'did not fully report on his thinking to Akashi and Janvier'⁶⁰. Zagreb took the decisions and several times Smith had to face the fact that he was overruled by Janvier or that his advice was ignored. Janvier, and other Force Commanders before him, should have been insufficiently open to the special situation in Sarajevo and the rest of Bosnia. For instance only after the fall of Srebrenica a UN office was established in Sarajevo with an own Mission Chief, which restored the balance somewhat and a more or less 'customized' policy for Bosnia could be pursued. On taking decisions, Zagreb strongly depended on the reports supplied by Smith from Sarajevo and the events in Sector North East were far away.⁶¹

Smith confirmed to the NIOD that this had put Zagreb 'out of the loop' as regards the events in Sarajevo and the eastern enclaves. Consequently, information about the situation in Sarajevo and the eastern enclaves reached Zagreb less and less adequately. There was not much contact between Smith and Janvier or Akashi, and Smith himself did not go to Zagreb very often. Moreover, contacts were hampered by the fact that the UN satellite connections were not secure;⁶² once the UN had lent a UN-secured fax machine to the VRS to enable them to maintain secure connections with the Bosnian-Serb regime in Pale. Later the Bosnian Serbs had refused to return this fax machine

⁵² Interview C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99.

⁵³ Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*, p. 160.

⁵⁴ Interview Yasushi Akashi, 25/11/99.

⁵⁵ Interview Yasushi Akashi, 25/11/99.

⁵⁶ Confidential interview (56).

⁵⁷ Interview Jan Inge Svensson, 04/11/99.

⁵⁸ Interview A.M.W.W. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

⁵⁹ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

⁶⁰ Interview Tony Banbury, 11/05/00

⁶¹ Interview K. Bache, 29/10/99.

⁶² Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

In conclusion it can be said about the relation between Smith and Janvier that in general Smith was advocate of a hard line towards the Bosnian Serbs, because he thought they were not sensitive to ‘softer’ means; Janvier was much more cautious with a view to the safety of the UN troops. On the basis of his responsibility, Janvier also had to take into account the political world in which the decisions on UNPROFOR were taken. Smith from his responsibility also didn’t have to worry so much about the political *Umwelt* of UNPROFOR than Janvier had to. In addition, Janvier seemed to have a less analytical attitude than Smith, but his analyses and the resulting solutions were in many cases checked by Janvier’s cautiousness and political reservations. Eventually Smith increasingly appeared to have seen it correctly, but that was not until after the fall of Srebrenica. During the preceding period Janvier repeatedly overruled Smith’s military initiatives. To sum up: differences of opinion remained, but it was not impossible for them to work with each other. There was not much consultation, also due to a lack of properly secure means of communication.

5. The Split meeting: *split visions?*

By way of illustration of the various ideas within the UNPROFOR top, first an explanation follows about the meeting in Split on 9 June 1995. That was a highly important meeting because that was where Smith, Janvier and Akashi were going to synchronize their watches. The meeting took place in an atmosphere that was crisis-like for UNPROFOR. That was mainly caused by the fact that since the end of May UN personnel had been held hostage by the Bosnian Serbs. That had happened after NATO had carried out air strikes on ammunition depots in Pale, the ‘capital’ of the republic in Bosnia that had been proclaimed by the Bosnian Serbs. The meeting was intended to ensure that the analysis of the situation in Bosnia and its approach by these three leading figures (and then mainly between Smith on one side and Janvier and Akashi on the other) would be the same, but in fact it only illustrated the differences between their way of thinking.

The discussion was mainly carried on between Smith and Janvier, with Smith playing first fiddle. The few times Akashi contributed to the discussion, it would be typical of his attitude: he did not commit himself. Akashi’s only real contribution to the discussion was that it would be a problem to get the hostages released, unless the Bosnian Serbs would get the assurance that no more air strikes would follow, and that was impossible. Small numbers of hostages had been released earlier, but now the situation was different, said Akashi. In his opinion the Bosnian Serbs were more isolated than they used to and the scale of air strikes had been more massive than ever before. Not much had changed to the framework in which UNPROFOR operated. Modifications to the Safe Areas regime had appeared a controversial issue in the Security Council, Akashi reported (later in this Chapter the cautiousness of the Security Council will be discussed in detail). Any proposed new actions had to be acceptable to the Security Council and the troop contributing nations. New proposals also had to fit in within the context of peacekeeping. Akashi once more listed the relevant requirements: consent of the warring factions, impartiality, use of force only in self-defence and freedom of movement.

If elements of peace enforcing were to creep into the mission, it would reach the edge of the ‘Mogadishu line’, according to Akashi. He said that with reference to the failed UN operation in Somalia; since then crossing the ‘Mogadishu’ line meant crossing the border between peacekeeping and peace enforcing. Crossing this border results in chaos and unpredictable consequences for the peacekeepers, or forced withdrawal.

As peacekeeper UNPROFOR had to talk to all parties, and small steps were better than a combative approach, said Akashi. If UNPROFOR would not cross the ‘Mogadishu’ line, it would be accused of being too mild and pro-Serb. On the other hand, if the line was crossed, they would be accused of recklessness and endangering the peace process. That way Akashi merely described the problem for UNPROFOR, without giving much indication for a solution to it.

At this meeting Smith recognized the major problems UNPROFOR was facing as a consequence of the current hostage crisis. He also reported major problems in the enclaves, in the sense that it was not possible to send supplies to the population there. Moreover, in Zepa and

Srebrenica there were UNPROFOR observation posts (OPs) that could easily be run over. Many UNPROFOR compounds, including those in the eastern enclaves, were within artillery range of the VRS. Every form of endorsement by the Bosnian Serbs for the UNPROFOR actions was a lost case. The Bosnian Muslims cooperated less and less too. In fact the UN had been neutralized and the Safe Areas were under increasing threat. The VRS still held UNPROFOR by the throat and Smith didn't believe that the VRS wanted a cease-fire. He believed that the VRS would no longer tolerate UNPROFOR in its vicinity and would also continue neutralizing NATO. The Bosnian Serbs would want to show the international community that they were not to be kept under control. That could strengthen the hold of the VRS on Sarajevo or lead to an attack on the eastern enclaves.

The Bosnian Muslims too were increasingly fed up with the UN, said Smith. When Pale was bombed, they hoped that the world came to their rescue, but now they saw that such was not the case. Their army, the ABiH, would want to continue what they started in May: entering into battle with the VRS, and in the meantime at the political front sticking to the Contact Group plan. All in all UNPROFOR had gradually been marginalized and developments for further marginalization went faster than UNPROFOR could keep up with. Things were looking bad for air strikes as well. More in general the Air Power instrument had been neutralized because the air strikes at Pale had not had the desired effect; on the contrary, it had caused the hostage crisis.

Despite the described problems, Smith still showed a certain amount of optimism. It would also be possible to take advantage of the situation that had developed. The air strike on Pale had surprised the VRS for various reasons. For once the UN had done what they said they were going to do. Also the scope and precision of the bombings had surprised the VRS. Advantage could be taken from that.

Nevertheless Smith thought that this action had failed because the VRS had not returned the heavy weapons around Sarajevo to the Weapon Collection Points. But that was a failure that could be converted into a gain. It was no longer necessary to deal with the VRS, after they had suspended their endorsement of the UNPROFOR operation in response to the bombings. Smith saw a wide range of opportunities: the fact that the UN was also holding four VRS soldiers gave UNPROFOR something to barter with and at least they showed the Serbs that they could not get away with everything. Smith did not seem to worry so much about the UN people who were being held hostage.

Janvier had a gloomier view of the situation than Smith. UNPROFOR was being frustrated more than ever, said Janvier. The Bosnian Serbs were master of the situation. Janvier was not amused that he had to ask permission from Mladic to let convoys pass. For him the main issue was to get the hostages released and to send supplies to the enclaves. Mladic now considered UNPROFOR as the enemy, although he had said that he would not fire at the UNPROFOR positions. Mladic knew that this was not in his interest.

However, Smith thought that Mladic did not see UNPROFOR as the enemy as long as everything happened on his terms, but that entailed the problem that if actions were carried out on Mladic's terms, he would succeed in neutralizing UNPROFOR. If UNPROFOR would just show its teeth, Mladic would make concessions, in Smith's opinion.

Janvier on the other hand considered UNPROFOR a peacekeeping force whether they wanted it or not. That also caused the scheduling problems for the Rapid Reaction Force, that had a more 'forceful' character which would be at odds with the peacekeeping character of UNPROFOR. It was highly important that the political process would start, said Janvier. As long as it did not, a confrontation was out of the question. If UNPROFOR should leave the enclaves, that would mean giving the Bosnian Serbs what they wanted, said Janvier.

Smith's analysis of the intentions of the Bosnian Serbs was different than Janvier's. Janvier thought that the Bosnian Serbs had a military-strategic advantage, and were not going to overplay their hand. Smith remained convinced that the VRS wanted to end the war that same year and would do everything in their power. As long as the sanctions along the Drina against the Bosnian Serbs were maintained, the VRS gradually weakened compared to their opponent, but the Bosnian Serbs would only accept a cease-fire when their political identity was guaranteed. Smith's analysis also was that the Pale regime would realize that the main issue now involved the hostages, not the solution of the

Bosnian problem. For that reason Smith supposed that the Bosnian Serbs could now gain more by a military offensive attitude, also to emphasize their political identity, than by sitting down at the negotiating table and letting a political process start. Though Bildt had been appointed as negotiator, it was not clear what his mission was and for that reason Smith did not really expect that Bildt would be able to achieve anything through negotiations. Moreover, it was difficult to make military peacekeeping plans as long as it was not clear what the peace UNPROFOR should support was going to look like.

Janvier shared Smith's analysis that Bosnian Serbs felt the need for international recognition and the lifting of the sanctions along the Drina. In view of the gravity of the situation, Janvier hoped that this would soon be realized. However, Janvier did not believe that the Bosnian Serbs were trying to create a crisis. He believed that they were prepared to adjust their behaviour and to become good discussion partners. For that reason the discussion with them had to be continued to show how important it was to behave normal. Yet Smith didn't believe either that the Bosnian Serbs wanted to force a crisis. What they did want was to neutralize the UN and NATO to be able to fight the ABiH to create a military advantage.

For Smith the problem remained that he didn't know what the political course was going to be. Therefore, he was at a loss what to do with the announced Rapid Reaction Force. Could it be used to fight or couldn't it? He reiterated that if the unit was not allowed to fight, it wasn't very welcome as far as he was concerned, because it would create expectations it could not live up to.

How to go on?

Smith feared that after the bombings on Pale the status quo would return, but then with UNPROFOR as demanding party. There had not been freedom of movement before the air strikes either, and now that should have to be realized, Smith urged. At least it should be possible to supply food to the enclaves.

Smith wanted two things to stabilize the situation. Smith thought that the risk of provocations by the ABiH was controllable. Therefore, now first of all the Bosnian Serbs should be tackled, but that was only sensibly possible if the risk that the UN people were taken hostage was reduced and their safety would be guaranteed. That would require UNPROFOR to withdraw from the eastern enclaves to safe positions that could be defended until help was available. 'In the field' only some UNMOs (military observers) should remain with what was known as Forward Air Controllers, necessary to guide NATO aircraft to their target. Smith's intention also was to hold out the prospect of massive air strikes in the event the VRS would subsequently still attack a UN base. That would greatly reduce the threat of the new hostage-takings.

However, this plan had considerable consequences for the UNPROFOR mandate and Smith did not have the authority to decide on the subject. In the Security Council, Janvier and Boutros-Ghali had already advocated a plan to withdraw UNPROFOR, but that had not been accepted (see sections 7 and 8). Smith's military ideas were politically water under the bridge.

Smith also wanted to have the Security Council determine routes along which the UN could move freely, comparable to the routes to Berlin during the Cold War. Janvier rejected that idea too: he saw no possibility to impose a corridor upon the Bosnian Serbs. That could only be achieved through political negotiations.

Smith considered negotiations on the subject a loss of time. New York had to impose the rules. If UNPROFOR was not prepared to fight, the VRS would get the best of the situation, he estimated. The fact that in that event the 'Mogadishu' line would be passed, was not a problem for Smith. In his opinion this line had already been passed because the Bosnian Serbs no longer saw UNPROFOR as peacekeepers. Turning back across that line was only possible either by doing nothing, getting UNPROFOR increasingly in the power of the Bosnian Serbs, or by showing the will to fight, which would mainly come down to bluff because it would not be possible to implement this will.

Janvier didn't want to hear about the fighting option: 'I insist that we will never have the possibility of combat, of imposing our will on the Serbs'.

Smith repeated that he considered the situation around Exclusion Zones, Weapon Collection Points and the Safe Areas a major problem, because military-strategically the Serbs had a very advantageous position in an absolute sense. This could cause crises, even before the Rapid Reaction Force would be available. Smith predicted actions, mainly by Bosnian Serbs, who would make a fool of his political superiors. He anticipated situations in which UNPROFOR would be forced to ask for Close Air Support.

Janvier's approach was different. Janvier wanted to reinstate contact with the Bosnian Serbs to explain that there were things they just couldn't do. Smith's assessment remained that they wouldn't want to listen. Janvier argued that the Bosnian Serbs were in a politically favourable situation which they wouldn't want to compromise. They would realize that cooperation had its advantages. Unless provoked by the ABiH, the Bosnian Serbs wouldn't act, Janvier thought.

The end of the discussion was that Janvier saw no other option than going back to the negotiating table, to realize a cease-fire and to resume the UNPROFOR operations.

Smith predicted that in that event UNPROFOR would be forced to take decisions within a month. Smith assessed the situation as in the interest of the Bosnian Serbs. All this would also confirm the belief of the Bosnian government that they would rather see the arms embargo lifted (that was being discussed mainly from the American side) than to rely on UNPROFOR. Smith considered all this short-term decisions, which would have implications for the long-term, but of which no one knew what they would lead to. As long as the enclaves remained in existence, UNPROFOR remain neutralized to a certain extent.

Janvier then took the position that the ABiH rather than UNPROFOR would have to defend the enclaves in the event of an attack by the VRS. They were strong enough to be able to do that. He had also said that in New York, but that idea was not appreciated.⁶³

It was remarkable that Akashi's contributions to the discussion remained minor. He didn't draw conclusions and didn't indicate a direction. This is surprising because exactly Akashi emphasized the importance of a uniform analysis of the situation and approach of the problem. On the other hand there was not so much difference of opinion between Akashi and Janvier regarding their approach: adhere strictly to the practice of peacekeeping, and believe in negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs.

Even if history would prove Smith to be more or less right, he was their inferior and had to comply with the judgement of Zagreb and New York.

6. The strategic field of forces spring 1995, seen from UNPROFOR

The rather hopeless situation in which UNPROFOR found itself at the time of the meeting in Split, had not appeared out of the blue. In spring 1995 there were numerous developments that indicated a worsening situation for UNPROFOR.

Incidentally, the name of UNPROFOR was changed on 31 March 1995 because on that date the Security Council adopted a number of resolutions on the subject. The overall command (for all of Yugoslavia) of general Janvier in Zagreb, called UNPROFOR until that moment, was given the name UNPF (United Nations Peace Forces). The UN operations in Croatia and Macedonia were given different names and no longer came under UNPROFOR but under UNPF. The term UNPROFOR was reserved for the UN operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, old names were still being used for a long time. To prevent confusion, the name Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (BH-Command) or 'sarajevo' will still be used hereinafter, although it officially had been transferred to UNPROFOR on 31 March 1995. The sector division in Bosnia-Herzegovina remained unchanged.

Consequently, in the rest of this report UNPROFOR in a general sense refers to the UN operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the (former) Bosnia-Herzegovina Command ('sarajevo') of

⁶³ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. SRSG's Meeting in Split, 09/06/95. Conf.

general Smith was in charge. When reference is made in the text to 'Zagreb', that refers to general Janvier's UNPF command.

The state of affairs in the struggle between ABiH and VRS

Late 1994 at headquarters of Sector North East of BH Command in Tuzla they were taking stock of the situation. In a general sense they concluded that a stalemate situation had developed in East Bosnia. The warring factions along the confrontation line made little progress. Neither party had the military power to impose its will on the other or to force a breakthrough. Little indicated that the stalemate could be broken.

However, it was important that the VRS were at a relative strategic disadvantage: time was in favour of the Bosnian Muslims. The VRS had lost the initiative in North and East Bosnia. Whether that was the consequence of the fuel shortages that the VRS were confronted with, remained unclear to the UN. In any case it seemed that VRS had had to change their tactics and could not longer deploy the full potential of its mechanized forces.

This strategic advantage also had a political impact for the Bosnian Serbs. That is because the Bosnian Serbs became increasingly politically isolated after the rejection of the Contact Group plan. As a result of the embargo measures the Bosnian Serbs also got more and more economically isolated from Yugoslavia. The economic situation in the Republika Srpska, bad as it already was, made it impossible to mobilize more men and to tip the military scales, a situation that could cause friction between political and military leaders.

In absolute terms the VRS did maintain its superiority regarding heavy weapons and ammunition supplies. However, the VRS had the problem that they had won more terrain than they could control. With 60.000 men they had to hold a front that stretched over 1600 km and, consequently, the VRS troops were 'overstretched'. Sector North East identified the following areas as strategically the most important to the VRS in East Bosnia (see map East Bosnia):

- the Ozren mountains; controlling the northern approach to Sarajevo from Tuzla;
- the Posavina corridor at Brcko; a corridor of only a few kilometres wide that formed a vital connection between the western and eastern part of the Republika Srpska;
- the communication tower of Stolice, north of the Majeвица hills; this tower was an indispensable chain in the communication network of the Republika Srpska;
- the corridor north of Zvornik; here the ABiH front line was not even 10 kilometres from the Drina, which made it possible to drive a wedge into the territory of the Republika Srpska and to sever the connections between the northern and southern parts of Eastern Bosnia.

The prospects for the leaders of the Bosnian Muslims improved over the course of time. The ABiH gradually got more and better equipment available. Fuel was not a limiting factor for the ABiH, unlike for the VRS. The ABiH increasingly took the offensive, but lacked the heavy weapons the VRS did have to gain real strategic advantage. In addition, at the operational level they lacked capacity to adequately support military operations.⁶⁴

All in all the military-strategic balance between ABiH and VRS and the resulting political relations between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs were anything but static late 1994. In absolute terms the VRS still had a major military-strategic advantage, but they were increasingly experiencing problems to control the area they had taken. The ABiH used the time to build its military strength and could take advantage from the political vacuum in which the other party found itself.

⁶⁴ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. HQ SNE, Chief G2/G3 (Lt Col. C.A. Le Hardy). Revision of HQ Sector North East Operation Instruction, 05/12/94.

The cease-fire as dead letter



In the meantime the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Akashi, was worried about the position of UNPROFOR in relation to the warring factions. He reported on the subject to the UN in New York on 1 March.

In a general sense Akashi concluded that the Bosnian government was increasingly resisting the peace process and UNPROFOR. He stated that the attitude of the Bosnian government regarding UNPROFOR was changing. Because there was no prospect of a political solution it was not likely that the Bosnian Muslims would be prepared to renew the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. Through radio and television the Bosnian government in Sarajevo made it clear that certain cities in Bosnia had to be retaken.

This change in attitude of the Bosnian Muslims had already started in January 1995. Akashi thought he detected 'an orchestrated campaign of obstruction'. An indication of that Akashi saw in the fact that though the ABiH had accepted the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, they still obstructed attempts by UNPROFOR to separate the troops of ABiH and VRS and to observe the confrontation lines. In addition, the ABiH imposed limitations upon UNPROFOR's freedom of movement, said Akashi. He also concluded that not only did the Bosnian Serbs impose restrictions on sending fuel supplies to UNPROFOR, but the Bosnian Muslims were doing the same: supplying the troops in the Sapna Thumb (where a Dutchbat company was stationed) and Srebrenica was hindered by the restrictions imposed by the ABiH.

The ABiH were getting ready for an offensive, Akashi concluded. He saw numerous indications: the pace of restructuring, training and supplying had been increased; fuel and logistic convoys that had not been seen before were moving towards the north of Sector North East; mobilization took place in Zenica and Tuzla; hospitals had been warned to expect wounded people; and lives of VRS officers had been threatened.

Of course an ABiH offensive would mean a violation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. However, Akashi got the impression that violating this agreement had a wider impact, also towards UNPROFOR: the ABiH refused to implement the arrangements of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. Indication for that was the circumstance that everywhere where the ABiH were preparing for battle, UNPROFOR were under pressure and their Freedom of Movement was limited: the ABiH refused the UN access to the front line. On the other hand UNPROFOR did not have access to the areas controlled by the VRS either. In addition, the VRS liaison officers stationed in Tuzla

and Gornj Vakuf were told by the ABiH that they had to clear out. These liaison officers should have played an important role in determining the demarcation lines and the separation of the troops.

In Akashi's opinion everything was aimed at an ABiH offensive as soon as the weather conditions would improve. The Bosnian government had not explained the reasons for this obstruction against the arranged Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, but Akashi did have the impression that the Bosnian government wanted to make it clear to the international community that the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement had no effect, with the purpose of discrediting the Bosnian Serbs. However, in reality it was the Bosnian government that failed to fully comply with it. That had put UNPROFOR in a deadlock. In addition, the Bosnian government used the relatively quiet period to financially squeeze UNPROFOR for rent of facilities (buildings for accommodation and logistic installations).⁶⁵

There were many more signs like this that a continuation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement for the period after 1 May 1995 was not very likely. In the middle of March 1995 it began to become clear that Akashi's attempts to achieve a continuation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement after 30 April were going to fail. Both the Bosnian Muslims and the Bosnian Serbs were preparing for a continuation of the war. General Smith expected that already by the end of March the ABiH would take the offensive. The VRS should first want to find out which way the wind would be blowing, to determine a central area where they could best send their troops, and also to avoid being considered the party violating the cease-fire.

In Sarajevo general Smith already saw it coming that the hostilities would be resumed. Smith took precautions: he tried to prepare his troops for the end of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement: commanders had to be prepared that as soon as the fighting started, the ABiH would be carrying out operations from the Safe Areas. In addition, pending UN guidelines, Smith issued a Directive for the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. In it, he voiced his opinion that, in so far as practically possible in wartime, the population ought to be protected. Finally Smith tried to define a number of criteria, under the heading: 'avoiding'. Avoiding a worsening of the situation for the population through UN actions; avoiding that the conflict would spread further or that the violence level would increase; avoiding that the UN would get involved in the fighting; and avoiding that UN personnel would be put at risk. Smith reiterated that UNPROFOR did not have a mandate to fight a war on the side of one of the warring factions. The safety of the UN personnel was of the highest importance, according to Smith. So in this regard Smith agreed with Janvier. Taking action to enforce a Safe Area was only permitted if the population was under threat, and if the criteria for 'avoiding' were observed'.⁶⁶

Resumption of the hostilities by the ABiH

The ABiH strategy appeared to be aimed at gaining ground over a wide front, before the end of the Cessation of Hostilities. That could be intended to increase the distance of the VRS guns to the area of the Bosnian Muslims in the Tuzla area; it could also have the limited objective of keeping the VRS occupied over the widest possible front, without the ABiH exhausting itself. The ABiH possessed the manpower for this strategy. This tactic stemmed from weakness, but if it were to succeed, it would keep the VRS with its weaker manpower busy along its much too long front lines. The strategy also involved compensation for the lack of artillery and mobility, the ABiH took advantage of the adverse weather conditions and favourable mountainous terrain, which slowed down the VRS response.

In March the ABiH indeed resumed the battle, and that at one of the four places that were strategically important to the VRS: the communication tower of Stolice, north of the Majejica hills. However, this attack revealed the limitations of the ABiH and the superiority of the VRS in fire power. Although they did achieve surprise, the operations were badly planned, commanded and executed. That caused major losses for the ABiH that affected morale.

⁶⁵ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 01/03/95, No. Z-341.

⁶⁶ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Commander BHC Directive 1/95, 15/03/95, Confi.

These ABiH operations elicited a worried reaction from general Smith. It was not only a violation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, an attack had been set up from the Safe Area Tuzla. That had to trigger a countermove by the VRS. Smith feared that the ABiH action would cause more civilian victims and that it would endanger the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement elsewhere in Bosnia.⁶⁷ Indeed the VRS reacted in the usual manner by firing at villages in the area.⁶⁸ The Bosnian Prime Minister Siladjic called the ABiH attacks a counteroffensive and stated that all ABiH actions were self-defence.⁶⁹

In addition, the Bosnian government justified the ABiH attacks in the Tuzla region by referring to the Bosnian-Serb interference with Bihac. That worried Akashi, but what annoyed him the most was that the Security Council hardly reacted to these violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. The effect was that both warring factions were starting to consider UNPROFOR an irrelevant factor, Akashi warned.⁷⁰ Indeed that was exactly what happened.

Does the VRS also take the initiative?

In the meantime, the question remained whether the VRS would also take the offensive, in particular against the three eastern enclaves, including Srebrenica. Assessments on the subject differed. The Senior UNMO in Bosnia, colonel G.M. Mohatarem, didn't consider it very likely in March 1995 that the VRS would start an offensive to reduce the size of the enclaves Gorazde and Srebrenica. In view of the difficult terrain and a considerable ABiH presence, an offensive would cost them dearly, he estimated. It was more likely that the VRS would try to gradually break the will of the ABiH by a blockade with second-rate troops.⁷¹

General Smith on the other hand was not so sure that the eastern enclaves would remain in existence. On 7 March Mladic had said to him on their first meeting in Vlasenica that the eastern enclaves bothered him. On this occasion it became clear to Smith that Mladic wanted to get rid of those. For that he had two military-strategic considerations.

The first consideration was that the VRS were keeping these three enclaves surrounded and Mladic thought that it held too many of his troops tied up. Zepa, Srebrenica and Gorazde caused a constant 'drain' of an estimated 10% of all VRS troops to the eastern enclaves that Mladic could not afford. After all, the battle of the Bosnian Serbs had to be fought at the same time in central Bosnia and the Krajina.⁷² With all attention going to Bosnia, Croatia was silently preparing to retake areas in the Krajina from the Croatian Serbs. Both Croatia and the Republika Srpska Krajina ignored Resolution 981.⁷³ That called for a 'negotiated settlement' that could guarantee all groups of the population, majority or minority, that they could live in safety within the Croatian republic. Both parties were frustrating all attempts by negotiator Stoltenberg to implement this resolution. With this resumption of the fighting in the Krajina, the VRS needed troops there too. From that moment on the strategy of the VRS was aimed at freeing troops and equipment from the eastern enclaves. That was reason for Smith to think that Mladic and Karadzic had an interest in ending the war; the VRS simply didn't have the manpower to hold the terrain they had taken. That assessment proved correct.

Smith also saw this strategic problem of lack of manpower with his own eyes. He had noticed that the Republika Srpska was such an empty country. You could drive for a long time without seeing anyone or passing any villages. There was no depth behind the VRS lines, from which Smith concluded that indeed the VRS had problems defending their front line of 1600 kilometres and that Mladic

⁶⁷ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Lt Gen. Rupert Smith to General Delic, copy to Dr E. Ganic, Minister Muratovic, 21/03/95.

⁶⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 22/033/95, No. Z-452.

⁶⁹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 25/03/95, No. UNPROFOR Z-473.

⁷⁰ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 28/03/95, No. Z-495.

⁷¹ CRST. UNMO HQ BH Comd to UNMO HQ Zagreb, 151700 March 95, Outgoing Fax no. 1512733. UN Conf.

⁷² Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

⁷³ United Nations. S/RES/981, 31/03/95.

probably used the same units over and over again for his military operations. Sending troops back and forth that way to stop gaps elsewhere or to concentrate at a different point, usually doesn't do the morale of the troops much good. That was a problem for Mladic.⁷⁴

The other military-strategic reason for Mladic to want to get rid of the enclaves, was that he was afraid that the ABiH would attack the VRS front in the back from the enclaves. If then at the same time the ABiH would attack from the Tuzla area, a corridor to the enclaves might be opened, and Mladic wanted to prevent that. Mladic had informed Smith during the first meeting that he feared an ABiH attack in the direction of the eastern enclaves over two axes. One axis would run from Tuzla to Srebrenica and Zepa, the other axis from Trnvo to Gorazde. Mladic would not permit the development of such corridors, he announced: if such a corridor was going to be opened, Mladic informed Smith, he was going to attack the enclaves to knock out in the ABiH there.⁷⁵ Plans for a corridor will be discussed further in the Chapter 'The events between 25 May and 6 July.'

Mladic further informed Smith as regards Srebrenica that he would respect the Safe Area there. However, the problem was the lack of agreement on the external borders of this enclave. Mladic interpreted it as a small area around the city of Srebrenica.

Smith interpreted this as a signal from Mladic that he was still considering to attack the enclaves. He said he understood the military reasons for such an action, but he warned that the international community would consider that a violation of the Safe Areas and that this would not be in the interest of the Bosnian Serbs. Mladic appeared to interpret this remark by Smith as a threat to use Close Air Support, which caused a series of threats to take countermeasures.

For Smith this outburst by Mladic was a sign of his concern that he indeed did not have the means to fight on two fronts in the event of a Croatian attack on the Krajina, and by the ABiH in Central Bosnia. Mladic might want to have his back covered at an early stage, and the eastern enclaves were worrying him.⁷⁶

So from a military point of view Smith came to the assessment that Mladic had a major problem with the eastern enclaves. Yet at the time he did not hear that the VRS were actually going to attack the enclaves, it was merely his personal vision. Only by small things, by analyzing conversations and by knowing backgrounds could he try to assess whether the enclaves would be attacked. That information certainly was not hard military intelligence, but it only involved minor matters that fitted in the general picture of Bosnia.⁷⁷

The situation in April: an attack by the VRS on the eastern enclaves?

Gradually, Smith's ideas about what Mladic was going to do developed further. He had already concluded that the eastern enclaves were a problem for the VRS. Early April 1995 he went one step further, by posing what Smith called his 'thesis'.⁷⁸ Smith's thesis was that for political and military reasons Mladic was going to round up the eastern enclaves, or at least to reduce their size, while simultaneously fully shutting off Sarajevo. Smith estimated that Pale wanted the Bosnian Muslims to directly accept negotiations and the international community to come up with an acceptable peace plan. If that would not happen, Pale would have no choice but to let the VRS attack. That way the ABiH could be weakened and forced to give up their positions, and subsequently be forced to start negotiations, Smith estimated. The Bosnian Serbs could then link political and military targets to force a solution to conflict, he thought.

⁷⁴ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

⁷⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 215, File BHC95 0703/95 – 14/03/95. Meeting Gen Smith and Gen Mladic 7 March 1995, Ref 8594; BHC FWD to DOKL. 091100A March 95. Outgoing fax No. 122/95. UN Conf.

⁷⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 215, File BHC95 0703/95 – 14/03/95. Meeting Gen Smith and Gen Mladic 7 March 1995, Ref 8594; BHC FWD to DOKL. 091100A March 95. Outgoing fax No. 122/95. UN Conf.

⁷⁷ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

⁷⁸ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

The political objective of an attack to reduce the size of the enclaves was, still according to Smith, to hit the Bosnian government and to demonstrate that the ABiH did not have the power to reinforce the enclaves. An additional political objective would be that the VRS would want to prevent a response by the UN and NATO, to demonstrate the indecisiveness of these organizations; Smith suspected that the assumption in Pale was that there would be no response if the enclaves were only reduced and not fully rounded up. Later that assumption proved to be correct.

The military objective was, according to Smith, to reduce the enclaves to an area with a 3-kilometre radius. That way the population would be concentrated, the ABiH resistance would be broken, the length of the confrontation line could be limited, subsequently the situation could be consolidated, and then demilitarized to free six brigades for the fight of the VRS elsewhere. If the high areas around the enclaves were in the hands of the VRS, one brigade for each enclave would suffice to control them. The tactic to pursue that purpose, still according to Smith, would be an attack by manoeuvring units from the west. In the meantime the already present units could form a blocking force against break-outs by the ABiH from the enclaves. With rapid, concentrated and simultaneous attacks using massive firepower it was possible to attack with company groups from various sides. This would require only a limited number of additional VRS troops. Such an operation would require no more than seven to ten days from start to finish, and should preferably be carried out in bad weather because that would hamper NATO's observation possibilities.

Before or simultaneously with the attack on the enclaves, Sarajevo would be shut off. It would be a siege, without forcing entry into the city, because that would entail major losses and the risk of a NATO response. The Weapon Collection Points in the eastern enclaves and in Sarajevo would be cleared out. UNPROFOR would then have their hands fully tied by a worsening situation around Sarajevo.⁷⁹ It would appear that Smith's thesis was not far off the mark.

Early April Smith analyzed further. In preparation of the visit that Akashi and Janvier were going to pay to the Security Council in New York, he wanted to present his vision of the situation in Bosnia. He also wanted to indicate at what points he expected guidelines from the UN.

Smith assumed that the international community was not going to find a solution to the conflict, and neither would it be prepared to use force to impose a solution. He thought that the Contact Group offered little news and was only redrafting old proposals. That left him with the impression that the political process was bogging down. He concluded that the Bosnian government were not prepared to negotiate on the basis of the existing situation, but only tried to get the international community on their side by saying to accept the Contact Group plans. That had to keep the international sympathy on the side of the Bosnian Muslims, was the idea. Furthermore, the Bosnian government tried to capture the attention of the world by loudly protesting against the violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement by the Bosnian Serbs, and mainly by dramatizing the situation in the enclaves and Bihac.

Smith thought that the Bosnian government tried to isolate the Bosnian Serbs by making common cause with the Croats in Bosnia. In the meantime the Bosnian government were openly preparing for a continuation of the war; it was clear that they wanted more territory than the Bosnian Muslims were holding at that moment, Smith analyzed. There were signs that the will among the population to continue the war was dwindling, but that could quickly swing around in the event of the Bosnian-Serb attack.

Relations between the Bosnian Serbs and UNPROFOR were also getting disturbed because the Bosnian government were making requirements that were impossible for the UN to realize. The Bosnian government demanded: a new agreement with the UN on the conditions of the Bosnian Muslims; their own special representative of the Secretary-General; a new mandate for UNPROFOR but then with peace-enforcement tasks; and Armed forces that could realize it.

⁷⁹ NIOD, Coll. Smith. A memo on the subject bore the name of the American head G2 of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Lieutenant-Colonel Powers: 'Assessment of Areas of Concern 1-7 April 1995'. The following pages are based on this source.

Smith's analysis further shows that in his opinion the Bosnian Serbs were having problems holding the conquered areas. Therefore, the Bosnian Serbs wanted to negotiate on the basis of the areas they were holding. The Bosnian Serbs were in a bitter mood against the international community, as well as against Milosevic. That was caused by the failure of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, by the isolation in which the regime of the Republika Srpska in Pale found itself, the effect of the sanctions (in particular from Serbia already since September 1994), and the feeling to be left in the lurch by Serbia.

The purpose of the Bosnian-Serb regime remained an autonomous Republika Srpska, with a certain right to associate with Serbia. The Bosnian Serbs wanted to end the war by fighting. In Pale the Contact Group plans were considered dead, so that from Pale's political perspective fighting seemed the only solution. It seemed that they had come to the conclusion that the factor time was against them, and that the military scales were turning to the advantage of the ABiH. That could be a sign for a decisive result in summer. Smith saw the announcement of a full-scale mobilization and calling back the VRS reservists (conscripts in the Republika Srpska who had moved to Serbia) as the beginning of the end of the war in Bosnia, though with a favourable starting position in the negotiations for the VRS.

Though there were signs of battle fatigue, that would still rather lead to the will to force a solution than to negotiate. That is because there was a certain confidence among the population that Mladic and the VRS would be able to defeat the ABiH. The UN was finished in the eyes of the Bosnian Serbs; they felt betrayed by the UN and the international community. The Bosnian Serbs had imposed their own sanctions against the UN as countermeasure: fuel convoys were refused, unless the Bosnian Serbs received half the fuel.

Smith saw as the objective of the ABiH offensive in the Majevica hills that had started late March: dramatizing the situation to introduce the international community to force a solution by trying to involve them in the conflict and to have them put pressure on the Bosnian Serbs. From an operational point of view, the ABiH offensive in the Majevica hills had three objectives: reducing the pressure on Bihac by moving the centre of the battle; securing strategic roads at Brcko for future operations; and forcing the VRS to spread out over a wide front to prevent them from concentrating. Due to lack of equipment the VRS would not be able to do much more than fight on one front and consolidate on another.

If the VRS would have to face attacks on various fronts, they would have no other choice than to stem the ABiH attacks and to try and hold as much ground as possible. Another possibility for the VRS was to force a decision. In view of the political situation that was the most likely option in Smith's opinion. Then the VRS could consolidate the front in vital areas - such as Sarajevo - and secure it, to shift the attention elsewhere and forcefully defeat the ABiH there.

In Smith's opinion, from an operational point of view Mladic had to make a choice. He either had to concentrate his troops in the west - the Krajina and Bihac - or on the eastern front. Smith was betting on the latter, for the following reasons: the VRS had problems with fuel shortages; the proximity of Serbia; and Sarajevo as strategic target. To be able to concentrate his troops on the eastern front, Mladic would want to make one or all eastern enclaves harmless to the VRS. That way six brigades and support arms could be freed to strengthen the siege of Sarajevo. Moreover, Mladic could start these attacks on his own terms because the ABiH could not easily reinforce the enclaves.

Smith furthermore expected that it was not going to be easier for UNPROFOR. Both warring factions would keep frustrating UNPROFOR and putting them out of action. They would keep denying the enclaves the supply of fuel and possibly also other supplies. The frequency of the shooting incidents would increase, just like shootings for retaliation. That increased the risk of UNPROFOR personnel becoming a target. The Bosnian government would try to make the most out of every situation and scream on every occasion that the Safe Area and Exclusion Zone regime had to be enforced.

Smith's expectation remained that as a consequence of going ahead with an ABiH offensive, the VRS would start an offensive against one or more Safe Areas or Exclusion Zones. Against a background of loud cries for action and threats, Smith would find himself forced to take decisions, he

anticipated. He would have to face procedures that were geared for handling minor violations and these would no longer be appropriate.

Air strikes would not really solve anything, because due to their nature they would change the relation with parties and would be considered biased. Neither would such attacks serve to protect the population in the Safe Areas, according to Smith.

Smith finally portrayed the essence of the problem for UNPROFOR: in fact there was no longer a cease-fire. The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement was on the verge of collapse, with still a month to go. The only option left for UNPROFOR was to strongly and openly demonstrate their belief in the mission. UNPROFOR should not be seen as the failing party. That was not the simplest of matters in practice. The Bosnian Serbs no longer wanted to talk with UNPROFOR and the Bosnian government didn't want to hear about a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. That resulted in an asymmetric strategy and because the political process in the Contact Group had halted, there was no political framework within which to operate.⁸⁰

Indeed early April it looked like the conflict would sooner take a military course than a political, although in various ways international pressure was being exerted on the warring factions.

For instance the Security Council did that with resolution 987 on 19 April 1995. That, once more, emphasized that a military solution to the problem was not acceptable and that negotiations on the basis of the Contact Group plan had to be continued. However, that plea fell on deaf ears.⁸¹

Members of the Contact Group also made a last attempt to achieve an extension of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. In their response to that the Bosnian government appeared to be mainly after international goodwill, rather than an actual extension of the cease-fire. The fact is, the Bosnian government declared not to oppose an extension, but subjected it to conditions that were not acceptable to the Bosnian Serbs. A statement by the Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Siladjic that the ABiH would only take action in response to an attack, seemed a doubtful promise: on the contrary, during the previous period the initiative for offensive military action had in most cases been taken by the Bosnian Muslims.⁸²

7. After the end of the cease-fire

After the end of the cease-fire (the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement) on 1 May, Smith expected the Bosnian government to continue the pressure on the VRS, where a complicating factor could be that by now the VRS had to shift its attention to the western front because now the fighting in the Krajina had flared up again. It is of great significance that Smith, who had a keen eye for the military-strategic aspects of the conflict, saw as main strategic objective of the Bosnian Muslims breaking the siege of Sarajevo and forcing back the Bosnian-Serb artillery around the city. In this respect Sarajevo, as capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, seemed to be of greater importance than the eastern enclaves, if the ABiH would have to make choices.

Smith thought that breaking the siege of Sarajevo would proceed at a slow pace that the ABiH could keep up with for a long time. That was based on various reasons. First of all economic interests were at stake; also within the ABiH every soldier could only fight at one place at a time. Moreover, the morale of ABiH had to be handled with care. Finally, in the eyes of the world the victim role had to be preserved, and so simultaneously with the ABiH actions, the loud cry to NATO, UN and the world would still be heard to allow the Bosnian Muslims to fight and to lift the arms embargo.

The VRS too had to make choices where to deploy their troops, for the event fighting would start raging again. The VRS was facing the difficult choice to preserve a certain balance in troops and equipment. As regards the troops: to defeat the ABiH the VRS had to concentrate troops and to

⁸⁰ NIOD, Coll. Smith. BHC Situation Report signed Lt Gen R.A. Smith, 05/04/95.

⁸¹ United Nations, Resolution 987(1995), 19/04/95.

⁸² MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, no. 20/95, completed 021400 May 1995.

synchronize their actions with the forces of the Serb-proclaimed republic in the Krajina, the Republika Srpska Krajina. The problem was whether first the own interest of the Republika Srpska had to be protected by striving after a military decision in the fighting with the ABiH, or that they had to come to the rescue of the Serb brothers in the Republika Srpska Krajina in their struggle against the Croats. As regards the means: in that respect the VRS strongly depended on a steady support flow from the VJ. Indeed this support was substantial, and stole past the border checks between Serbia and the Republika Srpska; probably part of it went through Croatia. This involved spare parts for military equipment and its maintenance, fuel, specialized personnel (probably artilleryists), and personnel that kept the integrated air defence systems going. In addition, there was a VJ signals unit in Han Pijesak. Finally, the VJ paid the officers from Serbia.

It took time to decide where the troops could best be deployed. In the meantime the events in Bosnia or the Krajina might get the better of the Bosnian Serbs, Smith suspected.

As far as the international position of the Bosnian Serbs was concerned, Smith anticipated a further alienation between UN and VRS. The Bosnian Serbs were getting increasingly isolated and estranged from the world, Smith analyzed. They were actively punishing their international enemy by refusing further shipments of supplies to the enclaves, by considering the UN as a target and by taking UN personnel hostage. As soon as NATO would attack the VRS, the VRS would have an excuse to take UN soldiers hostage and to 'punish' the UN. In the past such methods had already successfully been used to paralyze the decision-making process in NATO and the UN.⁸³

Smith's assessment of this political position of the Bosnian Serbs was confirmed rather soon: on 9 May he had a secret meeting with Karadzic in Pale. On this opportunity Karadzic announced a blockade of the UN that would only be lifted if the Bosnian Serbs received fuel. If NATO was going to attack the Bosnian Serbs from the air, then the Bosnian Serbs would treat UNPROFOR as the enemy. Karadzic said that his position partly was the result of the disappointment about the UN attitude at the Croatian attack on Western Slavonia. The UN had let themselves be walked over. Karadzic emphasized that he would no longer respect the Security Council resolutions: 'The Security Council is the enemy of the Serbian people and the instrument of hostile US policy'. From that moment on he would only have eye for the interest of the Serb people. The Bosnian Serbs no longer wanted to cooperate with the international community.

Also from a military-strategic point of view the meeting created some clarity, for what it was worth: it became clear to Smith that the VRS would restrict themselves to carrying on the defence against the ABiH offensives and were not going to take the initiative themselves. That was in line with the VRS response to a possible ABiH offensive: the VRS had heard rumours that the ABiH were organizing an offensive to break through the siege of Sarajevo. If the Bosnian Muslims were going to attack, the VRS would hit back, no matter what the Security Council might say. Karadzic wanted to prevent UNPROFOR from rushing to the assistance of the ABiH in this scenario to defeat the VRS; by the way, a fear that can hardly be called founded because UNPROFOR wanted anything but become a party to the conflict. Karadzic did not deny that the position of the VRS towards the ABiH would gradually be weakened also without interference by the UN, but he expected help from friendly governments and the VRS was sufficiently equipped to continue the fighting for another few years. As regards the Safe Areas, Karadzic said that these had to be demilitarized. Removing the weapons of the ABiH soldiers in the enclaves was a wish that had repeatedly been expressed by the Bosnian Serbs, but it had never been met. Consequently, Karadzic no longer wanted to respect the Safe Areas until that condition had been satisfied.⁸⁴

Otherwise hostilities not only threatened to be resumed in the eastern enclaves, but also in the other Safe Areas such as Sarajevo. That was pointed out by the Sector Commander for Sarajevo who

⁸³ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Lt Gen R.A. Smith, Comd UNPROFOR - Post COHA Guidelines, 03/05/95, No. 8800.

⁸⁴ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 92, File 4.2.1 Sarajevo Government Authorities 10/09/94 – 15/08/95. The Office of the Commander BH Command to UNPF Zagreb attn Mr. Akashi, Gen Janvier, 091900B May 1995 and 091615B May 1995.

came under Smith, the French Major General H. Gobilliard. Mid-May he signalled that the actions of the warring factions were changing. According to him the warring factions no longer trusted UNPROFOR to be able to realize their mandate, and the aggression against UNPROFOR had increased.

Gobilliard noted a pattern that would be seen more often over the weeks and months to come: agreements were a dead letter for both sides. The warring factions tried to involve UNPROFOR in the conflict and to dictate them how to carry out their mandate. The ABiH increasingly used UNPROFOR as a shield, by setting up positions close to UN observation posts. That attracted VRS fire, also hitting the observation posts, and that became a daily event. The risks for the population and for the peacekeepers increased accordingly.

The Bosnian government became more critical of UNPROFOR and at the same time demanded that more be done against the VRS. The VRS also demanded action from UNPROFOR: the Safe Areas had not been demilitarized, but instead they had become a base of operations for the ABiH, and thus provoking the Bosnian Serbs. The consequence was that the VRS were taking the Safe Areas under fire and demanded that UNPROFOR should take measures against the ABiH. That didn't happen and that had now turned UNPROFOR into a disappointment, not only for the Bosnian Muslims but also for the Bosnian Serbs, also because the Bosnian Serbs did not believe that UNPROFOR was impartial. The Bosnian Serbs now only saw UNPROFOR as an enemy and an obstacle they wanted to get rid of to be able to settle the score with the Bosnian Muslims.

According to Gobilliard it was simply a matter that both parties wanted to fight: the Bosnian Muslims to regain ground, the Bosnian Serbs to keep what they had as negotiating object. The eastern enclaves were not the only areas with supply problems: also for Sarajevo the Bosnian Serbs systematically refused to let fuel convoys pass since 2 March. All this required an analysis of the mandate, Gobilliard said with a sense of understatement. In his opinion the existing mandate could only be implemented if the warring factions cooperated. That was not to be expected. Therefore, Gobilliard wanted clarity for the future,⁸⁵ a wish shared by everyone in UNPROFOR.

All in all it seemed that UNPROFOR in Bosnia had ended up in a hopeless situation. According to the *Nederlandse Militaire Inlichtingendienst* (MID) (Dutch military intelligence service) that could not remain without political consequences. The MID had noticed that the Bosnian president Izetbegovic was calling for a special session of the Security Council, aimed at changing the UN approach of the Bosnian conflict, but without providing insight into the contents of such an approach. In the meantime, France and the United Kingdom were also trying to find a different approach: they said they wanted to withdraw their units from Bosnia. Izetbegovic was not impressed by that threat, for he made it clear that he would do nothing to keep countries wanting to withdraw from Bosnia to do so.⁸⁶

The awkward situation UNPROFOR was now getting into also had its impact on the relation between Smith and Janvier. They were in disagreement on the question: 'do we go for a status quo plus or minus', in other words: maintaining the status quo, but then without the possibility to use force. Smith assumed that it would be to the benefit of UNPROFOR if the pressure on the Bosnian Serbs could be maintained: 'We bomb you unless we get freedom of movement'. In this respect Janvier was much more reluctant, as explained earlier in this chapter.

It is interesting that Janvier stated that he was not under French pressure. He had once been asked whether he often felt Paris breathing down his neck, but Janvier had replied to that: 'surprisingly little'. In so far as can be established, the French President only once gave Janvier direct instructions, not as regards Close Air Support, but as regards regaining the Vrbanja bridge in Sarajevo (on which more in section 11).⁸⁷ This also was in line with the general picture the British military in UNPROFOR

⁸⁵ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Letter Major-General H. Gobilliard to Lieutenant-General R. Smith, 11/05/95, Confi.

⁸⁶ MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, no. 22/95, completed 161200 May 1995.

⁸⁷ Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

had of the French policy: it was characterized by a lack of confidence in soldiers, and placed little confidence in the military attachés at the French representations abroad. The French government preferred to use diplomatic channels to obtain information. At Janvier's briefing before the Security Council, the French UN representative, Mérimée, seemed to treat Janvier with public contempt (on which more in section 9). The British had a different tradition in this respect: they valued the military more and did business with them. The British Prime Minister Major called Smith twice, Portillo (Secretary of Defence) several times and his successor Rifkind from May 1995 regularly.⁸⁸ Consequently, the statement by the British Minister of Defence Rifkind to Kofi Annan that the United Kingdom was proud, unlike the French President, never to issue instructions to their soldiers under UN command, should be put into perspective.⁸⁹

So Janvier did not in the first place feel the pressure from Paris, but he certainly was under pressure from Boutros-Ghali: not only to have the problem the former Yugoslavia solved, but more in particular to do that without using any force. That was also the reason why Boutros-Ghali was reluctant to delegate the authority to deploy NATO air power, the more so if that authority would come into the hands of 'hawk' Smith, as Boutros-Ghali saw him.⁹⁰ Boutros-Ghali in turn was under enormous pressure by the American representative to the UN, Albright, to act more forcefully and to make more use of air power.

8. Boutros-Ghali's move in the Security Council

In May it was the task of Janvier and Boutros-Ghali to convince the UN Security Council of the problems with the mission of UNPROFOR and, subsequently, get everybody behind a solution. As preparation for this task there had been a meeting in Paris on 12 May between Janvier and Boutros-Ghali, at which Akashi was also present. Janvier once more pictured the gloomy situation, on the basis of an extensive briefing paper. According to him the situation was explosive. Attempts to isolate the Bosnian-Serb regime in Pale meant that they had lost all influence on the Bosnian-Serb regime. In addition, air power had lost all the deterring effect it had had two years earlier. The UN were wearing too many hats at the same, and reacted too strongly to the various national agendas. For that reason Janvier came up with four options on how to proceed in Bosnia.

The first option Janvier mentioned was to maintain the status quo. The general suggested to set a high threshold for air strikes, as there had in fact been so far. The demilitarization of the Safe Areas, as had already been provided for in the mandate but had remained a dead letter, still had to be initiated in an attempt to separate civilians from military targets. Ukrainian units would have to replace the Dutch and British units in the enclaves. In this connection Janvier said that in fact it would not be possible to maintain the status quo; that would mean getting deeper and deeper into the morass. If this option was going to make any sense, a new peace process would be required as well as continuous political pressure on all parties; that seemed unfeasible at that moment.

The second option was a more forceful military attitude, including a more extensive use of air power. Transport helicopters could set up an airlift to the enclaves; to prevent those helicopters from being fired at by the VRS, NATO airplanes would have to keep this air corridor open. According to Janvier this option would prove to be too expensive and, moreover, because of the risk of escalation of conflict, it would not get much support in the UN, except from the Islamic countries. These countries might want to supply troops, but it was highly questionable whether the international community and mainly the Bosnian Serbs would be going to support the idea.

⁸⁸ Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

⁸⁹ Confidential information (50).

⁹⁰ Interview Manfred Eisele, 14/10/99.

The third option was: limit the mandate. The underlying idea was that UNPROFOR would completely withdraw from Bosnia. The UNHCR would then have to be given the opportunity to freely continue its humanitarian operations.

The fourth option was to withdraw UNPROFOR from 'certain areas'. UNPROFOR would then concentrate on the continuous area of the Muslim-Croat Federation (and so withdraw from the eastern enclaves), in order to prevent complete withdrawal from Bosnia. Then a new mandate and a new structure for UNPROFOR could be introduced.⁹¹

The idea behind this option was that it might put a stop to the blundering on. A tougher attitude towards the Bosnian Serbs would become possible without a major risk of UN personnel being taken hostage in the vulnerable eastern enclaves. For now Janvier considered this scenario the most advisable option. It had been Smith who had convinced Janvier that the eastern enclaves were indefensible and Boutros-Ghali had agreed. The UN Secretary-General preferred a 'workable mission' and left Paris with a preference for this option.⁹²

This option was also followed in a Non Paper under the title 'Current position. Where we stand' by the UN staff in Zagreb. Two days before the meeting in Paris, it once more explained to Janvier what the current conditions for UNPROFOR were. They were deplorable: the UN mandate in its current form was no longer considered applicable; there was no prospect of a military or political solution; losses among UNPROFOR soldiers were increasing; in some areas the UN personnel were potential hostages; and use of air power entailed the risk of losses among UNPROFOR personnel.

The political pressure to accurately pursue this option was considerable for Janvier. During their meeting in Paris, Boutros-Ghali had told him that he didn't want to risk his own credibility and that of the UN: 'after 3 years, the mission cannot end in a stark failure'. Therefore, Boutros-Ghali wanted to present the Security Council a solution '(even an intermediate, temporary or stalling one) which would allow him to not lose face'.⁹³

In another, additional Non Paper of that same day the UN staff in Zagreb portrayed the 'Logic of New Deployment'. It provided a clear picture of the potential risks of this option. This new deployment of troops would have to take place in three stages. The first, preparatory stage, would have to end on 15 July. During this stage political agreement would have to be reached on the eastern enclaves and on evacuation of the population and the Displaced Persons in the enclaves, mainly in exchange for a corridor to Sarajevo. On an enclosed map all three eastern enclaves were marked as areas to be retreated from ('Retrait UN'). For the second stage, Redeployment, the deadline was set at the beginning of the winter. UNPROFOR would only be stationed in the Muslim-Croat Federation, making the troops less vulnerable to hostage-takings by the VRS. During this stage the number of troops should have been reduced by at least 50%. The last stage was the Operational stage. During this stage an escalation of the conflict was considered a real possibility, as appeared from the rest of the document. If the VRS should use military force to attack the Muslim-Croat Federation, NATO would be ready to launch air strikes to break the military infrastructure of the VRS. That would be the first step on the escalation ladder. Then probably the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims would also be lifted without delay. That would mean complete withdrawal by UNPROFOR from Bosnia because the NATO withdrawal plan would be put into operation and the American and European NATO troops would replace the UN.⁹⁴

Boutros-Ghali in the Security Council: withdrawal from the eastern enclaves

On 16 May Boutros-Ghali briefed the Security Council. He was clear and gloomy on the situation in Bosnia. He reported that the fighting had already started again, even before the end of the Cessation of

⁹¹ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. 'Briefing to sec.-gen. Options in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Paris – 12/05/95', Secret, 12/05/95.

⁹² Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

⁹³ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Non-paper for FC/DFC Only, Secret, 'Current position. Where we stand', 14/05/95.

⁹⁴ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Non-paper for FC/DFC Only, Secret, 'Current position', 14/05/95.

Hostilities Agreement, and that both parties were increasingly firing at UNPROFOR. With 137 people killed and 1420 injured among UNPROFOR, an unacceptably high number of casualties had been reached. The Safe Area concept was not clear, and it was contradictory in itself. Both parties misused the concept and insufficient troops had been made available for the mission. Twice Boutros-Ghali had asked for clarification,⁹⁵ but the Security Council had not responded.

The idea to withdraw from the enclaves was not entirely new; already in December 1994 and January 1995 a discussion had started within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the UN in New York on giving up the enclaves, but that discussion had never really become serious. Now Boutros-Ghali and Janvier continued on the chosen path that UNPROFOR had to withdraw from the eastern enclaves.⁹⁶

Boutros-Ghali presented the four options of Janvier to the Security Council. The last of the four, redeployment and reduction of UNPROFOR - read: withdrawing UNPROFOR from the eastern enclaves - was his personal preference. That would reduce the number of UNPROFOR casualties and increase the chance that the troop contributing nations would be prepared to maintain their contribution to the mission. Moreover, this option would yield major financial savings, which would come in handy in view of the demand of the United States to reduce their contribution to the UN by 25-31% - a rather cynical consideration.

Boutros-Ghali also argued in support of his vision that the civil and military leadership in Zagreb and Sarajevo, just like the political leaders in Europe, had come to the conclusion that under the current circumstances it would no longer be possible for UNPROFOR to carry out their mandate.⁹⁷ Boutros-Ghali had been in touch with the Russian president Jeltsin, the Spanish Prime Minister Gonzales, the Canadian Prime Minister Chrétien, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Juppé, and the British Minister of Foreign Affairs Hurd. In 2001 Boutros-Ghali could no longer remember why he had not consulted Washington, the pillar of the Bosnian Muslims; the fact that Washington hadn't been consulted did appear to have major consequences for his ideas.⁹⁸

In the event of the probably imminent escalation, UNPROFOR would certainly not be able to carry out their mandate. Both warring factions were preparing for an escalation of the fighting in summer. Along the confrontation lines the risks for UNPROFOR personnel were the highest; that's where their presence would have to be reduced first. Ideas for a redeployment of the troops would be detailed in a report to the Security Council.⁹⁹

Boutros-Ghali took the position that the troops in the eastern enclaves had to be replaced by UN observers and Forward Air Controllers; that way air power could be used against the Bosnian Serbs and the risk for the UN would be minimized. From Boutros-Ghali's perspective clearly a turning point for the mission had been reached; in any case it couldn't go on like this.¹⁰⁰

Reactions to Boutros-Ghali's plea: the US, Great Britain and France

In a general sense Boutros-Ghali's plea before the Security Council came as a surprise: after all, what it came down to was that he felt the mission had ended in disaster and that message was highly confronting. That was certainly true for the United States: Washington felt passed over, so that was the side from which directly the first, negatively worded, response came. The American Permanent Representative to the UN, Albright, said that a redeployment that would make UNPROFOR more effective would be appreciated, but that this should not mean that they were going to leave the Safe

⁹⁵ United Nations, S/1994/555 en S/1995/1389.

⁹⁶ Interview Manfred Eisele, 14/10/99.

⁹⁷ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 16/05/95, No. MSC-1735.

⁹⁸ Interview Boutros-Ghali, 31/01/01.

⁹⁹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 16/05/95, No. MSC-1735.

¹⁰⁰ *Reuter*, RTR 0359 3 OVR 243, 162315 GMT May 95 and RTR 0373 3 OVR 529, 170058 GMT May 95.

Areas.¹⁰¹ Albright noted that Boutros-Ghali was calling for a ‘complete change in direction’, but that was a matter for the Security Council to decide – with Washington taking the lead, Albright said.¹⁰²

Boutros-Ghali had to try and live with it that the Americans were doing everything they could to influence the UN organization. He referred to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations as a glass house that had extensively been infiltrated by the Americans and, thus, in fact received direct recommendations from Washington. That also was the reason why Undersecretary for Political Affairs, Goulding, was the one negotiating with NATO: his Department of Political Affairs had not been infiltrated by the Americans to such an extent. Neither was it a secret that Boutros-Ghali sometimes clashed with the American representative to the UN, to whom he referred as ‘my girlfriend’ Albright.¹⁰³ Other sources emphasized that the Americans were reading the coded messages and e-mails of the UN.¹⁰⁴

Not only the Americans, also the French and British were busy determining their position after the briefing by Boutros-Ghali, in anticipation of his report with further proposals on the redeployment of UNPROFOR. The Dutch Permanent Representative to the UN, Biegman, described that as ‘keeping their powder dry’ (see below for Biegman’s report). The United States had not determined their exact position, but in all events they opposed withdrawal because then the warring factions could fight it out among themselves. The problem was that president Clinton had promised NATO 25,000 ground troops for the withdrawal plan, known as Oplan 40104. The Americans did not consider that a formal decision, but the NATO Council had already accepted the promise so de facto the Americans could not really back out anymore. The American mediator in Bosnia, Holbrooke, painted a vivid picture of the American position in this scenario: ‘Using American troops to fight the war was (...) out of the question’. However, the United Kingdom and France actively kept the pressure on, by describing what would happen if the United States would not supply troops for the withdrawal plan: ‘The resulting recriminations could mean the end of NATO as an effective military alliance, as the British and the French had already said to us privately.’¹⁰⁵

So what the position of the US came down to was that they realized that UNPROFOR was not ideal, ‘but without UNPROFOR life in Bosnia would be terrifying’. The American Permanent Representative Albright, supported by Vice-President Gore, said to be going to strive after a more forceful course of action, though it was not clear what that meant exactly.

That way the Americans shoved the problem back to the UN and the European troop contributing nations. Great Britain and France in particular had problems with that. The British felt that they had to take into account the majority of French casualties among UNPROFOR, but withdrawal was ‘not desirable, not feasible’. The British seemed to like the idea of a combination of more forceful action and redeployment, but they too realized that this more forceful action could not mean peace-enforcement, for the presence of UNPROFOR had to remain based on the consent of the parties. For the British the main point was that they wanted to minimize the risk for their own troops; that was emphasized time and again by the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Consequently, the British Permanent Representative could only suggest one course: the Safe Area concept had to be detailed and implemented again. If that would make it possible to convince parties to demilitarize the Safe Area, more forceful actions could become possible. It would become easier to respond with air power to attacks from outside because those attacks could only be aimed at civilian targets.¹⁰⁶

The position of the French government remained unclear for a while, to the British and the others, mainly because the day after Boutros-Ghali’s plea, 17 May, the new French President Chirac was installed. It was remarkable that despite the uncertainty, an indication of the French opinion

¹⁰¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 16/05/95, No. MSC-1735.

¹⁰² UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 17/05/95, No. MSC-1743.

¹⁰³ Interview Boutros-Ghali, 30/01/01.

¹⁰⁴ Confidential interview (57).

¹⁰⁵ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, pp.65-67.

¹⁰⁶ DCBC, 1413. Code Biegman 452, 19/05/95.

appeared rather soon,¹⁰⁷ that was during the conference of the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the troop-contributing nations and other NATO countries in Soesterberg on 19 May. There the French Chief of Defence Staff Lanxade proved to be the strongest critic of a policy of reduction of UNPROFOR presence. He thought the French government would not agree to that. It would only be an invitation for further fighting, with the result that the remaining personnel would run even greater risks. According to Lanxade the only option was: reinforcement of UNPROFOR. UNPROFOR had left the initiative to the Bosnian Serbs and France wanted a deadline, mid-summer 1995, on which a cease-fire should have been achieved and political progress should have been realized. If the deadline was not met, France wanted to withdraw UNPROFOR under NATO cover. Partial withdrawal was incorrect.¹⁰⁸

The French position that the effectiveness of UNPROFOR had to be reinforced, was also the unanimous decision of the Chiefs of Defence Staff. They had considered five options for the future. '(1) continue as at present; (2) enhancing UNPROFOR's effectiveness and security within its present mandate; (3) reduced presence; (4) total withdrawal en (5) military intervention.' Improving the effectiveness was urgent to prevent a partial or complete withdrawal from becoming inevitable. Although such measures would not have 'strategic impact', there was a chance of progress if these reinforcements went hand-in-hand with a revitalized political process.¹⁰⁹

However, Boutros-Ghali didn't want to consider the opinion of the French Chief of Defence Staff as the official French opinion; he wanted to be sure of the support of the French government, for his report on redeployment of the troops, and for this reason he waited for the official position of the new French government. He also wanted to evaluate the results of the meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff; he wanted to be sure that the position of the Chiefs of Defence Staff was backed by their respective governments.¹¹⁰ This did fit in with his general attitude, that can be characterized as careful. Boutros-Ghali thought about himself as 'not that much different from a general who carries out the orders from his political superiors', in this case the Security Council and governments.¹¹¹

It wasn't until 26 May that Chirac informed Boutros-Ghali of the French position: this was more or less in line with what Lanxade had said in Soesterberg. France wanted to do more justice to protection of the troops, though unlike Lanxade, Chirac did think it necessary to amend the UNPROFOR mandate. Yet Chirac didn't make it clear either how that should be done exactly; increasing the effectiveness of UNPROFOR seemed to have become a kind of magic spell. Chirac also added that the mandate should get more 'focus' and that spreading out the troops should be prevented. If the Security Council did not agree to that, Chirac said – also in accordance with Lanxade - France would withdraw its troops.¹¹²

Reactions to Boutros-Ghali's plea: the Netherlands

The Dutch Permanent Representative to the UN, Biegman, reported to The Hague about the plan launched by Boutros-Ghali. To a certain extent he went along with Boutros-Ghali's analysis, but not with his solution.

His report started with a bold statement: according to him, the UN didn't feel much for the Safe Area concept, also because the means (in the form of troops) to carry out the mission had never been made available. Biegman also argued that the generals thought that UNPROFOR could no longer carry out their tasks properly, and that Boutros-Ghali himself opposed larger-scale deployment of air power, because that would put the safety of the troops at risk and would intensify the fighting. However, Biegman did not consider redeployment of the troops a solution, because according to him

¹⁰⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Code Veenendaal 776, 17/05/95.

¹⁰⁸ Confidential information (59).

¹⁰⁹ Confidential information (59).

¹¹⁰ DCBC, 1413. Code Biegman 452, 18/05/95.

¹¹¹ Interview Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 31/01/01.

¹¹² ABZ, DPV/ARA/02110. Code Biegman 478, 26/05/95; ABZ, DEU 05243, Code Wijnaendts 165, 28/05/95.

that would come down to giving up the Safe Areas with all its consequences for the population. Biegman saw it as a gift to Karadzic, wondered what was going to happen to the population, and finally how the troops could be withdrawn: with or without NATO? Maintaining the status quo - undesirable as it seemed - was the most probable outcome, according to Biegman.¹¹³

On the same day that Boutros-Ghali briefed the Security Council, Minister Van Mierlo of Foreign Affairs had been called to Parliament in connection with the Bosnian affairs for the so-called question time on Tuesday afternoon. Van Mierlo stated that the situation in Bosnia was very worrying. There was little hope for a political solution, and work in the Contact Group advanced with difficulty. The situation on the ground deteriorated visibly. That day the heaviest shelling of Sarajevo of recent times took place, according to Van Mierlo initiated by the Bosnian Muslims and answered by the Bosnian Serbs. For Dutchbat the situation also became increasingly difficult. According to Van Mierlo, internationally the feeling grew that this could not continue, but the Dutch starting point was that withdrawing UNPROFOR from Bosnia and thus withdrawing from the eastern enclaves was not an option for the Dutch government. That would leave hundreds of thousands of people to fend for themselves, and a withdrawal entailed risks. Partial withdrawal had to be seen as a redeployment that eventually should lead to a safer situation. The Netherlands thought that the UN had to make their presence more credible by protecting the troops better, defending more effectively and taking action more effectively. Van Mierlo and Chirac were thinking on the same line: that was easier said than done.

Van Mierlo reported that the problems with UNPROFOR had been subject of discussion in Paris between Boutros-Ghali, Akashi and Janvier, but the Netherlands had not been informed of what was discussed. A text prepared for Minister Voorhoeve only stated that the UN Secretary-General wanted to thoroughly evaluate the mission.¹¹⁴

Some MPs expressed their concerns about the multitudes of international bodies dealing with the conflict: the Contact Group for the former Yugoslavia still existed, a French-British axis seemed to be developing and of course there was the UN. However, Van Mierlo didn't seem to worry about that very much and discussed each of the three bodies referred to.

He said the contacts with the members of the Contact Group were good, although he added that at that moment the group was not functioning. More in general there was no prospect of achieving a political solution, Van Mierlo said.

The worries about a French-British axis were not quite imaginary, as the previous day, 15 May, the French and British ministers of Foreign Affairs had failed to appear at a WEU meeting in Lisbon. Still Van Mierlo did not give a direct answer to question whether a French-British axis was developing. He obviously couldn't, because at that moment he didn't know yet that his British and French colleagues, Hurd and Juppé, had been discussing the plan to withdraw from the eastern enclaves. Hurd had expressed his concern about the French statements on withdrawal (see below). Apparently, the Netherlands was not fully informed of the positions of these members of the Contact Group and the Security Council.

Nevertheless Van Mierlo said that he thought the Netherlands had nothing to complain as regarded decision-making in the UN.¹¹⁵ Yet that optimism was belied that same day, when Boutros-Ghali delivered a plea to the Security Council which the Netherlands was very unhappy about.

It did become clear in the Netherlands rather soon what Boutros-Ghali had proposed in the Security Council, for instance on the occasion of the NATO council of the next day, 17 May. There the British representative gave a briefing on the options presented by Boutros-Ghali. The Dutch representative at NATO, Veenendaal, considered withdrawal from the eastern enclaves 'definitely unattractive'. 'All efforts of the past 18 months to protect the civil population in these enclaves would have been in vain.'¹¹⁶

¹¹³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05277. Code Biegman 436, 17/05/95.

¹¹⁴ NIOD, Coll. Princen. Question Time 16/05/95, the Former Yugoslavia

¹¹⁵ TK, 1994-1995, Handelingen, 16/05/95, 76 pp. 4553-4557.

¹¹⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Code Veenendaal 776, 17/05/95.

When it appeared that Boutros-Ghali wanted to withdraw UNPROFOR from the eastern enclaves, the Dutch government openly distanced themselves. The Ministers Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo gave notice of objection to the statements by the UN Secretary-General. They opposed reduction of UNPROFOR and the possible withdrawal from the eastern Safe Areas, because that would endanger the safety of the population. The Dutch commitment was that 'of course' the population in the enclaves deserved special attention, according to Voorhoeve. UN observers in the eastern enclaves, like Boutros-Ghali wanted, could offer the population insufficient safety, Voorhoeve thought. If the UN moved out, the Bosnian Serbs could take the enclave with hardly any resistance, which would cause an exodus of Displaced Persons.¹¹⁷

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs they were also thinking creatively on the options Boutros-Ghali had. The Deputy Chief of the European Affairs Department, Hattinga van 't Sant, came up with an analysis of the options proposed by Boutros-Ghali. In his opinion all these options were a dead end, including the option chosen by Boutros-Ghali: withdrawal from the eastern enclaves. Though Hattinga van 't Sant did see the problem that the eastern enclaves were indefensible and had to be abandoned because otherwise the UN troops – as hostages – would hinder forceful action, still withdrawal from the eastern enclaves did not seem realistic to him because it would mean leaving the eastern enclaves to fend for themselves without offering any humanitarian aid or even psychological support in return.

So it threatened to come down to 'blundering on', but because that too was far from ideal, Hattinga van 't Sant wondered whether the international community should not politically, economically and militarily stand by the Bosnian Muslims through active military interference in the conflict. Recently in Soesterberg the Chiefs of Defence Staff had rejected military intervention too easily in his opinion; the option of active military intervention should at least have been assessed. In his opinion that didn't have to mean that the UN or NATO would have to mobilize a large intervention army, but it did mean that the UN, NATO or a coalition of countries should help the ABiH to defend the area. That would involve defending the area to which according to the plan of the Contact Group the Bosnian Muslims were entitled, after the ABiH themselves had first taken this area. Joining offensive actions was not the intention, offering Close Air Support for ABiH ground actions should be possible. That way the international community could define a clear strategy again to force back the Bosnian Serbs behind the borders indicated in the plan of the Contact Group.

Hattinga van 't Sant did realize that this option also had its disadvantages. The international community would choose sides, while in contrast the essence of UNPROFOR was to refrain from that. Another drawback was that this option would result in casualties, and therefore that Parliament would be very reluctant to approve this strategy. Russia wouldn't want that either, Hattinga van 't Sant thought. His assessment of these drawbacks was not only correct, it also outweighed its advantages: the memo with this option was offered to the high officials, but no response has been found.¹¹⁸

Also at the highest political level in the Netherlands the situation was a topical subject. The Council of Ministers of 19 May was worried about the political situation in the former Yugoslavia. The threat of a war between Serbia and Croatia made the situation even more complex. Due to differences of opinion between the French and the British the situation wasn't very clear already, which not only applied to the eastern enclaves but also to the western front. Ministers Juppé and Hurd were having an emergency meeting on the subject on 15 May; at first this bilateral contact caused some resentment on the part of the Dutch, because it was kept out of the WEU talks in Lisbon on that same day. At this Council of Ministers meeting, the French policy was described as follows: because of the high number of casualties among French soldiers (37 killed) the French government wanted to withdraw their troops gradually starting in June, unless the UNPROFOR mandate was extended. This French policy was at

¹¹⁷ *De Volkskrant*, 18/05/95.

¹¹⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Memo with the subject 'Bosnië, de VN op dood spoor. Is er nog een uitweg?', 27/05/95. (Bosnia, the UN at a dead end. Is there a way out?) The memo was presented to DGPZ, Plv DGPZ, Chief DEU, Chief DAV and DAV/MS.

odds with what Boutros-Ghali wanted, a reduction of the size of UNPROFOR as well as withdrawal from some areas, including Srebrenica.

However, so far the British didn't want to hear about withdrawal, and the Dutch government supported that at this meeting. It was expected that when this was going to be discussed in the Security Council, Boutros-Ghali would submit. The resentment about the French-British initiative was moderated because Hurd had explained to his Dutch colleague the importance of a united French-British position in the Bosnian issue. It convinced the Council of Ministers that it was indeed important, exactly because the Contact Group no longer functioned. Moreover, the French and British governments had stated that from now on they would not take any action without consulting the Dutch government.¹¹⁹

After his contact with Hurd, Van Mierlo had indeed come to the conclusion that a united French-British position was more important than Dutch anxiety about a French-British axis. Early May Hurd had already explained to Van Mierlo how serious the problems with France were: Paris had reached the limit, Hurd made clear to Van Mierlo. Juppé had thought that the existing situation in the former Yugoslavia could no longer be accepted and in his opinion three things were required: a new cease-fire, reinforcement of UNPROFOR and new diplomatic action. If not, Paris would already stop replacing their troops in June, which came down to withdrawal. Hurd did show understanding for this French position, because France had already lost so many soldiers, but he did call the French decision 'a dangerous course'.¹²⁰

Early May more disturbing sounds were heard from Paris that pointed in the same direction. According to British diplomats, on the day Chirac was elected president, Juppé had said that probably Chirac would soon announce his decision to start withdrawing French troops within two or three months, so indeed possibly without awaiting reinforcement of UNPROFOR and attempts to reach a political agreement. London had urged that consultation should take place before such a far-reaching decision was taken. Also the French had already informed the Canadians that the United Kingdom would also withdraw its troops, which was incorrect. British spokesmen noted that differences of opinion could be perceived in Paris. French politicians wanted to leave Bosnia because it was a hopeless case, but for now the military wanted to stay.¹²¹

9. Janvier in the Security Council and in consultation with the troop contributing nations

After the briefing by Boutros-Ghali on 16 May, on 24 May Force Commander general Janvier briefed the Security Council on the situation in Bosnia. For this meeting, general Smith once more summarized his ideas about the situation for Janvier on 21 May. Again it wasn't a very heartening story: both warring factions were prepared to fight to force a solution. The centre of the activities would be around Sarajevo and the eastern enclaves. Endorsement by the Bosnian Serbs for the UNPROFOR presence was a lost case; for the Bosnian Muslims that was not far away. The VRS held UNPROFOR hostage, while the ABiH increasingly used UNPROFOR as shield. If they didn't want the conflict to escalate, UNPROFOR had to keep trying to get endorsement by parties and should not give up their impartiality. That meant use of force exclusively in self-defence. Protection of the peacekeepers would be the priority. More powerful military actions by UNPROFOR, supported by NATO, would satisfy the Bosnian government and part of the international community, but that would turn UNPROFOR into combatants, while they still didn't have the weapons for that (UNPROFOR had no artillery). More powerful action was not a solution either for the problem of UN soldiers taken hostage. According to Smith the Security Council had to take a decision on the question whether UNPROFOR had to go

¹¹⁹ Objectified summary for the NIOD investigation of the meeting of the Ministerial Council of 19/05/95.

¹²⁰ Confidential information (57).

¹²¹ Confidential information (58).

beyond the principle of self-defence. Smith pleaded for a redefinition of the UNPROFOR mandate. Inconsistencies and ambiguities on the use of force had to be resolved. Smith saw no good of withdrawing UNPROFOR as a whole, as that would mean a reward for the Bosnian Serbs, against whom still more severe action had to be taken one way or the other. Moreover, Smith didn't believe that many governments wanted to support withdrawal. Withdrawal would cause too large practical and military problems for UNPROFOR.¹²²

Janvier thought, just like Boutros-Ghali before him, that partial withdrawal from the eastern enclaves was the only option left to UNPROFOR. However, he would be faced with similar problems in the Security Council as Boutros-Ghali before him.

It already started for the Force Commander the night before the briefing to the Security Council. That night, 23 May, the French and British Permanent Representatives, Mérimée and Hannay, had dinner with Janvier. Janvier told them what he was going to say in the Security Council; what it came down to was what he had arranged with Boutros-Ghali, that was withdrawal from the eastern enclaves to increase the effectiveness of UNPROFOR as a whole. That message didn't go down very well, and it came out at once that Janvier wanted to change the mandate. Even before Janvier went to the Security Council, he was stopped in the hallway by UN Undersecretary-General Kofi Annan. He told Janvier that there was no political will to execute 'the line Janvier'. Instead the line should be: continue as is, but more forceful. Then Janvier had asked: 'but how can we?' Janvier was not going to get much support from Annan in those days. Annan 'tried to do an honest job', but he wasn't the man who could achieve much. He was 'the tea boy of the Security Council', according to colonel Baxter, Smith's Military Assistant who had been assigned to Janvier's delegation. Annan had a feeling for the political temperature, but he was only surviving, had little influence and mainly looked to the United States.¹²³ Janvier did not modify his briefing after this warning from Annan.

The briefing to the Security Council was in closed session. Srebrenica was not mentioned there and Janvier didn't even say explicitly that Srebrenica had to be abandoned. He did say that UNPROFOR could no longer execute their mission in Eastern Bosnia, which was generally explained as a plea for withdrawal.¹²⁴ That came as a bombshell: the Security Council was set against Janvier's ideas, because approval of his proposal would mean that the Security Council's idea of the Safe Areas had become a failure. For that reason the Security Council held on to the idea and rejected Janvier's suggestion to leave the enclaves. Then the Security Council would also have to design plans for a transition period, but they weren't ready for that yet, the more so because most members looked to the American representative Albright. The non-permanent members didn't seem prepared either to enter into battle with the five permanent members, including the US.¹²⁵

Albright feared that Janvier's plan could mean an escalation of the conflict, as also indicated in Janvier's own non-paper. That could mean that UNPROFOR as a whole had to be withdrawn and, consequently, that 25,000 Americans had to be sent to Bosnia. The American government still didn't feel like that at all. That's why Albright strongly opposed Janvier's idea, also in public: after the meeting she told the press 'my government does not see why air strikes would not be a suitable action in Bosnia at the moment'.¹²⁶

After briefing the Security Council, Janvier said that his career had now fallen to pieces: 'I have said what was politically not accepted'. Because the problem was mainly between Albright and Janvier, Albright took him aside after the meeting. They were in a side-room for two hours, where Albright asked why the UN could not act more aggressively and make more use of the UN units in the Safe Areas. Then Janvier had plaid a nationalist card by replying that when he was involved in the UN mission in Lebanon, the American soldiers had refused to patrol at night. He had had to use

¹²² NIOD, Coll. Smith. Smith to Janvier, 21/05/95, No. 8060.

¹²³ Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

¹²⁴ Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

¹²⁵ Interview Manfred Eisele, 14/10/99.

¹²⁶ Westerman en Rijs, *Het zwartse scenario*, p.131.

Norwegians and Swedes for that. The attending press officer, M. Rubin then gave Albright a note with the words: 'walk out now'. Albright continued the conversation, but it remained a discussion between deaf people. Later Baxter judged that the two generals Smith and Janvier should have gone to the Security Council together; he thought that might have made more impression.¹²⁷

To the question why she had rejected the proposals of Boutros-Ghali and later Janvier, while those really offered possibilities for a more forceful use of air power as she advocated, Albright answered that for her it had been a 'Hobson's choice': a choice in which there seemed to be alternatives, but where, in fact, only one course could be followed. That was because it was hard to imagine to leave the population of the enclaves behind without protection. The Security Council was divided as well, and for that reason something had to be devised that only met the needs of the UN and UNPROFOR halfway, Albright said.¹²⁸

Consultation Janvier with the troop contributing nations

On the same day as his briefing to the Security Council, Janvier briefed the representatives of the troop contributing nations, including the Netherlands. That was attended by all troop contributing nations, not only for Bosnia but also elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. The meeting did not have an official status; the decisions were taken in the Security Council.

On the Safe Area concept Janvier said that the situation in the Safe Areas at that moment was completely different than at the moment they were set up. A number of factors obstructed the implementation of the concept. The UN soldiers in the Safe Areas were isolated, spread out, poorly armed, in fact hostages, and highly vulnerable. The Bosnian government used the Safe Areas as a basis to launch attacks at the VRS. Janvier didn't consider the presence of UNPROFOR very useful. He wanted a substantial modification of the mandate. The only real guarantee for an improvement of the situation could come from negotiations and the prospect of a political settlement.¹²⁹

The Dutch representative, Biegman, was one of the first in the consultation between the troop contributing nations who responded to Janvier's briefing. Biegman opposed withdrawal of UNPROFOR from the eastern enclaves. In particular with regard to the Safe Areas the mandate or strength of UNPROFOR should not be weakened. If UNPROFOR was seen as too weak, it had to be reinforced. Biegman referred to a statement by the American chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, general Shalikashvili, who had said that firm actions by NATO would make the Bosnian Serbs start behaving correctly. It was exactly the lack of such action that had caused the frustrations. With that Shalikashvili voiced the general attitude of the American government that a firm line had to be taken with the Bosnian Serbs from the air and Biegman agreed to that. Neither did Biegman think it fair to approach both warring factions at the same time. It had been the Bosnian Serbs who had frustrated the Contact Group plans.

In his reply Janvier emphasized the complex problems of the use of air power. There was no middle course between a 'strong protest' (a personal warning to the Bosnian Serbs) and the use of the Close Air Support. That had to be balanced against the risk of an effective implementation of the UNPROFOR mandate.

Consultation with the troop contributing nations indeed showed that most countries were not in favour of withdrawal from the enclaves. The Islamic countries indicated that they would only support air actions and the lifting of the arms embargo to help their fellow believers, the Bosnian Muslims, in their struggle against the Bosnian Serbs. Some western countries noted the vulnerability and risk of hostage-takings for the troops in the enclaves. That required concentration of the troops, in

¹²⁷Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

¹²⁸ Interview M. Albright, 28/09/01.

¹²⁹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Reunion des pays contributeurs de troupes 24 mai 1995, Exposé introductif du Général Janvier, Commandant les forces de paix de Nations Unies, attached to Outgoing Code Cable No. 1829. Minutes of UNPF TCN meeting on 24/05/95.

other words withdrawal from the enclaves.¹³⁰ Although Biegman did not speak according to instructions from The Hague, earlier public statements by the Ministers Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve had been perfectly clear. The intervention by Biegman also revealed the close ties that existed between the Netherlands and Bosnia, in particular in the person of the Bosnian ambassador to the UN, Sacirbey. In addition to the fact that Sacirbey regularly visited the Netherlands on his travels from New York to Geneva and Sarajevo and visited the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, Biegman sent him the text of his intervention in the consultation between the troop contributing nations.¹³¹

Later interpretations of Janvier's actions

Later the briefing by Janvier to the Security Council caused a row in the Netherlands when on 31 October 1995 *ANP*, *De Telegraaf* and *NRC Handelsblad* reported a reconstruction of the fall of Srebrenica by the British newspaper *The Independent*. This newspaper stated to possess documents that already on 24 May Janvier had proposed in New York to leave the enclaves to fend for themselves, but that some Islamic countries and the Netherlands would have opposed the proposal and Janvier's hostile attitude towards the Bosnian government. In addition, Westerman and Rijs wrote in their book *Het Zwartste Scenario* (the blackest scenario) that the Dutch government had 'spectacularly' missed the gist of Janvier's argument and that Permanent Representative Biegman had not understood or reported that Janvier wanted to get rid of the enclaves. Westerman and Rijs also wrote that Janvier's speech could not be found at the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence.¹³²

These reports in the newspapers raised the question what exactly the Netherlands had known about Janvier's appearance before the Security Council. Initially Minister Van Mierlo responded by stating that the report from the UN Secretary-General had already indicated that withdrawal was not a realistic option. But that did not appear until 30 May, six days after the meeting with Janvier in the Security Council.¹³³ Around that time Minister Voorhoeve publicly acknowledged that he still did not exactly know what Janvier had said about the enclaves during the closed session of the Security Council.¹³⁴ Van Mierlo on the contrary informed the lower house that the Permanent Representative at the UN had sent the report of the meeting with Janvier to the Ministry of Defence. However, this referred to Biegman's report on the meeting of the troop contributing nations that Janvier had addressed, also on 24 May.

Van Mierlo also made it clear that a number of UN ambassadors, including the Dutch ambassador, had criticized Janvier's plans: the Netherlands had rejected withdrawal from the Safe Areas, according to Van Mierlo, and the Dutch policy had always been aimed at maintaining UN units in the Safe Areas 'to discourage attacks and shootings'.¹³⁵

Van Mierlo did not specifically state that the Netherlands also knew what Janvier had said in the Security Council. Ambassador Biegman had certainly reported on the subject, even though the Netherlands had not been present. Janvier's argument had been roughly the same as his argument before the troop contributing nations. Before the Security Council he had just been a bit more specific on the possibility of redeployment; Janvier wanted to maintain the UN presence in Sarajevo, but he did not exclude withdrawal from Tuzla or Bihac, implying that the same was true for withdrawal from the eastern enclaves Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde. Biegman also reported that the positions within the Security Council had not come closer. The United States kept going on about a forceful UNPROFOR

¹³⁰ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 31/05/95, No. 1829. Minutes of UNPF TCN meeting on 24/05/95.

¹³¹ APPVN, Fax N.H. Biegman to Muhamed Sacirbey, 25/05/95, without number.

¹³² Westerman and Rijs, *Het zwartste scenario*, p. 131.

¹³³ *ANP*, 302350 and 311536 Oct 95.

¹³⁴ Vectra BuZa 02-11-1995 13:50, referring to ANP139 4 BIN 226 Van Lambalgen 808.

¹³⁵ TK, 1995-1996, 22 181, nr. 139 (11/12/95).

and maintaining presence in the Safe Areas, while France and the United Kingdom seemed to be heading for redeployment plus forceful action.¹³⁶

To sum up: the statement by Westerman and Rijs that the Netherlands had not known what Janvier had said in the consultation with the troop contributing nations and in the Security Council, was incorrect. Biegman had certainly reported on both meetings. He had also gathered sufficient information on the meeting of the Security Council at which he himself had not been present. There had not been much difference in Janvier's contribution at these two meetings. Because Janvier also delivered his plea for withdrawal from the enclaves at the meeting with the troop contributing nations, it wasn't really a problem that his actual text before the Security Council was not known. Biegman even was one of the first to react by saying that he opposed withdrawal from the enclaves, including Srebrenica.

In the parliamentary debate of December 1995 that was intended to close the subject, the matter of Janvier's contribution on 24 May was discussed once more. VVD spokesman Blaauw accused Van Mierlo of not having informed the lower house that Janvier had wanted to give up Srebrenica. Then the Netherlands would have had a clearer picture of what Dutchbat might be facing.¹³⁷

A lot could be said against Van Mierlo's reply that he had not heard Janvier say that he wanted to get rid of the enclaves, had not received confirmation of that and that he did not believe that Janvier would have said that like this.¹³⁸ After all, ambassador Biegman and thus the Netherlands had certainly not missed Janvier's appearance. Apart from the codes by Biegman to his Ministry, Minister Voorhoeve had also said on 19 May in a conversation with the American UN Representative, Albright: 'Giving up the enclaves, as suggested earlier by Force Commander Janvier, would result in a bloodbath.' That had also been reported to Foreign Affairs.¹³⁹ In addition, Biegman had already reported extensively on the briefing by Boutros-Ghali before the Security Council on 16 May, where he had voiced his preference for redeployment.

In the debate Blaauw also tried to defend the position that Janvier's statement had had an influence on the actions of the UN headquarters. Such speculations on a connection between Janvier's appearance before the Security Council and the later fall of Srebrenica seemed attractive, but Janvier's idea to withdraw UNPROFOR from the enclaves was not followed up: UNPROFOR did not withdraw from the enclaves. After Janvier hadn't received any support in the Security Council for his ideas of withdrawal from the eastern enclaves, he didn't discuss that any more, not even after it had gone wrong.¹⁴⁰ But above all the Bosnian-Serb strategy on how to handle Srebrenica, as will be discussed later in this part, had already been shaped before Janvier addressed the Security Council. Janvier's ideas were not considered worth further study. As in a reflex the politicians rejected it, because it would underline the failure of the Safe Area concept; people didn't want to admit a failure. The American UN ambassador Albright was at the forefront, but the Dutch government members were clearly heard as well. That way there came no new implementation of the Safe Area concept.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05277. Code Biegman 467, 25/05/95.

¹³⁷ TK, 1995-1996, Proceedings, 19/12/95, TK 40-3185 en TK 40-3162.

¹³⁸ TK, 1995-1996, Proceedings, 19/12/95, TK 40-3185 en TK 40-3162.

¹³⁹ APPVN doss. 272 ag nr. 22491. Code Biegman 548, 19/06/95.

¹⁴⁰ Interview A.M.W.W. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

¹⁴¹ For instance similar to the Safe Havens in Northern and Southern Iraq that were protected from the air. A concept that still works today, without allied troops being on Iraqi soil. As general Shalikashvili, former commander of Operation Provide Comfort in Iraq, said: that was a concept that, unlike that of the Safe Areas, had been thought about and where the motto had been 'shoot first, ask questions later'. Shalikashvili did have to admit that the terrain in Iraq was better suited to such an approach than the terrain in Bosnia. Interview John Shalikashvili, 07/06/00.

10. The air strikes on Pale

The month of May saw a considerable escalation of the fighting between VRS and ABiH.¹⁴² UNPROFOR got involved in the fighting, which resulted on 25 and 26 May in the much-discussed air strikes on ammunition depots in Pale, the 'capital' of the Republika Srpska. However, it would be incorrect to consider these bombings by NATO as the single cause of the escalation; before 25 May the conflict had already been escalating.

For instance on 7 May ten French UN soldiers and civilians were killed and 30 got wounded in a mortar attack near Sarajevo, on which operation also the carefulness of the UN headquarters in Zagreb was underlined once more: Akashi's refusal to use Close Air Support was criticized by a number of UN member states.

A next step on the escalation ladder was the removal of heavy weapons by Bosnian Serbs from a Weapon Collection Point, on 24 May even followed by firing heavy weapons by Bosnian Serbs from Weapon Collection Points, and taking away still more weapons. That included tanks and rocket launchers in what was called the Heavy Weapons Exclusion Zone around Sarajevo.

This removal of heavy weapons by Bosnian Serbs did not remain without consequences. On 24 May the Bosnian Serbs received an ultimatum through a press conference by general Smith in Sarajevo: if the next day heavy weapons would not have been removed or delivered at a Weapon Collection Point, the VRS would be attacked from the air. If the heavy weapons would not remain silent within 24 hours after that, another air strike would follow. That same ultimatum also applied to the ABiH.

The VRS did not respect this deadline. That made 25 May 1995 a day to remember in the Bosnian conflict. In the Chapter 'Air power: Close Air Support and air strikes' below, these air strikes will be discussed in more detail. Threatening with force, as Smith did on this occasion, sometimes had a positive result. The fact that NATO was prepared to shoot down airplanes that violated the no-fly zone, had prevented the use of the airspace for offensive purposes. Threatening with force had already worked before to set up the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone around Sarajevo. But the Bosnian Serbs had quickly understood that they could have the UN pay an unacceptable price for the use of air power. And that was exactly what happened after the second air strike.

After the Bosnian Serbs had failed to respect the deadline, NATO indeed carried out an air strike on 25 May. To prevent unintended damage (in military terms: collateral damage) and casualties, they selected as target two bunkers on an ammunition site near Pale, the capital of the Republika Srpska, proclaimed by the Bosnian Serbs.

The VRS did not take long to respond to this air strike. That same day the VRS besieged Weapon Collection Points and fired at all Safe Areas, with the exception of Zepa. Especially Tuzla was hit very hard: as retaliation for the air strikes on 25 May (Tito's day of birth, and the day of unity and fraternity¹⁴³) they fired at Tuzla from a distance of 20 kilometres, and one single shell (a 130 mm artillery shell) caused 195 casualties, of which 72 were killed.¹⁴⁴ Because the Bosnian Serbs did not observe the ultimatum, on 26 May NATO carried out a second air strike on the other bunkers at the same ammunition site near Pale.

Three examples show how UN personnel got involved in the VRS actions against their will. The first and most important one showed UNPROFOR's vulnerability: on 26 May the VRS took 145 UN observers and UN soldiers hostage. During the following days the number of hostages increased.

¹⁴² For the description of the events in May in this section in a general sense use has been made of the list of events as stated in the report by Boutros-Ghali. The conclusions in his report will be discussed in section 11.

¹⁴³ CRST. Remark by General Sead Delic, see Minutes of Meeting with Brig Delic/Comd 2 Corps on 07/0695. Compiled by MA/Comd Sec NE Maj Valved.

¹⁴⁴ NIOD, Coll Brantz. Commander Sector North East (Brigadier General Hagrup Haukland) to Major General Rupert Smith, 28/05/95. UNMOs later expressed their suspicion that the shellings then and in later weeks on the western part of city were not random, but that these were aimed at the TTU factory of which it was suspected that it was an ammunition factory. Remarkably, the shell was Soviet-made and it was equipped with an American percussion fuse. (CRST.UNMO HQ Sector NE to UNMO BHC, 111000B Jun 95).

Now famous TV images showed UN personnel chained to strategic objects, in many cases tied to bridges and lampposts. The VRS said to have locked up 168 peacekeepers at possible targets for an air strike to make sure the next air strike would not be aimed at those. General Mladic informed general Smith that their lives would be at risk if the air strikes were to continue. A second example of the direct involvement of UNPROFOR personnel happened at Sarajevo: there the French retook the Vrbanja bridge (see below) on French initiative, that had earlier been taken by the VRS. A third example is that on 28 May the VRS in Gorazde fired at the British compound and took 33 men prisoner of the personnel of the observation posts (OPs). The following section describes the direct consequences of these actions for UNPROFOR.

The VRS didn't stop at that: also on 28 May the Bosnian Serbs cut off the gas, water and electricity supply to Sarajevo. From the Weapon Collection Points they had surrounded the VRS took back two hundred mortars and artillery pieces.

After the VRS had taken UN personnel hostage, it was relatively quiet in Sarajevo, but that had been achieved at a high price and it had left UNPROFOR in complete isolation. The situation increased the problems with sending supplies to the eastern enclaves, because now the Bosnian Serbs didn't feel at all like letting convoys pass that were heading for the UN personnel in those eastern enclaves. The capacity of the UN to act effectively in Bosnia had badly been affected. The same applied for the intended impartiality of the UN and the necessary consent from the warring factions for the UN presence: the warring factions considered UNPROFOR party to the conflict.

11. Direct consequences of the air strikes for UNPROFOR

The air strikes on 25 and 26 May in Pale were not isolated events. Earlier in spring it had already become clear what the pattern was at the use of air power (air strikes or Close Air Support): Force Commander Janvier wanted to observe extreme restraint because of the safety of the troops on the ground. That attitude in itself was not strange, because each time air power was used against the Bosnian Serbs, the VRS quickly responded with major consequences for UNPROFOR: hostages were taken, the supply route to the Safe Areas was closed, airplanes supplying relief-aid to Sarajevo were fired at, UNMOs and VN personnel at isolated observation posts were taken hostage and UNPROFOR was ignored. The general UNPROFOR policy as regards the use of air power, and the decision-making process that led to the air strikes at Pale, will be discussed in the next Chapter, 'Air Power: Close Air Support and air strikes'. Here the account continues with consequences the air strikes on 25 and 26 May had for UNPROFOR of which the most important one was, as stated earlier, that the Bosnian Serbs were taking hostages because UNPROFOR would have chosen sides.¹⁴⁵ In addition, isolated UN units were surrounded by the VRS, and UNPROFOR had been robbed of their freedom of movement in Bosnian-Serb territory.¹⁴⁶

On 29 May general Smith also concluded that the objective of the air strikes had not been achieved. This objective had been to revitalize the regime of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones and Weapon Collection Points that had gradually been broken down. On the contrary, the VRS had taken possession of large numbers of arms and equipment from the Weapon Collection Points. The Bosnian government did cooperate as long as it was to their advantage, but could also be forced to give up the regime of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones or Weapon Collection Points.

The VRS had a hold on UNPROFOR, Smith concluded: still (on 29 May) 347 UN soldiers were being held hostage, isolated UN units were surrounded by the VRS, and the VRS had robbed UNPROFOR of their freedom of movement. The UN personnel in the enclaves was vulnerable and, as Smith put it, 'more part of the problem than the solution'. UNPROFOR had lost the consent of the

¹⁴⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 62/77, File 2.8 Nato 25/05/93 – 05/07/95. The statements came from Parliament chairman Momcilo Krajisnik on Radio Knin, 26/05/95, 16.00 hrs. Krajisnik also came with the reproach that the Bosnian troops were using the Safe Areas, including Srebrenica, as base of operations. UNPROFOR 26/05/95, 23.30 hrs.

¹⁴⁶ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Commander HQ UNPROFOR Directive 2/95, 29/05/95, No. 8800, UN Conf.

Bosnian Serbs for their presence and were no longer seen as peacekeeper, certainly not since UNPROFOR was holding four VRS soldiers prisoners of war. UNPROFOR could hardly be called impartial anymore and they were not far from the point that in fact they were allies of the Bosnian Muslims.¹⁴⁷

After the air strikes on Pale on 25 and 26 May 1995 a completely new situation developed. As general Smith put it in a discussion with the Bosnian vice-president E. Ganic on the evening of 24 May: the air strikes would change the situation to such an extent that 'much of the debate currently going on in New York would become academic'.¹⁴⁸ New York did not know that the air strikes were coming: On 24 May Janvier held his speeches before the Security Council and the troop contributing nations, and he said he was aware of the importance of air strikes, but he gave no indication whatsoever that he was actually going to use them.¹⁴⁹ Directly after the first air strike the UN were in an uproar.

Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo had estimated that the air strike would cause escalation. The intelligence staff (in military terms: the G-2) in Sarajevo expected that an air strike would mainly evoke a strong response because the Bosnian Serbs had been hit so close to home. Karadzic might see it as proof that he was right to continue to fight; he would resist Milosevic's pressure to start negotiations. UN personnel could be taken hostage, as Karadzic had threatened to do. The VRS might even take up arms against UNPROFOR. In particular it was predictable that as countermeasure for the enclaves the VRS would attack there, hold UN personnel and stop further convoys. The ABiH would wait and see which way the wind was blowing and wait for the response from the Bosnian Serbs, while at the same time they would try to increase the tension and destabilize the situation by provoking the Bosnian Serbs. Sarajevo and also Gorazde were obvious targets for such actions. They were playing high-stakes poker and it wasn't clear what card the Bosnian Serbs would be playing. 'They are very good poker players and never show their cards until they have to'.¹⁵⁰

The first reactions by the Bosnian Serbs to the air strikes came in words and didn't promise much good. Mladic accused Smith of 'crazy and unreasonable' use of the instrument of air strikes. He wondered whether Smith was trying to frighten him. Mladic expected Smith to act as a reasonably thinking human being; he, Mladic, had never provoked or attacked the UN, but now it had been Smith who had attacked him. Smith should have thought of his soldiers and the consequences of 'such unreasonable and unthinking decisions'. Mladic expected apologies rather than threats.¹⁵¹ Other reactions from the Bosnian Serbs were just as furious. The advisor and spokesman of Karadzic, Jovan Zametica, reeled off a litany of protests against the UN. He said that from now on the UN could only be considered an enemy, because the UN had chosen the side of his enemies. The international community tried to use force to induce the Serbs to make concessions, but that wouldn't work. Already that community didn't understand much of the Serb cause and the Serb rights. The Bosnian Serbs were prepared to negotiate about peace tomorrow, but only when the Bosnian-Serb interests were taken into account and the Bosnian Serbs were not seen as just an autonomous minority in Bosnia.¹⁵² Karadzic himself declared that because of the air strikes, the Republika Srpska considered the UN an enemy and he revoked all arrangements made earlier with the UN. UN resolutions would no longer be respected. Momcilo Krajisnik, Parliament Chairman of the Republika Srpska, also said that the UN had given up their neutral position and should from now be considered the enemy. After what the UN had failed to do, they did not have the right to attack the Bosnian Serbs. That is because Krajisnik stated that the

¹⁴⁷ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Commander HQ UNPROFOR Directive 2/95, 29/05/95, UN Conf.

¹⁴⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Meeting Gen Smith/Dr Ganic: 24/05/95, attached to Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 25/05/95, No. Z-861.

¹⁴⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05277. Code Biegman 467, 25/05/95.

¹⁵⁰ NIOD, Coll. Smith. BH Command G2 Assessment 25/05/95, UN Conf.

¹⁵¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Telephone Conversation Gen Smith / Gen Mladic: 26/05/95, attached to Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 26/05/95, No. Z-870.

¹⁵² UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Statement of Dr Jovan Zametica, Advisor and Spokesman to Dr Karadzic, Bosnian Serb Radio, 26/05/95, 24.00 hrs, attached to Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 27/05/95, No. Z-875.

Safe Areas were not at all safe, but that they were used as base of operations for attacks by the Bosnian Muslims. There were armed troops instead of civilians under protection. The ABiH had carried out attacks from Srebrenica, Zepa as well as Gorazde.¹⁵³

After these threatening words against the UN, the Bosnian Serbs suited their actions to the word: large numbers of UN personnel were taken hostage. That plunged the UN into a crisis. The special representative of the UN secretary-general, Akashi, appealed to Karadzic to release the hostages. The way in which they were exhibited in images that went all over the world, with UN personnel chained to objects, had not done much good to Karadzic' reputation. Harming the hostages would only cause pressure from the international community for further military action, air strikes included, 'that will be impossible to resist'.¹⁵⁴

However, Akashi was bluffing for in reality the actions against the Bosnian Serbs didn't become stricter after 25 and 26 May. It looked more like the reverse; the careful powers were gaining influence again. Akashi was only too aware of the limitations the hostages would cause for the political and military activities of UNPROFOR.¹⁵⁵ 'The need not to worsen the security situation in UNPROFOR is paramount.' Akashi reported to New York that he had instructed general Smith that implementation of the mandate was second to the safety of the UN personnel. Smith had to take measures to prevent the VRS from taking even more personnel hostage. That could mean a reduction of UNPROFOR's presence and activities.¹⁵⁶ That had proved Smith right that the discussion so far in New York suddenly seemed very academic, now that Akashi had also worded his vision of the mandate.

More in general most people within UNPROFOR thought that the air strikes had fallen short of expectations. That was for instance concluded by Akashi's substitute in Sarajevo, Deyan Mihov. The objective had been to make the VRS comply with the agreement of February 1994 on heavy weapons, and to achieve stabilization of the situation around Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia. Because that objective had not been achieved, and to get the hostages released, Mihov wanted to stop the air strikes. In his opinion it looked like the Bosnian Serbs were following a preconceived plan. Their objective seemed to cause disputes between UN and NATO, as well as within the Security Council, in the Contact Group and among the troop contributing nations.¹⁵⁷ Whether or not that was the objective of the Bosnian Serbs, they succeeded rather nicely: the consequence of the air strikes of 25 and 26 May was that for the time being UNPROFOR gave up further air strikes.

New visions of the national governments

The development of the hostage situation had really shaken the troop contributing nations, in particular the United Kingdom and France. For instance, on 2 June the French observers were transported to safer areas as a matter of precaution. The situation in Bosnia was getting highly gruesome for the intervening soldiers too.

The Americans had also had a fright, although they had no ground troops in Bosnia. They got more involved after an American F-16 was shot down near Banja Luka on 2 June.¹⁵⁸ There were American individuals in Bosnia, but only in the civil and military staffs. That also appeared on 29 May

¹⁵³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Statement of Mr Momcilo Krajisnik, 'speaker of the Republika Srpska National Assembly', Bosnian Serb Radio, 26/05/95, 14.00 hrs, attached to Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 27/05/95, No. Z-875.

¹⁵⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Letter Yashushi Akashi to Radovan Karadzic, 26/05/95, attached to Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 27/05/95, No. Z-875.

¹⁵⁵ Confidential information (60).

¹⁵⁶ Confidential information (61).

¹⁵⁷ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Fax Deyan Mihov, Acting D-SRSG/CAC BH Command Sarajevo to Yasushi Akashi and Michel Moussali, HCA Civil Affairs, HQ Zagreb, Situation Assessment 29/0595 sent with Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 29/05/95, No. Z-889.

¹⁵⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, Weekly Situation Report, 31/05/95, No. Z-900, Restricted; MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, no. 25/95, completed 301200B May 1995; confidential information (121); Royal Netherlands Crisis Staff Weeksitrep of 25/05/95 - 02/06/95.

when messages came about hostage-takings of American observers of the ICFY mission who were monitoring the border between Yugoslavia and Bosnia. These observers were then hastily withdrawn.

At a high level in the United States now discussions started on how to continue. On 27 May safety advisor Lake and chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-staff, general Shalikashvili, had a discussion about the subject. Lake thought that UNPROFOR 'should stay on course and decide what to do next'. Shalikashvili was instructed by him: 'Be prepared to discuss redeployment and emergency extractions.' General Smith had already warned for the possibility that the troops would have to be withdrawn.

Military precautions were taken for an operation to withdraw UNPROFOR. The American so-called Rapid Response Option (the Marine Expeditionary Unit or MEU) in the Mediterranean was activated, as well as a third part of an American airborne division in Italy, the availability of which had been kept silent. That activation merely involved an increase of their readiness and did not yet mean deployment.

Washington also took political precautions: Lake talked to American Congress members about moving the Marine Expeditionary Unit from the Mediterranean to the Adriatic Sea. However, as yet their actual deployment was not discussed. The American Minister of Defence, Perry, had a meeting with the British and German Ministers of Defence, Rifkind and Rühle. Perry's message was: 'no air strikes, only Close Air Support'. This response mainly seemed inspired by the spur of the moment; there are no further indications that the policy of the United States did not remain that the Bosnian Serbs had to be closed down on through air strikes. The American army also got permission to make plans to rescue the hostages. The American government did not rule out commando actions to free hostages.

The hostage crisis made achieving international agreement even more difficult than it already was. For instance the Security Council could not reach agreement on a Presidential Statement to denunciate the violence, and the North Atlantic Council, called in emergency session, did not get beyond demanding that the shooting at the Safe Areas had to be stopped and that the hostages should unconditionally be released. Even the Russians spoke of barbarism.

Soon it also appeared that the hostage crisis got a place of its own in the discussions between the Americans and the troop contributing nations. For instance, Perry had spoken to the new French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hervé de Charette, and it had appeared to him that the hostage situation had been reason for the separate countries to have a much greater interest in Bosnia because of their hostages than before.

The same applied for the British: the British Chief of Defence Staff, Sir Peter Inge, had already said that so far the British had not had a 'vital interest' in Bosnia, but that now they did. British troops with heavy weapons (artillery) landed in Split.¹⁵⁹

The French and American response to the hostage crisis

The hostage crisis had roused the emotions, not in the least in France: the strategic Vrbanja bridge near Sarajevo had been stormed and taken on 27 May by Bosnian Serbs, dressed as French UN soldiers. Two French soldiers were killed. That same morning this bridge was retaken; this recapture took place, without Smith knowing anything about it, on personal instructions of the French President, Chirac. He gave orders to the French Chief of Defence Staff, Lanxade, and he transferred them to the also French general Gobilliard in Sarajevo, who set up the recapture operation. The argument for this French get-together was that the French government reserved the right to take Command and Control in case of an emergency and to issue direct instructions to French units under international command.¹⁶⁰

Despite earlier tirades by telephone, the generals Smith and Mladic remained in touch with each other on subjects like this. On 28 May they discussed the situation that had developed. The recapture

¹⁵⁹ Interview John Shalikashvili, 07/06/00. Information on the basis of the diary notes.

¹⁶⁰ Confidential interview (1).

had killed three VRS soldiers and four were taken prisoner of war. It caused the bizarre situation that a peacekeeping force took prisoners of war, although they were not allowed to be called like that. Then VRS soldiers threatened to kill the French UN soldiers that had been taken hostage if these four Serbs were not released. Smith did not directly reply to that to Mladic; Mladic told Smith that he had information that these four Serbs had been handed over to the ABiH (which was not true). Mladic called the treatment of the French UN soldiers taken hostage humane and correct - apart from an isolated case -. He did admit that some French UN soldiers were at key locations that could be target of NATO actions, including Mladic' own headquarters. In addition Mladic told Smith that he hoped that Smith would act in accordance with the UN mandate and would not respond to the wishes of the Bosnian government. Smith should make it clear once more to the Bosnian Vice-President Ganic, according to Mladic.¹⁶¹ The VRS soldiers were not released until after mid-June also the UNPROFOR hostages had been released.

The French directly took the position that the French and not the UN should liberate the French hostages. In addition to the solo action at the Vrbanja bridge, the French were considering to set up another national operation for that purpose; the French aircraft carrier Foch sailed with special units on board. The French Chief of Defence Staff, Lanxade, told his American counterpart Shalikhvili that neither the UN nor UNPROFOR were the right intermediaries to do business with the Serbs now that there were hostages. The UN in Zagreb could not handle the crisis. Countries would want to solve the hostage problem each in their own way. The chairman of the Military Committee of NATO, Sir Richard Vincent, even received telephone calls from the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hervé de Charette, who was unhappy because there was no multinational involvement.¹⁶²

The new French president, Chirac, also responded to the hostage crisis. After the indignation on the hostage-takings, it was mainly France that tried to realize new initiatives. Chirac took the lead in new diplomatic offensives and the French chairmanship of the EU that ended by the end of June caused a diplomatic final sprint. An important French initiative was the proposal to set up a Rapid Reaction Force (for its formation see section 13). On top of that the French intended to follow up this military initiative with political action. France called for an international conference and asked the two joint chairmen of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia, Stoltenberg and Bildt, to leave for The Balkans as soon as possible for preparatory talks, so there could be results in time to discuss those at the European summit in Cannes on 26 and 27 June.¹⁶³

The Americans on the other hand wanted to prevent each country from steering its own course, for that would result in chaos. That's why Perry thought it necessary to have NATO solve the hostage crisis, by a group of international planners. Otherwise the Americans seemed to have written off the UN: In Perry's opinion the entire peace operation had to be transferred to NATO. Finally he emphasized the vital interests of a new negotiator for the Contact Group; if no political agreement could be reached, everyone would be up a blind alley.¹⁶⁴

The Dutch response to the hostage crisis

On 28 May, Minister Voorhoeve told the American Minister of Defence, Perry, about his fears that also after a solution of the hostage crisis the problems with UNPROFOR would continue, by which he meant: as long as the UN troops were in vulnerable positions spread out over Bosnia, and the Bosnian Serbs could take both UNPROFOR and the Muslim population hostage.

¹⁶¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Telephone Conversation Gen Smith / Gen Mladic: 28/05/95 UN Confi, attached to Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 26/05/95, No. Z-883.

¹⁶² ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Code Wijnaendts 165, 28/05/95.

¹⁶³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, File BHC Weekly Sitreps, 17/06/95 – 21/09/95. UNPROFOR HQ, Weekly Situation Report, No. 122, 5-11 June 1995.

¹⁶⁴ Interview John Shalikhvili, 07/06/00.

The first priority for Voorhoeve was to make UNPROFOR less vulnerable, before more forceful action could be taken against the Bosnian Serbs. That meant withdrawal of the UNMOs and a solution for the UNPROFOR troops in the enclaves. Voorhoeve saw two ways to achieve that: either a corridor to the enclaves over land was created after negotiations, – but that would be difficult to realize – or the enclaves were evacuated, taking along the population that should then be relocated in Central Bosnia or around Sarajevo. This was just an exchange of thoughts with Perry, Voorhoeve himself has never tried to find support for this idea. This option would of course be unfeasible because this scenario meant that over a hundred thousand people had to be moved, while it was highly questionable whether the Bosnian government would want to cooperate.

At least Voorhoeve saw the problem clearly: as long as the enclaves remained the responsibility of the UN, UNPROFOR would remain highly vulnerable because the Bosnian Serbs had the population there in a firm hold. A day after his conversation with Perry, on 29 May, Voorhoeve warned the Council of Ministers that in view of discussions in New York, it could become inevitable for UNPROFOR to have to leave the enclaves.

The Dutch government was also worried about the situation that had developed. During that same Dutch Council of Ministers on 29 May, Voorhoeve warned for the risk that Dutchbat soldiers could be taken hostage. The UN were highly vulnerable and no longer had things under control in Bosnia.¹⁶⁵ It was concluded in the Council of Ministers that with this kind of actions the Bosnian Serbs seemed to be aiming at banishing UNPROFOR from Bosnia. A forced departure would have major consequences for the credibility of the Security Council and NATO. The UN were vulnerable, the enclaves were indefensible and the UN could not act as warring faction. None of the member-states knew what the best way was to deal with the Bosnian Serbs. Lack of control on the part of the UN, doubts and insecurity had caused a situation in which the Bosnian Serbs were challenging the UN. All eyes were now focused on the meeting of the Contact Group in The Hague and of the NATO ministers of Foreign Affairs who were going to meet in Noordwijk together with their colleagues from Central and Eastern Europe. No decisions were expected in Noordwijk, but it was important that the large countries presented a common front to which the Netherlands could conform.

Now the Netherlands hoped that the following would happen with UNPROFOR: a redeployment of the troops, which would make UNPROFOR less vulnerable; no longer sending unarmed observers; and a new policy regarding the enclaves. But if the UN troops left the enclaves, they would have to take along the local population. As said before, Voorhoeve had already expressed this idea in a conversation with Perry. Implementation of this idea would of course mean a lot of human suffering; however, it was better than ethnic cleansing by the Bosnian Serbs. Though it meant cooperating with ethnic cleansing, it could be defended if the interests of the population were considered. However, the Netherlands had too little influence in achieving a political consensus on the road to a peace plan. The Netherlands did have to strive after making the situation for the Dutch UN soldiers as safe as possible. The Council of Ministers really did not pretend to be able to set out the political course for the international consultation. It would be possible to develop options in which the Netherlands had a choice: either withdrawal, or taking part in redeployment, reduction of the vulnerability and solving the enclaves problem. The latter was the preferred choice.¹⁶⁶

At this meeting of the Council of Ministers it was also noted that contradictory messages came from France, which, in the opinion of the cabinet, increased the unrest. At this meeting of the Council of Ministers, it was heard that the French wanted a different mandate for UNPROFOR. The position of Russia wasn't clear either. Russia seemed to have a positive attitude towards the Bosnian Serbs, but got increasingly irritated by their unruliness. In addition, the Russian attitude was slowing down the international consultation. In the Dutch vision one country should take the lead to get all the hostages released; preferably the United States, but there the political reservations within the country were too

¹⁶⁵ Diary Voorhoeve, p. 80-81, 83

¹⁶⁶ Objectivized summary for the NIOD investigation of the meeting of the Ministerial Council of 29/05/95.

great. Another country that had the military capacity was France. Though evacuation plans for UNPROFOR were ready, there was no good plan to transfer the solution to the hostages crises to NATO.¹⁶⁷

How to achieve a more efficient peace force and a more practicable mandate was another problem that kept the Dutch government busy. It was not only politically relevant to get London and Paris speaking with one voice, but if the Netherlands wanted to send additional troops for reinforcement of UNPROFOR, a conceptual approach was important. The moment it became possible to seriously discuss a peace arrangement with the Bosnian Serbs was coming closer, in the opinion of the Council of Ministers, and then a UN force remained necessary for monitoring. The objective should be a different and clearer operational leadership. The Netherlands would be capable of making a modest but valuable contribution. That also was important in case of the event Dutchbat would get into trouble in Srebrenica and the help of allies would be necessary.¹⁶⁸

12. The report from the UN Secretary-General

With so many hostages as a consequence of the air strikes, Boutros-Ghali could only conclude that the use of air power in a peacekeeping operation caused problems. It was the fifth time the UN head resorted to the air strike weapon and the third time the Bosnian Serbs had hit back by taking hostages. Using force against one party put an end to UNPROFOR's neutrality with all the risks for the personnel. For that reason a decision to use air power should be well-considered after carefully balancing all factors that influenced the mission. It could not be the result of fixed criteria, according to Boutros-Ghali.¹⁶⁹

What they were now waiting for was the report for the Security Council on redeployment of the UNPROFOR troops in Bosnia that Boutros-Ghali had promised. The report was published on 30 May. After Janvier's presentation, Janvier and Baxter (Smith's Military Assistant who had been assigned to Janvier's delegation) spent two more fruitless days in New York rewriting Boutros-Ghali's report in an attempt to make it more palatable. Eventually it wasn't the Department of Peacekeeping Operations but Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Goulding who took over drafting the report.¹⁷⁰ In this comprehensive report Boutros-Ghali took stock of the situation in the former Yugoslavia.¹⁷¹ It not only discussed what he called the 'dramatic developments' in Bosnia. Boutros-Ghali expressly placed matters in a wider perspective, by clearly bringing out into the open what exactly UNPROFOR was and was not.

Boutros-Ghali noted that there was little progress on the diplomatic field and that it was not to be expected shortly either. The warring factions apparently had decided to go back to the battlefield and Boutros-Ghali assumed that the lack of cooperation was going to continue.

The fighting had already started again in March, even before the end of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement on 1 May. First in Bihac, after which the fighting spread to Central Bosnia and Tuzla. After mid-May the fighting around Sarajevo got fiercer. Both parties were fighting for the high terrain sections around the city and along the Pale road and were using heavy weapons, which increased the number of casualties both among the population and among UNPROFOR.

The situation in which UNPROFOR had ended up as a consequence of the escalation of the fighting, brought Boutros-Ghali to the mandate of UNPROFOR. Before any options for modifications

¹⁶⁷ Objectivized summary for the NIOD investigation of the meeting of the Ministerial Council of 29/05/95.

¹⁶⁸ Objectivized summary for the NIOD investigation of the meeting of the Ministerial Council of 02/06/95.

¹⁶⁹ Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council Resolutions 982 (1995) and 987 (1995), 30/05/95, No. S/1995/444, §§ 40 en 58.

¹⁷⁰ Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

¹⁷¹ Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council Resolutions 982 (1995) and 987 (1995), 30/05/95, No/1995/444. The following sessions, including the references, is fully based on this report.

could be considered, it was important to analyze the tasks with which the Security Council had charged UNPROFOR with regard to the Safe Areas, which were:

- to monitor the cease-fire in the Safe Areas;
- to promote the withdrawal of military or paramilitary units other than those of the Bosnian Government from the Safe Areas;
- to deter attacks against the Safe Areas;
- to occupy key points on the ground;
- to participate in the delivery of humanitarian relief to the population in the Safe Areas.

Boutros-Ghali touched on a tender spot when he came up with the fundamental reason why the position of UNPROFOR in the Safe Areas was made problematic: the inconsistencies within the mission.

There had been a very fundamental problem right from the start: according to Boutros-Ghali some 34,000 troops would have been required to achieve the intended ‘deterrence through strength’. However, the Security Council had chosen the light option of 7600 men, under the assumption that parties were going to agree to UN resolution 836 and would cooperate – which was not the case. Over the course of time troubles had only increased and relations between parties had deteriorated. The Safe Areas had been dragged along in the intensification of the conflict.

How to deal with the VRS was not the only problem; the ABiH had weapons they used for extensive attacks from the Safe Areas. Boutros-Ghali pointed out that on the one hand the UN Resolution 836 did not demand from the Bosnian government to withdraw their military units from the Safe Areas, but that on the other hand to the Security Council had made it clear in the form of Presidential Statements that ‘provocative actions by whomsoever committed’, so also by the ABiH, were unacceptable.¹⁷² Boutros-Ghali himself had emphasized that the defenders of a Safe Area had to observe certain obligations if UNPROFOR wanted to realize the objective of protecting the population. ‘Unprovoked attacks launched from Safe Areas are inconsistent with the whole concept.’¹⁷³ Indeed that was exactly what the ABiH were doing in spring 1995: the military activities in and around the Safe Areas were intensified considerably and were made an integral part of a larger military campaign. Military units, corps headquarters, and logistic installations were situated in Safe Areas, such as Bihac, Tuzla, and mainly Sarajevo. In addition the ABiH maintained considerable numbers of troops in Gorazde (where also an ammunition factory was located) and in Zepa and Srebrenica. The latter was a violation of the demilitarization agreement of 18 April 1993. That agreement prescribed that no armed people or units other than UNPROFOR were allowed to be in the city of Srebrenica.¹⁷⁴

To put it more in general, Boutros-Ghali reproached the Security Council for sending out UNPROFOR with a peacekeeping mandate, while elements of peace-enforcement had crept in, among other things because in its resolutions the Security Council had referred to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, that allows the use of force. However, UNPROFOR had not been adapted to that; it remains based purely on peacekeeping tasks.

In this connection Albright said to have felt very unhappy after the large-scale hostage-taking of UNPROFOR soldiers. In retrospect it appeared that UNPROFOR had never been given the right mandate and that, in addition, the concept of the use of air power in a UN operation had not been defined properly, she felt. Boutros-Ghali had been proved right by saying that the operations under Chapter VI and VII of the UN Charter, namely peacekeeping on the ground and peace-enforcement from the air, did not go together. In hindsight Albright admitted from New York that she could have been a little too easy to judge the acts of UN commanders in Zagreb and Sarajevo.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² United Nations, S/PRST/1994/14 and 57.

¹⁷³ United Nations, S/1995/444, p. 11.

¹⁷⁴ NIOD, Coll. Wahlgren. Agreement for the Demilitarisation of Srebrenica, signed Gen Sefer Halilovic, Lt Gen Ratko Mladic, Lt Gen Lars-Eric Wahlgren, 18/04/93.

¹⁷⁵ Interview M. Albright, 28/09/01.

In his report Boutros-Ghali noted that in many circles it was thought that the disastrous situation in Bosnia was the consequence of the incapacity of UNPROFOR to impose the will of the international community. In his opinion that was not correct. He thought that the situation was a consequence of the fact that parties were not prepared to observe their obligations. Along a similar line of reasoning critics sometimes made it look as if UNPROFOR was intended to end the war or to fight on the side of one of the parties. That was not true either, Boutros-Ghali thought. That was a matter for the Contact Group and the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia (ICFY). Consequently, Boutros-Ghali resisted the criticism poured out over UNPROFOR because they were not successful in fighting the war, for that was not their assignment. The objective of UNPROFOR's presence was to mitigate the consequences of the war, to stem the conflict and to create conditions for negotiations. The problem was that none of the parties had come to the conclusion that their own objectives could easier be achieved at the negotiating table than on the battlefield.

On that battlefield of course the offensive ABiH actions referred to earlier were not the only problem for UNPROFOR. The response by the VRS was usually aimed at military targets in the Safe Areas, though the response was often disproportional. But also without provocations by the ABiH the VRS would violate the Safe Area regime and other local agreements, for instance by firing at the Safe Areas. The UNPROFOR mandate demanded a response to Bosnian-Serb actions, even though in turn these were a response to provocations by the Bosnian Muslims. In that case it was a problem to maintain UNPROFOR's neutrality and to prevent them from being seen as party to conflict.¹⁷⁶

In addition, it was a peculiarity that in Boutros-Ghali's analysis the mandate required cooperation with the warring factions, but at the same time it offered the possibility to call in Close Air Support in the event UN personnel was attacked. The victim of that Close Air Support would then be the contending party that they at the same time had to cooperate with. And the Security Council had only imposed sanctions against one party, the Bosnian Serbs. However, at the same time it was expected from these Bosnian Serbs that they would cooperate with UNPROFOR.

Possibilities to implement the mandate were also seriously hampered by lack of Freedom of Movement. After it had been decided that UNPROFOR had to protect humanitarian convoys, that was done on the rules applying for peacekeeping: use of force exclusively permitted in self-defence. Boutros-Ghali had added that 'self-defence was deemed to include situations in which armed persons attempted by force to prevent United Nations troops from carrying out their mandate'.¹⁷⁷ That had indeed been the case because the Bosnian Serbs got the opportunity to stop humanitarian convoys without UNPROFOR being able to do anything against it, because no UN personnel was under direct threat. That had made it as good as impossible to send supplies to Gorazde, Srebrenica and Zepa. Fuel supplies to keep operations there going were at a dangerously low level.

The consequence of all these internal inconsistencies was that by now the Bosnian Serbs no longer cooperated with UNPROFOR and, in response, had imposed their own sanctions against the UN. In his conclusion Boutros-Ghali was as clear as he had been at the Security Council briefing: this couldn't go on. 'As a result of these contradictions, UNPROFOR now finds itself obstructed, targeted by both sides, denied supply, restricted in its movements, subjected to constant criticism - in short, in a predicament that my Special Representative, the Theatre Force Commander, many of the troop-contributing nations and I myself no longer consider tolerable.'¹⁷⁸

In view of all this Boutros-Ghali was very definite: the mandate was still aimed at peacekeeping. Even though already for more than 16 months there had been no negotiations with all parties at the table. The warring factions increasingly saw UNPROFOR as a hindrance on the road to their objective. All that time UNPROFOR remain deployed in a situation in which 'after more than three years, there is still no peace to keep'. However, the present situation for UNPROFOR would have been unavoidable,

¹⁷⁶ Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council Resolutions 982 (1195) and 987 (1995), 30/05/95, No. 23.S/23900, § 68.

¹⁷⁷ See United Nations, S/24440, 10/09/92.

¹⁷⁸ United Nations, S/23900, § 69.

Boutros-Ghali stated, as in his opinion the Security Council had wanted a peacekeeping operation and had stuck to that. This could also be concluded from the low strength the Security Council had permitted for UNPROFOR, while Boutros-Ghali had thought that considerably more troops would be needed for implementation of the mandate. Also from careful assessment of the many resolutions adopted on the former Yugoslavia, Boutros-Ghali concluded that the mandate was almost fully aimed at peacekeeping; only the safety of UNPROFOR personnel was enforceable. And of course a force equipped for peacekeeping could not be expected to fight. Composition and equipment of the troops didn't even allow that.

Peacekeeping was intended to support a political process, according to Boutros-Ghali. Even though the political process had now come to a halt, fact remained that neglecting that there was a difference between peacekeeping and peace-enforcement undermined the operation and put UN personnel at risk. Boutros-Ghali finally reminded them that already in 1992 he had come to the conclusion that the conflict in the former Yugoslavia was not suitable for peacekeeping because parties were too far apart.¹⁷⁹ This way Boutros-Ghali also indirectly blamed the Security Council for the malaise in which the UNPROFOR mission found itself.

How to go on with the UNPROFOR mission?

Having said that, the question remained: now that UNPROFOR was there, how to go on? Boutros-Ghali analyzed that UNPROFOR could only execute the mandate when consent and cooperation of the warring factions were obtained. 'Given their lamentable record in this respect, it is important to avoid creating unrealistic expectations of what the force can achieve'.¹⁸⁰ So that was exactly the problem: if parties were determined to continue the war, and that was what it looked like, the results of UNPROFOR would remain limited. It no longer seemed cost-effective to keep up a large military organization that could be crippled whenever the warring factions would feel like it, with all the harmful consequences for the credibility of the UN. The warring factions just showed too little respect for the UN to turn their peacekeeping operation into a success.

Use of force on the ground certainly wasn't a solution. Approval of the use of force in no event went beyond the right to self-defence, like with every UN peace operation. That showed from the equipment of the troops, according to Boutros-Ghali.

Use of Close Air Support might be a solution, but that was only permitted to protect UNPROFOR personnel, while it was the intention that the threat it wielded would deter attacks on the Safe Areas. During the period up to late May 1995, air power (air strike or Close Air Support) had been called in in nine cases. However, experience had taught that the use of Close Air Support also had had major drawbacks and that additionally it certainly was not an easy solution. That was because use of force against one party changed the perception of that party as regards UNPROFOR's neutrality. That entailed the risk that elsewhere UN personnel would be seen as party to the conflict. Because these were so spread out over the country, they were an easy target for obstruction and hostage-takings, like it had happened after the bombing of Pale.

Because the consequences of Close Air Support on the ground could be far-reaching, prior to the use of Close Air Support careful assessment of all consequences was required, Boutros-Ghali thought. For that reason the double key remained very important: UN and NATO both had their own decision-making processes and consent of both organizations was required (see Part I and the Chapter 'Air power: Close Air Support and air strikes'). According to Boutros-Ghali, Force Commander Janvier shared his vision regarding the use of Close Air Support. That the consequences could be major, was also discovered by some troop contributing nations, that initially had been prepared to use Close Air Support, but later had second thoughts in view of the risks it caused for the troops on the ground:

¹⁷⁹ See United Nations, S/23900,12/05/92.

¹⁸⁰ United Nations, S/23900, § 65.

hostage-takings of UN personnel for instance. Some members of the Security Council had also turned against the use of Close Air Support.

In fact Boutros-Ghali had four options on the question how to go on with UNPROFOR. The first was to accept that there was no other option than to amend the UNPROFOR mandate; after all, the events of 25 and 26 May had shown that the position of UNPROFOR had become impossible. It became clearer and clearer that the UNPROFOR mandate was an inadequate instrument to achieve acceptable living conditions in the Safe Areas. As a result, the pressure to use Close Air Support increased, not to protect UN personnel but, on the contrary, to protect or even just to supply the population in the Safe Areas. On the other hand, Close Air Support as deterrent had its limitations. Close Air Support had to contend with the problem of the air defence system of the Bosnian Serbs. That made it necessary to suppress the air defence: the possibilities of the VRS to attack NATO planes had to be incapacitated, otherwise the risks for the planes were too high - an argument from NATO. The VRS would consider the elimination of their air-defence system a hostile act, make UNPROFOR party to the conflict, and thus the boundaries of peacekeeping would be crossed. That was exactly what was threatening to happen after 25 and 26 May. Because of this risk of escalation on the ground Boutros-Ghali was against amending the current mandate and letting UNPROFOR use more force.

According to Boutros-Ghali a second option could be to make the Safe Areas really safe. The only way to achieve that - as long as there was no comprehensive political arrangement - was to come to a regime that was acceptable to both parties. For that purpose UNPROFOR would have to remain deploying troops along the confrontation line, to avoid affecting UNPROFOR's capacity to prevent or stem fights at local level, and to deter an attack on the Safe Areas. Then UNPROFOR would have to concentrate on tasks such as: 'good offices', a liaison task, negotiations with warring factions, monitoring cease-fires, as long as parties were prepared to implement such measures. In other words: pure peacekeeping tasks. Boutros-Ghali was not an advocate of this option either; it came down to muddling through.

In itself, Boutros-Ghali had the best arguments for the next option, total withdrawal of UNPROFOR. However, it had become clear to him that he would not get sufficient support for this option from the separate governments, so he did not opt for it.

Taking stock of the conditions, only one course of action remained, according to Boutros-Ghali: choosing the fourth and last option, meaning an amendment of the UNPROFOR mandate in such a manner that it only included tasks that could reasonably be expected of a peace force. For Boutros-Ghali that meant that, to limit the vulnerability of UNPROFOR, he stood by his earlier plan to withdraw UNPROFOR from the eastern enclaves. As a personal note Boutros-Ghali added that for him the safety of the UN personnel had a high priority. The television reports of UN personnel taken hostage and humiliated had already been painful enough for the UN top.¹⁸¹

Reaction to the report of Boutros-Ghali

The Security Council was divided on the question how to react to Boutros-Ghali's report and his four options, including his preference, withdrawal from the eastern enclaves.

It was obvious that the hostage crises caused the Security Council to proceed very carefully. That caused the proposals by Boutros-Ghali and Janvier to restructure UNPROFOR and to concentrate in Central Bosnia to make the unit less vulnerable to hostage-takings, to be cut down by the Security Council without properly assessing the military merits. Because of a lack of political will to discuss other options for the protection of the population in the eastern enclaves and to revitalize the idea of deterrence through air strikes, UNPROFOR could do little else than continue on the road of the 'muddling through scenario'. It should be noted that it was exactly the Bosnian government that said to be prepared to agree to a withdrawal of UNPROFOR from the eastern enclaves, provided that

¹⁸¹ Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council Resolutions 982 (1995) and 987 (1995), 30/05/95, No. 23.

it would be compensated by a commitment of deterrence and protection of the population using air power.¹⁸²

The result of this lack of political will to consider the options of Boutros-Ghali was, curiously enough, that the Security Council did not send any response.¹⁸³ The Council just didn't want to choose from the options presented by Boutros-Ghali.¹⁸⁴ Still this report was discussed, at a joint meeting of the troop contributing nations and the members of the Security Council. The prevailing spirit there was described as follows by Kofi Annan: 'While there was no formal deadline for the Council to take action on the report, all members of the Council were aware of the urgency of the matter under consideration.' That was diplomatic language for a dead-end.

The majority of the troop contributing nations didn't want to hear about any amendment to the mandate whatsoever; that meant they didn't choose either. In particular the mandate for the Safe Areas should not be amended. So in fact there were no new developments since Boutros-Ghali and Janvier had briefed the Security Council on their ideas about the future of UNPROFOR: presence in the Safe Areas had to be maintained. The troop contributing nations still rejected withdrawal, but they did demand that the Security Council should clearly indicate a direction, as well as objectives and means that matched the tasks allocated to UNPROFOR.¹⁸⁵

The Dutch government didn't respond either to Boutros-Ghali's report and did not go into the content of the options it described for the future of UNPROFOR. Already before the report was published the Contact Group had come to the conclusion that in all events UNPROFOR had to stay. The Dutch government supported this conclusion and welcomed reinforcement of UNPROFOR, as Ministers Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve informed Parliament. The Netherlands would consider how a contribution could be made.¹⁸⁶ That would lead to a Dutch contribution to setting up the Rapid Reaction Force (see section 13).

The ambiguities mentioned by Boutros-Ghali in the various Security Council resolutions, just like the shortcomings in the Safe Area concept, received little attention from the Security Council this way. In Resolution 998 of 16 June 1995 the Security Council did not get beyond demanding unobstructed access for humanitarian aid to the enclaves and respect for the Safe Areas. The Security Council supported the necessity of a mutually agreed demilitarization of the Safe Areas and their direct vicinity. That would be to the advantage of all parties because it could mean an end of the attacks on and from the Safe Areas. The Security Council encouraged the UN Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to reach an agreement with parties on demilitarization and called upon parties to cooperate.¹⁸⁷ That was all. However, Boutros-Ghali did not make an effort in this respect, the more so because only 'in the long run' Boutros-Ghali wanted to obtain the consent of the warring factions for demilitarization of the Safe Areas.¹⁸⁸ It was also highly questionable whether that was feasible shortly.

It may be surprising that the recommendations by the military commanders and the secretary-general responsible for the operations, received so little attention. That was certainly the case for the Major General Royal Netherlands Marine Corps F.H. van Kappen, who took office as military adviser to the UN Secretary-General shortly after the report by Boutros-Ghali was published. As a soldier he was amazed that in New York military advice carried so little weight. Extensive military recommendations were watered-down in the bureaucratic process through political officials, political directors and Undersecretaries-General. Military information often disturbed political pictures and did not fit in well with the political story, Van Kappen thought. Military recommendations could not be made available unfiltered to the members of the Security Council, because that would affect the power

¹⁸² ABZ, PVVN. Code Biegman 486, 01/06/95.

¹⁸³ Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35 (1998), 15/11/99, § 209.

¹⁸⁴ Interview Yasushi Akashi, 25/11/99.

¹⁸⁵ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 05/06/95, No. MSC-1874.

¹⁸⁶ TK, 1994-1995, 22 181, nr. 97. (30/05/95).

¹⁸⁷ United Nations, S/RES/998(1995), 16/06/95.

¹⁸⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01802. Letter Boutros Boutros-Ghali to Willy Claes, 23/06/95.

of the political administrative levels. The members of the Security Council did tend to approve it, but the UN Secretariat checked that. ‘The mandarins who have been sitting there forever and a day consider that surrendering part of their power to a bunch of foreign workers’, Van Kappen said, referring to temporarily deployed soldiers. Having soldiers brief the Security Council also was an anathema. It had already been very exceptional that Janvier had given such a briefing. Soldiers were to rough with words for the UN, Van Kappen thought.¹⁸⁹ These heart-felt cries do deserve some comment. From a military perspective the observation that the UN had too little attention for military advice was understandable. On the other hand it is true that the UN is involved in military matters, but it still remains a political organization. And a political organization also bases its decisions on other than military considerations; an additional factor for the UN was that they always had to keep finding a consensus in the decision-making process, which already made it difficult enough even without military information.

Van Kappen also noted that the problem that in his opinion military information did not carry enough weight in the UN decision-making process, was wider. Also from the military staffs in the capitals the Permanent Representatives hardly received military advice. With the exception of the British it seemed that little comprehensive advice from the capitals reached ‘their’ permanent representatives. In particular for the Americans the military advice seemed dispersed and to have followed a roundabout way in which various institutes like the State Department, the Pentagon and the National Security Council were at loggerheads with each other.¹⁹⁰

13. Response to the air strikes on Pale: formation of the Rapid Reaction Force

One of the consequences of the air strikes was that the political deadlock in which UNPROFOR found itself became painfully visible. The idea that progress could be made if only the Bosnian Serbs would be dealt with forcefully, turned against UNPROFOR as a boomerang. Hundreds of UN soldiers had been taken hostage, making new air strikes fundamentally unthinkable. So for UNPROFOR it meant muddling through.

In this political vacuum both the British and the French governments were trying to find ways to give UNPROFOR more teeth. That had to be achieved by deploying a ‘forceful’ military unit (with artillery and attack helicopters) in Bosnia, that would have to be composed on combined British-French initiative. That way a corridor could be created from central-Bosnia to Sarajevo and it would become possible to send supplies to the eastern enclaves. Opinions still differed on how exactly to implement all this: Janvier estimated that using the so-called Rapid Reaction Force to open such corridors would not be feasible, because it would make UNPROFOR party to the conflict.¹⁹¹ However, opening up corridors to the Safe Areas was exactly what Paris and London wanted, and it was the silent wish in The Hague; Prime Minister Kok worded the objective of the Rapid Reaction Force as follows: ‘the question was how to continue in a responsible manner. The answer was: ‘take into account the interests of the people for whom you are there’. And of course in line with that: ‘whenever possible also take into account to safety and position of your own people’.¹⁹²

Characteristic of the relations was that both the French and the British units intended for the Rapid Reaction Force, were announced by the two governments without Janvier and Smith having been informed. Directly after the air strikes on Pale, the British Prime Minister Major decided to send reinforcements; a few hours later President Chirac announced that he was going to send even more troops than the British. There had been no previous consultation with the UN whatsoever.¹⁹³ This state of affairs was typical of what was going to happen to the Rapid Reaction Force.

¹⁸⁹ Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

¹⁹⁰ Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

¹⁹¹ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. SRSG’s meeting in Split, 09/06/95. Conf.

¹⁹² Interview W. Kok, 25/05/00.

¹⁹³ Ripley, *Deliberate Force*, p.130-4.

History of the formation of the Rapid Reaction Force

The idea for a 'forceful' unit like the Rapid Reaction Force did not entirely come out of thin air. The French had already been in favour of a more powerful role for UNPROFOR, as had for instance already appeared before the bombings at Pale from the plea by the French Chief of Defence Staff Lanxade at the conference of the Chiefs of Defence Staff in Soesterberg on 19 May.

The hostage crisis, that developed after the bombings, did give an impulse to set up the Rapid Reaction Force. It is not quite clear who took the initiative. France and the United Kingdom both claimed the idea, while in particular London had its reservations about the French intentions. The French focused on Sarajevo, because that's what they were responsible for. For the same reasons the British concentrated on Gorazde, where they had troops.

At least on 28 May it were the French who gave the further impetus to set up the Rapid Reaction Force, by submitting a Priorities Memorandum for further discussion in the Contact Group. What the French had in mind with the formation of the Rapid Reaction Force was that after the hostage crisis they wanted to realize reinforcement of UNPROFOR and reduction of their vulnerability. Some of the tasks the French aimed at for the new unit was opening up a corridor to Sarajevo, and sending supplies to the eastern enclaves. The latter also offered an attractive perspective for the Netherlands: it could reduce the problems of Dutchbat in Srebrenica. The French Memorandum did leave many questions open; for instance who was going to command the Rapid Reaction Force. It had already become clear that the United States and the Russian Federation wouldn't want to contribute. The Russians were suspicious of reinforcement of UNPROFOR, and they feared a pre-arranged deal by the Western countries.¹⁹⁴

On 29 May the Rapid Reaction Force was discussed at the highest political level between the United Kingdom and France. On this occasion, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hurd, had his first meeting with his new French colleague, Hervé de Charette, successor of Juppé. De Charette presented proposals for opening up a corridor at Sarajevo, and for the composition of the Rapid Reaction Force that would have to arrange it. Hurd saw little difference between the French and British visions, and in a political sense he agreed with the French Memorandum. From a military point of view Hurd, just like the French, aimed at reducing the vulnerability and increasing the effectiveness of UNPROFOR. As yet no decision had been taken on the question whether the Rapid Reaction Force would be 'blue' or 'green'.

During that meeting Hurd also addressed the - in his opinion-insufficient political-military control of the military activities in the former Yugoslavia. He thought a tougher attitude was necessary to prevent a repetition of the hostage crisis. He criticized NATO Secretary-General Claes who should not act quickly enough, but mainly the fact that within the UN the Security Council and the Secretary-General kept passing each other the responsibility. However, Hurd didn't come up with any solutions; he only wanted to point out that better control was required. He recognized that such would not be possible through the Contact Group, of which the British government was part, because after all they could not take any military decisions. Hurd's criticism on the UN decision-making process had already been expressed earlier by the French; consequence was that the British and French preferably operated without UN interference.¹⁹⁵

Responses from other governments to the formation of the Rapid Reaction Force

Hurd also got backing for the British-French initiative from EU mediator Lord Owen. They also spoke each other on 29 May. Owen stated that the Rapid Reaction Force would give general Smith extra possibilities without having to resort to the use of air power. Owen criticized the use of air power as long as UNPROFOR was still in a vulnerable position: the hostages were in danger, and the toughness

¹⁹⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Wijnaendts 172, 01/06/95, 01/06/95; Code Celer 222, 01/06/95.

¹⁹⁵ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01

and determination of the political and military leaders in Pale should not be underestimated. The VRS had had two years to think about possible actions against air strikes and taking hostages as part of their strategy. Owen declared himself in favour of redeployment and reinforcement of UNPROFOR. Apparently, he too had little confidence in the decision-making process of the UN. He applauded the option of more troops under independent command.

Hurd met with less enthusiasm among the smaller troop contributing nations, including the Netherlands. These countries had their own worries about the role of London and Paris (the Dutch worries about a French-British axis have already been discussed in section 8). The French-British initiative was broached during the meeting of the North Atlantic Council of NATO in Noordwijk on 30 May, but the worries couldn't be removed. For that reason there still was clumsy pressure (Owen) from Minister Van Mierlo to have the Netherlands join the Contact Group, an old Dutch wish. More in general Van Mierlo wanted the troop contributing nations to have a seat in the Contact Group, but his idea failed to gain approval.¹⁹⁶

Political discussion on the set-up of the Rapid Reaction Force

France and the United Kingdom followed their line of march towards formation of the Rapid Reaction Force. The next step was to get from idea to realization. For that purpose the French assembled the ministers of defence of the NATO and WEU countries that also contributed troops to UNPROFOR. That consultation was planned for 3 June in Paris.

During the preparations for this meeting it was clear that the British and French each had their own approach of the set-up of the Rapid Reaction Force. Delegations of public officials and experts had sounded out the ideas in the three participating countries. That revealed the differences in views between France and the United Kingdom. Although the participants agreed that the new unit should only have to be intended for emergency situations, it was not crystal-clear what that should mean.

According to the British the Rapid Reaction Force could not be used to fight a way to the enclave for the convoys. The French wanted to bring the unit under the French-dominated UN headquarters in Zagreb, but that met with political objections on the part of the British. In their opinion extra British troops should also be used to reinforce British units in Bosnia and for that reason they should come under the British-dominated headquarters in Sarajevo. The delegations did agree that the troops would have to operate within the existing mandate and force instructions, though these would have to be modified a little. The Dutch delegation thought that important too. The British want to limit the tasks to humanitarian and peacekeeping tasks and considered the Rapid Reaction Force as a backup unit that would act reactively to fill the gap between 'the gun on the ground' and 'the fighter plane in the air.' The French on the other hand, wanted to take a firmer stand. They wanted a multinational unit, equipped with armoured vehicles and guns, that could be deployed under a stretched mandate. It seemed that the French were thinking more in the line of a 'green' implementation of the Rapid Reaction Force and the British more of a 'blue' implementation. The British wanted to wear the blue helmet or beret, the French wanted to go no further than a UN badge.¹⁹⁷

In preparation of the summit in Paris of 3 June, the Netherlands also had to determine its policy. The matter caused discord during consultation in the Prime Minister's office 'het Torentje' on 2 June. Minister Van Mierlo of Foreign Affairs was absent from this consultation because he was abroad; he had civil servants represent him. Present at the Torentje were: Prime Minister Kok, Vice-Premier Dijkstal, Minister Voorhoeve, Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen, Council Adviser Merckelbach of General Affairs, and Substitute Director-General Political Affairs of Foreign Affairs Van Eenennaam.

¹⁹⁶ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

¹⁹⁷ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Fax 'To the Minister and delegation members for the ministerial meeting on the situation in the former Yugoslavia on 3 June 1995 in Paris', from Lt Gen Schouten, kol. R. van Dam, F.J.J. Princen. Added to the fax were reports on 'Bijeenkomst van de delegaties van FR, VK, VS en NL', 01/06/95 and 'Bijeenkomst experts', 02/06/95.

Voorhoeve declared himself in favour of the more careful British line, also because that fitted in better with the UN framework, something the Netherlands thought rather important. The French line of more forceful action mainly appealed to Foreign Affairs, even though that was purely for political reasons.¹⁹⁸ This difference of opinion between Defence and Foreign Affairs caused discussion.

On behalf of Foreign Affairs, Van Eenennaam opposed Voorhoeve, who in view of the differences of opinion between the United Kingdom and France, had advocated support for the British position. For London it was important that the Rapid Reaction Force would not cross the line between peacekeeping and peace-enforcement and that there should not be two lines of command with different mandates. Van Eenennaam argued that recent statements by Clinton, Chirac and the Germans showed that they were inclining towards more forceful action. Directly opting for peace-enforcement seemed a bridge too far: for that reason, Foreign Affairs was trying to find a solution that would fit within the borders of the peacekeeping mandate, while maintaining the double key for applications for Close Air Support. There was wide support for sending additional troops to Bosnia, provided that it would be with a clear mandate, Van Eenennaam estimated. According to Van Eenennaam Prime Minister Kok also expected support in Parliament, if only the mandate would be clear.

Foreign Affairs thought it would be better if the Dutch government would back an approach that could be supported by both the British and the French. Van Eenennaam was afraid that the line advocated by Voorhoeve would lead to a too one-sided Dutch orientation on the British; this would lead to a politically undesirable *alleingang* of the French. Because the summit in Paris had been one of ministers of Defence rather than of ministers of Foreign Affairs, that could pose a problem, Van Eenennaam thought. The result could be that the Netherlands (Voorhoeve) would in fact agree with London, but still would have to take an interim position between London and Paris (what Foreign Affairs thought necessary). Van Eenennaam added that in practice maybe it would not be so bad, because the French-British problems about the organization of the Rapid Reaction Force would already largely have been solved.

So there really was a difference of visions between Foreign Affairs and Defence: Defence wanted to join the British, Foreign Affairs preferred a central position. Probably the reason was that in the absence of his minister, Van Eenennaam felt obliged to make a strong argument for the position of Foreign Affairs. The net result of all this seemed to be that in any case for the British there would be no reason to expect Voorhoeve to cause problems in Paris.

A clear choice for the French or British position was not made. Instead the 'Torentje' consultation led to a number of starting points that could be contributed on further consultation in Paris. The Netherlands was prepared to join the initiatives of other countries and was prepared to send additional units. A compromise was worded to the extent that the objective in Paris should be the closest possible integration of the British and French ideas, also to prevent the development of separate command structures, and to prevent the French from steering their own course. A decisive command structure under UN command was required, but the mandate should not cross the border with peace-enforcement. That linked up with the British line. The units of the Rapid Reaction Force would have to be deployed in such a manner that they could increase the safety of the scattered and lighter armed units, and could contribute to restoration of the Freedom of Movement for UNPROFOR, so it would again become possible to send supplies to the enclaves.¹⁹⁹ In the further consultation in preparation of the Paris summit, the Netherlands did not attempt to make a link between the Rapid Reaction Force and supplying the eastern enclaves.

¹⁹⁸ ABZ, DAV 999.241. Confidential Memorandum Plv DGPZ to M through DGPZ and S, 02/06/95; Bstas. Memo Ambtelijk BZ and Defence to MP Kok via Merckelbach, Vice MP Dijkstal, Minister Voorhoeve, CDS Gen vdBreemen [02/06/95]; DCBC, 529. Note for Chief of Defence Staff, 02/06/95, without number.

¹⁹⁹ ABZ, DAV 999.241. Confidential Memorandum Plv DGPZ to M through DGPZ and S, 02/06/95; Bstas. Memo Ambtelijk BZ and Defence to MP Kok via Merckelbach, Vice MP Dijkstal, Minister Voorhoeve, CDS Gen vdBreemen [02/06/95]; DCBC, 529. Note for Chief of Defence Staff, 02/06/95, without number; Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

Consultation in Paris on 3 June 1995

The Paris consultation on 3 June confirmed that the Rapid Reaction Force was intended to increase the effectiveness of UNPROFOR and to reduce the vulnerability of the UN troops. The most vulnerable units would have to be redeployed, but the presence of the UN troops in the eastern enclaves was not under discussion.

An important direct objective for the Netherlands was restoration of the Freedom of Movement to the eastern enclaves, and sending supplies to those. That was even stronger because the French Defence Minister, Millon, expected that the Rapid Reaction Force would be able to force a route to the eastern enclaves. That linked up with the unexpressed wishes of the Netherlands to start sending supplies to Srebrenica again. In Paris Voorhoeve emphasized the importance of the Rapid Reaction Force by offering two units of soldiers (a company of mortars 120 mm of the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, and a unit with mortar detection radars of the Royal Netherlands Army).²⁰⁰

The nations contributing troops to UNPROFOR welcomed the results of the Paris consultation. Only the Islamic countries thought the results of the consultation did not go far enough because the Rapid Reaction Force was not going to get a mandate for peace-enforcement.²⁰¹

Further consultation followed after the Paris summit. On the one hand this took place between soldiers, in which, according to Voorhoeve, the Dutch were highly instrumental in bringing the French and British ideas under one heading;²⁰² on the other hand there was also political consultation in New York, between the UN secretariat and the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands. The company remained limited to these countries because their contributions linked up closely and the Dutch and British had already been exercising jointly for years.

In New York the arrangement was confirmed that the Rapid Reaction Force would be acting within the existing UNPROFOR mandate (so peacekeeping) and within the existing command chain (so in UN framework). Operational decisions were reserved for Force Commander Janvier. The units were going to operate in national uniform so, unlike the rest of UNPROFOR, without UN hats and without white-painted vehicles. The UN Rules of Engagement would remain in force, but these would be adapted to the heavier weapons that were to be deployed. Thirty days after the political agreement the units would have to be in the operating area. The Rapid Reaction Force numbered a total of some 13,500 men. The organization would consist of a multinational brigade: a task force A with British and Dutch units with a strength of 2500 men, and a task force B consisting of the 2000 men French units. In addition, the British supplied an airmobile brigade with a strength of 5000 men, and the French a standby brigade of some 4000 men.²⁰³ General Smith would have liked to include the Danish tanks that were still in Tuzla in the Rapid Reaction Force but Copenhagen did not want to hear about it. The Danes regarded the Rapid Reaction Force as an intervention by politicians of which the military had no idea what to do with it.²⁰⁴

The organization of the Rapid Reaction Force in relation to that of UNPROFOR

So it was decided to have the Rapid Reaction Force operate along the same decision-making lines as UNPROFOR had already done all that time. One of the questions raised concerned the actual position of personal representative of the UN Secretary-General, Akashi, in the command chain. This point remained unsolved; France and the United Kingdom took the position that his role would have to be

²⁰⁰ DCBC, 2409. Fax DCBC to Sitcen KL, 031703Z Jun95; *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/07/95, 'Reactiemacht Bosnia forceert toegang enclaves'.

²⁰¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02110. Code Biegman 499, 05/06/95.

²⁰² TK, 1999-200, 26 454, nr. 10, p. 203. Stenografisch verslag van de openbare hoorzitting van de Tijdelijke commissie uitzendingen, 31/05/00.

²⁰³ DCBC, 1879. Summary of Discussions, 07/06/95. Also refer to the joint letter of the ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence to Chairman of Parliament, 07/06/95, nr. D101/95/11086.

²⁰⁴ Interview C.H. Helso, 28/10/99.

reduced. The authority to use Close Air Support would have to be delegated to the UN commanders. The British and the French agreed not to politically broach this subject, but to leave it to Janvier and Smith.²⁰⁵ The French government also concluded that it was necessary to have the operational control over the Rapid Reaction Force without intervention of Akashi. Speculations were already heard on an imminent resignation of Akashi, in view of the wide dissatisfaction about his performance in New York. However, as regards Akashi's role, New York for the moment stuck to the line of 'constructive ambiguity'.

In The Hague there was also fear that the 'gains of Paris' would evaporate in the New York decision-making process. Indeed that mainly involved the position of Akashi. In The Hague it was said that the military decisions by Janvier and Smith regarding the Rapid Reaction Force would from then on reach Akashi in the form of recommendations that he would not be able to refuse.²⁰⁶

Problems on a possible deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force

From the beginning onwards, Force Commander Janvier put the possibilities of the Rapid Reaction Force into perspective. For starters, he feared that such reinforcements would be serving national interests. But above all, he viewed this construction as problematic with respect to the arrival of this Rapid Reaction Force. The two warring factions would be suspicious because it would mean a change in status quo that was not in their interest. Its deployment could easily make UNPROFOR party to the conflict, and Janvier did not like that idea.²⁰⁷ That way the Rapid Reaction Force could end up in the same morass as UNPROFOR.

Janvier's estimate seemed correct; the warring factions looked upon the Rapid Reaction Force from self-interest. The Bosnian UN ambassador Sacirbey for instance feared that the objective of the Rapid Reaction Force would gradually become more modest, especially after the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hurd, had explained to him that the unit could not be used to enforce corridors to the eastern enclaves and to protect the Safe Areas. For that matter, that was also something Voorhoeve had already told Sacirbey after the end of the conference in Paris on 3 June. That was because Sacirbey had already asked then whether the Rapid Reaction Force was also intended for Srebrenica, as he would have liked, but the answer was that such was not the case.²⁰⁸ After Hurd's statement, the British Minister of Defence, Rifkind, also said that the Rapid Reaction Force was not intended to fight itself a way past the checkpoints. The Rapid Reaction Force could be used to shoot back if convoys were fired at and to prevent vehicles and equipment from being stolen. For the sake of clarity London informed UNPROFOR Commander Smith that the Rapid Reaction Force would have to play it by the rules for peacekeeping, had to observe the Rules of Engagement of UNPROFOR, and had to act with the consent of the parties.²⁰⁹ That made it clear to the Bosnian Muslims that the Rapid Reaction Force would not be able to force a corridor to Sarajevo and that they would be acting within the existing mandate; they expressed their disappointment on this.²¹⁰ Also, in later days the Bosnian attitude remained ambiguous because, as the Bosnian UN ambassador Sacirbey put it, the mandate was ambiguous. The positive thing about its formation was that a more active mode of operation of UNPROFOR was made possible, but that contributed little to a solution as long as UNPROFOR remained part of the problem instead of the solution, Sacirbey said.²¹¹

²⁰⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02090. Code Biegman 509, 07/06/95.

²⁰⁶ DCBC. Code Schaper 521, 13/06/95.

²⁰⁷ Confidential information (158).

²⁰⁸ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

²⁰⁹ DAB. Memo DAB to the Minister, Report of the conversation between Minister of Defence, dr. ir J.J.C. Voorhoeve, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mr M. Sacirbey, 13 June 1995, 14/06/95, nr. D95/306; Confidential information; NIOD, Coll. Nicolai. Diary Nicolai, 16/06/95.

²¹⁰ DCBC, 2821. Code Van Mierlo 73, 06/06/95.

²¹¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02090. Code Biegman 520, 09/06/95.

The assessment at UNPROFOR was that on the other hand the VRS would see the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force as new evidence of support to the Bosnian Muslims, with the consequence that it would only hamper a solution of the hostage crisis and restoration of the Freedom of Movement and make the Bosnian Serbs even more stubborn. Possible intervention by the Rapid Reaction Force to protect the population in the enclaves could only increase the frustration of the Bosnian Serbs on the status of the Safe Areas and their failed demilitarization, and make them aware of the fact that the Security Council resolutions were mainly directed against them. Conversely, the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force could tempt the Bosnian Muslims to extend their military activities. For deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force the UN, just like in the case of UNPROFOR, strongly depended on the Bosnian government, which could mean a certain influence on the development.²¹²

In practice the reaction of the Bosnian Serbs to the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force was not too bad. They were not too worried about its arrival and seemed to want to wait and see what the effects would be once it had landed. The greatest worry was that the Rapid Reaction Force would be used to deliver aid. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republika Srpska, Buha, also said that the unit would sooner contribute to 'Vietnamization' of Bosnia than to peace, but that the Bosnian Serbs were not going to attack it.²¹³

General Smith in Sarajevo, just like Janvier in Zagreb, had his reservations about the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force. He also expressed those: 'tell me what I have to do and give me the means to do it. Also tell me what the purpose is of all those reinforcements I get without asking for them. Do you want to become party to the conflict or don't you? Do you want the Bosnian Serbs to regard you as ally of the Bosnian government or don't you?' According to chief of staff Nicolai in Sarajevo, Smith tried to get answers to these questions in order to force political decisions.²¹⁴ Smith also did not want the Rapid Reaction Force to become an instrument that would unwillingly involve UNPROFOR in peace-enforcement. Smith once more emphasized in a directive that UNPROFOR remained a peaceforce that would only use force in self-defence.²¹⁵

Just like Smith, Janvier wanted that a clear and feasible mission would be worded for the Rapid Reaction Force and that the composition would be geared to that.²¹⁶ Similar notes could be heard in the staff of the Rapid Reaction Force in formation itself. First the tasks should be determined, then it should be determined what units were required. Now it seemed as if the sequence had been reversed.²¹⁷

Janvier assumed that the impartiality of the UN could and should be maintained. Moreover, he wanted the Rapid Reaction Force to be completely self-supporting and not to rely on logistic support from the UN. In addition, Janvier wanted to use the Rapid Reaction Force mainly to protect the Freedom of Movement for UNPROFOR to make a new start with delivering humanitarian aid and supplies to the enclaves. Once a route by a road had been opened, the Rapid Reaction Force could be used to forcefully maintain the new Freedom of Movement, Janvier thought. However, Janvier thought it impossible to open up and keep open routes to the enclaves.²¹⁸ That was in line with the political arrangements that had been made on the use of the Rapid Reaction Force, but by now the question became realistic what in practice would be the added value of the Rapid Reaction Force.

²¹² NIOD, Coll. Theunens. Interoffice Memorandum G2 to COS, 02/06/95, 'some Thoughts on the Warring Factions' Response to UNPROFOR 'Reinforced' Peacekeeping.

²¹³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, File BHC Weekly Sitreps, 17/06/95 – 21/09/95. UNPROFOR HQ, Weekly Situation Report, No. 122, 5-11 June 1995; UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88041, File 4-10, Background notes to SRSG, John Almstrom to SRSG, 18/06/95.

²¹⁴ DCBC, 2405. Fax DCBC to BuZa/DAV and PVVN, 121724ZJun95 with added note Bgen Nicolai to CDS and BLS, 'Toelichting op Strategisch Concept Comd UNPROFOR' of 06/06/95.

²¹⁵ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87304, File 3300-6, Vol 5, 01/06/95 – 15/09/95. Commander HQ UNPROFOR Directive 3/95, 29/06/95.

²¹⁶ Bstas. Note CDS to the Minister and the Staatssecretaris, 06/06/95, No. S/95/061/2330. Janvier also considered his headquarters insufficiently equipped to take operational command of the Rapid Reaction Force.

²¹⁷ Ripley, *Deliberate Force*, p.131.

²¹⁸ DCBC, 1878. Force Commanders Intent on the Employment of the QRF, [07/06/95].

Janvier was afraid that expectations about the Rapid Reaction Force would be too high. The unit was not capable of opening up corridors and could only win time to break through the deadlock in the peace process. In addition, Janvier wanted the Security Council to make his mandate simpler and clearer. If that was not going to happen, he only saw expensive UN resources being used up which would cause further confusion among the warring factions without bringing a peaceful solution any nearer. Janvier also wondered whether he could deploy the Rapid Reaction Force in Croatia, while the establishing countries mainly aimed at deployment in Bosnia. Finally Janvier preferred the unit to operate under his command rather than that of UNPROFOR Commander Smith;²¹⁹ Janvier apparently thought the risk not unrealistic that Smith would use the Rapid Reaction Force for adventures that Janvier considered undesirable.

In any case it was clear that the Rapid Reaction Force could not mean an alternative for a political solution to the problems. It seemed further away than ever. Talks between the American negotiator Frasure and Milosevic on the recognition of Bosnia failed, because Milosevic wanted to keep his options open for constitutional arrangements between Belgrade and Pale, and because in exchange for recognition of Bosnia, Milosevic insisted on alleviation of the sanctions (discussed further in section 15).

Milosevic seemed to accept the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force because he thought its tasks could not be more than protecting UN convoys and soldiers. Moreover, it could help freezing the front lines, which could contribute to realizing the strategic objectives of Belgrade.²²⁰

Formation of the Rapid Reaction Force: consequences in Washington, Brussels, New York

The American Congress steered its own course regarding Bosnia. That had appeared for instance from the pressure exerted by Congress to get the arms embargo for Bosnia lifted. The Rapid Reaction Force also got its own place in the discussions on Capitol Hill. 'UN-bashing' once more appeared a popular activity there: during a hearing of the American Congress it appeared that many members considered the UN mission in Bosnia a failure. The mood in Congress, particularly among the Republicans, really was a spoke in the wheel of the formation process of the Rapid Reaction Force. Though the Americans would still not supply ground forces, their involvement in the Security Council was vital. Then there still was Clinton's promise that American ground forces would be deployed if UNPROFOR was to be withdrawn. In a reaction to the frustrations in Congress, Secretary for Defence Perry asked attention for the fact that the number of civil casualties had decreased considerably since the deployment of UNPROFOR (according to Perry from over 100,000 in 1992, through about 12,000 in 1993 and 3000 in 1994, to less than a thousand so far in 1995) but to no avail. In the eyes of Congress solidarity with the European allies should not go beyond helping them on an evacuation of UNPROFOR. If the deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force would not lead to successes, Perry saw that moment come near.²²¹ That also seemed the reason why Perry wanted to see the Rapid Reaction Force deployed as soon as possible: he had to make it credible before Congress that the Rapid Reaction Force was useful.²²²

NATO was not displeased with the formation of the Rapid Reaction Force, because that way the UN would have their own capacity to evacuate isolated UN units. That allowed NATO to concentrate on a complete withdrawal plan for UNPROFOR.²²³ The suggestion that with the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force the withdrawal plan (OPLAN 40104) was no longer necessary, was mainly thought up by the Americans and, Van Mierlo stated, had to be refuted. American assistance on

²¹⁹CRST. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 12/06/95, No. UNPF-HQ Z-967.

²²⁰ABZ, DDI-DAV/00246. Code Engels 68, 07/06/95.

²²¹ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Code Jacobovits 378, 08/06/95; DCBC, 2811. Code Veenendaal NAVO 870, 08/06/95, Conf.

²²²UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88041, File 4-10, Background notes to SRSG, John Almstrom to SRSG, 18/06/95.

²²³DCBC, 1877. Code Veenendaal NAVO 854, 06/06/95.

evacuation of UNPROFOR or parts of it remained important.²²⁴ The British vision also was that setting up the Rapid Reaction Force did not mean preparation for withdrawal, even though the British did not exclude withdrawal from the Safe Areas if it was no longer possible to carry out meaningful tasks there.²²⁵

In New York the attention focused on a new Security Council resolution. Not because the UNPROFOR mandate had to be changed, but because the ceiling permitted for the strength of UNPROFOR would be exceeded by well over ten thousand men. The question who was going to pay the Rapid Reaction Force also remained unanswered. New York hoped that the governments involved would pay the costs, but these took the position that this was in addition to UNPROFOR, so the funding had to be arranged through UN channels.²²⁶ As a result of that, and because the required definition of the task of the Rapid Reaction Force, the realization of the resolution was an arduous process.

Prior to the meeting of the Security Council where the new resolution was going to be discussed, Boutros-Ghali pointed out to the Security Council that reinforcement of UNPROFOR should not lead to the idea that UNPROFOR would be able to put a stop to the war in Bosnia. UNPROFOR could only create the conditions for a political settlement. For that reason Boutros-Ghali considered it vital to ensure that the formation of the Rapid Reaction Force would be accompanied by new initiatives and a decisive attempt to revitalize the peace process. The governments of the countries contributing troops to the Rapid Reaction Force agreed to that.²²⁷

The Security Council resolution regarding the formation of the Rapid Reaction Force was registered under number 998. The Netherlands was co-introducer. The resolution stated that a military solution to the conflict was impossible, called for a new cease-fire and negotiations, and asked the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Contact Group plan as starting point for those.

The resolution did not find receptive ground among the warring factions. The Bosnian Muslims did not want to hear about an appeal for a cease-fire: though, the purpose of the solution was to approve the formation of the Rapid Reaction Force, at the same time all existing tasks within the original peacekeeping mandate were maintained. Akashi sent Karadzic a letter to inform him that the Rapid Reaction Force was going to operate under the existing Rules of Engagement and furthermore that the Rapid Reaction Force 'will not in any way change the essential peace-keeping nature of the UNPROFOR mission'.²²⁸ Akashi's letter leaked out which promptly caused an American accusation of appeasement. UN representative Albright called the contents and timing of the letter 'highly inappropriate', because it gave the idea that the Rapid Reaction Force would be more of the same.²²⁹ The French also disassociated themselves from Akashi's letter. On the contrary, it had been the French intention that the Rapid Reaction Force would be acting more forcefully,²³⁰ but the French had lost control over it.

Because of this vague mission of the Rapid Reaction Force American Congress also started to interfere again. The Congressmen wondered whether funding the mission was worthwhile.²³¹ After all, the Americans were paying 31% of the costs of the peacekeeping operations. Another factor was that

²²⁴ DCBC, 1398. Code Van Mierlo 237, 13/06/95.

²²⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02090. Code Biegman 551, 20/06/95.

²²⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02090. Biegman 509, 07/06/95.

²²⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02090. Fax PNVN to DPV/PZ, 8 [9] June 1995, No. nyv-3683 with letter Boutros-Boutros-Ghali to Detlev Graf zu Rantzau, President of the Security Council, 09/06/95. Also refer to Security Council, S/1995/470, 09/06/95.

²²⁸ Collection NIOD (7), 09/07/99 Annex 1, Letter SRSG to Radovan Karadzic, 19/06/95. Also refer to NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 19/06/95, No. Z-1022

²²⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR. UNPROFOR HQ, Office of Civil Affairs, Weekly Situation Report, No. 120, 19-25 June 1995.

²³⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Wijnaendts 208, 23/06/95, 23/06/95.

²³¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02090. Code Jacobovits 385, 13/06/95.

in Bosnia there were no Americans on the ground, but some 20,000 Americans did play a role in the various other operations in the former Yugoslavia. However, those costs were not paid by the UN.²³²

American uncertainty about the question who was going to pay the costs of the Rapid Reaction Force even prevented the resolution from being put to the vote in the UN Security Council.²³³ Congress maintained objections, because the Rapid Reaction Force would be more of same. The resolution also had to make clear in stronger words that the protection of the Safe Areas would be continued; the Americans still considered that highly necessary. Akashi's statement that UNPROFOR, also with the Rapid Reaction Force, would exclusively be engaged in peacekeeping had not really been appreciated in Washington.²³⁴ The intended nationally paid forceful military force seemed to be degenerating into a UN force with a less clear assignment. The Rapid Reaction Force should have a renewed deterrence concept, the Americans thought. It was exactly the assignment that was important to the American Congress to be able to judge the Rapid Reaction Force and its funding. Within Congress there was considerable mistrust as regards the UN, more in particular against Boutros-Ghali and Akashi. UN ambassador Albright summarized the American position with a clear statement that was characteristic of her: 'the more Akashi, the less money'.²³⁵

The American resistance mainly came from the Republican leaders in the Senate, Dole and Gingrich. But President Clinton also considered the mission of the Rapid Reaction Force 'watered down'. It seemed it was going to become part of the inefficient UN system; a watered-down version of the original objective of Rapid Reaction Force that also was a thorn in the flesh of others.

The Islamic countries objected to a passage in the draft resolution on the necessity of demilitarization of the Safe Areas; in previous resolutions regarding the UNPROFOR mission this demilitarization had already been included in 1993, but it had never happened. In an attempt to help the Bosnian Muslims the Islamic countries now emphasized that the tasks of the Rapid Reaction Force should also include protection of the Muslim population in the Safe Areas.²³⁶ The Germans held the British responsible for this watering down because, unlike the French (and the Germans), they had not wanted to go beyond maintaining the status quo.²³⁷

Clinton's objections appeared to be removed because the French President Chirac, visiting Washington, seemed to convince Clinton that the Rapid Reaction Force really could make a difference.²³⁸ The question was however, whether Chirac had really convinced Clinton of the usefulness of the Rapid Reaction Force; the ideas of the American government would have differed little from those of Gingrich and Dole, so Washington could conveniently hide behind Congress.²³⁹

In Washington, Chirac also entered into discussion with the Republican leaders in the Senate, Dole and Gingrich. They would have preferred that the Rapid Reaction Force would operate under NATO umbrella, that the UN peacekeeping mission was reconsidered, and that the United States had made it clear to the European Union that the Americans were not on the side of the Bosnian Serbs. Chirac argued that it was also about protecting soldiers, and that Congress should not withhold its political support. Gingrich did appear sensitive to that, and he was prepared to accept an American vote in favour of the resolution, but he would not accept funding it.²⁴⁰ Subsequently, Chirac thought he could conclude that the Americans would accept the resolution. However, that was not the case; Albright did not receive instructions from Washington to that effect.²⁴¹

²³² ABZ, Embassy Washington. Code Jacobovits 408, 20/06/95.

²³³ ABZ, DDI-DAV/00246. Memorandum Plv DEU to e.g. S, DGPZ, 14/06/95, no. DEU-481/95.

²³⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02090. Code Jacobovitz 393, 15/06/95.

²³⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Codes Van Walsum 242 and Biegan 548, 20 and 19/06/95.

²³⁶ DCBC, 556. Code Schaper 521, 13/06/95.

²³⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Jacobovits 403, 17/06/95.

²³⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Jacobovitz 396, 16/06/95.

²³⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Schaper 539, 17/06/95.

²⁴⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Jacobovitz 396, 16/06/95.

²⁴¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA 05278. Code Schaper 539, 17/06/95.

Not only had Chirac failed to convince Dole and Gingrich, they also tried to take the edge of the resolution by wanting to include that 'UNPROFOR officials that have to date crippled the UNPROFOR operation' would not have the right to veto the deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force. These Republican senators didn't want the Americans to accept any further financial and military obligations in connection with the Rapid Reaction Force and they didn't want the costs to be divided among the member states.²⁴² The resolution did not give in to the requirements of Dole and Gingrich that a civil UN official, namely Akashi, should not have the right to veto the deployment of air power.²⁴³ The financial problem still hadn't been solved either. In order to have more time to canvass Congress, the Americans were aiming at a postponement of the vote.²⁴⁴ In the background the Bosnian Muslims played in part in the problem of funding the Rapid Reaction Force: they tried to convince the Americans not pay for it, unless the unit was authorized to open up corridors.²⁴⁵ As a rule Washington made itself international spokesman of the Bosnian position,²⁴⁶ but this time the problems that Americans had with the UN in general and with funding the Rapid Reaction Force in particular, were greater than the sympathy for the Bosnian Muslims.

Eventually a solution could be found to still put the resolution to the vote. That happened by adding the phrase: 'the modalities of the financing to be determined later' to one of the operative paragraphs of the text of the resolution. Except the Americans, nobody was happy about this postponement. The British for instance saw it as the final blow to the peacekeeping operations if these operations would not be paid from membership fees but from voluntary contributions.²⁴⁷

On 16 June the Security Council finally accepted resolution 998. UNPROFOR was authorized to increase the strength by a maximum of 12,500 men. The Russian Federation and China abstained from voting.²⁴⁸

Also after adoption of the resolution the Americans still had questions about the Rapid Reaction Force. Could it also be deployed in Croatia? Would the French decide or did the UN decide when the French standby brigade that would remain in France could be deployed? Neither was there certainty about the American assistance with heavily armed armoured planes (in military terms: C-130 Gunships) and attack helicopters, as well as support in the field of intelligence.²⁴⁹ The Gunships could operate from basis outside Bosnia, but attack helicopters would have to be made available without American crews because the American Congress did not permit Americans to be stationed in Bosnia. For the same reason participation by an American intelligence unit in the staff of the Rapid Reaction Force was only possible if the Rapid Reaction Force would be stationed in Croatia.²⁵⁰ In any case this intelligence support would remain limited to photo material.²⁵¹

Further problems with the development of the Rapid Reaction Force

The United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands kept exerting pressure on the UN secretariat to present a budget in the usual manner to see to what extent the costs of the Rapid Reaction Force could be brought within the existing budget for UNPROFOR, or could be covered by voluntary

²⁴² ABZ, PVNY. Fax PVVN to DPV/PZ, DEU/OE and Amb Washington, 15/06/95, No. nyv-3624 with letter Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole to The President, 15/06/95.

²⁴³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Jacobovits 403, 17/06/95.

²⁴⁴ DCBC, 2402. Code Jacobovits 393, 15/06/95.

²⁴⁵ CRST. Fax Philip Corwin to Akashi, 28/06/95, 'Meeting with Minister Muratovic'.

²⁴⁶ Interview Charles Redman, 27/06/01.

²⁴⁷ Confidential information (21).

²⁴⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Letter of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Chairman of Parliament, 21/06/95, no. DPV/PZ-1348/95.

²⁴⁹ DCBC no. 2195. Secure Fax Amb Washington to Ministry of Defence attn DAB and CDS and Ministry of Foreign Affairs attn DAV, 21/06/95, without number.

²⁵⁰ ABZ, Embassy Washington. Code Jacobovits 408, 20/06/95.

²⁵¹ Confidential information (20).

contributions that would have to be deposited in a trust fund. For the latter promises had been made by Japan, Germany, Canada and Italy during the meeting of the G-7 that was held from 15 to 17 June in Halifax, Canada.²⁵² However, that would mean partial absorption of the costs of the Rapid Reaction Force in the existing UN budget, and the Americans opposed that as well.²⁵³ The American attitudes met with strong criticism during the G-7 summit: the United States refused to send ground forces to Bosnia and now they also refused to pay for others who did want to do that. The British Minister of Defence, Rifkind, expressed the criticism as follows: 'all that Senators and Congressmen have to decide is whether US dollars should be made available. Britain, France and the Netherlands, who provide UNPROFOR peacekeepers, have to decide whether it is worthwhile sending young men to Bosnia who may be killed and injured.'²⁵⁴

Also in the Netherlands the Rapid Reaction Force was reason for debate. On 8 June an overwhelming majority of the Permanent Commissions for Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Lower House had agreed with the intention to add 170 Dutch soldiers to the Rapid Reaction Force.²⁵⁵ However, general Couzy, Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, expressed a different opinion. He criticized the way the UN were muddling through in the former Yugoslavia, and he did not agree with the British and French initiatives to reinforce UNPROFOR with this Rapid Reaction Force. He called it madness to send troops to protect other troops. Couzy also thought that hurt national feelings were not a proper basis for a well-considered policy.

Couzy's statements – not only on this subject - caused quite some political commotion (see Chapter 4). After the parliamentary approval, the Netherlands started preparations to make the mortar company of the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, a mortar-tracing radar group of the Royal Netherlands Army, and some staff officers ready for deployment in Bosnia. On 15 July the Rapid Reaction Force in Bosnia had to be ready for action. Because of the funding problems it was not possible for the Americans to send this equipment free of charge to the operating area on American ships in planes; therefore the Netherlands rented tonnage. The Americans did fly in the personnel.²⁵⁶

Indeed the American troubles about the funding of the Rapid Reaction Force did continue. The Republican leaders in Congress also opposed funding the costs of the Rapid Reaction Force if it came directly from the American defence budget.²⁵⁷ With that trick Clinton had hoped to remain friends with the troop contributing nations and at the same time to steer clear of the opposition by Congress. However, Gingrich and Dole opposed the use of contributions from current budgets, because that way Congress would be bypassed. They told President Clinton so in a new letter. As long as the Rapid Reaction Force could not make a meaningful contribution to the protection of the Safe Areas, strong resistance would remain among the Republicans. They also opposed giving Close Air Support to the Rapid Reaction Force, as long as it was not possible to deal with the Bosnian-Serb air defence. It was unacceptable that American personnel would be running risks because of political sensitivities of UN bureaucrats, which meant that Dole and Gingrich overlooked the fact that this was rather a matter of an inadequate mandate for UNPROFOR. In the meantime the attitude towards UNPROFOR among the Republicans had not really improved: the moment had even come to completely stop paying for 'a hopelessly incompetent' UNPROFOR operation, they felt.²⁵⁸

The American discussion on the funding of the Rapid Reaction Force was complicated further by the negative reports in the American media on the force's credibility. The tenor of the reports was:

²⁵² ABZ, DPV/ARA/02090. Code Biegman 558, 21/06/95.

²⁵³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02090. Code Biegman 570, 28/06/95.

²⁵⁴ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, File BHC Weekly Sitreps, 17/06/95 – 21/09/95. UNPROFOR HQ, Weekly Situation Report, No. 122, 5-11 June 1995.

²⁵⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Van Mierlo 158, 09/06/95.

²⁵⁶ BSG, CDS 95III. Note CDS to the Minister, 29/06/95, No. S/95/061/2697.

²⁵⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Jacobovits 422, 30/06/95.

²⁵⁸ APVNY. Fax PZ/Washington to DEU, PV New York, 30/06/95, without number. Letter Dole/Gingrich re Rapid Reaction Force.

‘more expensive UNPROFOR inaction’, and that while the Rapid Reaction Force would not be able to open up corridors to starving Sarajevo and the enclaves without Mladic’s permission. In addition, the American media mentioned the demoralization in the US headquarters in Zagreb, because people there had to operate in an intellectual and diplomatic vacuum. The main criticism was directed at the Security Council. Also for that reason Bosnian government officials and Western diplomats saw the Rapid Reaction Force as a precursor of the withdrawal of UNPROFOR.²⁵⁹

For now that had undermined the threat of a more forceful course of action by UNPROFOR, which indeed greatly affected morale in Zagreb. The wish expressed by Boutros-Ghali to clarify and simplify the mandate was not reflected in Resolution 998 either and only confirmed the muddling-through idea. The Security Council emphasized the necessity of a ‘vigorous pursuit of a political settlement’ because there was no military solution, but at the same time the newly appointed negotiator Carl Bildt said: ‘there will not be a political solution, there is no political process’. These contradictory signals did affect the Zagreb headquarters. According to colonel De Jonge in Janvier’s staff, the mood there was gloomy, especially because of the continuing problems for UNPROFOR even apart from the Rapid Reaction Force.²⁶⁰

Janvier remained tormented by doubts about the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force. In a letter to general Smith, Janvier informed him that the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force would not improve the situation as long as there was no will to achieve changes on the political stage. If not within three to four weeks after the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force the political process had been revitalized, Janvier was pessimistic about the future. The arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force would at best create expectations and make the cries for forceful action get louder. No matter how frustrating the situation was, the soldiers would have to withstand those cries. Janvier always kept the safety of the troops in mind: what he wanted to prevent under any circumstances was that the Rapid Reaction Force would become an instrument to drag UNPROFOR from peacekeeping to peace-enforcement.²⁶¹

Rapid Reaction Force: too little, too late

Consequently, the formation of the Rapid Reaction Force took quite some doing, also after the political decision to set it up. An operational concept had to be created on the basis of a rather obscure definition of tasks. Moreover, the composition of a staff for the Rapid Reaction Force required extensive horse trading between the French and the British on the division of positions. Finally, the actual deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force was seriously hampered by sabotage from the Croatian and Bosnian authorities on landing in Split and moving to Bosnia.

For the political and military climate in June and early July the activities and discussion around the formation of the Rapid Reaction Force were relevant in a more general sense, but that had no noticeable influence on the situation in Srebrenica. A role in enforcing the highly necessary resupply of the eastern enclaves was not reserved for the Rapid Reaction Force. Because of all restrictions on the military possibilities to open up a corridor, there seemed to be little hope for the Netherlands on formation of the Rapid Reaction Force that taking part in it would also be to the advantage of Dutchbat in their scary stronghold.

Nevertheless the Rapid Reaction Force would be highly important late August 1995: the operation Deliberate Force would at last bring about a turn in the situation. Artillery and mortar units of the Rapid Reaction Force then played a valuable role in reply to the mortar grenade hit on the Markale market in Sarajevo. Artillery and mortars – unlike air power, directly available under all weather conditions and with less risk for unintended damage (in military terms: collateral damage) – fired 1500

²⁵⁹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 03/07/95, No. 2181; *Christian Science Monitor*, 03/07/95, David Rohde, ‘UNPROFOR’s New Bosnia Force May Depend On Serb OK’ and ‘Despondent UNPROFOR Staff Question Their Role’; *The Washington Post*, 01/07/95, John Pomfret, ‘West "Reaction Force" Rapidly Fading Away’.

²⁶⁰ CRST. Fax G3 Land Ops HQ UNPF to CDS and BLS in hands, 17/06/95.

²⁶¹ SMG/1004/6. Lieutenant-General Bernard Janvier to Lieutenant-General Sir Rupert Smith, 27/06/95.

grenades at the time. However, the Rapid Reaction Force came too late for the dramatic events of which Dutchbat would be witness: the Dutch contingent of the Rapid Reaction Force was going to leave for Bosnia exactly on 11 July of all days: the day of the fall of Srebrenica.²⁶²

14. The situation on the ground for UNPROFOR in June 1995

In the meantime the situation for UNPROFOR remained highly arduous. The Security Council had not responded to Boutros-Ghali's report in which he expressed his preference for withdrawal from the eastern enclaves. That as it were automatically left UNPROFOR to keep 'muddling through'.

The Bosnian Muslims kept relatively quiet during a few days after the air strikes, as UNPROFOR suspected in the hope that further ground or air actions would follow and UNPROFOR would do the job for the ABiH by curbing the fighting power of the VRS. However, the UN realized that this patience would soon be exhausted if there were a long-term stalemate and again it would appear that UNPROFOR did not have the power to act against the warring factions. That could lead to more pressure on UNPROFOR from the part of the Bosnian government, or because the ABiH could try to take advantage of this momentum by starting their own military action. In the meantime the VRS could focus on the enclaves: that could divert the attention that now went to Sarajevo. That had the additional advantage for the VRS to fight in a smaller, encircled area which was easier. Gorazde could be a first target for the VRS.²⁶³

Now that UNPROFOR had proceeded to use force with the air strikes, according to Smith the problem had developed that because of the use of air power it now seemed to be a matter of peace-enforcement, while the mandate on the ground remained unchanged peacekeeping. That could cause confusion, but a return to the situation before the air strikes was as good as impossible according to Smith. He wondered whether the UN was prepared to fight against the VRS and, if so, with what objective for UNPROFOR, within what political strategy, under whose command and with what troops and means? And if the UN were not prepared to fight, then what was the objective of UNPROFOR going to be? According to him, answers to these questions were decisive to what was going to happen. In anticipation of these replies, Smith assumed that the troop-contributing nations would be prepared to fight.²⁶⁴ What Smith actually wanted was, by way of experiment, to just enter into battle with the Bosnian Serbs. For instance, he would have liked to send out a convoy without asking permission from the Bosnian Serbs, as was the custom so far. As soon as the VRS was going to fire at it, he would want to strike back with prepared Close Air Support. However, nobody dared let him take the test. They had to stick to the (by now theoretical) concept that UNPROFOR was impartial.

Early June Smith arrived at a new estimate of the objectives of the warring factions. Objective of the VRS with regard to UNPROFOR was to neutralize it by regulating or denying resupply, in particular for fuel. That would affect UNPROFOR's power to such an extent that the safe Area concept would be emasculated, after which the VRS could freely attack the opponents.

From a military viewpoint the objective of the VRS was to keep exerting pressure on the enclaves to be able to reduce their size. The underlying objective was to release manpower for operations around Sarajevo, because to the VRS Sarajevo remained the centre of the activities. Yet Smith did not think the risk of offensive operations to take all of the eastern enclaves particularly great at that moment. Its political implications, the negative publicity and a lack of infantry made it unlikely, according to Smith. Rather, the VRS tactics seemed to aim at besieging the ABiH troops in the enclaves to exhaust them and force them to surrender.

²⁶² See also Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force* and A.J.E. Wagemaker, 'Powerplay in Bosnia?', *Marineblad*, 106(1996)114-121.

²⁶³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Fax Deyan Mihov, Acting D-SRSG/CAC BH Command Sarajevo to Yasushi Akashi and Michel Moussali, HCA Civil Affairs, HQ Zagreb, Situation Assessment 29/05 sent with Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 29/05/95, No. Z-889.

²⁶⁴ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Commander HQ UNPROFOR Directive 2/95, 29/05/95, UN Confi.

Smith was convinced that the VRS were counting on it that actions against the enclaves would not invoke a response from NATO. Therefore the VRS would continue shelling military targets within the enclaves. The ABiH in the enclaves were going to lose ground; the defenders would gradually run out of ammunition and would have to find refuge in more densely populated areas.

Conversely, Smith thought the Bosnian Muslims would do anything to get UNPROFOR, NATO and the international community on their side. Smith expected that the ABiH would be going to use UNPROFOR as a protective shield. The result would be that VRS could be shooting at UNPROFOR as a deterrence. That way the ABiH would try to drag UNPROFOR into the conflict. In this scenario the safety of the UN soldiers was not directly at risk, but casualties through crossfire were possible.²⁶⁵

The situation had not improved much when on 22 June 1995 Smith explained his military vision on the situation in Bosnia to the negotiators Stoltenberg and Bildt. Bildt was exploring the ground as newly appointed EU negotiator. Soon a division of tasks would develop between Bildt and Stoltenberg in which Bildt was handling Bosnia and Stoltenberg took care of Croatia. Bildt wanted to try and draw the Bosnian Serbs from their psychological shell without alienating the Bosnian government. Bildt told Smith that he realized that the clock was ticking and that the political and military situation was unfavourable.²⁶⁶

During his briefing to Bildt and Stoltenberg, Smith gave his vision of the near future of the conflict: Smith pointed out to Bildt that the time factor was against the Bosnian Serbs. According to Smith that was the reason why Mladic wanted peace soon; Mladic would benefit by a permanent ceasefire. A temporary ceasefire could only be to the advantage of the Bosnian Muslims, for they could arrange reinforcement. The ABiH's tactics were, according to Smith, to slowly nibble away small pieces of the territory held by the VRS. The ABiH aimed at small targets such as a single road and, locally, the occupation of elevated areas; being at a higher level than the enemy would give a military-tactical advantage. The ABiH attacked in various areas simultaneously to prevent the VRS from concentrating. It forced Mladic to move his troops with dilapidating buses and dwindling fuel supplies under cover of darkness. The VRS did maintain a considerable superiority in heavy weapons, but the ABiH began to operate reasonably effectively with small infantry units. In the long term the ABiH could be winning and even book successes at Sarajevo.

As far as Smith was concerned, UNPROFOR was in a crisis, he told the negotiators. For him now the point had gradually been reached of: 'either send your white vehicles home and let's have a real fight, or let's leave'. He confronted Bildt and Stoltenberg with the question whether they were prepared to use force in self-defence (for instance in the form of Close Air Support), and to accept the escalation of the conflict that it could entail. If escalation was not accepted, UNPROFOR had to leave, Smith said. According to Smith only in Zagreb the will still seemed to exist for 'muddling through'.²⁶⁷ In saying so, he underestimated that in an international framework, and so also at the UN in New York, muddling through still was the only feasible option with all its drawbacks.

The further policy of UNPROFOR according to Janvier

To his question whether the UN was prepared to fight, Smith did not get an answer from Janvier. In fact that answer was not relevant anymore, because Smith received the directive from Janvier that implementation of the mandate was subordinate to the safety of the UN personnel. Janvier informed Smith accordingly in his Personal directive, dated 29 May. Loss of lives only to defend positions had to be prevented, Janvier thought.

That way the Force Commander acknowledged in so many words that after the air strikes of 25 and 26 May the Bosnian Serbs had been able to change the situation in a political and military sense to

²⁶⁵ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Lt Gen R.A. Smith, Eastern Enclave Operations Assessment, 06/06/95, No. 8940.

²⁶⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 24/1995/95, No. Z-1051.

²⁶⁷ Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*, p. 113-144.

their advantage. They would be determined, and they would continue to strike UNPROFOR at its weak points. The Bosnian Serbs were preparing for 'extremely intense and long-lasting crises'. They were taking measures to protect themselves against future air strikes and against military actions on the ground. In Janvier's analysis the centre for the VRS was at Sarajevo. This city was at stake, both from a military and a media viewpoint. The VRS were going to use the position in which the isolated UNPROFOR units found themselves, such as in the enclaves, and take those decisions they thought important. In that sense the Bosnian Serbs had a dual objective, according to Janvier.

According to Janvier, the main objective of the VRS was to neutralize UNPROFOR. The VRS wanted to prevent UNPROFOR from carrying out their tasks, in particular at the locations where UNPROFOR was between the parties, such as in the enclaves. The VRS was going to use 'every trick in the book' to tip the local balance of power in the advantage of the VRS.

The second objective then was to take those military targets that so far UNPROFOR had kept them away from. The VRS would want to keep the momentum and fully isolate Sarajevo and the enclaves. The risk of Bosnian provocations could only worsen the situation. The ABiH could attack the VRS to provoke Bosnian-Serb retaliation, in particular around Sarajevo. UNPROFOR could become involved, but then under dramatically adverse circumstances with so many hostages in Bosnian-Serb hands. That would cause a cycle that would eventually result in a call for a massive air strikes. As usual, the media would soon bring that to the attention of the general public.

Janvier's policy was aimed at saving lives of hostages, obtaining safety for the UNPROFOR troops, and putting a stop to the trend of taking hostages. He thought it of vital importance to reduce the vulnerability for hostage-takings. Under the current circumstances UNPROFOR was in fact no longer able to do what it originally was intended for: the escalation of the situation around Sarajevo was just too much for the military capabilities of UNPROFOR. Neither could UNPROFOR handle the imminent problems with sending food to the enclaves. Withdrawal by the warring factions from the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones, and the violation of the Safe Area regime was an issue to be dealt with at a political level, not for UNPROFOR: they now had to make the safety of the UN troops their priority.²⁶⁸

Nevertheless, Janvier wanted to try and have UNPROFOR keep the initiative, without endangering the lives of his soldiers. He wanted to do that by simultaneously demonstrating that key positions would be held onto and, if necessary, defended. Smith was ordered to do everything to locally stabilize the situation without surrendering positions that could have a military importance for the warring factions. Janvier gave instructions to make preparations to leave the vulnerable OPs that were not essential for the task. Backup units had to be formed to be able to act in emergency situations. If they were fired at, they had to respond, while observing the principle of proportionality. At local level Smith had to initiate negotiations to realize termination of the actions against UNPROFOR and the release of the hostages.²⁶⁹

Smith's response to Janvier's directive was that to him it was a matter of principle not to negotiate with the Bosnian Serbs as long as not all hostages had been released and their equipment had been returned. Smith also wanted to deal only very cautiously with the Bosnian government to prevent UNPROFOR from being considered biased in favour of the Bosnian Muslims. Instructions from high up had to be given, otherwise Smith feared that UN personnel in the enclaves would be inclined to cooperate with the Bosnian Muslims.

In addition, Smith once more touched on the tender spot by concluding that there was no coherent strategy to establish links between matters such as: political measures to end the conflict; taking military measures to support that strategy; bringing about the release of the hostages; and thinking about the purpose of reinforcements for UNPROFOR. Such a strategy was not only required to solve the hostage crisis, but also to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Sarajevo and to get

²⁶⁸ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Force Commander to LtGen R. Smith Only, 29/05/95, File Ref: FC/95/0801, UN Confi.

²⁶⁹ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Force Commander to LtGen R. Smith Only, 29/05/95, File Ref: FC/95/0801, UN Confi.

supplies to the eastern enclaves. Smith wanted all these problems to be tackled within a political-military strategy to be determined.²⁷⁰ The problem was that indeed a political strategy was highly necessary to get UNPROFOR out of the morass, but that there was no such strategy.

And a morass it was, everybody in Zagreb realized. Consequently, the situation in Bosnia had its effect on the atmosphere at the UN headquarters in Zagreb. Colonel J.H. de Jonge, member of Janvier's staff, openly stated that the UN was at risk of being dragged along into a 'vicious Vietnam circle'. Whatever scenario was observed in the war of nerves with the Bosnian Serbs, the UN would lose in all events. Powerless and frustrated Zagreb waited for political instructions. De Jonge once more analysed the situation in which UNPROFOR found itself: UNPROFOR had lost its credibility and was in a political vacuum. The UN mission was built on quicksand and logical errors, he stated in an interview. Peacekeeping assumed that there was peace. The surrounded enclaves, including Srebrenica, were indefensible and not safe because UNPROFOR was not equipped to deter an attack or to strike back. The UN was a toothless army, pitted against the heavily armed VRS, and the UN was not capable of repaying in kind. The only option left was to use air power, but that had appeared a giant step on the escalation ladder.

De Jonge thought that there should be more understanding for the ideas and sensitivities of the Bosnian Serbs. In his capacity of Chief of Land Operations De Jonge tried to anticipate the moves of the warring factions, but he confessed to have been mistaken all the time: 'my way of thinking is not theirs. I don't understand them.' De Jonge saw the Bosnian Serbs as constrained and no longer prepared to compromise. Their behaviour was irrational and they were more bitter than ever before: the world had always been anti-Serb and they could never do any good. That had given the Bosnian Serbs the idea that they had nothing left to lose. On top of that, according to De Jonge, the Bosnian Muslims could get away with 'quite a lot' and the Bosnian Serbs were permitted 'hardly anything' on the battlefield. There was an unbalance that in some cases was unjust, encouraged by the continuous American support.²⁷¹

Minister Voorhoeve did not thank De Jonge for these revelations. It had irritated both him and Van Mierlo. Voorhoeve wanted criticism from the field to be expressed by superiors. Otherwise, critical reports in the media would cause too much confusion and unrest among friends and family of the deployed Dutch soldiers.²⁷²

Deadlock between New York and Zagreb

In the meantime, a different note was heard from New York. So far Boutros-Ghali had advanced very cautiously and he and Janvier had agreed that the first priority had to be the safety of the UN personnel. Mid-June, when the hostage crisis was coming to an end, Undersecretary Kofi Annan took the initiative from New York to put the pressure on again. It was remarkable that Annan asked Akashi to send on the contents of this message to Smith, something that happened much more often later. That was the start of a centre shift from Zagreb to Sarajevo.

The bad mood in Zagreb had not been left unnoticed in New York. Kofi Annan wrote to Akashi: 'Here in New York, we are well aware of the extreme difficulties and the resulting stress that all UNPROFOR personnel in the theatre are operating under at the moment.' Annan admitted that 'the way ahead is somewhat unclear at this point', words that Zagreb equated with muddling through.

Annan believed that the time had come that UNPROFOR had to try to make more out of their mandate. A 'reconfiguration' was required: a new balance had to be found between Force Protection and the realization of the mandate. Annan said to be 'disturbed' by a statement from Akashi's spokesman that Akashi was waiting for directives from New York. Annan ensured Akashi that his

²⁷⁰ SMG 1004/3. Office of the Commander HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb attn SRSR, COS, FC, 'strategic Planning Issues', 02/06/95.

²⁷¹ Interview Frank Westerman; *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/05/95.

²⁷² *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/06/95.

judgement and decisions could count on the full support from New York, that he did not want to be in the way of the commanders in the field, and that in addition New York was 'always happy to respond to specific requests for guidance' Exactly that was the problem for Zagreb: New York did not always respond to such questions. In any case, waiting for Security Council resolutions in preparation made no sense, according to Annan, for those did not deal with operational details. That way it looked as if Akashi and Janvier were expecting New York to come up with clear guidelines, while New York was waiting for acts from Zagreb: that meant deadlock.

In between there were the media, who had recorded statements from UN officials that in practice UNPROFOR was not allowed to do anything without Bosnian-Serb approval. Annan said he found it awkward if UNPROFOR were to surrender to a mentality of isolation and to worrying mainly about the safety of the personnel, no matter how important. That also entailed risks; Somalia had taught that doing nothing with a view to the own safety was exactly what had provoked enemy action. Therefore, Kofi Annan considered it important to show willpower and to boost credibility to make room in the future for peacekeeping again. Giving in to a 'mentality of isolation' dictated by care for the personnel should not be allowed. Annan wondered what options Akashi saw to ensure humanitarian relief and resupply of UNPROFOR. On 9 June Pale said to have accepted it, and what did UNPROFOR do to subsequently enforce cooperation of local VRS commanders?²⁷³

Akashi came with an answer to Annan that was relatively defensive and mainly listed the problems for UNPROFOR. According to Akashi, UNPROFOR was still recovering from the consequences of the air strikes of 25 and 26 May, 'which dramatically highlighted the long standing contradictions and impracticabilities of the Safe Area mandate, and the consequences of an inability to escalate force in an essentially peace-keeping mission'. The media had portrayed UNPROFOR as passive and withdrawn ('unassertive'). That was caused by ambiguities in the UNPROFOR mandate and false hope. Akashi once more brought to mind that Boutros-Ghali had already mentioned that in his report to the Security Council. Akashi disputed this had caused a 'negative mentality' with UNPROFOR in the realization of the mandate. Yet the lack of Freedom of Movement, caused by the VRS as well as increasingly by the ABiH, had caused 'some frustration' among the troops.

What was needed according to Akashi was decisiveness, and avoiding the feeling of paralysis. However, the rest of the message showed little decisiveness, but rather the by now well-known clichés on the future of UNPROFOR and the risks of the mission. Restoration of the Freedom of Movement did not suffice according to Akashi; a clear definition of the presence of UNPROFOR in the Safe Areas, just like demilitarization of those was required. The warring factions had started a war and UNPROFOR found itself in the middle of a Bosnian offensive around Sarajevo, resulting in manipulation, hostilities and mistrust from the side of both parties. Under these circumstances UNPROFOR had to be prepared for escalation. It was important to understand thoroughly what this could mean, because it required that the escalation could be continued, resulting in further hostilities. That required support of the Security Council and the troop contributing nations. The arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force and a reduction of the vulnerability of UNPROFOR offered new, though limited possibilities.²⁷⁴ It has already been discussed that Janvier warned for too high expectations of this Rapid Reaction Force, because it entailed the risk that UNPROFOR would become party to the conflict.

UNPROFOR in June 1995: muddling through

Akashi's gloom expressed towards Annan was shared by Janvier. Late June 1995 the latter informed Annan that in fact the situation for UNPROFOR in the Bosnian theatre had only worsened even further. UNPROFOR kept being troubled by restrictions on their Freedom of Movement. In Janvier's opinion their purpose remained unchanged: the Bosnian Serbs wanted to punish UNPROFOR, to

²⁷³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 15/06/95, No. 1981.

²⁷⁴ Confidential information (62).

prove that the Republika Srpska was a nation, to impose sanctions upon UNPROFOR in order to alleviate the sanctions imposed on themselves, to control and punish the population in the enclaves, and to try and lay their hands on a larger part of the humanitarian relief. The position of the Bosnian Muslims did not make it any easier either, Janvier analysed: the Bosnian government imposed restrictions to check the UNPROFOR actions, and to be able to carry out military operations without UNPROFOR having any idea. All these restrictions limited the relief flows. The population of Bihac, Sarajevo and the three eastern enclaves received insufficient relief to be able to survive in the long run. This undermined the credibility of UNPROFOR and UNHCR.

Janvier saw that the realization of the UNPROFOR mandate in the eastern enclaves, including Srebrenica, was increasingly put at risk. Without Freedom of Movement, UNPROFOR was held hostage in the enclaves: 'by the Bosnian Serbs (outside) and by the Bosnian Muslims (inside)'. Insufficient resupply made it impossible to man all observation posts of UNPROFOR. Patrols by vehicle had already become impossible due to lack of fuel. Patrols on foot could not see everything and these were vulnerable to enemy action. In Srebrenica and Zepa the UN units had to be considered 'semi-operational' due to lack of fuel and other means: already for two months nobody had been able to enter or leave the enclaves. It was unavoidable that this situation had an influence on the morale of the troops, because the soldiers were increasingly wondering what they were actually doing there when they were not able to do their job.²⁷⁵

By now there were lasting differences of opinion between Janvier and Smith regarding military matters. Since the meeting in Split where Akashi, Janvier and Smith discussed the situation in Bosnia (see section 5), the difference in thinking between Janvier and Smith was perfectly clear. The question whether it was possible to achieve a new status quo for the peacekeepers, and whether the Bosnian government and the VRS wanted a cease-fire, was answered by Janvier with 'yes' and Smith with 'no'. Smith expected high tension, increase of incidents and deterioration of the situation around the enclaves, without having the possibility to use air power.²⁷⁶

Smith wanted tougher action, while it seemed that Janvier did not take decisions so easily. As already stated above, the pattern seemed to be that Zagreb presented problems to New York, from where in many cases the answer came that solutions had to be found in Zagreb, thus closing the circle.

All this offered the individual countries space to take their own decisions. Examples of that were the French recapture of the Vrbanja bridge at Sarajevo, or the helicopter lift of French mortars to Sarajevo ordered by the French of which Smith only learned the next day. As consequence of the formation of the Rapid Reaction Force all kinds of planning teams arrived in the area, without much advance coordination. Smith in turn also surprised Janvier sometimes, for instance when he arranged with Janvier's British chief of staff and in consultation with London, landing a British artillery regiment in Split without Janvier knowing anything about it.²⁷⁷

Not many new impulses could be expected from Akashi. He took the position that until the situation had changed sufficiently, UNPROFOR had to be careful about defining new objectives or accepting risks. For now his objective was to arrange a more regular supply of humanitarian relief. Convoys started to reach the enclaves and Sarajevo again, even though not sufficient to cover the need. The idea of 'forcing convoys through', as Smith actually wanted, was an abomination to Akashi. The military power was lacking for it and, more importantly, it no longer concerned local VRS opposition but policy ordered from high up by the de Bosnian-Serb leaders. That made a fundamental difference to Akashi. Removing blockades with military means then unavoidably led to escalation and further hostilities. That required additional means, calculation, preparation and full support from the Security Council and the troop contributing nations.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Confidential information (62).

²⁷⁶ NIOD, Coll. Nicolai. Diary Nicolai, 10/06/95.

²⁷⁷ CRST. Fax G3 Land Ops HQ UNPF to CDS and BLS in hands, 17/06/95.

²⁷⁸ Confidential Information (62)

Akashi looked to New York, but New York did not bother about the convoy problems. The Security Council had spoken on 16 June, and with Resolution 998 had ordered the warring factions to: 'fully respect the safety of UNPROFOR personnel, and others engaged in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and ensure their complete freedom of movement.' On 23 June the Security Council, on the initiative of the Russian Federation and after lengthy consultation within the Contact Group, once more condemned parties for the restrictions in the Freedom of Movement they imposed upon UNPROFOR and for hindering humanitarian relief. This time the Council also condemned the 'Bosnian Government Forces' for obstructing UNPROFOR in Visoko, Gorazde, Gorni Vakuf and Kladanj, and for laying mines in front of the compound of the Canadian UN unit in Visoko.²⁷⁹ The Bosnian authorities had carried out a revenge action against the Canadians there; they claimed that reports from the battalion 'provided sensitive operational data to the Bosnian Serbs'. The ABiH threatened to shell the Canadians if they dared to venture outside their base. Consequently, observation posts (OPs) had to be withdrawn.²⁸⁰ Under these circumstances, Akashi's task was not really enviable. Neither the Bosnian Muslims nor the Bosnian Serbs cared much about the political resolutions of the Security Council and that placed all problems with steering UNPROFOR back on Akashi's plate.

Of course Smith's worries were undiminished as well, he said on 29 June: though the political process had been reactivated by Bildt's actions, Smith also noted that the ABiH were going to continue their offensive, and: 'we can expect the VRS to counter-attack at some stage'. Finally Smith wrote: 'I am particularly sensitive to the situation of the units in Sarajevo and the Eastern Enclaves who for no fault of their own are without clear direction'.²⁸¹

Janvier did share Smith's opinion that negotiations with a clear objective were required, and preferably at the highest level. That process of negotiations, that Janvier expected to start soon, had priority and should not be disturbed; another reason to refrain from new air power actions, Janvier thought. Akashi was busy designing a strategy for the negotiations; they had to lead to a wide political agreement. Janvier thought that he himself and Smith would soon become part of that process. Janvier was optimistic that the international community would reach a more coherent approach, with more consensus.

Janvier also reported to Smith that he was fully informed on the situation in the enclaves. His main priority was to get food to the troops. Smith was ordered to ensure resupply with the Bosnian Serbs, starting with Zepa. However, Janvier did not want compromises, but he wanted to make it clear to the Bosnian Serbs what their responsibilities were and what the consequences would be if they failed to cooperate. He did not indicate what those consequences would be. It did have to become clear to the Bosnian Serbs that UNPROFOR was determined to get supplies to the troops. Smith had to continue with plans to airlift supplies to the enclaves, for the event the Bosnian Serbs kept frustrating resupply by road.²⁸² The problems of airlifting supplies to the enclaves is discussed in detail in the Appendix 'Airlifting supplies'.

Just like the UN, NATO was worried about the safety of the UN troops and their vulnerability. NATO was prepared to increase the safety and to reduce the vulnerability. That was the result of the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in ministerial session (that is with the Ministers of Defence and of Foreign Affairs of the NATO countries) in Noordwijk on 30 May. Secretary-General Claes informed his UN counterpart Boutros-Ghali that the NATO countries would strongly support a lasting presence of the UN in the former Yugoslavia.²⁸³ Despite this statement, well before the air strikes of 25 and 26

²⁷⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Fax PV New York to Ministry of BZ, 23/06/95, reference nyv-3449.

²⁸⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, File BHC Weekly Sitreps 17/06/95 – 21/09/95. UNPROFOR HQ, Office of Civil Affairs, Weekly Situation Report, No. 120, 19-25 June 1995.

²⁸¹ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Smith to FC, Commander HQ Unprofor Directive 3/95, 29/06/95.

²⁸² NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Letter Lieutenant-General Bernard Janvier [to General Smith], 02/06/95.

²⁸³ UNNY,DPKO, UNPF. Letter Willy Claes to Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 31/05/95, No. attached to Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 26/2/31, No. 1831.

May talks had started between NATO and UN to plan a possible withdrawal of UNPROFOR from Bosnia.²⁸⁴ So that scenario was also considered a possibility.

15. At the political front in Bosnia after the air strikes: the situation in June 1995

Differences in political ideas between Mladic and Karadzic

The analysis in Zagreb was that discord existed in the bosom of the Bosnian-Serb leadership; in a general sense there would be little symbiosis between Karadzic and Mladic. From his political angle Karadzic seemed to want to hold onto his original maximalist course, while Mladic from his military perspective was steering a much more pragmatic course and seemed to be more prepared to compromise on territorial matters.²⁸⁵ However, for Western governments it was extremely difficult to map out the exact relations between Karadzic and Mladic, and between those two and Milosevic.²⁸⁶ As negotiator Lord Owen put it, there was in fact an 'anarchic situation' in Pale, on which foreigners and also Milosevic could hardly get a hold. Karadzic and his entourage should mistakenly have been seen as a genuine government.²⁸⁷

Relations between Karadzic and Mladic had already soured in April 1995. Mladic had complained to Karadzic about businessmen affiliated to Karadzic's political party, the SDS. According to Mladic they would benefit by the war, without providing the VRS with the (fuel) supplies to win the war. Conversely, Karadzic blamed Mladic for losing terrain, which caused a counterreproach to Karadzic that he had defined insufficiently feasible objectives for the war.

Karadzic and delegates in the Parliament of the Republika Srpska then accused Mladic of a coup against the political leaders of the Bosnian Serbs. Attempts were made to reorganize the General Staff of the VRS, making it subordinate to Karadzic's political party. From the start of the war the political leaders of the Republika Srpska should have tried in vain to convince the military leaders that they should coordinate their military actions with the politicians.²⁸⁸ However, these attempts failed.²⁸⁹

Mladic accused the political leaders of the Republika Srpska to be after financial gains, but as a professional soldier he said he had no ambitions to take over the political leadership. The Bosnian Muslims hoped this would lead to Karadzic's fall, but that was not near.²⁹⁰

The rows between Mladic and Karadzic were not very helpful in coordinating a military strategy between the High Command (Karadzic) and the General Staff of the Commander (Mladic). Moreover, they brought Mladic and Milosevic closer to each other, to find ways to realize the cease-fire and to arrange coordination of military plans in an attempt 'to clean up the map' while the Contact Group plan would have to be used as basis for further negotiations.²⁹¹

Already in July 1994 the Contact Group had drawn up a map of Bosnia and informed parties that they first had to accept this map before changes could be made in mutual consultation. However, the Bosnian Serbs had rejected the plan, which resulted in political and diplomatic isolation of Pale.

²⁸⁴ Confidential Information (63).

²⁸⁵ Confidential Collection (5). Fax Ravi Solanski UNHCR Zagreb to A. O'Connell UNHCR Geneva, 07/07/95. It is not stated who compiled the study and at what date it was completed.

²⁸⁶ Confidential Interview (52).

²⁸⁷ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

²⁸⁸ Interview Miroslav Toholj, 14/12/99.

²⁸⁹ Belgrade *Vecernje Novosti*, 18/04/95, p. 4; Belgrade *Nin*, 01/11/96, p. 19-22, LtCol Milovan Milutinovic, 'Loss of Supreme Command'; Podgorica *Monitor*, 21/04/95, p. 15, Vladimir Jovanovic, 'Coup Against Mladic', aangehaald in [US State Department, Draft] *Balkan Military History Project, Balkan Battle Fields: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict 1990-1995*, Book 3, p. 9-11.

²⁹⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Conversation M[Minister]/Bildt 26/6 [26/06/95] with additional remarks Bildt during dinner 26/6.

²⁹¹ [US State Department, Draft] *Balkan Military History Project, Balkan Battle Fields: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict 1990-1995*, Book 3, p. 9-11.

This isolation of Pale had not appeared very fruitful. The Bosnian Serbs kept refusing the map as a basis for negotiations, and Milosevic apparently had not been able or willing to exert sufficient pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to make them change their position. Pressure on the Bosnian Serbs, by imposing sanctions, only had an economic but no political effect and it was hardly possible to make the sanctions more severe.²⁹²

The pattern that one-twos were played between Mladic and Milosevic, without involving Karadzic, was unmistakable: these also contributed to the isolation of Pale. Milosevic for instance encouraged Mladic to state in public that he rather than Karadzic would carry on the negotiations that were going to lead to peace. If that was a bridge too far for Mladic, maybe as interim solution the Mixed Military Working Group could be brought back to life and Mladic could directly negotiate a settlement with his counterpart Delic under Smith's supervision, with the maps on the table. Akashi should not have to be involved, for then the political leaders in Pale would also have to join, Milosevic suggested. According to Milosevic, in elections Mladic would even stand an excellent chance to succeed Karadzic as political leader of the Bosnian Serbs. However, Mladic did not like such ideas very much; he took the position of an a-politic soldier. The position of Mladic in the VRS was very strong, and he knew that the political leaders in Pale could not ignore him, if they wanted to reach a political agreement. Rumours of a coup in Pale were unfounded, but these could be an indication of a decreased willingness to fight within the VRS, which could go even further if they were to sustain more losses.²⁹³ Rumours of a dash for political power by Mladic continued, also because Mladic visited Milosevic, without involving the political leaders in Pale.²⁹⁴ In turn Karadzic had asked Milosevic for help to remove Mladic from his position, but he had refused.

In the monthly for the VRS, Mladic called for unity among the Bosnian Serbs, and asked them to prepare for a long war. He criticized the political establishment (Karadzic c.s.); they would want to impose solutions that were not in line with the interests of the Serb people. Mladic also wrote that there had been political machinations around his person, but he said that there had never been a military coup against the political leaders. Finally he said not to harbour any political ambitions.

Karadzic on the other hand complained that for a year nobody had spoken to the Bosnian Serbs. If the negotiations were not resumed, that would lead to a totally unnecessary war caused by frustration and impatience. Therefore, in June Karadzic wanted the new EU negotiator, Bildt, to come to Pale as soon as possible. His arrival would be the first step on the road to normalization of the relations with UNPROFOR. As soon as Bildt arrived, humanitarian relief to the Muslim population could be resumed, the shootings by the VRS would come to an end, and an international peace conference could start. Karadzic also included a proposal to that effect in a letter to president Clinton. He called for a 'Camp David style conference' and promised that in a short time all current problems could be solved and peace could be signed. Clinton was the only person who could save the world from a bloody war on the verge of breaking out, according to Karadzic. With the usual historic analogies, Karadzic stated that the Serbs had lived in Bosnia for ages, but that they couldn't do that under a Muslim regime and Islamic law. Izetbegovic would lead the way to Islamic fundamentalism, Karadzic thought. If that was what the Bosnian Muslims wanted, then that was fine with Karadzic, but the Bosnian Serbs did not want that.²⁹⁵ Such a cry for help made it clear how much Karadzic was up to his neck in trouble; it was a sign that the political isolation of Pale was successful. Consequently, Bildt did not respond to the invitation.

The major tensions between Karadzic and Mladic were covered up for the outside world as far as possible,²⁹⁶ but on 4 August they no longer managed to do that. Then the discord came out into the

²⁹² ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Memorandum Plv DEU to M through DGPZ and S, 21/06/95, no. DEU-494/95.

²⁹³ Confidential information.

²⁹⁴ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

²⁹⁵ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Fax Philip Corwin to Akashi, 02/07/95.

²⁹⁶ ABZ, DDI-DAV/00246. Incoming message PA/Belgrade to DEU, 12/06/95, No. Belgrade-264.

open: Karadzic dismissed Mladic, at a moment that things were looking bad for the Republika Srpska due to the Croatian advance. However, after a week Karadzic had to back down and reinstate Mladic.²⁹⁷

Differences in political ideas between Karadžić and Milošević

There was no political dialogue with the Bosnian Serbs, they were in an isolated situation. The question was how despite all that a dialogue with Pale could be started again. Milošević had stated to want to play a part in it; negotiator Lord Owen urged to make use of that. However, late May 1995 Minister Van Mierlo wondered why they should negotiate with Milošević; his influence was on the wane, Van Mierlo estimated. The British did not agree with that: nobody knew whether Milošević was a good or a bad card, but he was a card with which they could and should play. 'After all, over the past month, a split had developed between Belgrade and Pale, and that should be considered a success'. However, Van Mierlo stuck to his original position: one should not place too much trust in Milošević.²⁹⁸ London was proved right in so far that indeed the relations between Milošević and Karadzic could get even worse; they worsened mid-June 1995 and would be 'close to zero'.²⁹⁹

EU negotiator Bildt noted friction between Karadzic and Milošević, but according to him there wasn't a deep gap between Pale and Belgrade; Milošević was only cleverly playing off Karadzic so he could butter his bread on both sides.³⁰⁰ According to him Milošević did take some delight from making negative remarks about the leaders in Pale. They would not want to negotiate seriously, Karadzic was said to lie, to refuse to respect agreements, and to break every promise he made. These qualifications were not without some self-interest on the part of Milošević; Milošević wanted to make it clear that *he* was the one to be trusted and that *he* was the one who could force Pale to accept matters, according to Bildt.³⁰¹ A different observer, the American negotiator Redman, thought that the influence of Milošević on Karadzic should not be overestimated either, according to the reasoning that the one who adopts a reasonable attitude has little influence on the one who is determined not to act reasonable: Milošević indeed presented himself as someone who had an influence on the negotiating process, and with whom a deal could be made. He would be prepared to draw lines on the map and to observe the resulting arrangements, which eventually he would indeed do in Dayton. The Bosnian Serbs under the leadership of Karadzic did not want all those arrangements, but were only hoping to increase their territory.³⁰²

Otherwise the differences in vision between Karadzic and Milošević were not only caused by principles about the question whether a political arrangement should be striven after; for instance, Milošević blamed Karadzic for his interest in Sarajevo, which according to Milošević would be personal and selfish. Milošević had tried offering Karadzic the suburbs Vogosca and Ilijas in exchange for offering the Posavina corridor to the Bosnian Muslims. The Assembly of the Republika Srpska would accept such a proposal, Milošević thought. Karadzic should have known this was the case, and exactly for that reason he had always kept territorial discussions general.³⁰³ Milošević also revealed that he was listening in to Karadzic's telephone conversations; on that basis he concluded that Karadzic only used the Krajina as small change to Mladic for exchanging areas in Bosnia: Karadzic knew that in a military-strategic sense Mladic set greater store by Western Bosnia and Krajina, Karadzic himself considered Easter Bosnia more important because otherwise association with Serbia would never be possible.

Milošević also discussed this separation in the leadership in Pale with Akashi and he said to be highly critical of Karadzic and Parliament chairman Krajisnik. As long as those two were there, no

²⁹⁷ Bildt, *Peace Journey*, p. 82.

²⁹⁸ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

²⁹⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Code Biegman 518, 09/06/95.

³⁰⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Coreu Vie 248, 19/06/95.

³⁰¹ Bildt, *Peace Journey*, p. 45.

³⁰² Interview Charles Redman, 25/06/01.

³⁰³ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

solution was possible. According to Akashi's assessment Mladic was the only ally of Milosevic in Pale.³⁰⁴

In an attempt to get the Bosnian Serbs out of their isolation and to involve them again in the negotiating process, at a certain point the Russians also visited Pale. They tried to convince Karadzic to accept the Contact Group plan.³⁰⁵ However, the Russian proposals met with resistance from both Karadzic and Milosevic. Karadzic refused to accept a plan that would divide Bosnia into two almost equal parts and although just like Karadzic Milosevic wanted the sanctions imposed against Yugoslavia to be lifted,³⁰⁶ unlike Karadzic he was prepared to make that subordinate to acceptance of the Contact Group plans. However, the expectations – for instance among the Americans – were that Milosevic would not directly succeed in getting Karadzic back at the negotiating table; Milosevic would also consider Karadzic a rival rather than a partner.³⁰⁷

The Bosnian Serbs indeed felt more and more isolated, because after their rejection of the Contract Group plan, the attention of the international community shifted towards Milosevic. That already was the case before the bombings of Pale took place. The hostage crisis further increased Milosevic's role because he was seen as the man who could achieve a satisfactory solution. At the same time the international community wanted Milosevic to recognize Bosnia as a state. That would mean a major blow to the Bosnian Serbs, because it would destroy the dream of a Great Serbia that many in the Bosnian-Serb regime in Pale still had.³⁰⁸ In turn that would increase the isolation of Karadzic and his people; Milosevic seemed to realize that such a Great Serbia was not feasible, at least not in the near future.

The Bosnian Muslims had high hopes of the split they saw between Milosevic and Karadzic. Milosevic had already ordered withdrawal of Serb officers and soldiers from Bosnia, as the Bosnian Muslims had noticed, as a result of which twenty VRS tanks and several rocket launchers were left idle along the side of the road. The ABiH was certain that Karadzic would consider this treason to the Serb cause, getting Pale into panic and doing irrational things, like large-scale attacks and attacks on civilian targets. Recognition of Bosnia by Milosevic could follow within a few days, they thought. However, in fact that would still take quite some time.³⁰⁹

Recognition of Bosnia by Milosevic?

Karadzic' plans were upset by the creation of the American-sponsored Muslim-Croat Federation early 1994. That would seriously hinder the future ties between the various groups of Serbs. Inclusion of the Serb-proclaimed republic in the Krajina, the Republika Srpska Krajina, in the Croatian economy would be improved by it, while that of the Serb-proclaimed republic in Bosnia, the Republika Srpska, would become dependent on the Bosnian economy.³¹⁰

Karadzic' ideal was to have all Serbs live together in one republic. That was received well in the self-proclaimed Serb republics in Croatia and Bosnia. The Republika Srpska and the Republika Srpska Krajina were trying to find support with each other in an attempt to realize a 'United Serb Republic'. However, in practice there was little cooperation between the two entities. And, more importantly: from Belgrade no support for this idea was received. Milosevic wanted the two Republikas not to go

³⁰⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi aan Annan, 10/05/95, No. Z-759.

³⁰⁵ ABZ, DDI-DAV/00246. Code Engels 76, 23/06/95.

³⁰⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, File BHC Weekly Sitreps 95. UNPROFOR HQ, Weekly Situation Report, No. 122, 5-11 June 1995.

³⁰⁷ DS. Zendbrief PV NAVO/PA aan Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken /DAV en Ministerie van Defensie/DAB, DS, 20/06/95, No. 118667.

³⁰⁸ DS. Zendbrief PV NAVO/PA aan Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken/DAV en Ministerie van Defensie/DAB, DS, 20/06/95, No. 118667.

³⁰⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33) D 51/a. ABiH 28e Division Command to Commander 280 IBLB personally, 22 May 1995, No. 01-47/95, Military Secret.

³¹⁰ ICTY (IT 98-33) OTP 425/a. Karadzic, Directive No. 7, 08/03/95, No. 2/2-11.

beyond a basic decision and to postpone practical realization to a later date. Most Bosnian-Serb members of Parliament would not be prepared to provoke Milosevic regarding this subject. The Serb Republic did seem to make haste when they decided that the unification of the Serbs should be proclaimed on 28 June 1995, the day of the commemoration of the battle of Kosovo in 1389 that the Serbs lost and the start of the century-long Turkish rule.³¹¹ However, that did not happen; instead Karadzic' fear for inclusion of the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and inclusion of the Republika Srpska Krajina in Croatia was more or less proved justified.

Milosevic would also have wanted to agree to recognition of Bosnia, in exchange for lifting the sanctions. This step, Milosevic would have estimated, was necessary to end Karadzic' Great-Serb aspirations and 'to keep him under control as 'loose cannon'. Still a consequence could be that Karadzic and the VRS would try to provoke NATO air strikes in order to force Milosevic to render military support to the Republika Srpska. The subsequent intention would be to put Milosevic in the awkward position that he would have to leave fellow-Serbs in the lurch.³¹² Consequently, Karadzic was disappointed that the response to the air strikes was not that military support was asked from Serbia, but only that hostages were taken. Karadzic accused his rivals Milosevic and Mladic that they had caused the hostage crisis between them. Karadzic would even have gone as far as giving orders to release the hostages in order to still get military support from Serbia, but Belgrade would have prevented that. Milosevic would benefit by a release of the hostages in stages, because that way he could build up a strong negotiating position. Karadzic, who got increasingly isolated, then even tentatively suggested that he would still be prepared to accept the Contact Group plan, provided that a formula could be found that would save him loss of face. That would be possible by introducing minor modifications to the map and in giving the Republika Srpska more the character of an independent state.³¹³

However, in the meantime Milosevic followed his own agenda. He wanted to stick to the 49% against 51% area division as provided in the Contact Group plan. He did support the idea of exchanging territory, but in order not to get his fingers burned, he took the position that it had to be arranged in direct negotiations between Karadzic and Izetbegovic. Milosevic had agreed that Bosnia was going to exist of two entities: the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska, provided that both entities were economically viable. On that basis Milosevic stated to be prepared to recognize Bosnia. For Milosevic this promise also provided leverage to try and alleviate the sanctions under which the Yugoslavs were suffering. As argument for alleviation of the sanctions Milosevic also used the argument that the sanctions were counter-productive, because they weakened Belgrade's influence on the Bosnian Serbs and gave the Bosnian Muslims a motive to continue fighting in the expectation that Serbia would collapse.³¹⁴

At the same time there was a military stalemate in Bosnia as a result of which the confrontation line hardly changed any more. About mid-June the ABiH started an offensive around Sarajevo. That did not yield much for the Bosnian Muslims, while mainly the population in Sarajevo and in the enclaves suffered heavily because the resupply was cut off. It invoked the question in the European capitals how useful a continued political isolation of Pale was.³¹⁵

³¹¹ MID/KL, MID/KL, Intsum 114/95, 161200Z Jun 95; MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation 29/95, completed 211400B Jun 1995, Confi; UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, Weekly Situation Report, 20/1995/95, No. Z-1031.

³¹² Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/95.

³¹³ ABZ, DDI-DAV/00246. Code Engels 76, 23/06/95.

³¹⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05288. Rome Coreu 298, 14/06/95.

³¹⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Memorandum Plv DEU to M through DGPZ and S, 21/06/95, no. DEU-494/95.

New initiatives for a political arrangement

In June Carl Bildt became European joint chairman (with Stoltenberg) of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia. He took over the tasks from Lord Owen. When he took office, the question became topical again in the European capitals whether direct contacts with Karadzic had to be developed again. Acceptance of the Contact Group plan was no longer considered a fruitful condition before this was possible again. The French president Chirac had said, after consultation with the European government leaders, that Bildt's task was to make contact with all political and military powers in Bosnia,³¹⁶ so including Karadzic. However, the Americans objected to the idea that Bildt would have direct talks with Karadzic; on the contrary, they wanted to maintain his isolation.³¹⁷ That way the deadlock remained for the time being.

The government leaders of the European Union who were gathered in Cannes on 26 and 27 June, in a declaration issued by the EU demanded free access to the enclaves and Sarajevo and warned the parties not to hinder the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR and humanitarian organizations. Karadzic ignored the EU call for a cease-fire with the argument that the ABiH had only used such agreements to reinforce themselves.³¹⁸ In Cannes the European Council also defined the negotiating mandate for Carl Bildt as EU negotiator. Bildt was given five tasks, the first of which was to end the siege of Sarajevo and to gain access to the eastern enclaves. This task was given a higher priority than resuming negotiations on the peace plan at hand. Reaching a moratorium on military operations had the lowest priority.³¹⁹ However, according to Wijnaendts, the Dutch ambassador in Paris, Bildt would have little illusions about the success of his mission and did not believe that he would succeed in realizing a political solution.³²⁰

The only real development in the political field in June in Bosnia was that mid-June the Bosnian Serbs released the last hostages, though without the stolen equipment, including twelve French armoured vehicles.³²¹ That had ended the hostage crisis as such, but the political deadlock continued. Boutros-Ghali proposed to organize a conference with all parties involved, remarkably enough including the Bosnian Serbs. Bosnian vice-president Ejup Ganic rejected the idea; he wanted to stick to the peace plan of the Contact Group. Conversely, Alexa Buha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republika Srpska, considered negotiations on that plan unacceptable.³²²

There was little progress either in lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims: on 9 June the American government informed the Bosnian Prime Minister Siladjic that they would not lift it unilaterally. Siladjic then accused the Americans of setting their sail to the failing policy of the European countries.³²³

16. The strategy of the Bosnian Muslims in the fighting

So far in this Chapter a lot of attention has been paid to the role the Bosnian Serbs played in frustrating the UNPROFOR mandate. Clearly the army of the Bosnian Serbs, the VRS, constituted a major problem for UNPROFOR, because this VRS gradually started to see and treat UNPROFOR as their opponent. The position of the army of the Bosnian Muslims, the ABiH, was materially different. The

³¹⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Code Wijnaendts 186, 12/06/96.

³¹⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Codes Jacobovits 393 and 403, 15 and 16/06/95.

³¹⁸ MID/KL. MID/KL, Intsum 122/95, 281200Z Jun 95.

³¹⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05242. Statement by European Union and Statement by the President of the Republic on behalf of the European Council, 27/06/95, no. SN211/95, part B and SN 204/2/95.

³²⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Code Wijnaendts 210, 28/06/95.

³²¹ Minister Hasan Muratovic said that the French had let fifty tanks and APCs get into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs as 'delivery deal'. (CRST. Fax Philip Corwin to Y. Akashi, 1/07/95).

³²² MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation 28/95, completed 141400B Jun 1995, Confi.

³²³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, File BHC Weekly Sitreps 95. UNPROFOR HQ, Weekly Situation Report, No. 122, 5-11 June 1995.

ABiH did not really see UNPROFOR as their enemy, but increasingly expected UNPROFOR to stand up for the Bosnian Muslims as the ‘underdog’ in the conflict. With that attitude the Bosnian Muslims – not only the ABiH soldiers but also the Bosnian government – considerably complicated the position of UNPROFOR. In the meantime the warring factions also had their own strategy in the struggle between them, in many cases over the heads of UNPROFOR. This section will discuss the strategy observed by the Bosnian Muslims.

In his memoirs, EU negotiator Lord Owen analyses the relation between the UN troops and the Bosnian Muslims. In his opinion that relation was characterized by the fact that the UN soldiers had trouble understanding that disorder and desalinization were an essential element of the strategy of the Bosnian Muslims. That was at odds with the military mind of the UN soldiers, used to working in a relatively well-ordered military organization, who had to find order in the midst of the Bosnian chaos. That impression must have been even stronger because in the conflict the Bosnian Serbs were the ones who had an interest in maintaining the status quo, while the Bosnian Muslims were the ones who refused to except the truce lines and tried to change them by violating agreements and provoking incidents. Consequently, the Bosnian Muslims were responsible for most of the truce violations and, in the opinion of Owen, they were the main threat to the Safe Areas: from there they could execute their operations, and even under protection of the UN. The Bosnian Muslims did take care not to provoke so far that they endangered the efforts of UNHCR.³²⁴

The UN headquarters in Zagreb had also concluded that the Bosnian Muslims continually misused the Safe Areas to maintain their Armed forces, while in some cases it looked as if they intended to provoke shelling by the Bosnian Serbs. Zagreb referred to the example of Tuzla, where the ABiH regularly fired artillery deployed in the city, which in turn provoked retaliation by the VRS, in many cases targeted at the headquarters of the 2nd ABiH Corps, located in the centre of the city. As far as the eastern enclaves were concerned, expectations of the UN headquarters were that the ABiH would continue their outbreak from the Safe Areas but that it was unlikely that this would happen at a large scale.³²⁵

The Bosnian government did not make it easier for UNPROFOR to get a good idea about the intentions of the Bosnian Muslims. Their political and military strategy were not always easy to follow, and sometimes of a varying nature. The Bosnian president, Izetbegovic, kept aloof in the negotiations; the discussions were between the other members of the Bosnian government. In addition to the impenetrability of the position of the Bosnian government, there also was the problem that people not always spoke with one mouth. For instance the Bosnian vice-president, Ganic, had wanted to use the month of April 1995 to come to a political arrangement of the conflict rather than just trying to achieve a continuation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. He thought that the international community had wasted the period of the Cessation of Hostilities, and had only resumed matters when it ended.³²⁶ However, other members of the Bosnian government pointed out that a quick solution of the conflict was exactly what the Bosnian Serbs wanted. Indeed the Bosnian Serbs had repeatedly expressed the wish to put a direct and final end to the war, followed by negotiations. The *communis opinio* in the Bosnian government was that it was a ‘public relations trap’, worded as follows by the Bosnian Prime Minister Siladjzic: ‘soon we will be called aggressors in our own country.’³²⁷

This Siladjzic, the Bosnian Prime Minister, wanted to find a way out of the deadlock in quite a different way than Vice-President Ganic. He interpreted the position of the Bosnian Muslims towards the Bosnian Serbs as follows: ‘we are not strong enough to win and they are not strong enough to defeat us’. His strategy was aimed at forcing the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Contact Group plan. Siladjzic had asked the Contact Group to propose to Milosevic to acknowledge Bosnia with a view of

³²⁴ Owen, *Odysssey*, p. 199-200.

³²⁵ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 81304, File 3300-6, Vol. 4, 1 Apr-12 Jul 95. Operations BH. Interoffice Memorandum Military Information Branch, G2 to COS, 18/03/95.

³²⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 20/03/95, No. UNPROFOR Z-441.

³²⁷ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 21/04/95, No. UNPROFOR Z-637.

Milosevic acknowledging the Republika Srpska as a part of Bosnia; while on the contrary the ideal of the Bosnian Serbs was to affiliate with Serbia. In this way Siladjic tried to force a wedge between Milosevic and Karadzic. The next step would be that the Contact Group plan would have to be formally accepted by the Security Council. Accordingly, at the same time Siladjic wanted that the international community would give the Bosnian Muslims guarantees towards the Bosnian Serbs.³²⁸ If the Bosnian Serbs refused to accept the Contact Group plan, as they had done earlier, the Bosnian Muslims could blame the Bosnian Serbs for obstructing the peace process.

The position of the Bosnian government was even more complicated because they were not only speaking with several voices, but on top of that those voices expressed changing ideas. A clear example of that occurred late April as regards Siladjic, the Bosnian Prime Minister. He repeated what he said earlier, that the ABiH would not take the initiative for offensive military operations. However, at odds with that was that he added that a continuation of the cease-fire was not in the interest of the Bosnian government and, consequently, not in the interest of the Bosnian Muslims. Siladjic accused the Bosnian Serbs of wanting to maintain the status quo through a 'creeping legalization of what they took by genocide'. If the Bosnian Serbs wanted peace, they had to pay attention to the worries of the Bosnian government about the shellings by the VRS of the Safe Areas, Siladjic said. According to him the Bosnian Serbs were planning an intensification of the shellings of the Safe Areas. Another sign that the Bosnian Muslims wanted to take up arms again, was that Siladjic was breathing new life into the call to lift the arms embargo, suspended by the Bosnian President Izetbegovic in November 1994.

A major theme in the strategy of the Bosnian government, no matter with which voice they were speaking, was that pressure was exerted on UNPROFOR to resume the humanitarian relief to the enclaves. Prime Minister Siladjic and the minister without portfolio charged with UN matters, Muratovic, were trying to get an unambiguous statement by Akashi and Smith that UNPROFOR was prepared to adopt a forceful interpretation of the mandate, in particular with regard to humanitarian relief. For quite some time Akashi had already been under pressure from the these two Bosnians to adopt a more forceful attitude, or to clearly say that UNPROFOR was not prepared to do so. Akashi did not do either, because he wanted to keep operating carefully as well as to avoid underlining the failure of UNPROFOR. According to the Bosnian Muslims the mandate offered scope for more forceful action against the Bosnian Serbs for frustrating the convoys, and UNPROFOR could do more. Siladjic also tried to put pressure on general Smith to make him use force to ensure the delivery of humanitarian relief. However, Smith replied that he could not go beyond self-defence and did not willfully want to endanger convoys.³²⁹ As stated earlier, Smith really was prepared to try the experiment to send out a convoy without permission from the Bosnian Serbs, but telling that to Siladjic might give the latter false hope.

Akashi tried to derive a view on the Bosnian strategy from conversations with the Bosnian Muslims. That was successful to the extent that it became clear that the Bosnian Muslims wanted to benefit by the factor time and also by exerting international pressure to exploit their 'underdog' position. If UNPROFOR were to remain neutral, according to the mandate, in Akashi's analysis that would probably lead to a Bosnian campaign aimed at the UN, the United States, some European countries, and some Islamic countries to exert pressure to pursue a policy of punishing the Bosnian Serbs. Akashi thought it likely that the Bosnian government would want to use the factor time by considerably stepping up hostilities during the months after the end of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement: the ABiH would violate truce lines and provoke incidents to keep the VRS busy. In those circumstances the UN would come under great pressure to ensure the humanitarian relief to the enclaves and to deter a VRS attack. In the meantime the Bosnian government would be worrying about the expected continued refusal by the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Contact Group plan; after all, Karadzic had stated that he considered the West the enemy of the Bosnian Serbs and that he did not

³²⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 25/03/95, No. UNPROFOR Z-473.

³²⁹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 21/04/95, No. UNPROFOR Z-637.

want to have anything to do with the Contact Group. That would also lead to international pressure to relieve the Bosnian position. More in general the Bosnian government would remain trying to brand the Bosnian Serbs as the aggressors responsible for continuation of the war. The Bosnian government would also want to revitalize the battle against the arms embargo with help from the allies and the Republicans in the American Congress, still according to Akashi.³³⁰

The presence of UNPROFOR in the eastern enclaves also became subject of discussion within the Bosnian government. The Bosnian Permanent Representative at the UN, Sacirbey, said that his government set great store by continued presence of UN troops in the Safe Areas. The Bosnian government should want to agree to a demilitarization of Sarajevo – a crucial city to the VRS and to the ABiH -, provided that it would not only apply for the areas under Bosnian control, but also for the areas under Serb control, and that UNPROFOR would be defending the area. The Bosnian government did not want demilitarization for Safe Areas such as Tuzla and Gorazde, because important military installations were located there.³³¹ Shortly after that Sacirbey, by then Bosnian Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that the Bosnian government could agree to withdrawal of UNPROFOR from the eastern enclaves, provided that it would be compensated by a UN commitment to the effect that they would use air power to deter the Bosnian Serbs, would protect the population and, if necessary, arrange food airdrops. This was possible, according to Sacirbey, because gradually the ABiH were capable of defending the enclaves on the ground. UNPROFOR could then concentrate on traditional peacekeeping in Central Bosnia, and keeping open a secure corridor to Sarajevo - an old wish of the Bosnian Muslims.³³² However, there were also reports that Sacirbey as minister had violently criticized Boutros-Ghali who had proposed withdrawal by UNPROFOR from the eastern enclaves. Sacirbey said he feared that the population would no longer be protected in that case. Vice-President Ganic also said that he would not allow UNPROFOR to leave the Safe Areas.³³³ Minister Muratovic in his turn said that the Bosnian government supported changes in the mandate. He preferred a smaller UNPROFOR with a limited mandate, that would offer options for NATO actions. With that Muratovic also seemed to suggest that UNPROFOR could leave the eastern enclaves. Lifting the arms embargo, or a larger UNPROFOR that did have the capacity to enforce peace, were other options for Muratovic.³³⁴

Lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims, as discussed before, came on the agenda in June. That happened in connection with the loss of trust in UNPROFOR on the part of the Bosnian government. Then Minister Sacirbey of Foreign Affairs said that his government had to choose between fighting to lift the arms embargo or sticking to UNPROFOR, and Sacirbey now decided to choose the first option. He noted a continuous erosion in the implementation of the Security Council resolutions and he was harassing its chairman with letters expressing his worries. He wanted consultation to achieve implementation of relevant resolutions. In fact the only still had confidence in UNPROFOR if their mission was reinforced with heavy artillery through the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force to implement the Security Council resolutions, but Sacirbey was cynical about its arrival: 'the first time it uses force will be the last'. Only if the Rapid Reaction Force would succeed in gaining access to the enclaves and Sarajevo, its arrival was justified, said Sacirbey. Because the Bosnian government did not believe in it, according to Sacirbey they were close to the point when they would ask UNPROFOR to leave the country because it no longer could play a useful role.³³⁵ Minister

³³⁰ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 21/04/95, No. UNPROFOR Z-637.

³³¹ DCBC, 1413. Code Biegman 452, 19/05/95.

³³² ABZ, PVNY. Code Biegman 486, 01/06/95.

³³³ MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, no. 27/95, completed 081400B June 1995.

³³⁴ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 04/04/95 – 23/08/95. Weekly Report, 22/05/95, Code Cable Moussali (HCA Zagreb) to Info Officer NORLOGBAT, 25/05/95, No. SSN-1251. Also sent as Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 24/05/95, No. UNPF-HQ Z-855.

³³⁵ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, attn SRSF, FC, Smith, 11/06/95, No. 1949; NIOD Coll. Ashton. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 28/06/95, No. MSC-2119, with attached letter Muhamed Sacirbey to Detlev Graf zu Rantzau, President of the Security Council, 26 and 28/06/95.

Muratovic spread the same message, but with a tougher and more disdainful tone. He said that the Bosnian government disapproved of all relations with the Bosnian Serbs, including people in contact with them, as was the case with UNPROFOR at all levels at that moment.³³⁶ Muratovic also said that he no longer placed trust in Akashi en Janvier. Their decisions weakened the operations in Bosnia and raised the question what was the use of 20,000 troops in Bosnia. Only Smith still had his trust.³³⁷

Recommencement of the hostilities around Sarajevo

What UNPROFOR had been expecting for a long time, happened on 16 June: the battle of Sarajevo broke out again. That day the ABiH had started a major offensive from Sarajevo. The intention was to connect the city with the area of the Muslim-Croat Federation north and west of the city. From Central Bosnia the ABiH simultaneously attacked the VRS in the back. This outbreak attempt was in violation of the Security Council resolution 913 of 1994, that prohibited 'provocative action (...) in and around Safe Areas', but there was little UNPROFOR could do about it. Initially the offensive seemed to yield successes.³³⁸ The ABiH managed to block two supply routes of the VRS, which caused counter-attacks from the VRS.³³⁹

Akashi's staff in Zagreb analysed what the various objectives of the ABiH with this attack were. According to Akashi this time the objective of the offensive was not specifically military, but mainly political and diplomatic: it put pressure on the VRS, that already was experiencing political and military problems: in a political sense because they got isolated from the international community, in a military sense because they had to save their strength as long as the problems with their own supplying continued. The offensive would also put pressure on the regime in Belgrade, to make it clear that this regime was making common cause with the Bosnian Serbs. In addition, the offensive would boost the morale of the Muslim population, and generate support for the SDA, the leading nationalist party of President Izetbegovic. That way the ABiH wanted to show that they were doing what the international community failed to do. Moreover, the objective of the offensive was to gain international sympathy for the cause of the Bosnian Muslims: with the Bosnian Muslims as underdog much attention of the international press, more than to the ABiH attack itself, would go to the responses by the Bosnian Serbs, such as the shelling of Sarajevo. That in turn could contribute to pressure on the international community and to lifting the arms embargo. President Izetbegovic had already said: 'In our situation we have no obligation to look at what the world is thinking, the world that has done nothing for Sarajevo.' Reacting against the indifference of the international community was possible without the Bosnian Muslims paying a political price. Finally the offensive could demonstrate that the military alliance between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats was fruitful. Indeed there seemed to be some coordination with the army of the Bosnian Croats in the form of artillery support around Kiseljak and in the Lasva valley. That forced the Bosnian Serbs to fight on several fronts at the same time, by which both the Bosnian Muslims and the Bosnian Croats benefited: it could increase the Croatian pressure on the Serbs in the Knin. In the meantime the UN were fully powerless.³⁴⁰

That way UNPROFOR had to face increasing problems, Akashi said. The offensive started by the ABiH around Sarajevo was only one of those. That offensive had resulted in an increasing use of heavy weapons on both sides. The Rapid Reaction Force could not respond adequately, because it could not be operational until 15 July. The VRS were not only firing at military targets in their offensive, but also at civil targets to make the ABiH pay a price for the shellings from the Safe Area Sarajevo. That had to do with the highly cynical strategy of the ABiH: civil targets are we used a shield

³³⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan and Gharekhan, 16/06/95, No. UNPF Z-1006.

³³⁷ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. *Oslobodenje*, 30/06/95. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 30/06/95, No. UNPF Z-1081.

³³⁸ Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35 (1998), "Srebrenica Report", § 211-212.

³³⁹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 16/06/95, No. Z-1008, Restricted.

³⁴⁰ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Note Mark Baskin, POZ/CA to HAAU. 'The BH Offensive as one form of increasing polarization', 19/06/95.

for military targets. The ABiH had deployed the weapons they used to fire at the VRS near civilian targets, including the Sarajevo hospital.³⁴¹ If the VRS in their counteroffensive should hit the hospital, the Bosnian Muslims could exploit that in the media and keep on exerting pressure internationally.

The main players in the battle of the ABiH: Delic & Delic

The main executors in the strategy of the ABiH were army Commander Rasim Delic and the Commander of the so-called 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla, Sead Delic (not related to each other). The area of responsibility area of this 2nd Corps comprised all of north-eastern Bosnia, including Srebrenica and Zepa. Because they were the most important soldiers of the ABiH in this connection, their backgrounds and activities in the battle deserve attention here.

First of all it should be noted that in the political-strategic game they did not seem to play a very important role. The name of Rasim Delic as ABiH Commander is found in UN documents not nearly as often as that of his Bosnian-Serb counterpart Mladic; the name of Sead Delic is hardly mentioned at all. That can partly be explained by the fact that Delic and Delic were staying closer to the line of their political party, the SDA, while Mladic determined his course much more independently from Karadzic, thus offering him the opportunity to develop himself as leader of the Republika Srpska. However, this did not mean that Rasim and Sead Delic and Delic had no influence on the later events around Srebrenica: both had a role in giving orders for military outbreaks of the ABiH from the enclave, and as regards the position of Oric as military Commander in Srebrenica.

The few times that 2nd Corps Commander Sead Delic was mentioned in UN documents, it was not in a very positive sense: 'he was selected by the SDA for his dedication and loyalty to the party rather than for his tactical ability'.³⁴² Sead Delic was also known as a person who took all decisions by himself and did not consult his staff. He had attended the Military Academy where he had been trained as a scout. At the beginning of the war he was Major and Commander of a reconnaissance unit and as Bosnian Muslim he then still fought with the Yugoslav army, the JNA, in Croatia. Consequently, the Croats would consider him a war criminal, but he escaped from Croatia and returned to Bosnian Tuzla by way of Hungary and Serbia.³⁴³

Sead Delic came under attack due to a failed offensive carried out by the 2nd Corps in March 1995 against the Stolice communication tower in the Majevisa hills. The ABiH lost an estimated one thousand men, the hospital in Tuzla was temporarily closed to civilians. In front of Delic's headquarters demonstrations were held by soldiers who had returned from the battle.³⁴⁴ Despite the fact that Sead Delic was severely criticized for the large number of casualties in the attempts to conquer the Majevisa hills and the Ozren mountains, he was officially congratulated on his military successes. The latter was presented during a press conference that seemed to be intended to boost the image of his political party, the SDA.³⁴⁵

In the Yugoslav army Rasim Delic had been a contemporary of Mladic. It was said that with regard to quality Mladic was at the top of his year and Delic at the bottom. Nevertheless Rasim Delic had been one of the few Bosnian Muslims who had risen to the higher ranks within the JNA. He took part in the fighting of the JNA against Croatian Vukovar in 1991, but he left the JNA before the war broke out in Bosnia in 1992. That year he joined the SDA, the party of Izetbegovic. His star rose during the fighting against the army of the Bosnian Croats in 1993-1994. After his appointment as army

³⁴¹ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 29/06/95, No. UNPROFOR Z-1074.

³⁴² UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 04/04/95 – 23/08/95. Fax Biser to Aguilar, Report for week ending 14 April; 21/04/95.

³⁴³ Confidential interview (5).

³⁴⁴ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 04/04/95 – 23/08/95. Fax Biser to Aguilar, Report for week ending 14 April; 21/04 and 5/05/95.

³⁴⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 04/04/95 – 23/08/95. Fax Biser to Corwin, 16/06/95, Report for week ending June 16, 1995.

Commander of the ABiH, within the more hard-line nationalist branch of the SDA Rasim Delic closely worked together with Vice-Presidents Ganic and the deputy Minister of Defence Hasan Cengic, architect of substantial arms deliveries to the Bosnian Muslims by the Islamic countries. Rasim Delic had a major role in transforming the ABiH from undisciplined territorial units and volunteers into a regular army.³⁴⁶

General Rose, Smith's predecessor, got the impression that ABiH Commander Rasim Delic did not like to negotiate personally with Mladic. He sometimes refused to do that and seemed to be physically afraid of Mladic. Rasim Delic knew that at a certain moment during a meeting he would have to give way to Mladic. Mladic managed to intimidate him. When Rasim Delic refused to meet Mladic in person, sometimes for Mladic that in turn was reason to refuse to talk with the ABiH, unless it was with Rasim Delic himself. In fact they would only have shaken hands once, after concluding the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in December 1994. According to Rose a difference between the highest army command of the ABiH and of the VRS that Delic would rarely stick to his words and that in that sense Mladic was the opposite of Rasim Delic. The latter opinion dates back to Rose's time as Commander of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, that ended early 1995.

General Rose regarded Rasim Delic as 'not a bright officer'. According to Rose, to blame for that was the fact that Rasim Delic followed instructions from the politicians in Sarajevo, and they subsequently determined what happened to the ABiH. Rasim Delic himself was in favour of an all-out war; he considered this the only way to come to a just solution. In many cases he started an offensive that invariably seemed to end in defeat. For that reason Rose called Delic a bad strategist. Late 1994 he simultaneously launched offensives at five different places, at a moment when the ABiH lacked the firepower and logistics to conduct an effective offensive even on one front.³⁴⁷ Delic did not consider UNPROFOR a positive thing. Nevertheless the Americans tried to explain to Delic the importance of dealing with UNPROFOR in a correct manner; the international community would judge the Bosnian government on that basis.³⁴⁸

The staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command did not do much business with Rasim Delic. Contacts were usually with Enver Hadzijasovic, chief of staff of the ABiH. General Nicolai only once talked to Rasim Delic on the telephone. That was shortly after the air strikes had started in August during the operation 'Deliberate Force'. Then Rasim Delic personally called Nicolai to thank UNPROFOR that they were at last doing what they should do: bombing the Bosnian Serbs.³⁴⁹ At one of the few meetings general Smith had with general Rasim Delic, on 24 May 1995 in Zenica, Smith asked him about his vision of the war and his intentions. As regards the eastern enclaves Delic said to expect that the VRS would want to attack them to exert pressure on the ABiH. He emphasized that the ABiH troops in the enclave had orders to act only in self-defence. They had to defend themselves, they would do that and then blame the Bosnian Serbs for starting the war. The ABiH was a properly disciplined organization that always followed the orders from the political leaders, according to Delic.³⁵⁰ Earlier in this chapter we saw that usually the pattern was different: the ABiH started attacks from the enclaves, to which the VRS responded more than proportionally.

17. The strategy of the Bosnian Serbs in the fighting

Even before the air strikes at Pale on 25 and 26 May, the intelligence staff of UNPROFOR in Zagreb determined what the main objective of the VRS was: forcing the Bosnian Muslims to the negotiating table. The UN was the instrument to realize that. At the same time the Bosnian Serbs saw the UN as an obstacle to victory and they thought that the presence of the UN in Bosnia delayed its realization. Since

³⁴⁶ John B. Allcock, Marko Milivojevic and John J. Horton, eds., *Conflict in the former Yugoslavia: an encyclopedia*, 1998, p. 71.

³⁴⁷ Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, p. 33, 67, 71, 102, 103, 104, 141, 154, 198, 233.

³⁴⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 30/05/95, No. Z-895.

³⁴⁹ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99.

³⁵⁰ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Meeting Gen Smith / Gen Delic 24/05/95, attached to Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 25/05/95, No. Z-861.

the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had imposed the embargo against the Bosnian Serbs in August 1994, the factor time had become ever more important and pressing for the VRS. Yet the advantages of the UN presence seemed to compensate its drawbacks from the perspective of the Bosnian Serbs: as long as the UN remained present, the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims would also remain in force and it also restrained too open arms deliveries by Islamic countries. Moreover, in the political isolation of the Bosnian Serbs, the UN gradually was the only organization that confirmed the more or less independent status of the Republika Srpska.³⁵¹ Of course also the Bosnian-Serb forces, the VRS, had their strategy in the struggle against the Bosnian Muslims – again over the heads of UNPROFOR.

The fact that the Bosnian Serbs were dissatisfied about the way they were treated by the UN, has already been discussed in detail above. They kept complaining that their rights were not recognized and that UNPROFOR was damaging the Bosnian-Serb interests. Karadzic said to be under pressure from population and Parliament to end the not so profitable relation with UNPROFOR. The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement had been violated so often that in the end it no longer existed. Consequently, the Bosnian Serbs were not prepared to discuss a new cease-fire, but only a final end to the war. Karadzic pleaded for an immediate end to the war and a flexible attitude by parties to come to a territorial arrangement. It has already been discussed at the strategy of the Bosnian Muslims that this was exactly what the Bosnian Muslims did not want because the factor time was to their advantage. Akashi got the impression that in the end the Bosnian Serbs saw resumption of the fighting inevitable and resigned themselves to that.³⁵² The big question was what strategy the Bosnian Serbs were going to follow; UNPROFOR, the ABiH and Western intelligence departments were trying to find the answer. However, that did not mean there was much insight into their political and military intentions.

The Bosnian-Serb strategy according to UNPROFOR

Early July 1995 an analysis drawn up by the UN in Zagreb of the 'serb Strategic Culture' was published. This analysis finished with the often-heard idea that the Bosnian Serbs possessed a unique culture, mainly based on historic experiences, which caused them to act irrationally and that their acts could best be understood through a psychological-cultural approach.

The analysis in Zagreb was that mainly political and military factors determined the behaviour of the Bosnian Serbs and their reactions on the battlefield. Moreover, the Bosnian-Serb strategic and political assessment of the situation was well-developed. The rational dimensions of the strategy should not be underestimated by paying too much attention to historic and cultural factors, even though it was clear that those were often referred to in a rhetorical sense. The Bosnian Serbs understood the Western mind better than the West understood the Bosnian-Serb mind. Since the outbreak of the war the West had consistently underestimated the military capabilities of the Bosnian Serbs. There were good reasons to assume that the behaviour of the Bosnian Serbs was the result of calculation. Already at the start of the war Yugoslav military experts had come to the conclusion that the risk of a direct Western military intervention was negligible, because no Western interests were involved and it was not wise for the West to send troops at high costs and run political and military risks.

The Bosnian Serbs also had a keen eye for their own vital interests in the struggle against the Bosnian Muslims. Only twenty percent of the infrastructure and the main economic objects was in the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. Karadzic stated that, according to the Contact Group plan, the Muslim-Croat Federation would get 51% of the Bosnian territory, but that subsequently the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian Muslims would have 76% of the power plants, 83% of the railroads, and 84% of the road network.

³⁵¹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87304, File 3300-6 Vol. 4, 01/04/95 – 12/07/95, Operations BH. G2 to COS 'Advantages and disadvantages of UN presence: the BSA view', 24/05/95, relayed DFC to SRSR 24/05/95.

³⁵² UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 22/04/95, No. UNPF-HQ Z-644.

In Zagreb they also analysed that to a high degree both Karadzic and Mladic depended on local political and military leaders. The position of the Bosnian Serbs deteriorated and they saw themselves surrounded by enemies. The activities of the Hague Tribunal and the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force invoked a mixture of fear and aggression. In these circumstances it was to be expected that the leadership would become more adventurous and dangerous. That seemed to apply to Mladic to a greater extent than to Karadzic, because military aspects became increasingly important so the influence of Mladic gained weight, while also the international strategy to isolate Karadzic began to have effect.

According to this analysis in a military-strategic sense the VRS would remain utterly on the defensive and their possibilities to carry out large-scale offensive operations were limited. That was because the units were hardly mobile due to the fuel shortage so it was difficult to move them from one front to the next.

As a result the morale of the VRS troops was sinking. The announced complete mobilization, including calling back VRS reserves from Serbia, indicated that the Bosnian Serbs were preparing for the worst. The morale of the VRS caved in, discipline was bad and there was a shortage of officers. Already in mid-April Mladic would have made it clear during a meeting with the Parliament of the Republika Srpska that the Bosnian Serbs could no longer count on successes, or on keeping the territory they were holding, and that they were going to suffer losses. On the other hand, the leadership of the Republika Srpska needed military successes to survive. The VRS were aware that time was working to their disadvantage.

In Zagreb the analysis was also that in view of the increasing fighting power of the Bosnian Muslims, the Bosnian Serbs were left only three options: either wait for a decisive attack by the ABiH; or start a pre-emptive offensive to take a number of strategic objects such as airfields and roads; those were strategically important in the event the arms embargo would be lifted; or to choose a more an indirect approach by threatening to shell cities, to turn against UNPROFOR, and to take hostages again. What would happen in all events was that the warring factions would continue to provoke UNPROFOR, and the question was how the UN would respond to that.³⁵³

Although much in this analysis sounds plausible, it still should be put into perspective: the actual contents of the strategy pursued by the Bosnian Serbs as regards Eastern Bosnia, was known by neither UNPROFOR, nor the Bosnian Muslims. UNPROFOR's perception of the strategy of the Bosnian Serbs has already been discussed in detail. In this connection the ABiH did not get beyond speculations on the intention of their enemy. Nevertheless it is important to a proper understanding to know what those speculations were.

The Bosnian-Serb strategy according to the ABiH

When considering the strategy of the Bosnian Serbs it was important according to ABiH intelligence officers to include the old plans of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) during the Cold War. Those plans assumed that Yugoslavia would be attacked from outside. In such an event the border between Croatia and Bosnia would form a defence line, and on the right bank of the Drina (in present Serbia) the JNA would redeploy and lead further resistance. However, that right bank of the Drina was not militarily developed. For that reason it was important to the Serbs to control the area left of the Drina. Moreover, fighting in the Bosnian mountains was not easy; consequently, the best alternative was to fight along the Drina. Disturbing factors in this strategy were Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde.³⁵⁴ Therefore, the strategic objective of the Serbs would be to take a strip of at least twenty kilometres along the Drina – a strip in which all three eastern enclaves were lying.³⁵⁵

³⁵³ Confidential Information (5). Fax Ravi Solanski UNHCR Zagreb to A. O'Connell UNHCR Geneva, 07/07/95. It is not stated who compiled the study and at what date it was completed.

³⁵⁴ Interview Hazrudin Kistic, 17/05/99 and 18/05/99.

³⁵⁵ Interview Semsudin Murinovic, 17/05/99.

The idea that the strategic objective of the Serbs was to take possession of the eastern enclaves, was not entirely speculative. A European intelligence service also held the opinion that pressure had been exerted from Belgrade on the Bosnian Serbs to attack the eastern enclaves, with the objective of obtaining an additional safety zone of some thirty kilometres along the Drina. That would improve the communications between Serbia and the Republika Srpska, and there were economic motives as well, such as securing the hydroelectric installations in the Drina. Cutting off the connection between the Muslim part of Bosnia and the Sandzjak in Western Serbia, where many Muslims lived, can be important in this relation.³⁵⁶

From the start of the war a central objective of the Bosnian Serbs would have been to deport the Muslim population from Eastern Bosnia, later the eastern enclaves.³⁵⁷ That was also important for a possible affiliation between the Republika Srpska and Serbia.³⁵⁸ Conversely, the strategy of the Bosnian government, according to minister Muratovic, aimed at defending the eastern enclaves to preserve the border between Bosnia and Serbia along the Drina, the old historic border.³⁵⁹ Said European intelligence service rather saw the eastern enclaves as political cards in the game of the Bosnian government, to get help, certainly from the Islamic countries. The eastern enclaves would not have had military-strategic importance for the Bosnian government in Sarajevo and for that reason an exchange of territories had been considered earlier.³⁶⁰

The Bosnian-Serb strategy according to a western intelligence service

This analysis by a Western intelligence service contained a rational analysis of the Bosnian-Serb strategy, but its high abstraction level gave it little predictive value. In this analysis the Republika Srpska had taken over much of the range of ideas of the old JNA, as a result of which there was no coordination in the strategy, with all its consequences. That was caused by the fact that in the former Yugoslavia the power of the state was founded on the People's Army, the territorial defence and the (secret) police as civil defence.³⁶¹ These three had never been under military pressure before. When it did happen it directly caused major problems. These three cornerstones had never matched properly and they had never exercised together. Neither had there ever been exercises with army mobility, or fighting with fire and troops movements in cooperation with territorial defence. For instance, territorial defence did not exchange information on minefields that had been laid and barricades, with the result that the own Yugoslav units ran into minefields.

In the old Yugoslavia the model of a people's defence would only have worked if a doctrine to that effect had existed and the army had been made mobile. The people's defence had never been exercised, but they did use it locally without control. That was because local party bosses had much influence, much more than people in the West were used to. Local uncontrolled use of the people's defence was also contributed to by the presence of the Ministry of Home Affairs with its own troops and paramilitary units. The reason that so many warlords appeared with all warring factions in the conflict in Bosnia, was that regular military defence did not perform properly and adequately.

In a military-tactical sense units in the former Yugoslavia differed from those in the West. In the West a military operation would develop according to a strategy in which the enemy was attacked at its weak spots, surrounded and then defeated. One of the main reasons this went differently in Bosnia, was that politicians – unlike in the West - had a considerable influence on the military strategy. This sometimes caused illogical military attacks and strategies. Sometimes also special regional solutions were

³⁵⁶ Confidential interview (6).

³⁵⁷ Interview Sefko Tihic, 08/03/99.

³⁵⁸ Interview Hasan Muratovic, 30/01/98.

³⁵⁹ Interview Hasan Muratovic, 30/01/98.

³⁶⁰ Confidential interview (6).

³⁶¹ A detailed description of these bodies is found in the part of this report; 'The history preceding the conflict: Yugoslavia up till 1991'.

thought out for military problems, for the sake of special economic or political interests. In practice the conflict in Bosnia was usually about dispelling the opponent as well as the population living in the area. The political leaders were less interested in the manner in which that was realized. In short: the war was fought on the basis of a military philosophy that had never been exercised and was not practicable when Yugoslavia fell apart. Later they did develop military structures, but those were aimed at ethnic cleansing.

This Western intelligence service also noted that there was cooperation between the old Yugoslav army, the JNA (later VJ), and the army of the Bosnian Serbs, the VRS. That cooperation did decline over the course of time and got a more secretive character. Mladic had a special line with Milosevic through the General Staff in Belgrade; JNA chief of staff general Perisic was first of all a soldier, he obeyed orders and was a cooperative man. Unlike Mladic, he did not push himself on the forefront much. Perisic was mainly an executor of orders and completely subservient to Milosevic. Mladic was more of a political general.

After all, it was certain that in the battle the Bosnian Serbs used means coming from Serbia. These means, pursuant to an alliance between VRS and VJ, included that Serb staff officers were stationed in Pale, that VRS officers were trained in Serbia and that VRS officers were paid through Belgrade. There was an JNA liaison regiment in the Bosnian-Serb Han Pijesak. In addition, the VJ provided a lot of strategic support to the VRS: the VJ arranged repairs, spare parts and kept equipment up to date. The VJ also coordinated and arranged road transport of tanks and APCs in the Republika Srpska. Yet means of transport were in very short supply. Sometimes it took the VRS days to get troops somewhere due to lack of vehicles.³⁶²

The Bosnian-Serb strategy: Karadzic' vision

For UNPROFOR it remained guessing in the conflict what the Bosnian-Serb strategy with regard to the eastern enclaves specifically meant. They did know that for a number of reasons the Bosnian Serbs would like to lay their hands on the eastern enclaves, but that was quite a different thing than fathoming their specific strategy.

At first sight it seemed that the Bosnian-Serb strategy with regard to the eastern enclaves was based on long-term considerations. According to the Chief General Staff of the VRS, later Minister of Defence of the Republika Srpska, general Manojlo Milovanovic, the idea among the VRS was that in all events the enclaves would remain isolated after the war and that the Muslim population would leave on their own accord, mainly because after war the international relief would slowly come to a stop. The Muslim population would gradually move to the territory of the Muslim-Croat Federation. They would have disappeared within ten to fifteen years.³⁶³ D.Ludlow, former Private Secretary of Lord Owen, also voiced this vision in retrospect, after the fall of Srebrenica: though the Bosnian Serbs had the ambition to gain control over the banks of the Drina, they would probably have accepted the isolated enclaves such as Srebrenica and Zepa, because the Bosnian Serbs believed that these areas would not appear viable in the long run and the population would leave on their own accord.³⁶⁴

According to VRS general Milovanovic, from a military point of view it had already been possible to press on with the attack on Srebrenica in 1993. But because of the intervention by general Morillon, the fact that Srebrenica was declared a Safe Area, and the pressure from the international community, the leaders of the Republika Srpska in Pale had decided at the time not to press on with the attack on Srebrenica. After that the VRS initially had no other strategy then keeping the Bosnian Muslims inside, though that was difficult to check because they used all kinds of narrow tracks and horses. However, what had happened after 1993, according to Milovanovic, was that manpower,

³⁶² Confidential interview (6).

³⁶³ Interview Manojlo Milovanovic, 18/11/98.

³⁶⁴ Confidential Information (121).

ammunition and weapons had been brought into the Safe Area by the Bosnian Muslims; not all weapons had been handed over to UNPROFOR. In the Bosnian-Serb vision that meant the ABiH had not carried out their share of the demilitarization agreement. It was clear that military personnel had stayed behind in the Srebrenica enclave, otherwise the ABiH would not have been able to form new brigades and divisions in the enclaves. All these units operated on instructions from high up in the ABiH and attacked the VRS from these Safe Areas. That way the creation of the Safe Areas contributed to a paralyzation of the VRS. The army, small as it already was, had to be concentrated around the enclaves. Srebrenica required continuous deployment of three to four brigades of the VRS, Sarajevo of twelve brigades and Bihac of an entire corps. That way the enclaves occupied a major part of the available VRS troops, which reduced the offensive force of the VRS.³⁶⁵

The military strategy of the Bosnian Serbs developed by anticipating on the ABiH strategy, which Karadzic did as follows from his perspective. His analysis, laid down in his directives of 8 March 1995, on which the following is based, can be considered rather adequate in a military sense, although in his analysis it seemed he rather overestimated the military capabilities of the ABiH at a number of points.

According to Karadzic, the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement had treated the Muslims and the Croats preferentially: in the meantime they had been able to improve their armament. After the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement the Bosnian Muslims, in the eyes of the Bosnian Serbs, had in no way observed the provisions of the agreement and the ABiH had started a major reorganization to regain their strength: among other things, in the Safe Areas, manoeuvring units, divisions and corps had been formed and there had been large-scale exercises. Manpower, weapons and equipment had been brought to strength, through own production as well as illegal import. The ABiH had been preparing to start a new offensive already before the end of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, according to Karadzic. In his opinion the military leaders and most political leaders of the Bosnian Muslims were in favour of continuation of the war. The Bosnian Muslims were thought to hope that offensive action would bring more advantage than changes in the Contact Group plan.

Karadzic concluded to his dissatisfaction that the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement had also contributed to keeping alive the eastern enclaves and Sarajevo, because supplying of the enclaves had restarted to a certain extent in 1995. That was unfavourable because it increased pressure on the Bosnian Serbs and drained the VRS potential. Moreover, Karadzic feared, the Muslims and Croats assumed that the conflict that slumbered within the bosom of the Bosnian-Serb leadership between Mladic and him would get worse. The Bosnian Serbs would be forced to accept negotiations, but then under conditions that became more unfavourable with the lapse of time.³⁶⁶

Karadzic did not expect much support from the Russians. Because of their own political and economic problems, the Russians would not be able to stand up to the Americans. Karadzic even went as far as to think that there was a secret agreement between the Americans and the Russians. The Americans would be after a dominant position in the Balkans, and military presence in a large number of Balkan countries.

Karadzic thought that the West was backing the Bosnian Muslims. He also wondered whether the West-European countries realized that this would cause an islamization of Europe; in his analysis Western Europe did realize the risk of a spread of the Islam, but Western Europe thought that the Islamic factor in Europe could be controlled with non-military methods. The West assumed, Karadzic thought, that if the Bosnian Serbs should not accept the Contact Group plan, the West would strive after a military solution without deployment of NATO ground troops. In the long run the intention of the West would be that a steady balance of power would develop between the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Bosnian Serbs in Bosnia. Karadzic saw that as the way the West was trying to get the Bosnian Serbs under control.

³⁶⁵ Interview Manojlo Milovanovic, 18/11/98.

³⁶⁶ ICTY (IT 98-33) OTP 425/a. Karadzic, Directive No. 7, 08/03/95, No. 2/2-11.

Also in military-strategic sense the West chose the side of the Bosnian Muslims, according to Karadzic: the Bosnian Muslims were to expect little pressure from the West to accept a political arrangement, and they assumed that the results of a military offensive of the ABiH would get the blessing of the international community. If the ABiH should not be successful, the Bosnian Muslims would use NATO to exert pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to stop a VRS counteroffensive. A bright spot for Karadzic was that he considered deployment of NATO ground troops highly unlikely.

Karadzic realized that the military means of the ABiH were considerable: he estimated the strength of the ABiH at 270,000 men, divided over six army corps with 112 brigades and another 45 independent battalions. The ABiH should be in the possession of 120 tanks, 80 armoured vehicles, 340 artillery guns, 90 multiple rocket launchers, 230 light rocket launchers, 1800 mortars, 450 PAT anti-aircraft guns, 700 PAM anti-aircraft guns, 200 Stinger or Strela anti-aircraft missiles, 370 POR anti-tank missiles, 16 helicopters and 17 light and agricultural airplanes.

Karadzic's expectations on 8 March were, that an ABiH spring offensive - in Northern and Eastern Bosnia - would be aimed at the Posavina corridor at Brcko, the Majevisa hills, at Vlasenica and at Han Pijesak (see map Eastern Bosnia). In reality however, it would appear that the ABiH offensive was only aimed at one of these four areas: the Majevisa hills. According to Karadzic the Majevisa hills and the Posavina corridor at Brcko were likely targets of an ABiH offensive because these were the areas that were going to the Bosnian Muslims according to the Contact Group plan. Han Pijesak would be likely because that was the home of the VRS headquarters, and Vlasenica because that housed the headquarters of the VRS Drina Corps.

Otherwise Karadzic thought that the attention of the ABiH would mainly be focused on the siege of Sarajevo. An attack on the Posavina corridor at Brcko, strategically important because it connected the west and the east of the Republika Srpska, would depend on the support of the Croats, and their intentions with the Krajina. In a subsequent offensive the ABiH would even direct their attention to connecting the eastern enclaves with Central Bosnia and reaching the Drina; the latter was probably not within the possibilities of the ABiH.

With their tactics the ABiH would focus on sending sabotage units behind the front line for surprise attacks deep into Bosnian-Serb territory on headquarters, artillery sites and communication lines. Then when panic had been created, stronger units could attack the front. The ABiH tactics should also be aimed at diversion manoeuvres to occupy the VRS units.

Karadzic had little respect for the Muslim-Croat Federation in Bosnia, and expected to have little to fear from them in a military sense. According to him that was caused by the fact that the Muslim-Croat Federation was burdened by mistrust between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats. On the other hand, in his opinion these two groups had no need for a new military conflict with each other, and they would want to avoid further armed conflicts. Karadzic hardly feared a joint action against the Bosnian Serbs, and that was a correct estimate at the moment; coordination of the two armies by a joint staff was still far away. Yet the American sponsors of the Muslim-Croat Federation did work on that. The Americans had appointed general-major J. Sewall to help improve the integration of the Armed forces of Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats. Already late May 1995 Sewall told Akashi that then he was already surprised about the degree of cooperation and coordination that had been reached so quickly.³⁶⁷ Karadzic's estimate in March still was that Croats in the framework of the Muslim-Croat Federation would only honour those matters that were in the Croats' interest, such as joint operation in the Posavina corridor because of the vicinity of Croatia, and against the Serb-proclaimed republic in Croatia, the Republika Srpska Krajina, because of the battle the Croats were fighting there against the Serbs.

However, Karadzic also saw opportunities in the unstable balance between Croats and Muslims. He thought it possible that partly a battle could be fought by Croats and Serbs against Muslims. That would be possible because Karadzic assumed that Croatian policy makers were prepared to enter into

³⁶⁷ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 30/05/95, No. Z-895.

an alliance with the Republika Srpska, to eliminate the Bosnian Muslims in the Muslim-Croat Federation as a political factor. For the Croats that did have to be compensated by integration of the Republika Srpska Krajina as an autonomous area in Croatia.

The estimate that the Bosnian Croats could partly make a pact with the Bosnian Serbs, was a striking miscalculation of Karadzic. Below we will see that indeed the Bosnian Croats not always joined forces with the Bosnian Muslims, but that did not mean the Bosnian Croats then entered into a pact with the Bosnian Serbs. It also happened that the Bosnian Croats preferred to stay on the sideline when Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims were fighting each other. The Bosnian Croats expressly had their own agenda in the fight against the Bosnian Serbs.

Karadzic did realize that cooperation between the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Croats was not going to be easy. That's because the forces of the Bosnian Muslims would support those of the Bosnian Croats when it came to keeping the VRS busy on Bosnian territory. Then together they could prevent the forces of the Bosnian Serbs from smothering an attack by the Croats on the Republika Srpska Krajina at an early stage.

For that moment, on 8 March, it was still a matter of sabre rattling to bring about a peaceful reintegration. However, the military option was not excluded and this compelled Karadzic to a highly complicated game of chess.

It also appeared from Karadzic's directives that at that moment the VRS were up to their necks in problems. According to Karadzic, the main task of the VRS was to defend the conquered area. The priority was to prevent the ABiH from breaking the siege of Sarajevo; after all, that was the most important city for both warring factions. The second priority was to prevent a surprise attack by the ABiH, that could for instance take place north of Zvornik, in the Majevisa hills and at Brcko. The strategic position of the VRS would also have to be improved by shortening the front lines. A number of conscripts would have to be sent home to improve the economic situation in the Republika Srpska.

In the opinion of Karadzic, combat actions should be aimed at inflicting the greatest possible losses in personnel and material on the ABiH. That way the ABiH had to be weakened until they were destroyed. The international community would then be forced to recognize the situation on the ground, of which Karadzic hoped that it would look as much as possible like the situation of that moment that was favourable to the VRS. That also was the right moment and the optimum situation to negotiate peace, and conditions would have been created for a glorious end to the war. The main purpose of all efforts, said Karadzic, was to realize a united Serb state.

According to Karadzic that led to a strategy to be followed by the army of the Bosnian Serbs, the VRS, as regards the eastern enclaves, including Srebrenica. The defence of the eastern enclaves, and of the northwestern front in Eastern Bosnia (roughly the line Zvornik – Tuzla – Kladanj), became the task of the so-called Drina Corps of the VRS that was stationed in Eastern Bosnia. This Drina Corps would have to bring about a separation between Srebrenica and Zepa as soon as possible; there still was communication and traffic of people between these two enclaves, and that would have to be prevented to isolate the enclaves as much as possible in order to weaken them. If that was followed by well-considered combat actions - without defining those further - that would create an unbearable and unsafe situation as a result of which there would be no hope of survival or life for the inhabitants of Srebrenica and Zepa. Apparently already in March 1995 the Bosnian Serbs were anticipating a possible withdrawal of UNPROFOR from the enclaves. In that case the Drina Corps had to be ready to destroy the ABiH in these enclaves and to achieve a final liberation of the Drina valley. Karadzic's plans for Goradze were more concrete than for Srebrenica. There an operation had to be planned to reduce the size of the enclave to a small protected area around the city centre. The ABiH had to be fully defeated there as well. In any case the ABiH had to be denied the possibility to open a corridor in order to link up with the troops around Sarajevo. However, the greatest priority for the Drina Corps was the area east of Tuzla: along the line Kalesija - Simin Han the ABiH should be cut off, and in the regions Teocak, Sapna and Vitinica the ABiH had to be destroyed. (see map). Together this should remove the threat of an ABiH breakthrough to the Drina north of Zvornik. The area itself that was vulnerable to

the VRS was outside the territory of the Drina Corps, but that was a matter for a different VRS Corps (the East Bosnia Corps in Bijeljina).³⁶⁸

The Bosnian Serbs finally also needed better public relations, Karadzic thought. A more aggressive propaganda campaign had to expose the prejudiced and hostile attitude within UNPROFOR and some humanitarian organizations. UNPROFOR and the Muslim population had to become dependent on the good will of the Bosnian Serbs, but at the same time condemnation by the international community and the public opinion had to be prevented. Logistic support to UNPROFOR and the population in the enclaves should have to be limited by a restrictive policy as regards issuing clearances, permits to let convoys through. That policy would indeed be implemented and the eastern enclaves would increasingly be burdened by it.

The Bosnian-Serb strategy regarding the enclaves: differences Mladic- Karadzic

Around this time more became known about the military strategy of general Mladic as well: on 7 March Mladic gave Smith some insight into his intentions. Mladic once more broached the subject of the border of the Safe Area Srebrenica; the warring factions had never reached an agreement on the exact border. In Mladic' vision the Safe Area Srebrenica never comprised more than an area of 4.5 by one kilometre around the city. In the event of an attack Mladic was only prepared to accept that area as border of the Safe Area.

Mladic then already had asked Smith to issue orders to UNPROFOR to withdraw from the southwestern part of the enclave. In that area observation posts (OPs) of UNPROFOR had already permitted the ABiH to take up positions. As a result the road south of Srebrenica - which in Mladic' opinion rightfully belonged to the Bosnian Serbs - was a blockade against the Bosnian Serbs. Mladic anticipated that this way the ABiH could build on an attack to connect the Srebrenica enclave with Tuzla (and Gorazde with Sarajevo). In that event the VRS would start a counterattack. To make it more difficult for the ABiH and to prevent their advance to Tuzla, Mladic took a precaution: he would restrict the supply of food, medicines and fuel to the enclaves. Smith concluded from all this that Mladic did not have the capacity to fight on two fronts. If the Croats would start an attack on the Republika Srpska Krajina, and the ABiH in central Bosnia, Mladic was going to need those troops elsewhere than in the enclaves. Therefore he would timely have to secure the area behind the front on the side of the Republika Srpska, where the eastern enclaves were. So if Mladic needed his troops elsewhere, that could cause a VRS attack on the eastern enclaves, Smith had interpreted Mladic.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁸ ICTY (IT 98-33), OTP 425/a. Karadzic, Directive No. 7, 08/03/95, No. 2/2-11.

³⁶⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 215, File BHC95 07/03/95-14/03/95. Meeting Gen Smith and Gen Mladic 07/03/95, Ref 8594. BHC FWD to DOKL. 091100A Mrt 95. Outgoing fax No. 122/95. UN Conf.



Karadzic and Mladic had different opinions on the eastern enclaves. Karadzic saw forcing back the population on such a small area as part of his strategy to create a situation in the enclaves that would be unbearable for the population. Moreover, he thought that the Safe Areas were illegal, because in his opinion there was no basis for them in international law.³⁷⁰ A first signal that Karadzic wanted to get rid of the enclaves was his statement on the subject in a speech he delivered on 23 May. The Americans, for that matter, did not know then how this announcement by Karadzic fitted in the VRS strategy; the idea was that the Bosnian Serbs were busy ‘to clean up the map’.³⁷¹

For Mladic this was exactly the other way round: he on the other hand was prepared to accept the Safe Areas as an area where the population could be housed. However, Mladic also had eyes for the development of the ABiH in the enclaves and he feared a possible connection between Srebrenica and Tuzla. That seemed unrealistic in view of the problems that the ABiH also had to contend with, but it did mark the vulnerability of the VRS around the eastern enclaves, and Mladic’ fear that for the VRS roads to move the troops and supplies would be taken by the ABiH. Moreover, Mladic was under pressure to reorganize his defence and he was worried about the ABiH outbreaks from Srebrenica and Gorazde. Mladic would not worry too much about Tuzla, because he could closely control this area.³⁷²

The Bosnian-Serb strategy in practice in spring 1995

The ABiH offensive that started late March in the Majeve hills, was a thorn in the flesh of Mladic. Despite the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement note that the ABiH had started these operations. It was hardly acceptable for Mladic that in the meantime the VRS had been threatened with the use of air power. According to Mladic, that threat was based on UNPROFOR’s fear that the Bosnian Serbs were going to take the eastern enclaves.

Mladic was contemplating a response to this ABiH offensive. He gave orders to destroy the ABiH in the Majeve hills. That would have to be done by the East Bosnia Corps and the Drina Corps

³⁷⁰ Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

³⁷¹ Confidential Information (6).

³⁷² Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

of the VRS. This attack had a great priority for Mladic, which also appeared in the form of helicopter support: from Belgrade many helicopters flew equipment for the VRS to the Majevisa hills. The importance of this attack was reflected in the possibility it offered if successful: to cut off the 2nd ABiH Corps (the Corps in Northeast Bosnia) from the main ABiH force in Central Bosnia. This 2nd ABiH Corps also held the strategically important airfield of Dubrava (in UN jargon: Tuzla Air Base).³⁷³ It was not very successful. The fights stranded in the Majevisa hills and there was not a chance of cutting off the 2nd Corps and widening the Posavina corridor at Brcko. Tuzla Air Base remained unusable for both the VRS and ABiH.

This elaboration on the development of the ABiH offensive in the Majevisa hills late March is important, because it reveals a pattern in the behaviour of the forces of the Bosnian Croats: they only supported the ABiH in the fight against the Bosnian Serbs when they themselves had an interest. In the case of the Posavina corridor at Brcko the Croats clearly had an interest: this narrow corridor was close to Croatia, and it was a weak but strategically important place for the Bosnian Serbs. However, for the Bosnian Croats there was no interest in the ABiH offensive in the Majevisa hills. They could easily have supported the ABiH, but they did not. The Bosnian Muslims themselves in Tuzla did not have the vehicles and artillery to win the battle of the Majevisa hills against the Bosnian Serbs, so eventually it ended in a draw.

Also when taking the eastern enclaves the pattern would show that Croats only helped the ABiH when they themselves had an interest. A European intelligence service suspected a different reason for this lack of support by the Bosnian Croats. This service had two indications for it. First of all, prior to the attack on the eastern enclaves there would have been some coordination between the Croatian President Tudjman and the Serb President Milosevic. They would have agreed to more or less give the Bosnian Serbs the green light to tackle the eastern enclaves, without provoking direct support by the Croats to the ABiH. Those conversations should have been held on a special telephone hotline between Belgrade and Zagreb. There was no confirmation that these contacts had actually taken place. However, the Americans thought that arrangements between Milosevic and Tudjman came in the category: 'false rumors': such a deal would not have existed. According to them the Croats did support the ABiH, but never readily and they never gave extensive support.³⁷⁴

There was a second reason why this European intelligence service thought that the Croats would not come to the rescue of the ABiH in the event of an attack by the Bosnian Serbs on the eastern enclaves. That was because in the summer of 1995 the VRS were removing troops from the region around Brcko, even though that was the weakest point of the VRS. The VRS would only do that if they knew that in the meantime the Croats would not undertake anything in the Brcko region. Again, this is without evidence.³⁷⁵

Late June, early July, the Bosnian Serbs seemed to be prepared to continue the fighting. Mladic informed Janvier that the Bosnian Serbs had chosen for the war option. After two earlier meetings at the time of the hostage crisis, Janvier had a third meeting with Mladic in Zvornik by the end of June. There Janvier once more tried 'de manière très pédagogique' to sound out even the slightest chance of a breakthrough in the minds of the Bosnian Serbs, now that at their third meeting the problem of the hostages had been resolved. However, Mladic thought that still nothing had been done towards peace negotiations, while the sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs continued. He also thought that the initiatives of Bildt and statements by EU government leaders at the summit in Cannes meant insufficient concessions to the Bosnian Serbs.³⁷⁶ Mladic made it clear that war was the only option left.

³⁷³ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 426/a. Colonel-general Ratko Mladic, Directive No. 7/1, 31 March 1995, No. 02/2-15.

³⁷⁴ Confidential Interview (7).

³⁷⁵ Confidential interview (6).

³⁷⁶ UNNY,DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 01/07/95, No. UNPF Z-1082.

Prior knowledge on the Bosnian-Serb strategy: a review

The conclusion of all opinions about the strategy of the Bosnian Serbs, is that nobody knew the real intentions of the Bosnian Serbs. That also applied to the UN. As regards the eastern enclaves general Smith in Sarajevo came close with his analysis that the VRS were trying to exhaust the ABiH (and UNPROFOR), but that too never got beyond an 'educated guess' and it was not based on hard military intelligence. Moreover, Smith did not think either that the entire Srebrenica enclave would be rounded up, but that the VRS would only try to reduce it.

Smith's analysis was mainly correct from a military point of view, but it was not shared in the western capitals. For instance, they were at odds with the analysis made by the government in London. That was partly caused by different interpretations of the developments, but also because Smith mainly looked at what was to be expected from a military-strategic point of view rather than what was politically feasible. Smith's analysis had also been presented to the French intelligence community, but in Paris it found little credence as well. Smith also discussed his thesis with general Clark of the Pentagon. He too had a different opinion: there would be no attack on the enclaves.³⁷⁷

Even if it had been known that the eastern enclaves were going to be attacked, then in a military-strategic sense the attack on Srebrenica still came more or less as a surprise, also for the American intelligence community. Moreover, Gorazde was more valuable as a military target; it was strategically located on a connecting road between Sarajevo and Montenegro, it was larger and had more inhabitants, and it had an ammunition factory. So it was logical that if there were to be an attack, Gorazde would be the first target.³⁷⁸

When one wonders what was known in the Netherlands about the military strategy of the warring factions, the answer is: little. There was hardly any insight into the strategy pursued by the Bosnian Serbs. Many estimates and expectations were based on political analyses, or on messages seeping through from the Contact Group in the direction of The Hague.

The Dutch Military Intelligence Service (MID) did try to gather information on military strategies, but they tended to be off the mark. Early May for instance, the service stated that though talks on an extension of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement had yielded nothing, it was not expected that this would lead to new large-scale offensive operations by the Bosnian Muslims or Bosnian Serbs. The Bosnian Muslims would not favour that, because they wanted to prevent counteractions and possible Yugoslav intervention.

The MID seemed to have more insight into the developments in Croatia. In May 1995 the MID anticipated the Croatian preparations for an attack on Knin, the capital of the Republika Srpska Krajina, and the possibility that Western Slavonia would be overrun.³⁷⁹

Mid-May 1995 the MID thought they had indications that Mladic was trying to get permission from the Bosnian-Serb political leaders for a large-scale offensive. That would take away the initiative from the Muslims and boost the morale of the VRS. However, this plan should have met with resistance from the Bosnian-Serb Parliament. Possibly the rivalry between Mladic and Karadzic played a part and maybe Karadzic feared that if the offensive were successful, Mladic would gain too much prestige and influence. Possibly the Croatian actions against the Republika Srpska Krajina in Western Slavonia played a part. Also the lack of unity among the Serbs in the Republika Srpska and the Republika Srpska Krajina should have played a role in this reticence.³⁸⁰

More in general, it was not the habit of the MID to venture into military-strategic estimates in the conflict. One of the few examples that the MID did, involved the offensive by the ABiH late May to break the siege of Sarajevo. The unusually large concentrations of ABiH troops had not escaped the attention of the MID, and neither had the fact that this seemed to indicate a strategy change. If up to

³⁷⁷ Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

³⁷⁸ Confidential interview (6).

³⁷⁹ MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, no. 20/95, completed 021400 May 1995.

³⁸⁰ MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, no. 22/95, completed 161200 May 1995.

then the strategy had been aimed at using relatively small-scale operations to force the VRS to use their reserves and to spread the heavy weapons of the VRS,³⁸¹ now the ABiH were carrying out a large-scale operation. The MID thought, and with some justification, that this might mean that the ABiH were overestimating their own military powers; the ABiH would not be able to withstand Bosnian-Serb counteraction and intensification of the shelling of Sarajevo.³⁸² Indeed the ABiH suffered unexpectedly high losses and were not able to render sufficient logistic support to their deployed units. Consequently, the new mode of operation did not give the ABiH the desired result.³⁸³

But this was an incidental example of military-strategic estimate with regard to the ABiH, there was no question of any estimate of the VRS strategy with regard to Eastern Bosnia in the MID reports. The theme advance knowledge of an attack on Srebrenica will be discussed in much detail in the separate Appendix to this report on intelligence.

18. Conclusion

The situation that developed in spring 1995 for UNPROFOR, can be characterized as sinking further and further away in a morass. That was caused by a number of circumstances that will be summarized here. They are distinguished here at an analytical level, but in practice of course they interacted continuously.

The recommencement of the hostilities between the warring factions was the main problem for UNPROFOR. The cease-fire, agreed between the warring factions, officially ended on 1 May 1995. However, the hostilities had already started again well before that time. The pattern was that the forces of the Bosnian Muslims, the ABiH, started the offensive, after which the forces of the Bosnian Serbs, the VRS, in most cases responded more than proportionally. The ABiH were prompted to do so for military-strategic considerations: with offensive actions they tried to recapture as much terrain as possible from the VRS, and first of all to keep the VRS busy. During the cease-fire the VRS had a favourable starting position with regard to the terrain they held, but the VRS had great problems maintaining their terrain over the entire long front line. This way time was to the advantage of the ABiH, also because already for a long time the Bosnian Muslims presented themselves as the 'underdog' in the international media, though their military strength was increasing all the time.

That put UNPROFOR in the firing line in spring 1995. The Bosnian Serbs suspected UNPROFOR of being prejudiced against them, in line with the prevalent international opinion that was set against the Bosnian Serbs. Conversely, the Bosnian Muslims expected UNPROFOR to protect them against the Bosnian Serbs and, if necessary, would fight with them against these Bosnian Serbs.

The Bosnian Serbs were convinced of UNPROFOR's partiality in favour of the Bosnian Muslims. As proof of that they saw, understandable from their perspective, that the Safe Areas, including Srebrenica, became a base of operations for attacks by these Bosnian Muslims – to the great indignation of the Bosnian Serbs, who reminded UNPROFOR that it had been agreed to demilitarize these areas. Another major problem for the Bosnian Serbs was that many of their men were kept occupied to keep the three eastern enclaves (Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde) surrounded: those troops could have been very useful elsewhere in the war. Nevertheless nowhere within UNPROFOR it was expected that the Bosnian Serbs would walk over the enclaves, including Srebrenica; they did know that general Mladic considered this Safe Area to comprise a smaller area (around the city of Srebrenica) than the UN assumed.

True to their mandate, UNPROFOR tried to remain neutral in the midst of all this. However, the Bosnian Serbs saw that differently. That caused measures against UNPROFOR, such as stopping convoys over Bosnian-Serb territory that were intended for the Muslim population of Srebrenica and

³⁸¹ MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, no. 20/95, completed 021400B May 1995.

³⁸² MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, no. 28/95, completed 141400B June 1995.

³⁸³ MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, no. 30/95, completed 271400B June 1995.

the other eastern enclaves, as well as for the UNPROFOR troops themselves. That had serious consequences for the situation of the population and UNPROFOR alike. NATO air strikes on Pale late May, aimed against the Bosnian Serbs, only worsened the hold the Bosnian Serbs had over UNPROFOR. The Bosnian Serbs responded by taking UN personnel hostage, once more emphasizing the vulnerability of UNPROFOR.

Political initiatives in the first six months of 1995 were to no avail in the end. The policy of the international community remained aimed at isolating the Bosnian Serbs, but for the time being that had no influence on the fighting. Milosevic tried to benefit by Karadzic' isolation by setting himself up as the one who could make a peaceful end to the conflict possible: political affairs had to be arranged with him rather than with Karadzic, his message was. Within the Bosnian-Serb leadership Karadzic indeed did not seem to be prepared to accept any political solution whatsoever, because his sole objective was to keep the area for the Bosnian Serbs. That also brought him into conflict with Mladic, who was facing military problems conquering territory. That again contributed to Karadzic' isolation.

The British-French initiative to set up a Rapid Reaction Force, a 'forceful' units, with artillery, yielded little. That was mainly because this unit would be deployed under the same regime as UNPROFOR. As a result the Rapid Reaction Force threatened to become part of the problem rather than the solution to it.

The international decision-making process regarding 'how to go on with UNPROFOR' generally proceeded with difficulty, mainly because of the different visions of the troop contributing nations, including the Netherlands. The governments of France and the United Kingdom, with many troops on the ground in Bosnia, tended to give the safety of these troops the highest priority. That became even stronger when British and French soldiers were taken hostage. The United States were the greatest advocates of strong measures (air strikes) against the Bosnian Serbs, also because unlike Europe they had no direct interest in the form of troops on the ground in Bosnia. However, air strikes could cause an escalation of the conflict and withdrawal of UNPROFOR from Bosnia. In that case American ground forces would be deployed, in accordance with an imprudent promise by the American President Clinton to NATO. However, the American government really did not like the idea that their ground troops would actually have to get involved in the withdrawal of UNPROFOR. The Europeans could still be checked with that when they were pressing for more forceful measures against the Bosnian Serbs.

For UNPROFOR the question continually was: 'how to prevent muddling through'. In that connection also from UNPROFOR many proposals were reviewed, with the focus on a stricter approach of the Bosnian Serbs, and more 'forceful' action by UNPROFOR to make this peace force less vulnerable. General Smith in Sarajevo was a strong advocate of that. However, that continuously met with the objection that such action would not be covered by the mandate: after all, that did not go beyond peacekeeping. That was regularly pointed out to Smith by his superior in Zagreb, general Janvier, who preached cautiousness - also with a view to the troops. Janvier in turn referred to his political superior in Zagreb, the special envoy of UN Secretary-General Akashi. He himself did not expressed strong views, but it was clear that he anticipated the fear among the UN in New York that the conflict would escalate. That was particularly prevalent within the Security Council, in accordance with the described positions of the various troop contributing nations and the United States. UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali himself also made an effort to find ways to prevent muddling through. In the Security Council he and general Janvier defended the plan to withdraw UNPROFOR from the eastern enclaves to reduce the vulnerability of UNPROFOR. That would make more 'forceful' action against the Bosnian Serbs possible. However, this plan was rejected in the Security Council, because it was not in line with the positions of the countries concerned, and also because it meant loss of face for the UN Security Council if the eastern enclaves were abandoned.

So eventually it did end in muddling through for UNPROFOR, under increasingly dramatic circumstances: open hostilities over the heads of UNPROFOR; halted supplies; a Muslim population that increasingly turned against them; and no prospect of an improvement of the situation.

Chapter 2

Air power: Close Air Support and air strikes

1. Introduction

A proper understanding of the rest of this report requires that the chronology will now be broken. The previous chapters discussed the phenomena ‘Close Air Support’ and ‘air strikes’. This chapter explains more thematically what these concepts exactly meant, what the difference between them was, and how decisions on these subjects were taken in the period preceding the fall of Srebrenica. At the end of this chapter the reader will chronologically be back at the point where the previous chapter ended, late June 1995. Armed with this knowledge the reader will have a better insight into the force and the value of air power at the time of the attack on Srebrenica.

The prologue to his report already pointed out the crucial difference between Close Air Support and air strikes and involves the two manners relevant here to use air power in the structure chosen for UNPROFOR. The two ways of using air power caused much misunderstanding, which may happen easily if the concepts are used indiscriminately. Hence, it is highly important to understand these two ways of using air power.

The difference between Close Air Support and air strikes

In practice in Bosnia two main types of air power were used: Close Air Support and air strikes.³⁸⁴ The conceptual difference between the two was essential, but tended to escape the notice of politicians and the media. That sometimes caused confusion about the various types of Air Power. Quite often the concepts were mixed up, not only in the political arena but also in military circles. That would also affect Dutchbat.

Close Air Support was defined as the use of air power for direct support of the UN troops on the ground. A request for it had to come from an UNPROFOR Battalion Commander and could be made if one of the contending parties attacked his unit or fired at it.

There is no definition for the concept air strikes within NATO. Here it involved the use of air power aimed at destruction; large-scale bombing that could for instance be carried out if one of the warring factions violated an agreement on the use of heavy weapons (in the zones declared by NATO known as Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones). It should be emphasized that battalion commanders had nothing to do with air strikes; the relevant decisions were taken at the highest level, so in Zagreb or New York. For air strikes the pilot was briefed on the position of his target that he had to find himself, without the assistance of a Forward Air Controller on the ground to guide the pilot to the target. Usual targets for air strikes were installations for air defence, radar installations, command posts, liaison centres and ammunition depots. For hitting such targets there were target lists, drawn up jointly by UNPROFOR and NATO. Both UNPROFOR and the highest local NATO authority, Admiral Leighton Smith, could take the initiative for consultation on the desirability of an air strike. In all cases the (Special Representative of) the UN Secretary-General had to decide on the request before NATO did.

³⁸⁴ The Force Commander’s Concept of Employment of Air Power of 5 September 1994 defined Close Air Support as: ‘The use of air power against hostile ground attacks in close proximity to the UNPROFOR forces that are directly threatened. This action requires the detailed integration of each air mission with the fire and movement of friendly forces. It is used strictly when ground weapon systems are inadequate for the situation at hand’. Air strikes were defined as: ‘This is a generic term used to describe the use of aircraft to engage ground targets not in close proximity to UNPROFOR troops. In the case of UNPROFOR, it is used to refer to NATO preplanned missions’. (UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 79, File 2.5.4, Air Support 17/08/93- 06/02/95).

Until late May 1995 air power had been used nine times (Close Air Support or air strikes). Close Air Support had not yet been requested by Dutchbat. In Part II it has been described that in a different eastern enclave, Gorazde, Close Air Support had been asked for in April 1994. The most well-known and also the most drastic instance of air strikes happened during the bombings of Pale on 25 and 26 May. The previous chapter contains an extensive description of the demoralization this resulted in for UNPROFOR. This chapter will describe Close Air Support and air strikes in a more general sense. Central issues are: how did the decision-making process on the subject proceed within and between the UN and NATO? How did this decision-making shift in the course of time when it appeared that the use of air power was not without consequences on the ground, due to reprisals by the Bosnian Serbs?

The military context in Bosnia changed considerably between 1992 and 1995. This context had a major influence on the use of air power; in the period between August 1993 and March 1994 it usually sufficed for UNPROFOR to threaten to use air power. During that period the many training flights over Bosnia and air presence³⁸⁵ near 'hot spots' usually proved sufficient to deter the warring factions. Gradually this deterrent lost its effect and the warring factions increasingly tested UNPROFOR.

As a result of NATO actions in February 1994 around Sarajevo and in April 1994 near Gorazde, the reputation of Close Air Support could be restored a little; then NATO, assuming individual responsibility in this connection, declared Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones. Declaring the zones was linked to an ultimatum and the threat of attacking these heavy weapons from the air. That forced the warring factions to withdraw their heavy weapons from these zones.

Then NATO considered the possibility to also declare such Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones around the other four Safe Areas (Bihac, Tuzla, Zepa and Srebrenica). That caused the problem that NATO had to do three things at the time: be active in the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones, support UNPROFOR on the ground, and enforce the No Fly Zone. It appeared that NATO did not have enough aircraft available for all those tasks. It required a substantial number of additional aircraft for which, unless more aircraft carriers were allocated, bases had to be found outside Italy, with all the additional problems of obtaining overflight rights from the countries involved. It was mainly for this reason that indeed the number of Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones would not be increased.

During the period from April 1994 to July 1995 the conflict escalated further. During this period there were threats of force as well as use of it. This period also painfully identified the limitations of the use of Close Air Support in the Bosnian conflict: the Bosnian Serbs started taking UN soldiers hostage as reprisal, and using their air defence against NATO aircraft. The difference in ideas between UN and NATO was also tersely revealed. The UN seemed to be satisfied with the existing arrangements for the use of Close Air Support, while NATO had its reservations with regard to the current arrangements. A major issue in this connection was whether NATO wanted to accept that UNPROFOR would send out a warning prior to an air strike and that it should be UNPROFOR rather than NATO that gave targets their priority.³⁸⁶

2. Backgrounds of the differences of opinion between NATO and UN

When declaring the Safe Areas under Resolution 836 of the UN Security Council on 3 June 1993, the use of air power in Bosnia seemed to offer potential for new and unprecedented possibilities for a UN peace operation. When the lighter weapons of UNPROFOR on the ground would no longer be sufficient to cope with the situation, air power could be called in.

At the same time it was clear from the start that use of this air power was full of pitfalls and that the consequences were uncertain. Those who introduced Resolution 836 had agreed that the authority

³⁸⁵ 'Presence' was defined by UNPROFOR as 'Training or overflight/orbiting performed over an area of tension above 5000 feet AGL to show the availability of air power'. (UNPROFOR Operations Order 14/94, 15/07/94. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 79, File2.5.4, Air Support 17/08/93 – 06/02/94).

³⁸⁶ Confidential Information (147)

to use Close Air Support had to be vested in soldiers. At the same time the UN secretariat expressed concerns that the use of air power could entail risks for the safety of the troops and the humanitarian convoys. Consequently, the UN vision was that this air power should only be used reluctantly. It could only be used in self defence for the UN troops.³⁸⁷

That way right at the start the seeds were sown of a continuous fight within and between the UN and NATO on the question in what degree force in the form of air power had to be applied and whether the authority to use it should be in the hands of soldiers or diplomats. Those discussions would also continue extensively between 1993 and 1995. In those discussions the military capabilities of the Bosnian Serbs also continuously played a role in the background.

It is important to follow the discussion on the use of air power in the second half of 1994 and the first half of 1995, to gain an insight into the visions and conditions that determined the use of air power at the time of the fall of Srebrenica. Moreover, it will appear that this discussion under the predecessor of General Janvier, as Force Commander the highest ranking soldier within UNPROFOR in 1995, did not proceed much differently than in his period in command. The procedure with regard to the use of air power in specific situations will be discussed further in Chapter 6; this chapter describes what in a general sense the considerations whether or not to use air power were in the context of UNPROFOR.

Superficially speaking, optimism on the use of air power could stem from the Gulf war, during which air power had been used successfully: there supreme air power in open and level terrain had paved the way for the ground troops. However, this experience created incorrect expectations when it was applied to the Bosnian conflict. That was the opinion of, among others, the American Secretary of Defence, Perry. He declared: 'no responsible military commander believes we can change the outcome of the war with an air campaign alone. Bosnia is not Iraq. Bosnia is wooded, mountainous and often blanketed by clouds. The Serbs spread out their weapons over a wide area and often place them in the middle of population centers'.³⁸⁸

Not only the terrain conditions were difficult in Bosnia, lack of experience was another complication for the use of air power. Neither the UN nor NATO had experience in using air power in a conflict such as in Bosnia. Characteristics of that partly intrastate conflict were: ethnic cleansing, sieges, guerrilla tactics, unclear front lines and highly dispersed troops. The military characteristics of the conflict in Bosnia made parties little vulnerable to air actions such as NATO could have carried out: on the ground the conflict was mainly fought out in populated areas (including the access roads to these populated areas). The warring factions for instance had a habit of deploying heavy weapons near schools and hospitals. Large-scale military operations, after concentration of troops and equipment, were rare. Actions of the warring factions often aimed at terrorizing and chasing away the population in order to ethnically cleanse the area concerned.

Specifically in the case of Close Air Support there were still other hurdles to clear: the dispersion of the troops of the contending parties, their mobility, and the time that lapsed when requesting Close Air Support, added to the requirement of the minimum application of force, made the use of Close Air Support not always easy, to put it mildly.³⁸⁹

Use of air power had still other limitations, for instance technical: aircraft could only stay in the air for a limited period, and their use depended on the weather conditions, that were not always favourable in Bosnia.

Yet in practice the political limitations of air power would prove to be the most relevant: use of air power only had a momentary effect. Even if it could play a dominant and decisive role in battles high in the conflict spectre, it could not independently end a conflict. For peacekeeping, unlike in the case of peace-enforcement, air power could not play that decisive role. Air power had a provocative

³⁸⁷ NIOD, Coll. Wahlgren. Code Cable, Annan to Stoltenberg for Wahlgren, 07/06/93, No. MSC-945.

³⁸⁸ Prepared remarks of Secretary of Defense William J. Perry at the 100th Landon Lecture Series, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kan., March 9, 1995, *Defense Viewpoint*, Vol. 10, No. 21.

³⁸⁹ De Lapresle in Biermann and Vadset, *UN Peacekeeping in Trouble*, p. 140.

nature and for that reason it could only be used for peacekeeping when political, military and geographic factors allowed it. Nevertheless Close Air Support offered substantial possibilities because of the high mobility of the air forces, the possibilities for patrolling, for air reconnaissance, and rapid fire support. With these advantages air cover could contribute to keeping the number of troops on the ground limited and to preventing escalation of the conflict. That did require a rapid decision to turn the 'key' to activate air power, and that was exactly what was lacking at UNPROFOR, as will appear later in this chapter. After all, a battalion on the ground in trouble does not want to wait for hours for Close Air Support to arrive.

Air power did have a major support role in the field of deterrence, and in the field of gathering intelligence, even if UNPROFOR hardly shared in it, for reasons explained in the Appendix to this report on intelligence. At the same time it seemed that the capacity for air reconnaissance of the aircraft stationed in Italy, including the Dutch F-16 photo reconnaissance aircraft, was not used to the full.³⁹⁰

The background of said political limitations of air power was that in general the UN and NATO had different ideas about the use of force. These differences also stemmed from a different development history, culture and a different objective of these two organizations: NATO was originally intended as alliance for the use of troops for 'high intensity warfare'. The doctrine and tactics of NATO air forces were aimed at reaching strategic and tactical goals, in cooperation with ground forces that were deployed to fight. In short, NATO was intended and organized to win a war. The UN on the other hand was intended and organized to keep the peace. The UN saw the use of force as a defensive instrument to protect the troops in the event of danger. NATO did want to see force as a defensive means as well, but also saw it as a means to make the Bosnian Serbs behave in a certain way: hence, they shared a more offensive vision of air power. The UN Security Council resolution declaring the Safe Areas permitted the use of force in reply to a shelling or armed invasion of the Safe Areas. If this need would arise the UN and NATO would have to cooperate closely. However, this cooperation was anything but natural: though NATO did act to support UNPROFOR, that did not mean this organization was prepared to be just the subcontractor of the UN. NATO also wanted to keep an eye on their own credibility. The vision of the conflict and mainly its approach differed fundamentally between NATO and UN. The fact that the main member states in both the UN and NATO were the same, was no guarantee that they spoke with the same voice at both forums. For that to happen both organizations still had too much specific dynamics.³⁹¹

UN's vision of the use of air power

The previously mentioned differences between NATO and UN as organizations had their effect on the structure in which UNPROFOR had to operate as was not designed according to the pattern of NATO, but to that of the UN. The military and political logic behind the deployment of such a peace force was fundamentally different than deployment of combat units. In the specific case of UNPROFOR the composition, deployment, armament and logistic support of its units can also depended on the approval of the warring factions (peacekeeping), and was not geared to peace-enforcement. UN troops could no longer carry out their mandate as soon as they would be engaged in war with one of the parties. Close Air Support would still be possible in such an event, but Akashi considered that irresponsible if UN personnel in isolated and vulnerable positions could become target for retaliation. That straitjacket imposed limitations upon the use of air power to solve the Bosnian conflict, because negotiations had to remain possible.

For that reason Akashi was reluctant to use air power. One of his considerations was the effect these actions could easily have on the impartiality of the UN: 'the man you bomb today, is the same man whose cooperation you may require tomorrow for the passage of a humanitarian convoy'. Thus

³⁹⁰ Confidential Information (147)

³⁹¹ See Tharoor, 'UN Peacekeeping in Europe', *Survival*, 37(Winter 1995-96)125.

Akashi described the continuous dilemma for the UN organization, for which it was difficult to find a way out. According to Akashi it was important in a UN operation to carefully balance all factors that could influence the attitude of the warring factions. Moreover, preventing escalation of incidents required continuous contact with the warring factions.

For Akashi, who made the final decision on the use of air power, deterring attacks on the Safe Areas was a major challenge for that reason. As long as UNPROFOR also had to operate in areas under control of the Bosnian Serbs, intervention against those same Bosnian Serbs had to be balanced carefully against the background of the required impartiality. That necessitated continuous explanation to the warring factions and to the members of the international community. Akashi recognized that automatism in a response in a war could be a good thing, but for a UN operation such a reaction entailed the risk of overlooking consequences that affected the role as credible intermediary.³⁹² For NATO against their background it was difficult to adjust to that.

Akashi was not the only one who held these views. Also for someone like EU negotiator Lord Owen the perception of impartiality was important. He gave as example the problem of the heavy weapons in the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones. If the Bosnian Serbs had these weapons there, they could be threatened with air strikes. But impartiality meant that if the Bosnian Muslims had weapons in the same zone, they would also have to be attacked. However, the latter was unlikely to happen because the United States would not accept it.³⁹³

Already before July 1995 these self-imposed limitations in the execution of enforcement measures with air power had caused much disappointment and discussion in international politics and the media on the performance of UNPROFOR.³⁹⁴ Attempts to come to a joint approach together with NATO were complicated and sometimes controversial. For instance NATO commanders received orders from their superiors that came from the decision-taking bodies of NATO, but these instructions had to be in line with the intentions of the Security Council and allow for the limitations of the troops on the ground. If not, consultations were required between NATO and UN, within UNPROFOR, within the governments of the troop-contributing nations, and within the NATO member states.³⁹⁵

NATO's vision of the use of air power

Diametrically opposed to the vision of the UN and Akashi was the American vision, together with the American-dominated NATO vision. From that side there was continuous pressure to use air power. They also had little understanding for the fact that it were professional UN soldiers, from NATO countries even, who advocated restraint in the use of military means rather than using those. From the perception of UNPROFOR such a lack of understanding was due to the fact that the Americans were not represented in Bosnia with ground troops, and due to a lack of insight into the assignment of UNPROFOR which consisted of ensuring humanitarian relief and protection of the population in the Safe Areas.³⁹⁶

There were Americans at every level of the decision-making process within NATO, and they dominated this process. Though the United States was not represented in UNPROFOR with ground troops, there were Americans in all major staff sections of the staffs in Zagreb, Sarajevo and Tuzla. However, none of them was at the decision-making level: decisions on Close Air Support were the prerogative of Akashi, on whom the Americans had little influence. If the Americans wanted to influence Akashi, they mainly had to do that through Kofi Annan in New York. For the American policymakers Akashi was a 'prince of darkness', and they ventilated that vision so extensively that his reputation began to suffer. What the Americans annoyed for instance, was that Akashi held the opinion

³⁹² Akashi, 'The Limits of UN Diplomacy and the Future of Conflict Mediation', *Survival*, 37 (Winter 1995-96).

³⁹³ Owen, 'The limits of the UN peace-enforcement', *Internationale Spectator*, 49(1995)377.

³⁹⁴ Akashi, 'The Limits of UN Diplomacy and the Future of Conflict Mediation', *Survival*, 37 (1995-96)(Winter 1995-96)96.

³⁹⁵ Confidential Information (161).

³⁹⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Memorandum PA/Washington to DEU, 02/02/95.

that it should also be possible to punish the Bosnian Muslims using Close Air Support. For instance, behind closed doors in Zagreb Akashi once said that for every five times the Bosnian Serbs had to be attacked with Close Air Support, he wanted to punish the Bosnian Muslims at least once.³⁹⁷ In that connection the Dutch Permanent Representative at the UN, Biegman, spoke of Akashi's 'notorious even-handedness'.³⁹⁸

Particularly the American UN ambassador Madeleine Albright tried to convince the UN to use air power. She did that by attempting to win France and the United Kingdom for her ideas to use air power, in order to jointly exert pressure on Boutros-Ghali to give NATO more room and to get rid of Akashi.³⁹⁹ In May 1995 the situation in Sarajevo was more awkward than it had been since 1993, but Akashi refused to ask for military support because he wanted to continue finding a political solution, was the judgment of Foreign Affairs civil servant Hattinga van 't Sant in a Memorandum to his superiors.⁴⁰⁰

The highest NATO soldier on the scene: Admiral Leighton Smith

As a natural result of the differences in opinion between NATO and the UN at the diplomatic level, the soldiers of the two organizations also regularly were at odds. On the side of the UN there were the Force Commanders in Zagreb, Generals Janvier and before him De Lapresle, as well as their junior commanders in Sarajevo, generals Smith and before him Rose. On the side of NATO there were the highest NATO soldier in Europe, the American Joulwan, (in military terms known as Supreme Allied Commander Europe or SACEUR); and his subordinate, the highest NATO soldier on the scene, the American Admiral Leighton Smith (in military terms known as Commander in Chief Allied Forces Southern Europe or CINCSOUTH), not to be confused with the British (UN) General Rupert Smith in Sarajevo.

Using air power required the approval of both the UN and NATO, for Close Air Support as well as air strikes. That was known as the dual key procedure. For the UN initially Akashi held that key, after the air strikes on Pale it went to Boutros-Ghali, and from 22 June it was back with Akashi. The second key, NATO's, was held by Admiral Leighton Smith.

Admiral Smith became extensively acquainted with the various kinds of problems in the talks on Bosnia. For instance, he regularly found that there was a 'disconnect' between politicians and soldiers. For instance the Contact Group would have made plans without military input. It had happened that soldiers from the United States, the United Kingdom and France assessed a Contact Group plan from a military viewpoint, and then recommended not to publish it in that particular form because it was not feasible from a military point of view. Subsequently, the plan was still published without any modification.

In addition to this gap between political guidelines and military means, Smith also concluded that there was 'political inconsistency' about what had to happen in Bosnia, but Leighton Smith himself put that into perspective when he told the NIOD investigators: 'my ideas did not matter'. That did not make his ideas as a professional soldier less outspoken.

Leighton Smith found himself in a difficult intermediate position: between NATO and UNPROFOR, and between Americans and Europeans. In retrospect Leighton Smith identified the following pattern: he had felt himself put under pressure by the United States to use more extensive force. He had felt uneasy about that, for at the same time he did understand UNPROFOR's wish to prevent troubles for the troops on the ground due to the use of force. However, Smith also worried about the safety of the pilots of NATO aircraft over Bosnia: they were vulnerable to the Air Defence

³⁹⁷ Confidential interview (50).

³⁹⁸DCBC, 1975. Code Biegman 382, 01/06/96.

³⁹⁹ ABZ, DWH/ARA/00844. Code Jacobovits 320, 09/05/95; ABZ, Embassy Washington, No. 139296.

⁴⁰⁰ ABZ, DIE/2001/00023. Memorandum Plv DEU to e.g. S, DGPZ, 18/05/95, No. DEU-414/95.

Systems of the Bosnian Serbs. Yet eliminating those would mean massive air strikes, and that was something the UN opposed.

The pressure on Smith from the United States was intended to use NATO to control matters in Bosnia. The policy formulating National Security Council in Washington was manned by civil servants and politicians who had a strong opinion and more than once adopted an aggressive attitude, but who did not have any military experience themselves. As a result it happened that they tried to let soldiers do things, without knowing what they could and could not. That caused friction, also within NATO. One of the main pushers of the use of force had been mediator Holbrooke, who had already been involved in the Bosnia policy as a member of the Contact Group as early as the summer of 1994. However, he and Albright did not show much insight into the backgrounds of the conflict; Smith said that Albright and Holbrooke believed that if in the United States so many cultures could live together, that certainly should be possible in Bosnia where people even spoke the same language. It was difficult to understand for policymakers in Washington what was really going on in Bosnia, Smith thought.

Smith was also under pressure of one of his superiors, the American general and SACEUR Joulwan: 'Joulwan beat the hell out of me to do more', Smith said. Incidentally, it was not always clear for Smith whether Joulwan was wearing his US or NATO hat. According to Smith this pressure of Joulwan on him also meant that Joulwan was indirectly trying to give orders to UNPROFOR. That not only caused 'bad blood' between Smith and Joulwan, but also between Janvier and Joulwan. It did not become any simpler for Smith when also the American mediator Holbrooke tried to tell him what he had to do, while on the other hand his superior Joulwan had told them not to take any orders from Holbrooke: Holbrooke would not know the first thing about a military command structure. Even American senators tried to influence Smith: Senator Ted Stevens (Rep., Alaska) once complained to Smith that the Americans had to spend so much more money than the Europeans on fuel for aircraft. Smith had made it clear that the French had paid with 32 lives and that this was no match for the costs the United States had to make for fuel for aircraft - after that Stevens had never talked about the subject any more. In fact the only Americans from whom Leighton Smith did not feel any pressure were General Shalikavili (the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) and the American Defence Ministry, the Pentagon.⁴⁰¹

SACEUR, General Joulwan, thought it necessary to exert pressure on Smith because according to him it was not realistic to hold on to the UN rules for peacekeeping in a setting 'where there was no peace to keep'. He thought that in a military sense the UN officials were too narrow-minded and too reluctant to use Close Air Support only because they feared it was outside the scope of the mandate. Joulwan also turned against the British doctrine that Rose supported of wider peacekeeping, meaning that though at the level of UNPROFOR as a whole the mission would keep its peacekeeping character, but that at a lower level (for instance a battalion) fighting was still possible. Precondition here was that to the party to be attacked (the VRS) the connection between violation and response had to be clear. Joulwan did not see much good in this kind of solutions from Rose, because it resulted in operations between Chapter VI and VII of the UN Charter, that is in between peacekeeping and peace-enforcement. That was because the opponent could think that you were engaged in peace-enforcement while you yourself thought it was peacekeeping, Joulwan said.⁴⁰²

On the other hand Admiral Leighton Smith was also under pressure from the UNPROFOR commanders in Zagreb and Sarajevo as regards the dangers for the peacekeepers on the ground. He said he had supported the UNPROFOR commanders in their resistance to what General Rose in Sarajevo referred to as, 'the hawks in NATO', meaning those within NATO who wanted to go further than a solution of the conflict by negotiations. According to Rose, Leighton Smith very well understood the need for a balance between the necessity to use force and the necessity to be able to continue the humanitarian mission.

⁴⁰¹ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

⁴⁰² Interview George Joulwan, 08/06/00.

General Rose himself regarded the use of Close Air Support merely as an overture to war and – according to Leighton Smith – had managed to convince the UNPROFOR Force Commander in Zagreb, De Lapresle (Janvier's predecessor), of his views. Rose picked old or earlier hit VRS equipment, wanted the aircraft to first fly over the target for some time, and wanted the VRS warned 20 minutes in advance.⁴⁰³ To Joulwan all that was unacceptable: this procedure could only make the VRS overconfident after one of two times and the seriousness of UNPROFOR would be put to the test; this was too limited and too predictable.

Joulwan said that Rose had not wanted to listen to good advice and was too careful in the use of Close Air Support. When declaring the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones, NATO Secretary-General Wörner had given clear instructions on their enforcement and demanded strictness to prevent NATO from losing credibility. According to Joulwan, Rose had made a mistake to want to have little to do as possible with the Bosnian-Serb violations of the regime of the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones. Joulwan also concluded that, when he was in Sarajevo with a deputy NATO Secretary-General, and the headquarters of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command was fired at. During this briefing Joulwan could see on the map that there was VRS artillery in the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones. Accordingly, Joulwan concluded that Rose did not want to use NATO air power. Joulwan could also see from aerial photographs that the weapons at the Heavy Weapon Collection Points were ready to fire; they were aimed at Sarajevo.⁴⁰⁴

The difference in approach between the UN (UNPROFOR) and NATO can hardly be illustrated more clearly than with this difference of opinion between Joulwan and Rose. Seen from NATO, from a military point of view, it is of course not logical to warn the enemy that an attack is imminent. In this case it would even give the Bosnian Serbs the opportunity to put their anti-aircraft missiles in position against the NATO aircraft. Rose did this (with Akashi's support) because the Bosnian Serbs should not be considered the enemy; that was not in line with the character of the peacekeeping mission. The fact that moreover Rose picked old or earlier hit VRS equipment as target, infuriated Smith and his superior Joulwan. In their opinion, after all, that unnecessarily put the lives of pilots at risk.

Consequently, Admiral Leighton Smith regularly had conflicts with Rose. Moreover, in April 1994 a British naval aircraft (known as Sea Harrier) was shot down over Gorazde. After that, Smith wanted Rose no longer to warn the VRS for an air raid. Rose did not agree with that; he felt bad that an aircraft had been shot down, but he considered it 'a routine hazard'. Smith also responded to this aircraft being shot down by saying that he no longer wanted to accept requests for air strikes that were in fact at a limited (military-tactical) level; he considered it too risky. According to him it would be better to reserve air strikes for more strategic targets such as headquarters, communication centres and logistic installations. Nevertheless if the UN should send requests for air strikes with a non-strategic target, Smith would still loyally honour these requests.⁴⁰⁵

Smith's own experience also played a part here. He had been a navy pilot in Vietnam and he saw the risk of the Air Defence Systems of the Bosnian Serbs. They fired anti-aircraft missiles from so-called Surface-to-Air-Missile (SAM) sites at NATO aircraft patrolling over Bosnia. Smith wanted to take away this risk by eliminating the Air Defence Systems of the Bosnian Serbs. Moreover, he felt supported by General Mike Ryan, his Airforce Commander. However, in the period 1994 – 1995 Smith did not get a chance to eliminate the VRS Air Defence Systems, and that frustrated him. Consequently, in June the Bosnian Serbs shot down an American F-16. After that Smith no longer wanted to send aircraft to areas where Bosnian-Serb SAMs were located: 'we became predictable'. The risk for Western aircraft was even greater because the VRS had a habit of relocating these SAMs.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

⁴⁰⁴ Interview George Joulwan, 08/06/00.

⁴⁰⁵ Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, p. 114, 118, 143, 160, 170 and 177.

⁴⁰⁶ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00. Smith said, unlike from the American Minister of Defence Perry, he had experienced little support in this from Joulwan.

So Smith wanted to protect the pilots of patrolling western aircraft from being shot at by the Bosnian Serbs, just like UNPROFOR felt strongly about the safety of the ground troops. After the VRS had proved in practice that their air defence was effective, Admiral Smith demanded permission to first carry out air strikes on these Bosnian-Serb Air Defence Systems. Until then he would not respond to requests by UNPROFOR for Close Air Support, he said, because that would be too dangerous for the pilots.

Admiral Smith did not really believe in the proportionality idea supported by UNPROFOR, but he preferred to use force.⁴⁰⁷ However, it appeared rather difficult for NATO to get approval for the use of air power (air strike or Close Air Support): UNPROFOR had to be the first to turn the key, and after that NATO should follow. In the opinion of SACEUR Joulwan, UNPROFOR had more flexibility in the realization of their mandate than they thought. He based that optimistic thought on the idea that NATO soldiers would think more in terms of protecting the area and UN soldiers more in terms of protecting people; protecting a territory with fixed borders was easier to realize than protecting people.

The problem with eliminating the VRS Air Defence Systems, what Smith really wanted, was that it would require a long-term campaign of air strikes, and UNPROFOR did not feel like that at all. Rose could not understand that Smith was in favour of that; had it not been Smith who had shown so much understanding for the safety of peacekeepers on the ground? That could be put at risk by such an air campaign. Rose suspected that Smith was once more being put under pressure by his superior of SACEUR Joulwan to let NATO do something in which Smith himself did not believe and Rose even less. Rose tried to get support from De Lapresle against these ideas on the part of NATO, but he said he could do little against the wish for a stricter NATO air campaign. Eventually the UN did win, and there was no campaign of air strikes on strategic Bosnian-Serb targets.⁴⁰⁸

That put Admiral Smith in a fix between NATO and UNPROFOR. It appeared that up to the highest level (General De Lapresle in Zagreb) UNPROFOR had different ideas about developments in Bosnia than Smith himself had. Smith remained convinced that a firm attitude of UN and NATO was required to make these organizations perform successfully. If that firm attitude was not adopted, it would mean an invitation to the Bosnian Serbs to take not the slightest notice of the UN mandate, Smith thought.⁴⁰⁹

Therefore, NATO and indirectly the United States put pressure on Smith to induce the UN commanders to at least make more use of Close Air Support. In that connection Smith had continually been up and at it with De Lapresle and Janvier, but neither De Lapresle nor Janvier were really in favour of it. They feared that it would endanger the safety of their personnel. Smith concluded that to many people within the UN it was not clear how Close Air Support had to be used, what its effectiveness was, and what could be achieved with it. Another factor here was that NATO overestimated the effectiveness of UNPROFOR somewhat. Unlike NATO, UNPROFOR did not have a centralized command, no unity of command, and there was little consultation; it has already been pointed out that the organizations had been set up for different purposes to begin with. That made cooperation awkward. Then, in between there were still more organizations such as the monitoring mission of the EC (the ECMM), the Contact Group and UNHCR, and there were UNMOs. Through it all there was the problem that in addition there was friction between the UN headquarters in Sarajevo and Zagreb on the question who really was in command in Bosnia.

The main problem for Smith remained however that there was no 'unity of effort' between UNPROFOR and NATO. This difference could not even be removed at the highest level. NATO Secretary-General from October 1994, Claes, and his counterpart at the UN, Boutros-Ghali only wrote; they hardly ever spoke to each other. According to Leighton Smith politicians in general did not speak enough to each other on the question how the gaps between organizations and countries could be

⁴⁰⁷ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

⁴⁰⁸ Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, p. 200, 204 en 210.

⁴⁰⁹ Confidential Information (150).

bridged: ‘they could not get their act together’, Leighton Smith said.⁴¹⁰ Boutros-Ghali admitted to the NIOD investigators that indeed his relation with Claes was not too good. According to Boutros-Ghali that was because Claes felt a stronger American influence than his predecessor Wörner (Secretary-General until his death in August 1994).⁴¹¹ At the operational level contacts improved after a liaison officer of the International Military Staff of NATO became the link between the UN headquarters in New York and the NATO headquarters in Brussels. Equipped with a cryptofax this officer could arrange the traffic between the two headquarters. Because this officer was relieved every fortnight, it helped NATO to get to know the UN.⁴¹² Moreover, in Zagreb a NATO liaison officer was stationed who maintained the contacts between Zagreb and the NATO headquarters in Naples (Admiral Smith) and Vicenza (the headquarters of the Fifth Allied Tactical Airforce, in short 5ATAF).

The no-fly zone

One way to use air power was a preventive one. Bosnian airspace was a No Fly Zone. One of the objectives of the NATO operations in Bosnian airspace (in NATO terms known as Deny Flight), was to deny both warring factions the use of the Bosnian airspace, even if it in practice only applied to the Bosnian-Serb airforce. That objective was realized in so far as it concerned fighter aircraft; violation of the no-fly zone over Bosnia by Bosnian-Serb fighter aircraft was a rare. However, NATO fighter aircraft could do little against the use of helicopters by the contending parties and, consequently, a lot of criticism was heard on the failure to maintain the No Fly Zone for helicopter flights.

Both warring factions used helicopters intensively; the VRS mainly used them to move troops and equipment, to carry off casualties and also for trips of Bosnian-Serb liaison officers to Serbia: UNPROFOR units and UNMOs in Zepa and Srebrenica frequently observed helicopter flights over the Drina, usually at night, which was a sign of Serbian support to the VRS. However, this should not lead to the conclusion that the Bosnian Serbs were the main violators of the No Fly Zone; in May 1995 the Bosnian Muslims were responsible for the main part of the observed violations. The ABiH mainly used helicopters to move equipment.⁴¹³

When the No Fly Zone was declared in July 1993, NATO called its violation by helicopters of no military importance. This attitude of NATO changed when it had appeared that the warring factions also used helicopter flights to carry supplies to their troops. Consecutive Force Commanders of UNPROFOR feared revenge actions against UNPROFOR and UNHCR if NATO should try to attack helicopters of the warring factions. The NATO Military Committee accepted that, and urged for a system of permission for helicopter flights.⁴¹⁴ Nothing came of that and in later days the use of helicopters only increased, by both VRS and ABiH. For instance in September 1994 near the Stolice tower – an important communication tower – there even were reports of 130 flights on one day, which also raised doubts about quality of the reports because it was questionable whether there even were so many helicopters on the entire Balkans.⁴¹⁵ These reports came from UNPROFOR; double counts of helicopters seem to offer an explanation for such a high number.

Enforcing the No Fly Zone for helicopters met with a number of hurdles that had to be passed. NATO aircraft that had to follow the movements of helicopters over Bosnia (that could be done with flying radar installations, known as Airborne Warning and Control System or AWACS) seemed to experience quite some trouble. If they succeeded, attacking a helicopter was not so easy for NATO

⁴¹⁰ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

⁴¹¹ Interview Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 30/01/00.

⁴¹² Interview Manfred Eisele, 14/10/99.

⁴¹³ The VRS had eighteen Russian-made transport helicopters of the type MI-8 that could carry 24-28 people or 3000 kg freight, the ABiH had six and the VJ 64. In addition, parties respectively had some eighteen, three and 63 light Gazelle helicopters of French/British origin.

⁴¹⁴ Confidential Information (151).

⁴¹⁵ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

fighter aircraft in the mountainous terrain of Bosnia. That not only had to do with militarily-technical reasons, but mainly with the existing Rules of Engagement for UNPROFOR. Those prescribed that civilian helicopters, possibly with passengers on board, could not be attacked. For that reason a NATO pilot first personally had to confirm visually that it was not a civilian helicopter which was nearly impossible at night or when the helicopter was flying low. This made a complete ban on helicopter flights the obvious solution, but it would imply that flights with military helicopters to carry off casualties would not be permitted either. In that case the warring factions would undoubtedly want to test NATO by checking whether NATO would really dare to shoot down a helicopter carrying wounded. Within NATO that led to the conclusion that under the circumstances it would be better to refrain from attacking helicopters altogether. The US ambassador at NATO, Hunter, pointed out to Admiral Smith that this decision did affect NATO's credibility since it made the flying ban for helicopters a dead letter. Admiral Smith had confronted him by saying that he knew a solution: 'shoot them all down'. After that he had never heard again about the problem with maintaining the No Fly Zone for helicopters. The chairman of the NATO Military Committee also suggested to just shoot down all helicopters, but at the same time he pointed at the problem of evacuation of casualties and attempts to test NATO that it would entail.⁴¹⁶ In turn the fact that NATO left all helicopters alone, caused suspicion in Zagreb: there were UN and NATO officers in Zagreb who believed that NATO was not really prepared to hunt down helicopters, had to do with covert support for the Army of the Bosnian Muslims (the ABiH) rather than with fear of bad publicity.⁴¹⁷

3. Air strikes in practice: the second half of 1994

There was a procedure that had to be followed to come to an air strike. Air strikes served a political purpose, and the first step meant that it had to be determined what that political purpose was. Subsequently it had to be determined what military targets would enable the UN to achieve their political purpose. Then it had to be assessed what the military and political consequences of such an action would be, and what the next step would have to be. The answer to these questions would have to be consistent with the previously asked question on the political purpose. Finally the question had to be asked what precautions had to be taken to ensure the safety of UNPROFOR on the ground and whether these precautions could be taken prior to the air strike.

Carrying out the air strike was no concern of the UN 'key holder'. In addition, unlike in the case of Close Air Support, the Force Commander in Zagreb could not delegate carrying out the action to the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo. Neither could the highest NATO authority in the area, Admiral Smith, delegate the action to the commander of the Airforce that was actually going to carry out the attack (5ATAF in Vicenza referred to earlier).⁴¹⁸

Air strikes definitely had their practical limitations, resulting from the described request procedure. That made them ineffective for eliminating artillery and mortars because these could quickly be relocated. If they were deployed in densely populated areas, an air strike was in fact not a realistic option. The geographic conditions in Bosnia and the weather conditions did not make air strikes (and other airborne operations) any easier either. An additional problem was that proportionality was the basis: there had to be a certain relation between violation and punishment. At the same time an air strike had to be strong enough to be effective. Moreover, to have the desired effect every next air strike had to be stronger than the previous one. A complicating factor was that the warring factions could take precautions to reduce their vulnerability to subsequent air strikes, for instance by preparing their Air Defence Systems for counteractions against NATO aircraft: the risk that NATO aircraft could be shot down by the Bosnian-Serb air defence warned NATO to operate cautiously in Bosnian airspace. A

⁴¹⁶ Confidential Information (162); interview Leighton-Smith 06/06/00.

⁴¹⁷ Confidential Information (75).

⁴¹⁸ DCBC, 1485. Fax OCHKlu, 'Explanation commonly used terms operation 'Deny Flight', 26/04/94; De Lapresle in Biermann and Vadset, *UN Peacekeeping in Trouble*, p. 143.

highly complicating additional factor was that before air strikes could be carried out, the troops on the ground and the various UN organizations in the field had to be warned. That made them less vulnerable for countermeasures. Air strikes could also have undesired effects: the Bosnian Serbs could respond by taking UN personnel hostage, stopping convoys or breaking off negotiations.

The question whether misbehaviour of the warring factions should be punished with air strikes was a delicate subject that was bothering UNPROFOR and NATO. Discussions on the subject mainly became heated due to three causes: firstly, rather soon the warring factions did not care much about the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones around Sarajevo and Gorazde that had been declared by NATO in the first half of 1994; secondly, UN helicopters and UNPROFOR on the ground were under fire; and finally, the VRS threatened to shoot down aeroplanes with humanitarian relief that flew to Sarajevo, if the UN did not meet the demands of the VRS.

In September 1994 all this was reason for NATO Admiral Smith to suggest to start air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs to UNPROFOR Force Commander De Lapresle. Smith thought that the VRS were trying to push back political frontiers, and they could do as they liked. Direct reason for Smith to start meddling with politics was that NATO pilots were running risks in their aircraft: on 8 September 1994 the VRS fired at two British navy Sea Harriers with Surface-to-Air missiles (type SA-7), and elsewhere the same threatened to happen with other anti-aircraft missiles (type SA-6 and SA-2) because there the VRS were following NATO aircraft with their target tracking radar. Admiral Smith was convinced the VRS would increase such activities to test the credibility of the UN and NATO. For that reason he thought it necessary to send a signal to make the VRS change their behaviour and he proposed a series of air strikes. He also directly announced to Force Commander De Lapresle that if he should not accept this, Smith would take it to the highest political level.⁴¹⁹

Smith's premonition in the letter appeared to be correct. UNPROFOR indeed refused his request. In September 1994 Force Commander De Lapresle in Zagreb and Commander Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Rose were not prepared to start air strikes 'based on other considerations external to the United Nations', unmistakably meaning the United States. The series of air strikes proposed by Smith on four command centres and logistic installations as well as seven weapon sites, all of the VRS, was way beyond what they wanted. That would only cause counter-attacks by their VRS on UN personnel on the ground and on the Safe Areas, they feared. De Lapresle emphasized that for peacekeeping the use of force should be related to the established violation. He reverted to the objectives of air strikes by pointing out that when these were used the force should be proportional to the violation, and that it should be used as soon as possible after an incident to make that relation clear.

De Lapresle had a clear bottom-line: 'In this civil war, all is based on provocation and reaction'. De Lapresle's greatest fear was that the UN would lose its impartiality by using force without sufficient evidence and without relation to the violations; he argued that an uncomprehended air strike would not only risk the supposed impartiality of UNPROFOR, but would also mean the end of UNPROFOR's freedom of movement so their humanitarian task could no longer be performed. Another objection of the Force Commander against air strikes was that the troop-contributing nations had made their soldiers available as peacekeepers and not for fighting.

De Lapresle reiterated that his main staff officers and higher commanders in Bosnia, all from countries that contributed troops and were members of NATO, fully supported him. He was convinced of the correctness of his decision not to permit air strikes at the scale requested by Smith. De Lapresle even expressly informed Smith that he was not under command of the UN authorities. The final reason why De Lapresle thought these air strikes could not be carried out was, that they required protective measures. He was referring to the withdrawal plans for UNPROFOR that NATO was preparing, but that were far from ready at the moment. De Lapresle did recognize the necessity for

⁴¹⁹ DCBC, 1505. Smith to de Lapresle, 11/09/94, unnumbered; Confidential Information (162). Smith wrote that he was acting under orders, but not from whom. Probably from SACEUR, general Joulwan, who presented Smith's letter to the acting NATO Secretary-General that same day.

UNPROFOR and NATO to improve their mutual understanding. As a result the plan arose to have De Lapresle brief NATO on the situation, and to have the Permanent Representatives of the NATO member states from Brussels visit Sarajevo.⁴²⁰

A few days later NATO was brought up to date by generals De Lapresle and Rose. De Lapresle had done so earlier on 29 June 1994 in Brussels. Then he had opposed ‘frappes aériennes’ (air strikes) if there was no clear political objective and the political and military consequences had not been assessed thoroughly. If on a high level NATO and the UN would decide that air strikes were the right answer, then that was a grave mistake for the future of UNPROFOR, De Lapresle said. On 15 September 1994 De Lapresle and Rose were present at a meeting with the NATO Military Committee. There they were given the opportunity to adjust the image NATO had with regard to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. It became a repetition of moves.⁴²¹ De Lapresle and Rose once more explained that after all UNPROFOR’s mandate comprised only peacekeeping, and that UNPROFOR would never cross the line to a combat situation. De Lapresle remained opposed to air strikes; about Close Air Support he said that UNPROFOR only decided what requests would be made for Close Air Support. The question whether the request was accepted depended on many factors that were usually not known outside UNPROFOR, and it was certainly not true that all kinds of violations culminated until, when a certain level was exceeded, UNPROFOR decided to take action. De Lapresle’s major fears remained that the dialogue with the warring factions would be broken off. The remaining alternative, humiliation of UNPROFOR, was a lesser problem in his opinion than losing UNPROFOR’s neutrality.⁴²²

The interventions of De Lapresle, intended to prevent the use of air power to avoid risking the troops on the ground, had no effect. Within NATO, in particular in the United States, the prevailing opinion remained that a firmer hand was required for the Bosnian Serbs. That showed for instance shortly after De Lapresle’s appearance at the NATO Military Committee, at a meeting of the NATO ministers in Sevilla on 29 and 30 September 1994. The American Minister of Defence, Perry, presented proposals at this meeting to let NATO respond more ‘forceful’ to the Bosnian-Serb provocations. It was clear to the participants of this summit that the Americans had an additional objective in mind, i.e. to force the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Contact Group Peace Plan.

Though Perry’s British and French colleagues, Rifkind and Léotard, mitigated his ideas a little, they did reach agreement on how forceful had to be defined: attacking more than one target, and no more advance warnings. Rifkind stated that on the other hand if the Bosnian Serbs were no longer warned, that could cause problems in the form of countermeasures by the VRS, which could hinder the humanitarian relief.

The Netherlands was a not unimportant player in the airspace over Bosnia, but was not involved in this consultation between the United States, France and the United Kingdom: that had taken place outside the conference room. Yet the Netherlands did support the proposed line of these three, through Minister Voorhoeve of Defence, who then had his first meeting with NATO ministers since he had become a minister, well over a month earlier. Voorhoeve too pointed at possible counter-productive results of inexpert use of ‘forceful’ actions for the inhabitants of Srebrenica and for Dutchbat.⁴²³

Here also the use of the word ‘forceful’ covered up the differences of opinion between Americans and Europeans: unlike the impression Perry gave at a press conference, the American proposals were not accepted decisions and neither was there an agreed NATO view.⁴²⁴ The differences on the interpretation of the word ‘forceful’ directly surfaced again: the Americans blamed the British

⁴²⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 79, File 2.5.4. Air Support 17/08/93 – 06/02/95. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 12/09/94, No. Z-1397; Letter de Lapresle to Admiral Smith, 12/09/94. Secret.

⁴²¹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 62/77, File 2.8 Nato 25/05/93 – 05/06/95. Fax Office of the FC to Commander BHC Fwd, Remarks of LtGen de Lapresle to NATO [29/06/94], 02/0794, No. FC/94/409.

⁴²² DCBC, 1505. HPMV to CDS, report 36th MC/PS, 15/09/94.

⁴²³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05276. Code Van Mierlo 377, 03/10/94.

⁴²⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05276. Code Veenendaal NATO 1534, 03/10/94.

for their ambiguous attitude; initially, in Sevilla they had shown themselves advocates of a more forceful course of action, and after that they once again opted for muddling through.⁴²⁵

Forceful action: will UN and NATO reach agreement?

Force Commander General De Lapresle remained against this more 'forceful' action. In the first place he thought it would increase the risks for the UN personnel, and he wondered whether the troop-contributing nations and the permanent members of the Security Council were prepared to take that risk; it would mean risking more casualties among UN personnel. De Lapresle once more listed the reasons to oppose that. It had appeared to him that the Bosnian Serbs did 'understand' a direct response by the UN to a VRS action, but not when it came much later. And in practice it would always take 24 hours to respond to a VRS action, at least when it involved inhabited areas. And in practice it nearly always involved attacks in inhabited areas: warring factions liked to deploy their heavy weapons there to make the risk of collateral damage caused by the opponents as high as possible in the hope that they would not dare to attack.

The 24 hours response time was caused by the fact that for bombing a target in inhabited areas NATO had to allocate aircraft with the correct bombs; bombs that could be aimed exactly, known as Precision Guided Munition. That technique was still highly advanced in 1995 and there were only few aircraft that could drop these bombs. Precision Guided Munition means that during its fall the bomb can find the target with the aid of sensors, usually because someone on the ground (a Forward Air Controller) aims a laser beam at the target. Such bombs are unlike the then more common 'dumb bombs'; these are not able to be aimed at the target as soon as they have been dropped. And the problem was that most aircraft were armed with these 'dumb bombs': these only had a one percent chance to hit a small target such as a tank or a gun and could hardly be used to bomb targets in inhabited areas.

In his argument against more forceful action De Lapresle pointed out that in peacekeeping it was the custom to give the warring faction to be attacked a short advance warning, and accordingly General Rose did so in practice. If they chose not to warn the party to be attacked any more, that would lead to more casualties among UN personnel, and that had to be balanced with the life of one single pilot. Finally De Lapresle compared the air actions with the Rules of Engagement for UNPROFOR: those did not even permit retaliation.

At the NATO summit in Sevilla the idea had been broached to give NATO at least four targets before starting air actions; that was in line with Smith's ideas to start a series of air strikes. However, there was little understanding for these thoughts within UNPROFOR; there were hardly any areas with four targets. And then there still was the general objection on the part of UNPROFOR that the Bosnian Serbs had to be aware of the justification of attacks on those targets at the moment. If not, it would only cause an increased risk for the UN personnel in a wider area.

Akashi and De Lapresle began to suspect NATO of using air power against the Bosnian Serbs as a secondary objective of putting pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Contact Group plan. Akashi and De Lapresle rejected that: according to them NATO air power was intended as support for UNPROFOR and not to strive after political objectives. The Bosnian Serbs had to be put under pressure to accept the Contact Group plan with economic and political means. If NATO should use air power to increase that pressure, it could only lead to escalation, departure of UNPROFOR, and a public opinion in the Republika Srpska that turned against the political process.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05241. Code Van Mierlo 184, 27/10/94. Assistant Secretary of State Kornblum said that to Van Mierlo.

⁴²⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 07 and 08/10/94, Nos. Z-1525 and Z-1529. Record of Discussions, Meeting of SRSG, FC and Staff to Review Fixed Targets, and the Implications of NATO Defence Ministers' Meeting, Sevilla, 30/09/94.

However, within NATO the train thundered on; it were mainly the Americans who kept emphasizing that the Bosnian Serbs had to be tackled with air strikes. They were not to be stopped by Akashi or De Lapresle. The United States already made a list of decisions for the North Atlantic Council to the effect that in the event of air strikes no advance warning should be given any more and that at least four targets had to be authorized.⁴²⁷ Akashi still tried to put it to Perry that this was a disastrous plan when the American Minister of Defence visited Split, but his arguments fell on deaf ears. The American position in the North Atlantic Council of 5 October 1994 in Brussels was that first NATO had to determine how to use air power. That way they were driving at a confrontation with the UN: if Boutros-Ghali did not agree with this line, he should just inform NATO about it and then it could be discussed. The Netherlands supported that vision, but other troop-contributing nations adopted a more cautious attitude: the French did not want to leave the proportionality principle, and the British wanted to consult with the UNPROFOR commanders on the consequences of the NATO decision. The Danes had their doubts about the wisdom of the decision to attack four targets, and the Norwegians wanted more insight into the UN position before NATO took a decision.

However, the United States kept deliberately aiming at a policy of informing rather than consulting the UN. The Americans wanted to end the 'pin-prick' operations that endangered the pilots, as NATO Admiral Smith had earlier made clear to UN General Rose. NATO's first worry must be the safety of the crews, they decided.⁴²⁸ Boutros-Ghali was informed of the - unchanged - NATO decision without asking his approval, in accordance with the American line. Subsequently it was no surprise that Boutros-Ghali could only inform his NATO colleague, substitute Secretary-General Balanzino⁴²⁹, that the Brussels decisions 'create problems for me'. The Russians had already asked him how the NATO decisions related to those of the Security Council and the neutral position of UNPROFOR. The Russians wondered whether NATO took into account the consequences for the humanitarian relief and the responses by the Bosnian Serbs who undoubtedly would start taking hostages.⁴³⁰

For the UN command in Zagreb it remained to be seen what it was that NATO really wanted. There were no real objections to attacks on the Bosnian-Serb Air Defence Systems provided that these were small-scale and provided they were carried out according to the dual key procedure. Akashi warned that NATO could not just override the current procedures for the use of air power. Consequently, Zagreb saw the planned air strikes as NATO actions rather than UNPROFOR actions. For practical reasons alone Zagreb already had problems with this NATO *alleingang*. The question arose for instance: if four targets were assigned, did NATO pick one or were all four of them attacked? It already was a great problem to warn UNPROFOR personnel in the field at short notice when one target was attacked. NATO seemed to fully overlook that. Another objection was that NATO only focused on one party: the Bosnian Serbs. However, more UNPROFOR soldiers had been killed as a result of actions of the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats than through actions of the Bosnian Serbs. According to Akashi, the main reason that as far as UNPROFOR was concerned air power would only be used against the VRS was a practical one: only the Surface-to-Air missiles of the VRS constituted a risk to the NATO aircraft and that way hindered the use of air power; and only the VRS had fighter aircraft. The other warring factions in Bosnia did not have those.

The NATO proposals were made plausible with arguments for a more effective use of the aircraft, but Akashi thought that in addition there were all kinds of other motives for the American call for more forceful action: according to him the proposals were actually meant to exert pressure on the Bosnian Serbs. At least the Bosnian-Serb regime in Pale had understood it like that, he reported to Annan. Neither did Akashi want to have anything to do with reasons of internal American nature to

⁴²⁷ DCBC, no. 2021. Secure Fax DCBC to Sitten Klu, 051819Z Oct 94, no. 1451.

⁴²⁸ Confidential Information (151).

⁴²⁹ Balanzino, Deputy NATO Secretary-General under Wörner, became acting Secretary-General after the latter's death on 13 August 1994. He held that post until Claes became Secretary-General on 17 October 1994.

⁴³⁰ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 07/10/94, No. MSC-3256. Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations to The Secretary-General, 06/10/94, No. 541/n.

come to a more forceful course of action. Those reasons were that American Congress was still exerting pressure to lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims. The European troop-contributing nations did not like that because it entailed the risk of an escalation with all the connected risks for the UNPROFOR ground forces. That escalation could eventually result in withdrawal of UNPROFOR. That in turn would mean that the American ground forces would have to come to Bosnia (see previous chapter). The American government wanted to prevent that and for that reason they appeared to want to get ahead of Congress by a more forceful action (read: air strikes) against the Bosnian Serbs. Akashi also considered another American argument irrelevant, that of the American air force being only too happy to prove that they could play a role in a conflict like the one in Bosnia. The American reasoning was that until that moment the NATO aircraft had not been deployed in the correct manner over Bosnia; Akashi and the staff in Zagreb considered that absurd arguments. With 'the correct manner' the Americans meant that the aircraft had not been used for air strikes but only in an attempt to make an impression on the Bosnian Serbs. The UN could use a similar argument: the white-painted armoured vehicles were not used for their intended purpose either. In short, NATO thought that UNPROFOR had to deter the Bosnian Serbs, with NATO support. Akashi was convinced that the deterrence theories did not work in Bosnia. Those theories were only effective if UNPROFOR could escalate in the same manner as the contending parties could.⁴³¹ And that was not within the possibilities of UNPROFOR.

So what it came down to was that Akashi thought that what NATO wanted would lead to escalation, and he did not want that. That fundamental difference of opinion caused a lot of tussle. The apparent result was that NATO got the best of it: In October 1994 NATO and UN confirmed that they were determined to make an effective use of air power to deter attacks on UNPROFOR or the Safe Areas. In practice cooperation between UN and NATO remained necessary because of the dual key systems, so future conflicts remained possible.

The wording of the compromise between UN and NATO was that if air strikes were necessary, the highest authorities of UN and NATO on site would observe the following procedure: in accordance with the proportionality principle targets would be chosen from a prearranged list of targets. As a rule that would be three or four targets. Less was also an option, if it was not possible to identify so many targets. More than four would also have to be possible on occasion. Then it was the task of Force Commander De Lapresle to determine the priorities and sequence. As regards the advance warning of the contending parties to be attacked it had been determined that a general warning would be sent ('there will be an air strike'), but not a tactical warning (where and when the attack would). An exception to that could be made if Akashi and De Lapresle considered it necessary to prevent casualties among the population or UNPROFOR. However, such a warning could not be issued without permission from NATO Admiral Smith. This arrangement seemed to indicate that NATO had made itself subordinate to the UN again, but that did not appear from the way in which this arrangement was made public: NATO was the first to make their views clear to the press, the troop-contributing nations and Russia. That raised some eyebrows in New York because the UN has already planned a meeting of the troop-contributing nations to make it clear what the agreement entailed.⁴³²

The proof of the pudding

The first test for the reassessed relations between UN and NATO came on 21 November 1994. It became a telling example of the use of air power, including the discussion on how exactly such deployment should be arranged and what the consequences of the attack would be.

⁴³¹ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 13/10/94, No. Z-1560.

⁴³² NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Only Cable Annan to Knutsson on mission with the Secretary-General. 28/10/94, No. 3519.

During the previous weeks VRS fighter aircraft had departed from the Bosnian-Serb airfield of Udbina, in the Krajina in Croatia; a clear violation of the flying ban. These fighter aircraft had attacked nearby Bihac, one of the six Safe Areas. In response, on 21 November NATO carried out an air strike on this airfield, the most extensive one so far in the Bosnian war. In the decision-making process for this specific attack the familiar pattern of different views between UN and NATO cropped up again: De Lapresle and Rose declared to oppose attacks on aircraft and air defence systems, because VRS soldiers might be killed. So the target of the attack was limited to rendering the airfield useless. NATO Admiral Smith would have preferred to press ahead, but he accepted that the attack would only be aimed at the runway system and those air defence systems that constituted a direct threat to NATO aircraft. That did remain frustrating for NATO; the wording of Smith's Air Commander, Ryan, was quite explicit: 'You can't bomb the SAM sites unless they shoot at you. You can't pre-emptively take them out. Those kinds of restrictions are wacko. That is a stupid way to run a war.' At a press conference after the successful attack Smith too could not disguise the discord between UN and NATO either. According to him it applied for the UN that 'their principle concern is the safety of their forces and their mission, being peacekeeping'. That was what the attack had been geared to, 'rather than what some of us might consider more military effective.'⁴³³

Right away there was a new opportunity to test the cooperation between UN and NATO. The next day, on 22 November, the VRS fired two Surface-to-Air missiles (type SA-2) at two British aircraft patrolling over Bihac. It were near misses but NATO was in uproar again. NATO Admiral Smith wanted to respond by attacking all Air Defence Systems deployed in Bihac. Again the UN put up a fight. Rose did not want to respond to the incident, because he was afraid a NATO air strike would end in a war orchestrated by Mladic. Rose considered it wiser to send one more warning first. However, Rose was overruled: Not only De Lapresle but now even Akashi thought they had warned enough but apparently the Bosnian Serbs were not prepared to listen. Smith and De Lapresle did agree to keep a second group of aircraft standby to attack other SAM sites. However, that would not happen until the moment that VRS air defence acted against NATO aircraft. The attacks were carried out on 23 November and they were successful.⁴³⁴

In the meantime the VRS continued their offensive on the ground in Bihac. In response to that on 25 November NATO aircraft took off again that were authorized to give Close Air Support. However, that did not happen because the aircraft could not find the tanks and the artillery. Bosnian-Serb air defence had already been in action again to be able to fire anti-aircraft missiles at NATO aircraft. For that reason Admiral Smith requested permission to attack the SAM site from which that had happened. Although the circumstances had not materially changed, Akashi did not permit air strikes this time, for two reasons: in the first place he did not want to disturb the 'extremely sensitive negotiations' that had started between the Bosnian Muslims and the Bosnian Serbs. The second argument was even more important: Akashi considered the combative attitude of the VRS at that moment a reason not to start air strikes, in view of the risks for the UN personnel on the ground and for the mission as the whole.

That way it looked as if there were not going to be any air strikes for the time being because the Bosnian Serbs were playing cat and mouse with UNPROFOR and NATO. Akashi did realize the far-reaching character of his intention not to permit any new air strikes for the time being; that was a reason for him to apply to his 'superiors': the UN in New York and the troop-contributing nations would first have to declare themselves on new air strikes.⁴³⁵

Akashi's intention also caused discord between him and Force Commander De Lapresle. They agreed on their rejection of new air strikes, but Akashi recognized that this meant that the Bosnian-Serb Air Defence Systems remained operational. He realized that as a result enforcing the No Fly Zone and

⁴³³ Lutgert and De Winter, *Check the horizon*, p. 321-327, p. 301-315. The quoted statements by Ryan come from: M.P. Kelly, 'Good to go'. *The rescue of Scott O'Grady from Bosnia*, Annapolis, 1996, p. 15-16.

⁴³⁴ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 22/11/94, No. Z-1769.

⁴³⁵ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Only Cable Akashi to the Secretary-General, 26/11/94, No. Z-1806.

giving Close Air Support might be no longer possible in the future. De Lapresle opposed that. He stated not to have any objections against future Close Air Support. Neither did De Lapresle have any objections against Rose's idea of limited air strikes (only attack unimportant equipment, and warn 20 minutes in advance).⁴³⁶

Akashi was under pressure from NATO, that wanted to continue large-scale air strikes on the Bosnian-Serb Air Defence Systems. Akashi feared that NATO would carry out new air strikes without observing the agreed the dual key procedure, so he reverted to a kill-or-cure remedy. For fear of the negative consequences of new air strikes Akashi proposed as 'the lesser of two evils' to provisionally suspend *all* NATO flights over Bosnia, so also the regular patrol flights. New York realized that new problems had developed in the relation with NATO. Therefore, Boutros-Ghali sent his Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs, Goulding, to Brussels to clarify matters.

During this period (late November) the VRS were very active with their air defence. In five days' time no less than fifteen NATO aircraft had been followed by the so-called target tracking radars of the VRS air defence (radar lock-ons), that can be used to send a Surface-to-Air-missile onto its target. In addition, nine Surface-to-Air missiles were actually launched. That made it clear to NATO as well that in such a setting the possibilities to protect UNPROFOR and the Safe Areas were very limited. Yet it was also clear that in the not so near future the problems between the UN and NATO would persist.

Consultation between NATO and UN at the highest level

That the gap between NATO and UN was still deep, appeared from a verbal dispute that broke out at the highest level between these organizations. At the consultation with the troop-contributing nations, UN Undersecretary-General Annan had said that NATO was applying pressure to achieve 'widespread use of air power' in Bosnia to eliminate the Air Defence Systems of the Bosnian Serbs. NATO on the other hand stated that it was only about the safety of NATO fighter aircraft (and also UN transport aircraft). At the consultation acting NATO Secretary-General Balanzino stated that suppression of the Air Defence Systems was bound to the principle of the dual key; for consolation he promised the UN that NATO would stick to this dual key procedure. Balanzino also pointed out that the limitation was that only sites that were a threat to NATO aircraft could be target. That was not the same as the 'widespread campaign' of air strikes, for which neither the Military Committee nor the North Atlantic Council had given permission.

With these statements the NATO Secretary-General did take a sting out of the conflict between UN and NATO. Claes' promise that NATO would stick to the dual key procedure, meant a return to the well-known routine, in which the UN took the lead. Boutros-Ghali took another sting from the conflict because he was of the opinion that actual suspension of all NATO flights would cause more problems than it would solve. That meant Boutros-Ghali rebuked his Special Representative Akashi, who was the one who had proposed to suspend these flights. Boutros-Ghali tried to cover that diplomatically by pointing out that at least Akashi's worries had once more been brought to the attention of the military and political leaders of NATO.

To the dismay of New York the affair had an unpleasant end because a UN spokesman in Sarajevo gave 'exactly the wrong signal at an extremely delicate time' by stating that it was indeed true that NATO had suspended flights over Bosnia on the request of the UN; which was what Akashi had proposed but the UN Secretary-General had not agreed and in reality it had not come to that. While Boutros-Ghali had personally done his best to keep this idea of Akashi behind closed doors, a spokesman unwillingly brought the discord out into the open.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 26/11/94, No. Z-1807 with attached Interoffice Memorandum de Lapresle to Akashi (Only), 25/11/94.

⁴³⁷ NIOD Coll. Ashton. Only Cables Annan to Akashi, info Goulding, 30/11/94, No. 3974, 01/12/94, No. 3987 and 02/12/94, No. 4005; Letter Sergio Balanzino to Kofi Annan, 30/11/94, No. DSG/94/895.

Reactions of the Bosnian Serbs

The Western media welcomed the new air actions: at last the time of empty threats was over. It did become clear that these attacks started a chain reaction in the relation between Bosnian Serbs on the one hand and NATO and UN on the other.

The attack at the airfield of Udbina on 21 November did not directly invoke reactions on the part of the Bosnian Serbs, but countermeasures taken by the VRS caused major problems for both NATO and the UN: hostages were taken and the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR was restricted. After that the Bosnian Serbs made it increasingly difficult for NATO to operate freely in the airspace over Bosnia by activating their Air Defence Systems (with Surface-to-Air missiles of the type SA-2 and SA-6): the Bosnian Serbs in fact no longer permitted NATO aircraft to fly over Bosnia without their approval. Consequently, the humanitarian flights at Sarajevo came to a halt and Sarajevo airport remained besieged. This event induced the newly appointed NATO Secretary-General Claes to say that he had learned his lesson that peace-enforcement and peacekeeping did not mix. A decisive peace could not be imposed by NATO from the air, as long as on the ground the UN was commanded, deployed and equipped for peacekeeping, Claes thought.⁴³⁸

The Bosnian Serbs complained bitterly about NATO: during the air strikes of 23 November 'vandal NATO aircraft' had caused damage, many civilians and VRS soldiers had been killed or wounded and extensive material damage had been inflicted. The Bosnian Serbs also complained about damage caused by the air strikes on 25 November. However, that was not justified because that day NATO had not dropped any arms. There had been hits at three locations but they came from pieces of Surface-to-Air missiles that the VRS had fired at NATO aircraft that day.

The Bosnian Serbs then declared to General Rose in Sarajevo that in their opinion UNPROFOR was not an enemy, but NATO was. NATO used UNPROFOR as a shield to carry out actions against the VRS, the reproach was. The VRS made the reopening of Sarajevo airport dependent on a written guarantee by the Security Council or the Secretary-General that NATO aircraft would not take action, unless NATO aircraft themselves were attacked. Akashi did feel for such a declaration on NATO's role in Bosnia, in view of all misunderstandings that existed among the warring factions and in the media.

That way Akashi underestimated the problems such a declaration would cause among the warring factions and his political bosses: members of the Bosnian government still believed that it was NATO's task to intervene on their behalf. In turn many Bosnian Serbs thought that too: NATO supported the Bosnian Muslims. Annan did not agree to draw up such a declaration because of the problems it would cause with NATO. Such an explanation would first have to be tuned with NATO and Annan pointed out that Boutros-Ghali wanted to prevent that, because of the tensed relations with NATO. Akashi himself should issue a declaration in Annan's opinion.⁴³⁹

4. Discussions on air strikes in spring 1995

Between November and April it remained relatively quiet in the field of the use of air power. The discussions on the subject only broke out again when the contending parties resumed the fighting in the period April/May 1995. By then Rose had been succeeded by Smith, and De Lapresle by Janvier. The changed situation and new people at the key positions also caused new discussions within the UN on the deployment of air power.

In April 1995 the situation had been reached that it was clear to everybody of the UNPROFOR staff in Zagreb that the UN mandate in its current form no longer worked. Furthermore the situation

⁴³⁸ Biermann and Vadset, *UN Peacekeeping in Trouble*, p. 25-26, 39.

⁴³⁹ Confidential information (158). UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 62/77, File 2.8, Nato 23/05/93 – 05/07/95. Outgoing Fax Andreev to Akashi, 05/12/94, No. CCA-BHC-394; UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 59, File 2.5 BHC 04/07/94 – 31/12/94. Fax MA to Comd to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 03/12/94, Exchanges Karadzic/Rose.

was characterized by hopelessness, because no military or political solution could be anticipated. There were major problems on the ground and in the air. On the ground UNPROFOR was confronted with the situation that casualties among UNPROFOR soldiers kept increasing. By now it was clear about the use of air power that it caused major risks for UNPROFOR because UN soldiers were potential hostages, as would once again soon appear.⁴⁴⁰

The Commander Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo, General Smith, saw that the existing possibilities to use air power were inadequate for three fundamental reasons. Firstly he emphasized that these procedures were geared to minor violations, for instance of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement or the ban on the use of heavy weapons in certain zones. According to Smith those procedures were no longer suitable because the acts of the warring factions could no longer be classified as 'minor violations'. Then there was the problem that air power had an 'all or nothing' character: UNPROFOR did not possess any instrument between filing a protest at the warring factions and actions from the air. Finally he pointed out that it could be decided to use air power, but that could not protect the population in the Safe Areas.⁴⁴¹

Force Commander General Janvier in Zagreb also recognized a number of fundamental problems connected with the use of air power. For instance on 12 May in Paris he made it clear to Boutros-Ghali that air power had lost its deterrent effect. The contending parties were no longer impressed when aircraft flew over their positions and they were only threatened with the use of air power. Janvier did not oppose air strikes, but the threshold for it should be high. Otherwise the same problems as in November would reoccur: a cat-and-mouse play by which the Bosnian Serbs benefited. Furthermore, Janvier wanted to keep up UNPROFOR's neutrality: use of air power could only be possible if the Bosnian Muslims would demilitarize the Safe Areas.⁴⁴² For only then it would be possible to determine that if the VRS shelled a Safe Area, this did not serve any military purpose. Then the procedure to request Close Air Support could be started.

In contrast to these fundamental problems for the use of air power, at the same time the UN was under increasing international pressure to use air power. The public opinion still was that the population in the Safe Areas had to be protected that way. That was not hindered by the fact that Boutros-Ghali once more pointed out to the Security Council that UNPROFOR only had a mandate to deter attacks on the Safe Areas and that air power had its limitations on deterring such attacks on Safe Areas.⁴⁴³

The reply by UNPROFOR spokesmen to the question how probable it was that there would be new air strikes did not help the troublesome considerations about the use of air power either. In a general sense that reply was unfortunate. These spokesmen gave the impression that the activities in the air would be limited because of the fears that the VRS would take hostages. In view of the many fundamental problems with the use of air power their expectation was not so strange, but they should not have said it. That fostered speculations about a new, more restrictive policy as regards the user of air power, while on the other hand it was stated that policy was unchanged.

In a reaction to what the spokesmen had said, the UN headquarters in New York intervened and came with the following line the spokesmen had to follow. Indeed New York stated that the policy was unchanged: air strikes had always been and would always be an option. Determining the effectiveness of air strikes was done by UN/UNPROFOR and NATO jointly, also with a view to its consequences. In practice the UN wanted to determine for each case separately whether to call in support from NATO. For every decision in this connection Force Commander Janvier would take into account the arrangements between NATO and the UN, but still every time balance them against the

⁴⁴⁰ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Non-Paper for FC/DFC Only, Secret, 'Current position. Where we stand', 14/05/95.

⁴⁴¹ NIOD, Coll. Smith. BHC Situation Report signed Lt Gen R.A. Smith, 05/04/95.

⁴⁴² NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Paper: 'Briefing to SecGen. Options in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Paris – 12/05/95', Secret, 12/05/95.

⁴⁴³ Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council Resolutions 982 (1995) and 987 (1995), 30/05/95, No. S/1995/444, §§ 40 and 58.

safety of the own troops. This position was arrived at after contacts between the NATO Military Committee and Janvier, while Janvier expressed his surprise that NATO had not applied to the UN Secretary-General.⁴⁴⁴ The impression that still the policy regarding air strikes had become more restrictive, had not been removed by the confirmation of the old policy: after all, also in November air strikes had already been cancelled because of possible countermeasures on the ground by the Bosnian Serbs.

For Janvier's staff in Zagreb indeed the safety of the own troops was in all cases an important factor. As a consequence Zagreb anticipated that, still in a general sense, a vicious circle would develop if air strikes were started. After all, many of the air actions against the Bosnian Serbs that UNPROFOR had permitted, had been caused by provocations of the ABiH, in the opinion of Zagreb. Then the propaganda machine of the Bosnian Muslims provoked a reaction by the Bosnian Serbs. That VRS reaction usually turned out as an overreaction, which in turn gave the Bosnian Muslims ammunition for a next round in the propaganda war to stir the UN into action.

The first time there were air strikes again was late May at Pale; these attacks have already been discussed in the previous chapter. These had been carefully prepared by Akashi, Janvier and NATO Admiral Smith. Because the ammunition site was near some villages, it had been divided into two sectors. In one of the sectors there was little risk of collateral damage. That sector was attacked first on 25 May to demonstrate the intentions of UNPROFOR. On 26 May it appeared necessary once more to demonstrate UNPROFOR's forcefulness. Then it appeared that the image of Akashi as a person who was very reluctant to use force, required some putting into perspective: Akashi had no problems whatsoever with these new air strikes. Now UNPROFOR was even more aggressive than NATO: Akashi wanted to attack the entire ammunition site, but this time it had exactly been Admiral Smith and his Air commander General Ryan who had been reluctant for fear of hitting civilians.⁴⁴⁵

Boutros-Ghali too strongly opposed the idea that Akashi did not want much in this connection. The problem that was troubling Akashi in many cases was, according to Boutros-Ghali, that he received contradictory military advice, partly based on visions of the governments of France and the United Kingdom. The long struggle between American institutes such as Congress, the White House, the State Department, the CIA and the Pentagon, before policy decisions could be taken was not really helpful either. Nevertheless the result on the American side always was that the Americans wanted to show that they were doing something in Bosnia, and that was only possible in the form of NATO air strikes.⁴⁴⁶

Of course the response of the VRS to the use of air power had a substantial influence on the discussions. The response of the VRS to Close Air Support and particularly on air strikes was extremely violent and aimed at UNPROFOR: UNMOs and UN personnel at isolated observation posts were taken hostage, the supply route to the Safe Areas was closed, aircraft bringing aid to Sarajevo were fired at, and UNPROFOR was ignored. Experience had taught that the response of the Bosnian Serbs came quickly after the use of air power and would paralyze UNPROFOR for two to six weeks.⁴⁴⁷

Consequences of the air strikes on Pale for the use of air power

Paralyzation of UNPROFOR was exactly what happened after the air strikes at Pale on 25 and 26 May 1995. The Bosnian Serbs stated that UNPROFOR had taken sides and acted accordingly by taking

⁴⁴⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cables Annan to Akashi, 30/03/95, No. MSC-1006; 31/03/95, No.1028; Akashi to Annan, 31/03/95, Z-519; ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Code Veenendaal 776 from PV Navo to Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence, 17/05/95.

⁴⁴⁵ Confidential interview (50).

⁴⁴⁶ Interview Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 30/01/01.

⁴⁴⁷ BLS/Kab. Interoffice Memorandum G 2 to COS, 'VRS reaction to NATO air strikes', 11/04/95. Sent by fax UNPF HQ G 3 Land Ops to G-2 Crisis staff, 25/04/95.

hundreds of hostages among UN personnel.⁴⁴⁸ The previous chapter already discussed in detail what consequences of these air strikes were for UNPROFOR; here we will once more look at the consequences of these air strikes on UN policy as regards the use of Close Air Support. Those consequences were considerable, certainly in combination with the cancellation of the plan to withdraw UNPROFOR from the eastern enclaves (also referred to in the previous chapter). That kept UNPROFOR vulnerable and there was nothing to do but ‘muddle through’ for UNPROFOR. The same applied for the use of air power

Janvier wanted to avoid further confrontations and a further increase of the tension and the use of Close Air Support. UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali also saw how considerable the consequences of the use of air power were. For that reason he took a far-reaching political decision on the use of Close Air Support after the air strikes at Pale: from now on Boutros-Ghali wanted to be consulted personally both for air strikes and Close Air Support, he informed Akashi in a confidential instruction. In practice that meant that the UN key for the use of air power was now in the hands of the Secretary-General himself. Though that might cause problems due to time pressure, still Boutros-Ghali wanted to be involved; he stated as reason that ‘in the Bosnian-Serb mind’ the difference between air strikes and Close Air Support was not recognized sufficiently.⁴⁴⁹ Air strikes were soon out of the question as a result of the hostage crisis, Close Air Support remained available as support for the commanders on the ground, even if there were doubts about it among the press.

The Bosnian Serbs had been punished by the air strikes on Pale, but they did not submit. On eight consecutive days they fired at NATO aircraft with shoulder-launched missiles and air defence. It did not stop at threats: on 2 June 1995 the VRS shot down an American F-16. It was going to be an incident with major consequences. The cause was that on that day VRS fighter aircraft were taking off from the repaired airfield of Udbina, and that had attracted NATO aircraft. Presumably that was exactly what they wanted, because an anti-aircraft battery (type SA-6) had purposefully been deployed in the vicinity of the airfield. That way the VRS tried to be sure of a NATO target. Here in a certain sense NATO had to pay for not fully eliminating the VRS air defence in November.⁴⁵⁰

The pilot, Scott O’Grady, managed to eject from the aircraft and landed in Bosnian-Serb territory, in Bihac. Subsequently, the Bosnian Serbs played a game of psychological warfare with regard to his fate. Mladic told Janvier that he had the pilots of the crashed aircraft in his power. Janvier called NATO Admiral Smith who then knew that he did not have to believe Mladic: there had only been one pilot on board the aircraft and Mladic had spoken of pilots. Even apart from that Mladic’ message to Janvier was not consistent with the facts: O’Grady had indeed managed to stay out of the hands of the Bosnian Serbs.

Then discussions broke out on the question whether a rescue operation had to be organized; that was not without risks with O’Grady being in Bosnian-Serb territory. NATO Admiral Smith proposed a rescue operation. The French government appeared to have objections to that, because still French UN personnel were held hostage.⁴⁵¹ Joulwan said that he had informed NATO Secretary-

⁴⁴⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 62/77, File 2.8 Nato 25/05/93 – 05/07/95. The statements came from Parliament chairman Momcilo Krajisnik on Radio Knin, 26/05/95, 16.00 hrs. Krajisnik also came with the reproach that the Bosnian troops were using the Safe Areas, including Srebrenica, as base of operations. UNPROFOR 26/05/95, 23.30 hrs.

⁴⁴⁹ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Only Cable Janvier to Smith, 30/05/95.

⁴⁵⁰ DCBC, 2822. Deny Flight Intsum 004/Jun/95, 071400Z Jun 95.

⁴⁵¹ Later, in September, two French pilots ended up in the same situation as O’Grady. For them too, a rescue operation was discussed: Joulwan wanted a rescue mission for *every* shot down pilot, not only for O’Grady. In this connection NATO Admiral Smith only wanted to inform UNPROFOR and not ask their permission. At the start of the operation Smith had telephoned the NATO liaison officer at the UNPF staff of Janvier in Zagreb, Rudd, with the message: ‘tell Janvier I’m going to get them’. Janvier only replied that he wished Smith success and asked to tell him if he needed any help. At this point Janvier at least was helpful enough not to attempt to stop the rescue operation, even though such an operation was not without risks for UNPROFOR. Attempts to rescue them on 21 September failed; later they were still released through negotiations. Smith told the NIOD that the French pilots had been tortured by the Bosnian Serbs (broken legs, contusions) but that Paris had carefully kept that quiet.

General Claes that he would not be bothered by it and that he did want to go after O'Grady. In his opinion that was within the Rules of Engagement.

Indeed a rescue operation was launched for pilot Scott O'Grady, with the result that he was taken to safety by American marines on 8 June; subsequently O'Grady became a hero in the United States. The VRS did not come into action when he was liberated, though they were in the vicinity. Eventually shooting down O'Grady and the subsequent rescue operation had little effect on the relations between VRS and UNPROFOR. Something else did change: it further limited the possibilities for the use of air power.

5. After the O'Grady incident: air power in July 1995

Shooting down the F-16 of O'Grady taught NATO much about the possibilities of the Air Defence Systems of the Bosnian Serbs: it appears that the VRS were able and prepared to utilize the possibilities of an integrated Air Defence System. Such a system meant that already from a great distance the VRS radars could lock onto the NATO aircraft, and that information on aircraft movements was relayed to their Air Defence in real-time. Then it had become clear that the VRS actually intended to make use of their possibilities and that is what they did.

The VRS Air Defence in July 1995

The VRS had the availability of this highly adequate integrated Air Defence System because they had full control over the 'old' Yugoslav Air Defence System. That had been modernized in the early nineties and after the disintegration of Yugoslavia it had been maintained

This integrated system was composed of radar installations and air defence installations that covered a large area and were interconnected. The area where the radar systems were deployed that were used by VRS at least included Serbia and Montenegro. Consequently, the area covered by these radar systems stretched far beyond the former Yugoslavia. The result was that the Bosnian Serbs could benefit optimally from this system: they could already see NATO aircraft on their radar screens shortly after they had departed from Italy or from carriers in the Adriatic Sea. By the way, this system was not exclusively available to the Bosnian Serbs: the Serb regime in Belgrade could also monitor the airspace over Bosnia. However, there are no indications that Belgrade also played a decisive role in the command and control of the Bosnian-Serb Air Defence Systems, or the support of the VRS radar target tracking.

In the above, reference has repeatedly been made to the option, occasionally discussed in NATO circles, to eliminate the entire integrated Air Defence System used by the VRS. Some remarks should be made here. First of all this in itself was impossible for NATO because parts of the systems were located outside Bosnia, in Serbia and Montenegro. The mandate did not cover that. So NATO actions had to be limited to systems in Bosnia. Additionally, the problem arose that the VRS were able to move their launching installations for surface-to-air missiles against NATO aircraft (SAM sites), which they regularly did. That applied to the radar-guided Surface-to-Air Missiles of the types SA-2 and SA-6; radar-guided systems, intended for aircraft at high altitude. Of those, the SA-6 was the most dangerous type, for this was the most advanced one and had a shoot-without-warning-capacity of which NATO had received proof. NATO made substantial intelligence efforts to trace where the SAM sites of those types were moved to, but they only succeeded partially. In addition the VRS had many Surface-to-Air-missiles of the types SA-7 and SA-9; those were portable systems that could be launched from the shoulder and that were not radar-guided but heat-seeking. These systems were only suitable to attack aircraft at lower altitudes. Finally they had a lot of conventional anti-aircraft artillery; these systems could be moved too, but they were not a major problem for aircraft flying fast and at high altitude.

For NATO the problem with these systems was that their effectiveness for the Air Defence Systems increased strongly during the conflict, even to such an extent that finally NATO could no

longer act freely. Initially, NATO flew patrols at an altitude of over 10,000 feet, and that was outside the range of all anti-aircraft guns. After some time that was no longer sufficient; the aircraft had to fly lower to carry out an operation. However, the Bosnian Serbs got to know their enemy in a number of ways; for instance at the stage when they were no longer flying over Bosnia, but were flying patrols over the Adriatic Sea. The Bosnian Serbs knew that something was about to happen as soon as an aircraft steered for Bosnia, and when aircraft flew back to Italy the VRS knew they could go ahead again on the ground. In addition, the VRS could monitor the communications of NATO fighter aircraft; only the Netherlands and the United States had cryptologically secure connections. However, because other countries did not use these, the Netherlands and the United States were forced not to use their secure connections.⁴⁵² In all those manners the VRS found out when and where NATO aircraft were flying, when the aircraft left Bosnia, and when they were going to refuel.

For NATO this meant an increased risk for the aircraft, that prompted for a more reluctant realization of the operation Deny Flight, and giving Close Air Support. To prevent things from happening again, or worse, for new operations over Bosnian-Serb territory the Air Defence Systems in the widest sense had to be eliminated, so not only the SAM sites that were a direct threat to the NATO aircraft; exactly what NATO had advocated all the time, but the UN did not permit for fear of VRS casualties and escalation.

Another limitation of NATO's freedom to act was that because of the risk of the VRS Air Defence Systems, every NATO aircraft had to be escorted by so-called SEAD aircraft. SEAD means Suppression of Enemy Air Defence; such aircraft were intended for self-defence, to eliminate the SAM sites that formed a direct threat to the NATO aircraft. Another problem with the SEAD aircraft was that there were only few of them, so only thirty percent of the former NATO capacity could be utilized. Consequently, for reconnaissance flights they increasingly had to rely on unmanned aircraft (Remote Piloted Vehicles or RPVs) and satellites, but that also had its limitations in comparison to the old situation in which the NATO aircraft did it all on their own. Training flights and flights for Close Air Support were also in a tight spot because they could no longer fly over land without an escort of SEAD aircraft. These new circumstances made the highest NATO soldier in Europe, SACEUR Joulwan, assume on 5 July that new air strikes to protect the Safe Areas had become unlikely.

The major problem NATO was facing, was that though they could eliminate the radar installations, that did not take away the threat of the mobile air defence batteries. That applied less to Eastern Bosnia, where there were no troop concentrations and few military installations. The most important there were the systems at the VRS headquarters in Han Pijesak, 18 km from Srebrenica as the crow flies. These two systems deployed at Han Pijesak had a range (in military terms: a mission envelope) as far as the vicinity of Srebrenica. That made flying over Srebrenica even more problematic for NATO. The main threat for Eastern Bosnia came from the anti-aircraft missiles launched from the shoulder; if there were VRS troops concentrations, the presence of such anti-aircraft missiles could be expected.⁴⁵³

All this had major consequences for the possibilities to use Close Air Support, also at the time of the VRS attack on Srebrenica. Now the situation had developed that for in itself rather simple Close Air Support missions and entire air fleet had to be composed. The capacity no longer existed to be able to render Close Air Support 24 hours a day. Moreover, on the authority of NATO the aircraft that had to give the Close Air Support had to remain out of reach of the VRS air defence; that meant these could no longer patrol over the target area. In practice the aircraft had to remain over the Adriatic Sea. NATO Admiral Smith also emphasized that early July when the VRS attack on the enclave of Srebrenica started; he said he had once more pointed out to Akashi and Janvier that he could not allow aircraft intended for Close Air Support to patrol over Srebrenica.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵² Statement J.L.H. Eikelboom, 02/06/01.

⁴⁵³ DCBC, 881. Note MID/Klu to DCBC, 18 /07/95; DCBC, 1570. Code Veenendaal NATO 1009, 06/07/95; NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, 21 and 22/06/95.

⁴⁵⁴ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

The new NATO policy to no longer permitted NATO aircraft over Bosnia without aircraft for Suppression of Enemy Air Defence did cause a difference of opinion between the Netherlands and the United States. The Netherlands did not want to go so far as to conclude that SEAD was a precondition for enforcing the flying ban. Neither was the Netherlands in favour of offensive action against the integrated Air Defence System of the Bosnian Serbs as the Americans had wanted, but preferred NATO to carry out a study into the best possible use of electronic measures against this system (known in military terms as Electronic Countermeasures or ECM).⁴⁵⁵

Shortly before that the Dutch Air Force had already realized that the measure to have every aircraft escorted by a SEAD aircraft put severe strains on the deployment of the air forces and, consequently, hindered the protection of the Dutch blue helmets in Srebrenica. In the Netherlands there were doubts on the part of the Dutch Air Force about the wisdom of such an American-inspired NATO measure. Though the SEAD aircraft were useful to suppress the VRS air defence in a wider sense, that did not offer a guarantee against individual aircraft being shot down, the Air Force thought. Flying over Bosnia would still remain risky, but to reduce that risk the aircraft already were equipped with means for self-protection. Through regular modification of flying patterns and flying altitude the air force still considered deployment of aircraft over Bosnia acceptable, also without SEAD aircraft. The imposed flying-technical and tactical restrictions only harmed the ability to respond, the Dutch Air Force thought.⁴⁵⁶

On the day of the fall of Srebrenica, 11 July, it also appeared that the threat of the use of VRS air defence was not an empty one. Just before the NATO aircraft arrived over Srebrenica, the VRS activated the radars for the Air Defence Systems.⁴⁵⁷ Near Srebrenica an anti-aircraft missile (type SA-9) was fired that only just missed an American F-16.⁴⁵⁸ In response to that, and for fear of retaliation, the VRS near Srebrenica directly started camouflaging their positions.⁴⁵⁹ That retaliation did not come by the way.

The differences in the analysis between NATO and the Dutch Air Force reflected the difference of opinion between countries with and countries without troops on the ground, of which the Americans were the main example. The Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Airforce, H.J.W.Manderfeld, worded this opinion on the limitation initiated by the United States that there should be no more flying over Bosnia as follows: 'The decision to impose restrictions seems to be founded rather on a different degree of involvement in the conflict'. The Dutch vision showed the wish to support the own troops on the ground, while the Americans mainly worried about the safety of the pilots, many of which were Americans.⁴⁶⁰

The Dutch objections increased even more by the way the Americans handled this difference of opinion: there was a complete American *Alleingang*. The American reaction seemed out of proportion and the American analysis on which it was based could not be verified by the Dutch. The British went even further. They even suspected that the Americans had manipulated data on the Bosnian Serb Air Defence System, 'and that not for the first time'. The British linked the American attitude to the unsuccessful attempts of Admiral Smith to get permission to eliminate the airfield of Banja Luka and the surrounding radar and air defence installations.⁴⁶¹

In the American analysis the Bosnian Serbs had more Surface-to-Air missiles than was assumed earlier and their Air Defence System enabled a better mode of command than had been thought

⁴⁵⁵ DCBC, 1572. Fax NLMilRep, Lt Gen H.W.M. Satter, to CDS/SCOCIS, 050745Z Jul 95.

⁴⁵⁶ DPKlu. Note DOPKlu to Defence staff/SCOCIS personal, 03/07/95, No. DOP 95.047.339/956.

⁴⁵⁷NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Chronology of Events UNPROFOR/NATO Close-Air Support to Dutch Battalion at Potocari, 11/07/95.

⁴⁵⁸DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH, Air Desk Log, 11/07/95.

⁴⁵⁹ ABiH Tuzla. 2nd Corps, report of 12/07/95, no. 02/8-10-1253. Contents on the basis of intercepts.

⁴⁶⁰ DS, no. SN95/009/5602. Letter BDL to CDS, 28/08/95, no. BDL 95.062.978, with copies letter BDL to General J.P. Douin, Chef d'Etat Major de L' Armee de l'Air, Air Chief Marshall Sir Michael Graydon, Chief of the Air Staff Royal Air Force, Lieutenant General B. Mende, Inspector der Luftwaffe, 16/08/95, unnumbered.

⁴⁶¹ DCBC, 1574. Code Veenendaal NATO 989, 03/07/95.

possible before. In addition, the intentions of the Bosnian Serbs had changed. They were now deliberately firing at NATO. SACEUR, General Joulwan had concluded from this analysis that it would be better to stay away from the Bosnian air space or to provide all flights with maximum SEAD protection. Stopping Close Air Support was a bridge too far in the Dutch vision, but maximum protection for all flights did not offer a solution either.⁴⁶²

The Dutch objections increased even further by the way the Americans handled this difference of opinion: there was a complete American *Alleingang*. There had been no consultation whatsoever on these limitations with the European air forces that took part in operation Deny Flight. There was no common analysis of the threat. Though the Air Force Commander considered it obvious that the risks had to remain as low as possible, this way the balance between the troops on the ground and the pilots that had to protect them, threatened to be lost. That applied even stronger for countries with troops on the ground in Bosnia. For that reason Manderfeld wanted to improve the decision-making process with his British, French and German colleagues; a position, by the way, he only announced after the fall of Srebrenica.⁴⁶³ NATO Secretary-General Claes told the NIOD that he knew that the Dutch Air Force Commander resisted the American reluctance to let pilots run risks. Claes said he had chosen Manderfeld's side and had agreed with him that NATO should keep their hands free to a greater extent than was the case at that moment. However, that did not result in initiatives to change the NATO policy: there was no more talk about Manderfeld's vision, not within the NATO council and neither within SACEUR.⁴⁶⁴

The conflict between the Americans on the one side and the Dutch on the other existing since spring 1995 could be traced back to the interpretation of the Rules of Engagement for the NATO operation Deny Flight. In fact that interpretation had already been the issue on the air strikes of November 1994, but then there had been no unambiguous statement by the highest NATO and UN authorities.

The Americans wanted that if there was a 'hostile intent' at one of the contending parties, it would not only have to involve a violation of the No Fly Zone over Bosnia by the contending parties, but also the VRS air defence. NATO also wanted to bomb the air defence of which the radars locked onto aircraft. However, UNPROFOR thought that too risky, because it could entail all kinds of repercussions on the ground. Mainly the French made objections because they thought it too dangerous for the ground troops. That resulted in a threat by the Americans that they would withdraw their aircraft from the operation Deny Flight. In turn that invoked accusations from other countries that the consensus within NATO degenerated into the imposition of a decree by one single country.⁴⁶⁵ This squabbling within NATO eventually resulted in a compromise: the contending parties would formally be informed that it was not permitted to let their radars lock on to NATO aircraft. Then if NATO took counteraction, it had to be proportional and could only be directed at the air defence system in question. The Netherlands endorsed the French opinion. Too forceful action could have consequences for the UNPROFOR units, the Netherlands agreed.⁴⁶⁶ Strictly from an 'air force' point of view such a compromise was not the most effective one, and just like after earlier negotiations with the UN, the United States were left with an unhappy feeling. The consequence was that subsequently the Americans forced through restrictions for flying over Bosnia within NATO.

⁴⁶² DCBC, 1571. The Dutch Permanent Military Representative at the NATO Military Committee (Lt Gen Satter) to CDS/SC-OCIS (Cdre Hilderink), 011555Z Jul 96, faxnr. 148.

⁴⁶³ DCBC, 1103. BDL to CDS, 28/08/95, No. BDL 95.062.978.

⁴⁶⁴ Interview W. Claes, 12/03/01.

⁴⁶⁵ DCBC, 2389. Code Hoek 024/95, HPMV to CDS, 08/04/95, No. BuZa dvt776 - HPMV024, report 20nd MC/PS meeting of 20/04/95,

⁴⁶⁶ DCBC, 454. Note CDS to the Minister, 02/05/95, No. SN/95/009/2726.

6. Discussions on air power between UN and NATO at the highest level

It was clear that there were still fundamental differences of opinion between UN and NATO on the use of air power. Late June the matter had returned to the highest political level: NATO Secretary-General Claes applied to Boutros-Ghali to get clarity on the position of the UN as regards the use of air power.

In this intervention Claes focused on the 'dual key' procedure; it may appear from the above that this was only one of the problems in connection with the use of air power. Claes was aiming at that partly because of the fact that after the air strikes on Pale Boutros-Ghali had taken the 'key' in his own hand rather than leaving it with his special representative, Akashi. If it involved air strikes, Boutros-Ghali wanted power of decision, for Close Air Support he at least wanted to be consulted.

Claes stated that this affected the effectiveness of NATO. That was because the effectiveness of air power depended on the speed with which help could be called in for the ground troops and for protection of the Safe Areas. Claes wanted to put the authority to permit Close Air Support back into the operational area. Otherwise the Bosnian Serbs might think that limitations had been imposed upon NATO, and that could only make the VRS overconfident.⁴⁶⁷ Claes gained support from Akashi and Janvier. They too were strong advocates of putting the authority for Close Air Support back into their hands as soon as possible. In a - for him - firm statement Akashi pointed out to New York that though Zagreb did its best to achieve good cooperation with NATO in the region, the efforts there and the effectiveness of UN and NATO would benefit by it if there was a 'policy coordination' that did not leave room for misunderstandings.⁴⁶⁸

Akashi certainly had a point there. There certainly was a necessity of better contact and better coordination between UN and NATO, although it has by now become sufficiently clear that such required more than just Boutros-Ghali handing back the 'key' to Akashi. The problem was deeper, which also appeared from the tone of the letters exchanged between the two Secretaries-General. That was distant and grumpy, which undoubtedly was a consequence of the fact that they seldom spoke to each other, and that NATO was expected to make itself subordinate to the UN. Improving the relations between the two organizations was on the agenda all the time, but it would only be realized later, after the fall of Srebrenica.

For the time being Claes did not go beyond accepting a new series of briefings by NATO in Brussels. He also noted that regularly Zagreb was surprised by proposals from Admiral Smith. If that had to be prevented in future, it was necessary that the UN commanders in Zagreb and Sarajevo and the NATO commander met more often in Zagreb for some more brainwork. Claes also thought that there should be talks with the highest NATO soldier in Europe, General Joulwan.⁴⁶⁹

The next day Boutros-Ghali responded to the letter from his counterpart at NATO. In turn he asked an explanation on a request by NATO Admiral Smith. On 21 June he had telephoned Janvier, when once more two VRS fighter aircraft had departed from the Bosnian-Serb airfield of Banja Luka. The Bosnian-Serb Air Defence Systems made it difficult to attack these aircraft. Subsequently, Smith had asked Janvier permission for a 'major air operation'. Smith wanted nothing less than to eliminate all Bosnian-Serb Air Defence Systems, to put the airfield of Banja Luka, important to the Bosnian Serbs, out of operation and to destroy all aircraft located there. From a military point of view it made sense not to wait until the aircraft were in the air or until the air defence would fire at the own aircraft, but sentiments within the UN were different. That was because Janvier had said 'no' with a view to proportionality: the VRS had only carried out flights and there had been no attacks. In Janvier's opinion that did not justify an air strike on the airfield.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 62/77, File 2.8 Nato 25/05/93- 05/0795. Letter Willy Claes to Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 21/1995/95, No 1995.

⁴⁶⁸ UNNY, DKPO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 22/1995/95, No. Z-1041.

⁴⁶⁹ NIOD Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, 07/0795.

⁴⁷⁰ ABZ, PVNAVO, Vml Joeg/No Fly Zone, nr. 118772. Letter Boutros Boutros-Ghali to Willy Claes, 23/06/95.

Now Boutros-Ghali would like to know what Claes thought about these proposals, that he considered radical. An indication of this does exist: The NATO Secretary-General himself had also wanted to bomb the Banja Luka airfield after the American F-16 had been shot down on 2 June, as had been done effectively with Udbina at an earlier stage. Nevertheless Claes instructed SACEUR Joulwan to telephone Admiral Smith who - as he said - 'got beaten hard' by Joulwan. Joulwan took the position that every VRS radar that was switched on was tantamount to hostile intent. For that reason he wanted to attack every radar that was switched on, but without asking UNPROFOR for permission. That means basically he agreed with Smith: he also wanted to eliminate the VRS Air Defence Systems. Smith thought that the Rules of Engagement offered the possibilities to do that.⁴⁷¹

The UN wanted to be involved and feared that NATO would fail to consult the UN. Already in November Annan had asked NATO to confirm that this organization would observe the dual key procedure, while the UN would take the lead because they were the first to turn the key. Now NATO had made a proposal and the UN had refused it. Boutros-Ghali also pointed out that the powers were still in his hands and not in those of Akashi in Zagreb. Boutros-Ghali told Claes that he could understand that enforcing the No Fly Zones entailed risks and technical problems, but still the mandate did not permit operations of the kind Admiral Smith wanted now. Therefore, Boutros-Ghali would like to hear from Claes that NATO would keep basing their actions on the Security Council resolutions. If NATO considered this kind of air operations necessary to enforce the No-Fly Zone, that would require authorization from the Security Council, according to Boutros-Ghali.⁴⁷² Claes was forced to personally call Admiral Smith to order because of his insistence to bomb against the resolutions.⁴⁷³

The pressure on Boutros-Ghali to at least return the 'key' for Close Air Support to Akashi, if Boutros-Ghali himself would keep the 'key' for air strikes, was successful. In addition to Claes, the British Minister Rifkind and Undersecretary-General Annan had urged to do that. Boutros-Ghali declared that one of the reasons to take this into his own hands was to reduce the pressure on Akashi; a remarkable reasoning, if only because taking it back had been kept quiet.

Pressure had been exerted on Boutros-Ghali by his own UN headquarters and it had been pointed out to him that the matter of the authorization had to be handled better, also because there was no arrangement for delegation of that authority if Boutros-Ghali left for Geneva. The description of a meeting on the subject comes from General Eisele, Assistant Secretary-General for Planning and Support of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the UN. The meeting was attended by: Boutros-Ghali, Goulding (Undersecretary-General and head of the Department for Political Affairs), Gharekhan (Senior Advisor to the Secretary-General), Kofi Annan (Undersecretary-General and head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations), Iqbal Riza (Chief cabinet of the Secretary-General) and Eisele himself. It had been preceded by extensive talks with Janvier and Akashi. At the meeting Boutros-Ghali had explained his principle: 'I do not trust any person in the world.' Then Boutros-Ghali wanted to end the discussion without a decision having been taken. Eisele had responded that such was not possible; in his own words a remarkable act because 'His Imperial Highness' did not wish to be contradicted. The attending civil servants agreed that a solution had to be found; someone in the chain of command had to be appointed; Boutros-Ghali would be too far removed from the former Yugoslavia.

Subsequently, the meeting discussed the option to give the 'key' to Annan. That wasn't possible either because he was travelling around the world too much. Boutros-Ghali then asked Eisele who he did propose to make key holder. Eisele stated that it should be the military commander on the ground. Boutros-Ghali responded that it should not be the 'English general' (Smith). Janvier had said to have no objections to that. Then Akashi was discussed. He had already had the 'key' before. Boutros-Ghali had no objections to delegation to Akashi, but Eisele himself thought that in fact Zagreb was too far

⁴⁷¹ Interviews George Joulwan and Leighton Smith, 06/06/00 and 08/06/00.

⁴⁷² ABZ, PVNAVO. Vml Joeg/No Fly Zone No. 118772. Letter Boutros Boutros-Ghali to Willy Claes, 23/06/95.

⁴⁷³ Interview W. Claes, 12/03/01.

away from Bosnia. The 'key' would have to be placed lower in the UN organization, in the same way as NATO had organized it. Then Janvier was discussed. However, Boutros-Ghali argued that if Janvier took the decision, Boutros-Ghali would still be blamed for a wrong decision by the media and the Security Council. Eisele had responded that he was right, but that Boutros-Ghali had to trust his subordinates. In view of Boutros-Ghali's statement that he trusted nobody, the compliment Goulding gave Eisele afterwards was understandable: he said he had been brave at the meeting. He had the impression that the other people present had only considered Eisele impolite because he had contradicted Boutros-Ghali. However, to everybody's surprise a written memo appeared to delegate the authority for Close Air Support to Zagreb and then further down if there was reason to do so.⁴⁷⁴

When this difference of opinion had been settled, on 22 June the decision was taken that Akashi could decide again on Close Air Support. However, Boutros-Ghali did want to retain the authority to decide on air strikes. According to one of those present it was amazing to see how difficult it was for Boutros-Ghali to delegate, and yet he did not want to see how incorrect it was to keep the 'key' for air strikes himself. According to him, conflicts on the use of air power would remain deeply seated with this construction: that was because the United States wanted to use air power as much as possible, while France and the United Kingdom preferred not to use it at all. Particularly the United Kingdom could not handle the Bosnian-Serb countermeasures that were the consequence of the use of air power for their troops on the ground. However the British did not want to say in public that they disagreed with the Americans.

This analysis – that only referred to air strikes, not to Close Air Support – was that the British and the French found it convenient that Boutros-Ghali had taken back the power of decision for air strikes rather than giving it to, for instance, a soldier.⁴⁷⁵ In view of Boutros-Ghali's cautiousness there was reasonable certainty that new air strikes were not really likely. Though Boutros-Ghali informed his counterpart at NATO, Claes, that he would not hesitate to allow air strikes, but if it was necessary to request those, Boutros-Ghali first wanted to see an extensive motivation for that request with an explanation of the circumstances, the objectives, and the consequences for the UN personnel on the ground.⁴⁷⁶ That already put up a substantial barrier against air strikes, for it would cause substantial delays. Janvier was not happy either that Boutros-Ghali retained this 'key'; on 3 June he had already informed the ministers of defence of NATO and WEU that he would like to see this authority at the executive military level, preferably at General Smith in Sarajevo.⁴⁷⁷

After all these discussions air strikes were no longer a fundamental subject of discussion until the moment of the attack on Srebrenica. On 30 June the Bosnian Prime Minister Siladjic did have contact with NATO Secretary-General Claes about Close Air Support. On that opportunity Siladjic expressed his worries about the factual rejection of air strikes that was the consequence of the discussions between and within NATO and UN. Subsequently Siladjic asked Claes what would happen if the Bosnian Serbs would try to annex the eastern enclaves. Would NATO render Close Air Support to the ABiH? Claes did not take Siladjic words too seriously; Siladjic was a provoking superhawk, he thought.⁴⁷⁸

Claes had replied that NATO was particularly worried about the position of the Dutch UN troops and the population in Srebrenica. The NATO discussion partners also pointed out to Siladjic that if the Dutch troops would be attacked, 'it could be assumed that UNPROFOR would turn their key'. In consultation with the UN it would also be possible for NATO to act in the event the

⁴⁷⁴ Interview Manfred Eisele, 14/10/99.

⁴⁷⁵ Confidential interview (63).

⁴⁷⁶ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Code Cable The Secretary-General to Akashi, 22/05/95, No. MSC-2058; ABZ, PVNAVO. Vml Joeg/No Fly Zone no. 118772. Letter Boutros Boutros-Ghali to Willy Claes, 23/06/95; NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, 22/06/95.

⁴⁷⁷ DCBC, 1876. Code Van Mierlo 72, 06/06/95.

⁴⁷⁸ Interview W. Claes, 12/03/01.

population would come under fire, Siladjic was told. The latter was questionable, but it would not be NATO's fault.⁴⁷⁹

Meanwhile in the former Yugoslavia

In addition to the more general discussions on key holders, meanwhile a specific discussion started on the rejection by Janvier (not a key holder for that matter) of NATO Admiral Smith's plans for large-scale air strikes he had proposed. The UN was blamed for that in the American press. Akashi had told journalists that Janvier had rejected Smith's request. Akashi's staff had briefed him that Janvier had not taken a decision, but had only explained that the mandate for Deny Flight did not cover the kind of large-scale air strikes such as Smith had proposed. For that same reason Janvier already had problems with NATO intercepting VRS aircraft, even it was an obvious violation of the No-Fly-Zone regime.

The negative publicity in the American press invoked the question within the UNPF staff of Janvier in Zagreb whether perhaps Akashi tried to use this to put pressure on Janvier or was maybe trying to divert the attention from himself. In any case it was clear that the tone in the American media was devastating for UNPROFOR: they considered it a step back that the UN gave up enforcement of the No-Fly Zone for respect of the Bosnian Serbs. It became even worse due to a not too wise response by a UN spokesman in Zagreb: he had explained that Smith's request had been schemed by NATO, in the expectation it would be rejected. Then NATO could hold the UN responsible for the policy not to carry out any more air strikes, leaving the blame with the UN. A response from New York to these statements was not long in coming: Annan spoke of an 'extreme lack of judgement'. This misinformation of the press could easily have been avoided if it had simply been said that the UN Security Council resolution authorizing the air actions (Resolution 816 of 31 March 1993) was limited to actions from the Bosnian airspace to enforce the flying ban. That also meant that the actions requested by Admiral Smith were not permitted; that was because Smith's actions had a preventive character and that was not permitted in this Resolution.⁴⁸⁰

To clarify what exactly the policy as regards air strikes was, Janvier and NATO Admiral Smith spoke to each other on 27 June 1995. They agreed that NATO would no longer carry out preventive strikes (in military terms: pre-emptive missions) without observing the dual-key procedure. However, if there would be a threat because a Bosnian-Serb target tracking radar locked onto NATO aircraft, missiles would be launched at it. That fitted within 'internationally recognized military standards' as the Bosnian Serbs had been informed earlier. This did mean – as explained above - that all missions over Bosnia, training missions, air reconnaissance as well as Close Air Support, had to be accompanied by SEAD aircraft to suppress the Bosnian-Serb radar; so in this sense the Americans got their way. As the availability of such SEAD aircraft was limited, this meant the end of air presence over Bosnia and the response time for requesting Close Air Support was increased. Nevertheless Close Air Support would be available 24 hours a day within the arranged time limit of four hours.⁴⁸¹ Every day 35 flights would be available for the UN. Janvier said to be satisfied with that and that he was aware of the risks for the pilots.⁴⁸²

7. Conclusions

At the time of the start of the Dutchbat mission in 1994, expectations were that air power would be used forcefully if necessary, and that, if necessary, the Dutch UN soldiers could count on prompt and

⁴⁷⁹ DCBC, 1583. Code Veenendaal NATO 994, 03/07/95. The code mentioned a raid by Serbia.

⁴⁸⁰ John Pomfret, 'U.N. rejects NATO Request to Bomb Serb Airfield After 'No Fly' Violations', *The Washington Post*, 22/07/95; UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 22/06/95, No. MSC-2066.

⁴⁸¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 28/06/95, No. Z-1067.

⁴⁸² UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 30/06/95, No. Z-1078.

adequate support from the air. Those expectations appeared false.⁴⁸³ The UN showed reluctance to use air power. UNPROFOR was facing the problem that in fact it did not have any instruments between protesting to the contending parties and an action from the air.

A major problem as regards the use of air power (in the form of air strikes or Close Air Support) was the different approach of the conflict by the UN and NATO. The UN stuck to neutrality in the conflict and to the mandate of UNPROFOR that was aimed at peacekeeping, while under American pressure NATO preferred to focus on peace-enforcing. On various occasions the two organizations were pitted against each other: the UN kept an eye on the safety of their peacekeepers on the ground, NATO was focused on the safety of the NATO pilots over Bosnia and the credibility of their organization. That explains why on the part of NATO there was continuous criticism on the careful manner in which the UN handled air power.

The friction between the two organizations became even stronger by the proven ability of the Bosnian-Serb Air Defence to fire at NATO aircraft. For that reason NATO wanted to put an end to that, preferably by pre-emptively also eliminating the Air Defence Systems. However, the mandate did not permit such pre-emptive elimination. In practice it appeared once again that peacekeeping on the ground and peace-enforcing from the air did not really match. For successive UNPROFOR Force commanders it was a spectre that as a consequence of a disproportional reaction by NATO the impartiality of the UN would be lost, endangering the humanitarian mission in Bosnia.

There were also differences of opinion about exactly what warring faction had to be attacked. At the UN headquarters in Zagreb they were not happy to note that air power was only used against the Bosnian Serbs even though more peacekeepers had fallen through the Bosnian Muslims and Croats doing. On top of that the UN suspected that the United States not only wanted to use air power according to the applying procedures, but also for political reasons: they wanted to get tougher with the Bosnian Serbs. Proof of the deep mistrust between these two organizations existed for example at the highest levels of the UN which asked NATO several times for the assurance that NATO would not independently decide to carry out air strikes: there were fears for an American *Alleingang* in this respect. NATO was asked to keep observing the 'dual key' procedure: the UN decided to use air power, and then it only came after NATO had approved it as well. NATO always confirmed this procedure, but the mistrust remained.

Large-scale deployment of air power in the form of air strikes was not really suitable to attack the dispersed mortars and artillery of the warring factions. Moreover, the Bosnian Serbs kept relocating these systems so the NATO aircraft remained vulnerable to them. Air power also became blunt because the Bosnian Serbs started taking hostages. That happened for instance after the air strikes on Pale.

Air power lost its deterrent effect: the capacity of the Bosnian-Serb Air Defence required additional escort aircraft. That considerably reduced NATO's capacity to render Close Air Support.

A later evaluation study among UNPROFOR officers once more showed 'the' UN approach. The respondents stated to welcome support for UNPROFOR by NATO, even considered it essential. They had not failed to identify the problem, that was that the UN and NATO were followers of different philosophies. NATO did not feel the same involvement in an impartial mode of operation as the UN. The UN officers saw NATO as an organization that could compensate the operational weakness of the UN and could contribute means that the UN did not possess. Nevertheless the majority of the UN officers – even those coming from NATO countries – thought that NATO had to operate exclusively in a supportive role, so under UN command.

Consequently, this study showed the problems that had appeared in practice with the use of Close Air Support and air strikes: there was no consensus on the applicability of Close Air Support in a peace operation, and there were grave doubts about the usefulness of offensive air strikes in a

⁴⁸³ DMKlu M95077091/1617. Director Operations (MGen G.F.A. Macco) to MinDef d.t.v. CDS, 04/10/95, No. DOP95.072.078.

peacekeeping operation. The higher the military rank, the more doubt about the use of air power. Air power was considered an instrument for war rather than for peacekeeping. They named as (better) alternatives for air power: more troops and better protection of the troops.

The possibility to request Close Air Support for protection of peacekeepers was generally appreciated, provided that it did not mean the UN was choosing sides. The use of Close Air Support to defend Safe Areas was a controversial issue, which was partly explained by the discussions on Close Air Support around the fall of Srebrenica. Reservations on the use of Close Air Support were also related to the generally existing impression that the Security Council took decisions without allowing for the ideas of the Force Commander in Zagreb. Officers were almost unanimous in that, even though many did not believe it would be realistic to expect improvement of the communication between New York and the field.⁴⁸⁴

An evaluation among the Dutch UN staff officers, asked about their experiences in 1996, also revealed the following. According to them there had been considerable pressure by NATO to come to a more forceful course of action, and that while the risk of the consequences of those NATO operations was for the UN troops on the ground. The Dutch officers defended the principle of decision-making according to the dual key as necessary. The UN staff officers had also noted that NATO officials had a tendency to treat the UN condescendingly and conceitedly. Nevertheless they called the relation between UN General Janvier in Zagreb, NATO Admiral Smith in Naples and UN General Smith in Sarajevo good. Finally the UN officers expressed their opinion that the cooperation with NATO as regards Close Air Support had been good, certainly after the procedures had been cut short and authority had been transferred to military hands.⁴⁸⁵ Indeed air power only became really effective again when UNPROFOR became less vulnerable to hostage-takings - after the fall of Srebrenica.

⁴⁸⁴ Biermann in Biermann and Vadset, *UN Peacekeeping in Trouble*, p. 100-106. For this study 1200 officers of all ranks and coming from various countries, including the Netherlands, have been approached.

⁴⁸⁵ DOKL. Record of an evaluation of UN key personnel, 26/04/96, No. DPS BLS/3651. Landmachtstaf, Zaak nr. BLS/721.

Chapter 3

No air actions on release of the hostages: a deal between Janvier and Mladic?

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter it became clear that during the month of June the procedure for using air power would increasingly meet with hindrances, in particular in view of the consequences to be anticipated. Those consequences could be in the air (the risk that NATO aircraft would become target of the VRS air defence still was considerable), as well as on the ground (late May the Bosnian Serbs had ignored the air strikes on Pale by taking hostages among UN personnel). Early June the question was realistic to what extent the use of air power was still an option. In that connection it is useful now to consider the vision of the two leading figures as far as the use of air power was concerned: UN General Janvier and VRS General Mladic. There is reason for a further consideration of their vision because they discussed, among other things, the use of air power. This chapter will systematically deal with the question how their meeting should be seen in view of the (hindrances to) the further use of air power.

The meeting between generals Janvier and Mladic took place on 4 June 1995, in the Bosnian-Serb city of Zvornik in Eastern Bosnia. Their meeting is surrounded with rumours. Many people contend that there, after the air strikes at Pale on 25 and 26 May, arrangements of some kind should have been made on the release of UN hostages in exchange for abandoning further air actions against the Bosnian Serbs. These assertions should be investigated further because this meeting between Janvier and Mladic has been linked to the Bosnian-Serb attack on Srebrenica, as well as to not giving Close Air Support to Dutchbat during the attack, also because the military UN top should want to get rid of the enclaves.

This link regularly cropped up in the media. The meeting will first be assessed on the basis of reports from the public domain: what appeared about it in the press and in messages between government and Parliament? Then the findings from NIOD's own investigation will be discussed and a conclusion will be drawn as regards the question what the relevance has been of the meeting in Zvornik for the fall of Srebrenica.

2. Rumours in the media about a 'deal'

Reuter correspondent Kurt Schork in Sarajevo was the first to report that General Janvier had had a secret meeting with General Mladic. Schork also quoted a 'UN official' who had said that the UN had been in a hurry to make a 'deal' regarding the hostages.⁴⁸⁶ Janvier had been furious about this report.⁴⁸⁷

On 22 and 23 June 1995 *The Washington Post* and the *International Herald Tribune* fueled the gossip machine by mentioning a deal made by the French Government to get the hostages released, in which also Greece and Russia should have been involved. A UN spokesman should have confirmed that there was a link with air strikes. According to the newspapers the link was clear: after the talks in Zvornik on 4 June, on 9 June this UN spokesman, with reference to the meeting of Akashi, Smith and Janvier in Split (see Chapter 1), had declared rather surprisingly for Akashi that from now on the UN would strictly stick to the rules for peacekeeping, which implied that the UN would not use force or choose sides. Surprising because that suggested that there would not be any more air strikes; that was new. This could be seen as a clear sign from the UN to NATO that no more force (air strikes) would be used; if the UN did not turn the 'key' for air power, NATO could not do that either. It was not a coincidence

486 NIOD, Coll. De Ruyter. *Reuter*, REU1327 3 OVR 556, 1159 190695 GMT

487 NIOD, Coll. De Ruyter. Note by COS (Nicolai) to report *Reuter* of 19/06/95.

that refraining from further force had been the main demand of Mladic and Karadzic. 'Now the Serbs know no-one is going to punish them. These two guys have let the cat out of the bag', a western official was quoted.

These newspapers quoted more possible evidence for an independent French role: Chirac should have ensured the Russian President Jeltsin that 'the troubled era of air strikes in Bosnia was over'. A request from NATO Admiral Smith to Janvier to bomb the airfield of Banja Luka (see Chapter 2) should have been a scheme to make the UN recognize that a deal between Janvier and Mladic had resulted in a no air strike policy.⁴⁸⁸

A few days later rumours also appeared in the media in the United Kingdom: on 27 June *The Times* reported that soldiers in Bosnia had suspicions that a concession had been made to the Serbs in exchange for release of the hostages, though rumours on a 'no air strikes' deal remained without evidence. That is because diplomatic circles, according to *The Times*, had stated that it was not of the habit of the Serbs to unconditionally accept something. The British Foreign Office then argued against this that a secret agreement could not have been concluded without consulting the troop-contributing nations. UN sources in New York and Zagreb were very definite: when the Bosnian Serbs asked to stop the air strikes, they had received the answer that this was 'out of the question'. NATO officials said that they had not been told anything about a change in their mission.⁴⁸⁹

New suspicions about the relation between the release of hostages and abandoning the use of air power had arisen after 6 June when the former Force Commander, the French General De Lapresle, had unexpectedly appeared in Pale even before hostages were released.⁴⁹⁰ It is likely that his presence there had to do with his activities for EU and Bildt. De Lapresle had been assigned to the latter's mission by the French Government.

Also in the Netherlands extensive reports appeared on rumours about a possible deal. These persisted also after the fall of Srebrenica and were repeated in the media from time to time. For instance on 2 November 1995 *NRC Handelsblad* took over a report from the Berlin newspaper *Tageszeitung* stating that on instruction of the French President Janvier had refused to carry out air strikes during the offensive against Srebrenica. The newspaper had understood from sources at the French Government and French sources in Zagreb that Chirac had given Janvier instructions to that effect already before the attack on Srebrenica had started.⁴⁹¹ Two days earlier *NRC Handelsblad* referred to the British newspaper *The Independent*, that had concluded that not honouring the 'desperate requests' for Close Air Support was a deliberate policy. These reports also revived the thought that the UN was refusing Dutchbat Close Air Support because the militarily UN top already wanted to get rid of the enclaves.⁴⁹²

On 29 May 1996 this process was repeated. That day *Newsday* in an article by Roy Gutman once more referred to a declaration issued on behalf of Akashi on 9 June 1995 in which he had stated that from now on the UN would strictly stick by the rules for peacekeeping. The *International Herald Tribune* had already stated that about a year earlier. The conclusion derived by *Newsday* from this declaration did go a bit far: the paper called it a triumph for the Bosnian Serbs that it had been said that UNPROFOR would cease all hostile actions. That had given the Bosnian Serbs the green light for an attack on the enclaves, was the interpretation of *Newsday*. Gutman also wrote that Janvier had offered quid pro quo for the release of the hostages not to attack the Bosnian Serbs with NATO air strikes any more. Janvier had been the requesting party and he had proposed the meeting and the deal, according to the author. Mladic had presented a letter to Janvier stating that the VRS would no longer threaten the lives of

488 *The Washington Post*, 22/06/95. *International Herald Tribune*, 23/06/95.

489 *The Times*, 27/06/95.

490 Bildt, *Peace Journey*, p. 30. De Lapresle had been assigned as military advisor to the negotiating team of Bildt and had indeed met with the Bosnian Serb leaders in the last stages of the hostage crisis. During the Gorazde crisis in April 1994 he also had negotiated with Milosevic on the release of the hostages.

491 *NRC Handelsblad* 2/11/95.

492 See ANP, 301134 Oct 95.

UNPROFOR soldiers and UNPROFOR would no longer use air strikes. Signing the agreement would lead to immediate release of what Mladic referred to as the prisoners of war. Even though Gutman reported that Janvier had not signed, he concluded a deal by implication.⁴⁹³

NRC Handelsblad published – also on 29 May 1996 – a long article written by Frank Westerman in which he too reported about the events in Zvornik. In Westerman's words: 'officially the meeting never took place; what was discussed has never been revealed before'. Just like Gutman, Westerman described what Mladic demanded of Janvier and he wrote that Janvier had not signed the document that contained those demands. In Janvier's place General De Lapresle should have completed the negotiations. Westerman called the meeting at Zvornik the first step on the road to the fall of Srebrenica, that way also implying a deal.⁴⁹⁴

Responses to the rumours

As a result until May 1996 lots of rumours went round that there still should have been a deal of some kind between Janvier and Mladic in Zvornik. The departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs thought it necessary to respond to these reports. The responses of the two ministries converged to some extent, but not completely.

The first response from Defence to the reports in May 1996 was that the purport was not new, and that it was a repetition of earlier allegations directed to the UN and General Janvier. The response from Foreign Affairs also was that the tenor of the reports was not new, but that some elements were new and deserved serious attention.

Defence felt no need for such a further in-depth investigation. Letters to Parliament had already discussed in detail the circumstances under which Close Air Support had been given at Srebrenica, the message was. From those replies it appeared that Close Air Support had been given too late and insufficiently, but that there were no indications for a preconceived UN strategy to abandon the Safe Area Srebrenica. Neither stated Defence to have evidence for contacts between President Chirac and Janvier on the use of air power at Srebrenica. There were doubts whether Close Air Support could have prevented the fall of the enclave. For Defence there was nothing new under the sun and the Public Relations Directorate should just respond calmly to the reports, the motto of the General Policy Directorate was.⁴⁹⁵

That motto was wasted on Colonel De Jonge, Land Operations Officer in Janvier's staff in Zagreb. He was very annoyed about the article by Westerman and felt he had unjustly been quoted as witness and supporter of Westerman's 'conplot theory': this theory meant that a deliberate choice was made not to defend Srebrenica. It became clear to De Jonge, when he spoke to Westerman on 20 May 1996, that he was trying to mobilize support for his theory. De Jonge had already said that he certainly had no indications for that and that he considered the theory completely implausible. With reference to the published article De Jonge once more pointed out that if Janvier would have wanted to give up the enclave, he would never have agreed to the use of the 'blocking position' on 9 July, intended to make sure that indeed the VRS were intending an attack on the enclave (see Chapter 6). Though Janvier had advocated an amendment of the mandate (see Chapter 1), when that did not come he just carried out his assignment. Janvier was too much of an officer not to carry out his orders, De Jonge said. Janvier just did not see much in the use of force, certainly not if he knew he would have to give up an action under pressure of existing or newly taken hostages. De Jonge made all this clear in a draft for a letter to the editor of *NRC Handelsblad*, in response to Westerman's article. Doctoring with that text by the Public Relations Directorate of the Ministry of Defence resulted in new versions of this letter, but by

493 *Newsday*, 29/05/96.

494 *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/05/96.

495 ABZ, DPV/ARA/02109. Memo Sebastiaan Reyn (DAB) to H. van den Heuvel (DV), 29/05/96; Memorandum Plv DGPZ to M, 31/05/96, No. 26/96. That Foreign Affairs thought that London could also ask for an explanation because of the role of General Smith was a misconception. He was absent those days.

then the momentum for inserting such a letter had already passed, so eventually it did not appear in the newspaper.⁴⁹⁶

Foreign Affairs could not put an end to the matter by playing it down, as Defence had proposed. That was because on 13 May 1996 the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs had issued a statement that called the allegations directed at Janvier that he had delayed air power at the instigation of President Chirac, completely unfounded. For that reason Foreign Affairs expected Paris to insist on a further explanation of the latest reports.

Also in Parliament the matter of a possible deal was discussed, one day after the article in *NRC Handelsblad*. Spokesmen in Parliament referred to the article and asked for a response by the ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense. According to Blaauw (VVD) this information was not in line with what had been said in the consultation between House and government. For Hoekema (D66-Democrats) on the other hand, the information was a confirmation of what the government had told Parliament earlier and did the *NRC Handelsblad* article not add anything substantially new. De Hoop Scheffer (CDA-Christian Democrats) considered it expedient to further investigate the UN decision-making process; that seemed to have passed by the Netherlands completely. Valk (PvdA-Labour) wanted the government to discuss a possible secret deal between Janvier and Mladic and the question whether Janvier and Akashi had deliberately aimed at the fall of the enclave. Rosenmöller (GroenLinks-Green Left) would like to have an answer to the question whether the UN had decided in advance to give up Srebrenica and what role the French President Chirac had played in all this.⁴⁹⁷

3. Further investigation into a deal in New York and Paris

Although also Minister Van Mierlo in Parliament called the tenor of the messages in the press not new, some elements and the documents referred to by Westerman were not known in the Netherlands. That deserved serious attention, Van Mierlo thought, the more so because the suggestion had been made that the enclave had fallen, with all its consequences, due to secret deals between the Bosnian Serbs and major countries, particularly France. The information that had become public had to be verified.

In particular a message from Akashi that the Serb President Milosevic had told them during the hostage crisis about arrangements on Close Air Support between Clinton and Chirac drew the attention: Milosevic had asserted to Akashi that the French President Chirac had told him that President Clinton had agreed that there would be no air strikes if these were unacceptable to Chirac. Milosevic had told Akashi this when on 19 June he discussed with him in Belgrade the situation in Bosnia and Croatia. Milosevic had expressed his gratitude to Akashi for the mediation on the release of the hostages, and then he had declared to Akashi that the first step on the road to a peace arrangement had to be the avoidance of further air strikes.⁴⁹⁸ How could such a UN code message end up in the hands of the press, and was it really authentic, Van Mierlo wondered.

Two lines were set out: the Netherlands Permanent Representative at the UN, Biegman, was instructed to ask attention for this matter from Akashi and Kofi Annan.⁴⁹⁹ In addition, the Dutch ambassador in Paris, Wijnaendts, was instructed to confront his French conversation partners with the UN code message referred to in *NRC Handelsblad* and ask them for a response. The earlier declaration by the French who had called reports on contacts between Janvier and Chirac about air power completely unfounded, was not sufficient. It was not the intention to take this matter to the realm of the international relations, the instruction said. It was only about obtaining data to inform Parliament.⁵⁰⁰

496 'Response Col J.H. de Jonge to article Srebrenica in *NRC Handelsblad*. 29/05/96', 03/06/96 (not published).

497 Parliament, TK, uncorrected shorthand report of 30/05/96 (not in Proceedings).

498 NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 19/06/95, No. Z-1020.

499 ABZ, DDI/DVN/PZ 523796. Code Van Mierlo 181 to PV New York, 31/05/96.

500 DCBC, 530.Code Celer Circ 345, 03/06/96.

Report from New York

Biegman set to work in New York. The UN code message referred to in *NRC Handelsblad* was authentic, Annan's top official Tharoor informed Biegman. However, it said nothing about a deal between Janvier and Mladic, as had been suggested in *NRC Handelsblad*. It appeared that indeed General de Lapresle had been sent to the area by the French Government, but the UN had nothing to do with that.⁵⁰¹ In line with that Janvier later denied to have had mutual contacts with de Lapresle during the hostage crisis.⁵⁰² Janvier had always been very loyal and on the level and he had always discussed his meetings with Mladic afterwards with Akashi, according to Tharoor.

Biegman also asked Akashi for information. He did not think there had been a deal, but he also said to Biegman that maybe he had not always known everything that was going on. It was remarkable that Akashi replied to Biegman's question whether Milosevic had told him about the arrangement with Chirac, that the press knew more than he did. Indeed release of the hostages had had the highest priority, Akashi confirmed towards Biegman.

After gaining information from Tharoor and Akashi, late May 1998 UN Ambassador Biegman - as very special exception and under condition of strict confidentiality - also got permission for an interview with Undersecretary-General Kofi Annan himself about the matter of possible arrangements. What exactly was discussed between Janvier, Mladic and de Lapresle, Biegman reported after the interview with Annan, would probably never be revealed. Annan also knew that there had been frictions between Janvier and Chirac, but for New York the nature of those remained a mystery. Eventually New York had concluded that there had been no agreement at all between Mladic and Janvier. If there had been, the Bosnian Serbs had undoubtedly referred to it when late August 1995 new air strikes were launched against them, Annan stated.

Another alleged deal was broached in the conversation with Kofi Annan. *Time* magazine had reported that there should have been a deal between Milosevic and the United States, to the effect that the Bosnian Serbs would be allowed to take the three eastern enclaves and the Croats the western part of Bosnia. The correctness of that could not be confirmed.⁵⁰³ Mladic also referred to that in Potocari where, directly after the fall of Srebrenica, he should have told Displaced Persons that he had permission from the United States to take Srebrenica.⁵⁰⁴ However, any proof for that assertion has never been presented and it does not seem very likely that the American Government, being the pillar of strength for the Bosnians, would have given permission for that.

Report from Paris

In the meantime Ambassador Wijnaendts got to work in Paris. He reported that the French were indeed rather annoyed about the allegations directed at their President that he would have instructed Janvier regarding air power. That fitted the pattern so far: already a year earlier, when on 23 June Roger Cohen pointed an accusing finger at Janvier in the *International Herald Tribune*, Wijnaendts had been told by the military advisor of the Elysée, General Quesnot, that Cohen was wrong with his allegation that Janvier and de Lapresle had made a 'deal'.⁵⁰⁵

Now Wijnaendts reported that Chirac had told Boutros-Ghali that he had to ensure that the hostages were released and that *until that moment* there would be no air strikes. Wijnaendts also reported on the alleged guarantee by Chirac to Milosevic that there would only be air strikes if those were acceptable to Chirac; according to Wijnaendts, Chirac had brought Milosevic quite a different message,

501 ABZ, DDI/DVN/PZ 523796. Code Biegman 389, 05/06/96.

502 *Mission d'Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica, Audition de M. Bernard Janvier*, 25/01/00.

503 ABZ, DPV UNPROFOR Nederlandse deelname. Code Biegman 389, 05/06/96.

504 ANP 031443 Nov 95. A witness from Srebrenica declared this at a press conference of the Gemeinschaft für bedrohter Völker (GfV) in Bonn. Some doubts about this statement seem justified.

505 ABZ, DIO/ARA/00408. Code Wijnaendts 208, 23/06/95.

that was that he would place himself outside the international order if he did not make sure the hostage-takings were ended.

Wijnaendts continued his report by stating that the meeting between Janvier and Mladic on 4 June in Zvornik had only been a 'technical contact'. The same applied to the talks between the former UNPROFOR Commander De Lapresle and the Bosnian Serbs.

Wijnaendts reported the following on the tricky issue of the contacts between Chirac and Janvier. The French categorically denied that President Chirac should have instructed Janvier to postpone Close Air Support for Dutchbat until all hostages were released. They wondered what reason Chirac could have had to give Janvier such instructions. The French rhetorically wondered whether it had not also been the Dutch who had urged not to carry out air strikes (they meant: Close Air Support) at the time of the fall of Srebrenica when Dutch personnel had been taken hostage in Bratunac; a position by the way only taken by the Dutch Government on 11 July after Bosnian-Serb threats. Air strikes at Srebrenica would only have been useful from a military point of view if those had been massive at a moment before the Bosnian Serbs started their attack, Wijnaendts' spokesman had added.

It had been quite a different matter that Akashi and Janvier thought that the Safe Areas were indefensible. Presumably it had been a mistake of Janvier to say that so openly during his visit to the UN.⁵⁰⁶ Though Janvier agreed with Boutros-Ghali in this respect, he had to convey the message to the Security Council under less favourable circumstances (see Chapter 1).

Own investigation by Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo

In addition to the investigation started in New York and Paris, Foreign Affairs also asked the American Government for comment by the Deputy Secretary of State, Peter Tarnoff. Tarnoff considered an agreement between Clinton and Chirac, as Milosevic had contended, unthinkable. Just to be sure Tarnoff ordered further investigations within the State Department and the National Security Council. The result of that was that the conversations between Clinton and Chirac about air strikes were not denied, but those had also taken place with Kohl and other western leaders. However, at no point in time had the American Government agreed to a ban on NATO air strikes in exchange for release of the hostages.⁵⁰⁷

Ministers Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve themselves met with Akashi on 4 June 1996.⁵⁰⁸ The latter thought that there were major inaccuracies in the reports published in the press during the previous days. In the light of the international consensus that had existed after the air strikes at Pale, it was no surprise that Milosevic had said that there would be no further air strikes, according to Akashi. In addition, Akashi pointed out that at the time of the fall of Srebrenica neither Janvier nor he himself were authorized to decide to use air strikes; Boutros-Ghali had taken up the authority (the 'key') to approve air strikes after the air strikes on Pale.

The possibility for Close Air Support had always remained open. Akashi denied to Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo that arrangements on the subject had been made with the Bosnian Serbs. The French President had not exerted pressure on Janvier either; consequently, the refusal of the requests from Dutchbat for Close Air Support had exclusively been based on Janvier's military judgment and the balancing of risks for the UNPROFOR soldiers, still according to Akashi. That after the meeting between Akashi and generals Janvier and Smith in Split on 9 June a UN spokesman in Sarajevo had said that UNPROFOR would no longer carry out air strikes, was a statement Akashi had not authorized, he said.⁵⁰⁹

506 DCBC, 537. Wijnaendts 156, 04/06/96.

507 ABZ, DDI-DAV 999.241. Codes Jacobovits 309 and 310, 03 and 04/06/96.

508 The Deputy Director Europe had drawn up a list of questions in preparation of the meeting (ABZ, DEU, Srebrenica, no date).

509 Code Van Mierlo 183 to PV New York, 07/06/96.

After this investigation round the ministers replied to Parliament on 7 June 1996. They also asked attention for four parliamentary documents from 1995 describing the sequence of affairs around the fall of Srebrenica ‘in detail’.⁵¹⁰ For the sake of clarity the reply started with a description of the differences between ‘air strikes’ (air strikes on targets in a larger area with a strategic character) and ‘Close Air Support’ (Close Air Support of a purely tactical nature against targets that attacked UN units).

The reply could be summarized as follows. The hostage-takings after the air strikes at Pale on 25 and 26 May 1995 had already taught the UN leaders that air strikes had an adverse effect. The French Government had confirmed to have urged the UN Secretary-General not to carry out any air strikes as long as UN personnel was held hostage. That position was shared by many UN member states, including the Netherlands. At the time President Chirac had asked President Milosevic to bring about the release of the hostages. There had been no promises of any kind and there was no evidence of a ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ between Janvier and Mladic.

Milosevic’s statement, that the French President had ensured him there would be no air strikes without his approval, only applied to the situation as long as there were hostages, the ministers said. Finally Akashi had confirmed that there was an international consensus not to carry out any air strikes as long as the hostage crisis lasted; Close Air Support did remain possible.⁵¹¹

What was not in the letter to the House, but did appear in a draft prepared by Foreign Affairs, was that on 23 June 1995 the UN Secretary-General had written to the NATO Secretary-General that the release of the UNPROFOR personnel had been unconditional. Neither Boutros-Ghali, nor Akashi, nor Janvier had given the Bosnian Serbs any assurance that the use of Close Air Support would no longer be considered. Consequently, Janvier had been completely free to award requests for Close Air Support for Srebrenica. There were no indications that Janvier was under pressure of the French President or that his freedom to take decisions was restricted by arrangements; Janvier did have to take into account possible retaliations against UNPROFOR or the population, the draft text stated. The reason to delete this paragraph probably was to avoid publication of correspondence from third parties that was not addressed to the Netherlands.⁵¹²

4. The rumours on the Bosnian side

Nevertheless rumours on alleged deals with the Bosnian Serbs remained in circulation. The NIOD investigation into this aspect showed that particularly on the Bosnian side the meeting between Janvier and Mladic understandably caught a lot of attention because of the implications of such a deal. Though the meeting had not publicly been announced, the Intelligence offices of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH (the Corps established in Tuzla) knew about it. The Bosnian Muslims also received information on regular meetings between the top of the Republika Srpska and the Serbian Governments because they had a Human Intelligence source (a spy) near those meetings.

At one of these meetings also the meeting between Mladic and Janvier on 4 June in Zvornik was discussed. According to this source Janvier had not told Mladic that he could go ahead with attacks on the Safe Areas, but still Janvier would have made it clear that if the VRS attacked, there would be no air strikes. Whether the ABiH knew about that alleged deal before 11 July remains uncertain.⁵¹³ Moreover, it should not be forgotten that this involves a Bosnian interpretation of a conversation that is not necessarily free from value judgments and undisputed. ABiH army Commander General Rasim Delic on the other hand said he had no evidence for a deal.⁵¹⁴ The Commander of the 2nd Corps, General Sead Delic, neither could say anything more than that he knew that Janvier and Mladic had had

510 TK, 1995-1996, 22 181, Nos. 115, 128, 134 and 138. Also refer to House debate 19/12/95.

511 TK, 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 159 (07/06/96).

512 Draft letter to the Chairman of Parliament, not dated (ABZ, DDI/DEU Srebrenica, No. 192/96).

513 Confidential interview (88).

514 Interview Rasim Delic, 21/04/98.

contact.⁵¹⁵ So it is doubtful whether the Bosnian Muslims knew what was discussed at the meetings in Zvornik.

The story kept buzzing around in Bosnian circles. During the hostage crisis the Bosnian minister without portfolio charged with UN matters, Muratovic, had criticized the contacts between the UN and the Bosnian Serbs and expressed his doubts about the neutrality of UNPROFOR.⁵¹⁶ Later Muratovic told the NIOD about the meeting in Zvornik that Janvier had promised there not to attack the Bosnian Serbs from the air as long as Mladic was in command, not even after the hostages would have been released. For that reason Janvier would have stopped an air attack at Srebrenica, according to Muratovic. Later negotiator Stoltenberg had told Muratovic that there was such a deal. However, there was no written evidence of it. Muratovic also concluded from his contacts with the Serbs that a deal had been made; they told them there would be no Close Air Support. Mladic would have based his decision to attack and his preparations on that deal.⁵¹⁷ When asked about it, Stoltenberg firmly denied that he had ever told Muratovic anything about a deal. It was 'nonsense' and Muratovic's words should not be believed. Stoltenberg did not believe such a deal existed; in his opinion Janvier was an honest and sincere man.⁵¹⁸

There were more people who doubted the reliability of Muratovic's words. His statement should be seen in the light of the fact that the Bosnian Government tended to blame the British and the French for developments they did not like. Everybody in Bosnia, Izetbegovic included, blamed Janvier for the fall of the enclave of Srebrenica and the later tragedy. He had the power and the instruments to intervene to prevent the tragedy, the Bosnians argued. It was concluded from that, that if he had wanted, he could have let Srebrenica survive as Safe Area.⁵¹⁹

Shortly after the replies to Parliament, Muratovic made himself heard again with regard to a possible deal between Janvier and Mladic. The then Bosnian Prime Minister said at a public Srebrenica debate in the Bosnian Parliament that he had evidence about arrangements made between Mladic and Janvier.⁵²⁰ However, Muratovic did not present that evidence and Parliament did not ask for it. These events were noticed in the Netherlands. They were reason for Minister Van Mierlo to ask Muratovic if he was prepared to present such evidence if Van Mierlo would send an envoy to Sarajevo for that purpose. Muratovic had responded positively. The Dutch embassy in Sarajevo was subsequently instructed to remind Muratovic of his promise. If necessary, Van Mierlo would be prepared to get on the phone himself with Muratovic.⁵²¹

The civil servants at Foreign Affairs did not like the fact that Van Mierlo insisted so much on Bosnian evidence of a deal between Janvier and Mladic. Substitute Director-General Political Affairs Van Eenennaam wondered whether this approach sufficiently allowed for responses from the French Government. It could involve material that would be 'incriminating' for Janvier and the French Government would undoubtedly want to be the first to see it. It was understandable that Muratovic did not want to make this material available to Paris, but Paris might get irritated if sooner or later they would find out that a special envoy had been sent to Sarajevo to collect such material. It would be oil on the fire after the French ambassador in The Hague had given 'crystal-clear signs' about the French sensitivity for criticism regarding Janvier. Van Mierlo was not mollified by this civil servants position. He wanted to know all the ins and outs of the matter and he said he placed little trust in Muratovic.

515 Interview Sead Delic, 10/03/99.

516 MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, No. 28/95, completed 141400B June 1995.

517 Interview Hasan Muratovic, 30/01/98.

518 Interview Thorvald Stoltenberg, 22/09/00.

519 Confidential interview (59).

520 ABZ, DDI/DEU, Srebrenica. Code Glaubitz 19, 20/08/96.

521 ABZ, DDI/DEU, Srebrenica. Code Van Mierlo 11, 23/08/96.

statements; then the French would not have a problem either. However, to him it went too far to have the French direct his skepticism.⁵²²

The delegate in Sarajevo, Glaubitz, damped Van Mierlo's expectations. Though Muratovic said to be prepared to supply intercepted messages between Bosnian-Serb units and intercepted UN messages, Glaubitz first wanted to know to what extent really information could be expected that added something to what was already known. Glaubitz emphasized 'that it happens sometimes in this country that what is promised theoretically is not entirely (or entirely not) the same as what is offered in practice.' He had experience with that regarding some issues. The Bosnian authorities were not too anxious to lay all facts about Srebrenica on the table, Glaubitz estimated. There was a considerable risk that a ministerial envoy would not get really new information and would return empty-handed.⁵²³ Thus this trail ended, apparently because Van Mierlo let the matter rest.

5. The report on the meeting with Janvier and Mladic

At the time of the meeting in Zvornik only few people knew exactly what had been discussed. Little openness had been observed about meeting. Even General Smith did not know about it initially, until he heard of it through the Intelligence and security departments; then Zagreb confirmed that the meeting had taken place. At later meetings with Mladic Janvier did inform Smith and they discussed the contents.⁵²⁴

The Dutch people in the UNPROFOR organization did hear something about the meeting, but that remained very vague. For instance the Dutch chief of staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo, Brigadier-General Nicolai, said that he had heard that a meeting had taken place and that the main points of discussion had been the resumption of the convoys and the return of the hostages. However, Nicolai did not know what exactly had been discussed.⁵²⁵ According to the additional Dutch Chief of Staff in Zagreb, Major-General Kolsteren, the staff there did not know anything about a deal with Mladic. There were rumours, however those were not strong.⁵²⁶ The Chief Land Operations in Zagreb, Colonel De Jonge, did not even know that Janvier and Mladic spoke to each other in Zvornik. He only heard about it late July.⁵²⁷ As a result, little can be concluded from 'Dutch UN sources' about the meeting in Zvornik. Both leading figures – Mladic and Janvier - refused to speak to the NIOD about this question. Consequently, the following reconstruction is mainly based on systematic research in records and on conversations with people in their vicinity.

Already before the meeting in Zvornik, Janvier had received instructions from Boutros-Ghali that for the time being the use of air power was out of the question. Janvier relayed this to General Smith in Sarajevo with the following words: 'we must definitely avoid any action which may degenerate into confrontation, further escalation of tension and the potential use of air power'. Smith had proposed to Janvier to face the confrontation with the Bosnian Serbs by opening the route across Mount Igman to Sarajevo in order to get supplies to Sarajevo again. Janvier refused because he did not want to face the confrontation, not even if UNPROFOR would let the Bosnian Serbs know about it in advance. Janvier expected that he would soon be involved in the negotiations on the release of the hostages and, in addition to the safety of the personnel, they had absolute priority. His purpose was to achieve, while maintaining 'political freedom to manoeuvre' that the Bosnian Serbs would release

522 ABZ, DDI/DEU. Memorandum Plv DGPZ to M through DGPZ, 26/08/96, no number. With remarks from M of 17/08/96.

523 ABZ, DDI/DEU. Code Glaubitz 25, 03/09/96.

524 Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

525 Interview C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99.

526 Interview A.M.W.W. M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99. Kolsteren arrived in Zagreb after the meeting in Zvornik.

527 Interview J.H. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

hostages, and to ensure that headway could be made with a broader political settlement of the conflict.⁵²⁸

A report worded in French is available about the meeting in Zvornik.⁵²⁹ For a meeting that lasted five hours without interruption, a report of four and a half pages is rather brief. Consequently, it only describes the arguments of Janvier and a number of points put forward by Mladic; there is nothing to be learned about the discussions. Only a relatively small part of the report is dedicated to the issues of the hostages and Close Air Support. The enclaves and sending supplies there were other topics.

Although it is not clear when exactly the report was drafted, it is striking that Akashi did not send it to New York until 15 June, after New York had asked for it a day earlier with the words: 'perhaps its transmission to New York was inadvertently overlooked?' Akashi sent the report with 'our apologies for the oversight'.⁵³⁰ A remarkable state of affairs, though it should be noted that Annan did know that the two generals had spoken to each other for five hours; he already reported this at the consultation of the troop-contributing nations on 5 June.⁵³¹ Janvier was not secretive either about his meeting with Mladic and he talked about it, also on 5 June, with the Dutch Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen.⁵³² To the question why Janvier had not sent that report earlier, he said in 2001 that he 'had other things to do than shuffling paper.' After he had informed Akashi and New York by telephone, he considered the rest details. Janvier also said that he had not sent the report on request of the UN; he had only sent it when it was finished.⁵³³

The report on the meeting does not mention any agreement. It does state that at the end of their meeting Mladic demanded that in future there would be no more '*frappes aériennes*'.⁵³⁴ Mladic had also demanded in a telephone conversation with General Smith on 28 May that all flying activity would be stopped. That not only applied to fighter aircraft, but also to transport aircraft because according to Mladic those carried weapons and supplies for the Muslims. If the flights were continued, Mladic would be forced to take 'certain other' measures.⁵³⁵

For Mladic the release of 'prisoners of war' that were still captured, as Mladic called them, was connected with the guarantee that there would be no more air strikes. For that purpose Mladic had drawn up a text and demanded that Janvier would sign it immediately. That text stated that Janvier and Mladic agreed on three items: (1) that the VRS would no longer threaten the lives and safety of the members of UNPROFOR; (2) that UNPROFOR would no longer carry out '*frappes aériennes*' on VRS targets and other targets within the terrain of the Republika Srpska; (3) that signing of the agreement would automatically mean release of all 'prisoners of war'.⁵³⁶ Janvier had not accepted that. Of course the signing of the agreement by Janvier as presented to him by Mladic would have seriously exceeded Janvier's mandate, according to Akashi.⁵³⁷

528 SMG, 1004. Letter Janvier to (Rupert) Smith, 02/06/95.

529 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF Code Cables 14/06/95-30/06/95. 'Rencontre entre le General Janvier et le General Mladic, Commandant and chef les Forces serbes de Bosnie, Bosnie le 4 juin 1995', sent by Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 15/06/94 No. Z-995

530 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF Code Cables 14/06/95-30/06/95. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 15/06/94, No. Z-995.

531 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 12/1995/95, No. MSC-1948. It is not clear how this information had reached Annan.

532 Bstas. Note CDS to the Minister, 06/06/95, No. S/95/061/2330.

533 *Mission d'Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica, Audition de M. Bernard Janvier*, 25/01/01.

534 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF Code Cables 14/06/95-30/06/95. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 15/06/94, No. Z-995, with attached 'Rencontre entre le General Janvier et le General Mladic, Commandant and chef les Forces serbes de Bosnie, Bosnie le 04/06/95'.

535 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF Code Cables 14/06/95-30/06/95. Telephone Conversation Gen Smith / Gen Mladic, 28/05/95 UN Confi., attached to Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 26/05/95, No. Z-883.

536 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF Code Cables 14/06/95-30/06/95. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 15/06/94, No. Z-995, with attached 'Rencontre entre le General Janvier et le General Mladic, Commandant and chef les Forces serbes de Bosnie, Bosnie le 04/06/95'.

537 Interview Yasushi Akashi, 25/11/99.

Mladic said in Zvornik, that he understood the report on the agreement in such a manner that the chain of action and reaction now had to be broken and that the attention should be focused on the peace process. However, it would be difficult to convince the Bosnian-Serb authorities to make a gesture and release the hostages, Mladic thought. Now it was the turn of the UN who had to make a gesture of good will in the direction of the Republika Srpska: they wanted to be treated on an equal footing with the other parties.

The report of the meeting also mentions a discourse by Mladic on the Serb history and all kinds of unrealistic far-reaching proposals. In that connection Mladic came with the proposal to start negotiating with the commanders involved in the conflict as soon as possible. This proposal seemed to have been prepared because Mladic used notes. The purpose was to reach a final agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Firstly there had to be a ceasefire based on the lines the troops now occupied. It was Janvier's tasks to gather the army leaders at a neutral location, possibly Paris. A military agreement could subsequently give the diplomats room for negotiations.⁵³⁸

Follow-up: the second meeting between Janvier and Mladic

When on 17 June Janvier and Mladic met for the second time, Close Air Support and hostages were no longer conversation topics; the last hostages were released the next day.

At this meeting Mladic was calm and cheerful, according to the report. He carefully wrote down all remarks by Janvier, and said that he was even prepared to announce a unilateral ceasefire. He was still interested in a meeting of the commanders involved in the conflict, to reach an agreement between soldiers that should immediately and finally lead to a cessation of hostilities. This time Mladic was even prepared to come to Sarajevo for it. But whether 'Docteur Karadzic' supported that did not become clear to Janvier. In addition Mladic complained about the unequal treatment of the Bosnian Serbs; he once more demanded that the Bosnian Serbs would be treated on an equal footing.⁵³⁹

6. External interference with the hostage crisis

On 18 June the last UN hostages were released. This release had been preceded by a long path of diplomatic activity of varying origin.

Mediation by the UN itself appeared impossible: initially the Senior Political Advisor of Boutros-Ghali, C.R. Gharekhan, had been appointed to solve the crisis. However, because the Bosnian Serbs withdrew earlier guarantees for the safety of his flight to Sarajevo, Gharekhan could not reach Sarajevo.⁵⁴⁰ Until then Akashi had tried in vain to contact the authorities in Pale.⁵⁴¹

The Yugoslav Government also got involved in the hostage-takings. Milosevic condemned them rather quickly, after which the French Government asked him already in the early stages of the crisis to use his influence on Karadzic to bring about the release of the hostages.⁵⁴² That accidentally fitted Milosevic's wish to emphasize his position as key figure; that wish had already appeared earlier when Milosevic had not responded strongly to the NATO attacks on Pale of 25 and 26 May. That way it indeed appeared that Milosevic was after gaining credit at the French and the British.⁵⁴³ French pressure on Milosevic to get the (mostly French) hostages released also appeared from consultation between Chirac and Clinton on 27 May, after which Chirac spoke to Milosevic on the very same day.

538 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF Code Cables 14/06/95-30/06/95. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 15/06/94, No. Z-995, with attached 'Rencontre entre le General Janvier et le General Mladic, Commandant and chef les Forces serbes de Bosnie, Bosnie le 04/06/95.

539 DPKO, UNPF Code Cables 14/06/95-30/06/95 Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 20/1994/95, No. Z-1025.

540 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 05/06/95, No. MSC-1874.

541 Confidential information (67).

542 MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, no. 25/95, completed 301200B May 1995. Confi.

543 ABZ, DPV/ARA/00797. Code Engels 65, 29/05/95.

Chirac should have made it clear to Milosevic that he had to reckon with further sanctions if the situation would not improve quickly, and that he would become the outcast of the international community. Chirac also asked the Russian President Jeltsin to make an effort to get the hostages released. In the meantime, according to the French Chief of Defence Staff Admiral Lanxade, there had to be a pause in the air strikes in order not to increase the risk for the hostages.⁵⁴⁴ That way Lanxade expressed the consensus in the international community: as long as there were hostages, new air strikes were not recommended.

The Contact Group too hoped to exert pressure on Karadzic through Milosevic to get the hostages released.⁵⁴⁵ The American negotiator Frasure would also ask for active interference by Milosevic for the release of the hostages.⁵⁴⁶

The matter of the hostages also appeared on the agenda of the coming summit of the G-7 in the Canadian city of Halifax from 15 to 17 June. Milosevic had invited the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms Agnelli, to give her a message for the G-7. They met on 13 June in Belgrade. The message entailed that the release of the hostages had to end the confrontations, and that it also had to revitalise the negotiation process on the basis of the Contact Group plan. Milosevic was completely confident that he would succeed in convincing Karadzic to accept a peace proposal.

Agnelli also took along what Milosevic told her about the conversation between Chirac and Milosevic to the North Atlantic Council. However, based on the report, the conversation between Chirac and Milosevic had not (only) been about Close Air Support but (also) about the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force that had to reinforce UNPROFOR in a forceful manner (see Chapter 1). Milosevic had made it clear that deployment of this Rapid Reaction Force was not exactly the best method to bring peace closer. He envisaged the risk of a further escalation because the Bosnian Government could exploit its arrival by 'provocative actions', which in turn could lead to Serb reactions

It had been no coincidence that the hostages were released before Agnelli came to Belgrade, Milosevic also told Agnelli. That had to be seen as a good will gesture. He also disapproved of Karadzic's behaviour in the strongest terms.⁵⁴⁷ So at the meetings with Akashi and Agnelli Milosevic did not say that to him the air strikes were unacceptable or that he connected conditions to a release.

Finally on 12 June Akashi reported at the meeting of the Special Representative that Milosevic had informed Chirac by telephone that the remaining hostages would soon be released.⁵⁴⁸ The Belgrade press had already reported on 2 June that Milosevic had exhaustively consulted with Chirac about a release, and Milosevic had promised it would happen as soon as possible.⁵⁴⁹ Milosevic was the source of the contacts between him and Chirac, as it had also been Milosevic's interpretation that Chirac had ensured him there would be no air strikes without approval by him (Chirac). General Wesley Clark, who negotiated regularly with Milosevic in this capacity of chief of plans for the American Joint Chiefs of Staff, later pointed out that Milosevic had a habit of making what he called 'mischievous charges'. Clark gave as an example that during consultations in 1995 Milosevic had left the room for a telephone conversation with the French President and returned with the words that Chirac was against bombings.⁵⁵⁰ It cannot be ruled out that Akashi has become a victim of a similar statement.

Milosevic's position was shown most clearly when on 5 and 6 June the Greek Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Defence, Papoulias and Arsenis, spoke to Karadzic in Pale and to Milosevic in Belgrade, in an attempt to make a contribution to the solution of the hostage crisis. The Greeks liked to see themselves as negotiators in the Bosnian conflict and boasted their contact with Milosevic and

544 ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Code Wijnaendts 165, 28/05/95.

545 MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, no. 26/95, completed 011400B June 1995.

546 ABZ, Embassy Washington, record 912.11, no. 129431. Code Celer 102 to Emb Washington, 02/06/95.

547 Confidential Information (154).

548 NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, 12/06/95. Such reports also appeared in the *New York Times* of 7 and 12/06/95. However, these reports did not contain information on a possible 'deal'.

549 Confidential information (158).

550 Nicholas Kravov, 'West braces for Milosevic's "tales"'. *The Washington Times*, 07/03/01.

countries sometimes used that.⁵⁵¹ Milosevic had agreed with his conversation partners that all hostages had to be released unconditionally. He was determined to do everything in his power to achieve that goal. Greek sources reported that Milosevic had indeed urged Karadzic to unconditionally release the hostages. The Bosnian Serbs on the other hand were prepared to release hostages, but underlined the importance of something in return: they wanted guarantees that NATO air strikes would not be repeated.⁵⁵² According to a Greek newspaper the two ministers had only promised that 'NATO air strikes would stop for a period'.⁵⁵³ That did not mean final cessation. So these conversations between the two Greek government officials showed clear differences of insight on the subject between the authorities in Belgrade and those in Pale. Karadzic said that the Bosnian Serbs felt cornered by the hostile attitude of the West. Consequently, the only solution for the Bosnian Serbs was to rely on 'all out actions', Karadzic said.

The Dutch Military Intelligence Service also reported that Karadzic, in addition to stopping the air strikes, also connected the condition to the release of the UN hostages that UNPROFOR would demilitarize the Safe Areas and would more strictly supervise the observance of the weapons embargo.⁵⁵⁴

At the same time also the negotiators Owen and Stoltenberg made efforts to get the hostages released. In that connection Owen spoke to Milosevic, who told him that he was working hard on the matter. Milosevic had sent his own safety advisor Stanisic to Pale and he himself had spoken several times to Mladic who was in an overheated state of mind. Milosevic did not want the Serb nation would be identified with hostage takers.⁵⁵⁵ According to one source, a Canadian Intelligence official, indeed a deal had developed between Belgrade and Pale. He had understood this from the head of the Serb Military Intelligence, Demitriavic. According to him Serbia had supplied aid to the Bosnian Serbs in the form of money, fuel, military goods and ammunition, in exchange for the release of the hostages; especially the fuel and the ammunition should have been used for the attack on Srebrenica. Such a deal has not been reported from any other source.⁵⁵⁶

Milosevic had not been too happy about the Greek intervention, he informed Owen. Initially he had even refused to receive Papoulias because that could possibly cast a shadow over his central position in the matter. The Greeks had traveled to Belgrade and Pale without any consultation with their European colleagues.⁵⁵⁷

In addition to Karadzic there were others in the regime of the Republika Srpska who spoke about the hostage crisis. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republika Srpska, Aleksa Buha, had also said that Milosevic had ensured him that there would be no more air strikes. New York asked Akashi to find out, if possible what the basis for Buha's statement had been.⁵⁵⁸ Although Akashi did not directly reply to the question, he indirectly did with his representation referred to earlier of his meeting with Milosevic on 19 June: that same day he reported to New York that he had heard from Milosevic that there would be no air strikes if those were unacceptable for Chirac.⁵⁵⁹

The Bosnian-Serb Vice-President, Nikola Koljevic, also added his two cents worth. He demanded, according to articles in the Belgrade press, that before the hostages were to be released,

551 Telephone conversation with Tom Miller, 18/06/00.

552 ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Code Ath COREU, 08/06/95, No. pesc/ath 269.

553 Confidential information (67).

554 MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, no. 27/95, completed 081400B June 1995.

555 Confidential information (67).

556 Confidential interview (2).

557 Confidential information (67).

558 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 15/06/95, No. Z-1981. This message was stated in the Weekly Situation Report of 08/06/95, No. UNPF-HQ Z-943 from Akashi to Annan which said that according to Buha 'the release followed signals through diplomatic channels that there would be no more air strikes and that there would be a positive movement in the peace process.' A reply by Akashi has not been found

559 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF Code Cables, 14/06/95 – 30/06/95. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 19/06/95, No. Z-1020.

NATO had to promise not to carry out any further air strikes.⁵⁶⁰ Later Koljevic openly boasted that the release of the hostages had been the result of a deal between French officials and the VRS.⁵⁶¹

According to Koljevic also President Jeltsin had said that Chirac had ensured him ‘that air strikes in Bosnia were finished’.⁵⁶² Assigning a right of veto to the French president for the use of air power in Bosnia was referred to as ‘pure fantasy’ of Milosevic by the American UN ambassador Albright. She did not believe a word of it. According to her Milosevic seldom spoke the truth. That interpretation was not only convenient for Milosevic, it was also factually incorrect, according to Albright: on the contrary, the arrival of Chirac on the stage had meant a break with the policy of his predecessor, Mitterrand. Chirac was advocate of more forceful action against the Bosnian Serbs and for that reason the Americans had been glad with his arrival.⁵⁶³

7. Visions from later days

The American negotiator Holbrooke later wrote in his polemic memoirs that there was ‘substantial, if circumstantial, evidence’ of a secret deal between Janvier and Mladic in Zvornik. However, Holbrooke’s remarks are inconsistent. He writes for instance that it was not clear what assurance, if any, the Bosnian Serbs received. Apparently Holbrooke bases his decision on the fact that the release of the hostages started after the meeting in Zvornik. According to Holbrooke, Washington did not know what exactly had been arranged until the moment his book was published in 1998. In any case, according to Holbrooke, the Bosnian-Serb military efforts dramatically increased after the meeting in Zvornik without the UN or NATO starting air strikes.⁵⁶⁴

The American ambassador in Zagreb, Galbraith, informed the NIOD of his vision about an alleged deal. According to him there certainly had been some kind of deal between Mladic and Janvier in Zvornik. It might not have been an official signing of an agreement, but a token of approval. It did not miss its psychological effect. It was widely known, Galbraith argued, that Janvier wanted to get rid of the enclaves and rumours about a possible agreement were only signs that this picture could be correct. The idea of an agreement in itself already had a positive effect on the morale of the VRS and a negative effect on the morale of the ABiH and on that of UNPROFOR. As a result UNPROFOR soldiers had it at the back of their minds that there would not be any air actions. Even though there was no formal agreement, the rumours had a devastating psychological effect according to him.⁵⁶⁵

Also for another American ambassador in the region it was an indisputable fact that Janvier had made an arrangement with Mladic about the cessation of air strikes and Close Air Support. This spokesman considered it irrelevant whether or not he signed a document on the subject. The crucial issue was mutual understanding on a commitment, and Janvier stuck to that according to this ambassador. Whether or not the French Government instructed Janvier had little relevance, according to this spokesman.⁵⁶⁶ However, these American ambassadors did not possess any evidence either of such an alleged ‘mental deal’. At the end of this chapter we will get back to the question whether a ‘mental deal’ could be likely.

Highplaced French political and military sources said that they did not know of a deal between Mladic and Janvier about Close Air Support, as concession to get the hostages released. Janvier was a rather straightforward troops general, ‘*tres discipliné*’, and he would never have made secret arrangements

560 Confidential information (68).

561 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cables, 14/06/95 – 30/06/95. Akashi to Annan, 19/06/95, No. UNPF Z-1019.

562 Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, p. 263. Sudetic doesn’t state when and where Koljevic made these statements. Possibly this statement was made during a press conference on 13 June on the occasion of the release of 130 of the remaining 144 hostages.

563 Interview M. Albright, 28/09/01.

564 Holbrooke, *To End a War*, pp. 64-65.

565 Interview Peter Galbraith, 23/06/99.

566 Confidential interview (3)

for the release of the hostages. Neither did these sources know anything about a promise by Clinton to Chirac (no air strikes without Chirac's approval), as Milosevic suggested. Neither would it fit in with the approach advocated by Chirac, according to these sources: conversely, the French President wanted to pursue a strong policy, handle the VRS forcefully and not permit any further humiliation of UNPROFOR; that also appeared from Chirac's personal instruction to retake the Vrbanja bridge in Sarajevo while the hostage crisis still lasted (see Chapter 1).⁵⁶⁷

To sum up: these sources qualified the rumours about a secret deal as nonsense. In any case the French authorities had never asked Janvier to make such an arrangement.⁵⁶⁸ It is true that, in the opinion of the French military advisor - presumably - during the hostage crisis a conversation between Chirac and Janvier had taken place on the initiative of the President.⁵⁶⁹ The contents of this conversation was never disclosed. When assessing such conversations it should not be forgotten that Janvier was also the Commander of the French contingent in the former Yugoslavia.

In order to determine whether there was a deal as contended by Milosevic (no air strikes without Chirac's approval, which Clinton would have accepted), it has been investigated what was known about that among American sources within NATO; after all that was the circle of potential executors of this alleged American political decision. It involved the American representative at NATO, ambassador Hunter and the American Commander in Chief Allied Forces Southern Europe, Admiral Smith. They both said they did not know anything about a statement by President Clinton in that sense.⁵⁷⁰ The Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), also Commander of the American troops in Europe, General Joulwan, also said he did not know anything about French involvement with Close Air Support. Though it would not have surprised him, he had never been informed about it.⁵⁷¹

The Canadian Military Assistant to the Deputy Force Commander in Zagreb, Major Last, did not see any indication either for a deal between Janvier and Mladic. He attended various meetings between Janvier and Mladic (though not the one in Zvornik on 4 June). He saw as evidence of the fact that no 'deal' had been made with Mladic, that later Mladic had never referred to an agreement that was broken, while he did refer to other elements that were discussed in Zvornik.⁵⁷²

Negotiator Carl Bildt worded the same vision. A deal between Janvier and Mladic about Close Air Support seemed highly unlikely to him too. Later Mladic certainly would have broached the subject, but after the bombings in August he had never said anything along the lines of: 'that had not been agreed', although he had been ranting and raving about these air strikes.⁵⁷³

When asked, Boutros-Ghali made it clear to Brussels that, despite the speculative reports in the media regarding secret agreements, neither his representative Akashi nor the Force Commander Janvier had made any concessions to VRS Commander Mladic regarding future use of air power. Boutros-Ghali maintained that he would not hesitate to permit air strikes (he held the 'key' that would allow air strikes to begin) if the conduct of the warring factions or the objectives set out in the Resolutions gave reason to do so.⁵⁷⁴

Also, *The Washington Post* published a report about a deal referred to at the beginning of this chapter. Then Akashi received instructions from New York to explain 'in no uncertain terms' that no assurance whatsoever had been issued to the Bosnian Serbs. In New York the report was considered 'extremely damaging and only an example of many similar stories in other newspapers'. A UN spokesman had suggested to the *Washington Post* that there was a link between the release of the hostages and Close Air Support, but this spokesman was 'ill-advised', according to New York: the use

567 Confidential interview (4)

568 Confidential interview (1)

569 Confidential interview (4)

570 Interviews Leighton Smith and Robert Hunter, resp. 06 and 07/06/00.

571 Interview George Joulwan, 08/06/00.

572 Interview David Last, 05/07/00.

573 Interview Carl Bildt, 13/12/00.

574 Confidential Information (149).

of air power certainly remained an option.⁵⁷⁵ Akashi responded to New York: ‘I can state emphatically that neither I nor General Janvier have given such assurances, nor could we condone any such assurances; we have always maintained that the release of the hostages must be, and was, unconditional’.⁵⁷⁶

8. Continuing the use of air power, also during the hostage crisis?

In the meantime in New York the UN had realized already since the start of the hostage crisis, that started right after the air strikes on Pale, that Mladic understood very well that at that moment the strength of NATO air power had already been undermined also without ‘deal’, and did not amount to much more as long as UN personnel were still held hostage. Already on 27 May Akashi reported to New York that ‘reducing risks, calming the situation’ and release of the hostages had the highest the priority. For Akashi that meant that air power would no longer be used and that incidents on the ground had to be avoided. He expected that would lead to some relaxation of the conditions under which the UN personnel were held. Unlike in the past, an imminent release was not to be expected according to Akashi. The detention could very well last until the Bosnian Serbs were convinced that there was no longer a threat of actions from the air, according to Akashi, even more so because they might be afraid for more forceful NATO action, in view of the state of mind of the international community.

So while air strikes were out of the question as far as Akashi was concerned as long as there still were hostages, he did not rule out Close Air Support. Despite the worries about the safety of the hostages, shootings at Safe Areas could be accompanied by attacks on UNPROFOR, which would lead to a greater risk for the personnel than the risks for the hostages. Akashi still wanted to take into account that air actions might be needed to implement the UNPROFOR mandate, including use in the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones around Sarajevo, and to support resupply. The key question was just whether the use of air power was feasible under the given conditions. Akashi wanted a clear statement on this point from the UN Secretary-General and the troop-contributing nations.⁵⁷⁷ Two days later Akashi once more repeated the gist of his message of 27 May that maybe if need be Close Air Support could be used if ‘robust defensive action’ would be required to prevent more hostages.⁵⁷⁸

The Deputy Force Commander in Zagreb, the Canadian Major-General Crabbe, also informed Annan from Zagreb as early as 26 May, when still only eight UNMOs were being held hostage, that the key was held by the troop-contributing nations. He wondered whether those countries still wanted further actions from the air, with a view to the hostages and possible further hostage-takings. Crabbe wanted to know what the troop-contributing nations wanted and what their worries in this respect were. His question had come up because the General Smith had told him that he did not care what policy UNPROFOR was going to follow. He did want to continue the air campaign to enforce the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones regime around Sarajevo, but then it should be realized that the UNMOs that were held in Pale might be killed and that there might also be casualties elsewhere. The policy Smith wanted to follow could in the long run mean withdrawal of UNPROFOR, Crabbe estimated. Observation posts of UNPROFOR (OPs) and personnel at Weapon Collection Points would then have to pay the price and possibly have to be withdrawn from the eastern enclaves. If they did not want to continue the air campaign, the limitations of UNPROFOR had to be realized and they should ‘thereafter conduct our business accordingly’. Then negotiations about the release of the hostages had the highest priority.⁵⁷⁹

575 UNNY, DKPO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 22/06/95, No. MSC-2066.

576 UNNY, DKPO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 22/06/95, No. UNPROFOR Z-1041.

577 Confidential information (70).

578 Confidential information (70).

579 Confidential information(71).

During the consultation of the troop-contributing nations on 27 May the UN ambassadors decided on the question whether or not to continue the air strikes.⁵⁸⁰ Kofi Annan referred to the outcome of the consultation as 'largely predictable': worries had been expressed about the hostages and the population and there was a difference of opinion on the question what further action had to be taken: six countries 'spoke strongly in favour of more air strikes'. Six other countries were 'equally emphatic that the results of the earlier air strikes did not warrant their continuation'. Eight other countries said it was time for a pause. Kofi Annan concluded from the consultation that there was support to leave further decisions to Akashi and the commanders in the field. It was clear that there was not a unanimous vision within the troop-contributing nations and neither within the Security Council about a future strategy. Annan did not rule out any option but Akashi and the commanders in the field had to decide what option to follow.

It can be concluded from this report about the consultation of the troop-contributing nations that the Islamic countries supported rather more than less Close Air Support. Most NATO countries preferred to leave the decisions to the commanders in the field. It was striking that the majority of the NATO countries wanted to give the right to decide to carry out air strikes to the operational commanders: unlike what Annan told Akashi, not a single country named the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Akashi) as the authority with the power to decide.

In his report of the meeting Kofi Annan also wrote to Akashi: 'We understand that you have also received further guidance directly from the Secretary-General in this regard.'⁵⁸¹ In fact Boutros-Ghali had assumed all authority to use air power after the air strikes on Pale, because he wanted to be consulted for air strikes as well as for Close Air Support; only after 23 June Akashi was allowed to decide on Close Air Support again (see Chapter 2). It is not clear whether the troop-contributing nations knew about this limitation; the Dutch UN representative did not report it. Only on 7 June (during consultation about the Rapid Reaction Force in New York) the UN admitted that there were problems with the position of Akashi and the original delegation of authorities to him. On that opportunity Kofi Annan also remarked that though future use of air strikes had not been discussed, Close Air Support did remain a major element for the commander on the ground.⁵⁸²

It is not surprising that the weapon of air strike caused doubts as long as UN personnel was still being held hostage and thus had become blunt. The intended purpose of the air strikes had not been achieved, and the Bosnian Serbs had not complied with the obligations that had been arranged for the heavy weapons. The air strikes of 25 and 26 May had not stabilized the situation around Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia. The political advisor of UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, Mihov, directly said that for the time being there should be no more air strikes with the short-term objective of getting the hostages released. That did not necessarily have to get an official touch; the possibility of air strikes would not formally be eliminated.⁵⁸³

Janvier saw the use of force, Close Air Support and air strikes included, as a last resource. It should be attempted to renew talks with the Bosnian Serbs. UNPROFOR had to resume their peacekeeping tasks in so far as possible and try to carry out the mandate.⁵⁸⁴ In a directive to Smith, Janvier did not rule out the use of air power in advance, but he did not recommend it.

Also strong advocates of the use of air power like the Americans, who moreover did not have any hostages taken, did not want to use air strikes for the moment. The American Secretary of Defence, Perry, gave the order that air strikes should no longer be used. Only Close Air Support was still

580 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 07/06/95, No. MSC-1911, Minutes of TCN meeting on 27/05/95.

581 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, attn SRSG, FC, Smith, 27/05/95, No. 1810.

582 ABZ, DPV/ARA/02090. Code Biegman 509 to Min. v. BZ cc Min. v, Def/DS/DAB, 07/06/95.

583 UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Fax Deyan Mihov, Acting D-SRSG/CAC BH Command Sarajevo to Yasushi Akashi and Michel Moussali, HCA Civil Affairs, HQ Zagreb, Situation Assessment May 29 1995, sent with Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 29/05/95, No. Z-889.

584 NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Force Commander to LtGen R. Smith Only, 29/05/95, File Ref: FC/95/0801, UN Confi.

allowed.⁵⁸⁵ The British strategy was ‘holding/containment’ until the release of the hostages was certain. Air power would remain available, but it looked like it would be ‘hard to use’ without causing new hostages.⁵⁸⁶

The British position had already been stated to Koljevic, the Vice-President of the Republika Srpska, on 31 May by the British ambassador in Sarajevo, Sir Ivor Roberts. Roberts handed him a EU statement about the hostages; on that occasion Koljevic had said that the hostages would not be released until it had been guaranteed that ‘use of air power’ in future was excluded. Koljevic added that he understood that public guarantees were not possible, but he wanted to investigate the option of personal guarantees. Roberts then emphasized that such guarantees were not possible. The best guarantees against new air strikes were in the hands of the Bosnian Serbs themselves in the form of respect for the Safe Areas and for the status of the UN troops, according to Roberts.⁵⁸⁷

On 12 June the delegates from various European countries of which personnel was being held hostage, were briefed in Belgrade by the Civil Affairs Coordinator of the UN in Belgrade, Kirudja. The Netherlands was also represented there because a number of Dutch UNMOs were among the hostages. Several times Kirudja said he had been in contact with President Milosevic and negotiator Stanisic, the head of the Yugoslav Secret Service who maintained the contacts with Mladic and Karadzic. The different perceptions of Belgrade and Pale of the matter became clear: Belgrade strived after immediate release of the hostages, but Pale was afraid for new air strikes after the release. During the briefing the French delegate, supported by the British delegate, said that Kirudja could inform Pale that for now there were no plans to repeat the air strikes after the release of the hostages: ‘the more rapid they release them unharmed, the less they have to fear air strikes’.⁵⁸⁸ It looks like it that these statements can be interpreted as big talk to promote a speedy release of the hostages; there are no indications that the British or the French Government really supported the positions worded here by their delegates.

According to the Dutch Military Intelligence Service, on 7 June the Bosnian Serbs had released a number of the hostages as ‘token of international approach’ and Mladic did not seem to demand something in return.⁵⁸⁹ The position of the Bosnian Serbs seemed a repetition of an earlier hostage action in April 1995 when Karadzic had said to Stanisic that he possessed information that NATO was in the process of planning a retaliation for what the Serbs had done. Then too the Bosnian Serbs feared the release would create the conditions for renewed NATO air strikes. Stanisic had said at the time that a temporary postponement of air strikes would improve the chances of political talks between Milosevic and the American negotiator Frasure.⁵⁹⁰

9. Conclusion: deal or no deal?

The main conclusion for the question whether or not there was a deal, is that the governments involved of the countries that contributed troops in Bosnia first of all did not want to take any risks as long as ‘their’ UN personnel was still held hostage. That meant the release of the hostages had the priority and that was exactly how the Dutch Government thought about it. For that reason air strikes were out of the question as long as there still were hostages, and not because there was a ‘deal’.⁵⁹¹

If Janvier might have hinted that there would be no more air strikes, even though there are no indications for that, he did not leave the track that had been prepared by politicians. The consensus was that under the current circumstances air strikes would lead nowhere. However, it would have been highly unwise to say a thing like that openly. Moreover, already before the meeting in Zvornik on 4

585 Interview John Shalikhshvili, 07/06/00.

586 ABZ, PVNY. Secure Fax DPV to PV New York, 02/06/95, unnumbered.

587 Interview Lord Owen, 23/06/01.

588 ABZ, DDI-DAV/00246. Code Lenstra 72, 14/06/95.

589 MID/KL. MID/KL, MID/KL, Intsum 107/95, 071200Z Jun 95.

590 CRST. Code Cable Kirudja, D-SRSG/CA to FRY to Akashi info Smith, 14/04/95.

591 Bstas. Ambtelijk BZ en Defensie to MP Kok, Confi. Undated (02/06/95).

June the authority to turn the key for air strikes had been taken away from Zagreb.⁵⁹² So Akashi and Janvier could no longer independently decide to carry out further air strikes.

That was different for Close Air Support. That was not out of the question. After all, orders that no more Close Air Support should be given had not been issued by New York, nor by Zagreb. It also appears from the above that Akashi did not rule out the use of Close Air Support in advance.

However, there has been no Close Air Support and that was because Janvier's first priority was the negotiations about the release of the hostages and safety of the troops; these should not be disturbed. For that reason Janvier gave the order that the use of Close Air Support should be avoided; he did not speak of a ban.⁵⁹³ The staff in Zagreb concluded that the Bosnian Serbs had two possibilities (a) submitting to the UN, but that did not seem very likely because they did not want to be seen as 'bombed to the negotiating table' and (b) holding the hostages to test the determination of the UN and the troop-contributing nations.

That means the hostages were at the heart of the line of thought of the entire UN decision-making chain. If the UN would continue air strikes or Close Air Support, then hostages might be killed and the UN could get the blame. That would put the international community even more to the test. The only thing the UN could set against it, was to stop all air actions. The air activities could only be continued with the full support of the UN in New York and the troop-contributing nations, and it would be the beginning of the end of the mission. If the air campaign was continued, the VRS could go on shelling the Safe Areas and get a tighter grip on the enclaves. When deciding on the policy to be followed, UNPROFOR was also tied to principles such as impartiality and proportionality (the UN response had to be in proportion to the violation). They continuously had to consider the safety of their own personnel and of the population. In the eyes of the soldiers in Zagreb an air campaign also did not make much sense if it could not be followed by political initiatives.⁵⁹⁴

Nevertheless, there were still many rumours that a deal would have been concluded. Right after the meeting in Zvornik all kinds of rumours were heard in Sarajevo and Zagreb that such was the case. Akashi wanted to suppress the rumours and circulated a Memorandum stating emphatically that there was absolutely no deal, but still the rumours persisted.⁵⁹⁵

These rumours re-emerged when late June Bosnian-Serb fighter aircraft from Banja Luka carried out attacks on ABiH positions near Visoko, north-west of Sarajevo. Then NATO Admiral Smith wanted to retaliate by large-scale attacks on the airfield of Banja Luka, but Janvier refused that. The reasons why have been described in the previous chapter. Then it had been the Bosnian Muslims who interpreted Janvier's response as a sign that the UN had secretly promised the Bosnian Serbs not to carry out any more air strikes in exchange for the release of the hostages.⁵⁹⁶ It should not be forgotten however, as stated earlier, that from Bosnian perspective there was a certain interest to present matters as if a deal had been made; such a deal would imply that from now on the UN would leave their enemy, the Bosnian Serbs, alone.

NATO Admiral Smith did want to know all the ins and outs; after he had heard many times that a deal should have been made, at a meeting attended by some ten to twelve people he had asked Janvier whether he had made a deal about Close Air Support. Janvier had denied that.⁵⁹⁷ General Smith in Sarajevo had never seen any proof of a deal in Zvornik either.⁵⁹⁸

In short: there is no proof whatsoever for a formal deal. That there were no more air strikes followed from own argumentation and not from own 'obligation'. Formally laying down not to carry

592 NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Code Cable Janvier to Smith, 30/05/95, No. Z-.

593 NIOD Coll. Karremans. Letter Lieutenant-General Bernard Janvier (to General Smith), 02/06/95.

594 NIOD, Coll. Ashton. 'Concept for Future Ops', undated (late May 1995), no author stated.

595 Interview Tone Bringa, 13/07/99.

596 MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, no. 30/95, completed 271400B June 1995.

597 Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

598 Interview Rupert Smith, 12/01/00.

out any more air actions would also have been at odds with all interests of the UN or the western powers.

A 'mental deal'?

It can be concluded from the above that there is no evidence about any agreement between Janvier and Mladic about abandoning air strikes in exchange for the release of hostages. The UN denied in no uncertain terms that the release would have been conditionally. They did share the political feeling that air strikes would not be expedient as long as there were hostages.

An employee of Akashi in Zagreb still maintained that Janvier and Mladic should have made a kind of 'mental deal'. Mladic should have managed to convince Janvier that as long as UNPROFOR would not use any large-scale force, the hostages would be released.⁵⁹⁹ There were others who felt that this had been the case, like the American ambassadors in the region referred to earlier. How likely is such a 'mental deal'?

It is possible that Janvier once more explained to Mladic what the current policy regarding air strikes was. That meant that air strikes would not be carried out at that moment without political approval or consultation and, consequently, that air strikes would not be carried out purely on the authority of Zagreb. In that sense Milosevic's statement on his contacts with the French President Chirac should be seen. However, it is not likely that Chirac gave Milosevic a sign that there would never more be any air strikes. Although the French were against air strikes as long as French soldiers were being held hostage, the arrival of a new French President resulted in an even harder line rather than reluctance on the part of the French. Chirac took a much tougher position than his predecessor Mitterrand.⁶⁰⁰ These are more reasons to consider a 'mental deal' unlikely.

One of the two leading figures has the last say. In January 2001, Janvier made a statement before the French parliamentary investigating committee about his meeting with Mladic in Zvornik. Janvier stated that he did not have the authority to decide on Mladic's proposal to release UN personnel in exchange for abandoning air power and that, consequently, he could not consider it a serious item for negotiations. Janvier said he had directly told Mladic that and did not discuss the subject. In this connection Janvier also gave an interpretation of the opinion of some who thought that they did close a (mental) deal. As put forward in this story, in particular some Americans involved remained convinced of that. Janvier declared that he considered the rumours on an alleged deal as manipulation as a consequence of American acts to make the French President and the French untrustworthy in the sense of: 'hostages released as a result of a deal organized by Chirac himself'.⁶⁰¹

It was not possible to take a statement from the other leading figure, Mladic. The description above showed that for the Bosnian Serbs, Milosevic was the main source of information about any deals between Janvier and Mladic. Is not impossible that with such statements on what should have been arranged, Milosevic tried to spread discord and unrest. Against Milosevic's statements is the fact that Mladic did not blame UNPROFOR on later Close Air Support and air strikes for violating an agreement. That Mladic proposed to Janvier to come to an agreement in the sense of: 'no air strikes in exchange for release of the hostages', may have contributed in the public opinion to rumours that such a deal had actually been made. After all, Mladic was the one who had an interest in such a deal. For that matter, Mladic referred to air strikes and not to Close Air Support.

As regards the higher ranks of the UN organization, the conclusion is that no guidelines or instructions have been issued, not by Boutros-Ghali, not by Akashi and not by Janvier that air strikes or Close Air Support were no longer permitted. Boutros-Ghali did stipulate in a confidential missive that no Close Air Support or air strikes were permitted without him having been consulted first. However,

599 Interview Tony Banbury, 11/05/00.

600 ABZ, DDI-DAV/01100. Confidential Memorandum Plv DGPZ to M through DGPZ and S, 02/06/95, unnumbered (report 'Torentjes' consultation).

601 *Mission d'Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica, Audition de M. Bernard Janvier, 25/01/01.*

at the time of the attack on Srebrenica the authority to permit Close Air Support was back in the hands of Akashi.

What may have been a factor in the later and persisting rumours was the lack of knowledge regarding the distinction between air strikes and Close Air Support. There were no restrictions for Close Air Support. That should not be confused with reluctance on the part of Akashi and Janvier regarding allowing requests for Close Air Support. Neither should it be forgotten that Janvier had a responsibility that extended beyond Srebrenica, and that he had to balance all requests for Close Air Support against all other UN interests in the former Yugoslavia.

The conclusion is that it is not possible to directly link the meeting in Zvornik to the fall of Srebrenica. Also indirectly such a link is highly unlikely. The Bosnian Serbs did not decide to overrun the enclave as a whole until 9 July (see Chapter 6). That same day it was decided in Zagreb to set up a blocking position to be sure that the Bosnian Serbs were intending to attack the enclave. After all, then it would be possible to use Close Air Support, Janvier had said.⁶⁰² So Close Air Support had certainly not been ruled out in advance.

602 Interview J.H. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

Chapter 4

The mood in the enclave: May - July 1995

1. Introduction

The preceding chapters dealt with the difficult political and military waters that UNPROFOR had gradually moved into, and how NATO air support for UNPROFOR had started to become increasingly problematic. These chapters presented a picture of an increasingly defeatist UNPROFOR, which, through the lack of a prospect of a political settlement to the conflict in Bosnia, had drifted into a ‘muddling through’ scenario. Before dealing in more detail with the events in and around the enclave in the weeks leading up to the fall of Srebrenica, it is appropriate first to outline the situation in which the occupants of the enclave found themselves in the period between, roughly speaking, 25 May to 6 July 1995. In this, the three groups that were mentioned earlier can be identified: Dutchbat III, the population (including Displaced Persons), and the 28th Division of ABiH. The purpose of this chapter is also to portray the mood as a background against which the ultimate fall of Srebrenica has to be assessed.

On a micro level, the picture of the situation in Srebrenica differed little from that of UNPROFOR in general. The Bosnian Serbs had embarked on a policy of minimizing supplies to this enclave, among others, and there was therefore no other option than to ‘muddle through’ for Dutchbat either, in a situation where they were finding themselves increasingly in a ‘semi-operational status’. The problems with the supplies had an impact not only on the performance of Dutchbat’s duties, but also on daily life in the enclave, and on the performance of ABiH: the population of the enclave went hungry increasingly often because of the frequent suspension of humanitarian convoys, owing to interference from the Bosnian Serbs. The morale of the 28th ABiH Division, which was the Bosnian Muslim army unit located in Srebrenica (and elsewhere), also suffered under the lack of supplies. For more information on the organization of the ABiH in Bosnia, reference is made to Chapter 6 of Part II.

Part II of this report dealt comprehensively with the conditions for the population, and described the impression that Srebrenica and Dutchbat made on the few visitors to succeed in reaching the enclave. It is covered in the part up to the spring of 1995. This chapter will identify in more detail the factors that influenced the performance of Dutchbat, the population and the ABiH in the final two months prior to the fall of Srebrenica.

The conditions for Dutchbat, the population and the 28th ABiH Division were already bad in May 1995, and became steadily worse as a result of the consistent rejection of convoys. Dutchbat had to get by without supplies of diesel.⁶⁰³

With respect to the population, when food convoys did arrive in the enclave, the quantity brought in was inadequate to feed everyone properly. The food supply to the population of the eastern enclaves was still reasonably good in April 1995: 82% of the need was covered. In May too, UNHCR still had regular access to the enclaves. Much changed after the air strikes at the end of May. In June, UNHCR convoys were able to reach Srebrenica only sporadically. The result was that in June it was possible to satisfy only 30% of the food requirement.⁶⁰⁴

The provision of information to the population left much to be desired, which encouraged rumours, and made it easier for the Bosnian Serbs to engage in psychological warfare. The departure of 28th Division Commander Naser Oric from the enclave in April 1995 had consequences for the cohesion of the ABiH; as the conditions continued to deteriorate, desertion by and departure of ABiH

⁶⁰³ Where possible, wood was used for fuel, including for hot water. Wood could be cut in sufficient quantity from the woods.

⁶⁰⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 06/07/95, No. UNPF Z-1106.

soldiers increased. Reports and diary fragments will be used to illuminate the state of Dutchbat, the population and the ABiH in the month before the fall.

Attention will also be paid to the thinking in the Dutch political arena regarding the Dutch presence in Bosnia in this period. Remarks that were made there did not always provide encouragement to Dutchbat and the home front in this last difficult period of the stay in Bosnia: there was a gnawing uncertainty on many matters, one of which was relief, as discussed later in this chapter; Dutchbat III should have been relieved early in July, but this was the subject of the wildest rumours, and uncertainty persisted until the last moment. The relief issue therefore also gave rise to considerable speculation within Dutchbat and to action and political pressure from The Hague.

2. Dutchbat's mood

The sources used to form a view of the mood and the daily conditions in the enclave in this period were the diaries of Dutchbat members and others, letters home, personal documents, and newspaper articles, statements or interviews. A degree of caution is called for in using such sources, however: it is not possible to attach any absolute value to them, because 'mood' is a somewhat subjective concept.

Extensive use will be made in this chapter of three of such sources from Dutchbat members: the anaesthetist and medical naval captain Schouten kept a diary; Warrant Officer Piet Hein Both wrote letters home; and Warrant Officer Koreman wrote a chronicle of the situation. Schouten, Both and Koreman were of the older generation, and were part of the thirteenth Airmobile Brigade battalion, which formed the Dutchbat core. All three were in the Potocari compound. A number of remarks should be made on the selection of these writers. Firstly, the perceptions of the events of these three military men is not necessarily representative of the life and the atmosphere at other locations, specifically the Dutchbat compound in Srebrenica and the observation posts (OPs). The mood in these smaller and more homogeneous units also appeared to be better than that in Potocari, which had a greater diversity of personnel. The associated problem, however, is that no diaries are known of among the groups stationed outside Potocari that cover a relatively long period and that can be used to deduce a mood. Nevertheless, the three writers give a picture of the problems that Dutchbat III was faced with.

In addition to these sources, there are also a number of personal documents that provide an impression of the atmosphere surrounding Dutchbat. The book written by Karremans, *Srebrenica - Who Cares?*, is the best known example, as well as *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* (Dutchbat in the name of peace), which was written by various authors. Although these books are also important sources, they cannot be considered representative for Dutchbat in all respects, either. Karremans's book was written only after the event and is consistent with an attempt to give an account and justification; *Dutchbat in vredesnaam* is mainly a compilation of recollections for the members of Dutchbat III themselves, and does not hazard any reflection.

General conditions

Regarding the conditions that Dutchbat had to work under, in the first place there was the undeniable influence of the Bosnian-Serb blockade of supplies to the enclave. There was little that could be done about this on Dutchbat level; it was an issue for the upper UN echelons.

With respect to the fuel situation, the problems for Dutchbat III started after 18 February 1995, after which no more fuel convoys reached Dutchbat. The resultant depletion of the diesel reserves started to have an increasing impact on Dutchbat, and could not continue without an effect on the execution of duties, the living conditions and the mood.

Colonel Brantz, the Chief of Staff at the Sector North East Tuzla headquarters, also warned that Dutchbat's morale was being put under increasing pressure. He considered the main cause to be the increasingly intolerant attitude of the VRS. The quality of execution of Dutchbat's duties deteriorated as a result of carrying out what was known as the *minimize* programme, which was initiated

to limit the consumption of diesel to a minimum. A lack of new fuel meant that this programme had to be made ever more stringent. For example, vehicles could no longer be used for patrolling the enclave. Meanwhile, the attitude of the ABiH in the enclave was becoming progressively more arrogant, according to Brantz; he felt that this was hardly beneficial to Dutchbat morale. The constraints on a proper task execution by Dutchbat were therefore utterly poor. The feeling of powerlessness became stronger by the day, because of the hopeless logistical situation and the unpredictable behaviour of the combatants. This constantly put the Dutch soldiers' powers of perseverance and endurance to the test. Brantz saw this as an unknown phenomenon for the Dutch, who had little idea how they should deal with it.

Dutchbat was wrestling with other problems, according to Brantz's analysis: what was happening with the Muslim population was in conflict with a sense of justice. The morale was put even further to the test by increasing tensions within the battalion itself. The key question was how long Dutchbat could continue to survive with the meagre resources. The minimizing of diesel consumption and the many foot patrols that resulted were a blow to their physical and mental state. A number of other factors were added to this that were by no means a boost to motivation, such as: the lack of opportunity for leave; confusing reports from the Netherlands on relief of the battalion; a statement by Prime Minister Kok that Dutchbat would have to stay longer than expected; the impression that neither UNPROFOR nor the international community were in any hurry to improve the situation that Dutchbat found itself in; tensions; and monotonous food. However, the lack of reliable information made it impossible for Sector North East in Tuzla to form an accurate impression of the mental and physical resilience of the personnel.⁶⁰⁵

In hindsight, there were also signals from the battalion that morale had been affected: 'We were just exhausted, literally and figuratively'.⁶⁰⁶ There was tension in the battalion in the final period of its presence in the enclave; a situation developed in which Dutchbat wondered what was going to happen.⁶⁰⁷

Dutchbat was also increasingly confronted with personnel shortages. In early June, the situation was that, in the weeks still to go, the battalion would have to perform its duties with only the 430 men who were still in the enclave, as opposed to the original 600. Those returning to the enclave after leave became stranded in Zagreb, and returned to the Netherlands because it was unlikely that they would get through; it was pointless to wait any longer for clearance from the Bosnian Serbs for transport to the enclave. On 12 June, General Couzy, through his Operations Deputy, Brigadier General Pollé, informed the battalion Commander, Karremans, that no one else would be able to return to Srebrenica. Karremans was unhappy that those returning from leave and waiting to enter the enclave were being sent back: he felt that it meant a possible means of pressure on the Bosnian Serbs was being abandoned.⁶⁰⁸

This lack of manpower also meant that the work in the enclave became more strenuous. For instance, the work that was carried out by C Company (stationed in the Potocari compound) initially with 143 men, now had to be done with one hundred men. This meant that on average everyone was allocated more patrols and guard duties. Of these one hundred men, 26 had had no leave at all since Dutchbat III started its duties. In other words, when Dutchbat left the enclave at the end of July, they had been there for more than six months without interruption, and would have been told, in some cases up to five times, that their planned leave had been cancelled. This was not without influence, but, according to their Company Commander, Captain Matthijssen, it was hardly noticeable, if at all, in the performance and the effort of the members of his company. According to Matthijssen, there was also

⁶⁰⁵ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Diary Brantz, *passim*.

⁶⁰⁶ Interview J. Otter, 26/05/99.

⁶⁰⁷ Interview E. Koster, 06/10/99.

⁶⁰⁸ SMG 1012. Weeksitrep Royal Netherlands Crisis Staff 01/06- 07/06/95; Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 147-9; Interview Th.J.P.Karremans, 15/12/98.

no question of a collapse of morale; there is no doubt that the conditions had an influence, but everyone just carried on doing their work and put their shoulders to the wheel, the commander said.⁶⁰⁹

From mid April, those due for leave were no longer able to leave the enclave, and those returning from leave were unable to get in. Neither did post continue to arrive in the enclave. There had been no fuel convoys since 18 February. Between sixty and eighty men had never had any leave, and Karremans says that all this did start to 'eat away' at the men. This also carried the risk that Dutchbat would no longer remain impartial; an anti-Serbian attitude started to emerge, which was why Karremans stated in a report that Dutchbat 'was no longer willing and able to consider itself impartial.' There was much grumbling about the rejection of convoys; there was a board in the corridor in the Potocari compound showing which convoys would and would not go ahead. Karremans had the following to say about this: 'You really hear some ripe Dutch vocabulary there in the corridor. You can actually pick up something of the mood from that. The lads were simply sick to death of it. And so was I. Every bit as much. Everyone. Only, you have to temper that to a certain extent.' At a certain point this gave rise to a situation where the battalion no longer believed in the arrival of convoys, and resigned themselves to it. Karremans had the impression that this led to a calmer state of mind. But, according to him, for some Dutchbat members, accepting the situation meant that they did nothing except look forward to the date when they would be relieved.⁶¹⁰

Specific moods

The company's supply situation in this period was extremely critical: food rations were being used up, there was hardly any fresh food, and no more diesel arrived after 18 February. At the same time, there was a persistent lack of clarity regarding how serious the problems were, and how long Dutchbat itself estimated it could hold out. An attempt is made below to provide some insight into the seriousness of Dutchbat's supply position. The following graphs show Dutchbat's statement of the supply position. The vertical axis shows in succession the number of days of fresh food still in stock, how much diesel remained, and how many days rations. The horizontal axis shows the period for which figures are available: 1 May to 10 July 1995. In the course of this chapter references will regularly be made to these graphs, and to the way in which they have to be interpreted.

The graphs in any case make clear that the situation took on dramatic proportions, particularly from mid May. This worked through into the mood within the battalion, which was also subject to the following additional negative influences.

In early June, great pressure was placed on the OP crews. At the beginning of June, the fear arose in Sarajevo that the Bosnian Serbs were about to launch a surprise attack on the observation posts (Ops). For this reason, the crews were informed that in an emergency they would have to be prepared to evacuate the OP in haste within one hour. This meant that they had to be almost constantly packed up and ready to go in case of a hurried departure.⁶¹¹

The effects of minimizing the consumption of diesel also did nothing to improve the mood; because there was no more diesel to run the generators, it was only possible to read in the evenings by candlelight. It also meant that it was possible to shower in warm water only once a week for three minutes, by using a number of wood-fired boilers. This led to internal tensions, which were quicker to arise and were more intense in nature than they otherwise would have been.⁶¹² In other respects too, the conditions that the battalion were in because the supplies had been cut off were far from rosy. Reports of fears of salmonella infections and the consequences of deteriorating hygienic conditions even reached the Dutch press. The state of health was said to deteriorate because, for a considerable

⁶⁰⁹ Interview C.J. Matthijssen, 11/10/99.

⁶¹⁰ Interview Th. J.P. Karremans, 24/09/98.

⁶¹¹ Interview Th. J.P. Karremans, 25/06/98.

⁶¹² SMG /1004/24. Dpty C vbpl (AOOI Tops) and med Capt Folmer to acting SSOGD, Crisis Staff, med LCol Lankhorst [07/07/95]; interview E.C.J.M. Koster, 19/10/99.

time since 16 May, it had been possible to eat only emergency rations, and it had been decided to issue vitamin pills. The staff surgeon on the Crisis Staff of the Dutch Army in The Hague (in military terms known as the Dutch Army Crisis Staff) considered the reports to be essentially correct, but also that an emotional component played a role in the description.⁶¹³ The specific medical problems, for both Dutchbat and the population, will be discussed in the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical matters'.

On 25 May, the air strike at Pale and the shells at Tuzla and Srebrenica did not escape Dutchbat's notice either. As a response, voices were heard within Dutchbat such as the following: 'we are fighting for a lost cause here'. There were reports on Dutch radio that Dutchbat had spent the entire night in the bunker. This was incorrect, but it did give rise to the necessary commotion: 'Nice and provocative for the home front. They will be getting nervous in Holland,' Schouten wrote in his diary.⁶¹⁴

De Volkskrant correspondent Bart Rijs recorded at the Dutch-Belgian transport and logistics battalion in Split that many soldiers there were concerned about what the home front might think when they saw TV pictures with chained-up UN personnel who had been taken hostage by the Bosnian Serbs. Rijs observed that many soldiers felt that the UN should depart as quickly as possible from what was known in soldier's slang as 'this goat's country'. The soldiers had the impression that no one appreciated the dangerous work they performed: 'not international politics, not the press and absolutely not the population.'⁶¹⁵ Journalists had no chance to get through to Srebrenica, but it seems rather unlikely that the thinking was more positive there.

The question that prevailed earlier in May among Dutchbat personnel in Srebrenica, was what would happen if the diesel finally ran out. The water treatment system would then be unable to work and there would no longer be any clean water, and there would be only emergency rations as food. 'How long would they let the battalion continue to run like that?' wondered Schouten in his diary.⁶¹⁶ The electricity supply was already minimal, so that they had to sit in semi-darkness in the evenings. On 10 May, Karremans wrote that he went from *bare minimum* (the 'minimize' level) to *survival*.

Later the same day, a convoy reached the battalion with, among other things, 10,000 kilos of meat. However, it was not possible to keep it, because the cooling units of the refrigerators had been turned off in response to the fuel shortage. The meat had been put on the convoy without being requested. Koreman wrote what happened to the meat: 'The idea of giving the meat to the population was well meant, but was impossible to realize. The population - who were actually in need of meat - would still refuse the offer, because, as Muslims, they did not eat pork. We could only wonder whether the staff had actually made the offer to the population (...)' The population was offered 2500 kilos of pork, but, indeed, they would not accept it; it was decided simply to have lavish barbecues and to bring another portion of the meat to the Bosnian-Serb area. Sergeant Major Rave delivered this in person on 11 May to the Bosnian Serbs, by horse and cart that had been hired for the price of one pack of coffee.⁶¹⁷

This luxury problem was rare, however: in the middle of May the toilet paper ran out; diarrhoea occurred regularly; the first infestations of fleas took place; showers could be taken only with cold water. 'How could it go on? This is *subsistence*, not *existence*', Schouten remarked.⁶¹⁸

Drinking water had to be rationed because heavy rain on 28 May had flooded the compound in Potocari, so that the water treatment system was blocked with mud. Drinking water was then distributed around the compound in jerry cans; the amount given was minimal. Only once the diesel

⁶¹³ ANP, 071234 Jun 95; NIOD, Coll. Princen. Information for the General Meeting with Parliament on Thursday 08/06/95.

⁶¹⁴ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 25/05/95 and 26/05/95.

⁶¹⁵ *De Volkskrant*, 29/05/95.

⁶¹⁶ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 13/05/95.

⁶¹⁷ Dijkema, 'Dutchbat in Vredesnaam', p. 178.

⁶¹⁸ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 16/05/95.

supply had been brought back to normal could the water treatment system be used again, and then water treatment would ensure that the drinking water problem was a thing of the past. There was still sufficient chlorine available to disinfect water, however.⁶¹⁹ There was hardly any water left for laundry. Op 5 June Schouten wrote in his diary: 'with a bit of luck, I can find some water to do some washing. The situation will now really get miserable if they cannot get the water pipeline open. Before you realize it, your nails, feet, ears, hair - everything - get dirty because they get covered in a fine layer of clay dust'.⁶²⁰ Meanwhile, the shooting between the combatants in the surroundings increased: 'I wonder when we will have the first dead or wounded.' Gradually the tobacco also ran out, so that the smokers began to suffer, or had to change to locally grown tobacco.⁶²¹

The uncertain situation that they found themselves in encouraged rumours to start: for instance, fuel would be supplied by air within a couple of days. *De Volkskrant* of 31 May reported that the Ukraine wished to take over the manning of the Srebrenica Safe Area: this welcome news arrived in the enclave on the same day. However, the report also mentioned that, as yet, it was no more than a 'tentative prospect of replacement', as Minister Van Mierlo expressed it. Van Mierlo also said that supplying the UN troops in the eastern enclaves had 'top priority' among the nations providing troops. That was putting it too strongly: the UN was powerless as long as hundreds of blue helmets were still held hostage, and that ruled out a risky supply operation by air⁶²² (see also the 'supplies by air' Appendix).

Because of the meeting of the NATO North Atlantic Council in Noordwijk on 30 May, the Dutch press gave extra prominence to reports on Bosnia. This reporting also contributed to the confusion about what was happening on the political front, with the following headlines appearing in one day in the *Algemeen Dagblad* alone: 'NATO wants 'more robust' action in Bosnia'; 'New mandate for the blue helmets' and 'script for retreat ready'.⁶²³ Such reports did not fail to have an effect on the mood of Dutchbat and the home front. Schouten wrote about this in his diary: 'splendid plans are made internationally, but they don't do us much good. For many people it is another reason to speculate [on] a hasty retreat. They always reason the same way: home. Because we can't do anything anyway, the diesel has run out, the food is wrong, too little protein, and so on. (...) A telegram about the food situation was sent with much fuss and panic to the Crisis Staff. I think it would have been more useful to find out the best way to solve the problem. (...) The item was mentioned in the *Brabants Dagblad*. Unfortunately, it was yet another reason for serious concern at home. But it appears to be misunderstood.'⁶²⁴

On 2 June, Schouten reported that there was only enough locally baked bread for another three days: 'this is where the dissatisfaction begins'. Schouten's words were clear enough: 'it is hopeless. The same every day. (...) People are slowly becoming irritable. (...) There are still enough calories, but there will be a lack of protein and vitamins. (...) You are allowed to eat only one meal [ration]. What good is that to these hulks? They are following the wrong policy. (...) There is bickering. It is only a matter of time until someone flips and accidents happen. How much longer? Weeks. Then there will be a mutiny. No water, no light, poor food, poor personal hygiene: there will be victims. Rationing appears to be necessary.'⁶²⁵ Fortunately the TV is on in the evening. A welcome diversion for hours. (...) A blessing, it numbs the brain a little.'⁶²⁶

⁶¹⁹ SMG /1004/24. Dpty C vbpl (AOOI Tops) and med Capt Folmer to acting SSOGD, Crisis Staff, med LCol Lankhorst [07/06/95].

⁶²⁰ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 05/06/95.

⁶²¹ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 29/05/95.

⁶²² *De Volkskrant*, 29/05/95 and 31/05/95.

⁶²³ *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29/05/95.

⁶²⁴ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 07/06/95. Also see the Annez: Dutchbat and the local population: medical issues.

⁶²⁵ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 02/06/95.

⁶²⁶ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 03/06/95.

On 4 June, the day after the VRS captured a Dutchbat observation post (about which there is more information in the following chapter), Schouten wrote: ‘A telephone line is out of order, so it is difficult to make calls. Because some pretty tall stories reach home, private calls are forbidden. Which is a shame, because we cannot reassure the people back home at all.’ On 5 June: ‘A bright spot: herring in tomato sauce on bread this afternoon. (...) We have had enough. It is just a question of constant waiting and living one day at a time. If you knew what the end date was, you could put up with things, but to have to wait maybe for weeks longer is miserable for everyone.’⁶²⁷ Another five days later: ‘The commander has written a serious letter to the Crisis Staff and said that we will be unable to do anything in another fourteen days. I wonder what will happen. (...) It is gradually becoming unpleasant. Politicians talk, and we wait. (...) I wonder whether all the Minister’s great words will come to anything. There is no one to take over from us. Do we have to clear up? And the supplies? Will helicopters arrive next week with fuel? How many deaths will there be? Or will the Serbs allow convoys by road? Wait and see.’⁶²⁸

The waiting was hard. Schouten’s repatriation date to the Netherlands had since passed more than a month ago. ‘All news turns out to be false in the end. The lack of information makes the world shrink to what you can see ahead. And just wait and wait until something happens.’⁶²⁹ And a couple of days later: ‘The food is now just lousy. (...) I hope something will happen, because the reserves are officially exhausted. It is not clear why no further action is being taken.’⁶³⁰

In mid May, the message that a list of valuable equipment would have to be drawn up in relation to a possible evacuation of Dutchbat by NATO, also sowed disquiet in the ranks.⁶³¹ The battalion was in the dark on many matters surrounding possible evacuation plans, in which a temporary NATO presence in Bosnia would give UNPROFOR the opportunity to withdraw. The home front was even more in the dark, as Schouten was also aware: ‘What are people at home to think if they have no contact with us here? Many of them will be in panic.’⁶³²

On the same day that Schouten wrote this, *Het Parool* reported that Minister Voorhoeve was allowing for the possibility that, in the extreme case, Dutchbat would be withdrawn by force from Srebrenica. The Permanent parliamentary Committee for Defence was informed of the evacuation plans in confidence: lives could be at stake in the event of an evacuation. Defence was terrified of unrest if the evacuation plans were to leak out prematurely. It was impressed upon members of Parliament to treat the matter in confidence. *Het Parool* printed the report on the basis of sources within the Ministry of Defence, so that the damage to the morale of Dutchbat and the home front had already been done. This was all the more true, according to the article, because Minister Voorhoeve deemed consultation with Parliament necessary to provide political cover for possible calamities in the event of a withdrawal. The article also stated that the battalion had food supplies until 4 June, but an Army spokesman hastened to add that the evacuation plans should not be linked to the food situation.⁶³³ Otherwise, the newspaper reported that arrangements for relief had still not been made. The Netherlands was dependent on other countries, which was equally true for the relief, for a possible withdrawal operation and for possible resupply by air.⁶³⁴

⁶²⁷ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 04/06/95 and 05/06/95.

⁶²⁸ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 10/06/95.

⁶²⁹ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 15/06/95.

⁶³⁰ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 17/06/95 and 18/06/95.

⁶³¹ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 11/05/95.

⁶³² NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 16/05/95.

⁶³³ *Het Parool*, 16/05/95.

⁶³⁴ *Algemeen Dagblad*, 17/05/95.

Karremans's 'cry of distress'

The 'serious letter' that Schouten referred to was a 'cry of distress' sent by Karremans to the Dutch Army Crisis Staff on 5 June, regarding the state in which Dutchbat found itself. Karremans wrote that the battalion felt cut off from the outside world. Although this was perhaps putting it a little dramatically, the battalion saw itself in a situation similar to the hostages after the shelling of Pale, with the difference that Dutchbat had already been in a hostage situation for a considerable time. The main cause of all this was the lack of supplies and the constant rejection of convoys by the VRS. There had been no supply of fuel since 18 February, which did not mean that there was no fuel left: Karremans pointed out that Dutchbat had only been able to keep going for so long thanks to an extremely low fuel consumption and making use of the UNHCR fuel stock that was stored on the compound (which took place with the consent of General Smith).

Karremans warned, however, that this too would come to an end within one week. After that there were only emergency diesel reserves, which were intended to be used for leaving the enclave in an emergency.

The battalion commander painted a sombre picture of the situation after that time: carrying out the battalion's tasks would then no longer be feasible. A large part of the daily activities of the engineering platoon, the logistic platoons and the Field Dressing Station were already at a standstill. Materiel for reinforcing observation posts, positions and road repair was no longer available. The stock of spare parts ran out, so that essential equipment could no longer be repaired and its usability was at risk. Patrols and support to the population had already largely come to a halt. When the diesel reserves ran out it would no longer be possible to treat any water. The only reserves left then would be packaged drinking water for twelve days. The battalion had no heating, lighting or hot water and it was no longer possible to do the laundry. The personnel had had no fresh food for four weeks, (in fact it had been three weeks) and all the time they were forced to eat rations. This stock would be exhausted in another four weeks, according to Karremans. Meat, dairy products and flour were no longer available. Vitamin pills were issued to compensate for the nutritional deficiencies. Because there was no longer any fuel, the patrols had to be made on foot, which demanded considerable physical effort. The deteriorating hygienic conditions caused an increase in the number of cases of diarrhoea, and the chance of it spreading became greater. Normal items such as toilet paper and cleaning and conditioning agents were no longer available. Daily requisites such as soap, toothpaste, shampoo and shaving foam ran out. All this was detrimental to the performance of the personnel, according to Battalion Commander Karremans.⁶³⁵

The situation was becoming increasingly difficult for the population of the enclave too. UNHCR convoys no longer had access to the enclave, and there was a lack of the most essential vital necessities. The smuggling routes to Zepa had been closed by the VRS. The water pipeline no longer worked. Neither the hospital nor *Médecins Sans Frontières* were able to offer the population adequate medical assistance; nor was there any more medicine. The VRS had hardened its attitude, Karremans wrote. In the absence of measures from the authorities, Karremans suspected that the VRS would attempt to capture the southern part of the enclave. In view of the increasing threat and the expectation that a wholesale attack could take place, many residents along the enclave border left their accommodation out of fear. This was also true of some of the Displaced Persons who lived in the Swedish Shelter Project in the south of the enclave.

The civilian and military authorities had 'urgently' requested Karremans to publicize the situation in the enclave. If no changes were made in the near future, a disaster could not be ruled out. Dutchbat had no chance of doing anything and was no longer able to cope with a situation that was out of control, Karremans said. The situation became more threatening by the day, and Karremans suspected that it would not be long before it escalated. Now that the population had put its fate in

⁶³⁵ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Appendix to letter TK9589 dated 05/06/95 to C-RNLA Crisis Staff.

Dutchbat's hands, Karremans requested his letter to be brought to the attention of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence. He also requested the whole situation to be disclosed to the Dutch Press Agency (ANP).⁶³⁶ This last suggestion was immediately ruled out by the Dutch Army Crisis Staff because, also in the interests of avoiding unrest on the home front, they preferred not to widely publicize the state in which Dutchbat found itself.

There are no indications that the Dutch Army Crisis Staff brought the letter to the attention of the Ministers, as Karremans had requested. Even though it was understandable under the circumstances that Karremans would want to clutch at every straw, the question was what the Dutch government would have been able to do beyond what the UN, UNHCR and the International Red Cross (ICRC) had already tried.

To emphasize the seriousness of the situation, *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) issued a press release in Belgrade, in which the organization indicated that the food supplies in the enclave were becoming 'dangerously low'. The Bosnian Serbs also made it difficult for MSF to work in Srebrenica: they did allow medical goods for MSF through, but MSF was also put under pressure in that the Bosnian Serbs had refused permission for the relief of personnel.⁶³⁷

One day earlier, on 4 June, Karremans had also sent a cry of distress to Sector North East in Tuzla and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo, informing them that the food situation in the enclave was starting to take on dramatic forms. This letter was less extensive than the one to the Dutch Army Crisis Staff, and did not dwell on the problems which Dutchbat itself was wrestling with, concentrating instead on the state in which the population found itself. Karremans wrote in this letter that the UNHCR warehouse would be empty within a few days. On 25 May, discussions were still being held between the Opstina (the municipal authority of Srebrenica) and the Bosnian Serbs for buying food in Bratunac, but these came to nothing because the Opstina thought the prices were too high.⁶³⁸ On that day, Civil Affairs of Sector North East in Tuzla also notified Sarajevo that there were no more food reserves for the population. The scale of the black market had decreased: what there was, was traded for prices that an ordinary mortal could not afford. For instance, the price of flour in early June trebled within a week. Stories of people who died of starvation were taken with a pinch of salt in Tuzla at the time, because they had no evidence to support it.⁶³⁹

Karremans observed that the population had put its fate in Dutchbat's hands. After the local authorities of Srebrenica had made an appeal to the world community, Karremans made an appeal to the UN command in Sarajevo: both cries of distress were oriented towards achieving better living conditions for the population and the battalion.⁶⁴⁰ In Karremans's view, the ball was now in the court of the upper echelons: it was up to them to create the conditions for Dutchbat to be able to continue the assigned duties.⁶⁴¹

These upper echelons were at hard at work on the matter. Akashi and Ogata (the High Commissioner for Refugees) wrote in a joint letter to Karadzic about the poor conditions for the population in Sarajevo, Bihac, Gorazde, Srebrenica and Zepa: 'whole families are crying out for food (...) we can no longer tolerate the violation of exhaustively negotiated agreements (...) we refuse to accept lame excuses, false allegations and suspicions or references to uncontrolled elements to justify interference with the free movement of humanitarian goods and staff'.⁶⁴²

⁶³⁶ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. CO Dutchbat III to C-RNLA Crisis staff, 05/06/95, No. TK9589 and Appendix.

⁶³⁷ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF update from Belgrade, 05/06/95, No. In 240.

⁶³⁸ NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF Srebre to MSF Beo, Monthly Report, 09/06/95, No. Out 760.

⁶³⁹ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. HQ SNE G5/Civil Military Operations to G5/Civil Military Operations [Sarajevo], 4 July 1300B 95; NIOD, Coll. UNHCR, Tuzla. Belgrade (UNHCR), Sitrep for Gorazde, Srebrenica, Zepa and Serb areas of Eastern BH, 02 Jun 95 1110Z; UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade, 01/06/95 14:18.

⁶⁴⁰ NIOD, Coll Karremans. CO Dutchbat to Comdr BH Command thru Comdr HQ SNE, 04/06/95, No. TK9588.

⁶⁴¹ NIOD, Coll Karremans. Appendix to letter TK9598 dated 05/06/99 to C-RNLA Crisis Staff.

⁶⁴² UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, Civil Affairs- Sector North-East, 1994-1996. UNPROFOR HQ, Office of Civil Affairs, Weekly Situation Report, No. 120, 19-25 June 1995.

Also on 4 June, Janvier and Mladic spoke to each other in Zvornik (see the previous chapter), and the agenda included the supplies to the enclaves. In this, Mladic made a link between the supplies to the enclaves and the present blockade of the supplies to the Bosnian Serbs from Serbia. As a gesture of goodwill, Mladic was prepared to permit UNPROFOR to be supplied by road from Yugoslavia (which was already the case for UNHCR transports). It was agreed on 6 June that there would be further contact on the matter.⁶⁴³ Janvier and Mladic agreed that, for the eastern enclaves, meetings would be held at established venues regarding the needs for food and fuel for the UNPROFOR units and the need for humanitarian aid for the population, to be supplied by UNHCR.⁶⁴⁴ For Dutchbat, the further course of events was that UNHCR and MSF provided Deputy Battalion Commander Franken with data on their need for food, fuel and medicine for the population.⁶⁴⁵ On 6 June, Franken indeed handed over the list of the population's and UNPROFOR's needs to the VRS liaison officer for Dutchbat, Major Momir Nikolic. Nikolic received the list without comment. Consultation with him on this occasion led to nothing; he had no authority to take decisions.⁶⁴⁶ Ultimately, it was not the local military authority that decided whether convoys were allowed through, but Pale; Nikolic's answer that he had no authority would therefore not have come as a surprise. After all, Nikolic's task was only that of liaison officer. His duty was to communicate requests from the VRS command to (in this case) Dutchbat, and to bring the reply back to his command.⁶⁴⁷

Otherwise, it was usually not clear to local VRS commanders why convoys were or were not allowed through. For instance, the VRS commander of the Yellow Bridge checkpoint (to the north of the enclave border), Jovan Ivic (also known as Jovo), said that he only received a telex from his command containing detailed instructions of what he could and could not allow through his checkpoint.⁶⁴⁸

The seriousness of the situation had apparently convinced Pale: on the day after the discussion with Nikolic, another UNHCR convoy arrived with ten trucks carrying 72 tons of food for the population of the enclave. The VRS authorities had scrapped one truck: the one with teaching materials for the schools. Meanwhile, Dutchbat's supply problems persisted.⁶⁴⁹

In the meantime, the ABiH in Srebrenica appeared to be taking good care of itself. In May, the ABiH separated approximately forty tons of goods from UNHCR aid that had reached the enclave from the aid to the population. This implied a considerable risk: if the Bosnian Serbs were to find out, the aid to the population could be limited even further. It was also noteworthy that the Chief of the Defence Sector in the enclave, Professor Suljo Hasanovic, reported from the enclave to the defence secretariat of the Ministry of Defence of the Tuzla canton that the ABiH had also received some food from Dutchbat. For the same reason, if the Bosnian Serbs were to intercept this message traffic - which was not unlikely - and irrespective of whether this message was true, it could have given the VRS an additional reason for tightening the thumbscrews on Dutchbat.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 15/06/95, No. Z-995 (FC's meeting with Mladic - 4 June).

⁶⁴⁴ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol. I Resupply Eastern Encl, 17/04/95 -11/07/95 Comd UNPF-HQ Zagreb to Comd UNPROFOR, 05/06/95.

⁶⁴⁵ NIOD, Coll. MSF.Capsat LO-Team Dutchbat to MSF and UNHCR Srebrenica, UNMOs Srebrenica, 05/06/95, 21:09, No. In 250.

⁶⁴⁶ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol. I Resupply Eastern Encl, 17/04/95 -11/07/95. Fax Office of the Comd HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, 071400BJun 95; SMG, 1001. CRST. HQ Dutchbat to Sector HQ North East, Sitrep and Milinfo period 051700 to 061700B Jun 95; *The Inner Circle*, number 39, 6/07/95.

⁶⁴⁷ Interview Momir Nikolic, 20/10/00.

⁶⁴⁸ Interview Jovan Ivic, alias Jovo Rus, 20/10/00.

⁶⁴⁹ DCBC, 1858. Code Com Coreu to Par Coreu, 21/06/95, BuZa Ref No. Come292/pesci6193.

⁶⁵⁰ ICTY (IT-98-33) D55. Chief of the Defence Sector Prof Suljo Hasanovic to Defence Ministry Tuzla Defence Secretariat, Department Srebrenica Municipality, 05/06/95, No. 03-49-5/95. The list was as follows: 2500 kg of flour, 596 kg of sugar, 1,423 litres of cooking oil, 619 kg of salt, 5,000 kg of beans, 17,020 of cold cuts, 100 kg of powdered milk, 62 kg of juice, 7,780 tins of fish, 1290 kg of cauliflower, 90 kg of kale, 150 kg of carrots, 240 kg of green beans, 171 litres of heating oil and 1 litre of motor oil.

How critical was Dutchbat's supply situation ?

The answer to the question of how critical Dutchbat's supply situation was at various times is complex. So far, the discussion has been limited to how serious the situation was according to Dutchbat itself, which can be deduced from the earlier graphs. The UN organizations in Tuzla, Sarajevo and Zagreb themselves also attempted to form an opinion of the (seriousness of) Dutchbat's supply position. This was not unimportant: their assessment of the seriousness of the situation could determine, for example, whether a drastic operation such as delivering supplies by air was necessary. In this connection, Janvier stated that if there was no improvement in the fuel situation, he would take a decision sometime around 16 June on concentrating Dutchbat, which would mean giving up the OPs.⁶⁵¹

In June these upper echelons of the UN did not yet view Dutchbat's food and water reserves as critical. The staff officer for logistics (in military terms: the Chief G-4) of Sector North East in Tuzla, Lieutenant Colonel Staale Hansen, calculated on 15 June that Dutchbat could survive on rations and water until 28 July.

The picture became more vague on the question of when the diesel reserves would run out. Officially, they had already run out at the beginning of March. The fuel consumption had already been reduced to 400 litres a day, which was the absolute minimum. Otherwise, some fuel arrived again on 20 June.

Before 20 June, different answers were given to the question of when the reserves would be exhausted. According to an assessment by Zagreb on 11 June, the reserves would be exhausted on 15 June, whereas according to Sector North East in Tuzla on 15 June, the diesel would run out on 22 June, but on the same day, Hansen in Tuzla thought that Dutchbat had already 'borrowed' two thousand litres from UNHCR: in his opinion, Dutchbat could 'borrow' another two thousand litres in an emergency. In addition, Hansen pointed out that Dutchbat had an emergency reserve of six thousand litres, and that the vehicles' tanks were half full. Hansen deduced from this that, with strict rationing and by using the last reserves, Dutchbat could survive in the enclave until 12 July. However, Karremans stated on 15 June that the date that the diesel would run out was between 17 June and 21 June.⁶⁵²

Altogether, confusion was caused by the differing dates that were mentioned for the end of the fuel reserves for the following reasons: the predicted date kept moving because, by taking increasingly stringent measures, Dutchbat was able to last a little longer with the existing reserves; fuel was 'borrowed' from UNHCR reserves, which were stored on the Potocari compound (the UNHCR fuel reserves actually continued to be replenished for some time).⁶⁵³ On the other hand, the fact that Dutchbat had drawn fuel from humanitarian reserves was not appreciated by *Médecins Sans Frontières*. The MSF generator could only run for eleven hours a day, 'thanks to Dutchbat who used during 2.5 months the fuel for humanitarian aid without any restriction'.⁶⁵⁴ On 14 March, Dutchbat had drawn 67,850 litres of diesel from UNHCR, and it would appear that Dutchbat later drew another 5000 litres from these reserves.⁶⁵⁵

In an attempt to arrive at an improvement in the perilous supply position, Karremans launched the idea in Sarajevo of resorting to supply by air. That appeared to Karremans to be a simple, feasible and promising solution for ensuring that containers would arrive at the intended place.⁶⁵⁶ The upper echelons had already been wrestling for months with the supply problem, and were exploring all

⁶⁵¹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2, SRSG Meeting, 1995 May-Oct. Senior Staff Meeting, 13/06/95.

⁶⁵² UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 454/77, File UNPROFOR Civil Affairs, Sitraps SNE 95, 16 Feb - 31 May 95. Interoffice Memorandum DFC to FC, 11/06/95, File 3300-SEE (DFC); NIOD, Coll. Brantz. HQ Sector North East Memo Chief G4 to CO, DCO, A/COS, Ch G2/G3, 15/06/95.

⁶⁵³ *The Inner Circle*, Dutchbat III, number 43, 19/06/95; SMG 1005/16. Capsat DCO/S4 Dutchbat to UNHCR Srebrenica, [12/06/95],

⁶⁵⁴ NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF Srebre to MSF Beo, Monthly Report, 09/06/95, No. Out 760. MSF said that it still had two months of emergency reserves.

⁶⁵⁵ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. C-1 (NL) UN Infbat Dutchbat 3 to BLS, 17/06/95, No. TK9597.

⁶⁵⁶ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 147.

avenues for delivering fuel, especially to the eastern enclaves. This took place outside Dutchbat's field of view. Because this struggle, which lasted for several months, would seriously interrupt the story line of the period preceding the fall of Srebrenica, it has been decided to move the process of searching for alternatives to land convoys through Bosnian Serbian territory to a separate Appendix, 'supply by air'.

3. The home straight was the heaviest for Dutchbat

Dutchbat started to look forward to relief and made preparations accordingly. Warrant Officer Piet Hein Both's *War Diary* states that on 3 June, the day of the capture of Observation Post Echo (OP-E), many had already packed their kit bags ready for departure, and that they were in the process of clearing up. Around 9 June, a series of debriefing interviews was started with the battalion's psychologist, Lieutenant Colonel Sanders. 'It seemed then as if the mission was over,' was how Both interpreted the mood. In these confidential psychological debriefing interviews, matters such as the following were brought up: satisfaction with the work; the team spirit inside the group and the cooperation outside it; coping emotionally with fellow-soldiers being wounded, and experiences with the local population; the question of whether they felt threatened during activities or in the compound; the shock reactions to firing around the compound or the OPs; the question of whether they had been able to sleep well; the effects of the circumstance that they were away from home for a long time and the question of how the contact with home had proceeded; how the Dutchbat members themselves had coped with being separated from their family; how their wives and children at home had coped; and the support on the home front by family, friends and the unit.⁶⁵⁷

Both also went through this debriefing, and the question was raised as to what purpose Dutchbat's presence had served. He had no answer. They had made no contribution to peace, simply because there was no peace. The feelings in Both's supply platoon would have been the same. The personnel sensed a great lack of understanding among the upper echelons: 'In The Hague, they do not know what is happening here. The way we live: they have no idea.' Dutchbat felt forgotten and trapped; it was a trap with no escape and where you starved. For Both it was an upside-down world where he had to be given a piece of bread by a Muslim woman in the compound. 'How long do they think this can go on?' Psychologist Sanders is reputed to have said: 'This battalion can't take any more. The personnel are exhausted. The supplies are exhausted. We have to be relieved. And very soon.' According to Both, Dutchbat personnel that returned from the OPs said that the battalion must leave as rapidly as possible, because it was the Bosnian Muslims who were provoking the fighting. Otherwise, the population irritated them because their personal possessions were stolen quite frequently.⁶⁵⁸ Many a Dutchbat soldier was irritated in the course of patrols by the shouts of young Muslim men: 'Fuck off, you UN' and other unfriendly utterances.⁶⁵⁹

An event on 3 June showed that dangers were also attached to the mission in Bosnia. On that day, two members of the Dutchbat A company, which was stationed in Simin Han, were severely wounded after their armoured personnel carrier (APC) had been hit by an anti-tank shell, which had been fired by the VRS. The commander and the gunner would be invalids for the rest of their lives: Sergeant Pieter van Wesel lost an eye and part of his skull, and Private Gaby van Wage lost an arm.⁶⁶⁰ This event left a deep impression in Srebrenica too, partly because such incidents could lead to panic on the home front through reports in the media. The families and friends in the Netherlands naturally closely followed the events surrounding Srebrenica, but the only source of information available to the home front when something special happened was the Dutch Army Crisis Staff. But it was precisely in times of disaster that this could be difficult, which would also be apparent after the VRS started to attack the enclave and capture OPs on 6 July, when it led to a tidal wave of telephone calls for

⁶⁵⁷ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman, 36nd week, p. 28.

⁶⁵⁸ Piet Hein Both/Herman Veenhof, *Srebrenica, War Diary of Piet Hein Both*, p. 87-90.

⁶⁵⁹ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (1).

⁶⁶⁰ See *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 239 and Diary Koreman, 35th week, p. 29.

information to the Dutch Army Crisis Staff.⁶⁶¹ This caused many problems there: there were insufficient telephone lines available, many calls were cut off abruptly, breakdowns were a regular occurrence, and callers often had to wait a long time to be connected. An even greater problem was that it was not possible to separate operational message traffic from telephone calls from the home front. At some times this reached such proportions that operational commanders could no longer reach the Dutch Army Crisis Staff.⁶⁶²

Meanwhile, little changed in the state outlined by Karremans in his 'cry of distress'. There were hopeful messages about the arrival of a convoy of seventy trucks to supply UNPROFOR in the eastern enclaves, which was to take place via Belgrade: the Federal Yugoslav authorities and Mladic had given their approval. The messages did not prove true, however. The convoy was ready on 16 June in Zagreb, but the Bosnian Serbs gave no permission for the planned size; the Bosnian Serbs insisted that the convoy had to be drastically scaled down. The quantity of fuel had to be reduced from 247 m³ to 95 m³. This was reason for Karremans, after his 'cry of distress' of 5 June, to explain the situation that his battalion found itself in again in a letter of 17 June, this time addressed to the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, General Couzy. Karremans pointed out that the battalion could not perform its duties with moral support, sympathy and words like 'good luck'. It was time for action at the highest level; Karremans again outlined the situation. The battalion had been deprived of fresh food, dairy products, meat and sandwich filling for a month. Their last meal was cooked on 9 May, and since then they had lived on rations. After the convoy on 10 May, a final convoy arrived on 16 May, consisting of only one vehicle. For a month after that, no more fresh food would arrive, so that the reserves would have to be depleted further. No diesel had arrived for four months, and the battalion had lived for six weeks on a subsistence level. Post, newspapers, toiletries and tobacco no longer arrived. In an operational sense, the battalion was no longer in a position to carry out its duties. The restrictions were not without influence on the morale and the performance of the personnel, even though it was still relatively high under the circumstances, in Karremans's eyes. The personnel was simply 'tired' of the hopeless situation that it found itself in. Karremans denied that the battalion gave 'a slightly stressed impression': he had concluded from statements from the Dutch Army Crisis Staff that they thought so. Karremans also asked permission to use the emergency diesel reserve and he requested that his problems be brought to the attention of the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the Defence Staff and to have the battalion resupplied later the same week.⁶⁶³ Karremans gave this signal at different times to Sector North East in Tuzla and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo. The Hague was unable to carry much weight in connection with the problems mentioned in the letter. It was Mladic who continued to adhere to an equal distribution of the humanitarian aid to Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs, and in so doing brought the issue to a focus for UNPROFOR.⁶⁶⁴

There was no prospect of improvement. There was still no permission from the Bosnian Serbs on 19 June for the convoy destined for Dutchbat to depart from Zagreb. Neither did the UN staff in Zagreb know what should happen next. The expectation was that Janvier would not want to force anything, and that it would have to be accepted that Dutchbat could continue to man the OPs, but would otherwise cease to be operational. The fact is that Dutchbat was not the only unit in a bad state: the British and Ukrainians in Gorazde were similarly only manning the OPs while being otherwise non-operational, and the Ukrainians in Zepa had also not seen a fuel supply for sixteen weeks, and were even without food. When a convoy arrived there, it had only 525 kg of ketchup, 1395 kg canned

⁶⁶¹ Interview M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00.

⁶⁶² Lessons Learned, case No. LL/879/839. The Chief of Operational Staff BLS to distribution list, 22/03/96, No. OPS BLS/3526. (The shortcomings observed were taken into account in designing a new location for the Commander-in Chief RNLA Operational Staff.)

⁶⁶³ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. C-1 (NL) UN Infbat Dutchbat 3 to BLS, 17/06/95, No. TK9597.

⁶⁶⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 20/06/95, No. Z-1025 with attached Janvier/Mladic meeting of 17/06/95.

potatoes, 150 litres of vinegar and a small quantity of highly spiced Malaysian rations. There was no meat, salt, sugar, flour, pasta and vegetables.⁶⁶⁵

Ultimately, Pale gave clearance on 20 June for the Dutchbat convoy from Zagreb to Srebrenica, but for no more than two trucks (one container with frozen food and one container with chilled food) as well as a tanker with 11,000 litres of fuel, as opposed to the requested five containers of food and medical supplies and 84,000 litres of fuel.⁶⁶⁶ The arrival of the convoy was surrounded by disbelief. Schouten wrote in his diary: 'The convoy appeared to be on its way after all. It is said to consist of 3 to 10 vehicles. No one knows how many. Claims are made on the radio that we will be supplied completely, which is a great lie. We will just continue on the same minimize. (...) We will have to make do with a container, a refrigerated container and 12,000 litres of diesel. So we will just be carrying on with *minimizing*'. Cheese and sausage arrived, but there was no bread and neither was there any flour.⁶⁶⁷

At a check of the convoy on the way to Srebrenica, the VRS opened all the parcels and confiscated a number of them. Most contained school equipment. An event that was illustrative of the VRS interference and its fear that clothing could arrive in the enclave of possible benefit to the Muslim population,⁶⁶⁸ was a negotiation that had to be conducted about one package containing twenty T-shirts, which led to much discussion because the VRS liaison officer's position was that soldiers always had to wear uniform and so had no need to wear T-shirts. Dutchbat pointed out that it was usual in Western countries to change clothes outside working hours, and that the T-shirts were also to be used for playing sports. This was acceptable to the liaison officer, but only for personal parcels, which did not apply to the package containing the twenty T-shirts. They were confiscated and handed over to the Military Police in Bratunac. All this provoked much anger among the Dutchbat liaison team and also among the UNMOs, because the Dutchbat command had not taken the trouble to clarify this matter for a following convoy.⁶⁶⁹

Neither was there anything to report on the relief in the meantime. On 22 June, Schouten noted what was being said around the battalion: 'the Minister made a loud and clear statement that we would leave on 1 July. Everything is ready, except we know nothing.' One day later: 'Karremans has had enough. As Commander he knows nothing and everyone just keeps saying that we are leaving on 1 July. He will get clarification from The Hague. [...] Then we will be called together in the afternoon. The Hague is unaware of any rotation of Dutchbat (?!!) and everyone in the battalion thinks that the others have already fixed it up.'⁶⁷⁰ (Please note that we return to the difference between relief and rotation in section 5.)

The only other item of information on the issue of the relief and supplies that was known to the battalion was that General Janvier and General Mladic were to have talks on the problems. 'The picture gradually emerged of the bankruptcy of the UN actions. The Serbs just do as they please, and the only thing we do in return is 'diplomacy' and 'conferences'. That has had no result since 1990.'⁶⁷¹ On 29 June, Schouten wrote: 'wonderful that Minister Voorhoeve knows that the Ukrainian battalion will arrive on 14 July. We know nothing.'⁶⁷²

⁶⁶⁵ BDL. Outgoing Fax David Harland to Philip Corwin, Sector Sarajevo, Weekly Situation Report, 24/06/95.

⁶⁶⁶ ABZ, DAV/ARA/00246. Code Lenstra 72, 13/06/95; DCBC, 2765. Memo Sitsen to SC-O, G2, G3, DCBC, G1, G4, G6, 15/06/95; CRST. Fax G3 Land Ops HQ UNPF Zagreb to CDS and BLS (by hand), 17/06/95; CRST. UNMO Pale to G3 Convoy Ops/UNMO HQ UNPROFOR Sarajevo, 190930B June 1995, sent with fax G3 Land Ops to RNLA Crisis Staff, 20/06/95.

⁶⁶⁷ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 20/06/95.

⁶⁶⁸ The sports club 'Guber' had to appeal to Dutchbat to leave sports shoes behind on its impending departure to be able to play a farewell match. (SMG 1005. Letter Sportship 'Guber' to Dutchbat III, Sgt Blom and Adj Dijkema, 21/06/95, No. 01-18/95).

⁶⁶⁹ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Capsat TA to TX 202030B Jun 95, DSR Update 201800B - 212400B Jun 95.

⁶⁷⁰ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 22/06/95 and 23/06/95.

⁶⁷¹ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 27/06/95.

⁶⁷² NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 29/06/95.

On 28 and 29 June, after Dutchbat had consumed an exceptional provisional last hot meal of roast chicken and vegetables, which arrived with a small convoy, the reserves of fresh food were exhausted again. After that the personnel were forced to resort to consuming French rations. On 1 July, less than one week before the VRS attack, the situation was again as unchanged as before. The population and Dutchbat were in nearly the same boat, with the exception that the food situation for the population - which we will return to later in this chapter - was even worse than for Dutchbat. 'I wonder whether this will make the population rise up. They have nothing more to eat. If that happens we will be extremely busy. The cigarette papers have also run out. Taking normal leave into account we have now been here for 6 months, give or take a week. We are almost back to where we started after 1 week: super-minimize and French cans again. Everything is running out. Toiletries, toilet paper, food. How we are going to manage in the near future I just do not know. The resistance will probably decline. Most people's wounds are healing poorly already. And then become dirty. Then unpleasant infections will appear.'⁶⁷³

There was a lighter moment when a small group of 26 people was able to leave the enclave on 2 July. At the same time, this was also a source of dissatisfaction, because others who had also been waiting for relief for some considerable time felt let down and unfairly treated. This matter also had implications in another area, and also after the fall of Srebrenica, and it is therefore covered in the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical matters'.

This departure of a number of Dutchbat members from the enclave allowed a little more news about the company's ups and downs to the outside, and also into the open. Newspaper articles stated that many were wasting away because they had had to live for long time on rations. Some were suffering from stress because of being surrounded by the Bosnian Serbs. Others were less troubled by the situation, but were taken aback when the VRS captured OP-E at the beginning of June: things looked ominous then. However, the Spartan living conditions had not broken the morale, according to this informant, who was a medic: 'the atmosphere among the men is fine (...) You put up with the fact that you can only call home for three minutes a month.' He added that, in comparison with the local population, Dutchbat's conditions were relatively good.⁶⁷⁴ A Dutchbat cook said that it had been difficult for him because he had only been able to serve the men food out of a tin, and biscuits. The French emergency rations had no flavour. Everyone had lost weight, but there had been enough biscuits. The shooting around the enclave was something it was possible to get used to, and watching TV was the main daily recreation. He also pointed out that in spite of the lousy conditions, the atmosphere within the battalion had been good.⁶⁷⁵

The Army Commander, General Couzy, attempted to cheer the battalion up by giving an expression of satisfaction, but to little effect. An expression of satisfaction takes the form of a one-off payment; in this case NLG 1500. In the words of the anaesthetist Schouten: 'NLG 1500. To be shared by 750 people, = NLG 2, minus 60% tax leaves an expression of appreciation of 80 cents for me. Fortunately we expect to find a good cause.'

In response to newspaper articles, some parents of Dutchbat members were also worried by the dramatic reports of shortages: the rationale was that the reserves may well have been depleted, but Dutchbat still had enough to eat; the worst that happened was that the soldiers felt a little listless after having to live on rations for weeks. Parents who reasoned in this way actually found nothing to complain about in the support received from the Ministry of Defence: their questions were always answered, even though they were none the wiser afterwards. 'They know nothing more than what you hear from the media.' However, doubts did start to be heard about the UN presence: 'if it gets more out of hand, they (the warring factions) should just sort it out among themselves. They don't want to be put in the harness. It is really bad for those Muslims, I do realize that. But I am not inclined to

⁶⁷³ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 01/07/95.

⁶⁷⁴ *Brabants Nieuwsblad*, 05/07/95.

⁶⁷⁵ *Het Parool*, 04/07/95.

sacrifice my son for it', a mother said.⁶⁷⁶ A matter on which there were significant feelings of dissatisfaction on the home front was the lack of information and sympathy from the side of the Ministry of Defence.⁶⁷⁷

In early July, Couzy therefore attempted to calm the mood on the home front by means of a personal letter, in which he wrote - not suspecting how right his words would be - that: 'it is inevitable that in the coming period you will all go through difficult and uncertain times'. He called for understanding of the fact that the Ministry of Defence was also occasionally confronted with uncertainty. The Minister and senior Defence officials were working day and night to bring about the relief.⁶⁷⁸ However, a report appeared in the press later that same day that the Bosnian Serbs were still blocking the relief of Dutchbat by the Ukrainians. The Bosnian Serbs were said to want to detain the Dutch so as to put pressure on the UN and NATO, according to *Het Parool*.⁶⁷⁹

A degree of interaction between the feelings on the home front and the mood among the personnel was unmistakable: personnel in the enclave could have concerns about what was happening with their private affairs in the Netherlands. This could vary from a hospitalization, or a death in the family, to the birth of a child. Because the Bosnian Serbs did not always permit freedom of movement - temporary - repatriation was not always successful in such cases.⁶⁸⁰ The home front had more of a tendency to see the black side of Dutchbat's situation than Dutchbat itself. This, nourished by the uncertainty of the timing of the relief and the return home, could not remain without effect on the home front and the personnel in the enclave.

Neither did public debates in the press improve the situation. The reporting on the former Yugoslavia and Dutchbat could be followed by both Dutchbat and the home front; Dutchbat received newspaper articles from The Hague by fax. Further, the Dutch world service radio, RTL news and the UN situation reports formed Dutchbat's information resource. The reporting from the Netherlands often had a negative effect, because the public debate magnified the uncertainty in Srebrenica, which had consequences for morale. An example of this was the Dutch world service radio broadcasts. With respect to the shelling that preceded the VRS attack on 6 July, when Dutchbat was confined for a long period to the bunkers, there was a broadcast in which a mother said that she found everything so distressing and was so afraid. That resounded around the bunker and was repeated every hour; 'the lad in question had no life in the bunker. (...) That was not very clever.'⁶⁸¹

In spite of the situation that Dutchbat found itself in, Karremans felt that the morale of his battalion at the end of June was still fairly high. He wrote as much on 29 June in a letter to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo. Except that, according to him, the battalion could no longer consider itself impartial, because of the restrictions that the Bosnian Serbs were imposing on the battalion. As long ago as 26 April, Dutchbat had felt itself to be a hostage of the VRS, and Karremans considered it high time for a powerful protest to be made to the Republika Srpska. He finally requested Sarajevo to forward his letter to the Force Commander.⁶⁸²

Not only did senior officials of the Ministry of Defence wrestle with a lack of information, but so too did Dutchbat. The battalion did not know what was going on with the VRS, and was completely unaware that choking off the supplies had been a deliberate strategic decision. Dutchbat was also little aware of the concerns within the UN headquarters in Sarajevo and Zagreb. The UN situation reports were scant and much of what was going on in the former Yugoslavia had to be gleaned mainly from the Dutch media. Karremans learned of the air strikes on Pale on 25 and 26 May followed by attacks on

⁶⁷⁶ *Brabants Nieuwsblad*, 04/07/95.

⁶⁷⁷ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Diary Schouten, 01/06/95.

⁶⁷⁸ *Telegraaf*, 05/07/95.

⁶⁷⁹ *Het Parool*, 05/07/95.

⁶⁸⁰ Diary Koreman, 36nd week, p. 29.

⁶⁸¹ Interview J. Otter, 26/05/99.

⁶⁸² NIOD, Coll. Karremans. CO 1(NL) Infbn to Comdr B-H Command thru Comdr Sector North East, 29/06/95, No. TK95105.

OPs at Gorazde through the press cuttings fax of the Ministry of Defence.⁶⁸³ This was not exceptional; the Commander of the Norwegian battalion in Tuzla, Colonel G. Arlefalk, also stated that his main source of information was CNN. The UN information was scant and the information that reached him via national channels was equally inadequate.⁶⁸⁴

Karremans's letter to Sarajevo of 29 June was the second 'cry of distress' to reach the UN chain of command within one month, after the first one on 4 June. Karremans did have a point, as seen from where he stood: the situation in all three of the eastern enclaves had been poor for some considerable time. At the end of June, the UN units in Zepa and Gorazde again had fuel reserves at their disposal for 52 and 39 days consumption, respectively, while Dutchbat's reserves had yet to be replenished.⁶⁸⁵ According to Sector North East in Tuzla, on 3 July Dutchbat still had its own reserves of 900 litres of fuel, just enough to get through the weekend, and rations for eleven days.⁶⁸⁶ This version differed somewhat from that of Dutchbat itself. That was also connected with the fact that Dutchbat was rather incommunicative about its own logistics situation, when it was requested by the Civil Military Operations Cell of Sector North East in Tuzla. 'This is all the information I was able to squeeze out of them', was how the official concerned sized up his contact person, Deputy Battalion Commander Franken.

The result of the lack of fuel and primary vital needs, and the fact that for more than two months no one had been able to get into or out of the enclaves, was that at the end of June, General Janvier considered the UN units in Srebrenica and Zepa to be 'semi-operational'. Janvier reported to New York that this situation was 'bound to sap morale as soldiers increasingly asked: 'Why are we here when we are prevented from doing our jobs effectively?''⁶⁸⁷ The fact that Janvier now considered Dutchbat to be 'semi-operational' did not actually lead to an amendment of the terms of reference. Dutchbat to be 'semi-operational' did not actually lead to an amendment of the terms of reference.

4. Bosnia in the Netherlands domestic political arena - June 1995

In an interview with the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army, General Couzy, on 2 June for the *Algemeen Dagblad*, he referred condescendingly to the UN's 'muddling-through scenario'. He felt that the institution of Safe Areas was an example of failing UN policies. UN soldiers were sent there with no clear objectives and Rules of Engagement: politicians tried to keep everyone happy. The troops did their best to guarantee the safety of the population, but if the Bosnian Serbs were to start shelling, UN soldiers were not allowed to return fire. Couzy called that 'strange but true'. He had once advised Minister Ter Beek not to agree to deployment, and 'it gives me no pleasure to be proved right after the event.' Couzy characterized the political arena as one where politicians would adopt tough resolutions, but then failed to respond when additional troops had to be deployed.⁶⁸⁸ The attitude that this interview attested to did not escape many in politics, not even an external observer such as the British Ambassador in The Hague, Sir David Miers. According to him, Couzy had the 'reputation of being outspoken', and furthermore Couzy 'found always a way so that his opinion was known'. This gave Dutch politicians a problem, but his performance was appreciated by those who worked for him, according to this characterization.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸³ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 25/06/98.

⁶⁸⁴ Interview G. Arlefalk, 18/05/00.

⁶⁸⁵ CRST. Chief Joint Logistics Operations Centre to G3 Land Ops info DFC, COS, Logistics Report 03001 July 95 - 032359 July 95, 040700B July 95, Serial OPS/1094/95. When the resupply of Zepa and Gorazde took place is unclear. The quantities stated are from 30 June. On 3 July, Zepa and Gorazde again had 51 and 22 days of rations, respectively, at their disposal.

⁶⁸⁶ DJZ. Outgoing Fax HQ Sector N.E. G5/Civil Military Operations to G5/Civil Military Operations, 4 July 1300B 95.

⁶⁸⁷ Confidential information (29).

⁶⁸⁸ *Algemeen Dagblad*, 02/06/95.

⁶⁸⁹ Interview Sir David Miers, 01/08/01.

In a response to these statements, Minister Voorhoeve informed Couzy that he was required to consult with him before publicly expressing his views. At an earlier stage, the doubts that Couzy had expressed about sending reinforcements to Bosnia had already irritated Prime Minister Kok.⁶⁹⁰ There had been other occasions on which Couzy had got into the news in a similar way, and in so doing he eroded the primacy of the politicians, was how the situation was analysed in Parliament on the day of the interview in the *Algemeen Dagblad*. Couzy's remarks were also ruled out of order in the Ministerial Council, and they came at the wrong time from the wrong mouth.⁶⁹¹ What was especially painful was that Couzy ventilated his views at the precise moment that the Netherlands had decided to deploy a Royal Netherlands Marines Corps mortar company and a Dutch Army counter mortar radar unit to Bosnia as a contribution to the Rapid Reaction Force. Couzy had called it the height of insanity 'to send soldiers to protect soldiers'. 'Take harder action or get out', was Couzy's motto.⁶⁹²

Criticism on the Dutch government's policy also came from a politically friendly side. At a meeting of the VVD party council on 17 June, the VVD party leader Frits Bolkestein demanded that the 'muddling-through scenario' must be brought to an end. Bolkestein wanted the Dutch contribution to UNPROFOR to terminate as rapidly as possible. He wanted a clear choice between a long-term presence and a complete withdrawal in the short term, although he qualified his statements by saying that the Netherlands should not withdraw unilaterally. On the domestic political front, this position was deemed to be rather unhelpful for the mood within Dutchbat and on the home front. In general, Parliament was constantly seeking the broadest possible support with respect to the deployment of Dutch troops to Bosnia, and not political gain. It was considered inappropriate to conduct opposition on this point.

The government was therefore unhappy with Bolkestein's words. From China, Minister Van Mierlo called Bolkestein's statements 'hardly likely to motivate the people who have to do the work'. Voorhoeve and he had done everything 'to reverse this slightly shiftless attitude of recent months'. It had started to become tense, and then, according to Van Mierlo, discussion on the matter should stop for a while.⁶⁹³ From Haiti, where he was visiting marines participating in a peace mission, Voorhoeve stated that the Netherlands would have to maintain its presence until a peace agreement had been achieved. Countries should not withdraw because their patience had run out. The Dutch soldiers in Bosnia played a constructive role, moderated the violence through their presence and had therefore saved thousands of lives. Under the prevailing difficult circumstances they had a right to support.⁶⁹⁴ Prime Minister Kok told the NIOD that by adopting this position, the VVD leader 'was engaging in another typical Bolkestein action, which was his trademark. As the minister responsible I felt very much exposed. Bolkestein put into words something that many people thought at the time. At the same time, however, he knew that the government - including his own Minister of Defence - had no resources to satisfy the feeling that he was expressing.'⁶⁹⁵

Support for Dutchbat had also been discussed in the Ministerial Council a short time before. The question then was whether making marines available for the Rapid Reaction Force for Srebrenica could possibly bring consolation. The mood for this in the Ministerial Council changed rapidly: the drift on 29 May was still that Srebrenica was difficult to defend, and that therefore additional troops would not provide the desired relief. With this, discussion on the idea came to an end.⁶⁹⁶ A couple of days later it became apparent in the Ministerial Council that, in VVD circles especially, there was resistance to this deployment of marines: the thinking in this party was that it must first become clear

⁶⁹⁰ *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/06/95.

⁶⁹¹ Objectivized summary of the 02/06/95 Ministerial Council meeting for the NIOD investigation 02/06/95.

⁶⁹² *Algemeen Dagblad*, 02/06/95.

⁶⁹³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Introduction Frits Bolkestein Public Meeting of the VVD party council, Jaarbeurs Congress Centre Utrecht, Saturday 17/06/95; *NRC Handelsblad* and *de Volksrant*, 19/06/95.

⁶⁹⁴ *Het Parool*, 19/06/95.

⁶⁹⁵ Interview Wim Kok, 08/06/00.

⁶⁹⁶ Objectivized summary of the 29/05/95 Ministerial Council meeting for the NIOD investigation.

what the substantial issues were, and this deployment must lead to a strengthening of UNPROFOR's position.⁶⁹⁷ The following day in Paris the Rapid Reaction Force was actually founded, including Dutch participation (see Chapter 1), which enabled the Netherlands to remain involved in further decision-making on the composition and deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force.

The parliamentary factions also responded with disapproval to Bolkestein's words. Wallage (PvdA) thought that members of the government coalition should not express personal opinions that undermined the position of the soldiers. CDA parliamentary party chairman Heerma thought that Bolkestein's statements had been a repetition of the recent debate on the deployment of marines to Bosnia for the Rapid Reaction Force.⁶⁹⁸ Bolkestein broke with the aim of not conducting opposition on this point with what was seen as opportunistic statements on withdrawal from Bosnia, in the judgement of the opposition CDA parliamentary group.⁶⁹⁹

Meanwhile, Jan-Dirk Blaauw, the VVD defence spokesman, attempted to qualify the words of his political leader. The discussion was confusing, Blaauw said. The knot had just been cut to send marines to Bosnia, and now was not the time to start a simultaneous discussion on terminating the tasks in Bosnia. The only thing that the VVD had wanted to set on the political agenda was the question of whether, after three years of Bosnia, the time was not ripe for another country to take over the tasks.⁷⁰⁰ This fitted in with what Blaauw himself wanted: as long ago as May he had argued in Parliament for setting a time limit on a Dutch presence in Srebrenica. He had proposed that the Netherlands should offer no more ground forces after Dutchbat III.⁷⁰¹

The Netherlands therefore adhered to a presence with combat units in Bosnia, a noble but otherwise unnecessary gesture towards the UN: UNPROFOR actually had a surplus of battalions as a result of restructuring and the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force. The situation had changed from the time of the offer of Dutchbat I in 1993: at that time this was a gift from heaven, which the UN was eagerly awaiting.

The Dutch presence in Bosnia also no longer had the great support of domestic public opinion, which there had been earlier. This could be deduced from surveys periodically carried out by the Society & Armed Forces Foundation: the support among the population for Dutch participation in this UN peace operation continued to crumble. The figures appeared to underline the powerlessness of UNPROFOR, all the more so because the survey was conducted in June, shortly after pictures of chained-up UN personnel had travelled around the world. With respect to the Dutch military presence in Bosnia, the opinion was as follows:

	December 1993	December 1994	June 1995
Agree	68 %	54 %	40 %
Disagree	14 %	26 %	26 %
No opinion	18 %	20 %	34 %

In the space of half a year, the support of the population for the Dutch participation in UNPROFOR had declined from 54 to 40 per cent, and the doubt was increasing palpably. The survey also looked into the UN's political-military approach: in June 1995, only twenty per cent of the respondents thought it was sensible. In response to these figures, Minister Voorhoeve said that he understood the disquiet of many people. The fact was that UN soldiers had to do their work under difficult conditions, while a political solution was not within reach. He added that what the Blue Helmets had achieved, in terms of limiting the number of victims in the conflict, was sometimes underestimated.⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁷ Objectivized summary of the 02/06/95 Ministerial Council meeting for the NIOD investigation.

⁶⁹⁸ NRC *Handelsblad* and *de Volksrant*, 19/06/95.

⁶⁹⁹ NIOD, Coll. CDA. CDA parliamentary party, Memo Retrospective 94-95 // Key objectives 95-95, 15/09/95.

⁷⁰⁰ Paul Koopmans, 'VVD vindt het onderhand welletjes' (VVD thinks enough is enough) in *Haagsche Courant*, 20/06/95,

⁷⁰¹ TK, 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 101 (10/05/95).

⁷⁰² *Trouw*, NRC *Handelsblad*, 05/07/95.

The fall of Srebrenica on 11 July influenced these figures even further. A telephone survey on the evening of 11 July revealed that 57% of the Dutch population wanted Dutch troops to leave Bosnia. Only the deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force and the air strikes in September 1995 gave the impression that the international community had drawn a line in the sand. Confidence then returned to its old level.⁷⁰³

Few in the Netherlands could make any sense of the situation in Bosnia in mid 1995. As an *NRC Handelsblad* editorial aptly stated on the eve of the VRS attack on Srebrenica, the subject of Bosnia was almost impossible to surpass in 'hopelessness, despair, awfulness and complexity'. It was 'frustration-without-end'. Nevertheless, the newspaper also pointed out that in a conflict where the parties do not want peace, it is a considerable accomplishment for a peacekeeping force to achieve a reduction in the number of victims. However, the question was justified as to what business a peacekeeping force had there, and whether the risks run by the peacekeepers were in proportion with the contribution they were able to make to maintaining the peace. The newspaper concluded, however, that there was no alternative to muddling-through.⁷⁰⁴

The end to this 'muddling-through scenario' was not far off, however, but would not be before the UN mission and Dutchbat had been through an extremely deep depression. Firstly, though, the subject of the relief of Dutchbat continued to stir feelings considerably.

5. The relief of Dutchbat III

The relief of Dutchbat was a complex, and above all, uncertain matter. The Netherlands had promised troops for the Safe Area until 1 July, but in mid May it was clear that not one country showed any enthusiasm for going to the eastern enclaves. Attempts by the Netherlands to create interest among the member states of the Western European Union and NATO, as well as Poland and the Czech Republic, for taking over the task in Srebrenica all came to nothing. A complicating factor was that it was not only the Dutch that wanted to be relieved in Srebrenica, but also the British in Gorazde, another enclave in East Bosnia. The United Kingdom had announced that it was unwilling for its contingent in Gorazde to be relieved by other British troops, and not a single other country had offered to take the task over from them.

That the relief of Dutchbat could possibly become a major problem was already evident in late March 1995 during a visit by Dutch Parliamentarians to Zagreb. Visiting Member of Parliament Gerrit Valk asked Akashi how UNPROFOR would respond to a request from Voorhoeve to replace the Dutch contingent in Srebrenica. Akashi answered that he understood Voorhoeve's question completely. Janvier and he had paid 'a lot of attention' to the problem of Dutchbat's replacement, but both thought that it would be difficult to find a replacement. There was no battalion on hand in Bosnia, and both Akashi and Janvier rejected the solution for Srebrenica of sending in a battalion from the Islamic countries, or one that was composed of several nationalities, so that the Dutch presence could have been reduced. They saw that as rather impractical and militarily ineffective.⁷⁰⁵

Ultimately only the Ukraine appeared to be prepared to go to Srebrenica. There happened to be Ukrainian units already stationed in Zepa and Gorazde. But the arrival of a Ukrainian battalion was surrounded by uncertainty for a long time: it was unclear whether they actually would come, and, if so, when. This begged the question of whether the relief of Dutchbat III would have to wait for the Ukrainian battalion, or that a newly formed Dutchbat IV would have to bridge the intervening period.

⁷⁰³ J.S. van der Meulen, 'Expectations of Peacekeeping: Dutch Public Opinion on Missions in the Former Yugoslavia' in J.L. Soeter and J.H. Rovers, eds, *NL Arms*, p. 175.

⁷⁰⁴ *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/07/95.

⁷⁰⁵ NIOD, Coll. Valk. Correspondence with Gerrit Valk, 31/05/00; UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88041, File 4-4 Notes on Meetings 95 Feb-Jul. Note for the File, 'Meeting Between SRS G Mr. Akashi and a Visiting Dutch parliamentary Delegation Led by Mr. G. Valk', 28/03/95.

For Dutchbat itself, the subject of relief was understandably an important point. As early as the beginning of April, before this subject really became an issue, Karremans had been in the clinch with Chief of Staff Nicolai of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo to bring forward the Medal Parade that UNPROFOR had planned for 28 July, so that the final Dutchbat remnant could leave the enclave on 20 or 22 July.⁷⁰⁶ But whatever was planned, the relief of Dutchbat III remained an uncertain matter right up to the time of the Bosnian-Serb attack of 6 July and even after that. The relief of the Dutchbat company in Simin Han, outside the enclave, did proceed according to plan, however.

Many factors had an influence on the relief. A reorganization of UN troops in Croatia was planned for early May 1995. That appeared to offer opportunities for the relief of Dutchbat by transferring a unit from Croatia to Bosnia. Minister Voorhoeve was already wondering in early March if it should not be considered whether Poland would be prepared to contribute to the UNPROFOR presence in Srebrenica. Personally, Voorhoeve had in mind a Dutch-Polish responsibility (fifty-fifty). He proposed raising the matter in his coming visit to Boutros-Ghali, as well as the possibility of stationing units from moderate Islamic countries in Srebrenica.⁷⁰⁷

Salient points of a Ukrainian battalion

The transfer of units from Croatia to Bosnia was accompanied by many ifs and buts, however. Not only was it necessary for the troop-contributing nation to give its consent, but the battalion concerned also had to be acceptable to the warring factions involved. Furthermore, the battalion in question should be suitable for a logistically independent deployment. Various battalions were involved in the redeployment in Croatia, including from the Czech Republic and Argentina. However, they would continue to form part of the UN operation in Croatia. Two battalions from Jordan would be available, but it appeared unlikely that a Jordanian battalion would be acceptable to the VRS for deployment in Srebrenica, because an Arab country would be considered to be possibly too pro-Muslim and therefore too anti-Serbian. Only one possibility remained for transferring units from Croatia to Bosnia: two Ukrainian battalions that were already there.

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the UN in New York proposed to move one of the two Ukrainian battalions to Gorazde, where a Ukrainian battalion already happened to be. However, that proposal was flatly rejected by the Ukrainian government in Kiev.⁷⁰⁸ There was surprise and irritation in Kiev in response to the UN secretariat's announcement that the Ukrainian battalions were to be withdrawn from Croatia. Kiev saw itself confronted with a *fait accompli*, and believed that the Russians were behind it, the Ukrainian government recently having criticized the Russian action in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The UN then put forward the argument that the Ukrainian battalion in Croatia consisted of only four hundred men: the other battalions that were involved in the regrouping consisted of the usual nine hundred men. Kiev found the withdrawal of this battalion unacceptable, and in March had even proposed strengthening the battalion to the required nine hundred. Consultation then followed between the UN and the Ukraine on arranging for this battalion, with its limited strength, to nonetheless fulfil a more meaningful task in Bosnia. A factor that played a significant role for the Ukrainian government was that the task in the former Yugoslavia was one of the few instruments for helping the Ukraine to aspire to an international image: the task fulfilled by the Ukrainians until then had not been an unqualified success because of the limited experience in acting with other countries. In order to give the Ukraine more experience in collaborating with other countries in UN operations, Minister Voorhoeve had even offered them a collaboration programme with the Netherlands,⁷⁰⁹ and these good Dutch relations with the Ukraine were later to bear fruit.

⁷⁰⁶ NIOD, Coll. Nicolai. Diary Nicolai, 03/04/95.

⁷⁰⁷ DCBC, No. 399. Memo Minister to DAB and CDS, 06/03/95.

⁷⁰⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/03356. Code Biegan 390, 05/05/95.

⁷⁰⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05277. Code Serry 088, 15/05/95.

There was another argument in the discussion between the UN and the Ukraine: in their activities in Croatia the Ukrainians had gained a poor reputation because of corruption and black market trading. This argument was apparently not to be allowed to play a role in the discussion, but was nevertheless well known: the Dutch UN ambassador, Biegman, reported on the matter to The Hague. To avoid continuing to offend the Ukrainians in the discussion on what would have to happen with the battalion concerned, Kofi Annan made a concession to the Ukraine by requesting the country, as an alternative to expanding the Ukrainian battalion, to supply a helicopter squadron.⁷¹⁰

When this discussion on the transfer of units from Croatia became an issue, half way through May, the Dutch government also saw the sense of an involvement. Minister Van Mierlo also alerted the Dutch representative at the UN that it should not be automatically assumed from the reorganization in Croatia that the troops could then be withdrawn completely: it was in fact not out of the question that reinforcement of UNPROFOR in Bosnia was necessary. Van Mierlo's idea was that as units became free in Croatia they could be deployed in Bosnia. In that case it would indeed appear to involve the small Ukrainian battalion. Another opportunity that presented itself was to transfer a Kenyan battalion from Croatia to Srebrenica or Gorazde, but because that battalion lacked the credibility, discipline, experience and equipment for duties there, this idea was not pursued.

The UN ambassador, Biegman, was therefore instructed by the Dutch government to urge the UN secretariat to keep the possibility of transferring the Ukrainian battalion to Srebrenica open. Military circles within the UN secretariat further indicated that the transfer of the Ukrainian battalion was now being viewed more positively. It therefore seemed to the Netherlands to be just the right card to play to bring about the relief of Dutchbat. Furthermore, Biegman learned at the same time from the Netherlands that the Netherlands was belatedly planning to make its own arrangements for the relief of Dutchbat, if necessary.⁷¹¹

A few days later, Biegman discussed the relief of Dutchbat with Kofi Annan. Annan said that the possibility put forward by Van Mierlo of transferring the company concerned from Croatia to Bosnia had already been offered to the Ukraine. An additional advantage for UNPROFOR was that it fitted in with a planned reorganization of UNPROFOR: currently, two sectors (Sector North East for Srebrenica and Sector Sarajevo for Zepa and Gorazde) concerned themselves with the three eastern enclaves. This was to be replaced by a separate headquarters for the three eastern enclaves, in a newly formed sector that would have to be manned by the Ukraine.

Another idea of how UNPROFOR should change its policy on the eastern enclaves did not survive. This was related to a plan that had General Smith's approval. He wanted to locate only smaller units or only UNMOs in the enclaves, in order to track the movements of the combatants. These units or UNMOs were to act as UNPROFOR's 'eyes and ears', and, if the need should arise, a decision could then be made on an UNPROFOR response. In this scenario, a strengthened company for each of the three eastern enclaves would suffice. This idea did not take root, however, for the same reason that the ideas of Janvier and Boutros-Ghali on the withdrawal of UNPROFOR from the eastern enclaves did not succeed in the Security Council (see Chapter 1): a reduction of the presence in the eastern enclaves was simply not feasible politically.⁷¹²

Now that there were signs that the transfer of the Ukrainian company to Srebrenica may be likely, UN Ambassador Biegman proposed that the Dutch ambassador in Kiev, R.H. Serry, should now initiate discussions between the Netherlands and the Ukraine on the modalities of a handover of Dutchbat's duties to the Ukrainian battalion. And, Biegman added: it would be advisable for the Netherlands to refrain from acting as a 'complainant' in Kiev, because, should the Netherlands indicate that it wanted to leave Srebrenica 'at all costs', it could give the Ukrainians food for thought.

⁷¹⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02110. Code Biegman 428, 16/05/95.

⁷¹¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Code Van Mierlo 139, 18/05/95.

⁷¹² DCBC, 560. Fax UNPROFOR/COS to DCBC, RNLA Crisis Staff attn CDS, BLS, 141200B Jun 95, No. 225/95.

Van Mierlo also said that he tried to quash the excessively sombre stories on Srebrenica, because it could hamper attempts to motivate the Ukrainians towards a relief operation. That proved to be a somewhat naive idea, because the Ukrainians were naturally well aware of the problems that the presence in an enclave entailed through their presence in Zepa and Gorazde. With hindsight, Van Mierlo also said that he could see the irony of his idea. He pointed out that the interest of the Ukrainians appeared to be that they were seeking a place where they could manifest themselves, also towards the Russians. They would also welcome the UN payment for participation in a peace operation.⁷¹³

The relief, however, was by no means cut and dried. Voorhoeve announced on 29 May in the Ministerial Council that he was in discussion with the Ukraine on the relief of Dutchbat in July. He added that it was extremely uncertain whether the country wanted it, partly in view of the recent deteriorating situation in Bosnia and Srebrenica.⁷¹⁴ Not that this actually appeared to be the real problem: the Ukrainian representative at the UN, Anatoli Zlenko, said to Undersecretary-General Kofi Annan that his government agreed in principle with the transfer of a battalion to Bosnia, but his preference would be for Gorazde. He said that it was his understanding that this was also Janvier's preference. Kofi Annan pointed out, however, that should the Ukrainians want their own command in Bosnia, the UN would expect the Ukraine to account for all of Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde.⁷¹⁵ Janvier responded in cautiously positive terms to the Ukrainian offer, and accepted the formation of an own command, but in view of all the uncertainty that was in the air, he currently did not want to enter into any commitments.⁷¹⁶

There were other reasons for uncertainty about an actual relief by the Ukraine: the conflict had flared up again in Croatia too. This offensive, which was started by Croatia, brought the plans for redeploying the UN units in Croatia almost to a standstill. Furthermore, a formal statement on the Ukrainian willingness to transfer a battalion to Bosnia was still awaited. Finally, there was another complication in the person of the Force Commander: Janvier considered the relief of Dutchbat by the battalion that was currently in Croatia to be unacceptable. The earlier-mentioned reputation of that battalion and the circumstance that there were enough troops in Croatia was probably the reason for the Force Commander's attitude. He would agree with an entirely new Ukrainian unit, which was to replace the battalion in Croatia, that would subsequently be transferred to Bosnia.⁷¹⁷

Biegman was otherwise no great supporter of departure from Srebrenica if it was to mean that any new Dutch battalion (Dutchbat IV) would be deployed elsewhere in Bosnia: it would be no safer there. In areas where it was quiet, there were already battalions stationed from the Islamic countries between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats, and they could not be found a place anywhere else. There was therefore no doubt that the Netherlands would be deployed to another front line between Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims. Biegman also had in mind that former Force Commander De Lapresle, when asked by Biegman, had said he suspected that the Bosnian Serbs would not overrun the enclave, because the political price that they would have to pay would not be outweighed by the potential strategic gain. History would reveal that this assessment of the price of capturing the enclave may well have been correct, but that De Lapresle was mistaken in his assessment that the chance of this happening was only slight.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Code Biegman 455, 22/05/95; interview H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo 10/2/00.

⁷¹⁴ Diary Voorhoeve, p. 83.

⁷¹⁵ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 31/05/95, No. 1828.

⁷¹⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 07/06/95, No. UNPF-HQ Z-954.

⁷¹⁷ Bstas. Memorandum CDS to the Minister, 06/06/95, No. S/95/061/2330, 'Concise report of the meeting of CDS with C-UNPF, Gen Janvier on Monday 05 June in Zagreb'. Code Biegman 450; see reference in document DCBC, 563.

⁷¹⁸ Bstas. Memorandum CDS to the Minister, 06/06/95, No. S/95/061/2330, 'Concise report of the meeting of CDS with C-UNPF, Gen Janvier on Monday 05 June in Zagreb'; Code Biegman 450; see reference in document DCBC, 563.

Ukrainians, or Dutchbat IV after all?

The Dutch government also reflected on the fallback option of deploying a Dutchbat IV battalion, but they had learned a lesson after having offered a battalion that had ended up in Srebrenica through a series of coincidences (see Chapter 10 in Part II). Therefore, before resorting to deploying Dutchbat IV, the government wished to attach two clear conditions. The first was that Dutchbat IV would be offered for half a year, after which all options, from an enlargement to a reduction of the Dutch presence in Bosnia, would be open. The second condition was that this time the deployment would have to be to Central Bosnia, and therefore, contrary to what Biegman had suggested, not to Srebrenica.⁷¹⁹ Voorhoeve therefore requested the options for stationing a Dutchbat IV battalion in Central Bosnia to be investigated. The Defence Staff and the Military Intelligence Service set to work and investigated the security situation with respect to three options:

- the Maglaj pocket, bordering on the Posavina corridor that linked the eastern and western parts of the Republika Srpska;
- the sector of the British battalion in the vicinity of Vitez;
- at Livno.

The opinion that was sent to Voorhoeve was that the security risks in these three places did not differ substantially from places elsewhere in Bosnia.⁷²⁰ General Smith stated meanwhile that his preference was deploying Dutchbat IV in the Maglaj pocket; this was for the time being only taken for granted.⁷²¹ In other respects, the security aspect was not the major reason that the Netherlands wished to leave Srebrenica: it had more to do with the fact that an effective execution of duties had become impossible because resupply had broken down.

The media kept a close track of the relief of Dutchbat III. At the end of May, Willibrord Nieuwenhuizen reported in *NRC Handelsblad* that Prime Minister Kok recalled that limits had been set on the deployment of Dutchbat, which must be respected. Kok would urge Minister Voorhoeve to redouble his efforts to identify relief for Dutchbat. On an international level, the newspaper reported that from diplomatic circles in New York - which remained vague - there were noises that the UN was slacking in finding relief. But the Netherlands itself had contributed to this attitude according to the source: in the past the government had responded to every request from the UN to supply observers or troops, and now too, preparations were being made to send a new battalion, which was known as the 'Limburgse Jagers' (Limburg Chasseurs), to Srebrenica to relieve Dutchbat.⁷²² In so doing, the Netherlands was giving a signal that it did not wish to confront the UN with a *fait accompli*, which was in contrast to the British in Gorazde, who had stated emphatically that they would make no relief arrangements themselves. For Srebrenica, the question of whether the UN would or would not be confronted by a *fait accompli* was actually academic: unilateral Dutch withdrawal was impossible for a number of reasons, because leaving the enclave would require military support; it was politically undesirable for the Netherlands to back out unilaterally from UN commitments;⁷²³ and the population and the ABiH would not have allowed Dutchbat to leave in the absence of adequate replacement.

Voorhoeve needed little encouragement from the Prime Minister in his search for a solution and relief: he discussed the subject on 9 June in Brussels with his Ukrainian opposite number, Shmarov. However, Shmarov would go no further, even after a briefing from General Pollé (the Commander of the Dutch Army Crisis Staff) and former Dutchbat I Commander Vermeulen, than to say that he

⁷¹⁹ DAB. Memorandum DAB to the Minister, 28/06/95, No. D95/346.

⁷²⁰ BSG 95 III. Memoranda CDS to the Minister, 23/06/95 and 3/07/95, nos. S/95/061/2585 and 2739.

⁷²¹ DCBC No. 2142. Defence Staff/Operations, Notes for CDS, 30/06/95; CRST. Internal Memorandum Operations Directorate of the Royal Netherlands Army, from G3, l-col Felix to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 04/07/95, No. CRST/2632.

⁷²² *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/05/95.

⁷²³ *Eindhovens Dagblad*, 23/05/95.

would investigate the possibility of relief by the Ukraine. Voorhoeve had indicated that there were no major problems with the safety of the soldiers in Srebrenica, but that the greatest problem was the resupply. He aimed at 1 July, if necessary in phases. The Dutch could then transfer the tasks step-by-step and familiarize the Ukrainian battalion, which would avoid allowing the Bosnian Serbs to seize the relief as an opportunity to take over OPs. The Ukrainian battalion stationed in Croatia was to be provided with fresh Ukrainian personnel on 26 June, so fulfilling Janvier's requirement. Shmarov mentioned that after that, however, the battalion would still need some time to acclimatize in the former Yugoslavia. This made relief as of 1 July impossible, Shmarov said. The Ukrainian also wanted Dutch officers to lead the hand-over. Above all, however, Shmarov wanted to see a formal decision from the UN, but the problem was that little had yet been heard from the UN, although Annan had offered the relocation of the battalion to the Ukraine. Voorhoeve therefore also mentioned that the UN, as well as Janvier and the Bosnian government, would consent to the relief.

Therefore some progress was booked, but a few practical problems remained to be overcome. It was accordingly agreed that a Dutch military attaché would be recognized in Kiev in the near future. It was also agreed that a Dutch delegation under the leadership of General Pollé would visit Kiev on 21 June to prepare the agreement. Minister Shmarov did not want to receive a delegation as to confirm of an agreement between the Netherlands and Kiev before 21 June, however, because discussions would only then be coming to an end in Zagreb on the future of the Ukrainian battalions: the Ukrainian Deputy Chief of General Staff, Major General G. Pankratov, accordingly paid a visit to Zagreb. Furthermore, by that time the UN would possibly have reached a formal decision.

Voorhoeve said to Shmarov that if necessary he was prepared to come to Kiev himself to conclude the meeting. Voorhoeve also requested the Bosnian UN ambassador Sacirbey to be careful not to talk disparagingly about the Ukrainian units in public.⁷²⁴

The discussion between Voorhoeve and Shmarov proceeded well, and the Dutch embassy in Kiev had positive expectations regarding the relief. In spite of that, the arrival of a Ukrainian battalion in Srebrenica had still not been secured. This had mainly to do with the unclear situation in Bosnia, and the increasing tensions around Sarajevo at the time. This meant that there was still a breeding ground for Ukrainian doubts.

In the Netherlands, the Chief of Defence Staff, Van den Breemen, and the Director of General Policy Affairs, De Winter, therefore pondered on additional measures in anticipation of Ukrainian doubts: securing the relief was necessary for domestic political reasons, they stated. The question then was how to alleviate the doubts in Kiev: if Kiev was reluctant for military-technical and financial reasons, a possible way out would be to hand over Dutchbat equipment and infrastructure and for Dutchbat to supervise the hand-over. It would even be possible for the Netherlands to donate money to mitigate additional expenses, which was an indication that the Netherlands was gradually getting fed up with the relief issue. If the Ukrainian doubts were on a political level, then there would be little the Netherlands would be able to do about it. In that case, Van den Breemen and De Winter suggested, Minister Voorhoeve could use his friendly relations with the American Secretary of Defense, Perry. He could express appreciation for the Ukrainian plan to man the eastern enclaves, and for the Ukrainian willingness to share responsibility for peace and safety in Europe. Such pressure was thought to have a good chance of success, because the Americans provided the Ukraine with political and financial support; the relations between the two countries were good.⁷²⁵

Whereas one part of the Ministry of Defence was deliberating on measures to persuade Kiev with equipment or financial resources, noises could be heard from another part of the Ministry to be particularly cautious in this regard and not to set to work too hastily. The Director General for Economics and Finance, E.H. Wellenstein, urged restraint towards the Ukraine in making such

⁷²⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02109. Code Veenendaal NATO 886, 09/06/95; DAB. Memorandum DAB to the Minister, 14/06/95, No. D95/306.

⁷²⁵ DARIC B-16-039. Memorandum DAB to the Minister, 14/06/95, No. D95/302.

concessions. He thought that Voorhoeve's impending mission to Kiev should take account of this: donating or loaning equipment to the Ukraine meant the destruction of capital or a reduced payment from the UN. Wellenstein would have preferred to transfer ownership of Dutch equipment to the UN, because the Netherlands would then receive its residual value. Wellenstein made no comment on the bureaucratic consequences and the amount of time that would be involved.⁷²⁶

Speed was of the essence in completing arrangements for the planned relief as of 1 July. To alleviate the Ukrainian objection that there was no formal UN decision, Van Mierlo instructed Biegman to urge the UN secretariat to record its consent to the relief as rapidly as possible in a formal decision. Reference could be made to Janvier's statement to the Dutch Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen, during a visit to Zagreb. Janvier had said that he had no objection to relief, provided arrangements were made for fresh personnel.⁷²⁷

In Zagreb too in mid June, documents were awaited on the decision to be taken in New York on further plans for the deployment of troops. The relief of Dutchbat was not actually high on the priority list in Zagreb. The wish expressed by Minister Voorhoeve to relieve Dutchbat III as of 1 July was deemed by Colonel De Jonge, who was on Janvier's staff, to be unrealistic and infeasible. Van den Breemen had suggested visiting Janvier again, and then to insist more firmly on the relief of Dutchbat III. De Jonge's estimation was that it would achieve little: Janvier's priority was not the Dutch concerns about relief but the release of the hostages (which also took place on 18 June), the issue of the Weapon Collection Points in Sarajevo, Freedom of Movement for UNPROFOR, and supplies to Sarajevo and the eastern enclaves. De Jonge did make a link between these priorities and the relief: all these priorities of Zagreb actually contained a possibility of a deterioration in relations with the Bosnian Serbs, and could therefore reduce the probability of relief. De Jonge also pointed out that a regrouping of the battalions in Bosnia was imminent.⁷²⁸

Meanwhile, representatives of Defence and Foreign Affairs were in the clinch with the Ukrainian government, but Kiev's primary condition had still not been met: formal approval by the UN. Furthermore, Kiev now introduced (16 June) additional requirements. If a sector command was to be created for the eastern enclaves, as UNPROFOR wanted, Kiev would like to see it placed under a NATO general, to prevent it all becoming an entirely Ukrainian matter. For the same reason, Kiev would prefer to see a British company remain in Gorazde (the British actually wanted to leave Gorazde: they did not consider their succession to be a British responsibility). Furthermore, the relief of Dutchbat III must not lead to relocation of the Ukrainian unit from Sarajevo, because it was important to the logistical support. Nevertheless, Kiev still considered 1 July to be feasible as the start of a relief operation that would take from three to six weeks. Voorhoeve would have to try to iron out the creases during a planned visit to the UN secretariat in New York on 19 June.⁷²⁹

Even before Voorhoeve could start on this, the Dutch delegation that was in Kiev to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ukraine had already been sending signals that, on further reflection, 1 July was not feasible for the relief. According to this message from the Dutch ambassador in Kiev, the point of departure might well still be that the Dutch mandate would end on 1 July, but the relief should be set at 'as soon as possible'. After consultation with the Ukrainian Chief of the General Staff, Pankratov, who was staying in Zagreb, this had to be revised again, however: the period must be made dependent on the completion of the formal decision-making within the UN, and the question of what would happen to the equipment that the Ukrainian battalion in Croatia was using. A timetable was established for completing the relief in thirty days: to this end, the Dutch UN infrastructure in Srebrenica would be handed over in its entirety to the Ukraine; handing over equipment from Dutchbat depended on the wishes of a Ukrainian reconnaissance group to be sent to Srebrenica; training on

⁷²⁶ DGEF doss. F95/77. Memorandum DGEF to the Minister, 16/06/95, No. F 9500179.

⁷²⁷ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02109. Code Van Mierlo 165, 13/06/95.

⁷²⁸ CRST. Fax G3 Land Ops HQ UNPF Zagreb to CDS (by hand) and Chief of Staff Crisis Staff BLS, 14/06/95.

⁷²⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Wesseling 110, 16/06/95.

Dutch equipment could start in the meantime in Zagreb, and if necessary should also be continued by Dutch instructors after Dutchbat's departure from Srebrenica.⁷³⁰

On the same day that this message arrived, Voorhoeve paid his visit to Kofi Annan in New York. Annan informed him that a formal request had just been issued to the Ukraine to deploy Ukrainian units in Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde, and to take over the command. Voorhoeve pointed out that that was against Kiev's wishes. Annan had no further view on the date on which the relief could take place, but Voorhoeve could already inform Parliament, because rapid agreement could be expected. Annan said that he hoped that the combatants would not throw a spanner in the works. His preference was therefore for direct relief by the Ukraine, and not by another Dutch battalion in the form of Dutchbat IV. Voorhoeve took the opportunity to say that this Dutchbat IV was available for other duties in Bosnia, but then preferably not in an enclave, because all the difficulties encountered there had undermined the broad support that there had once been in the Netherlands for participation in UNPROFOR. Annan was unwilling to make any promises, however, because he had no knowledge of Janvier's plans for regrouping.⁷³¹

Confusion subsequently arose in New York because a Dutch inquiry to the Political Officer of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had revealed that there was no information on a letter that had been sent to the Ukrainian government, as Annan had said. From the UN side, it was added that even if such a letter had been sent, it was not common practice to inform other governments. Neither, apparently, was anything known about a letter at the Ukrainian mission. There indeed appeared to be no letter; it still had to be drafted, and that would only happen in the course of 21 June, after which it still had to be approved and delivered to its destination. In the letter, although the UN accepted the relief by the Ukraine, the bad news that it contained was that the Force Commander was still unable to give a precise date. Ambassador Biegman then saved the situation concerning the letter that Annan had mentioned to Voorhoeve: he suggested that the Netherlands needed no letter, because the Ukraine had been requested by the UN to relieve Dutchbat, and that the Ukraine had responded positively. The Netherlands could make detailed arrangements with the Ukraine.⁷³²

Voorhoeve had also concluded from his discussion with Annan that the Netherlands could proceed at full speed in making arrangements with the Ukraine. Voorhoeve would not go himself to Kiev: he allowed the matters to be dealt with by the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, Lieutenant General M. Schouten. On 21 June, Schouten and his colleague Pankratov then finally signed a 'protocol of progress consultation' in Kiev. The draft of the protocol was sent back and forth a few times between the negotiating team in Kiev and The Hague. On his way to Kiev, Schouten was implored by the Director General of Economics and Finance, Wellenstein, to make no financial agreements: it was first necessary to have some insight into the Ukrainian needs. The protocol moved this problem back until after the arrival of the Ukrainian reconnaissance team in Srebrenica: the decision would be made later. Minister Voorhoeve instructed Schouten to take special care to be encouraging to the Ukrainians, because the media had treated the old Ukrainian battalion in Croatia in a rather negative way. Voorhoeve also followed the recommendation of the Chief of Defence Staff and Director of General Policy Affairs by asking his American counterpart Perry to give a word of encouragement to Minister Shmarov, which Perry was prepared to do: an American unit had practiced with the new battalion and it was excellently capable of carrying out peace keeping duties, according to the welcome American assessment.⁷³³

⁷³⁰ DCBC No. 2394. Code Wesseling 111, 19/06/95.

⁷³¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02110. Code Biegman 548, 19/06/95.

⁷³² DCBC nos. 2760 and 2761. Fax Deputy Milad to Kiev Emb and Min of Def/DS/DCBC, 201607 LT Jun 95 and 210848 LT Jun 95.

⁷³³ DCBC No. 564. Fax PDV (H.P.M. Kreemers) to DCBC Head of duty squad, [19/06/95]; and DCBC No. 2153. Handwritten fax Kreemers to DCBC for Lieutenant General M. Schouten [20/06/95]; DGEF doss. F95/77. Memorandum DGEF to PCDS, 20 June 1995, No. F 95001837; DCBC No. 5666. Fax Kiev Emb, Col Veldkamp to Gen Pollé, 191645 Jun

The importance of receiving such a formal promise from Kiev was all the more apparent from the words of the Ukrainian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Khandogy, who said to Schouten prior to the signing of the protocol that the Ukrainian thinking on areas of deployment other than Srebrenica had not yet stopped: developments in Croatia could still lead to maintaining the battalion there. This appeared to be wishful thinking in the hope of rehabilitating the Ukrainian battalion that had a poor reputation because of black marketeering and other practices: the Croatian authorities could well harbour objections to a continued stay of that battalion in Croatia.

In Kiev on the day of signing this protocol, they were still awaiting the formal UN request: it was clear that the Netherlands would benefit from the fastest possible decision-making in New York. The only way that the Dutch Defence Staff saw for this was to instruct the Dutch UN ambassador, Biegman, to insist on delivering the formal UN request as rapidly as possible to the Ukrainian mission, which took place in the letter drafted on 21 June, sent on 21 June, and that arrived in Kiev on 24 June. With this, the most significant condition set by the Ukrainian government appeared to be fulfilled. The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs subsequently confirmed that the UN had ordered preparatory measures to be taken for the relief of Dutchbat by Ukrainians, such as sending a reconnaissance team to Srebrenica. When this group was to depart remained unclear: Kiev seemed to assume mid July.⁷³⁴

The relief gets bogged down

The time for the planned relief of Dutchbat, 1 July, was getting closer in the meantime. The Dutch Army Crisis Staff in The Hague started by issuing instructions for a 'winding-up programme'. Note that in this section the term 'relief' is sometimes replaced by the term 'rotation'. In the terminology of the Dutch Army, the term 'rotation' is used when one battalion is replaced by another, successive battalion (for example, Dutchbat I by Dutchbat II). If there is no such succession, the term used is 'relief', for example when a Canadian battalion is replaced by a Dutch battalion. The term 'rotation' will be used here in accordance with the Dutch Army usage.

For personnel that were not part of the Dutchbat III organization (the supporting units), a date had already been established on which they were to report back to their units.⁷³⁵ The ABiH (the 2nd Corps in Tuzla) was also informed of the sequence of events of the relief, but not yet of precise dates.⁷³⁶ According to plan, the first Dutchbat members were to be repatriated on 6 July. The coordination of this relief plan with the upper political echelons appeared to leave much to be desired in the meantime: as late as 25 June Karremans heard Prime Minister Kok say on the radio that Dutchbat would stay until August. Karremans thought it was typical that he had to find out through the media that the battalion would only be relieved half way through August. Inquiries revealed that the Dutch Army Crisis Staff had not been informed. Karremans pointed the finger of blame for this incorrect reporting to the Defence Information Service.⁷³⁷ The question is whether this was justified: the *Reformatorsch Dagblad* of 24 June appeared to have been expertly informed on the relief, and reported that, after a phased relief, the last man would be back home at the end of July.⁷³⁸

There was still no real clarity for the primary interested party, Dutchbat III. On 4 June, Dutchbat had received a message that the Ukrainian government had decided not to send a battalion for relief to Srebrenica, and that Dutchbat should take account of a delay in the relief schedule.

95; ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Protocol of Progress Consultation between the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff of the Netherlands and the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Ukraine, 21/06/95.

⁷³⁴ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Wesseling 115, 21/06/95. DCBC No. 2437. Fax DCBC/SCOCIS to N. Biegman, 221145 Z Jun 95, fax No. 534; ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Biegman 561, 22/06/95.

⁷³⁵CRST. Fax G3 Plans Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to C-11 Lumbbrig suppl. to C-Dutchbat, 231450B Jun 95, No. CRST/2580.

⁷³⁶NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Memorandum Meeting 2 Corps ABiH, 23/06/95.

⁷³⁷Interview Karremans, 26/06/98; Karremans, *Srebrenica: Who Cares?*, p. 156.

⁷³⁸R. Pasterkamp, '*Als blauwe ratten in de val: Laatste loodjes voor het Nederlandse bataljon in Bosnië*' (Like blue rats in a trap: Dutch battalion ties up loose ends in Bosnia) in *Reformatorsch Dagblad*, 24/06/95,

Karremans was told that, in principle, relief would be by Dutchbat IV (which was to be formed from the earlier-mentioned 42nd Armoured Infantry Battalion, the Limburgse Jagers).⁷³⁹ Karremans heard that the Limburgse Jagers were holding their home front days, which are information meetings for the relations of the soldiers who were to be deployed. Karremans drew the following conclusion with respect to the Limburgse Jagers: 'that means they are coming'. At the same time the protocol for the relief by a Ukrainian battalion was signed in Kiev; Karremans concluded: 'they are coming too'. Karremans writes: 'For me it was as if the light had been turned out: who will be relieving us?'. It was clear to him, however, that the political decision-making process was not yet complete, and that the UN still had to give its permission, which, as outlined above, was to take another few days. It goes without saying, that if the relief was unclear even for Karremans, it was much more so for the battalion.⁷⁴⁰

In the meantime, the Dutch Army Crisis Staff were considering a wide range of options, including a continued Dutch stay in the Srebrenica enclave. Inspired by the deterioration of the situation in Bosnia, they were looking for ways to act more robustly: discussions on the associated opportunities were conducted on all levels, which was covered in Chapter 1 of this part. One possibility for acting more robustly was to reorganize the Dutch battalion that was still to be deployed, Dutchbat IV, and to equip it with Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) with a 25 mm gun; This would make Dutchbat IV into a mechanized infantry battalion. Further, the Dutch Army Crisis Staff attempted to look forward to October 1996: account was taken up to and including a Dutchbat VI. To reduce vulnerability, the withdrawal of a number of Dutch soldiers was a final option: in view of the enormous effort that would be involved in deploying mechanized infantry battalions, this was a welcome alternative. On balance, the experience of both the Canadian battalion and Dutchbat had shown that guarding the enclave could best be achieved by the manning of observation posts (OPs), which would be possible with two companies and the existing Dutchbat strength of 430 men. Karremans did not agree, however, in view of the problems Dutchbat III had encountered with this strength in its work and in the situation.

The Dutch Army Crisis Staff were also entertaining the idea that if relief by a Ukrainian battalion were to take place in August, the handover of the duties to the Ukrainian battalion could also be carried out by Dutchbat III. It was no surprise that Karremans rejected the idea: because the handover to another country would take more time (the protocol signed in Kiev allowed for thirty days), and relief in August would mean that leave could not be taken until in September, which would rule out a holiday with the families. 'I would like someone to come here and explain that, in particular to those who have not been on leave here as a consequence of the situation,' Karremans responded.⁷⁴¹

Karremans's admonition did not appear to get through completely to the Dutch Army Crisis Staff. As is evident from the minutes of a meeting half way through June on the possible forthcoming deployment of Dutchbat IV, the assumption was still that a Ukrainian battalion would relieve Dutchbat III before 1 September. In that case, Dutchbat IV would not relieve Dutchbat III, but instead Dutchbat III would remain two months longer in the enclave. The other options devised by the Dutch Army Crisis Staff were rejected: Deputy Army Commander, General Van Baal, would hear nothing of any adjustment in the strength or the equipment: the point of departure remained task execution with the organic resources.⁷⁴² This point of departure was reconfirmed after consultation between the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Couzy, and the Chief of Defence Staff, Van den Breemen. Because of the political consensus that Dutchbat IV should not be quartered again in Srebrenica, the subject of the feasibility of the three investigated alternatives in Central Bosnia was also raised: the most obvious new duties for Dutchbat IV would appear to be in either Livno, or in the surroundings of the Maglaj pocket, and would involve setting up checkpoints and manning several

⁷³⁹Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 147-9; interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 15/12/98.

⁷⁴⁰Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 151.

⁷⁴¹CRST. Internal Memorandum DOKL of G3, lcol Felix to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 6/06/95, No. CRST/2483; NIOD, Coll. Karremans. C-1 (Netherlands) UN Infbat to C-RNIA-Crisis Staff, 06/06/95, No. TK9590.

⁷⁴²CRST. Staff 1 Army Corps, Section G3 to Distribution list, 14/06/95. AKL Crisis Staff No. CRST/2548.

OPs. As equipment for both options, the APC with a .50 machine gun would suffice, with which Dutchbat was also equipped. Being equipped as armoured infantry meant that if Dutchbat III were to be relieved by Dutchbat IV, Dutchbat IV would have to return to the Netherlands to be fitted out there as an armoured infantry battalion, and then to be deployed (to Livno or Maglaj). Such an armoured infantry battalion with two companies was in any case only deployable for six months, and that was not worth the effort.⁷⁴³ It was therefore determined from all the above that it was not an option. In August 1995, the decision was taken to fit out armoured infantry combat vehicles of the companies still to be deployed with a 25 mm gun. The argument used at the time was that the vulnerability had to be reduced, and that, in view of the increasingly hostile actions, it was necessary in the interests of self-defence to have heavier resources available.⁷⁴⁴ Shortly after this decision, however, General Nicolai asked Zagreb to inform the Dutch government that there was no new task for Dutchbat and that all preparations could be halted.⁷⁴⁵

In the meantime, the relief continued to cause problems until the end of June. Minister Voorhoeve was able to announce in Parliament only three days before the planned date of relief, on 28 June, that the UN had agreed with the relief of Dutchbat III. When it was to start was not yet known, he told Parliament: a number of technical details still had to be sorted out.

There was close contact between The Hague and the Dutch members of the UN staffs in Sarajevo and Zagreb on the rotation and relief of Dutchbat. From Zagreb, Colonel De Jonge urged the Defence Staff to make a reservation in the relief of Dutchbat III by the Ukrainian battalion, because it remained to be seen whether the ABiH army Commander would agree to that battalion in view of its Orthodox character. De Jonge also warned that the Ukrainian battalion was expected to be available no earlier than mid July for transfer from Croatia to Bosnia. The relief would in any case have to be complete before the end of August, because the UN was then expecting a Croatian offensive.⁷⁴⁶

However, the 2nd Corps of the ABiH already informed its unit in Srebrenica, the 28th Division, that Colonel Brantz of Sector North East in Tuzla had announced that the commander of Dutchbat IV would be paying his respects to the staff of the 2nd Corps on 5 July. It was also announced that Brantz would arrange for the new Dutchbat IV to enter the enclave. Brantz claimed - according to a Bosnian report - to have gained experience in 1994 and 1995 in arranging relief.⁷⁴⁷

The rotation of Dutchbat III was immediately frustrated, however. A Dutch reconnaissance team planned to enter the enclave on 28 June. The Bosnian Serbs refused this group entry to Srebrenica, however.⁷⁴⁸ Therefore, General Couzy was to call Karremans on 1 July with the announcement that General Mladic had thrown a spanner in the works, and that no clearance had been given for the rotation. Neither could the rotation of the first group, which was planned for 6 July, take place. The ultimate decision on admission was with the Bosnian Serbs, and, for the rest, both alternatives, relief by Dutchbat IV (the 42nd Armoured Infantry Battalion Limburgse Jagers), or the Ukrainian battalion, were still open. A discussion subsequently flared up between Dutchbat and the Dutch Army Crisis Staff on the question of whether the rotation was to take place in three or four rounds. Karremans sighed: 'This is slowly driving me crazy'.⁷⁴⁹

The effects on Dutchbat III's personnel and home front of a matter of such importance to the Army as the care and security of personnel, and on such a sensitive point as relief, was anybody's guess. In spite of all the uncertainty surrounding the relief, the preparation for the rotation continued as if nothing was wrong. A start was made on packing the kit bags, and the Dutchbat unit that was planned

⁷⁴³DCBC No. 565. Memorandum PCDS to CDS, 19/06/95, No. S/95/061/2514.

⁷⁴⁴ TK, session 1995-1196, 22, No. 111. (03/08/95).

⁷⁴⁵NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Fax Comd HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, 141100Aug95.

⁷⁴⁶ DCBC No. 2150. Fax G3 Land Ops HQ UNPF to SCOCIS Defence Staff info COS HQ UNPROFOR, 27/06/95.

⁷⁴⁷ ABiH Tuzla. Komanda 2. Korpusa Komandi 28.d KoV, 29/06/95, Str.pov.broj. 02/1-676/2.

⁷⁴⁸ DCBC, 2756 and 2755. Gen Nicolai to DS/SCOCIS and DOKL/SCO, 27/06/95 (the memo was signed by LCol A. de Ruiter) and *ibid.* as a supplement to the memo of 27/06/95, 28/06/95.

⁷⁴⁹Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 157.

to leave the enclave on 10 July handed them in as early as 1 July. After the kit bags had been loaded onto trucks on this day, those involved heard on the RTL news that Dutchbat IV did not yet have the permission of the Bosnian Serbs to depart for the enclave. With this, the rotation schedule was up in the air again. This caused great disappointment, which was only compensated by the fact that on 2 July a limited number of people (ten for rotation and sixteen for leave) could depart with the convoy containing all the packed kit bags. To be on the safe side, buses for the main rotation remained in the enclave. A palliative measure was that the earlier planned date for the start of the major rotations, 10 July, was brought forward on paper and was now again set at 6 July.

The home front received a detailed letter stating the arrival time of the aircraft on 7 July carrying those who were to leave the enclave with the first rotation on 6 July. For this letter, the Dutch Army Crisis Staff assumed what was called a 'positive plan', although there were the necessary disclaimers. In the event of no clearance from the Bosnian Serbs, it would mean two days delay, but considerable delay was also possible. Late in the evening of 5 July, the message arrived that the clearance for the following day's rotation had indeed been rejected by the VRS. To rub more salt into the wound, the RTL news on that day showed the arrival in Soesterberg of the fortunate fellow soldiers who were able to leave Srebrenica on 2 July.⁷⁵⁰

Further complications surrounding the relief: the reorganization of UNPROFOR in Bosnia

The relief was further complicated because UNPROFOR, after transferring the Ukrainians from Croatia to Bosnia, could also expect a game of musical chairs within Bosnia. It was decided as early as May to carry out the mandate with fewer troops, and Resolution 998 of 16 June had also spoken of the regrouping of UNPROFOR. The arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force likewise entailed the necessity of a reorganization. A further complication was formed by the reorganization in the eastern enclaves, which meant that a Dutch and a British battalion became available for deployment elsewhere in Bosnia. Janvier wanted to transfer an Argentinian battalion from Croatia to Bosnia, but there was no work for an Argentinian battalion in Bosnia: it would be difficult enough to find a task for a new Dutchbat and a new Britbat. The Dutch government had formally confirmed that it considered it desirable to maintain a battalion in Bosnia, and the British government had also said that it was prepared to maintain its strength in Bosnia, provided the UN was to deploy the British - like the Dutch - in Central Bosnia. In addition, the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force represented enormous pressure on the available logistics resources, and that better accommodation than tents would have to be found before the winter.⁷⁵¹

As far as the relief of Dutchbat III was concerned, the planned reorganization meant that it could not take place in a hurry. The fact was that if a Ukrainian battalion were to take over Dutchbat III's duties, a situation would arise in which no new deployment area would be established for Dutchbat IV. This would mean that the Netherlands would have to 'fight' for a place, because the total number of battalions in Bosnia was to be reduced by three. For this reason, General Nicolai and Lieutenant Colonel De Ruiter from Sarajevo expressed the fear that the Netherlands would have to compete with other Western countries, which would not enhance the probability of a problem-free new deployment area for Dutchbat IV. This was already difficult because a certain balance also had to be maintained between Western and non-Western countries. If Dutchbat III were to transfer its duties prematurely to the Ukraine, then it would be doubtful if the UN would still make an appeal to the Netherlands, but the Dutch government provisionally adhered to the position that this would have to happen. A possible outcome was that agreements with Canada or England would have to be made on a Dutch deployment area, but it could not be stated in advance whether that was certain.

⁷⁵⁰ NIOD Coll. Diary Koreman, 40th week, p. 3-11; CRST. Head G1 the Royal Netherlands Crisis Staff (LCol W.P.J. Patist) to the families of the returning military personnel of Dutchbat-3 UNPROFOR and scheduled for return in 'Round 1', 29/06/95, No. CRST/2571/A.

⁷⁵¹ DCBC, 2148. Letter COS UNPROFOR to Force Commander UNPF, 25/06/95, Ref Plans 1300.

The key question remained as to how much time was involved in the arrival of the Ukrainian battalion: experience showed that it took three weeks to relieve a battalion, but consultation with the Bosnian government in Sarajevo and with the Bosnian Serbs in Pale had not yet been conducted at the end of June. Because the United Kingdom had also announced that it wanted to leave Gorazde, with the Ukraine as the only candidate for relief, it fell to the Bosnian government to explain the various aspects. Sacirbey may well have said to Voorhoeve that he would consent to the arrival of the Ukrainians in Srebrenica, but this did not convince Nicolai. Sacirbey had actually said so to Voorhoeve at the beginning of June: the impression arose then that the arrival of Ukrainian troops would not be disagreeable to the Bosnian Muslims, because they would pay less strict attention to enforcing the demilitarization agreement.⁷⁵² But even if the Bosnian government were to agree, according to Nicolai in Sarajevo the question remained as to whether the ABiH would cooperate, in view of the poor relations with the Ukrainian troops.

All things considered, it appeared to Nicolai to be inadvisable to allow the relief by the Ukraine to start in early July, at least in so far as it was actually feasible for the Ukraine. The Netherlands would then have a reasonable chance of missing out on new terms of reference in Bosnia. A longer stay of Dutchbat III in Srebrenica was also a non-option. The only path open appeared to be the following: the relief of Dutchbat III by Dutchbat IV. A rapid hand-over of Dutchbat III's duties to Dutchbat IV appeared doubtful, Nicolai thought: it would still take some time to reach the relevant decisions. UNPROFOR's study on its regrouping in Bosnia would be complete at the end of June: it would then have to go to Zagreb, and if agreement was reached on it there, the Security Council in New York would still have to pronounce judgement on it. Among other reasons, because Dutchbat's resupply was still stalled, it appeared to be inadvisable to bring in more troops to the enclave in addition to the 430 of Dutchbat III who were there at that time. Therefore only 430 men of Dutchbat IV could enter the enclave, which again raised the problem that the complete Dutchbat IV battalion consisted of more than 430 people, so that the Netherlands was faced with a difficult choice of which Dutchbat IV units to leave at home.⁷⁵³

Also, because of the problems that Dutchbat III was wrestling with, neither was the Army Staff in The Hague interested under these circumstances in having Dutchbat III relieved by the Ukrainian battalion: the feeling was that it could not be sold to the home front and the soldiers of Dutchbat III. The Department for Individual Support and the Defence Social Service considered a longer stay in Srebrenica irresponsible. If the promised period of deployment of six months was exceeded, the organization's credibility would suffer, and this would have a considerable impact on the follow-up care. Here again, therefore, the conclusion was to deploy a Dutchbat IV battalion.

In addition, General Couzy wanted relief to be carried out by the complete Dutchbat IV, partly as a way of limiting the security risks. Couzy thought that it would send the wrong signal to outsiders and that it was furthermore bad for team building for a part of Dutchbat IV to have to start the deployment with a period of leave; Dutchbat IV must stay together. Complete units should be able to hand over duties to each other. Furthermore, there was equipment for more than 600 men in the enclave, which, after the hand-over from Dutchbat III, would have to be transferred by Dutchbat IV to the deployment location elsewhere in Bosnia. Equipment for 600 men should not be moved by 430 men, Couzy felt.⁷⁵⁴

Couzy's scenario conflicted with Minister Voorhoeve's assumption of bringing no more personnel into the enclave than strictly necessary, which was also what Nicolai had advised from Sarajevo. Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen pointed out that the supply situation in Srebrenica was already a problem, and that the Bosnian Serbs would certainly not allow UNPROFOR to increase

⁷⁵² DCBC, 2821. Code Van Mierlo 73, 06/06/95.

⁷⁵³ DCBC, 2756 and 2755. Gen Nicolai to DS/SCOCIS and DOKL/SCO, 27/06/95 (the memo was signed by LCol J.A.C. de Ruiter) and *ibid.* as a supplement to the memo of 27/06/95, 28/06/95.

⁷⁵⁴ DCBC, 2151 and 2145. Fax LCol Felix [RNLA Crisis Staff] to (Comdr Metselaar [DCBC], 27/06/95 and 28/06/95, No. CRST/2610.

its strength in the enclave. In other respects, Couzy and Van den Breemen were in agreement in their assessment that an extended stay of Dutchbat III was undesirable: the battalion must be relieved as rapidly as possible, which would mean relief by Dutchbat IV, although Voorhoeve's preference was for relief by the Ukrainian battalion.

Another scenario that the Defence Staff was considering was that relief would not be permitted for some considerable time. The choice then would be whether Dutchbat III should stay or withdraw. If the UN could not carry out relief, a unilateral withdrawal of the Dutch contribution would come closer. Although General Smith, General Nicolai and UN Undersecretary-General Kofi Annan had made positive remarks regarding a continued presence of a Dutch battalion in Bosnia, the Defence Staff acknowledged that no other purpose could be found after Dutchbat IV's stay in Srebrenica. Van den Breemen wanted to discuss this problem with Janvier.⁷⁵⁵

Meanwhile, on 30 June there was still absolutely no certainty about the relief of Dutchbat. In the Ukraine the completion of the political decision-making was still not in sight, and Kiev still appeared not to be content with the prospect of the country being the only one to have to occupy the eastern enclaves.⁷⁵⁶ This was at least the opinion of the Dutch UN delegation in New York. In the meantime, a message had been received from Kiev on 28 June that the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had agreed to the move to Srebrenica, and that parliamentary approval was not required. The commander of the old Ukrainian battalion concerned (known as the 60th) was ordered to make arrangements for the transfer. An advance party was on standby in Croatia from 5 July to travel to Srebrenica, although the Chief of the General Staff, General Pankratov, expected that this would not happen before mid July. The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also requested support from the Netherlands, although it was not a condition for the relief: the Ukraine wanted to achieve a sustained involvement of other countries in the enclaves, even if it was only in the form of supply units. If Gorazde, Srebrenica and Zepa were to be placed under a separate Ukrainian sector, then Kiev would still also like to see a NATO General at the head of this sector.⁷⁵⁷

The Ukrainian government continued not to determine a position because of the formation of a new cabinet: some confusion surrounded this matter, because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kiev had announced on 28 June that it consented to a Ukrainian battalion in Srebrenica. New York was also in agreement, and adopted the position that relief must take place as rapidly as possible. The Netherlands put pressure on the Ukraine via the American Secretary of State, Perry: it was known that Minister Shmarov would return in a newly formed cabinet. Perry indeed spoke with Shmarov about the relief, who said that he was committed to going to Srebrenica, but at the same time was greatly concerned that the Ukraine was now alone in occupying the eastern enclaves. He in turn appealed to Perry for help in avoiding this situation, but this did not appear to be a hard condition for Shmarov either.⁷⁵⁸

Van den Breemen visited Janvier on 30 June to be given insight on the situation in Bosnia, and to learn the state of affairs with respect to the relief of Dutchbat III. The picture painted by Janvier was extremely sombre: Mladic would not make any promises on the rotation or relief of Dutchbat. He had said that he would study relief by the Ukrainian battalion, but his position was that under the current circumstances for the time being there could, for the time being be no rotation. Mladic adopted an uncompromising and hostile attitude towards the UN: he would not yield and he was convinced that he

⁷⁵⁵ DCBC, 574. Memorandum CDS/SCOCIS to the Minister, 29/06/95 No. S/95/061/2674.

⁷⁵⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02109. Code Biegman 575, 29/06/95.

⁷⁵⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Wesseling 120, 29/06/95. See also DCBC, 2436. Fax Hilderink to Kolsteren, 031600 LT Jul 95, No. 551.

⁷⁵⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Codes Horbach 590, 05/07/95; ABZ, DPV/ARA/02109. Jacobovits 436 and 439, 07/07/95 and 10/07/95; DCBC, 682. Biegman 599, 10/07/95; DCBC, 2140. Fax Kiev embassy to Minister of Defence, 07/07/95; DCBC, 2089 [= 2220]. Code Cables Annan to Akashi, 06 and 07/07/95, Nos. 2220 and 2251. DCBC, 528. Day reports DCBC 07/07/95.

could win a conflict with the UN. Mladic was counting on the fact that the major countries would not want to risk a war over Bosnia.

Janvier thought that Mladic considered the presence of UN units in Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde to be a way of putting pressure on the UN: however, it would be Mladic himself who abandoned this source of pressure by attacking the enclaves. Mladic had further declared that he would attack the UN units if the Rapid Reaction Force were to be deployed. Therefore, the Rapid Reaction Force could not be deployed before a solution was found for the enclaves. Janvier wanted to raise this matter again with the Security Council.

Janvier also expressed the preference that Dutchbat III should be relieved directly by the Ukrainian battalion. But the approval of the parties involved and the rotation itself could take another month, the Force Commander thought. This hardly offered an attractive prospect, and Van den Breemen was also keen not only for Voorhoeve to work in favour of the relief, but for Van Mierlo also to use his influence on Bildt and his Ukrainian counterparts to raise the matter of the relief with the Bosnian-Serb regime in Pale.⁷⁵⁹

The result of Van den Breemen's visit was that Janvier again brought the replacement of Dutchbat III to the attention of New York. Janvier expressed no preference for a replacement by Ukrainian or by Dutch troops. He merely pointed out that a Ukrainian reconnaissance team should depart on 5 July. He wondered whether the Bosnian delegate at the UN had already been informed, and whether New York would agree with transferring the Ukrainian battalion. Janvier further said that he had already requested Mladic on 28 June to cooperate in the departure of Dutchbat with all its vehicles, but also that Mladic did not wish to respond. As the next step, Janvier pointed to the necessity of approaching the governments of Croatia, Bosnia and the authorities in Pale.⁷⁶⁰ The Dutch pressure on New York to reach decisions quickly had therefore borne little fruit.

On 3 July, the Bosnian Serbs still would not allow a quartermaster unit of the Limburgse Jagers (part of Dutchbat IV) into the enclave. This meant that a start could not be made on the relief, and it no longer seemed likely that Dutchbat III would have left the enclave on 11 July:⁷⁶¹ the planned date for Dutchbat to be able to leave the enclave changed often, as will be clear from the above. Voorhoeve had already publicly announced that there was still no certainty about a precise date of the relief of Dutchbat; this had to wait for the Bosnian Serbs.⁷⁶²

Only on 6 July did the promise from the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the Ukrainian move to Srebrenica reach the Secretary-General of the UN, Boutros-Ghali. General Kolsteren made the suggestion to The Hague from Zagreb to remind Kofi Annan via the Dutch Military Advisor to the UN, General Van Kappen, of his promise to Voorhoeve, as Kolsteren had interpreted it: according to Kolsteren, Annan had promised, immediately after approval from Kiev, to instruct Janvier to transfer the Ukrainian battalion from Croatia to Srebrenica. It was not necessary to remind Annan of this alleged promise: UN Ambassador Biegman hoped that a reconnaissance team of the Ukrainian battalion would soon be able to depart to Srebrenica, although, as was the case with the Dutchbat IV reconnaissance team, nothing could yet be said about the possibility of actually arriving there.⁷⁶³

As far as the Ukrainian battalion was concerned, there was another obstacle to overcome: the Ukraine had now consented to a Ukrainian battalion in Srebrenica, but there was still no permission

⁷⁵⁹ BStas. Memorandum SCOCIS to Minister, 03/07/95, unnumbered. Secret, Personal, Minutes of the meeting of the Chief of Defence Staff and the Force Commander UNPF in Zagreb on 30/06/95. See for unclassified draft: DCBC, 576.

⁷⁶⁰ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, Srebrenica 3300-SRE Vol. I, 01/07-16/11/95. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 02/07/97, No. Z-1085, UN Restricted.

⁷⁶¹ *De Volkskrant*, 03/07/95.

⁷⁶² *De Volkskrant*, 30/06/95.

⁷⁶³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Codes Horbach 590, 05/07/95; ABZ, DPV/ARA/02109. Jacobovits 436 and 439, 07/07/95 and 10/07/95; DCBC, 682. Biegman 599, 10/07/95; DCBC, 2140. Fax Kiev embassy to Minister of Defence, 07/07/95; DCBC No. 2089 [= 2222]. Code Cables Annan to Akashi, 06 and 07/07/95, Nos. 2220 and 2251. DCBC, 528. Day reports DCBC 07/11/95.

from the Bosnian government and the Bosnian-Serb authorities for the presence of that battalion in Srebrenica. This was a task for Janvier, but he would first have to take up the matter of the departure of the Ukrainian battalion from Croatia with the Croatian government. Only then could he approach the Bosnian government and the Bosnian-Serb regime. The Federal Yugoslav government would probably also have to be requested for permission to allow the relief to take place via Serbian territory, which was the quickest way. In any case, the Defence Staff was of the opinion that the Netherlands would have to put pressure on the UN, so that the Netherlands would be given priority in UNPROFOR's redeployment plans.⁷⁶⁴

That proved to be no longer necessary, however: Janvier wanted the transfer of the Ukrainian battalion from Croatia to Bosnia to take place as rapidly as possible, but for practical reasons it could only happen 'during a lull in the hostilities in Bosnia'. However, these hostilities would actually throw another spanner in the works, because from 6 July the VRS was making a start on the operations against Srebrenica. The Bosnian Serbs still refused in the meantime to allow the first Dutchbat IV echelon destined for Srebrenica through to Srebrenica; the quartermaster unit of the Limburgse Jagers was stopped at the bridge over the Drina at Zvornik. On 6 July, a start should have been made with their vehicles on the rotation of Dutchbat III.⁷⁶⁵

This definitely upset the plans. After having been kept in uncertainty about the timing of the relief for some considerable time, the Dutch were looking forward to a series of departures on 6, 9, 13 and 16 July. Matters were to turn out differently.

A retrospective on the relief

The relief of Dutchbat III meant moving a long way in a short time. There was simply no interest in a move to the eastern enclaves on the part of the troop-contributing countries. Therefore, the Netherlands was forced to review with hindsight the uniqueness of the isolated adventure that they had embarked upon so full of hope and confidence.

The Ukraine was the only country that could be persuaded to show an interest in taking over the duties in Srebrenica. The country said A, and to the relief of the policy makers in the Hague, eventually also said B, after doubt had been raised in Kiev on whether it was advisable to be the only country to take on duties in the eastern enclaves, among other questions. This led to a Ukrainian call for the internationalization of the presence in the enclaves, in which the Netherlands (and before them Canada) had preceded the Ukraine, but this call fell on deaf ears, however.

In the search for relief in making related agreements with the Ukraine, the Ministry of Defence was at the fore: Foreign Affairs appeared on this point to be playing more of a facilitating than a leading role. In Dutchbat I's offer to the UN in 1993, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was still as keen as mustard: when it came to the relief of Dutchbat III, Defence stood largely alone, however. The difference with one and a half years earlier was great: then, Minister Ter Beek was not even granted the privilege of offering Dutchbat I to Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali (see Part I).

This time, the new offer of Dutchbat IV could be made by the Minister of Defence; Actually, Voorhoeve appeared almost to stand alone. Voorhoeve's position as minister certainly played a role in this: Relations now were such that as long as Voorhoeve did not bang his fist on the table or otherwise raise the alarm, his problem would be seen as a problem of Defence, who would therefore also have to come up with the solution. Voorhoeve was seen as more of a worrier than his predecessor, Ter Beek, and his concerns were therefore sometimes taken with a pinch of salt by his fellow ministers.⁷⁶⁶ That even Prime Minister Kok publicly urged Voorhoeve to make haste in finding relief for Dutchbat, was actually a message that could just as appropriately have been sent to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

⁷⁶⁴ DCBC, 2434. Draft Memorandum DCBC, undated, unnumbered, sent with Fax No. 562Sec, 062255B Jul 95 to Col Smeets.

⁷⁶⁵ SMG 1004/79. Fax Dutchbat 3-4 Rotation Team to Sitcen BLS, 051300B Jul 95.

⁷⁶⁶ Interview J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00.

It may be doubted whether the offer of replacement by Dutchbat IV in the search for a replacement for Dutchbat III was advisable from the point of view of exerting pressure for pulling Dutchbat III out. There is no doubt that it could be seen as a noble gesture intended to avoid embarrassing the UN and to ensure that Dutchbat III would be relieved, but the manoeuvre took the pressure off New York itself to arrange for the replacement of Dutchbat. New York was not particularly active in seeking opportunities for Dutchbat's replacement, and it eventually showed little haste in reaching agreements with the Ukraine.

The circumstances were also not favourable for the Netherlands. Janvier had set the condition that the Ukrainian battalion, which he would probably rather be rid of, must first be provided with fresh personnel: this battalion was dogged with a poor reputation through reports of corruption and black market dealings.

Furthermore, UNPROFOR's reorganization plans, both in Croatia and in Bosnia, upset matters for the Netherlands. This led to delays in decision-making. The question of whether the Bosnian government had formally wished to consent to relief by the Ukraine was still unanswered at the time of the fall of Srebrenica, and therefore remains hypothetical: Dutchbat was the loser.

There is little point in speculating on whether the Netherlands could have been spared a trauma if the relief had been timely. There are no reasons to believe that the ups and downs of the relief played any role for the warring factions, in the sense that they exploited it, or that it played a role in the timing of the Bosnian-Serb attack. The VRS did emphatically keep the Republika Srpska closed for the Dutchbat IV reconnaissance team: by which time the decision to start the attack on the enclave had already been taken.

All this time, Dutchbat III and the home front were kept in gnawing uncertainty. To make matters even worse, all this took place shortly before the holiday period. For understandable reasons, the circumstances in which Dutchbat III found itself made rapid relief desirable. In this sense, from the point of view of personal welfare, it was understandable that The Hague suggested Dutchbat IV as a temporary replacement, even though it reduced the probability of a continued presence of a Dutch battalion elsewhere in Bosnia, in a reduced UNPROFOR.

6. The morale of ABiH and the population

After three years of war and two years of 'imprisonment' in a Safe Area, the situation also became increasingly bad for the population of Srebrenica, including those who had fled to the enclave. The fact that the population could not contact their families outside the enclave made the isolation increasingly more difficult to bear.

Not only Dutchbat, but also the population, were victims of the interruption of the resupply. The longer the Bosnian Serbs continued their strategy, which was intended to cause intolerable living conditions in the enclave, the more the belief of the residents in the future of the enclave crumbled. A humanitarian disaster was imminent now that the Bosnian Serbs were only allowing UNHCR convoys through piecemeal. An increasing number of people therefore wanted to flee the enclave. There were bound to be consequences for the morale of the population and the ABiH.

The morale of the ABiH declined rapidly after May 1995. The possibility of a change in the UNPROFOR mandate was in the air in the spring of 1995, but finally did not materialize (see Chapter 1 of this part). This also led to a hardening of the ABiH's attitude towards Dutchbat.

It had not escaped the notice of the ABiH General Staff that in mid May, Boutros-Ghali and Janvier were considering proposals that could entail the withdrawal of UNPROFOR from the eastern enclaves. Even before Janvier presented his regrouping proposals to the Security Council, from Tuzla Naser Oric already informed the 28th Division of the ABiH in Srebrenica of the possibility that Dutchbat could leave Srebrenica: he sent an order to obstruct it. The civil administration of the enclave, the Opstina, was to be informed of this order. It also had to be made clear to the population that Srebrenica and Zepa had not been sold, but that the struggle would continue. Oric made the Brigade

Commander in the southwestern part of the enclave, Zulfo Tursunovic, personally responsible for the execution of this order, which further underlined their special links.

Another point of concern for the ABiH was that intelligence indicated that the Drina Corps of the VRS was to approach the population with pamphlets urging them to surrender. As soon as this happened, it would become necessary to explain to the population that the struggle would be continued. The most severe measures must be used against cowards and faint hearts, irrespective of whether they were soldiers or citizens, according to Oric.⁷⁶⁷

The latter was easier said than done. ABiH deserters who had subsequently left Srebrenica formed a considerable problem, and were of influence on the morale of both the ABiH and of the population. After the start of spring, a steady flow of groups of people, including ABiH soldiers, started from the enclave. It is a fact that there had been problems surrounding departure from the enclave, and also from Zepa, to Tuzla, Kladanj and Serbia since 1992: in the preceding three years approximately 5000 people had left and not returned. Measures were taken to obstruct the departure of the population, but it is not completely clear what these measures were, except that they did not have the desired effect.⁷⁶⁸ The flight from the enclave encountered opposition from the Bosnian government, partly for fear that it would be mainly men who would leave. This would have an unfavourable psychological effect on those who remained. For this reason, the Commander of the 28th Division, Ramiz Becirovic, was able to justify a more radical measure: a complete ban on departure from the enclave.⁷⁶⁹

An order to this effect was issued on 27 May. The 28th Division then issued an order that banned every movement of individuals and groups, and in particular of soldiers, between Srebrenica and Zepa. This order was difficult to maintain in the presence of an increasing shortage of food, however. Word spread around the enclave in June that the best solution was to leave for Tuzla, and a large proportion of the population did in fact want to leave. The ABiH had little control over this flight from the enclave, but did see it as extremely harmful for the survival of the enclave. Therefore ABiH men were obliged to report incidents of people wishing to leave the enclave, as soon as they became aware of them: all ABiH units were ordered to exchange information with *Stanica Javne Bezbjednosti* (SJB), the service for public safety, and to cooperate in the matter. However, this offered no solution: preparations were made for departure in small groups, which was difficult to oppose. There was a great degree of solidarity among the population, and they provided the ABiH no information on escape plans. Despite all the measures, groups indeed succeeded in leaving. This included many soldiers, who left with their weapons and ammunition. Zulfo Tursunovic was even sent to Zepa: with the authority he possessed, he had to disarm the many who had left for Zepa with the intention of continuing to Kladanj, and to return them to Srebrenica.⁷⁷⁰

Also, the eighteen ABiH helicopter flights supplying military equipment from Tuzla to Zepa had an influence on this: the return flights from Zepa offered individuals the chance to leave. This mainly involved family members of people in Tuzla, who were prepared to pay the helicopter pilots. In Tuzla everyone attempted to curry favour with the pilots, and provided them with the names of people to be picked up:⁷⁷¹ Someone who had family members with money could leave by helicopter.⁷⁷² This problem was solved for the ABiH by the VRS: the Bosnian Serbs shot down a helicopter at the beginning of June in the vicinity of Zepa, killing twelve people, including three doctors destined for service with the 28th Division. According to information from the surgeon Ilijaz Pilay, who was in

⁷⁶⁷ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa to Komandi 28 n/r Tursunovic Zulfo, 19/05/95, br. 02/1-S1.

⁷⁶⁸ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpusa Odjeljenje za moral, 16/06/95, br. 04-99/95.

⁷⁶⁹ Interview Ibrahim Becirovic, 05/08/97.

⁷⁷⁰ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa, 21/06/95, br. 01-132/95.

⁷⁷¹ Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05 and 06/08/97.

⁷⁷² Interview Hasa Selmanagic, 07/08/97.

Zepa when the helicopter crashed, 37 people had some kind of permission to fly with a return flight. The flights stopped after this incident.⁷⁷³

There were reports in early June that a group of eighty people was on the way from Srebrenica to Zepa, including one of the local doctors. The hospital manager was extremely concerned about him, because others cherished similar plans.⁷⁷⁴ Because of the poor living conditions in the enclave, an increasing number of people started to flee. The food situation for the population temporarily improved somewhat after a convoy arrived again on 7 June⁷⁷⁵ with 72 tons of food, which was good for five days consumption.⁷⁷⁶

The command of the 28th Division of the ABiH feared chaos as a result of the departure of so many from the enclave: more severe repressive measures were necessary to deter people from fleeing. Practice actually showed that these measures were not strict enough: groups of soldiers who arrived in Tuzla from Srebrenica in May were not punished or sent back. Instead they were reassigned to other ABiH units. Furthermore, commanders in the enclave would turn a blind eye to departure and would do little to prevent it. Later measures against deserters involved sixty days detention, but because this was seen as a light punishment, the situation continued to encourage desertion. At the end of June, thirty ABiH soldiers in the enclave were being punished for their escape plans.⁷⁷⁷

To stop the exodus of ABiH soldiers from the enclave, and because the collaboration with the SJB was not proceeding satisfactorily, a company of Military Police was formed in Srebrenica and attached to the 282nd ABiH brigade of Ibro Dudic, who was stationed in the south, on the route to Zepa. This hunting down of ABiH soldiers then had a bad influence on ABiH morale:⁷⁷⁸ some resigned from the ABiH before fleeing. These were often people who had a stock of food and who were able to pay a few hundreds of marks for guides. A poorer person would hardly be in a position to flee.⁷⁷⁹

Hunger was a primary motive to flee, irrespective of the social status and responsibilities held by the person involved in the army or in the Opstina. This meant that the control over the flight of the population became increasingly lost.⁷⁸⁰ Shortly before the start of the VRS attack on 6 July, the ABiH General Staff in Kakanj was told by the command of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla that the situation in Srebrenica was threatening to have catastrophic consequences, because food was running out. If food convoys did not arrive soon, it would no longer be possible to get the situation back under control. The 2nd Corps appealed to the General Staff to raise the alarm with the authorities in Sarajevo to send help to Srebrenica either by air or by road as rapidly as possible.⁷⁸¹

The ABiH had earlier also expressed the fear that, in the event of further delays to UNHCR convoys, major social problems would arise that would also reduce the state of readiness of the ABiH in the enclave. As in 1993, groups of ABiH soldiers felt forced to search for food and cattle in VRS territory. The command of the 28th Division in Srebrenica was aware that such enterprises carried out on individual initiative were full of risk, not only for those searching for food but also for the entire

⁷⁷³ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpuse ARBiH, 05/06/95, br. 04-89/95; ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to GSS ARBiH KM Kakanj; Komanda 2. Korpuse ARBiH, 04/06/95, br. 01-74/95.

⁷⁷⁴ CRST. Telex Tuzla UNHCR 08 jun95 0657Z; NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF Srebre to MSF Beo, 14/06/95 15:41, No. Out 801.

⁷⁷⁵ NIOD, Coll. UNHCR Tuzla. UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade, 08/06/95 14:32.

⁷⁷⁶ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol. I Resupply Eastern Encl, 17/04/95 -11/07/95. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 08/06/95.

⁷⁷⁷ ICTY (IT-98-33) D66/a, D61/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Asst Commander for Morale Captain Nijaz Masic) to the Command of 2nd Corps Morale Department, 30/06/95, No. 04-113/95; ABiH 285 IBlbr, 23/06/95, No. 08-21-208/95.

⁷⁷⁸ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpuse Odjeljenje bezbjednosti, 15/06/95, br. 13-05-86.

⁷⁷⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33) D66/a, D61/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Asst Commander for Morale Captain Nijaz Masic) to the Command of 2nd Corps Morale Department, 30/06/95, No. 04-113/95; ABiH 285 IBlbr, 23/06/95, No. 08-21-208/95.

⁷⁸⁰ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpuse Odjeljenje za moral, 16/06/95, br. 04-99/95.

⁷⁸¹ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpuse to GSS ARBiH KM Kakanj, 04/07/95, Str.pov.br. 02/2-13-490.

population, because of possible reprisals by the VRS. Even so, according to the officer in charge, the morale of the ABiH was still satisfactory in early June.⁷⁸²

The question remains as to whether this was true. There was a general air of dissatisfaction in the ABiH in June because the army was no longer in a position to pay the wages.⁷⁸³ Whether this also affected the 28th Division is not known. Reports on the positive aspects of their morale of the division appeared to be often repeated platitudes in the ABiH reports. For instance, one and the same report stated that morale was high, and that in the first weeks of June, 22 members of the 28th Division had departed from the enclave.⁷⁸⁴ At the end of June the 28th Division expected a new exodus from Srebrenica to Tuzla. This led to a ban by the 2nd Corps on travelling to Tuzla, the formation of another platoon of Military Police to intercept escapees, and diligent activity by the security service to attempt to prevent escapes.⁷⁸⁵

Escape from the enclave was not without risk; there were many examples of ABiH soldiers and citizens failing to achieve their escape objectives: at the beginning of June there was a rumour that out of a group of escapees, eight people had arrived in Tuzla, but that ten people were missing;⁷⁸⁶ the 2nd Corps announced that a group of fifteen deserted ABiH soldiers in the area of Snagovo had been dispersed by the VRS, and that no one had either returned to Srebrenica or arrived in Tuzla; around 21-22 June, the VRS had likewise beleaguered a group in the area of Han Pogled, twenty of which had returned to Srebrenica, where two were imprisoned and one killed; on 22 June, a group of twenty persons left from Zepa to Kladanj, and were overpowered not far from Kladanj, after which only one wounded person managed to arrive back at Srebrenica, and the fate of the others was uncertain.⁷⁸⁷

As well as desertion, the ABiH was also weighed down by a lack of food, clothing, equipment and footwear. Although 700 uniforms arrived in the enclave by helicopter in early June, it was still a considerable problem to distribute them among 6200 soldiers. As a consequence, the uniforms remained in the stores for some time, because to distribute them would create divisions and therefore also have a bad influence on morale. It took until mid June before the uniforms could finally be distributed; 10% of the personnel could be given new uniforms.⁷⁸⁸

The Capture of Observation Post Echo (OP-E) by the VRS on 3 June, which we will return to in the next chapter, created a shock wave in the enclave. This capture was a reason for the 28th Division of the ABiH to submit a list of supplies from the 2nd Corps in Tuzla to increase the effectiveness of the 28th Division. The following items stood out on a formidable shopping list: 3000 rifles, 7000 uniforms, 7000 pairs of shoes and, if possible, ammunition. Quantities of ammunition were not specified: Red Arrow anti-tank rockets, ammunition for 82 mm mortars, hand grenades, 12.7 mm machine guns, 20/3 and 20/4 anti-aircraft guns, 105 mm howitzers, 120 mm mortars (which were out of stock in the enclave), ammunition for the T-55 tanks (7 shells remained) and 50 RPG short range anti-tank weapons. This list also formed a sample sheet of the available weapons to be found with the ABiH units or in the Weapon Collection Point under Dutchbat supervision. For communication purposes, nine 100-watt transmitters were desired, as well as 120 Motorolas, a large number of telephones, batteries and many kilometres of telephone cable.⁷⁸⁹

⁷⁸² NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa, 02/06/95, br. 04-84/95. GSS ARBiH *Dani*, Special edition, 09/98.

⁷⁸⁴ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 28. Dvizije to Komandi 2. Korpusa Odsjek Bezbjednosti, 24/06/95, br. 13-05-95.

⁷⁸⁵ ABiH Tuzla. Komanda 28. Divizije Odsjek bezbjednosti to Komandi 2. Korpusa, Odjeljenje bezbjednosti, 30/06/95, Str. pov. br. 04-114/95.

⁷⁸⁶ CRST. Telex Tuzla UNHCR 08 Jun95 0657Z; NIOD, Coll.MSF. Capsat MSF Srebre to MSF Beo, 14/06/95 15:41, No. Out 801.

⁷⁸⁷ ICTY (IT-98-33) D66/a, D61/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Asst Commander for Morale Captain Nijaz Masic) to the Command of 2nd Corps Morale Department, 30/06/95, No. 04-113/95; ABiH 285 IBIBr, 23/06/95, No. 08-21-208/95.

⁷⁸⁸ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa ARBiH, 05/06/95, br. 04-89/95.

⁷⁸⁹ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to GSS ARBiH KM Kakanj; Komanda 2. Korpusa ARBiH, 04/06/95, br. 01-74/95.

The ABiH's distrust of Dutchbat

The capture of OP-E by the VRS also contributed to the distrust felt by the ABiH towards Dutchbat. It reinforced the fear of what the immediate future would bring, even if only because there had been no firm response from the UN to the Serbian action.⁷⁹⁰ The 28th Division asserted that Dutchbat may have promised at every meeting that the battalion would defend the enclave should the need arise, but doubt existed about this within the ABiH after what had happened. At the same time, the ABiH realized that Dutchbat was 'possibly' also under pressure from the VRS, and that this did not make life easier for the battalion. The ABiH also doubted whether Dutchbat informed its own command properly about the situation in the enclave.⁷⁹¹

Dutchbat followed the movements of the ABiH, and stood guard at places where the ABiH came so as to drive them away. Many ABiH soldiers found this objectionable, and the command of the 28th Division was afraid that it would be a cause of conflicts.⁷⁹² A certain lack of trust between the ABiH and Dutchbat was also evident from the constant accusations that Dutchbat was hard at work collecting intelligence on ABiH units, their state of readiness, and their military objects, and that such data reached the VRS. The ABiH security organs therefore received orders to oppose the activities of Dutchbat and UNMOs in that direction.⁷⁹³ It was a constant concern of the local ABiH that information had been leaked by Dutchbat to the VRS: Dutchbat's encounters with the VRS also aroused suspicion within the division. A senior ABiH intelligence officer actually said that the ABiH was not afraid that UNPROFOR passed on information to the VRS, and that there was no evidence at all that UNPROFOR spied for the VRS.⁷⁹⁴ The opposite was evident from the available ABiH documentation, to the effect that interpreters from Dutchbat and the UNMOs regularly passed on information on UN activities to the 28th Division, who then forwarded it to the 2nd Corps in Tuzla.

Neither did peace reign among the population in the enclave. Polarization within the SDA, as the leading political party, did the internal relationships in the enclave no good. Earlier, Naser Oric had actually discouraged the development of political parties in the enclave, in particular the SDA, however his departure from Srebrenica in April 1995 made room for political activity again.⁷⁹⁵ The newspaper *Ljiljan* reported on 14 June 1995 that there were military and political conflicts in the enclave, which originated in Tuzla: a 'Tuzla-Drina Canton Assembly's Committee for help to Srebrenica' was set up in Tuzla. Relations within that committee were strongly politicized: the governor of the Tuzla canton of the ruling SDA, Izet Hadzic, stood diametrically opposed to the opposition mayor of Tuzla, Salim Beslagic. They were to have repercussions on the enclave and cause discord in the enclave between the town of Srebrenica, Potocari and Suceska.⁷⁹⁶

After the murder of Hamed Salihovic, the former SJB chief and one of the leaders of the SDA in Srebrenica, not only the internal security situation, but also the political climate within the SDA deteriorated. Different wings of the party fought with each other, and, because of the lack of a quorum, no meetings of the party could be held. Hakija Meholic (the Chief of Police) and Resid Efendic (head of the criminal service) resigned. 'This is only to the benefit of the VRS,' remarked Nijaz Masic, the officer in charge of morale of the 28th Division; he sensed important negative developments here.⁷⁹⁷

⁷⁹⁰ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to GSS ARBiH KM Kakanj; Komanda 2. Korpusa ARBiH, 04/06/95, br. 01-74/95.

⁷⁹¹ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa ARBiH Odjeljenje morala, 09/06/95, br. 04-93/95.

⁷⁹² NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa ARBiH, 05/06/95, br. 04-89/95.

⁷⁹³ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 285 ILbr, 31/05/95, br. 01-65/95.

⁷⁹⁴ Confidential interview (5).

⁷⁹⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, Civil Affairs SNE, Weekly Report, 1995. ABZ, UNPROFOR. Fax Biser to Corwin, 30/06/95, Civil Affairs Sector NE, Report for Week Ending 29/06/95.

⁷⁹⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 4 April - 23 August 1995. Fax Biser to Corwin, 21/06/95, unnumbered. A translation was attached from *Ljiljan* of 14/06/95.

⁷⁹⁷ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa ARBiH Odjeljenje morala, 09/06/95, br. 04-93/95.

The 28th Division also reported on relations within the enclave: 'helped by the government, it is leading us to a certain death without the VRS having to fire a bullet.'⁷⁹⁸

As well as political ups and downs, thoughtless rumours also made their negative influence felt on the population. For instance, there was the rumour that the presidium in Sarajevo had replaced Naser Oric, as Commander of the 28th Division, by Ramiz Becirovic; and so Srebrenica and Zepa were said to be written off. The report had not yet been made public, but it was correct: Becirovic was indeed formally appointed Deputy Commander of the 28th Division on 30 May, which also made him de facto commander, because Oric did not return to the enclave.

The fact that Naser Oric remained in Tuzla with twenty of the best officers and did not return to Srebrenica also had a particularly negative influence on the morale of the ABiH and the population.⁷⁹⁹ The only report from Tuzla was that Oric would return to Srebrenica as soon as circumstances permitted.⁸⁰⁰ The VRS rubbed salt in the wound by constantly insisting on a meeting with Oric: the ABiH saw that as a provocation by the VRS, because it was known that Oric was in Tuzla. Part of the VRS propaganda was also a song that was broadcast on the radio each day, to the effect that as long as Naser was in the Majevica hills, no convoys would arrive.⁸⁰¹

7. VRS propaganda in the enclave

As the ABiH attempted to prevent the flight of the population from Srebrenica, the VRS was actually attempting to encourage their flight from the enclave. The VRS engaged the Bosnian-Serb media for propaganda purposes and for spreading disinformation. Radio Bratunac especially was active in this,⁸⁰² but so were other Serbian and Bosnian-Serb stations, such as Radio Bijeljina, Radio Loznjica, Radio Bajina Basta, Radio Milici, Radio Sokolac and Radio Visegrad. These stations were also an important window on the outside world for the population of Srebrenica. With respect to printed media, only *Srpska rev*, a newspaper printed in Bratunac, reached the enclave, although it is not clear how.⁸⁰³

The VRS used its radio propaganda between 10 and 20 June to announce the opening of a corridor, among other things. This would give the population of Srebrenica and Zepa the opportunity to leave for Kladanj. The messages caused a great deal of panic among the Muslim population, because no one knew if there was any truth in it.⁸⁰⁴ In practice there appeared to be no such corridor: on the contrary, the VRS laid ambushes on possible escape routes and detained individuals who could divulge the secrets of the situation in Srebrenica and Zepa.

It was also said on the radio that no more convoys would be allowed through. This led to a meeting on 10 June between the 28th Division of the ABiH and the Opština, after which orders for a complete state of readiness were issued. This form of psychological warfare made a strong contribution to the fear of a further decline in morale and an uncontrolled flight. This fear would become realistic if UNHCR convoys indeed did not come, because the food reserves were running out.

⁷⁹⁸ NIOD Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa ARBiH Odjeljenje za moral, 20/06/95, br. 04-101/95.

⁷⁹⁹ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa, 05/06/95, br. 01-78/95. ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 28. Divizije Odsjek Bezbjednosti to Komanda 2. Korpusa ARBiH Odjeljenje za Bezbjednosti, 15/06/95, br. 13-05-86.

⁸⁰⁰ NIOD Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa to Komandi 28 n/r Tursunovic Zulfo, 19/05/95, br. 02/1-S1.

⁸⁰¹ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa ARBiH Odjeljenje morala, 09/06/95, br. 04-93/95. Two weeks after Oric had left the enclave, VRS Colonel Beara, the General Staff security officer, requested a meeting with Oric. The ABiH announced then that Oric did not wish to meet Beara, which created an odd impression because Oric was never afraid to attend such meetings. Interview Emir Suljagic, 23/11/97.

⁸⁰² ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpusa Odjeljenje bezbjednosti, 15/06/95, br. 13-05-86.

⁸⁰³ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa ARBiH Odjeljenje za moral, 20/06/95, br. 04-101/95.

⁸⁰⁴ NIOD, Coll. UNHCR Tuzla. UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade, 05/06/95 20:56.

Another VRS propaganda report that had a great demotivating effect on the population of Srebrenica reached the enclave via radio Pale on 14 June. It was announced that the attacks that the ABiH had carried out on the VRS from Sarajevo would be avenged in East-Bosnia. This message had a great effect: it created panic among the population, which also affected the morale of the ABiH.⁸⁰⁵

With respect to the opening of a corridor for the population, UNMO Major Joseph Kingori stated in 1997 that he had been invited in early June by VRS Major Nikolic to a meeting in Hotel Fontana in Bratunac, which was also attended by VRS Colonel Vukovic, as well as another higher ranking VRS officer. The VRS delegation had taken this opportunity to state through Vukovic that the entire population would have to leave the enclave. In addition, Vukovic is said to have threatened that if this did not happen, he would have the population killed. However, if the population were to leave, they would be offered safe passage to Tuzla.

Kingori understandably said that the meeting had left him with the feeling that something was in the air if no use were to be made of the corridor. He also assumed that the Bosnian Serbs had passed on the same message to the UN headquarters, but no indications can be found for this in the UNPROFOR archives. The message clearly did not reach this destination.

During his testimony in April 2000 to the Yugoslavia Tribunal, Kingori said that Vukovic had attempted to find out what the response of the UN would be if the VRS were trying to capture the enclave and to transport the population elsewhere. Kingori deduced from this that the intention was to get the message through to the population that the Bosnian Serbs might be going to capture the enclave, and that the population would be able to leave the enclave. The related question that remained unanswered was whether the population would be able to leave the enclave voluntarily, or would be forced to leave the enclave via a corridor to be formed after the fighting started.⁸⁰⁶

What is surprising is that Kingori had apparently not reported back what was discussed so that it could reach Dutchbat. Neither was this subject raised at the debriefing of the UNMOs, including Kingori, after the fall of Srebrenica.⁸⁰⁷ Nothing was stated on the discussion in the Dutchbat situation reports and neither did Karremans make any mention of it to the upper echelon. The explanation could be that UNMOs and Dutchbat formed separate circuits; more in general, it could not be ruled out that UNMOs had meetings with the VRS that Dutchbat was not aware of.

There are no further indications of plans for opening a corridor for the population. None of the members of the Opstina made any mention of it in interviews with the NIOD. At the time of the fall, there was nothing that pointed to the possible opening of a corridor or to related discussions.

The question remains as to why the VRS officers allowed a UN observer to act as messenger, rather than making the offer on a higher level: they would be aware that consultation would take place with the Bosnian government on the matter. The question arises as to whether there really was a plan for a corridor, or that such messages only played a role in the psychological warfare. There was actually nothing unique about messages on the opening of a corridor. The Dutchbat section that was tasked with civil-military contacts (in military terms: section 5) fairly regularly heard the offer from VRS officer Nikolic to allow the population to leave, and even to arrange buses for the purpose. On each occasion, this section passed the messages on to the command of the Opstina, but they never showed any interest.⁸⁰⁸

There had been other rumours about the opening of a corridor before the end of June. Starting such rumours formed part of the psychological warfare conducted by the VRS, and seemed to be mainly an example of local propaganda and intimidation. It did not lead to political activity on higher

⁸⁰⁵ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpusa Odjeljenje za moral, 16/06/95, br. 04-99/95.

⁸⁰⁶ Testimony of Joseph Kingori at the trial of Krstic, 31/03/00 and 3/04/00. Reference was also made during the trial to statements made earlier in 1997 by Kingori. The defence considered Kingori's statements to be inconsistent

⁸⁰⁷ Only in a document entitled 'UNMO Debrief (Srebrenica 28/29 Jun 95)', was any mention made that the VRS had offered to evacuate everyone to Belgrade or another destination, with the exception of war criminals. There are no further details (NIOD Coll. Segers).

⁸⁰⁸ Telephone conversation B. Rave, 11/06/01.

levels. The Bosnian Serbs realized all too well that the Bosnian authorities did not want the population to leave the enclave under any circumstances. As ABiH army Commander Rasim Delic expressed it: there were calls every day to abandon the enclave. He did admit that these calls led to the departure of individuals to Tuzla.⁸⁰⁹

VRS General Zivanovic, the Commander of the Drina Corps, addressed the residents of the enclave through Radio Belgrade on a number of occasions, using words such as: 'we will come, we will take revenge, we will kill you'. Zivanovic, like Karadzic and Mladic, was a welcome guest on the 'Argument Vise' programme of Radio Belgrade. Mladic himself also spoke on the radio and announced that it would only be a matter of days before he captured the enclave. Broadcasts of this type took place once every two or three months, at a time when the residents had started to relax again.⁸¹⁰

On the other hand, Dutchbat interpreters, who also had the task of listening to Bosnian and Serbian radio, thought that a great deal of propaganda came through these stations, but that Srebrenica hardly played any role in them. Most of the messages were about food shortages and shelling.⁸¹¹ Actually it was not only the Bosnian-Serb propaganda that had an influence; it could be heard on the radio in Srebrenica too that Akashi had stated at the beginning of June that the Safe Areas could not be defended (see Chapter 3). It goes without saying that neither did this add to the population's confidence in UNPROFOR.⁸¹²

Because of the propaganda and the fear for what the future might bring, the wildest rumours circulated in the enclave. As soon as the rumour started that a VRS offensive was imminent, everyone wanted to leave the enclave. According to the most optimistic rumours, the enclave could be defended for thirty days by the ABiH; after that there was little else the population could do besides flee into the woods and try to reach Tuzla. The most pessimistic rumour was that the ABiH could hold out for only one day and that the VRS would then inflict a bloodbath.

The most common rumour was that the Bosnian president, Izetbegovic, had 'sold' the population of Srebrenica as a way of saving Sarajevo, but he did not dare to admit it. The same rumour was also reported by the newspaper *Lijian* on 14 June 1995: Srebrenica had been sacrificed, but Izetbegovic had sent a message to Naser Oric in which he is alleged to have said that Srebrenica would not be exchanged.⁸¹³ The remarkable thing about this rumour - which is still heard today - is that it was already circulating before the fall of Srebrenica.

There were more negative remarks in a report on the morale of the 28th Division of the ABiH: politicians were only concerned with becoming as rich as possible; there was no future for Srebrenica; there were no prospects for the enclave and the population could not see that a factory would ever again be opened there; it was nothing more than a punishment for the population to be in the enclave. The morale in the ABiH units was poor: everyone wanted to go to Tuzla, but only a few would dare to admit it. Only the moderately successful actions outside the enclave borders at the end of June, and in particular the raid deep in Bosnian-Serbian territory, raised the morale of the 28th Division back to a higher level (see the following chapter). Neither were there any words of appreciation for UNPROFOR: the UN could just leave, because they weren't doing anyone any good. The population, who were subject to compulsory service in the army, had a fairly negative opinion of the 28th Division, according to this report: the officers were said to be illiterate and not competent for their duties, and no one paid attention to the families of soldiers who had died.⁸¹⁴

⁸⁰⁹ Interview Rasim Delic, 21/04/98.

⁸¹⁰ Interview Hatidza Hren, 18/06/98.

⁸¹¹ Interview Omer Subasic, 19 and 20/10/97.

⁸¹² Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98 with supplements from 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

⁸¹³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 4 April - 23 August 1995. Fax Biser to Corwin, 2/06/95, unnumbered. A translation was attached from *Lijian* of 14/06/95.

⁸¹⁴ ICTY (IT-98-33) D66/a, D61/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Asst Commander for Morale Captain Nijaz Masic) to the Command of 2nd Corps Morale Department, 30/06/95, No. 04-113/95; ABiH 285 IBibr, 23/06/95, No. 08-21-208/95.

In summary, the psychological state of the population in the enclave was difficult for outsiders to understand, but enough was clear to see that it was disastrous. The population spoke only of leaving the enclave, according to a statement made by the Minister for UN Affairs, Hasan Muratovic, to the NIOD. There were many internal problems: they were crammed together and were forced to lead the life they led.⁸¹⁵

Even an ABiH leader such as Zulfo Tursunovic, who had previously not lost a single square metre of territory, had trouble keeping spirits up in the spring. Every spring the people in Srebrenica spoke of leaving the enclave, but in 1995 this was stronger than ever. The people never spoke of anything else: they made maps and discussed routes to Tuzla. On the other hand the population had hardly any shoes to be able to make such a journey, the interpreter Hasan Nuhanovic thought.⁸¹⁶

8. The absence of Naser Oric

The departure of Muslim leader Naser Oric from the enclave in April 1995, and his absence from that place at the time of the VRS attack in July, was a much discussed matter at the time, which was surrounded by rumours, and still is. His absence was of great influence on the morale of both the ABiH and the population, because in previous years he had been the great man in the Bosnian Muslims' struggle against the Bosnian Serbs (see Part II).

There are different explanations for his absence during the attack, which originated especially after the attack on the enclave. These explanations are rather inconsistent and partly contradict each other, but this would mainly seem to be a consequence of ignorance. In an enclave cut off from the outside world, whole and half truths simply captured the attention of the population, and after the fall too, they continued to play a role in the search for possible answers to the question of why Srebrenica had been lost. For this reason, we will first present a collage of the different opinions and rumours below, and will then consider which statements appear plausible.

For some Muslims, Oric was something of a mythical figure, who was admired and reviled: someone not only with a large number of admirers, but also enemies. For the one, Oric was a bold fighter, a prominent military leader and a saviour. For others he was not so much the great military leader, but more of a mafioso and womanizer, which meant that he lost respect. Yet others in certain circles of the Muslim population suspected him of committing war crimes, in particular in the period 1992-1993, and many believed that Oric could be among the accused in the Yugoslavia Tribunal. Nevertheless, his presence and leadership qualities commanded respect and gave the population confidence: Oric was essential for morale, in the assessment of his Deputy, Ramiz Becirovic.⁸¹⁷

Why did Oric leave Srebrenica?

The fact that Oric did not return after his departure in April 1995 and was therefore absent during the fall of Srebrenica has led to speculation to the present day as to the motives. However, it is not easy to give a precise explanation. Oric himself was silent on the matter, and the ABiH Commanders were cautious in their statements, but they nevertheless did give a clear indication of the underlying reasons.

Several members of the municipal executive of Srebrenica, the Opstina, confirmed that Oric as a Commander of the 28th Division of the ABiH had received an order from the 2nd Corps in Tuzla in April to leave Srebrenica. He was to be a member of a delegation that was to discuss the situation in Srebrenica at the request of the Bosnian government. The Opstina said that it was informed of Oric's departure, but was not consulted beforehand. The Commander of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, Sead Delic, denied that Oric had been invited, however. According to him, Oric joined the delegation at his

⁸¹⁵ Interview Hasan Muratovic, 30/01/98.

⁸¹⁶ Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05 and 06/08/97.

⁸¹⁷ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02 and 05/02/98; 18/04/98.

own initiative.⁸¹⁸ To this end, Oric travelled by land to Zepa and from there by helicopter to Tuzla, which used to be a usual route.

Opinions also diverge on the question of whether the delegation was intended to return to Srebrenica. Some members of the Opstina said that it had been established in advance that this would not be the case, and in their view, the delegation's task was to function as an extension of the Opstina in both Tuzla and Sarajevo, to develop a better understanding there of the situation in Srebrenica. According to the War President of the Opstina (the chairman of the municipal executive), Osman Suljic, the expectation, however, was that the delegation definitely should return, and with instructions on how to proceed. He said that it was also expected of Oric that he would return.⁸¹⁹

Another explanation was offered by the former Srebrenica-based doctor, Nedred Mujkanovic. According to him, a conference was organized in April under the leadership of President Izetbegovic. This conference dealt with the ABiH offensive at Sarajevo, and the question of whether the VRS would respond by attacking the eastern enclaves. Izetbegovic wanted to know the state of affairs in Srebrenica, and Mujkanovic and the Deputy Commander of the 28th Division, Becirovic, were summoned to explain. Mujkanovic was already in Tuzla, and Becirovic had to come from Srebrenica. According to Mujkanovic, Oric also wanted to come along for this conference in April from Srebrenica to Tuzla.⁸²⁰ According to the journalist and author Chuck Sudetic, Oric told Izetbegovic at this conference that the ABiH could defend Srebrenica, provided they could take over the heavier weapons (mortars and anti-tank weapons) that Dutchbat had in their possession.⁸²¹

Becirovic was therefore summoned to Tuzla. According to him, this was intended for him to receive instructions on how the 28th Division should prepare militarily, based on the political situation and the thinking of the international community. He said he did not learn much.

After the conference, Becirovic returned to Srebrenica, and Oric did not. It was always the intention that Becirovic would return to the enclave.⁸²² Brigade Commander Ejup Golic likewise returned to Srebrenica. Golic had been summoned to Tuzla for a much different reason: he was suspected of a number of murders in the enclave. The decision to put him on trial or send him back to the enclave had been delegated by ABiH Commander Rasim Delic to the Commander of the 2nd Corps in Tuzla, Sead Delic. Sead Delic opted to send Golic back, because his crimes would not lapse with time and he could therefore be tried at a later time. Later, after the fall of Srebrenica, he distinguished himself in the fighting surrounding the breakout from the enclave.⁸²³

The question was raised as to whether the UN had aimed for Oric's departure. Sudetic asserts that Akashi insisted on Oric's removal. Akashi viewed the commanders in Srebrenica as criminals and gang leaders. According to him, Oric was becoming an increasingly destabilizing factor. According to Akashi, the problem was not so much Oric the man as the circumstances that prevailed in the enclave.⁸²⁴ That was just the question: a staff officer of the 2nd Corps said that Oric had half obeyed orders throughout the war, and then only if it suited him.⁸²⁵

Otherwise, ABiH Army Commander Rasim Delic categorically denied that the UN had had a hand in his departure: 'Oric came to Tuzla with the others to present his view on what was going on in the enclave.' When asked, Delic did say that Oric came 'on his own initiative', and, he added later: 'perhaps that it coincided with an international desire'.⁸²⁶

⁸¹⁸ *Dani*, 17/03/00, interview of Vildana Selimbegovic with General Sead Delic.

⁸¹⁹ Interviews Osman Suljic, 04/03/98, Dzemaludin Becirevic and Sefket Hafizovic, 21/10/97.

⁸²⁰ Interview Nedred Mujkanovic, 10/03/99.

⁸²¹ Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, p. 257.

⁸²² Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02 and 05/02/98.

⁸²³ *Dani*, 17/03/00, interview of Vildana Selimbegovic with General Sead Delic.

⁸²⁴ Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, p. 257; interview Chuck Sudetic, 31/03/98. Sudetic writes that Zulfo Tursunovic and Ejup Golic had also been ordered to leave Srebrenica and that they also did leave the enclave, which was therefore not entirely true: Tursunovic remained in Tuzla, and Golic returned to Srebrenica.

⁸²⁵ Confidential interview (5).

⁸²⁶ Interview Rasim Delic, 21/04/98.

The Commander of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, General Sead Delic, confirmed, however, that Oric may have left the enclave at his own initiative, but that at the same time it was also true that his unit had considerable problems. The reasons for this were the large psychological problems experienced by the population, which made the situation intolerable. Delic put that down to factors such as hunger, the siege by the VRS, prostitution and the use of drugs. Furthermore, ten to fifteen murders were committed, and in addition, the municipal authority did not function, and it took no initiative. The situation had therefore become intolerable. Oric simply had to leave Srebrenica, Delic thought. As a more subjective factor, the ABiH had hoped for improved contacts with the VRS after Oric's departure. According to Delic, there was also information that indicated that Oric's unit had been infiltrated by the VRS, and that this was also true of the municipal executive. Sead Delic also said that UNPROFOR had exerted no pressure to make Oric leave. It was Oric's own decision to leave Srebrenica. There were no documents, instructions or orders for Oric to leave. He went on his own initiative.⁸²⁷ As such, this not only coincided with the desire of the international community, but also with that of the command of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH.

There were other indications that Oric's departure had to do with internal ABiH reasons. The UN Civil Affairs Officer in Tuzla, Ken Biser, suspected that the premeditated intention of the ABiH was not to allow Oric to return to the enclave. Oric's activities during the war and a possible indictment by the Yugoslavia Tribunal could embarrass government circles in Sarajevo.⁸²⁸ Also, the Bosnian journalist Mehmed Pargan heard the rumour that the ABiH wanted to get rid of Oric, because he was not seen as a good officer and they wanted to replace him by their own man: the ABiH command was oriented towards the SDA, whereas Oric opposed that party.

It was pointed out from various sides that Oric's departure also had to do with his relations with the Opstina. According to the journalist Pargan, the inner circle of the Srebrenica municipal executive proposed allowing him to leave.⁸²⁹ Oric's successor, Ramiz Becirovic, denied similar tensions between Opstina and the ABiH. According to him, there used to be no conflict between Opstina and ABiH, and after Oric's departure there was no real change in the relationship between the soldiers and the Opstina. According to Becirovic, neither Becirovic nor Oric had ever quarrelled with the Opstina.⁸³⁰ This was again contradicted by the assertion of Army Commander Rasim Delic, who said that he had received intelligence reports that indicated that Naser Oric had poor relations with the civil and military authorities.⁸³¹ Finally, many people thought that Oric went to Tuzla to organize an attack on Konjevic Polje and the Sapna Thumb, which would bring a corridor between Srebrenica and Tuzla within reach.⁸³²

Why did Oric not return to Srebrenica?

Whatever the reasons for Oric's departure from the enclave, it caused fear among the population, also because the trip was not without danger.⁸³³ It fuelled rumours that the fall of the enclave was on the way. For instance, the journalist Isnam Taljic understood from the reports that he received from Srebrenica that Oric's absence was bad for the morale of the residents.⁸³⁴ This mainly had a demoralizing effect because no one ever gave a clear explanation for his departure from the enclave.⁸³⁵

⁸²⁷ Interview Sead Delic, 10/03/99.

⁸²⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, Civil Affairs SNE, Weekly Report, 1995. Fax Biser to Corwin, 30/06/95, Civil Affairs Sector NE, Report for Week Ending 29 June 1995.

⁸²⁹ Interview Mehmed Pargan, 15 and 16/06/98.

⁸³⁰ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02 and 05/02/98; 18/04/98.

⁸³¹ Interview Rasim Delic, 21/04/98.

⁸³² Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05 and 06/08/97.

⁸³³ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

⁸³⁴ Interview Isnam Taljic, 18/05/99.

⁸³⁵ Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05 and 06/08/97.

When Oric left the enclave, the situation was still stable. The fact that he was outside the enclave later contributed to low morale and the ultimate tragedy, also in the opinion of Minister Hasan Muratovic.⁸³⁶ The non-return of Oric meant in any case a hard blow to the morale of the remaining soldiers, and also the population saw it as a major blunder. The VRS did not fail to pass this on to the ABiH via the 'trench communication channels'. Bosnian Serbs in the front line said that Srebrenica would be traded with Iljidza and Vogosca, suburbs of Sarajevo. They declared that Oric had left the enclave on the basis of a deal between Izetbegovic and Karadzic.⁸³⁷

After that, stories also circulated on the Bosnian side about Oric's supposed return. According to ABiH Commander Rasim Delic, it was originally the intention that Oric would return on the helicopter which was later shot down near Zepa. However, Oric had requested Delic to be allowed to return a couple of days later, because officers who had been on a training course in Central Bosnia would also be returning then, by helicopter. Stories were circulating that the VRS had good intelligence sources within the Bosnian government, and therefore knew of the flight to Srebrenica with, in all probability, Oric on board. That would explain why the helicopter was shot down. However, it appeared unlikely to Delic that the helicopter had been shot down by the VRS because Oric was assumed to be on board.⁸³⁸ The helicopter was shot down for no other reason than that the earlier flights had drawn attention, and the VRS had taken appropriate measures, according to Rasim Delic.⁸³⁹

After the helicopter concerned had been shot down, the ABiH ceased flying to Zepa, also because flying by night was risky. According to Oric's successor Ramiz Becirovic too, Oric was willing to return to Srebrenica by helicopter only via Zepa, but that was no longer possible. He wanted an armoured helicopter to take him back, but this was not available in the ABiH arsenal.⁸⁴⁰ Minister Hasan Muratovic also thought that Oric had asked for an armoured helicopter: according to Muratovic, this was after Oric had been ordered to return.⁸⁴¹

According to the doctor Nedred Mujkanovic, Oric simply did not want to return, because he could see that the enclave could not be held.⁸⁴² Others were of the opinion that Oric would not want to return because he observed that nothing was being done for the enclave. Some thought it strange, if it was true that he himself did not want to return, that no steps were taken against Oric to force him back to Srebrenica.⁸⁴³ Selim Beslagic, the mayor of Tuzla and not a member of the ruling SDA, thought that Oric had been ordered by ABiH headquarters in Tuzla to go to Srebrenica on foot, but the political (SDA) leaders of the Tuzla canton had forbidden his return.⁸⁴⁴ Also, according to the journalist Sefko Hodzic, the delegation, once it was in Tuzla, did not want to go back to the enclave. They did not have to wait for a helicopter: if they had wanted, they could have returned to the enclave on foot. Couriers did that too. Hodzic mentioned that Oric had been ordered to return to the enclave, but he refused to obey.⁸⁴⁵ Hakija Meholic, the Chief of Police in Srebrenica, thought that the officers who were trained in Central Bosnia would have wanted to return through the woods, but Oric would have opposed this and would even have threatened murder.

A number of people involved thought that there was a connection between the exchange of Srebrenica for a number of suburbs of Sarajevo. According to Moholic, politicians protected Oric after the event because he would have known of such a deal, which would also be the reason why he had been pulled from Srebrenica.⁸⁴⁶ In this scenario, Oric would have been aware in good time that the

⁸³⁶ Interview Hasan Muratovic, 30/01/98.

⁸³⁷ Interview Damir Skaler, 31/10/98.

⁸³⁸ Interview Mustafa Muharemagic, 20/10/97.

⁸³⁹ Interview Rasim Delic, 21/04/98.

⁸⁴⁰ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02 and 05/02/98.

⁸⁴¹ Interview Hasan Muratovic, 30/01/98.

⁸⁴² Interview Nedred Mujkanovic, 10/03/99.

⁸⁴³ Interview Hasan Hadzic, 21/10/97.

⁸⁴⁴ Interview Selim Beslagic, 06/08/97.

⁸⁴⁵ Interview Sefko Hodzic, 24/05/99.

⁸⁴⁶ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98, with supplements of 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

Bosnian government did not wish to retain the enclave, and therefore he would not want to return. Others even thought that Oric was deliberately pulled out by the Bosnian government to weaken the enclave's defence.⁸⁴⁷

Yet another vision was expressed by the journalist Mehmed Pargan: Oric wanted an order from 2nd Corps Commander Sead Delic for him to return to Srebrenica. Neither Sead Delic nor ABiH Commander Rasim Delic wanted to take the responsibility for sending Oric back, however. Oric had already wanted to return in early May, with or without orders. Oric is even said to have boarded a helicopter to Zepa, but left the helicopter at a stopover in Zivinice: this was the helicopter that was shot down at Zepa.⁸⁴⁸ Another explanation was that Oric, who was not particularly amenable to reason and rather paranoid, must have smelled a rat. Oric himself is said to have explained that he missed the flight because he was drunk.⁸⁴⁹

Oric's own opinion - conclusion

In the contact with the NIOD, Oric himself did not really want to go into this matter. He said that he was extremely critical of the 2nd Corps. If, as Corps Commander Sead Delic asserted, he had ordered Oric to return to Srebrenica in the months prior to the fall, the command of the 2nd Corps could pick him up even now for disobeying an order, Oric said.⁸⁵⁰ Oric made a false assumption here: Sead Delic said that he had considered ordering him to return by foot, but did not do so. Delic still had before him the spectre of the group of one hundred men who had departed on foot from Tuzla to Srebrenica in the winter of 1993, and seventy of whom were killed (which was known as the Ruzine Vode incident).⁸⁵¹

The above selection of opinions and half truths gives some insight into the rumours being circulated, and led in any case to the conclusion that the non-return of Oric had a negative influence on the morale in the enclave. A completely different question is whether he actually could have made a difference against the superior strength of the VRS, which had gathered around the enclave in July, and whether he could have mounted an effective defence. The answer to this question is by definition speculative, but there are arguments for expressing doubt: defence was simply not his speciality. It is also questionable whether Oric, under the poor humanitarian circumstances prevailing shortly before the fall, could rely on the same authority as at first, and whether he was in a position to halt the decline in morale, as described in the above sections.

At that time, Oric departed from the enclave, an attack on the Safe Area was not yet to be expected, and was not much more than a theoretical possibility. Based on what was said from the ABiH side in interviews, it was Oric's initiative to leave the enclave. It can be deduced from a statement by Rasim Delic that it was originally the intention to make Oric return: Oric had requested some delay to be able to return by helicopter together with the officers who had undergone training in Central Bosnia. After the helicopter had been shot down at Zepa, the possibility of returning in this fashion evaporated, and Oric did not want to return by land.

It cannot be ruled out that Oric's ABiH superiors had started to view his presence as an increasingly negative factor in the relations in the enclave. The non-return of Oric was convenient for them, and fitted in with a policy of normalization and professionalization that had been set in motion within the ABiH, and where there was ever less room for War Lords of the first hour. Oric kept life in the enclave in an iron grip, and many things happened that would not stand the light of day. The population rapidly forgot this, however, when the worst came to the worst, and they believed that Oric could again be the saviour that he had been earlier in 1993.

⁸⁴⁷ Interview Mustafa Muharemagic, 20/10/97.

⁸⁴⁸ Interview Muhamed Durakovic and Vahid Hodzic, 20/04/98 and Mehmed Pargan, 15 and 16/06/98.

⁸⁴⁹ Interview Emir Suljagic, 23/10/97.

⁸⁵⁰ Interview Naser Oric, 23/10/00.

⁸⁵¹ *Dani*, 17/03/00, interview of Vildana Selimbegovic with General Sead Delic.

However, Oric was not completely sidelined. Now and again, he issued instructions from Tuzla to Ramiz Becirovic on how to proceed. The question of whether it had been the intention that Oric should continue to command the 28th Division from Tuzla, received a terse answer from ABiH leader Rasim Delic, however: 'no'.⁸⁵² Whether Oric gave his orders on the authority of the 2nd Corps, or that a blind eye was turned to his involvement, remains unclear. From the time of his departure from Srebrenica, Oric was in any case not a permanent link in the message traffic between the 28th Division and the 2nd Corps. After the fall of Srebrenica until the 28th Division was disbanded, for a short period he was given back command of the remainder of the division.

The most plausible explanation is that Oric left the enclave on his own initiative. As early as February 1995 Oric said to the visiting Force Commander, General De Lapresle, that he feared that, behind his back, Srebrenica was the subject of negotiation between President Izetbegovic and the Bosnian-Serb regime in Pale. Oric therefore wanted to go to Sarajevo to urge the retention of Srebrenica, and to convince himself that there were no plans for an exchange of territory.⁸⁵³

It is plausible that the original intention of ABiH and Oric himself was that he would return. Oric himself delayed his planned departure by helicopter for a few days, with the assent of Army Commander Rasim Delic. After the helicopter had been shot down at Zepa, no more flights left, and the ABiH command finally decided not to make him return; it is possible that this was also convenient for the army leadership, because it was a way of indirectly bringing an end to the stranglehold that Oric had on the enclave.

9. The humanitarian situation in Srebrenica

The humanitarian situation in the eastern enclaves remained poor, and humanitarian aid had become a political football. Almost half of the population of Srebrenica would be without food after mid June. Whereas in the past soup kitchens had been opened during critical periods to provide food for the four thousand most vulnerable among the population, it was no longer possible to keep the kitchens open because of the lack of ingredients. Dutchbat had three local employees replaced because they stole food from the Potocari compound. The Opstina attributed that offence to the critical food situation in the enclave.⁸⁵⁴

The lack of UNHCR convoys had a major negative influence on the morale of the population, and diminished the state of readiness of the ABiH. Rumours that the VRS were to block convoys for the enclave, so as to subsequently force the ABiH to surrender, also had a negative impact. Rumours of this type went from person to person, and if the message came through that a convoy had been stopped on the way, it only fuelled new rumours.⁸⁵⁵

The Deputy Mayor of Srebrenica, Hamdija Fejzic, requested Karremans to send a letter about the situation to UNPROFOR in Tuzla and Sarajevo. Karremans did this on 17 June: he passed on the information that the municipal executive (the Opstina) expected the first people to die of starvation within ten days. At the same time he sent the emotional appeal from the Deputy Mayor to the world: Srebrenica, which had already been the largest concentration camp in the world for three years, was a town of hunger: the exhausted and hungry eyes of its citizens were looking to the powerful of the earth for help. The people were dying a slow death before the eyes of Europe. While in the rest of the world the children played, those in Srebrenica looked death in the eyes. In the last five and a half months, only half a kilo of baby food and two kilos of powdered milk per child had been distributed. UNHCR had been able to carry out only 65% of the planned convoys, and to provide only 30% of the planned

⁸⁵²Interview Rasim Delic, 16/04/98.

⁸⁵³ Correspondence of General Bertrand De Lapresle with NIOD, 09/11/01.

⁸⁵⁴ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNMO HQ Sector BH-NE to UNMO HQ BH Comd, 21/06/95, Fax No. 7123.

⁸⁵⁵ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa ARBiH Odjeljenje za moral, 20/06/95, br. 04-101/95.

quantity.⁸⁵⁶ As *Médecins Sans Frontières* were informed, the letters from the Opstina and from Karremans ended up at the International Red Cross in Geneva at the highest level.⁸⁵⁷

However, this was no guarantee of a change. Attempts to change the attitude of the Bosnian Serbs proceeded in a difficult and uncoordinated way: each level was occupied with this problem.

In General Smith's opinion the most important effort in re-establishing the Freedom of Movement was on the level of the UN and the member states. Smith again set out what the combatants had in mind with their restrictions: the Bosnian Serbs wanted to control and punish UNPROFOR; to show that the Republika Srpska was a state; to impose sanctions on UNPROFOR and the population with the objective of having the sanctions that were imposed on them partly lifted; to punish and control the population in the enclaves; and finally: to be given a larger slice of the humanitarian cake itself. The Bosnian Muslims for their part also imposed restrictions on UNPROFOR's Freedom of Movement, with the objective of controlling UNPROFOR, and to be able to carry out operations without UNPROFOR's knowledge.

Smith also wanted it to see it laid down at the highest level that Freedom of Movement existed, and that it was not bound to conditions - such as the ability to search convoys. After that it could be made clear to the VRS that, within the existing Rules of Engagement, UNPROFOR was prepared to fight for the protection of its convoys, and also to call in Close Air Support. If the efforts of the UN or member states did not result in this, the enclaves would continue to be hostages.⁸⁵⁸

Smith also called in the help of the British military authorities to get Bildt and other negotiators on the track that he desired, all the more because he had seen a telegram from Paris which stated: 'negotiate requirements day by day'. Smith considered that they were past the stage of such lengthy negotiations. He set the following mode of operation central: 'we all aim at achieving the same method as well as object. Unless we do this we will be picked off in detail by the BSA [VRS]'.⁸⁵⁹

General Nicolai wrote in his diary in Sarajevo about the uncoordinated international involvement:

'We are currently in a phase where many are intervening in an uncoordinated way in many parts of the same cake. Great names such as Boutros-Ghali, Chirac, Bildt, Akashi, Janvier, De Lapresle as military advisor to Bildt, and on a lower level CAC [Civil Affairs in Tuzla] and UNHCR concern themselves with Milosevic, Mladic, Karadzic and Koljevic on the subject of hostages, convoys and Freedom of Movement. Certainly the last mentioned subject is an example of a 'container concept' where, as usual, the methods and the approach diverge. The effect is that everyone has the feeling that they are leaving with a 'yes' [after contacts with the Bosnian Serbs]. The ranks on the other side remain closed, however. In effect, the actual answer is only half or less, and then as commander on the ground you have to be satisfied with the so-called result achieved.

As a consequence you have to work to convince the higher levels in your own ranks that Mladic really hasn't kept his word. In brief: let one negotiating team do its work and stop a lot of very important 'nitwits' being given the chance to

⁸⁵⁶ CRST. Deputy Municipal Mayor Fejzic Hamdija, 16/06/95, No. 02-824/95, sent by CO-1(NL) UN Infbn to HQ UNPROFOR Sarajevo thru HQ BH Sector NE, 18/06/95, No. TK9598.

⁸⁵⁷ NIOD, Coll. MSF. Brussel Capsat MSF Srebre to MSF Beo, 20/06/95 10:20 nr. Out 826.

⁸⁵⁸ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Letter Lt Gen R.A. Smith to HQ UNPF, 20/06/95, UN Confi.

⁸⁵⁹ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Fax The Office of the Commander of UNPROFOR to Joint Commander and DOPS, 202000B Jun95.

interfere in matters and procedures without being properly informed by people who are involved on a day-to-day basis.⁸⁶⁰

On the other hand, not all the reports on the humanitarian situation in Srebrenica were as sombre. *Médecins Sans Frontières* carried out an investigation into the ratio of children's weights to their heights. Almost all children appeared to be above 85% of the norm.⁸⁶¹ Furthermore, in mid June a representative of the World Food Program described the humanitarian situation in the eastern enclaves as provisionally still stable.⁸⁶²

Colonel Brantz heard otherwise from the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla, however, specifically that on 16 June the reserves were only enough to survive for three or four days. It was time for the UN to do something, it was warned, otherwise panic could break out among the population. In turn, this could lead to a flight from the enclave, which the ABiH would resist by all possible means. The danger of fleeing was also pointed out again to Brantz: Bosnian-Serb television had already shown pictures of five imprisoned Displaced Persons from Srebrenica. His discussion partners from the ABiH asked Brantz to use his influence with the Dutch government to put pressure on the UN to relieve the situation in the enclave.⁸⁶³

Similar worried signals came from the UNHCR. For instance, the local UNHCR representative in Srebrenica, Almir Ramic, warned that the warehouse was nearly empty and that people were begging for food. Another noteworthy message came from Ramic. This related to the American Special Forces Major Guy Sands Pingot, who worked for Civil Affairs in Sector North East in Tuzla. He was said to be already in contact with an otherwise unidentified Joint Task Force, and only a request from Dutchbat would be necessary to initiate air drops. Almir Ramic himself was sceptical about this. In the light of the problems of flying in Bosnian air space, it is indeed hardly likely that the only thing necessary was a request from Dutchbat, which after all was low in the hierarchy.

Neither was this subject raised in a discussion between representatives of Sector North East and the 2nd Corps of the ABiH. Corps Commander Sead Delic did write two days later to Sector Commander Haukland in an 'officer to officer' letter that he must do his best to bring about an improvement in conditions: 'you are in [a] position to resolve it by using parachutes for food and medicine delivery'. Delic requested Haukland to put pressure on his superiors. Otherwise, he expected a 'suicidal search for food' which could lead to residents dying or ending up in concentration camps. At the same time, Haukland pointed out in a letter of protest to the ABiH command in Sarajevo that this was one side of the coin; he complained about ABiH's limitation of UNPROFOR's freedom of movement and the curfew, and the hostility experienced from ABiH soldiers. For this reason he was no longer able to perform his operational and humanitarian duties satisfactorily.⁸⁶⁴ Haukland's anger could be explained: the ABiH (the 1st Corps in Visoko) blocked the flow of humanitarian goods to the Tuzla region, where 250,000 people were dependent on aid. Governor Izet Hadzic was not up in arms about this, although he did have concerns about the humanitarian situation in Srebrenica.⁸⁶⁵

The situation for the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)

Alongside the conflict on the humanitarian front, the Bosnian Serbs also obstructed the UN and the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) regarding the relief of personnel. It was mentioned above that members of Dutchbat who had taken leave could not return to the enclave, and that the Dutchbat

⁸⁶⁰ NIOD, Coll. Nicolai. Diary Nicolai, 21/06/95.

⁸⁶¹ NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF Srebre to MSF Beo, 13/06/95, 15:43.

⁸⁶² ABZ, DAV/ARA/00246. Code Lenstra 74, 13/06/95.

⁸⁶³ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Meeting 2 Corps ABiH, 16/06/95.

⁸⁶⁴ CRST. UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade, 17/06/95 20:45 NIOD Coll. Brantz. Memorandum Meeting 2 Corps ABiH, 17/06/95; 2nd Corps HQ to UNPROFOR Sector NE HQ, 19/06/95; NIOD Coll. Brantz. Comd Sector North East to BiH Army through HQ UNPROFOR 19/06/95.

⁸⁶⁵ ABZ, UNPROFOR. Fax Ken Biser to Philip Corwin, 23/06/95, Report for week Ending 23/06/95.

surgical team was forced to stay longer in the enclave because it could not be relieved. Neither could UN Civil Police staff in Gorazde and Srebrenica be relieved: three UN staff members in Gorazde had been waiting for two months for permission to leave, and two Dutch UN Civil Police in Srebrenica for two weeks. They did not have to be relieved. The Civil Police concerned had been insisting on their withdrawal for some considerable time, because the nature of their police work was mainly humanitarian.⁸⁶⁶ It was possible for the foreign staff of two other NGOs to leave the enclave on 15 June: the MPDL (Movimiento por la Paz, el Desarme y la Libertad, a Spanish NGO with a social programme for children and young people) and the Swedish Rescue Service Agency. This meant that *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) was the only remaining nongovernmental organization with foreign personnel in the enclave.⁸⁶⁷ It had not been possible to relieve MSF personnel for two months. This was also the case in Gorazde with personnel of the International Red Cross.

It appeared here as if there was an element of punishment from the VRS because governments no longer wanted to maintain contacts with Pale, and because they had not condemned the ABiH offensive around Sarajevo. The Vice President of the Republika Srpska, who was also an expert on Shakespeare, Professor Nikola Koljevic described the ABiH offensive at Sarajevo as ‘terrible’ and ‘the last battle’ for the Bosnian Serbs, and as a question of ‘to be or not to be’. The military situation meant that access to the enclaves had become nearly impossible, because groups of from twenty to thirty ABiH soldiers were operating everywhere in the Republika Srpska. The ABiH blocked the accesses to Srebrenica and Gorazde with mines, Koljevic said. Two UNHCR trucks were even said to have been blown up.

All this seems grossly exaggerated, and furthermore the situation with respect to supplies and personal rotation was not substantially different from before commencement of the ABiH offensive around Sarajevo. Koljevic also pointed out that convoy clearances that were issued by the state commission for cooperation with the UN, could be obstructed by VRS soldiers if the roads were necessary for strategic purposes, if foreign NGO personnel were in danger, or it was suspected that strategic material was being smuggled.⁸⁶⁸

In this way, Koljevic appeared to be shifting the blame for withholding permission for the rotation of MSF personnel onto the soldiers, but in practice it had more to do with a means of pressure to move the MSF organization via the French government to press to allow Pale to make contact with French diplomacy.⁸⁶⁹ MSF gave itself another few days to consider whether the international press should not be informed as a way of getting the issue on the agenda. This turned out to be no longer necessary, because the planned rotation was able to take place on 24 June.⁸⁷⁰

Problems between UNHCR and Dutchbat with UNHCR convoys

In the meantime, it could not be said that not a single UNHCR convoy was able to reach Srebrenica any more. However, their arrival was irregular with long intervening intervals, and so did not completely satisfy the need. On 18 June a UNHCR convoy of eight trucks arrived carrying 64 tons of flour. It had taken a considerable amount of effort, both before and shortly after arrival in Srebrenica. As an illustration of the problems faced by UNHCR convoys, we will go into more detail on the progress of this convoy.

⁸⁶⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 339, 4160/SB.6 Incidents. Interoffice Memorandum Sven Frederiksen UNCIVPOL Commissioner to Yasushi Akashi, 24/05/95, No. 4160/HQ.24/128 and Egil Jacobson Acting UNCIVPOL Commissioner to Yasushi Akashi, 16/06/95, No. 4160/HQ.24/134.

⁸⁶⁷ NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF Srebre to MSF Beo, Sitrep N 24 Srebrenica 17/06/95, No. Out 815. It is worthy of note that Swedish Rescue did receive a convoy with building materials.

⁸⁶⁸ NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF to Teams Gorazde, Srebre and Blg, 19/06/95 15:13, No. In 408.

⁸⁶⁹ NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF Team Pale, 20/06/95 19:21, No. In 417.

⁸⁷⁰ NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF Belgrade to MSF Sre et Grd, 22/06/95 07:10, No. In 424 and MSF Srebre to Dutchbat LO Team, 24/06/95 09:36, No. Out 356.

The convoy left Belgrade on 17 June, but thirteen kilometres before Srebrenica, on Bosnian-Serb territory, it was stopped because of an unsafe situation. Rifle fire had been heard, and an excited VRS Major Nikolic arrived at the convoy with a group of soldiers. He said he had been attacked the previous night by ABiH soldiers from Srebrenica. The VRS had suffered four dead and thirteen wounded. As a counter measure, a curfew was imposed in Bratunac, and the VRS was now in the process of clearing up a group of seven or eight ABiH soldiers in the vicinity.

The convoy then drove a number of kilometres back, because Nikolic could not guarantee its safety. All this time the firing continued and there was a busy flow of orders over the radio to the VRS units. The Bratunac Brigade of the VRS advised the convoy to return to Zvornik. UNHCR had received no reports of the events from Dutchbat, but Bosnian-Serb residents confirmed that shooting had gone on the whole night and morning. UNHCR representative Almir Ramic was of the opinion, however, that the account of fighting in Bratunac was a cheap trick to obstruct the arrival of the convoy. He had heard no shooting, and Dutchbat confirmed that the northern OPs had observed nothing of that nature.⁸⁷¹ As a personal opinion, convoy leader Stefano Comazzi also told the MSF that something was afoot.⁸⁷² As will be evident in the next chapter, around this time there actually was small-scale fighting in the vicinity of Bratunac.

The convoy did indeed return to Zvornik and stayed there overnight. The VRS arranged a guard and shared their rations with the convoy supervisors. Although safety could still not be guaranteed, no prohibition on continuing was forthcoming.

At Yellow Bridge the VRS, both on the outward and on the return journey, carefully checked the quantity of fuel in the vehicles' tanks. The VRS soldiers appeared friendly, but the convoy leader could not say that about Dutchbat: the Dutchbat soldiers were instructed to check the vehicles, which was done conscientiously. Furthermore each truck was photographed. Major Franken explained this by saying that Dutchbat performed the checks as a precautionary measure, because otherwise the ABiH would do so; he feared that the ABiH would also set up a roadblock. This fear for ABiH checks proved realistic as such: the ABiH was indeed afraid that the VRS would join the convoys with stolen UN vehicles. Also, according to convoy leader Comazzi, the ABiH seized every opportunity to set up checkpoints, certainly after the VRS had used stolen UN vehicles in capturing the Vrbanja bridge in Sarajevo from the French. War President Osman Suljic of the Opstina had already tried in the time of Canbat to set up their own checkpoints in the enclave. Nevertheless, Comazzi was angry that Dutchbat started to check his convoy.

It surprised Franken that UNHCR was not aware of the ABiH measure of checking convoys, because he assumed that this had been passed on informally by the Dutchbat liaison officer to the local UNHCR representative. However, MSF also appeared to be unaware of this measure.

A reason for the convoy leader's anger was that the check took place in the no man's land between the Bosnian-Serbian area and the enclave, and not in a safer place in the enclave. This did not concern Franken, however: if the VRS wanted to fire on UNHCR, it could do that anywhere, he thought.

Otherwise, UNHCR in Zepa also had problems with convoys, but there they were not searched by the ABiH nor by the UNPROFOR unit there: the Ukrainian commander in Zepa had brought that about by saying that the ABiH was his problem.⁸⁷³

On 20 June, another UNHCR convoy arrived in the enclave, this time with 56 tons of sugar, beans, salt, fish, flour, soap, powdered milk and biscuits. Again Dutchbat searched the convoy, more thoroughly than the VRS had done. What is more, the VRS had first tapped some fuel from each truck until 100-150 litres remained. According to the UNMOs present on the site, the convoy commander

⁸⁷¹ CRST. UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade, 17/06/95 18:51; Capsat MSF Srebre to MSF Beo, 19/06/95 14:13, No. Out 823.

⁸⁷² NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF Srebre to MSF Beo, 19/06/95 17:42, No. Out 824.

⁸⁷³ Interview Jerry Champagne, Ottawa, 12/11/99; CRST. Memorandum [UNHCR] Stefano to Bill, Report of Srebrenica Convoy on 17 and 16/06/1995.

now again objected to the check by Dutchbat, and informed his headquarters. The result was that a convoy planned for the next day would be cancelled, unless Dutchbat changed the procedure. UNHCR had no objection to a check of the identity papers on entering the enclave, but the most logical place for the load was the unloading point in Srebrenica itself. If the ABiH was afraid of the VRS infiltrating a convoy, an ABiH representative could be stationed at the unloading point, but UNHCR thought that Dutchbat should not solve ABiH's problems: UNHCR felt that a check lasting several hours in no man's land was unacceptable. The result of such checks as seen by UNMOs was the cancellation of a convoy, more hungry stomachs, and tension between Dutchbat and UNHCR. This tension was all the more intense because Dutchbat had said that it would continue with the checks. In response, the next day's convoy was sent back to Belgrade by UNHCR.

In all this, the Opstina had the last laugh: the municipal executive had always wanted its own checkpoint for the convoys, and would be able to make political capital out of the hunger by blaming UNPROFOR.⁸⁷⁴ The reason for this was that the Bosnian Muslims were constantly afraid that Bosnian-Serb intelligence services would penetrate Srebrenica and via UNHCR or NGOs would succeed in gaining a foothold in the enclave. The 2nd Corps intelligence officer said that the ABiH had alerted UNPROFOR many times to this possibility, but UNPROFOR had never taken appropriate action. The ABiH was also afraid that the VRS had informants in the enclave. The Bosnian Serbs were said to have left agents behind as 'sleepers' in the enclave, so that information constantly leaked to the outside. These concerns actually went back as far as 1993.

The fear for the UNHCR convoys and the need to check them came because this UNHCR humanitarian aid came via Belgrade. It was mainly Ukrainian drivers who were not trusted: it was thought that they might engage in destabilizing activities during their stay in the enclave.⁸⁷⁵ Befriended Orthodox drivers were quickly suspected of taking out this information. Western intelligence analysts nonetheless did not believe in Bosnian-Serb infiltration in the enclave. That Ukrainian UNHCR transport drivers had a role in these infiltrations was dismissed as 'Balkan rumour' and 'paranoia'. To these analysts, infiltration in this way was unnecessary:⁸⁷⁶ if the Bosnian Serbs so wished, they could gain possession of sufficient information by other and less risky means. They knew the state of the population perfectly well, among other things by tapping the ABiH and Dutchbat communications, by interrogating Displaced Persons intercepted as they left Srebrenica, and by a thorough check on what entered the enclave.

Meanwhile, the consequence of the friction between UNHCR on the one hand and Dutchbat and the ABiH on the other was that UNHCR via its local employee informed the Opstina that no more UNHCR convoys would be sent until the ABiH dropped the requirement of an extensive check. This would then mean that Dutchbat also had no more reason to check the convoys. Franken was not happy with this; he saw it as an attempt to confront Dutchbat and ABiH with each other. According to him, it was certainly not the case that Dutchbat danced to the ABiH's tune. If UNHCR held principles, in this case the unwillingness to have their convoys searched, more important than the supply of aid, then they should not shift the blame onto Dutchbat and ABiH for what happened.⁸⁷⁷

According to convoy leader Jean-Paul Cavalieri, Franken refused to reconsider his decision. He had what he called an 'open and friendly' discussion on the subject with Franken. Cavalieri had the feeling that the local authorities had found a clever way of getting Dutchbat to man a checkpoint. Dutchbat had opted for the path of least resistance to appease these authorities. Cavalieri even thought that pressure had been brought to bear on Franken from the VRS side too, because the VRS was afraid

⁸⁷⁴ DCBC, 2485. Handwritten fax G3 Country Ops to DCBC, 21/06/95; NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Capsat TA to TX8, 251733B Jun 95.

⁸⁷⁵ Interview Sefko Tihic, 08/03/99; Interview Isnam Taljic, 18/05/99.

⁸⁷⁶ Confidential interview (52).

⁸⁷⁷ SMG 1003. Capsats 90L to 90E, 201010B Jun 95 and SMG 1003. Maj Franken to liaison officer Team Dutchbat through UNMO Srebrenica, 21/06/95 10:12.

of the smuggling of weapons to the benefit of the ABiH. The NIOD could find no evidence that this also actually happened in Srebrenica.

In Cavalieri's opinion, Dutchbat allowed itself to be used for unreasonable requirements of one of the combatants, because Dutchbat did not put up a fight in the form of a refusal to search a convoy. Franken did admit that the concerns expressed by the ABiH about VRS infiltration in the convoys were unfounded; the VRS really had less risky opportunities to enter the enclave. In the opinion of UNHCR representative Almir Rasic, the Muslim authorities would have been satisfied with an identity check. In a time of food shortage, it was extremely unfortunate that convoys were suspended, not now by the VRS, but imposed by UNHCR for alleged security reasons. Cavalieri therefore urged a compromise.⁸⁷⁸

The UNHCR Chief of Mission in Bosnia, Karen Koning Abu Zayd, urged UNPROFOR Chief of Staff Nicolai in Sarajevo to bring about a change. According to her, there was no necessity for UNPROFOR to check convoys. If it should be necessary by way of some form of concession, it should be a provisional check in a safer place.⁸⁷⁹

In any case, the food position improved for a while. Moreover, this also pushed the idea of supplies for the population by air to the background again. This did remain on the agenda, but not particularly high. For this, see the Appendix 'supply by air'.⁸⁸⁰ A problem that remained was that a convoy was sent back because of the problems between UNHCR and Dutchbat. On this matter, Sead Delic, the Commander of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, submitted questions to the commander of the 28th Division in Srebrenica, Ramiz Becirovic. Delic wanted to know the circumstances under which the convoy had been sent back; whether it was the Dutchbat commander who had sent the convoy back; and whether the ABiH had been informed. Also, the 2nd Corps wanted to know whether Dutchbat had requested evidence of the nationality of the drivers in the convoy, and also whether the ABiH were allowed by Dutchbat to check the nationality of the drivers.

Separate from the answers to these questions, from now on the 2nd Corps ordered a stop to check the identity of the drivers. If there were indications that there were Serbs among the drivers, then they must not be allowed to move away from the route or from the UNHCR warehouse. In that case, the counter-intelligence service should follow them, so that they would be unable to engage in activities, such as leading artillery fire.⁸⁸¹

Ramiz Becirovic replied that he was unaware of the reason for sending the convoy back. Neither was he aware or whether Dutchbat had checked the identity of the drivers. Becirovic also made clear that there was not such a great necessity for all the trouble Dutchbat was taking for the ABiH by checking the convoys: neither himself, nor other members of the 28th Division had ever requested such a check, he stated. However, he had heard that it was in the vein of General Staff of the ABiH to check a possible VRS entry with UN vehicles. When a convoy arrived at the enclave border, attempts must indeed be made to have this carried out by the ABiH, Becirovic said.⁸⁸² After this, the checking of convoys quickly became irrelevant, because the capture of the enclave by the Bosnian Serbs then started.

The humanitarian situation in late June

In late June, the humanitarian situation in Srebrenica again became as poor as a few weeks previously because of the scarce arrival of convoys. Again, throngs of people gathered in front of the Opstina building and begged for food. At any moment the local authorities could ask again for supply by air. Rumours about ABiH actions outside the enclave led to fear among the population for shelling by the

⁸⁷⁸ CRST. Belgrade UNHCR, 22/06/95 1430Z. Interview Jean-Paul Cavalieri, 08/07/00.

⁸⁷⁹ CRST. Chief of Mission to Chief of Staff UNPROFOR, 30/06/95.

⁸⁸⁰ CRST. UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade, 22/06/95.

⁸⁸¹ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa to Komandi 28. Divizije KoV n/r zastupnika komandant, 27/06/95, br. 02/1-670/2.

⁸⁸² NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa, 28/06/95, br. 01-149/95.

VRS as reprisal. Dutchbat had already warned that the population must no longer congregate in the market. UNHCR representative Almir Masic feared that if the rumours of ABiH actions outside the enclave were true, the arrival of a convoy planned for 27 June would not take place.⁸⁸³ It therefore came as a great surprise that the Bosnian Serbs actually allowed this convoy through, which consisted of ten trucks.⁸⁸⁴ It brought a little relief to the distressed circumstances, but convoys that were planned for 24 and 28 June, were cancelled again.⁸⁸⁵ At a meeting between Sector North East and the 2nd Corps of the ABiH on 23 June, Colonel Brantz did inform the 2nd Corps of the fact that he had issued a press release on the situation in which the population found itself: 'so the world is informed now'.⁸⁸⁶ It was to make no impression, however.

On 22 June, Radio Sarajevo reported that Karadzic had said that no more convoys would be permissible, because Srebrenica was not demilitarized. It therefore had the appearance of a response to the ABiH actions. The consequence was that a representative of the Opstina said in an interview on Bosnian radio that the population would quickly die of starvation. The hospital manager stated that there were medical supplies for fifteen days. MSF stated, however, that there were supplies for slightly less than a month, although there were shortages of some items. For these shortages, MSF submitted a shopping list to Dutchbat under the motto 'who knows when the next convoy will arrive'.⁸⁸⁷ Otherwise, the MSF staff discovered by accident that the hospital in Srebrenica - in small quantities - was drawing on the medical supplies to provide Zepa with resources.⁸⁸⁸

What MSF also discovered by accident was a rumour that the hospital was being used as a weapons store, and that MSF were turning a blind eye to it. This rumour reached MSF via the Dutchbat medical service. MSF thought it was just a dirty trick by the Dutch to suggest such a thing: it was clear that the demilitarization of the enclave had failed, in view of the large number of men that were openly walking around with a weapon, but the accusations directed at MSF were misplaced. It was still a point of concern for MSF, because if this rumour were to reach the Bosnian Serbs, it could form the pretext for shelling the hospital.⁸⁸⁹

Reports on the alarming situation in Srebrenica also reached Zagreb, but little more was done there than to forward the reports to New York. The population of the Safe Areas (not only Srebrenica) were not receiving the quantities of food that would help them survive in the longer term, Janvier reported to New York. Opposing the Restriction of Movement imposed by the Bosnian Serbs by force was not an option, also not on a local level, because UNPROFOR could not risk an escalation.⁸⁹⁰ Reports from the UNMOs in Srebrenica on deaths in the population only led to the request from both Sarajevo and Zagreb for confirmation and supplementary information.

Deaths had indeed occurred, the UNMOs reported in early July, although it was not entirely clear to what extent hunger had been the cause: not all the cases were documented, and in four cases the deaths were not investigated by a doctor. Three deaths documented by MSF had nothing to do with starvation, but the local authorities still entered them on the list of people who had died from hunger. The Deputy Mayor and the funeral committee announced that they were unaware of any people starving to death, and that the hospital had no cases of malnutrition.

⁸⁸³ NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF Srebre to Medical Team Dutchbat, 22/06/95 13:40, No. Out 842.

⁸⁸⁴ ICTY (IT-98-33) D66/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Asst Commander for Morale Captain Nijaz Masic) to the Command of 2nd Corps Morale Department, 30/06/95, No. 04-113/95.

⁸⁸⁵ NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF Srebrenica to MSF Beograd and Pale, 27/06/95; 19:24. Belgrade UNHCR, Sitrep for Gorazde, Srebrenica, Zepa and Serb areas of Eastern BH, 30/06/95 1115Z.

⁸⁸⁶ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Memorandum Meeting 2 Corps ABiH, 23/06/95.

⁸⁸⁷ NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF Srebre to Medical Team Dutchbat, 22/06/95 13:40, No. Out 842.

⁸⁸⁸ CRST. UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade 26/06/95 16:15 retransmitted HCR Belgrade to HCR Zagreb, 26/06/95 15:08; NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsats MSF Srebre to Medical Team Dutchbat, 22/06/95 13:40, No. Out 842 and MSF Srebrenica to MSF Beograd, 26/06/95 18:27.

⁸⁸⁹ NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade, 06/06/95 17:37.

⁸⁹⁰ Confidential information (41).

The fact that it was not clear whether there were deaths from starvation did not detract from the fact that the situation was serious, of course. According to the UNMOs, however, alarming reports on this matter were mainly intended to attract attention to the fate of the population. The Bosnian government already spoke of thirteen deaths by starvation.⁸⁹¹ In June, of the twelve convoys, only four arrived. If the Bosnian Serbs continued to refuse convoys, then within a week there would be a catastrophe. People who could not afford to buy food at the exorbitant prices, begged on the street. The UNMOs found out little about food transports between Zepa and Srebrenica. Dutchbat had no data on the subject and the population were unwilling to talk about it for fear that the VRS would get wind of it and lay ambushes. The Deputy Mayor did confirm that every day one hundred to two hundred people went to Zepa in search of food.⁸⁹²

Humanitarian aid: concluding remarks

Humanitarian aid had been turned into a political instrument in the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. On the one hand, they used the argument that the aid was for the benefit of the ABiH, and on the other hand it was an instrument to force the international community to establish contact with the politically isolated Pale. Prof. Koljevic may well have promised more aid convoys to Sarajevo and the enclaves, but Karadzic had other ideas on the matter. He wanted the negotiator Bildt to come to Pale as quickly as possible. If he were to do so, the convoys would be resumed, the shelling would be stopped and an international conference could get under way.

The arrival of negotiator Bildt could be the first step on the way to the normalization of relations between the Bosnian Serbs and UNPROFOR, but his arrival in Pale was not on the agenda for the time being. Bildt did deem contacts with Pale to be essential, however, and he had also been given the necessary room by the European government leaders and the Contact Group, if it would help him achieve concessions. He wanted, partly in view of the sensitivity of the Bosnian government in Sarajevo on this point, however, to go to Pale only after Karadzic had made substantial concessions; Karadzic must open the land routes for convoys.

Bildt was prepared to meet Karadzic on the border in Zvornik, but that was rejected by the Bosnian Serbs as there had only been there had only been contacts at a lower level in Zvornik in early July. This closed the circle again, with the starving population of Srebrenica inside. A few days later, the end of the Safe Area would be ushered in.⁸⁹³

10. Conclusions

The Bosnian Serbs had considerable success in following their strategy. This was oriented towards creating an unbearable situation in Srebrenica. Both Dutchbat and the population suffered under this, albeit not to an equal extent. Dutchbat still had access to sufficient food, even though it was in the form of monotonous rations. The population had to make do with minimal quantities of food that were brought in on scarce UNHCR convoys. The refusal of humanitarian aid had become an instrument in the Bosnian-Serb strategy. The living conditions of the population were already poor, and those of Dutchbat were becoming steadily poorer because of fuel shortages. All the above could not continue to have no influence on morale and motivation.

The population became increasingly disillusioned, and, in its wake, the morale of the ABiH also suffered. This led to a flight of the population (for the time being only individuals and small groups) to somewhere safe (Tuzla) and to desertion from the ABiH. The psychological warfare that the Bosnian

⁸⁹¹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2, SRSG Meeting, 95 May-Oct. Senior Staff Meeting, 06/07/95.

⁸⁹² MID/KL. [UNMO HQ Sarajevo] 041132B Jul 95. NIOD, Coll. MSF. Capsat MSF Srebrenica to MSF Beo, 04/07/95 17:47, No. Out 926; UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 434, UNMO HQ SNE Srebrenica. UNMO Srebrenica to UNMO HQ SNE, 041740B Jul 95.

⁸⁹³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05244. Codes Van Mierlo circ. 410 and Van Mierlo 81 (paru081), 4/07/95 and Loudon 255, 3/07/95.

Serbs used, such as spreading false propaganda reports on the radio, also did not remain without effect, and contributed to the feelings of anxiety among the population. The absence of Naser Oric had a similar effect: he left the enclave in April 1995 and did not return before the fall. Until his departure, he had been an influential leading figure for the population: an analysis shows that he left on his own initiative.

Neither did the situation for the population improve as a result of quarrels between UNHCR and Dutchbat over checks on UNHCR convoys carrying humanitarian aid goods. This had escalated to the extent that a convoy that was on the way to the enclave was even sent back by UNHCR.

Dutchbat was semi-operational because of a lack of fuel, and became undermanned because those who had gone on leave were not given permission by the Bosnian Serbs to return to the enclave. This meant a heavier load for those who remained, under increasingly difficult conditions. The execution of duties duly suffered. It is not possible to say with any certainty to what extent their morale also suffered. Dutchbat held out, also after 'cries of distress' from Karremans had had no effect. It was not easy to keep up spirits, because there was no real prospect of relief and no certainty could be offered on the timing of return.

Also, the support for continued Dutch presence in public opinion and in a section of the parliamentary arena was crumbling: VVD leader Bolkestein openly expressed his doubt on whether the presence of Dutchbat III should be continued. Attempts to continue a Dutch presence with a combat battalion in Bosnia stood out somewhat starkly in contrast. After a great deal of shilly-shallying, a Ukrainian battalion or a Dutch battalion Dutchbat IV would finally take the relief for its account. However, neither could play any further role before the Bosnian Serb attack on the enclave started.

The situation in the former Yugoslavia was, through the lack of prospects of a political settlement to the conflict, hopeless, as was evident in Chapter 1. UNPROFOR drifted into a 'muddling-through scenario', and the circumstances in which the muddling-through had to take place were extremely poor for Srebrenica. This meant that the Bosnian Serbs had manoeuvred into a favourable starting position to tighten the thumbscrews on the enclave on 6 July, and also ultimately to capture it. This was exactly what would happen.

Chapter 5

The period from 25 May 1995 to 6 July 1995

1. Introduction

After the outline given in the previous chapter of the situation in which the population, ABiH and Dutchbat found themselves in the last month before the fall of Srebrenica, this chapter will focus on the more military aspects of that period.

The Pale bombings at the end of May, after which the UN personnel were taken hostage, had a considerable influence on the situation in Bosnia. The Bosnian Serbs not only took hostages, but also threatened observation posts (OPs) around the three eastern enclaves. Originally, this took place mainly around Gorazde and Zepa, but the Srebrenica enclave was not to escape.

In Srebrenica, the VRS went one step beyond threatening OPs: on 3 June an OP was actually captured, with which the southern point of the enclave fell into Bosnian-Serb hands. We will first investigate what signs existed in advance of the capture, how it proceeded and how Dutchbat and ABiH responded.

We will then deal with how the political and military state of affairs developed in Bosnia in the course of June 1995. Among the significant related events were the attempts made by the Bosnian Muslims to break the siege of Sarajevo. As the capital city of Bosnia, Sarajevo was the main scene of action in the war, and other combat activities in that period usually derived from the conflict around Sarajevo.

An element in the breaking of this siege of Sarajevo was formed by the military actions conducted by the ABiH from the Safe Area of Srebrenica, because such actions actually obliged VRS troops to be present around the enclave, so preventing them from being moved to Sarajevo to fight. Such ABiH actions led to skirmishes between the ABiH and the VRS around Srebrenica. We will deal with what these actions involved, and what effects they had on relations between the VRS and ABiH around the enclave.

The chapter ends at the start of the VRS attack on Srebrenica, on 6 July 1995. We will attempt to establish the possible motivation of the VRS for an attack on Srebrenica, what plans were made for capturing the enclave, and what indications existed for the impending attack. The next chapter will focus attention on the capture of the enclave itself.

2. The position of the Dutchbat observation posts (OPs)

The Pale bombings were important as a catalyst for the VRS activities. Around Srebrenica too, this was preceded by a period of skirmishes between the combatants. The initiative for this was not exclusively with the Bosnian Serbs; as early as 22 May, the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla had ordered the 28th Division in Srebrenica to undertake offensive and sabotage actions behind the VRS lines, with the intention of undermining the morale of the VRS.⁸⁹⁴ Dutchbat had little view of what was going on outside the borders of the Safe Area: they only observed that armed ABiH soldiers were making their way outside the enclave, and that the observed battle noise was greater than before. Around this time, a situation also arose in which Dutchbat no longer had a satisfactory answer to the reciprocal protests from the two combatants. This gave Karremans the feeling that Dutchbat was gradually losing the grip that it once had on the situation.⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁹⁴ ICTY (IT-98-33) D51/a. ABiH 28th Division Command to Commander 280 IBLB personally, 22/05/95, No. 01-47/95, Military Secret.

⁸⁹⁵ Karremans, *Srebrenica: Who Cares?*, p. 132.

It is therefore impossible on the basis of Dutchbat observations to verify all the data provided by the ABiH intelligence service to the NIOD on the period May - June 1995 on the subject of manoeuvres and hostilities in and around the enclave. According to the ABiH, the VRS had already attempted in early May to penetrate the enclave from Jasenova, which was to the south of the enclave, so as to occupy the 799 metre high hill in the south of the enclave at Bucje and the 780 metre high hill at Zivkovo Bdro (see map Chapter 6, section 5). The ABiH assumed that the VRS wanted to control Zeleni Jadar at the southeast point of the enclave, and wanted to drive the ABiH back to Srebrenica town.

The VRS was also active elsewhere to the south the enclave. On 15 May, the VRS dispatched a group to the Zepa enclave to the south of the Srebrenica enclave, who were to launch an attack there on 17 May and create confusion. On 25 May, the VRS carried out an attack as a reaction to the bombing of Pale. At the same time, an attack was carried out on the hilly area of Suceška. On 28 May, the VRS laid mines at the entrances to the area of Slapovic, where the Swedish Shelter Project for Displaced Persons was located. On 30 May there was an attack on Dugo Polje. Constant pressure was brought to bear to force UNPROFOR further back while the VRS organized a base for an attack.⁸⁹⁶

Sometimes, the ABiH exchanged information with Dutchbat on a possible VRS attack, or related information was compared. For instance, the Commander of the 28th ABiH Division, Becirovic, pointed out to Dutchbat that the Bosnian Serbs had already started building up their armed forces around the enclave during May. He referred to the arrival of tanks, artillery and to an increasing number of soldiers. There was also mention of an increasing number of helicopter flights, both during the day and at night, including to Serbia. Becirovic said that he already expected an attack at this time.⁸⁹⁷ Dutchbat answered Becirovic by saying that the VRS actions were in response to ABiH activities, but that the VRS would not attack. According to Becirovic, neither did UNPROFOR then believe the ABiH reports of a Bosnian-Serb build-up, and they said that the ABiH did not have to be afraid of an attack.⁸⁹⁸ The ABiH, on the other hand, felt that an offensive was in the air, and attempted to organize the defence of the enclave between the Dutchbat OPs, including by digging trenches. Dutchbat would not permit this, and dispatched patrols between the OPs, according to ABiH liaison officer Ekrem Salihovic, so that the ABiH were unable to dig and constantly had to hide their weapons. Dutchbat also closed the trenches again.⁸⁹⁹

Much of the Bosnian-Serb revenge following the NATO bombing of Pale on 25 and 26 May concentrated on Sarajevo, but the eastern enclaves were not spared. This also had repercussions on the situation around Srebrenica. On 25 May, as immediate retaliation, a number of shells landed close to a school in Srebrenica. There were one dead and three wounded. The VRS also opened fire on the south-western part of the enclave.

UNPROFOR was also confronted with firing from the VRS side. It may be the case that the NATO air strike was announced in advance to all UN units, but UNPROFOR's vulnerability to a VRS reaction was unavoidable. The VRS retaliation struck the Headquarters of Sector North East on Tuzla airfield, which received ten direct hits from VRS artillery. Dutchbat then also had to retreat to the bunkers, but the situation in the Srebrenica enclave was still relatively favourable, at least in contrast to the situation in the Gorazde enclave. The warning that another NATO bombing of Pale would follow on 26 May led only to a short stay in the bunkers. When, on 26 May, the RTL evening news reported that Dutchbat was in an utmost state of readiness, Karremans viewed the report simply as an unnecessary way of putting the home front into an 'utmost state of anxiety'. At the time, Karremans

⁸⁹⁶ Interview Hazrudin Kistic, 17/05/99 and 18/05/99.

⁸⁹⁷ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02/02/98 and 05/02/98.

⁸⁹⁸ ABiH Tuzla. 2nd Corps, unnumbered. Supplementary statement by Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement of 11/08/95.

⁸⁹⁹ Interview Ekrem Salihovic, 02/12/98.

saw no reason for Dutchbat to be in an increased state of readiness, although he did see reason for increased alertness with respect to the OPs, the compounds and patrols.⁹⁰⁰

The first signals that there could be more at foot than retaliation shelling from the VRS did not come from Dutchbat itself, but reached the battalion via the British soldiers that were attached to Dutchbat, who were known as the Joint Commission Observers or JCOs. On 25 May, JCO Headquarters passed on the message that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had announced from Sarajevo that 'a move on the eastern enclaves was a real possibility, and that if this occurred then Srebrenica would be the first'. It remained completely unclear, however, which OP or OPs would or could be first. The information was conveyed to Dutchbat 'who, it is reported, did not believe it'.⁹⁰¹ After the Pale bombings, there were no further indications that the VRS was preparing activity on the ground against Dutchbat.

The events of 28 May

On 28 May, the situation got increasingly out of hand in Gorazde, one of the other eastern enclaves. In a well-coordinated ambush, the VRS fired on British armoured personnel carriers, which were escorting a convoy. The VRS also harassed the British compound with mortars, detained the crew of two OPs, and then occupied the OPs themselves. As a precaution, the crew of six other OPs withdrew to Gorazde town, leaving behind a great deal of equipment: a large number armoured vehicles, and hundreds of UN uniforms and helmets fell into Bosnian-Serb hands. It had appeared earlier that the VRS would make use of captured UN uniforms and weapons. Thereby, more than before, the VRS would be in a position to provoke incidents and then to place the responsibility on the UN side. The VRS also took 33 of the British hostage, with the intention of securing protection against an ABiH attack.

The ABiH responded by occupying the Ukrainian OPs in the Gorazde enclave and blockading the Ukrainian compound in Gorazde.⁹⁰²

On the same day, 28 May, Dutchbat's situation also became steadily less favourable, however. Ever more alarming messages reached the battalion at a rapid tempo. From Sarajevo, Lieutenant Colonel De Ruiter, the Military Assistant to the Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, General Nicolai, would first inform Karremans at 15.00 hours on that day that actions by the VRS against Zepa and Srebrenica were not yet to be expected, but that vigilance was called for. A mere half an hour later, Nicolai asked Karremans to consider giving up a number of less important and remote, relatively inaccessible and difficult to defend observation posts, and only to continue to occupy the most important OPs. In this way, the battalion could carry on longer in a critical situation. In Nicolai's opinion, another aspect was that Karremans himself had already come up with a similar proposal (on 10 May), because of the lack of fuel. At the same time, Nicolai made clear that any requests for Close Air Support must be kept to a minimum, in order to prevent further escalation. For Nicolai and his staff in Sarajevo, the events in Gorazde were a terrifying example.⁹⁰³

At 17.00 hours, the Dutch Colonel De Jonge sent a message from Zagreb that the Arkan Brigade had left Croatia and was on its way to the surroundings of Tuzla and Srebrenica, to take local hostages at UN posts. Because De Jonge was unable to reach Dutchbat on a secure telephone link, he

⁹⁰⁰ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 135-7.

⁹⁰¹ Confidential information (1).

⁹⁰² UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, Weekly Situation Report, 31/0595, No. Z-900, Restricted; MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, No. 25/95, closed 301200B May 1995; Confidential Information (121); SMG 1012. RNLA Army Crisis Staff Weekstrep for 25 May - 02 June 1995.

⁹⁰³ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 135-7; interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

forwarded the message to Dutchbat via the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff in The Hague. The message was from 28 May 17.00 hours.⁹⁰⁴

In the late evening of the same day, 28 May, there was another telephone conversation between Nicolai and Karremans. Dutchbat was now ordered to abandon the most vulnerable OPs with immediate effect, and especially the OPs that could be surrounded by surprise at night and taken over. In particular, this concerned two remote western observation posts, OP-A and OP-C.

At Karremans' request, Nicolai granted him half an hour to make an assessment of the situation. In that half hour, Karremans and his deputy Franken arrived at the position that they did not share Nicolai's assessment of the situation with respect to the OPs: according to them, it was not only OP-A and OP-C that could be surrounded, but *all* OPs. In view of the severe weather conditions at that time and the poor state of the (unmetalled) roads, it was impossible and irresponsible to withdraw from a number of OPs in the middle of the night. The persistent rain meant that OPs were difficult to reach even on foot; roads and paths that had already become poorly negotiable, were washed away. Furthermore, mines laid by the VRS in the south of the enclave had come adrift. Karremans' and Franken's assessment was furthermore that once an OP had been abandoned, it would be lost for good.

Karremans said that he was so dumfounded by the discussion that he had requested time to think. 'It simply cannot be true. After all: you then open the door (even wider) to the VRS (and this is not to mention the practical feasibility). Seldom have I been so disappointed in the results of the military decision making process of a headquarters and in the imaginative powers of those who were in command there. How in God's name can someone come up with such an idea', Karremans said. Dutchbat stated that it had been doing all in its power for months to ensure that the OPs functioned as well as possible with the few resources they had at their disposal. At the same time, this was almost the only justification of Dutchbat's existence, because it was only from the OPs that a degree of protection could be offered to the population. Karremans therefore also concluded with respect to Nicolai's order that: 'In brief, I refuse to obey and I accept the risk.'⁹⁰⁵

The events of 29 May

In the night of 28 and 29 May, there was another telephone conversation between Karremans and Nicolai. An assessment of the situation was also made within the staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo. This time it resulted in the order to abandon six to eight OPs: in any case OP-A, OP-C, OP-D, OP-K, OP-M, and OP-N, and, if necessary, also OP-E and OP-F. The OPs would have to be concentrated around Srebrenica, and that would have to be carried out that same night. Karremans pointed out to Nicolai that it was undesirable to withdraw the OPs at night. Nicolai then pointed out to Karremans that the OPs had to be withdrawn anyway: Bosnian Serbs were said to have been murdered by Bosnian Muslims from Srebrenica, and as a reaction the VRS might capture the OPs. Karremans did not attach much value to that account, which came from the Serbian press and had therefore already taken place at an earlier stage.

A compromise then appeared in the consultation between Karremans and Nicolai: preparations would be made to be able to abandon the OPs within one hour should that be necessary. There would be consultation the following morning with General Smith, and more detailed instructions were to follow. The OPs could be maintained until further notice or until serious danger threatened. Finally, Sarajevo pointed out the fact that no unnecessary risk must be taken and that no UN lives must be put in danger.⁹⁰⁶ The staff of Sector North East in Tuzla, which was between Dutchbat and Bosnia

⁹⁰⁴ CRST. G3 Land Ops HQ UNPF Zagreb to Chief of Staff Crisis Staff BLS, 18/05/95, unnumbered, the message was from 281700B.

⁹⁰⁵ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 137-8.

⁹⁰⁶ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. 1(NL) UN Infbat Dutchbat 3, 29/05/95, No. TK9581.

Hercegovina Command in Sarajevo in the hierarchy, was noticeably absent in this decision-making process; this link in the chain of command was also passed on other occasions, however.

On the morning of 29 May, more detailed guidelines indeed came from Sarajevo. The OPs might remain in place until further notice. They may remain as long as possible, until serious danger threatened. No unnecessary risk was to be taken, and no lives put in danger. OPs related to the ABiH positions must be retained as long as possible, which, according to Karremans, concerned nearly all OPs. After abandoning the OPs, they must fall back on positions surrounding the most densely populated part of Srebrenica; the Srebrenica-Potocari route must be kept open. The Quick Reaction Force (a rapidly deployable reserve unit of the battalion with the APCs at their disposal) received renewed attention: they were to be expanded, and preparations must be made to reoccupy OPs after being abandoned.⁹⁰⁷ Karremans disregarded this last order. Without having the necessary resources at his disposal, an order to recapture one or more OPs was 'suicide', he thought.⁹⁰⁸ What grounds Karremans had for assuming that there was no other way back than by recapture, is unclear, however. When danger threatened, the Norwegian battalion (Norbat) in the region of Tuzla repeatedly left an OP on the confrontation line between VRS and ABiH, only to reoccupy it later without a problem.⁹⁰⁹

That afternoon, Major Franken called a meeting with the ABiH and members of the Opstina. According to Karremans, the mood of the meeting was positive, because Dutchbat indicated that it did not intend to abandon OPs. This gave Karremans the feeling that he was on the right track.⁹¹⁰ What else was discussed exactly cannot be deduced from Dutchbat sources. However, the Commander of the 28th ABiH Division in the enclave, Ramiz Becirovic, made a comprehensive report of this meeting with Franken. It is clear from this report that it actually was a remarkable meeting. The meeting was arranged in the greatest secrecy, and for this reason there were no UNMOs (United Nations Military Observers) present, which would have been usual in such meetings.

Franken started by referring to the dangerous situation in Gorazde. He said that Dutchbat had been ordered to withdraw the OPs, but that Dutchbat had protested. According to the report of this discussion given by Becirovic, on that morning an order followed to the effect that Dutchbat must remain on the OPs, that permission was given to use weapons, and that permission was also given to deploy Close Air Support should OPs be attacked. Vulnerable OPs were reinforced, the most critical of which were identified as Zeleni Jadar (OP-E), Yellow Bridge (OP-P) and Zalazje (OP-R).

In Becirovic's document, all this was presented as Franken's analysis; Becirovic added that the ABiH shared this analysis. Subsequently, Franken informed Becirovic that Arkan was on his way to Srebrenica. All this, according to Becirovic, led Franken to conclude that little could be done other than for the ABiH and Dutchbat to jointly defend the enclave. According to this report, Dutchbat considered itself capable of defending the OPs for 72 hours. According to the report, Franken proposed that the ABiH should position itself close to the OPs in order to provide any necessary help against the VRS. Becirovic accepted this proposal. At the same time, he accepted the proposal that ABiH and Dutchbat jointly reconsider the positioning of the armed forces at the most vulnerable points.⁹¹¹

These proposals were, as having come from Dutchbat, known to the headquarters of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla. This promptly led to suggestions from Naser Oric that testified to a great mistrust in the joint operation of Dutchbat and the ABiH. For instance, Oric suggested a trial to see whether the Dutch actually were so determined that they would fire on the VRS together with the

⁹⁰⁷ Record CO Dutchbat, 29/05/95, No. TK9581. Appx. 18 in Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?* The report of the discussions is from the hand of Karremans. No records were found in the UNPROFOR archives on this matter from Smith or Nicolai.

⁹⁰⁸ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 139.

⁹⁰⁹ Interview G. Arlefalk, 18/05/00.

⁹¹⁰ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 139.

⁹¹¹ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpasa Odjeljenje za moral, 02/06/09, br. 04-84/95.

ABiH. At the same time, Oric directed Becirovic to take care not to allow Dutchbat to see what weapons the ABiH had at their disposal, in case Dutchbat's objective was to discover this information by means of the agreements reached. Oric also wanted Becirovic to ask Dutchbat whether they were prepared to return the weapons and ammunition held in the Weapon Collection Point to the ABiH. Oric's ukases were further that Becirovic must not agree to the distribution of their own ammunition supplies across the OPs by the Dutch, because then the ABiH would lose sight of them. It might well all be a Dutchbat trick to ensure that the ABiH would be unable to confiscate that ammunition for its own use, or to be able to say that the VRS had captured the ammunition. It was not only necessary to keep a close eye on the VRS, the same applied to the Dutch.⁹¹²

Meanwhile, Dutchbat drew up a plan for blocking positions (roadblocks to be set up at strategic points) for the eventuality that OPs did have to be abandoned. The intention was not so much to take up defensive positions against the VRS, but rather to occupy positions to the rear so as to be able to continue to observe from there.⁹¹³ This plan would later become relevant in the VRS attack.

On the same afternoon, 29 May, Lieutenant Colonel De Ruiter called again from Sarajevo with the message that there were indications of a repeat of the pattern of Gorazde (the OPs overrun by the VRS) in Zepa. The UNPROFOR commander in Zepa was invited for a discussion with the VRS on an observation post. One hour before, all manner of VRS troop movements had been observed in the vicinity of the OP concerned. However, Karremans was able to conclude nothing from the situation reports of that day that pointed in the direction that De Ruiter had indicated: all still seemed to be quiet in Zepa.

Later that day, Karremans again had a discussion with De Ruiter, and learned that the Ukrainians in Zepa had been forced to stay on the OPs, and had no more freedom of movement. The pattern of Gorazde had therefore indeed been repeated in Zepa. Furthermore, there was open fighting in Gorazde between the VRS and the ABiH.⁹¹⁴

However, the situation surrounding Srebrenica remained exceptionally quiet, and therefore Karremans saw no reason still to resort to the withdrawal of OPs. He had no indications that Arkan was actually in the area, and he knew nothing of any incident in which Bosnian Serbs had been murdered by Bosnians, as Nicolai had told him from Sarajevo.⁹¹⁵ According to Sarajevo, this was actually consistent with a pattern: De Ruiter observed that it was hard going for Bosnia-Herzegovina Command to convey to Karremans what was actually happening in other places in Bosnia.⁹¹⁶ This was in line with what is known as a siege mentality, which visitors had observed with Dutchbat at an earlier stage. The siege mentality meant that the view of what was going on in the outside world became cloudy, because circumstances dictated that they concentrate on their own surroundings.⁹¹⁷

Karremans unwilling to withdraw the OPs

Karremans' position of 28 May that he wanted to maintain the OPs was remarkable in itself: earlier (on 10 May) he actually requested Bosnia-Herzegovina Command to be allowed to withdraw OPs. It was already mentioned in the previous chapter that Karremans had informed Sarajevo on that day that Dutchbat had gone from 'bare minimum' to 'survival' status where the fuel reserves were concerned. According to him, this could only be sustained for ten days, and after that Karremans wanted to withdraw all OPs. For operational reasons, he did not deem it acceptable to withdraw a single OP, he wrote, because once the OPs had been withdrawn, there was no way back. Dutchbat would then lose

⁹¹² NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. Brigadir Naser Oric to Komandi 28. D KoV Srebrenica n/r Nacelnika staba majora Becirovic Ramiz, 31/05/95.

⁹¹³ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 140.

⁹¹⁴ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 140.

⁹¹⁵ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Record CO Dutchbat, 29/05/95, No. TK9581.

⁹¹⁶ Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

⁹¹⁷ Confidential interview (87).

credibility, and the control of the demilitarized zone would be lost, with an increase in the fighting as a possible consequence. Karremans also estimated that the ABiH would oppose the abandonment of the OPs or would take over the OPs before the VRS did so.⁹¹⁸

Four days later, on 14 May, Karremans and Nicolai spoke to each other about additional fuel saving measures. Karremans was then of the opinion that all further economy measures had been exhausted. He rejected the idea of turning off the lighting of the OPs after dark for safety reasons.⁹¹⁹ Nicolai then requested Karremans to try to survive until 1 June with the available quantity of fuel.⁹²⁰ In his time schedules, Karremans had actually left the possibility open that a recalculation of the fuel reserves would permit an extension to 1 June.⁹²¹

On 28 May, however, the Battalion Commander decided to disregard Nicolai's order from Sarajevo to abandon OPs. This begs the question as to where this reversal came from: the fact is that no fuel arrived in the meantime, and the deadline agreed with Nicolai was approaching. In searching for a reason for the reversal, consideration must be given to the fact that Karremans wanted to continue to perform his task, in spite of all the misery, even when it had become almost impossible.

It seems very likely that, in taking the position that he took on 28 May (that the OPs must not be abandoned) Karremans allowed himself to be influenced by the circumstances of the moment (relative quiet in the enclave) and concerns about the withdrawal of OPs at night and/or in poor weather: he did not appear to be greatly aware of the impending danger that was hanging over Dutchbat's head in view of the forced withdrawal of the OPs in the other enclaves, although this had been drawn to Karremans' attention from Sarajevo. On the other hand, it must be said that a factor in the Battalion Commander's decision not to withdraw the OPs was that Karremans simply did not think it was justified, because danger could then be feared from the ABiH.⁹²² In early July it would be apparent that this certainly was a valid argument. Indeed, abandoning the OPs would also have meant Dutchbat being even 'blinder' than they already were for observing what was going on around the enclave.

It is established that Karremans felt pushed into a corner by the circumstances, without seeing any way out. He was disappointed in the upper echelons and felt let down.⁹²³ What did not make it any easier for him was that he felt no empathy with Sarajevo (General Nicolai), which he did with the level above, Zagreb, (Colonel De Jonge). De Jonge felt that Karremans had good reasons not to withdraw his OPs. The fact is that the battalion would otherwise have had absolutely no eyes, and no one knew what was going on around the enclave, De Jonge argued.⁹²⁴ In his decision to maintain the observation posts, Karremans was also supported by the Director of Operations of the Royal Netherlands Army, Major General A.P.P.M. van Baal, who he had informally asked for advice.⁹²⁵

Withdrawal of the OPs after all?

Dutchbat had hardly any view of what was happening at the edge of the enclave and outside: as already mentioned, it had to rely on messages from Bosnia Hercegovina Command in Sarajevo, and there too, not everything was known about what was happening around the enclave. For instance, it turned out (afterwards) that Arkan units really were in position in the surroundings of the enclave. The multiple murder by Bosnian Muslims on Bosnian Serbs that Nicolai had mentioned to Karremans, and that Dutchbat was only aware of from a Serbian newspaper, was concerned with five (the number seven

⁹¹⁸ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. CO Dutchbat to Comdr BH Command thru Comdr SNE, with Appendix A: Consequences of the withdrawal of OPs, 10/05/95, No. TK9565.

⁹¹⁹ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. C-Dutchbat 3 to COS BHC Sarajevo suppl. to C-RNIA Crisis Staff, 15/05/95, No. TK 9566.

⁹²⁰ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 133.

⁹²¹ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Time schedule for abandoning OPs, 12/05/95, No. TK 9567.

⁹²² Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

⁹²³ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 133.

⁹²⁴ Interview H. De Jonge, 17/09/99.

⁹²⁵ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 01/11/01.

was also mentioned) VRS soldiers who were killed by a group of Bosnian Muslims outside the enclave at Rupovo Brdo near Milici on 27 May.⁹²⁶ The ABiH reported in relation to this that an ABiH patrol had come across VRS personnel, that the ABiH personnel concerned had seen the VRS soldiers earlier, and had opened fire, killing five Bosnian Serbs. Two patrols met each other in a similar way on 29 May, this time in Podravanje, outside the enclave. This time the VRS was the first to open fire, which left the ABiH with two wounded. The VRS also took revenge by laying ambushes between Srebrenica and Zepa, where in two incidents there were three dead and three wounded among food scavengers and ABiH soldiers.⁹²⁷

Dutchbat had been on maximum vigilance since 28 May. The .50 machine guns had to be engaged, and no more patrols that were vulnerable to being overrun must be undertaken from the OPs. In the night of 28 to 29 May, Karremans gathered his company commanders together. He issued the guideline that it must be possible to leave the OPs within one hour. To this end, all vehicles at the OPs must be loaded, and a plan must be drawn up for each OP of what was to happen with the rest of the equipment. The Quick Reaction Forces of the companies and the reconnaissance platoon commands were given new duties: if a meeting was to take place with the VRS on one of the OPs, then 'alarm phase red' was to be in force there and the Quick Reaction Force must be stationed visibly in the vicinity of the OP with an armoured personnel carrier (APC).⁹²⁸ The instructions had nothing to say on what should happen in the unlikely event that the VRS wanted to enter an OP.

The fact that preparations had been made to leave the OPs did not mean that permission had already been given to leave the OPs. The associated preparations were completed on the same night, however.⁹²⁹ The crew of one OP were so seized with the situation that they burned their personal belongings and wrote farewell letters.⁹³⁰

Otherwise, preparations had already been made in May to be able to withdraw the entire battalion within 48 hours in a secret operation. Interpreters, local personnel, UNMOs and *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) were not acquainted with this plan, because the battalion was counting on opposition from the population. They were assumed to try in all conceivable ways to obstruct the departure of Dutchbat, so that there must be no suspicion of preparations being made to leave the OPs and the compounds. Such preparations had therefore to be made in darkness, or when there were no 'locals' around. The vehicles at the OPs would then go via designated routes to a particular point. However, it would first be necessary to ask for clearance from the VRS to venture outside the enclave.⁹³¹

3. The days of late May and early June 1995: the VRS threaten around OP Echo

The area around OP-E at Zeleni Jadar, in the south-eastern corner of the enclave, had long been a disputed area. There were several reasons for it being of strategic importance: it was on the three-forked road that controlled the southern access to the enclave. Important Bosnian-Serb places in the region could be reached easily via Zeleni Jadar, including Milici, Vlasenica and the military stronghold Han Pijesak. If the route via Zeleni Jadar was unusable for the Bosnian Serbs, a detour was necessary via the northern side of the enclave.

In addition, both warring factions had economic interests at stake in Zeleni Jadar. For the Muslims, without control over Zeleni Jadar, the important route from Srebrenica to Zepa would be more difficult, because it was on the connecting route to that enclave. For the Bosnian Serbs, on the

⁹²⁶ Interview Zoran Jovanovic, 13/09/99.

⁹²⁷ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpusa Odjeljenje za moral, 02/06/99, Str. pov. br. 04-84/95.

⁹²⁸ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 138-9.

⁹²⁹ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. CO Dutchbat to Comdr BH Command thru Comdr SNE, 04/06/95, No. TK9587.

⁹³⁰ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 139.

⁹³¹ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Appendix D (Gevplan) to Operation plan no 2 (Departure from enclave) of C-1(NL) UN Infbat, 13/05/95, UN Secret.

other hand, Zeleni Jadar formed the access to the bauxite mines on the southern side of the enclave. It was also important to both parties that the Srebrenica drinking water supply could be controlled from this location.

Apart from Zeleni Jadar itself, the industrial area to the south was of potential importance. According to a member of the Opstina, the Deputy Mayor of Srebrenica, the Canadian battalion (Canbat) in Zeleni Jadar had had an observation post behind the factories. This is why the industrial area formed part of the enclave before the arrival of Dutchbat I, and the Muslims therefore considered that it belonged to the enclave. However, according to this Opstina source, immediately after its arrival in March 1994, Dutchbat I took up an observation post in front of the industrial area for security reasons, so that the factories fell to the Bosnian Serbs. The Opstina were said to have pointed out the wrong position of OP-E, but they received the answer that Zeleni Jadar was a Bosnian-Serb area according to Dutchbat I.⁹³²

Moreover, a Canadian source refuted that in 'their' time the industrial area had belonged to the Bosnian Muslim territory: both Canbat battalion commanders were unanimous in their opinion on the matter. Dutchbat had simply taken over the OPs that Canbat had set up. OP-E was then also within the enclave, and then too - as some Muslims asserted - had not been situated to the south of the factory complex.⁹³³ However, the OP had been moved: originally it was 200 metres outside the factory complex. Because of the shooting there, and because the ABiH had occupied positions there, the OP was moved,⁹³⁴ but not to the south: the Canadians did attempt to include the local water plant in the area, but they were unsuccessful. Therefore, the Srebrenica drinking water supply remained a point of dispute between the warring factions.⁹³⁵

OP-E was a thorn in the VRS' flesh because it cut through the roads to the south of the enclave, and interfered with supplying the units around Srebrenica. The Bosnian-Serb side had nurtured the desire to be able to use the road to Milici for a long time. There were various meetings in which the use of the road was raised for discussion, but no agreement was ever reached because military traffic was involved, which no one wanted to permit.⁹³⁶

For instance, the Bosnian Serbs asked as early as September 1994 to be able to use the road to Milici, at a meeting between the VRS, Naser Oric and Battalion Commander Vermeulen of Dutchbat I (all of which was covered in Part II).

The War President of Srebrenica, Osman Suljic, did not agree with the use of the road by the VRS; he did not want to accept such a proposal. Suljic made no report to Sarajevo on this meeting because, he said, it was difficult to convey the information. The Civil Affairs Officer of Sector North East, Ken Biser, also heard of the meeting and did make a report. He was on a visit to Srebrenica. On 22 September he met Professor Nikola Koljevic, the Vice President of the Republika Srpska, and they discussed the use of the road. Koljevic originally wanted direct UNPROFOR assent to the use of the road, but finally agreed to discuss the matter in a meeting of the Joint Demilitarization Commission, in which there were also Bosnian representatives. This would not then happen in Srebrenica but in Sarajevo.⁹³⁷ If UNPROFOR, as a goodwill gesture to the VRS, were not to permit the road to be used, then the Bosnian Serbs would feel obliged to open the road by force, Koljevic said. In this sense, the capture of OP-E could not have come as a strategic surprise.⁹³⁸

In March 1995, General Mladic had also requested General Smith to withdraw the UNPROFOR units in the south-eastern part of the enclave. According to Mladic, the UNPROFOR

⁹³² Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

⁹³³ Interview Pierre Desjardins, 12/11/99.

⁹³⁴ Interview Yvan Bouchard, 15/11/99

⁹³⁵ Interview Thomas K.D. Geburt, 18/11/99.

⁹³⁶ Interview Petr Uscumlic 14/09/99.

⁹³⁷ CRST. Civil Affairs, Sector NE, Srebrenica Trip Report, 21-14 September, 1994.

⁹³⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 4 April - 23 August 1995. Fax Biser to Corwin, 09/06/95, unnumbered.

presence there permitted the ABiH to occupy territory, as well as ‘an important road that was by rights Serbian.’ Smith refused.⁹³⁹ In April/May 1995, Koljevic found himself back at OP-E for the same purpose, but War President Osman Suljic did not meet him then.⁹⁴⁰

The events of 30 May

In spite of the apparent quiet in the enclave at the end of May, there were indeed rumblings in the surroundings of Srebrenica. On 30 May at 20.30 hours, the VRS requested an emergency meeting in the vicinity of OP-P in the north of the enclave. This came entirely out of the blue for Karremans. Dutchbat was represented by Section 5, the section for military-civil contacts; the VRS was represented by Major Nikolic and an unknown officer from Pale, who were apparently nervous. Nikolic announced that he had intelligence that the ABiH would attack OP-A and OP-C within two days and would take over all the equipment. The message was clear: when the ABiH was to take over OPs, the UN personnel must no longer be in that area. Otherwise, they would be a target for the VRS. Furthermore, the VRS complained that too many ABiH soldiers were in the vicinity of the Dutch OPs, especially OP-R in the east of the enclave, on the Zanik hill. If the ABiH were to attack the OPs, the message from the VRS side went, then Dutchbat personnel were welcome in the VRS lines, as long as they brought along their weapons and ammunition. Otherwise, Dutchbat was free to leave the enclave whenever it wanted.

Karremans did not know how to react to these statements. This could be a new approach from the VRS, or some kind of trick. The offer to Dutchbat of an unopposed withdrawal from the enclave and the offer to escape to the VRS lines had been made at an earlier stage, and complaining voices about too many ABiH soldiers in the vicinity of OPs were familiar. What was new, however, was that Dutchbat was considered to be a VRS target should the ABiH take over an OP. Under the prevailing circumstances, the Battalion Commander did not consider it very likely that the ABiH would adopt the position that the VRS predicted: that would be an upside-down world. Karremans had sensed earlier that the VRS were looking for a pretext to start an offensive operation, but again Karremans saw no necessity to abandon OPs.⁹⁴¹ In Gorazde, in the meantime, two OPs had been taken over by the VRS.

On the same day, 30 May, in the south-eastern part of the enclave, at OP-E, VRS Colonel Vukota Vukovic personally made clear to the OP crew that his men had already surrounded OP-E.⁹⁴² This was evident when, half way through discussion, Vukovic hurriedly departed because there was shooting from a hill opposite the OP. The previous night, Sergeant Ceelen had already heard the sound of falling rocks, but he was unable to see anything with vision.⁹⁴³ In the evening, fires could be seen in the hills. When the OP crew whistled, the VRS whistled back. Muslims, who under other circumstances would be waiting at the gate to the OP for bread, batteries, aid, sweets and tobacco, were no longer to be seen.⁹⁴⁴ Shortly after midnight on 31 May, a powerful explosion was heard about one hundred metres from the OP: it appeared to be an attempt at intimidation.⁹⁴⁵ Following an order from his company Commander, Captain Groen, Ceelen went to investigate by daylight, and to measure the crater that had resulted from the explosion. It turned out to be a large crater in the road.

⁹³⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 215, File BHC95 7Mar-14Mar95. Meeting Gen Smith and Gen Mladic 7 March 1995, Ref 8594. BHC FWD to DOKL. 091100A Mar 95. Outgoing fax No. 122/95. UN Conf.

⁹⁴⁰ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

⁹⁴¹ CO Dutchbat to HQ UNPROFOR Sarajevo through HQ BH Sector NE, 30/05/95, No. TK9583. Appx. 19 in Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?* See also p.141.

⁹⁴² SMG/Debrief. Diary of E.R. de Vries.

⁹⁴³ Interview W.A. Ceelen, 02/0799.

⁹⁴⁴ SMG/Debrief diary of E.R. de Vries.

⁹⁴⁵ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam*, p. 157.

The events of 31 May

The following day, 31 May, the VRS fired at Ceelen during a patrol. It was clear to Ceelen that the VRS were staging incidents around OP-E as a way of putting pressure on Dutchbat. Company Commander Groen decided to reinforce the OP: Sergeant Smit and a number of soldiers were added to the OP crew, bringing the crew strength up to twelve. At the same time, Groen ordered a foxhole to be dug in an area of higher ground behind the OP, and to have it occupied during the day by one of the two sergeants and a soldier.⁹⁴⁶ The purpose of this observation post was to give warning of a VRS arrival, to facilitate denial of access to the enclave entrance road by any armoured personnel carriers.⁹⁴⁷ For this purpose, the post was equipped with AT-4 short range anti-tank weapons.⁹⁴⁸

On 31 May, the combatants in the vicinity of OP-E were indeed fighting with each other, although Dutchbat had little relevant information. There was also fighting at OP-F, which was a little further away. It is possible that during the previous night there had been VRS infiltrations in the vicinity of OP-K and OP-D to the south of the enclave. Reconnaissance patrols stumbled across each other on two occasions in the vicinity of OP-E on 31 May, and two ABiH soldiers were wounded, and two from the VRS died.

More problems appeared to be on the way, because the ABiH had understood from intercepted message traffic that Zeljko Raznjatovic, better known as Arkan, had arrived in Bratunac on 1 June to prepare sabotage and terror actions. The VRS Drina Corps had also ordered the Milici Brigade to lay ambushes in the area to the south of Srebrenica with the intention of regaining control of the area between Srebrenica and Zepa, where - as is evident from a Milici Brigade report - the Muslims were then lord and master. This resulted in three operations in the night of 31 May to 1 June, in which ten ABiH soldiers died, six were wounded and one was taken prisoner. Messages from the ABiH confirmed the events, but spoke of seven dead on their own side, including four soldiers (of the 284th ABiH Brigade), who were carrying a wounded soldier who had trodden on an anti-personnel mine; they were taking him from Zepa to the hospital in Srebrenica.⁹⁴⁹

What the warring factions were after was OP-E, from where the southern part of the enclave and the access to the town could be controlled. In a letter to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Karremans adopted the position that he would continue to defend OP-E with support from the Quick Reaction Force. If the ABiH were going to attack the OP, the VRS would close the road between OP-E and Srebrenica. In that case the VRS would find themselves confronted with the Quick Reaction Force. Dutchbat did not have a mind to give up OPs, was in a position to defend each OP, and would act accordingly, Karremans said in his letter. It was unacceptable for the VRS to cross the confrontation line: when that happened, Dutchbat would resist with all means at their disposal. Karremans added that there was a 'massive reserve echelon'. The VRS had announced that they would not start any offensive actions against UN units. The VRS wanted to maintain good relations with UNPROFOR in general, and on a local level with Dutchbat in particular. The VRS were unable to understand Dutchbat's firmness. Nevertheless, Karremans concluded from a meeting with VRS officer Vukovic on that day, that the VRS were looking for a pretext to start an action, and that the VRS were trying everything to step up the pressure on the battalion.⁹⁵⁰

The VRS also expressed their rage through Colonel Vukovic regarding an ABiH infiltration on 28 May that had cost the lives of seven Bosnian Serbs. Whereas earlier Karremans had dismissed the

⁹⁴⁶ Interview W.A. Ceelen, 02/07/99.

⁹⁴⁷ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam*, p. 158.

⁹⁴⁸ Debriefing report M.J. Koper, 08/09/95.

⁹⁴⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33) D122/a, D53/a, D52/a. Command of 1st Milici Brigade to Command of Drina Corps, 01/06/95, No. I/02-495-1. ABiH 28th Division Command, Asst Commander for Security Captain Nedžad Bektić to Command of 2nd Corps Security Department, 02/06/95, No. 13-05-77/95; ABiH 28th Division, Distribution of materiel and technical equipment, 02/06/95, No. 02-35/95.

⁹⁵⁰ CO Dutchbat to HQ UNPROFOR Sarajevo through HQ BH Sector NE, 31/05/95, No. TK9584. Appx. 20 in Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*

murder of these seven Bosnian Serbs as an irrelevant historical fact towards General Nicolai, he now saw it as a pretext for the VRS to start an action. Another point that the VRS had brought up in discussions was that they expected the ABiH to provoke an attack near OP-E. OP-A and OP-C in the west, about which this fear had been expressed earlier, were now apparently out of the picture. In the event of an attack by the ABiH, the VRS would defend themselves, and the VRS were concerned about the fact that OP-E would then be in the line of fire. Vukovic therefore came up with the proposal that, in the event of an attack, the crew could seek shelter with the VRS. In any case, the OP would have to be evacuated as rapidly as possible. Later in the afternoon, Section 5, for military-civil contacts, informed the ABiH of the substance of the discussion with the VRS.⁹⁵¹ The ABiH response was not recorded.

The events of 1 June

On 1 June, VRS Colonel Vukovic again had a discussion with a Dutchbat representative, this time at OP-E. Karremans agreed to a discussion, and this time attended in person, although De Ruiter in Sarajevo had expressly told him two days earlier not to go himself; the fact was that experience in Zepa and Gorazde had shown that one hour before the meeting troop movements would take place near the venue.⁹⁵² After the Dutchbat liaison team had arrived at the post, the VRS was called on the phone. Despite the guarantee of their safety, the VRS negotiating team did not wish to come to OP-E, however: Vukovic did not consider it safe. The VRS therefore proposed another venue, between the OP and the VRS positions, three hundred metres to the south, which the Dutchbat negotiators could reach by foot or APC.⁹⁵³ Karremans was unwilling to do this, in view of the experiences in Gorazde, where two days earlier the VRS had taken two OP crews hostage. Karremans therefore later spoke briefly with Vukovic through an interpreter, on a phone line that ran between the OP and the VRS positions, while standing on the lookout tower of the OP.

Vukovic notified Karremans on behalf of the Commander of the Drina Corps, Major General Zivanovic himself, that the VRS intended from that moment on to use the road to the south of the enclave that led to the bauxite mine area. Dutchbat was therefore requested to open the road at OP-E, and to evacuate the OP.⁹⁵⁴ Karremans rejected this request. In the evening, Vukovic also received written confirmation at OP-P of the rejection of his proposal: the fact was that OP-E lay within the borders of the Safe Area, and it was Dutchbat's duty to man OPs along the confrontation line, Karremans said.⁹⁵⁵

According to Corporal de Vries, Sergeant Ceelen on OP-E asked Karremans after the discussion between Karremans and Vukovic whether there were any details that he should be aware of. According to De Vries, the Company Commander had answered Ceelen by saying that this was not the case. Ceelen confirmed this, and added that Captain Groen had asked Karremans the same question, and had also received the answer that nothing had been discussed that was of interest to the crew of the OP. The Dutchbat soldiers on the OP had other ideas, however; the pressure from the VRS increased. Ceelen heard later on the Netherlands World Service radio that Vukovic had demanded the evacuation of an OP. If that was indeed the case, which it was, Karremans should have said so, in Ceelen's opinion, because the OP was in danger from that moment on. Furthermore, Ceelen heard from the interpreter about the VRS plans to take the southern point of the enclave.⁹⁵⁶

⁹⁵¹ CO Dutchbat to HQ UNPROFOR Sarajevo through HQ BH Sector NE, 31/05/95, No. TK9584. Appx. 20 in Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?* See also p. 141.

⁹⁵² Karremans, *Srebrenica: Who Cares?*, p. 140.

⁹⁵³ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. CO Dutchbat to BH Command, 01/06/95, No. TK 9586.

⁹⁵⁴ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 144 and Appx. 21.

⁹⁵⁵ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. CO Dutchbat to Col Vukovic, 01/06/95, No. TK9585.

⁹⁵⁶ SMG/Debrief. Diary of E.R. de Vries; interview W.A. Ceelen, 02/07/99.

The 28th Division was preparing for further hostilities, and in the meantime sent extra ammunition to the various brigades. Altogether this was a reasonable quantity, but in proportion to the number of available rifles it was not much more than twenty cartridges each. The ammunition that was distributed consisted of 43,000 rifle rounds, 4500 machine gun rounds, 280 hand grenades, 45 M-57 anti-tank rockets, 30 82 mm mortar shells and 52 rounds for a 60 mm rocket launcher.⁹⁵⁷

It remained unsettled in and around the enclave. In the town of Srebrenica itself, men with weapons became an increasingly common sight.⁹⁵⁸ According to the Canadian UNMO Captain Bob Patchett, there was a hint that something was about to happen, but it was unclear when it would be. The VRS had been complaining for weeks that the ABiH were digging trenches and were walking around heavily armed, but now more positions than before were being occupied on both sides. According to Patchett, another signal was being shown a map by the VRS with new confrontation lines. These lines implied that the Swedish Shelter Project - whose entrance was not far from OP-E - would come under Bosnian Serb control.⁹⁵⁹

The ABiH liaison officer requested to be able to discuss the situation with UNMOs on a daily basis, and also requested information on the state of affairs in Gorazde. However, the UNMOs did not have this. In turn, the UNMOs requested the ABiH to refrain from provocation. The population had already been warned not to allow cattle to graze in the vicinity of the confrontation line, and not to cut wood there.⁹⁶⁰

In the morning of 1 June, there was an exchange of fire to the south of the enclave. Residents reported that the VRS had laid an ambush in the hills of Sucasca in the vicinity of OP-K (two kilometres west of OP-E), which was located on one of the smuggling routes to Zepa, along which a group had just returned to Srebrenica. According to an ABiH source, eleven people died in this ambush, including several ABiH soldiers.⁹⁶¹ The ABiH then formed a special unit to retrieve the bodies, including those of several boys under the age of sixteen. According to an ABiH source, a local Dutchbat commander was said to have told the VRS that the ABiH men had been in combat action, and that, although only flour was found in their rucksacks brought from Zepa. There was no publicity on the incident.⁹⁶²

The crew of OP-K had indeed counted 46 ABiH soldiers, who were walking to the ambush site. The OP crew also saw that the VRS were unloading weapons from a vehicle and were setting up weapon mounts. Later the same day, Dutchbat also observed a T-55 tank there. A returning group of Bosnian Muslims smugglers even reported that the VRS had ten tanks to the south of the enclave, and that the VRS regularly entered the enclave via this smuggling route. Even more remarkable was that this group (35 men, 20 of whom were armed, and 35 horses) said that they had bought five armoured personnel carriers (type BTR-60) from the Ukrainian battalion in Zepa. Karremans had the story of the purchased armoured personnel carriers investigated and came to the conclusion that it was untrue.⁹⁶³

On the other hand, UNMOs reported, as the 'oddest item of news', that two such armoured personnel carriers had entered the enclave at night. The crew of OP-K is said to have seen the armoured personnel carriers, fired flares, and even tried to shoot at them, but the vehicles were out of range. The corresponding OP-K report indicated that two wheeled vehicles, probably armoured

⁹⁵⁷ ICTY (IT-98-33) D122/a, D53/a, D52/a. Command of 1st Milici Brigade to Command of Drina Corps, 01/06/95, No. I/02-495-1; ABiH 28th Division Command, Asst Commander for Security Captain Nedžad Bektić to Command of 2nd Corps Security Department, 02/06/95, No. 13-05-77/95; ABiH 28th Division, Distribution of materiel and technical equipment, 02/06/95, No. 02-35/95.

⁹⁵⁸ MSF Brussels. Capsat MSF Srebrenica to MSF Beograd, 02/06/95 03:06, No. Out 679.

⁹⁵⁹ Interview Bob Patchett, 19/11/99.

⁹⁶⁰ SMG 1001. Capsat TX to TA info Dutchbat LO Team, 012130B Jun 95.

⁹⁶¹ Interview ABiH Captain Hazrudin Kisić, 17/05/99 and 18/05/99.

⁹⁶² Confidential interview (51).

⁹⁶³ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 144.

personnel carriers of the same type BTR-60, entered the enclave via the road that ran 250 metres to the east of the OP, and subsequently made their way to the north.⁹⁶⁴

One month later, more reports emerged on these armoured personnel carriers: during the night of 1 July, OP-C in the southwest heard heavy engine noises from the adjoining Bandera triangle. A resident reported that ABiH BTR-60s were involved.⁹⁶⁵ No further indications regarding the presence of this type of armoured personnel carrier in the enclave were found. There was a story that they had continued through the lines on to Tuzla.

The events of 2 June

Confusion and fear reigned in these days in the enclave. A contributory factor was that the UN had withdrawn its Civil Police from the town to the Dutchbat compound in Potocari.⁹⁶⁶ UNHCR also reported that the tension was increasing hand over fist. This was not only a consequence of the ambush laid by the VRS at OP-K, but also of reports that could be heard on Radio Bratunac: 1500 Arkan troops were on the way to Bratunac to capture Srebrenica, and the VRS intended to capture OPs from Dutchbat by force.⁹⁶⁷

Dutchbat heard still more panic reports. 10,000 VRS soldiers were reported to be on standby on the Drina and they were to attack that same evening. All they were waiting for was a political decision, but when it came they would attack on a front approximately ten kilometres wide. The ABiH claimed it could resist an attack for up to seven days.⁹⁶⁸

The Dutch Military Intelligence Service (RNLA) followed the developments with concern. The service suspected that the VRS ambush was intended to bring an end to the smuggling practices, after accusations that the ABiH was using the routes for supplying weapons and ammunition. Both claimed that UNPROFOR was not performing its duties adequately. The Bosnian Serbs were said to claim that UNPROFOR was unable to hold the Muslims in the enclave, and the Bosnian Muslims were said to blame UNPROFOR for not protecting the population sufficiently.⁹⁶⁹

The 28th ABiH Division expected that the VRS Drina Corps, reinforced with auxiliaries from Serbia, would step up the pressure on the enclave. In this way, the VRS would seek to provoke a continuous migration of the population to Tuzla. The ABiH also expected that the VRS would put pressure on Dutchbat to render the battalion powerless, so that Dutchbat would have no way open to it other than evacuation. A first phase in that process would be the capture of OPs. Once UNPROFOR had been driven away, the Bosnian Serbs could make a start on their attempt to 'cleanse' the left bank of the Drina once and for all. The ABiH therefore expected further attacks with tanks or armoured vehicles, to gain possession of the road link from Bratunac to Milici via the south of the enclave. The VRS mobilized men in Han Pijesak, Milici, Bratunac and Zvornik. The ABiH wanted to step up their intelligence activities because of the situation, and the 28th Division's brigades were therefore ordered to set up observation posts, which would be able to warn of traffic on the roads from Bratunac to Konjevic Polje, from Milici to Podravanje and from Jasenova to Zeleni Jadar. These posts would then have to be situated partly outside the enclave.⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶⁴ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 434, UNMO UNPROFOR HQ North-East, Milinfosummaries/1, SNE/1. UNMO HQ Sector NE to UNMO HQ Zagreb, Weekly Infosum 21/95 (22 - 28 May) and 22/95 (29 May - 4 Jun), 281500B May 95 and 040800B Jun 95. The report from OP-K was from 270015B May 95. MID. Doc Rest 200,300,200,200,200.Yo.12423 (AMID 443-0305 Box 113).

⁹⁶⁵ SMG 1001. C-BCie to Dutchbat Potocari, Daily Sitrep of 301600BJun95 - 011600BJul95.

⁹⁶⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 4 April - 23 August 1995. Fax Biser to Mihov D-SRSG BHC FWD, 03/06/95, unnumbered.

⁹⁶⁷ CRST. UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Sarajevo, 02/06/95 08:07.

⁹⁶⁸ SMG 1004/20. Capsat 61 to 90, 02/06/95 12:12.

⁹⁶⁹ MID/RNLA. Military Intelligence Service Army Dept, INTSUM 105/95, 021200Z Jun 95. Confi.

⁹⁷⁰ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 285. IBLbr, 02/09/95, Str. pov. br. 01-71/95.

On this day, 2 June, the level of the activities of the warring factions seemed at first to decrease for a while, although the trenches of the warring factions generally remained occupied. At the start of the evening, however, the VRS suddenly fired fifteen shots at Dutchbat OP-E personnel, who had just returned from the observation post above the OP. Dutchbat also noticed that an exchange of fire was taking place in the south-western corner of the enclave between the VRS and the ABiH.⁹⁷¹ According to an ABiH report, the VRS had already attempted on 2 June to capture OP-E. The ABiH was prepared for it, however, and could foil an attempt by opening fire on the VRS, which cost the VRS two wounded. The ABiH reported to the 2nd Corps in Tuzla that it was in a state of readiness to face surprises, in particular the capture of Dutchbat OPs. The ABiH also observed that the VRS was bringing in reinforcements.⁹⁷²

Meanwhile, Sector North East in Tuzla assessed the threat against Srebrenica as high.⁹⁷³ However, little information yet pointed to an attack on OP-E, until the following day, on 3 June, the OP-E crew observed fifty VRS soldiers in the factory complex on the opposite side of the road. Fifteen to twenty men then crossed the road and so came close in front of the OP: the VRS had started operation 'Jadar-95'.

The events of 3 June: the capture of OP-E

Sergeant Ceelen and Corporal De Vries, who at that time were manning the observation post above the OP, identified the VRS soldiers as Arkan fighters. The OP crew were instructed via a megaphone to leave the OP within ten minutes. Shortly after that, the VRS surrounded the OP. At the same time, two explosions could be heard close by, as well as a couple of heavy bursts of fire. De Vries wrote about this event as follows: 'the message was clear as far as we were concerned. The OP was under heavy fire.'

Ceelen and De Vries gathered their property together in the observation post and watched the scene. Meanwhile, hasty contact was sought with the Company's Second in Command, Captain P.J. Hageman, who in turn, also in this crisis situation, had to feed all the messages back to the battalion leadership. De Vries wrote the following about this in his diary: 'The Serbs either had no clock, or no patience. After a couple of minutes the message became more earnest: "This is your chance to leave the OP". The only thing that that they can say at battalion level is: "stand by, out" [indicating that the battalion staff did not know how to deal with the situation] and "situation? Over".'⁹⁷⁴

The man behind the megaphone was Petr Uscumlic: on that day, the VRS had brought this Montenegrin UNMO interpreter, who was stationed in Bratunac, against his will to an improvised headquarters on the Kvarac hill to the east of Srebrenica. He was then told that the VRS were going to capture OP-E, but that the VRS did not want Dutchbat to have the slightest suspicion. Uscumlic was given a megaphone to urge Dutchbat personnel on OP-E to leave the OP. However, he thought it was understandable that they had opted for the safety of the bunker within the OP, because this was the safest place. After five to ten minutes of hesitating, the crew left the OP, 'thank God' Uscumlic said. The VRS did fire on the OP's defensive embankment, but the crew were able to leave the post unharmed. Dutchbat officers later said that they were 'pissed off' with Uscumlic, but he never had the chance to explain the situation.⁹⁷⁵

⁹⁷¹ CRST. Dutchbat Milinfo, period 020600-030600B Jun95.

⁹⁷²NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpusa Odjeljenje za moral, 02/06/09, Str. pov. br. 04-84/95.

⁹⁷³ CRST. HQ Sector NE Daily Milinfosum from 311700B May to 011700B Jun 95. UN Confidential.

⁹⁷⁴ SMG/Debrief. Diary of E.R. de Vries.

⁹⁷⁵ Interview Petr Uscumlic, 14/09/99.

A Standing Order for Dutchbat was to set fire to everything in the event of a forced departure from an OP. OP-E was prepared for this, but on the instruction of the B Company Commander, it was not carried out.⁹⁷⁶

The Commander of B Company, Groen, was in Potocari at the time of the capture of OP-E for the daily discussion with the Battalion Commander. He received the following message from his Second-in-Command, Hageman: 'OP-E is under attack! Return immediately!' Groen followed the message traffic on the radio on the way; Hageman maintained contact with the OP. The battalion staff had Hageman ask: 'When is the last chance for leaving without casualties?' The answer from the OP was: 'Yes, that is right now!' with which the OP crew broke off the communication.⁹⁷⁷

The rule for such a necessarily rapid evacuation was that the Dutchbat members who formed the crew of the observation post were to descend the slope in an arc to the road, to be picked up there by the withdrawing APC; the crew of the OP were already in the APC, with the exception of Ceelen and De Vries. Ceelen noted: 'The OP Commander was already sitting in the vehicle when our company [referring to the Second-in-Command] said: 'break off'. However, Ceelen's account of this last communication between the company leaders and OP-E was somewhat different from that of Groen, above.

Ceelen then ran with a machine gun to the road, and De Vries with a rifle and two anti-tank weapons. The wet weather meant that they had to slide down the slope. The APC arrived and waited for them in the middle of the road. The problem now was how to get in, because the APC's hatch remained closed. The two of them lay in the verge, and the VRS fired in the direction of the APC. Bullets whistled close above them, and they heard the crack of branches. They wanted to tell the APC crew on their walkie-talkie that the hatch had to be opened, but all the running and falling had changed the frequency setting of the walkie-talkie, so that there was no reaction from the APC. They therefore had to wait until the hatch opened, and when that finally did happen the two of them ran forward and dived in. To make matters worse, the hatch would not close again, because a phosphorus grenade had become lodged in it. After opening and closing the hatch a few times the vehicle was able to drive away, 'under the rattle of farewell fire'.

After moving one and a half kilometres from their terrifying adventure, the APC came to a halt: the OP crew met the Quick Reaction Force there, and Company Commander Captain Groen,⁹⁷⁸ who remarked with hindsight, with a feeling for understatement: 'They had been forced to swallow quite a lot. They were really tense.'⁹⁷⁹

Follow-up of the capture of OP-E

The attack gave rise to alarm on the compound in Srebrenica. The B Company Quick Reaction Force (QRF), consisting of an APC with nine men under the command of Sergeant Struik, was alerted. When the QRF arrived, they found Captain Groen and Sergeant Ceelen two kilometres to the north of OP-E, standing on the roof of a house so as to be able to see the OP. Groen wanted to know how far the VRS were advancing on Srebrenica town, and whether they were continuing to the nearby Swedish Shelter Project. 'In which case there would no end to the misery.' In order to get a better view of what was going on, Groen took someone from the APC, got in and then drove at walking pace to the south to approximately 500-600 metres from OP-E.⁹⁸⁰

They were reasonably tense and they did not know how the VRS would react. After all, the VRS had earlier opened fire on the Dutchbat personnel. The APC proceeded slowly forwards, stopping occasionally, turning off the engine so as to listen, seeking the location of the VRS, and whether

⁹⁷⁶ Interview W.A. Ceelen, 02/07/99.

⁹⁷⁷ Interview J. R. Groen, 05/07/99.

⁹⁷⁸ SMG/Debrief. Diary of E.R. de Vries.

⁹⁷⁹ Interview J. R. Groen, 05/07/99.

⁹⁸⁰ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (36).

contact could be made with them. According to a patrol of the commands in the lateral area, with which the APC was in contact, the APC had even already passed the newly created VRS line. Groen then wanted to return to a location that he had seen earlier and that offered a clear view of the valley.

At that point, ABiH soldiers suddenly appeared from the woods and set up a roadblock. They had walked into the woods with the APC without being seen, and they wanted to see how far the APC could go: which would be how far they could go, too. When Groen wanted to turn back with the APC, the ABiH set up a roadblock to indicate that they must not give up the territory the vehicle had managed to move into.⁹⁸¹

An ABiH soldier stood on the road with an M-79 anti-tank weapon on his shoulder, and five were standing in the verge.⁹⁸² The intention was clear: no further back towards Srebrenica. The ABiH soldier who made that clear had a sniper's rifle, which he demonstrated on the spot. The VRS positions were visible in the valley. The ABiH fired a mortar shell at them and a VRS soldier who jumped up to change position was shot down. After that, the same happened again. The ABiH were in front of, alongside and above the APC and fired intensely on the VRS positions. All this time, the apparently disciplined VRS did not fire back, while the ABiH soldiers did their best to involve the UN in the fight. Via the battalion Ops Room (the command post), Groen requested the VRS to be informed that the UN remained neutral. Whether that happened he did not know.⁹⁸³

Captain Groen felt obliged to stay in the vehicle so as not to be taken hostage by the ABiH. The way back to Srebrenica was blocked. The ABiH continued to fire on the VRS from the direct vicinity of the APC for the entire evening. This persisted until three o'clock in the morning. Contact was made by radio with the battalion staff, and the ABiH liaison team was requested to mediate.⁹⁸⁴ After some time, the ABiH liaison officer, Ekrem Salihovic, indeed appeared at the location. After that there was no more firing. According to Salihovic, there was chaos at the time among the ABiH soldiers there, and panic broke out because they ended up behind Dutchbat lines. In turn, Dutchbat demanded that the ABiH make an opening to allow the APC to withdraw.⁹⁸⁵ The ABiH appeared to have no other intention than to pin the APC to the spot. After consultation with the battalion staff, Groen sought a new location for an OP.⁹⁸⁶ An agreement was arrived at between the ABiH and Dutchbat: Dutchbat would remain in the new position, and the ABiH would occupy new positions somewhere else, and would not fire on Dutchbat.⁹⁸⁷ At five o'clock in the morning, the ABiH vanished.⁹⁸⁸ In the morning, another APC appeared under the command of Sergeant Van Eck to set up a new OP, which became OP-U.⁹⁸⁹ The Bosnian Muslims continued to insist on the recapture of OP-E by Dutchbat, however.⁹⁹⁰

Although the Dutchbat situation reports as well as Karremans' report made no mention of it, Close Air Support had been requested at the time of the capture of OP-E. This was the first time that Dutchbat III had done so. The request was submitted to Sarajevo, contrary to the applicable procedure, without a list of objectives. At that time there was a considerable amount of reluctance in Sarajevo to permitting Close Air Support. The staff officer responsible in Sarajevo had to ask the headquarters of Sector North East whether an attack was involved and whether that attack was directed specifically at UNPROFOR units. Before consensus was reached between Dutchbat and UNPROFOR on these questions, following extensive discussion, much time had been lost; the NATO aircraft that would have to carry out the Close Air Support could not remain in the air indefinitely. Therefore, according to the Chief of Staff of Sector North East, Colonel Brantz, it was not surprising that Sarajevo returned with

⁹⁸¹ Interview J. R. Groen, Havelte, 05/07/99.

⁹⁸² Information based on confidential debriefing statement (36).

⁹⁸³ Interview J. R. Groen, Havelte, 05/07/99.

⁹⁸⁴ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (36)

⁹⁸⁵ Interview Ekrem Salihovic, 02/12/98.

⁹⁸⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (36).

⁹⁸⁷ Interview Ekrem Salihovic, 02/12/98.

⁹⁸⁸ Confidential debriefing statement (36).

⁹⁸⁹ Confidential debriefing statement (36).

⁹⁹⁰ Confidential debriefing statement (43).

the statement that no aircraft were available; they had returned to their base. Brantz said that Dutchbat responded with amazement to this decision by Sarajevo; the battalion staff could not make head or tail of Sarajevo's air support policy.⁹⁹¹ In this case, Dutchbat was not entirely to blame. Not only had an American F-16 been shot down one day earlier, but a decision taken a few days earlier meant that, in view of the delicate situation in which UNPROFOR found itself after its personnel had been taken hostage, New York also wanted to be consulted before Close Air Support was considered. This meant that a decision on Close Air Support took even longer. The directive was otherwise confidential and was not to be disclosed to the troops.⁹⁹²

After the occupation of Zeleni Jadar, the VRS had the access to the town of Srebrenica in their hands. The VRS Skelani Brigade under the command of Colonel Vukovic, was now on either side of the road at Zeleni Jadar and controlled the communication lines and the high ground. War President Osman Suljic of the Opstina was convinced that the VRS were going to occupy the enclave at a later stage, and said that they conveyed this message to Karremans. The UN personnel may originally have understood matters correctly that only the OP was involved, but Suljic continued to think otherwise.⁹⁹³

The Bosnian Muslims were in agreement regarding the VRS objective of capturing OP-E: the use of the road link with Milici, the closure of the link between Zepa and Srebrenica, and gaining access to the bauxite mines.⁹⁹⁴ With the occupation of Zeleni Jadar, as mentioned the VRS also had the southern access to Srebrenica in their hands.⁹⁹⁵ According to Ramiz Becirovic, the Commander of the ABiH 28th division, there was no direct connection with the later attack on the enclave, however. There were provocations by the ABiH all that time, and the VRS had responded to it since December 1994. At the start of the actual attack on Srebrenica on 6 July too, Becirovic still assumed that the only objective of the VRS was to further open the road from Zeleni Jadar to Milici.⁹⁹⁶ Osman Suljic also thought that the objective of capturing OP-E was to enable the free use of the road from Bratunac to Milici.⁹⁹⁷ An underlying reason seen by the intelligence staff of the 2nd Corps in Tuzla was that the ABiH was supplied from Zepa via Zeleni Jadar, and the VRS wanted to bring an end to that situation.⁹⁹⁸ Within Sector North East, the staff likewise thought that the issue was the use of the road. It shortened the east-west links for the VRS considerably, it increased the possibility of keeping the population in the southern part of the enclave under control, of keeping an eye on the factory complexes to the south of OP-E, of restricting the traffic to Zepa and of exercising control on the bauxite mines (which were said to belong to the vice-president of the Parliament of the Republika Srpska).⁹⁹⁹ Civil Affairs Officer Ken Biser said that he had been proclaiming for a year that the VRS wanted to wrest control of the road concerned.¹⁰⁰⁰

The VRS did not accept Dutchbat's invitation for a discussion with a representative of the Drina Corps, the purpose of which was to convey a protest and to request the return of the materiel left behind: night vision sight, a radio, ammunition, two generators and UN uniforms were missing.¹⁰⁰¹ Dutchbat Liaison Officer Boering had already requested VRS Liaison Officer Nikolic to withdraw the

⁹⁹¹ NIOD, Coll Brantz. Diary of Brantz (version August 1999), p. 89.

⁹⁹² NIOD, Coll Brantz. Code Cable Janvier to Smith, 30/05/95, UN Conf.

⁹⁹³ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

⁹⁹⁴ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpusa Odjeljenje za moral, 02/06/09, Str. pov. br. 04-84/95. Interview Dzemaludin Becirevic and Sefket Hafizovic, 21/10/97.

⁹⁹⁵ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98, 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

⁹⁹⁶ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

⁹⁹⁷ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

⁹⁹⁸ Interview Hazrudin Kistic, 17/05/99 and 18/05/99. According to the service, a black shirt unit from Central Serbia had executed the attack on OP-E. Radio Milici and Radio Bratunac never made a secret of the fact that soldiers from Serbia served in the VRS.

⁹⁹⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 4 April - 23 August 1995. Fax Biser to Corwin, 09/06/95, unnumbered.

¹⁰⁰⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 42, File SNE, 25/77, 04/04/95 - 23/08/95. Fax Ken Biser to Ed Joseph Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, 05/06/95.

¹⁰⁰¹ NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. HQ Dutchbat to Sector HQ North East, Sitrep and Milinfo period 021700 to 031700B Jun 95.

VRS after the capture of OP-E, otherwise NATO Close Air Support would be requested. Nikolic said that he would pass the message on to a higher level, but it had no effect.¹⁰⁰²

Dutchbat also had a meeting with the leaders of the Opstina, Osman Suljic and Mayor Salihovic Fahrudin, and Military Commander Ramiz Becirovic. They stated that the ABiH was not in a state of readiness at the time of the VRS attack. The three proposed that the UN present an ultimatum to the VRS to the effect that the VRS should return as rapidly as possible to the old positions, and, failing that, to use Close Air Support. However, Karremans thought that, in the middle of a hostage crisis, the UN was not in a position to make demands. Karremans did agree to the request to intensify the observation activities at the Swedish Shelter Project and OP-R.¹⁰⁰³ In addition, Becirovic discussed with Dutchbat the return of surrendered ammunition, but this was refused by Dutchbat.

According to Becirovic, the battalion leaders pointed out in later discussions that Dutchbat had no mandate and insufficient weapons to act against an attack by the VRS. The Dutchbat leaders explained that the loss of OP-E was merely an incident and it could be solved.¹⁰⁰⁴ Moreover, according to Chief of Police Hakija Meholjic, Karremans did his best: he sent reports on the situation to his superiors in the organization and asked the War Presidency of Srebrenica to do the same towards Sarajevo.¹⁰⁰⁵ Such reporting from Srebrenica encountered problems however, because of trouble with the links at that time. For this reason, the 2nd Corps in Tuzla was not in a position to verify reports of the capture of OP-E, but if it was true, according to this 2nd Corps, then the General Staff of the ABiH should request UNPROFOR for military intervention at the highest level.¹⁰⁰⁶

Civil Affairs in Tuzla was afraid that the loss of OP-E would expose UNPROFOR to severe criticism in the media, especially if the Bosnian government were to recall that Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had been asked in September/October 1994 to arrange negotiations for the use of the road in exchange for electricity and water and better access to the enclave;¹⁰⁰⁷ it might have been possible to achieve that last aim then, but not any longer. The negative publicity came on 14 June with an issue of the newspaper *Ljiljan*, which reported that there was excellent collaboration between Dutchbat and the VRS, and that the VRS had informed Dutchbat that OP-E would be attacked so that Dutchbat could pull out in good time. The article was also full of insinuations: the Company Commander had urgently requested to be able to leave Srebrenica and had reported that the ABiH intended to attack UNPROFOR and to confiscate their weapons. Lower-ranking Dutchbat soldiers had requested the 'unarmed ABiH' for assistance in resisting further VRS attacks. The newspaper also accused two captains who they identified by name, the Dutchman Kooij and the Norwegian Toksted, of stating at a Sector North East intelligence meeting in Tuzla that the massacre in Tuzla on 25 May, in which a single shell in the centre had inflicted a large number of casualties, had been the work of the ABiH.¹⁰⁰⁸

The Bosnian Minister for UN Affairs, Hasan Muratovic, called the withdrawal from OP-E utterly 'outrageous'. The UN had neglected its duties and he deplored the UNPROFOR attitude towards the Safe Areas. Muratovic took the opportunity to stress that the Bosnian government had no plans for protecting the town, but it did have plans for protecting the residents. He did not make clear how this was supposed to happen.¹⁰⁰⁹ Governor Izet Hadzic of the Tuzla Canton requested the recapture of OP-E, which should take place in a similar way to what the French had done with the Vrbanja bridge in Sarajevo. Although Hadzic admitted only reluctantly that there were ABiH soldiers in

¹⁰⁰² Interview Omer Subasic, 19/10/97 and 20/10/97. Subasic was the interpreter on this occasion.

¹⁰⁰³ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 146.

¹⁰⁰⁴ ABiH Tuzla. 2nd Corps, unnumbered. Supplementary statement by Ramiz Becirovic (1956), 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement of 11/08/95. (The original statement was not found.)

¹⁰⁰⁵ Interview Hakija Meholjic, 02/02/98 with supplements on 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

¹⁰⁰⁶ ABiH Sarajevo. ABiH Command 2nd Corps to Command General Staff, 03/06/95, No. 02/1-592/2.

¹⁰⁰⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 4 April - 23 August 1995. Fax Biser to Corwin, 09/06/95, unnumbered.

¹⁰⁰⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 4 April - 23 August 1995. Fax Biser to Corwin, 21/06/95, unnumbered. A translation of *Ljiljan* of 14/06/95 was attached.

¹⁰⁰⁹ MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, No. 28/95, closed 141400B June 1995.

Srebrenica, he said to Civil Affairs Officer Ken Biser that he would warn them to refrain from provocative actions. According to Biser, it would only be a matter of time before the ABiH lured VRS vehicles into ambushes, which would result in the shelling of the enclave and the capture of even more OPs along the southern edge. The day after the capture of OP-E, the VRS had already started to take the road into use.¹⁰¹⁰

The only weapon Biser could see that he could use in the conflict to prevent further incursions of the VRS into the enclave was to mobilize the international media, but because Tuzla had no Public Information capacity, this would be a disastrous path to go down.¹⁰¹¹ Furthermore, the international media had other interests as long as the hostage crisis had not ended. Therefore there were no reports of the capture of OP-E in the international press. Only Radio Sarajevo referred to UNPROFOR's impotence to protect the population of Srebrenica; it was added that Dutchbat was even unable or unwilling to protect itself against attacks from the Bosnian Serbs, because it had handed over an OP complete with weapons. The station also reported that five tanks, ten armoured personnel carriers and ten howitzers had been brought in from Serbia, which had subsequently been fired on the innocent citizens of Srebrenica, killing or wounding dozens of citizens in Srebrenica and Zepa. The station claimed that the source of the information was the 2nd Corps in Tuzla, but the correspondent Nino Catic also informed Radio Sarajevo from Srebrenica that the VRS had shelled villages in the south on 5 June.¹⁰¹² It was not untrue that there had been shelling, that there was no question of there being many dead and wounded. The reports of the large-scale supply of equipment from Serbia was a part of the psychological warfare.

The loss of OP-E was also raised in discussions between Sector North East and the staff of the 2nd Corps in Tuzla. There was some sympathy for the fact that Dutchbat had abandoned the OP under pressure from the VRS, but it must not be allowed to happen for a second time, because it put the population in danger, the Chief of Staff of the 2nd Corps stated. Should Dutchbat abandon a second OP, then the ABiH should take matters into their own hands. At that time, the 2nd Corps feared that this would happen in the northeast of the enclave. Colonel Brantz, who represented Sector North East, said that he understood the 2nd Corps' attitude, but he emphasized that the Dutchbat commander was the only person who took decisions and Dutchbat was 'capable to do the job in the most proper way.'¹⁰¹³

Dutchbat feared attempts by the ABiH to recapture OP-E and to restore the old confrontation line, in which case the conflict would escalate and the ABiH would want their weapons back from the Weapon Collection Point. Meanwhile, Karremans informed the UN staff in Tuzla that if the capture of OP-E was indeed the start of a larger VRS attack, it would be inevitable that the ABiH would have to be given back their weapons in order to be able to defend themselves, because Dutchbat would not be in a position to defend the enclave.¹⁰¹⁴

It could not be ruled out that the ABiH wanted to take matters into their own hands. Ramiz Becirovic wanted instructions from Naser Oric on how the 28th division should position itself against Dutchbat if there was a threat of another OP being abandoned: should they disarm the Dutchbat personnel and take their equipment, or prevent them from withdrawing from the OP? In Becirovic's analysis, Dutchbat would not allow matters to come to a fight with the VRS, and the battalion had the intention of withdrawing further from the OPs and more into the enclave. However, Dutchbat would not want to admit that to the ABiH. The ABiH therefore felt that it had been misled by Dutchbat.

¹⁰¹⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 4 April - 23 August 1995. Fax Biser to Corwin, 09/06/95, unnumbered.

¹⁰¹¹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 4 April - 23 August 1995. Fax Biser to Joseph, 05/06/95, unnumbered.

¹⁰¹² BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 07/06/95, source Radio Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo, in Serbo-Croat 1300 gmt 05/06/95.

¹⁰¹³ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Memorandum Meeting with COS 2 Corps ABiH, 04/06/95.

¹⁰¹⁴ NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. HQ Dutchbat to Sector HQ North East, Sitrep and Milinfo period 021700 to 031700B Jun 95.

According to him, nothing had yet been achieved in the field, with which Becirovic was probably referring to the ideas mentioned earlier about a joint defence, which Franken had revealed on 29 May. The VRS was visibly busy everywhere demonstrating its strength. Srebrenica and Zepa were seriously threatened, and Becirovic also considered a media campaign to be necessary in order to maintain the enclaves. Becirovic further stated that it would be said that OP-E would be recaptured, and it concerned him that the VRS had taken away the OP's equipment and that an unknown quantity of weapons and uniforms had fallen into VRS hands.¹⁰¹⁵

The requested instructions of the 2nd Corps arrived on 7 July, not from Naser Oric, but from Sulejman Budakovic, the Chief of Staff of the 2nd Corps. Attempts must be made to make an agreement with Dutchbat to jointly repel a VRS attack. If Dutchbat refused, Becirovic was to take all possible measures not to allow a single metre of territory to fall into VRS hands. If a Dutchbat OP were to withdraw, the OP must be disarmed and the weapons used for their own purposes. According to Budakovic, the UN's instructions were to defend the enclave in the event of an attack, and that Dutchbat had also been given corresponding orders.¹⁰¹⁶

The fact that some Muslims said that Dutchbat abandoned OP-E without a struggle appeared to be motivated mainly by disappointment about the loss of this important point. The effect that the fall of OP-E had on the Potocari brigade (284th brigade), who were in the northern part of the enclave, was one of total demoralization. If the UN also gave in, what was the ABiH supposed to do then?¹⁰¹⁷ The loss of OP-E also meant that access to the Swedish Shelter Project, where three thousand Muslim Displaced Persons lived, was now open. The population had already declined from three thousand to two thousand.¹⁰¹⁸ As a result of the VRS shelling and the threat of sustained armed VRS force, 1000-1500 people fled from the Swedish Shelter Project to Srebrenica town. It was not the first and it would certainly also not be the last time that Displaced Persons in the period to the fall of the enclave would leave the Swedish Shelter Project. Forced by the degrading conditions in the overpopulated town, they always returned, however, when conditions appeared to be quiet.¹⁰¹⁹

It was not out of the question that fighting could break out on a larger scale in the south of the enclave. The VRS added reinforcements around OP-E and established lines around the factory complexes in Jasenova near Zeleni Jadar.¹⁰²⁰ In the night of 3/4 June, the population reported to the gate of the compound in Srebrenica that the ABiH was to launch a counterattack with one thousand men in the morning. Dutchbat did see many armed ABiH around OP-F but there was no question of a counterattack to regain control of the area near OP-E. Dutchbat also feared for the two other southern OPs: OP-F and OP-K could well be a subsequent VRS target. To be prepared for all eventualities, they took the precaution of moving four Quick Reaction Force APCs from the Potocari compound to Srebrenica. In the meantime, the VRS had settled into OP-E and was busy rebuilding it, but a bulldozer that was intended to reposition the defences was forced to turn back by ABiH rifle fire.¹⁰²¹

The VRS was informed on 4 June that Dutchbat has set up a new OP (OP-U) to the east of the Swedish Shelter Project in order to protect the population there. The VRS, in the person of Major Nikolic, accepted that; the establishment of new OPs was permitted in the vicinity of Slapovic (to the west of the Swedish Shelter Project) or Zivkovo Brdo on Hill 780 (to the east of the Swedish Shelter Project). Otherwise, Nikolic expressed his wrath about the fact that, after the capture of OP-E, Dutchbat had not intervened when the ABiH opened fire on the VRS. The ABiH had fired ten mortar

¹⁰¹⁵ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpusa n/r k-danta 28.dKoV brig. Naser Orica, 03/06/95, Str. pov. br. 01-73/95.

¹⁰¹⁶ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa to K-di 28. DKov n/r zastupnika k-ta, K-di 285.lbr n/r k-danta, naznanje, 07/06/95, Str. pov. br. 02/1-620/1.

¹⁰¹⁷ On the basis of discussions with two Bosnian witnesses who wish to remain anonymous.

¹⁰¹⁸ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Eastern Enclaves Assessment, Appendix A to HQ UNPROFOR 800, dated 06/06/95, UN Confi.

¹⁰¹⁹ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Diary of Brantz.

¹⁰²⁰ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa to K-di 28. DKov n/r zastupnika k-ta, K-di 285.lbr n/r k-danta, naznanje, 07/06/95, Str. pov. br. 02/1-620/1.

¹⁰²¹ NIOD, Coll. Koremans, Diary of Koremans, 35th and 36th week p. 34 and 1-2.

shells on the VRS positions, and Dutchbat did not obstruct them, although they were sixty to seventy metres from the ABiH firing position. There was not even any attempt to stop the firing by the ABiH, and there was no attempt to disarm the ABiH soldiers. The VRS had not taken reprisals for the ABiH attack with artillery fire because a Dutchbat APC was positioned there. Nikolic demanded the immediate disarming of the ABiH and their removal from the hills above the Jadar valley, in other words, in the enclave. Otherwise, the VRS would drive the Muslims out by force. Furthermore, Dutchbat must remove the APC from the ABiH position, in order to avoid it being exposed to VRS fire in the event of the ABiH again opening fire on the VRS.¹⁰²² In an apparent attempt to press home this demand, a VRS tank (type T-54) pointed its gun at the new OP-U and fired. It missed the OP by one hundred metres.¹⁰²³

Assessment of the state of affairs

It was clear that the capture of OP-E entailed many tensions in the enclave. It made the population realize that the UN was not in a position to protect them. The warring factions started to behave more violently now that they saw that the UN remained inactive. After this, the UNMOs had little further contact with the VRS. Interpreter Petr Uscumlic was requested to contact the VRS, but he said that no one was available to talk to the UNMOs. This limited the chances of finding out what was going on on the Bosnian-Serb side.¹⁰²⁴

Disarming the ABiH was one of the conditions that Karadzic had set on UNPROFOR for the release of the UN soldier hostages. Karadzic also demanded complete demilitarization of the Safe Areas and enforcement of the arms embargo.¹⁰²⁵ In his assessment of the state of affairs, Karremans stated that it was impossible to disarm thousands of ABiH soldiers. Karremans concluded from the threats to drive out the Muslims if the ABiH were not disarmed, which had been made by VRS Major Nikolic, that the VRS might continue the attack within 36 hours. The objective would then be to gain control of the River Jader valley and the high ground to the north of them as far as Mount Kak, which would correspond with the southern border of the enclave as the VRS saw it. With this, the Swedish Shelter Project, where there were still two thousand people, came to lie in the line of fire. For Dutchbat too, such an advance would have considerable consequences, because it would mean that OPs K, D, S and U would become isolated and then easy for the VRS to take over. In fact, Dutchbat would then have to take back these OPs. Karremans saw this as impossible, however, because the ABiH had already indicated that they would then take over Dutchbat's weapons and APCs, if necessary by force.¹⁰²⁶ In this way, a pattern developed in which Dutchbat increasingly found itself caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.

The intelligence section (in military terms known as the G-2) of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo assessed that the ABiH lacked the manpower to unite Srebrenica with Zepa, and that any conflict would probably be limited to defensive operations on the confrontation line. In turn, the VRS was expected to want to exercise greater control over ABiH activities in the enclave. After gaining possession of the southern access, the pressure would only increase. The pressure on the western edge of the enclave was already considerable. Attacks on the ABiH systems of trenches along the edge of the enclave would be certain to happen. Especially the roads in the north and south and in the vicinity of the bauxite mines would be hit hard. Because the ABiH was probably in no position to launch a counterattack, the VRS could carry out the operations slowly and methodically to avoid victims among

¹⁰²² CRST. Handwritten, English language statement of Major Nikolic. Appx. to Fax HQ Dutchbat to CO Sector North-East, COS BHC, 041500B June 1995. The same message reached the UNMOs through their interpreter in Bratunac, Petr Uscumlic. SMG 1001. Capsat UNMO Srebrenica to Dutchbat LO Team, 042123B Jun 95.

¹⁰²³ Diary of Koreman, 35th and 36th week p. 34 and 1-2.

¹⁰²⁴ Interview Bob Patchett, 19/11/99.

¹⁰²⁵ MID. MID INTSUM 27/95, closed 081400B Jun 1995.

¹⁰²⁶ CRST. Fax HQ Dutchbat to CO Sector North-East, COS BHC, 041500B June 1995.

their own troops. The Jadar valley and the ridge of hills to the north of it were viewed by the intelligence section as a probable target of a VRS attack. However, the intelligence section deemed an attack on the entire enclave and its occupation as improbable: the VRS would want to leave the refugee problem to the Bosnian authorities. The intelligence section saw little room for a Dutchbat withdrawal because the ABiH would thwart such an operation, as the situation around OP-E had shown. Furthermore, the ABiH had already stated that it would confiscate Dutchbat's weapons and armoured personnel carriers by force to obstruct a subsequent withdrawal.¹⁰²⁷

The Army Commander, General Rasim Delic, also expressed disappointment about the withdrawal of OP-E and said he would consider the UN to be an accessory if they failed to attack the VRS in the future. In a reply, General Smith indicated that he was extremely concerned about the outbreak of fighting in Srebrenica (and Gorazde). Smith took the opportunity to reiterate his instructions: 'to deter attacks on the civilian population by our presence, acting only in self-defence'. Delic should understand that UNPROFOR was not equipped and was in no position to fight. Smith assumed that Delic was also informed of the problems with supplying the enclaves and understood that reinforcement was out of the question. In spite of the situation, Smith believed that UNPROFOR was still in a position to be a deterrent and could continue to man OPs until such time as the situation became untenable and the lives of peacekeepers were in danger. Smith took the opportunity to again make clear to Delic that UNPROFOR had to remain neutral. This meant that UNPROFOR could not act together with the ABiH. Smith did emphasize that he was prepared to use force and to recommend the use of air power.¹⁰²⁸

On 6 June, Smith sent his assessment of the situation in East-Bosnia to Akashi and Janvier. In Smith's opinion, the VRS appeared to be aiming to exhaust the ABiH and force them to capitulate by means of a siege. Smith also expected that the VRS would continue to neutralize UNPROFOR. The arrival of supplies, and in particular fuel, was subjected to strict VRS control, or was not permitted at all. The Bosnian Serbs were aiming to undermine the Safe Area regime in such a way that they could deal with their enemy with impunity. The deteriorating situation would also not leave the politicians unmoved, Smith thought: the humanitarian need among the population, possible ethnic cleansing and the further immobilization of the UN would lead to a call to punish the Bosnian Serbs or to deter them from further action. Should UNPROFOR resign itself to the situation, then this would lead to pressure from the Bosnian government to lift the arms embargo. Smith feared that it was impossible to return to a Safe Area regime such as had existed before the air strikes of 25 and 26 May, certainly in view of the impossibility of adequate supplies. In order to prevent a withdrawal from the enclaves, and because the troops and population could no longer be fed, a solution was necessary for the long term. And, Smith wondered in his letter to Akashi and Janvier, what would happen if they were to be an attack on a Safe Area?¹⁰²⁹

4. Developments in June: an imminent VRS attack?

After the skirmishes in early June and the capture of OP-E, it was again reasonably quiet in Srebrenica, also compared with the state of affairs elsewhere in Bosnia. The situation resembled a status quo. There was a change in the situation towards the end of the month. The number of reported Firing Close Incidents on Dutchbat OPs and patrols increased sharply, so that the number of incidents in June ultimately exceeded the number for the entire period from January to June 1995.¹⁰³⁰

¹⁰²⁷ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Eastern Enclaves Assessment, Appendix A to HQ UNPROFOR 800, dated 06/06/95, UN Conf.

¹⁰²⁸ NIOD, Coll. Smith. LtGen R.A. Smith to Army General Rasim Delic, 05/06/95, unnumbered. Delic's letter to Smith was not found.

¹⁰²⁹ NIOD, Coll. Smith. LtGen R.A. Smith to HQ UNPF for SRS, FC, DFC, COS, 06/06/95, File No. 8940, UN Conf.

¹⁰³⁰ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Letter Commanding Officer 1(NL)UN Infbn (Dutchbat3) to Commander Sector North East, 07/07/95, No. TK95112.

Around the time that the hostage crisis consequent to the Pale bombings in mid June was resolved, the ABiH started an offensive around Sarajevo. June was also marked by heavy fighting around Sarajevo, which radiated out to other areas in Bosnia, and also did not leave Srebrenica unaffected. In Gorazde, the fighting that had started in May continued. In comparison, it was still quiet in Srebrenica. After mid June, however, the number of incidents between the combatants increased around Srebrenica too, with provocative actions that extended beyond the enclave borders. This was largely concerned with the offensive started by the ABiH at Sarajevo. These actions around Srebrenica at the end of June appeared to create an atmosphere that led to increasing embitterment on the side of the Bosnian Serbs and that paved the way for more drastic measures.

Matters were brewing in the south of the enclave especially. Skirmishes between VRS and ABiH in the area around OP-E continued. The ABiH reinforced its positions and fired with mortars and weapons of all calibres at the factory complex at Zeleni Jadar.¹⁰³¹ The VRS showed that they were not satisfied with the occupation of OP-E, and after 4 June they attempted to occupy the area of Turija (between OP-F and OP-E) too. In the early evening of 5 June, there was another attempt by the ABiH to recapture the surroundings of OP-E. The VRS replied with mortar and tank fire. The pressure waves from the explosions could be felt on OP-U. As darkness fell, the fighting ended, however; the attack had failed. The resistance was too great for the lightly-armed ABiH. On 6 June there were new attacks by the VRS on Turija.¹⁰³²

In all the confusion during the ABiH's attempts to recapture OP-E, the three thousand residents of the Swedish Shelter Project fled yet again, only to return because of the lack of accommodation in Srebrenica. Many left their possessions behind in Srebrenica in anticipation of another quick escape. The rumour machine, fed from outside the enclave, continued to run at full speed.¹⁰³³ Representatives of the Swedish Rescue Service Agency heard on *Sky Radio* that the VRS had threatened to fire on Dutchbat if Dutchbat were to try to recapture OP-E, and that in response, Dutchbat had threatened air strikes. There were no grounds for either assertion.¹⁰³⁴

The VRS, through Major Nikolic, complained to Dutchbat that the ABiH was continuing to send patrols to lay ambushes outside the enclave. The VRS would keep quiet if the ABiH did too, according to Nikolic. But if the ABiH attacked, the VRS would repulse the attack with heavy weapons and attack the ABiH positions to oust them not only from the positions, but, if necessary, also from the entire enclave. Nikolic took the opportunity to repeat that the attack on OP-E had been provoked by the ABiH. The VRS nonetheless had some understanding for the fact that Dutchbat had to keep doing its work, and Nikolic promised that the battalion would therefore no longer be attacked directly.¹⁰³⁵

In the meantime, the ABiH was busy improving its positions, and digging trenches and bunkers. The ABiH denied Dutchbat access to some areas. For instance, for no clear reason, Dutchbat was no longer allowed on Zanic hill near OP-R. On the Kvarac hill, on the opposite side, there were many positions that controlled the eastern access road to Srebrenica via Zalazje. Dutchbat personnel were able to use a thermal imaging sight to observe forty to fifty people digging day and night in the surroundings of OP-Q. Dutchbat turned a blind eye to Bosnian Muslims carrying weapons in the enclave, because of the threat of the presence of the Bosnian Serbs. The battalion staff indicated that they disregarded the practice and did not deny the ABiH the right to self-defence, although this was not in line with orders from higher echelons.¹⁰³⁶

¹⁰³¹ SMG, 1001. Milinfo 07/06/95, period 060600-070600B.

¹⁰³² NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary of Koreman, 36th week, p. 7; NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. Dutchbat Milinfo period 040600 - 050600 B Jun 95; SMG 1001. Daily Sitrep of 041600B Jun 95 - 051600B Jun 95, C-BCie to Dutchbat; Interview Hazrudin Kistic, 17/05/99 and 18/05/99.

¹⁰³³ MSF Brussels. Capsat MSF Srebrenica to MSF Beograd, 05/07/95 15:56 No. Out 709.

¹⁰³⁴ CRST. UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade, 5/06/95 20:56.

¹⁰³⁵ SMG 1004/23. Capsat Maj Franken to Cap Groen, 06/06/95. NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. HQ Sector NE Daily Milinfosum from 051700B to 061700B Jun 95.

¹⁰³⁶ Debriefing statement of First Lieutenant L.C. van Duijn, 12/09/95; interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

Dutchbat knew almost nothing of what was going on outside the enclave. There was only an occasional sighting of VRS troop movements, which were mainly in the south, where the occasional tank was spotted.¹⁰³⁷ On rare occasions, the lights of the columns could be observed with thermal imaging sights on a clear night as they moved along the Drina, although it was impossible to say whether this was on the Bosnian or the Serbian side. Dutchbat also saw that the ABiH regularly patrolled with two or three men. They left the enclave at OP-Q and OP-R, and then proceeded through a valley in the direction of Bratunac and Sase as far as the Drina. Mines were also said to be laid, and now and again they went off.¹⁰³⁸

Otherwise, there all sorts of events that Dutchbat did not immediately understand. For instance, in the night of 5 to 6 June, helicopters were spotted several times at various places around the enclave. Also, a number of pieces of VRS artillery that had been set up to the northwest of the enclave, disappeared. Not that it became any quieter there: there was also intimidation of OPs by the VRS in the north of the enclave, and bullets flew over various OPs. On the same night, an ABiH patrol encountered a VRS patrol in the surroundings of OP-E, which led to exchanges of fire, with the VRS using mortars and tanks.¹⁰³⁹ This exchange of fire arose more or less by coincidence; the ABiH said that it was not planning to attack there.¹⁰⁴⁰

From the battle noise that Dutchbat observed, however, it could be concluded that something was brewing. For instance, on 8 and 9 June, the battalion counted 1165 small calibre shots, 316 heavy calibre shots and 27 explosions in a period of 24 hours, the great majority of which were outside the enclave.¹⁰⁴¹ Nevertheless, Dutchbat still expected no change in the situation in the short term.¹⁰⁴² The Military Intelligence Service of the RNLA also expected the skirmishes to continue for some time, but the Service assessed the probability of an attack on one of the eastern enclaves under these circumstances as low.¹⁰⁴³

Signs of a VRS attack?

The Dutch Military Intelligence Service's assessment that a VRS attack was improbable suddenly appeared to change when the Commander of the 28th Division, Ramiz Becirovic, and his intelligence officer, Ekrim Salihovic, called an emergency meeting with Dutchbat on 8 June. They informed the liaison team that a VRS attack was to be expected during the evening of 8 June or the morning of 9 June. General Mladic was said to have personally ordered the attack and the neutralization of all Dutchbat OPs. Troops concentrated in the area of Brezani (four kilometres to the east of OP-E). One axis of attack would be to the south of OP-R towards Srebrenica town, while the other would run alongside OP-F and then bear off to the north towards the town. In addition to the VRS Skelani Brigade, special units, which were involved earlier in the capture of OP-E, were to take part in the attack. Because the message came from the same source that announced the attack on OP-E, Karremans considered it to be reliable.¹⁰⁴⁴

The intelligence report that the liaison officer of the 28th Division of the ABiH, Ekrem Salihovic, sent to the 2nd Corps in Tuzla, was less alarming in its tone. Although this report indicated that data on the possible attack had been passed to Dutchbat, the VRS activities that were mentioned related mainly to the north-western part of the enclave. The VRS may have been performing intensive

¹⁰³⁷ NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. HQ Dutchbat to Sector HQ North East, Daily Milinfosum from 061700 to 071700B Jun 95.

¹⁰³⁸ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

¹⁰³⁹ NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. Milinfo 05 and 07/06/95, period 040600-050600 and 060600-070600B.

¹⁰⁴⁰ SMG 1004/23. Capsat Maj Franken to Cap Groen, 06/06/95.

¹⁰⁴¹ NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. Milinfo, 09/06/95, period 080600-090600B.

¹⁰⁴² NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. HQ Dutchbat to Sector HQ North East, Daily Milinfosum from 061700 to 071700B Jun 95.

¹⁰⁴³ MID/RNLA INTSUM 106/95, 061200Z Jun 95.

¹⁰⁴⁴ SMG 1004/25. Fax Dutchbat to CO-SNE, COS-BHC info CO-RNLA Crisis Staff, 08/06/95, UNPROFOR Confi. This document does not exist in the Coll. Karremans, neither is it included in *Srebrenica: Who Cares?*

reconnaissance at Zalazje near OP-R, but the ABiH themselves had not observed it in the field.¹⁰⁴⁵ Other ABiH sources did consider that the situation was alarming and that a VRS attack on the enclave was imminent: Captain Nijaz Masic, who was responsible for the morale of the 28th Division, concluded from the intensification of the propaganda from the VRS side, the logistics support that was said to be received from Serbia, and the improving VRS morale, that the VRS finally wanted to conquer East Bosnia.¹⁰⁴⁶ An intelligence officer of the 2nd Corps also said that on 6 June military engineers from Serbia had arrived with equipment, artillery and direction finding equipment in Pribicevac, where the VRS had an advance command post.¹⁰⁴⁷



Karremans mentioned in his *Srebrenica: Who Cares?* that, on 8 June, the British Joint Commission Observers (the JCOs) attached to the battalion, also approached him with the suspicion that the VRS would attack all enclaves within two weeks. In his book, Karremans said that he passed reports from them and from the ABiH regarding a possible attack on to the higher echelon,¹⁰⁴⁸ but the specific message that Karremans sent to Tuzla, Sarajevo and The Hague only included the information that had been provided by the ABiH on an attack, and not the JCOs' suspicions. Neither did the JCOs make their own report, although they did report to Sarajevo that the warning from the ABiH regarding an 'imminent attack' was reason for concern, but that they themselves had heard such rumours on several occasions and attached little value to them. The JCOs said they could not provide Sarajevo with any confirmation of the VRS plans.¹⁰⁴⁹

The Military Intelligence Service (MOD) in The Hague analysed the report from the ABiH and came to the conclusion that there were no indications of large-scale troop concentrations. On the other hand, according to this Military Intelligence Service (RNLA) analysis, the VRS were strong enough around the enclave to perform a limited operation in the enclave border area, and it did not appear unlikely that, as in Gorazde, the VRS would attempt to gain control of parts of the enclave. However, the MID (Military Intelligence Service) considered it premature to view the limited operation against OP-E as an overture for further operations. In Gorazde, similar warnings from the ABiH reached UNPROFOR. However, their import appeared to be that Dutchbat should vacate the OPs so that the ABiH could take them over themselves. It was conceivable that the Bosnian warnings in Srebrenica had

¹⁰⁴⁵ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa, 08/08/95, Str. Pov. Br. 02-06-27/95.

¹⁰⁴⁶ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa RBiH Odjeljenje morala, 09/08/95, Str. Pov. Br. 04-93/95.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Interview Hazrudin Kisić, 17/05/99 and 18/05/99.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Karremans *Srebrenica: Who Cares?*, p. 149.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Confidential information (1).

the same purpose. Another possibility seen by the Military Intelligence Service (MID) was that the ABiH warning could be intended to lay the responsibility for any escalation at the door of the VRS in advance. The minister was informed of the matter.¹⁰⁵⁰

Later in July 2000, this 'warning from Karremans' would emerge in the media as evidence of advance knowledge of an attack on the enclave, and as evidence of the fact that The Hague had paid no attention to the matter. It was stated that Deputy Commander Van Baal did not consider it necessary to inform Minister Voorhoeve about Karremans' message, but, as stated above, Voorhoeve definitely was informed. According to a Ministry spokesman, the fact that Voorhoeve did not respond was because the message was also addressed to UNPROFOR: Defence said that it was the UN's task to respond, and not the Army's.¹⁰⁵¹

Another accusation was that UNPROFOR had done nothing with Karremans' information that the entire enclave would be attacked. This was with reference to the report from the British JCOs, but it was argued that it involved no more than a warning and not a probable event.

Analyses of the MID (MID/RNII) regarding a possible VRS attack went no further than to assume that the VRS might continue capturing OPs and that the ABiH would attempt to step up the tension through provocation, resulting in: shelling of ABiH positions and possible civilian targets.¹⁰⁵² This analysis was confirmed a few days later: according to an analyst, a repetition of the scenario that was applied in the capture of OP-E was possible, but as long as the hostage crisis had not been resolved, this would be politically unacceptable to the command of the Republika Srpska. Should the VRS nonetheless resort to action, they would probably limit themselves to OPs; the occupation of large parts of the enclave was unlikely for the time being.¹⁰⁵³ At the time, neither did anyone within Dutchbat have the notion that the Bosnian Serbs might capture the entire enclave. The idea did exist that the VRS would try to nibble away at parts of the enclave, in particular OP-A, OP-R and OP-Q.¹⁰⁵⁴

Provocations from the side of the ABiH were meanwhile a cause of great concern for UNPROFOR. The Commander of Sector North East in Tuzla, the Norwegian Brigadier General Haukland, demanded that General Sead Delic, as commander of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, take steps to ensure that the ABiH refrained from making their way outside the enclave. The fact was that this would only aggravate the situation in which Dutchbat and the population found themselves. The concerns also included 'slivo-firing', which was the warring factions' practice of firing bullets and shells while under the influence of drink. ABiH soldiers regularly fired on the VRS, which led to escalation if the VRS fired back with heavy equipment.

Delic, however, responded by washing his hands in innocence: he did not see how firing a couple of rounds could provoke someone, and the ABiH only responded to actions by the VRS. According to him, the men in the enclave had no choice but to defend their families. Delic announced that he feared for the safety of the enclave, and that the ABiH and Dutchbat should defend it together. He also proposed that Dutchbat lay mines in front of the OPs, but he received the answer that there were no mines in a peacekeeping force's arsenal. At the same time, Delic did not think that the VRS would resort to combat with Dutchbat about the OPs. However, should Dutchbat withdraw from them without firing, it would be a sign of weakness that the VRS would want to exploit. This led to Delic's announcement that he had ordered the ABiH 'with all means to provide security for UNPROFOR'. In other words, the protector was to be protected by a nominally disarmed ABiH in

¹⁰⁵⁰ Bstas. Memorandum Head of Operations (Col R.S. van Dam) to the Minister, State Secretary, CDS, PCDS and SCOCIS, 09/06/95, unnumbered. It is unclear whether and how Karremans was informed of the MID's findings. The MID also pointed out that in the preceding days the ABiH had fired over the newly equipped OP-U towards the VRS, with the apparent purpose of provoking the VRS and involving the UN in the conflict.

¹⁰⁵¹ See current affairs section NOVA of 11/07/00 and: 'Alarm Karremans over enclave werd genegeerd' (Karremans' alarm about enclave ignored), in: *De Volkskrant*, 12/07/00.

¹⁰⁵² MID/RNLA, INTSUM 107/95, 071200Z Jun 95.

¹⁰⁵³ MID/RNLA. INTSUM 109/95, 091200Z Jun 95.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

Srebrenica! Haukland did not ask for any explanation of the meaning of this announcement. Delic did say that he was satisfied with Dutchbat's presence; according to him, the Netherlands was one of the few countries able to do the work there, and he would not want to see the battalion replaced by one from another country.¹⁰⁵⁵

After the alarming reports that reached Dutchbat from the ABiH side on 8 June of an imminent attack, relatively little happened. On the contrary, the situation even appeared to become more relaxed and the battle noise declined. Only in the north of the enclave did the VRS fire 25 rounds at OP-M. OPs in the southern part of the enclave, and in particular OP-K, may well have seen regular movement of the VRS, or were told so by residents, but the movements did not appear to be hostile. The VRS occupation of OP-E was actually reinforced with thirty men, and there was movement in the factory complex near Zeleni Jadar, but that had more of an economic than a military significance: groups of VRS soldiers were dragging slabs of marble away. A number of days saw no change in this picture of relative quiet. There was also frequent traffic again between Srebrenica and Zepa for supply purposes, with horses.¹⁰⁵⁶

On the face of it, therefore, the message that originated from the ABiH about an attack was incorrect. However, there could have also been more strategic factors at that time for not persisting with an attack; the VRS' attention was needed on other fronts. The strategy of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH was to attack at as many locations as possible, so as to confuse the VRS soldiers about where real attacks were going to take place. In this way, the VRS were tied up around the enclave, and the ABiH prevented these VRS men being deployed elsewhere (around Sarajevo). The VRS indeed had a shortage of men and had lost the initiative. The Bosnian Muslims were out to gain time and to avoid significant defeats. It was not the intention to get involved in a real fight, because then the ABiH would be no match for the VRS.

The VRS was probably also keeping its powder dry around the Srebrenica enclave in the light of the imminent ABiH offensive around Sarajevo; in the event of it becoming necessary to fight there, it would be better for them to conserve their strength now. The ABiH had already concentrated 25% of its total strength there. Closer to home, there were ABiH troop movements around Tuzla, division command posts were moved forward, and a new attack seemed likely on the Stolice communication towers and on positions in the Majevisa hills and Mount Vis, from which it was possible to fire on Tuzla. The VRS strategy was mainly oriented to the conduct of a counter-offensive in those areas and the strengthening of units there.

In mid June, the assessment of the Army Intelligence and Security Departments was still that a large scale attack on Srebrenica was improbable. In addition, the strategic importance of Gorazde to the Bosnian Serbs was not considered to apply to Srebrenica.¹⁰⁵⁷

In mid June, Dutchbat too expected no change in the fairly quiet situation in the coming days.¹⁰⁵⁸ Karremans stated that Dutchbat was completely surrounded, but a withdrawal of the OPs was no longer an option. In the light of a possible UNPROFOR regrouping and some relief of the fuel shortage problem, Karremans did speak on this subject with the Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo, Nicolai. Withdrawal of the OPs was no longer urgent for Sarajevo, however.

¹⁰⁵⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 118, Civil Affairs-Sector North-East, 1994-1995. Minutes of Meeting with Brig Delic/Comd 2 Corps on June 7th 1995. Author MA/Comd Sec NE Maj Valved.

¹⁰⁵⁶ SMG, 1001. Capsat OPS 61 to OPS 90, 9/06/95 11:00; C-BCie to Dutchbat, 9/06/95 13:22; NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. HQ Sector NE Daily Milinfosum from 081700B to 091700B Jun 95; NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. HQ Sector NE Daily Milinfosum from 091700B to 101700B Jun 95; CRST. HQ Sector NE Daily Milinfosum from 101700B to 111700B Jun 95.

¹⁰⁵⁷ CRST. HQ Sector NE Daily Milinfosum from 081700B to 091700B Jun 95; NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. UNMO HQ Sector NE to UNMO BHC, Weekly Milinfosum 23/95, 111000B Jun 95; NIOD, Coll. Theunens. Interoffice Memorandum G2 Military Information Branch UNPF-HQ, G2 to COS, 12/06/95. Appendix A (Milinfosum) to HQ UNPROFOR Sarajevo dated 13/06/95; NIOD, Coll. Svensson. G2 Briefing SRSG 12/06/ 95; MID/RNLA. DOKL, Dept Intelligence and Security, Sect Information: Weekintsum No. 23/95, 7 June - 12 June, Confi.

¹⁰⁵⁸ MSF Brussels. Capsat MST Srebre to MSF Beo, 13/06/95 15:43.

Karremans also stated that it was no longer an option to hold fuel in reserve for a possible hasty departure of Dutchbat from the enclave.¹⁰⁵⁹

5. The NATO withdrawal plan

Whereas for Dutchbat at that time an evacuation was no longer a requisite, around this time NATO's Southern European Command (AFSOUTH) did seriously work on a plan for a possible withdrawal of UN troops from the enclaves, in the context of what was known as NATO contingency plan (OPlan) 40104, also known as Operation Determined Effort. The purpose of this plan was for the UN personnel and their personal weapons to be withdrawn; everything else was to be left behind.

In August 1994, NATO had already started to draw up plans to facilitate a withdrawal of UNPROFOR from Bosnia and Croatia in military terms. This meant the start of a slow and complicated process, which was actually also the first time NATO had developed a major plan that was no longer oriented to the East-West differences of previous times. Whereas the political line then used to be clear, in the case of the former Yugoslavia it was not. This led on the one hand to unsatisfactory political direction from the North Atlantic Council, and on the other hand to a significant involvement of this Council in all manner of details. Neither did the fact that both the UN and NATO were involved make matters any easier, with the prospect of UNPF still performing its duties while elsewhere in the operational area NATO was busy with an evacuation. Neither would it be an easy operation. Only at the end of June 1995 did the North Atlantic Council give provisional approval to the most important parts of the 'Contingency plan 40104 Determined Effort'. Before the plan could be put into effect, in addition to a decision by the North Atlantic Council, a resolution was also first required from the Security Council. In the execution of this plan, the United States stood opposite the European countries, with the Netherlands in the middle.¹⁰⁶⁰ (For the relevant political background, see Chapter 1).

The operational preparations would also be drastic: before a start could be made on the execution of the plan, it would first be necessary to concentrate a NATO military force in Italy, followed by a deployment to Croatia and the Adriatic Sea. After that, withdrawal routes must be opened for UNPROFOR. Execution of the plan was no sinecure, certainly not if it should come down to fighting with the warring factions. For Bosnia, the plans had to be tailored to the evacuation of 22,000 men, 1300 armoured personnel carriers, 5000 other vehicles and 14,000 containers. For Croatia, 13,000 men, 800 armoured personnel carriers, 2000 other vehicles and an unknown number of containers were involved. For the eastern enclaves, withdrawal meant that several confrontation lines had to be crossed. Each enclave would need a brigade with tanks and armoured personnel carriers (in military terms: a mechanized brigade). Subsequently, a road would have to be found to an embarkation port.

How the warring factions would react to all this was a question that NATO found difficult to answer. The Bosnian Serbs might see a withdrawal as a signal to attack the ABiH, so that UNPROFOR would then become involved. The ABiH would seem to have the most interest in a continuation of the UNPROFOR presence, and could consequently apply delaying tactics. The most unpredictable response would be that of the population. The residents of the enclaves especially would probably prefer not to see UNPROFOR depart, and could attempt to prevent them from doing so using women and children. This could well form the greatest threat and challenge for NATO. The danger of sabotage, mines, the blowing up of bridges and the theft of equipment came in second place. Neither were shelling with artillery and mortars ruled out. Attacks with ground forces on the NATO units still formed the smallest threat.¹⁰⁶¹

¹⁰⁵⁹ NIOD, Coll. Nicolai. Diary of Nicolai 11/06/95.

¹⁰⁶⁰ DCBC, 1456. Code Veenendaal NATO 975, 28/06/95.

¹⁰⁶¹ RNLAf. The head of the Central Support Operations Department, Training, Plans, Evaluations and Reports to distribution list, 19/06/95, No. DOP 95049467/956, Conf.

The military plan that was necessary for this operation was actually at an advanced stage, and if the worst came to the worst it was expected that the political decision-making could also be speeded up. General Janvier and Admiral Smith had spoken to each other at the end of May regarding what was known as the Quick Response Options (rapidly deployable NATO units). This was specifically intended to withdraw the troops from the eastern enclaves. Janvier had then emphasized the necessity of immediately having a plan available for the support of UNPROFOR in a combat situation.¹⁰⁶² The associated planning was delegated to Strike Force South, the mainly American NATO fleet in the Mediterranean, where Royal Netherlands Marine Corps Major E.J. van Broekhuizen made the plan for Srebrenica.

The attention in the plan was mainly on Bihac and in the second place on Zepa and Gorazde, and not so much on Srebrenica. For the execution of the operations, there were to be two Quick Response Options: the Marine Expeditionary Unit was available and the United Kingdom/Netherlands Landing Force would be made available. Both these marine units were able to reach the eastern enclaves by helicopter from amphibious vessels off the coast, possibly through a Forward Operating Base. An important part of this plan consisted of identifying Landing Zones where large helicopters (types CH-53 or CH-47) could land simultaneously, and could not be threatened.

For Srebrenica it was not a simple matter in the densely populated and hilly area to find such landing sites. Many questions had to be answered for the rest of the planning: could the Landing Zones and the inward and outward flight paths be secured, was it also possible to assemble the personnel of the OPs there, and what danger did they have to fear from the local Armed forces? Dutchbat answered a questionnaire that was intended to clarify such questions. The fact that the ABiH and the local population would obstruct a departure, whether or not by force of arms, formed a greater problem than the VRS response. The Bosnian Serbs were possibly even prepared to lend a helping hand and allow the helicopters to land in their territory. This was certainly not an absurd idea: on 18 September 1994, Karadzic had already offered General Rose permission for isolated UNPROFOR units in the enclaves to withdraw via Bosnian-Serb territory, in which the VRS would provide help to prevent UNPROFOR weapons falling into the hands of the ABiH. The cooperation of the VRS in the event of execution of the plan might even be necessary: the only possible Landing Zones in the enclave were on and adjacent to the Potocari compound in the sight of the VRS, and voltage power lines also formed a problem. Furthermore, the entire enclave was within range of the VRS artillery. On request, Dutchbat made 'tactical pictures' of the area, and marked them up with the terrain configuration and the VRS positions.¹⁰⁶³

The intention was to keep these withdrawal plans secret, but this was unsuccessful. For instance, Dutchbat asked *Médecins Sans Frontières* what it would do in the event of a Dutchbat evacuation.¹⁰⁶⁴ Dutchbat interpreters also got wind of the search for Landing Zones, although it had the effect of reinforcing their suspicion that plans for bringing in supplies by air were involved.¹⁰⁶⁵

In the execution of the plan, the NATO commanders could be confronted with a nightmare scenario and ethical dilemmas. The North Atlantic Council decided that alongside the military tasks, it was necessary to deal cautiously with obstruction from citizens, that obstacles to negotiation had to be removed by negotiation or - if necessary - the clearance must take place with non-lethal force. Commanders would also have to provide 'humanitarian support' to the population, while not allowing it to deflect them from a timely completion of the withdrawal, and to the extent that they had troops

¹⁰⁶² UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2 SRSG Meeting, Srebrenica Staff 95 May-Oct. SRSG, Senior Staff Meeting, 01/06/95.

¹⁰⁶³ DCBC 2404. Fax Dep NLL0 AFSOUTH (KLTZ A. Stoel) to HDCBC, 30/05/95 and fax DCBC to the RNLA Crisis Staff, 12/06/95, No. 442; DCBC, 1451. Fax NLL0 AFSOUTH, 27/06/95; DCBC, 1460. Fax HQ Dutchbat Srebrenica to RNLA Crisis Staff, 14/06/95, 'Questions from Strike Force South'.

¹⁰⁶⁴ MSF Brussels. Capsat MSF Srebre to MSF Beo, 14/06/95 15:41, No. Out 801.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05/08/97 and 06/08/97.

available for the purpose. Life-threatening violence would have to be stopped if the necessary resources and opportunities were present.¹⁰⁶⁶

All that was easier said than done: inadvertently it resurrected images from March 1993 of General Morillon detained in Srebrenica. NATO assumed that in the event of an UNPROFOR departure, the confrontation lines in Bosnia would remain where they were, but that in the event of execution of the plan, the Bosnian government could well decide to evacuate Srebrenica and Zepa. This would bring about an exodus in the direction of Tuzla, which could have an influence on NATO military operations. NATO units would have to offer the population limited protection, and lead them through the confrontation lines with movement control.¹⁰⁶⁷

6. The ABiH offensive at Sarajevo

On an operational level, the ABiH resumed the offensive at Sarajevo in June.¹⁰⁶⁸ It is important to dwell briefly on this offensive, because it also appeared to have an influence on the situation around Srebrenica. In addition to all the problems that existed in connection with restrictions to the freedom of movement and the supplying of the enclaves, there was also the uncertainty surrounding the intentions and outcomes of the offensive that had started around Sarajevo. The strategy behind this offensive was discussed in Chapter 1; we discuss here the operational aspects of the offensive.

The Bosnian Serbs appeared to be able to offer resistance to the offensive, which led to the - justified - fear at UN headquarters in Zagreb that the ABiH in the eastern enclaves would attempt to tie up as many VRS units as possible there, to prevent them from going to take part in the fighting around Sarajevo.¹⁰⁶⁹

The offensive at Sarajevo was a life-and-death affair for the ABiH. The ABiH attempted, with the support of Croatian artillery, to cut off all VRS supply routes by attacking at several locations and exhausting the VRS. Thirty thousand men (ABiH), supported by six thousand Croatian soldiers found themselves confronted by twelve to fifteen thousand VRS men (VRS).¹⁰⁷⁰

Attacks were launched on five different roads to Sarajevo, both to and from Sarajevo. As usual, the VRS responded with the use of heavy weapons on the ABiH axes of attack, and the shelling of military targets and government buildings in the town.¹⁰⁷¹ UNPROFOR had little insight into the precise relationship of this offensive with the fighting in Northeast Bosnia, although it was observed that the activities died down at the same time as the offensive at Sarajevo.¹⁰⁷²

The apparent objective of the ABiH in East Bosnia was to prevent the Drina Corps sending reinforcements to Sarajevo, and to cut the link with Zvornik. The Sector North East Military Intelligence Officer was of the opinion that the ABiH also had the longer term desire to recapture Zvornik and the Podrinje (the area containing Srebrenica). The Drina Corps was responsible for an enormous area, which, as a former Muslim area, was largely empty, and gave rise to a wide scattering of the troops.

The VRS appeared to be satisfied for the time being with occupying the hilltops and assuming that with their superior artillery strength would enable them to prevent the ABiH concentrating for an

¹⁰⁶⁶ DCBC, 1459. Code Veenendaal NATO 931, 19/06/95.

¹⁰⁶⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 62/77, File 2.8, Nato 25/05/93 - 05/07/95. UNPF HQ, Internal Memorandum from Matthew Hodes Legal Adviser to HCA, 14/06/95, Conf.

¹⁰⁶⁸ NIOD, Coll. Theunens. G2 UNPF HQ, Daily Military Information Summary from 250001B to 252359B Jun 95.

¹⁰⁶⁹ MID/RNLA. MID/RNLA, INTSUM 114/95, 161200Z Jun 95.

¹⁰⁷⁰ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, Weekly Situation Report, 28/06/95, No. Z-1069.

¹⁰⁷¹ NIOD, Coll. Theunens. G2 UNPF HQ, Daily Military Information Summary from 160001B to 162359B Jun 95; NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Meeting 2 Corps ABiH, 16/06/95.

¹⁰⁷² CRST. HQ Sector NE Daily Milinfosum from 241700B to 251700B Jun 95; HQ UNPROFOR Sarajevo, Military Information Summary, 25/06/95. UN Conf.

attack. According to Sector North East in Tuzla, in this assessment of the strategy of the parties, Srebrenica played no role, however:¹⁰⁷³

Because of its superior infantry strength at Sarajevo, the ABiH was in a position to force a temporary breakthrough, but the preponderance of VRS heavy weapons meant that the gain in territory would be lost again.

According to messages from the Dutch ambassador in Paris, the media, and in particular CNN, were exaggerating the strength of the troop concentrations on the Bosnian side: in reality, achieving a sustained breakthrough of the siege of Sarajevo was beyond the reach of the Bosnian Muslims. The French government therefore wondered whether the Bosnian government had a sufficient understanding of the political damage to be expected if the offensive turned out to be a failure. Likewise, Paris was fearful for Croatian lightning operations to recapture the Krajina, now that the Bosnian Serbs' attention was necessarily on Sarajevo.¹⁰⁷⁴

The Dutch government showed understanding for the endeavours of the Bosnian Muslims to bring an end to the distressing situation in Sarajevo, but adopted the position that the conflict must be solved at the negotiating table. The government was concerned about possible victims among the population of Sarajevo and also feared for the safety of the UN troops.¹⁰⁷⁵

The ABiH offensive did appear to give the Bosnian Serbs something of a surprise: they called a state of war around Sarajevo. The chairman of the Parliament of the Republika Srpska, Momcilo Krajisnik, still did not call that an expression of panic, but a preventive measure to be able to mobilize all available resources. This measure was also intended to show the international community that the Bosnian Serbs were resolved to defend their Republika Srpska as long as the international community failed to condemn the Bosnian Muslims and the Croats, and even looked with favour on the attack on the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁰⁷⁶

Akashi also noticed that Milosevic was seriously concerned about the strength of the ABiH offensive, and that he appeared less self-assured than normal. This time, Milosevic even managed to express some sympathy for the Bosnian Serbs, who felt threatened and treated with disrespect. Although Milosevic did not believe that the siege of Sarajevo could be broken, he was concerned about the matter.

Around this time, Milosevic happened to make an incorrect assessment of the situation: he said that the Krajinas could be defended successfully, in contrast to the Serbian region in Bosnia. The exact opposite appeared to be the case. Milosevic may also have shown some interest in a ceasefire in Bosnia, but he assumed that the Bosnian government would not want one as long as no humanitarian aid reached the Bosnian Muslims. In his view, the most important step in the political process to be set in motion by EU negotiator Bildt was to bring an end to the ABiH offensive and to the NATO air strikes on Bosnian-Serb targets, and to treat the Republika Srpska equally with the Muslim-Croat Federation. Both Milosevic and his Minister of Foreign Affairs Jovanovic said they were concerned about the misuse of the Safe Areas.¹⁰⁷⁷

Later in the summer, a Croatian offensive was indeed to be expected. President Tudjman had said that he wanted to solve the problem of the Krajina before November. He no longer found a self-declared Republika Srpska Krajina on Croatian territory acceptable. If the integration of the part of Croatia inhabited by Serbs that had awarded itself an autonomous status (the Republika Srpska Krajina) did not occur willingly, then it would happen with a *Blitzkrieg*. The fact was that the UN mandate in Croatia ran out in November and it would be political suicide for Tudjman if he were to assent to its extension. All manner of military measures had been set in motion and the Croatian army, the HVO, was regularly seen with brand new American equipment. The chances that the Krajina-Serbs would

¹⁰⁷³ SMG 1004/7. MIO SNE (Maj. P.H.D. Wright) to Zagreb/BH Comd for COO/MIO. 27/06/95.

¹⁰⁷⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00797. Code Wijnaendts 196, 15/06/95.

¹⁰⁷⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Press release Min BZ, DVL, 16/06/95, No. 049/1995.

¹⁰⁷⁶ CRST. Transcript Bosnian Serb Radio, 17/06/95, 22.00 hrs; Fax Fred Eckhart to Yasushi Akashi, 17/06/95.

¹⁰⁷⁷ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 19/06/95, No. Z-1020.

receive help from the VRS appeared to be relatively small, because the VRS could no longer easily move around as a result of a shortage of fuel.¹⁰⁷⁸

The offensive failed

The ferocity with which the ABiH offensive started diminished again fairly rapidly, however. After two days the attacks were broken off, and the ABiH had booked territorial gains in only two places. UNPROFOR could only guess why the offensive was broken off so rapidly, and neither could the UNMOs acquire any information from the ABiH side because they were not allowed to visit hospitals; the intention was to deduce from the number of wounded how heavy the conflict had been.

It was possible that the offensive was intended to test the reaction of the international community before launching an offensive in earnest, or the ABiH could have been out to lure the VRS units towards Sarajevo, or - which UNPROFOR considered to be the most likely reason - the offensive stranded because of the usual problems with logistics and the inability to exploit tactical successes, in combination with unexpectedly high losses.¹⁰⁷⁹

A Croatian source said to Akashi that the offensive was indeed stopped because of the heavy losses suffered by the ABiH when they wanted to penetrate the well-organized VRS defence. The intention had been for the offensive to last a month, with the purpose of capturing Bosnian-Serb suburbs of Sarajevo, such as Ilidza, Ilijas and Vogosca. The greatest problem that the ABiH wrestled with was making passages through the minefields.¹⁰⁸⁰

Bosnian politicians gave different explanations for why the offensive was started. Prime Minister Haris Siladjic said that the offensive was intended to nip a Bosnian-Serb attack in the bud; President Izetbegovic said that it was intended to break the stranglehold that the Bosnian Serbs had on Sarajevo. As conditions for stopping the offensive he set the withdrawal of VRS heavy weapons and clearance for humanitarian aid.¹⁰⁸¹ Other government circles were of the opinion that the ABiH had indeed not succeeded in breaking the siege and that points of departure would now be occupied ready for a renewed attempt later in the summer.¹⁰⁸² There was evidence for the fact that the Bosnian Serbs were taking a resumption of the offensive into account in the request to Civil Affairs of UNPROFOR to make five hundred body bags available.¹⁰⁸³

7. The situation around Srebrenica in mid June

After the ABiH had warned in early June of a possible attack on the enclave, it remained, as stated above, relatively quiet. After mid June, the number of incidents started to rise again, however. Originally these skirmishes had little substance. Neither could they be seen as an overture to the later attack on Srebrenica. This changed after mid June. The actions of both warring factions took on more significant forms, and so started a chain reaction culminating in the conflict around the enclave. Precisely how this chain reaction came about is difficult to establish with any accuracy. It did not start in June 1995, but in fact went back to April 1993. The capture of Srebrenica by Mladic was then nipped in the bud by Morillon's action, with the ultimate approval of Karadzic. This also refers back to the ensuing period of the failed demilitarization and the lack of agreement on the demarcation of the

¹⁰⁷⁸ CRST. Fax G3 Land Ops HQ UNPF Zagreb to G2 Crisis Staff, 22/06/95.

¹⁰⁷⁹ NIOD, Coll. Theunens. G2 UNPF HQ, Daily Military Information Summary from 180001B to 182359B Jun 95; SMG/1012. RNLA Crisis Staff, Weekstrep 15 - 22 June 1995.

¹⁰⁸⁰ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, Weekly Situation Report, 28/06/95, No. Z-1069. The statements came from HVO Brigadier-General Vinko Lucic.

¹⁰⁸¹ *International Herald Tribune*, 20/06/95; MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation 29/95, closed 211400B Jun 1995. Confi.

¹⁰⁸² UNGE, UNPROFOR, box 42, Sector North-East-Tuzla, File 25/77, 04/04/95 - 23/08/95. Fax Ken Biser to Philip Corwin, 23/06/95, Report for week Ending June 23 1995.

¹⁰⁸³ BDL. Outgoing Fax David Harland to Philip Corwin, Sector Sarajevo, Weekly Situation Report, 24/06/95.

borders of the Safe Area. Military activities, not only around the Safe Areas, but also from enclaves, had been commonplace since April 1993.

It was not for nothing that the Security Council again spoke in Resolution 998 on 16 June of the necessity to demilitarize the Safe Areas and the immediate surroundings, because this would be to both parties' advantage 'in terms of the cessation of attacks on the Safe Areas and of launching military attacks therefrom'. However, this admonition did not deter the combatants from fighting a small war around Srebrenica. This was payment for the fact that the borders of the enclave were not properly established and visibly marked out on the ground: according to the Bosnian Serbs the area was smaller, and according to the Muslims it was larger. Consultation on the subject did not lead to a result, and neither was much done by the UN to bring the parties to agreement, even if this was within the UN's grasp.

From mid June battle noise could be heard every day around the enclave: there were shots, either in earnest, or as an exercise, or to cross each other. The warring factions respected no suspension of hostilities, and they made use of UNPROFOR for realizing their own objectives, or they accused UNPROFOR of not doing its work properly, if it suited them to say so. It was a fiction that Srebrenica as a Safe Area had been demilitarized. In the spring of 1995, the ABiH purposefully smuggled weapons into the enclave, and orders came from above to carry out military operations outside the enclave.

Consequences for Srebrenica of the offensive around Sarajevo

The ABiH offensive around Sarajevo caused an intensification of the tension in East Bosnia and around Srebrenica. Large changes were made in the order of battle of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH. Two thousand men and a complete attack brigade were said to have been moved to the south to be deployed at Sarajevo. UNMOs had observed no Corps reserve of the ABiH for some time.¹⁰⁸⁴ The Bosnian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sacirbey, linked the isolation of the eastern enclaves with the release of VRS manpower for deployment elsewhere for offensive purposes.¹⁰⁸⁵ Around Srebrenica too, the VRS had transferred armed forces to the front at Sarajevo.¹⁰⁸⁶ At the same time, the VRS intensified the laying of mines around the enclave.¹⁰⁸⁷

Concurrently with the offensive at Sarajevo, the ABiH attempted to cut the road link between Vlasenica and Zvornik via Sekovici and the attacks from Gorazde and Srebrenica were intensified.¹⁰⁸⁸ With few exceptions, this involved small scale actions. The laying of ambushes was a favourite activity. In late May and early June, this had already happened several times, but it also stopped again, until the offensive at Sarajevo lit the fuse and the actions became larger in scale. Most of the actions took place outside Dutchbat's field of view, so that it was often difficult for the battalion to assess what was actually going on. It was not possible to closely monitor fifty kilometres of front line in extremely hilly terrain with a limited number of OPs. Furthermore, UNPROFOR and Dutchbat lacked the resources to gather their own intelligence. At the same time, ABiH reports frequently mentioned the fact that Dutchbat was thought to be passing intelligence to the VRS, as well as Dutchbat's passive attitude towards the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁰⁸⁹

¹⁰⁸⁴ CRST.UNMO HQ Sector NE to UNMO BHC, 251000B Jun 95.

¹⁰⁸⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05243. Code Vie Coreu, 19/06/95, No. pesc/vie 248. The statement was made in the presence of the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Schuessel.

¹⁰⁸⁶ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpusa Odjeljenje za moral, 16/06/95, br. 04-99/95.

¹⁰⁸⁷ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpusa Odjeljenje bezbjednosti, 15/06/95, br. 13-05-86.

¹⁰⁸⁸ ICTY (IT-98-33) D 127/a. Command of Drina Corps, 15/06/95, No. 15-354/32.

¹⁰⁸⁹ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije Odsjek bezbjednosti to Komandi 2. Korpusa Odjeljenje bezbjednosti, K-dantu 28. Divizije KoV, 23/06/95, Str. Pov. br. 13-05-92/95.

Because the ABiH had the idea that Dutchbat were mostly patrolling the middle of the enclave, the ABiH requested Dutchbat to start to patrol the edges of the enclave, in Zalazje and Jasenova, but the battalion refused. This was no surprise because these places were outside the enclave borders.¹⁰⁹⁰

A corridor between Tuzla and Srebrenica?

The VRS assumed in June 1995 that the ABiH were nurturing plans to link the eastern enclaves with each other.¹⁰⁹¹ Chapter 1 also mentioned that Mladic was already afraid in March 1995 of an ABiH attack from Tuzla towards Srebrenica and Zepa. He expressed to General Smith his fear of an ABiH attack towards the eastern enclaves along two axes, one of which was from Tuzla to Srebrenica and Zepa, and the other from Trnvo to Gorazde. Should the ABiH resort to an attempt to link Srebrenica with Tuzla, it would have to lead to a VRS action against the enclave, Mladic informed Smith. He then wanted to attack the enclaves to disable the ABiH fighting power that existed there.¹⁰⁹²

Such ideas were not entirely plucked out of thin air. The ABiH had indeed nurtured plans for some considerable time for opening a corridor to Tuzla. As early as 1992 it had been an important task for Naser Oric and his ABiH unit (which was known then as 8 OG) to bring it about, and he almost succeeded at the time. In 1993, such plans were no longer realistic after all the territory near Cerska had been lost and Srebrenica had almost been trampled underfoot. An intelligence service also confirmed that there was a plan for the opening of a corridor between Tuzla and Srebrenica via the Sapna Thumb, but they were unaware of the planned timing of the opening of the corridor.¹⁰⁹³

The commander of the 28th Division of the ABiH in Srebrenica, Ramiz Becirovic, said, however, that he was unaware of any plans for a corridor between Tuzla and Srebrenica. He said he had only once seen a plan to come to the enclave's help, but that was from 1994.¹⁰⁹⁴ Becirovic was possibly referring to an ABiH plan from November 1994 that is said to have been developed to break the blockade of Srebrenica. As Chief of the General Staff of the ABiH, General Enver Hadjihasanovic was said to have been its deviser. The plan consisted of two options: an attack from Kalesija (between Tuzla and Zvornik) or from Kladanj.¹⁰⁹⁵

These ideas for a corridor were raised again in 1995. They were consistent with the notion of a Bosnia that extended to the Drina and that incorporated a link with the three eastern enclaves. When the idea that a VRS attack on Srebrenica could not be ruled out started to take hold, Hadjihasanovic is said to have developed new plans to open a corridor in a concerted ABiH effort from Tuzla on the one hand and from Srebrenica and Zepa on the other, as a possible countermove. The existence of such a plan can also be deduced from statements of the Commander of the 2nd Corps, Sead Delic, and of Ramiz Becirovic.¹⁰⁹⁶

Furthermore, Zulfo Tursunovic, the ABiH Commander in the south-western part of the enclave, is said to have suggested the plan of opening a corridor via Milici to Kladanj. The Bosnian Serbs would never have been able to obstruct a wholesale breakout of the population to Kladanj, he thought. The distance to Kladanj was also less than to Tuzla. The Chairman of the Municipal Council, War President Osman Suljic, is said to have dissuaded him of such ideas, however. This is evident from a diary of Zulfo Tursunovic that was found in the enclave after the fall.

¹⁰⁹⁰ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpusa n/r K-danta 28. divizije brigadira, Naser Oric, 18/06/95, Str. Pov. broj. 01-120/95.

¹⁰⁹¹ ICTY (IT-98-33) D95/a. Command of Drina Corps to the General Staff of the VRS, 26/06/95, No. 02/6.

¹⁰⁹² UNNY, DHA: Sergio de Mello Papers. Meeting Gen Smith and Gen Mladic 7 March 1995, Ref 8594; UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 215, File BHC95 7 Mar-14 Mar95. BHC FWD to DOKL. 091100A Mrt 95, Outgoing fax No. 122/95. UN Confi; interview R.A. Smith, 12/1/00.

¹⁰⁹³ Confidential interview (6).

¹⁰⁹⁴ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Interview Isnam Taljic, 18/05/99.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Statement of Brigadier Makar 23/3/99. See also *Dani*, 17/03/00, interview of Vildana Selimbegovic with General Sead Delic.

The underlying idea in the plans for a corridor from Srebrenica to Central Bosnia was that President Izetbegovic was only making efforts for the defence of Gorazde. He is said to have given up on Srebrenica. Furthermore, Tursunovic may have believed that there was something of an international conspiracy against the Bosnian Muslims of Srebrenica, because troops from Christian countries were always stationed there.¹⁰⁹⁷

It proved to be impossible to uncover the details of similar plans on the Bosnian side. That the ABiH was strong enough to open and to keep open corridors to the enclaves appeared to be an overestimate of its military capabilities. ABiH offensives from Tuzla and Kladanj had already been brought to a halt on 24 June, and the breaking of the siege around Sarajevo was given priority over actions to link the area around the enclaves Zepa and Srebrenica with Tuzla. In view of the military-strategic circumstances, it was in fact impossible in July 1995 to race to provide help to Srebrenica from Tuzla or from Kladanj via a corridor.

From the VRS side too, some details were known of such a corridor. According to VRS liaison officer Major Nikolic, the VRS expected that Oric had gone to Tuzla in April 1995 to establish a corridor with Srebrenica from there. In this, a breakthrough would be forced from both areas towards the other, where the 2nd Corps of the ABiH would leave from Crni Vrh. From the corridor that would be created in this way, the entire area remaining in the direction of the Drina would then be 'swept clean' by the Bosnian Muslims and stripped of Bosnian Serbs. According to Nikolic, the VRS had intelligence that this plan was to be carried out between 20 and 25 July 1995.¹⁰⁹⁸

The Bosnian-Serb Chief of Police, Luka Bogdanovic, said after the fall of Srebrenica that a plan for opening a corridor between Srebrenica and Tuzla had fallen into his hands. The plan was on a diskette that was left behind in Srebrenica after the fall and was dated April 1995. Its objective was to open the corridor in August 1995. It involved a simultaneous advance from Srebrenica and Tuzla. Naser Oric made a case for executing the plan, and sent it to Army Commander Rasim Delic. The plan may have been known to the VRS, but in July it played no role in the decision to attack Srebrenica. Neither was the plan for the corridor a determining factor in the timing of the VRS attack.¹⁰⁹⁹

Noises about a corridor could also be heard in late June 1995 when the VRS Drina Corps reported to the VRS General Staff on ABiH actions around Mount Vis. The VRS saw its possession as a necessary condition for the ABiH for further ABiH actions towards the Podrinje, the area containing Srebrenica and Zepa. The ABiH actions were brought to a halt, however. The associated message from the VRS was full of rhetoric. Not only did it speak of 'superhuman efforts' and 'six days of hand-to-hand combat' but also that 'Alija [Izetbegovic] had never, and never will take a cup of coffee on Vis, and we are inviting President Karadzic and General Mladic to take a cup of "Turkish" coffee on the Serbian Vis.' In a more distant past, Mount Vis had already been a place where decisive battles had been fought between Muslims and Serbs.¹¹⁰⁰

8. Individual skirmishes between ABiH and VRS

This section will discuss how the warring factions harassed each other around Srebrenica in June. A summary will be given below of what has become known about this on the basis of reports from both ABiH and VRS. These reports could not be verified from sources other than the warring factions (Dutchbat). The activities of both parties on either side of the enclave border usually took place out of sight of UNPROFOR, and in only a few cases were they reported in the press.

Apart from that, the actions were mainly on a small scale. Two larger and more hazardous actions, the VRS raid on Vitlovac and the ABiH raid on Visnjica later in June, will be dealt with

¹⁰⁹⁷ Interview Rajko Dukic, 14/06/00.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Interview Momir Nikolic, 20/10/00.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Interview Luka Bogdanovic, 10/12/99.

¹¹⁰⁰ ICTY (IT-98-33) D89/a. Command of 1st Milici Light Infantry Brigade to All Subordinate Units, 19/06/95, No. I/01-617-1.

separately. All these events illustrate the tension that prevailed around the enclave, which increased as time went by. The month of June 1995 was the epitome. Ultimately these actions would form the overture to the VRS attack in early July.

The previous history of military actions around the Srebrenica enclave

The actions in June were not actually new: there had been activity for some considerable time by groups that had ventured outside the enclave. ABiH activities outside the enclave had been a problem since the time of the Canadian battalion (Canbat). The VRS complained constantly through Colonel Vukovic as early as 1993, at the time of Canbat I, about hit-and-run actions.¹¹⁰¹ Canbat II observed that there had indeed been excursions from the enclave three or four times a week by the ABiH at group or platoon level. Major Yvan Bouchard, the Commander of Canbat II in Srebrenica, had already warned Naser Oric at the time that he was risking killing his own people inside the enclave.¹¹⁰²

Use of the Safe Area for military purposes therefore had an entire history, which dated from before Dutchbat's arrival. The Commander of the 28th Division, Ramiz Becirovic, later also admitted that there had been provocations all that time, and that the VRS had been responding to them since December 1994.¹¹⁰³ These actions were not always based on a local initiative: they were usually ordered from above.

On 6 October 1994, the ABiH brigades (the predecessor of the 28th Division, known as 8 OG) were ordered to form reconnaissance teams to infiltrate Bosnian-Serb territory. These reconnaissance actions were also executed. In November, the VRS became aware of the supply of ammunition via a route from Kladanj, which appeared to have been in progress since July 1994.

On 7 November, the ABiH made plans for actions against the VRS to capture important areas of terrain outside the enclave. During sabotage actions in 1994 and the first half of 1995, the ABiH set fire to houses of members of the Bratunac Brigade.¹¹⁰⁴

Along the north side of the enclave, where some considerable traffic passed from and to Bratunac, the ABiH laid a series of ambushes for vehicles near Voljevica and Glogova at the end of 1994 and in January-February 1995.¹¹⁰⁵

Actions of the warring factions in the period 25 May - 6 July

In the period immediately preceding the fall of Srebrenica, the incidents were on a small scale, but they did constantly result in dead and wounded among the combatants.

On 28 May, five VRS soldiers who were cutting wood at Rupovo Bdro (near Milici) died when an ABiH patrol stumbled across them.¹¹⁰⁶ The ABiH spoke in a report of a VRS patrol, and not of woodcutters.¹¹⁰⁷

The ABiH suffered losses as a result of landmines. In the night of 27 to 28 May, a cloudburst caused a mudslide in which the water took dozens of mines with it.¹¹⁰⁸ On 8 June, an ABiH patrol chanced upon a minefield in Jasenova, that had been laid there by the VRS after the capture of OP-E. It resulted in one death and four wounded for the ABiH.¹¹⁰⁹

¹¹⁰¹ Interview Thomas K.D. Geburt, 18/11/99.

¹¹⁰² Interview Yvan Bouchard, 15/11/99.

¹¹⁰³ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

¹¹⁰⁴ ICTY (IT-98-33) D 160/a, Radinovic Report, para 2.16-2.18, 2.20.

¹¹⁰⁵ Interview Luka Bogdanovic, 10/12/99.

¹¹⁰⁶ Interview Zoran Jovanovic, 13/09/99; ICTY (IT-98-33) D 160/a, Radinovic Report, para 2.32.

¹¹⁰⁷ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2.Korpusa Odjeljenje za moral, 02/06/95, Str. pov. br.04-84/95.

¹¹⁰⁸ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28.Divizije to Komanda 2.Korpusa, 02/06/95, br. 04-84/95. GSS ABiH

¹¹⁰⁹ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 28.Divizije to Komandi 2. Korpusa Odjeljenje Bezbjednosti, 15/06/95, br. 13-05-86.

In the second half of June 1995 especially, there were an increasing number of skirmishes between the ABiH and the VRS. Both parties took the initiative.

In mid June, the ABiH laid an ambush in inhospitable and difficult terrain, seven kilometres in a straight line outside the enclave border to the south of Zeleni Jadar. A small lorry that was taking VRS soldiers home on leave from the lines around Srebrenica was caught in the ambush. Three soldiers died and nine were wounded.¹¹¹⁰

On 14 June, three soldiers of the VRS Milici Brigade went to pick berries in the area outside the minefields. They were caught in an ambush in the deserted village of Bozici, to the west of the enclave. Two of the three soldiers died, and the third managed to escape. According to the VRS, the bodies of the two who died were mutilated. According to the Drina Corps, five soldiers of the VRS Milici Brigade had already died earlier in the same way.¹¹¹¹

Not only the ABiH, but also the VRS was active around Srebrenica. According to ABiH 2nd Corps intelligence, the VRS attempted to send a group of soldiers to the village of Suceška to stir up panic there on 14 June. The purpose of this, according to the ABiH, was to exert pressure and to erode the confidence of the people living there.¹¹¹²

It cannot be established whether there was a connection between the actions of the ABiH and of the VRS on that day. On 15 June, Major General Milenko Zivanovic, the Commander of the Drina Corps, reiterated in an instruction that all his units must be completely battle ready. The VRS General Staff had also already determined this on 6 June. Zivanovic pointed out that there was every reason for this, because the ABiH was active everywhere in the area under his control, including in Teocak, Kalesija, Vis, Kladanj and Olovo and between Srebrenica and Zepa.¹¹¹³

Around 16 and 17 June, the VRS Milici Brigade again attempted to carry out attacks in the area near Suceška. On 22 June the VRS again sent an attack team into Suceška. In that area the high ground, in particular the 946 metre high Kak, were important for controlling the road to the south of Srebrenica and the bauxite mines.¹¹¹⁴

Sector North East in Tuzla reported that in the night of 18 to 19 June, the ABiH from Srebrenica had laid an ambush for a VRS patrol. The report did not state exactly where this had taken place. The assertion that the VRS patrol commander had been killed and that a captured machine pistol had been handed as a gift to Naser Oric, gave the report a low credibility: Oric was no longer in the enclave. The Dutchbat B Company did report that the ABiH had fired on a VRS vehicle in the vicinity of OP-U on that day, and as a consequence it ended up in the ditch. After that, the VRS and the ABiH fired on each other.¹¹¹⁵

From mid June, Dutchbat also reported an increase in incidents that were directed against the battalion itself. OPs were fired on at intervals, mostly hitting the OP defence wall, and the origin of the firing was not always clear. This happened at several OPs: OP-M, OP-C, OP-U, OP-P and OP-A. Other events took place in the vicinity of the OPs: for instance, the crew of OP-S witnessed an enclave resident treading on an anti-personnel mine fifty metres from the OP. A few missiles fired by VRS tanks landed at Buljim (between OP-M and OP-A). Moreover, a message reached Dutchbat via residents that in the south, at Jasanova, there were four VRS tanks.¹¹¹⁶

Other events took place around the eastern enclaves: the situation around Srebrenica was not unique. As a result of all the incidents, the VRS had become afraid of infiltrations in its own rear area. From Gorazde, the ABiH had cut the roads that the VRS used and the VRS had abandoned positions

¹¹¹⁰ Interview Dane Katanic, 16/09/99.

¹¹¹¹ ICTY (IT-98-33) D 127/a. Command of Drina Corps, 15/06/95, No. 15-354/32.

¹¹¹² Interview Hazrudin Kistic, 17/05/99 and 18/05/99.

¹¹¹³ ICTY (IT-98-33) D 128/a. Command of Drina Corps, 15/06/95, No. 01/04-122-5.

¹¹¹⁴ Interview Hazrudin Kistic, 17/05/99 and 18/05/99.

¹¹¹⁵ NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. HQ Sector NE Daily Milinfosum from 181700B to 191700B Jun 95, UN Confi.; SMG 1001.C-BCie to Dutchbat, Daily Sitrep 181600B Jun95 - 191600B Jun 95.

¹¹¹⁶ NIOD Coll. Koreman. Diary of Koreman, 37th and 38th week.

in panic. VRS positions had even been captured at Visegrad. They had to be recaptured, which cost the VRS fourteen dead, five missing and thirty wounded. The ABiH therefore managed to operate behind the lines on various occasions, which led to panic in the Drina Corps.

The Commander of the Drina Corps, General Milenko Zivanovic, determined that the problems occurred in units that had not been involved in combat action for a considerable time, in the lines where there were contacts between the warring factions, and in the lines where trade took place. He again ordered the VRS units to be battle ready and no longer taken by surprise. He took measures to this end: he went on an inspection tour to check an entire shopping list of points; all personnel must be made aware of the consequences of ABiH infiltrations; and anyone who had contact now or in the past with the other party could expect to be investigated.¹¹¹⁷ A lack of fuel did not make matters easier for the VRS to secure the rear area, however.¹¹¹⁸

On approximately 18 June, the VRS observed ABiH nighttime activity outside the enclave at Repovac, one kilometre to the west of Bratunac. The ABiH was said to want to murder a certain Nurija Memisevic there, and for that purpose the ABiH had laid an ambush on the road from Bratunac to Konjevic Polje.¹¹¹⁹

The Commander of the VRS Bratunac Brigade, Colonel Vidoje Blagojevic, understood from a reliable source that the ABiH in Srebrenica had been ordered to perform diversionary actions and reconnaissance and sabotage missions outside the enclave in order to spread panic in the VRS ranks and to wreak havoc. The ABiH was said to be busy with its reconnaissance for that objective. Blagojevic's assumption was correct. The ABiH conducted much reconnaissance in the VRS area of responsibility with the purpose of making the greatest possible contribution to the struggle for Sarajevo by organizing all manner of activities in the VRS area: the intention was to lure as many VRS soldiers away from Sarajevo as possible. This brought ABiH patrols into contact with the VRS on several occasions, which - according to an ABiH report - yielded the VRS thirteen dead and several dozens of wounded, as opposed to two dead and three wounded on the ABiH side.¹¹²⁰

One of these reconnaissance actions took place between 20 and 22 June, and was oriented to the areas north of Srebrenica. On 14 June, Zulfo Tursonovic's 284th ABiH Brigade was ordered by the 28th Division to perform reconnaissance and sabotage actions in the direction of Buljim, Konjevic Polje, Cerska, Zvornicka Kamenica and Snagovo. Snagovo was near Zvornik, and more than twenty kilometres in a straight line outside the border of the enclave. These were places that were again to play a role after the fall of Srebrenica, during the flight of the column of Muslims to Tuzla: in the breakout from the enclave on 11 July, the same route would be followed (see the Chapter 1 in Part IV).

The primary objective of the action was to explore the terrain there and to determine the position and strength of the VRS troops. If there was a good chance of success and they could return safely, the ABiH were to carry out sabotage actions.¹¹²¹ A concentration of VRS soldiers was observed in Kravica, and also in Konjevic Polje, where a number of small army units and pontoon bridges were found. The other places that the ABiH encountered on the way were unpopulated and burned out, as were all other villages in the surroundings. The ABiH patrol thought it had not been observed. It remains unclear whether the action was linked with the plans that the VRS said the ABiH had of opening a corridor between Tuzla and Srebrenica later in August.¹¹²²

At Ladja Lamanac (between OP-N and OP-P) on 23 June, an ABiH patrol seized the opportunity to dismantle two mines and subsequently place them on a communication path between

¹¹¹⁷ ICTY (IT-98-33) D88/a. Command of Drina Corps, 19/06/95, No. 94/76-3.

¹¹¹⁸ ICTY (IT-98-33) D90/a. Command of 1st Bircani Infantry Brigade, 21/06/95, No. 03/1-691.

¹¹¹⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33) D89/a. Command of 1st Milici Light Infantry Brigade to All Subordinate Units, 19/06/95 No. I/01-617-1. ICTY (IT-98-33) D89/a.

¹¹²⁰ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. Komanda 28. Divizije to Komandi 2.Korpora, 30/06/95, Str. pov. br. 04-114/95.

¹¹²¹ ICTY (IT-98-33) D60. ABiH 28 Division to Command or 284 IBLbr, 14/06/95, No. 01-102/95.

¹¹²² ICTY (IT-98-33) D66/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Asst Commander for Morale Captain Nijaz Masic) to the Command of 2nd Corps Morale Department, 30/06/95, No. 04-113/95.

two VRS trenches. When an unarmed VRS soldier passed, the mine was exploded by pulling a cord: the VRS soldier died from his wounds. Likewise on 23 June, a sabotage team of the 282nd ABiH Brigade 'liquidated' three VRS soldiers outside the enclave in the area of Koprivno (near OP-A).

On 24 June, a sabotage platoon assembled from the 282nd and 283rd ABiH Brigade laid an ambush along the road from Zeleni Jadar to Skelani, near Osmace, approximately six kilometres outside the enclave border. A lorry was stopped and five Bosnian-Serb policemen died. The place was later marked with a memorial stone, where family members of the dead lit candles.¹¹²³

In a radio dispatch, Radovan Karadzic was probably referring to these five killed policemen when he said that the Bosnian Serbs would tolerate no attacks by the Bosnian Muslims from protected areas. Karadzic also said that he would not feed the ABiH that carried out these attacks, which would affect the entire population.¹¹²⁴

All these activities were undertaken in support of the offensive at Sarajevo to tie up the VRS, and so to obstruct the VRS in sending reinforcements to Sarajevo. The actions, which were usually successful, had the effect of raising the morale of the ABiH. After the earlier occupation on 23 June of a number of points on the ridge of hills at Ravni Buljim by an ABiH unit, which then opened fire on the VRS, VRS Colonel Blagojevic, as Commander of the Bratunac Brigade, requested the Drina Corps' permission to deploy his artillery against the most important facilities in Srebrenica in the event of a repetition. According to Blagojevic, the incidents also had a positive effect: they improved the feeling of security within his brigade. Morale also received a boost because conscripts, who lived in Yugoslavia, were called up to rejoin the unit.¹¹²⁵

On 24 June, Mladic wrote to General Smith that, on the previous day, ABiH armed forces had executed various attacks from the Safe Area. According to Mladic, the attacks were from Potocari towards the village of Ludmeri (meaning the hills north of Potocari on the enclave border), from Poljanci to Ravni Buljin (between OP-A and OP-M) and from Pusulici to Zeleni Jadar (in the south). Consequently, six citizens and soldiers had lost their lives, and Mladic pointed out that this represented a serious violation of the status of the Safe Area. He warned that the Bosnian Serbs would no longer tolerate it. Mladic recalled that this was not the first time that innocent Serbian citizens had been killed. He demanded that Smith obstruct attacks from the Safe Areas and inform his superiors and those with political responsibility about the attacks. In addition, Mladic wished to be informed of the measures that Smith would be taking.¹¹²⁶

UNPROFOR in Sarajevo asked Sector North East in Tuzla to provide data, if available, because Mladic should be answered as quickly as possible.¹¹²⁷ The question ended up with Karremans, who reported to Sarajevo on each of the three ABiH attacks.

With respect to the attack in the Ludmeri hills, the local ABiH Brigade Commander had said that a VRS patrol had indeed walked into an ABiH ambush. No one in Dutchbat had observed it, but it appeared to be consistent with the battle noise that had been heard from this direction.¹¹²⁸ However, more was going on in the Ludmeri hills: the VRS Bratunac Brigade was in the highest state of readiness

¹¹²³ Interview Isnam Taljic, 18/05/99; ICTY (IT-98-33) D 160/a, Radinovic Report, para 2.30. Taljic placed the incident in May.

¹¹²⁴ SMG 1004/27. Radio report 24/06/95 15.00 hrs BSA.

¹¹²⁵ ICTY (IT-98-33) D91/a, D92/a, D94/a. Command of 1st Bratunac Brigade to Command of Drina Corps, 23/06/95, No. 03-253-82/1; Command of 1st Bratunac Brigade, 24/06/95, No. 02/415-1; Regular Combat Report to Command of Drina Corps, 26/06/95, No. 03-253-85; ABiH Command of 28th Division (Asst Commander for Morale Captain Nijaz Masic) to the Command of 2nd Corps Morale Department, 30/06/1995, No. 04-113/95. ABiH Tuzla. Komanda 28. Divizije Odsjek bezbjednosti to Komandi 2. Korpusa, Odjeljenje bezbjednosti, 30/06/95, Str. pov. br. 04-114/95.

¹¹²⁶ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Lieutenant General Ratko Mladic to UNPROFOR Command Sarajevo attn Lieutenant General Rupert Smith, 24/06/95 No. 06/17-441, sent by UNMO LO Pale (Interpreter) to BHC 241810B.

¹¹²⁷ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. HQ UNPROFOR FWD to HQ Sector NE, 251130B Jun95, Outgoing Fax No 11971/95. UN Restricted. (with attached letter Headquarters Army of the Republic of Srpska, 24/06/95, No. 06/17-441).

¹¹²⁸ NIOD Coll. Brantz. CO-1(NL) UN Infbat to G3 OPS HQ BHC FWD info COS SNE, 25/06/95, unnumbered.

there, and the brigade had even resorted to mobilization after an increasing number of ABiH soldiers occupied positions in the surroundings.¹¹²⁹

According to Karremans' account, the attack from Poljanci towards Ravno Buljani happened in an area where the ABiH did not allow Dutchbat any freedom of movement. However, an increase in battle noise was observed that could point to an action.

Ultimately, Dutchbat could not confirm the actions from Pusedini. In the morning of 24 June, there was also an unusual increase in the battle noise there, which could be a sign of action, but Dutchbat did not observe what had caused that battle noise. However, an action did take place in this area on 19 June, in which the ABiH stopped a VRS vehicle, and at least two VRS soldiers were wounded.

Karremans ended his report by stating that he had repeatedly warned the Commander of the 28th Division that actions outside the enclave borders would provoke reactions from the VRS and possibly put the population in danger. If the ABiH had indeed undertaken actions outside the enclave, then it would mean - as Karremans wrote - that the VRS had restrained itself. The only response was from the usual posts with the usual weapons. The VRS could have inflicted great damage if that had been ordered.¹¹³⁰

At the end of June, two larger actions also took place, which will now be dealt with in more detail: an attack by the Bosnian Serbs via the Vitlovac tunnel, and an ABiH attack that became known as the Visnjica incident.

The attack via the Vitlovac tunnel

In the night of 23 to 24 June, explosions woke the B company in the compound in Srebrenica town with a fright, and the personnel went to the shelters. It was thought that mortar grenades were involved, but where they came from was unclear. The explosions could also be heard at OP-Q.¹¹³¹ These appeared to be linked with an attack that the VRS carried out via the Vitlovac tunnel. This tunnel ran from the lead and zinc mines at Sase within Bosnian-Serb area under the enclave border to the settlement of Vitlovac, close to Srebrenica town. For the mineworkers, the tunnel once formed a link between the mine and their homes in Srebrenica. However, the mineworkers had not used the tunnel for some considerable time, and some parts were dilapidated.¹¹³²

With the terrain at Sase, the VRS occupied the entrance to the tunnel. In 1992-1993, this area fell for a short time into the hands of the Bosnian Muslims, who had observed that stones were falling down in the tunnel. This led them to believe that the tunnel had collapsed and was blocked. However, no check was made to confirm this. The ABiH also thought that mines had been laid in the tunnel. On the Srebrenica side, the tunnel entrance was therefore not closed. The Bosnian Serbs in Sase were aware of the situation: the commander of a special unit worked as an engineer in the mines before the war.

There were said to be signs of activity in the tunnel. A man who was chopping trees on a hill saw muddy water coming out of the tunnel, which could be a sign that the Bosnian Serbs were in the process of reopening the tunnel. This was reported at the time to Naser Oric, but he paid it no heed. The ABiH unit closest to Sase, Ejup Golic's brigade, paid just as little attention to the warning. The sector where the tunnel was located was not a front line, and there was therefore little surveillance. This made it easy for the Bosnian Serbs to enter Srebrenica from this place.¹¹³³

The tunnel emerged on a hill above Srebrenica hospital. One group of VRS soldiers fired on the hospital and neighbouring apartments. A second group fired on houses near the tunnel. The VRS was

¹¹²⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33) D/unnumbered. 1st Bratunac LPBR to Drina Corps Command, 17/06/95, No. 03/253-77.

¹¹³⁰ NIOD Coll. Brantz. CO-1(NL) UN Infbat to G3 OPS HQ BHC FWD info COS SNE, 25/06/95, unnumbered.

¹¹³¹ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary of Koreman, 37th and 38th week.

¹¹³² Interview Murat Efendic, 30/01/98.

¹¹³³ Interview Damir Skaler and Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

armed with shoulder firearms, light anti-tank weapons and light mortars, which caused the explosions that had woken B company. The ABiH showed the empty cartridge cases to Dutchbat, who, according to Commander Ramiz Becirovic, at first would not believe that something had happened, and after that was unsure about the circumstances: 'as the UN often was', said Becirovic.¹¹³⁴ Karremans reacted rather bluntly, according to Becirovic: he said that the attack was organized by the 28th Division. Srebrenica's Police Commander, Hakija Meholjic, also said that Dutchbat laid a suspicion of guilt on the Muslims, 'suggested by the Serbs, who definitely had done it themselves'.¹¹³⁵

Such accusations from both sides were common. Becirovic later thought that there was even a report from Sector North East on attempts by Muslims to make their way to VRS positions with the purpose of luring Dutchbat to fire on them (in military terms: drawing Dutchbat's fire) so that the VRS could then be blamed for firing on Dutchbat. According to Becirovic, this was 'incorrect and an insult'. He wondered how Dutchbat could assert such a thing with certainty, while Dutchbat dared reach no conclusion on the VRS attack through the tunnel. On another occasion - Becirovic had forgotten when - the ABiH was accused of firing a bullet through a room where a Dutchbat medic was working. Becirovic was certain that the VRS had done it: it would have been possible from the VRS positions. Becirovic said that he often asked what would have to happen before the UN really did something. According to him, he never received a satisfactory answer. Dutchbat assured him only that it would do something if the enclave were attacked.¹¹³⁶

Becirovic later stated that Karremans never wanted to hold one of the warring factions responsible for an incident. In spite of all the evidence that the ABiH brought up, Karremans always held both parties equally responsible. Karremans sometimes also withdrew to consider evidence. Dutchbat followed the 28th Division's movements, but behaved completely differently towards the VRS, according to ABiH Commander Becirovic: Dutchbat was thought to be afraid of approaching them.¹¹³⁷

Dutchbat's distrust of the ABiH was indeed fairly considerable, as was also evident from another incident: the local ABiH Commander, Zulfo Tursonovic, came to OP-A to show a tailpiece of an 82 mm grenade. He reported that a village in the surroundings had been hit with five grenades. 'They tried to report attacks and at the same time to pass the buck to the other party', was a typical Dutchbat comment,¹¹³⁸ Dutchbat wanted to be careful not to take sides.

The ABiH considered the attack via the tunnel to be a diversionary tactic. There was another attempt by the VRS on the same day to infiltrate the enclave via Likari to Peciste (behind OP-Q), but the group concerned became embroiled in the ABiH minefields and was forced to return.¹¹³⁹

The residents noticed little of other VRS infiltrations in the enclave. There were said to have been earlier Bosnian Serb activities near the area of the Swedish Shelter Project.¹¹⁴⁰ There was said to have been yet other incident, although the precise date on which it took place was unclear. The details of the incident were that a man and a woman from Cerska were walking with two children around 9 o'clock in the evening, near the 'Guber' sport club football pitch (near the tunnel) when in the dark they chanced upon five - as it proved later - Bosnian Serbs, who said 'dobro vecer', which was strange because everyone in the enclave greeted each other with 'salum aleikum'. The man concerned said something like: 'How can you say that?', after which the Bosnian Serbs opened fire and ran away. The woman was wounded.¹¹⁴¹

¹¹³⁴ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

¹¹³⁵ Interview Hakija Meholjic, 02/02/98 with supplements from 19/04/98.

¹¹³⁶ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

¹¹³⁷ ABiH Tuzla. 2nd Corps, unnumbered. Supplementary statement by Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement of 11/08/95.

¹¹³⁸ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary of Koreman, 38th week, p. 20.

¹¹³⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33) D66/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Asst Commander for Morale Captain Nijaz Masic) to the Command of 2nd Corps Morale Department, 30/06/95, No. 04-113/95.

¹¹⁴⁰ Interview Hakija Meholjic, 02/02/98 with supplements from 19/04/98.

¹¹⁴¹ Interview Damir Skaler and Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99. The precise timing of the events is unclear.

With the attack through the tunnel, the VRS had penetrated deeper into the enclave than ever. According to Becirovic, the possible purpose of the attack was to create panic and to increase the pressure on the population.¹¹⁴² The British JCO commander thought that the purpose of the attack was to test how the ABiH or Dutchbat would respond.¹¹⁴³

Dutchbat did not witness the attack through the tunnel; for that matter, neither did the ABiH. The Quick Reaction Force of B company was not activated to size up the situation. After investigation it was only possible to establish that nineteen shells had been fired from near the mine entrance.¹¹⁴⁴ A Dutchbat reconstruction of the attack revealed the following.

A group, the strength of which could not be established, had taken up firing positions at two places. The groups fired simultaneously towards Srebrenica. One man was wounded when a missile struck his house; two people fled their home near the mine entrance. They were fired at with a machine gun, and one woman was killed and a man wounded. After the facts were held up to the light, Dutchbat considered it not impossible for the ABiH to have executed the attack with the purpose of influencing Dutchbat and public opinion, although it was actually considered to be more probable that the attack had been executed by the VRS, which could not be proved, however.¹¹⁴⁵ The UNMOs established that remarkably little damage had been inflicted in the attack. Muhamed Durakovic, a Swedish Rescue Service Agency worker, explained that there were so few victims because so few people had left their houses when the firing started. The situation was unsettled every evening around the time of the incident 'because all sorts of idiots started to shoot'. The local population therefore did not immediately assume that they were dealing with a Bosnian-Serb attack.¹¹⁴⁶

The Dutchbat liaison section stated, also after a discussion with Ramiz Becirovic, that it could not be established whether the VRS or the ABiH were responsible for the incidents. It was a day in which the battle noise had increased considerably. Between 23 and 24 June, in a period of 24 hours Dutchbat counted 1587 rifle shots, 228 machine gun shots and 253 artillery or mortar explosions.¹¹⁴⁷

Various Dutchbat members were wrong-footed when they tried to answer the question of which party was guilty of the shelling. Warrant Officer R.J. Geval of the Explosives Disposal Unit also thought that the ABiH was guilty. He came to this conclusion from the fact that when he arrived to carry out the investigation, an ABiH soldier was able to tell him accurately where the mines around the tunnel entrance were. A more detailed inspection showed that the factory safety device fitted as standard to these mines was still intact. If it had been the intention to cover a retreat with mines, than they would have been armed, which was not the case here.¹¹⁴⁸

Lieutenant Caris of the Dutchbat commandos was also convinced that the ABiH had made it appear that it had been the VRS. A fairly short time before that, some of the ABiH had been provided with new footwear, the profile of which he was familiar with. He established that there was no track whatsoever away from the tunnel entrance. In the surroundings, on the other hand, the tracks of obviously new shoes could be seen. According to him, another clue was that there was an ABiH bunker two hundred metres away that was normally always occupied, but not apparently on the evening concerned. The anti-tank weapons were fired from the crest of a hill, which would make a noise and would have been visible to the ABiH from that bunker. Therefore the attack in question made him suspect a deliberate ABiH action.¹¹⁴⁹

¹¹⁴² Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

¹¹⁴³ Confidential information (1).

¹¹⁴⁴ The traces found were: two MRUDs, a Canadian smoke hand grenade, nine M80 rocket launchers, two M79 rocket launchers, 3 rocket tail fins, a rocket launcher of unknown type with a 92 mm calibre, six launchers for 60 mm mortar grenades and twenty-five protective covers for 60 mm mortar grenades. Dozens of 7.62 mm and 54 5.56 mm cartridge cases were also found.

¹¹⁴⁵ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Incident Report 240230B-240245B Jun 95, UN Confi.

¹¹⁴⁶ Interview Muhamed Durakovic, 21/11/99.

¹¹⁴⁷ NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. HQ Dutchbat to Sector HQ North East, Sitrep for period 231700 to 241700B Jun95.

¹¹⁴⁸ Debriefing statement of R.J. Geval, 11/09/95.

¹¹⁴⁹ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

UNMOs first suspected that a VRS infiltration was involved, that the patrol concerned had walked into an ABiH ambush, and that they had fought a retreat back to the tunnel.¹¹⁵⁰ The Canadian UNMO Bob Patchett thought that everything had been intended to frighten the population, but that the VRS had not committed the attack, because the PTT building (where the staff of the 28th Division were based) had not been fired on, while the compound in Srebrenica had. Mines had been laid at all the entrances to the tunnel; the mines were still there and were fitted with tripwires, the purpose of which was to trigger them if someone came along.¹¹⁵¹

The UNMOs later gave as their assessment that the plan and execution of the operation had been carried out precisely, and that it was striking that so little damage had been inflicted. The manner of the withdrawal and the laying of boobytrapped mines on the escape route moved the UNMOs to the conclusion that this looked too professional to have been carried out by local troops. It was a mystery to UNMO headquarters in Tuzla why this operation had been carried out. It appeared that the ABiH were trying to tie up the VRS, while the VRS were actually aiming to keep matters quiet in northeast Bosnia. The attack could therefore well have been intended to make the ABiH have concerns about its own safety. The most important objective of the action appeared to have been the UNMO headquarters, in order to inflict terror and to attract the attention of the media.¹¹⁵²

In their usual way, the warring factions tried to make capital out of the action. A radio report from a Bosnian-Serb station, which was received in the enclave, said that skirmishes among the Bosnian Muslims had flared up in Srebrenica. That morning, many explosions were heard from the town, which, according to the Bosnian Serbs, signalled the possibility of a confrontation between the 'extremist' Commander Naser Oric and the 'moderate' War President Osman Suljic, where the only possible victims were the Displaced Persons.¹¹⁵³ In turn, the Bosnian radio spoke of a Serbian sabotage unit that had inflicted carnage on the population.¹¹⁵⁴

VRS liaison officer Major Nikolic was nowhere to be found to give a full account to Dutchbat of this attack, for which in reality the VRS really was responsible. Through informal channels, the local UNHCR representative in Srebrenica, Almir Masic, heard that the attack was a reprisal for the ambushes laid by the ABiH in Bosnian-Serb territory. The situation in the enclave after the attack settled down again, although the population was alarmed by statements from Karadzic about access to the enclave for humanitarian aid. This aid was already failing to arrive regularly, and Masic expected that the local authorities would shortly demand to be supplied by air. According to Masic, the ABiH response was what was to be expected: the blame was given to Dutchbat for not guarding the enclave properly and failing to prevent the action.¹¹⁵⁵ ABiH Commander Ramiz Becirovic reproached Dutchbat in a report to the 2nd ABiH Corps in Tuzla that they did not return fire on the VRS, but said instead that Dutchbat was unsure of who the aggressor had been.¹¹⁵⁶

That the ABiH gave Dutchbat the blame was also evident from a meeting between representatives of the 2nd ABiH Corps and Sector North East of UNPROFOR. From the enclave there were complaints about Dutchbat, firstly because Dutchbat had not been to the scene of the incident at the tunnel entrance, and secondly because Dutchbat was patrolling the confrontation line less frequently, as Brantz, who conducted the discussions on behalf of Sector North East, admitted: he said that this was attributable to the shortage of fuel, but also because Dutchbat had become more careful in view of the imminent rotation. Apparently the battalion did not want to run any more risks.

¹¹⁵⁰ SMG 1001. TX to TA info Dutchbat, 240250B Jun 95.

¹¹⁵¹ Interview Bob Patchett, 19/11/99.

¹¹⁵² NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. UNMO HQ Sector NE to UNMO BHC, 25100B Jun 95.

¹¹⁵³ SMG 1004/27. Radio report 24/06/95 15.00 hrs BSA.

¹¹⁵⁴ *AP Worldstream*, 24/06/95, Srecko Latal, 'Serbs Sneak Through Government Lines, Open Fire on Town'. The Dutch media paid no attention to this report.

¹¹⁵⁵ BLS/OPSUNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade 25/06/95 13:40.

¹¹⁵⁶ ICTY (IT-98-33) D67/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Maj Ramiz Becirovic) to Command of 2nd Corps, Section for Morale and Political Guidance, 30/06/95, No. 01-114/95.

Brantz promised to contact Karremans on the issue to arrive at an evaluation.¹¹⁵⁷ The 2nd ABiH Corps gave the 28th Division feedback on the discussion with Brantz, in which another interpretation of the discussion was presented: according to the 2nd Corps, Brantz would insist that the Dutchbat Commander patrol the enclave. The 2nd Corps also mentioned the fear of the population that when one battalion left the enclave, the VRS would not allow the other battalion to enter. Brantz, however, said that he would ensure that the new battalion entered first;¹¹⁵⁸ the problems of the relief were dealt with exhaustively in the previous chapter.

The Visnjica incident

What became known as the 'Visnjica incident' was an important catalyst for the later events in East Bosnia. This incident, which was given much publicity, was the final and most extensive of a whole series of incidents in and around the enclave before the attack on Srebrenica, and it was also the one that penetrated the deepest into Bosnian-Serb territory. Whereas in the years 1992 and 1993, raids from the enclave were mainly intended to acquire food, in 1995 the raids had a mainly military objective, which was to tie up the VRS around the enclave. In this way, the ABiH wanted to prevent reinforcements from East-Bosnia influencing the conflict in Sarajevo. In addition, the action was intended to influence the morale of the VRS by creating panic and causing a feeling of uncertainty.

The order for this action was given on 17 June 1995, one week before the VRS attack through the Vitlovac tunnel; the incident itself took place shortly after the Vitlovac attack. There was no connection between the two incidents, even though it could not be ruled out that by tapping the ABiH links, the VRS got wind of the order that led to the Visnjica incident. If that happened, the VRS could have responded by planning and executing the action in the tunnel, to reciprocate by keeping the ABiH occupied.

The Chief of Staff of the ABiH 2nd Corps in Tuzla, Sulejman Budakovic, informed Ramiz Becirovic as Commander of the 28th Division on 17 June that he had been given verbal orders by ABiH Army Commander Rasim Delic to make preparations for offensive activity and to inflict losses on the VRS. Intelligence data had actually shown the ABiH that the VRS were keeping units in reserve at Han Pijesak to be able to intervene in Sarajevo.¹¹⁵⁹

The order from Tuzla was that a sabotage and intelligence action was to be undertaken along the road Vlasenica-Han Pijesak-Sokolac. For the VRS, this road formed the most important supply route to Sarajevo. Becirovic's primary purpose was to attack military transports, to obstruct VRS supplies along this road and to seize weapons.

To this end, Becirovic formed a combat group from the various brigades (known as brigades 280, 281, 284 and 285) of the 28th Division, and placed them under the command of Major Ibrahim (Ibro) Mandzic. Zulfo Tursonovic, the Commander of the 284th Brigade in the south-western part of the enclave, was ordered to escort this newly-formed combat group first to Zepa, where he was to determine the best possible location for the action in consultation with Colonel Avdo Palic, the Commander of 285 Brigade there. Becirovic suggested a place between Mekota and Mrkalji with as objective the regions Vrhovi, Han Pogledi or Debela Medj along the road from Han Pijesak (the site of the VRS headquarters) to Sokolac. According to the plan, Palic was to have the casting vote in selecting the location and he was to supply the guides.¹¹⁶⁰ In addition to this action, a briefing was also given

¹¹⁵⁷ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Memorandum Meeting 2 Corps ABiH Tuzla, 29/06/95.

¹¹⁵⁸ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. Komanda 2. Korpusa to Komandi 28.d KoV, 29/06/95, Str. pov. br. 02/1-676/2.

¹¹⁵⁹ This was concerned with the 65th Protection Regiment (Diversants) that played a major role in the mass murders after the fall of Srebrenica; NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Generalstab Armije to K-di 28.div KoV, 17/06/95, Str. pov. br. 1/825-84.

¹¹⁶⁰ NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic. ABiH, Headquarters of the 28 Division, No. 01-127/95, Military Secret, Highly Confi. The authenticity of the document was confirmed by its author, Ramiz Becirovic, on 18/04/98. It is notable that the document is

about another action towards Kladanj, which was to have been supported from Srebrenica. The informant concerned did not wish to disclose the purpose of this action.¹¹⁶¹ The latter action was not put into effect.



There was resistance to the plan within the Srebrenica municipal executive. Mayor Salihovic Fahrudin, deputy Hamdija Fezic and Chief of Police Hakija Meholic were against it. The Chairman of the municipal council, the War Presidency, convened the military Commanders in vain to appeal to them to disregard the order because it would be a violation of the demilitarization and so would give the Bosnian Serbs an excuse for a counter-move. Srebrenica was a demilitarized zone and was not intended for the development of military activities, such as carrying out a raid and then returning to the enclave. The voting in the War Presidency was 60% for the action and 40% against, however. Afterwards, the War Presidency did carry out an investigation into who had given the order for the military activities; Becirovic stated then that the orders were from the General Staff in Sarajevo,¹¹⁶² which was correct, because as indicated above, the order came directly from Army Commander Rasim Delic.

The Brigade Commander in Zepa, Palic, after consultation with Brigade Commander Zulfo Tursunovic and the Commander of the combat group to be formed, Ibro Mandzic, and the Intelligence Officer of the 28th Division, Ekrem Salihovic, arrived at a fairly complicated plan. This plan entailed as many as nine sabotage teams with different assignments. Each group was given its own objective, which varied from roads, barracks, an ammunition depot and air defence to fortifications. The approximately 150 men who took part in the attack left in the night of 25 to 26 June 1995. All groups were ordered to attack at intervals of two hours to cause panic. All groups were to reach their destination, but only four of them attacked, so that the centre of gravity was in the area of Crna Rijeka.

The VRS discovered the ABiH infiltrators early on, and were then given reinforcement. Nevertheless, the attack was a moderate success from an ABiH point of view: as the ABiH viewed it, the action yielded the VRS forty dead and wounded. It was possible to seize a considerable quantity of weapons and ammunition, and two radios. In Visnjica, a group happened on a large quantity of ammunition, but fatigue prevented them from taking it away. A few dozen cattle were taken, though.¹¹⁶³ Two groups of ABiH soldiers who had taken part in the attack walked into a VRS ambush on the way back, but managed to escape. A lightly wounded VRS soldier was taken to Zepa as a prisoner of war. The interrogation of this soldier, Velimir Mrdjan, did not produce any data on a proposed VRS attack on the enclave. There were, however, also losses on the ABiH side as a consequence of this attack. There were two dead, one seriously and five lightly wounded.

endorsed with the words 'Engelse vertaling document' (English translation of document), which makes it look like it had been in Dutchbat hands. Dutchbat had no knowledge of the operation, however (interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98).

¹¹⁶¹ Confidential interview (51).

¹¹⁶² Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/99. It is unknown whether the War Presidency had made earlier pronouncements on actions outside the enclave borders.

¹¹⁶³ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. Komanda 28.Divizije to Komandi 2.Korpusa, 30/06/95, Str. pov. br. 04-114/95.

The intelligence organ of the ABiH 2nd Corps could largely follow the progress of its own units by listening in to VRS radio traffic. In this way, according to the 2nd Corps, they could hear that the VRS gave orders to regain control of the situation; roads were closed and helicopters deployed. The 2nd Corps could also listen in to the message traffic of the VRS from Srebrenica in the same way. For instance, orders could be heard, including one from the Drina Corps to the Bratunac and Skelani Brigades to retaliate with an artillery bombardment of Srebrenica. After this, the 28th division reported indignantly from Srebrenica that the VRS was shelling the enclave as if Srebrenica was not a demilitarized zone.¹¹⁶⁴

Palic reported after the operation, back in Zepa, that after this the local ABiH were unable to take on further large-scale actions for the time being: the VRS was fully occupied with strengthening its positions, and Palic also asked for reinforcement 'should we be attacked by the infantry, as all estimates from the field seem to indicate that the Chetniks are up to something'.¹¹⁶⁵

The village of Komnica, at the foot of the Veliki Zep peak, 24 km in a straight line west of Srebrenica town, was the furthest point that was reached in Bosnian-Serb territory. The ordered objective was somewhat further, in the area of Han Pijesak, but the ABiH could no longer reach the area, so that the ABiH was no longer in a position to undertake further action.

The actual Visnjica incident was marginal in this enterprise. Palic did not report on the matter. What happened was as follows: one group passed the settlement of Visnjica, approximately five kilometres from OP-C, on the way back. Visnjica was originally a place where Bosnian Muslims lived; they had fled to Srebrenica. The group concerned consisted of approximately fifty men, without leaders. What happened was that early in the morning of 26 June they returned on their own initiative in the direction from which they came. They were men from the villages of Basca, Misici and Gerovi. This was a pure act of revenge of people from the three villages; deterring people from acts of revenge was not an uncommon problem.

Little organization was necessary for this spontaneous ABiH action. There were no minefields and there were hardly any VRS lines because it was well within VRS territory. A fight nevertheless did take place near Visnjica, although the ABiH command had given strict orders to withdraw to Zepa and to undertake no further action.¹¹⁶⁶ A report from the VRS Milici Brigade spoke of a group of fifteen to twenty soldiers who came from the south, and chanced upon a VRS post above Visnjica. They then attacked the post with hand grenades and rifle fire. One soldier died, one was wounded, and the two others managed to escape.

After that, according to the VRS report, the Muslim group opened fire on a part of Visnjica. An older woman was hit in the leg. In the village itself they set fire to five houses, as was confirmed by an ABiH source.¹¹⁶⁷ Both Muslim and Bosnian-Serb sources indicated further that no one of the local population was murdered.¹¹⁶⁸

This was later presented in the media as a special action, but it would appear from the above that it was not: what happened in Visnjica was more or less a coincidence, and there was no element of

¹¹⁶⁴ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije Odsjek bezbjednosti to Komandi 285. IBlbr n/r PK za bezbjednost Zepa, 01/07/95, Broj. 13-05-101; Komanda 28. Divizije Odsjek bezbjednosti to 2. Korpus Odjeljenje bezbjednosti, 05/07/95, Str. pov. br. 13-05-106; ICTY (IT-98-33) D66/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Asst Commander for Morale Captain Nijaz Masic) to the Command of 2nd Corps Morale Department, 30/06/95, No. 04-113/95. ICTY (IT-98-33) D62/a. ABiH, 2nd Corps Command, Assistant Commander for ObP (Intelligence) Dr Esad Hadzic 28th Division Command Intelligence Organ, 27/06/95, No. 02/8/01-998.

¹¹⁶⁵ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH 285 IBlbr Zepa to Komanda 2. Korpusa n/r Nacelnika staba Budakovic, Komanda 28. Divizije Srebrenica n/r majora Ramiz Becirovic, 28/06/95, Str.pov.broj. 08-21-244/95.

¹¹⁶⁶ Confidential interview (51).

¹¹⁶⁷ICTY (IT-98-33) D93/a. Command of the 1st Milici Light Infantry Brigade to Command of Drina Corps Operations Center, 26/06/95, No. 332-1684; confidential interview (51).

¹¹⁶⁸ Interview Momcilo Cvjetinovic, 11/06/98; confidential interview (51).

an attack in a military sense. Nevertheless, afterwards, the Bosnian Serbs linked the name Visnjica to both the military actions towards Han Pijesak and the one to Visnjica.¹¹⁶⁹

Reactions to the Visnjica incident

The incident received special attention because the *New York Times* devoted an article to it, so that it attracted the interest of the UN headquarters in New York, and a Security Council briefing had to be given. The newspaper wrote that the incident illustrated UNPROFOR's weakness, because the UN troops had not succeeded in keeping the ABiH within the area that had been demilitarized. The article relied heavily on the statement of Colonel Milovan Milutinovic, the VRS spokesman, and a few Bosnian Serbs affected by the attack who, in already needy circumstances, had lost all their worldly possessions and thought that they were safe because the UN was guarding the enclave. It did not escape the author Stephen Kinzer's attention that this was a companion piece to the Bosnian government's accusations towards UNPROFOR when they did not succeed in averting the shelling of the Safe Area. The image of the powerless UNPROFOR could also be detected in the words of a VRS soldier, who said that it was time for UNPROFOR to depart so that both parties could fight the war out among themselves.¹¹⁷⁰

The following day, the *International Herald Tribune* also printed the article. Karremans responded and defended himself in a letter to the Crisis Staff of the Army. In his view, the article illuminated the situation in and around the enclave in a one-sided way. It would be advisable to spend some time in an enclave before writing about the situation there, Karremans thought. There is no doubt that journalists would agree with Karremans, but the Bosnian Serbs just did not allow them into the enclave. Karremans also pointed out that the enclave border was fifty kilometres long. With thirteen scattered OPs, it was impossible to keep the borders completely closed: according to the Battalion Commander, they also leaked like a sieve. The ABiH moreover was more familiar with the territory than Dutchbat, and also kept some areas closed to Dutchbat. It was therefore none too difficult for them to go into and out of the enclave unnoticed. Karremans also pointed out that closing the enclave was not a part of the task. As far as the combatants were concerned: even though they knew better, both of them accused Dutchbat of not acting against infiltration to or exfiltration from the enclave.¹¹⁷¹

The UN headquarters in Zagreb reported on the incident that the two Dutchbat OPs in that corner of the enclave had reported no troop movements before or after the incident, but they did report hearing battle noise and seeing smoke in the early morning. Later that day, the Commander of 28th Division, Becirovic, stated that his soldiers had not been involved in the incident. He suggested that the VRS had staged the incident, so as to lay the blame with the ABiH. Zagreb did not rule this out, but neither did they rule out the possibility that it might have been an unauthorized attack by people looking for food: if aid convoys were unable to reach Srebrenica regularly, this could herald more of such incidents, Zagreb feared. UNPF in Zagreb had apparently been influenced by a press release saying that ABiH soldiers had set fire to houses and taken cattle in a hit-and-run action on neighbouring Serbian villages.¹¹⁷²

Visnjica had hardly any significance in the warfare, but Bosnian-Serb radio used the *New York Times* report for propaganda purposes, and made it the symbol of the suffering of the local Serbian population: the attack was without strategic importance and was a sign of ABiH frustration following the failure of their offensive at Sarajevo. According to the Bosnian Serbs, it was also evidence that UNPROFOR had taken the side of the Muslims, because it had not opposed military activities from

¹¹⁶⁹ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

¹¹⁷⁰ UNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 27/06/95, No. MSC-2093; *New York Times*, 27/06/95.

¹¹⁷¹ MID/RNLA. C-1(NL)UN Infbat to the RNLA Crisis Staff, 28/06/95, No. TK95103.

¹¹⁷² SMG 1001. Interoffice Memorandum G3 Land Ops to FC, 13/07/95. The press release was from *Reuters* of 26/06/95.

the Safe Area.¹¹⁷³ Local VRS officers expressed similar accusations in response to the Visnjica incident: Dutchbat was partial and carried out its duties poorly. The Dutch soldiers were said to have allowed the Muslims past their checkpoints, and to have allowed the Muslims to wreak havoc in Visnjica. The Netherlands should have prevented this action, and it was even more evidence that the UN troops were partial.¹¹⁷⁴

The Dutch Military Intelligence Service also responded to the incident. The service thought that the Bosnian-Serb criticism that UNPROFOR had done too little to demilitarize the enclave, instead even supplying food and military resources to the ABiH in the enclave, was incorrect. It may have been the case that it was impossible for Dutchbat or UNMOs to verify the accusations on the spot, but in the past the Bosnian Serbs had repeatedly accused the UN of bias towards the ABiH. The Military Intelligence Service (MID) considered it conceivable that the VRS had been trying to justify the earlier capture of OP-E, or to use these reports to justify new operations in Bosnia.¹¹⁷⁵ This turned out to be all too true, although the Military Intelligence Service (MID) appeared to have reversed the cause and effect. Both incidents illustrated not only the increase of tension but also how difficult it was for Dutchbat to establish what was going on in and around the enclave in the vast and obscure territory, and certainly at night.

In the ABiH raid to Visnjica, the ABiH estimated that there were more than forty casualties on the VRS side. VRS messages had even been intercepted, which the ABiH happened to consider to be unreliable, that the VRS had lost 71 men. The ABiH Commander in Srebrenica, Becirovic, considered the operations to be a success, because, in other places too, a total of thirteen Bosnian Serbs had been 'liquidated'. The ABiH objective of occupying the VRS in East Bosnia had actually been achieved: the VRS had indeed been unable to continue sending troops to Sarajevo from the areas around Srebrenica and Zepa, but on the contrary had been obliged to transfer troops from elsewhere to Srebrenica and Zepa.¹¹⁷⁶

The fact that the ABiH attack was intended to tie up the VRS in East Bosnia was an illustration that Sarajevo was still the pearl in the Bosnian crown. All other interests were subordinate. This was a familiar pattern: it had also cropped up in the ideas regarding an exchange of territory between Sarajevo and Srebrenica (see Chapter 1 of this part). Another illustration of Sarajevo's importance was given in a meeting of the high command of the ABiH 2nd Corps that was also attended by Izetbegovic. The Commander of the ABiH 2nd Corps, Sead Delic, suggested in the meeting that instead of attempting to lift the blockade of Sarajevo, to concentrate on lifting the blockade of Srebrenica and Zepa. This idea did not go down well, however: As the capital city, Sarajevo was of greater strategic importance, and it was there that the decisive battle with the VRS should be fought. If the ABiH were to lose the fighting around Sarajevo, then there would be losses on all fronts. The ABiH would then be exhausted, and would have to give up on other fronts. In the backs of their minds, Sead Delic and other ABiH leaders still thought that in the battle for Sarajevo the enclaves could be attacked by the VRS, but they were counting on the fact that the international community and UNPROFOR would be able to protect the population.¹¹⁷⁷

The events at Visnjica also led to a comprehensive correspondence with the commanders of both warring factions. The Chief of Staff of UNPROFOR, Nicolai, wrote to Mladic that the ABiH had indeed carried out hostilities. However, he was unable to confirm the details that Mladic had provided.

¹¹⁷³ SMG 1004. SM Bijkerk to Dutchbat Opsroom, Radio message of 29 June BSA. Later, Visnjica appeared to play another small role in the media campaign when the 'Zvornik Seven' (the survivors of the journey to Tuzla who, after many detours, were handed over to the VRS by American soldiers in 1998 and put on trial in the Republika Srpska) were linked with Visnjica. However they had nothing to do with it.

¹¹⁷⁴ *The Inner Circle*, published by the Communication Section of Dutchbat III, Number 47, 3/07/95.

¹¹⁷⁵ MID/CO. MID/CO, Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, No. 31/95, closed 291000B June 1995.

¹¹⁷⁶ ICTY (IT-98-33) D67/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Maj Ramiz Becirovic) to Command of 2nd Corps, Section for Morale and Political Guidance, 30/06/95, No. 01-114/95.

¹¹⁷⁷ Sefko Hodzic, *Optjecaceni koverat*, p. 246-7.

Nicolai pointed out that, as Mladic was aware, the lack of fuel meant that patrols were impossible and neither could the incident be investigated. In fact, Dutchbat would not have done so anyway, because the incident took place outside the enclave. In recent weeks, Dutchbat had actually requested the local ABiH soldiers to comply, because UN Resolution 836, which led to the establishment of the Safe Areas and gave UNPROFOR the mandate to deter an attack on them, was still in force. On the other hand, Dutchbat should also ask the VRS to comply, in view of the increasing amount of firing on OPs. Nicolai also took the opportunity to repeat the request to Mladic to withdraw his troops from OP-E.¹¹⁷⁸ After the letter from Nicolai to Mladic, General Smith also expressed alarm about the recent incidents, because they could easily lead to further escalation. He also reminded Mladic that Resolution 836 was still in force. In addition to firing on civilians, Smith also referred to an increase in attacks on OPs in Srebrenica, Gorazde and Sarajevo, and added that he would not tolerate it. He wrote that he would not hesitate to respond within UNPROFOR's right to self-defence.¹¹⁷⁹

UNPROFOR also received a letter of protest from the Bosnian Muslim side, addressed to Smith. This was rather unpleasant, in view of the fact that ABiH Army Commander Rasim Delic himself had ordered the attacks outside the enclave. Perhaps it was for this reason that Delic aimed his arrows mainly at the loss of OP-E. He pointed out that Dutchbat no longer carried out its duties, because it no longer patrolled along the borders of the enclave, and therefore did nothing to protect the population. After the withdrawal of OP-E, the Serbian aggressor had been able to intensify its attacks on Srebrenica with impunity, according to Delic. He demanded the recapture of OP-E.¹¹⁸⁰ Nicolai answered from Sarajevo that he was unable to share Delic's view that the cause of the increasing tension was that Dutchbat was no longer performing its duties well. The shortage of fuel did not make it any easier to carry out the patrols. Foot patrols may well have been stopped temporarily, but Nicolai assured Delic that they had been resumed in the meantime. He furthermore pointed out to Delic that in recent weeks Dutchbat had warned the ABiH on several occasions to refrain from attacks outside the enclave.¹¹⁸¹ This letter did not actually state explicitly that Resolution 836 and the agreement of 8 May 1993 to demilitarize Srebrenica were still in force, but the Bosnian Muslims should have been well aware of the fact.

9. The final two weeks before the attack

The limited force of the actions around Srebrenica was completely out of proportion to the fighting power of the thirty thousand men that had concentrated around Sarajevo. The population of the enclave were nevertheless put in danger by them, because, however modest in scale, the military actions were linked with the major offensive at Sarajevo, as described earlier: the ABiH wanted to tie up the VRS around the enclave, and, to a lesser extent, the opposite was also the case.

After the unrest caused by the Pale bombings and the hostage crisis in early June, the humanitarian situation in the enclave had improved somewhat and it was relatively quiet there again. Soon, however, food aid degenerated into an instrument of warfare. There were political motives underlying the denial of aid to the population, but it was also an easy instrument. The VRS reports showed that in the Bosnian-Serb view, firing on the enclave was a direct consequence of the activities carried out by the ABiH outside the enclave. Only when the humanitarian situation in Srebrenica started to assume an extremely serious form (from 27 June), did the ABiH put a brake on military activities outside the enclave.

In the meantime, the ABiH scrutinized the activities of Dutchbat. The ABiH 2nd Corps said that it had secret reports from the UN at its disposal, and sent a message on the subject on 25 June to the 28th Division in Srebrenica. According to the message, a regrouping of the VRS and its tanks had been

¹¹⁷⁸ DCBC, 1019. Letter Brigadier General C.H. Nicolai to General Ratko Mladic, 26/06/95, No. CG/6043/206/95.

¹¹⁷⁹ DCBC, 1019. Letter Lt General R. Smith to General Ratko Mladic, 26/06/95, No. CG/6043/207/95.

¹¹⁸⁰ SMG 1004/5. Letter Army General Rasim Delic to Lt General R. Smith, 25/06/95, Ref. 02/32-40.

¹¹⁸¹ DCBC, 1019. Letter Brigadier General C.H. Nicolai to General Rasim Delic, 26/06/95, No. CG/6042/208/95.

observed in the enclave. The Dutchbat reconnaissance platoon was said to have established where 120 mm mortars had been set up. It was also stated in the report that the VRS expected an attack by the ABiH and that there had therefore been a mobilization in Bratunac: if the worst came to the worst, those who were eligible would have to report to their unit. The ABiH also observed an increase in the number of helicopter flights between the Republika Srpska and Serbia. The report also mentioned the VRS guarantee that everyone, except criminals, would be able to leave Srebrenica unhindered. Whoever wanted to could be escorted to Bosnian territory or to Serbia. At the same time, the report pointed out that it was not so easy in practice to leave the enclave: two people had left Srebrenica through the mediation of the UN in the form of transport. They did have to pay DM 6000 per person to a mediator for the privilege. Moreover, the report mentioned Opstina resolutions on banning the establishment of new objects. According to the report, this could refer to a possible exchange of territory between the two parties. It is unclear on which Dutchbat or Sector North East reports these statements were based.

It was possible to deduce from the correspondence that two Bosnian UN interpreters in the enclave informed the command of the 28th Division not only of the military activities of the VRS but also of that of UNPROFOR.¹¹⁸² The fact that a number of interpreters acted as ABiH informants was known within Dutchbat, because it had been observed that they had moved to the top floor of the PTT building in Srebrenica town. This was the location of the ABiH 28th Division intelligence section, which was taboo for Dutchbat and UNMOs.

Otherwise, it appears that the weight given by the 2nd Corps to the facts mentioned, if this is what they were, was not justified. The fact is that Dutchbat constantly kept track of the positions of the VRS equipment, in so far as it was in view. Statements on an exchange of territory were fixed items on the rumour menu.

With respect to the mediation of the UN in the evacuation of two people: residents of the enclave were not often able to leave the enclave through the mediation of the UN, but, on the other hand, it was not uncommon. In this case it concerned a Dutchbat-organized medical evacuation. However, it did not take place at the end of June: at the time Dutchbat was actually confronted with a refusal for clearance by the VRS for a medical evacuation of a member of their own personnel who needed surgery, which their own dressing station could not offer.¹¹⁸³ Neither did the report indicate which UN organization was involved with the smuggling. It could not have had anything to do with Dutchbat: there was little traffic from the battalion over the enclave border. On 20 June, a supply convoy of six trucks arrived for Dutchbat, to be unloaded at the closed compound in Potocari. For the first occasion in a long time, it was possible on 2 July for some Dutchbat personnel to leave the enclave, and this was after the ABiH report referred to. UNHCR convoys passed the border fairly often, but they remained in the enclave for only a few hours, and were furthermore under the control of accompanying non-Bosnian UNHCR Field Officers and of Dutchbat. For this reason, these vehicles returned to Belgrade, and on leaving the enclave they were also checked by the Bosnian Serbs, precisely because the VRS wanted to know if people were leaving the enclave.¹¹⁸⁴ All the above made frontier-running using UN vehicles fairly improbable. Other traffic that left the enclave on 15 June had to do with the departure of personnel from a Spanish and Swedish non-governmental organization. On 24 June, there was also a personnel rotation of *Médecins Sans Frontières*. It was also usual for this traffic to be checked by the Bosnian Serbs.

In a report on his contacts with Dutchbat, Ramiz Becirovic particularly reproached the Dutchbat liaison officer, Major Boering, for constantly blaming the ABiH as the cause of everything that the Bosnian Serbs carried out against the enclave. In particular, Boering had stated that the

¹¹⁸² NIOD, Coll. Trifunovic. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa, Odjeljenje Bezjednosti to Komanda 28. D. KoV, Odsjek SVB, 25/06/95, broj. SP. 06-401-2/95.

¹¹⁸³ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Commanding Officer 1(NL)UN Infbn (Dutchbat 3) to Commander Bosnia-Hercegovina Command thru Commander Sector North East, 29/06/95, No. TK95104.

¹¹⁸⁴ Interview Jovan Ivic, alias Jovo Rus, 20/10/00.

Bosnian Muslims had put the safety of the Safe Area in danger with their activities. According to Becirovic, Boering had no evidence for his accusations.¹¹⁸⁵

However, the Bosnian Muslims also came to realize that their activity outside the enclave borders did not continue without consequences. This was evident from an order of 27 June from the ABiH 2nd Corps to the 28th Division, to the effect that the activities outside the enclave borders must be curbed. Hostilities could still be planned, but they must not be executed without Tuzla's prior consent. The 28th Division must restrict itself to defence and reconnaissance, and was only to fire on VRS targets when really necessary, because otherwise there could be consequences for the population.¹¹⁸⁶ In any case, they should wait until the problems with the arrival of UNHCR convoys had been solved, to prevent the food situation deteriorating further. For the time being, the most important task was to take measures to prevent departure from the enclave (see Chapter 4). In a certain sense, the VRS also lent a helping hand, according to the report, in preventing departure from the enclave, because the message continued by warning that the VRS were checking the roads to Kladanj and Caparde (between Tuzla and Zvornik), so that a journey from Srebrenica to Tuzla was not without danger. Finally, the 28th Division were congratulated on the successful contribution to the actions for Sarajevo, and for inflicting heavy losses on the VRS.¹¹⁸⁷

After that, the military situation in the enclave remained relatively quiet in the last days of June, even though there were some incidents. There was no longer any question of ABiH hostilities outside the enclave borders, but a considerable number of shots and explosions could be heard every day, both inside and outside the enclave. The VRS fired anti-aircraft guns on the foremost ABiH lines with the purpose, the ABiH assumed, of rendering observation of the activities there impossible. In addition to infantry activity, the ABiH reported that the VRS were increasingly often attacking with artillery, deep inside ABiH territory, with the area around Sucasca in the south of the enclave suffering most. Moreover, the ABiH observed VRS activity near the bauxite mines. According to the ABiH assessment, Dutchbat avoided the VRS, because the battalion was afraid of the VRS.

The ABiH did reinforce its lines with an eye to 28 June, Sint Vitus' day, on which the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 was commemorated, and which was a day of mythical proportions for the Bosnian Serbs.¹¹⁸⁸ However, this day also passed with no activity other than the renewed harassment of the foremost ABiH lines with anti-aircraft guns.¹¹⁸⁹

Dutchbat reported in the last days of June, after the attack through the tunnel at Vitlovac, that the Potocari compound had been hit several times by rifle fire at intervals through the night. There was other activity to report: OP-R in the east of the enclave was also fired on. An exchange of fire took place on the nearby Kvarac peak between the VRS and the ABiH. On the other side of the enclave, in the west, eight mortar grenades fired by the VRS landed to the south of OP-A. A VRS tank fired a number of shots into the enclave. At OP-F, the VRS fired on farmers who were grazing their cattle, in which a number of shots hit the OP defence wall. The VRS fired on a Dutchbat patrol near OP-M, to which the OP responded by firing a .50 machine gun over the VRS positions. Much rifle fire could be heard near the Potocari compound, which narrowly missed a patrolling Dutchbat member. *Médecins Sans Frontières* reported three wounded as a result of the shelling of Sucasca.¹¹⁹⁰ In the night of 29 to 30

¹¹⁸⁵ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH 28. Divizije to Komanda 2.Korpora, 27/06/95, Str. Pov. Broj. 01-146/95.

¹¹⁸⁶ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpora to Komandi 28.d KoV, Komandi 285.lbr, 28/06/95, Str. Pov. Broj. 02/1-670/4.

¹¹⁸⁷ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpora to Komandi 28.d KoV i Zepi, 27/06/95, Str. Pov. Broj. 02/1-604/93.

¹¹⁸⁸ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH 28. Divizije, Odsjek obavjestajnih poslova to Odjeljenje obavjesta poslova 2. Korpora, 27/06/95, Str. Pov. Broj. 02-06-46/95.

¹¹⁸⁹ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH 28. Divizije to Komanda 2.Korpora, 28/06/95, Str. Pov. Broj. 01-148/95.

¹¹⁹⁰ NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. [Dutchbat] Milinfo 26/06/95, period 250600 - 260600; 27/06/95 period 260600 - 270600; 28/06/95, period 270600 - 280600; MSF Brussels. Capsat MSF Srebrenica to MSF Beo, 29/06/95 16:37.

June, the VRS made another attempt to infiltrate the enclave (at Dobra Zena), but the ABiH managed to frustrate it.¹¹⁹¹

The VRS bombardments resulted in one dead and ten wounded. The ABiH reported that the VRS was busy with reconnaissance and re-establishing positions. Excavators were being used near Mount Caus (near Potocari) and to the south of Bratunac, possibly to improve the protection of Bratunac. The VRS was also hard at work laying mines in the vicinity of Buljim. On 29 June, this cost the life of one ABiH soldier, while another was severely wounded.¹¹⁹² The VRS were also said to have laid mines within the enclave to block the passage to Tuzla. In this, with hindsight, the Bosnian Muslims saw a preparation for the attack on Srebrenica: the VRS is said to have known that it would probably become the escape route to Tuzla. But at the time that this happened, there were not yet any orders for the VRS to attack, and the laying of mines appeared to be more intended to keep the ABiH within the enclave.¹¹⁹³

The ABiH 2nd Corps had understood from the intercepted radio traffic that a unit of the Drina Wolves of Captain Dragan Jovic (alias Legenda) had left the area at Srebrenica in support of the Zvornik brigade to the north. The Commander of the Drina Corps, General Zivanovic, had not been informed of this transfer. When he was told, he wanted - at the request of Brigade Commander Vukovic - twenty men to return to the enclave, because the Skelani Brigade had a shortage of men. Ultimately, it was possible to find twenty soldiers for that purpose who were in punishment detention. Neither did this withdrawal of the Drina Wolves immediately point to preparations for an attack on Srebrenica.¹¹⁹⁴

On 29 June, there was again panic after fifty VRS soldiers entered the southeast of the enclave. The B Company Quick Reaction Force made their way in that direction and the Potocari Quick Reaction Force put itself on standby on the compound in Srebrenica. The threat increased a little because a VRS T-54 tank started its engines there. The VRS liaison officer at Yellow Bridge asked why the Quick Reaction Force had been called out, and UNMOs informed the ABiH of the matter. Deputy Battalion Commander Franken informed Company Commander Groen of the Bravo Company that a further VRS penetration must, if necessary, be responded to by firing. Without any further provocation the VRS disappeared again, however. The only incident to take place in the meantime was that the VRS fired on two enclave residents who were one hundred metres away in a tree. The VRS also fired a shot over OP-K.

After that, for the sake of peace, a discussion was held with the ABiH, in which Dutchbat was accused of not being in a position to do anything against the VRS activities in the Bandera Triangle in the west of the enclave. But the fact was that the ABiH had actually denied Dutchbat access to this area in January, and forbidden them from occupying OP-B in the Bandera Triangle (see Chapter 6 of Part II). This was precisely where the ABiH received direct hits from the VRS. In order to come into action in the area itself, the ABiH then demanded all the weapons from the Weapon Collection Point, which was rejected by the Dutchbat liaison team.¹¹⁹⁵

The daily report of the ABiH of 3 July indicated that measures had been taken to resort to the highest state of readiness, to prevent VRS reconnaissance teams approaching the ABiH lines. Attention was also extended to the humanitarian situation, which was assuming the form of a catastrophe. Hunger meant that an increasing number of ABiH soldiers were no longer able to carry out combat

¹¹⁹¹ ICTY (IT-98-33) D67/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Maj Ramiz Becirovic) to Command of 2nd Corps, Section for Morale and Political Guidance, 30/06/95, No. 01-114/95.

¹¹⁹² ICTY (IT-98-33) D66/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Asst Commander for Morale Captain Nijaz Masic) to the Command of 2nd Corps Morale Department, 30/06/95, No. 04-113/95.

¹¹⁹³ Interview Hazrudin Kistic, Tuzla, 17/05/99 and 18/05/99.

¹¹⁹⁴ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa to Komandi 28.divizije n/r obavjestajnom organ, 29/06/95, Str. Pov. Broj. 02/8-01-1026.

¹¹⁹⁵ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary of Koreman, 39th week, p. 7-25; SMG 1004/38. Capsat Maj Franken to Cap Groen, undated.

duties. There would soon also be no more food for the ABiH. The 2nd Corps in Tuzla asked the General Staff of the ABiH to make all possible efforts to alarm all relevant international organizations and to put pressure on the VRS.¹¹⁹⁶ On 3 July, there was still no sign of alarming messages about an imminent attack by the VRS.

10. The motivation for starting the attack

Even now, there are no reliable sources for the precise motivations of the Bosnian Serbs to start the attack on Srebrenica around the time that it happened. All explanations are with the wisdom of hindsight, and at the moment are little more than the rationalized hypotheses of relative outsiders. It is therefore difficult to draw a distinction between convenient arguments, explanations with hindsight after the attack had been started, and the actual reasons for starting the attack. If, however, one looks behind the rhetoric of the Bosnian-Serb side, there nonetheless seems to be a reasonably consistent line from various spokesmen in the motives for the attack on the enclave.

Alongside military-strategic layers there are also economic reasons underlying the attack on the enclave. The Podrinje, the area around Srebrenica, because of its position on the Drina, was an area of geo-strategic importance for both Muslims and Bosnian Serbs. The links with Serbia and the economic prospects of the Podrinje, with its mines, industry and agriculture, played a role, even though it has to be said that the importance of Gorazde far surpassed that of Srebrenica in this regard.¹¹⁹⁷ A memo addressed to Akashi indicated that there could be little doubt that gaining possession of the area west of the Drina was 'a primary strategic Serb objective', and that this was of great importance to the leaders in Pale.¹¹⁹⁸

Just as for the Bosnian Muslims, Srebrenica had no priority for the Bosnian Serbs because of political-strategic factors. The offensive started in mid June by the ABiH to break the siege around Sarajevo demanded all attention. At the same time, this offensive actually focussed attention on Srebrenica again, through the ABiH action towards Han Pijesak that was associated with it, which, among other things, culminated in the Visnjica incident. The question is then whether this action, and the above mentioned increase in the number of skirmishes between the combatants in the spring of 1995, played a role in the ultimate Bosnian-Serb decision to attack the enclave. A list is presented below of what was known to UNPROFOR on the attack on the enclave. This is followed by miscellaneous extracts and an analysis of the Bosnian-Serb points of view, followed by the points of view of the Bosnian Muslims. The majority of the points of view are retrospective, but a number provide an explanation for starting the attack on Srebrenica even before the fall of the enclave.

The motivation for starting the attack according to UNPROFOR

There are no well-founded UNPROFOR points of view, also with hindsight. UNPROFOR had no view of the actual motives of the Bosnian Serbs to attack the enclave. When asked, General Smith said that on 16 July, after the fall of Srebrenica, Mladic said to him that the VRS had attacked Srebrenica because of the sustained hit-and-run operations from the enclave. Smith himself saw the attack as a local event with no direct link to any strategy elsewhere.¹¹⁹⁹ Also given as a reason in Mladic's biography is: 'each day we had ten dead. They call that a Safe Area. Therefore we resorted to the attack in July 1995.' According to Mladic, Dutchbat would be able to confirm that the ABiH undertook attacks from the enclave.¹²⁰⁰

¹¹⁹⁶ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Koanda 2. Korpusa to GSS ARBiH KM Kakanj, 03/07/95, Str.pov.br. 02/2-13-489

¹¹⁹⁷ Borislav Durdevic, in *Srpska Vojaska*, 25/08/95.

¹¹⁹⁸ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88041, File 4-4 Notes on Meetings, 4 Jul - Dec 95. Interoffice Memorandum T. Colborne-Malpas to SRSG, 06/07/95.

¹¹⁹⁹ Interview R. A. Smith, 12/01/00.

¹²⁰⁰ Ljiljana Bulatovic, *General Mladic*, p. 101.

Karremans said that, on Dutchbat's departure from Srebrenica, he asked Mladic what would have happened if the Muslims had been unarmed, and if there had been no soldiers in the enclave. Karremans asked whether the enclave would then still have existed. Mladic's answer was 'yes'.¹²⁰¹ Mladic later also said to journalists that what had happened in Srebrenica and Zepa could have been prevented if those areas were disarmed in accordance with the agreements signed in 1993.¹²⁰² It is difficult to establish to what extent a distinction has to be made here between a politically correct and a genuine answer. Nevertheless, all these statements point in the same direction, that the attack took place as a response to the ABiH sorties to Bosnian-Serb territory. Immediately after the raid to Visnjica had become known, Janvier had also expressed the fear that it would lead to reprisals.

Western intelligence services were also cautious in drawing conclusions. Little is known from Western or UN sources about the motivation for an attack on Srebrenica. According to a Western intelligence service statement on 10 July, the ABiH raids in the previous weeks certainly contributed to the VRS decision to attack.¹²⁰³ According to another Western intelligence service too, the raids from the Safe Area were the probable reason for the VRS attack on Srebrenica.¹²⁰⁴

The motivation for starting the attack according to Bosnian-Serb sources

The actual plan for the attack on the enclave, Operation 'Kravija '95', will be discussed in the following section. Attention is given here to the explanations to the question of why the attack took place, and why it took place at that time. From the available Bosnian-Serb sources, a consistent line can be detected in the thinking of the VRS, but there is no precise description of the motives for attacking the enclave.

In this, two types of explanation can be distinguished. Explanations can be sought in Srebrenica as part of a larger strategic whole, in which the reasoning for the attack would be that the Bosnian Serbs were at a disadvantage in the war as a whole, which forced them to concentrate their resources and to consider political solutions, such as the changes to the map of the Contact Group for the division of Bosnia. In this explanation, the fate of Srebrenica is closely linked to that of the Zepa enclave. Explanations can also be sought in the enclave as an isolated problem, in which the VRS started the attack as a response to earlier events, in which it wished to test what might happen next. In this explanation, the attack on Srebrenica must be seen as separate from that on Zepa. Both levels of explanation will be discussed.

In the more comprehensive explanations, the Bosnian Serbs are assumed to have identified two phases in the military-strategic thinking of the ABiH. In the first phase, the VRS thought, the ABiH wanted to conquer all the territory that would devolve to the Muslims on the basis of the Contact Group plan. This meant that the ABiH wanted to break the siege of Sarajevo and wanted to cut the Posavina Corridor at Brcko, to separate the eastern and western parts of the Republika Srpska. In a second phase of the offensive, the Drina would have to be reached along a wide front, such that the eastern enclaves would be linked with Central Bosnia. In addition to the offensive at Sarajevo, the ABiH would initiate offensives from Tuzla and Kladanj towards Srebrenica and Zepa. The VRS feared that this could lead to enclosure of its own territory. The VRS also recognized the danger of activities from the enclaves in support of ABiH actions elsewhere, the ultimate result of which could be that the eastern enclaves would become larger and would be linked with Central Bosnia.¹²⁰⁵

It is also clear from this analysis what the dangers for the VRS were. The Bosnian Serbs were then wrestling in East Bosnia with two main problems, which meant that the Drina Corps were hardly

¹²⁰¹ SMG 1007/13. Statement of LCol T. Karremans, Camp Pleso press conference (Zagreb) 23/07/95.

¹²⁰² ANP, 'Mladic wil onderhandelen met autoriteiten Gorazde' (Mladic wants to negotiate with authorities in Gorazde), 270523 Jul 95.

¹²⁰³ Confidential information (5).

¹²⁰⁴ Confidential interview (48).

¹²⁰⁵ ICTY (IT-98-33) D 160/a, Radinovic Report, para 1.6-1.11.

in an enviable position. Firstly there was a great lack of troops, and in addition the Drina Corps, which was partly formed from territorially organized military units, was engaged on two fronts. On the outside lines this concerned defending the line Tuzla-Zvornik, Kladanj-Vlasenica, Olovo-Sokolac and Gorazde-Visegrad. On the inside lines, there were defences around Srebrenica, Zepa and a part of Gorazde. This explains Mladic's fear for the establishment of a corridor between the Muslim-Croat Federation and the enclaves: if this should be created, then the area that was under the Drina Corps' responsibility would be split in two, and the undermanned corps could be attacked from the rear. The Drina Corps had no reserves, and there would be no way open other than to give up the Podrinje, the area around Srebrenica.

The fact that in the meantime the balance of forces around Srebrenica was favouring the ABiH - there were calculations of 1 VRS soldier to 2.8 ABiH soldiers - was less relevant: within the ABiH, not everyone had a weapon, and, with respect to heavy weapons, the VRS again had superior power. VRS sources stated that the ABiH therefore drew up a plan as early as November 1994 to overpower the Dutchbat bases and weapons,¹²⁰⁶ which indeed proved to be the case.

If the actions against the eastern enclaves are taken into consideration - not to be confused with the conquest of the entire enclaves - then it can be established that had been on the Bosnian-Serb agenda for a considerable time. In early March 1995, Karadzic had already ordered a separation between Srebrenica and Zepa, to prevent traffic between the two enclaves and to create an intolerable situation in which there would be no hope of survival for the residents. Mladic had determined in an ensuing directive that the VRS must prepare operations against the enclaves. In East Bosnia, however, the priority was fighting the ABiH in the area to the east of Tuzla: Kalesija, Simin Han and the regions Teocak and Sapna. At an early stage, the VRS took account of the possibility of a departure of UNPROFOR from the enclaves, which Boutros-Ghali and Janvier would indeed propose at the end of May 1995 (see Chapter 1 of this part). In that case, it would be easier for the VRS to deal with the ABiH in the enclaves and to gain possession of the Drina valley, where the eastern enclaves were situated.¹²⁰⁷

Many VRS sources mention a link between the ABiH actions and the attack on the enclaves. In an interview at the end of August with the army newspaper *Srpska Vojska*, General Radislav Krstic, who led the actions against Srebrenica, and in the meantime had become the Commander of the Drina Corps, likewise indicated that the motivation for the VRS attack must be sought in the fact that the ABiH had undertaken a number of offensive actions from Srebrenica and Zepa in the previous six months. Serbian villages such as Osmace, Kotijevac, Visnjica and Podravanje had been set on fire (not all these villages were actually completely Serbian). UNPROFOR had failed, because it had done nothing to stop these actions, whereas it would have known everything about them. According to Krstic, UNPROFOR had failed in the demilitarization of the enclaves, but instead had only put up a smoke screen behind which the Bosnian Muslims could attack Bosnian-Serb territory.

The VRS appeared to assume that UNPROFOR and Dutchbat were informed of the military activities of the ABiH outside Srebrenica. The VRS therefore concluded that UNPROFOR was prejudiced, partly because warnings from the Security Council and from UNPROFOR were mainly directed against the Bosnian Serbs, while in Bosnian-Serb eyes the Muslims also rode roughshod over the resolutions on the Safe Areas.¹²⁰⁸ Krstic concluded that the Safe Areas were no longer *safe*, and that there was a danger of actions on an increasingly large scale deeper into Bosnian-Serb territory, in which Bosnian Serbs could be killed. For this reason, the VRS found it necessary to take measures in the short term to call a halt to the threat from Srebrenica and Zepa.¹²⁰⁹

¹²⁰⁶ ICTY (IT-98-33) D 160/a, Radinovic Report, para 2.12, 2.13, 2.15.

¹²⁰⁷ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 425/a. Karadzic, Directive No. 7, 8/03/95, No. 2/2-11. General Pukovnik Ratko Mladic, Directive No. 7/1, 31/03/95, No. 02/2-15.

¹²⁰⁸ ICTY (IT-98-33) D 160/a, Radinovic Report, para 2.12.

¹²⁰⁹ Borislav Durdevic, in *Srpska Vojska*, 25/08/95.

The VRS units destined for the attack on Zepa were told that ABiH sabotage units had penetrated deep inside Bosnian-Serb territory, so that the VRS were suffering constant losses.¹²¹⁰

Colonel Milovan Milutinovic, the head of the army information service of VRS headquarters, also drew a direct line between the ABiH actions and the VRS attack. He pointed out that the Safe Areas Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde had been misused in the last month to attack VRS positions.¹²¹¹ According to him, in 1995 alone, ABiH fighters committed arson in approximately fifty Bosnian-Serb settlements around the enclave. Every couple of days houses would go up in flames and several people would be murdered, which had led to a flight from the villages around the enclave. In the months of May and June 1995, and even before then, the General Staff of the VRS had issued warnings to UNPROFOR that the 28th Division was not disarmed. Because the UN was not prepared to do anything about it, the VRS started the operation against the enclave, according to Milutinovic.¹²¹²

It was correct to say that there had been warnings from the VRS to UNPROFOR. However, Milutinovic's statements are somewhat too firm, because, as stated above, the Bosnian Serbs had already taken the decision in March to reduce the size of the Srebrenica enclave.

This shifts the perception of the complete military-strategic situation in East-Bosnia, via a possible attack on the eastern enclaves, to the attack on Srebrenica itself. What then comes to light in the first place is the question why Srebrenica was not attacked earlier, while Mladic had set down in a directive that this had to happen 'as rapidly as possible'. The Serbian journalist Zoran Petrovic-Pirocanac answered this question in an article in the Belgrade weekly *Intervju*. From 13 July he was in the area around Srebrenica and he was the one who filmed the famous pictures of the surrender of the Muslim men on the journey to Tuzla.¹²¹³

According to this journalist, the reason that Srebrenica was temporarily pushed to the background as an objective was that the conflict surrounding Teocak in the Majeveca hills flared up in the spring; the VRS attempted to cut off the ABiH's path there (see Chapter 1). This would later be admitted by the VRS as a tactical error: already at the start of the year, the fall of Srebrenica could have brought about a change on the Bosnian field of combat for the Bosnian Serbs, because trampling the enclave underfoot would have released the brigades that could be well used elsewhere.

According to Petrovic-Pirocanac, the high command of the Republika Srpska - which included Karadzic, the Generals Mladic, Gvero, Tolimir and the politicians Krajisnik, Plavsic and Koljevic - had talked about Srebrenica on various occasions. Already at the beginning of January, the command of the Republika Srpska was said to have come to the decision to step up the pressure on the eastern Safe Areas. Part of this pressure was limiting the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR from and to the enclaves, and imposing restrictions on the access of convoys. As early as February 1995 Karadzic is said to have had a clear picture of plans for conquering Srebrenica, but only in early July would Mladic be given the green light by the leaders of the Republika Srpska to start the operation.¹²¹⁴

An explanation for the attack on Srebrenica during the attack itself came from the information service of the VRS General Staff, which distributed a press release through the press agency *Tanjug* on 9 July stating that the Bosnian Muslims were using the Safe Area as a base for starting attacks, where particular mention was made of the incident in Visnjica.¹²¹⁵ On 10 July, VRS General Gvero attempted to remind the world that in 1993 the Bosnian Serbs had halted their advance against Srebrenica after the UN promised that the area would be demilitarized. According to him, the Bosnian Muslims had done everything, however, to prevent that, and had later even brought weapons into the enclave. Gvero

¹²¹⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33) D96/a. Command of Drina Corps to Commands of 1st and 5th Podrinje Light Infantry Brigade, 05/07/95, No. 04/156-4.

¹²¹¹ *The Ledger* (Lakeland, FL), 10/07/95.

¹²¹² Interview Colonel Milovan Milutinovic, 20/03/00 and 23/03/00.

¹²¹³ Discussions Zoran Petrovic-Pirocanac, 31/03/98 and 02/04/98.

¹²¹⁴ Zoran Petrovic-Pirocanac, *Intervju*, 21/07/95; ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex.499/a. ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 403/a, Butler Report, para 1.11.

¹²¹⁵ *Politika*, 10/07/95.

pointed to the hundred dead and the more than two hundred wounded that had fallen on the Bosnian-Serb side as a result of ABiH actions. Gvero also mentioned Visnjica in this regard, in addition to the death of woodcutters, the laying of ambushes for VRS vehicles and the killing of policemen at Osmace.

Where Gvero subsequently resorted to false rhetoric was in his statement that the ABiH had launched a military action to link Srebrenica with Zepa.¹²¹⁶ VRS General Tolimir also mentioned this to Janvier on 10 July.¹²¹⁷ This reasoning emerged on other occasions, but no grounds for it can be found.

The link between ABiH actions and the VRS attack on the enclave Srebrenica was also laid by Jovan Zametica, an advisor to Radovan Karadzic. He pointed out that the Bosnian Muslims had misused the status of the Safe Area, and: 'we are determined to put a stop to these acts of terrorism'.¹²¹⁸ Mladic wrote likewise to Smith on 10 July: misuse of the Safe Area was the reason why the 'Muslim terrorists' had been neutralized.¹²¹⁹ On 11 July, Akashi was also told by Milosevic that the VRS military action was a response to that of the ABiH.¹²²⁰ That the Bosnian Serbs were completely fed up with the misuse of the Srebrenica Safe Area was clear; the various numbers of dead civilians did not appear to be devoid of a propaganda element. We will return later in this section to the question of how many victims there had been on the Bosnian-Serb side around Srebrenica.

Among the Bosnian-Serb population, the constant casualties as a result of raids from a Safe Area, which was deemed to be demilitarized, also led to great indignation and fear. The residents of Bratunac could not easily forget the events of 1992 and 1993, when the town was surrounded on two sides and many civilians lost their lives. For this reason there was also much pressure from the Bosnian-Serb population to do something against the ABiH sorties, because many feared becoming a victim.¹²²¹

The former Chief of the General Staff of the VRS, later Minister of Defence of the Republika Srpska, General Manojlo Milovanovic, thought likewise that the attack was a response to the ABiH sortie towards the VRS headquarters in Han Pijesak, which culminated in the Visnjica incident.¹²²² The historian Milivoje Ivanisevic indicated that the ABiH raids were the reason for the attack: to prevent repetition, the ABiH lines must be taken.¹²²³ When asked, the journalist Zoran Jovanovic, at the time employed as information officer of the Drina Corps, confirmed that the murder of the five VRS woodcutters at Rupovo Bdro near Milici on 28 May and the raids on 26 June at Visnjica, followed by an attack on a VRS liaison patrol at Crna Rijeka, three kilometres from the Drina Corps headquarters - in which, as well as two dead and two wounded, Jovanovic's son had been wounded - brought Mladic to the decision to finally disarm the enclave.

According to him, the reason for the attack on Zepa was hardly any different: there too, the ABiH troops were under the command of the 28th Division, and in some actions the VRS did not know whether the opponents came from Srebrenica or from Zepa.¹²²⁴

This again raises the question of to what extent the events in Srebrenica and later in Zepa must be seen as inextricably linked together. General Krstic was quoted above, and he spoke in an interview in August 1995 of ABiH raids from Srebrenica and Zepa as an explanation for the attack on Srebrenica. But why then attack Srebrenica and not Zepa? In his trial, Krstic stated that the decision to attack Srebrenica was actually isolated. According to him it rested on two points. The first was that there was

¹²¹⁶ CRST. Telex Banja Luka (UNHCR) 11jul95 1102Z

¹²¹⁷ ABiH Tuzla. Komanda 2. Korpusa za Odbranu Republike Vojna Tajna Strogo Povjerljivo, 11/07/95, Str. pov. br. 02/8-01-1215.

¹²¹⁸ *Associated Press*, 11/07/95; Tuesday 18:46 Eastern Time.

¹²¹⁹ SMG 1004/84. HQ Army of the Republic of Srpska to UNPROFOR Command, 10/07/95, No. 06/17-455, sent by UNMO liaison officer Pale 11113B July 1995. SMG 1002/10. Capsat UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade, Sarajevo, Zagreb, 10/07/95 17:05.

¹²²⁰ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNPROFOR/NATO Close-Air Support to Dutch Battalion at Potocari, 11/07/95, Chronology or Events.

¹²²¹ Interview Momcilo Cvjetinovic, 25/06/98.

¹²²² Interview Manojlo Milovanovic, 18/11/98. In mid 1995, Milanovic was a Corps Commander in the Bihac.

¹²²³ Interview Milivoje Ivanisevic, 17/09/99.

¹²²⁴ Interview Zoran Jovanovic, 13/09/99.

a directive from the General Staff of the VRS from March 1995 that prescribed the separation of Srebrenica and Zepa - which was discussed in Chapter 1 of this part. According to him, the other point, and the actual decision to resort to the attack, was in fact the attacks by the 28th Division from the Srebrenica enclave and the persistent infiltration into Bosnian-Serb territory from the enclave.¹²²⁵ Srebrenica therefore presented the VRS with more problems than Zepa.

The motivation for starting the attack according to Bosnian Muslim sources

On the Bosnian Muslim side there was less insight into the motivation for the VRS attack. In so far as it can be established, they were never aware of the directives issued by Karadzic and Mladic in March for the separation of Srebrenica and Zepa, which were the basis for the attack. By way of completing the quest for the motives for an attack, it is nonetheless desirable to investigate the associated views from the Bosnian side.

Brigadier-General Sead Delic, the Commander of the ABiH 2nd Corps, thought that the attack on Srebrenica had everything to do with the ABiH offensive from Sarajevo. The ABiH had carried out raids from the enclave, to lure the VRS away from the surroundings of Sarajevo. For Delic, breaking the siege subsequently meant the start of the attack on Srebrenica. For Sead Delic, this offensive was also the reason why the attack did not take place until July 1995, and why after rolling up OP-E on 3 June the VRS could not continue the attack on Srebrenica: all the VRS' energy was needed at Sarajevo.

An additional explanation for the attack, in his opinion, could be found in the tactics that the VRS followed: they had first wanted to see how Dutchbat responded to the attack, and whether Close Air Support would follow. In this way, the VRS wanted to explore the state of the defence of Srebrenica by the ABiH.¹²²⁶

The Bosnian military intelligence service gave a slightly different explanation of why the attack did not start until July. The ABiH thought that an attack really had been planned for the spring of 1995. After the ABiH offensive in the Majeвица hills at the end of March had been halted, an attack on Srebrenica immediately came back into prospect. From intercepts (intercepted message traffic) and Human Intelligence (spying) the ABiH had got wind of the fact that on 5 and 6 May there had been a meeting of the top of the Drina Corps, including such attendees as: General Krstic, the VRS brigade commanders, and protecting and special units from elsewhere that did not belong to the Drina Corps. It would have been clear to the ABiH then that the VRS' intention was to start the attack on the eastern enclaves, initially with Srebrenica.¹²²⁷ The ABiH thought then, in May, that it had also seen signs of a build up of armed forces around the enclave.¹²²⁸ According to a source in the Bosnian military intelligence service, however, the VRS had again postponed the execution at the last moment, because there appeared to be shortages of lorries and buses, which were necessary for bringing in reinforcements. According to this source, the plan then remained on the agenda, because the attack would be necessary for the VRS for two other reasons, which will be dealt with below: firstly to free up troops for reinforcing the men in the Krajina, and secondly to improve morale.¹²²⁹

The Croatian attack in the Krajina was started on 4 June 1995. The question is therefore whether the strategy followed there by the Croats had any influence on the decision of the VRS to start the attack against Srebrenica. This attack would actually mean that troops would be freed up in East-Bosnia to be able to cope with the Croatian attack in the Krajina. According to ABiH Corps

¹²²⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 399/a bis; interview of Radislav Krstic, 18/02/00.

¹²²⁶ Interview Sead Delic, 10/03/99. In an interview Sefko Hodzic in July 1998, Sead Delic gave the same motivation and added that the Bosnian Serbs were convinced that the international community would not respond and that in his opinion the international community had given something of a 'nod' to making an end to the problem of the eastern enclaves. (Sefko Hodzic, *Otpocaveni koverat*, p. 249).

¹²²⁷ Interview Semsudin Murinovic, 17/05/99.

¹²²⁸ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 08/02/98.

¹²²⁹ Interview Hazrudin Kistic, 17/05/99 and 18/05/99.

Commander Sead Delic, this could have played a role.¹²³⁰ The Bosnian-Serb leaders, according to him, would have had the choice of giving preference to operations in East or in West Bosnia. The fact was that there was a risk that if the VRS were to find itself at a disadvantage in West Bosnia, they would still be confronted with the East Bosnian enclaves. Mladic was said to have shown more interest in the defence of West Bosnia, but Karadzic decided that East Bosnia had priority.¹²³¹ It is impossible to establish to what extent such perceptions played a role and how probable they were.

It was also clear for the ABiH that the morale of a part of the VRS was poor, and a victory at Srebrenica would be an opportunity to give it a boost.¹²³² The ABiH considered that it had evidence of this after a number of VRS documents had fallen into ABiH hands in the Bihac. For instance, a document from 21 June - therefore from before the ABiH actions towards Visnjica - indicated that the VRS were faced with a morale crisis, which would have to be stopped by means of a rapid and brief action.¹²³³

ABiH officer Semsudin Murinovic also thought that, alongside tactical considerations, feelings of revenge also played a role in the decision to attack Srebrenica. Because of the murders of Bosnian Serbs outside the enclave by ABiH troops, and especially in Kravica at the start of the war, feelings of revenge prevailed in the Republika Srpska, according to him.¹²³⁴ These feelings of revenge should possibly be categorized on two levels: firstly as a general theme of revenge in the conflict in the light of the events in the preceding years, and secondly as a specific trigger in the decision actually to trample the enclave underfoot.

On the Bosnian side, on the other hand, not everyone appeared to be convinced of a link with the events in Visnjica. Army Commander Rasim Delic did not think that it was a pretext for an attack: 'The Serbs would have clutched at *everything*, as soon as they decided to attack. They then had great problems, were losing territory and becoming disoriented. In their eyes, one large victory could reverse that process.' The Division Commander in Srebrenica, Ramiz Becirovic, also thought that there was no direct link with the later attack on the enclave.¹²³⁵ The Police Commander Hakija Meholic thought that the decision to take Srebrenica had already been made before the events in Visnjica.¹²³⁶ The local SDA politician Ibran Mustafic said that the raid that culminated in the incident in Visnjica was the only action of the local ABiH to have proceeded reasonably well, although it did not amount to much. He did think that that it had resulted in the Bosnian-Serb attack, however.¹²³⁷ The assessment of the last three must be treated with some caution, however, because it concerns the suspicions of residents of the enclave, who had little visibility of what was going on outside the enclave.

Implicitly, the Bosnian temporary Charge d'Affaires at the UN, Ivan Mistic, also made a link between the Bosnian-Serb attack and the events in Visnjica, although he did not identify this place by name. Mistic stated in the Security Council on 12 July, one day after the fall of Srebrenica, that the strategists in Pale themselves had initiated an attack against an ostensibly Serbian village. This village was said to be populated by actors who made out that they were being terrorized by Muslim Special Forces. It may be true that television teams and reporters were there immediately, but the foreign press could not have known that in reality it was a Bosnian village had been ethnically cleansed by Karadzic's hordes. These were methods that Goebbels used to use, Mistic said.¹²³⁸

Finally, the NATO bombing of Pale on 25 and 26 May was also thought by the ABiH to have influenced the VRS decision to attack the enclaves. After all, more bombings could lead to further

¹²³⁰ Interview Sead Delic, 10/03/99.

¹²³¹ Interview Makar, 23/03/01.

¹²³² Interview Sefko Tihic, 08/03/99.

¹²³³ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Command 2nd Corps to all divisions, 18/07/95, No. 04/1-105-618. This referred to a document from the General Staff of the VRS of 21/06/95 No. 02/2.

¹²³⁴ Interview Semsudin Murinovic, 17/05/99.

¹²³⁵ Interview Rasim Delic, 21/04/98.

¹²³⁶ Interview Hakija Meholic, 19/04/98.

¹²³⁷ Interview Ibran Mustafic, 16/04/98.

¹²³⁸ ABZ, PVVN. Security Council 3553rd meeting (S/PV.3553) of 12/07/95.

erosion of the VRS military infrastructure and could accentuate VRS ideas to settle the Bosnian crisis by military means.¹²³⁹

Making up the balance of the motivation for starting the attack

Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims appear in general terms to agree that losses on the Bosnian-Serb side as a result of actions of Bosnian Muslims were a bone of contention for the VRS that had a strong influence on the motivation for the start of the attack on the enclave. There can be no complete answer to the question of how great these losses outside the territory of the enclave were precisely. This seems to be partly the consequence of the definition of the period and the size of the area, and of the question of whether soldiers or civilians were involved. They could refer to the number of victims from the start of the war, or from the period when Srebrenica was designated a Safe Area. With respect to the size of the area being referred to: it could be concerned with the area of the Podrinje with the Opstinas adjacent to Srebrenica, such as Bratunac, Skelani and Milici, or a wider area.

For these reasons, there are different estimates in circulation of the total number of victims on the Bosnian-Serb side around Srebrenica. Karadzic, for example, said as early as 26 January 1994 that there had been 1260 Serbian deaths as a result of ABiH raids.¹²⁴⁰ The pathologist Zoran Stankovic, who performed many post mortems in the area, thought that in the course of the entire war there had been approximately 1600 deaths on the Bosnian-Serb side around Srebrenica.¹²⁴¹ The historian Milivoje Ivanisevic likewise indicated that prior to the fall of the enclave 1600 Bosnian Serbs had died in and around Srebrenica.¹²⁴² The journalist Zoran Jovanovic even thought that in the regions around Vlasenica, Bratunac and Srebrenica during the entire war approximately three thousand Serbs had died, ninety per cent of which were civilians.¹²⁴³ VRS Major Zoran Malinic indicated in July 1995 that in the two previous years there had been seven hundred casualties.¹²⁴⁴ On 10 July, Mladic wrote to Smith that because of the misuse of the Safe Area, one hundred Serbian civilians had died and two hundred had been wounded.¹²⁴⁵ Jovan Zametica, advisor to Karadzic, asserted on 11 July: 'We have had 30 killed civilians in the past 45 days'.¹²⁴⁶ Where purely military losses were concerned, Milosevic informed Akashi on 11 July that in the preceding weeks as a result of ambushes and attacks, 150 VRS soldiers had died.¹²⁴⁷ It can be deduced from data originating in the VRS that, after the demilitarization of Srebrenica, 35 soldiers of the Bratunac Brigade were killed and 25 of the Zvornik Brigade, while 13 were missing.¹²⁴⁸ The ABiH estimated that the attack towards Han Pijesak and the incident in Visnjica had cost the VRS more than forty casualties, and possibly even 71. Furthermore, in the days prior to the raid, another thirteen VRS soldiers died.¹²⁴⁹

A military-strategic reason for the General Staff of the VRS to start the operation was to free up troops. These troops were greatly needed around Sarajevo and elsewhere on the sparsely occupied front line of the Drina Corps.¹²⁵⁰ The thought arose within the ABiH too that the VRS needed the brigades

¹²³⁹ Interview Semsudin Murinovic, 17/05/99.

¹²⁴⁰ *The Toronto Star*, 26/6/94.

¹²⁴¹ Interview Zoran Stankovic, 28/05/00.

¹²⁴² Interview Milivoje Ivanisevic, 13/12/99.

¹²⁴³ Interview Zoran Jovanovic, 13/09/99.

¹²⁴⁴ Interview V.B. Egbers, 02/09/99.

¹²⁴⁵ SMG 1004/84. HQ Army of the Republic of Srpska to UNPROFOR Command, 10/07/95, No. 06/17-455, sent by UNMO liaison officer Pale 11113B July 1995.

¹²⁴⁶ *Associated Press*, 11/07/95; Tuesday 18:46 Eastern Time.

¹²⁴⁷ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNPROFOR/NATO Close-Air Support to Dutch Battalion at Potocari, 11/07/95, Chronology or Events.

¹²⁴⁸ ICTY (IT-98-33) D 160/a, Radinovic Report, para 2.28 and 2.33.

¹²⁴⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33) D67/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Maj Ramiz Becirovic) to Command of 2nd Corps, Section for Morale and Political Guidance, 30/06/95, No. 01-114/95.

¹²⁵⁰ ICTY (IT-98-33) D 160/a, Radinovic Report, para 3.3.

that were tied up at Srebrenica elsewhere. Sefer Halilovic, the former ABiH commander, even thought that Mladic's lack of troops largely determined the Bosnian-Serb strategy.¹²⁵¹ It is possible to haggle about the importance of the VRS troops around Srebrenica, because they were local and certainly not first class troops. On the other hand, the three eastern enclaves were tying up six thousand VRS men, and that was no insignificant number.

In any case, reducing the size of the Srebrenica enclave was consistent with a political-military framework previously established by the VRS. This was discussed in the introductory chapter of this part: the objective of the Bosnian Serbs was to return to the first demilitarization agreement of April 1993, when the size of the enclave was only four by one and a half kilometres. The Bosnian Serbs therefore wanted to deliberately create intolerable conditions for the population. Although the Bosnian Serbs had not said so, this was intended to lead to a mass evacuation, as was also envisaged in 1993, but which then encountered resistance from the Bosnian government.

The cynical side of all this was that Srebrenica was not a priority for the Bosnian Muslims in the war, and the same applied to the Bosnian Serbs. The area to the east of Tuzla, the Majevisa hills, and Sarajevo in particular, were of considerably greater interest. But it was precisely the importance that the Bosnian Muslims attached to Sarajevo that led to Srebrenica also being involved in the conflict: the ABiH carried out diversionary manoeuvres outside the enclave territory, so as to tie up the VRS around the enclaves and to prevent them from sending reinforcements to Sarajevo. This focused the attention of the Bosnian Serbs on the Srebrenica enclave, which was deemed to be demilitarized, as they did not hesitate to emphasize because of the losses they suffered there.

During the war in Bosnia, it was not unusual for the ABiH to throw a stone in the pond and arouse the anger of the VRS, which then struck back disproportionately and with an excess of heavy weapons. The former ABiH army Commander Sefer Halilovic also pointed out that Srebrenica and Zepa should never have been involved in the conflict surrounding Sarajevo if there had not been assurances that the enclaves were secure.¹²⁵²

The primary reason for the attack on Srebrenica must then also be sought in the activities carried out by the ABiH outside the borders of the enclave. General Krstic called this the basis for the attack on Srebrenica.¹²⁵³ Neither can it be ruled out that Mladic's fear for corridors to be opened by the ABiH to the eastern enclaves played a role.

In addition, the elimination of the enclave offered a number of additional benefits, although they were not motives as such. The freeing up of troops around the enclaves was to the benefit of the infantry-weak VRS, because the troops could then be deployed elsewhere. A victory was also useful as a boost to the sagging morale. Furthermore, the attack forced the enclave to new political negotiations, because it thoroughly turned the map for the division of Bosnia on its head.

11. VRS plans for the attack on Srebrenica

The two concluding sections of this chapter discuss the developments of the plans for starting an attack on the enclave by the VRS. In this it will be demonstrated that these plans were created at a very late stage and in a short time. Even if the idea of reducing the size of the enclave had existed since March, as described above, there was *no* question of months of preparation for this operation: the preparation was a matter of days. Neither was it the intention at the start of the attack to occupy the enclave in its entirety; this decision was taken only on 9 July, a few days after the start of the attack, which will be covered in the following chapter.

Attention will also be given to which signs could have alerted Dutchbat and the 28th Division to a possible attack. For a more extensive study into the signs at higher military and political levels,

¹²⁵¹ Interview Sefer Halilovic, 17/04/98.

¹²⁵² Interview Sefer Halilovic, 17/04/98.

¹²⁵³ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 399/a, Interview of Radislav Krstic, 18/02/00, p. 10.

please refer to the separate Appendix to this report: *Intelligence and the war in Bosnia 1992 - 1995 - The role of the intelligence services.*

The military-technical planning of the attack

The first signs that the VRS was about to start an action at Srebrenica consisted of the arrival of a group of staff officers from the Drina Corps in the Bratunac Brigade area to the north of the enclave. This group was led by the Chief of Staff of the Drina Corps, Major General Radislav Krstic; and after 13 July he became Commander of the entire Drina Corps. With the arrival of this group, the planning of what would become known as operation 'Krivaja 95' started.¹²⁵⁴

On 2 July, this resulted in an operational plan issued by the Drina Corps. The objective of 'Krivaja 95' was to separate the enclaves Zepa and Srebrenica from each other as rapidly as possible, to reduce their size to their urban areas, and to create the conditions for their elimination. This should be achieved with a surprise attack. Units around the enclave were ordered to conduct an active defence, while separate attack units were to reduce the size of the enclaves.

The plan for Srebrenica involved two directions of attack. The main axis ran from the south east of the enclave, from Zeleni Jadar to Srebrenica. Two secondary axes ran from the Derventa in the west via Suceška to Srebrenica, with an intermediate axis from the Podravno area to Vijogor (see map in this section). An advance on these secondary axes proved to be unnecessary, and the associated units remained passive until 11 July.¹²⁵⁵

A battalion of the Zvornik Brigade was given the task of monitoring the high ground and the southern access to Srebrenica via Bukova Glava (near OP-F in the southeast), Puzulici and Bojna (likewise the southeast of the enclave). A combat group (of battalion strength) of the 2nd Romanija Brigade was allocated a parallel and somewhat more western advance route starting in Jasenova and via Bujakovic and the area near Orahovica to Stupine, with which the western access to Srebrenica could be controlled. A combat group (likewise of battalion strength) with a platoon of tanks of the Birac Brigade was given as line of departure the area around Podravno and an advance route via the Alibegovac hill to the Bajramovici area to close the accesses to Srebrenica to the west of the Romanija Brigade at Stupine.

In addition to the Zvornik Brigade, the following three units had to carry out the attack: the Bratunac Brigade, the Milici Brigade, and the Skelani battalion.

The Bratunac Brigade's task was to attack the ABiH from the already occupied positions on the heights of Predola (near OP-Q), Divljakinja, Crni Guber and Olevine. The Bratunac Brigade subsequently had to occupy the Gradac height (between Srebrenica and Potocari) to prevent the ABiH reserves being brought in from Potocari to Srebrenica.

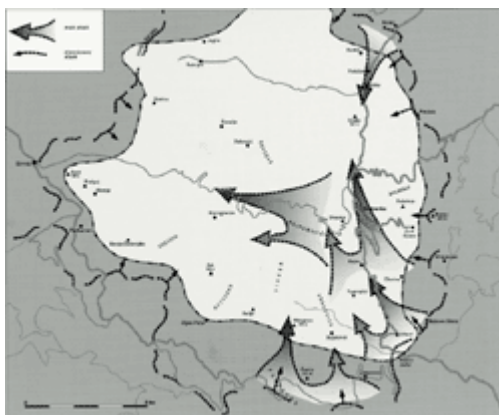
The Milici Brigade had to break through the lines with a company from the south to take the Kak peak and then to proceed to the north to control the road at Staroglavice. The Milici Brigade units had to perform diversionary actions to tie up the ABiH to the west of the enclave including at Jaglici (OP-M), Ravni Buljin, Osoje (former OP-B), Podgaj and Zedanjsko (OP-C).

The Skelani battalion was given the role of Corps reserve. This battalion was to advance through behind the other units to Osredak in the heart of the enclave. The artillery was to be positioned around Pribecevac, to prepare to fire on military targets. An introductory bombardment was also planned. Should NATO aircraft be deployed in support of UNPROFOR, they must be attacked. The security organs of the Drina Corps and the military police were intended to pick up and guard

¹²⁵⁴ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 403/a, Butler Report, p. 6 and 15.

¹²⁵⁵ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 428/a. Command of the Drina Corps to Commands of 1Zpbr, 1Bpbr, 2Rmtbr, 1Brlpbr, 1Mlpbr, Map, 02/07/95, No. 04/156-2.

prisoners of war. The orders indicated that: 'In dealing with prisoners of war and the civilian population, behave in every way in accordance with the Geneva Conventions'.¹²⁵⁶



On 2 July, the Drina Corps issued a warning order to the various brigades of the Corps to prepare the troops. In this, the Bratunac Brigade was responsible for the eastern and northern sector around the enclave, the Milici Brigade for the western sector, and the Skelani battalion for the southern sector. The Bratunac and Milici Brigade and the Skelani battalion had received some reinforcement after the call up of reservists in mid June, but in spite of this these units were too poorly equipped, too predominantly manned by older reservists and too little trained to take part in an attack.

The 1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade and the 1st and 5th Podrinje Light Infantry Brigade were ordered each to prepare a lightly armed battalion. The 1st Birac Infantry Brigade, the 2nd Romanija Motorized Brigade and the 1st Vlasenica Light Infantry Brigade must each prepare a reinforced company as part of a battalion or for independent assignments. In addition, the 5th Mixed Artillery Regiment was to supply the weapons for the support of the operation.¹²⁵⁷

These smaller units were placed in a tactical group. Such a formation of temporary units into a tactical group, and adjustment of the command structure for operations in a specific area, was not unusual in the VRS. Neither was it unusual for the VRS to select the best and youngest units to be able to carry out an attack. The older conscripts who manned the trenches - and often got involved in all manner of trading with the other party - were deemed unfit for that work.

The newly formed tactical group came under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Vinko Pandurevic, the Commander of the Zvornik Brigade. This brigade also supplied a platoon of tanks and motorized (in military terms: self-propelled) artillery. It was the movement of these units that had been observed on 5 July by Dutchbat and UNHCR.

The deputy commander of the new unit was Captain 1st Class Milan Jolovic, alias 'Legenda', who also commanded the Podrinje detachment, better known as the 'Drina Wolves': they were experienced, well equipped and well trained groups who would lead an attack.

Other secondary units were the 65th Protection Regiment (Diversants) and the 10th Sabotage Detachment. The 65th Diversants were stationed in Han Pijesak to guard the military installations there and on the Veliki Zep peak. It was one of the strongest military units of the VRS and was normally directly under the orders of the General Staff. Its Commander was Lieutenant Colonel Milomir Savcic. The 10th Sabotage Detachment consisted of two platoons from Vlasenica and Bijeljina and was under the command of Lieutenant Milorad Pelemis. This unit was used for sabotage actions and was directly

¹²⁵⁶ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 428/a. Command of the Drina Corps to Commands of 1Zpbr, 1Bpbr, 2Rmtbr, 1Brlpbr, 1Mlpbr, Map, 02/07/95, No. 04/156-2. See also ICTY (IT-98-33) D 160/a, Radinovic Report, para 3.8.

¹²⁵⁷ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 403/a, Butler Report, p. 6 and 15; ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex.427/a. Drina Corps Command (Major General Milenko Zivanovic) to Commands 1ZPBR, 1BPBR, 2RMTBR, 1VLPBR, 1PLPBR, 5PLPBR, 1BRLPBR, 1MLPBR, 5MAP, Skelani SPB, 2/07/95, No. 01/04-156-1.

under the Drina Corps. A battalion of Military Police, under the command of Major Zoran Malinic, came from Nova Kasaba.

Units of the police, who belonged to the Ministry of the Interior, were also made available to the VRS; after declaring a state of siege or a state of war, provisions for this measure had been carried over from the old Yugoslavia. Such units could be classified as Municipal Police and Special Police. The first were organized along military lines and were responsible for law enforcement and security in their area. These units could be deployed by military commanders for operations agreed in advance. The units came from Vlasenica, Milici, Bratunac, Skelani, Visegrad and Rogatica. Within their own structure, these paramilitary units came under the control of the regional Centar Sluzbe Bezbednost (the security service) in Zvornik. Its head there was Dragomir Vasic, and his deputy was Mane Duric. A unit of Special Police under police Lieutenant Colonel Ljubisa Borovcanin, later operated in Potocari. It was not unusual for battalions of the Special Police to take part in hostilities.¹²⁵⁸

The composition of the battalions and reinforced companies was to be complete on the same day that this order was given, 2 July; plans to be worked out by the fighting units had to be complete on 3 July. The preparations for offensive operations were to be complete on 4 July, and the transfer of the designated units to the operational area on 5 July. On 3 and 4 July, Drina Corps Commander General Milenko Zivanovic and a group of commanding officers were on the advance command post of the Bratunac Brigade in Pribicevac, which had a view of Srebrenica. In the afternoon of 4 July the advance command post of the Drina Corps at the same place opened. The expectation of the VRS was that the ABiH would defend the enclave by force, and that it would be supported in this by UNPROFOR.¹²⁵⁹ A supplementary order was concerned with air defence: the VRS assumed that NATO air power would be called in for assistance.¹²⁶⁰ On 6 July at 02.00 hours radio communication should be established. The idea was for the operation to be complete within three to five days.¹²⁶¹

In addition, in support of the operations at Srebrenica, all units of the Drina Corps would be instructed to go from defence to attack, and to perform offensive actions along the entire front up to and including Kladanj and Olovo. The attacks on Srebrenica and Zepa therefore also led to fighting at Tuzla, Zvornik, Kladanj, Vlasenica, Olovo and Sokolac. According to General Krstic, the VRS managed to beat off the ABiH counter-moves in these areas, so that the troops at Srebrenica and Zepa could carry out their duties unhindered. Because the reporting concentrated on Srebrenica, such hostilities and those at Zepa were hardly mentioned in reports, however.¹²⁶²

On 5 July, General Zivanovic reported to the General Staff that all units of his Corps had completed their preparations. He reiterated the order: an offensive operation against Srebrenica with the objective of separating Srebrenica and Zepa and reducing the size of Srebrenica to an area in agreement with the original demilitarized zone of April 1993.

To prevent units from Zepa attacking the VRS from behind, Zivanovic asked the General Staff to ensure that the 65th Diversants attacked Zepa early on 6 July. The 1st and 5th Podrinje Brigade had already been given such an order.¹²⁶³ These units destined for Zepa were told by way of an explanation of their objective that a corridor between the two enclaves had been established for the exchange of goods, and that from the enclave various terrorist sabotage groups penetrated deep inside Bosnian-Serb

¹²⁵⁸ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 429/a. 1 Zvornik pbr to the Command: Chief of Security, 2/07/95, No. 01-244. ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 403/a, Butler Report, p. 11-15.

¹²⁵⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex.427/a.Drina Corps Command (Major General Milenko Zivanovic) to Commands 1Zpbr, 1Bpbr, 2Rmtbr, 1Vlpbr, 1Plpbr, 5Plpbr, 1Brlpbr, 1Mlpbr, 5Map, Skelani SPB, 02/07/95, No. 01/04-156-1.

¹²⁶⁰ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 403/a, Butler Report, p.16, para 3.8.

¹²⁶¹ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 428/a. Command of the Drina Corps to Commands of 1Zpbr, 1Bpbr, 2Rmtbr, 1Brlpbr, 1Mlpbr, Map, 02/07/95, No. 04/156-2. See also ICTY (IT-98-33) D 160/a, Radinovic Report, para 3.8.

¹²⁶² ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 744/a.Vuk Kovacevic in an interview Major General Radislav Krstic in *Drinski*, November 1995, p. 7-9.

¹²⁶³ ICTY (IT-98-33) D76/a. Drina Corps Forward Command Post to General Staff VRS, 05/07/95, No. 04/156-4-1.

territory, so that the VRS was constantly suffering losses and damage.¹²⁶⁴ In this, not only was a link made with Karadzic's strategic directive of March 1995 to separate Srebrenica and Zepa, but also with the ABiH sorties from Srebrenica.

The military tactics behind the attack

The striking feature of the operation plan is that it was created in a very short time. Neither was there much time for the preparation. Nevertheless, the gathering together of battalions and companies from different brigades, placing these in ad hoc structures under unfamiliar staffs, and the movement of these units, entailed the necessary coordination problems.

Nearly all effort was oriented to the southern part of the enclave, which was consistent with the order: to separate Srebrenica and Zepa. It was also the least risky direction of attack of the three possibilities: from Derventa in the west, from Bratunac in the north, or from Zeleni Jader in the south. Advancing from Derventa meant that the longest route to the town of Srebrenica would have to be used, which furthermore went through difficult terrain, and where there were no metalled roads. The route from Bratunac was the most direct, but had the disadvantage that it emerged directly on the Dutchbat compound in Potocari. This route had furthermore fairly open terrain, which could entail the use of heavy equipment in the event of a timely discovery by the Bosnian Muslims, and also involved the risk of losses. The southern part of the enclave was relatively poorly defended, and offered the shortest route to the town via reasonably covered terrain.

The plan had no provisions to stop a wholesale flight of the population to the north, to Bratunac or from there to Yugoslav area: there was no mention of closing the enclave in a northerly direction. The one company of the Bosnian Serbs that was designated to occupy the high ground at Gradac, which dominated the road between Srebrenica and Potocari, would only have been able to reach that point, after the capture of intermediate objectives, only after some considerable time.

The VRS therefore also made it none too difficult for the men to break out to the north for their later journey to Tuzla, although this breakout was not expected. There were no instructions that this was a deliberate tactic or that a corridor had been opened deliberately.

Another striking feature was that UNPROFOR was non-existent as far as the VRS was concerned. The operation plan took absolutely no account of the presence of Dutchbat. The VRS possibly expected that UNPROFOR would remain neutral. At least the VRS had made no provisions to isolate the Dutchbat compounds. On the VRS maps for the operation, neither the compounds nor the OPs were drawn in. Account was only taken of the deployment of NATO aircraft or Airmobile units.

The strength with which the VRS carried out the attack is not accurately known. The three units that were around the enclave had a total of 1700 men in June 1995. These units had tanks, eighteen field artillery pieces and a number of MRLS rocket launchers. The VRS supplied reinforcements of 2000 to 3000 men, including special troops that did not belong to the Drina Corps. The attack itself would be carried out with 1500-1700 men.¹²⁶⁵

The West was only aware that special troops had been involved in the attack after the event. Then too, only the existence of the 10th Sabotage Detachment was clear, with a strength of one hundred to two hundred men.

Moreover, a detachment of Greek volunteers formed part of the Drina Corps. There were possibly also two to three hundred Arkan Tigers involved, who were under the control of the Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker was certain that she saw Arkan together with Mladic after the fall in Srebrenica. Mladic had taken the opportunity to ask Arkan if he wanted to

¹²⁶⁴ ICTY (IT-98-33) D96/a. Command of Drina Corps to Commands of 1st and 5th Podrinje Light Infantry Brigade, 05/07/95, No. 04/156-4.

¹²⁶⁵ Interview Zoran Petrovic-Pirocanac, 31/03/98 and 02/04/98.

introduce himself to *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Unlike in 1992, however, she saw no actions of Arkan Tigers.¹²⁶⁶

The objective of the operation was therefore not the capture of the Safe Area Srebrenica, but a reduction of its size, as well as cutting the link with Zepa. The operation was consistent with the directive issued by Karadzic in early March 1995 as described above. From a military standpoint, this directive was hardly clear, however: it did not indicate precisely which military objective was to be achieved, and went no further than to state that an intolerable situation must be created for the population, and that the enclave must be made smaller.

In Mladic's view, the Safe Area comprised an area no larger than 4.5 by 1 kilometre around the town. He would not respect an area any larger. The packing together of 35,000 people in such a small area could indeed create an intolerable situation for the population. Although not one directive said what was to happen to the population in such circumstances, it was apparently intended to lead to the displacement of the population through the malicious organization of a humanitarian catastrophe. In this, UNPROFOR would be obliged to take charge, and not the Bosnian Serbs. It was to turn out otherwise.¹²⁶⁷

12. Signs of an impending attack?

UNPROFOR and the Bosnian Muslims were unaware of the VRS plans outlined above for an attack on the enclave. There was also little that pointed to preparations for an attack. In the first days of July, in spite of an increase in the battle noise, it was quiet in the enclave.

On 2 July a resident reported that a woman had been shot near OP-Q. When the OP commander and the medical orderly arrived she had already died. On the same day the VRS fired a machine gun on a Dutchbat patrol. The only other matter of note was that positions on Mount Caus were permanently occupied, which had not been the case earlier. Relative to earlier days, the battle noise on 2 July could still be called low and it was quiet in the area.

The tensions appeared to be greater in Gorazde and Zepa. In Gorazde, the ABiH surrounded the Ukrainian battalion, and would allow them to leave only after the battalion had been relieved. In Zepa the VRS performed various shelling operations with 120 mm mortars.

In the Majevisa hills and around Mount Vis (from where VRS artillery harassed Tuzla) it was only a 'generally quiet week' and the ABiH operations, after losses probably amounting to three thousand dead and wounded, had been brought to a standstill. The UNPF in Zagreb did deduce from troop movements that the ABiH would be resuming offensive operations in the near future. The objective appeared to be to shell the Posavina corridor, the link between the western and eastern part of the Republika Srpska at Brcko. Troop movements that pointed to a possible ABiH offensive in the Majevisa hills appeared to be related only to the relief of troops.¹²⁶⁸

Assistance from the Yugoslav army to the VRS?

It is not impossible that the Yugoslav army, the Vojska Jugoslavia (VJ), as the ABiH asserted, already brought equipment from Serbia to Bosnia in June as preparation for the attack (especially artillery),¹²⁶⁹

¹²⁶⁶ Interview Emira Selimovic, 21/10/98.

¹²⁶⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 215, File BHC95 7 Mar-14 Mar 95. Meeting Gen Smith and Gen Mladic 7 March 1995, Ref 8594. BHC FWD to DOKL. 091100A Mar 95. Outgoing fax No. 122/95. UN Confi. See also part IV. See also ICTY, (IT-98-33), Dannatt Report, OTP Ex. 385/a, para 38-41.

¹²⁶⁸ NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. [Dutchbat] Milinfo 3 July 1995, period 020600 - 030600; UNMO HQ Sector NE to UNMO BHC, 021000B Jul 95; NIOD, Coll. Theunens.G2 UNPF HQ, Daily Military Information Summary from 02001B to 022359B Jul 95 and 04001B to 042359B Jul 95; MID/RNLA. DOKL, Afd I & V, Sect Information: Weekintsum No. 26/95, 27/06 - 3/07/95. NIOD, Coll. Sitreps. HQ Sector NE Daily Milinfosum from 041700B to 051700B Jul 95.

¹²⁶⁹ Interview Hazrudin Kistic, 18/05/99 and 19/05/99.

but it is improbable that this happened in large numbers. At the bridges over the Drina, such as at Ljubovija opposite Bratunac, international observers of ICFY (the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia) were present day and night. Furthermore, the VRS had no immediate shortage of artillery.

Other reports of signs of the attack came from ABiH circles after the attack: the ABiH 2nd Corps spoke of the arrival of an artillery regiment of the Yugoslav army from Kraljevo.¹²⁷⁰ In later days, ABiH-sources and residents of the enclave reported VJ artillery fire on the enclave from the opposite side of the Drina,¹²⁷¹ but Dutchbat reports do not support this assertion. Moreover, the VRS orders otherwise make no mention of coordination with units from outside the Drina Corps. During the attack too, no signs were found for direct support from the VJ, including from VRS documents. The five Western attachés that were accredited in Belgrade (Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy) coordinated their activities with each other and had considerable freedom of movement; they also reported no VJ shelling of Srebrenica. Neither did Canadian observers who were located opposite Bratunac on the other side of the Drina at Ljubovija report it. The VJ did not go into action across the Drina and there were also no special units from Serbia involved in the operation against Srebrenica.¹²⁷²

Bosnian sources on assistance from the VJ must be treated with caution. From the Bosnian side few concrete examples were brought forward of violation of the embargo along the Drina. However, there were many generalized or propagandist statements without any form of evidence, such as the assertion that engineers of the VJ 25 had built pontoon bridges over the Drina for the support and supplying of the VRS. The reports on Yugoslav support for the attack on Srebrenica also state that they were executed by four motorized and two armoured brigades of the VJ and were led by the Chief of Staff of the VJ, General Perisic, from a command post (on Mount Tara) on the opposite side of the Drina.

All these reports detract from the possible truthfulness of other reports. Where these were concerned with more concrete examples of assistance to the VRS with respect to the region around Srebrenica, there was the report of a truck with ten or twelve tons of ammunition that passed the bridge at Ljubovija to Bratunac on 5 April. There was also a report that nine trucks stolen from UNHCR had crossed the Drina at Zvornik loaded with ammunition on 10 April.¹²⁷³

What in fact came over the Drina in terms of military equipment was small scale. Beer and cigarettes were more important contraband than military equipment. The negotiator Carl Bildt said that he constantly received lists from the Bosnian Minister Sacirbey that stated how many troops and how much equipment was being supplied from Serbia across the Drina. He had personally ascertained whether it was true. According to him, it could not be proved, and he believed nothing of it. Posts of the ICFY mission supervised the traffic that passed the bridges over the Drina, and neither could intelligence services prove that equipment was reaching Bosnia via pontoon bridges from Serbia. The VRS had enough equipment in his possession.¹²⁷⁴

The media also referred to secret UN documents that were alleged to indicate that in the weeks prior to the attack on Srebrenica 'high-level military support' was given to the Bosnian Serbs and personnel and equipment crossed the Drina, but they were not found in the UN archives.¹²⁷⁵ The UN

¹²⁷⁰ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Command 2nd Corps to all divisions, 18/07/95, No. 04/1-105-619.

¹²⁷¹ Interviews Semsudin Murinovic, 17/05/99; Almir Ramic, 06/11/99.

¹²⁷² Interview Dennis Snider, 17/11/99.

¹²⁷³ APVVN New York. Letter of offer Ivan Z. Mistic to Nicolaas H. Biegan, 04/09/95, with report 'Military Assistance of so called Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) to the Rebelled Bosnian Serbs from August 1994 to July 1995'; confidential interview (52).

¹²⁷⁴ Interview Carl Bildt, 13/12/00.

¹²⁷⁵ See *ANP English News Bulletin*, 'Documentary alleges Serbian Arms Used to Invade Srebrenica', 30/05/95 and *Reuter*, 29/05/96.

headquarters in Zagreb did hear constant rumours about support from the VJ, but hard evidence was never given.¹²⁷⁶

From the American side it was confirmed that no evidence was ever given that weapons crossed the Drina to the Bosnian Serbs. The road via Croatia was open, however. The conclusion was that the embargo along the Drina was 'fairly effective', although there were leaks.¹²⁷⁷ Another Western intelligence service had also never seen hard evidence that the VRS had received weapons from the JNA in the period prior to the fall of Srebrenica, but they could not rule it out completely.¹²⁷⁸

At the same time, it is clear that there definitely was support from the Yugoslav army to the army of the Bosnian Serbs along a more indirect route: the military infrastructure of the old Yugoslavia was still largely intact, and assistance came in the form of logistics support, components, the payment of officers' salaries and a liaison unit at the headquarters in Han Pijesak. General Smith's conclusion was therefore that there was some involvement of the VJ in the war in Bosnia in 1995, but not in a direct way.¹²⁷⁹ In general it was true that, even without reinforcement from the VJ, the VRS was more than capable of defeating a weak and poorly armed opponent in Srebrenica without outside assistance.¹²⁸⁰

The previous day: 5 July 1995

From the Dutch side, no information came about a possible VJ involvement. A briefing of the Military Intelligence Service (RNLA) on 5 July again focussed attention on the situation around Srebrenica, in particular with a view to the probability of an attack by the VRS on the eastern enclaves. The question was raised as to what advantages and disadvantages such an attack might have for the VRS. The conclusion was that a reason to attack the enclaves could lie in the fact that success could not be achieved anywhere else. Furthermore, it could be achieved with relatively little effort and with few victims on their own side. After that, the VRS, according to this briefing, would have their hands free in East-Bosnia and could shorten the confrontation line considerably. A disadvantage could be that the Bosnian Serbs would be held guilty and that the American media would insist on retaliation.

There might have been a variety of reasons not to attack. In Gorazde, a place with an arms industry, there was a strong and well-organized ABiH army. Zepa would deliver, unlike Gorazde, no improvement in the road and river links. As far as Srebrenica was concerned, the Army intelligence people believed that it may have been possible to take Srebrenica in a reasonably short time, but that the VRS would have to make too many sacrifices to achieve it. It was easier for the VRS to aim for a deterioration from the inside. Furthermore, the enclave could be taken a bit at a time. After the capture of OP-E the east-west link was already in the hands of the VRS. A similar tactic could be applied to gaining possession of the bauxite mines. The capture of the enclave did appear to be attractive in order also to gain a good north-south link.

If the VRS were to aim for the dismantling of the enclave bit-by-bit, then many problems could be expected with the ABiH: in that case the Bosnian Muslims would want to isolate the OPs, and use the UN troops as a shield, and possibly kill a number of UN personnel and then blame the Bosnian Serbs. The ABiH could also attack Dutchbat to acquire weapons with a heavier calibre, or to isolate Dutchbat by surrounding it with civilians. That could be organized in a couple of hours, so that Dutchbat would be paralyzed.¹²⁸¹

This briefing therefore gave no indication of an attack, although it cannot be said that it had no predictive value. The question of to what extent within the UN organization or outside knowledge

¹²⁷⁶ Interview Tony Banbury, 11/05/00.

¹²⁷⁷ Confidential interview (14).

¹²⁷⁸ Confidential interview (8).

¹²⁷⁹ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00. Smith did not base his conclusion on non-UN information reports.

¹²⁸⁰ Confidential information (3).

¹²⁸¹ MID/RNLA.[Note] for briefing dated 5/07/95. No author named.

existed of the imminent attack, is raised in an Appendix to this report: *Intelligence and the war in Bosnia 1992 - 1995 - The role of the intelligence services.*

Within UNPROFOR, the closest that came to a suspicion that heavy weather was on the way came from the intelligence staff (in military terms known as the G-2) of Sector North East in Tuzla. Dutchbat reported to them that a convoy of five armoured tracked vehicles, four tanks (type T-55) and five trucks had been seen. Dutchbat also saw the movement of five pieces of artillery from Bratunac to the south. In addition, a UNHCR worker reported that five tanks had been seen on the road to the south of Zvornik (possibly the same ones as in the Dutchbat report). This led Sector North East to comment:

‘It is not known what the final destination is for the convoy or the arty [artillery] pieces, but it may be a show of strength to keep the pressure on the enclave or to stop the movement of arms between the two enclaves of ZEPA and SREBRENICA. This may mean an increase in WF [Warring Faction] activity around the enclaves in the very near future. The tks [tanks] were not reported as being on low loaders so it is assumed that they will not be going too far remembering that DUTCHBAT will shortly be in the process of rotating and the BSA may wish to test the new boys out.’¹²⁸²

By way of explanation of this quotation it can be said that low loaders are usually only used to transport tanks over large distances, because they consume a great deal of fuel, they need much maintenance, and they cause damage to the roads.

The test for - the still not relieved - Dutchbat was coming even sooner than ‘the very near future’, but Dutchbat suspected nothing. The last situation report that Dutchbat sent on 5 July, hours before the start of the VRS attack, stated only: ‘the situation is calm and stable. We expect no major changes for the next 24 hrs’.¹²⁸³

It was indeed quiet in the enclave. At OP-K, 43 men and women left in a southerly direction at the end of the afternoon. The only other report pointing to military activity was that the ABiH had occupied many positions near the confrontation line, and that at OP-C a low loader with a tank had been observed.¹²⁸⁴

In Bratunac, there was nothing to see of the build-up of an attack on the enclave. The Commander of the VRS post at Yellow Bridge, Jovan Ivic (Jovo), had to learn via the hotline of the Dutch that the attack had started.¹²⁸⁵ The commander of the British Joint Commission Observers (the JCOs) reported to his headquarters that reports had also reached him in which VRS troop movements were mentioned. He also stated that he did not believe that Karremans considered the VRS to be a serious threat. As recently as June, Karremans, according to this British commander, had told a *Médecins Sans Frontières* doctor that the ABiH could hold their positions for at least seven days and was strong enough to prevent the fall of the enclave.¹²⁸⁶

Although on 5 July there was another discussion between Sector North East and the ABiH 2nd Corps, neither was there any indication from the side of Chief of Staff Budakovic that something was

¹²⁸² SMG 1002. HQ Sector NE Daily Milinfosum from 031700B to 041700B Jul 95. UN Confi. The report of the tanks south of Zvornik came from a UNHCR Field Officer. (SMG 1001. LO-Team to UNMOs Srebrenica, Milinfo, 05/07/95 16:4?)

¹²⁸³ NIOD Coll. Sitreps. HQ Dutchbat to Sector HQ North-East, Sitrep for period 041700 to 051700B Jul 95. The report of the tanks south of Zvornik came from a UNHCR Field Officer and that of the artillery at Bratunac from the Dutchbat LO Team. (CRST. Supplement to Daily Milinfosum 4/07/95).

¹²⁸⁴ SMG 1001. Fax S2/3 Dutchbat to A-Cie (Simin Han), 1 (Netherlands/BE) Logtbat, Logbase Zagreb, Comcen Crisis Staff, Milinfo 040600 - 050600B Jul 95.

¹²⁸⁵ Interview Jovan Ivic, alias Jovo, 20/10/00.

¹²⁸⁶ Confidential information (1).

brewing.¹²⁸⁷ Only the following day, after a large number of missiles had landed in the enclave, did the Commander of the 2nd Corps, Sead Delic, call in the assistance of Sector North East for a UN intervention. Delic then also referred to the reinforcements that the VRS had brought in in the afternoon of 5 July.¹²⁸⁸

Even so, the 28th Division had said to the 2nd Corps as recently as 5 July that they were aware of the possibility of an operation against the enclave. For some time the population had seen troop movements, and reconnaissance had shown that, in the afternoon of 5 July, VRS units had arrived in the area around Zeleni Jadar.¹²⁸⁹ The War President in the Opština, Osman Suljic, said that he had personally taken stock of the situation. He had seen that the Bosnian Serbs were moving in soldiers in buses.¹²⁹⁰ Ekrem Salihovic, the intelligence officer of the 28th Division, also mentioned large numbers of buses with VRS soldiers. He considered it incomprehensible that Dutchbat or the UN had not seen the attack coming.¹²⁹¹ Whether he also felt this on 5 July, however, is doubtful, because he did not provide information to Dutchbat on that day.

What is striking is that the 28th Division reported only on the morning of 6 July that a large column of armoured and mechanized units were moving from the direction of Zvornik to Bratunac. This had been heard on 5 July from a UN interpreter.¹²⁹² The movement of the VRS heavy equipment that was brought in mainly from Zvornik, had escaped the notice of the ABiH and was also not revealed by listening in to the radio traffic. This was the main indicator of an attack on Srebrenica. A passing UNHCR convoy only noticed these transports by coincidence.

From the departure lines that were occupied on 5 July around Srebrenica, the Bosnian Serbs were to complete the last act in what would be the drama of Srebrenica, although no one yet knew what this last act would involve, and especially how it would end:

‘Judge not the play before the play is done;

Her plot hath many changes; every day

Speaks a new scene; the last act crowns the play.’¹²⁹³

¹²⁸⁷ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Memorandum [Meeting] HQ 2 Corps, 05/07/95.

¹²⁸⁸ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. ABiH 2nd Corps Command to BHC Sector North East, 06/07/95, No. 02/1-700/1.

¹²⁸⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 403/a, Butler Report, p. 17. 28th Division Combat Report 5/07/95, No. 01-161/95 Also in a report of 6 July, the 28th Division indicated that on the previous day a strong concentration of armour and artillery had been seen. (NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. Komanda 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa, 6/07/95, Str. pov. br. 01-163/95.)

¹²⁹⁰ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

¹²⁹¹ Interview Ekrem Salihovic, 02/12/98.

¹²⁹² NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa, odjellenje bezbjednosti, General Stab ARBiH Uprava bezbjednosti, 06/07/95, Str. Pov. Broj. 13-05.

¹²⁹³ Francis Quarles 1592-1644.

Chapter 6

The Fall of Srebrenica: 6 to 11 July 1995

1. Introduction

This chapter primarily concerns the operational activities of Dutchbat and the warring factions. The humanitarian aid provided by Dutchbat and *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) in the days of 6 through 11 July, along with a number of related subjects that later played a role, were compiled in the Appendix, 'Dutchbat III and the Local Population: Medical Affairs'. This chapter will primarily attempt to track, where possible from day to day, the operational activities in those crucial days between 6 and 11 July. This chronological description will be followed, in the subsequent chapter, by another look at a number of issues; however, this time in a more contemplative form. For that reason no conclusion, only two recaps (about numbers of victims and also the ABiH's vision of those six days), will be drawn from this chapter. The following chapter will however close with a number of conclusions.

A substantial amount of this chapter is also dedicated to the issue of Close Air Support. After all, this was the method, which, from the acceptance of the UN Resolution 836 and the imposition, in 1993, of the Safe Areas, played a special role in deterring attacks. Air support was the principal means of defence of the lightly armed peacekeepers in sometimes perilous situations.

A number of factors that emerged in the discussions around Close Air Support in Srebrenica compel thorough consideration of that issue in this chapter. A crucial element in the discussions is the fact that Dutchbat believed that NATO, on 11 July, was planning a massive air strike in a last ditch effort to keep control of the enclave. The ultimate result was no more than mere Close Air Support with a few aircraft. This was generally considered too little and too late to keep hold of the enclave.

In a more general sense this chapter will attempt to provide some answers to the following questions:

What efforts did Dutchbat make to halt the Bosnian-Serb advance?

What was the vision of this in the higher echelons of UNPROFOR/UNPF?

Was it possible from a military perspective for the ABiH or Dutchbat to defend the enclave against the Bosnian-Serb advance and thereby to protect the local population? What role did ABiH and Dutchbat play in that context?

How did Dutchbat call in air support, and how were those operations executed?

What role did the UNPROFOR mandate play in this, what were the Rules of Engagement and the care for the safety of its own troops?

How exactly was The Hague kept up to date of the events, and what role did the Ministry of Defence play in relation to the role of the UN headquarters in Zagreb and Sarajevo?

2. Investigative problems related to the period of the fall and thereafter

Based on the logbooks and notes of the applicable headquarters it is possible to follow the events around Srebrenica in the period of 6 to 11 July meticulously, and at times almost minute by minute. It is however, less simple to distil the broad outlines of the activities of Dutchbat and the warring factions, and relate that to what happened in the headquarters in Zagreb, Sarajevo, Tuzla and Srebrenica.

Analyses based on the logbooks over the period 6 to 11 July raise a number of specific problems. One objection is that the entries in a logbook are often quite brief, cryptic or incomplete, and that some periods are not covered at all. Moreover, some sources are written in long hand, which further exacerbates the difficulty of interpretation. A further disadvantage of the logbooks is that only the facts stated are represented in concise form; not the motivations for actions or decisions taken. There is also not always a balance between the 'logging' of incoming and outgoing reports. This applies equally to the Dutchbat logbooks and those in The Hague. On the whole, incoming reports dominate and it is not always possible to determine the decisions or measures that those reports culminated in. In some instances, there is only mention of contact between officials without providing any insight into the substance of the communication. What is notable is that the NATO headquarters were well-informed regarding the situation in as far as it was relevant to the organisation. The NATO liaison officers in Zagreb and Sarajevo thereby fulfilled an important role. The logbooks of the Zagreb and Sarajevo headquarters could not be found in the UNPROFOR archives in Geneva and New York. Consequently, in that regard, the investigator must make do with the few extracts from a later date. In the Zagreb extracts, however, the subject of Close Air Support is a central issue.

The UN never made an analysis or synthesis of the events immediately after the fall of Srebrenica. This was due to the fact that the applicable headquarters were fully occupied with the problem of providing aid to deportees and the looming fall of Zepa and Gorazde. It was only in the autumn of 1995 that the fall of Srebrenica again enjoyed some attention in New York and Zagreb as a consequence of the parliamentary debate in the Netherlands. The attention in New York and Zagreb, however, only resulted in the determination of a chronology of events.

New York did order a 'comprehensive follow-up report on Srebrenica', which was to have been coordinated between UNPF in Zagreb, the UN Refugee Organisation UNHCR, ICTY (the Yugoslavia Tribunal) and ICRC (the International Red Cross). General Janvier thereby demanded that his staff have accountable drafts ready within three days. Janvier's aim was to make as much use as possible of code cables in the archives in Zagreb that had previously been sent to New York.¹²⁹⁴ This assignment could explain why almost all of the situation reports, from the period around the fall of Srebrenica, had disappeared from the UNPROFOR archives in Sarajevo. New York sent an administrative official from Zagreb to Sarajevo to track down relevant documents. Situation reports from, for example, Dutchbat and Sector North East were sent to Sarajevo, but were not sent on to Zagreb in their complete form. The data provided to Sarajevo by the various sectors within UNPROFOR were summarised and sent to Zagreb in the form of a situation report from Bosnia-Herzegovina Command.¹²⁹⁵

At the time of the NIOD investigation, the UN archives were in a poor state. They were hardly organised at all and were full of gaps. Large sections of the archives had already been removed in Sarajevo and Zagreb; partially due to ignorance, partially out of neglect, and partially due to the fact that some individuals had an interest in the archived pieces, either for their own use or to sell them.¹²⁹⁶

The results of Janvier's assignment from New York could not be found in the UN archives. It did yield, at the end of January 1996, a document entitled Force Commander's End of Mission Report. This document is of a very general character and does not deal specifically with Srebrenica.

There is a Srebrenica Report that was compiled under the instructions of the Secretary-General of the UN; however, it was dated significantly later, viz. November 1999. This report too, reveals limited detail about operational issues, such as questions concerning Close Air Support, and primarily views the issues from the perspective of New York and Zagreb. This report does however reveal that the office of the Secretary-General of the UN was not aware of requests from Dutchbat for Close Air Support submitted prior to 9 July. This, as well as the fact that much confusion continues to prevail in Dutch circles, is ample reason to dedicate attention to the question of air support in this chapter.

¹²⁹⁴ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87299, File 3061/3, 07/97-11/95. Interoffice Memorandum, FC to CMO, DFC, COS, CMNAT, info SRSG, HPU, 01/11/95, File 3300-SRE(DFC).

¹²⁹⁵ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87299, File 3061/3, 07/97-11/95. Memorandum, MA/DFC to DFC, 30/10/95.

¹²⁹⁶ Confidential interview (46).

When weighing up the value of the various sources, it is essential to keep in mind that the various parties concerned represented different interests, and that the circumstances that contributed to the formation of an overall picture of the events could therefore vary between the parties concerned. This applies to the UN officials in the various headquarters, Dutchbat, and the Bosnian Muslims: the population of the Srebrenica enclave lived in their own world and were forcibly cut off from the rest of the world. The population of the enclave relied primarily on news provided by the Serbian and Bosnian-Serb radio and TV stations. News provision from both sides could hardly be described as impartial. There was almost no printed press available in Srebrenica.

Most of the intelligentsia, the original leaders and the city dwellers left the enclave at the start of the war. Their place was taken by self-styled militarists, a new generation of local leaders and refugees from surrounding villages that were not always highly literate. As a rule, rumours were able to flourish in that type of environment. Another important factor is that most of the impressions of what actually happened were coloured by later discussions in the refugee camps, third-party perspective and rumours. Quite often, personal perceptions are masked by those of others. When interviewing Bosnian Muslims an endeavour was always made to find witnesses who had experienced events first hand, and not to focus interviews, wherever possible, on personal perceptions.

The situation of the survivors of Srebrenica was certainly extraordinarily serious; more so because almost half a generation of men had simply been exterminated. It is also true that the indignity inflicted upon the survivors in the days after the fall and in the preceding years could easily be reinforced by subjective factors. In a certain sense the survivors from Srebrenica also have an interest in emphasising their extraordinary situation. As a result, the reports of offended survivors (as understandable as their indignation might be) did and still do not always contribute to the objectivity of descriptions of events to which they had fallen victim.

The risk of a comparable but reverse distortion is presented in the accounts of the politicians and military leaders from outside the enclave. After all, in hindsight, they could possibly have a personal interest in underplaying their role in the big picture. Obviously they do not, in retrospect, like to be confronted with the question as to whether they could or should have done more for the enclave at the time. For the inhabitants of Srebrenica, the enclave was a central issue, but for the politicians and military leaders this issue was secondary to the problems of larger populated centres such as Sarajevo, Mostar and Tuzla.

Very few are inclined to lay the blame for the fall of the enclave primarily on Dutchbat. The general pattern is as follows: The higher the status of the interviewee in the Bosnian social strata, the smaller the blame apportioned to Dutchbat, and the greater the blame for the fall on the UN or even the Bosnian Government. The latter is a fixed theme in many of the conspiracy theories doing the rounds in Bosnia, and is partially based on half-truths and unverifiable accounts. In many instances issues are unjustifiably or causally related, and prior events used as proof in subsequent developments. The problem with these types of conspiracy theories is that, while they sometimes do command certain logic, they are rarely based on solid evidence.

There are various instances of such conspiracy theories. A few examples were described in the chapter titled 'The Mood in the Enclave: May – July 1995' (*stemmingsbeeld*), the most notable of which are the following:

The Bosnian Government committed treason with respect to Srebrenica with the aim of exchanging the enclave for the outer Bosnian-Serb suburbs of Sarajevo; the episode around the departure of the military leader of the Bosnian Muslims, Naser Oric, from the enclave, and the reasons for his failure to return; questions around the downing of a helicopter between Srebrenica and Zepa in May 1995; and the inadequate aid to the columns of refugees en route to Tuzla in July 1995 due to the fact that other interests were at stake (see the chapter, 'The Journey from Srebrenica to Tuzla' in Part IV).

In a country at war, with no tradition of independent media, where suspicion against authorities thrives, and where the authorities are accustomed to arriving at important decisions in small circles and without the need for accountability, the investigator researching conspiracy theories enters a veritable

minefield. Here too a marked incongruence exists between the former population of the enclave and the leaders on the outside. In some instances explanations abound in which the uninitiated could easily inflate certain issues into mythological proportions. In other instances the initiated contradict one another, for example in the case of land exchange around the eastern enclaves - the leaders deny this, while some of the initiated have provided testimony to that effect.

The investigator would have to find as many reliable sources as possible and would have to test and weigh them up to the greatest extent possible. This has transpired to be more easily said than done. Language barriers have brought about problems and have slowed down the investigation. A great deal of effort has been put into researching reports about Srebrenica published in local periodicals in Bosnia and in the Republika Srpska. Local historical writing and the publication of sources about the Bosnian war appear to be underdeveloped and, where they do exist, appear to be profoundly tainted by interpretation.

During many interviews it was essential to win the confidence of the interviewees and to invest time to build relationships. In some instances, interviewees had had bad experiences with the journalists who had shown only a fleeting interest in their stories or failed to publish documents that were made available. One investigative method that did appear to be valid has been to return to the same source a number of times. In many cases this has yielded supplementary information and an increasing willingness to delve into other resources or provide introductions. This method was used to find both leading figures in the enclave and people with a 'good memory' of the events. One person might for example remember a host of details with limited coherence, while another would only be able to relate the bigger picture in situations where the investigator needed to penetrate deeper into the prevalent issues.

No amount of effort could prevent the number of sources from remaining limited due to the fact that, ultimately, not everyone was prepared to talk to the investigators. Some people refused to be interviewed and attempted to shield themselves from re-experiencing the emotional distress. Others fear that once exposed, the issues might be turned against them. The consequences of the war appear to be far from fully processed.

Another notable experience for the investigators was the fact that witnesses in the Republika Srpska or Serbia were significantly less willing to talk or testify than the Bosnian Muslims. Most (Bosnian) Serbs were extremely suspicious. The investigation was further hampered by the fact that the investigators originated from the Netherlands, the seat of the Yugoslavia Tribunal.

In the course of the investigations various attempts were made to interview leading politicians and military leaders in the Republika Srpska. While contact was established with parties concerned via indirect routes, and questionnaires were provided, no further progress was made with respect to interviews about the questionnaires. All of those contacts were established via private channels. Collaboration on the part of the Serbian authorities was initially limited and was at times influenced or terminated by arrests for the Yugoslavia Tribunal. The war in Kosovo in 1999 also played an important role - the fact that no visas were issued in that period caused appointments, that had been hard to set up, to be cancelled and it proved impossible to re-establish them at a later stage. Only after the changeover of power in Yugoslavia and the arraignment of former president Slobodan Milosevic by the Yugoslavia Tribunal, did a more promising climate of greater openness arise.

This led to the establishment in Belgrade in the summer of 2001 of the 'Truth and Reconciliation Committee' and contacts between the NIOD and that committee. The committee aims to launch investigations at three levels:

- the disintegration of Yugoslavia from a political and economic perspective;
- the war as a product thereof and the incrimination of the community;
- violation of human rights and the law of war.

Its contact with the commission offered the NIOD the promise of many benefits of the archive research that was to be conducted by the commission. Practise however proved more stubborn than anticipated. For example, archived documents in Yugoslavia may not be accessed for a period of 30

years. Although President Kostunica was obliging at the time, the legal problems associated with this issue appeared insurmountable in the short term. The absence of an archive inventory also did not make matters easier. Currently, it is estimated that some 20,000 dossiers exist for the period of 1980 to date, with an estimated breadth of approximately two kilometres. The archives contain documents related to the president and the military, as well as the Ministry of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, and a number of institutions. Additional archives exist containing documents from a number of refugee associations and non-government organisations (NGOs). Limited information is available concerning the actual state of these archives. No central authority exists with an overview of the archives and the locations where they are kept. Archives of the Defence Force were destroyed during the NATO bombings, and sections of the archives were relocated or wilfully damaged. As a result, it will take a significant amount of time to reorganise the archives. The military archives have, in the short term, not yielded any material about Srebrenica. The initial optimism about the possibilities of finding information in the Yugoslav archives has thus far been frustrated.¹²⁹⁷

The realization of the need for a clean slate is slow in coming, in the Republika Srpska. The rest of Bosnia (the Muslim-Croat Federation) only offered cooperation at the highest level at a later stage of the investigation by offering documents originating from the military archives and the possibility to obtain information from currently serving officers – a privilege not previously granted to investigators (including Bosnians). Documents were issued based on questionnaires provided by the NIOD. Investigators were however not able to research the Bosnian archives in person.

The NIOD investigators were specifically interested in information and debriefing reports of the Bosnian Muslim army (the ABiH). It is notable that a variety of documents were issued that showed the former leaders in Srebrenica in a bad light. Beyond that, the investigators were told time and again that knowledge of the factual situation in Srebrenica was limited in the administrative centres of Tuzla and Sarajevo. Moreover, it transpired that there was a limited availability of reports and other documents on events in Srebrenica over the period from 1992 to 1995 in the Bosnian Muslim army. It was only in the course of 1994 that more tightly organised command structures allowed more regular reportings. Concrete obstacles in the investigation consisted of damage due to fire and flooding in the central military archives in Sarajevo.

Army archives of the Bosnian Muslims and the city council of Srebrenica came into Bosnian-Serb hands after the fall of the enclave. The archives were not safeguarded. After the fall, many former Bosnian Serbs freely browsed the archives and claimed sections of it. With the support of the current inhabitants of Srebrenica it was nevertheless possible to obtain access to some of the documents. Of the documents that were restored to safety, some came into the possession of the Intelligence and Security department of the Bosnian Serb Army or under the control of the Ministry of the Interior and were stored in the regional archives in Zvornik. The documents under the control of the army are not even accessible to the 'new' Bosnian Serb administrators who greatly rely on pre-war administrative data of, for example, the infrastructure in Srebrenica to manage the region.

An important source of military documents was from a computer seized by the Bosnian-Serb army during the taking of Zepa; all reporting by the ABiH in Tuzla to Srebrenica went via Zepa. The Bosnian Serbs made documents recovered from this computer available to the investigators. The authenticity was confirmed by means of a random check conducted by Ramiz Becirovic, former Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander of the 28th Division of the ABiH in Srebrenica. Eventually the SFOR Peacekeeping Force made available a sizeable collection of documents that had been collected in Bosnia and recorded on CD-ROM. This also included documents about Srebrenica.

Dutchbat is an important additional resource alongside the Bosnian-Serb and Bosnian-Muslim sources; however, that resource too has its limitations. Fearing that the data would fall into Bosnian Serb hands, Dutchbat incinerated the archive prior to their departure from the enclave. As a result a great deal of unique material, such as situation reports from the companies to the battalion staff was

¹²⁹⁷ Interview the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Belgrade, 15/06/01.

destroyed. While battalion and company logbooks did keep a record of reports from OPs and units in the field, this only related to the days around the fall of the enclave. There is a notable absence of interpretation of the facts recorded in the logbooks. Moreover, much of what happened between the ABiH and VRS in July 1995 and in the preceding months was not open to the observations of Dutchbat. This applies to various skirmishes outside the borders of the enclave in the months preceding the fall, as outlined in the previous chapter.

The actions of the warring factions will be presented extremely concisely. In fact, hardly any written sources exist with respect to the actions of the ABiH. An account of these actions is mainly based on interviews and documents provided by the ABiH for the purposes of the investigation. With respect to the VRS this creates an unbalanced situation. It was only possible to a limited extent to conduct interviews in the Republika Srpska. Consequently investigators had to rely mainly on written sources, such as those compiled by the Yugoslavia Tribunal during the trial against the VRS general, Krstic, as well as on the experts' reports compiled for the trial and by witnesses of the court. In as much as information was available about the actions of the warring factions, it was fitted chronologically into the sequence of events.

Most of the attention will however be focused on the operational activities of Dutchbat and the actions that took place in the UN headquarters. To that end several sources were available to the investigators:

Extract from the UNPROFOR Operational Logbook (in military terms: the G-3 Logbook) over the period 4-21 July 1995 in Sarajevo with supplementary notes by Brigadier General C.H. Nicolai and Lieutenant Colonel J.A.C de Ruiter;¹²⁹⁸

Extracts from the logbook of the Air Operations Coordination Center of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo of 9-11 July 1995;¹²⁹⁹

'short Overview of Recent Events' compiled by Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, dated 17 July 1995;¹³⁰⁰

'Monthly Register' with overview of reports that entered the Dutchbat Ops Room, current for the period 8 to 13 July 1995;¹³⁰¹

The Journal of the Commander of B Company, Captain J.R. Groen, current for the period 6 July through 11 July 1995. A number of reports are absent for the period 6 July 10.17 hours to 8 July 11.26 hours;¹³⁰²

Notes on radio reports made by Major Otter (Commander of the Staff and Medical Company) on 6 and 10-11 July at Potocari;¹³⁰³

'Firing Close Reports' by Dutchbat at Sector North East in Tuzla and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo;¹³⁰⁴

¹²⁹⁸ SMG, 1004/59. Fax Lt. Col. J.A.C. de Ruiter to DCBC and Netherlands Army Military History Section, 12/08/95. The notes were written in English.

¹²⁹⁹ *Ibidem*. The extract was written in Dutch.

¹³⁰⁰ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. C-1(NL)Infabat Dutchbat 3, 'Kort overzicht van de gebeurtenissen van de afgelopen periode', 17/07/95, No. TK195118.

¹³⁰¹ SMG, 1004/61.

¹³⁰² SMG, 1004/56.

¹³⁰³ SMG, 1106/18.

‘Chronological Summary of incidents occurring between 060300B Jul 95 and 061700B Jul 95’;¹³⁰⁵

‘Chronological Summary 11 July 95’, attached to the ‘HQ Sector North East Sitrep for period 101700B to 111700B Jul 95’;¹³⁰⁶

Situation reports by Colonel Brantz to the Situation Center of the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army. In the days around the fall of Srebrenica those (telephonic) situation reports were the primary source of information for the Crisis Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army. The written version was sent by fax to the Defence Crisis Management Centre in The Hague (DCBC);¹³⁰⁷

‘Logbook/Journal’ (Defence Crisis Management Centre);¹³⁰⁸

Situation reports of the Netherlands Liaison Officer to the headquarters Allied Forces Southern Europe, in Naples (in military terms: ‘CINCSOUTH Sitreps’), sent by the Dutch liaison officer in Naples via the Headquarters of the Royal Netherlands Airforce to the Defence Crisis Management Centre;¹³⁰⁹

‘situation Reports Srebrenica Enclave’;¹³¹⁰

Some hand-written notes found at the Defence Crisis Management Centre, including notes marked ‘FC [Force Commander]’ Jim Baxter’ (Military Assistant [of] Commander B-H Command, General Smith), minutes secretary unknown;¹³¹¹

‘sitreps [Situation reports] Netherlands Army Crisis staff Morning Edition’;¹³¹²

Various reports originating from the UN Headquarters, Department of Peacekeeping Operations Situation Center, forwarded to the Defence Crisis Management Centre by the military advisor of the Dutch Permanent Representative to the UN;¹³¹³

‘Chronological Overview of Srebrenica’, compiled by the Army Military History Section ;¹³¹⁴

Handwritten extract marked ‘Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 7-11 July 1995’;¹³¹⁵

Extract ‘Air Desk Log’ 5 ATAF in Vicenza, 9-11 July 1995;¹³¹⁶

¹³⁰⁴ DCBC, 595.

¹³⁰⁵ DCBC attached to 595.

¹³⁰⁶ DCBC, 693.

¹³⁰⁷ DCBC and CRST

¹³⁰⁸ DCBC, 652. The document consists of three pages of hastily scribbled hand-written text that relates exclusively to 11/07/95.

¹³⁰⁹ DCBC, various.

¹³¹⁰ DCBC, various. (Dutch) compiler and origin unknown.

¹³¹¹ DCBC, 674.

¹³¹² CRST, various.

¹³¹³ DCBC, various.

¹³¹⁴ SMG 1004.

¹³¹⁵ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number

Sitreps from Sector NE in Tuzla and B-H Command in Sarajevo;¹³¹⁷

Daily reports from the Defence Crisis Management Centre (handwritten);¹³¹⁸

Situation reports from the various UN organisations and reports;

Journals and notes from staff officials, such as Generals Ashton, Smith, Kolsteren, Nicolai, Colonel Brantz and civilian employees of Akashi;

Debriefing statements;

The Factual Account of the Debriefing.

The investigative value of the various sources is extremely diverse. While the statements compiled during the debriefing of Dutchbat in Assen in September 1995, as released to the NIOD by the debriefed soldiers concerned, do contain substantial information, their value to the investigation is at times relative. The information varies significantly in scope, quality and meticulousness. Few debriefing reports offer a meticulous reconstruction of the events, in time and otherwise, and few of the debriefing officers offer in-depth treatment of subsequently important details. In retrospect it appears that the debriefing officers neglected to deal with certain issues in sufficient depth, which could be the result of a dearth of knowledge about the circumstances in Srebrenica and time limitations during debriefing (also see the chapter on large-scale debriefing in Assen in Part IV).

That notwithstanding, the debriefing statements do, to a great extent, supplement the reports and descriptions of events around the observation posts and turned out to be of significant interest. The fact that not all debriefing statements could be accessed was a loss; however, not such a loss as to leave blank spaces in this precise-as-possible reconstruction.

On the whole, the journals of UN officials consist of brief notes taken during briefings. Only in rare instances did the journals present the course of any actual discussions. The remaining Dutchbat journals more generally contain descriptions of the circumstances under which Dutchbat had to do its work than detailed descriptions of the operational activities. Incidents and observations dating to the days around the fall were neither compiled systematically nor analysed. Dutchbat also made no efforts to that effect in the week between the evacuation of refugees from Srebrenica and their own departure. It was never organised into a 'First Impression Report' or 'After Action Report' as is normal for military personnel in a NATO environment. As mentioned before, the Dutchbat archives were destroyed prior to the evacuation of Srebrenica. In retrospect Major Franken regrets not having faxed some of the more sensitive documents to Tuzla instead of having destroyed them.¹³¹⁹ Additional interviews were extremely important for the latter reason, as well as to be able to establish the necessary relations between events and circumstances.

3. A closer look at the headquarters and chain of command

The structure of the UN organisation in Yugoslavia was outlined in detail earlier in Part III. The bottom-up structure can be represented as follows: Dutchbat in Srebrenica —> Sector North East in Tuzla —> UNPROFOR (formerly known as the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command) in Sarajevo —> UNPF (formerly known as UNPROFOR) in Zagreb. This fell under the authority of the UN Headquarters in New York. To obtain deeper insight into the events that occurred in the period

¹³¹⁶ DCBC, 623.

¹³¹⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR.

¹³¹⁸ DCBC, 528.

¹³¹⁹ Interview R.A. Franken, 31/03/99.

between 6 through 11 July 1995, it is both useful and necessary to analyse the mutual relations and practical communication problems that arose between those headquarters.

The Zagreb headquarters featured the most prominently in the UN organisation in the former Yugoslavia. This is not primarily because it was in charge of the UN's political and military operation in Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia, but mainly because it had the final say in the deployment of air power. Any decision for Close Air Support required the permission of Akashi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN (in the period around the fall, the ultimate decision for air strikes lay in New York with Boutros-Ghali; see Chapter 2 for more detail). This put the headquarters in Zagreb in a special position. At the same time, there was a world of difference between the various headquarters: while Zagreb was not in a state of war, the headquarters in Sarajevo and Tuzla did operate under war conditions. The level of tension under which those headquarters operated could not really be compared to the situation in Zagreb. Zagreb was mainly confronted with political pressure, while Sarajevo was under the pressure of the warring factions and the consequences of war. Due to its location, the contacts in the Sector North East Tuzla were limited to mainly Bosnian Muslims.

UNPF in Zagreb

Cooperation between the headquarters in Zagreb and Sarajevo left much to be desired. There were clear differences of insight into a wide variety of issues. As was also explained in the introductory chapter, this was partially due to the personal attitudes of the commanding generals, the French General Janvier in Zagreb and British General Smith in Sarajevo. In addition, London had greater influence on Sarajevo than did Paris. In Zagreb the reverse situation applied.

It was only in Zagreb (in contrast to Sarajevo and Tuzla) that the normal chain of command remained intact and where Force Commander Janvier and, for the greater part of the July period, deputy Force Commander Ashton remained at their posts. In Zagreb staff input was channelled via Chief of Staff Kolsteren, but it was also customary for the heads of the sections of staff to speak for themselves on relevant points. The Deputy Force Commander only expressed his view when and where required. In many instances Janvier made on-the-spot decisions, partially due to the fact that the staff had to work out the decision afterwards. The consultation circuit had an open structure and it was not common for the Force Commander, the deputy Force Commander and Chief of Staff to deal with issues separately.

Only officers of the NATO alliance countries were involved in decisions concerning Close Air Support. While Zagreb sometimes questioned the quality of the officers from non-NATO countries, there were definite exceptions, such as the officers from Pakistan and Bangladesh that had been trained in the United Kingdom or well-trained officers from the Ukraine and Russia (even though they were inclined to be pro-Serbian).

The collaboration between Janvier's military staff and Akashi's civilian staff (consisting mostly of young diplomats and pen pushers) was good. The practical quality of the relationship was generally subject to the military-political assessment of the situation at any given time. The collaboration was particularly useful whenever it was necessary to report to New York; this served to prevent Janvier from sending separate Code Cables.¹³²⁰

The Zagreb headquarters also hosted a number of inner circles from the various countries represented in Zagreb. In total, UNPF was represented by seventy-seven nationalities, which translated in an abundance of personnel of limited actual value. All of the countries that sent military forces had to be represented (in military or civilian capacity) in the highest echelons. One third was really excellent, one third was useful and one third was superfluous according to the Dutch Chief of Staff in Zagreb, Major General A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren. Even Janvier, who originates from a country that is not militarily integrated in NATO, routinely suggested that 'It would have been much better if we only

¹³²⁰ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

represented NATO staff.¹³²¹ One consequence of that was the establishment of national lines whereby commanding officers brought Military Assistants along from their own countries. In many instances that had a negative impact on the decision-making process. The British generally prefer to deal with Britons, the French with French and so on. Another sign of the establishment of national lines was the fact that quite a few issues in Janvier's office were dealt with in French; which created problems for officials, such as the Chief of Staff and the NATO liaison officer, even when it proved functional. In many of those instances the Dutch served as a kind of linking pin.¹³²²

The reasons why commanders relied so heavily on their Military Assistants, with the accompanying danger of breaching normal staff procedures, was largely due to the poor quality of the staff. The multinational character of the UN staff made the situation extremely difficult. For example, in 1994, the UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo (also known by its 'old' name of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command) hosted more than 182 officers originating from 23 different countries. It was customary in UN operations to assign staff functions based on the size of the contingents provided by the member states. This resulted in large staffs of limited practical value, burdened with language problems. Some officers spoke almost no English, had followed no staff courses and originated from small countries where the battalions were under the direct command of the ministry and therefore had no higher staff positions. This resulted in the establishment of parallel staff structures in which only competent officers played a role, and thereby managed to hold matters together. Under the best of circumstances a UN staff was burdened with problems of language, culture, quality and education/training.

The problems were further complicated by the fact that, unlike Navies and Airforces, Land Forces are generally not accustomed to collaboration with other nations. A further complicating issue was the difference between the equipment of the various battalions, even mutually between Western nations, and their military capabilities. There was absolutely no question of collective doctrines and procedures outside the NATO countries. Moreover, many of the contingents would only follow instructions from their own capitals. Of the 20,000 troops stationed in Bosnia, UNPROFOR effectively had no more than four battalions that were well-equipped and that responded to orders from the UN headquarters with the permission of their capitals.¹³²³

The Force Commander in Zagreb was not the *de facto* commander in chief, as he routinely had to negotiate with national governments to assign specific tasks to the national troops. He was not in a position to issue orders. This resulted in a degree of national control that was exploited to a greater or lesser extent by some countries. Moreover, due to the fact that many countries sent troops to the UN under specific conditions, the national influence on troop contingents was generally a significant factor.

Despite all of the above, the Western nations in UNPROFOR were generally able to cooperate satisfactorily. The real problem arose from troop contingents from Russia, the Ukraine and other Asian countries. Generally their equipment was inferior and they were almost undeployable.¹³²⁴

Zagreb expressed a great deal of criticism of the UN management from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York. Force Commanders were constantly required to provide feedback to New York, but there was no effective General Staff in charge. The leadership of that Department was primarily politically orientated, sometimes questioned executive details in the mission, and it was not always clear exactly what New York wanted. Officials, such as Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, his chef de bureau, Iqbal Riza and Director of Communications and Special Projects, Sashi Tharoor, were inclined, according to Chief of Staff Kolsteren in Zagreb, to make more opportunistic and politically tainted decisions, while Under Secretary-General Kofi Annan was generally

¹³²¹ Interview A.M.W.W. M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

¹³²² Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹³²³ Interview Lord Owen, 23/06/01.

¹³²⁴ Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/95.

inclined to adopt a more objective and realistic position.¹³²⁵ This was largely due to unclear directives issued by the UN Security Council – quite often due to compromises that rarely lent themselves to unambiguous interpretation at executive level. Moreover, on the whole, the Security Council adopted a reactionary rather than a proactive orientation, whereby, based on the absence of a long-term political strategy, ad hoc basic decisions were sometimes taken, that either did not yield the desired effect or were counterproductive in the mission area. This was also why efforts by the UN headquarters in New York to provide the Force Commanders with directives were not always successful. One side effect was that the headquarters in Zagreb and Sarajevo had no clear strategy; which created massive practical problems for the commanders in the field.¹³²⁶

Zagreb had a so-called ‘theatre level command’ status. This was very important due to the fact that the problems and operations in the former Yugoslavia extended across international borders. For military, cultural and economic reasons the new neighbouring countries (the republics of the former Yugoslavia) were closely involved in each other’s domestic affairs. This compelled the UNPF to integrate public counselling, as well as diplomatic and humanitarian efforts. In addition, it was essential to maintain a centralised logistical system to maintain the 40,000 strong peace-keeping force and to keep control of the planning and contact with NATO.¹³²⁷

The extensive influence of the civilian officials in Zagreb created major problems for the military officials. Civilian officials remained in the mission zone for longer periods and were in charge of the financial management, which enhanced the scope of their influence. Their influence was further enhanced by the continuity of their positions and superior knowledge of the not-always-logical UN rules and regulations. As a consequence, the military staff was compelled to coordinate at length with the political and civilian managers. Military staff supported the notion of preparing decisions, while the final decisions would ultimately be taken by the commanders. There was also a fair amount of mutual friction; the military would accuse the civilian staff of a lack of flexibility, of being unwilling to deal with the military, of being unable to make quick decisions, and often, that they confused career decisions with strategic ones. There was also little consideration for the general cost effect; for example, the military were disturbed by the fact that civilians were well-paid and were issued UN cars down to secretarial level.

Compared to Zagreb, those relationships were inversely proportional in the significantly smaller headquarters in Sarajevo where the military section of the staff outnumbered the civilians. One disadvantage of the besieged city of Sarajevo was that UN personnel and logbook keepers fell victim to what General Smith called a ‘siege mentality’. As result, Akashi sought increased interaction between Sarajevo and Zagreb, as well as personnel rotation between the headquarters.¹³²⁸ Unfortunately, his idea came too late to have significant effect.

The Sector North East Headquarters in Tuzla

While the quality differences between officers were manifest at all levels, the effect was greater on small staffs than on large ones. This was felt most strongly in the staff of Sector North East in Tuzla, which included Dutchbat. In practise, this staff was far removed from events determined at the higher levels in Sarajevo (let alone in Zagreb). The Sector Commander in Tuzla, the Norwegian Brigadier General Hagrup Haukland, had no insight into the results of discussions held by the top echelons of UNPROFOR, mainly with the VRS. Although he had contact on an almost daily basis with General

¹³²⁵ NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. Chief of Staff HQ UNPF, ‘End of Tour Report Major General Ton Kolsteren’, 31/0196. Also see ‘Evaluation Report of Key UN Officials’, 26/04/96, No. OPS BLS/3651.

¹³²⁶ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

¹³²⁷ NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. John Almstrom to SRSG, ‘SRSG Presentation to ICFY Steering Committee’, 14/06/95 sent by fax AMA COS UNPF-HQ to DCBC, 101600 Jul 95.

¹³²⁸ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury Diary. SRSG’s Meeting 10/07/95.

Smith in Sarajevo, the latter was reluctant, for security reasons, to divulge really important information over the telephone.

In Tuzla there were no problems in the cooperation between civilian and military sections of the staff; however there were problems in areas where there were significant differences in the quality of the staff. There were 41 officers in the Sector North East staff. While this was a small contingent as such, the problem was that the effectiveness of the staff left much to be desired. The cooperative climate between the various troop-contributing nations represented in the headquarters in Tuzla was equally questionable. The cadres consisted of clans of Norwegian, Pakistani and Dutch military that were incapable of adequate mutual cooperation. The quality of the reporting from Tuzla to Sarajevo could also have been better in some areas. For example, in one instance the Sector Commander in Tuzla received a message from the Intelligence Section (in military terms, the G-2 Section) in Sarajevo to the effect that it no longer wished to receive reports from Tuzla due to the low quality of the reporting. The Netherlands too provided some examples of how training and position are not always well synchronised. One such example was of a Dutch major with a medical background that was assigned a position in the Intelligence Section.¹³²⁹

Staff problems in Tuzla had direct consequences in the days of the fall of Srebrenica. The so-called Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo was manned by personnel from NATO countries with the aim of, among other things, coordinating requests for Close Air Support between the UNPROFOR battalions, the UN headquarters in Sarajevo and Zagreb, and NATO. Contact with Tuzla was coordinated via an Air Liaison Officer for the Sector North East. This Canadian official was however withdrawn one week before the fall of Srebrenica and was never replaced. The troop-contributing nations were asked for a successor, but none obliged. This not only terminated the communications with the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo, but with it the possibility of proactive actions in situations where air operations appeared desirable. Requests for Close Air Support thus went to the Operational section (in military terms, Section 3) in Tuzla. This section consisted almost entirely of Pakistanis, and when it became necessary during the attack on Srebrenica, it transpired that the Pakistanis were unfamiliar with the format of a request for Close Air Support to NATO. It is understandable that this could create discontent in Dutchbat, more so as, at midday on 11 July, the complete Pakistani section had abandoned the office for routine religious activities in the local mosque.¹³³⁰

A further contributory factor for the small contingent in Sector North East was that the fall occurred on the weekend (Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 July). At that time twenty officers out of a total staff of forty were on leave. Only eight members of the policy staff remained. At one point the local Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander, Colonel Brantz, was recorded saying to his interpreter, Nadia Skokic; 'Nadia, imagine, I cannot find anybody - everybody is on leave or off for the weekend'.¹³³¹

All that notwithstanding, Sector Commander Haukland in Tuzla considered the Pakistanis to be excellent officers. According to him they never disappointed, were loyal and generally compiled good reports.¹³³² Haukland was however not witness to the hectic days around the fall of Srebrenica – he too was on leave and only returned to Tuzla on 15 July. Brantz called him about the situation on 9 July. Brantz found Haukland to be rather laconic under the circumstance, and asked whether Brantz could resolve the situation on his own. Brantz replied in the affirmative. Brantz did however make a statement to the effect that he found it strange that commanders are not required to return to their

¹³²⁹ Interview Hagrup Haukland, 03/05/99. Also see NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. 'Evaluation Report on Key UN Officials', 26/04/96, No. OPS BLS/3651.

¹³³⁰ Interview M.P. Wijsbroek, 10/12/97. Wijsbroek claimed to have noted this with Major Kooij of the Netherlands Army Engineer's Corps.

¹³³¹ Interview Nadia Skokic, 04/02/98; DCBC, 1281. Memos of meeting dated 01/11/95 regarding the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995.

¹³³² Interview Hagrup Haukland, 03/05/99.

posts when the principle of the Safe Area was violated.¹³³³ Haukland stated there against that he had asked whether his presence was required, but that Brantz had replied to the contrary.¹³³⁴

Colonel Brantz

Due to Haukland's absence of leave during the fall of Srebrenica, his deputy, Brantz, enjoyed substantial prominence during that period. In the days around the fall of Srebrenica, Colonel Brantz formed an important link in the chain of information provision with the The Hague concerning Dutchbat. Brantz was however more of a source than a player in that process.

Thanks to his former position as Chief of Staff of the Royal Netherlands Crisis staff, Brantz had succeeded in arranging a satellite connection - something his predecessor, Colonel Engelen, had expressed jealousy about (he only had a UN telephone that was connected via an exchange in Zagreb). This allowed Brantz to easily contact Srebrenica, Sarajevo and The Hague. On 11 July, he was on the phone all day.¹³³⁵

The contact between Brantz and the Defence Management Control Centre (DCBC) of the Dutch Ministry of Defence was a one-way contact – it was rare for the DCBC to call him. Most of the questions that did arise were posed to General Kolsteren in Zagreb or General Nicolai in Sarajevo.

Brantz was in a difficult situation. He attempted to mobilise the understaffed and moderately functional staff into a fully functioning whole, but was routinely by-passed. At the time of the fall of the enclave, Sarajevo did almost no business via the staff of the Sector North East and often dealt directly with Dutchbat. Brantz felt responsible for whatever was or was not happening via the 'national line'; but he was never involved in it. This was one of the reasons why he made frequent calls to The Hague. He felt he was better able to get his message across to the Central Organisation of the Ministry on '*Het Plein*' (in this instance, the Defence Crisis Control Management Centre) than to the Royal Netherlands Army (in this instance the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis staff), which, according to a source in the Centre, was also due to the confidence Brantz had in his contacts there.¹³³⁶

Brantz had access to three sources of information to establish what was happening in the enclave. The first was a staff in Tuzla with a number of Joint Commission Observers (the JCO staff). While they had no formal affiliation with the staff of Sector North East, they had their own communication with the Joint Commission Observers (JCOs) in the enclave, and they also communicated with Sarajevo. They exchanged news with the staff of Sector North East and thus formed an important source of information for Brantz.¹³³⁷ The JCOs in Tuzla were rather meticulous in passing on information and often advised Brantz on the current situation. Brantz was able to listen to the communication traffic between the JCOs in the enclave and those in Tuzla from a vehicle in the staff building. He was warned by the JCOs in Tuzla whenever there was an imminent threat. Secondly, Brantz obtained information from the UNMOs in the enclave and, finally, via Dutchbat's own lines.

Brantz endeavoured to put all the information together, but discovered that there were blank spaces between the reports. Both the interpretation of the situation and the meticulousness of reporting varied, whereby the reports from the JCOs appeared most professional due to their superior experience.¹³³⁸

¹³³³ Interview C.L. Brantz, 11/06/99.

¹³³⁴ Interview Hagrup Haukland, 03/05/99.

¹³³⁵ Interview C.L. Brantz, 11/06/99.

¹³³⁶ Interview C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

¹³³⁷ Interview M. Wijsbroek, 10/12/97.

¹³³⁸ Interview C.L. Brantz, 11/06/99.

The Headquarters of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo

Communications with the JCOs in Srebrenica and the local UN headquarters (Bosnia-Herzegovina Command) were also of great importance to Sarajevo for fast and accurate reporting. Lines of communication were also available between the commander of Dutchbat and the staff in Sarajevo, and between the group in the enclave responsible for guiding aircraft on their targets (the Forward Air Controllers) and the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo; although the latter was of limited importance for combat purposes.¹³³⁹

In terms of daily practise in Bosnia, the UN headquarters in Sarajevo (Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, which was formally known as 'UNPROFOR Headquarters' (after 1 April 1995) was of great importance. The powers of those headquarters were otherwise rather limited; for example, Zagreb (Akashi) and not Sarajevo had decision-making power with respect to summoning Close Air Support.

As Commander Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (after 1 April Commander UNPROFOR), General Rupert Smith left a clear mark on those headquarters. However, neither he was at his post during the fall of the enclave, as he had been asked by Boutros-Ghali to attend a meeting in Geneva on 8 July. After that he spent some time on the Dalmatian coast before returning to Split on the evening of 11 July. As in the case of Haukland, he too did not return because of Srebrenica. Smith had not deputised his Pakistani replacement, Shaheed, who had been based in Split as Commander of the Sarajevo Sector (one of the other two sectors apart from Sector North East), but the French officer, Major General Gobilliard.¹³⁴⁰

Personnel allocation: Dutch and French officers in key positions

As of July, the Dutch had an important say in local current affairs. All three layers of command, Zagreb, Sarajevo and Tuzla had a Dutch Chief of Staff, respectively Kolsteren, Nicolai and Brantz. Moreover, Van Kappen, the military advisor of the Secretary-General was also Dutch. Due to the absence of Haukland, Brantz was also Deputy Commander. Nicolai in Sarajevo was not an Deputy Commander, but Chief of Staff. Due to the fact that Gobilliard, as Commander of the Sarajevo Sector, spent much of his time in his own headquarters, Nicolai held substantial sway in the sector.

Consequently, much of the decision-making around the enclave was done in Dutch circles. Decision-making concerning proposals for approval of Close Air Support by Akashi was however in French hands.

The strength of the Dutch representation was not always beneficial to the work in the headquarters, as the rest of the staff were immediately at an information disadvantage when the Dutch treated matters in their own language. In those situations the use of the Dutch language facilitated mutual communication and contributed to crossing of the formal lines of the command structure. This also applied to information traffic between Ministry of Defence in The Hague and the staffs in the former Yugoslavia and the military advisor of the Secretary-General of the UN. Resentment was invariably the result in Tuzla when the Dutch in Sarajevo bypassed those headquarters to contact Dutchbat directly. Conversely, Tuzla expressed resentment of the fact that Sarajevo showed too little interest in the isolated compatriots in Srebrenica. Life in Sarajevo was however significantly more complicated than in Srebrenica and Tuzla, and because much more happened there at staff level, it was not possible to keep the attention focused on Srebrenica at all times.

¹³³⁹ Debriefing statement Lieutenant-Colonel J.A.C. Ruiter, 27/09/95.

¹³⁴⁰ Interview Hagrup Haukland, 03/05/99.

4. Procedures for the request of Close Air Support

The consequences of requesting the Close Air Support procedures

The application procedure for Close Air Support was known as Blue Sword. Zagreb played a decisive role in the procedure, which entailed that the application for Close Air Support had to be initiated by a battalion commander. The application, when issued, went via Sector Headquarters (in the case of Dutchbat, via Sector North East in Tuzla) to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo. In Sarajevo, the Headquarters Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Close Air Support Committee was responsible for initiating the application. The committee was made up of senior staff officers and civilian staff. The commander of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (later known as the UNPROFOR Commander) subsequently provided a recommendation for the application and sent it through to the headquarters in Zagreb where it was assessed by the Crisis Action Team¹³⁴¹ under the command of the Chief of Staff (during the fall this was the Dutch officer, Kolsteren). Subsequently, the Force Commander (the Frenchman Janvier during the fall) proposed the application with his recommendation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN, Akashi, who was empowered by the Secretary-General to issue a decision with regard to the application. All of the aforementioned procedures occurred under the strict regime of a double-key procedure that entailed that NATO too had to approve an application (see Chapter 2 for further detail on this subject). The decision at the UN only applied to the first application by a battalion commander. Subsequent applications could go directly from Sarajevo to the NATO command post (in Vicenza), and the Special Representative could intervene at any time.¹³⁴²

Request went through a fixed checklist procedure, whereby the UN considered very different issues than NATO, which saw the target as the enemy and was responsible for the execution of the operation. For the UN, the purpose of air power was to serve as a potential means of deterrence for as long as possible. In the case of the actual use of air power, the overriding concern was for the safety of its personnel on the ground. The use of air power as retribution was not permitted – the action had to bear a direct relationship to a violation by one of the warring factions.¹³⁴³

In the case of Close Air Support, the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo considered the purpose of the request as one of the main criteria. Did the request comply with UN preconditions? Was there a direct threat to own troops? Was there a chance of collateral damage, for example to buildings, schools, or hospitals within range of the target? After all, if a school or hospital were to have been hit it could have spelt the end of the mission. It was also necessary to check where UN troops were posted to avoid them being hit by misses, for example when various nations were involved in bombing operations, they had to be prevented from bombing troops of other allied nations. Such actions could lead to strife between the participating Western capitals, and it was essential to keep UNPROFOR together as a coalition. It was also necessary to check for the presence of a Forward Air Controller in the vicinity who could ‘talk’ aircraft to their targets. All of this entailed military considerations.

¹³⁴¹ The Crisis Action Team formally consisted of fourteen members: Chief-of-Staff (Chairman), Head of Civil Affairs, Chief Military Observer, Military Assistant to SRSG, NATO Liaison Officer, Chief G3, Chief G3 Air, Chief Military Information Officer, BH Liaison Officer, Chief Press and Information Officer, Commissioner CIVPOL, UNHCR Military Liaison Officer, European Community Monitoring Mission Representative, International Committee of the Red Cross Representative. In addition there was an SRSG Advisory Group to study and evaluate the information accompanying the Release Authority. (UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 79, File 2.5.4, Air Support 17/08/93- 06/02/95. UNPROFOR Operations Order 14/94, 15/07/94).

¹³⁴² *Subsequent use* is viewed as an extension of time and location of *first use* within the same tactical situation. Re-authorisation was required in the case of a changed situation. (UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 79, File 2.5.4, Air Support 17/08/93- 06/02/95 UNPROFOR Op Order 14/94 of 29/06/94).

¹³⁴³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 79, File 2.5.4, Air Support 17/08/93- 06/02/95. Force Commander’s Concept of Employment of Air Power, 05/09/94.

The results were immediately signalled through to NATO in Italy as an early report. NATO military forces were in charge of the communications with the headquarters in Italy and the secure communications with Sarajevo.

The Force Commander in Zagreb was then briefed regarding the purpose of the action, the reason for the request, and the extent to which it complied with the preconditions. The Force Commander was then required to sign the application, after which it was forwarded to Akashi for yet another explanation. Akashi would then consult his political advisors, as bombing operations could have political implications.¹³⁴⁴

After obtaining Akashi's approval, the Force Commander would send the request to the NATO Commander in Southern Europe (in military terms: the Commander in Chief Allied Forces Southern Europe or CINCSOUTH) in Naples, the American Admiral Leighton Smith. He then followed the NATO chain of command, and sent the order via his Air Force commander (in military terms: COMAIRSOUTH) to the Air Force in charge of the attack, the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force (or 5ATAF) in Vicenza. That unit then assigned the order to aircraft currently located in Bosnian airspace or above the Adriatic Sea, or aircraft located in Italian bases or on aircraft carriers in the Adriatic Sea. An airborne command post above the Adriatic Sea (in military terms: an Airborne Battlefield Command and Control Center or ABCCC), in collaboration with the pilots and Forward Air Controllers with the battalions then executed the order. The purpose of the Forward Air Controllers was to talk the aircraft to their targets.

After verification of the order (with the ABCCC), the commander of the attacking force contacted a Forward Air Controller who gave permission to attack the target (see below). In addition, there was the question of the flight time to the target. This complicated procedure also took a substantial amount of time, and completion of the UN procedure took more time than the NATO procedure. In the case of a more predictable situation it was also possible to execute several actions at once. In those instances Akashi and the Force Commander had to join the Crisis Action Team. The line of communication was normally shorter within NATO – the battalion commander normally applied directly for Close Air Support and not, as in the case of the UN, to a three-star general.

In practise it transpired that many hours could pass between the time of request and the time of the attack. When, on 25 November 1994, Close Air Support was requested in the Bihac region, exactly 60 minutes passed before the report of a bombardment from the field resulted in the dispatch of an application by Sarajevo to Zagreb. The Crisis Action Team in Zagreb then needed 45 minutes to evaluate the application and to have the Force Commander sign it. Akashi only needed one minute to give his permission (in military terms: to sign the release authority). It was only one and a half hours later that the NATO aircraft finally flew over Bihac. In other words, a total of approximately three hours.¹³⁴⁵

However, this extremely stratified request procedure was not the end of the story. There were further problematic aspects. Close Air Support was only permissible under very strict conditions. As stated above, all operations had to be guided by a Forward Air Controller, who had to be capable of indicating the target on the ground to the pilots and had to ensure that friendly forces and areas were spared. The payload could then only be released once the pilot had positively identified the target, and the Forward Air Controller had authorised the attack.

The aircraft crew and the Forward Air Controller were required to maintain constant two-way communication, and both parties were required to positively identify the target. The intensity and duration of the use of the aircraft was not allowed to exceed that which was strictly required to reach

¹³⁴⁴ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹³⁴⁵ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Only Cable De Lapresle to Annan, 25/11/94, No. Z-1803. The mission was terminated due to poor weather. Before that the Bosnian Serbs had fired two Surface-to-Air missiles at the aircraft.

the set goal, and third-party damage had to be avoided to the greatest extent possible.¹³⁴⁶ All of this was severely hampered by the long-winded procedures: Even if the aircraft were capable of reaching the target fast, the unavoidable passage of time could make it possible for soldiers, vehicles or artillery equipment to be moved, alternatively artillery equipment could have ceased firing, leaving no smoking guns to attack.

Political considerations too could be problematic. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo also refused permission for Close Air Support once or twice out of fear of the consequences for the humanitarian mission or of fear of disruption of negotiations. This inevitably and increasingly corrupted the credibility of threats to use air power. The deployment of fighter aircraft against ground positions and to protect the Safe Areas was therefore fraught with problems and quite unsuccessful. In short, Close Air Support in the Bosnian theatre had many limitations and was subject to too many conditions to be considered truly effective.

Collaboration between UN and NATO: liaison

NATO support of the UN, as in this instance, made it essential to coordinate and lead requests for air strikes and Close Air Support. This demanded the establishment of an Air Operations Coordination Center (AOCC) in Sarajevo. There was also a so-called liaison cell at UNPF level in Zagreb to manage contact with NATO's Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force in Vicenza, and a NATO liaison officer was made available for contact with Naples. The British provided the lion's share of the personnel required for the establishment of the coordination centres. The matter of the establishment of the centre was settled by July 1993, but there were many problems at the operational level.

The problems were based on the fact that non-NATO countries participated in UNPROFOR. NATO communication resources were needed, but guarantees were needed regarding the security of the accompanying cryptographic systems.

As a UN organisation, the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo had no powers. It did however form an important communication link between the UN and NATO - in this case with the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) of the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force in Vicenza. The Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo was responsible for ensuring, meanwhile, that requests for Close Air Support entered the NATO channels to obtain that organisation's permission and to provide an early warning to aircraft due to execute the operation. After approval of the request in Zagreb and Naples, the Air Operations Coordination Center was responsible for the briefing of the applicable Tactical Air Control Party of which the Forward Air Controller was a member, and issued permission for the attack.

In addition to its role in the line of communication with NATO, the Air Operations Coordination Center also played a role in the evaluation of the suitability of the target for purposes of an air attack. After all, the peacekeeping concept demanded a minimal use of force, meticulous identification of the target to prevent collateral damage (unintended damage), and use of the appropriate weapons for the target.

Collaboration between UN and NATO: the Forward Air Controller

UNPROFOR had twenty Tactical Air Control Parties (TACP) available to guide aircraft to their targets. A TACP with a Forward Air Controller received its instructions from the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo but remained under the command of the battalions to which it pertained.

The names, Tactical Air Control Party and Forward Air Controller were sometimes interchanged. In the case of Dutchbat, a Tactical Air Control Party consisted of a Forward Air

¹³⁴⁶ DCBC, 2506. Secure fax BDL/Sitcen Klu to DCBC, 181315ZJul94. Defence Briefing, mid February 1994; UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 79, File 2.5.4, Air Support 17/08/93 – 06/02/95. UNPROFOR Operations Order 14/94, 15/07/94; DCBC, 2516. Fax RNLAf to DS/SCOCIS, 071019Z Jul 95.

Controller and a driver of a APC (A Personnel Carrier) who also acted as signalman, and a gunner for the APC's .50 gun, who could also act as a signalman. In the case of an alarm, the six-man unit could be augmented to protect the Forward Air Controller. Tactical Air Control Parties were particularly conspicuous once there were aircraft in the air and the moment they were spotted, quickly attracted enemy fire. The Tactical Air Control Parties were issued with a secure military satellite connection to the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo, as well as a non-secure high-frequency radio and a civilian satellite as back up. The Tactical Air Control Parties had their own APC to enable them to quickly reach their observation posts.¹³⁴⁷

Whenever a target was announced in the field, it was the duty of the Forward Air Controller to locate it. Forward Air Controllers were preferably found in the front line own troops in elevated positions that commanded a good view of the terrain. The Forward Air Controller marked the target on his topographic map and used it to determine the best access route for the pilot via points that are easily identifiable from the air. As soon as the target was marked on the map, the Forward Air Controller could seek cover. He only needed to leave his cover every now and then to make sure that the target was still located in the original position. He communicated directly with the pilot by means of an UHF radio.

The local Forward Air Controllers kept daily contact with the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo to pass on the weather report and temperature for training flights. The Forward Air Controller was then informed as to whether training aircraft were expected, how many, at what time, and the call signs to be used by the aircraft. The Forward Air Controller then took up a position in the terrain a half hour in advance. When the aircraft arrived, the Dutch Forward Air Controllers reported their presence with the call sign (Windmill), while the pilots identified themselves with their call signs based on nationality - in the case of the Dutch this was Kurt. The Forward Air Controllers then found out how long the aircraft were available and reported the target. In the case of training flights, those targets were sometimes small Bosnian Serb bunkers (which, on a number of occasions, led to fire from the VRS after a bombing dive), or a recognisable house in the enclave, such as the one belonging to Naser Oric.¹³⁴⁸

As far as the Forward Air Controllers were concerned, Dutchbat was in an unfortunate position in July 1995. Due to flight restrictions over Bosnia no training flights had been permitted for some time. After a period of leave the lieutenant of the Forward Air Controllers team could not return to the enclave. The two remaining Forward Air Controllers were NCOs, and when they were finally called upon to act, were found not to be fully employable for the task. One of them collapsed under the burden of fear and anxiety and was rendered completely incompetent. The other was apparently even less competent. As the commandos and Joint Commission Observers (JCOs) in the enclave could also be used as Forward Air Controllers, it was possible to improvise with the result that the battalion actually did not have a shortage of manpower in those crucial skills. This will be dealt with in more detail later on in this chapter.

5. Combat action and Close Air Support from day to day: 6 July

The development of the VRS plans for an attack on Srebrenica were sketched in the previous chapter. The first indications of impending disaster came on 5 July. However, the indications did not lead either Dutchbat or UNPROFOR to the conclusion that an attack was imminent. The disaster was manifested in the early hours of the morning of 6 July, when, quite unexpectedly, the enclave was shelled.

¹³⁴⁷ SMG/Debrief. Standing Order 1(NL) VNInfbat, Annex 12 Close Air Support.

¹³⁴⁸ Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

The UN was slow in recognising the attack

It took a while for the higher echelons in NATO to recognise the reality of the Bosnian Serb attack on the enclave. On 6 July 1995, Deputy Force Commander Ashton gave Akashi a briefing and stated the following: ‘Overall a quiet day militarily’. Janvier was in Paris for discussions about the Rapid Reaction Force and access to Sarajevo, but in Paris, too, Srebrenica was not a point of discussion on that day - it only became an issue on 10 July.¹³⁴⁹

At that point Zagreb was not even aware of the attack, as most reports had been based on the preceding 24-hour period. Akashi’s daily reports to New York also made no mention of an attack on Srebrenica. Instead, all attention was focused on the situation in Croatia where the Republika Srpska Krajina was being mobilised, the Croatian offensive in the Livno valley, and the increasing number of skirmishes in the Bihac region.

As before, the situation in Sarajevo was on the morning agenda in Zagreb, along with the statement of the French Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Lanxade, to the effect that he wished to deploy the Rapid Reaction Force to create a corridor through which to withdraw the French troops from the city where they were exposed to excessive risk. The French president, Chirac, did not however approve the proposal.

Srebrenica was in fact discussed in the briefing in Zagreb, but only because the UNHCR representative mentioned it based on a report by the Bosnian Muslims to the effect that thirty people had died of starvation. UNHCR could not confirm the news. At the same time the local UNHCR representative reported that seven people had died there, probably not due to disease, as they had received ample food.¹³⁵⁰ In a telegram to New York, Akashi stated that in June only around thirty percent of the required food had reached the enclave.¹³⁵¹ The supplies in the UNHCR Warehouse in Srebrenica were almost depleted and it was thought that local families would only be able to prepare one or two meals a day for a few days more. Dutchbat only had about 450 litres of diesel in stock and *Médicins Sans Frontières* 200 litres. The scope of UNHCR’s fuel supply in the compound in Potocari was kept secret.¹³⁵²

These conditions favoured the Bosnian Serbs during their attack, as it undermined the morale of both the population and the ABiH. This subject was discussed in the chapter titled, ‘The Mood in the Enclave: May-July 1995’. The morale of Dutchbat had suffered based on the perceived futility of maintaining a presence in the enclave without proper supplies and without clear prospects of relief.

The attack is launched

The 6th of July also dawned peacefully at the headquarters of Sector North East in Tuzla. Local reports marked the day as ‘very quiet’. However, on that day in Srebrenica hostile activities were not limited to the usual terrifying nocturnal exchanges of fire, as, in Potocari, missiles had begun to fly over the compound. The compound took a direct hit as well as a number of stray projectiles, and personnel were forced to retreat to shelters. The day started early with skirmishes between the VRS and ABiH in the Bandera triangle where the VRS launched two assaults on ABiH positions. Further skirmishes were reported in the northern areas of the enclave, but the focus of the battle was in the south-eastern sector of the enclave at OP-F. The VRS fired at ABiH positions with tanks and artillery based a hundred metres in front of the OP. Two tanks fired grenades at the OP-F, resulting in two direct hits and

¹³⁴⁹ *Mission d’Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica*, Audition de M. Jean-Claude Mallet, 05/04/01.

¹³⁵⁰ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury Diary, 06/07/95; UNNY, DPKO, UNPROFOR. Code Cables Akashi to Annan, 06/07/95, No. Z-1104 and Janvier to Annan, 06/07/95, No. Z-1111.

¹³⁵¹ UNNY. DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 06/07/95, No. Z-1106.

¹³⁵² UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 434, File UNMO HQ SNE Srebrenica. UNMO HQ UNPROFOR to UNMO HQ Zagreb, 081330B Jul 95.

substantial damage. During the course of the morning all of the OPs in the southern regions of the enclave reported attacks.¹³⁵³

The Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander of the 28th Division, Major Ramiz Becirovic, reported to the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla that, on that day, three VRS infantry assaults had been warded off in the south-eastern corner of the enclave at the cost of two dead and two wounded on the ABiH side.

After 04.25 hours the VRS began preparations for an infantry attack in the sector of the 282nd Brigade of the ABiH (in the south-eastern sector of the enclave). The VRS continued its siege of that brigade with tanks for the remainder of the day. At 12.15 p.m. the VRS launched a second infantry assault, followed at 13.00 hours by a third, which was also warded off. After that the VRS intensified its fire and hundreds of projectiles rained down on the ABiH lines. Twice more during the course of the day the VRS moved in infantry by means of a total of nine truckloads, and at around 14.00 hours the VRS launched an unsuccessful attack on the ABiH lines at Mount Kvarac to the east of the city.¹³⁵⁴ Becirovic has no explanation as to why the VRS did not follow up those attacks.¹³⁵⁵

The local population panicked. The humanitarian situation was already dismal and a convoy that had been announced previously failed to arrive due to the fighting. Four fuel trucks destined for Dutchbat were forced to turn back. The others went to Belgrade hoping to be able to complete their mission at a later stage.¹³⁵⁶

Ramiz Becirovic reported to the 2nd Corps in Tuzla that Dutchbat continued to man the OPs, but that no movement was visible amongst the other units of the battalion and that they were staying put. He requested a meeting with the commander of Dutchbat but could only establish contact with the liaison section. During the meeting with the Dutchbat liaison section and the UNMOs, Becirovic asked Dutchbat to return fire, and – based on UNMOs reports – also for a NATO air strike. Becirovic was assured that Dutchbat would return fire, but that it would only make a final decision pending their own analysis of the situation. Becirovic further reported to Dutchbat that his units had spotted two buses and two trucks dropping VRS troops at Zeleni Jadar on the afternoon of 5 July. Another truckload of VRS soldiers had also been spotted at Zalazje, in the vicinity of OP-R. According to Becirovic, troop concentrations had been observed in the enclave throughout the day of 5 July. In their report, the UNMOs expressed amazement at the failure of the ABiH to report those preparations (those were not observed by Dutchbat).¹³⁵⁷

Becirovic again requested that the weapons in the Weapon Collection Point be returned, something he had failed to report to the 2nd Corps in Tuzla. Karremans however dismissed the request after due consideration.¹³⁵⁸ He decided only to issue the arms once the VRS crossed the enclave borders.

The ABiH request for the return of the weapons also kept Akashi busy. He proposed the request to New York as a problem that ‘may well need to be resolved in the near future given the inability of UNPROFOR to defend the Safe Area’. There is however no indication that that point had ever been discussed in any detail either in Zagreb or New York. The offensive against Srebrenica also prompted Akashi to ask New York what the point was of maintaining troops in a situation where they were incapable of defending themselves.¹³⁵⁹ No reply to that question was ever received from New York.

¹³⁵³ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Letter Commanding Officer 1(NL)UN Infbn to Commander Sector North East, 07/07/95, No. TK95112.

¹³⁵⁴ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. Komanda 28. Divizije aan Komanda 2. Korpusa, 06/07/95, Str. pov. br. 01-163/95.

¹³⁵⁵ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

¹³⁵⁶ SMG/1004/62. LOGTBAT to Sitcen BLS, 06/07/95 14:39.

¹³⁵⁷ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. Komanda 28. Divizije aan Komanda 2. Korpusa, 06/07/95, Str. pov. br. 01-163/95; CRST. UNMO Srebrenica to TX 061700B Jul 95; NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNMO HQ Sector BH-NE to UNMO HQ BH COMD, 06/07/95.

¹³⁵⁸ SMG,1004/62. Coll. Brantz to Sitcen BLS, 06/07/95, 07:28.

¹³⁵⁹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPRF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 07/07/95, No. Z-1112.

Discussions on Close Air Support

After the start of the VRS attack, Karremans wrote a letter of protest to VRS liaison officer, Major Nikolic, regarding the shelling of civilian and UN objects.¹³⁶⁰ After the start of the Bosnian-Serb offensive, the War Presidency of the Opstina was desperate and attempted to get in touch with President Izetbegovic.¹³⁶¹ War President Osman Suljic did establish contact with Izetbegovic and appealed to him to salvage whatever they could. Suljic also claims to have spoken to Karremans on that morning and to have asked him to inform the UN on the offensive on the enclave. Suljic stated that Karremans had initially considered the VRS offensive a mere provocation.¹³⁶²

Karremans did however sound the alarm. After the shelling, Karremans made an effort to eliminate most of the VRS weapons systems around the enclave. Their positions were known and, in his view, the shelling provided a unique opportunity to attack those systems. To that end he put in a request for Close Air Support at 13.50 hours; however, only Karremans considered this a formal request – it was apparently not viewed as such by the hierarchical line (see below).

This request was preceded by a telephone conversation between Karremans and Nicolai regarding the possibilities and impossibilities of Close Air Support in relation to the shelling of OP-F. In that conversation with Karremans, Nicolai discussed the criteria and instructions of the Force Commander as they applied after the bombardments at Pale at the end of May, as well as the smoking gun principle. Only targets that were actually currently engaged in an assault on UNPROFOR could be targeted, and the VRS had subsequently stopped the shelling. The request for Close Air Support submitted by Karremans therefore did not comply with the directives. According to Nicolai, as long as the option of withdrawing UNPROFOR personnel from the area existed and the lives of UNPROFOR personnel were not directly threatened, Zagreb would not agree to Close Air Support. Apparently that was what had happened at the end of May and at the beginning of June in Gorazde. Karremans countered with his own vision of the situation by saying that, ‘One has to grab every opportunity or do nothing at all’.¹³⁶³ Karremans maintained his view to the effect that the shelling had provided a unique opportunity to eliminate an extensive number of weapon systems.¹³⁶⁴ That was the basis of his application at 13.50 hours, and he continued to expound that vision over the days that followed.

The 2nd Corps in Tuzla reported in a letter to Sector North East in the same city that on that day a thousand projectiles had hit the enclave, with seventeen striking the city itself. ABiH General Sead Delic issued an urgent appeal to Brantz for implementation of measures ‘to protect the disarmed population and their territory’. Delic further reported that the 28th Division had learnt that Karremans had asked for Close Air Support, but that he had received no reply from his superior officers.¹³⁶⁵ On the same day Sector North East also established verbal contact with the 2nd Corps. In a conversation with Brigadier General Sulejman Budakovic, Chief of Staff of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, Brantz stated that Dutchbat had asked for ‘NATO Air Strikes’, but did not know whether Zagreb had issued orders to that effect. Brantz promised to ask Sarajevo for more detailed information and directives. It was up to the politicians to decide what to do; however, Brantz expected the authorities to opt for a ‘stay put’ policy for the UNPROFOR units in Srebrenica and the use of air power. Brantz emphasised the need for effective data exchange with the 2nd Corps.

¹³⁶⁰ SMG, 1005. Komandant 1 (NL) UN Pjbat Dutchbat za Major Nikolic, 06/07/95.

¹³⁶¹ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98, 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

¹³⁶² Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98. It was not possible to determine with certainty whether the interview had occurred on 6 July. Suljic did talk to the Dutchbat Liaison Section on 7 July.

¹³⁶³ Debriefing statement Lieutenant Colonel J.A.C. Ruiter, 27/09/95; interview C.H. Nicolai, 09/07/99.

¹³⁶⁴ Karremans, *Srebrenica, Who Cares?*, p. 160.

¹³⁶⁵ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Letter 2nd Corps Command to BHC Sector North-East, 06/07/95, No. 02/1-700/1.



Up to that point, the data concerning the progress of the offensive still coincide.¹³⁶⁶ A number of other points that emerged from the discussions however did not coincide with the actual state of affairs. Some of the ABiH soldiers were armed, which means that, in contrast to the position maintained by the ABiH, the entire population of the enclave was not unarmed. Furthermore, Brantz' reply to Budakovic 's question concerning Close Air Support was incorrect – there had never been a formal application. Moreover, the reply to the request had not come from Zagreb as Brantz had assumed, but from Sarajevo. Based on that, Nicolai explained to Karremans that the request would probably not be fulfilled.

The Dutchbat liaison team, during a meeting with the president of the Opstina, mentioned that an application for Close Air Support had been submitted to Sarajevo, but that it had been refused due to a shortage of aircraft. That report reached Tuzla via ABiH channels and, in Brantz' view 'fell out of the air' and could therefore not be considered credible.¹³⁶⁷

What was true was that at 13.50 hours, Karremans, in spite of Nicolai's negative advice, had submitted a request for 'Presence Close Air Support' (a non-existing concept), which had indeed been turned down based on a shortage of aircraft.¹³⁶⁸ That report also reached the Netherlands, as a result of which it also appeared in Dutch reports.¹³⁶⁹ No formal request had however been submitted for Close Air Support. It is an established fact that the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo submitted a request to NATO for air presence (sending NATO aircraft into Bosnian airspace as a deterrent without an actual decision as to specific actions) above Srebrenica.¹³⁷⁰ The reasons remain unclear. Most probably it was due to the fact that peace had largely been restored to the enclave, partially due to recent heavy rains.¹³⁷¹

It would appear that the aim of the VRS shelling had been to get Dutchbat to run for cover, to terrorise the local population and to force them to leave the scattered villages to build up the concentration in the city. This coincided with the VRS objective to reduce the enclave in size in the enclave and cut the communication with Zepa. However, it had obviously not stopped at that, as the city too had been shelled. The UNMOs were amazed at the relatively low number of victims and limited damage to buildings. According to the UNMOs there was a clear pattern in the shelling. The

¹³⁶⁶ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Memorandum Meeting COS 2 Corps ACOMDR SNE, 06/07/95 15.00 hrs.

¹³⁶⁷ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary (August Version 1999), p. 114-115, 121-122.

¹³⁶⁸ DCBC, 595. Dutchbat Firing Close Report, 06/07/95.

¹³⁶⁹ DCBC, 581. Weekintsum No. 27/95 from 4 thru 10 July from DOKL, Department of Intelligence and Security section. Confi.

¹³⁷⁰ DCBC, Box 59. Overview of Citations Logbook Air Operations Control Center, Annex A to Klu replies to Questions by the Chamber on Srebrenica.

¹³⁷¹ DCBC, 594. Situation report Srebrenica dtg 061430B Jul 95; DCBC, 595. Dutchbat Firing Close Report, 06/07/95; UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 54/77. File 2.2.7 Sector Command Matters 01/06/95-17/08/95. HQ SNE, Sitrep for Period 051700B to 061700B Jul 95; Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 161; SMG, 1001. Fax UNMO Srebrenica to Dutchbat LO Team, 061221B Jul 95.

VRS fired off ten grenades, only to stop the shelling for a period of one to two hours. As soon the refugees emerged from their retreats, the shelling would recommence to force the victims back into hiding. It was especially hard to keep the children inside. This appeared to have been the routine between roughly 08.00 and 22.00 hours.

It would have been easy for the VRS to have shelled the UN compound in Potocari; however, that did not happen even though the VRS did fire at the nearby hillside to keep Dutchbat undercover as long as possible. The UNMOs failed to establish contact with the VRS, as a result of which VRS intentions remained unclear. The interpreter to the UNMOs who was based in Bratunac had learnt from the VRS that he was to refuse his services to the UNMOs.¹³⁷² According to a later testimony by the former Chief of Staff of the VRS, General Manoljo Milovanovic, the VRS most certainly did execute the shelling to intimidate Dutchbat and the local population. He also added that the VRS had issued orders as to the general conduct of its forces in the presence of UNPROFOR. It was however quite possible that the UN could have been fired upon sporadically, partially due to the fact that it would have been hard to maintain discipline amongst the VRS troops.¹³⁷³

Reactions in the Netherlands

At this point the build-up in Srebrenica enjoyed only very limited coverage in the Dutch national and international press which was largely dominated by other events in Bosnia. Colonel Brantz reported to the ANP that there had been no Dutch casualties and that Dutchbat did not appear to be a direct target of the Bosnian Serbs. That notwithstanding, a nervous home front assaulted the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis staff with telephone calls and an atmosphere of major uncertainty prevailed. Although Dutchbat had not been attacked directly, the shelling in the immediate vicinity could certainly be described as life threatening. 'What will happen next?', was the question posed by Deputy Chairman J. Janssens of the Home Front Committee. Could Dutchbat leave the enclave or not? This question fed on the uncertainty of those who had been left at home, partially due to the fact that many had booked holidays in view of the approaching leave of the Dutchbat troops.¹³⁷⁴ However, specifically due to the enormous uncertainty around the issuance of convoy clearances by the Bosnian Serbs, the Defence Force opted for silence. No further utterances would be made regarding Dutchbat's relief until a convoy was actually underway to the enclave.¹³⁷⁵

On the evening of 6 June, the start of the VRS offensive was also a hot topic of speculation at the Defence Crisis Management Centre in The Hague. It had always been expected that the offensive would start at Gorazde, which was not only the largest of the eastern enclaves, but also the most important from a strategic perspective. It is conceivable that the Bosnian Serbs did not wish to provoke the British who were based in Gorazde, especially in view of statements to the effect that the Rapid Reaction Force would be operational within a few days and could be used to open a corridor to Sarajevo. At least, that was the prevailing speculation in the Defence Crisis Management Centre. For those reasons the attack on Srebrenica could have been a preventative action; however, the possibility that it might have been an incident 'gone out of control' could also not be ruled out. A further possible explanation for the VRS offensive, which was offered by Defence Management Control Centre in a limited-circulation draft Memorandum, was that the VRS was attempting to inhibit Dutchbat's evacuation from the enclave. This would indeed have been a worrisome development, as Dutch policy was specifically aimed at getting Dutchbat III out of the enclave as soon as possible.¹³⁷⁶

In light of the planned relief of Dutchbat units, the aforementioned draft Memorandum posed the question as to the political-military options available if Dutchbat would be unable to obtain

¹³⁷² NIOD, Confidential Coll. (4). Debrief of UNMOs from the Srebrenica enclave, 23 /07/95.

¹³⁷³ Interview Manojlo Milovanovic, 18/11/98.

¹³⁷⁴ ANP 061332 Jul 95; *Algemeen Dagblad*, 07/07/95.

¹³⁷⁵ DCBC, 2432. Ministry of Defence Directorate of Counselling, 07/07/95.

¹³⁷⁶ DCBC, 2434. Draft Memo DCBC, no number, sent by Fax No. 562Sec, 062255B Jul 95 to Col. Smeets.

permission to leave the enclave. According to an analysis both the VRS and the ABiH could benefit from the continued UN presence. In spite of the statement by Sacirbey, the Bosnian Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the effect that the Muslims were quite capable of defending the enclave on their own, the speculation was that the evacuation of Dutchbat could lead to intensification of the VRS attacks and possibly to the conquest of the enclave.

In any event, it was clear to The Hague that, had the Bosnian Serbs hoped to gain control of the enclave, they had been prevented thus far by the presence of the UN. The attack increased international attention to acts of terror on the part of the VRS. On the other hand, the presence of the UN personnel as potential hostages presented the Bosnian Serbs with a means of countering the effective use of the Rapid Reaction Force or to frustrate NATO Close Air Support. Mladic had already announced that the VRS would act against the enclaves in the case of the deployment of a Rapid Reaction Force. All that notwithstanding, The Hague considered Bosnian Serb resistance to the evacuation of Dutchbat improbable. It was however almost certain that both warring factions would want to benefit from the withdrawal of Dutchbat by taking over the OPs, equipment and armoured vehicles.

In the event of Dutchbat being taken hostage, the Rapid Reaction Force would have to be deployed to relieve the situation. To do so would primarily demand the support of the British as the situation in Gorazde was potentially comparable. Other options included asking NATO for a withdrawal operation (Operation Plan 40104) or to get negotiator Bildt to insist on a speedy relief effort. High-level negotiations with Mladic would however conflict with the prevailing negotiation techniques of the international community; that is, no contact with the Bosnian Serbs. To that end, and in spite of doubts concerning Dutchbat's capabilities to that effect, the only alternative was for Dutchbat to optimise its own contact with local VRS commanders to negotiate passage over Bosnian-Serb territory.

A notable suggestion, developed by the Defence Crisis Management, was to reward the combating parties for a safe rotation – a dubious action with regard to the UN's neutral position. In an extreme situation, Dutchbat could surrender its armoured vehicles to the VRS while offering its auxiliary resources and/or equipment to the Muslims. This draft Memorandum drawn up by the Defence Crisis Management Centre was sent to the Royal Netherlands Crisis staff for commentary. No further traces were found of that Memorandum in the archives; which presents the feasible conclusion that the Memorandum was quietly put to rest at official level. Clearly this appeared uncomfortably close to a Dutch attempt to bypass UNPROFOR and, in any event, the ideas posed to solve the problems of evacuating the enclave did not coincide with political reality. Clearly, by sacrificing UN neutrality, the DCBC was prepared to pay a high price. The anonymous author of the draft Memorandum was clearly aware of the consequences, especially in view of the conclusion of an overwhelming likelihood that Dutchbat would have to remain in the enclave for an extended period of time. In view of the existing supply problems that would entail an exacerbated physical burden and an increasingly anxious home front.¹³⁷⁷

Agreements for joint self-defence efforts?

The Bosnian Muslims did indicate that, shortly before the assault, Dutchbat and the ABiH had reached an agreement concerning joint defence of the enclave.¹³⁷⁸ Dutchbat denied the existence of any such agreements, stating that a joint defence effort could not and would not have taken place. It would also have been in conflict with the UNPROFOR mandate.

According to Sergeant-Major Rave of the section for military-civilian relations (in military terms: Section-5), Major Franken had only told Ramiz Becirovic that Dutchbat would defend the OPs as long

¹³⁷⁷ DCBC, 2434. Draft Memo DCBC, no number, sent by Fax No. 562Sec, 062255B Jul 95 to Col. Smeets.

¹³⁷⁸ ABiH Tuzla. 2nd Corps, no number. Supplementary statement by Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on previous statement of 11/08/95.

as possible. Rave stated that a coordinated defence effort was not possible due to the fact that the UN had to remain neutral. Franken pointed out the big gaps between the OPs and requested ABiH report the presence of the VRS in those areas. The Dutchbat vision was that the OPs could be defended for 72 hours in the case of an attack, assuming that the attack was to be executed with weapons similar to those used by Dutchbat. The gaps in the defence would thereby be the responsibility of the ABiH. They would be able to maintain the defence in those intermediate areas for seven days.¹³⁷⁹

According to a report compiled by the ABiH of a meeting with Franken on 29 May, the ABiH claims that there were definite agreements to collaborate in the defence of the enclave. The report was mentioned in the previous chapter. The agreement was made at a time when, during the hostage crisis, a real threat had been identified with respect to the OPs. In the days that followed, that threat culminated in the capture of OP-E by the VRS. During the meeting, as reported in the ABiH analysis, Dutchbat stated that in the event of an attack of the OPs they would be able to defend them for 72 hours. Subsequently both Dutchbat and ABiH frequently used that period as a given. According to Major Franken, armoured vehicles could, if necessary, be used to regroup or to move ammunition. The troops in question were airborne soldiers who had never been exposed to a real fire fight, but efforts had been made to prepare them for an attack without panicking.

According to the report of that meeting Franken could not guarantee to Becirovic that Dutchbat and the ABiH would be able to fight side by side, but he stated that Dutchbat would certainly defend themselves if necessary. If at any point the OPs could no longer be maintained, they would withdraw to the centre of the enclave. According to the ABiH report, Franken proposed that the ABiH remains in the vicinity of Dutchbat in order to provide assistance. Becirovic accepted that proposal. Franken also proposed that the representatives of Dutchbat and the ABiH could jointly identify critical points in the defence of the enclave and, if necessary, come to an agreement that, in the case of an emergency, the ABiH could occupy those positions. This would have to be done under cover so as not to reveal the situation to either Dutchbat or the VRS. Becirovic also accepted that proposal.¹³⁸⁰

UNMO interpreter Hasan Nuhanovic also stated that, in a meeting during the hostage crisis, Karremans had told Ramiz Becirovic that he had received orders from Sarajevo to withdraw from all OPs. This too was covered in the previous chapter. According to Nuhanovic, after consultation with his superiors, Karremans disregarded that instruction. Dutchbat had enough ammunition in the OPs for a 72-hour defence effort, after which the ABiH would be permitted to take over the OPs from Dutchbat - according to Nuhanovic that was what Karremans had in mind: 'As soon as we surrender, you can take over'. Nuhanovic stated that the agreement was, in retrospect, one of the few moments in which Karremans showed courage. On the other hand, this also demonstrated the UN's weakness. At the time Karremans was not prepared to report the agreement to the UN because the communication lines were not secure and the Bosnian Serbs could have got wind of the news.¹³⁸¹

Dutchbat interpreter Omer Subasic confirmed that vision in broad outlines - the agreement was that Dutchbat would remain at the OPs and continue to defend them. The ABiH would guard the intermediate terrain to prevent the OPs from being outflanked. According to Subasic there were no real plans for collaboration. It was all a tacit agreement, which was also the reason why the ABiH were allowed to carry arms.¹³⁸²

Members of the Opstina also understood there to have been a tacit agreement concerning collaboration in the event of a VRS assault. The aforementioned members were uncertain as to why the agreement was never implemented.¹³⁸³

¹³⁷⁹ Interview E.A. Rave, 24/01/01; information based on confidential debriefing statement (43); SMG/Debrief. Factual Account of the Debriefing.

¹³⁸⁰ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROM's. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije aan Komandi 2. Korpusa Odjeljenje za moral, 02/06/09, br. 04-84/95.

¹³⁸¹ Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05/08/97 and 06/08/97.

¹³⁸² Interview Omer Subasic, 19/10/97 and 20/10/97. Subasic did not know the date of the agreement.

¹³⁸³ Interview Dzermaludin Becirevic and Sefket Hafizovic, 21/10/97.

According to Ramiz Becirovic, Karremans had also promised not to disarm the ABiH as long as they stayed away from the OPs, and as long as they kept their arms out of the view of the Bosnian Serbs. Otherwise the UN was required to report or confiscate the weapons.¹³⁸⁴ It was also a known fact in Tuzla that Karremans had permitted the ABiH to carry arms. Sector North East approved that for purposes of self-defence, and mentioned it during a discussion with the 2nd Corps of the ABiH.¹³⁸⁵

It is unlikely that the agreement would have been announced within Dutchbat. Hasan Nuhanovic was not a witness to orders issued and the agreement was never recorded in writing; however, in his view, based on the behaviour of the Dutch sub commanders it had been announced within Dutchbat. According to Nuhanovic it was possible partially to deduce that an agreement had been reached based on the fact that Dutchbat went to the ABiH trenches and never disarmed local units of the ABiH. Nuhanovic noticed this at OP-D and even reported an argument between the UNMOs about the question as to whether to compile a report to that effect.¹³⁸⁶ Dutchbat interpreter, Vahid Hodzic, claims to have heard Dutch soldiers say to ABiH soldiers at OP-S that they would jointly defend the OP.

Such an agreement between ABiH and Dutchbat could cast a different light on the attitude of the ABiH soldiers – it would explain why the ABiH treated Dutchbat rudely and threatened them with violence when they withdrew from the OPs. In that light, the ABiH would have interpreted Dutchbat's departure as a violation of existing agreements.

If agreements did exist in any form, it most probably concerned local initiatives at the OPs. Based on the available debriefing statements and the Factual Account of the debriefing, it appears that only those directly involved in the discussions with the ABiH would have been aware of any agreements. There were no reports of any meetings.¹³⁸⁷

Retrospectively, in the view of UNMO interpreter Emir Suljagic, only the Dutchbat leaders could have known about the agreement, and not the private soldiers. This later led to a number of clashes with armed ABiH soldiers who were not officially allowed to carry arms, much less openly display them. This created a confusing situation both for Dutchbat and the local population.¹³⁸⁸

In contrast to the Dutchbat units, it would appear that the ABiH soldiers were aware of the agreements. According to a member of the ABiH soldiers and in the view of many along the borders of the enclave, Dutchbat frequently had better contact with the VRS than with the ABiH, but that changed, partly due to the loss of OP-E, when Dutchbat proposed cooperation with the ABiH.¹³⁸⁹

There were however no indications of any coordination based on the former agreement between Dutchbat and ABiH or any initiative to that end by either party at the time of the VRS offensive on the enclave. According to Karremans the ABiH had promised to move into the positions between the Dutchbat units and to join their flanks; however, that only occurred in the night of 10 to 11 July when he announced the air strikes.¹³⁹⁰ This utterance of Karremans' refers to various perceptions. The ABiH took the Dutchbat promises made on 29 May, seriously. According to Nuhanovic it appeared that Dutchbat did not consider the agreements with the ABiH valid once the threats at the end of May and the beginning of June subsided, and did not renew them at the time of the sudden attack on 6 July. He stated further that the situation had changed meanwhile and, while at the end of May and the beginning of June the OPs were threatened by small VRS and Arkan Tiger units, the attack on 6 July was conducted with heavy weaponry and larger infantry units.

¹³⁸⁴ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

¹³⁸⁵ Interview Nadia Skokic, 04/02/98. The principal contacts in the 2nd Corps during those meetings were Sead Delic (Corps Commander), Mehmed Zilic (Chief Security), Sulejman Budokovic (Chief of Staff) and Andjelko Makar (Deputy Commander).

¹³⁸⁶ Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05/08/97 and 06/08/97.

¹³⁸⁷ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (42); SMG/Debrief. Factual account of the debriefing, section 3.2.5.

¹³⁸⁸ Interview Emir Suljagic, 23/11/97.

¹³⁸⁹ Interview Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98.

¹³⁹⁰ Karremans, *Srebrenica, Who cares?* p. 190.

The former agreement did however contribute to the confusion in July amongst the ABiH units. According to Nuhanovic the ABiH was therefore extremely vexed when, in the course of the battle, Dutchbat did not hold to its promise of defending the Ops for 72 hours.¹³⁹¹ According to ABiH soldier Damir Skaler, the ABiH was disappointed by the fact that Dutchbat gave up the OPs along with their arms and uniforms, and that action contributed to their loss of morale.¹³⁹²

Whatever the truth may be, it is clear that after 29 May there were no further agreements with respect to coordinated defence efforts at critical points. This resulted in clashes during the attack on the enclave. Ramiz Becirovic felt that, from a military point of view, his troops needed the positions where the OPs were located, as they held high positions in tactically important terrain and oversaw potential routes of advances on the enclave. Becirovic felt that if his soldiers had occupied those positions, the defence would have taken a course for the better. Moreover, the gradual break-up of the enclave due to the surrender of the OPs by Dutchbat in the days thereafter had a negative impact on the ABiH's morale. This was exacerbated by the fact that, according to Becirovic, Karremans had stated that Dutchbat would put up a defence in the case of an attack. He had promised not to retreat. After the surrender of the OPs, Becirovic claims to have protested to Karremans, but no longer expected Dutchbat to fight, as it 'simply lacked the motivation of its own troops'.¹³⁹³ The actual state of the morale amongst the ABiH remains questionable.

According to UNMO interpreter Emir Suljagic the 'deal' between Karremans and Becirovic, which entailed that the ABiH would defend the flanks of the Ops, transpired in retrospect to have been a mistake. In his view it resulted in a deterioration of the relations between Dutchbat and the local population. The timing of the agreement was a mistake too, as it could only have made sense had it been made earlier. That would have given them time to work on the relationship, which was, in any event, hampered by a range of problems including theft and black-market trading. Dutchbat apparently also became increasingly irate due to supply problems and the postponement of leave.¹³⁹⁴

There was therefore clearly no collaboration between Dutchbat and the ABiH during the fall of the enclave; only mutual resentment. As Ramiz Becirovic put it later, the ABiH initially succeeded in defending themselves while, in his view, Dutchbat did little more than observe.¹³⁹⁵ Dutchbat later testified that the ABiH impeded its operations and stood in the way of the battalion.

6. Combat action and Close Air Support from day to day: 7 July

The morning of 7 July started in Srebrenica with a 'low level of activity'. The action between the VRS and the ABiH appeared to be diminishing, in relation to the previous day. The continuous rain on that day limited the warring factions to a few mutual exchanges. At higher levels this did not inspire anyone to intensify the alarm signals. Moreover, on the same day Sarajevo was subject to heavy shelling, which substantially reduced the interest in Srebrenica.¹³⁹⁶

Looking back to the day before, Karremans wrote in a letter to the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo that the situation was becoming critical now that new volleys of grenades and missiles were hitting the enclave from all directions. Karremans was not clear as to the targets of the missiles. Although the shelling was impressive, it yielded very limited military results. In Karremans' view the aim of the shelling was to intimidate the local population as well as the UN. Most of the shells landed north of Mount Gradac located halfway between Srebrenica and Potocari. Five mortars hit the

¹³⁹¹ Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05/08/97 and 06/08/97.

¹³⁹² Interview Damir Skaler, 31/01/98.

¹³⁹³ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

¹³⁹⁴ Interview Emir Suljagic, 23/11/97.

¹³⁹⁵ AHIB Tuzla. 2nd Corps, no number. Supplementary statement by Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on previous statement of 11/08/95.

¹³⁹⁶ Interview Samantha Powers, 08/06/00.

town of Srebrenica resulting in four casualties. According to another Dutchbat report there were four dead and thirteen casualties.¹³⁹⁷

OP-M and OP-N, the northernmost Ops, were also targets of the attack but were not hit. The VRS also gave a demonstration of its fire power with a 12-tube Multiple Launch Rocket System (in military terms: an M-63) that fired over and next to the compound in Potocari.

Karremans' view of the situation was that the VRS' agenda was to exacerbate the situation in the enclave. He assumed that the Drina Corps had been ordered to reinforce their positions and to boost their credibility by way of some military successes. Weapons systems and troops were needed elsewhere to be able to act with more flexibility against the ABiH by neutralising or eliminating their forces. In that respect Karremans had not been far off the mark. His reports did express some fear that the VRS could also be targeting the UN. Karremans therefore finally asked for support by any means 'on the ground and in the air' 'on behalf of the population of the enclave'. On that day, however, there were no specific requests for Close Air Support.¹³⁹⁸

The Military Information Cell of Sector North East learnt that the mayor of Srebrenica had said that he did not think that the VRS would want to occupy the entire enclave, but intended to dominate the area by targeting the strategically positioned higher ground. In view of the fact that the Drina Corps already had some fifty kilometres to patrol around Srebrenica alone, with an additional several hundred kilometres around the other enclaves, this seemed to be a plausible explanation. The Drina Corps was also responsible for scattered centres, such as Zvornik, Vlasenica, Han Pijesak, Bratunac and Visegrad.¹³⁹⁹

On the afternoon of 7 July, a meeting was convened between Dutchbat, the UNMOs and Opstina president Osman Suljic. He stated his dissatisfaction with the reporting of UNPROFOR. He had heard via Radio Free Europe that both the VRS and the ABiH were using artillery, tanks and mortars. The world should have known that Srebrenica had been designated a Safe Area and that all heavy weapons were to have been confined to the Weapon Collection Point. Suljic wanted to know who had reported this. UNMOs and Dutchbat revealed what information had been sent out of the enclave. Suljic's statement that the ABiH had not reacted to the VRS attacks and would not do so in future was notable in that context. The UNMOs did not treat that issue in any further detail in their reports.¹⁴⁰⁰

The War Presidency expected the UN to provide protection. While the ABiH was mobilised, the Presidency felt that actually going into battle would only serve to exacerbate the situation.¹⁴⁰¹ It was thought that if they were to take matters into their own hands, the UN would no longer be prepared to take any action. This appears to be a politically tainted statement as the ABiH most certainly did react to the VRS attack, and several skirmishes took place between the ABiH and the VRS. The local population did indeed expect a great deal from the UN. Too much, in fact, because, according to Omer Subasic (one of the Dutchbat interpreters), it was hard to explain to the locals that the weapons in Dutchbat's possession were only intended for their own self-defence. Everyone believed that Dutchbat would defend them. Some people appeared to be aware of Dutchbat's limitations, but believed help would come from the outside. That belief was kept alive for quite some time. The local population initially even thought that the VRS attack was simply one of many and that the Bosnian Serbs would eventually withdraw again.¹⁴⁰²

¹³⁹⁷ SMG, 1001. Dutchbat Daily Milinfosum 061700B to 071700B Jul 95.

¹³⁹⁸ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Letter Commanding Officer 1(NL)UN Infbn to Commander Bosnia-Herzegovina Command thru Commander Sector North East, 07/07/95, No. TK95112.

¹³⁹⁹ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNMO HQ SNE Tuzla, 'Assessment Situation in Srebrenica Enclave', 07/07/95, No. MIO.ASS.SREB001 and 'BSA Forces in SNE as at 07/07/95', MIO ORBAT.BSA.001. Secret and Confidential. Compiled by P.H.D. Wright.

¹⁴⁰⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 421, UNMO HQ Zagreb. UNMO HQ Daily Sitrep, 080100B Jul 95.

¹⁴⁰¹ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

¹⁴⁰² Interview Omer Subasic, 19/10/97 and 20/10/97.

Also, on 7 July, the Defence Crisis Management Centre started briefing accredited military attachés in The Hague. The attachés of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France received daily briefings on the situation. In addition to verbal briefings, they were also issued with unofficial and unsigned hand-outs. In most instances those hand-outs were English translations of the confidential Situation Report compiled daily by the Defence Crisis Management Centre, which was also sent to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and General Affairs. The same information was sent to the *aide de camp* of General John Shalikashvili, the chairman of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Joulwan, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, also kept General Shalikashvili up to date regarding developments in Srebrenica.¹⁴⁰³ All of these contacts were the outcome of the conferences of the Chiefs of Defence held in December 1994 and May 1995, and the good mutual relations between the British, French and American Chiefs of Staff, respectively Inge, Lanxade, and Shalikashvili, and their Dutch colleague Van den Breemen.¹⁴⁰⁴

7. Combat Action and Close Air Support from Day to Day: 8 July

On 8 July the fighting in the enclave intensified once again. In the night of 7 to 8 July the observation posts counted a total of 275 artillery and mortar explosions. Around midnight two shells fired by the Bosnian Serb artillery positioned north of OP-P shook the compound in Potocari. Later in the day, when low-lying mist that normally hung above the enclave in the early morning hours and almost completely inhibited fighting, had risen, the battle recommenced in earnest. At that time the VRS shelling also recommenced. In the course of the morning the UNMOs counted 31 hits near Potocari and 34 in the town of Srebrenica. The ABiH spotted a trailer with a tank, which indicated that the VRS was bringing in reinforcements.¹⁴⁰⁵

The ABiH assumed that the VRS was bringing in new units to various spots around the enclave. The ABiH spotted units of Drina Wolves (well-trained and equipped Bosnian Serb combat units that could form the vanguard during an attack), as well as regular combat units brought in from Serbia. This could however not be verified independently and the 2nd Corps also could not provide further proof to that effect. It is possible that auxiliary troops could have been deployed from Tara (a Serbian region opposite Drina). Hotels were vacated to make room for auxiliary troops that travelled to Srebrenica during the day only to return at night via the bridge at Bajina Basta. The same units may also have been involved in the mass murders that were committed later.¹⁴⁰⁶

The ABiH had to withdraw from a number of positions under heavy artillery fire. The 2nd Corps of the ABiH reported to the General Staff that no action had been observed on the part of Dutchbat. That report also mentioned a new request to Dutchbat to retrieve weapons from the Weapon Collection Point; however, Dutchbat again refused to oblige. Dutchbat did however state that NATO would intervene if necessary. Karremans also proposed that the ABiH initiate a dialogue with the VRS to stop the offensive; however, according to the report, the ABiH Commander in the enclave, Ramiz Becirovic, rejected that proposal.¹⁴⁰⁷

The Attack on OP-F and the Death of Raviv van Renssen

The centre of the battle on 8 July was still located in the south-eastern corner of the enclave at OP-F. By midday, VRS tanks were firing at ABiH positions approximately two-hundred metres from OP-F.

¹⁴⁰³ DV, V54/95/Defstaf. CDS memo to the Minister, 05/09/95, No. S/95/061/3473; interview General John Shalikashvili, 07/06/00. See also Faxes DCBC, 2333, 2425, 2427, 2428 and 2429. Shalikashvili entered the data in his diary.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Interview C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

¹⁴⁰⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 434, UNMO HQ SNE Srebrenica. UNMO HQ BH SNE to UNMO HQ BH Comd, 081430B Jul 95; interview Hazrudin Kistic, 17/05/99 and 18/05/99.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Confidential interview (5).

¹⁴⁰⁷ ABiH Tuzla. Komanda 2. Korpusa aan GSS ARBiH KM Kakanj, 09/07/95, Str. Pov. Br. 02/1-03.

That resulted in a heavy exchange of fire between the ABiH and the VRS; not only at OP-F, but also at the nearby posts of OP-U and OP-S.

Shortly prior to the start of the actual attack on OP-F, the OP sergeant in command, Sergeant Van Rossum, discussed an evacuation plan with the personnel of the OP. A sketch had been drawn of the route that was to be used as a retreat by the APC in the case of an emergency.

The exchange between the ABiH and VRS started soon thereafter in the vicinity of the OP. Various explosions a few hundred metres from OP-F terrorised the crew of that OP. The OP Commander, Sergeant van Rossum, then reported to the Battalion Command (Franken) that he wished to evacuate the OP; however, the OP was under fire and they were faced with the problem of safely reaching the APC. They did not receive permission to evacuate the OP. Franken would not agree to the advice of the Company Commander, Captain Groen, to allow the OP crew to withdraw towards the location of the VRS soldiers. A witness to that conversation heard Franken say on the radio; 'You know how I feel about that. I do not want to discuss it any further.' The unit was informed that they were not permitted to evacuate the OP 'under any circumstances'. Consequently, the Company Commander, Captain Groen, also refused permission to withdraw in the direction of the VRS lines. The battalion staff did however send another message to the OP crew, namely; 'Try to give the Serbs hell'; which attested to a general lack of understanding of the situation. The final decision was to remain in the OPs and to allow the VRS to advance.

A VRS tank subsequently broke through the ABiH lines and approached to within a hundred metres of the OP. The VRS additionally opened fire with an M-46 130mm Field Gun at ABiH positions nearby. UNMOs then determined that the VRS was making preparations to attack the OP. Two tanks were used to blow a hole in the defence wall of the OP to allow VRS soldiers to force their way inside, and a VRS tank, positioned a hundred metres away, kept its barrel aimed at the OP and the withdrawal route. One of the crew wrote the following about the situation: 'At that point everyone panicked. There was no way we could escape'. To top it all, Franken, at some point instructed Groen to the effect that OP-F should fire a TOW anti-tank missile to eliminate the tank. The Battalion Commander also instructed them to take the AT-4 anti-tank weapons with them in case of demolition of the OP. At that point the VRS soldiers approached the OP from the surrounding bush. Waving white flags, they attempted to establish contact with the OP crew. Initially they would not approach the OP as a result of which it was impossible to establish contact. The VRS then tried to get the OP Commander, Van Rossum, to meet them at a house located a hundred metres in front of the OP, but Van Rossum refused. After that two VRS soldiers approached the OP and, after an exchange of gestures, more followed. The soldiers were in a festive mood, for the simple reason that they intended to take over OP-F.

The VRS was prepared to let the OP crew go once they had surrendered all weapons and flack jackets. After some negotiation Dutchbat was allowed to keep their flack jackets. The VRS then demanded the crew's departure within ten minutes. The VRS did indeed let them go by APC without further problems. Karremans notified Nicolai in Sarajevo and Brantz in Tuzla that the VRS had taken OP-F.¹⁴⁰⁸ The assault on and occupation of the OP played out in a matter of approximately one hour. This put the VRS inside the borders of the enclave for a second time - this time in control of an OP.

The APC left the OP-F at high speed, but soon slowed down and eventually came to a halt approximately 200 metres further.¹⁴⁰⁹ At the foot of the hill ABiH soldiers were putting together a barricade to stop the APC. This was the second time the ABiH had witnessed a take-over of an OP by the VRS. It meant that, after the occupation of OP-E, more than a month earlier, another piece of the

¹⁴⁰⁸ NIOD, Confidential Coll. (4). Debrief of UNMOs from the Srebrenica enclave, 23/07/95; SMG, 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 08/07/95 14.15 - 14.54; SMG 1004/56. B-Company Diary 08/07/95, 13.13 - 14.55; Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 280-1; Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 162-3; NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. 'sequence of events Close Air Support Missions Srebrenica'; Debriefing statements, D.H. Ross, 12/09/95 and 14/09/95; information based on confidential Debriefing statement (40) and (42).

¹⁴⁰⁹ Debriefing statement B.W.J. Wevelkate, 07/09/95.

enclave was under threat of being nibbled away by the Bosnian Serbs. The ABiH wanted to prevent that, which is why they endeavoured to stop Dutchbat from beating the retreat. The crew of the APC feared that the ABiH was planning to use them as a shield against the Bosnian Serbs; which, understandably, motivated them all the more to retreat as soon as possible. Having established that no anti-tank weapons were aimed at the APC and after obtaining permission from the command post (in military terms: the Ops Room) of B Company, the APC broke through the barricade while the occupants under the command of the APC commander took shelter behind the armour plating. Soldier Van Renssen, who was slow in taking cover because of his length, was hit by pellets of a shotgun fired by an ABiH soldier – others, however, mentioned a handgrenade – of which small metal parts entered his skull beneath the rim of helmet.¹⁴¹⁰

Van Renssen collapsed inside the vehicle. A crew member wrote the following passages: ‘Once again everyone panicked and everyone tried to help him – he had a large wound behind his left ear. The emergency bandage we applied was almost immediately saturated with blood.’ A hastily summoned armoured casualty evacuation vehicle raced Van Renssen to the sickbay at the compound in Potocari: In spite of heart-massage and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation by two medics, while a third applied a drip and administered atropine, Van Renssen died.¹⁴¹¹ His remains were sent to the Netherlands and arrived there the following day. The negotiations to move his body from the enclave, and the medical treatment Van Renssen received at the compound in Potocari, are covered in more detail in the Appendix, ‘Dutchbat and the local population: medical issues.’

Van Renssen was the 67th victim to be mourned by UNPROFOR. Karremans wrote the following in his book: ‘Once again time stood still. Victim to a war that is not our own.’¹⁴¹² In those words Karremans also expressed the consequences of Van Renssen’s death for the battalion; morale, which had not been high for various reasons, now fell to new lows. Dutchbat increasingly fell victim to a gnawing sense of doubt in the value of their continued presence. They were hostages in the enclave and there was no visible end to their sojourn. Worse still, in the days to come things would only take a more dramatic turn.

A Closer Look at the Assault on OP-F and the Death of Raviv van Renssen

The events surrounding OP-F led to action in a number of places in the UN hierarchy. In Tuzla, Brantz wrote to the Commander of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, General Sead Delic, that if the ABiH were going to treat UNPROFOR as an enemy, as had happened at OP-F, this simply illustrated the kind of problems facing UNPROFOR. Brantz also asked for an investigation into the ABiH soldier responsible for Van Renssen’s death.¹⁴¹³ That was followed by a meeting with the 2nd Corps. It was only at that point that Brantz learnt that the real reason for the pullback from OP-F had been a deliberate attack by the VRS. After that meeting, the ABiH in Tuzla sent an order to the 28th Division to do everything in their power to get the body of the late Van Renssen out according to the wishes of the Dutchbat commander,¹⁴¹⁴ even though that was really an issue for the VRS.

After Brantz’ request to the ABiH for an investigation, the 2nd Corps ordered the Commander of the 28th Division, Ramiz Becirovic, to investigate the circumstances of the wounding of Van Renssen and to issue a written report.¹⁴¹⁵ The Commander of the 282nd Brigade of the ABiH, Major Ibro Dudic, thereupon declared that he had conducted an interview with the ABiH soldiers in the

¹⁴¹⁰ SMG, 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 08/07/95, 14.40; Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 280-1; Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 162-3.

¹⁴¹¹ SMG/Debrief. ‘Military Analysis of the action taken by Dutchbat during the Srebrenica crisis; Assen, 28/09/95, Compiled by LCol A. de Munnik, see: OP-F REUS 9215; Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam*, p. 281.

¹⁴¹² Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 164.

¹⁴¹³ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Memorandum for Commander ABiH 2nd Corps, 08/07/95.

¹⁴¹⁴ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. Komanda 2. Korpusa aan Komandi 28. Divizija, 09/07/95, Str. pov. br. 02/1-709/1.

¹⁴¹⁵ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. Komanda 2. Korpusa aan Komandi 28. Divizije, 09/07/95, Str. pov. br. 02/1-09/205.

direct vicinity of the APC. According to them, Van Renssen had not been wounded by the ABiH, but by a grenade launched at the APC by the VRS.¹⁴¹⁶ A witness of the attack on Van Renssen, VRS Colonel Vukota Vukovic, attributed responsibility for the events to an ABiH rifleman.¹⁴¹⁷ Inhabitants of the enclave also ultimately assigned blame to a Bosnian Muslim rifleman, one Alija hailing from Glogova.¹⁴¹⁸

Karremans in his book wrote the following about the death of Van Renssen: 'The reproaches only came later. If only the crew of OP-F had pulled out earlier, then this would never have happened. If only the OP-F APC had taken the outside route to Bratunac, then Raviv van Renssen would still have been alive today. Perhaps I should have withdrawn from all observation posts prior to 6 July.'¹⁴¹⁹ Karremans is thereby referring to the plans and orders outlined in Chapter 5 to withdraw from all OPs in May and June.

From Zagreb, General Janvier also reported to New York about the events. He reported that the ABiH had been familiar with the local situation, as APCs frequently had to pass that ABiH roadblock en route to OP-F. In that instance the APC was clearly recognisable as a UN vehicle: White with a large blue flag flying on it. The APC was visible to the ABiH at a distance of a hundred to two-hundred metres and was travelling slowly; however, according to the latter report it had failed to stop. The APC's .50 machine gun was pointing up at a 30-degree angle and was clearly not aimed at the ABiH. Moreover, at the time of the incident there were no fire fights between the VRS and ABiH in the proximity of the APC, the ABiH was not under threat, and the VRS had not confiscated any vehicles from Dutchbat.¹⁴²⁰ About the death of Van Renssen, Janvier wrote to the Commander of the ABiH, Rasim Delic, that he had been deeply shocked and that there was no doubt whatsoever that one of his soldiers had been responsible. In the event of a repetition of those events, Janvier promised to 'react in an appropriate manner and with all possible means available to me'.¹⁴²¹

The death of Van Renssen also led to a telephone conversation between Nicolai in Sarajevo and the liaison officer of the ABiH. Nicolai announced letters of protest to the headquarters of the ABiH and the Bosnian Government. He also pointed out that there were two more OPs in the proximity of the abandoned OP-F (OP-S and OP-U) that were surrounded by the VRS. Nicolai's request to the ABiH was to issue immediate instructions to Srebrenica to the effect that under no circumstances was the ABiH to fire at Dutchbat soldiers in the event of further forced evacuations from the remaining OPs.¹⁴²² Nicolai further informed the ABiH Commander, Rasim Delic, that the efforts by the ABiH to keep the OPs in place and the attacks on the peacekeepers had only further complicated an already dangerous and unstable situation. The safety of the peacekeepers was a major issue and the OPs would not be manned again until such time as the UNPROFOR headquarters considered it safe.¹⁴²³

General Gobilliard, serving as Deputy Commander of UNPROFOR, wrote that there was no justification for attacks on UN personnel. UN soldiers were non-combatants and the incident demonstrated conscious contempt of UNPROFOR. Gobilliard demanded an immediate investigation and action against those responsible for such an 'ill disciplined act'.¹⁴²⁴

¹⁴¹⁶ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 28 Divizije aan Komanda 2. Korpusa, 09/07/95, Str. pov. br. 01-168.

¹⁴¹⁷ Interview Milenko Zivanovic, 17/09/01. Zivanovic stated the place of the accident as Kozlja, one hundred metres from the monument of the Partisan Hero, Bjelakovic.

¹⁴¹⁸ Interview Mira and Miroslav Budisa, 19/06/00. The man purportedly had a criminal record from before the war for the murder of a Montenegrin man and his wife in Srebrenica.

¹⁴¹⁹ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 164.

¹⁴²⁰ DCBC, 717: Fax AMA COS UNPF-HQ to DCBC, 121715 Jul 95, with Code Cable Janvier (signed Ashton) to Annan for Van Kappen, 11/07/95, No. Z-1132.

¹⁴²¹ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Letter Janvier to Rasim Delic, 10/07/95.

¹⁴²² SMG, 1004. HQ UNPROFOR, Telephone Conversation General Nicolai - BiH LO, 08/07/95, 0830 hrs.

¹⁴²³ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Letter Brigadier General Nicolai Chief of Staff UNPROFOR to General Delic, 09/07/95.

¹⁴²⁴ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Letter Major General Gobilliard Acting Commander UNPROFOR to General Delic, 09/07/95, ref 8120.

UNPROFOR, on the other hand received objections from both the warring factions. Gobilliard sent a letter of protest to the VRS for the attack on OP-F and the use of tanks and artillery to that end. In reaction to that, the Commander of the Drina Corps, Zivanovic, sent a letter full of counter accusations to generals Krstic and Tolimir on the advance VRS command post in Pribicevac. Zivanovic stated that the General Staff of the VRS had replied to the objection to the effect that the ABiH were in possession of six UN armoured vehicles (Chapter 4 presents an explanation that the vehicles reportedly had been bought from the Ukraine battalion in □ epa – it was however an established fact that those armoured vehicles were no longer in the enclave at the time of the fall), and that the UN had authorised the ABiH to undertake offensive actions from Srebrenica in order to create a link between Srebrenica and Zepa. To avoid any surprises, UNPROFOR would have to prevent that from happening. Zivanovic also asked UNPROFOR to urge the ABiH to withdraw to within the borders of the demilitarised zone and to disarm its troops. The General Staff further asked UNPROFOR not to extend its OPs outside of the Safe Area. The General Staff of the VRS also issued a command not to fire on UNPROFOR.¹⁴²⁵

The Bosnian Muslims also submitted protests to UNPROFOR. In fact, the Commander of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla, Sead Delic, submitted an objection to Sector North East about the withdrawal from the OP even before the VRS actually occupied OP-F. Although Delic wrote that the withdrawal was occurring ‘under intense mortar and tank fire’, he demanded that UNPROFOR fulfil its duties instead of withdrawing in a cowardly manner. He further demanded that the Close Air Support procedure be initiated immediately. Failing fulfilment of its duties to protect the local population, UNPROFOR’s extended presence would be regarded as ‘unnecessary and harmful’.¹⁴²⁶ Sector North East did not commit itself and kept its options open.

Moreover, in a letter to the General Staff of the ABiH, the Commander of the ABiH, Rasim Delic, wrote that no effort must be spared to prevent UNPROFOR from executing further cowardly withdrawals and that it should be held to fulfil its mandate and protect the local population. UNPROFOR was bound to fulfil its agreements and moral obligations. Air strikes had to be launched immediately to stop the VRS offensive on the demilitarised zone. He also requested the deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force. Rasim Delic added that failure on the part of UNPROFOR and the troops under the command of Sector North East to implement the necessary defensive measures would render their extended presence unnecessary and even harmful.¹⁴²⁷

In Srebrenica on the afternoon of 8 July two meetings were convened with the local ABiH Commander, Ramiz Becirovic. In one of the meetings, the UNMOs were informed of the positions occupied by the VRS around the enclave while at the second meeting Major Boering confronted Becirovic with the death of Van Renssen. Becirovic offered his apologies, but explained that the ABiH had acted as it had because they did not have the means to fight the VRS and depended on Dutchbat for protection. Becirovic nevertheless, and in the same breath, labelled the UN reaction to the critical situation as ‘shameful indeed’, and accused Dutchbat of having done nothing to deter the VRS offensive. He explained that the withdrawal of Dutchbat from the OPs left the ABiH vulnerable to a VRS advance, as the ABiH were relying on Dutchbat to protect the enclave. According to Becirovic, the ABiH wanted Dutchbat to lead the defence.

During the discussion the question was raised as to whether Dutchbat should have used anti-tank weapons against the VRS. Boering claimed that Dutchbat did not do so, as firing at the VRS would have harmed the position of the ABiH. Becirovic did not agree with that view. The following day Dutchbat returned to that issue by saying that the anti-tank weapons at OP-F had been rendered unusable in the shelling of the OP. In that meeting the Dutchbat representatives suggested that the

¹⁴²⁵ ICTY (IT-98-33), D 78/a. Komando Drinskog Korpusa, general-major Milenko Zivanovic aan IKM DK Pribicevac, general-major Krstic Radislava, GSV Republika Srpska general-majora Zdravka Tolimira, 08/07/95, br. 04/156-5.

¹⁴²⁶ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. HQ 2 Corps to HQ Sector North East, 08/07/95, 14.30 hrs.

¹⁴²⁷ NIOD, Coll. CD-ROM's. Komando 2. Korpusa aan Komandi GSS AR BiH, 08/07/95, Str. pov. br. 02-1-700/3.

ABiH and VRS should hold mutual consultations. Becirovic said that, although he wanted to, he had no faith in that option. Moreover, he would need the permission of his superiors to do so.

Dutchbat further enquired as to the purpose of the VRS attack. Becirovic merely replied by saying that some way had to be found to avoid a bloodbath. Dutchbat subsequently reproached the ABiH for impeding thorough execution of their job and complained about the blockades set up by the ABiH at the OPs (as in the case of OP-F), as well as at the compound in Srebrenica. Dutchbat also complained about the ABiH firing at OP-H, but Becirovic denied the latter accusation. He stated that he had neither given a command for shelling nor for a blockade of the compound – he suggested that it must have been civilians seeking protection at the compound. Dutchbat nevertheless threatened with appropriate action in the case of future blockades. At the compound in Srebrenica, it turned out that the issue concerned thirty soldiers and civilians who had been building a bridge over the little river passing behind the compound to provide easier access to the compound. According to the compound Commander, Groen, those activities in no way threatened the compound.¹⁴²⁸

The Second Request for Close Air Support

Due to the fact that fighting was becoming more intensive in the vicinity of OP-F, as well as in the northern sections of the enclave, and the town of Srebrenica had come under increased shelling, Karremans decided on 8 July, at around 13.00 hours, to put in a second request for Close Air Support after the initial request of 6 July.¹⁴²⁹ By that time the VRS had not yet fired at OP-F.

The request reached Nicolai in Sarajevo, although it remains unclear how. Clearly Karremans bypassed Tuzla with his request – Brantz, of Sector North East in Tuzla, only heard about it during a discussion at the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, which had, in turn, heard from the 28th Division that the Dutchbat commander had submitted a request. Brantz had however not received an application and consequently had no choice but to confirm the application to his contacts. Brantz stated after the fact that he should have been informed about the request. He also did not know why the request had been denied. Brantz thought the call for Close Air Support had been denied, once again, due to failure to observe the correct procedures; moreover, the request had not been accompanied by a target list.¹⁴³⁰ That was however not the case - Sarajevo did indeed take it seriously.

Upon receiving Karremans request, Nicolai called for a briefing regarding the possibility of Close Air Support. Once it became apparent that the problems around Srebrenica were continuing, NATO made aircraft available for Close Air Support if necessary. The flight plans for Operation *Deny Flight* of 8-10 July showed that, during the day, between 05.00 and 19.00 hours, several aircraft had been available for Close Air Support. During the night however availability was limited to a few American aircraft.¹⁴³¹

NATO itself offered Sarajevo air presence (aircraft flying over the affected area without a specific mission). Nicolai accepted that offer and asked for an air presence for a period of fifteen to twenty minutes. It must be kept in mind that no procedures existed for air presence - NATO could decide autonomously to fly over Bosnia and could also be asked to do so. The procedures outlined for a Blue Sword Request did not apply to air presence.

Nicolai meanwhile also asked UNPROFOR's operations section (in military terms: the G-3) and the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo (which formed the connection between Sarajevo and NATO) to do the necessary paper work for a Blue Sword Request for Close Air Support.

¹⁴²⁸ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. UNMO HQ Sector BH-NE to UNMO HQ BH Comd, 09/07/95, No. 7123. The report is dated 082059B Jul 95; SMG, 1004/41. Dutchbat to CO-28 BiH Div, 09/07/95.

¹⁴²⁹ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 162.

¹⁴³⁰ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary (version August 1999), p. 114-115, 121-122, 126.

¹⁴³¹ DOKL STAOOPER. Flight Plans Operation Deny Flight 8-10/07/95, no number. Sunrise on 10 July was at 05.14 and sunset at 20.32 hours.

He then assigned a Dutchbat Tactical Air Control Party (with a Forward Air Controller to guide the aircraft to their targets) to the area.¹⁴³²

The Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) of NATO's Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force in Vicenza, which was in close contact with the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo, closely followed the developments in Srebrenica but merely stated: 'no request for anything'. Which was accurate, as no formal request for Close Air Support had reached Zagreb; which is where those decisions were made (see below).

NATO's southern command (in military terms: AFSOUTH) in Naples even offered aircraft for Close Air Support after the occupation of OP-F, but Zagreb failed to accept that offer. It is however dubious that Close Air Support was actually possible at that time, as the weather was considered 'not workable'. The cloud base was low and haze restricted visibility to two kilometres. Two British Jaguars did however arrive in the air space above the enclave at 15.52 hours after the personnel of OP-F had retreated towards Potocari at 15.20 hours. The Jaguars left again at 16.35 hours. In other words, there was an air presence. The aim was to remain in the air space between Tuzla and Sarajevo for some time longer, but Major General Hal Hornburg, director of the CAOC in Vicenza, put an end to that, as bad weather was fast approaching and there were indications that an anti-aircraft battery (type SA-6) was being set up by the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁴³³

Once again, on 8 July, Close Air Support failed to materialise. The explanation Nicolai gave to ABiH Army Commander, General Rasim Delic, was that the necessary criteria had not been fulfilled for Close Air Support. While there had indeed been an air presence, Nicolai claimed that technical problems prevented the identification of specific targets.¹⁴³⁴ The ABiH liaison officer, in a telephone conversation with Nicolai about the death of Van Renssen, was given the same explanation.¹⁴³⁵

Sarajevo had completed the paperwork for a Blue Sword Request and had offered it to Nicolai even before Dutchbat had been forced, at 15.20 hours, to evacuate OP-F. However, as the situation had become calmer, Nicolai decided not to send the application through to the Deputy Commander of UNPROFOR, General Gobilliard. Gobilliard had to approve the application (UNPROFOR Commander Smith was not available – see paragraph 3 above) prior to sending it on to Zagreb.¹⁴³⁶ Karremans viewed this as a refusal by Nicolai to provide him with Close Air Support. Afterwards Karremans stated that he was losing faith in Nicolai's 'sense of reality'. Karremans stated that 'it is disappointing to receive no support at all under those circumstances. I now realise that the interests in the higher echelons are engaged in a completely different realm – namely politics – and could not be bothered by a minor observation post in the Safe Area of Srebrenica.'¹⁴³⁷

Carl Bildt's Negotiations as a Reason for Denial of Close Air Support?

The reason the request for Close Air Support had failed to reach Zagreb after the shelling of OP-F, according to a report in The Hague, was that the negotiations being conducted by Carl Bildt and the combating parties could not be disrupted.¹⁴³⁸ That was however not mentioned in UN and NATO reports. Bildt was trying at the time to negotiate with the Bosnian-Serb regime in Pale for the opening of a corridor to Sarajevo through the Bosnian Serb area. Those negotiations had priority for both humanitarian and political reasons. As long as that could not be established, the Bosnian Government could not be expected to make any compromises in the peace process.¹⁴³⁹

¹⁴³² NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. 'Chronology of Events Close Air Support Missions Srebrenica'.

¹⁴³³ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook 5ATAF, 08/07/95, 14.32Z and 14.38Z.

¹⁴³⁴ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Letter Chief of Staff UNPROFOR, Brigadier General C.H. Nicolai to General Delic, 09/07/95, ref 8120.

¹⁴³⁵ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Telephone Conversation General Nicolai - BiH LO, 08/07/95.

¹⁴³⁶ NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. 'Chronology of Events Close Air Support Missions Srebrenica'.

¹⁴³⁷ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 163.

¹⁴³⁸ DCBC, 2430. Annex to Peace Operations Situation Report No. 136/95 (State of Affairs on 9 July 16.00 hrs).

¹⁴³⁹ ABZ, DDI-DAV/00246. Code Wijnaendts 213, 07/07/95.

During a briefing in Sarajevo, Nicolai stated that he had refused a request by Karremans for Close Air Support based on the fact that Bildt was involved in sensitive negotiations.¹⁴⁴⁰ The same report found its way to The Hague and after the fall Voorhoeve publicly announced this as the reason for the refusal to provide Close Air Support.¹⁴⁴¹ Another official present in Sarajevo at the time, Chief Civil Affairs Officer Philip Corwin later also wrote in his book, *Dubious Mandate*, that UNPROFOR was accountable for political factors related to Bildt's mission, and that policy makers in the capitals were concerned that NATO deployment could restrict the efficacy of his negotiations.¹⁴⁴² According to Lieutenant Colonel De Ruiter, Military Assistant to Nicolai, too, the presence of Bildt was a factor in the refusal to grant Close Air Support; however no orders had been issued to that end. Janvier did however spell out in a letter to General Smith that limited time was available for negotiations and it was essential to resist the temptation to use force, except in instances of self-defence. The hands of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo were more or less tied, and Dutchbat would have had limited insight into the political situation in which the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo found itself.¹⁴⁴³ On the other hand, Karremans could not understand why he had been given no support in what he called a life-threatening situation for the personnel of OP-F. The political developments were no concern of his.¹⁴⁴⁴

Colonel Brantz said that Sector North East had not been informed of the relationship between the peace process and Close Air Support. He claimed, moreover, that at his level it was also not necessary. Brantz only knew that Bildt had been in Bosnia because he had been aware of the latter's presence in the Tuzla region on 3 July. According to Brantz, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo did indeed emphasise the importance of the peace process without advising Tuzla of the consequences thereof. The conclusion Brantz drew afterwards was that the UN considered the peace process and Bildt's efforts to get the negotiations back on track more important than the preservation of control of the enclave. He felt that the same applied in the days thereafter when no applications for Close Air Support were sent through to Zagreb.¹⁴⁴⁵

Brantz put too much emphasis on this. No written sources are available on this issue and the views and/or recollections of the individuals concerned diverge on the subject. General Smith stated that far too much attention had been placed on Bildt's mission.¹⁴⁴⁶ Rumours reached The Hague via informants in the Dutch embassy in Paris, who were in contact with Janvier, to the effect that one of the considerations for refusing Close Air Support had indeed been the negotiations between Bildt and Milosevic (regarding recognition of Bosnia).¹⁴⁴⁷ General Kolsteren, the Chief of Staff of UNPF in Zagreb, denied that the Bildt mission had played a role in the decision-making process concerning Close Air Support.¹⁴⁴⁸ Deputy Force Commander General Ashton acknowledged that there had been a discussion regarding the possible effects of the deployment of air power on negotiations; however only in the general sense in the context of the question of how to get the parties back to the negotiating table.¹⁴⁴⁹ In Zagreb only Colonel De Jonge, in an interview, referred to the negotiation process initiated by Bildt as follows: 'A process such as this one could have been disrupted completely if permission were to have been given for air operations. It would have meant throwing away the last opportunity to get the Bosnian Serbs to the negotiating table.' De Jonge's statements related to the issue of granting

¹⁴⁴⁰ Interview David Harland, 18/05/99, 21/05/99 and 25/05/99. Harland was present at these briefings.

¹⁴⁴¹ Voorhoeve Diary, p. 101; *Algemeen Dagblad*, 12/07/95.

¹⁴⁴² Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*, p. 193.

¹⁴⁴³ Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00 and 30/01/02. No written instructions to that effect were found in the UNPROFOR archives. Colonel De Jonge was not aware that instructions had ever been issued from HQ UNPF. (Interview 30/05/01). Also see SMG, 1004/6. Letter Janvier to Smith, 27/06/95.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 163.

¹⁴⁴⁵ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary, p. 118, 121-122, 126.

¹⁴⁴⁶ NIOD, Coll. Nicolai. Nicolai Diary, 10/07/95.

¹⁴⁴⁷ ABZ, 999.241. Code Wijnaendts 217, 10/07/95.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/09/99.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Interview Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

Close Air Support on 9 July and not on 8 July; whereby he commented that the real reason for the denial of permission was that the lives of the peacekeepers had not been under direct threat.¹⁴⁵⁰

Bildt denied that his negotiations had played a role. He was in fact in favour of air operations.¹⁴⁵¹ Bildt had even said to Akashi that decisions concerning Close Air Support had to be taken without fear of disrupting the political process. He even emphasised that failure to act with sufficient force would also have political consequences. Bildt and Akashi had apparently agreed that an immediate decision should have been taken as soon as Dutchbat called for Close Air Support; however, in Bildt's view, Akashi clearly feared that Close Air Support could have had negative political implications.¹⁴⁵²

Bildt was consistent in his statements on that point. On 11 July Bildt and Akashi again discussed the issue of Close Air Support. On that day they conducted two telephone conversations. During those conversations Bildt said that Close Air Support could negatively impact on the negotiations, but that he realised there were other factors at play, and that he would accept Zagreb's decisions.¹⁴⁵³ Bildt did however express a sceptical view about air strikes to Minister of Foreign Affairs Van Mierlo prior to the VRS offensive. According to Van Mierlo, Bildt said that Janvier had wanted to block them (air strikes). In his view the military were increasingly less inclined to use force.¹⁴⁵⁴

In other words, there is no clear and unambiguous answer to the question as to whether Bildt's mission was responsible for the denial of permission for Close Air Support, and whether it was indeed one of the obstacles in the decision-making process regarding Close Air Support on 8 July. No reactions or repercussions of any further discussions or instructions to that effect could be found in the archives. In the final analysis, it would appear that Zagreb did indeed consider seriously the implications for the mission; otherwise the effect of the deployment of Close Air Support on the mission would never have been a subject of consultation.

OP-U Occupied and the Personnel taken Hostage

After the occupation of OP-F, Dutchbat issued orders to a Quick Reaction Force (a rapid deployment reserve unit at both company and battalion level with APCs at its disposal) consisting of four APCs under the command of First Lieutenant Mustert of B Company to occupy a location behind OP-F and to fill the gap that had been created by the occupation of the post. Halfway to the OP, the ABiH stopped the unit with a grenade attack. The reason for the attack is unclear, but could most probably be attributed to a sense of powerlessness and lack of discipline on the part of the ABiH. The Quick Reaction Force received permission to beat a slow retreat in the direction of Srebrenica and then occupied positions in the two hairpin bends en route to Srebrenica. Captain Groen then asked the battalion staff officer to pass information about the location of the APCs on to the VRS in one way or another.¹⁴⁵⁵

At around 19.00 hours OP-U was occupied. In a tense and anxious situation, a unit of about 20 VRS soldiers that had surrounded the OP, ordered the personnel to surrender their arms. The order was enforced by a number of shots in the air. The OP Commander, Sergeant J.A.J. van Eck, informed his personnel that no clear action scenario had been formulated in the case of a VRS attack on the OP. Having previously experienced the occupation of OP-E, he insisted on action directives in the case of future VRS offensives. He received instructions to fire over the heads of any VRS soldiers crossing the border of the enclave. If that failed to obtain the desired results, they were required to shoot to kill. In

¹⁴⁵⁰ *Trouw*, 28/07/95, Renée Postma and James Kliphuis, 'UN Commander Requests Close Air Support'.

¹⁴⁵¹ Interview David Harland, 18/05/99, 21/05/99 and 25/05/99. Harland discussed it with Bildt.

¹⁴⁵² Bildt, *Peace Journey*, p. 55; interview, 13/12/00.

¹⁴⁵³ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury Diary. SRSG's briefing 12/07/95.

¹⁴⁵⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05244. Code Van Mierlo 81, 04/07/95.

¹⁴⁵⁵ SMG, 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 08/07/95, 18.45; SMG 1004/42. Capsat 61R to 90E, 08/07/95 1.23; Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 165.

view of the force the VRS were capable of unleashing on 8 July, the OP personnel considered such an action suicidal. The B Company Ops Room (Command Post) therefore amended the initial order as follows: ‘The local commander of the post could act at his own discretion.’

The VRS occupied OP-U and ordered the personnel to depart for Srebrenica. After the incident with the ABiH in which Van Renssen had been killed, such an action could elicit forceful resistance on the part of the ABiH. For that reason Van Eck told the VRS that movement to Srebrenica was no longer possible. A short while earlier the ABiH had fired on the VRS at a distance of ten metres from the OP.¹⁴⁵⁶ The only viable alternative was that the OP personnel surrendered as hostages to the Bosnian Serbs.

The VRS gave Van Eck permission to contact the Ops Room. After explaining the situation and the plan to go with the Bosnian Serbs, they were told to wait a while. Meanwhile, in the battalion Ops Room in the compound in Potocari, Sergeant Major L.J.L.M. van Meer, while keeping open the communications with the OP, quickly consulted the Deputy Battalion Commander, Franken, regarding the consequences of the decision. The options were: Safe passage as hostage to the Bosnian Serb territory, or a withdrawal to the north through ABiH lines. The Company Commander, Groen, also recommended that the OP personnel surrender as hostages to the VRS rather than to risk another confrontation with the ABiH.

Recollections concerning the decision-making process that led to the surrender to the Bosnian Serbs diverged from person to person. Van Meer’s account was that the decision had been taken to secure the safety of the personnel, and that he had given those instructions to the OP commander by radio.¹⁴⁵⁷ OP Commander Van Eck said that he had tried again later to establish contact, as the VRS had become nervous and demanded a decision. He then received the following instructions: ‘Whatever you decide to do, we wish you good luck.’ Based on subsequent radio traffic it could be deduced that the VRS commander concerned had said that they might as well push on to Srebrenica, indicating thereby how little resistance the VRS had encountered.

The VRS then transported the OP personnel in the direction of OP-E and, once they had removed some land mines, to an assembly area where they stopped. From there the APC went on to Pribicevac where the group sojourned for an hour and a half, and the Dutchbat soldiers saw the VRS using line communications with field telephones. A major then arrived to escort the APC to Bratunac in a Jeep.¹⁴⁵⁸ Of this Karremans wrote the following: ‘The first six Dutchbat soldiers were now in the hands of the Bosnian Serbs.’¹⁴⁵⁹

An UNPROFOR objection against the VRS advance went no further than the VRS liaison officer. On the night of 8 July there were no generals available at the VRS headquarters to receive messages from UNPROFOR in Sarajevo. General Nicolai pointed out to the liaison officer that, on that same afternoon, VRS General Tolimir had promised him that the VRS would not attack further UN positions, and demanded the withdrawal of the VRS.¹⁴⁶⁰ It was only on the following day that Nicolai and Tolimir were able to establish direct contact. Nicolai then expressed his appreciation to the VRS for having conducted the Dutchbat soldiers to safety along a safe route to Bratunac, but added that he wanted them back in Potocari as soon as possible. Tolimir however played deaf.¹⁴⁶¹

In the early hours of the evening of 8 July a meeting was convened at the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo. Nicolai and members of the staff, including the officers responsible for operations and intelligence (in military terms: the G-3 and G-2), the Director of the Air Operations Coordination Center and the NATO liaison officer, discussed options with respect to Close Air Support for Dutchbat. The aim of the discussion was to establish a ‘pre-approved’ application, whereby

¹⁴⁵⁶ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (28).

¹⁴⁵⁷ Debriefing statement Sergeant-Major L.J.L.M van Meer, 08/09/95.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (35); Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 07/07/95, 18.58.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 165.

¹⁴⁶⁰ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Message forwarded to the BSA HQ by General Nicolai, 08/07/95, 1945 hrs.

¹⁴⁶¹ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Telephone Conversation General Nicolai -General Tolimir, 09/07/95, 12.30 hrs.

the continuation of the VRS offensive to the North was to serve as a 'trigger'. The aim was therefore, in the case of a continued VRS advance, to provide immediate Close Air Support without the need for lengthy consultations. The Air Operations Coordination Center would meanwhile inform NATO about a possible request for Close Air Support. A Dutchbat Forward Air Controller was assigned the task of going to the southern section of the enclave and to remain in an area (the 'box') marked in the draft Blue Sword Request.

At 23.00 hours the officers in charge of operations (in military terms: the G-3) and the Director of the Air Operations Coordination Center briefed General Nicolai on the state of affairs. They advised him to ask Deputy UNPROFOR Commander Gobilliard to sign the request in advance, and to send it to Zagreb. Nicolai however decided only to deploy air presence on the morning of 9 July and not to submit the request to Zagreb before the next morning.¹⁴⁶² On 9 July, Akashi was in Geneva; however, to prevent a loss of time, he had authorised Janvier to grant permission for Close Air Support. Whether this indeed prevented a loss of valuable time is debatable, as Janvier, too, was in Geneva on that day. He was briefed by telephone from Zagreb. Upon his return to Zagreb, Akashi claimed not to have found any calls for Close Air Support.¹⁴⁶³

What was the VRS Objective?

By 8 July, UNPROFOR, too, had not yet realised the real threat to the future of the Srebrenica Safe Area. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo did not think that the VRS were preparing to occupy the enclave. The VRS attack was seen as a 'probing attack' with a limited objective. This notion was supported by the absence of a simultaneous attack on the enclave from the North.¹⁴⁶⁴

In other words, UNPROFOR had little conception as to the reason for the VRS operations. On that evening the Civil Affairs Officer of Sector North East, Ken Biser, called Philip Corwin, Head of Civil Affairs in Sarajevo with the news that the VRS were planning to man OPs E, F and U after occupation in order to be able to use the road south of the enclave. The reason given was that it would shorten the VRS supply routes by sixty kilometres. Apparently the VRS had no interest in occupying the enclave, as they had no idea what they would do with all the local Bosnian Muslims. The VRS were still talking about a reduced Safe Area. Although Biser failed to name his source, the news appeared to have originated from the 2nd Corps of the ABiH. Biser had also been told that the time had come for the ABiH to start using 'serb tactics'; meaning that the ABiH would also have to start confiscating weapons and armoured vehicles from UNPROFOR. This led the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo to fear that this could actually happen.¹⁴⁶⁵

However, there was no mention of this in a discussion between Brantz of Sector North East and the Deputy Commander of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, Brigadier General Makar. Makar did however express the fear that the VRS could also attack Zepa. Makar's reason for this was that the VRS wanted to force the ABiH to give up positions around Sarajevo where the ABiH were currently still executing an offensive. Makar also thought that the VRS would try to marginalise Dutchbat in order to launch an attack on the centre of the enclave. According to Makar, NATO Close Air Support was the only real solution to that problem. He added that, in the event of Dutchbat continuing to withdraw from the OPs, the ABiH would be left with no other option than to take over the defence. Makar claimed to have understood the motive for withdrawing from the OPs and saw the proposed Dutchbat rotation as the reason for this. In his view, the VRS had calculated Dutchbat's reaction; which facilitated the VRS effort to extend their positions.¹⁴⁶⁶

¹⁴⁶² NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. 'Chronology of Events Close Air Support Missions Srebrenica'.

¹⁴⁶³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 26/07/95, No. Z-1263.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*, p. 188.

¹⁴⁶⁵ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Note for the file, [compiled by P. Corwin], 08/07/95, 21.15 hrs.

¹⁴⁶⁶ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Memorandum Meeting Tuzla Air Base 08/07/95, 15.45 hrs.

There were more sources who, on 8 July, did not believe that the VRS would occupy the entire enclave - including Minister Voorhoeve. He based his assessment on the judgement of the UN commanders, who, at that point apparently still assumed that this concerned a limited attack on the southern section of the enclave. In that context, according to Voorhoeve, they saw the deployment of Close Air Support as excessive use of force.¹⁴⁶⁷ A VRS officer present during the occupation of OP-F also stated to Sergeant Van Rossum that this was a limited attack on the southern section of the enclave.¹⁴⁶⁸

Based on the events of 8 July, it is possible to come to the conclusion that the occupation of OP-F and OP-U had established a pattern. The OP personnel and the VRS provided very little mutual trouble, and the terror inspired by the death of Van Renssen made Dutchbat reluctant to return to their own lines. Based on the experience of OP-F, all OP commanders had then been instructed in advance to act at their own discretion with respect to the VRS and ABiH in the case of a forced withdrawal. The safety of own personnel enjoyed the highest priority.¹⁴⁶⁹

Due to the fact that the Dutchbat hostages were partially able to continue to use their radios, and were able to report that they had not been maltreated, it was decided that, over the coming days, it might be advisable for other OP personnel to surrender as hostages – there were ABiH soldiers posted near almost every Dutchbat OP. Due to the fact that the OPs all occupied high, dominant positions in relation to the surrounding terrain, they also provided good positions for the ABiH. On the other hand, this was also a well thought out tactic on the part of the ABiH (not only in Srebrenica) to draw UNPROFOR into the fight by inviting fire on the UN positions through fire on the VRS in the vicinity of the Ops.

After the loss of OP-F and OP-U, Dutchbat had an increasingly limited view of events as they unfolded in the south-eastern section of the enclave. The other southern OPs (OP-S, OP-K and OP-D) appeared to be the next candidates for VRS occupation.

The VRS attacks on the OPs followed the usual pattern. The VRS unit would advance as close as possible to the OP, fire a few grenades in the vicinity of the OP and then repeat that action in closer proximity of the OP before sitting down to wait. In the absence of support for the OP (which was the case in most instances), the VRS would warn the OP personnel to withdraw. Most Dutchbat units soon understood that they were less likely to come to harm with the VRS than with the apparently unpredictable ABiH units. The continued assurance on the part of the Bosnian Serbs to the effect that they did not exploit the vulnerability of the UNPROFOR soldiers appeared consistent with the reality.

VRS tactics were, through the occupation of OPs in high terrain, to obtain an excellent vantage point for further attacks on the enclave and to clean up the areas around the OPs. Thus, the VRS systematically occupied all strategically important terrain in the enclave. The Bosnian Serbs successfully applied the same tactics time and again.¹⁴⁷⁰ According to the ABiH this tactic was a well-considered component of the psychological plan worked out by the VRS to neutralise Dutchbat. Every time the VRS captured more UN personnel, morale amongst the rest of Dutchbat sagged a little lower.¹⁴⁷¹ Growing numbers of Dutch soldiers were systematically finding themselves in Bosnian Serb hands. The treatment they received was good, especially when compared to the humiliation hostages had been subjected to a month earlier (when they were chained to strategically important engineering structures to prevent NATO air attacks).

¹⁴⁶⁷ Voorhoeve Diary, p. 101.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 163.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 163-7.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Interview Hazrudin Kisić, 17/05/99 and 18/05/99.

¹⁴⁷¹ Interview Semsudin Muminovic, 17/05/99.

8. Combat Action and Close Air Support from Day to Day: 9 July

Consultations in Geneva

On 9 July, a discussion was convened in Geneva under the chairmanship of Boutros-Ghali about the deteriorating situation and continued firing at UN personnel. The mood was exceptionally sombre and appeared to suggest the failure of the mission. The option of a complete withdrawal was discussed openly despite the fact that Boutros-Ghali made it clear that he would not initiate such an action. The discussions focused on Bosnia, but against the background of a potentially renewed war. There was a general consensus that Croatia might have decided to use force to retake the land previously occupied by the Krajina Serbs.

The situation in Srebrenica was not discussed during that meeting (with the exception of a point made by Janvier to the effect that it was becoming increasingly hard to continue to man the OPs). Janvier further announced that it would have been advisable for the UNPF to leave the eastern enclaves – in his view there were too many potential hostages.

General Smith, who also attended the meeting, was more pessimistic than Janvier, and stated that he believed that both the Bosnian Muslims and the Bosnian Serbs intended to end the conflict in combat.

Negotiator Stoltenberg was even more pessimistic. He stated that the parties concerned had never been so mutually hostile before, and that no one was prepared to negotiate. The Bosnian Government wanted air power to be deployed, the arms embargo to be lifted, and UNPROFOR to withdraw. They pinned their hopes on the United States as saviour in the case of continued battle. The Bosnian Serbs were not interested in negotiations because they had occupied sufficient territory and had time on their side. Stoltenberg's analysis is notable in its departure from the military vision of Smith, who believed that the VRS were in fact planning a quick end to the war because of the systematic weakening of their forces. Mladic, too, in his discussions with Janvier always insisted on a ceasefire. The role of the time factor was analysed in detail in Chapter 1.

Akashi said that he feared an escalation of the war in Croatia, as fighting in the Krajina would also encourage the struggle in Bosnia. He saw the plan of the Contact Group as an obstacle to peace. There was not that much difference between the strategic targets of Belgrade, Pale and the Bosnian Serb military – they all wanted a political constellation that would, in the long term, ensure the unity of all Serbs. It was considered Bildt's task to attempt to remove the constitutional obstacles.

It was however clear to Bildt that the Bosnian Government was fighting the battle on Capitol Hill. He continued to be told by Premier Silajdzic that his mission was a 'waste of time'. That provoked Bildt to ask the Bosnians to make a decision concerning the presence of UNPROFOR. The Bosnian Muslims were making it increasingly hard for UNPROFOR, and UNPROFOR already had its hands full with the Bosnian Serbs. It was however thought that Izetbegovic and Silajdzic would back off their position when faced with the prospect of an UNPROFOR withdrawal. However that notion appeared only to have presented another means of influencing Capitol Hill. Bildt was given little time, because, if his mission were to have failed, the only remaining option would have been to withdraw and that would have had to be done before the onset of winter.

Smith questioned whether NATO was actually needed for such a pullback, as the organisation could offer little help in the eastern enclaves.

The gravity of the situation was clearly illuminated by the proposal of the High Commissioner for the Refugees Ogata. She proposed to transfer the logistics of the humanitarian operation to the military. In June only twenty percent of the required aid had reached its destination. That was the primary point of discussion at that meeting. The UN generals were not sympathetic to that idea and, according to Boutros-Ghali, due to the fact that the views of the members of the Contact Group diverged too greatly on that matter, it would have been impossible to issue another mandate for UNPROFOR (as in the case of the Ogata proposal). Boutros-Ghali closed the discussion with the

following summary: ‘One would need a mediator for the mediators.’ The conclusion remained exactly the same as before the meeting: ‘muddle on, muddle through’.¹⁴⁷²

More Hostages: OP-S Occupied

Meanwhile, the tension was mounting amongst the personnel of OP-S after the loss of the nearby OP-U the day before. The tension reached a peak when, in the morning, a large unit of ABiH military gathered behind the OP. Initially, a number of ABiH military fired a single shot at the VRS from about one hundred metres in front of the OP, but no fire was returned. Fifteen minutes later the VRS moved in from the surrounding bush and pinned the OP personnel down in their shelter. By that time the ABiH seemed to have disappeared. The OP was captured just as the OP personnel had received the order to send out a patrol to ascertain the current location of the ABiH. Prior to and during the overpowering of the OP, the OP commander Sergeant J.G.A. Bresser said he was given no instructions from B Company. It hurt him to hear by chance on the radio of an APC the next day that Major Franken had said that he didn’t want ‘another OP-S story’: as if the OP personnel had done something completely wrong.¹⁴⁷³

Around 9.00 hours the VRS occupied the OP. Once again the VRS demanded the surrender of all personal weapons and posed Dutchbat the option of departing for Srebrenica or Bratunac. Captain Groen consented to Bratunac. OP Commander, Sergeant J.G.A. Bresser was permitted to continue to use his radio and to signal information through concerning the presence of the VRS in Pribicevac (mortars, anti-aircraft weapons, and a tank and artillery were underway). The VRS now held the six members of personnel of OP-U, as well as the eight from OP-S.

The personnel of OP-S had also checked access to the Swedish Shelter Project occupied by Bosnian Muslim refugees. According to Karremans, it would have been possible to abandon the OP at night or at the break of day, but then access to the Swedish Shelter Project and the Jadar Valley would have been open to the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁴⁷⁴ The fact that the OPs had been taken in the morning had major consequences. In the eyes of the Bosnian Muslims, Dutchbat had given the OPs up too easily; which seriously compromised the confidence in Dutchbat on the part of both the ABiH and the local population.¹⁴⁷⁵ This was manifested in the fact that, after the fall of OP-U, thousands of inhabitants of the Swedish Shelter Project fled to the town of Srebrenica. In fact, that exodus had already started the day after the occupation of OP-F; which was also located in the proximity of the Swedish Shelter Project.

The inhabitants of the project, most of whom originated from Bratunac and Kravica, did not feel a great commitment to Srebrenica, and were not involved in the defence of the enclave. Every day the VRS were visible in the surrounding hills. The ABiH saw the Swedish Shelter Project as a weak point in their defence, as both the ABiH positions and the Dutchbat OPs were located in the hills behind it.

When news surfaced that the ABiH and Dutchbat could offer little resistance to the VRS, the inhabitants lost their nerve, which resulted in a massive run. The scale of the flight of the population

¹⁴⁷² Confidential information (122). Present were: Boutros-Ghali, Akashi, Ogata, Stoltenberg, de Lapresle, Gharekhan, Goulding, Kittani, Annan, Almstrong, Generals Smith and Janvier, Colonels Puga and Moneyt and Bijleveld. Supplemented with diary entries of the parties concerned. The presence of de Lapresle as former Force Commander and former Military Advisor to the Co-Chairman was a controversial decision taken by Boutros-Ghali. Also see NIOD, Coll. Smith. Fax 091649BJul for notes by Smith and Janvier’s draft operations ‘By-Pass’ (‘Pontage’) for supplies for Sarajevo to which all Bosnian issues were secondary. For the Bildt negotiations, see ABZ, DEU/ARA/05244. Code Madrid Coreu 454, 11/07/95 and for the strategic objectives of the Serbs see ABZ, DEU/ARA/05244. Code Engels 78, 11/07/95.

¹⁴⁷³ SMG, Debrief. Military analysis of the action taken by Dutchbat during the Srebrenica crisis, Assen, 28/09/95, compiled by Lt Col A. de Munnik, see OP-S, BOSCD016.I; BRESJ030.I and unknown report.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 169. (SMG, 1004/61) Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 09/07/95, 08.56, 08.58, 09.37, 10.20 and 10.36; Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 294.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Interview Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

prevented both the Opstina and the ABiH from restoring order to the situation. When those people took flight, a massive panic attack hit the town of Srebrenica, with disastrous effect on morale in the ABiH. In the view of the ABiH Commander in Srebrenica, Ramiz Becirovic, the run from the Swedish Shelter Project was the overture to the fall of Srebrenica.¹⁴⁷⁶

One consequence of the loss of OP-S and OP-U was that Dutchbat no longer had an observation post in the south-eastern section of the enclave. For that reason, Company Commander Groen ordered one of the Quick Reaction Force APCs to assess the situation at the Swedish Shelter Project in the early afternoon, and to establish how far the VRS had penetrated there. The APC reported battle noise, and saw ABiH soldiers and inhabitants flee towards the West. The bungalows in the project had been abandoned. After a ten-minute loss of communication, the APC Commander (Sergeant 1st Class J. Bos) checked in again with the news that the APC and its crew of five had been captured by the VRS – the VRS now had five more Dutchbat hostages. The surprise attack occurred at an awkward moment: when the driver was urinating from the open hatch of the APC, the crew found themselves confronted with between 15 and 20 VRS soldiers. They motioned to the crew to step out of the vehicle and hand over their weapons and ammunition. After walking for one hour the crew arrived at a VRS camp behind Mount Jasenova. The APC was driven to the former OP-E under supervision of the VRS soldier. The VRS transported the driver and crew to Bratunac along with the personnel captured at OP-S. Bos was no longer allowed to use the radio.¹⁴⁷⁷ The next, highly predictable VRS target was OP-K. That was scheduled for later in the day.

Karremans' Expectations

In a letter to the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, dated 9 July, Karremans looked back on the events of the previous days. The VRS attacked the ABiH and Dutchbat positions with all means available and deployed artillery, mortars and Multiple Launch Rocket Systems or MLRS systems of types M-63 and M-77. Most of the OPs were targeted with mortars and, in Karremans' view the VRS knew exactly what they were doing and how far they could go. Their operations appeared to have been executed based on a premeditated and well-formulated plan. The situation was tense and due to the shelling of the Swedish Shelter Project, some three to four thousand inhabitants had left their homes for the perceived safety of Srebrenica. Not only had OP-F been hit, but OPs U and S were surrounded by the VRS, and the Dutchbat personnel instructed to surrender. In neither instance was there any way out due to the presence of the ABiH units in depth behind the OPs. At the time both OP units, with weapons, equipment and APCs, were captives of the VRS. Karremans assumed that the Dutchbat personnel would be treated decently, but that they would lose their APC, ammunition and equipment.

Karremans expected that, now that the VRS had opened the southern route past Zeleni Jadar, they would continue further along the Jadar Valley (which ran more or less parallel with the road) in the direction of Mount Kak. The 946-metre high, Mount Kak dominated the terrain along the road, as well as the bauxite mines in the foothills. This gave the VRS full control of the southern section of the enclave. According to Karremans the VRS now had two options: Continued occupation of the southern section, or occupation of the entire enclave. The use of Close Air Support, 'in all possible ways', was, in Karremans' view, 'not feasible yet. It would provoke the VRS in such a way that both Srebrenica itself, and the OPs and compounds would be targeted by all means.' Karremans' main fear in that respect was the Multiple Launch Rocket Systems that were deployed to the north of the enclave at OP-P and in Bratunac. He also feared that artillery and mortars would be fired at predetermined

¹⁴⁷⁶ Interviews Ramiz Becirovic, 02/02/98 and 05/02/98 and 18/04/98 and Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98 and 15/04/98.

¹⁴⁷⁷ SMG/Debrief. Military analysis of the action taken by Dutchbat during the Srebrenica crisis, Assen, 28/09/95, compiled by Lt Col A. de Munnik, see Bos J107.1; *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 221, 294.

targets. In Karremans' view, Close Air Support would only make sense if all those weapon systems could be wiped out at the same time; however, in his view that just did not seem possible at the time.¹⁴⁷⁸

The Morning of 9 July: Time for Close Air Support?

Even though Karremans did not consider the use of Close Air Support desirable yet for fear of VRS reprisals, NATO was ready on 9 July. Dutch F-16s on an air presence mission were in the air over Srebrenica by 08.15 hours, expecting the pre-prepared Blue Sword Request (the draft of which was ready in Zagreb) to be activated once the VRS penetrated further into the Safe Area. At that time there were no VRS tanks in either the Safe Area or the box indicated on the maps on the draft Blue Sword Request.¹⁴⁷⁹

In consultation with the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo, Bosnia –Hercegovina Command had drawn a number of boxes on the map as most probable targets. The boxes were areas in which the advancing VRS vehicles would be channelled and therefore present a rich target opportunity. The boxes on the map measured three kilometres. As the boxes represented no more than a preliminary definition of a possible plan, this did not mean that all of those areas would be attacked. A specific box, the so-called Kill Box, centred around the village of Pusmulici, was determined for the Blue Sword Request. According to the Canadian Lieutenant Colonel Rick Hatton, Chief G3 of Bosnia-Hercegovina Command, information about the boxes had been sent to Sector North East in Tuzla. He had assumed that the information had subsequently been forwarded to Dutchbat.¹⁴⁸⁰ Whether that had indeed happened is not clear.

One of the problems on the morning of 9 July was that visibility around Srebrenica was limited to one kilometre. A further problem was that no Forward Air Controllers had been posted south of Srebrenica. Without a Forward Air Controller it would have been impossible to provide Close Air Support, as the aircraft needed to be guided to their targets. The Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo had asked for a Forward Air Controller to be sent to the area during the night of 8 to 9 July, but that failed to materialise. Sarajevo could not establish why – it could have been due to shelling or because someone in Dutchbat had given orders to stay put in the compound. As a result there was no Forward Air Controller available in the south of the enclave 'in the area of interest'. Contact had however been established with Windmill 01 before the aircraft appeared near Srebrenica at 08.15 hours, and via him with Windmill 02. The authentication procedure between the aircraft and Forward Air Controllers had also been successful.

For some reason or another, after the aircraft appeared above the enclave at 08.15 hours, the Air Operations Coordination Center was informed to the effect that Karremans did not want any aircraft above the enclave. The Forward Air Controller communicated the same to the Dutch F-16s as follows: 'Get the hell out of here, they are holding some of our guys.' This was a reference to the eight Dutchbaters from OP-S that were being held captive in the southern section of the enclave, along with the six from OP-U taken hostage by the Bosnian Serbs the night before. Karremans was under the impression that the aircraft were planning low altitude *attack runs* over the area. Permission for the attack was also outstanding as Akashi had not yet signed the Blue Sword Request. In other words, Karremans had been reluctant to intimidate the Bosnian Serbs with the presence of the aircraft.¹⁴⁸¹ He wanted no air presence out of fear for the safety of the Dutch soldiers held captive by the VRS.¹⁴⁸²

The aircraft left the Srebrenica area on the orders of Major General A.M. Hornburg, Director of the CAOC in Vicenza. Ten minutes later, after due consultation with the Air Operations

¹⁴⁷⁸ NIOD Coll. Karremans. Letter Commanding Officer 1(NL)UN Infbn (Dutchbat3) to Bosnia-Hercegovina Command through Commander Sector North East, 09/07/95, No. TK95113.

¹⁴⁷⁹ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook 5ATAF 09/07/95, 0440Z, 0545Z.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Interview Rick Hatton, 16/11/99.

¹⁴⁸¹ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook 5ATAF 09/07/95, 0440Z, 0545Z, 0610Z, 0620Z.

¹⁴⁸² DCBC 2430. Fax DCBC to staatssecretaris, 091600Z Jul 95, No. 570.

Coordination Center in Sarajevo, Hornburg instructed the aircraft to return to the skies above Srebrenica. There was however still no Forward Air Controller in the south of the enclave. Windmill 02, Sergeant 1st Class R. Voskamp, reported to Sarajevo that he did not have sufficient diesel to take the position indicated by the Air Operation Coordination Center.¹⁴⁸³

In other words, Close Air Support had been available even though no decisions had been taken as yet about actual deployment. Sarajevo did take that into account. The aircraft intended for Close Air Support returned to the tanker above the Adriatic Sea, while the aircraft intended to suppress VRS Air Defence fire remained in the Srebrenica area to provide NATO with rapid reaction capability, as it was expected that Gobilliard would soon sign and send the draft Blue Sword Request to Zagreb.¹⁴⁸⁴

The final request had to be signed by both Gobilliard and Janvier; however, that was not possible due to Janvier's absence (he was with Akashi in Ilidza near Sarajevo). They were therefore flown back to Zagreb in a hurry. However, at 10.15 hours Janvier purportedly stated telephonically that, in his view, the VRS were only testing the waters and would withdraw again soon. At 11.15 hours Nicolai reported to the Air Operations Coordination Center that the request would soon be signed by Gobilliard, only to let them know at 12.15 hours that it was not to be the case.¹⁴⁸⁵

Although Karremans was against it, Sarajevo did initiate the necessary preparations for a request for Close Air Support. Shortly before midday, new information reached Zagreb from Sarajevo - General Nicolai and Lieutenant Colonel Jim Baxter, the British Military Assistant to the absent General Smith, wanted to start the procedure for Close Air Support. To that end, Baxter had asked for an interview by secure phone with Deputy Force Commander General Ashton (Janvier was still absent) or Colonel Dureaux, Janvier's Military Assistant.¹⁴⁸⁶

Gobilliard did not sign the request at that stage; in other words, there was no formal request, only a draft. It is notable that, on that occasion, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo had prepared a request for Close Air Support and had offered a draft version to Zagreb in advance based on the rapidly deteriorating situation in the enclave. Sarajevo took that decision based on the fact that the situation was approaching the predetermined criteria. In other words, the request did not follow the standard procedure based on a request from the battalion commander. Karremans had been informed about the request, but only reacted by saying that he was not happy about it. In his view Close Air Support would have had an escalating effect - as he had advised Sarajevo in his written assessment of the situation.¹⁴⁸⁷

NATO aircraft left the Srebrenica area again around midday. The reason for their departure was not the fact that their presence was considered a threat to the safety of the Dutchbat hostages, as Karremans had claimed, but because they had received reports about unidentified radars and a battery of Surface-to-Air-Missiles southwest of Srebrenica. It later emerged that those positions would have posed no threat, as the batteries were on Serbian terrain some 70 kilometres east of Srebrenica.¹⁴⁸⁸

After this sequence of events the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo did not expect further requests for Close Air Support for 9 July. At 14.00 hours, Nicolai reported to The Hague that no more aircraft would be deployed to avoid disrupting efforts to secure the release of the fifteen Dutch soldiers kept hostage by the VRS.¹⁴⁸⁹

Nicolai did however want to keep his options for Close Air Support open.¹⁴⁹⁰ He had previously been briefed to the effect that once the aircraft returned to their base in Italy it could take hours to

¹⁴⁸³ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF 09/07/95, 0440Z, 0545Z, 0610Z, 0620Z, 0629Z and 0830Z.

¹⁴⁸⁴ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF 09/07/95, 0645Z, 0730Z, 0830Z and 0845Z.

¹⁴⁸⁵ DCBC, Box 59. Overview of Citations Logbook Air Operations Control Center, Annex. A to Klu-replies to Questions by the Chamber on Srebrenica; interview Gary F. Collins, 08/06/00.

¹⁴⁸⁶ NIOD Coll. Ashton. Notes to Diary Ashton, 09/07/95, 11.52 hrs.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Debriefing statement Lieutenant Colonel J.A.C. Ruiter, 27/09/95.

¹⁴⁸⁸ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 09/07/95, 11.28Z.

¹⁴⁸⁹ DCBC, 2430. Annex to Peace Operations Situation Report No. 136/95 (state of affairs at 09/07/95, 16.00 hours).

¹⁴⁹⁰ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook 5ATAF 09/07/95, 04.40Z, 1326Z.

assemble a new group of aircraft. That was however not the case. Close Air Support continued to remain possible even after the aircraft had returned to their bases. NATO always kept aircraft ready for Close Air Support (French and Dutch F-16s, each armed with four dumb Mk82 bombs (unguided once dropped)). The aircraft remained available in the vicinity of a tanker flying over the Adriatic Sea (for aerial refuelling if necessary).¹⁴⁹¹

Close Air Support on the Afternoon of 9 July

After the aircraft had returned to base in the afternoon, the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo continued to question why it had not been possible for Dutchbat to send a Forward Air Controller to the southern section of the enclave that morning. As outlined above, Sarajevo failed to establish this while the aircraft were available above the enclave that morning.

The Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force in Vicenza (5ATAF) then received a report to the effect that Karremans had refused all personnel permission to leave the compound; which explained why Windmill 02 had been unable to relocate.

Sarajevo meanwhile took the necessary steps to ensure the presence of a Forward Air Controller. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command instructed the British Joint Commission Observers attached to Dutchbat (JCOs) to relocate to the south, and to take a Dutchbat Forward Air Controller with them. At around 13.00 hours the JCOs headed south after Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, in consultation with the Air Operations Control Center, had determined that Close Air Support was needed to prevent the occupation of Srebrenica. The JCOs were in their position at Stupine at 13.00 hours. At that time the aircraft had been absent for approximately one hour.¹⁴⁹² Dutchbat did however (for the first time) send a target list to both Tuzla and Sarajevo indicating fifteen artillery and mortar targets.¹⁴⁹³

The battalion command made a provisional decision to leave the JCOs in their position without the Dutchbat Forward Air Controller; however he did arrive a few hours later. At that time most of the fighting was occurring in the east, south of the so-called kill box around Pribicevac. From their position the JCOs noticed an increasing stream of wounded VRS being carried to a casualty collection point where they were picked up by ambulances. The JCOs could not confirm the report that a tank had been deployed on a hilltop north of the kill box from where it commanded a view of the town of Srebrenica.

At around 16.00 hours, a Dutchbat Tactical Air Control Party joined the JCOs. At 17.00 hours the JCOs heard from Sarajevo that no further aircraft were available, and that they were to return to the compound in Potocari to await further instructions. Upon their arrival there they were told by Sarajevo that Dutchbat was to be assigned to so-called blocking positions (see below). They also heard that Dutchbat had not yet received instruction regarding the blocking positions and that it could take some time. The JCOs, meanwhile, were instructed to prepare to accompany the Dutchbat Tactical Air Control Party to the blocking position that would later be known as Bravo 1 (see below).¹⁴⁹⁴

Discussions between Dutchbat and the ABiH and Opstina

On the morning of 9 July, the Dutchbat liaison section and the UNMOs were in a meeting with the Bosnian Muslims, including the local ABiH Commander, Ramiz Becirovic. That meeting was followed by other meetings with the Opstina and *Medicins Sans Frontières* (MSF).

In the meeting with the ABiH, Major Boering complained that Dutchbat had received no guarantee from the ABiH to the effect that the battalion would not be harassed during subsequent

¹⁴⁹¹ DCBC, 2430. Annex to Peace Operations Situation Report No. 136/95 (state of affairs at 09/07/95 16.00 hrs).

¹⁴⁹² DCBC, 2430. Annex to Peace Operations Situation Report No. 136/95 (state of affairs at 09/07/95 16.00 hrs); DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number Logbook 5ATAF 09/07/95, 0645Z, 0730Z, 0830Z and 0845Z.

¹⁴⁹³ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. HQ Dutchbat to Sector North East, BHC, 09/07/95 13.31.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Confidential information (1).

withdrawals. The absence of that guarantee resulted in the capture that morning of the personnel of OP-S by the VRS. Becirovic countered that the understanding between his troops and OP-S had always been good

Boering then attributed the problems to misunderstandings on both sides. He stated that it was essential for Dutchbat to obtain a guarantee from the ABiH to ensure the battalion of the necessary freedom of movement. Failing that, Dutchbat would feel compelled to take the necessary measures - Boering failed to explain what that meant. Becirovic assured him that he had instructed his troops on that issue. If the OP-S situation were to be repeated, it would be due to insubordination in his ranks; in which case he would intervene personally.

Becirovic agreed to keep Dutchbat updated on developments to enable the battalion to anticipate the necessary actions. Boering also accused Becirovic of having asked permission from the 2nd Corps of the ABiH to forcibly raid the Weapon Collection Point. Becirovic argued that the contrary was true. The 2nd Corps had instructed him to claim those weapons along with the Dutchbat weapons, as the Dutch were not prepared to confront the VRS.¹⁴⁹⁵

Becirovic had indeed received such an order, the result of two radio conversations conducted on the afternoon of 8 July with Naser Oric about the situation in Srebrenica. In those conversations Becirovic reported that the 280th Brigade was faced with a large concentration of VRS, and that Dutchbat had withdrawn. Becirovic said that while they were still holding out in the south, there were no guarantees as to the outcome. He also stated that Dutchbat had asked NATO for support but that none had been forthcoming. Oric replied that he had to put his shoulder to the wheel – it was all or nothing – and hoped that help would arrive. Oric insisted that they remain in the trenches and use the anti-tank weapons (type Red Arrow) to prevent the VRS from taking the trenches. Becirovic replied that they had already tried to use the weapons with no success. There was nothing they could do against the VRS artillery; however, the real danger was that if the artillery were to stop its fire, the VRS would send in the infantry. Oric further insisted that they focus on securing Likari (at OP-Q) to prevent the same kind of take-over that happened in the south of the enclave. If UNPROFOR was not offering any resistance against the VRS, then Oric wanted Dutchbat to return the weapons that were in safekeeping and the ABiH should ask Dutchbat to surrender their weapons so that the ABiH could use them to continue the fight. If Dutchbat refused to surrender the weapons, then Oric assumed that the commander of the 2nd Corps would issue an instruction to take the weapons by force.

Two hours later Oric continued the conversation with Becirovic. Meanwhile he had asked and received instructions from the commander of the 2nd Corps, Sead Delic. The ABiH had to make the Dutchbat OPs as secure as possible, but if Dutchbat withdrew, their weapons had to be taken and the OP occupied. The Dutchbat commander could be told to fight the VRS or surrender his arms.

Becirovic countered that he could not disarm Dutchbat. The ABiH could not approach Dutchbat as the battalion was under the same fire as the ABiH. What had happened was that Dutchbat had been attacked directly by the VRS and therefore had to withdraw with the ABiH. Dutchbat had lost a man and blamed the ABiH for his death. Becirovic did reproach Dutchbat for failing to react to the VRS attack, but he also added that he would not know what to do if the VRS pushed on with their offensive. Becirovic stated that a meeting had been planned with the leaders of the Opstina to determine what to do next. Becirovic also added that he did not wish to negotiate with the VRS (as Dutchbat had suggested) without the permission of the higher echelons in the ABiH. Becirovic called the situation dramatic and complex. The ABiH had been under artillery fire for the past three days, incapable of defending themselves against the VRS. The ABiH soldiers were not used to that kind of situation and were mortified.

Oric attempted to encourage Becirovic by telling him not to panic and to take it easy. Oric advised him to summon all brigade commanders and to order them to occupy as many positions as possible in the lines. If Dutchbat decided to withdraw, the battalion had to be disarmed immediately

¹⁴⁹⁵ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Capsat TA to TX, 091103B Jul 95.

and the weapons used against the VRS. Second Corps Commander, Delic, had told Oric that Dutchbat would probably not be willing to surrender their arms. In that case Dutchbat was to be given the option of being surrounded by the ABiH to force them to endure the same VRS attack as the ABiH, or surrendering the arms. In addition, Oric insisted that they execute counter attacks on lost lines. The ABiH in the enclave had to seek ways of getting behind the VRS and attacking them from the back – that was the only way the ABiH would survive.¹⁴⁹⁶

According to Ramiz Becirovic, Dutchbat did indeed offer, later, to return the weapons in the Weapon Collection Point. Becirovic also referred to the discussion of that issue with Dutchbat on 6 July whereby it had already been agreed that the weapons would be given back in the case of the VRS crossing the enclave borders. Opstina and the ABiH had however agreed after due consultation to reject that offer. They saw that as a pretext for Dutchbat not to react in the case of a VRS attack. It was in any event too late for that and, moreover, Becirovic feared that it would provoke the Bosnian Serbs to hit back with even greater force.¹⁴⁹⁷ The War Presidency of the Opstina also did not want to assume responsibility for such an action and, like Becirovic, feared the consequences of a confrontation with Dutchbat. However, more than that, they feared that it would provide Dutchbat with the pretext to do nothing at all. No one dared to make the decision.

In any event, most of the weapons were more or less useless.¹⁴⁹⁸ They were old, had not been maintained for two years, and there was hardly any ammunition available.¹⁴⁹⁹ Later, the weapons which were kept in the compound in Srebrenica were damaged by a shelling.¹⁵⁰⁰

The second Dutchbat meeting was with the War President, Osman Suljic. He started by offering the condolences of the entire nation for the death of Van Renssen. In this meeting Dutchbat pointed out that the ABiH had contributed to the loss of two OPs, namely, OP-U and OP-S. Suljic's problem was that three thousand people from the Swedish Shelter Project and a thousand from the surrounding villages had sought refuge in the city. One thousand people could be accommodated in a primary school, and the Civil Defence unit of the Opstina provided blankets for them. More water needed to be taken to the school and the MSF was asked to set up an *Ambulanta*. It was expected that most of the difficulties would arise around the children. The MSF however reported that it had already exceeded its capabilities and could no longer cope with the accelerating demand for care.

The notes of Sergeant Major Rave and MSF diverged from the UNMO report with respect to the capacity to continue to provide medical care. Rave wrote that the MSF could still cope for two to three weeks and that space was still available in the hospital. MSF coordinator Christina Schmitz claimed to have offered supplies to prepare the school for accommodation, and had also offered to visit the school where the refugees from the Swedish Shelter Project were accommodated with the Dutchbat liaison team. That visit had been prevented by continued shelling on the enclave.

Suljic also proposed during the discussion that Dutchbat should protect the hospital. MSF however dismissed that proposal as it would only have attracted military activity. The hospital had to remain a neutral zone, so the protection of the ABiH was therefore also not needed. The Opstina then suggested that enormous panic and chaos would ensue if the VRS were to occupy the city. In that case, Suljic hoped that Dutchbat would make its facilities available, as there was nowhere else for the

¹⁴⁹⁶ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjecaceni koverat*, p. 250-3.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

¹⁴⁹⁸ ABiH Tuzla. 2nd Corps, no number. Supplementary statement of Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on a previous statement of 11/08/95.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98. UNMO interpreter Hasan Nuhanovic gave an alternative explanation: Via Liaison Officer Boering, the Dutch had insisted upon the removal of the weapons from the Weapon Collection Point. That led to the cynical notion amongst the Muslims that once the ABiH had taken up arms, there would no longer be a Safe Area and Dutchbat could leave! Dutchbat was *desperate* to leave the enclave. This notion was reinforced, according to Nuhanovic, by the fact that, since June, rumours had abounded to the effect that helicopters would come to evacuate Dutchbat from the enclave. (Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05/08/97 and 06/08/97)

¹⁵⁰⁰ ABiH Tuzla. 24 Divizije, 14/07/95, broj. 06-1225/95.

population to turn to. He appealed to the UN to prevent such a disaster. He himself would try to warn the Bosnian authorities to that effect.

The UNMOs added to their report on that meeting that they expected the VRS to encounter significant resistance from the ABiH if they were to attempt further occupation of the enclave. In the view of the UNMOs the reason why the north of the enclave was being subjected to artillery fire was to prevent the ABiH from sending reinforcements to the south.¹⁵⁰¹

Suljic did indeed raise the alarm with the Bosnian authorities in the form of a letter to President Izetbegovic and ABiH Commander Rasim Delic. In his letter Suljic sketched the situation at 19.00 hours on 9 July. The command structure in the enclave had begun to collapse and the 28th Division was no longer capable of stopping the VRS from entering the city. Chaos and panic prevailed and the civilian authorities were faced with the problem of saving the population. Suljic proposed a meeting between the Bosnian political and military leaders and those of the Republika Srpska to establish whether it would be possible to open a corridor to allow the population to travel to the territory of the Muslim-Croat Federation under international supervision. Suljic insisted on an answer within 24 hours. Izetbegovic did not react.¹⁵⁰²

The VRS Pushes On

On the morning of 9 July, Ramiz Becirovic reported to the 2nd Corps in Tuzla that the VRS were pursuing its offensive with full force. The VRS executed infantry assaults on the ABiH lines on the eastern side of the enclave from Zalazje to Pribicevac, as well as on the southern side of the enclave, from Podravanje (the area with the bauxite mines) to an area known as Kutuzero where Mount Kak was located. The entire Safe Area was under constant fire of a variety of calibres of artillery and, at that point, more than a thousand shells had struck the enclave. The precision of the artillery fire led to the assumption that highly trained officers of the JNA were involved. Several concentrations of armoured vehicles and Air Defence systems had been spotted and four tanks were underway between Zeleni Jadar and the town of Srebrenica.

Based on the fury of the VRS fire and the force of the infantry assaults, Becirovic stated that the VRS on that day had launched its most forceful offensive. After a previous breakthrough in the territory of the 282nd Brigade, the VRS had also broken through in the territory of the 283rd Brigade (see map 'Battle Progress 6 – 12 July 1995' section 5). The 282nd Brigade stood directly in the way of the main VRS advance from the south with the result that that section of the ABiH was completely shattered. Becirovic claimed to be doing his utmost to restore the stability of that unit. He planned to send reinforcements to prevent the continued advance of the VRS. At the time of the report the VRS had advanced to within two kilometres of the city. The remaining brigades were under heavy artillery fire.

The humanitarian situation in the city was a catastrophe. The food and drink supplies for both the population and the soldiers had been depleted and, as of the following day, 10 July, it would no longer be possible to send supplies to the ABiH lines. With respect to Dutchbat, Becirovic speculated that the battalion must have panicked, as there was no sign that it had planned to implement measures to restrain the VRS from occupying the city. Becirovic asked the 2nd Corps in Tuzla 'to plead' to the authorised government institutions and international community to do whatever they could to endeavour to stop the catastrophe in Srebrenica. He also asked a concrete contribution from the 2nd Corps.¹⁵⁰³

¹⁵⁰¹ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Capsat TA to TX, 091103B Jul 95, with supplements interview E.A. Rave, 24/01/01; NIOD, Coll. MSF, Brussels. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period 6.7 - 22/7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz, 24/07/95.

¹⁵⁰² ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP, p. 00882884. President of the Presidency Osman Suljic to President of the Presidency of the RBU Alija Izetbegovic, Commander of the ABiH, General Rasim Delic, 09/07/95; interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

¹⁵⁰³ NIOD Coll. CD-ROM's. ABiH Komanda 28 Divizije to Komanda 2. KorpUSA, 09/07/95, Str. pov. br. 01-167.

The General Staff of the ABiH reacted by issuing orders to obstruct the VRS advance by all means available. The 28th Division was instructed to closely observe Dutchbat's conduct. Whenever an OP was abandoned it had to be secured immediately to prevent the VRS from occupying it. Based on those orders, it was clear that the ABiH had gauged the situation as a difficult and complex one. The 24th Division that was based in the area surrounding Kladanj was instructed to initiate immediate action towards Srebrenica in support of the 28th Division. Although the order had been drafted on the morning of 9 July, it took until the afternoon for the ABiH Commander, Rasim Delic, to approve and dispatch it.

During the night of 9 to 10 July, the Corps Commander of the 2nd Corps, Sead Delic, instructed the 21st and 25th Divisions to join the 24th Division on 10 July with two companies of 'hardened fighters' to initiate active military actions as quickly as possible to distract the VRS and to obstruct their advance to the town of Srebrenica. Delic warned the units concerned to take that order as seriously as possible while keeping in mind the historical significance of Srebrenica.¹⁵⁰⁴ The actions of those units are unknown. They were far away from Srebrenica and it was almost certain that, whatever effort they put in at that stage, it was simply too little, too late.

Colonel Brantz in Tuzla discussed the situation in Srebrenica with the Chief of Staff of the 2nd Corps, Sulejman Budakovic and compared data. There were few notable differences. Budakovic thought that the VRS were two to three kilometres from the city, while Brantz estimated three to four kilometres (Becirovic estimated two kilometres). Brantz obtained information concerning the order given to the other ABiH divisions, namely, to endeavour to reduce the pressure on Srebrenica. According to the report of the meeting, Brantz provided some information about the Close Air Support procedure and, as an example of NATO capabilities, said that three aircraft could destroy seventy targets. He also added that Karremans had issued clear orders to stop the VRS advance and to fire on the VRS. Brantz also reported that the ABiH and the commander of the Dutchbat units were effectively synchronising their activities.¹⁵⁰⁵ The 2nd Corps sent the report of this meeting to President Izetbegovic and the General Staff of the ABiH.

Brantz thereby gave rather an optimistic turn to the general course of affairs. The orders were not as clear as they are represented here, as will be demonstrated in the paragraphs on the blocking positions below, and there was hardly any (if any) coordination between Dutchbat and the ABiH.

Occupation of OP-K and OP-D

After the VRS had occupied OP-U and OP-S, the personnel of OP-K feared that theirs was the next to be taken. This was due to the fact that they had been able to listen in to the radio traffic, and were familiar with what had happened at OP-F, and the fact that there were tanks, howitzers and mortars involved. They had also learnt about Van Renssen's death via Radio Netherlands, and flew the OP flag at half mast. The news prompted a local Muslim to say that Van Renssen's death had been his own fault – something which did not contribute to a sense of good mutual trust and goodwill. There were some efforts though on the part of the ABiH to establish rapprochement with Dutchbat. An ABiH officer later visited the OP to strike up a conversation.

After the fall of OP-F, Groen notified the personnel that, in the case of a VRS attack, should the opportunity present itself, they should abandon the OP and return to the compound. The battalion wanted to pull the southern lines further north and closer to the city. The shelling was however advancing steadily and skirmishes could be observed between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs. OP-K was also visited by an ABiH commander, who queried via an interpreter what the crew planned to do in the case of a VRS attack. OP Commander Sergeant Ceelen replied that he did not know what

¹⁵⁰⁴ NIOD Coll. CD-ROM's. ABiH Generalsstab to Komandi 2. Korpusa, Komandi 28. DKov, 09/07/95, Str.pov.broj. 1/825-1010. Also see Sefko Hodzic, *Otprecaveni koverat*, p. 255-7.

¹⁵⁰⁵ NIOD Coll. CD-ROM's. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa to Predsjedništvo RBiH n/r A. Izetbegovica, KM Kakanj n/r k-danta ARBiH, OU brig.gen M. Hajrulahovic, 09/07/95, Str.pov.broj. 02/1-03/45.

he would do. The ABiH commander's reaction was that the ABiH would then be compelled to take the preventative action of seizing their weapons and vehicles. That did not happen. The ABiH commander also stated that, were the OP personnel to withdraw, they could expect to be hit by an anti-tank grenade. The OP personnel began to believe that they would get shot at irrespective of the direction they fled in. Abandoning the OP did not present a very positive perspective; which is why they had not done so earlier.

After those events at OP-F, Ceelen decided to go with the VRS and not to risk an attack by the ABiH. The personnel felt positively threatened once they had noticed that the ABiH had indeed set up an anti-tank weapon on the route to the compound. The ABiH wanted to confiscate Dutchbats' weapons and 'blue equipment' to fight the VRS from the OP.

The crew was too scared to leave the OP. The option of making their way back to the compound on foot unarmed was no more attractive due to fact that the route led straight through the lines of fire of the warring factions. The initial intention of Captain Groen, the Commander of B Company, was to allow OP-D to retreat and, safety considerations permitting, to take up a blocking position at the village of Lipovac with a Dragon anti-tank weapon. However, upon re-examining the situation he decided the order was too dangerous and withdrew it. Instead he advised them to await further events in the relative safety of the APC. The instructions were aimed at avoiding casualties, or worse, amongst his troops. The crew therefore took cover in the APC with their personal effects, weapons and food.

It was clear that the Bosnian Serbs would come sooner or later – it was only a matter of time. The personnel felt positively relieved when, around 18.30 hours, after five mortar grenades had exploded at approximately one hundred metres from the OP, the first VRS soldiers approached the OP. The first unit to arrive in front of the OP consisted of twenty men, followed by another contingent behind the OP fifteen minutes later. After that more arrived. The personnel felt as if they had been liberated. The VRS commander and an interpreter were then granted entry to the OP, after which discussions were conducted in a friendly atmosphere. The commander said that nothing would happen to them and that they need not be afraid. The VRS presented them with a choice – to return to the compound via the ABiH lines or via the VRS lines.

After due consultation with B Company, they received permission to leave the OP with the VRS. Soon after the arrival of the VRS, the OP was surrounded by more than a hundred VRS soldiers. Everything appeared to be very well organised. The VRS conducted themselves in a becoming fashion and asked if they could take the food. The VRS also wanted Ceelen to hook the water trailer to the APC, but he refused to do so even after being given a direct order to that effect. The VRS reminded Ceelen that he had forgotten to lower the flag. The VRS then lowered the flag and presented it to Ceelen. The ten members of the OP-K personnel then got into the APC. Two VRS soldiers followed to accompany them. During the departure the APC drew automatic fire from the direction of Mount Alibegovic. It was hit and the VRS soldiers took cover. Presumably the shots had been fired by the ABiH. Somewhere further down the road the vehicle was stopped and all personal arms confiscated from the OP personnel.¹⁵⁰⁶

The personnel of OP-D had also listened in to the fate that had befallen their colleagues at the other southern OPs. They too had heard about the death of Van Renssen via Radio Netherlands. The OP-D personnel had spotted tanks, witnessed regular VRS artillery fire at the ABiH, and noticed how shelling had increased on 8 July. A group of six to ten ABiH soldiers were constantly visible at a distance of approximately 20 metres of the OP. The OP personnel had packed their belongings in preparation of a possible evacuation, a fact that did not escape the notice of the alcohol swilling ABiH.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (27); Debriefing statements B.W.J. Wevelkate, 07/09/95, W.A. Ceelen, 08/09/95, A.J. De Roo, 11/09/95 and E.R. de Vries, 11/09/95, Y.J. Schellens, 20/09/95. Interview W.A. Ceelen, 02/07/99. Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 294.

On 9 July however there were no ABiH soldiers visible in the vicinity of the OP. By the end of the afternoon the VRS were firing artillery and mortar shells from the mining area towards Bucje, Mount Kak and the intermediate valley of Kutuzero. Presumably those areas were still occupied by the ABiH soldiers; which would hamper efforts to withdraw from OP-D, as the escape route passed through that terrain. The Bosnian Serbs could be heard clearly in the foreground. During radio contact with Company Commander Groen, they were instructed to stay put and to withdraw to the compound in Srebrenica if they could do so without risk of personal safety.

Fifteen minutes later OP commander Sergeant 1st Class, N. Zuurman, decided to pull out. After travelling for a distance of approximately five hundred metres, they ran into a roadblock manned by a group of fifteen ABiH soldiers armed with an anti-tank gun and machine guns. Zuurman talked to the ABiH in German via an interpreter. The Bosnian Muslims wanted the Dutch soldiers to assist them in the fight against the VRS and attempted to confiscate their weapons and the APC. Zuurman however managed to persuade them that they could not join them in battle against the VRS and that the Dutchbats had not been authorised to surrender their arms or vehicle. The APC was then prevented from continuing or turning back. In the course of the evening the group of ABiH soldiers grew to about sixty strong. This led to a tense situation in the APC.

Groen was informed by radio of the actions of the ABiH. After consultation with Groen, the personnel of OP-D attempted to establish contact with OP-K, which had meanwhile been taken over by the VRS. The idea was to attempt to draw the VRS to the APC. Unfortunately they failed to establish contact. The evacuation of OP-D thus yielded the remarkable situation in which Dutchbat was attempting to call in the assistance of the VRS to reach a safety. It was only by the following morning, after Groen had negotiated with Ramiz Becirovic, that the APC was permitted to continue. Soon after that the APC got stuck in a narrow section of road, and had to turn back to an intersection manned by a number of ABiH soldiers. Thanks to a helpful interpreter and a farmer, the Dutchbats were shown an alternative route to the compound in Srebrenica.

The interpreter accompanied them in the APC through a section of VRS controlled terrain back into Muslim territory.¹⁵⁰⁷ OP-D was the fifth OP which had to be forcibly abandoned by Dutchbat. Meanwhile the number of Dutchbats held captive by the VRS had grown to thirty – twenty in Bratunac and ten in Milici. VRS General Tolimir assured General Janvier that they were not viewed as POWs – they had asked for assistance and were free; however, the VRS had not granted them the freedom to return to the enclave.¹⁵⁰⁸

While the personnel of OP-D thus used the VRS to seek safety, the VRS used Dutchbat to take over OP-D. The VRS commander in Milici sent captive Sergeant Ceelen of OP-K, and his deputy, Corporal De Vries (under duress) to accompany a VRS commander and an interpreter to the front in a small truck (type TAM 110) to persuade the personnel of OP-D to abandon the OP. Standing behind a bunker, Ceelen had to attempt to establish contact in English with OP-D using a loudhailer. The Dutch received instructions from the VRS to leave the OP via the Bijelo Polje - Palez route. OP Commander, Sergeant Zuurman however refused to leave the enclave due to the presence of mines on the road. Once the VRS commander had seen to the removal of the mines, Zuurman reported that he was being held captive by the Bosnian Muslims. Meanwhile the OP-D personnel had already left the OP. When the VRS commander learnt from Ceelen that OP-D had been evacuated, the VRS used a VRS tank (type T-54) firing grenades to destroy the OP.¹⁵⁰⁹

The VRS did not always adopt such a 'protective' attitude towards Dutchbat. UN vehicles continuously drew artillery fire while entering and leaving the compound. UNMOs were therefore

¹⁵⁰⁷ Debriefing statement Soldier 1st Class B.N. Pents, 07/09/95 and information based on confidential debriefing statement (39); SMG 1004/61. Monthly Register Dutchbat OPs Room, 10/07/95, 09.99.

¹⁵⁰⁸ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 10/07/95, No. Z-1127.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Debriefing statement Soldier 1st Class R. Jagt, 08/09/95; interview Sergeant W.A. Ceelen, 02/07/99.

instructed by the battalion staff never to arrange meetings with the ABiH or Opstina using Motorolas (walkie-talkies), as the VRS were always listening in. They were advised to do so via satellite phone.¹⁵¹⁰

Meanwhile the situation in the enclave remained extremely restless during the course of the afternoon. On that afternoon the UNMOs counted more than 78 explosions in the centre of the city alone in little over an hour. Later on, the VRS turned their fire towards ABiH positions at the eastern side of the enclave.¹⁵¹¹

Another Attempt at Close Air Support?

Even before the occupation of OP-K, Zagreb Chief of Staff Kolsteren bombarded the local liaison cell of the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force (5ATAF) in Vicenza with questions concerning the availability of aircraft and the time needed to get them in the air.¹⁵¹² By the evening of 9 July, Vicenza had assumed that by dawn on 10 July (by which time Dutchbat would have occupied the blocking positions (see below)), a so-called pre-approved Blue Sword Request would be activated immediately Dutchbat was attacked. A pre-approved Blue Sword Request entailed that the request had already been pre-approved by Gobilliard, Janvier and Akashi in the event of an attack on a UN unit.

On that evening, four tanks and several hundred VRS infantrymen were involved in the attack even though, at that time, only one tank and a hundred soldiers were actually inside the Safe Area. In addition, there was some concern about the presence of an anti-aircraft gun (type ZSU 23/2, maximum firing range 5,000 metres at 7,500 feet) that had been spotted some distance from the specified kill box near Pribicevac. A further point of concern was the fact that the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo had not been able to establish contact with the Dutchbat Forward Air Controller, Windmill 02. The spokesman for the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo, Squadron Leader Rick Phillips, considered it unlikely, although not impossible, that further requests for Close Air Support or air strikes would come in that evening.¹⁵¹³

That turned out to be a miscalculation. Deputy UNPROFOR Commander Gobilliard signed the Blue Sword Request at around 17.00 hours. It had been compiled by the Director of the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo, Rick Phillips. At 17.16 hours this formal request for Close Air Support was faxed to Zagreb. This too was not based on a request by Karremans. Gobilliard specified the event justifying the deployment of Close Air Support as 'an incursion into the Safe Area Srebrenica and a threat to UNPROFOR peace-keepers'. To the question as to whether the warring factions had threatened to take casualties, he entered 'Yes'. To the question concerning previous casualties, he referred to the death of a UN soldier.

Sarajevo did not specify precise targets in that request, but did specify all Dutchbat positions and the presence of refugees from the Swedish Shelter Project. However, according to the request, the threat to the refugees would be minimal. A Forward Air Controller, or, in the absence of one, an Airborne Forward Air Controller on board an aircraft (a possibility in the case of an emergency) would be able to identify the targets.¹⁵¹⁴

Zagreb held on to the request. Shortly after 18.00 hours UNPF headquarters sent a situation report to New York and Geneva, which described the situation as 'having quietened down for the moment'. The intention of the Dutchbat commander in that situation was 'to hold the ground'.¹⁵¹⁵

¹⁵¹⁰ SMG 1004. Capsat LO team to UNMO's Srebrenica, 09/07/95, 00.4?. SMG 1004.

¹⁵¹¹ SMG 1004. Capsat TX to TA, 091517B and 091648B Jul 95.

¹⁵¹² DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook 5ATAF 09/07/95, 1550Z-1605Z.

¹⁵¹³ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook 5ATAF 09/07/95, 1610Z, 1744Z and 1810Z.

¹⁵¹⁴ NIOD Coll. Kolsteren. UN Release Authority Request, 09/07/95; NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary (version August 1999), p. 137.

¹⁵¹⁵ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SRE Vol. I, 1 Jul - 16 Nov 95. Fax UNPF-HQ Zagreb G3 Land Ops to Annan UNNY, Stoltenberg Geneva ICFY, UNNY Sitroom, 091822B Jul 95.

Close Air Support was available on the evening of 9 July. As of 18.00 hours a member of aircraft, in military terms: a package, stood ready on the ground. At 18.50 hours there was even the possibility of aircraft taking off. A Combat Air Patrol that was already airborne was instructed to remain in the vicinity of the tanker in the case of an emergency.

At 19.45, confusion arose at AFSOUTH (the southern NATO command) in Naples regarding the question as to whether a request for Close Air Support had indeed been approved. A liaison officer in Zagreb had informed the Deputy Director of the Combined Arms Coordination Center (CAOC) in Vicenza to the effect that the Blue Sword Request had been signed. Verification of the news in Zagreb however revealed that the approval procedure had at that point only just been initiated.

At 19.23 hours, the liaison cell of the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force in Zagreb had already reported to the CAOC in Vicenza that Janvier had returned to the headquarters and was being briefed. Duty NATO liaison officer Pete Lightbody however reported that Akashi was reluctant to authorise a *carte blanche* for Close Air Support. He wanted to wait until the following day.

At 20.14 hours Zagreb confirmed to the CAOC in Vicenza that a Blue Sword Request had been initiated, but that it had not been approved by Akashi.¹⁵¹⁶

At 21.15 hours Zagreb reported to Naples that Janvier had been authorised by Akashi to deploy Close Air Support.¹⁵¹⁷ It was therefore not true that Akashi had wanted to wait until the following day to make a decision - Akashi had authorised Janvier to make the decision. Although that might have been the case, the request that arrived in Zagreb that evening was not presented to Akashi or Janvier for reasons unknown.¹⁵¹⁸ As a result no decision was taken on the evening of 9 July concerning Close Air Support.

The fact that the UN had failed to authorise Close Air Support on 9 July created a shock wave in the Dutch Press; especially as the newspapers reported that the decision had been based on political rather than military-technical considerations. According to newspaper reports the reason was that, after four weeks' negotiation, the Bosnian Serbs had finally promised to allow convoys to reach to Sarajevo, which could not be jeopardised by an air strike. The primary concern was for the safety of the Dutch peacekeepers – concern for the lives of the local population only followed later. The death of Van Rensen had obviously contributed greatly to that situation. The newspaper headlines reflected the mood in the Netherlands: 'Blue helmets are pawns in the game.', 'Only one more week for the soldiers.', 'Desperation in UN peace call.', 'Dutchbat in a corner: UN blue helmets helpless against Bosnian-Serb offensive.', 'Hunted by one, shot down by the other.', 'Government and Parliament shocked by soldier's death.'¹⁵¹⁹

A survey conducted by *RTL News* (a Dutch TV channel) on 10 July showed that the majority of the Dutch population wanted the Dutch out of Srebrenica.¹⁵²⁰ *Het Parool* (an Amsterdam based newspaper) could see no further role for Dutchbat in Bosnia. The refusal to deploy Close Air Support deprived Dutchbat of the last potentially effective means of control of the local situation. According to the newspaper Dutchbat now had no further business in Bosnia, because 'one does assign a traffic officer the task of controlling a riot'. TV presenter Maartje van Weegen asked Minister Voorhoeve to explain how long he thought it would be necessary for Dutch soldiers to fight and die for Srebrenica. A main editorial in *Het Parool* stated that Close Air Support was the only remaining means of removing Dutchbat from Srebrenica. Those comments stood in sharp contrast to the type of news reports that followed the fall of Srebrenica.

Although the UN did threaten to deploy Close Air Support on 9 July, *De Volkskrant* (another Dutch daily) considered it unlikely that it would be used as long as the Dutch were being held by the

¹⁵¹⁶ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook 5ATAF 09/07/95, 1823Z, 1900Z.

¹⁵¹⁷ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 09/07/95; DCBC, 2430. Annex to Peace Operations Situation Report No. 136/95 (state of affairs on 9 July 16.00 hours).

¹⁵¹⁸ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2, SRSG Meeting, May-Oct 95. Senior Staff Meeting, 10/07/95.

¹⁵¹⁹ See also *de Telegraaf* (3x), *Trouw*, *de Volkskrant*, *NRC Handelsblad*, all of 10/07/95.

¹⁵²⁰ *RTL News*, 11/07/95, Late News.

Bosnian Serbs. Member of the Second Chamber, Hoekema (D66), asked for an emergency meeting to gauge the feelings of the ministers regarding the safety of Dutchbat and to determine what measures could be taken to enhance their safety. Hoekema was concerned about this, and felt that agreements that had been made with regard to the use of Close Air Support for their protection should be observed. Hoekema was also more concerned about Dutchbat at the time than about the local population. Minister Voorhoeve explained on Dutch TV that Close Air Support had been requested twice on 9 July but that the Dutchbat commander had refused it once – for the time being. Voorhoeve considered the use of Close Air Support unavoidable; however, the safety of the Dutch soldiers enjoyed priority. The order issued to the commanders was to avoid bloodshed; ‘I want every man and woman to come home safely.’ All those statements must be viewed in the context of the death of Van Renssen a few days earlier.¹⁵²¹

The Bosnian Government was also concerned about developments on 9 July. They dedicated a special parliamentary session to the situation in Srebrenica. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sacirbey, tried as early as 05.30 hours to set up a meeting with Boutros-Ghali in Geneva. The UN delegation also consulted the Bosnian Permanent Representative in Geneva concerning the panic in the Bosnian Government due to the Srebrenica offensive.¹⁵²²

Premier Haris Silajdzic accused the Western powers of having green-lighted the Bosnian-Serb attack on the enclave.¹⁵²³ In the case of the continuation of the attacks on the Safe Area and the continued failure on the part of the UN and NATO to implement meaningful counter measures, Silajdzic planned to take a number of measures, including re-evaluation of the purpose of the UN presence in Bosnia, a call on volunteers ‘to defend Bosnia-Herzegovina from fascism’ (using Spain as an example) and asking friendly nations to send troops and arms. If the situation persisted, Silajdzic planned to release all the names of those persons that aided and abetted the Bosnian Serbs in their genocide mission. Silajdzic called on General Smith to return to his position.¹⁵²⁴

President Izetbegovic also called on Clinton, Chirac, Major and Kohl to use their influence to hold the UN to its obligations and to prevent the genocide of the citizens of Srebrenica. Izetbegovic also pointed out in his letter that, even after Srebrenica had been declared a Safe Area and had been demilitarised, it had been subject to continuous shelling. The cover letter to the British Minister of Foreign Affairs from Downing Street stated ‘no reply needed’.¹⁵²⁵

Izetbegovic also telephonically notified the Iranian leader, Hashemi Rafsanjani and the Turkish President, Suleyman Demirel, of the situation. All Bosnian diplomatic and consular missions were instructed to urgently disseminate news about the Bosnian-Serb crimes against Srebrenica. Izetbegovic also called an emergency session of the Security Council.¹⁵²⁶ In a letter to the Security Council, the Bosnian representative pointed out that the VRS offensive could only be aimed at the population and UNPROFOR, as the ABiH had been disarmed in May 1993. In his view, in exchange for the disarmament, the UN and NATO had assumed responsibility for the defence of Srebrenica¹⁵²⁷ - a political assumption that did not fully coincide with the military reality.

¹⁵²¹ Bart Rijs, ‘VN weigeren Nederlandse soldaten luchtsteun’ [UN Refuses Close Air Support for Dutch Soldiers], *de Volkskrant*, 10/07/95; Frans Peeters, ‘Geen taak meer voor Dutchbat in Bosnië’ [No Further Tasks for Dutchbat in Bosnia], *Het Parool*, 10/07/95; Editorial, *Het Parool*, 10/07/95; *NPS*, 10/07/95, News on 1, R. 1, 12.07 hours; Nova 10/07/95, N. 3 22.34 hours.

¹⁵²² Confidential interview (63); Confidential information (4).

¹⁵²³ *Agence France Presse*, 10/07/95 15:17 Eastern Time.

¹⁵²⁴ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 11/07/95, Source: Radio Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo, in Serbo-Croat 1600 GMT 09/07/95.

¹⁵²⁵ Confidential information (28); *Agence France Presse*, 09/07/95 14:47 Eastern Time.

¹⁵²⁶ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 10/07/95, Source: Radio Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo, in Serbo-Croat 0900 GMT 09/07/95.

¹⁵²⁷ United Nations, Security Council, 09/07/95, S/1995/548.

Silajdzic also wrote to NATO Secretary-General Willy Claes to ask whether the UN had asked NATO to intervene in reaction to the 'all-out assault' of the Bosnian Serbs. In this instance, too, the tone of the letter made a reply unlikely:

'some 60,000 unarmed civilians are exposed to direct heavy artillery, tank and infantry fire. UNPROFOR forces, which ought to be protecting Srebrenica, are themselves at the mercy of the Serbs. UNPROFOR units in Srebrenica are in disarray, unable to defend themselves and the helpless civilians. Today in Srebrenica nobody can any longer even count the dead and wounded women and children who have been placed under UN protection. (...) I would appreciate it if you could immediately inform me whether the UN has requested NATO intervention, and, if so, why NATO has not reacted so far. Could it be that senior UN officials are deliberately obstructing UNPROFOR's mandate, or is this an alteration of NATO's decision on Bosnia-Herzegovina.'¹⁵²⁸

Silajdzic also warned that, failing a swift reaction by the West, the Bosnian Government would seriously reconsider the presence of UNPROFOR. The Bosnian ambassador to the UN, Mustafa Bijedic, was already making utterances to the effect that the fall of Srebrenica would mean the end of the UN mission in Bosnia. Boutros-Ghali, in fact, said almost the same thing, namely that failure on the part of the warring factions to respect the UN and to start serious peace negotiations would hasten the departure of UNPROFOR.¹⁵²⁹ Akashi was becoming increasingly concerned about the media attitude to the UN mission. Withdrawal from Bosnia would be a blow to UN prestige and Akashi would be the scapegoat. To a certain extent Akashi claimed to be prepared to accept that and expressed his gratitude to Boutros-Ghali for having entrusted him with the job.¹⁵³⁰

The 'scale Tips': The VRS decide to occupy the entire Enclave

The question on everyone's mind was what would happen in the coming days. The VRS had entrenched themselves in various locations in the Safe Area and were positioned at a stone's throw from the main population centre. A general pessimism about the outcome was setting in fast. Minister Voorhoeve said on the Dutch news program, '*NOS-journaal*', that the Bosnian Serbs could not be stopped if they were planning to occupy the enclave.¹⁵³¹

That notwithstanding, a major Western intelligence agency was disinclined to believe that the Bosnian Serbs would push through into the city based on fear of the number of casualties it was likely to take. The VRS were more likely to use the enclave as a basis for neutralising ABiH attacks. By reducing the size of the enclave and exacerbating the humanitarian situation it could undermine the morale of the ABiH. The VRS were very unlikely to heed UNPROFOR protests until it had achieved its objectives. It was expected that the VRS attacks would continue until the ABiH had been neutralised in the enclave.¹⁵³²

The Royal Netherlands Military Intelligence Service (RNLA) also did not believe that the VRS planned a complete occupation of the enclave. In the view of the Army/Intelligence Service, all indications suggested that the VRS were only striving for control of the southern section of the enclave.¹⁵³³ Even the ABiH were not sure that the VRS were actually inclined to attack the heart of the enclave. The 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla, based on intercepted radio traffic, could make out that

¹⁵²⁸ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 10/07/95, Source: Radio Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo, in Serbo-Croat 1300 GMT 09/07/95.

¹⁵²⁹ *The New York Times*, 10/07/95; *The Washington Post*, 10/07/95, Final Edition.

¹⁵³⁰ NIOD Coll. Banbury, Banbury Diary; SRSG's Meeting 10/07/95.

¹⁵³¹ NAA Document, 222897.09/07/95.

¹⁵³² Confidential information (5).

¹⁵³³ MID/KL. INTSUM 130/95, 101200Z Jul 95.

the VRS attack had unfolded successfully, but did not think that occupation of the town of Srebrenica was part of the plan. The possibility of the VRS using the opportunity of doing so was however not entirely excluded.¹⁵³⁴ Indeed, that was exactly what was about to happen.

Karremans and Franken, in retrospect, considered the VRS assault on Mount Kak in the south of the enclave the ‘moment the scales tipped’. Once the VRS had established control of the mountain, they also controlled the southern section of the enclave and the bauxite mines. In their view, if the VRS did not stop there, they were planning to occupy the entire enclave.¹⁵³⁵

There was however a more final ‘tipping point’ of which the UN had no knowledge whatsoever. The VRS offensive had proven so successful that, on the evening of 9 July, the Bosnian Serbs decided not to limit the operation to the southern section of the enclave, but to push on and to occupy the town of Srebrenica and the entire enclave. The president of the Republika Srpska, Radovan Karadzic, had been kept informed on the success of the operation to that point. He had also been told that those successes enabled the Drina Corps to take over the city. Karadzic was satisfied with the results and agreed to extend the operation to disarm the ‘Muslim terrorist gangs’ and to demilitarise the enclave completely.

The order issued by the VRS officer, Major General Zdravko Tolimir, also specified that Karadzic had determined that the safety of UNPROFOR troops and the population had to be guaranteed. Orders to that effect had to be issued to all participating units. The safety of the population had to be guaranteed if they wanted to cross the enclave to reach the Safe Area Tuzla via the Republika Srpska. The orders made no mention of any forced removals of the population. The VRS units were to be instructed not to damage private property except in the case of resistance. The burning of buildings was strictly prohibited. An important final instruction was that the population and POWs had to be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention.¹⁵³⁶

This made 9 July the most important day in the build-up to the fall of the enclave. No one, including major Western intelligence agencies, expected the Bosnian Serbs to occupy the entire enclave. After all, what would Mladic do with so many refugees? All that notwithstanding, the VRS decided on that fateful night to do exactly that.

9. A Line in the Sand: The Blocking Positions

Unaware of those Bosnian-Serb intentions, the UN headquarters in Zagreb almost simultaneously came to a decision to instruct Dutchbat to establish blocking positions. The aim was for Dutchbat to set up a blockade against the VRS advance to Srebrenica whether or not in combination with the deployment of Close Air Support, and thereby to stop the advance.¹⁵³⁷

On 9 July the front lines of the VRS troops were just over four kilometres into the enclave. When General Nicolai asked VRS General Tolimir for an explanation, Nicolai stated that UNPROFOR considered the actions of the VRS as an attack on the enclave. UNPROFOR demanded a withdrawal and Nicolai warned Tolimir that UNPROFOR would defend the enclave with all means at its disposal. Tolimir however countered with the argument that, in fact, Dutchbat was occupying Bosnian-Serb territory. Tolimir nevertheless reassured Nicolai that Dutchbat soldiers would not be threatened.¹⁵³⁸ A few hours later the generals again established communication. Tolimir told Nicolai that he had been assured by local commanders that there were no problems with either Dutchbat or the population. To

¹⁵³⁴ NIOD Coll. CD-ROMs. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa een Komanda 28. Divizije, 10/07/95, Str. pov. br. 02/8-01-1142.

¹⁵³⁵ BLS, OPS. Fax Karremans to PBL 29/08/95.

¹⁵³⁶ ICTY (IT-33-98) OTP Ex 64B. Main Staff of the Army of Republika Srpska to President of Republika Srpska, for information, Drina Corps IKM/Forward Command Post, Generals Gvero and Krstic, personally, 09/07/95, Strictly Conf. No. 12/46-501/95.

¹⁵³⁷ Confidential interview (52).

¹⁵³⁸ SMG, 1004. Note from MA/COS to MA/Comd. Telephone Conversation General Nicolai - General Tolimir, 09/07/95, 17.50 hrs.

that Nicolai could only repeat that, while the VRS may not be having problems with either Dutchbat or the local population, it would certainly have to deal with UNPROFOR if it failed to withdraw across the borders of the enclave. The agreement with Morillon had to be respected. Thanks to the good discipline of the UN forces, Nicolai stated, they had not yet taken up arms against the VRS, but he could not guarantee that this would not happen. Tolimir said that he understood the message, and repeated that the VRS had no problem with Dutchbat and the population - only with the ABiH. According to Tolimir it was the actions of the ABiH from the demilitarised zone that violated the existing agreements, as well as the efforts to mutually connect Zepa and Srebrenica.

Nicolai could not see the connection. In his view this was about an attack on a Safe Area, and a threat to the local population. The VRS was the only party that was deploying heavy weaponry, as all ABiH weapons were still in the Weapon Collection Point. That was one sound reason for UNPROFOR to defend the Safe Area. Tolimir however did not agree that the ABiH had surrendered all their heavy weaponry. He claimed that the ABiH owned six armoured vehicles, which it had either bought or stolen from UNPROFOR. That led to a verbal exchange between Tolimir and Nicolai, who vehemently denied the latter statement. Tolimir was right about the armoured vehicles even though the vehicles, which had originated from the Ukraine via Zepa, were no longer in the enclave.¹⁵³⁹ (The situation concerning the armoured vehicles was discussed in Chapter 4.)

Tolimir claimed that Nicolai did not understand the heart of the matter. The ABiH had continuously launched attacks from the Safe Area, which, in contrast to the agreement, had never been demilitarised. Serbian towns constantly went up in flames. Nicolai countered that the ABiH had been warned to that effect on several occasions. At this point, however, the VRS were taking measures that went far beyond the call for self-defence. Nicolai demanded – a complete withdrawal within two hours or UNPROFOR would be forced to deploy all means available against the VRS. Nicolai failed to specify the means.¹⁵⁴⁰

The threat was backed up by a formal warning by UNPF in Zagreb to the Bosnian Serbs. The offensive was ‘totally unacceptable’ and signified a serious escalation of the conflict. The VRS were to stop the offensive on the enclave immediately and to withdraw to the border of the enclave as agreed on 8 May 1993 with General Morillon. Moreover, all Dutchbat troops held captive by the VRS had to be released immediately with their equipment. The VRS were further informed that Dutchbat had been instructed to establish blocking positions, thereby closing off access to Srebrenica. The warning stated that Akashi and Janvier had decided to deploy Close Air Support in the event of a VRS attack on the blocking position. The warning reminded the VRS of the ‘grave consequences’ following disregard of a warning. The warning failed to mention what the grave consequences would be. Sarajevo sent the warning to General Mladic and also issued a press release.¹⁵⁴¹

During the day of 9 July, Zagreb and Sarajevo worked feverishly to establish substance for this warning (which was later incorrectly viewed by many as an ultimatum). The UN headquarters in New York also had problems with the warning to the Bosnian Serbs. Reports of companies and several tanks in the vicinity of the town of Srebrenica had reached New York; however, as such, those reports signified nothing special. The UN headquarters did not expect anything special to occur until the alarm was signalled by the Situation Center in New York based on the continuous incoming reports and situation reports. Boutros-Ghali was abroad at the time, as was his deputy, Kofi Annan. Iqbal Riza thereby replaced both Annan and Boutros-Ghali.¹⁵⁴²

¹⁵³⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 434, Milinfosummaries 1, Box SNE, 1. UNMO HQ Sector NE to UNMO HQ Zagreb, Weekly Infosum 21/95 (22 - 28 May) and 22/95 (29 May - 4 Jun), 281500B May 95 and 040800B Jun 95. SMG, 1001. The report from OP-K dated from 270015B May 95 (MID 443-0305 Box 113. Doc Rest 200.300.200.200.Yo.12423).

¹⁵⁴⁰ SMG, 1004. Note from MA/COS to MA/Comd. Telephone Conversation General Nicolai - General Tolimir, 09/07/95, 19.30 hrs.

¹⁵⁴¹ DCBC, 620. ‘Warning to the Bosnian Serbs: Attacks Against the Srebrenica Safe Area’, 10/07/95.

¹⁵⁴² Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

Riza was a Pakistani who was sympathetic to the Bosnian Muslims.¹⁵⁴³ He asked the Military Advisor to the Secretary-General, Major General of the Marines, F.H. van Kappen, what to make of the situation reports. The information stream in New York was always somewhat behind the times due to the time difference, and delays caused by written reports via the headquarters. Moreover, much of the reporting to New York was devoid of military-tactical subjects. Although New York was reluctant to establish direct contact with field commanders, there seemed to be little choice other than to contact General Janvier directly for an explanation. Van Kappen failed to raise Janvier telephonically, but did manage to get in touch with Colonel De Jonge, who provided a clear sketch of the situation. New York found the situation disquieting: Something unforeseen had happened - the Bosnian Serbs were continuing their offensive. The reasons remained unknown to both Riza and Van Kappen. Riza nevertheless thought it essential to send a clear signal to the Bosnian Serbs to the effect that they had crossed a critical line. This resulted in a new round of communication between Van Kappen and De Jonge. De Jonge explained that Zagreb planned to establish blocking positions to provide the Bosnian Serbs with a clear and practical message: So far, and no further.¹⁵⁴⁴

Riza agreed to the notion of the blocking positions, however, he felt that it needed to entail a clear political-military signal. In his view it was essential to issue orders to offer real resistance and not only to fire over the heads of the offenders. Van Kappen said that he had pointed out to Riza that, from a military perspective, blocking positions did not make all that much sense, as infantry could easily bypass them. Riza accepted this and understood that half a battalion was not exactly capable of putting up an effective defence; however, he did consider the political message conveyed with the blocking positions important. That message had to be supported in a military sense, and Janvier had to give substance to that requirement. Riza wanted the political signal of the blocking positions to serve as a 'line in the sand'. De Jonge was then informed by Van Kappen that New York considered the blocking positions a sound initiative as long as they presented a clear signal.

The issue of Close Air Support was also mentioned in that discussion. Van Kappen was informed that Zagreb was making preparations to that end, even though the staff did not believe an attack was about to be launched with much more than one company supported by two or three tanks.

After that, events unfolded very quickly and became extremely confusing to New York. This was partially due to the fact that the Bosnian Serbs had initially reacted with a denial of their intentions to take Srebrenica city and because New York was itself beginning to doubt whether this was not just another incident.¹⁵⁴⁵

After the take-over of one OP after the other, De Jonge in Zagreb began to fear that the VRS offensive could well signify more than a 'salami tactics' or an isolated incident. The intelligence staff in Zagreb still maintained that the operation was limited to the southern section of the enclave, and that it would not lead to further invasion of the Safe Area. However, De Jonge countered, if the rollup of OPs continued unabated, not much of the enclave would remain. The question was what could be done to avoid having to answer later to accusations to the effect that the enclave had been taken without any resistance or firm action on the part of the UN.

Decision to establish Blocking Positions

On the morning of 9 July, the Zagreb staff did another dry run of handling a Blue Sword Request to ensure that everyone was familiar with their roles in that bureaucratic procedure. After the exercise De Jonge came to the conclusion that the VRS had to be put into a position where they would be forced to admit their true intentions. This led him to the idea of the blocking positions. The aim was not to set Dutchbat up in a defensive position with all means available; however, the battalion would be authorised to take up positions from which it could fire upon the VRS. The aim was to establish

¹⁵⁴³ Confidential interview (63).

¹⁵⁴⁴ Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

whether the VRS were conducting lightning strikes that would be ceased at the first sign of resistance or whether they were really planning an assault on the entire enclave. In the case of a VRS attack on a blocking position it would be obvious that their intentions went well beyond isolated operations. De Jonge's idea was thereby also to bring about a separation between the attacking and defending groups, preferably by one to two kilometres. That would present the opportunity to safely deploy Close Air Support against the VRS. After all, Close Air Support was not permitted if it posed a danger to friendly troops.¹⁵⁴⁶

De Jonge proposed his plan to Chief of Staff Kolsteren. Kolsteren favoured De Jonge's idea partially based on the experience of UNPF at the fall of Sector West in Croatia, where UN troops present had taken no action against the advancing Croatians. A blocking position could fill the gap between Dutchbat's light weaponry and Close Air Support. A substantial 'gap' existed between light and heavy weaponry due to the fact that, as was well known, Dutchbat's anti-tank weapons were no longer in sound working order (more on that subject below).

Kolsteren stated that his consideration of De Jonge's idea had also been based on another idea, namely, UNPF's perception that, while there was a battalion in Srebrenica asking for Close Air Support, there were questions as to the actual role of that battalion. Dutchbat did its work - at least that was how Zagreb saw it - but it could hardly be said that they had shown courage or betrayed a sense of battle-readiness. Colonel De Jonge denied that such a notion was prevalent or that it had been uttered in Zagreb,¹⁵⁴⁷ however, in Kolsteren's view the battalion was not only in Srebrenica to observe and report. Matters were deteriorating 'invitingly rapidly'. Obviously Zagreb was concerned about the safety of UNPROFOR personnel, but that was hardly license for Dutchbat to do absolutely nothing at all. The battalion would have to show its mettle. The blocking positions would have to provide the test of that mettle. It would have to provide Mladic with a clear demonstration that attacking the blocking position and advancing on Srebrenica city was a step too far.¹⁵⁴⁸

De Jonge then proposed his idea to Force Commander Janvier. Janvier was immediately convinced of the validity of the plan. Janvier responded to De Jonge as follows: 'Then we will know Mladic's real worth. Moreover, we will then be able to deploy Close Air Support.'¹⁵⁴⁹ Janvier however first wanted to know whether this concerned a real offensive or merely a sham attack. According to Kolsteren, Janvier had not intend to give up the enclave without resistance even though he had previously presented that as an option to the Security Council.¹⁵⁵⁰ Janvier also used the words 'a line in the sand'. He wanted to attach an ultimatum to the blocking positions, so that Mladic would be clear about the consequences of continuing forward operations. Janvier's staff would fill in the details. De Jonge said that he was then instructed to draft an order for the blocking positions, which Janvier would sign.¹⁵⁵¹

Janvier and Akashi's discussion in the early evening of 9 July culminated in the order for Dutchbat to block the route to Srebrenica. The commanders of UNPF in Zagreb, UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, and Akashi would, each at their own level, issue 'a firm warning' to the Bosnian Serbs. Deputy Force Commander Ashton talked to General Mladic and demanded the withdrawal of the VRS from Srebrenica.¹⁵⁵²

Simultaneous with Akashi and Janvier's decision, early that evening, to establish blocking positions, the headquarters in Zagreb and Sarajevo were instructed to prepare for Close Air Support. The latter operation would serve as a reply in the event that the Bosnian Serbs were to undertake an 'action directe' against the UNPROFOR units that stood in their way.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹⁵⁴⁷ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 30/05/01.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/09/99.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/09/99.

¹⁵⁵¹ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99. No written order was found in the UNPROFOR archives.

¹⁵⁵² Confidential information (44).

Brigadier General Dave Sawyer, deputy Director of the CAOC in Vicenza, was recalled to his post to consult with Nicolai regarding Zagreb's plans for the establishment of blocking positions designed to stop the VRS. The entry in the logbook of the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force in Vicenza was testimony to the fact that the UN was planning 'to slug it out with the VRS. If unsuccessful, NATO Close Air Support/Air Strikes would be used.'¹⁵⁵³ Vicenza meanwhile issued orders for an airborne command post, code name *Bookshelf*,¹⁵⁵⁴ to stand by for deployment at 06.00 hours on 10 July, and to conduct a radio check with Dutchbat's Forward Air Controller, Windmill 02. Sawyer emphasized the importance of that action.

It was also established via the Dutch officer, Major Frentz, who worked at the Air Operations Coordination Center, that Windmill 02 would be available at that moment. Vicenza meanwhile drew the positions of the VRS tanks onto the map and was in possession of a target list, even though they knew that it might no longer be up to date. The exact locations of the blocking positions were not as yet known in Vicenza, and the fear was expressed that it would not be known until 06.00 hours on the following day.¹⁵⁵⁵

Around 21.00 hours that evening Janvier consulted with NATO Admiral Leighton Smith in Naples. They agreed that, as of 06.00 hours on 10 July, NATO aircraft would be in positions above the Adriatic Sea, ready for deployment at the request of Sarajevo in the event of a threat to Srebrenica. The final decision for deployment remained with Janvier and Akashi.¹⁵⁵⁶ NATO was indeed ready for Close Air Support at 06.00 hours. The Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo, for several hours more, remained under the impression that a Blue Sword Request would be honoured in advance if a blocking position were to have been attacked on 10 July.¹⁵⁵⁷ That was however not the case, and the procedures remained as they had been established.

Zagreb did not conduct a risk analysis prior to issuing the order for the establishment of blocking positions. It also did not seem sensible to expect this of a headquarters four organisational levels above Dutchbat. The risk evaluation had to be left up to the commanders in the field.¹⁵⁵⁸ De Jonge said that he had in fact raised the question of the Rules of Engagement (rules of conduct for opening fire), but the staff in Zagreb did not think it required amendment.

It was however clear that a risk was being taken and that the order posed Dutchbat with an enormous problem. The white UN armoured cars would be highly conspicuous and vulnerable on the hills. Following the Rules of Engagement could at any moment compel Dutchbat to return fire and thereby to 'green' conduct. The battalion was neither equipped nor trained for this and it certainly did not have the mindset for such an operation. Field Manuals warn never to issue sudden 'green' orders to troops trained only at 'blue' level, as this would be demanding the impossible of the troops (see Chapter 8 of Part II). De Jonge nevertheless felt that, in that instance, the risk had to be taken. Janvier, who had always shown extreme caution and circumspect, supported him in this. Sarajevo issued the order to Dutchbat. Zagreb did not at any time consult Karremans directly regarding the assignment.¹⁵⁵⁹

Like Zagreb, Sarajevo also did not amend the Rules of Engagement and did not instruct Dutchbat as to whether to fire directly at the VRS or not. The idea was that the threat of Close Air Support would serve as a deterrence and would be sufficient to stop the advancing VRS troops. For that

¹⁵⁵³ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook 5ATAF 09/07/95, 1550Z-1605Z.

¹⁵⁵⁴ This concerns a C-130 Airborne Battlefield Command and Control Center serving as communication platform and to coordinate between the Tactical Air Control Parties and the Combined Air Operations Coordination Center.

¹⁵⁵⁵ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook 5ATAF 09/07/95, 1823Z, 1900Z, 1930Z, 2000Z, 2015Z, 2144Z.

¹⁵⁵⁶ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87304, File 3300-SRE Vol. I, 1 Jul - 16 Nov 95. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 09/07/95, No. Z-1122; DCBC, 607. UN HQ DPKO Situation Center to Members UN Security Council, 09/07/95, 1925NYT.

¹⁵⁵⁷ DCBC, Box 59. Overview of Citations Logbook Air Operations Control Center, Annex A to Klu Answers to Questions by the Chamber Srebrenica,

¹⁵⁵⁸ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/09/99.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99. In *NRC Handelsblad* of 26/08/95 De Jonge was quoted to have said: 'We did not consider the safety of the men. Not for one minute. We did not philosophise about 'acceptable risks' – that is a political concept and I do not know what it means.'

reason the warning to the VRS had been supplemented with the message that a VRS attack of a blocking position would result in Close Air Support.¹⁵⁶⁰ De Ruiter informed Karremans about the warning, as well as the availability of Close Air Support. According to De Ruiter, Karremans dismissed the Close Air Support with the words, ‘That will only result in an escalation of the situation.’¹⁵⁶¹

In the event of the VRS firing on a blocking position, the normal Rules of Engagement dictated that fire could be returned in self defence. According to Nicolai in Sarajevo, Janvier wanted to implement an intermediary step between letters of protest and the deployment of air power in the form of a return of fire by Dutchbat with surface-to-surface weapons. According to Nicolai that strategy had been discussed with Karremans. In the event of a real threat of Srebrenica falling into Bosnian-Serb hands, or in the event of the VRS firing directly at UNPROFOR, Dutchbat was under order to return fire. The VRS would then have to pass through or around a blocking position.¹⁵⁶² When setting up the warning to the Bosnian Serbs, Zagreb believed that Mladic would think twice before moving into the enclave. That thinking was confirmed by Lieutenant Colonel Jim Baxter, the Military Assistant to General Smith. The interpretation of the warning was however primarily a Dutch issue.¹⁵⁶³

Warning or Ultimatum?

Dutchbat was confused about the nature of the warning issued to the Bosnian Serbs. Although a warning had been issued, both Karremans and Company Commander Groen, who was in charge of the execution of the blocking positions, initially spoke of an ultimatum. The difference being that an ultimatum encompasses a time limit and consequences, while a warning does not. The *Inner Circle*, Dutchbat’s internal information leaflet, also used the word ultimatum.¹⁵⁶⁴ Karremans reiterated this in a report, at the end of August 1995, to the Minister of Defence.¹⁵⁶⁵ That notwithstanding, he did later state in his book, ‘*srebrenica, Who Cares?*’ that, in the strict sense of the word, this could not be considered an ultimatum, but only a warning.¹⁵⁶⁶ The report on the debriefing in Assen also mentions an ultimatum.¹⁵⁶⁷ The question remains as to the extent to which Karremans adjusted his judgement in retrospect. In the publication, ‘*Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*’ (‘*Dutchbat for Peace’s Sake*’), Groen offers his impression of the staff meeting in which Karremans reported the directives as received from Sarajevo: ‘The UN’s first reaction finally came at 20.30 hours! It came in the form of an ultimatum to the VRS, and specified that all VRS troops had to have pulled back south of a line drawn about three kilometres south of the city by no later than 21.00 hours. Failure to comply with that instruction would result in a massive air strike on 10 July (the following day)!’¹⁵⁶⁸ An anonymous author wrote in the same book that ‘in reaction to the VRS offensive, UNPROFOR sent the VRS an ultimatum on that same night.’¹⁵⁶⁹ The section for military-civilian contacts (in military terms: Section 5) did the same when it announced the warning early on the morning of 10 July to the commander of the 28th Division, the president of the Opstina and the mayor.¹⁵⁷⁰

Colonel Brantz in Tuzla also referred to an ultimatum even though he had been aware that a VRS attack of a blocking position would only invoke consideration of a NATO deployment.¹⁵⁷¹

¹⁵⁶⁰ Debriefing statement Lieutenant Colonel J.A.C. de Ruiter, 27/09/95.

¹⁵⁶¹ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. C-11 Pagnbat (LCol J.A.C. de Ruiter) to CDS and BLS, 07/11/95.

¹⁵⁶² Interview C.H. Nicolai, 09/07/99.

¹⁵⁶³ Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

¹⁵⁶⁴ *The Inner Circle*, No. 49, 10/07/95.

¹⁵⁶⁵ BLS Kab. Karremans to Ministry of Defence through BLS, 29/09/95.

¹⁵⁶⁶ *Srebrenica, Who Cares?*, p. 174.

¹⁵⁶⁷ See Debriefing Report §§ 3.29, 3.36.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 296.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 332.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (93); interview W. Melchers, 23/10/00.

¹⁵⁷¹ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary, version August 1999.

Karremans also viewed the ultimatum as a promise.¹⁵⁷² That was however not justifiable, as no decision had been taken at that point regarding the deployment of Close Air Support. The warning most certainly made no mention of air strikes. In other words, there was no question of an ultimatum with an associated sanction. This was clearly better understood at NATO (AFSOUTH in Naples) than by Dutchbat. To that effect, the Dutch representative at AFSOUTH, Colonel A.F. Koopmans, commented as follows on the warning to the VRS: ‘This ‘ultimatum’ will only be activated after obtaining the (renewed) permission of the UN!’¹⁵⁷³ General Nicolai also notified The Hague that no ultimatum had been issued, but that withdrawal had been demanded with an associated sanction.¹⁵⁷⁴ The point of the difference between a ‘warning’ and an ‘ultimatum’, as well as the difference between ‘Close Air Support’ and ‘air strike’, was to play an important role on the following day.

The VRS reaction to the warning, according to General Nicolai, was exactly what UNPROFOR had become accustomed to – denial that the events had occurred. The VRS invariably reacted to all threats of Close Air Support with extraordinary agitation and the statement: ‘Threaten us with Close Air Support and terrible things will happen.’ In other words, that warning made a limited or no impression at all on the Bosnian Serbs, let alone that the VRS saw it as an ultimatum. At most, the warning had had a marginal influence on VRS tactics. In a military sense, Mladic was unquestionably extremely wily and undoubtedly realised that a concentration of heavy weaponry would set his units up as a clear target. According to Nicolai, Mladic was acutely aware of his vulnerability to an airborne attack. For that reason he avoided deploying his tanks on the blocking position and, instead, orchestrated an infantry attack.¹⁵⁷⁵

The idea was that Close Air Support was the ultimate deterrent and could therefore not be deployed too soon. No direct contact was established with either Mladic, Karadzic or Milosevic regarding the warning.¹⁵⁷⁶ NATO Admiral Leighton Smith, who held the second key for Close Air Support, was not involved in drawing up the plans for the blocking positions.¹⁵⁷⁷

In short, in spite of reports to the contrary, there was never any question of a formal ultimatum with an associated sanction. According to Nicolai, General Smith had initially wanted to issue an ultimatum, but pressure from Zagreb had changed that. UNPROFOR could not afford to be manipulated into a situation similar to the events of 25 May 1995, which had led to the air strikes at Pale – that operation only yielded bad experiences. That was the reason for the conscious avoidance of the word ‘ultimatum’. An ultimatum, after all, had an irreversible character. Zagreb specifically wanted to leave itself room to manoeuvre to be able to determine the precise action at the supreme moment. Consequently, all it did was to issue a warning accompanied by a threat that, if necessary, Close Air Support would be used. The wording was carefully formulated and proposed to Zagreb. The text was edited a few times in an exchange of faxes between Zagreb and Sarajevo until a final text had been decided upon for approval by Janvier and Akashi. Zagreb had no further plans beyond the deployment of Close Air Support. In other words, there was never any question of air strikes.¹⁵⁷⁸ Zagreb never gave thought to any actions beyond Close Air Support in the event of failure on the part of the VRS to heed the warnings. Certainly there were never any plans to follow up Close Air Support with an air strike. In other words, there was no Plan B to cover the consequences of a VRS dismissal of the warning.¹⁵⁷⁹

¹⁵⁷² CRST, 1157. C-13 Infbat Lumbl, 15/11/95, No. TK95.213. Addressee not stated.

¹⁵⁷³ DCBC, 625. Senior National Representative CAOC 5ATAF (Col. Koopmans), handwritten fax, 10/07/95.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Voorhoeve Diary, p. 100.

¹⁵⁷⁵ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 09/07/99.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

¹⁵⁷⁸ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 09/07/99.

¹⁵⁷⁹ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 09/07/99.

The Hague and the Blocking Positions

No substantive consultation occurred between Dutchbat and the Netherlands Army Crisis staff on 9 July concerning the blocking positions, nor was there consultation between Dutchbat and the Defence Crisis Management Centre. As UN Commander, Karremans did not need to consult those bodies. The Hague was also not authorised to amend the instructions on the use of force. Kolsteren, from Zagreb, notified the Defence Crisis Management Centre about the blocking positions, and Brantz, from Tuzla, notified the Netherlands Army Crisis staff.¹⁵⁸⁰ By the end of the afternoon Nicolai communicated with Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen about the plan for the blocking positions. Nicolai thereby reported on his efforts to contact Mladic regarding the current operation. He had however only succeeded in speaking to VRS General Tolimir, who claimed to have no knowledge of the proposed attack on the city.

Nicolai also stated that he had received calls from the Bosnian Muslims, respectively, Minister Hasan Muratovic and ABiH Commander Rasim Delic. Both of the latter parties pointed out to him that the population of Srebrenica had to be protected. The impression in The Hague was that Nicolai was operating cautiously. Nicolai nevertheless warned about the prospect of a rapid collapse of the enclave. Van den Breemen also spoke to Van Kappen in New York and to Kolsteren. Via that channel the Defence Crisis Management Centre in The Hague received reports to the effect that Karremans feared that failure on the part of Dutchbat to put up resistance to the Bosnian Serbs could exacerbate Bosnian Muslim irritation; which could result in further Dutch casualties. A fatal example of that was the death of Van Renssen, which quickly assumed an important place in the reporting of the Bosnian Muslims. For example, on 9 July the office of President Izetbegovic issued a statement to the effect that NATO had not reacted to a Dutchbat request for Close Air Support after Van Renssen had been killed by 'the Serb aggressor'.

The death of rifleman Raviv van Renssen was also a gripping event for The Hague. His body arrived in the Netherlands on 9 July. Minister Voorhoeve called the Bosnian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Muhamed Sacirbey, to inform him that Van Renssen had been killed by Muslim soldiers, and to ask him to instruct the ABiH in Srebrenica not to fire on Dutchbat units. Sacirbey said that he had asked Sarajevo to instruct the ABiH not to fire at the Dutch soldiers. Voorhoeve also called Nicolai and stated that, regardless of the consequences, Close Air Support could be deployed against the VRS, as the population was threatened and the UN could not guarantee their safety. It also became clear to Voorhoeve that Karremans was extremely concerned about the VRS rocket launchers stationed north of Potocari. Karremans feared that the VRS would deploy those weapons in the event of their tanks encountering blocking positions in their way. Nicolai did not share that opinion. Nicolai and Karremans could not reach agreement on that matter.¹⁵⁸¹

In those troubled days it appeared that the Dutch allies did not wish to leave the Netherlands out in the cold. The American Ambassador in The Hague, Terry Dornbush, called Minister Van Mierlo with the announcement that the United States considered the situation in Srebrenica as extremely serious and that it was prepared to help the Netherlands. Dornbush also called Voorhoeve with the announcement that the United States would give due consideration to any requests from the Netherlands. It was not clear what the proposed aid entailed.¹⁵⁸² Dornbush's efforts seemed well intentioned; however it was clear that if the Americans were to do something, it could only be from the air, and in the framework of NATO.¹⁵⁸³

¹⁵⁸⁰ SMG, 1006/18. Report of interview Colonel Smeets (Deputy Commander Netherlands Army Crisis Staff since mid May 1995), 02/08/95; DCBC, 2430. Fax DCBC to State Secretary of Defence, 091600Z Jul 95. This fax notified Gmelich Meijling that Dutchbat, in consultation with Nicolai, had occupied a blocking position and that Close Air Support had been requested of NATO.

¹⁵⁸¹ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 10/07/95, Source: Radio Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo, in Serbo-Croat 0900 GMT 09/07/95; Voorhoeve Diary, p. 99-101; interview J.J.C Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.

¹⁵⁸² Voorhoeve Diary, p. 100-101.

¹⁵⁸³ H.G.B. van den Breemen, 05/10/00.

The French also enquired via Chief of Defence Staff Admiral Lanxade how Dutchbat could be assisted. Voorhoeve thereupon asked whether the French would be prepared to send in attack helicopters in the case of an emergency. The helicopters made available for the Rapid Reaction Force had not been deployed in Bosnia yet. Lanxade also reported that he had put pressure on Milosevic via Generals Janvier and De Lapresle.¹⁵⁸⁴ Whether any real pressure had indeed been exerted is unknown.

It is also not known whether Milosevic had any knowledge of the continuing Bosnian-Serb offensive that resulted in the occupation of the enclave. After the fall of the enclave, Milosevic made no mention to that effect to the UN envoy Thorvald Stoltenberg – he was too much of a poker player to reveal anything.¹⁵⁸⁵ On the other hand, Milosevic did express himself clearly later, in 1996, when he dropped the question to a group of Bosnian-Serb entrepreneurs as to ‘what idiot’ had made the decision to attack Srebrenica while it hosted international troops when it was obvious that, in any event, the enclave would eventually have been bled dry or become depopulated.¹⁵⁸⁶ It is not clear to what extent that statement had been intended to clear his responsibility for those events.

Orders to B Company to Occupy the Blocking Positions

Nicolai explained the purport of the assignment for the establishment of the blocking positions to Karremans by telephone from Sarajevo and they discussed the problems related to that issue. Nicolai chose to communicate this directly to Karremans instead of via the headquarters of Sector North East in Tuzla.

Nicolai explained that, in addition to the rules for the use of Close Air Support, there was a second problem, namely that Janvier was reluctant to use the toughest means possible immediately after uttering threats of Close Air Support. For that reason it was essential, to eliminate all misunderstanding, and to create a situation that would lead to a confrontation between the Bosnian Serbs and UNPROFOR troops. The Bosnian Serbs could not be allowed to use the excuse of having been fired upon by Bosnian Muslims. It had to be clear that it was UNPROFOR that was being attacked. This entailed that Dutchbat had to make concessions with regard to their visibility in order to prevent the occurrence of any misunderstandings concerning whom the Bosnian Serbs were dealing with. If and when Dutchbat was required to use their weapons, it would be easier to get permission to use air power.¹⁵⁸⁷

Karremans claims thereupon to have told Nicolai that, in view of the mandate and the available resources, the establishment of blocking positions was not practicable. The combination of the assignment to establish blocking positions and the promise of Close Air Support did however motivate him to execute the order.¹⁵⁸⁸ Karremans did not ask for any further explanation of the order or Rules of Engagement.¹⁵⁸⁹ Karremans and Franken also did not discuss those issues subsequently.¹⁵⁹⁰

At 22.00 hours on 9 July, the telephonic directives were followed up by written directives in the form of a fax in Dutch drafted by Lieutenant-Colonel De Ruiter in Sarajevo and signed by Nicolai. The formal order thus originated directly from Sarajevo and not from the headquarters of Sector North East. The text was concise: ‘You are to use all means at your disposal to establish blocking positions to prevent further advances of VRS units in the direction of the town of Srebrenica. You are to do everything in your power to reinforce those positions, including the use of weapons.’ A note added to the order stated that the blocking position had to be recognizable from the ground. As of Monday, 10

¹⁵⁸⁴ Voorhoeve Diary, p. 100-101.

¹⁵⁸⁵ Interview Thorvald Stoltenberg, 22/09/00.

¹⁵⁸⁶ Interview Rajko Dukic, 14/06/00.

¹⁵⁸⁷ Interview C. H. Nicolai, 09/07/99.

¹⁵⁸⁸ CRST, 1157. C-13 Infbat Lumbl, 15/11/95, No. TK95.213. No addressee stated on letter. It forms a supplement to the answers of questions by the Chamber based on the Debriefing Report.

¹⁵⁸⁹ NIOD Coll. Karremans. Correspondence NIOD Karremans, 25/11/00.

¹⁵⁹⁰ Interview R.A. Franken, 04/05/01.

July, Karremans could count on all ‘promised supplementary resources’.¹⁵⁹¹ That referred to Close Air Support.

Meanwhile it had also become clear to Dutchbat that the ‘line in the sand’ was to be taken almost literally. While the ‘warning’ to Mladic did not indicate the precise position of the line in the sand, the location mentioned in the telephone traffic between Sarajevo and Srebrenica was along ‘Horizontal 84’. This referred to a line on the map running approximately one and a half kilometres south of the town of Srebrenica.¹⁵⁹²

Captain Groen, the Commander of B Company, received instructions from Major Franken about the purpose of the blocking positions. Franken also indicated that the orders had come not from the battalion, but from higher authorities, and roughly amounted to the prevention of the occupation of the city by the VRS. Groen was instructed to take into account that this was considered a serious ‘green order’ (as opposed to the usual ‘blue’ UN order).¹⁵⁹³ Franken was the first to use the term ‘green order’, a term commonly used in the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff.¹⁵⁹⁴ That resulted in a discussion between Groen and Franken regarding the meaning of the term. The general drift of the discussion was that the order was almost impossible to execute with the means available and that Dutchbat had been sent to Bosnia with an entirely different mission. As the discussion was being conducted via a non-secure radio channel, it was continued by telephone.¹⁵⁹⁵

Major Franken confirmed the order by fax. The fax indicated that B Company had to set up a defensive position and prevent the penetration of the VRS to the city by all means available. There was thus no misunderstanding concerning the nature of the order. The question was how this could be achieved with the means available. The tone of the order was set with the comment that it was to be taken as a ‘serious green order’. The positions had to be dug in and the blocking position ready by 05.00 hours on 10 July.¹⁵⁹⁶ The receipt of that fax did not result in further consultation.

Groen did not find it realistic to dig in, but an order was an order; which was the reason for the friction that developed during the radio communication. Groen’s side of the argument was as follows; ‘What kind of an order is that – I can’t do anything with that.’¹⁵⁹⁷

The nature of the terrain did not really permit the unit to dig in, nor were there sufficient time and other resources available. Moreover, Groen had learnt that he would be receiving reinforcements from Potocari to supplement his inadequate contingent of personnel and armoured vehicles (APCs), and that it would arrive at 04.00 hours the following morning. The instructions were summary, and everything had to be arranged as quickly as possible. By September 1995, Groen could not recall whether Dutchbat had been instructed to fire directly at the advancing VRS.¹⁵⁹⁸ Karremans said that he had instructed Groen verbally to fire over the heads of the VRS unless circumstances, such as self-defence, compelled Dutchbat to fire directly at the advancing troops. However, in view of the current circumstances, there had been no time to discuss the directives in any detail. The battalion command had not considered how the existing Rules of Engagement translated into a ‘green order’.¹⁵⁹⁹

¹⁵⁹¹ SMG, Debrief, Outgoing Fax HQ UNPROFOR Sarajevo to Dutchbat, 092200B Jul 1995, No. 261/95.

¹⁵⁹² Dutchbat referred to the last line specified by the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command for the VRS Advance as Horizontal 84. Horizontal 84 was a grid line on the map that passed approximately one-and-a-half kilometres south of the city. (SMG,1007/25. Debriefing Report Captain Groen, Kamp Pleso, 22/07/95). De Ruiter referred to Horizontal 84.5 (500 metres north along first houses). (SMG, 1006/18. Report of telephone conversation [SMG] with Lieutenant Colonel A. de Ruiter, 03/08/95).

¹⁵⁹³ Confidential information (15).

¹⁵⁹⁴ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Correspondence NIOD-Karremans, 25/11/00.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

¹⁵⁹⁶ Fax Maj. Franken to Capt. Groen, 09/07/95 19:53, printed in Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 338.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Interview Captain J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

¹⁵⁹⁸ Confidential information (81). According to Captain W. Melchers it was Major Franken who, on 9 July, determined that they had to shoot over the heads of the VRS at first (interview, 23/10/00).

¹⁵⁹⁹ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Correspondence NIOD-Karremans, 25/11/00.

As far as weapons were concerned, the order only stated that the APCs from Potocari had to be provided with four anti-tank weapons each (type AT-4, short range).¹⁶⁰⁰ A number of other anti-tank weapons were also available for the blocking positions and a number of those were taken to the blocking positions.¹⁶⁰¹ There were however several problems around those anti-tank weapons.

Dutchbat Ammunition for the Blocking Positions

The only weapons capable of having any real effect on advancing VRS tanks were the TOW and Dragon anti-tank missiles. Dutchbat had brought TOW and Dragon missile launchers to Bosnia for emergency purposes.¹⁶⁰² Of those, six TOW and eighteen Dragon launchers were in Srebrenica, while the rest were outside the enclave in Simin Han. At the time of the fall of the enclave, however, only three of the TOW missile launchers were still usable. One had been broken and several more lost during the occupation of OP-F and OP-D by the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁶⁰³ Both of those weapons systems are wire-operated systems,¹⁶⁰⁴ whereby the operator has to aim at the target through a sight. The TOW has a maximum range of three kilometres, and the Dragon, one kilometre. In addition, Dutchbat had a number of AT-4 anti-tank missiles for use over shorter ranges.

The TOW was the main anti-tank weapon and best suited for use in the terrain around Srebrenica; however it yielded problems from the word go. Already in March 1994, the American Army had advised against the continued use of TOWs of a specific series, as they presented battery problems.¹⁶⁰⁵ The Director of Materiel of the Royal Netherlands Army had banned the use of the TOWs.¹⁶⁰⁶ TOW missiles had been flown in from the Netherlands to replace the TOWs in Dutchbat's possession. There were 135 missiles.¹⁶⁰⁷ Closure of the enclave had however prevented the exchange.

Dutchbat's only alternative was to smuggle the TOWs into the enclave in deep-freeze containers, however it is not clear whether that did in fact happen. Both the Netherlands Army Crisis staff and Dutchbat were secretive about this at the time.¹⁶⁰⁸ It appears more likely to have happened at the start of the Dutchbat period than during period of Dutchbat III. Captain W. Melchers, who was responsible for supplies in the first months of Dutchbat III, had not been aware of TOWs reaching the enclave. Considering the size of the boxes in which the TOWs were transported, Karremans too was uncertain as to the possibility of that having happened.¹⁶⁰⁹ The Hague, in any event, was not informed as to the presence of usable missiles in the enclave.

Maintenance of the TOW missiles was also a problem, as they had to be tested every 180 days with a special test instrument.¹⁶¹⁰ Later that period was stretched to 360 days.¹⁶¹¹ The test equipment was not included in Dutchbat's equipment.¹⁶¹² Defective TOWs could not be repaired at the Support

¹⁶⁰⁰ Fax Maj. Franken to Capt. Groen, 09/07/95 19:53, printed in Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 338.

¹⁶⁰¹ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (53); interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99. According to Karremans the blocking position only had four AT-4s. (*Srebrenica. Who Cares?* p. 182). Captain P.J. Hageman mentioned two Dragons and six AT-4s. (Information based on confidential debriefing statement (37).

¹⁶⁰² BSG, doss. DV 1993. Memo of Deputy Chief of Operational Affairs to the Minister through CDS, 30/11/93, no number.

¹⁶⁰³ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing Captain Hageman, 22/07/95.

¹⁶⁰⁴ A thin wire continued to connect the launcher and the missile after launch – this enables guidance of the missile.

¹⁶⁰⁵ SMG, 1005. Internal Memorandum DMKL MUN/SMV/Hfd Bur Behoeft Bepaling to Log Base Split, 06/04/94, No. Mun/1841/94.

¹⁶⁰⁶ SMG, 1005. Internal Memorandum DMKL/Dept Mun Sie Matvzg to RNLA Crisis Staff G-4 Exec, 31/03/94, No. SMV/MUN/001/94.

¹⁶⁰⁷ SMG, 1005. Fax RNLA Crisis Staff G-4 Exec to 812 Transport Group, 05/03/94, No. Vleid/0604/001.

¹⁶⁰⁸ SMG, 1004. Report on interview Lieutenant Colonel E.G.M. Otterloo with SMG, 31/07/95. Also see SMG 1006/18. De Ruyter Report, 01/08/95.

¹⁶⁰⁹ Interview Captain W. Melchers, 23/10/00; NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Correspondence NIOD-Karremans, 25/11/00.

¹⁶¹⁰ SMG, 1005. Fax C-1(NL) UNPROFOR SPT CMD to Crisis Staff G4 Exec, 16/05/94, No. 715.

¹⁶¹¹ SMG, 1005. Fax C-1(NL) UNPROFOR SPT CMD to Crisis Staff G4 Exec, 15/11/94, No. 761.

¹⁶¹² SMG, 1005. Fax C-1(NL) UNPROFOR SPT CMD to Crisis Staff G4 Exec, 08/06/94, No. 762.

Command in Lukavac (outside the enclave) once they had left the enclave, as the maintenance group there was not qualified to do so.¹⁶¹³ The Netherlands Army Crisis staff thought that the tests, which had to be performed every 180 days, could simply be performed by the battalion; however, the Director of Materiel of the Royal Netherlands Army stated that this was not possible as it was not a simple test.¹⁶¹⁴ The Director therefore would not agree to the tests being conducted by Dutchbat or the Support Command.¹⁶¹⁵ Consequently, if they could only be tested there, the defective TOWs could not be used for more than three months due to the long circulation times between Srebrenica and the Netherlands.¹⁶¹⁶

Karremans, who returned in October 1994 from a reconnaissance trip in Srebrenica, reported to the Netherlands Army Crisis staff that there were problems with the TOW control systems, as a result of which not all weapons systems were deployable. He proposed that new control units be sent in with the rotation of Dutchbat III. The Netherlands Army Crisis staff then established via a non-secure phone line that three of the launchers in Srebrenica were deployable and three were not.¹⁶¹⁷

A new exchange of TOWs was therefore put on the agenda for March 1995.¹⁶¹⁸ That turned out to be impossible due to the blockade of the enclave.

After a visit to Srebrenica, the Chief of Defence Staff, Van den Breemen, reported in April 1995 to Minister Voorhoeve that no certainty could be established regarding the use of the TOWs and Dragons.¹⁶¹⁹ At the same time Karremans let the Netherlands Army Crisis staff know that the usability of his TOW and Dragon missiles was 'extremely debatable' due to the absence of the testing equipment. Furthermore, due to poor storage conditions, there was a possibility of moisture defects in the TOWs.¹⁶²⁰ The TOW missiles were fitted with an indicator that jumped from green to red to indicate that it was no longer suitable for use. The Dragon had similar problems and lacked aiming devices.¹⁶²¹

The limited amount and quality of the TOW ammunition was also a point of concern for the Defence Crisis Management Control Centre.¹⁶²² The Hague was however incapable of providing a solution. The only development in that respect was that, in May 1995, the ban of the use of the TOW missiles (rejected in April 1994 and still in the enclave) was restated with the addition that the missiles were not to be used under any circumstances.¹⁶²³ After the fall of the enclave, Franken, during the debriefing, stated in Zagreb that the TOWs had still been 50% reliable.¹⁶²⁴ There was no certainty regarding the state of the Dragons. Karremans could not remember.¹⁶²⁵

In retrospect, advanced weapons, such as anti-tank missiles, were in fact more of a hindrance than a help when it was found (due to the closure of the enclave) that the logistical systems needed to guarantee the usability of the weapons could not be put into practise. It was also impossible to maintain or exchange the equipment. Weapons experts advised against the use of the missiles in the strongest

¹⁶¹³ SMG, 1005. Notes DMKL Man Bwpn supplemented by fax RNLA Crisis Staff G-4 Exec to 1(NL) UN SPTCMD, 17/06/94, No. 3644/32.

¹⁶¹⁴ SMG, 1005. Internal Memorandum DMKL Bureau Bewapening, Systeemgroep Matdienstgoederen, Dept. Manoeuvre/Sectie Bewapening, Project Officer TOW to Log Vrbrd, 18/11/94, no number.

¹⁶¹⁵ CRST. Fax RNLA Crisis Staff G-4 Exec to Head G4 RNLA Crisis Staff and 1(NL) UN SPTCOMD S3, 29/11/94, No. 4929/32.

¹⁶¹⁶ SMG, 1005. Fax C-1(NL) UNPROFOR SPT CMD to Crisis Staff G4 Exec, 15/11/94, No. 761.

¹⁶¹⁷ CRST. Internal Memorandum RNLA Crisis Staff to S4 Dutchbat, 28/10/94, No. CRST/1172 and notes.

¹⁶¹⁸ SMG, No. 1005. Fax RNLA Crisis Staff G-4 Exec to LSO Bevo 1(NL) UN SPTCOMD S3, 29/11/94, No. 4929/32.

¹⁶¹⁹ DS. Memo Chief of Staff of Defence to the Minister and State Secretary, 06/04/95, No. S05/061/1517.

¹⁶²⁰ CRST. Fax C 1(NL) UN INFBAT to Commander Crisis Staff, 10/04/95, No. 089.

¹⁶²¹ SMG, 1006/18. Report of visit [SMG] Colonel Lemmen (plv C-11 Lumbl), 03/08/95.

¹⁶²² DCBC, 2379. Verslag bunkeroverleg DCBC, dated 21/04/95.

¹⁶²³ SMG, 1005. Fax RNLA Crisis Staff G-4 Exec to H/G4 RNLA Crisis Staff, S4 1 (NL) UN INFBT, Maj. Franken, 31/05/95, No. 5759/3144.

¹⁶²⁴ SMG, 1007/23. Debriefing report Major Franken, Kamp Pleso, 22/07/95. 32 packed TOW missiles and 6 Dragons were reportedly taken back to Zagreb (SMG 1004/37).

¹⁶²⁵ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Correspondence NIOD-Karremans, 25/11/00.

possible terms due to the danger of premature detonation and problems related to the directional stability of the missiles.

Ammunition was a general problem. The Netherlands Army Crisis staff was unable to establish the exact supplies available in the enclave. The battalion reports offered little useful information. Relations between the officials in charge in the enclave and those in the Netherlands, namely, Major Franken and Lieutenant Colonel E.G.M. Otterloo of the logistical section of the Netherlands Army Crisis staff, were not optimal. Otterloo had attempted on several occasions to contact Franken by phone to offer his services, but he claimed Franken refused to provide him with useful information. As a result, The Hague did not have a very thorough impression of the types and supplies of ammunition available in the enclave.¹⁶²⁶ Dutchbat stated that only 16% of the usual ammunition supplies were available.¹⁶²⁷ That number was established during the rotation of Dutchbat II and III in January 1995. It is assumed that the number was a mathematical average of all available types of ammunition.¹⁶²⁸ The officer in charge of equipment (Chief G-4) of Sector North East in Tuzla also failed to obtain the data and reported the following: 'The unit has not been able to give me the figures of the ammo [ammunition] level. Their general answer is that the ammo level is low, but they have enough for self defence.'¹⁶²⁹

The inventory figures for the various types of ammunition was unavailable. The Netherlands Army Crisis staff thought that the percentage must have been somewhere around 54%. The logistical battalion provided those figures in spite of the fact that they were considered incomplete. It is conceivable that the ammunition available to A Company in Simin Han could have made a difference. That company had sufficient ammunition to allow target practise.¹⁶³⁰ The Hague also did not know how many of the blocked series of TOWs were still in Srebrenica. A request from The Hague to determine this remained unanswered. When, in May 1995, an warrant officer of the logistical section of the Netherlands Army Crisis staff visited the enclave and could not return, Franken denied permission for further logistical data gathering. This could have had something to do with the fact that a lot of equipment had been lost (for more information on this, see the chapter entitled 'The departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica').¹⁶³¹

Advanced weaponry also posed a problem for the ABiH, who had some anti-tank weapons, but were unskilled in the use and technology of the weapons. A reasonable number of RPG-7 (short range) anti-tank weapons were available in the enclave. Dutchbat noticed that the ABiH sometimes used RPG-7s, which were designed for ranges of up to three hundred metres, at ranges of up to a thousand metres. According to Company Commander Groen this was partially due to ignorance and partially due to the need to show off their courage, as merely firing the weapons constituted an act of valour.¹⁶³²

The ABiH had been in possession of 'Red Arrow' anti-tank weapons since 1994. There were two types of Red Arrow; the Red Arrow 8 (from China) and the older Red Arrow 73 (a licensed Soviet AT-3 Sagger). The Red Arrow 8 had superior aiming devices, a greater hit rate and superior penetration capability. Aiming at the target was determined by following the infrared radiation of the missile and wire-guided corrections. The chance of hitting a moving target was slim without training and regular simulator practice. Both weapons weigh more than eleven kilograms, are launched from a tripod-based launching device, and have a maximum range of three thousand metres.¹⁶³³

¹⁶²⁶ SMG, 1004. Report interview Lt-Col E.G.M. Otterloo, 31/07/95.

¹⁶²⁷ This number is used consistently. Also see Memorandum resupply Dutchbat, no date, which indicates that 16% was only adequate for defence over a period of 24 hours against a non-mechanised opponent (DCBC, 436) and Karremans' testimony to the Tribunal on 03/07/96 (Case No. IT-95-18-R61).

¹⁶²⁸ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Correspondence NIOD-Karremans, 25/11/00.

¹⁶²⁹ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. HQ Sector North East Memo Chief G4 to CO, DCO, A/COS, Chief G2/G3, 15/06/95.

¹⁶³⁰ SMG, 1006/18. Report interview De Ruyter, 01/08/95.

¹⁶³¹ SMG, 1004. Report interview Lt-Col E.G.M. Otterloo with SMG, 31/07/95. Shortages that started with Dutchbat I had accumulated to 12.6 million guilders.

¹⁶³² Interview J. R. Groen, 05/07/99.

¹⁶³³ MID/KL. DOKL, Intelligence and Security Section, WeekINTSUM No. 11/94, 15 March - 21 March 1994. Confi.

The most recent Red Arrows were smuggled into the enclave in the spring of 1995. No one in the enclave had however been trained in the use of the Red Arrow. The instructions were printed in English and had been translated by two (NBI) UN interpreters by order of Naser Oric. Unfortunately both the original text and the translations were subsequently lost. On 6 July the 28th Division received new instructions for the preparation and use of the Red Arrow via the military communication channels with Tuzla.¹⁶³⁴

The limitations of the 28th Division's knowledge of the weapon was illustrated when, in May, a missile was assembled and fired off by accident. Three men were injured when the missile was penetrated into the wall in the location where they were working. Fortunately the explosive charge had not yet been attached to the rocket. On 9 July the ABiH attempted to deploy the missile against one of the tanks that was shelling the city from Pribicevac. The rocket flew high into the air and hit some trees. A second rocket smashed into the ground a few hundred metres away. When loading a third missile, it was discovered that the trigger mechanism had broken down, as a result of which the launching mechanism was no longer usable. Consequently the ABiH branded the Red Arrow unreliable. At that point they still had eleven missiles.¹⁶³⁵

Dutchbat's Views of the Blocking Positions

After receipt of the order, Captain Groen and his deputy analysed the best ways to execute the order. His deputy, Captain P.J. Hageman, had been assigned by Franken as Commander of the blocking positions. The job was to be done with six APCs and fifty infantrymen. Zagreb on the other hand had assumed that at least 120 soldiers had been available.¹⁶³⁶ However, the maximum number of infantry personnel the battalion could scrape together was fifty. Of the remaining 430 Dutchbaters, only about two hundred were infantry - the rest were support or medical personnel. The 200 remaining infantry men were, at that point, manning the OPs.¹⁶³⁷

Groen was concerned that, if Dutchbat sided too openly with the ABiH and fired on the Bosnian Serbs, the VRS would consider Dutchbat an enemy. That would undermine the impartiality of the UN and their principal task, namely, the protection of the population. It was important that the VRS continued to view Dutchbat as a neutral UN unit and not as a combatant. Groen thought that he could achieve that by setting up the blocking positions between the VRS and the population. Groen had previously tried at the OPs to prevent Dutchbat from choosing sides, and wanted to maintain that position in the implementation of the blocking positions. He planned to use this strategy to prevent casualties amongst the population.¹⁶³⁸

The order, as formulated on paper by Major Franken, was therefore not formulated in exactly the same way by Groen in his orders to his own subordinates – and consequently not executed in exactly the same way. The alternative execution therefore appeared to be due as much to poor briefing from higher authorities as it was due to Groen's own decisions - his plan being to gather as much information as possible. If the blocking positions were to have become location bound in combat with the VRS, the Dutchbaters would have lost sight of the extended terrain. As a result, the lieutenants were not instructed to prevent the advance of the VRS into the city by all means available, as it was as clear to Groen and most of the others concerned that this was not a viable strategy using the blocking positions.¹⁶³⁹ Accordingly, Groen's orders were as follows: Try to determine where the VRS were

¹⁶³⁴ MID, CD-ROMs. ABiH 2. Korpusa to Komandi 28. D Kov, 06/07/95, Str. pov. br. 02/1-700/2.

¹⁶³⁵ Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 71.

¹⁶³⁶ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2, SRSG Meeting, May-Oct 95. Senior Staff Meeting, 10/07/95.

¹⁶³⁷ See Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 400, n. 2. Groen missed 40 of his 147-strong company - 42 were at the OPs, 10 were on guard duty, 19 went to the blocking position. The rest were staff, kitchen, communication or administrative personnel or Ops Room staff.

¹⁶³⁸ See Report Groen in Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 296.

¹⁶³⁹ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

planning to enter the enclave, where they were heading and along which route. Dutchbat was not supposed to engage in combat with the VRS, as the battalion was insufficiently equipped. Moreover, they could not afford to be pinned down by the VRS.¹⁶⁴⁰

Groen's interpretation of the order was therefore to prevent an escalation of the conflict as much as possible and, if possible, to try to de-escalate. Only in the case of a direct attack were they authorised to act in self-defence as deemed necessary. That was in compliance with the prevalent Rules of Engagement, and no one had determined that those rules no longer applied. For a number of days Dutchbat had been under heavy fire, a few OPs had been occupied and a number of personnel had been taken hostage. The situation was threatening to escalate and in Groen's view the VRS were about to occupy the enclave – unless Close Air Support were deployed. Understandably the whole of Dutchbat was under the impression that Close Air Support was coming. The prevailing view was that there was little else that could save the enclave from VRS occupation. In the absence of Close Air Support, the occupation of the enclave could assume two forms: With a great number of casualties or with (relatively) few casualties. In Groen's view very little could be done against the VRS offensive with a .50 machine gun (the heaviest weapon) and a number of ineffective anti-tank weapons. Groen could not recall whether there had been any further consultation with the battalion staff on the issue of the Rules of Engagement. Groen drew the conclusion as to the validity of the prevalent rules based on the circumstances and after consultation with his deputy, Hageman.¹⁶⁴¹ The battalion staff had in fact not expressed any alternative views to Groen at that point.¹⁶⁴²

Groen saw the order to 'prevent penetration of the VRS to the city' as an extremely difficult assignment. What were they to do if the VRS were to pay no heed to the blocking positions? The risk was substantial that the situation could escalate if the VRS deployed the heavy equipment positioned around the enclave. It would also result in a high mortality rate amongst the population. The VRS had previously shown themselves undeterred by prospects of attacks on the population. Apart from the unreliability of the anti-tank weapons, Groen, in retrospect, questioned when they could have been deployed and what possible goal might have been achieved thereby. Eliminating a single vehicle would be a temporary success – followed by what?¹⁶⁴³ It was by no means certain that the VRS would not fire directly at the blocking positions. Generally speaking, VRS fire on Dutchbat had been intimidating and often struck so close to vehicles and buildings that it was debatable whether they had been intentional misses.¹⁶⁴⁴ In one past instance of potential use of the TOW anti-tank weapons at the OPs, the directive was only to fire those weapons in the case of a direct assault on the OPs. In those instances, the use of the TOW would not only have resulted in an escalation, but would have resembled suicide, as, in that instance, the operator would have had to fire the missile from the exposed vantage point of the OP roof.¹⁶⁴⁵ No mobile systems were available for the heavy TOW launchers. Safe aiming, firing and guidance of those missiles should preferably occur from under armour. Due to the time-consuming reloading procedure, it was further desirable to work in pairs.

Groen thus instructed his personnel at the blocking positions to fire the first rounds over the heads of the VRS. Only in the event of the VRS firing directly at the personnel, or if considered necessary for self-preservation or to enable a retreat were they authorised to fire directly at the VRS – and then only at the discretion of the officer in charge on the spot. Personnel had to await an explicit order to fire anywhere other than over the heads of the VRS.¹⁶⁴⁶ Hageman afterwards said that the order should have entailed direct fire. In consultation with Groen, he came to the conclusion at the time that it was not really practicable. The method should have been, initially, to fire over the VRS heads, but

¹⁶⁴⁰ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

¹⁶⁴¹ Confidential information (81).

¹⁶⁴² NIOD, Coll. Karremans, Correspondence NIOD-Karremans, 25/11/00.

¹⁶⁴³ Interview J. R. Groen, 05/07/99.

¹⁶⁴⁴ Confidential information (81).

¹⁶⁴⁵ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing report Captain Groen, 22/07/95.

¹⁶⁴⁶ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

thereafter to fire directly at the advancing forces. Consequently, the soldiers were instructed only to release direct fire in the case of self defence.¹⁶⁴⁷ Captain C.J. Matthijssen also did not instruct his units assigned to the blocking positions to fire directly at the VRS. He also instructed his troops to fire over the VRS heads if necessary.¹⁶⁴⁸ Captain Melchers recalled that Major Franken had in fact determined that already during the O-group.¹⁶⁴⁹

Because a broken down APC had to be exchanged during the setting up of the blocking positions, Hageman had to return to the compound in Srebrenica and Groen once again discussed the situation there with him. Even then the brief was to prevent an escalation, keep a focus on the VRS to prevent the Bosnian Serbs from advancing around the blocking positions, and to serve as a shield between the population and the VRS. Meanwhile, it transpired that the VRS desisted from firing directly at the blocking positions wherever it was not deemed strictly necessary. From that Groen and Hageman concluded that the VRS would also not fire at the population - as long as the blocking positions remained between the population and the VRS.¹⁶⁵⁰ To the question as to when Dutchbat could relinquish their positions in the blocking positions, Groen and Hageman responded that this could only happen if the ABiH (which was considered unpredictable) gave up the battle, APCs were threatened, or the VRS attempted to bypass the blocking position and no Close Air Support was forthcoming.¹⁶⁵¹ If Dutchbat were to notice an (impending) attack on the city, B Company would attempt to evacuate the civilians from the city in the direction of Potocari, which was still relatively peaceful.¹⁶⁵²

Although Hageman had been designated commander of the blocking positions, it was Groen who pulled the strings by radio from the compound in Srebrenica. Groen was at all times to be found in the B-Company Ops Room - he led the action from there and coordinated all movements. Groen did not assign a dedicated radio frequency to the blocking positions but used the company network. The aim was to ensure that all reports from the OPs could reach every vehicle. In that way all personnel would remain thoroughly informed at all times - even in the case of interference in the mountainous terrain. Moreover, this enabled Groen to maintain direct communications with all APCs in case Hageman's signal was lost. It also enabled him to consult the APC commanders directly. Due to the loss of OP-U, OP-S and OP-F, the nachonet would not be overburdened.¹⁶⁵³

Groen viewed Hageman as his eyes in the field and instructed him to reconnoitre and report as much as possible, especially as it was not possible to keep an overview of the terrain from a single vantage point. Groen also remained in constant contact with Franken.¹⁶⁵⁴ Although this gave Groen the feeling that he had not been abandoned by the staff, it was clear that now that things were really heating up there was very little they could actually do for him. He therefore realised that he had to do the job on his own.¹⁶⁵⁵ Franken was in charge of all combat operations related to the blocking positions¹⁶⁵⁶ and he also dealt with the radio communications. Although Karremans was present in the Ops Room, one of the members of the Operations Section was amazed to find the Deputy Battalion Commander leading operations in such a critical situation. As a result, a rumour did the rounds to the effect that it would have been better had the commander been heard on the radio from time to time.¹⁶⁵⁷

¹⁶⁴⁷ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing Captain Hageman, 22/07/95.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (41).

¹⁶⁴⁹ Interview W. Melchers, 23/10/00.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Interview J. R. Groen, 05/07/99.

¹⁶⁵¹ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing Captain Hageman, 22/07/95.

¹⁶⁵² See Report Groen in Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 297.

¹⁶⁵³ Interview J. R. Groen, 05/07/99.

¹⁶⁵⁴ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing report Captain Groen, 22/07/95.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Confidential information (81).

¹⁶⁵⁶ SMG 1007/25. Debriefing Capt. Wieffer S-2/Ops Room, 22/07/95.

¹⁶⁵⁷ SMG 1007/25. Debriefing Sergeant Major Van Meer, assistant S3, 22/07/95.

10. The Early Morning Hours of 10 July: Dutchbat Activities at the Blocking Positions

The task of occupying the blocking positions had thus been assigned to B Company with the support of C Company in Potocari. C Company supported B Company with four APCs for the blocking positions. Initially four, and later six APCs stood by with the still available ammunition and fuel for the blocking positions. This so-called Quick Reaction Force was the battalion reserve that had been assembled after the fall of OP-E in case the newly established OP-S and OP-U were to have been in danger. To prepare for that kind of assignment, the unit intensively reconnoitred and tested several locations.¹⁶⁵⁸ The platoon commanders and their deputies investigated possible positions for the APCs. The positions were located close to the roads and commanded a good view of the terrain. The positions had only been reconnoitred, not prepared. The soil condition did not permit trench digging and, in any event, there was insufficient fuel and equipment available to do so. The aim was therefore to establish the blocking positions on locations that had previously been reconnoitred.

The battalion reserve or Quick Reaction Force thus departed from Potocari at 03.15 hours on 10 July under the command of First Lieutenant V.B. Egbers. In fact Egbers was the Deputy Commander, as the Commander of the Quick Reaction Force was First Lieutenant E.C.M.J. Koster. The Battalion Staff however kept Koster in Potocari to organise the rotation of the battalion. Egbers was profoundly surprised by the fact that the commander had been ordered to stay behind on the very first call for action on the part of the Quick Reaction Force. Koster and Egbers had specifically trained together to that end.¹⁶⁵⁹ Koster had superior 'track experience', but because of his engagement with the organisation of the rotation, Franken had designated Hageman as Commander of the blocking positions instead of him.¹⁶⁶⁰ An extra team was also formed in C Company for the blocking positions.¹⁶⁶¹ On the evening of 9 July, Company Commander Matthijssen came with the following announcement: 'We have been asked to support the Bravo Company with the blocking positions. Volunteers?' For a few moments they stared at one another sheepishly before Lieutenant Van Duijn and a few others volunteered.¹⁶⁶² Initially a Forward Air Controller did not accompany this group.

Little documentation is available that reflect the ideas and expectations of the personnel assigned the task of setting up the blocking positions. According to Sergeant 1st Class A.A. Batalona of B Company, everyone accepted the mission and no-one really argued. Dutchbat counted on NATO support and did not believe that the VRS had any intentions of harming Dutchbat personnel. On the other hand, Soldier 1st Class S. Veer of the Maintenance Unit, who had also been sent to the blocking positions, declared in October 1995 that at the time he had thought that he had been 'sent to his death'.¹⁶⁶³

The objective was to establish four blocking positions. The naming of the blocking positions was complicated, primarily due to the fact that the blocking position personnel were continuously relocating during the hectic situation. Where the text below refers to any specific blocking position (Bravo 1 through 4), it refers to the original location of the blocking position as indicated on the map entitled 'Fighting between 6-12 July 1995'. In instances where the personnel and APC of one of the blocking positions moved to another location, this is indicated using the phrase 'the personnel of the applicable blocking position'. The locations of the four blocking positions as originally intended are indicated with a cross on the map, 'Fighting between 6-12 July 1995'. To provide an overview of the account, the following table represents the original positions. The table exclusively relates to the

¹⁶⁵⁸ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, pp. 274-275. According to Captain Wieffer, Dutchbat II had reconnoitred all those positions. (Debriefing, 22/07/95).

¹⁶⁵⁹ Interview V.B. Egbers, 02/09/99.

¹⁶⁶⁰ SMG, 1007/23. Debriefing Major Franken, 22/07/95.

¹⁶⁶¹ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (39).

¹⁶⁶² Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

¹⁶⁶³ *Algemeen Dagblad*, 14/10/95.

situation on 10 July. It represents the initial location of the blocking positions, the commanders featuring in the account and the blocking position, and the number of vehicles (APCs) allocated to each blocking position. The blocking position, Bravo 2,¹⁶⁶⁴ was left out of this diagram (it was originally the first blocking position on the road between Zeleni Jadar and Srebrenica). This location served no practical purpose, as the overview from Bravo 4 (somewhat further down that route) was superior (see below).

The blocking positions as per 10 July:

Blocking position	Commanders/ <i>FAC</i>	Location	APCs
Bravo 1	Egbers	Stupine (west of Srebrenica)	2
Bravo 3	Van Duijn	At OP-H, (east of Srebrenica)	1
Bravo 4	Mustert	Hairpin bend on road between Zeleni Jadar – Srebrenica, at Height 424	2

The following information supplements the data available in the table. The Commander of the blocking positions, Hageman, was not always present in any of the blocking positions up front but spent most of the time in a APC (the sixth) on the edge of the city. There were also a number of Forward Air Controllers in the area - Voskamp at Bravo 1, and a number of Forward Air Controllers not bound to specific blocking positions. The latter group consisted of Dutchbat commandos, the British Joint Commission Observers (JCOs) assigned to the battalion, and a reserve commando unit that remained in the compound. On 10 July, the commandos and JCOs were initially located at OP-H, and later at Height 469 (west of Srebrenica, one kilometre north of Bravo 1).

Bravo 1 was located at a position at Stupine on the high ground west of the town of Srebrenica. That position provided a good view of the route descending from Zeleni Jadar to the city. The positions for Bravo 4 (and Bravo 2) were located in two hairpin bends located on the latter route. Bravo 3 was located at the position of OP-H east of Srebrenica on the road descending from Kvarac (1013 metres) via Crni Guber with a steep descent to the city. The route to the city was less visible from Bravo 2 than from Bravo 1. This was due to the fact that Bravo 2 had been located on a ridge and presented vehicles as easy targets. Bravo 2 was located about one kilometre ahead of Bravo 4 and would have formed the first obstacle to the VRS on their way down. As the position of Bravo 2 could be covered from the position of Bravo 4, blocking position Bravo 2 was cancelled in practise.

In the night of 9 to 10 July the APCs first moved from Potocari to the compound in Srebrenica. After the Deputy Commander of the Quick Reaction Force, Lieutenant Egbers, reported to Captain Groen with his four APCs, Groen explained that he had no view of the southern section of the enclave as all of the OPs in the area had been rolled up. Groen was not sure exactly where the VRS were at the time and found it most disturbing that the VRS could have advanced on the gates of the city before anyone had realised it. Consequently, the blocking positions had to be occupied quickly. Egbers was further instructed to make sure not to become engaged in the ABiH defence lines, as Groen feared that Dutchbat would be held there - which was not the intention.¹⁶⁶⁵ Groen directed Lieutenant Van Duijn to the position of Bravo 3 as he had a sound knowledge of the area.¹⁶⁶⁶

Groen also consulted with the British JCOs regarding suitable positions for the Forward Air Controllers. Groen wanted to establish two Tactical Air Control Parties: one Forward Air Controller (Voskamp) at Bravo 1 to cover the western flank, and a Forward Air Controller from the JCOs for the eastern flank at the location of Bravo 3 at OP-H. The JCOs then asked for the assistance of the commando's from Dutchbat's reconnaissance platoon. Franken agreed to that.¹⁶⁶⁷

In the early hours of the morning of 10 July, Forward Air Controller Sergeant Voskamp reported to Franken in the Ops Room (the command post) in Potocari, where Karremans too was

¹⁶⁶⁴ Bravo 2 is also referred to as Bravo 1A.

¹⁶⁶⁵ Interview V.B. Egbers, 02/09/99.

¹⁶⁶⁶ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

¹⁶⁶⁷ SMG, 1007/23. Debriefing report Major Franken, 22/07/95.

present. He was instructed to accompany the second NCO Forward Air Controller directly to Bravo 1 and to prepare for possible Close Air Support. According to Voskamp, Franken emphasised that their personal safety was the top priority.

At the moment the APC was about to leave the compound in Potocari, it was fired upon with grenades. Voskamp's colleague Forward Air Controller collapsed. He panicked and refused to go along. Franken talked to the Controller concerned, but he was beyond persuasion and had to receive medical care. After that disruption, Voskamp, who was by then the only remaining Forward Air Controller, left the compound at Potocari with his driver in the APC en route to the position of Bravo 1. Halfway to their destination, the APC broke down, because, due to the excitement, the driver had forgotten to remove the canvas covers from the engine, as a result of which it overheated. They used water from jerry cans to cool the engine, but despite all their efforts they were unable to restart the engine. After a radio report to the compound in Srebrenica they were picked up by a Jeep (not a APC) from B Company. As a result Voskamp could only take his most important equipment. He accompanied the driver to the position of Bravo 1, where Lieutenant Egbers' APC was visible on a hill. The team consisting of the commandos and JCOs were visible on another hill.¹⁶⁶⁸ Voskamp did not realise at that time that the commandos and JCOs, like himself, would become active as Forward Air Controllers.

Consequently, in addition to the Dutchbat Forward Air Controller, there were also the Forward Air Controller from the commandos and the British JCOs in the southern section of the enclave.

At around 05.00 hours all three blocking positions to be established in practise, were in position at Bravo 1, 3 and 4, and awaiting further events. At first light, at 04.30 hours, the JCOs heard from Sarajevo that Close Air Support would be available at 06.00 hours with a reaction time of forty minutes between VRS action and actual Close Air Support.¹⁶⁶⁹ When the blocking positions were occupied, the potential targets for Close Air Support were visible and the weather fine. Radio contact with the Forward Air Controllers was also good. They had identified four possible targets of VRS tanks and artillery. However, at that time they were not firing at the blocking positions. It was unclear what was expected of them in the case of VRS infantry surrounding the blocking positions and entering the city on foot and without the support of tanks and artillery. At the time, as far as the Combined Arms Coordination Center (CAOC) in Vicenza was aware, no decisions had been taken to that effect. Zagreb too had had no suggestions as to an immediate course of action, and the question had never really been brought up during discussions concerning the establishment of the blocking position.¹⁶⁷⁰

Prior to the APCs departure to their blocking position, severe fighting had been reported from the front. The fighting was mostly concentrated around the strategically located Height 664 halfway between Zeleni Jadar and Srebrenica city. Thanks to fine weather, Dutchbat could see the Bosnian Serbs advance with tanks and their forces clear out the villages. The VRS systematically torched all houses scattered along the road; possibly because ABiH soldiers that were still putting up a defence had converted the houses into defensive positions. The pattern was to fire a grenade through the roof of the house and to open machine-gun fire on anyone escaping from the house. This pattern made it easy to observe the movements of the VRS, as house after house went up in flames. The fighting between the ABiH and VRS could be followed simply by listening to the gunfire. The precise strength of the VRS was hard to estimate. ABiH soldiers reported that a 220-strong VRS unit had entered the enclave at OP-F. Dutchbat only observed small groups of VRS infantrymen, unaccompanied by mechanised units, advancing while firing along the flanks of the hills.¹⁶⁷¹

¹⁶⁶⁸ Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

¹⁶⁶⁹ Confidential information (1).

¹⁶⁷⁰ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 10/07/95, 0355Z, 0408Z.

¹⁶⁷¹ Interviews R. Voskamp, 08/10/98 and J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

The Final Battle between the VRS and ABiH for the Enclave

At around 05.00 hours, the ABiH launched a counter offensive in the direction of Pusmulici, at the height of Zivkovo Brdo and Zeleni Jadar. Some ABiH units succeeded at Zivkovo Brdo to attack the rear of the VRS and to isolate them, while other units attacked the VRS as a decoy. The counter offensive was successful and forced the VRS to withdraw. Thus, in a few hours, the VRS lost all ground they had gained over the past few days, and the ABiH benefited from a new arms supply.¹⁶⁷² The VRS even abandoned a wounded soldier. It is unknown what fate befell the wounded soldier. Apparently two soldiers of the 283rd Brigade of the ABiH approached to within thirty metres of a VRS tank, but did not have the means to eliminate it. This led to a powerful boost of morale amongst the ABiH soldiers. At the time some hundred and fifty ABiH soldiers informed Lieutenant Mustert of their brilliant victory. They said that they were withdrawing towards Srebrenica to get some sleep. Mustert was amazed by that information.¹⁶⁷³ It appeared that either the ABiH had driven the VRS back or the VRS had withdrawn; however, Dutchbat did not have a clear view of the situation after the loss of the southern OPs.

The joy amongst the ABiH was short lived. The VRS brought reinforcements and launched a fresh assault in the afternoon. In the battles that ensued, sections of the ABiH lines were unable to withstand the assault. According to ABiH reports, there was even hand-to-hand fighting. The VRS shelled the lines forcing large numbers of ABiH soldiers to abandon their positions. That resulted in disorganisation and breaking up of units. The command structure failed and the 282nd Brigade under Ibro Dudic collapsed. The population fled, accompanied by large numbers of ABiH soldiers looking for family members. The early-morning victory of the ABiH was therefore a temporary one and could not be turned into real gain and the effect of the ABiH counter offensive was lost. The ABiH attempted to regroup and turn the tide, but by around 16.00 hours the VRS had retaken all their former positions at Bojna in the vicinity of the city.¹⁶⁷⁴

The view of the Dutchbaters in blocking position Bravo 1 was restricted to a relatively empty terrain in which a tank appeared from time to time. There was no question of a tank assault on the enclave. The four VRS tanks did shell Srebrenica, but their actions were not tactically related to the occupation of the terrain. The VRS used its tanks (type T-54/55, maximum range of fifteen hundred metres) as fire support. The pattern was that a tank would fire a few shells before withdrawing again. The ABiH continued to move to the south in small groups – they informed Lieutenant Egbers that they were planning to put a VRS tank out of commission. The ABiH however failed in that mission.¹⁶⁷⁵

Lieutenant Van Duijn set up an observation post that provided some shelter against the shelling at his position (Bravo 3) east of the city. From that position he could see a few small, disorganised groups of ABiH soldiers, armed only with Kalashnikovs moving across the terrain. The population still present in that area appeared to be grateful for the presence of Dutchbat. The personnel of that blocking position took turns at the observation post for the day, and were able to determine the positions of two tanks – one to the south of Pribicevac and another on the tarred road near Bojna. From Bravo 3, Van Duijn could also establish that the VRS were shelling Srebrenica with artillery from Pribicevac. He saw two Howitzers (type 2S1, 122 mm self-propelled) and tanks with their barrels up.

Initially the firing was aimed across Bravo 3 at the city, but several shells exploded close to the blocking position. In the course of the morning two shells exploded in their direct vicinity, followed by more shelling later on. Most houses in the vicinity of the APC were blown apart. Van Duijn described those events as 'quite impressive'. The rather accurate firing must have been guided by forward artillery observers with a good view of the terrain. In accordance with the directives, the personnel then

¹⁶⁷² Interview Sadik Vilic, 15/04/98.

¹⁶⁷³ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

¹⁶⁷⁴ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjecaceni koverat*, p. 259-62.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Interview V.B. Egbers, 02/09/99.

retreated into the APC to avoid injury by exploding grenades. That notwithstanding, Van Duijn did not believe that the VRS were firing directly at them.¹⁶⁷⁶

The ABiH nevertheless reported to Tuzla that the VRS had fired five tank grenades at a Dutchbat APC. According to the report, the shelling came nowhere near Dutchbaters, so they did not react. According to local ABiH Commander Becirovic, Dutchbat had reduced its movements to an absolute minimum. In a conversation between Budakovic, the Chief of Staff of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, and Becirovic at around 13.00 hours, the former asked what Dutchbat was reporting to its commanding officers. Becirovic thought that Dutchbat might be reporting the situation inaccurately to their superiors. Becirovic stated that Dutchbat had been fired at twice by a VRS tank and that, until then, three OPs had been occupied. In Becirovic's view Dutchbat took no measures to counter the VRS actions even though Dutchbat had accused Becirovic and the ABiH of obstructing the battalion. Budakovic reacted by saying that, if necessary, the ABiH had to force Dutchbat to surrender their weapons, and that he would contact Colonel Brantz in Tuzla to ensure that the VRS understood the nature of the UN ultimatum.¹⁶⁷⁷

Dutchbat meanwhile tried to set up a blocking position in one of the many hairpin bends on the road south of Srebrenica that offered a good view of the terrain below.¹⁶⁷⁸

Commotion at the Blocking Position

When the APCs of Captain Hageman and Lieutenant Egbers attempted to occupy positions near the hairpin bends, the crew heard explosions and found themselves under fire. Initially Hageman had mistaken it for an ABiH hand grenade, thinking they had thrown it because the ABiH did not appreciate the Dutchbat presence near their position. He only realised several hours later that it had in fact been a VRS tank grenade fired at an ABiH artillery position. The Dutchbat section concerned with military-civilian matters (in military terms: Section 5) initially even thought that the ABiH had taken over a tank and was using it to fire at the Bravo 1 blocking position. After Section 5 contacted ABiH Commander Ramiz Becirovic, it became clear that the ABiH had been attacking a VRS tank.¹⁶⁷⁹

The positions of Bravo 1 and Hageman's APC lay more or less in a straight line in relation to the direction of fire emanating from the tanks located near Pribicevac. Soon thereafter the Bravo 1 APCs were also exposed to shelling in their immediate vicinity.¹⁶⁸⁰

It later turned out that the location of Bravo 1 almost exactly coincided with an ABiH artillery position some thirty metres higher. The gun was an old-fashioned M-48 Howitzer,¹⁶⁸¹ that had been pulled into the position with a tractor. It was set up approximately one hundred metres from the Dutchbat APCs. While Dutchbat had not noticed it at first, the presence of the ABiH artillery position had real consequences for them once the VRS had noticed the gun.

During the above-mentioned grenade explosion, Hageman's APC skidded off the road when its track became jammed.¹⁶⁸² The APC came to a halt on the edge of a precipice and the crew quickly abandoned the vehicle. It was clear that the APC could be pulled out, but that the operation would demand the support of a recovery unit. This unit arrived an hour later. During the recovery operation,

¹⁶⁷⁶ Debriefing statement L.C. van Duijn, 12/09/95 with supplements from interview, 02/07/99.

¹⁶⁷⁷ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjeceni koverat*, p. 259-602.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Due to the fact that VRS tanks first fired on the Bravo 1 APCs on 10 July and again on 11 July, after again having taken position at Bravo 1, recollections of the events over those two days are generally muddled. This obstructed efforts to reconstruct actual events.

¹⁶⁷⁹ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing Sergeant-Major B. Rave, 22/07/95.

¹⁶⁸⁰ SMG, 1004/56. B Company Journal, 10/07/95, 07.13

¹⁶⁸¹ To be precise, this was a 76-mm mountain cannon with a range of 8,750 metres, specifically designed for combat in Yugoslavian terrain and climate, also known as the 'Tito Gun' due to the fact that it was one of the first weapons to be produced during the Tito regime. This was the only artillery weapon in the possession of the ABiH and had not been handed in during the demilitarisation of the enclave.

¹⁶⁸² SMG, 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 10/07/95, 07.16, 07.30 and 09.08.

the VRS attacked the position of the eight exposed Dutchbat soldiers, according to one with a tank, according to another with a mortar. Mortar grenades hit the area around them and damaged a periscope of the APC. The crew of the stranded vehicle took cover and split up over the remaining vehicles. The recovery operation was stopped and the APC left perched on the edge of the precipice.

The essentials were already taken from the APC. Hageman and his men used the vehicle of the recovery unit to drive back to the compound in Srebrenica. As Hageman suspected, on their way back the ABiH shelled the recovery APC using light mortars. Back at the compound after a small debriefing session the men took some rest. At the compound in Srebrenica a new vehicle was being prepared and Groen replaced the crew who had been lightly wounded with infantry soldiers on duty at the compound. During the period of time that Hageman stayed at the compound, Groen assumed responsibility over the blocking position. At the end of the afternoon, Hageman resumed the position near the Market Square in the village.¹⁶⁸³

Lieutenant Egbers reported from Bravo 1 that a tank was firing at his APC and that he needed to change his position. It was not clear whether the VRS were firing at the APC or at the ABiH artillery position at Stupine.¹⁶⁸⁴ The confused Bravo 1 APCs turned around to withdraw out of the view of the VRS and took cover behind a mountain ridge a few hundred metres away. That position offered no view of the terrain and they lost radio contact with Groen. Hageman again ordered the crew at Bravo 1 to take positions in a safe spot on the hill, and to resume observation. As expected, they were soon targeted again and the two APCs and the command vehicle sought cover once again. Once ensconced in a safe position, the crew were able to consult outside the APCs. They returned to a hilltop position from where they could observe the terrain without being spotted by the VRS.¹⁶⁸⁵ In this way, Egbers' section of APCs relocated to safe positions several times over a period of an hour, only to return after a short while, take fire from the VRS, and return to the safe position again.

The third time Bravo 1 was fired upon, several grenades exploded around them while personnel were outside the APC.¹⁶⁸⁶ Four grenades exploded in the direct vicinity of the Dutchbat APCs, generating a great deal of smoke and dust around the APC and some personnel who were outside at the time.¹⁶⁸⁷ The Dutchbaters could clearly distinguish the sound of shrapnel hitting the side of the APCs. Soldier G.M.M. Verhaegh was wounded by a grenade explosion some ten metres away. Verhaegh, who, at the time was standing next to the APC, took shrapnel in his elbow and neck, and temporarily lost his hearing.¹⁶⁸⁸ Four others also suffered hearing loss.¹⁶⁸⁹ Forward Air Controller Voskamp, who was at the time sketching targets on his map in the door of the APC, claimed to have been disoriented by an explosion.¹⁶⁹⁰ Meanwhile a Jeep arrived with three commandos, one of whom was lightly wounded.¹⁶⁹¹

After that round of shelling the two APCs and Jeep quickly returned to the safe spot behind the mountain ridge some three hundred metres back. Once things had calmed down again, the commandos sought out a new vantage point over the terrain. Bravo 1 continued to report explosions and fighting;

¹⁶⁸³ SMG/Debrief. 'Military analysis of the action taken by Dutchbat during the Srebrenica crisis', Assen, 28/09/95, compiled by LCol A. de Munnik, see 'Verslag blocking positions' by Capt. Hageman; Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p 297-8. The driver of the recovery APC, who had closed the vehicle's hatch, lost control of the vehicle on the way back to the compound and crashed into a house. (Feitenrelaas, § 3.7.4)

¹⁶⁸⁴ Interview V.B. Egbers, 02/09/99.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (39).

¹⁶⁸⁶ SMG, 1004/56. B Company Diary, 10/07/95, 07.23-08.45.

¹⁶⁸⁷ SMG, 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 10/07/95 06.44. Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

¹⁶⁸⁸ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (30). The shrapnel was removed by a doctor. Verhaegh subsequently did service in the compound in Potocari and helped with the management of the refugee convoys. There was still some shrapnel near his wind pipe, which could not be removed in Potocari. Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 105 attributed the wounding to a British JCO.

¹⁶⁸⁹ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (39).

¹⁶⁹⁰ Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

¹⁶⁹¹ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 298.

however, it was unclear as to the exact source of the attacks.¹⁶⁹² Later that afternoon Egbers received orders to return to the other APCs, which had meanwhile returned to Srebrenica.¹⁶⁹³

The VRS had therefore most probably not fired at the Bravo 1 blocking position, but at the ABiH Howitzer. The fire from the Howitzer was countered by tank fire.¹⁶⁹⁴ The shelling reinforced the impression that the VRS had observers in positions at various hilltops and thus commanded a good view of the terrain.¹⁶⁹⁵ The VRS advised Dutchbat command via the Dutchbat hostages at Bratunac not to send any further vehicles to the south as, otherwise, the VRS could not guarantee Dutchbat's safety. That notwithstanding, the shelling of the APC gave the battalion command the opportunity to call in Close Air Support.¹⁶⁹⁶

11. Close Air Support: A Third Request from Dutchbat

The Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo had already advised Nicolai, at 07.55 hours in the morning of 10 July, to prepare a Blue Sword Request. Nicolai discussed this on the phone with Zagreb, but was advised not to put in his request too early. Nicolai was informed that, at that point, Zagreb still had no concrete plans for the deployment of Close Air Support. Force Commander Janvier did not want to sign a Blue Sword Request while NATO still had aircraft in the air; which, as agreed, had been the case as of 06.00 hours. The logic of the decision was unclear to the Director of the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo. The reasons for the decision can only be speculated upon in retrospect; the most probable being that Janvier had decided that there was no need to rush for a signature while NATO had aircraft in the air – if those aircraft had not been available, approval would have demanded more urgency, as valuable time would have been lost in recalling the aircraft to above the Adriatic Sea. The Air Operations Coordination Center meanwhile insisted that Nicolai give them an idea as to the conditions under which aircraft would be deployed.¹⁶⁹⁷

One possible explanation for Janvier's reluctance at the time (not linked to the presence of NATO aircraft) could have been his statement, made during the morning meeting with Akashi at 08.30 hours, to the effect that the ABiH were the real root of the problem in Srebrenica. Janvier also expressed the conviction that the ABiH were capable of defending the enclave, but had clearly chosen not to do so and that the Bosnian Muslims were now putting pressure on the UN to defend Srebrenica for them. It was further stated during the meeting that the position of the Dutchbat Forward Air Controllers was located at one-and-a-half kilometres south of the city.¹⁶⁹⁸ The meeting is discussed in

¹⁶⁹² SMG, 1004/56. B Company Journal, 10/07/95, 08.32, 09.39, 12.43.

¹⁶⁹³ Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

¹⁶⁹⁴ According to David Rohde (*Endgame*, p. 104-5) the weapon was not fired as Ramiz Becirovic had issued orders not to do so. The ABiH soldiers were instructed to wait and leave the defence to Dutchbat. In an interview, Hasan Nuhanovic said he had heard Ramiz Becirovic give the order not to use the weapon, as it could provoke the VRS to shell the population and because it could discourage the UN from granting Close Air Support. (Interview, 05/08/97 and 06/08/97). Both the Dutchbat and JCO reports independently confirmed that the Howitzer had been fired. JCO reported fire from the M-48 on 10 July. The B Company logbook stated that the M-48 fired on 10 July at 08.22 and 09.25 hours and on 11 July at 12.30 hours in the direction of the VRS. According to Lieutenant Egbers the Howitzer was never fired while he was in the neighbourhood. In the first place, the ABiH had been told not to fire it; however, later, when Dutchbat also came under fire, it was said to have fired back. In Egbers' view that never happened either because there was not enough ammunition available or the cannon failed to fire. (Interview 02/09/99). Corporal S.P. Winkler of the Reconnaissance Platoon asked the ABiH not to use the cannon until the VRS passed an unspecified point. He notified Egbers of that agreement. (OM Arnhem. KMar Brigade Soesterberg, 'sebra-Care-Team', 28/10/98, No. P. 462/99.

¹⁶⁹⁵ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

¹⁶⁹⁶ SMG, Debrief. Memorandum by Major Otter (C Support Coy) 10/07/95 10.45. The report originated from Sergeant Bos.

¹⁶⁹⁷ NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. 'Chronology of Events CAS Missions Srebrenica', 10/07/95, 0730LT, 0800LT, 0830LT. Also see DCBC, Box 59. Overview of Citations Logbook Air Operations Control Center', Annex A with Klu replies to Questions by the Chamber on Srebrenica.

¹⁶⁹⁸ Interview David Last based on journal entries, 05/07/00. The Public Relations Officer of UNPF cautioned those present not to discuss that vision outside of the room concerned.

more detail in Paragraph 12. Vicenza, via the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo, had been informed to the effect that the Forward Air Controllers, Windmill 02 and 03, had been under fire.¹⁶⁹⁹ The fact that Windmill 02 had had to withdraw from Bravo 1 that morning and had been forced to find an alternative location due to direct ABiH fire came as a surprise to Vicenza. They also questioned whether it could indeed have been the ABiH, and not the VRS.¹⁷⁰⁰ This offers a glimpse into the confusion that followed after the Dutchbat units found themselves in the crossfire between the VRS and ABiH positions. To the question from Vicenza as to whether air power should also be deployed against the ABiH when firing on a Tactical Air Control Party, it was replied that it would be considered. The question became current when, as outlined above, it transpired that the ABiH were firing an artillery piece at a very short distance from the Bravo 1 blocking position. Had the VRS answered that fire, there would have been a substantial danger of the Dutchbat requesting Close Air Support. The question posed in Vicenza was; in that case, who should be targeted first – the ABiH or the VRS? Vicenza preferred the option of the VRS; however that would have begged the question as to whether the Forward Air Controller would have been able to guide the Close Air Support if he had been incapable of relocating.¹⁷⁰¹

At 08.38 hours the officer in charge of operations (G-3) in Sarajevo briefed Nicolai regarding the availability of aircraft. Nicolai wanted ‘continuous air coverage’ until 13.00 hours. Even during that conversation Vicenza continued to work on changes to the Air Tasking Messages. Those amendments would have enabled the aircraft to remain in the air until 14.00 hours, and further work was being done to extend that to 18.00 hours. Nicolai confirmed that he wished to keep the aircraft available until 14.00 hours and that they should be ready and deployable within 60 minutes after that. The Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo again described the blocking positions to Vicenza as ‘a line in the sand’ aimed at holding the VRS back - if necessary with force. One problem in that respect was the fact that the VRS APCs were moving both on and off the roads, which made them hard to pinpoint from the air.¹⁷⁰²

Deputy Battalion Commander Franken requested Close Air Support at exactly 08.55 hours, immediately after the ABiH, who were positioned near the Bravo 1 blocking position, had opened fire on the VRS and the VRS had returned their fire. The accompanying target list showed fifteen VRS targets – mainly artillery and mortars, but including two tanks, all in the southern section of the enclave. The Target Lists were intended to prepare the pilots, and to determine priorities and the most threatening targets. The coordinates of the targets could then be programmed into the aircraft’s computers. High on the priority list was a rocket launcher that had earlier sowed death and destruction amongst the population in the eastern section of the enclave, as well as a few active Howitzers. One problem was the scattered presence of the ABiH soldiers that were attempting to close their lines in the densely forested hillsides. They could disrupt simple target identification procedures, as they were almost impossible to distinguish from the VRS on the ground.

The Dutchbat target list of the previous day, 9 July, was no longer current due to the territorial gains of the VRS. Brantz requested Dutchbat to update those targets.¹⁷⁰³ Sector North East however received no update or repetition of the request for Close Air Support. Dutchbat only updated the target list in the course of 10 July.¹⁷⁰⁴

¹⁶⁹⁹ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 10/07/95, 0630Z, 0712Z.

¹⁷⁰⁰ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 10/07/95, 0750Z, 0955Z.

¹⁷⁰¹ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 10/07/95, 0540Z, 0555Z.

¹⁷⁰² DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 10/07/95, 0638Z, 0745Z, 0812Z, 0955Z.

¹⁷⁰³ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹⁷⁰⁴ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary (version August 1999), p. 127. Brantz referred to Fax No. T No. 180 dated 09/07/95 from Dutchbat to SNE and HQ UNPROFOR. On that day Franken kept in contact with Brantz, because, as far as he knew, Karremans was temporarily unavailable due to a cold. Karremans however denied having been ill that day.

No trace of Franken's request could be found in the logbooks of either Sarajevo or Vicenza and Naples.¹⁷⁰⁵ Apparently the Forward Air Controllers also had no knowledge of the request, as they had issued no warnings. The Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo also gave no indication that a request was underway. The aircraft remained above the sea as instructed 'to be available "if" needed to provide CAS'.¹⁷⁰⁶

The problems were not limited to the failure of Franken's request to reach the higher echelons. Even if it had reached Zagreb, a further obstacle was the fact that Janvier had, at the time, stated that he was still not ready to sign a Blue Sword Request. In any event, Zagreb never did receive a request.¹⁷⁰⁷

At 12.00 hours, Zagreb consulted Nicolai regarding The Hague's position on Close Air Support, whereby it was confirmed that CAS was available. However, a request still had to be submitted and at that time Zagreb had not yet received the said request. The paperwork in Sarajevo was ready for a Blue Sword Request. At that point the Intelligence staff in Zagreb maintained that there would be no VRS attack. On board the USS *Lasalle*, where NATO Admiral Smith was present, there was concern about the precise location of the VRS, and what the Bosnian Serbs were planning to do. In their view the VRS were in fact moving in very close to Srebrenica.¹⁷⁰⁸

That afternoon, with the exception of brief radio contact with Bookshelf (the airborne command post), there was no further significant mention of Close Air Support.¹⁷⁰⁹ The aircraft remained available until 14.00 hours, after which they returned to their bases. The afternoon package was not scheduled go airborne, but only to remain on 60-minute alert. This made the reaction time for Close Air Support two hours and forty minutes.¹⁷¹⁰ Shortly after midday, the Director of the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo again advised Nicolai to try to obtain a signature from Janvier and Akashi for a Blue Sword Request; however, there is no record that this had ever been proposed to Zagreb.¹⁷¹¹

At around midday the VRS advance appeared to grind to a halt. The commander of the Joint Commission Observers (JCOs) assigned to Dutchbat notified Sarajevo that, in his view, the VRS were heeding the warnings.¹⁷¹² Vicenza did however continue to plot the positions of tanks and artillery signalled from Sarajevo. However, at that point clouds rolled in over Srebrenica, which, according to Vicenza significantly lessened the chances of Close Air Support being granted.¹⁷¹³

Karremans wrote in his book that he had submitted a second request for Close Air Support on the afternoon of 10 July when the city again came under fire. Karremans however did not specify the time of the request. His request was not granted based on an 'incomplete target list'; however it is unclear at which headquarters the request became stuck.¹⁷¹⁴ The Dutchbat monthly register does indeed mention shelling of the city between 15.00 - 15.54 hours.¹⁷¹⁵ However, not a single logbook mentions a request for Close Air Support, a target list or any preparatory activities to signal the alarm to the aircraft (which were on the ground after 14.00 hours). There was also no mention as to the influence of deteriorating weather conditions on that afternoon.¹⁷¹⁶ It was only at 19.11 hours that the Air Operations Coordination Center signalled that the VRS were launching an assault and that Dutchbat

¹⁷⁰⁵ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 10/07/95, 0630Z, 0712Z.

¹⁷⁰⁶ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 10/07/95, 01.45Z, 09.19Z.

¹⁷⁰⁷ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary (version January 2001), 11/07/95, 08.55. Brantz claimed to have enquired in Zagreb.

¹⁷⁰⁸ Interview Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

¹⁷⁰⁹ Confidential information (1).

¹⁷¹⁰ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log for 10/07/95. The log reports at 01.45Z: 'Bosnian UN Commander'. This seems unlikely. Those powers pertained to the Force Commander in Zagreb and the Bosnian Commander was absent.

¹⁷¹¹ NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. 'Chronology of Events CAS Missions Srebrenica', 1235-1359 LT.

¹⁷¹² Confidential information (1).

¹⁷¹³ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 10/07/95, 1043Z, 1045Z.

¹⁷¹⁴ Karremans, *Srebrenica: Who Cares?*, p. 184.

¹⁷¹⁵ SMG 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 10/07/95, entries 15.00 to 15.54.

¹⁷¹⁶ This applies to Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, AFSOUTH, Sector North East, 'Chronology of Events CAS Missions - Srebrenica'. Colonel Brantz' diaries offer no further explanation.

had returned fire. The logbook also states that the final decision to withhold Close Air Support was made at 20.00 hours that evening.¹⁷¹⁷

12. Further Activities of the Blocking Position on 10 July

The notion that the VRS were observing the warning was proven wrong when, a few hours later, tank and artillery fire broke loose all over the city.¹⁷¹⁸ At around 15.00 hours the southern and eastern sections of the enclave were rocked by more than thirty explosions. Houses were hit, resulting in a stream of casualties. Four vehicles were used to transport casualties to the hospital.

Sergeant 1st Class G.W. Reussing saw a lorry with seven wounded Muslims pass en route to the hospital. The consequence of this was that it seemed that both the ABiH and the population would become more alienated and aggressive towards Dutchbat.¹⁷¹⁹ Reussing had posted his APC casualty evacuation vehicle in the centre of Srebrenica to provide medical aid, if needed, at the blocking positions. The location turned out to have been an unfortunate choice, as scores of Muslims, seeing the red cross, sought treatment for minor injuries and protection. The local population also demanded that the APC casualty evacuation vehicle be used to transport their patients to hospital.¹⁷²⁰ Reussing was however not prepared to do that. After a few hours in the centre, he moved the APC to an alternative location. After consultation with Groen, it was decided to return to the compound in Srebrenica and to remain on standby there.¹⁷²¹

Although situated behind the Bravo 3 blocking position, OP-H, due to its high location, appeared to command the best view of the terrain south of the enclave, and was therefore an important source of information. In the course of 10 July, the OP reported explosions in the centre of the city and southwest of Srebrenica, as well as heavy fighting around Mount Zivkovo Bdro at the southern edge of the enclave and north of the Swedish Shelter Project. The wooden houses there, as well as in the village of Pustumlici were on fire. The VRS were using a variety of weapons systems (Multiple Launch Rocket Systems, artillery, mortars, and T-34 and T-54 tanks) that were mostly set up near Pribicevac. At around 18.00 hours OP-H reported sighting fifty VRS infantry descending in the direction of the city, and setting everything on fire on the way. The OP also spotted a VRS concentration near the radio tower at Height 664, and to the east of the village of Rajne. The VRS pressure was increasing and many ABiH soldiers were fleeing towards the city. The population in the centre of the city panicked and started to flee en masse.¹⁷²²

By shortly after 17.00 hours, the VRS infantry had regrouped its units along the Ranje – Petrovici line (see map, section 5). All buildings and houses along that line had been destroyed or were on fire.¹⁷²³ Lieutenant Mustert reported to Captain Groen from Bravo 4 blocking position that, once the VRS infantry descended past the radio tower, Bravo 4, like Bravo 3 would be cut off from Srebrenica city. He asked Groen for advice, as only Bravo 1 would be able to return to the compound in Srebrenica along the route to the west of the city. Groen, advised thereto by Hageman, ordered his units to abandon blocking positions Bravo 3 and Bravo 4. It was becoming clear that the VRS were concentrating on occupying the city.¹⁷²⁴

It was at that time that Groen gave instruction at the compound to fire over the heads of the VRS and to launch mortar fire. The last available mortar (type 81 mm) was set up in the compound in

¹⁷¹⁷ NIOD, Coll. De Ruitter. Memorandum Maj. Frenzt, AOCC Sarajevo to Lieutenant Colonel de Ruitter

¹⁷¹⁸ Confidential information (1).

¹⁷¹⁹ SMG, 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 10/07/95, entries 15.00 to 15.45.

¹⁷²⁰ SMG, 1004/56. Logbook B Coy 10/07/95, 06.21.

¹⁷²¹ Debriefing statement Sergeant 1st Class G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95.

¹⁷²² SMG, 1004/56. Logbook B Coy, 10/07/95, various entries.

¹⁷²³ SMG, 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 10/07/95, 17.15.

¹⁷²⁴ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

Srebrenica. Sergeant F.H. Struik, the Commander of OP-H, gave the necessary corrections by radio.¹⁷²⁵ Initially only light grenades were fired in warning; the High Explosive grenades were only to be used in case of a direct assault on a blocking position.¹⁷²⁶ At that point the VRS were in the vicinity of Bojna, descending the hill towards the city, and crossing the 84th Horizontal, which served as the final line for the advance.

At 19.13 hours Hageman was instructed by Groen to withdraw blocking position Bravo 1 in the direction of the city's market square. After that the teams of blocking positions Bravo 3 and Bravo 4 also began to withdraw towards the market square in Srebrenica. The Bravo 1 team was at that stage close to Hageman on the market square.

At 19.17 hours, B Company sent out a request for Close Air Support. Hageman made this request in order to be able to fall back on a powerful weapon in case it were to become necessary to fire at the VRS with .50 machine guns. He gave instructions to only fire the .50 machine guns if Close Air Support was actually given. Hageman assumed at that time that Close Air Support would arrive within six minutes. Hageman himself did not have any view on the VRS, but reports on its presence from OP-H strengthened his conviction that a request for Close Air Support was justified.¹⁷²⁷

While withdrawing Bravo 4, Lieutenant Mustert ordered direct .50 machine gun fire on the VRS units across the open terrain on foot. His intention was to secure the withdrawal by forcing the VRS to take cover. That was the only time Dutchbat fired directly at the VRS. The firing distance was five hundred to one thousand metres. The effects of the fire could not be established. While impact points were visible, it was impossible to determine whether any casualties fell on the VRS side.¹⁷²⁸

The B Company logbook also reported that fire was stopped for incomprehensible reasons. Within a period of forty minutes, B Company fired off nine light grenades in the direction of the VRS. After that the VRS appeared to withdraw.¹⁷²⁹

Tension also ran high at Bravo 3. The ABiH appeared restless and anxious, and showed aggression towards Dutchbat. Bravo 3 received a report from the ABiH to the effect that approximately eighty VRS infantrymen were hidden behind the crest of a hill and would presently become visible. Hageman then instructed Lieutenant Van Duijn to fire over the heads of the VRS as soon as they appeared on the crest of the hill to make them aware of the UN positions.¹⁷³⁰ The Bosnian Serbs then retreated beyond the crest of the hill and out of sight. Van Duijn's unit then ceased firing the .50 machine gun from the APC, after which everyone present sighed with relief. After that Bravo 3 also pulled back in the direction of the market square.¹⁷³¹ Groen instructed the only deployable APC in the compound in Srebrenica to take a position a few hundred metres from the compound en route to the western OPs to cut off access to the city from the west. If the VRS had been able to reach the edge of the city unnoticed from the east and the south, then they could do so from the west. They had to prevent the Bosnian Serbs from entering the city and the compound unexpectedly from the west.¹⁷³²

At that point two of the three blocking positions had already been abandoned and the third, too, was beginning to withdraw even though Groen had not consulted the Battalion Staff to that effect. Consultation was in any event not possible at the time, as the radio communication with the Battalion Staff was not functioning well. This malfunction could have been caused by accidental use of the toggleswitch of one of their own radios. There was a permanent beeping tone that did not appear to be due to intentional VRS disruption; which had previously occurred on several occasions. Once they did

¹⁷²⁵ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 298-300.

¹⁷²⁶ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing report Captain Groen, 22/07/95.

¹⁷²⁷ SMG, Debrief. 'Military analysis of the action taken by Dutchbat during the Srebrenica crisis', Assen 28/09/95, compiled by LCol A. de Munnik, see 'Verslag blocking position' by Capt Hageman.

¹⁷²⁸ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

¹⁷²⁹ SMG, 1004/56. Logbook B Coy, 10/07/95, 18.15 to 19.28.

¹⁷³⁰ SMG, 1004. Debriefing First Lieutenant Van Duijn, 22/07/95.

¹⁷³¹ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

¹⁷³² Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 298-300.

manage to establish contact with Franken, his reaction was assenting.¹⁷³³ The breaking away activities yielded no significant problems with the ABiH. There was sufficient room to manoeuvre and, with the exception of a few ABiH soldiers with hunting rifles and Kalashnikovs, there was no sign of local population in the area. The calm around the APCs became almost tangible. The general impression at the time (which was to be confirmed later) was that many of the ABiH had already left the area.¹⁷³⁴ By then it was 19.35 hours and it appeared that the VRS had pulled back; which meant that the city had been completely surrounded by the VRS on the southern and eastern sides.¹⁷³⁵

Many ABiH soldiers had gathered in the centre of Srebrenica. Many screamed and aimed anti-tank and other weapons at the APCs, and ordered Dutchbat to move to the south.¹⁷³⁶ The mayor told Hageman that Dutch bat was not allowed to move backwards. The mayor also resolutely refused Hageman's request that the population move away from the vicinity of the APCs. The population and the APCs were not to be allowed to move.¹⁷³⁷ Hageman then sought contact with ABiH Commander Ramiz Becirovic and the Dutchbat section for military-civilian contacts (Section 5). Becirovic agreed to the positions occupied by the blocking positions.¹⁷³⁸ One member of Section 5, who had been instructed to negotiate with the ABiH soldiers and population for more room to manoeuvre for the blocking positions in the vicinity of the market square, reacted with the words that he had better things to do. That negative response was reported to Groen, but was not followed up.¹⁷³⁹ Dutchbat was sorry about the lack of support on the part of Section 5, even though they were fully familiar with the circumstances that gave rise to that lack of support.¹⁷⁴⁰

After having ordered the APCs to move to the south, the Bosnian Muslims ordered Dutchbat to fire at a ridge where some VRS were supposed to have been lurking. Some of the ABiH even fired (small-arms fire) at one of the Dutchbat APCs, forcing the gunner to take cover.¹⁷⁴¹ After that the situation on the market square deteriorated rapidly. An ABiH soldier climbed onto the APC and started firing randomly with the .50 machine gun. This happened due to the fact that the machine gun had been left exposed and without supervision, whereby it was possible for anyone to use it. It was impossible to tell whether the firing had any effect. The machine gun fire only stopped once the ammunition box had been emptied. Lieutenant Mustert warned the gunner on board the APC by radio to do something to stop the firing, but that failed because the ABiH soldier that was operating the gun was sitting on the hatch, thus trapping the gunner insider the vehicle.¹⁷⁴² According to Ramiz Becirovic, two ABiH soldiers were involved in that incident – the Commander of the 282nd Brigade, Ibro Dudic, and a second ABiH soldier. According to the Bosnian journalist, Sefko Hodzic, Dudic confiscated the APC and, driving it through the streets of Srebrenica, used the machine gun to chase the VRS from the police station to the market. After having used up all the ammunition, he purportedly took the APC to the compound in Srebrenica and left it there. That story did the rounds for a while, but falls strictly under the category of 'tall stories'.¹⁷⁴³

The remaining ammunition boxes were under armour in the APC and were thus out of the reach of the ABiH. The ABiH did however continue to demand that the APC be driven to the south to fight the VRS instead of standing passively on the market square. That demand was also worded as a

¹⁷³³ Confidential information (15).

¹⁷³⁴ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

¹⁷³⁵ SMG, 1004/56. Logbook B Coy, 10/07/95, 19.35.

¹⁷³⁶ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 276.

¹⁷³⁷ SMG/Debrief. 'Military analysis of the action taken by Dutchbat during the Srebrenica crisis', Assen 28/09/95, compiled by Lt Col A. de Munnik, see 'Verslag blocking position' by Capt Hageman.

¹⁷³⁸ SMG, 1004/56. Logbook B Coy, 10/07/95, 20.57.

¹⁷³⁹ SMG/Debrief. Feitenrelaas [Factual Account] debriefing § 3.2.5.

¹⁷⁴⁰ SMG, 1004. Debriefing First Lieutenant Van Duijn, 22/07/95.

¹⁷⁴¹ Debriefing statement Soldier 1st Class A. Hagenaaars, 14/09/95.

¹⁷⁴² Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

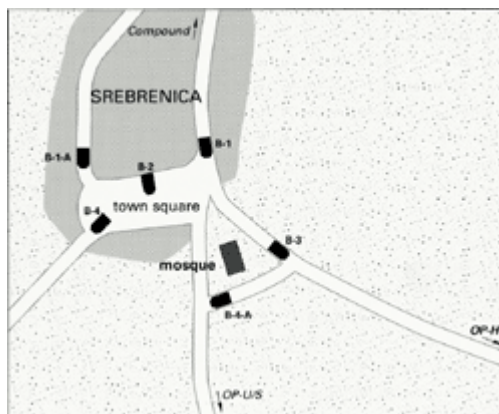
¹⁷⁴³ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjeceni koverat*, p. 268.

threat.¹⁷⁴⁴ In addition to the vehicles, there were some ABiH soldiers with anti-tank weapons (type RPG); which also implied a certain threat.¹⁷⁴⁵ It is conceivable that some of the ABiH soldiers present might mistakenly have thought that one of the Dutchbat vehicles was about to be returned to the compound in Srebrenica when, in fact, it was about to be moved a little further to the south. One of the leaders of the Opstina (it is not clear who) was present and succeeded to calm the situation down somewhat by telling the soldiers to stop threatening Dutchbat and to let them do their work.¹⁷⁴⁶ Hageman ordered the Bravo 1 crew to fire the .50 machine gun over the heads of the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁷⁴⁷ After that they did indeed fire using approximately half a case of ammunition, before the APC in question pulled back to two hundred metres from the market square.¹⁷⁴⁸ The Bosnian Muslims appeared to have been appeased by that. Two APCs remained on the market square with gunners above armour.¹⁷⁴⁹

After that a VRS tank (type T-54/55) resumed fire and also a mortar grenade exploded in the direct vicinity of an APC (near the UNHCR Warehouse) causing shrapnel to hit the APC's armour. No one, including the population on the square was injured. Hageman then ordered the withdrawal of the vehicles of blocking positions Bravo 1, 3 and 4.

After the shelling, Groen reported to the Battalion Chief Staff that B Company was using direct fire to defend the city, but according to the logbook that never happened. Groen had indeed ordered all APCs to open fire, but all units reported that they had fired into the air. It is possible that Groen, with that announcement, sold the Battalion Chief Staff and also the UN staffs a dummy (because it was reported to the higher echelons). While the report had not been accurate, the VRS did indeed back off somewhat after the .50 machine gun fire.¹⁷⁵⁰

During the night of 10 to 11 July, all the APCs from the blocking positions remained concentrated on the market square, mainly because Groen had feared that the VRS might have been able to surround one of APCs in the dark. That would have been quite easy due to the nature of the terrain and the fact that it was not always easy to distinguish between the VRS and ABiH.¹⁷⁵¹



At that point OP-H was still occupied. The ABiH returned in small groups to the city from the south of the enclave. During the evening there was air presence in the form of some fighter aircraft; however, soon thereafter an announcement was made to the effect that the request for Close Air Support had been turned down. After that things were relatively quiet for a few hours. There was still

¹⁷⁴⁴ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

¹⁷⁴⁵ Debriefing statement First Lieutenant L.C. van Duijn, 12/09/95.

¹⁷⁴⁶ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

¹⁷⁴⁷ Debriefing statement Soldier 1st Class J.A. Eggink, 11/09/95.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Debriefing statement First Lieutenant L.C. van Duijn, 12/09/95.

¹⁷⁴⁹ Debriefing statement Soldier 1st Class A. Hagenaaars, 14/09/95.

¹⁷⁵⁰ SMG, 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 10/07/95, 19.10 and 19.50. SMG, 1004/56, Logbook B Coy, 10/07/95, 19.01 and 19.05.

¹⁷⁵¹ Interview J. R. Groen, 05/07/99.

some fighting on the eastern side of the city.¹⁷⁵² As in the preceding days, the night was relatively peaceful.¹⁷⁵³ People continued to stream backwards and forwards across the city square, but it was only at around 01.00 hours in the night of 10 to 11 July that the chaotic mass finally began to settle down. At that point, although all members of the crew of the blocking positions left stranded in the market square in their APCs felt miserable about the course of events, they nevertheless managed to remain resolute.¹⁷⁵⁴

13. The Night of 10 July: The Fourth Request for Close Air Support

When briefing Akashi on the morning of 10 July, the Operations Department in Zagreb reported the receipt, on the previous evening, of the pre-planned request for Close Air Support from Sarajevo. The only step that was still outstanding was the signature from Zagreb. This was also the meeting at which Janvier stated that the ABiH were strong enough to defend their own territory. In his view the current situation was quite different from that of 1993, when the enclave was more or less overrun. Janvier had received information to the effect that the ABiH had not only fired at Dutchbat, but also at NATO aircraft above Srebrenica. No confirmation of the latter accusation is available. Other than in Zepa, there is no evidence that the ABiH was in possession of shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles. At that meeting Janvier stated that he feared the Bosnian Government might be trying to force the UN to take a direction it was not prepared to take.

Akashi was of the opinion that the ABiH tended to initiate actions and to ask the UN and the international community to react to the consequences.¹⁷⁵⁵ The Dutch embassy in Paris reported that ‘circles in daily contact with General Janvier’ had attributed the fact that UNPROFOR had only threatened the Bosnian Serbs with Close Air Support a few days later to the feeling that the Bosnian Muslims had provoked the offensive with their recent thrust at Visjnica. In addition, Zagreb could not be sure as to whether the Bosnian Serbs were executing a limited operation or whether they were planning to occupy the entire enclave.¹⁷⁵⁶

The intentions of the VRS were still not clear – including to the Joint Commission Observers (JCOs) in the enclave.¹⁷⁵⁷ Several data exchanges between Karremans and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo about the situation that day were aimed at determining at what point the VRS would have gone too far. After the VRS had resumed the advance at around 19.00 hours, the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command again considered letting the aircraft return to the air space above Srebrenica, however after due consultation with Zagreb that was called off due to the weather.¹⁷⁵⁸

At around 19.00 hours the VRS threatened to surround blocking position Bravo 1, as a result of which the blocking position had to be withdrawn towards the city. That was the best time for B Company to initiate a request for Close Air Support. Indeed, at about that time Dutchbat did send Sarajevo a new request for Close Air Support via Tuzla. Shortly prior to that, the PTT building, which also served as the UNMO base, and the nearby hospital came under fire.¹⁷⁵⁹ In the latter request, Karremans assigned priority to three areas, namely, the areas south of blocking position Bravo 1, the area north of OP-P, and the heights southeast of the town of Srebrenica.¹⁷⁶⁰

At about the same time NATO was put on the alert with the news that Dutchbat had been engaged in a firefight with the VRS, and had returned fire with ‘small arms fire’.¹⁷⁶¹ A report reached

¹⁷⁵² SMG, 1004/56. Various entries logbook B Coy.

¹⁷⁵³ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 298.

¹⁷⁵⁴ Debriefing statement Soldier 1st Class A. Hagenaaars, 14/09/95.

¹⁷⁵⁵ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Branbury Diary. SRSG’s Briefing 10/07/95.

¹⁷⁵⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00797. Code Wijnaendts 217, 10/07/95.

¹⁷⁵⁷ Confidential information (1).

¹⁷⁵⁸ Debriefing statement Lieutenant Colonel J.A.C. Ruiter, 27/09/95 with supplements 22/01/02.

¹⁷⁵⁹ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary, (version August 1999), p. 128-130.

¹⁷⁶⁰ Karremans *Srebrenica: Who Cares?*, 186.

¹⁷⁶¹ NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. ‘Chronology of Events CAS Missions Srebrenica’, 1900 LT.

the CAOC of the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force in Vicenza at 19.11 hours from Sarajevo to the effect that VRS infantry was at that point launching attacks one kilometre north of the designated 84th Horizontal. Dutchbat had been instructed to return fire if fired upon by the VRS.¹⁷⁶² After NATO in Naples had been updated by the NATO liaison officer in Sarajevo that the VRS had resumed the offensive, the designated line had been crossed, and that UNPROFOR had asked for a Blue Sword Request, NATO initiated a number of steps to comply with the request. Three minutes later the CAOC in Vicenza confirmed that aircraft were available. Within half an hour a great number of steps had been taken: Aircraft had been put on cockpit alert and a number of aircraft were waiting on the runway with engines running. Several tanker aircraft had taken off in a hurry (in military terms: they were scrambled); and would be in position within 45 minutes. The Close Air Support aircraft could fly overland, as a number of aircraft were already engaged in the Suppression of Enemy Air Defence systems (in military terms this is known as 'HARM Shooters'). A few other aircraft that were already in Bosnian airspace were assigned the task of providing Close Air Support; however they were not suitably armed. While those F-18s did have night vision equipment, they were only armed with HARM missiles, and carried no bombs. Vicenza did however check to see whether other aircraft could be kept in the air longer.¹⁷⁶³

The proof that Sarajevo had been serious was evident in the speed at which the Close Air Support procedure had been processed. Nicolai also notified the VRS at 19.20 that he had called in Close Air Support. Getting his message across was not so simple, as there were no VRS generals or senior officers available to take the message. As a last resort, Nicolai left the message with a switchboard operator. He was informed that Mladic might be available to talk to him later.¹⁷⁶⁴ According to the UN spokesperson, Alexander Ivanko, Nicolai also notified the Bosnian Serbs that the situation of the Dutch hostages would not influence his decision concerning the deployment of air power.¹⁷⁶⁵

At 20.17 hours the NATO liaison officer in Sarajevo briefed General Nicolai that aircraft were available. Nicolai was advised to agree with the instruction to leave 'targets at the discretion of the Tactical Air Control Party'. This order related to situations in which the Forward Air Controllers felt that moving targets could be identified effectively, and that the warring factions and the population could be distinguished clearly from one another. Although the weather had deteriorated, there were no indications that it would be a restrictive factor. Windmill 03 would be the Forward Air Controller, and at that stage communications were functioning well. Nicolai prepared a Blue Sword Request. Gobilliard signed it, and the request was sent to Janvier.¹⁷⁶⁶

Janvier Refuses Close Air Support

In Zagreb, at 19.55 hours, Janvier assembled the Crisis Action Team to reach a decision concerning the request for Close Air Support. The meeting was attended by deputy NATO liaison officer, the American Air Force Colonel C. Butler (Air Commodore Rudd was with Admiral Leighton Smith at sea), the political advisor to Akashi and Janvier, a few French officers and Colonel De Jonge.

Janvier posed all the questions, which, in the view of De Jonge, were answered satisfactorily, such as: 'Where is it? Is there a danger of collateral damage? Are we not too close to the Serbian border?' The latter question related to the possibility that NATO aircraft might be targeted by Air Defence systems near the Serbian border. Janvier asked whether it was possible to execute bombing

¹⁷⁶² DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 10/07/95, 1711Z.

¹⁷⁶³ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 10/07/95, 1755Z, 1758Z, 1826Z, 1830Z, 1835Z.

¹⁷⁶⁴ NIOD Coll. De Ruiter. Telephone Conversation General Nicolai - BSA HQ, 10/07/95, 19.20 hrs.

¹⁷⁶⁵ Associated Press, 10/07/95, 23:15 Eastern Time. The reports on the telephone conversations provide no confirmation to that effect.

¹⁷⁶⁶ DOPKlu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 10/07/95, 1817Z.

raids at night. The answer was that it would pose no problems; in fact, the American regarded this as a preferable option for their own aircraft, as it limited their vulnerability.

The most important obstacle was that Janvier apparently continued to assume that the Bosnian Serbs would not attack. His staff disagreed with that; after all, there was a smoking gun and there were sufficient reasons for Close Air Support. Those were typical considerations brought up during the meeting. Finally, Janvier asked the views of everyone present, starting with Colonel De Jonge. De Jonge was certain that the time had come to say 'yes' to a call for Close Air Support. All those present, with the exception of the French Colonel Thierry Moné confirmed this. The French Colonel considered a night operation hazardous; a view that was promptly negated by the NATO liaison officer, who continued to see a night operation as viable. NATO had aircraft, such as the F-15F and the AC-130, that were perfectly suitable for night work; however, NATO was not consulted.

Janvier remained uncertain about signing the request. He consulted several people and said that he had to discuss a few more things with Akashi. Akashi's political advisor said that this was not necessary, as Janvier could make the decision himself; he had full mandate, and Close Air Support fully complied with that mandate.¹⁷⁶⁷

It was left at that. During a period of further postponement, news came that the Bosnian Serbs had withdrawn.¹⁷⁶⁸ At 21.15 hours, all JCOs in the enclave were instructed by Sarajevo to return to Potocari. ABiH soldiers fighting in the vicinity of OP-H obstructed their withdrawal from the OP and later, on the return route between Srebrenica and Potocari, the ABiH again fired at the JCOs.¹⁷⁶⁹ At 21.25 hours, after some time earlier an overview had been conducted of the aircraft that could remain in the air the longest, the state of readiness of the aircraft was brought back to sixty minutes.¹⁷⁷⁰

At 21.25 hours Janvier spoke to Mladic's headquarters to notify him to the effect that the situation was no longer tolerable. Janvier claimed to have done everything possible to avoid the use of force, but that there was a limit. Janvier briefed the staff about the conversation and concluded that the UNPF was faced with three possible scenarios: (1) do nothing. In that case the VRS could stop its advance, but could also surround the blocking positions; (2) call for immediate Close Air Support; however, as it was dark and the situation confusing, that could be risky; (3) wait until the following morning to avoid the risk of hitting friendly forces with Close Air Support, and to have a clear view of the targets.¹⁷⁷¹ Janvier chose the third option. He decided not to sign the Blue Sword Request and thus not to grant Close Air Support at night. His plan was to review the situation at 06.00 hours the following morning (unless there was an attack during the night, in which case he would order nightly Close Air Support).¹⁷⁷²

Janvier notified Sarajevo of his decision and De Jonge reported the decision to the Operation Officer in Sarajevo via his own channels. Zagreb also issued an instruction that aircraft had to be on stand by as of 06.00 hours for Close Air Support. It was agreed with NATO that by that time the

¹⁷⁶⁷ *Associated Press* reported that Akashi would have preferred to leave the decision to New York and had contacted Boutros-Ghali to that end. The latter however made a public statement that he was willing to deploy the aircraft to defend Srebrenica and the UN troops. (10/07/95, 23:15 Eastern Time).

¹⁷⁶⁸ Interviews A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/09/99; H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99; DOPKLu, STAOOPER. SCO to PDOPKLu, draft replies to questions from the Chamber. The course of the discussion is described in Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 119-121 and Westerman and Rijs, *Het zwaarste scenario (The Blackest Scenario)*, p. 153-5. Rhode (p. 124) also mentions that Karremans had asked during the CAT meeting whether he should abandon the remaining OPs. In view of the political and military consequences, he considered this a 'command decision'. Janvier thought that such decisions should be made on site. Other sources fail to mention this issue. Colonel De Jonge denied that this point had ever been raised in Zagreb. (Interview, 30/05/01).

¹⁷⁶⁹ Confidential information (1).

¹⁷⁷⁰ DOPKLu, STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 10/07/95, 1925Z; DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 10/07/95, 1839Z, 1942Z.

¹⁷⁷¹ Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35(1998), § 290.

¹⁷⁷² DCBC, Box 59. Overview of Citations Logbook Air Operations Control Center, Annex A to Klu replies to Questions by the Chamber on Srebrenica, NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. 'Chronology of Events CAS Missions Srebrenica', 10/07/95, 2045LT.

aircraft would be flying over the sea. The reaction time from the sea to the enclave was only about fifteen minutes.¹⁷⁷³

Zagreb that evening was not in a state of panic. No one was expecting a massive attack on the enclave, and no one could foresee that the fall could come as quickly as it did the following day.¹⁷⁷⁴ The tone of the press briefing in Sarajevo was 'business as usual'; although journalist Samantha Power of *The Washington Post* noticed a degree of uncertainty in the words of spokesperson Gary Coward when he said about Srebrenica that 'we think they are trying to achieve this (he drew a small circle), but we fear they might do this'(and he drew a large circle).¹⁷⁷⁵

General Janvier's Telephone Conversations

On the evening of 10 July, during the meeting of the Crisis Action Team regarding the request for Close Air Support, Janvier conducted a number of telephone conversations in French which later caused some commotion. Janvier frequently contacted and consulted Paris partially due to the fact that he was the most senior French officer and the commander of the French contingent.¹⁷⁷⁶ According to the Military Assistant of the Deputy Force Commander, Major David Last, Janvier's position implied that those conversations were largely routine communications without much deeper significance. During meetings, Janvier was frequently called away for telephone calls, which took place in the office of the Force Commander where the secure telephone line to Paris was located. None of the international staff were witness to those conversations; which may well have generated and fed the prevailing rumours. However, it did not appear that any of the conversations with Paris had a significant effect on Janvier's own position.¹⁷⁷⁷ Deputy Force Commander Ashton did not perceive the calls as any different to what the Canadians and Dutch were doing – i.e., simply calling their superiors at home.¹⁷⁷⁸ In the same way Janvier had daily telephone contact with the French Chief of Staff of the Defence, Admiral Lanxade.

He had significantly less contact with the Security Advisor of French President Chirac, and those conversations were primarily aimed at obtaining information (in addition to information from Lanxade) to better advise Chirac. The purpose of one of those calls was to pass on a decision from Chirac. Telephone conversations between the French President and the French Force Commanders were however exceptional. It apparently only happened on two occasions, namely, a conversation between Mitterrand and Cot in February 1994 during the Sarajevo crisis, and a conversation between Chirac and Janvier during the hostage crisis. On 10 July there was no direct contact.¹⁷⁷⁹

Kolsteren, the Dutch Chief of Staff of UNPF in Zagreb, was amazed by media reports to the effect that all calls from Paris conducted in French at the time of the fall of Srebrenica were from the French president. According to Kolsteren, whenever that had occurred previously, Janvier had invariably said; 'Listen, Mr President, I am an international officer and I have my own responsibility for the situation here.' By the time Janvier left Zagreb, his fears of being retired were apparently not entirely unfounded. Contact with the capitals was an accepted given as long as it remained clear where the primary responsibility lay. In Kolsteren's view, Paris' efforts at controlling the situation were not very effective. Moreover, Kolsteren claims that developments in July were such that, no matter how hard you tried to steer it, the situation was virtually beyond anyone's control. Janvier often made prompt decisions that needed to be worked out afterwards by the staff. It was a fairly open affair, and it was not true that staff members were left out of the decision-making process and that all decision-

¹⁷⁷³ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹⁷⁷⁴ Interview R. Theunens, 08/02/00.

¹⁷⁷⁵ Interview Samantha Power, 08/06/00.

¹⁷⁷⁶ Interview Tony Banbury, 11/05/00

¹⁷⁷⁷ Interview David Last, 05/07/00

¹⁷⁷⁸ Interview Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

¹⁷⁷⁹ Confidential interview (5).

making was left in the hands of two or three generals. The only closed sessions were those conducted with the American mediator, Richard Holbrooke.¹⁷⁸⁰

Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Commodore C.G.J. Hilderink, was an incidental witness when Janvier received the message that a French mortar platoon had been ordered via national lines to occupy positions on Mount Igman near Sarajevo without his knowledge. On that occasion Janvier made no secret of his anger at Paris' interference.¹⁷⁸¹

Rohde in his book mentions some of Janvier's telephone conversations conducted in French on 10 July. He also mentions a heated discussion in which Janvier raised his voice.¹⁷⁸² If true, then it is not highly likely that Chirac had been on the line - more likely Gobilliard. They communicated on several occasions on 10 July and exchanged information regarding Janvier's conversations with VRS Generals Tolimir and Mladic's headquarters. After the aforementioned conversation Janvier reiterated his view that the dark would compromise the safety of friendly troops, and that the risk was too great.¹⁷⁸³

When asked about it later, the Belgian, Captain Theunens, replied with certainty that the conversation mentioned by Rohde had taken place between Janvier and Gobilliard – Janvier never spoke to Nicolai during Smith's absence. According to Theunens the door had remained ajar; which certainly would not have been the case had Chirac been on the line. Theunens, as representative of the Intelligence Officer in Zagreb, had been called to the meeting of the Crisis Action Team and had to stay in the meeting to interpret from French into English and vice versa. Theunens had no idea where the rumour that Chirac had called Janvier on that day had originated. In his view the story had been started by rumour mongers who had blamed Janvier for having proposed in May to allow the enclaves to fall. Rumours had played an important role in that context.¹⁷⁸⁴

The Dutch Government later also stated that it had no information that pointed to contact between Chirac and Janvier.¹⁷⁸⁵ The compilers of the UN report on Srebrenica also could not draw the conclusion that Janvier had solicited the view of the French Government based on material from their interviews.¹⁷⁸⁶ The entire debate also begs the question as to why Chirac would have refused Close Air Support in Srebrenica. Chirac is in fact known as more of a hardliner.

No other sources offered deeper insight into the question as to why Janvier refused the request for Close Air Support.¹⁷⁸⁷ Janvier was in fact generally known as a cautious military leader and always tried to put himself in the place of the UN soldiers on the ground when making decisions. According to Deputy Force Commander Ashton, Janvier did want to grant Close Air Support, but sincerely thought it impossible for the aircraft to identify their targets at night.¹⁷⁸⁸ Kolsteren also confirmed that Janvier had feared that friendly forces could be harmed by nightly Close Air Support operations. Friendly casualties and fatalities would have done more harm than good. That fear was stronger than the fear of potential harm to the Dutchbat hostages in Bratunac. It was only after the fall of Srebrenica that Admiral Smith was able to personally convince Janvier that NATO could hit targets at night and even had a preference for that. The NATO liaison officer in Zagreb on 10 July was not as explicit on that point as Admiral Smith eventually was. The NATO liaison officer did however state that a nightly

¹⁷⁸⁰ Interview A.M.W.W. M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

¹⁷⁸¹ Interview C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

¹⁷⁸² Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 121.

¹⁷⁸³ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

¹⁷⁸⁴ Interview R. Theunens, 08/02/00.

¹⁷⁸⁵ TK, Conference Year 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 134 (30/11/95).

¹⁷⁸⁶ Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35(1998), § 287.

¹⁷⁸⁷ Colonel Brantz in Tuzla, based on information obtained from the political advisor of Sector North East and from CIA circles, claimed that it was 80% certain that Janvier had been in contact with Chirac. According to Brantz, Janvier purportedly heard from the president that no Close Air Support could be granted before 12 July. The CIA man concerned had heard from an 'acquaintance' in Akashi's office that Chirac had called Janvier during the meeting of the Crisis Action Team. This concerns second-hand information. (NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Telephone conversation SMG with Col. Brantz, 04/08/95; Westerman and Rijs, *Srebrenica: Het zwaartste scenario*, p. 158).

¹⁷⁸⁸ Interview Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

Close Air Support operation would have been preferable to one conducted by day, and that he himself had flown such missions. Janvier was an old-fashioned infantry man and, according to Kolsteren, while he knew exactly what his powers were with regard to Close Air Support, he was less well informed about the use of aircraft and their capabilities. Another contributory factor was the fact that Janvier had thought that the fighting would stop at night, as it was almost invariably the case in Bosnia. Janvier's argument was that it would therefore also be harder to locate targets for Close Air Support. That was the position he had adopted at around 21.30 hours. The VRS offensive had been discontinued and there were no targets available; which obviated the need for Close Air Support. If the VRS were to have stopped or withdrawn, the objective would have been achieved, albeit temporarily. De Jonge did point out at the time that the VRS would probably continue the offensive on the following day.¹⁷⁸⁹

In Kolsteren's view the decision to delay was not only based on the fact that it had been dark at around 21.30 hours and that Dutchbat's safety would have been compromised, or that the Bosnian Serbs had stopped the offensive. In his view a further reason was the fact that the blocking position had not yet been attacked.¹⁷⁹⁰ Janvier's position was that the blocking positions would be more effective at stopping the VRS infantry in the dark than Close Air Support.¹⁷⁹¹ Janvier's judgement on that score was not highly relevant, as, in his own words, fighting tended to stop at night. Based on his report to New York on 10 July, Akashi agreed with Janvier on that point. According to Akashi the option of Close Air Support had received 'serious consideration', but Janvier had decided against it because it concerned an infantry attack, 'thus making means other than air power preferable in UNPROFOR's efforts to stop the advance'.¹⁷⁹² The Hague received a different and slightly more distorted impression of the situation: 'The VRS advance had stopped at 21.30 hours and Janvier had refused Close Air Support for 'technical reasons', namely that NATO aircraft could not attack infantry.'¹⁷⁹³

Janvier's caution was also reflected in his request to Kolsteren to ask Voorhoeve for the Dutch Government's position in the case of a decision in favour of Close Air Support. The Dutch Government responded to the effect that it would accept any decision made by the Force Commander, even if it led to reprisals against the captive peacekeepers.

According to the UN report on Srebrenica, Janvier's decision had also been influenced by a report he had received from Karremans. The UN report does not state who had passed on the report, and how. Karremans was purported to have said that the blocking positions 'could still hold their ground'. Karremans was further purported to have said that he did not consider Close Air Support useful at the time, but would like to have it available at 06.00 hours the following day. The UN report also stated that Dutchbat and the Bosnian Muslims were coordinating a joint defence; which was strange.¹⁷⁹⁴ Zagreb had apparently been misinformed with respect to the latter issue. There was absolutely no question of establishing a joint defence at the time. That picture must have been generated based on reports that Dutchbat had problems with the ABiH in its vicinity; which may have prompted Zagreb to conclude that they were occupying the same lines at the time.¹⁷⁹⁵

¹⁷⁸⁹ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

¹⁷⁹⁰ Debriefing statement Major General A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 27/09/95. Colonel De Jonge confirmed that Janvier had mentioned those reasons, but denied that Dutchbat's failure to take action had played a role. It had in fact not even been mentioned. (Interview, 30/05/01).

¹⁷⁹¹ Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35(1998), § 291.

¹⁷⁹² UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi (signed Janvier) to Annan, 10/07/95, No. Z-1128.

¹⁷⁹³ DCBC, 607. Annex to Peace Operations Situation Report No. 137/95.

¹⁷⁹⁴ Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35(1998), § 287, 289 and 291. Voorhoeve confirmed that Kolsteren had asked him this and that he had been in no position with respect to the population to refuse Close Air Support. (Interview 13/03/97).

¹⁷⁹⁵ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 30/05/01. In De Jonge's view reports about the withdrawal from the blocking position only reached Zagreb on 11 July and that the UN report was inaccurate on that score.

14. The Start of the Refugee Stream

On the morning of 10 July, Srebrenica city took 49 grenade and nine missile hits in one hour. The PTT building was hit several times. The situation became too hot for the UNMOs and they relocated from their post at the PTT building to the compound in Potocari.¹⁷⁹⁶ As the headquarters of the 28th Division of the ABiH was based in the building, they feared further shelling of that building. Upon their departure, they were stopped by Opstina President Osman Suljic and ABiH Commander Ramiz Becirovic, who ordered them to remain in the building.

The UNMOs were then instructed from their own headquarters in Tuzla to arrange a meeting. That took place while the building was shaken by a new round of shelling. At that point Osman Suljic burst into tears and told the UNMOs to let the world know that the VRS were using chemical weapons to wipe out the population. There were however no indications to the effect that the VRS had used any chemical weapons during the offensive. The UNMOs explained to their headquarters that they needed a safer environment in which to perform their work and would therefore continue reporting from Potocari.¹⁷⁹⁷

In the words of UNMO Squadron Leader David Tetteh, the UNMOs thereupon left the location where they had 'courageously stood their ground in a seemingly dangerous situation', and from which they had gathered information for the higher echelons from across the length and breadth of the enclave. The group then departed, again in the words of Tetteh:

'... under a rain of bullets. Driving at a death speed of approx 140 km/h, the group sped along the almost empty streets of the doomed town through the valleys of Potocari and headed directly into the line of fire of the big guns on the hills of Budak and Borici, which threateningly covered their escape route to freedom. At every moment of their flight they expected just one unlucky shell to pick them off the track and hurl them into oblivion to end their misery. And at one time a shell just missed them by the skin of their teeth; however from that moment onwards, nothing more mattered to them, as the driver increased his foot pressure on the accelerator, automatically pushing the poor Jeep Cherokee beyond its endurance.'¹⁷⁹⁸

Interpreter Emir Suljagic showed more courage than his UNMO employers. He accompanied the UNMOs to Potocari, from where the sounds of shelling was audible. Suljagic suggested returning to Srebrenica city, as the UNMOs in Potocari had no access to information about developments in the city. He claimed that the UNMOs did not dare return. He then asked for a map and a walkie-talkie, and said that he would go alone. The UNMOs thought he had gone mad, but they were happy that he had volunteered as he could thereby keep them updated. The Dutch Major, De Haan (leader of the three UNMOs), offered him a map, a radio and charged batteries, and told him that he would be operating entirely on his own, and that De Haan would accept no responsibility for him. Emir Suljagic thus dodged the shelling and returned to Srebrenica city via the river valley.

He continued to report from the PTT building, UNHCR, MSF and the hospital until about 19.00 hours that evening. At that point the city and the entire situation fell apart completely, with masses of people fleeing the city to the north. Suljagic later stated that he only became aware of his own fear when he saw thousands of people fleeing under the helpless gaze of local ABiH leader Zulfo Tursonovic and other leaders. The shelling intensified and he decided to return to Potocari. He soon came under direct fire, at which point he began to fear that returning would be impossible. Fortunately,

¹⁷⁹⁶ SMG, 1001. Capsats MSF Srebrenica to UNPROFOR Dutchbat, 10/07/95 03:24; SMG 1004. Ops Room Dutchbat to MSF, 101157B Jul 95; Sitcen BLS to Ops Room DB-3, 101500B Jul 95.

¹⁷⁹⁷ NIOD, Confidential Coll. (4). Debrief of UNMO's from the Srebrenica enclave, 23/07/95.

¹⁷⁹⁸ NIOD, Coll. Segers. 'Report on the Battle of Srebrenica', compiled by Sqn Ldr David D. Tetteh, 21/07/95.

however, a Dutchbat vehicle stopped and picked him up. At around 20.00 hours he was back in Potocari. His actions allowed De Haan to report to Karremans and the UNMO organisation on the situation in Srebrenica. He reported nine casualties that morning. The UNMOs acknowledged that Suljagic had gathered most of the information they had signalled through on that day.¹⁷⁹⁹

During their stay in Potocari the UNMOs depended on Dutchbat for information and, thereby ceased to be an independent source of information.

The afternoon was also extremely hectic in Srebrenica city. At about midday on 10 July a large crowd of refugees stormed the B Company compound in Srebrenica and tried to force the gates open. Groen learnt about this from his guards via his radio. He was under the impression that the population at the time felt that it would be safer inside the gates of the compound. In his view the compound could not offer safety to the crowd of several thousand refugees, as it was much too small and there was no reason to believe it would be spared in the case of an attack. Groen gave instructions to open the gates to admit three representatives (their identities are unknown) with the aim of persuading them to leave the compound in Srebrenica and to push on in the direction of Potocari where it was still relatively peaceful. When the gates were opened to admit the delegates, a mass of hysterical refugees broke through the fences and stormed into the tiny compound.¹⁸⁰⁰

At that time the compound was occupied by no more than thirty Dutch military personnel – the rest were occupying the blocking position.¹⁸⁰¹ Within a few moments the whole place was filled with people. The guards were called in to help prevent occupation of the Ops Room (the Command Post). Sergeant 1st Class Zuurman was instructed to keep the people at bay under force of arms, but he quickly admitted that there was no stopping them.¹⁸⁰² Groen ordered all available personnel outside to attempt to regain control of the chaotic situation, to restore calm, and to attempt to persuade as many as possible to go to Potocari.¹⁸⁰³ Zuurman proposed to Groen to get the crowds going by walking with them in the direction of Potocari. He pushed through the crowd to set it in motion accompanied by three soldiers. Groen too was hoping that once the crowd started moving, accompanied by UN soldiers, the rest of the population would follow. He asked the permission of the battalion command in Potocari to conduct the refugees to Potocari, as he saw no other way of getting them out of the compound. In his view few would have survived a grenade attack on the compound.¹⁸⁰⁴

At around 15.00 hours the group of refugees led by the Dutchbat personnel finally came into motion. The ABiH also helped to persuade the refugees to abandon the compound after Groen had pointed out that the chaos totally prevented the unit from doing its work. The column of refugees diminished systematically en route to Potocari, as many simply abandoned the column partly due to the grenades that were exploding around them and partly because few believed that the situation would be much better in Potocari.¹⁸⁰⁵ After two to three kilometres the march ground to a halt when mortar grenades exploded approximately two hundred metres from the road and the refugees sought cover. According to Zuurman it seemed as if the VRS were trying to intimidate the crowd and bring them to a halt.¹⁸⁰⁶

Later that day the, to prevent further panic, the mayor made an attempt to keep as many people as possible in Srebrenica. He did not want more people to relocate to Potocari.¹⁸⁰⁷ Hageman forwarded

¹⁷⁹⁹ Interview Emir Suljagic; 23/11/97. NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Capast TA to TX, 111000B Jul 95.

¹⁸⁰⁰ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (15).

¹⁸⁰¹ Debriefing statement, H.J.W. Timmerman, 12/09/95.

¹⁸⁰² SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing Sergeant Zuurman, 22/07/95.

¹⁸⁰³ Debriefing statement Sergeant 1st Class G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95. See also Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 299.

¹⁸⁰⁴ SMG, 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 10/07/95, 19.10 and 19.22.

¹⁸⁰⁵ Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99. See also Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 300.

¹⁸⁰⁶ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing Sergeant Zuurman, 22/07/95.

¹⁸⁰⁷ SMG, 1004/56. Logbook B Coy 10/07/95, 20.33, 20.34, 21.07. Reports mention both the president of the Opstina (Osman Suljic) and the mayor (Fahrudin Salihovic). Most Dutchbat personnel did not know the officials or the difference between their positions. The Debriefing Report mentioned the mayor. Captain W. Melchers of Section 5 also confirmed this.

that message from the mayor to Company Commander Groen with the argument that the mayor did not wish to contribute to the turmoil. According to Groen the population was already in turmoil. Hageman was told, 'The more people you can get away from the compound, the better. Try to get the stream moving and send the people towards Potocari where they will be safer.' Conditions were still relatively safe in Potocari, as few shots had been fired in the northern section of the enclave.¹⁸⁰⁸ Shortly after 21.00 hours the local leaders of the Opstina however sent the refugees back to Srebrenica. Apparently they had consulted the ABiH Commander, Ramiz Becirovic to that effect. As a result the attempt to move the crowd to the compound in Potocari was given up and the designated personnel put on standby. By 22.00 hours the refugees had left the compound in Srebrenica.¹⁸⁰⁹

15. The Evening of 10 July: Emergency Meetings in Various Locations

New York

On the evening of 10 July Akashi reported to New York for the first time since 7 July regarding the situation in Srebrenica. The communication gap during that period could be attributed to the fact that Akashi and Janvier had had a meeting in Paris on 6 July, followed by meetings in Geneva on 8 July. Moreover, 8 and 9 July fell over the weekend. While in Geneva, Janvier questioned whether it would not have been more sensible to be in Zagreb. Akashi and Boutros-Ghali however kept him in Geneva. No information was available regarding the situation in Srebrenica, as a result of which it was nearly impossible to assess the situation realistically. Only on 9 July, after receiving more and harder data about the situation, did Janvier begin to get clarity regarding the deteriorating conditions in Srebrenica.¹⁸¹⁰

The matter-of-fact tone of Akashi's Code Cable to New York, which was in fact a compilation of earlier UNHCR, UNMO and Dutchbat reports, differed markedly from the faxes sent to Sarajevo and Zagreb by the local UNHCR representative, Almir Ramic. Akashi's main concern was the shelling. According to the figures released by UNHCR the shelling had, by that time, claimed six lives and 23 casualties. *Médecins Sans Frontières* had reported four deaths and 22 casualties. Akashi expected the continued shelling to increase those numbers. Two thousand refugees had sought refuge in the vicinity of the hospital and an unknown number was fleeing Srebrenica for Potocari. Akashi also mentioned a meeting between Karremans and the local VRS commander, which had in fact not occurred (its purported occurrence had been based on an incorrect conclusion drawn from a confusing UNMO report).¹⁸¹¹

Towards the end of the day on 10 July Zagreb was still in the dark as to why Mladic had launched an operation against Srebrenica. Clearly the VRS attached no value to the contents of the declarations they had issued previously (as summarised in the previous chapter). Akashi mentioned four possible scenarios. The first was that 'a renegade commander' was responsible for the situation in Srebrenica. That seemed unlikely, especially if the renegade commander was Mladic himself. An alternative was that the VRS wanted to reduce the size of the Safe Area to shorten their own lines in order to release more of their own troops. It was also possible that the VRS simply wished to overrun the enclave as retribution and to increase control of East Bosnia, and to release more troops and at the same time to kill the plan of the Contact Group that formed the basis for further negotiations. A final possibility was that the VRS wished to show that the Rapid Reaction Force presented no solution to UNPROFOR's problems. No one in Zagreb however had any idea which of those scenarios was the most probable.¹⁸¹²

¹⁸⁰⁸ Interview J. R. Groen, 05/07/99.

¹⁸⁰⁹ SMG, 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 10/07/95, 21.24 through 21.49.

¹⁸¹⁰ *Mission d'Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica*, Audition de M. Bernard Janvier, 25/01/01.

¹⁸¹¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 10/07/95, No. Z-1128.

¹⁸¹² UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 10/07/95, No. Z-1128.

Akashi received an instruction from New York to report the situation in as much detail as possible to enable the office of the UN Secretary to answer questions posed by 'interested delegations' (of member states). Special attention had to be given to fire on UNPROFOR personnel by either side, especially by the ABiH, and the use of Close Air Support. Delegations were also likely to ask questions about the possible use of the Rapid Reaction Force to rescue Dutchbat.¹⁸¹³

The Security Council also took notice of developments in Srebrenica. The United Kingdom, France and Argentina wanted to express their support for Dutchbat, as well as for the 'resolute attitude' displayed by the civilian and military leaders of UNPF and UNPROFOR. A briefing to the Security Council stated that the ABiH had fired on three separate Dutchbat APCs with rifles, hand grenades and an anti-tank weapon. The United States and the Russian Federation adopted the usual stance with respect to the two warring factions. The Americans stated that the situation had to be investigated thoroughly before blaming the ABiH for firing on Dutch APCs. One possible interpretation of the events was that the ABiH had assumed that the APCs they had fired upon had been confiscated by the VRS. The Americans felt that that theory could not simply be dismissed, as they had previously shown no restraint in attacking UN positions in UN uniforms. The Russian Federation there against felt that the events in Srebrenica should be viewed in the appropriate context. The ABiH had executed offensives on Serbian villages from the Safe Area. The Russians questioned how the ABiH could have been capable of firing grenades and anti-tank weapons at Dutchbat APCs and referred to a recent letter from the Bosnian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sacirbey, in which he indicated that, on 8 May 1993, UNPROFOR had disarmed the ABiH in the enclave.¹⁸¹⁴

As a result of the discrepancy between the positions of the United States and the Russian Federation, no resolution was adopted in the Security Council. The Honduran President of the Security Council, Gerardo Martinez Blanco, merely stated that the Security Council had debated the value of calling in a NATO air strike against the Bosnian Serbs. In a declaration issued by the chairman, the Security Council stated that it was extremely concerned about the situation and the distress of the population. It called upon the parties to respect the status of the Safe Area, and the Security Council demanded the release of the captive Dutchbat personnel by the Bosnian Serbs.

The members of the Contact Group were also unable to reach agreement about a British draft declaration. Due to the general discord, the Bosnian Serbs were not held responsible for the situation and no condemnation expressed of their offensive against Srebrenica.¹⁸¹⁵

Démarches

That notwithstanding, the British representative in Belgrade was instructed on 10 July to urgently contact Milosevic's government and to insist that Milosevic use his influence with the Bosnian Serbs to release the Dutchbat hostages, to stop their offensive and to withdraw to the borders of the Safe Area. The results, if any, of that demarche are unknown.¹⁸¹⁶

Akashi also instructed his representative in Belgrade, Iouri Miakotnykh, to update Milosevic regarding the situation and to ask his help to get the Bosnian Serbs to stop their offensive, and especially to cease firing on civilians. On 10 July Akashi was in Dubrovnik as a guest of the Croatian Government, from where he tried in vain to reach Milosevic. Late that evening Miakotnykh reported that he had spoken to Milosevic, but the latter had told him not to expect much, as the Bosnian Serbs

¹⁸¹³ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box, 87305. File Srebrenica 3300-SRE vol. I, 1 Jul -16 Nov 95. Outgoing Cryptofax Gharekhan to Akashi, 10/07/95, No. 2268.

¹⁸¹⁴ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 10/07/95, No. MSC-2271.

¹⁸¹⁵ ABZ, PVNY. Fax PVNY to DAV, DVL/BZ, DEU/OE and DPV/PZ, 10/07/95, No. nyv-4242; DCBC, 681. Code Biegan 603, 11/07/95; *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 10/07/95, 19:42 CET.

¹⁸¹⁶ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

did not listen to him. Due to the rapidly deteriorating situation, Akashi returned to Zagreb, but only arrived back at his post around midnight on the night of 10 to 11 July.¹⁸¹⁷

In New York, Kofi Annan's replacement, Iqbal Riza, summoned the Bosnian charge d'affaires, Ivan Misić, about the ABiH shooting at Dutchbat APCs. Riza claimed to have found those actions incomprehensible, especially at a time when the UN had clearly taken positions against the VRS advance. Misić also stated that he was assuming that the ABiH had fired on the UN vehicles based on the assumption that they had been confiscated by the VRS.

According to Misić, Sacirbey had had contact with an anonymous Dutch UN general who had stated that no incidents of ABiH fire on Dutchbat vehicles had occurred on 10 July. Riza then argued that Van Kappen had been in contact with both Zagreb and the Dutch Ministry of Defence and that his contacts had confirmed the ABiH attacks. All of the APCs that had been confiscated by the VRS were in Bratunac and therefore could not have been used by the VRS. Misić then promised to take the UN protest to the authorities in Sarajevo.

The office of the UN Secretary also informed the permanent representatives to the UN of Germany and the United States about the shootings. Both representatives promised that their embassies in Sarajevo would send a demarche to the Bosnian Government to protest the attacks on peacekeepers.¹⁸¹⁸

VRS Ultimatums to Dutchbat

At around 21.00 hours on the evening of 10 July, Dutchbat received two reports from the VRS via Sergeant Bos who was being held hostage in Bratunac. Bos stated that they were being treated well and that the VRS had claimed to be against the ABiH entering Dutchbat compounds. They did not however have any objection to *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) and UNHCR entering Dutchbat compounds. Assuming those conditions were met, UNPROFOR would be in no way threatened. VRS liaison officer, Major Nikolić added to Bos' report that the VRS would not object to the population relocating to Potocari, as long as they stayed out of the compound. No further attacks would be executed on Dutchbat vehicles. Nikolić also explained that the aim of the VRS action had been to demilitarise the enclave due to the fact that Dutchbat had failed in that mission.¹⁸¹⁹

The latter report was also confirmed in a letter written earlier that day by Mladić to General Smith in which he stated that, contrary to the agreement in 1993, Srebrenica had not been demilitarised. In Mladić's view the ABiH had abused the Safe Area, as a result of which hundreds of Serbian civilians had been killed and two hundred wounded. That was the reason why the 'Muslim terrorists' had to be neutralised. Mladić added that the VRS activities were neither directed at the civilians nor at UNPROFOR, and that the UNPROFOR units need not feel threatened. The fact that Dutchbat personnel were being held safely in Bosnian Serb territory after 'one of your soldiers' had been killed by the ABiH purportedly proved that the actions were not directed at UNPROFOR.¹⁸²⁰ Deputy VRS Commander Milan Gvero repeated the message in more detail at the VRS press centre and again pointed out that, in 1993, the VRS had ceased the offensive against Srebrenica because the international community had promised to demilitarise the enclave.¹⁸²¹

Soon thereafter a new VRS message reached Dutchbat. According to that message ABiH soldiers were to report at Yellow Bridge, north of the enclave, between 06.00 hours on 11 July and

¹⁸¹⁷ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi (signed Janvier) to Annan, 10/07/95, No. Z-1128; CRST. Code Cable Akashi to Mlakotnykh UNPF Belgrade, 10/07/95, no number; Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35(1998), § 286 and 292.

¹⁸¹⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 10/07/95, No. MSC-2272.

¹⁸¹⁹ SMG 1001. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 10/07/95; SMG 1004/61. Capsat TAH to TA, 10/07/95 16:44.

¹⁸²⁰ SMG 1004/84. HQ Army of the Republic of Srpska to UNPROFOR Command, 10/07/95, No. 06/17-455, sent by UNMO Liaison Officer Pale 11113B Jul 1995; SMG 1002/10. Capsat UNHCR Srebrenica to UNHCR Belgrade, Sarajevo, Zagreb, 10/07/95 17:05.

¹⁸²¹ CRST. Banja Luka (UNHCR), Input for EXTREL Press Review, 11/07/95, 1102Z.

06.00 hours on 13 July to hand in their weapons. They would then be free to leave for their own preferred destinations on the condition that they left their weapons behind. Dutchbat and NGOs would be free to leave the enclave.¹⁸²² The representatives of the NGOs and Dutchbat could go to Bratunac to surrender. Dutchbat was thereby also required to leave their weapons behind. It was not initially clear whether this also entailed a withdrawal of Dutchbat from Eastern Bosnia. The following day Prof. Nikola Koljevic, the chairman of the commission of the Republika Srpska for cooperation with the UN explained that the message should not be viewed as an ultimatum, but as an offer to Dutchbat to withdraw beyond a certain line based on considerations of safety.¹⁸²³ VRS General Milan Gvero had already confirmed to the press that the local population was free to leave: 'All civilians who want this will be able to leave the town in an organised and safe way.' At the same time Gvero warned the West not to intervene in the fighting and not to get involved in the Muslim propaganda war.¹⁸²⁴

Meeting between Janvier and VRS General Tolimir

Fifteen minutes later Janvier also learnt in a telephone conversation with VRS General Tolimir that the VRS had granted a free withdrawal to both the UN personnel and the population. Janvier summarily dismissed the proposed withdrawal of the UN¹⁸²⁵ and dismissed both options (withdrawal of Dutchbat and the population). On Sarajevo's instruction Karremans also dismissed the withdrawal of both groups. Lieutenant-Colonel De Ruiter in Sarajevo notified the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis staff that the ultimatum would not be observed.¹⁸²⁶ Ramiz Becirovic also advised Karremans not to accept the ultimatum after Dutchbat had forwarded it to him, the War President, Osman Suljic, and other members of the Opstina.¹⁸²⁷ Instead, Dutchbat replied to the VRS to withdraw beyond the 'Morillon Line' and to refrain from executing any further attacks. The withdrawal was to be effective as of 06.00 hours the following day, failing which Close Air Support would follow.¹⁸²⁸

On the evening of 10 July several further phone calls were made between Janvier and VRS General Tolimir. The ABiH listened in on three of the conversations. The transcripts are important, as no record of the conversations were available in the archives of the Force Commander. The transcripts show no record of any discussions regarding a 'free' withdrawal. The conversations were initiated by Janvier, who had wanted to talk to Mladic about the VRS attacks on Dutchbat; however, the VRS general was in the field at the time. Janvier was referred to General Tolimir, who denied any knowledge of VRS attacks on the UN. He added that he did not believe it, as the VRS had consistently endeavoured to avoid that kind of situation. He promised to verify Janvier's statements, but refused to pay heed to Janvier's warning to stop the attacks and to withdraw. Janvier could call back after 20 to 30 minutes after Tolimir had issued orders to establish a connection between the VRS and Dutchbat.

In the subsequent conversation Tolimir reported that Dutchbat had refused to establish a radio communications with a VRS radio station. He had also established that one of the OPs had fired at the VRS after it had been instructed to do so via an ABiH radio network. In Tolimir's view this meant that Dutchbat had transferred its command to the ABiH. Janvier reacted with disbelief and queried the veracity of the assertion that the UN had fired at the VRS. Tolimir confirmed it, but stated that he had

¹⁸²² NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary, (version August 1999), p. 130-131; KAB, BLS. Brief Karremans to the Minister of Defence, BLS, 29/08/95.

¹⁸²³ CRST. Pale UNHCR 11 Jul 95 12.55Z, sent by the Military Liaison Officer of UNHCR (de Moel) to RNLA Crisis Staff.

¹⁸²⁴ *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 10/07/95, 19:42 CET as quoted by the Belgrade news agency *Beta*.

¹⁸²⁵ Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35(1998), § 286 and 292.

¹⁸²⁶ SMG 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 10/07/95, 20.45 and 20.58; NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Capsat TA to TX, 101230B Jul 95; SMG/1004. Update 110200B Jul 95, Annex A to BH-SNE DSR dated 11/07/95; UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 10/07/95, No. Z-1128; DCBC, 637. RNLA Crisis Staff 102200B Jul 95.

¹⁸²⁷ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Retransmission Capsat TA to TX, 111331B Jul 95 from UNMO HQ BH SNE to UNMO HQ BH Comd, UNMO HQ Zagreb, 111415B Jul 95.

¹⁸²⁸ SMG 1004/49. Capsat Maj. Franken to Capt. Groen.

nevertheless ordered the VRS to refrain from firing at the UN positions. According to Tolimir the local VRS commander had stated that Dutchbat had been put under pressure to fire at the VRS.

In the second conversation Tolimir also stated that the VRS had agreed to withdraw to the positions taken on 9 July; however, that could only happen after termination of the current skirmishes. Tolimir reminded Janvier that 'people were dying there', whereupon Janvier stated that he was fully aware of that. Janvier then added that, unless the VRS withdrew, things could get much worse for them and that this was Tolimir's own choice. Tolimir said that he would do everything in his power to prevent a clash between the VRS and UNPROFOR. He asked Janvier to do his utmost and use his influence to prevent UNPROFOR from firing on the VRS. Janvier added that he did not want the VRS to confiscate Dutchbat's weapons. If it were to happen, the UN troops would be obliged to defend themselves as real soldiers. Tolimir promised to instruct the VRS to refrain from confiscating Dutchbat weapons; however he needed some time to get the information to the trenches. Tolimir pointed out that the Bosnian Muslims were spreading a lot of unfounded rumours. Tolimir said that he had tried for two days to prevent casualties and losses, and that the VRS had thus far succeeded in that. Tolimir again wanted to check the situation and told Janvier to call him again in one hour.¹⁸²⁹

In the follow-up conversation (only Tolimir's side of the conversation had been recorded), Janvier was again told that he could not speak to Mladic and that this could only be arranged on 11 July between 10 and 11 hours. Tolimir re-emphasised that the VRS had adopted the appropriate attitude towards UNPROFOR and the population. He assumed that Janvier was familiar with the fact that the ABiH were conducting attacks from the demilitarised zone in order to connect it to Zepa. The details of those actions had already been passed on to General Nicolai in Sarajevo, and Tolimir assumed that Janvier had been updated on that account. Tolimir further reprimanded the ABiH for using UNPROFOR weapons.

Tolimir also confirmed that the Dutchbat personnel had not been captured or taken hostage in Republika Srpska territory, but had voluntarily approached the VRS to avoid being caught in the crossfire. The Dutchbat soldiers had openly stated that the ABiH had threatened them with death if they were to withdraw from the OPs. Janvier had to understand that the ABiH were exploiting the situation in order to exacerbate the fighting. The ABiH had confiscated all heavy weaponry left behind by Dutchbat. Concerning a withdrawal on the part of the VRS, Tolimir on this occasion only stated that it would be difficult until such time as the war objectives had been fulfilled, and that it was particularly hard while the ABiH were launching attacks from all over the enclave. According to Tolimir the VRS were doing everything in their power to stabilise the situation.¹⁸³⁰

All of the conversations between Janvier and Tolimir were characterised by the Bosnian Serbs' blame of the ABiH for the situation, and repeated attempts on their part to depict the operation against Srebrenica as a defensive strategy. Janvier failed to adopt a tough line in those conversations. Tolimir largely dictated the tone of the conversations. Janvier neither set hard conditions for withdrawal nor threatened with the use of air power. They also did not discuss the fate of the population. Nicolai adopted a firmer line in his conversations with Tolimir. Janvier's conversations were aimed at preventing the VRS from firing on UNPROFOR. That did however beg the question as how that related to Janvier's orders with respect to the blocking positions, namely to invite fire from the VRS. Although that entailed the risk of a firefight with the VRS, Janvier considered it an effective means of justifying the use of air power. The VRS did fire incidental shots at Dutchbat, but the fire appeared to be aimed more at the ABiH occupying positions in the vicinity of Dutchbat than at Dutchbat itself. To emphasise his point, Tolimir again reminded Janvier that Dutchbat had found safety with the VRS, while the ABiH had threatened them with death.

¹⁸²⁹ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa, 10/07/95, Str.pov.br. 02/8-1-1205.

¹⁸³⁰ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa, 11/07/95, Str.pov.br. 02/8-1-1215.

A Demonstration in Tuzla

The events in Srebrenica also did not escape the notice of the population of Tuzla. The civilian authorities of the Tuzla Canton organised a demonstration for the evening of 10 July at Tuzla Air Base and at the compound of the Nordic Battalion in Zivinice (Norbat, consisting of Norwegian, Swedish and Danish units). The 2nd Corps of the ABiH had released information about the situation in the enclave (according to Brantz in Tuzla they had manipulated it) and provided transport for the demonstrators. The demonstrators, mostly refugees from Srebrenica who were staying in Tuzla, as well as a group of more than two hundred people who had apparently, on 9 July, succeeded in passing the combat lines,¹⁸³¹ demanded an interview with the commander of the Nordic Battalion. The meeting took place in a local restaurant. Brantz and other staff members of the Sector North East were also present.

Representatives of the refugees expressed their concern for the safety of the inhabitants of the enclave and demanded NATO intervention. Failing appropriate action on the part of NATO, they would form a blockade around the compound of the Norwegian Battalion. Moments later the first lorries arrived at the main gate with five hundred women and children. They also blocked all entrances and exits to the restaurant where the discussions were taking place. Brantz felt that he had been ambushed, but found a creative way out – he took off his uniform and, wearing a T-shirt and wielding a pistol, he calmly strolled out through the crowd while his colleagues and the vehicles remained behind. He was able to get away with the help of two Dutch Military Policemen. By the time personnel of ABiH 2nd Corps arrived to rescue Brantz, he had already returned to the staff of Sector North East. The other staff members were eventually able to get out after local authorities had removed the refugees late that evening.¹⁸³²

During the demonstration the demonstrators fired fifty rounds at the Norbat headquarters. This was not the first time the local population had displayed hostility against Norbat units based on the situation in Srebrenica. At the beginning of July the population of Srebrenica north of Tuzla held up a lorry with Swedish soldiers for four hours, threatening them and pelting them with stones and wood every time they tried to get out of the truck. The reasons stated for the hold-up were rumours about poor humanitarian conditions in Srebrenica and the rumour that people were starving to death. Those rumours had also been stimulated by the local media.¹⁸³³

Based on the cumulative events, and the situation in Srebrenica, Akashi feared a serious setback for stability in Eastern Bosnia, and a deterioration of the relationship between the military and civilian authorities in the whole of Bosnia. He expected the criticism to increase and evolve into general hostility on the part of the ABiH.¹⁸³⁴

16. The Night of 10 to 11 July: Last Meeting between Karremans and the Opstina

On 10 July the Defence Staff on *het Plein* in The Hague drew up a notable 'Report on Peace Operations'. Notable, but not entirely congruous with reality. The report stated that Close Air Support had already been requested by 06.00 hours on 11 July. Permission depended upon the outcome of proposed talks between Janvier and Mladic. Nicolai's intention had been not only to focus the Close Air Support on tanks, but also on artillery positions around Srebrenica. The report does not state the source of that information. It did however report the consultation between Gobilliard and Janvier, as

¹⁸³¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 10/07/95, No. Z-1127. According to Brantz the refugees originated from Bijeljina and Zvornik and had been in Tuzla for some time. This seemed more likely than the situation reported by Akashi as there were no other reports that such a large group had escaped to Tuzla.

¹⁸³² Interview M.P. Wijsbroek, 10/12/97; NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary (version August 1999), p. 128. Brantz was angry because the Swedish commander of Norbat took leave that day instead of doing something to end the tense situation around his compound.

¹⁸³³ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary (version August 1999), p. 124.

¹⁸³⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1144.

well as the fact that Janvier had stated that he would not hesitate to ‘give direct permission’ for Close Air Support missions were the VRS to continue their advance.¹⁸³⁵

The logbooks of the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force in Vicenza as well as the overall NATO Command (AFSOUTH in Naples) however made no mention about possible preparations for NATO air activities for the morning of 11 July. There were no indications whatsoever of any preparations for the air strikes or Close Air Support so desperately wanted by Dutchbat. By 04.30 hours there was still no communication traffic between the headquarters, even though the aircraft had been put on a 60-minute alert at 21.25 hours on 10 July. The only indication to that effect was the fact that the Forward Air Controllers in the enclave had been ordered to contact the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo at 05.00 hours.¹⁸³⁶

In Srebrenica, the Company Commanders met Karremans at midnight on the night of 10 to 11 July for an update on the schedule for the following day. Karremans stated that the UN had set an ultimatum to the effect that the VRS were to start a withdrawal by 06.00 hours local time. Failure to do so on the part of the VRS would result in massive air strikes. The air strikes would be aimed at attacking and eliminating several targets around the enclave simultaneously. Karremans’ announcement put both his own unit and the ABiH at a disadvantage. This will be covered in more detail in Paragraph 9, *The Air Strikes that Never Came*.

The Company Commanders never doubted Karremans’ announcement. One individual did however, in retrospect, find the ultimatum strange in view of the use of the words, ‘start a withdrawal’. After all, if the VRS tanks had reversed one hundred metres, they would have complied with the ultimatum. Karremans instructed the Company Commanders to take another look at the targets and to resubmit them.

Based on the data received from Karremans, the company commanders then briefed their own units. The general atmosphere amongst the units was that they were about to witness history in the making. Finally something would be done and the Bosnian Serbs punished.¹⁸³⁷

Karremans was under the impression that all artillery positions would be destroyed and also announced the imminent arrival of forty NATO aircraft. Karremans had apparently been notified to that effect by the next level up, Sector North-East in Tuzla. According to that source a number of gunships would take part in an attack on the VRS positions at Pribicevac.¹⁸³⁸ Franken however denies that such an announcement had ever been made. In fact, it had been considered initially, but fell through during the execution of the earlier supply operation planning.¹⁸³⁹

Also on the night of 10 to 11 July, at 23.00 hours, the ABiH commanders and municipal council, the Opstina, held a meeting in the PTT building in Srebrenica city. At that meeting it was proposed that the Chief of Police, Hakija Meholic, should take over command of the 28th Division of the ABiH from Becirovic. The same happened in 1993 when Meholic temporarily took over command from Naser Oric. This time Meholic refused, as it was no longer possible to take over command of the division. Meholic did however propose the immediate launch of a counter offensive against the VRS with the two brigades of Ibro Dudic and Zulfo Tursunovic. One of the brigades would defend the city, while the other, consisting of about two thousand troops, would outflank the VRS and attack its rear. It was night time, and the VRS tanks would have little effect. The VRS were concentrated around the occupied OP-E and OP-F. The thinking was that, in the event of a successful counter offensive,

¹⁸³⁵ DCBC, 607. Annex to Peace Operations Situation Report No. 137/95.

¹⁸³⁶ DOPKlu STAOOPER, no number. Logbook 5ATAF 11/07/95, 0320Z.

¹⁸³⁷ Interview J. Otter, 26/05/99.

¹⁸³⁸ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00. Captain Hageman also understood that gunships would arrive (C-130 gunships were used in the theatre). (SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing report Kamp Pleso, 22/07/95); interview P. Sanders, 12/12/00 and 13/12/00. Karremans dismissed the gunship reports as pure fantasy. He had also never heard of ‘Plan Gorilla’ in which the gunships were to be used. (NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Correspondence NIOD Karremans, 25/11/00).

¹⁸³⁹ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

UNPROFOR might do something.¹⁸⁴⁰ The ABiH would be much stronger at night, as they were operating in familiar terrain without landmines and they suspected that their opponents in the area proposed for the attack would consist largely of Russian mercenaries. Meholic, who had learnt Russian in school, had heard them talking in the front lines.¹⁸⁴¹

A local doctor, Ilijaz Pilav, also attended the meeting in the PTT building. Shortly after midnight, when, according to Pilav, a decision had been taken in favour of the counter offensive (Pilav thought that a decision had been taken), Dutchbat officer, Major Boering, entered the meeting 'as if he had known about the meeting and the decision that had been taken'. Boering announced the NATO air strikes, laid a map on the table, pointed to the targets and asked the Bosnian Muslims to stay away from those areas due to the risks entailed – he called it a '*zona smrt*' or 'Death Zone'. The time of the air strike was given as 'either before or at dawn'. Boering also stated that an ultimatum had been issued demanding the withdrawal of the VRS. There was no mention to the ABiH and Opstina as to what would happen after the air strikes. The consequence of Boering's announcement, according to Pilav, was that no one made any further preparations for the counter offensive proposed at Zeleni Jadar.¹⁸⁴²

Later that night Karremans also visited the PTT building for a meeting that occurred shortly after midnight. There are different views on how the meeting had been set up. One was that the War President of the Opstina, Osman Suljic, had asked Boering at the earlier meeting to ask Karremans to personally attend a meeting at the PTT building. Another view was that Karremans had asked for a meeting with Ramiz Becirovic in the PTT building at around midnight to explain the 'ultimatum' set to the VRS and the imminent NATO support.¹⁸⁴³ In any event, the meeting with Karremans did occur and was attended by all the members of the War Presidency decked out in full military regalia.¹⁸⁴⁴ Karremans never sat down in the meeting and the others also remained standing.¹⁸⁴⁵ Karremans appeared more relaxed than usual and said that he had received information from his superiors to the effect that the VRS positions would be attacked. ABiH Major Nedžad Bektic noticed Karremans's optimistic look and 'cynical laugh'.¹⁸⁴⁶ Karremans asked Ramiz Becirovic to pull his troops out of the range of the air bombardment.¹⁸⁴⁷ Karremans pointed to the map and insisted that the population was to have evacuated the zone before the start of the bombardments. The aircraft would fire at all moving targets.¹⁸⁴⁸ Pointing in the direction of Zeleni Jadar, Karremans said; 'Tomorrow everything will be blown away. No one in that zone will survive.'¹⁸⁴⁹ Becirovic asked what the population should do during the air strike and was advised that everyone should stay as far as possible from the combat lines and seek cover in local homes.¹⁸⁵⁰ Karremans also stated that the Bosnian Serbs had been given an ultimatum; which was not new to those present, as, Izetbegovic in Sarajevo had communicated the news to the Opstina an hour earlier (see the section below; 'Contact between the Opstina and the Bosnian Government in Sarajevo').¹⁸⁵¹

Ramiz Becirovic also believed Karremans when he announced the impending Close Air Support. It did in fact herald the end of the defensive operations on the part of the ABiH. Becirovic asked what the Dutchbat would do once the VRS had pulled back. According to Becirovic, Karremans replied that the Dutchbat would re-occupy its former positions.

¹⁸⁴⁰ Interview Ekrem Salihovic, 02/12/98.

¹⁸⁴¹ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98, 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

¹⁸⁴² Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

¹⁸⁴³ SMG, 1004/56. Various entries in B Company logbook.

¹⁸⁴⁴ Interview E.A. Rave, 24/01/01.

¹⁸⁴⁵ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

¹⁸⁴⁶ Interview Nedžad Bektic, 10/09/99.

¹⁸⁴⁷ Interview Dzermaludin Becirovic and Sefket Hafizovic, 21/10/97.

¹⁸⁴⁸ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

¹⁸⁴⁹ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

¹⁸⁵⁰ SMG/1004. Update dtg 110200B Jul 95, Annex A to UNMO HQ DSR, 11/07/95.

¹⁸⁵¹ Interview Dzermaludin Becirovic and Sefket Hafizovic, 21/10/97.

The mayor of Srebrenica, Fahrudin Salihovic, had little faith in the proposed air strikes.¹⁸⁵² Karremans did however convince War President Osman Suljic. He claimed to have asked Karremans directly; 'If you had been in my place, would you have believed Close Air Support was imminent?' Karremans replied in the affirmative. Suljic later quoted that as the moment Karremans betrayed him. In fact, on 11 July he proposed to have Karremans arrested for that betrayal. His reasoning was that such an action might have prompted the UN to come to his aid. Prior to that, Suljic claimed to have had a good understanding with Karremans. According to Suljic, Karremans did everything in his power to save his soldiers and was himself very scared. He claimed that the Bosnian Muslims had planned a counter offensive, and the fact that many would have died made no difference, as everyone involved was going to be killed in any event, so said Suljic later.¹⁸⁵³

ABiH officer Nedžad Bektic confirmed the announcements to those present at the meeting. Everything appeared to be under control. The VRS had been given an ultimatum and they were going to withdraw. Lines had been drawn on the map to mark the 'zona smrti'. The ABiH had drawn up an all-or-nothing plan to attack the VRS rear with all means available by moving via Puzulici to Zeleni Jadar. In his view those present at the meeting had no other choice but to believe Karremans.¹⁸⁵⁴

Police Chief Hakija Meholic said that Karremans had been informed about the proposed counter attack during the meeting. Meholic saw the counter attack as the final opportunity to retain control over Srebrenica. He believed that failure on the part of the UN to deploy air strikes would end in disaster, as it would then be too late to do anything to save the enclave. Karremans stated that the leaders had to decide for themselves whether to launch the counter offensive or not; but that their troops would almost certainly be wiped out by the air strikes. He therefore asked them to call off the plan. Meholic said that he had asked Karremans what would happen if the air strikes failed to materialise, as then Srebrenica would certainly be lost. Karremans replied that 'Our task is to wait'. Meholic wanted to pursue the planned counter offensive because he did not believe that the 'Death Zone' would be attacked at 06.00 hours as Karremans had claimed. In his view, it made no real difference whether his people were killed by air strikes or by the VRS. ABiH Brigade Commanders Ibro Dudic and Zulfo Tursunovic supported Meholic's idea of pursuing the planned attack, but they were opposed by Ramiz Becirovic and the other brigade commanders. The members of the Opstina also supported Karremans' position. The discussion ultimately culminated in the decision not to pursue the attack.¹⁸⁵⁵ According to Becirovic that decision was only made after Karremans' departure. Becirovic then instructed the ABiH to withdraw to a safe distance of two kilometres from the VRS lines.¹⁸⁵⁶

Karremans later described the meeting as the most depressing he had ever experienced. The discussions were painful, everyone was exhausted, and the tension was tangible. He attempted to persuade those present that UNPROFOR would fulfil their promises to him. Karremans was thereby referring to a talk he had had with the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in which it reported that 'as of 06.00 hours all known targets, anything moving or firing, will be eliminated' – thus implying air strikes. According to him the area south of Srebrenica was a kill box, which is why he appealed to the ABiH to withdraw to the southern edge of the city. Karremans did not mention the ABiH plans for the counter offensive in his book.¹⁸⁵⁷

¹⁸⁵² Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98; NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Update 110200B Jul 95, Annex A to BH-Sector North East DSR, dated 11/07/95.

¹⁸⁵³ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98. Suljic believed that the international community had agreed to the takeover of the enclave and that a secret deal had been signed between Milosevic, Clinton and Yeltsin. The latter purportedly arranged the pact. Mladic and Karadzic had apparently cheated on the deal.

¹⁸⁵⁴ Interview Major Nedžad Bektic, 10/09/99.

¹⁸⁵⁵ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98, 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

¹⁸⁵⁶ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjecaceni koverat*, p. 263.

¹⁸⁵⁷ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 190.

Last-ditch Efforts by the ABiH

There is no certainty as to whether the planned counter offensive would have been executed had Karremans and Boering not informed the Opstina about the proposed air strikes. It seems highly unlikely, as the offensive had already been branded as a desperate last-ditch effort during the meeting. The question remains as to the possible effects of such an ABiH attack. At best it would have represented a temporary setback for the VRS. It appears unlikely that the ABiH would have succeeded in destroying the VRS tanks (although the ABiH did have short-range anti-tank weaponry). It was equally inconceivable that the ABiH would have been able to neutralise the threat of the artillery and mortars set up around the enclave. Finally, the ABiH troops no longer seemed to have the will and morale to undertake large-scale combat operations.

Karremans' announcement did however make an end to the scattered presence of ABiH units south of the 84th Horizontal, an area into which Dutchbat had very limited insight. The last report of a fire fight on the evening of 10 July came at 21.58 hours from the east of Mount Kak; however that area was located quite a long way to the west. After that report everything became relatively quiet in the enclave. The next shots were only reported again the following morning at 08.00 hours, also at Mount Kak, from where renewed firefights were reported. At that time most of the ABiH soldiers appeared to have withdrawn to the edge of the city. Reports of returning ABiH soldiers had started to come in even before Karremans met with the Opstina.

At 00.25 hours, four hundred partially armed ABiH troops passed the compound in Srebrenica en route to Potocari. It would hardly have been possible at that point to pass orders to them from the PTT building. Further reports of ABiH troop movements were received in the course of the night. At 03.00 hours a few hundred armed troops set off in a south-south-westerly direction from OP-C, which was located in the south-western sector – in other words, out of the enclave, possibly in the direction of Zepa. An hour later B Company reported that more ABiH soldiers were entering the centre of Srebrenica. Groen could not make sense of the movements: Were they moving around the VRS? Were they preparing for a flank attack? Or were they breaking out?¹⁸⁵⁸ There was no further consultation, and after the meeting with Karremans there was no more contact between Dutchbat and the ABiH or the Opstina.

It must be kept in mind that Dutchbat had a very limited view of what exactly was happening in the enclave - with the exception of the structures that were set alight by the VRS (and that was only due to the dark and the loss of the OPs in the south). At that point the blocking position was located on the edge of the city. Later on the morning of 11 July it was relocated to the south to obtain a view over the terrain.

The planned counter offensive against the ABiH was also mentioned by other authors on the subject of the fall of Srebrenica; however they did not offer significantly more information. David Rohde, in his *Endgame*, described Karremans' visit to the aforementioned meeting based on fewer witness accounts than the account stated above, but makes no mention of plans for a counter offensive. Westerman and Rijs do not mention the meeting. Nor do the brief descriptions of Honig, Both and Sudetic, all of which are rather similar. Sudetic does mention that Becirovic had withdrawn most of his troops to the west, leaving behind only a symbolic resistance to the east of the enclave under the leadership of Ejup Golic.¹⁸⁵⁹ That account coincided with the observations reported by Dutchbat; although it would have been almost impossible to distinguish between that group and any other group of soldiers leaving the enclave on 10 July. The NIOD contacts were reluctant to make any statements in that regard.

Karremans wrote in his book that a number of other events also occurred on the night of 10 to 11 July – the night during which most of the male population of Srebrenica left the city. Although this might suggest that they were executing a premeditated plan of the military council, this is patently

¹⁸⁵⁸ SMG 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register; Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 301.

¹⁸⁵⁹ Both and Honig, *Srebrenica*, p. 47-48; Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, p. 279.

incorrect. Minister Voorhoeve also wrote in the cover letter of the Debriefing Report to the Second Chamber that ten to fifteen thousand men had left the enclave on 10 July. That too is incorrect, as the exodus only occurred on the night of 11 to 12 July.¹⁸⁶⁰

Contact Between the Opstina and the Bosnian Government in Sarajevo

Government officials in Sarajevo maintained regular radio contact with the leaders of the Opstina. The press had previously referred to such communications during the VRS offensive. According to statements by his Cabinet, President Izetbegovic made radio contact with the War President of Srebrenica, Osman Suljic, in the evening of 8 July and on the morning of 9 July.¹⁸⁶¹ Izetbegovic later remembered having spoken to Osman Suljic (although he was not sure exactly when), and instructing him to use the anti-tank weapons that had been sent to the enclave a few months earlier. Izetbegovic felt that if they could eliminate one or two tanks the VRS would stop the advance.¹⁸⁶²

The Bosnian Premier, Haris Silajdzic, also claimed to have spoken to Osman Suljic on 9 July and that he had been informed about the desperate humanitarian conditions in the city due to the arrival of the 4,000 inhabitants of the Swedish Shelter Project in Srebrenica city. Suljic told Silajdzic that there had been no contact with the local UNPROFOR command (Dutchbat), as it had gone underground and, in any event, provided inaccurate information. It was unclear in which way the information had been inaccurate.¹⁸⁶³ Nino Catic, an amateur radio operator in Srebrenica, on 10 July, reported to the Bosnian radio that the situation was dramatic. He reported that battles were raging all over the enclave, that tanks were shelling the city, that large numbers of dead and wounded had been reported, and that the Bosnian Serbs had torched houses during their advance.¹⁸⁶⁴ Osman Suljic was more precise in his outgoing communications, and told the media in Sarajevo that, since the start of the VRS offensive, eight civilians had been killed and 27 wounded.¹⁸⁶⁵

Osman Suljic claimed to have been the last to have radio contact with President Izetbegovic. Suljic at the time told Izetbegovic that Srebrenica had been lost, that he was abandoning the PTT building, and that he would try to keep the president updated from elsewhere.¹⁸⁶⁶ According to Hakija Meholic the last radio contact with Sarajevo from the PTT building took place at 05.00 hours on 11 July. Suljic however claims that he had left the PTT building at 02.07 hours. All those present in the PTT building could listen in on the conversation between Suljic and Izetbegovic over loudspeakers. The president sounded sleepy, which meant that he had been woken up and could not have been briefed on the most recent events. Suljic asked him and the international community to protect the women and children. Izetbegovic asked them to hold on for another two hours, as air support was coming. Izetbegovic failed to react when Suljic announced that that would be the last radio contact as Srebrenica was falling. He also did not mention the possibility of aid from the ABiH.¹⁸⁶⁷

Earlier that evening, at 21.00 hours, Suljic also had contact with Premier Haris Silajdzic. The Premier stated that they should fight to the last bullet and that help would arrive. Suljic then asked who would send help once the last bullet had been fired, to which Silajdzic responded with silence. Suljic had only limited faith in Silajdzic. Suljic questioned what Izetbegovic and Silajdzic could actually do and what kind of help could be expected. They did not have access to the necessary resources and could do

¹⁸⁶⁰ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 189 and 192; TK, Conference Year 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 128 (30/10/95).

¹⁸⁶¹ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 10/07/95, Source: Radio Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo, in Serbo-Croat 0900 GMT 09/07/95.

¹⁸⁶² Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35(1998), § 288.

¹⁸⁶³ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 11/07/95, Tuesday, Source: Radio Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo, in Serbo-Croat 1700 GMT 09/07/95.

¹⁸⁶⁴ AP Worldstream, 10/07/95; 08:32 ET.

¹⁸⁶⁵ *The Commercial Appeal* (Memphis), 10/07/95, Final Edn.

¹⁸⁶⁶ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

¹⁸⁶⁷ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98, 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

little more than to alert the international community. Suljic did not believe that both officials wished to sacrifice the population of Srebrenica.¹⁸⁶⁸

There was a significant amount of confusion regarding the role of Premier Haris Silajdzic. According to author Chuck Sudetic, Silajdzic had assured Ramiz Becirovic via a radio communication that the UN would defend Srebrenica. Author David Rohde too thought that Silajdzic had assured Becirovic that NATO air strikes would be forthcoming. At the time Silajdzic did make Becirovic promise not to take any peacekeepers hostage, nor to disarm or hurt them.¹⁸⁶⁹ Silajdzic said to Radio Bosnia that he had had contact with Srebrenica at 06.00 hours on 11 July, when he had been asked whether the population had been condemned to death. His anonymous contact had purportedly been furious and disappointed when Silajdzic told him to keep up the struggle.¹⁸⁷⁰

Later on 11 July, at around 15.00 hours, Silajdzic accused the UN on TV BiH of intervening too little and too late. Everything was too late and Silajdzic said that he had spoken to people in Srebrenica who had asked him whether they had been condemned to death and whether the enclave had been sold out in a prior agreement.¹⁸⁷¹ According to author Chuck Sudetic, the Bosnian Government had however made no plans to intervene in the event of failure of the UN intervention. In an ABiH radio communication from the ABiH headquarters in Kakanj, President Izetbegovic told Osman Suljic that there was nothing he could do for Srebrenica – in the words of the president, the survival of Srebrenica was in the hands of the UN. According to Sudetic the Commander of the ABiH, Rasim Delic, and the Commander of the 2nd Corps in Tuzla, Sead Delic, did not do anything to get the VRS from Srebrenica.¹⁸⁷² As mentioned in Paragraph 8, that is not correct.

After that Osman Suljic failed to re-establish contact with the Bosnian Government in Sarajevo. Chief of Police Hakija Meholic said from Susnjari (via which the men tried to reach Tuzla after the fall of Srebrenica) that he had tried to contact Izetbegovic, but that the latter had been at an SDA rally in Zenica on that day.¹⁸⁷³ The Commander of the ABiH, Rasim Delic, stated to the newspaper, *Dani*, that his organisation had last established contact with Srebrenica at 14.43 hours on 11 July.¹⁸⁷⁴ There are however records of later contact (see the Chapter entitled ‘The Road to Tuzla’ in Part IV).

The rally of the executive committee of the ruling SDA, which Izetbegovic had attended, was also attended by ABiH Commander Rasim Delic. The latter made the notable comment that there were enough weapons in Srebrenica. The ABiH had made sure that there were more weapons in Srebrenica in recent months than there had been in the three previous years. According to Rasim Delic, four VRS tanks constituted nothing in the face of an adequate supply of anti-tank weapons (Red Arrows and RPGs). He also claimed that there were more than enough soldiers available – the only problem was the inability to organise a coherent defence strategy. In his view the problem was that the enclave lacked a strong enough personality to organise a coherent defence. The delegates did not ask the question as to why Naser Oric, the only personality who did have the proven skills and personality to do so had been removed from the enclave. According to Delic the VRS advance had been stopped wherever it encountered ABiH resistance. Unfortunately the morale was low in the enclave and it was oppressed by an atmosphere in which everyone wondered how they were going to make it to Tuzla. According to Rasim Delic, in the last three months thirty soldiers had fled to Tuzla.¹⁸⁷⁵

The possibility that the Bosnian Government might have ordered the evacuation of the enclave or that a withdrawal had been agreed upon at the highest political level were the subjects of widespread rumours in Bosnia. There is however no concrete evidence to that effect, and the parties involved,

¹⁸⁶⁸ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

¹⁸⁶⁹ Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, p. 278; Rohde, *Srebrenica*, p. 138.

¹⁸⁷⁰ National Public Radio: All Things Considered (NPR 4:30 pm ET) 11/07/95.

¹⁸⁷¹ *Dani*, Special Edition Dossier Srebrenica, Sarajevo, September 1998.

¹⁸⁷² Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, p. 278.

¹⁸⁷³ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98, 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

¹⁸⁷⁴ *Dani*, Special Edition Dossier Srebrenica, Sarajevo, September 1998.

¹⁸⁷⁵ Rohde, *Srebrenica*, p. 164-5, p. 404, n. 20; *Dani*, Special Edition Dossier Srebrenica, Sarajevo, September 1998.

including a high-ranking Bosnian Intelligence officer denied this. Ramiz Becirovic, the Commander of the 28th Division, also claimed not to have been aware of any requests for or dismissals of a complete evacuation. He had participated in all Opstina deliberations, and all communication between the Opstina and Izetbegovic had always been brought up in those meetings. Becirovic himself never had contact with the civilian authorities in Sarajevo.¹⁸⁷⁶

17. 11 July: No Air Strikes

After the meeting with the 28th Division and the Opstina Karremans returned to the B-Company compound, where he informed his personnel that air strikes could be expected from 06.00 hours. From that point on, the enormous air assault was the main subject of discussion in the compound.

Karremans spoke of a massive attack on a number of familiar hard targets. He described it as the last straw, which is also how Company Commander Groen saw it. Close Air Support was the only thing that could change the dangerous situation in which Dutchbat currently found itself.¹⁸⁷⁷ It was now simply a matter of waiting for dawn; however, some people continued to hope that the VRS would heed the warnings and refrain from pushing the advance towards the city. Once again, during that wait, Groen heard from the Battalion Staff that the UN would not tolerate a VRS attack. For that reason he continued to take the air strikes into account. After all, in spite of the relative calm of the previous night (as in the case of the previous days), it was clear that the VRS were setting up an attack.¹⁸⁷⁸

After Karremans' meeting, Company Commander Groen issued orders related to the proposed air strikes that were due to hit approximately sixty targets around the enclave at 06.00 hours the following morning. Forward Air Controller Voskamp was also present when the orders were given. He had been brought down from the mountain blocking position at breakneck speed, travelling without lights, to the B-Company compound by the British Joint Commission Observers (JCOs). Voskamp claimed that there was nothing for him to do before the air strikes, as all targets were known and had been signalled through, and that all the pilots knew exactly what to do. All he needed to do was to switch on his radio half an hour ahead of time to be able to intervene in the case of problems arising. By 02.00 hours Voskamp was back at the blocking position from where he issued a report.¹⁸⁷⁹

Shortly before midnight, on the night of 10 to 11 July, Lieutenant-Colonel De Ruiter in Sarajevo updated Colonel Brantz in Tuzla about the availability of Close Air Support on 11 July. According to Brantz he had made it clear that Close Air Support would be initiated from there. Brantz called Potocari, but Dutchbat had already been updated by Sarajevo, and the chain of command, via the headquarters of Sector North East, had once again been thwarted. By the time the message from Brantz reached Potocari, Karremans had already left for the PTT building to update the leadership of the 28th Division and the Opstina. At 06.50 hours, the identified targets or part thereof were to be hit by an air strike; at least, that was the idea. Dutchbat and Sector North East were both completely convinced of that.¹⁸⁸⁰ The next chapter will elaborate on the air strikes that never came.

The weather report for Bosnia was relatively good on 11 July. There were some scattered clouds at altitudes between 3,000 and 18,000 feet. Visibility was good up to six to eight kilometres, but could vary from 500 metres to three kilometres locally due to morning mist.

A meeting of the Crisis Action Team was scheduled in Zagreb at 06.00 hours. From that point on, Zagreb reported, aircraft would be airborne for rapid reaction to a call for Close Air Support. Zagreb also asked 'to ensure that this information is passed on so that safety measures can be taken by

¹⁸⁷⁶ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98. Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, p. 278 states that Siladjic had assured Becirovic over the radio that the UN would defend Srebrenica.

¹⁸⁷⁷ Confidential information (81); interview J. R. Groen, 05/07/99.

¹⁸⁷⁸ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 297.

¹⁸⁷⁹ Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

¹⁸⁸⁰ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary, (version August 1999), p. 141.

exposed or isolated troops'.¹⁸⁸¹ It is conceivable that the latter warning had unintentionally contributed to the general notion that a decision had already been taken with regard to Close Air Support.

In preparation of the arrival of the anticipated air strike, Dutchbat kept a close watch on the VRS artillery positions from its observation posts. Many of the targets were visible with the naked eye. As a result, the tension increased, and a common thought was what would happen after the air strikes. It was not inconceivable that, once the air strikes had dealt the first blow, VRS support could emerge from positions beyond the crests of the hills. For that reason, at nightfall, they had double-checked the bunkers to make sure there was sufficient food and water, that the communications worked, that the toilets were complete, and that they would be able to stay in the bunkers for at least six hours.¹⁸⁸² Dutchbat was sure that air strikes were the only salvation – failing that, they believed they were lost, as they did not have the resources to resist the VRS.¹⁸⁸³ Based on their meagre numbers and limited supply of armament, there was virtually nothing they could do in the face of the overwhelming force of the VRS. The prevailing notion amongst Dutchbat was not so much so that Close Air Support was coming, but that air strikes had been promised because the Bosnian Serbs had entered the Safe Area.¹⁸⁸⁴

However, by the early hours of the morning of 11 July there was little happening at the NATO headquarters to suggest imminent air strikes. Intelligence summaries indicated that NATO, in spite of the threat to the enclave, thought it unlikely that air strikes were due at any moment. According to NATO, threats of air strikes would ring hollow as long as the VRS held Dutchbat personnel hostage in Bratunac (especially in view of previous experiences following air strikes at Pale). The VRS would be equally aware of that fact.¹⁸⁸⁵ As a result there was no sign of the impending air strikes Dutchbat was so eagerly awaiting. The AFSOUTH logbook in Naples mentioned very little of any significance about Close Air Support on the morning of 11 July. The nightshift of 10 July closed the logbook with a report of no special events and no high-level communication. Only in the early hours of the morning (02.05 hours local time) was there mention of a number of changes in flight schedules. The first note in the logbook that might have been related to Close Air Support was that, at 06.20 hours, two Dutch F-16s had been instructed to remain near the tanker aircraft for another hour.¹⁸⁸⁶ In other words, by the time the NATO aircraft were supposed to be appearing in the airspace above the enclave, they had not even left their bases.

The logbook of the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force in Vicenza yielded very much the same impression. At 01.30 hours Sector North East sent a list of the positions of the remaining Dutchbat OPs to the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo, which reached the Intelligence Cell in Vicenza via the liaison cell of the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force in Zagreb. It was not treated with great urgency and was only sent from Zagreb to Vicenza by 06.50 hours. At the same time Vicenza heard from Sarajevo that as soon as the Forward Air Controllers had obtained a view of the terrain the 'target positions' would follow. The only thing that occurred in the interim was that, at 05.00 hours, Sarajevo confirmed to Sector North East that there had been no changes in the flight schedules.¹⁸⁸⁷

Meanwhile the VRS started the day calmly – so calmly in fact that the UNMOs characterised the enclave as 'unusually, but creepily, calm and quiet'. 'The usual hail of shells that have been greeting our mornings is surprisingly absent today. We view this as a positive change in the current circumstances, which undoubtedly have [sic] come from the NATO ultimatum even though it has not been implemented yet. We hope things remain as it is now until a peaceful solution to this problem is

¹⁸⁸¹ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Fax COS UNPF-HQ to Comd UNPROFOR, 102316B Jul 95. NIOD Coll. Brantz; Brantz Diary, (version August 1999), p. 141.

¹⁸⁸² Interview J. Otter, 26/05/99.

¹⁸⁸³ Interview C.J. Matthijssen, 11/10/99.

¹⁸⁸⁴ Interview E. Wieffer, 18/06/99; SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing report Capt. Wieffer, 22/07/95.

¹⁸⁸⁵ Confidential information (6).

¹⁸⁸⁶ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log for 11/07/95.

¹⁸⁸⁷ DCBC, Box 59. Overview of Citations Logbook Air Operations Control Center, Annex A to Klu replies to Questions by the Chamber on Srebrenica.

reached. We are presently doing fine but remaining in our bunkers. The air strike is supposed to take place in the next quarter of an hour.¹⁸⁸⁸

However, by 06.00 hours that morning the skies above the enclave were still silent. At first the morning mist was taken as a delaying factor for the arrival of the aircraft, then the thought occurred that the air strikes had been called off and that the battalion had taken them for a ride.¹⁸⁸⁹ The disappointment on the part of the Dutchbat soldiers was enormous when the air strikes failed to materialize, and interpreter Omer Subasic could not fail to notice this. According to Subasic the officers were able to conceal their emotions, but some of the Dutchbat troops were almost in a state of shock and seemed to need help.¹⁸⁹⁰ Dutchbat no longer had matters in their own hands, and it was beginning to look as though the UN was not planning to do anything for either the battalion or the enclave. That left some Dutchbat personnel with the feeling that they were on their own and needed to do whatever they could to save their own skins.¹⁸⁹¹

The ABiH too kept their eyes on the skies. When the aircraft failed to show up, those volunteers that had still been willing to fight disappeared one after the other. Karremans' news of air strikes had delivered the death knell to any plans of a final counter offensive. According to Police Chief Hakija Meholic, all that the ABiH could do after that was to await the air strikes.¹⁸⁹² The morale in the lines was revived briefly by the news of the air strikes, but when nothing happened, the morale collapsed. At that point all control was lost over the ABiH soldiers. No one was capable of issuing further orders. More than likely only someone like Naser Oric could have succeeded in that desperate situation.¹⁸⁹³ Almost everyone was thoroughly disillusioned. The ensuing sense of chaos and apathy was reinforced by everyone's fear for the safety of their families.¹⁸⁹⁴ Ramiz Becirovic retained control only of those ABiH soldiers that wanted to stay on and fight; however, it seemed most were more inclined to flee. The main reason for this was the dearth of weapons, ammunition and food. The remaining ABiH soldiers were surrounded and looking for ways of escape. The majority of the population was already fleeing the city.¹⁸⁹⁵ There were no UNMOs or interpreters left in the PTT office. The only remaining sign of an international presence in Srebrenica was the Dutchbat armoured vehicles at the UNHCR Warehouse in the centre.¹⁸⁹⁶

There was no contact between Dutchbat and the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo in the early hours of the morning. Zagreb assumed that, when the aircraft were airborne, the two Forward Air Controllers had assumed their positions in the enclave (one in the east and one in the west) and two in the Potocari compound.¹⁸⁹⁷ That was only partially accurate.

Commandos and JCOs as Forward Air Controllers

At 06.00 hours on 11 July the commando team (First Lieutenant A.A.L. Caris, Sergeant 1st Class F.C. Erkelens and Corporal M.J. Smit) were posted on the roof of the Potocari compound. While they were not Forward Air Controllers, they had followed a two-week basic training and were familiar with the procedures even though that normally did not qualify one as an independent Forward Air Controller. One of the Dutchbat Forward Air Controllers could not be deployed (he had collapsed) and reports

¹⁸⁸⁸ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Capsat TA to TX, 110755B Jul 95.

¹⁸⁸⁹ Interview E. Wieffer, 18/06/99; SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing report Capt. Wieffer, 22/07/95. Sergeant-Major Van Meer stated that Karremans had called and that he too had heard that the request was to have been submitted in writing. (SMG 1007/25. Kamp Pleso, 22/07/95).

¹⁸⁹⁰ Interview Omer Subasic, 19/10/97 and 20/10/97.

¹⁸⁹¹ Interview E. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

¹⁸⁹² Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98, 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

¹⁸⁹³ Interview Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98.

¹⁸⁹⁴ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

¹⁸⁹⁵ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

¹⁸⁹⁶ Interview Ekrem Salihovic, 02/12/98.

¹⁸⁹⁷ Interview Major General A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

had reached the Ops Room (the command post) that the other at the blocking position (Voskamp) might have problems related to anxiety and stress.¹⁸⁹⁸

Caris and Erkelens found their order to sit and wait on the roof of the compound senseless, as experience had taught them that the entire area was invariably covered in mist until about 08.00 hours. At 06.00 hours the hilltops were in fact covered in mist. Erkelens therefore thought that there must have been some confusion. He thought this might have been due to the fact that UNPROFOR and NATO used different time zones.¹⁸⁹⁹ Erkelens thought that might have explained the two-hour difference.¹⁹⁰⁰

The fact that the commandos were used as Forward Air Controller was based on Dutchbat's plan to position them and the British JCOs on the roof of the Potocari compound. However, at 23.00 hours on 10 July, the JCOs had received instructions from their headquarters in Sarajevo to provide a Tactical Air Control Party in the city in case Dutchbat should request Close Air Support. Dutchbat however stuck to the plan of situating the Forward Air Controllers and the JCOs on the compound. The commander of the JCOs in the enclave resisted that notion. He preferred to find a position in the city in order to be able to report the events from there and, if necessary, lead the Close Air Support from there. The JCO commander was unable to persuade Dutchbat to that effect. The order remained standing – they were to be on the roof of the compound at 06.00 hours with the Dutchbat Forward Air Controller.¹⁹⁰¹

Once the JCOs had occupied their posts on the roof of the compound in Potocari at 06.00 hours, they too realised that the thick mist made their presence there superfluous. The JCO team used a portable satellite connection to report the weather conditions to Sarajevo. Sarajevo replied that Close Air Support was not possible at the time due to the weather, and the current location of the Forward Air Controllers. Sarajevo had thus arrived at a decision based on different considerations than Dutchbat. The commander in Sarajevo instructed them to relocate to the city and to find a location from where they could guide the aircraft to their targets. Sarajevo updated Karremans to that effect, and instructed him to position the Forward Air Controllers in the city. Karremans agreed to that for the time being. The JCOs asked the commandos to accompany them as back-up. According to the British, the commandos were initially not prepared to do so, but were subsequently ordered by Major Franken to do so.¹⁹⁰² The commandos and the three British soldiers then loaded a Mercedes and a Land Rover with Forward Air Controller equipment, water, ammunition and two anti-tank weapons and left for the PTT building where they tried to find Ramiz Becirovic to provide them with a guide.¹⁹⁰³

Ramiz Becirovic confirmed that Karremans had called him with the news that two JCOs would come by and that they were to be pointed to important targets for air strikes. Becirovic replied that Dutchbat was already familiar with all the targets. Karremans again explained in that conversation that massive air strikes were about to be executed and that he needed more targets. Becirovic said he then showed Franken and the JCOs suitable air strike targets at Zeleni Jadar.¹⁹⁰⁴ Becirovic instructed Ekrim Salihovic, who was acting as the ABiH liaison officer, to assist the JCOs and the Forward Air Controllers.¹⁹⁰⁵

Salihovic's account of the events is that he had been present in the PTT building at around 07.00 hours when two British JCOs suddenly entered. They told him that they were the aircraft contact team and that they were going to organise the air strikes. The ABiH had no interpreter available, and

¹⁸⁹⁸ Interview Major E. Wieffer, 18/06/99. MvD, Cie Dapperheidsonderscheidingen. Also see Report FAC Missies Srebrenica, 23/08/00.

¹⁸⁹⁹ Zulu time used by the AOCC and Bravo time used by Dutchbat.

¹⁹⁰⁰ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing Sgt. 1 Erkelens and First Lieutenant Caris, 22/07/95. SMG/Debrief, Statement of Facts § 3.7.5.

¹⁹⁰¹ Confidential information (1).

¹⁹⁰² Confidential information (1).

¹⁹⁰³ SMG/Debrief. Feitenrelaas § 3.7.5.

¹⁹⁰⁴ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

¹⁹⁰⁵ ABiH Tuzla. Supplementary statement by Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on prior statement of 11/08/95.

the British did not take anyone with them. They hastily launched a search for a girl who could speak English; she had previously worked as a bar lady at B Company.

All descriptions subsequent to the point at which this group (the JCOs, the commandos, Salihovic and the girl) went on the road are confusing. This is due to the fact that (based on all available reports) the British and the Dutch went their own separate ways and no longer referred to one another after they had left Srebrenica city. They did however leave together and described identical activities. The tasks were divided as follows: Lieutenant Caris and Corporal Smit were assigned to gather target information, Sergeant Erkelens was in charge of the radio procedures and responsible for drawing the targets in on the map, while the British JCO officer did the verification, one JCO took care of communications with Sarajevo, and the other JCO was to defend locality.¹⁹⁰⁶ That morning the APCs and crews left the market square for their blocking position of the previous day. Forward Air Controller Voskamp was therefore also back in that area, but he was now at blocking position Bravo 1 and worked separately from the group of commandos and JCOs.

Salihovic guided the group via the centre of the city to a hill east of the city. The vehicles remained on the market square. Radio and satellite connections were taken along. The JCOs said that they would be able to obtain excellent contact with the aircraft from that point. To his amazement one of the British asked Salihovic to draw the exact positions of the ABiH on a clean sheet of A4 paper instead of on a map.

From that position the JCOs sent a briefing to Sarajevo and searched the terrain for possible targets. Ekrem Salihovic was nervous due to the proximity of the VRS and asked for ABiH support. It appeared that the VRS had already advanced to within a few hundred metres of the position.

The JCOs were in constant contact with someone, but Salihovic could not figure out with whom. After twenty to thirty minutes Salihovic saw clear relief on the faces of the British. The girl who was acting as interpreter asked what was going on and they said that they could not contact the aircraft because their batteries were flat.¹⁹⁰⁷ The JCOs did not mention anything about flat batteries. Their version of the story was that there had been a misunderstanding due to the limited knowledge of English on the part of Salihovic and the girl.¹⁹⁰⁸

The JCOs saw the VRS infiltrating the eastern section of the city as well as the ensuing skirmishes between the VRS and the ABiH; at which point the JCOs also came under fire. As far as Ekrim Salihovic could remember, the British then ducked right into the trenches with the ABiH soldiers who had no idea what they were doing there.

The JCOs obviously felt safe and relaxed in the trenches and took off their helmets and flack jackets. According to Salihovic they then pretended to make radio contact, but remained seated and did not appear to be planning any further action. According to Salihovic the British saw everything happen – the VRS infantry were visible with the naked eye and were moving in on the city. Ekrem Salihovic decided to leave for the city, leaving the JCOs and Dutch commandos behind and hoping that Dutchbat would still do something.

Salihovic's vision of the event could be tainted by the fact that he did not have any insight into the working methods of the Forward Air Controllers. As long as there was no approved request for Close Air Support, and no aircraft were approaching, they did not need to expose themselves. In those conditions they only needed to make occasional observations to identify potential targets.

At around 09.00 hours the JCOs wanted to move to a better position. They decided to go to Height 469, west of the city, a place that was well defended by the ABiH. The position was located one kilometre north of the position that the Bravo 1 blocking position had occupied the day before. That position commanded a good view of the areas to the south and east of the city. For that reason it was a potential target for the VRS; which did indeed happen.¹⁹⁰⁹ The JCOs therefore first made contact with

¹⁹⁰⁶ See Distinctions, CDO. Report FAC mission Srebrenica, 23/08/00.

¹⁹⁰⁷ Interview Ekrem Salihovic, 02/12/98.

¹⁹⁰⁸ Confidential information (1).

¹⁹⁰⁹ Confidential information (1); Interview Ekrem Salihovic, 02/12/98.

the ABiH to seek information about a new position. They were taken to a position located three hundred metres from the VRS front lines. Here the JCOs were notified from Sarajevo that Close Air Support might be deployed if the Bosnian Serbs continued their attack on the city. The JCOs then signalled 41 targets varying from command posts to artillery and tanks to the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo.¹⁹¹⁰ No list of 41 targets could be found in the archives.¹⁹¹¹ In any event, at 09.30 hours, Sarajevo sent an ‘updated target list’ to Vicenza (see below).¹⁹¹²

The experience recounted by the commandos was identical to that of their British colleagues. They had found a hilltop where they were able to command a view over the mist (identical height: 469). The group remained in that position for the rest of the day. They shared the position with five ABiH soldiers.¹⁹¹³

Tensions did emerge that morning between Salihovic on the one hand and the JCOs and Dutchbat commandos on the other. There was some bickering, which was partially due to Salihovic’s ignorance of the work method of Forward Air Controllers.¹⁹¹⁴ In an interview with a Bosnian author, Sefko Hodzic, Becirovic mentioned problems on that occasion with two Dutch officers. The ABiH had shown them the positions of the tanks and VRS infantry, but the Dutch responded that they could not see the infantry from that position. According to an unnamed ABiH officer (most probably Ekrim Salihovic), who was acting as Becirovic’s spokesman, the Dutch simply did not wish to see the VRS infantry, whereupon the said officer decided to kill them. He asked Becirovic’s permission, but permission was refused.¹⁹¹⁵ According to Becirovic it was also hard to work with the British JCOs - Salihovic had informed Becirovic that they could not see the tanks although they had been pointed out to them.¹⁹¹⁶

The JCOs and Dutch commandos remained in those positions in anticipation of future events.

Meanwhile in Sarajevo, Zagreb, Vicenza, Naples...

There was still very little news from the NATO front about Close Air Support. The first update of the target list from the JCOs and commandos came at 07.30 hours. At that point there were 25 targets varying from command posts to artillery and troop concentrations and tanks. Based on those targets Sarajevo identified as priority targets the positions of the infantry and artillery at Pribicevac that had repeatedly fired at the city.

The most notable targets were those on the western side of the enclave, including the headquarters of the Milici Brigade. Those targets were located far outside the enclave and were therefore not visible, as a result of which it was not possible to target them with Close Air Support. Those targets appeared to have been included based on ABiH reports – it was one of the rare instances in which the ABiH provided information to UNPROFOR. The liaison cell of the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force in Zagreb sent the list to the Director of the CAOC in Vicenza at 08.45 hours.¹⁹¹⁷ The logbook of AFSOUTH in Naples (the Air Desk Log) first mentions activity pertaining to Srebrenica at

¹⁹¹⁰ Confidential information (1).

¹⁹¹¹ The following were found: DOPKlu, STAOOPER. Target List Real Time as at 0730B.

¹⁹¹² NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Memorandum Maj. Frenztz, AOCC Sarajevo to LtCol De Ruiter, no date.

¹⁹¹³ SMG 1007/25. Debriefing Sgt. 1 Erkelens and First Lieutenant Caris, 22/07/95; interview Captain A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00; SMG/Debrief. Statement of Facts § 3.7.5. Lieutenant Caris felt that the demand became a threat when a loaded Kalashnikov was aimed at him.

¹⁹¹⁴ Confidential information (1).

¹⁹¹⁵ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjecaceni koverat*, p. 264.

¹⁹¹⁶ ABiH Tuzla. Supplementary statement by Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on a prior statement of 11/08/95.

¹⁹¹⁷ DOPKlu STAOOPER, no number. Fax 5ATAF Cell to Intel/CAOC, 110450Z and to CAOC Director, 110645Z; DOPKlu STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 11/07/95, 0440Z.

12.02 hours when a new packages of aircraft had been put together for potential Close Air Support action.¹⁹¹⁸

To the frustration of the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo, the key for Close Air Support in Zagreb had not been turned as yet. The locations of the remaining Dutchbat OPs were sent by telex to Bookshelf, the airborne command post. Vicenza did not have an update of the moving targets in the terrain and was waiting for the Forward Air Controllers to get into position. At the time it was 07.15 hours. At 07.25 hours the position of Windmill 03 (of the Dutchbat commandos) became available. That Tactical Air Control Party then signalled a tank as a priority target. At that point Srebrenica was under fire, but not Dutchbat.

Meanwhile the APCs, back in their blocking positions, were marked with orange to render them visible from the air. At that point (for security reasons), all 'soft skinned vehicles' (non-armoured vehicles) had to be inside the compounds.

At 07.50 hours Windmill 03 took some distance from the ABiH and reported that he had compiled a detailed target list of VRS weaponry and wanted to signal it through as quickly as possible. Meanwhile the weather had become workable and the communications were good. That notwithstanding, it took until 08.45 hours for a fax to be sent with the targets selected by Windmill 03. At 09.30 hours an additional list of six targets reached Vicenza from Sarajevo. The latter list included two artillery positions, two rocket launchers and a tank. A few minutes later a report reached Vicenza to the effect that Windmill 03 would send a new target list with viable targets identified by the commandos (this was the list of 41 targets the JCOs and commandos had compiled from their current location).

Contact had by then been established with three Tactical Air Control Parties: Windmill 02 (Voskamp), Windmill 03 (of the commandos) and Windmill 04. The latter caused some confusion in Vicenza where it had been assumed that the latter unit had split off from one of the other Tactical Air Control Parties.¹⁹¹⁹ That was however not accurate, as that unit consisted of Second Lieutenant M. Versteeg, who had remained in the Potocari compound as back up. It had initially been assumed that his radio was unserviceable; however, that turned out later not to be the case. Dutchbat Major Wieffer had therefore alerted the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo that surface-to-air contact might not be possible. He was thereupon informed that the absence of an Forward Air Controller on the ground would not necessarily present a problem, as a Forward Air Controller was available in the air.¹⁹²⁰

Dutchbat meanwhile awaited what it continued to view as the promised arrival of the aircraft. On several occasions, when asked by his staff and the local population what was happening, Captain Groen said that the air strikes were still coming – only to be forced to contradict that some time later. As a result, confidence began to fail; tension rose and everyone began to doubt that the air strikes would ever come.¹⁹²¹ Captain Hageman, too, had promised the local population that NATO help would be forthcoming.¹⁹²² On several occasions the Battalion Staff also reported that aircraft were on their way; however, on every occasion that turned out to be untrue.¹⁹²³

A VRS Attack on the Forward Air Controllers

At about 10.00 hours the VRS advanced to within five hundred metres of the position occupied by the British and Dutch. They withdrew in steps; the Dutch commandos into a bunker, and the JCOs into an ABiH trench. The ABiH became impatient and threatened to shoot the British and Dutch if the aircraft

¹⁹¹⁸ DCBC, Box 59. Overview of Citations Logbook Air Operations Control Center, Annex A to Klu replies to Questions by the Chamber on Srebrenica.

¹⁹¹⁹ DOPKlu STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 11/07/95, 0515Z - 0750Z.

¹⁹²⁰ Interview E. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

¹⁹²¹ Interview A.M.W.W. M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99; interview David Last, 05/07/00.

¹⁹²² SMG/1007. Debriefing Capt. Hageman, 22/07/95.

¹⁹²³ SMG/Debrief, Feitenrelas § 3.7.5.

failed to arrive soon. That pattern was repeated when, later, the ABiH threatened the Dutch commandos when no second wave of Close Air Support materialised. Lieutenant Caris then saw the demand for Close Air Support pressed home with the threat of a loaded Kalashnikov.

The JCOs persuaded the ABiH not to shoot at them, as that action would have given away their position to the VRS. At about 11.00 hours the ABiH opened fire with their machine guns and a double-barrel anti aircraft gun (type ZSU 23/2) from the top of the hill, presumably in an effort to compel UNPROFOR to engage in battle with the VRS.

The consequence was that the VRS opened fire on the bunker with mortars, a tank (type T-55), small-arms fire and snipers. The bunker took a direct hit, but no one was injured. The Dutch commandos remained in the bunker, as they were still expecting the aircraft. Another explosion occurred directly in front of the trench in which the JCOs were hiding.

From that point on the position of the JCOs was under constant fire from tanks and Howitzers. The JCO team then learnt from Sarajevo that Close Air Support had been refused, presumably because the UN troops were under no direct threat, whereupon one of the JCOs announced that they were indeed under direct fire.

The JCOs also claimed to have come under fire at 12.30 hours when fighting started around the city. The ABiH soldiers panicked and asked the JCOs to call in immediate Close Air Support. The JCO commander feared that the ABiH might shoot them in the absence of Close Air Support. The JCOs renewed their call for Close Air Support – this time they were told that it had been authorised and would arrive within twenty minutes.¹⁹²⁴

18. The Situation in the Early Morning Hours of 11 July

Zagreb, at dawn on 11 July, had no idea that this was to be the day of the fall of the enclave. From a military point of view UNPROFOR was in an extremely weak position, but still had an ace in the hand in the form of Close Air Support. Zagreb did not believe that Mladic would dare to push his tanks straight through the blocking position or act directly against the UN soldiers, as that would have been a step too far. There was however no certainty about this, as no one had succeeded in compiling a coherent profile of Mladic's worldview. No one however expected that he would actually go as far as to occupy Srebrenica and thereby turn world opinion against him.¹⁹²⁵ The UN political vision also could not accommodate the possibility that a Safe Area could simply be overrun.

On the other hand, no one was completely convinced that Srebrenica would not be overrun either. For Dutchbat the real uncertainty started on 11 July: The VRS were on the fringes of the city and there was no indication that the ABiH were setting up a determined last line of defence. Although, on the whole, there was very limited fighting during the night, B Company did receive reports of explosions and troop movements in the early hours of the night of 11 July. There was a report that fifty ABiH troops were pulling back. Another report stated that approximately four hundred ABiH soldiers were moving in the direction of Potocari.

At that time the position west of the blocking positions was occupied by approximately two hundred ABiH soldiers that had been situated around the market square that night; two hundred on the front, and one hundred to the east of the city. They were armed with rifles, machine guns, and light anti-tank weapons. During the night a number of passing Muslims stole items from one of the APCs. The B-Company logbook stated that thousands of ABiH soldiers, one third to half of which appeared to have been armed, initially moved towards the west, but later turned back and moved in towards Srebrenica.

¹⁹²⁴ Interview Ekrem Salihovic, 02/12/98; SMG 1007/25. Debriefing Sgt 1 Erkelens and First Lieutenant Caris, 22/07/95; interview Captain A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00; SMG/Debrief, Feitenrelaas § 3.7.5; Confidential information (1).

¹⁹²⁵ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

The ABiH reported the presence of VRS infantry and three or four tanks in Pusmulici, as well as infantry and artillery on the opposite side of the road on the ridges of the Olovina hills. A VRS infantry company was positioned at Crni Guber. Battle noise was on the increase again after 02.00 hours. At OP-H, the VRS threw hand grenades and launched a small-arms attack. The ABiH no longer responded to that fire. An ABiH lorry passed the Bravo 3 blocking position, presumably to deliver troop supplies to the troops. Soon thereafter twenty armed ABiH soldiers returned past the Bravo 3 position. On other locations three to four hundred ABiH troops moved in a south-westerly direction towards OP-C.¹⁹²⁶ Dutchbat had no insight into the reasons for those ABiH movements.

At around 03.30 hours, OP-H established contact with a local ABiH commander. He gave the OP permission to withdraw to reinforce the APCs in the city; but with instructions to leave all equipment behind. Ramiz Becirovic confirmed this to Groen, who then gave the OP personnel permission to withdraw if necessary.

At 04.00 hours a report came that four ABiH soldiers had been spotted walking from the direction of Potocari towards the centre carrying a mortar; however, they soon pulled back in a northerly direction. That appeared to be in response to instructions given by means of a very light fired from behind the PTT building.

After that the Bravo 1 blocking position received information from a Muslim that the VRS with a unit of two to three hundred strong were planning to launch an attack on the city within six hours from the area of Crni Guber in the east. To do so they would have had to pass OP-H. Almost immediately after that the OP personnel became aware of the sound of heavy machine gun and small arms fire. After consultation with the police Commander, Hakija Meholjic, the personnel abandoned OP-H. Twenty minutes later the OP personnel were split up over the vehicles at the blocking position on the market square.

At first light B Company discovered that there had been an increase in the number of refugees seeking safety in the city. Remarkably, some people were also following a southerly route. Dutchbat personnel speculated that they were going home to fetch their possessions. Later those people returned with green cans that could have contained emergency rations.¹⁹²⁷ It turned out that they were civilians who had broken into the municipal food storage. To everyone's amazement, and in spite of the dire needs of the population, there was still a supply of twenty to thirty tons of rice, flour and relief goods in the warehouse that had not been distributed to the population.¹⁹²⁸

At dawn the fighting flared up again and the shelling increased. The VRS continued their advance; however reports to that effect did not make sense. Groen received news about a number of VRS positions and wanted Bravo 1 blocking position to verify the VRS positions. Groen wanted to avoid unjustifiably asking for NATO help and provoking retaliation or escalation by bombing the Bosnian Serbs. He therefore sent the APCs back to the south to confirm the presence of the VRS infantry and armoured vehicles previously observed at the radio tower.¹⁹²⁹

Hageman initially received orders to advance along the road to Zelene Jadar with one section, and later with a second. One section remained in the city to keep an eye on the eastern approach. If nothing untoward was found in the southern section of the city, OP-H would be reoccupied. At 05.50 hours Groen instructed the two Bravo 1 APCs to return to their former positions.¹⁹³⁰

The departure from the UNHCR *Warehouse* did not occur without incidents. When Lieutenant Egbers reversed his APC, he ran into ABiH resistance – they were under the impression that Dutchbat was withdrawing. The APC was forced to a halt by ABiH personnel yielding an anti-tank rocket (type RPG-7). After endlessly pleading and explaining their intentions by pointing to the map, the ABiH finally realised that they were not actually running away, and let them go. Although the APC crew were

¹⁹²⁶ SMG 1004/65. Logbook B Coy, 11/07/95, 00.06 to 03.30.

¹⁹²⁷ SMG 1004/65. Logbook B Coy, 11/07/95, 03.38 to 06.13.

¹⁹²⁸ Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 142.

¹⁹²⁹ Interview J. R. Groen, 05/07/99.

¹⁹³⁰ SMG 1004/6. Logbook B Co, 11/07/95, 05.50.

uncertain as to how they would get away from the market square, it turned out not to be a problem, as most of the ABiH soldiers had already departed.¹⁹³¹

It was probably at that point, near the market square, that a Dutchbat soldier used his weapon. The said soldier was guarding the rear of one of the APCs when he saw a man emerging from behind a house and line up his weapon to shoot at the APC. The Dutchbat soldier, thinking it was an anti-tank weapon, fired and hit the potential assailant, who fell to the ground. The APC immediately drove away. The Dutchbat action supposedly went unnoticed due to the fact that the warring factions were firing all around at the time.¹⁹³²

On their way south the Dutchbat APCs passed the earlier abandoned APC perched on the edge of the precipice. Smoke was visible above the town of Petrovici. An hour later the panicking inhabitants of the town told the APC personnel that the VRS were approaching the city. ABiH soldiers notified Bravo 1 blocking position of the presence of a tank at Bukova Glava, another at Pribicevac, and two at Bojna. A column of smoke smelling of gunpowder hung in the air and could be smelled as far away as the compound in Srebrenica. Rumour had it that the smoke was intended to mark targets for the aircraft,¹⁹³³ however, according to ABiH Commander Ramiz Becirovic, the VRS had created the smokescreen. That turned out to be accurate – apparently Mladic had personally instructed his units to set fire to piles of hay to create a smokescreen. Purportedly that would have made it harder for the aircraft to find their targets.¹⁹³⁴

The ABiH also reported that a VRS artillery unit and a tank were positioned at the radio tower; however, the commandos, who had a good view of the southern section of the enclave from their Bravo 1 blocking position, could not confirm that report. They were only able to report targets at Pribicevac. The ABiH also reported that the VRS infantry had occupied positions at Height 424, at the perimeter of the city, and in the vicinity of the radio tower. The only location where the ABiH still occupied positions in the proximity of the VRS was near Bojna, where the ABiH had an anti-tank weapon.¹⁹³⁵

Heading south, an APC of the Bravo 2 blocking position came under small-arms fire. The fire was most probably issued by VRS troops still positioned at Height 664. Meanwhile the units in the blocking position had determined that the VRS were occupying positions along the Height 664 line.¹⁹³⁶ Groen was thereby able to report with certainty to the Battalion Staff the presence of VRS armoured vehicles and lorries at the radio tower, and that one of his vehicles had come under VRS fire.¹⁹³⁷ The question was whether that constituted sufficient reason to ask for NATO assistance.

19. The Morning of 11 July: Is Close Air Support Coming?

Once the mist had lifted, at around 08.00 hours Dutchbat submitted the first request for Close Air Support that day on two targets that were threatening Srebrenica. The VRS were still south of Horizontal 84, which the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo viewed as the final line of the VRS advance.

Major Wieffer maintained contact with the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo from the Ops Room (although that was contrary to the prevailing rules, which, in the case of imminent bombing, required him to take shelter in the compound in Potocari). The Ops Room was however

¹⁹³¹ Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

¹⁹³² OM Arnhem. KMar Brigade Soesterberg, 'sebra-Care-Team', 28/10/98, No. P. 462/99.

¹⁹³³ Interview Dzermaludin Becirovic and Sefket Hafizovic, 21/10/97.

¹⁹³⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 399/a bis, Interview of Radislav Krstic, 18/02/00, p. 13; SMG 1004/6. Logbook B Coy, 11/07/95, 06.23 to 10.14; ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 399/a bis, Interview of Radislav Krstic, 18/02/00.

¹⁹³⁵ SMG 1004/6. Logbook B Coy, 11/07/95, 07.45 to 10.00.

¹⁹³⁶ SMG 1004/6. Logbook B Coy, 11/07/95, 09.47, 10.07.

¹⁹³⁷ SMG 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 11/07/95, 10.01.

calmer than the so-called 'bobo bunker' that had been set up for command purposes, and where all radio traffic and satellite communications with the outside world came in.

To his amazement, Wieffer was unable to arrange Close Air Support by telephone and was informed that he had to do so in writing. He did however talk to the Air Operations Coordination Center about targets and priorities. The two targets mentioned were the VRS artillery positions in the north that directly threatened Potocari, and the VRS tanks in the south. The request was then sent to Tuzla and Wieffer contacted the headquarters of Sector North East. He was initially put through to a captain, then a major, and finally to a section chief. After that Major Franken took over the conversation.¹⁹³⁸

Wieffer was extremely angry about the delays in Tuzla. Franken then talked to the officer in charge of operations (the G-3) of Sector North East, the Pakistani Lieutenant-Colonel Rachid Sadiki. Franken was told that Tuzla too had to follow the set procedures – he first had to send a new fax, as the wrong forms had been used for the request. Franken immediately instructed his personnel to complete the correct forms, whereupon the staff hurriedly compiled a handwritten fax and sent it to Tuzla.¹⁹³⁹ Sadiki however established that only ten of the required fifteen items had been filled in (he had not been briefed that that only the most important items needed to be filled in before sending the request to Sarajevo). He then sent the form (in military terms: the format for an Air Request) back to Srebrenica. An extremely angry Franken then called Brantz and recounted his experiences with the staff at Sector North East. Brantz thereupon assigned the military engineer, Captain Emiel Post to handle the request procedure.¹⁹⁴⁰

The application procedure between Tuzla and Potocari created a delay. The delay was exacerbated by the absence of an Air Liaison Officer in the office where the request was being processed as well as the fact that the officers from the non-NATO countries insisted on strict observance of their orders; which resulted in delays, mutual misunderstanding and irritation.

Dutchbat also heard a rumour that a broken fax machine had caused additional delays; however, Brantz claimed that this had had no effect on the procedure. The crypto fax of the staff of Sector North East in Tuzla had indeed been out of order, but the Communication Centre there also had a crypto fax, and the request for Close Air Support came in via the latter machine.¹⁹⁴¹

Tuzla sent the request directly to Sarajevo. At 08.39 hours Sarajevo confirmed receipt of the request and Brantz let them know that the aircraft could arrive at their targets about thirty minutes after they had been authorised.¹⁹⁴² Karremans interpreted the latter message as meaning that the attacks on the hard targets south of Horizontal 84 would be forthcoming and that everything in the kill box south of Srebrenica would be attacked – he had been under that impression from 9 July.¹⁹⁴³

At 09.45 hours Tuzla however received a message from Sarajevo the request had been refused. Brantz was not clear about the reason.¹⁹⁴⁴ Karremans in his book claims that he had heard from Brantz that Zagreb had refused the request; however, that was not the case. The request never reached Zagreb – only the target list made it there.¹⁹⁴⁵ Karremans heard from Nicolai in Sarajevo that the conditions had not been fulfilled, as neither Dutchbat nor the city were under attack.¹⁹⁴⁶

¹⁹³⁸ Interview E. Wieffer, 18/06/99; SMG 1007/25. Debriefing report Capt. Wieffer, 22/07/95. Sergeant-Major Van Meer stated that Karremans had called and that he too had heard that the request needed to be submitted in writing. (SMG 1007/25. Kamp Pleso, 22/07/95). Franken said that he was the one who had called.

¹⁹³⁹ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

¹⁹⁴⁰ Interview C.L. Brantz, 11/06/99.

¹⁹⁴¹ Interview C.L. Brantz, 11/06/99.

¹⁹⁴² DCBC, 648. Sitrep Brantz to Sitcen BLS 110800B and 110839B Jul 95.

¹⁹⁴³ CRST. C-13 Infbat Lumbl, 15/1195, No. TK95.213. Addressee not specified.

¹⁹⁴⁴ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary (version January 2001).

¹⁹⁴⁵ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. G3 Air to SO1 for FC, 16/07/95, CAS in Srebrenica. Chronology of Events. Brantz reported in this diary that he had heard from Sarajevo that the request of 08.00 hours had not resulted in a release in Zagreb.

¹⁹⁴⁶ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who cares?*, p.193.

The VRS Push On: New Requests for Close Air Support

At 08.45 hours, the Commander of the Drina Corps, General Milenko Zivanovic, from his headquarters in Vlasenica, issued an order to the VRS in Srebrenica to accelerate the operation. Based on radio traffic, the ABiH in Tuzla were able to determine that the VRS were coming closer to the city.¹⁹⁴⁷

At around 10.00 hours the VRS brigade commanders reported to the Forward Command Post in Pribicevac that all set objectives had been taken. With the occupation of Bojna, which dominates the southern access to the city, and Mount Kak and Alibegovac, Srebrenica had effectively been cut off from Zepa. That was the original goal of Operation Krivaja '95. At that point Mladic was present at the command post in Pribicevac, and issued an order to continue the advance with an attack on the town of Srebrenica.¹⁹⁴⁸

B Company then established that, at that point, the VRS were located one kilometre within Horizontal 84. Captain Groen saw this as sufficient cause to submit a new request for Close Air Support.¹⁹⁴⁹ For NATO in Vicenza that was the critical point at which 'the fog of war' set in. There were reports of several tanks occupying the higher ground of Mount Kak - in other words, to the west, and at a significant distance from the Bravo 1 blocking position. However, based on a briefing by Nicolai, Vicenza had understood that the infantry and armour were concentrated just above the city.

Vicenza was also familiar with the fact that a Dutchbat patrol had been fired upon, had fired back and had returned to the city during a mission to survey the situation. This probably referred to the incident concerning the APC (Bravo 1) of Lieutenant Egbers. At that point all attention in Vicenza began to focus on Srebrenica. The only locations still needed in Vicenza at that moment were those of the Forward Air Controllers in Srebrenica, and they were known to all parties concerned.¹⁹⁵⁰

At about 10.00 hours, Karremans submitted his second request of the day to the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo. This request only included a single target, namely a tank south of Srebrenica. Karremans called Tuzla directly, but was informed that the request had to be submitted in writing.¹⁹⁵¹ Karremans explained that, according to Brantz, the responsible staff official in Sarajevo was required to show that the attack directly concerned UNPROFOR units. A great deal of time had been lost in the process of establishing an agreement between Dutchbat and UNPROFOR - by which time Sarajevo reported that no aircraft were available, as they had all returned to their bases in Italy at 10.35 hours (in military terms: had terminated their airborne alert).

Potocari was apparently surprised by that decision. In Brantz' view Dutchbat had limited understanding of the Close Air Support policy as applied after the bombings at Pale.

Nicolai had consented to the aircraft returning to their base, as he had heard almost nothing more from Srebrenica on that morning, and had assumed that the situation had stabilised. Brantz however said that he had been alerted by Sarajevo that a request was on its way. Nicolai denied that.¹⁹⁵²

Shortly after that there was a notable speeding up of the handling of requests for Close Air Support in both Sarajevo and Zagreb. At 10.50, the Dutchbat request handed in at 10.00 hours, reached Sarajevo.¹⁹⁵³ By 11.15 the Deputy Commander of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, General Gobilliard, had signed the Blue Sword Request and asked Force Commander Janvier to do the same.¹⁹⁵⁴ By 11.17 hours the staff of the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force in Vicenza heard that a Dutchbat request for Close Air Support in Sarajevo had been approved. Vicenza was however not sure at that time what

¹⁹⁴⁷ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa, 11/07/95, Str.pov.br. 02/8-01-1221.

¹⁹⁴⁸ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 399/a, Interview of Radislav Krstic, 18/02/00, p. 12.

¹⁹⁴⁹ SMG 1007/25. Report debriefings Captain Groen and Hageman, 22/07/95.

¹⁹⁵⁰ DOPKlu STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 11/07/95, 0910Z.

¹⁹⁵¹ SMG 1007/25. Debriefing Sergeant-Major Van Meer, 22/07/95; Debriefing statement Lt-Col J.A.C. Ruiter, 27/09/95.

¹⁹⁵² NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary (version August 1999), p. 101; Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 114 and n. 8; NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. Chronology of Events CAS Missions Srebrenica.

¹⁹⁵³ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Memorandum Maj. Frentz, AOCC Sarajevo to Lt-Col de Ruiter.

¹⁹⁵⁴ NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. 'Chronology of Events CAS Missions - Srebrenica', 11/07/95.

the listed target was, as it was located in the furthest northern tip of the enclave, and it was not known whether OP-N had been attacked. Clearly Vicenza was still operating on the basis of the previous request of that morning in which this target had been listed. It was also clear to Vicenza at that point that fifty VRS soldiers, one armoured and three other vehicles were concentrated on the southern edge of the city preparing for an attack.

Nicolai in Sarajevo informed Gobilliard by telephone that UN troops were now under attack. At that point Vicenza learnt from one of the NATO liaison officers in Zagreb that Sarajevo was putting pressure on Janvier to authorise Close Air Support: 'If not approved now, it never will be'. Fifteen minutes later, news arrived in Vicenza from Sarajevo that pressure was still being applied on Janvier to sign the request. At that point the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo listed the first target as a tank, even though it was not actually firing at that time. As a result it became necessary to send out a Forward Air Controller to determine whether there was an actual 'smoking gun' to target.¹⁹⁵⁵

Sarajevo was of the opinion that there were too few targets in the north of the enclave. De Ruiter requested Dutchbat in Sarajevo to list more targets in the north of the enclave to supplement the listed targets in the south already listed. According to Zagreb those additional targets caused further delay.¹⁹⁵⁶ That was however not clear from the logbooks, which only stated that an 'updated target list' had been received at 12.30 hours.¹⁹⁵⁷

At approximately 11.15 hours, once Zagreb had confirmed receipt of the request, the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo received a report that the VRS were attacking Dutchbat.¹⁹⁵⁸ At about the same time Zagreb too realised that the attack had been continued and that the VRS had not pulled back.¹⁹⁵⁹ The Bosnian Serbs had most probably noticed on their radars the aircraft leaving Bosnian airspace after they had been ordered to return to base at 10.35 hours - which enabled the VRS to continue their advance into Srebrenica.¹⁹⁶⁰

At that point the 182nd Brigade of the ABiH regrouped in the south-eastern corner of the enclave. In the first hours after dawn the Commander of the Brigade, Ibro Dudic, reported that the VRS were holding the lines but were not firing. According to the report he had matters under control and the situation was normal. This was rather encouraging in view of reports from the previous day stating that the brigade was in a fairly desperate state and many troops had fled.

At around 11.00 hours Dudic reported that the VRS were attacking. The Bosnian Serbs were at the gates of the city, Dudic had lost control of his troops and was forced to withdraw. At that point chaos broke loose as scores of ABiH soldiers fled with their families. Dudic received an order from Becirovic not to withdraw and was sent a company to reinforce his unit. He ordered the 28th Division Forward Command Post and communication centre in the Hunter's lodge to relocate to the PTT building. The personnel asked permission to set fire to the building upon evacuation, but Becirovic refused because he was still not expecting the fall of Srebrenica. He was afraid that burning down the Hunter's lodge would cause more panic amongst the population who could take this as a sign that the VRS had occupied the building. As a result documents of the 28th Division were left behind and fell into the hands of the VRS.¹⁹⁶¹

Once the 28th Division communication centre had been set up in the PTT building, Becirovic had a short discussion with General Budakovic, the Chief of Staff of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla, in which he reported that the situation at the city entrance was beginning to assume dramatic

¹⁹⁵⁵ DOPKlu STAOOPER, no number. Logbook CAOC 5ATAF, 11/07/95, 0820Z, 0917Z, 0932Z, 0946Z.

¹⁹⁵⁶ NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. 'Chronology of Events CAS Missions - Srebrenica', 11/07/95.

¹⁹⁵⁷ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Memorandum Maj. Frenzt, AOCC Sarajevo to Lt-Col de Ruiter.

¹⁹⁵⁸ DCBC, Box 59. Overview of Citations Logbook Air Operations Control Center, Annex A to Klu replies to Questions by the Chamber on Srebrenica.

¹⁹⁵⁹ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

¹⁹⁶⁰ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

¹⁹⁶¹ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjeceni koverat*, p. 265.

proportions. VRS snipers were firing into the city from high positions, which prevented all ABiH movement. The population had already abandoned the city. On 10 July nine civilians were reported dead and thirty wounded, and on 11 July eight had been wounded. While NATO aircraft had still not gone into action, UN personnel were on their way to guide aircraft to potential targets.

Budakovic issued an order to regroup and to stop the VRS at the entrances to the city. He emphasised that the Red Arrow anti-tank weapon should be used. Unfortunately it had been rendered unserviceable by unskilled users. Budakovic also wanted the War Presidency of the Opstina to make an effort to calm the public and to regain control of the population. Becirovic however considered those orders unexecutable. All communications were being conducted by courier and no one knew with any certainty whether the couriers would be able to locate the Command Posts they had been sent to.¹⁹⁶²

With the exception of the struggle between the VRS and the ABiH for possession of Mount Kak (which was taking place outside Dutchbat's view), there were no dramatic developments in the southern section of the enclave before 11.00 hours. In the north things were however different: At 11.01 hours OP-N was shaken by mortar and heavy machine-gun fire, the crew of the OP took cover. The shelling continued with intervals over a period of thirty minutes, while a VRS tank fired at nearby ABiH soldiers. After that the situation calmed down with limited further sightings of either ABiH or VRS until eight ABiH soldiers unexpectedly forced their way into the OP and demanded Dutchbat's withdrawal so that they could occupy the OP. The OP commander, in consultation with the Commander of C Company, Matthijssen, finally persuaded the ABiH to leave with the agreement that, increase of a next mortar attack, the Dutch would pull out so the ABiH could take over the OP. It took another half hour to actually get the ABiH to leave.

The day before, a supply team that had come to fetch two anti-tank weapons (Dragons) and a weapon sight from OP-N had also been confronted by armed ABiH soldiers bent on ensuring that the OP personnel did not beat a premature retreat.¹⁹⁶³

The personnel of the Bravo 1 blocking position spotted a VRS presence to the west of Srebrenica in the form of a small lorry (a TAM 110) moving on the tarred road from Zeleni Jadar to Srebrenica, as well as an armoured vehicle, two cargo lorries and some infantry in the hairpin bend on the same road.

At 10.44 hours Franken issued an order to relocate the blocking position to a location 500 metres further south, and to use an 81 mortar and the .50 machine guns to 'persuade' the VRS in the vicinity of the radio tower to pull back. At that point the personnel of the blocking position also saw two Jeeps, a lorry, an ambulance and an armoured vehicle on the same road. Approximately fifty VRS infantry were moving in column along the road.

At 11.17 hours Franken authorised his units to fire at their own discretion;¹⁹⁶⁴ however, there were no indications that Bravo 1 did indeed open fire. For some time there was no communication with the blocking position, most probably due to the fact that the vehicles had been moving.¹⁹⁶⁵

Reports of anti-tank fire and firing from north to south probably related to ABiH activities. Subsequently a report came in of a VRS tank near the radio tower on the way from Zeleni Jadar to Srebrenica, of gunfire in Crni Gruber to the east of the enclave, new reports of anti-tank fire, and of fire fights between the ABiH and VRS. Missile hits and explosions indicated renewed VRS artillery action. A tank opened fire on the APCs from Pribicevac. The withdrawal of the APCs from the Bravo 1 blocking position towards Srebrenica drew close fire from the VRS.¹⁹⁶⁶ The commander of the ABiH

¹⁹⁶² Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjeceni koverat*, p. 265-6.

¹⁹⁶³ SMG 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 11/07/95; Debriefing statement Sergeant 1st Class Klinck, 12/09/95; information based on confidential debriefing statement (41).

¹⁹⁶⁴ SMG 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 11/07/95, 11.17 and 10.32.

¹⁹⁶⁵ SMG 1004/65. Logbook Coy, 11/07/95, 11.59.

¹⁹⁶⁶ SMG 1004/65. Logbook Coy, 11/07/95, 10.21 to 12.06.

artillery (the M-48 Howitzer that was still positioned above Bravo 1) suffered a serious abdominal wound during the shelling and needed to be evacuated.¹⁹⁶⁷

Lieutenant Egbers was not at Bravo 1 at that point. He had temporarily handed over the command to Sergeant Visser so as to return to the location where Forward Air Controller Voskamp and Sergeant Struik had remained after a previous round of shelling.¹⁹⁶⁸ The three men were making their way forward over the two to three hundred metres to the APCs when a VRS tank opened fire on them. Grenades exploded right and left and they were forced to seek cover against the mountain slope. Halfway back the three men were met by the APCs that were withdrawing because of the firing. The APCs picked them up and quickly pulled back to safety.¹⁹⁶⁹ At that moment several grenades exploded directly in front of the APC, which, in Egbers' opinion, would have hit them had the leading vehicle not stopped to pick up the three men.¹⁹⁷⁰

A grenade also exploded near the APCs and one of the two men standing outside the vehicle was thrown against the APC. The driver pulled away so fast that the two men failed to get in on time and were forced to hang onto the rails as the APC made its way down the slope. The two men concerned later claimed that the APC had run over the legs of a Muslim sitting with his legs stretched across the road. There were several other ABiH soldiers in hiding along this mountain slope.¹⁹⁷¹ The driver, who was partially under armour, failed to notice anything to that effect. One other person suspected that this might have happened; however none of the others noticed anything.

As mentioned before, an ABiH soldier had been wounded, but this was the ABiH commander of the M-48 Howitzer that had been hit by the grenade. The ABiH soldiers in the area however made no mention of such an accident, and there was no subsequent hostility towards Dutchbat. To the contrary, an ABiH soldier later returned a coffee mug dropped by Dutchbats who had been making hot chocolate in the back of the APC when the shelling started. Insufficient evidence was available to justify any hard conclusions about this incident.¹⁹⁷²

After that the VRS concentrated their fire on the north. Four tank grenades exploded at Height 469, more than eight hundred metres from the compound in Srebrenica, at the location of the Forward Air Controllers. Civilians in the proximity of the compound were starting to take flight. The abandoned OP-H was hit by a grenade and three light VRS mortars. The VRS also opened tank and heavy machine-gun fire at OP-H from the radio tower. By that time the VRS were also firing into the enclave and at OP-H from Crni Guber and the radio tower. There was no further visible sign of an ABiH presence and Dutchbat only caught the occasional glimpse of a few isolated ABiH soldiers. The only audible ABiH small arms fire came from the vicinity of OP-H and a few hundred metres south of the market square. The ABiH fired four mortar grenades from near the PTT building. Hundreds of refugees, including some armed soldiers, continued to move towards Potocari.¹⁹⁷³

Towards midday, VRS troops began to concentrate on the crests of the hills south of Srebrenica, but still showed no signs an advance. Shortly after twelve the VRS asked for an interview with Karremans in Bratunac, but failed to disclose the subject of the discussion. Although they guaranteed Karremans' safety, the Battalion Commander failed to react to the invitation - Dutchbat was awaiting the arrival of the requested aircraft.¹⁹⁷⁴ By 13.00 hours (according to the estimates of *Medicins Sans Frontières*), it had become clear that the ABiH would not be able to continue the defence of the city

¹⁹⁶⁷ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 276.

¹⁹⁶⁸ Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

¹⁹⁶⁹ Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

¹⁹⁷⁰ OM Arnhem. KMar Brigade Soesterberg, 'sebra-Care-Team', 28/10/98, No. P. 586/b 006/1998.

¹⁹⁷¹ OM Arnhem. KMar Brigade Soesterberg, 'sebra-Care-Team', 28/10/98, No. P. 586. B 004/1998.

¹⁹⁷² OM Arnhem. KMar Brigade Soesterberg, 'sebra-Care-Team', 28/10/98, No. P. 462/99.

¹⁹⁷³ SMG 1004/65. Logbook Co, 11/07/95, 12.19 to 12.56. .

¹⁹⁷⁴ SMG 1004/56. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 11/07/95, 12.08. SMG 1007/25. Debriefing Sergeant-Major Van Meer, 22/07/95. It is possible that the aim of the invitation had been to threaten Karremans with the death of the hostages; possibly after the VRS had learnt of the request for Close Air Support.

for more than another thirty minutes.¹⁹⁷⁵ The ABiH withdrew from the area around the market square with the VRS close on their heels. The APCs also pulled back gradually from the market square to avoid being surrounded by the VRS.

A grenade hit the compound in Srebrenica, causing several casualties (Dutchbat's reaction to that is described in more detail in the Appendix, 'Dutchbat III and the Population: Medical Issues.' One of the APCs lost a track and wheel in the grenade explosion. Moments later an explosion occurred directly behind the compound. In spite of the fighting and shelling, Major Franken wanted all B-Company personnel to remain in the vicinity of the compound in Srebrenica. The VRS next issued an order that refugees from Srebrenica were not permitted to flee to the compound in Potocari. That notwithstanding, the first lorries with refugees and wounded left for Potocari.¹⁹⁷⁶

The Bravo 1 blocking position was then instructed to pull back to the Srebrenica compound with the .50 machine gun pointing south. One of the two VRS tanks at the radio tower on the road between Zeleni Jadar and Srebrenica kept its barrel aimed at the withdrawal route of the Bravo 1 blocking position towards Srebrenica.

At about the same time as the refugees (estimates of four to five thousand) began to overrun the B-Company compound, the first aircraft arrived above the enclave. The blocking position meanwhile made its way back to the compound at a walking pace.¹⁹⁷⁷ ABiH Commander Ramiz Becirovic visited Groen in the Ops Room. He appeared shaken and said that it was all over. That caused Groen to fear that the ABiH would not let the rest of B Company withdraw, but that the desperate ABiH soldiers would try to entrap them. Groen, with the help of an interpreter, secured Becirovic's permission to evacuate the refugees from Srebrenica city.¹⁹⁷⁸

20. Close Air Support Approved

In the early afternoon Akashi sent his first report of the day to New York on conditions in Srebrenica. Further updates were to follow in the course of the day. He sketched an extremely sombre picture and pointed out that the intention had been to send 779 soldiers in Srebrenica, but that only 470 had eventually been stationed there; thirty of whom were now in the hands of the VRS. Dutchbat was out of fuel, had had no fresh food in days, and no home leave in six months. Dutchbat's isolation had been exacerbated by the fact that periods had passed in which no Close Air Support could be given. The Rapid Reaction Force could not come to their rescue as the Force was being held up at the border by the Bosnian Croats. In the case of a concentrated attack by the VRS, the blocking position would not be capable of holding its ground or defending itself. In short, in Akashi's view Dutchbat could do very little to ward off a VRS attack.¹⁹⁷⁹

Zagreb had meanwhile refused Close Air Support. As a result Brantz thought his only option was to throw a cat amongst the pigeons. After making enquiries in Sarajevo he learnt that the request had been sent to Zagreb. He called Colonel De Jonge in Zagreb and asked him to arrange Close Air Support.¹⁹⁸⁰ Brantz also contacted the Defence Crisis Management Centre in The Hague at 11.43 hours to re-emphasise the gravity of the situation. In Brantz' view, if the one channel failed, he had little other option than to use another; after all, failure to act would certainly result in the loss of the enclave. An urgent request for Close Air Support had been submitted, and Brantz strongly suspected Janvier would fail to take the necessary action.¹⁹⁸¹

¹⁹⁷⁵ SMG 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops Room Monthly Register, 11/07/95, 11.29 and 12.58.

¹⁹⁷⁶ SMG 1004/65. Logbook B-Coy, 11/07/95 13.00 to 14.35.

¹⁹⁷⁷ SMG 1004/65. Logbook B-Coy, 11/07/95 13.00 to 14.41.

¹⁹⁷⁸ SMG 1007/25. Debriefing report Captain Groen, 22/07/95.

¹⁹⁷⁹ UNNY, DKPO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1131.

¹⁹⁸⁰ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary (version January 2001), 11/09/95, 10.30.

¹⁹⁸¹ Interview M.P. Wijsbroek, 10/12/97.

If The Hague had been unaware of the situation until then, Brantz' message effectively changed that situation. The Hague too felt that Close Air Support was a matter of extreme urgency after the reports of advancing VRS tanks, the intolerable situation at the blocking position, and VRS shelling of the OPs in the north of the enclave. That however did not mean that The Hague intended to intervene by putting pressure on Janvier or Akashi. The discussions in the bunker at the Ministry of Defence in The Hague were focused on the options available in the event of further OPs falling. The question was whether Dutchbat should be cut back in strength to a smaller company with the exclusive task of 'reporting and observing'.¹⁹⁸² That was the idea Karremans had proposed to his superiors the day before, but Janvier did not wish to make any decisions, as he considered that to be the duty of the local commander. That discussion was apparently not continued, as no further evidence to that effect was available.

Thirty minutes after the request for Close Air Support had reached Zagreb, the consultations of the Crisis Action Team were finished. Few questions were posed and there was little further discussion, as this was more a case of collecting Janvier and Akashi's signatures and sending the request to NATO.¹⁹⁸³ Janvier signed at 12.00 and Akashi at 12.17 hours.

Janvier confirmed telephonically to Admiral Smith that three sets of targets had been approved, viz., (1) VRS units attacking the blocking position south of Srebrenica; (2) heavy weapons shelling the UN positions in Srebrenica and; (3) VRS units attacking the OPs.¹⁹⁸⁴ The Blue Sword Request that Janvier had signed stated that approval had been granted for 'attacks on any forces attacking the blocking UNPROFOR position South of Srebrenica and heavy weapons identified as shelling UN positions in Srebrenica town.' To that Akashi added the authority to attack 'forces attacking UN OPs on the perimeter of the enclave' (clearly based on the problems encountered by OP-N).¹⁹⁸⁵ At 12.20 hours Zagreb sent a message that the request had been signed. Sarajevo did not notify Tuzla and Srebrenica about the additional instructions from Zagreb; only about the approval of the request.¹⁹⁸⁶

The order for Close Air Support came at an unfortunate moment for NATO, as it fell exactly between two packages. The aircraft had been flying above the Adriatic Sea until 11.00 hours, after which they had returned to their base. A number of aircraft (in military terms: a package) was put on 60-minute alert for the afternoon.

Shortly after the aircraft had returned to their base, news came in from the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo that Janvier had been put under pressure to sign the request. In anticipation of Akashi's signature, the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force decided, at 12.02 hours, to put aircraft in the air. At 12.30 hours, the US Navy, which provided the support aircraft, launched its aircraft from the *USS Roosevelt*. The Dutch F-16s from Villafranca took off fifty minutes after receiving the order. In that time they had to be briefed, start their engines, feed flight data into the computers, arm their bombs and taxi out. That fitted into the alert period (Ground Alert) of 60 minutes applicable to the aircraft. The flight time to Bosnia was only 25 minutes. The problem there was that the package for the Close Air Support operation still needed to be assembled, as they were scattered over various bases. They would also have to wait for the much slower command post (a C-130 Airborne Battlefield Command and Control Center, ABCCC) and slow American A-10 aircraft; which would add to a total of eighty minutes.¹⁹⁸⁷ Vicenza had failed to put the ABCCC on alert status, which caused an extra delay.¹⁹⁸⁸ At the time there was only one aircraft airborne that could provide Suppression of Enemy Air

¹⁹⁸² Voorhoeve Diary, p. 106.

¹⁹⁸³ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹⁹⁸⁴ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNPROFOR/NATO Close Air Support to Dutch Battalion at Potocari, 11/07/95, Chronology of Events.

¹⁹⁸⁵ NIOD Coll. Brantz. Release Authority for Air Request 0109/1107/95.

¹⁹⁸⁶ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary (version August 1999), p. 142-3.

¹⁹⁸⁷ DMKlu M95077091/1617. Director of Operations Klu (MajGen G.F.A. Macco) to MinDef, CDS, 04/10/95, No. DOP95.072.078. Minister Voorhoeve had asked the Commander in Chief RNLAf whether it would be possible for the aircraft to arrive earlier.

¹⁹⁸⁸ Lutgert and de Winter, *Check the Horizon*, p. 406.

Defences (SEAD) (a EA-6 Prowler). The Prowlers were used to suppress VRS surface-to-air operations, and were a condition for other aircraft to be allowed to fly overland flights. A similar SEAD aircraft left an aircraft carrier at 13.29 hours.¹⁹⁸⁹

A total of six support aircraft were available (types EF-111, EA-6B, F-18C) and eight for Close Air Support (types F-16 and A-10). The aircraft for the Suppression of Enemy Air Defences were immediately authorised to fly over Bosnia 'to assess the environment'; however, that took until 13.51 hours. The Close Air Support aircraft provisionally remained in the vicinity of the tanker aircraft above the Adriatic Sea. Vicenza had determined the sequence of the aircraft as follows: First the Dutch F-16s, then two flights of American F-16s and, finally, two American A-10s. Contact had been established with two Forward Air Controllers, namely, Windmill 04 (still on the roof of the compound) in Potocari and Windmill 03 at blocking position Bravo 1. Hours earlier, they had identified a tank and artillery at Pribicevac, a tank south of Srebrenica, and a tank east of Srebrenica as targets.¹⁹⁹⁰

Shortly after the targets had been identified, a report came in about a VRS surface-to-air battery (SA-6) in the vicinity of Srebrenica that might be active; however, ten minutes later the news arrived that the 'target' was a surface-to-air battery in Hungary.¹⁹⁹¹ That report immediately resulted in a telephone conversation between Admiral Smith and Janvier. Smith asked Janvier's permission to attack the surface-to-air battery, and Janvier agreed based on considerations of self-defence applicable to NATO and UN units.¹⁹⁹²

On the afternoon of 11 July the Dutch F-16 pilots were as yet unaware of the imminent bombing mission. They had put in a lot of air time the previous day based on an alert (in military terms: alerts and scrambles) with no concrete results. The pilots had no idea in advance that the mission was to be Srebrenica – they were only briefed once they were already in the air. After flying off the tanker for fifteen minutes, the aircraft were assigned a Forward Air Controller, a radio frequency, and a target at Srebrenica. In the view of the Dutch pilots, the CAOC in Vicenza could have issued authorisation for that flight earlier, namely as soon as Vicenza knew that this was a serious mission. In their view, that simple routine would have saved time.¹⁹⁹³ At 13.56 hours the attack package was authorised to realise weapons.¹⁹⁹⁴ At 14.20 hours the F-16s established first contact with the Forward Air Controllers. At 14.42 hours the first bomb fell. Karremans had requested the attack at 10.00 hours, the request arrived in Sarajevo at 10.50 hours; nearly four hours had passed by the time support finally arrived.¹⁹⁹⁵

Akashi let New York know that Close Air Support would only be used if UNPROFOR personnel came under attack – in other words, not if the population or the city came under attack. In as far as the Dutch hostages were concerned, the protection of the Dutchbat units at the OPs and in the blocking position enjoyed priority. After he had approved the request for Close Air Support, Akashi explained to Milosevic that NATO had been called in to ensure UNPROFOR's safety in the enclave. The policy in Zagreb was to notify the Bosnian Serbs that this was not an air strike, but Close Air Support related to what was happening on the ground. Akashi further explained that this was a consequence of the Bosnian Serbs' own actions. He described the mission and said that it was a direct result of the VRS' attacks on Dutchbat OPs. Akashi also confronted Milosevic with the fact that UNPROFOR had issued three warnings to VRS General Tolimir on 10 July. Janvier had tried to contact Mladic, but he had not been available. According to Akashi, had the VRS stopped its offensive, there would have been no reason for Close Air Support. Milosevic promised to contact Mladic

¹⁹⁸⁹ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Memorandum Maj. Frenzt, AOCC Sarajevo to Lt-Col de Ruiter, no date.

¹⁹⁹⁰ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 11/07/95, 1002Z, 1044Z, 1048Z.

¹⁹⁹¹ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 11/07/95, 1102Z, 1126Z, 1151Z, 1153Z, 1210Z.

¹⁹⁹² NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNPROFOR/NATO Close-Air Support to Dutch Battalion at Potocari, 11/07/95, Chronology of Events.

¹⁹⁹³ Lutgert and de Winter, *Check the Horizon*, p. 408.

¹⁹⁹⁴ SMG, 1002. Interoffice Memorandum DCOS LOG/ADM to COS, 02/11/95, Memo 768. Zagreb calculated the time from the moment the request arrived and counted 185 minutes.

¹⁹⁹⁵ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Memorandum Maj. Frenzt, AOCC Sarajevo to Lieutenant Colonel de Ruiter, no date.

immediately. He also added that he doubted whether Mladic would appreciate the difference between air strikes and Close Air Support, and that he expected a strong reaction from Mladic.¹⁹⁹⁶

UNPF Chief of Staff Kolsteren in Zagreb was convinced that Mladic and the VRS had a very keen understanding of the difference between Close Air Support and air strikes. Failure on the part of the VRS to recognise a direct connection between the use of air power and their own actions, would have resulted in their viewing NATO's assistance as repression, which, in turn, would have resulted in blind rage. The aim of Close Air Support, as deployed in Srebrenica, was to clearly demonstrate the logical connection.¹⁹⁹⁷

According to Akashi it made very little difference whether this was about Close Air Support or air strikes, as, in his view, any use of air power was a traumatic event for the Bosnian Serbs. According to Akashi, Mladic would much rather have put up with 72 tank grenades, as the Danes had previously done in Tuzla, than an attack from the air.¹⁹⁹⁸ At 15.00 hours Milosevic called Akashi back with an update on the situation. Milosevic said that the Dutch soldiers held in the Bosnian-Serb territory had been able to keep their weapons and equipment, and that they had full freedom of movement.¹⁹⁹⁹

Reactions in The Hague

Authorisation of Close Air Support also necessitated intensive telephone traffic with the Netherlands. Voorhoeve called Akashi at the same time as he received the call from Milosevic. When he returned Voorhoeve's call, Akashi said: 'On the recommendation of Janvier, I have given approval for Close Air Support. Planes have taken off and will be in the area in one and a half hours.' Voorhoeve too felt that Close Air Support was appropriate 'if the local commander finds that it is essential for the safety of his blue helmets. My first priority is to avoid unnecessary casualties.'²⁰⁰⁰ Voorhoeve did however confess to Akashi that he feared the action might expose Dutchbat to a concentrated attack by the Bosnian Serbs, and asked him about evacuation plans for Dutchbat.²⁰⁰¹ NATO had prepared plans for the withdrawal of the entire UNPROFOR force, but those plans had not been completed yet. Akashi confirmed that an evacuation should be prepared and that he would consult his military commanders to that effect. Akashi also informed Voorhoeve that he had been in contact with Milosevic and that he would put pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to stop the fighting.²⁰⁰²

At around 12.30 hours, the Chief Defence Staff, Van den Breemen, with Voorhoeve at his side, spoke to Kolsteren via a secure telephone. He also stated that safety was to be the first priority should the task become unfeasible.²⁰⁰³

Akashi agreed; after all, he had already pointed out the uncertainties surrounding the fate of the Dutchbat hostages in his report to New York on authorisation of Close Air Support. At that point there were unconfirmed rumours that the hostages were making their way back to the battalion. Akashi had hoped (assuming the rumours were true) that they would have made it back to safety before actual authorisation of Close Air Support. He added that, in any event, protection of the Dutchbat soldiers in the field enjoyed a high priority.²⁰⁰⁴

At almost exactly the same time Van Mierlo spoke to Bildt. He too promised to put pressure on Milosevic. Voorhoeve then updated NATO Secretary-General Claes on his communications with

¹⁹⁹⁶ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNPROFOR/NATO Close Air Support to Dutch Battalion at Potocari, 11/07/95, Chronology of Events; interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99; NIOD; Coll. Kolsteren. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1130.

¹⁹⁹⁷ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

¹⁹⁹⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 22/07/95, No. Z-1229.

¹⁹⁹⁹ NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1136.

²⁰⁰⁰ Voorhoeve Diary, p. 108.

²⁰⁰¹ NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1130.

²⁰⁰² DCBC, 528. Daily Reports DCBC 11/07/95, 12.43-13.07.

²⁰⁰³ Voorhoeve Diary, p. 106.

²⁰⁰⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1130.

Akashi and Janvier. He said that Akashi had turned the key for Close Air Support. Claes agreed with Voorhoeve that preparations should be made for the evacuation of Dutchbat.²⁰⁰⁵ During the lunch of the permanent representatives that day he mentioned Voorhoeve's request. Claes was not necessarily happy with the request, as it could result in an embarrassing situation for NATO due to the fact that the operational plan concerned (Oplan 40104) had not yet been approved and as yet no NATO units had been deployed in Bosnia. After consultation with Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve, the deputy Permanent Representative, Feith, explained that a request for evacuation could only be sent to NATO via the UN.²⁰⁰⁶ This is dealt with in further detail in Chapter 9, 'The departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica'.

Close Air Support: Execution

At 13.26 hours, Forward Air Controller of the commando's with call sign Windmill 03 (Sergeant Erkelens) reported two tanks as priority targets. Other targets consisted of infantry units and three armoured vehicles moving along the road to Srebrenica. At 13.40 hours Windmill 03 reported that he was under fire. At that point the aircraft were still flying over the sea.²⁰⁰⁷ At 14.02 hours Windmill 04 (Lieutenant Versteeg), who was still on the roof of the compound, also reported that he was under fire from the artillery positions in Bratunac. One report went as far as to state that one of the Forward Air Controllers had been wounded, but that the other was continuing his work.²⁰⁰⁸

After those reports, Vicenza assigned four extra F-18s to prepare for Close Air Support after the American A-10s. Lieutenant General Mike Ryan, Air Force Commander of NATO's Southern European Command (in military terms: COMAIRSOUTH), personally confirmed this to the NATO liaison officer in Zagreb. He indicated that the first group would arrive over Srebrenica in ten minutes. The Dutch F-16s arrived above the Forward Air Controller at 14.20, even before Ryan's announcement.²⁰⁰⁹

The fact that Windmill 03 was to decide on the precise targets for the aircraft was based on the information that he had been under fire.²⁰¹⁰ Both Erkelens and Voskamp were still present near the Bravo 1 blocking position. The Dutch F-16s made contact with the Forward Air Controllers and the authentication procedure was executed correctly – there was some confusion, as both Windmill 02 (Voskamp) and Windmill 03 (Erkelens) were active to a greater or lesser extent and it was not too clear to the aircraft who exactly was who. The JCOs were also still present and claimed to have made contact with the two Dutch F-16s at 14.30 hours. They did not play any role in guiding the aircraft on their targets, as the Dutch Forward Air Controller spoke to the pilots in Dutch.²⁰¹¹ One of the Forward Air Controllers mentioned the taking of a hostage, which precluded the possibility of continuing to work with him. This however appears to have been a misunderstanding, as the statement referred to the threat to the lives of the Dutchbat hostages in Bratunac and not to the possibility of a Forward Air Controller being taken hostage. The gravity of the situation was clear to the pilots at their first radio contact (partly because they had been asked directly whether they were Dutch or not). Initial contact was (as usual) in English, but the pilot promptly switched to Dutch. The leader of the Dutch formation did not wish to complicate matters by switching back to English. The high level of stress was clear from the instructions given to one of the pilots; 'You can take out anything south of the point at which you just turned.'

²⁰⁰⁵ Voorhoeve Diary, p. 108.

²⁰⁰⁶ SMG, 1004/48. Code Feith NATO 1036, 11/07/95.

²⁰⁰⁷ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 11/07/95.

²⁰⁰⁸ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNPROFOR/NATO Close Air Support to Dutch Battalion at Potocari, 11/07/95, Chronology of Events.

²⁰⁰⁹ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 11/07/95, 1140Z, 1202Z, 1218Z.

²⁰¹⁰ Debriefing statement Lieutenant Colonel J.A.C. Ruiter, 27/09/95.

²⁰¹¹ Confidential information (1).

Windmill 02 said that the F-16s ‘were put on hold’ for ten minutes (in military terms: a wheel). In that manoeuvre the aircraft circled above the target area to identify the targets in dialogue with the Forward Air Controller. Experience gained during the Gulf War and in a Bosnia had shown that the pilots could operate at medium heights without excessive risk and that these tactics were reasonably effective in fair weather conditions. Experience also showed that time pressure played a less important role, and that communications were more effective than in the case of the low-flying techniques used during the East-West conflict.²⁰¹²

When the F-16s returned to the enclave, Voskamp realised that they were also in contact with Forward Air Controller Erkelens. He was however unable to hear Erkelens, and Erkelens could not hear him - the pilot alerted them to that effect. Voskamp said that he had not realised that the commandos had also been assigned the task of serving as Forward Air Controller.

The main reference point from the ground was the radio tower, but the pilot could not initially see it. Consequently the F-16s flew a circle and then returned. Voskamp then instructed the pilot to fly from north to south, which occurred. At that point, it seemed that the other Forward Air Controller, Erkelens, had taken over. According to a Royal Netherlands Air Force report to the Royal Netherlands Army, he had issued good instructions even though he was under fire at the time.

At 14.40 hours, after a second run over the targets to ensure that they had properly been identified, the first F-16 dropped a bomb from an altitude of 15,000 feet. That was followed by a second bomb after having flown another circle. The second F-16 dropped both bombs in a single run (all four were Mk 84 bombs). One of the pilots thought to have noticed fire from a surface-to-air artillery position.²⁰¹³ In the In-Flight Report the pilots stated: ‘Definite hits on road, possibly on tanks.’ Vicenza then instructed the American F-16s to attack the tanks in Pribicevac.²⁰¹⁴

Windmill 02 and 03 asked for more assistance. The American F-16s then asked permission from the flying command post to drop their payload. Permission was granted with the proviso that they were in contact with a Forward Air Controller. The authentication procedures between the American F-16s and Sergeant Erkelens failed at first. According to the Royal Netherlands Air Force this was because the American pilots had not executed the procedure correctly.²⁰¹⁵ Erkelens then instructed the Americans to drop a bomb on the former OP-E, as it was occupied by VRS soldiers.²⁰¹⁶ Confusion ensued after the flight controllers in Vicenza had lost contact with the Forward Air Controllers. The JCOs made contact with the two American F-16s (known as Nasty 05)²⁰¹⁷ and tried to guide them to tanks and artillery positions firing at the city. The aircraft passed over several times, but could not locate the targets. After the VRS had fired off a surface-to-air missile, the American F-16s flew away, signalling the JCOs that they needed fuel.²⁰¹⁸

At 15.33 hours the American F-16s signalled via their In Flight Report that they had seen the smoke grenade fired by the Tactical Air Control Party, and that the coordinates given at Pribicevac had been accurate, but that they had failed to drop their bombs. Akashi reported to New York that the second flight by the American F-16s had been called off ‘due to obscuration over the target.’²⁰¹⁹ According to Sergeant Erkelens (Windmill 03) the first target was five tanks spotted by the Dutch pilots

²⁰¹² DCBC, 1251. Fiche DOPKlu to CDS, 01/12/95, no number; DCBC, 739. DOPKlu to Mindef for SCOCIS, 13/07/95, DOP 95.050.987/956.

²⁰¹³ DCBC, 739. DOPKlu to Defence Staff, 13/07/95, DOP95.050.987/956. Confi.; Lutgert and De Winter, *Check the Horizon*, p. 407.

²⁰¹⁴ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 11/07/95, 1252Z, 1259Z.

²⁰¹⁵ DCBC, 739. DOPKlu to Defence Staff, 13/07/95, No. DOP95.050.987/956. Confi.

²⁰¹⁶ SMG 1007/25. Debriefing Sgt 1 Erkelens and First Lieutenant Caris, 22/07/95.

²⁰¹⁷ The JCOs’ report is inaccurate on that point. It specified contact with the A-10s, but their call sign was Dumbo, and the call sign of the American F-16s was Nasty.

²⁰¹⁸ Confidential information (1).

²⁰¹⁹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1136. Voorhoeve informed the Second Chamber to the effect that the American pilots had failed to identify their targets due to the rugged terrain and procedural failures. (TK, Conference Year 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 134 (30/11/95)).

and later possible VRS positions at height 747 between Srebrenica and Pribicevac. One of the American pilots had first dropped a smoke bomb as a point of reference followed by another, one kilometre further south and later two more. However the pilots were reported to have had problems finding their bearings.²⁰²⁰

As mentioned before, the situation was not that simple – according to a report, the VRS had launched an SA-7 (shoulder launched, heat-seeking surface-to-air) missile. It is not clear who issued the report, but apparently the missile had been dead on target, did not react to the flares fired by the F-16 (to mislead the heat-seeking device) and narrowly missed the tail of the American F-16. That disrupted the entire operation and contact was lost. After that incident the Americans did ask permission to drop their bombs with the agreement of the Forward Air Controller. At that point the CAOC in Vicenza was unsure as to whether they were talking to Windmill 02 or 03. An alternative was to seek authentication between the American F-16s and Windmill 04 on the roof of the compound in Potocari. The authentication procedure however failed again. AFSOUTH in Naples then intercepted with the announcement that the American F-16s were neither authorised to work with Windmill 04 nor to drop their bombs.²⁰²¹ The American F-16s were exclusively authorised to bomb their targets in the case of a direct attack on Windmill 04, which was not the case.

Ten minutes later authentication succeeded and AFSOUTH asked Windmill 03 and 04 whether they still needed Close Air Support. Windmill 04 in Potocari indicated that he had identified a good target for bombing.²⁰²² The American A-10s were still in the target zone and the F-18s that followed were waiting to enter the target zone. The A-10s flew over the southern section of the enclave between 15.50 and 16.18 hours and remained in contact with Windmill 04.

At 16.37 hours the CAOC in Vicenza asked Windmill 03 whether he still needed Close Air Support.²⁰²³ Windmill 03 was then (16.40 hours) instructed by Sarajevo via Vicenza and the flying Command Post to withdraw as soon as a suitable opportunity arose. Sarajevo had lost contact with Windmill 03.²⁰²⁴ Windmill 04 responded that he had a good target in sight. At 16.58 hours the American F-16s were again authorised to drop their bombs at the request of a Forward Air Controller provided he was under fire. At 17.05 hours Windmill 04 requested the aircraft to leave the enclave based on the situation with the hostages in Bratunac. That request had been issued by the Dutchbat Ops Room (Command Post) (see below).²⁰²⁵ After having received confirmation that Windmill 04 no longer needed Close Air Support, AFSOUTH instructed the F-18s to climb to a higher altitude, but to maintain contact with the Forward Air Controller and to remain in the area. The F-18s were subsequently instructed once more to enquire about Windmill 04's situation, but no reply was logged. After that all aircraft were directed back to the Adriatic Sea and instructed to stay near the tanker aircraft. At 18.30 hours the operation was called off.²⁰²⁶

The effect of the Close Air Support

The staff in Zagreb had listened in and reported that two targets had been identified and attacked, and that the American F-16s had failed to identify their targets.²⁰²⁷ The fact that the guidance of the aircraft had not been conducted spotlessly, had not escaped Zagreb's notice.²⁰²⁸ Zagreb's frustration was

²⁰²⁰ SMG/Debrief. 'Military Analysis of the action taken by Dutchbat during the Srebrenica crisis; Assen, 28/09/95, Compiled by Lt Col A. de Munnik, see: ERKEF150.1

²⁰²¹ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 11/07/95, 1434Z, 1437Z, 1439Z, 1441Z, 1443Z, 1445Z, 1447Z.

²⁰²² DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 11/07/95, 1435Z, 1458Z, 1504Z.

²⁰²³ SMG 1007/25. Debriefing Sergeant-Major Van Meer, Kamp Pleso, 22/07/95.

²⁰²⁴ DCBC 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 11/07/95, 1443Z, 1504Z.

²⁰²⁵ SMG 1007/25. Debriefing Sergeant-Major Van Meer, Kamp Pleso, 22/07/95.

²⁰²⁶ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 11/07/95, 1505Z, 1506Z, 1600Z, 1630Z.

²⁰²⁷ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

²⁰²⁸ Interview R. Theunens, 08/02/00.

exacerbated by the fact that the ‘dumb’ bombs had failed to have much effect; which led to the belief that it signalled an end to the Srebrenica Safe Area.²⁰²⁹

Five minutes after the bombing, Janvier ordered Dutchbat to abandon all OPs and withdraw to the compound in Potocari. Janvier added that this was to be done without engaging in combat with the ABiH. Janvier was at that point clearly still haunted by the events surrounding OP-F, Van Renssen’s death, and later problems with the ABiH. What Janvier had clearly not realised was that the ABiH were at that point preparing to leave the enclave. Karremans however kept the OPs in place for the time being, as he thought it too risky to execute the order at that stage.²⁰³⁰

To the NATO liaison officer in Zagreb’s question as to what to do next, Janvier replied that the Forward Air Controllers could be withdrawn. Janvier then left the Situation Center in Zagreb and did not return.²⁰³¹ At 17.16 hours, NATO liaison officer Rudd notified Admiral Leighton Smith that Close Air Support could be terminated, but added that Janvier had asked to keep the aircraft in the air as long as possible. In the event of further Close Air Support being needed in the framework of the approved Blue Sword Request, Janvier would contact Admiral Smith personally to that end.²⁰³² At 18.30 hours, Vicenza instructed the aircraft to return to their bases.²⁰³³

Due to a shortage of information, AFSOUTH in Naples was unable, in its Situation Report of 17.22 hours, to determine the extent of the damage and whether the operation had in fact stopped the VRS advance. For those reasons attention was to remain fixed on Srebrenica, as well as on Zepa, as a potential next Bosnian Serb target. The NATO headquarters in Naples considered VRS retribution against UN personnel a probability.²⁰³⁴ The UNHCR also put all its posts on the alert against retaliatory and hostage-taking operations.²⁰³⁵

The VRS did indeed issue a threat. At 15.50 hours, Dutchbat received an ultimatum from the VRS via the radio of one of the hostage APCs in Bratunac. Failure to stop the aerial attacks would result in the death of the thirty Dutchbat hostages in Bratunac, and all available weapons systems would be aimed at and used against the compound in Potocari and Srebrenica. Shortly after that (16.20 hours) Dutchbat observed from the compound in Potocari that the VRS had indeed set up the weapons systems.²⁰³⁶ Franken stated that Dutchbat did not attach much value to the threats. In his view, Mladic would not allow the VRS to kill UN soldiers (mainly because it had not happened before). On the other hand, the VRS had previously fired at refugees and had also fired mortars into the square near the bus station while occupied by numerous refugees. Undoubtedly further mortar attacks would have resulted in scores of dead and wounded.²⁰³⁷

Within ten minutes of receiving the ultimatum, Karremans reported it to Sarajevo and Tuzla.²⁰³⁸ Colonel Brantz in Tuzla reported the news to the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) in The Hague. The Hague then attempted to stop further deployment of Close Air Support. How that went and the extent of the success of those efforts is discussed in Chapter 7, paragraph 5: All Further Close Air Support Called off on 11 July.

In terms of actual losses inflicted on the VRS, the effect of the Close Air Support was limited, as only one tank had been damaged. At the time the only certainty was that the road had been hit;

²⁰²⁹ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

²⁰³⁰ DCBC, 528. Daily Reports DCBC 11/07/95. The news came from Colonel Brantz at 15.07 hours. General Kolsteren had notified the DCBC of the assignment two minutes earlier.

²⁰³¹ Interview David Last, 05/07/00, diary entries.

²⁰³² DCBC, 664. Letter Lt Gen B. Janvier to Admiral L. Smith, 11/07/95.

²⁰³³ DCBC, 665. Fax NLLO AFSOUTH (Col. J. Beks) to OCHKKlu, 11/07/95 19.00 LT.

²⁰³⁴ Confidential information (153).

²⁰³⁵ CRST. Fax Zagreb (UNHCR) 11 Jul 95 1515Z.

²⁰³⁶ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. ‘short Overview of Recent Events’ compiled by Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, 17/07/95, No. TK195118; Karremans, *Srebrenica: Who Cares*, p. 196.

²⁰³⁷ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

²⁰³⁸ Karremans, *Srebrenica: Who Cares*, p. 196.

however, no one could tell for sure whether any tanks had been hit.²⁰³⁹ The Dutch F-16s initially reported that one tank had been eliminated, and their information appeared to have been compiled quite thoroughly.²⁰⁴⁰ Later reports appeared to claim more damage than had actually been inflicted. The *Leeuwarder Courant* (a Dutch daily newspaper) reported that at least one tank and possibly a second had been destroyed (the F-16s originated from the Leeuwarden Airbase, which explains the local interest). The Squadron Commander, Lieutenant Colonel J.L.H. Eikelboom, after studying video images of the attack, expressed the same view in the *Defensiekrant* (the Armed Forces newspaper).

Later reports from the JCOs stated that an artillery position and a bunker had also been eliminated.²⁰⁴¹ The JCOs reported to the UNMOs that a tank, an artillery position and a bunker had been hit.²⁰⁴² This was a notable statement, especially in view of the fact that they, like the commandos, did not have a direct view of the tanks positioned five to six hundred metres away. The commandos could only see smoke emanating from the tanks' barrels when firing – not the tanks themselves. After the Close Air Support the direct fire on the commandos ceased; however, at that point they were surrounded by the VRS.²⁰⁴³ Forward Air Controller Voskamp and Sergeant Struik only witnessed the effect of the first bomb. It appeared to be a direct hit, as one of the tanks was blown one metre into the air. Voskamp failed to report this, as his group came under fire after that. Voskamp then took cover in a APC and did not see the other two bombs being dropped.²⁰⁴⁴

According to the Bosnian Serbs the tanks were slightly damaged, but the explosions had no further effects.²⁰⁴⁵ Deputy Mayor Hamdija Fejzic and Police Chef Hakija Meholic were able to follow the bombing. Fejzic saw a bomb miss the tank, and the bombs dropped by the second aircraft explode in the forest. Meholic saw VRS soldiers abandon the tanks, apparently happy to have survived the attack. He also saw a bomb miss the tank and explode in the river nearby. The VRS did not take refuge but opened fire on the aircraft. The tanks also fired grenades to create a smokescreen against further attacks from the air. The smoke and the bombs dropped from the aircraft exacerbated the panic and resulted in major chaos in the city. The population took flight and the War Presidency of the Opstina was unable to regain control of the crowds.²⁰⁴⁶

The Close Air Support thus had limited effect other than anger on the part of the Bosnian Serbs. Mladic, during negotiations with Karremens the following day, directly attacked the latter because he had requested Close Air Support without due cause, as a result of which, Mladic claimed, twelve of his soldiers had died. It was not possible to obtain independent verification of that claim, whereby it would be fair to assume that Mladic had been bluffing.²⁰⁴⁷ The claim is further contradicted by the statements of Fejzic and Meholic above. Mladic during discussions with General Rupert Smith in Belgrade on 16 July reiterated his anger about the Close Air Support mission. According to Mladic one of the bombs nearly hit him, whereupon Smith merely replied: 'What a pity it missed you'.²⁰⁴⁸

Shortly after the Close Air Support operations, the UNPROFOR Chief of Staff in Sarajevo, General Nicolai, and VRS General Gvero conducted a telephone conversation during which Nicolai explained that Dutchbat had called for Close Air Support in self-defence. Gvero however denied that

²⁰³⁹ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury Diary. SRSG's meeting 11/07/95.

²⁰⁴⁰ DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 11/07/95, 1259Z.

²⁰⁴¹ Lutgert and de Winter, *Check the Horizon*, p. 409. Reference was made to *De Leeuwarder Courant*, 12/07/95, *Defensiekrant*, 27/07/95 and *Friesch Dagblad*, 29/07/95; P. Gerritse, 'We wilden vooraan vliegen, commandant Eikelboom en de nadagen van Srebrenica', *De Opmaat*, December 1995, p. 10.

²⁰⁴² NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Capsat TA to TX, 112049B Jul 95.

²⁰⁴³ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

²⁰⁴⁴ Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

²⁰⁴⁵ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 399/a, Interview of Radislav Krstic, 18/02/00, p. 14.

²⁰⁴⁶ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98, 19/04/98 and 21/05/99 and Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98. Westerman and Rijs found remnants of bomb craters in a garden on the shoulder of the road in June 1996. (*Het zwaartste scenario*, p. 254).

²⁰⁴⁷ Interview Petr Uscumlic, 14/09/99.

²⁰⁴⁸ Interview Rupert Smith, 12/01/00. Captain Caris heard from a JCO source during a later deployment in Bosnia that Mladic had been standing three hundred metres away. (Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00).

the VRS had attacked UNPROFOR positions. According to him the ABiH (the party that UNPROFOR protected) was responsible for those attacks. In Gvero's view, Nicolai, as a human being and experienced soldier, could not justify an unjustifiable attack on the VRS. It was untrue that the UN had been attacked and consequently there was no just cause for Close Air Support. Gvero called it an 'unprovoked attack' and demanded an immediate end to Close Air Support. Failing that, the VRS would hold Nicolai responsible for the consequences with regard to his troops as well as the population. Gvero thus clearly assumed that Nicolai was acting as deputy UNPROFOR commander.²⁰⁴⁹

At 16.23 hours, Gvero reported his conversation with Nicolai to Karadzic. According to Gvero, Nicolai wanted all VRS activities against UNPROFOR to be stopped, but Gvero added that this most likely concerned Muslim activities. In Gvero's view, if the UN had been hit, it had been hit by the very people it was protecting. He also told Karadzic that he had asked Nicolai to stop the aerial activities. Gvero also told Karadzic not to worry, as the operation was running according to plan. Gvero added that the UN presence was extremely disruptive with regard to VRS movements. Twenty minutes later Gvero again called Karadzic to tell him that the NATO aircraft were still in the air.²⁰⁵⁰

Two hours after the conversation with Nicolai, Gvero learnt that not Nicolai, but Gobilliard had been appointed as General Smith's deputy. Gvero immediately contacted Gobilliard. In a telephone conversation conducted at 18.10 hours, Gobilliard confirmed that the NATO aircraft had been withdrawn. He stated that, while the aircraft were no longer flying over Srebrenica, they remained available over the sea to protect both Dutchbat and the refugees.²⁰⁵¹

Gobilliard added that Karremans had been instructed to arrange a local ceasefire. Gvero supported the notion of direct contact with the local VRS commander, whose cooperation would be needed to negotiate a ceasefire. Gvero failed to mention that the VRS commander in question would be Mladic. He promised Gobilliard to do his utmost to keep the situation in Srebrenica under control. Gvero stated that he could not foresee any serious problems in that respect due to the presence of 'competent soldiers' there. At the end of the conversation, Gvero again pointed out that the VRS had not fired at UNPROFOR, and that the blame fell squarely on the ABiH. In Gvero's view this was a typical scenario, and he added

that the ABiH routinely used stolen UN vehicles to attack the VRS.²⁰⁵² The 'blame-it-on-the-ABiH' scenario pursued by Gvero in that conversation had by then become standard VRS fare.

The effect of Close Air Support for the blocking positions

In the meantime, the VRS kept moving forward.²⁰⁵³ After the F16s appeared above the enclave at 14.45 hours,²⁰⁵⁴ their attack on the VRS tanks had an unintentional effect: within the hour, the VRS made a strong push towards the city.

Now, everything gained momentum. The blocking positions and the rest of B-company had to be pulled back: a Dutchbat presence within the town of Srebrenica could no longer be maintained. The commandos, the FAC team, and all APCs had to withdraw at full speed.²⁰⁵⁵

Neither the commandos nor the JCOs could make contact with the aircraft or with Sarajevo. Their radio antennas had been damaged by a shot from a VRS tank. The fleeing ABiH had inflicted damage on the antennas too. This marked a difficult phase for the blocking position. The tension

²⁰⁴⁹ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Telephone Conversation General Nicolai - General Gvero, 11/07/95, 16.15 hrs. The ABiH intercepted this conversation. Also see ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa, 11/07/95, Str.pov.br. 02/8-01-1224.

²⁰⁵⁰ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa, 11/07/95, Str.pov.br. 02/8-01-1224.

²⁰⁵¹ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Letter Lieutenant Colonel J.A.C. de Ruiter to Commodore Hilderink, personal, 27/01/97.

²⁰⁵² NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Telephone Conversation General Gobilliard - General Gvero, 11/07/95, 18.10 hours.

²⁰⁵³ SMG 1007/25. Captain Groen's debriefing report, Camp Pleso, 22/07/95.

²⁰⁵⁴ This is also the moment from which the logbook of B-Coy was no longer kept.

²⁰⁵⁵ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

increased enormously, which manifested in swearing during B-company's radio transmissions and unrest in the battalion's Ops room (the Command Post).²⁰⁵⁶ During the shelling, 'quite chaotic shouting' could be heard over the radio and the feeling arose among the Battalion Staff: 'this is going wrong'.²⁰⁵⁷ Under fire from the VRS, which luckily missed, commandos and JCOs withdrew to the road while running and firing, where an APC awaited them.²⁰⁵⁸ Shortly before getting on, the JCO commander was the last one firing at the onrushing VRS soldiers, which were now at a distance of 100 to 200 metres away.²⁰⁵⁹ Upon arrival, the commandos were almost fired upon by their own troops because B-company thought for a moment that they were VRS military dressed as UN personnel. However, the commandos were recognized at the last minute.²⁰⁶⁰

Due to the firing and fighting in the rear, the position of blocking position Bravo-1 could no longer be maintained. The Commander of B-company, Groen, thus ordered Egbers to give up his position.

The Close Air Support did have a short-term effect in that part of blocking position Bravo-1 could more easily withdraw via a route that was previously fired at VRS tanks. Nevertheless, the blocking position was visible from Pribicevac and could still be fired at from there by the VRS. The crews of the other blocking positions were already withdrawing with their vehicles towards the B-company compound in Srebrenica.²⁰⁶¹

The Bravo-1 crew drove full-throttle down the hill on the way to the city. Soldier Hagenaaars saw ABiH soldiers come towards the road, and he saw one of them fire at him. At that moment, he sat on top of the APC's turret as gunner. Hagenaaars heard a tap on the turret, felt an impact on his left arm, and saw blood dripping. He went inside the APC for cover. There he was bandaged, and could continue to function normally. The incident was immediately reported to the APC in front of them so that the gunner there could also take cover.²⁰⁶²

Upon arrival in Srebrenica, the personnel of blocking position Bravo-1 encountered indescribable chaos. The Dutchbat vehicles were damaged due to the impact of a shell on the compound. Artillery- and mortar fire had damaged buildings in the area. The refugees were desperate and asked the Dutchbat military what to do.²⁰⁶³ At the same time, the APCs from the other blocking positions also arrived at the compound in Srebrenica. Hageman's APC collided against Van Duijn's APC in the midst of the chaos.²⁰⁶⁴

When the APCs from the blocking positions arrived at the back gate of the compound, the first VRS soldiers were already coming down the hill towards the compound. It came to an assembly of Dutchbat vehicles at the compound. Captain Groen stood at the back gate. Lieutenant Mustert beckoned him to his vehicle that was equipped with several radios, so that he could stay in contact with the battalion and vehicles from his own company.²⁰⁶⁵ Groen made a last round through the compound, took the discs out of the computers and, after he had ensured that none of his own personnel was still in the compound, rode in Mustert's APC towards Potocari.²⁰⁶⁶ With the departure of this APC, the last Dutchbat personnel left the town of Srebrenica.

²⁰⁵⁶ SMG 1007/25. Debriefing Captain Wieffer, S2/Ops room, 22/07/95.

²⁰⁵⁷ Major E. Wieffer interview, 18/06/99; Debriefing statements First Lieutenant L.C. van Duijn, 12/09/95; Information based on confidential debriefing statement (4).

²⁰⁵⁸ Confidential information (1) and (81).

²⁰⁵⁹ Sie Onderscheidingen, CDO. FAC missions Srebrenica report, 23/08/00.

²⁰⁶⁰ SMG 1007/25. Debriefing Sergeant I. Erkelens and First Lieutenant Caris, 22 /07/95.

²⁰⁶¹ Confidential information (81).

²⁰⁶² Information based on confidential debriefing statement (15).

²⁰⁶³ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, Egbers report p. 297.

²⁰⁶⁴ SMG 1004. First Lieutenant Van Duijn debriefing, 22/07/95.

²⁰⁶⁵ J.E. Mustert interview, 18/06/99.

²⁰⁶⁶ Confidential information (81).

After returning to Potocari, Lieutenant Caris reported to Major Franken around 15:00 hours. He then learned that all Close Air Support activities were suspended.²⁰⁶⁷ Only after returning to Potocari did the JCOs learn that Mladic had demanded that Close Air Support be suspended, because otherwise the compound would have been shelled and the hostages killed. Due to the rumour circulating that the VRS were looking for three British, they stayed at the compound the rest of the time.²⁰⁶⁸ The JCOs destroyed their radio equipment, so as not to have it fall into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs because of the secret crypto equipment, as a result of which an important source of additional information was lost for Sarajevo and Tuzla.

21. The VRS occupy the city – the population moves to Potocari

The effect of the air support for Dutchbat meant was that it had to pull back from the town of Srebrenica, the effect was negligible for the VRS, and the effect for the population was that it created further panic, due to which the fall of Srebrenica seemed to be precipitated sooner. People fled because of it, often without taking anything, and many assembled at the hospital.²⁰⁶⁹ The Commander of the 28th Division, Ramiz Becirovic, thought that the air support operation was also a meaningless action from a military point of view, because the VRS simply changed position.²⁰⁷⁰

After that, the Opstina lost all control of the fleeing population. Loudspeakers that had been set up in the market square could no longer play a role in informing the population, and the radio station in the House of Culture had only limited reach.²⁰⁷¹ At 15.00 hours, 90% of the population had left Srebrenica for Potocari or Tuzla.²⁰⁷²

After the Close Air Support, when Ramiz Becirovic saw that Dutchbat was also preparing for a hasty departure from the compound in Srebrenica, it was clear to him what was about to happen. He returned to the PTT building but it was already deserted. After that, he had no more contact with Karremans or Franken. There was no longer hope for the continuation of the defence of Srebrenica, and Becirovic commanded his soldiers to move towards Potocari and make contact with the civil authorities; he wanted the ABiH to fight their way into a free area (the area of the Muslim-Croat Federation around Tuzla). He was one of the last to leave Srebrenica around 3pm, on the way to Susnjari in the Northwest of the enclave, even though he did not know then that plans had been made in the meantime to go to Tuzla from there. He realized that there was no other choice but to leave the town of Srebrenica and to put the thoughts of continued fighting behind him.²⁰⁷³

At 16.00 hours UNMOs reported that the stream of refugees and wounded on the way to Potocari comprised countless people. The number of people that arrived at the compound grew steadily. The bombardment of the city continued even after the Close Air Support. At that time, the UNMOs expected the arrival of even more aircraft: 'the air strikes on the North part of the enclave have not yet taken place.' The VRS were now everywhere in the enclave and the UNMOs estimated their numbers between 1,000 and 3,000. That was a rough estimate; the number was lower in reality.

The UNMOs predicted that the refugees would be close to desperation within 48 hours, because the battalion itself only had food for a few days. Rumours were spreading that a large group of ABiH soldiers were fighting their way out of the enclave. It was still not entirely clear what number was involved. The VRS ceased the shelling of the city, but did start to bomb Budak and Gradac in the North of the enclave with rockets and grenades. The impact caused panic in the refugees because these

²⁰⁶⁷ See Onderscheidingen, CDO. FAC missions Srebrenica report, 23/08/00.

²⁰⁶⁸ Confidential information (1).

²⁰⁶⁹ Interview Abdula Purkovic, 4/02/98.

²⁰⁷⁰ ABiH Tuzla. Additional statement from Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement from 11/08/95.

²⁰⁷¹ Interview Omer Subasic, 19/11/97 and 20/10/97.

²⁰⁷² Interview Dzermaludin Becirevic and Sefket Hafizovic, 21/10/97.

²⁰⁷³ ABiH Tuzla. Additional statement from Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement from 11/08/95; interview Ramiz Becirovic 02/02/98 and 05/02/98.

places were located close to the compound. However, the VRS did not shell the compound itself or the surrounding area where the refugees were.²⁰⁷⁴ The information from the UNMOs got to Janvier by way of a note. Janvier got to hear which orders General Gobilliard had issued to Dutchbat as well (humanitarian aid to the population and bringing about a local cease fire).²⁰⁷⁵ How Dutchbat executed these orders will be discussed in Part IV.

At 16.55 hours the ABiH in Tuzla intercepted a message from the VRS: the Serbian flag had been raised over the destroyed Orthodox Church of Srebrenica.²⁰⁷⁶ Shortly before that, Gvero had let Karadzic know by phone that the flag had been raised over the Orthodox Church, and that the spire of the tower had disappeared.²⁰⁷⁷ Another message made mention of the suggestion that the Greek mercenaries that fought for the VRS had to hoist their flag too, and that this had to be recorded on video 'for marketing purposes'.²⁰⁷⁸ The enclave had definitely fallen into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs.

When the VRS troops arrived in the centre of the city, Mladic together with Generals Zivanovic and Krstic decided to go there too. That resulted in the well-known images of Mladic and his people walking through the deserted city congratulating each other on the results, and where Mladic offered the city to the Serbs as a gift. On this occasion Mladic spoke the words: 'Hereby I return Srebrenica to the Serbian people, on the eve of yet another holy day. I return the city in the tradition of the Serbian struggle against the Turks, as we have overcome the Dahije.'²⁰⁷⁹

In the centre, Mladic, Zivanovic and Krstic met the VRS Brigade Commanders Andric and Pandurevic. Mladic ordered both Brigade Commanders to advance to Potocari, but they both objected to that. Mingling in with the citizens near the UN compound did not seem like a good idea to them, and moreover, contact with the 28th Division of the ABiH had been lost. It was about to get dark and the whereabouts of the ABiH were unknown. After some discussion, Mladic gave in and ordered all VRS units to remain in their current positions.²⁰⁸⁰

Following this, Mladic ordered his units to assemble at 22.00 hours at the Bratunac Brigade's command post in Pribicevac, where he would issue orders. During the evening in Pribicevac, Mladic told Karremans about this meeting but did not elaborate on the details of the meeting. Mladic also mentioned that Karadzic had named Miroslav Deronjic Civil Commissioner of Srebrenica. He also disclosed that the 10th Sabotage Detachment that reported directly to the General Staff of the VRS had arrived in the area, as well as the detachment of Special Police of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mladic further ordered all units of the Drina Corps to leave their positions that same night and move to Viogor, a higher situated area in the centre of the enclave, to prepare for a march toward Zepa the next morning.

On 12 July at 13.00 hours, all Drina Corps units had again left the area of the former enclave. No other regular VRS soldiers were located around Srebrenica or Bratunac any longer, only the so-called 10th Sabotage Detachment and a detachment of the Special Police. These units cut off access to Potocari during the night of 11 July.²⁰⁸¹

²⁰⁷⁴ SMG 1002. Updates 111600B, 111730B and 111910B, July 1995; NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Capsat TA to TX, 112049B, July 1995.

²⁰⁷⁵ DCBC, 670. Col. F. Dureau to FC, Point de situation fait par le Commandant de la FORPRONU (11.19.09B July 95).

²⁰⁷⁶ ABiH Tuzla. Komanda 2. Korpusa, 11/07/95, Str. Pov. Br. 02/8-10-1223.

²⁰⁷⁷ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa, 11/07/95, Str.pov.br. 02/8-01-1224.

²⁰⁷⁸ ABiH Tuzla. Komanda 2. Korpusa, 11/07/95, Str. Pov. Br. 02/8-10-1224; interview Semsudin Muminovic, 17/05/99.

²⁰⁷⁹ Mladic referred to the 12th of July: the day of St. Peter and to the murder of four Ottoman representatives (Dahije) in Belgrade early in the nineteenth century. The footage of Mladic in Srebrenica can a.o. be seen in the film 'Cry from the Grave'.

²⁰⁸⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 399/a bis. Interview Radislav Krstic, 18/02/00, p. 14-15.

²⁰⁸¹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 399/a bis, Interview Radislav Krstic, 18/02/00, p. 15-18 and 47.

Numbers of victims from 6 to 11 July

The exact number of casualties amongst the population in the period between 6 and 11 July, as a result of the fighting between the warring factions is not certain. It must be somewhere around 20 or more. Aside from the numbers that the UNMOs collected, there is only one known Bosnian source that lists the number of casualties, but this source does not give an overview and is from a later date.²⁰⁸² During these days, 14 men should have been killed on the ABiH side, but perhaps more, according to Ramiz Becirovic.²⁰⁸³ Police Chief Hakija Meholic estimated that in the week of the attack approximately 30 citizens and 10 to 15 soldiers were killed. Concerning the losses of the VRS, Meholic had no idea, as opposed to Becirovic.²⁰⁸⁴ According to Becirovic, 40 VRS soldiers were killed during the counter attack alone at Zeleni Jadar. On 9 and 10 July, a total of some 60 VRS men should have been killed.²⁰⁸⁵ Confirmation of these casualty numbers has not been obtained from any other source. The VRS never made public how many men they lost at Srebrenica.²⁰⁸⁶

In view of the enormous number of artillery grenades that descended on the enclave between 6 and 11 July, the number of victims amongst the population of the enclave and the ABiH military was relatively small. Given, as a possible explanation for this from the UNPROFOR side was the poor quality of the ammunition, and especially the quality of the fuses, due to which the explosions were not effective and only made small craters with limited effect. In addition, the guns were outdated and available meteorological data was limited, so the outgoing fire was less accurate.²⁰⁸⁷

The majority of the VRS grenades landed along the edges of the enclave and seemed specifically intended to intimidate the population and drive them North. That was a tested formula in ethnic cleansing and made it easy for the VRS in that the town of Srebrenica did not have to be cleansed with risky fighting in built up areas.

General Krstic, who led the attack of the Drina Corps on Srebrenica, later denied that the population was a deliberate target of the shellings. That not one single grenade had fallen on the city and that no buildings were damaged, as was argued by the Bosnian-Serb side, does not correspond with reality however. Still, no evidence could be provided during the trial against General Krstic that the population formed a direct target. The primary objective of the shelling did indeed appear to be to frighten the population and to drive them out of the city. That fitted within the long-standing objectives of the Bosnian Serbs: ethnic cleansing, with which military means were used to threaten and terrorize the population to instigate a hasty flight from the area.²⁰⁸⁸

22. From Srebrenica to Potocari

Thousands of frightened people of all ages flocked towards Potocari. Incoming radio reports made the threats increasingly clear according to B-company Commander Groen. He ordered some of his people to walk to Potocari amongst the refugees to give them the feeling that the UN was protecting them. According to Groen, however, this was no more than 'showing the flag' to the population.²⁰⁸⁹

People were standing or sitting on anything mobile.²⁰⁹⁰ An old man on a stretcher was carried into the APC and an old woman was helped inside. Many people were riding on the APC.²⁰⁹¹ Some had

²⁰⁸² ABiH Tuzla. 28 Div, 4 /06/97, nr. 06/2-138/97, Interview Murat Siljkovic (ABiH dossier about war crimes in Srebrenica and the period in the Batkovići camp).

²⁰⁸³ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02/0298 and 05/02/98.

²⁰⁸⁴ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98, 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

²⁰⁸⁵ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02/02/98 and 05/02/98.

²⁰⁸⁶ Interview Zoran Petrovic-Pirocanac, 31/03/98 and 02/04/98.

²⁰⁸⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 434, File special reports 4, box SNE 1. Note from Major C. Bradley RA, Task Force Alpha, 8/06/95, No. MIO.ARTY/002.

²⁰⁸⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Krstic Judgement, 02/08/01, para 122-5.

²⁰⁸⁹ Confidential information (81).

²⁰⁹⁰ Dijkema, *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, Egbers report p. 297.

to be left behind as well, even though Dutchbat tried to take as many people as possible. People left each other behind and were hanging on to the vehicles. There were people on the front of the APC that fell off the vehicle and were probably run over.²⁰⁹² Part IV will come back to the later investigation in the Netherlands on incidents of people being run over.

The APCs had to move very slowly due to the large stream of refugees. All that time, the crews rode above armour. They stopped a few times to take exhausted people that were sitting on the verge with them. Shots and impacts were heard in the surrounding mountains.²⁰⁹³ The VRS did not shoot at the refugees during the journey to Potocari, but overhead. Groen had given the order to drive behind the refugees, using the six APCs from the blocking position as a shield.²⁰⁹⁴ Lieutenant Van Duijn did not see any ABiH soldiers on the trip from Srebrenica to Potocari. He did not see VRS soldiers either. However, grenades impacted and they also seemed to come closer. The impacts seemed to follow the procession.²⁰⁹⁵ Yet the firing did gradually decrease after the departure from Srebrenica.²⁰⁹⁶

Franken first planned to establish a new blocking position on a football field along the way from Srebrenica to Potocari. Just as he relayed the message, Groen saw two mortar impacts approximately 100 metres from the road. He also heard gunfire. Thereupon, the order came to continue towards the compound at Potocari. Approximately three kilometres before reaching Potocari, Groen received the order from Franken to establish a new blocking position with four vehicles at the turn off to Susnjari, just south of the factories at Potocari. This new blocking position came under Groen's command.²⁰⁹⁷ The APCs arrived there at 16.00 hours after a one and a half hour trip.²⁰⁹⁸ The order was to continue giving the population that would possibly follow some feeling of security with four APCs, and to form a buffer between the population and the VRS.²⁰⁹⁹ At Groen's request, he received permission to move the position 150 metres north, because the intersection had previously been a favourite for VRS artillery to find the range.²¹⁰⁰ At that intersection, Dutchbat had a reasonably good view of the road to Susnjari, and to the south and the east. Indeed some people passed, but not in numbers worth mentioning.²¹⁰¹ Around 23.30 hours, the APC from OP-M came by, loaded with and surrounded by a large number of refugees (more about this below).²¹⁰²

The Dutchbat soldiers saw about a hundred ABiH soldiers assemble at this intersection: they were the last ABiH soldiers that Dutchbat saw. Their presence led to some concern because they attracted fire from the VRS.²¹⁰³ a piece of VRS artillery had started firing at the ABiH soldiers and the ABiH answered, due to which they attracted even more fire, endangering the refugees present.²¹⁰⁴

The fighting stopped after that. The first VRS soldiers now cautiously moved towards the blocking position. Groen made contact with the commander. There was some conversation and the VRS disappeared again, only to return later. At that point, any remaining affability was gone: the VRS military made it clear to the Dutchbat soldiers that the gloves were off by aiming weapons and cocking pistols. They made it clear that the UN no longer had a say in the matter, and that the VRS would determine what was to happen. The VRS soldiers signalled the Dutchbat soldiers to put down their weapons so that everyone was disarmed. The Dutchbat soldiers were wearing bulletproof vests, which

²⁰⁹¹ Confidential information (77).

²⁰⁹² SMG 1004. Debriefing First Lieutenant Van Duijn, 22/07/95.

²⁰⁹³ Debriefing statement Soldier 1st Class A. Hageaars, 14/09/95.

²⁰⁹⁴ Debriefing statement Soldier 1st Class J.L. Portegies Zwart, 07/09/95.

²⁰⁹⁵ Debriefing statement First Lieutenant L.C. van Duijn, 12/09/95.

²⁰⁹⁶ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing statement Captain Groen, 22/07/95.

²⁰⁹⁷ Confidential information (81).

²⁰⁹⁸ Debriefing statement Soldier 1st Class A. Hageaars, 14/09/95.

²⁰⁹⁹ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

²¹⁰⁰ SMG 1007/25. Debriefing statement Captain Wieffer, 22/07/95.

²¹⁰¹ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

²¹⁰² Debriefing statement First Lieutenant L.C. van Duijn, 12/09/95.

²¹⁰³ Interview J. R. Groen, 05/07/99.

²¹⁰⁴ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (15).

is why the VRS military had been ordered to make their first 5 cartridges armour piercing, and those cartridges were actually in the clips too: the VRS could have shot right through the vests with those. The Bosnian Serbs proudly showed these magazines and ammunitions to Lieutenant Musters as his section was being disarmed.

Following this, the Bosnian Serbs took what they deemed useful or handy. Initially, that was the pistols and Uzis. The VRS soldiers apparently found them quite nice, left the rest of the weapons behind, and kept walking towards Potocari. An hour later, a few Bosnian Serbs reappeared and repeated this ritual with regard to the weapons left over. The blocking position personnel thus allowed the disarmament but drew the line at personal possessions that were found in a little bag inside the APC. Therefore, an implied agreement was made that the VRS would not be allowed to enter the vehicles. If the VRS wanted something from the vehicles, they would take it out.²¹⁰⁵

This was contrary to the order that General Gvero had issued to the Drina Corps immediately after the occupation of Srebrenica on 11 July. It read: ensure the best and correct treatment of the UNPROFOR soldiers, who are our guests, and prevent provocation despite their behaviour. The VRS must understand, stressed Gvero, that the attention of the UN commander and of international public opinion is focussed on the treatment of Dutchbat.²¹⁰⁶ Gvero's orders did not speak of attention to the correct treatment of the *population*. The safety of the UN military was indeed the responsibility of General Janvier too; this comes up in the next chapter.

This blocking position crew had hardly slept in four days. Groen made sure that some Dutchbat soldiers from Potocari were relieved on the night of 11 and 12 July.²¹⁰⁷

The Dutchbat soldiers were forced in this way – with or without being threatened with a weapon – to surrender their personal weapons, their vehicles, bulletproof vests and helmets. In most cases in which this happened, Dutchbat was forced to do this by the VRS, but in a few cases by the ABiH as well. Upon departure from Srebrenica, Dutchbat III had lost 199 rifles in total, which included 25 Uzis, 38 pistols, 18 .30 machine guns and 11 .50 machine guns.²¹⁰⁸

23. The fate of the remaining OPs

After the fall of the enclave, there were still seven OPs left: OP-A, OP-C, OP-N, OP-P, OP-Q and OP-R. OP-M was still manned as well. The evacuation will be discussed in brief here. During these activities, the number of Dutchbat soldiers in the hands of the VRS would ultimately rise to 51. Not all Dutchbat soldiers that fell into the hands of the VRS were indeed taken hostage: in an isolated case, Dutchbat soldiers were also taken to the compound in Potocari by the VRS military.

In the meantime, Zagreb was poorly informed of the actual situation in the enclave with regard to the OPs. That was made evident from the announcement from Janvier to Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen when he visited Janvier on the night of 11 July. Janvier told him that the VRS and the ABiH were still fighting for OPs C, M, N, P and R. That proved to be wrong, but Janvier was of the opinion that the occupation of the remaining OPs and the hostages no longer posed a risk: after all, the VRS had obtained its objectives. But Janvier was of the opinion that air support might still be needed, and he was prepared to allow that in case a warring faction were to attack an OP. An air support was then intended as assistance for the evacuation of OPs.²¹⁰⁹

²¹⁰⁵ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

²¹⁰⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33) D 80/a. Glavni SAB Vojske Republike Srpske to Komandi DK IKM-1 DK, 11/07/95, str.pov.br. 03/0-1617.

²¹⁰⁷ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

²¹⁰⁸ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Dutchbat fax to lkol de Ruiter, 182130B July 1995, with list of weapons as appendix. Also see SMG/DEbrief. Factual account of the Debriefing (Feitenrelaas), § 2.4.1, where lower numbers are mentioned.

²¹⁰⁹ SMG, 1004/85. Short report on the meeting of CDS and PBLs at FC UNPF (also present, COS UNPF) 11/07/95.

The capture of OP-R

OP-R and OP-Q were relatively quiet OPs in the Eastern part of the enclave. They were near the compound in Potocari but were also the closest of all the OPs to the VRS lines. They had virtually no contact with the ABiH.

In the days prior to the fall, these OPs had reported no fighting activity within their area. OP-R had a special position because there was a telephone line there with the so-called 'Dragan bunker', a private residence within the Bosnian-Serb territory a bit further away where a VRS battalion-command post was located. Not many ABiH soldiers were in the area of the OP and there were contacts with the VRS via the telephone. Appointments for meetings were made by telephone, of which the VRS usually took the initiative. During these meetings, VRS soldiers stated that there would come a time when the Bosnian Serbs would invade the enclave, and that the VRS would then let UN personnel leave via Bratunac. After the fall of OP-E at the beginning of June, these meetings became less frequent by order of the Battalion Staff.

On 6 July, OP-R noticed the movement of troops and tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery. But only on 12 July at the crack of dawn did the crew notice seven VRS soldiers near the OP, who were heading towards the OP. As day began to break between 40 and 50 VRS soldiers could be seen. They had probably spent the night close-by. The Bosnian Serbs waved to the OP personnel and two hours later around 30 men came walking over to the OP. The gate to OP-R was closed, but the VRS commander spoke in English through the fencing. These Bosnian Serbs wanted to go up Zanic Mountain to get a view of the area. They asked the OP crew whether there were still ABiH soldiers in the neighbourhood, to which Corporal Ouwens answered that the VRS should go and take a look themselves. The VRS Commander then walked away, talked on his radio, and gave a signal at which Ouwens was pushed to one side, the VRS opened the gate and about 20 VRS soldiers took over the OP. The Dutchbat soldiers were forced to surrender their weapons and leave the OP. The VRS led the crew to the 'Dragan bunker' located 500 metres away. This all went quite cordially. In the meantime, the OP and the accompanying APC were plundered. The APC had already been partially loaded in order to leave upon orders from the battalion command. However, documentation from the OP had not yet been destroyed and the anti-tank weapon (the TOW) had not been disabled, but had not been functional for some time.

Thereafter, OP Commander, Sergeant T.P. Lutke and his driver returned to the APC. They wanted to convince the VRS to return sleeping bags and some personal gear. After that, the VRS moved the APC and the crew to Bratunac, where one of the Bosnian Serbs was dressed in a UN helmet and fragment vest. In fact, several VRS soldiers were wearing the blue UN helmet. They paid no attention to the comment from the Dutchbat soldiers that this was not allowed. During the crew's stay in Bratunac, they even got a visit from Mladic. He gave the Corporal a hand, asked him how things were going and if he had anything in particular to report. The Corporal then referred him to the Battalion Commander.²¹¹⁰

The capture of OP-Q

After the VRS had taken over OP-R, it was the more northerly situated OP-Q's turn. The VRS approached the OP in such a manner that the road returning to the compound was cut off, so that OP Commander Sergeant M. Davids would have no choice. He could not fulfil the order given earlier by the C Company Commander to let go of the position.

²¹¹⁰ SMG/Debrief. 'Military Analysis of the action taken by Dutchbat during the Srebrenica crisis; Assen, 28/09/95, Compiled by Lt Col A. de Munnik, see: OP-Area, BOERE038.1; OUER023.1; VISE652.1 and unknown account; Feitenrelaas § 3.7.6; SMG 1004/61. Dutchbat Ops room monthly register, 12/07/95. The first name of the concerned VRS Commander was 'sava' and of his replacement, 'Rade'.

Approximately 25 VRS soldiers penetrated the OP and about a hundred surrounded it. Here, the crew had the opportunity to destroy documents, maps and targeting equipment for mortar before the VRS came towards the OP. The Bosnian Serbs seized personal weapons and accompanying ammunition from the Dutchbat soldiers. The VRS then ordered the crew into the APC and it went to Bratunac as well. In Bratunac, the weapons still in the APC were taken and the six Dutchbat soldiers were taken to a school. No force was used during any of this.²¹¹¹

The capture of OP-P

OP-P fulfilled an important role as intermediary between Dutchbat and the VRS, because it was located on the border of the enclave on the road from the compound in Potocari to Bosnian-Serb territory. The OP formed an important link to the world outside the enclave.

After hostilities began south of the enclave on 6 July, the VRS started to fire mortars over and along OP-P from the north. On 10 July, three tanks (type T-54) took up positions near the OP and executed shelling of Budak village near the compound in Potocari, and ABiH positions. OP-P itself was not fired upon.

Tanks approached the OP for days afterwards. The crew had received a message via telephone from Jovan Ivic (Jovo), the Commander of the VRS check point at the entrance to the enclave at 'Yellow Bridge', near the OP. Jovo announced that the VRS were advancing, but that the OP would not be fired upon if the crew did not fire at the VRS. From contact with the Ops room of the battalion the day before a message had already been received from Karremans stating that the remaining OPs should adopt a passive approach and was not to fire in the vicinity of the fleeing population. The Commander of the OP, Sergeant R. Tjerks, decided to comply with the VRS's demand and allow the crew to be disarmed because the OP was already surrounded by tanks and infantry. A large number of well-equipped 'Rambo-type' troops surrounded the tanks.

On the morning of 12 July, while VRS soldiers entered the OP, the .50 machine gun of the OP was still manned. The VRS soldiers demanded those operating the weapon to come down, and 'this seemed [to me] to be the most sensible thing to do at that moment', according to the person involved. The VRS soldiers searched the OP and took some private property as well. The VRS military immediately put the Dutch weapons to use themselves, and continued to cleanse houses in the surrounding areas. Other VRS soldiers later arrived to stay behind with OP-P.

Earlier, this OP had fulfilled the role of notifying Karremans of meetings in Bratunac. Karremans said at one of these meetings that if OP-P were to be taken by the Bosnian Serbs, its crew would be transported to Bratunac too. Unlike the other OP crews, the VRS did not take the OP-P crew hostage. The VRS did take the APC that was with this OP; it came in handy to the VRS that this OP crew had previously given them driving lessons on the vehicle.

On 12 July at 10.00 hours, the VRS brought some of OP-P crew's personal possessions back to the gate of the compound in Potocari with a small truck.²¹¹²

The capture of OP-C

Prior to 11 July, the situation at OP-C remained unchanged for a few days. The crew followed the way in which the VRS had captured the closest OP (OP-K) to the south via the radio, and the crew that departed towards the Bosnian-Serb Milici. Furthermore, it could be seen from the OP how the VRS

²¹¹¹ SGM, Debrief. 'Military analysis of the actions of Dutchbat during the Serbian crisis', Assen, 28/09/95, compiled by LCol A. de Munnik, see OP-Q, OTTEM 206.01, DAVM113.1 and unknown account; Feitenrelaas § 3.7.6.

²¹¹² Debriefing statement Soldier 1st Class I.J. van der Werke, 11/09/95; SGM, Debrief, 'Military analysis of the actions of Dutchbat during the Serbian crisis', Assen, 28/09/95, compiled by LCol A. de Munnik, see OP-P, AUFDA032.1;JONGD004.1;TJER172.1; SMG/Debrief. Feitenrelaas § 4.5.11.

searched, plundered and set fire to various houses within the village of Podgaj. Its population moved to Potocari, or south to Zepa.

On the morning of 11 July, the ABiH indicated that they would seize any weapons still at the OP in case of an emergency.

After that, Sergeant Ceelen, who had been taken hostage by the VRS in Milici, suddenly made contact with OP-C in English via the radio. He announced that the VRS would come to pick up the OP-C personnel. Initially, a slight panic arose at OP-C because it was not clear whether the OP would have to deal with the VRS or with the ABiH. The crew was able to burn the maps and documents here too, just before the arrival of the VRS. However, the anti-tank weapon (the TOW) was not disabled. The APC was already loaded by order of OP Commander, Sergeant E.P. Smid. Departure from the OP did not take place that day, apparently because the VRS no longer wanted to undertake anything in the dark. The Bosnian Serbs left, so the crew stayed another night at OP-C.

Following this, a group of 15 to 20 unorganized ABiH soldiers attacked the OP around 20.00 hours, under the deception of a white flag. A number of ABiH soldiers stood guard around the OP, and one wanted to talk to the Commander. The OP crew was afraid that they would be taken hostage. The Bosnian Muslims stole their weapons, ammunition, food, drinks, clothing, backpacks and their personal possessions at gunpoint. One Dutchbat soldier had to surrender his bulletproof vest after they put a gun to his head. The OP had no weapons after this. The ABiH only left the heavier weapons behind. A few older Muslim men later came by the OP asking for a little understanding regarding the actions of the youngsters. They were given two UZIs and some ammunition. There had been contact with Company Commander Groen over the question of what to do: he had said cooperate for the sake of self-preservation.

On 12 July, the VRS returned with an armoured vehicle and found the OP crew robbed of clothing and shoes. The Bosnian Serbs displayed a friendly attitude and tried to put the Dutchbat soldiers at ease. They did make it clear however that they needed to work quickly. Accompanied by the Bosnian Serbs, the crew headed towards Milici with their own APC and the remaining heavy weapons and munitions, where the Dutchbat soldiers arrived late at night and found the personnel of OP-K. Afterwards, Sergeant Ceelen wrestled with the question of whether he had gone too far by aiding the attempts of the VRS to 'empty' OP-C, OP-D (see paragraph 8) and OP-A (see below). In the end, he did not see this as helping one of the warring factions and adopted the viewpoint that he acted only as a 'middleman'.²¹¹³

The capture of OP-A

After Dutchbat had left the other OPs in the area, the crew of the most Western OP, OP-A, constantly kept in mind that they had to quickly leave the post too. Nothing appeared to be less true.

In the days prior to 11 July, the ABiH were situated close to the OP and ABiH soldiers were shooting towards the VRS to provoke fire. Indeed, the VRS shot at the OP regularly. On 11 July, the OP crew fired another smoke grenade as a point of recognition for the aircraft landing Close Air Support.

Some young Muslim men hurriedly appeared at the OP that evening. One of them was a man named Zulic from Slatina; he had been at the OP gate before, amongst others, with a man who claimed that the VRS were using chemical weapons in the fight for Kak Mountain in the southern part of the enclave. He had previously tried to put Dutchbat soldiers up to smuggling money and he had given a demonstration on producing forbidden dum-dum bullets. The small group of Muslim men now demanded shoes and food so they could get out of the enclave. The OP crew gave them some old

²¹¹³ Debriefing statement Soldier 1st Class R. Ruesink and Soldier 1st Class R. Jagt, 11/09/95 and 08/09/95; information based on confidential debriefing statement (44); interview W. A. Ceelen, 02/07/99.

shoes, emergency rations and bags. Once the men received these things, Zulic displayed a hand grenade and declared that he was happy he did not have to use it.

On the night of 11 - 12 July, one or two mortar grenades hit in the vicinity of OP-A every hour. On 12 July, there were shellings during the day as well, and the OP crew saw how the VRS cleansed the Muslim village of Musici. During these days, the OP also acted as a relay station for radio traffic between the Battalion Staff at the compound in Potocari, and for the Dutchbat vehicles that accompanied the convoys with refugees on the way to Kladanj. The OP crew wondered how long it would take before the VRS would take over the OP.

By VRS order, Sergeant Ceelen also made radio contact here with the OP. The VRS wanted the crew to come to them with all weapons and ammunition. OP Commander, Sergeant E. van der Hoek, refused this because the crew would have had to cross a minefield.

Following this, the VRS Commander wanted to come and pick up the Dutch; a meeting point was arranged, indeed only on 14 July. Van der Hoek gave the route that he would follow to the agreed upon meeting point. The nine crewmembers that left the OP wanted to do this with APC casualty-transport vehicle, among other things, but it had a defective track (wheel mechanism on the vehicle). This vehicle was then disabled by smashing the fuel filter, as well as the anti-tank weapon (the TOW) and the mortar, after which the nine men left the OP in an APC. Captain Matthijssen, C-company Commander, gave authorization for this.

The APC got stuck on an incline while following the agreed upon route. The tracks were still equipped with rubber pads (rubber blocks for protecting the road surface), so they did not provide much traction on the soft path. If the pads had been removed from the APC, as the OP crew had requested, they could have climbed the slope. The vehicle could no longer move, so the crew was not able to reach the point agreed upon with the VRS. Moreover, it was starting to get dark. The crew tried to make contact with the compound in Potocari and with the Dutchbat personnel that was being held by the VRS in Milici. To that end, four crewmembers walked up a mountain with a radio but were unsuccessful in making contact. After that, a hidden bivouac was set up in a riverbed, which was secured by Dutchbat soldiers with two machine guns.

Early in the morning on 15 July, the nine crewmembers walked back to OP-A under the protection of a white flag and a UN flag. They chose an early hour in order to safely pass the village of Slatina, without the danger of a confrontation arising with Bosnian-Serb plunderers. There was no one present at the OP.

Contact with C-company was made again around 17.30 hours. They ordered them to remain at the OP and make contact with the VRS. It was agreed that the crew would still report to the VRS during the course of the day. Around 19.50 hours the group walked to the village of Musici following orders from the Company Commander. First, the night-vision sights goggles and the thermal-imaging systems there were disabled, after which contact was made with the VRS. The VRS military arrived and took weapons and bulletproof vests from the crew. A VRS truck then took the group to Milici, where they were given food. After listening to some propaganda and the announcement that the continuing skirmishes between the ABiH and VRS made it too dangerous to continue driving, the crew spent the night in a school, along with the VRS. The crew did not notice the presence of any Bosnian Muslims that day; a Dutch APC driven by Bosnian Serbs was observed though. The following day, 16 July, the group returned to Potocari via Bratunac. In the meantime, the other Dutchbat soldiers held hostage by the VRS were on their way from Belgrade to Zagreb.²¹¹⁴

²¹¹⁴ Information based on confidential debriefing statements (38) and (45); interview W. A. Ceelen, 02/07/99; Dijkema, *Dutchbat in vredesnaam*, p. 285-6.

The capture of OP-N

On 12 July 1995, the day after the fall of the enclave, the Bosnian Serbs took the most northern OP, OP-N.

The VRS had threatened to attack this OP earlier, which was reason for considering the use of air support there. The VRS had shelled ABiH positions around OP-N with mortar fire over a three-day period. The shots were coming increasingly closer because the ABiH were closing in on the OP. However, the VRS always fired next to the OP and the Dutch military felt safe in the bunker.

On 9 July, two local ABiH-military Commanders named Delic and Cele, or Zele, had been at OP-N. There they received lessons on operating the anti-tank weapons and a mortar. The idea behind this, according to some crewmembers, was that when the OP had to be unexpectedly abandoned, the crew could hand these weapons over to the ABiH in exchange for a safe withdrawal to Potocari. However, this picture is not consistent, because other Dutchbat soldiers indicated that the TOW was to be destroyed and the AT-4 anti-tank weapons would be left behind: they could not be taken in the APC. Although it is certain that Dutchbat and ABiH had explained the working of each other's weapons during patrols in the previous days. The same thing occurred on 10 July when OP Commander Sergeant 1st Class S.N. Pattiwael van Westerlo together with several others explained how the weapons at the OP worked. If the crew suddenly had to leave the OP, then the weapons would fall into the hands of the ABiH and they would be able to make use of them. Only afterwards did one or two realize that this was contrary to the neutral stance of the UN.

On 10 July, the local ABiH Commander, Delic, came to the OP again with a number of his men, after they had cut a hole in the barbed-wire entanglement in the back. Delic wanted to fight the VRS from the OP. The OP Commander was able to change his mind.

During a VRS shelling on 11 July, Delic panicked and wanted to takeover OP-N to fight the VRS from there. He then went to the OP with a group of six men and an imam, and accused the crew of not doing anything to oppose the VRS. The OP crew was unable to clarify that they were not in a position to influence the situation under the given circumstances. The imam protected the OP personnel however, after which Delic and the imam threatened each other with weapons. The imam remained behind at the OP when Delic and his men left again; he said that he felt threatened and made it known that he wanted to flee to Tuzla with his father during the night. He received a bag of food from the OP crew and a watch from a Sergeant. The imam also stated that approximately 300 ABiH soldiers from the region around OP-N were departing for an assembly point.

On the evening of 11 July 1995, the order came from C-company Commander Matthijssen that the OP crew should not fight back when the VRS tried to capture the OP. The crew had to remain at the OP and continue to observe instead. In the meantime, the crew had already packed a machine gun (MAG) and placed a cover over another machine gun (.50) as a sign that no resistance would be offered. According to Matthijssen, the crew themselves had to indicate whether they wanted to leave the OP, and whether they wanted to go to the VRS- or the ABiH-side. However, the crew could not leave at all because the only way back was cut off. The crew felt that their only option was to go north to Bosnian-Serb territory: that seemed to be the safest. The VRS were deemed trustworthier than the ABiH, who were panicking. Following this, the order came from the Company Commander to wait until the VRS came to pick them up.

On 12 July, a mortar shell landed in the vicinity of OP-N around 14.30 hours. After that, the VRS fired three salvos with a rocket-launcher (RPG type) at an ABiH bunker, which was located 400 metres from the OP. An attack from the VRS followed, and they cleansed the area surrounding the OP while firing. The VRS had already plundered the village of Cizmici and set houses on fire.

Subsequently, the OP crew saw around 20 VRS soldiers with two cows and three horses coming up the hill on which the OP stood. They held their weapons in the air, as a sign that they meant no harm.

A VRS soldier signalled the crew to come outside to open the gate. The OP Commander did this with his weapon above his head, together with a soldier who opened the gate. The VRS asked

whether ABiH soldiers were still around and whether there were mines. When both questions were answered negative, the VRS entered the OP area, after which the crew came out and put their weapons on the ground. A student who served as an interpreter for the Bosnian Serbs said that they would be treated well, but would have to have patience.

During these actions of the VRS, the crew was in continuous communication with their own Company Commander. The VRS military did not appear to be malicious but they did take everything they wanted, both military as well as personal things. The Dutchbat APC was packed and ready to move. However, this was first plundered and emptied by the VRS, and the mortar was taken as well. The OP crew felt as if they were made prisoners of war, and they were evacuated in the APC accompanied by two VRS soldiers. Their route took them by OP-P, which had already been taken by the VRS and where there were tanks and artillery. The trip ended in Bratunac, where the VRS confiscated the APC. There, the crew first received something to eat in a barracks where they found the crews of OP-Q and OP-R. Afterwards, everybody was put into a small school where many dogs roamed outside at night. The Dutchbat soldiers were not treated badly.²¹¹⁵

The abandoning of OP-M

The days of the fall of the enclave were also very exciting for the OP-M crew. The OP, located at Jaglici in the northwest, was in a remote corner of the enclave. The population here consisted entirely of indigenous people: the village did not harbour any refugees.

Shelling of OP-M took place earlier on 6 and 8 July, mainly with mortars from a distance of 1,800 to 2,000 metres. An ABiH trench was located not more than 10 metres from the OP, where the local Bosnian Muslims ostentatiously paraded with their weapons, apparently in an attempt to draw fire.

On 8 July, the VRS fired upon the village of Jaglici. As a result, OP Commander, Sergeant 1st Class M.A. Mulder, asked the C-company Commander for permission to return to the compound at Potocari. However, the answer to Mulder's request was that 'they were probably testing capability'. When Mulder stated that he still wanted to give up the post, he was granted permission. However, the crew later returned. Mulder then announced that if the VRS fired, the crew could take aim and return fire. It never went this far though. On 9 July, the VRS shifted the fire from Jaglici to OP-M. The impacts came increasingly closer until a grenade demolished the OP gate. With Company Commander Matthijssen's consent, the crew left the OP. The OP did not have a well-equipped shelter that offered sufficient safety, and it had no more than one layer of sand bags placed around it. Therefore, the APC served as shelter.

The crew's orders were to return to the compound in Potocari with the APC and any equipment. The radio was left behind at the OP with the thought of a possible return.

Shortly after the crew had left the OP, it received a direct hit and was fired at with a heavy calibre machine gun. After the crew had driven about 100 metres in the APC, approximately 100 armed ABiH soldiers surrounded the APC. They tried to disarm the Dutch, but they refused to hand over their weapons.

The local ABiH Captain (known as Envir) wanted the APC crew to fight with them against the VRS. This Envir had been an officer in the JNA before the war; he was wealthy, and probably earned his money by trading with the Ukraine UN personnel in Zepa, which he visited regularly. Envir lead a company of approximately 110 men; it mainly consisted of farmers with shotguns.

Dutchbat Corporal M. Doze was handed a Kalishnikov and a hand grenade from the ABiH, but gave them back. The crew received the specific order from the Ops room (Command Post) not to fight them. The threat of staying at the village was noted by the crew, even though contact with the population had been positive and the Dutchbat soldiers had received food and other things from them.

²¹¹⁵ SMG/Debrief. 'Military analysis of the actions of Dutchbat during the Serbian crisis', Assen, 28/09/95, compiled by LCol A. de Munnik, see OP-N,PATTS132.1 and unknown account; SMG/Debrief. Feitenrelaas, §§ 2.4.3, 2.4.4, 3.2.1, 3.4.3, 3.6.6, 3.6.8, 3.7.4, 3.7.5, 3.7.6, 4.5.2, 4.5.4, 4.5.8, 4.5.11.

The crew was troubled over the question of how to get away from there. We could force our way through with the .50 machinegun, 'but you cannot do that', said Mulder. Only once was there contact with the higher echelon concerning this situation; Captain Matthijssen told Mulder that he had to act on his own discretion.

To appease the ABiH soldiers present, Mulder rode with the local Commander to an ABiH position near two houses. The .30 machinegun was set up behind a few trees, 50 metres in front of the APC. There was nothing left for the crew to do but wait because an ABiH soldier was constantly in the immediate area with an anti-tank weapon to ensure that the APC could not leave without permission from the local Commander. Thus, the OP crew was in fact taken hostage by the ABiH, a situation that would last two days.

From where they were, the crew saw small groups of six to eight ABiH soldiers, who indeed were not from Jaglici, escape from the enclave (to what later proved to be Tuzla). That continued the entire day. At one point even infighting between ABiH soldiers occurred north of Jaglici; Mulder assumed that it was about their responsibility for the enclave. It struck him that strange soldiers with entirely new uniforms and new looking weapons clashed with the people of Jaglici. Mulder got the impression that there was a plan for an escape: everybody was lined up, and he caught statements like; 'first to Zvornik and then to Tuzla'. Rumours started to circulate that the Bosnian Serbs were already in the enclave 'and were killing all Muslims'.

Mulder was asked despairing questions from the population about what would happen to them, but he could only say that an air support would come. At one point, Mulder saw soldiers standing around the APC crying. He decided to size up the situation in Jaglici because he got the feeling that something was wrong: there were a number of men that were unaccounted for. He walked to the village and found these men saying goodbye to their wives and children. 'Meanwhile you could hear around you: we are going to Tuzla'. Envir had also gone to the village: he pushed his two children into Mulder's arms so that he could say goodbye to his wife. Mulder kept the children with him and decided that the OP crew now had to leave. That departure was prompted by the gunfire that was now coming very close, and one could hear bullets whistle.

The departure of the OP crew in the APC became chaotic. The APC almost immediately got stuck in a ditch. Mulder tried to manoeuvre it out, but that alarmed the 'guards' with the anti-tank weapon. A substantial discord amongst the Muslims present then arose: one group of them wanted to allow the departure of the APC, one group did not, and yet another group wanted the women, children and elderly to take the APC. Someone from the ABiH took a weapon from the APC and aimed it at the vehicle, which Mulder thought would be shot at the APC to prevent the Dutchbat soldiers from leaving. Envir then appeared and shot the man in cold blood in the head, after which the APC could leave without interference. After feeling as though they had been held hostage for two and a half days, they could finally leave early in the evening of 11 July. The crew did have to hand over their personal weapons and the AT-4 anti-tank weapon.

The APC manoeuvred out of the ditch towards the refugees that were there. Suddenly a cow walked onto the road, which had possibly been turned loose during the flight to Tuzla. The APC could not avoid the cow and drove right over it. After that, the APC caught up with the refugees; Mulder sent the approximately 75 village inhabitants remaining along the north side of Jaglici to the south, so they would not have to walk in front of the VRS positions. He took the road along the front of the VRS positions and then rejoined the group.

The trip to Potocari turned into an outright nightmare. The group of refugees around the APC quickly grew because the refugees from the OP-A area, who saw that Jaglici was being evacuated, joined the group too. Hundreds of refugees also came from the hills with horses, carts and on crutches. Everyone tried to secure a place on the APC. Mulder took people off again that were able to walk. Mothers threw their children onto the vehicle but they would fall off. In the meantime, mortar fire from the VRS continued in full force, resulting in the APC quickly being piled up with wounded people, due to which some of them had to deal with a lack of oxygen. The medic on board tried to do

what he could. People fell off the APC during the trip, and a woman even gave birth on top of the APC's hatch.

Meanwhile, the crew saw hundreds of ABiH soldiers pulling back in the opposite direction. They seemed to be going to an assembly point according to plan, with heavier weapons and mortars and such. That indeed went quietly, although they did threaten the APC along the way. From the hills on both sides of the road, the VRS continued firing over the refugees.

The armoured vehicle stopped at one point: Mulder tried to contact the Ops room (the Command Post in Potocari) to discuss the retreat of the refugees. Three Dutchbat soldiers went outside the APC to keep the refugees calm, and had the group sit down on the ground.

Suddenly, the VRS fired a few salvos at the APC. The impacts ended up in the side of a mountain next to the APC, upon which the APC crew quickly went inside. Mulder, who also acted as driver because there was no other driver with the group, quickly drove on and stopped again later. The group of refugees tightened up again behind the APC and it continued towards Potocari. There were possibly mines too: it struck Mulder along the way that the procession sometimes fanned out, and sometimes were very frightened staying on the road; apparently the population knew where the mines were, concluded Mulder.

Run over incidents?

It turned out that everything could get even worse. The APC was past Milacevici. Mulder, who drove, sat in the APC with the signaller and the gunner. Two soldiers walked behind the APC and one walked in front. The trip was not progressing and Mulder was afraid all the refugees would cut him off from the compound, there was also the threat of running out of fuel: it was driving, stopping, driving, and stopping. Mulder tried to lead the procession with the APC. He had been ordered to keep the people behind the APC. He stopped occasionally to climb on top of the APC to show that they were still there: 'if we stood still, everybody stood still.' However, the APC was not able to stay out front because more and more people joined the procession along the way. Therefore, there were gradually many refugees in front of the APC too.

At this stage of the trip, a steep wall ran along the right side of the road and there was water with a steep slope behind that on the left. Mulder was just standing on top of the APC again to reassure the people when shots were fired from the north with a .50 machinegun. Refugees fell from the APC; Mulder was unable to judge whether that was due to the scare or because they were hit. A huge panic arose. Mulder called his personnel inside, turned on the APC's lights and sounded the horn. When the road was reasonably clear, Mulder started to drive while honking the horn over a distance of approximately 300 metres. He drove fast to escape the fire, which, according to him, was aimed at the APC and this presented danger to the refugees as well. However, people were still walking in front of the APC at that point. They had nowhere to go on the narrow road and the APC drove faster through here than the refugees could walk.

Mulder felt as if he was driving right over people. When the APC stopped, he reported via the radio that he had possibly hit people with the APC during the move. Upon arrival at the road between Potocari and Srebrenica, Mulder reported to Captain Groen who maintained the blocking position there. He ordered him to continue driving directly to Potocari, where refugees had also arrived in the meantime. Ultimately, between 3,000 and 4,000 people arrived in Potocari with the group from OP-M, including quite a few able-bodied boys between the age of 16 and 17, according to Mulder. The wounded were dropped off at the sickbay, and then the British JCOs received Mulder with a cup of tea.²¹¹⁶

²¹¹⁶ Debriefing statement Corporal M. Doze, 12/09/95 and 13/09/95; information based on confidential debriefing statements (51) and (52); interview M.A. Mulder, 06/10/98.

An ABiH soldier later said that the possible run over incidents occurred at Brosevici, at a place called Dervisevac, or Libina Voda. On the way to OP-M, it was also very busy in the opposite direction because everybody going to Susnjari would pass too; that was the point of assembly for what would become the journey to Tuzla.

However, nobody from the local ABiH unit had returned to the place where the run overs were to have occurred. The ABiH soldier involved heard about it for the first time in the VRS prisoner-of-war camp at Batkovic, from someone who was one of the last to go to Jaglici. There was even a rumour that around 40 people were to have died as a result of this. However, this soldier himself had not heard anything from the people of Jaglici, where he knew everybody. According to him, it could have concerned people going from Srebrenica to Jaglici.²¹¹⁷

The Public Prosecutor back in the Netherlands would investigate possible run overs. Part IV will return to this, as well as to the adventures of the Dutchbat soldiers taken hostage in Milici and Bratunac after 11 July. There, the events are picked up again from the time that the refugees arrived in Potocari.

This chapter will close with two reviews. The first one deals with the number of victims between 6 and 11 July, and the second one with the questions of whether the Bosnian Muslims were prepared for the VRS attack and how the causes of what happened in these six dramatic days were considered in Bosnian Muslim circles. The following chapter in its entirety is an elaborate review of the matter of air support in those same days, among other things.

24. The ABiH reaction to the VRS attack

This chapter has already dealt in length with the question of how much planning existed within the VRS for the capture of the enclave. At the end of this chapter, the question of how much the ABiH had anticipated a VRS attack will be discussed. From there, the question arises as to whether plans existed that would be implemented in case the Bosnian Serbs were to attack the enclave, and whether plans existed in anticipation of how to deal with the population.

Unlike the previous paragraphs, where the sources were mostly from the period of the attack, this paragraph mainly concerns data that came from interviews held later and thus afterthoughts. Following a search for plans from the Bosnian-Muslim side, it will change to a reflection on the military action of the ABiH in the days of July 1995. Hence, it shall be primarily about the opinions concerning the ABiH actions according to Bosnians involved; a more detailed opinion on the actions of Dutchbat will be discussed in the next chapter.

Some prudence in handling Bosnian-Muslims' views on ABiH actions is advised. As mentioned briefly in the introductory paragraph of this chapter, the interests of the Bosnian Muslims involved in the fall of Srebrenica that stayed within the enclave can differ from the interests of the political and military leaders outside the enclave. Written sources about what occurred within the Bosnian Government during the fall of Srebrenica are scarce. Although the ABiH did conduct some investigation into what had happened, after the fall, in the form of a debriefing of some of the people involved, this –according to ABiH information – never lead to a comprehensive report.

There was confusion on the Bosnian-Muslim side about the existence of plans at ABiH in Srebrenica and Tuzla, which should have become effective in an attack on the enclave by the VRS. Several people seemed to know of the existence of such plans, while others denied the existence of them, or were of the impression that plans made previously still had certain validity. The reality was that the ABiH had not made many preparations when the VRS knocked on the gates of the enclave in July 1995.

²¹¹⁷ Confidential information (55). This ABiH soldier had also heard that the VRS had run over people with a truck close to the compound between Potocari and Srebrenica. But that was also no more than a rumour.

Plans for the defence of the enclave?

The former ABiH Commander in Srebrenica, Naser Oric, told Chief of Police Hakija Meholic upon being asked that a plan did exist for the defence and evacuation of the enclave. However, Oric added that this was a military secret. The question of whether that plan and this secrecy were a matter for the 2nd Corps in Tuzla or for the 28th Division in Srebrenica remained unknown to Meholic as well. In any case, such a plan had not been announced to the local council or the population.²¹¹⁸

Deputy Mayor Hamdija Fejzic was also under the impression that there was a plan from the 2nd Corps of ABiH for the defence of Srebrenica in case of a VRS attack on the enclave. The existence of the plan was to have been confirmed by soldiers in Tuzla and by the Commander of the 2nd Corps, Sead Delic. If indeed such a plan did exist, the question would then be why it was never executed. Supposedly, thought Fejzic, it did not regard a plan as such, but more of a method for the ABiH to execute the defence.²¹¹⁹

ABiH Officer Sadik Vilib was of the opinion that something like a defence plan had existed, even though he only knew of it through hearsay. However, that dated back to when Naser Oric was still staying in the enclave (thus, before April 1995). The idea would have been that the ABiH were to defend the enclave to the best of their ability, to take the weapons from Dutchbat, to attack Bratunac, and then to advance to Tuzla step by step, via attacks on various places. The VRS would have then been able to flee to Serbian territory from Bratunac, and that might have offered more room for negotiations. Naser Oric might have attempted a plan to attack Bratunac, according to Vilib, but such a plan had no chance of succeeding after he had left.²¹²⁰

The former Bosnian Minister without Portfolio in charge of UN issues, Hasan Muratovic, said to the NIOD in 1998 that a strategy to attack the VRS toward the Drina had indeed been discussed in Sarajevo, partly because there were entire areas there that were unoccupied by the VRS.²¹²¹ However, that was not the same as a separate defence- and evacuation plan, which Muratovic mentioned in 1997 to Minister Voorhoeve and the Dutch Ambassador in Sarajevo, V. Sluijter. According to Muratovic, both plans were there, but they had not been executed.²¹²²

Although, the question here must be whether the plans were so concrete that those responsible for executing those plans knew about them. This displays that the executioners of the plans knew nothing, and there are no indications that concrete plans actually existed.

When the Opstina wanted to know whether the ABiH had made such plans in case of an attack, differences of opinion arose amongst the ABiH leadership about that question, according to a source within the Opstina. It was argued that it was not customary for military plans to be accessible to the Opstina as a civil authority. The fight for power within the enclave also played a role thereby. The ABiH wanted to play first violin in the enclave, while the Opstina wanted to maintain its voice as well.²¹²³

In any case, the Opstina expected to obtain instructions from the ABiH as to how to handle a VRS attack. According to War President Osman Suljic, there were however no military plans that took into account an attack. At least he had no knowledge of any, and plans for an evacuation of the population did not exist either, according to him.²¹²⁴

Mayor Fahrudin Salihovic also said that he had asked Ramiz Becirovic, as Military Commander of the 28th Division, about plans for the defence of the enclave and evacuation of the population at the beginning of June 1995. Fahrudin Salihovic was of the opinion that there was something of a plan, but

²¹¹⁸ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98 with additions from 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

²¹¹⁹ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

²¹²⁰ Interview Sadik Vilib, 06/02/98 and 15/04/98.

²¹²¹ Interview Hasan Muratovic, 30/01/98.

²¹²² DCBC, box 68. 'Conversation with Mr. Hasan Muratovic on 20/10/97 in Sarajevo about the fall of Srebrenica', compiled by J. Voorhoeve, 29/10/97.

²¹²³ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 31/01/98.

²¹²⁴ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

if it was already in place, he did not know who was responsible for it within the ABiH chain of command, thus he let the NIOD know.²¹²⁵ Chief of Police Hakija Meholic confirmed that the War Presidency of Opstina had requested plans for an evacuation.²¹²⁶

However, the ABiH Commander within the enclave itself, Ramiz Becirovic, denied that defence plans existed for the enclave in July 1995. He had to acknowledge this during the meeting in the PTT building on 10 July 1995, when Chief of Police Meholic asked him to make the plan known to the civil government. On the basis of his own statements, Becirovic then had to admit that no plan existed, and that no preparations had been made in case of a VRS attack.²¹²⁷

The General Staff of the ABiH did not expect a serious attack. Thus, there was no reason to send instructions to the defenders in 1995. According to Army Commander Rasim Delic, this view was based on information from the area itself. Most of this information on the situation in Srebrenica came via the 2nd Corps, though the General Staff received information from other military and civil circles as well.

Instructions from Sarajevo or Tuzla for the execution of the defence were not received in Srebrenica. In April 1995, Ramiz Becirovic was part of a military and civil delegation from Srebrenica that was taken to Tuzla by helicopter to analyse the situation in joint sessions with the 2nd Corps headquarters. Becirovic had hoped to receive instructions in Tuzla, but when he returned from those meetings, he had the feeling that he had not received any form of instruction. From his point of view, the trip seemed to be intended for him to say that he had received instructions. Becirovic did say that he was promised military support at the meeting: in case of a VRS attack, the 2nd Corps would launch a counter attack from two directions: from Kladanj and from Medjedja (at Nesuk).²¹²⁸ That indeed happened, but only when the column of men fleeing to Tuzla after the fall of Srebrenica reached Bosnian territory near Medjedja.

The outcome of the joint analysis was that without international support, defence of the enclave was not possible. The General Staff then proceeded with what had been said at that meeting.²¹²⁹

In reaction to the claim that the 2nd Corps had offered insufficient help to Srebrenica during the VRS attack, Sead Delic said: 'What can you do for a large group that is 35 km away and separated from the 2nd Corps by two VRS frontlines and minefields. My conscience is clear, because there was nothing we could do. I personally come from the area. I wanted to do everything, but this was simply not possible from a military point of view'.²¹³⁰ A UN translator, who attended the deliberations between the 2nd Corps and Sector North East during the days surrounding the fall, sang a different tune. She felt that the 2nd Corps did not know what to do during the attack on Srebrenica. The 2nd Corps were involved in fights in the Orasje pocket and were not able to leave their lines there, while a substantial part of the 2nd Corps occupied Sarajevo.²¹³¹

Following the Dayton Agreement at the end of 1995, the Bosnian Parliament indeed considered to the causes of the fall of Srebrenica and then Zepa. Army Commander Rasim Delic reported to Parliament. He gave an elaborate overview of the measures that were taken to militarily strengthen Srebrenica before July 1995. Delic said that he expected a higher level of resistance, but that the Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica had not listened to suggestions and orders from higher up, and had not acted according to anticipated plans. However, as the most important reason for the fall of Srebrenica, Delic also mentioned 'the betrayal by the international community'. According to him, the ABiH within the enclave had difficulty defending themselves in the given circumstances and expected too much from UNPROFOR (see below under 'Attempts of the ABiH to get Dutchbat on its side'), while the

²¹²⁵ Interview Fahrudin Salihovic, 04/02/98.

²¹²⁶ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98 with additions from 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

²¹²⁷ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

²¹²⁸ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02/02/98 and 05/02/98.

²¹²⁹ Interview Rasim and Sead Delic, 16/04/98 and Rasim Delic, 21/04/99.

²¹³⁰ Interview Sead Delic, 10/03/99.

²¹³¹ Interview Nadia Skokic, 04/02/98.

General Staff had correctly warned that little would come of that. Delic also pointed out that the population had been prepared to leave the enclave since March, and he further pointed at the poor leadership and organization of the 28th Division.²¹³²

According to Minister Hasan Muratovic, the Bosnian Government tried to make an analysis of the events in Srebrenica by evaluating these events two times with the fifteen most important people from Srebrenica, including circles of ABiH officers, police, political leaders and opposition. The most important people from Srebrenica (the Military- and Police Commander and the members of the War Presidency) had been able to escape the enclave. SDA politician, Ibran Mustafic, took part in these meetings as well; he fell into Bosnian-Serb hands but managed to survive. During these meetings, issues were discussed such as why the defence of the enclave failed, what the expectations were regarding air support, and what the situation was like around the compound in Potocari. The trip to Tuzla came up for discussion as well: it was asked why no other route was taken to Tuzla, why part of the population wanted to go to Zepa, and how that was accomplished. It was also discussed that Ramiz Becirovic had enemies in Srebrenica, and that there had been infighting amongst the ABiH. However, no real answers to these questions were obtained during these meetings. According to Minister Hasan Muratovic, no reports on these meetings existed, and no conclusions were reached either.²¹³³

Views from the UN and NATO

The UNPF staff in Zagreb had little insight into the actual balance of power of the warring factions around Srebrenica. Estimations of that balance of power from the beginning of June tended to underestimate the numbers of the ABiH, and to overestimate those of the VRS. The difference in number of heavy weapons for the warring factions was enormous, to the advantage of the Bosnian Serbs. However, what is striking in the explanation that was given in Zagreb for the defeat of the ABiH, is that the military balance of power was not named so much as a factor as were the psychological factors. The Bosnian-Serb artillery, tanks, rocket launchers and mortars could easily find targets, against which the ABiH had no defence. Those VRS weapons had influence on the morale and stamina of the soldiers and citizens on the Bosnian-Muslim side, which was the analysis in Zagreb.

That the ABiH could defend the enclave on their own, like Bosnian circles believed (Ministers such as Sacirbey and Muratovic and also Army Commander Rasim Delic expressed this feeling, as did General Budakovic, the Chief of Staff of the 2nd Corps²¹³⁴), proved to be fiction. The defence did not function as the ABiH leadership had expected. The ABiH leadership was too optimistic, as was evident from the statements of Rasim Delic before the Bosnian Parliament, based on the weapons that were supplied in reasonable number via 18 helicopter flights to Zepa and that were then smuggled into the enclave in spring 1995. However, they were sparingly used, partly because the ABiH did not know how to operate these weapons. The approximately 6,000 strong ABiH had a substantial shortage of weapons, and not more that a third possessed a weapon, but there was no shortage of ammunition. At the onset of the hostilities, the ABiH disposed of over 450,000 cartridges. Most of the ammunition was not used.²¹³⁵

Question marks were placed beside the actions of the ABiH within the UN as well. Under Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Military Advisor of the Secretary-General of the UN, Van Kappen, openly asked themselves at the end of September 1995, why the 3,000 to 4,000 lightly armed Muslims around Srebrenica had not played a role. They put that question to Sacirbey, but they received no real

²¹³² MID, DIS97005661. HMID note to the Minister of Defence, 10/11/97. The date of the debate in the Bosnian Parliament is not mentioned.

²¹³³ Interview Hasan Muratovic, 30/01/98.

²¹³⁴ General Budakovic told Colonel Brantz this on 06/07/95, subject to the ABiH taking back the weapons from the Weapon Collection Point. (NIOD. Coll. Brantz. Brantz Diary, August 1999 version).

²¹³⁵ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98. According to Meholic, this number was also brought out by ABiH Commander Rasim Delic and was correct in his view.

explanation from him. He only said that there was not enough ammunition and weapons, and only rhetorically asked himself what else the ABiH could have done then. He thus blamed the UN for the loss of the enclave.²¹³⁶

NATO Secretary-General Claes also asked Sacirbey why the ABiH units in Srebrenica did not better defend themselves. In answer to that question, Sacirbey then pointed to the passivity of Dutchbat. That led Claes to disbelief.²¹³⁷

Janvier was under the impression that the enclave could have maintained the defence for 30 days. It appears plausible that Janvier based that opinion on the optimistic expectations that the Bosnian Muslims themselves had. The Bosnian President, Izetbegovic, thought that the Bosnian Muslims could defend themselves for 30 days as well. This did not happen due to a lack of morale and the psychological situation in which the population found itself, according to Izetbegovic: the Bosnian Serbs led a powerful and hostile propaganda campaign, according to the Bosnian President. The weak within the enclave fled and tried to convince the rest to do the same. Izetbegovic said that he knew the enclave could not be defended for more than 30 days. It was also pointed out that all attempts to establish a corridor between Tuzla and Srebrenica had failed previously, and the ABiH did not possess enough military means to try that again. If the international community had bombed the VRS, the ABiH positions might have been held, according to him. But that did not happen and therefore a tragedy arose, according to Izetbegovic.²¹³⁸

Political machinations?

Izetbegovic stated that the Bosnian Government never intended to give up Srebrenica. However, he added that the fate of the enclave had been decided a long time ago, meaning that it could not be defended.²¹³⁹ Izetbegovic admitted that there had been meetings about trading areas where Srebrenica was concerned, but these had never lead to any results, according to him.

After the fall of Srebrenica, the rumour started circulating that Srebrenica was part of a deal to obtain a convoy route through Vogosca (Bosnian-Serb territory near Sarajevo). In this cynical theory, the Bosnian Government had much to gain from the fall of the enclave and therefore such a deal would be part of an orchestrated attempt to discredit the West, in an attempt to obtain support from the Islamic countries. That would have also been the reason that Oric had not returned to Srebrenica and that the 6,000 ABiH men hardly put up a fight.²¹⁴⁰

There were no grounds for such rumours that were often heard, namely, that there was a deal to give up the enclave in one form or another, or that they consciously offered little resistance, or that orders were even given to leave the enclave. The rumour that Izetbegovic had 'sold' the population of Srebrenica to save Sarajevo had circulated before the fall of the enclave as well.²¹⁴¹ All such rumours are highly unlikely because giving up Srebrenica not only would have meant supporting ethnic cleansing, but also would have robbed the Bosnian Government of a useful pawn in the propaganda war.

In addition, no trace of evidence can be found for these intriguing theories, neither political nor military. Izetbegovic opposed these theories by stating that the Bosnian Government would not have sent weapons and doctors to Srebrenica if it planned to leave the city.²¹⁴² What the citizens of the

²¹³⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05279. Code Biegan 860, 25/09/95; interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

²¹³⁷ DCBC, 778. Code Feith Navo 1049, 13/07/95.

²¹³⁸ Alija Izetbegovic, *Govori, Pjisma, Interjui '95*, p. 86 (interview 05/08/95) and p. 107 (interview 13/08/95).

²¹³⁹ Alija Izetbegovic, *Govori, Pjisma, Interjui '95*, p. 86 (interview 05/08/95) and p. 107 (interview 13/08/95).

²¹⁴⁰ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNMO HQ SNE, 'Postscript to Srebrenica', 26/07/95, MIO.SREB.002. Secret. SDP member Zlatko Dukic would also have been of the opinion (<http://serbianlinks.freehosting.net/srebrenica>, consulted 29/04/99).

²¹⁴¹ ICTY (IT-98-33) D66/a, D61/a. ABiH Command of 28th Division (Asst. Commander for Morale, Captain Nijaz Masic) to the Command of 2nd Corps Morale Department, 30/06/95, No. 04-113/95; ABiH 285 IBIBr, 23/06/95, No. 08-21-208/95.

²¹⁴² Interview of David Harland with President Izetbegovic, 16/07/99.

enclave did not take into account was that neither Srebrenica nor Zepa held priority in the Bosnian play for power. Almost all attention was devoted to Sarajevo. The question was asked several times within the 2nd Corps where the attention should be focussed: the Posavina corridor at Brcko (the small corridor that linked the Western and Eastern parts of the Republika Srpska) or Srebrenica. The answer was increasingly: the Posavina corridor.²¹⁴³ In May 1995, during a Commanders' meeting in Central Bosnia in which Izetbegovic and other political leaders were present, Srebrenica would have been discussed as the primary problem. The Commander of the 2nd Corps, Sead Delic, gave a briefing there in which he was to have presented the situation as better than it really was: there was enough ammunition to resist an attack for at least 10 days and helicopters flew regularly to Srebrenica. That would have been the reason why Izetbegovic and Army Commander Rasim Delic thought that there were no problems.²¹⁴⁴

Minister Hasan Muratovic placed a large part of the blame on a lack of fighting spirit as well. He thought that when the VRS were attacked, they would stop. Another reason why the defence collapsed so quickly would have been that the ABiH defenders also expected air support.²¹⁴⁵

Former ABiH Army Commander and opposition politician Sefer Halilovic found that President Izetbegovic and Premier Haris Silajdzic could have done more to save Srebrenica by keeping the enclave higher on the agenda and strengthening the enclave even further. According to him, more weapons and ammunition could have been sent to Srebrenica. There were 12,000 men that could fight, of which not more than 4,000 were armed. A strong defence was simply not executed. According to Halilovic, the VRS could have captured the city with 500, maybe even 300 men. Another point that Halilovic brought up was that the attempts to break the siege of Sarajevo should have only been attempted after Srebrenica and Zepa were safe. Instead, soldiers from Zepa and Srebrenica were sent to execute a diversionary attack on the VRS, which gave Mladic an easy excuse to attack the enclave.²¹⁴⁶

The meaning of the organization of the ABiH

It was said that political and military leaders were not always well informed about the actual situation in the enclave due to poor communication. ABiH Commander Rasim Delic said that it had been a problem to know what the actual situation was in Srebrenica, and especially what the exact internal relations were in the enclave: 'The psychological situation and the level of morale were completely unclear'. In addition, he pointed out that the population was living under the pressure of propaganda from the Bosnian Serbs to surrender the enclave. Delic acknowledged that this had led to 'individuals' leaving the enclave for Tuzla.²¹⁴⁷

The Commander of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla, Sead Delic, also said that he had not known exactly how the ABiH was organized in Srebrenica and how the chain of command functioned. That was only known on paper: indeed local groups within the enclave were linked to brigades. All these brigades were under the command of the division, which again fell under the command of the 2nd Corps. The Zepa brigade belonged to the division as well. 'However, they could act independently, depending on the circumstances', according to Sead Delic. According to him, the local Commanders never spoke with one another, and communication from person to person was impossible because the only communication was via encrypted radio. He had to receive a lot of information about Srebrenica via UN channels; the Civil Affairs Officer of Sector North East in Tuzla, American Ken Biser, had been the most important source of information, according to Sead Delic.²¹⁴⁸

²¹⁴³ Interview Andjelko Makar, 12/06/00.

²¹⁴⁴ Conversation with Isnam Taljic, 18/05/99.

²¹⁴⁵ Interview Hasan Muratovic, 30/01/98.

²¹⁴⁶ Interview Sefer Halilovic, 17/04/98.

²¹⁴⁷ Interview Rasim Delic, Sarajevo 21/04/98.

²¹⁴⁸ Interview Rasim Delic and Sead Delic, Sarajevo, 16/04/98 and Rasim Delic, 21/04/98.

In the opinion of Bosnian journalist and author Sefko Hodzic, Sead Delic's view was too defensive. Stories of high-handed warlords formed an easy excuse according to him, but that only applied to the beginning of the war. A Command and Control relationship and good communications actually did exist in 1995, according to Hodzic.²¹⁴⁹ Rasim Delic also contradicted Sead Delic's view in his report before Parliament by saying that there was continuous contact with Srebrenica and that Naser Oric was in daily contact with Ramiz Becirovic from Tuzla. Rasim Delic added the criticism that if Oric had really wanted to influence the course of fighting in July, he would have had to build a good command system first. Command of the ABiH units indeed proved to be one of the weak points in the ABiH action during the VRS attack, according to the ABiH Commander.²¹⁵⁰

It is clear that the psychological state of the population meant that there was little desire within the ABiH and the population to go and fight. In the month of July 1995, neither the population nor the ABiH had the will to continue fighting.²¹⁵¹ Thus, the population had basically lost hope in the rescue of the enclave, partly because there was little interest in the enclave from the outside. To criticize the ABiH, in the sense that there should have or could have been a better defence, was also rather easy in the opinion of Ramiz Becirovic.²¹⁵²

If the observations were focussed on the organization of the different parts of the ABiH enclave, it is striking that large differences in morale existed between the territorially organized brigades. However, it is difficult to obtain a view on the military performance of the locally organized, separate ABiH brigades and battalions. Ibro Dudic's brigade (in the southeast part of the enclave) was situated on the primary line of advance of the VRS, but had the least number of weapons at its disposal. No attempts were made to strengthen this brigade with the brigade of Smail Mandzic, which operated in the northern part of the enclave where hardly any fighting took place.

Most of the weapons would have been with the Suceška brigade in the South, but they were hardly involved in the fighting either.²¹⁵³ This formidable 281st Brigade led by Zulfo Tursonovic (operating in the southwest part of the enclave) would not have opened fire on the VRS in the last phase of the fight, although there would have been opportunity for that. However, this brigade would not have wanted to harm the population by giving cause for revenge. The suggestion was also made within that brigade to kill UN personnel, in order to force NATO into action. However, the majority did not agree with this.²¹⁵⁴

Zulfo Tursunovic enjoyed more respect in the enclave than his Commander, Ramiz Becirovic, and was sometimes even seen as a better Commander than Oric. He was a somewhat older man, and it was a public secret that he was Oric's advisor and that he consulted with him on everything.²¹⁵⁵ Tursunovic led a good unit from Suceška. He had the use of good headquarters, was open to initiatives and the discipline within his unit was strong. That applied to the humanitarian situation within his territory as well.

The situation was worse in Zeleni Jadar, at the VRS line of attack, where Ibro Dudic was Commander. In this area, where some 4,000 refugees were housed in the Swedish Shelter Project, SDA politician Ibran Mustafic had a lot of influence over the population and there were quite a few of his followers there.²¹⁵⁶ The population here consisted of refugees that were seen as 'villagers': they were not

²¹⁴⁹ Interview Sefko Hodzic, 24/05/99.

²¹⁵⁰ MID, DIS97005661. HMID note to the Minister of Defence, 10/11/97.

²¹⁵¹ Interview Igor Rajner, 06/08/97.

²¹⁵² Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02/02/98 and 05/02/98.

²¹⁵³ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98 with additions from 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

²¹⁵⁴ Confidential information (51).

²¹⁵⁵ Interview Damir Skaler, 17/05/99.

²¹⁵⁶ Ibran Mustafic was viewed with the necessary scepticism because he had left Srebrenica earlier. The fact that he returned later through the mountains was suspicious as well, because it was extremely difficult. When he returned, another SDA group (recruited mainly from the villages) had seized power. Conflicts between Oric and Mustafic then began too. Mustafic was the only one who survived Srebrenica, and there were rumours that he had asked Karadzic or Krajisnik via the radio to spare him. (Interview Mehmed Pargan, 15/06/98 and 16/06/98).

from Srebrenica itself, but from the surrounding villages. Therefore, they were less involved and motivated to defend Srebrenica. They fled in mass at the beginning of the attack, which instigated the negative spiral in the population's morale.

Zulfo Tursonovic did not allow Mustafic to become politically active in his area. Right away, the thought was that if Zulfo Tursonovic had been in the southeastern sector, the defence there would have been better conducted. The Brigade Commander in that area, Ibro Dudic, was seen as a good Commander, but his soldiers would have supported Mustafic, which would certainly not have helped the fight.²¹⁵⁷ In this chapter, it has however been proven that as the fighting there progressed, Ibro Dudic had more difficulty keeping his men under control. Military-psychological factors appear to offer a better explanation than political, because the core of the fighting was just in that corner of the enclave.

Still, Ramiz Becirovic also foisted a rather destructive influence on Ibran Mustafic. He had been the primary authority in Srebrenica in 1992, found himself at the beginning of the war in Sarajevo and tried to regain as much of his old authority as possible following a miraculous comeback to the enclave.²¹⁵⁸ He claimed a position on formal grounds as a chosen representative. According to Becirovic, he had 'perhaps the right ideas, but it was not the right time for that'. The population did not care that he was the only chosen representative: fighting the Bosnian Serbs took priority. Some thought that he had taken to his heels at the beginning of the war and only returned when the situation had stabilized. He arrived in the enclave via Zepa, and immediately started to organize the SDA. It would thereby not have been difficult to win people over that were in destitute circumstances. The fact that there was insufficient food made it easy for Mustafic. He pointed out to the public that Opstina was depriving them and stealing aid goods. That caused discord amongst the population.

Though it was hard to say exactly what role Mustafic now played in the enclave, the reigning opinion was that he caused chaos and weakened the enclave, so judged two UN interpreters.²¹⁵⁹ Two attacks were launched on him, and once with the aid of an anti-tank rocket. It never became clear who was behind that. Both attacks had taken place at night, there were no witnesses, and police investigations produced no results. Naser Oric was sometimes suspected, but he was no longer in the enclave during the second attack.²¹⁶⁰ (See further for the role of Mustafic: Part II, Chapter 7: The situation in the enclave under Dutchbat.)

Naser Oric was the one that mattered in Srebrenica in the eyes of many. The population saw him as a living legend. Many people thus felt betrayed when Oric left the enclave in April. The reigning thought was that if Oric had been in the enclave in July, he surely would have known to organize some form of resistance.²¹⁶¹ Ramiz Becirovic was more of a staff officer than a troop commander and had little control over what was happening. In that way, a lot was left to the local commanders.²¹⁶² The journalist Sefko Hodzic said he had seen a message from Becirovic as Deputy Commander of the 28th Division of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, which read that he was not able to execute the instructions given to him since the men were not prepared to listen to him in the absence of Oric.²¹⁶³ Becirovic had a different personality; he was not the respected figure that Oric was, and not so impressive physically. He had been an officer in the JNA and was part of the territorial defence since 15 April 1992. He was more intellectual and more politically inclined than Oric, spoke on behalf of the ABiH at Opstina meetings (Oric usually failed to appear), acted as spokesperson and negotiated with Dutchbat.²¹⁶⁴

²¹⁵⁷ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98, 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

²¹⁵⁸ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

²¹⁵⁹ Interview Muhamed Durakovic and Vahid Hodzic, 20/04/98.

²¹⁶⁰ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

²¹⁶¹ Interview Igor Rajner, 06/08/97.

²¹⁶² Interview Sadik Vilib, 06/02/98 and 15/04/98.

²¹⁶³ Interview Sefko Hodzic, 24/05/99.

²¹⁶⁴ Interview Igor Rajner, 06/08/97; ABiH Tuzla. 2nd Corps, without no. Additional statement from Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement from 11/08/95.

In Opstina circles, Becirovic was seen as ‘nothing special’ and as a less capable leader.²¹⁶⁵ Afterwards, it was said in circles of the population as well that Becirovic had been a bad commander and was not up to the mark.²¹⁶⁶ UN interpreters regularly heard soldiers speak critically of him: he had been eager in accepting the post of deputy commander; others would possibly have been more suitable, but the problem with that was that most of the brigade commanders were tribal leaders of sorts, who did not use their heads enough and sometimes did mindless things. At least Ramiz Becirovic was a threat to no one.²¹⁶⁷ Zulfo Tursunovic would have said about Becirovic that he did spur the ABiH on to defend themselves, but not to take the initiative to counterattack.²¹⁶⁸

Becirovic pointed out that when the attack began, most of the non-indigenous population was preparing to flee to Tuzla. The indigenous residents still present followed that example. It had only been a minority that really wanted to fight for the retention of the enclave, judged Becirovic.²¹⁶⁹ In addition, there were not enough means and not enough weapons for the ABiH to win the fight. Morale was no longer very high and survival was more important. Even if Oric had been in the enclave, that would have made little difference.²¹⁷⁰

Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that at the time of the fall, Becirovic was physically hardly able to lead at times. On 7 May 1995, he was badly injured in a helicopter crash, due to which he was bedridden until 7 June. He suffered the consequences for quite some time and had to be supported by two men for a long time.²¹⁷¹ He would have been sick and unable to lead around 6 July.²¹⁷²

UNMOs attributed the minimal resistance of the ABiH to a lack of leadership and confusion about the question of who the leader actually was. Becirovic indeed tried to lead, but his orders would have been different than the troops expected, which again contributed to the confusion. Moreover, the ABiH soldiers were tired because they were sent from one side of the enclave to the other. Transportation was not available and the heat did not contribute to the performance either.²¹⁷³ The relatively large groups of armed men reported by Dutchbat that were in the centre near the PTT building, seemed to be an affirmation of the lack of leadership and the execution of a determined defence. An escape towards Tuzla began prior to 11 July as well, and although the numbers appeared to be limited, this pointed to a collapse in morale.²¹⁷⁴

The Bosnian Government in Sarajevo believed that a defensive could be waged for 30 days, but the leaders in Srebrenica had different thoughts. The War President of Opstina, Osman Suljic, did not deem this realistic. There was only enough food for a few days, according to him. Becirovic felt that the leaders in Sarajevo knew little about the local situation. Politicians that were invited to come to Srebrenica never came.²¹⁷⁵

Sead Delic, 2nd Corps Commander, thought that the statement about the defence lasting for 30 days was false as well. He saw a political explanation for this, but the 2nd Corps knew better: according to their commander, there were only 20 cartridges per soldier (that was indeed not true, because roughly 100 cartridges per soldier had already been smuggled into the enclave with the secret weapon transport in May 1995). The defence could have perhaps been lengthened to 10 or 15 days, but given

²¹⁶⁵ Interview Hakija Meholjic, 02/0298, 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

²¹⁶⁶ Interview Damir Skaler, 17/05/99.

²¹⁶⁷ Interview Muhamed Durakovic and Vahid Hodzic, 20/04/98.

²¹⁶⁸ Interview Muhamed Durakovic and Vahid Hodzic, 20/04/98.

²¹⁶⁹ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02/02/98 and 05/02/98.

²¹⁷⁰ Interview Ibrahim Becirovic, 05/08/97.

²¹⁷¹ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02/02/98 and 05/02/98.

²¹⁷² Confidential information (51).

²¹⁷³ NIOD, Confidential Coll. (4). Debriefing of UNMOs from the Srebrenica enclave, 23/07/95.

²¹⁷⁴ Interview Emir Suljagic, 23/11/97.

²¹⁷⁵ Interviews Osman Suljic and Ramiz Becirovic, 04/03/98 and 02/02/98 and 05/02/98.

the force of the VRS, this would not have been probable. Srebrenica could not be defended from a military point of view, according to Sead Delic.²¹⁷⁶

On the other hand, Chief of Police Hakija Meholic believed that the defence could have held out longer. He saw the period of 30 days not so much as incorrect, but according to him, the problem was that the ABiH had destroyed itself internally. The men no longer wanted to fight and there had been a lot of irregularities within the enclave that had contributed to the decrease in morale. Nobody could order anyone to do anything when it came down to it. The panic amongst the population destroyed the last bit of morale.²¹⁷⁷

In the view of the Commander of the 283rd Brigade in the North, Smail Mandzic, it might have been possible to keep up the fight for a few more days but that would have only had a psychological effect. However, it might not have been possible to move to Tuzla at that point because the supply of ammunition would have been depleted. The ABiH had counted on NATO to keep the enclave standing. The population was completely exhausted from a lack of food. They had been separated from Tuzla for years without good information sources, and hardly any instructions had come from Tuzla.²¹⁷⁸

There had been many arguments within the ABiH and little coordination. The 28th Division in Srebrenica would have had the best weapons of the entire ABiH during the fall of the enclave, but it lacked the morale to fight with them. The 28th Division was completely exhausted from fighting, according to the War President of Opstina, Osman Suljic. The siege had taken too long, according to him, due to which the population was exhausted.²¹⁷⁹ A reward system had been set up within Opstina: 10,000 DM for each tank shot, and 15,000 DM for each captured VRS soldier would be paid. However, putting up rewards could no longer turn the tide of the decreasing morale.²¹⁸⁰

Thus, the opinions varied on why the defence of the enclave had been so unsuccessful. Accusing fingers were pointed at both the ABiH as well as Dutchbat. ABiH Commander Rasim Delic was of the opinion – contrary to his subordinate, Sead Delic – that Dutchbat could have defended the enclave.²¹⁸¹ There was also discord within the ABiH concerning the tactics to be followed in the event of a VRS attack. The responsible officers of the ABiH could have done more, according to Rasim Delic: ‘When I compare it with what happened in Brcko, I think that the attack would have stopped if two tanks had been destroyed. In Brcko, two suicide attacks were executed on VRS tanks. On the basis of their trip to Tuzla and their successful breaks through Serbian lines, they demonstrated that they were capable of something’, according to the ABiH Commander.²¹⁸²

Attempts of the ABiH to get Dutchbat on its side

How extensive the thinking was in Srebrenica to consciously try to have UNPROFOR conduct the fight against the VRS cannot be said for sure. Incidentally, that thought did play a role.

War President Osman Suljic and the ABiH Commander within the enclave, Ramiz Becirovic, did however make announcements that urged restraint, for fear that UNPROFOR would not intervene otherwise. That was also proven by the refusal to empty the Weapon Collection Point, out of fear that it would be said that the ABiH could take the defence into their own hands and UNPROFOR could stand on the sidelines. It was more logical to take the weapons from Dutchbat than to take back the weapons from the Weapon Collection Point, according to 2nd Corps Commander, Sead Delic. However, the ABiH did not do that either because Close Air Support was expected. Supposedly, Naser

²¹⁷⁶ Interview Sead Delic, 10/03/99. Delic said that the number of 30 days was uttered by Minister Hasan Muratovic, but he added that it was a Bosnian Cabinet member’s opinion and not that of a soldier.

²¹⁷⁷ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98 with additions from 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

²¹⁷⁸ Interview Smail Mandzic, 18/05/99.

²¹⁷⁹ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

²¹⁸⁰ Confidential information (51).

²¹⁸¹ Interview Rasim Delic, 21/04/98.

²¹⁸² Interview Rasim Delic and Sead Delic, 16/04/98 and Rasim Delic, 21/04/98.

Oric had once stated that the ABiH would be able to defend Srebrenica if they could get a hold of Dutchbat's weapons, but Sead Delic had no knowledge of this.²¹⁸³ Instructions to take weapons from Dutchbat had indeed been given (see paragraph 8 on this).²¹⁸⁴

Delic held little trust in cooperation with the UN anyway. He did not trust UNPROFOR to defend Srebrenica either. In his opinion, it had been proven too often that the UN was not prepared to fight. He had to admit that their role was peacekeeping, but 'the international community had done so and been able to intervene. But the UN was more concerned about one of their own soldiers than about 5,000 citizens,' as Sead Delic said to the NIOD interviewers.²¹⁸⁵

Also, Ramiz Becirovic could only conclude from the efforts of the UN, Dutchbat and especially Karremans, that they mainly acted to save their own lives and had not acted in the spirit of the mission that was ordered: 'they did not go into action against the VRS and did not confront them, not even verbally.'²¹⁸⁶ According to War President Osman Suljic, Dutchbat had too easily given up OPs and APCs as well. In his opinion, that was why all trust in Dutchbat had been lost.²¹⁸⁷ Sead Delic also found that Karremans had requested air support too late. The VRS then took the *zona smrti* that was intended for air strikes, and were sure that the international community would not react. There was even proof of cooperation between Dutchbat and the VRS, according to Sead Delic: 'we have more painstaking information about Dutchbat's actions'. However, he could not substantiate this statement.²¹⁸⁸

Dutchbat was an easy scapegoat in venting frustrations over the loss of the enclave. Residents in particular tended to blame Dutchbat for the loss of the enclave, rather than their own military. To them, Dutchbat was indeed the representative of the international community that had promised to protect the Safe Area. That there was a difference between defending and scaring off an attack within a restricted mandate with limited means was a subtlety to those that found themselves in the circumstances in Srebrenica before and especially after 11 July. There were indeed other opinions within the higher social strata, although they often contained an undertone of criticism.

On the other hand, General Sead Delic said that the 2nd Corps knew that the fighting capability of Dutchbat was limited.²¹⁸⁹ For others, that was reason enough not to blame Dutchbat for the loss of the enclave. *War President* Osman Suljic was convinced that a battalion was absolutely insufficient to defend the enclave.²¹⁹⁰ Minister Hasan Muratovic did not blame Dutchbat for the fall of the enclave either. In his view, the battalion did not have the strength to stop the attack. He did not deem himself capable of giving a complete analysis of their actions, but he did point out that Dutchbat was on the verge of going home, and therefore 'not so willing to do their jobs'. According to him, Dutchbat also had problems of a psychological nature.²¹⁹¹

The announcement from Karremans that there would be air strikes took the last bit of spirit out of ABiH's defence, rather than giving a boost to morale. There came an end to plans for threatening the VRS. The ABiH, just like Dutchbat, waited for air strikes. When Close Air Support finally arrived, it no longer had any meaning from a military point of view, and it only sealed the fate of the enclave. The Opstina felt betrayed and left to their own devices by Karremans because of that. Promises were not fulfilled. Within Opstina's circles, some could have killed him. 'Why did he say such things when he could not honour them', many asked themselves, although the realization existed that Karremans could have been misled by his UN superiors. The Opstina knew that Dutchbat was not strong enough to defend the enclave, but had believed that Dutchbat would ask for help in the event of an attack. The

²¹⁸³ Interview Sead Delic, 10/03/99.

²¹⁸⁴ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjecaceni koverat*, p. 250-3.

²¹⁸⁵ Interview Rasim Delic and Sead Delic, 16/04/98 and Rasim Delic, 21/04/98.

²¹⁸⁶ ABiH Tuzla. 2nd Corps, without no.. Additional statement from Ramiz Becirovic (1956), 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement from 11/08/95.

²¹⁸⁷ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

²¹⁸⁸ Interview Rasim Delic and Sead Delic, 16/04/98 and Rasim Delic, 21/04/98.

²¹⁸⁹ Interview Sead Delic, 10/04/99.

²¹⁹⁰ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

²¹⁹¹ Interview Hasan Muratovic, 30/01/98.

relationship with Dutchbat had been good up to the beginning of 1995, but after the VRS had rounded up OP-E, more understanding for the Bosnian Serbs would have arisen within Dutchbat, according to the ABiH. In the eyes of the Bosnian Muslims, it seemed that Dutchbat was more concerned about their own personnel than about the population.²¹⁹²

Step by step, the VRS took OPs, and they continued when no reaction came from UNPROFOR. The fate of the enclave was sealed after the VRS had taken Dutchbat soldiers hostage.²¹⁹³ The fact that Dutchbat soldiers fell into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs (or consciously walked) sealed the fate of the enclave and population, according to Dutchbat interpreter Emir Suljagic.²¹⁹⁴

²¹⁹² Interview Dzermaludin Becirevic and Sefket Hafizovic, 21/10/97.

²¹⁹³ Interview Sefko Tihic, 08/03/99.

²¹⁹⁴ Interview Emir Suljagic, 23/11/97.

Chapter 7

6 - 11 July 1995 – retrospective accounts

1. DCBC: Defence Crisis Management Centre and the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff (RNLA Crisis Staff)

Within the Ministry of Defence Dutchbat activities were monitored closely at two locations in The Hague, namely at the Defence Crisis Management Centre, which comes under the Defence Staff at the Ministry of Defence Central Organisation, and the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff (RNLA Crisis Staff). The Defence Crisis Management Centre was located in a bunker below the Hague Ministry of Defence in *Het Plein* and the RNLA Crisis Staff was housed in the *Julianakazerne*.

Both moved into different premises in later years, which were considerably better equipped. The organization and infrastructure of the Hague bunker below *Het Plein* were poor at that time. All incoming and outgoing communications were supposed to go through the so-called head of duty team. In practice, this proved problematic, as there were large numbers of telephones with direct lines not connected to a switchboard. Those present in the Defence Crisis Management Centre made full use of these telephones, from the minister to the Directorate of Information (*Directie Voorlichting*) employees and from the junior minister to the Chief of Defence Staff. It was impossible for a head of duty team to record all these calls, and even if it happened, records were often limited to who spoke with whom. Recording the contents of these calls was virtually out of the question. Only a few telephones were equipped with a sound recorder, and these were merely intended for replay purposes, and to jot down notes if required. The tapes were neither processed nor stored. The latter also applied to the RNLA Army Crisis Staff.

In practice, the Defence Management Crisis Centre and the Netherlands Crisis Staff were charged with different tasks, though not formally. The Army Crisis Staff was mainly engaged in personnel and materiel issues relating to Dutchbat, and in exchanging information with the home front. The Defence Crisis Management Centre in its turn informed the political leadership and maintained contact with the military commands in Sarajevo and Zagreb, with NATO, and with representations of foreign countries in the Netherlands. So RNLA Crisis Staff conducted almost no business with Zagreb, and very little with Sarajevo, while the Defence Crisis Management Centre on the other hand had virtually no contact with Dutchbat; this was the situation up to the days in July.

Contact with Dutchbat was primarily a matter for RNLA Crisistaff. The RNLA Crisistaff also maintained contact with the Dutch Contingent Commander in Bosnia (Colonel Verschraegen in Busovaca). But at the time of the fall of Srebrenica a temporary adjustment was made to these functional lines, as it was no longer feasible to have the Dutch Contingent Commander, who resided in remote Busovaca, act as a Point of Contact for The Hague. He was too far removed from the centre of power. Instead, General Nicolai in Sarajevo, who was in a better position to follow developments, acted as the Dutch Contingent Commander, at the suggestion of Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen. His formal appointment only followed during the July days, after consultation with Gobilliard as deputy UNPROFOR Commander. Nicolai did seem to have occupied that post in practice for some time, as his name featured on a list of National Contingent Commanders dated June.²¹⁹⁵

For example, General Nicolai was the Point of Contact for the Defence Crisis Management Centre in Sarajevo. General Kolsteren occupied this function in Zagreb. Colonel Brantz kept the RNLA Crisis Staff as well as the Defence Crisis management Centre informed from the Sector North East in Tuzla, though any Defence Crisis Management Centre initiated contact with Brantz was scarce.

²¹⁹⁵ Confidential collection (3). G1 Military Zagreb, List B, G2 Branch Heads & Coordinating Agencies, 09/06/95

Relationship between the Defence Crisis Management Centre and RNLA Crisis Staff

Arrangements relating to the control of peace operations were taken care of by the service branch most involved, in this case the Army. But the Defence Crisis Management Centre, under the political pressure of that time, began increasingly to intervene in the execution of the operation, as things started to heat up in Srebrenica, and the dividing lines between the tasks of the Defence Crisis Management Centre and those of RNLA Crisis Staff became blurred.²¹⁹⁶

The relationship between the Defence Crisis Management Centre and RNLA Crisis Staff was not ideal during the days in July. This could be traced back to two causes: the situation in those days but additionally at the time the relationship had not formally been laid down. In practice, these factors intermingled, and as the role of the Defence Crisis Management Centre grew over time, due to the circumstances, the Royal Netherlands Army soon interpreted this as increased interference. The pragmatic arrangements, which provided for the Defence Crisis Management Centre to maintain contact with Zagreb and Sarajevo, and RNLA Crisis Staff with Brantz and Karremans, hardly worked in practice. A complicating factor was that Brantz frequently called the Defence Crisis Management Centre, and as a result the Defence Crisis Management Centre rang Brantz more than once.²¹⁹⁷ Brantz was a significant linchpin in the provision of information to the Netherlands in relation to the ups and downs of Dutchbat during the days in July. In one case, calls between Brantz and the Defence Crisis Management Centre led to irritating misunderstandings about the number of Dutchbat troops held by the VRS.²¹⁹⁸

The Defence Crisis Management Centre's position was a more central and influential one due to the proximity of the minister, resulting in a considerable increase in the influence of the Defence Crisis Management Centre during the days in July. The fact that the Defence Crisis Management Centre not only maintained contact with Dutch nationals in the UN organisations in Zagreb and Sarajevo but also with the Dutch Staff officers in New York, with the military advisor of UN Secretary-General Van Kappen, as well as with the higher echelons in Zagreb, namely Akashi and Janvier, also contributed to this. The Defence Crisis Management Centre also maintained contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the Dutch Permanent Representatives at the UN in Washington and NATO in Brussels, as well as with the foreign military attaches who were accredited in The Hague.²¹⁹⁹

This division of labour meant that the RNLA Crisis Staff did not of their own accord contact the Dutch officers stationed in Zagreb and Sarajevo, even though Colonel De Jonge from Zagreb and Lieutenant-Colonel De Ruiter from Sarajevo more than once called the RNLA Crisis Staff to pass on information. Regular contact did take place between RNLA Crisis Staff and the Dutch UNMO coordinator in Sarajevo but this was mainly intended to inform the rank and file. Contact between the RNLA Crisis Staff and Karremans, and occasionally Franken, mainly concerned non-operational, i.e. personnel and materiel matters.²²⁰⁰

In theory, RNLA Crisis Staff and the Defence Crisis Management Centre were deemed to exchange information on peace operations but this was not always the case in practice and much took place on an ad hoc basis. An extensive blueprint for the Crisis Staff originating from the Army and dated June 1995 explained the tasks and organisation relating to the control of peace operations. It does not contain indications as to how contact with the Defence Crisis Management Centre or with other branches of the services were supposed to be maintained.²²⁰¹ Although this point had featured on the agenda for some time, arrangements for the Chief of Defence Staff to be charged with control of the

²¹⁹⁶ SMG/1004. Conversation Col. Dedden (Chief-of-Staff Crisis Staff), 10/08/95.

²¹⁹⁷ SMG/1004. Conversation Col. Dedden (Chief-of-Staff Crisis Staff), 10/08/95.

²¹⁹⁸ SMG/1004. Report of conversations between C. Klep and Capt. Voets and Lt-Col Felix, 20/07/95.

²¹⁹⁹ SMG/1004. Conversation Col. Dedden (Chief-of-Staff Crisis Staff), 10/08/95.

²²⁰⁰ SMG/1004. Conversation Col. Dedden (Chief-of-Staff Crisis Staff), 10/08/95.

²²⁰¹ DPKL, Pers/95, ss/95/37.763/21.787. Blueprint Crisis Staff BLS, sent with fax 01/06/95.

peace operations during the fall of Srebrenica had not yet been completed. These were not put into effect until later that year.²²⁰²

As matters in Srebrenica tensed up, the volume of information from Sarajevo to the Defence Crisis Management Centre increased. This caused the Crisis Staff to feel that they were confronted with an information backlog in times of crisis in particular. Keeping the RNLA Crisis Staff to some extent also informed meant twice as much work for the Dutch Staff officers in Sarajevo, because it meant that often the same story had to be told twice from Sarajevo, to RNLA Crisis Staff and to the Defence Crisis Management Centre. Zagreb mainly continued to telephone the Defence Crisis Management Centre and not the Crisis Staff.

Added to that, the realisation that Karremans should not be telephoned all the time, whether by RNLA Crisis Staff or from the former Yugoslavia, surfaced during the days in July. A request was then sent from Sarajevo to not unnecessarily burden the Dutchbat Commander, and Brantz also let it be known from Tuzla on 7 July that questions about Dutchbat should be addressed to him, as the lines of communication with Dutchbat started to become clogged up.²²⁰³ The Army Director of Operations and Deputy Commander in Chief Van Baal issued instructions at the start of the VRS attack to preferably conduct communications between Dutchbat and the RNLA Crisis Staff via Brantz. They did add that this was not a prohibition on communication, rather that it was intended to relieve Karremans.²²⁰⁴

Contact between Sarajevo and the Defence Crisis Management Centre was good. Nicolai, as well as Lieutenant Colonel De Ruiter as his messenger at busy times, were main suppliers of information to the Defence Crisis Management Centre. The information passed on by Nicolai was considered to be factual, accurate and up to date. The Defence Crisis Management Centre therefore received the impression that it knew reasonably well what was happening. Contact consisted of answering questions or comparing different assessments of the situation. And Sarajevo did not feel it received orders from the Netherlands – communications were therefore conducted in an open fashion.²²⁰⁵ Kolsteren in Zagreb also called the line which existed from there to the Defence Crisis Management Centre on 10 and 11 July open and unproblematic. He did not consider the contact problematic, patronizing or controlling.²²⁰⁶

The Defence Crisis Management Centre as well as the Crisis Staff were plagued during the days in July by recent transfers and leaves. The relationship between the RNLA Crisis Staff and the Defence Crisis Management Centre had been good under the Crisis Staff Commander Brigadier-General Polle but in July he was preparing for his new tour of duty in the former Yugoslavia. The Defence Crisis Management Centre considered it got on less well with his replacement, Colonel P.H. Smeets, partly because of his more formal attitude. Smeets himself was of the opinion that a certain rivalry existed between the Defence Crisis Management Centre and the RNLA Crisis Staff. In his view the fact that there was no Army personnel present on behalf of the Defence Crisis Management Centre during the days around the fall of Srebrenica also played a role. This complaint was not aimed at the top level, as this was well represented, especially in the person of the Deputy Army Commander, but rather at the level of the permanent Defence Crisis Management Centre staff. Army personnel who had been there earlier included at top level the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, Lieutenant-General M. Schouten, but he was on holiday; and as permanent staff member the former Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Operations Kolsteren but the latter had been appointed UNPF Chief of Staff in Zagreb on 21 June. According to Smeets, this caused the feeling at the RNLA Crisis Staff that Navy and Airforce personnel interfered in matters concerning the Army. The posting of Lieutenant Colonel M.C.J. Felix as RNLA Crisis Staff liaison officer at the Defence Crisis Management Centre brought about some improvement in the situation.

²²⁰² SMG/1004. Report of conversations between C. Klep and Capt. Voets and Lt-Col Felix, 20/07/95.

²²⁰³ NIOD Coll. Brantz. Diary Brantz, (version August 1999), 07/07/95; interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

²²⁰⁴ SMG/1004. Report of conversations between C. Klep and Capt. Voets and Lt-Col Felix dated 20/07/95.

²²⁰⁵ Interviews J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00 and C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

²²⁰⁶ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

The relationship between the Defence Crisis Management Centre and the Royal Netherlands Army top on the other hand was excellent, due to the presence of Deputy Commander Van Baal at the Defence Crisis Management Centre. General opinion at the Defence Crisis Management Centre, however, was that Commander in Chief Couzy left a lot to his deputy, Van Baal.

In addition to Defence Staff, a permanent representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, J.C.S. Wijnands, who kept his minister and department informed of developments, was also stationed at the Defence Crisis Management Centre. Senior civil servants at Foreign Affairs, such as the Director of Atlantic Security, F. Majoor, and the Deputy Director-General of the Directorate of General Policy Matters, Van Eenennaam, were only occasionally present at the Defence Crisis Management Centre. According to the former Director-General of the Directorate of General Policy Matters, Wijnaendts, Foreign Affairs hardly played any part in the Hague bunker. In his opinion, Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen was pursuing military policy on the Dutch side. He said that the latter had been pulling the strings in the bunker, and that Voorhoeve was just 'a puppet on a string in this situation'.²²⁰⁷

Others on the permanent staff of the Defence Crisis Management Centre also recognized that Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen decided policy. The then Director-General of the Directorate of General Policy Matters at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vos, had little influence on policy. The atmosphere in the Defence Crisis Management Centre at the time of the fall was rather tense, which was caused by the concern about the Dutch military in particular. Concern about the fate of the population only arose with the fall of the enclave.²²⁰⁸

2. Discussions at the Defence Crisis Management Centre up to 11 July 1995

Hence, communications were brisk between the former Yugoslavia and The Hague. Upon looking for an answer to the question about the extent of intervention on the part of The Hague in Dutchbat, there is little evidence of formal instructions. The fact is that command relations at the UN, a political organisation, were less clear-cut than at NATO, a military organisation; there was a large grey area. The UN had to consider the requirements of the troop-contributing providing troops, and depending on the political pressure which national governments put the UN under, countries were able to put a certain stamp on the deployment of their troops.

In practice, the UN offered some opportunity for this. It was, for instance, not unusual for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Akashi, and the Force Commander, Janvier, to poll the views of national governments from Zagreb. This emerged for example from a request to Kolsteren by Janvier on 10 July 1995 to find out from the Dutch Government whether they objected to the provision of air support. At the time it was a logical question, as it is a fallacy that the Netherlands no longer had anything to do, or should have had anything to do, with its units under UN command. Full Command remained in Dutch hands and the administrative and logistical responsibilities also remained a national concern. Operational issues, on the other hand, were a matter for the UN but this Transfer of Authority did not go beyond Operational Control, as it was a more limited form of command than Operational Command. As a result, the Netherlands remained involved when the tasks initially assigned were subject to change.

Incidentally, this begs the question whether such issues relating to Command and Control in the Netherlands, within and without the Ministry of Defence, were as clear as all that. Outside a small circle of military personnel, familiarity with this subject was limited amongst civil servants, as well as amongst Members of Parliament. In any case, the Ministry of Defence once more busied itself with such formal aspects, in order to get these sorted out again after the fall of Srebrenica.

²²⁰⁷ Wijnaendts obtained his information on the DCBC from the Director of Atlantic Security, F. Majoor (interview H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00).

²²⁰⁸ Interviews C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00 and J.C.S. Wijnands, 24/05/00. Telephone call H. Wijnaendts, 25/04/00; SMG/1004. Report conversation Col Smeets, 02/08/95.

The Minister of Defence, Voorhoeve, took the position in respect to NIOD that these instructions relating to Command and Control, and the allocation of people's responsibilities, was more or less clear-cut but that at the same it had proved not possible in practice to separate these kind of issues, resulting in them intermingling with each other. According to him it was possible to argue strictly from the point of international law that the Netherlands had made units available to the UN, and that subsequently the Netherlands were only entitled to recall these units, and that otherwise things were up to the UN. In other words, The Hague could say that these military troops were now UN blue helmets, and that therefore this was not their problem. But in practice matters were different, according to Voorhoeve. These were Dutch troops with a home front, which continuously asked questions and was concerned, and The Hague was also confronted by the Dutch media and Parliament, both interested in the lives of the Dutch troops in Bosnia.

Consequently, Voorhoeve saw the UNPROFOR line of command as a confused one, which was not always functioning properly and which featured representatives of numerous countries. The various levels in the UN chain of command merely revolved around a limited number of officers who kept things together, according to him. The Chief of Defence Staff, the Defence Crisis Management Centre and the RNLA Crisis Staff learned in practice whom they could consult, in order to find out what was actually happening. The vague and badly functioning formal network contained in fact a better-functioning informal network. So The Hague telephoned officials such as Kolsteren and Nicolai if questions arose. And in turn they were the people asked by their own Commanders to ring The Hague, in order to find out what its views were.²²⁰⁹

The views of The Hague could be deduced from a number of discussions held around the fall of Srebrenica within the Defence Crisis Management Centre. Voorhoeve could be found frequently at the Defence Crisis Management Centre during the days immediately prior to the fall, but this did not mean that his role or opinion was dominant. He was, however, very involved and extremely concerned about the developing situation. The role of Junior Minister Gmelich Meijlings was limited, which was linked to his portfolio. He was less frequently present at the Defence Crisis Management Centre and mainly got in touch at times that Voorhoeve was absent. Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen played a significant role in the Defence Crisis Management Centre, which was not surprising in view of his function as the military advisor of the Minister. Voorhoeve chaired meetings at the Defence Crisis Management Centre but it was usually Van den Breemen who analysed matters and arrived at a conclusion, which was then either adopted or not. We have already mentioned that General Van Baal on the Army side played a larger role at the Defence Crisis Management Centre than Commander Couzy. Van Baal generally arrived well-prepared and well-informed, and his input was greater, not surprisingly in view of his previous experience in Bosnia as Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo. Those present made grateful use of the knowledge he had acquired in Bosnia. The Director of the Directorate of Policy Matters, J. de Winter, kept in the background when military affairs were discussed. His role became only prominent after the fall of Srebrenica. The Deputy Chief Defence Staff for Operations, Commodore Hilderink, was charged with day-to-day control at the Defence Crisis Management Centre and was the person who had to contribute information for the discussions at higher level. The Military Intelligence Service (of the Central Organisation as well as the Royal Netherlands Army) did not contribute to the discussions at the Defence Crisis Management Centre.²²¹⁰

On several occasions a discussion arose in the Hague Defence bunker about the situation in which Dutchbat found itself at the time of the fall. The Hague discussion, however, always lagged behind the actual situation in Srebrenica. Little was known about the actions of the warring factions. Discussions were therefore of a highly theoretical nature, and they did not affect the actual circumstances in Bosnia. The only exception was the requirement to call a halt to any further Close Air

²²⁰⁹ Interview J.J.C Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.

²²¹⁰ Interview C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

Support on 11 July as conveyed by Voorhoeve to Akashi. This is discussed below in the section: 'Calling a halt to further air support on 11 July'.

Air support was the main topic under discussion at the Defence Crisis Management Centre. It should be noted that the possible deployment of anti-tank weapons was not under discussion within the Defence Crisis Management Centre. It had briefly been the subject of a discussion in the Prime Minister's Office between Prime Minister Kok and Ministers Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve, amongst others. There Van Mierlo took the view that Dutchbat setting out to use its anti-tank weapons was dangerous, as this could lead to a bloodbath amongst the Dutchbat troops.

Voorhoeve proposed during this discussion that Dutchbat withdraw to the Potocari compound. Van Mierlo on the other hand, according to the Chief of Military Cooperation of the Atlantic Security Directorate, Klompenhouwer, who was present, took the view that the entire world would blame the Netherlands if Dutchbat was to abandon the enclave. According to Klompenhouwer, Van Mierlo made it clear to him during the discussion that 'he should decide'. When Klompenhouwer did so, Voorhoeve became extremely irritated and asked what the alternative was; the question went unanswered.²²¹¹ Van Mierlo admitted that his attitude in respect of Dutchbat during and after the fall had mainly been one of: 'You can't just pull out.'²²¹²

Air support was the subject of different and rather strong views amongst those present at the Defence Crisis Management Centre. Voorhoeve did not object to providing air support but Gmelich Meijling, for instance, was against. A few others were also strongly opposed, but the military in particular thought that a commander could not be withheld any means he considered necessary; air support was therefore a matter for operational commanders locally. Those who thought that people in The Hague could not judge operational issues in Srebrenica gained the upper hand. No operational instructions were therefore issued from the Defence Crisis Management Centre to Dutchbat in relation to air support.²²¹³

Those present at the Defence Crisis Management Centre on 8 July, including Minister Voorhoeve, tried to form an opinion about the intentions of the Bosnian Serbs. Opinions were divided, as some thought that the VRS would not go beyond taking the southern part of the enclave and that it would not be rational to kill the Dutchbat hostages, as they would then lose their leverage. Others thought that the Bosnian Serbs would have done so earlier, if this was what they wanted. In reality, nobody knew what was about to happen, although the idea that the entire enclave could be lost could not be dismissed.²²¹⁴

Close Air Support as well as air strikes were under discussion on 9 July. The outcome of the discussion was merely that decision-making on these issues would have to be done with great care. Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen informed General Kolsteren of this view, as the highest Dutch representative in the UNPF Staff in Zagreb.²²¹⁵ Exerting pressure on Akashi and Janvier to be careful on this issue, however, was not exactly necessary: they were well aware of the risks for the hostages. The Defence Crisis Management Centre recognized that this was primarily a responsibility of the UN and NATO commanders. Couzy had 'the fullest confidence' in General Janvier in this respect. According to Couzy, Janvier had pondered so long for a good reason as to whether he should honour the request for air support or not on 10 July.²²¹⁶ Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen was also full of praise for Janvier. He admired Janvier and thought him a good soldier.²²¹⁷

There was also concern on the American side for the welfare of Dutchbat. Voorhoeve spoke to the American ambassador, Terry Dornbush, at the home of Voorhoeve in the evening of 9 July.

²²¹¹ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 15/09/01.

²²¹² Interview H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo, 10/02/00.

²²¹³ Interview C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

²²¹⁴ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97.

²²¹⁵ NIOD, Coll. Hilderink. Memo 'Besluitvorming Defence Crisis Management Centre', no date, no No., no author given.

²²¹⁶ Interview H.A. Couzy, 07/09/98, 14/09/98 and 17/09/98.

²²¹⁷ Interview H.G.B. van den Breemen, 29/09/99.

Dornbush had taken the initiative for the discussion, as he wished to be informed of the events around Srebrenica. Dornbush said that his relationship with Voorhoeve had been open. The Dutch Minister had always been straight, according to him, and was never less than frank. According to Dornbush, Voorhoeve still assumed during this discussion that the Bosnian Serbs might possibly not take the entire enclave: there was 'at least a fifty percent chance that the Serbs would not overrun Srebrenica'. Voorhoeve said that it would not be the first time that they merely tightened the noose around a town. Dornbush thought that Voorhoeve was just as concerned about the ABiH conduct as about the conduct of the VRS, after the Dutch had incurred a fatality on the part of the ABiH. Voorhoeve did not ask the Americans for assistance during this discussion.²²¹⁸

On the eve of 10 July Van Mierlo also telephoned Dornbush. Dornbush called this 'the most general of any conversation'. Van Mierlo indicated that the Dutch Government was 'very concerned' about developments around Srebrenica but the telephone call had no further content. It was only intended to open lines of communication with Dornbush, and to remain in close contact during the following days, according to the American ambassador. On subsequent days Dornbush heard no more from Foreign Affairs.²²¹⁹

There was also interest from American military quarters. Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen not only maintained a close relationship with his American colleagues (as well as with his British and French colleagues), Deputy Chief of Operations Hilderink, for instance, was telephoned at home by General Wesley Clark, the deputy of the American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Shalikashvili, in order to catch up on matters.²²²⁰ According to his diary, Shalikashvili proved to be well informed about the situation in which Dutchbat found itself at the time of the fall.²²²¹ There was also contact between the French Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Lanxade, and the Defence Crisis Management Centre in those days.²²²²

Discussions relating to air support

When the VRS further advanced on 10 July and Dutchbat was ordered to take up a blocking position, the Hague discussion on air support intensified. Kolsteren rang Voorhoeve, as Janvier wanted to know whether the Netherlands objected to air support, because this might have resulted in the Dutch hostages being killed. It was clear to Voorhoeve that the Netherlands was in no position to refuse air support, just because the hostages were vulnerable. He made this consideration clear to Kolsteren, even though nobody in The Hague knew what exactly were the risks that had to be balanced. These were difficult moments for Voorhoeve, as according to him it was clear on the one hand that the enclave would not be able to survive without air support, and on the other hand that the enclave would fall as soon as the Bosnian Serbs decided to take it. The decision-making process could take half a day, or two weeks, and even then Voorhoeve could be little sure about the risks: there might be no fatalities, or there might be sixty, the VRS might first fire mortar bombs at the civilian population, resulting in hundreds of casualties, or the Bosnian Serbs might demonstrate that they were in power by executing a number of hostages. The VRS might also fire on the Dutchbat compounds. There had been earlier strikes in the town and in the compound, even though it was not clear for whom these grenades had been intended. Dutchbat would be left with little they could do. Voorhoeve put into words what he

²²¹⁸ Interview Terry Dornbush, 29/01/01. Dornbush spoke several times with Voorhoeve and Van den Breemen following this conversation but not with other Dutch authorities. Contact with both was via the telephone. Dornbush could not recall the details of these conversations.

²²¹⁹ Interview Terry Dornbush, 29/01/01.

²²²⁰ Interview C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

²²²¹ Interview John Shalikashvili, 07/11/00.

²²²² DCBC, 528. Daily reports DCBC, 10/07/95. The content of this contact was not recorded.

called 'the emotional context of those days': 'You did not know exactly how it would end, only that it would end badly'.²²²³

Hilderink wrote in a memo dated October 1995 about the meeting at the Defence Crisis Management Centre during the fall of the enclave. The following, he wrote, had been present at the meeting on 10 July: Junior Minister Gmelich Meijling, secretary-general Barth, Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen, Director of the Directorate of General Policy Affairs De Winter, Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Van Baal and Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Operations Hilderink himself, who informed Voorhoeve of the outcome.

The main objective of the meeting was again to arrive at a judgement about the intentions of the Bosnian Serbs and to formulate guidelines and priorities for action by Dutchbat. These could then be compared to the UN instructions, and where necessary be made known to the UN authorities as the Dutch position. Those present identified three possibilities in respect of the intentions of the VRS: to provoke the UN by taking over OPs; to take the strategically important southern part; or take the entire enclave. The latter was still not seen as the most likely goal, based on information provided by the UN and appraisals by the Military Intelligence Service. The safety of the Dutch personnel had to be paramount with respect to Dutchbat, and the next priority was the execution of the task for as long as possible, in so far as this did not threaten the first priority.²²²⁴

The safety of the national troops was constantly emphasized during discussions held in these days. This was in agreement with the instruction issued by General Smith, namely that the execution of the mandate was subservient to the safety of the UN personnel.²²²⁵ Van den Breemen, but also Voorhoeve, was strongly convinced of the importance of the safety of the Dutch troops. Voorhoeve, on the other hand, seemed to have shifted ground on this in his later account of the discussions at the time.²²²⁶ he wrote a commentary on 28 October 1997 on the passage mentioned above in the memo by Hilderink in which the latter wrote that the safety of the national troops was paramount. Voorhoeve noted that this account of the situation was too brief and incomplete. The memo did not do justice to the concern and fear which was prevalent at the time for the inhabitants of the enclave, in case they were overrun. Voorhoeve pointed out that this was considered repeatedly during those days at the Defence Crisis Management Centre and that the question as to what fate would befall the population had arisen, and what Dutchbat could still do from its powerless position in order to as much as possible to limit a 'disaster taking place'. Voorhoeve wrote that at the time he had not wanted the UN to take unwarranted risks in pointless battles with the VRS: Dutchbat would only lose these. Voorhoeve estimated the odds that the VRS wanted to round up the entire enclave at 50% in this commentary after the event.²²²⁷

Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen left for Mons in Belgium in the afternoon of 10 July, in order to visit the SACEUR, General Jouwan, following the meetings at the Defence Crisis Management Centre. Van den Breemen discussed the possibilities and impossibilities of air support with him and the measures which Admiral Smith had taken in Naples to be able to provide air support. Van den Breemen returned early in the morning of 11 July.²²²⁸ Joulwan remembered that Van den Breemen had tried to call Janvier from his home but that the Chief of Defence Staff had not been able to speak with the Force Commander.²²²⁹

²²²³ Interviews J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97 and 15/04/97.

²²²⁴ NIOD, Coll. Hilderink. Memo 'Besluitvorming Defence Crisis Management Centre', no date, no author given. A note on the memo reads: approved by: Stas, SG, vml PBLs, vml SCO, CDS. The memo dates from October 1997. The commentary by Voorhoeve dates from 28/10/97.

²²²⁵ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. UNPROFOR Directive 2/95, 29/05/95, UN Confi.

²²²⁶ Interview H.G.B. van den Breemen, 22/09/99.

²²²⁷ NIOD, Coll. Hilderink. Memo MINDEF to CDS, i.a.a. STAS, SG, Lt-Gen M. Schouten (PCDS), Cdre C.G.J. Hilderink (SCO), 28/10/97, No. 1381.

²²²⁸ NIOD, Coll. Hilderink. Memo 'Besluitvorming Defence Crisis Management Centre', no date. [1997].; see also 'Hollands Dagboek', *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/07/95.

²²²⁹ Interview George Joulwan, 08/06/00.

3. Discussions at Defence Crisis Management Centre: 11 July 1995

Shortly after the morning briefing at Defence Crisis Management Centre on 11 July another discussion was held at 08.40 hours, on offering air support to Dutchbat. Minister Voorhoeve was not present but was in Doorn at that time, where he took leave of a Royal Netherlands Marine Corps mortar company which was about to participate in the Rapid Reaction Force.

The discussion developed along the following lines. The Deputy Army Commander, Van Baal, was under the impression that there were two 'hard' targets for Close Air Support that morning. Those present realized that Close Air Support would probably provoke a response on the part of VRS but Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen did not want to accept any ultimatums from VRS. On the other hand, the Netherlands would have to take into account the safety of its own troops; Dutchbat itself should take care of this, if necessary with the aid of a third party. Junior Minister Gmelich Meijling had two options: abandoning the remaining OPs and withdraw to the town of Srebrenica, or enter into battle with the VRS. The latter scenario, however, begged the question as to what the consequences would be. There would be casualties as a result of the Close Air Support, and a possible later, more massive deployment of air power. Dutchbat was in a 'no win' situation, according to Van den Breemen, and found itself in a spot in respect of the Bosnian Muslims as well as the Bosnian Serbs. Gmelich Meijling considered the best option to be for Dutchbat to withdraw to both compounds, or to the Potocari compound only, in which case the town of Srebrenica would have to be abandoned. Van Baal retorted that Dutchbat would have to continue carrying out its assignment, and that not the Defence Crisis Management Centre, but rather the UN at the highest level decided on the abandonment or otherwise of the enclave.²²³⁰

Barth, secretary-general of the Ministry of Defence, was pessimistic about the fate of the thirty Dutchbat hostages. A decision on Close Air Support was the responsibility of the Dutchbat Commander but Barth considered the deployment of air power at that time to be overkill. Gmelich Meijling also wondered whether Close Air Support could be given at that time, as the activities of VRS were not aimed at UNPROFOR. Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Operations Hilderink pointed out that reactive, rather than active action was required against the two VRS tanks close to the blocking positions.

Barth remained pessimistic, Van den Breemen did not want to give in to VRS demands, and Close Air Support in self-defence remained feasible for Van Baal. According to him, the VRS would understand the situation fully well after the warning issued on 10 July. Hilderink, however, warned that little time remained for Close Air Support, as the aircraft would soon be out of the airspace over Bosnia again, and that thereafter the aircraft could only be redeployed from their base.

Talking or fighting?

Gmelich Meijling subsequently wondered what to do next. Barth proved to be in favour of pulling out of the OPs. Van den Breemen merely wanted to be prepared for this, he was thinking of reinforcement and assistance from the French. In this connection, the Dutch ambassador in France, Wijnaendts, had pointed out on 10 July that Paris had notified Janvier that the French units of the Rapid Reaction Force were in Bosnia and available to relieve Dutchbat. This was overly optimistic: in reality the realisation of the Rapid Reaction Force was not making much progress, and it was nowhere near ready to be deployed operationally in Srebrenica. Paris thought that the British were stalling,²²³¹ and expected an improvement only after the tough French General Soubirou had taken on the command, which was planned for 16 July.²²³² French helicopters for a possible transfer of troops to Srebrenica were not yet

²²³⁰ DCBC, 636. This discussion has been reconstructed on the basis of notes during the morning briefing on 11/07/95 July 1995 at the DCBC. No author given.

²²³¹ Original: '*les Britanniques trainent les pieds*'

²²³² ABZ, DPV/ARA/00797. Code Wijnaendts 217, 10/07/95.

available in Bosnia either; these helicopters comprised Tigre attack helicopters including crew,²²³³ which were still underway to Bosnia on the aircraft carrier Foch.²²³⁴ It is not quite clear as to when these helicopters would be available for deployment at Srebrenica. Janvier had insisted as recently as 10 July that they would arrive in Bosnia before 14 July.²²³⁵

This French support had, however, not been able to offer assistance, as Voorhoeve said immediately after the fall, even if the helicopters had arrived in good time: it was not an option from a military point of view to fly to Srebrenica with vulnerable transport helicopters.²²³⁶ It is true that on 10 July France was said to have offered to supply the Tigre helicopters, including crew, should the Dutch run into further problems.²²³⁷

Actually, the apparent French offer to provide troops and attack helicopters for the reinforcement of Srebrenica was more a political gesture rather than a feasible military option. Attack helicopters had not yet arrived in Bosnia and the French did not have transport helicopters which could transfer larger numbers of troops. The Americans would have to supply these. These helicopters were available onboard the American amphibian ships in the Mediterranean but immediate deployment for an operation which was not without risk could not be taken for granted. It would require coordination with NATO, as all helicopter landing pads in the enclave were within range of VRS artillery. The planning and preparation of the operation would require at least 72 hours.

The greatest problem with such an operation would be to obtain political consent: this required overcoming an important obstacle in respect of command and control relations. The Americans wanted to operate only under NATO command in the case of such an operation, not under UN command. At that time, the command relations had not yet been put in place either for a possible withdrawal operation on the part of UNPROFOR (Oplan 40104; see Chapter 1). It would take days just for national governments to establish a position, for the North Atlantic Council of NATO to pronounce on it, and for the secretaries-general of the UN and NATO to agree.

Another possibility was to have French attack helicopters operate under UNPROFOR command. These helicopters would require air cover, due to their vulnerability. Moreover, they could not be stationed in the enclave itself, as fuel and ground staff could not reach the enclave. The helicopters would therefore have to find a base in remote Tuzla.

The conclusion relating to an apparent French offer of attack helicopters to assist Dutchbat is that it involved such considerable difficulties from a military point of view, that the offer must be considered as no more than a political gesture towards The Hague. It arrived too late to be considered seriously.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence declared that other countries had also made gestures similar to France, though he declined to say which countries.²²³⁸ Support from other countries was not really under discussion at the Defence Crisis Management Centre. The availability of the Quick Response Option – NATO reserve troops – was, however, reviewed. The best option seemed to Voorhoeve to assume a 'worst-case scenario', and meanwhile to ask NATO to prepare for this. NATO had declared to need three days to activate the reserve troops, according to Voorhoeve, but the problem was that it was difficult to keep this secret. An even greater problem was the fact that the NATO evacuation plan (Oplan 40104) provided for a Quick Response Option, but only for a single enclave. The British might oppose an evacuation of only Dutch troops from Srebrenica, thought Voorhoeve, as they themselves wanted to leave Gorazde with their troops on 5 September. If NATO actually proceeded to activate the Quick Response Option, then it seemed more likely to Voorhoeve

²²³³ ANP 101938 July 95.

²²³⁴ *Srebrenica: rapport sur un massacre. Assemblée Nationale, 2001 No 3413, Annexe IV, Note interne du ministère de la Défense du 11 juillet 1995 sur la situation en ex-Yugoslavie*, p. 328.

²²³⁵ NIOD, Coll Banbury. Banbury dairy. SRSG's Briefing 10/07/95.

²²³⁶ *Algemeen Dagblad*, 12/07/95.

²²³⁷ ANP 101938 jul 95.

²²³⁸ ANP 101938 jul 95.

that the UN troops would be evacuated simultaneously from all three eastern enclaves.²²³⁹ The Dutchbat withdrawal will be discussed in greater detail in the Chapter 'Departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica'.

It seemed to Gmelich Meijling that the discussion at the Defence Crisis Management Centre was about the choice between talking and fighting. He retained a preference for withdrawal to the compounds, in order to continue carrying out the assignment from there. Van Baal considered this not feasible from the compounds; according to him the blocking positions remained necessary to protect the population. The party agreed that it was not for the Dutchbat Commander to determine how long Dutchbat was to continue fighting; it was not up to a battalion commander to make such fundamental choices but rather a matter for the Security Council Cabinet.

Van Baal was the only one who considered that the decision whether, and how long, to continue fighting lay with Dutchbat. Barth then wondered who would have to make a decision on this: it was clear that it would be a political decision but who exactly was to decide, and on what grounds? He wondered whether the safety of Dutchbat and the hostages played a role in this. Withdrawal (evacuation) of Dutchbat no longer served a useful purpose, according to the secretary-general. Van den Breemen repeated that the safety of the troops was paramount, and that carrying out the assignment came second. The local commander continuously weighed this up and reviewed his available fighting power, according to the Chief of Defence Staff. As well as his earlier choice in favour of withdrawal to the compounds, evacuation of Dutchbat was now also an option for Gmelich Meijling. This begged the question for Hilderink as to what response it would draw from the Bosnian Muslims.

The discussion on talking or fighting did not arrive at a conclusion. Two decisions were made: Minister Voorhoeve would be recalled to the department and an Orion (maritime patrol aircraft) was made ready. Van den Breemen had namely proposed that he travel to Zagreb to contact the Security Council jointly with Janvier. A decision whether the Chief of Defence Staff should actually undertake this journey was not made during this meeting.²²⁴⁰

Another meeting took place at the Defence Crisis Management Centre at 11.00 hours. Voorhoeve had by then returned from Doorn.

Van Baal presented an assessment of the situation. The renewed VRS attack which was in full swing by now made it clear, according to Van Baal, that it was the intention of the VRS to clear the enclave. The blocking position was not able to do anything against the superior strength of the VRS, or to maintain it. The VRS knew about the possibility to deploy Close Air Support. The fundamental points of this discussion continued to be the safety of the Dutch troops and the feasibility of continuing with the assignment. Van den Breemen had to ask Janvier and Akashi whether the task assigned was still feasible.

Voorhoeve then asked whether Dutchbat would still be able to carry out its task if Close Air Support was provided. Hilderink answered that this in itself was still possible but the question was what would happen after air support had been given. Voorhoeve was of the opinion that the terrain restricted the chance to eliminate the VRS in one go. The message as far as he was concerned was therefore regrouping, and withdrawing to the compounds in Potocari and Srebrenica. Van den Breemen added that the enclave would have to be given up and that Dutchbat would have to leave it if the VRS would fight on. Janvier would have to take the political consequences up with the Security Council. Political action and the local situation had to be synchronized. Karremans, the local Commander, was in the best position to weigh up the conduct of the warring factions and balance it against the battalion's own possibilities to halt the VRS advance. Close Air Support involved large risks but it had to remain available to the battalion commander.

²²³⁹ Voorhoeve diary, p. 105.

²²⁴⁰ DCBC, 636. This discussion was reconstructed on the basis of notes during the morning briefing on 11/07/95 at the DCBC. No author given.

Voorhoeve feared that the VRS might surround and starve the Dutch units into surrender if Dutchbat withdrew to the compounds in Srebrenica and Potocari. Voorhoeve also feared that the ABiH might insist on the Weapon Collection Point in the enclave being opened up for its own purposes following a regrouping by Dutchbat. In his opinion, Nicolai had to be notified.

According to Deputy Army Commander Van Baal, an additional problem was that the VRS might use uniforms and armoured vehicles stolen from Dutchbat. A withdrawal from the enclave by Dutchbat also entailed the risk of misunderstandings.

At that point a message arrived that OP-N was under attack but that Janvier had not honoured a request for Close Air Support. This also proved that the information received by the Defence Crisis Management Centre was not always accurate: as shown in the previous chapter, there was no causal connection between the attack on OP-N and the rejection of the request for Close Air Support, as the former took place only after the latter. Moreover, as already shown in the previous chapter the request never got as far as being considered in Zagreb but was rejected in Sarajevo, as (according to Nicolai) Dutchbat had not been attacked and the town had not been shelled.

Barth proposed to halt the deployment of Close Air Support but Voorhoeve disagreed. Barth argued that Close Air Support would lead to escalation and would only have a limited effect. Moreover, it would result in increased risk for the thirty Dutchbat hostages. Barth guessed that the VRS would break through and that the positions of Dutchbat would become untenable. According to Barth, the Netherlands should impress upon the UN that a 'give-way' scenario could not be excluded. Gmelich Meijling thought that Karremans ought to know what ideas were bandied about in the bunker, and he wanted Karremans to be telephoned: the battalion Commander should take steps in line with Defence Crisis Management Centre, according to the Junior Minister. He did not clarify how Karremans should translate the thinking into measures to be taken. Minister Voorhoeve did not consider this necessary, he considered Karremans to be familiar with the priorities, which were to ensure a minimum number of casualties, certainly amongst Dutchbat, and after that also amongst the population.

Nevertheless Voorhoeve, like Gmelich Meijling, wanted to call Karremans to ask him personally for his assessment of the situation. Van Baal thought it would be better to call Janvier, rather than Karremans, in order to give voice to the Dutch concern in relation to the continued execution of the assignment. His idea was that it would allow for people in the bunker to control the orders to be issued to Dutchbat, and their feasibility. Focusing on the safety of the Dutch troops would result in the assignment no longer being carried out but it was up to the UN to decide that Dutchbat should consider its task to be either the safety of the Dutch troops, or the safety of the population also. Voorhoeve agreed that the UN as well as the Netherlands was faced with a problem, and that Janvier would be asked for his judgement in this matter.

Even so, Voorhoeve was in favour of contacting Karremans as he thought that the latter had to deploy antitank weapons even if Close Air Support would not be forthcoming. Van Baal, however, pointed out that the VRS tanks were shelling Srebrenica over the heads of Dutchbat. Admittedly, the task of Dutchbat was to protect the population but if the VRS went through with the attack, the safety of the Dutch troops would be threatened and their only choice would be 'a white flag and retreat'. If the VRS deployed artillery or mortar bombs, the Dutchbat Commander would feel compelled to call on Close Air Support, according to him. Van den Breemen repeated that Dutchbat was in a 'no-win' situation. A commander should decide the deployment of available weapons but should also assume that casualties amongst his own troops should be avoided, and that should therefore not happen upon giving up the blocking position. The possibility to give Close Air Support would therefore have to be worked out in greater detail.

In the opinion of Voorhoeve, the enclave would certainly be lost should Dutchbat withdraw to the compounds, with Close Air Support. Hilderink feared that Dutchbat soldiers would be taken hostage by the ABiH upon surrender to the VRS, and that the OPs would be attacked. Van den Breemen then proposed that he also discuss the evacuation of Dutchbat with Janvier in the knowledge

that this could lead to problems because an evacuation by road, taking along weapons, could lead to blockades by the ABiH.²²⁴¹ Voorhoeve decided that Van den Breemen would indeed have to personally convey the results of the discussion to Janvier that same day, as the Dutch view of action required. Van Baal would accompany Van den Breemen.²²⁴²

Voorhoeve then called Members of Parliament Korthals (*VVD-Liberals*) and Hoekema (*D66-Democrats*), respectively chairman and deputy chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence. He informed them that the situation was hopeless and that nobody knew what would happen to the inhabitants of the enclave and the Dutch troops.²²⁴³

That afternoon, the Interservice Committee Deputy Chiefs of Staff for Operation of the Armed Forces, were also convened at the Defence Crisis Management Centre. Hilderink, as Deputy Chief Operations of the Defence Staff for Operations chaired the committee. Also present were Air Commodore F.J.M. Vogelpoel (Air Force), Commandore R. Zeijlemaker (Navy) and Colonel C.N.J. Neisingh (Military Police). The Army was represented by the newly stationed liaison officer Lieutenant Colonel M.C.J. Felix. This rather surprised Neisingh of the Military Police, as the focus that day was on the Army, yet it was represented merely by a Lieutenant-Colonel commander, not by a higher rank (Brigade-General or Colonel). He was also surprised that there was no one else present from the Army in the bunker: he got the impression that this service branch had withdrawn to its own stronghold, namely the RNLA Crisis Staff. Evidently events at the Central Organisation (in this case the Defence Crisis Management Centre) were of less interest to the Army. What Neisingh at that time did not know was that Deputy Commander Van Baal, who was normally present when things hotted up, had left for Zagreb with Van den Breemen. Colonel Smeets, the Deputy Chief of Operations of the Army, did not join the company until later that afternoon. As explained earlier, the latter was not usually found at the Defence Crisis Management Centre but rather at the RNLA Crisis Staff.²²⁴⁴

Conclusion

We can surmise from the discussion that the Dutch Defence top did apply itself to the policy to be followed but that this for the time being remained without consequences. It is also evident from the discussion that there was a great deal of uncertainty about the developing situation. It became clear to The Hague too on 11 July that the end of the Srebrenica Safe Area was on its way, and that an evacuation of Dutchbat was not out of the question. It was a question of balancing on the one hand the question whether Dutchbat should pull out of the enclave, or on the other hand should withdraw to the compounds; and between on the one hand the possibility for Dutchbat to continue carrying out its assignment, and on the other hand whether they should consider the safety of the Dutch troops as a priority. The safety remained a priority at the Defence Crisis Management Centre but this was no different in Zagreb. It was UNROFOR policy to place the safety of the UN troops above execution of the assignment.

At that time, The Hague did not object to allowing Close Air Support, despite the concern about the possible consequences. Nevertheless, the fact that there might be casualties amongst the Dutch troops was part of the equation.

Military considerations were left to Janvier. Despite the wish of Voorhoeve as well as Gmelich Meijling to personally confer with Karremans, this did not happen. Karremans did not receive instructions from The Hague and intervention on the part of The Hague did not go beyond the

²²⁴¹ NIOD, Coll. Hilderink. Memo Maj Govaarts to Lt Col P. van Geldere, 20/01/97. Govaarts was head of the duty team at the DCBC and took notes of what was discussed at the time, which he later worked up.

²²⁴² NIOD, Coll. Hilderink. Memo 'Besluitvorming Defence Crisis Management Centre', no date [1997]. The Govaarts report states that Minister Voorhoeve decided that Van den Breemen as well as himself would inform Janvier, Van Baal and Hilderink Karremans. (NIOD, Coll. Hilderink. Memo Maj Govaarts to Lt Col P. van Geldere, 20/01/97).

²²⁴³ Manuscript Bert Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan*, p.66.

²²⁴⁴ Interview C.N.J. Neisingh, 03/01/02.

decision to inform Janvier of the Dutch views. There was no question of any attempt to interfere in the UN chain of command. All this would change a few hours later.

4. Meeting of the Ministerial Council at the Defence Crisis Management Centre on 11 July

A party of senior politicians arrived at the bunker following the meeting of the Deputy Chiefs of Staff for Operations. There was a second meeting that same afternoon at the Defence Crisis Management Centre, where Prime Minister Kok and Van Mierlo, the minister for Foreign Affairs, were apprised of the situation in the presence of Minister Voorhoeve and secretary general Barth. Hilderink provided a briefing. In case Dutchbat would have to leave the enclave somehow, four options open to Dutchbat were discussed: activation of the NATO withdrawal plan (Oplan 40104); a UN and NATO helicopter operation; an escape attempt via the northern edge of the enclave; and leaving by road, taking the vehicles. The latter would, however, have to be referred to the Bosnian Serbs, and the population would have to be taken along. It was generally feared that the Bosnian Muslims would want to block Dutchbat leaving by lying down in front of the vehicles. The question was also raised as to who would be in charge if one of the options were chosen. The answer was that this would be the UN in the case of the last option (driving off) and in the case of the first three options this would be the United States or NATO.²²⁴⁵

A surrealistic atmosphere prevailed in the bunker during this meeting. A map was projected onto the wall, and the blocking position was discussed. At some time a picture of the VRS breaching the blocking position was created and it became clear that the latter had indeed been overrun. This led to the realisation that the VRS really wanted to capture the enclave in its entirety and that operations were no longer limited to the southern part of the enclave. Voorhoeve concluded that the 'serbs had blood in their eyes'; he seemed to be a few steps ahead in his mind, while the military were still mainly thinking technocratically.

Prime Minister Kok found it difficult to choose between doing something and doing nothing. The discussions, which Voorhoeve had held with Akashi, were raised, and they heard through the American military attaché in The Hague that the United States were under the impression that Akashi had even already requested the evacuation of Dutchbat. (See also Chapter 9, 'Departure of Dutchbat from the enclave'). It was also known that Janvier in Zagreb and Nicolai in Sarajevo were evaluating the situation.²²⁴⁶ The party finally decided to call a halt to air support, after receiving the latest news; see also the section below, 'Calling a halt to further air support on 11 July'.

Following this meeting, Voorhoeve prepared for his press conference in order to announce the fall of the enclave. A decision was made at the Defence Crisis Management Centre to brief the accredited military attachés present in The Hague.²²⁴⁷

Meanwhile, Nicolai had telephoned Mladic and passed on the latest details to the Defence Crisis Management Centre: refugees were being admitted to the compound in Potocari; there were no casualties or wounded amongst the Dutch; all OPs would be abandoned; Dutchbat had been forced to leave the compound in Srebrenica; and all UN personnel were now centred on the Potocari compound. Nicolai also reported that Karremans intended to negotiate with Mladic on that evacuation.²²⁴⁸ Brantz

²²⁴⁵ NIOD, Coll. Hilderink. Note 'Besluitvorming Defence Crisis Management Centre', no date [1997]; interview C.N.J. Neisingh, 03/01/02. The impressions of this meeting are taken from the observation of Colonel Neisingh (Deputy Director of Operations Royal Netherlands Marechaussee).

²²⁴⁶ Interview C.N.J. Neisingh, 03/01/02.

²²⁴⁷ Interview C.N.J. Neisingh, 03/01/02.

²²⁴⁸ DCBC, 528. Daily Reports DCBC 11/07/95, 17.52, statements by Nicolai.

reported from Tuzla that the VRS had offered an evacuation of the Dutch, representatives of the non-governmental organisations and also of the population, with the exception of able-bodied men.²²⁴⁹

A last meeting within the Defence Crisis Management Centre on this day involved almost the entire Ministerial Council, which assembled there at about 19.30 hours.²²⁵⁰ The meeting was convened because Prime Minister Kok and the members of the Ministerial Council most involved found it necessary to bring the entire Ministerial Council up-to-date. The Prime Minister had opted for the bunker as the venue because this offered the best chance to have the coordination staff at Defence, who had maintained contact with the former Yugoslavia, present an assessment of the situation there and then. He did not want to drag them away from their job by having them come to the *Trêveszaal* (the usual meeting place of the Ministerial Council).²²⁵¹ Ministers present were told that the Bosnian Serbs had overpowered the enclave. According to the reports, no Dutch soldiers had been killed, even though this was stated with reservation. The briefing continued: thirty hostages were in the hands of the VRS; Dutchbat and the garrisons at most OPs had retreated to the Potocari compound. Various Dutchbat soldiers were on their way to Potocari, accompanied by 7000 refugees. Karremans conferred with Mladic on the admission of aid convoys, unopposed departure of the refugees and of the battalion, along with the weapons. Nor was it a coincidence that the attack took place a week before the realisation of the Rapid Reaction Force, and a week before Dutchbat was relieved.

The fear was voiced within the Ministerial Council that the VRS attack would not be restricted to Srebrenica; Zepa and Gorazde were also indefensible and might fall shortly. It was hoped that Dutchbat would receive permission for departure to Serbia or to Central Bosnia. Karremans was free to act according to his own judgement. This had proved essential in order to prevent loss of lives, and it also became clear that this had always been given the highest priority in discussions with Karremans. He seemed to have succeeded in this respect. The Ministerial Council also judged that Dutchbat had no chance of defending the enclave, in view of the geographical situation and the artillery preponderance of the VRS.

The question was then raised at the meeting of the Ministerial Council on what grounds it was hoped that the Bosnian Serbs would give permission for Dutchbat's departure from the enclave. There was a possibility that the Dutch would be taken hostage in order to prevent the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force. Reports that permission for the departure of the refugees and Dutchbat had been given had not yet been confirmed. There were reports that only women and children would be allowed to leave and this gave rise to the worst fears for the men, and for a bloodbath. The Bosnian Serbs would want to prevent the men from joining the ABiH but the feeling in the Ministerial Council was that a bloodbath would not be in the interest of the Bosnian Serbs, in view of international repercussions. Should Dutchbat receive permission to leave, then this would give rise to an ethical dilemma. In that case pressure would have to be exerted on Milosevic. EU negotiator Bildt had already been approached for this purpose, and the Netherlands had requested that an emergency meeting of the Security Council be convened. Kinkel, the German minister for Foreign Affairs, had promised he would speak with the Russian Government.

The meeting also led to questions about responsibilities and a discussion on evacuation plans. It became clear that the UN was responsible for the negotiations. Evacuation without the consent of the warring factions was only possible with the support of NATO, and the United States would have to take the initiative. It was a risky operation because it would have to be done using helicopters. The time for preparation was three days and this seemed hardly acceptable in the circumstances, yet inevitable. Only the United States were able to carry out such an operation independently. All other variants would have to be subject to negotiation. The American and French Governments had offered to assist with a possible evacuation.

²²⁴⁹ DCBC, 528. Dagrapporten DCBC 11/07/95, 18.17, statements by Brantz. The statement relating to able-bodied men stems from the notes of Colonel Neisingh who was present at the DCBC.

²²⁵⁰ NIOD, Coll. Hilderink. Note 'Besluitvorming Defence Crisis Management Centre', no date [1997].

²²⁵¹ Interview W. Kok, 30/05/00.

The issue of emergency measures to deal with refugees was also raised in the meeting of the Ministerial Council. Only, those present did not know the location where provisions had to be made. The most urgent requirement was to find a safe haven. The situation, which had developed, would without doubt lead to ethnic cleansing. Negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs would therefore have to continue for as long as possible but on the other hand there was only sufficient food in Potocari to last for 24 hours.

Another question raised was whether the Netherlands was in a position to impose conditions. This seemed not possible in the circumstances. At best the Netherlands would only be in a position to submit requests. The Spanish presidency of the EU was busy preparing a statement on the situation in Srebrenica and Spain thought that the Dutch military should continue to offer protection to the local population. In that case the Netherlands was faced with the difficult choice of deciding between continuing a humanitarian assignment, or the safety of their own troops. The question was asked whether the battalion commander should make that decision. The Ministerial Council considered this a matter for later; saving human lives was paramount for the time being. During the battles much of the focus had been on the safety of their own troops; after the fall, attention would have to be paid to the Bosnian Muslims but the question was how long that would be possible. A scenario, which saw Dutchbat leaving, taking along all refugees was difficult to imagine.

A question of an entirely different order was how Parliament and the media should be informed. The intention of the Ministerial Council was to invite the chairmen of all parliamentary parties for a briefing at the Ministry of Defence. The hope was also in this way to prevent a parliamentary debate in the near future, and to postpone a parliamentary debate already planned for 12 July. The idea behind the postponement was to exercise reticence in the comments on the events for the time being.²²⁵²

In retrospect, Prime Minister Kok said that the discussions in the Ministerial Council on the situation as it had developed in Srebrenica had been emotional that evening. There was a growing feeling of powerlessness, due to the fact that it was extraordinary difficult to determine the consequences of the enclave being overrun. There was uncertainty about the position of the Dutch troops and of the population. The subject of solidarity was raised repeatedly in the discussion, which according to Kok resulted in the conclusion that they were responsible for the fate and future of the population, in the knowledge also that the possibilities for Dutchbat in the newly created circumstances were completely different to the role assigned earlier. Kok thought that there was no question of conflicting ideas in the bunker on the evening of 11 July. The emphasis was on different points relating to emotional involvement with the population as well as with the Dutchbat troops.

Kok could in no way agree with a description which indicated that there were opposing views.²²⁵³ Such a description could for instance be found in *Vrij Nederland*, where Leonard Ornstein posed that disagreement had arisen in the Ministerial Council and a fierce debate had raged during which Pronk, the Minister for Development Cooperation, had in an emotional manner drawn attention to the interests of the refugees, and Voorhoeve considered safeguarding the troops as the most important task, with Van Mierloo midway, and Kok shifting from safeguarding Dutchbat to safeguarding the Muslims.²²⁵⁴

According to Voorhoeve, harmony between political authorities and the military had been good in those days. There had been no disputes on the type of action. Voorhoeve added that he had not done anything different to what the military also considered had to be done. He had not been able to judge everything himself, and the military also knew that they could not assess the situation properly from The Hague. That could only be done by the UN troops locally.

²²⁵² Objectivized summary for the NIOD investigation of the Ministerial Council meeting on 11/07/95.

²²⁵³ Interview W. Kok, 30/05/00.

²²⁵⁴ Leonard Ornstein in *Vrij Nederland*, 09/09/95.

Voorhoeve is on record as saying that he minded the retrospective criticism by Couzy. He thought it artificial and contrived criticism on the part of someone who had visited the bunker only a few times. On one of these occasions, Voorhoeve had a discussion with Couzy on the order to take up the blocking positions, which Dutchbat had received from Zagreb. Couzy had said then that the order had to be carried out. There was no alternative, even if it might cost human lives, as the white vehicles were sitting ducks. The only alternative according to Couzy was to pull back Dutchbat. Couzy suggested this but then rejected it again as not feasible. A worried Couzy then left the bunker, saying that he expected things to turn out badly, according to Voorhoeve.²²⁵⁵

Couzy was indeed not often found at the Defence Crisis Management Centre during those days. He generally sent his deputy, Van Baal. Neither did he visit RNLA Crisis Staff much, though he was kept informed by telephone of important developments. In his memoirs, Couzy indicated that he did not like to be in the way of the staff on duty, and that it was impossible for him to influence the situation.²²⁵⁶ Voorhoeve participated in the debate on the shopfloor through his presence at the Defence Crisis Management Centre, in contrast to Couzy; the latter hardly ever did this, and was merely kept informed. Even though Couzy could not make decisions, his conduct could create distance to those who had to make decisions. On the other hand, the Minister knew himself to be surrounded by his direct advisers, the lines were short and decisions could be arrived at quickly when the situation hotted up.

The question remains whether the political authorities should have gotten involved in discussions at the Defence Crisis Management Centre as happened here. The question was prompted by ex-Minister of Defence Ter Beek, amongst others. The latter said that he would not have done so in his place.²²⁵⁷ But this is an individual consideration: elements such as commitment, solidarity and a feeling of responsibility may also play a role, including for members of the government other than those directly involved.

5. Calling a halt to further air support on 11 July

One of the few examples where The Hague concerned itself with the operational execution of the assignment in Bosnia related to the attempt to halt Close Air Support, when the Bosnian Serbs threatened to kill the Dutch military hostages if air support continued. This topic is dealt with in detail in this section. We will look at the extent to which the Dutch attempt to intervene actually had any effect, and also how the UN tried to cash in on this.

Remarks made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN, Akashi, do not indicate clearly why air support was cancelled. Akashi said in a meeting in Zagreb on 12 July, which Janvier also attended, that the Dutch Minister of Defence had called him the previous day. He said that Voorhoeve had requested the air actions be cancelled, due to the threats against his troops. Akashi said that he therefore had no choice in this respect but he did accept responsibility for the decision. Akashi also reported the request by Voorhoeve during a TV interview that day. He did add then that it had also been impossible to continue air support for another reason: Dutchbat and the VRS were too close together, according to him.²²⁵⁸ Akashi mentioned to SACEUR Joulwan later in July that he would have been prepared to continue deploying air power, if the Dutch Minister of Defence had not stepped in.²²⁵⁹ On the following day,²²⁶⁰ Akashi also remarked that air support had been discontinued at the

²²⁵⁵ Interview J.J.C Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.

²²⁵⁶ Interview M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00; Couzy, *Mijn jaren als bevelhebber*, p. 161-2.

²²⁵⁷ Interview A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

²²⁵⁸ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury diary, SRSG's briefing 12/07/95.

²²⁵⁹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 22/07/95, No. Z-1229.

²²⁶⁰ The first discussion dated from 18 July, the second from 19 July. The report of the interview with Joulwan was therefore compiled at a later stage.

request of Voorhoeve at a meeting with the North Atlantic Council.²²⁶¹ Akashi stuck to this reading in his interview with the NIOD in 1999; at the time he had cancelled a new wave of Close Air Support following a telephone call by Voorhoeve. The telephone call had been the deciding factor for him.²²⁶² Boutros-Ghali shared the criticism of Akashi. As soon as Voorhoeve heard that an air campaign had started, he immediately rang to say that the Dutch troops were too close to the Bosnian Serb infantry and that their lives would be in danger during an air campaign. Akashi then had no other choice than to postpone the air campaign, according to Boutros-Ghali in his memoirs.²²⁶³

So Akashi gave a different representation of the state of affairs shortly after 11 July than he did after a longer period had passed. Shortly after 11 July he accepted responsibility for the decision to suspend and at that time he was not yet hiding behind Voorhoeve. He reported to New York that ‘Admiral Smith has agreed to our request, proposed by the Netherlands Minister of Defence to the SRSG, to suspend air presence and Close Air Support missions over Srebrenica. It is our view that they would endanger the civilian population and our own personnel who are now intermixed with Serb forces.’²²⁶⁴ Janvier also confirmed the postponement of Close Air Support in a letter to Admiral Leighton Smith, giving the following reason: ‘the extreme confusion on the ground in the Srebrenica area and especially the current BSA [VRS] threat to the thousands of Bosnian refugees in the northern part of the area, as well as the UNPROFOR forces’. Janvier himself did not refer to any political reasons for the decision and did not mention the intervention on the part of Voorhoeve.²²⁶⁵

Janvier also offered different readings for the reasons for cancelling air support. During the meeting with Akashi on 12 July Janvier only said that there had been sound military arguments in favour of cancelling Close Air Support. The troops had indeed been too close together to continue air support, according to Janvier.²²⁶⁶ But on the night before Janvier had said to Van den Breemen, the visiting Chief of Defence Staff, that he himself had decided to cancel the second wave of air support following the threat by the VRS to kill the population and the hostages.²²⁶⁷ According to Colonel De Jonge, this Bosnian Serbian threat only played a limited role in the decision-making process on calling a halt to Close Air Support within UNPF headquarters, as the respective information did not arrive at Zagreb until later.²²⁶⁸ In this sense, the call by Voorhoeve to Akashi met the objective Voorhoeve had intended: to pass on the information more quickly than was possible via Dutchbat and the UN chain of command.²²⁶⁹

Kok, Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve were present at the Defence Crisis Management Centre on the afternoon of 11 July, together with a number of civil servants, when the news arrived that the Dutch military hostages would be killed if the third wave of air support were to take place. This message from Brantz in Tuzla was received at 16.03 hours by the head of the Defence Crisis Management Centre, Commander P.P. Metzelaar.²²⁷⁰ The message had arrived at Dutchbat at 15.50 hours, i.e. more than one hour after the first wave of Close Air Support had taken place and during which bombs had been dropped (no bombs had been dropped during the second wave).²²⁷¹

²²⁶¹ DCBC, 925. Code Feith NAVO 1097, 19/07/95, Conf.

²²⁶² Interview Yasushi Akashi, 25/11/99.

²²⁶³ Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, p. 238.

²²⁶⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1136.

²²⁶⁵ DCBC, 664. Letter Lt Gen B. Janvier to Admiral L. Smith, 11/07/95.

²²⁶⁶ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury diary, SRSG's briefing 12/07/95.

²²⁶⁷ SMG 1004/85. Brief report on the meeting between CDS and PBLs at FC UNPF (also present COS UNPF), 11/07/95.

²²⁶⁸ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

²²⁶⁹ Deputy Force Commander Ashton received a telephone call from Deputy SACEUR from NATO headquarters at Mons, after Janvier had left the Situation Center. This time it was Paris [sic] which asked to suspend the Close Air Support as the risk faced by the troops was too great. The report could not be verified. There are no indications that this has been the subject of an approach by The Hague to Mons. (Diary notes by Major David Last; interview 05/07/00).

²²⁷⁰ DCBC, 1975. See note on Code Biegan 382, 1/06/96.

²²⁷¹ NIOD, Coll. Karremans No. TK195118. ‘Kort overzicht van de gebeurtenissen van de afgelopen periode’ compiled by Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, 17/07/95.

Brantz also reported from Tuzla that Mladic threatened to bomb the town of Srebrenica and the Potocari compound in response to the air support, as well as kill the Dutch military hostages. It was not known at that time whether the UN or NATO was aware of this threat.²²⁷² Alarming as this report was, it was surpassed by another report. The B Company compound was said to have fallen in the hands of the VRS and the B Company commander had allegedly been taken prisoner. The first was correct and the latter was not but it did give rise to confusion. A briefing at the Pentagon on 11 July even mentioned that a Dutch commander had surrendered to the Bosnian Serbs in order to ensure the release of his troops, 'and that did, in fact, happen'.²²⁷³

Minister and chief of defence staff start ringing round to halt air support

Once Metzelaar, the head of the Defence Crisis Management Centre, had passed on the message, the conclusion of the ministers after a few minutes of discussion was that air support had to be cancelled immediately. The meeting was interrupted to allow Voorhoeve to call the UNPF authorities. In the words of spokesman Bert Kreemers: 'following some discussion, Voorhoeve calm, Kok quiet, the members of the government agreed the allocation of tasks. Voorhoeve would ring Akashi; Kok would ring Leighton Smith if necessary. Wim Kok's face was ashen.'²²⁷⁴

Before he began to telephone, Hilderink, who was responsible for the day-to-day running of the Defence Crisis Management Centre, had appealed to Prime Minister Kok. He asked Kok to telephone personally, should Hilderink not be able to reach the NATO authorities. The Prime Minister consented but it proved unnecessary. Hilderink called the Dutch representatives in Naples and Vicenza (respectively Colonel J. Beks and Colonel P.H. Koopmans) with the message to report matters to the NATO commanders. Hilderink did not ring NATO in Brussels, as it would probably be too late to pass on the message via this route.²²⁷⁵

In order to have air support cancelled, the commodore present at the meeting also used the argument that the enclave had already fallen, so that there was no longer a military reason for action.²²⁷⁶ Voorhoeve said later he would also have decided to cancel air support if he had been on his own in the bunker, and that for that reason Kok and Van Mierlo need not be held co-responsible. It was the only sensible course of action according to him. To continue would mean incurring a large and pointless risk.

Not knowing whether Zagreb also wanted to cancel air support, Voorhoeve went to the room at the Defence Crisis Management Centre where the telephones were and also began to telephone. He first rang Akashi, to say that it made no sense to continue with the air campaign. When Voorhoeve rang Akashi, Akashi told him to stay on the line, as he was talking to Milosevic on another line. After Akashi had spoken to Janvier he returned to Voorhoeve and said that Janvier was not fully in agreement that a third wave of aircraft for Close Air Support should not take place. Nevertheless, Voorhoeve was told that the third wave of attack would be stopped if there were time.

Voorhoeve then wondered whether the UN would be quick enough to immediately ring NATO. To be on the safe side he decided to do this himself, and explain what he had discussed with Akashi. Voorhoeve first tried to reach the permanent representative at NATO in Brussels, Ambassador Veenendaal, who was not at his post. Voorhoeve got his deputy, Feith, on the line. The minister told of the Bosnian Serb threat and asked Feith to pass on to Secretary-General Claes that he advised to suspend air support as the enclave had already fallen and air support made therefore no longer any

²²⁷² NIOD, Coll. Hilderink. Memo 'Besluitvorming Defence Crisis Management Centre', undated [1997].

²²⁷³ Background Briefing U.S. Department of Defense, 11/07/95, http://www.defenselink.mil:80/news/Jul1995/x071195_xback711.html, consulted 06/05/00.

²²⁷⁴ Manuscript Bert Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan*, p. 68.

²²⁷⁵ NIOD, Coll. Hilderink. Memo 'Besluitvorming Defence Crisis Management Centre', undated [1997]; Interview C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

²²⁷⁶ Objectivized summary for the NIOD investigation of the Ministerial Council meeting held on 11/07/95.

sense from a military point of view.²²⁷⁷ Feith did indeed ring Claes but he was told that NATO wanted to leave any suspension of an air campaign up to the UN, for political reasons.²²⁷⁸

Voorhoeve then also spoke to Colonel Koopmans, who was the Dutch representative in Vicenza at the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC), of the Fifth Allied Tactical Airforce stationed there. It was more or less coincidence that Voorhoeve spoke to Koopmans there. Hilderink had first spoken with Koopmans. Hilderink said he was well aware as to how the NATO command system functioned, and that a telephone call was insufficient authorisation to suspend an operation such as this but that he rang to say that this should happen anyway. Beks (in Naples) as well as Koopmans had indeed already indicated that a telephone call was inadequate. But according to Hilderink the idea was to inform NATO as soon as possible, and neither of the Dutch colonels were indeed aware of the threat on the part of the Bosnian Serbs.

Koopmans had called the Defence Crisis Management Centre at 16.25 hours with the message that a fax with the latest news from Vicenza was on the way. When Koopmans finished speaking, Hilderink asked Voorhoeve: 'Minister, do you want to have a word?' Voorhoeve then passed on the same message to Koopmans, which Hilderink had passed on earlier: air support had to be suspended.²²⁷⁹ Koopmans later commented that Voorhoeve had told him that he had to suspend air support immediately because his people were at risk. Koopmans was not authorized to do so; he said he could only pass on the request, and subsequently did so to Major General Hal Hornburg, the CAOC director. Hornburg had responded with 'He may be right but he has to go other channels. Sorry, I have no authority to do so. He has to go to his political friends.' This message was then relayed to Voorhoeve. Koopmans did understand the action of the Minister but nevertheless considered it incorrect. Senior national representatives were stationed at NATO headquarters to ensure that Dutch policy was carried out correctly, not to carry out orders from ministers, according to Koopmans. Voorhoeve later countered this with 'if required I will transgress my authority as much as necessary. If I can avoid a disaster but have no authority, then blow the authority.'²²⁸⁰

These were not the only actions undertaken from the Defence Crisis Management Centre to have air support suspended. Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen called the military advisor of the Secretary-General of the UN, General Van Kappen in New York, stating that the wave of Close Air Support had to be stopped. Van Kappen responded by saying that this was the wrong route to take: this concerned operational decisions, which were not made in New York, something which Van den Breemen knew fully well according to Van Kappen. But Van Kappen was able to report that Janvier in his capacity as operational commander had also already reached the conclusion that continuation of the Close Air Support no longer made sense: the conditions for Close Air Support were no longer met and it was now pointless as there was no longer a boundary between the UN troops and the enemy. Moreover, the refugees were caught in the middle.²²⁸¹

Van den Breemen had also wanted to speak with Admiral Leighton Smith. The latter was at sea onboard the USS LaSalle. At the time Voorhoeve rang Akashi, Commander Metzelaar was busy passing the information on to Smith. The request seemed to have been passed on to Admiral Smith at 17.15 hours.

²²⁷⁷ Interview J.J.C Voorhoeve, 15/04/97; DCBC, 528. Daily reports DCBC, 11/07/95, 16.03 hrs.

²²⁷⁸ SMG 1004/48, Code Feith NATO 1036, 11/07/95.

²²⁷⁹ DCBC, 652. Hand-written 'logboek DCBC'; DCBC, 528. Daily reports DCBC, 11/07/95, 16.25 hrs; interviews C.G.J. Hilderink and J.J.C Voorhoeve, 15/04/97. Voorhoeve noted in his diary that Akashi told him immediately to ask Janvier to do so. This agrees with the notes in the 'logboek DCBC'.

²²⁸⁰ Lutgert and de Winter, *Check the Horizon*, pp. 411-412. The interview with Koopmans dated from 26/03/96. According to Koopmans, Voorhoeve should have approached SACEUR. This would not have been correct as General Joulwan was not a keyholder for air support to the UN. Koopmans said in an earlier interview with Frank Westerman (*NRC Handelsblad* 11/11/95) that he had referred Voorhoeve to AFSOUTH. This would seem a more correct representation. As Westerman wrote, Voorhoeve had shouted: 'stop, stop, stop'.

²²⁸¹ Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

A minute later, De Jonge reported from Zagreb that the third wave of Close Air Support had indeed been cancelled. According to Voorhoeve, the military within the Defence Crisis Management Centre had fully agreed with his action. Everyone knew that the enclave had already fallen and that air support could no longer make any difference. The pointless continuation would only have incurred risk, and human lives could have been lost.²²⁸²

Air support cancelled at the request of the Netherlands?

When the message from Voorhoeve that the hostages would be killed if Close Air Support was to continue arrived in Zagreb, the decision to suspend had already been made, according to UNPF Chief of Staff Kolsteren. In that sense he considered intervention on the part of Voorhoeve in fact not necessary.²²⁸³ An assistant of Akashi also said that Akashi immediately agreed with the request by Voorhoeve not to have any further Close Air Support missions carried out, after Voorhoeve called Akashi. It was a 'convenient excuse' for Akashi, because no more new missions were being prepared. Voorhoeve had not needed to persuade Akashi.²²⁸⁴

Deputy Force Commander Ashton also said that Akashi had decided to deploy no more Close Air Support even before Voorhoeve rang.²²⁸⁵ According to De Jonge in Zagreb, it was Sarajevo, which had applied the brakes. At the same time that Kolsteren had been called away for a telephone call from The Hague, De Jonge heard that the NATO liaison officer in Zagreb consulted with his counterpart in Sarajevo. De Jonge understood this to mean that the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo, following consultation with the staff there, had already called off air support on military grounds. This was rendered unnecessary because the Bosnian Serbs were outflanking the blocking position and as a result VRS troops, refugees and Dutchbat troops got mixed up. Sarajevo reported it wished to suspend Close Air Support for this reason. At approximately the same time Kolsteren, rather agitated, re-entered and said: 'The Dutch Government wants the action to be suspended.' This was no longer necessary, as the action had already been suspended for military reasons, according to De Jonge.²²⁸⁶

De Ruiter, who was in Sarajevo, underwrote De Jong's view. The suspension of the third wave of Close Air Support was not the result of the combined action of Voorhoeve and Akashi. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command received the news that Srebrenica had fallen and that Dutchbat and the refugees were withdrawing to the UN compound in Potocari from Dutchbat, the British JCOs in the enclave as well as from the VRS.²²⁸⁷ Lieutenant Colonel Milenko Indic, the VRS liaison officer, had also informed UNPROFOR headquarters at 16.35 hours of the threat to shell Dutchbat and the refugees if the UN did not suspend the air campaign. The VRS threat seemed serious, not least because it was reinforced by two mortar grenades, which had landed some fifteen minutes before on the UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo. Sarajevo had already doubted whether the second wave of aircraft should have started the attack. The consideration to take action and to direct the NATO planes to an area over Tuzla was already based on the fact that even air support could no longer restore the former situation in the enclave; refugees and Dutchbat also ran a large and disproportionate risk of retaliation.

Nicolai had informed Karremans that air support remained available. Karremans had told Nicolai he had wanted to surrender to the VRS but received the reply from him that surrender was out of the question which was another reason why air support remained available.

Voorhoeve made his request to Akashi at such a time (16.50 hours) that it indeed had no longer any effect. The decision to suspend the attack had already been taken in Sarajevo. The Ruiter also

²²⁸² DCBC, 652. Hand-written 'logboek DCBC'; interview J.J.C Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.

²²⁸³ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

²²⁸⁴ Confidential interview (84).

²²⁸⁵ Interview Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

²²⁸⁶ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

²²⁸⁷ SMG, 1004. Report of a telephone conversation [SMG] with Lt Col A. de Ruiter (BH-Command), 03/08/95.

deduced this from a conversation held later that afternoon between Janvier and Deputy UNPROFOR Commander Gobilliard. When Janvier referred to the contact between Voorhoeve and Akashi, Gobilliard also spoke of a decision already made. In the opinion of De Ruiter, Sarajevo had not understood that the Dutch Minister had also made a similar attempt until hours after the event.²²⁸⁸

General Nicolai called Voorhoeve to tell him that it was decided in Sarajevo to halt further use of air power. Voorhoeve was pleased with this. Nicolai said that internal deliberations amongst the staff had led to the conclusion to suspend air support. This had been done in consultation with Karremans, after the Bosnian Serbs had threatened to shell the Potocari compound. The reason was that nearly the entire enclave had been captured by then. Nicolai set the time of that decision at approximately 16.30 hours.²²⁸⁹

Nicolai's telephone call to Voorhoeve took place not long after Voorhoeve had called Akashi. It initially caused Voorhoeve to think that he had called a halt to the air campaign. He also said during the press conference following the fall of the enclave that the third wave of air support had been halted at the request of the Netherlands. It was only during subsequent days that he discovered that others had beaten him to it.²²⁹⁰ In a letter to Parliament, Voorhoeve neatly circumvented the issue: he wrote that the Dutch Government had simultaneously drawn the same conclusion as UNPROFOR.²²⁹¹ There was no mention of the fact that the Dutch Government had also been active in ending air support in an earlier letter by Voorhoeve to Parliament.²²⁹²

There seems to have been more involved than just 'calling a halt'. Perusal of the NATO logbooks and the UNPF reports to the UN headquarters Situation Room tells us that there was never any question of calling a halt to the third wave of attack; the only reason that the third wave of attack did not come about was not that it had been called off by Voorhoeve or Zagreb or Sarajevo but that it had been cancelled: the Forward Air Controller (this was raised in the previous chapter; it concerns Windmill 03) was under fire and it was impossible for him to identify the target.²²⁹³ At the time the message from Brantz reached the Defence Crisis Management Centre (16.03 hours), the third wave, comprising American A-10s, had already been flying over the enclave for a period of 15 minutes. The fourth wave, consisting of F-18s, got ready at 16.35 hours to enter the target area. The message that the aircraft would only be allowed to drop their bombs when the Forward Air Controllers requested it did not arrive from Vicenza until 16.58 hours, when the Forward Air Controllers themselves were under fire. In this sense no absolute brake had therefore been applied to Close Air Support. Nor did Akashi mention the suspension of the third wave of Close Air Support in his reports later on during the evening of 11 July. The third wave was aimed at a tank and infantry which besieged one of the Tactical Air Control Parties, 'but no ordnance was dropped'.²²⁹⁴

General Gobilliard had, however, ordered a pause in the attacks to give him the opportunity to consult Pale. Once Commander Kevin Donegan, the NATO liaison officer in Sarajevo, and Squadron Leader Rick Phillips, the Director of the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo, had pointed out to Gobilliard that the Windmill 03 (the commandos' Tactical Air Control Party) was still under fire, Gobilliard countermanded his order for a pause in the attacks. The aircraft left the air space around Srebrenica only when Windmill 03 proved safe and it was established that there would be no more

²²⁸⁸ NIOD, Coll De Ruiter. Letters Lt Col J.A.C. de Ruiter to Commodore Hilderink, personal, 23/01/97 and 27/01/97; Debriefing statement Lieutenant Colonel J.A.C. Ruiter, 27/09/95 with addition 22/01/02; DCBC, 528. Daily reports DCBC, 11/07/95, 16.50 hrs.

²²⁸⁹ DCBC, scattered archivalia. Letter Commander 1 Division '7 December', 23/01/97, appendix to memo S97/061/1487, 23/01/98.

²²⁹⁰ Interview J.J.C Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.

²²⁹¹ TK, 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 129 (30/10/95).

²²⁹² TK, 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 115 (28/08/95).

²²⁹³ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol. I, Resupply Eastern Encl 17/04/95 –11/07/95. Fax UNPF HQ Zagreb G3 Land Ops to UNNY Sitroom, Sincerp, 111930Bjul95.

²²⁹⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1138; DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 11/07/95.

requests for Close Air Support from the enclave.²²⁹⁵ This was at the request of Dutchbat. By then it was 17.05 hours.

The aircraft in the end only returned to their base at 18.30 hours, after Janvier had asked to extend their availability for as long as possible. It looked therefore very much as if the call by Voorhoeve was indeed 'a convenient excuse' after the realisation that the enclave was lost.

The affair relating to the calling off of air support gave rise to a sequel in January 1997 due to the publication of the book by Westerman and Rijs, *Het zwartste scenario*. The authors referred to 'secret documents' in their possession in which Akashi said that air support had been ended at the request of the Netherlands. The opening paragraphs to this section refer to the Code Cables from Akashi to New York.

As indicated above, the Dutch intervention ultimately had a negligible effect on the air support operations. The intervention also arrived too late. The NATO aircraft remained in the air space near Srebrenica and it was the conditions locally which led to the fact that no new bombing missions were carried out. In that sense there was no question of calling a halt to Close Air Support. The NATO logbooks and the statements from Forward Air Controllers do not show that those carrying out air support were ordered to suspend further Close Air Support. Aircraft no longer flew in the vicinity of the enclave following a request by Dutchbat, due to the situation around the hostages. The aircraft only left after Dutchbat had confirmed it would no longer request Close Air Support. General Gobilliard even notified the VRS afterwards that although the aircraft no longer occupied air space over Srebrenica, they were still available. The aircraft only ceased to be available after 18.30 hours.²²⁹⁶ There were no longer any consultations with NATO to arrive at a continued presence of aircraft in Bosnian air space after the afternoon flights, in order to continue Close Air Support if necessary.

Janvier also returned to the subject of air support at the end of September 1995, after New York asked Janvier questions on it, in connection with the preparation for the Dutch parliamentary debate on Srebrenica. On that occasion Janvier said of the air support that it had been 'particularly complex'. However, when suitable targets had been identified and the criteria met, Akashi had adopted his recommendation to permit Close Air Support. Janvier did say this time that the NATO missions had flown until the Dutch Minister of Defence had requested suspending them. Janvier once more pointed out that Close Air Support was not a panacea, and that it would not have been able to prevent the fall of the enclave.²²⁹⁷

Janvier repeated that view in November 1995 in the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, when he said that Close Air Support was not a magic wand. Janvier also thought that he did not need to answer for his decisions in his capacity of operational commander. He added that he had not decided on a large-scale deployment of air power because this would inevitably have resulted in the death of dozens of Dutch soldiers. Janvier wondered in this respect what the Dutch Government would have had to say about this. He was of the opinion that the tendency to criticize personnel deployed for peace operations should cease: 'the assassination of UNPROFOR-peacekeepers by words or by bullets must stop', according to Janvier.²²⁹⁸

The conclusion is that Akashi during the short period all this took place could agree with Voorhoeve's request and at the same time see it as a convenient excuse to hide behind, only to subsequently honestly believe in their explanation.

²²⁹⁵ NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. 'sequence of Events CAS Missions Srebrenica. Origin not indicated, probably 5ATAF Cell in Zagreb.

²²⁹⁶ SMG 1007/25. Debriefing Sergeant Major Van Meer, Camp Pleso, 22/07/95; DCBC, 623. AFSOUTH Air Desk Log, 11/07/95, 1630Z; NIOD Coll. De Ruiters. Telephone Conversation General Gobilliard - General Gvero, 11/07/95, 18.10 hrs.

²²⁹⁷ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 27/09/95, 1768.

²²⁹⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05279. Code Feith NAVO 1467, 03/11/95. Janvier made his statements in the presence of Feith.

6. The discussions in Zagreb on 11 July

In addition to the question of how to get Dutchbat out of Srebrenica, the problem posed by the refugees was also one of the main topics under discussion in Zagreb on the evening of the fall. This section offers an impression of the discussions in Zagreb during the evening of 11 July. Please refer to Chapter 9 of this Volume 'The departure of Dutchbat from the enclave' for thoughts on and arrangements for the departure of Dutchbat. The departure and the treatment of the refugees will be discussed in detail in Volume IV chapter 4.

During a meeting with Akashi on 11 July, which started at 18.30 hours, Janvier said that he feared that the end of the 'safe area' concept had begun now that Srebrenica had fallen. He thought that the other two eastern enclaves, Zepa and Gorazde, would follow. This meant that the Bosnian Serbs would have achieved their objectives in relation to the 'map' for the division of Bosnia. The Bosnian Serbs had used the attack by the ABiH on Visnjica as an excuse to overrun the enclave, according to Janvier. Nevertheless, an attempt had been made with 'firm intentions' to stop the Bosnian Serbs. UNPROFOR 'did battle on the ground' and air support had been deployed to protect the Dutch units. The power ratios had prevented the continuation of the battle after the VRS had threatened to kill the hostages if air support had been continued. Janvier decided to retrieve the authority allotted to Gobilliard, because he had had to hear from Gobilliard that Sarajevo had advised to suspend air support. Janvier also pointed out that he had issued an order to leave the OPs at the time he initiated Close Air Support. He did not want to risk the ABiH blocking the withdrawal, as had happened at OP-F, which had cost Dutchbat a fatality.²²⁹⁹

Akashi wondered what had happened to the ABiH. Janvier said to have asked the same question and to have understood that the ABiH troops had 'disappeared'. Janvier thought therefore that public statements should indicate that the ABiH had been not very active in defending the Safe Area. Akashi offered a short comment on this: if that would be stated, then Janvier's statement in May 1995 before the Security Council would be recalled (see Chapter 1): Janvier had said there that UNPROFOR could be withdrawn from the eastern enclaves. According to Akashi this would be accompanied by the comment that Janvier had been wrong, because the ABiH would clearly not have been strong enough to defend the enclave by itself. Deputy Force Commander Ashton in turn countered this by saying that the converse was also possible, namely that the ABiH had chosen not to defend itself.²³⁰⁰

The fundamental question for Janvier remains as to why the ABiH had not deployed the weapons available against VRS. Janvier estimated that 1500-1800 VRS troops had been involved in the attack, as well as a squadron (four or five) tanks. He wondered why the ABiH had not been able to deal with a concentration of VRS troops, and what the ABiH had in fact done to assist in the defence of Srebrenica. It was clear to Janvier that the ABiH had shown little zest for battle. Janvier also considered that Mladic would begin to demand that the ABiH lay down its weapons. Zagreb, however, did not have any information as to where the ABiH was in the area around Srebrenica.²³⁰¹

Akashi then raised the possibility of allowing the refugees from Srebrenica to go to Serbia, in view of the closeness of the border. But he also realized that this would mean crossing the territory of the Republika Srpska, and that the population would want to go to Tuzla. The local UNHCR staff in Srebrenica had already made it clear that everybody preferred to leave the enclave. An evacuation was mainly a mass logistical operation, in Akashi's opinion, for which the Bosnian Government would have to give its consent.

Akashi thought that a departure of the population would have to be prepared along the UNPROFOR as well as the UNHCR line. UNHCR was preferred, as they had no part in the violence

²²⁹⁹ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury diary, SRSG's meeting 11/07/95.

²³⁰⁰ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury diary, SRSG's meeting 11/07/95.

²³⁰¹ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Note Janvier to Only Cable Annan to Akasi, 11/07/95, No. 2280; NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury diary. SRSG's briefing 12/07/95.

exercised by UNPROFOR in Srebrenica. UNHCR representative A.W. Bijleveld immediately pointed out during the meeting that the VRS would probably not allow the men to leave the enclave, and that this could give rise to problems. The staff in Zagreb also predicted that the two parties would use tactics to humiliate each other. An international presence remained desirable for that reason. Bijleveld therefore wanted to keep Dutchbat in the enclave until the logistical operation to move the refugees out of Srebrenica had started to take shape. In any case, UNPROFOR troops were required at locations where refugees assembled before departure. The VRS would there try to separate the men from the women and children, according to Bijleveld, unless the VRS was not able to keep control of so many men. Escorts for the aid convoys were also required but the warring factions might well object to these also.²³⁰²

Akashi also remarked to his staff during this meeting that Boutros-Ghali wanted to make political use of the fall of Srebrenica. The UN Secretary-General now wanted to achieve the 'rationalisation and regrouping' of UNPROFOR, which he desired. In practice, this meant a withdrawal by UNPROFOR from the three eastern enclaves. UNPROFOR would in that case be faced with a 'major media offensive' feared Akashi, because leaving Zepa and Gorazde could at that time not be sold as a policy in any case. Janvier's experience was no different, because his suggestion to leave the eastern enclaves and to concentrate UNPROFOR in Central Bosnia had led to a storm of protests in the Security Council as recently as May. But Janvier was in favour of maintaining a symbolic UN presence. This begged the question as to how the Security Council would have to be involved in instructions on a withdrawal from the Safe Areas. Admiral Leighton Smith suggested to Akashi to have New York consider asking the Security Council for support from NATO for the withdrawal, but Smith did not enter into details.

The discussion foundered on the urgency of the problem to first get the refugees out of Srebrenica, even though it was possible that similar problems would arise in Zepa and Gorazde during the next few days. But Akashi did not just want to brush aside the thoughts of Boutros-Ghali: they had to be considered. Others however did push aside his thoughts: a separation of men and women under the eyes of UNPROFOR would be a 'disgrace of highest order', and would capture the full attention of the media. It was decided to go down two routes: UNHCR would have to establish a plan for the evacuation of the population and Zagreb would have to inform New York of the problems regarding the enclaves. The estimation during this meeting was that the VRS would not be able to manage 20,000 refugees; the Bosnian Serbs would want to be rid of them. This would be the start of a forced deportation and UNPROFOR would be accused of helping it along. Akashi was not overly pessimistic: 80 percent of the population of Srebrenica were already refugees.

Another question Janvier asked himself was who would force the Bosnian Serbs to leave Srebrenica again and what means would be deployed.²³⁰³ This question did not yet lead to a discussion on 11 July but it did so the next day in the Security Council. Please refer to Chapter 8: 'Plans for the recapture of Srebrenica' for this discussion.

The UN headquarters in Zagreb and Sarajevo had little time for reflection and an analysis of the reasons for the attack on Srebrenica, due to the plans to recapture Srebrenica and especially due to the acute problems which would arise in respect of the relief of the refugees from Srebrenica on arrival in Tuzla. Moreover, it was not known in Sarajevo and Zagreb where the men were who had left Srebrenica, and there was a risk of an attack on Zepa.

Akashi did look for an explanation for the attack on 12 July but he had to admit that this was speculation. Akashi also complained that there had been no overview of the VRS military activities, and that he had not had any intelligence at his disposal, which might have indicated an attack. The most probable reason for the VRS campaign seemed to Akashi to be that the Bosnian Serbs wanted to show off their military force after the Croat attacks on the Republika Srpska Krajina, and the series of attacks

²³⁰² NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury diary, SRSG's meeting 11/07/95.

²³⁰³ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury diary, SRSG's meeting 11/07/95.

which the Bosnian Muslims had undertaken since March. In addition, the Bosnian Serbs could have intended to protect their own terrain against raids by the ABiH, and in order to gain access to the bauxite mines and roads in Srebrenica, according to Akashi; this would make securing their own terrain easier, and free up scarce troops. Akashi also saw certain proof in the attack that the Bosnian Serbs were prepared to continue their military operations against the will of the international community. A last possibility suggested by Akashi was that the Bosnian Serbs had wanted to deliberately change the map and demography of the area in order to force negotiations on the peace process in a direction favoured by them.²³⁰⁴

7. Prior knowledge of the attack in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

There was no official response on the capture of Srebrenica from Belgrade. The under Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cicanovic, said only that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (formed by Serbia and Montenegro) opposed the use of violence: it was counterproductive and did not lead to a political solution. Belgrade opposed the ABiH attacks from the Srebrenica Safe Area as well as the attack on it by the Bosnian Serbs. But even though Belgrade did not support the Bosnian Serb regime in Pale along official channels, the media and the population in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were certainly on the side of the Bosnian Serbs, according to Akashi's representative in Belgrade, Miakotnykh. Belgrade was also of the opinion that the logic of the developments pointed with a high degree of probability in the direction of a continuation of the attack on Zepa and Gorazde.²³⁰⁵

The fact that there was no response from Belgrade begs the question as to whether Belgrade was aware of the intended attack on Srebrenica. This question must be answered in the affirmative. There were VJ officers at the VRS headquarters in Han Pijesak.²³⁰⁶ The Dutch Military Intelligence Service also concluded from confidential conversations some months after the fall that the decision to attack Srebrenica was coordinated with Perisic and Milosevic but made without consultation with Karadzic.²³⁰⁷ Another western intelligence service was also of the opinion that the VRS operations in July 1995 had been coordinated with Belgrade. This service was of the opinion that not only military but also political coordination had been involved. The latter fitted in with the thought of the idea 'to clean up the map' relating to the peace plans, in which progress of the negotiation process had been caught up.²³⁰⁸ Negotiator Carl Bildt had never been able to establish whether Milosevic had been aware of the attack on Srebrenica. According to Bildt, the VJ military were of the opinion that Milosevic did not know much about military matters and that is why they preferred to keep him out of it.²³⁰⁹ The extensive indictment against the former Yugoslav President Milosevic before the Yugoslav Tribunal offers no clues on this point.²³¹⁰

NIOD interviews showed that it was largely known in the circles around the former Yugoslav President Cosic on 4 July that something was about to happen but there also it was not known exactly what. Sympathising 'political friends' of Cosic had indicated this. In these circles there was a certain fear that it would come to extreme solutions for the Bosnian conflict. If the VRS advanced to Srebrenica then they would have to attack Dutchbat and this could result in intervention on the part of NATO. The government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia received, however, no warning from these circles lest they would be accused of being foreign agents. Enquiries at the *Republika Srpska* office in Belgrade indeed showed that they were not aware of anything in this respect. The circle around Cosic

²³⁰⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 12/07/95, No. Z-1147.

²³⁰⁵ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87717, File 7-8-1, 11/07/95 – 31/07/95. Fax I. Miakotnykh, D-SRSG/CAC to FRY to Y. Akashi, M. Moussali, 12/07/95.

²³⁰⁶ Confidential interview (2).

²³⁰⁷ MID/CO. Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische Federatie, 47/95, closed 141200B Sep 1995.

²³⁰⁸ Confidential interview (52).

²³⁰⁹ Interview Carl Bildt, 13/12/00.

²³¹⁰ ICTY, Indictment No. IT-01-51-I, 22/11/01.

did not renew their activities until after the fall of Srebrenica;²³¹¹ we will return to this in Part IV, Chapter 1 the Journey from Srebrenica to Tuzla in Volume IV. The question regarding prior knowledge of the attack will be dealt with in detail in the appendix on intelligence to this report.

8. Retrospective accounts relating to air support: Zagreb, The Hague, Mons, Naples, Washington etc.

The provision of air support to Dutchbat was one of the main issues under discussion after the fall of the enclave and also before it, together with the deportation of the population and the fate of the men fleeing from Srebrenica. In Chapter 3 called 'No air actions upon release of the hostages: a deal between Janvier and Mladic?' we already attended to the question whether bargains had been struck at the time in relation to the release of UN personnel taken hostage, in exchange for a decision no longer to proceed with air campaigns against the Bosnian Serbs, or whether Dutchbat was denied air support because the UN top wanted rid of the enclaves was already attended to. Our conclusion was that a direct link between these issues and the fall of Srebrenica could not be established.

A further discussion broke out on the question whether air support had been too little and too late. The UN and NATO each had their own ideas on this.

An entirely different question relates to the issue whence the belief on the part of Dutchbat regarding the arrival of air strikes in the early morning of 11 July originated. This section starts by discussing the various interpretations of the air support at Srebrenica. We will then try and disentangle the views held by the various headquarters and players in respect of the deployment of air power on 11 July 1995.

General Janvier told visiting General Van den Breemen on the eve of the fall that he thought that UNPF had done what had to be done. Janvier was of the opinion that Mladic had miscalculated, as public opinion in the West would now turn acutely against the Bosnian Serbs. Janvier was right as far as the latter was concerned but that was a matter for later. By no means everyone agreed with Janvier's verdict that UNPF had done enough.²³¹²

His stand also led to the question as to how effective the deployment of air power had been at Srebrenica. Many different views and opinions prevailed, some of which had been voiced even before the fall of Srebrenica. General Smith in Sarajevo, for instance, did not believe that air power could protect the population in the Safe Areas.²³¹³ And Admiral Smith in Naples had explained earlier to the British Foreign Secretary Hurd that it was a myth that the enclaves could be defended and protected from the air. He had pointed out that the VRS conducted most attacks with mortars which could be moved, placed in position or hidden by a handful of persons within the space of a few minutes. Air support could achieve nothing in this kind of situation.²³¹⁴

Air support came also up in a discussion on 10 July in the Prime Minister's Office at which Prime Minister Kok, Ministers Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve, Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen and the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff Operations Hilderink were present. During the discussion it was also mentioned that 'massive CAS' could not deliver the desired solution, namely retention of the enclave, from a military point of view, not least because the VRS might deploy its artillery in a reprisal.²³¹⁵

Only the most senior military NATO authority in Europe, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Joulwan, struck a completely different note. He thought that air power might have been able to save Srebrenica but only if Srebrenica had been declared a Heavy Weapon

²³¹¹ Interview Vladimir Matovic, 16/12/99.

²³¹² SMG 1004/85. Brief report of the meeting between CDS and PBLs at FC UNPF (also present: COS UNPF) 11/07/95.

²³¹³ NIOD, Coll. Smith. BHC Situation Report signed Lt Gen R.A. Smith, 05/04/95.

²³¹⁴ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

²³¹⁵ ABZ, DAV 999.241. Memo DAV to Archive, 12/07/95, No. DAV/MS-51/95.

Exclusion Zone as early as 1994.²³¹⁶ This would have given NATO the opportunity to undertake air strikes against heavy weapons within a radius of 20 kilometres around the boundary of the Safe Area. Yet as indicated in Chapter 1 of this volume, this did not happen due to the lack of aircraft and airfields in Italy. Joulwan's view in hindsight is, however, completely at odds with an earlier statement made during an informal meeting of the North Atlantic Council on 18 April 1994. He stated there that air power could not restore the original situation in Gorazde, where the Bosnian Serbs had started to advance, neither could it protect the other Safe Areas.²³¹⁷ There were also reservations in the Netherlands as to what air power would be able to achieve. According to Minister Voorhoeve, the idea, which arose later amongst commentators, that air support could have saved the enclave, had never existed within the Ministry of Defence.²³¹⁸

The same view was prevalent during an informal 'brainstorm' at the North Atlantic Council on 14 July, in which the chairman of the Military Committee, British Field Marshal Sir Richard Vincent and SACEUR Joulwan also took part. Close Air Support merely resulted in a rather limited outcome and was in most cases not able to turn events around, according to Vincent. Joulwan emphasized that the UN authorisation for the deployment of air support in Srebrenica had come extremely late, and that Janvier and Akashi had attached the strict condition that action could only be taken against 'a smoking gun'. This even led to a discussion started by Hunter, the American Permanent Representative at NATO, whether NATO could also impose demands and decline UN requests for air support. Otherwise NATO ran the risk of cutting a poor figure, or, in the words of Vincent who agreed with Hunter on this point: 'is it worth it?'

Concern for the credibility of NATO could also be heard in the questions asked by Dutch Deputy Permanent Representative Feith. The latter wondered whether more 'high tech' ammunition had not been available instead of the 500 pounds bombs. The perception of air power amongst the general public happened to be based on CNN images from the Gulf war. He received the answer that the terrain and the weather conditions in Bosnia were quite different.²³¹⁹

Air support: too little, too late?

The tardy decision to deploy air support led in retrospect to a point in the debate. Akashi feared on the day after the fall of Srebrenica that criticism would be forthcoming on the deployment of Close Air Support, in the sense that it had been 'too late and too little'.²³²⁰ The staff in Zagreb shared this concern of Akashi's, not least because Karremans had asked repeatedly for Close Air Support, and this had been declined.²³²¹ Haris Siladjic, the Bosnian Premier, had already made some critical comments along these lines on 11 July. Akashi's advisor John Almstrom thought that there had been no suitable targets to attack, apart from the two VRS tanks. The deployment of air power could not have been effective against the VRS infantry. The artillery positions, which Karremans would have liked to tackle, were not mentioned in Zagreb. NATO liaison officer Air Commodore Rudd stated that Admiral Smith wished to avoid a debate on the subject of air support.²³²²

The question what could have been achieved in deploying air support against the VRS did result in a heated argument between Admiral Smith and Janvier. Janvier had said to Smith that there were no targets on the ground. Smith, on the other hand, was of the opinion that there had certainly been such targets but that Zagreb had merely been too late in summoning air support. If they had done this earlier, there would have been better targets for NATO, according to Smith. Janvier had shown

²³¹⁶ Interview George Joulwan, 08/06/00.

²³¹⁷ Confidential information (22).

²³¹⁸ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97.

²³¹⁹ DCBC, 835. Code Feith NATO 1060, 14/07/95, Confidential.

²³²⁰ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2, SRSG Meeting, May-Oct 95. Senior Staff Meeting, 12/07/95.

²³²¹ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury SRSGs briefing 12/07/95.

²³²² NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, SRSGs briefing 12/07/95.

surprise at this analysis of Smith's and had rejected it.²³²³ General Joulwan explained the controversy between these two officers by saying that their assessment of the military situation differed, and also pointed out the wish on the part of Admiral Smith to show his teeth at an early stage.²³²⁴ Leighton Smith did not care to speculate on the question whether the fall of Srebrenica could have been prevented in this way.²³²⁵

Admiral Smith had expressed himself more cautiously on this point during an interview than he had to Janvier: 'we may have been involved in this a bit late in that the Bosnian Serb forces were so close and the balance was pretty much tipped in favour of them at the point we were called in'.²³²⁶ Smith proclaimed that he would take the stand that air support had indeed been too late if it was to come to a debate on air support. He would then say that there had been targets and that earlier deployment might have yielded results. Janvier did not understand what Smith based his statement on and completely disagreed with him. Janvier added in his defence that there had been sound military reasons, on the basis of which Close Air Support had been suspended; according to Janvier, the troops had been so close to each other that it was impossible to proceed with air support.²³²⁷

The difference in views between Janvier and Admiral Smith was also evident from the fact that Janvier called the air support provided, the first example of 'real' Close Air Support on the day after the fall. Like Smith, he declared not to want any discussions on the question whether earlier and tougher action should have been taken. The focus now should be primarily on aid to refugees, and on assisting the battalion commander in his impossible task in Srebrenica.²³²⁸

The discussion was given a surprising turn by a French Air Force colonel in Zagreb, who took a stand diametrically opposed to Janvier on 14 July during the daily briefing to Akashi. During the briefing, and in the presence of Janvier, he stated that he did consider that Close Air Support had arrived too late. UNPF should have planned better to avoid situations such as those in Srebrenica. Action was taken merely in response, rather than planned in advance. The Dutchbat Tactical Air Control Party was already under fire when air support was being planned, so it would have come much too late. Deterrence had failed, and too little force had been used.²³²⁹

The discussion on 'too late and too little' did not include the time passed between approval of the request by Janvier and Akashi and the arrival of the aircraft over the enclave. Admiral Smith called the two-hour interval on 10 July 'reasonable'. It should be said that Smith only looked at his own organisation, ignoring the time which had passed between the request from the battalion commander and the approval of the request in Zagreb. As explained in the previous chapter, NATO also made mistakes which resulted in delay,²³³⁰ for instance the flying command post (ABCCC) which had not been put on alert by Vicenza (see the previous chapter).

The view of Admiral Smith that air support had been too little too late continued to exercise the minds in Zagreb. Akashi again wanted to know on 17 July what Admiral Smith thought of Close Air Support at Srebrenica. Deputy Force Commander Ashton (Janvier was on leave) replied that Smith was still disappointed and considered that Close Air Support had come too late. Smith would have wished to be warned in advance, if possible.

Janvier was said to have been told that the aircraft could only take off on the basis of a written request and this point was also raised during the briefing on this subject to Akashi. NATO liaison officer Rudd then pointed out that this was not policy, and practice also had shown differently. Janvier

²³²³ Interview David Last, 05/07/00.

²³²⁴ Interview George Joulwan, 0/06/00.

²³²⁵ *De Volkskrant*, 13/07/95.

²³²⁶ ABC World News Tonight 6:30 pm ET 11/07/95.

²³²⁷ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, SRSGs briefing 12/07/95.

²³²⁸ NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. Diary Kolsteren, 12/07/95.

²³²⁹ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, SRSGs briefing 14/07/95.

²³³⁰ DCBC, 747, Fax NLO AFSOUTH Naples to OCHKKlu and DCBC, 12/07/95 20.10 LT.

had been informed incorrectly by someone, or he had misunderstood. The aircraft had even taken to the air before the Blue Sword Request had been signed.²³³¹

Admiral Smith *did* think that the political will had been lacking to deploy the military power available against the Bosnian Serbs. He was of the opinion that the UN had lacked resolve and consensus on the question as to what to do, resulting in Dutchbat ending up in a situation without clear political leadership. Moreover, the Safe Area concept was not clear-cut for the situation of such an attack and neither had the UN provided clarity.²³³²

The rate of response on the part of the UN had also been too slow. As early as June 1995, Smith had urged Akashi to establish a list of targets in order to cut out a long series of decision-making procedures every time. Akashi had persistently rejected this.²³³³ SACEUR Joulwan also urged the establishment of triggers during the London Conference after the fall of Srebrenica (see Part IV, chapter 9 'The fate of the other eastern enclaves'), and before the North Atlantic Council on 14 July, after which NATO could go into action. Joulwan was afraid that too much time would again be lost otherwise, so that NATO would have no time left to plan measures for, in this case, Gorazde.

Meanwhile, some good intelligence had been obtained on the way VRS had proceeded against the enclaves. This showed that the VRS had very quickly concentrated its troops around Srebrenica 'to support forward elements already in place', and only the front echelon of these was used. This happened again later at Zepa. The detection of such a concentration of troops, and artillery being placed in position, should have been such a trigger. This proved indeed successful in the case of Gorazde. The shelling of the market in Sarajevo later also became such a trigger. NATO had also been able to plan air support at that time. The VRS could have been tackled much earlier in this fashion, according to Joulwan, if only the UN had created the right conditions. Joulwan sighed that he had been trying to establish such a trigger procedure from February 1994 until September 1995 but that the UN had not agreed. So the smoking gun became unfortunately the guiding principle, instead of the trigger principle. In his opinion, UNPROFOR had been occupied too much with the protection of its own troops.²³³⁴

Janvier's view remained unchanged. He repeated during a meeting with the North Atlantic Council on 19 July 1995 that he had gone as far as he could in giving air support at Srebrenica. The Deputy Chairman of the Military Committee, American Vice Admiral Ray, however, rejected Janvier's explanation that the UN had deployed air power to the full. And Akashi's interpretation of the political guidelines had been too limited: because the authorisation was based on 'smoking guns' only, air support had come too late.²³³⁵ Janvier also maintained during a meeting with General Joulwan on 18 July that the air support provided was 'at precisely the correct time and place'.²³³⁶ Joulwan later commented before the NIOD that Janvier himself thought that he had a thorough understanding of the meaning of air support but that this had not proved the case in practice. In the same way that Admiral Smith doubted the timeliness of the air support, Joulwan also thought that three days had been wasted during the run-up to the fall of Srebrenica.²³³⁷

NATO Secretary-General Willy Claes also returned to the air support in a meeting with Akashi on 19 July. Claes thought that Janvier had responded too late even during the first request of Dutchbat. Neither could he understand why it took the UN until 11 July to respond, after a warning had been issued to the Bosnian Serbs on 9 July (which had resulted in the blocking positions). Nor could Claes understand why Janvier had insisted on only tackling weapons actually used by the VRS for firing on

²³³¹ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, SRSGs briefing 17/07/95.

²³³² Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

²³³³ Confidential information (23).

²³³⁴ Interview George Joulwan, 08/06/00. Joulwan had argued this before on 14/07/95 at the North Atlantic Council (DCBC, 835. Code Feith NAVO 1060, 14/07/95, Conf).

²³³⁵ DCBC, 925 and 1561. Codes Feith NAVO 1097 and 1098, 19/07/95, Conf.

²³³⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 22/07/95, No. Z-1229.

²³³⁷ Interview George Joulwan, 08/06/00.

UNPROFOR. NATO had only done what the UN asked of it, yet NATO had subsequently come under serious attack in relation to the restrictions on the air support.

Akashi defended himself by saying that he had faith in the military judgement of his commanders and found it difficult to say that Close Air Support could have been effective, and whether it could have been deployed against infantry. Claes objected by saying that the Bosnian Serbs would no longer respect the rules of the game if Close Air Support was deployed on too small a scale. As soon as the details of the genocide in the enclave became known, UN and NATO would be for it. Claes predicted that Washington would then call for an end to the weapons embargo, and the European countries would want to pull out of Bosnia.²³³⁸ This was a real risk, as on the day of the fall Premier Haris Silajdzic had pleaded with American Senators Bob Dole (Rep., Kansas) and Joseph Lieberman (Dem., Connecticut) for the suspension of the weapons embargo.²³³⁹ Izetbegovic did not seem to be entirely convinced of this course. He feared that the Americans would no longer be under an obligation to the Bosnian Muslims if this happened.²³⁴⁰

Akashi passed the report of the meeting with Claes on to New York. It reflected little of the harsh criticism by Claes. According to the report, Claes had merely suggested that the deployment of air power 'may have been too late' and that the UN 'was perhaps too limiting in its use of CAS'. Akashi indicated that he had responded by saying that air power was not the best form of defence against an infantry attack. He ignored the tanks and the artillery. Janvier had added to the comments by Akashi that: 'he went as far as he could with air power, and that its use was not too little or too late, but rather just right'.²³⁴¹

During a press conference in Athens on 14 July, Boutros-Ghali was also asked whether more use should have been made of air power at the start of the Bosnian-Serb offensive. Boutros-Ghali replied then that the truth should be known, and that according to him it had been the Dutch Government who had asked the UN to call a halt to further deployment of air power. Boutros-Ghali thus blamed the Dutch Government on account of 'too late and too little', without answering the question asked.²³⁴²

General Couzy from the Dutch side also reproached NATO for having failed but he only referred to the execution of Close Air Support on 11 July. This arrived too late, and only the Dutch F-16s had been effective. 'The other planes had lost their targets, had to leave at the crucial moment to refuel, or disappeared because they were being detected by the Serb anti-aircraft defence', according to Couzy after the press conference in Zagreb on 23 July.²³⁴³ These statements were not without a trace of demagoguery.

The UNPF Chief of Staff, General Kolsteren, thought that NATO was also to blame for 'too late and too little'. It had taken another two hours after the UN had turned the key on 11 July before the first bombs were dropped. And these had even been dumb bombs, and the choice of weapons was a matter for NATO and not for the UN.²³⁴⁴ But this was neither what the NATO critics had in mind with 'too little and too late'. They had wanted to deploy air power even during the preceding days.

Air action should have taken place much earlier, much more massively and should have included air strikes for it to have been meaningful, agreed Voorhoeve. This should have taken place one or two days before the fall, even if a number of guns would undoubtedly have survived. It would have been a clear-cut signal to Mladic that UNPROFOR and NATO took things seriously. Nevertheless, the

²³³⁸ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury. Meeting Claes-Akashi 19/07/95.

²³³⁹ *AP Worldstream*, 11/07/95; Tuesday 19:24 Eastern Time.

²³⁴⁰ *Dani*, Special edition dossier Srebrenica, Sarajevo, September 1998. Izetbegovic made the statement in the afternoon of 11/07/95 during an internal SDA meeting in Zenica.

²³⁴¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 21/07/95, No. Z-1223.

²³⁴² ABZ, DPV/ARA/00797. Code Wagenmakers 133, 14/07/95.

²³⁴³ *De Volkskrant*, 24/07/95.

²³⁴⁴ DAB. Notes of the meeting held on 01/11/95 on the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995, undated

hesitation on the part of the UN to provide air support was not the cause of the fall of Srebrenica, according to Voorhoeve.²³⁴⁵

But American negotiator Richard Holbrooke squarely lay the blame for the absence of mass air attacks on Voorhoeve. Following criticism in the American press on the tardy UN response at the attack on Srebrenica, Holbrooke pointed out that the United States had desperately urged the deployment of air power but that the Western European countries had rejected it. 'The first line of resistance to any action was the Dutch Government, which refused to allow air strikes until all its soldiers were out of Bosnia. (...) For a week I called our Ambassador in the Netherlands, Terry Dornbush, instructing him to press the Dutch to allow air strikes, but to no avail,' Holbrooke wrote in his memoirs. Neither had other European countries planned to undertake action which might endanger the Dutch, according to Holbrooke.

The remarks by Holbrooke were wide of the mark. Holbrooke must refer to air strikes *after* the fall of Srebrenica. Not only did the Netherlands not object against the deployment of air power *before* the fall of the enclave, despite the hostages, no trace was discovered of any demarche by the American ambassador in The Hague in the Defence and Foreign Affairs archives. Ambassador Dornbush consequently had to admit that Holbrooke's comments 'did not reflect the embassy's reporting'. A spokesperson at the State Department tried to put things right by stating that 'the problem was not so much with the Dutch as with the United Nations'. This should have put an end to the discussion. But Holbrooke repeated his accusations against Voorhoeve in his memoirs.²³⁴⁶ It prompted Voorhoeve to point out to Holbrooke that he misled his readers, as the Netherlands had actually agreed to the air support when Voorhoeve had been asked by the UN headquarters in Zagreb on 10 July whether there were any objections to it.²³⁴⁷ Air support no longer made sense after the fall of the enclave in the opinion of the Dutch Government, as it would have endangered the Dutchbat hostages unnecessarily.

Holbrooke confused the air support affair with something which was at issue shortly thereafter. Holbrooke was indeed after the bombing of the Bosnian-Serb positions *after* the fall of Srebrenica. Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen had approached ambassador Dornbush in this matter to ask whether the bombardments could be delayed until 22 July as Dutchbat would have left Srebrenica by then. Holbrooke advanced this by ten days in his book. It gave the erroneous impression that the Dutch Government did not want any bombardments when the VRS attacked Srebrenica.²³⁴⁸

Air strikes instead of Close Air Support?

The question remains whether air strikes in addition to Close Air Support might have made a difference. To start with, it must be said that there was not really any question of the possibility of air strikes in July. The authority for these was in the hands of Boutros-Ghali. It should be noted that Akashi had spoken with Boutros-Ghali on the morning of 11 July. At the time, Boutros-Ghali had offered to delegate the authority to deploy air strikes to Akashi. But Akashi had declined.²³⁴⁹

There were also practical reasons for not proceeding with air strikes. The conditions for air strikes as formulated by General Smith in Sarajevo were not in place, namely (1) protect the peacekeepers to avoid hostages being taken; (2) deploy offensive manpower to support air strikes and (3) let the air strikes be an integral part of a campaign rather than deploy air strikes on an ad hoc basis. All these conditions were only met at the end of July.²³⁵⁰

²³⁴⁵ Interview J.J.C Voorhoeve, 15/04/97; *Algemeen Dagblad*, 12/07/95.

²³⁴⁶ NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. Letter Terry Dornbush to Joris Voorhoeve, 31/10/95; Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 70. These reports were published on 30/10/95 in the American press.

²³⁴⁷ BSG, D 010/98. Letter J.J.C. Voorhoeve to R. Holbrooke, 03/06/98, No. D 98001199.

²³⁴⁸ Interview Terry Dornbush, 29/01/01.

²³⁴⁹ Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35 (1998), 'srebrenica Report', 15/11/99, § 301.

²³⁵⁰ Interview David Last, 05/07/00.

Philip Corwin, Head of Civil Affairs in Sarajevo, associated the air strikes with a serious risk of ‘collateral damage’. Air strikes within the enclave or on the edges would have been pointless, as there were few immovable targets. Even the deployment of Close Air Support was not a realistic option for Corwin. NATO should have bombed the VRS command centres in Pale, Banja Luka and Han Pijesak in response to the attack on Srebrenica. This would have escalated the conflict to a different political level, for which UNPROFOR did not have a mandate. The world was ready for this only after the events in Srebrenica and Zepa,²³⁵¹ when the situation within UNPROFOR had changed to the extent that UN staff could no longer be taken hostage on a large scale. Not until then could the earlier ill-concealed differences of opinion between the United States, France and the United Kingdom in particular be bridged. The British had earlier referred to French bragging; the French to the unwillingness of the American Congress, and the Americans had distrusted the British because the latter did not want to use force.²³⁵²

The only way to stop the VRS would have consisted of the deployment of large-scale, sustained air strikes but this crucially required a political decision. The period of time covering the Bosnian-Serb attack on Srebrenica was, however, too short to arrive at such a decision. The advance had simply been too fast: ‘the Serbs were taking the elevator’. Even if Close Air Support had been deployed on a larger scale, it would not have been able to achieve anything right from the start. But neither would air strikes have had much effect because Dutchbat soldiers had been taken hostage. And the large hostage campaigns in May/June, started after the air strikes on Pale, had only just been completed; as explained in chapters 1 and 2 of this part the political climate was thereafter particularly unfavourable in relation to new air strikes. There was also the risk of reprisals elsewhere and suspension of humanitarian aid.

In any case it was clear that Close Air Support, or ‘pinprick air strikes’ were not effective. The VRS had shown not to be easily intimidated by air attacks and even less by Close Air Support. The VRS was not even touched after the massive air strikes during the Deliberate Force operation at the end of August, and continued to move its troops.²³⁵³

VRS General Milovanovic, VRS Chief of Staff but Corps Commander in the Bihac region at the time of the fall of Srebrenica, confirmed that it would have been impossible for NATO to intervene on behalf of Dutchbat. The bombs intended for the VRS would also have landed on the population and on Dutchbat. Punishment of the VRS elsewhere would have been possible but no longer in Srebrenica.²³⁵⁴ But this was also judged in hindsight.

All in all, air support was not a panacea for the UNPROFOR weaknesses, as many seemed to think. As explained in Chapter 1, the deployment of air power in a peace operation was full of pitfalls. This applied to air strikes even more than to air support. The power of air strikes was considerably undermined by the fear that UNPROFOR troops and unarmed UNMOs (United Nations Military Observers) might be taken hostage. The Bosnian-Serb air defence increasingly prevented NATO aircraft from operating freely in Bosnian airspace. In addition, a decision relating to the deployment of Close Air Support could only be made after a laborious and time-consuming consent procedure. The Bosnian terrain and the weather conditions also contributed to the difficulties.

The Bosnian Serbs were not deterred from taking Srebrenica by the presence of the NATO airforce. The deterrent effect of air power had worn off, and the VRS was prepared for a possible deployment of air power. We can only speculate on the question whether the Bosnian Serbs were guided in their decision by the fact that the NATO air force had not been deployed up to that moment on the eve of 9 July to capture the entire enclave after all. It is clear from a military point of view that it would have been virtually impossible to eliminate from the air the VRS infantry who were attacking from dispersed positions, and to prevent them from overrunning the enclave.

²³⁵¹ Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*, pp. 160, 190 and 204.

²³⁵² DCBC, 835. Code Feith NAVO 1060, 14/07/95. Confi.

²³⁵³ Confidential interviews (7) and (52).

²³⁵⁴ Interview Manojlo Milovanovic, 18/11/98.

9. The non-arrival of air strikes

All misunderstandings about the arrival of air strikes on 11 July seemed to stem from telephone conversations conducted mainly in Dutch circles between the various UN headquarters. UNPROFOR contained a network open to Dutch officers and relatively closed to outsiders, to which other nationalities did not have access. This meant that anyone other than the Dutch did not always know what was said in the telephone conversations amongst Dutch officers. It contributed to the fact that others in the UN staffs were less well informed than Dutch officers about issues around Dutchbat, which in itself created new problems because it was not generally the Dutch who were in charge.

The UN report on Srebrenica dated November 1999 says of the supposed air strikes: 'It remains unclear why UNPROFOR personnel in Srebrenica were expecting air strikes to be deployed automatically. Instructions on this subject appear to have been passed over the telephone, of which no official written record exists.'²³⁵⁵

Lacking written resources, below parade the views of those most involved in relation to the supposed arrival of air strikes, to achieve at the most accurate reconstruction possible. The communication between the Dutch officials will be depicted and portrayed, starting at the Zagreb level and continuing down to the Srebrenica level. The section ends with observations made in relation to air support during the debriefings in Zagreb and Assen, and concludes with the verdict by the Hague ministries on this point.

Zagreb/Sarajevo versus Karremans/Brantz: different wavelengths...

General Smith's Military Assistant, Baxter, was clear in his view with respect to Karremans' expectation that air strikes would take place; according to him, Karremans requested 'the undeliverable'.²³⁵⁶

Why Karremans believed that large numbers of aircraft would arrive on 11 July for bombing purposes was in hindsight a mystery to UNPF Chief of Staff General Kolsteren. In his opinion, the idea could only have been based on a communication problem; he suspected that the number of aircraft involved in the operation must have been known in Sarajevo, and possibly also in Tuzla. Somehow there must have been a breakdown of communications either at Karremans end or, if Brantz also expected air strikes, in the upstream information pipeline. It came as a complete surprise (in retrospect) to those involved in Zagreb that Karremans had spoken of a 'zone of death' as the subject of air strikes had never been raised there. A battalion commander would not normally be involved in air strikes, as this was a matter for the top level. A battalion commander was generally only involved in Close Air Support, and the request procedure for air support was geared to this.²³⁵⁷

Janvier could not say anything on expectations about air strikes prevalent on 11 July at his interrogation by the French parliamentary investigation committee. He did say he regretted the confusion which had arisen but he maintained vigorously that he had never said that air strikes would take place at 06.00 hours that day.²³⁵⁸

There had been no direct contact with Karremans from Zagreb, according to Dutch Chief of Staff Kolsteren. According to Kolsteren as well as Colonel De Jonge, numbers of aircraft had never been discussed in Zagreb; this was a matter for the NATO planners.²³⁵⁹ The number of aircraft depended on the question how long Close Air Support would continue and whether NATO aircraft would be required to relieve each other.

²³⁵⁵ Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35 (1998), 'srebrenica Report', 15/11/99, § 298.

²³⁵⁶ Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

²³⁵⁷ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

²³⁵⁸ *Mission d'Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica*, Audition de M. Bernard Janvier, 21/06/01.

²³⁵⁹ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

According to De Jonge, neither could Karremans have heard about the arrival of air strikes via NATO lines from Zagreb (the local NATO liaison cell). It was all the less likely because the erroneous distinction Karremans made between both forms of deployment of air power (air support or Close Air Support on the one hand and air attacks or air strikes on the other) were not likely to have been made along that line.

The NATO representatives in Zagreb had not had any contact with Tuzla and Srebrenica. De Jonge emphasized that only Close Air Support had been discussed in Zagreb, and not air strikes. According to De Jonge, somewhere along the UNPROFOR line a 'translation' must have taken place from the number of aircraft to the expectation of air strikes. The question as to where it had been translated wrongly could not be answered by anyone in Zagreb. De Jonge could only hazard a guess: possibly something had been interpreted wrongly under pressure and through wishful thinking in Tuzla, where the staff relied on a few hard-working people who were near the end of their tether. De Jonge had been in touch with Brantz on 10 July but not again after the conclusion of the disappointing development of the discussion amongst the Crisis Action Team, where Janvier had decided that evening not to give his consent to Close Air Support but to await the following morning. Colonel Brantz in Tuzla was a busy man according to De Jonge, much was put on his shoulders, and the staff in Srebrenica was also fully occupied in arranging all matter of things. This had prevented Dutch officers in Zagreb to pick up the phone and call Dutch officers in Tuzla or in the enclave.

One possibility not discounted by the Dutch officers in Zagreb was that the idea of air strikes had originated in the Dutchbat Opsroom (Command Post). Neither did they exclude the possibility that the use of the Dutch language had played a part: misunderstandings might have arisen because the NATO terminology was not used, even though it was more or less customary to do this even in conversations in Dutch amongst themselves. De Jonge understood in hindsight that in Tuzla as well as in Srebrenica the idea had existed that air strikes would take place but he had not been able to determine from Zagreb whether and how mutual influence between Tuzla and Srebrenica had played a part in relation to this point.²³⁶⁰

What *could* have contributed to the idea in Srebrenica (and Tuzla) that air strikes were imminent is the fact that target lists were regularly compiled and sent to Tuzla or Sarajevo from the enclave during those days. From Zagreb, target lists had been requested regularly downstream in the UN hierarchy. But according to Kolsteren this was a normal procedure, which also applied to Close Air Support. It did not necessarily point to air strikes but related to the establishment of possible targets, priorities and to listing the coordinates for the location of the targets. An indication that there was no question of air strikes lay according to Kolsteren in the fact that Forward Air Controllers were not required for air strikes. Kolsteren considered there could be no argument about this as far as the procedure was concerned.²³⁶¹

The view of De Jonge was the same. He agreed that target list were a common aid in the execution of Close Air Support.²³⁶² It had not been known in Zagreb that Karremans was asked to submit a request for Close Air Support from Tuzla on 11 July; Karremans was under the impression that a certain measure of automatism was involved in the arrival of air strikes, when aircraft were available at 06.00 hours on 11 July.²³⁶³

Neither had the subject of air strikes been raised in Sarajevo on 10 or 11 July, according to the officer in charge of operations (in military terms the G-3) in Sarajevo, Canadian Rick Hatton, who considered that the staff only prepared for Close Air Support. In this context the target lists requested from Dutchbat were only meant to prepare for missions, and to establish whether their own troops ran a risk, agreed Hatton.²³⁶⁴

²³⁶⁰ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

²³⁶¹ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

²³⁶² Interview H.A. de Jonge, 30/05/01.

²³⁶³ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

²³⁶⁴ Interview Rick Hatton, 16/11/99.

Lieutenant Colonel De Ruiter in Sarajevo was of the opinion that there had been considerable ambiguity amongst unit commanders (in other words not just at Dutchbat) on the possibilities and limitations of Close Air Support existing in June and July after the hostage-taking and the shooting down of an American F-16. There was confusion about these possibilities, and the expectations of the unit commanders had been too high.²³⁶⁵

The implementation of air support was a technical matter, according to De Ruiter. It was of no interest to a commander on the ground how the mission was flown, what the weapons were and what type of aircraft was being used. The Air Operation Coordination Center in Sarajevo only briefed the Forward Air Controllers on a mission when it was certain that the mission would take place. The Forward Air Controllers knew that only missions consisting of just two aircraft at a time were flown over the enclave; there was not much room for more. De Ruiter also emphasized that it was improbable for a Forward Air Controller to believe that air strikes would be involved, as Forward Air Controllers did not play a role in these.

The most probable explanation for the belief in air strikes was that it was not known in Tuzla and Srebrenica that the NATO tactics had been changed and that aircraft would only arrive if they could be supported by aircraft to suppress the Bosnian-Serb Air Defence, according to De Ruiter, which made the mission more hazardous. The procedures remained the same, and the concept for support to troops on the ground, including the Rules of Engagement, remained unchanged.²³⁶⁶

This begs the question whether Brantz as well as Karremans had been adequately informed of the effects of the changed tactics. It meant that aircraft destined for Close Air Support had to be accompanied by aircraft deployed in suppressing Bosnian-Serb air defence. This was the explanation for the large number of aircraft airborne.

According to De Ruiter, Karremans and Brantz were sufficiently aware of the changed tactics. Discussions had been held repeatedly between Nicolai and Karremans, between De Ruiter and Karremans, but also with Brantz, on the intrinsic meaning and ideas on which UNPROFOR guidelines for air support were based. De Ruiter had spoken more about this with Karremans than with Brantz.

Karremans should have known, according to De Ruiter, that there could never have been any question of air strikes in the sense the battalion Commander had in mind. Nicolai and De Ruiter had explained the air support procedure to Karremans as recently as 6 July, and even before then the difference between, and the possibilities of, Close Air Support and air strikes had been discussed several times. De Ruiter had stated explicitly that air strikes were not an option within the existing Rules of Engagement and the proportionality principle.²³⁶⁷

In addition, General Smith had issued a guideline from Sarajevo as recently as 29 May, and shortly after the consequences of the air strikes on Pale became visible in the form of hostages, which explained that air strikes would be deployed less frequently in future. Karremans confirmed in his book that he was aware of the so-called Post Air Strike Guidance; he also knew that air support had been reduced to a minimum. However, he wrote: 'Knowing this, I am nevertheless requesting air support'. Karremans justified this on the fact that UNPROFOR was aware of the exact location of the VRS weapons systems. In his opinion, this offered a 'unique opportunity' to eliminate a large number of them. He wrote that he discussed the possibilities of this with Nicolai but that the directives of the Force Commander and Commander of UNPROFOR had not been met, reasons for Nicolai to reject the request.²³⁶⁸

The investigators compiling the UN report on Srebrenica stated in this connection to have gained little insight in the roles played by Nicolai and De Ruiter in the process relating to the air

²³⁶⁵ Debriefing statement J.A.C. Ruiter, 27/09/95.

²³⁶⁶ Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

²³⁶⁷ Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

²³⁶⁸ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 160. Commander HQ UNPROFOR Directive 2/95, 'Post Air Strike Guidance', dated 29/05/95 mentioned not much more about air support than that Close Air Support and air strikes could only be deployed 'as a last resort'.

support requests, in the sense that they were not clear what they said to Karremans on the one hand, and to The Hague on the other. They intimated that information had run aground with Nicolai, so that it did not reach the staff in Sarajevo, according to one of the investigators.²³⁶⁹ General Smith's Military Assistant, Baxter, was of a different opinion. He was convinced that the staff in Sarajevo knew everything Nicolai was told at the time of the fall.²³⁷⁰

As far as Tuzla was concerned, Brantz was of the opinion he had acted meticulously by inquiring in Sarajevo about the arrival of air strikes. He also deduced the arrival of air strikes from the indicated time the aircraft would arrive over the enclave (in military terms: Time over Target). Brantz also considered that Karremans had learnt of the arrival of air strikes from Sarajevo, and that both Potocari and Tuzla notified separately by Sarajevo had arrived at the same conclusion.²³⁷¹ The assumption took greater hold through the continuous telephone communications between Sarajevo and Karremans, to the annoyance of Brantz. It interrupted the chain of command, as communications should formally take place via Tuzla.

Karremans in turn indicated that he had heard about the arrival of air strikes from Brantz. Both, and with them all of Dutchbat, therefore solemnly believed in the arrival of air strikes. The Commander had a duty to inform his subalterns correctly, accurately and clearly, in the opinion of Brantz. If a subaltern and the local commander had both misunderstood, then the blame was not theirs in the eyes of Brantz.

Brantz defended himself before the NIOD researchers as follows: 'The person who told me I could not tell the difference between an air strike and Close Air Support, insults my intelligence, my professional competence and the training I have received within the Army. Of course I know the difference. But when I ask three times whether forty aircraft are setting off for the enclave, and De Ruiter answers yes twice, Nicolai says yes and a G-3 Brit says yes, then it does not stem from my imagination?. De Ruiter had even said on 11 July that two groups of forty aircraft (packages) would arrive; they required targets in the north and in the south of the enclave. Dutchbat therefore had to submit additional 'hard' targets in the north of the enclave.'²³⁷²

It seems that here the seed was sown for the assumption that air strikes would arrive, despite the fact that Brantz will undoubtedly have known the difference between air strikes and Close Air Support. Three officers confirmed to Brantz from Sarajevo that forty aircraft were set to arrive. The number of aircraft gave no indication as to whether they were deployed for air strikes or for Close Air Support; Brantz' interpretation that air strikes were imminent was therefore incorrect. It was likely that there were many aircraft airborne: as well as the attack aircraft, for instance SEAD, and refuelling aircraft, flying command posts, aircraft for air presence or Combat Air Patrol, or aircraft which were not destined for Srebrenica directly.

The views of Karremans and Brantz

Brantz said that he had once more checked at 04.50 hours in the morning of 11 July in Sarajevo whether the information on the deployment of air support was still correct. He received confirmation of the data, as well as the updated target list, the composition of the aircraft package and the method of attack. The times were repeated constantly, perhaps unnecessarily: Time over Target 06.50 hours. Brantz thought that any misunderstanding was excluded. Sector North East passed to readiness level Alert State 'Orange' at 06.00 hours, and this changed to 'Red' at 06.45 hours. Everyone looked at the sky in anticipation – only to find that nothing happened, after which total confusion took hold. Sector

²³⁶⁹ Interview David Harland, 18/05/99, 21/05/99 and 25/05/99.

²³⁷⁰ Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

²³⁷¹ Interview C.L. Brantz, 11/06/99.

²³⁷² Interview C.L. Brantz, 11/06/99. Brantz and Karremans had both been trained at the Army Staff College (*Hogere Krijgsschool*) and should therefore have been aware of the distinction between an air strike on the one hand and Close Air Support on the other.

North East returned to Alert State 'Green' at 08.00 hours and everything seemed to return to normal. Brantz called Sarajevo to ask what had happened. De Ruiter told him that the aircraft had circled the enclave but that bad visibility had prevented deployment. All aircraft had gone back to refuel, and also, De Ruiter added, to await a request from Dutchbat.²³⁷³

Brantz confirmed that he received no information on air support from Zagreb from Kolsteren or De Jonge on 10 and 11 July. The only contact had taken place when Brantz rang De Jonge later that morning. Brantz had asked then whether the request for Close Air Support (which Dutchbat had submitted at 10.00 hours) had been received. De Jonge had replied to Brantz that the aircraft had been put on standby (in military terms: they were in a holding area). Brantz had then asked whether it was right that forty aircraft were involved. Brantz had understood this from Sarajevo and he would like to have it confirmed in Zagreb. De Jonge received his information on this point from NATO, from Naples and Vicenza, and he confirmed that 40 aircraft were indeed involved. Brantz retorted that he thought a second group of forty would arrive. De Jonge replied that he did not know, and would have to sort this out first.²³⁷⁴

De Ruiter had been the person in Sarajevo who passed on to Tuzla and also directly to Dutchbat that air support with at least forty aircraft was imminent, with a Time over Target of 06.50 hours. The receipt of this news by Brantz was confirmed by Major Wijsbroek, Brantz' Military Assistant. Brantz in turn passed it on to the rest of the staff at Sector North East, and then to Karremans, who had already heard it directly from Sarajevo.

The fact that Tuzla received the news from Sarajevo and passed it on to Dutchbat is also evident from the Sector North East log, which has an entry by the operations officer from Sarajevo (the Chief G-3) dated 11 July at 01.00 hours that aircraft would be airborne at 06.00 hours and arrive above the enclave at 06.50 hours. Tuzla passed the message on to Dutchbat.

When ultimately nothing happened at that time, the initial trust that Brantz and Karremans had in Nicolai and De Ruiter disappeared, as it proved to them that their information was inaccurate. This seemed a significant breeding ground for recriminations to and fro during the period of the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica. These feelings were strengthened in retrospect by the lack of feedback from Sarajevo and the feeling that the Dutch in Sarajevo had not been in close contact with their compatriots in Tuzla in order to find out how Karremans got on.²³⁷⁵

The question remains how Brantz arrived at the idea that air strikes were imminent. The explanation is broader than merely the number of aircraft. Brantz admitted that he was not really aware of the changes which the shooting down of the American F-15 on 2 June had effected. He only learnt that the flight levels were different after the fall of the enclave.²³⁷⁶ But like Karremans he considered that all VRS targets would have to be eliminated if the objective was to halt Mladic, and this could not be done with just a few aircraft. Brantz saw the event that forty aircraft were on their way to the enclave as 'Close Air Support with an air strike impact'. It was also significant that Brantz was not aware of the smoking gun principle (the principle that air support could only be given if UN units were under VRS fire). Brantz considered these to be desk ideas, in view of the prevailing conditions on 11 July. He only became aware of this principle after statements by Nicolai and after his return to the Netherlands.²³⁷⁷ Nicolai said in May 1996 in an interview that guidelines had been established for a more reticent deployment of air power. Assistance by NATO should not be called on for the retention of a single OP, unless the crew was at risk.²³⁷⁸

Deputy Battalion Commander Franken was of the opinion that Karremans had been genuinely convinced that air strikes were imminent, otherwise he would not have enthusiastically expressed this

²³⁷³ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Diary Brantz, (version August 1999), p. 131-132.

²³⁷⁴ Interview C.L. Brantz, 11/06/99.

²³⁷⁵ Interview M.P. Wijsbroek, 10/12/97; Westerman & Rijs, *Srebrenica: Het zwartste scenario*, Annex 3D, p. 236.

²³⁷⁶ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Diary Brantz (version August 1999), p. 121-122.

²³⁷⁷ Interview C.L. Brantz, 11/06/99.

²³⁷⁸ NIOD, Coll. Westerman: 'Interview Cees Nicolai', The Hague, 15/05/96.

belief to the Opstina during the night of 10 – 11 July. Franken said that he had been more sceptical, and he added that he was *not* saying so in hindsight. He later stated that he had made his scepticism known to Karremans in the morning of 11 July, when they both sheltered in the ‘bobo’ bunker while awaiting the arrival of the expected air strikes. He considered himself not to be in a position to counter Karremans’ belief.

Karremans’ belief was greatly nourished by the reports from Brantz, also to Franken. Brantz had made it crystal clear that air strikes were involved. But Nicolai had omitted to make sure that De Ruiter, and also Brantz and Karremans, had understood this crucial point clearly, Franken judged with hindsight. Neither had Nicolai made it clear that air strikes could not be involved, and that while it was obvious to him that only Close Air Support could be involved. Franken considered this a significant explanation for the tension which arose later between Brantz and Karremans on the one hand, and Nicolai on the other.

The disaffection felt by Karremans and Brantz towards Nicolai increased in retrospect when it became known that he had rejected the first two requests for air support on the basis of arguments which did not mean much to the staff in the enclave at that time. Franken had understood these arguments to be that no aircraft were available if there was no attack on the UN, and that there was a risk of the Dutchbat and VRS troops being mixed up.²³⁷⁹

There were further reasons unrelated to Nicolai, which caused Karremans and Brantz to assume that air strikes were imminent. On several occasions there was some doubt whether the Dutchbat staff was sufficiently aware of the request procedures for Close Air Support, and the conditions under which it could be provided. This was at issue even before 11 July; Dutchbat had first been confronted with the need to submit a request for air support at the capture of OP-E at the beginning of June. Karremans did not mention this in his book. Chapter 5 discussed how Karremans went about requesting air support on that occasion, and how the outcome of considerable discussion between Dutchbat and Sarajevo was that the battalion was surprised about the result that no aircraft were available.

Karremans had also already summoned Voskamp as his Forward Air Controller during the attack on OP-E, in order to request air support. Voskamp pointed out to him that the sky was overcast and that it would therefore be difficult, but Karremans had replied that he did not care. He thought it more important that the ‘droning of aircraft’ could be heard over the enclave. Voskamp was ordered to request air support and to ensure that aircraft would arrive. He refused initially, as it was not his job according to the guidelines; it was the job of the battalion commander or his deputy. The Forward Air Controller’s task was merely to guide aircraft to their targets. Karremans persisted and even had Voskamp call Zagreb direct. Voskamp was told in reply that the weather was not ‘workable’ for air support. This gave Voskamp the impression that Karremans did not know how to ask for air support.²³⁸⁰ The question is whether together they could not have resolved the issue by discussing the formalities. Voskamp was formally correct in that it was not his job; the UNPROFOR Operations Order confirmed that the Forward Air Controller should initiate the request process (by submitting an Air Request Message to the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo) but it was indeed the commander who had to ratify the actual request.²³⁸¹

Knowledge at battalion level *did* seem to be inadequate. Dutchbat had to rely formally on the so-called Dutchbat Operations Orders, which dated from the time of Dutchbat I. These were brief in relation to air support, and did not mention air strikes at all, as it was not a matter for the battalion. In relation to the procedures for Close Air Support, the Operations Orders only mentioned that the Forward Air Controller should request Close Air Support from the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo when the battalion commander made this decision, while the commander explained

²³⁷⁹ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

²³⁸⁰ Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

²³⁸¹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 79, File 2.5.4, Air Support 17/08/93- 06/02/95. UNPROFOR Operations Order 14/94, 15/07/94.

the situation via the hierarchical line.²³⁸² The idea was that a well-considered decision could thus be made on the basis of information supplied by the commander. The form in which this should take place was not mentioned in the Operations Orders. The designation Blue Sword Request as a code name for a Close Air Support request did not appear.²³⁸³ Instructions for requesting air support were laid down in the UNPROFOR operation orders but these seemed not to have found their way to the Dutchbat orders. This may have put Karremans on the wrong track. On the other hand, Franken had experience with air support procedures as he had earlier occupied the post of Ground Liaison Officer in the First Army Corps.

According to Brantz the early June request had been submitted directly and without a target list to Sarajevo, against the procedure which applied at the time. The UNPROFOR orders did not prescribe that a Battalion commander had to submit his request via a sector headquarters (in this case Sector North East in Tuzla). On the contrary, the rules (Command relationships) for Close Air Support provided for a direct line from the battalion to the Commander Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (later called UNPROFOR Commander). The sector headquarters only needed to be notified.²³⁸⁴

Operational orders for the fifth allied airforce in Vicenza indicated that a battalion as well as a company commander could themselves submit an Immediate Request, and that the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force including the Forward Air Controller could then send the request directly to Sarajevo.²³⁸⁵

Brantz was also haunted by the events in July. During a meeting with the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, Brantz said that he was worried about Srebrenica, that he had therefore urged air support and that he had been promised it.²³⁸⁶ When air support ultimately was not forthcoming, Brantz was no longer welcome at the 2nd Corps. Nevertheless, Sead Delic, the Commander of the 2nd Corps, did not complain to Sector Commander Haukland about the lack of Close Air Support, once Haukland returned from leave. Haukland had expected Delic to do so.²³⁸⁷ A representative of the at the Ministry of Defence later stated to the NIOD that question marks could be placed at Brantz as a source on what had happened and been decided in relation to Close Air Support. According to him, Brantz was not in a position in Tuzla, and should never have manoeuvred himself in such a position, to make statements on it afterwards.²³⁸⁸

The stand taken by Karremans in relation to enlisting air support changed over time in Sarajevo during the VRS attack, according to De Ruiter, possibly as a result of the changing circumstances. He alleged that Karremans had hesitated considerably about requesting Close Air Support during the initial days of the VRS attack. Karremans's stance did not change as far as his urging large-scale deployment of air power was concerned. Karremans stated on 6 July that Close Air Support was pointless in his opinion, unless deployed on a large scale.²³⁸⁹ When De Ruiter telephoned to pass on orders for the blocking positions on 9 July, he indicated that Close Air Support would be available the next morning. At the time Karremans rejected this, arguing that it would only escalate the situation.²³⁹⁰ That same day Karremans indicated in his Commander's assessment for Sarajevo that deployment of Close Air Support in his opinion was not yet 'feasible'; it would provoke the VRS to the extent that Srebrenica, the OPs and the compounds would become targets for the two rocket systems (MLRS) which were

²³⁸² UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 79, File 2.5.4, Air Support 17/08/93- 06/02/95. UNPROFOR Operations Order 14/94, 15/07/94.

²³⁸³ SMG/Debrief. Operations Order 1(NL) VNInfbat, Annex 12 Air Support.

²³⁸⁴ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 79, File 2.5.4, Air Support 17/08/93- 06/02/95. UNPROFOR Operations Order 14/94, Annex B, 15/07/94.

²³⁸⁵ DS, SN95/938/3402. FIVEATAF OPORD 45101.5, 1 May 1995, No. 1520.1/FAPP/95.

²³⁸⁶ Interview Nadia Skokic, 04/02/98.

²³⁸⁷ Interview Hagrup Haukland, 03/05/99.

²³⁸⁸ Interview J.S. Riepen, 03/10/99.

²³⁸⁹ Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

²³⁹⁰ SMG 1007/30. Letter C-11 Pagnbat (Lt Col J.A.C. de Ruiter) to CDS and BLS, 07/11/95.

deployed north of OP-P and in Bratunac, as well as for the artillery and the mortars around the enclave. According to Karremans it would be impossible to eliminate all of these in one go.²³⁹¹

Nicolai was aware that Karremans was afraid of such repercussions and that the elimination of VRS tanks might indeed mean that the rocket systems would start firing. This was an important reason for Karremans to say that all targets which circled and threatened the enclave had to be eliminated immediately on deployment of Close Air Support. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo, on the other hand, did subscribe to the view that these rocket systems were a risk factor but considered them less of a threat than Karremans did. According to Nicolai, Sarajevo wanted to keep the possibilities open and this was also the reason that Sarajevo had asked Karremans during the night from 10 to 11 July to pass on all known VRS positions in any case.²³⁹² This may have been the source for a significant misunderstanding. The last chapter also referred to this discussion: it was precisely this telephone conversation with Sarajevo through which Karremans received the impression that Sarajevo announced that massive air strikes would be deployed on all these targets the next morning. We already mentioned in the previous chapter that he passed on this expectation to the Opstina, ABiH and the entire Dutchbat, with the result that they were all looking at the sky at 06.00 hours. This also seems to agree with Nicolai's position: he informed Defence Crisis Management Centre on the evening of 10 July that Close Air Support was available from 06.00 hours in order to be deployed against the VRS artillery amongst other things. He also added that he would telephone Karremans in relation to this point.²³⁹³ Nicolai was, however, referring to Close Air Support rather than to air strikes.

Sarajevo proves more reticent than Karremans expects

As far as the risk run by the peacekeepers upon deployment of air support is concerned, there seemed to be two camps within UNPROFOR in Sarajevo. One group said that the Bosnian Serbs would never deliberately eliminate peacekeepers, and the other said that the risk should be avoided. De Ruiter in Sarajevo belonged to the first camp: if VRS policy was to eliminate UNPROFOR troops when possible, then there had been plenty of opportunities earlier in Gorazde and Sarajevo. VRS General Tolimir had also said in so many words that the peacekeepers in Srebrenica were not a target: the VRS was concerned with the ABiH. Occasionally a grenade landed on a UN headquarters but this resulted from deliberate action on the part of the Bosnian Serbs, in reprisal for an incident or because air power had been deployed. Such a reprisal was for instance carried out after the Pale bombardments but also on 11 July when grenades landed on the UN headquarters in Sarajevo after the air support at Sarajevo.²³⁹⁴

Karremans seemed to belong more to the second group on account of the position he found himself in; he did not want his troops to run any risks. According to Voorhoeve, Karremans therefore hesitated considerably on the question whether it would be sensible and feasible to try and eliminate the Serb artillery in one go. It also explained the confusion which arose later on the issue as to what had happened on the afternoon of 11 July, according to Voorhoeve - air strikes or air support. According to the Minister, the static VRS positions, about which Voorhoeve was notified that there were not less than forty around the enclave, indicated the former. Voorhoeve had seen some of these himself through a telescope when he was in the enclave in September 1994: 'You looked straight into the face of the Bosnian Serbs who were playing cards next to the guns, and looked down onto the enclave. They then picked up their telescope because they saw that they were observed through the telescope.' The

²³⁹¹NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Letters Commanding Officer 1(NL)UN Infbn (Dutchbat3) to Commander Bosnia-Herzegovina Command through Commander Sector North East, 07/07/95, No. TK95112 and 09/07/95, No. TK95113.

²³⁹² Interview C.H. Nicolai, 09/07/99.

²³⁹³ DCBC, 528. Daily reports DCBC, 10/07/95, 21.58 hrs.

²³⁹⁴ Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

fact that attacking and firing objects had been bombed would indicate air support on the other hand.²³⁹⁵

Karremans considered the hoped-for arrival of large numbers of attacking aircraft as deliverance, according to Franken, in a situation which was hopeless from a military point of view. In these circumstances only air strikes on as many VRS targets as possible could have brought relief, according to the battalion commander. It was not so much the VRS infantry that filled Karremans with dread, but rather the artillery. The infantry tread wearily out of fear for losses. VRS artillery did not fire on Dutchbat but on the refugees. Karremans therefore considered that the VRS artillery, as well as the tank, had to be eliminated. Close Air Support was not the answer.

A massive deployment, simultaneously on the targets listed, matched the tactical picture in Franken's opinion also; a pinprick would only provoke the anger of the VRS. Franken considered the arrival of the two F-16s as of little use from a military point of view, certainly after Dutchbat had quite clearly outlined the threat posed by the artillery. Franken expected that the VRS artillery deployed in the north would be tackled after the attack on the VRS tanks; the former had a high priority for him as the Potocari compound was within reach of the artillery.²³⁹⁶

According to De Ruiter in Sarajevo, people there found it difficult to go along with Karremans's ideas. They believed that Karremans took it for granted that air support had to be provided if requested by him. They also noticed that Karremans assumed as a matter of course that, once he had submitted a request for air support, it applied for some time. Karremans made it clear that he considered it overly bureaucratic to submit a request repeatedly; Sarajevo alleged that he had little understanding for the context in which the senior military and political level processed requests, and for the pros and cons which Dutchbat was not in a position to grasp. De Ruiter said, for instance, that Karremans did not appreciate the political context that negotiator Bildt was involved, which restricted Sarajevo's scope for action at the time.²³⁹⁷ This referred to the discussion on 8 July, which has already been mentioned in the previous chapter.

This begs the question, however, whether in this situation Karremans could be expected to appreciate the context. It certainly seems to be the case that Karremans was not well-acquainted with this particular context of the senior military and political levels. The reason was that he depended mainly on a single Dutch TV channel and the *Wereldomroep* for his knowledge of events in the outside world; matters such as the political context were not raised in the daily situation reports. Srebrenica was isolated, which made it impossible for Karremans to attend commander's conferences in Sarajevo or Tuzla. Such matters were indeed discussed there between senior and other commanders. More or less the same applied to Brantz: for instance, he only knew of the presence of Bildt in the region because the latter visited Tuzla.

So Dutchbat expected on 10 July that air strikes would arrive the following morning, while Sarajevo knew nothing about this. This begs the question whether this could not have become apparent; in theory there were several opportunities but the misunderstanding was not cleared up during any of these.

According to First Lieutenant Caris, whose group of commandos acted as Forward Air Controllers, there was no direct contact between the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo and Dutchbat on 10 July. This was the reason, according to him, that there was no denial of the expected air strikes from that side.

Neither was there a report of an air strike during the daily evening discussions via the satellite link of the JCOs with their commander in Sarajevo on 10 July.²³⁹⁸ This was precisely because nobody in

²³⁹⁵ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97.

²³⁹⁶ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

²³⁹⁷ Interview A. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

²³⁹⁸ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

Sarajevo assumed air strikes were imminent. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command was not aware of such contact between the JCOs and their own headquarters in Sarajevo.²³⁹⁹

Discussions were held on 11 July between Dutchbat and the Air Operations Coordination Center. These did not reveal anything concrete to support Dutchbat's belief in air strikes, nor apparently anything to make Dutchbat think that air strikes were definitely not imminent. Dutchbat merely got the feeling that the Air Operations Coordination Center was a delaying factor because only noises like 'be patient please', 'arrangements have not yet been finalized' or 'planes still need to take in refuel' reached Dutchbat from there. This slowly extinguished the last remaining shreds of belief in the arrival of large-scale air strikes.

When the air strikes did not arrive, Dutchbat belatedly received a report that in fact everything had been cancelled the night before. This alarmed them. 'We heard that somewhere during the night there had not been enough signatures to realise that. The Battalion Commander had visited the ABiH on the night before. So he was made to look a right fool', according to Dutchbat Major Wieffer.²⁴⁰⁰ This appeared to be another misunderstanding, one of many: it concerned the rejection by Janvier of the request for air support on the evening of 10 July, not the requests for 11 July.

The question arises why the sector commanders involved were not sent written confirmation in relation to the deployment of something so major as an air strike. Either the procedures did not provide for this, or it was not done for secrecy reasons. Sector Commander Haukland did not receive written confirmation of the arrival of the air strikes in September 1995.²⁴⁰¹

The subject of the so-called 'strike package' was raised in NATO circles on 11 July but this related to nothing more than a list of the thirty participating aircraft for the afternoon group of aircraft (the afternoon package). Not more than eight of these were destined for Close Air Support. It does not seem likely that such lists circulated outside NATO circles, certainly not in Tuzla or Srebrenica.²⁴⁰²

Karremans on air support at the press conference in Zagreb on 23 July

The statement by Karremans at the press conference in Zagreb after the departure of Dutchbat from the enclave gave some insight in his way of thinking in relation to air support. His thinking during the days before the fall was aimed mainly at large-scale deployment of air power (air strikes) rather than Close Air Support for the threatened positions.

Karremans admitted during the press conference that he had not requested air strikes directly. 'You understand that this is authorized at top level'. He said that a decision had been made during the morning of 11 July not to proceed with the air attacks because of ground mist but in addition the higher echelons had not seen any reason to deploy air strikes according to him, because the VRS was not attacking the battalion or the town at that time.

Notes made in preparation for the press conference also mentioned that a battalion commander did not independently request air attacks. His military chiefs were able to draw the conclusion from the situation outlined that, as Karremans had jotted down, 'air support (Close Air Support)' was required. Karremans wrote that the higher echelons had made a decision in favour of 'air attack (Close Air Support)' but had cancelled the actual deployment of the aircraft because of the ground mist ('not where we were, the weather in Srebrenica was beautiful').²⁴⁰³

Even the question whether there had been ground mist gave rise to contradictions. Karremans said at the press conference at Camp Pleso in Zagreb that mist hung over the ground. Some months later, there had been no ground mist in Karremans' memory: 'Mist was said to hang over the ground.

²³⁹⁹ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 09/07/99.

²⁴⁰⁰ Interview E. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

²⁴⁰¹ Interview Hagrup Haukland, 03/05/99.

²⁴⁰² DOPKlu STAOOPER, no No. given. 'strike Package on 11/07/95. POC Maj Roberts'.

²⁴⁰³ SMG 1007/13. Statement by Lt Col T. Karremans, press conference Camp Pleso (Zagreb) 23/07/95; DV, Afd Legervoortlichting. 'Inleiding Karremans persconferentie 23 juli 1995 op Camp Pleso'.

But there was no mist'.²⁴⁰⁴ The British Joint Commission Observers and the commandos' Tactical Air Control Party, who were on the roof of the compound in Potocari at 06.00 hours, reported that there was ground mist which had not cleared away until around 08.00 hours.

According to an entry made at the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo, the air above Srebrenica was clear at 06.45 hours.²⁴⁰⁵ It was possible that local differences affected the weather picture. Brantz also blamed the fact that air support proved fruitless on the fact that all kinds of things had 'gone wrong through a combination of human failure, equipment and ground mist' in an interview conducted shortly after the fall of Srebrenica.²⁴⁰⁶ The targets had not been visible due to the ground mist, according to Brantz.²⁴⁰⁷

The Netherlands Airforce was explicit in its judgement on this: there was *no* relationship between the ground mist and the non-arrival of Close Air Support on 11 July. The weather in the area had not been a factor for the deployment of aircraft in the decision-making of the Fifth Allied Tactical Airforce in Vicenza either. Ground mist *did* limit horizontal vision but not generally vertical vision, at least not to the extent that it was impossible to attack from a medium height. The fact that no air support took place that morning could only be blamed on the lack of a request from the UN, according to the Netherlands Airforce.²⁴⁰⁸

There was more fog around the terminology used by Karremans at the press conference in relation to 'air support' and 'air attack'. On paper he used the terms indiscriminately. The fact that he not only equated the term air support (correctly) but also the term air attack (incorrectly) with Close Air Support, may be a slip of the pen. But it may also point to an inadequate distinction between these two forms of air power. Karremans was not the only one who confused the terms: a number of military men and civil servants were not always duly careful with the terminology and there was also an uncontrolled Babel-like confusion in relation to these terms amongst the international press during the period 6 – 11 July 1995. Hardly any distinction was made between air strikes and Close Air Support.

There were exceptions, such as the *United Press International* and *Associated Press*, who did try and explain the difference between both forms of air power, only to fail miserably. Liam McDowall of *Associated Press* was well off the mark in stating: 'Close Air Support is the term used to describe NATO protection for embattled peacekeepers, including airstrikes.' Chris Simon of *UPI* did no better when it came to understanding the definitions: 'The latest strikes were what the United Nations refers to as 'close air support', technically differing from airstrikes in that the aim was to defend troops rather than to launch an offensive attack.'²⁴⁰⁹ Press agencies such as *Agence France Press* and *Associated Press* mentioned air strikes in most of their reports but no single press agency or newspaper was consistent. *CNN* used both terms. The warning issued by UNPROFOR on 9 July to the Bosnian Serbs literally referred to the fact that Close Air Support would be given if the VRS attacked the blocking position to be manned by Dutchbat but this was often represented as air strikes in the news.

The death of soldier Van Rensen overshadowed reports of the UNPROFOR warning to the Bosnian Serbs in the Dutch press. The handful of newspapers which mentioned it, such as *NRC Handelsblad* and *De Volkskrant*, spoke of air attacks, the Dutch term for air strikes. The headquarters in Zagreb and Sarajevo consistently spoke of Close Air Support and there was not a trace of doubt in relation to the conceptual and procedural distinction between Close Air Support and air strikes. Both headquarters disposed of expert NATO Airforce personnel. A liaison cell of the Fifth Allied Tactical Airforce was stationed in Zagreb, and NATO officers were represented in the Crisis Action Team and at the discussions with Akashi and Janvier. Sarajevo had the Air Operations Coordination Center staffed by NATO officers. The difference seemed insufficiently known amongst the lower

²⁴⁰⁴ CRST. C-13 Infbat Lumbl, 15/11/95, No. TK95.213. No addressee given.

²⁴⁰⁵ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Memo Maj Frenzt, AOCC Sarajevo to Lt Col de Ruiter, undated.

²⁴⁰⁶ Cees van der Laan, 'Commandant Brantz: Ruwe bolster blanke pit' ['a Rough Diamond'] in *Haagsche Courant*, 20/07/95.

²⁴⁰⁷ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Telephone conversation SMG with Col Brantz, 04/08/95.

²⁴⁰⁸ DOPKlu STAOOPER, no No. SCO to PDOP, draft replies to parliamentary questions, undated.

²⁴⁰⁹ *AP Worldstream*, 10/07/95; Monday 08:32 Eastern Time; *United Press International*, 11/07/95.

headquarters, such as Sector North East and Dutchbat. Adequate knowledge about the procedural aspects of the deployment of air power was evidently lacking there. The Sector North East headquarters had, for instance, no longer an Air Liaison Officer.

The Netherlands Airforce also deduced from the debriefing report for the 'large' debriefing in Assen that the difference between air strikes and Close Air Support was not sufficiently clear at all UN levels.²⁴¹⁰ The term air strikes does not appear in UN documents stemming from Sarajevo and Zagreb. Those involved within these staffs also deny ever to have uttered the words. The term Close Air Support was also the term used in RNLA Crisis Staff logs. Lieutenant Colonel M.C.J. Felix of RNLA Crisis Staff, attending the Defence Crisis Management Centre during those days as liaison officer, could not remember that the term air strikes was ever used in The Hague.²⁴¹¹ Dutch UNPROFOR officers from Zagreb and Sarajevo also only ever spoke of air support to the Defence Crisis Management Centre.²⁴¹² The RNLA Crisisstaf log listed as its last entry on 10 July that Lieutenant Colonel De Ruiter had telephoned that Close Air Support would be available from 06.00 hours on 11 July onwards.

The question is therefore where the use of the term air strikes originated. A clue is the first entry in the RNLA Crisis Staff log on 11 July which was a message from Brantz in Tuzla in which he announced that the Time over Target of the aircraft was 06.50 hours, and that they 'would attack in six waves.'²⁴¹³ Voorhoeve remembered that at one time the idea took hold in the Defence Crisis Management Centre that a large number of NATO aircraft would carry out a 'massive air campaign' and would eliminate some forty targets simultaneously. It would seem that the term 'air attacks' is creeping in at this stage.

Voorhoeve could not remember precisely when the idea of a 'massive air campaign' took hold exactly. He thought that it had been late in the evening on 10 July, or early in the morning on 11 July, and thought that the source of the idea had been Brantz in Tuzla.²⁴¹⁴

Colonel Smeets, Deputy Commander of RNLA Crisis Staff, agreed that everybody within the Royal Netherlands Army top had expected 'an enormous bang' from the 'air attacks', even though this term evidently did not make the logs. The expectation was also based on the fact that RNLA Crisis Staff had received reports, from AFSOUTH amongst others, which indicated the deployment of large numbers of aircraft. Afterwards they felt let down when the results of the bombardments proved to be negligible. By then it had become clear to RNLA Crisis Staff also that from the large number of aircraft only a few were destined for Close Air Support.²⁴¹⁵

Later voices: the so-called Preplanned Requests

Karremans wrote in a letter to the minister of Defence at the end of August 1995 that he had been given to understand on 10 July, when gathering information on air support for the following day, that air support had been provided on the same conditions as during the evening of 9 July.²⁴¹⁶ But a decision had only been made for air support to be available; not that it would actually be provided, on 9 as well as on 10 July. The fact that Sarajevo had been preparing for preplanned air support on 9 July, and that a Blue Sword Request signed by Deputy Commander UNPROFOR Gobilliard had been dispatched to Zagreb at his initiative, could give rise to confusion. This method of requesting Close Air Support by Sarajevo, unsupported by a request from a battalion commander and without a smoking gun, certainly

²⁴¹⁰ DOPKlu STAOOPER, no No. given. SCO to PDOP, draft replies to parliamentary questions, undated.

²⁴¹¹ Interview M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00.

²⁴¹² DCBC, 528. Daily reports DCBC.

²⁴¹³ NIOD, Coll. Brantz.Logbook. RNLA Crisis Staff Srebrenica. No copy found in the RNLA archives. The version in Brantz' possession is an edited version.

²⁴¹⁴ Diary Voorhoeve, p. 183.

²⁴¹⁵ SMG/1004. Report conversation Col Smeets, 02/08/95.

²⁴¹⁶ KabBLS. Letter Karremans to the minister of Defence, via BLS, 29/08/95.

confused Brantz.²⁴¹⁷ A Preplanned Request for air support was certainly not common within UNPROFOR; there was in fact little practical experience in relation to the deployment of air power. NATO may well have conducted tens of thousands of raids since the start of operation Deny Flight, but only five requests for an air strike, and five requests for Close Air Support had been approved before July 1995.

A Preplanned Request in Sarajevo related to missions which could be included in the planning cycle, because the nature of the targets and the operational requirements for the mission were known. But even then requests still needed to go through the normal chain of command, in other words via Tuzla, also via Sarajevo and finally Zagreb. A smoking gun cannot be established in advance, so in that case, Immediate Requests were a more common form: they would allow a Forward Air Controller to contact Sarajevo directly, quickly followed by the usual approval procedures. The bombardments had then to be carried out with aircraft, which were already airborne for this purpose, or with aircraft which were stationed at airfields or on the deck of an aircraft-carrier with a certain degree of readiness.²⁴¹⁸

Colonel Hatton, Operations Officer (G-3) in Sarajevo, had drawn his boxes on the map as part of the Preplanned Requests; these indicated areas supposed to be rich in targets. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command had asked Zagreb for authorisation to attack targets in these boxes. This was rejected by Zagreb, which also resulted in frustration within Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, not least because a detailed explanation for the refusal was not given.

Hatton did not know that Karremans had gone to the Opstina to explain there about the *zona smrt*, the zone of death. According to Hatton, it would indeed have been 'prudent' to leave the areas within the boxes, and to minimize the damage for the ABiH. But Hatton had already taken the ABiH positions and the population into consideration when drawing the boxes on the map. Karremans had interpreted the information wrongly, according to Hatton, by warning the ABiH to leave in order to prevent them being bombed. Karremans seemed not to have made a distinction between 'being available' and 'to arrive' in relation to the aircraft. Hatton said that there was no plan for Preplanned Close Air Support on 11 July.²⁴¹⁹

SACEUR Joulwan did try to breathe new life into the preplanned Close Air Support in later days. He considered that the directions of advance towards Zepa and Gorazde could be mapped in advance, and be taken into account in a box.²⁴²⁰ Joulwan also stated that he had pointed out the possibility to Akashi. Even though that would not have changed the Srebrenica outcome, it would have been possible to deploy preplanned air support at the time that the Dutchbat OPs had detected the Bosnian-Serb advance, according to Joulwan.²⁴²¹

Later voices: the changed air tactics

The sector headquarters, including Tuzla, and the battalions were not sufficiently aware that the shooting down of the American F-16 in June had led to a radically different operating procedure at NATO. There are no indications that the lower echelons had been notified of this in writing. On the other hand, it was less relevant for the battalions: they only requested Close Air Support. The method of execution was of no concern to a battalion commander.²⁴²² The UNPROFOR operations orders did not provide for a request of air strikes by a battalion.

²⁴¹⁷ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Diary Brantz, (version August 1999), p. 131.

²⁴¹⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 424, ops/Micro Files, OPORDER 34/94 – Close Air Support, 23/01/94, No. 301.1/934, UN Confi.

²⁴¹⁹ Interview Rick Hatton, 16/11/99.

²⁴²⁰ DCBC, 1566. Code Feith NATO 1060, 14/07/95, Confi. Joulwan made the proposal in the NATO Council.

²⁴²¹ UNNY, DKPO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 22/07/95, No. Z-1229.

²⁴²² Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

Air strikes in Safe Areas were exclusively linked to Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zones, and they only applied around Gorazde and Sarajevo. All other Safe Areas were concerned exclusively with Close Air Support.

The aircraft could no longer hang in the air as a kind of *perpetuum mobile*, due to the change in tactics. Having been airborne for a few hours above Bosnia or the Adriatic, they were required to pull out.²⁴²³ The ground troops were apparently insufficiently aware of this change in tactics relating to the air war, and they had unrealistically high hopes of air power, as it turned out on 11 July, based on the number of aircraft to be deployed.

Dutchbat believed in the arrival of air support because Karremans had been told this by Tuzla and (in Karremans' perception) by Sarajevo. The battalion believed it because its commander believed it. Moreover, military logic in the mind of many dictated that there had to be a large number of aircraft simultaneously tackling a large number of targets, for the enclave to be retained.²⁴²⁴

The VRS advance had progressed too far by 11 July for air support to be of little use. The battalion and the population felt therefore that they had been abandoned. Expectations had been raised which ultimately could not be realized, and those involved felt they had been made to look foolish.²⁴²⁵ In addition, the air space above Srebrenica was so limited that no more than two aircraft were able to operate simultaneously. Ultimately, there were only a limited number of targets and there were only two Forward Air Controllers. The capacity per Forward Air Controller was limited and only one aircraft per tank would be available.²⁴²⁶

The Dutch F-16s were at the time only armed with 'dumb bombs' (they could not be guided once dropped) (type Mk82 weighing 500 lbs.). This did not mean that such bombs could not be dropped accurately. The computers in the F-16 carried out the calculations,²⁴²⁷ and the bombs could be dropped with an accuracy of ten to twenty metres, depending on the skills of the pilots and the altitude at which the bombs were dropped. This was usually more than sufficient for attacks on military targets such as barracks, depots and vehicle parks but a tank represented a smaller and better-protected target. The Netherlands Airforce plans only provided for the procurement of Laser Designator Pods in 1997-1998, with which laser-guided ('smart') bombs once dropped could be guided to their target.

This removed the Dutch F-16s from the category 'most advanced aircraft' because they were not able to drop Precision Guided Munitions. That is why there had been some talk in June of these aircraft no longer being needed for a Close Air Support task.

Later voices: why Dutch aircraft?

The fact that these Dutch F-16s flew the first mission on 11 July and that the Royal Netherlands Airforce also played a leading role amongst the aircraft which were destined for Srebrenica during the preceding days, was a deliberate choice. It had been agreed with CAOC in Vicenza. As squadron Commander Lieutenant-Colonel J.L.H. Eikelboom said: 'we fought to be allowed to fly in the front line. After all, they were our mates down there'. Vicenza could sympathize with this.²⁴²⁸ The Dutch did surprise Janvier because he heard a woman's voice over the radio: it had to be explained to him that this was a Dutch female pilot at work.²⁴²⁹

²⁴²³ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

²⁴²⁴ Interview E. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

²⁴²⁵ SMG/Debrief. Feitenrelaas [Factual Account of the Debriefing], p.68.

²⁴²⁶ DMKlu, M95077091/1617. Director Operations Klu (MGen G.F.A. Macco) to MinDef via CDS, 04/10/95, No. DOP95.072.078; DCBC, 1251. Note DOPKlu to CDS, 01/12/95, no No.

²⁴²⁷ Interview J. Le Clerq, 18/05/01.

²⁴²⁸ DCBC, 625. Hand-written fax SNR CAOC 5ATAF (Col A.F. Koopmans), 10/07/95; Peter Gerritse, 'We wilden vooraan vliegen [We wanted to fly in front] in *De Opmaat* (December 1995), 6-10; Westerma & Rijs, *Het smartste scenario*, p. 158; Lutgert and de Winter, *Check the Horizon*, p. 406.

²⁴²⁹ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/10/99.

It seems, however, that the American A-10s, also present with their antitank guns and Maverick rockets, would have been more appropriate to eliminate the VRS tanks. Whether the other aircraft were equipped with smarter types of munitions was not important in this case: they could not be guided on their targets as the Forward Air Controllers in the enclave did not possess Laser Target Designators to point out targets. The Fifth Tactical Allied Airforce in fact knew that Dutchbat did not have these.²⁴³⁰

The Royal Netherlands Army signed a lease contract for Laser Target Designators at the end of December 1994 as part of the Dutchbat effectiveness improvement programme, so that the Forward Air Controllers would be able to cooperate with NATO aircraft on this point. The Laser Target Designators were supposed to have been sent to Bosnia with the troops but this did not happen. Demands on training and operation and maintaining the skills to use this equipment with the various types of aircraft were of a level which could not be met in the circumstances prevalent in the enclave at that time. Brantz remained unaware of this; he was under the impression that they were at the disposal of the Forward Air Controllers. This was incorrect because the Laser Target Designators were not present in the enclave.²⁴³¹

Later voices: the VRS on air support

It was a known tactic on the part of Mladic to make one move during an attack and then to wait in order to see how the UN responded, even though he did not do this every time. It was therefore difficult to second-guess Mladic's responses correctly. The UN then struggled with the problem of how to respond because the organisation had no military possibilities at its disposal other than a protest letter or the deployment of air power.²⁴³² The deployment of air power led to extreme anger on the Bosnian-Serb side but with hindsight it seemed not to matter too much to the VRS whether air support was given or not. The VRS assumed that the infantry could not be eliminated with air power, and this assessment was correct.²⁴³³

Close Air Support was only available during parts of the day and night. As the Bosnian Serbs had been able to maintain their Integrated Air Defence system, they could, with assistance from Yugoslav Air Defence radars around Belgrade and in Montenegro, follow the NATO aircraft from the moment they took to the air, they could also establish fairly accurately the time at which the NATO aircraft would have to refuel, and in this way the VRS could make use of the parts of the day not covered by Close Air Support.²⁴³⁴

Mladic had worked out very well how NATO air power operated and had studied the allied air attacks on Iraq right up to the tiniest detail. The Bosnian Serbs knew the limitations and the power of the NATO radar and weapon systems.²⁴³⁵ The VRS was also in possession of the UN regulations, and they knew the procedures.

ABiH Captain Hazrudin Kistic, expert on electronic warfare, thought that the VRS counted on the fact that Close Air Support would not be forthcoming if they could just get close enough to Potocari. The risk that the aircraft would hit refugees or Dutchbat troops would then be too great. The VRS would have been aware of the request by Dutchbat for Close Air Support through listening in, according to him.²⁴³⁶ Support for these statements by Kistic could not be found in the sources.

²⁴³⁰ DOPKlu STAOOPER, no No. Log 5ATAF 09/07/95, 1610Z, 1744Z and 1810Z.

²⁴³¹ BDL 94092387/252. Director of Operations RNLAf to Commander USEUCOM, 1307/95, No. DOP95.050.840/956; CRST. Memo SCIPS to the minister, 23/12/94, No. S/94/061/4497 with comment HAJO to DOP; Interview C.L. Brantz, 11/06/99.

²⁴³² Interview R. Theunens, 08/02/00.

²⁴³³ Interview Milovan Milutinovic, 20/03/00 and 22/03/00.

²⁴³⁴ DCBC, 2478. Code Feith NATO 946, 22/06/95, Conf; DOPKLU. Memo DOPKlu to SCOCIS Defence staff, 10/07/95, No. DOP95.050.141/956, Conf.

²⁴³⁵ Van der Roer, *Frontdiplomaten* (interview Owen), p. 44.

²⁴³⁶ Interview ABiH Hazrudin Kistic, 17/05/99 and 18/05/99.

Later voices: Janvier's role

The complex procedures for requesting air support were a separate factor in later discussions on air support. The hostage crisis in May/June 1995 and the Gorazde crisis had made it clear that rapid decision-making was essential. The facility to make an immediate decision on Close Air Support was crucial and was a task for the commander on the ground. This gave rise to pressure on New York to change this as soon as possible and to simplify the procedures and put the decision-making powers in the hands of the military.²⁴³⁷

The name of Janvier has often been linked to reticence in the deployment of air support. Janvier was indeed very reticent but so had been his predecessors Briquemont, Cot and de Lapresle. However, they had not been confronted with crises such as those around Srebrenica.

The view on the part of the Force Commanders in relation to air support proved to be fairly consistent over a longer period. Reticence cannot be traced purely to the person of Janvier. An explanation should consider several factors, such as the question whether deployment would lead to hostages, and whether the resupply of the population or the UN elsewhere might be at risk. Janvier had already kept Akashi informed over a number of days of the possibility that Close Air Support would have to be provided. As Akashi said: 'Janvier was tormented. He weighed up many factors.' Or as General Van Kappen put it: while Karremans believed in the arrival of massive air strikes, Janvier struggled with the proportionality principle for the deployment of Close Air Support.²⁴³⁸

On the other hand, if Janvier was so torn by the question whether or not to provide Close Air Support, could not Akashi have been able to force a decision? Akashi said on this score that as a civilian he could not have overruled General Janvier: 'I had to respect his opinions.' Akashi himself had never been to Srebrenica, but had insisted on being briefed extensively on the terrain conditions there. So he knew that: 'srebrenica is not very conducive to air action. I had no basis to contradict [Janvier].'²⁴³⁹

Air support at the 'small' debriefing in Zagreb

Once the battalion had left the enclave, it arrived in Camp Pleso near Zagreb (see also Chapter 9: 'The departure of Dutchbat from the enclave'). There an initial brief operational debriefing of Dutchbat was conducted, which is discussed below.

Even during the 'small' debriefing the idea arose that the opinions on the exact circumstances of air support to Dutchbat and/or its refusal were divided. To start with, many Dutchbat troops seemed to have their own interpretation of what exactly air support was, and what could be expected from it. Different variants were bandied about on the question as to who was authorized to enlist air support. C. Klep, one of the debriefers, received the impression that it was not clear to Karremans either. Nevertheless, Karremans as well as Franken had been convinced that they were let down. They had not doubted the arrival of large numbers of aircraft during the morning of 11 July. It did surprise the debriefers that Karremans claimed on the one hand that on several occasions he had requested air support, which in the end had not arrived, while on the other hand he had a deep-rooted conviction that the support *would* arrive at six o'clock on 11 July, and had also reported this to the population.²⁴⁴⁰

The debriefing leader was the Commander of the 11th Airmobile Brigade, Brigade-General Bastiaans. Bastiaans had earlier been Chief UNMO (United Nations Military Observer) in the former Yugoslavia and had sat at the same table as the Force Commander when decisions had to be made on requests for air support. He had experienced in Zagreb how laboriously these decisions would be arrived at and the large extent to which air support was tied to strict conditions.

²⁴³⁷ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

²⁴³⁸ Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

²⁴³⁹ Interview Yasushi Akashi, 25/11/99.

²⁴⁴⁰ Interview Christ Klep, 18/02/99.

Bastiaans held stronger views on the expectation on the part of Karremans and Franken that large numbers of aircraft would arrive. He said to the NIOD that he had established at the debriefing in Zagreb that Karremans, and also Franken, had inadequate knowledge of the possibilities and limitations of Close Air Support, and the difference with air strikes. According to Bastiaans, they lacked knowledge of the UN policy on air support. In his opinion, Karremans should have studied the subject in greater depth, and he could then have been in a position to draw a number of conclusions. For that matter, Bastiaans thought it primarily a responsibility of the senior commanders in the hierarchy, and first and foremost of Sarajevo, to explain the policy and the changes in it.²⁴⁴¹

Other participants in the Zagreb debriefing also confirmed that Bastiaans had arrived at this judgement immediately.²⁴⁴² Bastiaans thought that both Karremans and Franken did not know how to request air support and had not followed the correct procedure. They should never have expected air support to arrive at six o'clock on 11 July. As far as Bastiaans was concerned, this would at most be the moment in time at which the provision of Close Air Support was considered. The debriefers could not get away from the impression either that Dutchbat had missed many of the developments in relation to air support over the past months. This could have been a task for UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, not so much for Sector North East in Tuzla as regional command. Admittedly, Brantz should have updated Sector North East in this respect, taking into account the circumstances, even though Brantz had not been debriefed in Zagreb.²⁴⁴³

According to Karremans, Bastiaans tried to picture the course of events during the 'small' debriefing. Karremans was left with the impression that Bastiaans wanted to put words in his and Franken's mouth. Karremans and Franken gave their side of the story but Bastiaans had other ideas about it, according to him. Karremans said that he had not taken the reproach by Bastiaans, that he had not quite understood what the rules for requesting air support were, as a criticism. But Deputy Battalion Commander Franken had. The discussion related not only to 11 July but also to the initial days of the VRS attack, the bombardment of the town and OP-F in particular. Karremans considered the bombardment of the town a good reason to request air support but in reply Bastiaans said that air support would not have been possible, because the conditions and guidelines on which the provision of air support was based were not in place.²⁴⁴⁴

There were also members of the debriefing team in Zagreb who doubted whether it had already been quite so clear to Bastiaans at that time that things were not quite right in relation to air support; they alleged that the finer points would have not struck him until later.²⁴⁴⁵

The debriefing exposed the differences in thinking between Bastiaans and Karremans in a number of aspects. The differences related not only to air support but also to plans in relation to the OPs: according to Bastiaans, the OPs should have been included in an operations plan for the battalion, and it should also have involved the ABiH. Bastiaans had wanted to see a structured operations plan including integral air support. Karremans, as well as Franken, were on the other hand of the opinion that each OP commander could determine independently whether to abandon his OP when conditions became too dangerous, as well as determine independently whether to make for Bosnian Serb or Muslim areas, depending on what the OP commander considered safest.

This begged the question amongst the other debriefers whether Bastiaans, despite his experience in the former Yugoslavia, was exactly au fait with the conditions in the enclave. The response from Karremans was that he remarked to Bastiaans that the latter had not been in the enclave. Karremans and Franken thought they had a clear idea of the definition of a Safe Area, and whether and how it could, or could not, be defended. Karremans was of the opinion that the enclave was not defensible and that the ABiH was unreliable; Bastiaans thought that the ABiH should have been

²⁴⁴¹ Interview, G.J.M. Bastiaans, 26/10/00.

²⁴⁴² Interview M. Elands, 15/02/99.

²⁴⁴³ Interview Christ Klep, 18/02/99.

²⁴⁴⁴ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 15/12/98, 16/12/98 and 17/12/98.

²⁴⁴⁵ Interview P.M.H. Groen, 17/02/99.

involved in a defence plan. The debriefers had the impression in relation to these differences of opinion that the Deputy Brigade Commander, Colonel Lemmen, was more in agreement with Karremans than with Bastiaans.²⁴⁴⁶

The entire discussion between Karremans and Bastiaans is missing from the report²⁴⁴⁷ of this Zagreb debriefing, which was submitted to the Army Commander, Couzy. The report was no more than an overall reconstruction of the main events, without any conclusions.

Dutch people involved in the fall of the enclave had contact with Janvier on several occasions during the days after the fall but the subject of 'air support' was not raised. To start with, Generals Van den Breemen and Van Baal spoke to him on the evening of 11 July, when the subject was not raised. After his arrival in Zagreb Karremans also spoke with Janvier, and he did not broach the non-arrival of Close Air Support with him either; the discussion was limited to a general chat about the situation. Janvier had said to Karremans that he had been embarrassed about the situation because he not been able to do much for the battalion and for the Bosnian Muslims.²⁴⁴⁸ Finally, Prime Minister Kok also spoke very briefly with Janvier in Zagreb; Voorhoeve was not present. It was an almost perfunctory visit; the emphasis of Kok's presence was on a meeting with the Dutchbat troops, not on a conversation with Janvier.²⁴⁴⁹

10. Close Air Support at the 'large' debriefing in Assen, and later in The Hague

The question why the Close Air Support provided was too little and arrived too late was one of the main issues which preoccupied Dutchbat at the later 'large' debriefing in Assen.²⁴⁵⁰ Personnel at the Military History Section, which had been involved in the 'small' operational debriefing in Zagreb, had already pointed out, in preparation for those who would conduct the 'large' debriefing in Assen, that one of the subjects for discussion would have to be the request for Close Air Support in relation to its actual deployment.²⁴⁵¹ The question why Dutchbat had been refused Close Air Support was also one of the questions at issue for the debriefing inspectors in Assen, General G.L.J. Huijser Retd and former Minister of Defence and Justice J. de Ruiter. Huijser said he regretted that he had not been able to give more attention to the subject, due to the restriction imposed in relation to the period to be investigated.²⁴⁵²

If the intention was to have the question of 'Close Air Support' feature as one of the main issues in Assen, then its consideration in the debriefing report was but a pale shadow of it. No attention was paid to the question what the belief in assistance from the air on 11 July was based on. The procedural aspects of the request and approval process was admittedly touched on briefly but this was accompanied by the comment that Close Air Support could be deployed if UN troops were threatened directly, and that air strikes could be instigated following an attack on a Safe Area.²⁴⁵³ This referred to a distinction which in Bosnia was not tenable in the field. Although UN Resolution 836 allowed for the use of force, it did not define the term. The distinction between Close Air Support and air strikes related more to a difference in the technique of the deployment of air power, and in particular to the level of approval required. On the UN side this was Boutros-Ghali himself for air strikes, and formally Akashi for Close Air Support, in practice generally Janvier. The distinction between these two forms of deployment of air power had therefore nothing to do with the distinction between UN troops at risk and an attack on a Safe Area.

²⁴⁴⁶ Interview Christ Klep, 03/03/99.

²⁴⁴⁷ SMG 1007/23. C-11 Luchtmobiele Brigade to Commander-in-Chief RNLA 28/07/95, No. 172/Conf.

²⁴⁴⁸ Interviews Karremans, 15/12/98, 16/12/98 and 17/12/98.

²⁴⁴⁹ Interview W. Kok, 30/05/00.

²⁴⁵⁰ Interview G. de Groot, 28/04/99.

²⁴⁵¹ SMG/Debrief. Annex J Bundle Debriefing Srebrenica, 30/08/95, p. 15.

²⁴⁵² Interview G.L.J. Huijser, 08/10/97.

²⁴⁵³ Debriefing report, p. 11, §§ 2.24 - 2.27.

Apart from this, the report only mentions that Karremans was convinced that NATO would conduct massive air strikes on the VRS positions during the morning of 11 July, and that he expressed this belief during a meeting with the authorities locally. The report also refers to telephone contact with Sector North East, including a mention at 05.00 hours that morning of air strikes just before 07.00 hours (this referred to the telephone conversation between Brantz in Tuzla and De Ruiter in Sarajevo at 04.50 hours). As far as the rest is concerned, the reader has to be satisfied with a handful of quotes from debriefing statements, which are not analysed in detail.²⁴⁵⁴ Although the Dutch UN officers in Zagreb and Sarajevo were also debriefed, it would seem that the debriefers were insufficiently equipped to shed light on this obscure matter. The explanation relating to the refusal of air support also begged the necessary questions within the ministry.²⁴⁵⁵

The subject of Close Air Support in the process of drafting the letter to Parliament

The letter from Voorhoeve accompanying the debriefing report to Parliament tried to compensate a little for this omission. The letter pointed out that the large number of aircraft could give the impression that the massive air fleet was available for air strikes but that only Close Air Support was a possibility according to current UN policy. Zagreb headquarters assumed so, and only awaited the Dutchbat reports in case the battalion was attacked.²⁴⁵⁶

The Directorate of General Policy Matters and the Defence staff had assembled a number of views which were prevalent amongst Defence, Foreign Affairs and General Affairs during the run up to the parliamentary discussion of the debriefing report. This had been preceded by their own investigation, in order to be able to enter into matters which were not explained adequately in the debriefing report.

The results of the investigation, however, were not reproduced in the letter to Parliament. Defence concluded in respect of air support that Brantz and Karremans had wrongfully assumed air strikes would take place, while earlier UNPROFOR (here referring to Zagreb) had been clear about this point, namely in their warning to the VRS, which accompanied the order for the blocking positions; the warning stated that Close Air Support would follow a VRS attack on a blocking position (referred to in Section 9 in the previous chapter). According to Defence, Brantz and Karremans should have known on the basis of experience of the air strikes at Pale, that air strikes were no longer under discussion. The UN command lines also proved to have suffered communication breakdowns on a regular basis, when concepts had been muddled up. One of the conclusions was that the unfounded expectation of air strikes explained why Karremans had asked the Opstina to vacate the southern part of the enclave in order to prevent the Bosnian Muslims being hit during the air strikes.²⁴⁵⁷ This harsh but nevertheless correct judgement could not be traced in the letter to Parliament. The letter was a great deal more cautious, as indicated above, and did not go beyond stating that the number of aircraft might have given the impression of air strikes.

The two Directorates most involved at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the Directorate for Political and UN Affairs and the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs) analysed the debriefing report. The judgement by the Head of the Directorate for Political and UN Affairs, Kurpershoek, in so far it referred to the subject of Close Air Support, was most acerbic. He pointed out to Minister Van Mierlo in a 'for your eyes only' memo that the 'gigantic misunderstanding' between Srebrenica on the one hand and Sarajevo/Zagreb on the other constituted 'the most revealing and shocking part' of the report. This crucial point raised numerous additional questions for Kurpershoek,

²⁴⁵⁴ Debriefing report, p. 11, §§ 3.41, 3.45 and 3.50.

²⁴⁵⁵ NIOD Coll. Kreemers. Memo from the Deputy Director of Information to the minister, 13/10/95, No. V95019355. The memo also indicated that journalist Frank Westerman had suggested to Member of Parliament Hoekema that Voorhoeve had intervened in order to have the deployment of air power on 10 July cancelled.

²⁴⁵⁶ TK, 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 129 (30/10/95).

²⁴⁵⁷ DCBC, 1220. Memo DAB to the minister, 20/10/95, No. D95/537, Confi.

and the impression remained with him that the report concealed many points as far as the appraisal of Karremans was concerned. According to Kurpershoek, everything pointed to the fact that Zagreb did not want to go beyond Close Air Support. Nowhere did the report reveal what Karremans based his expectation of air strikes on. Karremans allegedly put the offer of an unopposed and safe withdrawal for battalion and population to one side on the basis of this expectation, not giving it any serious thought. Instead, Karremans, on his own initiative, seemed to have sent the VRS an ultimatum containing a threat of massive air strikes. Karremans had wrongly assessed the VRS positions over a period of five days. Kurpershoek continued to say that these were serious errors of judgement for which the Dutchbat leadership was responsible.

Kurpershoek seemed poorly informed regarding these points. Karremans did not give the VRS an ultimatum on his own initiative; rather, the warning from Zagreb, to which Kurpershoek refers, was interpreted as an ultimatum by Karremans (see Section 9 in the previous chapter). The point that Dutchbat and the population were said to have been promised an unopposed withdrawal was also fully discussed in the previous chapter. Janvier immediately rejected the first, and the second was not a concrete offer in the sense that this was still subject to extensive negotiations afterwards. As far as the objectives of the VRS offensive were concerned, Zagreb and Sarajevo entertained similar views, and Karremans should not be blamed for the fact that the assessment was not correct.

Kurpershoek also put forward his view that the UNPF leadership in Zagreb had not had the intention to defend the enclave because they had refused Close Air Support. According to Kurpershoek, Zagreb had acted against the will of the Security Council in doing so but this proposition could not be proven. Underlying the tragedy was the alleged lack of will in Zagreb, and the extreme state of demoralisation on the part of Dutchbat, in the opinion of Kurpershoek. He believed that Karremans 'may subsequently have omitted availing himself' of an opportunity to prevent worse happening. But blaming Dutchbat for the fate of the population and the atrocities committed by the VRS cut no ice with Kurpershoek; and Dutchbat had been left to fend for themselves to a considerable extent by Zagreb.²⁴⁵⁸ Kurpershoek subsequently submitted his assessment to Defence in a more sober, and slightly more considered, form.

The Ministry of General Affairs also assessed the debriefing report, along with the supplementary investigation. The 'misunderstanding or breakdown in communication' between the commanders in Srebrenica on the one hand and Zagreb/Sarajevo on the other was one of the most delicate sections of the debriefing report, as Council Advisor J.P.M.H. Merckelbach also admitted in a note to Prime Minister Kok. Merckelbach wondered whether the erroneous expectation on the part of Karremans was not also a consequence of his contacts with The Hague; he would not be surprised if Karremans had felt himself encouraged in his belief because The Hague had also been preoccupied with the arrival of massive bombardments as expected by Karremans.

There is no evidence for this hunch on the part of Merckelbach. There had indeed been speculation in The Hague on the possibility of an air strike, and on the question whether allies knew where exactly the VRS artillery was located through intelligence. At the Defence Crisis Management Centre in The Hague, officials wondered whether the artillery could indeed be eliminated in one go by a gigantic aircraft fleet. But as far as the Defence Crisis Management Centre was concerned, it ended there.²⁴⁵⁹ It was not discussed with Karremans. The extent to which The Hague had put pressure on Zagreb/Sarajevo to provide air support *or otherwise* should also be included in a political assessment of the events in Srebrenica, according to Merckelbach. This was another reason Merckelbach was surprised that personnel at the Hague staffs (and at this point Merckelbach will have thought of the Defence Crisis Management Centre and RNLA Crisis Staff) had not been involved in the debriefing in Assen. Merckelbach and Kurpershoek both wondered whether the belief in the arrival of massive bombardments by NATO aircraft had not kept the idea alive that this backing could have helped retain

²⁴⁵⁸ ABZ, 911.31 Bosnia. Memo Head DPV to M 'For your eyes only', Conf, 12/10/95, No. DPV-1898/95.

²⁴⁵⁹ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97.

the enclave, and that this was the reason the unopposed withdrawal, which the VRS had guaranteed, had not been pursued, even though the latter was not a foregone conclusion.²⁴⁶⁰

Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo were not unaware of the fact that the Bosnian Serbs had promised an unopposed withdrawal to the Bosnian Muslims. They had discussed it even before the fall of the enclave with the Bosnian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sacirbey. Voorhoeve had suggested that the Displaced Persons should be moved to Central Bosnia, under UNHCR command. In response, Sacirbey declined such a preventive evacuation on 10 July, because he considered it did not fit in with the Bosnian political framework. His government thought the retention of the enclaves essential for a united Bosnia, according to Sacirbey.²⁴⁶¹

The meeting at the Defence Crisis Management Centre on 1 November 1995

It was clear even at the time of dispatch of the letter to Parliament on 30 October that this would not end the confusion on the issue of Close Air Support once and for all. The Defence staff therefore made a final attempt two days later, on 1 November, to obtain more precise information on the situation surrounding the Close Air Support. On 1 November the argument at the Defence Crisis Management Centre meeting (in the bunker) went that the debriefing in Assen had not created sufficient clarity, also because confrontation had been avoided in the case of conflicting statements. A rather distinguished assembly attending this meeting was to provide clarity. Those present included Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen, his Deputy Schouten, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Operations Hilderink, Army Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army Couzy, Nicolai (at that time Deputy Chief of Operations), Director of the Directorate of General Policy Matters De Winter and UN officers Nicolai, Brantz, De Jonge and De Ruiter. Conspicuous by their absence from this list were Karremans and Franken; the report does not give a reason.

The question to be answered was again whether air strikes or Close Air Support had in fact been at issue on 11 July. UNPF Chief of Staff Kolsteren, who was not present at this meeting, had announced in advance that only Close Air Support had been mentioned in Zagreb, and this would only be given if Dutchbat was attacked (the smoking gun principle). Nicolai did attend, and he also indicated that Close Air Support could only be given in response to a smoking gun. He said that Janvier had been extremely reticent, and had not wanted to proceed too soon with the use of force. Nicolai also pointed out that the authority for air strikes had continued to lie with New York. Brantz countered this by saying that it made not much difference to a commander on the ground whether the deployment of air power was termed Close Air Support or air strikes; he merely required support. This was also the stance the absent Karremans had taken. Brantz supposed that the request to Karremans from the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo on 10 July to submit targets had given the battalion commander the idea that there would be air strikes, as well as the fact that a fleet of forty aircraft were involved. The idea was also prompted by the 'ultimatum' (Brantz) that the VRS had been set on 9 July, namely that air strikes would follow if the VRS did not retreat. Brantz was wide of the mark here because the warning (not an ultimatum) only referred to Close Air Support. Brantz and De Jonge did indeed believe that Karremans could have known that air strikes were out of the question; he could have guessed this from the Post Air Strike Guidance dated 29 May, and De Ruiter had told him so again on 6 July.²⁴⁶²

The Post Air Strike Guidance by General Smith, however, did not indicate that Close Air Support was absolutely out of the question following the hostage crisis. Although the guidelines hinted at caution, they also indicated that violence could be deployed as a last resort if necessary; in practice, the obstacles to new air strikes were greater than for the deployment of Close Air Support. The main

²⁴⁶⁰ AZ. Memo J.P.M.H. Merckelbach to the Prime Minister, 19/10/95, No. 2028/95M007773.

²⁴⁶¹ DCBC, 631. Code Van Mierlo Circ. 425, 10/07/95.

²⁴⁶² DCBC, 1281. Notes on the meeting dated 01//99 relating to the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995, no date.

indication in this directive was that the execution of the mandate came second to the safety of UN personnel. Janvier's instructions to Smith, which also preceded this directive, demanded reticence in the use of force and the deployment of air power. UNPROFOR should resist the temptation to use force, except in the case of self-defence, according to Janvier. Whether this should be interpreted in the sense that a 'smoking gun' attacking a unit would first have to be identified, cannot be deduced from the instruction; Janvier's letters in which he stated his policy were not distributed down to the level of Sector North East or to Dutchbat. The intentions behind the directives will therefore have been known better in Zagreb and Sarajevo than in Tuzla and Srebrenica.²⁴⁶³

During the continued discussion at the Defence staff on 1 November, General Couzy recalled that the supposed 'ultimatum' and the number of aircraft to be deployed gave rise to the idea in the Netherlands also, that something big was about to happen. Voorhoeve also confirmed that this expectation was prevalent in the Hague bunker. As a result, expectations in Srebrenica, Tuzla and The Hague were completely different to those in Zagreb and Sarajevo. The difference in perception between Dutchbat and Tuzla on the one hand, and Sarajevo and Zagreb on the other, only came to light when Close Air Support was not forthcoming during the morning of 11 July. Karremans then proceeded to request Close Air Support, in accordance with the procedure.

The deliberations on 1 November in the Hague bunker did not manage to arrive at the core question, namely how was it possible that such different perceptions prevailed in relation to air support on 11 July? Journalists managed to penetrate to these evaluating confidential 'bunker discussions', even though Deputy Chief of Defence Staff Schouten had requested to keep matters private. Journalist Frank Westerman had called the Directorate of Information even while the discussion was under way, in order to ask what the discussion in the Defence Crisis Management Centre was about. This resulted in an investigation by the Dutch Military Police into the so-called 'bunker leak' (See also Part IV, Chapter 8).²⁴⁶⁴

A new letter to Parliament

The debriefing report, once it reached Parliament, led to a large number of questions by Members of Parliament to the Ministers of Defence and of Foreign Affairs. The answers reached Parliament on 30 November and were largely repeats of views voiced previously; the Hague view remained unchanged in that technical information from the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo on the numbers of aircraft, and the order to Dutchbat to draw up an inventory of largish numbers of targets had caused the misunderstanding in Tuzla and at Dutchbat that massive air strikes were being prepared. This was the reason the battalion had expected massive air strikes on 11 July; only when it became evident that these were not forthcoming did Karremans apply for air support.²⁴⁶⁵

The Ministry of Defence deduced from this that headquarters were not cooperating efficiently and were not adequately staffed, which might have led to confusion on the distinction between Close Air Support and air strikes. This requires refinement: the confusion existed at the lower headquarters in Tuzla and Potocari, rather than in Sarajevo and Zagreb, and then mainly between the Dutch themselves.

With hindsight, Minister Van Mierlo was surprised that Karremans had had such unequivocal faith in air strikes, and had ignored the lessons learned by the hostage taking. Karremans should at least have had reservations on the dependability of air power, according to Van Mierlo, and should have had an idea of the complex structure of the double key. Karremans, in Van Mierlo's opinion, had needed only to keep up to date with the reports on the hostage crisis in order to arrive at these conclusions. He

²⁴⁶³ SMG 1004. UNPROFOR Directive 2/95, 29/05/95, UN Confidential; NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Letters Janvier to Smith, 02 and 27/06/95.

²⁴⁶⁴ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97; DCBC, 1281. Notes on the meeting dated 01/11/95 on the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995, no date.

²⁴⁶⁵ TK, 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 134 (30/11/95).

added: 'Perhaps one's awareness becomes restricted if one finds oneself over there to do that job. In that case one should be assisted by people who are deemed not to suffer from such restricted awareness.'²⁴⁶⁶ Karremans was not backed on this point, at least not by The Hague. Knowledge there of the procedures to enlist air power was not exactly extensive, so that one wonders whether it would have been sufficient. Karremans did not ask for this in The Hague either; instead he consulted commanders immediately superior to him, especially Brantz. But Karremans landed from the frying pan into the fire by relying on his reports, because Brantz had the same incorrect expectations in relation to air assistance as Karremans himself. This did not absolve Karremans from the obligation to arrive at his own assessment on such an important issue. But it would have been better if Tuzla and Srebrenica had been fully aware of the problems surrounding the deployment of air power before the days in July when it mattered.

Views in hindsight on the Forward Air Controllers

The fact that two Dutchbat Forward Air Controllers, Voskamp (active for some time as Windmill 02) and the Forward Air Controller who broke down in the morning of 10 July, had not performed as well as might have been expected, was no secret within the battalion. This became evident even at the 'small' debriefing in Zagreb. Virtually nothing was said about the role of the JCOs and the commandos as substitute Forward Air Controllers during the 'small' debriefing.²⁴⁶⁷

Experiences with the two Forward Air Controllers had not been altogether favourable, even during the period prior to the fall, and the battalion viewed them with a certain measure of suspicion. They had to be available at all times, and were therefore excused guard duty, they did not need to go on foot to OPs because of the equipment they carried, and they seemed to be very much a law unto themselves.²⁴⁶⁸ Their commander, Second Lieutenant F.S. Fundter, had not been able to return to the enclave following his leave. He had recommended that the two, as 'genuine' Forward Air Controllers, give further training to the commandos as substitute Forward Air Controllers but the Forward Air Controllers had not actually done so. This was also resented by the battalion.²⁴⁶⁹

There was some trouble after one of the Forward Air Controllers had overslept before a trip to an OP. He was woken up roughly by the Commander of the Forward Air Controllers, and promptly filed a complaint on account of the Commander's use of force. The Forward Air Controller in question then reported sick during the trip to the OP, and returned to the compound. This created bad feelings in the battalion.

The reputation of Forward Air Controller Voskamp within the battalion suffered badly in retrospect from events around the fall. This seemed not altogether justified; Voskamp at least remained active as a Forward Air Controller when things started to hot up, in contrast to his colleague, who broke down during the shelling of the compound in Potocari, and who was no longer operational afterwards.²⁴⁷⁰

The strained relations with the Forward Air Controllers came to the surface when the blocking position was taken up. At that time arguments arose between Lieutenant Egbers, the Commander of Bravo-1, and Forward Air Controller Voskamp. The Dutchbat troops in the APCs were regularly shot at by a VRS tank. As already mentioned in chapter 6 Egbers and Voskamp argued about the question whether or not they should return to their original position. Voskamp feared troops might be killed or wounded. Experience also played a role, even though neither of these two had experience of war. Voskamp had been a sergeant for twelve years; Egbers had just arrived from the Royal Military Academy. Voskamp also pointed out that he was the only remaining Forward Air Controller, and

²⁴⁶⁶ Interview H.A.F.M.O van Mierlo, 19/05/00.

²⁴⁶⁷ Interview Christ Klep, 18/02/99.

²⁴⁶⁸ Interview, V.B. Egbers, 02/09/99.

²⁴⁶⁹ Debriefing statement L.C. van Duijn, 12/09/95.

²⁴⁷⁰ Debriefing statement L.C. van Duijn, 12/09/95.

therefore should not run any unnecessary risks. Although the commandos had also attended a Forward Air Control course, they did not have adequate practical training, according to Voskamp. He did not yet know at that time that the commandos had also already been directed to the front for Forward Air Controller tasks.²⁴⁷¹ With hindsight, Voskamp believed that he had not acted correctly by entering into a discussion with his superior.

Chapter 6 stated that Egbers received an order on the afternoon of 10 July to join the other YPRs who had already retreated to the town of Srebrenica . The blocking position was therefore moved towards the town. This order came at an inopportune time, as Close Air Support was imminent, according to Voskamp, and moving targets in particular had to be watched. Voskamp was against returning to the town in the valley, as a Forward Air Controller could accomplish little in a valley, from where he was not able to see anything.

Voskamp therefore initially refused to accompany the blocking position back to the town, and he asked Egbers for protection. In the end he decided not to stay behind after all, because of continuous shooting by the VRS and ABiH. So the group finally left for the town.²⁴⁷² A few Dutchbat soldiers present commented that Voskamp was upset and were of the opinion that this was an additional reason for his failure to guide an aircraft to the target on 11 July.²⁴⁷³

Voskamp believed that his performance had wrongly been put in a bad light and that the debriefing report also gave a one-sided picture because many Dutchbat troops had believed that his performance was below par. The accusations particularly related to the point that he had allegedly not played any role in guiding the aircraft to their targets on 11 July, and that the commandos' Tactical Air Control Party had undertaken that task (in reality Voskamp and a commandos' Forward Air Controller had simultaneously and independently tried to guide the aircraft to their targets in a not altogether felicitous fashion, as mentioned in the previous chapter). This resulted in an appraisal which was not exactly favourable. Voskamp appealed against the report, with the result that the RNLA Advisory Board for the Settlement of Administrative Disputes destroyed the performance report following a thorough and time-consuming investigation. It is beyond the scope of this work to report on the investigation in detail but the committee was not convinced beyond any shadow of doubt that Voskamp 'could no longer cope', which had been the basis for the performance report. The question as to which of the two Forward Air Controllers had had the best view of the target (this could no longer be established) and the fact that both had lost radio (UHF) contact with each other also played a role. The committee judged that Voskamp *had* been active as a Forward Air Controller, had issued actual instructions to the F-16s, and for the rest it agreed with the verdict of the Air Force Commander in question that the deployment of the F-16s had succeeded partly due to the contribution made by both Forward Air Controllers.²⁴⁷⁴

Voskamp believed that the lack of understanding had arisen largely because Dutchbat troops did not know exactly what the job of a Forward Air Controller implied. The job involved identifying targets and monitoring their position from time to time until the aircraft arrived. Egbers, on the other hand, was of the opinion that Voskamp had been assigned to his blocking position and therefore was under his command. Egbers in turn could conceive that the task of the Forward Air Controller did not require him always to be at the front of the blocking position but unfortunately Voskamp no longer had his own YPR, the engine of which had overheated, due to an error by the driver.²⁴⁷⁵

The state of mind Voskamp was in also played a role in Egbers' opinion. He considered that Voskamp at one time had seemed to act much like a 'zombie'. Voskamp partly confirmed this; he blamed lack of sleep, tension and uncertainty. Voskamp subsequently suspected that Egbers had declared him 'no longer available for work' for this reason, and that the commandos thereafter had

²⁴⁷¹ Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

²⁴⁷² Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

²⁴⁷³ Debriefing statement Soldier 1st Class A. Hagenaars, 14/09/95.

²⁴⁷⁴ NIOD, Coll. Voskamp. RNLA Advisory Board for the Settlement of Administrative Disputes , 17/06/96, No. 6001/96.

²⁴⁷⁵ Interview, V.B. Egbers, 02/09/99.

received the order to act as Forward Air Controllers. This was not correct, the commandos had been deployed as Forward Air Controller before, on 10 July.

Another misunderstanding was also said to play a part. At one time Egbers thought that Voskamp had requested leave to return to the compound, while Voskamp had meant position Bravo-1, as there was a good view of the surroundings from there.

It is impossible to establish to what extent some measure of competition between Voskamp and the commandos played a role in the later conceptualisation on the performance by the Forward Air Controllers. The idea that competition existed cannot be excluded. Commandos liked to see Forward Air Control as part of their task; it meant attending an attractive training course in Canada, where the trainee was allowed to fly in F-16s.²⁴⁷⁶

The relationship between the commandos and the battalion leadership was also far from ideal. The commandos believed that their skills, in particular in relation to reconnaissance, were not utilized to the full by Karremans. The relationship between the three British Joint Commission Observers (JCOs) assigned to the battalion on the one hand, and Dutchbat on the other, was not ideal either. There was suspicion and animosity between Dutchbat and these JCOs; the latter attributed this to the poor information provided to Dutchbat on their role. Information on the JCOs was lacking in other respects too. At the time, the Defence Crisis Management Centre, for instance, did not know of the JCOs' presence of in the enclave.

JCOs considered on the whole that Dutchbat 'put up a reasonable performance'. There had been examples where the JCO Commander and Karremans had not seen eye to eye. The JCOs had witnessed a number of courageous acts by young soldiers in particular. They concluded their assessment of Dutchbat with the statement that there could not have been any question of a defence of the enclave, due to the lack of military resources.²⁴⁷⁷

11. A retrospective at the blocking positions and the Rules of Engagement

The concept of the blocking positions had been that Dutchbat had to prevent a VRS advance to Srebrenica using the resources at its disposal which had not been carried out in the way the higher echelons in Zagreb and Sarajevo had intended. It was one of these orders which fit the category 'easier said than done.' The peacekeepers were now asked to change from acting 'blue' to acting 'green', and that posed a problem from a conceptual as well as from a practical point of view. The resources available for the blocking positions were totally inadequate in order to halt the VRS. Concern about the safety of the neutral peacekeepers was also difficult to reconcile with a fighting role, within the Rules of Engagement, which had not changed and were still aimed at peacekeeping.

The order was also formulated very briefly and moreover interpreted differently at the various levels. Telephone explanations had been supplied with the order, between Zagreb and Sarajevo, as well as between Sarajevo and Srebrenica, and within Dutchbat. These explanations were not recorded, and it cannot be determined exactly how much scope there was for a different interpretation of the order and whether all consequences of the order had been discussed thoroughly with the higher levels.

Nicolai called Karremans about the order. Karremans did not ask for further clarification of the order but did object to it: he considered a defensive battle not feasible in the circumstances. It would also put the lives of Dutch military troops at risk while the battalion would not have been able to turn the situation around against the superior VRS power. There was little discussion on the essence of the order between Karremans and his deputy Franken on the one hand, and the Commander of B company, Groen, on the other. This also left room for an individual interpretation on the part of

²⁴⁷⁶ Interview R. Voskamp, 08/10/98.

²⁴⁷⁷ Interview C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00; confidential information (1).

Groen. Nevertheless, Karremans was of the opinion that Groen had carried out the instructions of the battalion staff in broad lines.²⁴⁷⁸

The concept of the blocking position was all in all not sufficiently unambiguous, and ultimately proved unworkable. Feedback between the various levels, from Janvier down to the company commander in charge of the execution of the order, was poor. This was the reason for different interpretations of the assignment.

The situation in Srebrenica was the subject of a discussion on 10 July in the UN Security Council. There the question also arose what exactly was meant by the order to set up blocking positions. The Security Council was not clear whether self-defence on the part of the UN troops, or actual defence of a Safe Area was at issue. The Security Council also noted that the Bosnian Serbs were not asked to move their troops and vehicles from the enclave in the warning issued.²⁴⁷⁹

In practice, the VRS activities did not lead to the unequivocal 'smoking gun' which was required for a decision to deploy Close Air Support. On the one hand, this was a result of the cunning positions taken up by the VRS in relation to Dutchbat, and on the other of the withdrawing movements by the blocking positions which prevented an actual confrontation. Even though Lieutenant Egbers was shot at by the VRS, he did not believe that the VRS deliberately shot at Dutchbat.²⁴⁸⁰ Neither did the Dutchbat liaison section gain the impression that the VRS was aiming to shoot at UN units.²⁴⁸¹

Karremans was, in retrospect, extremely critical about the order to take up the blocking positions, and he was also scathing in relation to the support he was given by UNPROFOR during the fall of the enclave. Karremans believed that the higher echelons had made a mistake in not responding to the shelling on 6 July and subsequent days. Both UN compounds had been under fire several times and the population within the Safe Area had been attacked directly. The blocking position was attacked on 10 July and this had not elicited any response either. Karremans stated that he had never received any explanation of the inactivity by the higher echelons.²⁴⁸²

As far as the blocking positions were concerned, Karremans even went so far as to state that someone had 'flipped', meaning his army colleagues in the higher UN staffs. Karremans' wrath was aimed primarily at De Jonge. Karremans saw him as the spiritual progenitor of the plan for the blocking positions. The Battalion Commander ignored the fact that ultimately it was Janvier who issued the order.

Karremans reproached De Jonge that he had not weighed up the feasibility of the order and the risks which accompanied it. The order was doomed to failure in Karremans' opinion, because the unit which had to carry out the order was operationally and from a logistical point of view not capable of conducting a defensive fight. Dutchbat was not able to defend itself, according to him, let alone the population. Karremans also reproached De Jonge that the latter seemed to have forgotten what the tactical rules said about the defensive battle.²⁴⁸³ Karremans called the consequences of the order to take up the blocking positions 'possibly disastrous' and expressed his bitterness about the fact that colleagues in the Royal Netherlands Army organisation were instructing men and women at the blocking positions, who according to him were 'too good to be sacrificed', which might occur due to a 'lack of decisiveness, insight and action', particularly in Zagreb. This, and the entire aftermath of Srebrenica, had nearly caused him to decide to leave the Royal Netherlands Army.²⁴⁸⁴

One of these colleagues, Kolsteren, thought that Karremans should not have opposed De Jonge, as the latter was in a position completely different from Karremans' own. Karremans received his orders from Sarajevo and via Tuzla. Kolsteren was of the opinion that Karremans could 'say what

²⁴⁷⁸ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Correspondence Karremans, 25/11/00.

²⁴⁷⁹ DCBC, 681. Code Biegan 603, 11/07/95.

²⁴⁸⁰ Interview V.B. Egbers, 02/09/99.

²⁴⁸¹ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (42).

²⁴⁸² Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 25/06/98.

²⁴⁸³ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 176-77.

²⁴⁸⁴ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 176-77.

he wanted but there are no other indications than that the situation worsened very rapidly indeed, almost invitingly so. He may be annoyed, but he should first examine whether the blame lay not with him', according to UNPF Chief of Staff Kolsteren.²⁴⁸⁵

Karremans again listed the reasons in his book why in his opinion the blocking positions, which must be set up with six armoured cars and fifty infantry troops, were doomed to failure, in order to clarify his objections. The personnel had had to depart for the positions at night, which caused the noise made by the APCs to carry a long distance. The VRS knew therefore of their arrival. Cover for personnel and vehicles could not be built through lack of time, lack of equipment and the condition of the soil. This also applied to alternative and secondary positions. The white armoured vehicles could hardly be camouflaged. There were no natural obstacles in the front and at the flanks of the positions, and fire support was not available, neither were long-range anti-tank rockets. Ammunition for small-bore weapons and the machine guns was inadequate, and resources to compile a reserve battalion were lacking. There was no time to set up the blocking position in the dark, and finally the positions had not been reconnoitred, causing units to get lost and vehicles to run off the road. According to Karremans all this caused so much delay before the order could be executed that even Close Air Support could no longer compensate for it.²⁴⁸⁶

Brantz, as Sector North East's 'acting commander', saw the blocking position as a green order for a blue unit. Units equipped and trained, and consequently prepared for peacekeeping could not and should not be expected to go into battle, in his opinion. If the blocking position was to become the trigger for the deployment of the NATO air force, then Brantz, just like Karremans, saw this as a 'dangerous, unnecessary and incorrect assignment'. This also led to a discussion between Brantz in Tuzla and Nicolai in Sarajevo but without any result.²⁴⁸⁷ Brantz later even used terms such as 'criminal', in relation to the act of having a blue unit occupy a clearly visible position, hence, attracting enemy fire, and thus initiating Close Air Support.²⁴⁸⁸

According to Nicolai in Sarajevo, there had been much debate in retrospect on the order to take up blocking positions. Nicolai recognized that he had been all too aware of the fact that white vehicles were to be used in the blocking positions and that an order had been issued in haste, for which Dutchbat was not prepared. A blocking position would normally be prepared beforehand and they would have operated from well-covered positions. On the other hand, Nicolai pointed out that the terrain was hilly so that positions could be found which were more or less covered. As far as he was concerned, the idea was to issue a response and to help the VRS make the right decision. Nicolai could not say to what extent Karremans had briefed his personnel properly on this point. He stated that it was sometimes necessary to run a risk, and in the case of a further advance the response by the VRS had to be probed at in an early stage.²⁴⁸⁹

Nicolai pursued the issue of anti-tank weapons separately. Long-range anti-tank weapons (two to four kilometres), the TOW, were present. Deployment, however, presented a problem because these weapons required regular servicing, and they could not be serviced any longer because the enclave became isolated (see Section 9 in the previous chapter). The UN staff in Sarajevo knew about the TOW anti-tank weapon situation, because Karremans had reported their condition more or less regularly, and said that he could no longer rely on them. Nicolai stated that he had told Karremans: 'Try to also take the anti-tank weapons with you to the blocking position.' Nicolai did not consider these weapons to be so unreliable that they would explode on pulling the trigger; at worst they would deviate from their course or explode prematurely. But even if this weapon did not hit any targets, it would give a tremendous bang, which would deter the VRS, so Nicolai's argument went.

²⁴⁸⁵ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/09/99.

²⁴⁸⁶ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 182.

²⁴⁸⁷ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Diary Brantz, version August 1999.

²⁴⁸⁸ Brantz before the Van Kemenade Commission, 04/09/98.

²⁴⁸⁹ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99 and 09/07/99. According to Nicolai, General Couzy had not been happy with the situation either.

Nicolai believed that the anti-tank weapons had been taken along to the blocking positions, but had not been fired, possibly out of fear for repercussions. We mentioned in the previous chapter that anti-tank weapons were indeed carried to the blocking positions but that they were not fired. Nicolai refused to comment on this point because he thought it not fair to lecture Karremans any further. Nicolai did recognize that there were reasons to fear the VRS, especially since the opponent possessed much superior military power consisting of heavy weapons and infantry. A short-term heroic action at a blocking position was possible but Nicolai admitted that this would not amount to much if thereafter a Dutchbat compound would be shelled and demolished by the VRS. On the other hand, Nicolai insisted that taking a risk was sometimes necessary.²⁴⁹⁰

The order to set up blocking positions also led to extreme uncertainty in The Hague. This order constituted one of the more difficult moments for Voorhoeve, because he understood that it was 'madness' from a military point of view to block the road using eye-catching white vehicles. The situation which Voorhoeve feared would arise, was Dutchbat carrying out the order, whilst the military in The Hague shook their heads. Even so, a last warning could not have contained anything other than the deployment of blocking positions, as a demonstration that the UN would not let the enclave be run over, according to Voorhoeve. At the same time, Voorhoeve and the military in The Hague hoped that the personnel would be sensible enough to leave their vehicles and seek cover, so that they would not be in a situation where the armoured cars full of Dutch troops would be a target for the VRS.²⁴⁹¹

It had not been easy for Zagreb to comply with the order to set up blocking positions, due to objections in Sarajevo. According to Kolsteren in Zagreb, they only succeeded in getting the order passed 'after nagging and coordinating with Sarajevo.'²⁴⁹² The operations officer (G-3) in Sarajevo, Hatton himself had difficulty believing in the usefulness of the blocking position, but he thought it was not up to him to doubt orders: 'as a soldier I was ordered to do so'. Nevertheless, Hatton believed that the battalion could have done more than it had.²⁴⁹³ Kolsteren did not agree; he considered that Dutchbat would not have been able to do much more with the resources available because it was impossible to set up a position which could not be circumvented by the VRS. On the other hand, he was somewhat disappointed that Dutchbat gave up the positions as quickly as they had. There seemed to be some question of Dutchbat repelling an attack from the south at one stage during the afternoon of 10 July, because the VRS advance halted. This resulted in a degree of relief in Zagreb: at last some serious resistance was being offered.²⁴⁹⁴ This was also the impression which Colonel De Jonge got after he had spoken with a number of freed Dutchbat hostages in Zagreb: 'The attack was stopped as soon as the BSA [VRS] found out that this time UNPROFOR did hold the ground instead of withdrawing after the first fire'. De Jonge reported to Janvier what he had heard from the Dutchbat troops. De Jonge also concluded that the VRS, which had attacked Srebrenica, had apparently received orders to avoid any combat contact with UNPROFOR. The only exception had been a tank firing at a Tactical Air Control Party, as soon as it had been recognized.²⁴⁹⁵

Once the attack had apparently been halted, the VRS circumvented the blocking position, and Mladic was also sighted in the vicinity of Srebrenica. This really made it crystal-clear to Zagreb that they were not confronted with a local initiative and a limited operation but that the entire enclave was at stake.²⁴⁹⁶

Colonel De Jonge, on his part, expected that the order to take up blocking positions would be carried out properly. He stated that Karremans had shown earlier that he tried to carry out his assignment as best he could, despite all the problems his unit faced and the lack of resources. The initial

²⁴⁹⁰ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99.

²⁴⁹¹ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97.

²⁴⁹² NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. Notes COS 3 July-29 August.

²⁴⁹³ Interview Rick Hatton, 16/11/99.

²⁴⁹⁴ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/09/99.

²⁴⁹⁵ NIOD, Coll. Segers. Interoffice Memo G3 Land Ops to FC, 18/07/95.

²⁴⁹⁶ Interview A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, 07/09/99.

impressions De Jonge had of the execution of the assignment had been positive: a unit had been assembled in the night, positions had been taken up, mortars had been put in position, Forward Air Controllers were present, and the personnel had been briefed that this was a 'green assignment'. Reports arrived saying that weapons had been fired, although it was shown later that the shooting had been mostly over the heads of the VRS. All this gave Zagreb the impression that the blocking position had been carried out as good as possible. De Jonge knew also that conducting a real defence was impossible and that simply no more could be achieved with the resources available. De Jonge thus arrived at the same verdict as Kolsteren.

Initially, the presence of the blocking position seemed to deter the VRS infantry but it was shown later that the same infantry could easily circumvent the blocking position. There was no clear 'smoking gun' because the tanks did not fire directly at the APCs. But De Jonge believed that enough shots landed in the vicinity to speak of a 'smoking gun'. De Jonge concluded that the blocking positions had been effective as a method to make Mladic jump one way or another, despite the difficulties; it certainly became clear that the VRS intended to take the entire enclave. This would have justified Close Air Support but this could not be taken advantage of, due to the tardy decision-making in Zagreb, as De Jonge himself admitted.

There remained the negative judgement on the part of Karremans in relation to the blocking positions assignment; this could be explained, in the opinion of De Jonge, by the low level of fighting power on the part of the battalion, which was also diminishing by the week. Moreover, it had been difficult for Karremans to gain insight in what was happening at the UN levels above Dutchbat. According to De Jonge, a factor in the negative judgement of Karremans was also the fact that his request for air support had not been granted immediately.²⁴⁹⁷

The B Company Commander, Groen, judged in relation to the actions by the blocking positions that he had fulfilled his task in respect of UNPROFOR and the population. The enclave could not have been saved anyway, in his opinion, and he had therefore made the safety of the Displaced Persons a priority. Groen was satisfied with the large number of Displaced Persons who could be evacuated from Srebrenica and wondered what would have happened if Dutchbat had not been present. He was also happy with the way in which B Company personnel had carried out its tasks in relation to the blocking position; the strong ones had dragged the weaker ones along.²⁴⁹⁸

As a member of blocking position Bravo-4, set up on the road from Zeleni Jadar to Srebrenica, Lieutenant Mustert was convinced that this had affected the speed with which the VRS advanced. He believed it was not so much the military equipment which Dutchbat put into the field as purely the presence of the blocking position. The VRS had clearly not welcomed this presence as it slowed down its activities. He believed that the problem was just that there always came a point at which the VRS seemed to have had it with the Dutchbat presence, and subsequently became stronger. According to Mustert, their attitude towards Dutchbat was something like this: 'that's it, push off, and if you don't leave now, I'll blow you away.'²⁴⁹⁹

According to Groen, the idea within Dutchbat originally was not that the Bosnian Serbs were actually intending to attack the entire enclave. The battalion was in theory prepared for the eventuality but this did not mean that it was seen as a real option for the VRS to overrun the enclave.²⁵⁰⁰ Mustert also said that the assumption within Dutchbat was that the VRS would not continue the advance, because the Bosnian Serbs could see UN vehicles blocking their way (these were the blocking positions). The Bosnian Serbs were expected to comply with the warning issued. They also had the idea at the back of their mind that Close Air Support would help out in case the VRS persisted regardless. Briefings to Dutchbat troops also always emphasized that Close Air Support would arrive if things started to get out of hand. Dutchbat's task, it was generally assumed, would then be to map the VRS

²⁴⁹⁷ Interview H.A. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

²⁴⁹⁸ SMG 1007/25. Report debriefing Captain Groen, 22/07/95.

²⁴⁹⁹ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

²⁵⁰⁰ Interview J. R. Groen, 14/01/00.

positions and to pass this information on to the higher echelons. Close Air Support would then finish the job because the battalion itself could not do so with the means available.²⁵⁰¹

The dominant thought amongst the blocking positions personnel was therefore entirely different to what Zagreb had thought it to be. Zagreb had thought that the VRS would be given a signal, something of the kind of 'to here and no further'; but the perception of the blocking positions task amongst B Company was that this comprised observation and the reporting of VRS troop movements.²⁵⁰² It also explains why it was pointed out that it was not necessary to send the blocking position ahead in the direction of the VRS just for this purpose, as the Dutchbat reconnaissance platoon was also able to see the VRS tanks and was in contact about this with the Battalion Staff.²⁵⁰³

The subject of the blocking positions was also raised during the 'small' and 'large' debriefings. The report on the debriefing in Zagreb is brief on this point. It mentions a number of factual observations and states that the ABiH barely defended the town and that the blocking positions as well as the Forward Air Controllers were threatened by the ABiH, in an attempt to have Dutchbat fire at the VRS. The report also notes that Karremans as well as Franken described the assignment as a 'green assignment', and that company Commander Groen, following analysis of the assignment, adopted the line that the positions would be occupied by YPRs, and that the personnel had to stay inside the APC as much as possible for their own safety; that in case of a VRS attack firing would take place only over the heads of the VRS, and that shooting to kill was only permitted in response if the VRS targeted them. The mortar (81 mm) would only fire light grenades. The report did not analyse the blocking position in greater detail. It did point out that the instruction to use force had been applied restrictively, and that it had been aimed at the safety of the Dutch personnel, and to prevent victims. For this reason they had fired only high, or low over the heads of the enemy.²⁵⁰⁴ Karremans stated during the debriefing that Sarajevo had never given the order to use the weapons. He also said he had made it clear to the subunits of the blocking positions (B company and battalion reserve) that this concerned a green assignment. Nevertheless, Brigade-General Bastiaans, who chaired the debriefing, added a comment that the execution of the order for the blocking position had evidently been more 'blue' than 'green'. He deduced this from the resources deployed and the instruction about using force.²⁵⁰⁵

The draft report of the 'small' debriefing was discussed at the end of July in Schaarsbergen, together with the debriefers from Zagreb: Bastiaans and his staff, as well as Royal Netherlands Army Military History Section personnel. The assembly certainly proved it could identify the weak points in relation to the blocking positions but this was not recorded in the report.

Bastiaans appeared to consider it a problem that Karremans, Franken and Groen each had attached their own interpretation to the order to set up blocking positions. According to Bastiaans, the order had been to prevent further break through and advance of the VRS with the resources available. This seemed to have been reduced in practice to the use of a mortar with light grenades, and responding to targeted fire. The question whether Karremans' order had been so unclear that it allowed for such an interpretation, or perhaps even whether an order had not been obeyed, was not answered in Bastiaans' opinion. Bastiaans realized that the decision to have Dutchbat carry out an active defence, with the risk of deaths amongst the personnel, was passed on from UNPF in Zagreb to UNPROFOR in Sarajevo like a hot potatoe, and via Karremans to Groen. The latter had determined how much risk he was prepared to expose his personnel to. It begged the question why Groen had not gotten back to Karremans to ask for clarification of the order. On the other hand, there was no doubt that this was not the only vague order issued by the battalion leadership, so that B Company received and appropriated more leeway to act independently.

²⁵⁰¹ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

²⁵⁰² Debriefing statement Soldier 1st Class A. Hagens, 14/09/95.

²⁵⁰³ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

²⁵⁰⁴ SMG 1007/23. Commander 11 Airmobile Brigade to Commander in Chief RNLA, 28/07/95, No. 172/Confi.

²⁵⁰⁵ SMG 1007/23. Report debriefing C-Dutchbat III, Lt-Col Karremans, 22/07/95.

The assembly also considered that Karremans was to blame for the fact that he did not grab the opportunity to go through the plans, or to clarify them, with Groen during the night from 10 to 11 July, on the way to Srebrenica for a discussion with the ABiH and the Opstina. He had even passed the B company compound on his way. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Karremans did call in at the B company compound on his return to Potocari but the discussion was limited to the arrival of the supposed air strikes the next morning.

Bastiaans considered it a mistake of an entirely different order that Karremans had confirmed the 'green' character of the assignment while in fact it remained 'blue'.²⁵⁰⁶

The report on the 'large' debriefing in Assen did not enter into such speculations. The debriefing report therefore does not offer any analysis or assessment on the issue of the order to set up blocking positions, and the interpretation and execution of the order. The text of the UNPROFOR order to Dutchbat was recorded in the report, as well as the fact that the battalion designated this order as 'green.' According to the debriefing report this was understood to mean: 'entering into battle if necessary'.²⁵⁰⁷

Otherwise the debriefing report only indicated that Groen decided 'that shooting to kill should not be done immediately, the initial shots should be aimed beside, over or below targets, in order to prevent escalating the fight from the start. Shooting to kill shall take place in response to a direct attack on vehicles or personnel.'²⁵⁰⁸

Karremans was, in fact, in full agreement with the conclusion on this point in the debriefing report, which said that the blocking positions had constituted not much more than a 'symbolic road block'. With hindsight, he thought that it was an order not feasible, which could have resulted in a great many victims. But the clarification of the order in the debriefing report was too brief for Karremans' taste as well.²⁵⁰⁹

The UNPROFOR order issued to Dutchbat itself did not contain the words 'green assignment'. This term was used first in the fax confirming the order from Franken to Groen. Legal experts at the Ministry of Defence considered in retrospect that this was an unfortunate term to have chosen; it was misleading as it could imply that the UN units had lost their neutrality.²⁵¹⁰ The Dutch Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (NJCM) came up with similar objections in a comment on the debriefing report, not least because the debriefing report included the explanation that the term 'green' military action meant that if necessary battle had to be entered into with the VRS.²⁵¹¹ The argument was that the soldier involved in a 'green' operation was at that moment a combatant, rendering him a legitimate target for enemy fire according to the Geneva Conventions. The Geneva Conventions did not prohibit opening fire on UNPROFOR members but this prohibition as referred to here had been laid down in various Security Council resolutions.²⁵¹² This indicates that the concept of the blocking position had not been fully considered, at least as far as its legal implications were concerned, and the caution which Dutchbat and Groen showed in this respect seemed justified.

The letter from Minister Voorhoeve to Parliament which accompanied the debriefing report did not arrive at an explanation as far as the blocking position was concerned. The paragraphs on the blocking position only emphasized that Dutchbat had carried out its military and humanitarian tasks as best as possible, despite the narrow margins, as stated by Voorhoeve. Dutchbat did not have sufficient resources at its disposal to fight the Bosnian Serb superior powers. Voorhoeve referred to the

²⁵⁰⁶ SMG 1006/18. Report of the discussion report debriefing personnel Dutchbat III by staff 11 Airmobile Brigade, Schaarsbergen, 27/07/95.

²⁵⁰⁷ Debriefing report, § 3.31.

²⁵⁰⁸ Debriefing report, § 3.32.

²⁵⁰⁹ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 176-77.

²⁵¹⁰ DJZ. Memo PH-IJB (B. van Lent) to DJZ, 28/11/95, no number.

²⁵¹¹ Debriefing report, § 3.31.

²⁵¹² DJZ/BST. Letter *Nederlands Juristen Comité voor de Mensenrechten* to minister of Defence, 18/12/95.

unreliability of the TOW and Dragon anti-tank weapons and noted that only sixteen percent of the operational requirement for ammunition was available.²⁵¹³

Shooting to kill?

There is some ambiguity regarding the question what the orders to open fire from the blocking positions meant exactly. It is already mentioned that Zagreb had not issued instructions on this which were contrary to the Rules of Engagement, and that in practice Groen issued instructions merely to fire over the heads of the enemy; shooting to kill was only supposed to occur if required to ensure the safety of Dutchbat troops.

According to Karremans, the Rules of Engagement were of a restrictive nature. His policy had been aimed at all times at keeping the spiral of violence as low as possible; Dutchbat would only return fire if they were fired at directly. This had not happened during the entire Dutchbat III period, and in his opinion this also explained why the Netherlands, in contrast to France and the United Kingdom, had suffered so few victims. Karremans had also ordered merely to fire over the heads of the enemy, also in the case of the blocking positions, and neither had Franken issued instructions when to shoot to kill.

Karremans did not discount the fact at the 'small' debriefing in Zagreb that one or two APCs had indeed fired directly at the enemy.²⁵¹⁴ Karremans later told NIOD that the order to fire directly at the enemy had been given once only, after an order had been issued in the first instance to aim beside, over or below the target. Karremans could no longer remember at the time whether the order had been issued by himself or by Franken. He did not know what the outcome of the order was.²⁵¹⁵ VRS Colonel Jankovic reported to Franken after the fall that this had led to VRS losses,²⁵¹⁶ but this was not confirmed.

Deputy Battalion Commander Franken, on the other hand, stated during the debriefing in Zagreb that he had certainly ordered the .50 machine gun to be fired at the enemy but using the mortar to fire light grenades only. The order had been given via the battalion network. At the time this was not discussed, and Franken had assumed that it had been complied with.²⁵¹⁷ Reussing, on the other hand, who was in the APC intended for transporting casualties, thought he had heard Franken order the VRS to be fired at with a mortar (81 mm) over the radio, but that Groen had not done so and instead had fired light grenades from the mortar at the VRS, instead of real (in military terms: highly explosive) grenades.²⁵¹⁸ Groen could not recall at all that Franken had given an order to fire directly at the enemy, either with the machine gun, or with the mortar. He stated that he himself had not issued any orders to that effect in any case.²⁵¹⁹

Whether Franken issued an order to shoot to kill can no longer be established. The B Company log does indeed indicate that Groen ordered the troops to fire over the heads of the VRS troops, and to fire illumination using a mortar from the compound on 10 July. The log does not contain any other reports on orders to fire;²⁵²⁰ allegedly Franken advised Groen to deploy anti-tank weapons,²⁵²¹ but this did not actually take place.

²⁵¹³ TK, 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 128. (30/10/95).

²⁵¹⁴ SMG 1007/23. Report debriefing C-Dutchbat III, Lt-Col Karremans, 22/07/95.

²⁵¹⁵ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 07/09/99.

²⁵¹⁶ Interview R.A. Franken, 31/03/99.

²⁵¹⁷ SMG 1007/23. Report debriefing Franken, 22/07/95.

²⁵¹⁸ Debriefing statement G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95.

²⁵¹⁹ SMG 1007/25. Report debriefing Captain Groen, 22/07/95.

²⁵²⁰ SMG 1004/56. Log B-Company, 10/07/95 18.36. The Ops room Dutchbat monthly record contains mainly incoming and hardly any outgoing reports.

²⁵²¹ SMG 1007/25. Debriefing Sergeant 1st Erkelens and First Lt Caris, 22/07/95.

Finally, on 11 July Franken passed on to Groen over the radio that firing was ‘free’, which means that Groen could open fire at his discretion.²⁵²² The B company log does not mention whether the order was passed on to the APCs in the blocking position. As mentioned in chapter 6 this resulted in firing directly at the enemy by Bravo-4 only but that no results were observed.

The Rules of Engagement in retrospect

Members of Parliament asked several questions on the Rules of Engagement, the ‘green’ order to set up blocking positions and on the firing, whether directly or otherwise, at the VRS, following the debriefing report. The answers by Minister Voorhoeve on these questions were extremely brief; he replied that the usual UNPROFOR instructions for the use of force had applied. These stated that shooting to kill was only permitted when the military or the population for whom they were responsible were fired at with the aim of killing or wounding them. Voorhoeve stated that Dutchbat had acted in accordance with these rules. The order to shoot to kill if necessary had been issued by Karremans in accordance with the instructions for the use of force. The answers did not elaborate on the term used, namely ‘green order’.²⁵²³

The draft answers compiled by the Netherlands Army did do so, and were more comprehensive. They stated that the purpose of the blocking position was to prevent a further breakthrough and advance by the VRS, using the resources available. They also stated that Karremans had reported to Nicolai that the order was not feasible on the basis of the mandate and the means available. The draft answers also indicated that if the order was to prevent a break through and advance on the part of the VRS to Srebrenica, it was ‘clear’ to a commander that he should have defensive positions manned, and conduct defensive combat. Within such a ‘green’ order it was not in itself incorrect to fire directly at the target but it had to be done in compliance with the Rules of Engagement.²⁵²⁴ These draft answers did not find their way to Parliament precisely because such a ‘green’ order to fire directly at the enemy and the Rules of Engagement were at loggerheads with each other, as is evident from the following view on the Rules of Engagement.

The Rules of Engagement, including rules for when UNPROFOR was allowed to open fire, were intended to set limits to the use of force and to indicate in which situations force could be used. These rules had a strong legal character, as the UN and individual countries could be held liable under international law, and an individual soldier could be prosecuted.²⁵²⁵ The rules operated in practice at the interface of policy, legal and operational requirements and limitations. They referred to authority to use force, not to a duty in this respect. The distinction was raised as early as October 1992 when PvdA MP Van Traa referred to the example of what to do when the life of a Muslim woman was threatened in the presence of the Dutch troops. The Rules of Engagement in that case allowed the use of proportional force, but whether force would actually be used was a decision for the soldier present there and then and depended on orders issued to him by his commander.

The Rules of Engagement originally dated from 24 March 1992. They were confidential, which limited awareness of them outside UNPROFOR circles.²⁵²⁶

²⁵²² SMG 1004/61. Ops room Dutchbat Monthly record, 11/07/95 11.17 hours. SMG 1106/18.

²⁵²² SMG 1004/61. Monthly Register Opsroom, 11/07/95, 11.17. SMG 1106/18.

²⁵²³ TK, session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 134. (30/11/95).

²⁵²⁴ DCBC, 1314. Contribution RNLA to parliamentary Questions Srebrenica, 17/11/95.

²⁵²⁵ DJZ/BST. Memo DJZ to CDS, cc BLS, CKMar, 09/06/92, No. JZN92/0336/BST.

²⁵²⁶ BSG, DAB 91-92. Memo DAB to the Minister, 19/10/92, No. D92/447 (with Annex DJZ JZN92/0771/IJB). See: R.M. Eiting & J.S. van Duurling, ‘De aangeliijnde waakhond: Conceptuele gedachten over ‘Rules of Engagement’ [Watchdog on a leash: Conceptual thoughts on Rules of Engagement], *Militaire Spectator*, 167(1998)168-179 for a discussion on ‘Rules of Engagement’.

Abstract problems in relation to the Rules of Engagement

To start with, there were a number of more abstract problems with the Rules of Engagement, which nevertheless had considerable consequences for the execution of the assignment by Dutchbat. They made clear within what limits the battalion should operate.

The Rules of Engagement contained, for instance, the phrase that resistance against violent attempts to prevent the UN force from completing its tasks was permitted; a phrase which the Ministry of Defence indicated as ‘much too open to interpretation and undesirable’.²⁵²⁷ The judgement whether violent attempts were made to prevent UNPROFOR from fulfilling its tasks could only take place under the personal supervision of the Force Commander. In practice things never got that far.

The rule ‘to resist deliberate military or paramilitary incursions into the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPA’s)’ was hardly more specific. Persons authorized to resist a deliberate incursion of protected areas were not defined. This rule was not activated either.

On 19 July 1993, the following phrase was added to the rule referred to above, in order to update it: ‘or Safe Areas’, after these Safe Areas had been established. It was never made clear what exactly had to be protected in the Safe Area, and it remained unclear whether this referred to a demarcated area, or the population within the area. International law did not offer anything to go by either because a Safe Area, in contrast to a safe haven, is a non-defined concept. This made for the curious situation that incursion of the Safe Area Srebrenica by the VRS did not violate international law; this only came into play with the compulsory displacement of the population and the mass murder which followed the fall of Srebrenica.

The last time that the Rules of Engagement had been changed substantially by Zagreb *before* the fall of Srebrenica was on 27 November 1994. It was then made possible to use force in order to defend individuals who had been placed under protection of UNPROFOR.²⁵²⁸ The Rules of Engagement, however, did not give any indication how individuals (or areas) under UN protection should be defended against a direct attack. In practice, UNPROFOR personnel in that case acted under orders of the highest officer on the spot.

A new version of the rules of Engagement was issued on 17 July 1995, following a number of small changes.²⁵²⁹ This version was therefore not yet in force during the fall of Srebrenica. The change was necessary, due to ambiguities which had come to light in practice, and especially in connection with the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force, which would bring along heavy weapons such as artillery and mortars. UNPROFOR would still remain a peacekeeping mission even with this change; the fact that here was something of a paradox was raised in chapter 1.

Use of force in accordance with the Rules of engagement

The possibility to avail itself of force was already available to UNPROFOR even before the change made in November 1994. The UN had a standing instruction that the use of force had to be limited to

²⁵²⁷ DJZ/BST. Memo DJZ to CDS, cc BLS, CKMar, 09/06/92, No. JZN92/0336/BST.

²⁵²⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Krstic Judgement, paragraph 118. The Directive as revised on 19 July 1993 is reprinted in Bruce D. Berkowitz, ‘Rules of Engagement for U.N. peacekeeping Forces In Bosnia’, *Orbis*, (Fall 1994) 635- 646. This represents a UN Restricted document. The classification had earlier been a reason not to submit the Rules of Engagement to Parliament. See also W.B. Kroon & J.C.B. van der Veer, ‘Rules of Engagement: Ervaringen van Nederlandse land- en luchtmacht militairen tijdens UNPROFOR en IFOR’ [Rules of Engagement: Experiences of the Royal Netherlands Army and Airforce troops during UNPROFOR and IFOR], *Militaire Spectator*, 166(1997)463-472.

²⁵²⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 080, File 6.0, Legal, 05/05/95 – 21/08/95. A proposal for change dated from 07/06/95. UNPROFOR Interoffice Memorandum Legal Adviser Lt Col Jost van Duurling to Comd, No. 20/19/95. The draft Rule of Engagement for artillery and mortars indicated that where possible smoke grenades had to be fired first. Although this instruction did not find its way to the approved Rules of Engagement, a parallel can be drawn with the firing of light grenades by Dutchbat.

a minimum, and could normally only be used in self-defence.²⁵³⁰ The Rules of Engagement for UNPROFOR leaned heavily on the traditional peacekeeping concept, and were geared mainly to lightly-armed peacekeepers in an environment which was not hostile to any great extent. They were intended in their practical implementation for individual members of the forces and *not* for operations in a military context, such as the case of a blocking position; only minimum force was to be used at any time. Should it prove necessary to open fire, then warning shots had to be fired in the air initially. Individual, aimed shots could be fired only if the warning shots were ignored. Use of automatic fire (for instance machine guns) was permitted as a last resort. The guidelines assumed that the phrase: ‘United Nations, halt, hands up’ would be shouted out before firing took place, followed by ‘United Nations, stop or I fire’. If necessary, the warning had to be repeated to prevent any misunderstanding, and only then could the weapon be made ready, followed by a shot to be fired into the air – if there was any time left.²⁵³¹ These guidelines have been referred to in chapter 1 of Part II.

These were hardly practical instructions for combat conditions. The instructions in the original Rules of Engagement dating from 1992 were even worse: according to these, the manning, preparing, moving and firing of weapons in the presence of warring factions – as was the case with the blocking position – was prohibited.²⁵³²

Despite these extremely restrictive rules, the UN did not reject the use of force in peacekeeping out of hand. Since the UN operation in the Congo, and later also, force could be used during peacekeeping operations, in self defence, and also when the peace force was prevented from carrying out their mandate. This formulation was again used during peacekeeping operations such as UNEF (Suez Canal), UNDOF (Golan Heights), UNIFIL (Lebanon) and also in Bosnia. Force Commanders seldom used this possibility, however, because they did not want conflicts to escalate, for which they did not have the military means at their disposal either.²⁵³³ But Boutros-Ghali had also already de facto excluded the use of force other than for self defence since the start of the UNPROFOR mission.²⁵³⁴

The UNPROFOR commander in Sarajevo and the Sector commanders were entitled to change the Rules of Engagement but this was not done for the purpose of setting up the blocking positions. The use of force around these blocking positions therefore complied with the then current Rules of Engagement: a cautious position with firing over the head of the enemy, and the use of light grenades. Use of force in this situation was permitted to a Dutchbat soldier in order to defend himself, as well as individuals and areas placed under protection of Dutchbat, against a direct attack but this did not rule out the limits set by UNPROFOR to the use of force. These rules were not intended for a deliberate attack with approaching tanks; they were silent on the question of how to respond when being fired at with mortars or artillery.

Only the new Rules of Engagement dated 17 July 1995 provided for the use of anti-tank weapons and mortars. These stipulated in relation to fire from anti-tank weapons that the rifleman as well as the commander on the spot should have positively identified the target, that both had to have the target as well as the surroundings in their sight, and that they had to be in contact with each other. The rule relating to fire from mortars was that an observer had to identify the target, that the latter should have the target continuously in view, and that the unit’s Fire Coordination Center had to give permission to fire the first shot. Moreover, the rule that multiple weapons could only be used for firing after a UN unit had been fired at, applied to anti-tank weapons as well as mortars. And the choice of ammunition for antitank weapons and mortars had to ‘be appropriate to the target and the effect desired’.

²⁵³⁰ Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to SCR 721(1991), 11/12/91, Annex III, para 4.

²⁵³¹ CRST. Force Commander Directive No. 01, 24/03/92. UN Restricted.

²⁵³² CRST. Force Commander Directive No. 01, 24/03/92, Rule No. 6 Option A. UN Restricted.

²⁵³³ Confidential interview (63). Boutros-Ghali used this formulation in S/24440, 10/09/92.

²⁵³⁴ ABZ, Yugoslavia, res 770 (1992). Code d’Ansembourg 783, 19/08/92.

Protection of the population or of the Safe Area?

There were other discrepancies between theory and practice in relation to the use of force. The subsequent current Rules of Engagement did, for instance, not contain a definition of the important principle of proportionality in the use of force. But the question of how to deal with the use of force to protect the population was of the utmost importance. UN Resolution 836 dated May 1993 was an important guideline in this context, in addition to the Rules of Engagement. The Resolution dealt with the fulfilment of the UNPROFOR mandate through deterrence, by threatening to deploy weapons. An order for UNPROFOR was given 'to deter attacks against the Safe Areas'. This concept, however, was of a different order; in practice it only referred to the presence of UNPROFOR, possibly backed up by NATO aircraft, of which it was hoped that they had a deterrent effect. The resolution never led to a change in the Rules of Engagement already in force at that time; the principle of deterrence was not elaborated there.²⁵³⁵ The crux of this resolution was, however, that it was aimed at deterring attacks on Safe Areas, not at resisting such attacks.

The interpretation by e.g. the former legal advisor at UNPF in Zagreb, Gary F. Collins, implied that UNPROFOR was only permitted to use force in practice when its own personnel was at risk, and not in order to protect the population. Boutros-Ghali had sent a non-official working paper to the Security Council on 28 May 1993, according to Collins, with the question whether the Security Council expected UNPROFOR to use force in an attack on a Safe Area. The Security Council had never answered this question. Requests from Zagreb to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations for guidelines on this point were never complied with by New York. Subsequent Force Commanders therefore considered Resolution 836 as not practicable, according to Collins, and no further attempts were made in practice to make the resolution practicable in retrospect as far as this point was concerned. It therefore remained a resolution without teeth, because the traditional Rules of Engagement for peacekeeping remained in force. The protection of the population therefore lacked a legal basis.²⁵³⁶

Another legal adviser in Zagreb, Dutch Lieutenant Colonel Jost van Duurling, also concluded that Resolution 836 allowed the use of force with the weapons available on the ground and Close Air Support, but both only in self defence. Protection of the population could not be included in the concept of self defence, in his opinion.

But this conflicted with the political interpretation given to it. Van Duurling pointed out that, for instance, the Secretary-General of the UN adhered to the principle that protection of the population was more important than the terrain of the Safe Areas. He considered that Boutros-Ghali did not view protection of the Safe Areas as a goal in itself; it was only intended as a temporary measure which did not mean that UNPROFOR should lose sight of the original mandate. The purpose of the mandate was to allow for humanitarian aid and to promote the peace process. This meant that priorities could conflict with each other, certainly in view of the limited resources at the disposal of UNPROFOR.²⁵³⁷ When asked, Boutros-Ghali concurred that it was indeed his philosophy to protect the population, rather than the territory.²⁵³⁸

These views are not just expressed in hindsight; day-to-day experience in Zagreb included the feeling that UNPROFOR was about the protection of the population, rather than the Safe Area in a geographical sense. But that argument proved difficult to explain externally, as became evident during the Senior Staff Meeting in Zagreb on 10 July, in which Akashi and Janvier participated, and where the

²⁵³⁵ DCBC, 1589. Force Commander's Policy Directive Number (13), Issued 24/03/92, Revised 17/07/95. UN Restricted. The 17/07/95 rules read: 'The amount of force which is reasonable in intensity, duration and magnitude, based on all facts known to the commander at the time, to decisively counter the hostile act or hostile intent and to ensure the continued safety of UN forces or non-UN personnel that are protected by UN personnel'.

²⁵³⁶ Correspondence with former Legal Adviser Gary F. Collins, 05/03/01.

²⁵³⁷ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. 'Briefing on Safe Areas, NAC decisions and Demilitarized Zones', 17/04/95.

²⁵³⁸ Interview Boutros-Ghali, 30/01/01.

issue of a guideline for press briefings on this point was raised. This discussion was continued in Akashi's office and was not recorded.²⁵³⁹ An explicit answer on the question as to what had to be protected, the terrain or the population, has not been found anywhere.

NATO commanders, on the other hand, were under the impression that protection of a Safe Area related to territory. SACEUR General Joulwan as well as NATO Admiral Smith thought so.²⁵⁴⁰ They also saw this as a simple gauge to check whether the parties complied with a truce. Protection of the Safe Area related to both, in the mind of the Bosnian Government; UNPROFOR should not only protect the population, the territorial integrity of the enclave should also be safeguarded.²⁵⁴¹

But the UN opted for protection of the population, rather than protection of the enclave's territorial integrity. This was not understood properly outside the UN organisation, according to an intelligence officer in Zagreb,²⁵⁴² and there were even misunderstandings about this within the UN organisation. It seemed to be recognized in Sarajevo but whether it was realized by many Dutchbat troops is extremely doubtful. According to De Ruiter in Sarajevo, this UN policy surfaced when the VRS passed a particular geographical line, and it was not considered a sufficiently serious violation to reach for a remedy such as air support. It was worth a protest but not much more than that.²⁵⁴³

Protection of the population *was* part of the UN mandate in its interpretation by the Dutch Government. But the Government stated in June 1995, even before the fall of Srebrenica, that the population centres could not be protected adequately even if the UN had large numbers of additional troops at its disposal, this also applied to the Safe Areas. The Ministerial Council then judged that it would have been better if NATO had established the Safe Areas, rather than the UN. The only thing which could really deter the Bosnian Serbs was the deployment of air power, the meeting felt. But the Council realized that this could not be used as long as reprisals on the ground were a risk. Reprisals would become less easy only after reinforcement of the ground troops. This stance reflected the proposals made in May by Janvier and Boutros-Ghali to leave the eastern enclaves due to the vulnerability to hostage campaigns, which did not receive backing from the Dutch side at that time either.²⁵⁴⁴ (see Chapter 1).

The conclusion relating to the Rules of Engagement is that the UN troops were in a vulnerable position, for a number of reasons. They were reactive and were not allowed to undertake offensive operations; they were wholly equipped for peacekeeping, not for situations which lacked peace. The rules were so restrictive that they did not allow UNPROFOR units to operate effectively with acceptable risks. The Rules of Engagement were not suitable for combat situations which UN troops got drawn into, because they were not allowed to use more force than strictly necessary. It was not realistic to expect military troops under fire to read and decipher the respective ten pages of definitions, guidelines and flow charts. The Rules of Engagement were clear on two points only: never to take the initiative in the use of force, and no reprisals.²⁵⁴⁵

In practice, it was the local commander of a single weapon system who had to find his way amongst these rules in difficult and unforeseen circumstances. They also had to account for their application afterwards.

²⁵³⁹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2, SRSG Meeting, May-Oct 95. Senior Staff Meeting, 10/07/95. Another remarkable statement in this connection during the Staff Meeting was that the ABiH had begun an offensive from Srebrenica and was sufficiently strong to defend itself. There is no record as to who made this statement but Janvier had held a similar point of view on other occasions

²⁵⁴⁰ Interviews George Joulwan and Leighton Smith, 08/06/95 and 06/06/00.

²⁵⁴¹ DCBC, 673. UNPF HQ, G2 Military Information Branch, Interoffice Memorandum from G2 to COS, 12/07/95. UN Restr.

²⁵⁴² Interview R. Theunens, 08/02/00.

²⁵⁴³ Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

²⁵⁴⁴ Objectivized summary for the NIOD research of the Ministerial Council meeting held 07/06/95.

²⁵⁴⁵ Response Bruce Berkowitz to Major-General John A. MacInnis, 'The Rules of Engagement for U.N. Peacekeeping Forces in Former Yugoslavia: A Response', *Orbis*, (Winter 1995)97-100; Bruce D. Berkowitz, 'Rules of Engagement for U.N. peacekeeping Forces In Bosnia', *Orbis*, (Fall 1994)635- 646.

There was also ambiguity in relation to the question whether UNPROFOR protected the population, or the terrain of the Safe Areas. From a military point of view the latter seemed the most logical, but this was countered from political quarters: in this way the suggestion could be created that UNPROFOR was not there to protect the population, and that was not the intention. As a result, the question was not answered explicitly, which gave rise to many misunderstandings.

In practice, the Rules of Engagement basically only allowed force in self defence.

The safety of the peacekeepers

In practice, use of force would therefore be allowed mainly in self defence. This was a reflection of the fact that the safety of the peacekeepers was a source of continuing concern within the UN. The policy laid down that the safety of the troops had priority over the carrying out of the mandate, as mentioned in several chapters of this part. Government leaders had regularly asked UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali for guarantees for the safety of their troops. This was a reason for Boutros-Ghali to state that the political aspect of the mandate had been more important than the military aspect. He considered it a matter of political diplomatic psychology to show the Bosnian Serbs that the UN would not stand for any nonsense, but at the same time he said that the UN had assumed that the Safe Areas would never be attacked.²⁵⁴⁶

The commanders in the operational area thought little different on the safety of the troops. General Smith stated in a guideline in March 1995 that the population, in so far it was practically possible in conditions of war, should be protected, but also that any risk to UN personnel while doing so had to be avoided. UNPROFOR did not have a mandate in his opinion to fight a war on the side of one of the warring factions; the safety of the UN personnel was therefore of the utmost importance to Smith.²⁵⁴⁷ Janvier largely agreed. Janvier had asked Kofi Annan on 27 April to let the troop-contributing nations troops know that Akashi as well as himself considered the safety of the UN personnel as their prime responsibility.²⁵⁴⁸ Concerns about the safety of the peacekeepers had only grown in New York and amongst the governments concerned since the hostage crisis at the end of May. Akashi instructed General Smith that the execution of the mandate was subordinate to the safety of the personnel,²⁵⁴⁹ and he received the same instruction from Janvier. Loss of lives merely to defend positions had to be prevented, Janvier emphasized. On the other hand, Janvier wanted real key positions to be retained and defended if necessary. Fire from one of the warring factions would have to be answered but with adherence to the principle of proportionality.²⁵⁵⁰ Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali also wrote in his report to the Security Council on 30 May 1995 that the safety of the UN personnel was paramount.²⁵⁵¹ And on 11 July, just before the deployment of Close Air Support at Srebrenica, Akashi wrote to New York that the protection of the Dutch troops at the OPs and in the blocking positions took precedence.²⁵⁵² These statements by four main players at the UN left therefore no doubt what the UN thought about the lives of peacekeepers.

Concern about the safety of the personnel was no different on the Dutch side. Voorhoeve and Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen discussed this point as soon as the blocking positions were being set up. They arrived at the line that human lives should not be lost unnecessarily. It did not result

²⁵⁴⁶ Interview Boutros-Ghali, 30/01/01.

²⁵⁴⁷ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Commander BHC Directive 1/95, 15/03/95, Conf.

²⁵⁴⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 27/04/95, No. UNPF-HQ Z-674.

²⁵⁴⁹ Confidential information (24).

²⁵⁵⁰ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Force Commander to Lt Gen R. Smith Only, 29/05/95, File Ref: FC/95/0801, UN conf.

²⁵⁵¹ Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolutions 982 (1195) and 987 (1995), 30/05/95, S/1995/444.

²⁵⁵² NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1130.

in intervention on the part of The Hague; the government was confident that the local UN commanders could be trusted to ensure the safety of the Dutch personnel.²⁵⁵³

The Dutch Government therefore did not go as far as, for instance, the Canadian Government; the Canadian Prime Minister issued an order on 13 July to abandon two Canadian battalion OPs at Visoko for safety reasons, which were besieged by the ABiH.²⁵⁵⁴ Minister Voorhoeve had taken the view in the Ministerial Council on 29 May 1995 that if it were to come to a pitched battle between the VRS and Dutchbat, Dutchbat would have to opt for self-preservation.²⁵⁵⁵ There was no battle but neither did The Hague issue any instructions which put self-preservation above carrying out the assignment.

The safety of the Dutch troops played a similarly large role within Dutchbat. Company Commander Groen, for instance, stated that he considered care for his own personnel to be his main task and that safeguarding the safety of the population came second.

Giving priority to the safety of one's own troops is not unusual among military organisations. The general principles of war generally mention safety as the first principle, an essential prerequisite for the preservation of one's own resources and freedom of action. Groen had the impression that the task to protect the population as best as possible with the scarce resources available could be performed best if Dutchbat took the most neutral stance possible. This was a lesson which in his opinion had also been learned from the experience of the predecessors, Dutchbat I and II.²⁵⁵⁶ That is also why the interpretation of the order to take up the blocking positions resulted in the instruction to fire over the heads of Bosnian Serbs. The general opinion within B Company was that this interpretation would have been the best solution, otherwise more victims would have fallen, amongst Dutchbat as well as amongst the population. The – 'green' – order was also thought to have been in conflict with the Rules of Engagement by the B company.²⁵⁵⁷

The death of Van Renssen on 8 July also played a significant role in the thinking in relation to the safety of the Dutch troops. His death, caused by the ABiH, can be seen as a turning point; afterwards, many a Dutchbat soldier was watching the actions of the ABiH just as much as those of the VRS. In that sense the death of Van Renssen had a considerable effect on the attitude of the Dutch troops. Dutchbat troops realized then that they found themselves continuously between two fires, with the advancing VRS before them and the ABiH behind, threatening the Dutchbat personnel out of fear that the battalion would withdraw from the enclave.²⁵⁵⁸

Several incidents occurred after 8 July when the ABiH took a hostile stance against Dutchbat. Shortly after midnight on 9 July the ABiH demanded that a Dutchbat APC drove on some five hundred metres to defend a position there, together with approximately forty ABiH soldiers. Behind the APC was a 'blockade' of ABiH soldiers threatening to throw hand grenades. After the APC turned round anyway, one of these ABiH soldiers threw a hand grenade after the vehicles, without causing any damage.²⁵⁵⁹

The experiences of the blocking positions with the ABiH were different. The ABiH did not actually fire on Lieutenant Van Duijn's vehicles but threatened to do so. One ABiH soldier sat down in front of one of the APCs armed with an RPG anti-tank weapon and said that the group had to remain and start fighting, otherwise the weapon would be fired at the APC. This led Van Duijn to wonder what the Bravo-3 soldiers should do; from time to time grenades exploded so close to them that it

²⁵⁵³ Diary Voorhoeve, p. 100.

²⁵⁵⁴ Interview Barry Ashton Retd, 30/05/00.

²⁵⁵⁵ Diary Voorhoeve, p. 83.

²⁵⁵⁶ *Koninklijke Landmacht, Militaire Doctrine*, (1996), p. 88; Confidential Information (81).

²⁵⁵⁷ SMG/Debrief. Feitenrelaas [Factual Account of the Debriefing], p. 173.

²⁵⁵⁸ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99; interview J.J.C Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.

²⁵⁵⁹ SMG 1004/44. Capsat B1A to 90E, 09/07/95, 00.15.

would be better to leave the personnel in the YPR for that reason; but what if the anti-tank weapon exploded and the personnel was in the YPR? He tried negotiating.²⁵⁶⁰

Lieutenant Mustert at his blocking position, Bravo-4, reported he was fired at several times with small bore weapons and once with a .50 machine gun, or a 12.7 bore. The hits could be heard to land on the YPR but the vehicle was able to withstand this.²⁵⁶¹ The YPR was again fired at and hit with small bore weapons at the time the blocking position was abandoned. Mustert could not establish who had done so but because the VRS was a little further away at that time, the occupants tended to think that it was the ABiH. The same YPR was fired on a couple of times more at a later stage, and the armour-plating showed indeed some dents and pits on the right- and left-hand side.²⁵⁶²

The weekly situation report from Akashi to New York reported three cases of ABiH attacks on the blocking positions: with small-bore weapons, with a hand grenade and with an anti-tank rocket.²⁵⁶³ The fact that the ABiH fired an antitank weapon at a YPR at 10.49 hours on 10 July, which missed its target, cannot be verified from Dutchbat logs. It is possible that this was confused with the threat to deploy anti-tank weapons.²⁵⁶⁴ The ABiH also fired at the British Joint Commission Observers (JCOs). After they were ordered to return to Potocari in the evening of 10 July, ABiH troops who were fighting around OP-H prevented this, until an ABiH soldier who knew the JCOs agreed to let them leave.²⁵⁶⁵

12. First impressions of Dutchbat action

The way in which Dutchbat carried out the assignment to set up blocking positions seemed to have aroused false expectations in a number of cases; as a result, the initial euphoria in respect of the Dutchbat achievement soon turned into disappointment and criticism. The military results achieved by the blocking positions seemed to have been overplayed.

Expectations as to what Dutchbat could do about a VRS advance were inflated even shortly before the blocking positions were set up. An Intelligence Summary mentioned, for instance, that after the loss of the four southern observation posts and the detection of four VRS tanks on 9 July, Dutchbat 'deployed antitank guided missile teams' along the southern confrontation line, in an attempt to halt any further VRS advance.²⁵⁶⁶

Colonel Brantz reported to The Hague on the operations of blocking position Bravo-3; he reported that B Company opened fire using six .50 machine guns when the VRS with eighty men descended in the early evening of 10 July.²⁵⁶⁷ The previous chapter showed that this concerned a threat only, as the VRS troops did not actually descend from the hills.

Akashi reported to New York late in the evening of 10 July that blocking positions had fired over the heads of the VRS but that 'the Dutch engaged in direct firefights with the VRS, using personal weapons and .50 calibre machine guns' when the VRS continued their advance regardless. According to Akashi, the advance was halted as a result.²⁵⁶⁸ The latter was actually a consequence of darkness (little fighting took place at night), rather than a response to action by blocking position Bravo-1, as Akashi seemed to infer. Neither did logbooks or debriefing reports mention the use of personal weapons by personnel in blocking positions in an exchange of fire, as Akashi believed; the VRS was too far away.

Reports by Akashi to New York on 11 July initially mentioned that the Bosnian Serbs had not advanced beyond the blocking positions.²⁵⁶⁹ This statement seemed to be of a positive nature but

²⁵⁶⁰ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

²⁵⁶¹ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

²⁵⁶² Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

²⁵⁶³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Akashi to Annan, Weekly Situation Report, 20/07/95, No. Z-1212.

²⁵⁶⁴ SMG 1004. Interoffice Memorandum G3 LAND OPS to FC, 13/07/95.

²⁵⁶⁵ Confidential information (1).

²⁵⁶⁶ Confidential information (6).

²⁵⁶⁷ DCBC, 648. Coll. Brantz to Sitcen BLS, Sitrep 101900B Jul 95.

²⁵⁶⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 10/07/95, No. Z-1128.

²⁵⁶⁹ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1130.

neither the reports compiled during the last few hours of 10 July in Zagreb, nor the 11 July morning report indicated that the blocking positions had returned to the town during the night: all APCs were parked in the market square.

This assessment outlined by Akashi founds its way to New York in no time at all. Akashi's reports from Zagreb formed the basis for a statement during a UN briefing in New York to the effect that fire from a blocking position had halted the VRS advance during the evening of 10 July. The spokesman added that Dutchbat had not only halted the VRS advance temporarily but had also managed to stop the shelling of the town. However, as said earlier, the level of activity displayed by the warring factions fell sharply after nightfall. It was further mentioned at the briefing that the VRS had taken the B company commander captive, which was incorrect.²⁵⁷⁰ It is not known how New York obtained this information. From New York, such information found its way back to the national governments; for instance, the British Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, who had just taken office, stated in the House of Commons that the VRS launched an infantry attack during the evening of 10 July, and that Dutchbat had returned fire from the blocking position, after which the attack had been discontinued.²⁵⁷¹ And the Defence Crisis Management Centre also heard that eighty VRS troops attacked a blocking position but that the Dutch fired back. This message arrived by telephone from the Deputy Military Adviser to the Permanent Representative at the UN, Major Sondag. Another report which arrived at the Defence Crisis Management Centre from New York indicated, for instance, that 34 VRS troops were positioned at the southern edge of Srebrenica, and that the blocking position there returned fire too.²⁵⁷² Matters were stated less explicitly than in New York in a situation report compiled by the Defence Crisis Management Centre on 10 July but this report also indicated that fire was returned from the blocking position; the type of weapon was not known.²⁵⁷³ Firing had indeed taken place but it will not have been immediately clear to everyone that this was merely firing over the head of the enemy.

Another notable point in the reports by Akashi to New York was that 'the Dutch blocking position is running out of ammunition and, in the face of a BSA [VRS] concerted attack, will be unable to defend their position on the ground'.²⁵⁷⁴ This was not quite correct either; there *was* a shortage of ammunition but this was not the reason why blocking positions had been withdrawn²⁵⁷⁵; it will be clear from the earlier discussion that the VRS facing the blocking positions were simply too great in number. This was the reason for the retreat, rather than lack of ammunition. Akashi had already reported earlier²⁵⁷⁶ that he had been told that Dutchbat had little ammunition. This was strictly correct. The amount of ammunition available to the blocking positions was indeed scant; the APCs carried approximately ten boxes of ammunition each. Firing a few times over the heads of the VRS soon meant two or three boxes of spent ammunition. That strategy rapidly got through the supply available, leaving little for any serious combat.²⁵⁷⁷ Dutchbat, on the other hand, considered the scant ammunition a fact of life with which they had to live with. The B Company logbooks did not report it as a problem. Dutchbat dealt with this in practice by firing the .50 machine gun on the APC at length once only; the crew at a blocking position then made themselves scarce, partly because they were not in a position, nor did they have the means, to continue the fight upon retaliation by the VRS, and partly in order not to risk becoming an easy VRS target.²⁵⁷⁸

²⁵⁷⁰ DCBC, 668. Briefing Note Srebrenica, sent with fax Milad/PVVN to minister of Foreign Affairs, minister of DEF/DS and DEF/DAB, 111842 LT Jul 1995, No. NYV-4334.

²⁵⁷¹ Statement by the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, in The House of Commons, 12/07/95.

²⁵⁷² DCBC, 528. Daily reports DCBC.

²⁵⁷³ DCBC, 607. Annex to Situation Report Peace Operations No. 137/95, 10/11/07/95.

²⁵⁷⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1131.

²⁵⁷⁵ Interview J. R. Groen, 05/07/99.

²⁵⁷⁶ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1130.

²⁵⁷⁷ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

²⁵⁷⁸ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

Akashi stated on 12 July during a meeting at the UNPF headquarters in Zagreb that the Dutch had conducted a strong defence and that their action had been ‘very admirable’. He said that Dutchbat had done well in setting up the blocking positions, unfortunately the VRS had circumvented these.²⁵⁷⁹

Initial praise for Dutchbat from the Netherlands and the rest of the world...

During later days, positive reports on the blocking positions’ performance came from Dutch Defence circles in particular. The Deputy Army Commander, Major-General Van Baal, said in a speech to the NATO Chiefs of Defence Staffs that B Company (which had set up the blocking positions) had successfully withstood the first attack on the town of Srebrenica. The APCs had indeed had to give up their positions but Van Baal emphasized that they had managed to temporarily halt the attack by firing their .50 machine guns and mortars in the direction of the VRS positions.²⁵⁸⁰ Van Baal’s statement too was partly incorrect; the previous chapter has shown that the mortars had not fired live ammunition (merely light grenades as a warning), and that the .50 machine gun was only fired occasionally. The VRS had indeed been brought to a temporarily halt only, as Van Baal said. But this had probably been the result of caution on the part of the VRS so as not to bring about victims amongst their own personnel and amongst Dutchbat troops, rather than it influencing the will of the VRS to take possession of the enclave, as Van Baal seemed to suggest.

Minister Voorhoeve stated during the parliamentary debate in December 1995 that Dutchbat had not surrendered the enclave without a struggle. He considered that commentators who had used the word ‘cowardly’ had not put themselves in the position of the lightly armed troops, in white vehicles, who had been ordered to set up a blocking position – according to Voorhoeve in order to serve as a target for a Bosnian Serb superior force. Dozens of Dutch troops could have been killed or wounded, the Minister said. That would have given rise to a completely different political debate, and he himself would have been blamed for causing loss of lives.²⁵⁸¹

A year after the fall of Srebrenica, Minister Voorhoeve again stated that the blocking positions could have resulted in many Dutchbat victims. The Close Air Support could have resulted in a bloodbath amongst the hostages and the population. The VRS had earlier also shown that giving Close Air Support could have led to shelling the population, Voorhoeve said.²⁵⁸² These statements contained some measure of rhetoric; the fact that the VRS began shelling after the deployment of Close Air Support was not unusual: the enclave came regularly under fire during the days in July. But the VRS had never dared to kill hostages under the UN troops before that time.

Initially there was nothing but praise for the Dutchbat action, including at international level. The Military Advisor to the Secretary-General of the UN, Van Kappen, indicated to UN Ambassador Biegman in New York during the morning of 12 July that the more information became available on what had happened on 10 and 11 July, the more appreciation seemed to grow for the professionalism and the courage Dutchbat had shown in carrying out its task. Van Kappen also praised the way in which the Dutch troops had carried out the order to set up blocking positions during a briefing on 12 July. He substantiated this by pointing out the enormous superior military strength and the scarcity of Dutchbat arms. He believed that Dutchbat had taken the decision to retreat at the right time, having

²⁵⁷⁹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2, SRSG Meeting, May-Oct 95. Senior Staff Meeting, 12/07/95; NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Dairy Banbury, SRSG’s briefing 12/07/95.

²⁵⁸⁰ SMG 1007/12. Speech PBLs, A.P.P.M. Van Baal, meeting COS NATO, no date. The English translation is entitled: ‘Address by the Deputy Commander in Chief RNLA, Major General A.P.P.M. Van Baal, on the occasion of the meeting by the NATO Military Committee on Monday 11/09/95’.

²⁵⁸¹ TK, 1995 – 1996, Proceedings [*Handelingen TK*] 40-3176, 19/12/95.

²⁵⁸² Speech by the Minister of Defence, J.J.C. Voorhoeve, during the memorial service for the fall of Srebrenica held on 11 July 1996.

initially offered powerful resistance by a fighting withdrawal. Moreover, Close Air Support was provided at the time that the hostages were in the hands of the VRS.²⁵⁸³

UN Ambassador Biegman subsequently reported to The Hague that ‘the quality of the action by the Dutch peacekeepers has not gone unnoticed in New York circles’. Biegman also quoted extensively from words of praise for Dutchbat. During the Contact Group consultations, Kofi Annan had on his own initiative included a passage in the preamble of what would become UN Resolution 1004 in order to ‘emphatically express appreciation for the quality of the Dutchbat actions.’ The initiative for this did not stem from Annan himself but from Akashi. The spokesman for the Secretary-General of the UN had earlier in a press briefing referred to the ‘invaluable humanitarian work’ which Dutchbat had carried out: medical assistance was being given (see Annex ‘Dutchbat and the population – medical issues’) and the Dutch shared what little food they had with the refugees.

Van Kappen later commented that nobody in New York assumed that Dutchbat should have continued to fight to the end. He said that the initial reports from Zagreb created the idea that Dutchbat had drawn a line in the sand and that the battalion had therefore done what they had been ordered to do, namely offer resistance to the Bosnian Serbs. The mood in New York in the first instance was that Dutchbat had carried out its tasks well and courageously. There had been reports in New York of a retreat under fire from Srebrenica to Potocari.

When in the days following 11 July things turned out not to have been as they seemed, and when it became clear that the blocking positions in the end amounted to much less than first thought, the mood in New York rapidly changed, according to Van Kappen. This also happened to the claim that Dutchbat shared its last rations with the refugees. It slowly became known what had really happened to the refugees, and at the same time the earlier regard for Dutchbat diminished. Van Kappen said that the expectation was more or less that Dutchbat would take up a firm position morally speaking, as Morillon had done earlier (see also Parts I and II). Disappointment grew when it turned out that Dutchbat had not done so, even though it was recognized in New York that fighting was no longer an option for Dutchbat once it arrived in Potocari, because there were so many refugees there who could have easily been drawn into any fighting.²⁵⁸⁴

Initially Dutchbat was showered with praise for their actions. During the formal assembly of the Security Council to adopt Resolution 1004 (see Chapter 8 for the creation of this resolution), many delegates sang Dutchbat’s praises; the Bosnian delegation thought that the courageous but lightly-armed Dutch peacekeepers had been overrun; the Italian representative declared solidarity with the ‘courageous Dutch soldiers’ who shared the hardship of the population and who had been faced with ‘overwhelmingly superior forces’, and this under disheartening psychological conditions with a large number of hostages; the Czech Republic spoke of the ‘very courageous way’ in which resistance had been offered to superior forces and the way in which assistance had been offered to the population. Argentina complimented Dutchbat on the work it had done in critical circumstances; Indonesia praised Dutchbat for the courage and the resolve it had displayed against a superior force; Nigeria had words of praise for the willingness on the part of Dutchbat to make sacrifices; the United Kingdom complimented Dutchbat on the ‘bravery with which they have withstood attacks’ by the VRS; Germany said that Dutchbat had shown great courage in carrying out its task and that ‘they had acted in an exemplary manner’ to alleviate the suffering on the part of the population; and finally the United States, in the person of the Permanent Representative Madeleine Albright, even spoke of Dutch peacekeepers ‘who set a standard for bravery and dedication that will be long remembered’.²⁵⁸⁵

Bilaterally there was also fulsome praise for Dutchbat during the first few days after 11 July, for instance from the United States; similar voices were heard during the daily press briefing on 13 July from the American State Department. The spokesman said on behalf of the Secretary of State, Warren

²⁵⁸³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00797. Code Biegman 610, 12/07/95.

²⁵⁸⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1138; interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

²⁵⁸⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00797. Code Biegman 610, 12/07/95; ABZ, PVNY. The opinions have been copied from Security Council 3553rd meeting (S/PV.3553) held on 12/07/95.

Christopher, that the brave conduct on the part of Dutchbat was highly appreciated, as were their efforts to offer protection to innocent citizens; ‘the Dutch - under very difficult terms - are trying to do the best they can to protect the refugees and to monitor the behaviour of the Bosnian Serb forces towards the refugees’, said spokesman Burns.²⁵⁸⁶ Christopher himself voiced further appreciative words to his Dutch colleague Van Mierlo a few days later, when nothing was yet known of the mass murders which had taken place:

‘Let me express my admiration for the courage and dedication with which your troops are handling an extremely difficult situation in Srebrenica. The Dutch Battalion’s action, under fire, to care for the wounded and the thousands of refugees was truly heroic. The priority you have placed on the safety of the refugees at the risk of your own soldiers, is an example of you country’s leading role in addressing humanitarian crises all over the world. Srebrenica was the most exposed enclave and the most difficult assignment in Bosnia. When the crisis came, brave Dutch soldiers averted what could have been a much greater humanitarian catastrophe.’²⁵⁸⁷

The British Government struck a similar note: Prime Minister Major told Prime Minister Kok that ‘the Dutch peacekeepers in Srebrenica did their duty magnificently and with great courage. The Netherlands can be proud of them’.²⁵⁸⁸ And the Security Council on 14 July again declared its appreciation for the courage shown by the UN personnel in Srebrenica. The Security Council also remarked that ‘the presence and bravery of the troops has undoubtedly saved the lives of many civilians’.²⁵⁸⁹

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately tried to forge political capital out of these judgements; the regional Directorate for Europe composed an official briefing text, which was distributed widely, including amongst posts abroad. The text did not mince words: ‘All sides, not least the Security Council, have expressed appreciation for the professional and courageous action by the Dutch blue helmets. Attempts to block the Bosnian Serb advance from the south and the crucial assistance they offered the population in the transfer from Srebrenica to Potocari were singled out in particular. (...) Dutchbat has done everything in its power in Srebrenica to prevent the fall of the enclave and to adequately protect the Srebrenica population but unfortunately this was unsuccessful. (...) Dutchbat currently shares its scarce provisions with the population and is trying to exert a favourable influence on developments.’

The surprising thing about this text issued on 14 July was not just that it was out-of-date (there were no longer any refugees in the compound on 13 July), it was also not sent out until after the weekend on 17 July. Also surprising was the fact that Foreign Affairs through this text called on the Bosnian Government to release the eight Dutch blue helmets held by the Bosnian Government army (the ABiH);²⁵⁹⁰ Dutchbat troops had never been in the hands of the Bosnian Muslims, and there had not been a government army in the Srebrenica enclave since 11 July.

²⁵⁸⁶ FOIA US Dept of State. SecState WashDC to All Diplomatic and Consular Posts, No. State 169604, 142046Z.

²⁵⁸⁷ ABZ, DAV 999.241. Letter K. Terry Dornbush to Hans van Mierlo, 17/07/95, with a letter from Warren Christopher to Hans [van Mierlo], 17/07/95.

²⁵⁸⁸ General affairs [AZ] 95moo5637. Ambassador Sir David Miers to W.J.P. Geerts Advisor to the Ministry of General Affairs, 19/07/95.

²⁵⁸⁹ ABZ, dossier DAV 999.24. Presidential statement on Bosnia, 14/07/95, No. S/PRST/1995/32. Sent by fax PVVN to M-Secretariat, 14/07/95, No. NYV-4410.

²⁵⁹⁰ ABZ, dossier DAV 999.241. Memorandum DVL/BZ, 14/07/95, No. 619/95.

...but not from the French minister of Foreign Affairs and the French President

Critical words from the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hervé de Charette only provided a note of discord in this chorus of appreciation. His view was the result of a French debate in which President Chirac had also participated, according to Wijnaendts, the Dutch Ambassador in France. Surprise had been expressed there on the speed with which Dutchbat had given up the enclave, while the order had been given to halt the VRS advance by setting up blocking positions; the French idea had been that Dutchbat could have defended itself against the 1500-strong VRS and four tanks. When this proved unsuccessful, Close Air Support had been promised and delivered. The fact that the Dutchbat Forward Air Controllers had abruptly stopped indicating targets for the NATO aircraft had subsequently given rise to surprise in Paris.²⁵⁹¹ As shown in chapter 6, a complicated set of factors caused Close Air Support to be cancelled. It was incorrect that the Forward Air Controllers had stopped indicating targets after the initial bombs had been dropped. The second wave of attack, comprising American F-16s, had not been able to identify the target indicated. Only then was a more reticent stance adopted in relation to the bombardments, due amongst other things to the threat which the Bosnian Serbs voiced against the hostages and refugees, as discussed in chapter 6, and as a result of the Bosnian Serbs shooting at a Forward Air Controller (Windmill 03).

Minister De Charette then also accused Dutchbat in public, in the French national and international press. He said on French television on 13 July that he found it hard to accept the fact that Srebrenica had fallen without a genuine response on the part of UNPROFOR. The Dutch UN troops had not offered adequate resistance in his opinion, and their presence in the coaches used for deporting the population made them an accessory to ethnic cleansing²⁵⁹² (see Part IV for these events). De Charette also wondered why the thousands of Bosnian soldiers had not defended the enclave. He said to have understood from Western intelligence services that the Bosnian Serbs with their tanks were a superior force but that it had nevertheless been expected that the ABiH would have resisted for longer. The speed of the capture had surprised Paris. This suggested either lack of will amongst the ABiH to defend the enclave in his opinion, or it suggested an ABiH strategy to pull the UN into the war on their side.²⁵⁹³

De Charette's words marked a turnabout in the earlier appreciation for Dutchbat and struck a heavy blow in the Netherlands. The responses in the Netherlands to the statements by De Charette were furious. Minister Van Mierlo said that De Charette's statements were so wide off the mark that he could not imagine that it was true that De Charette had in fact spoken these words.²⁵⁹⁴ The messenger who brought the bad news from France was the Dutch Ambassador in Paris, Wijnaendts. The latter raised it in a telephone call to Van Mierlo on 13 July. The minister was angry and took umbrage at Wijnaendts because the latter had reported that Paris was displeased that Dutchbat had not resisted, as mentioned before. The Dutch troops were some of the best NATO had, in the opinion of Van Mierlo. Wijnaendts countered this by saying that Van Mierlo should have known that Dutchbat was demoralized as a result of creeping deterioration and had not exactly distinguished itself, and Wijnaendts thought so too. The fact that most of the Dutch troops were still very young was not relevant, according to Wijnaendts; British and French professional soldiers were young too but their training was much harder and more intensive, in his opinion. Wijnaendts was also displeased with the reports by UN Ambassador Biegman in which the latter stated that all members of the Security Council had praised Dutchbat. 'As if Biegman did not understand that this was diplomatic courtesy within the

²⁵⁹¹ ABZ, DAV 999.241. Code Wijnaendts 218, 12/07/95. Wijnaendts believed, incorrectly, that the Forward Air Controllers had suspended their activities on the orders of General Van den Breemen. Van den Breemen was on the way to Zagreb at the time Close Air Support was carried out (interview H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00).

²⁵⁹² ABZ, PVNY. Interview de M. de Charette, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, à France 2 (Paris, 13/07/95), attached to fax DPV to PV New York, 14/07/95; *Reuters* 132145 GMT Jul 95; *ANP*, 132045 Jul 95; *NOS journaal* 13/07/95, N.3, 22.00 hours.

²⁵⁹³ *Financial Times*, 14/07/95.

²⁵⁹⁴ *NOS Journaal*, 13/07/95, N.3, 22.00 hrs.

Security Council, which was in no way related to the real state of affairs in Srebrenica', according to Wijnaendts.²⁵⁹⁵

The Dutch press too responded to criticism on the part of De Charette on 14 July, following the initial indignant response by Van Mierlo. This was couched in terms such as 'malicious and unacceptable',²⁵⁹⁶ 'criticism which is neither here nor there' and 'empty words and a transparent attempt' to bolster the UN prestige.²⁵⁹⁷ France, as a member of the Security Council, was co-responsible for the situation in Bosnia; grounds why De Charette should be 'rather less outspoken' wrote the *Algemeen Dagblad*.²⁵⁹⁸ Prime Minister Kok stated he was 'livid'. He said in *Den Haag Vandaag* that if a French Government minister indicated that the Dutch had 'let themselves be overrun, it makes your blood boil', and also: 'hats off to the minister somewhere in an elegant building in Paris, who knows it all.' Kok compared this criticism with the international recognition Dutchbat had received and he again praised the fantastic way in which Dutchbat had conducted itself and had tried to defend the enclave to the end by returning fire. For him it was 'cast in stone' that the Dutch could not have fulfilled their task any better. According to the Prime Minister, Dutchbat would not leave Srebrenica because the wounded would first have to be assisted in leaving the enclave and he also considered that relief for the separated men would have to be arranged first.²⁵⁹⁹

The words voiced by De Charette also led to surprise and indignation amongst the UNPF staff in Zagreb.²⁶⁰⁰ Even the French press, as well as the international press, showed surprise at the words used by De Charette; *Le Monde* considered the terms used by De Charrette lacking in diplomacy. The newspaper wrote that De Charette might have been basically right in that the Dutch had not succeeded in their mission to protect the Safe Area, but *Le Monde* noted that he had omitted to refer to the circumstances under which Dutchbat operated; UNPROFOR was at the mercy of Bosnian Serb reprisals and the Bosnian Muslim action had also thrown Dutchbat out of balance, according to the paper.²⁶⁰¹ The *Financial Times* wrote that Paris had surprised its allies with the 'bluntness of its reaction' to the fall of Srebrenica. This, in the opinion of the *Financial Times*, was partly linked to the cool reception of French recapture plans for Srebrenica; Paris was on its own in this respect.²⁶⁰² (See chapter 8, 'Plans for the recapture of Srebrenica.')

Neither was there much support from the French military for the words by De Charette. The French Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Lanxade, telephoned his Dutch colleague Van den Breemen after the statement by De Charette and said that his own view was different, which he would make known to President Chirac.²⁶⁰³ The Elysée, however, seemed to lean more towards De Charette's point of view; President Chirac basically considered the action by Dutchbat amounted to UNPROFOR 'militairement [avait] mal conduit' in Srebrenica. The French military top was in complete disagreement with these critical remarks, and supposed that they could be explained on the basis of Chirac's views on, and his unfamiliarity with peace operations; Chirac allegedly believed that Srebrenica related to a 'situation de guerre' but forgot that UNPROFOR was not equipped for combat.

The question whether Dutchbat should have offered resistance was '*absurde*' for the French military top, because that would mean that the battalion would have had to switch to hostilities and sacrificing troops. The reactions by Chirac and De Charette allegedly fitted in with the 'Elysée code'; the French military top was said to have tried to make clear to Chirac on the basis of the above argument that his criticism was not justified. Chirac had responded irritably and had not changed his

²⁵⁹⁵ Interview H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00.

²⁵⁹⁶ Editorial, *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 14/07/95.

²⁵⁹⁷ Editorial, *Trouw*, 14/07/95.

²⁵⁹⁸ Editorial, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 14/07/95.

²⁵⁹⁹ NOS, *Den Haag Vandaag*, 14/07/95, N.3, 23.00 hours.

²⁶⁰⁰ De Jonge in *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/07/95.

²⁶⁰¹ *Le Monde*, 15/07/95.

²⁶⁰² *Financial Times*, 14/07/95.

²⁶⁰³ NIOD, Coll. Hilderink. Note 'Herovering Srebrenica hoe verder' [Recapture of Srebrenica what next] in anthology 'Chronologie der gebeurtenissen' [Chronology of events].

mind. The president made it clear that what was especially important to him was that Dutchbat had not complied with the code of conduct, namely that *'l'honneur de la nation'* of the Netherlands was at stake and that the battalion should have defended itself against the attack at all cost. The French military top then repeated that Chirac misjudged the situation because there was no 'situation de guerre'.²⁶⁰⁴

Minister Van Mierlo summoned Daniel Bernard, the French Ambassador in the Netherlands, following the statement by De Charette. Van Mierlo told him in the presence of Voorhoeve that De Charette's words were not merely unfriendly but also not in accordance with the truth; there was no question of Dutchbat being an accomplice to ethnic cleansing. Van Mierlo pointed out that there had been wide acclaim internationally for the courageous action by Dutchbat; the battalion had requested Close Air Support while Dutch individuals had been taken hostage, the blocking position had conducted a defence against the Bosnian Serbs and Dutchbat troops had evacuated the hospital under artillery fire. Van Mierlo considered that the statement by De Charette did not accord with the telephone conversations he had had with the French Minister. Van Mierlo admitted that there were differences of opinion between the Netherlands and France on what approach to be taken by UNPROFOR but De Charette had gone too far with his statement.

Voorhoeve told the ambassador that he assumed that De Charette had not made the statement as it stood, and that the Minister was quoted incorrectly. He pointed out that the Bosnian Serbs had had an artillery force, which was superior by a factor of twenty. This explained why the Bosnian Muslims had cried off and left the defence to Dutchbat. Voorhoeve also pointed out that other countries had, in fact, praised the courageous conduct on the part of Dutchbat. The Dutch had considered the improvement of the humanitarian situation of the population their primary task, and the battalion had distributed food amongst the population when they had provisions for 24 hours only. Regarding the reproach that Dutchbat was an accessory to ethnic cleansing, Voorhoeve stated that Karremans had on the contrary insisted that Dutch troops accompany the coaches and that the Battalion Commander had refused to leave at the same time as the population; they first had to be sure that the population had found a safe haven. Karremans had also demanded that the men who had been transported to the Bratunac stadium be returned; part had indeed returned, said Voorhoeve.²⁶⁰⁵ This last statement was incorrect, this point will be discussed in Part IV, Chapter 4.

Ambassador Bernard returned only thirty minutes later with the message that the French Government had been perfectly well aware of the difficult position in which Dutchbat had found itself. It was not relevant to the criticism of the Dutch troops, according to the ambassador. The *Reuters* press agency had compiled an unacceptable summary of De Charette's statement; it referred to UNPROFOR in general, not to Dutchbat, the ambassador explained.²⁶⁰⁶ The Dutch Government then considered the matter closed as 'evidently a misunderstanding'.²⁶⁰⁷ This would, however, prove to be a relative assessment.

Prime Minister Kok also told NIOD that he considered the statement by De Charette to be a slip-up. According to the Prime Minister, the French-Dutch relations had been somewhat at loggerheads at the time, partly because of the drugs issue, but this was certainly not the case in NATO or UN context. In Kok's opinion, the statement by De Charette said something about the way the French ally treated its Dutch ally.²⁶⁰⁸

Kok did not know that Van Mierlo in the meantime had been in touch with De Charrette and that they had talked the matter through. This information had not reached the Ministerial Council and neither had Kok been told of it in the meantime. This is why Kok used such strong language during the usual press conference after the meeting of the Ministerial Council on 14 July, and this in turn had upset De Charette again.

²⁶⁰⁴ Confidential interview (1).

²⁶⁰⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Van Mierlo 83, 14/07/95.

²⁶⁰⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Van Mierlo 83, 14/07/95.

²⁶⁰⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05279. Memorandum DVL/BZ to Yugoslav distribution, 14/07/95, No. 619/95.

²⁶⁰⁸ Interview W. Kok, 30/05/00.

Kok did add that even if the message that van Mierlo had talked the matter through with De Charrette had reached him in time, he was not at all sure whether it would have made any difference; he admitted that it would have been difficult for him to dispose of the matter with the words that Van Mierlo and De Charrette had talked things over, after what had happened during the previous days. Kok stated that he would have found it difficult not to have shown something of his original opinion in that case;²⁶⁰⁹ the issue clearly rankled the Prime Minister.

The Netherlands did not refrain from praising the action by Dutchbat during subsequent days, even though by then the first reports on the violation of human rights were arriving piecemeal. Van Mierlo again pointed out the 'brave and professional conduct by Dutchbat' at the European General Council on 18 July. He also expressed his gratitude for the 'almost unanimous appreciation' expressed internationally. The fall of Srebrenica had certainly and painfully shown up the relativity of the Safe Area concept in Van Mierlo's opinion. He said that the will and the ability to defend the enclave had been proven to be more symbolic than real but this was based on a tacit agreement with the Bosnian Serbs, according to the minister: 'we defend symbolically, you do not attack'.²⁶¹⁰ He thus reiterated the words used earlier by UN ambassador Biegman in a report to the Hague.

Van Mierlo's words contrasted sharply with the view stated simultaneously by the Dutch social scientist Jan Willem Honig, the later co-author of *Srebrenica: Record of A War Crime*. He was one of the earliest critics of Dutchbat and stated that the battalion had surrendered the enclave more or less without offering resistance. The statement by Voorhoeve that Dutchbat had conducted itself very well indeed had been hollow words in his opinion.²⁶¹¹

13. Later criticism of Dutchbat

French criticism continued unabated after the first few days. The French media persisted in paying attention to the action by Dutchbat and later also linked this with the excesses, details of which became increasingly known. Ambassador Wijnaendts pointed out in September that the tenor had now become that Dutchbat had only been concerned about its own safety during the attack, and had not bothered about the actual assignment. The main concern of the battalion was said to have been to do nothing which might endanger a safe Dutchbat retreat. That was also supposedly the reason why Dutchbat closed its eyes to excesses, according to Wijnaendts.²⁶¹²

During hearings by the *Mission d'Information*, the French parliamentary investigation commission on Srebrenica in 2001, Janvier delivered an extremely harsh judgement on the conduct of Dutchbat at the blocking positions. The former French Minister of Defence, Léotard, a member of the commission, asked him whether the affairs in Srebrenica would have taken a different course if four hundred French instead of four hundred Dutch troops had been stationed in the enclave. Janvier answered in the affirmative. He said that the French would have fought, and he was convinced that the French would have made the Bosnian Serbs draw back: 'in all honesty I say that French soldiers would have fought and not shrunk back from the risks.' Janvier argued that the Dutch troops had received orders to do battle, which is why the battalion had taken up blocking positions, and the battalion should therefore have done battle. According to Janvier, this was Dutchbat's mission; the French considered setting up blocking positions was the same as engaging the enemy. French troops would have turned to their weapons after setting up the blocking positions; they would have deployed the 81 mortars, as well as every tank equipped with a .50 machine gun. Janvier pointed out that the Dutch also had powerful

²⁶⁰⁹ Interview W. Kok, 30/05/00.

⁴¹⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. Code Van Mierlo 93, 18/07/95.

²⁶¹¹ *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 17/07/95. Voorhoeve wrote a letter in defence to the editor which appeared on 18/07/95 in *De Volkskrant* following criticism from Honig as well as from Herman Wigbold on the Forum page of *De Volkskrant* dated 15/07/95 and 17/07/95.

²⁶¹² DCBC, 2783. Code Wijnaendts 255, 11/09/95.

antitank weapons but that they had not deployed these. Janvier had to admit that Dutchbat lacked the resources to eliminate the VRS artillery.²⁶¹³

These judgements by Janvier are difficult to reconcile with the discussions he had with VRS General Tolimir in the evening of 10 July. As already discussed in Section 15 of the previous chapter, rather than adopting a tough attitude at that time, Janvier was concerned; he wanted to prevent the VRS from firing at Dutchbat again. It was concluded in the previous chapter that the question remained how his stance then could be reconciled with the order to set up blocking positions, which Janvier had issued in the meantime; this order had, in fact, been intended to draw fire from the VRS.²⁶¹⁴

Janvier's judgement of Dutchbat as stated to the parliamentary commission also varied quite a bit from what Janvier had told Chief of Defence Staff General Van den Breemen on 2 November 1995. At that time Janvier wrote: 'Investigations conducted by both the Netherlands and in United Nations on the events surrounding Srebrenica clearly show that peacekeeping forces conducted themselves honourably, within the mandate and the spirit of the aims of the UNPROFOR mission during this most difficult time'.²⁶¹⁵ More than a month previously, the UN had asked in New York whether an appraisal of the action by Dutchbat had been conducted within UNPF in Zagreb. Janvier had answered that this was not the case but at the same time he asked Kofi Annan to assure the Dutch Permanent Representative at the UN that Dutchbat 'behaved in a commendable manner under difficult circumstances'.²⁶¹⁶

In short, Janvier's view had more than a hint of chauvinism in it. This resulted in a question by the parliamentary commission as to how Janvier was able to judge that French soldiers would indeed have done battle. The question was prompted by a directive from Janvier dated 29 May 1995, which literally read: 'I would like to reiterate my utmost confidence in the tactical commanders who have tremendous responsibilities on their shoulders and my support for any decision that they alone can make.' Janvier had therefore left the decision whether the threatened positions had to be abandoned to the local commander if peacekeepers' lives were at risk. The commission raised the point that this was exactly what the Dutch had done.²⁶¹⁷ Janvier then came back with the surprising answer that this directive should not be applied to Srebrenica; he said that the directive related to Sarajevo and the Weapon Collection Points. Janvier was wrong in this because the eastern enclaves were indeed mentioned in his directive. Janvier also argued that the situation during the month of July was totally different to the situation at the time of the directive; he said that it had been necessary after all for Dutchbat to go to any length by entering into combat, even during a peace mission. This in turn begs the question why Janvier did not issue a new directive, if the situation in July had really been so different from the one at the end of May. The result of that was recorded in a directive issued by General Smith on 29 July: 'I am particularly sensitive to the situation of the units in Sarajevo and the Eastern Enclaves who, for no fault of their own, are without clear direction'.²⁶¹⁸

So Janvier maintained before the *Mission d'Information* that it had been the choice of the Dutch not to fight and not to commence firing. He considered this against the spirit of the order but maybe the Dutch had had their reasons to depart from the order. But if the Dutch had interpreted the order to resist by shooting over the heads and by not deploying antitank weapons, then this would obviously have allowed the Bosnian Serbs to advance. Dutchbat could have changed the situation by deploying weapons and entering into combat, said Janvier.

⁴¹⁹ *Mission d'Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica, Audition de M. Bernard Janvier*, 25/01/01 and 21/06/01.

⁴²⁰ See the transcripts of the conversations between Janvier and Tolimir in: ABiH Tuzla. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa, 10/07/95, Str.pov.br. 02/8-1-1205 and 11/07/95, Str.pov.br. 02/8-1-1215.

⁴²¹ DCBC, 1284. Letter Lt-Gen Bernard Janvier to Chief of Defense Staff H.G.B. Van den Breemen, General RLNMC, 02/11/95.

⁴²² NIOD Coll. Kolsteren. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 27/09/95, No. 1768.

⁴²³ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87302, Vol. II, Air Operations - Air Strikes 01/01/95 – 09/11/95. FC's Personal directives to UNPROFOR Cmd, Fax Force Commander to LtGen R. Smith Only, 29/05/95, File Ref FC/95/0801.

⁴²⁴ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box, File 3300-6 Vol 5, 01/06/95 – 15/09/95. Commander HQ UNPROFOR Directive 3/95, 29/06/95.

What Janvier omitted from his statement was that entering into combat would have been contrary to the Rules of Engagement, which only allowed for self-defence. The question is why Janvier did not change the Rules of Engagement for this occasion; after all, he was authorized to do so as Force Commander. Janvier's statement that French troops would have done battle should therefore be interpreted as the French in that case ignoring the Rules of Engagement. It was Morillon who explained before the *Mission d'information* that the French would have done just that: 'The entire time I spent in Bosnia, I told my commanders that only passiveness is dishonourable. I would not have wanted anything to do with the Rules of Engagement; the mandate made me sick. Everybody knows that this has always been my attitude.' In answer to the question whether he would have fought, he said: 'If the French had had Foreign Legion soldiers there, yes. Fighting to save face is not prohibited under military law, on the contrary, it is applauded. I have been a soldier in the Foreign Legion myself.' He considered that combat should have been entered into, 'in order to uphold the honour of the UN. The issue in Srebrenica in 1995 was to save face. This would have fitted in with the French tradition but I refuse to condemn the Dutch.'²⁶¹⁹

Janvier also said that his statement was not intended to put the blame for the fall of Srebrenica on the Dutch. He realized the soldiers were physically exhausted and morale was low; it was impossible to live for four months as they had done, under terrible stress from the side of the Bosnian Serbs as well as from the Bosnian Muslims. Janvier believed that the unit had been under extreme pressure. But Dutchbat should have done something as a matter of principle, to save face. Nevertheless, Janvier said that he did not want to blame Dutchbat, although he obviously did so with his statement. It should also be noted that Janvier did not at any time prompt Dutchbat, either in person or via the command line, to enter into combat and that he himself hesitated considerably about providing Close Air Support.

His statement seemed to reveal a different military culture to the Dutch one; this was also evident from his statement that the restoration of peace in Bosnia was mainly due to French efforts. Janvier considered this was obvious from the pure fact that the French were mourning 56 deaths, as opposed to 216 for the other countries together.²⁶²⁰

Janvier repeated his critical words in an interview later in 2001. In answer to the question why the Dutch had not entered into combat, Janvier said that he did esteem the Dutch soldiers, but that he merely stated the facts. Dutchbat had not fought and had said so themselves. According to Janvier, Dutchbat, which he characterized as hardly a homogenous unit with soldiers from eighty different units, was below strength and demoralized, not an infantry unit which was equal to the situation.²⁶²¹

Marie-Hélène Aubert, a member of the French parliamentary investigation commission, seemed to disagree with Janvier that 400 French troops would have fought: 'every country would have been confronted with the same problems in the enclave. I believe that a French battalion would not have acquitted itself any better than Dutchbat.' French soldiers were rather proud and arrogant in her eyes; they assumed that the French army was the best in the world. She put this into perspective by pointing out that the Dutch were more modest about their role. According to her, the *Mission d'Information* also wondered how much Janvier really knew about the situation in Srebrenica; it seemed that for the French in general and for Janvier in particular everything revolved round Sarajevo, rather than Srebrenica. She also pointed out that Janvier was far away, in Zagreb, and that he was not at his post at the start of the VRS attack.²⁶²²

There seems to be no escape from the conclusion that the statement by Janvier before the *Mission d'information* in 2001 cannot be reconciled with the caution he displayed in 1995 in his function as Force Commander, and with the reticence which characterized his attitude to General Smith at that time, who out of the two had been the 'fighter', and to VRS General Tolimir.

⁴²⁵ *Mission d'Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica*, Audition de M. Philippe Morillon, 25/01/01.

⁴²⁶ *Mission d'Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica*, Audition de M. Bernard Janvier, 25/01/01 and 21/06/01.

⁴²⁷ Interview Général Janvier in *Valeurs Actuelles*, No. 3393 paru le 7 Décembre 2001.

²⁶²² Rudolf Bohr, 'Luchtsteun of luchtaanval: Nederlandse getuigen voor Franse parlementscommissie' [Close Air Support or air strike: Dutch witnesses before the French parliamentary committee], *HN*, 05/05/01,

Could Dutchbat have done more?

The question what would have happened if Dutchbat had actually met the advancing VRS square on on 10 and 11 July has been asked frequently in public. The answer to that question is by its very nature speculative but we can nevertheless say something about it.

The mandate did definitely not include defence of the enclave because the mandate did not go beyond deterrence. The VRS could have overrun the enclave any time they wished; they possessed the military resources required and they hardly needed any additional reinforcements. This was the case even during the period that the Canadian battalion was present in Srebrenica (before Dutchbat I), and things did not change during the Dutchbat period. Dutchbat I had established at the time of arrival of the Dutch early in 1994 that the Bosnian Serbs around the enclave possessed a handful of tanks (type T-54/5), artillery pieces (three 152 mm and nine 105/122 mm guns) one multiple rocket launcher (MRLS), a few dozen mortars (five 120 mm mortars and many 82 mm ones) and an unknown number of anti-aircraft guns.²⁶²³ Dutchbat, undermanned and lightly armed, did not stand a chance from the start against a VRS with these weapons.

Medical doctor Ilijaz Pilav from Srebrenica believed that each battalion of any which nationality could have been responsible for Srebrenica but he did not think the nationality made any difference, when speculating on what Dutchbat could, or could not have done. The 430 Dutchbat troops simply were not able to halt the Bosnian Serbs or to enter into combat with them; the enemy's strength was too great, he admitted. According to him, it was more a question of what the UN and NATO could have done; Dutchbat had needed assistance, and the primary responsibility for this lay with Akashi and Janvier. In the eyes of Pilav this did not mean that Dutchbat was innocent; Dutchbat had made mistakes because it did not pass on sufficient information to the higher echelons in the UN hierarchy on what was happening around Srebrenica. Pilav believed, and many with him, that Dutchbat knew that the VRS were about to attack but that the battalion had not given out information on this. Dutchbat had been too tolerant during the VRS attack in his opinion, and the OP had been abandoned too quickly following verbal threats of shelling by the VRS. Dutchbat had also prevented the ABiH from doing something when this was still possible, because Karremans had assured them on the evening of 10 July that air strikes were imminent. Here again Pilav voiced the feelings which prevailed fairly generally amongst the inhabitants of Srebrenica.²⁶²⁴

It was not feasible for the blocking positions to actually halt a VRS advance from a military point of view. On the other hand, political and psychological considerations may have come into play amongst the Bosnian Serbs. The VRS tried to see how far it could go and in that case offering obvious resistance might have been sufficient to make the Bosnian Serbs reconsider their decision on 9 July to continue the attack on Srebrenica after all and also to take possession of the enclave's population centre. The order for the blocking positions arrived too late for this. Such resistance would have demanded deployment of military resources which were beyond the level Dutchbat possessed.

If the anti-tank weapons (TOW and Dragon) had been deployed and proved to be serviceable, then there might have been losses amongst the four VRS tanks operating in the south but the APCs and the Dutchbat infantry would then as a target have been relatively defenceless against VRS artillery and heavy mortars. The Dutch mortars (81 mm) would at most have been able to score a brief victory against the VRS infantry before they would have come under fire from artillery themselves. Observation and firing was no great problem for the VRS, as all high and tactically important areas of the terrain around the enclave were in their possession. The VRS infantry had relatively free play in the extremely hilly terrain, and in the end played a larger role than the tanks, which were tied to the road in large parts of the enclave.

²⁶²³ MID/RNLA. DOKL, Intelligence and Security Dept., Intelligence Division, Supintrep enclaves Zepa and Srebrenica, 09/02/94. Confi.

²⁶²⁴ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

No means were available other than Close Air Support to eliminate the VRS artillery. But NATO aircraft would not have had the field to themselves because the VRS around the enclave had anti-aircraft guns, and deployed these. The Bosnian Serbs were also very well aware of the mandate with which UNPROFOR had to comply, and with the problems which were linked to Close Air Support requests and deployment. Infantry (soldiers on foot) did not constitute a target for Close Air Support, due to the lengthy response time before it could be carried out.

The VRS could easily deploy their infantry to circumvent the blocking positions' vehicle line-up in the hilly terrain. Dutchbat only had the .50 machine guns on the APCs and medium mortars to oppose the infantry, while the troops occupying the blocking positions had formed an easy target for the VRS artillery and mortars. It also proved to be a disadvantage at the blocking positions that the .50 machine gun and the anti-tank weapons could not be operated from below armour, and it rendered Dutchbat even more vulnerable if this was used.

Behind all this was the fact that peacekeepers had not been sent out, and were not equipped for entering into combat. They could only protect themselves to a limited extent. Moreover, the largest part of the meagre Dutchbat fighting power was distributed amongst the OPs. They could hardly take a stand with the battalion reserve (the Quick Reaction Force) which was below strength anyway due to troops no longer being allowed into the enclave on their return from leave.

The blocking positions showed that six white painted vehicles distributed in pairs across the terrain were no match for an opponent equipped with tanks. Their own weapons were intended primarily for self defence and there had never been any question of an order to defend the enclave by force of arms until 9 July. The Dutchbat tasks were aimed at deterrence and protection, by observing to what extent the parties complied with the agreements and to report on this. The Rules of Engagement were geared to these tasks.

Were the weapons available the decisive factor?

Even if Dutchbat had been able to avail themselves of heavier weapons to defend the enclave, it would have made little difference to the outcome of the VRS attack. (The extensive debate on the Dutch arms was discussed in Chapter 6, Section 9). Even if the APCs had been equipped with a 25 mm onboard gun, it would have made little difference in the situation in which Dutchbat found itself in respect of the blocking positions. This had been a regularly recurring topic, and it was discussed again during the relief of Dutchbat III by a possible Dutchbat IV still to be created.²⁶²⁵

The Dutchbat anti-tank weapons exercised the minds to a greater extent. As far as the weapons were concerned, the army spokesman present at the Karremans and Couzy press conference in Zagreb had already warned that journalists might ask why the TOW anti-tank weapon had not been deployed at the blocking positions.²⁶²⁶ This did not happen at that time in Zagreb²⁶²⁷ but the British newspaper *The Independent* did indeed do so on 21 September 1995. It certainly kicked up some dust, particularly because the newspaper also included negative statements on Dutchbat in missiles could have halted the VRS advance but that the Dutchbat troops had been told not to use these rockets. A British OP had

²⁶²⁵ DJZ, doss. Srebrenica. Lt-Col A. de Ruiter to DCBC and RNLA Crisis Staff/SCO, 14/08/95. Notwithstanding this view, Commander 1st Army Corps, Lieutenant-General R. Reitsma, who, as Director of Operations in the Royal Netherlands Army had earlier played a role in the deployment of Dutchbat and the weapons to accompany them, appeared to have now concluded that acts of war had significantly increased in the operational area. The current idea was that the 42nd battalion Limbuge Jagers which was ready to leave, replace the APC equipped with a .50 machine gun by an APC with a 25 mm onboard cannon. In addition, the allocation of heavier resources such as APC-TOW and APC120 mm mortars was required, as well as equipping the reconnaissance platoon with APCs. (CRST. Draft letter C-1Lk to C-1 Div, C-NATCO, C-CORNLA, C-11 Lumblbrig, C-CSG, Crisis Staff, 08/08/95).

²⁶²⁶ Interview J.S. Riepen, 19/07/95.

²⁶²⁷ SMG 1007/13. Statement Lt-Col T. Karremans and Lt-Gen Couzy and questions, press conference Camp Pleso (Zagreb) 23/07/95.

successfully deployed just such an anti-tank missile in order to stop a VRS tank in its tracks in Maglaj two months previously, according to Block.

The newspaper referred to Sergeant Johan Bos as the source for the non-deployment of these anti-tank weapons by Dutchbat, who had said: 'We had the TOW system, two in each APC, and it was working, but we were not allowed to use them.' The report did not make clear whether Bos referred here to the prohibition to deploy the weapons because they were unreliable and therefore unsafe, or whether this had been dictated by commanders during the operations after 6 July. Moreover, Bos was not in the best position to act as a source on the events during the last few days and the blocking positions because he was one of the hostages in Bratunac after his APC had already been overpowered during a reconnaissance trip on 9 July. For that matter, Bos did not refer to the action by the blocking positions in the article but stated that the TOWs could have been deployed on two earlier occasions in his opinion (on 7 and 9 July), when VRS tanks approached Dutchbat OPs. An unintended effect of the interview was that it reinforced the idea that all OPs and APCs disposed of well-functioning TOW anti-tank rockets. This was not certain, as described in Chapter 6, Section 9 in the passage on Dutchbat weapons.

Because Dutch newspapers ran a paraphrased version of the report in *The Independent*, an even more distorted picture was created. *De Telegraaf* wrote that the ample TOW anti-tank weapons had remained unused.²⁶²⁸ The *Algemeen Dagblad* was a little more circumspect in its reporting by stating that Dutchbat possessed TOW anti-tank weapons but that they had not been allowed to use them. A spokesman for Defence added that the weapons were unusable, due to lack of spares.²⁶²⁹ *NRC Handelsblad* also referred to *The Independent*, as well as to Dutchbat Corporal H. Berkers, who had confirmed that part of the TOW anti-tank weapons were, in fact, operational. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Defence had responded by stating that the anti-tank weapons were no longer usable.²⁶³⁰ The Ambassador in London, J.H.R.D. van Roijen, submitted a 'Letter to the Editor' to *The Independent* as a response by the Ministry of Defence. The newspaper, however, deleted the statement it contained that the TOW anti-tank weapons could not have been deployed.²⁶³¹ The response by Defence was also submitted to all Dutch papers,²⁶³² but not a single paper paid any attention to it by then.

The reasons that the TOW anti-tank weapons had not been deployed were not just of a technical nature. The fact that the operators of the weapons were exposed and visible (in other words, they were not protected by armour) and therefore vulnerable, also played a part. Deployment of the TOW anti-tank weapon had not been an option, according to Deputy Battalion Commander Franken.²⁶³³ Lieutenant Mustert, who carried Dragon as well as TOW anti-tank weapons at blocking position Bravo-4, stated that he had not considered firing these, because he had no suitable targets in view for them, and, additionally, there were obstacles in the terrain which prevented the deployment of these wire-guided missiles. The entire VRS advance route from Zeleni Jadar to Srebrenica could only be overseen from the position of Bravo-1, and only from there might the firing of a TOW anti-tank weapon have been effective.²⁶³⁴

²⁶²⁸ *De Telegraaf*, 22/09/95.

²⁶²⁹ *Algemeen Dagblad*, 22/09/95.

²⁶³⁰ Frank Westerman in *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/09/95. Westerman refers in the article to a statement by Sergeant Bos which was distributed by the ministry of Defence, which referred to 'two operational TOWs'. No statement by Sergeant Bos was found in the Defence archives. The deputy director of Information did compile a response, which indicated that the TOW was no longer operational. This response was distributed to all senior officers working for the UN, as well as NATO officers involved in the UN operation. (DCBC, 2446, Annex B to fax DCBC, 211500Z Sep 95, No. 754)

²⁶³¹ *The Independent*, 25/09/95. Letters to the Editor, 'How the Dutch soldiers acted during the fall of Srebrenica'.

²⁶³² DGP, SOD/95.17602. DGP to participants Sector discussions Defence, 26/09/95. This process was repeated one month later when the Dutch ambassador to Hungary, H.J.M. Sondaal, submitted an almost identical letter to the *Budapest Sun* on 20 October 1995, which had featured an article written by N. Doude van Troostwijk under the title 'The shameful 'Dutchbat' role in Srebrenica's fall' (DAV doss. 999.241).

²⁶³³ SMG 1007/23. Report debriefing Major Franken, 22/07/95.

²⁶³⁴ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

14. The Dutchbat command

‘Those he does command move only in command, nothing in love’.²⁶³⁵ This maxim from William Shakespeare’s pen indicates that recognition of authority should not be taken for granted. Below we look back at the Dutchbat command, which comprised the battalion commander, the deputy battalion commander and the company commanders. The question is raised how the battalion perceived the performance during the last few days of Dutchbat’s stay in Srebrenica. Karremans and Franken occupied the highest posts in this hierarchy and formed the most obvious target for criticism; they are the main focus for attention. Dutchbat’s Deputy Battalion Commander was formally Major P. van Geldere; he was stationed with Dutchbat A company in Simin Han, outside the Srebrenica enclave. Franken was the logistics staff officer (in military terms: S-4) and was also the most experienced staff officer in the enclave. Karremans therefore chose him to be his deputy in Srebrenica.

This section focuses on the views amongst military circles and within Dutchbat, and the relationship between Karremans and Franken. The section then builds on what has already been said on this subject in Part II, Chapter 9.

Comments on forming a judgement

There is no objective way to judge the performance of leaders. Observations on the operation of the command in a military unit, by superiors as well as subordinates, are subjective. Within a battalion, a commander is someone who is regarded with a certain measure of reserve; this was not just the case with Dutchbat III, but also with Dutchbat I and II. Everybody soon forms an opinion of a commander but it is not easy to establish how this opinion is formed and to what extent personal positive or negative experiences, frustration, conflicts, punishment, individual observations or other people’s opinions play a part in this.

We must also guard against viewing the performance by the Dutchbat command as decisive for the events during the respective days in July when considering the performance of the Dutchbat command. The fall of the enclave cannot be ascribed to the command performance, taking into account the circumstances. The Bosnian Serbs were responsible for the Srebrenica tragedy.

Dutchbat also occupied the lowest rung of the ladder in the UN chain of command; Dutchbat command cannot be held responsible for what happened higher up on the ladder. The Secretary-General of the UN was ultimately responsible for the implementation of the peace mission but had delegated the day-to-day responsibility to Undersecretary-General Kofi Annan and his Special Representative in Zagreb, Akashi. General Janvier was responsible for the military control of UNPF in Zagreb. He laid down the conditions within which in Bosnia UNPROFOR (Bosnia-Herzegovina Command) had to operate in Sarajevo. Sector North East in Tuzla in turn came under Sarajevo as the next higher level headquarters to Dutchbat. The Security Council was responsible for the mandate and the Safe Area concept, which proved to be inoperable. The original plans for the Srebrenica Safe Area provided for a 5000-men strong brigade equipped with heavy weapons. Instead, there was now a lightly armed battalion consisting of 430 men; it was not able to defend a large area such as the Srebrenica enclave and neither was this Dutchbat’s job. A battalion of that strength from whichever country under whose ever leadership was no match for the VRS who were equipped with tanks and artillery, notwithstanding the later statements by Janvier, related in the section above, on the pervasive French willingness to fight. An assessment of the Dutchbat command should therefore be considered separate from the question whether an aggressive stance on the part of UNPROFOR might for political reasons have prevented the Bosnian Serbs from pushing through, because the Bosnian Serbs had decided at the highest political and military level to capture the enclave.

²⁶³⁵ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, V. ii.19.

The circumstances under which Dutchbat had to operate before as well as during the fall of Srebrenica were extremely unfavourable. General Janvier had good reasons for describing the battalion, after its resupply had almost ceased, as ‘semi-operational’. In Chapter 4 ‘The mood in the enclave: May – July 1995’, is briefly outlined under what circumstances Dutchbat had to operate.

Moreover, nobody could have reasonably suspected in UN circles that the battalion would be faced with an attack on a Safe Area. An attack, followed by deportation of the population, was not an event for which the UN, UNPROFOR, Dutchbat command and the battalion troops were prepared. Such exceptional circumstances do not, of course, make the task of leadership any easier but on the other hand an army is meant to operate under difficult circumstances.

Dutchbat soldiers’ views on the battalion’s command

Surprisingly, internal criticism of Dutchbat command is for the most part not centred on the days of the fall themselves. The sometimes rather frank opinion which Dutchbat soldiers entertained of the command was already largely established during the period prior to the fall. There are no real examples from interviews and debriefing statements where criticism is aimed specifically at the performance of the battalion command during the days in July immediately after the attack. Rather, the reverse is the case: there is some evidence of recognition, in particular for Deputy Battalion Commander Franken, including the judgement that he had performed exceptionally well under extreme circumstances.²⁶³⁶

The earlier ‘small’ debriefing of a number of officers and NCOs in Zagreb had already shown that there was some criticism of the command performance. This was, however, not reflected in the brief report on this debriefing, as was the case with the proceedings around Close Air Support. Neither were there any questions about the performance by the Battalion Staff when answering questions in Parliament and during conversations with Minister Voorhoeve.

Neither did the report on the ‘large’ debriefing in Assen devote much attention to the Dutchbat III command performance, although it is raised in various debriefing reports. The report only lists aspects which might have affected Dutchbat performance, such as: ‘composition of the battalion, atmosphere/morale, relationship between superiors and subordinates’.

As far as the composition of the battalion is concerned, the report on the ‘large’ debriefing does make a distinction between the core of Dutchbat III (the 13th Airmobile Infantry Battalion of the Airmobile Brigade) and the personnel which was attached to this core. It became evident that Dutchbat was a composite unit in which ‘airmobile culture’ played a large role. The troops belonging to this core saw themselves as an elite force, causing the personnel attached to the battalion to feel less accepted; the attached personnel experienced this as real, and it rankled.

The report on the ‘large’ debriefing mainly refers to the relationship between the battalion command and the surgical team called KHO-5 in respect of atmosphere and morale (see Appendix ‘Medical issues: Dutchbat and the population’). This gave rise to a conflict in which the battalion command was involved, and the latter was not able to control an escalating conflict. The debriefing report states that the atmosphere and the morale at the OPs were good otherwise, apart from the odd exception. The atmosphere in the compounds was also described as good. These matters have been discussed extensively in Part II, Chapter 8.

The aspect ‘relationship between superiors and subordinates’, mentioned as a factor in the performance of the battalion, is not dealt with at all in the debriefing report.²⁶³⁷

The Factual Account of the debriefing (*Feitenrelaas*), an internal document in which several statements from the separate debriefing statements had been categorized by subject, and which was used to help with compiling the actual debriefing report, represents an anonymized collection of different opinions recorded in the debriefing statements. In Assen, opinions about the battalion

²⁶³⁶ SMG/Debrief, Feitenrelaas, [Factual Account of the Debriefing], § 3.1.1.

²⁶³⁷ Debriefing report, pp. 68-69.

command were elicited, or they were offered spontaneously. Several debriefing statements therefore contained references to action by the command. These sometimes contain harsh words but it had been decided from the start that matters relating to the commander and personal relations within the battalion would be kept out of the report, according to one of the editors of the report on the 'large' debriefing in Assen.²⁶³⁸ The debriefing report therefore does not contain any criticism of the battalion command but this does not mean that it did not exist.

The Factual Account contains a number of passages with observations on the command grouped under headings such as: 'Command within DUTCHBAT and interaction with higher levels', 'Decision-making and command by the battalion staff', 'Command exercised by the subcommanders and the lower levels' and 'DUTCHBAT orders, directives and instructions to the subcommanders and interaction between the battalion staff and the subcommanders'. We may therefore assume that information on the command was categorized, even if it did not find its way into the report.

The Factual Account contains harsh words: 'A soldier explained that the negative attitude on the part of the Battalion Commander definitely affected the performance of the unit. (...) Every action by [this soldier] was checked by [the Deputy Battalion Commander] on the orders of the battalion commander. He did not think that the Battalion Commander was the person whom you could approach at any time. (...) He believed that the Battalion Commander displayed an interest in his personnel, which appeared forced.'²⁶³⁹ There were complaints that the communication between the battalion command and the battalion was awkward, which was attributed to the person of the Battalion Commander as well as to his deputy. Not everybody in the battalion was clear as to who was in charge, the Battalion Commander or his deputy. The impression arose, particularly during the fall of the enclave, that operational command was in the hands of Deputy Battalion Commander Franken and that the latter was also more capable of the two from an operational point of view.²⁶⁴⁰ He remained calm under the given circumstances and was in control.²⁶⁴¹ A staff NCO even stated that the battalion command had been a 'one man band', in the person of Franken. That was not as it ought to be but he believed it was a good thing Franken was there. Karremans had not displayed adequate leadership according to this NCO.²⁶⁴²

Many Dutchbat soldiers voiced the opinion that the Battalion Commander had had relatively little contact with his personnel, a complaint which was heard frequently. The 'invisibility' on the part of the commander was, however, not just related to his character but was also based on agreements between Karremans and Franken on the division of labour, and they also conferred. 'That is why we were talking every night about who would do what,' according to Karremans. The outcome was announced by Karremans at the staff meeting, in so far it concerned the staff. Karremans maintained all contact with the world outside the enclave: the reports to the higher UN echelons (Tuzla and Sarajevo), to The Hague, and he also maintained contact with the press. Franken's involvement with the higher echelons was limited to essential logistics and administrative matters. He did not bother with incoming telephone calls.²⁶⁴³ A deliberate choice had been made, on the other hand, in relation to contact with the warring factions and the Opstina in favour of a system where it was not the commander who maintained contact. This was done by the section for civil-military relations, Section 5, which dealt with matters within its mandate. Franken was the right man to take over discussions in the case of issues outside the mandate, and Karremans only intervened in exceptional cases. This allowed

²⁶³⁸ Interview F. Pennin, 07/03/00.

²⁶³⁹ SMG/Debrief, Feitenrelaas, [Factual Account of the Debriefing], § 3.1.1.

²⁶⁴⁰ SMG/Debrief, Feitenrelaas, [Factual Account of the Debriefing], § 3.1.3.

²⁶⁴¹ SMG/Debrief, Feitenrelaas, [Factual Account of the Debriefing], § 3.2.2.

²⁶⁴² The various judgements voiced on the command are not annotated. They represent a compilation of opinions which were voiced by various members of Dutchbat during interviews with NIOD and in debriefing statements. It was deemed inadvisable to add comments here, because many are still part of the Defence organisation.

²⁶⁴³ Interviews J.Th.P. Karremans, 15, 16, 17/12/98.

Karremans to keep his hands free during earlier stages of contact with the warring factions and the Opstina. This had worked well, according to Franken.²⁶⁴⁴

Franken was the person who was especially visible for the battalion, because he implemented the policy line agreed between Karremans and Franken. Franken stated that a Battalion Commander could not be everywhere, and that Karremans should definitely not even try and do so. In his view the commander was supposed to stay in the centre of the web and retain an overall view. There were individuals, including some amongst the battalion staff, who had not agreed with this method of operation but Franken said that this had also been the case in the Netherlands, even before Dutchbat III had left. Franken emphasized that there had only been one person in charge, namely Karremans.²⁶⁴⁵

Many within Dutchbat did not perceive this to be so; the reason was that Franken was much more visible than the Battalion Commander, due to the arrangements he had made with Karremans. To the mind of many this seemed like a reversal of the more usual pattern within a staff, namely that the commander keeps his hands free as much as possible to do what he thinks necessary within the battalion, acts as a front, and appears before his men, while the chief of staff deals with matters in the background, coordinates the work of the staff and makes sure the flow of paper is not held up. One problem thrown up by the explicit or implicit arrangements agreed between Franken and Karremans was that these often had passed the men by.

The role of a battalion commander according to the book...

The arrangements between Karremans and Franken on the division of labour were also at loggerheads with the so-called Netherlands Army doctrine: 'In so far the operational conditions permit [the commander] must see and be seen; his staff must not form a barrier between himself and the troops. (...). An interest in the person behind the soldier and in the working of his mind allows the commander to assess the readiness of the unit and in particular, the morale of the troops.'²⁶⁴⁶

Literature studies on command, issued by the Royal Military Academy [*Koninklijke Militaire Academie*] also refer to the importance of the role of the commander. The battalion commander and his company commanders are the main executors of policies issued by the authorities. They are also the persons who must ensure that the troops comply with the rules of conduct laid down for them, that they are adequately prepared, have been given sufficient information, are determined but not aggressive, and that incidents are dealt with correctly. Commanders must therefore be in constant contact with their men. During peace operations in particular, small groups of troops operate at a great distance from their commanders, and mutual trust is essential in such situations.

The underlying idea here is that a commander who is no longer in close contact with his men will hear little of what they are really concerned with. If he does not show his face, or seems not to be interested in the problems his men are facing, then he will receive little information. This applies even more when the team spirit is strong and distances make it difficult to stay in contact. A commander must show concern when problems occur and be prepared to resolve these. A commander should also recognize symptoms of stress and frustration, and should try and work on this with personnel trained for this work. In addition, he must convey to his men a realistic picture of the task of the unit, and of what is to be expected from the local population. Commanders will set their sights high in order to keep their unit motivated. High expectations, however, can also turn into frustration if a unit feels that it is not succeeding in achieving the goals. A commander will therefore find himself walking a fine line between motivation and feasibility.²⁶⁴⁷ All this does not make his role particularly easy, certainly not

²⁶⁴⁴ Interview R.A. Franken, 05/05/01.

²⁶⁴⁵ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

²⁶⁴⁶ RNL-A doctrine publication, Part I: *Military Doctrine*, 1996, paragraphs 0658 and 0569.

²⁶⁴⁷ A.L.W. Vogelaar, 'Norm Violations during Peace Support Operations: a Social-Psychological Explanation' in A.L.W. Vogelaar, K.F. Muusse and J.H. Rovers, eds. *NL Arms: Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies 1998*, Royal Netherlands Military Academy, Breda, 1998, pp. 144-46.

under the conditions prevalent in Srebrenica, where many soldiers increasingly wondered what the real point of their presence was.

Units without internal conflicts do not exist but a commander must try and detect conflicts at an early stage, and confront them. Denial of conflicts only raises the tension and has a negative effect on the performance of the unit. Conflict resolution demands some measure of courage but can also generate respect. It was not enough, particularly in the case of composite units such as Dutchbat, to know what other people's tasks were. They had to know each other's capacities, views and needs. Problems may well ensue if soldiers in a composite unit remain strangers to each other, according to a study by Ambaum on this subject.²⁶⁴⁸

The literature also points out that a commander must be aware of his own behaviour and that he must have the courage to be confronted with his own conduct and how it is perceived by those under his command. This requires feedback.²⁶⁴⁹

...and in practice

The question is whether the Dutchbat III Battalion Commander received such feedback from the battalion. The battalion staff, who were already undermanned during the last few months of their stay in Srebrenica, did not possess the cohesion which could guarantee an optimum performance from the commander and the staff. Karremans had not been happy with the composition of his staff even before the mission; he had not been able to exert influence to any great extent and considered that not all officers and NCOs in the staff had performed equally well.²⁶⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Franken said during the final phase of Dutchbat's presence in Srebrenica that he had got on very well with the key officials in the staff. But Franken said that these did not include individuals who sometimes showed signs of a nervous breakdown during the last few days.²⁶⁵¹

Judgements by Dutchbat troops of company commanders are generally positive. Captain Groen, the B Company Commander, had quite definite ideas on strict discipline in his company. There was a fair amount of resistance in the battalion against the strict uniform rules, for instance, but Groen was very definite about the uniform his men had to wear. Franken was also a stickler for this, and felt annoyed that Karremans had been less strict on this point during Franken's leave.²⁶⁵²

The compound in Potocari was not subject to the same discipline as the compound in the town of Srebrenica. B company stood out for its strict and direct methods of operation. Groen mixed with his staff there but it would never enter anyone's mind to get familiar with him. This had also been the consideration for stationing Groen in the compound in the town of Srebrenica. Franken considered this a felicitous choice in hindsight. Captain Matthijssen, the C company commander in Potocari, was less hard and consulted more but did have a cohesive company with relatively young personnel.²⁶⁵³ There had been little cause for conflict or ambiguity amongst Major Otter's Service Support Company, also stationed in the compound in Potocari.²⁶⁵⁴

The relationship between B Company and the battalion was characterized by aloofness. Instructions issued by the battalion were said not always to have been clear but this in turn gave B Company a certain degree of freedom. The Battalion Staff was said to have appreciated the work by the company but Karremans' appreciation had not been very apparent. The relationship between Battalion Command and C Company was good. They were stationed in the same location.

²⁶⁴⁸ Ambaum in *NL Arms 1998*, p. 176.

²⁶⁴⁹ Ambaum in *NL Arms 1998*, p. 176.

²⁶⁵⁰ Interviews J.Th.P. Karremans, 15, 16, 17/12/98.

²⁶⁵¹ Interview R.A. Franken, 05/05/01.

²⁶⁵² Interview R.A. Franken, 05/05/01.

²⁶⁵³ Interview R.A. Franken, 05/05/01.

²⁶⁵⁴ SMG/Debrief, Feitenrelas, [Factual Account of the Debriefing], § 3.2.1.

There was allegedly some tension between the Company Commanders and the Battalion Staff during the fall. There was some talk amongst the Dutchbat III officers that in their opinion the battalion staff had known little about what exactly took place in the field during the days around the fall. This was deduced from the instructions, which were lacking in practicality. The actual situation in the terrain was said to have been beyond the imagination of the staff. Company Commanders such as Groen and Matthijssen were, however, capable enough, so that the lower levels hardly noticed these shortcomings. Although not everyone appreciated Groen's style of leadership, many were of the opinion that he had been a good leader during the fall of the enclave and in particular during the implementation of the blocking position. He showed controlled behaviour and took care of the safety of his personnel, despite having enjoyed little sleep. His leadership during those last days was demonstrated by issuing clear-cut orders. He remained calm and was highly regarded for this reason. Groen was seen as a good leader and a good soldier and for this reason was admired by his men.²⁶⁵⁵

At times, what was frequently seen as the urge for regulation and control on the part of Franken, led to irritation. Some said that the higher echelon should have had more trust in the lower level. Conversely, there were also examples according to Franken when there was doubt during the VRS attack whether the logistics personnel attached to the battalion were in fact willing to do work outside the safe walls of the bunker which was not part of their actual job. The Battalion Command did not always have an easy job of it during the fall of the enclave. According to Franken, it was not the soldiers who posed a problem during the last few days. It had rather sometimes been the NCOs who presented problems. Occasionally the command had been called upon to get the odd NCO moving again. According to Franken, there had been individuals who stated: 'the minister has said that unacceptable risks must not be run and I consider this unacceptable.'²⁶⁵⁶

The relationship between Karremans and Franken, and how they related to each other, passed most Dutchbat soldiers by. Nevertheless, there remained the idea that the relationship was not always as good as it might have been. Karremans was seen as not very approachable and withdrawn; whether he behaved that way deliberately, or whether he was unaware of it, was not clear to the personnel. There were few conflicts between the men and Karremans; conflict mostly arose with Franken, also because he was the person carrying out the policy of the commander.

Franken was an outspoken and extrovert individual. He 'was a large, imposing figure who dealt summarily with everyone and showed little patience'. Karremans was much more of an introvert. 'He did speak but he seemed to hold back a lot. It always seemed as if Franken wore the trousers and Karremans was allowed to tag behind. This is just my impression, it may well not have been so at all', said a Dutchbat soldier. Franken was someone who was quite prepared to make a decision, on anything, and he had the freedom to do so. He adopted a clear point of view; after all, he had to make sure he kept Dutchbat together and that could not always be done tactfully. Sometimes he had to make unpleasant and difficult decisions but this could not be avoided under the circumstances. Most people understood that conflict in that case should not be looked for; the odd person did though, which only made the situation worse.

Members of the battalion were pretty much united in their judgement that Karremans found it harder to relate informally to his men without giving the impression it was a chat out of duty. Karremans was not viewed by the battalion as a person who found it easy to relate to his personnel. Sometimes he was perceived as being rather blunt, yet at other times he was regarded as amicable. The feeling was that some people required an interest taken in them, and a commander had to stick his neck out for them. A good atmosphere in a battalion where everybody knew each other and knew what they could expect from each other frequently forms the basis for a good performance. Dutchbat soldiers, however, stated that they had seen little of Karremans, not even in the compound in Potocari where the Battalion Commander was stationed. Karremans was not a 'trooper' surgeon Kremer judged; he

²⁶⁵⁵ SMG/Debrief, Feitenrelaas, [Factual Account of the Debriefing], § 3.2.1.

²⁶⁵⁶ Interview R.A. Franken, 05/05/01.

had never received a spontaneous visit at the Field Dressing Station from Karremans, who was also stationed at the compound in Potocari.²⁶⁵⁷

There were further similar comments from the battalion; a judgement such as ‘Karremans was an individual who was considerably reserved in his dealings with us. In contrast, we had a good relationship with Franken’ was typical. Karremans was seen more as a solo performer than Franken. While Franken was always in conversation with anybody, Karremans kept himself aloof, which made the Dutchbat troops act aloof too. A factor which affected this was, of course, the lack of fuel - this restricted personal contact between the staff in Potocari on the one hand and B Company in Srebrenica and the OPs on the other hand to a minimum, and made it also more difficult for the commander to visit if he wanted to do so.

Brantz, who as Deputy Commander of Sector North East in the days of the VRS attack had been in frequent contact with Karremans and had known him for longer, publicly said in an interview that he was not surprised at the irritation amongst the battalion in relation to Karremans’ conduct. Karremans could be quite cynical, he said, did not mix easily in company and was not always very flexible. On the other hand, Brantz pointed out that nobody had ever gone through what Karremans had had to go through, and that all his critics should first prove that they could have done a better job.²⁶⁵⁸

As far as Deputy Battalion Commander Franken was concerned, many may have had personal reservations about him but they nevertheless declared to have got on well with him. He made a good impression and without him the decision-making process within the battalion would not have been of the same quality because Karremans was less able to take on the command, which in turn became evident from Franken’s role. The troops had on the whole worked incredibly hard during the fall, but the general opinion was that it had above all been Franken who had distinguished himself in this respect. In particular people close to him spoke with admiration of Franken. For many people he was instinctively the man who pulled the strings. The officers had a high regard for Franken’s military skills. The men only objected to his strict insistence on maintaining dress regulations.

So Franken was the man who arranged matters, which was in fact part of his task as Chief of Staff. This contributed to the general impression that he was the person making decisions. It should be noted that Karremans did not shrink from action if he considered something important. This related to negotiations other than the routine negotiations with the VRS and the ABiH and the Opstina. Karremans, for instance, visited B Company to tell them personally that Soldier Van Renssen had died. On the other hand, there was some irritation about the fact that Karremans, following his discussion with the Opstina during the night of 10 to 11 July, had not shown an interest in the personnel at the blocking positions who had assembled in the market square. The same could be said in relation to the Dutchbat hostages: they were held in the same hotel (Fontana) where the discussion between Karremans and Mladic had taken place following the fall.

The first question which Bastiaans raised in the interview with Franken at the debriefing in Zagreb was the issue of the command at the time of the fall; he wanted to know who had in fact been in charge. Franken answered with a straight face that it had been him, according to a debriefer who was present during this discussion. The debriefers noted even during the conversations in Zagreb that it was Franken in particular who was taken seriously. When Captain Groen spoke of the command, he referred to Franken. Nobody spontaneously mentioned Karremans, and nearly everyone used words such as: ‘Franken ordered me to ...’. Karremans argued that all this had taken place with his full agreement but the impression was given, and remained, that Franken had pulled the strings. Franken appeared as someone who had done more than was expected from him. This gave Bastiaans the impression that it had probably been a good thing in the circumstances.

²⁶⁵⁷ Interview G.D. Kremer, 13/07/98. Karremans did call in when Kremer invited him to a drink on his birthday.

²⁶⁵⁸ G.Nage, ‘Charlie we zijn verneukt’, *De geknakte loopbaan van luitenant-kolonel Karremans*, *HP/De Tijd*, 22/12/95.

Karremans did not deny during the ‘small’ debriefing that Franken had played a large role. He explained this by saying that he had been busy with all kinds of issues which were less related to operations. Karremans did not give the impression that Franken had taken up the more dominant position. Karremans had an explanation for everything when confronted with issues presented to him in Zagreb which allegedly proved that this had been the case.

It can be deduced from other conversations in Zagreb that many within the battalion thought that Karremans really should have fulfilled the role of battle captain – leading the battle – but that this role had been played by Franken.²⁶⁵⁹ Franken himself said that he definitely had not conducted ‘his own battle’ but had been ‘prominently present’ and had indeed made a number of decisions of his own accord when lack of time had made this necessary. He knew the terrain well, which is why, as he said, it was easy to make decisions.²⁶⁶⁰

Members of the Military History Section involved in the debriefing in Zagreb arrived in respect of the internal relations at the conclusion that Karremans had performed moderately and that Franken had seemed to be the actual person in charge. They had also listened to what was said outside the debriefing rooms, and the tenor of the conversations heard there was that Karremans seemed less suitable for his function. In contrast, there were positive words for Franken and Groen. Kamphuis, the Head of the Section, had informed the Netherlands Army Director of Operations, Major-General Van Baal, of these findings; they evoked disbelief in Van Baal, who had a different impression, because he had understood from a number of matters which had occurred at the battalion that Karremans had taken firm action. Van Baal expressly told NIOD that he had great regard for Karremans in this respect. The latter had, according to Van Baal, decided to continue occupying the OPs against the order from Gobilliard, had continued to request Close Air Support time and time again, against all logic, and had ordered the blocking positions to be set up against all logic.²⁶⁶¹ According to Van Baal there had not been any doubt in The Hague on the basis of these issues as to who had been in charge: Karremans.²⁶⁶²

As far as the actual combat command during the fall was concerned, Franken was indeed the man who held sway. The fact that the personnel did not hear Karremans over the battalion radio network during the days around the fall also played a role in the judgement of Karremans. It was not in itself customary that Karremans was heard over the network but in this type of situation some expected the commander to broadcast in person over the radio network from time to time. But this also was due to arrangements made between him and Franken, according to Karremans; Franken acted as battle captain and was in charge of combat,²⁶⁶³ Karremans was present in the Opsroom (the command post) of the battalion from where he could issue instructions or intervene. To what extent this actually happened, and whether Karremans actually fulfilled a directional role, is not made quite clear in the debriefing statements.

Neither Karremans nor Franken was very visible for the personnel during the days in question. This could be explained by the fact that the battalion lacked an operations officer (S-3) who normally would have been in charge of military operation affairs. Franken took over that role and Karremans was continuously called to the telephone by several UN headquarters who took an interest in Srebrenica. Sarajevo regularly breached the hierarchical line with Dutchbat, which should have run via the Sector North East headquarters. This caused Dutchbat to deal with two headquarters (Tuzla and Sarajevo) who preferred to do so with the Battalion Commander personally. In addition, there were the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff and the Defence Crisis Management Centre from the Netherlands. As referred to in the introduction to this chapter, at a given moment this even resulted in

²⁶⁵⁹ Interview Christ Klep, 18/02/99.

²⁶⁶⁰ SMG 1007/23. Report debriefing Major Franken, Camp Pleso, 22/07/95.

²⁶⁶¹ Interview A.P.P.M. Van Baal, 12/12/01.

²⁶⁶² Interviews P.H. Kamphuis and Chr. Klep, 08/04 and 18/02/99.

²⁶⁶³ Interview J.Th.P. Karremans, 15, 16, 17/12/98.

the fact that Sarajevo had to ask The Hague to restrict telephone communications because the commander had other things to worry about besides answering the telephone.²⁶⁶⁴

Haukland, the commander of Sector North East, was well pleased with Karremans. Although Haukland was not in a position to be able to consult regularly with Karremans in person, and was also absent during the days of the fall, he called Karremans an excellent and capable officer: 'He was deadly right in all his assessments'. According to Haukland there was little to reproach Karremans for; working conditions in Srebrenica had been impossible and his task was impossible too.²⁶⁶⁵ Haukland seemed to base his judgement particularly on the staff work and the letters which Karremans wrote to the higher echelons. He was less well informed about the internal operations of Dutchbat.

Brantz felt he had a better overview at Sector North East. Moreover, he knew both Karremans and Franken. Brantz thought that Karremans and Franken could have complemented each other. The question was merely one of what was left by one, and done by the other. If proper arrangements had been made, and this seemed to be the case during the posting in Srebrenica, then in his view there was not a problem. It only became a problem if Franken had already embarked on matters before this was agreed, and this had possibly been the case according to Brantz during the last period of the stay. Franken stepped in as soon as he saw that someone left something undone. According to Brantz, Franken was not able to leave matters be, and Karremans was not inclined to put him in his place. According to Brantz, Franken was also domineering, which sometimes gave rise to negative views about him, not least because people were afraid of him. This also meant, on the other hand, that Franken had been mentally resilient under the strain of the moment, and that he, still according to Brantz, acted more alert than Karremans because of his strongly analytical mind. Franken held his own in the military tactics field; he knew the terrain because he had been on many patrols.²⁶⁶⁶

There seems to be a lot of truth in this judgement by Brantz when compared with the cited views of Dutchbat troops. However, one thing should be added: ultimately it was Karremans and not Franken who carried the burden of final responsibility on his shoulders. A deputy does not carry that burden, so he is able to act with greater ease.

Conclusion

Deputy Battalion Commander Franken put Battalion Commander Karremans in the shade. This was on the one hand a result of the agreements in relation to work and the division of labour which the commander and deputy had agreed, which made Franken more visible to the battalion than Karremans. But it did deviate from the more usual pattern in the division of labour between commander and deputy, and contributed considerably to the fact that the men began to consider Franken as the driving force behind the battalion. It posed a problem that the Dutchbat men did not see the actions by Franken and Karremans as based on arrangements agreed between both. The characters of each of them also played a role. The nature of the relationship between the two was already known before Dutchbat III was sent out, and the consequences could have been foreseen. By sending them out in this combination, the command of the Airmobile Brigade was in some measure co-responsible for the performance of Dutchbat command.

The test for leadership in a crisis only comes when the crisis actually materializes. Training is only partly effective and gives insufficient indication in order to predict conduct during a crisis. There had even been some doubt on this point before the dispatch of the battalion, as explained in Part II, but there were not enough reasons to make changes in the leadership. If the battalion had found itself in different circumstances and with sufficient resupply, and if the enclave had not been overrun by the Bosnian Serbs, then there would have been a fair chance that the problems outlined above would not

²⁶⁶⁴ Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

²⁶⁶⁵ Interview Hagrup Haukland, 03/05/99.

²⁶⁶⁶ Interview C.L. Brantz, 11/06/99.

have surfaced. The picture, which emerged after the fall of the enclave, was one of sorrow. This does not seem wholly justified. Other than rather vague orders for the setting up of the blocking positions, and misunderstanding in relation to application procedures and possibilities or otherwise of Close Air Support, Karremans appears not to have made all too big mistakes during the attack on the enclaves.

Six months of living and working on top of each other in dire circumstances represents an enormous test of leadership qualities, personal relations and morale. Criticism is always levelled at the commander in such cases. Karremans and Franken, and with them the battalion personnel, made the best of the situation. They also complimented each other to a certain extent; Karremans as the man who analysed and reported matters, and Franken as the decisive man taking care of the day-to-day management. Franken was a practical man and was well regarded for this reason, including Karremans. Franken also made full use of the freedom to act as afforded by Karremans. It is difficult to judge to what extent there was a battle for competence between the two. Franken, and this also applies to Groen to a lesser extent, was not always appreciated by the battalion because of his strictness, but the performance by these two during the fall commanded respect amongst the men, which ultimately turned into recognition. In the case of Karremans there seems to be no question of a comparable reversal in regard for him.

15. Military honours for Karremans and the Forward Air Controllers?

The question whether military honours should be awarded to the battalion was one example where an initially positive regard for the Dutchbat III performance turned into doubt. Immediately after the fall of Srebrenica the question arose whether members of Dutchbat III might possibly be considered for military honours. The Airmobile Brigade and Military History Section debriefers asked during the debriefing in Zagreb whether there were people who should be considered, and if so, whom. The name mentioned most often was Captain Groen, in recognition of the leadership he had shown during the week of the fall.²⁶⁶⁷ This was as far as it went in Zagreb. Nominations for military honours were not submitted to The Hague by the Airmobile Brigade itself.

The question had been pondered earlier, on 13 July 1995, at the Ministry of Defence. But that had been at a time characterized by uncertainty, because the forced departure of the population was still ongoing, and the departure of Dutchbat had not yet been decided. The idea was that a military honour by way of recognition for the battalion would be appropriate when Dutchbat returned unscathed from Srebrenica. This was dependent on a 'positive scenario', which meant that the local population and Dutchbat had to have been released from their plight without too many problems. Minister Voorhoeve wanted to visit the battalion as soon as the situation allowed, and this would be a suitable time to honour Dutchbat in the person of Karremans for their efforts during the previous difficult period, according to him.

A military honour for Karremans?

Consideration was given to a military honour for Karremans because it was not possible to award a medal to a unit as a whole. The honour was therefore not actually intended for the person of the Battalion Commander but should be seen as a symbolic recognition of the entire battalion. The award of a Gold Merit medal (*Eretekken voor Verdienste in Goud*) was considered, a military honour awarded fairly infrequently which expressed a high level of recognition. The award of this medal was also prompted by the fact that the Minister of Defence could grant the military honour himself, avoiding the long process of a Royal Decree, as was necessary for other honours.

The initiative to award a military honour stemmed from Voorhoeve himself. The Head of the Military Honours Section at the ministry, P.V.E. Horbowiec, then studied the criteria for awarding the

²⁶⁶⁷ Interview Christ Klep, 18/02/99.

Gold Merit medal. The order could not be awarded on the basis of the criterion that ‘functional organic activities’ had been carried out in an outstanding manner, because the situation in which the battalion found itself did not feature in any schooling or training scenario and the situation was of such a special nature that it did not fit in with the concept of ‘organic functional tasks’.

Other criteria did apply, however, such as ‘courageous acts in conflict situations in peacetime’ and ‘cases of individual bravery in life-threatening circumstances’. The first criterion seemed to offer few difficulties; Dutchbat on a peace mission signified peacetime. The fact that war conditions prevailed locally, although Dutchbat was not a party in the conflict, did present a problem, however. Another criterion, ‘courageous action’ and ‘individual bravery’ might, in view of the circumstances and the responsibilities on the part of Karremans, apply to him and in that case these would also apply to the men who had to perform their tasks under exceptional circumstances, and had not shirked from personal risks.²⁶⁶⁸ But, as mentioned before, awarding military honours to a unit as a whole was not possible, so the attention turned to the commander.

This firstly required approval on the part of the secretary general of the Ministry of Defence, Barth. If he agreed with the proposal, the administrative machine could be set in action. The secretary general let it be known that he was ‘completely in agreement’ and would give his approval with pleasure, as he thought Karremans deserved ‘the highest praise’ for his actions during the week of the fall.²⁶⁶⁹

The next step was to arrive at a draft recommendation, which would allow the secretary-general, the Chief Cabinet of the Chief of Defence Staff and the Head of the Military Honours Section (together forming the commission authorized to do so) to submit a formal recommendation to the minister. The Commander of the Army, General Couzy, was invited to compile a draft recommendation. Couzy subsequently submitted a recommendation to the minister by 14 July, signed by himself. Couzy cited as grounds that Karremans had led the execution of the mission in an excellent fashion, which had to be carried out under very difficult and life-threatening conditions. The unit had commanded respect by the courage displayed and their resilience, the mutual solidarity and the concern for the population of the enclave. The task had been continued as best as possible during the protracted blockade of the enclave. Despite ‘stubborn resistance’ on the part of the Dutch troops, the offensive campaigns had resulted in the capture of Srebrenica, due to the enemy’s vastly superior numbers’. Karremans and his battalion had then taken care of ‘tens of thousands’ of refugees and shared the scant Dutchbat provisions with them. Karremans had during negotiations tried to ensure maximum safety for the refugees in his care, without losing sight of the safety of his personnel. ‘Through his resolute actions and the moral courage displayed, Lieutenant-Colonel Karremans has endeavoured to serve the Netherlands Armed Forces in an exceptional fashion’, Couzy concluded his recommendation.²⁶⁷⁰

The citation in the certificate was largely borrowed from the recommendation by Couzy and spoke of ‘resolute action’ and ‘moral courage displayed’ through which Karremans had shown himself exceptionally worthy when ‘the resilience, the mutual solidarity and the concern for the Dutch personnel as well as for the population in the Srebrenica enclave shown by the infantry battalion under his command had compelled much respect and awe’. This last sentence served to indicate that the battalion in this way was honoured in the person of its commander.²⁶⁷¹

The ministerial order and the certificate were ready for signing by the Minister on 19 July. Voorhoeve was to confer the military honour in Zagreb on 21 July. As the Netherlands Army technical

²⁶⁶⁸ Sie Onderscheidingen No. DO.055/95/. Note Head of Military Honours Section to the Head of the Ministerial Office, 14/07/95, No. 4496/N.

²⁶⁶⁹ Sie Onderscheidingen Section No. DO.055/95/. Note Head of the Military Honours Section to the Secretary-General and Head of the Defence Staff Office, 14/07/95, No. 4496/N. The Secretary-General gave his approval on 14 July, the Chief Cabinet of the Chief of Defence Staff on 19 July.

²⁶⁷⁰ Sie Onderscheidingen No. DO.055/95/. C-in-C RNLA to minister of Defence, 14/07/95, No. KAB/140795.

²⁶⁷¹ Sie Onderscheidingen No. DO.055/95/. Unsigned order to award the Gold Merit Medal.

office needed additional time to write the document in calligraphy, the fear that the recommendation would meanwhile be leaked was great.²⁶⁷²

But the recommendation was never signed. The idea had always been to retain the order for the time being and to wait for further developments and reports on actions by Dutchbat. Couzy also agreed with this view.²⁶⁷³

After Junior Minister Gmelich Meijling in Zagreb had spoken with the 55 Dutchbat troops kept hostage by the VRS, who had just arrived there, and also with Couzy, he urged Voorhoeve while still in Zagreb not to act prematurely in relation to the recommendation of a military honour for Karremans.²⁶⁷⁴

The message that the recommendation should not be proceeded with arrived on 21 July on the orders of Voorhoeve. The facts had caught up with the earlier favourable judgement on Dutchbat and in the meantime they had acquired a negative tenor to the extent that the earlier grounds for the award of a military honour no longer applied.²⁶⁷⁵

A military honour for the Forward Air Controllers?

This did not put an end to the recommendations for military honours, even though there was an interval lasting some years for other applications. These later included recommendations for bravery medals for some three members of the Corps Commandos. This idea had been suggested to them by the fact that commandos who had been present in Srebrenica had heard that the three British Joint Commission Officers, with whom they had collaborated during the last few days of the fall, had been rewarded with a military honour.

The personnel officer of the Corps Commandos had subsequently approached his commander and the Military Honours Section at the ministry had advised them to submit a sound proposal, together with situational sketches, reports and witness statements. These were produced but the commander of the Corps Commandos sent the proposals directly to the Military Honours Section at the ministry. The Netherlands Army heard about this and demanded that the recommendations be submitted via the hierarchical line, in this case via the Dutch Deputy Commander of the German/Royal Netherlands Army Corps, General G.D.T. Keuning, and from there to the Commander of the Army. The dossier went therefore from the ministry to the Royal Netherlands Army; this was early in 1998. Nothing was done for a long time, apparently because Keuning did not arrive at a decision. Consultation took then place between the Commander of the Land Forces (Lieutenant-General M. Schouten) and Keuning, and also between Schouten and the Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral L. Kroon.

There was considerable procrastination, also because nobody quite knew how to deal with such recommendations: bravery medals had been awarded last during the early sixties in New Guinea. A special Bravery Honours Committee chaired by the Deputy Chief of Operations at the Defence Staff, Brigadier-General Dedden, which included representatives from operational staff in the various services. This committee went to work on the recommendations.

In the meantime, the matter had reached the press; *De Telegraaf* reported on 3 October 2000 that Van Wiggen as Commander of the Corps Commandos had voiced his anger on the lack of a decision in an open letter to his men, as well as in the Corps newsletter *De Groene Baret*. He wrote that commandos had taken the initiative to take on the target guidance of the F-16s under 'enemy fire' when others could no longer do so. They had done more than could be expected from them and it was frustrating to see that recognition at senior level depended on the political sensitivity of the subject of Srebrenica.

²⁶⁷² Sie Onderscheidingen No. DO.055/95/. Note Head of Military Honours Section to the Head of the Technical Office C-in-C RNLA, 19/07/95, No. 4498/N.

²⁶⁷³ Interview A.P.P.M. Van Baal, 01/11/01.

²⁶⁷⁴ Interview J. Veen, 16/01/02.

²⁶⁷⁵ Interview P.V.E. Horbowiec, 26/02/01.

This undermined trust in the senior levels, thought Van Wiggen. He now put his hope in the recently established Committee for Bravery Honours. This committee was supposed to advise the minister in order to arrive at a positive or negative decision. Secretary-general Barth supported this; any special actions had to be assessed.²⁶⁷⁶

Van Wiggen submitted three new recommendations on 10 November 1998. These recommendations were supported by only one limited witness statement, compiled by one of the 322 Squadron RNLAf, who had been involved in the Close Air Support on 11 July. There were no witness statements by persons who could have observed the actions of the commandos from close by; these persons did exist but they were all British JCOs. Van Wiggen tried to trace who the British JCOs in the enclave had been via the British embassy in The Hague, with the aim of contacting them. These efforts came to nothing. Van Wiggen feared that this was because of the political sensitivity of the presence of the British in Srebrenica at the time of the fall. A more plausible explanation was, however, that they were Special Forces personnel, whose names were prohibited from being released for formal reasons.

This obviously did not make the job of the Bravery Honours Committee any easier. The only other thing the committee could bring to bear on the matter was a report on the actions on 11 July, and the incomplete schooling and training by Sergeant-Major A.J.H. Wesselink, the unit supervisor of the Corps Commandos Forward Air Controllers but he was not a witness to the events on 11 July.²⁶⁷⁷

The committee therefore had very little material at their disposal on which to base a decision. Moreover, the committee immediately hit on the problem that one of the Dutchbat Forward Air Controllers, Voskamp, pointed out that it was factually incorrect that the commandos on their own had taken the initiative to guide the F-16s to their targets; the author of the letter had indeed played a role there in his capacity as Windmill 02, albeit at a more modest level than Windmill 03 (this was discussed in chapter 6). If the commandos proved to be eligible for a bravery medal, because they had carried out their task under difficult circumstances, then this also applied to the Forward Air Controller involved, in his opinion.²⁶⁷⁸

The committee subsequently commenced with a number of hearings to check the recommendations. This ultimately led to a decision to award Sergeant 1st Class F.C. Erkelens the Merit Cross (*Kruis van verdienste*). Erkelens, however, declined the honour. He considered that not only himself but all three commandos who had constituted the Tactical Air Control Party should have been offered the award.

16. Conclusions

‘Intelligence services were also surprised by the capture of the enclave’

Western intelligence services were not aware of any VRS preparations for an attack on Srebrenica. The plans for the attack had been made only a few days before and troop movements were observed only on the day prior to the attack. They escaped detection by the intelligence services. The Dutch Military Intelligence Service only hit the nail on the head in a brief analysis immediately after the fall of Srebrenica: the VRS operation at Srebrenica was an opportunistic target of limited scope which was extended when a credible defence did not materialize.²⁶⁷⁹

The attack by the Bosnian Serbs not only arrived totally unexpected, in Western eyes it also signified a new tactic and strategy, irrespective whether it had been preplanned or took place ad hoc. The usual VRS tactics was namely to exert pressure on the edges of the Safe Area, in order to gain possession of the higher areas. Nobody had expected that the entire enclave or the town of Srebrenica would be captured. This was based on the assumption that the VRS did not have the necessary troops

²⁶⁷⁶ Interview P.V.E. Horbowiec, 26/02/01.

²⁶⁷⁷ Sie Onderscheidingen, CDO. Report FAC missions Srebrenica, 23/08/00.

²⁶⁷⁸ Sie Onderscheidingen, No. 63.08.27.253. Letter R. Voskamp to the Bravery Honours Committee, 10/10/00.

²⁶⁷⁹ DCBC, 882. MID briefing for Ministers Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo, 18/07/95.

and too few men to overpower the ABiH in house-to-house and street combat, who outnumbered them. Neither did the VRS allegedly know what to do with the refugees. The purpose of the offensive seemed to be twofold, strategically speaking: to compel the Bosnian Muslims to come to the negotiation table, and to make the map of Bosnia, drawn up by the Contact Group, again the subject of negotiations.²⁶⁸⁰

The possibility that more local factors played a role in the decision to attack seems to have escaped the Western intelligence services. They had insufficient insight into the events and their effect on Bosnian Serb thinking, such as activity outside the Safe Area. The intentions on the part of the Bosnian Serbs in relation to Srebrenica were not known either: in the first instance this was to reduce the size of the Safe Area. This also applied to the VRS decision on 9 July to overrun the entire enclave after all, when the conditions to do so seemed favourable; this was partly due to the scant resistance offered by the ABiH, and possibly also to the lack of a vigorous response on the part of the UN in the form of the deployment of NATO air power.

The possibilities and impossibilities relating to UNPROFOR

The UN units were stationed in the Safe Areas in order to deter an attack. This signified little more than a symbolic presence. UN Undersecretary-General Kofi Annan had already written to the then Force Commander Wahlgren on the establishment of the Safe Areas that the demilitarisation of Srebrenica only meant that UNPROFOR itself took on a 'moral responsibility' for the safety of the Safe Area but that he realized that UNPROFOR did not possess the military resources to guarantee safety. Annan stated that a small number of peacekeepers could not be expected to ward off a large-scale invasion by Bosnian Serbs. UNPROFOR would seek cover when fired at, like everyone else. It was up to the warring factions to treat Srebrenica as a Safe Area.²⁶⁸¹

The capability on the part of UNPROFOR to deter attacks on Safe Areas was totally inadequate. The Secretary-General of the UN considered he needed 35000 men for the six Safe Areas. The Security Council preferred a 'light option' of 7600, and in the end the member states supplied no more than 4000 troops, of which five hundred for the enclave of Srebrenica. It was established earlier that in Srebrenica alone a fully armed 5000-man strong brigade was required for that task. The 4000 men had been made available with a mandate which did not go beyond self-defence, and without the Bosnian Serbs being promised negative sanctions for contravening the Safe Area regime, and the Bosnian Muslims for violating the demilitarisation. It all looked very much like political bluff. When this was no longer effective, the peacekeepers had nothing to back them up. Use of the concept of deterrence²⁶⁸² in the Safe Area Resolution may have been a diplomatic masterstroke but politicians had not given it sufficient clout in a military sense. An author concluded after the event that something terrible had gone wrong with the concept of the Safe Areas. These were ideas full of good intentions, conjured up in air-conditioned conference rooms, which did not pass the test of commanders who behaved like medieval warriors.²⁶⁸³ Deterrence was not a concept which could be implemented using fewer troops than for a defence. The idea of deterrence was far removed from the deterrence doctrine active during the Cold War when the aim was to restrain undesirable conduct on the part of the opponent by threatening negative sanctions.

The central issue was the credibility of negative sanctions, which UNPROFOR lacked. Empty threats had no effect and the possibility to turn the threat into deeds must be real in the eyes of the opponent. This required a clear indication in unambiguous terms what the negative sanction meant. The threat also had to be plausible and feasible, and the military capacity and the will to carry out the

²⁶⁸⁰ Confidential information (25).

²⁶⁸¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPROFOR. Code Cable Annan to Wahlgren, 23/04/93, No. MSC-676.

²⁶⁸² 'To discourage and turn aside or restrain by fear; to frighten from anything; to refrain or keep back from acting or proceeding by any consideration of danger or trouble' (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

²⁶⁸³ Hans-Ulrich Seidt, 'Lessons Learnt from the Crisis in the Balkans', *European Security*, 5 (Spring 1996) 65-70.

threat had to be present.²⁶⁸⁴ The deterrence was inadequate and was not effective in an environment which was geared to peacekeeping 'where no peace was to keep'. General Rupert Smith saw himself confronted with procedures geared towards dealing with lesser violations when deterring an attack, and these procedures were no longer appropriate in the case of Srebrenica. UNPROFOR had no means at its disposal between protesting to the warring faction in question and actions from the air.²⁶⁸⁵

Akashi deemed after the fall of Srebrenica that the Security Council had to understand that UN resolutions must reflect the reality on the ground. In his opinion, unrealistic expectations had been raised. The Secretary-General had repeatedly brought the shortcomings of the Safe Area regime to the attention of the Security Council, and had warned in reports that the situation was untenable. He had pointed out the lack of military resources, the use of the Safe Areas for military purposes by the Bosnian Government, the provocations and attacks from the Safe Areas and the limited credibility of the deterrence and the consequences of the deployment of air power for the humanitarian component of the mission. Moreover, the Safe Areas had only been intended as a temporary measure. Proposals had been made which should have resulted in the demilitarisation of the Safe Areas, but it had taken a further twelve months after the Gorazde crisis in April 1994 before the Security Council had considered the demilitarisation issue, according to Akashi.²⁶⁸⁶

Close Air Support during 6 – 11 July

NATO was no longer capable of guaranteeing around the clock Close Air Support after the proven capacity on the part of the Bosnian Serb air defence during June 1995. Although the response time for aircraft when flying above the Adriatic was some twenty minutes, once returned to their base in Italy the response time soon rose to two and a half hours. This delay was not really acceptable to troops confronted with a smoking gun, a condition for requesting air power. It was the result of the American dread of again losing aircraft and pilots to the Bosnian Serb air defence.

The risks for the peacekeepers on the ground increased accordingly. The Royal Netherlands Airforce considered the concern for the risks to the aircrew exaggerated; aircrews always ran a risk but it was not excessive here. Although the Air Force Commander tried to seek support from a number of European colleagues, there was no change in the NATO chain of command dominated by Americans: no aircraft for Close Air Support flying over land if they could not be accompanied by aircraft suppressing Air Defence (in military terms: SEAD aircraft). Within this limitation, NATO responded promptly to warnings of possible requests for Close Air Support, but not without making mistakes. For instance, they neglected to put a C-130 flying command post on alert on 11 July, resulting in an additional delay before Close Air Support was provided to Dutchbat.

The procedure for processing a request for Close Air Support was cumbersome and time-consuming. A request went through many channels, there were restrictions and it usually arrived too late. The Bosnian Serbs could also see on their radar screens when NATO planes were in the air. Once the aircraft returned to their base, the VRS simply continued their advance.

UNPF in Zagreb responded tardily, due to caution on the part of Janvier, not least because the decision-making process on 10 July took so much time that the need for Close Air Support lapsed because the VRS in the meantime retreated, while Akashi had given Janvier a mandate in advance to approve Close Air Support.

This was only the first request for Close Air Support which reached Zagreb. Opinion as to how UNPROFOR acted on this point in Sarajevo, through which requests also had to pass, is divided. Initially Sarajevo was reticent when passing on requests to Zagreb, not least for technical reasons; as

²⁶⁸⁴ Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, *The Dictionary of World Politics: A Reference Guide to Concepts, Ideas and Institutions*, New York, no date, pp. 86-88.

²⁶⁸⁵ NIOD, Coll. Smith. BHC Situation Report signed Lt Gen R.A. Smith, 05/04/95.

²⁶⁸⁶ Akashi offered this harsh judgement on 12 July 1995 as a proposal for a letter from the Secretary-General to the Security Council (UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 12/07/95, No. Z-1149).

long as the VRS did not fire at Dutchbat then there was no reason for Close Air Support according to Sarajevo, because the Rules of Engagement and UN Resolution 836 stipulated the condition 'in self defence'.

Sarajevo (in particular general Nicolai) was said to believe that the Bildt mission would prevent the provision of Close Air Support during the initial phase of the VRS attack. The argument went that the bombardments of the Bosnian Serbs might wreck his mission. Bildt himself denied this.

On the other hand, Sarajevo did not have a trace of doubt about the seriousness of the situation, which was shown by the fact that a Blue Sword Request (a request for air power) was completed twice, without an underlying request by Dutchbat, which was unusual on the basis of the procedures which applied at the time.

It is not possible to determine what effect the absence of General Smith had in the UNPROFOR headquarters. It was known generally that Smith did not shrink from using force, but he was not authorized to summon Close Air Support; only Janvier and Akashi in Zagreb were authorized to do so. On the other hand, his deputy, French General Gobilliard, did not hesitate to sign the requests submitted to him either.

Janvier said after the event that if he had known what was about to happen he would certainly have asked Smith to stay in Sarajevo and that Smith would no doubt have complied. Janvier was also convinced that Smith would have returned had he known in advance how things would end. Janvier had tried to speak to him on the telephone but had not managed to do so.²⁶⁸⁷ It has to be said that Janvier was not much at his post either during the initial days of the VRS attack.

We may conclude about the air strikes expected by Dutchbat on 11 July that lack of knowledge of procedures and circumstances caused the numbers of aircraft mentioned and the submission of target lists to lead to the wrong conclusion in Srebrenica (and also at Sector North East in Tuzla) that air strikes were imminent.

The concept for providing Close Air Support had been changed considerably after the shooting down of an American F-16 early in June. This development seemed to have largely passed Tuzla and Srebrenica by, or was not sufficiently made known there. Knowledge of the procedural aspect of the deployment of air power also seemed to be lacking at these headquarters; the procedures and the smoking gun principle which applied (Close Air Support could only be requested if UNPROFOR was attacked) seemed not to be totally clear to all involved. Ultimately this resulted in enormous misunderstandings and errors of judgement, causing Dutchbat in Srebrenica to expect the morning of 11 July to start with a massive bombardment by NATO to eliminate the artillery positions around the enclave.

We have already pointed out the somewhat ambivalent attitude on the part of Karremans in respect of Close Air Support. Initial doubt regarding the expediency also throws a different light on the picture presented later, namely that Close Air Support was continuously requested. Karremans initially held back from requesting Close Air Support or air presence out of fear for reprisals, and preferred all VRS weapons around the enclave to be eliminated by massive air strikes. Sarajevo did not share the fear for reprisals but air strikes were not an UNPF option at the time; Boutros-Ghali himself had to make a decision to deploy these, even though he was willing to delegate the authority. The vulnerability on the part of UNPROFOR for further hostage actions was undiminished. It would also be impossible from a military point of view to eliminate all weapons which threatened the enclave in one go, as Karremans wanted. It points at excessive optimism in the possibilities of air power but Karremans was grasping at straws.

²⁶⁸⁷ *Mission d'Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica*, Audition de M. Bernard Janvier, 21/06/01.

The role of the ABiH

The statement by Karremans to the city council, the Opština, during the night from 10 to 11 June 1995 in fact signified the end of the resistance which the Bosnian Government army, the ABiH, displayed; Karremans recommended the ABiH retreat to avoid ABiH targets being hit by the bombardments. It should be said that the ABiH resistance could not have made much difference. A counter attack by the ABiH was successful on 10 July only but it did not last long.

The resistance offered by the ABiH was in many eyes, Bosnian as well as the UN, disappointing. The causes must be sought mainly in a low morale, inadequate leadership, lack of communications and inability to properly operate the heavier weapons present in the enclave. Of the approximately 6500 troops in the enclave, no more than 200 to 300 weapons in the four brigades and the independent battalion were present per unit. It is true that orders for a resolute defence had been given, but they were not carried out. The team spirit within the regionally organized 28th Division was poor. The links between the units were inadequate and the communication system between division and brigades soon broke down, causing commanders to decide of their own but what seemed best to them. It was an old problem that the brigade commanders took little notice of divisional orders. Occasional resistance was displayed here and there but it had been badly organized. Often it concerned resistance from ABiH troops who tried to bring their family into safety during the retreat. Once the VRS entered the town of Srebrenica, there was no further organized resistance and the ABiH got ready to leave the enclave during the night of 11 to 12 July.²⁶⁸⁸

It was not only Van Renssen's death, which resulted in an aloof stance in respect of the ABiH. There were many instances when Dutchbat were or felt at risk from the ABiH. The same thing happened to the British Joint Commission Officers (JCOs). The threat seemed to stem in particular from the thought that UNPROFOR should protect the enclave. When the fact that Dutchbat was withdrawing everywhere became evident, it resulted in frustration which in turn was expressed in an attempt to keep Dutchbat in position with the aid of force or by threatening force, or even to exact air power. The situation was not unique to Srebrenica; it also happened in Zepa that ABiH soldiers tried to prevent UNPROFOR troops from leaving an OP.²⁶⁸⁹ Too much trust in UNPROFOR and unfamiliarity with the method and military possibilities on the part of Dutchbat also played a role. This was reinforced when the ABiH expected cooperation with Dutchbat during the defence against the VRS on the basis of promises which Dutchbat had made in this respect on 29 May; promises which due to their interpretation were known to the ABiH but of which the Dutchbat rank and file were unaware. On the other hand, some measure of fear for action by the ABiH was not entirely unjustified. The ABiH General Staff and the 2 Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla issued orders to capture the ordnance and the OPs from Dutchbat.

Ought Dutchbat to have defended the enclave by force of arms?

The intention of Janvier's order to Dutchbat to set up the so-called blocking positions was to set the Bosnian Serbs a limit: once they transgressed, a situation was created in which the UN could reach for air power after a confrontation between the Bosnian Serbs and UNPROFOR. The Bosnian Serbs had not been set an ultimatum and sanctions had deliberately not been linked to a further advance, rendering it into no more than one of the many warnings which UNPROFOR issued to the VRS. Although the idea to set up the blocking positions was simple, it proved not to have been considered carefully in its consequences. There was scope for a different interpretation of the order at the various levels within UNPROFOR, and this also applied to Dutchbat.

The Rules of Engagement for peacekeeping remained in force, unchanged. These rules landed the UN troops in a vulnerable situation because they were of a reactive nature and did not allow for

²⁶⁸⁸ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjecaceni koverat*, pp. 267-9.

²⁶⁸⁹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2, SRSG Meeting, May-Oct 95. Senior Staff Meeting, 10/07/95.

offensive operations. The rules were not geared to an overt attack on a Safe Area. Moreover, it had not been pointed out to the UNPROFOR units that the implementation of the mandate was secondary to the safety of the troops. Akashi wrote to New York as late as 11 July that the protection of the Dutch troops at the blocking positions and at the OPs took precedence.

The effect which the death of soldier Van Renssen through the fault of the ABiH had on the performance of Dutchbat is difficult to underestimate. OPs in the southern part of the enclave had been able to listen in to what happened over the B company command network. The prospect of undergoing the same fate was not exactly attractive. OP commanders received the freedom to determine for themselves to which side they wanted to flee (ABiH or VRS) if the VRS planned to capture the OPs, after the death of Van Renssen. The company and battalion leadership supported them in their choice of the least dangerous option. This will have partly been prompted by a guilty conscience on the part of the Dutchbat command, following the decision not to allow OP-F to move to VRS lines.

In many cases the OP crews made it easy for the VRS to capture the OP. It was unmistakable for the OP garrison that this was on the cards and the crews were prepared for it. A fight at an OP did not fit in with the security idea for the peacekeepers. From a military point of view it would be a lost cause, because it would not have been difficult for the VRS to eliminate the OPs with the aid of the tanks and artillery available, although on the other hand it would have been an unmistakable trigger for Close Air Support; but that was not a factor either which could have saved the OPs. Neither was the nature of the terrain much of an obstacle for the VRS to circumvent the OPs and to isolate them.

Judgements by the UN and The Hague on 10 and 11 July

Initially the mood within the UN and in The Hague was that Dutchbat had done well in carrying out the assignment at the blocking positions. When in hindsight the action proved to be rather less successful, the earlier positive judgement turned into a negative one. As far as could be established, the machine guns had been used once only directly against the VRS, and the antitank weapons had not been fired at all; the latter could, in fact, not be fully deployed.

From a military point of view it was an impossible task to halt VRS tanks using six white-painted armoured vehicles. It was therefore little more than a symbolic blocking of the advance route in order to compel the Bosnian Serbs to jump one way or the other and so to create the conditions for the deployment of air power. Although the personnel at the blocking positions landed several times into risky situations, it was not the case that the Bosnian Serbs fired deliberately at UNPROFOR. So it did not provide the expected smoking gun which within the rules for self-defence could form an excuse to deploy Close Air Support.

The Hague tried to follow the developments closely but generally lagged behind the rapidly changing developments in the field. The relations between both Dutch staffs, with the Defence Crisis Management Centre (Defence Crisis Management Centre) informing the political leadership and the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff maintaining contact with Dutchbat, were not ideal. The relations were not formally laid down, and much depended on individuals. There were duplications because generally both staffs in The Hague needed to be informed from Sarajevo (and Tuzla). The Hague did apply itself to the policy to be followed by UNPROFOR but these discussions did not affect the actual circumstances in Bosnia.

There was no evidence of any disagreement between the political and military leadership at the time of the fall. Neither were there any direct instructions to Dutchbat or to Dutch staff officers in the UN staffs. The Hague only intervened to try and halt further Close Air Support on 11 July. This resulted in a politically tainted battle of words between the Netherlands and Akashi in particular on the cancellation of a third wave of attacking aircraft. Akashi argued that he had no choice but to grant the request by Voorhoeve. People involved in Zagreb and Sarajevo, however, pointed out that the UN was not preparing any further Close Air Support missions, and that the request by Voorhoeve was a

convenient excuse not to have to admit this. Voorhoeve submitted his request at such a time that it no longer had effect; nevertheless Akashi did, in fact, hide behind it at a later stage.

The decision not to initiate any further action from the air had indeed already been taken. This did not mean that flights by NATO aircraft already present above the enclave were deferred; they remained present because no prohibition on further missions arrived from NATO. The Dutch intervention was in this sense not actually significant. There were reproaches between the UN and NATO during the days after the fall. NATO commanders were of the opinion that too late and too little Close Air Support assistance had been enlisted. Akashi and Janvier on the other hand were of the opinion that Close Air Support had been provided according to the book.

Close Air Support on 11 July, however, arrived too late to produce an effect and call a halt to the VRS advance. The Bosnian Serbs did not intend to capture the entire enclave before 9 July. A decision to do so after all was only made during the evening of 9 July, after the earlier successful completion of operation Kravija '95. This decision was not known at UNPF in Zagreb. Decisions were hampered in this way by the fact that the intentions of the Bosnian Serbs were not clear. An incorrect assessment of the intentions of the Bosnian Serbs, and an overcautious response at all levels within UNPROFOR, as well as little resistance on the side of the ABiH, offered the VRS scope to continue the advance and to ultimately capture the entire enclave.

This ensured that the Bosnian Serb decision was made simultaneously with the UNPF decision to set up blocking positions. Attempts to put an obstacle in the way of the Bosnian Serb advance should therefore have taken place prior to 9 July. The UN was under the impression that the VRS was interested in the southern part of the enclave. This did not place the population centres in the enclave at risk and the purpose of the Safe Area regime was the protection of the population, rather than the territory.

Reactions on the part of the Bosnian Muslims

Numerous conspiracy theories in respect of a wanton sacrifice of the enclave by political machinations circulated in Bosnia but no concrete evidence was found.

Srebrenica only occupied a subservient position in the political and military power game in Bosnia. However, the political and military leaders within and outside the enclave were diametrically opposed in their views after the fall. The belief outside the enclave was that the defence could have stood its ground longer; within the enclave the leadership pointed at the hopeless situation in which they found themselves and which had affected the morale of the population and ABiH. ABiH in the enclave had not really been prepared for the attack. The leaders within the enclave denied that plans had existed for a defence and for the evacuation of the population, as argued outside the enclave. It indicates the different interests which existed to explain what happened after the fall of Srebrenica. Nobody had expected that the Srebrenica tragedy would actually end in mass murder.

Bosnian embitterment on the loss of Srebrenica was great. President Izetbegovic stated during the days after the fall that the confusing explanations by the UN, NATO, European and American politicians signified political approval of the legitimisation of power, the acceptance of genocide as a fait accompli and war criminals as equal partners in negotiations. He pointed an accusing finger at Akashi. The latter's hesitation continued and he ought to resign. Lack of resolve at the UN was the main reason that the tragedy in Bosnia continued, according to Izetbegovic. He could not see any extension of the UNPROFOR mandate on the horizon.²⁶⁹⁰

Comments in the Bosnian press were just as devastating: the backing by international diplomats and the delayed response on the part of NATO had made the fall of Srebrenica possible. The West had the power as well as the aircraft to halt the Bosnian Serb conquests but did not want to do so. 'seldom

²⁶⁹⁰ ABiH Tuzla. Command 2nd Corps to all divisions, 14/07/95, No. 04/01-105-615 with report press conference President Izetbegovic.

had so much misery, suffering and obscure business been recorded in diplomatic annals as at the Srebrenica tragedy. Srebrenica was simply betrayed.' There was a reminder that the Security Council had committed itself to protect the area when declaring Srebrenica a Safe Area. When Mladic's intentions became clear, UNPROFOR and the diplomats had played deaf, dumb and blind at the crucial moment.²⁶⁹¹

A problem for Defence or for the Netherlands?

Anything other than a harsh Bosnian judgement immediately after the fall of Srebrenica could hardly be expected. But critical comments could also be heard towards the UN headquarters in Zagreb. They had been averse to taking a risk. The Zagreb headquarters was a large and unwieldy machine, which had frequently been surprised by events. A bureaucratic aversion to drastic changes was said to prevail there. Akashi tended to always first want to check the information received from the military, and his reports from Zagreb to New York had always been moderate in tone. Moreover, Akashi had been instructed by Boutros-Ghali to safeguard the essence of UN peacekeeping and to remain as neutral as possible.²⁶⁹²

If the world had been determined to save Srebrenica and the UN soldiers then they should have struck hard at the VRS in which case Mladic would not have dreamt of playing a game with the fate of a protected zone and the dignity of the UN, in the opinion of the Bosnian newspaper *Oslobodenje*. The deployment of NATO aircraft had been nothing more than a cosmetic action. The fact that Minister Voorhoeve had admitted that he had tried to halt further air actions following the threat of terrorist action, resulted in a vicious response to him also: 'with a single move from this minister, 40 000 civilians were sacrificed, and the entire region was changed into a collective pull-out with an uncertain fate'.²⁶⁹³

Apart from the comments in the Bosnian press, the former EU negotiator Lord Owen also vented criticism.²⁶⁹⁴ He was of the opinion that the Dutch Government had damaged its own position by remaining silent on the situation in Srebrenica, the violation of the demilitarisation, the ABiH raids and especially by not denouncing the fact that the resupply was being cut off. The Netherlands had always taken a moral tone in foreign policy, and Owen admired this. The Hague had successfully commanded a certain measure of authority by doing so. The Netherlands should in his opinion have interpreted the problems in the enclave and also the actions on the part of the ABiH diplomatically but had not done so. The Netherlands enjoyed sufficient respect internationally that it could have counted on being listened to in international forums. Owen was of the opinion that the Dutch position in the diplomatic force field would have improved considerably if The Hague had taken action along these lines. He believed that if the Dutch Government would have said something along the lines of no good guys, no bad guys, even before the fall of Srebrenica, that this would have had international impact but the Netherlands had not done so. When Karremans uttered these words after his return from the enclave, they merely acted as a boomerang, because it had become clear immediately that the Bosnian Serbs had shown themselves as the indisputable bad guys.

When Owen raised these kind of problems during an assembly of EU Foreign Affairs ministers, he said that Minister Van Mierlo, supported by the German Minister Kinkel, gave him what for. Owen believed this showed a lack of realism in the Dutch foreign policy. As a result he wondered whether there had in fact been a mechanism in existence at government level in the Netherlands to discuss in detail differences of opinion between Foreign Affairs and Defence in relation to the policy to be

²⁶⁹¹ ABiH Tuzla. Command 2nd Corps to all divisions, 14/07/95, No. 04/01-105-615 with comment *Oslobodenje* on press conference President Izetbegovic.

²⁶⁹² Confidential interview (46).

²⁶⁹³ ABiH Tuzla. Command 2nd Corps to all divisions, 14/07/95, No. 04/01-105-615 with comments from *Oslobodenje* on press conference President Izetbegovic.

²⁶⁹⁴ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

followed, in the presence of military and civil servant experts, as was the custom in the United Kingdom.

This criticism voiced by Owen seemed not wholly unjustified. There was some question of consultation with the ministers, the military and civil servants involved in the Prime Minister's Office and there were extensive contacts between the Defence and Foreign Affairs departments but these contacts took place mainly *after* the Bosnian Serbs had started their attack on Srebrenica. Defence was mostly on its own during the period prior to the attack, as was evident from the problems around the resupply of Dutchbat and the relief. It was true that Parliament was informed at an early stage of the problems which Dutchbat faced, but these consultations remained confidential, lest too much would leak out and might therefore result in unrest amongst the Dutchbat backing. It did not result in targeted diplomatic action and pressure on New York, apart from the participation in the Rapid Reaction Force, where Defence again took the lead. Contact between the Force Commander and Chief of Defence Staff could not produce a solution. This does not mean that considerably increased activity, including activity on the part of Foreign Affairs, would have made a lot of difference; the Bosnian Serbs showed themselves intransigent. The relatively scant diplomatic effort on the part of Foreign Affairs nevertheless remains surprising, certainly in the light of the leader role which this department had fulfilled at an earlier stage.

Chapter 8

Plans to re-take Srebrenica

1. Introduction

After the seizure of Srebrenica, the international community, headed by France, turned its attention to finding ways of restoring the enclave to Safe Area status. The driving force behind the plans for a recapture was the French President, Chirac. The political tactics that he represented had already become clear after the hostage crisis: a stronger stance against the Bosnian Serbs. Accordingly, Chirac found it unacceptable to simply tolerate the VRS seizure of Srebrenica, with a possible follow-up in Zepa and Gorazde. In addition, 'srebrenica' was something of a sore point in France, because of the role played by Morillon there in 1993. At that time Morillon had declared publicly in Srebrenica that, henceforth, the population would fall under UN protection.

Chirac started canvassing for a recapture of the Safe Area of Srebrenica. His efforts to rally international support were unsuccessful; not a single country was prepared to give military backing to the French proposal. The UN saw no future in the idea either, but still paid lip service to it. This took place through the adoption of UN Resolution 1004 on 12 July 1995. By this time the Security Council had debated extensively on how the Safe Area would be restored, and whether force could be deployed. As co-sponsor of the resolution, the Netherlands played its own role in attempts to amend the draft text.

However, the decision-making in New York was far removed from the reality of the situation in Bosnia. In this respect, Resolution 1004 can be regarded as a continuation of UN Resolution 836, which designated the Safe Areas in the first place: there was again a yawning divide between political intentions on the one hand and the military means and possibilities to realize them on the other.

Eventually, the resolution did lead to a military plan from UN headquarters and from UNPF in Zagreb, but these were barely more than an effort to keep the Security Council satisfied. Moreover, mindful of the fact that the population of Srebrenica would not be happy about returning voluntarily to their 'open prison', the military commanders in New York and Zagreb paid little serious attention to the political plans.

This chapter will discuss the materialization of the French plans, their reception by the member states, the Security Council discussions on UN Resolution 1004, the visions in The Hague and, finally, the response in Zagreb and Sarajevo to plans to re-take the enclave.

2. The French proposals

On 11 July a Franco-German summit on Defence and Security was held in Strasbourg. The topics for discussion included the fall of Srebrenica. During the summit the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Klaus Kinkel, received a telephone call from his Dutch counterpart Van Mierlo. Van Mierlo said that he called Kinkel because he (Kinkel) was his liaison for the Contact Group.²⁶⁹⁵

No direct testimonies could be obtained from the main French and German players in these talks: Chirac, De Charette, Kohl and Kinkel. But testimonies were recorded from others present at this summit, including Jean-David Levitte, Chirac's political advisor. According to Levitte, Van Mierlo said that the Dutch contingent was coming under heavy pressure from the Bosnian Serbs. Dutchbat had, however, fulfilled its obligations and there was no [*sic*] need for NATO air intervention.

The talks in Strasbourg resumed until, approximately an hour later, Kinkel was again called to the telephone. Van Mierlo now passed on the message that Srebrenica was about to fall and was insistent that Close Air Support should no longer be provided as it entailed the risk of collateral damage

²⁶⁹⁵ Interview H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo, 19/05/00.

to Dutchbat and the local population. The French General Jean-Claude Mallet, who was also present, said that in his second call, Van Mierlo appealed to Kinkel to waive intervention and to leave matters to the commanders on the ground.²⁶⁹⁶

Levitte further said that when Chirac heard that Srebrenica was on the brink of collapse and that NATO could no longer deploy its air power, 'Le Président de la République a littéralement explosé'. Chirac adjourned the meeting and turned his attention to the French and German military experts to find out about plans to avert the fall of Srebrenica or to re-take it. After an hour, Chirac and Kohl reached a four-point agreement:

1. They would condemn the attack;
2. The Safe Area must be restored;
3. The Security Council must be convened;
4. France and Germany would announce their willingness to support Dutchbat and efforts to restore the enclave to UN control.

At the end of the summit, Chirac informed the press of this four-point agreement. Chirac announced that contact had been established with the troops on the ground and the relevant Dutch politicians, and that an emergency session of the Security Council had been called 'à la demande des Hollandais'.²⁶⁹⁷

Chirac did not want the Security Council to acquiesce in the fall of Srebrenica; otherwise the same fate would await Zepa, Gorazde and the Bihac. He wanted it to make a fast decision. If not, he threatened to withdraw France from UNPROFOR.

Whereas Chirac was thinking of military action and was prepared to commit French troops, Kohl was thinking primarily of humanitarian aid.²⁶⁹⁸ According to EU negotiator Carl Bildt, Kohl would not, however, have had any objections to military action.²⁶⁹⁹ German diplomatic sources say that Chirac had urgently asked Kohl to militarily support the French plans to retake Srebrenica. The Germans were under the impression that Chirac saw this as a serious option. Kohl discussed it with Minister Kinkel, Minister of Defence Volker Rühle and his political advisor Steiner. Everyone agreed that it was a splendid initiative, but this did not yet mean that Bonn would participate in it. Subsequently, Kohl responded with caution; he supported Chirac's idea for a recapture, but refused to allow military participation on the part of Germany.²⁷⁰⁰ The Dutch Ambassador in Bonn also reported that Kohl ruled out stepping up the German contribution to UNPROFOR.²⁷⁰¹

Earlier in the afternoon of 11 July, also in Strasbourg, the Bosnian Foreign Minister, Sacirbey, had campaigned in the European Parliament for a rescue of Srebrenica, even though he seemed aware at the time that the enclave no longer actually existed.²⁷⁰² On the same day Sacirbey also broached the subject with Bildt in Strasbourg. Bildt reportedly told him that Srebrenica would not be liberated, and also that Zepa would not be defended. According to Sacirbey, this disclosure meant that Mladic had 'implicitly or explicitly' been given the green light to carry out these attacks – hence, strategically, the decision on Srebrenica had already been taken.²⁷⁰³ Bildt has a totally different recollection of this meeting. In his memoirs Bildt wrote: 'surprisingly, I was more upset by what had happened than he seemed to be. His calm reactions and controlled arguments still seem to me to be a mysterious piece of the Srebrenica puzzle'. In Bildt's version, Sacirbey said that Srebrenica had always been a problem for his government and that Sarajevo knew that a peace deal would involve the loss of the enclave. He

²⁶⁹⁶ *Mission d'Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica*, Audition de M. Jean-David Levitte, 30/01/01 et Jean-Claude Mallet, 05/04/01.

²⁶⁹⁷ *Mission d'Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica*, Audition de M. Jean-David Levitte, 30/01/01.

²⁶⁹⁸ *De Volkskrant*, 12/07/95.

²⁶⁹⁹ Bildt, *Peace Journey*, p. 57-58; interview Bildt, 13/12/00.

²⁷⁰⁰ Confidential interview (53).

²⁷⁰¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Code Smit 217, 13/07/95.

²⁷⁰² *Dani*, Special issue of the Srebrenica Dossier, Sarajevo, September 1998.

²⁷⁰³ Sejo Omeragić, 'Kad god otvore nase grobnice, mi budemo krivi', in: *Ljiljan*, 10-17/07/00.

added that, from this perspective, 'what had happened made things easier'. According to Bildt, Sacirbey then pressed for humanitarian aid and not for a recapture.²⁷⁰⁴

After the Franco-German summit Bildt accompanied President Chirac on the flight from Strasbourg to Paris. At that moment there was still no military plan for a recapture. Bildt says that General Quesnot, as Chirac's military advisor, was the first to raise the subject en route. The Dutch Ambassador to Paris, Wijnaendts, was also under the impression that the idea to retake the enclave originated with Quesnot, who reportedly said to Chirac: 'Give me two parachute regiments. I'll jump and retake Srebrenica'. Wijnaendts seemed to be well-informed about this; later, the French General Germanos also said that Quesnot had helped instigate the plan by proposing to save Srebrenica with a parachute contingent which he would lead personally.

However, according to Bildt, no-one took this plan seriously apart from Chirac. In any case, said Bildt, Chirac was a person who could wax enthusiastically for ages about something and then change his mind or simply forget it.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt, in Bildt's view, that Chirac was genuinely furious. He was showing increasing frustration with the situation in Bosnia and wanted fast, powerful and resolute action. A Bosnian-Serbian attack on a Safe Area could not and would not be tolerated. Spurred on by Quesnot, Chirac appealed to Bildt to urge UNPROFOR to launch an attack to retake Srebrenica at the earliest opportunity.

During the flight, Bildt put Chirac's idea for recapturing the enclave into perspective. He pointed out that the area was under Bosnian-Serb control and that the only available troops were the Scandinavian battalion (Norbat) in Tuzla and Dutchbat. As far as he knew, the Governments of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands had not been consulted. Furthermore, Dutchbat was demoralized and penned in at Potocari. This battalion did not have the capacity to fight its way through to Srebrenica. The Rapid Reaction Force was not yet operational and was hundreds of miles away in Bosnian terrain. It would take weeks to transfer the unit to Srebrenica. Still on the flight to Paris, Bildt reminded Chirac that the Bosnian Government had not asked for a recapture but for humanitarian aid.

As it happened, on 12 July the rest of the Bosnian Government changed its stance on this issue: from that date onwards it no longer supported plans for a regulated evacuation of the population, but precisely Chirac's idea for a recapture.

Bildt said that he had urged Chirac to desist from promises that could not be kept. According to Bildt, Chirac and he were largely agreed that, basically, a recapture was not a realistic option which should take priority. Besides the political tragedy, a humanitarian tragedy threatened which must be averted with the utmost urgency. Bildt said that Chirac and he had looked for alternatives but had found none. They did not develop any ideas to involve the US politically from the start. The French did want US military support in the form of transport and fighter helicopters, but Bildt was of the opinion that the US would prefer a free hand in new air actions against the Bosnian Serbs.²⁷⁰⁵

During a meeting in the 'bunker' (the Defence Crisis Management Control Centre) under the Ministry of Defence on the evening of 11 July the Ministerial Council heard that Chirac and Kohl had advocated the restoration of the Safe Area of Srebrenica at a press conference. The Ministerial Council immediately judged that, given the underlying developments, little credibility could be attached to these statements.²⁷⁰⁶ Before the French had even mooted their controversial proposal, the possibility of retaking the enclave by military force had been explored at the Ministry of Defence. Chief of Defence Staff, Van den Breemen, instructed Vice-Chief of Operations Hilderink to find out approximately how

²⁷⁰⁴ Bildt, *Peace Journey*, p. 57 - 59.

²⁷⁰⁵ Bildt, *Peace Journey*, p. 57-59; interview Bildt, 13/12/00; telephone call with H. Wijnaendts, 25/04/00; *Mission 'd' Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica*, Audition du Général Germanos, 12/02/01. For the change in the stance of the Bosnian Government see: Draft Diary Van den Breemen, 12 July 1995. Van den Breemen received Sacirbey's message for Voorhoeve (DCBC, 714).

²⁷⁰⁶ Summary of the meeting of the Ministerial Council of 11/07/95, objectivized for the purposes of the NIOD investigation 11/07/95.

many troops would be required. Hilderink worked this out together with the Army Crisis Staff on the basis of the original plan for the Safe Areas and the NATO evacuation plan. Thus, a reasonable estimate could be compiled of the size and type of units that would be needed. The conclusion was that it was a noble idea to retake the enclave, but the troops were simply unavailable. Van den Breemen further concluded that an accelerated build-up of the Rapid Reaction Force afforded no possibilities: by the time the troops could be deployed all the Displaced Persons would have left the enclave.

The response to the French idea of recapture was that it was unrealistic and should be seen as a political stunt by Chirac. The British and the Americans were asked for their vision via accredited attachés in The Hague; their response was no different from that of The Hague.²⁷⁰⁷ Van den Breemen called a helicopter operation with six hundred men a 'total non-option', which could, moreover, endanger the lives of the Dutch troops still in the enclave.²⁷⁰⁸ On 12 July Van Mierlo announced in Parliament that the French proposal to retake Srebrenica was not a policy principle for either the Dutch Government, or the governments of other countries.²⁷⁰⁹

On the very eve of the fall, Janvier too had philosophized on the question of what was to be done with the enclave. He considered military solutions untenable as the Bosnian Serbs would threaten reprisals. There was no way that Srebrenica could be reached by land, because it would mean travelling sixty kilometres through Republika Srpska. This would have required an armoured division, similar to the one envisaged in the NATO withdrawal plan.²⁷¹⁰

The French President and his government nonetheless stuck to their proposal. After the meeting of the French Cabinet on 12 July, a communiqué was issued in which France demanded that the Security Council use all possible means to facilitate the departure of the Bosnian Serbs and the return of the population. The French Government also informed The Hague that it was prepared to contribute to this aim 'avec tous les moyens disponibles à toute opération qui serait décidée'.²⁷¹¹ 'La France est prête à répondre "présente" dans un cadre international' was the message from Paris. Chirac did not want a solo operation by the French,²⁷¹² but he could find few supporters: the UK was hesitant. The French Chief of Defence Staff, Lanxade, asked his American counterpart, Joint Chiefs-of-Staff Chairman General Shalikashvili whether American helicopters could be made available to fly in a French unit of between six and eight hundred troops. Shalikashvili hedged, saying that such decisions rested with Congress. The French also inquired through informal channels if the Dutch company of marines, which was assigned to the Rapid Reaction Force, was available for a French operation.²⁷¹³ It appears that 'Tous les moyens disponibles' were somewhat lean on the French side.

The US Ambassador to Paris, Mrs Pamela Harriman, approached Ambassador Wijnaendts on 12 July about the French initiatives. She hinted that the French had told the Americans that they were counting on logistical support if a decision were taken to recapture Srebrenica, but that the Americans were demurring in the French plans. One interesting aspect of this meeting was that Harriman said that the American standpoint would be determined by the wishes of the Dutch. Wijnaendts derived the impression that the Americans, in turn, intended to shelter behind a Dutch rejection of Chirac's 'robust option'. It is for this reason that Wijnaendts had no wish to continue the dialogue with Harriman. J.M.M.A graaf de Marchant et d'Ansembourg, Chief of the European Department, supported his decision and Minister Van Mierlo was duly informed.²⁷¹⁴

2707 Interview C.G.J. Hilderink 11/08/00.

2708 DCBC, 714. Draft Diary Van den Breemen, 12/07/95.

2709 ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278. General meeting Def/FA, 12/07/95.

2710 NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury. SRSG's meeting 11/07/95.

2711 ABZ, DAV 994.241. Fax Emb Paris to MinFA, 12/07/95.

2712 *Les Echos*, 12/07/95.

2713 DCBC, 728, Code Wijnaendts 218, 12/07/95.

2714 ABZ, DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS/Yugoslavia/NATO/Coordination/ July 1995-August 1996. Memorandum Chief DEU to M via DGPZ and S, 12/07/95, No. DEU-563/95.

On the evening of 13 July – after the completion of the deportation of the population – Chirac called President Clinton. He told him that American transport and fighter helicopters were needed. According to Chirac, the fall of Srebrenica and possibly Zepa was tantamount to ‘un échec majeur’ for the UN, NATO and Democracy. Now that the men were segregated from the women, a violation of international law was on the horizon and the civilized world should oppose such ‘fascism’. This called for ‘une action militaire ferme et limitée’ to restore the situation in the eastern enclaves. Clinton replied that he respected the French resolve, but that his military experts were sceptical about a recapture, also because it was a highly risky operation.

The US negotiator Holbrooke says that Chirac’s proposed intervention had no chance of success. His ideas had already been raised through formal French channels, and had met with fervent opposition from the Pentagon, the British, and also Chirac’s own generals.²⁷¹⁵

The press was also sending out sceptical signals regarding the French plans. Akashi categorically rejected military intervention and said that no attempts would be undertaken to re-establish a Safe Area around Srebrenica. Akashi actually spoke out of turn because the Security Council had not yet issued any statements on the matter. Among the parliamentary spokespersons in the Netherlands, Van Traa (PvdA, (Labour)) was the only one who wanted to demand the restoration of Srebrenica, but he realized that there were insufficient military resources to achieve this. Van Traa therefore gave priority to winning international support to facilitate the departure of the Displaced Persons.

The French idea met with still more rejections. Bildt announced in public that he could not see how a military operation could bring about a recapture; NATO Secretary-General Claes described Srebrenica as ‘irrevocably lost’; and there were also doubts from the British corner. The Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, said that the British Government was in favour of the restoration of the Safe Area, but that it must be achieved by negotiation. The *Financial Times* saw the French plan as a ploy which would enable the French Government to plead innocence in subsequent catastrophes expected around Zepa and Gorazde. It also took the view that the Americans would only, in theory, leave the option open, having stated that they would support any joint plan of the European member states; this was easily said given the unbridgeable gap between the French and the British. The *Financial Times* maintained that Chirac’s ideas were largely politically motivated and drew attention to the fact that he had made these statements shortly after being catcalled in the European Parliament when he announced France’s intention to resume nuclear testing. Besides, Chirac could use this as an opportunity to make out that France was the only country that was prepared to stick its neck out and thus pave the way for his retreat.²⁷¹⁶ In his memoirs the British Prime-Minister John Major spoke of ‘fairly hair-raising plans’.²⁷¹⁷

Meantime, after talks with the US negotiator Holbrooke, the Spanish Presidency of the European Union reported that Holbrooke was convinced that the French were not really serious about retaking Srebrenica and were merely playing a political game. According to the EU President, the Americans only agreed half-heartedly to support the French, while sheltering behind the Dutch, who were in the best position to assess the situation. The US Ambassador in The Hague, Terry Dornbush, also mentioned that Holbrooke had suggested a swap: the eastern enclaves, including Srebrenica, would be maintained in exchange for lifting or suspending the sanctions against the (Bosnian) Serbs. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minister Voorhoeve had – rightly – dismissed this proposal as it could have led to hostage-taking and paralyzed the Rapid Reaction Force.²⁷¹⁸

²⁷¹⁵ *Mission ‘d’Information commune sur les événements de Srebrenica*, Audition de M. Jean-David Levitte, 30/01/01; Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 70.

²⁷¹⁶ ANP, 120042 and 121416 July 95; *Parool*, NRC/*Handelsblad*, 13/07/95; *Financial Times*, 14/07/95 and 19/07/95.

²⁷¹⁷ Major, *The Autobiography*, p. 545.

²⁷¹⁸ ABZ, DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS/Yugoslavia/NATO/Coordination/ July 1995-August 1996. Fax J.M. Vos, DGPZ to Minister Van Mierlo, 13/07/95, Fax No. 356.4540.

3. UN Resolution 1004: formulation and consequences

Judging from the discussions in the *Comité Politique* of the European Union (consultation between top officials from the member states), the seriousness of the situation had not yet penetrated on 10 July. An attempt by the Spanish Presidency to have the EU Ambassador in Belgrade carry out a so-called *démarche* at the government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia came to nothing. During the discussions, it emerged that Akashi had been optimistic about a positive conclusion to the VRS attack on Srebrenica, but his optimism was not shared by the Netherlands. The French and German representatives expressed no views at the EU meeting, but the British representative, Pauline Neville-Jones, did. She maintained that the action by the Bosnian Serbs would not usher in the seizure of the enclave because it was not to their military advantage. She saw it more as provocation in the light of Bildt's negotiations.²⁷¹⁹

On 10 July the Security Council discussed the situation in Srebrenica informally. The Council could only agree on issuing a 'statement of concern' to the press, the weakest instrument at its disposal. France would have liked a stronger response in the form of an official statement by the President of the Security Council, but the Americans and the Russians were unable to agree on the wording: the Russians wanted a reference to the demilitarization agreement of 1993, the Americans did not. Only after the fall of Srebrenica did the Security Council take a stronger line.²⁷²⁰

The UN Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali, did not actively concern himself with the problems in Srebrenica in the days after the fall. He was in Athens from 10 to 12 July en route to Africa, and devoted no attention to the situation in the enclave in speeches on 11 July. When questioned about this afterwards by the press, he merely replied that attempts would be made to restore the Safe Area of Srebrenica.²⁷²¹ In New York Undersecretary-General Annan was acting as his deputy. Annan sensed that a harder line was in the offing; his assessment was that the Security Council countries would want to send out 'robust signals', though he also admitted that he was aware of the non-viability of the Safe Areas and the limited resources at UNPROFOR's disposal.²⁷²²

Akashi wanted to press for a UN resolution or a 'Presidential Statement' by the Security Council President, believing that this would give moral support to the negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs. Akashi also asked that the UN and NATO immediately start consultations and that precautionary measures be taken in case the Bosnian Serbs would not cooperate. If this indeed proved to be the case, then Akashi believed that a withdrawal from Bosnia was imminent.²⁷²³

Players on the international stage sent out mixed signals. The President of the Muslim-Croat Federation in Bosnia, Kresimir Zubak, did not ask Boutros-Ghali to retake the enclave, but '[to] exert all the necessary pressure against the Serbian aggressor, using all means at your disposal'.²⁷²⁴ President Izetbegovic, on the other hand, in a statement issued on 12 July (which deviated from his standpoint of the previous day in which he said that priority rested with the evacuation of the Displaced Persons) demanded that the UN and NATO restore the status of Safe Area by force. If these institutions could not or would not do this, then Izetbegovic demanded that this be publicly announced.²⁷²⁵ On the same day, Minister Sacirbey adopted a more moderate tone when he spoke with NATO Secretary-General Claes about retaking Srebrenica; he still gave priority to humanitarian aid.²⁷²⁶ In a letter to the President of the Security Council, Morocco, as the spokesperson for the Organization of the Islamic

²⁷¹⁹ DCBC, 720, Code Bot 349, 12/07/95.

²⁷²⁰ Bildt, *Peace Journey*, p. 59.

²⁷²¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00797. Code Wagenmakers 133, 14/07/95

²⁷²² Confidential information (45).

²⁷²³ DCBC, 1188, Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1139.

²⁷²⁴ United Nations, General Assembly/Security Council, A/50/284, S/1995/572, 13/07/95. The letter was dated 12/07/95.

²⁷²⁵ ABZ, PVVN. Security Council 3553rd meeting (S/PV.3553) of 12/07/95.

²⁷²⁶ DCBC, 778. Code Feith NATO 1049, 13/07/95.

Conference Contact Group on Bosnia, demanded a withdrawal of the 'serbian forces', but also called for 'all the necessary measures, including the use of air power' to restore the status of Safe Area.²⁷²⁷

In the afternoon of 11 July the Director of UN Political Affairs of the Dutch Foreign Ministry was also busy persuading the Security Council to address the matter. In a fax to Vos, the Director General of Political Affairs present at the Ministry of Defence, a proposal was put forward to convene the Security Council without delay in order to discuss whether steps were needed to restore the Safe Area in the interests of the population, UNPROFOR and the personnel of NGOs.²⁷²⁸

France, the UK and the USA, as permanent members of the Security Council, had already held preliminary talks at the American mission to the UN. The Dutch UN representative Biegman was invited to attend.

The French Permanent Representative at the UN, Jean Bernard Merimée, had, on the basis of the bilateral contact between Chirac and Kohl in Strasbourg, and after consulting the British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, been instructed by his government to reach a resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of the Bosnian Serbs, the restoration of the Safe Area to give fresh impetus to the Safe-Area regime, and the return of UN troops to Srebrenica (which were, incidentally, already present in the form of Dutchbat). The British representative Sir David Hannay had received similar instructions from his own government.

These three countries were agreed that the trampling underfoot of Srebrenica must be condemned, and warranted a robust response from the Security Council. The French representative stated that Paris was prepared to deploy the parts of the Rapid Reaction Force that were already stationed in Bosnia in order to reinforce the UN presence in Srebrenica, primarily in the form of armed helicopters. This prompted the United States to ask whether they would then be asked to provide military support. According to Biegman, both his French and his British counterparts said that this would not be requested. Biegman personally stressed the 'exceptionally high risks' to the Dutch troops if a military operation were set in motion. He pointed out that this would not only spell danger for the Dutchbat hostages; in addition, the battalion that had withdrawn to the compound in Potocari would be vastly outnumbered and it had no fuel or ammunition.²⁷²⁹

These discussions were followed by a meeting of the Contact Group, to which Biegman was also invited. The participants set out the instructions they had received from their governments. The Russians were not against a condemnation of the Bosnian-Serb aggression, but they wanted to see it placed in the context of the Bosnian-Muslim violation of the demilitarization of the enclave. The British also wanted to use the demilitarization agreement of April 1993 as a departure point for a condemnation of the situation in Srebrenica. At the Contact Group meeting Biegman also explained the Dutch Government's concern for the safety of the Dutch troops.

The Contact Group decided that a 'drafting group' would immediately start work on a draft text for a Security Council resolution. The French ideas (which were in tune with those of the British) would serve as a basis: condemnation of the Bosnian-Serb aggression; a call for the immediate withdrawal of the VRS; the restoration of the Safe Area; the return of the UN troops; and – a new addition at this stage – the necessity for the demilitarization of the enclave.

The Dutch demand for this draft text was that the parties respect the safety and freedom of movement of the UNPROFOR personnel, that the hostages be freed, and that the UNHCR and aid organizations be granted unimpeded access to the enclave. The result was a draft text which, in Biegman's opinion, reflected the Dutch concerns.²⁷³⁰ Biegman said that the 'Dutch bottom line was safe withdrawal of their troops, but he acquiesced in the French-British approach'.²⁷³¹ At the request

²⁷²⁷ United Nations, Security Council, S/1995/563, 12/07/95.

²⁷²⁸ DCBC, 661. Fax DPV sent to Deputy DGPA 11/07/95 15:51.

²⁷²⁹ ABZ, DPV 452342. Code Biegman 607, 12/07/95.

²⁷³⁰ ABZ, DPV 452342. Code Biegman 607, 12/07/95.

²⁷³¹ Confidential Information (46).

of the Dutch, the preamble to the resolution also expressed concern for the plight of the Displaced Persons who had gathered in Potocari.

All resources available or all necessary resources?

The draft text also stated that the Secretary-General would be asked to ‘to use all resources available’ to bring about the restoration of the Safe Area. The Russians had serious qualms about this phrase, claiming that it implied that if the Bosnian Serbs failed to respect the resolution, then force could be deployed; for, the draft text referred to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which sanctioned the use of force. The Russians would not allow this reference to go farther than the safety of UNPROFOR; they were supported by China. Conversely, the permanent members from the West wanted no truck with the Russian ideas to include a call for a ceasefire in Bosnia, because this would be tantamount to giving in to the wishes of the Bosnian Serbs.

Biegman was prepared to go along with this draft, also in view of the willingness of the United States, France and the UK to take the Dutch wishes into account and to allow the Netherlands to co-sponsor the resolution.²⁷³²

However, the vexing question was still that intensifying the pressure on the Bosnian Serbs, as conveyed by the spirit of this resolution, was more likely to lessen than augment the chance of a swift release of the Dutchbat soldiers. This had not escaped the notice of the Foreign Ministry in The Hague; this is why it was reluctant to agree to the draft text. The Netherlands realized that the phrase ‘use all resources available’, in combination with a reference to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, opened up the possibility of restoring the Safe Area by force. This would be at variance with the Dutch Government’s aim of persuading the Bosnian Serbs to release the Dutchbat hostages. The Foreign Ministry did not therefore share the French wish for robust action. Accordingly, instructions were drawn up for Biegman to try to change the disputed phrase, but these were never sent because the Foreign Ministry realized that such an amendment would be impossible without the backing of the French and the British representatives.

That was the end of the line as the Netherlands was concerned. Biegman received no support for scrapping the phrase and the Netherlands withdrew as co-sponsor of the resolution.²⁷³³ Neither Biegman, nor the Director-General of Political Affairs, Vos, relished the idea of a Dutch intervention. This was also due to tactical motives: the draft resolution must not be amended as a result of a Dutch initiative. Other countries would have to be prepared to take the lead, so that the Netherlands would not be the requesting party.²⁷³⁴ Otherwise, the Dutch might be left to carry the can when it wanted to get Dutchbat and the Displaced Persons out of the enclave. It could be blamed for wrecking the Safe Area concept by giving up Srebrenica, precisely when the Security Council was demanding a return to the *status quo ante*. According to Vos, the UN should carry the can along with the other countries which were not prepared to release sufficient resources to make the Safe Areas truly safe.²⁷³⁵

The draft resolution was also presented to Akashi in Zagreb. His comments were expressed by Undersecretary-General Kofi Annan at a meeting of the Contact Group, which took place prior to the Security Council session where the draft text of Resolution 1004 would be adopted. The Netherlands was again invited to attend.

At this meeting Annan said that Akashi had cautioned against unrealistic expectations.²⁷³⁶ Akashi had indeed told Annan that he had serious objections to the text: ‘The resolution again raises unrealistic expectations and its failure to take into account reality on the ground will inevitably lead to

²⁷³² ABZ, DPV 452342. Code Biegman 607, 12/07/95.

²⁷³³ ABZ, DPV 452342. Fax DGPZ to Minister Van Mierlo, 12/07/95, Fax No. 356.4540.

²⁷³⁴ ABZ, DPV 452342. Original FA message from Min. of FA to New York PV, 12/07/95, no number. See also annotations on the document.

²⁷³⁵ ABZ, DPV 452342. Fax DGPA to Minister Van Mierlo, 12/07/95, Fax No. 356.4540.

²⁷³⁶ ABZ, DPV/ARA, 00797. Code Biegman 612, 12/07/95.

further disillusionment and disappointment among the international community and the media.' In his view, the main concern should be the humanitarian consequences which, according to him, were scarcely addressed in the draft text. Akashi said that the draft resolution would not help to win the cooperation of the Bosnian Serbs in the efforts to improve the humanitarian situation – cooperation that he believed essential. Akashi had further understood from UNHCR sources that the majority of the population did not want to stay in the enclave; after all, most of them were Displaced Persons from elsewhere. According to Akashi, an estimated 27,000 people were still in Potocari without enough food for 24 hours. Admittedly, there were sufficient food supplies in Tuzla and Belgrade, but the question was how to get them to Srebrenica without freedom of movement. Moreover, if the Bosnian Serbs cut off the water supply, then the 7,000 litres that Dutchbat could generate on a daily basis would be 'woefully insufficient'. Worse still, Dutchbat did not even have fuel for the water-treatment installation.²⁷³⁷

Annan heeded Akashi's warnings and, in turn, told the Contact Group that a restoration of the Safe Area was beyond the capacity of UNPROFOR. It would only lead to disillusionment. Annan also reported back to Akashi that the text had been preceded by negotiations on whether to choose 'all resources available' or 'all necessary means'. This was largely a question of semantics whereby the latter seemed more bellicose. Though the sponsors believed that the resolution had to imply condemnation of the actions of the Bosnian Serbs, they realized that only the less bellicose formulation of 'all resources available' would be feasible. Akashi even had doubts about this wording, but the sponsors stuck to 'all resources available'. The three sponsors solved their problems with the – in their view – already over-cautious wording by pointing out that the exact wording was not, in itself, all that important. For example, the French representative Merimée said that the choice of words was not intended as a declaration of war or a specific choice between options. It was not down to the Security Council to give a detailed specification of how to realize the objective. The French were only prepared to make troops available under the condition that the military and civil authorities of the UN deemed an operation useful and viable.²⁷³⁸

Similarly, the British representative Hannay did not see the phrase as an instruction to deploy force. He too was of the opinion that it was the Secretary-General's job to consider how he could best achieve the desired result. Biegman responded by proposing that if the draft text was not intended as an instruction to use force, then the wording should be changed and a more modest objective be set. At the end of the day, it was Dutchbat who would first be confronted with the consequences of the resolution. Biegman tried a different approach by suggesting that the Secretary-General be instructed 'to exercise his best efforts'. However, the compilers of the draft text, France, the USA and the UK, closed ranks and refused to countenance any amendments. They would clarify the intentions of the resolution when they brought out their vote.²⁷³⁹

London did, however, believe that the Bosnian Serbs could not be forcibly expelled from Srebrenica; this had to be achieved through negotiations between UNPROFOR and Pale. This is why Hannay did not want the Rapid Reaction Force mentioned in the resolution. Otherwise, London would no longer push for demilitarization of the Safe Area. London did, however, want the resolution to include a reference to the demilitarization agreement of 18 April 1993. A return of UNPROFOR to the enclave was, according to London, possible and even desirable if it was demilitarized. Evacuation of the Displaced Persons was an irrefutable necessity, but the UN had to steer clear of situations in which it would be assisting ethnic cleansing. The British therefore wanted to try to retain the Safe Area by reducing the population: the original population, estimated at 20%, would be allowed to stay while the Displaced Persons were evacuated to Tuzla.²⁷⁴⁰

2737 DCBC, 751. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 12/07/95, No. Z-1141. Sent by fax COS UNPF-HQ to MOD NL, 13/07/95.

2738 ABZ, DDI DAV 999.241. Code Biegman 611, 12/07/95.

2739 ABZ, DPV/ARA, 00797. Code Biegman 612, 12/07/95.

2740 ABZ, DPV 452342. Code Biegman 612, 12/07/95.

Entreaties for humanitarian treatment of Displaced Persons were, incidentally, not only directed at the Bosnian Serbs: the UNHCR had wanted to evacuate all the Displaced Persons but had met with resistance from the Bosnian Government. Minister Hasan Muratovic had announced that this was unacceptable to the Bosnian Government;²⁷⁴¹ it would mean that it had acquiesced in the fall of the enclave. The temporary Bosnian *chargé d'affaires* at the UN, Misic, said that the UN should not miss the chance to vindicate itself. UNPROFOR should abandon its neutrality. He also repeated President Izetbegovic's demands, made on the same day, that the UN and NATO forcibly recapture Srebrenica or publicly announce that they were unprepared to do so.²⁷⁴²

On 12 July the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1004. The most important operative paragraph of the resolution read: 'Requests the Secretary-General to use all resources available to him to restore the status as defined by the Agreement of 18 April 1993 of the Safe Area of Srebrenica in accordance with the mandate of UNPROFOR, and calls on the parties to cooperate to that end'.²⁷⁴³

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Kornblum summarized the situation as follows for Jacobovits, the Dutch Ambassador to the United States: Chirac was pushing for the deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force to retake Srebrenica. The British were against it. The Americans were prepared to support the French position but had no intention of committing materiel support.²⁷⁴⁴

Minister Van Mierlo had decided that the first priority was to evacuate Dutchbat from the enclave, and that a French proposal to retake it must therefore be resisted.²⁷⁴⁵ The Ministerial Council was likewise against military intervention upon French initiative as it could endanger the lives of troops held hostage in Bratunac. On 14 July Van Mierlo communicated to the French Government that the Netherlands could not agree to a French operation, as long as Dutch troops remained in Srebrenica. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hervé de Charette, then assured Van Mierlo that no action would be undertaken without prior consultation with the Dutch Government.²⁷⁴⁶

The meaning of the resolution

At the meeting of the Contact Group in London on 12 July Bildt described the UN resolution as 'absurd'.²⁷⁴⁷ He took the view that it was wrong to make rhetorical statements if there was no military back-up.²⁷⁴⁸ Essentially, Bildt took the same line as Akashi: it would only raise unrealizable expectations. In London Bildt dismissed the French statements as unrealistic. He was supported by the British. The Contact Group did agree that force was the only way to turn the situation around. The German and American representatives in the Contact Group, Steiner and Holbrooke, did want to take tough action, but force was an unrealistic option given the repercussions that it could trigger elsewhere in Bosnia.²⁷⁴⁹

According to Bildt, Holbrooke was dubious as to whether UN Resolution 1004 had any meaning at all. No-one was prepared to use arms to re-take Srebrenica; in his view, the enclave should be considered lost. Holbrooke also seemed afraid that the Europeans would press for the activation of the NATO withdrawal plan, which would entail the involvement of US ground forces. This tallies, according to Bildt, with the telephone call between Chirac and Clinton, in which Chirac had said that if the United States was not prepared to offer any support at all in the form of military resources, then the

2741 ABZ, DPV 452342. Code Biegman 612, 12/07/95.

2742 ABZ, DAV 999.241. Code Biegman 611, 12/07/95.

2743 United Nations. S/RES/1004 (1995) 12/07/95.

2744 ABZ, DAV 999.241. Code Jacobovits 445, 12/07/95.

2745 Telephone call with H. Wijnaendts, 25/04/00.

2746 Summary of the meeting of the Ministerial Council of 12-14/07/95, objectivized for the purposes of the NIOD 'srebrenica' investigation.

2747 Bildt, *Peace Journey*, p. 59.

2748 Confidential interview (53).

2749 DCBC, 757. Code Loudon 270, 13/07/95.

whole UN operation would be jeopardized.²⁷⁵⁰ In the meantime, the British Foreign Secretary, Rifkind, was coming under pressure from parliamentarians who were demanding the withdrawal of British troops to avoid being drawn into a Balkan war. UN troops must not become a belligerent party. Rifkind said that, though London had supported Resolution 1004, the restoration of the status of Safe Area must nonetheless be achieved by negotiation.²⁷⁵¹ In a statement on 12 July the White House spokesman also said that, given the shortage of military resources at UNPROFOR, he could not believe that a military operation was on the cards; in his opinion, all the efforts would have to take place in the diplomatic domain.²⁷⁵²

The question is whether the Bosnian Serbs were receptive to a resolution in any shape or form. They had turned their back on the UN some time ago and asserted that the Security Council was their enemy. The statement issued by Akashi after the adoption of UN Resolution 1004, in which he demanded immediate UNHCR access to the enclave, had no effect.²⁷⁵³ The same fate awaited a similar statement by the President of the Security Council.²⁷⁵⁴ The Bosnian Serbs had already said on several occasions that they would not be bound by resolutions. They simply became more hardened in their attitude. Besides, President Chirac's statements had already set the anti-Bosnian-Serb tone before the adoption of UN Resolution 1004.²⁷⁵⁵

In the highest echelons of the UN the adoption of UN Resolution 1004 also led to heated discussions on how fast the Secretary-General should respond to the Security Council's request to use 'all resources available' to realize the restoration of the Safe Area. On the one hand, they feared a knee-jerk response from Boutros-Ghali, who was travelling at the time; on the other, the Security Council needed quick assurance that the Secretary-General was actually coming into action. The subscribers to the latter view included Kofi Annan and Undersecretary-General Marrack Goulding.

On 13 July, during a telephone call from Kigali, Boutros-Ghali consented to a proposal to send Stoltenberg to Bosnia to start negotiations with both parties. Boutros-Ghali insisted on informing the Security Council of this in writing.²⁷⁵⁶ As the second Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Stoltenberg was authorized to negotiate on the restoration of the Safe Area of Srebrenica. If this proved non-negotiable, then he was to push for the continuation of a UN presence. The words 'force' and 'military resources' did not appear in the instructions. In his letter to the Security Council Boutros-Ghali also said that he was 'urgently' exploring the possibilities for the restoration of the Safe Area of Srebrenica 'using all resources available', but that he first wanted to ascertain through diplomatic channels if the objective of UN Resolution 1004 could be achieved.²⁷⁵⁷

According to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, the French position was still – even after the adoption of UN Resolution 1004 – that France was ready to contribute all available resources to any operation that the Security Council might decide upon in order to expel the Bosnian Serbs from Srebrenica.²⁷⁵⁸ At the same time, however, the French Government informed Annan that they would not urge a military operation, even though Chirac's statements suggested otherwise. Boutros-Ghali could therefore be persuaded not to inform the Security Council in writing that military options were being fleshed out.²⁷⁵⁹

²⁷⁵⁰ Bildt, *Peace Journey*, p. 59.

²⁷⁵¹ *Daily Telegraph* and *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/07/95.

²⁷⁵² CRST. White House Briefing, sent by Outgoing Cryptofax Gharekhan to Akashi, 12/07/95, No. 2287.

²⁷⁵³ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNPF-HQ, Statement by Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, 13/07/95.

²⁷⁵⁴ ABZ, DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS/Yugoslavia/NATO/Coordination/ July 1995-August 1996. S/PRST/1995/32, 14/07/95, sent by fax PVVN to M-Secretariat, 14/07/95, No. NYV-4410.

²⁷⁵⁵ CRST. White House Briefing, sent by Outgoing Cryptofax Gharekhan to Akashi, 12/07/95, No. 2287.

²⁷⁵⁶ Confidential interview (63).

²⁷⁵⁷ NIOD, Coll. Ashton, Only Cable Annan to Akashi, 13/07/95, no. 2318; ABZ, PVNY. Letter Boutros Boutros-Ghali to Gerardo Martínez Blanco, President of the Security Council, 13/07/95.

²⁷⁵⁸ *Les Echos*, 13/07/95.

²⁷⁵⁹ Confidential interview (63).

4. Military plans for retaking Srebrenica after the UN resolution

The adoption of UN Resolution 1004 raised a few eyebrows in Zagreb: there was a risk that the troop-contributing nations could line up against one another, now that Chirac had sent out critical signals in the direction of the UN and NATO. Russia and Canada criticized Chirac's position; the UK and the USA criticized the French proposal for recapture; and the Dutch and the French were embroiled in a row after comments by the French Foreign Minister, Hervé de Charette, that Dutchbat had not put up much of a fight and had assisted in ethnic cleansing (see Chapter 7). Chirac was now out on a limb without the resources to go his own way. This was the conclusion at UNPF headquarters in Zagreb.²⁷⁶⁰ Janvier did not take the French ideas of a recapture seriously either, because he knew they were unattainable in military terms.²⁷⁶¹ Hence, very few words were wasted on the subject at the meeting between Akashi's and Janvier's staff. If it did ever crop up, then it was mainly in the form of intimations by the staff members on what they had heard about it. The announcement that Chirac had called for an intervention did not prompt any discussion.²⁷⁶²

The military advisor of the UN Secretary-General, Van Kappen, had already pointed out at the meeting with the troop-contributing nations on 11 July that at least one armoured division would be needed for the restoration of the Safe Area. The Rapid Reaction Force was not yet ready for such missions and would not come under UNPROFOR command until 15 July.²⁷⁶³ Van Kappen interpreted the resolution as 'political bargaining'; it was unrealizable and had only political meaning. It was simply political wordplay which could not be taken seriously from a military perspective. Initially, Van Kappen did not even want to review the options. It was only when Kofi Annan asked him to do so, because the UN ultimately owed the French a proper answer, that he applied himself to the task, much against his better judgement.

With a view to Chirac's remarks, Boutros-Ghali had instructed Annan to ascertain the military requirements for restoring the Safe Area by force. Assuming that Akashi was already overburdened, Annan assigned this task to Van Kappen.²⁷⁶⁴ Van Kappen considered the plan politically as well as militarily unrealizable, given that UNPROFOR's mandate would have to be amended accordingly. This could lead to war with the Bosnian Serbs.²⁷⁶⁵ Van Kappen had already publicly questioned the aims of any such military operation, also because it would not be in the interests of the Displaced Persons.²⁷⁶⁶

Annan's request made Van Kappen feel compelled to present a plan to the staff in Zagreb. Zagreb understood very little of this, and was even more unable to comprehend that New York was taking this sort of thing seriously. It led to a lot of friction in which terms such as 'adventurism and amateurism' were bandied about. Eventually, New York received a message from Deputy Force Commander Ashton in which he said that he refused to look seriously at these kinds of 'idiotic propositions'. Van Kappen then made clear that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations thought more or less the same, but that their position would be stronger, in the event of rejection, if they could say that a recapture plan had been presented to Zagreb, and that Zagreb was of exactly the same opinion. Some attention was consequently paid to the plan. This then triggered new friction because the staff in Zagreb had other things on their mind at that moment; Janvier's response was the same. What mattered to New York, however, were arguments to reject the plan; the issue was politically-sensitive because it concerned a proposal from the highest political level in France. Additionally, they

²⁷⁶⁰ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, SRSG's briefing 14 and 15/07/95.

²⁷⁶¹ Interview Tony Banbury, 11/05/00.

²⁷⁶² NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, SRSG's briefing 12/07/95.

²⁷⁶³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02110. Code Biegman 606, 11/07/95.

²⁷⁶⁴ Confidential information (47).

²⁷⁶⁵ Interview F.H. van Kappen 21/06/00.

²⁷⁶⁶ *Le Monde*, 14/07/95, *Het Parool*, 13/07/95.

had to steal a march on the French ambassador to the UN; he must not be able to say that the French were willing but could rally no support.²⁷⁶⁷

On 13 July Van Kappen sent his 'Preliminary Military Analysis of the Retaking of Srebrenica' to Zagreb.²⁷⁶⁸ He also informed the Dutch Chief of Defence Staff of his analysis. Political implications and the effects on the future of the mission were left out of consideration. Nevertheless, Van Kappen wanted clarity about the political aim of an operation with regard to Srebrenica: 'The securing of a piece of ground in the middle of the Balkans has no military and precious little political value'. Van Kappen pointed out that it was unclear if the aim of the operation was the return to Srebrenica of the Displaced Persons from Central Bosnia – assuming this was desirable – or simply the restoration of the credibility of the international community.

At all events, Van Kappen felt that the UN should realize that a recapture would involve three separate military plans: first, the seizure of a land corridor leading to the enclave, and the terrain of the former Safe Area; second, an operation to guarantee supplies for an indefinite period; and third, an air campaign to eliminate the VRS air defences, also on the other side of the Drina in Serbia. This kind of air campaign required NATO approval. What all of this boiled down to was that a full division would be required to retake Srebrenica. This could then be reduced to a brigade and a mechanized division to keep a land corridor open: a total of 35,000 troops, which could be cut down to 15,000. According to Van Kappen, the Rapid Reaction Force was not suitable for a mission such as opening a land corridor. In view of the risks, NATO units were the only option, which would mean that NATO would want to take over Command and Control in Bosnia. There were only a few months left before winter set in; this period would be taken up by political and financial discussions. And by that time, he added, it might also be necessary to include Zepa and Gorazde in the plans.²⁷⁶⁹

Deputy Force Commander Ashton presented Van Kappen's analysis to the Rapid Reaction Force Planning Team in Zagreb. The team endorsed Van Kappen's findings; a recapture would require an operation that was far beyond the capabilities of UNPROFOR and would lead to war with the VRS. Only NATO had the required capability, and this meant that UNPROFOR would have to hand over the operational command to NATO. The team saw a recapture of Srebrenica as a potential nightmare and a 'high-risk low-return option'. A firm defence of Gorazde seemed to make more sense and to be capable of delivering more results.²⁷⁷⁰

Ashton informed Kofi Annan that he supported Van Kappen's military analysis, though he did not believe that Srebrenica could be defended with a single brigade. The securing of a sixty-kilometre-long corridor to Tuzla might also require more troops than Van Kappen had estimated. In addition, such a large force would not have the advantage of strategic surprise. Ashton added that the position of the Security Council had always been that UNPROFOR should protect the civilians and not the terrain. A departure from this principle would call for more troops and new Rules of Engagement. The elimination of the VRS air-defence system could lead to all-out war. It would unite the Serbs and harden the Bosnian Government in its war aims. However, the cardinal question was what the political aim of such an operation would be; after 13 July there were no more civilians in the enclave and those now staying in Tuzla had no wish to return. The majority of the population of Srebrenica already consisted of Displaced Persons and they would be better protected in Central Bosnia.

The British ambassador in Paris learned from the French Ministry of Defence that the French operational staff were considering two options: dispatching a helicopter unit with troops from, amongst others, the Rapid Reaction Force, and equipped with an anti-tank capacity, or sending the entire (or

²⁷⁶⁷ Interview F.H. van Kappen 21/06/00.

²⁷⁶⁸ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File Srebrenica 3300-SRE Vol. I, 1 Jul - 16 Nov 95. Fax Maj Gen Van Kappen to Lt Gen B. Janvier, 13/07/95. Deputy Force Commander Ashton sent the fax on to Sarajevo (Fax DFC/34, 151052B Jul 95).

²⁷⁶⁹ DCBC, 761. Outgoing Facsimile Van Kappen to CDS Netherlands, 13/07/95.

²⁷⁷⁰ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Memo 'Military Analysis on Retaking Srebrenica', no date.

parts of the) Rapid Reaction Force across land, but this was considered infeasible by the French General Staff.

When the American, British and French Chiefs of Defence Staff met on 16 July at the initiative of the French, the French Government had already recognized that plans for retaking Srebrenica were unrealistic. The British did not give the plans serious consideration because they were beset by too many practical complications. The operation was too risky and was out of step with the peacekeeping mandate. The UK had neither artillery nor tanks available for it.²⁷⁷¹

The British Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, was somewhat denigrating of the French ideas: 'President Chirac has so far given us a lot of fine words but there are no proposals. President Chirac could today be commanding his own French soldiers to march on Srebrenica and Zepa to rescue them. He will not be doing so, for the very good reason that French soldiers, like other UNPROFOR soldiers, do not have tanks, heavy artillery, or the means to get to Zepa and Srebrenica.'²⁷⁷² At the morning briefing of 12 July in Zagreb the Public Information Officer had already criticized Chirac's knowledge of geography. Janvier also continued to oppose the French plans.²⁷⁷³

Hence, Chirac's ideas received a cool reception from political and military quarters. General Shalikhvili's comment to the NIOD on a recapture of Srebrenica was: 'How are you going to do this? The French honour was soiled, what the hell?'²⁷⁷⁴ General Smith's response to the French plans was: 'With what?' In his opinion, the troop-contributing nations would never have consented.²⁷⁷⁵

Senior French military figures confirmed that Chirac's principle aim was to display decisiveness, but that he was not really intending to take action.²⁷⁷⁶ There was no clearly defined French proposition or plan. All that was suggested was the dispatch of three battalions to Srebrenica by air. It was an unrealistic plan with no firm political foundation. The deployment of three battalions with large helicopters would have required US cooperation and taken several days, if not a week, of preparations.

In that case it would mean the deployment of a brigade, 'militairement une opération lourde'. The French Permanent Representative, Blot, offered this at the NATO Council meeting of 12 July, but senior French Defence officials said that it was unrealizable. Here too, it became evident that the plan was a political ruse; the French Defence Staff had not been consulted.²⁷⁷⁷ On the same day the French Permanent Representative at the UN assured his Security Council counterparts that Paris would abide by the judgement of the UN headquarters in Zagreb as to whether the plan was militarily feasible.²⁷⁷⁸

A French Defence official said that there was no real plan to retake Srebrenica with a unit of 600-900 French special troops. There were only emergency plans for Srebrenica within the framework of NATO Extraction Plan 40104, but on 11 and 12 July Paris had not considered implementing this plan.²⁷⁷⁹

Sarajevo also doubted whether a recapture would serve any purpose. The planners in Sarajevo knew nothing of the details of the plans formulated by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).²⁷⁸⁰ UNPROFOR in Sarajevo was wondering whether it was the intention to return the Displaced Persons to the same wretched predicament as before. Chief of Staff Nicolai rated the chances at zero that the Displaced Persons would want this after everything that had happened. Afterwards, a corridor would need to be kept open. Sarajevo felt that there was some kind of hidden

²⁷⁷¹ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

²⁷⁷² Edited Transcript of Interview with the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, on the 'Today Programme', 15/07/95.

²⁷⁷³ Interview Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

²⁷⁷⁴ Interview John Shalikhvilli, 07/06/00.

²⁷⁷⁵ Interview Rupert Smith, 12/01/00.

²⁷⁷⁶ Confidential interview (4).

²⁷⁷⁷ Confidential interview (1). This concerned an informal meeting of the NATO Council where the representatives spoke off the record.

²⁷⁷⁸ Interview Lord Owen 27/06/01.

²⁷⁷⁹ Interview Michel Guesdon, 07/06/00. Guesdon worked at BHC in Sarajevo in 1994 and then, until 1999, at the Balkans Department of the Ministère de Défense in Paris.

²⁷⁸⁰ Interview Rick Hatton, 16/11/99.

agenda behind this plan.²⁷⁸¹ Admiral Leighton-Smith, Commander in Chief of the Allied NATO Forces in Southern Europe, said that a plan for the recapture of Srebrenica was never discussed with him.²⁷⁸² Similarly, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations attached little value to the idea, because UNPROFOR did not have the military capacity to implement it. New York also saw it as a purely political gesture.²⁷⁸³ At a press conference on 13 July Minister Voorhoeve said that a retake of Srebrenica would be senseless from a military perspective. Commodore Hilderink, Vice-Chief of Operations at the Defence Staff, added that the enclave was a military farce that could only be recaptured at a high price and would then be hard to defend.²⁷⁸⁴

On 16 July Janvier informed Annan that he agreed with Van Kappen's assessment that a recapture of Srebrenica would call for a 'major operation'. Janvier said that this was beyond the capacity of UNPROFOR, all the more so given that any such operation would have to take place within sight of a hostile population and would in all probability lead to open war with the Bosnian Serbs and possibly even Yugoslavia, because NATO would have to attack the integrated air defence system.²⁷⁸⁵ This was the last word that was spoken on the French ideas to retake Srebrenica. The Bosnian population and the international community were one illusion poorer thanks to all the political rhetoric in the international arena.

5. Conclusion

In effect, the ideas on recapturing Srebrenica were no more than French rhetoric, designed to portray France as resolute and go-ahead. Neither the other states nor the UN felt much for the idea of plunging into an uncertain political and military adventure. The Bosnian Serbs were equally unimpressed by such plans. They labelled them as senseless; in their eyes Srebrenica now belonged to Republika Srpska.²⁷⁸⁶

Moreover, the implementation of UN Resolution 1004 the UN would not go any farther than negotiations to restore the status of Safe Area. The military experts at UN headquarters in New York, and in Zagreb and Sarajevo, also gave little credence to the plans for a recapture: they were divorced from the military reality, and the UN commanders questioned whether there would be any point in sending the people back to a situation which had proven more or less untenable.

Nonetheless, the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille on 14 July prompted a new wave of rhetoric from Paris. President Chirac expressed his frustration that the member states were not prepared to support the French call for an intervention in Srebrenica. Contacts with the USA and the UK had been to no avail and the French stood alone – according to Chirac – but they had no mandate or means to recapture Srebrenica themselves. Chirac called upon the great democracies to reconsider a recapture and to enforce respect for human rights and international law. He could not imagine that the UN was in Bosnia only to observe, and if so, then it would be better if UNPROFOR were withdrawn.

The French Minister of Defence, Charles Millon, announced that Paris would give its member states 48 hours to decide whether or not they were prepared to undertake military action in order to halt the VRS attacks on the enclaves. He stressed that if no answer came from the main powers then 'we will have to draw the consequences' but did not say what these would be exactly.²⁷⁸⁷ This marked the end of the French rhetoric. According to Prime-Minister Kok, the French utterances gave rise to the suggestion that the Dutch had somewhat dismissed Srebrenica while France was now rolling up its

²⁷⁸¹ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99.

²⁷⁸² Interview Leighton-Smith, 06/06/00.

²⁷⁸³ Interview Manfred Eisele, 14/10/99.

²⁷⁸⁴ ABZ, DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS/Yugoslavia/NATO/Coordination/ July 1995-August 1996. Memorandum DVL/BZ, 14/07/95, No. 619/95. The text was drawn up by the European Secretariat.

²⁷⁸⁵ DCBC, 2751. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 16/07/95, No. Z-1177.

²⁷⁸⁶ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87299, File 3061/3, Jul-Nov 95. Fax The Office of the Commander HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, attn: SRSG, FC, DFC, COS, 132316B Jul 95.

²⁷⁸⁷ *Associated Press*, 14/07/95; 08:40 ET.

sleeves, even though they knew it would not come to action. Kok saw these two elements as more logically linked than they appeared: the French threats of a recapture made the Netherlands, as the other party, come across as just a little weaker.²⁷⁸⁸

UN Resolution 1004 illustrated that, in this case, political intentions did not chime with military possibilities. There were insufficient military resources to lend weight to the political initiatives of the French. Apart from Chirac, no-one seemed prepared to seriously consider a plan for recapture, for political reasons amongst others. Hence, Chirac also created the impression that he was not really intending to resort to action and that his initiative was meant primarily as a show of political decisiveness.

All the same, the French stuck to their plan in public and were prepared to make French troops available for its implementation. The actual number of troops was left in the dark, but it would certainly not have been enough to tip the balance needed for such an operation. A purely French operation was not only politically undesirable but impossible as well. The support of US transport helicopters was, at the very least, necessary to get the troops into Srebrenica, but the Americans kept their distance.

In short, the restoration of the Safe Area of Srebrenica would only be achieved at the negotiating table, and not exacted by UNPROFOR by military means.

The Netherlands played its own role in shaping UN Resolution 1004, but dropped out when the text implied the use of force to retake the enclave. This would not have been in the interests of Dutchbat, which was still located in Srebrenica. The battalion was still entirely at the mercy of the Bosnian Serbs to allow it to depart.

²⁷⁸⁸ Interview W. Kok, 30/05/00.

Chapter 9

The departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica

1. Plans for the departure of Dutchbat

After the enclave fell it took another ten days before Dutchbat could leave Srebrenica. The activities of the battalion during these days are addressed later in Part IV. This chapter will deal only with discussions conducted in UNPROFOR, NATO and The Hague on the actual departure. It will trace the thoughts about this departure, how they evolved under the pressure of circumstances, and the influence that was, or was not, exerted by the Netherlands.

On 10 July, the day before the actual fall of the enclave, a meeting took place between, amongst others, Prime Minister Kok, Minister Van Mierlo, Minister Voorhoeve and Chief of Defence Staff, Van den Breemen. The subject under discussion was the situation in Srebrenica and the prospects for the Dutch presence there. It was said at this meeting that, though the Bosnian Serbs had said they would not impede the departure of Dutchbat, this was not a path that could be trodden, as it would constitute serious problems for the remaining civilians. In any case, it was highly unlikely that the Bosnian Muslims would allow Dutchbat to just up and leave.²⁷⁸⁹ The meeting broke up without arriving at a concrete decision, but it did expose the differences in the positions of Defence and Foreign Affairs: whereas the former was concerned mainly about its own personnel, the latter was worried about the effect a Dutchbat withdrawal would have on the international position of the Netherlands.²⁷⁹⁰ (See Chapter 7, paragraph 2.)

Oddly enough, on the following day, 11 July, the visions of Ministers Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo appeared to intersect. Foreign Affairs was now urging that Dutchbat leave Srebrenica as soon as possible. This can be construed from a message sent by Van Mierlo to the British Government. At 18.45 hours on 11 July, Van Mierlo informed the British Government that Srebrenica had fallen, that Dutchbat and the ABiH had been unable to halt the Bosnian-Serb offensive, and that Dutchbat was heading for the north of the enclave accompanied by seven thousand Displaced Persons. Van Mierlo was worried that these Displaced Persons would hamper a Dutchbat withdrawal, if the Bosnian Serbs refused to allow them to leave the enclave.²⁷⁹¹ Earlier in the day, Voorhoeve's priorities actually appeared to shift from withdrawing the battalion to providing humanitarian aid for the Displaced Persons (see below).

Consultations in Zagreb on the departure of Dutchbat

The developments in Srebrenica prompted deep concern at UN headquarters in Zagreb. The VRS attack on a Safe Area signalled a major change in the Bosnian Serb strategy. The need for military preparations to deal with possible new developments around the three eastern enclaves was discussed: the authorization to order air strikes would again have to be delegated to Zagreb. Boutros-Ghali was warned that UNPROFOR might have to withdraw from all the eastern Safe Areas.

However, on 11 July, most of Zagreb's attention was directed at the situation in Srebrenica. On the day of the fall the standpoint of Force Commander Janvier more or less echoed that of the Dutch Government. Immediately after the fall, at 17.45 hours, Janvier analysed the situation in Srebrenica with Deputy Force Commander Ashton and Chief-of-Staff Kolsteren and assessed the options. Janvier wanted to ascertain whether plans could be drawn up to get Dutchbat out of Srebrenica because, under

²⁷⁸⁹ ABZ, DDI-DAV, 999.241/DAV/MS/Yugoslavia/NATO/Coordination. Memorandum DAV to Archive, 'Nederlandse presentie in Srebrenica/Torentjesoverleg 10 juli', 12/07/95 No. DAV/MS-51/95, Top Secret.

²⁷⁹⁰ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 15/09/01.

²⁷⁹¹ Confidential information (29).

the present circumstances, they were virtually hostages in the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. Dutchbat therefore had to get out of the enclave as soon as possible. This did not, according to Janvier, include the equipment nor *'bien sur'* the displaced civilians.

Janvier maintained that negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs were the only way of achieving anything in Srebrenica. As the UN personnel had priority in this, Janvier instructed Gobilliard to broker an immediate ceasefire between the parties on humanitarian grounds.²⁷⁹² At 18.30 hours Janvier instructed General Gobilliard, as acting Commander of UNPROFOR, to approach the Bosnian-Serb regime in Pale on the matter.

Immediately afterwards, Janvier and Akashi spoke to each other. At that moment the headquarters in Zagreb were also under fire. Janvier said that no conclusions could yet be drawn from the military situation in Srebrenica. In the meantime, it was known that the ABiH had disappeared from the enclave, and that some ABiH soldiers were heading for Zepa. Akashi said that Voorhoeve had asked him how an evacuation of Dutchbat should be carried out, if the contingency were to arise. At this moment, Voorhoeve had already distanced himself from the idea that Dutchbat should be evacuated at the earliest opportunity (see below). However, evacuation plans for Dutchbat still needed to be drawn up in Zagreb so that they would be ready, if needed. Akashi was thinking, first of all, of the deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force, or an *ad hoc* NATO coalition of different countries. But, to Janvier, force was 'out of the question'. He argued that it would be impossible to open a corridor between Tuzla and Srebrenica. The problem was, however, that the Rapid Reaction Force could not be deployed because it was not yet operational. Hence there was also no possibility of an air lift, which would entail the deployment of helicopters within the framework of the Rapid Reaction Force to get Dutchbat out of the enclave.

The only option would be an 'emergency extraction' by helicopter, and this would require talks with NATO Admiral Smith on the NATO Quick Response Options (see below). Janvier's proposal that Dutchbat leave behind its equipment was not acceptable to Akashi; Dutchbat should at least take along the weapons. Janvier too would have preferred to see Dutchbat leave with weapons and all, but feared that Mladic would demand these as war reparations.

Akashi saw no other alternative than to negotiate with the Bosnian Serbs on a Dutchbat withdrawal. One option was to depart to Serbia, but Akashi found that the first necessary step in the negotiations was to secure a concentration of Dutchbat; the crews of the OPs which were still manned had to go to Potocari. The UNHCR would then have to negotiate the departure of the population. The third step was that Zagreb would ask New York for guidelines. Akashi also said that NATO should speed up the timetable for pulling out UNPROFOR, and that the Security Council should make a statement on its further obligations to the Safe Area of Srebrenica. The dominant view in Zagreb was that such an announcement was necessary.

It also became clear that not only negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs were necessary, but also with the Bosnian Muslims. Janvier and Akashi ascertained that these were needed in order to get any kind of help into Srebrenica. Gobilliard would approach the Bosnian Government in Sarajevo on this matter.²⁷⁹³

On the evening of 11 July, the Bosnian Serbs announced through Vice-President Nikola Koljevic that the Dutchbat soldiers in Bratunac were safe. He did add that their further safety depended on a guarantee that there would be no more air support. Koljevic said that the Close Air Support on that day had 'complicated' matters. He suggested that Janvier and Mladic work out an arrangement as soon as possible for the release of the Dutchbat soldiers.

²⁷⁹² UNNY, DPKD, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1136. According to Ashton, Janvier suggested that Nicolai should contact Tolimir; Akashi reported, however, that the contact actually took place between Janvier and Gobilliard.

²⁷⁹³ Interview Major-General Barry Ashton (retd), 30/05/00; NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, SRSG's meeting 11/07/95.

There were plenty of initiatives for contact at high level: the acting Civil Affairs Coordinator left Sarajevo for the UNHCR office in Pale to maintain contact with the representatives of Republika Srpska. The UNHCR quarter-masters left by helicopter for Tuzla.²⁷⁹⁴ But none of the contacts that were established were in the enclave itself, because Mladic refused admission to UN officials. He was apparently dictating who could enter the enclave. From Pale, Karadzic's spokesman, Jovan Zametica announced that all UN personnel had to leave the enclave.²⁷⁹⁵

Can NATO assist in the Dutchbat withdrawal?

The analysis in Zagreb was that withdrawal was more urgent for Dutchbat than for any of the units in the eastern enclaves. General Janvier contacted NATO Admiral Leighton-Smith on activating the Quick Response Options (the quickly deployable NATO reserves) specifically to assist with the evacuation of Dutchbat. This offered a means of pre-empting the larger, more general withdrawal plan for UNPROFOR, Oplan 40104, which was still awaiting approval. NATO had looked for openings in this plan whereby it could also deploy smaller units at short notice and with fewer military and political risks. These became the Quick Response Options. Two alternatives were formulated: the dispatch of a battalion within 48 hours to secure a limited objective, such as taking out an observation post; or the deployment of a unit the size of a brigade within seven days to, for instance, rescue a company that was hemmed in.²⁷⁹⁶ Janvier had already asked Smith on 11 July to raise the alertness of the respective NATO units.²⁷⁹⁷

Though UNPROFOR had a 'Hasty Withdrawal Plan', it could not be executed without NATO help.²⁷⁹⁸ As it happens, neither this 'Hasty Withdrawal Plan' nor the withdrawal plan of Sector North East contained much in the way of concrete arrangements. The plan of Sector North East went no farther than to say that Dutchbat should secure a route from the enclave and make for Simin Han (in the Muslim-Croat Federation), where a Dutchbat company was already stationed. The plan did not say how this was to be achieved.²⁷⁹⁹

NATO Admiral Smith was prepared for the eventuality of pulling out UN troops from the Safe Areas. Deputy Force Commander Ashton spoke with him in Naples on 9 July about activating the Quick Response Options in order to withdraw Dutchbat from Srebrenica with the aid of Special Forces.²⁸⁰⁰ Smith then drafted a plan for the withdrawal. It would have to be executed by an American Marine Expeditionary Unit, stationed in the Adriatic Sea (see Chapter 1), and reinforced with fourteen heavy US transport helicopters from elsewhere plus four Cobra, six Gazelle and six Lynx helicopters from the UK and France, all of them armed, which were already in Bosnia in connection with the Rapid Reaction Force. The response time of the units was cut to sixty hours.

Moreover, measures were drawn up, which pre-empted the NATO withdrawal plan (Oplan 40104), to have parts of the NATO headquarters of the Rapid Reaction Corps in Zagreb operational within four days and to send communication equipment on ahead. Measures for speeding up troop availability were also considered, including an Activation Order for the Dutch-British marine unit, the UK/NL Amphibious Force. Admiral Smith also asked his superior, SACEUR General Joulwan, for guidelines on how to treat the Displaced Persons and Dutchbat. He also asked whether he should

²⁷⁹⁴ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87717, File 7-8-1, Srebrenica 11/07-31/07/95. Fax UNHCR Pale to UNHCR Zagreb, 11/07/95, Note John Ryan to Akashi, Zagreb, Moussali, HC Zagreb, Corwin, BHC, 11/07/95; UNNY, DPKD, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1136; interview Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

²⁷⁹⁵ Interview David Last, 05/07/00.

²⁷⁹⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 28/06/95, No. MSC-2118.

²⁷⁹⁷ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, SRSG's meeting 11/07/95; interview Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

²⁷⁹⁸ DCBC, 814. Fax MILAD RUN to DV and DCBC, 161610 LT Apr 96, with OPLAN 31/94, 04/12/94.

²⁷⁹⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 247, File 1/6, Rapid Reaction Force (RRFOS). HQ Sector NE Operation Plan 007 - Withdrawal Plan, 20/02/95, No. HQ NE 3010.3.

²⁸⁰⁰ Interview Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

prepare himself for a similar situation in the other eastern enclaves of Zepa and Gorazde.²⁸⁰¹ Smith assured Colonel J. Beks, the Dutch liaison officer for AFSOUTH (the southern NATO command in Naples) that he could count on full support in relation to Dutchbat.²⁸⁰²

In Naples thoughts were focusing on an emergency evacuation of Dutchbat, both via the route to Serbia and by air. An air evacuation required sixty hours of preparation, a land evacuation required twenty. NATO Admiral Smith's preference was to make this a NATO-led operation, assigned specifically to the Commander of Strike Force South in the Mediterranean.²⁸⁰³

The last option would be executed by flying a night reconnaissance mission and a Landing Zone Team to Srebrenica. An air operation would not be easy as two-thirds of the helicopter capacity had no night-vision capacity.²⁸⁰⁴ Later, Admiral Smith said that immediately after the fall there would have been scarcely any possibilities of getting the battalion out of Srebrenica. The NATO withdrawal plan had not yet been formalized. This was not the main obstacle in his opinion; the real problem was that the operation could not be carried out without risks of casualties. In addition, there was a deep fear that the people still in Potocari would resort to civil disobedience.²⁸⁰⁵

The fact that US assistance might be needed to get Dutchbat out of Srebrenica was causing the Clinton administration great concern. The prospect of the deployment of US ground troops was suddenly very close. The question in Washington was whether the Netherlands would call on NATO to help evacuate the Dutch troops. On 11 July a White House spokesman refused to answer the question whether a Dutch request for assistance fell within the framework of the NATO withdrawal plan for UNPROFOR. According to the author David Rohde, the US Ambassador in The Hague, Dornbush, was instructed to convince the policymakers in The Hague that Dutchbat should stay in Potocari and should not be allowed to leave before the Displaced Persons.²⁸⁰⁶ Voorhoeve and Dornbush did speak to each other after the fall of Srebrenica, but there are no indications that Dornbush communicated any such message. This may be explained by the fact that, at that moment, the UN and Voorhoeve had both reached the conclusion that Dutchbat had to stay put.²⁸⁰⁷

Voorhoeve had already approached NATO Secretary-General Claes around noon on 11 July. He informed Claes of his contact with Akashi and told him that he had talked about the possibility of evacuating Dutchbat in the event of a Bosnian-Serb attack. Voorhoeve asked Claes to consider in the meantime a possible UN request to NATO for an evacuation of Dutchbat. Voorhoeve stressed that this was not an actual request for an evacuation, but merely a warning.²⁸⁰⁸

Claes passed on Voorhoeve's message during the lunch of the Permanent Representatives at NATO and opened it to discussion.²⁸⁰⁹ Acting Permanent Representative Feith had, however, received no instructions as yet from The Hague on the matter. Feith said that he partook in the discussion to the best of his ability and only later conferred with Ministers Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve. At the meeting Feith had pressed for the deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force or NATO forces to evacuate Dutchbat from the enclave. He believed that this was in line with Dutch policy. However, he received no support within NATO.²⁸¹⁰ The French Permanent Representative at NATO, Blot, wondered whether, under the circumstances, it would not be better to nip any UN request to NATO in the bud.

²⁸⁰¹ DCBC, 747, Fax NLLO AFSOUTH Naples to OCHKKlu and DCBC, 12/07/95 20.10 LT.

²⁸⁰² DCBC, 750. Fax NLLO AFSOUTH Naples to OCHKKlu and DCBC, 13/07/95.

²⁸⁰³ DCBC, 762. (RNIAP) Deny Flight INTSUM/009/Jul/95, 131330Z Jul 95.

²⁸⁰⁴ Confidential interview (54).

²⁸⁰⁵ Interview Leighton-Smith, 06/06/00.

²⁸⁰⁶ Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 177.

²⁸⁰⁷ ABZ, DAV 999.241. Fax DGPZ to Minister Van Mierlo, 12/07/95, No. 356.4540. Voorhoeve and Dornbush did, however, discuss the idea aired by the US negotiator Richard Holbrooke i.e. to maintain the eastern enclaves in return for a suspension of sanctions. According to FA, Voorhoeve had – rightly – rejected this because it would only create hostages and paralyze the Rapid Reaction Force.

²⁸⁰⁸ Diary Voorhoeve, p. 103.

²⁸⁰⁹ SMG 1004/48. Code Feith Navo 1036, 11/07/95.

²⁸¹⁰ Interview P.C. Feith, 24/08/00.

Claes had already made it clear that any such request could be a source of embarrassment to NATO as the withdrawal plan would need to be activated and it had not yet been officially approved.²⁸¹¹

An emergency evacuation of Dutchbat was also discussed in the North Atlantic Council on 12 and 13 July. SACEUR General Joulwan explained to the Council that, after receiving political approval, the first unit of the Quick Response Option could be on the spot within sixty hours. But the main strength could only be operational after a period of between ten and fourteen days. However, before proceeding with action, the North Atlantic Council had to decide on the Rules of Engagement for any such operation and on action against the integrated air-defence system. Joulwan estimated that these preliminaries would considerably reduce the speed of response, because an attack against the Bosnian-Serb air-defence system, in particular, would not be any easy political decision.²⁸¹²

On 13 July the Permanent Representatives at NATO brainstormed on the feasibility of an emergency evacuation. According to Feith, the planning would have to focus not only on the evacuation of the units, but the civilians as well; there were, incidentally, no civilians left to evacuate when he spoke. At this meeting the question was also raised as to how the safety of Dutchbat could be guaranteed before the US Marines could be on the spot. The obvious reaction of the Bosnian Serbs would be to take hostages. Another option was the deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force. Paris would agree to this when it was linked to the certainty of US participation. This led to the idea of transferring the Rapid Reaction Force from the UN to NATO, as part of a NATO-led operation. How the UN would respond to this was not addressed. The possibility of using the UK/NL Amphibious Force arose when the representatives were studying NATO's Quick Response Options. This British-Dutch marine unit could be one of the first on the spot, but it would still take ten days. If the unit had to be flown to the enclave, NATO would again be faced with the problem of neutralizing the Bosnian-Serb Air Defence.²⁸¹³

In the North Atlantic Council of 14 July, Feith also stressed that Dutchbat was still under UN command, and that a decision on withdrawal was the duty of the UN. One condition for the departure of Dutchbat was that the wounded in Potocari would be taken along and that the VRS would provide guarantees for the prisoners in the football stadium in Bratunac. (Their fate is discussed further in Part IV.)²⁸¹⁴

2. No withdrawal, stay put

No further work needed to be done on a withdrawal plan in Brussels, because The Hague realized fairly soon that the humanitarian situation had priority and that the continued presence of Dutchbat was therefore desirable.²⁸¹⁵ Nicolai had also emphasized this from Sarajevo, when Voorhoeve had mooted the plan to bring Dutchbat to safety in a telephone call with him on 11 July. Nicolai advised Voorhoeve to instruct Dutchbat to give maximum assistance to the Displaced Persons. Voorhoeve consented, and told Nicolai to inform Karremans of his decision. This took place immediately.²⁸¹⁶

Voorhoeve later returned to this telephone call with Nicolai in the White Paper of Defence accompanying the debriefing report to Parliament. He feared that this telephone conversation could lead to a wrong conclusion, namely, that The Hague was primarily interested in getting Dutchbat to a place of safety. During the discussion with Nicolai, which took place at 16.30 hours, there was, according to Voorhoeve, no longer an emergency situation *with regard to Dutchbat*. The enclave had fallen and the battalion could concentrate on humanitarian tasks before leaving.²⁸¹⁷

²⁸¹¹ SMG 1004/48. Code Feith Navo 1036, 11/07/95.

²⁸¹² DCBC, 729. Code Feith Navo 1039, 12/07/95, Confi.

²⁸¹³ DCBC, 778. Code Feith Navo 1049, 13/07/95.

²⁸¹⁴ DCBC, 1565. Code Feith 1058, 14/07/95.

²⁸¹⁵ Interview P.C. Feith, 24/08/00.

²⁸¹⁶ Debriefing report, § 5.14.

²⁸¹⁷ TK, 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 128 (30/10/95).

On the afternoon of 11 July Voorhoeve appeared to have already dropped the idea of getting Dutchbat out of the enclave as soon as possible. This can also be deduced from a discussion with Sacirbey, the Bosnian Minister of Foreign Affairs, which took place some time in the same afternoon. Voorhoeve had assured Sacirbey that the Dutch troops would stay in Srebrenica until all the civilians had been evacuated. Sacirbey then demanded that the entire population, including the soldiers, be protected and evacuated. Voorhoeve agreed.²⁸¹⁸

Meanwhile, in Sarajevo, the French Sector Commander General Gobilliard, who was Deputy Commander in the absence of General Smith, received instructions between 17.30 and 19.30 hours on 11 July to keep the air power in reserve in case the VRS resorted to action against Dutchbat. Gobilliard also ordered the remaining OPs to 'regroup' as far as possible in Potocari and to think about a plan for getting Dutchbat out of Srebrenica. Apart from this, Gobilliard did not play an important role. He was only present at UNPROFOR headquarters in the evenings, accompanied by a Canadian officer who acted as interpreter. Gobilliard spoke no English at all, a serious handicap in such a hectic situation, except in the contact with Janvier. So, no-one exactly looked forward to his arrival at headquarters.²⁸¹⁹

At around ten o'clock on the evening of 11 July, Akashi reported to New York that he intended to instruct Dutchbat to stay in the enclave until negotiations had been conducted on the departure of the population. Until then, a 'substantial presence' was needed in the enclave, and Dutchbat had to remain armed. Akashi wanted to offset this against what he thought was still the wish of the Dutch Government, namely, to pull out the Dutch troops as soon as possible. Only when a satisfactory agreement had been reached on the departure of the Displaced Persons, would Akashi be prepared to negotiate on a withdrawal of Dutchbat.²⁸²⁰ By now, the UN staff in Zagreb had also decided that a continued UN presence was important for providing humanitarian aid. The conclusion was that as soon as this necessity no longer existed, there would no longer be a case for a UN presence and Dutchbat would leave the enclave.²⁸²¹ But there was also a hidden agenda: Akashi had his own reasons for keeping Dutchbat in Srebrenica for the time being. He was afraid that a departure might induce the troop-contributing nations to want to withdraw their own units from Zepa and Gorazde.²⁸²²

On the morning of 12 July Voorhoeve received the Permanent Parliamentary Committee for Defence in the Defence Crisis Management Centre (the bunker) and told it what had happened. Voorhoeve also said that they could thank Providence on bended knee that dozens of the Dutch contingent had not been killed. He saw the disrespect for the blue helmets as a clear sign of a change in the offence strategy of the Bosnian Serbs. The VRS had threatened to kill the UN forces and to fire on the enclave with mortars if Karremans did not cooperate, but Voorhoeve understood that no shots had ever been actually fired at them.²⁸²³

On the same day a joint meeting took place with the Permanent Parliamentary Committees for Foreign and Affairs and Defence. At that moment there was still no real government consensus on a Dutchbat pull-out: Van Mierlo said that the Dutch aim to accord priority to getting the troops to safety had met with understanding and support from his foreign colleagues.²⁸²⁴ Nonetheless, Voorhoeve intimated at this meeting that the Dutch could only leave if the Displaced Persons could leave as well. He had already stated at a press conference on the previous day that the mission of the Dutch troops in Potocari was first and foremost to save lives.

²⁸¹⁸ *Nezavisni magazin DANI*, Special edition Srebrenica Dossier, 09/98. Esad Hecimovic, 'Chronology of the events of 11 July 1995'. The source of this information appears to be the Minister for UN Affairs, Hasan Muratovic.

²⁸¹⁹ Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

²⁸²⁰ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1139.

²⁸²¹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87299, File 3066, Jul-Dec 95. 'Continued UN Presence in Srebrenica/Other Safe Areas', undated [11/07/95].

²⁸²² UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 11/07/95, No. Z-1139.

²⁸²³ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.

²⁸²⁴ ABZ, DDI-DAV/DPV/PZ/VN/VR/Peace operations/1995, part 05. Memo 'overleg Tweede Kamer 12/07/95 Srebrenica'.

Parliament thought differently. Both VVD and D66 thought it unrealistic to link the withdrawal of Dutchbat to the departure of the Displaced Persons. VVD spokesman Blaauw said that 20,000 Displaced Persons could not be linked with four hundred Dutchbat soldiers. Blaauw had told the press prior to the meeting that the UNHCR was responsible for the protection of the Displaced Persons. Blaauw did not repeat this at the meeting and went no farther than to say that the battalion was in an impossible situation as far as helping the Displaced Persons was concerned. D66 spokesman Hoekema stated that the first priority should be a free and dignified departure of the Dutch troops. He thought it unlikely that Dutchbat would be able to get guarantees for the safety of the Displaced Persons. Conversely, spokespersons for the other parties did want to link the departure of Dutchbat with such guarantees. Van Traa (PvdA) wanted negotiations on a departure of Dutchbat, which would include the Displaced Persons, though he did realize that little value could be attached to any assurances by the Bosnian Serbs. The opposition, represented by De Hoop Scheffer (CDA), also wanted this link, but without burdening the negotiations with the political preferences of the Dutch. De Hoop Scheffer said that Voorhoeve was handling it well, and that in times of crisis it was imperative for the government to get maximum backing from Parliament.²⁸²⁵ Parliament as a whole did support the aim to get Dutchbat out of Bosnia without delay.²⁸²⁶

On 12 July, it was clear to the Ministerial Council that the negotiations between Mladic and Karremans on the previous evening (see Part IV) had been fruitless. Karremans had indicated that political and psychological support was needed from above. The Security Council had met informally and expressed its intention to bring the Bosnian Serbs to a negotiating position. The Russian Federation urged the Bosnian Serbs to that end. Through these channels, the conditions would have to be formulated for a safe departure of Dutchbat and the Displaced Persons. The Dutch would not leave Potocari until the Displaced Persons were allowed to leave as well. Any other scenario was unthinkable to the Dutch Government.²⁸²⁷

Prime Minister Kok announced in public that a solution must be found not only for the blue helmets but also for the population.²⁸²⁸ Kok declined to elaborate when asked whether the Dutch troops should be rescued by force.²⁸²⁹ In any case, the threat to Dutchbat was no longer so urgent: Voorhoeve had informed the British Government that he could see no role for the Rapid Reaction Force. Van Mierlo also told the British that the risk to the Dutch troops was no longer imminent.²⁸³⁰

As Van Mierlo told Parliament, it was doubtful whether there was understanding and support for getting Dutchbat to safety. According to the German political advisor Steiner, the Contact Group had agreed that the Dutch priorities, namely the safety of Dutchbat and the Displaced Persons, were totally justified. At the same time, the Contact Group hoped that a certain Dutch presence in Srebrenica could be maintained.²⁸³¹ Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Kornblum also said that the Americans would like to see some continued military presence in the eastern enclaves, including Srebrenica; they hoped to realize this through diplomatic and military pressure. Should a rescue operation still be necessary for Dutchbat, then the Netherlands could count on the United States, though circumstances would determine whether this was actually forthcoming.²⁸³² Moreover, the United States only wanted this to take place under the auspices of NATO.²⁸³³ The British also declared

²⁸²⁵ 'Meningverschil over beschermen bevolking' [Difference of opinion about the protection of the population], *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/07/95.

²⁸²⁶ NAA 222914. *NOS Journaal*, 12/07/95, 20.00 hrs.

²⁸²⁷ Summary of the meeting of the Ministerial Council of 12/07/95 objectivized for the purposes of the NIOD investigation.

²⁸²⁸ 'Een ramp van grote omvang heeft zich voltrokken' [A disaster on a massive scale has taken place], *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/07/95.

²⁸²⁹ 'Tragedie in Srebrenica' [Tragedy in Srebrenica], *Algemeen Dagblad*, 12/07/95.

²⁸³⁰ Confidential Information (29).

²⁸³¹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01812. Code Smit 217, 18/07/95.

²⁸³² ABZ, DPV/ARA/02110. Code Jacobovits 445, 12/07/95.

²⁸³³ Conversation with H.G.B. van den Breemen, 29/09/99.

their willingness to help in Srebrenica, if necessary.²⁸³⁴ The Canadian Ambassador to the UN, however, refused to make any Canadian helicopters available for the evacuation of Dutchbat.²⁸³⁵ Be that as it may, such declarations of support should be interpreted more as political courtesies than as military options that could be executed at short notice. No-one specified the actual nature of this assistance.

The visit of Van den Breemen and Van Baal to Zagreb on 11 July

On the evening of 11 July Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen and the Deputy Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army Van Baal visited Janvier in Zagreb, where despair was running high. At that moment all the attention converged on the humanitarian consequences of the fall of Srebrenica.²⁸³⁶

Van den Breemen conveyed the wish of the Dutch Government to withdraw Dutchbat as soon as possible, and specifically within several days. In the meantime the priority in The Hague had shifted towards the protection of the Displaced Persons. Under the pressure of circumstances Janvier's vision had also changed: he now believed that Dutchbat should stay put in order to provide humanitarian assistance. Janvier also told Van den Breemen that the use of force to remove Dutchbat was impossible. 'He understood perfectly my point of view,' said Janvier.²⁸³⁷ Van den Breemen and Van Baal did indeed become convinced that the Displaced Persons could not be abandoned to fate. In the evening Van Baal subsequently reported to the Defence Crisis Management Centre that leaving the Displaced Persons behind without protection was not an option. According to him, a clandestine departure from Srebrenica was out of the question. He said that Janvier was also of the opinion that Dutchbat could not be removed from the enclave by force.²⁸³⁸

Janvier repeated his standpoint that Dutchbat should stay in Srebrenica for the time being to General Smith, who had now returned to his post: 'Withdrawal of the Battalion will be carried out only after the issue of the refugees is solved.'²⁸³⁹ UNHCR representative A.W. Bijleveld had already pointed out to Akashi and Janvier on the day of the fall that problems could arise around the withdrawal of the troops and that it was therefore better for Dutchbat to stay in the enclave where it could keep an eye on the places where the Displaced Persons might be rounded up on transport convoys and where the VRS might try to segregate the men from the women.²⁸⁴⁰

The day after the consultations with Janvier, Van den Breemen, who had now returned to The Hague, briefed General Nicolai in Sarajevo on the meeting. Van den Breemen said that he was worried about the plight of the Displaced Persons, but even more about the fate of the civilian personnel in the service of Dutchbat, because the Netherlands was responsible for them. Both generals also discussed the conditions that needed to be in place for the evacuation of Dutchbat itself. Van den Breemen took the view that the staff in Sarajevo must try somehow to become a partner in the talks with Mladic and take over the negotiations from Karremans. Everyone in Sarajevo was convinced that, after the fall, Karremans was not in a position to pressurize Mladic. Nothing came of their attempts and Karremans had to go it alone. Only a few days later did Smith actually negotiate the withdrawal of Dutchbat with Mladic.

²⁸³⁴ Diary Voorhoeve, p. 103.

²⁸³⁵ Conversation with H.G.B. van den Breemen, 29/09/99.

²⁸³⁶ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 01/11/01.

²⁸³⁷ NIOD Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, SRSG's briefing 12/07/95. The notes in Banbury's diary were almost identical to those in the diary of David Last, (interview 05/09/00).

²⁸³⁸ DCBC, 712. Handwritten memo to SCOCIS from Gen. Van Baal 22.49lt. 11/07/95.

²⁸³⁹ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Letter Janvier to Comd UNPROFOR, SRSG, DFC, COS, 'Guidance to Commander UNPROFOR', 14/07/95.

²⁸⁴⁰ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury. SRSG's meeting 11/07/95.

Should Dutchbat take along their equipment?

Nicolai was given a free hand by the Netherlands to negotiate agreements ensuring that Dutchbat returned home safe and sound. Van den Breemen and Nicolai did discuss possible conditions that should be linked to this. Nicolai intimated that UNPROFOR was concerned about UN equipment ending up in VRS hands and then being misused. At all costs, the VRS must be prevented from impounding even more equipment; furthermore it had to return all equipment it had already stolen from Dutchbat. In practical terms the problem was that if the VRS started driving around with blue berets and helmets in UN vehicles, then it would no longer be clear who the enemy was. UNPROFOR had already run into problems on several occasions because of equipment taken by the VRS, and this could create dangerous situations. UNPROFOR was therefore adamant that Dutchbat take along their equipment. The Hague found this less important and Van den Breemen did not make an issue of it either. After Van den Breemen heard from Nicolai that the UN would do so, he left the matter in his hands.²⁸⁴¹

UNPROFOR's concerns that UN equipment would fall into VRS hands are also reflected in a letter sent by General Janvier to General Mladic on 7 July, in which he demanded the return of UN equipment. By now, the VRS had a whole arsenal of UN materiel: 19 French, 6 Ukrainian, 4 British and 8 Canadian combat vehicles and a smaller number of trucks. In the second half of July the VRS had used these vehicles five times in combat. At that time Janvier also stressed that this was creating a great deal of confusion, which was jeopardizing the lives of his men.²⁸⁴² But the Bosnian Serbs refused to return the stolen materiel until the ABiH stopped using weapons and vehicles which they too had stolen from the UN.²⁸⁴³

General Smith also impressed on Janvier that it was important for Dutchbat to leave with their weapons and equipment. If not, then the stage was set for the future. Moreover, if Dutchbat remained hostage in Srebrenica, UNPROFOR's hands would be tied and the only option would be 'to lie back'. Smith further emphasized that Karremans must not be left to solve this problem on his own as: 'he is talking from the jail'. If the Bosnian Serbs refused to do business with UN headquarters in Sarajevo and Zagreb, then EU negotiator Bildt and the relevant governments (the Netherlands and also the UK because of the British JCOs) would have to be asked to apply pressure. Meanwhile, Karremans had received instructions from Sarajevo to hold his ground and not to negotiate any VRS demands, except the relinquishment of the weapons and equipment. Smith felt that this was negotiable.²⁸⁴⁴

Voorhoeve accorded less importance to the equipment; he saw this as placing materiel above people, and this was not open to discussion. His attention was becoming more focused on the people than the weapons. According to Vice-Chief of Operations Hilderink he said, 'People first, materiel second'. This prompted some discussion in the Defence Crisis Management Centre as to whether a distinction should not be made between weaponry and other types of materiel. The heavier equipment, especially the APCs, should be taken along or else disabled, to prevent it from falling into the wrong hands. Voorhoeve went along with this. In view of the circumstances, the Ministry of Defence considered the rest of the equipment unimportant.

However, Foreign Affairs argued that all the materiel should be taken along.²⁸⁴⁵ It deemed it desirable that Dutchbat leave with the weapons and that Karremans should endeavour to bring this about. Chief of Defence Staff, Van den Breemen, requested support from the Military Advisor to the UN Secretary General, General Van Kappen, and Permanent Representative Biegan to realize this. It

²⁸⁴¹ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 09/07/99.

²⁸⁴² NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Letter Janvier to Mladic, 07/07/95, sent by fax at the FC's Office to UNPROFOR Comd for Gen Mladic, 08/07/95, Conf.; NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. 'Update on major equipments held by BSA at 4 Jul 95'.

²⁸⁴³ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Interoffice Memorandum MA to SC, DSC, DCOS, SOO, SLO, SMIO, PIO, 13/07/95, UN Conf.

²⁸⁴⁴ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87299, File 3061/3, Jul-Nov 95. Fax The Office of the Commander HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, attn SRSF, FC, DFC, COS, 132316B Jul 95.

²⁸⁴⁵ Interview G.C.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

should be noted, for the sake of clarity, that Foreign Affairs did add that, in any case, a decision on a withdrawal from Srebrenica lay with General Smith.²⁸⁴⁶

This standpoint was also expressed by the Dutch representative at NATO. Dutchbat was 'under the strict instructions' of Smith. It was up to him to decide when Dutchbat could pull out of Srebrenica and to say where it had to go. However, this would only be possible after guarantees had been obtained for the safety of the wounded who would still be in Potocari after the population had been evacuated and for the men in the football stadium in Bratunac, whose plight was still largely unknown. A further demand by the Dutch NATO representative was that Dutchbat take its weapons and equipment when it left.²⁸⁴⁷

UN headquarters in New York also maintained that Dutchbat must take along the weapons. New York was trying to get Milosevic and Pale to consent to this through the Russian UN ambassador and its own channels to Stoltenberg. These messages came from Van Kappen, the Military Advisor to the Secretary-General. The Defence Crisis Management Centre passed them on to Nicolai and Vos, Director-General of Political Affairs at the Foreign Ministry.²⁸⁴⁸

3. The hard truth: Mladic dictates whether and how Dutchbat withdraws

In the meantime, it was the Bosnian Serbs who were dictating whether Dutchbat would withdraw and whether it would take along the materiel. The political authorities in the Republika Srpska were making arrangements for the departure of Dutchbat. The task of sorting out the Dutchbat evacuation was assigned to Miroslav Deronjic, who was appointed Civil Commissioner for Srebrenica by Karadzic on 11 July. Deronjic stressed, in line with Karadzic' instructions, that this departure was a civilian and not a military matter. But Deronjic was not representing Mladic, who ultimately decided what happened and paid little heed to the political considerations of Pale.

Deronjic says that Karremans did not exactly help the Dutchbat withdrawal. He thought that Karremans was afraid of offending Mladic and agreed to everything he said, even if it was against the interests of Dutchbat. Deronjic was under the impression that Karremans was definitely scared of Mladic.

The question is whether Deronjic had his own reasons for saying this. Mladic took a critical view of everything that Deronjic did and, in any case, the military authorities had the last word after a state of war had been declared in the region on 14 July. According to Deronjic, Mladic was constantly meddling in the question of the Dutchbat equipment; he was probably hoping to lay his hands on some, though he did not force Dutchbat to surrender it. Deronjic said that eventually Karadzic had to intervene to ensure that Dutchbat could take the equipment out of the enclave.

Karremans had also given Deronjic a list of the vehicles and equipment which the VRS had stolen from Dutchbat and asked him to negotiate their return. However, Deronjic was of the opinion that it was impossible to exact compliance from the VRS at that moment. He suggested to Karremans that, as a compromise, both should sign the list and submit it to the political leaders of Republika Srpska. This would then increase the chance that the equipment would be returned in the course of time. This was the last contact between Deronjic and Karremans.²⁸⁴⁹

Meanwhile, UNPROFOR representatives were exploring all sorts of avenues in order to negotiate with the VRS on the Dutchbat withdrawal. Nicolai was also assigned a role in this process. In Sarajevo on 12 July Nicolai had suggested to VRS General Gvero that they meet to discuss the

²⁸⁴⁶ ABZ, DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS/Yugoslavia/NATO/Coordination/July 1995-August 1996. Memorandum DAV to DGPA, 14/07/95, No. DAV-95/818.

²⁸⁴⁷ DCBC, 1565. Code Feith NATO 1058, 14/07/95

²⁸⁴⁸ DCBC, 714. Draft Diary Van den Breemen, 13/07/95; NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen Henk van [den] Breemen, 'Hollands Dagboek' [Dutch Diary], NRC *Handelsblad*, 22/07/95 with personal additions.

²⁸⁴⁹ Interview Miroslav Deronjic, 03/11/99.

conditions of a Dutchbat withdrawal. Nicolai had added that the battalion could only leave when the Displaced Persons were no longer in need of support.

Gvero was not amenable to this idea and would only consent to a meeting between Karremans and Mladic. If Nicolai felt that a meeting between him and Gvero was especially important, then he should submit a written request for one. Gvero added that a withdrawal of Dutchbat would not run into any problems. It could take place in safety to a location 'in the interest of their Mission'.²⁸⁵⁰

The inability to get negotiators into the enclave formed a huge problem in the attempts to get Dutchbat out. The Dutch Government also exerted indirect pressure to achieve access for negotiators. In the morning of 12 July Voorhoeve informed the British Government that General Smith had been asked to support Karremans in the negotiations with Mladic. Voorhoeve hoped that this might lead to a departure of Dutchbat and the Displaced Persons. He did, however, anticipate ethical dilemmas if the plight of the Displaced Persons were to deteriorate further.²⁸⁵¹ All efforts were in vain: the Bosnian Serbs refused to budge and Karremans had to go it alone.

In the morning of 13 July it was patently obvious that Mladic would not receive a UN delegation from Zagreb, and would only do business with Karremans. UNPROFOR resigned itself to this situation, as otherwise the trip to Srebrenica would have had to be made without the permission of the Bosnian Serbs with all the attendant risks. Nicolai conveyed this message to Van den Breemen. They agreed that Nicolai would give Karremans all possible support.

In addition, The Hague wanted to know who exactly would issue the order for the Dutchbat withdrawal. The absence of tight orchestration by the UN was also playing a role in the line of thought of Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen. His concerns were further reinforced by the fact that no UN officials from Zagreb or Sarajevo were being admitted to the talks with Mladic. Van den Breemen felt that Smith, and not Karremans, should have negotiated with Mladic. In his analysis operational matters were a task for the UN, but logistical matters, including arrangements to withdraw a unit from an operational zone, could fall under national issues, which meant that the Netherlands could have a say.

Van den Breemen discussed this with Colonel De Jonge in Zagreb. After internal consultations in the Defence Crisis Management Centre between Van den Breemen, Deputy Chief of Operations Hilderink and the Director of General Policy Issues De Winter the standpoint was still that Dutchbat should provide the Displaced Persons with humanitarian assistance for as long as possible. However, any VRS threats to the safety of Dutchbat personnel would tip the balance. At Nicolai's request, Van den Breemen rang John Almstrom, Akashi's Senior Political Officer, and urged that the problem of the Dutchbat withdrawal – preferably along with the weaponry – be solved at the highest level. Van den Breemen realized, however, that Mladic would probably impound them. The safety of Dutchbat, therefore, continued to be the top priority of the senior military personnel in the Netherlands.²⁸⁵²

Almstrom played a role in the 'srebrenica Crisis Action Team' set up in Zagreb on 12 July. With the support of the International Red Cross this team tried to get the American Ken Biser, the Civil Affairs Officer of Sector North East in Tuzla, to Srebrenica, but the Bosnian Serbs refused to allow it.

As it happened, the UN Chief Political Officer in Sarajevo, Philip Corwin, was actually granted permission by the Bosnian Serbs to go to Srebrenica, but for other reasons. Probably, Almstrom did not want Corwin to go because of the problems that had arisen with the Bosnian Government on the reception of Displaced Persons in Tuzla.²⁸⁵³

²⁸⁵⁰ SMG, 1004. Telephone conversation with General Nicolai – General Gvero, 12/07/95, 14.45 hours.

²⁸⁵¹ Confidential information (29).

²⁸⁵² DCBC, 714. Draft Diary Van den Breemen, 13/07/95; NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. Henk van [den] Breemen, 'Hollands Dagboek' [Dutch Diary], *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/07/95 with personal additions.

²⁸⁵³ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury, SRSG's briefing 14/07/95.

4. The Hague, Zagreb and New York deliberate on the departure of Dutchbat

After the Bosnian Serbs had deported the last of the Displaced Persons from Srebrenica on 13 July and no more Bosnian Muslims were left in the enclave, the problem remained that several thousand men had been taken to Bratunac. This also had an influence on the Dutchbat withdrawal, because The Hague did not think it tactful to allow Dutchbat to leave while the men in nearby Bratunac were left to an unknown fate. From New York Biegman pointed out that 'at my suggestion' Kofi Annan, on 13 July, had actively addressed the problem of the deportees and taken up contact with President Sommaruga of the International Red Cross and Ogata, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Shortly afterwards, the Defence Staff phoned Biegman out of bed to pass on the concern in the Defence Crisis Management Centre about the plight of the men who had been transported to Bratunac. The Defence Staff suggested sending UNMOs to the location.²⁸⁵⁴ Biegman too believed that it would be 'painful' if Dutchbat were to withdraw before an international presence had been arranged in Bratunac. Biegman stressed that Annan had already asked the Russians to put pressure on Pale. According to him, Annan had also asked UNPROFOR to strenuously push for a presence with the Bosnian Serbs, but he did not want to tie Karremans' hands by imposing conditions for the Dutchbat withdrawal, as this might inspire 'obstinacy' on the part of the Bosnian Serbs.²⁸⁵⁵

At Foreign Affairs the Director of the Department of Atlantic Security, Majoor, took the view that Dutchbat should not stay too long in the enclave but not too short either. Dutchbat would have left too soon if it later transpired that something had happened to the men in the football stadium at Bratunac. According to Majoor, Mladic had 'agreed' to the return of these men to Potocari. Biegman and Majoor felt that Dutchbat could not make a dignified exit before this group had left for Tuzla or Kladanj or was placed under the supervision of UN organizations or the International Red Cross.

Majoor was also asking himself whether the original local population – not the eighty percent of Displaced Persons who were located in Srebrenica – would actually want to leave Potocari. There was still no information in this respect. If Mladic wanted to leave this group in Srebrenica, then this was another reason for a longer Dutchbat presence. On the other hand, if Mladic were to forcibly clear the area, 'Dutchbat would have to sound the alarm and remain neutral'. Majoor believed that, if this happened, then diplomatic pressure would be stepped up.²⁸⁵⁶

Meantime, these thoughts had been overtaken by circumstances: there were no more Bosnian Muslims in Potocari, nor were there members of the original population or Displaced Persons. All the diplomatic pressure had been fruitless; Mladic had certainly resorted to forcible clearance. Dutchbat later faced heavy criticism for remaining neutral in this operation (see Part IV), but on 14 July the outside world was still unaware that there were no more Muslim men in Bratunac.

On 14 July the UNPF headquarters decided in Zagreb that the moment had not yet come for a Dutchbat withdrawal.²⁸⁵⁷ In the interim, the staff did weigh up the pros and cons of a longer stay by Dutchbat in Potocari. The possibility of helping the remaining Displaced Persons in the region had to be weighed against the operational advantages of a withdrawal. A withdrawal would mean that the battalion could no longer be taken hostage by the Bosnian Serbs and hence that UN operations elsewhere in Bosnia would no longer be at risk of obstruction. Meanwhile, the UNMOs and UN Civil Police would have to stay behind; Zagreb did not know that the UN Civil Police had left the enclave shortly before it fell.²⁸⁵⁸

²⁸⁵⁴ DCBC, 714. Draft Diary Van den Breemen, 14/07/95.

²⁸⁵⁵ DCBC, 807. Code Biegman 619, 13/07/95.

²⁸⁵⁶ ABZ, DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS/Yugoslavia/NATO/Coordination/July 1995-August 1996. Memorandum DAV to DGPZ, 14/07/95, No. DAV-95/818.

²⁸⁵⁷ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2, SRSG Meeting, May-Oct 95. Senior Staff Meeting, 14/07/95.

²⁸⁵⁸ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87299, File 3061/3, Jul - Nov 95. Interoffice Memorandum Chief G3 Policy/Plans to FC, 14/07/95.

The proposal that Dutchbat be allowed to leave under these circumstances did not meet with strong resistance in Zagreb. Given the large number of missing persons at that moment, and the possible presence of several thousand men in Bratunac, Almstrom judged in Zagreb that the UNHCR, the International Red Cross and UNMOs should, at any rate, be able to stay in Srebrenica. They should provide the Displaced Persons with aid. Their presence was also needed because of UN Resolution 1004 (see previous chapter), which called for the restoration of the Safe Area. Otherwise, with the departure of Dutchbat, the UN would have no foot at all in the enclave.²⁸⁵⁹

Leaving the UNMOs in Srebrenica was also an option that Prime Minister Kok discussed with the British Prime Minister John Major. Kok wanted Major to lend his support. Major agreed wholeheartedly with the idea; this way they could keep an eye on how the Bosnian Serbs treated the people they had rounded up. Major made no comment on a Dutchbat withdrawal or the possible restoration of the Safe Area.²⁸⁶⁰ London supported the proposal and Kofi Annan would welcome it as well.²⁸⁶¹

New York began to take tighter control of the arrangements for the departure of Dutchbat. Kofi Annan asked Moussali, the Head of Civil Affairs in Zagreb, if Milosevic could play a part in securing a Dutchbat withdrawal with equipment and all. The answer came from Akashi: as long as Srebrenica could not be accessed for humanitarian purposes, the Dutch withdrawal should not be accelerated. Akashi believed that it would be a bad business to allow Dutchbat to leave under the prevailing circumstances when the plight of the civilians was still so precarious. He had consulted Janvier and General Smith, and it had been decided that Dutchbat would stay put for the time being. Eventually Dutchbat would be able to make a dignified departure along with their weaponry and equipment as far as this was possible. Boutros-Ghali duly appointed Stoltenberg as negotiator. Janvier wanted Stoltenberg's mission to Belgrade to give priority to the withdrawal of Dutchbat.²⁸⁶² Before starting his mission Stoltenberg met Akashi and again stressed that one aim of the negotiations had to be an 'honourable withdrawal of the Dutch Contingent, with their arms and vehicles'.²⁸⁶³

On 15 July, the date of Stoltenberg's first negotiations in Belgrade, the Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence were again united in their approach: Dutchbat had to stay. Van Mierlo conveyed to Van den Breemen his deep concern that the Netherlands would be accused of leaving before there was certainty about fate of the men in Bratunac. Van den Breemen said that Voorhoeve shared this concern and he informed Nicolai of the anxiety of both Ministers. Van den Breemen did, however, tell Van Mierlo that, in his opinion, Karremans was not in a position to do much about the plight of the men in Bratunac. He saw high-level diplomatic consultations as the only hope. Van Mierlo decided to call EU negotiator Bildt, who was also at the negotiating table in Belgrade. Bildt told him that the Bosnian Serbs saw the men as prisoners of war and that they apparently wanted to exchange them. This meant that the International Red Cross would have to be granted access to Bratunac. Van den Breemen also informed Nicolai of the ministers' concern about the matter.²⁸⁶⁴

5. Is a withdrawal in sight after all? The birth of the Smith-Mladic Agreement

The negotiations between Stoltenberg, Bildt and Milosevic, in themselves, brought a breakthrough. Smith and Mladic also participated in the negotiations. Smith had been called to these negotiations at the initiative of the French General De Lapresle, who was attached to the Bildt mission. At Bildt's

²⁸⁵⁹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File Sreb 3300-SRE Vol. I, 15 Jul – 16 Nov 95. Note Deputy Force Commander's Office to DFC, 14/07/95.

²⁸⁶⁰ AZ 95moo5637. Ambassador Sir David Miers to W.J.P. Geerts, Advisor to Min van AZ 19/07/95.

²⁸⁶¹ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

²⁸⁶² NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury; SRSB briefing 14/07/95. CRS. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 13/07/95, No. 2318.

²⁸⁶³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Cryptofax Stoltenberg to the Secretary-General, 15/07/95.

²⁸⁶⁴ DCBC, 714. Draft Diary Van den Breemen, 15/07/95.

request, Milosevic summoned Mladic to Belgrade, but this was not allowed to be made public. The desire for Smith's presence stemmed partly from the wish to get him and Mladic back on speaking terms.²⁸⁶⁵ Dutchbat could leave with their equipment, via Bratunac, and Karremans would present the VRS and UNPROFOR with a list of his transport vehicles. Generals Mladic and Smith would have to supervise the Dutchbat withdrawal. At this meeting the Dutchbat withdrawal was planned for 21 July, or shortly afterwards.²⁸⁶⁶ The real breakthrough came when agreement was reached in Belgrade that there were no more impediments to a departure of the Dutchbat soldiers held in Bratunac, along with their personal possessions and weapons. This could, in theory, take place on the same day (15 July) but it was actually planned for 21 July.

After this agreement had been reached, Smith's Military Assistant, Baxter, drew up a draft agreement along the same lines for Smith and Mladic, who were also present in Belgrade. This stated that Smith and Mladic would confirm the agreements on 19 July and fill in the last details. On 19 July the Dutch departure would be formalized by Smith and Mladic in Sarajevo. It was agreed there that the actual withdrawal would take place on 21 July, which Belgrade had stipulated as the earliest possible date.

The negotiations in Belgrade taught Smith that Milosevic could influence Mladic, but that he could not force him into concessions which Mladic was not prepared to make. Mladic was only too willing to argue and disagree with Milosevic. Neither Pale nor the Bosnian Serbs politicians were involved in bringing about the meeting in Belgrade.²⁸⁶⁷

Late in the evening of 15 July The Hague heard the outcome of the Belgrade consultations from Nicolai. The good news was that Dutchbat could leave with their vehicles, equipment and weapons; the bad news was that it would take a week before the departure could actually start. The Hague understood that a decision had been taken at the meeting that the wounded could be evacuated and that the International Red Cross would be allowed access to the prisoners. Nicolai stressed that it was imperative to keep the agreement between Smith and Mladic secret as the arrangements for the withdrawal were still to be sorted out.²⁸⁶⁸

While the meetings were underway in Belgrade, the UN representatives still had no inkling of the true situation around Srebrenica. It was not yet known that mass murders had taken place; the column of men that was on its way from Srebrenica to Tuzla had not yet arrived in the territory of the Muslim-Croat Federation. Baxter had, however, noticed that Mladic seemed extremely uncomfortable, saying that he had lost control and mistakes had been made. Mladic then virtually agreed to allow the NGOs and the International Red Cross access to Srebrenica.²⁸⁶⁹

Apparently, Dutchbat was not immediately informed of the outcome of the negotiations in Belgrade. On 16 July the battalion was still in the dark about their departure. The reason for the delay was that the agreement between Smith and Mladic would not be formalized until 19 July. It was clear that the battalion could not pull out before the wounded who were still waiting for transport in Potocari and Bratunac had left.²⁸⁷⁰ Karremans had, however, heard from local military and civil representatives of Republika Srpska that Smith and Mladic would be meeting again. He also knew that discussions on missing Dutchbat equipment had been held with the Foreign Ministry of Republika Srpska, but that Karadzic was not expected to answer before 21 or 22 July.²⁸⁷¹

²⁸⁶⁵ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Diary Banbury. SRSG's briefing 14/07/95; interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

²⁸⁶⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 17/07/95, No. Z-1175.

²⁸⁶⁷ SMG 1006. Agreement between General Smith and General Mladic, 19/07/95.

²⁸⁶⁸ DCBC, 714. Draft Diary Van den Breemen, 15/07/95.

²⁸⁶⁹ Interview J. Baxter, 16/10/00.

²⁸⁷⁰ SMG 1003. Capsat Eus and Leo to Capt. Voerman, 16/07/95.

²⁸⁷¹ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. C-1(NL)UN Infbat to COS BHC Sarajevo, RNLA Crisis Staff, The Hague, 18/07/95, No. TK95120. See also ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 371/a, Command of the 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade Intelligence Unit (Capt. Momir Nikolic) to General Staff VRS, Intelligence Sector. Command of the Drina Corps, Intelligence Department, 18/07/95, No. 08-34/95.

6. The arrangements for the withdrawal and the route

Early in the evening of 13 July Karremans had received guidelines from Sarajevo for the negotiations with Mladic on a Dutchbat withdrawal. All the Displaced Persons, apart from the wounded, had already left the enclave. The guidelines were drawn up by Colonel De Ruiter. There were two versions: one in Dutch and one in English. Both faxes had the same number, and the same date and time. The existence of the Dutch fax prompted journalist Frank Westerman to infer later that this was a piece of private communication between The Hague and Sarajevo. This will be further addressed at the end of this chapter.

The orders from Sarajevo were that Dutchbat was to leave the enclave with all its combat vehicles, weapons and communication equipment. The blue helmets, berets and shrapnel-proof vests had priority, but the other UN equipment and infrastructure and the personal equipment could be relinquished. Dutchbat had to take along the local UN personnel, and take particular care for the British military personnel. Karremans also heard that Nicolai had been appointed authorized negotiator on behalf of both UNPROFOR and the Dutch Government. If the negotiations with Mladic reached a deadlock, then Karremans was to inform Nicolai immediately.²⁸⁷² The instructions also included suggestions for the withdrawal route.

As soon as he received the UNPROFOR guidelines Karremans informed Mladic in writing of his instructions. He also passed on the routes stipulated by Sarajevo. Karremans stretched the UNPROFOR instructions slightly by saying that he had to take along the personnel of *Médecins Sans Frontières* in addition to the local UN staff and all the wheeled vehicles, computers, personal possessions and clothing.²⁸⁷³ Mladic answered the following day that he would study Karremans' letter and arrange things with him *in situ*. He asked Karremans to be patient.²⁸⁷⁴

Sarajevo favoured the route via Kladanj to Busovaca, where the Dutch-Belgian transport battalion was stationed. The route via Zvornik to Zagreb was the second choice because of the limited reception facilities in Zagreb.²⁸⁷⁵ Karremans could not agree with the first priority because, in his opinion, the route via Kladanj was not the more logical of the two options. In his book he does not mince words on this choice: 'Who on earth thought that one up? (...) How can they even consider it? Don't they keep up to date with the messages and maps at the higher level? Kladanj is closed, isn't it?' Karremans saw only one realistic option: to head for Zagreb via Zvornik, or else for Belgrade.²⁸⁷⁶

Karremans had a point. The route via Kladanj was not in use, and it was impossible for road traffic to pass the confrontation line there. Convoys of Displaced Persons and a convoy of wounded had left for Kladanj in vain. In any case, fighting was still going on along this route. The Bosnian Serbs also refused to allow the International Red Cross to use this route for the transportation of the wounded from Potocari on 17 July. In his book Karremans also refers to a discussion he had with Couzy on 13 July in which he asked for further guidelines – which he never received. In a conversation with Colonel Dedden, Chief of the Army Crisis Staff, Karremans learned the following day that attention was being paid to a departure via Zagreb as well as via Busovaca; a departure via Belgrade was not feasible. The Dutch-Belgian transport battalion was ready for the reception; the idea was to stay there for two days.²⁸⁷⁷

According to Brantz in Tuzla, the arrangements for the Dutchbat withdrawal were also causing considerable irritation and frustration between The Hague, Potocari, Tuzla and the Dutch officers in

²⁸⁷² SMG 1004. Outgoing fax HQ UNPROFOR Sarajevo from COS to Dutchbat, 131800B Jul 1995, Fax No. 266/95. See *ibidem* for the English version.

²⁸⁷³ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Letter CO-1(NL)UN Infbn to General Mladic 13/07/95, No. TK95115.

²⁸⁷⁴ SMG, 1004. Letter Lt.-Gen. Ratko Mladic to Lt.-Col. Karremans, 14/07/95, No. 06/17-460. Karremans sent the letter on to Nicolai, Brantz and Janvier.

²⁸⁷⁵ SMG 1004. Outgoing fax HQ UNPROFOR Sarajevo from COS to Dutchbat, 131800B Jul 1995, Fax No. 266/95. See *ibidem* for the English version. NIOD Coll. Brantz.

²⁸⁷⁶ Karremans, *Srebrenica, Who Cares?*, p. 224.

²⁸⁷⁷ Karremans, *Srebrenica, Who Cares?*, p. 226-7. With addition by Karremans 25/11/00.

the UN chain of command. Potocari and Tuzla were not asked for their opinion: The Hague and Sarajevo had jointly decided that the route via Kladanj to Busovaca was preferable to Zvornik-Belgrade-Zagreb. Brantz said that the contingent Commander of the Dutch troops in Bosnia, Colonel Verschraegen, had advised The Hague along the same lines. This way they could make use of the reception and care facilities in Busovaca.

Like Karremans, Brantz was surprised by the choice of route, given previous experience and the recurrent skirmishes. Additionally, it meant crossing more territory of Republika Srpska than a route that went via Zvornik. Brantz also took up contact with the Defence Crisis Management Centre and the Army Crisis Staff: 'Had they lost their minds, I asked, barely able to conceal my irritation.' Dutchbat had to leave the territory of Republika Srpska as soon as possible and this meant, according to Brantz, that it should take the route via Zvornik. What is more, a service support area needed to be set up as close as possible to Potocari in order to provide Dutchbat with help, to transfer vehicles and materiel, to get the personnel onto buses, and to mount the APCs on trailers.²⁸⁷⁸

Karremans and Nicolai heard from the Army Crisis Staff that the higher echelons in the UN were sticking to the plan for a departure to Busovaca. According to Karremans, he asked the contingent Commander Verschraegen, the Army Crisis Staff and the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo three times to relocate Dutchbat to Zagreb and not to Busovaca. He could not understand why no-one listened to him. Eventually, he sought contact with Brantz who told him that the decision to go to Busovaca was taken mainly on the basis of personnel considerations.²⁸⁷⁹

According to Van Baal, Deputy Commander of the Army, the main advantage of Busovaca was that the Dutch would then be in control; in these more remote surroundings the Ministry of Defence would be in a better position to shield Dutchbat from curious outsiders than in Zagreb. Actually, to Dutchbat one of the attractions of Zagreb was its airport, which would expedite the journey home. Van Baal, in particular, had pushed for Busovaca, and for the organization of a short debriefing there in relative peace and quiet. The chaotic arrival of the 55 previous Dutchbat hostages at Soesterberg airport had strengthened his convictions.²⁸⁸⁰

On 18 July, the logistics staff at UN headquarters in Zagreb was still to express a preference for a departure to central Bosnia. Contrary to the situation in the Netherlands, this was based on economic rather than personnel considerations: central Bosnia was the simplest and cheapest option, especially if the Dutchbat equipment was to be made ready for a new deployment in Bosnia. A second option was a withdrawal via Ljubovija (situated opposite Bratunac on the Serb side of the Drina) to Camp Pleso near Zagreb. The vehicles could be brought from Serbia to Zagreb by road or rail, but this would take more time to plan. A timescale of fourteen days was even quoted.²⁸⁸¹ For a long time Zagreb stuck to a withdrawal of the personnel to Busovaca and the materiel to Zenica. This may have been partly motivated by the thought that the equipment would have to be left behind in the event of a withdrawal via Serbia.

On 20 July the buses and helicopters had already been requested to take Dutchbat from Busovaca to Split, where it could be flown back to the Netherlands. It was certain at that time that there would be no opportunity for a debriefing in Split. If this was still to take place in the mission region then it would have to be in Zagreb.²⁸⁸²

The Commander of Sector North East, Brigadier General Haukland, was not involved in the arrangements for the Dutchbat departure. He had not even been informed of it. Be that as it may, Haukland was acquainted with the instructions that Dutchbat had received. He said to Minister Pronk, who was on a working visit to Tuzla, that Sarajevo's instruction to Karremans that he must not leave

²⁸⁷⁸ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Diary Brantz, (version August 2000).

²⁸⁷⁹ Karremans, *Srebrenica, Who Cares?*, p. 234-5.

²⁸⁸⁰ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 01/11/01.

²⁸⁸¹ DAB. Interoffice Memorandum, Maj. Porter, JLOC Plans to Wing Comd Bernard, DCJLOC, 18/07/95;

SMG/1004/75. Fax sent from AMA COS UNPF-HQ to DCBC, RNLA Crisis Staff, COS UNPROFOR, 181700B Jul 95.

²⁸⁸² DCBC, 2823. Fax 1(NL) UN Cie Logbase Split to OCKlu, 20/07/95.

before all the enclave residents were able to depart was not particularly clear. Haukland complained that orders were no longer going through Sector North East and that no-one had told him that Dutchbat was no longer under his command; obviously, Sarajevo had not taken the trouble to inform him. It was a common complaint at Tuzla that Sarajevo broke the lines of command. At one point Haukland had called the Chief of Operations in Sarajevo to tell him that he had lost contact with Dutchbat. The answer was that the battalion was already on its way to Zagreb.²⁸⁸³

Apparently, the decision on the route was clinched during the meeting with, amongst others, General Smith in Belgrade on 15 July. It was then that Mladic agreed to a withdrawal of Dutchbat – with local UN personnel – via Belgrade on 21 July. Mladic also agreed that a convoy could supply Dutchbat prior to the departure. Mladic made a ‘gentleman’s agreement’ with Smith that he would do his best to get back as much as possible of the Dutchbat equipment that had been stolen by the VRS; nothing, however, came of this.²⁸⁸⁴ The materiel looted by the VRS was never returned.

Mladic did nonetheless honour the agreement on the arrival of the convoy. This convoy, carrying plentiful supplies of fuel for the return trip, had already been requested by UNPROFOR in Pale on 18 July.²⁸⁸⁵ Mladic also stuck to the agreement on the transport of the equipment: Dutchbat was allowed to take all of it.

On 20 July there was momentary panic, when Colonel P. Kracmar, the representative of the Force Commander in Belgrade, came with the disheartening news that the headquarters in Zagreb had failed to notice that Serbia was a sovereign state and had to be asked formally for permission before Dutchbat could cross its territory. Kracmar pointed this out to Janvier after a meeting with Colonel Vuksic, the representative of the General Staff of the VJ. This permission had not yet been requested and the necessary procedures could mean a two-day delay in the timetable for the Dutchbat withdrawal. To make matters worse, separate permission was needed for the APLs.

There were, moreover, restrictions for crossing Serb territory, because small pockets of armed Bosnian Muslims were still active in the area along the Drina. These had come from the column that was trying to reach Tuzla. In addition, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia could not guarantee safe passage for the local UN personnel. As long as no permission came from the Yugoslav authorities, the Dutchbat convoys would be stopped at the border. Though arrangements had been agreed with Mladic on the Bosnian-Serb side, he had no jurisdiction in Yugoslavia.²⁸⁸⁶ After Belgrade, Dutchbat would travel on to Zagreb. What happened to the battalion thereafter will be discussed in detail in Part IV.

In the long run the alarming news from Belgrade did not cause a delay. Neither did the position adopted by the international community at the London Conference of 21 July (a joint stance should be taken to prevent a further Bosnian-Serb advance) throw a spanner in the works. Minister Voorhoeve was momentarily afraid that this standpoint could tempt the Bosnian Serbs still to take Dutchbat hostage in order to stave off any air strikes.²⁸⁸⁷

This was not the case. General Mladic ordered the Drina corps and the Bratunac Brigade to do everything possible to ensure that Dutchbat could leave with dignity. The Commander of the Bratunac Brigade, in particular, had to make sure that his staff behaved correctly and he was ordered to escort convoys from and to Potocari. No-one other than Mladic himself was permitted to make arrangements with Dutchbat on a departure or a longer stay. Mladic would be in charge of the Dutchbat escort on 21 July.²⁸⁸⁸

²⁸⁸³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01654. Memorandum DMP/NH to R, 31/07/95, No. NH-618/95 with summary of trip R to Tuzla and Sarajevo, 14-18 July 1995; interview Hagrup Haukland, 03/05/99.

²⁸⁸⁴ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. ‘Meeting Gen. Smith/Gen. Mladic - 19 Jul 95’, drafted by Lt-Col. J.R.J. Baxter, 19/07/95.

²⁸⁸⁵ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. HQ UNPROFOR G3 Convoy Ops to UNMO Pale, 181000B Jul 95, No. 20-096/07.

²⁸⁸⁶ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87290 SRFC Belgrade, 13 March - 10 Oct 95. Fax SRFC-B to Lt-Gen. B. Janvier, 201640B Jul 95. UNPROFOR New York Box 87290 SRFC Belgrade, 13 March - 10 Oct 95.

²⁸⁸⁷ E-mail Bert Kreemers to NIOD, 23/01/02.

²⁸⁸⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33) D 83/a, Army of the Republic of Srpska General Staff to Drina Corps, 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade (for attention of the commanders), 20/07/95, No. 06/18-279.

On 21 July Dutchbat was able to leave the enclave and make its way to Zagreb. It was not Smith and Mladic who supervised the withdrawal – as had been agreed – because Smith had already left for the London conference. Nicolai did the honours. For Mladic, the departure of Dutchbat was the only occasion upon which he returned to Srebrenica.

According to Sergeant J. Zwiers, the actual departure from Bratunac was well organized by the VRS: ‘I’m sorry to say it, but the Serbs had organized it perfectly. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee couldn’t have done any better.’ The conduct of the VRS was exemplary; only some of the locals made throat-slitting gestures.²⁸⁸⁹

7. Consultations between Mladic and Nicolai on the Dutchbat equipment

Before the withdrawal, Nicolai and Mladic met in Bratunac. Mladic repeatedly made insinuations about the role that Milosevic and the Chief of Staff of the Federal Yugoslav Armed Forces Perisic had played in the Smith-Mladic agreement on the departure. A representative of Milosevic also stressed the role played by Perisic. This must have been behind the scenes because Perisic was not involved in the negotiations in Belgrade on 15 July. At the meeting Nicolai asked how much of the stolen equipment had been returned. Mladic said he did not know, and that he should ask Karremans. When Karremans arrived in Bratunac, and was asked by Nicolai if all his materiel had been returned, Karremans initially said that it had. However, he forgot the equipment that the VRS had taken when they seized the OPs.

Nicolai then asked Mladic about the state of affairs regarding the equipment the VRS had captured from Dutchbat. At this Mladic became furious and said that UNPROFOR should not think that they set the conditions; he was in charge. Given the damage that the VRS had suffered from the NATO bombings, there could be no question of returning equipment. If Nicolai wished to re-open negotiations on Dutchbat equipment, the existing agreement on Dutchbat would come adrift and the talks would have to start all over again. Mladic said that he had agreed with Janvier that the question of equipment would be addressed later. The Dutch should be glad to be leaving the enclave with the equipment that they had. Nicolai thought that Mladic was bluffing about this agreement with Janvier. When he returned to Sarajevo, Nicolai reported this to Smith; but he knew nothing of an agreement either.

At that moment, however, Nicolai did not pursue the issue further in Bratunac; it was half-past ten and the column was due to move at noon. He did not want to overplay his hand; the UN personnel had to be brought to a place of safety first. They could talk about the rest of the APCs at a later date. Shortly before the withdrawal, Mladic even asked Nicolai for a couple of Dutchbat’s medical evacuation vehicles as they would no longer be required and he (Mladic) was badly in need of them. Nicolai did not know whether Mladic was being impertinent or deliberately irksome, but he replied that there was no question of Dutchbat handing over any materiel to him.²⁸⁹⁰

An inventory taken after the departure of Dutchbat revealed that a considerable amount of equipment had been lost or had fallen into the hands of the VRS. Lost materiel could, in principle, be claimed from the UN. The list was extensive: radio and crypto equipment of the Forward Air Controllers had been destroyed upon the orders of the Air Operations Coordination Centre in Sarajevo. The other coding equipment had also been destroyed, though there was no guarantee that this had been successful in all cases. In accordance with the Geneva Convention medical supplies were not destroyed. Fourteen different tracked vehicles could not be taken along. This constituted a loss of NLG16,457,000. Among the wheeled vehicles eighteen Mercedes jeeps were lost and four trucks valued at NLG 1,880,000. Six TOW mounts, six mortars, twelve .50 and twenty three .30 machine guns and 152 rifles which Dutchbat could not take along or had gone missing earlier amounted to a loss of

²⁸⁸⁹ Interview J. Zwiers, 28/04/99.

²⁸⁹⁰ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Meeting between Gen. Nicolai and Gen. Mladic at Bratunac on 21/07/95; interview C.H. Nicolai, 09/07/99.

NLG 190,000.- for the rifles and NLG1,740,280.- for the rest. Optical equipment such as thermal-imaging/weapon sights and binoculars accounted for a loss of NLG 1,969,000. The five thermal-imaging sights actually cost over half a million guilders. Remarkably, 152 pairs of binoculars were also missing. General equipment, including aggregates, a water-treatment plant, field kitchens, tents and field mattresses, worth a total of NLG. 3,746,260, remained behind in Srebrenica. Similarly, communication equipment, satellite dishes and 102 radios of various types constituted a large loss amounting to NLG 5,004,700. In August 1995 a provisional estimate arrived at a grand total of NLG 31,182,362.²⁸⁹¹

8. The Dutchbat withdrawal as a public issue

The Dutchbat withdrawal from Srebrenica later received negative coverage in the Dutch media. The Netherlands had been supposedly very eager to get Dutchbat out; too much attention had been paid to taking along the equipment and not enough to the Displaced Persons. The reports also said that instructions for a withdrawal were drawn up in the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) in The Hague and that UNPROFOR was merely an intermediary. Earlier comments by the Foreign Ministry suggested that a rift had developed between the government departments that were most concerned with the issue.

At the end of August 1995 the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence were publicly hurling reproaches at each another about the Dutchbat withdrawal. This was to some extent due to the fact that Defence was directly responsible for the personnel, while Foreign Affairs was not, and was more concerned about the international position of the Netherlands and how it was perceived. Later, diplomats expressed doubts about the haste with which the Defence Staff wanted to pull out the blue helmets from Srebrenica. UN Ambassador Biegman said: 'It doesn't make much of an impression if you go to protect an area and your first priority is to get your people out.' The Dutch Ambassador in Belgrade is also reported to have urged that Dutchbat be kept as long as possible in Srebrenica until the International Red Cross had received permission to visit the enclave. It actually did so on 17 July but, by then, the Displaced Persons had already been deported. The diplomats were embarrassed by the conduct of the Ministry of Defence and felt that they were constantly engaged in damage limitation. At the same time, Defence was becoming increasingly irritated by Biegman's criticism: 'It's very easy to make such judgements from your armchair,' was the riposte of a Defence spokesman.²⁸⁹²

Minister Van Mierlo's response to Biegman was not exactly positive either. He said in Parliament that public officials would be well-advised to exercise caution when expressing their opinions in public, especially on matters in which they were involved in their official capacity, and this was 'certainly so' in Biegman's case. Clearly, Van Mierlo did not share Biegman's view.²⁸⁹³ In July 2000 Biegman said that he could not remember the Dutch putting pressure on New York to engineer a speedy withdrawal of Dutchbat, even though the previous passage suggests that Van Mierlo did continue to place the emphasis on this in general terms after the fall. Biegman believed that a foremost concern at The Hague was how the Netherlands would appear in the international community.²⁸⁹⁴

In an analysis of the deployment of Dutchbat in Srebrenica, dating from October 1995, Foreign Affairs presented a picture in which Defence was 'understandably' concentrating on getting the Dutch

²⁸⁹¹ SMG/1005/31. Internal memo RNLA Crisis Staff from H-DMKL-OPLOG/H G4 KL-CRST to i.a. wnd C KL-CRST and D-DMKL, 10/08/95, No. G4/95081/05; SMG/1004/77. 1 (NL/BE) UNPROFOR LOG/TBAT to G6 Crisis Staff, 181040B July 95. In February 1997 another 150 cases of Dutchbat ammunition and fifty cases of TOW missiles were found in Srebrenica. It looked as if these had been left behind after the hasty departure from the compound. There were fears that if this came to light, it would lead to negative publicity for the Netherlands Army. (MID Coll Pennin. Note HBV MID/KL to HAMID/KL, 05/02/97, No. St-28-02.97, Conf.)

²⁸⁹² 'Defensie "verbijstert" diplomaten' [Defence "confounds" diplomats], *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 29/08/95.

²⁸⁹³ TK, 1994-1995, 22 1818, No. 119.

²⁸⁹⁴ Interview N. Biegman, 03/07/00.

troops to safety and whereby Foreign Affairs had raised – ‘in good consultation’ – other factors that should play a role in the decision on a withdrawal. Examples that were cited included the fate of the men in Bratunac, the Displaced Persons and the wounded in Potocari, the local personnel, and the Dutch materiel. These considerations were then integrated in the government policy, according to Majoor, Chief of the Directorate of Atlantic Security.²⁸⁹⁵

Wijnaendts, the Dutch Ambassador in Paris, said that he had received information direct from Majoor at the Defence Crisis Management Centre on the state of affairs and it was clear to him that The Hague was concerned about the return of Dutchbat and that this took first priority. According to Wijnaendts, Van Mierlo had also more or less said this.²⁸⁹⁶ The impression emerging from this chapter is that after the fall, the return of Dutchbat was, in fact, still the main priority, figuring largely at staff level at Defence and at political level at Foreign Affairs.

The implicit separation of responsibilities between Foreign Affairs and Defence did not actually go as far as this. As reported by *NRC Handelsblad* on 30 October, staff members at the Dutch Embassy in Belgrade had argued for a later departure of Dutchbat from the enclave, until the International Red Cross had gained access to the deported Muslim males. This was a rumour that had circulated earlier, but the Dutch Embassy in Belgrade had made no such proposals. There was, in any case, no reason to do so as it had been agreed in the negotiations in Belgrade on 15 July that the International Red Cross would indeed be granted access to Srebrenica. This was again confirmed in the formalization of the agreement between Smith and Mladic on 19 July, which dated to before the Dutchbat withdrawal.²⁸⁹⁷

Judging from the standpoint adopted by the government directly after the fall, there is little evidence of a rift between the Defence Ministry and the Foreign Ministry. This standpoint was that Dutchbat did not take priority over the population. However, political correctness could have played a role in this. Leonard Ornstein reported in *Vrij Nederland* that dissension had arisen in the Ministerial Council on the question of whether priority should be accorded to the safe transfer of the Dutch troops or to the protection of the civilian population; this is not confirmed by the minutes of the Ministerial Council,²⁸⁹⁸ but these do not give a literal account of the discussions that took place. According to a Foreign Affairs Public Relations official present during the council meeting, Defence initially gave priority to its own personnel. Prime minister Kok also seemed inclined to support that vision, with Pronk supported by one or two ministers, thought differently. Van Mierlo, while sometimes on other occasions supporting Voorhoeve and giving priority to Dutchbat, took up a middle position.²⁸⁹⁹

Pronk, who was Minister of Development Cooperation at the time, described the discussions in the Ministerial Council of 11 July as ‘probing’. The discussions were subtle but, according to him, the outcome was unanimous: solidarity with the Displaced Persons and negotiations on a pull-out of Dutchbat. Pronk said that this outcome was not raised again during the later discussions on 12 and 13 July.²⁹⁰⁰ Be that as it may, it appears that in the days before and after the fall of the enclave there were differences in emphasis between the approach of Foreign Affairs and Defence.

In 1997 Westerman and Rijs published a book which contained the Sarajevo guidelines for the negotiations on the Dutchbat withdrawal. By way of elucidation the authors say: ‘Drawn up under the Ministry of Defence in The Hague on 13 July 1995, the instructions were sent from the UNPROFOR command in Sarajevo to Colonel Karremans via the Dutch General Nicolai.’ It has already been shown that this is incorrect: the instructions were drawn up in Sarajevo. But this still begs the question of how far Sarajevo anticipated the wishes of The Hague.

²⁸⁹⁵ DBZ, DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS/Yugoslavia/NATO/Coordination/July 1995-August 1996. Memorandum DAV to S via DGPZ, 16/10/95, No. DAV 95/1123.

²⁸⁹⁶ Interview H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00.

²⁸⁹⁷ DCBC, 1280. Letter PDV to Editor-in-Chief *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/11/95, No. V95020569.

²⁸⁹⁸ *Vrij Nederland*, 09/09/95. The article refers to the Ministerial Council of 11/07/95.

²⁸⁹⁹ Interview D. Hiensch, 13/07/00.

²⁹⁰⁰ Correspondence J. Pronk with NIOD, 29/05/01.

As evidence, Westerman and Rijs quoted a phrase from the letter which Karremans sent to Mladic. Karremans wrote: 'At 20.00 hrs, I did receive a message from the authorities of the Netherlands thru HQ UNPROFOR in Sarajevo concerning the evacuation of Dutchbat.' This statement raised a lot of dust, partly because a connection was laid between the text of these guidelines and the unfortunate testimony of Karremans at the Yugoslav Tribunal, where he came across as being more concerned about the Dutchbat equipment than the Muslim males. According to Westerman and Rijs, Voorhoeve appeared 'amazed' at this and omitted to mention that Karremans had followed guidelines that he himself had issued. Although the book devotes only a few sentences to this matter, they were considerably blown up because the publishers, Atlas, highlighted them in their press release under the headline: 'Dutchbat had to save equipment instead of Muslims. Voorhoeve gave orders to Karremans.'²⁹⁰¹ The latter allegation was, in any case, incorrect: the instructions did not come from The Hague via Sarajevo but from Sarajevo direct.

In January 1997 General Couzy, now retired, rekindled the debate when he responded to Westerman's challenge in the TV programme *Middageditje*: 'Let's be honest: these instructions were drawn up in The Hague' by saying that The Hague had indeed instructed Karremans to the effect of 'Get back as quickly as possible with the sick and the local UN personnel'. And that was, according to Couzy, exactly what Karremans had done. At that moment Karremans was no longer responsible for the Displaced Persons. Couzy did not believe that the command structure of the UN had been undermined, because Nicolai had issued the instructions as a UN official. 'But,' he added, 'the instructions which he issued were suspiciously similar to those that had been drawn up in The Hague.' Further questions posed to the Deputy Director of Information, Kreemers by Van Baal, who was then the Deputy Commander of the Army (as shown in Chapter 6, Couzy himself was not always directly involved in this), revealed that Sarajevo had only taken account of the Dutch wish to have Dutchbat leave for Busovaca instead of Zagreb because of the shortage of reception facilities there. Only this wish was included in the UN guidelines that Sarajevo issued to Dutchbat on 13 July. Nicolai also stated that the guidelines were drawn up under his responsibility as UNPROFOR Chief-of-Staff, and that he had informed The Hague of their content.²⁹⁰²

Nicolai told the NIOD that Couzy's memory was not entirely accurate. According to Nicolai, the instructions had been written by Colonel De Ruiter in Sarajevo, and hence under his (Nicolai's) responsibility. Nicolai had informed De Ruiter of the contents in advance. As they concerned Dutch troops, there was no point in drawing them up again in English (which did, in fact, happen). Afterwards a copy was faxed to The Hague and was almost certainly brought to Couzy's attention, but the instructions were definitely drawn up in Sarajevo. Had they been compiled in The Hague, this would have hit a sensitive chord in the UN, though Nicolai did not personally find this much of an argument. At the end of the day, the Dutchbat mission to help the Displaced Persons was not an issue; on 13 July there were no longer any Displaced Persons in the compound. However, the plight of the men in Bratunac was still uncertain: Nicolai admitted that the instructions only addressed the question of how to get the troops back in one piece. He saw this as a government matter. From this angle, the issuing of guidelines by The Hague would make sense, but, he emphasized, this was not what happened.²⁹⁰³

²⁹⁰¹ Westerman & Rijs, *Srebrenica: Het zwartste scenario*, p. 182, 225 and 248-9. Press release Uitgeverij Atlas Amsterdam, 15/01/97. Frank Westerman had already come up with a remarkable theory in *NRC Handelsblad*, this time with Harm van den Berg, on the Dutchbat departure: 'To appease him [Mladic] and especially to get out of Srebrenica, The Hague suggested that the Dutch be marched out before the Ukrainians arrived.' Aside from the question of whether the UN would have accepted a period without a UN presence in Srebrenica, whether the Ukraine would have accepted that Dutchbat did not transfer the duties and facilities and, most importantly, whether the population would have allowed a pull-out, there is no evidence that this proposal was ever mooted in The Hague. ('Het demasqué van Dutchbat' [The unmasking of Dutchbat], *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/08/95.)

²⁹⁰² BSG. *Middageditje*, 21/0197. Memo from PDV to the Minister, 21/01/97, No. V97000071.

²⁹⁰³ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 09/07/99.

De Ruiter also confirmed that the instructions were sent from Sarajevo and that he had only had contact about them with Van den Breemen and Deputy Chief of Operations Hilderink. Minister Voorhoeve had not interfered. The initiative for the contact came from Sarajevo. The Dutch had expressed their concern for the UN personnel, the wounded and the British JCOs and the route was discussed whereby the preference had fallen on Busovaca.

De Ruiter denied that Sarajevo had acted as a *poste restant* for the Dutch; this was also clear from the differences of opinion regarding the Dutchbat equipment. The issue was discussed verbally and there was no question of instructions from The Hague. To avoid language problems and to ensure optimal clarity De Ruiter had written the fax in Dutch and signed it, because there were no reasons to wait for Nicolai. They had already discussed the contents in detail. Once the instructions had been properly fleshed out the Displaced Persons were already gone.

According to De Ruiter, the first contact on this matter was not with The Hague, but with the Contingent Commander, Colonel Verschraegen, in Sarajevo. Verschraegen had said that the preference was to transfer Dutchbat to Busovaca and that De Ruiter should prepare himself accordingly. Verschraegen had had earlier contact with the Netherlands on the matter, partly because the headquarters in Sarajevo had been taken over in connection with the problems surrounding Zepa and the reception of the Displaced Persons. The transportation of the units from the operational zone was a national matter and the responsibility of the contingent commander. This was precisely the reason why Verschraegen had been sent to Bosnia.²⁹⁰⁴

9. Conclusion

Before the fall of the enclave and immediately thereafter, considerable attention was paid to the possibilities of a Dutchbat withdrawal. This was not only true of The Hague. Both the acting UNPROFOR Commander in Sarajevo, Gobilliard, and Force Commander Janvier were considering the options. It was obvious from the start that this question had to be settled through negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs. The implementation of the NATO withdrawal plan was not a ready solution. Not only would it take days for the required troops to come into action, there were also some political and military-technical hurdles that needed to be cleared before the plans could be realized. Practically speaking, NATO intervention was a non-starter.

Initially, Karremans was alone in the task of negotiating with the VRS in the person of Mladic, because the Bosnian Serbs categorically refused to admit a negotiator from Zagreb or Sarajevo and UNPROFOR did not wish to force the issue. Karremans and Mladic did not, however, negotiate on a departure of Dutchbat. Instructions from Sarajevo on the departure led only to a written exchange of standpoints between the two men. On 15 July, at the instigation of the UN in New York, negotiations took place at the highest political level in Belgrade on the withdrawal of Dutchbat. These eventually delivered results.

There are no grounds to support the claim that the guidelines for Karremans' negotiations with Mladic were dictated by The Hague. The actual negotiations on the Dutchbat withdrawal were conducted in Belgrade and The Hague was not involved. The only point that The Hague pressed was a transfer to Busovaca instead of Zagreb, but this encountered serious and – under the circumstances – practical objections from Karremans. It later came to light that there were also objections to a reception in Zagreb because it was in the media spotlight.

Similarly, there is no hard evidence to suggest that the Dutch were inordinately concerned about the return of the Dutchbat equipment. This wish did exist, but a safe return of the Dutchbat soldiers was deemed more important. It was UNPROFOR that made a point of taking along the

²⁹⁰⁴ Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00; NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Letter Col J.A.C. de Ruiter to Cdre. Hilderink (personal copy to C-in-C RNLA, 23/01/97.

equipment. The reason why the Netherlands did not get back all the equipment confiscated by the VRS was because Mladic failed to honour his part of the bargain reached in Belgrade.

The Hague was involved to some extent in the departure of Dutchbat. This was not exceptional for a troop-contributing nation. It was no different in the case of the withdrawal of Dutchbat I and II, because administrative rather than operational arrangements were involved. The situation of Dutchbat III was certainly exceptional and could not have been foreseen.

A complicating factor that soon emerged with regard to the Dutchbat departure was the fate of the population. However, the decision-makers still gave priority to getting Dutchbat out of Srebrenica as quickly as possible. This was partly motivated by a need to prevent the Bosnian Serbs from taking the battalion hostage; this would have been extremely unfortunate if the VRS started advancing on Zepa and Gorazde. Akashi had to concede his point that governments of the troops in Zepa and Gorazde might also want to pull out if Dutchbat did not stay. Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen together with the Deputy Commander of the Army Van Baal did convey to Force Commander Janvier that the Dutch wanted Dutchbat to leave at the earliest opportunity, but by then Akashi and Janvier had reached the conclusion that there was no other alternative than to instruct Dutchbat to stay in the enclave. All they could then do was to show understanding for the situation. By then Voorhoeve had realized, like Foreign Affairs, that the Netherlands would cut a poor figure if the battalion were perceived as having abandoned the population.

Hence, the departure of Dutchbat quickly became subordinate to the humanitarian mission. The circumstances forced Akashi, Janvier, Voorhoeve, the Defence Staff and also the MPs to change their standpoint: they laid a link between the Dutchbat departure and the Displaced Persons. On 10 July Voorhoeve had pushed for the departure of the battalion and Van Mierlo had emphasized that it could not simply get up and leave; after the fall of the enclave their standpoints on this matter seemed to cross. The official government position was still that though care for the population was desirable, Dutchbat was soon no longer able to provide it: after 13 July, there were no more Displaced Persons in the compound. There were certainly indications that the Muslim males had been deported to Bratunac, but as this was out of Dutchbat's reach, attention turned quickly to organizing the departure of the battalion. The agreement reached by Smith and Mladic on 15 July formed a key stimulus here.

The Ministerial Council was concerned about the consequences of the fall, and feared ethnic cleansing, mass murder and gender-based segregation. These concerns were not made public and resulted only in politically correct statements on the importance of Dutchbat's humanitarian mission and solidarity with the population. The only concrete response from the Government was a call for an emergency session of the Security Council and diplomatic efforts on Dutchbat's behalf; it undertook no political initiatives on the international stage. On the other hand, the UN, the USA and several European nations were only too aware of the meaning of ethnic cleansing. Though it came as no surprise to them that it had taken place, they were shocked by the scale at which it had been carried out. But this could not have been foreseen at that moment in time.

Summarizing, it could be said that the persons and organizations that were most involved had to choose between two deeply felt convictions (a) to get Dutchbat home quickly and safely and (b) to protect the people who had flowed through to Potocari for as long as the Bosnian Serbs were in the vicinity. The balance between the two choices shifted for each person and institution through time, but they eventually became reconciled: it soon emerged that Dutchbat could not leave Potocari as long as some of the population were still there.

Part IV

The repercussion and the aftermath until the end of 1995

Chapter 1

The journey from Srebrenica to Tuzla

1. Introduction

The population of Srebrenica, numbering roughly 40,000 at the time of the enclave's fall, was already on the move on 10 and 11 July. The people were heading for the Dutchbat compound and for an assembly point in the north-western corner of the enclave. Meanwhile the VRS offensive continued unabated, eventually resulting in the Bosnian Serb occupation of much of the enclave. This marked the beginning of a period in which the people of Srebrenica, and the men in particular, would be subjected to horrors of unparalleled atrocity. In a mass exodus, a large group of the men attempted to flee the VRS and to reach the safe territory of the Muslim-Croat Federation. To do so they had to cross an area in the hands of the Republika Srpska. Those who surrendered or otherwise fell into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs became the victims of mass executions, as described in the following chapter.

Over the years, many versions of the march from Srebrenica and the circumstances by which it was prompted have been given, leading to some confusion regarding exactly where the truth lies. This report attempts to relate the events as dispassionately as possible, reconstructing the chronology of events in as far as this can be ascertained. The recollections of a few survivors are included to provide some insight into the emotions which prevailed at the time.

However, it is far from easy to offer an accurate reconstruction of the journey to Tuzla. The existing source material allows the route to be ascertained, and provides some information regarding the decision to set out on the march with the column as well as some information regarding the VRS actions against the Muslim men. The locations of conflicts between the column and the VRS can also be ascertained with reasonable accuracy, enabling us to pinpoint where victims fell.

Far less is known about the internal dynamics of the column, in terms of the communication between the various sections (becoming more spread out as the column progressed), how decisions were taken, the effects of disagreement and internal fighting, and the fate which befell the groups which remained behind. It has proven particularly difficult to ascertain exactly *when* certain events took place, people's sense of time being less developed than that of location. This is clearly demonstrated by the various witness statements.

There are no diaries or journals to provide any *aide-mémoire*. The column, some kilometres in length, became increasingly spread out as it progressed and it is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether the events described took place at the fore, middle or rear. There are no reliable statistics regarding the numbers of victims or the number of people who actually reached Tuzla or when they arrived.¹ Existing reports and studies tend to concentrate on the number of missing people, omitting to state how many people arrived safely in Tuzla.²

We can distinguish two main groups of refugees. First, there was that comprising mostly of elderly people, women and children who assembled at the UN compound in Potocari under the supervision of Dutchbat. Second, there was a group which assembled near the village of Jaglici in the north-western part of the enclave and at Susjnari slightly to the south, with the intent of fleeing to Bosnian territory. This group, estimated to be between 10,000 and 15,000 strong, included enlisted military personnel, able-bodied men of military age, the political leaders of the enclave, the medical staff of the local hospital and family members of those who had played some prominent part in life within the enclave. They set out from the north-western corner of the enclave with the intention of reaching on foot the area controlled by the Bosnian government.

¹ Hren, *Srebrenica: Het verhaal van de overlevenden* (Srebrenica: the survivors' story), p. 23.

² See e.g. Report of the Secretary General submitted pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1010 (1995), 30/08/95, No. S/1995/755.

A third and somewhat smaller group of refugees attempted to escape into Serbia via Mount Kvarac via Bratunac, or across the River Drina and via Bajina Basta. According to the Humanitarian Law Centre in Belgrade, this group numbered some 700,³ although the organization Women of Srebrenica estimated that approximately 800 men had crossed the Drina on the way to Serbia. It is not known how many were intercepted, arrested and killed on the way.

In April 1996, the Serbian authorities handed 211 persons over to their Bosnian counterparts.⁴ Most of these refugees did not wish to return to Bosnia as they expected to experience difficulties when asked to explain why they had chosen to flee to Serbia in the first place. They therefore proceeded to other countries.⁵

A fourth group headed for Zepa, possibly having first tried to reach Tuzla.⁶ The size of this group is not known. Furthermore, not all the names of those who actually reached Zepa were recorded. The estimates of the numbers involved therefore vary widely, from 300 to around 850. The only firm figures in existence are provided by a report stating that 25 civilians arrived in Zepa on 16 July along with 82 soldiers of the 28th Division. (The Commander, Ejub Golic, was not among them).⁷ Chapter 9 of this part will describe how those who managed to reach Zepa were again forced to flee at the end of July, when the population had to leave the Safe Area due to the continued VRS offensive. At this time, many of the military and civilian personnel fled - with the assistance of the Serbian authorities - across the Drina or followed more or less the same route to Tuzla as had previously been taken by the men from Srebrenica. Some arrived only months later.

By far the largest group was that which followed the notorious route towards Tuzla through the forests and mountains. The journey to Tuzla - a distance of 55 kilometres as the crow flies- entailed crossing extremely hilly terrain in the height of the summer heat. The progress of the column which set out from Srebrenica is charted on the map added to this part. The locations of the events described in the text are indicated using the figures 01 to 16.

The largest group to complete the journey safely did so in five days, their progress marked by continual skirmishes with the VRS, severe shortages of food and water, and the general exhaustion of all concerned. The column was completely cut off from all food supplies. In general, each individual had started out with enough rations for only two days, everyone having a just little bread and sugar. Shortages began to become apparent on the third day, whereupon the people had to turn to leaves, grass and snails for sustenance.⁸ Alongside under-nourishment, the high summer temperatures caused dehydration. Finding sources of drinking water or moisture became a major problem, solved in part by eating any fruit which could be found along the way. The terrain over which the route passed was inhospitable and densely wooded. Much was at high altitude. For water, the people had to descend into the valleys and the water was not always clean. The enormous difficulties caused by hunger and thirst were further compounded by lack of sleep and the sheer effort required. This was a physically exhausting undertaking. Soon after setting out, the men faced a choice between acceding to the VRS call to give themselves up or carrying on. The latter option would inevitably entail ongoing armed conflict with the VRS which would in turn bring much death and destruction. Some people began to show symptoms of severe mental distress. Some turned on others, killing them outright. Others committed suicide.

There was little cohesion or sense of common purpose in the column. This would have been difficult to achieve given that the string of people stretched back several kilometres. Depending on the situation at any given moment, the column could be anything between five and ten kilometres in length.

³ Interview Natasa Kandic, 14/03/00.

⁴ Hren, *Srebrenica: het verhaal van de overlevenden*, p. 23-4. See also Masic, *Srebrenica*.

⁵ Interview Natasa Kandic, 14/03/00.

⁶ Interview Hazrudin Kistic, 17 and 18/05/99.

⁷ [Http://serbianlinks.freehosting.net/srebrenica.html](http://serbianlinks.freehosting.net/srebrenica.html) consulted 29/04/99, referring to a message sent by Major Ramo Cardakovic to the ABiH 2nd Corps on 22/07/95 at 2.20pm. Also interview Muhamed Durakovic, 22/11/99.

⁸ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

This made it a particularly easy target for the VRS and contributed much to a gnawing sense of uncertainty regarding the fate of friends and family elsewhere in the column. This uncertainty gave rise to much speculation, such as rumours that poison gas had been used. (The question of whether the VRS had indeed used chemical weapons is examined in the Appendix ‘Chemical weapons used?’) There were also rumours that the people captured by the VRS had managed to buy their freedom by offering the Bosnian Serbs money.

Many people in the column had been exhausted even before setting out on the march, following the siege of Srebrenica, the fighting with the VRS, the lack of food and the arduous conditions in general. The vast majority of the people from Srebrenica later reported as missing were among the 10,000 to 15,000 people who undertook this perilous journey. Some six thousand were active military personnel, although not all were armed at the time. With such a large proportion of troops in the column, it be claimed that it formed a legitimate military target for the VRS. Indeed, during the trial of the Drina Corps’ Chief-of-Staff, General Radislav Krstic, the military advisors to both the prosecution and the defence agreed on this point, and the Tribunal chose not to consider it further, nor whether there had been any breach of the law of war in this regard.⁹ The charges against Krstic did not therefore include that of deliberate hostilities on the part of the VRS against the civilian personnel of the column. However, it is certain that VRS action contributed greatly to the extremely tragic series of events affecting this group of people.

The sources and reference material for this chapter of the report have been derived from both sides, but mostly from the archives kept by the Bosnian Muslims. The majority of the Bosnian witness statements are taken from the records of the ‘state Commission for the Collection of Information on War Crimes Committed in Bosnia-Herzegovina’, based in Sarajevo. In order to ensure the anonymity of the witnesses concerned, their statements are not annotated in this report. The NIOD has been able to supplement the information previously available with that gained through interviews with those involved in the events described.

The General Staff of the ABiH provided the NIOD access to certain documents, including transcripts of intercepted telephone conversations held between VRS personnel and several orders and situation reports from their archive. To date, the ABiH has made little attempt to chronicle the relevant events in a structured manner.

The time of departure and the route adopted by the column were both contrary to the instructions of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH and were therefore construed as a sign of deliberate disobedience. The members of the 28th Division who survived the journey felt betrayed by their own army, pointing to the extremely limited support they had received. This may have resulted in the exact motives for the action on the part of the Bosnians having been ignored. Although a few ABiH officers were debriefed by the 2nd Corps upon arrival in Tuzla,¹⁰ only one debriefing report has been found among the records of the 2nd Corps itself. This is actually a supplement to an earlier debriefing of the Deputy Commander of the ABiH’s 28th Division, Ramiz Becirovic.¹¹ The General Staff of the ABiH in Sarajevo have another- undated - document which may have been the result of a debriefing. However, it is very limited in scope and its focus is on the situation prior to the fall of Srebrenica and the subsequent executions rather than on the journey to Tuzla itself.¹² The material derived from the ABiH archives must be approached with a certain degree of caution in that the selection was made by persons other than the authors of this report. A further source of information is provided by certain trial documents used in the case against the Chief of Staff and later Commander of the Drina Corps, General Radislav Krstic. These are documents which originally derive from the VRS Drina Corps and from the VRS General Staff. The material from the VRS archives consists partly of documents seized

⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33) Exh. D160, Radinovic Report, § 3.25, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 163.

¹⁰ Interview Smail Mandzic, 18/05/99.

¹¹ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps. Supplementary statement by Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement on 11/08/95.

¹² ABiH Sarajevo, ‘Arnautovic Archive’.

from the A BiH and partly from material acquired specifically for the purposes of the Tribunal. Here too, there is a danger of the selection being too restrictive.

In Bosnia, the fall of Srebrenica resulted in a constant stream of publications in local daily and weekly press reports, in anthologies of such reports, of eye witness accounts and full-length treatments of the conflict. An important work for the Dutch-speaking region is the anthology *Srebrenica: 'Het verhaal van de overlevenden'* (Srebrenica: the survivors' story).¹³ The only work published in Bosnia itself to make use of the A BiH records is *'Otpjecaceni koverat'*, a book by the journalist Sefko Hodzic, who was given access to a limited number of A BiH documents. While the NIOD has enjoyed access to a rather larger range of documents, Hodzic nevertheless provides some important supplementary information. Where relevant, the content of the documents consulted and interviews conducted by Hodzic has been incorporated into this report verbatim (in translation). Of the other publications about Srebrenica, such as those by David Rohde, Chuck Sudetic, Both & Honig and Westerman & Rijs, only Rohde briefly mentions the journey to Tuzla.¹⁴

Some of the source material requires some comment. The statements made by survivors were taken within two or three days of their arrival in Tuzla by the 'state Commission for the collection of information concerning war crimes committed in Bosnia-Herzegovina'. These statements, 184 in all, often give contradictory accounts of the events. Most of those questioned were still disoriented at the time, confused with regard to the exact location of the events (i.e. unable to provide any geographic indicators) and lacking a focused sense of time. Few people seemed to have had the same experiences. Moreover, almost every statement contains information which was based on rumour and speculation rather than on personal observation. This is certainly the case with regard to the alleged use of chemical weapons by the VRS (examined in greater detail in the Appendix 'Chemical weapons used?'), the alleged infiltration of VRS soldiers in civilian clothes into the column, and the 'infighting' within the column itself.

On numerous occasions during the interviews, the survivors proved to be extremely reticent and cautious in their descriptions of the events and in offering any sort of comment. The horrors of the journey and their experiences en route had served to traumatize many. Witnesses often felt both bitter and guilty: in their own perception they had failed as soldiers. Their statements often emphasize the fact that they were the very last to leave their posts and to abandon the enclave. The bitterness reflects the view that neither the A BiH, the political authorities of Bosnia-Herzegovina or the UN took any action to protect the enclave or rescue its inhabitants.

There is a further circumstance which complicates the survivors' statements. During their three-and-a-half years in the Safe Area, they lived in almost complete isolation from the outside world, completely reliant on each other. The dramatic journey highlighted this reliance yet further. Although they were spread out over some distance, most travelled in groups. Many of the survivors, both those who later remained in Bosnia and those who have since been granted asylum in other countries, still live in these groups. Their experiences during the journey were regarded in the group context and the process of dealing with the psychological effects of the experiences has also been marked by the group context. Accordingly, not all elements of personal recollection are necessarily based on personal observation. There can be said to be an 'authorized version' of the account of the journey.

To summarize, we can therefore state that a relatively large quantity of material concerning the journey to Tuzla is available, but that this information is extremely fragmented and is based on individual accounts. There can be no general, all-embracing overview. This makes it particularly difficult to reconstruct the journey as a whole, particularly when considering the various factors that caused the column to split up at a relatively early stage. Experiences differed. The ongoing fear and sense of insecurity, the loss of family members, the apparent proximity of death and the sense of helplessness felt by the people may have influenced their perception. Memories may have been corrupted by

¹³ Hren, *Srebrenica: Het verhaal van de overlevenden* (Srebrenica: the survivors' story), passim.

¹⁴ See the Bibliography and References section for further details.

information gained since. There was great confusion even before setting out for Tuzla and this certainly did not diminish as the column progressed. However, there is no reason to cast doubt on the veracity of the witness accounts recalling the many traumatic events they faced. The differences are largely in the details.

2. 11 July, Day one: events leading up to the departure

The commanders of the various ABiH brigades and the other senior figures did not arrive at any coordinated decision to leave the enclave. This again illustrates the lack of any central leadership and the chaos that existed on 11 July. The morale of the ABiH had already suffered a serious dent; following the departure of Naser Oric it became more difficult for the brigade commanders to exercise central leadership. There was little unity of purpose between the civilian local government and the military command. It would have been preferable for decisions regarding the route and the organization of the column to have been taken unilaterally by the military, rather than becoming the subject of time-consuming democratic debate. In fact, there was no clear decision-making procedure of any kind - military or civil - and the ABiH's lines of communication were inadequate to allow the units lower down the chain of command to be informed about decisions in an effective manner.

Under the pressure of the VRS offensive, the 28th Division of the ABiH abandoned its last positions during the course of 11 July. Word spread that the men were expected to assemble in the north-western part of the enclave, and the commanding officers issued orders to this effect too.¹⁵ That the men proceeded to the woodlands in the north-west of the enclave was therefore not a premeditated, strategic movement, but one which took place more or less spontaneously.¹⁶ In many instances, the orders to move to the assembly point were based on impromptu decisions.¹⁷ The choice of assembly point was pretty much limited to Susnjari or Jaglici, since the ABiH defence lines to the east of Srebrenica had already been abandoned. Susnjari was outside the VRS field of vision.¹⁸

It may therefore be concluded that there were no pre-existing instructions for the evacuation of the men, nor any plan regarding the route to be followed.¹⁹ Many people had no idea of what was happening. The only thing that appeared to be reasonably certain is that the enclave was about to fall to the enemy and that the population must leave as soon as possible. Originally, the intention may even have been for the women and children to assemble in Susnjari as well, whereupon everyone would proceed to Tuzla together. No suggestion that Dutchbat troops would accompany the column was ever made.²⁰

It took practically all day on 11 July for the men to assemble. At approximately 11 hours, the Commander of the 282nd Brigade of the ABiH, Ibro Dudic, reported that his unit, which had been in the main line of VRS fire in the south of the enclave, was now retreating and could no longer offer any resistance. At around the same time, the headquarters of the 28th Division moved from its 'hunting lodge' location to the Post Office building in the town centre of Srebrenica.²¹

Shortly thereafter, while Ramiz Becirovic, the Commander of the 28th Division, was in the B Company compound in Srebrenica to discuss the evacuation of the local hospital, the political and military leaders of the enclave moved northwards to the village of Kutlici, on Mount Viogor, one kilometre to the west of the compound in the town of Srebrenica. This was a central point in the enclave: it concerned the presidency of Srebrenica as well as the headquarters of the Brigade Commanders of the 28th Division and the chief of police. In other words, this was where the most

¹⁵ Interview Omer Subasic, 19/10 and 20/10/97.

¹⁶ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

¹⁷ Interviews Damir Skaler and Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

¹⁸ Interview Sadik Vilic, 15/04/99.

¹⁹ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

²⁰ Confidential interview (55).

²¹ Interview Omer Subasic, 19/10 and 20/10/97.

prominent and influential people in the enclave were to be found. Such people included Zulfo Tursunovic, Commander of the 281st Brigade, Vejs Sabic, Commander of the 284th Brigade, Ibrahim Mandzic, Commander of the 280th Brigade, Ibro Dudic, Commander of the 282nd Brigade, Ejub Golic, Commander of the Independent Battalion, Nedzad Bektic, Head of Security for the 28th Division, Hakija Meholic the Chief of Police, Hamdija Fejzic, Deputy Mayor, and the other members of the local Opstina (council). It was here that the decision to leave the enclave was taken at approximately 15.00 hours, without the knowledge of Ramiz Becirovic. However, it was around midnight before the first group actually set out.²²

When Ramiz Becirovic returned from the B Company compound at 15.30 hours, he was surprised to find the Post Office building which served as his headquarters totally deserted. Near the building he met someone from the 28th Division who informed him that the staff and signals unit of his division had moved north and were now to be found on Mount Viogor.

When Becirovic heard that Tursunovic's 281st Brigade was still offering active and successful resistance at Bucje on the southern fringe of the enclave, he began to make plans for a counteroffensive. An idea emerged by which the VRS troops in Srebrenica would be surrounded and an attack would be carried out that same night. However, on the way to join the rest of the 281st Brigade, Becirovic met some soldiers who informed him that their Commander Tursunovic had since ordered them to leave their forward defence positions and proceed to Susnjari. The civilian population had been told to leave for the Dutchbat compound in Potocari.

On the morning of 11 July, the personnel of the 281st Brigade were already considering breaking out of the enclave and trying to reach Tuzla. However, the Brigade Commander Zulfo Tursunovic wished to return for one last 'showdown' with the VRS. Tursunovic may have been the only person against leaving the enclave at this time, believing as he did that it was possible to hold out for a little longer. Others managed to persuade him to leave.²³ Knowing that Ejub Golic's units still occupied positions to the north of the Srebrenica hospital, and that (according to other officers) the majority of the population was now in Potocari, it was generally thought that any active resistance would not be in the people's best interests. Everyone left for Susnjari where the process of grouping continued until 01.30 hours on 12 July. On the way, Tursunovic's party met a group of women and children at Brezova Njiva. These were going to Potocari. There were many harrowing scenes as people there were forced to say their farewells to each other in extreme haste.²⁴

Becirovic was surprised by Tursunovic's decision not to undertake any further fighting with the VRS. He proceeded on horseback to Susnjari, where he joined the 28th Division, here in almost full strength, at about 16.00 hours. By this time the situation was very much a fait accompli: the orders to withdraw from the enclave had already been issued and could not be rescinded. According to Becirovic, Tursunovic told him the decision to leave en masse would not have been made if a courier had been sent earlier with details of his plan for the counter-offensive. However, once the VRS troops had reached the centre of Srebrenica at around 16.00 hours, all brigade commanders ordered their men to proceed at once to Susnjari, being the only area still under the control of the 28th Division.²⁵

That same afternoon, Dutchbat had left the area around Susnjari, in which OP-M had been located till then. According to a soldier of the ABiH's 284th Brigade, originally from Jaglici, the Dutchbat crew whom he met during the VRS attack were afraid. When OP-M was abandoned, the men left equipment behind and the ABiH men in the area were offered weapons. According to the same soldier, the ABiH turned this offer down for fear that they would later be accused of seizing the weapons. (See also Part III, Chapter 6, section 23)

This soldier surveyed the chaotic scene from a mountain top close to his home. People were converging on Susnjari from every direction, while the local population were clearly wondering why

²² Interviews by Makar with Vejs Sabic (December 2000) and Ramiz Becirovic, 02/02 and 05/02/98.

²³ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjecaceni koverat*, pp. 268-269.

²⁴ Confidential interview (51).

²⁵ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjecaceni koverat*, pp. 268-269.

these people were coming here. He saw an APC with the men of OP-M departing for Potocari. The people coming the other way - from Potocari to Susnjari - were thrown into confusion because they thought that the VRS was now also attacking from the west. Many turned around and headed back to Potocari. The 284th Brigade was among the last to receive radio orders to assemble. It was gone 22.00 hours before the unit began to regroup close to Alija Ademovic's house in Susnjari. There was absolute chaos and a state of panic. Encroaching darkness meant that little of what was going on in the area could be seen clearly. Everyone had his or her own ideas; no one had a megaphone with which to issue orders and keep the crowd in some form of order.²⁶

The Deputy Mayor, Hamdija Fejzic, also noticed the chaos: people had brought horses and cows, no one knew what to do and no one was listening. Fejzic arrived in the woods at Susnjari shortly before night fell.²⁷ It was practically impossible to create any form of order here. The people were in a state of panic and shots were being fired.²⁸ The VRS was using rocket launchers and 32 of its projectiles landed in the area around Susnjari. There were no direct casualties, although one woman died of a heart attack.²⁹ One group wanted to leave Susnjari for the UN compound in Potocari, but the majority, believing that the UN would not offer them any protection, preferred to remain where they were.³⁰

It was decided that all those able to do so should head for the mountains, while the remainder would go to Potocari.³¹ Civilians could decide for themselves whether to join the group going up into the mountains or whether to go to Potocari. The military personnel were allowed to make individual decisions too.³² Everyone therefore had a free choice between heading for Tuzla or going to Potocari. The 'War President' of the *Opština*, Osman Suljic, later said that if anyone had asked him what to do, he would have advised making the journey across the mountains.³³

3. The motives for the flight

Many of the people who took part in the exodus and who were later interviewed stated that their reason for fleeing the area was fear of reprisals by the VRS, although they did not explicitly refer to the events prior to the establishment of the Safe Area or the later activities beyond the boundaries of the enclave. Some cited doubt concerning the ability of Dutchbat to offer them adequate protection. The general opinion seemed to have been that Dutchbat neither intended to nor was able to defend the enclave. On this point, the statements are unanimous: flight offered the only hope of survival. 'Had we fallen into the hands of the Cetniks, we would have been killed on the spot. Leaving gave us a chance. We knew what to expect if they caught us.' According to witness statements, most of the men were convinced that they should flee before the VRS managed to enter the enclave. Few if any believed that the VRS would offer a chance of survival or allow them to leave later without any reprisals.

'Few if any believed that there would be any exchange of prisoners of war. If a member of the ABiH fell into the hands of the VRS there was a very high probability that he would be killed. Knowing this, most thought it wise to flee the area. The people did not therefore leave the enclave on the basis of any concrete warning of what would happen but on the basis of experiences of events elsewhere.³⁴ For example, the fact that 762 Muslims had been killed in Zvornik on 1 June 1992 left little doubt as to what would happen if men of military age fell into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. A similar massacre had taken place in Cerska on 9 September 1992, when a group of 6000 refugees from Konjevic Polje,

²⁶ Confidential interview (55).

²⁷ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

²⁸ Interview Osman Suljic, Tuzla, 04/03/98.

²⁹ Confidential interview (55).

³⁰ Interview Hakija Meholjic, 02/02/98, with further information on 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

³¹ Interview Sadik Vilic, 15/04/99.

³² ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps. Supplementary statement by Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement of 11/08/95.

³³ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

³⁴ Interview Semsudin Muminovic, 17/05/99.

Cerska and Kamenica tried to reach Tuzla. The VRS had laid ambushes and opened fire on the column, killing many and taking hundreds of prisoners.³⁵ Some 500 people were killed close to Snagovo, as the moving column came under fire from artillery and aircraft. Human remains were still to be seen as the column of July 1995 passed on its way to Tuzla. Most refugees were forced to return to Cerska, later arriving in Srebrenica where they recounted their experiences. It was also clear that the VRS wanted to take revenge for the murders of 1992 and 1993 by Muslims in Serb villages. Almost everyone in the column going to Tuzla would have taken this into account.³⁶

The pessimism was not universal, however, in that some hoped and believed that the VRS would be willing to leave a corridor open through which the column would be able to proceed to Tuzla without hindrance. The reasoning was that the Bosnian Serbs' primary objective was the territory itself rather than the killing of the men. However, there were only rumours concerning the existence of a corridor; there was never any actual information.³⁷ The topic was regularly raised. Indeed, it had been mentioned in previous years, but the idea of safe passage for the entire population had met resistance from the Bosnian Government. For the Bosnian Serbs, the corridor was a useful element in their psychological warfare against the citizens of Srebrenica. The most cogent example of this was the broadcasts made by Radio Bratunac between 10 and 20 July 1995, calling on the people of the enclave to leave and proceed into the territory of the Muslim-Croat Federation of their own volition. These broadcasts explicitly stated that the VRS would open up a corridor to allow all citizens (including military personnel unless guilty of 'war crimes') free passage. Apparently, these broadcasts led to it being rumoured throughout Srebrenica that the VRS would indeed open up such a corridor.³⁸ Even ABiH officers stated that this would be the case.³⁹ Military personnel therefore accepted the rumour as true. However, there were no orders from the *Opstina* and the usual couriers on horseback brought no information.⁴⁰

Some people did not expect there to be any announcement by the authorities and tried to organize something themselves, hoping to set out for Tuzla without attracting attention or confrontation.⁴¹ So it was that some broke out of the enclave as early as 10th July. This was strictly against orders and any military personnel involved were then regarded as deserters.⁴² Many were incensed that such groups had simply walked out of the enclave having hired a local guide from Konjevic Polje or Cerska.⁴³

However, the VRS did not open a corridor after 11 July. The men's departure came as a surprise to the Bosnian Serbs too. During his discussions in the Hotel Fontana on 11 and 12 July, Mladic had tried to force the surrender of the ABiH but failed due to the unexpected flight of the men. The Bosnian Serbs had not expected the Muslim men to leave the women behind. It was traditional for them to remain together. Without the women, there was little left to fight for. Furthermore, it would have been more usual for the civilian population to leave followed by the military, not the other way around.⁴⁴

Later, the Bosnian Muslims construed the fact that no corridor had been opened as evidence of the Bosnian Serbs' intent to kill. That ambushes had been laid even before the column arrived in the area was seen as yet another indication that the VRS planned to dispose of the men once and for all. The VRS would have expected the column to proceed to Tuzla via Kladanj, Palogi, Baljkovica, Barasinovac and Mehmedici. A second, alternative route would have passed through Spidanska Stena

³⁵ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 81.

³⁶ Confidential interview (55).

³⁷ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97 and Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

³⁸ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

³⁹ Interview Omer Subasic, 19 and 20/10/97.

⁴⁰ Confidential interview (55).

⁴¹ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

⁴² Interviews Damir Skaler and Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

⁴³ Interviews Damir Skaler and Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

⁴⁴ Interview Manojlo Milovanovic, 18/10/98.

and then on to Zepa. According to the ABiH, the VRS prepared accordingly, laying mines along the entire route in advance, even before the column had left the enclave.⁴⁵ However, there is no evidence to support this view. The VRS did not lay any ambushes or obstacles in advance for the simple reason that they did not foresee any breakout from the enclave. There are no indications that the VRS prepared in any way for the breakout or that they knew anything about it until the column was well under way. The ambushes were laid later and, according to an ABiH soldier who came from the area, the mines around Buljin which proved to be such a major obstacle had been there for some time.⁴⁶

4. The night of 11 and 12 July: attempts to coordinate efforts

As said, the central assembly point was Susnjari, a village on the edge of the upland plains of Buljin. Estimates of the number of people who arrived here on the afternoon and evening of 11 July 1995 vary widely, but are often between 10,000 and 15,000 men together with a small number of women. Osman Suljic and Hakija Meholjic put the number at 12,000 to 13,000 men.⁴⁷ However, there are no precise figures. According to its Commander, Ramiz Becirovic, the strength of the 28th Division at the time of the VRS attack was approximately 6500, in five brigades and one battalion. Each brigade had some 200 to 300 firearms, mostly rifles, and each soldier had two sets of ammunition (*borbeni komplet*). The remainder of the troops were unarmed and it was among this group that the greatest number of casualties fell. Among those who opted to join the march to Tuzla were about ten women who were on the medical staff and an unknown number of women who did not wish to go to Potocari. These included the Commanders' wives and Naser Oric's mother.⁴⁸ There were also a number of women with children, together with a number of boys aged between 12 and 17, most of whom were going with their fathers because they were afraid to remain behind in Srebrenica.⁴⁹ Finally, the group included a number of men over the age of 60.⁵⁰

It is far from clear how decisions regarding the route and the time of departure were made. It is also unclear whether the departure had been approved by the authorities in Sarajevo and Tuzla. The *Opština* President Osman Suljic later stated that there had been contact with various people in Sarajevo that evening, most notably with Prime Minister Silajdic and President Izetbegovic, both of whom had urged the men to fight 'to the last bullet' but had offered no actual support in doing so.⁵¹ At this time, the 28th Division still had use of a radio. Becirovic's final radio communication with his contact person in Tuzla, the 2nd Corps' Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Sulejman Budakovic, was made between 01.00 and 04.00 hours. Becirovic told Budakovic that the best solution would be a breakout. Indeed, in his view it was the only solution. For many of the men, morale had reached a low point; they were physically exhausted and merely wanted to get out of the enclave come what may. Budakovic was of the opinion that in doing so the group would expose themselves to an even greater risk than if they were to stay where they were. Although they would be more visible during the hours of daylight, he considered it better to wait until then before departing because it would not be possible to cover much distance in what remained of the night.

Becirovic wanted to set out at once. Budakovic then wanted to know what route the column would be taking, so that he would know where it could be expected. Becirovic stated that the route would pass through Udrc and then probably on to Baljkovica. Budakovic did not consider this to be a

⁴⁵ Interview Semsudin Muminovic, 17/05/99.

⁴⁶ Confidential interview (55).

⁴⁷ Interviews Osman Suljic, 04/03/98; Hakija Meholjic, 02/02/98 with additional information supplied on 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

⁴⁸ Interviews Damir Skaler and Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

⁴⁹ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, unnumbered. Supplementary statement by Ramiz Becirovic (b. 1956), 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement of 11/08/95.

⁵⁰ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, unnumbered. Supplementary statement by Ramiz Becirovic (b. 1956), 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement of 11/08/95.

⁵¹ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

sound plan. Again, he called for the group to remain where it was until morning when the most appropriate solution could be found. During this conversation, Budakovic further stated that a UN team was on its way from Tuzla to Bratunac, to provide assistance to the people who had assembled in Potocari. (In fact, the Bosnian Serbs would not permit the team to pass.) He added that a solution would also be found for the presence of the ABiH troops (which did not prove to be the case). The conversation between Becirovic and Budakovic did not arrive at any alternative decision. The signals personnel in Tuzla allocated a radio frequency on which the column could report its progress.⁵² However, this signal would be the last between the column and Tuzla until 15 July. Contact between the 28th Division and Tuzla was broken when signals personnel deliberately destroyed the Division's radio equipment.⁵³

Tuzla took some steps to prepare for the arrival of the column. At 02.20 hours on the morning of 12 July, Sead Delic, Commander of the ABiH 2nd Corps, ordered several units to remain on standby to provide assistance if necessary. Specifically, the 24th Division commanded by Salih Malkic was assigned to arrange accommodation for the civilians and soldiers from Srebrenica. All brigades within this division were also expected to keep a company on standby for armed action. Sead Delic reports that he also ordered Naser Oric to make himself and a number of other officers from Srebrenica available to the 24th Division. They were to pinpoint the position of the column and the route. The 25th Division was ordered to carry out a diversionary manoeuvre in the form of an attack on the VRS positions in the Majevisa hills to the east of Tuzla.⁵⁴

5. Why was this particular route to Tuzla chosen?

Having received the alarming news that the column had already set out, against Budakovic's instructions, the 2nd Corps in Tuzla tried to determine possible escape routes. To march directly across country with the entire column would have been out of the question. Three routes were therefore set out by the personnel in Tuzla. A section of the column would first proceed to Baljkovica, part to Kladanj and the rest to Zepa. This recommendation was to have been passed on to the troops in the enclave, although no confirmation of this being the case has ever been found. The route that the majority eventually took was the most obvious one, in that many refugees from Srebrenica were familiar with the route as well as the sort of terrain they would have to cross. This route had often been used between 1992 and 1995.⁵⁵

According to Ramiz Becirovic, agreement had been reached with the civilian authorities to form a column to move to the free area,⁵⁶ but it was not until the evening of 11 July that the decision to proceed to Tuzla was made.⁵⁷ This was after the people had assembled in the woods near Susnjari. It was here that the decisions concerning the route, the division into groups⁵⁸ and the time of departure were made. The choice of the route to Tuzla seems to have been prompted in part by the fact that the Commander of the 284th Brigade of the ABiH, Vejz Sabic, had reconnoitred the area around Konjevic Polje and Cerska prior to the attack, and had volunteered himself and his men as escorts to the column as far as Tuzla.⁵⁹ On the orders of the 28th Division, the 284th Brigade had undertaken a number of missions in the area around Buljin, Konjevic Polje, Cerska, Zvornicka Kamenica and Snagovo in order

⁵² Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjecaceni koverat*, pp. 243-244. Ramiz Becirovic confirmed the main points of the conversations. (Interview on 02/02 and 05/02/98).

⁵³ Interview Sead Delic, 10/03/99.

⁵⁴ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjecaceni koverat*, p. 272.

⁵⁵ Interview Semsudin Muminovic, 17/05/99.

⁵⁶ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps. Additional statement by Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement of 11/08/95.

⁵⁷ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98 with additional comments of 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

⁵⁸ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

⁵⁹ Interviews Andjelko Makar with Vejz Sabic, 12/00.

to reconnoitre the terrain and to determine VRS positions. The intention was to find ways of confining the VRS to the Srebrenica region and prevent reinforcements being sent from here towards Sarajevo.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, it remains difficult to determine exactly how the choice of route to Tuzla was made. This is confirmed by Opstina President Osman Suljic.⁶¹ Decisions within the 28th Division were often taken democratically, with all commanders (not only Ramiz Becirovic as Commander) having a vote.⁶² Ilijaz Pilav, a doctor, believes that it was the military leaders - and Ramiz Becirovic in particular - who decided on the route and who decided that everyone should proceed in a column. Pilav disagreed with the latter decision.⁶³ Another source believes that it was Zulfo Tursunovic who took the decision concerning the route after Ramiz Becirovic had declared himself unable to take charge of the operation.⁶⁴ The option of splitting the people up into smaller groups does not seem to have been considered prior to departure.⁶⁵ The decision to proceed as a single column, with all 10,000 to 15,000 people walking in procession one behind the other, eventually proved disastrous. The straggling column, many kilometres in length, had no effective means of defence.⁶⁶ It represented a target that could all too easily be split. Becirovic made a grave error of judgement, his critics would later claim.⁶⁷

According to Becirovic himself, four different routes were considered but the final choice was made because this was the only route for which guides were available.⁶⁸ He believed it would have been impossible to have each of the brigades take a different route to Tuzla. It was not possible to proceed towards Bratunac nor towards Han Pijesak.⁶⁹ There was one route which split at Mount Udrc, one fork going on to Kladanj and the other in the direction of Tuzla. However, there was no one who knew the route to Kladanj, while there were several who knew how to reach Tuzla. Furthermore, it was known that VRS troops were along the route to Kladanj and close to Vlasenica.⁷⁰ In any event, the selected route was the most natural way of reaching Tuzla.⁷¹ The ABiH personnel did not expect any resistance on this route, since there had never been any in the past.⁷² This too proved a monstrous error of judgement.

It must then be asked why the group heading for Zepa was not considerably larger. After all, the route to Zepa was - with the benefit of hindsight - the most secure and also the shortest. Moreover, there was more food in Zepa. Many people had already followed this route without problem, almost all having travelled to Zepa to find food. The route across the high mountains and along poor roads and paths was a difficult one which demanded strength and perseverance, yet it could be completed within a day.⁷³ Many of the men who had gathered in the north-western corner of the enclave would have preferred to set out for Zepa during the night of 11 July. The terrain offered better cover and more opportunities to hide than the more open terrain they would have to cross on the way to Tuzla. Some even started out towards Zepa but this plan was abandoned when reports of the town having fallen were received. The reports proved to be false.⁷⁴

From the perspective of the 2nd Corps, the choice of Zepa as a destination would have allowed the ABiH units from Srebrenica and Zepa itself to join forces in far more favourable terrain, thus

⁶⁰ ABiH 28th Division to Command of 284 IBLbr, 14/06/95, No. 01-102/95. ICTY (IT-98-33) D60.

⁶¹ Interview Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

⁶² Interview Andjelko Makar with Vejs Sabic, 12/00.

⁶³ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

⁶⁴ Interview Damir Skaler, 31/01/98.

⁶⁵ Interview Damir Skaler, 31/01/98.

⁶⁶ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

⁶⁷ Interview Hakija Meholjic, 02/02/98 with additional comments of 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

⁶⁸ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjeceni koverat*, p. 271.

⁶⁹ Confidential interview (51).

⁷⁰ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 02/02 and 05/02/98.

⁷¹ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

⁷² Interview Sadik Vilic, Sarajevo, 15/04/99.

⁷³ Interview Semsudin Muminovic, 17/05/99.

⁷⁴ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

enabling them to offer more effective defence.⁷⁵ This consideration was based on the desire to hold Zepa. Earlier, Sead Delic, Commander of the 2nd Corps, had told Becirovic to proceed to Zepa on 6 July to join up with the Zepa brigade. However, it is not clear whether this was an order or a suggestion. Deputy Corps Commander Makar considered it to be an order, Delic himself thought of it as a suggestion. The 2nd Corps' plan was to have the 28th Division and the Zepa Brigade carry out a joint counter-offensive against the VRS in Srebrenica. In hindsight this might well have been a strategically sensible move. The evacuation of the population on 13 July would have greatly facilitated such a counter-offensive.⁷⁶

The idea of sending the 28th Division to Zepa did not, however, take psychological factors into consideration. Everyone would have much preferred to go to Tuzla, a free area, than to yet another enclave. There would have been little desire to move from one Safe Area to another; it was much more attractive to take the shortest possible route into free territory.⁷⁷ Psychologically, people had been ready for the exodus to Tuzla for the past three years. After all, this was the traditional regional centre and many had already moved there. The Bosnian Serbs' psychological warfare had the desired effect on the people, who had little faith in UN protection whether in Srebrenica or Zepa. It must also be asked whether the 28th Division itself was sufficiently organized to carry out such a tactical move efficiently, and whether it was reasonable to ask them to leave their homes and families unprotected while they set off on a mission of which the outcome was so uncertain. The morale of the 28th Division had been declining for some time. If this plan was to be carried out, they would have to push through the VRS lines to the south of the enclave, while it was already known that Zepa was under fire from the VRS.⁷⁸

Radio Milici and Radio Bratunac reported of the fall of Zepa. The VRS used these stations to spread disinformation and to sow the seeds of panic as part of their psychological warfare tactics.⁷⁹ In this respect, the Bosnian Serbs succeeded completely. Ilijaz Pilav does not recall how he came to hear of the supposed fall of Zepa. In any event, there was no opportunity to check the veracity of such reports and no one thought of doing so.⁸⁰ Another doctor, Dzevad Džananović, himself a patient in the hospital at the time, recalls he had already heard the rumour as he left Srebrenica on the afternoon of 11 July.⁸¹ The Deputy Mayor Hamdija Fejzić stated that he was told about the fall on Zepa on 10 July but did not know where the information came from.⁸² Even the ABiH commanders were saying that Zepa had already fallen, but these rumours later proved to be unfounded.⁸³

It was generally known that the Bosnian Serb radio stations broadcast war propaganda. Given that there had been radio contact with Sarajevo and Tuzla during the afternoon and the early hours of the night of 11 July (specifically with the 2nd Corps of the ABiH and the journalist Isnam Taljić of Radio Sarajevo) it remains unclear why the Division Command did not attempt to make contact with Zepa. The two enclaves had worked closely together in military operations and there would undoubtedly have been means to make radio contact with each other if so desired. Tuzla was in daily radio contact with Zepa until 25 July and could have informed Becirovic about the situation in Zepa during the night of 10 and 11 July.⁸⁴ Some of the men in the column were carrying radios and on the way to Tuzla they heard news reports to the effect that Zepa had *not* fallen. However, by now it was too late to turn back.⁸⁵

⁷⁵ Interview Sead Delic in Sefko Hodžić, *Otpjecaceni koverat*, p. 271.

⁷⁶ Interview Andjelko Makar, 21/10/00. See also Sefko Hodžić, *Otpjecaceni koverat*, p. 271.

⁷⁷ Interview Nijaz Masić, 25/10/00.

⁷⁸ Interview Mehmed Zilić, 04/11/99.

⁷⁹ Interview Semsudin Muminović, 17/05/99.

⁸⁰ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

⁸¹ Interview Dzevad Džananović, 04/03/98.

⁸² Interview Hamdija Fejzić, 03/02/98.

⁸³ Interview Omer Subasić, 19 and 20/10/97.

⁸⁴ Makar report, 12/00.

⁸⁵ Interview Dzevad Džananović, 04/03/98.

6. 12 July: the departure of the column

As stated above, Zulfo Tursunovic's 281st Brigade, which included men from Kamenica and Cerska, wanted to take the lead. Ejub Golic also wished to be at the fore. In civilian life he had been a transport operator from Bratunac. In 1993, he had been involved in the defence of several villages around Bratunac before becoming brigade commander in Srebrenica. He was a good organizer who knew how to maintain discipline within his unit. He claimed that his unit was the best trained and that he was the person most familiar with the situation to be faced when crossing the main road at Konjevic Polje, a critical point on the route. Nevertheless, it was decided that the 284th Brigade should head the column, the argument being that these men were most familiar with the terrain.⁸⁶ At the same time, several smaller groups devised their own plans and tried to find the shortest and safest route on their own.⁸⁷

An advance reconnaissance party went on ahead of the column proper. This group comprised four guides who set out one hour before the column and maintained a lead of approximately five kilometres throughout the journey. Next, there was a group comprising 50 to 100 of the best soldiers from each brigade, each carrying the best available equipment. This group was under the command of Vejs Sabic of the 284th Brigade. Next in line was the 281st Brigade. All these men were originally from Cerska, Konjevic Polje and Kamenica. They knew the terrain. The rest of the column followed at some distance. In order, there was the reconnaissance unit of the 28th Division, the 280th Brigade from Gornji Potocari, the division command, the wounded, the medical staff, the de 281st Brigade, the 283rd Brigade, the independent battalion and the 282nd Brigade bringing up the rear. Notably, the best troops were all at the front of the column. Here too were the elite of the enclave, including the mother and sister of Naser Oric and other prominent persons. The majority of civilians and the wounded were in the centre of the column. At the rear was the weakest and least heavily armed Brigade, the 282nd under Ibro Dudic. It was this brigade which had borne the brunt of the VRS offensive and had suffered the greatest losses.⁸⁸

At around 22.30 hours on 11 July, the men lined up whereby they were encouraged to seek out their friends and acquaintances.⁸⁹ The soldiers were not counted, there was simply no time.⁹⁰ Each brigade took a group of refugees under its wing.⁹¹ The units stayed more or less intact. Many civilians joined the military units spontaneously and acquaintances went along with the troops. There were many shifts and changes of allegiance as the journey got under way.⁹²

It was a clear night with a full moon. There had been heavy rain for days beforehand and many people did not have adequate footwear, which impaired progress somewhat. The speed with which the column moved forward was also restricted by a number of cattle and horses laden with supplies and provisions.

Communications between the various sections of the column relied on couriers and walkie-talkies. The head of the column was in contact with the command of the 28th Division on one frequency and with the central and rearmost sections of the column on another frequency. The front and rear of the column were therefore not in direct communication with each other. As Commander of the 28th Division, Ramiz Becirovic was in the centre of the column from where he could oversee its entire length. Vejs Sabic, Commander of the foremost section (including the main military force of the

⁸⁶ Confidential interview (51).

⁸⁷ ABiH Sarajevo, 'Arnautovic Archive', 20/05/99.

⁸⁸ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, undesignated. Additional statement by Ramiz Becirovic of 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement of 11/08/95. Interview Andjelko Makar with Vejs Sabic, 12/00.

⁸⁹ Confidential interview (51).

⁹⁰ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, undesignated. Additional statement by Ramiz Becirovic of 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement of 11/08/95.

⁹¹ Othon Zimmerman, *Moslimstrijders in helse tocht opgejaagd als wild* ('Muslim fighters on hellish journey hunted down like game'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 18 /07/95.

⁹² Confidential interview (51).

28th Division) later attributed the failure to assist at critical moments to the lack of information about what was happening at the rear of the column.⁹³

The VRS was able to eavesdrop on the column's radio communications. This much became clear from the two 'intercepts' made by the Drina Corps' Intelligence unit and sent by the police station at Bijeljina. The intercepts concern the attempts of two groups, that of Zulfo Tursunovic and that of Ibrahim Mandzic, to obtain instructions for further action having fallen into an ambush near Kamenica.⁹⁴

7. 12 July: the VRS discovers the departure

In the hours immediately after the fall of Srebrenica the VRS was not aware of the 28th Division's position. The breakout had taken the VRS completely by surprise; there were no plans to cover such an eventuality. In his first talks with the Dutch Commander Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, Mladic was clearly under the impression that all men were still in the enclave: he demanded their surrender. In fact, their presence was a source of great concern to the VRS who had to consider the possibility that units of the 2nd Corps could attack from the Tuzla and Kladanj sides and make contact with units of the 28th Division. This concern had been current within the VRS for some time.

The VRS had not omitted to take precautionary measures altogether. On 11 July, before it was even known that the column was being formed, the VRS General Staff ordered the Drina Corps to make arrangements with the special units attached to the Ministry of the Interior (*Ministarstvo Unutrasnjih Poslova*; MUP) in preventing any movement of ABiH units into or out of Srebrenica.

The VRS had reason to believe that an ABiH division would be sent from Sarajevo, via Olovo and Kladanj and along two separate routes towards Zepa and Srebrenica. It was also expected that the 28th Division would be given permission by the ABiH to leave the enclave and would later return. The Drina Corps was therefore required to set up road blocks and ambushes. A particular concern was that the routes would pass close to the VRS headquarters in Han Pijesak.⁹⁵ However, the VRS headquarters did not see the column pass, since it was well to the west of Srebrenica and the actual escape route was to the north.

The VRS first caught wind of the escape when what seemed to be a reconnaissance unit was spotted close to Mount Udrc on the morning of 12 July, some time between 02.00 and 06.00 hours. Given the distance from Srebrenica, this could not have been the head of the column itself but was almost certainly one or more of the small groups which had set out for Tuzla on 10 July, even before the fall of the enclave. At about 03.00 hours the VRS learned of the formation of the column itself from communications intercepted. One intercepted message, recorded at 06.56 hours on 12 July, involved a conversation about the column between two unidentified individuals in which the possibility of MUP ambushes was raised. In another, timed at 13.05 hours the same day, General Krstic is heard issuing orders for the Vlasenica Brigade to make contact with the MUP.⁹⁶

⁹³ Interviews Andjelko Makar with Veiz Sabic, 12/00.

⁹⁴ NIOD, Coll. MUP Republika Srpska. MUP Republika Srpska, RJB Bijeljina, 13/07/95, RJB-303/95.

⁹⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), D 148/a. Ratko Mladic to the commands of the DK, zmtpr, 67 pv, 2 rmtbr, 1 vlpbr, 1 mlpbr, 1 plpbr, 11/07/95, no. 03/4-1616. Judgement, paras 162 and 287.

⁹⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, paras 162 and 287.



Intercepts of the ABiH show that the VRS only became fully aware of the flight of the men at around midday on 12 July, by which time the ABiH was somewhere in the forests to the north of Potocari. "They seem to have done a very good job," commented one VRS observer.⁹⁷ The Bratunac Brigade informed the command of the Drina Corps that the men were heading in the direction of Konjevic Polje.⁹⁸ At this stage, the VRS had no idea of the extent of the column or the number of men who had fled the enclave. Neither was the route to be taken known. However, it was clear that the column had become embroiled in a minefield and a deep watercourse (near Ravni Buljin). It was also clear that a group - some two hundred men strong - had turned back towards Srebrenica. At that time, the VRS did not know whether the others had also turned back or had been able to continue. The VRS was unable to come any closer, since their own minefield blocked the way and the unit concerned did not have the appropriate maps. This greatly annoyed General Krstic who ordered the relevant information to be found at once.

At that time, there were also reports that the Bosnian Serb population would be prepared to hand over the Muslims who had taken part in the so-called Podrinje massacre, (Podrinje being the region around Srebrenica). Whether this should be taken to mean that the Serbs had already intercepted some of the fleeing Muslims, or that they would be prepared to assist the VRS should the opportunity arise, is not clear. The ABiH intercepted a conversation involving the Serb journalist Goran Malinaga in which an ultimatum given by Mladic was mentioned: the ABiH must surrender before midday otherwise the VRS would open hostilities. The conversation also mentioned a pursuit or round-up 'like that in Chechnia'.⁹⁹ When the Bosnian Serb-organized refugee convoys set out from the UN compound in Potocari to Kladanj on 12 July, Mladic ordered that every caution should be exercised to ensure that no men could be part of those convoys. At the same time Mladic ordered the mines and

⁹⁷ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, report based on intercepts, 12/05/95, no. 02/8-10-1253.

⁹⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 371.

⁹⁹ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, report based on intercepts, 12/05/95, no. 02/8-10-1253.

other obstacles to be cleared from the area around Kladanj before the refugees arrived, and that his troops should then withdraw.¹⁰⁰

The discovery of the breakout and the flight of the column from the enclave came as a shock to the General Staff of the VRS. This was an entirely unforeseen eventuality; it had been expected that the ABiH soldiers would go to Potocari. The VRS had expected that this would bring about the cessation of all military action.¹⁰¹ When this proved not to be the case, General Milan Gvero suggested in a document of 12 July that the group of ABiH soldiers certainly included 'notorious criminals' who would do absolutely anything to reach Tuzla. Part of the column had by then been successful in crossing the main Bratunac - Konjević Polje - Milići - Vlasenica road. Everyone would have to do likewise in order to reach Tuzla. Gvero called upon all available units to track them down and prevent them from attacking Bosnian Serb villages.¹⁰² The inhabitants of Milići, for example, were afraid of the escaping Muslims and several citizens appear to have been killed in shooting affrays with the members of the column.¹⁰³ There were also fears that the column would attack the town of Zvornik, although these were dismissed as groundless by other VRS sources, since Zvornik was not directly on the route to Tuzla. In any case, the VRS were also certain that the Muslims would not attempt to reach Serbian territory, as it would be far too difficult for them to cross the Drina.¹⁰⁴

From the ABiH perspective, in retrospect, the laying of ambushes in Konjevic Polje and Kravica had been part of the VRS's plan of attack. The ambushes and other obstacles had been laid by reserve troops, their orders being to ensure the eradication of the entire column. According to the ABiH, when the VRS saw that the opposing forces were strong enough to break through the VRS lines, Generals Mladic, Zivanovic and Krstic decided to send their elite troops and 'special forces' to cover the possible route. When even this proved to be insufficient, reportedly the Special Police Troops were also deployed.¹⁰⁵ Many Bosnian Muslims also suspected that the VRS deliberately allowed the well-armed groups at the front of the column to pass, since it was only later that the shooting began. In their explanation, the VRS was afraid of the ABiH, knew that these foremost groups were well-armed, and therefore preferred to save their fire for unarmed men.¹⁰⁶ Many saw this as confirmation that the VRS had opened a corridor, and to the front of the column this seemed to be the case since it was able to cross the Bratunac - Konjevic Polje - Nova Kasaba road with ease. Later, this same road would prove to be a practically impassable barrier.¹⁰⁷ Other people held the view that the VRS's failure to open fire on the first groups to cross the road was part of a deliberate ploy to divide the column up into sections.¹⁰⁸

Contrary to what many in the column believed, the reason that the vanguard was able to cross the road at Konjevic Polje with relative ease had little to do with composition strength of the group in question, but more with the fact that the VRS was not yet ready to offer any resistance. As indicated by the communications intercepted by the ABiH, it was not until after midday on 12 July that the VRS became aware of the column's existence or its breakout from the enclave. Only then was any forcible response prepared, whereupon the VRS deployed all available units (i.e. those which were not required in either Srebrenica itself or at Zepa).

¹⁰⁰ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, report based on intercepts, 12 /07/95, no. 02/8-10-1257.

¹⁰¹ Interview Milovan Mulinovic, 20/03 and 22/03/00.

¹⁰² NIOD, Coll. MUP Republika Srpska. VRS General Staff to IKM-1 DK, 1. Zpbr, 1. Vlpbr, illegible, recd. Bratunac Brigade on 14/07/95, no. 01-456-1.

¹⁰³ Interview Rajko Dukic, 14/06/00.

¹⁰⁴ Interview Milovan Mulinovic, 20/03 and 22/03/00.

¹⁰⁵ Interview Semsudin Muminovic, 17/0599.

¹⁰⁶ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/0298.

¹⁰⁷ Confidential interview (51).

¹⁰⁸ Interviews Damir Skaler and Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

8. 12 July: the VRS deploys heavy weaponry

One of the concerns of the column as it left Susnjari was whether it would be possible to cross the main Bratunac - Konjevic Polje - Nova Kasaba road before sunrise. Given the short time remaining and the sheer length of the column, this concern proved founded - it was not possible.¹⁰⁹ After the VRS had discovered the column's movements, there was an immediate movement of troops and equipment, whereby VRS artillery opened fire from the villages of Siljkovici, Rogac and Mratinsko Brdo (in area number 03 on the map). At this stage, the VRS was unable to come close to the column and was therefore firing on it from the mountains. Meanwhile, the VRS had also begun to lay ambushes along the asphalted Bratunac - Konjevic Polje road, in the villages of Kamenica, Sandici and Lolici (in area 04 on the map).

From the village of Susnjari, the column moved to nearby Jaglici, in which the now abandoned Dutchbat OP-M was located. The 281st Brigade set out at precisely 01.30 hours and arrived on the Buljin plateau at around 05.30 hours.¹¹⁰ The main part of the column did not move off until 05.00 hours. By the time the rear set out it was almost light, while the intention had been to pass the Buljin plateau before daybreak.¹¹¹ One group at the very rear of the column did not to move off because the VRS was already too close. They were forced to divert to Zepa.¹¹² At first, the journey between Susnjari and Buljin went well¹¹³ (see 01 and 02 on map). After Buljin, there was a descent and it became necessary to cross a number of rivulets. In the centre of Buljin was a VRS bunker but it was deserted.

The vanguard of the column, including the 284th Brigade under Vejz Sabic, reached the Hajducko Groblje mountain at approximately 07.00 hours (see 03, 04 and 05 on maps). Sabic and a few of his troops then turned back to guide the rest of the column. For the past three years, this region had been the front line of the conflict and both sides had mined the area extensively. Under normal circumstances it would have been possible to cross the plain in two hours. With the mines in place, it became necessary to carefully crawl on one's knees, whereby it took an average of fifteen hours. The mines in the Hajducko Groblje section had not been cleared but were marked with white paper flags. Experts went on ahead to determine the position of the minefields; they had nothing but pieces of paper with which to mark them. Instructions were then passed back by word of mouth - 'watch out, there's a mine right here!' The men then had to proceed in single file, picking their way between the flags. They were fortunate in that there was fog until about 10.00 hours.¹¹⁴ Because of the delays, the rear of the column did not reach Hajducko Groblje until 10.00 hours, by which time the head had already reached Islamovici (in the region 06 shown on map), while the centre of the column was level with Kamenica (04 on map).

From Mratinci (04 on map), the head of the column moved on towards Kravica (05 on map). It was not possible to enter Kravica itself, since the village was occupied by the VRS. It was decided not to proceed immediately but to wait until nightfall before crossing the road. By this time, however, the VRS had located the column and opened artillery fire. Many people in the column gave up at this stage and many were killed. There was also some infighting among the refugees themselves as the effects of hunger began to take effect. Tensions were high. This was partly due to the artillery bombardment and partly because no one knew exactly what was happening. Furthermore, there were rumours that VRS personnel in civilian dress had infiltrated the column at Kravica.¹¹⁵ Kasim Mustafic, who wandered the area to the south of the Bratunac to Konjevic Polje road for two days, later testified that a group of

¹⁰⁹ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpaceni koverat*, p. 271.

¹¹⁰ Confidential interview (51).

¹¹¹ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

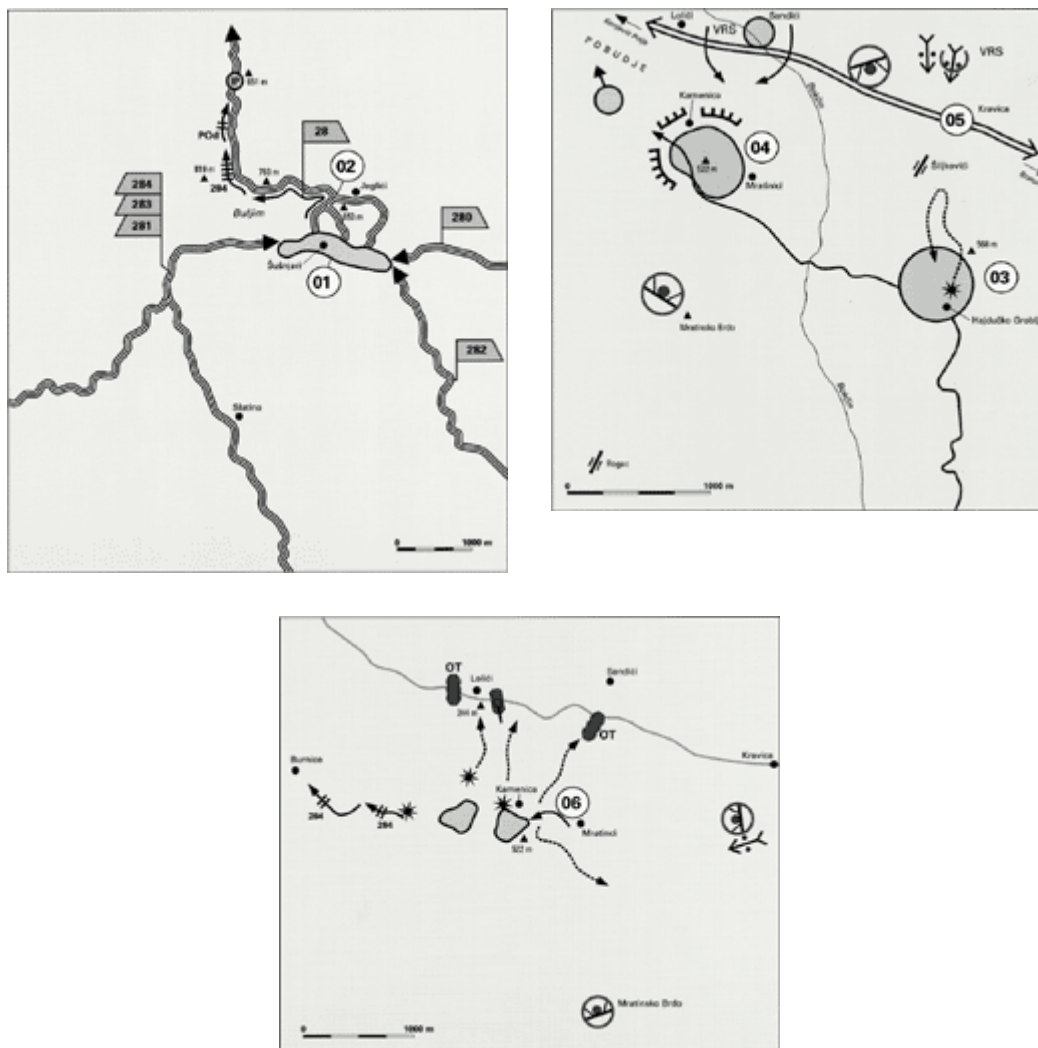
¹¹² ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, unnumbered, additional statement by Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement of 11/08/95.

¹¹³ Interview Vahid Hodzic, 08/03/99.

¹¹⁴ Confidential interview (51).

¹¹⁵ Interview Hakija Meholjic, 02/02/98 with additional comments of 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

about one hundred Bosnian Serbs had approached the column at Kravica from the direction of Bratunac. They were dressed in black casual shirts and trousers, and armed with knives and garrotes. They mingled with a group of some three hundred Bosnian Muslims and began to kill them. This continued for about half an hour, after which between 30 and 50 mutilated bodies, some now missing legs, arms, ears or genitals, were loaded onto a truck and driven off in the direction of Bratunac. Some were murdered on the spot and thrown into the river alongside the road. Shortly thereafter, a tanker arrived to hose the blood off the tarmac.¹¹⁶



The story goes that other infiltrators gave directions during the march, claiming to know the way. It would indeed have been possible to infiltrate the column as the refugees from Srebrenica did not know each other particularly well.¹¹⁷ When they began to suspect that infiltrators were present, the people checked on each other although the fact that they came from seven different Opstinas made this difficult. Because there were no differences in language, it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe.¹¹⁸ Infiltration has often been reported as a tactic, and sightings of bodies with their throats cut certainly supported the notion of there being Bosnian Serbs at large within the column. However, such

¹¹⁶ ABiH Sarajevo, 'Arnautovic Archive', see 14/07/95. Kasem also reports having seen someone drinking the blood pouring from the wounds of a Bosnian man who had been stabbed in the back.

¹¹⁷ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

¹¹⁸ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98 with additional information supplied on 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

stories may also be a reflection of the fear and confusion that had seized the people, particularly in that these stories emerged just as the column was in danger of being ambushed.¹¹⁹

The rear of the column, at this time still at Hajdučko Groblje, was the first section to come under fire. Suddenly, it seemed as though gunfire was coming from all sides at once. Several men fell. No one knew exactly where the gunfire was coming from. Witnesses have since stated that the shooting began as one group of refugees entered a minefield. That some people had indeed unwittingly fallen victim to the mines was confirmed by an intercepted communication in which a VRS soldier said that he saw a group of refugees walking into a minefield near the Kamenica junction between 7 and 8 p.m., and that at least twenty people had been killed. The full-scale VRS assault began shortly thereafter, with a combination of infantry and artillery fire. There was widespread panic within the column.¹²⁰

One member of the 281st Brigade has described the events. According to his testimony, as the Brigade was about to descend from the Buljin Plain, shooting and machine gun fire opened up on all sides. The VRS were in the hills, the Muslims among the rivulets on the marshy land. The VRS bombarded the group with grenades and machine gun fire. As the first thirty or so casualties fell, panic broke out. The first fatality was Nihad 'Nino' Catic, a radio reporter who had made the last report from Srebrenica on the morning of the fall.¹²¹ According to other accounts, some men had entered the woods at Kamenica to rest for a while and to wait for the remainder to catch up. Close by, an enormous beech tree was split in two by a grenade. Artillery fire began and continued for some twenty minutes. This was the point at which the column began to disintegrate rapidly. Statements describe the episode as an absolute nightmare: there were bodies everywhere, the wounded were crying out for help, many people lost sight of their loved ones; fathers, sons and brothers who had been together up to this point were parted from each other. A few found each other days later; most never did.¹²²

A section of the 281st Brigade assembled in the woods and held an impromptu strategy meeting. It would, they decided, be possible to attempt to carry on to Konjevic Polje, but they suspected that even if they came that far it would then be impossible to reach Tuzla. No fewer than 34 members of the 281st Brigade had already been killed and 70 wounded. Of the wounded, six or seven now had to be carried, others taking it in turns to act as bearers. They discussed the route. It was clear that if they continued straight on they would have to cross the main road at Konjevic Polje no matter what. This section of the 281st Brigade decided not to do so, but to turn off at Burnice (in the area of number 06 on the map) and to turn back to Zepa. At 03.00 hours on 13 July, the 40 surviving members of the Brigade left Burnice. As they went, they saw corpses everywhere.¹²³

The head of the column halted to find out what had happened to the rear. Because the shooting continued throughout the day and the night of 12 July, hope of being able to regroup was abandoned and the front of the column resumed the march. Exactly who made the relevant decisions and how they were made is not known. As the foremost group of the column continued on its way, the rear lost contact and panic broke out once more.¹²⁴

The VRS artillery fire directed at the column as it tried to cross the road at Konjevic Polje and Nova Kasaba split the column in two. Only about one third of the men managed to cross the road before the VRS opened fire with full force.¹²⁵ As far as can now be ascertained, some 300 to 400 people died even before the rear of the column had reached Konjevic Polje.¹²⁶ The ABiH's own figure is somewhat higher still, at between 500 and 2000.¹²⁷

¹¹⁹ *Refugee Report*, Vol. XVI, No. 5, 31/07/95, p. 6 and pp. 9-10.

¹²⁰ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, report of 12/07/95, no. 02/8-10-1253. Contents based on intercepts.

¹²¹ Interview Salih Brkic, 02/02/98.

¹²² Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

¹²³ Confidential interview (51).

¹²⁴ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

¹²⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 62.

¹²⁶ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

¹²⁷ ABiH Sarajevo, 'Arnautovic Archive', see 12/07/95.

The central section of the column managed to escape the shooting and reached Kamenica (on map 06) at about 11.00 hours and waited there for the wounded. Ejub Golic turned back towards Hajducko Groblje to help the casualties. Because many had to be carried, there were major delays. It was 09.00 hours before the column could continue, by which time the survivors from the rear had joined those in the central section of the column.

The foremost part of the column succeeded in reaching and passing Kamenica (on map 04) before 10.00 hours, thus escaping the shooting. This section spent the evening on Mount Udrc (map 08) waiting for the rest of the column to catch up. The very first section, the 284th Brigade, and the mountain battalion managed to cross the road at Konjevic Polje (map 07) without any difficulty. This news filtered back to the other sections of the column.¹²⁸ This raised hope, but that hope proved to be unfounded. Hamdija Fejzic heard of the first group's success as he was under way somewhere between Nova Kasaba and Konjevic Polje. He managed to cross the road during the hours of darkness, closely followed by a group of some three hundred armed men. There was not only the road to contend with, but also the River Jadar which was ten metres wide at some points and ran parallel to the road.¹²⁹ The ill-fated rearmost part of the column continued to come under heavy VRS artillery fire throughout the day and the following night. Survivors described it as a relentless manhunt; many gave up.¹³⁰

9. 12 July: the first prisoners are taken

Units of the Bosnian Serb Drina Corps which had not been deployed for the attack on Zepa were ordered to intercept the column and block its further progress. A number of other units were given similar instructions. They included a brigade of the Special Police of the Republika Srpska's Ministry of the Interior (MUP), sections of a the Military Police battalion of the 65th Regiment and several regular police units. An intercepted communication suggests that all police units were sent from Zvornik to Velja Glava to stop the column in its tracks.¹³¹

The result of the ambushes and shooting was that the Bosnian Serbs were able to take large numbers of men prisoner along the Bratunac to Konjevic Polje road on the afternoon and evening of 12 July. The prisoners had all been at the rear of the column.¹³² The VRS closed the road completely and, using an APC seized from Dutchbat, proceeded in the direction of the villages Pobudje and Kravica (numbers 05 and 06). From these villages, the VRS opened fire with an M84 rocket launcher, causing considerable death and destruction. The wounded had to be left behind. The vast majority of the 28th Division gave themselves up to the VRS on the road. The ABiH estimates of the number concerned run into the thousands. The gunfire and the roadblocks had succeeded in splitting the column up. The front section had now moved off in a north-westerly direction. During the afternoon of 12 July, they crossed the Nova Kasaba - Konjevic Polje road using the bridge at Begova Kuca and then marched onwards towards Mount Udrc.

Not only did the VRS lie in ambush along the Bratunac - Konjevic Polje road. They also called upon the men who were hiding in the forest to give themselves up, promising that if they did so the Geneva Convention would be observed. These actions were carried out by the Special Police under Borovcanin, while the 65th Regiment was sent in the direction of Nova Kasaba. The VRS used stolen UN uniforms and equipment to convince the Muslim men that the operation was being carried out under the supervision of the UN or the International Red Cross. Various witnesses report seeing armoured vehicles seized from Dutchbat by the VRS and further report seeing the VRS use the APCs to persuade refugees to give themselves up. The VRS was now all along the road, with a man posted

¹²⁸ Confidential interview (51).

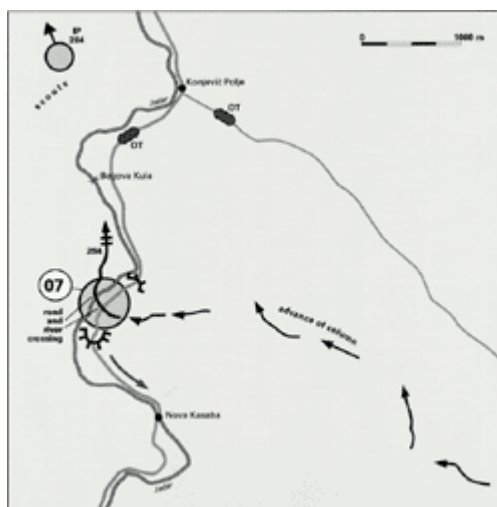
¹²⁹ Interview Hamdija Fejzic, 03/02/98.

¹³⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 62.

¹³¹ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, rapport van 12/07/95, no. 02/8-10-1253. Contents based on intercepts. ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 162.

¹³² ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, paras 63 and 167.

every fifty metres. There were artillery posts at various points, most notably in Sandici where the command post had also been set up.¹³³



At various other locations, the VRS fired with anti-aircraft guns into the woods wherever the presence of Muslim men was suspected. One result of this action, as a Zvornik Brigade intelligence report of 12 July indicates, is that the Bosnian Muslims fled in panic, control over them was lost and many surrendered to the MUP or VRS units, either individually or in groups.¹³⁴

Once taken prisoner, the men were robbed of their personal belongings. In some instances they were executed on the spot. The VRS sent one of the civilians who wished to surrender back towards the column: one of his eyes had been gouged out, his ears had been cut off and a cross carved into his forehead.¹³⁵ A small number of women and children, and a few elderly people who had been part of the column and who fell into Bosnian Serb hands were allowed to join the buses which evacuated the women and children out of Potocari to Kladanj on 12 and 13 July.¹³⁶ Among them was Alma Delimustafic, a woman soldier of the 280th Brigade. The VRS surrounded her group, took them prisoner and transported them to Konjevic Polje. In a field near Konjevic Polje, a VRS captain interrogated the group, asking about the movements of other groups and the senior officers. He also asked if anyone knew the whereabouts of a Dr Branka and the nurse Sister Namka, a friend of Naser Oric. There were various other occasions on which the VRS displayed unusual interest in persons thought to have a connection with Oric. At this time, Delimustafic was in civilian clothes and was released because the VRS did not realize that she was a soldier. She reported seeing two of the captured men being taken off, supposedly to Bratunac but they were killed on the way.¹³⁷ There are also statements from four young boys who had surrendered, who had been taken prisoner at the roadside, but who were then released by the VRS and allowed to join the buses carrying refugees from Potocari. One managed to escape by himself.¹³⁸

Close to Sandici, on the main road from Bratunac to Konjevic Polje, one witness recalls seeing the scene with which the rest of the world was later to become familiar from Zoran Petrovic's video footage: the Bosnian Serbs were forcing a Muslim man to call others down from the mountains. Some

¹³³ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 63.

¹³⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, paras 63 and 168.

¹³⁵ Interview Damir Skaler, 31/01/98.

¹³⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 61-3.

¹³⁷ ABiH Tuzla. Tuzla (Intel Dept) to 2nd Corps, 25/07/95, (Tuzla no.) 11.6.-1-414/95 (2nd Corps no.) 06-712-24-30/95, Results of meeting with persons from Srebrenica. This report was signed by Sarajlic Osman.

¹³⁸ Witness statements before the 'state Commission for the collection of information concerning war crimes committed in the Republic of Bosnia Hercegovina'.

200 to 300 men followed his instructions and descended to meet the waiting VRS. The witness reported that some were then shot on the spot. The brother of the witness was among those who gave themselves up expecting that some exchange of prisoners would take place. The witness himself was more cautious and hid behind a tree to see what would happen next. He heard Bosnian Serbs shouting to ask whether there were any more men in the hills. Despite the assurances of those below that there were not, the VRS fired artillery shells into the cover. The witness watched as the two to three hundred men below were lined up in seven ranks, each some forty metres in length, with their hands behind their heads. He then watched as they were mown down by machine gun fire. His own brother was among the victims, shot while he looked on.¹³⁹

Bosnian survivors report that there was indeed panic at Sandici and that chaos then reigned. A number of people committed suicide, some with a rifle, most with hand grenades which inevitably killed those in the immediate vicinity as well. The witness statements also include reports of a number of Cetniks in civilian clothes who posed as guides and then led people to the VRS lines. They were then executed on the spot. Many people recalled seeing groups walk straight into the hands of VRS soldiers and then falling to the ground in a hail of bullets.

There was also a story that VRS soldiers, having infiltrated the column, gave some people poisoned water and killed others from the remains of the scattered column with knives and rifles on the spot. However, it can be asked whether VRS guides would risk their own lives to lead refugees into the ambushes and if they would give poisoned water on purpose.

Later witness statements allege the use of chemical weapons in the form of poison gas grenades, which would certainly explain the panic which broke out. The problem with such observations in the various witness statements is that they cannot be verified. The investigation of the possible use of chemical weapons is covered in a separate appendix to this report.¹⁴⁰

Exactly which units were responsible for the ambushes at Konjevic Polje and Nova Kasaba could not be established at the time of General Krstic's trial before the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague. It was indeed the subject of some disagreement. The famous video footage made by the journalist Zoran Petrovic, accompanied by Lt. Col. Ljubisa Borovcanin (Deputy Commander of the MUP Special Police unit) along the road between Bratunac and Konjevic Polje, suggests the involvement of MUP units. However, at the Krstic trial, the prosecution contended that units of the Drina Corps were (also) responsible, since the MUP units were of insufficient strength to seal off the entire road between Bratunac and Nova Kasaba. The defence challenged this. There was some confusion regarding the origins of the equipment seen in the video, which included a tank. It was difficult to determine whether this belonged to the VRS or to the MUP. On closer scrutiny it proved to be an MUP vehicle. However, the other vehicles shown belonged to the 4th Battalion of the Bratunac Brigade and to the 2nd Romanija Brigade. Footage of the military personnel dealing with the Muslim men clearly shows that these were members of the police units and not from the VRS.

There is no conclusive evidence to show that personnel of the Drina Corps were present on the football field at Nova Kasaba where the Muslim men were assembled. However, there are several reported sightings of VRS men in the meadow near Sandici, another location at which a large number of men were brought together. The Muslim men who had been in the second section of the column and who had managed to reach Tuzla reported that both VRS and MUP units had been involved in taking prisoners. They could be recognized by the colour of their uniform.¹⁴¹

At the time of the trial, it was also impossible to state with any certainty whether units of the Drina Corps had been involved in taking prisoners, although the command of the corps must have known what was going on. There was, after all, close cooperation and coordination between the MUP units and the Drina Corps, and in particular the latter's engineering battalion which assisted the MUP

¹³⁹ Confidential interview (55).

¹⁴⁰ Confidential interview (60).

¹⁴¹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 173-4.

units in blocking the path of the column. The staff of the Drina Corps were in constant communication with MUP units along the road from Bratunac to Konjevic Polje and followed progress of the events. This can be established by a conversation between General Krstic and Lt. Col. Ljubisa Borovcanin, Deputy Commander of the MUP.¹⁴²

During the course of 12 and 13 July, the VRS was able to intercept radio communications within the column, thereby obtaining information about the present position and the route to be followed. This has been established by a communication intercepted at 16.40 hours on 12 July, from the chief-of-staff of the Zvornik Brigade, Major Dragan Obrenovic, discussing various matters concerning the activities of the column and those of the MUP units which were deployed to lay ambushes along the road to Konjevic Polje.¹⁴³ In a communication timed at 19.00 hours on 12 July, the Drina Corps Commander General Zivanovic issued orders for an intervention to the north-west of Cerska, where a group of approximately 1000 refugees had been sighted. The VRS sent a platoon of the Zvornik Brigade to the location.¹⁴⁴

10. 13 July: the hunt continues

On 13 July, the Drina Corps received orders from the VRS General Staff to take the men of the column prisoner. At the same time, the General Staff ordered the Bratunac - Konjevic Polje road to be closed to all non-military traffic to ensure that no military secrets could be exposed. All personnel were ordered not to divulge any information to the media.¹⁴⁵ VRS General Milan Gvero briefed those brigades most closely involved, describing the column as 'hardened and violent criminals who will stop at nothing to prevent being taken prisoner and to enable their escape into Bosnian territory.' The Drina Corps and the various brigades were ordered to devote all available manpower to the task of finding, stopping, disarming and taking prisoner the men of the column. To do so, they were expected to lay ambushes along the Zvornik - Crni Vrh - Sekovici - Vlasenica road. Gvero stipulated the procedure to be followed when prisoners were taken. This included taking the men to suitable locations where they could be guarded by a minimum of personnel and reporting the arrangements made to the General Staff.¹⁴⁶ That afternoon, General Zivanovic issued orders confirming Gvero's instructions. The order was identical to Gvero's and was directed to all units of the Drina Corps. Round-the-clock ambushes were to be set up and all Serb villages were to be given extra protection. All ABiH prisoners were to be taken to the designated locations and treated as prisoners of war in compliance with the Geneva Convention. Superiors were to be informed of all groups of ABiH prisoners immediately.¹⁴⁷

That same day - 13 July 1995 - the Zvornik Brigade of the VRS reported to the staff of the Drina Corps that all troops not required for the attack on Zepa had been deployed in dealing with the ABiH soldiers travelling to Tuzla. The Zvornik Brigade also reported ongoing skirmishes with units of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH from Tuzla itself. These ABiH units were attempted to exert pressure on the VRS elsewhere as a diversionary tactic, drawing attention away from the column.

Of the VRS units hunting down the sections of the column which had succeeded in crossing the road at Konjevic Polje, the Zvornik Brigade was the most actively involved. The Bratunac Brigade had very little armed contact with the column, being primarily involved in cutting off its progress and surrounding the area to prevent escape.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴² ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 176. The conversation took place at 8.40pm on 12 July.

¹⁴³ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, paras 162 and 165.

¹⁴⁴ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, report based on intercepts, 12/07/95, no. 2/8-10-1253.

¹⁴⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Butler Report, OTP Ex 401, para. 9.7.

¹⁴⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 532/a. Main Staff of the Army of Republika Srpska (illegible signature) no. 1-1223. See also ICTY, (IT-98-33), D 81/a, General Staff, to Drina Corps Headquarters, Drina Corps Forward Command Post, 13/07/95, no. 03/4-1620.

¹⁴⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 462/a. Command of the Drina Corps, 13/07/95, No. 03/156-12.

¹⁴⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 164-5.

During the evening of 13 July, the VRS was still occupied in tracking the movements of the column, and at 20.35 hours Major Obrenovic, Chief of Staff of the Zvornik Brigade reported. An unidentified general then instructed him to take immediate steps to ensure that no Muslims could get through, come what may.¹⁴⁹

The information obtained by the VRS by listening into the internal communications between the groups in the column proved to be an accurate reflection of the actual situation on the ground. The Zvornik Brigade had a special signals section whose task it was to monitor communications and this was particularly successful in following both the movements and the intentions of the column.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, the ABiH 2nd Corps' Signals Intelligence unit was monitoring VRS frequencies and could therefore follow events. In many cases, the intercepts were of instructions and orders issued by VRS commanders, whereby the ABiH could follow the route and the progress of the column.¹⁵¹ However, it was not possible to pass crucial information back to the column itself since there was no direct radio link.

A document produced by the Drina Corps' Intelligence staff on 13 July notes that three large groups of men from Srebrenica had been sighted. An initial group of approximately 300 men preceded the second which was approximately 2000 strong. The third group was bringing up the rear and was also some 2000 men strong. At the time of sighting, the first group was on the Cerska – Kamenica - Crni Vrh road. The second group followed the first almost immediately and they agreed by radio to assemble 'by the line'. This has been taken to mean the Sekovici - Zvornik road and the VRS line from Baljkovica to Ravno Brdo. The third group was sighted close to Kravica, in the village of Siljkovici where they were engaged in combat with VRS units. The leader of this group, who referred to himself as 'Phantom' over the radio, asked the ABiH command for instructions. He reported that there many had been killed or wounded and that the VRS were now using a megaphone to demand their surrender. His group had split up and had fled into the forest. They had lost contact with the rest of the column. Apparently, small pockets of resistance had also remained behind in the former enclave. An ABiH source learned this from communications made by a VRS officer in the enclave and intercepted by the ABiH. There was still some shooting going on there, but the ABiH within the enclave had no lines of defence left. They had been chased into one small area comprising two or three mountain tops. The VRS instructed these remaining resistance fighters to reveal themselves and surrender. They were given until 13 July to do so and if they still remained hidden they would be killed the following day. This ABiH soldier moreover learned that the VRS expected the ABiH soldiers who did not surrender to attempt to reach Kamenica or Pogled by road. To reach Kamenica would involve a journey of 20 or 30 kilometres through densely wooded terrain before any reasonable progress could be made. According to the ABiH source, the VRS officer in the field said that it would take at least another 20 days to search the woodlands thoroughly.¹⁵²

It is not known how many prisoners the Bratunac Brigade was able to take in the area around Srebrenica after the 'sweep' operation ordered by General Krstic (as prompted by General Staff) on 13 July.¹⁵³ OP-A remained manned for some time after the fall of Srebrenica because the personnel were unable to withdraw as the dirt road to Potocari was impassable for their APC. From this OP, in the western part of the enclave, heavy gunfire in the immediate vicinity was reported on 15 and 16 July, although it was not possible to determine exactly what was happening.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 164.

¹⁵⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Butler Report, OTP Ex. 401, para. 7.62.

¹⁵¹ Interview Sefko Tihic, 08/03/99.

¹⁵² ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2. KorpUSA, 13/07/95, Str.pov.br. 02/08-01-1262.

¹⁵³ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Krstic Judgement, para. 193.

¹⁵⁴ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

11. 13 July: the journey continues

In the early morning of 13 July, the remaining members of the column regrouped on Mount Udrc (map 08). At a rough estimate, the column now comprised 5000 people, i.e. about half of its original size. According to Ramiz Becirovic, it was at this point that the 28th Division command first heard about the VRS road blocks on the Bratunac - Konjevic Polje road. At first, it was decided to send 300 ABiH soldiers back in an attempt to break through the blockades. When reports came in that the column had nevertheless succeeded in crossing the road at Konjevic Polje, this plan was abandoned. Approximately 1000 men managed to reach Udrc that night.¹⁵⁵

There was another unfortunate situation that day, prompting some people to consider turning back. The Police Chief Hakija Meholic reported having listened to Radio Sarajevo on which he heard ABiH Army Commander Rasim Delic say that the men should turn back to Srebrenica, the situation there having 'normalized' whereupon it was now possible for people to return to the town. 'We were supposed to go back to be killed,' according to Meholic. There was considerable confusion and disagreement concerning Rasim Delic's order, since Delic had no up-to-date information regarding the situation in Srebrenica. Some of the men wished to turn back. Delic's order threw many into utter confusion and there was even the threat of some infighting. The men seemed ready to shoot each other and it was only with some difficulty that this could be prevented. Meholic did not know whether any of the other groups had a radio and had heard Delic's message, nor what consequences this might have had. Meholic was able to calm the men. He believes that many now thought that neither side wanted them to leave the enclave alive. Many in their anger may even have thought, 'Let's make sure we leave the enclave, then we can fight the ABiH.' Everyone then wanted to proceed to Tuzla in order to 'clear things up'.¹⁵⁶

When asked about the radio message of 13 July calling on people to return to Srebrenica, Rasim Delic was vague. 'I would have to know the context. I can only imagine that departure would have undermined the morale of those remaining behind. It was important to us that they remained in the enclaves to ensure that Bosnia comprised more than just two free areas. Had the Vance-Owen peace plan been signed, to include a link between the enclaves and the free areas, that would have been a good thing. But that would have been impossible if the enclaves were then deserted.'¹⁵⁷

At 16.00 hours on the afternoon of 13 July, the reassembled head and central section of the column left Udrc and headed for the village of Glodi. One group took another route, probably unintentionally, to Cerska. Some managed to reach Zepa, others arrived in Tuzla after 20 July. The VRS assumed that the entire column would now take a route farther to the west, taking it to Mount Caparde.¹⁵⁸ When the main contingent reached Snagovo (no. 12 on the map), the next main staging post on the journey the following morning - 14 July - it came as a complete surprise to the VRS. Reconnaissance parties had reported VRS ambushes on the road to Caparde, particularly around Mount Velja Glava (no. 11 on map in this section). These reports forced the decision to abandon that route. A report from the Zvornik Brigade revealed that the VRS had indeed prepared itself on the assumption that the column was proceeding to Velja Glava.¹⁵⁹

At Glodjansko Brdo (no. 09) the head of the column under Commander Vejs Sabic waited for the remainder to catch up. The intention was to lead them on to the village of Redzici (no. 10) and from there to Snagovo (no. 12). It was assumed that those left behind (who probably included Ibro Mandzic's brigade) had taken the route to Caparde. The losses that this part of the column sustained

¹⁵⁵ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps (unnumbered). Additional statement by Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement of 11/08/95.

¹⁵⁶ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98 with additional material supplied on 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

¹⁵⁷ Interview Rasim Delic, 21/04/98.

¹⁵⁸ NIOD, Coll. MUP Republika Srpska. *Ministarstvo Unutrasnjih Poslova Republika Srpska kabinet ministra* to CJB Zvornik, *nachelniku, sstad komande policijskih snaga MUP-a, Bijeljina*, 13/07/95. K/p-416/95.

¹⁵⁹ The report was made at 09.10 hours on 14 July. ICTY, (IT-98-33), Krstic Judgement, para. 321.

during a confrontation with the VRS at Kamenica Gornja (no. 09), could be due to miscommunication between the various groups in the column. They had emerged from cover at precisely the wrong place and had walked straight into the VRS ambush that other parts of the column had managed to avoid.

On that same afternoon, the ABiH made preparations to receive the men of the column into Bosnian territory. The 2nd Corps set up a forward command post at the village of Medjedja on Mount Nezuk, from where units could come to the assistance of the 28th Division. Two of the 2nd Corps' battalions stationed around Sarajevo were ordered to move to Medjedja. There they were joined by Naser Oric and several other officers who were themselves originally from Srebrenica, such as Semso Murinovic and Velid Sabic (brother of Vejz), one of the ABiH brigade commanders. They were ordered to make contact with the 28th Division,¹⁶⁰ but were unable to do so. Oric had several radios with him and had hoped that someone in the column would recognize his voice and that he would recognize those of one or more people in the column.¹⁶¹ However, no communication was received from the 28th Division on the frequency that had been agreed between Becirovic and Budakovic during their last communication. Oric and the others had received orders to prepare for combat situations.

12. 14 July 1995

The Zvornik Brigade of the VRS was acting on the assumption that the column was heading for Velja Glava. However, at this time the brigade had no units which could be deployed to halt the column's progress. A battalion of the MUP Special Police under the command of 'Mane' (Captain Mendeljev Djuric, who had earlier been in Potocari and whose unit was later at Konjevic Polje), was instructed to proceed to the area. Further troops would arrive the following morning, having been withdrawn from around Zepa. Until then, the orders from the VRS were to maintain pressure on the column and to continue its observation.¹⁶²

Early in the morning of 14 July, the head of the column reached Josanica Gaj (map 12). The men halted here to rest and recuperate until 16.00 hours that afternoon. The reconnaissance parties had now arrived at Snagovo Gornje (on map 13).¹⁶³ When it moved on, the column passed Snagovo and crossed the Tuzla to Zvornik road later that night. Once again, this came as a surprise to the VRS, since they had expected the column to cross the road somewhere near Caparde. Because the chosen route was somewhat more to the east than had been expected, the VRS now feared an attack on the town of Zvornik, less than two kilometres from the column's route and, given its various crossings over the River Drina, of significant strategic importance. Units of the 24th and 25th Divisions of the 2nd Corps ABiH in Medjedja conducted decoy radio communications which appeared to be in preparation for just such an attack. They actually succeeded in making the VRS believe that an attack on Zvornik was imminent.¹⁶⁴ The VRS hurriedly sent reinforcements to the town. However, opportunities to divert the route of the column to the east and actually attack Zvornik were little more than hypothetical. According to Ramiz Becirovic, the men were physically incapable of any such attack, having spent the last few days in the woods.¹⁶⁵ But the VRS failed to take this into consideration. Only when the column, now two to three kilometres in length, had passed Maricici (map 13) did it become apparent that the men were heading for Baljkovica and Nezuk.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁰ Interviews Andjelko Makar with Vejz Sabic, 12/00.

¹⁶¹ *Dani*, 17/03/00, interview Vildana Selimbegovic with General Sead Delic.

¹⁶² ICTY, (IT-98-33), Krstic Judgement, para. 321.

¹⁶³ Interviews Damir Skaler and Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

¹⁶⁴ Interview Andjelko Makar, 12/00; see also Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjecaceni koverat*.

¹⁶⁵ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

¹⁶⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 550/a. Command of the 1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade to the Command of the Drina Corps, 14/07/95, no. 06-216/2.



Meanwhile, the 2nd Corps of the ABiH increased the pressure on the VRS. The VRS observed troop movements of the 2nd Corps to Sapna and Medjedja and opened artillery fire on these reinforcements. For its part, the ABiH mortar-shelled the positions now held by the most northerly battalion of the Zvornik Brigade. This action then escalated: in the early morning of 15 July, the 4th, 6th and 7th Battalions of the Zvornik Brigade, holding the lines near Baljkovica where the column was now heading, came under an artillery barrage lasting all of an hour. The VRS sustained only three casualties. The ambulance carrying these wounded men to Zvornik was shot upon by the column at Planinci (map 15), whereupon the driver and a medical orderly were killed. The ABiH soldiers in the column were able to cut the VRS' field telephone lines near Planinci, forcing the battalions to revert to radio communications which were more liable to interception.¹⁶⁷

13. 15 July 1995

In the early evening of 14 July, the ABiH scouts established the presence of VRS ambushes near the villages of Liplje and Maricici (map 13). Likewise, shortly after midnight on 14-15 July, the VRS observed that a column, 2.2 kilometres in length, passed nearby Liplje and, would meet the 4th and 7th Battalions of the Zvornik Brigade early in the morning. These battalions were ordered to muster as much manpower as possible to fire upon the column.¹⁶⁸ The VRS brought in reinforcements from various quarters and a Bosnian Serb police unit also lay in wait for the column. The column was unable to avoid this ambush and a full-scale battle resulted. Some survivors recall this as the worst of all the ambushes they encountered. The VRS fired on the column with tanks and anti-aircraft guns. Many were killed.¹⁶⁹ The Zvornik Brigade reported one hundred ABiH fatalities.¹⁷⁰ According to Ramiz Becirovic, some 300 Muslims were killed. Again, the foremost sections of the column were relatively unaffected, it being those farther back which suffered the greatest number of casualties. The fighting was fierce and Becirovic learned after the war that 88 Bosnian Serbs were killed,¹⁷¹ although this figure has not been corroborated by the VRS's own reports or casualty lists.

On 15 July, the VRS command called the commander of the first Zvornik Brigade, Vinko Pandurevic, back from Zepa to organize the defence of Zvornik. Units of the brigade which had been involved in the fighting around Srebrenica and Zepa were also recalled. In the morning, Pandurevic

¹⁶⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 597/a. Command of the 1st Zvornik pbr to Command of the Drina Corps, 15/07/95, No. 06-217.

¹⁶⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), D 100/a. Command of the 1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade, 14/07/95, number illegible.

¹⁶⁹ *Refugee Report*, Vol. XVI, No. 5, 31/07/95, p. 8.

¹⁷⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), D 101. Lt Col. Vinko Padurevic to Drina Corps Command, Extraordinary Combat Report, (15/07/95).

¹⁷¹ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

familiarized himself with the current situation: the Zvornik Brigade had absolutely no reserves. No major problems had yet been experienced on the front line, though units of the 2nd Corps were however firing, with varying intensity, upon the Zvornik Brigade with artillery and tanks. The outer areas of the town of Zvornik were also hit. Once the column commenced its attack at approximately 04.30 hours, the battalions which were supposed to lay the ambushes came under yet heavier fire. Four VRS men were killed and ten wounded.¹⁷² Pandurevic learned that Naser Oric was coming to meet the column. However, reports that Oric had already broken through at that moment were based on misinformation.¹⁷³

The foremost section of the column had by now crossed the Zvornik to Caparde road and was engaged in an assault on the two battalions of the Zvornik Brigade. This was a cause of great concern to the Intelligence section of the 1st Zvornik Brigade since it would be impossible to hold back the column (now thought of as 'kamikazes') with only the 500 VRS and MUP men available. It was felt that the higher command should deploy strong units to advance into the area between Udrc, Liplje and Krizevici. The Zvornik Brigade's Intelligence section then advised the command of the Drina Corps to consider opening up a corridor to allow the front section of the column, estimated to comprise some 1500 men, to pass. This corridor would then be closed off and the area swept. Pandurevic told the Drina Corps that he had contacted the ABiH and had offered to allow the civilians in the column to pass if the remainder would give themselves up. If this offer was not accepted, reinforcements would be urgently required. Because Naser Oric was also in contact with the column, the Zvornik Brigade feared an attack on the front line where it stood.¹⁷⁴

At 20.00 hours on 15 July, the column reached the area by Krizevici (no. 16 on the map), only two kilometres from its own lines. The second section of the column regrouped in the area close to Liplje (no. 13 on the map). The livestock which had been brought along was left by Udrc, as was the meagre logistic support that had been available.¹⁷⁵

The evening of 15 July saw the first radio contact between the 2nd Corps and the 28th Division, established using a Motorola walkie-talkie taken from the VRS. After initial distrust on the part of the 28th Division, the brothers Sabic were able to identify each other as they stood on either side of the VRS lines.¹⁷⁶ An unexpected turn of events was the capture of a VRS officer, Major Zoran Jankovic, near Liplje. This provided the ABiH with a significant bargaining counter. The 28th Division made Jankovic contact his commanding officer, codenamed 'Janez', to negotiate free passage. Semso Murinovic, then at the forward command post in Medjedja (the village on Mount Nezuk) conducted the negotiations on behalf of the 2nd Corps, dealing directly with the Commander of the Zvornik Brigade, Vinko Pandurevic, to obtain free passage to Tuzla for all the men.¹⁷⁷ Pandurevic offered to allow the civilians to pass and the military personnel to surrender. However, this was not acceptable to the ABiH commander on 'the other side'; everyone must be allowed to pass.¹⁷⁸

These negotiations were far from straightforward and took considerable time. The VRS demanded two hours to consider whether unarmed men could or should be allowed through. When these two hours had elapsed, the VRS demanded another hour. The VRS then announced that the column had been completely surrounded and that all personnel should now surrender under the terms of the Geneva Convention. The response from the ABiH was that the troops had no intention of giving themselves up and were prepared to engage in armed combat to break through the VRS line.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷² ICTY, (IT-98-33), D 101. Lt Col. Vinko Padurevic to Drina Corps Command, Extraordinary Combat Report, (15/07/95).

¹⁷³ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 608/a. Intercept Tuzla CSB, 15/07/95.

¹⁷⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 596/a. 1st Zvornik Infantry Brigade, Intelligence unit to Drina Corps Command, 15/07/95; ICTY, (IT-98-33), D 101. Lt Col. Vinko Padurevic to Drina Corps Command, Extraordinary Combat Report, (15/07/95).

¹⁷⁵ Interviews Andjelko Makar with Vejs Sabic, 12/00.

¹⁷⁶ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98, with additional material supplied on 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

¹⁷⁷ Interview Semsudin Muminovic, 16/06/00.

¹⁷⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 609/a, Command of the 1st Zvornik Brigade, 15/07/95, no. 06/217-1.

¹⁷⁹ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98 with additional material supplied on 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

According to some reports, Zulfo Tursunovic was also in radio contact with the VRS on 15 July (from his position at Krizevici) and he too requested free passage for all. If this was granted, his soldiers would not open fire. The VRS demanded that they should hand over their weapons, whereupon Tursunovic proposed an agreement whereby the wounded and unarmed civilians would be allowed to pass. But the VRS continued to demand that all personnel should surrender and that all weapons should be relinquished. Zulfo Tursunovic repeated his request in what was to be his final radio communication. When the VRS once again refused Tursunovic told his troops to 'fight until the very last man'.¹⁸⁰

14. 16 July: the breakthrough at Baljkovica

The hillside at Baljkovica formed the last VRS line separating the 28th Division from Bosnian-held territory. The VRS cordon actually consisted of two lines (map 17), the first of which presented a front on the Tuzla side against the 2nd Corps and the other a front against the approaching 28th Division. The VRS troops in position here included the 1st Zvornik Brigade under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Vinko Pandurevic and the Drina Wolves under the command of Captain Jolovic, codenamed 'Legenda'. Troops commanded by Major Obrenovic and the 4th Zvornik Brigade were also deployed here.

Following an unsuccessful attempt to reach the ABiH front line on 15 July, the head of the column assisted by the 2nd Corps succeeded in doing so on 16 July. At approximately 05.00 hours on 16 July, the 2nd Corps made its first attempt to break through the VRS cordon from the Bosnian side. This took place close to Baljkovica. The objective was to force a breakthrough close to the hamlets of Parlog and Resnik. Companies drawn from the 211th, 242nd and 243rd Brigades of the ABiH took part in this action, having been transported here from Srebrenik north of Tuzla. They were joined by Naser Oric and a number of his men. Sead Delic, Commander of the 2nd Corps, told Malkic, Commander of the 24th Division, that Naser Oric was expected to make physical contact with the 28th Division.

At 06.00 hours, the 2nd Corps made a second attempt to force a breakthrough and this time it was successful. Semsudin Murinovic was the Commander of the group which managed to drive a wedge through the line. Oric was involved but, according to Murinovic, was under the latter's command.¹⁸¹ According to Sead Delic, it was certainly not Oric who was responsible for the breakthrough but the other units.¹⁸² The Zvornik Brigade, the three battalions of which formed the target for this operation, described this as a very heavy combined artillery and infantry attack. The objectives of the VRS were clear: the ABiH was trying to penetrate the VRS defences in order create conditions to enable a large number of soldiers and civilians to leave the area.¹⁸³ The VRS lines were indeed penetrated, defence being hampered by heavy rainfall and hail. This was a combined offensive: the 28th Division carried out an action on one side of the front, while the foremost section of the column carried out a desperate all-out storm action on the other. After a brief reconnaissance raid, Ejub Golic with his battalion and Vejz Sabic with the 284th Brigade attacked the VRS line. They were able to capture several heavy arms including two Praga self-propelled anti-aircraft pieces which were then turned on the VRS. Ejub Golic was killed during this action and Vejz Sabic was wounded. Becirovic believed that the heroic actions of Ejub Golic accomplished the opening of the corridor.

From the direction of Tuzla, the VRS line was penetrated near Poljane at approximately 08.00 hours. This was accomplished by 26 soldiers of the 2nd Corps' 242nd Brigade, under the command of Senahid Hadzic, together with five of Naser Oric's men. It proved possible to drive a two-kilometre-wide breach in the VRS lines, although the VRS later maintained that the opening was no more than

¹⁸⁰ Interviews Damir Skaler and Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

¹⁸¹ Interview Semsudin Muminovic, 17/05/99.

¹⁸² *Dani*, 17/03/00, Vildana Selimbegovic's interview with General Sead Delic.

¹⁸³ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 612/a. Command of the 1st Zvornik Brigade to Command of the Drina Corps, 16/07/95, no. 06-218.

300 to 400 metres. The foremost section of the column was thus able to pass through the corridor, but because it was not possible to keep the corridor open for the groups which arrived later, many among these groups were killed.¹⁸⁴ The captured anti-aircraft pieces had to be relinquished once more and the hunt for stragglers was resumed with the same intensity as before the temporary ceasefire.¹⁸⁵ The rearmost section of the column was therefore the worst affected, just as it had been when crossing the road at Konjevic Polje.

At 10.00 hours, the command post at Medjedja reported to the 2nd Corps command in Tuzla that it had established contact with the 28th Division. A huge procession with a company of troops at the fore had been sighted. By this time, six soldiers had managed to reach the 2nd Corps' positions. They reported that the 28th Division had sufficient ammunition but little or no food.¹⁸⁶ Some men had thrown away their weapons on reaching the VRS lines in case they were taken prisoner. Others had taken up these weapons. One person recalled having started the journey with no weapon at all and finishing with a machine gun, having had three different weapons en route and having collected a large amount of ammunition.¹⁸⁷

Early in the afternoon, the 2nd Corps and the 28th Division of the ABiH met each other in the village of Potocani (no. 17 on the map). The moment was recorded by a photographer, Ahmed Bajric. The presidium of Srebrenica were the first to reach Bosnian terrain. Remarkably, a group of ABiH soldiers managed to reach Medjedja in a captured jeep bearing Yugoslav army identification marks, having killed the five original occupants of the vehicle. This was the only indication that the Yugoslav army may have been involved in any action against the column.¹⁸⁸

The opening-up of the corridor had not been subject to very much advanced planning. It was largely the result of a desperate attack. Intercepted VRS radio communications describe a mass assault carried out by the 28th Division. In many instances, unarmed Bosnian Muslims took on the VRS soldiers with their bare hands. Lieutenant Colonel Pandurevic, Commander of the Zvornik Brigade, stated that he had taken the decision to open up the corridor to allow unarmed personnel in the column to pass, in view of the enormous pressure being placed on his men.¹⁸⁹ As a VRS soldier later recalled, 'we did not believe that any of the Muslims would leave Bosnian Serb territory alive.' In fact, the VRS troops found themselves surrounded by men who had already made their minds up: they would break through this line or would die in the attempt. They were extremely highly motivated and really had no other choice having already come this close to Tuzla.¹⁹⁰

During his interview with the NIOD, Ramiz Becirovic declined to put a figure on the ABiH's losses at Baljkovica Donja. However, it is known that a considerable number of VRS personnel (mostly of the Drina Wolves) were killed, having been caught between the column trying to reach Tuzla and the forces which had come from the other direction to assist. According to Becirovic, the help of the 2nd Corps came too late as the 28th Division had already managed to fight its way through the VRS lines. Becirovic did not know the strength of the ABiH support force.¹⁹¹

Pandurevic reported to the Drina Corps that, in view of the pressure being exerted on his brigade and the losses already sustained, it was no longer possible to offer effective resistance. To avoid further losses among his own men, Pandurevic had decided to open up a corridor for the civilian population. In doing so he had reached agreement with Semsudin Murinovic. It seems probable that a number of ABiH soldiers were also able to escape through this corridor, although the majority of

¹⁸⁴ Interview Salih Brkic, 19/04/98.

¹⁸⁵ *Slobodna Bosna*, p. 28-31, 11/07/98. (FBIS translation).

¹⁸⁶ Sefko Hodzic *Otpaceni koverat*, p. 277.

¹⁸⁷ Interview Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

¹⁸⁸ John Pomfret, 'Bosnian Soldiers Evade Serbs in Trudge to Safety', *The Washington Post*, 18/07/95.

¹⁸⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Krstic Judgement, para. 165.

¹⁹⁰ Zeljko Palnincic, 'The call for help goes out to the rest', *Banja Luka Srpska Vojaska*, 03/11/95. (FBIS translated text).

¹⁹¹ Interview Ramiz Becirovic, 18/04/98.

people passing through it were indeed civilians. In return for allowing this safe passage, Pandurevic had demanded the release of a policeman and several soldiers who had been taken prisoner.¹⁹²

The corridor remained open for three hours. Pandurevic had orders given orders that the men were not to be fired upon unless his own troops were under direct threat. He also ordered the artillery bombardment to be suspended. One Bosnian source reported that three thousand Muslim men would have been able to pass through the corridor, but also contends that better advantage could have been taken of the confusion that was then rife among the Bosnian Serbs. Once the VRS had regrouped, the temporary ceasefire came to an end. During the night of 16 and 17 July, the VRS made it their business to track down and deal with any remaining ABiH troops in the area.¹⁹³

Pandurevic did not consult his superiors about opening up the corridor. When Karadzic heard about it, he asked the headquarters of the General Staff for further information. The General Staff, Mladic was later told, could not contact Pandurevic in the field to prevent him from taking any unauthorized action.¹⁹⁴ Pandurevic's decision was born of necessity because the Zvornik Brigade did not have the strength or resources to block the further progress of the column. Pandurevic made at least two complaints about the problems laid at his door during this period. One small section of his own unit together with a number of other units attached to his brigade, were involved in seeking suitable sites to hold 3000 Muslim men before going on to execute them and, later still, to obscure the evidence. At the same time, he was not only expected to block the progress of the column by force, he was also responsible for much of the confrontation line with the 2nd Corps of the ABiH. Pandurevic was in a particularly awkward situation because Zvornik could no longer be defended, whereupon its people were to accuse him of forsaking them as the price for the capture of Srebrenica.¹⁹⁵ On 16 July he was provided with some assistance from the Krajina Corps.¹⁹⁶

15. 17-20 July: the battle with the stragglers

Following the successful breakthrough at Baljkovica, the VRS stepped up its efforts to 'sweep the area clean'. Around Srebrenica, the Bosnian Serbs - including a number of MUP units - had already expended considerable energy in combing the area. On 13 July, when it became apparent that a number of pockets of resistance remained, General Krstic ordered units of the Bratunac and Milici Brigades and the Skelani Battalion to scour Srebrenica thoroughly.¹⁹⁷

On 15 July, Colonel Ignjat Milanovic, the Drina Corps' officer in charge of Air Defences, suggested that Colonel Vidoje Blagojevic, then Commander of the Bratunac Brigade, should be placed in charge of all units then engaged in cleansing the area around the enclave. Krstic agreed. On 16 July, Blagojevic was able to report that he had personally visited all units, including those of the MUP, in order to coordinate their action. However, the coordination of such activities was taken over by the General Staff on 17 July.¹⁹⁸

General Mladic sent instructions concerning the coordination of operations to round up and destroy the remaining ABiH directly to the brigades of the Drina Corps. Mladic assigned three colonels from the General Staff to the Zvornik Brigade to assist in planning and leading the combat operation to be undertaken by the VRS and MUP around Kamenica, Cerska and Udrc. Lieutenant Colonel Keserovic, staff officer representing the Military Police on the General Staff, was also assigned units of the Bratunac and Milici Brigades, the Military Police Battalion, the 67th Signals Regiment, the 65th Regiment and MUP units, with orders to sweep the areas around Bratunac and Milici. This task was to

¹⁹² ICTY, (IT-98-33), Butler Report, OTP Ex 401, para. 7.72.

¹⁹³ *Slobodna Bosna*, p. 28-31, 11/07/98. (FBIS translation).

¹⁹⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 636/a. Intercept Tuzla CSB, 16/07/95, No. 664.

¹⁹⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Butler Report, OTP Ex 401, para 7.71 and 7.75.

¹⁹⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Dannatt Report, OTP Ex. 385/a, para. 56.

¹⁹⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 287, 318.

¹⁹⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 287, 324.

be completed by 20.00 hours on 19 July. Immediately thereafter, Keserovic was expected to submit a plan to Mladic to continue operations towards Cerska. The brigade commanders approached the civilian authorities to provide additional manpower to search the area.¹⁹⁹ One explanation for the rather unusual step of placing officers of the General Staff in charge of this operation is that the Zvornik and Bratunac Brigades had by this time become involved in the attack on Zepa, whereupon the presence of the brigade commanders was required elsewhere.²⁰⁰

On 18 July, two battalions of Bratunac Brigade together with a number of civilians mobilized to help them, were engaged in searching the territory around the Pobudje hills, south of the Bratunac to Konjevic Polje road, which the column had crossed. They were also scouring the area around Konjevic Polje itself. There were still several small groups of men in this area, trying to reach Tuzla via Cerska.²⁰¹ The next day, the search was extended to cover a wider area around Potocari.²⁰² The Bratunac Brigade continued the search for several more days. On 20 and 21 July, the Brigade found several groups of men in the Pobudje and Konjevic Polje areas. They had been trying to break through to Tuzla. Every day, sections of the terrain were 'cleansed' and groups of fugitive men were murdered on the spot.²⁰³

During the search, the Bratunac Brigade discovered four children aged between eight and fourteen among the prisoners they took. They were taken to the barracks in Bratunac where they were placed in confinement. When one of them had described seeing a large number of ABiH soldiers committing suicide and shooting at each other, Brigade Commander Blagojevic suggested that the Drina Corps' press unit should record this testimony on video.²⁰⁴ It is not known whether any such recording was made. The fate of the boys also remains uncertain.

Elsewhere in the region, the Zvornik Brigade spotted several small groups close to Snagovo, moving in a northerly direction. At the same time, ABiH infantry units were firing on Zvornik Brigade battalions to the north of Baljkovica in an apparent attempt to prevent these units being able to move south to reinforce the VRS in their hunt for the remaining refugees.²⁰⁵ The ABiH units' pressure continued on 19 July, but the intensity of fire was not great. The Zvornik Brigade had been joined by other VRS units, but the strength was still no more than a company together with one platoon. Units of the MUP were by now preparing to close off the area. The Zvornik Brigade's losses on 19 July were just one man killed and another wounded. The Brigade took two ABiH soldiers prisoner that day and 'eliminated' thirteen.²⁰⁶ The exact course of events can be reconstructed from the testimony of one of the ABiH prisoners of war, related below.

16. A prisoner of war's story

So far, the events during the march to Tuzla have been considered at the broadest level. Next, the attention is shifted to a much narrower perspective, that of a single soldier in the rearmost part of the column, in order to illustrate the horrific experiences people were forced to undergo.

¹⁹⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 649/a. Command of Colonel General Ratko Mladic to DK Command for information, 1 zpbr, 1 blpbr, 1 mlpbr, 67 pv, 17/05/95, no. 03/4-1670.

²⁰⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Butler Report, OTP Ex 401, para. 12.15.

²⁰¹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 382/a. Command of the 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade to the Drina Corps Command, 18/07/95, No. 03-253-107.

²⁰² ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 377/a. Command of the 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade to the Drina Corps Command, 19/07/95, No. 03-253-108.

²⁰³ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 383/a and 3834/a. Command of the 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade to the Drina Corps Command, 20/07/95, No. 03-253-109 and 21/07/95, No. 03-253-110.

²⁰⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 375/a. Command of the 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade to the Drina Corps Command, 17/07/95, no. 03-253-106/1.

²⁰⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 676/a. Command of the Zvornik pbr to the Command of the Drina Corps, 18/07/95, no. 06-223.

²⁰⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 693/a. Command of the Zvornik pbr to the Command of the Drina Corps, 19/07/95, no. 06-224.

On the morning of 19 July, a soldier of the 284th Brigade was one of a group of ten men which arrived at a spot close to the VRS line at Baljkovica. They had been at the rear of the column and were now exhausted. They wanted to rest before attempting to cross into their own lines. The group hid themselves among pine trees and a clump of tall nettles and fell asleep. It was 14.00 hours when they were awakened by the noise of rifle bolts being drawn. The soldier looked up and saw a weapon. He lay there with a neighbour and his son-in-law, while his brother, four other neighbours and a friend lay just ten metres away. The Bosnian Serbs began to scream: 'We have seen you. You are surrounded. Stand up!' His brother-in-law, neighbour and family duly stood, as did an uncle and his son-in-law, but the soldier himself did not wish to stand up. The order to do so was heard several more times, but he remained crouching, waiting for the sound of a rifle shot. Twenty-five metres away stood a line of VRS soldiers. They fired shots into the bushes. Yet again they demanded that the group should give themselves up, and then again. The soldier then realized that those who had indeed already given themselves up were being shot.

This soldier had obtained a weapon in Kamenica. He considered opening fire, but realized that this would give his position away. He therefore waited in silence, and noticed that the Bosnian Serbs were doing nothing. He heard someone order the men on to search the next section. This was where he was hiding and he really did not believe that he could now survive. He was not sure whether any of his companions were still alive. He decided to stand up in order to increase his chances of survival. The Bosnian Serbs asked him where he had been all that time and he replied that he had been fast asleep, this being his first opportunity to sleep at all for the last seven days. The Bosnian Serbs then asked if there was anyone else among the bushes, to which he replied that he did not know. The butt of a gun was pushed against his hip and he was prodded forwards and made to walk down the hillside. He then saw that his brother also stood up, he too had a rifle. (Almost everyone in the column had the opportunity to arm themselves in one way or another, some taking weapons from dead VRS soldiers.)

Apparently, the Bosnian Serbs thought that the soldier's brother was about to shoot. The commander gave the order to open fire. The soldier then saw four people, his own brother among them, shot dead on the spot. In all probability, they were later buried in an old trench along the former front line. Five others from the group who had surrendered half an hour previously were lying on the ground and were being interrogated. Jewellery such as rings and watches were taken off them, whereupon the paramilitaries began to haggle among themselves as they divided up the spoils. The men on the ground remained unharmed for the time being.

The Bosnian Serbs asked the soldier whether he was indeed military personnel. He did not know what the others had been asked and whether they had already said that he was a soldier. Furthermore, if he denied it he might be shot. He therefore admitted that he was a soldier. This proved to be the right answer, since the response was, 'that's what you should say, at least you're honest'. Those who had been interrogated before him had all denied any military involvement, whereupon the next question was: who had actually been fighting to protect Srebrenica?

The others in the group were moved just four or five metres away. One was then shot in the back as the soldier in question looked on. When his brother-in-law's turn came, the man said, 'please... I was not a soldier!' He too was shot in the back but the bullet re-emerged just below his shoulder and the brother-in-law survived.

At first the ABiH-soldier was threatened with another method of execution. He was told that he was to be killed with a knife. One of the Bosnian Serb paramilitaries was indeed playing with a knife, but his commander ordered that this was not to be used: perhaps it would be possible to exchange the soldier for one of their own prisoners. Apparently the VRS needed thirty ABiH soldiers to exchange for one of their own officers who had been taken prisoner. This soldier owed his life to this arrangement.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Confidential interview (55).

These incidents involved no regular VRS units. Rather, they were the work of the Special Police and police personnel from Zvornik. The senior officer at the location wrote down the names of the people who had been killed. Throughout the operation he was in radio contact with one Vukasinovic (possibly of the Military Police), from which it became obvious that he had no authority to act independently. Only when the commanding officer asked what he should do with the others was he told to decide for himself.²⁰⁸

Having been taken prisoner, the ABiH soldier was first interrogated in Karakaj. He was asked why he had become a soldier, where he had been in action, how many people he had killed, and if he knew who had killed the persons they mentioned. He named only people whom he knew were already dead.

For three days he was held prisoner in a paint factory in Zvornik, tied up in a toilet with his hands fastened to a tap above his head. He was the first to be confined at this location, but was to be followed by another 39 Muslim men who had been taken captive in various places. They included children of about 14 or 15 years of age. All were later transferred to the prisoner of war camp at Batkovici. There, he was put to work in a flour mill every day. The food in the camp was poor, but the advantage of working in the mill was that he was able to eat the flour and could smuggle some out in socks for the other prisoners in the camp.

Some prisoners from this camp were exchanged. The wounded and anyone who did not feel well were the first to be considered for such exchanges. There were inspections by the International Red Cross but according to this soldier, they had been instructed to look only in certain places and were allowed to stay no longer than half an hour. The prisoners' treatment improved only after the Dayton Accord had been signed. For example, clothes were distributed. The soldier was himself exchanged late 1995. At that time, there were still 229 men from Srebrenica in the Batkovici camp, including two men who had been taken prisoner in June or July 1994. These had not taken part in any combat action but had merely been working in the fields close to the confrontation line.²⁰⁹

17. After 20 July

Many members of the ABiH 28th Division and Muslim men in the column heading for Tuzla lagged behind, stranded for the moment in Bosnian Serb-held territory. They chose to follow the clearly visible tracks of those who had preceded them. Given the large number of missing persons, it could reasonably have been expected that many groups would follow, even after 20 July. The VRS observed a group of around 200 to 300 men close to Snagovo, most of whom were armed. Some were taken prisoner; two committed suicide.²¹⁰ The following day, further groups of armed ABiH men were found during the search of the area. The Bircani Brigade, sent as reinforcement to the area along the confrontation line, reported that they now had matters under control but they too were beset by difficulties due to the ABiH activity along the front.²¹¹

The VRS continued to suffer losses. Lieutenant Colonel Pandurevic of the Zvornik Brigade complained that his unit had been involved in active operations for too long and that he had been given no time for rest. This, he claimed, had resulted in his unit suffering 39 deaths, 6 men missing and 91 casualties. A large number of armed groups were wandering the rear-area of the brigade, while the

²⁰⁸ Confidential interview (55).

²⁰⁹ Confidential interview (55). Other sources give the number of 230 men. They too complained of poor food and poor living conditions in the camp, the only positive point being that there was little or no physical abuse. Of the 230 prisoners, approximately 180 had been captured during the march to Tuzla. (Hren, *Srebrenica*, pp. 219-221 and 233).

²¹⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), D 110/a. Command of the 1st Bircani Infantry Brigade to Command of the Drina Corps, 20/07/95, no. 03/1-721.

²¹¹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), D 110/a. Command of the 1st Bircani Infantry Brigade to Command of Drina Corps, 21/07/95, no. 03/1-722.

ABiH was still making attempts to break through the front line.²¹² The 2nd Corps tried unsuccessfully to reopen the corridor by means of an assault. The morale of the ABiH troops had fallen; Oric was no longer in the battlefield and the attack could now be conducted on one side only.²¹³ General Sead Delic would later berate Oric for not having remained in the corridor to defend it and to organize matters there. Instead, he had proceeded onwards with his men.²¹⁴

At about 21.00 hours on 22 July, the ABiH commenced a three-pronged attack on the 3rd Battalion of the Zvornik Brigade. This VRS battalion was occupying the lines further to the north of Baljkovica. The assault was followed by another shortly after midnight on the area held by the 4th Battalion of the Zvornik Brigade, which was closing the line near Baljkovica. Again, the objective was to force another breakthrough. In a situation report, the VRS battalion commander estimated the strength of the ABiH attacking force, now exerting considerable pressure, to be in the region of fifty men. Six of these were killed. In the morning of 23 July, the ABiH launched yet another attack, this time to the south of Baljkovica. This was also unsuccessful. Thereafter, the fighting was limited to sporadic gunfire aimed at the VRS positions. The VRS losses were one dead and one injured. The ABiH did not enjoy sufficient strength of numbers and its actions were restricted to infantry attacks. By contrast, the VRS was in the highest possible state of readiness. This was essential since the groups attempting to pass the confrontation line would stop at nothing to do so. Twenty Bosnian Muslims were killed in the attempt, while seven were taken prisoner. Another group of some 50 armed men and 200 unarmed men were spotted approximately one kilometre from the forward line.²¹⁵

Further to the south, along the route between Planinci and Brezik (no. 14-15 on the map) units of the Zvornik Brigade and the MUP were still combing the terrain for remaining Muslim refugees. Ten men were killed in this area. According to VRS reports, most were carrying automatic weapons. Twenty-three men were taken prisoner; the reports describe these as soldiers but unarmed. In all probability they were civilians. At another location, a further 17 men were taken prisoner. Brigade Commander Vinko Pandurevic asked the Drina Corps to waste no time in setting up a committee to oversee the exchange of prisoners, and further requested instructions regarding where he should take his prisoners and to whom he should hand them over. On interrogation, it seemed that several groups had turned back to Udrc (no. 08 on the map) when they found it impossible to pass the VRS posts, cross the lines at Baljkovica or establish a route to Kladanj along the Caparde road.²¹⁶

Yet farther south, numerous refugees found themselves cut off for some time in the area around Mount Udrc. They did not know what to do next or where to go. They managed to stay alive by eating snails, leaves and mushrooms. The atmosphere was one of tension, hunger and desperation. None knew how the others had fared. On or about 23 July, the Bosnian Serbs swept through this area too, and according to one survivor they killed many people as they did so.²¹⁷

The reports of the Bratunac and Zvornik brigades say little about the activities of the Bosnian Serb civilian population in tracking down the remaining refugees. It is known that for a while some civilians had been forced to join in the hunt in the area under the control of the Bratunac Brigade. The Zvornik Brigade makes no mention of civilian assistance. Nevertheless, a father and son - both VRS conscripts - were given three days' detention for failing to report the sighting of 'enemy forces', having supplied four Muslim men with food and clothing and explained to them how to pass the lines. The men concerned, however, lost their way, were exhausted and decided to give themselves up in a Bosnian Serb village. They revealed the names of their erstwhile benefactors to the Military Police in Zvornik.²¹⁸ The names of these four men are included on the list of missing persons but it is possible

²¹² ICTY, (IT-98-33), D 103/a. Lt. Col. Vinko Pandurevic to the Command of Drina Corps, 21/07/95, no. 01-272.

²¹³ Interview Semsudin Muminovic, 17/05/99.

²¹⁴ *Dani*, 17/03/00, interview by Vildana Selimbegovic with Sead Delic.

²¹⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 391/a. 1st Zvornik pbr to Drina Corps Command, 23/07/95, no. 06-230/1.

²¹⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 708/a. 1st Zvornik pbr to Drina Corps Command, 22/07/95, no. 06-229.

²¹⁷ Hren, *Srebrenica*, p. 238.

²¹⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 707/a and 706/a. Zvornik Military Police, 23/07/97 and 25/07/95.

that they were survivors of the mass-executions at the Branjevo Military Farm. The village where they made contact with the father and son conscripts was not far from Branjevo, less than twenty kilometres north of Baljkovica. According to one of the Bosnian Serb benefactors, the men's clothes were soaked in blood. This ties in with the story of another Branjevo Farm survivor who reported that he had left the execution site along with four other men.²¹⁹

The Zvornik and Bratunac Brigades had by no means given up their search for stragglers, although the large-scale executions now seemed to have come to an end. (The full story of these executions is recounted in Chapter 2 of this part). However, this is not to say that the killing had stopped; reports of 'liquidations' continued to come in from the field but many of those who were captured or who gave themselves up after 20 July were taken to the prisoner of war camp at Batkovici.

As said, on 22 July, the commanding officer of the Zvornik Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel Vinko Pandurevic, requested the Drina Corps to set up a committee to oversee the exchange of prisoners. He also asked for instructions with regard to the prisoners of war his unit had already taken: where they should be handed over and to whom.²²⁰ On 25 July, the Zvornik Brigade took a further 25 ABiH soldiers captive. They were taken directly to the camp at Batkovici. The same fate befell another 34 ABiH men the following day. The Zvornik Brigade reports until 31 July continue to describe the search for refugees and the capture of small groups of Muslims.²²¹ On 26 July, the Bratunac Brigade also reported the presence of small groups of men in its area, and as late as 18 October 1995 Major Nikolic of this brigade suggested closing of the village of Slapovic within the former enclave in order to track down remaining Muslim men.²²²

Meanwhile, the VRS had commenced the process of clearing the bodies from around Srebrenica, Zepa, Kamenica and Snagovo. Work parties and municipal services were deployed to help. In Srebrenica, the refuse that had littered the streets since the departure of the people was collected and burnt, the town disinfected and deloused.²²³

The ABiH 2nd Corps' forward command post at Medjedja closed on 30 July, indicating that they too had given up any hope of further refugees being able to pass the lines at Baljkovica. Nevertheless, small groups and the odd individual did manage to reach Bosnian territory. On 5 August 1995, during a meeting of the SDA party council in Zencia, ABiH Commander Rasim Delic said that he considered it likely that another 500 to 600 soldiers would soon reach Tuzla to join the 3600 men who had already arrived.²²⁴ Between this day and 16 April 1996, no fewer than 270 days after the fall of Srebrenica, around 1000 more men managed to reach Bosnian territory. The exact number is not known, neither is it known how many were military personnel. The Bosnian Government has never released these figures.²²⁵

From the situation reports sent by the Zvornik Brigade to the Drina Corps, it is possible to deduce from the ammunition usage exactly when the fighting between the column and the brigade and between the brigade and the units of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH which came to the assistance of the column, was most intense. Each situation report was prepared at the end of the afternoon and covers the preceding twenty-four hours. We thus see that the Zvornik Brigade first became embroiled in combat with the column on 14 July.

²¹⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Butler Report, OTP Ex 401, para. 10.12 - 10.17.

²²⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 708/a. 1 Zvornik Brigade to Drina Corps Command, 22/07/95, no. 06-229.

²²¹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Butler Report, OTP Ex 401, paras 10.20 and 10.21.

²²² ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 380/a. 1st Bratunac lpr to Drina Corps Command, 26/07/95, no. 03-253-116. ICTY, (IT-98-33), 00706671. Working meeting of commander with command staff and battalion commanders, 16/10/95.

²²³ ICTY, (IT-98-33), D 102/a. Drina Corps Command, Deputy Commander of the Rear, Col. Lazar Acamovic, 24/07/95, no. 18-146/95.

²²⁴ *Dani*, Special edition, September 1998.

²²⁵ Nijaz Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 209.

The table below shows the various types of small-bore ammunition used, together with the various calibres of artillery and mortar shells. On 17 July, the brigade also used 364 hand grenades and light mortar shells.²²⁶

Table: Ammunition used by the Zvornik Brigade of the VRS, 13-19 July 1995

	Small bore (infantry)	Large bore (artillery)
13 July	-	187
14 July	?	?
15 July	31,950	-
16 July	125,780	272
17 July	129,560	239
18 July	37,040	43
19 July	14,000	-

18. The fate of those remaining in Kamenica

The VRS took the largest number of prisoners on 13 July, along the Bratunac - Konjevic Polje road. It remains impossible to cite a precise figure, but witness statements describe the assembly points such as the field at Sandici, the agricultural warehouses in Kravica, the school in Konjevic Polje, the football field in Nova Kasaba, the village of Lolici and the village school of Luke. Several thousands of people were herded together in the field near Sandici and on the Nova Kasaba football pitch.²²⁷ The men who had surrendered were intimidated and bullied, both physically and verbally. They were searched and put into smaller groups. In a video tape made by journalist Zoran Petrovic, a VRS soldier states that at least 3000 to 4000 men had given themselves up on the Konjevic Polje - Nova Kasaba road. By the late afternoon of 13 July, the total had risen to some 6000. A radio communication intercepted at 17.30 hours that day states that there were indeed approximately 6000 prisoners at this time. The following day, Major Franken of Dutchbat was given the same figure by Colonel Radislav Jankovic of the VRS. Many of the prisoners had been seen in the locations described by passing convoys taking the women and children to Kladanj by bus, while various aerial photographs have since provided evidence to confirm this version of events.²²⁸

One hour after the evacuation of the women from Potocari was completed, the Drina Corps staff diverted the buses to the areas in which the men were being held. Colonel Krsmanovic, who on 12 July had arranged the buses for the evacuation, ordered the 700 men in Sandici to be collected. The soldiers guarding them made them throw their possessions on a large heap and hand over anything of value. During the afternoon, the group in Sandici was visited by Mladic who told them that they would come to no harm, that they would be treated as prisoners of war, that they would be exchanged for other prisoners and that their families had been escorted to Tuzla in safety. Some of these men were placed on the transport to Bratunac and other locations, while some were marched on foot to the warehouses in Kravica. The men gathered on the football ground at Nova Kasaba were forced to hand over their personal belongings. They too received a personal visit from Mladic during the afternoon of 13 July. On this occasion, he announced that the Bosnian authorities in Tuzla did not want the men and that they were therefore to be taken to other locations. The men in Nova Kasaba were loaded onto buses and trucks and were taken to Bratunac or the other locations.²²⁹

²²⁶ ICTY, (IT 98-33), OTP Ex. 540/a, 597/a, 612/a, 641/a, 676/a. Command of the 1st Zvornik pbr to Command of the Drina Corps, 13/07/95, no. 06-216, 15/07/95, no. 06-217, 16/07/95, no. 06-218, 17/07/95, no. 06-219, 18/07/95, no. 06-223.

²²⁷ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, report of 12/07/95, no. 02/8-10-1253, contents based on intercepts.

²²⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 64, 83, 171.

²²⁹ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, report of 12/07/95, no. 02/8-10-1253, contents based on intercepts; ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, para. 171, 177.

In Bratunac, many were forced to spend the night in the buses and trucks which had brought them there. Some were locked in sheds and warehouses in Bratunac, where they spent the night. Throughout the night, VRS soldiers came to the places in which the men were being held, probably looking for people from certain villages, perhaps their own. The next day, 14 July, the prisoners were once again to be transported onwards. Most had not left the vehicles. Some remained in the buses and trucks until the afternoon when they were finally taken to the execution sites. What happened next is described in the following chapter.

It is not known precisely how many people gave themselves up to the Bosnian Serb forces. It is thought that up to one third of the original column, mostly the foremost sections, managed to reach Mount Udrc. According to witness statements, many reached Udrc only later, in some cases several months later. The testimony of the people who managed to avoid falling into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs at Kamenica reveals an atmosphere of absolute desperation and disorientation. Some descended from the mountains at Kamenica in order to drink fresh water from the streams and to rest a while. Others were unable to rest as the hunt went on.

At one point, the group heard the sound of a truck. This heralded the arrival of a large group of VRS soldiers, some 150 to 200 in number. About one in every three was accompanied by a sniffer dog. The VRS lined up and swept the area, forcing those present to head off in the direction of the tarmac road at Konjevic Polje. People were desperately looking for some hiding place; some of the Muslim men found a small hut, just two metres by two, used for smoking meat. They huddled inside hoping to find safety. They did not. The VRS merely shot straight through the hut.

Many people in the part of the column which had not succeeded in passing Kamenica did not wish to give themselves up and decided to turn back towards Zepa. Others remained where they were, splitting up into smaller groups of no more than ten. Some wandered around for months, either alone or groups of two, four or six men. Few knew the way and attempted to navigate by following overhead power cables or the paths which had obviously been trodden recently. They had exhausted their supplies. Occasionally they would walk for days only to arrive back where they had started. They often found corpses, by now in a state of decomposition. Sometimes one group met another group from Srebrenica who knew of a deserted Muslim village in the region. They would then proceed there together.

To feed themselves, the Muslim men took potatoes and other vegetables from the fields around the Serbian villages at night. The local Bosnian Serb population therefore began to mount patrols around their villages. The Muslims would generally sleep by day and wait for the cover of darkness before moving on. Some arrived in Tuzla after many months, having been wandering around the area between Srebrenica and Udrc with absolutely no sense of direction. This continued for a long time. For example, the people of Milici, a village on the route to Tuzla, discovered the disappearance of livestock in November 1995. A group of some ten to twenty of them went in search of stragglers from the column, armed with shotguns.²³⁰

Some of the Muslim men decided to retrace their steps towards the Srebrenica region, since this was familiar territory and they knew where to find food. From here, they would once again set out towards Zepa or attempt to reach Tuzla. A few hundred managed to reach Zepa just before the VRS occupied the enclave on 25 July. They were able to meet up with the local ABiH units. Once Zepa had succumbed to the Bosnian Serb pressure, they had to move on once more, either trying to reach Tuzla or crossing the River Drina into Serbia. (See the final Chapter of this part: 'The fate of the other eastern enclaves'.) Some men were able to join the refugee convoys which began to leave Zepa for Kladanj on 25 July, under the supervision of UNPROFOR.

There are countless stories recalling the experiences of those who lost contact with the column, their wanderings and the horrors they saw. They include the account of a 54-year-old engineer who lost touch with his group near to Kravica and who was attacked by a Bosnian Serb civilian wielding a metal

²³⁰ Interview Rajko Dukic, 14 /06/00.

pipe. The engineer was beaten unconscious and left for dead. When he came round, he went into hiding for a day before meeting a group of six other men from Srebrenica. Together, they lay low for another two days, living on mushrooms and the few rations they had remaining. During the next few days, this group grew to include approximately 50 men. They were surrounded by VRS troops who demanded that they should give themselves up. Most did so immediately, but the engineer and seven others managed to remain hidden. This group split up, later met yet another VRS patrol and once again managed to escape capture. Hunger forced them to turn back to Srebrenica in the hope of finding something to eat in one of the abandoned villages. Eventually, the engineer reached Zepa where he managed to find a place on one of the last buses to transport the evacuees out of the town. At first, VRS soldiers refused to allow him to board, but he was able to get onto another bus. Mladic was there to bid a personal farewell to the passengers, assuring them that no harm would come to them on the way. A CNN camera team was there to record the scene and the Bosnian Serbs thus managed to create the impression of being 'not that bad after all'.²³¹

During the night of 17 and 18 July, a group of approximately 40 men who had turned back from Kamenica towards Srebrenica were hiding in the former enclave close to Slatina (where OP-A had been). A VRS truck was here, with two VRS soldiers waiting for their colleagues to return. Most of the houses had been burned down. Close to a stream stood a Dutch vehicle. The men found some eggs and a little sugar in one of the houses; in another the oven was still hot. It transpired that it had been lit by another group of nine Muslim men. That night, the men ate fresh bread for the first time in over a week.

On the way to Zepa, the group of refugees arrived at an unidentified village. One of them knew how to open a beehive and extract the honey. This group included a man whose throat had been slit. In order to give him moisture, a length of corn grass was inserted into the wound like a straw. This man reached Zepa and was later treated in hospital in Sarajevo. By this time, the group had grown to include some 50 men and so they decided to split into two smaller groups. They now had a substantial supply of honey, flour, oil and potatoes, as well as some small livestock found wandering about. Fires were lit over which they made pancakes. Two goats were killed and skinned. Suddenly an anti-tank rocket exploded close by. The VRS had spotted the smoke from the fire. Bosnian Serbs shouted that the group was now completely surrounded. However, this proved not to be the case. The group knew the area extremely well and could therefore escape in the nearby woods. The VRS dared not take up pursuit. One of the group members had his family home in a house along the route and here they were able to find some clothing and more food in the form of walnuts and plums. The VRS was very close by but was far too busy looting other houses to take any notice of this group. The men then moved on towards Zepa and managed to enter the enclave some time later.²³²

Some men had remained behind in the former enclave of Srebrenica and had spent many days just wandering about. One reports seeing eight men killed during a *razzia* which took place in the village of Suceška, in the south-western corner of the enclave, on 10 August. On 18 August, the same man, together with about 30 others, found himself in the village of Pale, not far from the former UN compound at Potocari. They were assembled in a house, discussing the possibility of breaking out. That night, the house was surrounded. There was gunfire and then the house was set on fire. The man and six others managed to escape but they were chased and three of them were killed. The VRS continued to scour the area for another two days. The man later returned to Pale where he discovered that the bodies of his fellows had been mutilated. He and a few others remained in Suceška until 1 September before setting out for Tuzla.

On the way they discovered another group of six men from Zepa and Srebrenica. This group had been trying to find a way of crossing the front line at Olovo (between Tuzla and Sarajevo) but had lost their way and turned back to Srebrenica. Not far from Zepa they fell into an ambush. It was here

²³¹ *Refugee Report*, Vol. XVI, no. 5, 31/07/95, p. 6-7.

²³² Confidential interview (51).

that this man found their bodies, as his group was also forced to turn back through lack of food. On 18 September, the man whose testimony this is formed part of a group of ten trying once again to reach Tuzla. By this time he was forced to walk without shoes. The group moved only at night, thus successfully avoiding two ambushes. The group saw many corpses along the way, and it was particularly poignant that many had been killed only a few kilometres from the safe territory. Following a nine-day march, the group reached Tuzla, 75 days after the fall of Srebrenica.²³³

Yet others remained in hiding in Cerska for two full months. They would remain concealed by day and emerge at night to prepare food with whatever could be found in the village. The VRS searched the area on several occasions and some men were killed or taken prisoner. Eventually, those remaining decided to set out for Kladanj, despite not knowing the way. They arrived there on 12 September.²³⁴

A number of Muslim men were still wandering the immediate area months after being forced to turn back from their efforts to reach safe territory, while others found themselves in Serbia where they were arrested and transferred to various camps (from which 211 people were later released). One of these camps, Sljivovica near Uzice, had a particularly bad reputation. Muslims were physically and mentally abused here; they had to sleep on the floor and were given little food, despite provisions being supplied by the International Red Cross and UNHCR. These rations did not reach the prisoners. The prisoners were made to strike each other, perform certain sexual acts and to use Serbian names. Although the International Red Cross exercised due supervision and recorded all reports of abuse, the guards' attitude never changed.²³⁵

A particularly memorable story is that of three young men aged 17, 18 and 19.²³⁶ On several occasions they attempted to cross the main Konjevic Polje to Nova Kasaba road but were unsuccessful in doing so each time. They eventually managed to reach Zepa only after the enclave had fallen. They had set up camp in a couple of deserted Muslim villages where they managed to hide out for several months without attracting attention. They stole a cow from a Serbian village, slaughtered it and dried the meat. They were able to survive on this for several months, while also giving some to passers-by from Srebrenica. Sometimes the teenagers would escort groups of refugees as far as the next obstacle before eventually returning to their base. Finally, on 26 April 1996, a full six months after the signing of the Dayton Accord, they crossed the Drina into Serbia. They hid their rucksacks and pistol on the riverbank, intending to hitch-hike to Uzice. A driver stopped and they told him that they had come from Srebrenica. The man took them to the police station in Uzice where they made a statement. One of them was then required to accompany a police officer back to the Drina to look for the rucksacks and pistol. The rucksacks were recovered but not the weapon. The three youths were then taken to the camp at Sljivovica where they met other people from Srebrenica. In June 1996, the entire group was transferred to Padinska Skela, the largest prison in Belgrade. Here they met representatives of the International Red Cross and a number of senior Serbian politicians. They stated that they had been treated well at all times. The conversations were friendly in tone. They were asked to recount their experiences; they gave interviews to a Serb newspaper. Eventually, in October 1996 they were given the choice of returning to Bosnia or emigrating to Finland. Most of the people then detained in Padinska Skela, 23 in all, opted for Finland. The three young men chose Tuzla, where they were eventually reunited with their mothers.²³⁷

Another group of seven men wandered about in occupied territory for the entire winter. On 10 May 1996, after nine months on the run, they were discovered in a quarry by American IFOR soldiers. The seven men immediately surrendered to the Americans. They were searched and their weapons -

²³³ Hren, *Srebrenica*, pp 40-42.

²³⁴ Hren, *Srebrenica*, pp. 244-245.

²³⁵ Hren, *Srebrenica*, pp. 24, 149-151 and 201-203.

²³⁶ Witness statements given to the 'state Commission for the Collection of Facts Information concerning War Crimes committed in Bosnia Hercegovina.'

²³⁷ Interview Mevlida Salihovic, 10/12/99, who had produced a radio report on the group in question.

two pistols and three hand grenades - were confiscated. The men said that they had been in hiding in the immediate vicinity of Srebrenica since the fall of the enclave, and had set out for Tuzla only seven days previously. This story did not stand up to scrutiny: their clothes and footwear were reasonably clean and certainly not in keeping with having been on the road for seven days, let alone almost a year in hiding. Some of the men were clean-shaven and were wearing only parts of a uniform. They did not look like soldiers and the Americans decided that this was a matter for the police. The operations officer of this American unit ordered that a VRS patrol should be escorted into the quarry whereupon the men would be handed over. A unit of the International Police Task Force which happened to be in the area would supervise this operation.²³⁸ A Bosnian Serb court convicted the group - known as the Zvornik 7 - for illegal possession of firearms and the murder of four Serbian woodsmen. This conviction was later quashed (for 'procedural reasons') following pressure from the international community.²³⁹

19. The arrival of the men in Bosnian territory

Only a few journalists were present to witness the arrival of the column in Bosnian-held territory after its eventful march across country. Most attention was being devoted to the reception of the women and children at the Air Base in Tuzla. The few items that appeared in the press and on television described the arrival of 'an army of ghosts': men clad in rags, totally exhausted and emaciated by hunger. Some had no more than underwear, some were walking on bleeding feet wrapped in rags or plastic, and some were being carried on makeshift stretchers. There were men walking hand in hand with children. Many were still visibly frightened.²⁴⁰ Some were delirious and hallucinating as a result of the immense stress and privations they had endured. One soldier began to fire on his own unit as they arrived in Baljkovica; he had to be killed to prevent further bloodshed.²⁴¹ The medical station set up by the ABiH in Medjedja handed out large quantities of tranquillizers. As one survivor said, anyone who had not been on the march could not possibly begin to imagine what it had been like.²⁴²

When the men arrived in Bosnian territory they were not required to report in. UNPROFOR was not involved in the men's reception and had not been asked to provide any assistance.²⁴³ At Medjedja, the ABiH set up tents for the first refugees. The wounded were taken to hospital. For the others, there were trucks standing by to take them to Tuzla to meet up with family or friends.²⁴⁴ Many of the ABiH soldiers in the column were taken to an airfield near Zivinice where they were kept away from journalists by the ABiH. According to Othan Zimmerman, a reporter for the Dutch national daily *Algemeen Dagblad*, these men were forbidden to contact anyone, even their own families.²⁴⁵ However, this was certainly not the case for all ABiH troops.

While others were heading for family or friends, ABiH soldier Damir Skaler had no one to turn to: he was a Croat. He arrived in Tuzla between 21.00 and 21.30 hours, still armed, looking for the local barracks where he could rest and recuperate. He could barely walk. An elderly man approached him and said, 'You still have your weapon. You must be from Srebrenica.' Damir Skaler asked the way to the barracks. The old man said that it was some way further and saw that Skaler could not possibly hope to walk such a distance in his condition. He promised to arrange transport and flagged down a car

²³⁸ <http://www.linder.com/berserk/berserk.html> (on line 19/07/99). 'The Soldiers Who First Encountered the Zvornik Seven' and 'The Officer Who First Took Charge of the Zvornik Seven', 24/05/96.

²³⁹ *Ljiljan*, 04/02/98. For a first-person account, see Hren, *Srebrenica*, pp. 111-114.

²⁴⁰ Julian Borger, 'Return of the Ghosts of War', *The Guardian*, 18/07/95 and John Pomfret, 'Bosnian Soldiers Evade Serbs in Trudge to Safety', *The Washington Post*, 18/07/95.

²⁴¹ Interview Semsudin Muminovic, 17/05/99.

²⁴² Julian Borger, 'Return of the Ghosts of War', *The Guardian*, 18/07/95 and John Pomfret, 'Bosnian Soldiers Evade Serbs in Trudge to Safety', *The Washington Post*, 18/07/95.

²⁴³ Chris Hedges, 'Muslim Refugees Slip Across Serb Lines', *New York Times*, 18/07/95.

²⁴⁴ Interview Smail Mandzic, 18/05/99.

²⁴⁵ Interview Othan Zimmerman, 28/04/00.

on the street. The driver took Skaler to the barracks. The Officer of the Guard told him that he must relinquish his weapon before he could be given any help. Skaler did not wish to do so and the officer did not dare to take the gun from him by force. 'The people from the enclaves were like wild men.' Eventually, Skaler decided to hand over his weapon. He then telephoned a captain he had known in Srebrenica and who had been in Tuzla since 1992. He wanted to ask the officer to confirm his identity. For unknown reasons, Skaler had already been reported dead.²⁴⁶

When Damir Skaler left the barracks the next day, he was given a car and driver to help in the search for his wife, whose whereabouts he did not know, and to help him arrange accommodation. He first went to Tuzla Air Base where he found his wife almost immediately. She told him that she knew where to lay hands on a tractor to take them back to Tuzla. Skaler said that this really wasn't necessary since he had a chauffeur-driven Mercedes standing by. His wife replied that it was nice to see that he was still alive, but that he was obviously delusional. When they arrived at the car to find the chauffeur stood holding its door open for them, she was forced to admit that he had no mental problems.²⁴⁷

Almost everyone who had arrived here from the enclave had contacts among the refugee population in Tuzla to whom they could turn for help. Alternatively, they would seek out relatives at Tuzla Air Base, where many of the women and children from Srebrenica had been taken. One witness, Muharem Mujic, reports having spent an entire day at the Air Base looking for his wife with no success. He spent that night in student lodgings. The next day he borrowed some money from a friend and took the bus to Kladanj where he did find his wife. It was while he was sitting on the bus from Tuzla to Kladanj that the effects of the long journey began to emerge. Having survived the harshest of privations, he had reached safety. Yet he completely forgot that you have to buy a ticket to travel on a bus and was visibly surprised when he was asked him to produce one. The bus driver said simply, 'Oh, you must be from Srebrenica.'²⁴⁸

The men who had managed to reach safety spoke of little else besides the atrocities they had seen, the fighting they had endured and the fact that many of their comrades had been killed. The survivors felt a certain bitterness towards the UN because it had not been able to protect the 'safe Area'.²⁴⁹ That bitterness and resentment was also directed towards the 2nd Corps of the ABiH. The column's arrival on Bosnian soil was marked by a number of incidents. In one, a member of the 28th Division opened fire at his own Corps Commander, Sead Delic. A Military Police bodyguard was killed, while another returned fire and killed the sniper. The tensions were so great following the crossing of the line of engagement that staff officers of 2nd Corps removed their insignia so that they could not be recognized as staff officers at all. According to the Deputy Corps Commander, the division had turned against the 2nd Corps. In fact, the lack of confidence in the 2nd Corps was nothing new, as the 28th Division had felt abandoned in Srebrenica. This lack of confidence was increased by a general feeling that the 2nd Corps had done little to help the column as it fled the area.²⁵⁰

The Chief of Staff of the ABiH, General Hadzihasanovic, and ten other officers were sent to meet with the 2nd Corps to try to bring the situation with regard to the remaining members of the 28th Division under control. It now proved remarkably difficult to keep any form of military discipline among the 28th Division following their arrival in Tuzla. The 2nd Corps' Military Police were called in to assist. The Deputy Commander of the 2nd Corps, Brigadier Makar, attributed the problems to poor

²⁴⁶ Interviews Damir Skaler and Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

²⁴⁷ Interviews Damir Skaler and Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

²⁴⁸ Interviews Damir Skaler and Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

²⁴⁹ Julian Borger, 'Return of the Ghosts of War', *The Guardian*, 18/07/95 and John Pomfret, 'Bosnian Soldiers Evade Serbs in Trudge to Safety', *The Washington Post*, 18/07/95.

²⁵⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 42, File 2.2 Sector Command Matters General. Fax from Biser to Pedauye, info BH Commander, 23/08/95.

organization, lack of discipline and lack of any enforcement of discipline. No one had been able to tell Oric and his men what to do when they had been in Srebrenica, and that was still the case now.²⁵¹

20. The disbandment of the 28th Division.

There was indeed considerable bitterness concerning the fall of Srebrenica and the events that followed. This bitterness was felt by civilians and military personnel alike. The civilians brought together at Tuzla Air Base, considered themselves to have been used by the Bosnian Government as pawns in some political game. As far as the refugee problem was concerned, the government had passed the buck to UNPROFOR with the intention of laying the consequences of the fall of Srebrenica open to international scrutiny. This, it was felt, was why the refugees had been brought to Tuzla Air Base and accommodated in a hastily improvised 'tent city', despite more suitable facilities being available elsewhere in Bosnia. The people's disquiet was further fuelled by the fear among family members that the 28th Division was to be disbanded and its members posted to units in other parts of Bosnia much further afield.²⁵²

On 4 August 1995, a parade was held in Banovica, involving the 3651 remaining soldiers of the 28th Division (of the original 6500). This went some way towards reassuring people that the unit was to remain in existence. The 2nd Corps had re-equipped the men with weapons and uniforms. The ABiH Commander Rasim Delic led the parade and made an optimistic speech.²⁵³ The salute was taken by Brigadier General Naser Oric who also inspected the men. In his address, Rasim Delic said that despite the tragic losses of Srebrenica and Zepa - the responsibility of the international community- there was light at the end of the tunnel and that the beacon was being held up by the soldiers of the 28th Division. After all, it was they who had managed to break out of the VRS siege and it was they who had managed to reach Bosnian territory under the most arduous circumstances. These soldiers represented the guarantee that Srebrenica and the Podrinje would continue to exist. Delic said that it was an honour to command these men and the task was now clear: to return home. Delic stated that he could guarantee this return because he had the strength of the 28th Division behind him, strength which would be felt by the Bosnian Serbs who had never before proven able to erode down the 28th Division's resilience.²⁵⁴ The following day, during a council meeting of the SDA (Izetbegovic's political party) in Zenica, Delic said that the soldiers who had arrived in Tuzla (and those yet to arrive) would form part of the regrouped 28th Division. As long as there were still soldiers from Srebrenica and Bratunac, he said, it would be possible to show the people that Srebrenica had not been lost.²⁵⁵

Following all this heady rhetoric, the announcement that the 28th Division was indeed to be disbanded came as an even greater blow. However, given the incidents between the Srebrenica soldiers and the 2nd Corps staff officers at the front line, together with the general lack of discipline and of leadership during the march, the ABiH Command decision could hardly have come as a total surprise. The command of the 2nd Corps were of the opinion that the 28th Division was still operating at the level of professionalism it had shown at the very beginning of the war in 1992. Neither officers nor men had developed their tactical or technical skills.²⁵⁶

It is possible that the remaining 28th Division men were seen as a threat to the military and political elite, whereupon such arguments may well have played a role in the decision to decommission

²⁵¹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 42, File 2.2 Sector Command Matters General. Fax from Biser to Pedauye, info BH Commander, 23/08/95.

²⁵² UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 42, File 2.2 Sector Command Matters General. Fax from Biser to Pedauye, info BH Commander, 23/08/95.

²⁵³ Confidential interview (51).

²⁵⁴ BBC Monitoring Summary of World Broadcasts, 08/08/95, Source: Radio Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo, in Serb Croat, timed at 0000 GMT on 06/08/95.

²⁵⁵ *Dani*, Special edition September 1998.

²⁵⁶ BBC Monitoring Summary of World Broadcasts, 08/08/95, Source: Radio Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo, in Serbo Croat timed at 0000 GMT on 06/08/95.

the unit. However, the main argument was that the men of the 28th Division were so poorly disciplined. They seemed to regard the ABiH as an organization to be used to their personal advantage, rather than one which provided any leadership. The demise of the division led to some unrest. The soldiers demonstrated a strong loyalty to their unit but wished to fight only in those places where they had family. This gave rise to insurmountable organizational problems since families were scattered far and wide. Furthermore, there was a marked enmity towards the parent unit, the 2nd Corps, and towards the UN. The local population objected strongly to having members of the 28th Division in the immediate area, since this led to not only to the intimidation of Serb minorities in the Tuzla region, but to aggression towards Muslims as well, not to mention theft and looting.²⁵⁷

The General Staff of the ABiH determined that the 28th Division must be incorporated into the 24th Division before 17 September 1995. The 24th Division also comprised refugees from Eastern Bosnia, but was somewhat better drilled. The continued existence of the 28th Division as an independent unit was now beyond any discussion. The officers of the 28th were puzzled as to why their division was to be disbanded.²⁵⁸ Following their heroic march, many had hoped to be allowed to continue as an independent unit.

The survivors' resentment was directed not only at the military leaders but also at the politicians. During the night of 21 and 22 July, President Izetbegovic and General Rasim Delic were both in Tuzla where they held a two-hour meeting with the former staff of the *Opstina* of Srebrenica. The fall of the enclave was discussed, but Izetbegovic later refused to make any comment to journalists regarding what had been said.²⁵⁹ According to one source who had been at the meeting, Delic had not been given an opportunity to speak. Apparently, Izetbegovic was asked to set up an independent inquiry into the fall of Srebrenica to determine who had been responsible: the international community, the government, the army as a whole, the 2nd Corps or the civilian population. Izetbegovic is said to have been against any such investigation, saying only that a plan was now in existence for the return to Srebrenica.²⁶⁰

The hostile attitude of the refugees and the survivors of the march was also apparent when the Bosnian premier Haris Silajdic visited Tuzla Air Base: he was pelted with stones.²⁶¹ He had already committed a major faux pas in the eyes of the refugees in that he had failed to attend the parade on 4 August, he had been supposed to take the salute of ABiH Commander Rasim Delic after inspection of the division.²⁶² The episode with the stones would seem to be a demonstration of the refugee's feeling of having been 'left out in the cold'. This frustration went back a long way - not just to the final days of the enclave but many years previously, when the people felt confined as they lived under such abominable conditions.

21. Summary and conclusions

The men's breakout from the enclave and their attempts to reach Tuzla came as a surprise to the VRS and caused considerable confusion. The VRS had expected the men to go to Potocari. This explains why the first group was able to cross the main Bratunac to Konjevic Polje road with relative ease: at this stage the VRS was not yet adequately organized to start the battle.²⁶³ During the march, the VRS therefore left the foremost part of the column relatively unscathed. The second section was not so

²⁵⁷ NIOD, Confidential collection (5). Fax MIO Sector North East UNMO to BH Comd UNMO, Zagreb UNMO, 231415B Aug 95, Secret, 'Final Milinfo Update', 23/08/95, no. MIO.GEN/001.

²⁵⁸ Confidential interview (51).

²⁵⁹ BBC Monitoring Summary of World Broadcasts, 24/07/95, Source: Hiraqi News Agency, Zagreb, in English, timed at 0757 GMT on 22/07/95.

²⁶⁰ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98, with addition information supplied on 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

²⁶¹ Confidential interview (51).

²⁶² Confidential interview (51).

²⁶³ Confidential interview (52).

fortunate. It was here that the privations were greatest and it was here that the majority of casualties fell.²⁶⁴ As a result of the ambushes, there was little unity or cohesion in this central section. As the march progressed, many people fell behind, lost the way or decided to turn back into more familiar territory in the Srebrenica region and to attempt to reach Zepa from there. Others tried to push onwards in the wake of the vanguard of the column, following the signs that people had passed here, which included corpses and abandoned possessions. Such signs remained visible for many months. The groups who managed to complete the journey to Tuzla took widely varying times to do so. In a few extreme cases, people reached Bosnian territory only after several months.

As described in Part III of this report, the 28th Division faced major problems following Naser Oric's departure in April 1995. There was a lack of good leadership and there was little cohesion in the division. There were conflicts between the commanders. Ramiz Becirovic had already complained to the 2nd Corps command that he could not keep his officers under control. The lack of adequate military leadership had major consequences for the breakout from the enclave: it proved impossible to arrive at any effective decision and there was no one who was clearly 'in charge'. Even where commanders did fulfil their responsibilities in this sphere, the internal relations were so poor that there could be no good, coordinated leadership as such. This seriously hampered communications between the various parts of the column, as well as that between the column and the various brigades.

The column was ready to depart shortly after midnight on 12 July, according to the radio message from Ramiz Becirovic to Tuzla. Initial progress was very slow, due not only to the mines along the first section of the route but also the disagreements and lack of decisiveness among the military leaders. Much valuable time was lost, whereupon the VRS was able to take measures as soon as word of the breakout was received. The rearmost section of the column thus came to suffer serious losses. The delays also hampered the column in passing Kamenica, as the VRS had been given the opportunity of laying ambushes which would form an insurmountable obstacle for the larger part of the column. The assaults on the column in the area around Kravica, Konjevic Polje and Nova Kasaba were therefore responsible for the heaviest death toll. A second area in which many victims fell was that around Baljkovica, the final obstacle standing between the column and Muslim-held territory.²⁶⁵

Many refugees later stated that the ABiH could and should have provided more assistance from Tuzla. The column's general route was known as it had been used for earlier journeys to Tuzla. However, because there was no radio contact between the column and the 2nd Corps headquarters throughout the march, the ABiH in Tuzla had to rely on little more than guesswork to determine the exact route and the men's progress.

Only at the very end of the journey was the column able to contact Tuzla using a radio set captured from the VRS. From intercepted VRS communications, the 2nd Corps had already deduced that a large number of men had been taken prisoner. As officers of the 2nd Corps later revealed, the 'intercepts' served to apprise the unit of the actions, ambushes and intentions of the VRS. The 2nd Corps also listened in to the orders issued to VRS units which were sent to lay ambushes along the major roads which the column would have to cross. It was frustrating for those at the headquarters in Tuzla to know what was happening without actually being able to do anything about it, as one of the officers concerned later stated.²⁶⁶

This situation has to be seen in the light of the fact that not all 'intercepts' could be interpreted immediately, the information becoming available only some time later. Intelligence concerning what actually happened between 12 and 15 July might have been scarcer than now supposed. Indeed, some intercepts became available only years later since, according to the Bosnian newspaper *Slobodna Bosna*, it

²⁶⁴ Interview Sefko Hodzic, 24/05/99.

²⁶⁵ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98 with additional material supplied on 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

²⁶⁶ Interview Semsudin Muminovic, 17/05/99.

would otherwise be apparent how little support the ABiH had provided during the battle of Srebrenica and thereafter.²⁶⁷

The men in the column were embittered by the perceived lack of assistance from the ABiH. It was frequently claimed that the 2nd Corps did absolutely nothing to help the column, but this is not true: measures were indeed taken. Two battalions of the 2nd Corps were sent to the area from Sarajevo, as were various companies from nearby divisions. Pressure on the VRS units in Majevisa hills was increased so that they would be unable to offer support to the Zvornik Brigade. The 2nd Corps also successfully used hoax communications to persuade the VRS that an attack on Zvornik was imminent, whereupon VRS units were diverted to other regions. One group was sent to Snagovo with the intention of confusing the VRS. Such tactics met with some success as the VRS launched an attack on the wrong place. The 2nd Corps was also successful in opening up a breach in the VRS lines for the use of the column, although this was only temporary.

The units of the 2nd Corps which had been recalled from Sarajevo arrived too late to take any effective action. Only on 20 July, and with the fullest support of the 2nd Corps, could the assault on the VRS be renewed. This failed and no new corridor was opened. It can thus be seen that the 2nd Corps did attempt to provide appropriate support. However, Lieutenant Colonel Semsudin Murinovic, who had come from Tuzla to provide assistance, later said that he had never experienced such a shortage of weapons and ammunition as that he suffered during the period of 17 to 20 July. Murinovic declined to comment on whether Naser Oric had received adequate support from the 2nd Corps in his attempts to break through the lines at Baljkovica. He believed that the 2nd Corps became fully active only after it had been learned from the intercepts that the VRS had taken large numbers of prisoners.

Meanwhile, a number of volunteers had been assembled and, without the knowledge of the 2nd Corps command, proceeded to the front. They counted on receiving the support of the troops in the area. Small reconnaissance units were sent into the area, but it was only on Murinovic's initiative that a full brigade was later sent to the front line.²⁶⁸ (Murinovic was himself from Srebrenica). According to Naser Oric, and contrary to Sead Delic's testimony, it was not true that a substantial section of the 2nd Corps had attempted to²⁶⁹ drive a breach through the VRS lines in order to allow the troops and civilians from Srebrenica to pass. Oric claims to have done this himself together with fifteen volunteers²⁷⁰ The Deputy Commander Makar also denies that there was any large-scale assistance from the 2nd Corps.²⁷¹ However, some members of the column have pointed out that while the small number of ABiH troops sent from Tuzla could not have hoped to make much difference in forcing a breakthrough, they did indeed offer some help.²⁷²

The criticisms of the Bosnian politicians and military personnel have been persistent. Ibran Mustafic, a Srebrenica politician who survived being captured and held by Bosnian Serbs, finds it remarkable that no one has yet been called to account for the tragedy in Bosnia and its aftermath. Army Commander Rasim Delic has been accused of distancing himself from the conflict because he wished to have a full strength of men for the Sarajevo campaign. By contrast, Oric's reputation was enhanced when he came forward from Tuzla to provide assistance after the fall of the enclave. Oric is said to have complained to Sead Delic about the lack of support he received. This is alleged to be the reason for Oric's dismissal from the army, another reason was that Delic did not want a 'criminal' on his staff.²⁷³

²⁶⁷ Mehmed Pargan, "We have fifty of theirs in one grove, and we will have to kill them", *Slobodna Bosna*, 11/07/98 (FBIS translation).

²⁶⁸ Interview Semsudin Muminovic, 17/05/99.

²⁶⁹ Interview Naser Oric, 23/10/00.

²⁷⁰ Interview Naser Oric, 23/10/00.

²⁷¹ Interview Andjelko Makar, 21/10/00.

²⁷² Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98 with additional material supplied on 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

²⁷³ Interview Ibran Mustafic, 16/04/98.

The units of the 2nd Corps were deployed for too short a period and did too little to keep open the breach in the lines. Many blamed the large number of fatalities at Baljkovica on the 2nd Corps which, it is claimed, should have done more. There was said to be an air of complacency in Tuzla regarding the fate of Srebrenica.²⁷⁴ Likewise, the column should have told the 2nd Corps that the corridor must remain open, since those at the front knew that there was at least another 2000 or 3000 men following on behind. The 2nd Corps is said to have relinquished the corridor because of fears that the VRS would fire upon Tuzla itself.²⁷⁵

When confronted with such criticisms, Sead Delic stated that his Corps had done everything in its ability. However, there was no contact with the column; the Corps was constantly waiting for information and signs of life. Against this, it should be remembered that Delic had access to the 'intercepts' of VRS radio communications and must therefore have had some knowledge regarding the progress of the column. Delic claims that an attack was indeed launched to open up a corridor through the VRS lines as soon as it was known at which point the men were trying to reach Bosnian territory. The first attack, led by Oric, was unsuccessful. This was largely due to the lack of manpower. Later it was possible to open a breach in the lines by deploying 2000 men.²⁷⁶ There was also some criticism directed at Sead Delic in person: he is said to have moved forward only after he had heard that the column had reached safe territory. He remained far from the front line and was afraid of aggression on the part of the column because he had not offered adequate support.²⁷⁷ There is little evidence to support these claims. The 2nd Corps set up a forward command post to coordinate assistance to the 28th Division as early as 13 July.

There has also been fierce criticism of such people as President Izetbegovic, Premier Silajdzic and Commander Rasim Delic with regard to their lack of commitment. After all the emotional stress and loss of life, it would have been difficult for those in the column to appreciate the balance between what was desirable and what was actually possible. When the full extent of the mass murder began to emerge, rumours began to circulate among the refugees to the effect that the 'safe Area' had fallen as the result of some exchange of territory between President Izetbegovic and the VRS. (Part III of this report establishes that such rumours were already in existence prior to the fall of Srebrenica). Izetbegovic is said to have refrained from ordering assistance to the enclave with a view to this exchange. These rumours were further fuelled by the refugees' firm belief that no one had attempted to prevent the fall of the Safe Area. In their view, the government, the ABiH and the UN all failed to do anything to avoid the situation that developed.

The rumour that nothing was done to prevent the fall of the enclave was further based on the supposed order from some higher authority to evacuate the enclave. However, the actual decision to move out of Srebrenica was taken by the commanders of the 28th Division and the local political figures. As far as can be established, there was never any order from anyone at national or regional level.

Neither UNPROFOR nor Dutchbat played any part in the breakout or the subsequent march. The events took place without the knowledge of the United Nations. Dutchbat exerted no influence whatsoever on the decision to evacuate the enclave, nor did it influence the organization of the evacuation or the subsequent course of events. Dutchbat did not even know about the march, although the movement of a few small groups of men towards the north-western part of the enclave had been observed and reported. It may therefore be concluded that some groups left the enclave before the march to Tuzla was undertaken in earnest. During the hours in which the march was being planned and the departure prepared, Dutchbat was no longer in contact with the representatives of the 28th Division. Furthermore, Dutchbat was not in a position to see the area in which the people were

²⁷⁴ Interview Isnam Taljic, 18/05/99.

²⁷⁵ Interview Hakija Meholic, 02/02/98 with additional material supplied on 19/04/98 and 21/05/99.

²⁷⁶ Interview Sead Delic, 10/03/99.

²⁷⁷ Confidential interview (87).

assembled nor what happened to them thereafter. The observations post OP-M, nearest the assembly point, had already been abandoned.

The refugees in and around the compound at Potocari were, like Dutchbat, unaware of the whereabouts of the men. Only during the course of the next two days, 12 and 13 July, did the women who had been taken to Kladanj by bus or truck realize that the route taken by the column ran parallel to the Potocari - Konjevic Polje -Kladanj road for some distance. This was in fact the route taken by the men in the rear of the column who tried to cross this road after the VRS had blocked the more direct route to Tuzla.

It was in much the same way that a number of Dutchbat military personnel first noticed something of what was happening. However, like the women in the convoys, they caught no more than the briefest glances of the men as they assembled at the side of the road. The Dutchbat personnel who had escorted the convoys and those detained by the VRS in Nova Kasaba when their vehicles were confiscated, could not see very much of what was going on. They were kept away from the conflict areas with the argument that it would not be safe there. Because many Bosnian Serbs had by now donned United Nations gear and were driving Dutchbat vehicles, it was now almost impossible to tell the genuine Dutch peace-keepers from the Bosnian Serb impostors. Major Zoran Malinic, who had set up his headquarters in the school at Nova Kasaba, wanted to prevent the Dutchbat personnel from returning to Potocari, saying that it would not be safe there either. He told Lieutenant Egbers that there were Muslims waiting to blow themselves up with hand grenades, intending to take as many Bosnian Serbs as possible with them. For their part, the Dutchbat men considered the so-called MUP troops (units of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska) who now occupied positions along the road to be extremely undisciplined.

The Bosnian Serbs were extremely tense, as Egbers saw for himself when the school in Nova Kasaba in which the Dutchbat troops were stationed came under attack from Bosnian Muslims. There were actually only a few men responsible for the attack, armed with small bore weapons. However, VRS major Malinic initiated a full-scale action in response. He took two Muslim men from a house where prisoners were kept and used them as a human shield for himself. He ordered machine gun fire and mortar shells to be fired in the direction of the source of the gunfire, and took a section of ten men to hunt down the attackers. Malinic later returned without having located the snipers. The two Muslim men used as a shield also returned. Egbers interpreted this VRS action as demonstrating a certain concern on the part of the VRS for the safety of the Dutch troops, although it may also have been prompted by a desire to ensure that no one could observe what the VRS was doing.²⁷⁸

The Bosnian army of 1995 did not include a place for the 28th Division as a separate entity. The level of training, organization and discipline of these men did not justify an autonomous position within the ABiH. Because both the Division and the civilian population demonstrated a strong enmity towards the military and political leaders following the fall of Srebrenica, it being thought that they had done too little to protect the enclave, the continued existence of the 28th Division would have entailed a serious threat to the unity within the ABiH as a whole. For the soldiers of the 28th Division, after the severe stress and privations of the preceding weeks, the decision to disband the unit came as a severe disappointment and one which was difficult to reconcile. It served to reinforce the feelings of dissatisfaction concerning ABiH leadership and this too had consequences in the long term.

²⁷⁸ Interview V.B. Egbers, 02/09/99.

Chapter 2

The executions

1. Introduction

‘The events of the nine days from July 10-19, 1995 in Srebrenica defy description in their horror and their implications for humankind’s capacity to revert to acts of brutality under the stresses of conflict. In little over one week, thousands of lives were extinguished, irreparably rent or simply wiped from the pages of history. The Trial Chamber leaves it to historians and social psychologists to plumb the depths of this episode of the Balkan conflict and to probe for deep-seated causes. Thus, the Trial Chamber concentrates on setting forth, in detail, the facts surrounding this compacted nine days of hell and avoids expressing rhetorical indignation that these events should ever have occurred at all. In the end, no words of comment can lay bare the saga of Srebrenica more graphically than a plain narrative of the events themselves, or expose more poignantly the waste of war and ethnic hatreds and the long road that must still be travelled to ease their bitter legacy.’²⁷⁹

It was with these words that the judges of the Yugoslavia Tribunal expressed their sentiments in their verdict in the case against the VRS General Krstic. Even in the context of the war in Bosnia, here was something truly extraordinary, both in the scale and in the degree of brutality displayed. It was some time before the full extent of the executions which had taken place after the fall of Srebrenica became known to the world at large. The process by which the international community became aware of the dreadful events is described elsewhere in this report. This chapter presents a brief account of the limited sources of information and forensic evidence available, followed by an attempt to explain the motives for the mass murder and an estimate of its extent. The locations of the mass executions are listed in chronological order together with an account of the methods employed. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the responsibilities of the VRS officers involved.

It will remain difficult to provide a concise description of the mass murders or any analysis of the motives while researchers continue to meet a wall of silence on the part of the Bosnian Serbs involved and other witnesses. Sources of information regarding the planning and the carrying out of the executions themselves are extremely scarce. Most of the scarce information that is available derives from a single Bosnian source: intercepted VRS messages. However, the forensic evidence gathered in later years provided irrefutable proof that mass murder had indeed been committed, although it could not yet prove the full extent of the atrocities.

Ten survivors of the executions at various locations came to play an important role in reconstructing events for the benefit of the Tribunal, in that they were able to recount the methods adopted. Although their evidence was not particularly detailed, it provided sufficient to have perpetrators such as Major General Radislav Krstic and soldier Drazen Erdemovic convicted for their war crimes. Krstic was the Commander of the attack on Srebrenica itself, while Erdemovic was proven to be a member of the firing squad which carried out the executions nearby the Pilica school.²⁸⁰ At the time of writing, other suspects including Vodoje Blagojevic (Brigadier of the Bratunac Brigade), Dragan

²⁷⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33) Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 2.

²⁸⁰ ICTY, (IT-96-22), Judgement of 29/05/96.

Obrenovic (Deputy Commander of the Zvornik Brigade) and Dragan Jokic (Operations Officer of the same brigade) are in custody awaiting trial.

The criminal investigation served a purpose quite different to that of this historical survey. Nevertheless, the reconstruction made for the Tribunal is of great value given the paucity of other sources of information. In particular, the NIOD has been able to make good use of the information which emerged during the trial of VRS General Radislav Krstic, Chief of Staff and, after 13 July 1995, Commander of the Drina Corps. The trial was held between December 1998 and August 2001. Communications intercepted by the ABiH and subsequently made available to the Tribunal and to the NIOD also formed an important source of information. The Bosnian Serbs had by this time abandoned the caution which marked the careful preparations for the attack itself. The 'intercepts' contributed much to the overall picture of the events. Even so, the picture that has been constructed is not a particularly detailed one. In many cases, the only evidence available was a snippet of conversation, couched in vague or deliberately cryptic terms. However, once placed alongside each other and brought into context, the intercepts did provide an important source of evidence. The recurring word 'package' was recognized as code for a condemned man.

Much of what follows here is derived from the Krstic trial report. In some cases, the NIOD was also able to speak directly to survivors of the mass executions or could rely on the work conducted in 1995 by the organization Human Rights Watch. The most striking examples are Alexandra Stiglmayer (for *Time* and *The Boston Globe*) and David Rohde (for *Christian Science Monitor*). This report also draws upon the publication *Srebrenica: Het verhaal van de overlevenden*.²⁸¹ The NIOD had access to a number of VRS documents, most of which relate to orders and to the organizational aspects of the VRS brigades' persecution of the men from the column bound for Tuzla. However, of the few Bosnian Serbs who might be able to shed any light on matters and who agreed to an interview, there was absolutely no willingness to discuss events following the fall of Srebrenica. In this respect, the NIOD researchers met a wall of silence.

2. The extent of the mass murder and the number of missing persons

In the account of the journey to Tuzla given in Chapter 1, we have read that the Bosnian Serbs took a large number of prisoners on the road from Bratunac to Konjevic Polje on 12 and 13 July 1995. One estimate puts the number of men from Srebrenica held on the Nova Kasaba football field at between 1500 and 3000. Witnesses who gave evidence before the Yugoslavia Tribunal estimated that there were also between 1000 and 4000 men being held in a field near Sandici.²⁸² Other Bosnian sources talk of 'a few thousand men' in a field near Sandici and of 1500 men in the Nova Kasaba stadium.²⁸³ The estimates are therefore highly approximate. The exact number of people held at these two locations and elsewhere is impossible to state with any accuracy. The intercepted communications suggest that the Bosnian Serbs were holding between 3000 and 4000 prisoners by 15 July. This number would have increased over the ensuing days. The intercepts suggested that some 4000 to 5000 thousand people had been killed by 18 July. In all probability, this figure referred only to the victims of organized executions and did not include casualties of the fighting with the column on the march.²⁸⁴ Major Franken was told by VRS Colonel Jankovic that the VRS had taken 6000 prisoners of war. As far as he could later recall, Franken believes this statement to have been made on 14 July.²⁸⁵ Given his position as Intelligence Chief on the VRS general staff, it is reasonable to assume that Jankovic was well informed. A further group of men, numbering about 1000, had been separated from the women, children and elderly in

²⁸¹ *Human Rights Watch/Helsinki*, 'Bosnia-Herzegovina: The Fall of Srebrenica and the Failure of U.N. peacekeeping', Vol. 7, No. 13, October 1995; Hren, *Srebrenica*, passim. The anthology does not include the articles by Rohde and Stiglmayer.

²⁸² ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgment, 02/08/01, para. 171.

²⁸³ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, report of 12/07/95, no. 02/8-10-1253. Contents based on intercepts.

²⁸⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33), 18/07/95, OTP ex. 684/a bis.

²⁸⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Franken, T. 2050, 04/04/00.

Potocari and were taken to Bratuna (see Chapter 4). There, they were grouped with the men taken from the column. The Bosnian Serbs made no effort to keep the two groups of prisoners apart.²⁸⁶ It is probable that Jancovic's figure of 6000 included the Potocari contingent.

The Yugoslavia Tribunal was able to conclude that some 7000 to 8000 men had been executed, not counting the murders committed in Potocari itself. The Tribunal did not attempt to set a figure on the number of victims in Potocari, but we may be certain that it was a substantial figure. This would also be true of the number of men killed in Bratunac between 12 and 14 July, during the night.²⁸⁷ The Tribunal's estimate of the total number of executions seems to be somewhat higher than can be substantiated on the basis of evidence, since it fails to take into account other causes of death among those on the road to Tuzla. Thus, the Tribunal's figure actually refers to the total number of missing persons.

Indeed, it is very difficult to put an exact figure on the number of 'missing' Bosnian Muslims. Various figures have been cited, and press publications occasionally offer some astonishing estimates.²⁸⁸ According to the Minister of Defence of the Republika Srpska, Manojlo Milovanovic, the Bosnian Serbs did not keep any record of the number of casualties following the fall of Srebrenica, neither was there any documentation recording the number of fatalities among Bosnian Muslims.²⁸⁹

The most prominent and reliable non-governmental organizations to have collected data concerning missing persons after the fall of Srebrenica include the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Physicians for Human Rights (PHR). The International Commission of Missing Persons (ICMP) does not actually try to trace missing persons, but is mainly occupied with applying political pressure on those who have committed human rights violations, provides assistance to the families of victims and provides financing to trace missing persons.²⁹⁰

It was particularly difficult to estimate the number of missing persons in the first weeks following the fall of Srebrenica, there being no reports or testimony from family members on which to rely. In the first instance, the estimates were based on the assumed population of the enclave before the attack. However, the number at the time of the attack itself had never been accurately established, whereby all subsequent calculations were inevitably flawed. According to the Bosnian Government, the correct figure was 42,000 while UNHCR assumed a population of 42,600. This figure dated from 1993, but may have been artificially inflated in order to acquire more humanitarian aid for the enclave. According to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the number of people in the enclave in July 1995 would have been between 38,000 and 40,000.²⁹¹

An additional problem was that the estimates of the number of missing persons soon were all equated with the number of people that the Bosnian Serbs were known to have murdered. As we have already seen, this is a false correlation since in addition to those executed, there were those who perished on the road to Tuzla. During the march, fighting between the VRS and ABiH, ambushes, fighting among factions within the column, suicide, exhaustion and the rigours of the journey would have claimed an unknown number of lives. The bodies of these people remained unburied in the woods. According to journalist Saleh Brkic, human remains could still be found along the road to Tuzla - the *route des mortes* - many years later. He claims to have seen hundreds of corpses with his own eyes.

²⁸⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgment, 02/08/01, para. 66.

²⁸⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgment, 02/08/01, para. 487-8.

²⁸⁸ In mid-2000, the German organization *Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker* arrived at the figure of 10,701 missing persons, including 570 women and 1042 minors. No explanation for this very precise figure, which differs so markedly from that offered by the ICRC list, was given. See <http://www.gfbv-sa.com.ba/srebreng.html>

²⁸⁹ Interview Manojlo Milovanovic, 18/11/98.

²⁹⁰ Interview ICMP (Erwin Böhi and Laura Bowman), 05/08/97.

²⁹¹ Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1019 (1995) on Violations of International Humanitarian Law in the Areas of Srebrenica, Zepa, Banja Luka and Sanski Most, 27/11/95, No. S/1995/988, para. 4.

Add those found alongside the Zvornik to Vlasenica road and in the area around Baljkovica, and the figure could quite easily reach two thousand, he believes.²⁹²

It is thus impossible to arrive at even a general approximation of the number who perished on the road to Tuzla and in the areas of the major ambushes, nor of the number of persons who surrendered to, or were captured by, the VRS. The quoted figure of 6000 prisoners of war - the only 'hard' figure cited by any source - derives from the VRS itself. This, set against the figure of 7500 missing persons (calculated in the manner explained below) would suggest that approximately 1500 people died on the road to Tuzla, whether under gunfire, in combat, killed by mines, suicide or starvation. No reliable figure has ever been put forward by the Bosnians.

Following the events of July 1995, and under pressure from local people, the Bosnian State Commission for Tracing Missing Persons attempted to determine the number of victims on the march. However, the commission was unable to devote sufficient attention to this question, because shortly thereafter the problem of the Zepa enclave arose. It was not until the summer of 1996 that the commission's president, Amor Masovic, was able to join a Finnish mission in visiting the area to the north of Srebrenica. There he saw many human remains. It was not possible to retrieve these for burial. Some bodies had been eaten by animals or dragged away, while others had been burned, possibly deliberately to prevent identification. Later, in September and October 1996, the Bosnian Serbs permitted the retrieval of a limited number of remains, whereupon some 300 bodies were recovered. A further 400 bodies were found in the area of Milici, Nova Kasaba and Lazarici. It is likely that countless other corpses remained undiscovered, especially in areas such as the Ravni Buljim valley, where the shooting began, and in the woods around Burnice, near Nova Kasaba, where 300 men are known to have been killed. The Bosnian Serbs withdrew permission to search the area shortly thereafter. According to Masovic there were occasional 'exchanges' of remains following direct negotiations between the families concerned.²⁹³

The question of exactly how many people from Srebrenica went missing is one which two Norwegian demographers attempted to answer in a report they compiled at the request of the Office of the Prosecutor of the Yugoslavia Tribunal, on behalf of the Krstic trial.²⁹⁴ The researchers, Helge Brunborg and Henrik Urdal, took this opportunity to analyse the reliability of the figures compiled by the ICRC and PHR. It must be noted that the objectives of the two organizations were different, and hence the nature of the information kept was also different. The International Red Cross kept data with a view to assisting the families of missing persons, while the Physicians for Human Rights recorded missing persons information in the form of an *ante mortem* database to serve as an aid to identification, whereby the focus was on persons who went missing *after* the fall of Srebrenica. The International Red Cross has compiled a register of all missing persons in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995 but was not concerned with the question of whether the persons went missing before, during or after the fall of Srebrenica. The International Red Cross began its registration of missing persons immediately after the fall as it was believed at the time that these people were still alive and being held as prisoners of war. The advantage was that the data was still reasonably concise and uncontaminated, although it was derived at a time of enormous physical and emotional distress and exhaustion. In most cases, the information could not be corroborated due to the absence of identity papers. Physicians for Human Rights began its registration a year later. Here, the objective was to gather as much information as possible about the physical characteristics of victims and their clothing. Because relatives realized the emotional strain which could attach to such questions, most had prepared well and were often able to show the relevant identity papers.

Over the course of the ensuing years, the International Red Cross published four different versions of its list of missing persons. The final version appeared in July 1998 and lists 7421 missing

²⁹² Interviews Salih Brkic, 02/02/98.

²⁹³ Interview Amor Masovic, 5/08/97.

²⁹⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 276.

persons for Srebrenica alone, from a total 19,403 for Bosnia as a whole. Of this number, the fate of only 85 is known for certain: 22 are still alive and 63 are deceased. The list produced by Physicians for Human Rights includes fewer missing persons, its total being 7269. This is because the organization only registered missing persons around Tuzla and Sarajevo, not elsewhere in Bosnia. The conclusion that Brunborg and Urdal drew was that neither list was necessarily any better than the other. Each had strong points and weak points. Taken together, they offered more reliable information.

They then compared the lists with the electoral rolls for 1997 and 1998 and with the census of 1991. Nine persons proved to have been erroneously listed as missing. The ICRC's investigations found a further six of the listed people to be still alive. Eventually, the researchers were able to draw up a consolidated list of at least 7475 persons who were either known to be dead or whose current whereabouts were unknown. Brunborg and Urdal also considered the age groups of the missing persons. In the case of the males, there were 76 under the age of 16 and 629 over the age of 60. There therefore remained 6727 men between the age of 16 and 59. Forty-eight women were listed as missing, 26 of whom were over the age of 60.

The Norwegian researchers also addressed the criticisms which had been made by both the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims with regard to the way in which the Red Cross list had been compiled. One of the main objections on the part of the Bosnian Serbs was that no date of birth was listed for at least sixty per cent of the names, while this is something that the immediate family would be expected to be able to provide. The researchers determined that the proportion of missing persons for whom no *exact* date of birth had been given was only 24.5%, while the year of birth was known in every case. Another objection was that many people on the ICRC list had subsequently appeared on the voters' registers. As previously stated, this proved to be so in nine cases. To the researchers, this did not suggest that people having been wrongly reported as missing on any great scale. The Bosnian Serbs complained that the list included names of people who had died of natural causes. A list of 76 persons was provided, all of whom were said to have died of natural causes or as the result of hostilities between 1992 and early 1995. However, the researchers could find none of these names on the International Red Cross list.

The Bosnians claimed that the actual number of missing persons was greater than that suggested by the list. According to journalist Isnam Taljic, the Red Cross figure was simply too low. He pointed out that some families had been completely wiped out, whereupon there was no one left to report a missing person. This was particularly so in the case of families in villages outside Srebrenica itself. Some people would not have made a report in the hope that a family member would be found alive, while others had very little contact with family outside the immediate area. Many people in Sarajevo were totally unaware that they had relatives in Srebrenica. The actual number of missing persons would therefore be in excess of 10,000, Taljic claimed.²⁹⁵ Amor Masovic of the Bosnian State Commission for Tracing Missing People assumed a total of 7,500, but he too believed that many people had not been reported as missing because entire families had been killed. People had moved to Srebrenica from four large neighbouring towns. That made it very difficult for people to state with any certainty that, say, a neighbour had gone missing.²⁹⁶

Brunborg and Urdal had no ready response to the Bosnian arguments, but agreed with the view that if entire families had been killed, there might be no one left to report them as missing. They also conceded that there might have been single people without any family at all, people who were too old or too infirm to come forward, people who were too disillusioned or disoriented to do so, or people who had fled the country immediately after the events in question. They further believed that some families would have failed to report missing persons, being convinced that they were dead and that there was therefore no point in doing so. They therefore concluded that their figure of 7475 dead or missing should be regarded as the absolute minimum. They allowed that the actual number could

²⁹⁵ Interview Isnam Taljic, 18/05/99.

²⁹⁶ Interview Amor Masovic, 05/08/97.

indeed be higher, but were unable to give any indication of exactly how much higher. However, the conscientiousness with which they had carried out their work was reflected by the fact that only a very few of the bodies for which a positive identification had been made failed to match a name on either the International Red Cross or Physicians for Human Rights list.

The Norwegian researchers' estimate of 7475 was therefore lower than the 8000 to 10,000 that the Bosnians were suggesting. The higher estimate was not necessarily wrong, they concluded, but lacked conclusive evidence. An unknown number had not been reported as missing persons, and the number 7475 should be regarded as a minimum. Moreover, they pointed out that the number of casualties they had recorded was not vastly different to the number stated by the International Red Cross, i.e. 7421.²⁹⁷ There was no evidence that any deliberate deception or fraud had been committed, nor that missing persons from Srebrenica had been registered on the electoral roll in 1997 and 1998 to any significant degree.

It may be concluded that the ABiH troops had a slightly higher survival rate than the civilians in the column. Ramiz Becirovic estimated that 3500 soldiers had reached the free zone. If so, this means that just over half the soldiers survived the journey.²⁹⁸ Among the civilians, it seems that somewhat fewer than half did so. Given that no firm figures are available, it is impossible to make any further statement in this regard.

The casualties were not evenly distributed along the column, but this was for the troops no different than for the civilians. Casualties were by far the greatest among those in the rearmost section. Between 800 and 900 men were killed in the 282nd Brigade alone. They were bringing up the rear of the column and came under heavy artillery fire.²⁹⁹ The 281st Brigade under Zulfo Tursunovic was also at the rear and suffered many casualties.³⁰⁰

There is no evidence that any of the people from Srebrenica who were reported as missing had survived the fall of the enclave or the journey to Tuzla. The Norwegian researchers stated that all available information indicated that those missing could be presumed dead. Despite all the attempts of the International Red Cross and others to trace survivors, only six were ever found. Although many women from Srebrenica continued to hope that their husbands were still alive, perhaps wandering through the forests or held in some POW camp, the findings provided no cause for such optimism.

Such hopes were not readily dispelled. In late October 1995, UNPROFOR received reports from the local authorities in Tuzla to the effect that some 730 men from Srebrenica were being held in Serbian camps near Bajina Basta and Mitrovo Polje.³⁰¹ Soon thereafter, speculation and sensationalist reports in the media served to fuel further hopes that there were large numbers of survivors. There was even criminal activity which served to spawn false hope, as felons offered to go in search of the missing men - for a price, of course - having sent forged letters to family members. It was not difficult to find personal information in the abandoned houses in Srebrenica. An example of the sensationalist media reporting is an article which appeared in the publication *Globus* on 6 December 1996, which stated that some 700 men from Srebrenica were being held as forced labourers in the nearby mine at Sase. The newspaper cited Naser Oric as its source, which no doubt served to bolster the refugees' credulity. In addition, it was claimed that a further 3000 men were being held in four concentration camps in

²⁹⁷ According to the researchers, a correction was necessary in the case of 22 persons subsequently found to be still alive, as well as for a number of persons who had been reported missing *before* the fall of the enclave and a number who apparently went missing some distance from Srebrenica itself. On the list compiled by the ICRC, 7289 names matched those on the researchers' own list.

²⁹⁸ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH, 2nd Corps, statement by Ramiz Becirovic (b. 1956), 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement made on 11/08/95.

²⁹⁹ Interviews Damir Skaler and Muharem Mujic, 17/05/99.

³⁰⁰ Interview Vahid Hodzic, 8/03/99.

³⁰¹ UNGE, ICfY, Box 144, File Crypto Fax In 51, 10 – 31 Oct 95. Outgoing facsimile Pedauye, UNPROFOR HQ Sarajevo to Akashi, UNPF HQ, info Annan, Gharekhan, New York, Stoltenberg Geneva, Weekly Report, 23-29/10/95, 30/10/95/No. COM0110, Z-2018.

Eastern Bosnia, while Serbian camps in such places as Nis, Aleksinac and Leskovac were holding another 2000.³⁰²

Other reports from around this time - late 1996 - suggested that 4300 men from Srebrenica had been put to work in the mines at Trepca in Kosovo. The International Red Cross emphatically denied such reports, having made a thorough search of the mine in question. Nevertheless, rumours persisted not least because other mines, such as those in Aleksinac and Sremska Mitrovica or, in the Republika Srpska itself, at Sase near Srebrenica and at Brezovo Polje near Brcko - had not been investigated.³⁰³

When the British newspaper *The Guardian* also ran a story about Muslims who were being held prisoner, the credibility of the reports was considerably enhanced. The newspaper relied on information provided by refugees from Srebrenica. In Germany, it was claimed that three thousand men were still being held in captivity. Relatives had been approached by Serbian intermediaries asking for money to secure these prisoners' release. An Albanian man from Kosovo persistently told a refugee in Austria that he could have his brother freed in return for a ransom equivalent to 2000 euros. Refugees in Dublin had been told that there were two camps in Serbia - at Sljivovica and Mitrovo Polje - in which men were being held, while information emanated from Guildford in England to the effect that men from Srebrenica could be found in the coal mines at Aleksinac and in the hospital at Padinska Skela, north of Belgrade. The mine at Trepca in Kosovo was again mentioned. That no one had yet found the men was explained by the fact that they had been given Albanian or Serbian names and identity papers.³⁰⁴

In early November 1995, the leader of the SDA, Izetbegovic's governing party, told the EU observers' mission in Tuzla that he had received information about missing men being held in two prison camps in Serbia, at Uzice and Krajevo. The reports had not been confirmed, but it was hoped that the number of missing people would be halved if they proved to be true.³⁰⁵

However, in no case could the number of missing persons be reduced at all. This much was confirmed by the Boltzmann Institute of Austria, which had conducted an investigation on behalf of the UNPROFOR Commission for Human Rights. Having visited and inspected a long list of possible locations, the institute concluded that no truth whatsoever could be attached to the reports about people being held prisoner there.³⁰⁶ In 1998, there were yet further reports of survivors having been found in Serbian prisons. The Bosnian Government acknowledged these reports but pronounced them to be beyond belief.³⁰⁷ None of the reports provided any evidence nor resulted in any of the missing persons being found alive.

Along the road from Srebrenica to Tuzla, there are still a number of human remains, widely distributed and often in very inaccessible terrain. Over the course of the time, bodies came to be spread even more widely, due to a number of factors. Even in the case of the more accessible mass graves, the process of establishing the number of victims was seriously impeded by the fact that many bodies had been exhumed and moved elsewhere in the period following the executions. In the terminology adopted by the Tribunal, they had been shifted from the larger 'primary' graves to the smaller 'secondary' graves. Thus, the first had been opened, and remains had become mixed up.

For these reasons, it remains impossible to state with any certainty how many men were executed following the fall of Srebrenica and how many perished during the march to Tuzla. It is likely that we shall never know.

³⁰² 'U rudniku kraj Srebrenice prisilno radi', *Globus*, 06/12/96.

³⁰³ *Balkan Press*, 09/10 and 12/10/96.

³⁰⁴ *The Guardian*, 25/08/96.

³⁰⁵ MID/CO. Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, 57/95, 141000A, closed November 1995. Strictly Confidential.

³⁰⁶ Interview Manfred Nowak, 04/08/97.

³⁰⁷ *Reuters Report*, 26/02/98, see also *De Volkskrant*, 27/02/98.

3. The motives for the executions

As a wartime objective of the Bosnian Serbs, Srebrenica was not different to any other target: ethnic cleansing would be applied to bring about an ethnically homogenous region. However, the extent to which the population would fall victim to this policy took on unprecedented proportions, giving rise to widespread astonishment and disbelief. After all, UNPROFOR forces were there and it was their duty to break the spiral of violence into which the civilian population had been plunged. How was it possible that the war could nevertheless sink into the depths of sheer barbarism?

Originally, the primary objective of the VRS military operation which began on the 6th of July was to limit the territory of the Srebrenica enclave and to create an intolerable situation for the population within. In the fullness of time, this strategy would lead to such hardships that the population would be forced to move on elsewhere. The original plan of operation 'Kravija 95' made no provision for the civilian population whatsoever, although it did explicitly stipulate that the usual rules and conventions of war should apply. When the decision to take the entire enclave was made on the 9th of July, no guidelines for dealing with the civilians existed other than to state that the safety of the people in the area controlled by the VRS or the Bosnian Serb police should be guaranteed.³⁰⁸

The question of why the executions took place at all is not easy to answer. During the Krstic trial before the Yugoslavia Tribunal, the prosecution's military advisor, Richard Butler, pointed out in taking this course of action, the Bosnian Serbs deprived themselves of an extremely valuable bargaining counter. Butler suggested that the Bosnian Serbs would have had far more to gain had they taken the men in Potocari as prisoners of war, under the supervision of the International Red Cross and the UN troops still in the area. It might then have been possible to enter into some sort of exchange deal or they might have been able to force political concessions.³⁰⁹ Based on this reasoning, the ensuing mass murder defied rational explanation.

There is no surviving documentation concerning the organization of the executions. Indeed, it is unlikely that any orders so flagrantly flouting humanitarian law would be committed to paper in the first place. Even during the Krstic trial, it proved impossible to answer the question of when the decision to kill the men had been taken. The judges could not exclude the possibility that plans for the executions were originally hatched by the General Staff of the VRS, and that the Drina Corps which actually carried out the attack on Srebrenica had not been consulted about them beforehand. The Tribunal found that there was sufficient evidence to link Krstic with the organization of the removal of the women and children from Potocari, but that there was insufficient evidence that he actually made any arrangements for the executions. Because the Tribunal was unable to establish the date on which the decision to execute all able-bodied men was taken, it could not be determined whether the murders in Potocari on the 12 and 13 of July formed part of a larger plan. The men who were captured on the road to Tuzla were not admitted to recognised war camps (such as that at Batkovici) but were confined in appalling conditions in sheds, vehicles, sports halls, etc., without food or water. This suggests that a decision to execute the men had indeed been taken at some central level. As in Potocari, these men had their identification papers confiscated and burnt, which was also seemingly irrefutable evidence of malicious intent on the part of their captors.³¹⁰

Emotional factors such as revenge, anger and frustration seem to have gained the upper hand in prompting the executions. This column of men was on its way from the captured enclave to the safety of Tuzla, and seemed to be escaping the clutches of the Bosnian Serbs. Revenge for the murder of

³⁰⁸ Command of the Drina Corps to Commands of 1Zpbr, 1Bpbr, 2Rmtbr, 1Brpbr, 1Mlpbr, Map, 2/07/95, no. 04/156-2. ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 428/a. General Staff of the Army of the Serb Republic to the President of the Serb Republic, for information, Drina Corps IKM/Forward Command Post, Generals Gvero and Krstic, personally, 9/07/95, Strictly Confidential. No. 12/46-501/95. ICTY, (IT-33-98) OTP Ex 64B. See also ICTY, (IT-98-33) D 160/a, Radinovic Report, para. 3.8 and 6.15.

³⁰⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement of 2/08/01, para. 70.

³¹⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement of 2/08/01, paras 361, 362, 547, 573.

Bosnian Serb civilians in and around the enclave in 1992 and 1993 is frequently cited as a motive for the executions, both in the Muslim Croat Federation and in the Republika Srpska. There was, after all, considerable animosity between the various ethnic groups. According to a UN official, that animosity was so great that nowhere else in Bosnia was there so little peaceful negotiation between the combatant parties, and nowhere else were there so many skirmishes around a Safe Area as in that around Srebrenica.³¹¹

The situation obtaining at the time may also have contributed to the fateful decision. In the previous chapter, it was stated that the breakout from Srebrenica came as a complete surprise to the Bosnian Serbs who were totally unprepared. The conflict between the VRS and the 28th Division of the ABiH had taken a new turn by sundown on the 11th of July, by which time the VRS no longer knew exactly where the ABiH was positioned. On the orders of General Mladic, the VRS troops regrouped in the centre of the newly captured enclave. By noon the following day, they had left once more, en route to their next target, Zepa. Only reserve troops - a few MUP units and Military Police - remained in the enclave.³¹² This may well have contributed to the feelings of uncertainty or even panic on the part of the Bosnian Serbs, particularly when the VRS discovered that the ABiH troops had withdrawn and there was now to be a movement across Bosnian Serb-held territory without any prior preparation.

The sheer size of the party of men, both soldiers and civilians, which fell into Bosnian Serb hands soon thereafter would also have come as a great surprise. The rules and customs of engagement required that shelter, food, water and medical care be provided. This presented yet another unexpected problem: an extensive logistic operation would have to be launched at the very moment that the capture of the fleeing column was already causing so many problems. At the same time, it was necessary to ensure that the territory of the former enclave remained 'cleansed', while the operation against Zepa also demanded full attention. To establish the identity of each of these men, to question them as POWs and to determine any involvement in war crimes would take considerable time and would have exceeded the capacity of the VRS and Security agencies.³¹³

These factors suggest that there was no proof that the mass murder of the men may have formed part of the plans for the capture of Srebrenica before the operation itself. The Security and Intelligence units of the Drina Corps and the VRS Military Police had originally been ordered to assemble and guard prisoners of war upon the capture of Srebrenica.³¹⁴ There is therefore no indication that the VRS had harboured the intention of killing the ABiH soldiers and men in the column proceeding to Tuzla.

During the second meeting with the Dutchbat Commander Karremans in the Hotel Fontana, held on 12 of July, Mladic stated that all men of combatant age would be 'screened' for their part in war crimes. Such screening and the interrogation of prisoners of war is, under the international rules of engagement, permitted.³¹⁵ On the same day the VRS' Bratunac Brigade had made a list of Muslims who were suspected of war crimes. From notes made by members of the Bratunac Brigade, the Tribunal was able to deduce that some had indeed been questioned about their involvement in such crimes around this time.³¹⁶ Dutchbat sources were also able to confirm that this was done in Bratunac.³¹⁷ The VRS had a list of approximately 100 people from the enclave who were wanted for questioning in connection with war crimes.³¹⁸

³¹¹ Confidential interview (46).

³¹² ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 399/a bis, examination of Radislav Krstic, 18/02/00, p. 15-18 and 47.

³¹³ See also ICTY, (IT-98-33), Dannatt Report, OTP Ex. 385/a, para. 44 en 51.

³¹⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33) OTP 428/a. Command of the Drina Corps to Commands of 1Zpbr, 1Bpbr, 2Rmtbr, 1Brlpbr, Map, 2/07/95, no. 04/156-2. See also ICTY (IT-98-33) D 160/a, Radinovic Report, para. 3.8.

³¹⁵ See Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, 12/08/49. (Geneva Convention III).

³¹⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 360.

³¹⁷ NIOD Collection: Schouten's Diary and interview of 21/02/00. Schouten observed this on 15 July.

³¹⁸ Interview Milovan Mulinovic, 20/03 and 22/03/00.

However, it soon became apparent that the Bosnian Serbs did not plan to interview the men in compliance with international law. At first, some were rounded up and interrogated, but the number involved soon became unmanageable for the Bosnian Serbs. This could well have influenced the decision to execute all male prisoners. Rather than spend any more time in interrogating people to establish guilt or innocence, they seized all men and boys, regardless of age. No exceptions were made, no distinction drawn between civilians and military personnel. All personal belongings and identity papers were confiscated and were subsequently destroyed to avoid any evidence being left.³¹⁹ This process, as it affected the men in the immediate vicinity of the compound at Potocari, is described in further detail in Chapter 4 of this section. The current chapter deals with the executions beyond the immediate area of the compound.

Exactly when was the decision made to discontinue screening and to execute the prisoners instead? During the Hotel Fontana meeting with Karremans on the morning of July the 12th, Mladic stated that it would be better for the ABiH troops to lay down their arms rather than be killed. If he was sincere in this belief, we may deduce that any plan for a mass murder could have emerged no sooner than the end of that morning. It was then that the Bosnian Serbs learned that the men were planning to escape, and that the disarmament envisaged by Mladic was unlikely to take place. There is little sinister in the statements made by Karadzic in Pale that day. Karadzic boasted that there had been no civilian casualties during the fighting and that he had no objection to the continued presence of UNPROFOR. He dismissed all admonitions from the international community, but did not make any threats with regard to the men fleeing to Tuzla.³²⁰

The Tribunal was of the opinion that the Bosnian Serbs eventually intended to kill as many men of combatant age as possible. Although a number of women and children were murdered, together with a relatively large number of older men, the main focus of the VRS was on able-bodied men between the ages of 16 and 60. The buses which transported the women and children were systematically searched for men. Some, although very few, exceptions were made. They included the casualties in Bratunac hospital who had previously been treated in the Dutchbat compound at Potocari. In these cases, it seems as though the Bosnian Serbs were doing their best not to attract international attention, particularly when Dutchbat personnel were present and observing the proceedings.³²¹

A key question is that of where the idea of the mass murders emerged, and where the detailed planning and execution of the plan took place. Given the scale of the atrocities, the decisions must have been made at the Drina Corps level, with the Zvornik Brigade in particular being implicated in much of the planning and subsequent action. All the marks of a well-planned military operation were present. Logistic preparations had to be made: firing squads and bulldozers had to be moved to the execution sites. Digging machines were already readily available throughout the area in question, but those used in the bauxite mines were not actually deployed in burying the executed Muslims.³²² Without detailed planning, it would not have been possible to slaughter so many people in such a systematic manner and in such a short time - the period between 13 and 17 of July. However, the fact that Krstic and many units of the Drina Corps were concentrating on Zepa at that time seems to contradict the hypothesis that this corps was the instigator of the murders. In this case, it would have been the various specialist units which did not form part of the Drina Corps - the Special Police and the 65th Regiment, for example - who were responsible for the initial executions. In the case of the 65th Regiment, revenge could have been a significant motive in that fourteen days earlier the regiment had been the target of an ABiH action launched from Srebrenica during the attack on Visnjica. According to the ABiH, the attack had claimed more than 40 casualties among the VRS, possibly as many as 71.³²³

³¹⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 360.

³²⁰ NIOD, Clingendael Collection, RC Belgrade Daily Report, 13/07/95.

³²¹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 86, 504, 547.

³²² Interview Rajko Dukic, 14/06/00.

³²³ ABiH Command of 28th Division (Maj. Ramiz Becirovic) to Command of 2nd Corps, Section for Moral and Political Guidance, 30/06/95, No. 01-114/95. ICTY (IT-98-33) D67/a.

The Specijalna Brigada Policije (Special Police Brigade) had been formed in 1992 as a unit falling under the direct command of the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Republika Srpska (MUP). It was intended to provide support to the regular police in the form of anti-terrorist units and riot squads which would intervene in the event of any disruption of public order or a hostage situation. It would also provide personal protection to politicians, including Karadzic. This could be regarded as its 'peacetime' role. In the wartime situation, the Special Police Brigade became an elite fighting unit, taking part in the vast majority of VRS campaigns. The brigade was then under the operational control of the VRS itself. However, relationships with the VRS were poor, largely as a result of the tensions between the political leaders and the senior military officers.³²⁴ Nevertheless, VRS units were actively involved in the executions. In particular, the Zvornik Brigade played a significant part. From 14 July onwards, this unit was involved in laying ambushes for the column on the road to Tuzla. One day earlier, it had started to seek out suitable locations in which to detain and eventually execute its prisoners.³²⁵

Although General Krstic was the de facto Commander of the operations against Srebrenica and the subsequent actions, General Zivanovic was formally in command of the Drina Corps until the afternoon of 13 July. Zivanovic did not enjoy a high reputation as a successful officer, which may well have been the reason that Krstic was put in charge of the Srebrenica operation. On 20 July, Karadzic promoted Zivanovic from Major General to Lieutenant General, to mark his early retirement from the military.³²⁶

Zivanovic actually came from Srebrenica, and Mladic is said to have asked him whose side he was on. According to one Bosnian Serb source, Zivanovic contacted the hospital at Milici prior to the attack on Srebrenica and instructed staff to keep a large number of beds free for the patients from Srebrenica.³²⁷ It has been claimed that Zivanovic took early retirement because he did not wish to collaborate in any programme of mass murder. However, there is little evidence to support this notion: his retirement had been announced some time previously.³²⁸ Furthermore, there is little doubt concerning Zivanovic's opinions of the Muslims. When the fall of Srebrenica was commemorated in Tuzla in 1996, Zivanovic was in Bratunac where he reminded the families of VRS troops of the purpose of the ethnic cleansing of Serbian territory: 'Our policy is crystal clear, there is no life for Turks here'.³²⁹

Interviewed by the NIOD, Zivanovic did not deny that a mass murder had taken place, nor that it was an action organized by the VRS. He cited revenge as a motive. Another explanation which Zivanovic offered for the mass murder was that it was a deliberate action on the part of only a few officers on the field who were supporters of General Manojlo Milovanovic, formerly the VRS Chief of General Staff. These officers, claimed Zivanovic, carried out the executions without the prior knowledge of Mladic, the aim being to discredit Mladic himself. Colonel Beara, the security officer of the General Staff, was named as the prime mover. Zivanovic sought to absolve Mladic from any blame for the killings, and placed responsibility squarely at the feet of Krstic.³³⁰ However, this version of events does not stand up to close scrutiny since Mladic was seen in person at a number of the execution sites. Had he been against the killings, he was certainly in a position to prevent them. The statement made by Zivanovic, an interested party, must be viewed with suspicion. The question of where responsibilities actually lay is considered in greater detail later in this chapter.

³²⁴ Confidential information (2).

³²⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex 401, Butler Report, 15/05/00, para. 7.3 and 7.5.

³²⁶ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts: 'Karadzic congratulates military on Srebrenica, Zepa 'victories'; Bosnian Serb news agency (SRNA) in Serbo-Croat, recorded at 16.21 hrs GMT on 20/07/95.

³²⁷ Interview Dusko Milovanovic, 13/09/01.

³²⁸ Confidential Interview (52).

³²⁹ 'srebrenica Commemorations Underline Bosnia's Rift', *The Associated Press*, 12/07/96. 'Turks' is a derogatory term for Muslims.

³³⁰ Interview Milenko Zivanovic, 17/09/01.

Among the UNPROFOR personnel, no one has been able to state how or why the situation escalated to one of large-scale executions. On 5 July, negotiations concerning the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica were held between Bildt and Milosevic in Belgrade. On 19 July, similar talks were held between Smith and Mladic to discuss such issues as the withdrawal of Dutchbat forces. At this time, UNPROFOR knew nothing of the mass executions. Mladic stated that he had opened up a corridor through which the column could pass in safety. His exact words were ‘A corridor was agreed upon. Things went wrong in the dark. Columns did hit minefields and there was a lot of panic. Things went badly wrong hereafter and control was lost...’ when matters were left to the local commanders. Mladic drew a balloon shape by way of explanation: the circle to represent Srebrenica and the neck to represent the exit path for the column. Mladic conceded that ‘some skirmishes had taken place with casualties on both sides’ and that ‘some unfortunate small incidents had occurred’.³³¹ Mladic was clearly not at his ease during the Belgrade talks. He claimed that he had been divested of control and that that mistakes had been made, before hurriedly departing from Belgrade as matters threatened to get out of hand once more.³³²

On 21 July, Mladic would once again tell General Nicolai that he had opened up a corridor to allow refugees to escape to central Bosnia. According to his version of events, there had been many casualties among the ABiH soldiers who tried to escape from the corridor itself. Mladic also said that there had been occasional ‘abuses’³³³. General Smith said that he had never asked Mladic about the reason for the attack on Srebrenica, and that he had no answer to the question of whether the executions had been planned.³³⁴ Jovan Zametica, political advisor to Karadzic, was also asked about the motive for the executions, but he declined to comment.³³⁵

That a corridor had been opened but events in Srebrenica had then spiralled out of control was a version of events often heard from Bosnian Serb sources.³³⁶ However, Mladic’s claims regarding the opening of this corridor are palpably false. No corridor out of Srebrenica had been agreed upon, while the Baljkovica corridor (by which the column proceeding to Tuzla would be able to reach Bosnian territory) had yet to be opened on the 15th of July. Mladic had not been consulted about this beforehand. It is almost unimaginable that Mladic could have lost control over the events and that the ‘mistakes’ were made purely due to the actions of local commanders. Unlike the Bosnian Croat forces (the HVO) and the Bosnian Government’s army (the ABiH), the VRS had a very clear and effective command structure whereby officers of all ranks were fully aware of their tasks and responsibilities. The more senior VRS commanders were professional, well-trained officers who had been with the JNA. The VRS had good communications and there were regular reports made in both directions. The VRS preferred to operate according to the old Soviet ‘Befehlstaktik’ strategy, in which decisions are taken centrally at a more senior level, rather than the ‘Auftragstaktik’ model favoured in the west, by which commanders enjoy a marked degree of freedom within certain parameters.

The VRS commanders followed the orders from above and would not have arrived at such a far-reaching plan as that required for the mass executions on their own account.³³⁷ However, it is now almost certain that a number of smaller-scale executions were carried out in addition to the mass executions discussed here. These may well have been individual actions on the part of VRS or MUP personnel, prompted by any of a number of reasons, from personal revenge to theft.³³⁸ And so the question of the motives and background to the mass murder has yet to be satisfactorily answered.

³³¹ NIOD, De Ruiters Collection. ‘Meeting Gen Smith/Gen Mladic – 19/07/95, report prepared by Lt. Col J.R.J. Baxter, 19/07/95.

³³² Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

³³³ NIOD, De Ruiters collection: De Ruiters to DCBC and KL Crisis Staff/SCO, 14/08/95.

³³⁴ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

³³⁵ Confidential interview (80).

³³⁶ Confidential interview (5).

³³⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 385/a, Dannatt Report.

³³⁸ Confidential interview (65).

Before considering this in further detail, it will be useful to determine exactly where the executions took place.

4. The executions

The majority of the missing men were killed during the mass executions. However, not all executions could be described as 'mass'. Some Muslims were murdered individually or in small groups by the troops who had taken them prisoner. Some were murdered at the temporary prison camp locations. The executions began on 13 July. In the ensuing days, prisoners were transported to the execution sites to the north, where most executions took place between 14 and 17 of July.³³⁹ The Tribunal established that the executions had followed a set pattern. The men were first transported to disused schools or warehouses where they were held for several hours. Then they were loaded onto transport and taken to some remote location. Measures were taken to ensure that there was little or no resistance: the men were required to remove their footwear and their wrists were tied behind their backs. The prisoners were then lined up and killed, one at a time, with rifle fire. If any appeared to have survived, they were then shot again. In a few cases there were survivors who managed to 'play dead' convincingly enough and, although wounded, could later make good their escape. They reported that directly after - and sometimes during - the executions, earthmoving equipment would arrive to bury the victims where they lay, or in some convenient spot nearby.³⁴⁰

On the 12 and 13 of July, buses which were transporting the women and children to Kladanj were taken out of the convoy in Potocari. These were to transport the men from Potocari to Bratunac, where some were confined for between one and three days in various sheds and a disused school, others in the buses and trucks which had brought them there. The prisoners were given neither food nor water and suffered a torrent of abuse and other indignities.³⁴¹ According to witnesses, the people of Bratunac used to take men from these groups at night, and shots and screams could be heard. The events would appear to be a repetition of those which took place in the spring of 1992, shortly after the outbreak of the war in Bosnia. After 1995, the bullet holes could still be seen in the stands of the football stadium at Bratunac and in the classrooms of the Vuk Draskovic school.³⁴²

³³⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 67.

³⁴⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 68-9.

³⁴¹ Confidential information (77).

³⁴² Confidential interview (64).



The buses and trucks which had transported the women and children to Kladanj became available on 13 July. On the two subsequent days, the Military Police of the Bratunac Brigade escorted prisoners to locations farther to the north. The conditions under which the men were held in the trucks in Bratunac were atrocious. Having spent the night in the trucks, a group of approximately six hundred men proceeded to Kravica on the morning of the 14th of July. As the convoy reached the village, the vehicles halted and the men were left for hours under the tarpaulin of the trucks in the full heat of summer. Some passed out. In the afternoon, the trucks proceeded to Karakaj, north of Zvornik. Here the convoy stood outside a school for two hours. When the men were ordered out of the trucks to be held in the school, some were found to be dead.³⁴³

The Bosnian Serbs employed several methods to keep the prisoners as quiet and compliant as possible, using lies and deceit where necessary. Mladic was certainly guilty of such practices. For example, the men who were found attempting to escape by the Bratunac-Konjevic Polje road were told that the Geneva Convention would be observed if they gave themselves up. In Bratunac, men were told that there were Serbian personnel standing by to escort them to Zagreb for an exchange of prisoners. The visible presence of UN vehicles and UN vehicles, stolen from Dutchbat, were intended to contribute to the feeling of reassurance. Bosnian Serbs wearing Dutchbat uniforms encouraged the men to give themselves up. At the same time, individual VRS soldiers continued to intimidate the captives with both words and actions, taking pot-shots in the dark with weapons taken from the prisoners themselves.³⁴⁴

5. The morning of 13 July 1995: executions alongside the River Jadar

The first small-scale executions took place on the morning of 13 July 1995, alongside the River Jadar near Konjevic Polje. One survivor later told of how he was taken prisoner at Konjevic Polje earlier that morning, and then taken to a house for interrogation. He was then taken to another house, and later still to a shed by the Jadar where he was beaten. A bus then arrived at the shed. It transported the

³⁴³ ABiH Sarajevo. Arnautovic archive, 20/05/99, 'Report of 14/07/95'; ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 66, 180, 184.

³⁴⁴ Interview Omer Subasic, 19/10 and 20/10/97; confidential information (76).

seventeen men a short distance to a spot by the river, where they were lined up and shot. The surviving man had been hit in the hip, and managed to jump into the river and escape. This execution site was behind the headquarters building of the 5th Engineering Battalion of the Drina Corps, which had various facilities in Konjevic Polje. It is not possible to state with any certainty who actually carried out this execution: possibly personnel from the engineering battalion or perhaps a company of the MUP's Special Police.³⁴⁵

6. The afternoon of 13 July 1995: executions in the Cerska valley

The first large-scale mass executions began on the afternoon of 13 July 1995 in the valley of the River Cerska, to the west of Konjevic Polje. One witness, hidden among trees, saw two or three trucks, followed by an armoured vehicle and an earthmoving machine proceeding towards Cerska. After that, he heard gunshots for half an hour and then saw the armoured vehicle going in the opposite direction, but not the earthmoving machine. Other witnesses report seeing a pool of blood alongside the road to Cerska that day. Muhamed Durakovic, a UN translator, probably passed this execution site later that day. He reports seeing bodies tossed into a ditch alongside the road, with some men still alive.³⁴⁶

Aerial photos and excavations later confirmed the presence of a mass grave near this location. Ammunition cartridges found at the scene reveal that the victims were lined up on one side of the road, whereupon their executioners opened fire from the other. The bodies - 150 in number - were covered with earth where they lay. It could later be established that they had been killed by rifle fire. All were males, between the ages of 14 and 50. All but three of the 150 were wearing civilian clothes. Many had their hands tied behind their backs. Nine could later be identified and were indeed on the list of missing persons from Srebrenica.

For the prosecutors in the Krstic trial, these executions provided the first evidence of prior planning. The headquarters of the Drina Corps must have been involved, since these executions corresponded precisely with information gained from an intercepted communication in which Colonel Milanovic, the Drina Corps' air defence officer, had requested an earthmoving machine to be sent to Konjevic Polje. However, this in itself did not provide any evidence that units of the Drina Corps actually carried out the executions in the Cerska valley.³⁴⁷

7. The late afternoon of 13 July: executions in the warehouse at Kravica

Later that same afternoon, 13 July 1995, executions were also conducted in the largest of four warehouses (farm sheds) owned by the Agricultural Cooperative in Kravica. Between 1000 and 1500 men had been captured in fields near Sandici. They were brought to Kravica, either by bus or on foot, the distance being approximately one kilometre. A witness recalls seeing around 200 men, stripped to the waist and with their hands in the air, being forced to run in the direction of Kravica.³⁴⁸ An aerial photograph taken at 14.00 hours that afternoon shows two buses standing in front of the sheds. At around 18.00 hours, when the men were all being held in the warehouse, VRS soldiers threw in hand grenades and opened fire with various weapons, including an anti-tank gun.³⁴⁹ In the local area it is said that the mass murder in Kravica was unplanned and started quite spontaneously when one of the warehouse doors suddenly swung open.³⁵⁰

Supposedly, there was more killing in and around Kravica and Sandici. Even before the murders in the warehouse, some 200 or 300 men were formed up in ranks near Sandici and then mown

³⁴⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 196-198.

³⁴⁶ Interview Muhamed Durakovic, 20/11/99.

³⁴⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 201-204.

³⁴⁸ ABiH Sarajevo. Arnoutovic archive, 13/07/95.

³⁴⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 205, 208.

³⁵⁰ Confidential interview (65).

down with machine guns.³⁵¹ At Kravica, it seems that the local population had a hand in the killings. Some victims were mutilated and killed with knives. The bodies were taken to Bratunac or simply dumped in the river that runs alongside the road. One witness states that this all took place on the 14th of July.³⁵² There were three survivors of the slaughter in the farm sheds at Kravica. One recalls:

‘...all of a sudden there was a lot of shooting in the warehouse, and we didn’t know where it was coming from. There were rifles, grenades, bursts of gunfire and it was – it got so dark in the warehouse that we couldn’t see anything. People started to scream, to shout, crying for help. And then there would be a lull, and then all of a sudden it would start again. And they kept shooting like that until nightfall in the warehouse.’³⁵³

Armed guards shot at the men who tried to climb out the windows to escape the massacre. When the shooting stopped, the shed was full of bodies. Another survivor, who was only slightly wounded, reports:

‘I was not even able to touch the floor, the concrete floor of the building (...) After the shooting, I felt a strange kind of heat, warmth, which was actually coming from the blood that covered the concrete floor, and I was stepping on the dead people who were lying around. But there were even people who were still alive, who were only wounded, and as soon as I would step on one, I would hear him cry, moan, because I was trying to move as fast as I could. I could tell that people had been completely disembodied, and I could feel bones of the people that had been hit by those bursts of gunfire or shells, I could feel their ribs crushing. And then I would get up again and continue.’³⁵⁴

When this witness climbed out of a window, he was seen by a guard who shot at him. He then pretended to be dead and managed to escape the following morning. The other witness quoted above spent the night under a heap of bodies. The next morning, he watched as the soldiers examined the corpses for signs of life. The few survivors were forced to sing Serbian songs, and were then shot. Once the final victim had been killed, an excavator was driven in to shunt the bodies out of the shed. The asphalt outside was then hosed down with water. In September 1996, it was still possible to find hair, blood, human tissue and traces of explosives on the walls to be used in evidence. Some remnants of bones were discovered near one of the outer walls.³⁵⁵

Ammunition cartridges found at the scene established a link between the executions in Kravica and the ‘primary’ mass grave known as Glogova 2, in which the remains of 139 people were found. No blindfolds or restraints were found. In the ‘secondary’ grave known as Zeleni Jadar 5, there were 145 bodies, a number of which were charred. Pieces of brick and window frame which were found in the Glogova 1 grave that was opened later also established a link with Kravica. Here, the remains of 191 victims were found.³⁵⁶

Precisely which Bosnian Serb units were involved in the Kravica executions cannot be stated with any certainty. There were certainly personnel of the Drina Corps in the area at the time, and the headquarters of one of the Bratunac Brigade battalions was only four hundred metres from Glogova. However, there are also indications that a detachment of Military Police could have been involved in

³⁵¹ Confidential interview (55).

³⁵² ABiH Sarajevo. Arnoutovic archive, 14/07/95, witness Kasim Mustafic.

³⁵³ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 205.

³⁵⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 206.

³⁵⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 140, Manning Report, p. 6. ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 2/08/01, para. 207-8.

³⁵⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 140, Manning Report, p. 4-7. ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 210-4.

burying the victims. One Bosnian Serb witness observed soon after the executions that both VRS and Special Police could well have been involved. Given the proximity of the headquarters, the request for the earthmover, and the fact that military transport was making regular use of the road through Kravica, it is almost inconceivable that the Drina Corps could have been unaware of what was going on in the area.³⁵⁷

8. 13 and 14 of July 1995: executions at Tisca

Tisca was the place at which the buses from Potocari stopped, whereupon the women and children were forced to proceed to Kladanj on foot, crossing the demarcation line as they did so. Some men had also managed to find a place on these buses, particularly on the first convoys of 12 July. This had been possible because the matters were not yet being organized according to the VRS plans: the men had not yet been separated from the women, while the presence of (Bosnian) Serb camera teams in Potocari may also have played a role. When the buses arrived in Tisca, they were searched by VRS troops who forcibly removed the men.

A survivor recalls that he and 22 others were escorted to a school in the vicinity of Tisca on the 13th of July. Their wrists were tied with telephone wire. A Muslim woman (called 'Turk') was ordered to identify the men, but recognized only one of them.

In the late evening, everyone was ordered to board a waiting truck which, escorted by a stolen UN vehicle, proceeded to an execution site. In transit, the prisoners overheard the order that the truck had to head to a specific location, which had been the destination of a previous transport.

On arrival, two of the men attempted to escape. They were shot on the spot. One of the men had managed to free his wrists and to loosen the tarpaulin at the side of the truck, thus making his escape. Shots were fired, but he managed to reach the nearby woods. About half an hour later, he heard salvos of gunfire. While still in the truck he had recognized the road to Vlasenica, and could thus orient himself to find the road towards Mt. Udrac. There he met several people from the column, together they arrived in Tuzla fifteen days later.³⁵⁸

The Chief of Staff of the VRS' 1st Milici Brigade, Major Sarkic, was in Tisca at the time. His presence was duly noted by Dutchbat personnel. However, it could not be established beyond doubt that he or any of his men were involved in the murders in Tisca. Likewise, it is not known whether the executions were carried out by MUP units or by the Military Police.³⁵⁹

9. 14 July 1995: executions at the Grabavci school and elsewhere in Orahovac

In the early morning of 14 July 1995, a convoy of thirty vehicles arrived at the Grabavci school in Orahovac. On board were prisoners who had been held overnight in Bratunac. Among them were many men who had been forced to leave the UN compound at Potocari. Part of this group had originally been held at the Nova Kasaba football stadium where they heard Mladic announce that the younger men would be part of a prisoner exchange scheme and the older men would be taken to Tuzla and to safety. This did not happen: instead they spent the entire night in Bratunac, confined inside the trucks with no food or drink.³⁶⁰ Two survivors later recalled seeing a UN armoured vehicle carrying soldiers in UN uniforms (who happened to speak fluent Serbo-Croat) escorting six buses out of Bratunac. The intention would seem to have been to make the prisoners believe that they were being taken under UN escort to some place where an exchange of prisoners would take place.³⁶¹

³⁵⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 211-5.

³⁵⁸ Confidential interview (74).

³⁵⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 216.

³⁶⁰ Hren, *Srebrenica*, p. 53; ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 220.

³⁶¹ David Rohde, 'Bosnia Muslims Were Killed by The Truckload', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 02/10/95. According to Surem Huljic, some 300 to 400 men were involved. The other witness was Mevludin Oric.

This was very far from the truth. On arrival at the Grabavci school, a survivor noticed that the school gymnasium was already half full of men who had arrived earlier that morning. Within a few hours, the entire school was crowded. Survivors give various estimates of the number of people there, from 2000 to 2500, including some teenage boys and many old men, but at least 700 to 800 men of combatant age. In any case, the gymnasium was overcrowded and cramped. Every now and then, one of the guards would fire a shot into the ceiling in an attempt to quieten the panicking prisoners. There were two men walking around in UNPROFOR uniforms, accompanied by a 'civilian' who was posing as an interpreter. This would seem to be another ploy to persuade the men that the proceedings were under UN supervision. Some prisoners were taken outside where they were killed. Eventually, General Mladic himself arrived and announced, 'Well, your government does not want you, and I have to take care of you'. Another survivor recalls seeing Mladic at the execution site, where he witnessed several executions.³⁶²

Having been held in the gymnasium for several hours, the men were taken outside in small groups. Each was blindfolded and given a mouthful of water. They were told that they were being taken to a camp in Bijeljina. In reality, they were being taken to an execution site only one kilometre away. There, they were lined up and shot from behind. Those who survived the first round were shot again. The execution site comprised two adjacent fields. Once one was full of bodies, the firing squads simply moved into the other. The digging machines began work while the executions were still in progress.³⁶³ A survivor later recalled:

'When we reached the location, I jumped down from the truck and pulled the blindfold from my eyes. I saw that the field was full of people who had been shot dead. They had brought us here to kill us too. We were formed up in two ranks with our backs to the Cetniks. To our left was a yellow bulldozer. I stood close to the people that had already been shot before us. I grasped my amulet and fell to the ground among the other bodies just before they began to shoot. There was screaming and shouting all around me. I heard the command, 'Fire!' and then again: 'Fire!' The young lads were crying out for their parents, the fathers for their sons. But there was no help.

I lay motionless between the bodies and heard the Cetniks ask: 'Is anyone wounded? We'll take him to the hospital. If anyone replied, they would go over to him and finish him off. I remained silent. The man who had fallen on top of me was still alive. They came closer and finished him off. He convulsed and kicked my shoe off. They stopped shooting. I heard laughing and talking. Another truck arrived and then the bulldozer started up. It began to move the bodies into a heap and to crush them. It came very close to me and though it was going to crush me too. Then it would have been better to have been killed with a bullet. Suddenly the bulldozer stopped and a tall, stocky man got out and lit a cigarette. I could see everything because the light of the reflectors was on him. He turned and walked over to the group of Cetniks who were now in the middle of shooting another group of prisoners. I thought: this is the right moment. I pushed away the man who lay on top of me, found my shoe and began to crawl towards the woods, pulling myself over dead bodies all the way.'³⁶⁴

³⁶² ICTY, (IT-88-33), Witness L., 10/04/00. ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 220-1.

³⁶³ Hren, *Srebrenica*, pp. 53-54. ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 221.

³⁶⁴ Hren, *Srebrenica*, pp. 53-55.

These executions began in the afternoon of 14 July and were completed shortly before midnight. The process of burying the victims was then stopped and resumed the next morning. As the executions started, the Zvornik Brigade of the VRS had not yet engaged in combat with the column from Srebrenica on its way to Tuzla. At this time, the column was approximately nine kilometres from the execution site at Orahovac. Fighting began at 1800 hours, and a few hours later the column saw the opportunity to break through the ambushes and reform. It then proceeded in a string of about two to three kilometres in length, passing only three kilometres from Orahovac where the executions were being carried out.³⁶⁵

Two primary mass graves were later discovered in this area: 'Lazete-1' and 'Lazete-2'. In the former, 130 bodies were found, together with 138 blindfolds. Lazete 2 contained 243 bodies and 147 blindfolds. The vast majority of the men had been killed by a rifle shot. Bodies had been removed from Lazete 1 and 2, and re-interred some time between 7 September and 2 October 1995 in secondary graves designated Hodzici Road 3, 4 and 5. At least 184 bodies were found here, and again the vast majority had been killed by rifle fire.³⁶⁶

The Zvornik Brigade of the VRS was responsible for these deaths. Not only was Orahovac in this brigade's area of responsibility, but a vehicle belonging to the Zvornik Brigade was positively identified. It is also known that a detachment of the brigade's Military Police had been sent to Orahovac. Later, attempts were made to obscure this fact by means of forged duty rosters. Moreover, a survivor identified a former colleague, one Gojko Simic, Commander of the anti-tank platoon of the Fourth Battalion, 1st Zvornik Brigade, who was heard to say, 'Collect your ammunition and let's go to the meadow to kill the men.' Logbooks of the Zvornik Brigade's engineering section reveal that a truck belonging to the unit made two trips to Orahovac that day, while another towed an excavator. The logbook also states that a machine spent five hours digging and that 200 litres of diesel oil was issued for this purpose on 14 July. In addition, on both 15th and 16th of July, an excavator and a bulldozer belonging to the Zvornik Brigade's engineering section were deployed in Orahovac and a truck made three of four journeys between the base and Orahovac. Survivors report seeing these two vehicles with their lights on, working at the execution site.³⁶⁷

10. 14th and 15th of July 1995: executions at the school and the dam in Petkovići

On the 14 and 15 July 1995, another large group of prisoners numbering some 1500 to 2000 were taken from Bratunac to the school in Petkovići. The conditions under which these men were held at the Petkovići school were even worse than those in Grabavci. It was hot, overcrowded and there was no food or water. In the absence of anything else, some prisoners chose to drink their own urine. Every now and then, soldiers would enter the room and physically abuse prisoners, or would call them outside. A few of the prisoners contemplated an escape attempt, but others said it would be better to stay since the International Red Cross would be sure to monitor the situation and they could not all be killed.³⁶⁸

The men were called outside in small groups. They were ordered to strip to the waist and to remove their shoes, whereupon their hands were tied behind their backs. During the night of 14th of July, the men were taken by truck to the dam at Petkovići. Those who arrived later could see immediately what was going on there. A large number of bodies were strewn on the ground, their hands tied behind their backs. Small groups of five to ten men were taken out of the trucks, lined up and shot. Some begged for water but their pleas were ignored. A survivor described his feelings of fear combined with thirst thus:

³⁶⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex 401, Butler Report, para. 7.66.

³⁶⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 222-3.

³⁶⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 224.

³⁶⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 226.

‘I was really sorry that I would die thirsty, and I was trying to hide among the people for as long as I could, like everybody else. I just wanted to live for another second or two. And when it was my turn, I jumped out with what I believe were four other people. I could feel the gravel beneath my feet. It hurt. (...) I was walking with my head bent down and I wasn’t feeling anything. (...) And then I thought that I would die very fast, that I would not suffer. And I just thought that my mother would never know where I had ended up. This is what I was thinking as I was getting out of the truck. (...) I was still very thirsty. But it was sort of between life and death. I didn’t know whether I wanted to live or to die anymore. I decided not to call out for them to shoot and kill me, but I was sort of praying to God that they’d come and kill me. But I decided not to call them and I was waiting to die.’³⁶⁹

After the soldiers had left, two survivors helped each other to untie their hands, and then crawled over the heap of bodies towards the woods, where they intended to hide. They spent the night on a hillside. As dawn arrived, they could see the execution site where bulldozers were collecting the bodies. On the way to the execution site, one of the survivors had peeked out from under his blindfold and had seen that Mladic was also on his way to the scene.³⁷⁰

Aerial photos confirmed that the earth near the Petkovici dam had been disturbed, and that it was disturbed yet again some time between 7 and 27 September 1995. When the grave here was opened in April 1998, many bodies appeared to have disappeared. Their removal had been accomplished with mechanical apparatus, causing considerable disturbance to the grave and its contents. At this time, the grave contained the remains of no more than 43 persons. Other bodies had been removed to a secondary grave, ‘Liplje 2’, prior to 2 October 1995. Here, the remains of at least 191 individuals were discovered. One remarkable discovery in this grave was that of pages from Dutch newspapers, also found at three other burial sites.³⁷¹

It is not known precisely who carried out these executions. However, it is known that the Zvornik Brigade was involved, with two of its trucks driving between Petkovici and the dam no fewer than ten times on 15 July, presumably to transport the prisoners to the execution site. It is also known that two diggers belonging to the Brigades’ engineering company were deployed at the scene on the days in question. The execution site was only two miles from the command post of the 6th Battalion of the Zvornik Brigade in Baljkovica.³⁷²

11. 14 to 16 July 1995: executions at the Pilica school and the Branjevo Military Farm

On 14 July, the prisoners from Bratunac were taken even further to the north. Buses took them to a school in the village of Pilica, some twenty kilometres north of Zvornik. Here too, the 1000 to 1200 prisoners were denied food and water, some dying of dehydration in the gymnasium of the school itself. The men were confined for two full days.³⁷³ Although the executions at Orahovac and Petkovici had already taken place, the officer commanding the Zvornik Brigade, Lt. Col. Vinko Pandurevic, who on 15 July had been recalled from Zepa where his unit and others had been active, complained about

³⁶⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 227.

³⁷⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 228.

³⁷¹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 140, Manning Report, p. 44, Annex C, p. 4/17, 9/17, 11/17 and 13/17. Pages from Dutch newspapers were also found at Hodzici Road 5 and at Cancari Road 3 & 12. In one case it could be established that the newspaper dated from April 1995. In the grave at Konjevic Polje 1, a Dutchbat Laundry ID Card #15 in the name of Muminovic was found. This bore the photograph of a woman. No conclusions were drawn with regard to this find.

³⁷² ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 229-31.

³⁷³ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 233, 236.

the onerous burden which had been placed on his shoulders. He was required to find room for large numbers of prisoners in his area, guard them and dispose of the dead. His unit was no longer able to perform this task satisfactorily, lacking as they did the necessary resources. Pandurevic threatened to release the prisoners if no one else could be found to take responsibility for them. Even after the executions, Pandurevic declared it incomprehensible that ‘someone’ should have sent 3000 men to be confined in the schools, while he was also expected to deal with the fleeing column and engagements in which his units were being attacked by the ABiH.³⁷⁴

It may have been due to the lack of resources that the VRS did not remove the men from the school until 16 July. The prisoners were loaded onto buses, their hands tied behind their backs, and transported to the ‘Branjevo Military Farm’ (the farm bred pigs to supply the VRS). The prisoners were lined up in groups of ten and then shot. The 10th Sabotage Detachment, under the direct command of the General Staff of the VRS, carried out these executions.³⁷⁵ During the morning of 16 July, Drazen Erdemovic and other members of the 10th Sabotage Detachment were given orders for the executions, and proceeded via the headquarters of the Zvornik Brigade to the Branjevo Military Farm. They were accompanied by two officers of the Drina Corps’ Military Police and a Lieutenant Colonel without any distinguishing insignia, but the latter departed again shortly after their arrival. About half an hour after his departure, the first busloads of prisoners began to arrive. The Military Police escorted the buses (which belonged to *Centrotrans Sarajevo* and *Drinatrans Zvornik*) and supervised the disembarkation of the prisoners in groups of ten, and their last steps to the site of the execution. The first shots were fired at 10.00 hours and the entire procedure was completed by 15.00 hours. An additional ten VRS soldiers arrived to assist some time between 13.00 and 14.00 hours. It was said that they had come from Bratunac, which could also be deduced from the fact that they appeared to know some of the Muslims. Forensic examination of the ammunition cartridges found here failed to establish any similarity with the rifling marks on cartridges found elsewhere. It therefore seems likely that these were not the troops which formed the firing squads at other execution sites.³⁷⁶

Drazen Erdemovic, later convicted of war crimes by the Tribunal, was one of the VRS soldiers active here. According to his account, ‘the men in front of us were ordered to turn their backs. When those men turned their backs to us, we shot at them. We were given orders to shoot.’ Erdemovic reports that only one of the victims was in military uniform. Another had put up some resistance and had attempted to escape, but the remainder had shown full compliance. On occasion, the members of the Sabotage Detachment displayed remarkable cruelty. If they happened to recognize one of the prisoners, he would be humiliated and beaten before being put to death. Machine guns were used, which tended to cause wounds rather than being immediately fatal, thus serving to prolong the suffering.³⁷⁷ On this point, one of the survivors recalls:

‘When they opened fire, I threw myself on the ground. (...) And one man fell on my head. I think that he was killed on the spot. And I could feel the hot blood pouring over me. (...) I could hear one man crying for help. He was begging them to kill him. And they simply said “Let him suffer. We’ll kill him later.”’³⁷⁸

Between 1000 and 1200 men were killed at this site on 16 July. The killing continued the next day. Aerial photographs taken on 17 July show a large number of bodies around the Branjevo Military Farm

³⁷⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex 401, Butler Report, para. 7.71 and 7.75. From this number, it could be concluded that the executions in the area under Zvornik Brigade control (Orahovac, Petkovici, Branjevo Military Farm, Pilica Dom Kultura and Kozluk) involved some 3000 victims in all (Butler Report para. 9.33).

³⁷⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 233-4.

³⁷⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 140, Manning Report, p. 17. ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 239-40.

³⁷⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 234.

³⁷⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 235.

site and the tracks of an earthmoving machine which had been collecting the bodies together. In the mass grave at the Branjevo Military Farm, the bodies of 132 men were later discovered. These victims ranged in age from 15 to 61. At least 130 had died as the result of gunfire. It was possible to establish that thirteen men were from Srebrenica. Another grave, known as 'Chanceri Road 12', proved to be a secondary grave connected with the Branjevo Military Farm. Here, 174 bodies were found.³⁷⁹ In other words, only a small proportion of the total number of bodies were ever discovered.

That units of the Drina Corps were involved in the executions at the Branjevo Military Farm is beyond any doubt. The farm fell under the direct control of the 1st Battalion of the Zvornik Brigade. An earthmoving machine belonging to the Zvornik Brigade spent more than eight hours at the site on 17 July, the aerial photographs shown that a pit had been dug on that day. Moreover, intercepts established that the staff of the Drina Corps were involved. On the afternoon of 16 July, the Zvornik Brigade requisitioned 500 litres of diesel fuel for the use of Lt. Col. Vujadin Popovic, Security Officer of the Drina Corps, who had threatened to stop the 'work' he was doing if this was not forthcoming. The diesel was to be transported to Pilica and Col. Krsmanovic, the Transport Officer of the Drina Corps, was to make the necessary arrangements. The fuel was required to move prisoners from Pilica to the Branjevo Military Farm.³⁸⁰

It is noteworthy that two of the three survivors of the executions at the Branjevo Military Farm were arrested by local Bosnian Serb police on 25 July and sent to the prisoner of war compound at Batkovici. One had been a member of the group separated from the women in Potocari on 13 July. The prisoners who were taken to Batkovici survived the ordeal and were later able to testify before the Tribunal.³⁸¹

12. 16 July 1995: executions in the Dom Kultura in Pilica

The 10th Sabotage Detachment completed the executions at the Branjevo Military Farm at approximately 1500 hours on 16 July 1995, whereupon Erdemovic and his companions-in-arms refused to carry out any more executions. They were told that a group of five hundred prisoners had tried to escape from the Dom Kultura in nearby Pilica. The soldiers were then ordered to proceed to a café in Pilica where they were to await the arrival of the Lieutenant Colonel without identifying insignia who has already been mentioned in this chapter. While in the café, they could hear gunfire and grenades being detonated. This noise continued for 15 to 20 minutes, whereupon an soldier from Bratunac arrived and reported that 'everything' was over.³⁸²

There were no survivors to explain exactly what had happened in the Dom Kultura. However, it is remarkable that this was no execution at some remote spot, but one in the centre of town on the main road from Zvornik to Bijeljina. Over a year later, it was still possible to find physical evidence of this atrocity. As in Kravica, many traces of blood, hair and body tissue were found in the building, with cartridges and shells littered throughout the two storeys. It could also be established that explosives and machine guns had been used. Human remains and personal possessions were found under the stage, where blood had dripped down through the floorboards.³⁸³

The personnel of the Bratunac Brigade were involved in this incident. Two platoons of the Bratunac Brigade had been attached to the Zvornik Brigade, and a section of the Military Police platoon was in Pilica to guard prisoners. They carried out the executions in Pilica after those at the Branjevo Military Farm had been completed.³⁸⁴

³⁷⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 236-8.

³⁸⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 241-2.

³⁸¹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex 401, Butler Report, para. 7.42.

³⁸² ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 244.

³⁸³ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 140, Manning Report, p. 1-3.

³⁸⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 246.

13. Kozluk

The exact date of the executions at Kozluk is not known, although it can be narrowed down to the period of 14 to 17 July 1995. The most probable dates are the 15 and 16 July, not least due to the geographic location of Kozluk, between Petkovici Dam and the Branjevo Military Farm. It therefore falls within the pattern of ever more northerly execution sites: Orahovac on 14 July, Petkovci Dam on 15 July 1995, the Branjevo Military Farm and the Pilica Dom Kultura on 16 July. Another indication is that a Zvornik Brigade excavator spent eight hours in Kozluk on 16 July, and a truck belonging to same brigade made two journeys between Orahovac and Kozluk that day. A bulldozer is known to have been active in Kozluk on 18 and 19 July.³⁸⁵

Among Bosnian refugees in Germany, there were rumours of executions in Kozluk, during which the five hundred or so prisoners were forced to sing Serbian songs as they were being transported to the executions site. The interest subsequently shown in Kozluk can be explained by the fact that most of the six thousand inhabitants of the village (which had been 'ethnically cleansed' in 1992) were Muslim.³⁸⁶ Although no survivors have since come forward, investigations in 1999 led to the discovery of a mass grave near Kozluk. This proved to be the actual location of an execution as well, and lay alongside the Drina accessible only by driving through the barracks occupied by the Drina Wolves. The grave was not dug specifically for the purpose: it had previously been a quarry and a landfill site. Investigators found many shards of green glass which the nearby 'Vitinka' bottling plant had dumped there. This facilitated the process of establishing links with the secondary graves along Cancari Road.

The grave at Kozluk had been partly cleared some time prior to 27 September 1995, but no fewer than 340 bodies were found there nonetheless. In 292 cases, it was clear that they had died as the result of rifle fire: 83 by a single shot to the head, 76 by one shot through the torso region, 72 by multiple gunfire wounds, five by wounds to the legs and one person by gunfire wounds to the arm. The ages of the victims were estimated as between 8 and 85 years old. Some had been physically disabled (occasionally as the result of amputation) or had suffered from chronic disorders such as curvature of the spine or arthritis. Many had clearly been tied and bound using strips of clothing or nylon thread.³⁸⁷

Along the Cancari Road are twelve known mass graves, of which only two - Cancari Road 3 and 12 - have been investigated in detail. Cancari Road 3 is known to have been a secondary grave linked to Kozluk, as shown by the glass fragments and labels from the Vitinka factory. The remains of 158 victims were found here, of which 35 bodies were still more or intact and indicated that most had been killed by gunfire.³⁸⁸ Cancari Road 12 was the site of the re-interment of at least 174 bodies, moved here from the mass grave at the Branjevo Military Farm. Only 43 were complete sets of remains, most of which established that death had taken place as the result of rifle fire. Of the 313 various body parts found, 145 displayed gunshot wounds of a severity likely to prove fatal.³⁸⁹

14. Other execution sites

In addition to the mass executions, various smaller scale executions took place. They include those conducted in the immediate vicinity of the Dutchbat compound in Potocari.³⁹⁰ The executions of 12 and 13 July in Bratunac are discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

After the closure to the corridor at Baljkovica, several groups of stragglers nevertheless attempted to escape into Bosnian territory. Most were captured by VRS troops in the Nezuk -

³⁸⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 252.

³⁸⁶ ABZ, DEU 508363. Memorandum DIO/JS to DEU/OE, DPV/PZ, DAV/MS, JURA, nr. 643/92, 28/09/92.

³⁸⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 140, Manning Report, p. 45-7. ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 249-50.

³⁸⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 140, Manning Report, p. 48-51. ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 251.

³⁸⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 140, Manning Report, p. 19-21.

³⁹⁰ See Chapter 4.

Baljkovica area and killed on the spot. On 19 July, for example, a group of approximately eleven men were killed at Nezuk itself by units of the 16th Krajina Brigade, then operating under the direct command of the Zvornik Brigade. Reports reveal that a further thirteen men, all ABiH soldiers, were killed at Nezuk on 19 July. The report of the march to Tuzla includes the account of an ABiH soldier who witnessed several executions carried out by police that day. He survived because some ABiH soldiers were needed for an exchange of prisoners following the ABiH's capture of an VRS officer at Baljkovica.³⁹¹

15. Obscuring the evidence

The attempts to obscure the extent of the mass murders began in September 1995. They involved opening the mass graves at the execution sites and moving the bodies from these 'primary' graves to several 'secondary' graves. Immediately following the executions, victims' bodies were buried in fourteen primary graves. In September and October 1995, re-internment in the secondary graves, usually in more remote locations, took place.³⁹²

This suggests an orchestrated attempt to obscure evidence as Srebrenica became the focus of increasing world interest. Such measures would not have been found necessary if the victims had all been killed in combat, in which case the bodies could have been returned to the enemy forces under the usual customs and conventions of warfare.

Why the operation to 'cover the tracks' took place when it did remains a mystery. The aerial photographs which suggested that executions had taken place had been presented to the Security Council by the American Permanent Representative Albright some weeks previously, on 10 August 1995. The Bosnian Serbs had therefore known for some time that the existence of the mass graves was no secret. However, it should be noted that at this time, only the graves at Konjevic Polje were known to the UN, not those at more northerly locations. It soon became clear that there had been survivors of the executions, able to testify to the events that had taken place. Their stories gradually emerged.³⁹³ The manner in which the executions became public knowledge is discussed in the following chapter. It remains the case that it was several weeks after the publication of the aerial photographs that a start was made to the removal of remains from the mass graves. No witnesses to the extensive activity of excavation, exhumation and re-internment have ever been found. Neither is there any firm evidence indicating who was responsible for the decision to undertake such activity. However, a letter dated 14 September 1995 and signed by Mladic reveals that the General Staff of the VRS issued five tons of diesel fuel to the Drina Corps and the Zvornik Brigade. The Tribunal believed this to be in connection with the excavations. Fuel was a scarce commodity for the VRS, while the involvement of the Zvornik Brigade (familiar with the locations of the graves) and the VRS' security department indicated a deliberate effort to cover up the mass killings. Aerial photographs confirm that there was considerable activity at the original grave sites during this period. It is also known that a meeting of the Bratunac Brigade staff took place on 16 October 1995, at which the Security Officer Major Momir Nikolic indicated that activities involving the re-internment of human remains were being conducted on the orders of the General Staff. All in all, the excavation of the primary graves, the removal and reburial of bodies in the secondary graves must have involved considerable effort. There would also have been many truck movements over distances of up to forty kilometres.³⁹⁴

³⁹¹ Confidential interview (55). ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 254-5.

³⁹² ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 71, 78, 80.

³⁹³ ABZ 00797. Code Biegman 721, 11/08/95.

³⁹⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 257-60.

16. Excavations and exhumations

In 1996, the Yugoslavia Tribunal began its own excavations. Graves at Cerska, Nova Kasaba, Orahovac and the Branjevo Military Farm in Pilica were opened. A further eight graves followed in 1998: Petkovci Dam, Cancari Road 12, Cancari Road 3, Hodzici Road 3, Hodzici Road 4, Hodzici Road 5, Lipje 2, Zeleni Jadar 5. Yet another five were opened in 1999: Kozluk, Nova Kasaba, Konjevic Polje 1, Konjevic Polje 2 and Glogova 2, followed by a further four in 2000: Lazete 1, Lazete 2C, Ravnice and Glogova 1.³⁹⁵ (See map in section four) According to the official forensic reports, these graves have so far yielded the remains of no more than 2028 persons. In mid-2001, the locations of a further 18 graves were known, but had yet to be investigated. The experts believe that these must contain at least a further 2571 bodies, bringing the provisional total number of execution victims to 4599.³⁹⁶ By February 2000, only 73 had been positively identified, this number rising to 144 by the end of that year.³⁹⁷ Identification has proven to be a labour-intensive and expensive undertaking, made all the more difficult by the deliberate disturbance of the mass graves by the Bosnian Serbs.

Only when all the graves have been opened and fully investigated will it be possible to state exactly how many men were executed. Even then, there will remain some doubt regarding the accuracy of the count in the secondary graves, not only because these contain a number of incomplete corpses, but also because it is possible that some of the remains here belong to those killed in combat. So far, it has been possible to confirm the cause of death in only half the victims. In five cases, the cause of death was clearly shrapnel from grenades, which may indicate that they met their end during combat rather than as the result of the executions.

However, it is known that hand grenades were used during the executions in at least two places. In many of the graves, a large number of blindfolds and various restraints - mostly fashioned from iron wire and used to bind wrists or arms - were found. This clearly indicates executions, yet in the mass graves at Nova Kasaba and Konjevic Polje few such clues were found. There had also been combat in this area, and so it is possible that these victims fell on the battlefield. It will never be possible to distinguish victims of the executions from 'regular' casualties of war.³⁹⁸

Although it has been assumed thus far that all the victims of the executions were men and boys, not all the remains in the graves are male. Although in many cases it is impossible to establish gender at all, in at least one case the remains are of a woman. The majority of victims appear to be over the age of 25, but the remains of a number of boys aged between eight and twelve have also been found.³⁹⁹ There is a certain correlation between the ages of the missing persons and those of the bodies exhumed. The proportion of the listed missing persons aged between 13 and 24 is 26.4%, while the proportion of remains clearly in this group is 17.5%. In the over-25 category, the figures are 73.6% of the missing persons list and 82.8% of the actual remains. Identity documents, other papers and possessions have established a link with Srebrenica. In a few cases, the identity of a body could be determined by means of jewellery, photographs or prostheses. Some victims had been disabled and were therefore definitely never part of a combatant military unit.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 71.

³⁹⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 140, Manning Report, p. 3/21. How the investigators arrived at such an exact figure is not explained.

³⁹⁷ BBC Worldwide Monitoring. Bosnia-Herzegovina Federation TV, Sarajevo, in Serbo-Croat and timed at 18.30 hrs GMT on 04/12/01.

³⁹⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 76.

³⁹⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 140, Manning Report, p. 3/21, 28/21.

⁴⁰⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 74.

17. Responsibility

During the Krstic trial, a significant issue on which prosecution and defence differed, was that of where responsibility lay during the fall of Srebrenica, and more especially in the period immediately thereafter. The military operation would have relied on the close involvement of General Mladic and the officers of the VRS General Staff. This would be particularly true in the case of deliberate and orchestrated mass murder.

There was yet another complication, in that command of the Drina Corps had been transferred from General Zivanovic to General Krstic around the time that the executions commenced. Clearly, this has a great bearing on the question of responsibility.

As stated previously, there is no firm evidence to suggest that the Drina Corps drew up plans for the killings or actually instigated the physical measures required. In all probability, the planning fell to the General Staff under Mladic. Officers of the General Staff were indeed seen at various locations around the enclave during the killings. Mladic was in charge of the proceedings in Potocari: the separation of the men and women, and the imprisonment of the men at various sites close to the UN compound. Mladic was seen in the field at Sandici, and was also seen on 13 July at the football stadium in Nova Kasaba, where thousands of Muslim men were being held prisoner. Mladic was also present at Grabavci School and in Orahovac, where he witnessed the executions of 14 July. Colonel Beara, head of the General Staff's Security and Intelligence department was a prominent figure seen at various locations, as were several other members of the General Staff.⁴⁰¹

It was striking that the VRS security forces had a major part in the proceedings. Not only were the security organs of the General Staff involved, but also those of the Drina Corps, whose Assistant Chief of Staff for Security, Lt.Col. Popovic, was in charge. The activities of the security forces were, according to the Krstic's defence lawyers, carried out independently and autonomously. It was thus claimed that the Commanders of the Drina Corps, first Zivanovic and later Krstic, knew nothing of any criminal activity, even if this had taken place within the Corps' area of responsibility.

Another person must be identified as having a hand in all this, albeit in a minor role. Following the fall of Srebrenica, President Karadzic made Miroslav Deronjic (the Commissioner for Srebrenica whom Karadzic had previously appointed) responsible for prisoners and refugees. Deronjic had previously been a teacher at a Yugoslav school in France, and had been president of the SDS (Karadzic's party) in Bratunac since 1990. However, the Tribunal was not offered evidence that Deronjic had any degree of authority which would have enabled him to exert influence on the activities of the Drina Corps.⁴⁰²

In an interview, Deronjic told the NIOD that he had received Karadzic's phone call appointing him Civilian Commissioner for Srebrenica on 11 July. He told Karadzic that the VRS had entered a deserted town, the civilian population having left for Potocari. Karadzic said that his written instructions would follow. Deronjic claims that he immediately set out for Pale in order to obtain a full explanation of the role he was to play as 'civilian commissioner'.⁴⁰³

Deronjic was apparently put in charge of the civilian population of Srebrenica and of the organizational aspects of the civilian administration and the police force. Karadzic had instructed Deronjic to hold a meeting with representatives of UNPROFOR at which Muslims were to be offered the opportunity of remaining in Srebrenica under Bosnian Serb control. Deronjic did not consider this to be a viable option, if only because the Muslims themselves would never agree. Moreover, the civil authorities could not guarantee that Muslims and Serbs would be able to live alongside each other in harmony. However, according to Deronjic's statement, Karadzic wished his idea to remain among the options and to be put to the Muslims. Deronjic says that he was not particularly pleased to have been told to find a solution for the civilian population. He realized that any negotiations with Mladic would

⁴⁰¹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 290.

⁴⁰² ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 263.

⁴⁰³ Interview Miroslav Deronjic, 03/11/99.

be difficult because of the ongoing conflict between the military and the political forces in the Republika Srpska. He returned to Bratunac and attempted to contact Mladic that same evening, 11 July. Mladic was not available.⁴⁰⁴

That the Bosnian Serbs intended to allow the civilian population to remain in Srebrenica was confirmed by the vice president of the Serb Republic, Nikola Koljevic, during talks with the UNHCR representative John Ryan on the evening of 11 July. At that time, the military authorities were still in charge, as Deronjic was not due to become responsible for the civilian population until 12 July. Koljevic also stated that humanitarian organizations would be allowed full access to Srebrenica. This later proved not to be the case, there being strong resistance from the military forces.⁴⁰⁵

On the morning of 12 July, Deronjic received another telephone call: Mladic wanted to see him. He was to go to the Hotel Fontana where they had breakfast together. According to Deronjic, Mladic was not happy to negotiate with a civilian authority. He had already heard 'through the grapevine' that he was expected to do business with Deronjic. For his part, Deronjic promised not to interfere in any military operations, and stated that he understood that the military action would continue. He therefore did not count on the assistance of the military in performing his duties as civilian commissioner. Mladic was assured that Deronjic had all the assistance he needed in the form of the police.

On the very first night after the fall of Srebrenica, prisoners were taken to Bratunac. Deronjic told Mladic that he considered this unacceptable; there was no proper prison in Bratunac. Miladin Simic, the mayor of Bratunac, had informed Deronjic in disguised form that the prisoners were to be held in a school building. Deronjic allegedly told both Mladic and Karadzic that the prisoners must be accommodated elsewhere. According to Deronjic, he was in constant telephone contact with Karadzic at this time. Karadzic is alleged to have told Deronjic that 'the goods must be placed in a storeroom', which is understood to mean that the captive men must be moved to a prison camp. This message was passed on to the military commanders, whereupon the prisoners were placed on trucks with the destinations Konjevic Polje, Kladanj, Zvornik and Bijeljina.

According to Deronjic's account, there was then considerable uncertainty about what happened in the following days. Moreover, he claims that this was a military matter and thus entirely out of his hands. However, this standpoint does not chime with this orders to care for the civilian population of Srebrenica. To Deronjic, the most important thing was that the prisoners had been taken out of Bratunac; no more prisoners would be taken there.

Deronjic claims that there is no evidence of executions having taken place in Bratunac itself, although he does concede that some reprisal action was taken against individuals. After the fall of Srebrenica, there was an almost hysterical elation among the troops in Bratunac. Srebrenica was the first town of any appreciable size to be 'liberated' by the VRS. The soldiers felt the need to celebrate and to demonstrate their triumph, at the expense of the civilians.⁴⁰⁶

On 14 July Karadzic declared a state of war in Srebrenica and the immediate vicinity. In principle, this automatically made the civilian authorities subordinate to military rule. The purpose of this move was to ensure that VRS forces within the Drina Corps' area of responsibility had access to the personnel and resources which would enable 'final victory over the enemy'. Deronjic was now subject to military authority. Karadzic issued orders that both VRS forces and the civilian organs should

⁴⁰⁴ Interview Miroslav Deronjic, 03/11/99.

⁴⁰⁵ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87717, File 7-8-1, Srebrenica 11/07-31/07/95. Fax UNHCR Pale to UNHCR Zagreb, 11/07/95, Note John Ryan to Akashi, Zagreb, Moussali, HC Zagreb, Corwin, BHC, 11/07/95.

⁴⁰⁶ Interview Miroslav Deronjic, 03/11/99. It has not been possible to corroborate Deronjic's account using other sources. Deronjic further claims that as he was proceeding to Pale via Konjevic Polje on 11 July, a Muslim man emerged from the woods and wished to surrender to him.

⁴⁰⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP p. 00892574. Radovan Karadzic: Decision on the Proclamation of a State of War in the Srebrenica-Skelani Municipality, 14/07/95, No. 01-1372/95.

observe international law and conventions. However, they had not done so to date and continued to flout the law even after Karadzic's proclamation.⁴⁰⁷

In Belgrade, the coterie of Serbian intellectuals around the former president Cosic realized that revenge was likely to rear its head. This seemed even more likely in that the units involved in Srebrenica were made up of local men, whereupon one's opponent could well hail from the same small village. Cosic feared that the events in and around Srebrenica would escalate into a full-scale crisis. Among his circle, there was a concern that the Serbs would become embroiled in such a crisis to the extent that further ethnic conflicts and widespread fighting would become inevitable. It was therefore decided to observe the situation on the spot.

Vladimir Matovic, a former journalist and advisor to Cosic, was asked to go to Srebrenica since he was most familiar with the local situation. He also knew Karadzic and Mladic from the time that Cosic was still president. Matovic first went to the bureau of the Republika Srpska in Belgrade. The staff there knew nothing. It therefore seemed more useful to proceed directly to Bratunac and Srebrenica. On 12 July, Matovic managed to reach Potocari. What he saw here was enough: Muslims were lined up on one side of the road, VRS soldiers on the other. There was general confusion among both the VRS troops and their Dutchbat counterparts. The situation reminded Matovic of the film he had seen about the evacuation of Saigon. There were plenty of people and soldiers milling around, but there was no political figure in charge. The senior Muslim representatives had left and there was no sign of any agreements having been reached. Matovic attempted to contact the VRS and the Muslim leaders. He wished to arrange talks with the VRS commanders before reporting back to Belgrade on exactly what was happening here. However, he did not get to meet Mladic or any of his generals.

Matovic travelled on to Pale where he was able to meet with Karadzic and the ministers of the interior and defence, but these had no ready answers either. Matovic gained the impression that Karadzic was genuinely unaware of what was happening in and around Srebrenica. Rather than providing answers, Karadzic was asking questions. Matovic then decided to return to Belgrade. He arrived there in the early morning of 14 July, whereupon it was decided that the patriarch Pavle and former president Cosic would each write a letter to Mladic and Karadzic.

Matovic rushed to the monastery where Pavle lay on his sickbed and explained what the group had decided. Pavle proceeded to write to Mladic and Karadzic. Cosic did likewise. Although worded differently, the letters had the same general intent, pointing out that the situation was likely to lead to a full-scale crisis. They incited Mladic, as Commander of the Armed forces, to display civilized behaviour with regard to the ABiH prisoners of war. In his letter, Cosic referred to Serbian military traditions. With the letters, Matovic departed once more for Bratunac where he arrived on the evening of 14 July. He was again unable to find Mladic, but met with another VRS General, Dordje Djukic, responsible for logistics.⁴⁰⁸ Matovic explained the views of the Belgrade group and that he was going to visit Karadzic to deliver the letter. Karadzic told him later that he had obtained no further information since Matovic's earlier visit. In fact, he claimed to gain all his information from watching CNN.

Matovic returned to Potocari on 16 July. Here, the first rumours of killings reached him. He met Djukic again and asked him whether he had passed on the letter to Mladic. Djukic assured him that he had. As far as the killings were concerned, Djukic said that these were rumours and nothing more. It seemed even more essential that Mladic should be fully apprised of the standpoint held by the Cosic group, but yet again it was impossible to find him. Matovic states that the chaos he observed around Srebrenica and the fact that Karadzic seemed to know nothing made him very apprehensive about what could happen next. Cosic never received a reply to his letters from either Karadzic or Mladic.

⁴⁰⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP p. 00892574. Radovan Karadzic: Decision on the Proclamation of a State of War in the Srebrenica-Skelani Municipality, 14/07/95, No. 01-1372/95.

⁴⁰⁸ Djukic was indicted by the Yugoslavia Tribunal on 29/02/96, charged with shooting civilians during the siege of Sarajevo, after the Bosnian Muslims had taken him as a prisoner of war. However, he died on 04/03/96. The charges against him did not relate to Srebrenica.

However, he had not expected an answer: the letters were intended as an appeal to their sense of moral responsibility.⁴⁰⁹

Thus, the intervention of Cosic and his followers had no effect. However, it is an illustration of the fact that not everyone was confident of the Srebrenica situation being resolved satisfactorily, and that there were indeed fears in some Serbian quarters that taking the enclave would squander Serbian interests and lead to more blood-letting. It remains unclear whether Karadzic knew about the mass murders at the time, but in view of the manner that he was briefed about the progress of the VRS by his General Staff on 11 July, it seems unlikely that news of local events would not have reached him in the ensuing days.

18. The involvement of the General Staff

Clearly, it is important to establish the extent to which the General Staff of the VRS had direct control over the Drina Corps' activities in and around Srebrenica in order to determine who was responsible for the treatment the prisoners received and their execution. Therefore, the Tribunal examined this question in some detail. According to Krstic's defence, the General Staff intervened on several occasions. The first of these was alleged to have been on 9 July, when Mladic arrived at the VRS command post which had moved forward to Pribicevac, whereupon he took de facto command of the attack on Srebrenica. He would then also be responsible for ensuring that the original objective of operation 'Krivaja 95', that of reducing the enclave was changed to full capture of the enclave. The second General Staff intervention was in directing the movement of the population from Potocari, which again fell to Mladic. And it was Mladic (rather than the Corps Commander Zivanovic) who put Krstic in charge of the operation against Zepa on 11 July. A further intervention of the General Staff was the appointment, on 17 July, of Lt. Col. Keserovic to lead the operation to clear the territory around Srebrenica, this having previously been coordinated by the Drina Corps. Moreover, Mladic had stated that locating the 28th ABiH Division after the fall, when the Drina Corps did not know where it was to be found, was his responsibility.⁴¹⁰

In any event, the Krstic defence considered it clear that the General Staff had continued to issue a series of orders and instructions even after the fall of Srebrenica, and that those in charge of the Drina Corps had not always been informed or consulted about the activities of the General Staff in the region. Indeed, there were several indications to support these claims. In the early evening of 13 July, for example, the Drina Corps Commander Zivanovic was still investigating ABiH war crimes, while the first executions had already taken place at Konjevic Polje and Cerska, and were just about to begin at Kravica. Mladic had announced this investigation during the talks at the Hotel Fontana.

Further, the orders which Krstic carried out on 13 July in connection with the search for personnel remaining in the enclave had been changed. Another example is that Colonel Beara of the General Staff had issued orders directly to the officers of the Drina Corps. From an intercepted communication between Zivanovic and Beara it could be deduced that Mladic had issued direct orders concerning executions to the members of the 5th Podrinje Brigade, on or about 13 July 1995. The same communication suggested that Zivanovic was not aware of the action further to those orders before he had spoken with Beara. Zivanovic seemed to have very little say in matters after that: this was his last day as commanding officer.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁹ Interviews Vladimir Matovic, 16/12/99 and Dobrica Cosic, 13/09/01. In Belgrade several groups were active, comprising academics, writers, renowned professors, members of peace groups and various non-governmental organizations, all of which wished to contribute to the peace process in one way or another. The exact composition of the Cosic group depended on the occasion. In this case, it included Prof. Ljubomir Tadic, Prof. Smilja Avramov, Prof. Ekmečić (a Serb from Sarajevo), and Prof. Mihailo Markovic.

⁴¹⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 264-5.

⁴¹¹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 265.

In an intercepted communication of 17 July, Krstic was heard to ask an unidentified person on whose orders troops had been moved somewhere or other. The answer was: the General Staff. This provides another indication that the General Staff was issuing direct orders without informing the responsible officer of the Drina Corps. After July 11, various units which did not form part of the Drina Corps itself were active in arresting and executing Muslim men. They included the Police Battalion of the 65th Regiment, the Special Police of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MUP) and the 10th Sabotage Detachment.⁴¹²

Further questions concerning the command structure were also raised with regard to the units which are known to have played a major part in the executions. These were units which fell under the General Staff and not under the Drina Corps itself. The 10th Sabotage Detachment was involved in the executions at the Branjevo Military Farm, while the Military Police Battalion of the 65th Regiment was involved in taking and holding Muslim prisoners at Nova Kasaba. The MUP units, including both regular police and the Special Police, also conducted operations in the area. MUP units were certainly present at Potocari on 12 and 13 July, and were involved in capturing Bosnian Muslims at Nova Kasaba on 13 July. MUP personnel are also thought to have been involved in the executions alongside the Jadar river on the morning of 13 July.⁴¹³

On 11 July, soldiers of the 10th Sabotage Detachment were present in Srebrenica, as was their Commander, Lt. Miso Pelemis. The detachment had arrived on 9 or 10 July. With only 30 men, this unit would not have made very much impact one way or the other as the VRS prepared to take Srebrenica. However, the situation was somewhat different at the Branjevo Military Farm, where these men played a very significant role alongside counterparts from the Bratunac Brigade. Whether the detachment was by this time officially under the command of the Drina Corps cannot be determined, there being no documentation to this effect. However, the Yugoslavia Tribunal considered it reasonable to assume the presence of the unit, in that Krstic reported seeing its members in Srebrenica.⁴¹⁴

The Military Police Battalion of the 65th Regiment was stationed in Nova Kasaba. On or about 15 July, it was under the direct command of the Bratunac Brigade and was involved in activities intended to halt the progress of the column to Tuzla. However, there is no hard evidence to show that the 65th Regiment was involved in any executions after 15 July.⁴¹⁵

A number of companies of the Special Police of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MUP) were assigned to the Drina Corps as reserves for the 'Kravija 95' operation. These units were under the command of Lt. Col. Ljubisa Borovcanin, Deputy Commandant of the Special Police Brigade, and arrived in Bratunac on 10 or 11 July. Here too, it is unclear whether they were placed under the direct command of the Drina Corps at any time. Their deployment required the express permission of the Minister of the Interior of the Republika Srpska. There was clearly mutual cooperation and coordination. Whether these units were actually used in their reserve capacity during the attack on Srebrenica is not known, but it seems unlikely. However, these units did have a task following the fall itself. The Special Police were present in Potocari and along the road from Bratunac to Konjevic Polje, where on 13 July they took a large number of prisoners from the column and probably killed them as well.⁴¹⁶

Nevertheless, none of these examples and the presence of the units directly under the General Staff can be taken as definite proof that the General Staff was entirely responsible for the operations in and around Srebrenica, or for the events which followed the fall of the enclave. The units were placed under the command of the Drina Corps, which made this Corps ultimately responsible for their actions. The General Staff enjoyed the authority to deploy the resources of the brigades in times of

⁴¹² ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 265.

⁴¹³ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 277.

⁴¹⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 278.

⁴¹⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 282.

⁴¹⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement of 02,08/01, para. 283-6.

emergency, but not without informing the Corps command. According to General Krstic, this is exactly what had gone wrong after the fall of Srebrenica: Colonel Beara, the General Staff's Security Officer, had deployed the resources of the Zvornik Brigade on operations without informing the commanders of the brigades or of the Drina Corps. Krstic denied that Beara had acted through the usual chain of command in order to involve the Zvornik Brigade in the executions. Krstic also stated that Beara had definitely not reported the use of its personnel and vehicles to the Drina Corps.⁴¹⁷

VRS regulations did not permit the General Staff to intervene in the chain of command, whereupon the principle of unity of command would be violated. In a reasonably well-organized army, it would certainly not have been usual practice. However, the fact that the General Staff did apparently intervene indicates that the VRS may have been rather less well organized than was generally believed, which complicates the question of responsibility and makes it somewhat more difficult to find evidence against the Commander. Whatever the VRS regulations may have said, this did not prevent Mladic, a dominant personality, from issuing orders and instructions following his arrival on 9 July. He did so in the background and also publicly, as the video footage of 11 July shows, and did so with regard to certain aspects of the operation such as the continuation of the attack, the transport of the population out of Potocari and the executions themselves. Mladic also led the discussions in the Hotel Fontana, from which representatives of the Drina Corps were explicitly excluded. He was also seen in Potocari and at various execution sites. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily imply that the command of the Drina Corps did not know about the operations or that the usual authority with regard to the deployment of their own units had been removed from them.⁴¹⁸

It is seen as particularly significant that it was the Drina Corps and not the General Staff which organized the buses which arrived at Potocari. On 13 July, the General Staff informed the Drina Corps' Intelligence unit that the transport of women and children had been completed. The General Staff issued the orders to intercept the column but that was done via the Corps' command, although the Brigades directly received a copy of the order. It cannot therefore be claimed that the Drina Corps' chain of command was ignored or passed over. Col. Beara certainly consulted with General Krstic, and on 15 July requested him to supply extra personnel. Krstic referred Beara to Colonel Blagojevic, Commander of the Bratunac Brigade, to request the deployment of the 'Red Berets', a reconnaissance unit of the 3rd Battalion of the Bratunac Brigade. The brigades reported directly to the Drina Corps and not to the General Staff. The Corps was constantly informed of the progress of the column and of the number of prisoners taken.⁴¹⁹

According to the Tribunal, the senior members of the Drina Corps were aware of the events within the Corps' own area of responsibility at least. It would not have been possible for the executions to have taken place without the knowledge of the Corps command. The usual position in the chain of command remained unaltered by the interference of the General Staff of the VRS and the involvement of any security units, the Tribunal concluded.⁴²⁰ While the Drina Corps was in a sense 'overruled', its officers accepted the new status quo and continued to play their customary role.

In this context, two related questions remain. Firstly, were the prisoners the exclusive domain of the VRS security organs? Secondly, did the security organs of the Drina Corps and the General Staff have their own chain of command, independent of that of the Corps command? If so, was this able to act in secret? During the Krstic trial, the defence and prosecution clashed on this very point. According to the defence, the VRS regulations would have allowed security officers at Corps level to determine what was to remain secret, yet only the security organ of the General Staff could determine what should be made public knowledge. Lt. Col. Popovic is therefore likely to have received orders relating to the prisoners directly from Col. Beara without being allowed to inform the Corps command. It is thus

⁴¹⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 267, 277.

⁴¹⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 268.

⁴¹⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 269-70.

⁴²⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 272 en 276.

possible that the commanders of the Corps and the brigades were not aware of the crimes perpetrated by the security organs, which in principle would exculpate Krstic.⁴²¹

The prosecution challenged this view. VRS regulations actually laid down that the Assistant Commander for Security was subordinate to the Unit Commander. Lt. Col. Popovic therefore answered to the Corps Commander and not to Colonel Beara. Within the security organs there was no question of parallel chains of command. Even had Beara and Popovic carried out criminal activities on the direct orders of Mladic, there would have been ongoing consultation and coordination with the staff of the Drina Corps with regard to such matters as personnel deployment and the allocation of vehicle fuel and other supplies.⁴²²

This view was supported by the contents of a message intercepted on 15 July, which indicated that Beara had spoken to Krstic about extra personnel to be assigned to the work on which he was then engaged. Beara requested Krstic's cooperation only after the MUP commander had refused. Apparently, Beara was able to act upon his own initiative, but when this proved unsuccessful he relied upon Krstic to issue orders. It could therefore not be claimed that the security organs operated in isolation and in secret, without the knowledge of the Drina Corps command.⁴²³

As stated in the previous paragraph, all indications are that there was close cooperation between the General Staff and the Drina Corps in carrying out the operations which followed the fall of Srebrenica. The fact that the troops taking part were under the direct command of the General Staff and that MUP units were also involved helps to add weight to this argument. Moreover, the presence of Mladic and officers of the General Staff suggests that some importance was attached to the Srebrenica. Because the General Staff did not have its own troops or physical resources with which to achieve its own objectives, it was very much dependent on the Drina Corps in this respect.⁴²⁴

19. Who was in command of the Drina Corps?

Soon after the fall of Srebrenica, the command of the Drina Corps changed hands, with General Zivanovic handing over to his Chief of Staff General Krstic. The exact moment that this occurred could not be determined during the Krstic trial and remained a bone of contention. Obviously, this would have a significant bearing on the question of responsibility. Krstic claimed that he had been Chief of Staff until 20 July, and that Mladic officially appointed him commanding officer during a ceremony in a restaurant in Han Kram. General Zivanovic remained in his post until this moment. Furthermore, Krstic was fully occupied with the operations against Zepa until 2 August, whereupon he had not been involved in any planning or operational aspects of the Drina Corps prior to this date. Accordingly, Krstic could not have known about the executions.

Clearly, it was in his own interests to say this. He also claimed that he eventually heard about the executions in late August or early September, and only then had he heard about the interventions on the part of the General Staff. The defence claimed that there had been separate and parallel chains of command. The executions were not common knowledge throughout the entire Drina Corps: this was confirmed by other witnesses. Sometimes, personnel learned of the executions from the general media.⁴²⁵

The prosecution took a different view of events, setting the transfer of command very precisely at 20.00 hours on 13 July 1995, i.e. at a time that the executions had just commenced. The defence stood by its version: the transfer of command took place in Han Kram on 20 July. General Mladic and General Tolimir had arrived there by helicopter, and only then did he read Karadzic's orders placing General Zivanovic at the disposal of the General Staff. Krstic was then appointed Commander of the

⁴²¹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 273.

⁴²² ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 274-5.

⁴²³ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 287.

⁴²⁴ See also ICTY (IT-98-33), OTP. Ex. 385/a, Dannett Report, para. 43.

⁴²⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 307.

Drina Corps, while Colonel Andric moved up to fill the vacant position of Chief of Staff. By this time, the executions were finished.⁴²⁶

However, the Tribunal also heard evidence from members of the Drina Corps who stated that Krstic was already in command on the afternoon of 13 July. Mladic had assembled all officers in the headquarters of the Corps earlier that day, and had officially announced Krstic's appointment as Corps Commander, as well as that of Colonel Andric as Chief of Staff.⁴²⁷ Krstic's predecessor, General Zivanovic also stated that the transfer of command took place during the afternoon of 13 July, although it should be remembered that it was in Zivanovic's own interests to establish the moment of transfer as early as possible in order to minimize his responsibility for the executions.

On the afternoon of 13 July, Krstic arrived at the Drina Corps headquarters in Vlasenica wearing a Dutchbat helmet. He had been driven there in a Dutchbat APC. The mood was exuberant and the Dutchbat-issued headgear equipment was passed around the 25 or 30 people present. Mladic then gave a speech in which he proclaimed Krstic the new Commander of the Corps. Krstic had no desire to call the roll, although this was usual on such occasions. According to Zivanovic, Krstic behaved in a rather haughty and arrogant fashion throughout. Following this meeting, Radenko Jovicic, the Drina Corps' Personnel Officer, produced a document to confirm the transfer of command.⁴²⁸

It was not until April 2001 that the prosecution at the Yugoslavia Tribunal was able to lay hands on this document confirming the appointment of Krstic as commanding officer with effect from 13 July. This had been obtained through General Zivanovic. However, in the view of the prosecutors themselves, the document contained a number of irregularities and could well have been produced at a later date or for another purpose. The irregularity was that it referred to a Decree issued by the President of the Republika Srpska. However, the decree in question had not been signed before 14 July, and stated the date of the transfer of command as 15 July. The only person with the statutory authority to appoint a Corps Commander was Karadzic, not Mladic. A possible explanation is that Mladic appointed Krstic following consultation with Karadzic and with the latter's approval, and that the paperwork had been completed the following day.⁴²⁹

The last written order known to have been signed by Zivanovic is timed at 17.30 hours on 13 July, while the first signed by Krstic is timed at 20.30 hours that same day. This ordered units of the Bratunac and Milici Brigades, together with the Skelani Battalion, to scour the Srebrenica enclave in search of any remaining civilian personnel. Krstic signed this order with his name and the word 'Commander', thus indicating that he had indeed assumed command. The defence contended that Krstic had signed this order in his capacity as the Commander of the Zepa operation, not as that of the entire Corps. This seems a very tenuous argument in that Krstic should then have signed as Commander of the Zepa operation and not as Commander of the Corps.

It is also far from clear that the 'cleansing' operation he thus ordered bore any relation to the operation against Zepa. Krstic claimed that it did because, in his opinion, the enclave had to be cleared before the operation against Zepa could begin on 14 July. Not only is this an illogical argument, it is irrelevant to the question of his formal position.⁴³⁰

Another cause of confusion regarding the exact moment of the transfer of command is that even after signing his last order, Zivanovic continued to exercise authority with regard to the interception of the column near Zvornik on 14 July, and on at least one occasion he stated explicitly that his instructions had the status of an official order. This can be deduced from a number of intercepted communications. The prosecutor was of the opinion that, even though Zivanovic had been relieved of his command, he found himself the senior officer in a situation in which urgent decisions

⁴²⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 311.

⁴²⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 312-313.

⁴²⁸ Interview Milenko Zivanovic, 17/09/01.

⁴²⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 314-6.

⁴³⁰ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 318-20.

had to be made. Krstic was unavailable, being out of Srebrenica that evening. The question of whether such decisions should have been taken by the recently appointed Chief of Staff was not addressed.⁴³¹

Another intercepted communication served to explain Zivanovic's presence. He was indeed at the command post but was there to pack in connection with this transfer. This scenario is also suggested by the response that Zivanovic gave to Col. Beara's request for additional manpower: that it was something he was no longer able to arrange. He advised him to call the telephone exchange of the Drina Corps. Shortly hereafter, Beara repeated his request to Krstic, who promised to 'see what could be done'. Even before 15 July there were several examples of suggestions and requests put to Krstic, then at the command post in Pribicevac. On 16 July, Col. Blagojevic, Commander of the Bratunac Brigade, sent Krstic a report. Krstic acted as one would expect the commanding officer to act, not only in issuing orders for the operations against Zepa but also those for postings and troop rotations which had no connection with Zepa whatsoever.⁴³²

Even the arrangements for Zivanovic's farewell party were used as evidence in the important question of who bore responsibility and when. A handwritten note of 14 July, typed up on 17 July, announced a date for a farewell gathering of the Bratunac Brigade and local authorities. On 17 July, Zivanovic announced his farewell lunch to be held in Han Kram on 20 July. The heading of this document was that of the Corps Commander, but the body described Zivanovic as the 'former Commander'. Furthermore, Zivanovic did not sign this document as Corps Commander, as had been his practice on all documents signed before 13 July. General Krstic's defence attempted to show that the meeting in Han Kram represented the formal transfer of command. According to the prosecution however, this was nothing more than a farewell lunch - a social gathering.⁴³³ In fact, there was something else to celebrate: Zivanovic's promotion to Lieutenant General to mark his early retirement from active service.⁴³⁴ The VRS general Manoljo Milovanovic, who attended the lunch, later confirmed that the occasion was intended to mark Zivanovic's retirement rather than any transfer of command.⁴³⁵

The Tribunal concluded that General Krstic had been *de facto* Corps Commander since the beginning of July 1995. It was he who planned and led the Kravija 95 operation until Mladic appeared on the scene on 9 July. While Zivanovic was indeed at the first meeting in the Hotel Fontana, it was Krstic who had attended the other two. The Tribunal accepted that this was proven by the transfer ceremony which took place in the Vlasenica headquarters on 13 July. Exactly why this took place before president Karadzic had formally signed his decree is not clear, but there have been several other examples of VRS regulations being 'bent' during times of extreme necessity caused by the exigencies of war. It was therefore held that Krstic had been commandant since the late afternoon of 13 July and that there had been no doubt or confusion on this point within the Drina Corps itself. His orders were duly carried out. The conclusion was therefore that, in the capacity of Commander of the Drina Corps which he had assumed on the afternoon of 13 July, Krstic bore responsibility for the executions. At no time did Krstic actually deny that mass executions had taken place.⁴³⁶

The Tribunal's findings were based on the military conventions observed in all Western countries, whereby there is a formal transfer of command and a farewell after command transfer. To read out a presidential decree during a lunch cannot, despite the contentions of the defence, be regarded as a formal transfer of command. In any case, it seems likely that this decree was nothing to do with the transfer of command as such, but related to Zivanovic's early retirement and his promotion. There is no reason to suppose that the transfer of command of the Drina Corps did not take place on 13 July, whereupon Krstic was responsible for all events which took place within the area

⁴³¹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement of 02/08/01, para. 321-2.

⁴³² ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 322-5.

⁴³³ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 326-7.

⁴³⁴ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 'Karadzic congratulates military on Srebrenica, Zepa 'victories'', Bosnian Serb news agency SRNA in Serbo-Croat, recorded at 16.21 hrs GMT on 20/07/95.

⁴³⁵ Interview Manoljo Milovanovic, 18/11/98.

⁴³⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para. 328-30, 486.

controlled by the Drina Corps. In arriving at this judgement, the Tribunal had still not addressed the question of who was responsible for the executions in the Cerska valley which had commenced on the morning of 13 July, or those in Kravica which took place at roughly the same time as the transfer of command.

20. Review

Following the fall of the Srebrenica enclave, thousands of Muslim men were put to death by Bosnian Serb military units. Most of the victims were taken from the column which was attempting to reach Tuzla via woodlands and forests. It has not yet been possible to determine the exact number of people who were executed. The Norwegian demographers Brunborg and Urdal arrive at a total of at least 7475 missing persons, although this includes those who died as the result of fighting during the march to Tuzla. The Yugoslavia Tribunal concluded that between 7000 and 8000 men were executed, although this does not allow for the possibility that some will have died during the march for any of a number of other reasons. Based on the Bosnian Serb figure of approximately 6000 'prisoners of war' captured by the VRS, it seems that of the 7500 missing persons, approximately 6000 faced execution while the others met their end through some other cause.

There is absolutely no doubt that the mass murder was committed by Bosnian Serb military units. It is however difficult to answer most of the questions relating to their motives. It is hardly surprising that the information available on the Bosnian Serb side is extremely scarce. Even where available, it is not particularly reliable and frequently contradictory. Most of the available information was collected by and on behalf of the Yugoslavia Tribunal, most notably in the case against the Bosnian Serb General Krstic. It is this information, together with some information obtained further to the NIOD's own investigations, which forms the main source for the current chapter. This review section considers the questions of motive, the degree of preparation and the responsibility for the executions in greater detail.

There can be little doubt that the mass executions were carefully planned and organized. The hypothesis that they were more or less spontaneous as things 'got out of hand' is untenable. This said, certain of the smaller scale killings, such as those at Kravica, Konjevic Polje, Bratunac and Baljkovica, may have fallen into this category. It has not yet been determined who gave the order for these mass executions and whether the decision to proceed in this manner was a political or a military one. The larger scale executions certainly demanded a degree of prior planning and organization. In a generally well-structured and disciplined army such as the VRS, this would have required the foreknowledge and cooperation of the commanders. Transport had to be arranged for both prisoners and firing squads. Bulldozers had to be deployed to - literally - cover up the consequences. It may still be possible to contend that the first executions were carried out by special units on the orders of the General Staff and by units of the Ministry of Home Affairs. However, it is clear that regular VRS units became embroiled in the crimes, supplying both personnel and equipment. These units would also have been involved in seeking locations for temporary detention of the men and suitable locations for executions, these locations being found at ever greater distances from Srebrenica.

It seems improbable that the mass murder was planned well in advance, although some Bosnians believe otherwise. Premier Siladjic thought that the executions were part of a 'grand plan'. He said that Srebrenica was far from an isolated incident and claimed that an even greater number of people had been killed at Prijedor earlier in the war.⁴³⁷ The Minister for UN Affairs, Hasan Muratovic, also pointed to the general practice of killing men between the ages of 18 and 55. 'We knew that the men and women would be separated. That was a premeditated plan and an old VJ (Yugoslav Army) strategy which had previously been employed in Croatia and Zvornik.'⁴³⁸ The former Foreign Minister

⁴³⁷ Interview Haris Silajdzic, 16/04/98.

⁴³⁸ Interview Hasan Muratovic, 30/01/98.

Sacirbey was nevertheless puzzled why so many people had been put to death. He had not expected the killing to be on this scale.⁴³⁹

Western Intelligence Services, however, point out that mass executions were not common practice. Their analysts therefore concluded that the operation was commanded and organized from above.⁴⁴⁰ However, this does not tell us who was doing the commanding and organizing, nor how far in advance the planning commenced. There are no indications that the plans for the attack on Srebrenica included a specific plan whereby the population would be put to death. As described at length elsewhere in this document, the initial plans with regard to Srebrenica were developed in early July, whereupon the decision to take the enclave in its entirety was not taken until 9 July. In the relevant written orders, the need to comply with and enforce the usual laws and conventions of war was explicitly mentioned.

On 11 July and even on the morning of 12 July, Karadzic, Koljevic and Mladic still seemed to have assumed that suitable arrangements could be made for the civilian population and that the ABiH troops would surrender. The problem was that the Bosnian Muslims had very little trust in such arrangements. Whether the VRS' intentions were honourable and whether they genuinely intended to transfer the ABiH troops to prisoner of war camps after 'screening' for war crimes cannot be established one way or the other. No arrangements for the movement of prisoners were laid down in the written orders. However, the fact that the interrogations were commenced may indicate that such an intention did exist, but was abandoned soon thereafter

It is therefore plausible that the decision to execute all Muslim men of combatant age was taken some time after 11 July 1995. Very broadly speaking, the motive may have been to 'ethnically cleanse' Serbian territory, which was seen to include Eastern Bosnia. Murder would not have been the only means of accomplishing such an aim, but history has shown that parties in the region did not shrink from massacring the enemy in their search for solutions. In this specific instance, we may confidently state that revenge was also a contributory factor: revenge for the events of a dim and distant past, but also for the events of 1992 and 1993, and for the violent excursions from the enclave made by the ABiH in 1995 in particular. When the Bosnian Serbs seemed set to capture the enclave in April 1993, there were already fears that this would end in a bloodbath due to the desire for revenge that had emerged in the very first year of the conflict. Even Milosevic himself feared that the Bosnian Serbs' arrival in the town would lead to mass murder, given the mutual hatred that existed. It is said that Milosevic personally instructed Karadzic not to take the town at this time, whereupon it could be declared an official 'safe Area' shortly thereafter.⁴⁴¹

Besides the revenge motive, there was a further complication in that on 12 and 13 July, the VRS found themselves in a situation which no one had foreseen. The attempts of the ABiH to break out of the enclave and to reach Tuzla came as a complete surprise. It had been assumed that the ABiH and the civilian population would surrender, and that the problem of transport and screening the men for involvement in war crimes could be settled from Srebrenica and Potocari. Indeed, on the evening of 11 July, Mladic announced in Bratunac that now operation 'Krajiva 95' had been completed, the attack on Zepa could go ahead. In this light, the ABiH escape was far from convenient for the VRS. Suddenly, it became necessary to engage in combat with the column and to 'cleanse' an extensive area beyond the confines of the enclave itself. Furthermore, there was now a large contingent of prisoners of war for whom arrangements had to be made.

Although no explicit (written) order for the mass executions has ever been discovered, it seems likely that the accumulation of motives and problems led to a deliberate and premeditated decision. To kill all these men required organization and logistic preparations. In other words, there was indeed planning - not very far in advance, but more in the nature of an improvised way out of an unexpected

⁴³⁹ Interview Carl Bildt, 13/12/00. Bildt expressed some surprise that Sacirbey had reacted so calmly when the mass murder was revealed.

⁴⁴⁰ Confidential interview (52).

⁴⁴¹ Confidential information (43).

problem. There were many indications that the order had been given centrally, whereupon first the special troops and later the regular VRS units (the Drina Corps in particular) were dragged by the VRS General Staff into a plot to 'settle old scores' by murdering thousands of men from Srebrenica.

That the intention was to execute all captives became obvious when no further measures were taken to establish whether any had been involved in alleged war crimes and when no preparations were taken to set up prisoner of war camps or arrange prisoner exchanges. The men were denied food and drink, their identity papers were burnt, and the VRS did not make any distinction between military personnel and civilians. Logistic problems prevented the plans being implemented immediately, which prolonged the men's suffering in that they would sometimes have to wait two or three days for their execution without food or water, even though the Bosnian Serbs with Mladic at their head tried to make them believe otherwise. Only when the evacuation of the women and children from Potocari was complete did sufficient transport become available to transport the men to the ever more remote execution sites.

Once the process of mass executions had begun, it built up an unstoppable momentum. The executions in Kravica and in the Dom Kultura in Pilica were particularly bestial in their savagery, carried out by herding the prisoners, tightly packed, into a closed room and then opening fire with machine guns and throwing hand grenades among them. Atrocities of such magnitude were unheard of, even for the war in Bosnia. Media reports soon began to draw comparisons with the razzias and other horrors of the Second World War. That the executions in Bosnian represent the most terrible mass murder in Europe since that war seems very likely.

Apparently, it was eventually realized even among the Bosnian Serbs themselves that this had been an excessive and culpable outburst of violence. This much is suggested by the efforts that were made to obscure the true extent of the slaughter by exhuming bodies and re-interring them in graves in more remote locations. Such activities could not escape the keen eye of satellites and reconnaissance aircraft, nor above all the expertise of those who analyse aerial photographs. A lack of communication security when using radio communications revealed who had been involved in the mass murder. Furthermore, because many of the executions had been carried out in a rather haphazard manner, there were survivors who were later able to testify against those responsible.

Although it is not (yet) possible to point to the persons and organizations responsible, some general comments regarding involvement can be made. It seems likely that the overall decision to proceed with this mass murder was made by the General Staff of the VRS. It must then be asked whether there was any coordination with the political authorities of the Republika Srpska or possibly even those in Belgrade.

Indeed, some have expressed a suspicion that the attack on Srebrenica was coordinated with Belgrade, or in any event could not have been undertaken without the prior knowledge of Belgrade. Given the many close ties between the Republika Srpska and Serbia, such foreknowledge certainly seems possible. However, there is no evidence to suggest participation in the preparations for the executions on the part of Yugoslav military personnel or the security agency (RDB).⁴⁴² In fact, there is some evidence to support the opposite view: when the executions became public knowledge, the mood in Belgrade was one of incredulity and total disbelief. That the column should have been intercepted was understandable; that the prisoners should be murdered in cold blood was not. According to the Western liaison officer in Belgrade at the time, VJ officers had great difficulty in accepting that executions had taken place. At first, senior Yugoslav officers denied that these gruesome events had occurred. Soon afterwards, the Srebrenica affair was totally overshadowed by the Croatian attack on Krajina, with all attention diverted to the 150,000 Serb refugees there.⁴⁴³

Later, there were clear indications of the annoyance felt in VJ circles regarding the killings. Milosevic is reported to have told the European Commissioner Hans van den Broek and the Spanish

⁴⁴² Confidential information (3).

⁴⁴³ Confidential interview (2).

EU President Javier Solana, 'I cannot find words for what had happened there.'⁴⁴⁴ The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs interpreted Milosevic's words as implying that he was aware of what had happened following the fall of Srebrenica, even though this was not explicitly stated in his words.⁴⁴⁵ The VJ officers considered that the UN and NATO had been needlessly provoked. It was then doubtful whether Mladic could be kept under control. The VRS had manoeuvred itself into a particularly tricky situation in that, after Srebrenica, no ABiH soldier would be likely to give himself up for fear of facing the firing squad.⁴⁴⁶

The extent of the coordination with senior political figures of the Republika Srpska regarding the executions is not known. As Commander-in-Chief, it was Karadzic who issued the formal instruction to keep Srebrenica and Zepa separated and to reduce the size of the enclave. He also gave his approval to the decision to capture the entire enclave, but whether he was actively involved in instigating the that took place after that, is not clear. The strained relations between Karadzic and Mladic suggest that communication was not exactly intensive. The onus of responsibility seems to lie in military circles.

Within those military circles, the key role played by Mladic is not open to question. Although as Chief of Staff he would not have had direct authority to intervene in the chain of command, he was a person who tended to dominate any situation. He gave the central orders, and he maintained a high profile by ensuring his personal presence at various locations. Those locations included the execution sites. He was also seen at various assembly points, sometimes playing the part of the competent senior figure there to reassure the prisoners. But that was pure deceit and deception.

The central role played by Mladic does not detract from or mitigate the involvement of other people and units. Both the special units and the Drina Corps played a prominent part throughout the operation as, of course, did their commanders. During the cases so far considered by the Yugoslavia Tribunal in The Hague, two of the most senior figures - the Generals Krstic and Zivanovic - have attempted to shift the blame and to minimize their own responsibility. Clearly, they are unable to do so, as are such persons as Col. Blagojevic the Commander of the Bratunac Brigade, Lt. Col. Obrenovic, second-in-command of the Zvornik Brigade, and Major Jokic, the Staff Operations Officer of the Zvornik Brigade.

Most is known about General Krstic since the first phase of his trial has already been completed. His defence mainly relied on the contention that his role was a limited one: he had been in charge of the attack on Zepa and nothing more, whereby he had no knowledge of the executions. Furthermore, he claimed, he took command of the Drina Corps only at a much later stage in the proceedings, i.e. 20 July. Until that date, General Zivanovic had been the Commander. Krstic stated that Zepa had demanded his full and undivided attention and that he was therefore completely unaware of the events in and around Srebrenica, and was equally unaware that Mladic had assumed control. Krstic further claimed that the prisoners had been executed on the direct orders of General Mladic and Colonel Beara. He did not know what their motives were.⁴⁴⁷

Mladic had assembled a group of confidants around him: people he had known from the earliest days of the conflict and who had served under him in Knin. He had appointed them to different posts. They now occupied various posts and played a prominent part during the executions. They included General Tolimir (Deputy Chief of Staff for Security and Intelligence), Colonel Ljubo Beara (head of the General Staff's Security Force) and Lieutenant Colonel Vujadin Popovic (head of the Drina Corps' Security Force). The Commander of the Military Police of the General Staff, Lt. Col.

⁴⁴⁴ ABZ, DPV, ARA 00797. Code Bon COREU 649, 23/08/95.

⁴⁴⁵ ABZ, DPV, 499488. Code Hag COREU 501, 24/08/9595. The Spanish presidency was again to have approached Milosevic to request that he use his influence in Pale and among the ranks of the VRS to gain further information regarding the fate of the missing refugees.

⁴⁴⁶ MID/CO: Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, 47/95, closed 141200B, September 1995. Strictly Confidential.

⁴⁴⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 399/a bis, Interview of Radislav Krstic, 18/02/00, p. 65.

Keserovic, was also in command of the command post which Mladic set up in Nova Kasaba.⁴⁴⁸ As one Bosnian Serb later described them, this was a group of murderers whom Mladic had assembled around him and who followed him like faithful dogs.⁴⁴⁹

Of course, it was firmly in Krstic's own interests at his trial to claim that the prisoners had been killed on the orders of Mladic and Beara, and this statement cannot answer the question of who bore prime responsibility for the executions.

The Tribunal did not accept this defence. Neither did Krstic's claims sway the Tribunal, which proceeded to convict him for his part in the mass murder of the men of Srebrenica. He thus became the second and by far the most senior military figure to have been held to account for his part in the atrocities which followed the fall of Srebrenica (the other being Drazen Endomovic, a soldier of the 10th Sabotage Detachment). However, others will undoubtedly follow, and it is to be hoped that the evidence produced at future trials will serve to clarify the situation yet further.

For the time being, this report concludes that the executions were prompted by circumstances (partly unforeseen) and by pressure from the senior officers of the VRS, particularly Mladic, shortly after the fall of Srebrenica. All military units present had a part in carrying out the relevant orders, whereby all commandants are jointly responsible, or in more legal parlance 'contributory parties'. During the operation itself, feelings of hate and the desire for revenge were given free rein. This led to extremely violent scenes of slaughter, with many thousands of deaths.

⁴⁴⁸ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 399/a bis, Interview of Radislav Krstic, 18/02/00, p. 38. Major Malinovic was Commander of the Military Police battalion in Nova Kasaba but he was not among the inner circle of confidants.

⁴⁴⁹ Interview Rajko Dukic, 14/06/00.

Chapter 3

The news of the executions and the mass graves

1. Introduction

Today the name of Srebrenica is indissolubly linked with what is sometimes called the biggest massacre in Europe since the Second World War. In 1995, however, it proved very difficult to piece together a picture of what had happened there. It took a considerable time before the outside world became aware that executions really had taken place there on a large scale and proof of these atrocities could be made available. Knowledge of the events in Srebrenica only developed very gradually, and it was a long time before not only the scale of the executions but in particular the location of mass graves could be ascertained.

This chapter describes how this knowledge developed and what sources played a role. In broad terms, a distinction must be drawn here between organizations such as UNPROFOR, UNHCR and the ICRC (International Red Cross) as sources and public sources like articles by journalists who had spoken with witnesses and survivors of executions. These witnesses and survivors were of crucial importance because they provided information that allowed the Americans to make reconnaissance flights and satellite images showing traces of mass graves.

The interaction between the various kinds of sources did not make the search for further knowledge any easier. The image emerging from these sources was initially confusing and fragmentary at best. For example, it was thought for a long time that the missing men had been detained by the Bosnian Serbs.

While satellites and reconnaissance flights did deliver pictures of men who had been taken captive, there are no pictures taken from the air showing the executions. The reason for this must be sought in the poor weather conditions prevailing in the region in question after 13 July. The initial reports about a possible massacre therefore initially met with disbelief from Western Intelligence services, since the general practice had been that exchanges of prisoners would ultimately lead to the release of those who had been taken captive.⁴⁵⁰ Full details of precisely what the Intelligence services know about the news of the mass executions as it broke are given in the separate Intelligence Appendix of this Srebrenica report.

2. The search for the facts

It took several days after the first executions before Bosnia-Herzegovina Command could start piecing together a picture of what had happened in Srebrenica. No one at all was thinking about the possibility of executions. Just how unprepared UNPROFOR was for the idea of a massacre appears from the following passage, taken from a study of the consequences of the fall of Srebrenica: ‘the Bosnian Serbs have, from their point of view, attempted to act in a humanitarian manner, probably in an attempt to avoid too much international intervention’.⁴⁵¹

Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander General R.A. Smith initially thought that the fatalities reported had occurred in battle or in ambushes after the troops had made contact with one another, and that the corpses had been collected *en route*. He assumed that the Bosnian leadership had initially also been unaware of the murders. In response to a query about the massacre to Sarajevo, he was

⁴⁵⁰ Confidential interview (8).

⁴⁵¹ NIOD, Smith Collection, ‘Effects of BSA Action in Srebrenica’, UN Confi, undated, no registration number.

informed that the Bosnian government also knew nothing about it.⁴⁵² It was not until 22 July that the Bosnian premier Haris Silajdzic phoned General Smith to inform him that 4000 men must have been murdered to the west of Srebrenica. It seemed as if, up to this point, the Bosnian Muslims had not known what had happened to the men held captive in Bratunac, though Bosnia-Herzegovina Command found this difficult to believe: it was suspected that the Bosnian Muslims must have known more about the events that had occurred.⁴⁵³

However, the Bosnian government did not know at this time that the massacres had started on the afternoon of 13 July. While it is true that the first indications of 'alarming news' came on 13 July from the Bosnian Foreign Minister Sacirbey, his statements at this time referred only to a few murders committed by 'serb criminals' and 'Arkan Tigers'. Sacirbey had also stated that women between 15 and 35 had been separated from the men and sent to camps. All that was known about the men at that time was that they were being 'screened for war crimes'.⁴⁵⁴

It was common practice in Bosnia to separate men from women. According to General Smith, the ABiH did precisely the same thing when they had captured large villages. He had thus not been unduly alarmed when he received reports about the separation of men and women in Srebrenica. The same was true of mediator Carl Bildt: he had heard of such cases before, and thus did not regard the reports as exceptional. In fact, he felt quite reassured, taking this as a sign that the men would be treated as prisoners of war. The VRS was often keen to exchange prisoners to fill up the gaps in its ranks, while the ABiH with its much larger forces sometimes refused such proposals. It was certainly not an automatic reaction for captors to kill prisoners of war, although there was a constant fear of excesses. The flight of large numbers of people was not remarkable either: it had not occurred to anyone that this might lead to massacres.⁴⁵⁵

However, it became clear soon after the Bosnian Serbs had deported the last refugees from Srebrenica on 13 July that something was wrong. The number of people arriving at Kladanj differed very appreciably from the estimated population of the enclave. The ICRC had counted the people brought to Kladanj in the refugee convoys on 12 and 13 July, and noticed in addition that 90 to 95% of these were women, children and the elderly. This meant that the destination of roughly ten to twenty thousand persons – mainly men – was unknown.⁴⁵⁶

This finding led to a search for the missing persons. The Bosnian Minister for UN affairs Hasan Muratovic said on 13 July that he had summoned the American ambassador in Sarajevo and had asked him whether the United States could do anything with the aid of their satellites and spy planes to offer protection to the men who appeared to be on the run. Muratovic said that he phoned the ambassador every day to ask whether there had been any signs of the men: 'you can discover where they are, they will all be killed'. The first information that Muratovic claimed to have received was the well known images of mass graves which the American ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright showed the Security Council on 10 August.⁴⁵⁷

The first news of executions did not reach Washington until after rumours to this effect had been circulating in Tuzla. The authorities in Washington had also not been unduly concerned about reports of the separation of men and women, since they were aware that this had happened before in Bosnia and was thus not particularly surprising in the present case. While it is true that rumours of terrible deeds committed in Srebrenica were quick to arise, no one had any idea how many of these rumours was true or how many executions had taken place.

⁴⁵² Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

⁴⁵³ Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00. Baxter answered the phone on 22/07/95 for General Smith in the latter's absence.

⁴⁵⁴ FOIA, US Dept. of State, Code Amembassy London to Secstate, 131620Z Jul 95. The announcements came from the Bosnian Foreign Minister Sacirbey during a visit to London; he had received the information from President Izetbegovic.

⁴⁵⁵ Interviews R.A. Smith, 12/01/00 and Carl Bildt, 13/12/00.

⁴⁵⁶ ICFY, Box 234, File 6/15, Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 15/07/95, No. Z-1170.

⁴⁵⁷ Interview Hasan Muratovic, 30/01/98.

The Bosnian Muslims did not pass on to the Western Intelligence services the messages from the VRS that had been intercepted by the ABiH, referring to the hunt for escaped prisoners.⁴⁵⁸ These intercepted messages were not made public until several years later, which helps to explain why it took so long for more detailed knowledge of the massacres to appear. But even in the days following the executions, very little was known about them: the ABiH had never noticed any preparations, and the Bosnian Muslims were thus unable to derive any indications about the fate awaiting the men from the messages they had intercepted at that time.⁴⁵⁹

Possible ways of gaining information about the situation were also being examined at the UN headquarters in Zagreb. On 12 July, General Janvier discussed the possibility of using NATO reconnaissance aircraft for this purpose. These aircraft were available, and included Dutch F-16s equipped for photo reconnaissance. Subsequent to this internal discussion, Janvier and his deputy Ashton had a teleconference with NATO Commander Admiral Smith at 6 pm the same day, dealing with the events in Srebrenica and possible ways of gaining information. The main focus at that time was on Zepa and Gorazde, which were thought to be the next targets that might be attacked by the VRS. It was, however, decided not to use NATO reconnaissance aircraft over Srebrenica in view of the risks to which they might be exposed, since the Bosnian Serbs still had usable anti-aircraft guns.⁴⁶⁰ This was also the reason why the Netherlands did not want to use its own F-16s for that purpose (see Chapter 9).

The next question was how an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) could be deployed above the region. While there seemed to be a window of opportunity for this in the morning of 13 July, air reconnaissance over Western Bosnia was considered to have a higher priority on that day. The poor weather conditions over Eastern Bosnia also influenced this decision. However, a C-130 Hercules plane equipped with infrared cameras did detect the presence of prisoners late in the evening of 12 July. These C-130 aircraft were carrying out nightly flights over Bosnia from bases in Italy if the situation permitted this. The infrared equipment was intended to track the advance of the VRS towards Zepa and Gorazde. The infrared photos taken that night showed campfires by the roadside, and the warm motors of tanks and trucks. It is not known, however, what happened to this information regarding the presence of prisoners.⁴⁶¹

Another unmanned aerial vehicle (a Predator) appears to have flown over Eastern Bosnia during the night of 14 July. However, priorities were still on the region round Zepa and Gorazde. Potocari and the column making its way to Tuzla had a lower priority. On 15 July, a Predator was used again to see whether men were still being held captive in the football stadium at Bratunac. However, the image quality was too poor to allow any conclusions to be drawn. Satellites were not being used to look for traces of a massacre at this time, since there were still insufficient indications of this possibility.⁴⁶²

High-level contacts with the Bosnian Serbs which could be used to gain information about prisoners did not yet exist at this time. General Smith, who had returned to Sarajevo in the meantime, wanted to arrange a talk with General Mladic on 13 July, but disagreement with Janvier seems to have arisen about this. Janvier handled all the talks with Mladic for some time, because Smith and Mladic had not been on speaking terms since the hostage crisis at the end of May. The problem solved itself, however, since Mladic was not prepared to talk to any senior staff member at UNPROFOR.⁴⁶³

On 14 July, the UN headquarters in Zagreb announced that no information was available on about four thousand able-bodied men. The headquarters staff assumed that these men were being held captive in Bratunac, and repeated this assumption on 16 July. In view of the large numbers involved, it

⁴⁵⁸ Confidential interview (52).

⁴⁵⁹ Confidential interview (5).

⁴⁶⁰ Interview Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

⁴⁶¹ Confidential interview (54).

⁴⁶² Confidential interview (54).

⁴⁶³ Interview Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

was considered of vital importance that UNPROFOR, UNHCR and the ICRC should be granted access to Bratunac and Srebrenica for the purposes of an investigation about these men. The Bosnian Serbs refused categorically to grant access to these regions, however, and maintained this stance for a long time.⁴⁶⁴

The presumed presence of several thousand men in Bratunac also influenced the departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica. The Dutch peacekeepers could not leave before the fate of these men had been ascertained. The Dutch permanent representative to the UN, Biegman, therefore informed The Hague that 'at my suggestion' Deputy Secretary-General Kofi Annan had taken active steps on 13 July to study the problem of the men who had been moved to Bratunac. To this end, Annan contacted Sommaruga, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata.⁴⁶⁵ Prime Minister Kok sought support from his British counterpart John Major to get UN observers sent to the region round Bratunac.⁴⁶⁶ The Dutch Defence Staff had already made similar suggestions to Biegman.⁴⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the sending of UN observers to Bratunac was not high on the agenda at UN headquarters in Zagreb; according to Carl Bildt, the fear that these observers could be taken hostage made this idea a non-starter.⁴⁶⁸

It thus remained uncertain for some considerable time whether there were a large number of men in Bratunac. UNPROFOR's Civil Affairs department and UNHCR still assumed on 14 July that 5000 men between the ages of 16 and 60 were being held captive in the football stadium at Bratunac. Another possibility that was considered was that not all the inhabitants of Srebrenica had left the enclave.⁴⁶⁹ During discussions in Belgrade on 15 July, Stoltenberg, Bildt and Milosevic talked, as requested by Boutros-Ghali, about aid for the population of Srebrenica and access to the enclave. Mladic was also present at this meeting. The mediators Bildt and Stoltenberg still assumed that the men had been collected at Bratunac for registration and screening for war crimes and that those who had not committed war crimes would be released while the others would be put on trial in the Republika Srpska or transferred to the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague.⁴⁷⁰

Those taking part in the discussions in Belgrade had hardly any idea what had happened in Srebrenica. It could be concluded from the reports received from Dutchbat that some murders had been committed, while the refugees in Tuzla quite soon gave indications that they had witnessed terrible scenes on their way there; there was however as yet no suspicion that massacres had taken place. This was not revealed in Belgrade either. Mladic claimed that the men were being held prisoner because they were soldiers. He initially refused the ICRC the access to Srebrenica they had requested. General Smith was convinced, however, that not all the prisoners could be soldiers. Mladic finally gave way, promising that the International Committee of the Red Cross would be able to visit the prisoners.

Although Milosevic had put pressure on Mladic, Carl Bildt was not convinced that this was decisive: according to him, Mladic made the decision himself. While it cannot be denied that Milosevic could exert a certain degree of influence on Mladic, it was unclear how far this went. It would indeed appear later that Milosevic had little influence on the granting of access to the region where the massacres had occurred – or he may have been pretending that this was the case.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁴ ICFY, Box 234, File 6/15, Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 14/07/95, No. Z-1168; *Cable News Network*, 16/07/95 5.00 pm ET.

⁴⁶⁵ ABZ, DPV, ARA 00797, Biegman 619, 13/07/95.

⁴⁶⁶ AZ, 95moo5637. Ambassador Sir David Miers to W.J.P. Geerts, Raadsadviseur Min v. AZ (Counsellor at the Dutch ministry of General Affairs), 19/07/95.

⁴⁶⁷ DCBC No. 714, '*Concept Dagboek Van den Breemen*' (Draft diary of Van den Breemen), 14/07/95. (Subsequently published in an abridged, edited form as 'Dutch diary' in *NRC Handelsblad* of 22/07/95).

⁴⁶⁸ Interview Carl Bildt, 13/12/00.

⁴⁶⁹ FOIA, US Dept of State, Zagreb to State, 'srebrenica update: refugee movements, stranded Medevacs, lack of cooperation on every side', 14/07/95, No. Zagreb 02648, 142038Z.

⁴⁷⁰ ICFY, Box 234, File 6/15, Cryptofax Stoltenberg to the Secretary-General, 15/07/95.

⁴⁷¹ Interviews R.A. Smith, 12/01/00 and Carl Bildt, 13/12/00.

According to the participants at the Belgrade discussions, the International Committee of the Red Cross was in no hurry to visit Srebrenica. Both Carl Bildt and the US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke put pressure on the organization to go, but it was not keen to do so because of the fact that access had been granted on the basis of agreements at a political level. This might give the impression that the ICRC was being used as a political tool – which the organization naturally wished to avoid. The International Red Cross did not want to be put under pressure by the Bosnian government either.⁴⁷² It should not be thought, however, that the International Red Cross had not made any attempts itself to gain access to the area; these attempts will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Even after General Smith and Mladic had reached an agreement on 15 July, it did not look as if the ICRC was impatient to visit Bratunac to see what was going on there. During a meeting in Jahorina between representatives of UNHCR and the International Red Cross on 18 July, Lieutenant Colonel Baxter showed the signed agreement between Smith and Mladic and pointed out to the Red Cross representatives that this agreement did give formal permission to visit Bratunac. But even in this case, no one could tell the International Red Cross what to do. Moreover, the organization complained of a shortage of manpower.⁴⁷³ Arrangements for the International Red Cross to visit the prisoners were thus not made on 18 July, while the UN headquarters in Zagreb still believed that large numbers of prisoners were being held in Bratunac. It was not yet known that they had already been murdered.⁴⁷⁴

How confusing the reports about the possible presence of male prisoners were appears from the communications from *Médecins Sans Frontières* which reached the outside world. The organization reported on 15 July that from seven hundred to a thousand men who had been captured *en route* to Tuzla were being held in the football stadium at Bratunac. The day after that, *Médecins Sans Frontières* had even heard that there were as many as seven thousand prisoners, though they did not state where these numbers came from.⁴⁷⁵

The search for information about the missing persons continued. Sector North East headquarters drew up a new balance for UNPROFOR on 16 July. They estimated that from seven to eight thousand men had managed to leave the enclave. The column of men coming from Srebrenica had not yet reached Tuzla at that moment. It was suspected that from two to three thousand men were still in the mountains, while from four to five thousand may have been picked up by the Bosnian Serbs and brought to Bratunac for ‘screening for war crimes’. Requests from Dutchbat, Sector North East, the ICRC, UNHCR and UNPROFOR headquarters for information about or access to the men in Bratunac had so far been turned down by the Bosnian Serbs. The only worrying indication that something different might be going on was that since 13 July, sporadic salvos of rifle fire could be heard at the compound in Potocari coming from the direction of Bratunac. However, whatever was happening was out of sight of Dutchbat.⁴⁷⁶

UNPROFOR actively continued the search for further information. Its Civil Affairs department had contacted a wide variety of international and non-governmental organizations that were operating in Eastern Bosnia. A fact-finding team collected data from the refugees in Tuzla, in cooperation with UNHCR and the UNPROFOR Centre for Human Rights. The International Red Cross had also started collecting data that could be used to track down missing persons,⁴⁷⁷ and talks were held with members of Dutchbat who had arrived in Zagreb (see Chapter 5). A Joint Action Crisis team set up in

⁴⁷² Interview Carl Bildt, 13/12/00.

⁴⁷³ Interview J. Baxter, 16/10/00.

⁴⁷⁴ NIOD, Banbury Collection, Banbury's diary, SRSG's briefing 18/07/95.

⁴⁷⁵ CRST, Sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari, period 06/07 - 22/-7/95. Compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien (MSF), 24/07/95. Akashi passed this estimate on to New York in Code Cable 15/07/05, No. Z-1170.

⁴⁷⁶ DJZ, werkarchief (operational archives), G5 Civil Military Operations Sector North East (Major Guy Sands-Pingot) to Distribution List, 16/07/95.

⁴⁷⁷ DJZ, Srebrenica dossier, Update No. 9 on ICRC activities in the former Yugoslavia, 17/07/95, No.

COMREX/FIN95/1305. DCBC, No. 1063, Interoffice Memorandum, Moussalli to Akashi, 31/07/95, 'srebrenica Human Rights Report'.

Tuzla tried to shed more light on the number of missing persons on 19 July. The 2nd Corps of the ABiH had reported in the meantime that 4000 persons, mainly soldiers but also including some civilians, who had set off for Tuzla on foot had reached their destination and that another 4000 to 5000 were expected. That would indicate that the number of missing persons lay somewhere between 4000 and 8000. However, Yasushi Akashi, the head of UNPROFOR, asked New York not to publish this figure yet as long as it was so uncertain. He believed that a more accurate estimate could be obtained as soon as access had been obtained to the men held by the Bosnian Serbs. It was thus still believed on 19 July that the missing men were alive.⁴⁷⁸

Reports about men being held prisoner in Bratunac could not be verified. While the ICRC was allowed to visit the sick and wounded in the hospital at Bratunac and in the compound at Potocari on 17 July, the organization was not allowed into the areas where the murders had been committed. Stories about the existence of camps, 'execution style' murders and rapes could not be confirmed either at that moment. The head of Civil Affairs at UNPROFOR therefore considered it desirable to draw the attention of the media and public opinion to these matters.⁴⁷⁹

In any case, it was not particularly difficult to bring human rights violations to the attention of the media. Reports on this topic were appearing daily in the international press. The many statements by witnesses recorded by UNHCR at Tuzla Air Base the first few days after the fall of Srebrenica gave a reliable first impression. The activities of UNHCR and the ICRC at Tuzla Air Base are dealt with in Chapter 5.

The problem remained, however, that neither the ICRC nor UNHCR were allowed access to the region round Srebrenica to verify these stories. The authorities in Pale persisted in their firm denials that any brutality had occurred during the forced departure of the population. But if that was the case, it would also be in the interests of the Bosnian Serbs to have the stories verified by an independent body, and it might be expected that they 'would welcome an objective observer to the area'. UNHCR Protection Officer Cynthia Burns used such arguments in vain in an attempt to gain access to the region round Srebrenica.⁴⁸⁰

A week after the fall of Srebrenica, the Bosnian government still had little knowledge of what had really been going on. This can be deduced from a statement by the Bosnian Minister for UN affairs, Hasan Muratovic, who pointed out the existence of prison camps in Bratunac, Konjevic Polje and Nova Kasaba. He was unable to say how many men were held there, though he did state that 293 men from Potocari had ended up in the Bosnian Serb prisoner-of-war camp at Batkovic.⁴⁸¹

Ten days after the fall of Srebrenica, the British premier John Major once again urged 'immediate access for UNHCR and ICRC to the male detainees from Srebrenica' in his communiqué at the close of the big international conference in London on 21 July.⁴⁸² The Americans also lacked precise information about the existence of the supposed prison camps. The US Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, John Shattuck, stated as late as 19 July that 4000 to 5200 men were being held prisoner in Bratunac. In addition, according to American sources 3000 ABiH soldiers had been killed while fleeing Srebrenica. It seems likely that this information was obtained from men from the column making for Tuzla after they had reached their destination.⁴⁸³ It was not until 25 July that the Americans began to realize that the men who had been held captive in Bratunac were no longer alive. The American ambassador in Zagreb, Peter Galbraith, came to this conclusion on the basis of the testimony of a survivor of the executions who had managed to reach Tuzla after having been held captive in

⁴⁷⁸ ICFY Box 234, File 6/15, Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 19/07/95, No. Z-1198.

⁴⁷⁹ ICFY Box 234, File 6/15, Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 17/07/95, No. Z-1187.

⁴⁸⁰ CRST, UNHCR Protection Officer Bosnia and Hercegovina (Cynthia Burns) to Commissioner for Refugees and Humanitarian Aid (Ljubisa Vladusic), 19/07/95.

⁴⁸¹ CRST, UNHCR/ICRC, Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 19/07/95, No. Z-1204.

⁴⁸² NIOD, Smith Collection, 'Bosnia: International Meeting, London 21 July 1995, Chairman's Statement'.

⁴⁸³ FOIA US Dept of State, Information Memorandum Shattuck to The Secretary, 19/07/95.

Bratunac. If this report were to be believed, then according to Galbraith none of the men who had been captured by the Bosnian Serbs were still alive.⁴⁸⁴

The efforts of the various UN organizations in Tuzla to collect information about the missing persons revealed that the column that had left Srebrenica had contained between 8000 and 15000 persons. About 6000 had reached Tuzla, and 3000 may have died *en route*. However, the UN did not yet dare to publish an estimate of the number of missing persons.⁴⁸⁵ The UN special rapporteur on Human Rights, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, on the other hand, did give an estimate of 7000 persons missing or taken prisoner.⁴⁸⁶

On 31 July, Michel Moussali, the head of the Civil Affairs department of UNPF in Zagreb, sent a report to Akashi in which he sketched the state of affairs. It was already clear, according to him, that an unknown number of men had been executed in Potocari. He stated further that it was impossible to determine the extent of human rights violations in the column making for Tuzla, as long as the Bosnian Serbs were not prepared to grant access to the men they were holding prisoner. While it was true that some men had managed to reach Tuzla, they had only been able to observe what went on in their immediate vicinity. Moreover, the presence of soldiers in the column made it impossible to determine whether particular individuals had been killed or wounded as the result of acts of war or human rights violations. It was not until survivors of the mass executions reached Tuzla that the first reliable reports of these events were heard. They told of executions (subsequently known as the Orahovac executions) in the vicinity of a school near Karakaj (later known as the Grbavci school) and of mass executions near Nova Kasaba. The evidence gradually started to accumulate. The problem remained, however, that the Bosnian Serbs continued their refusal to allow verification on the ground.⁴⁸⁷

The variety of problems associated with attempts to gain access to the region may be illustrated with reference to the experience of the International Red Cross. Their initial requests on 12 July and then on 16 July met with the response from the Bosnian Serb authorities on 22 July that all such requests should be directed to the military authorities. On 26 July, the organization received permission to pick up the sick and wounded from Bratunac and Potocari, and to visit the detention centre in Batkovic. They only found 166 persons from Srebrenica there, including 22 wounded from Potocari.⁴⁸⁸ This number differed very appreciably from the 3000 who according to relatives were captured in Tuzla and the 5000 who were probably captured on the way to Tuzla. On 6 September, the International Red Cross submitted a list of 3070 missing persons to Nikola Koljevic, the Vice-President of the Republika Srpska, as a basis for further applications for access to the region. It was thought that these 3070 persons might have been arrested by the Bosnian Serbs. A week later, the ICRC submitted a new list with the names of no fewer than 8000 missing persons, 3046 of whom had been captured in Potocari while 5000 had disappeared on the way to Tuzla.⁴⁸⁹

The Bosnian Serbs continued to refuse to produce any clarification or to grant access to the region. No access to the prisons in the regions was granted either. The ICRC had got no further than the registered prison camps in Batkovic and Rogatica. Forty-four persons from Zepa were found in the latter camp. No detention sites for men were found in Bratunac. The ICRC was surprised at the low numbers of prisoners found: it was hard to believe that so few men were in Bosnian Serb hands. The ICRC had, however, no indications as to what might have happened to the missing persons. In the meantime, 34532 persons were registered in the Canton of Tuzla as having come from Srebrenica. On

⁴⁸⁴ NIOD Confidential Collection (1), Amembassy Zagreb to SecState Wash DC, 251907Z Jul 95, No. Zagreb 002788.

⁴⁸⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 42, File 2.2. Sector Command Matters General, Human Rights Update Sector North East, undated, compiled by P. Hicks, sent by fax Biser to Moussali UNPF HQ, 21/07/95, No. 151-3062.

⁴⁸⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE, 04/04-23/08/95, 'Press Conference of Special-Rapporteur on Human Rights', sent by fax Biser to Moussali UNPF HQ, 21/07/95.

⁴⁸⁷ DCBC, No. 1063, Interoffice Memorandum Moussali to Akashi, 31/07/95, 'srebrenica Human Rights Report'. Akashi forwarded the report to New York (Akashi to Annan, 12/08/95, No. Z-1406).

⁴⁸⁸ ABZ, DIO, JS, *VN mensenrechten, Zendbrief HUM/PV Genève aan Min. van Defensie/DAB*, (UN Human Rights, Letter HUM/PR Geneva to Dutch Min. of Defence) 30/11/95, No. gev/hum-3683/1995.

⁴⁸⁹ NIOD: Questionnaire ICRC, Sujet 11 Demarches. (Int. Red Cross questionnaire No. 11: Marches).

the basis of the number of 42500 inhabitants of Srebrenica used by UNHCR, this meant that 7968 were unaccounted for.⁴⁹⁰ This estimate is not so far from the number of 7421 missing persons that was finally established.⁴⁹¹

The International Red Cross was still in the same situation in February 1996: the organization had still been unable to carry out any inspections in the region. The only difference was that there was no longer any hope that the 3046 persons who had been captured in Potocari were still alive.⁴⁹²

3. American impetus for further investigation

The visit to Tuzla by the American Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, John Shattuck, on 31 July and 1 August provided a powerful stimulus for further investigations. While he was there he talked to, among others, a seventeen-year-old young man who had survived the executions. The young man could not say where this had happened, but it was thought at the time that it was near Konjevic Polje. However, it may be deduced from his description that it must have been near Petkovici, which is a long way from Konjevic Polje. This also illustrates the difficulty of tracing the location of the execution sites.⁴⁹³

Shattuck concluded that violent acts had occurred on a 'massive scale' and that hundreds if not thousands of unarmed refugees had been killed – many of them during mass executions. He put the number of missing persons at ten thousand. An unknown number were thought to be held in prison camps. Shattuck wanted to get together international support for putting pressure on Pale to release information about the situation and to grant access to the prisoners.⁴⁹⁴ To this end, he visited the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata on his way back to Washington. He asked her to send UNHCR Protection Officers to Srebrenica and Zepa, to discover what had happened to the missing persons and to redouble the efforts to interview people who had been evacuated from Srebrenica, so as to find out more about the missing persons and their whereabouts. Ogata told Shattuck that the efforts had already been redoubled, but that the Bosnian Serbs were hindering investigation on the ground.⁴⁹⁵

Shattuck's action did not lead to results in Pale, but it did put the problem of the missing persons on the agenda of the American State Department. This resulted in a search for evidence in the State Department's files, and eventually in the release of a number of air reconnaissance photos which gave an indication of what might have been happening in the region round Srebrenica. The release of these photos was not directly due to the efforts of Shattuck himself, however.

The events preceding the publication of these images are described in full in Chapter 8 of the Intelligence Appendix to this report. It will suffice to mention here that the American ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright briefed the members of the Security Council on 10 August and showed them photos that indicated the existence of mass graves in the vicinity of Konjevic Polje. Albright showed these photos not only to provide proof of the atrocities but also to get Washington to take up a harder stance towards the uncooperative Bosnian Serbs.⁴⁹⁶ According to a preliminary estimate, the graves that had been discovered so far probably contained between 2000 and 2700 bodies.⁴⁹⁷ The images were in agreement with the testimony of survivors of the executions, ten of whom had been traced in the meantime.⁴⁹⁸ Refugees had also stated that while they were on their way

⁴⁹⁰ SMG, map OPS/BLS, Sector NE Civil Affairs (Ken Biser) to Acting Deputy Head of Political and Humanitarian Affairs UNPROFOR Sarajevo (John Ryan), 09/08/95. 'Rode Kruis telt slechts 208 Moslim-mannen' (Red Cross can only find 208 Muslim men), *De Volkskrant*, 01/08/95. The number 164 was also mentioned, as well as 166.

⁴⁹¹ 'U.S. Reveals Photographs of Apparent Mass Grave', *International Herald Tribune*, 10/08/95.

⁴⁹² NIOD Questionnaire ICRC, Sujet 11 Demarches.

⁴⁹³ Confidential information (76).

⁴⁹⁴ FOIA, US Dept of State. Information Memorandum John Shattuck to The Secretary, 04/08/95.

⁴⁹⁵ Confidential information (77).

⁴⁹⁶ Interview M. Albright, 28/09/01.

⁴⁹⁷ 'Up to 2,700 Massacred by Serbs UNPROFOR is told', *International Herald Tribune*, 11/08/95.

⁴⁹⁸ ABZ 00797, Code Biegman 721, 11/08/95.

from Potocari to Kladanj they had seen executions at Nova Kasaba, and Bosnian Serbs dressed as UN peacekeepers driving a UN vehicle.⁴⁹⁹

When inspected in greater detail, the photos produced by Madeleine Albright showed indications of the presence of six hundred men on a football field at Nova Kasaba, and of four hundred by the roadside near Sandici. Freshly dug earth in Sandici suggested the presence of a mass grave there. Photos taken two weeks later showed two large areas and one small one where the soil had been disturbed. The images also showed a large barn near Nova Kasaba that might have been used as a detention centre. It should be noted that all this evidence referred to the southernmost group of mass graves: the mass graves situated further to the north had not yet been discovered.

The publication of the air reconnaissance photos moved the Dutch government to urge the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the High Commissioner for Refugees and the chairman of the ICRC to take 'visible and active steps' to clarify the fate of the missing men. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the Netherlands had a particular interest in elucidation of the facts, in view of the role Dutchbat had played in Srebrenica.⁵⁰⁰ President Sommaruga of the ICRC stated during a briefing held on 14 August that clarification of the fate of the missing men was his top priority. Eight thousand men and a small number of young women were registered as missing, and according to the Bosnian government many of them might still be alive. An estimate of five thousand survivors was quoted, but the International Red Cross could not confirm this figure on the basis of its own observations. Sommaruga found it difficult to give estimates, but he told the Dutch *chargé d'affaires* in Geneva, T.P. Hofstee, that the number of murdered men might be about a thousand. According to Christophe Girod, the ICRC delegate for the former Yugoslavia, most of the five thousand missing persons named by the Bosnian government had probably joined the ranks of the ABiH, and had not been allowed to contact their relatives for military reasons.⁵⁰¹

The Bosnian Serbs had forbidden the ICRC to set foot on the territory of the Republika Srpska without permission from Pale.⁵⁰² The question was therefore whether the attempts of the ICRC and UNHCR to gain access to the region were ever going to bear fruit. The DAV (Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security of the Dutch Foreign Ministry) therefore proposed that it should play a more active role and get independent observers into the region as quickly as possible. The Netherlands might be able to do this on its own or might act within the framework of the European Union to put pressure on Russia and the United States to take steps to secure admission for independent observers.⁵⁰³

The Americans were in fact already taking steps in this direction, but along other paths than those proposed by the Netherlands. On 16 August, the American ambassador in Bosnia was given orders to urge the Bosnian Serb authorities in Pale to grant the ICRC access to men being held captive, no matter where they might be.⁵⁰⁴ Although they were already aware of the existence of some mass graves, the Americans clearly thought that some men must still be alive. But these American attempts to gain access to the region were also unsuccessful.

The presentation of the American aerial reconnaissance photos to the Security Council led to the passage of Resolution 1010, demanding that the Bosnian Serbs should give UN and ICRC observers access to Srebrenica. Akashi then received orders from New York to request permission from the Bosnian Serbs to visit the site of the mass graves that were visible in the photos shown to the Security Council. He was also instructed to collect all the information that had become available via Dutchbat, after New York became aware that film and video records of the events existed. Collection

⁴⁹⁹ ABZ, DAV 999.241, Message from PRNATO to DAV, 09/08/95, No. 119761.

⁵⁰⁰ ABZ, 499488, Code Celer 103, 10/08/95.

⁵⁰¹ ABZ, 499488, Code Hofstee 292, 14/08/95.

⁵⁰² ABZ, 499488, Code Hofstee 292, 14/08/95.

⁵⁰³ ABZ, DAV 999.241, Vertrouwelijk memorandum wvd DAV aan M via S en wvd DGPZ (Confidential memorandum from deputy DAV to M via S and deputy DGPZ), No. DAV/MS 55/95, 15/08/95.

⁵⁰⁴ Confidential Coll. (1). US Dept of State. Secstate WashDC to Amembassy Sarajevo, 160135Z Aug 95.

of this material should be treated 'as a matter of urgency'.⁵⁰⁵ This request was also passed to the Dutch mission in New York via the Secretary-General's military advisor, General Van Kappen. The Netherlands promised to collect this material and to have the records of the debriefing in Assen translated.⁵⁰⁶ The debriefing had not started yet, however. After the UN Secretariat had been briefed by the American delegation to the UN (after the briefing of the Security Council by Madeleine Albright), a little more information was available which Akashi could use as a basis for his search: the precise coordinates of the graves near Nova Kasaba and the names of a number of witnesses.⁵⁰⁷

On receipt of these orders from New York, Akashi wrote to the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic on 12 August asking the latter to cooperate with UNPROFOR in an investigation of the existence of the reported mass graves, and to grant the ICRC permission to visit prisoners.⁵⁰⁸ Akashi had previously pointed out to Milosevic, during a meeting with the latter, that Mladic had promised Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander General Smith that the ICRC would be allowed to visit the prisoners. Milosevic undertook to convince Mladic to do this, commenting that Mladic should keep his promises.⁵⁰⁹ Little came of this, however; a fortnight later, Milosevic once again promised Akashi that he would discuss the matter of access to Srebrenica with Mladic.⁵¹⁰

Neither Karadzic nor Mladic reacted, however. When the UNPROFOR *Chef de Mission*, Antonio Pedayue, reminded Karadzic about the letter from Akashi again, the latter replied that he had not had time to deal with it because of all the crises that had arisen, but he promised once again to consider Akashi's request.⁵¹¹ The mediators Stoltenberg and Bildt also mentioned this topic during a meeting in Geneva with the Bosnian Serb leaders Momcilo Krajisnik and Jovan Zametica. The two Bosnian Serb leaders replied that they were not aware of the request from Akashi, or of the agreement between Generals Smith and Mladic granting the ICRC access to Srebrenica.⁵¹²

The Bosnian Serb reactions were not very credible. Nor was the formal Yugoslav reaction from Vladislav Jovanovic, former Foreign Minister under Milosevic and temporary *chargé d'affaires* at the UN, who tried to get the Security Council to believe in December 1995 that the ABiH had carried out the murders themselves as a result of internal disagreements. This 'monumental lie' merely aroused the anger of the Security Council.⁵¹³ Jovanovic also claimed that journalists had been given access to Srebrenica, and there was a grain of truth in this. A few journalists had indeed been allowed to visit Srebrenica at the end of August; it cannot be said, however, that they were given free access to the town. The visit of the journalists grew out of a statement made by the Mayor of Srebrenica that anyone was free to come and have a look, but that no one had asked to. In response to this, many journalists did apply for permission to visit the town, and a few were admitted. The statement was not however true in the form in which it was made: there was no question of free reporting, and the area where the mass graves were situated was kept out of bounds by the Bosnian Serbs.⁵¹⁴

⁵⁰⁵ DCBC No. 2748, Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 10/08/95, No. 2665.

⁵⁰⁶ ICFY, Box 140 (47), Cryptofax In 01/08/95 - 14/08/95, Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 11/08/95, No. 2686.

⁵⁰⁷ ICFY, Box 141, Cryptofax In 48, 14-29 Aug 95, Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 15/08/95, No MSC-2720.

⁵⁰⁸ ICFY, Box 140 (47), Cryptofax In 01/08/95 - 14/08/95, Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 14/08/95, No. Z-1416, with attached letter Akashi to Karadzic, 12/08/95.

⁵⁰⁹ ICFY, Box 140 (47), Cryptofax In 01/08/95 - 14/08/95, Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 14/08/95, No. Z-1416, with attached letter Akashi to Karadzic, 12/08/95.

⁵¹⁰ ICFY, Box 234, File 6/15, Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 29/08/95, No. UNPF Z-1540.

⁵¹¹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 120, File UNPF Civil Affairs Sector NE, BHC Weekly Sitreps, UNPROFOR HQ Sarajevo, Weekly Situation Report, No. 132, 21-27/08/95.

⁵¹² ICFY, Box 234, File 615, Cryptofax Stoltenberg to the Secretary-General, copy Goulding, Annan, Gharekhan, Akashi, 16/08/95.

⁵¹³ ABZ, ARA DEU 05279, Code Biegman 1238, 19/12/95.

⁵¹⁴ ICFY, Box 147, Crypto Fax In 54, 12/12/95-19/01/96, Code Cable Annan UNPF Zagreb to Kittani United Nations New York, 20/12/95, No. UNPF Z-2734.

4. New efforts

All pressure exerted by the UN on the Bosnian Serbs had thus been in vain. Pale simply granted no access to the region to anyone at all. The only person who managed to visit Nova Kasaba in mid-August was the journalist David Rohde from *The Christian Science Monitor*, and that was more or less by accident: he was not escorted, was sent in the wrong direction at a particular moment, got lost, and suddenly realized that he must be in the area containing the mass graves that had been visible in the aerial reconnaissance photos. The local inhabitants and passing soldiers left him alone. After a prolonged search, in the course of which he followed the tracks of a number of trucks, Rohde found unmistakable evidence of a mass execution: one grave 100 metres square, another measuring 80 by 70 and a third measuring 30 by 15 metres; he further discovered a decomposing leg, remnants of clothing in the recently dug up soil, prayer beads, diplomas bearing Muslim names, countless scraps of paper with 'srebrenica' written on them, and empty ammunition boxes. Traces of blood were also visible in the Nova Kasaba football stadium, while Rohde further came across traces of blood and bullet holes in the football stadium at Bratunac.⁵¹⁵

By the end of August, organizations like the UN and the International Red Cross had been able to add little to the scant evidence of mass graves and executions, since Eastern Bosnia still remained off bounds to them. Somewhat greater insight had however been gained into the events that had taken place round Potocari, and there were reports from refugees and Dutchbat which suggested that mass executions had been carried out. Observations by Dutch soldiers who had been taken hostage confirmed that 300 to 500 prisoners had been kept on the football field at Nova Kasaba; most of these appeared to be in uniform. A pile of bodies had also been seen nearby, and one Dutchbat soldier reported having seen a row of shoes and rucksacks near the football field which appeared to have belonged to an estimated 120-150 men; he also observed two vehicles carrying corpses. Refugees travelling between Bratunac and Nova Kasaba had seen bodies lying by the roadside, most of whom were described as civilians. Some had had their throats cut or bore signs of mutilation. There were also the reports of the survivors of mass executions, and the aerial reconnaissance photos. Though it had so far proved impossible to verify the observations, all the indications led the UN special rapporteur for Human Rights to the 'chilling conclusion' that mass executions had taken place.⁵¹⁶

There were no further developments in September that helped to pinpoint the location of the mass graves. Nevertheless, evidence of the atrocities grew as more and more reports from survivors appeared in the media and locations were named. Insight into the events that had occurred along the way from Bratunac to Kladanj grew somewhat as journalists talked to Dutchbat soldiers about what they had seen *en route*. As a result, even before the report of the debriefing of Dutchbat in Assen appeared the media debate about the executions was increasingly marked by comments on the behaviour of Dutchbat. Headlines left little to the imagination: 'Witness to atrocity: UNPROFOR troops stood by', 'Dutch troops ignored Bosnia killings', 'Thousands died at Srebrenica. Dutch peacekeepers welcomed the Serb killers'.⁵¹⁷ However, these reports did not throw any new light on the mass murders or the existence of mass graves: Dutchbat had not actually witnessed either of these. The debriefing in Assen did not yield any indications of the existence of mass graves either.⁵¹⁸ For the moment, the few survivors could only give indications of the possible location of mass graves other than those visible on the American aerial reconnaissance photos.

⁵¹⁵ David Rohde, 'Evidence Indicates Bosnia Massacre', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 18/08/95, and 'How a Serbs Massacre was Disposed', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 25/08/95.

⁵¹⁶ SMG, map OPS BLS, Code Cable Goulding to Akashi, 25/08/95, No. 2825, attached (draft) Report of the SecGen pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1010. See further 30/08/95, No. S/1995/755 for the definitive version. For further examples of observations by Dutchbat troops, see the *Rapport gebaseerd op de Debriefing Srebrenica* (Report based on Srebrenica debriefing) issued on 04/10/95.

⁵¹⁷ See *Boston Globe*, 01/10/95 and *Independent*, 24/09/95.

⁵¹⁸ Debriefing report, § 4.29.

Journalists, citing UN sources, claimed that the low rate of progress in tracing the mass graves was due to reduced American interest in this topic. Locating the graves no longer fitted in with US policy, since it could hinder the progress of the peace talks which had started up in the meantime, and where the Americans played a leading role. Moreover, evil tongues claimed that the aerial reconnaissance photos had only been published in early August to distract public attention from the Croat offensive against the Serbs in Krajina which had enjoyed covert American support.⁵¹⁹

Nevertheless, it was not true that the Americans had lost interest. The search continued on the basis of eyewitness reports at the instigation of the Yugoslavia Tribunal, and images of three possible mass graves near Zvornik were discovered. These images were not published, possibly from fear of revealing too much about American military capabilities.⁵²⁰ Officials ascribed the low rate of progress in finding the new photos to the vast amounts of material that had to be gone through.

This new knowledge, supported by extensive coverage of the fall of Srebrenica in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, led to a discussion of the events after the fall of the enclave in the Security Council at the end of October. It may be noted that this discussion, initiated by Germany, was the fourth time the Security Council had devoted attention to this topic. The Germans urged the Council to produce a report on the missing persons from Srebrenica, Zepa and Banja Luka (the last-mentioned group resulting from the Croat offensive against the Krajina Serbs). This proposal was supported by Madeleine Albright, who pointed out how difficult it had been to get information from the UN after the publication of the aerial reconnaissance photos. She feared further that the Bosnian Serbs were destroying evidence: aerial reconnaissance photos had revealed that the graves had been interfered with in September and October. She therefore stated that it was important to take steps to ensure that the parties to the conflict would work together with the Tribunal in the Dayton peace talks that were due to begin on 1 November, and she wanted the Security Council to demand that the Tribunal should be granted access to the areas controlled by the Bosnian Serbs. Akashi received orders from New York to prepare a new report.⁵²¹

The Bosnian Serbs did not make life easy for Akashi. Pressure on the Bosnian Serbs from the ICRC, Akashi, the UNPROFOR *Chef de Mission* and Sector North East to gain access to the region had been without success. Letters from the personal representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights remained unanswered.⁵²² At the end of October, Akashi made a third attempt to get Milosevic to use his influence on Mladic to get access to Srebrenica and its surroundings.⁵²³

In the run-up to the Dayton peace talks, both the Bosnian Muslims and the Yugoslav government exerted political pressure to gain access for international observers to areas where prisoners might be present. In fact, the Bosnian Muslims went so far as to make their participation in the Dayton negotiations dependent on this access. It should be noted that the areas in question were not only those round Srebrenica but also those near Banja Luka, where wide-scale ethnic cleansing (also affecting Krajina Serbs) had taken place as a result of the Croat offensive. Now that Serb interests were at stake, Milosevic was also demanding free access for humanitarian organizations to all areas in Bosnia.⁵²⁴ This led the Security Council to pass Resolution 1019 on 9 November, once again demanding that the Bosnian Serbs should grant the International Red Cross and UNHCR access to

⁵¹⁹ David Rohde, 'Eyewitnesses Confirm Massacres in Bosnia', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 05/10/95.

⁵²⁰ Elizabeth Neuffer, 'signs of mass graves found anew in Bosnia', *The Boston Globe*, 03/11/95.

⁵²¹ Michael Dobbs, 'New Proof Offered of Serb Atrocities: U.S. Analysts Identify More Mass Grave', *The Washington Post*, 29/10/95. Stephen Engelberg and Tim Weiner with further reporting from Raymond Bonner and Jane Perlez, 'Massacre in Bosnia: Srebrenica: The Days of Slaughter', *The New York Times*, 29/10/95. DPKO, Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 30/10/95, No. 3414.

⁵²² ABZ, PR New York, Fax PR New York to Min of Foreign Affairs, attn. DPR/PZ, 11/10/95, No. NYV-6299.

⁵²³ ICFY, Box 144, File Crypto Fax In 51, 10-31/10/95, Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 24/10/95, No. UNPF Z-1977.

⁵²⁴ ICFY, Box 144, File Crypto Fax In 51, 10-31/10/95, Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 30/10/95, No. 3413 with letters attached Muhamed Sacirbey to President of the Security Council, 30/10/95 and Vladislav Jovanovic to President of the Security Council, 26/10/95, No. 1058/95.

persons 'detained or reported missing' in Srebrenica, Zepa, Banja Luka and Sanski Most.⁵²⁵ As with so many previous resolutions, the Bosnian Serbs simply ignored this demand.

The charges against Karadzic and Mladic formulated by the War Crimes Tribunal on 16 November 1995, made it necessary to collect the relevant evidence on the ground. Not that there was any real doubt at this time that mass murders had been committed and that mass graves existed, but it had not yet been possible to set up an investigation on the spot. Besides, eyewitness reports and aerial reconnaissance photos had so far only led to the identification of six mass graves. Nevertheless, as UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali wrote in a report issued on 27 November (the raw material for which had been contributed by Akashi), detailed evidence was available. There were eyewitness reports from Dutchbat and from survivors of the executions, aerial photographs of the mass graves and material actually taken from the graves.⁵²⁶ The last-mentioned evidence was gained thanks to the efforts of David Rohde. He had managed not only to track down seven survivors of executions and to record their story, but also to gain some insight into the events at Bratunac and, as mentioned above, to visit the mass graves near Konjevic Polje.

During a new trip to Belgrade via Eastern Bosnia, Rohde had hoped to stop off at Zvornik to inspect the mass graves there before slipping over the Drina into Serbia. In order to gain access to the area round Zvornik, Rohde had changed the date on an old press accreditation, but his ruse failed: this time he was arrested as a suspected CIA agent, charged with spying, subjected to prolonged interrogation and imprisoned for ten days. His film material was impounded. The whole affair was an unwanted complication during the first few days of the Dayton peace talks: Milosevic had to intervene to secure his release. As Richard Holbrooke put it later, 'showing more courage than wisdom, he [Rohde] began digging in the red dirt of the mud dam near Zvornik'.⁵²⁷

After his release, Rohde wrote about what he had found in the loose earth near the Petkovići Dam: shoes, spectacles and other articles of clothing, along with three walking sticks and a crutch. The stench of rotting corpses still hung in the air. He also found piles of wind-jackets, leather jackets and T-shirts in the nearby woods. The local population and Bosnian Serb police claimed that the bodies in the graves were those of ABiH soldiers killed in battle, but the walking sticks and crutches argued against this claim. An identity card issued in Srebrenica and photos with Muslim names established a link with Srebrenica.⁵²⁸

As long as the Bosnian Serbs continued to claim that all the corpses were those of soldiers killed in battle, further forensic investigation was needed to verify or disprove this statement. The Dayton Accords granted investigators from the War Crimes Tribunal access to all areas in Bosnia, but made no provisions for protection of their work. These activities were potentially not without risk, since the Bosnian Serbs might see fit to prevent them. It was the Americans who, fearing mission creep, had stipulated that this should not be a task for the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR). According to David Rohde, the Americans went so far as to suggest that the Netherlands should supply troops to protect the experts during the excavations. In the end, such a request was not put to the Netherlands: after the fall of Srebrenica, it would have made the Dutch forces too vulnerable to further humiliation by the Bosnian Serbs.⁵²⁹

The search for evidence did not get a new impulse until after the Dayton Accords. NATO Commander Admiral Smith and Judge Richard Goldstone, the chief prosecutor at the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, reached agreement about cooperation in mid-January 1996. NATO troops would protect the teams who were investigating the graves. The Secretary General of NATO, Javier Solana, promised NATO resources for regular inspection by reconnaissance aircraft and patrols on the

⁵²⁵ S/RES/1019 (1995), 09/11/95.

⁵²⁶ Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1019 (1995) on Violations of International Humanitarian Law in the Areas of Srebrenica, Zepa, Banja Luka and Sanski Most, 27/11/95, No. S/1995/988.

⁵²⁷ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, pp. 242-243 and 254.

⁵²⁸ David Rohde, 'Graves Found That Confirm Bosnia Massacre', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 16/11/95.

⁵²⁹ David Rohde, 'Prosecutors Seek Access to Graves', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14/12/95.

ground to ensure that the graves were not tampered with.⁵³⁰ The most noteworthy development was however that the Bosnian Serbs finally gave the American Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, John Shattuck, permission to make a tour of inspection of the execution sites and the known mass graves. Shattuck's visit once again concentrated all attention on the existence of the mass graves. He was accompanied by the first representatives of the War Crimes Tribunal. The sites visited included the warehouse in Kravica, where the bloodstains and the remnants of the clothing of the men who had been murdered could still be seen, and the nearby mass grave in Glogova. 'It is far more chilling to see this in reality than I was prepared for', Shattuck said.⁵³¹

After the ice had been broken in this way, it became easier to visit Eastern Bosnia. The Dutch Minister for International Development Jan Pronk also visited Kravica on 1 March, in the company of a UNHCR delegation. The group was unable to find the mass grave at Glogova.⁵³² Some time later, a group of staff members from the Dutch embassy in Zagreb together with some Polish journalists and Bart Rijs, the correspondent of *De Volkskrant*, did manage to find the mass grave at Glogova. Numerous bones were observed there. The group also made a trip to the hills near Kamenica, where bundles of clothing were found which proved on closer inspection to contain parts of skeletons. Various objects were also scattered around, varying from Korans to a Dutchbat T-shirt, school exercise books and family photos. At other sites the group found skulls and bones all jumbled up together, amidst bundles of clothing and an unexploded hand grenade – silent witnesses of the terrors that the men in the column from Srebrenica to Tuzla had been exposed to.⁵³³

Early in April 1996, investigators from the War Crimes Tribunal started opening up the eleven mass graves whose existence seemed to have been confirmed by then. By the time the excavations started, it was already clear that the graves had been tampered with. NATO had only been given permission to protect the investigators, not the evidence.⁵³⁴ Reports that the Bosnian Serbs had tried to destroy the evidence of the massacre, e.g. by scattering chemicals on the corpses and scattering body parts in the six graves that had been identified at the time, appeared as early as October 1995.⁵³⁵ Air reconnaissance photos of the grave closest to Srebrenica, the 'Tatar' grave near Glogova which was only five kilometres from Bratunac and was the largest found so far, seemed to indicate that the grave had been completely emptied.⁵³⁶

5. Conclusion

Today the name of Srebrenica is indissolubly linked with the mass murders committed in the vicinity of this former Bosnian enclave, but this was not so self-evident in the days immediately following the fall of the enclave. It was, however, soon known that murders had been committed at sites along the road to Nova Kasaba and Konjevic Polje, which had been passed by the deported women and children who travelled along the same road on 12 and 13 July, and round the UN compound in Potocari which will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter.

For quite a long time, however, the Bosnian government and UNPROFOR were under the impression that large numbers of the men from Srebrenica had been captured *en route* to Tuzla, and that they were being held in Bratunac for interrogation and registration. This proved to be an illusion: they

⁵³⁰ Eve-Ann Prentice, 'Nato joins forces with war crimes teams to seek out mass graves', *The Times*, 23/01/96.

⁵³¹ ICFY, Box 148, Cryptofax In 55, Code Cable Annan to Goulding, 29/01/96, No. UNPF-Z-148.

⁵³² Slm@world.std.com, 'This week in Bosnia', 23/01/96, consulted 27/08/98. See also Bart Rijs, 'serviërs in Srebrenica weten van geen massamoord' (Serbs in Srebrenica know nothing about massacre), *De Volkskrant*, 24/01/96.

⁵³³ ABZ, DPV 499488, Code Pronk circ. 147, 05/03/96.

⁵³⁴ ABZ, DPV, UNPROFOR, NL deelname (NL participation). Secure fax Ambassade Sarajevo aan Min. v. B.Z. t.a.v. DMP/NH (Sarajevo embassy to Min. Foreign Affairs, att. DMP/NH), 06/05/96, No. SAR 092/96.

⁵³⁵ 'UN investigators begin opening mass graves', *Calgary Herald*, 03/04/96. .

⁵³⁶ Tim Weiner, 'U.S. Says Serbs May Have Tried to Destroy Massacre Evidence', *The New York Times*, 30/10/95, .

⁵³⁶ Confidential document. [US Secret]

had been murdered, long before the idea of a massacre gained ground. Even after that, it took some considerable time before evidence of the massacre could be produced. The first indications did not come to light until more than a month after the fall of Srebrenica.

Chapter 4

Potocari – Dutchbat and the fate of the local population

1. Introduction

Apart from the terrible journey to Tuzla that cost the lives of a large part of the male population of the Srebrenica enclave as a result of shelling or executions after being captured, the events in Potocari form the centre of the humanitarian disaster that took place in East Bosnia in July 1995. This chapter provides a description and analysis of what happened in Srebrenica and especially in Potocari from 10 July 1995 onwards, with particular focus on the fate of the population and the role that Dutchbat played in the outcome of that fate. The latter especially involves the question of Dutchbat's responsibilities and the manner in which it discharged its responsibilities under the circumstances prevailing at the time. The majority of questions that were asked in the aftermath of (events in) Srebrenica, can be traced back to these two intimately linked themes. Examples are: did it or did it not report executions, did Dutchbat possibly collaborate in separating men from women, did it draw up and pass on to the VRS lists of names of Displaced Persons (refugees), did it fail to resist the deportations, and so on. As a consequence of this, in describing certain subjects, the events are partially dealt with in the light of the role they played during the aftermath. For that reason, chronology and themes alternate.

It was decided to give one cluster of subjects and questions extensive treatment in a separate Appendix to this report, under the heading 'Dutchbat and the local population: medical issues'. That was done because the subjects discussed in this separate supplement are mutually related.

Before going any further, a word on the terminology used in this report. As early as the autumn of 1995, the Committee of Dutch Lawyers for Human Rights in a reaction to the debriefing report questioned the terminology employed in that report. Among other things, the Committee expressed doubts that the term 'refugees' was technically correct under the terms of the Refugees Convention of 1951. After all, in this particular case, the people concerned were still in their own country and, therefore, should really be described as 'Displaced Persons' or 'homeless'.⁵³⁷ However, this conclusion masks other complex issues that have to do with the status of the Safe Areas in relation to the self-styled independent republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. In any case, the term 'Displaced Persons' or 'displaced' was used by organisations such as *Médecins Sans Frontières* and UNHCR. However, because the word 'refugees' was most often used in the sources and in common parlance at the time and in subsequent years, we decided to use the same word in this report as well.

The first part, discussing the events in Potocari, focuses especially on what happened on July 10 and 11 and takes a close look at the emergence of a refugee problem as a result of the collapse of the enclave. The way in which Dutchbat handled this problem and what kind of motivations influenced its performance will be studied. That sets the stage for the events that followed, after the enclave had officially fallen on July 11.

This section is followed by one that deals with the negotiations between General Mladic and Lieutenant Colonel Karremans about the fate of the people in Potocari, and the unexpected start of the removal of the refugees. Here, too, the problem of terminology arises and again it was the Committee of Dutch Lawyers for Human Rights that pointed out its implications. The Committee disagreed with the VRS' use of the term 'evacuation' of the refugees in the compound and, therefore, also objected to the fact that Dutchbat went along with this terminology in its official contacts with the VRS. This

⁵³⁷ DCBC, 1995, Dr. B.C. Labuschagne, chairman NJCM, to dr. J.J.C. Voorhoeve, Minister for Defence, Leyden, 18/12/95.

happened, for instance, when on 17 July 1995 Deputy Dutchbat Commander R.A. Franken signed a Bosnian Serb document that said the ‘evacuation’ had taken place without problems.

The Committee questioned the use of this term. The lawyers defined evacuation as ‘a purely humanitarian measure that is almost always taken with the agreement of the people concerned’. The lawyers believed the aim of such a measure was to safeguard ‘the interests, health and safety’ of these people. On the other hand, ‘deportation’ was ‘an instrument in the hands of a hostile government to act in a repressive manner against the local population’. That put it almost on par with ethnic cleansing, which in United Nations resolutions had been described as a form of genocide ‘and elsewhere as a breach of international human rights’. But even if this is a genuine evacuation, the universally accepted standards of scrupulousness as laid down in the Fourth Geneva Convention⁵³⁸ should always be complied with.

The Committee bluntly declared that Srebrenica had been a clear case of ‘deportation’, a conclusion that can be endorsed by this report. That is why this term is also used in this text. Yet this is still not as simple as it may seem: among other things, we will talk about the fact that the people living in the enclave were themselves keen to get out. There are good indications in this context that the Bosnian Government as well as local authorities had discouraged evacuations for political reasons in the past because otherwise the Safe Area would literally be emptied.

To what extent the wish of local people to leave was dictated by the circumstances and therefore made free will a relative concept, as it were, is an added complication in trying to determine which term covers the nature of the events in Srebrenica best. This theme will come to the fore particularly in the discussion of the behaviour of Mladic on July 11 and 12, when he gave the local population pro forma the choice of either staying or leaving. However, against the background outlined above, his actions may well be interpreted as a conscious attempt to create an excuse against any accusations that he was guilty of deportation, ethnic cleansing and mass executions. For the same reason, Karadzic also emphatically claimed then and afterwards that people had been given a free choice: ‘Immediately after Mladic entered the city on July 11, residents were asked whether they wanted to stay or leave. Most people chose to leave, ‘just like the Serbs [sic] who did not wish to stay in occupied Sarajevo’.⁵³⁹ Soon after the fall of the enclave, Karadzic declared on television that people were ‘free to go anywhere they wanted’.⁵⁴⁰ It seems fair to say that because of the manipulative, intimidatory and sometimes even violent nature of the removal of the refugees, most of those involved did in actual fact have no real free choice in the matter at all. In regards to the terminology that has been used both in this and in the following chapters, the justification for using it should really be provided in the course of the account and we have, therefore, not tried to artificially avoid the concept of deportation.

The second part of this chapter concludes with the last refugee transports on July 12, but partially overlaps the detailed third part because of the formulation and definition of the problem that forms the basis of that part. This involves the question which flagrant violations of human rights, murders in particular, have taken place in and around Potocari and Srebrenica, and what individual members of Dutchbat or the battalion as a whole, in the person of its commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, have seen and reported any of these violations. To be able to answer these questions, it is necessary to follow the events as they began to unfold from the afternoon of July 12.

Part 3 in particular will take a strongly thematic approach because too many separate elements demand comprehensive treatment. However, in doing so an attempt is made to keep things in chronological order as much as possible. Because many issues are being discussed that began to play an

⁵³⁸ DCBC, 1955. Dr. B.C. Labuschagne, chairman NJCM, to dr. J.J.C. Voorhoeve, Minister for Defence, Leyden, 18/12/1995.

⁵³⁹ J. Pak, ‘Karadzic: Moslims gingen zelf weg uit Srebrenica’ (‘Karadzic: Muslims left Srebrenica of their own volition’), *Haagsche Courant*, 12/07/00. Quoted in: Military History Section SMG, 1002. RNLAf Deny Flight intsum, dtg 131330Z JUL 95.

⁵⁴⁰ Quoted in: SMG, 1002. RNLAf Deny Flight intsum, dtg 131330Z JUL 95.

important role in the aftermath of the events at Srebrenica and Potocari, it is hard to avoid touching on a number of these issues at different levels. Where possible, the way certain problems from the aftermath were dealt with has been discussed in later chapters.

The first part that follows now, will describe the measures Dutchbat took to get ready for providing shelter to the stream of refugees, and the problems that occurred at that particular stage. Attention will be paid to the formal framework that was in place for this kind of situation. Next, the flight from Srebrenica to Potocari and the possible incidents that may have taken place at that time will be discussed. The chapter concludes with the manner in which the refugees were received in Potocari and the problems involved in estimating the number of people that were there.

2. The rules regarding allowing refugees into the Potocari compound

Even when Dutchbat still fully believed in the deterrence value of Close Air Support, the battalion had to allow for the possibility of certain worst case scenarios. There are no indications that it had made any plans before the assault on Srebrenica for dealing with a wholesale flight of refugees to Potocari. In early June Karremans did express fears about the possibility of a Serb attack on the southern part of the enclave, particularly the Swedish Shelter Project (SSP). However, this did not lead to a plan to take care of any refugees.⁵⁴¹ However, the chance that a massive flow of refugees would move northwards in the direction of the Dutchbat compound was very real on July 10. That presented the battalion with a huge problem. What would it have to do to deal with these potential masses of tens of thousands of desperate people, and how might they be afforded the best possible protection? That question became relevant at the end of the afternoon of July 10 when it became clear that people were beginning to flee from the shelling of Srebrenica.

The decisions about how to deal with the refugees and, in particular, their admittance to the compound in Potocari became a loaded subject in the aftermath of the fall of the enclave, when 'srebrenica' began to look like becoming a major (political) affair. One of the questions that were repeatedly asked by former refugees in particular, concerned Dutchbat's decision to set a maximum number of people that would be admitted to the compound. The background to that question had to do with the poor protection of people who were forced to seek shelter in surrounding factories and the Potocari bus depot.

Another question linked to the theme of the Dutchbat chain of command during the fall and the days after the fall of the enclave, especially the roles of Karremans and Franken, and the question of how the command (structure) had functioned. In regards to the admittance of refugees to the compound, it was already claimed on the battalion's return to Zagreb - during the first debriefings of key officers of Dutchbat - that there may possibly have been problems between the commanding officer and his deputy in this area. Karremans is supposed to have rejected a request by B Company to be allowed to accept refugees but was subsequently 'overruled' by Franken.⁵⁴² As a result, this alleged incident later also became part of the sensitive questions asked about the command situation within Dutchbat, and particularly about the actions of Lt-Col Karremans. This question became a central theme of the first debriefing of the battalion in Zagreb, immediately after its return from the enclave on July 22 (see the following chapter), but it was conspicuously absent during the debriefing in Assen and certainly in the debriefing report. It only mentions that after consultation with the battalion it was decided to take the refugees to Potocari (see Chapter 7).

⁵⁴¹ 'In that case, SSP will be lost and about 3000 refugees either killed or expelled', Karremans wrote on June 4 in a letter to BH Command in Sarajevo (SMG/Debrief. TK9588, 'Deteriorating situation in Srebrenica'). The same message also went to the Netherlands. See SMG/Debrief. Th.J.P. Karremans, 'The situation in Srebrenica', appendix to letter number TK9589, 5 June 1995, from C-Dutchbat to C-Army Crisisstaf, bgen F. Pollé. Both letters have been included as supplements in: Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 312-321.

⁵⁴² SMG 1007. 'Debriefing Sergeant Major Van Meer, added S3 Dutchbat III, Camp Pleso 220795, 22.45-24.30 uur'.

Dutchbat's commanding officer as well as his deputy deny the incident took place, but confirmed that a discussion had taken place. In fact, Karremans did say at one point that he was opposed to admitting refugees to the compound.⁵⁴³ When he is supposed to have said this exactly is not clear, because B Company's request to be allowed to admit refugees could have been made either on July 10 or 11. In any case, on July 11 an order was given that said that for the time being refugees should not be sent away.

In a small diary kept by the Intelligence and security officer of the battalion, Rave, it says in an entry for July 14 - looking back on the previous hectic days - that he was told on July 11 that refugees were not being admitted because of the threat of shelling by the VRS.⁵⁴⁴ Lieutenant Koster remembers the same decision as being a 'standing order'.⁵⁴⁵

There was in fact a formal framework for this kind of situations. And although Karremans later said he had not in first instance based his decisions on formal considerations, it is important to take a closer look at the rules and regulations that were in force at the time to deal with such situations. A refusal to admit so-called non-combatants was in fact in accordance with the guidelines that UNPROFOR itself had laid down in its so-called Standing Operating Procedures (see Chapter 1 of Part I), which, in turn, had been partially included in the so-called permanent instructions, the Standing Orders of the battalion.⁵⁴⁶ However, in practice, and therefore also during these days, the Standing Operating Procedures were of little value because there were situations when the rules simply did not provide any clear and unambiguous solutions.⁵⁴⁷ Moreover, the Standing Operating Procedures, dating from 1993, were constantly being changed and updated - it was as 'growth document' as an introduction to the battalion Standing Orders called it.⁵⁴⁸ Nevertheless, these Standing Operating Procedures are relevant because they show the rules and responsibilities formally laid down on the one hand, as against the unruly realities that existed on the other. The Standing Operating Procedures were provided to every commanding officer of a deployed unit. He had to distribute these among his company commanders and section heads, who, in turn, passed on a simplified version to their subordinates.⁵⁴⁹ In practice, however, Dutchbat relied on its own Dutch-language Standing Orders, which incorporated those Standing Operating Procedures that were deemed most relevant.

In the case of admitting refugees (In the Standing Operating Procedures referred to as non-combatants) Standing Operating Procedure number 206 applied: 'Protection of persons seeking urgent assistance', translated in the battalion's Standing Orders as 'Criteria in regards to assistance to non-combatants in distress'.⁵⁵⁰ The accompanying explanation emphatically says that it is an UNPROFOR principle to protect non-combatants threatened by physical violence. It even stresses the point that the primary mandate of the peacekeepers and the limited resources at their disposal should not be allowed to be used as an excuse to do nothing. That addition, incidentally, had not been included in the battalion's Standing Orders.

The possibility of confusion about the duty to protect people becomes clear from the basic principle that UNPROFOR would take action only if local authorities, UNHCR or the International Red Cross could not or would not offer the required protection. After all, UNPROFOR was - as is mentioned elsewhere - 'not responsible for the protection of the population in the "Safe Areas"', although 'it (...) could make a contribution to this'.⁵⁵¹ Once the listed conditions were met, any threat

⁵⁴³ See: Wind, *Debriefing*, p. 33; interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 30/11/00 en 01/12/00 and R.Franken, 18/05/01.

⁵⁴⁴ Notebook B. Rave. Loaned to NIOD for perusal.

⁵⁴⁵ Interviews E. Koster, 06/10/99 en 19/10/99.

⁵⁴⁶ SMG/Debrief. Standing Order 1 (NL) VNINFBAT.

⁵⁴⁷ For meaning of the SOPs, see Part II, Chapter 1.

⁵⁴⁸ SMG/Debrief. Standing Order 1 (NL) VNINFBAT, p. 3.

⁵⁴⁹ Interview E.A.W.Koestal, 24/05/00. Koestal was acting Military Attache at the time at the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands at the UN in New York.

⁵⁵⁰ SMG/Debrief. Standing Order 1 (NL) VNINFBAT, Chapter 3 Operations, par 3.2, subpar 5c, Behaviour when personnel and/or equipment were under threat.

⁵⁵¹ SMG/Debrief. Standing Order 1 (NL) VNINFBAT, Chapter 3 Operations, par 3.2., subpar 4, Safe Areas.

to the people concerned had to be regarded as a threat to UNPROFOR, in which case the normal Rules of Engagement applied. That immediately led to the stipulation that ‘after providing assistance, nobody could be sent away if that would mean they faced a physical threat as a result’. The definition of non-combatants that had to be applied in this included unarmed civilians but also former combatants who no longer carried any weapons ‘and who, because of injury, incapacity or other reason is *hors de combat* [out of action]’. The battalion Standing Orders translated this as ‘Unarmed ex-combatants who have been put out of action (wounded, undernourished or other causes)’. This last stipulation was decidedly problematic because any soldier who for whatever reason declared himself *hors de combat* and was under threat could seek refuge with the UN. In a situation where the demarcation between soldiers and civilians was already a major problem, this could only make things even more complicated.

The Standing Operating Procedures (and the battalion Standing Orders) make an attempt to list a number of criteria based on which decisions needed to be made on ‘what to do’. First, the threat in question had to be analysed and it had to be ascertained whether assistance was really necessary and whether there was no other organisation that could help. Then followed a criterion that in the context of the events in Potocari also turned out to be not insignificant. It had to be ascertained whether assistance could be provided in a manner that did not expose own personnel to ‘unacceptable risks’ or would lead to UN personnel becoming ‘too deeply involved in the conflict’. Moreover, whatever assistance was provided was not allowed to interfere with the main tasks of UNPROFOR.

These stipulations meant that those who had to translate the sometimes mutually contradictory rules into decisions faced great difficulties. Because the people who drew up the original Standing Operating Procedures⁵⁵² and the battalion Standing Orders had foreseen this, they provided three sample situations that would turn out to apply to Dutchbat’s situation in Potocari extremely well. They concerned, firstly, the case where non-combatants would seek access to a UN facility, secondly, the scenario in which they would ask for UN transportation to help them get out of the dangerous area, and, lastly, ‘UNPROFOR personnel encountering a situation in which physical violence is being used against a non-combatant’. Later in this chapter we will talk about these latter two in more detail in regards to the significance they had to the practical reality faced by Dutchbat.

Admittance to a what was in this case a UN compound was permitted for people who were wounded or ‘seriously ill’. People eligible for assistance were also immediately told that they would have to ‘leave again as soon as their condition had stabilised and they faced no immediate danger’. People who were not wounded or seriously ill were not admitted into the compound. This stipulation came with the added provision that if or when this was necessary *and* possible, the battalion commander ‘(had) to provide protection and assistance outside the compound’. He was supposed to designate a location for this purpose outside the UN area that could serve as a temporary refugee shelter. In the Standing Operating Procedures there is an added stipulation that setting up this temporary shelter had to be combined with a protection plan, but the battalion’s Dutch-language Standing Orders did not include any such instruction.

The background to the restrictions on permitting refugees into the compound was not explained in the Standing Operating Procedures. Undoubtedly the stance of strict neutrality that the UN tried to maintain played a role in this, but possibly considerations of operational freedom of movement, safety and security were also involved. Telling enough was the translated Standing Operating Procedure 206 in the battalion’s Standing Order under the heading ‘What to do when personnel and/or equipment/ordnance are threatened’. It was, however, already clear from the start that these Standing Operating Procedures were of very limited practical use, because the introduction to the battalion’s own Standing Order indicated that the Standing Operating Procedure, as drawn up by the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, was a ‘standing procedure’ aimed at providing a solution ‘and therefore was not a standard solution’: ‘In many cases a Standing Operating Procedure will have to be

⁵⁵² One of them was David Harland, who worked at that time at BHC in Sarajevo and was one of the people involved in 1999 in the UN investigation into the events taking place in Srebrenica. Interview D. Harland, 14/12/99.

used in conjunction with a correct application of the Rules of Engagement and a dose of common sense'.⁵⁵³ In Potocari, it would be the latter, in particular, that was sorely needed.

3. July 10: admitting (refugees into the compound) in practice

Just before 19.00 hours on July 10, Karremans sounded the bunker alarm as a result of his request for Close Air Support and the possible response to this by the VRS. Everybody moved into the shelters. By this time, the fences of the compound in Srebrenica had given way under the pressure of great numbers of terrified refugees who had panicked because the VRS began to approach the city. Because of the danger of shelling, the compound's commanding officer, Groen, tried to convince as many people as he could to flee in the direction of Potocari. This became even more urgent because just then he received word of the request for air support - which in fact never eventuated. Just after 19.00 hours, Groen urgently requested permission to carry out his plans.⁵⁵⁴

At that moment, a decision had to be made on whether the refugees would be allowed to continue to the compound. Karremans' decision not to admit refugees to the compound was strongly influenced by practical considerations. He feared that if the compound was swamped by refugees, all kinds of security problems would ensue. Karremans did not want refugees in or anywhere near a number of sensitive locations within the compound, such as the Ops rooms (the command posts), the armouries, the work shops and soldiers' barracks. In addition, it was extremely important to him to maintain the battalion's operational freedom of movement.⁵⁵⁵ Franken shared this view. Even back in May, when the situation deteriorated, measures had been taken to be able to defend the compound. Defensive walls were built and vehicle positions were dug. The APCs would need to be able to move freely between these positions. However, if the compound became filled to overflowing, it would become impossible for vehicles to freely manoeuvre around the area. Dutchbat would then literally become trapped.

There was another aspect of the threat of the VRS that also played a role. The entrance gate to the compound was within view of the Bosnian-Serb guns and mortars which could easily cause carnage among densely packed masses of refugees. Important in this context were the VRS statements that no refugees were allowed to enter the compound in Potocari. It was difficult to determine whether Karremans had already heard this threat when he made his decision. The first recorded mention found in the Ops Room log book (and therefore probably also the only incidence Karremans himself talks about in his book⁵⁵⁶) dates from just after 20.30 hours and came from '4 E'⁵⁵⁷. The man behind this code was Sergeant Bos who was kept in Bratunac as a hostage and who was forced to pass on a number of statements by a VRS commander (probably Major Nikolic) via the on-board radio of his APC. The first of these was that 'Muslims would not be tolerated in the compound, but NGOs, on the other hand, would be. Furthermore, he announced the VRS would take on the job of demilitarisation that Dutchbat had proved to be incapable of.⁵⁵⁸ The next day, when the first refugees had already arrived, another VRS statement refusing refugees permission to enter the compound would follow.⁵⁵⁹

The time of sergeant Bos' announcement was well after the decision was made not to admit refugees to the compound, but it is likely that the battalion's officers had already formed the notion

⁵⁵³ SMG/Debrief. Standing Order 1 (NL) VNINFBAT, Chapter 3 Operations, par 3.1.

⁵⁵⁴ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 10/07/95, entry 19.10, reported by 61R (Groen)

⁵⁵⁵ Statement in writing Th.J.P. Karremans, 16/07/01.

⁵⁵⁶ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 187.

⁵⁵⁷ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 10/07/95, entry 20.45, report by 41R and a similar report, just before that but without time noted, by 4 E.

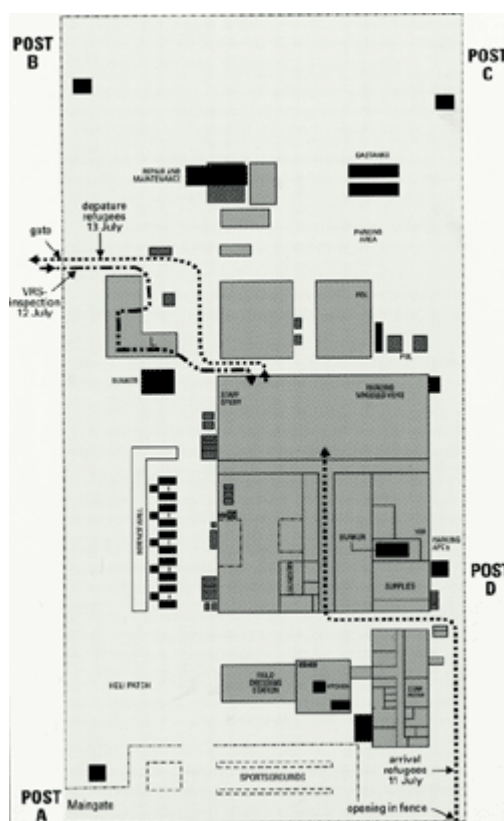
⁵⁵⁸ The exact reconstruction remains a problem. According to Karremans, the ban was lifted less than 10 minutes later and permission was also given to freely move in and out of their compound with vehicles. (Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 188) However, the Monthly register of Ops Room Dutchbat reports at 20.45 hours a message from Nikolic that refugees were allowed to go to Potocari but could not enter the compound.

⁵⁵⁹ Based on personal log book notes of major Otter, this was at 2.20 pm. Notes given to NIOD for its perusal.

that the VRS would not tolerate refugees much earlier than the actual decision. Compound Commander Major Otter thought he remembered the VRS regularly breaking into the battalion's radio channel by way of one of the captured armoured cars of Dutchbat in Bratunac. 'First there would be a Dutchman saying something in Dutch, and then they would switch to English. We interpreted one of those messages as a warning - that what the VRS was really telling us was: 'We cannot distinguish between refugees and fighters. We don't want people in the compound.'⁵⁶⁰

Against this background, an ostensibly brief discussion with major Franken ensued following Groen's request and Karremans' initial reaction. In principle, Franken agreed with the arguments of his commanding officer, but as the officer responsible for operations presented a number of other considerations that convinced Karremans. Says Franken: 'In the end we made the joint decision that they (refugees) would be allowed into the compound after all.'⁵⁶¹

The question is which consideration was the deciding factor. It was clear that at any time people arriving at the gates asking for admittance would be in a blind panic. How many people were concerned was not clear. What was clear in any case was that, probably in keeping with the battalion's Standing Orders, a mini Safe Area would need to be set up in the compound in order to deal with the expected influx of people. The idea was that this would then gain time for the UN 'to get a grip on the Serbs again'.⁵⁶² Karremans did in fact inform the VRS the following day that he regarded the compound and surrounds as a Safe Area.⁵⁶³



The battalion had only limited resources at its disposal. From the point of view of safety/protection and manageability, it was obvious that this area had to be kept as small as possible. If

⁵⁶⁰ Interview J.Otter, 26/05/99. Franken could not remember whether the threat had already been issued at that moment, but he 'did not rule it out. Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁵⁶¹ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁵⁶² Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁵⁶³ DCBC, nr.652. 'Log book/diary' DCBC.

very large numbers were involved, the logical conclusion was that some of the refugees could be best accommodated in the compound itself. The risk that opening the compound itself to refugees would simply swamp the whole area and basically eliminate Dutchbat as an effective force as a result was very real in this option, as we have mentioned earlier. So the discussion between Karremans and Franken very quickly began to focus on numbers. It was decided to let the total amount be determined by the number of people that could be accommodated in the compound's large vehicle hangars. That would leave the battalion's freedom of movement intact and the refugees would be out of the VRS' sight as well. When the time finally came, refugees were also admitted to the first floor of the compound building, until an army engineer warned that the floors would not be able to bear the weight of any additional people. So no absolute limit had been set beforehand.

The question as to how many refugees would be able to reach the compound without coming within sight of the Bosnian Serb guns was answered soon after. The refugee columns would be diverted just before they would come within view of the VRS gun crews, via a so-called covered route to the south-west side of the compound. The point where the refugee flow would be diverted was planned to be near the bus terminal in Potocari because the Bosnian Serbs' field of vision ended just before that. Dutchbat soldiers were posted at that point to tell people to turn right to be able to walk on to the Dutchbat complex under cover of the factories situated between the compound and the bus terminal. The whole route would be marked by way of ribbons and groups of Dutchbat soldiers acting as guides. Other Dutchbat soldiers would then have to take over when people arrived at the compound and lead them into the vehicle hangar that was hidden from view by the compound's main building. To do this, it would be necessary to create a new, covered entrance. Franken gave instructions to this effect to compound Commander Major Otter and Lieutenant Koster, who had a hole cut in the fence at the most south-westerly corner of the compound. For practical reasons, this entrance would be moved a little the next day.

Otter was ordered to put together a group of 30 - three lieutenants each with nine men - whose job it would be to receive the refugees.⁵⁶⁴ Lieutenant Jansen was designated as the officer responsible for dealing with the refugees within the compound, while Lieutenant Koster was given the same job in areas outside the compound.⁵⁶⁵ At about 20.00 hours., all preparations had been completed for something that in the end turned out to be no more than a preliminary exercise.

There has been some confusion since about the question whether or not there had been any refugees in the Potocari compound on the night of July 10.⁵⁶⁶ The conclusion that was already drawn in the debriefing report was that this had not been the case.⁵⁶⁷ Dutchbat soldiers were posted at the bus terminal, the location where the refugees would leave the road and which will hereinafter be referred to as diversion point. They had positioned themselves there to direct refugees when they were approached by Bosnian soldiers who told them that they had already sent people back in Srebrenica.⁵⁶⁸ About half past nine, captain Groen told the Ops Room that soldiers of the ABiH (Bosnian Muslim military forces) who at that time were still in Srebrenica had sent the refugees back to Srebrenica after consulting their commanding officer, Ramiz Becirovic. With the assistance of Becirovic, Groen's own compound was also cleared of refugees who had entered it. The Ops Room noted: 'our reception

⁵⁶⁴ Interview J. Otter, 26/05/99

⁵⁶⁵ Debriefing statement A.H. Jansen, 07/09/95; interview E. Koster, 06/10/99 and 19/10/99.

⁵⁶⁶ In Karremans' book his account is quite vague on this point and judging by other statements, probably partially incorrect. For instance, he says that refugees in first instance entered the compound, but left it again at 21.30 hours, after which the hole in the fence is supposed to have been closed again. He probably confuses the Potocari compound with the Srebrenica one. Karremans, *Srebrenica, who cares?* pp. 187 and 189. However, in his letter NIOD, dating from 17 July 1995, Coll. Karremans. TK95118, 'short summary of the events of the past week', he himself already says: '19.00 hours (...) first stream of refugees direction (sic) Potocari, but was able to send them back later'.

⁵⁶⁷ Wind, *Debriefing*, p. 41.

⁵⁶⁸ Dijkema, *Vredesnaam*, pp. 318-319.

committee has been cancelled and is on standby'.⁵⁶⁹ To be on the safe side, one team was kept outside the compound so it could deal with any refugees that might come across.

Why the soldiers of the ABiH decided to stop the refugees is not clear. At that time, a large number of military personnel were present near the post office building where the ABiH head quarters were, to demand a meeting with Becirovic to discuss the question whether they should give up the enclave and disappear.⁵⁷⁰ It is possible that they had heard about the permission issued by Nikolic at about quarter to nine to allow people to go north, and saw this as an indication that the enclave's fate was sealed. Both and Honig, who were among the first to put together an integral picture of the Srebrenica drama, provided a more cynical interpretation of the events that could fit this particular situation. In their view, the local population played a role in the attempts by the ABiH soldiers to ensnare the UN in battles with the VRS. That was supposed to be done not just by keeping the UN in the front line, but if possible also by involving the civilian population in the fighting. Mayor Salihovic is also supposed to have opposed moving the population out of the city. People who were already on their way to Potocari were therefore forced to turn back.⁵⁷¹

We could find no confirmation for this interpretation. It seems equally possible that other motives played a role. The departure of the inhabitants of Srebrenica could have been taken by hesitating defenders as a signal that it would indeed be better to disappear. Another possible explanation is that blind panic breaking out among the local population, and the possible consequences thereof, had to be prevented.

In any case, the measure turned out to have an effect for only a short while. About 30 minutes after midnight, the Ops Room received word from Srebrenica that 400 men, some of them armed, had left for Potocari. Fifteen minutes later, another message followed to report that a 'stream of refugees' was on its way to Potocari, including 'young people' (soldiers): 'hundreds of people passing behind and in front of the compound'.⁵⁷² However, these were probably mostly people belonging to groups gathering for an attempt to break out of the enclave. Dutchbat did not see any refugees near the Potocari compound and it was a relatively quiet night until the bunker alarm sounded at 06.00 hours because of the long-awaited air strike.

4. July 11 – the flight to Potocari

In the aftermath of Srebrenica, there were accusations that Dutchbat personnel's own attitudes to the local population had a negative effect on the way they handled themselves (in the crisis). Part II discusses this in detail, but this theme surfaces continually in accounts of what happened during and after the fall of the enclave. That applies to, among other things, the description and analysis of the flight of the civilian population to the Dutchbat compound in Potocari. The Dutch soldiers, who for military reasons were forced to pull back to Potocari as well, ended up becoming part of the general flow of refugees during this retreat. Most of them belonged to B Company, whose members were later criticised most heavily for their alleged anti-Muslim attitude. On July 11, their compound became the assembly area and starting point for the desperate residents of Srebrenica and the refugees from the southern part of the enclave who had had been the first to flee from the Bosnian Serb advance.

The halt in that advance had calmed the local population again somewhat, aided by Karremans' promises about air strikes. When these strikes initially failed to eventuate and the VRS resumed its advance, this caused the population to take to the road again on the afternoon of July 11. Even before

⁵⁶⁹ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 10/07/95, entry 21.29, noted by 61R. See also: Debriefing statement A.H. Jansen, Assen, 07/09/95; SMG, 1007. G. Bastiaans (debriefeer) and C. Klep (report), 'Report debriefing major Otter (C-Ststcie), 23/07/95, Camp Pleso'. Otter thought that there was a message at about 10 pm from a 'BiH fighter' that no refugees would be coming.

⁵⁷⁰ Rohde, *A safe area.*, pp. 126-127.

⁵⁷¹ Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 42

⁵⁷² SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 11/07/95, entries 00.25 en 00.43.

14.00 hours, B Company's compound was swamped again by refugees who had been kindly removed just the day before. Half an hour later a Bosnian Serb shell hit the compound, probably in response to a small mortar being fired by an ABiH soldier among the refugees outside the compound.⁵⁷³ Fortunately the shell landed between the parked armoured vehicles of the Dutch, as a result of which the explosion did not have the full destructive force it might have had. Just the same, there was one fatality and a number of people were seriously wounded. The way these wounded were treated is discussed in the Chapter entitled 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical matters'.

Just before 14.30 hours, even before the air strikes took place, captain Groen decided that the refugees outside the compound should be taken to Potocari, escorted by Dutchbat personnel.⁵⁷⁴ Some claim that a woman standing on top of an APC and using a megaphone urged people to leave for Potocari.⁵⁷⁵ By making it clear that the Dutch themselves were going (to Potocari), they managed to get people to move. The anti climax of the air strikes and the subsequent intensification of the shelling of Srebrenica had caused enormous panic among the population and acted as an extra incentive to flee from Srebrenica. At 15.00 hours, shortly before the VRS had threatened that if the air strikes continued it would kill the OP crews it had taken hostage, the decision was made to abandon the whole compound.⁵⁷⁶

Close to 16.00 hours, an endless ribbon of refugees slowly wound its way along the road from Srebrenica to Potocari. B Company did all it could to provide proper escort. Captain Groen had been ordered to protect the tail end of the procession against the advancing VRS by retreating slowly. At 15.45 hours he radioed the Ops Room that the refugee stream was moving very slowly in the direction of Potocari.⁵⁷⁷ Soldier S. van der Veer:

‘We wanted to help people as much as we could. So we walked with them and drove our vehicles staying close to the long procession, making sure that we were clearly visible to the Serbs. Just to let them know: there are UN blue helmets here, don't get it into your head to fire at civilians.’⁵⁷⁸

Dutchbat soldiers who were on foot dragged people along with them and urged them to keep pace and stay ahead of the VRS.⁵⁷⁹ ‘There were people sitting on the side of the road, exhausted. We tried to haul them to their feet. “To Potocari, Cetniks come!” we yelled, according to soldier J. Honig.⁵⁸⁰ To some extent, the Dutchbat soldiers were aided in their efforts to keep people moving by the constant gun and mortar fire shells landing in the areas along the road. In at least one case a soldier managed to get hold of a wheelbarrow, put a wounded woman in it and his weapon on top of her and subsequently walked the five kilometres to Potocari in this way. ‘You can't imagine what it is like,’ he later told a journalist in the safe haven of Camp Pleso in Zagreb. ‘When I arrived in Potocari with my wheelbarrow, people began to clap. Women kissed my hand.’⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷³ See the interview soldier Jord Honig in: W. Kieskamp, “‘We konden niet al die vluchtelingen op onze rug nemen’” (“‘We couldn't carry all those refugees on our backs’”), *Trouw*, 29/07/95. ‘Just past 4 o'clock in the morning, new groups of ABiH troops were reported to have arrived in the centre of Srebrenica, including someone with a small mortar. SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 11/07/95, entry 04.17.

⁵⁷⁴ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 11/07/95, entry 14.21: ‘Locals in front of B company on their way to Potocari, en masse under escort of (not noted down)’.

⁵⁷⁵ Interview Mira Budisa, 19/06/00.

⁵⁷⁶ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 11/07/95, entries 15.01 en 15.07.

⁵⁷⁷ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room, 11/07/95, entry 16.15.

⁵⁷⁸ P.van Gageldonk, ‘Hoe oorlog is in het veld. Srebrenica door de ogen van blauwhelm Steve van der Veer’ (‘What war is like in the field. Srebrenica through the eyes of UN soldier Steve van der Veer’), *Nieuwe Revu* 33, 9-16/08/95.

⁵⁷⁹ Description by Captain J. Groen in: Dijkema, *Vredesnaam* pp. 303-304; interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.

⁵⁸⁰ W. Kieskamp, “‘We konden niet al die vluchtelingen op onze rug nemen’”, *Trouw*, 29/07/95.

⁵⁸¹ Statement by sld 1 Rikwin van Damme, quoted in: “‘Ik zag zo tien mensen neervallen.’” (“‘I saw 10 people fall in this way’”), *Het Parool*, 24/07/95.

The Dutchbat soldiers faced painful dilemmas along the way. Refugees placed a stretcher with a wounded woman in front of the wheels of corporal Pijfers' truck to force him to take her with him. But there was absolutely no room left on his truck and he had to carefully manoeuvre the vehicle around the stretcher.⁵⁸² Soldier Van der Veer was involved in a similar incident, when he had to suddenly brake hard because a woman placed a wheelbarrow carrying her severely injured son in front of his vehicle. However, there was just no room for him: 'Our truck was completely full. People sat on the roof of the truck, they were lying between the battery boxes, we really could not fit any more in. I later heard that they made it. She continued to walk those four-and-a-half kilometres to Potocari with her wheelbarrow and her son was treated there by the doctors'.⁵⁸³

Soldier F. Kossen was in the rearguard with his APC. In Srebrenica he had been kept in a blocking position, but a mortar shell destroyed the house standing next to the APC, causing debris to crash into the vehicle. After that, they had retreated slowly, firing over the heads of the advancing VRS a few times hoping to slow down their advance and give refugees the time to get away. Some of them tried to climb onto the APC, but Kossen had been ordered to keep moving.⁵⁸⁴

APCs ahead of him and who had not been directly involved in the rearguard fight did, however, take on board as many refugees as they could that they found sitting exhausted on the side of the road. People were put inside as well as on top of the vehicle.⁵⁸⁵

Sometimes orders were ignored to be able to help someone. One of the last, if not THE last APC to complete the journey to Potocari was the vehicle of Sergeant R.H. van Beukering. He had been ordered to evacuate the Joint Commission Observers and the commandos who had been sent in as Forward Air Controller for the air strike. After these had made a hasty escape down the mountain, under fire, to where the armoured car was waiting for them, they hit the road for Potocari as quickly as possible. In view of a possible renewed air strike, Major Franken had ordered them to continue their FAC duties from the roof. Later this turned out to be unnecessary.

When the armoured car passed the compound in Srebrenica, it had already been abandoned. The APCs that had maintained blocking positions had already left. When they set out for Potocari, the road from Srebrenica was empty. They only saw some older people sitting here and there on the side of the road. Suddenly they saw an old woman standing in the middle of the road. Van Beukering:

'By the way my driver was holding the handles, I knew he wanted to stop. But I had orders to take those Forward Air Controllers to Potocari as quickly as possible, so I said: 'Keep going!' It still looked like he wanted to stop, but he drove around the little old lady. Ten metres on, he suddenly braked. The guys inside went crazy. When the tail gate went down, seven rifle barrels poked out of the vehicle! Then I said: 'OK, we'll take her with us.' That woman was dragged into the vehicle over a three-metre distance, she even hit her head on my seat. After that, we drove off like maniacs.'

After a few hundred metres he saw his first Dutchbat colleagues who were walking behind the refugees. Honking its horn loudly, the APC moved through the crowds to subsequently reach the compound in Potocari with a smoking, blown out engine.⁵⁸⁶

To what extent the observations in regards to the events between Srebrenica and Potocari are influenced by the hectic and sometimes seemingly life-threatening situations is a problem that occurs in almost all memories of the events of July 1995. The journey from Srebrenica to Potocari, too, was full

⁵⁸² "Ik zag zo tien mensen neervallen.", *Het Parool*, 24/07/95.

⁵⁸³ P. van Gageldonk, 'Hoe oorlog is in het veld. Srebrenica door de ogen van blauwhelm Steve van der Veer', *Nieuwe Revu* 33, 9-16/08/95.

⁵⁸⁴ "Bataljon weerde zich voortreffelijk" ("Battalion did an excellent job"), *Defensiekrant (Defence Journal)*, (1995)9.

⁵⁸⁵ ICTY (IT-98-33-T) Testimony L.C. van Duijn, 30/03/00.

⁵⁸⁶ Interview R.H. van Beukering, 14/12/00; debriefing statement sgt 1 R.H. van Beukering, Assen, 11/09/95.

of menace. The VRS was continually firing its guns and mortars, with the shells - according to the witnesses' depositions - landing mostly on either side of the road. Therefore, an analysis that was presented at the Krstic trial concluded that the shelling had been a conscious attempt to lead the refugees into a kind of funnel to Potocari.⁵⁸⁷ Even earlier, the debriefing report of 1995 had already recorded Dutchbat personnel's impression that 'shelling took place solely to keep the stream of refugees moving into the direction of Potocari, not to create casualties'.⁵⁸⁸

5. The issue of people getting knocked down (by Dutchbat vehicles)

The matter of how the journey to Potocari on July 11 proceeded was the umpteenth controversial theme that during the aftermath became intertwined with the whole issue of Dutchbat's performance in Srebrenica. In the summer of 1998, there was a lot of noise about enclave residents being run over by Dutchbat vehicles. Although the main focus in 1998 was on an incident that involved the crew of OP Mike and that until then had not attracted any publicity, other possible incidents involving local people getting knocked down were also being dragged up again.⁵⁸⁹ Among other things, the politicians' panic about the 'knock-downs' theme that resulted from this even led to investigations by the Military Police who set up the separate, so-called 'sebra team' for it.

The fuss was especially indicative of the short memories of politicians as well as the media. Dutchbat soldiers themselves have - contrary to later claims and suggestions - never made a secret of their fears and even conviction that they may possibly have run over people on the road between Srebrenica and Potocari. Four-tonne trucks were sent to the city on July 11 to pick up sick and injured people who had been taken from the hospital to B Company's compound. When they arrived, they were stormed by desperate refugees who had no other thought than to save themselves. To some extent, there was a repeat of the shocking scenes of the spring of 1993 when part of the population got a chance to be evacuated with the UN to Tuzla. There, too, it became a matter of the law of the jungle prevailing and the hope of escape gave rise to scenes that filled UN soldiers and journalists with horror. On 11 July 1995, many Dutch soldiers were angered by the lack of solidarity that they sometimes observed, especially among young men. For instance, Rave intervened when some of these young men ordered an old woman who was being pushed in a wheelbarrow to get out of her improvised mode of transport. They had a stereo installation with them and wanted the wheelbarrow so they wouldn't have to carry it.⁵⁹⁰

In July 1995, the urge for self-preservation meant that most of the sick and wounded didn't stand a chance against the panicked mass of people who stormed the trucks as soon as they arrived. One Dutchbat soldier would later refer to this as a 'panic of biblical proportions'.⁵⁹¹ Video scenes recorded by warrant officer Dijkema of whole bunches of people hanging from the trucks when they arrived in Potocari were later shown all over the world.

A number of drivers and soldiers escorting the trucks who took their human cargo to Potocari, already had a definite impression along the way that people fell from the trucks and ended up under the wheels or were run over by following trucks, or that they themselves hit people who fell off trucks ahead of them. Shocked and deeply disturbed they told colleagues about their experiences even when they first arrived at the compound. Members of the KHO team who left the enclave on July 15 as the

⁵⁸⁷ ICTY, Prosecutor versus Radislav Krstic, *Judgement*, par.123. This was in line with the suspicion that was also already expressed in the Debriefing report. See: 'Report based on the Srebrenica' debriefing, p. 55.

⁵⁸⁸ Wind, *Debriefing*, p. 55. In view of the large role that the OP-M incident played in the aftermath, this theme will be discussed in Part IV, Chapter 8.

⁵⁸⁹ See for instance: 'Onvolledige weergave incidenten Srebrenica' ('Incomplete accounts of Srebrenica incidents'), *NRC-Handelsblad*, 14/08/98.

⁵⁹⁰ Interview B. Rave, 13/12/00.

⁵⁹¹ Army medic Guido den Hertog, quoted by Robert Block, 'They were led away and they were all killed', *The Independent*, 21/09/95.

first to be allowed to do so, were debriefed following their arrival in Zagreb and already then told the team of psychologists as well as general Couzy who was also present about the stories regarding the possibility of people being hit by the Dutchbat trucks.⁵⁹²

Later suggestions of Dutchbat personnel deliberately keeping quiet about this subject were incorrect. The stories became public knowledge very quickly. On July 22, emotional Dutchbat soldiers in Zagreb openly talked to journalists about the events. A journalist of *Het Parool* (Dutch daily newspaper), for instance, recorded the experiences of corporal D. Pijfers with a truck full of refugees on the journey to Potocari: 'Perhaps there were 80 people on the truck, you just don't believe it when you see that truck. They were hanging from it, they were on it, under it. Two small boys were lying on the batteries. There were people who got under the wheels, but I couldn't stop, I had to keep going'.⁵⁹³

The really major publicity on this subject came a month and a half later. Appearing on the television programme *Zembla* on 6 September 1995, Sergeant W. Reussing said: 'we have made it clear in Zagreb, in writing, that people fell under the wheels of our truck and that we simply ran over them and killed them'. Reussing, whose willingness to speak in all candour cannot be faulted, also said in the same *Zembla* programme that as far as he was concerned 'everything can be out in the open'.⁵⁹⁴ However, *Zembla* producer R. van den Hout said the Ministry of Defence had known about this for nearly two months but did not wish to comment as long as its own major debriefing investigation was still in progress.

Van den Hout's claim that the Ministry of Defence kept quiet about the incident was incorrect. Possibly based on statements similar to those of Pijfers, Minister Voorhoeve also touched on this theme in a letter that he wrote to Parliament on August 3. In this letter, he told Parliament that during the evacuation of Srebrenica, refugees had perhaps fallen off the trucks and had ended up under (the wheels of) the vehicles.⁵⁹⁵

The debriefing report of the autumn of 1995 provided no definite answer to this question. The debriefers left open the possibility of people - either still alive or already dead - getting run over by the Dutchbat vehicles. For instance, soldier W.F. van den Dungen who on the afternoon of July 11 helped to provide shelter to refugees at the petrol station on the road between Srebrenica and Potocari, said that he saw two bodies of people who showed signs of having been run over by four-tonne trucks. Also, looking down the road from where he was stationed, he saw more bodies on the road itself as well as beside it. He could not make out whether they were actually dead, or people who had been temporarily knocked out because of sheer exhaustion - as in fact can be concluded from other statements as well. However, his superior did not give him permission to investigate.⁵⁹⁶

When they were asked about this, many Dutchbat soldiers, especially those who were among the last to cover the route on July 11, later declared they had not seen any dead bodies lying on or beside the road.

Sergeant Major Rave later told military police that at the Potocari compound he had heard from his colleague Dijkema about a certain soldier having the impression that he had perhaps run over people. However, Rave had immediately dismissed that as being unlikely. He himself had left Srebrenica in his Mercedes late in the afternoon of the same day and he had not seen any dead or wounded either on or beside the road. At the advice of Dijkema, Rave had subsequently discussed the matter with the driver concerned, who told Rave that he had not actually *seen* people being run over, but did have a strong impression that this had happened. Rave's reassuring reaction that it seemed

⁵⁹² The story about people possibly being run over came from colonel G. Kremer, MD. Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01. The debriefings in Zagreb and Couzy's role in them is discussed in detail elsewhere.

⁵⁹³ "Ik zag zo tien mensen neervallen.", *Het Parool*, 24/07/95.

⁵⁹⁴ 'Dutchbat reed moslims dood tijdens evaluatie' ('Dutchbat ran over and killed Muslims during evacuation'), *Haagsche Courant*, 07/09/95.

⁵⁹⁵ Reported in: 'Onvolledige weergave incidenten Srebrenica' ('Incomplete accounts of Srebrenica incidents'), *NRC-Handelsblad*, 14/08/98.

⁵⁹⁶ Debriefing statement W.F.W. van den Dungen, 18/09/95.

highly unlikely because he himself had taken the same road after the four-tonne trucks had gone ahead of him and had not seen any corpses or injured people, did not really lead to relief, but more to a sort of resignation.⁵⁹⁷

Rave's findings were the same as those of Lieutenant Colonel P. Sanders, the battalion's psychologist. Because of the standard psychological debriefing that took place at the end of every mission, he had temporarily moved to the compound in Srebrenica just before the assault began. When captain Groen ordered the evacuation of the compound on July 11, he (Sanders) had hitched a ride on an APC for about 100 metres, until he saw an exhausted old woman. Because they didn't succeed in lifting her onto the APC, he decided to join the refugees on the road and walk with them. Sanders was later also interviewed as part of the military police investigation and was one of the last people to walk the entire length of the road, together with soldiers of the recovery team. They did not come across any people who had been run over, nor did they see blood on the road. They did find exhausted people sitting beside the road here and there that they had to spur on to keep moving: 'We'd tell them, come on, the Serbs are coming!'⁵⁹⁸

The findings of Sanders and those of other Dutchbat soldiers were confirmed to the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (NIOD) by a member of a VRS reconnaissance unit that had advanced along the same road from the south. He, too, had not seen any corpses exhibiting signs of having been run over, nor had he heard anything about it from colleagues who had covered the same road.⁵⁹⁹ Dutchbat personnel, UNMO Kingori and Christina Schmitz, coordinator of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, who drove back to Srebrenica a few days later to pick up people who had stayed behind, have never reported seeing such bodies, either.

The Military Police eventually dropped its investigation because it was impossible to form a clear picture.⁶⁰⁰ The Public Prosecutor's Office had investigated nine cases where people had possibly been run over. In eight of these, statements by witnesses provided no confirmation. In one case, three witnesses declared that an APC had run over the legs of an ABiH soldier who had been resting beside the road, together with a group of other people, just after a bend in the road.⁶⁰¹

In media reports following the broadcast with Reussing in 1995, the question of refugees having been run over by Dutchbat vehicles provided further ammunition for the growing chorus of criticism and denigration of the battalion: 'A number of Dutchbat soldiers hasn't been nearly so heroic in Srebrenica as is generally assumed'.⁶⁰² These sort of reports created shock waves in the media and among politicians because in assessing Dutchbat they measured these events by the criterion of 'heroism' that had dominated the discussion until then. At least with hindsight that was misplaced because this news had already been in the papers on July 24, without causing any shock. Nor did it prevent people hearing the same kind of stories in 1998, when the issue was back in the limelight, claiming Dutchbat soldiers had behaved in a very reprehensible manner when they escorted the refugees. Added to that was the suggestion that they had deliberately kept quiet about it all.

Only one journalist, in this case René van der Lee of the *Brabants Dagblad*, commented in 1998 that a number of stories about people getting run over had 'already been told three years earlier'. He quoted his own newspaper that on 1 September 1995 had published an interview with Dutchbat soldier M. Koper: 'The truck was jam-packed with people. Refugees crammed the road, in front of us and beside us. Then, we had to stop. Someone said: someone is lying on the road in front of us. I got out to have a look. The person who was lying there was dead. We couldn't manoeuvre around him. So we just

⁵⁹⁷ OM-Arnhem, Kmar Sebra-team, P. 584.F003/1998. Report of interview of witness E.A. Rave on 08/12/98. Incidentally, Rave also said that he had not talked about this incident in Assen.

⁵⁹⁸ Interview P.F. Sanders, 12/12/00 and 13/12/00.

⁵⁹⁹ Interview Mile Stanojevic, 02/11/99.

⁶⁰⁰ 'No (convincing) evidence was found for any of these alleged incidents'. See: Stam report, OM Arnhem, KMar Sebra-Team, nr. 586/1998, file 2, 'Other incidents involving people being run over', p. 5 e.v.

⁶⁰¹ Ditto; Media reports Public Prosecutor's Office Arnhem district, 24/03 and 21/12/99.

⁶⁰² 'Dutchbat reed moslims dood tijdens evaluatie', *Haagsche Courant*, 07/09/95.

ran over him.⁶⁰³ A week later, the day after the Zembra broadcast on 7 September 1995 with Reussing, the *Brabants Dagblad* again raised the issue. The paper anonymously quoted two Dutchbat members who feared to have run over people: 'It was chaos. There were huge swarms of people, and the vehicles were going at full speed. But that doesn't make us murderers'.⁶⁰⁴

The complaint by these soldiers is understandable. The Dutch soldiers on the trucks and in the APCs on the road from Srebrenica to Potocari made their observations under severe stress and it is natural that they were sometimes in an emotional state. It is not for nothing that some of them were prepared to make their stories public. So it is entirely possible that, as a result, conjecture and assumptions sometimes took on the mantle of firm conclusions. It also looks like some comparable cases of possible knock-downs on the road between Srebrenica and Potocari escaped the attention of investigators. But even if there were accidents, there is no suggestion that they occurred intentionally. More than anything, the incidents concerned illustrate the impossible situation that the Dutchbat soldiers found themselves in, trying to salvage whatever they could. That had nothing to do with cowardice. Many soldiers made huge efforts to take refugees to safety. Some of them did so because they sympathised with the refugees' plight, others simply because they saw it as their job and their duty. Despite the many criticisms that Dutchbat has also had from former refugees, there are also others among them who have expressed their high regard for the assistance they received during the flight to Potocari.⁶⁰⁵

6. Reception in Potocari

The first refugees to arrive at the bus terminal were met by Lieutenant Koster and his men, who had positioned themselves there at around two in the afternoon. They were accompanied by an interpreter. Initially the first small groups trickling in were kept in the depot area. As mentioned earlier, Rave linked this to a threat that the compound would be shelled, possibly relating to a new message from the VRS in the person of 'Jovo', the guard of Yellow Bridge, to say that the refugees were not allowed to enter the compound in Potocari.⁶⁰⁶ The origin (sender) of this message was not clear to the person who kept the Ops Room log book, justifying the assumption that once again the VRS had broken into the battalion's network via one of the stolen APCs. It is, however, likely that Rave is talking about the VRS ultimatum that arrived at 15.50 hours in response to the air strike. The ultimatum not only threatened that the Dutch hostages would be killed, but also that the VRS would employ its entire arsenal of weaponry against the compound in Potocari and the town of Srebrenica.⁶⁰⁷ As mentioned before, the first refugees - those who came in with the four-tonne trucks - had according to major Otter already arrived and in that respect the die had been cast already. Probably there was a temporary delay during which time they were looking to see how things would develop at the bus terminal.

To do this, Koster was initially ordered to produce an estimate of the number of refugees there. In the beginning this was fairly simple because there weren't very many people yet, but it became difficult when the large crowds approached the depot. Koster:

'It's not difficult to work out whether there are 100 or 1000 people. But it gets much more difficult to say whether you're looking at 1000 or 5000. Based on this, I think they evaluated the situation: isn't the pressure getting too great? I

⁶⁰³ René van der Lee, 'Recycling van een gruwelverhaal' ('Recycling a horror story'), *Brabants Dagblad*, 15/08/98. Judging by the report on the KMAR investigations into knockdowns on the road, Koper was not heard. KMAR Sebra Team, no. 586/1998, file 2, 'Other incidents involving people being run over'.

⁶⁰⁴ René van der Lee, 'Recycling van een gruwelverhaal', *Brabants Dagblad*, 15/08/98.

⁶⁰⁵ This impression was formed during the many contacts that NIOD investigators have had with former residents of the enclave.

⁶⁰⁶ Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 11/07/95, entry 14.26.

⁶⁰⁷ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Letter TK95118 of commander Dutchbat, 17 July 1995, 'short summary of the events of the past week'.

myself told them a number of times: “Listen! I really can’t keep them here much longer!”⁶⁰⁸

When eventually the battalion commanders gave their permission, people were sent on in small orderly groups of about 20 persons via the covered route, with Dutchbat personnel showing the way.

Even before that time, when the main body of refugees first appeared, Koster had begun to get worried. He was stationed with only a small group of soldiers at the point where the covered route to the compound veered away from the main road and therefore he asked for reinforcements to prevent people from simply keeping to the main road and walk on in the direction of Bratunac. In fact, some of the refugees said that’s what they wanted to do anyway. Koster:

‘They often said: ‘Are we going to Bratunac?’ They would also talk about towns and cities whose names I didn’t know and can’t even repeat now. Then I would say: ‘I am sorry. I don’t know. But I wouldn’t do that just now, it’s too dangerous.’ Then they would turn around and walk away again.’⁶⁰⁹

Why people wanted to go to Bratunac was a mystery to Koster. He was not aware that just past 14.30 hours there had been another message from ‘Jovo’, who promised the people of Srebrenica that they could leave the enclave, ‘safety guaranteed’. People could go to ‘Tuzla or anywhere else’.⁶¹⁰ The incongruence between that statement and the rather unconcerned remarks that Koster got from the refugees via his interpreter are difficult to explain, but did fit in with the general pattern of the rumour mill that was operating among the local population.⁶¹¹

There were more surprises in store for Koster. He sometimes saw heartbreaking scenes of armed fighters saying goodbye to their families before they walked off in a westerly direction, into the hills. The usually older men who stayed behind had almost no weapons. It was probably known that soldiers would not be admitted, although the several pistols were later found in the toilets at the compound in Potocari. Some handed their weapons in to Dutchbat soldiers. One time, a group of five or six ‘really old men’ approached Koster. One of them spoke a little German and for the umpteenth time he was asked what was going to happen. Koster:

‘I said: “No idea. But whatever happens, we are going to protect you.” And he said: “If something happens, you will see me standing over there! But for now, here is a hand grenade for you. Then you can have a go at them with this!” The pin was still in it.’⁶¹²

Just past 16:00 hours things began to accelerate. At 16.10 hours, the Ops Room noted that about 1000 refugees and 25 injured people had been admitted to the compound and that about 7000 refugees were concentrated at the bus terminal. Ten minutes later, the log records that Srebrenica was in the hands of the VRS and there is a revised refugee count of 4000 people at the compound and 16,000 to 20,000 in the bus terminal area and the adjacent factories. At 16.30 hours, Koster called in an army engineer to open the gates of one of the factory sites and give the refugees access to the complex.⁶¹³ The improvised gate at the Potocari compound had been closed by then. Rave, who had come in from

⁶⁰⁸ Interview E. Koster, 06/10/99.

⁶⁰⁹ Interview E. Koster, 06/10/99.

⁶¹⁰ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 11 July 1995, entry 14.35.

⁶¹¹ Various statements show that some people had portable radios with them, as a result of which they knew what was happening outside the enclave. It could not be determined whether this also applied in this specific case.

⁶¹² Interview E. Koster, 06/10/99.

⁶¹³ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 11/07/95, entries 16.10; 16.20 en 16.30.

Srebrenica, also helped to stop the stream of refugees and to open the gates and break down doors at other factories near the compound.⁶¹⁴

Although some refugees sought shelter in nearby houses on the slopes behind the factories, most of them overran the factory sites, looking for the best spots. The bus terminal and the bus wrecks on the site had been occupied by them.

The factory areas were on either side of the main road. Some of the refugees who belonged to the small group of original Srebrenica inhabitants had worked here before the war. The *Energoinvest* factory was on the west side of the road, with the large zinc factory standing north of there. The bus terminal was opposite the zinc factory, on the east side of the road. All buildings almost directly backed onto forests and fields, where later bodies would be found - about which there will be more later in this chapter. The 'Potocari' map (section 15) shows the area surrounding the compound in Potocari.

After strips of farm fields and some scattered individual houses here and there, there were some other buildings north of this conglomeration of factory buildings. The largest complex, separated from the bus terminal by a forested strip of land, almost directly bordered the Dutchbat compound. They included the 'Feros Building', an office building, and the so-called 'Blue Factory'.

No refugees were housed in these buildings. During the trial against Krstic at the Tribunal, there was speculation about the question why the 'Blue Factory' had not accommodated any refugees. The theory that was advanced was that after the VRS moved in on July 12, the building was put to use as the VRS headquarters and that the refugees that had been in the building before were chased away.⁶¹⁵ The former is not impossible, but Dutchbat never regarded the factory as an option for housing refugees. Long before, an inspection of the 'Blue Factory', an old factory that used to produce brake shoes, had uncovered large quantities of loose asbestos, mountains of which were lying about in the corners of the sheds.⁶¹⁶ Moreover, it would have stretched the mini Safe Area to such an extent that it would have become impossible to keep proper control over the area with the limited resources at Dutchbat's disposal. It did, however, lead to a situation whereby at a distance of about 200 metres from the compound there was a sort of island full of refugees.

Access to this 'island' was barred on the south side by a few APCs of Bravo Company. Because at that time there was no imminent threat of VRS troops advancing from the north, the access road from Bratunac was guarded with a few APCs by Koster and his men of C Company, still at the location where the covered escape route branched off the main road at the bus depot. Soldiers were also posted at a few other locations around the perimeter of the 'island'. In the course of the evening, a casualty centre was set up at the bus depot and this was manned on a rotation basis by medical personnel of Dutchbat. Before that, any injured people that had been found had been transferred to the Potocari compound that was, by now, inaccessible to the other refugees.

Surprisingly, dealing with the refugees there had gone reasonably well in the beginning, but later, when numbers began to grow and panic struck among people who feared they would have to stay outside, the situation became increasingly chaotic. There were people among the refugees that streamed into the compound who really were in a blind panic. One desperate mother pushed her baby into the arms of a soldier standing at the gate, and then disappeared into the crowds again.⁶¹⁷ Alerted by a *Médecins Sans Frontières* midwife, another soldier found a stillborn baby in a garbage bin - it was buried in the compound.⁶¹⁸ Older people as well as children suffered in the stifling heat of more than 40 degrees Celsius and the Dutchbat soldiers did all they could to improve the situation. There was just one tap with running water and only one water purification device. The battalion also had only one water pump left to pump water out of the creek into a water truck. In the Netherlands, major Otter had sometimes seen firemen keeping large numbers of people at major outdoor events cool by spraying them with

⁶¹⁴ Notebook B. Rave. Loaned to NIOD for its perusal.

⁶¹⁵ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony J.-R. Ruez, 13/03/00.

⁶¹⁶ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁶¹⁷ Debriefing statement R.G.D. Zomer, 07/09/95.

⁶¹⁸ Debriefing statement R.H.B. Raghabir, 15/09/95.

water. He told the soldiers operating the water truck to do the same with the refugees. However, these didn't understand the good intentions at all and in fact were less than grateful for the efforts of the Dutch.⁶¹⁹

Otter then proposed to give at least pregnant women and small children in diapers the chance to take a shower. Otter:

'At one stage, I also went to talk to *Médecins Sans Frontières* about the idea to at least give several hundreds of people who were in a really bad way to have a wash. That Christina [Schmitz] of *Médecins Sans Frontières* said: 'That simply cannot be done.' And the interpreters said: 'How are we going to tell them about that? There are 5000 people in there. Do we have to stand there shouting: all women and children can take a shower? That's not going to work.' And the doctors also said: 'After that, you may as well throw the showers away altogether because the damn things will then be full of all sorts of diseases and other miseries. Give it up! For the time being, just don't do it.' We then collected all the towels that we could find and soaked them in water. We loaded them onto a cart that we wheeled it into the hall. I think all towels were gone in 10 minutes.'⁶²⁰

The plan Otter drew up to help the refugees involved all sorts of other measures. He organised a sick bay, had soldiers rig emergency lights, and mobile toilets, 'Dixis', were placed in various locations. Even so, it took quite some time before the refugees had calmed down somewhat.

7. Numbers of refugees

Making an estimate of the number of refugees in and around the compound was not an easy task. Counts by those who tried to arrive at a number differed widely and were sometimes adjusted. On July 12, Karremans reported to his superiors that there were no more than 17,500 refugees.⁶²¹ *Médecins Sans Frontières* and UNMO, however, were at that moment already working on the assumption that there were about 30,000 people around the compound.⁶²² In that same report by Karremans, he initially estimated the number of people in the compound at 2750. Later the battalion command adjusted that estimate to the much higher figure of 4000-5000 people. This is supposed to have been the result of an estimate that was carried out only on July 13 by representatives of the refugees, at Franken's request. The reason for this request was that he wanted a list of all able-bodied men in the compound.⁶²³ Counts taken at the exit of the compound when the refugees left on July 13 arrived at 5100 and 5200 respectively.⁶²⁴ Why there was such an important difference between the first and the last figures remained a mystery.

Just as important as the confusion about the total number was the erroneous impression (as would be shown later) that there were almost no able-bodied men among the thousands of refugees. Without going into the complicated issue of numbers here, we can assume that there were probably

⁶¹⁹ Outrage was expressed to NIOD investigators in various discussions with people who had been in Potocari.

⁶²⁰ Interview J. Otter, 26/05/99.

⁶²¹ SMG, 1004. CO Dutchbat to Janvier, TK95114, 12/07/95.

⁶²² Of these, 10,000 were in the compound and 20,000 outside. Referring to MSF, quoted as a source in: UNGE, ICFY, Box, 234/6/15. Telegram Akashi to Annan, Z-1152, 12/07/95.

⁶²³ 'srebrenica lijst 242' ('srebrenica list 242'), Letter Hasan Nuhanovic to Mient-Jan Faber, part 2, in: *Trouw*, 13/07/99.

⁶²⁴ SMG/Debrief. *Account of the facts*, pp. 242, 252. There were lower counts as well, which possibly relate to the times when counts began or can be explained by mistakes in writing statements down. For instance, psychologist P. Sanders said that he arrived at the figure of 2000 when he counted people at the gate (Debriefing statement P. Sanders, Assen, 13/09/95). Another soldier had 3200-3500. SMG/Debrief. *Factual Account*, p. 224.

about 2000 men in Potocari, three-quarters of whom were of able-bodied age (16-60).⁶²⁵ Of those, it later turned out that about 300 were among the refugees in the Potocari compound. The ‘dilution’ of these numbers within the total number of refugees made them invisible as a group for a long time. Sergeant J. Zwiens of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, for instance, who arrived at the enclave together with his colleague M. Moek on July 4, later declared that ‘the only thing’ that had particularly struck him at the time was that among the refugees that he saw in the compound there were ‘only women, young children to about 14-15 years of age, and old men’.⁶²⁶ That men in the ‘able-bodied’ category perhaps deliberately kept out of sight for fear of reprisals can explain why Dutchbat personnel both in the compound and outside had the distinct impression that the majority of men that they saw were of old age – an impression that turned out to be incorrect.

8. The meetings of Mladic and Karremans: introduction

The picture of the visibly timid Lieutenant Colonel Karremans and the conqueror of Srebrenica, General Ratko Mladic, glass in hand for a toast, has become a symbol of the humiliation of Karremans, Dutchbat and the United Nations. On a personal level, it would be Dutchbat’s Commander, in particular, who would suffer the effects of the power of that picture. Almost any subsequent media mention of Dutchbat’s performance and that of Karremans in particular would be accompanied by this ignominious image, as a photograph or short video fragment. To some sections of the media, Karremans became a ‘synonym for cowardice’.⁶²⁷ Only when the ‘Mladic tapes’ - as they were soon called - were shown to the general public for the first time in 1999, did it become possible to form a better picture of how the negotiations went. It was the first time that the ‘Mladic treatment’ that a select number of *peacekeepers*, diplomats and journalists had already experienced before was given a complete - and unpleasant - face. Instead of the short fragment that had begun to dominate the picture in people’s minds, the longer fragments showed proceedings during a number of negotiations where the Bosnian Serb general took on the role of director and producer. These images were unearthed by the British producers of the documentary film ‘A cry from the grave’ and were later also acquired by the Dutch current affairs programme Nova. They made it possible to arrive at a more accurate reconstruction of the decisions that sealed the fate of the Srebrenica enclave. In addition to the images, transcripts were now available of the texts of the discussions that took place. Up until this moment one had to rely on verbal accounts of some of the participants, particularly that of Karremans himself.

No matter how illuminating they were, even the more comprehensive video images do not in themselves tell the whole story. Literally not because the three meetings that were recorded do not appear to have been filmed in their entirety and, on top of that, were edited for the purpose of public screening.⁶²⁸ Therefore, it remains necessary to turn to other sources to reconstruct the discussions that took place at Hotel Fontana in Bratunac on 11 and 12 July 1995. However, in regards to all events that took place in Srebrenica and Potocari in July 1995, including these, we need to remember that all sources have to be treated with circumspection. All written statements that left the enclave were based on observations and impressions arrived at in a situation where freedom of movement was often

⁶²⁵ ‘The number of missing persons from Potocari, Srebrenica, 11 – 13 July 1995’, internally produced extrapolation by staff of the Prosecutor of the ICTY for the trial of Krstic, made available to the NIOD. The extrapolation is based on information from: Helge Brunborg and Henrik Urdal, *Report on the number of missing and dead from Srebrenica*, 12/02/00. ICTY Krstic (IT-98-33-T), OTP Ex. 276.

⁶²⁶ OM Arnhem, KMar Sebra-Team, P 506 (1998), file 1 OP-Mike. Report of interview witness J. Zwiens, Assen, 01/09/98.

⁶²⁷ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, ‘Reise rückwärts ohne Ziel’, 10/07/00.

⁶²⁸ NOVA published transcripts of broadcasts on 27 November 1999 of the ‘Mladic tapes’ on its internet site at the time. In addition, the transcripts were used as evidence in the Tribunal proceedings against general Krstic (ICTY, IT-98-33-T, OTP 39a). However, the set of NOVA transcripts that, as a whole, are less complete than those of the Tribunal, strangely enough include important paragraphs that are missing from the Tribunal transcripts. In particular, this involves parts of the conversation that Karremans had with Mladic about how the evacuation would be carried out. Even stranger is the fact that these gaps are not explained; in the Tribunal version the text concerned simply runs on without interruption.

limited and stress was a major factor. These limitations make it more difficult to answer the questions around the performance of Dutchbat in the enclave, such as those relating to Dutchbat personnel observing and reporting war crimes.

Other limitations also play a role. In view of the speed of the developments that took place, Karremans as well as various contact persons outside the enclave spent a lot of time on the telephone. Those involved made, often very short, notes of some of these telephone conversations, but often they didn't do so at all. Later that would lead to major difficulties in trying to reconstruct important decisions because those involved remembered different versions of the events. Misunderstandings were possible as a result of the stress of the moment, but also because of the limitations inherent in an unsecured connection combined with the near-certainty that the VRS was monitoring Dutchbat communications.

An extra complication arose only afterwards when 'srebrenica' increasingly took on the characteristics of a game of 'pass the buck' in the efforts to try to establish who had been responsible for what decision. Without wishing to infer that the urge for self-preservation or the salvaging of reputations led to conscious attempts to twist the facts, we cannot rule out the possibility that psychological mechanisms that play a role in people's memories had an effect on how they presented their accounts later.

Statements that were made about the same subject over a period of years sometimes show remarkable differences. In a number of cases we can probably trace these back to those psychological mechanisms. Chronologies shift and telescope and get re-arranged into a story that retains logical coherence, but doesn't necessarily continue to correspond with the reality as reconstructed by the investigators. As time goes by, people remember fewer and fewer details and as a result, they display the very human tendency to try and fill in the gaps in their memory in other ways. In this context, hearsay or factual knowledge obtained at a later date is then treated as a personal memory. Some people who kept diaries also have that tendency, in an urge to answer their own questions. They filled in the blanks afterwards, as it were, inadvertently reducing the value of their work as a reliable historical source.⁶²⁹

Apart from these more or less 'normal' phenomena, we have the problem of witness statements made by people who at the time of their original observations were undergoing traumatising events or even a succession of a number of shocking experiences in a short time. However, just as difficult in a reconstruction is the evaluation of memories presented in later statements that for the person concerned are more favourable than earlier statements. Objectively, these reduce their own responsibility and potentially make someone else responsible, without it being possible to say whether the person concerned is conscious of doing it. For that reason, the investigator can often do no more than note the phenomenon and weigh up the consequences. It also means that in some cases, it is impossible to provide the definitive 'last word' and only the discrepancy as such can be highlighted, where, if possible, marginal comments can be placed on the basis of scarce indications from other sources.

9. The events leading to the first meeting of Karremans and Mladic

The imminent fall of the Srebrenica enclave also led to feverish activity in Sarajevo. Chapter 9 of Part III deals with General Nicolai's vain attempts to reach Mladic. He did not get any further than a fruitless exchange with VRS General Gvero, who laid all blame for the events squarely at the feet of the UN. The VRS had no intentions whatever to halt the assault and Gvero had held Nicolai personally responsible if the air strikes were not called off. He made it look as though the fate of Dutchbat and the local population was at that moment in the hands of the Dutch general.

⁶²⁹ This problem occurs especially in the notes that are described as 'the diary of Brantz'. The author, colonel Ch. Brantz, constantly kept working on his notes and adding comments to them, which sometimes makes it difficult to establish what is authentic and what was added later. To a lesser extent, that also applies to the diary notes of former Defence Minister J.J.C. Voorhoeve.

After the definite cancellation of air support and the subsequent fall of the Srebrenica Safe Area, all attention was focused on the future of the local population and the Dutch peacekeepers. For a short time - priorities would change soon – the Dutch Government, particularly Minister Voorhoeve, was especially worried about the latter.

About 17.30 hours on July 11, the Minister talked to Nicolai, when the possibilities of evacuating Dutchbat, if necessary with force, were discussed for the first time. Soon after, De Ruiter took notes of a meeting with acting UNPROFOR Commander Gobillard where General Nicolai reported on discussions between Minister Voorhoeve and Akashi about a plan for the withdrawal of the battalion and in that context the – obvious problems of - ‘civilians getting mixed up with Dutchbat’.⁶³⁰

The term ‘evacuation’ in the discussions between Nicolai and Voorhoeve didn’t just pop out of thin air, because earlier that day the VRS had already made such an offer to Karremans, who had rejected it.⁶³¹ It was more or less a repeat of an offer on the evening of July 10, when the word was that between the morning of July 11 and 06.00 hours in the morning of July 13, all Muslims could report to the Yellow Bridge to say where they wanted to go, provided they surrendered their weapons.⁶³² So it was pretty evident in what direction the situation was developing. In a later comment on the debriefing report, Voorhoeve would make it clear that he had not wished to create the impression that he was only concerned with the fate of Dutchbat.⁶³³

About the same time there was a discussion between Force Commander Janvier and Nicolai’s superior, General Gobillard, who was UNPROFOR Commander in the absence of Smith. Janvier had received a lightning visit that day from Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen and acting Commander Van Baal, who had dashed to Zagreb to take stock of the situation. Van den Breemen, who on Voorhoeve’s orders made Dutchbat’s safety his main priority, discussed the options that the battalion had. Chapter 9 of Part III has shown that Van den Breemen and Van Baal were quickly convinced by Janvier that evacuating Dutchbat over land, using force, was impossible, and that a secret departure was just as unworkable. According to the latest reports, there were an estimated 27,000 refugees in and around Potocari who would make that impossible.

The group agreed that the only realistic possibility was to negotiate about the withdrawal of Dutchbat, with weapons and equipment, either together with the refugees, or separately. Janvier agreed with this, too. It was ‘unthinkable’ to leave the refugees behind without protection, it was agreed. Janvier said he expected evacuation to take time and he announced that a UNHCR representative would go to Potocari the following day, although that would never happen. Janvier turned out to be very conscious of ‘the fact that the refugees can end up becoming a real threat to Dutchbat, certainly if humanitarian aid fails to eventuate’.⁶³⁴

The subsequent deliberations with Gobillard at UNPROFOR in Sarajevo outlined the tasks that the Dutchbat commander would have to be given. Nicolai was given the job of verbally informing Karremans, ahead of the confirmation in writing by fax. According to Karremans, who based his recollections on the notebooks that in the following years would continue to be his main point of reference in all discussions about his performance, Nicolai telephoned him at 17.55 hours on July 11. Before that, he had already made several fruitless attempts himself to contact the higher echelons.⁶³⁵ However, both Nicolai and his assistant, Major De Ruiter, remember there having been earlier contacts between Karremans and Nicolai, probably soon after the enclave had fallen. De Ruiter says that

⁶³⁰ Quotes from notes of A. de Ruiter, loaned to the NIOD for its perusal; interview A.de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

⁶³¹ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNMO daily sitrep 110000-112000 July 95, dtg 111210B; SMG, 1004. The Monthly register of the Ops Room Dutchbat reported at 12.08 pm on that day that the VRS had offered to meet Dutchbat (representatives) in Bratunac.

⁶³² Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 188.

⁶³³ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99.

⁶³⁴ SMG, 1004/85. Short report of meeting of the CDS and PBLs bi FC UNPF (also present: COS UNPF) 11.07.95’.

⁶³⁵ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 197.

Karremans telephoned during a ‘panic phase’ and is supposed to have said he wanted to surrender along with the battalion. De Ruiter claims that before he put Karremans through to Nicolai, he ‘rather did his nut’ to make it clear to him in no uncertain terms that surrendering was out of the question.⁶³⁶ In a later reconstruction, Nicolai also referred to this episode early on the evening of July 11. However, when we read Nicolai’s reconstruction very carefully, a problem with the chronology becomes apparent. According to Nicolai, Karremans’ motive for wanting to surrender was that his entire compound in Potocari was ‘completely encircled’.⁶³⁷ But this situation did not develop until July 12. Moreover, Nicolai’s account contains elements of the telephone conversation he had with Karremans after the latter’s first meeting with Mladic on the night of July 11.

The combination of these ambiguities provides the impression that either Nicolai has possibly mixed up two separate conversations, or there was in fact just one conversation that afternoon, as Karremans claims. What’s more, he remembers from that afternoon conversation that there were no ‘comforting, encouraging or comradely words’.⁶³⁸ A remark by Karremans to Mladic shows that in that telephone conversation, Nicolai had also mentioned the request for a departure under safe conduct for the civilian population, the battalion, *Médecins Sans Frontières* and other NGOs. Karremans said that in this, the Chief of Defence Staff had acted on instructions from Janvier as well as ‘the civilian authorities’.⁶³⁹ In view of the fact that the Bosnian authorities were opposed to evacuation, it is likely that this referred to the contacts between Nicolai and Voorhoeve.

Gobillard’s instructions in the fax that arrived in Potocari at 18.45 hours strangely omitted the one about asking for a safe conduct. It also confirmed the impression that Karremans had already formed as a result of his conversation with Nicolai. That he was given the order to start negotiations with local VRS commanders about an immediate ceasefire stood to reason. The second point, b, said that he was to concentrate all his units, including those of the Ops at ‘camp Potocari’, into one area – whether this meant the area of the compound was not clear – and that he also had to take ‘all reasonable measures’ to protect the ‘refugees and the civilians’. Furthermore, he was to provide medical assistance and assist local medical authorities. The battalion also had to get itself organised to be able to receive all sorts aid supplies and coordinate their distribution. The penultimate guideline, d, ordered him to use ‘all means possible to defend your forces and installation’ against an attack. Karremans later thought he detected a ‘touch of cynical humour’ in the added comment: ‘This is to include the use of Close Air Support if necessary’.⁶⁴⁰

In the margin of the fax, which he would send on again later, Karremans wrote at points b and d ‘not possible’. The intimidating shell hits around the Potocari compound earlier that afternoon made it clear that carrying out such an order would not be feasible. The masses of refugees and the Dutchbat soldiers who were concentrated in and around the compound, not to mention the hostages in VRS hands, were too big a target. ‘Battle-captain’ Franken, who was responsible for Dutchbat’s operations, later told the Tribunal (and the NIOD) that he had briefly considered making a stand at Potocari, but had almost immediately rejected the notion again. The reasons he advanced for this decision were that he had only 150 soldiers to fight with – and the sort of condition some of these were in after five exhausting days of war he didn’t even say – who had only 16% of the ammunition they would need, even less for some of the weapon systems like anti-tank weapons and mortars. On top of that, Dutchbat was right in the middle of thousands of civilians. Judging by the artillery bombardments of Srebrenica and the road to Potocari, Franken felt sure the VRS would not have any qualms about using the same means against the local population again. According to information available to Dutchbat at the time, the VRS had 35 heavy-calibre guns as well as Multiple Rocket Launch Systems and tanks. ‘so

⁶³⁶ Interview A. de Ruiter, 29/06/00. This message is also supposed to have been passed on to the Netherlands.

⁶³⁷ CRST. C.H. Nicolai to DCBC and Army Crisis Staff/SCO, ‘Last days Dutchbat Srebrenica’, 16/08/95.

⁶³⁸ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 198. The fax concerned has been included in this book as Appendix 34, p. 340.

⁶³⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), OTP Ex. 39a. Transcript meeting Mladic-Karremans.

⁶⁴⁰ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 198.

they didn't have to fight us, they could simply withdraw and shoot us to pieces without us being able to do anything about it', Deputy Battalion Commander Franken said.⁶⁴¹

As if to illustrate Franken's point, shots from a tank gun rang out just when Karremans was on the phone to Brantz in Tuzla to discuss the instructions with him. Karremans is supposed to have said: 'Oh, they're trying to scare us again'.⁶⁴² Brantz later had some hard words to say about the ignorance of 'sarajevo' that failed to understand who was really calling the shots in the enclave.⁶⁴³ He implied that he shared Karremans' analysis, but this is only partially true. Conspicuous in the comments that Brantz ordered to be faxed to the UNPROFOR headquarters just before midnight (in other words, after the meetings that Karremans was going to have with Mladic), was that he at that stage still recommended 'CAS and air strike' as the only way of protecting Dutchbat and the local population. That had to be done 'in a way aimed at destroying all the heavy weapons which can possibly be used against the Dutchbat and civil population, otherwise retaliatory fire will be directed against the Potocari Camp which shall have grave consequences'.⁶⁴⁴ Franken later declared that he had never taken this option - which, incidentally, looked like a repeat of what Karremans had repeatedly and fruitlessly asked for before July 11 - seriously after the failure of the air support on July 11.⁶⁴⁵

About 19.00 hours, just after talking to Brantz and with the same fear about the battalion's vulnerability in the back of his mind, Karremans asked the VRS for a meeting. This turned out to be impossible because the responsible commander had not arrived yet. But he did get the message that the local ABiH commander was also welcome to attend.⁶⁴⁶

Soon after that, he received the message that Karremans and his liaison officers had to go to Bratunac. The request was conveyed by the Bosnian Serb UNMO interpreter Petar Usumlic, a brother-in-law of major Nikolic. He went to the OP-P and rang the Dutchbat Commander from there via the landline.⁶⁴⁷ Karremans told Brantz as well as Nicolai about the request and conferred with them one last time. 'He said: "I have to go in a minute. Do you still have any specific instructions?" So we talked about it again for a moment', Nicolai said later.⁶⁴⁸ It is not impossible that the agenda item about the evacuation, that as we mentioned earlier did not feature in Gobillard's fax, was raised by Nicolai only at this point. After this, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, major Boering and sergeant Rave left the compound at 18.55 hours, on their way to Bratunac.⁶⁴⁹

We can only guess at Karremans' state of mind. He himself would later say that he was 'completely exhausted' at the time.⁶⁵⁰ That's not surprising. Over the last few days, Karremans had made non-stop efforts - constantly on the phone and sending faxes - to keep his lines of communication with the outside world intact. During this time, he was constantly being badgered by Dutch (Government) agencies and departments who kept trying to get information directly from him without going through the formal channels and responsibilities. Brantz as well as Nicolai had urged The Hague to exercise restraint. 'I do know that I made a bad-tempered phone call to The Hague on July 11 to tell them those direct telephone calls to Srebrenica had to end immediately', Nicolai said later:

⁶⁴¹ ICTY (IT-98-33-T) Testimony R.A. Franken, 04/04/00.

⁶⁴² Interview Ch. Brantz, 11/06/99.

⁶⁴³ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Diary of Brantz (version May 1996) p. 103. Brantz notes 19.30 hours as the time when the discussion took place, but this was probably a second conversation, when Karremans confirmed that he could go to Bratunac. Karremans probably telephoned shortly after the fax of 18.45 hours was received because the Monthly register van de Ops Room has an entry from 18.50 hours that a tank at Yellow Bridge was firing in the direction of Budak.

⁶⁴⁴ DCBC, without number. Fax HQ SNE to HQ UNPROFOR, dtg 112359 B JUL 95, subject 'orders for defence of Dutchbat and protection of refugees- Srebrenica'.

⁶⁴⁵ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), Testimony R.A. Franken, 04/04/00.

⁶⁴⁶ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 11/07/95, entry 19.01.

⁶⁴⁷ Interview Petar Usumlic, 14/09/99.

⁶⁴⁸ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99.

⁶⁴⁹ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 11/07/95, entry 19.55

⁶⁵⁰ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans in: 'Reise rückwärts ohne Ziel', in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10/07/00.

“They asked for details that I couldn’t even know myself at that point. If this continues, the man (Karremans) cannot do his job any more. One moment he reports to Sector North East, only to find himself on the phone to me the next, which is already extra pressure. If he then also has to answer questions from Zagreb and The Hague, he still has to run a battalion. If he has to be on the phone all day to answer all sorts of difficult questions, he won’t be able to do the job he is there for. So I asked them to cease and desist! If there was something that they wanted to know, they should ask us instead! (...) The moment when I really did make a somewhat bad-tempered call to The Hague was when those people in The Hague started asking where the Forward Air Controllers were. It really is too ridiculous for words that they already want to know that kind of thing in The Hague. That’s when I told them: “Stop this! If you want to know something, ask us (in Sarajevo). We will try to answer those questions for you.”⁶⁵¹

Incidentally, having returned to Tuzla, it was Brigadier General Haukland’s turn to talk to Nicolai in the same vein on July 15: he responded to complaints from Brantz that Sarajevo regularly interrupted the normal chain of command by ringing the enclave directly.⁶⁵²

Quite apart from this mental and physical stress, Karremans had had to endure other problems. He had been firmly convinced that the air strikes that he hoped would save the day would in fact come and he had done his utmost to overcome the scepticism of the local authorities. The poor excuse for the real thing that finally, far too late, did take place must have filled him with shame. However, at the same time he also felt left in the lurch by the ABiH. In the six months that Dutchbat had been in the area, the ABiH had manifested itself in an increasingly open fashion, proudly showing off their new uniforms and weaponry to further cultivate their image of die-hard indomitability. Despite his annoyance about this macho display and the strict neutrality Dutchbat had to maintain, Karremans had proposed that if the worst came to the worst, they should defend the enclave together. Undoubtedly he was aware of the heroic stories, partially based on truth, about the courage of ABiH soldiers refusing to yield an inch. However, in his view they failed spectacularly to live up to their reputation. Not only did he feel that the ABiH didn’t make a serious stand at all, in some places it had even made Dutchbat’s job more difficult.⁶⁵³ The same criticism, incidentally, was also levelled at the local ABiH forces by the Bosnian Commander in Chief Rasim Delic after the fall of the enclave, although we can’t rule out that other motives also played a role in this.⁶⁵⁴

Anger and despondency were mixed with uncertainty when Karremans left OP-P. Added to that was the feeling of being in danger. The shelling of the Potocari area at a time when it was already known that there was going to be a meeting fits in quite well with the image of the VRS as an army that was quite adept at psychological warfare. Whether this was all part of the same (psychological) strategy or regular military activity is impossible to say now, but just after passing Yellow Bridge, Karremans spotted two mortar platoons who had taken up positions in a farm field along the road, with the compound within their range. As a former mortar platoon Commander himself, he knew from experience the horrific effects mortar fire has.⁶⁵⁵ Just before he left, the Ops Room had also received a message reporting that Karremans had been taken prisoner.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵¹ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99.

⁶⁵² NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Diary of Brantz 1998.

⁶⁵³ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 15-17/12/98.

⁶⁵⁴ Of course questions about public responsibility were also asked on the Bosnian side and all sorts of interests came into play, quite apart from the implications of the dark scenarios that ‘did not take long to start circulating about the fall of the enclave.

⁶⁵⁵ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 15-17/12/98.

⁶⁵⁶ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 203. A similar report was doing the rounds in the afternoon about captain Groen. See: DCBC, 528. Day reports, report Brantz 111603.

The threatening atmosphere was boosted by the countless number of units present in Bratunac. When the vehicle carrying the Dutch officers stopped at the central crossing where the Hotel Fontana was located, they heard a radio message coming in to say that the VRS had encircled OP-C as well.

10. The first meeting of Karremans and Mladic

Just on nine o'clock in the evening, the Dutch trio were led into a poorly lit room that was thick with cigarette smoke. The scene that developed then can be reconstructed as follows.

A gathering of six VRS field officers and a number of non-commissioned officers and body guards were in the room.⁶⁵⁷ This group also included some civilians and a film crew with video cameras.

Karremans made the first move by introducing himself as the Commander of Dutchbat. Interpreter Emir Suljagic, who worked in the enclave for UNMO, later heard from his Bosnian Serb colleague Petar Usumlic, the UNMO interpreter who was employed in all negotiations with Dutchbat in July, what took place next. One of those present, who would later turn out to be general Mladic, reacted furiously. According to the reports, he said: 'You are not a Commander. You are nothing. I am in charge here.' In a later interview with the NIOD, Suljagic provided an unexpurgated version of Usumlic's account. It boiled down to: 'You are a nobody and I am God'.⁶⁵⁸

Major Boering entered the room five minutes after his colleagues because he had gone to the toilet first.⁶⁵⁹ He later said that as soon as he walked in, a number of body guards crowded around him 'which led to a bit of pushing and shoving between the person concerned and the body guards, with the person concerned trying to keep the circle around the BC (battalion commander) as wide as possible in order to prevent the atmosphere in the room from becoming even more tense than it already was'.⁶⁶⁰ The 'person concerned', Boering, who because of his large stature and awe-inspiring feet had been compared to a 'large L' by enclave residents,⁶⁶¹ managed to rescue Karremans, but the tone had been set. His colleague, Rave, noted in a sort of diary a few days later that the three Dutchmen had been firmly convinced during the first 10 minutes that they could be taken outside any moment to be summarily executed.⁶⁶² According to interpreter Usumlic, Mladic did in fact express this threat.⁶⁶³ Ranting and raving, Mladic verbally assailed all three Dutchmen, one by one, although Karremans obviously got the worst of it.⁶⁶⁴

The Dutchmen were extremely confused, especially because it took a while - as Karremans later said - before the three of them fully realised that the bellowing man in question was general Mladic himself, no less. They really had assumed they would be dealing with general Zivanovic, who, incidentally, was in fact present as well. Karremans did not know him (Zivanovic) personally, but had heard about him from his predecessor at Dutchbat I, Lieutenant Colonel Chris Vermeulen. Vermeulen had painted the general as 'a bit of a peasant type: quiet, someone who did not get too excited and who Vermeulen described as someone you could easily sit down with'.⁶⁶⁵ Which is why Vermeulen had tried a few times to arrange a meeting, in the hope to be able to achieve more than with the local commanders. Those attempts had been unsuccessful. As member of the reconnaissance group, Rave had once attended a meeting with Zivanovic that had lasted several hours, together with the military-civilian relations section of Dutchbat II: 'We sat there with Zivanovic for at least eight hours. He had a

⁶⁵⁷ The officers were later identified as Colonel General Mladic, Major General Zivanovic (commander of the Drina Corps), Colonel Jankovic (attached to the G2 section of the General Staff of the VRS), Lieutenant Colonel Kosoric (chief of staff G2 Drina Corps) and colonel Milutinovic of the press and information section of the VRS staff, who led the camera team.

⁶⁵⁸ Interview Emir Suljagic, 23/11/97. This story is, broadly speaking, confirmed by Petar Usumlic. Interview 14/09/99.

⁶⁵⁹ Interview P. Boering, 14/12/01.

⁶⁶⁰ Debriefing statement P. Boering, Assen, 12/09/95; interview P. Boering, 14/12/01.

⁶⁶¹ Interview Muhamed Durakovic, 21/11/99.

⁶⁶² Notes B. Rave. Loaned to NIOD for its perusal.

⁶⁶³ Interview Petar Usumlic, 14/09/99.

⁶⁶⁴ Interview B. Rave, 13/12/00.

⁶⁶⁵ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 15-17/12/98.

clear message: the enclave belonged to him. In any case, he wanted the southern part. That was his and his alone'.⁶⁶⁶ Other than that, the meeting had not been particularly tense. Boering had even met Zivanovic twice before; which is why he later said that when he first came into the room he did in fact realise from the beginning who the ranting individual was.⁶⁶⁷

Because appearance-wise the two generals looked very similar, it took a while for Rave, at least, to work out who was putting the knife into them like that:

'We had not expected to be dealing with Mladic at all. We were just not at that level. When we came in, there were a lot of people milling about, many of whom we didn't know, television. Only after a few minutes we realised: 'Hey! There is another general here! He wouldn't be ...?' It was simply disbelief because we had not expected Mladic at all.'⁶⁶⁸

It was not the only thing that made their introduction to Mladic such a surprise. Although Zivanovic and Mladic did look somewhat similar, that definitely did not apply to the way they behaved. Later critics have sometimes suggested that Karremans allowed himself to be intimidated by Mladic's brutish display too easily because he should have known the general's reputation. However, that is doubtful: not only in Dutchbat but throughout the Yugoslav conflict generally very little structured information was available about the people that the peacekeepers would be dealing with, and certainly not in the way of psychological profiles and negotiating tips. According to De Ruiter in Sarajevo, people at the level that would normally conduct negotiations with Mladic sometimes did exchange experiences, but that was about the extent of it, even in preparations for a mission:

'Once we knew that we would be going to Bosnia, we did not receive any information about what kind of guys Karadzic or Mladic really were. We didn't know that command structure at all. We knew that Mladic was in charge. But what sort of people were operating below that level?'⁶⁶⁹

Karremans said that the summary that the Dutch Military Intelligence Service had given him before the mission, showing the army units (order of battle) that he could expect to come across in his area of operations, did not even go above Zivanovic's level. After all he was the Commander of the Drina corps that was responsible for Srebrenica.⁶⁷⁰ Conversely, Zivanovic was a stranger to Nicolai.⁶⁷¹

Initially, there was no systematic effort to gather information about Mladic as a person and as a negotiator, let alone to pass on what little that was known - in any kind of structured fashion - whenever new UNPROFOR officers arrived to take over the duties of their predecessors. That negotiating with Mladic about peace was akin to 'hand-feeding red meat to a Rottweiler', as someone noted in 1993 from his own experience, was not something that had become general knowledge.⁶⁷² Only when someone had to deal with him on a regular basis was it possible to get to know his moods and tricks. General Rose would later refer a few times in his memoirs to the 'usual' behaviour involving

⁶⁶⁶ Interview B. Rave, 13/12/00.

⁶⁶⁷ Interview P. Boering, 14/07/01.

⁶⁶⁸ Interview B. Rave, 13/12/00.

⁶⁶⁹ Interview A. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

⁶⁷⁰ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 15-17/12/98.

⁶⁷¹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Note DAB to Minister, D96/421, 'Major General Zivanovic', 06/09/96. Reason for this note was a Network broadcast the day before, when Zivanovic warmly greeted the 'great guys' of Dutchbat, who he invited to a holiday in the 'liberated area around the Drina'. AVRO, Network, N.1, 20.24 hours.

⁶⁷² NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. HQ BH Command to BHC fwd Sarajevo, 'COS and DC UNMO meeting at Sokolac 28/10/93 with general Ratko Mladic', 30/10/93.

constantly changing moods that Mladic let loose on his discussion partners, but, comparatively speaking, he had a lot of experience in dealing with Mladic.⁶⁷³

Anyone who didn't have that experience or wasn't prepared for Mladic's ways ran the risk of being manipulated. The photo showing Mladic and Karremans raising their glasses after the discussions became notorious. Slightly getting ahead, for a moment, of the rest of the story about their first meeting, it's of more than mere anecdotal value to pause here and look at how the then future NATO Commander in Chief SACEUR Clark was outmanoeuvred by Mladic in a similar fashion. That happened when Clark made an orientation visit to Bosnia when a meeting with the Bosnian Serb general was also on the agenda. The British Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose, who accompanied Clark, had urged his American colleague beforehand 'to avoid smiling in Mladic's presence, as it did no good to be seen fraternising with him'.

However, when Clark met Mladic, the VRS Commander first made an opening statement and then treated him to a litany about the position the United States had taken in the conflict. With armed body guards standing threatening behind him, Mladic worked himself up into a frenzy of rage, threatening to destroy anyone who stood in his way. The completely bewildered American general tried to take a different tack by telling Mladic that he definitely respected the Serbs as soldiers. Mladic calmed down and after that a businesslike discussion ensued. Towards the end of the meeting, Mladic steered the conversation to the subject of the American uniforms that he claimed ABiH soldiers were wearing. He said he admired the American equipment and displayed special interest in Clark's cap. Seemingly spontaneous, he offered to exchange headgear. A relieved Clark agreed. Mladic subsequently shepherded his guest outside where the media that had been summoned for the occasion lost no time recording for posterity the sight of an American general wearing Mladic's cap. At the end of the luncheon, Mladic was in a good humour again and expressed his confidence in Clark, saying that he was even prepared to disarm for him. He demonstratively removed his pistol and handed it to Clark. Engraved on the pistol was: 'From general Mladic'.⁶⁷⁴ Incidentally, Rose who recounted this incident in his memoirs, would himself be photographed in 1995 smilingly shaking hands with Mladic.⁶⁷⁵

However, this kind of incidents were not discussed very much in UNPROFOR circles.⁶⁷⁶ Later an attempt was made to get detailed information about Mladic, i.e. to get a better idea of what made Mladic tick. This attempt was strongly dependent on what national Intelligence services told them about the man's personality. As is discussed extensively in the Intelligence supplement that accompanies this report, UNPROFOR did not have an Intelligence gathering capability of its own. But in the spring of 1995 there was a German-language biography and analysis of Mladic that circulated at least in UNMO circles. Among other things, it talked about his 'recognisably degradable use of language' which was often accompanied by deeds that matched the rhetoric, especially breaches of human rights and war crimes.⁶⁷⁷

An evaluation on July 12 showed that Karremans was quite aware that he had been manipulated by Mladic. In any case, Rave wrote in his notebook: 'If TK had known [that] TV would be there, TK would not have gone (objections to cameras)'.⁶⁷⁸ It was also quite clear to Karremans himself that he was no match for the general, if only because the political weight of the negotiations clearly belonged to a higher level. At his meeting with Mladic, Karremans already asked whether he was permitted to ask for the presence of a representative of the UNPROFOR high command.⁶⁷⁹ That's why he said in the report on his meetings with Mladic that he wrote during the night of July 11 that negotiations at the

⁶⁷³ Rose, *Fighting for peace*, p. 33.

⁶⁷⁴ Rose, *Fighting for peace*, pp.165-166.

⁶⁷⁵ See photo in: Sells, *A bridge betrayed*, p. 132.

⁶⁷⁶ Interview A. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

⁶⁷⁷ NIOD, Coll. Segers. 'General Ratko Mladic', author not mentioned. Date on this fax, coming from Belgian Major J. Segers, who worked at HQ UNMO in Zagreb at the time, is 20/04/95.

⁶⁷⁸ Notes B. Rave, 12/07/95. Loaned to NIOD for its perusal.

⁶⁷⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), OTP Ex. 39/a. Transcript first meeting with Mladic, 11/07/95.

highest level were the only way out.⁶⁸⁰ In the following days, several fruitless attempts were indeed made to have higher-level negotiators take the place of Karremans. Nicolai remembers talking to Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen about this and that the latter had strongly urged ‘to become partner in the negotiations (...) To take over from Karremans. We were all in agreement on that. The reality is that someone who has been read the riot act like that is not exactly in any position to talk tough.’⁶⁸¹

Minister Voorhoeve also understood this. On July 12, he considered sending in Deputy Commander of the Army Van Baal, who together with Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen had flown to Zagreb the day before for a meeting with Janvier. As a former Chief of Staff at UNPROFOR in Sarajevo he had some experience with Mladic, but Van Baal told him he did not think it would be very useful because the general would not be interested in him.⁶⁸² Van Baal was also on the ‘advice list’ that the Defence Crisis Management Centre put together in flying haste on July 13, of people who ‘knew’ Mladic. Van Baal would add some marginal notes to a profile of Mladic drawn up by the Military Intelligence Service. Quite apart from the timing, – ‘too late to be of any use’ was a red thread in the communication with Karremans – it is questionable that the information ever reached its destination. Rave, who by virtue of his job would have known about it, cannot remember ever having seen Mladic’s profile.⁶⁸³

The attempt to provide Karremans at least with some degree of assistance was the result of Mladic’s blunt refusal to deal with any other negotiator than Karremans. A plan to take Nicolai to Srebrenica by helicopter was impracticable. The head of Civil Affairs in Tuzla, Ken Biser, did not get permission to enter the enclave either. In Sarajevo, De Ruiter tried to establish a line to Milosevic via Zagreb and obtain permission for a high-level negotiator that way, but this attempt failed.⁶⁸⁴ Even a direct attempt by Janvier on July 12, in a letter to Mladic that would be delivered by Karremans did not achieve anything.⁶⁸⁵ He offered to send two full colonels as his personal envoys, the Frenchman Paillard and the Russian Ratsouk, who had even travelled to the border crossing at Zvornik already. Serb camera man Zoran Petrovic, who in the days of the fall of the enclave shot the images that were to become notorious later, and a female staff member of MSF saw the two colonels there.⁶⁸⁶

Mladic undoubtedly knew exactly what he was doing. The Dutch lieutenant colonel was a handy tool that could be used as a buffer against politically more adept negotiators, and at the same time could act as a middleman to pass on his demands. The laborious communication at this low level may also have been adopted as a result of his wish to gain time for the final act that Mladic was already planning then: the lightning removal of all Muslim citizens from the former enclave. It was the best way of placing his opponents before a fait accompli.

The carefully targeted intimidation of Karremans and his men was designed to stamp out any resistance that was left, and, as mentioned earlier, that resistance had already been seriously affected anyway. It probably did not take Mladic very long to realise that his tactics were successful. Initially, the Bosnian Serb Commander went on at great length about the air strike on his troops, after which

⁶⁸⁰ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 207

⁶⁸¹ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99.

⁶⁸² Diary Voorhoeve, pp. 112-113.

⁶⁸³ Interview B. Rave, 13/12/00.

⁶⁸⁴ Interview A. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

⁶⁸⁵ Letter from Lieutenant General B. Janvier to gen. Mladic, 12 July 1995, included as Appendix 36 in: Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 343.

⁶⁸⁶ Letter B. Janvier to R. Mladic, 12/07/95, included as Appendix 36 in: Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 343. ; MSF, Brussels. Capsat MSF Belgrade to Christina Schmitz, 14/07/95, 19:38:38; interview Zoran Petrovic-Pirocanac, 31/03 and 30/04/98. On 14 July, he saw at ‘Iron Bridge’ a French and a Russian colonel who said they were waiting for a chance to talk to the VRS. In 2001, Janvier gave the French Parliamentary Commission of inquiry into (the events in) Srebrenica a different interpretation (of his reasons) for sending two representatives; the reason is supposed to have been messages from Dutch soldiers about specifically targeted massacres (‘assassinats’). See: Loncle, *Rapport d’information*, Tome 1, par. C2, ‘11/17 juillet: “le grand massacre”’. This seems highly unlikely in view of the date of his letter to Mladic (July 12) and the first reports (July 13).

Karremans immediately denied responsibility for the order 'to murder my soldiers.' Mladic angrily labelled these statements 'fantasies', after which Karremans reluctantly admitted that he had only acted in 'self-defence'.⁶⁸⁷

After the general fairly abruptly changed the direction of the discussion by asking Karremans what he really wanted, the subtle threats kept coming back with some regularity, by allusions to a last cigarette, a question whether Karremans would like to see his children again,⁶⁸⁸ and statements like: 'UNPROFOR (...) is not a target as yet. Your soldiers and officers have only one life, just like yourself. I don't think you wish to lose your life'. Mladic subsequently magnanimously offered his 'help', 'even if you don't deserve it': 'But I do it for those boys, those children of UNPROFOR, because I don't want them to be sent back to their mothers in coffins'.

Even the only concrete result from the meeting was accompanied by a threat. Mladic said he didn't want to regard the local population as a target, either. Therefore, he asked Karremans to come back with representatives of the civilian population. If there were still any representatives of the 'Muslim army' in the area, they would be welcome, too. Mladic asked, 'if possible', for Zulfo Tursunovic; he knew that Naser Oric was no longer in the enclave. Karremans was asked to find one or more representatives of the local population and come back with them the same night before 23.00 hours. Their safety was guaranteed. The purpose was to talk about a 'peaceful solution'. But Mladic again added a threat to his stated wish to reach agreements: 'You can all get out of this, or you can all stay, or you can all die. I do not wish you to die'.⁶⁸⁹

Karremans said he did not know where the civilian authorities were, but that with the interpreters' help he would try to find someone.

Mladic had already said 'see you later' when the meeting took another turn yet that, in hindsight, proved to have been fatal for Karremans. Probably trying to be diplomatic in an attempt to pacify Mladic a little, the Dutchbat Commander had - earlier in the meeting - thanked the 'serb military leadership (...) for treating the soldiers well'. He was referring to the OP crews who had fallen into the hands of the VRS. A number of them were held in Hotel Fontana at the time and Karremans did not want to leave without talking to them for a moment. When he asked Mladic permission for this, the latter switched back to the jovial mode that was also part of his unpredictable personality. He gave orders for the Dutchbat soldiers to be taken out of their rooms and then ordered a round of beer for everyone. Via the interpreter, Karremans was also offered a beer. Apparently the Dutchbat Commander became confused but eventually declined. Karremans was asked why he didn't want a beer and his subsequent reply leaves room for speculation about the question whether he realised the danger. Karremans did not wish to appear impolite, but hesitated and seemed to look for an excuse: 'If I... That is not good. I would be happy to have a beer with you if I... I appreciate it very much, but my soldiers don't drink beer, so I think I shouldn't drink beer either.' But Mladic didn't take no for an answer. In his own mind, it was quite clear: an officer drinks, 'we'll have a beer together'. The venom returned briefly: 'And make sure there are no aircraft flying about here'. It subsequently turned out the hotel had only wine and mineral water, after which Mladic concluded: 'No beer here. It'll be wine with mineral water'. Glasses were pushed into the hands of Karremans and his escorts, while video cameras recorded the scene.

⁶⁸⁷ This and the following is based on transcripts provided by the NOVA programme of the so-called 'Mladic tapes', (three discussions). In addition, we have used the transcripts presented at Krstic's trial (IT-98-33-T) as exhibits OTP Ex. 39a, 40/a and 49/a. The less complete NOVA set of transcripts, however, contains passages that strangely are missing in the Tribunal transcripts. These transcripts do not actually say that these particular passages, which are a record of Mladic and Karremans' discussion about how the evacuation would be handled, have been skipped in the Tribunal's version; the text concerned runs on without interruption.

⁶⁸⁸ Under pressure, Karremans replied with 'yes' although he does not have children himself.

⁶⁸⁹ Karremans interpreted this as a threat that the compound in Potocari and its surrounding area would be shelled, although the transcripts show that Mladic did not say this in so many words. See: Debriefing C-Dutchbat 3, copy own text LCol Karremans, Deventer, 6 September 1995 (Stg confidential/permanent) p. 13. 'At the end of the meeting, Mladic indicates that if his demands are not met, he will start shelling the compound in Potocari and its surrounding area.'

Whether this was a coincidence that Karremans unwittingly became the victim of as a result of his request to talk to his men, or whether Mladic had only waited for the right moment to execute a pre-arranged plan, cannot be determined with certainty. It cannot be ruled out that he was set up, also in view of the other propaganda activities around the fall of the enclave, including the manipulation of statements by Dutchbat soldiers who had been taken hostage: in the course of the second meeting, later that same evening, the Dutch were startled by the sound of a pig that was being slaughtered nearby.⁶⁹⁰ Later claims that Mladic might have been using the pig to hint at the possible fate of all who stood in his way were incorrect according to those concerned.⁶⁹¹ But everything points to it having been another test of the Dutchmen's nerves. Boering thought the same applied to the stolen APC that was constantly being driven backwards and forwards in front of the Hotel Fontana.⁶⁹²

Whether the meeting had really come to an end when Mladic said it had is also open to debate. Mladic's seemingly rambling approach undoubtedly had a hidden agenda. That became clear after the now-notorious 'toasting scene'. As if in an afterthought, Mladic casually asked Karremans if he could provide buses, either himself or via Nicolai. A surprised Karremans replied that this could probably be arranged.

By this time the Dutchbat hostages had arrived and Karremans had a chance to talk to them briefly. With a 'I expect you back here at 23.00 hours. See you then', Mladic indicated the meeting had ended.

11. The second meeting with Mladic

By the time Karremans returned to Potocari, the refugee problem had literally grown. While Karremans, Boering and Rave were in Bratunac, the crew of OP-M had arrived in Potocari with another few thousand refugees after a difficult journey (see Chapter 8). 'Huge problem' was the remark in the Ops Room's log book.⁶⁹³ The refugees had been taken to the site of the bus depot. Other refugees had come down from the northern part of the enclave around Budak that had still been under fire that afternoon. Dutchbat now estimated that more than 4000 people were in the compound, including more than 80 wounded, and 16,000 to 20,000 in the factories on either side of the road.⁶⁹⁴

Karremans talked to Brantz and Nicolai briefly to report on his meeting with Mladic. Nicolai, who probably sensed that Karremans had had a tough time, later said he referred to his own experiences during the Gorazde crisis and the 'scenario' there:

'I told him that I was certain the VRS would not dare to create a bloodbath among [sic] innocent civilians right under the gaze of international community. I ordered him to take a 'robust' position, not to allow himself to be intimidated, not to surrender with the battalion under any circumstances, not to surrender any weapons, to keep reporting to us about the developments and to stay near the refugees to continue to protect them as much as possible in this way.'

Nicolai said these guidelines had been 'endorsed' by Minister Voorhoeve.⁶⁹⁵ He would later declare that 'taking part in ethnic cleansing was better than standing around helplessly and watch ethnic murder'.⁶⁹⁶

After discussing it with Franken, Boering set off on a search for a suitable local representative to take along to the next meeting with Mladic. Nothing more had been heard from the official local

⁶⁹⁰ Notes B. Rave, 11/07/95. Loaned to NIOD for its perusal. Rave wrote 'window/curtain open', apparently believing that the purpose was to intimidate the Dutchmen and Mandzic.

⁶⁹¹ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 15- 17/12/98 and B. Rave, 13/12/00.

⁶⁹² Interview P. Boering, 14/12/01.

⁶⁹³ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 11/07/95, entry 20.10

⁶⁹⁴ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Brief Karremans TK95118, 'short summary of events in the past week', 17/07/95.

⁶⁹⁵ CRST. C.H. Nicolai to DCBC and Army Crisis Staff/SCO, memo "Last days" Dutchbat Srebrenica', 16/08/95.

⁶⁹⁶ 'Dutchbat handelde in strijd met orders' ('Dutchbat acted against orders'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/10/95.

authorities since that afternoon and it was difficult to determine who could speak on behalf of the refugees. Boering knew, probably via the interpreters, that the director of the high school in Srebrenica, Nesib Mandzic, had been seen. He knew him and Mandzic had made a good impression on him.⁶⁹⁷ Mandzic was found in the factory '11th March' after an interpreter had called his name with a megaphone. He was taken to the compound where Karremans explained to him what was expected of him. Mandzic was not keen on the job the Dutch Commander was trying to throw in his lap. The risk to be turned into 'official leader' and as a result to be held responsible for everything that had happened in recent weeks was clearly not something he looked forward to. However, pointing out there was very little time, Karremans managed to persuade him. They quickly put a few points on paper that would have to be discussed with Mladic.⁶⁹⁸

Slightly late, the delegation arrived back at the Hotel Fontana. The atmosphere was quite different from what it had been earlier that night. Karremans was able to get down to business almost immediately. At the earlier meeting, he had already told Mladic that the main wish of the local population was to be evacuated. Dutchbat soldiers who had tried to alleviate the misery among refugees had talked to some women who spoke English. These had indicated that they were waiting for buses to take them out of the enclave.⁶⁹⁹ As we mentioned earlier, Koster had met people who wanted to walk on directly to Bratunac, probably as a result of the VRS offer to provide transport (a lot of information reached the refugees via portable radios). As an aside, we can note here that later accusations directed at Dutchbat claiming that people had been taken away against their will are difficult to sustain. At worst, that could have applied to the original inhabitants of the area.

Karremans outlined to Mladic his ideas about the evacuation and sketched a picture of the size of the refugee influx, who were still continuing to stream in. He also touched on the composition of the refugee masses, commenting that there were 'almost no men' among them; but as was already pointed out, this was not true. After that he listed some of the most immediate shortages, such as food, medicines and fuel. Karremans also referred to the necessity to draw up an evacuation plan according to a set order of priorities, the details of which he would work out later. The Dutchbat Commander also told Mladic that he could arrange transport. The local representative of UNHCR in Srebrenica, Almir Ramic, had informed earlier that the UNHCR could provide 30 trucks from the 'Russian trucking team'.⁷⁰⁰ Karremans would also try to find out whether there was a possibility of getting more buses. He also indicated that Dutchbat wished to provide escort for the evacuation and that the battalion or the International Red Cross should be responsible for transportation. Mladic promised that the wounded would be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention and he declared his willingness to bring them in.

Karremans asked Mladic to announce a ceasefire, and the general acceded, until 10:00 hours. The Dutchman also let it be known that he regarded the area in and around the compound as a temporary Safe Area and that he could not admit any VRS soldiers and vehicles. At the same time, he asked for the release of the captured Dutchbat soldiers and the safe return of the men who were still held at observation posts. Mladic made notes of all this.⁷⁰¹

At one point, Mladic had turned his attention to Mandzic who, according to notes that Rave wrote down a few days later, 'was given a terrible roasting'.⁷⁰² Mladic dictated an ultimatum: weapons had to be laid down and anyone who did would stay alive - he gave his word on that. The international conventions would be honoured. He demanded a clear and unambiguous statement from refugee representatives to say 'whether they wanted to survive, stay or disappear'. Mladic said he was prepared to receive a delegation the following day to discuss 'saving your people'. He then asked if 'Nesib' had

⁶⁹⁷ Interview P. Boering, 14/12/01.

⁶⁹⁸ Interview N. Mandzic, 14/09/99.

⁶⁹⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), OTP Ex. 39a. Transcript meeting Mladic-Karremans.

⁷⁰⁰ CRST. Capsat UNHCR BH desk Belgrade to UNHCR Srebrenica, 11/07/95, 19:22.

⁷⁰¹ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 205

⁷⁰² Notes B. Rave, 14 juli 1995. Made available to NIOD for its perusal.

understood him completely, and told him, that the future of his people was now in his hands. Mandzic demurred for a moment by trying to make the point that he was only a representative by accident, but Mladic cut him off quickly by telling him that was his problem: 'Bring people who can guarantee weapons will be laid down and save your people from destruction'.⁷⁰³

Back at the compound, Karremans gave his senior officers an account of what happened at the meeting and also rang Brantz again, who subsequently called Minister Voorhoeve at 02.30 hours in the morning to tell him about Mladic's demands.⁷⁰⁴ After that, Brantz went back on the phone to Karremans to inform him of his conversation with the Minister. Karremans remembers Brantz telling him that Voorhoeve had promised to seek international support and had urged him to treat giving humanitarian aid as the main priority. A joint departure from the enclave of Dutchbat together with the refugees was second priority.

As Karremans said himself, after hearing those words, he felt was getting support and set down at his computer long after midnight to write a report on his discussions with Mladic and the ultimatum the latter had issued. He concluded he was unable to provide either the local population or even his own battalion with the protection he had been asked to give. He also wrote that it was impossible to find the local representatives that Mladic wanted because all official authorities had disappeared without trace. The same applied to ABiH commanders. Which meant he was in no position to force the ABiH to lay down their weapons. Karremans urgently asked for negotiations to be conducted at the highest level and take all possible measures to alleviate the lot of the refugees.⁷⁰⁵ A sleepless night followed.⁷⁰⁶

12. July 12: the third meeting with Mladic

At eight o'clock the following morning, Karremans talked to Minister Voorhoeve on the phone by accident when he happened to be in touch with the Defence Crisis Management Centre. The Minister seized the opportunity to say some personal words of encouragement to the harassed battalion Commander. Brantz had told him the night before that Karremans had made a 'very stressed impression'.⁷⁰⁷ In recording the telephone call, the Defence Crisis Management Centre's day report also noted that Voorhoeve had had the impression that Karremans was 'downcast, confused' and was in a 'chaotic and depressing situation'.⁷⁰⁸ Later that morning he commented in the Ministerial Council that the Battalion Commander needed 'political as well as psychological support'.⁷⁰⁹ The conversation early on the morning of July 12 was only brief and it is unlikely that Voorhoeve wanted to add to Karremans' burdens by telling him about his own gloomy expectations that he was now having about the fate of the population. Later that morning, the Battalion Commander told Mladic that he had been ordered by his Minister to assist 'as much as possible' in efforts to solve the situation.⁷¹⁰

There was one thing that Karremans probably had to worry about a little less by that time, because it started to look like there might be a delegation to represent the refugees at the meeting with Mladic, after all. A preliminary discussion took place at 08.30 hours, attended by two other people apart from Nesib Mandzic. Mandzic had gone looking and had first approached Ibro Nuhanovic, a former businessman who had worked in Srebrenica. He had also been chairman of the SDA, Izetbegovic's party, in Vlasenica.⁷¹¹ Together with a woman refugee, they had gone looking for Camila Omanovic, an economist who had worked at the Feros factory in Potocari before the war. They found her among the

⁷⁰³ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), OTP Ex. 40/a.. Transcripts second meeting Mladic-Karremans.

⁷⁰⁴ Diary Voorhoeve, p. 112.

⁷⁰⁵ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 207.

⁷⁰⁶ Ditto.

⁷⁰⁷ Diary Voorhoeve, p. 112.

⁷⁰⁸ DCBC, 528. Dagrapport DCBC 120805.

⁷⁰⁹ Diary Voorhoeve, p. 130.

⁷¹⁰ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), OTP Ex. 40/a. Transcript second meeting Mladic-Karremans.

⁷¹¹ Bosnian State Commission for the Collection of Facts on War Crimes, (24).

refugees on the site of the zinc factory. She had sought refuge there with her son, daughter and grandchild, after a hasty escape and an emotional parting from her husband who had decided to take a chance and try to reach Tuzla. She herself would later say that she had probably been asked to join the delegation 'as a mother, a woman and a literate person'.⁷¹² Omanovic was asked to come to the Dutchbat compound to discuss the situation among the refugees, but it would appear that she did not know exactly what was being asked of her beforehand. In any case, some kind of consultative group was needed to help solve the problems that could arise while waiting for an evacuation that probably would take a few more days to eventuate.⁷¹³ Karremans, too, had that sort of job in mind for them, but his immediate problem was to persuade the refugee committee to come along with him to the meeting with Mladic. Like the day before, Karremans had to employ all his powers of persuasion to convince the trio.⁷¹⁴

According to Karremans, Mladic had also asked him the previous night to contact the Bosnian Government about the ceasefire. However, attempts via UNPROFOR in Sarajevo had been unsuccessful. Karremans remembered that for a while he had been standing with one of the interpreters who was trying to get a connection with Sarajevo. Apparently that finally happened only later.⁷¹⁵

Although an accurate reconstruction is made more difficult because of the usual problems of conflicting memories and more than one incident possibly telescoping into a single event, the possibility emerges that one or more committee members also tried to get instructions from either Sarajevo or Tuzla. Both Omanovic and Mandzic later referred to such attempts.⁷¹⁶ The notes in Rave's notebook of those days refer to a telephone conversation with Muratovic, the Minister who was responsible for the relations with the UN, and the request for instructions from him, President Izetbegovic and Prime Minister Silajdzic.⁷¹⁷ Mandzic later told Intelligence officers of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH that he had had contact with Silajdzic at about 10:00 hours on July 12. However, it is not known what they talked about in that conversation.⁷¹⁸

Whatever happened, the attempts did not - on the face of it - achieve anything. Franken himself says he again made desperate attempts to track down Muratovic that same night on July 12, when events had taken a dramatic turn: 'We managed to find out where he was so we could call him. But when we rang, we were brushed aside with the story that he was at a dinner and did not wish to be disturbed. That was a real morale boost for Mandzic'.⁷¹⁹

The background to Muratovic's attitude can possibly be explained by the Bosnian Government's initial opposition to all plans for an evacuation. At a meeting early on the morning of July 12, Minister Muratovic emphatically declared that the local authorities in Srebrenica did not have a mandate to negotiate on behalf of the Government, at least not as long as it was not possible to set up proper lines of communications with them. The Bosnian Government also let it be known that it would only support medical evacuations. All new refugees would have to be taken care of on the spot.⁷²⁰

It would appear that the Bosnian Government reluctantly changed tack as the day's events unfolded. Rave's notes, at least, show that at some point, possibly not even until July 13, Mandzic managed to get a representative of the Bosnian Government on the phone. 'Order: not in bus without

⁷¹² ICTY (IT-98-22-T). Testimony C. Omanovic, 22/03/00.

⁷¹³ Debriefing C-Dutchbat 3, copy own text lt-col Karremans, Deventer, 06/09/95 (Stg confidential/permanent) p. 13.

⁷¹⁴ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 208.

⁷¹⁵ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 209.

⁷¹⁶ Interview Camila Omanovic, 18/05/99.

⁷¹⁷ Notes B. Rave. Loaned to NIOD for its perusal.

⁷¹⁸ ABiH, Tuzla. 'Report of events in Srebrenica for the General Staff of the ABiH in Sarajevo', doc.nr. 24, 28/08/95.

⁷¹⁹ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

⁷²⁰ SMG, 1004. Code cable Akashi to Annan, nr. Z-1142, 12/07/95, 'situation in Srebrenica'. See also: UNGE, UNHCR, file Srebrenica. Statistics etc., fax hcbsna to HCYUGBE, 'Meeting with Muratovic on Srebrenica', 12/07/95.

escort', Rave wrote.⁷²¹ Muratovic himself later declared in a conversation with Minister Voorhoeve in 1997 that he had had 'long discussions' with the 'Bosnian leaders' in the compound. He is supposed to have told them not to evacuate until the UN itself could arrange transportation. However, the reply was that the evacuation was taking place very quickly 'and they could not wait for that'.⁷²² A report on a conversation that General Rupert Smith had with Silajdzic also shows that Muratovic asked on July 13 for a list of names for each bus.⁷²³ It remains unclear whether he also told Mandzic about that requirement.

On the morning of July 12, the delegation had, in the end, no instructions when they accompanied Karremans and Boering to Bratunac. As a result of a delay at Yellow Bridge, caused by problems over letting the refugee representatives through, they arrived half an hour late. Once again the signs did not look good. As the deadline for the end of the ceasefire approached, some tanks had assembled threateningly at Yellow Bridge.⁷²⁴ A soldier at OP-P, where the delegation made a brief stop on July 11 as well as on July 12 before moving on to the meeting at the Hotel Fontana, later remembered the dejected mood his Commander was in; this soldier claimed Karremans 'said it was all over'.⁷²⁵

The gathering that awaited them at the Hotel Fontana this time included a larger number of civilians. One of them was an old school mate of Omanovic's by the name of Miroslav Deronjic, who Karadzic had given the job of representing him in the proceedings. To this end, he had been appointed civilian commissioner for Srebrenica.⁷²⁶ When Deronjic got ready to begin a discussion, Mladic stopped him. He then gave Omanovic and Nuhanovic the chance to introduce themselves. Full of admiration, Karremans listened to her (Omanovic) painting a picture for Mladic of the refugees' dire situation, presenting herself solely as a representative of the women and children. She also emphasised that the committee members were ordinary civilians who had nothing to do with politics or military matters.

After Nuhanovic had also introduced himself, Mladic launched into another monologue. Again he offered assistance. The refugees only needed to tell him what they wanted. They could go anywhere they liked, or stay. The general said he would provide vehicles for those who wished to leave – a surprising statement in view of the fact that just the night before he had still given the impression that he wanted Karremans, or the UN, to arrange that. Yet the threats were back again a little later: as trophies, Mladic had the place-name sign of Srebrenica brought into the room, as well as the town's birth, death and marriage records. He said he knew who had been the last people to get married and repeated that whoever wanted to leave could do so, 'or simply disappear'.⁷²⁷

A number of subjects were discussed in his conversation with Karremans. Once again, the disarming of ABiH soldiers came up. Mladic also demanded that Dutchbat would give him the diesel fuel for the vehicles to be used in the evacuation and said that VRS soldiers would provide the escort. However, this was rejected by Karremans, who apparently felt a little stronger again. The order of priorities for the evacuation was important, something that had already been discussed briefly the night before. Mladic said that men in the 17-60 age category would have to report first. Karremans asked him the question, that he would later present as a form of protest,⁷²⁸ why it was this category in particular that he wanted to see check themselves in first. Deronjic provided the reply, saying this group would be screened for the possible presence among them of war criminals. Like the night before, the Dutchbat

⁷²¹ Notes B. Rave, 12/07/95. On loan to NIOD for its perusal.

⁷²² DCBC, 68. (J.J.J.C. Voorhoeve), 'Conversation with dr. Hasan Muratovic on 20/10/95 in Sarajevo about the fall of Srebrenica'.

⁷²³ CRST. Fax col J.R.J. Baxter to HQ UNPF, 'BiH Statement on Srebrenica', 131653B Jul 95.

⁷²⁴ CRST. UNMO Srebrenica sitrep dtg 120950.

⁷²⁵ Debriefing statement B.H. Vos, 08/09/95. Vos said that Karremans said this at 09.00 hours on July 12, when he stopped at OP-P on his way to Bratunac.

⁷²⁶ Interview M. Deronjic, 03/11/99.

⁷²⁷ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), Testimony C. Omanovic, 22/03/00.

⁷²⁸ ICTY (IT-95-18-R61/IT-95-5-R61) Testimony Th.J.P. Karremans, 03/07/96.

Commander then said that as far as he knew there were hardly any able-bodied men in Potocari.⁷²⁹ Omanovic later remembered that Karremans also asked for the International Red Cross to be involved in the evacuation, and Mladic had said that this was no problem at all. Mladic is also supposed to have asked the refugee committee to draw up a list of names, probably for the purpose of separating people into groups for the evacuation.⁷³⁰ Rave had also already recorded the item 'list of names' at the Hotel Fontana that morning in his jotted notes on the meeting with the refugee committee.⁷³¹

There has been a lot of speculation afterwards about the question whether Karremans had done a 'deal' with Mladic at this meeting about the men. There have even been suggestions that they drew up a written statement signed by both Karremans and Mladic. Karremans has always denied this, and he would appear to be correct. Camila Omanovic was present, and she would later tell both the NIOD as well as the Tribunal that NO statement had been signed.⁷³² Deronjic, who was also present, has confirmed this although he did later refer to an agreement to seal the successful evacuation with a document, an issue that will be discussed later in this chapter under the heading 'Franken's statement'.⁷³³

That any kind of document was signed is also unlikely because of the unexpectedly sudden and chaotic end of the meeting: a message whose content was unclear created commotion. Omanovic thought it said something about the refugees from Potocari already being on their way to Bratunac, and she heard the word 'stadium'. The message probably referred to the anticipated arrival of large numbers of prisoners, the first captives of the large group of men from the enclave who had tried to escape. Mandzic recalled that someone told Mladic that 'the Bosniaks were arriving at the football stadium in Bratunac'.⁷³⁴

Whatever it was, Karremans and his companions were quickly hustled off. On the way back, Karremans was surprised to see that suddenly there were large numbers of VRS soldiers in the area between OP-P and the compound.

While Karremans, Boering and the refugee committee were with Mladic at the Hotel Fontana, the VRS had begun its advance on Potocari. Especially in the north this looked spectacular. Groups of well-equipped soldiers moved up along various routes, with burning houses and hay stacks marking their progress. At 10.45 hours Dutchbat's Ops Room received a message that houses were being cleared and that another group of about 100 refugees were on their way to Potocari from the north.⁷³⁵ Fifteen minutes later, VRS soldiers appeared on the north side of the compound, at the point of the building that was known as the 'Blue Hotel' (see the map 'Potocari compound section 3'). Originally, there had been an entrance there but it was no longer being used; a hole had been cut in the fence. Refugees coming in from the north had already used that route and now the VRS was using it: the soldiers made it clear they wished to inspect the compound and that they did not want to enter via the main entrance on the south side. They probably feared their flank would be unprotected against ABiH soldiers who might be hiding in the Dutch complex. It was decided to open the main entrance and give the VRS the chance to carry out the inspection that they wanted. To avoid any possible provocation, the Dutch soldiers who escorted the VRS soldiers temporarily put their weapons away in a visible pile.⁷³⁶ The gun barrels of the APCs that were standing in their protected emplacements were also ordered to be turned upwards to avoid any semblance of threat that could lead to incidents. After a brief tour around the compound and a quick look full of revulsion at the stinking halls full of refugees, the VRS soldiers were apparently satisfied and disappeared again.

⁷²⁹ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 211.

⁷³⁰ Interview Camila Omanovic, 18/05/99.

⁷³¹ Notes B. Rave, 12/07/95. On loan to NIOD for its perusal.

⁷³² Interview Camila Omanovic, 18/05/99.

⁷³³ Interview M. Deronjic, 03/11/99.

⁷³⁴ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony N. Mandzic, 21/03/00.

⁷³⁵ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 12/07/95, entry 10.44 hours

⁷³⁶ Diary Koreman, week 41, p. 25.

When Camila Omanovic arrived back at the compound with the other members of the group and she saw VRS soldiers walking around, she refused to get out of the car and asked to be driven straight to the factory complex where her family was waiting for her. As a result, she did not take part in the subsequent discussions with the refugee committee, that took place at 12.30 hours.

Because the meeting at the Hotel Fontana had come to such an abrupt end, it was not clear what was going to happen next. Although Mladic had nominated 13.00 hours as the time when the 'evacuation' would start, Mandzic as well as Karremans had been left with the impression that it could in fact take a while longer.⁷³⁷ Actually, they had been surprised that Mladic had used that word 'evacuation' and apparently wanted to take charge of the whole thing himself.

In order to get clarification as to how all this was going to be done, Boering and Rave were sent back to Bratunac while Karremans went to report to colonel Brantz. Apart from the question of the surrender and disarming of the ABiH and some comment on the improved atmosphere of the negotiations, the most important bit of information that Karremans had for Brantz was the plan to organise the evacuation in five batches. The first one would be the 'seriously wounded and wounded', the next batch would be the 'weak/less weak', followed by the 'stronger (women/children)', then men aged 17-60, and, lastly, Dutchbat itself. The situation report in which Brantz passed on this plan for an evacuation-in-batches showed that he expected that afternoon to see a start being made only on the evacuation of the first batch, the wounded and seriously wounded. There was an added note in regards to batch 4 (men aged 16-60) that said: 'will be subjected to debriefing by VRS'.⁷³⁸

13. The 'instruction to Karremans'

Brantz's message created quite a stir. It is necessary to take a moment to consider one of the many controversies that erupted almost immediately after Dutchbat's return to the Netherlands: the alleged instruction to Karremans not to cooperate with any attempt to separate men and women in Potocari. An internal reconstruction that at the request of Minister Voorhoeve had been carried out even in August as a result of stories in the media, showed how poor communications had once again led to misunderstandings here.⁷³⁹

Even at the Ministerial Council of the evening of July 11 serious concerns had already been expressed about the fate of the population. The initial preoccupation with the safety of Dutchbat had by then already made way for concerns about the future of the thousands of refugees who had sought protection with Dutchbat. Some ministers even talked about their increasing fears for the fate of the men, whose precise whereabouts were at that moment still absolutely unclear. Minister Voorhoeve even went as far as expressing his fears that there would be a bloodbath.⁷⁴⁰

When Brantz's situation report, outlining the results of the meetings with Mladic, arrived at the Defence Crisis Management Centre at 13.19 hours, the item about the VRS' planned debriefing of able-bodied men led to a shocked reaction from Voorhoeve. The Minister gave instructions to inform UNPROFOR in Sarajevo that the Dutch UN troops would not be allowed to cooperate with this in any way. The Deputy Chief of Operations, Air Commodore Hilderink, then contacted UNPROFOR. Later he could not recall whether he had talked to Nicolai, his military assistant De Ruiter, or colonel Brantz in Tuzla. Only De Ruiter vaguely remembers that the subject came up in the conversation. But he definitely did not remember having been given any kind of specific instruction from the Minister. 'It is unlikely that your instruction came through as a clear guideline from the Ministry of Defence,' the compiler of the note, acting director of the Directorate for General Policy L.F.F. Casteleijn concluded.

⁷³⁷ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 15-17/12/98; Testimony N. Mandzic, ICTY Krstic (IT-98-33-T), 21/03/00.

⁷³⁸ DJZ. 'Interim sitrep Col Brantz dtgr 121319 lt Jul 95'.

⁷³⁹ DS. Note DAB to Minister, D95/429, stg secret, 23/08/95. 'Instruction to LCol Karremans, 12 July last.' The note was distributed via five numbered copies. Unless stated otherwise, the reconstruction provided here is being followed.

⁷⁴⁰ Diary Voorhoeve, p. 117.

The reconstruction also showed that Karremans had telephoned Nicolai at 15.00 hours on July 12, but they have different recollections of what they talked about. The order of priorities was discussed and Nicolai had agreed to this. In August 1995, he said he remembered having expressed ‘reservations’ about the separate treatment of the men, although he did not recall any direct instruction that Dutchbat was not permitted to cooperate with the separation of men and women.⁷⁴¹ Karremans, however, did not remember Nicolai expressing any sort of objections and as a result Casteleijn came to the conclusion that the Battalion Commander never received a specific guideline from UNPROFOR.

An interesting element in the note was formed by the references by De Ruiter as well as Nicolai to the fact that they had been under the impression that it really concerned a bit of a non-problem. After all, Karremans had said a few times that there were barely any able-bodied men among the refugees; that was also what he had told Mladic on July 11 and 12. That seemed to fit in with the first messages that Sarajevo received about a possible large-scale escape attempt. However, that the reality was a little different was also picked up on in Casteleijn’s note. He pointed out that, for all that, there were ‘probably several hundreds’ of men in and around Potocari. Based on the number of people listed as missing, with ‘Potocari’ as the place where they were last seen, it became obvious only years later that even Casteleijn’s estimate had been very much on the low side and the real figure should probably have been more than 2000.

The note also referred to a list of 239 names of able-bodied men in the compound that Karremans is supposed to have ordered to be drawn up, a suggestion that he did not refute for a while and that appears to fit in with a pattern where Karremans initially took formal responsibility for decisions and actions by his subordinates during the days of the fall of the enclave. As we will see later in this part of the report, the list was actually the work of his deputy, major Franken. Karremans later declared that he had realised there were ‘more than 300’ able-bodied men in his compound only after Franken had told him about the results of a count of names on the list.⁷⁴² Until then, they had managed to stay hidden among the mass of more than 4000 people who occupied the overcrowded halls of the former factory.

A possible problem that doesn’t allow itself to be recognised stays hidden until it manifests itself of its own volition. When that happened, the situation in Potocari had changed radically and took on dynamics of its own that Dutchbat turned out to have no answers for. The prelude to this final act already took form the moment that Brantz sent his situation report to the Defence Crisis Management Centre.

14. Mladic breach of promise: the buses are coming

The run-up to the start of the deportation as well as the way it was actually carried out can be interpreted afterwards as an improvised but nevertheless well thought-out operation. ‘Improvised’ because the occupation of the entire enclave does not seem to have been part of the VRS plan, initially, and also because organising the departure of the refugees, particularly arranging the necessary transportation, was something that happened at the last moment. ‘Well thought-out’ applies to the whole pattern of the rest of the operation. It appears clear that the VRS at least partially revived the routines of ethnic cleansing for this, such as the combination of regular army units and irregular forces being used in the operation, with the latter taking care of the dirty work. However, the special circumstance that in this case a Safe Area was involved made it necessary to go about it with a little more circumspection. Mladic also knew exactly what the situation was like in the enclave; during one of his meetings with Karremans he boasted about his excellent Intelligence.⁷⁴³

⁷⁴¹ CRST. Note from Bgen C.H. Nicolai to DCBC, Army crisis staff/SCO, “‘Last days’ Dutchbat Srebrenica’, 16/08/95.

⁷⁴² Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 16/12/98.

⁷⁴³ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 16/12/98.

Although occupying Srebrenica has later been described as a major strategic blunder by Mladic, he himself apparently believed he could get away with it, relying on the propaganda resources at his disposal and which were in fact extensively employed during the fall of the enclave. Another factor that is partially bound up with this notion was the way how Mladic employed the same carrot and stick tactics that he had used on Karremans on a larger scale, according to an unpredictable pattern that promoted uncertainty and dependency. Refugees as well as UN soldiers became victims of this tactic, albeit not to any comparable degree.

It was close to 13.00 hours when Lieutenant Koster, who was still at the bus depot, saw a VRS armoured car and a tank approach his post. Refugees who had spread northwards for a short distance along the road, panicked and fled back behind Dutch lines. Koster stretched red-and-white tape across the road to mark the boundary of the mini Safe Area. A bit further back, Dutchbat soldiers formed a human chain to keep the refugees in check. Initially, the VRS soldiers stopped at the tape. Some of them sat down and sang and laughed, but they could also be heard commenting on the refugees already. Koster also saw a machine gun being placed in position on the first floor of a nearby house, barrel pointing threatening in the direction of the Dutchbat soldiers and the refugees.⁷⁴⁴ Witnesses would later claim that the gun was fired over the heads of the refugees, and even directly at the refugees.⁷⁴⁵ At that moment, however, it only caused some disquiet that quickly evaporated because of what happened next.

At 13.10 hours, the Dutchbat Ops Room received a message that bread was being distributed among the refugees from a VRS vehicle, accompanied by 'a lot of camera work'.⁷⁴⁶ It also led to the 'green light' that told everybody who had still been in the bunker until then to come out.⁷⁴⁷ Just over an hour later, the vehicle moved on in a southerly direction and Lieutenant Koster tried to 'get only the car here, without the TV crew'.⁷⁴⁸ A request from the VRS 'to be allowed to stage and film the same kind of scene inside the compound' was rejected by Dutchbat.⁷⁴⁹

Later the VRS also sent in a fire engine that began to distribute water to the refugees. Both the bread and the water, incidentally, probably came from Serbia. Observers of the CFY who were watching the border between Serbia and the Republika Srpska to make sure the boycott was being maintained, reported on July 12 that the mayor of Ljubovija in Serbia had asked for permission to assist the mayor of Bratunac by loading local vehicles with bread and water for the refugees.⁷⁵⁰

This media circus formed an entourage for Mladic, who arrived around that time to personally check out the situation, and the pictures of which would later be shown all over the world. In his notes of July 14, Rave would bitterly write about 'Mladic and his band of robbers' who 'made a media show of the whole thing, with lots of TV pictures of the scumbags handing out bread and chocolate to show how sweet and kind they are'.⁷⁵¹ UNMO Kingori, who went to have a look because he had heard rumours about threats, only saw people handing out cigarettes and sweets. However, in his message he did already add the comment: 'Hope this would not prove to be a deceptive act'.⁷⁵² That his fears were well-founded was borne out by statements afterwards: as soon as the cameras had turned away, the sweets that had been given to the eager children earlier were yanked back out of their hands.⁷⁵³

The highlight of the show came a little later. The VRS soldiers who had initially stopped at the red-and-white tape stretched across the road, had begun to mingle with the crowds of refugees when major Nikolic arrived. Not long after that, Mladic also joined the throngs and talked to them

⁷⁴⁴ Interview E. Koster, 06/10/99.

⁷⁴⁵ See, among others, Debriefing statement J.H.A. Rutten, Assen, 06/09/95.

⁷⁴⁶ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room, 12/07, entry 13.10.

⁷⁴⁷ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman, 41st week, p. 26.

⁷⁴⁸ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 12/07/95, entries 13.10 en 14.14.

⁷⁴⁹ *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 313.

⁷⁵⁰ UNGE, ICFY, Box 157, file 176. ICFY HQ Belgrade, COO to ICFY Geneva, 13/07/95.

⁷⁵¹ Notes Rave. Loaned to NIOD for its perusal.

⁷⁵² NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNMO sitrep dtg 121240.

⁷⁵³ This was reported by several Dutchbat soldiers and refugees.

reassuringly. The cameras were running and recorded his words: ‘Anyone who wants to leave, will be given transportation; large and small, young and old. Don’t be afraid, don’t worry. Let the women and children go first. Thirty buses are on their way to take you in the direction of Kladanj. No-one will hurt you’.⁷⁵⁴ Interpreter Vahid Hodzic, who assisted Koster, overheard a part of the speech that was not included in the film. Later he gave an account of what he had heard to a colleague who at the end of 1995 remembered Hodzic’s version of what Mladic had said as follows: ‘You could have lived beautifully (nicely) in your enclave, nobody would have touched you. You could have ploughed and sown, but you want to set fire to Serb villages. You listen to the Alijas [Izetbegovic], Silajdzic’s, [Naser] Oric’s. But they took your money and fled.’ After that, he said: ‘You will be scattered from Australia to Canada and you will never see each other again. Don’t be afraid. You will all be taken away. First the women with children, then the elderly and then the rest.’⁷⁵⁵

After his constant hints during the days before at an imminent departure, Mladic’s reassuring words probably had a sort of cathartic effect. The refugees had only one wish: to get out! The fact that he also made casual mention to the option to stay, something he had also said to the refugee committee that morning, played no role.⁷⁵⁶ It was quite clear to everybody what their best course of action was, and what the word of Mladic under the eye of the camera was really worth. Deception was Mladic’s trademark, as UNMO Kingori was to find out later that day. When he asked why the men were to be separated from the rest, Mladic said this was to be able to give priority to the physically weaker women and children when the ‘evacuation’ got underway.⁷⁵⁷

Before that, Lieutenant Koster had made a number of fruitless attempts to persuade Mladic to first talk to Karremans in the compound, undoubtedly because it became obvious that the general did not intend to respect the mini Safe Area, but Mladic was not interested. He refused to talk to Karremans.⁷⁵⁸ He met Karremans only after his media show - Karremans had been alerted and the two talked for about 15 minutes at the main gate to the compound. In his book, Karremans recounts how this conversation went, saying that, among other things, Mladic offered Dutchbat to leave the same day or the following morning together with the refugees. It was clear that nothing would come of the plan of an evacuation in batches. Karremans rejected the offer, not only because it was impossible from a practical point of view – unless the battalion wanted to make the VRS a present of all its equipment – but more particularly because of the wounded. Mladic simply did not reply to his demand that these would have to be picked up first by the International Red Cross or the Norwegian medical UN unit in Tuzla, Normedcoy. However, one of the officers in Mladic’s entourage, Jankovic, who had also been present at the first meeting at the Hotel Fontana, told Karremans that the VRS would take over the responsibility for transportation. Karremans rejected that proposal, referring to the agreement that seemed to have been reached on the subject of transportation just a few hours earlier. Citing the same agreement, his announcement that Dutchbat’s local employees would have to leave together with the battalion elicited no reaction.⁷⁵⁹

Major Boering later provided a different version of how this conversation at the gate came to take place. He claims that he asked Karremans to come along with him outside the compound, because of the buses that had arrived there. He wanted to show him what was happening, so Karremans could protest to Mladic. According to Boering, his commanding officer refused and told him that it was up to Boering to get Mladic to come to Karremans. When this didn’t work, Karremans is supposed to have said that Boering should go to Mladic accompanied by Schmitz of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, but Mladic showed no interest in talking to them. When Karremans eventually did make an appearance after all –

⁷⁵⁴ Translation transcript as provided by Honig/Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 66.

⁷⁵⁵ The Bosnian State Commission for the Collection of Facts on war Crimes, (24).

⁷⁵⁶ Transcript. ‘serbian TV: report on Srebrenica July 12, 1995’, The Balkan Archive, International Monitor Institute, Los Angeles, tape no 516.

⁷⁵⁷ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony J. Kingori, 31/03/00.

⁷⁵⁸ ICTY (IT-9595-18-R61/IT-95-5-R61). Testimony E. Koster, 04/07/96.

⁷⁵⁹ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 215.

how and why is not clear – Boering claims that the transport of the local population and the separation of men and women had already started.⁷⁶⁰ Franken, who according to Boering had been annoyed by Karremans' behaviour, later said he did not remember this incident and thought it was unlikely.⁷⁶¹ It does appear to be unlikely that the men and women were already being transported at this point because all available information points to their separation starting later that afternoon and it taking a while before it became clear what was happening.

Boering, who accompanied the first convoy, claimed that men were in fact being separated from the rest right from the beginning and were taken to the White House; before he left, he is even supposed to have posted UNMOs.⁷⁶² Franken believed Boering had to be mistaken, because the matter of the men at the White House became topical only on July 13 and that he, Franken, had been the one to order the UNMOs to keep an eye on that situation then. Moreover, Franken says that he saw the first four convoys to leave on July 12 also had men on board.⁷⁶³ It is not clear who is right.

The start of the removal of the population came as a big surprise to Dutchbat. It now became clear that Boering and Rave had been kept dangling in Bratunac in their attempts to get more clarity about the plans, such as when 'evacuation' would get under way and how many trucks and buses they could expect. When they returned without having achieved anything, they were shocked to see a large number of buses and big trucks standing ready on the side of the road at the compound. At that moment, UNMOs counted 12 buses and nine big trucks.⁷⁶⁴

Although almost all Dutchbat soldiers regarded this as proof that this was all part of a plan that had been put together long before, this was in fact not the case. Only the night before, the VRS had begun to collect as many buses and trucks as they could find in a wide area, a process that continued on July 12 and 13 as well.⁷⁶⁵ There were appeals for vehicles on local radio and television.⁷⁶⁶ Whatever the case, it was quite obvious that the VRS had its own agenda. Later, in Assen, with the directness that his colleagues say characterises him, he would remark that he had felt 'shafted'.⁷⁶⁷ Franken, too, who at that moment had been in the Ops Room (the command post), reacted according to those who were there with an expletive: 'Damn, they're not keeping their promises!'⁷⁶⁸ When Karremans came across Mladic again near the main gate of the compound at about 14.30 hours, he formally protested - without success.⁷⁶⁹

The deportation began close to 14.00 hours⁷⁷⁰ and it degenerated into chaos almost immediately. Refugees who were on the road and who were desperate to leave as soon as possible stormed the buses and trucks. The mass of people pushed the chain of Dutchbat soldiers into the direction of the buses, after which VRS soldiers pulled some of the Dutch soldiers out of the chain and urged the refugees to make a run for the buses. Camila Omanovic, who saw how everybody rushed for the buses, said that everybody was obsessed with the notion that they would be saved once they managed to get on a bus.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁰ Interview P. Boering, 14/12/01; reply from Boering to NIOD, 07/01/02.

⁷⁶¹ Statement by telephone R.A. Franken, 05/02/02

⁷⁶² Interview P. Boering, 14/12/01

⁷⁶³ Statement by telephone R.A. Franken, 05/02/02.

⁷⁶⁴ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNMO Srebrenica to UNMO HQ Tuzla, Srebrenica update: dtg 121645B JUL 95.

⁷⁶⁵ ICTY (IT-98-33-T) R.J. Butler, 'VRS Corps Command Responsibility Report, 05/04/00, p. 26.

⁷⁶⁶ Interview M. Deronjic, 03/11/99.

⁷⁶⁷ Debriefing statement P. Boering, 12/09/95.

⁷⁶⁸ Debriefing statement B.C. van Zutphen, 12/09/95. Something like it, but then in reference to a cursing Karremans, was reported by sergeant Mulder when he was being debriefed in Zagreb on July 22. Although it cannot be ruled out, it is also possible that this referred to Franken after all. SMG, 1007. Klep/Lagaune, 'report debriefing sgt1 Mulder, 22/07/95, Camp Pleso'.

⁷⁶⁹ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNPF-HQ daily sitrep 120001B to 122359B JUL 95.

⁷⁷⁰ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNMO Srebrenica update 121645B JUL 95.

⁷⁷¹ ICTY (IT-98-33-T) Testimony C. Omanovic, 22/03/00.

When Minister Voorhoeve in The Hague heard at 16.30 hours from Nicolai about the start of what Nicolai then still called the 'evacuation', he wrote in his little notebook: 'refugees want to go'.⁷⁷² In a written report just before that, Nicolai wrote that the 'evacuation' was 'in full swing' and he was 'not pessimistic' about the way things were going.⁷⁷³ It is not clear what he based that impression on. In a - possibly 'contaminated' - recollection Nicolai later referred to the messages of a different nature he was getting from Karremans at the time:

'They had wanted to do it in an orderly manner. Things got completely out of control. On the one hand because of the Serbs, but on the other hand also because of the Muslims. There was a run on the buses. There were people waving money around to buy a seat on a bus. They were almost trampled underfoot. Complete chaos. The ideas that we had to try and still make it an orderly evacuation certainly did not work.'⁷⁷⁴

During that first phase, Dutchbat soldiers could still move around more or less freely near the buses and among the refugees, while trying to assist people who were in danger of being trampled by the crowds rushing in.⁷⁷⁵ The buses were so full that one Dutchbat soldier described it as 'savage'.⁷⁷⁶ Gradually, however, it became more and more difficult to offer assistance and the behaviour of the VRS also began to change, according to Lieutenant Mustert:

'When the buses arrived, we just walked between them. If people did not respond quickly enough to the signals of the VRS to get into a bus, they'd sometimes get a kick of a shove and we told them to stop that. After little more than an hour they were sick of it and no longer allowed us to come near the buses. You're standing with your back to the wall.'⁷⁷⁷

One of the reasons for the feeling of powerlessness was the disarming of individual Dutchbat soldiers by the VRS. The first reports that this was happening arrived at the Ops Room just past 18.00 hours.⁷⁷⁸ Initially, VRS soldiers simply wanted to exchange weapons, something that most Dutchmen appear to have refused.⁷⁷⁹ As the afternoon wore on, the Dutch soldiers were forced - under the threat of VRS Kalashnikovs - to surrender their weapons and flak jackets. With an eye on the safety of the refugees, the Dutch soldiers had been ordered to avoid every kind of confrontation as much as possible and as a result they also gave in to the demands for the surrender of the weapons, although some did so with greater equanimity than others. Some of the debriefing officers in Assen would later form the impression that soldiers of certain platoons, such as those belonging to Lieutenant Rutten's outfit, were less inclined to surrender their weapons than others, something that they explained by differences in how different platoons looked at the job that they had to do.⁷⁸⁰ Intimidation took place in other ways as well. One Dutchbat soldier related how a VRS soldier showed him armour-piercing ammunition that the flak jackets of the Dutch would not be able to withstand.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷² Notebook J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 12 July 1995. Made available to NIOD for its perusal.

⁷⁷³ DAB. Report C.H. Nicolai, dtg 121615B JUL 95.

⁷⁷⁴ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99.

⁷⁷⁵ Interview E. Koster, 06/10 en 19/10/99.

⁷⁷⁶ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman, 41st week-26.

⁷⁷⁷ Interview J.E. Mustert, 18/06/99.

⁷⁷⁸ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 12/07/95, entries 18.14 en 18.55

⁷⁷⁹ At least one instance was reported in Assen where weapons were being seen to be exchanged, debriefing report.

⁷⁸⁰ Report telephone conversations as a result of call by Defence Minister, 17/08/98, Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, part 2, Appendix 7.

⁷⁸¹ *Feitenrelaas*, p. 304.

The changing attitude of the VRS appears to have taken place parallel with the fact that they began to pick men out of the rows of people with increasing frequency. Initially, the refugees had gone to the buses in a solid mass without there being any order of priority when they boarded. As a result, there were also a number of men who got onto the buses, most of whom were, in the recollections of Dutchbat soldiers who witnessed the scene, older or at least older looking men.⁷⁸²

It was probably not long – memories on this point are not consistent – before the VRS soldiers began to pick men from the lines of people and escort them to a nearby house. Lieutenant Van Duijn remembers that in first instance, the men who had been selected were driven off in a small van, reportedly for questioning in Bratunac. It was only after a while - possibly because the numbers were becoming too great - that the men were first taken to a house across the road.⁷⁸³ Van Duijn was told by VRS captain ‘Mane’ that the able-bodied men were picked out so their names could be compared to a list of war criminals that was kept in Bratunac.⁷⁸⁴ Dutchbat soldier Klaver, who had been in the human chain, saw that a small group of three men were grabbed by VRS soldiers almost immediately and taken to a nearby house, the front wall of which was only partially finished – this was not the same house as the infamous ‘White House’ diagonally across from the compound that would start to play an important role only on the second day.⁷⁸⁵

It remains unclear how many men were already picked out on July 12. Lieutenant Koster had the impression that the separation of the men really took place mainly on the 13th and only at a small scale on the 12th. As far as he could remember mostly older men were involved, although there also was one incident, where he successfully managed to keep an older teenager of around 19 out of the hands of a VRS soldier and put him on a bus. He believes this was on July 12.⁷⁸⁶

His observations about numbers and composition are confirmed by his colleague, Lieutenant Van Duijn. Initially, the latter had been at the blocking position south of the compound. The VRS had advanced on that side, too, and as a precaution Captain Groen had ordered all weapons to be stored in an APC, to avoid provocation and theft; nevertheless, VRS robbed them of everything except their personal possessions. The Dutchbat soldiers had been ordered not to cooperate with the VRS and to do nothing that could provoke violence. Van Duijn, who was a striking figure because of his height, walked north after that to assist his colleagues.

At the head of the crowd he came across a colleague sitting on the side of the road, despondently staring into space. He was just one of many cases where soldiers were overwhelmed by stress and became apathetic.⁷⁸⁷ Van Duijn took the initiative and approached a VRS officer who was known to Dutchbat personnel only by his nickname ‘Mane’ all that time.⁷⁸⁸ They agreed, according to Van Duijn after he had consulted Franken, that the VRS would pull back from the Dutchbat soldiers and the refugees for short distance and that they would then call out the numbers of people that the Dutchmen could allow to go through.⁷⁸⁹ This incident probably has to be placed in a wider context. The change in procedure probably resulted from the increasing number of incidents involving Dutchbat soldiers being disarmed as well as an attempt to literally channel the chaos into more orderly lines. A note entered into the Ops Room log book at 18.14 hours, links these two issues: ‘We probably

⁷⁸² Interview E. Koster, 06/10 en 19/10/99.

⁷⁸³ DAB. ‘Telephone conversation O. van der Wind 05/07/96 with First Lieutenant van Duijn’.

⁷⁸⁴ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99

⁷⁸⁵ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

⁷⁸⁶ Interview E. Koster, 06/10 en 19/10/99.

⁷⁸⁷ How many is difficult to say; several witness statements said that various soldiers had mentally broken down. In a point-by-point summary of his most important experiences of the past few days, Rave wrote in his notebook: ‘sld + officers/NCOs who did their job perfectly’, and ‘sld + officers/NCOs who broke down’. Notes Rave, loaned to NIOD for its perusal.

⁷⁸⁸ This was Mane Duric, acting head CSB Zvornik.

⁷⁸⁹ Rohde, *A safe area*, p. 209

have to surrender all weapons. Perhaps we can use vehicles to create a channel so we have more control'.⁷⁹⁰

Such a channel was in fact created with four APCs that were positioned on either side of the road. This allowed small groups of refugees to walk down the road for a short distance in a northerly direction, where the buses were. However, because of this arrangement, VRS soldiers standing farther down the route – some were even comfortably perched on stolen furniture – also had a better view of who walked past them. Van Duijn, too, saw that men were picked out of the row and taken to a house. When he asked the VRS Captain 'Mane' who was in charge for the reason, he was told that the men would be taken to Bratunac where their names would be compared to a list of war criminals.⁷⁹¹ Van Duijn said later that he managed to talk 'Mane' into letting about seven older and younger men board the buses. He had the same impression as Koster, that the number of men was not large and those who were selected involved mainly older men.

In this context, a striking detail is one that he told American journalist David Rohde about, who used it in a footnote in his book about the fall of Srebrenica. At a certain moment, the men who were kept in the house were also taken away separately, a first alarming sign that the 'screening' would perhaps take a different course than Dutchbat soldiers had believed at first. Van Duijn, who had been on the spot all day, only saw a group of 50 older men leave in the direction of Bratunac that day. A notable detail in his observation was that the men were put on the same truck that had taken bread to the refugees earlier that afternoon.⁷⁹² This observation is quite plausible. The CFY observers mentioned earlier who had given permission for the bread and water to be taken to the refugees, had at that time also carefully suggested to the owners that the vehicles could perhaps also be used to take refugees back with them.⁷⁹³ However, we still don't know what happened to this truck and its cargo.

There are, however, also indications that the number of men who were taken away that day may have been greater, although it remains difficult to irrefutably link some of the statements to particular dates. David Rohde placed the following story from Hurem Suljic on July 12. Suljic, who was taken away from Potocari and survived an execution, declared that a far larger number of 300, again older, men were carried off in two buses without Dutchbat noticing anything. Just before that, this group had had a visit from Mladic who had turned up again in Potocari early that evening. Suljic said that accompanied by his body guards and an unidentified UN officer (it is also possible this was an UNMO), Mladic visited the house where the men were kept. He told them that they would be exchanged as prisoners of war and that they would come to no harm. He also promised them food and water, a remark that turned out to be designed solely to fool the UN officer. Suljic said that about three quarters of an hour later, two buses and a red car – the latter has featured in other witness statements as well - stopped in front of the house. Instead of walking straight to the road, they had to go via a farm field, probably to make sure the Dutch wouldn't see them. When the buses were full, Mladic personally issued the order to leave and follow the red car. Later in this chapter we will talk more about how Suljic and other survivors of mass executions surfaced again, and their role in spreading the news about the executions.⁷⁹⁴ Not long after that, VRS soldiers began to burn luggage that the men had left behind in the yard. Klaver and a colleague later searched the house and its surrounding area for bodies, but didn't find anything.⁷⁹⁵

This incident, too, leaves room for doubt about the correct date. Burning people's possessions didn't occur until July 13, visible from the Dutchbat compound, at the so-called White House, and after the last men had been taken away.⁷⁹⁶ The statement that Klaver went looking for evidence of possible

⁷⁹⁰ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 12/07/95, entry 18.14

⁷⁹¹ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

⁷⁹² Rohde, *A safe area*, p. 409, footnote 52

⁷⁹³ UNGE, ICFY, Box 157, file 176. ICFY HQ Belgrade, COO to ICFY Geneva, 13/07/95.

⁷⁹⁴ Rohde, *A safe area*, pp 223-224, 409-410.

⁷⁹⁵ Rohde, *A safe area*, p. 224.

⁷⁹⁶ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99 and J.A.H. Rutten, 22/12/99.

executions also appears to fit in more with the events of July 13 rather than July 12, but it is not impossible that it took place on July 12 after all. In the course of the afternoon of the 12th, many Dutchbat members heard shots in the surrounding area that could have been executions. In view of the sometimes far-reaching implications of these and other observations to the issue of Dutchbat's performance on July 12 and 13, we will discuss this separately later in this chapter.

It is quite possible that the buses that Suljic talked about left without Dutchbat knowing about it. The initial plan had been that in case of an evacuation one Dutchbat soldier would be on every bus, but Karremans and Franken had to drop that notion from the beginning. The already heavily depleted battalion, many of whom were also at the end of their tether as a result of the huge pressures of the previous days and nights, would then run the risk of losing even more men. That would make it even more difficult to keep a grip on the situation in Potocari. The speed and scope of the evacuation formed an added problem, as Karremans told De Ruiter in Sarajevo on the phone that same afternoon.⁷⁹⁷

The lack of manpower could only be solved by having one or two vehicles with communications equipment tag along with each convoy. Captain Melchers was given the job of organising the logistics of the operation, forming the escort teams and maintaining contact. They didn't know the route of the convoy to Kladanj – the town had to be looked up on the map. The battalion's senior officers initially wanted to send Captains Melchers and Voerman on the first convoy so they could report back. However, because Melchers was temporarily occupied with other matters, major Boering offered to go with the convoy instead.⁷⁹⁸

When they arrived in Tisca with the refugees, the buses were emptied and the refugees first had to wait. Mines had to be cleared from the bitumen-sealed path through the woods that the refugees would have to follow. Lieutenant Caris, who was also present at the Tisca destination point, thought the VRS behaved better than expected, apart from one incident when VRS soldiers took a number of men off the buses.⁷⁹⁹ But other than that, they left the refugees alone. After a while, Voerman and Boering could get under way with the refugees, through a stretch of no-man's land and the tunnel that led to the territory of the Muslim-Croat Federation. There they were received by the Pakistani battalion that was in charge of dealing with the refugees who were subsequently taken to the airport near Tuzla, 'Tuzla Air Base', by bus where provisional shelter had been arranged for them. Not everybody ended up at Tuzla Air Base, incidentally; some people went their own way.

There had been very few problems along the way and according to reports from the Pakistani battalion the men who had managed to get on the first buses had also arrived safely. Boering and Voerman originally planned to return to Potocari, but once they were in Muslim territory that seemed too dangerous. After some delay, they were taken to Tuzla. There they briefly talked to Colonel Brantz and more extensively to the Joint Commission Observers about their experiences and observations of the past few days.⁸⁰⁰ They were subsequently sent to Zagreb by helicopter, to be reunited with the 55 freed hostages and the KHO-5 team that had been allowed to leave the enclave on July 15. Voerman flew back to the Netherlands, via Split, on July 16, together with the others, while Boering went to Bremen, from where he went home to Seedorf, Germany. When he got home, there was already a letter from the Ministry of Defence waiting for him to say that he was not allowed to talk to anyone about the events in Srebrenica/ Potocari.⁸⁰¹ Voerman would fly back a few days later to assist in Dutchbat's arrival in Zagreb.

⁷⁹⁷ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 216. He also informed Brantz. See: SMG, 1004/61. 'Message dtg 131430 from Col Brantz (d.t.v. DCBC)', in: 'various sources to Sitcen-BLS', 13/07/95, 20:27. The meaning of this message is discussed in the Chapter 'Circus Zagreb'.

⁷⁹⁸ Interview P. Boering, 14/12/01.

⁷⁹⁹ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

⁸⁰⁰ Interview P. Boering, 14/12/01.

⁸⁰¹ Interview P. Boering, 14/12/01.

The next convoys to get under way did in fact run into problems. That afternoon and evening, no less than 14 Mercedes cars were taken off Dutchbat personnel. However, the convoys could no longer be kept track of once they were past Vlasenica because of failing communications. Moreover, there was no clear picture in Potocari of the situation at the final destination, especially the fact that the refugees still had to cover a considerable distance on foot and that their reception in the Safe Area did not go as well as was being supposed. Franken said later:

‘I did not know about the hassles going on at the point where the refugees had to get out of the buses and the story of them then having to walk another distance. I had no information to be able to draw all sorts of other conclusions. That was running. At that stage we tried to get the wounded out as well, and as quickly as possible. I saw an opening to get those people out safely. You never knew with those Serbs when or how things would change again.’⁸⁰²

For Franken, this was reason to send the convoy with 54 wounded off as soon as possible, despite the late hour - it was close to 18.00 hours and dusk was not far away. To make sure there would be no problems, he had a message sent at the gate to VRS colonel Acamovic, who had been appointed by Mladic as his deputy that afternoon.⁸⁰³ The wounded convoy consisted of 54 wounded and was accompanied by 10 local nurses of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, as well as a few Dutchbat soldiers led by a (Dutch) Navy doctor, Colonel A. Schouten. The convoy arrived in Tisca well after midnight, and only a limited number of the wounded were allowed to go across the border. Men who pretended to be wounded and some of the nurses were taken away by the VRS. The rest of the convoy returned to Potocari, but was stopped at Yellow Bridge. While they were kept waiting there, one of the wounded men died. In the end the convoy drove back to Bratunac, where the wounded were admitted to the local hospital. Dr Schouten stayed with them during the next several days.⁸⁰⁴

In the light of Franken’s comments on his motives for sending the convoy of the wounded away, it seems fair to assume that Dutchbat personnel began to realise only after this that there were problems involving the transport of the men. The VRS foiled attempts to follow the buses that were carrying men by blockading the road at the edge of Bratunac and were refusing the Dutch escorts to pass. The Dutch also noticed that the same buses were back within an hour, leading them to conclude that the men had probably left the buses somewhere near Bratunac. Because of a shortage of vehicles that could be used to escort the refugees, it sometimes happened that there just wasn’t anything available. ‘A bus has just left without a (Dutchbat) escort,’ the watch commander reported at 21.16 hours.⁸⁰⁵

This was probably one of the last buses to leave Potocari that day, although it is not clear at what time precisely the evacuation stopped. It wasn’t until 22.45 hours that the UNMOs sent a message that the convoys had been halted because of the falling darkness.⁸⁰⁶ Six convoys, carrying an estimated 4000-5000 people had left the factory complexes around the compound.⁸⁰⁷ The day seemed to have come to an end for the VRS soldiers as well. Some of them told lieutenant Van Duijn that were going to Bratunac to celebrate their victory at the Hotel Fontana and would come back only the following day.⁸⁰⁸ At 21.00 hours and 22.30 hours, two groups of VRS soldiers totalling 70 and 75 respectively

⁸⁰² Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

⁸⁰³ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

⁸⁰⁴ The problems around the wounded convoy are comprehensively described in the Appendix ‘Dutchbat and the population: medical issues’.

⁸⁰⁵ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 12/07/95, entry 21.16

⁸⁰⁶ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNMO Srebrenica to UNMO-HQ Tuzla, Srebrenica update: dtg 121645B JUL 95,

⁸⁰⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 216, file BHC 6 Jul-27 Aug ‘95. UNPF-HQ daily sitrep 1200001B to 122359B JUL 95.

⁸⁰⁸ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

assembled on the road outside the compound at the point of the main gate. The watch commander saw them get into a 'city bus' and disappear in the direction of Bratunac.⁸⁰⁹

A few minutes before the last group got on the bus, the Ops Room got a message from the factory complexes: 'sudden panic among the refugees. Probably because of a small group of Serbs having a bit of fun. Trying to solve it.' Fifteen minutes later: 'All is calm again. Two injured. One man bitten by dog. One man hit himself on the head with a brick. Are now treating them'.⁸¹⁰

At the 'channel' created by the four APCs on the road, Koster and Van Duijn had been instructed by the VRS to clear the road of refugees and join them.⁸¹¹ Van Duijn was told that the road would be used to send troops to Zepa, Mladic's next target.⁸¹² The Ops Room received a report at 23.16 hours about two jeeps driving in the direction of Srebrenica.⁸¹³ Koster later said he had seen Mladic pass twice that night, first when he (Mladic) was on his way to Srebrenica and then again when he came back, but apart from the report we mentioned earlier, the Ops Room log book contains no other mention of traffic on the road. However, witness statements from refugees say they saw vehicles passing regularly, filled with Serb soldiers and civilians.⁸¹⁴

The possible connection between this traffic and the reported panic outbreak as well as later panic waves that remained unreported in the log book is part of an analysis of the events that took place during the night of July 12-13. The main questions concerning the performance of Dutchbat and the fate of the refugees in Potocari, relate to this night in particular and the following morning.

15. Dutchbat and the problem of the murders in Potocari: the rules

The impression that Dutchbat personnel witnessed more war crimes than they have actually talked about lies at the root of one of the most crucial questions surrounding the entire performance of the battalion. That question is bound up with another question that has been asked publicly: why didn't Dutchbat do more to prevent what in the public discussions was soon routinely called genocide?⁸¹⁵ This issue moved even more into the limelight following the investigations ordered by UN Secretary-General Annan in 1999 into the events in Srebrenica. In this report, Dutchbat's military performance that until then had been much criticised, was put into more perspective by way of a large number of comments that emphasised Dutchbat's inevitable powerlessness, especially because of the failure of UN air power. The questions and criticisms therefore now focused even more on the ostensibly inadequate reporting by Dutchbat of war crimes that were being observed and of indications of large-scale violations of human rights.

Before we talk about the events themselves, it is necessary to take a closer look at the formal framework that was in place for missions or SOPs within UNPROFOR. This framework consisted of the Standing Operating Procedures of UNPROFOR and, in particular, Standing Operating Procedure 208, 'Human rights and war crimes'. Standing Operating Procedure 208 was based on all relevant international conventions, charters and Security Council resolutions to do with human rights and war crimes.⁸¹⁶

⁸⁰⁹ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 12/07/95, entries 21.58 and 22.38

⁸¹⁰ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 12/07/95, entries 22.30 and 22.46

⁸¹¹ Interview E. Koster, 06/10/99.

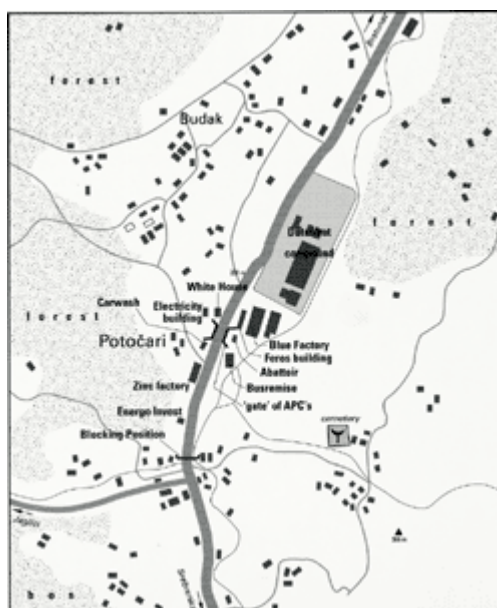
⁸¹² Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

⁸¹³ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 12/07/95, entry 23.16.

⁸¹⁴ Interview Camila Omanovic, 18/05/99.

⁸¹⁵ The use of the word 'genocide' is not being questioned here. It simply reflects its public use in relation to Dutchbat.

⁸¹⁶ To wit: A: Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 for the Protection of War Victims; B: The Hague Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and the Regulations annexed thereto of 18 October 1907; C: Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of genocide of 9 December 1948; D: Charter of the International Military Tribunal of 8 August 1945; E: Security Council Resolutions 764 (1992), 771 (1992) 780 (1992), 808 (1993) and 827 (1993); F: Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 2 of Security Council Resolution 808 (1993). Standard Operating Procedures UNPROFOR (01/09/93), SOP 208, Human Rights and War crimes.



Apart from the UNPROFOR troops, the warring factions in Srebrenica had also been formally informed of the applicable laws and rules of war and they had all formally accepted the validity of these laws. The preamble of the demilitarisation agreement signed by generals Mladic and Halilovic on 8 May 1993 reconfirmed that 'the Geneva conventions of 12 August 1949 and the protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the protection of victims of international armed (Protocol 1) are fully applicable in the conflict in Bosnia [sic] and Hercegovina [sic]'.⁸¹⁷ Signs placed on access roads to the Safe Area also gave notice of all this.

On the one hand, the purpose of Standing Operating Procedure 208 was to act as a deterrence to the warring factions in the short term, and, on the other hand, to create the possibility in the longer term for the Yugoslav Tribunal Prosecutor(s) to charge people who committed war crimes. UNPROFOR soldiers therefore had an obligation under this Standing Operating Procedure to make sure that all physical evidence of war crimes that they observed was secured and kept in a safe place. If they were approached by civilians who claimed to have information about possible war crimes, they had to explain to them that they had no authority to carry out investigations themselves. However, they did have the obligation to send all information, including witness statements, to the Bosnia-Hercegovina Command immediately, attention of the Legal Advisor. The latter would be responsible for further distribution and processing. In view of all this, a simple, well-structured and properly coordinated reporting procedure would be required and it was essential to have the support of all units and organisations in the operational area.

An appendix to Standing Operating Procedure 208 listed various examples of violations of the rules/laws of war and of human rights. The first one concerned the killing or wounding of enemy soldiers after capture or surrender. The same applied to civilians. This point further specified things like the indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets, sniper fire, and random executions. The third point concerned torture and cruel or inhuman treatment and forced labour. Examples of this included forced movements of people through the confrontation line and poor treatment of people who were being detained. Other points related to, among other things, 'forced eviction from apartments, houses villages or cities' but also unauthorised use of internationally recognised symbols and badges and insignia of organisations such as the Red Cross and the United Nations. The list ended with a safety net: 'This list is not complete, when in doubt report anyway'.⁸¹⁸

⁸¹⁷ The document has been included as Appendix 4 opgenomen in: Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 269-272.

⁸¹⁸ Standard Operating Procedures UNPROFOR, September 1993.

Notable in the Dutch-language Standing Orders of Dutchbat, which include some translated Standing Operating Procedures, the reference to procedures to do with humanitarian crisis situations and human rights violations has been omitted. The summary of standard report forms does not include the form that Standing Operating Procedure 208 refers to. However, the Standing Operating Procedures and other relevant instructions, such as the Force Commanders Directives, are presented as being applicable to the execution of the battalion's tasks. That serves as an illustration of the fact that reporting procedures on humanitarian matters were as yet poorly developed within UNPROFOR as a whole.⁸¹⁹

It is difficult to say to what extent the Dutch soldiers were fully aware of the existence of the procedures and the rules of law that were in force in regards to human rights violations. When people were being debriefed in Assen, they were all asked whether they had known about the rules/laws of war that had applied to the situation in Srebrenica, something that they had been taught about during training. Of the servicemen and women who were asked this question, 189 replied 'that they found it (their knowledge of the rules etc) adequate'. It's impossible to say whether this was just a routine answer that did not necessarily reflect reality. In any case, there were in fact some among those attending the debriefing sessions who said they didn't think their knowledge had been sufficient. Thirty-two of them said the theory did not fit reality, and about twenty even said they had received no instruction in the rules and laws of war at all.⁸²⁰ Strangely, the debriefers in Assen did not ask anyone whether he or she had also been familiar with the procedures in regards to violations of those laws; it's even doubtful that the debriefers themselves knew anything about these.

In determining how this formal framework functioned and to what extent Dutchbat soldiers used it as the basis for their actions, it is necessary to make an analytical distinction between the different groups of servicemen that this question is concerned with. The failure to make this distinction in many of the later public discussions about Dutchbat's role has led to matters getting confused and obscured in efforts to find explanations. Events at different locations and different points in time were sometimes mixed up, as a result of which the media, for instance, regularly created the impression that 'thousands of Muslims were murdered literally under the eyes of Dutchbat'. This completely ignores the fact that in reality the majority of the thousands of missing men died in their attempt to escape to Tuzla or at execution locations outside the enclave.

To begin with, there was the large group of servicemen who belonged to the main force in the Potocari compound and who eventually left the enclave on July 22. Within that group a distinction can be made between those who escorted the refugee convoys, and those who stayed behind in Potocari. In addition, there is the group consisting of OP crews taken hostage, totalling 55 soldiers, who were already released by the VRS on July 15 and arrived in Zagreb soon after. They got there more or less at the same time as the doctors and nurses of the KHO-5 group from Potocari who had been given permission for their postponed rotation, also on the 15th. The Dutchbat servicemen in Potocari are the main focus of this chapter, with the exception of the KHO group that we will talk about separately later.

The only official reports of murders that were sent from the enclave came from Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, who told Sarajevo on July 13 that nine to 10 bodies had been found and that there had been a possible observation of an execution. Karremans has always maintained that these were the only reports that had reached him from the battalion.⁸²¹ After the battalion's return from Srebrenica to Zagreb, Army Commander in Chief Couzy based his comments at his press conference on July 23 in

⁸¹⁹ Interview Peggy Hicks, 10/07/00. At the time, Hicks worked for the Human Rights Office (HRO), part of the Legal Office of the Civil Affairs department at the UNPF HQ in Zagreb. She was involved in the investigations into the events in Srebrenica.

⁸²⁰ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, par.4.7. Knowledge of the laws/rules of war, p. 311.

⁸²¹ SMG/Debrief. Debriefing C-Dutchbat 3, copy own text LCol Karremans, Deventer, 06/09/95 (Stg confidential/permanent) p. 13.

Zagreb on the same reports. Prior to his press conference statements, he said: 'I have here the exact facts as we know them so far and we think they're virtually complete'.⁸²²

However, the large-scale debriefing of Dutchbat in Assen that had been ordered by the Ministry of Defence in the autumn of 1995 already showed that there had been a number of indications of other murders. These indications were partially touched upon in the debriefing report, and in more detail in the so-called Factual Account Debriefing 'srebrenica' that was made public only later. Yet the number of confirmed and possible deaths on the basis of the debriefing only very slightly increased compared to the number reported by Karremans and Couzy. Based on the new information, the Ministry of Defence set the number of deaths at 13 to 14.

However, about that same time, early in October 1995, there were more and more stories in the media that pointed to massacres on a significantly larger scale. The publication at the end of August of American aerial photographs that possibly showed mass graves, had put many journalists on the trail. A lot of the information that they subsequently put together was based on statements from refugees and people who had survived executions. Part of that related to the mass executions that had taken place on locations outside the enclave. But other stories suggested that dozens and possibly hundreds of people had fallen victim in Potocari as well, near or perhaps even literally in full view of Dutchbat personnel. It is obvious that there was a proportional increase in the number of questions being asked about the role played by Dutchbat.

16. The question of numbers

To put the problem into sharper focus, it is necessary to first determine whether there is a numerical basis that can serve as a starting point for answering any questions about the actions of Dutchbat and the statements they themselves made about that later. Until now, those statements have not - or barely - been analysed in relation to material from other sources that do point to large-scale murders.

Over the years, many refugees have been interviewed, by different bodies, under different conditions and at different points in time, all of which influenced the way their statements came about. From the very beginning, the reliability of witnesses and to what degree their stories could be verified were the problems faced by journalists as well as investigators from all sorts of organisations, including those of the NIOD. This means that it is difficult to make a fully-reasoned selection of witness statements that can be called representative of what took place in Potocari.

Another complication in all this is that there has, to date, been very little in the way of supplementary forensic investigation that could support statements. Of all efforts made by the designated body, the Tribunal in The Hague, to reconstruct events in Srebrenica, only a small part focused on possible massacres in Potocari.

In 1996, when the Tribunal was working on the charges against Karadzic and Mladic, Tribunal Investigator Ruez already testified that 'dozens' and possibly even more people had died in the night of July 12-13.⁸²³ At that time, he based this mainly on eyewitness statements because there had as yet been little or no time for additional investigations. At the start of general Krstic's trial in 2000, Ruez declared that there still were gaps in regards to what was known about events in Potocari, which hopefully would be closed in the course of the trial.⁸²⁴ He and his colleagues were, after all, primarily concerned with the large-scale executions, in finding locations and victims as well as those who had been responsible for them. In point of fact, a number of witnesses were presented during a later stage of the trial, including some members of Dutchbat, who had to support the prosecutor's claim that large numbers of men had been murdered in the immediate area of Potocari. However, because no mass graves were found there, the Tribunal also remained in the dark as to exactly how many victims

⁸²² NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. 'Excerpts from press conference in Zagreb, 23/07/95 (full text of the introduction by Lieutenant General H.A. Couzy)'. Also in: *Diary Voorhoeve*, pp. 134-135.

⁸²³ ICTY, (IT-95-18-R61/IT-95-5-R61). Testimony J.-R. Ruez, ICTY, Karadzic and Mladic, 03/07/96.

⁸²⁴ ICTY, (IT-98-33-T). Testimony J.-R. Ruez, 30/03/00.

probably were involved, although based on the witness statements and forensic evidence that had also been gathered by then, the belief was that at least 80 and possibly a few hundred men had been killed in the Potocari area. The witness who gave evidence of a group of 80 men being taken away, provided, for instance, the detail that a hole had been cut for this in a barbed wire fence, making it possible to walk via a farm field in the direction of the forest. Tribunal investigators did in fact later find a provisionally patched hole in the location the witness had indicated.⁸²⁵

This sort of evidence increases the credibility of the statements, but doesn't remove all the drawbacks inherent in the use of sources like this. And although the Tribunal investigators did in fact, as Ruez promised, provide supplementary evidence for the murders in Potocari, we definitely cannot say that they closed all the gaps (in the available evidence).

The amount of qualitative source material about massacres in and around Potocari is so great in volume and provides so much detail that even the most conservative interpretation of the available information will show up the striking difference with the statements from the Dutchbat side. Determining the scale of the murders as exactly as possible plays an important role in explaining this contrast. Proper estimates are, however, difficult because much of the available quantitative information can only be treated with great caution.

Many of the figures that circulated about the numbers of refugees and the composition of the population still present a problem today. During the existence of the Srebrenica enclave as well as afterwards, it was difficult to get a reliable picture of the total number of people that were inside the enclave at the time of the attack. An added complication is that the discussion is subject to a political mortgage. The outcome of the count has a direct effect on all calculations of the numbers of people missing and, therefore, also on the question of, for instance, whether the scale of these numbers justifies the use of the word 'genocide'. Not surprisingly, the (Bosnian) Serb side has always expressed its doubts about the numbers of victims that are being claimed.⁸²⁶

Right from the beginning, those who were directly concerned also had difficulty trying to determine how many refugees there were in Potocari, inside the compound as well as outside. Counts were done at various times, by Dutchbat as well as UNMOs. In the description of events on July 11, we already talked about how Lieutenant Koster tallied up the numbers of refugees who came to Potocari and were sent on to the compound in groups of 25. In doing so, the Dutchbat soldiers made no distinction between men and women. It was only on July 13 that it became clear how many men were in the compound and in what age groups. Men in the able-bodied group, the category aged 15-60, became visible in the so-called 'list of 239', also known as 'Franken's list'. This list was drawn up after Franken had talked to two refugee representatives, Nesib Mandzic and Ibro Nuhanovic. However, the '239' handle is misleading because it is based on a hasty, incorrect count by Franken of the names on the list before he signed it. In reality, the list had 251 names on it. Franken and former interpreters said that about 70 men refused to put their names on the list because instead of protection they only expected problems if the Bosnian Serbs found their names on it.⁸²⁷ That would make the total number of able-bodied men present at the time about 320.

In reality, the total number of men in the compound was larger by an as yet unknown factor. Franken said that the refugee committee that took charge of the registration of people did not put elderly men on the list because they were expected to run less of a risk.⁸²⁸ Moreover, other information shows that boys younger than 15, even as young as 12, were pulled out of the refugee ranks by the

⁸²⁵ ICTY (IT-98-33-T) OPT Ex. 5/1.

⁸²⁶ For a recent example, see: C. van Zweeden, 'VN-diplomaat: minder executies in Srebrenica. Lijst van vermisten klopt niet' ('UN diplomat: fewer executions in Srebrenica. List of missing is incorrect'), *Haarlems Dagblad*, 27/06/01. The Bosnian Serb diplomat concerned is Darko Trifunovic, who investigated the events in Srebrenica himself for years. Interview D. Trifunovic, 10-12/06/98.

⁸²⁷ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01. Franken later noticed his own mistake.

⁸²⁸ 'Concept-report of conversation between Defence Minister J.J.C. Voorhoeve and major R.A. Franken on 28 August 1995'. Included in: *Diary Voorhoeve*, pp. 149-154 (151).

Bosnian Serbs when the compound was cleared late on the afternoon of July 13. Probably based on similar reasoning, Franken eventually came up with an estimate of 350 men having been in the compound.⁸²⁹

It needs to be commented here that not all men on the list were killed. A small number ended up in the prison camp of Batkovici near Bijeljina and were released in December 1995 as part of the Dayton Agreement, together with another group of men who came from Srebrenica.⁸³⁰

At the time of 'Franken's list', there were other estimates in circulation. Karremans believed that five percent of the total number of refugees, that he then estimated at 15,000 to 20,000 people, were men, in other words about 1000.⁸³¹ Franken later told the Tribunal that he thought there were 500-600 men outside the compound, bringing his total estimate to 850-950.⁸³² One estimate that was probably fairly accurate, of the number of men who were in the area marked off by tapes, came from a male refugee who survived. According to his count, the Serbs pulled about 1000 people out of the crowd outside the compound on July 12 and 13, most of which were men.⁸³³

The estimates by Karremans and Franken are in stark contrast with the one by a Dutchbat interpreter, Omer Subasic. In a comment on the debriefing report, he said he believed about 2000 men to have been in Potocari.⁸³⁴ In an extrapolation of the figures, the Tribunal also came to a total of 2000 men, three-quarters of them in the able-bodied category. Sergeant W. Sanders of the Supply platoon, who had been involved in the efforts to deal with the incoming stream of refugees, also arrived at a higher estimate, albeit by a considerable margin. He saw 'very few men' among the refugees and estimated their number at between five and 10 percent of a total of 5000 people inside the compound and about 25,000 outside it.⁸³⁵ That would mean there would have been 1500-3000 men. This last figure corresponds with the numbers that UNMOs mentioned in their reports, namely 3000 men.⁸³⁶ What this high number is based on is not clear because the UNMOs hardly ever patrolled outside the compound in Potocari, where they had already arrived on July 9. They, in turn, probably based their figures on estimates that they got from their interpreters, but for obvious reasons the latter didn't have any freedom of movement left either once the VRS had arrived in Potocari. Which is why Tribunal investigator Ruez urged caution when he mentioned this figure as a starting point for his sketch of the massacres in Potocari. He said he regarded it as 'as a very rough estimate'.⁸³⁷

⁸²⁹ ICTY, (IT-98-33-T). Testimony R.A. Franken, 04/04/00.

⁸³⁰ Interview Bosnian journalist Saleh Brkic, 10/09 and 11/09/99. This was also confirmed by Amor Masovic, chairman of the Bosnian State Commission for tracking down missing people, who mentioned the number of five men. Interview Amor Masovic, 05/08/98, details ICRC of numbers in Batkovici.

⁸³¹ CDS. 'Report of conversation with Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, 16 August 1995'. Appendix to: note DAB to Minister for Defence, 'Instruction to Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, 12 July last.', D95/429, 23/08/95. In later statements, Karremans adjusted the number of refugees upwards, putting it at 25,000. See: SMG/Debrief. Debriefing C-Dutchbat 3, copy own text LCol Karremans, Deventer, 06/09/95 (Stg confidential/permanent) p. 13.

⁸³² ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony R.A. Franken, 04/04/00. According to former interpreter Hasan Nuhanovic, representatives of the refugees made an estimate on July 13, at Franken's request and before the list of men in the compound itself was drawn up, that amounted to 2000 men outside the compound and 500 (10 percent of the estimated total of 5000 refugees) inside the compound. See: 'srebrenica List of 242', Letter Hasan Nuhanovic to Mient-Jan Faber, part 2, in: *Trouw*, 13/07/99.

⁸³³ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts on war crimes, Zivinice, (1).

⁸³⁴ Interview Omer Subasic, 19/04/98.

⁸³⁵ SMG/Debrief. Debriefing statement W.J. Sanders, Assen, 08/09/95. The total of 30,000 people was also in line with the estimate of Nesib Mandzic, who mentioned this figure to Mladic. See: ICTY (IT-98-33-T), OTP Ex. 40/a. Transcripts conversation with Mladic, 11/07/95.

⁸³⁶ See for instance the statement by ICTY (IT-98-33-T). UNMO J. Kingori, 31/03/00.

⁸³⁷ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), Testimony J.-R. Ruez 20/03/00. A few years earlier, during the charging process against Karadzic and Mladic, he had been considerably less cautious. See: 'Moslims ook nabij basis Dutchbat massaal vermoord' ('Muslims also murdered en masse near Dutchbat base'), *De Volkskrant*, 04/07/96.

17. Reports on missing people

To get to firmer ground, we therefore have to look at sources other than just Dutchbat and the UNMOs. The best source we can use for this are the figures based on a demographic study carried out at the request of the Tribunal by researchers Helge Brunborg and Henrik Urdal, which we already talked about in Chapter 2.⁸³⁸ The background to that request from the Tribunal were the claims that were made soon after the fall of the enclave, especially from the Serb side, that the reports about the numbers of people in the enclave and of the dead and missing were incorrect and had even been deliberately manipulated. Especially the so-called Serbian Unity Congress (SUC) made these kinds of comments, often on the Internet. To put an end to the continuing doubts, the Tribunal Prosecutor in the Krstic trial decided to ask for a count that was as accurate as it could possibly be.

To draw up a list of missing people who were to be linked to a place of disappearance, the researchers took the so-called ante-mortem database of the American humanitarian organisation Physicians for Human Rights as their starting point. Based on interviews with survivors, this database contained as much information as possible that could assist in the identification of bodies. However, all figures relating to numbers (of dead and missing) that come from this list, but also from other lists such as, for instance, the International Red Cross, are being regarded as minimum figures: because only direct family could report someone missing, it is possible that some people were never reported dead or missing because their immediate families had also perished, or because the international diaspora of many refugees prevented it. There are, for instance, examples of identified bodies that were found in mass graves but whose names had not been on any missing lists.⁸³⁹ The number of missing women that show up in the figures is also conspicuously low. Although the difference with the number of missing men fits in with the general picture that it was the men, in particular, who had been targeted, the number is so low that it is difficult to reconcile with witness statements about girls and young women being taken away. So the real number of men as well as women (that are dead and missing) is probably higher by an as yet unknown factor.

Shown below is a table of the last observations of missing people from Potocari, and it will serve as the starting point for the rest of the analysis:⁸⁴⁰

Males

	0-15	16-40	41-60	61-99	Total
11 th of July	3	99	236	128	466
12 th of July	10	107	343	172	632
13 th of July	15	156	416	228	815
					1913

Females

	0-15	16-40	41-60	61-99	Total
11 th of July	0	1	0	0	1
12 th of July	1	0	0	1	2

⁸³⁸ 'The number of missing persons from Potocari, Srebrenica, 11 – 13 July 1995', internally produced extrapolation by staff of the Prosecutor's Office at the Tribunal, made available to the NIOD. The extrapolation is based on information from: Helge Brunborg and Henrik Urdal, *Report on the number of missing and dead from Srebrenica*, 12 February 2000. ICTY Krstic (IT-98-33-T), OTP Ex. 276; also H. Brunborg, H. Urdal and T. Lyngstad, 'Accounting for genocide: how many were killed in Srebrenica?' (draft paper presented at the Uppsala conference on Conflict data, Uppsala 8-9 June 2001), 06/06/01. Loaned to NIOD by H. Brunborg for its perusal.

⁸³⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33T), Testimony H. Brunborg, 01/06/00

⁸⁴⁰ 'The number of missing persons from Potocari, Srebrenica, 11 – 13 July 1995', internally produced extrapolation by staff of the Prosecutor, based on report by Brunborg and Urdal; made available to NIOD.

13 th of July	0	0	1	2	3
					6

There are different ways of approaching these figures because they contain information that also plays a role in other issues. For now, however, it is more important to begin with the total of the men, the 1913 who are listed missing.⁸⁴¹ To answer the question that is the main focus of this chapter, the biggest problem is the number of 466 observations on July 11. It appears to be justified not to include these men in the calculations. After all, an unknown but undoubtedly high number of these men were among those who, after saying goodbye to their families who they had accompanied to Potocari, had gone into the hills for the trek to Tuzla.

Another complication here is that some witnesses claim that even in the night of July 11-12, people had already been taken away from the factory complexes in the area marked off with tape by Dutchbat. However, this is not very likely because the VRS appeared in Potocari in the course of July 12. In fact, many witnesses made a point of mentioning how quiet the first night, of July 11-12, had been compared to the second, of July 12-13. In many cases, such comments were accompanied by observations that, comparatively speaking, there had been many Dutch soldiers in the area during the night of July 11-12, but a lot fewer during the second night. That picture could be right: in the night of July 11-12, the blocking position was still in place on the south side of the compound and there was a sort of barricade manned by Dutchbat soldiers on the north side as well. There was a *Médecins Sans Frontières* post and a Dutchbat medical post at the bus depot, and medics were making regular rounds during the night. During the night of July 12-13, the monitoring activity was much lower, as will be discussed later.

A possible explanation for the stories about the first night may be provided by the phenomenon that the chronology of observations and memories has been telescoped and eventually even completely mixed up. All in all, for the purpose of the analysis it seems justified to ignore the numbers listed for July 11. To try and prove the supposition that many more murders were committed in Potocari than Dutchbat saw and reported, the numbers for July 12 and 13 offer sufficient leads.

As the table shows, the number of men who were last seen in Potocari on July 12 and 13 is 1447. In estimating the number of men who went missing in Potocari, it is also important to know how many of them were deported. Two to three hours after the unexpected start of the deportation on the 12th, when Dutchbat had managed to regroup a little and tried to introduce some structure in refugee transports, they began to keep tally of the numbers of refugees getting onto the buses. According to Franken, the number of buses had been kept track of from the start. After it had become clear that men were taken away in buses separately, tallies were being kept of those buses as well, by a soldier standing at the gate of the compound.⁸⁴² The figures were to be used to compare them with the numbers of people who arrived in Kladanj, or as a check option for the four static check posts that Karremans had been forced to set up along the evacuation route the next day after most of his vehicles that tried to escort the convoys had been stolen. Unfortunately, the tally lists have not survived - according to the then acting Battalion Commander Franken they were probably destroyed.⁸⁴³ However, a report from Karremans to Christina Schmitz of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, late on July 12, gives us some indication: Karremans told her that 70 buses each carrying 70 people - 4900 all told - had left Potocari.⁸⁴⁴ The surprising thing about this report is that Karremans says nothing about the use of trucks and semi-trailers to take people away, while it does appear that they were already used on July 12 as well. In any case, they are clearly visible in the video images shot by Warrant Officer Dijkema of the deportation.

⁸⁴¹ According to Brunborg, the total number of missing from Potocari was 2280, but a number of these were later still seen in other places. This became clear by comparing the lists of names of the ICRC and PHR. ICTY (IT-98-33T). Testimony H. Brunborg, 01/06/00.

⁸⁴² Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01. At least on the 13th this was soldier Verbugt.

⁸⁴³ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁸⁴⁴ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz) to Stefan (Oberreit), 13 July 1995, 01:52:42.

Numbers that turn up in a UNPF document of July 15 add up to a total of about 1000 men being carried off. The document is a fax from Ken Biser, head of Civil Affairs in Tuzla, who had been appointed by headquarters in Zagreb as 'lead officer UNPROFOR contact on the ground in the Srebrenica area'.⁸⁴⁵ The figure was made up of 293 people, probably able-bodied men, who had been 'removed from the compound, and another 700 or so, also able-bodied men, who had been among the 15,000 to 20,000 refugees outside the compound.'⁸⁴⁶ Those figures are roughly comparable to the figure of '700-1000' suspected prisoners kept at the Bratunac stadium that Franken mentioned to Christina Schmitz on July 15.⁸⁴⁷ And in conclusion, there is an obscure, probably Serb, source that claims that a group of men, 'amounting to about 500 or 750 (or 2%-3% of 25,000) were transferred to Bratunac, where they were screened for a check of war crimes'.⁸⁴⁸

If Franken's highest number of 350 men in the compound and Biser's reported number of 700 men deported from outside the compound (adding up to a total of 1050) are compared to the 1447 of the table, a gap of nearly 400 men who possibly disappeared in Potocari remains. To be able to take this number as a starting point, it is necessary to first consider a statement that may have a bearing on this. The description of the first deportations on July 12 already mentioned the story of Hurem Suljic, who was taken away from Potocari and survived an execution. Suljic claims that no less than 300 men were removed without Dutchbat knowing anything about it, at the direct orders of Mladic. They were put into two buses who then followed a red car.⁸⁴⁹ If Suljic is correct in believing that a large number of men escaped the attention of Dutchbat, then the number of men who left Potocari - not counting the compound - is not 700 as counted by the Dutch, but 1000. As a result, the gap of 400 is reduced to 100 men that we cannot account for.

It is difficult to say how reliable Suljic's statement is, but it does leave room for some annotations. A weak point in his story is, in particular, the number of people in relation to the number of buses that were supposed to have been used. Three-hundred people in two buses does appear to be an extraordinary number, even if people were literally squashed, with their noses to the windows. That did in fact sometimes happen.⁸⁵⁰ Still, even then the figure of 150 people per bus seems on the high side. There are reports from Dutchbat members about two buses each carrying 50 people, but because different types of buses seem to have been used, this doesn't give us a definite answer as to the maximum number of people per bus.⁸⁵¹ As we mentioned earlier, Karremans, for instance, was talking

⁸⁴⁵ See UNGE, UNPF, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 04/04-23/08/95. Fax M. Moussalli, HCA Zagreb, to Ph. Corwin, CA HQ BHC Sarajevo, 12/07/95.

⁸⁴⁶ See for in stance: UNGE, UNPF, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 04/04-23/08/95. Fax K. Biser to Ph. Corwin, Srebrenica update/Tuzla weekly report, 15/07/95. UNPF B&H sector NE (Tuzla) Civil Affairs. The number of 293 was almost certainly in reality the number 239 - the infamous list - that had been passed on incorrectly either as a result of stress of inadequate command of English by interpreter Hasan Nuhanovic in a telephone conversation with Biser on the 13th of 14th. (Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05/08/98). The misunderstanding leads to a difference that, however, is offset again for a large part by the correction that has to be applied to the 'list of 239'.

⁸⁴⁷ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz) to Stefan (Oberreit), 13/07/95, 01:52:42. This figure then began to circulate in Zagreb as well.

⁸⁴⁸ This undated and unauthorised document goes under the heading 'Case study Srebrenica', and is, apparently, a 'summary' of a larger work entitled 'Ignored massacres of Bosnian Serbs and alleged massacre of Muslims'. The figures are in paragraph 26, 'Fall of Srebrenica'. It's just as obscure what the figures are based on. The document can be found on the pro-Serb website of the Toronto-based 'Centre for Peace in the Balkans': <http://www.balkanpeace.org>

⁸⁴⁹ Rohde, *A safe are*, pp. 223-224, 409-410 (note 52). A number of Dutchbat statements in Assen talk about a relatively late-model Toyota Celica, red in colour, that belonged to a VRS officer who was apparently in charge at the White House. SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas* pp. 236-237.

⁸⁵⁰ It was seen in Bratunac, among other places, by the independent Serb journalist Bratislav Grubacic. Interview Bratislav Grubacic, 06/11/97.

⁸⁵¹ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas* p. 226. Witnesses also talked about an open truck that twice carried off about 50 men; after it had disappeared from sight near Bratunac, about 100 shots were heard. Ditto, p. 225.

about buses carrying 70 people each.⁸⁵² Another possibility is that Suljic's estimate of the number of people involved is too high.

However, the time that Suljic mentioned also raises questions about his claims. He places the event at around 19.00 hours. Just then, at 18.57 hours to be precise, Dutchbat's log book records the departure of two buses, described as convoy 5 (K5), accompanied by a Dutchbat escort in a Mercedes.⁸⁵³ Unfortunately it doesn't say who were in the buses, so we have no way of proving without a shadow of a doubt whether these two buses were the same buses (carrying only men) that Suljic refers to.

If the two buses that Suljic talks about are the same as those recorded in Dutchbat's log book, it is obvious that this particular transport was in fact seen, and the tally lists were not 'short' of 300 men. It's impossible to discover the exact number of men because Suljic's estimate may have been too high. That impression is reinforced by other statements from Dutchbat members. In any case, two of them said at the debriefing in Assen that they saw a group of 200 men who had been assembled at the White House opposite the compound being taken away by bus. That happened without a Dutchbat escort, which would explain why Suljic thought that this transport had not been noticed.⁸⁵⁴ Another Dutch soldier who managed to get into the same house saw 'a few hundred men' there.⁸⁵⁵ However, it's not clear whether these observations were of the figures relating to the number of men that were taken away from Potocari.

Of course we cannot rule out the possibility that there was more than one group of 300, or that other large numbers of men escaped Dutchbat's notice. For instance, one soldier referred in Assen to a completely closed and shuttered truck that he had seen driving away from the White House several times without it being possible to say who it was carrying.⁸⁵⁶ Yet another soldier talked about a Ford Transit van that drove off twice carrying - the more modest number of 15 - prisoners.⁸⁵⁷ Dutchbat members also mentioned that 'small military vans' had been used'.⁸⁵⁸ However, none of these reports point to sudden large-scale movements of prisoners.

In conclusion, it cannot be ruled out completely that a number of men were already carried off in the short period immediately after the start of the evacuation, before Dutchbat began to keep a tally of the number of buses and the people they were carrying. There are no real indications that this did in fact happen, but it is known that men were initially separated to be questioned in locations that were a few hundred metres away from the area where the buses and trucks were. That would have made it more difficult to then take these men away without anyone seeing it. So it really does not seem likely that the numbers of men who were deported were as large as the numbers that Suljic talked about.

Based on the available information, a more accurate estimate than what we have arrived at above does not seem possible. So the cautious conclusion is that possibly between 100 and 400 men disappeared in Potocari.

18. The question of the old and the young men

Suljic provided one interesting detail in his statement, namely that the group of 300 comprised mainly old men. Although there are a few statements by Dutchbat members who also point to a large number of younger men being taken away, Suljic's statement fits in with a conspicuous red thread running through a large number of Dutchbat witness statements that all emphasise that it was mainly *old* men that they saw being taken away. That impression played an important role in the estimates by

⁸⁵² MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz) to Stefan (Oberreit), 13/07/95, 01:52:42.

⁸⁵³ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, entry 18.59, 12/07/95. (report by 82 E)

⁸⁵⁴ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, pp. 226 and 234.

⁸⁵⁵ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 230.

⁸⁵⁶ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 235.

⁸⁵⁷ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 223.

⁸⁵⁸ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 198.

Dutchbat's senior officers as well as Nicolai and De Ruiter in Sarajevo. 'separating men of "military age" was (...) never seen as an acute problem because there were no such men among the refugees,' Lieutenant Colonel De Ruiter wrote in a review, repeating what his superior, general Nicolai, had said on the subject.⁸⁵⁹ Therefore, it is important to look at the origins of this far-reaching misunderstanding in greater detail.

The number of statements that support the idea that the majority of men who had been in Potocari had not been in the able-bodied category is quite extensive. For instance, referring to the men in the White House, one Dutchbat soldier said they had all been older than 60 and that there had definitely not been any young men among them.⁸⁶⁰ Another soldier spoke of 'more than 200 male refugees', who, he said, had been 'older (...) than 55'.⁸⁶¹ And yet another Dutchbat member said he had not seen any men in the 20-55 age category, only 'women, children and old men'.⁸⁶² Most officers and non-commissioned officers of Dutchbat said similar things. For instance, Rave made a note in his notebook of a fresh impression that the men being taken away involved 'mainly old men and boys (+/- 17 years of age)'.⁸⁶³ Lieutenant Rutten, who visited the White House on July 13, also saw few young men among them.⁸⁶⁴ His colleague Mustert, who also entered the same house that day and saw about 200 men there, had the impression 'that these men are older than 55'.⁸⁶⁵ Karremans and Franken also believed that mainly older men were involved. Karremans later wrote that even when the refugees first arrived at the compound, 'it was already quite obvious that almost all refugees were women, children and elderly people'. And: 'Only a handful of able-bodied men (aged 17-60) were outside the compound'.⁸⁶⁶ Major Otter, the compound Commander, also declared soon after the fall of Srebrenica that when the refugees arrived at the compound, Dutchbat had counted roughly 4800 people, mostly women and children and only about five percent of the total were men, only a few of whom were in the able-bodied category.⁸⁶⁷

The fact that the battalion's senior officers knew about the able-bodied men who had ended up on the 'list of 239' had no effect on the widely-held impression that the majority of men did not belong to that category. Compared to the total number of refugees, it was in fact only a small number. In conclusion, UNMO Kingori also declared that he had the impression that most of the men were either older than those in the able-bodied category, or young boys.⁸⁶⁸

At the same time, there are a striking number of witness statements from refugees who had formed the same impression, such as the woman who was already interviewed at one of the refugee centres on July 20 by a UN staff member who regarded her as 'quite credible'. The woman said that when she walked to the bus, she passed a house with a garden, which is how other people have also described the White House, where she saw a very large group of old people standing outside in the

⁸⁵⁹ DCBC, 1082. Note J.A.C. de Ruiter to DCBC/Army Crisis staff, 'Last days' Dutchbat in Srebrenica', 20/08/95; ditto C.H. Nicolai to DCBC/Army Crisis staff, 'Last days' Dutchbat in Srebrenica', 16/08/95.

⁸⁶⁰ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 230.

⁸⁶¹ SMG/Debrief. Debriefing statement J.M. Mustert, 08/09/95.

⁸⁶² SMG/Debrief. Debriefing statement R.P. van Veen, 11/09/95.

⁸⁶³ Notebook B. Rave. Loaned to the NIOPD for its perusal.

⁸⁶⁴ SMG, 1007/25. Note Petra Groen, 'Confrontation aoo Oosterveen and 1st lieutenant Rutten in regards to inquiry into war crimes, Camp Pleso 230795, 1-1.30 pm'. This detail is missing from later statements by Rutten.

⁸⁶⁵ SMG/Debrief. Debriefing statement J.E. Mustert, 08/09/95.

⁸⁶⁶ SMG/Debrief. Debriefing C-Dutchbat 3, copy own text LCol Karremans, Deventer, 6 September 1995 (Stg confidential/permanent) p. 13. See: SMG, 1007. G. Bastiaans (debriefeer) and C. Klep (report), 'Report debriefing major Otter (C-Ststcie), 23/07/95, Camp Pleso'.

⁸⁶⁷ See: SMG, 1007. G. Bastiaans (debriefeer) and C. Klep (report), 'Report debriefing major Otter (C-Ststcie), 23/07/95, Camp Pleso'.

⁸⁶⁸ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), Testimony J. Kingori, 31/03/00.

yard.⁸⁶⁹ Local representatives of the International Red Cross and UNHCR later used the description 'first three classes of secondary school, and older people'.⁸⁷⁰

Against the background of the figures on the last observations on July 12 and 13, 1047 missing men in the 0-60 category, according to the table, or about 75% of the total, this picture raises all sorts of questions. Therefore, it is worth taking another look - based on the missing figures - at the story about the old men, and ask ourselves whether it is possible that the majority of men who were taken away by bus and truck did *not* belong to the able-bodied category, and that it was the younger men, in particular, who were in fact kept in Potocari and disappeared there, having been murdered. A combination of figures and qualitative information does appear to make that a plausible assumption.

The difference between the probable number of people taken away on July 12 and 13, and the reports on the number of people posted missing in Potocari is, as mentioned before, probably about 400. Of the roughly 1000 people who were removed, about 350 came from the compound, the majority of them in the able-bodied category. The number of older men among them cannot be determined with certainty, but if the total estimate, 'list of 239' (252) plus non-registered (people who refused to have their names put on the list) plus people who were not in the able-bodied category is anywhere near accurate, it would have been about 50.⁸⁷¹

In view of the total number 400 older men posted missing, about 350 would have had to come from outside the compound. That could fit in with the aforementioned statements by Suljic and several members of Dutchbat. That, in turn, would mean that of the total of 1000 men who were taken away, about 650 would have been in the able-bodied category, more than half of whom belonged to the men inside the compound (the people who were on the 'list of 239' and those who refused to be on it). In that case, about 300 able-bodied men from outside the compound would have been taken away, something that fits in with the aforementioned observations by Dutchbat members who had also seen large numbers of younger men. When we offset this figure against the total of 1047 missing able-bodied men, it is in fact true to say that we are left with a number of 400 such men who disappeared in Potocari itself.

So, of those taken away from outside the compound, older men did form a majority. However, it's not a clear and unambiguous majority and that so many people had, nevertheless, formed that impression must have been caused by other factors. When Franken was confronted with the discrepancy, he suggested that many men had looked older than they really were because of the hardships and filthy conditions they had had to endure.⁸⁷² That would be even more plausible if it was especially the older able-bodied men, the 'border-line cases', who had been taken to Bratunac and subsequently to the execution locations.

The woman refugees who had seen the older men in the yard of the White House, also said that there had been no young men among them, because those had all been taken away during the night.⁸⁷³ Her statement dovetails with a large number of similar statements, including the one by Sejfo Mehic who we quoted earlier. There are strong indications that there was a specifically-targeted pre-selection. In that context, this may also explain why the men who were taken away on the 13th via the White House had to pile all their personal possessions in the yard before entering the house. At that point,

⁸⁶⁹ Interview Peggy Hicks with 'AC', 20/07/95, Babici Collection Centre, Gracanica, UN CA Zagreb, Human Rights Cell (NIOD, collection Hicks). On the other hand, the women mentions the unreal number of 1000 men, something that should perhaps be read as 'quite a lot'.

⁸⁷⁰ Interview Muhamed Masic and Almir Ramic, 08/11/99. Masic was a local staff member of ICRC and MSF; Ramic was the local representative of UNHCR.

⁸⁷¹ On the face of it this is a low number; it implies that on July 11 it was mainly young men who managed to find refuge on the Dutchbat base. The majority of the registered men, 144, were in the 16-40 category; 101 in the 41-60 category and only six were aged 0-15. It suggests a 'survival of the fittest' and a less orderly situation at the time of their entry than some statements by Dutchbat personnel would suggest.

⁸⁷² Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁸⁷³ Interview Peggy Hicks with 'AC', 20/07/95, Babici Collection centre, Gracanica, UN CA Zagreb, Human Rights Cell. NIOD, collection Hicks.

apparently, their identity already no longer mattered. At the same time, the fact that when bodies were discovered of people who had been executed their identity papers were also found in the immediate area, suggests that their identities had been checked before they were executed.

Although there are many reasons that can explain the impression that mostly older men had been in Potocari, and also the notion that they had nothing to fear from the VRS because of their age, it still remains strange that this was the picture that so many people had of the situation. The fact that it wasn't just Dutchbat personnel who had formed this impression makes it unlikely that this was an attempt to evade responsibility. It remains more likely that a large proportion of men in the able-bodied category were picked out quite early in the piece, without Dutchbat soldiers noticing it. However, it still is strange that the list that was drawn up of able-bodied men in the compound apparently had no influence on the prevailing view that mostly older men were involved, and that Nicolai and De Ruiter apparently never knew about it.

19. Why did murders take place in Potocari?

In Chapter 2 of this part, we have talked about the executions that took place outside the enclave. As we now know, however, 100-400 men from Srebrenica were also executed in Potocari. The question to what extent this was premeditated plays an important role in all discussions and trials relating to events in eastern Bosnia. However, in answering the question how likely it is that a large number of Bosnian men were murdered in Potocari and what sort of criteria dictated their selection, it is necessary to find out whether specific motives played a role in this. Knowing that most of the men who were taken away by bus ended up in execution locations outside the enclave, it appears - in first instance - strange that a large number of men were murdered immediately, on the spot. That is even stranger because the risk of discovery seemed greater because of the proximity of UN troops. What was it that caused them to lose their lives right there, and not later in another location? Trying to answer that question becomes even more difficult because of the almost total lack of statements by perpetrators who might have been able to explain this.

The Tribunal Prosecutor in general Krstic's trial suggested that the purpose for killing the men was to act as an instrument of terror, to make sure that refugees would have no thought of staying in the area. That's why certain executions were deliberately staged near watering points, where bodies would be sure to be found by refugees looking for water. It is certain that there are in fact many witness statements that appear to confirm that pattern. At the same time, this sort of psychological warfare is an unsatisfactory explanation for two reasons. Even if an element of terror played a role, it still explains only part of the number of murders. It's also doubtful that the murderers deliberately wanted to run the risk of discovery. As we have said earlier, the use of Dutch uniforms actually points to the opposite. Also, there are several statements by refugees who said that they, too, were in some cases actually prevented from entering locations where there were bodies or where murders were possibly taking place. One example of this was a house with a watering point, near the zinc factory, that features in many statements.⁸⁷⁴ Some people said there was even a period when they were not permitted to go outside the factories.

It is hardly believable that the VRS really wanted the Dutch to find evidence of executions. Which is why discoveries of bodies reported by Dutchbat soldiers have to be regarded as mainly flukes, that they came across only after moving a fair distance away from their base. There is a large number of statements by members of Dutchbat as well *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff and UNMOs that indicate the VRS in fact tried to prevent observations and patrols. They did this, on the one hand, by setting up extensive security at apparently sensitive locations, and, on the other, by a campaign of deliberate intimidation - the heat of which was turned up emphatically in the course of July 13. For instance, one

⁸⁷⁴ See for instance the testimony from the BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Municipal Commission Zivinice, (1).

Dutchbat soldier said a VRS soldier had demonstratively showed him an armour-piercing shell and at the same time pointed at the UN soldier's flak jacket.⁸⁷⁵ Another soldier was even given one such shell as a present, but he later handed it in to the Explosives Clearing Section.⁸⁷⁶ Yet another soldier knew that the shells were being given away just in case 'the UN soldiers would become difficult'.⁸⁷⁷

A soldier who looked on as five or six VRS soldiers used their rifle butts to beat up a Muslim man on the afternoon of July 13, was ordered by the soldier closest to him 'to look elsewhere'.⁸⁷⁸ The battered man was subsequently dragged by his hair behind the house, from where a shot rang out a few seconds later. The VRS soldiers then came back, without the man.⁸⁷⁹ When Christina Schmitz of *Médecins Sans Frontières* was alerted by a Dutch soldier of the discovery of a number of bodies behind the factory and she wanted to go there together with an UNMO to have a look, a VRS soldier told her she could do so if she wished, but he could not guarantee their safety.⁸⁸⁰

Another thing that strikes us in the witness statements is that they present the picture that many men were killed with knives. The only explanation for this seems to be that the murders had to take place without anyone noticing. During the day, they were apparently less reluctant to use firearms, judging by the fact that many Dutchbat soldiers continually heard shots that made them think people were being executed. The VRS soldiers possibly relied on the noise of the thousands of refugees and the dozens of vehicles making their activities less obvious. In this context, we also have to point out that many other Dutchbat members explicitly declared they had heard no shots at all during those days. The possibility that here, too, memories were being suppressed is regarded as plausible.

What all this means is that the VRS wishing to intimidate the local population on the one hand, and trying to prevent Dutchbat and the refugees from seeing any wrong-doings on the other, are not mutually exclusive propositions. The notion that all VRS troops on the spot followed uniform guidelines does not seem tenable. In that context, the composition of the units operating in Potocari is important. Franken and many other Dutchbat members noticed that the professional-looking troops who moved in from the north on July 12 were replaced by 'second and third-echelon scum' fairly soon after that'.⁸⁸¹ Many Dutchbat soldiers talked about 'Rambo types', who belonged to various paramilitary units. They saw many Drina Wolves, in particular, but one soldier also recognised White Eagles from the Serb nationalist Seselj.⁸⁸² Montenegrins and even Greek mercenaries were also found among the soldiers who spread all over Potocari. In addition, there was a unit from Mount Zvijezda that arrived in Potocari in a white truck. Their leader was a man called Milan Lukic, who had led a hit squad in Visegrad in 1992, when many of the town's inhabitants fled to Srebrenica.⁸⁸³ One of them was, for instance, Almir Ramic, who became UNHCR's local representative in Srebrenica.

Most notable was the presence of a unit that has stayed out of the limelight even until now, the infamous Arkan Tigers. Karremans as well as Franken later declared they had never had any indication that the Tigers were there, providing the umpteenth example of how badly the chain of communications failed in those days. Because other members of Dutchbat definitely knew the Tigers

⁸⁷⁵ Debriefing statement P.P.J. Wils, Assen, 12/09/96.

⁸⁷⁶ See also: SMG/Debrief. Debriefing statement J. Thijsen, Assen, 07/09/95.

⁸⁷⁷ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas* Debriefing 'srebrenica' (Assen, 30/08 – 22/09/95) p. 304.

⁸⁷⁸ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas* Debriefing 'srebrenica' (Assen, 30/08 – 22/09/95) p. 238

⁸⁷⁹ SMG/Debrief. Debriefing statement R.H. van Beukering, Assen, 11/09/95.

⁸⁸⁰ 'Audition de Christina Schmitz et Daniel O'Brien, 29 mars 2001', <http://www.paris.msf.org> The soldier concerned probably was Dutch commando P. Wouters. SMG/Debrief. Debriefing statement P. Wouters, 06/09/95.

⁸⁸¹ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁸⁸² SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas* Debriefing 'srebrenica', p. 308.

⁸⁸³ Grace Kang, Note for the file, Visit to Displaced Persons at UN airbase, 18 July 1995. UNPF HQ CA Human Rights Cell (NIOD, collection Hicks). See also: Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p. 296. Sudetic pays a lot of attention to Lukic elsewhere in his book as well. He was charged by the Tribunal in October 1998 in relation to the death of 65 people in Visegrad on 14 June 1992. Most of them died in a house that Lukic and his accomplices had set fire to. Anyone who tried to flee was shot. One of his accomplices, Mitar Vasiljevic, was arrested and brought before the Tribunal in 2001. Milan Lukic as well as his distant cousin and accomplice Sredoje Lukic had at that time still not been arrested.

were in the area, if only because some of them (the Tigers) informed the Dutch soldiers of this with pride.⁸⁸⁴ Other Dutchmen who were kept hostage in Bratunac saw Arkan Tigers there, accompanied by about 15 ‘vicious’ Alsatians.⁸⁸⁵ Witness statements from refugees as well as Dutchbat personnel show that these dog units, of which there were more, were used to clear the houses around Potocari.

Zeljko Raznjatovic, ‘Arkan’, was also seen in person in Potocari by, among others, several local inhabitants. One of them was *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff member Emira Selimovic, who bumped into Mladic at about 9 p.m. on the night of July 12. At the time, *Médecins Sans Frontières* was driving around in a pick-up truck outside the ‘yellow area’ (the area of the factory complexes and bus depot that Dutchbat had marked with yellow tape) to look for people who needed help. While talking to Mladic about this, Selimovic also saw Arkan. Mladic even asked him if he wanted to be introduced to *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Arkan’s response was ‘fuck off’ and a raised middle finger in the direction of the *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers.⁸⁸⁶

Arkan’s presence was also reported to Lieutenant R. Rutten, who had in fact already seen the Tigers but had not seen Arkan himself. After the fall of the enclave, Rutten had to make room in his prefab for a corporal of the 3rd platoon of his company. After the arrival of B company that following its expulsion from Srebrenica no longer had a home of its own, new sleeping arrangements had to be made. When they were talking one night, probably on Thursday, July 13, this corporal told Rutten that he had seen Arkan. Rutten had a newspaper picture of Arkan hanging in his prefab, taken at the wedding of Arkan and turbo-folk diva Svetlana Velickovic, better known as ‘Ceca’. Group members and group leaders had seen that picture. When the corporal told him about Arkan, Rutten showed him the picture again, to make sure. The corporal confirmed that the man in the picture was the man he had seen.⁸⁸⁷ Arkan was recognised in similar fashion by radiographer F. Wiehink, who saw him standing about 300 metres south of the compound. Wiehink also identified Arkan on the basis of newspaper articles and a video tape that he had seen once.⁸⁸⁸ ‘I recognised him by his baby face,’ the Dutchbat man said.⁸⁸⁹ Another Dutch soldier also recognised Arkan from photographs and believed to have seen him accompanied by another, unidentified, man. They were wearing ‘a plain khaki/grey uniform’ and a red beret.⁸⁹⁰ Apart from these Dutchbat members, UNMOs also positively identified Arkan on July 13.⁸⁹¹

The locations indicated by Wiehink and Selimovic place Arkan near the factory complexes where the refugees were. It is difficult to determine whether his Tigers were involved in the night-time events, but at least one Dutchbat soldier made a statement in Assen that points to it. At night, when he was with the refugees at the bus depot, his flak jacket, blue helmet, water bottle and some other pieces of equipment were stolen. He said the thieves had been “‘Hooligan Serbs’ with Tiger emblems on their sleeves, wearing dark purple suits and Rambo headbands’.”⁸⁹²

⁸⁸⁴ SMG/Debrief. Debriefing statement P.P.J. Wils, Assen, 12/09/96. See also: ICTY (IT-98-33-T), testimony D. Vaasen, 27/03/00.

⁸⁸⁵ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas* Debriefing ‘srebrenica’, p. 309.

⁸⁸⁶ Interview Emira Selimovic, 21/10/97. See also: BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Zivinice, (2). It is not known whether the two sources are related. Selimovic saw Arkan with Mladic when he walked ‘to the trucks’ on Thursday morning.

⁸⁸⁷ Interview R. Rutten, 22/12/99.

⁸⁸⁸ Debriefing statement F. Wiehink, 14/09/95.

⁸⁸⁹ E. Nysingh, ‘Bosnische Serven executeerden 2000 moslims’ (‘Bosnian Serbs executed 2000 Muslims’), *De Volkskrant*, 05/10/95.

⁸⁹⁰ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas* Debriefing ‘srebrenica’ (Assen, 30 August – 22 September 1995) p. 295.

⁸⁹¹ No direct reports by UNMOs from the enclave have been found, but information about Arkan’s presence did in fact reach the UNMO headquarters in Tuzla. See: UNMO HQ BH NE (DSMO) to UNMO HQ Zagreb (attn comd Segers), 191100B July 1995, subject: attack on Srebrenica enclave. (NIOD, Coll. Segers). The report was repeated at the debriefing of the UNMOs in Zagreb: ‘On Thursday, while busy evacuating the refugees, Arkan (sic) troops and Arkan (sic) himself, were positively identified at the scene’. In: SMG/Debrief. G2 (UNPF HQ) to COS, ‘Debrief of UNMOs from the Srebrenica enclave’, 24/07/95, p. 6.

⁸⁹² SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 30.

To what extent the presence of the Tigers should have been a pointer to the fact that something was amiss, can be deduced from the label that one Dutchbat member, army medic B. van der Grift, put on them when he went back to Srebrenica a year later, accompanied by a journalist: ‘a clean-up commando’.⁸⁹³ It makes it even more peculiar that neither Karremans nor Franken knew about all this at the time.⁸⁹⁴ It is not the only example of the major communication problems that existed in the battalion in those days.

Yet the presence of irregular troops is not in itself an adequate explanation of what happened in Potocari. They were often deliberately sent in by commanders of regular units who knew what would happen if they were given a free hand. In other words, it was not necessary for Mladic and Krstic to give the orders. The fact that Mladic and Arkan were seen together makes this clear. At the time, rumours were already circulating in Serbia that Mladic had scoured the entire Drina valley searching for paramilitary groups who wanted to take part in evening the score with the Muslims of Srebrenica.⁸⁹⁵ To what extent personal motives also played a role in the decision of Arkan and his Tigers to take part in the operation against Srebrenica is not clear, although there was a relationship with Srebrenica dating from the beginning of the war.

While the large-scale executions outside the enclave looked much more like cold, impersonal ethnic cleansing, the events in Potocari seem to have been very much in the nature of personal acts of revenge. Elsewhere there were no cold personal scores settled. A 35-year-old survivor of a mass execution who was interviewed by staff of Civil Affairs of the UN, recounted how after their capture, VRS soldiers asked for men from certain villages, such as Glogova, Kamenica, Osmace, Zedanjsko and Konjevic Polje. The man said that the reason wanted men from these particular villages was that they were relatives of Serbs who had died there or that Serbs had suffered defeats there.⁸⁹⁶ Mladic was the least choosy, it seems. When a Dutchbat employee walked to the trucks and buses, she recognised the general from television. She saw how we walked up to one of his soldiers who formed the rows that people had to pass through: [Mladic] grabbed him by his belt and said: “Neither young, nor old taller than this belt”. It was immediately clear to her that not a single man was allowed to leave on the buses.⁸⁹⁷ Other witnesses recalled that the length of an upright rifle was literally taken as the standard measure.⁸⁹⁸

However, many Bosnian Serbs in Potocari found this approach too easy. It strongly appears that anyone who had a score to settle could pick his own victims in Potocari. Most of these scores had been running since the fighting in 1992 and 1993. Especially the Serb defeat at Kravica and the subsequent destruction and murders by the Oric troops were indelibly stamped on Serb memories.⁸⁹⁹ A book that described these events also including lists of names of wanted ABiH soldiers had already appeared in 1994.⁹⁰⁰ It was only a matter of waiting for the moment of revenge. Many openly admitted this. For instance, the Serbian-American Danielle Sremac, who visited Bratunac in May 1995, talked to two brothers whose parents had been killed in Kravica and who swore they would avenge their deaths. Some of the people that Sremac met in Bratunac knew exactly which Muslim soldiers in Srebrenica had been responsible for the slaughter among Bosnian Serbs in 1992. Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic is later supposed to have said: ‘It was these elements of the Bosnian Serb forces in the

⁸⁹³ A. Karskens, ‘Terug naar mijn hel’ (‘Return to my hell’), *Nieuwe Revu*, 20/07/96.

⁸⁹⁴ ICTY (IT-95-18-R61/IT-95-5-R61), Testimony Th. Karremans, 04/07/96; interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁸⁹⁵ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p. 296

⁸⁹⁶ Interview ‘NO’, Tuzla Air Base, 22/07/95, by Grace Kang. UNPF HQ CA Human Rights Cell. NIOD, Coll. Hicks.

⁸⁹⁷ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Tuzla, (3).

⁸⁹⁸ Conversation with female refugees in Tinja, 02/02/98.

⁸⁹⁹ For a description of the attack that took place on the evening of Orthodox Christmas Day, 07/01/93, see: Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp. 161-162.

⁹⁰⁰ Milivoje Ivanisevic, *Hronika našeg groblja* (‘Chronicle of our cemetery’. With the sub-title: ‘story of the suffering of the Serb population in Bratunac, Milici, Strelani and Srebrenica’), 1994.

Srebrenica area that were most difficult to control. They really wanted to get at the Muslim soldiers sitting in Srebrenica who committed these crimes'.⁹⁰¹

However, the suggestion that this was just an unfortunate coincidence is difficult to sustain. Mladic later told a journalist: 'We knew exactly who had done what'.⁹⁰² He subsequently provided the opportunity to indulge in the lust for revenge in an 'orgy of blood', as some refugees have heard him say.⁹⁰³

Which is precisely what happened. A Bratunac resident who crossed the Drina with his wife on July 16 and talked to journalist Robert Block there, witnessed the execution of a Muslim who was accused of cruelties in Kravica. The murder took place in a school in Bratunac that was being used as a temporary prison. Before the man was shot, he is supposed to have shouted 'If we had known what shitty soldiers you Serbs were, we would have sent our women to take Kravica'.⁹⁰⁴

However, Kravica was only one of many such locations that inspired Serb revenge. For instance, Lukic (who we mentioned before) was on the lookout for people from Visegrad, in particular, many of whom had fled to Zepa and Srebrenica, after he himself, incidentally, had been on a horrific rampage there in 1992. Refugees in Potocari noticed that Lukic's men were wearing clean uniforms and obviously had not taken part in the fighting. Apparently they had come to Potocari for a different purpose. They approached someone they knew in the mass of refugees at the factories and told him to pass on the message that all people from Visegrad had to come forward, supposedly so they could be the firsts to leave for Tuzla. About 30 men walked to the factory gates. There they were told that their hands would be inspected to see who had calluses on his trigger finger. If you had 'clean hands, you would get a 'ticket for the bus'. The men who went with the Serbs to 'get the tickets' did not come back and were never seen again.⁹⁰⁵

Other Bosnian Serbs specifically asked for people from Cerska,⁹⁰⁶ while others were looking for people from Skelani.⁹⁰⁷ A woman from the area saw how Bosnian Serbs mingled with the refugees and asked whether there were people from certain villages, including Jaglici and Glogova. They were especially interested in Glogova, near Kravica.⁹⁰⁸ A woman who had boarded a bus saw how Mladic and a bearded 'Cetnik' named Milan entered the bus and asked whether there were people from Osmace among them. An 11-year-old boy who put up his hand was then taken away to one of the factories and did not return.⁹⁰⁹ Refugees as well as Dutchbat soldiers said that VRS soldiers were already walking around in the afternoon to see who was there.⁹¹⁰ The men were then taken away later in the afternoon and that evening. They also used acquaintances to help in picking people out of the ranks of the refugees. A woman who was born in Potocari recognised Ilija Petrovic from Spat, that is also part of the Srebrenica municipal area. He was walking around cursing the Muslims. The woman said

⁹⁰¹ Danielle S. Sremac, *War of words. Washington tackles the Yugoslav conflict* (Westport, Connecticut/London 1999) p. 177. Sremac is Director of the Institute for Balkan Affairs in Washington, DC. In her book, she criticises the one-sided, anti-Serb stance of the American media and its effect on American policies regarding the former Yugoslavia. The comment by Karadzic that she quotes is interesting because it clearly shows how Karadzic tries to evade responsibility. However, the fact that Sremac's experiences prove that revenge did not come as a surprise, places that responsibility back at the feet of the Bosnian Serb leadership.

⁹⁰² Ljiljana Bulatovic, *Mladic* (Beograd 1996) p. 101.

⁹⁰³ Conversation with female refugees in Tinja, 02/02/98; Roy Gutman, *Newsday*, August 1995.

⁹⁰⁴ Robert Block, 'At the mercy of Mladic; Bosnian Serbs are invited to take revenge on prisoners', *The Independent*, 23/07/95.

⁹⁰⁵ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp. 298-299

⁹⁰⁶ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Lukavac, (4).

⁹⁰⁷ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Zivinice, (5).

⁹⁰⁸ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Zivinice, (6). See also: Bill Frelick, 'special issue: the death march from Srebrenica', *Refugee Reports. A news service of the U.S. Committee for refugees*, vol. XVI, nr. 7, July 31, 1995; p. 2

⁹⁰⁹ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, (7). There are more examples of such young children disappearing.

⁹¹⁰ See for instance: SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 156.

she had a fair idea why he was there: ‘I think they brought Ilija in because he knew everybody in Srebrenica as well as in surrounding villages. He was probably the one who decided who had to be separated from the rest’.⁹¹¹

A striking number of statements talk about Serb neighbours, sometimes old classmates, who were looking for people they knew. Sometimes that even led to amicable encounters that added to the Dutchbat soldiers’ confusion about what was actually going on. Lieutenant Koster saw a Serb soldier point to someone in the crowd:

‘It gives this woman a fright and she shouts something. He shouts something back and then he walks up to her. I then thought: I better go have a look because that is going to go wrong. The moment those two reach each other, a girl of 17, maybe 18, runs to the guy and throws her arms around his neck and the guy is crying, too. He stays for a moment talking to that woman and the girl, then turns around and walks back. It was an extraordinary, unreal situation.’⁹¹²

Sometimes such a connection saved someone’s life. One VRS soldier rushed in to help a woman who was being pushed around by other soldiers and who was in danger of getting separated from her 17-year-old retarded son. The soldier had been at school with him. Thanks to him, they both got onto a bus and safely reached Kladanj.⁹¹³ Hatidza Hren, who had a feeling that the VRS soldiers were looking for her, owes her life to Miko Stanojevic, a young Serb policeman whom she knew and who urged her to immediately get onto the first bus.⁹¹⁴ But there also were some men who were saved in this way. ‘Ahmed’ was walking in the direction of the buses together with his father who was right ahead of him. A tank was parked in front. When they got there, his father turned left, together with the other men. Without thinking, Ahmed walked straight ahead, with the women and children. After a few metres, a hand grabbed his right shoulder. Ahmed turned around and recognised a VRS soldier, a former neighbour in Srebrenica: ‘He shoved a blanket in my arms and motioned me to put it on my head. He literally saved my life’.⁹¹⁵

In most cases, such encounters with old acquaintances did not go so well, such as the woman refugee who was threatened by a former neighbour from Sijemovo who asked her where her husband was and pushed her to the ground when she said he had died when their village had been shelled.⁹¹⁶

It was not just the soldiers who looked for people they knew. Many civilians from the area also came to Potocari:

‘Towards the evening, about 19.00 hours, groups of Serb civilians began to arrive, men as well as women, unarmed, who looked at us without saying anything. (...) The armed Serb soldiers that I didn’t know came in and began to take men with them, I don’t know where they went. They didn’t say anything, just pointed at a certain person who would then be taken away. The women and children of those men were crying.’⁹¹⁷

⁹¹¹ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Zivinice, (8).

⁹¹² Interview E. Koster, 06/10/99.

⁹¹³ Amnesty International, *Bosnia-Herzegovina: the missing of Srebrenica* (London, september 1995) p. 5.

⁹¹⁴ Interview Hatidza Hren, 18/06/98.

⁹¹⁵ Stover/Peress, *The Graves*, p. 131.

⁹¹⁶ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Zivinice, (9).

⁹¹⁷ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Zivinice, (5).

What that could lead to can be deduced from an observation by Dutchbat soldier Scholing, who was on guard duty at Post A in the compound early on the afternoon of July 14 - he probably meant July 13.⁹¹⁸ He saw two VRS soldiers approach from a southerly direction who looked up when someone called out to them. Scholing did not see where the person calling to the soldiers was and grabbed his binoculars. On the other side of the compound, where there is a road that runs up a slope, the two soldiers walked up the rise:

“Then I also saw the people who had called out to them. A group of Bosnian Serb civilians were standing under a large tree. A man sat in the middle, on his knees. The soldiers talked to the civilians for a moment, and then one of the soldiers roughly dragged the furiously struggling man with him. They disappeared from view, behind a small house. Immediately after that, I heard someone scream and there was a shot. The soldier came back and shook hands with a number of the civilians, like old friends.”⁹¹⁹

There are more examples that underscore the revenge motive. One woman heard an older man who someone else told her was ‘Milan’ from Spat say to another ‘Cetnik’: ‘I have seen the neighbour who had me locked up in prison for six weeks, before the war.’ The woman thought he was referring to a gamekeeper or merchant ‘of Muslim nationality.’ ‘Then the other man said: “What are you waiting for?” Milan replied: “I’ve got time”’.⁹²⁰

Yet another woman was questioned by three Bosnian Serbs who wanted to know who had been responsible for an alleged ambush on 8 May 1992 when SDS leader Goran Zekic is supposed to have died.⁹²¹

Some refugees who saw the storm coming made their own safety arrangements. Fifty-year-old Huso Tursunovic who came from the village of Zedanjsko in the southern part of the enclave, was one of these. One of the people that the Bosnian Serbs turned to be especially interested in was the feared ABiH Commander Zulfo Tursunovic, who had ruled the roost in the enclave’s south. In Potocari, Mladic asked Dutchbat interpreter Vahid Hodzic whether he knew where ‘Tursun’ was. Hodzic, who came from the southern part of the enclave, managed to talk himself out of trouble by pretending he thought Mladic was referring to another Zulfo Tursunovic, a ‘troublemaker’ he knew from his school days.⁹²²

Huso Tursunovic, who did not say in his statement whether or not he was actually related to ‘the’ Zulfo, had arranged with his wife, daughter, daughter-in-law and grandchildren that they would use his wife’s maiden name. He himself assumed another name. With a grandchild on his shoulders, he managed to board one of the buses on the morning of July 13. He realised he had been lucky. The day before he saw soldiers take seven men into a corn field, after which he had heard rifle shots. When he went outside to urinate that night, when he had heard howling every now and then, ‘like wolves’, he came across five people lying in the corn, who had been slaughtered with knives.⁹²³

Many statements suggest that the Bosnian Serbs used lists of names and photographs to find certain people. When Lieutenant Rutten managed to inspect the White House on the morning of July 13, he found a number of orderly arranged photographs lying on the floor of one of the rooms: ‘All

⁹¹⁸ It is probable that he was talking about the 13th but it is in fact not impossible that the executions continued on the 14th. There are many statements by Dutchbat soldiers that say they heard shots even after the 13th and that they could only explain these as being executions.

⁹¹⁹ SMG/Debrief. Debriefing statement R. Scholing, Assen, 07/09/95.

⁹²⁰ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Tuzla, (3).

⁹²¹ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Municipal Commission Zivinice, (10). For a description of the ambush, see: Westerman/Rijs, *Srebrenica*, p. 63.

⁹²² Interview Vahid Hodzic, 24/05/99.

⁹²³ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Tuzla, (11). The ‘wolf howls’ can point to Drina Wolves activities.

laid side by side. Of the original inhabitants of the house. The pictures of the men had been put together. They were looking for people they knew'.⁹²⁴ In a large number of cases, men were selected based on interrogation, seemingly in line with the screening that Mladic had already talked about during his meeting with Karremans. For instance, one Dutchbat soldier saw men aged 16-60 being taken to a house diagonally across from the bus depot in groups of 10-15. VRS soldiers on the spot said they were being interrogated there:

‘The whole group subsequently came out of the house again. Sometimes they released a few men who could prove they had been farmers and nothing else. The others then walked with the above mentioned VRS soldiers behind the house. He said that he then heard shots, after which he saw the VRS soldiers come back again, alone. This pattern was repeated several times during those two days, July 12 and 13.’⁹²⁵

Several refugees later made statements that also show that some men came back after an interrogation, although it was always no more than a temporary reprieve. They would either be taken away a second time, or would be separated from the other refugees on their way to the buses.

Those who did find themselves selected probably did not only include suspected soldiers or people that the Serbs had personal scores to settle with, but all sorts of dignitaries as well.⁹²⁶ One young woman was in the ‘Feros’ factory in Potocari for three days. While there, she saw a school friend as well as her geography teacher Saiba Salkic and two teachers from her old primary school, Redzo Salihovic and Muhamed Mekanik (who taught English) being taken away, among many others. They did not come back to the ‘factory circle’ or the ‘circle’ as refugees called the area of the factories and the bus depot. Someone else told her, incidentally, that a ‘Cetnik policeman’ who she had known since childhood had come to Potocari and was making enquiries specifically about her.⁹²⁷

This kind of specifically targeted searching happened more often. Mehmed Malagic and his wife, both from Srebrenica, saw Bosnian Serbs walk around with lists of names. He said the names on the lists were all of rich and well-known men, often people who had gone to college. He saw one of them spewing blood because he was so scared when his name was called. Malagic’s statement is especially interesting because he personally knew a number of people who were rounded up and could point them out.⁹²⁸

Other people also discovered that the Serbs were looking for them. Hasa Selmanagic, a dignified and elegant economist from a prominent local family who had been a bank director before the war, heard the Bosnian Serbs call out her name just when she was climbing into a truck. She knew one

⁹²⁴ Interview J.H.A. Rutten, 01/12/99.

⁹²⁵ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 235.

⁹²⁶ This was a pattern that had already been followed in 1992. According to Sefkija Hadziarapovic, former director of the textile factory in Srebrenica and chairman of the local SDP, Serb paramilitary groups such as the Arkan Tigers were using lists of Muslim intellectuals. The purpose of this was ‘to liquidate everybody who had the ability to unite three people behind him’. Interview Sefkija Hadziarapovic, 22/05/98.

⁹²⁷ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Tuzla, (12).

⁹²⁸ Interview Mehmed Malagic and his wife, Tinja, 22/10/97. Malagic named the following people: Aziz Music, police inspector; Sulejman Hodzic, imam; Esad Mujic, ‘a rich man’; Vejsil Suljagic, ‘the richest man in half Bosnia’; Sahib Suljagic, son of Vejsil, professor; Smail Hasic, ‘a rich man’; Beharija Salihovic, professor. NIOD put these names to dr. Helge Brunborg, the demographer who investigated the lists of missing people for the ICTY. Brunborg found nine of the 11 names that Malagic had provided also on the list of ‘srebrenica related missing persons’ that the ICTY had drawn up. Only five of these were unique (4 of them were probably writing errors). For the other four names, two or three ‘records’ were found every time. However, more information would be necessary to determine whether they are correct, such as date of birth or name of the father. Some details in the ICTY list do not meet the requirement that they have to refer to men who disappeared in Potocari on July 12 or 13. If such records are destroyed, there are no duplicates. So the end result is that nine names were found and two were not. See: Helge Brunborg, ‘some names reportedly taken by VRS military in Potocari on the 12th and 13th of July 1995’ (names provided by NIOD), 14/12/01.

of them very well because he was a former colleague of hers, Desimir Bucalina. Apart from him, she recognised 12 other people, including Budo Milovanovic, who she says acted as a guide for the Arkan Tigers when they attacked Srebrenica in 1992. Because she did not trust things at all, she had already disguised herself as an old woman by putting on clothes that had belonged to her dead mother (for whom she had remained in Srebrenica in the first place) and as a result managed to remain undiscovered. Her disguise was all the more effective because before the war she had always been fashionably dressed and never wore a headscarf.⁹²⁹

Tribunal investigators found solid proof that the Serbs had been hunting for community leaders when they searched the office of captain Momir Nikolic in Bratunac after the war. Nikolic played a prominent role in the events in Potocari. In this search, hand-written reports of the interrogations of the Muslim men were found, which showed that the VRS had been looking for specific people.⁹³⁰ As a result, their families were also in danger. One witness told UNHCR representatives in Tuzla that one certain woman had been separated together with the men 'because she is a relative of a senior Bosnian army officer'.⁹³¹ The wife of Damir Skaler, who had made the journey to Tuzla herself, heard Mladic and other Bosnian Serbs in Potocari ask 'whether [relations] of Oric were among them'.⁹³²

There was also special interest in some young Serb women who had continued to live in Srebrenica during the war. In particular, special attention was paid to Dana Ristanovic, who had been married to a Muslim.⁹³³ Another refugee heard that Mladic was personally searching for her and another Serb woman, Mira.⁹³⁴ Mira Budisa was in fact pulled out of the crowd by VRS soldiers who included an acquaintance of hers, policeman Miroslav Ilic. She was taken to the police station in Srebrenica for interrogation. Interest was shown in her husband and her son Miroslav. Mira said that her husband was dead and that her son had already fled from the enclave in 1992. But her interrogators then showed her documents from January 1995 in which the 28th division praised her son for his participation in some action. She had in fact lied. Miroslav served in Hakija Meholic's unit and had taken part in the fighting around OP-F.

Mira's fear that she would be killed after her lie did not eventuate. After a few hours, during which time questions were also asked about what had happened to a number of other people, Ilic said she was free to go. She returned to her home in Srebrenica and remained there until June 1996, when she managed to arrange transportation to Tuzla. By then she had already heard via the International Red Cross that her son had also made it to Tuzla alive.⁹³⁵

So it was not a given that anyone who was picked out was therefore automatically doomed to die. When prisoners were exchanged in October 1995, the International Red Cross still found more than 200 men from Srebrenica in the Batkovic camp. These included men who had been part of the group of 59 wounded who had left the compound in Potocari on July 12, but also one or two people who had been on the 'list of 239'. There were also men among them who had been captured during the big break-out.⁹³⁶ What or who determined that they stayed alive is not clear.

Sometimes the latter gave cause for speculation. One of the most interesting is the politician Ibran Mustafic, because his story also gives us an indication of what the Serbs' motives were. Initially, Mustafic played a leading role in Srebrenica, that he represented in the Bosnian Parliament before the war, on an SDA ticket. However, he had clashed with Oric, despite their close relationship dating from

⁹²⁹ Interview Hasa Selmanagic, 07/08/97.

⁹³⁰ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), Testimony R. Butler, 18/07/00. The items of evidence concerned were entered as exhibit 701. The interrogated men are posted missing.

⁹³¹ UNGE, UNHCR, file '1995 FYOO OPS.16 sitreps Bosnia (Jan.-July)'. 'Note for the File. Preliminary protection report no.1: 18 July 1995'.

⁹³² Interview Damir Skaler, 31/01/98.

⁹³³ Interview Hasa Selmanagic, 07/08/97. Ristanovic managed to escape with her daughter and emigrated to the United States.

⁹³⁴ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Municipal Commission Zivinice, (1).

⁹³⁵ Interview Mira and Miroslav Budisa, 19/06/00.

⁹³⁶ NIOD investigators talked to one of the former prisoners, who wished to remain anonymous.

the early days of the war. He had suffered a number of attempts on his life. The last one, on May 19, when he was on his way back to Potocari from a meeting in Srebrenica, cost the life of one of his supporters and he himself was seriously injured. Mustafic was still recuperating from this attack when he sought shelter in the Dutchbat compound in Potocari. According to Mustafic he had been a candidate to be put on the list of names of wounded to be taken to Kladanj on July 12. A Dutch doctor declared that his injuries weren't serious enough for this; it isn't the only accusation that a Dutch doctor determined someone's fate in this way. Similarly, a Dutchbat doctor ignored pleas by the director of the cultural centre in Srebrenica, Envir 'Zeke' Dozic, to be put on the list of wounded. Dozic had lost an arm. On July 11, and with one arm, he drove the pick-up truck that *Médecins Sans Frontières* used to take the last wounded from the Srebrenica hospital to Potocari. The doctor concerned, Schouten, who had been involved in this wounded convoy, could not remember an incident of this nature. What he remembered most was the chaos when refugees who included people who were not injured stormed the trucks.⁹³⁷

The rest of Mustafic's story is as follows: he ended up in a bus with men who were taken to an overcrowded shed in Bratunac where many people were murdered in 1992. At one point, his name was called.⁹³⁸ Mustafic thought he would be executed, but he was taken to the police station instead, 200-300 metres from the shed. From there they took him to Bijeljina the following day, handcuffed and blindfolded in the boot of a car. Mustafic would later say about his treatment by the Serbs that they had respected him 'in a negative sense'. It was only on 15 December 1995 that he was given formal proof of his status as a prisoner for the first time. 'Before that, they could have killed me any time'. Three days later he was transferred to the interrogation prison and on December 20 he was court-martialled. The first charge related to article 142 of the Penal Code of the former Yugoslavia, with a possible penalty ranging from 12 years jail to the death sentence: armed revolt against the Serbian people, as well as leading and organising armed rebellion.

After Mustafic had been sent to a camp in Pale, he was accused of war crimes. All of the other prisoners in that camp were also there because of (alleged) war crimes. When he was questioned, they especially wanted to know about raids that had been staged from the enclave in 1992 and 1993. After nine-and-a-half months of imprisonment, Mustafic was eventually freed as part of a prisoner exchange.⁹³⁹ According to the rumours circulating about him in Bosnia, he owed his survival mostly to his Serb political connections from before the war, who he is supposed to have asked via radio to spare his life even before the enclave had fallen.⁹⁴⁰

However, cases like Mustafic's were the exception rather than the rule.

20. What happened to the remains of those who were executed?

After arriving at the number of possible murders that took place, as well as the motives that probably played a role in these murders, one important question remains. If it is true that so many men were murdered in Potocari, where are their remains? That question is even more acute because mass graves have never been found in Potocari or its immediate surrounding area. In answering this question, it's best to begin with the victims of executions that Dutchbat personnel reported during those days. In two cases on the morning of July 13 (we will talk about these in more detail later), a number of them saw nine to 10 execution victims who were found a fair distance from the compound. In the course of the day there was another report about a single execution having been observed in Potocari itself, so

⁹³⁷ Interviews A. Purkevic, 04/04/98 and A.A. Schouten, 21/02/00.

⁹³⁸ According to a witness, Mladic and Milan Gavric, a policemen from Srebrenica, are supposed to have searched for Mustafic in Potocari already. Gavric then removed Mustafic from the factory hall where he was discovered and put him in a small van. Testimony 'E', ICTY (IT-98-33-T), 27/03/00.

⁹³⁹ Interview Ibran Mustafic, Sarajevo, 16/04/98.

⁹⁴⁰ Interview Mehmed Pargan, Tuzla, 15/06 and 16/06/98. Pargan has written a lot about Srebrenica as a journalist.

the total is 18-20 bodies, a figure that is slightly higher than in the debriefing report that talks about 13-14 people having been executed.⁹⁴¹

A strikingly uniform picture emerged both from the statements that were made in Assen as well as those afterwards, in interviews with journalists and investigators. In a large number of cases the executions themselves have not actually been seen. The succession of certain events led the observer to this conclusion or, at least, strong suspicion. The general pattern of that sort of observations was that a Dutchbat soldier saw one or more men being taken away, who subsequently disappeared from view behind or in a house or factory, or behind a bus, and that subsequently shots were heard whose nature and number corresponded with the picture the observers had of an execution. The VRS soldiers who had taken the men away would then always return soon after, without their prisoners.

One example of the many that we could provide comes from soldier Van Veen, a crew member of OP-M who was posted outside the compound after the arduous journey with the refugees. His statement is also interesting because it shows that the first incidents took place soon after the Serb troops arrived. That is in line with the rumour that didn't take long to reach the UNMOs, namely that VRS soldiers had adopted a threatening attitude towards refugees at the so-called 'prefab factory'. However, when they went to have a look, they saw 'some of the VRS soldiers giving out cigarettes and candies to a few refugees'.⁹⁴² Van Veen also witnessed the 'propaganda stunt' of Mladic and his troops, but at the same time he also saw the other side of their behaviour. Van Veen said that:

'...between 12.00 and 14.00 hours on the afternoon of July 12, he saw a group of five Muslim men being marched off escorted by an armed VRS fighter. Watching the group from a distance of 200-300 metres, he saw them enter a house on the hill diagonally across from the big factory. The group may have been larger because they walked into the house just when he looked in their direction. A moment later, he heard five or six shots. After a while, he saw the armed VRS fighter come out of the house again. He saw that this VRS fighter had only a pistol with him.'⁹⁴³

Investigations by the Tribunal in the immediate surrounding area of Potocari did not lead to any discoveries of mass graves, but it did provide an indication that creating such a mass grave had been considered. Traces were found behind the bus depot that appeared to suggest a mass grave had been dug there. Investigation showed that the pit had been filled in again, unused. The reason for this was not clear until the investigators noticed that the spot could be seen from the office tower in the Potocari compound and was, therefore, also in view of any possible Dutch observers on the roof, something that the people who dug the pit must have come to realise as well.⁹⁴⁴ Incidentally, one Dutchbat soldier who on July 19 had been ordered by Karremans to repair the water purification plant in Srebrenica, under Serb escort, saw a tractor on the road that was moving quicklime, while the driver was wearing a surgical mask.⁹⁴⁵ Although a grave was found later near Zeleni Jadar, at the most southerly point of the enclave, this turned out to be a so-called secondary grave: reburying bodies in this kind of grave had the purpose of obliterating evidence from the original graves outside the enclave.

If the dead were not buried on the spot and we assume that the VRS tried to cover its tracks, the only possibility is that the bodies were collected and taken away for burial elsewhere. Some refugees

⁹⁴¹ Report based on the debriefing Srebrenica, p. 50.

⁹⁴² NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNMO Srebrenica, Srebrenica update dtg 121240B JUL 95. This detail also made it into the report of Akashi to New York. See: UNGE, ICFY, Box 234, file 6/15. Akashi to Annan, Z-1154, Situation in Srebrenica, 13/07/95.

⁹⁴³ Debriefing statement R.P. van Veen, Assen 11/09/95. It cannot be ruled out completely, incidentally, that this actually happened on the 13th because we have seen that dates are very often mixed up in the Debriefing statements, especially 12 and 13 July.

⁹⁴⁴ ICTY, (IT98-38), OTP, Ex.5/E.

⁹⁴⁵ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 289

say that small cars were used for this purpose.⁹⁴⁶ Christina Schmitz of *Médecins Sans Frontières* saw ‘many cars from Bratunac’ early in the evening.⁹⁴⁷ Others saw trucks go in the direction of Srebrenica: ‘You heard people whisper: “Are they taking our men away after they have cut their throats?”’⁹⁴⁸ Based on other statements, Tribunal investigator Ruez testified that men who had been pulled out of the crowd had filled five trucks with bodies before they were murdered themselves.⁹⁴⁹ A woman who went to get water on the morning of July 13 saw three trucks on the main road with four Serb soldiers on each of them. She claimed the trucks were ‘full of people whose throats had been cut’ and they were going in the direction of Srebrenica.⁹⁵⁰

Probably based on what refugees arriving in Tuzla had told them, ABiH Intelligence officers already reported on July 14 that 150 men - some of whom were mentioned by name - had been killed in Potocari on July 12. Their bodies were taken away in ‘small cars’.⁹⁵¹

An interesting testimony that fits in with all this came from Bego Ademovic at the trial of Krstic. He was a former bus driver who had fled from Kutuzero to Potocari with his family on July 11, when he had had to leave his old and obese mother behind in the forest to die there.⁹⁵² Ademovic and his wife, daughter-in-law and grandchildren ended up in the yards outside the zinc factory. On July 12, he witnessed the entry of the VRS, who advanced from the south in columns walking on the main road. He saw how some of them mixed with the crowds for a discreet chat, while others were standing around cursing and issuing threats. When the situation looked a little calmer, Bego went looking for water together with a friend, Dzermal Karic. Via a hole in the fence behind the zinc factory they climbed up the hill. They weren’t the only ones, but when some VRS soldiers suddenly arrived on the scene everybody made a hasty retreat to the factory grounds. Bego and Karic hid in a small shed from where they could see the hill slope, the factory below and the house of Aljo Hasanovic a little farther away. In between was a corn field.

From that spot, the two men saw how 8 to 10 VRS soldiers entered the grounds of the zinc factory via the hole in the fence, only to repeatedly return with two or three male refugees. At an elevated spot in the area they were grabbed by the arm one by one by two soldiers, while a third cut their throats with a large knife. This continued until dusk fell. Karic had a packet of cigarettes with him – Bego remembered the brand, Drina, ‘of a factory in Sarajevo’ – and a stump of pencil. They kept tally until the pencil broke at 83. They estimated that ‘more than 100 men’ were slaughtered in this fashion. Bego recognised not only one of the VRS soldiers, a Zoran Miroslavljivic, but also his niece’s husband Hazim Lonjinac. The latter was in the very last group to be taken from the factory but their execution was prevented by a VRS officer who had arrived on the scene by then, after which the soldiers slinked off and the prisoners could return to the factory. After Ademovic, too, had managed to get back to the factory as a result of this intervention, Lonjinac told him that the VRS officer had mentioned his own name with the comment: ‘I am the one who got you out, now get back to the zinc factory quickly’. At the trial, Ademovic could not remember the officer’s name that Lonjinac told him about. He said that he later heard from Lonjinac’s daughter-in-law that Lonjinac had managed to get on a bus the following day, but had been taken off by the VRS somewhere along the way. He has been missing since.

The conspicuous thing about the testimony of Ademovic and others is that apparently a considerable number of men were already being murdered in the afternoon of July 12, at a time when Dutchbat’s attentions were concentrated on the chaotic start of the evacuation. Ademovic also saw a truck drive a number of times from the road, through the corn field, to the spot where the executions

⁹⁴⁶ ABiH, Tuzla. Report 24th division, 14/07/95, nr. 06-1225/95.

⁹⁴⁷ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz), 12/07/95, 21:10:14.

⁹⁴⁸ Statement no. 3, ‘A.S.’, in: *Srebrenica: the story of the survivors*. Provided by Hatidza Hren. Published by the Citizens Association ‘Women of Srebrenica’ in Tuzla. (Amsterdam 1999) p. 36

⁹⁴⁹ ICTY (IT-95-18-R61/IT-95-5-R61). Testimony J.-R. Ruez, 03/07/96.

⁹⁵⁰ Statement no. 2, ‘H.H.’, in: Hren, *Survivors*, p. 34. It is not clear how she could see this.

⁹⁵¹ ABiH, Tuzla. Report 24th Div., 14/07/95, nr. 06-1225/95.

⁹⁵² The following is based on: ICTY (IT-98-33-T), testimony Bego Ademovic, 29/03/00

had taken place. The bodies were thrown on the trucks after they had first been put in bags. The work was done by prisoners.⁹⁵³

The statements from Dutch soldiers also provide indications that bodies were being carried off, albeit only sporadic ones. One Dutchbat soldier who, like many of his colleagues, suspected executions were taking place, reported having seen a van whose windows had been covered. A colleague could add the detail that there also had been bars on the van's windows and that it had been seen a few times near the compound in Potocari.⁹⁵⁴ Notable, too, is that Major P. Boering, who would leave Potocari with the first convoy, had heard rumours even before his departure that a truck was being used to take bodies away⁹⁵⁵. The statement of another soldier also referred to an observation on July 12 about 'a covered civilian truck' that drove to a house 10 men had just been taken to and stopped at the side of the house:

'subsequently, he heard shots being fired close to this house. A few minutes later, he heard and saw the aforementioned truck drive off in a northerly direction. Based on his observations, he suspected that the 10 Muslims might have been shot and killed by VRS soldiers.'⁹⁵⁶

Another soldier made an undated statement in which he said that when the refugees were getting into the buses (so it must have been during the deportation) he saw a tractor pulling a flat wagon pass. 'A large blanket was lying on the wagon and he saw a hand sticking out from under it. By the shape of the blanket, he is of the opinion that there were several bodies on the wagon. It disappeared in the direction of Bratunac'.⁹⁵⁷

This kind of movements appears to have taken place more often during those days. On July 14, the day after the forced departure of all enclave inhabitants, Dutchbat soldier Koreman and some of his colleagues were in the compound and from there saw a power shovel and an empty truck pass, coming from Bratunac and going in the direction of Srebrenica. They later saw the same truck come back, this time covered with a bulging tarpaulin. The soldiers had a 'strong and reasonable' suspicion that there were bodies on the truck.⁹⁵⁸ Although we have to approach the dates of some of these observations with a degree of caution, it appears that the job of removing bodies even continued for some time after this. On July 17 or 18, at first daylight, army medic M. Doze walked from his prefab accommodation to the so-called 'wet' prefab. On the road skirting the compound he saw a tractor pulling a large wagon, with another, smaller wagon coupled behind it. The whole rig drove off in the direction of Bratunac. Wooden boards of about 30cm high had been placed on the sides of the wagons: 'He sees bodies lying on the flat wagon. Doze sees arms and legs and also heads with long hair [sic]. The bodies are not naked, they're still wearing clothes. Doze estimates their number at about 100'.⁹⁵⁹

The conclusion is that large numbers of bodies were in fact removed and that these numbers fit into the picture of there having been hundreds of victims of executions. However, caution remains necessary. For instance, in many cases the origin of the bodies that witnesses reported to have seen cannot be determined. It is, for instance, not impossible that some of the dead involved people who had died in the fighting in the Bandera triangle. Mladic himself told the UNMOs as well as Karremans that the ABiH had suffered a few hundred dead on that occasion.⁹⁶⁰ According to an article by Zoran Petrovic, who had also filmed the fall (of the Bandera triangle) at the time, as well as what happened

⁹⁵³ ICTY Krstic (IT-98-33-T), Testimony Bego Ademovic, 29/03/00.

⁹⁵⁴ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 281.

⁹⁵⁵ Interview P. Boering, 14/12/01.

⁹⁵⁶ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 233.

⁹⁵⁷ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 281

⁹⁵⁸ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman, week 41, p.48. See also: SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas* Debriefing 'srebrenica' p. 290.

⁹⁵⁹ Debriefing statement M. Doze, Assen, 12/09/95.

⁹⁶⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 434, UNMO HQ UNPROFOR, SNE 1. UNPF SNE 13/07/95, Srebrenica update 130800B.

after that, more than 500 people had died during the 'last battles with the Bosnian Serbs' on July 12.⁹⁶¹ This rather excessive number of alleged casualties in the Bandera triangle is difficult to reconcile with the picture that we have from the fighting and the break-out of the able-bodied men to Tuzla.

Dutchbat did get reports on July 10 of bloody ethnic cleansing actions taking place in the south. Sergeant Major Rave wrote in his diary that he had been told by Command Lieutenant M. Versteeg at about 01.00 hours in the night of July 11-12 'about the bloodbaths that he had seen during the cleansing actions of the VRS in the southern part of the enclave'.⁹⁶² Boering also talked to Versteeg, who told him how village after village had been plundered and destroyed and the inhabitants fled their homes. Men and women were murdered there, too.⁹⁶³

A member of the crew of OP-S, at the most southerly point of the enclave, also said in Assen that right at the beginning of the Bosnian Serb attack on July 8 he had already heard frequent loud screams and cries of fear that he thought came from women. The screaming always lasted about 15 minutes, alternating with crying, after which a single loud shriek would follow and the sound stopped abruptly. This continued without interruption for three to four hours. He also heard shots every now and then. Although the OP soldiers did not see any victims, they were under the impression that the VRS was 'sweeping' the entire area around the fringes of the woods and that they were 'finishing off' everything in their way. When the OP was taken by the VRS the following day, the Dutchbat soldier asked one of his VRS counterparts about it. The reply was 'first we raped them, and then we cut their throats'.⁹⁶⁴ An anonymous soldier already publicly alluded to this in August 1995: 'All the things that happened in the south of the enclave, I wish I hadn't been there, I don't want to know. Executions, torture, massacres. In 1995, in Europe. It is unbelievable that it can happen'.⁹⁶⁵

The indication that perhaps bodies of women were also being taken away ('heads with long hair') could fit in with all this. Certain witnesses that we will talk about separately and in more detail later in this chapter claim that they saw a large number of such bodies in Srebrenica itself as well as on the road from Srebrenica to Potocari. Whether these women were murdered or died in some other way is impossible to say. At least one Dutchbat soldier saw four or five bodies of women lying on the side of the road between Srebrenica and Potocari on July 11.⁹⁶⁶ It is possible that they were victims of earlier shelling of the road by the VRS, but there is a lot of evidence in the testimonies of refugees that suggests women were also killed in Potocari.

⁹⁶¹ Zoran Petrovic, 'The whitewashing of the town has begun! War in Bosnia: return of Serbs to Srebrenica', in: *INTERVJU*, 21/07/95. Translation, OTP Ex.499/a, ICTY (IT-98-33-T).

⁹⁶² Transcript from B. Rave's notebook, that he loaned to NIOD for its perusal. See also the reference in SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 149.

⁹⁶³ Interview P. Boering, 14/12/01. Boering also told the debriefers in Assen about this incident, who included it in his statement. At the debriefing, there was an agreement that relevant passages in Debriefing statements that contained information about human rights violations would be passed on to the Tribunal. Later the Tribunal was also given the full statements; during the preliminary investigations into Srebrenica, Boering was asked in 1998 to discuss a number of matters with the Tribunal in The Hague, and to prepare him to for being called as a witness. On that occasion, Boering saw his own Debriefing statement. He thought there was something missing, but could not immediately check that against his own copy that he had left at home in Seedorf (Germany). Via a friend, he obtained a copy from the debriefing archives. When he compared the two, it turned out that the copy that the Ministry of Defence had made available to the Tribunal did not contain the passage about the report by Versteeg. Boering says he went to ask the head of the Legal Section, Colonel A.C. Zuidema for an explanation. He says that Zuidema told him that there had been 'a certain check' and a 'depersonalisation'. Zuidema has said that he himself had not seen Boering's debriefing statement. As far as Zuidema knew, 'depersonalised' (names blacked out) debriefing statements were in fact sent from the debriefing archives to the Tribunal (telephone conversation with Brigadier-General A.C. Zuidema, 20/02/02). However, Boering says that no names had been blacked out in his statement, but a whole passage had been removed instead. After this incident, Boering gave the Tribunal an unexpurgated copy of his statement.

⁹⁶⁴ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 217. See: J. van der Graaf, "'Het was Auschwitz'" ("It was Auschwitz"), *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 05/08/95.

⁹⁶⁵ See: J. van der Graaf, "'Het was Auschwitz'", *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 05/08/95.

⁹⁶⁶ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 226.

As long as it is not clear where the bodies that were taken away ended up, it seems more likely - from a geographical point of view - that the removal of bodies from the Bandera triangle took place from the south and that the observations in Potocari of bodies being moved indeed related to events in Potocari itself. We cannot rule out that Mladic's remarks about hundreds of dead in the south were a diversionary tactic.

21. Murders in the night of July 12-13

The problem of the discrepancy between the statements by Dutchbat personnel and refugees comes into focus most sharply when we are talking about the events that took place late in the afternoon of July 12 and the subsequent evening and night of July 12-13. Because of the large number of statements by refugees, we will accentuate the red threads that become visible in these, also because this goes some way to solving the problem of determining reliability. The analysis is based on a large number of witness statements that were made over the years to investigators of different organisations, including the NIOD, and journalists. Evidence gathered and published by the Women of Srebrenica organisation were also included in this, as well as statements that had already been recorded quite early in the piece by the 'Bosnian State Commission for the Collection of Facts relating to War Crimes'.⁹⁶⁷ We will in fact discuss certain testimonies specifically, when they can strengthen or illustrate the evidence in certain important areas.

Statements by refugees are consistent on the point that on the evening and night of July 12-13, groups of VRS soldiers - often dressed in Dutchbat uniforms - went around picking up men who were subsequently taken away. As mentioned earlier, Dutchbat sources show that Bosnian Serb soldiers and paramilitary units, often described as 'Rambo types', began to relieve the Dutch of their weapons on the afternoon of July 12. This appeared to stop as they left early in the evening. However, Lieutenant Koster, who had been ordered by the Bosnian Serbs to join the refugees at the point where the bus depot was, told the Tribunal in 1996 that in the course of the evening and night, the VRS soldiers came back. Isolated Dutchbat soldiers on patrol were forced at gun point by groups of three or four VRS soldiers to hand over all their equipment. Koster said that most of the Dutchbat soldiers who were there lost their equipment in this way.⁹⁶⁸ Warrant Officer B. Oosterveen, who was also with the refugees that night, later described how Dutchbat soldiers lost items like flak jackets: "They simply took them away from you. Serbs would creep up on you when you were keeping watch with the refugees. They'd stick a Kalashnikov into your belly and hiss: hand over that jacket. What are you supposed to do? Run the risk they pull the trigger?"⁹⁶⁹ The Bosnian Serbs weren't satisfied with just flak jackets, either. *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff member Emira Selimovic saw how they forced some Dutchbat soldiers to take off their uniforms and shoes and then left them behind in their underwear.⁹⁷⁰

It is possible that some of the Bosnian Serbs, especially the paramilitary units, were merely after souvenirs. There are examples of VRS soldiers approaching Dutchbat soldiers to exchange weapons and badges, and in a few cases Dutch soldiers even appear to have complied with such requests.⁹⁷¹ Nevertheless, it looked more like a deliberate action. Masquerading as UN soldiers, with the aid of stolen uniforms, equipment and even vehicles, was also one of the ploys used in attempts to lure men who were trying to escape to Tuzla out of the woods. The instances in Potocari where Dutch uniforms were worn by VRS soldiers were probably attempts to fool the refugees and, more particularly, Dutchbat so certain activities would not be so obvious and easier to carry out. This had the unintentional side effect that it helped create the misunderstanding that Dutch soldiers had been guilty

⁹⁶⁷ Hren, *Survivors*, p. 121.

⁹⁶⁸ ICTY (IT-95-18-R61/IT-95-5-R61), Testimony E. Koster, 04/07/96.

⁹⁶⁹ 'Het boek "Srebrenica" is niet gesloten' ('The book on 'srebrenica' has not been closed'), *Oplinie*, July 1996, p. 7.

⁹⁷⁰ Interview Emira Selimovic, 21/10/97.

⁹⁷¹ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, pp. 29-30; Debriefing statement P. Wouters, Assen, 06/09/95. Wouters, of the KCT, intervened when two Dutchbat soldiers wanted to exchange weapons with VRS soldiers.

of all sorts of forms of collaboration. However, many statements by refugees also indicate they themselves saw through the Serb intention because language or behaviour betrayed the disguised VRS soldiers.

That did not prevent sometimes painful misunderstandings. Three Dutch soldiers who came across a rape in one of the dark factory halls, saw two Serb soldiers when they switched on their torches. One kept watch while the other was lying on top of a girl, with his trousers around his ankles. When they were discovered, the rapists ran off. The Dutchbat soldiers took the girl who was extremely upset outside and tried to give her first aid there, together with some women. It was refused. The girl began to kick and swung her hands around: 'she didn't want help from us because she was scared'.⁹⁷² That fear can be explained by the fact that the Serb rapists had been wearing Dutch uniforms.

At the end of the afternoon and early in the evening, VRS soldiers had already appeared in the factory grounds to have a look around, as if they were trying to work out tactics and wanted to take a first look whether there were any men they might be interested in. There are indications that Dutchbat possibly cooperated with this. With the assistance of an interpreter who was probably using a megaphone, as they did at other times during those days, the refugees were told that the VRS would hold an inspection and that there was no reason to be scared.⁹⁷³ Many refugees later said Dutchbat soldiers had guaranteed they would be protected, which declares much of the bitterness afterwards when this turned out to be a hollow promise.

There is evidence that even in the course of the afternoon, men were already being picked out of the crowd in a fairly quiet and unobtrusive manner, on the pretext that they would be interrogated. The VRS soldiers later supposedly had a party at a nearby house. In the course of the evening, VRS soldiers (wearing Dutch uniforms or their own) freely walked around in the area on either side of the road between the factories and the bus depot, picking up men 'with far less of a pretence that this was done for questioning'.⁹⁷⁴ Hatidza Hren, who had worked in the local office of the International Red Cross, saw them for the first time at about 23.00 hours.⁹⁷⁵ That roughly corresponds with the first panic wave, which - as mentioned earlier - was noted in the Dutchbat log book at 22.30 hours and was attributed to 'probably some Serbs having fun'.⁹⁷⁶ This is the only log book record on the subject, but some Dutchbat members later said in Assen that screaming and shrieking women had woken them up that night.⁹⁷⁷ This shrieking and screaming is confirmed by countless statements by refugees. For instance, a number of them reported that a new wave of panic rippled through the masses just after midnight.⁹⁷⁸

On the other hand, it is highly unlikely that nothing happened during the times that things were quiet. The statements also show that women and men often kept as quiet as possible whenever the VRS soldiers came near them, in a desperate effort not get noticed. The refugees cautiously kept each other informed on what was happening: 'Whispering, ear to ear, we told each other what was going on'.⁹⁷⁹

⁹⁷² ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony D. Vaasen, 27/03/00.

⁹⁷³ Statement no. 36, in: Hren, *Survivors*, p. 121. The debriefing statement of W. Sanders seems to confirm this story, because it is placed in the context of the refugees outside the compound. However, it is just as possible that the statement refers to the inspection of the compound in Potocari. This is an example of how the often very poor and sometimes absolutely chaotic editing of the debriefing statements makes it difficult to say exactly which events certain statements are talking about. Debriefing statement W. Sanders, 08/09/95.

⁹⁷⁴ Bill Frelick, 'special issue: the death march from Srebrenica', *Refugee Reports. A news service of the U.S. Committee for refugees*, vol. XVI(1995)7, p. 2

⁹⁷⁵ Interview Hatidza Hren, 02/02/98.

⁹⁷⁶ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly register Ops Room Dutchbat, 12/07/95, entry 10.30 pm. According to refugees, 11 pm.

⁹⁷⁷ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 233.

⁹⁷⁸ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Municipal Commission Zivinice, (13). According to the 'BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Municipal Commission Zivinice, (13) there were waves of panic at 23.00 hours and at 02.00 hours.

⁹⁷⁹ Statement no. 36, in: Hren, *Survivors*, p. 122.

Equipped with torches, the Bosnian Serbs moved among the refugees, selecting people who were taken away in small groups and sometimes singly. One witness later said: ‘What the Cetniks were doing in our circle reminded me of hawks swooping down on chickens’, adding that this process had continued all night.⁹⁸⁰ Some men and young women tried to escape notice by disguising themselves, others played a cat-and-mouse game with the Serb soldiers. ‘Ahmed’ and his father took turns sleeping next to the pallets in the factory, waking each other whenever soldiers came near them. He regularly saw drunken soldiers pluck young girls from the crowd, taking them to a nearby house.⁹⁸¹ The statements of many refugees confirm these scenes.

In sketching the red threads in the refugee statements, we must point to another important similarity in the various witness statements because it can serve as an indication of their reliability. Many witnesses named well-known men that they saw being taken away. Sometimes they had even recognised the voices of terrified men, coming from the direction of the abattoir north of the bus depot, about 30 metres from the road. One of those voices belonged to Fikret Hodzic, who sounded as though he was being tortured and kept crying out for ‘Nesib, Nesib’; it is possible that he was calling for Mandzic, the refugees’ representative.⁹⁸² Various refugees said a few days later, after their arrival at the reception camp at Tuzla Air Base, that many men had had their throats cut in the abattoir.⁹⁸³ For instance, Abida Smajic saw men being led into the abattoir on both July 12 and 13, but never saw them leave again. They didn’t hear shots or noise, but she did refer to a tank in front of the house that was used to collect blood.⁹⁸⁴

As we have said earlier, the Serbs were looking for specific individuals, especially in the able-bodied category. One man remembers that ‘the first day (...) all younger men’ had been taken away: ‘We were sitting on the concrete in the open air and the Cetniks walked past and pointed people out, who would then go with them. Those who they took away didn’t come back’.⁹⁸⁵ A 66-year-old man who managed to get on one of the buses and escaped death as a result, later said that men were picked up one by one that night, mostly aged between 17 and 60.⁹⁸⁶ Sometimes the men came back from their interrogation, some of them badly beaten.

One of those who came back was an older man, Sefik Mustafic, who had been so shocked at what he had apparently seen that he refused to talk about it; during the night, he committed suicide by hanging himself.⁹⁸⁷ Possibly it was his body that lieutenant Koster found in the factory the following morning and had it removed. But we cannot be certain that this body was Mustafic. Judging by various witness statements, more suicides by hanging must have taken place than just this one.⁹⁸⁸ Oddly there is once again hardly any confirmation on this point on the Dutchbat side, although it is just possible that

⁹⁸⁰ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Municipal Commission Zivinice, (14).

⁹⁸¹ Stover & Peress, *The Graves*, p. 130

⁹⁸² The name of Hodzic surfaced during the testimony of Camila Omanovic, ICTY Krstic (IT-98-33-T), 24/03/00. Another woman heard a man wail ‘oh Hedib!’. BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Zivinice, (10). See also: Bill Frelick, ‘special issue: the death march from Srebrenica’, *Refugee Reports. A news service of the U.S. Committee for refugees*, vol. XVI(1995)7, p. 5.

⁹⁸³ Christopher Bellamy, ‘20,000 still missing in “zone of death”’, *The Independent*, 17/07/95.

⁹⁸⁴ Interview Abida Smajic, 20/10/97. NIOD investigators’ own observations on the spoil confirmed this. There is a rail that runs to the outside from inside the abattoir, carcasses can be hung from it with meat hooks and moved along the rail; under it is tank to collect blood. Whether Smajic implied that this tank now contained the blood of the men did not become clear.

⁹⁸⁵ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Zivinice, (15).

⁹⁸⁶ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Zivinice, (20).

⁹⁸⁷ See, among others, testimony by Camila Omanovic, ICTY Krstic (IT-98-33-T), 22/03/00.

⁹⁸⁸ Such as by a Hamdija (surname not known) from the village of Peciste, whose wife and children as well as a female witness found his body hanging from a door of the factory. (BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Zivinice, (21) Another witness saw a man who had hanged himself by his belt from one of the buses at the depot, because, as she was told, his son had been taken away. (BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Zivinice, (22)). Mirsada Malagic stated that they heard from their relatives in Potocari that Kiram Smajic and Fehim Hasanovic had hanged themselves. Testimony M. Malagic, ICTY (IT-98-33-T), 03/04/00.

a number of these bodies, for instance those that were hanging outside in full view, were removed by the Bosnian Serbs.⁹⁸⁹ But it is more likely that Dutchbat soldiers did in fact come across more of these suicides but never officially reported them. Even in 1995 an anonymous Dutch soldier said: 'In their despair, a few Muslim boys hanged themselves'.⁹⁹⁰ It was not until Krstic's trial that a Dutch soldier openly said he had seen three or four suicide victims, two of which he himself had cut loose.⁹⁹¹ During the same trial, UNMO Kingori declared that he, too, with the help of some Dutch soldiers, had cut loose two men, aged 30-35.⁹⁹² To what extent this fits in with the previous statement could not be determined.

A 43-year-old female witness who was interviewed at Tuzla Air Base on July 20 and who was described as 'quite credible' by investigators of Civil Affairs of the UN, said she had followed her 20-year-old son when he was being taken away by the VRS together with 15 other young men. Initially, he had fled into the forest, too, but then returned to Potocari to look for his mother. About 19.30 hours on July 12, he, his 15-year-old brother and a number of other men were taken away by a group of five Serbs. The woman was told that they would be interrogated. She was also told that her son would be sent back after his interrogation. He did in fact come back after about two hours, but soon after that he was again picked up and taken away with 15 other men. The woman and a few other mothers ran after the group, who were taken to a yellow house. This is one of the many indications that many more houses in the Potocari area were used by the VRS for these purposes and not just the 'White House' that stood diagonally across from the compound and later became notorious - however, the VRS started to use it only on the 13th.⁹⁹³ The women, who were screaming and crying, were not prevented by guards from entering the house and were told that the men had to make a statement and would then come back. The witness said that she subsequently managed to get in anyway, via a back door, when she found three bodies whose throats had been cut. She then saw the VRS soldiers cut the throat of her own son. She lost consciousness and only came to back at the camp.⁹⁹⁴

The judges in the trial of Krstic could not reach a clear decision on the question whether there had been large-scale murders in Potocari or only sporadically. The witnesses presented at the trial contradicted each other on this point.⁹⁹⁵ What we are possibly seeing here is the difference between the lawyer and the historian, who has more room for interpretation. The picture that the historian gets from all the statements is that near the area marked by yellow tape, people were killed on a considerable scale. The exact scale of the murders cannot be determined because of the earlier explained question of numbers. Moreover, the details are sometimes so horrific, that at first glance they seem implausible to the investigator. There are many stories that talk about hacked off limbs and even decapitations. There is an obvious tendency (on the part of the investigators) to think the witnesses are embellishing their stories or use imagery remembered from the past in an effort to express the horrors they want to describe. Yet is necessary to exercise caution here because there is a danger that we close our eyes to the possibility that the reality of Potocari was perhaps as gruesome as some people described it. Obviously there are hardly any other sources than the statements of the refugees. But we know a lot about the things that happened elsewhere during the war, when the ghastly details were in fact fully

⁹⁸⁹ However, stories were doing the rounds, just the same, such as one about a man who had hanged himself from a tree. See among others: Debriefing statement F.S. Cameron, Assen, 05/09/95.

⁹⁹⁰ J. van der Graaf, "Het was Auschwitz" ("It was Auschwitz"), *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 05/08/95.

⁹⁹¹ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony D.Vaasen, 27/03/00.

⁹⁹² ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony J. Kingori, 03/04/00.

⁹⁹³ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

⁹⁹⁴ Interview report interviewee 'RS', 20/07/95, UN Airbase Tuzla; interviewer Wasantha Bandarage. UN CA Zagreb, Human Rights Cell (NIOD, Coll. Hicks). The story matches that of another woman on many points, BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Lukavac, (16). It is not known whether Tribunal investigators have later conducted forensic tests for blood traces in houses in and around in Potocari, as was successfully done in other places. Perhaps that was no longer possible because Serbs moved into the houses fairly quickly and any possible traces were erased.

⁹⁹⁵ Prosecutor vs Krstic, *Judgement*, par. 43.

documented. And sometimes there is a perpetrator who can no longer bear it and decides to go public. Drazen Erdemovic was one of those, but he was not the only one.

The 50-year-old Serb war veteran Slobodan Mistic caused a lot of excitement in Belgrade in November 1997 when the Belgrade daily *Dnevni Telegraph* published his statements. The independent press agency Beta also reported them. It was the first time that someone who had been involved freely admitted that Serbian soldiers had been guilty of large-scale war crimes. Mistic confessed that he had personally killed at least 80 Croats and Muslims. He also admitted to having been involved in the ethnic cleansing that took place following the fall of Srebrenica. According to Mistic, 4000-5000 people had been murdered in the course of this campaign. Quite apart from the political implications of Serbian involvement in the war in Bosnia, it's the gruesome details of his story that stand out the most. Mistic told *Dnevni Telegraph* how he and his colleagues decapitated civilians and captured soldiers and stuck the heads on stakes. They also cut off the ears of bodies and sold them somewhere else for 50 German marks each.⁹⁹⁶ Although this sort of stories have to be approached with circumspection, they do show that the stories of both victims and perpetrators sometimes point in the same direction. That is also an important conclusion as a starting point in answering the questions over Dutchbat's performance.

22. Protective effort in the night of July 12-13

The notion that Dutchbat's efforts to keep watch over and protect the refugees during the night of July 12-13 were adequate and effective has turned out to be untenable, although that suggestion still prevailed at the time. Christina Schmitz of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, which had set up a post among the refugees, expressed her concerns to Karremans and Franken about the men who were being separated from the rest and taken to a house where they would be interrogated. After midnight, Schmitz reported to the office of *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Belgrade on the conversation she had had with them. Apparently, the subject of the discussion was the rumour that men were being pulled out of the crowds. Schmitz told her Belgrade office: 'Discussed with Franken and Karremans – they are sure that the VRS cannot enter – they are very sure that nobody of the men gets killed etc'.⁹⁹⁷

Franken later told the NIOD that while Karremans had not wanted to go that far, he himself had in fact already been a little worried at the time about the fate of the men, but that for reasons of his own he had not wanted to say so - a theme that will be discussed elsewhere. Initially, he remained sceptical about the VRS having access to the refugees and the possibility that large numbers of men had been taken away and murdered while Dutch soldiers were not far away. However, when he was confronted with the pattern in the statements of the refugees, he acknowledged the problem. In a subsequent attempt to reconstruct events, trying to reduce the discrepancy with the refugee statements, elements emerged, however, that when looked at more closely may help find an explanation.

Franken said he went out to check things himself that night, because of a new panic wave among the refugees. Around the edge of the area marked by yellow tape, some posts had been set up that were 'virtually within sight of each other'. Franken found that two posts 'had joined up anyway' and were longer on the outside edge of the area. He also discovered that there was a gap behind the bus depot: 'That was fixed right then'.⁹⁹⁸ Franken admitted that this had possibly made it easier for VRS soldiers to infiltrate and - if they were wearing stolen Dutch uniforms - not to be recognised, also because it was 'pitch dark' – although according to some people the moon provided some light in the

⁹⁹⁶ H. Gerritsen, "'Serb army was fully involved". War veteran confesses to dozens of horrifying war crimes.' 05/11/97.

⁹⁹⁷ MSF, Brussels. MSF capsat Christina (Schmitz) to Stefan (Oberreit), not numbered, 13/07/95, 01:52:42. The date/time of the conversation (or the conversations) is not clear from this document, which is not without importance because of the context in which it took place. Schmitz and her colleague Daniel O'Brien told the French parliamentary *mission d'information* about Srebrenica that the conversations already took place in the afternoon (See: Audition de Christina Schmitz et Daniel O'Brien, 29 mars 2001, <http://www.paris.msf.org>). The time that the message was sent off, however, seems to leave room for the possibility that the contact took place in the evening.

⁹⁹⁸ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

area.⁹⁹⁹ While he was moving around, he himself was not stopped by the VRS. He was also stated that at about 13.00 hours he had to have B Company relieved. Until then, it had manned the blocking position at the southern entrance to the compound and also guarded part of the circle, at the point of the turn-off to Jaglici. The crew of this blocking position, some of the men of which had spent five days and nights without sleep in war conditions, was completely at the end of its tether, according to Franken: 'They were running on empty'.¹⁰⁰⁰ Lieutenant Mustert said the exhausted company had fairly readily - albeit under some threat- allowed itself to be disarmed by VRS troops twice, after which the VRS soldiers walked on in the direction of Potocari. Captain Groen arranged for the company to be relieved by a smaller team of mixed composition that came from the compound.¹⁰⁰¹ The Dutchbat soldiers who took over from the men of B Company knew each other much less well, which made infiltration by the VRS easier.

After his discussions with the NIOD, Franken made an attempt of his own to reconstruct the situation, together with other people who had been involved at the time. It showed that until about 01.00 hours, Dutchbat soldiers had been in the 'outside circle', with only a half-hour interruption when two or three posts were disarmed by the VRS. Probably that already happened early in the evening. Similar attempts were reported later in the night, but this never led anyone to the realisation that a gap had opened up on the outer ring as a result. It was only for the period of 01.00 hours to 04.00 hours that it was unclear whether there had been outside posts. Lieutenant Koster, who had relieved his colleague Egbers, had not been able to determine whether the outside posts were still being manned because during that period his attention was required elsewhere.

At 04.00 hours, Egbers took over from Koster again, when it was already beginning to get light. So Egbers then believed that from that moment it would be impossible to secretly take people away. Based on all this, Franken concluded that the only gap had existed during the three 'open' hours between 01.00 hours and 04.00 hours.¹⁰⁰² In this context, it is interesting that at least one refugee specifically said that most incidents, especially rapes, had taken place between midnight and 03.00 hours.¹⁰⁰³ Another witness who had gone outside at 3 in the morning to urinate, said that he found six women and five men, one of whom he recognised, all with their throats cut, at the river.¹⁰⁰⁴ Even allowing for a margin of error because of the distortions that can occur in a person's memory, these statements seem to fit in with each other.

However, Franken regarded it as unlikely that a large number of men had been spirited away during this period of time. Whether that is right remains to be seen: by wearing the uniforms of UN soldiers, the Bosnian Serbs could also operate outside the 'open' hours. Witness statements are consistent with the picture of individuals or very small groups being taken away, which could be done much less conspicuously. This process continued all night.

Egbers' firm belief that the early light of the morning of July 13 would make it impossible to take people away secretly also deserves comment. There was a shortage of manpower to provide proper protection, anyway. In the words of Koster: 'The situation was simply too big for us to handle and we didn't have enough people to be able to say: we'll post someone on every corner to keep an eye on the entire multitude. That was absolutely impossible'.¹⁰⁰⁵ This was also emphasised by Karremans: 'I didn't have the physical manpower. Especially at night it was completely impossible to keep an eye on everything. There were large gaps.'¹⁰⁰⁶

⁹⁹⁹ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Municipal Commission Zivinice, (17).

¹⁰⁰⁰ Interview R.A. Franken, 18 and 22/05/01.

¹⁰⁰¹ Interview J.M. Mustert, 18/06/99.

¹⁰⁰² E-mail R.A. Franken, 31/05/01.

¹⁰⁰³ BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Lukavac, (18).

¹⁰⁰⁴ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), Testimony 'E', 27/03/00.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Interview E. Koster, 06/10/99.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Interview Th. Karremans, 30/11/00 en 01/12/00

So it appears that a lot happened in the early morning of July 13 that the Dutchbat soldiers didn't notice. A conspicuous red thread in the refugee statements is formed by the discoveries of bodies in a corn field near the zinc factory. They had been slaughtered with knives. Many children who went looking for water saw bodies at the little creek. Men and women who had gone into the corn field during the night and in the morning to answer nature's call had also come across men whose throats had been cut.

Notable, too, is that several refugees also said they had tried in vain to warn Dutch soldiers. One of them was Camila Omanovic of the refugee committee, whose son had found corpses on both days and in two different locations, when he went out to get water.¹⁰⁰⁷ On the other hand, there are statements that Dutch soldiers advised refugees not to go to certain spots where there were bodies. Mevlida Selimovic, who lived in Potocari next to the battery factory, said that when she wanted to get water, a Dutch soldier refused to let her go to a certain spot because there was supposed to be a 'pile of bodies' behind the zinc factory.¹⁰⁰⁸ *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff member Emira Selimovic said that a number of Dutchbat soldiers had approached her boss Christina Schmitz about the discovery of seven dead Muslims whose throats had been cut. They wanted *Médecins Sans Frontières* to remove the bodies, which were supposed to be in a white house in a large corn field. Verification was impossible at that time because VRS soldiers with dogs were patrolling around the house. When Selimovic later did get a chance to take a look she did not find anyone there.¹⁰⁰⁹ At the 'major' debriefing in Assen, incidentally, not a single Dutchbat soldier talked about these murders, nor any other murder or indication of murder where knives had been used. A large number of other witnesses also mentioned the same house, as well as other houses nearby, sometimes even naming the owners.¹⁰¹⁰

The suggestion that emerges from this is that some Dutch soldier perhaps actually witnessed the same horrors that the refugees saw. However, such details have surfaced only sporadically until now. Social worker Dijkman later said he remembered hearing rumours in the compound about bodies in a corn field. It reinforced a 'gut feeling' that both he and psychologist Sanders had that something was 'very wrong'. However, he did not hear any concrete stories.¹⁰¹¹ But after the battalion's return to Zagreb, one Dutch soldier did tell UN interviewers that he had heard pistol shots from the direction of the corn field.¹⁰¹² This story did not emerge in the debriefing that was held in the Netherlands later.

23. Going around with blinkers on?

Bego Ademovic's testimony that we quoted earlier shows, as we have said before, that possibly a large number of the men who were 'lost' in Potocari were probably murdered at a time when Dutchbat's attentions were focused mainly on the chaotic start of the evacuation. At the same time, the Factual Account contains a large number of examples of Dutchbat personnel having strong suspicions that men were also being murdered during daylight hours on July 12 and 13. In some cases, reports of executions that had been seen by Dutchbat but had until then not been mentioned even surfaced during the debriefing in Assen. For instance, one Dutchbat soldier said that on July 12, he saw five

¹⁰⁰⁷ Interview Camila Omanovic, 18/05/99. Omanovic marked the locations on a map. The first discovery was south of the compound, the second closer to the factory.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Interview Mevlida Selimovic, 10/12/99.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Interview Emira Selimovic, 21/10/97. Schmitz was advised by MSF-Belgrade not to go and have a look but to leave that to the UNMOs. MSF, Brussels. Stephan and Bene to Christina and Daniel, MSF capsat IN.861, 13/07/95, 10:50.

¹⁰¹⁰ We have referred before to the house of Aljo Hasanovic that Bego Ademovic talked about (Testimony Bego Ademovic, ICTY, IT-98-33-T, 29/03/00). It is possible that this is the same house as the 'house of Alija' that a witness mentioned. (BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Municipal Commission Zivinice, (1) Other houses were also mentioned by refugees, especially by those among them who had lived in the area before the war, of course, such as the house of Fuad Malic, for instance. See: BiH State Commission for the collection of facts/information on war crimes, Zivinice, (17).

¹⁰¹¹ Interviews E. Dijkman and P. Sanders, 12/12 and 13/12/00.

¹⁰¹² NIOD, Coll. Hicks. UNPF HQ Civil Affairs, Human Rights Report Srebrenica, 31/07/95, p. 3.

male prisoners get out of a small VRS van and subsequently try to escape. They ran straight into the arms of VRS soldiers. Two were shot and killed, after which the others stopped running and were then taken away. This incident is supposed to have taken place only 50 to 60 metres from the main gates of the compound in Potocari.¹⁰¹³

Judging by the debriefing report and the Account of the Facts, Dutchbat soldiers did in fact see more on July 12 and 13 than was originally assumed. However, comparable reports coming afterwards have remained conspicuously scarce when it comes to the events that took place during the night of July 12-13. On the other hand, the amount of evidence coming from refugees that shows men were being picked up and taken away outside the 'open' hours as well is so vast that the question arises here why so little has been heard about this from Dutchbat personnel. Only anonymous psychological debriefing sessions with Dutchbat soldiers after their return to Zagreb provided vague pointers that fit in with the bleakest possible picture of what happened in Srebrenica and Potocari.¹⁰¹⁴ There are also indications that other people rather than just the psychologists and social workers who attended the debriefings have heard stories from Dutchbat members who apparently had moments when they needed to unburden themselves.¹⁰¹⁵ To these, we can then also add the various statements, some anonymous, some not, that have appeared in the media over the years. Talking to psychologists and other support people who have counselled or are still counselling Dutchbat members, it becomes clear that they, too, have been confronted with stories that sketch a much more gruesome picture of what took place than they had realised until then.¹⁰¹⁶

In other words, the overwhelming impression is that at the debriefings in Zagreb and Assen, Dutchbat soldiers reported only part of what they had seen during those days after the fall of the enclave. Looking for an explanation for this is a tricky affair. To what degree the debriefing methods themselves contributed to this will be discussed later in a separate chapter. However, other factors probably also played a role, although it's difficult to list them exactly with any degree of certainty. In any case, we can make a few rationally argued assumptions to try and answer this question.

One of the possible explanations for the poor reporting was provided afterwards by a number of Dutchbat soldiers themselves, namely that the chain of command was no longer functioning properly. Log books as well as personal notes indicate that the battalion was still functioning after a fashion until July 12, despite the shortage of officers and men. Franken said at the Krstic trial that at the end of July 12, 'it was obvious that we were not in control anymore'.¹⁰¹⁷ After that, the log books and personal notes do indeed show major gaps or are only sketched later in broad outlines, after the last refugees had left the compound in Potocari on July 13.

However, it is not correct to say that the chain of command ceased to function completely. Certain orders were still being carried out. But especially outside the compound, officers were largely left to their own devices and had to act as they saw fit. 'We had no direct leadership', Lieutenant Van Duijn said later. 'We did have a link with the battalion Ops Room via the portophone, but that was something like: if there is something that needs to be done, just jump in.' The ordinary soldiers generally looked to their sergeants or the lieutenant to tell them what to do. Van Duijn: 'You could get

¹⁰¹³ Wind, *Debriefing Srebrenica*, p. 51, 99. The detail that the men arrived in a small van stands out, as well as the fact that they apparently feared the worst.

¹⁰¹⁴ This will be discussed separately in a later chapter.

¹⁰¹⁵ An anonymous and undated note from the Military History Section, entitled 'Information sources', refers to an anonymous I&V (military intelligence) official who reported rumours that were circulating at the reception camp Pleso. Soldiers were supposed to have seen civilians being herded together with a power shovel and subsequently crushed to death against a wall. (Military History Section - SMG, 1007/7) If the least likely element of the story, that of living human beings being crushed to death, is discarded, this reported observation can refer to the clearing of bodies. There are indications that there was a power shovel or excavator Potocari, near the bus depot, where traces of digging were in fact found later (albeit no - traces of - bodies). See: ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony 'H', 30/03/00.

¹⁰¹⁶ Verification was impossible in view of the confidentiality of the statements. However, the stories appear generally plausible in the light of the other statements.

¹⁰¹⁷ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony R.A. Franken, 04/04/00.

the job done quite well in this way, if you employed clearly focused leadership. I think they closed their eyes to the situation. I did that myself, otherwise you cannot function under those circumstances.’¹⁰¹⁸ But sometimes that leadership was also lacking, as one soldier told the Tribunal: ‘We were understaffed, and the higher-ranking officers and non-commissioned officers were under such stress and so busy that we did not have any people in command. Everybody did as he saw fit, and we did what we could’.¹⁰¹⁹ Lieutenant Rutten was most explicit in his criticisms, talking of complete chaos that had been partially caused by the fact that there was nobody who took command: ‘Everybody acted as he saw fit, with the result that very little or nothing at all was actually done. The battalion had become completely passive’.¹⁰²⁰

Many Dutchbat soldiers said afterwards that they were so caught up in the circumstances of the situation that there was barely any time to stop and think about what was happening, let alone report it or do something about it. Lieutenant Koster, who also began to have vague feelings of unrest about what was going on, described it as follows:

‘You realise only afterwards that we were really more focused on trying to keep things under control and at least help people in an orderly manner than that we were continually keeping an eye on what the Bosnian Serbs were up to. As strange as that may sound. Afterwards, a lot of people couldn’t comprehend that. But when you have three, four women pulling at you because they want to know what is going to happen, it’s very difficult to keep your mind on other things as well.’¹⁰²¹

It was simply a matter of who happened to be available whenever something came up that had to be done, Van Duijn said. However, he also concluded that the latter was not self-evident: ‘Various people who were supposed to do a certain job would then no longer be available for deployment’.¹⁰²² It is a theme that even now, after so many years, is still being talked about with circumspection: some Dutchbat soldiers went to pieces, temporarily or otherwise, because of the tensions and fear. A note that Rave wrote into his little diary on July 14 points to the same thing, when he recorded his impressions from the past one-and-a-half to two days: ‘sld + officers and NCOs who functioned perfectly / Sld + officers and NCOs who went to pieces’.¹⁰²³ Franken later even declared that ‘during the end phase, he had had to physically threaten or even use physical force with a fair number of people to get them moving again.’¹⁰²⁴

Other people, too, saw some Dutchbat soldiers who were completely out of it. Children saw UN soldiers cry while they tried to explain - in English and therefore unintelligible - something to their mothers.¹⁰²⁵ Hatidza Hren, who later became spokeswoman for the widows of Srebrenica, recalled how a dark Dutch soldier began to cry when he asked her whether she knew why the men were being separated from the women.¹⁰²⁶ It wasn’t just refugees who told this kind of story later. Christina

¹⁰¹⁸ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

¹⁰¹⁹ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony ‘F’, 28/03/00.

¹⁰²⁰ Quoted by H. van den Heuvel, director of Information at the Ministry of Defence, in a report on a conversation that he and the then BLS Lieutenant General M. Schouten had with J.A.H. Rutten on 04/07/97. SG. Memo H. van den Heuvel, 06/07/97, Appendix 2 with letter from Minister for Defence to the chairman of the House of Representatives (Parliament), D98002140, 13/08/98.

¹⁰²¹ Interview E. Koster, 06/10/99.

¹⁰²² Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

¹⁰²³ Notebook B. Rave. Loaned to NIOD for its perusal.

¹⁰²⁴ Interview R.A. Franken, 04/05/01.

¹⁰²⁵ Interviews with orphaned schoolchildren from Srebrenica, at the initiative and under guidance of their teacher Hatidza Hren, 05/02/98.

¹⁰²⁶ Interview Hatidza Hren, 20/10/97.

Schmitz of *Médecins Sans Frontières* also said: 'I saw many big soldiers crying'.¹⁰²⁷ The interpreter at the time, Omer Subasic, said he had seen UN soldiers in a state of shock because they had seen dead bodies.¹⁰²⁸ One refugee claimed that at some point between July 11 and July 13, he had seen a UN soldier run around who 'went nuts' and kept shouting: 'UN is mafia!'.¹⁰²⁹

It is a well-known phenomenon that in situations of extreme stress, a person's powers of observation diminish and the observer withdraws into himself and shuts himself off from his surroundings. This alienating effect of shocking experiences was put into words by, among others, soldier Groenewegen, who witnessed an execution. His debriefers in Assen recount his experiences as follows: 'At that moment, he felt as if everything around him was no longer completely real and it was difficult to comprehend (what he was seeing). For a moment, the only thought in his head was to flee'.¹⁰³⁰ Even so, Groenewegen did report what he had seen to his superior. Another soldier reported in Zagreb already that he had seen a man being taken from a house and then disappear behind a bus, after which there was a shot. After that, the same thing happened again, but: 'He didn't dare make it too blatantly obvious that he was watching, for fear of the VRS'.¹⁰³¹

Others kept silent for a long time. A combination of other elements probably played a role in this as well. We have examples of what happened in other peacekeeping operations where UN soldiers witnessed people being killed. Initially they were so shocked by this, that they didn't report the incident. Then came the shame and the fear because they had failed in their duty to report the incident. When the bodies were discovered later and from the route that the UN patrol was known to have taken it became obvious that it was virtually impossible for them to have missed the incident, one soldier eventually cracked and told the story.¹⁰³²

It can be easily imagined that in some cases such mechanisms also played a role in Potocari. Often it takes a long time before the so-called bell-ringers come forward. A good and at the same time moving example of a case where the person concerned kept silent for a long time, probably as a result of prolonged mental stress, emerged at Tribunal trial of General Krstic. One of the witnesses was soldier D. Vaasen.

His testimony did not touch on the first gripping experiences that he had had. The court was not told that Vaasen had been part of the crew of OP-M. The members of this crew had seen the local ABiH commander shoot and kill two of his own men before their very eyes, because they wanted to stop the Dutch from leaving with the refugees. They subsequently saw them start fighting among themselves, and again people got killed. After that, they had driven their APC, like a Medusa raft on wheels, to Potocari surrounded by thousands of refugees. When they were being fired at along the way, the ensuing panic situation saw refugees end up under the wheels of the vehicle (see Chapter 8 of this part for more about the so-called OP-M incident.)

Back in Potocari, Vaasen was deployed in guarding the refugees in the factory complexes. As related earlier, he saw a number of suicides by hanging there. At Krstic's trial, Vaasen also said that he - and some colleagues - had witnessed the aforementioned rape of a young woman in one of the factory halls.¹⁰³³ It was a notable statement because it was the first time that a Dutchbat soldier publicly talked about having seen anything like that.¹⁰³⁴ For instance, general Couzy said at his press conference in

¹⁰²⁷ MSF, Brussels. MSF Capsat out. 534, 13/07/95, 22:02:43. Specific examples were provided in various conversations with former Dutchbat members who were promised anonymity.

¹⁰²⁸ Interview O. Subasic, 19/04/98.

¹⁰²⁹ Interview Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98.

¹⁰³⁰ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas* Debriefing 'srebrenica', p. 288

¹⁰³¹ SMG, 1007/25. Note P. Groen, 'Debriefing sgt Van der Vliet staff medic company in regards to inquiry into war crimes, Camp Pleso 230795, 12.30-1 pm'.

¹⁰³² This phenomenon is partially based on a concrete instance involving Dutch UNIFIL soldiers in Lebanon and comes from a former UNIFIL soldier who wished to remain anonymous.

¹⁰³³ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony D. Vaasen, 27 and 28/03/00.

¹⁰³⁴ This is not entirely correct. Army chaplain N. Meurkens, who was involved in the reception of Dutchbat in Zagreb, heard from a medic that he (the medic) had witnessed two rapes by VRS soldiers, including one where a young girl was the

Zagreb, after the return of the battalion, that Dutchbat had not seen any rapes. There is no reason to believe, incidentally, that Couzy said anything that he didn't think was the factual truth as he knew it at the time. The picture of no rapes having been observed by any member of Dutchbat also remained during the debriefing in Assen.

After that, Vaasen had other experiences that left an indelible impression on him. Under threat of an AK-47 automatic weapon that was held against his head, he had to surrender all his equipment. He also saw a man being taken behind a house, after which there was a shot and the VRS soldiers came back alone. When Vaasen made a trip from Potocari to Srebrenica a few days later to pick up equipment that had been left behind by B Company after the fall of the enclave, he saw many bodies along the way and in Srebrenica, some of whom had looked like execution victims.¹⁰³⁵

In reply to kindly questions from a judge as to his (Vaasen's) own well-being, Vaasen said that after all those years he was still being plagued by the memories of what he had gone through in Srebrenica.¹⁰³⁶

Psychological explanations of this kind of thing are often looked at with suspicion because they make the question of responsibility a lot more complicated. However, anyone who wants to understand what happened to the Dutchbat soldiers in Potocari, cannot escape having to take into account the effects of exhaustion and fear on their powers of observation and ability to act. A narrowing of vision, mental withdrawal, urge for self-preservation, denial/suppression (of things seen) and loss of memory can all occur in situations of extreme stress. Moreover, Dutchbat's soldiers weren't the only ones who failed to realise what the Bosnian Serb soldiers were up to exactly. Just like a lot of people outside the enclave, the possibility of a large-scale bloodbath was literally unimaginable to the Dutchbat soldiers. 'I think most of us didn't know. That was perhaps being a little naive', said warrant officer Oosterveen, who himself had found bodies of people who had been executed.¹⁰³⁷ On top of that, certain incidents seemed to fit into the picture that they had formed during training of the somewhat rough and ready local customs. That made it easier to simply shrug things off as 'incidents'. Hence, too, that some soldiers thought of themselves first. 'I thought: it's your party', as one of them, Van Beukering, expressed it.¹⁰³⁸ Incidentally, that attitude did not prevent him from reporting his strong suspicions about an execution, although he didn't do so until Zagreb.

All these factors were exacerbated by the lack of something to hold onto. The Dutchbat soldiers had not - or barely - been prepared or trained for a situation such as the one that developed on July 12 and 13. During one training exercise, lieutenant Koster had made his men simulate an execution near an OP: 'But afterwards I said: maybe we shouldn't do that too often, because it probably doesn't happen anyway'.¹⁰³⁹

In the autumn of 1995, the Committee of Dutch Lawyers for Human Rights wrote to Defence Minister Voorhoeve to point out how inadequate the attention paid to the humanitarian aspects of the mission had been:

victim. Meurkens reported this to the Head Chaplain and also told a journalist who was in Zagreb at the time about it. See: B. Bommels, 'De "black box" Srebrenica' ('The "black box" Srebrenica'), *Elsevier*, 29/07/95. One conspicuous detail is that Vaasen, in addition to his other tasks, also looked after the wounded.

¹⁰³⁵ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony D. Vaasen, 27/03 and 28/03/00.

¹⁰³⁶ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony D. Vaasen, 27/03/00.

¹⁰³⁷ F. Lardenoye, 'Het boek "Srebrenica" is niet gesloten' ('The book on 'srebrenica' has not been closed'), in: *Oplinie*, 05/07/96. See also: E. Nysingh, 'Naïeve Dutchbatters zagen moordpartij niet aankomen' ('Naive Dutchbat men never saw the murders coming'), *De Volkskrant*, 12/07/96.

¹⁰³⁸ Interview E.J. van Beukering, 14/12/00.

¹⁰³⁹ Interview E. Koster, 19/10/99.

‘subjects like setting up a refugee camp, distributing food, separating bona fide refugees and Displaced Persons from disguised soldiers, dealing with orphaned children (...) are perhaps paid too little attention to’.¹⁰⁴⁰

As an example, the Committee pointed out that the ‘Yugoslavia Manual’ issued by the Directorate of Operations of the Netherlands Army did not contain any chapters on humanitarian matters. We can only endorse the Committee’s conclusions, which were based on discussions with several Dutch officers. The words ‘perhaps paid too little attention to (humanitarian issues)’ probably don’t even express it strongly enough. Especially the lower ranks lacked the knowledge and training that they required to be able to perform adequately. The virtual absence of some kind of frame of reference that could give them something to hang on to, caused some soldiers ‘to lose their way’ during the chaos.’ That became even worse as a result of the chain-of-command problems that so many statements talk about. (The training of Dutchbat was discussed in more detail in Chapter 8 of Part II.)

Based on the available information, it is impossible to determine the degree to which the aforementioned factors affected Dutchbat’s performance. In any case, the reactions of individual Dutchbat soldiers were different from one man to the next. Some of them resigned themselves to the situation very quickly and, for instance, offered hardly any resistance when they were robbed of their equipment. Others only gave in only when they were threatened with violence. The same differences also played a role in how people observed and reported possible war crimes.

Although we can - on the basis of formal criteria - criticise the way some Dutchbat soldiers treated signs that war crimes were being committed and it is clear that this aspect of things has gone very wrong, it is also important to remember that apportioning individual blame/responsibility under such circumstances is a concept wrought with problems. A comparison with the way in which other observers dealt with the information that they got makes that even more obvious.

24. Observations and reports by the UNMOs

A *Post Mission Report* of the UNMO headquarters in Zagreb praised its own organisation as ‘the only real sensor’ in the field on behalf of the UN Security Council. The UNMOs’ impartiality was backed by ‘real national balance’, unarmed status, ability to operate independently during operations, great flexibility and mobility and the fact that they worked and lived in the local community. At a professional military level, the UNMOs concerned themselves with valuable monitoring of events on the ground. Even more importantly, the authors of the report said, was the fact that the UNMOs ‘used to be the last to leave the hottest spots and so to lose credibility with warring factions.’ As a result, they played a crucial role during the peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁴¹ In its conclusions, the report said, among other things, that ‘UNMOs are the most objective and reliable information source for UNNY, ICTY [the Tribunal], ICRC [the International Red Cross] and different humanitarian agencies (...)’.¹⁰⁴²

The report also briefly touched on the UNMO involvement in the events in Srebrenica, where three UNMOs were present at the time of the attack. In the flat description, which contrasts sharply with the bold conclusions of the report, we can read, among other things, that the UNMOs had assisted in the evacuation of the local population ‘to the bitter end’ and that they had managed to pass on valuable information despite the fact that they had become fairly powerless as a result of the situation.¹⁰⁴³

The reality of the UNMO activities during the last days of Srebrenica was rather less rosy. When the attack began, there were three UNMOs in the enclave. Three others had left on June 24 to

¹⁰⁴⁰ DJZ. Dr. B.C. Labuschagne, chairman NJCM, to Defence Minister J.J.C. Voorhoeve, Leyden, 18 December 1995.

¹⁰⁴¹ UNMO HQ Zagreb, *UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF. Post Mission Report* (Zagreb 1996) p. 4.

¹⁰⁴² UNMO HQ Zagreb, *UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF. Post Mission Report* (Zagreb 1996) p. 44.

¹⁰⁴³ UNMO HQ Zagreb, *UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF. Post Mission Report* (Zagreb 1996) p. 14.

be rotated, but the VRS did not allow their replacements to enter the enclave. Many Dutch soldiers, including the battalion's commanding officers, later criticised the three remaining UNMOs in Srebrenica. They complained about their 'invisibility', tendency to hang back and even fear in monitoring and reporting events during the crucial days of the fall of the enclave and what happened afterwards. Karremans as well as Franken accused the UNMOs of not taking greater advantage of their special position and wider mandate to at least try to follow the events better. In Karremans' eyes, they could have followed convoys by car, or 'at the start of the evacuation they can stand in the middle of Bratunac, so to speak'.¹⁰⁴⁴ Moreover, the UNMOs would even have been able to use the excuse that their second office was in Bratunac, at the Hotel Fontana.

Conversely, the UNMOs complained especially about the poor information that they received from the battalion, something that is supposed to have hampered their activities. Even early on July 12 they already reported their frustration about having been ignored in consultations between Dutchbat and other aid organisations: 'they tell us outright we are not required. We feel frustrated.'¹⁰⁴⁵ However, that may already have been the result of a loss of credibility at the time. Dutchbat personnel as well as local staff complained about the fact that the UNMOs made their own job more difficult by leaving their office at the Post Office building in Srebrenica quite early in the piece, on July 9.

At the time that the UNMOs left Srebrenica in a great hurry, one of them - the Dutch Major De Haan, was already at the compound in Potocari. He had arrived there on July 1 for some minor surgery, but had hung around the compound ever since - to the annoyance of many Dutchbat members. De Haan himself declared that he had gone back to work on July 10, inside the compound as well as outside it. The former was something that depended on how you looked at it: the remaining UNMOs, Kingori and Tetteh, already joined him on July 9 when things got too hot for them, and they left the compound again only after the fall of the enclave. It didn't make a very good impression when they sent their interpreter Emir Suljagic back to Srebrenica with a Motorola walkie-talkie to count and report on the shell bursts there¹⁰⁴⁶ (see Chapter 6 of Part III about this). Some Dutchbat soldiers liked to call the UNMOs 'UNBOs', standing for 'UN Bunker Observers', because 'when something had to be observed these people were sitting in the bunkers'.¹⁰⁴⁷ Two interpreters also said later that the UNMOs hardly ever tried to set foot outside the door and very much relied on them (the interpreters).¹⁰⁴⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Karremans also made a vain attempt to send them back to Srebrenica: 'When that failed, I sent my own Liaison Officer team'.¹⁰⁴⁹

The UNMOs themselves later tried to provide a different picture of their activities. On July 21, squadron leader Tetteh wrote a curious report in Zagreb entitled 'Report on the battle of Srebrenica', in which he gave a flowery, almost pathetic account of the adventures of the UNMOs:

'There was another silent group who championed the course of peace in this [sic] trying circumstances by assuming the role of co-ordinators as well as reporters and could be found at the scene of every event covering every single blade of grass. These were the notorious A team, UNMO team Srebrenica.'

In his report, Tetteh created the impression that the UNMOs had fearlessly continued to do their job after fleeing from Srebrenica: 'if anyone thought this notorious group was done with, he might be joking, for the team went hurriedly into action right away instead of going into hiding like the

¹⁰⁴⁴ Interview Th. Karremans, 18/12/98.

¹⁰⁴⁵ SMG/Debrief. Debriefing statement A. de Haan, 25/09/95. De Haan made statements in Assen on two consecutive days.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Interviews Muhamed Durakovic, 20/11/99; Almir Ramic, 6-10/11/99 and Emir Suljagic 24/05/99.

¹⁰⁴⁷ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 187.

¹⁰⁴⁸ 'srebrenica lijst 242', letter Hasan Nuhanovic to Mient-Jan Faber (part 4), in: *Trouw*, 14/07/99; ditto, part 9, in: *Trouw*, 20/07/99. Interview Emir Suljagic, 23/10/97.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Interview Th. Karremans, 30/11/00 en 01/12/00.

others'.¹⁰⁵⁰ However, Tetteh's name never turns up in any of the reports by Dutchbat personnel and *Médecins Sans Frontières*.¹⁰⁵¹ It is possible that Tetteh's invisibility had to do with him manning the new UNMO communications centre in the Potocari compound. The pathetic closing sentences in some of the situation reports seem to point that way. However, Kingori's casual remark at the Krstic trial, when he described the problems in monitoring events, is perhaps the most telling: 'we were just two observers'.

The Dutch UNMO, De Haan, also played an inconspicuous role. UNMO interpreter Emir Suljagic said that De Haan did try to get clarification from Mladic on July 12 on why the men were being separated from the rest.¹⁰⁵² De Haan himself later told a journalist that he went to investigate, probably that same day. On that occasion, he discovered an 'interrogation house' less than 300 metres from the gates to the compound, with clothes and other possessions piled high against the front wall. He saw about 70 men go into the house and heard shots coming from there from time to time.¹⁰⁵³ At Franken's strong insistence, he went to check out the White House on July 13, but did not go in because he was refused entry (by the VRS). But he did see how a man, who furiously resisted being taken away, was 'given a thorough beating and dragged into the bus'.¹⁰⁵⁴

The one UNMO who appears to have been most active in those days after the fall was the Kenyan major J. Kingori. He could in fact be seen in the film images made on July 12 after the entry of the Serb troops and Mladic. He was also the one who asked him why the men were being separated. At Franken's request, he watched the White House on July 13 to check whether the number of men who were led in corresponded with the number who came out.¹⁰⁵⁵ And as Dutchbat soldier Koreman wrote in his diary, Kingori also protested continually against the brutal manner in which people were packed together in the buses.¹⁰⁵⁶

Oddly, however, none of the incidents that De Haan and Kingori were involved in are mentioned in the reports that the UNMOs were regularly sending off. What's more, the picture that they painted of the VRS behaviour on the afternoon of July 12 was positive: it was 'giving bread and soft drinks [sic] to the refugees that are on the place of departure but it can't help all the people at once. At least they are trying to comfort the people in a way'.¹⁰⁵⁷

A partial explanation for this discrepancy was provided by the UNMOs themselves. The impression that we get from the UNMO reports about the mental state of the observers at the time closely corresponds to the picture that we have of many Dutch soldiers during those days: stress, fear and despair. At irregular intervals, the UN observers sent their reports to the sector headquarters in Tuzla, indicating their growing anxiety. They also talked about how they were getting on themselves, including their frustrations about their treatment by Dutchbat.¹⁰⁵⁸

Even on July 12 the UN observers were already signalling that their ability to operate was diminishing. When it was still uncertain whether the battalion would leave before all refugees had safely been removed, Franken toyed with the idea of staying behind if that happened, to keep an eye on things. He felt that should also be the UNMOs' job. Normally, they would have agreed with that, they told him, but 'concerning the current situation we think it is advisable to leave with the battalion. We turn out not to be machines however much we would like to. We feel really exhausted'.¹⁰⁵⁹

¹⁰⁵⁰ Collection NIOD (8). Sqdn ldr David A. Tetteh, 'Report on the battle of Srebrenica', 21/07/95.

¹⁰⁵¹ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), Testimony J. Kingori, 03/04/00.

¹⁰⁵² Interview Emir Suljagic, 24/05/99. However, Suljagic was soon taken back to the compound by De Haan because he was being threatened. De Haan then returned to Mladic without interpreter.

¹⁰⁵³ Westerman/ Rijs, *Srebrenica*, p. 171

¹⁰⁵⁴ Debriefing statement A. de Haan, 26/09/95.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Debriefing statement R.A. Franken, 07/09/95.

¹⁰⁵⁶ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman, 41st week, p. 26

¹⁰⁵⁷ SMG, 1002. UNMO Srebrenica update dtg 121645B JUL 95. The last update that was sent off that night does not say anything either that fits in with later statements about observations on the 12th.

¹⁰⁵⁸ See: SMG, 1002. UNMO HQ BH-NE daily sitrep 120001-12200, i.h.b. dtg 120746B JUL 95.

¹⁰⁵⁹ SMG, 1002. UNMO Team Srebrenica, Srebrenica update: dtg 121025B JUL 95

That picture is confirmed by an observation by the independent Serb journalist Bratislav Grubacic, who managed to reach Potocari on the 13th. The deportation of refugees outside the compound had been completed at about 16.00 hours and the clearing of the Dutch base began. Grubacic saw how the refugees walked between two rows of Dutchbat soldiers as they were leaving the base, and Serb soldiers who were standing behind the Dutchmen began to point certain men out and pluck them from the refugee columns. The Dutch soldiers who formed a sort of hedge, were just standing there, looking dazed: ‘They did nothing, they looked on as if they didn’t understand what was happening, including the officers. It was as if they came from Mars’.¹⁰⁶⁰ Grubacic said he also met a Dutch UNMO ‘who told me that he only wanted this whole affair to be finished as soon as possible: “I can hardly wait to go home”, he told me, “I lost 14 kilos here”’.¹⁰⁶¹

Probably about the same time, 17.15 hours, a fax went out to (UNMO section headquarters in) Tuzla that again indicated that it was best if the UNMOs left together with the battalion: ‘Emotions are getting out of hand by us and we really need time to recover’.¹⁰⁶² And a few hours later: ‘Tears were in our eyes when seeing the desperate Displaced Persons with no secure future looking at us and seeking for help we cannot give them. We really lost this enclave and our heads. We feel very sorry that we were not able to do more’.¹⁰⁶³

This emotional mood was a direct result of what the UNMOs went through on July 13. ‘After a virtually sleepless night’, they were confronted in the morning with the same stories of bodies being found that the Dutchbat soldiers heard: ‘We try to investigate the rumour that the Serbs have killed several men they took out of the crowd yesterday. I hope we will be able to’.¹⁰⁶⁴ Kingori himself says he made an attempt to investigate, but was stopped.¹⁰⁶⁵ However, the following day they despondently reported that they were hardly in a position to check rumours: ‘The ROM (restriction of movement) really kills us. We can only report the rumours and hardly confirm anything’.¹⁰⁶⁶ Shortly before that, they had reported one of their suspicions, resulting from shots that they had heard coming from the Bratunac area. Because of the *restriction of movement*, they had not been able to investigate, but: ‘Because the men were taken there in separate buses we fear for the worse [sic]’.¹⁰⁶⁷ That fear just didn’t pop out of thin air. Right from the beginning the UNMOs had had anxious forebodings. In their message of July 8 that the VRS was entering the enclave, they also wrote: ‘The question is now: how do we find the means to prevent a massacre?’¹⁰⁶⁸

However, in regards to those ‘restrictions of movement’ faced by the UNMOs at that time, there were two exceptions that throw a curious light on the question of the meagre humanitarian reporting from Potocari. Apart from the messages about the deportation, the rumours about murders and the shots that had been heard, the impression created by the UNMOs’ situation reports is that at that point nothing had happened. However, fairly soon after the fall of the enclave, in the autumn of 1995, there was already an indication that the UNMOs must have seen more than they had said in their reports. NRC journalist Frank Westerman, one of the first to seriously look at the issue, wrote an article in October that criticised the performance of Dutchbat in its efforts to assist the local population. Westerman also talked to Kingori, who claimed that the Dutchmen must already have known by July 12 that ‘people were being murdered on the other side of the fence’. Kingori referred to his own

¹⁰⁶⁰ Quoted in: ‘Dutchbat keek toe bij het wegvoeren mannen’ (‘Dutchbat looked on as men were being taken away’), *De Volkskrant*, 30/08/95.

¹⁰⁶¹ Interview B. Grubacic, 06/11/97.

¹⁰⁶² Def. Sitreps. UNMO Team Srebrenica, Srebrenica update: dtg 131715B JULY 95

¹⁰⁶³ Def. Sitreps. SMG, 1002. UNMO Team Srebrenica, Srebrenica update: dtg 132150B JULY 95

¹⁰⁶⁴ Def. Sitreps. UNMO Team Srebrenica, Srebrenica update: dtg 130800B JUL 95

¹⁰⁶⁵ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony J. Kingori, 03/04/00. This was possibly the incident mentioned earlier that Christina Schmitz talked about, when a VRS soldier told her he could not guarantee her or the UNMO’s safety if they decided to investigate.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Def. Sitreps. UNMO Team Srebrenica, Srebrenica update: dtg 141700B JUL 95

¹⁰⁶⁷ Def. Sitreps. UNMO Team Srebrenica, Srebrenica update: dtg 141420B JUL 95

¹⁰⁶⁸ Westerman & Rijs, *Srebrenica*, p. 15.

discovery of a house 'at 300 metres of the compound' (apparently not the White House) that was packed with men: 'They stretched out their arms and begged for help'. This quote was then followed by a remarkable comment, the implications of which weren't understood yet in 1995. 'A pile of bodies was stacked against a garage wall - higgledy-piggledy. I reported everything'.¹⁰⁶⁹

When he appeared as a witness in the trial of General Krstic in 2000, Kingori described another incident. After the last ousted inhabitants had been deported, a small convoy - consisting of some Dutchbat soldiers, Kingori and Catherina Schmitz of *Médecins Sans Frontières* - was put together to pick up some elderly people who had been left behind in Srebrenica. When they approached Srebrenica, Kingori said, 'we could see dead bodies on the roadside, next to buildings, and all that, the way up to the Srebrenica town itself'.¹⁰⁷⁰

In spite of his claim that he had reported 'everything', there is nothing in any of his reports that points to these events.¹⁰⁷¹ The *situation report* that describes the trip to Srebrenica with *Médecins Sans Frontières* only mentions the fact that the city was deserted, apart from looting VRS soldiers.¹⁰⁷²

However, the things that Kingori now says that he has seen appear to be confirmed by other sources. For instance, there is the notable comment about the 'pile of bodies' near a garage. After their arrival in Tuzla on July 15, several refugees said that a group of children had found 20 male bodies in the early morning in Potocari. They lay in a concreted courtyard, piled against a garage door with brown rust stains.¹⁰⁷³ This observation almost exactly corresponds with images that British journalist Robert Block saw on July 17 in the studio of the independent Studio B station in Belgrade. Block saw about 25 young Muslim men who had been killed: 'At about shoulder height above the bodies were what appeared to be brownish-red blotches on the yellowish wall and dark sticky looking stains on the black garage doors behind the cadavers. There were bullet holes everywhere'.¹⁰⁷⁴

The pictures were shot by cameraman Zoran Petrovic who had been filming events around the fall of Srebrenica. Parts of his video were soon going all over the world. They showed a triumphant Mladic in Srebrenica and Potocari, but also Colonel Doctor Kremer, who after he was asked what was happening angrily replied that it was quite obvious what was going on. The pictures also showed the hunt for the men who tried to cross the bitumen road at Nova Kasaba on their way to Tuzla and capture. Also included, among other things, were scenes of a small group of prisoners sitting in a field. Before it was clear what would happen, the picture went black. In the summer of 1995, Petrovic told Dutch journalists that he had destroyed these parts of his film after showing them to a limited number of people, because he feared 'that the pictures would fall in the hands of the prosecutors of the International Court of Justice in The Hague'.¹⁰⁷⁵

Block was probably one of the few people who saw the uncensored film. Incidentally, not all sensitive pictures were erased. Dutch journalists Frank Westerman and Bart Rijs managed to get possession of it when they investigated the events in Srebrenica. The images concerned show the bodies of four civilians who were dragged from a cellar by members of the Drina Wolves and shot in the street. Their bodies lay in the gutter for days.¹⁰⁷⁶

¹⁰⁶⁹ F. Westerman, 'Gezuiverd door Dutchbat' ('Cleansed by Dutchbat'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/10/95. Notably, the date and location are exactly the same as what De Haan said - as related earlier - about his inspection of the 'interrogation house' on the 12th. It is not known whether he went there with Kingori.

¹⁰⁷⁰ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), Testimony J. Kingori, 03/04/00.

¹⁰⁷¹ According to the UN report on Srebrenica, Akashi is supposed to have suppressed (on July 13) certain sensitive reports from the UNMOs for their own safety (UN, Srebrenica Report, par. 353). However, it is hardly possible for this specific report from Kingori, if it existed, not to have left any trace at any level in the reporting chain, neither in the collection of primary sitreps, nor in the internal summaries produced by headquarters.

¹⁰⁷² Defence Sitreps. UNMO Team Srebrenica, Srebrenica update: dtg 132150B JULY 95

¹⁰⁷³ Westerman & Rijs, *Srebrenica*, pp. 172 and 281.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Robert Block, 'Bodies pile up in horror of Srebrenica', *The Independent*, 17/07/95.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Westerman & Rijs, *Srebrenica*, p. 281.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Westerman and Rijs could assess the pictures based on what a witness had told them. See: Westerman & Rijs, *Srebrenica*, pp. 193 and 284.

Kingori, too, appeared to refer to Potocari when he talked about the pile of bodies. However, it is remarkable that he didn't mention his discovery when he testified before the Tribunal during the trial of General Krstic. And as we said earlier, nothing can be found on the subject in his original reports dating from the time of the incidents either. There is just a single indication that certain information did perhaps reach the outside world after all, although it remained unclear how that would have happened.

On July 15, just after 14.30 hours, a note was entered into the log book of the Defence Crisis Management Centre in The Hague in regards to a telephone call from De Ruiter in Sarajevo to Deputy Chief of Staff Hilderink: 'UNMO source about 1000 men taken away Bratunac with unknown destination, many people with neck shots. Worked over with rifle butts. Many killed. Carried on like animals (between Potocari and town of Srebrenica). During attack and what happened after that!' ¹⁰⁷⁷ This message reached Minister Voorhoeve the same day, who made a note of it in his diary with the comment: 'so I fear executions are taking place'. ¹⁰⁷⁸

It was impossible to find out where exactly this intriguing message came from. The only and most direct connection that we can see, at first glance, is with a statement from UNMO De Haan. When he was being debriefed in Assen in September 1995, he said that he had seen three bodies on the road from Potocari to Srebrenica, two of which had been shot in the back and one in the neck. Two lay about a kilometre south of the compound and one at about one-and-a-half kilometre (from the compound). ¹⁰⁷⁹ However, it is not clear when and under what circumstances he was able to see this, and how this was possibly reported. Nothing at all can be found about it in the situation reports of the UNMOs, nor is there any indication that he informed the battalion's senior officers. De Haan did accompany a wounded convoy to Bratunac on the 16th, but he cannot have seen the bodies that he is talking about on that particular trip. Nor is there anything to indicate that he joined Kingori to escort *Médecins Sans Frontières*. ¹⁰⁸⁰

A summary of 'bodies sighted' that was drawn up during debriefing in Assen, also included a report of an undated sighting of three bodies with neck shots who had been found in Srebrenica near the Bravo Company compound, behind the so-called UNHCR warehouse. Since these details are missing from De Haan's statement, we have to assume that this is a separate sighting. Strangely, nothing at all can be found about this incident in the debriefing report. Nor did we find any reference to it in the debriefing statements that were available to the NIOD. However, for reasons explained in the prologue to this report, this is not a complete collection. The anonymous *Factual Account* doesn't contain any passages that can be connected with this either.

Another story that is not found in the debriefing report is the one of male nurse R. van Duuren, who was part of a medical team that went to Srebrenica on a four-tonne truck on the evening of July 13. They had been ordered by Major Otter to pick up old people along the way and in Srebrenica itself who had been left behind. At a small roundabout in the city, Van Duuren saw three bodies:

'One of them was lying a little farther away. The second lay next to the roundabout, and the third I saw from up close. That body was completely black already, it was more than 40 degrees Celsius, and there was a large pool of blood near his mouth. It was obvious that the man had been executed, because he was still on his knees, although he had fallen sideways. He had been shot

¹⁰⁷⁷ DCBC, 528. Day reports DCBC period 6 July – 27 July 1995, dtg 151431. The actual origin of this message could not be traced.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Diary Voorhoeve, p. 222.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Debriefing statement A. de Haan, 26/09/95.

¹⁰⁸⁰ In her report per capsat as well as in her sitrep afterwards, MSF doctor Schmitz refers in her description of the trip to Srebrenica only to MSF, Brussels. 'Joseph' (Kingori). Capsat Christina (Schmitz), 13/07/95, 22:02:43; Christina Schmitz /Daniel O'Brien, 'sitrep Srebrenica – Potocari period 6.7 – 22.7.95', (Zagreb) 24/07/95.

through the back of his head or his mouth. We drove on and eventually put five or six resisting old Muslims into the truck and took them back to Potocari.’¹⁰⁸¹

That particular Thursday night, July 13, Lieutenant Rutten escorted the four-tonne truck, together with his driver and a sergeant. On the way, Arkan Tigers stole his Mercedes car and he had to continue the journey on the truck. A little later, Rutten saw some bloated bodies:

‘Two. Not together. Near a house, you can see a man has been shot and killed. Further down, another one. They were the only bodies we saw there’.¹⁰⁸²

But he did think he could see ‘a few things’ on the football field that was a little lower than the road:

‘I wanted to get out to have a look, but that didn’t have any chance of success. I could see that: there were Bosnian Serbs everywhere.’¹⁰⁸³

The story of the four-tonne truck is augmented by what Dutchbat soldier Koreman wrote in his diary about what he had heard from his colleagues who had been to Srebrenica. On the way, they saw bodies of ABiH warriors [sic] here and there (...) who had held out until the bitter end’ and they also ‘saw that a ABiH warrior who had hidden in a house was dragged outside and put up against a wall. He was shot in the neck and collapsed.’ Koreman said that when the truck’s substitute driver returned to the compound, ‘with sweaty hands and completely unnerved’, he said: ‘I am not going back there for all the gold in the world’.¹⁰⁸⁴

A few days later, some other Dutchbat soldiers also went to Srebrenica. Giving evidence at Krstic’s trial, soldier Vaasen said he had been ordered to escort a truck on a trip to the compound in Srebrenica one of the days after the fall of the enclave, to pick up equipment that B Company had left behind there. This was probably not until July 15 or 16.¹⁰⁸⁵ Just 500 metres outside the compound in Potocari he already noticed bodies lying left and right on the side of the road, already blue and purple in colour as a result of the great heat – as mentioned before more than 40 degrees Celsius- at the time. He thought that some of them looked like victims of dehydration, but a number of them had been shot. The closer he got to Srebrenica, the more bodies he saw, all civilians. Vaasen saw men as well as women and children. He believed he saw 40 to 50 bodies in Srebrenica itself, too, a remarkably large number compared to the much smaller numbers that we get from other statements.¹⁰⁸⁶ Vaasen’s story suggests that a large number of people were killed on this road between the trip of *Médecins Sans Frontières* with the four-tonne Dutchbat truck on July 13, and his own trip a few days later. No other sources could be found to confirm this story. At the time, Vaasen did not report any of this when he came back to Potocari so it becomes even more difficult to check his statement. The other Dutchbat

¹⁰⁸¹ Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, pp. 72-73. Honig and Both do not say what the source was for this quote.

¹⁰⁸² The observation of two bodies was confirmed by D.H. Ross among others. They had been there for a longer period of time. Supposedly, one of them was killed by a headshot. (Debriefing statement D.H. Ross, 14/09/95) According to Drazen Erdemovic, the body of a young man laid in the city for days. On the authority of Erdemovic’s commander Milos Pelemis the throat was cut. Testimony put forward in the closing speech of prosecutor Mark Harmon, ICTY (IT-98-33-T), 26/06/01.

¹⁰⁸³ Interview J.H.A. Rutten, 01/12/99

¹⁰⁸⁴ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman, 41st week, p. 25. It’s no longer possible to determine whether sightings have become mixed up in memory. In any case, Koreman, who revised his diary several times afterwards, places this incident a day early. It remains unclear whether the reported execution is the same as the one Groenewegen saw, or another one. However, his comments generally fit in with the picture that we have of that trip to on July 13.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Karremans reports in his book that he had fruitless discussions with Colonel Jankovic at 17.00 hours on July 15 about collecting equipment from the compound in Srebrenica. However, Pale was supposed to make the decision. Karremans does not say what the outcome was, but permission must have come, at the earliest, in the evening of the 15th. See: Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 229-230.

¹⁰⁸⁶ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), Testimony D. Vaasen, 27/03/00.

soldiers who, just like Vaasen, had seen bodies on the road to Srebrenica did not officially report this either.

Hints of executions having taken place between Srebrenica and Potocari only emerged in conversations that psychologists had with members of the medical team that had been allowed to leave for Zagreb on July 15. As mentioned before, De Ruiter telephoned Hilderink in The Hague that same day to tell him about what he had heard from the UNMO source; it is, therefore, quite possible that this information also came from the medical team. (This will be discussed in more detail in the Appendix 'Dutchbat III and the population: medical matters.')

In any case, there are no indications that the UNMOs in Srebrenica were in any way involved in the dissemination of this message.

That Kingori - and De Haan - actually saw things that pointed to executions is beyond dispute. But it does remain strange that they did not immediately report this. Similarly, they did not report - nor did they verify - that members of Dutchbat had found evidence of executions. According to interpreter Hasan Nuhanovic they knew about this on the 13th because he heard them whisper to Christina Schmitz of *Médecins Sans Frontières* about it.¹⁰⁸⁷ Another interpreter, Emir Suljagic, was present when a soldier from OP-A told Kingori in Zagreb that he had seen a lot of bodies near Kravica.¹⁰⁸⁸

However, the UNMOs have said hardly anything about all this Zagreb. At the time they were still in Potocari, they had been told that the procedure after their return (to Zagreb) 'is to include full debriefing of all team members with particular emphasis on any lesson which could be useful for the future, and any statement relevant to future war crimes investigation'.¹⁰⁸⁹

On 22 July 1995, when they were safely back in Zagreb with Dutchbat, the UNMOs were debriefed in the presence of representatives of their own organisation, Intelligence officers of UNPF, Civil Affairs of UNPF and the UN Centre for Human Rights. According to the report on this debriefing, it was held in an informal atmosphere. Kingori 'took the lead role'. What stood out clearly was that the debriefers got the impression that the UNMOs had always worked closely together all that time and 'agreed with each other's assessments of the situation'. That's why there are no comments in the record of the debriefing session that are attributed to specific individuals. Most of the discussion was devoted to all sorts of operational matters, but eventually the events after the fall of the enclave came up. The statement says: 'The UNMOs were with the refugees for 24hrs a day [sic] and knew nothing about the reports of the killing of men of military age. Single gun shots were heard but there was nothing to suggest they were from executions. A group of Dutch soldiers said that on the first night that the men were taken they saw 9 men taken behind a house and they heard shots and the men never came back, however, on investigation there were no bodies or signs of executions'.¹⁰⁹⁰ However, Kingori would later say at the Krstic trial that his investigation had been hampered by VRS soldiers.¹⁰⁹¹ In his report, Tetteh also referred only to the fact that men 'were rumoured to have been murdered behind a factory building in Potocari shot in the back with their faces to the ground'.¹⁰⁹²

In October 1995, Tetteh was approached by the Dutch Ministry of Defence when the latter was looking at the report on the debriefing of staff members of international organisations again. Major Kingori had already returned to Kenya by then, but Tetteh was still in Dubrovnik as a UN observer. Among other things, he was asked a question about violations of human rights. Tetteh apologized for his failing memory 'since it was an issue I would want to forget as early as possible', yet still provided a detailed answer. He declared that he had not seen any 'serious violations of human rights' in and

¹⁰⁸⁷ Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05/08 and 06/08/98.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Interview Emir Suljagic, 23/10/97. Various members of OP-A made statements about this during their debriefing in Assen. One of them saw 20 bullet-riddled bodies, men as well as women, in civilian clothes. Another one also saw a power shovel and a dumpster full of bodies (See the diagram in: Wind, *Debriefing*, p. 97) Franken heard a number of these stories when the crew of OP-A returned to the compound on July 16. He did not report this. Interview R.A. Franken, 22/05/01.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Confidential Information (5).

¹⁰⁹⁰ SMG/Debrief. Interoffice Memorandum G2 UNPF HQ to COS, Debrief of UNMOs from the Srebrenica enclave, 23/07/95.

¹⁰⁹¹ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), Testimony J. Kingori, 03/04/00.

¹⁰⁹² NIOD, Coll. Segers. Sqdn ldr David A. Tetteh, 'Report on the battle of Srebrenica', 21/07/95.

around the enclave as a result of his limited freedom of movement. In regards to Potocari, he mostly repeated what he had told debriefers in Zagreb, that there had been rumours of executions behind a factory, but he added two details. Tetteh said that the VRS commander ‘at the time of the evacuation denied any knowledge of the accusation when confronted with it by *Médecins Sans Frontières* and myself.’¹⁰⁹³ Particularly striking is the fact that there are no other sources that confirm this discussion with the VRS commander and that insofar as there was an instance of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and an UNMO acting together, only Kingori is mentioned by the sources.

What also stands out is that there is not a single reference to any report from either Karremans or Franken about a number of Dutch soldiers finding bodies – this will be dealt with later in this chapter - of people who had been executed, with the Dutch soldiers also taking photos of their discoveries, nor do we have any record of them (Karremans and/or Franken) saying anything about the execution that was actually witnessed by one soldier. We cannot rule out the possibility that the battalion’s senior officers did in fact fail to inform the UNMOs and that on this point, at least, they (the UNMOs) were not at fault in any way.

The UNMOs did report in Zagreb that Mladic had taken them to a house where men were being interrogated, but ‘there was no sign of any ill treatment but later they did hear reports of harassment of men’.¹⁰⁹⁴ Nor do we find anything in the account of the trip with *Médecins Sans Frontières* to Srebrenica that fits in with the later statements by Kingori and De Haan about finding people who had been executed. As we have mentioned earlier, they did report that Arkan Tigers and Arkan himself ‘were positively identified at the scene’, a sighting that the UNMOs did not report on the day (July 13) itself.

For the sake of accuracy, we have to add here that the report on the debriefing then concludes with the comment that all other people had to leave the room at the request of the representative of *Humanitarian Affairs* so humanitarian aspects could be discussed confidentially. No account of that meeting has been found in the archives. Maozwiecki did refer to the conversations with the UNMOs in a letter to the Defence Ministry.¹⁰⁹⁵ Peggy Hicks, advisor to Akashi on human rights, who at the time concerned herself intensively with the debriefing of those who had been involved in the events of Srebrenica, had no explanation for the possible lack of a written report on the humanitarian debriefing, which she couldn’t remember having taken place, either. Nor could she recall any specific UNMO reports that stood out in her mind. Hicks thought it was possible that the conversation didn’t produce anything and that, therefore, there was no written report of it. ‘Otherwise I would have had to see it’.¹⁰⁹⁶

The same curious phenomenon that we have seen in Dutchbat also appears to have been at play among the UNMOs: their original reports said less than they later claimed to have known. Conversely, there is a discrepancy between what they did say and the UNMOs’ declared position later. It is strange, for instance, that no trace can be found in Zagreb of the UNMOs’ fears that executions were taking place in Bratunac, as they were still saying on July 14.¹⁰⁹⁷ It is possible that De Haan’s visit to Bratunac, when he accompanied the seven wounded people who were handed over to the International Red Cross, influenced this. De Haan was in Bratunac with Colonel Schouten, a medical doctor, who had been there for a few days after the wounded convoy of July 12 had stranded. Schouten had told

¹⁰⁹³ DAB. Sqd ldr D.A. Tetteh to Dutch Minister of Defence, ‘subj: Request from Dutch Minister of Defence to answer some questions regarding Srebrenica’. Appendix to: Note J.H.M. de Winter (DAB) to Minister, ‘supplementary investigation staff of international organisations’, D95/534, 18/10/95.

¹⁰⁹⁴ SMG/Debrief. Interoffice Memorandum G2 UNPF HQ to COS, Debrief of UNMOs from the Srebrenica enclave, 23/07/95. Nor did they see anything that pointed to girls being abused.

¹⁰⁹⁵ DJZ. Letter T. Mazowiecki to B. van Lent, 28/07/95. Mr Van Lent was with the Directorate of Legal Affairs of the Ministry of Defence and was involved in replying to requests by Mazowiecki to be allowed to interview members of Dutchbat in the Netherlands.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Interview Peggy Hicks, 10/07/00.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Def. Sitreps. UNMO Team Srebrenica, Srebrenica update: dtg 141420B JUL 95

journalists by telephone that as far as he was concerned nothing serious was going on in Bratunac.¹⁰⁹⁸ It is possible that De Haan was influenced by Schouten's impressions and concluded that his initial fear was unfounded.¹⁰⁹⁹ Nevertheless, it remains odd in this regard that, on 17 July, Schouten had telephone conversations with foreign journalists in Mali Zvornik, across the Drina near Bratunac, in which he stated that for the past five days armed Bosnian Serbs had repeatedly tried to force their way into the clinic to take revenge on his patients. Schouten had been able to prevent this from happening with the help of hospital staff and a number of guards.¹¹⁰⁰ Speaking to the NIOD, Schouten further stated that he had heard shots in Bratunac, fired in two long bursts, which had seemed reminiscent of executions.¹¹⁰¹

The later statements by Kingori and De Haan about their sightings of executed people are the strangest of all. The impression we are left with here is that we are seeing the same pattern that emerged among many Dutchbat soldiers. As a result of the enormous tension and fear, the 'field of vision' narrowed and terrible events were suppressed. The situation reports of the UNMOs provide strong indications of that particular mental state. The urge to survive and escape from the chaos prevailed during the days of the fall of the enclave and the deportation of refugees. The UNMOs did not recover until later.¹¹⁰² After that, the feelings of guilt came, over their own dereliction of duty and possible failure. In that respect, the UNMOs apparently covered each other. In any case, it explains their unanimous declarations in Zagreb that confirmed the picture of events not having been as bad as might have been expected.

This red thread running through the debriefing of the UNMOs had a curious sequel in the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica. In particular, this concerned the question whether the Western media had exploited the fall of this Safe Area to put a disproportionate part of the blame for the war at the feet of the Bosnian Serbs. One of those who subscribed to that opinion was Carlos Martins Branco, UNMO Deputy Chief Operations Officer in July 1995. Basing his arguments, in part, on the debriefing of the UNMOs, he wrote an article entitled 'Was Srebrenica a hoax?' that tried to question the nature and size of the disaster that had taken place in Srebrenica. Not surprisingly, it didn't take long for this article to be found on a number of pro-Serb Internet sites.¹¹⁰³

The report resulting from the investigation ordered by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan into the events around Srebrenica also referred to the UNMOs' reports. The report talks about a request from Akashi to the UN secretariat on July 14 not to make a certain report of the UNMOs public, because of fears for their safety. However, the message that Akashi's request related to and that had been sent the day before, only concerned an announcement by Mladic that hundreds of dead ABiH soldiers were lying in the Bandera Triangle and that Dutchbat nor the UNMOs were permitted to go in to investigate.¹¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁹⁸ M. Zonneveld, 'Arts vindt in Bratunac geen enkel bewijs van genocide' ('Doctor does not find any evidence in Bratunac of genocide'), *Het Parool*, 27/07/95. During his stay in Bratunac, Schouten had already propounded the same message in a telephone conversation with American journalists who were in a village on the other side of the Drina, very close to Bratunac.

¹⁰⁹⁹ It was not possible to check this with De Haan.

¹¹⁰⁰ See for example: Christine Spolar 'UN doctor says Serbs violated clinic', *The Washington Post*, 18/07/95.

¹¹⁰¹ Interview A.A. Schouten, 21/02/00.

¹¹⁰² They are then even supposed to have had discussions with the VRS to be allowed to stay for a little while longer. See: UNGE, UNPF, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. '95. Ken Biser to Michel Moussalli, 'srebrenica/Tuzla update (0930 hours)', 18/07/95.

¹¹⁰³ See, for instance, the website of the Toronto-based 'Centre for Peace in the Balkans': <http://www.balkanpeace.org>

¹¹⁰⁴ United Nations, *A Srebrenica Report*, paragraph 353.

25. Sightings and reports by *Médecins Sans Frontières*

At a press conference organised by *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Brussels on 25 July 1995 after the safe return of its two representatives in Srebrenica, Field Coordinator Christina Schmitz recounted, among other things, the trip to Srebrenica to pick up patients who had been left behind. She described Srebrenica as a ‘ghost city’, where she only saw Bosnian Serb looters who were stealing washing machines and TV sets from houses.¹¹⁰⁵ Her story contained no details that fit in with the later stories of Kingori and the Dutchbat soldiers about that same trip to Srebrenica. The message that she sent from the enclave also only talked about the looting, her comments being largely similar to those of the *situation report* of the UNMOs.¹¹⁰⁶ She again provides a similar description in a report (in the form of a diary) that she put together after her arrival in Zagreb, with one strikingly different detail: she says that apart from Kingori, she had also been accompanied by a VRS escort.¹¹⁰⁷

So, Schmitz also presents us with the question whether her reports fully reflect what she had actually seen, and whether she, too, either pushed certain matters out of her mental field of vision, just like the UNMOs did, or that the problem lies with Kingori. In any case, the events had deeply moved Schmitz. She had been in Chechnya, ‘but this was much, much worse to have to go through’, she said in Brussels. She also said something about the survival mechanism that had helped her to persevere and that possibly explains what she did or didn’t see: ‘We managed to keep going only by working very hard and not thinking too much about what we saw’.¹¹⁰⁸ Possibly that applied even more to her colleague, the young Australian doctor Daniel O’Brien, who has had a very hard time. When he and Schmitz testified in April 2001 before the French Parliamentary Commission that investigated Srebrenica, he made a comparison with Auschwitz. He had said he had never thought that what he witnessed in Srebrenica could happen in Europe, even right under the noses of the UN troops. O’Brien recalled the stench of the masses of people packed together in the factories, where the filth was running in streams between people’s feet and desperate mothers no longer had milk for their babies because of the stress. But he also made it clear that at one point his ability to mentally grasp what was going on simply left him: ‘All the locals were saying they were going to be killed, but you just didn’t want to believe it - out of a naive faith in humanity, I suppose. But they were right’.¹¹⁰⁹

In combination with statements that they made later, the messages that the *Médecins Sans Frontières* representatives sent to their office in Belgrade made it a little clearer how this process operated at MSF. There are striking parallels with the stories that Dutchbat soldiers told, about anxious suspicions and the difficulty Schmitz had in coming to terms with the inescapable conclusions.

Schmitz and O’Brien had left Srebrenica for Potocari on the afternoon of July 11, after a number of their patients had already been evacuated.¹¹¹⁰ That had been done at the insistence of local doctors who feared there would be ‘a second Vukovar’; VRS troops had murdered 200 patients at the local hospital there in October 1991. (For the evacuation of the Srebrenica hospital, see the Appendix Dutchbat III: medical matters.)

After 55 wounded had been delivered to the Dutchbat compound, where the battalion set up an emergency hospital, Dutchbat soldiers helped *Médecins Sans Frontières* establish a post in three tents near

¹¹⁰⁵ ‘Verpleegster AzG deelt kritiek op Dutchbat niet’ (‘MSF nurse ‘does not agree with criticism of Dutchbat’), *Trouw*, 27/07/95

¹¹⁰⁶ United Nations, *A Srebrenica Report*, paragraph 353; MSF, Brussel. MSF capsat Christina (Schmitz) aan Bene en Stefan (Oberreit), out.534, 13/07/95, 22:02:43

¹¹⁰⁷ MSF, Brussels. Report Christina Schmitz, written with the assistance of Daniel O’Brien, 24/07/95.

¹¹⁰⁸ ‘Verpleegster AzG deelt kritiek op Dutchbat niet’, *Trouw*, 27/07/95.

¹¹⁰⁹ Adam Sage, ‘Witness recalls day UN troops permitted massacre’, *The Times*, 04/04/01.

¹¹¹⁰ For the reconstruction, we have used - unless stated differently - the various versions of the diary that Schmitz had kept and that she edited in Zagreb to produce an ‘End of Mission report’ (MSF Brussels). Some versions that are in circulation are extracts of that. See: ‘Journal de bord de l’équipe MSF’, <http://www.paris.msf.org>, ‘srebrenica’; Audition de Christina Schmitz et Daniel O’Brien, 29/03/01; Defence Sitreps, C. Schmitz, ‘sitrep Srebrenica – Potocari period: 6.7. – 22.7.95’.

one of the factories where the remainder of the refugees had sought shelter, right on the edge of the road.

Medical care was temporarily halted when the Serbs resumed their shelling. When the ceasefire came into effect, the *Médecins Sans Frontières* team could go back to work treating people with minor injuries or suffered symptoms of dehydration. Dutchbat provided water and made medicines available; initially only in small amounts but more generously later, when the danger of injuries among Dutchbat soldiers was over.

Schmitz heard about the discussions between Mladic and Karremans and the plans for the evacuation that, she was told, would begin with the wounded. When she saw the Bosnian Serb general himself during this triumphant tour of Potocari, she tried to protest to him against the evacuation. Mladic told her to stick to her job and then walked off.¹¹¹¹

Schmitz kept shuttling between the patients in the compound and the *Médecins Sans Frontières* post among the refugees outside, and she saw the VRS begin the evacuation at 15.00 hours 'with incredible speed'. Very soon after that, she noticed that men were being separated and taken to a guarded house nearby. She estimated their number at 35, at that time still assuming they were being treated well.¹¹¹² Just the same, she began to hear numerous shots coming from near the house where the men were being interrogated. In the message that she sent to Belgrade just after 21.00 hours, she said she thought the 'VRS was shooting in the air', but at the same time she added the comment: 'it's horrifying outside'.¹¹¹³ Schmitz went to see Franken but he reassured her that the men were being treated well. She also talked to Karremans, who said he was sure none of the men would be killed.¹¹¹⁴

Most of Schmitz's attention was focused on the wounded convoy that was due to leave at about 19.00 hours. 'It was chaos', she said, when she saw everybody try to secure a spot in the convoy that the refugees regarded as an unexpected opportunity to escape. Some people simply jumped into the trucks, while others tried to push family members forward any way they could. (See the Appendix Dutchbat III: medical matters).

At 07.00 hours the following morning, the deportations resumed. 'Everybody should see the violence in the faces of the Bosnian Serb soldiers while they ordered people around as though they were animals, on the way to the buses,' Schmitz wrote later. That afternoon, she saw VRS soldiers kick a man senseless, and another hysterical man began to hit himself. Before that, at the end of the morning, a father - accompanied by a VRS soldier - walked up to her carrying his one-year-old son and, in tears, gave the child to her. It was obvious to her that the man was among those to be taken away. All Schmitz could do was to make a note of his name and that of his baby son, while at the same time she knew in her heart that she did not expect him to see his son ever again.

About that time, Schmitz had also heard rumours that bodies were supposed to have been found behind the factory, where a lot of people had sought refuge.¹¹¹⁵ A Dutchbat soldier also approached her with the story.¹¹¹⁶ When she wanted to take a look with UNMO Kingori, a VRS soldier warned her that he could not guarantee her safety. She then decided, also at the advice of her colleagues Belgrade, not to go after all, and leave it to the UNMOs: 'Keep looking after the living and support them in their trauma'.¹¹¹⁷ She did, however, warn the Dutch officers who were on the spot.¹¹¹⁸

¹¹¹¹ MSF, Brussels. Report Christina Schmitz, written with the assistance of Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

¹¹¹² MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz) to Stefan (Oberreit), 12/07/95, 18:14:28.

¹¹¹³ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz), 12/07/95, 21:10:14. In her log book, Schmitz did not add the reassuring words 'in the air'.

¹¹¹⁴ The conversation or conversations probably took place only later in the evening because earlier capsats on the night of July 12 do not mention it. Schmitz did not send her report on the conversations until after midnight, probably after she had been woken up close to 02.00 hours to given the (incorrect) message that the wounded convoy would return to Potocari. See: MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz) to Stefan (Oberreit), 13/07/95, 01:52:42.

¹¹¹⁵ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz), 13/07/95, 11:34:43.

¹¹¹⁶ Audition de Christina Schmitz et Daniel O'Brien, 29/03/01, in: Loncle, *Rapport d'information*.

¹¹¹⁷ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Stefan (Oberreit) to Christina and Daniel, 13/07/95, 10:52:51.

¹¹¹⁸ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 03/07/99.

In the course of the day, Schmitz also began to realise that those who had managed to get on a bus still had much to endure. Dutchbat soldiers who escorted the buses reported many instances of intimidation along the way. She wrote that VRS soldiers showed people wooden crosses ‘(sign for death)’ and ‘show a strong victory feeling to the Muslims.’¹¹¹⁹

Once the refugees outside the compound had been removed, the VRS began the last round. The remarkable thing is that Schmitz even then had only heard rumours of able-bodied men being separated from that group as well. That fits in with statements by Karremans and other Dutchbat personnel in the compound itself who said that at that moment, or even at any time, they didn’t realise the men were being separated from their families.¹¹²⁰ Based on telephone conversations that the Directorate for General Policy had had with Karremans and Franken on 23 August 1995, it recorded the view that the men had boarded the buses together with the other refugees.¹¹²¹ However, when he was debriefed in Assen, Franken said he had in fact witnessed the separation of the men who came from the compound.

Because the four static posts that Karremans had ordered to be set up had not reported men being taken from the buses along the way, it was assumed that they safely reached territory held by the Bosnian Government.¹¹²²

This separation of men and women apparently took place out of sight of those who talked about it, but not out of sight of the Dutch soldiers who formed rows to funnel people in the direction of the buses. However, as we have noted earlier, those soldiers were just standing there, numbed and petrified.¹¹²³ Karremans was, apparently, never told about what they saw.

By this time, Schmitz was getting very worried about *Médecins Sans Frontières*’ male employees who she wanted to keep with her at any cost. In the meantime, Franken had also told her about the problems with the wounded convoy the night before.¹¹²⁴ When they were stopped and inspected on the way, just before Bratunac, the VRS had removed the bandages of a number of men and found there was nothing wrong with them. The VRS was understandably ‘furious’ and had taken away all 30 men. Franken had informed the International Red Cross and didn’t blame *Médecins Sans Frontières* for anything, as it turned out. O’Brien, who had been in charge when the wounded were put on the trucks, ‘could not control who got on the truck’. But the incident fuelled Schmitz’s fears; Franken tried to assuage her fears about the fate of her male employees. The *Médecins Sans Frontières* doctor worried that they would be taken away, but ‘according to Franken the VRS is not touching men who are not ABiH’. She added ominously: ‘The others you know’.¹¹²⁵

Schmitz decided to keep the men with her in the compound just the same, and she was present when a VRS delegation came in to check out the wounded who had been left behind in the compound. Local staff and interpreters were ordered to assemble in the bar, guarded by two unarmed Dutch soldiers.¹¹²⁶ ‘The *Médecins Sans Frontières* locals are freaking out’, she reported to Belgrade soon after.¹¹²⁷ However, the Bosnian Serb delegation left them alone and Schmitz took the opportunity to ask permission to pick up patients left behind in Srebrenica. As recounted earlier, she went on that trip

¹¹¹⁹ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz), 13/0795, 13:32:05.

¹¹²⁰ DAB. Internal memo wnd SCO to BLS, 23 August 1995, ‘Questions regarding. 239 registered male refugees from Srebrenica enclave’. Appendix to note by L.F.F. Casteleijn (pvv DAB) to Minister, D95/423, 25 August 1995, ‘List of 239 names of Muslim men’ (Debriefing statement R.A. Franken, 27/09/95). Other statements about separation not having been noticed: interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00; Debriefing statement B.J. Oosterveen, 08/09/95.

¹¹²¹ DCBC, 1074. D95/423, Note from L.F.F. Casteleijn, 25/08/95.

¹¹²² Other statements about separation not having been noticed: interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00; Debriefing statement B.J. Oosterveen, 08/09/95

¹¹²³ Interview B. Grubacic, 06/11/98.

¹¹²⁴ See Appendix ‘Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues’.

¹¹²⁵ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz), 13/07/95, 16:56:14.

¹¹²⁶ Interview Emir Suljagic, 24/05/99.

¹¹²⁷ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz), 13/07/95, 17:52:07.

together with Kingori and a VRS escort and later reported - at about 22.00 hours that night - only having seen looters.¹¹²⁸

Yet it is clear that Schmitz, too, began to have a growing realisation that there were probably terrible things going on. Late on the evening of July 13, she heard 'lots of small arms fire (...) in one certain place. (...) You can imagine what happens', she reported to Belgrade the following morning.¹¹²⁹ She also said at her press conference in Brussels that on July 12 and 13 she regularly heard shots, every day at a different house.¹¹³⁰ This observation and conclusion seamlessly fits in with those of a large number of Dutch soldiers in Potocari and they confirm the picture that the executions continued for some time after the completion of the deportation. Commando Wouters, for instance, had initially still believed that the separated men would be treated as prisoners of war. 'But later, when we kept hearing prrrrt, prrrrt in the distance, salvos from automatic rifles, it began to dawn on me, I knew then that they were executing people out there.'¹¹³¹ That may in fact have happened even earlier. Late in the evening of July 11, a Dutchbat soldier at OP-R heard rifle salvos at the dump, 'like they were keeping to the rhythm of a little tune'.¹¹³²

Corporal Medic Broeder heard the suspicious firing on July 14 and 15, during the day as well as at night, and the only explanation he could think of was that they were liquidations:

'It was systematic. It wasn't the of sort small-calibre fire that you hear in a fire fight. You really heard a machinegun firing monotonous bursts. Every time there would be about four minutes of silence, and then it started again. It went on for a long time. But you never heard answering fire.'¹¹³³

Soldier Groenewegen had formed the same impression and he actually witnessed one execution. He counted 20 to 40 'single shots' in an hour, coming from the nearby hills where there were houses. 'We all had ideas about it, but nothing was done', he told the Tribunal in 1996.¹¹³⁴

The sound of the shots, that went on for days, made another soldier 'mentally sick', as he put it: 'I closed the window of my room, which reduced the sound of the shots a little. You could only blot it out completely by turning the radio up a little, which I did'.¹¹³⁵

Not everybody was so forthright in explaining how he shut himself off from the outside world. What is striking about the debriefing statements is that so many of them specifically say that they had heard no shots at all during all those days in Potocari. This appears to fit the phenomenon of 'dissociation', where someone in stressful circumstances disconnects himself, as it were, from the reality in order not to have to face it. It seems to have led some people to simply ignore the reality, while others only gradually began to open their eyes to what was happening.

This growing awareness probably also applied to Schmitz, as is illustrated by another incident. In the same message where she reported having heard suspicious shots, she also brought up a problem that increasingly troubled her as well Dutchbat. One of the local *Médecins Sans Frontières* employees was the cook, Abdullah ('Dulo') Purkevic, who had come to Potocari with them. Dulo was outside in the crowd when the VRS occupied Potocari. He was wearing a *Médecins Sans Frontières* shirt and was picked

¹¹²⁸ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz), 13/07/95, 22:02:43.

¹¹²⁹ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz), 14/07/95, 08:21:04.

¹¹³⁰ Alois Berger, "Die Menschen waren apathisch". 'Ärzte ohne Grenze' über die Eroberung Srebrenicas', *Die Tageszeitung*, 27/07/95.

¹¹³¹ K. Bais, 'Commando in Srebrenica: "we zaten met onze snufferds op de Bosnische Serven"' ("Commando in Srebrenica: "The Bosnian Serbs were right under our noses"'), *De Opmaat*, 5 (1999) 1, p. 6.

¹¹³² SMG, Debrief. 'Military analysis of the performance of Dutchbat during the Srebrenica crisis', Assen 28/09/95, drawn up by LCol A. de Mannuik, see OP-R, vis E652.1.

¹¹³³ Interview A. Broeder, 03/05/00. See also: André Ritsma, 'srebrenica: kerf in de ziel van een hospik' ('srebrenica. Slash in the soul of an army medic'), *De Opmaat*, 4 (1998) 4, p. 27.

¹¹³⁴ ICTY (IT-95-18-R61/IT-95-5-R61), Testimony J. Groenewegen, 04/07/96.

¹¹³⁵ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Diary Koreman, 41e week, p. 27.

up VRS soldiers who forced him to make a statement in front of a camera. Purkevic was terrified because he had served in the army and was afraid he would be recognised. However, a Dutch soldier managed to take him under his wings and lead him back to the compound. Once there, he completely lost it, asking Schmitz as well as the Dutch doctor for poison to commit suicide with.¹¹³⁶ It was obvious that Purkevic presented a major problem. But it had become clear to Schmitz by then what sort of fate would await him if he was expelled from the compound: 'If he is ABiH, he will not survive'.¹¹³⁷

With Dutchbat's help, Schmitz managed to eventually evacuate Purkevic and the rest of the local staff, who also benefited from the 'general amnesty' announced by president Karadzic on July 17, with the Dutch convoy that finally left the enclave for good on July 21. A few days later, she was in Brussels holding her press conference.

Médecins Sans Frontières had Schmitz's reports from the enclave to tell the world about what was happening in Potocari. Understandably, no mention was made of her clues and hints that people were being murdered as well: not only would it have endangered the lives of the team and the local employees, the basis for her statements was also too narrow. The *Médecins Sans Frontières* team and Schmitz in particular only gradually developed a feeling that something was amiss, but they could not find hard evidence and could only express anxious suspicions. And on top of that, Schmitz also laboured under another partial misapprehension. Her messages show that her worst fears only concerned men who could be shown to have served in the Bosnian army. So in that respect there were further parallels with the kind of things that some of the Dutch were telling themselves.

On the other hand, the confusion about the fate of the men was made worse by messages that there were in fact men who had safely crossed the demarcation line at Kladanj. Schmitz heard from Franken on July 15 that according to the Pakistani UN battalion that was responsible for the initial reception of the refugees, 'young men do arrive in Kladanj', although no figures were available.¹¹³⁸ The contradictory impressions and messages made it difficult for the representatives of *Médecins Sans Frontières* in the enclave to fully recognise what had happened so close to them, yet largely outside their view. In that respect the example of *Médecins Sans Frontières* once again illustrates the problem of observing, interpreting and reporting what was going on in Potocari, the same problem that is evident from the later statements of many Dutchbat soldiers. However, there was a difference. It wasn't *Médecins Sans Frontières*' job to elucidate this issue, nor did it have the resources for this. Dutchbat, on the other hand, did - at least in theory.

26. Lieutenant Colonel Karremans And The Reports Of Executions

Pursuant to the Standing Operation Procedure applicable to human rights violations, number 208, a commander was required to verify information about suspected war crimes, as well as 'the extent of the crime if he considers one to have been committed'. Afterwards, he was to take the necessary measures, such as filling in a standard form enclosed with the Standing Operating Procedure, and forward it as quickly as possible to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. With the same immediacy he was then to contact the Legal Advisor by fax or telephone, in order to inform the sector commander (in this case located in Tuzla) or Civil Affairs of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo. He also was to cordon off and protect the crime scene, if possible.¹¹³⁹

Remarkable, as was already mentioned, is the fact that not a single reference could be found in the Standing Orders of Dutchbat (which in part adhere to the Standing Operating Procedures) about

¹¹³⁶ Interview G. Kremer, 13/07/98.

¹¹³⁷ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz), 14 July 1995, 08:21:04.

¹¹³⁸ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz) to Stefan (Oberreit) a.o, 15 July 1995, 14:22:10. Franken had also heard something like it from colonel Brantz in Tuzla, although the latter had not mentioned any figures. Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

¹¹³⁹ SMG, 1023. Annex B SOP 208, Actions for Commanding Officer and HQ BH Command. Standard Operating Procedures UNPROFOR, September 1993.

what actions to take upon observing human rights violations. In the extensive summary of standard report forms, a form for reporting this kind of incident is missing. In the introduction of the Standing Orders, however, the validity of the Standing Operating Procedures – and that of a number of other directives – *is* emphasized.¹¹⁴⁰

Under the hectic circumstances of the time, the majority of these directives were impossible to implement. Dutchbat was defenceless and undermanned and did not dictate the situation; probably there was no time for red tape bureaucracy. Verbal reporting was then also the easiest and quickest method.

But at the debriefing in Assen, Captain Matthijssen disclosed that a written report about two incidents was made by battalion command, this, however, is not confirmed and the statements could not be located.¹¹⁴¹ The incidents pertained to the discovery of nine corpses by Rutten and the execution observed by Groenewegen. Karremans has stated that he had reported these indications of executions – the only concrete indications he actually did receive – to Sarajevo. Less clear is whether he also informed Tuzla (Brantz): Karremans recounted that he had informed Brantz that it was ‘chaotic’ and that he also had told him about the observations;¹¹⁴² Brantz’s journal, however, contains no such entry.

Karremans’ report to Sarajevo pertained to the discovery of nine or ten corpses by Rutten, and according to Karremans, also to Groenewegen’s observation of an execution.¹¹⁴³ The exact circumstances that led to the discoveries, however, are difficult to establish due to the varying accounts by those involved. During the debriefing in Assen, Schotman stated that in the early evening of 12 July, he saw how opposite the bus depot two VRS soldiers with approximately 10 people turned into a dirt track in a westerly direction, uphill. On that same night, he already heard from civilians that nine corpses were reportedly lying in a house two- to three-hundred metres in that direction. The following morning he heard the same story. After the third report he decided to inform Lieutenant Koster, the officer in command. Lieutenants Koster and Rutten then reportedly found and photographed the location.¹¹⁴⁴

In this context a statement by UN Military Observer interpreter Emir Suljagic is also noteworthy. On the night of 12 to 13 July, he talked to a group of soldiers returning from a patrol that had taken place between 23.00 hours and 04.00 hours. The soldiers told him that they had observed the execution of 12 people that night.¹¹⁴⁵ It is not clear whether this account refers to the same events as the discovery of the corpses in the house on the dirt track, one reason being the difference in the number of corpses. Also, the UNMOs reported as early as 8am on the morning of 13 July that they had heard rumours about executions.¹¹⁴⁶

In any event, there can be no connection between the discovery made by Rutten and Koster and this night-time execution, as the course of events bears out. The time given was too late. On the morning of 13 July Rutten was ordered to escort a convoy of Displaced Persons.¹¹⁴⁷ The transport had resumed at around 07.00 hours on the initiative of Lieutenant Van Duijn, who wanted to seize the

¹¹⁴⁰ SMG/Debriefing. Standing Order 1 (NL) UN INFBAT. See Chapter 5, ‘Despatches, reports and messages’.

¹¹⁴¹ Debriefing statement, C.J. Matthijssen, 08/09/95. What is striking is that N. Franssen, Intelligence (I&V) Officer of Dutchbat IV, who was present in Zagreb, reportedly said that rumours were circulating already in Pleso to the effect that officers of Karremans’ staff contended that he had indeed made written reports. See: SMG, 1007/7. Note, ‘sources of information’, as evident from a hand-written note by smi N. Franssen (I&V), undated.

¹¹⁴² Interview Th. Karremans, 16/12/98.

¹¹⁴³ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 219.

¹¹⁴⁴ Debriefing statement, F.H. Schotman, 08/09/95.

¹¹⁴⁵ Interview Emir Suljagic, 23/10/97.

¹¹⁴⁶ Ministry of Defence, Situation reports. UNMO situation report Srebrenica update dated 130800B JUL 95.

¹¹⁴⁷ The following reconstruction is, where not otherwise indicated, based on the following sources: the official testimonies by witnesses J.H.A. Rutten, F. Van Schaik, E.C.M.J. Koster, B.C. Oosterveen and R.W. Dorst, in: OM Arnhem, KMar distr. Zuid-Holland/Zeeland, Judiciary Services, Official Statement P13-/1995-JD, Dossier ‘Dutchbat’, pp. 11-14; interview J.H.A. Rutten, 22/12/99; interview E. Koster, 06/10/99; debriefing statement, J.H.A. Rutten, 06/09/95; debriefing statement, F. van Schaik, 05/09/95; debriefing statement, F.H. Schotman, 08/09/95.

opportunity and get as many people out as possible while the VRS was still away. Before Rutten departed, he first walked towards the bus depot to get an idea of the size of the conveyance he was to escort. On the way there, he came across the house that was used for the so-called questioning of Bosnian Muslim men and that was to become known as 'the White House'. Then he already saw that all their personal possessions, including their identity papers, had been thrown on a pile outside. Around the house over 20 VRS soldiers stood guard. Together with Sergeant Major F. van Schaik, who accompanied him, Rutten entered the house under the pretext that he was bringing water. In the various rooms they saw over 100 terrified Bosnian Muslims. One man had even been handcuffed to the staircase and was hanging from it in a painful position. On Rutten's request, a VRS soldier adjusted the handcuffs and secured the man in a slightly more comfortable position.

The VRS soldiers prevented Rutten from entering a certain room, in which some men were apparently being questioned. While Van Schaik remained below, Rutten went upstairs, handed out water to the men held prisoner in various rooms and took their pictures. Rutten later described the atmosphere there as one of 'utter terror: you literally could smell death'.¹¹⁴⁸ The men seemed to understand fully why he was taking photographs and realized what fate possibly awaited them. They squeezed closer together to make sure they would all fit on the picture.

Rutten then attempted in vain to glance into the interrogation room from outside. He subsequently inspected another part of the house, where more men appeared to be kept. In one of the rooms he saw a whole bunch of photographs that looked as though they had been sorted deliberately. Rutten assumed that the VRS was looking for certain men.

Once outside again, he ordered two soldiers, Corporals Nieuwesteeg and Rattink, to inspect the house in regular intervals and, where possible, to provide assistance. To make it look as if both men had more authority, he had them attach a few additional stripes to their uniforms.

After Rutten had returned to the 'channel', he heard from a local interpreter that seven civilians had reportedly been executed in the vicinity of a well. Very shortly afterwards, he was told by his colleague, Lieutenant Schopman, that he too had heard this rumour. The same applied to Koster, who was approached by Christina Schmitz and UN Military Observer Kingori.¹¹⁴⁹ Rutten, accompanied by Van Schaik and Lieutenant Koster, then proceeded towards a well he knew, because he, as patrol coordinator and Intelligence officer of C Company, had good knowledge of the area. A Muslim woman, whom they had asked whether she knew of any men having been killed, showed them the exact way, towards a hill. After several hundred metres, they arrived at a small stream, where they indeed saw the corpses of several men. The stream, along the side of which a hedge was growing, bordered on a pasture. An opening in the hedge allowed the soldiers to walk up into the pasture. There they discovered the corpses of nine men, the youngest of which was approximately aged 40. They all wore civilian clothes and their heads were facing the water; seven lay on their stomach and two on their left side. All had been shot with a small calibre weapon, presumably an AK-47. The Dutch discovered that the execution had taken place not much earlier, as – in spite of the temperature being higher than 30 degrees – the blood had not yet coagulated and no flies could yet be seen. As Rutten himself and others concluded later, this indicated that this discovery could not relate to the reports that had reached Schotman quite some time before.

Rutten took a general photograph of the scene and then a second one, in which Lieutenant Koster squatted between the bodies as proof of the observation. He then ordered Van Schaik to collect the identity papers that were scattered around the place. When a shot rang out from one of the houses close by, they quickly made their way back toward the 'channel'. Rutten observed one VRS soldier leaving the house and disappearing around the corner. Fearing for their own safety, he ordered Van Schaik to throw away the identity papers. Subsequently they walked back, making it seem as though

¹¹⁴⁸ Bstas. Note dated 06/07/97 by H. van den Heuvel, Public Relations Director of the Ministry of Defence, about a conversation which he and BLS Gen. M. Schouten had on 04/07/97 with Ron Rutten. Appendix 2 of letter from the Defence Minister to the Speaker of Parliament, D98002140, 13/08/98.

¹¹⁴⁹ Interview L.C. Van Duijn, 02/07/99.

nothing had happened. By pretending to help carry a stretcher inside, they managed to get on to the compound.¹¹⁵⁰

There, Rutten inadvertently bumped into Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, which possibly explains why his report was not recorded by the Ops Room. The lieutenant told him what he had seen and also that he had taken photographs. Although Rutten found that Karremans reacted ‘half-heartedly’, the Commander *did* indicate ‘that he would bring it to the attention of those on a higher level’.¹¹⁵¹ Karremans later stated that he had given Rutten instructions immediately: ‘The first thing you do is stick that roll of film in your pocket and make sure that it gets back to the Netherlands, or wherever we might be going’.¹¹⁵²

According to Groenewegen, his observation reached Karremans through the usual chain of command, namely via Sergeant Mulder, First Lieutenant Schotman and Captain Matthijssen.¹¹⁵³ According to the account narrated in his book, Karremans first heard of the observation from Rutten and only ‘some time later’ of the execution witnessed by Groenewegen, whose name, incidentally, he does not mention.¹¹⁵⁴ Both observations were reportedly passed on to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command.¹¹⁵⁵ There are no other Dutchbat sources that can confirm Karremans’ account. The Ops Room register, where, normally speaking, all wires should have crossed, shows big gaps on July 12 and 13 and thus illustrates unintentionally the collapse of the ‘chain of report’ during these chaotic days.

The question is whether Karremans may not be mistaken here; neither he nor Franken reported Groenewegen’s observation during their debriefing in Zagreb. But both men did, in fact, report the discovery of the nine corpses and Franken even added explicitly that he was not aware of any ‘witness reports of actual executions’.¹¹⁵⁶ Although it is possible that Karremans was informed while Franken was not – the communication between the two was not exactly perfect in the chaos – this does not seem probable. The same applies to the statement that Karremans had supposedly forgotten to report such an observation.

But even if this was the case, it still is not clear whether Groenewegen’s observation had reached Karremans prior to his talk with Sarajevo and was reported at the same time as Rutten’s observation, or if it was reported later, in a separate communication. The date and the time of the execution are difficult to establish due to the varying statements Groenewegen has made in this regard. When interviewed by Colonel Lemmen on July 23 in Zagreb in the context of the operational debriefing, he did not mention a date.¹¹⁵⁷ But he did in fact give a date to the UN debriefers, namely July 12.¹¹⁵⁸ During the debriefing in Assen, he mentioned July 13.¹¹⁵⁹ The description of the execution was generally consistent: at a distance of about 200 metres from the compound, and about 30 metres

¹¹⁵⁰ Interview J.H.A. Rutten, 22/12/99

¹¹⁵¹ OM Arnhem, KMar, distr. Zuid-Holland/Zeeland, Judiciary Services, Official statement P13-/1995-JD, Dossier ‘Dutchbat’, p. 14.

¹¹⁵² Interview Th. Karremans, 16/12/98.

¹¹⁵³ Statement from Groenewegen during a conversation on 12 June 1996, in preparation of his testimony before the Tribunal. NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Royal Netherlands Army Legal Affairs Dept., Internal Memorandum, HJZ to CDS, ‘Hearing of witnesses by the Prosecution Office’, Stg/Confidential, unnumbered, 17 June 1996, p. 5; Debriefing statement, C.J. Matthijssen, 08/09/95.

¹¹⁵⁴ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 219.

¹¹⁵⁵ SMG/Debrief. Debriefing, C-Dutchbat 3, copy of Col. Karremans’ own text, Deventer, 06/09/95 (Stg confidential/permanent) p. 13. Incidentally, what stands out here is that Karremans appears to have bypassed HQ SNE (Brantz) in Tuzla; something that happened more than once, at any rate on 13 July. Brantz also was not informed of the drawing up of the ‘list of 239’. NIOD, Coll. Brantz.

¹¹⁵⁶ SMG, 1007. Chr. Klep, ‘Debriefing report, C-Dutchbat III Col. Karremans, 22/07/95, Camp Pleso’; Chr. Klep, ‘Debriefing report, Major Franken, 22/07/95, Camp Pleso’.

¹¹⁵⁷ SMG, 1007/25. Note P. Groen, ‘Debriefing of soldier Groenewegen C-Company in regard to an inquiry about war crimes, Camp Pleso 230795, 12.15-12.30 hours’.

¹¹⁵⁸ NIOD, Col. Hicks. UN-Debriefing form, Schotman; Margarita Lagos-Bossel (UNHCR)/Edric Selous (CVAO), Incident report by Paul Roeneuvegen (Groenewegen), 23/07/95.

¹¹⁵⁹ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 287.

from himself, Groenewegen observed how four VRS soldiers picked a man out of a group of refugees and placed him up against the wall of a nearby house, his face facing the wall. Groenewegen subsequently saw how one of the VRS soldiers killed that man with his AK-47, with a shot to the back of the head.¹¹⁶⁰ Later he stated that he only made his observation at around '4 p.m.' in the afternoon.¹¹⁶¹ In Zagreb, shortly after the battalion's return, he told the debriefers that he did not inform his group commander of the execution until the evening.¹¹⁶² If that was the case, Karremans could not have reported it on July 13 at around noon. After all, no indications were found that Karremans informed Sarajevo of the execution later on July 13 in a separate communication, even though on that day there was regular contact by phone.

The facts surrounding Oosterveen's report are also unclear. Karremans has stated before the Tribunal that on July 13 he received two reports only: the report of the nine or ten bodies and that of the one execution.¹¹⁶³ Before NIOD he stated that he also had spoken to Oosterveen and that, based on Oosterveen's story and that of Rutten, he concluded that the deportation was deteriorating into chaos.¹¹⁶⁴ Karremans, just as all the others after him, presumably understood the observations made by Rutten and by Oosterveen to be one and the same account. However, it is not clear when Oosterveen, and Dorst, who took photographs of the corpses, informed Karremans. As was the case with Groenewegen's observation, this issue directly concerns the uncertainty over the time when Oosterveen and Dorst discovered the corpses. Before both the Kodak Team of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, who investigated Rutten's botched film roll, and the Assen debriefers, Oosterveen mentioned '14.45 hours' as the time of discovery. This time was confirmed by Dorst. However, Dorst could not remember the exact day.¹¹⁶⁵ Oosterveen too, originally stated in Zagreb that he had made his discovery 'on Wednesday or Thursday'.¹¹⁶⁶ What is peculiar, however, is the fact that in both witness statements he recounted how a 10-year old Bosnian boy pointed out the killings as early as 'in the morning hours', or 'early morning', or 'after sunrise'.¹¹⁶⁷ This would put a considerable gap of several hours between the time of this warning and Oosterveen's reaction. But the account in his debriefing statement suggests that he went to pick up a camera on the compound immediately after having received this information and then, accompanied by Dorst, proceeded to find the location.¹¹⁶⁸ Elsewhere Oosterveen stated that he already had a camera on him.¹¹⁶⁹ This matter is complicated further by yet another differing statement by Oosterveen:

'A boy informed us of the existence of corpses. In the evening, we entered the enclave to investigate and did in fact find corpses of Muslims. It looked like an execution, because all the men were lying on their stomachs. A colleague took

¹¹⁶⁰ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, pp. 287-288. The name of witness Groenewegen became public later. He has also given testimony before the Tribunal: ICTY Karadzic and Mladic (IT-95-18-R61/IT-95-5-R61), 04/07/96. The video tapes of this incident were later introduced and submitted as evidence by the Prosecutor in the trial against Krstic.

¹¹⁶¹ SMG/Debriefing. *Feitenrelaas*, p. 287. This was supposed to have been around the time when the last Displaced Persons outside the compound were being deported.

¹¹⁶² SMG, 1007/25. Note P. Groen, 'Debriefing soldier Groenewegen C-Company in regard to an inquiry about war crimes, Camp Pleso 230795, 12.15-12.30 hours.

¹¹⁶³ ICTY (IT-95-18-R61/IT-95-5-R61), Testimony of Th. Karremans, 04/07/96.

¹¹⁶⁴ Interview Th. Karremans, 16/12/98.

¹¹⁶⁵ OM Arnhem, KMar, distr. Zuid-Holland/Zeeland. Official Statements of witnesses B.J. Oosterveen and R.W. Dorst, Judiciary Services, Official Statement P13-/1995-JD, Dossier 'Dutchbat', 02/08/95, pp. 21-22; 27. Dorst first refers to the separation of the men and women and then talks about 'around two days later'.

¹¹⁶⁶ SMG, 1007/25. Note Petra Groen, 'Confrontation aoo Oosterveen and elt Rutten in regard to an inquiry about war crimes, Camp Pleso 23/07/95, 13.00-13.30 hours'.

¹¹⁶⁷ Charles Lane, 'srebrenica: kroniek van een afgang' ('srebrenica, chronicle of a failure'), *De Volkskrant*, 12/08/95.

¹¹⁶⁸ Debriefing statement, B.J. Oosterveen, 08/09/95; OM Arnhem, KMar, distr. Zuid-Holland/Zeeland, Judiciary Services, Official Statement P13-/1995-JD. Dossier 'Dutchbat', 02/08/95, pp. 21-22.

¹¹⁶⁹ Jolande van der Graaf, 'Adjutant legde tiental executies door Bosnische Serven vast' ('Warrant officer photographed 10 bodies of people executed by the Bosnian Serbs'), *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 18/08/95.

photographs. Everything had to be done very sneakily, because by now the Serbs were cleansing the houses in the neighbourhood.’

However, the corpses on the photographs were almost indistinguishable, one of the reasons being the onset of darkness.¹¹⁷⁰ Both the explicit reference to the evening and the cleansing of houses by Serbs – an activity that took place in the wake of their advance to Potocari – strongly suggests that the observation may already have been made as early as the evening of July 12. This would tie in better with the statement mentioned earlier by Schotman and the stories of other Dutchbat personnel that they had heard already on ‘day one’ of the discovery of nine male corpses who had been taken away for questioning.¹¹⁷¹ Koster too confirmed that he heard rumours about nine or ten corpses as early as July 12, when making his reports at the compound.¹¹⁷²

It is not impossible that different recollections are being mixed up. A number of Dutchbat personnel at the Assen debriefing also linked Oosterveen to the discovery of bodies in a house. According to one of the Dutchbat soldiers, the Warrant Officer was warned by Groenewegen, shortly after he himself had observed an execution, that several corpses were reportedly lying in a house.¹¹⁷³ Warrant Officer Dijkema stated that:

‘... on the night of July 13-14 [this data is mixed up several times], Oosterveen and Koster had been in a house not far from the compound, where it was seen that shots were fired, after which the VRS left the house. They subsequently established that these persons had been murdered. He knows that photographs had been taken, the quality of which is poor, and that one roll of film is rendered useless.’¹¹⁷⁴

Naming Oosterveen and Koster (who accompanied Rutten) in one breath and the reference to a botched roll of film suggests that different events in Dijkema’s recollection have been mixed up. But what is striking is that Oosterveen here too is linked with a discovery of bodies in a house; an element which also appears in the reports that Schotman received as early as the night of July 12 to 13. As described before, *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker Emira Selimovic stated that Dutchbat personnel wanted *Médecins Sans Frontières* to remove some seven corpses from a house.

So the question remains of how Oosterveen came to his differing statements and if he, indeed, did see more than he has reported. Whatever the case may be, it was known in Zagreb that he had taken photographs. There he gave his roll of film to the local debriefing co-ordinator, Colonel Lemmen.¹¹⁷⁵ Petra Groen was head of the team of the Military History Section of the Royal Netherlands Army in Pleso and worked closely together with Lemmen; she saw Oosterveen hand the film to Lemmen. She signalled the MID, who later picked up the roll of film from Lemmen and had it developed.

Presumably, in the hectic situation, the observations of Rutten and Oosterveen were understood by Karremans as a reference to one and the same event. In Zagreb it had already been recognised that there was a problem. Colonel Lemmen, who in turn had organized a first debriefing of key persons by orders of General Bastiaans, arranged a confrontation between Oosterveen and Rutten especially for that very reason. From a note by Petra Groen, who together with Lemmen, also interviewed the witnesses of possible war crimes, it can be gathered that there were then indications

¹¹⁷⁰ F. Lardenoye, ‘Het boek “Srebrenica” is niet gesloten’ (“‘The ‘srebrenica’ book is not closed”’), *Oplinie*, July 1996, p. 7.

¹¹⁷¹ Debriefing statement, F.S. Cameron, 05/09/95. It still remains difficult to incontrovertibly link the meaning of ‘day one’ to 12 July. The weak chronology is a general problem with the statements made in Assen.

¹¹⁷² ICTY (IT-95-18-R61/IT-95-5-R61) Testimony of E. Koster, 04/07/96.

¹¹⁷³ Debriefing statement, E.J. Siemons, 05/09/95.

¹¹⁷⁴ Debriefing statement, W.J. Dijkema, 01/09/95.

¹¹⁷⁵ Interview P. Groen, 17/02/99.

that two different locations were at issue. Where Oosterveen mentioned a stream flowing in an east-to-westerly direction, Rutten indicated a stream following a north-to-southerly direction. Moreover, he placed the discovery in the neighbourhood of ‘a house with a watermill’, a marked detail that was missing in Oosterveen’s account.¹¹⁷⁶ However, neither observation was sufficiently clear for Groen and Lemmen to draw a definite conclusion, even though Groen, for her part, was inclined towards thinking that there may well have been two separate incidents.¹¹⁷⁷ Lemmen, due to the ‘obscurities’ in Oosterveen’s statement, was reluctant to draw this conclusion; if he had not known him in the past, he may well have considered the entire report as unreliable and pushed it aside, according to Lemmen.¹¹⁷⁸ Based on this assessment, General Couzy, in his press conference on July 23, started from the assumption that one single incident had occurred, although he explicitly left open the option that this issue involved two different incidents. He hoped that the comparison of the photographs would clarify the matter.¹¹⁷⁹

In the recollection of those involved, a unanimous conclusion, however, was drawn, even if it is quite possible that this impression arose only because the matter continued to occupy them after they had spoken to Groen and Lemmen. At any rate, Rutten and Oosterveen stated later that during a conversation in which they had consulted the ordnance survey map, they had come to the conclusion that the locations of their discoveries were surely 500 metres apart.¹¹⁸⁰ Rutten placed Oosterveen’s observation more in a northerly direction, towards Budak Mountain.¹¹⁸¹ His own discovery he marked on the map as being level with the battery factory.¹¹⁸² In this context, a statement that found its way into the report on Srebrenica published by Amnesty International in September 1995 is of interest. Here it is mentioned that ‘reportedly’ on July 13, VRS soldiers, on orders by their superiors, gunned down some nine men in a field close to one of the factories. The nine men were said to have tried to escape from the crowd, who were present in and around the factories, but were caught almost immediately.¹¹⁸³

In August 1995, Oosterveen and Rutten conveyed their conclusion to the researchers of the Kodak Team of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, who were investigating the destruction of Rutten’s roll of film. That same month, Oosterveen stated in a newspaper interview that there was more than one observation. ‘Another incident, also near the UN compound’ was being mentioned.¹¹⁸⁴ Even if it is somewhat understandable that General Couzy, in his Zagreb press conference of July 23, kept his options open and referred to a discovery of nine or ten bodies, it is puzzling that the debriefers in Assen did not unearth the same information as the Kodak Team. As a consequence, the debriefing report published in October 1995 only mentions one discovery of nine bodies. The fact that this report starts out with the assumption that an execution took place presumably on the night of July 12-13 is an interesting detail, with, as a striking addition, that Dutchbat reportedly did not obtain permission to remove the bodies.¹¹⁸⁵ In any case, nothing in the accounts of Rutten or Oosterveen, nor in that of any of the others closely involved in the discoveries, refers to the latter.

¹¹⁷⁶ SMG, 1007/25. Note taken by Petra Groen, ‘Confrontation aoo Oosterveen and elt Rutten in regard to an inquiry about war crimes, Camp Pleso 23/07/95, 13.00-13.30 hours.

¹¹⁷⁷ ditto

¹¹⁷⁸ Interview J. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

¹¹⁷⁹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. ‘Fragments from the press conference in Zagreb, 23/07/95. (Full text of the introduction of Lieutenant General H.A. Couzy)’. Also in Voorhoeve’s diary, pp. 139-140.

¹¹⁸⁰ OM Arnhem, KMar, distr. Zuid-Holland/Zeland, Judiciary Services, Official Statement P13-/1995-JD. Dossier ‘Dutchbat’, pp. 8 and 22.

¹¹⁸¹ Interview J.H.A. Rutten, 22/12/99.

¹¹⁸² Appendix to debriefing statement, J.H.A. Rutten, 06/09/95.

¹¹⁸³ Amnesty International, Bosnia-Hercegovina: the missing of Srebrenica (London, September 1995) p. 5.

¹¹⁸⁴ J. van der Graaf, ‘Adjutant legde tiental executies door Bosnische Serven vast’ (‘Warrant officer photographed 10 bodies of people executed by the Bosnian Serbs’), *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 18/08/95.

¹¹⁸⁵ Wind, *Debriefing*, pp. 50 and 51.

It is unclear whether this failure can be attributed solely to the debriefers. Neither Oosterveen nor Rutten apparently considered drawing the attention of the Assen debriefers specifically to this problem. This issue remained unclear within the Ministry of Defence. Only in July 1997, in a conversation with Rutten, did the Ministry of Defence's Directorate of General Information finally realize that two different incidents were involved, and that the debriefing report therefore was incorrect on this point.¹¹⁸⁶

In the wake of the Srebrenica tragedy the observations of executions also led to a debate. At issue was whether Karremans, as he himself has always maintained, did in fact report the incident to Sarajevo. This issue became part of the fast growing doubts after July 1995 as to whether Dutchbat, in the case of Karremans, had done everything in its power to avert the tragedy. The impression had arisen early on that the Dutchbat Commander had been negligent in his reporting. In his written retrospective, Kreemers, then Spokesman for the Ministry of Defence, argued that Karremans 'against better judgement, [had] time and time again missed the opportunity to mobilise world opinion.' Kreemers based his argument on statements by General Nicolai, who had spoken to Karremans by telephone on July 13. At that time, the Commander supposedly conveyed 'in the most vague terms', that 'very grave incidents had taken place in Srebrenica'.¹¹⁸⁷ This comment was brought to Kreemers' attention after it had escaped General Nicolai in a conversation with NRC reporter Frank Westerman. Westerman had picked up on that immediately and, not for the first or last time, confronted Kreemers with a fact he knew nothing about.¹¹⁸⁸

General Nicolai disclaimed that Karremans had informed him of executions, and also did so before the NIOD. He stated that he had asked Karremans 'on one occasion directly' whether war crimes had been committed. According to General Nicolai:

'At that time he said: "Irregularities have indeed occurred, but I don't think it is prudent" – we were talking over the telephone then – "to discuss the matter via this medium". The telephone line at that time was not secure.¹¹⁸⁹ He put it roughly as follows: "Soon, once we've left here, I shall report this. We still have no evidence of real crimes on a large scale." I am not quoting him literally now, but this was the tenor of his answer.'

According to Nicolai's account of Karremans' words¹¹⁹⁰, the incidents were 'small-scale', and Karremans would postpone any reporting due to the insecure lines. General Nicolai, however, believed

¹¹⁸⁶ Bstas, see report by H. van den Heuvel, Public Relations Director of the MoD, of the conversation between himself and former BLS Lieutenant General M. Schouten on 4 July 1997, with J.A.H. Rutten. SG. Memo, H. van den Heuvel, 06/07/97. Appendix 2 of letter by the Defence Minister to the Speaker of Dutch Parliament, D98002140, 13/08/98. However, in 'Prompting Document', a paper drawn up on 11 October 1996 by Colonel R.S. van Dam, in the light of interviews in the context of the NIOD investigation, which had just commenced, one already did start out from the assumption that there were two separate reports of nine or ten corpses with gunshot wounds. R.S. van Dam, 'Prompting Document', 11/10/96, p. 104.

¹¹⁸⁷ Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan* ('On the right side of the moon'), pp. 87-88.

¹¹⁸⁸ As evident from an undated, hand-written note made by Kreemers on Hotel Königswinter stationery during the 1996 stay in Bonn with Defence Minister Voorhoeve. NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. The note served to prepare for a conversation with General Van der Wind, in connection with the airing of VPRO TV broadcast *Lopende Zaken*, which was dedicated to the problems surrounding the local personnel of Dutchbat. Interview H.P.M. Kreemers, 18/03/99.

¹¹⁸⁹ This may well be possible; on the morning of 12 July, when the VRS advanced towards Potocari, an emergency destruction was implemented. At that time, a screwdriver was reportedly also used to render the encryption system 'cryptotel' (PNVX) inactive. See: debriefing statement, A.C.J. van Bladel, 19/09/95. Sld1 Van Bladel worked in the communications centre.

¹¹⁹⁰ Interview C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99. Another interesting fact is that Nicolai, in his memo to DJZ, does not refer to any reports either. "Last days' Dutchbat Srebrenica", Brig. Gen. C.H. Nicolai to DCBC, Army Crisis Staff/SCO, 16/08/95.

that Karremans could have used the secure fax line and convey his reports through that medium.¹¹⁹¹ Anyhow, it is striking that Karremans, in a chronological summary of the events which he faxed on July 17, known as TK95118, does not mention the discovery of the corpses and the execution.¹¹⁹² Whether no report was made due to safety considerations or for other reasons can no longer be reconstructed. However, there were indications that Karremans feared the VRS might discover that he had sent this information out of the enclave. For example, on July 15, when the team of KHO-5 finally was able to leave the enclave with the logistics convoy, he ordered them to keep silent about the events that had occurred in the enclave while the rest of the battalion was not yet in safety.¹¹⁹³ It is not clear whether he only intended this order to relate to contacts with the press, or whether this was a general information curfew.

Even if Karremans' story is weak on this particular point, it is ultimately General Nicolai's story that raises the most doubts. The fact of the matter is that Karremans' assistant in Sarajevo, Lieutenant Colonel De Ruiter, did confirm that Karremans had reported possible executions. This is something that De Ruiter told staff of the Ministry of Defence Political Affairs Directorate as early as October 1995, at which time De Ruiter also recounted the detail that Karremans had notified him about the existence of photographs.¹¹⁹⁴ In a fuller statement before the NIOD, De Ruiter presented his recollection of the conversation as follows:

‘I still remember that he said: “The time has come”, or “It has started”. I then asked: “What exactly do you mean?” “Well, the massacre.” “What happened?” Then came the story of the nine or ten men. That someone had made photographs. [De Ruiter continued asking]: “What exactly do you mean? Do you have indications for incidents on a larger scale?” “No, not at that point in time”.’¹¹⁹⁵

Karremans had an unpleasant recollection of this conversation. Based on his notebook, it appears that he called De Ruiter at 12.11 hours.¹¹⁹⁶ He not only reported the discovery of the corpses and the photographs, but also the objections of the Dutch blue helmets in connection with their departure. Karremans therefore reportedly requested ‘with emphasis’ mediation on higher level. But De Ruiter's answer had surprised Karremans, as it was one he did not expect under the given circumstances: ‘Don't panic, you seem stressed out, or words to that effect. After that conversation, I was so bewildered that it took me a while to let the answer sink in’.¹¹⁹⁷

This version was disputed by De Ruiter before the NIOD. He concurred that he had said something similar at one point or another, but dated this statement as having been made on July 11, before the VRS push into Potocari, and not on July 13. According to De Ruiter's account, his words

¹¹⁹¹ This comment certainly cuts ice. The Satcom-A with encryption equipment still functioned, even if it was ‘completely worn down’; debriefing statement, A.C.J. van Bladel, 19/09/95. New communication equipment was waiting in Zagreb but could not be brought into the enclave due to the ban on convoys. Other communication that was sent that same day included the ‘list of 239’, as evident, among other things, from Couzy's comment, that the list had arrived at the Royal Netherlands Army, encrypted. See: KAB. Memo J.J.C. Voorhoeve, Urgent, Attn.: SG, PCDS, DV, Princen. Stg-confidential, z.d. ‘Conversation with Karremans on 24 August 1995 from 08.30 – 09.30 hours with Gen Couzy (BLS) and Gen Schouten (PCDS)’.

¹¹⁹² SMG, 1006. Fax TK95118, Karremans, 17/07/95.

¹¹⁹³ Summary of compiled reports DCBC, As a result of ‘Report C-DB-3 dated 150800B Jul 95’: ‘They (the KHO-5) have received orders from C-DB-3 to NOT give out any info until DB-3 has returned to NL’.

¹¹⁹⁴ DAB. Note by J.H.M. de Winter (DAB) to Minister, Stg/confidential D95/537, ‘srebrenica’, 20/10/95, p. 8. It is equally striking that this information apparently did not reach Kreemers.

¹¹⁹⁵ Interview A. De Ruiter, 29/06/00.

¹¹⁹⁶ Interview Th. Karremans, 16/12/98.

¹¹⁹⁷ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 219. On the afternoon of July 13, Rave incidentally notes down: ‘We continue to report to the world’. Notebook of B. Rave, submitted to the NIOD for perusal.

had been a reaction to Karremans' earlier described alleged wish to surrender to the VRS, and therefore a mix-up by Karremans.¹¹⁹⁸

In the absence of an independent third source, it can no longer be established which version is correct. The core of the discussion therefore culminates above all on the question of how seriously the reports were taken. The presupposition must be that Karremans himself expected that incidents had occurred. In that regard, the character of the conversations, as Nicolai and De Ruiter recount them, does tie in. In contrast, Karremans suggests a half-hearted reaction by Sarajevo. This consequently begs the question of what took place after the telephone conversation with Lieutenant Colonel Karremans.

De Ruiter stated in October 1995 that after the conversation with Lieutenant Colonel Karremans he had made various attempts to verify his report. One such attempt was the involvement of the JCOs in Potocari. He 'had someone ask the secretly operating British unit in Srebrenica (a few soldiers) about indications of war crimes. They too had not reported much more in the days after the request than Lieutenant Colonel Karremans himself had already done.'¹¹⁹⁹

Shortly after the fall, interpreter Emir Suljagic and UNHCR Representative Almir Ramic indeed saw one of the British soldiers, 'a big strong guy', return after one night, completely drenched in mud 'as if he had only been crawling'. Later they saw him wash his things.¹²⁰⁰ Whether there was a connection with a request by De Ruiter could, however, not be established. It does not seem improbable that the JCOs were conducting reconnaissance missions anyway, one of the reasons being that they originally had the intent to leave the enclave without Dutchbat, but did not receive permission from battalion command.¹²⁰¹ The question is rather if the British were still able to pass on their findings at that time. From the available indications it appears that the JCOs, as a precautionary measure, destroyed their special communications equipment as early as 11, or no later than July 12.¹²⁰² This reportedly resulted in a break in communications on and after July 13, the days referred to by De Ruiter as 'the days after'. This leaves only the possibility that the British maintained contact with Sarajevo via Dutchbat's communications centre or via the equipment of the UNMOs, but this could not be established with certainty. It is not impossible that the JCOs, in one way or another, succeeded in getting information out of the enclave; the NIOD, however, did not obtain permission from the British Government to hear the involved SAS team. Colonel Brantz's journal includes notes about a report he received on July 14, with the entry that the 'Bratunac prisoners' are no longer in the football stadium and have possibly been moved to an undisclosed location. He made the additional note: 'Informal reports by JOC' [presumably a typing error].¹²⁰³

De Ruiter also said that he had approached the UNHCR in Sarajevo with the question of whether their representatives in Srebrenica had any knowledge of war crimes. 'This appeared not to be the case', said De Ruiter.¹²⁰⁴ This was generally correct: the UNHCR had planned that Field Officers from the UNHCR Bosnia-Herzegovina Desk in Belgrade should be present on the Srebrenica-Kladanj route in order to monitor the convoys, but had not obtained permission from the Bosnian-Serb authorities: 'Therefore there is no UNHCR presence to monitor the current process on the Bosnian-Serb side'.¹²⁰⁵ Repeated requests by the Head of Mission of the UNHCR in Bosnia, Damasio Fecci, to

¹¹⁹⁸ Interview A. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

¹¹⁹⁹ DAB. Memorandum from J.H.M. de Winter (DAB) to Minister, Stg/confidential D95/537, 'srebrenica', 20/10/95, p. 8.

¹²⁰⁰ Interview Almir Ramic, 08/11/99.

¹²⁰¹ Interview Th. Karremans, 15-17/12/98 and R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

¹²⁰² In any event, on the 12th, shortly before the VRS inspected the compound, the (Dutch) FAC equipment was destroyed with an axe and thrown in a deep pit. Code lists and keys were also destroyed (debriefing statements by P.M. Sanders and E.G.B. Wieffer, Assen, 13 and 07/09/95 resp.). At that time, the JCOs were reported to have sabotaged their own equipment as well.

¹²⁰³ Report dated 14 10.00/14.45 hours, Royal Netherlands Army and NIOD, Coll. Brantz in: Journal Ch. Brantz, appendix, pages unnumbered.

¹²⁰⁴ DAB. Memorandum J.H.M. de Winter (DAB) to Minister, Stg/confi D95/537, 'srebrenica', 20/10/95, p. 8.

¹²⁰⁵ UNGE, UNHCR, file Bosnia/Srebrenica. Capsat J-P. Cavalieri, UNHCR Belgrade, to UNHCR Zagreb, 13/07/95 1436z.

visit Srebrenica and Bratunac with members of their staff had also been turned down. In the meantime, the UNHCR was seriously concerned about the men, who were separated from their families and transported to an undisclosed location. Furthermore, accounts from an evacuated woman became known, about how her two nieces were arrested by Bosnian Serbs. However, there were no opportunities to verify these reports.¹²⁰⁶ But on July 13, an UNHCR convoy that had already been waiting for several days at the border crossing at Zvornik was finally allowed to enter the enclave.

At around 18.30 hours, when the deportation neared an end, two UNHCR Field Officers, Andrei Kazakov and Rosana Sam, arrived at Potocari with the convoy.¹²⁰⁷ They were accompanied by Dragan Kekic, chairman of the 'Coordinating Council for Humanitarian Assistance' and the president of the Opstina Bratunac, Ljubo Simic, who were to guarantee their safety. Kekic was further accompanied by a camera crew from Pale TV Srna, with whom he wanted to enter the compound to personally assure the safety of the local UNHCR staff. Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, however, prohibited this; Kazakov and Sam were granted access. Once inside, they discussed the situation with UNHCR Representatives Almir Ramic and Faruk Masic, the team of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and members of Dutchbat.

The picture that presented itself to Kazakov and Sam in Bratunac and Potocari (they were prohibited from visiting the town of Srebrenica) included both the problems of the medical convoy and the separation of the men from their women and children. According to the VRS soldiers they spoke to, their orders were to consider everyone with a weapon as a prisoner of war. The other men reportedly had permission to leave by bus. The Field Officers had to accept this: 'There was no evidence on site to deny this'. During their stay in Bratunac, before being allowed to proceed to Potocari, they had observed that 'the buses were loaded on the basis of age/sex with mixed elderly, then younger women and children and finally men of military age'. The latter were, as far as they were able to see, in the back of the bus and guarded by VRS soldiers. Kazakov and Sam had counted 25 buses, but had not been able to inspect all of them. According to local authorities, a further 700 POWs were detained in the stadium, but requests to visit them were turned down.

The answer about the deportation process which the Field Officers received from the Dutch soldiers during their two-hour stay was fairly uniform: the VRS operation was 'well-organized and had the intention to minimize civilian casualties'. There was no information about any possible mistreatment of the civilian population by the VRS. The Field Officers therefore concluded that the 'evacuation' had been conducted in 'a non-hostile way'.

There was actually only one exception to this picture. A UN soldier, whose name was not mentioned, said that 'on the night of July 10-11, he did not remember exactly due to fatigue, that draft age Displaced Persons were rounded up from the crowd in front of the compound and interrogated in a large building across from the compound. The source said he heard shooting from that building throughout the night and believed that many people had been executed there'.

This incidental report was seemingly drowned in the scores of reassuring statements about the process of events. What is interesting is that, according to internal reports, the local UNHCR representatives had nothing to say on this issue either. According to Jean-Paul Cavalieri, then UNHCR Program Officer in Belgrade and the person who had instructed Kazakov and Sam to look for the missing men, Ramic and Masic – who were very afraid – did in fact hear rumours about executions in Potocari, but had observed nothing themselves. They had heard shots from the hills around Potocari but not in the vicinity of the compound.¹²⁰⁸

The most striking incidence as yet is that, based on the UNHCR report, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans and Major Franken apparently missed the chance to inform the UNHCR directly of the

¹²⁰⁶ UNGE, UNHCR, file Bosnia/Srebrenica. M. Almeida e Silva (UNHCR Geneva) to Damasio Fecci, 'summary of 13.07.95 press briefing at the Palais des Nations', 13/07/95.

¹²⁰⁷ UNGE, UNHCR, file Bosnia/Srebrenica. The following is based on: E. O'Dwyer (BH Desk) to B. Tall, BH Desk Belgrade Coordinator, 'summary of Field/Prt monitoring Srebrenica July 13/14 1995'.

¹²⁰⁸ Interview J.-P. Cavalieri, 08/07/00. Why this is not included in the report's summary is not clear.

executions that had been reported to them.¹²⁰⁹ It is improbable, however, that De Ruiter in this case should have heard more in answer to his request for information than he already knew from Karremans. At that time, no other sources of information were available to the UNHCR on site and, for the time being, they decided to give Mladic ‘the benefit of the doubt’.¹²¹⁰

De Ruiter stated that he had not only approached the JCOs and the UNHCR, but also that ‘from Sarajevo he [had] brought the report to the attention of the UN’.¹²¹¹ The way in which this was formulated suggests that he may also have informed Zagreb. This appears to be confirmed by Janvier’s declaration in 2001 before the French parliamentary mission into Srebrenica. He said that he was aware of ‘assassinations’ that had been reported by the Dutch blue helmets. That is why, he continued, he had made attempts from July 13 to send two of his officers to Srebrenica.¹²¹² But it is not very likely that this occurred on July 13, as Janvier had already asked Mladic as early as July 12 to receive the respective officers ‘as his personal envoys’, before anything had been reported by Dutchbat.¹²¹³

One might naturally assume that De Ruiter also dispatched the information through to Sarajevo. Smith might have been able to use it in his negotiations with Mladic, which resulted in the 19 July agreement about the departure of Dutchbat. Anyhow, De Ruiter indicated in his notes that, according to Smith, Mladic had ‘accepted “unfortunate small incidents” had occurred’. De Ruiter also took down the remark (that his troops had) “finished [it] in a correct way”.¹²¹⁴ This in itself is not contradictory to the picture which predominated at that time. From the secret report of the meeting with Mladic, which took place in the presence of Milosevic, it is evident that human rights violations had not been raised, other than the question of access to detainees.¹²¹⁵ The question remains whether De Ruiter had informed the Netherlands. There were regular informal contacts between De Ruiter and the Defence Crisis Management Centre, the upshot of which can be found back in the log books. There is, however, no reference to the reports by Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, not even in relation to the already earlier cited telephone call on July 15, in which De Ruiter relayed the UNMO’s account about the terrible scenes that were said to have unfolded between Srebrenica and Potocari.¹²¹⁶

In this context, it is also interesting that in the summary ‘*Last Days of Dutchbat in Srebrenica*’, compiled by De Ruiter himself in August for the Defence Crisis Management Centre and Military History Section of the Royal Netherlands Army, any reference to the conversation with Lieutenant Colonel Karremans on July 13 is missing. In the compilation of this summary, De Ruiter had used several sources, including personal notes by General Nicolai and himself, as well as notes about telephone conversations and meetings.¹²¹⁷

The same gap can also be found in General Nicolai’s notes of July 13. He did, however, make two interesting notes one day later, but it could not be established if these related to the reports by Lieutenant Colonel Karremans: ‘Reports about incidents’ and one note showing the ‘A’ for ‘action’, ‘reports about incidents → UNHCR’.¹²¹⁸ This suggests that General Nicolai did in fact hear something.

¹²⁰⁹ Remarkable too, that based on the report, no mention was made of the drawing up of the ‘list of 239’, while this surely was of pre-eminent interest to the UNHCR.

¹²¹⁰ Interview Karen Koning-Abu Zayd, former UNHCR Representative in Bosnia, 11/07/00.

¹²¹¹ DAB. Memorandum, J.H.M. de Winter (DAB) to Minister, Stg/confidential D95/537, ‘srebrenica’, 20/10/95, p. 8.

¹²¹² Loncle, *Rapport d’information*, Tome 1, par. C2, ‘11/17 July: *le grand massacre*’.

¹²¹³ DJZ. Letter from B. Janvier to R. Mladic, 12/07/95. This letter gives Janvier’s 2001 declaration an air of self-justification.

¹²¹⁴ Notes by J.A.C. De Ruiter, submitted to NIOD for perusal. Interview J.A.C. De Ruiter, 29/06/00.

¹²¹⁵ SMG, 1002. Confidential-UK eyes A, Loose minute, Bildt Mission – Report 11, Belgrade-Brussels-Geneva-Belgrade-Sarajevo 14-20 July 95, 21/07/95, by Maj. Gen. C.L. Elliott, MA to Mr. Bildt.

¹²¹⁶ As will be discussed in Chapter 6, it is unclear whether Air Commodore C.G.J. Hilderink of the DCBC knew about the report. His confirmation in an interview the NIOD is at odds with information by other sources, and opens the possibility that Hilderink may be mistaken.

¹²¹⁷ SMG, 1004/59. “‘Last days’ Dutchbat in Srebrenica’, LCol. J.A.C. De Ruiter MA to DCBC/Royal Netherlands Army Military History Section, 12/08/95.

¹²¹⁸ Notebook of C.H. Nicolai, submitted to the NIOD for perusal. It is not impossible that his notes related to the first reports that came in on 14 July at 11.00am about ‘abusing refugees’. See: SMG, 1004/59. Logbook (G3 and personal notes),

Nor does there seem to be an obvious reason why Lieutenant Colonel Karremans would not have relayed the same information to General Nicolai as he did to his assistant. In view of the explicit question Nicolai posed, according to his own account, it would be peculiar if Lieutenant Colonel Karremans informed De Ruiter, but not his superior. It would then be expected that the General was informed about Karremans' report by his own assistant.

As far as General Nicolai is concerned, there are two possibilities; a mistaken recollection, or an intentional distortion of facts. In regard to the former, it is possible that the conversation between De Ruiter and Nicolai, which Nicolai himself remembers, did not take place on 13 July, but prior to that time. In this case, the question is: did De Ruiter inform General Nicolai of his conversation with Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, and when. If General Nicolai was not informed, or if it was done in a non-alarmist manner, then General Nicolai's recollection becomes more understandable.

In the other case, General Nicolai's statements may have been prompted by the idea that he didn't take Lieutenant Colonel Karremans' report seriously. This is all the more embarrassing, as Nicolai – according to his own statement – had impressed on Lieutenant Colonel Karremans as early as around 11 July that he did not expect the VRS 'to carry out a bloodbath among innocent civilians and UN soldiers under the eyes of the entire international community'.¹²¹⁹ However, at some time between July 11 and 18, something in General Nicolai's position changed in that regard, which might have to do with the 'incidents' of which he made brief notes on 14 July. On July 18 General Nicolai was one of the few top people who backed up Minister Pronk when he declared two days earlier that genocide had been committed in Srebrenica; even if the General expressed that it may be difficult to prove.¹²²⁰

Both Nicolai and De Ruiter made their statements about their contact with Karremans when the incident was less than four months old, when 'srebrenica' had already started to take on the character of a major political scandal and the description of events became a matter of importance for all parties involved.¹²²¹ 'Reports' had meanwhile become an extremely sensitive subject, and, in hindsight, were ascribed tremendous significance, even if their significance and scope was far from obvious at that time. Anyhow, the latter is the overriding impression that lingers over this complex issue: none of the parties involved interpreted the reports as warning signs. Nevertheless, formally speaking something went wrong in the reporting. The information, by the looks of it, became stuck in Sarajevo and with it, the responsibility for connecting or not connecting consequences to the reports rests with Sarajevo.

27. Protests To Mladic?

Apart from the duty to report human rights violations to those higher up in the chain of command, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans had an additional responsibility. As per Standing Operating Procedure 208, a commander was required to bring incidents to the attention of the local (military) commander 'and demand the violation to stop'.¹²²² In Lieutenant Colonel Karremans' case, this meant that he had to get redress from Mladic. The former Dutchbat Commander, on the face of it, has expressed contradictory words about whether or not he did so. In Assen, he originally declared: 'I did not speak with Mladic about possible corpses or skirmishes that reportedly took place. At the time, I was not

included in: 'Last days' Dutchbat in Srebrenica', LCol J.A.C. De Ruiter MA to DCBC/Royal Netherlands Army-Military History Section, 12/08/95.

¹²¹⁹ DJZ. Brig. Gen. C.H. Nicolai to DCBC, Army Crisis Staff/SCO, Memo "Last days' Dutchbat Srebrenica', 16/08/95.

¹²²⁰ K. van Beurden, 'Generaal steunt verhaal Pronk' ('General backs Pronk's story'), *Het Parool*, 19/07/95.

¹²²¹ Colonel Ch. Brantz recounted that he was extremely irritated by the manner in which Nicolai and De Ruiter had picked on both Karremans and Voorhoeve in a conversation with NOVA reporter Twan Huys during a flight to the Netherlands on 23 July. Brantz, who travelled in the same plane, could overhear the long conversation. He said to later have recognized the same stories in the fall, in an article by Frank Westerman in *NRC Handelsblad*. Interview Ch. Brantz, 11/07/99.

¹²²² SMG, 1023. Annex B SOP 208, Actions for Commanding Officer and HQ BH Command. Standard Operating Procedures UNPROFOR, September 1993.

aware of possible crimes and did not want to discuss matters on the basis of rumours; after all, at that time I did not have any hard facts'.¹²²³

The subject came up again in 1996, when Lieutenant Colonel Karremans and a number of other Dutchbat soldiers were summoned to give testimony before the Yugoslavia Tribunal in the Rule 61 procedure against Karadzic and Mladic. Although the contrary was claimed in the public arena¹²²⁴, the Netherlands witnesses were prepared by Royal Netherlands Army lawyers and their statements closely examined. With Lieutenant Colonel Karremans' consent, 'the passages and statements that might possibly raise questions were deleted or adjusted'.¹²²⁵ It was, after all, not in the interest of the Ministry of Defence nor of the Prosecutor that the focus would come to lie on Dutchbat, instead of on Karadzic and Mladic. On 11 June 1996, a preparatory conversation was held with Lieutenant Colonel Karremans by representatives of the Tribunal, in the presence of a Royal Netherlands Army lawyer. On that occasion, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans was asked, among other things, whether he had told General Mladic of the discovery of the nine executed Muslims: 'Karremans answered that he had indeed told Mladic about this incident, but that Mladic hardly reacted to this statement'.¹²²⁶ This supposedly took place on July 13, during an 'on the spot' meeting with the VRS General.

On the face of it, this declaration by Lieutenant Colonel Karremans in June 1996 is at odds with his statements made in Assen. On closer examination, however, this appears not to be the case: the statement given at the debriefing that he had not mentioned the killings to Mladic was made in the context of questions about his first meetings with Mladic on July 11 and 12; at that time Karremans could indeed not have been aware of the incidents in question. In June 1996, on the other hand, the question explicitly concerned the nine corpses, which were reported to Lieutenant Colonel Karremans only on July 13. So the question remains of whether he did in fact raise the issue of the killings with Mladic on July 13.

But, if his own words are used as a starting point, then this was not the case. Karremans said that he had met Mladic on a total of six occasions. The sixth meeting took place on July 21. The fifth time was on the Thursday morning of July 13, but this was before Lieutenant Colonel Karremans received the reports himself. In his book, he wrote: 'Before I received the report of the execution and the photographs, I met Mladic while making my rounds in the vicinity of the main gate'.¹²²⁷

Also, during the preparation for his testimony, the apparent discrepancy in Lieutenant Colonel Karremans' statements had already been noticed; Karremans' written account in his book deviated on this point from the statements he made in the pre-talk before the interviewer of the Tribunal. The Ministry of Defence's lawyer, Mr. Koet pointed this out to Karremans, and suggested that if Karremans' statement that he had reported the execution to Mladic was true, to change his statement to

¹²²³ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Royal Netherlands Army Legal Affairs Department, Internal Memorandum, HJZ to CDS, 'Hearing of witnesses by Prosecution Office', Stg/Confidential, unnumbered, 17/06/96, p. 5.

¹²²⁴ W. Nieuwenhuis, 'Voorhoeve liet Karremans bewust zonder hulp getuigen' ('Voorhoeve deliberately let Karremans testify without assistance'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 31/07/96. Minister Voorhoeve left assisting of witnesses up to the Royal Netherlands Army so as not to further strain the already sensitive relationship with this section of the armed forces. The Royal Netherlands Army, after pressure from the department, reportedly decided to set up a Monitoring Committee, 'but Karremans hardly listened to it'. This picture is at odds with the impression of extensive interference, as emerges from this document. The documents show that a Monitoring Committee was indeed established that did not maintain contact with Karremans directly, but via Koet – the request by Defence Minister Voorhoeve to let the Monitoring Committee speak with the witnesses directly was not granted. The Monitoring Committee was formed by Brig. Gen. C.H. Nicolai; J. Buirma LL M (DJZ); H.P.M. Kreemers, MA (Deputy Director of Public Relations MoD); Col. A.C. Zuidema, LL M (HJZ-BLS) and Air Commodore K. Hilderink (SCO-CDS). See: DJZ. Internal Memorandum from Col. J.W. Koet, LL M to PBL (Van Baal), no. 210596jz01, 21/05/96, 'Cooperation of Netherlands military personnel on Public Hearing in the case of Mladic and Karadzic.'

¹²²⁵ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Royal Netherlands Legal Affairs Department, Internal Memorandum, HJZ to CDS, 'Hearing of witnesses by Prosecution Office', Stg/Confidential, unnumbered, 17/06/96, front page.

¹²²⁶ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Royal Netherlands Army Legal Affairs Department, Internal Memorandum, HJZ to CDS, 'Hearing of witnesses by Prosecution Office', Stg/Confidential, unnumbered, 17/06/96, p.10.

¹²²⁷ Karremans, *Srebrenica who cares?* p. 220.

that effect. Koet assumed that Karremans could, in any case, expect to be asked by the Prosecutor or by one of the judges if he had addressed Mladic about this issue; but this did not occur.¹²²⁸

So the question remains of how probable it is that Karremans has raised this issue with Mladic during their sixth meeting on July 21. In July 1996, his testimony on this subject caused a tremendous stir. When Lieutenant Colonel Karremans testified before the Tribunal that month – the week before his promotion to Colonel was to take effect – his last contacts with Mladic were discussed. These took place on July 21, the day on which the battalion was finally permitted to leave the enclave. The Bosnian-Serb General still wanted to carry out an inspection of the compound in Potocari. On that occasion, a final conversation developed (apart from a few courtesies exchanged between Mladic, Karremans and Nicolai upon the battalion's departure of the enclave later that day in the north) with Karremans, when Karremans asked Mladic two questions. One question concerned the equipment that had been taken by the VRS, and the other concerned what would have happened in the event of a true full demilitarization of the Safe Area, and if the Bosnian Muslims had not embarked on the excursions out of the enclave. Mladic answered that, in this case, he would not have considered attacking the enclave; this was the standard story that VRS General Gvero, for example, had already presented to the press a few days earlier in the VRS Press Office.¹²²⁹ As a result of this conversation, one of the Tribunal Judges, Judge Riad, asked whether Karremans still had raised protest against the execution 'or the things you heard about'. The former Dutchbat Commander answered that he had not done so 'in the last meeting', as this meeting had more or less come about unexpectedly, and moreover, there had hardly been time to evaluate the events of the previous weeks, and in particular those of the last days: 'To be frank, I have not thought about the idea of asking him what happened to the refugees'.¹²³⁰ The judges, Minister Voorhoeve and the media reacted 'in bewilderment'.¹²³¹

Although this bewilderment is understandable, it nevertheless is peculiar that Karremans, while having told Tribunal representatives in the preliminary hearing that he did in fact raise the issue of executions with Mladic, he did not mention this incident during the hearing. Karremans, not for the first time, appeared to possess a talent to afflict damage to himself.

He was warned: at the end of the earlier mentioned pre-talk, Prosecutor Harmon had said to Karremans 'that he (Karremans) was a man of few words'. According to the Ministry of Defence representative, who was present, the American even urged him to 'talk about his experiences as elaborately as possible'. With this in mind, Karremans was offered the opportunity to give his testimony in the Dutch language instead of in English, but this was turned down by the Dutchbat Commander.¹²³² As a consequence, he deprived himself of the chance to make any subtle distinctions in regard to his own actions. The description in his book, however, nurtures the doubts of whether protest was ever lodged with Mladic.

Karremans indeed describes how, in a meeting with VRS Colonel Jankovic on July 15, the actions of VRS soldiers apparently were discussed. The answers were all 'evasive'. The events at Zvornik, where the KHO-5 convoy had been attacked that day, and the events during the escort of the displaced between Bratunac and Kladanj were, according to the VRS officer, 'all to blame on some irregulars, fighting their own war'. The actions and behaviour of VRS troops during the evacuation were attributed, according to Jankovic, to the local commanders, who had interpreted orders from the

¹²²⁸ See: DJZ. Jan Koet to Ton Karremans (sic), Den Haag, 13/06/96.

¹²²⁹ Translated press report of Glas Srpski/Srna, Sarajevo, 10/07/95. Included in: UNGE, UNHCR, file '1995 FYOO OPS.16 situation reports Bosnia (Jan.-July)', HCBSNBA to HCHRVZA (UNHCR Belgrade to UNHCR Zagreb) 11/07/95.

¹²³⁰ ICTY (IT-95-18-R61/IT-95-5-R61). Testimony of Th. Karremans, 04/07/96.

¹²³¹ See also: Hella Rottenberg, 'Karremans' relaas verbijstert rechters en Tribunaal' ('Karremans' account amazes judges and Tribunal'), *De Volkskrant*, 09/07/95; Ewout Nysingh, 'Naïeve Dutchbatters zagen moordpartij niet aankomen', *De Volkskrant*, 12/07/96; 'Voorhoeve verbijstert. Scherpe kritiek op Karremans' ('Voorhoeve perplexed. Sharp criticism of Karremans'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 12/06/96; 'Voorhoeve hard over Karremans' ('Voorhoeve harsh about Karremans'), *Trouw*, 13/07/96.

¹²³² NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Royal Netherlands Army Legal Affairs Department, Internal Memorandum, HJZ to CDS, 'Hearing of witnesses by Prosecution Office', Stg/Confidential, unnumbered, 17/06/96, p. 10.

government in their own way. Mladic had, after all, promised that he would respect the Geneva Conventions. Karremans came away from the conversation with the feeling ‘of having been terribly taken for a ride’.¹²³³

Franken also remembered a conversation with Colonel Jankovic, possibly the same conversation referred to by Karremans in his book. In his recollection, he was the one on that occasion who raised the issue of executions. But Jankovic had assured him that it only involved some unfortunate incidents. To a similar protest against the separation of men and women, he had answered with a reference to the Geneva Conventions.¹²³⁴

Discussing the question of whether a timely protest would have had any effect is more or less futile. No matter how strong Karremans would have phrased his objections, Mladic would have simply disregarded them. An entirely different matter, of course, is the question of the reports to the outside world, as the implications of not passing on the reports are so much greater for all parties involved.

As early as October 1995, the Political Affairs Director of the Ministry of Defence, J.H.M. de Winter, in a confidential paper, formulated a number of conclusions about Karremans’ actions in view of the publication of the debriefing report, based on, among other things, the earlier cited talks with De Ruiter. De Winter established that Karremans, strictly speaking, had not complied with ‘the UNPROFOR regulations on the written reporting of war crimes (Standing Operating Procedure 208) and that, were this to become known in public, it might be used to accuse Dutchbat of negligence in this regard’. Karremans’ manner of reporting was explained by De Winter ‘as a result of the hectic situation and the fact that Dutchbat has observed little in the enclave’.¹²³⁵

But this conclusion raises a number of questions. For instance, is the failure to fill in forms Karremans’ only and greatest act of negligence? The impression arises that after hearing the reports he should have sensed that something was wrong and issued instructions to pay even closer attention and report what was afoot around them. To a large extent, the way in which Karremans handled reports depended on his anticipation of the fate of the Bosnian (or Muslim) men. These anticipations related to his assessment of the composition of the group of Displaced Persons in Potocari.

In late 1998, Karremans publicly admitted that he had made an error of judgement in the negotiations with Mladic, when the General made it known that he was planning to question the men of military age. Karremans explained that, at that time, he did not realize what their fate would be and that afterwards he felt ‘severely taken for a ride’.¹²³⁶ At other occasions, the former Dutchbat Commander added the subtle distinction that he was not entirely unperturbed by what was taking place, but that he had never expected killings to take place on such a large scale. Before the NIOD, Karremans contended having considered the reports ‘at that time as a number of isolated incidents’.¹²³⁷ That Karremans really did have an uncomfortable feeling on July 13 was confirmed by Army Surgeon Colonel Kremer. When the last of the Displaced Persons left the compound in Potocari, both Kremer and Karremans were watching. Kremer asked him what he thought might happen to the men. Kremer certainly had no idea that the men were to be mass-murdered, but he had an inkling that theirs was to be a darker future than that of the women and children. From Karremans’ answer, Kremer deduced that he feared the same: ‘He said something like ‘you’d rather not know’ or ‘not too good’’.¹²³⁸

Karremans knew about the ethnic cleansing that had plagued Eastern Bosnia. In his letter of alert of 5 June, in which he set forth the impossible situation in which the battalion and the population had found themselves, he sketched a sombre scenario. He predicted that the VRS, who had captured

¹²³³ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 229-230.

¹²³⁴ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

¹²³⁵ DAB. Memorandum, J.H.M. de Winter (DAB) to Minister, Stg/confidential D95/537, ‘srebrenica’, 20/10/95, p. 9.

¹²³⁶ ‘Karremans erkent taxatiefout Srebrenica’ (‘Karremans admits he misjudged situation in Srebrenica’), Press report, KRO *Netwerk*, 11/12/98.

¹²³⁷ Interview Th. Karremans, 16/12/98.

¹²³⁸ Interview G. Kremer, 13/07/98. Also see: G. Riemersma, ‘De oorlog na Srebrenica’ (‘The war after Srebrenica’), in *Core question. Follow-up care for (young) veterans*, (1997/4 nr. 114) p. 59.

OP-E just two days earlier, would attempt to capture the southern part of the enclave. This would endanger the Displaced Persons in the Swedish Shelter Project: ‘The camp, in that case, would lie in their way. In view of what had already taken place in the past, there is no need to iterate what could happen to the inhabitants’. Nevertheless, further in the letter, Karremans becomes more specific: ‘All Displaced Persons would be expelled towards the north, or killed.’¹²³⁹

Was Karremans therefore convinced, well in advance of the looming danger? Before the NIOD, the former Battalion Commander contended that he had not counted on large-scale killings. He explained his remarkable words from early June as being his desire to send a strong warning sign to Sarajevo as well as to The Hague. This is why he had given his apprehension more emphasis than was consistent with his real estimation:

‘On 5 June, or better still, after the fall of OP-E, I and the battalion ceased to exist. Even then already, I was unable to do anything. All that could be done then was to raise the alarm. This I did in making the comment: If nothing is done and the enclave attacked, then everybody will be killed. This is simply raising the alarm.’¹²⁴⁰

His statement in the letter of early June apparently was no longer in his mind when, one month later, the situation took a turn that in retrospect would make him a clairvoyant: ‘After that I did not make the link to the situation a month later’.¹²⁴¹ Karremans’ assumption that matters would not be that bad appears to have been based chiefly on the already mentioned notion that hardly any men of military age were present in Potocari: ‘I originally believed that no men at all were left’.¹²⁴² Hence his weak protest against the separation of men and women and against the screening, and his reassuring words on July 12 to *Médecins Sans Frontières* nurse Schmitz that nothing grave would happen with the men.

Also, after the fall of the enclave, Karremans at various occasions stuck to his story which he combined with the statement that ‘only a handful of men of military age (17 - 60 years) remained outside the compound but within the cordon (...)’.¹²⁴³ With that, he unintentionally shed light on what possibly forms an explanation for the small number of indications of human rights violations that he issued to the outside world.

In August 1995, after returning from his short vacation in France, the Dutchbat Commander was invited several times for talks with Ministry of Defence representatives, including Minister Voorhoeve. This was, among other things, to prepare for the parliamentary debate that was to commence in early September.

One of the first things the Minister inquired about was the ‘list of 239’, which had caused a great stir at that time in the media. Karremans explained that he had a list drawn up ‘of the men *in* the compound’ and that he was under the assumption that all these men had gone to Tuzla. In Voorhoeve’s account: ‘These, by the way, were all old men. According to Karremans the Serbs had not taken away any men while the buses were being boarded’; this was also contended by several other Dutchbat soldiers.¹²⁴⁴ On the other hand, several statements were made indicating that this did in fact

¹²³⁹ ‘The situation in Srebrenica’, appendix of letter no. TK9589, 05/06/95, from C-Dutchbat to C-Dutch Amy Crisis Staff, Brig. Gen. F. Pollé. A shorter letter with similar content (‘In that case, SSP will be lost and about 3,000 refugees either killed or expelled’) was received on 4 June by BH Command in Sarajevo. (TK9588, ‘Deteriorating situation in Srebrenica’). Both letters are included as appendices in: Karremans, *Srebrenica*, pp. 312-321.

¹²⁴⁰ Interview Th. Karremans, 15/12/98.

¹²⁴¹ Interview Th. Karremans, 16/12/98.

¹²⁴² Interview Th. Karremans, 15/12/98.

¹²⁴³ SMG/Debrief. Debriefing, C-Dutchbat 3, copy of LCol. Karremans’ own text, 06/12/95 (Stg confidential/permanent) p. 10.

¹²⁴⁴ KAB. Memo J.J.C. Voorhoeve, Urgent, For the attention of: SG, PCDS, DV, Princen. Stg-confidential, z.d.

‘Conversation with Col. Karremans on 24 August 1995 from 08.30 - 09.30am with Gen Couzy (BLS) and Gen Schouten (PCDS)’. SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelaas* Debriefing ‘Srebrenica’, pp. 239, 250.

happen; which appears illustrative of the impact of the tension and chaos on individual perceptions. Even though their physical location may have influenced perception, it is in any case clear that here too, communication and reporting had fallen short.

It is also evident from other statements that Karremans had long been under the assumption that the men, after the screening, had been put on the buses with the women and children. No reports to the contrary reached him during those days.¹²⁴⁵ To a similar question by Voorhoeve about the deportation of the registered men, in a conversation with Franken, he had answered, in the words of the Minister, 'that in the four convoys at which he had been present, the men left with the other Displaced Persons. Other Dutchbat soldiers, however, reportedly saw that men were taken aside and brought to another bus or to the aforementioned house [meaning the 'White House'], (where they subsequently re-emerged from)'.¹²⁴⁶

Various things stand out in regard to these remarks. For example there appears to be an inconsistency between the expectation that the men went to Tuzla, and the uncomfortable feeling that Karremans said that he (and also Franken) had and which was confirmed by Kremer. More remarkable, however, is that Karremans, when he spoke of the 'list of 239', stuck to his idea that this list concerned elderly men. What is further striking is that here he still took responsibility for having drawn up the list himself, instead of placing it on the shoulders of Franken, who was the person actually preparing the list.¹²⁴⁷ It can no longer be established whether this point was entered incorrectly into the records by Voorhoeve, or if Karremans assumed formal responsibility for the action of a subordinate, or if he wanted to create the impression that, at that time, he still was in control of things.

However, based on these statements, big questions must be raised, particularly in regard to the latter possibility. That Karremans had set eyes on a list of 239 men of military age on his compound is difficult to reconcile with his insistence that these 'anyhow were all elderly men' (with a possible oral side note by Major Franken that not all men wanted to give their names). Karremans himself confirms that it is true that at some point he did find out about the list, but that the importance of the matter had fully escaped him at the time: 'There were 50,000 people crowded together in one place. I didn't even know that there were another 280 to 300 men on the compound. Franken told me about this later'.¹²⁴⁸

When this took place exactly and what was said can no longer be established. This says a great deal about the contacts between the Commander and his Deputy, and also about the chaos that prevailed in the days of the deportation. Karremans at the time apparently did not have information at his disposal that might have changed his idea about what was taking place. Elucidating, in this respect, are the statements he noted down in early September in a summary prepared for the debriefing. From these statements was already cited what Karremans had said about the small presence of men of military age outside the compound ('only a handful'). About their fate, he wrote:

'Men of military age are first 'screened' in the vicinity of the bus station and then taken away on the buses with the other Displaced Persons (not separately). I heard that in one instance, only men of military age were transported away in one bus, but this bus was part of the normal convoy.'¹²⁴⁹

Franken also stated that in at least four convoys, men boarded the buses as well.

¹²⁴⁵ This was confirmed once more by Karremans by telephone; 05/02/02.

¹²⁴⁶ 'Concept report of the conversation between Defence Minister J.J.C. Voorhoeve and Major R.A. Franken on 28 August 1995', included in Voorhoeve's diary (pp. 149-154), pp. 151-152.

¹²⁴⁷ In his own text of early September 1995, Karremans did indeed refer to his Deputy as having drawn up the list. SMG/Debrief. Debriefing, C-Dutchbat 3, copy of Col. Karremans' own text, Deventer, 06/09/95 (Stg confidential/permanent) p. 13.

¹²⁴⁸ Interview Th. Karremans, 16/12/98.

¹²⁴⁹ SMG/Debrief. Debriefing, C-Dutchbat 3, copy of Col. Karremans' own text, Deventer, 06/09/95 (Stg confidential/permanent) p. 12.

It can also be discerned from this description that on July 13 internal communications had largely broken down. The fact that ‘separate’ deportations did in fact take place and that this occurred on a larger scale than Karremans assumed apparently was not reported, even if more Dutchbat soldiers held the conviction that the number of those taken away was not large. Captain Schreijen, for example, was present at the departure of the convoys and estimated that of the 30 to 40 buses that constantly drove up and down, only a few were filled with men.¹²⁵⁰ However, we have already referred to statements by Dutchbat personnel indicating that men had been taken away in a variety of vehicles, including buses. Another interesting point is that Karremans apparently was not informed either that it was possible that the one bus he knew of had taken another direction than the convoy in Bratunac, without the escorting Dutchbat soldiers being able to do anything about it.

De Winter’s conclusion that the ‘hectic situation’ explained a great deal of all that had gone wrong, was, in all its innocence, correct as such. It was a misconception that Dutchbat had not observed much; however, this is not the main question that can be raised regarding De Winter’s conclusion. What is particularly striking is that no conclusions were drawn about the fact that the reports which Karremans apparently made to Sarajevo, have not left traces and seem to have disappeared in the bureaucratic mist.

It appears that neither De Ruiter, nor Nicolai, who formed both the link in Sarajevo and also the communication with the Netherlands, were ever addressed about this point. The earlier mentioned anger of Deputy Spokesman Kreemers that an opportunity had been missed to mobilize world opinion was therefore addressed to the wrong person, if he blamed Karremans for this.

In Karremans’ defence, it can be said on the one hand that on July 13 he was not aware of any human rights violations other than the two incidents that had been reported to him; on the other hand, he did not make any kind of effort to find out more about the matter.

28. Suspicions And Dilemmas: Van Duijn And Rutten

The number of statements of Dutch soldiers expressing the distinct suspicion that executions had taken place in Potocari is extensive. Very soon after Dutchbat’s departure from the enclave, individual soldiers made more or less explicit references about massacres. In spite of all the incidents which presumably had not been reported, the debriefing in Assen, as mentioned earlier, did in fact unearth a great deal of information which supports the suspicion that executions had occurred on a considerably larger scale than originally reported. The narrow criteria for factual observation of executions or corpses, and the lack of a systematic analysis, however, resulted in the debriefing report reflecting a one-dimensional picture of the events. In the debriefing report and in the Factual account on which the report is based, the majority of suspected executions are linked to specific situations and incidents. There is only scant information indicating whether, and how, individual troops fathomed the deeper significance of what was taking place around them.

Only after the publication of the debriefing report did it slowly became clear that many soldiers had figured out already during the events that more than just a few isolated incidents were involved. This and more emerged during the discussion of the July 13 incident between Lieutenants Van Duijn and Rutten concerning the separation of the men from the women. Rutten, who had found the bodies and had become convinced that ‘the men were [systematically] hunted down’,¹²⁵¹ became involved in an emotional discussion with Van Duijn, who, in Rutten’s mind, was lending too much assistance to the deportation. In a certain sense, this incident, which caused a great deal of damage to those involved, reflected the dilemma of those days in a nutshell. Van Duijn even instituted legal proceedings for slander because Rutten supposedly portrayed him as a ‘collaborator’, but the case was dismissed in

¹²⁵⁰ F. Lardenoye, ‘Het boek “Srebrenica” is niet gesloten’, *Oplinie*, July 1996, p.6.

¹²⁵¹ Interview J.H.A. Rutten, 01/12/99.

court.¹²⁵² The incident explains why even during the debriefing in Zagreb on July 22, Van Duijn wanted to state on record ‘with emphasis’ that neither he, nor other Dutchbat soldiers had co-operated in the separation of the men from their families.¹²⁵³

Van Duijn, who took over command from his colleague Koster at the ‘channel’ at 06.00 hours, noticed that the buses had arrived early. The bus drivers approached both him and Koster, and they deduced from their gestures that the drivers were asking what should happen next. The Dutch had the impression that the buses would be going to Kladanj. Van Duijn, who, on the previous day had seen that the men were separated from the women, suggested that the Dutchbat troops themselves could begin filling the buses with Displaced Persons, so that ‘we had matters in our own hands’.¹²⁵⁴ Van Duijn saw no harm in that. He believed that the process would proceed more peacefully and without violence, as long as there were no VRS troops present. Van Duijn’s and Koster’s opinions on their discussion of this plan would later differ; Koster believed that he had forbidden Van Duijn to carry out his plan: ‘I absolutely wanted to prevent the peacekeepers from getting the blame for transporting Muslims away on Serb buses and trucks’.¹²⁵⁵ In Van Duijn’s recollection, on the other hand, Koster had merely wondered ‘whether or not we should actually do that’.¹²⁵⁶

At any rate, Van Duijn had the displaced board the buses, and let the full buses depart. This went on for over an hour until the VRS showed up again. Van Duijn explained that until that moment he had been able to ‘have everybody board and leave on the buses’, including the men. Based on the statements by witnesses, this appears to be true. There are only a few examples of Muslim men who managed to board a bus in the morning of July 13 before the VRS had arrived back on the scene. One of those who succeeded to board a bus was thirty-one year old K.H., who due to an injury had not been allowed to take part in the journey to Tuzla, and anticipated ‘not an ounce of compassion from the side of the Cetniks’. In his statement he recalled how he had passed through the ‘channel’ on the morning of July 13, where only UN people and ‘no Cetniks’ had stood. In the overcrowded bus, he and his child had sat on the floor.¹²⁵⁷ This was presumably the reason why he escaped attention.

Also, Bego Ademovic, who had witnessed the massacre behind the battery factory, used the absence of the Serbs to make his escape, early on the morning of July 13. During the hours in the small shed, while he was counting the executions, his family members had been deported. During the night he hid inside the factory, while VRS soldiers and also some civilians were walking around with flashlights, selecting people. In the morning he went to get water in the Krizevica, the small stream running through the valley of Srebrenica. There he saw, as did many others, gruesome scenes; he saw one man who had been mutilated and another who had been hanged. He proceeded towards the buses as quickly as he possibly could. Ademovic also saw that the VRS soldiers had not arrived yet and managed to get on board a bus driven by his colleague of pre-war days, Ranko Mazdarevic. On the few occasions that the bus was stopped, Mazdarevic succeeded in hiding him or brushing the VRS troops off. At the end of the bus ride, Mazdarevic radioed an acquaintance at the disembarkation point informing him to leave Bego unharmed. He was assured that ‘nobody would touch Bego’. This is how Ademovic safely reached Bosnian terrain, together with two boys aged 12 and 13, who had been stopped in the column on the way to Tuzla but put on the bus by an acquainted Serb policeman ‘because they were good to us’.¹²⁵⁸

However, Ademovic’s account shows at the same time that he and the others who managed to escape by bus had been very lucky indeed. For, on the road, Ademovic also saw that at a Serb

¹²⁵² Interview L.C. Van Duijn, 02/07/99.

¹²⁵³ SMG, 1007. M. Elands, ‘Debriefing Dutchbat 3 – Saturday 22/07/95. Interview IV: Elnt Van Duyn (PC C-Company, unit of Blocking Force).

¹²⁵⁴ Interview L.C. Van Duijn, 02/07/99.

¹²⁵⁵ Interview E. Koster, 06/10/99.

¹²⁵⁶ Interview L.C. Van Duijn, 02/07/99.

¹²⁵⁷ Confidential information, testimony before the State Committee, (85).

¹²⁵⁸ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony of Bego Ademovic, 29/03/00; interview Ranko Mazdarevic, 14/06/00.

roadblock shortly before Kaldrnica, two or three buses that had departed a little earlier were stopped and a large number of men taken out. So the early start of the evacuation by Van Duijn ultimately probably only saved the lives of a handful of men.

Once the Serb troops had arrived back on the scene, Van Duijn, in a non-confrontational manner, tried as much as possible to keep the VRS soldiers from manhandling the Displaced Persons. In certain cases he also tried to prevent the separation of the men, even though he was under the assumption that they were only being detained for questioning and would be treated as prisoners of war. Only towards the end of the afternoon did he notice that those who had been detained had to throw all their identity papers on to a pile. This was strange if the men were to be questioned and registered as prisoners. His increasing apprehensions were confirmed when, in reply to his question, a VRS soldier told him that the men 'would no longer be needing the papers anyway'. Only then did it dawn on him what was going on. Van Duijn stated that he had reported his suspicion via walkie-talkie. However, nobody could remember later who had possibly received a message and Van Duijn himself could also not recollect whom he had on the line. Van Duijn emphasized that the chaos was 'enormous' at that point and 'we were over-fatigued'. At any rate, he did not speak to Karremans or Franken. But he had indeed talked to some officers, including army surgeon Colonel Kremer and Lieutenant Koster.¹²⁵⁹

It was clear to Rutten what fate awaited the men since the discovery of the bodies and his visit to the 'White House'. He tried to convince his colleagues of this and demanded that they cease to assist in the deportation. Rutten in particular found that Van Duijn went too far in his attempts to appease the VRS troops and was engaged in 'aiding and abetting'. In Rutten's view, this was something that was extremely confusing and frightening to the Displaced Persons. Rutten further considered it negligent that Van Duijn, during these two days, had not been able to establish the identity of the captain known only as 'Mane', who played a prominent role at the location where the Displaced Persons were being separated.¹²⁶⁰

Rutten did not contain his anger. A couple of VRS soldiers, who were sitting on a Dutch stretcher were told in no uncertain terms to leave, or 'piss off', according to Rutten's colleague E. Koster, who witnessed the scene.¹²⁶¹ The anger about what was taking place was also expressed in an accusation directed at Captain 'Mane', namely 'that he and his colleagues were using fascist methods'. The Bosnian-Serb's strong feelings about this accusation resulted in a temporary halt of the deportation, as the VRS officer demanded an explanation. According to Van Duijn, Rutten, through this action, needlessly prolonged the suffering of the Displaced Persons, who in the burning heat of over 40° centigrade had to wait for 1 to 1 ½ hours for their turn to be taken away. The interruption lasted until Van Duijn, as he said, had smoothed things over, (wrongly) suggesting that Rutten was somewhat sensitive on this issue due to an alleged Jewish background.¹²⁶² Rutten himself was steered clear of the danger zone by Colonel Kremer. Later he did the only thing that he still could, namely to document the deportation by taking photographs. Rutten's request to investigate the surroundings with a few soldiers after the deportation had been completed was turned down by battalion command.¹²⁶³ The VRS had ordered that all Dutch troops were to remain on the compound.¹²⁶⁴

Rutten was not the only person who had an idea of what was possibly going on, but this knowledge did not always result in the same decision. Army surgeon Colonel Kremer, for instance, who

¹²⁵⁹ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Note of 'telephone conversation dated 05-07-96 with elnt Van Duijn'. NIOD, Coll. Kreemers; O. van der Wind, 'Note of verbal conversation with Van Duijn in Rijswijk on 12 July 1996'. Concerning Van Duijn, see also Part IV, Chapter 5, about the debriefing in Zagreb.

¹²⁶⁰ Interview J.H.A. Rutten, 22/12/99. The captain in question was Mane Djuric, deputy chief of the CSB in Zvornik.

¹²⁶¹ Interview E. Koster, 19/10/99.

¹²⁶² Interview L.C. Van Duijn, 02/07/99; interview J.H.A. Rutten, 01 and 22/12/99.

¹²⁶³ OM Arnhem. KMAR distr. Zuid-Holland/Zeeland, Judiciary Services, Official Statement P13-/1995-JD, Dossier 'Dutchbat', p. 15.

¹²⁶⁴ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 15/12/98. Karremans later suspected that this order had to do with the 'cleansing activities' by the VRS.

with his implicit reference to the events ('You know perfectly well what is going on') in front of a Serb TV camera was to appear countless times on television, looked for the slightest evil. When the remaining Displaced Persons had to leave the compound on the afternoon of July 13, the situation threatened to deteriorate into chaos. A path was marked out with tape leading from the factory hall to the main gate of the compound. At first it seemed like there would be a rush to the buses, creating a danger that the elderly and children might get trampled in the stampede. The only possibility to prevent this was to organise the departure and in the meantime provide as much assistance as possible to those waiting in the burning heat. This is how Kremer and several of his colleagues tried to prevent the deportation from deteriorating into an even greater humanitarian disaster.¹²⁶⁵ Although he, like Rutten, did not anticipate that the VRS had much good in store for the men, he later defended Van Duijn by declaring that there was no alternative. The different ways of how the problem was approached and the emotional discussions afterwards clearly show the divisive and impossible dilemma in which Dutchbat had found itself.

29. The Role Of Major Franken

Major Franken, Karremans' deputy, also acted from the same understanding but with a slightly different assessment, which had further impact through its dramatic consequences. He was the one who, in the days after the fall, took the lead in operational decisions, while Karremans took care of the hectic communication with the outside world. This was possibly the reason why Franken had already come to a more realistic and pessimistic assessment of what was taking place. It is striking that this fact only became public knowledge at the time when he gave testimony in the trial against Krstic in 2000. The former Deputy Battalion Commander made the newspapers by announcing that during the days of July 1995 he had been aware the whole time of the possibility of a massacre.¹²⁶⁶ The suggestion that with this he had counted on thousands of dead can not, however, be deduced from his words and was also disclaimed by him before the NIOD:

'We did not assume that Mladic would shoot everybody. This was not the conclusion. I feared that, in the worst case, the men would indeed be killed. That things would not be done in accordance with the law of war or the conventions [of Geneva]. This is true. That is the possibility I counted on. But I did not know for sure.'¹²⁶⁷

Franken explained before the Tribunal that he had indeed been concerned about what might happen, were the VRS to get in among the crowd of Displaced Persons: 'I expected them to start killing, or things like that'. This concern was based, among other things, on the artillery shelling that the VRS had carried out on civilians and 'the history on the Serb side, not directly in the area of Srebrenica'. The shelling had been followed by the threat that, in the event of another air strike, the Dutch hostages would be killed. Franken stated that he did not fear executions, but was concerned that his men would be used as human shields.¹²⁶⁸ The issue Franken was faced with was not only whether he was able to intervene in any way at all, but also: 'Do I want to intervene? Must I intervene? What is the consequence, if I intervene?'¹²⁶⁹

Franken objected to the picture portrayed in the media that Dutchbat had been 'naïve' by not anticipating what might happen to the Bosnian men. As early as late in the afternoon of July 12, he got

¹²⁶⁵ Interview G. Kremer, 13/07/98.

¹²⁶⁶ See also: T. Lagas, 'srebrenica: het woord "genocide" mocht niet vallen' ('srebrenica: the word genocide was not allowed to be used'), *Trouw*, 08/04/00.

¹²⁶⁷ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

¹²⁶⁸ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony of R.A. Franken, 04/04/00.

¹²⁶⁹ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

the impression that the men's situation was taking a turn for the worse. This became even clearer the following day based on the scenes that were unfolding in connection with the interrogations in the 'white house'. The only thing he could do was to order the UNMOs to watch how many men entered the house and how many men came back out. Nevertheless, the accounts of incidents brought to his attention by, among others, *Médecins Sans Frontières* representatives who had heard rumours about corpses, as well as stories that men had been picked out from the crowd and taken away, rose steadily. But during the earlier mentioned conversation that Karremans and Franken held with Christina Schmitz as early as 12 July, they put her mind at ease.¹²⁷⁰ Franken recounted that Karremans told her at the time that there was not a single corroboration of human rights abuses having been committed: 'This is not inconsistent with the concerns we had. We just didn't express them then; on purpose'.¹²⁷¹

Karremans, as he declared before the NIOD, could not subscribe to this account by Franken, implying that he had misled *Médecins Sans Frontières* on purpose.¹²⁷² It is impossible to establish whether this denial is correct. In Karremans' case there are, as described earlier, no clear indications that make this plausible. However, much points towards the possibility that *too* much escaped him because of his rather isolated position, in which little information reached him from the lower ranks. This was a different case with Major Franken, who appears to have been moving around much more and in places where everyone could address him directly.¹²⁷³ But it is striking that Major Franken explained at his debriefing in Zagreb that he personally had not seen anything of the separation of men and women, because too much of his time was taken up by 'administrative business in regard to the displaced'. Franken later could not place this statement anymore.¹²⁷⁴

Franken himself presented his actions afterwards in a light which illustrated the downplaying of possible violations of international law and human rights as an inevitable consequence of his assessment of the situation. Various statements confirm this. A Dutchbat soldier who made a comment about looting – punishable according to international law – was told by Franken that 'there was no way to make that stick'.¹²⁷⁵ When interpreter Hasan Nuhanovic overheard the UNMOs talking about the discovery of nine bodies, he had immediately gone to Franken, who reportedly told him 'don't spread this bullshit around'.¹²⁷⁶ Another interpreter, Omer Subasic, pointed out to Franken the systematic shots that could be heard. Franken answered that these were being fired into the air. Subasic's impression was that Franken did not want to alarm the people. Still, he accepted Franken's explanation and convinced his own father that he would only be questioned. His father has been missing since July 13.¹²⁷⁷

Nesib Mandzic was given the same answer when he addressed Franken about the screaming, wailing and the sounds of gunshots that he heard in the night of July 12-13 and the stories of people who had managed to climb over the fence of the Dutch Base in the morning. Mandzic asked in vain for Franken to investigate the matter.¹²⁷⁸

Even after the nine bodies had been discovered by Rutten, Franken still maintained to the outside world that there was no singular evidence of executions. When Nesib Mandzic and Ibro Nuhanovic, the two male representatives of the displaced, came to Franken in the morning of July 13 with the rumours about killings, he stuck to the line that nothing was corroborated. Franken's motive for trivializing the killings or hiding behind the argument that there was insufficient evidence was

¹²⁷⁰ MSF, Brussels. MSF capsat Christina (Schmitz) to Stefan (Oberreit), unnumbered, 13/07/95, 01:52:42.

¹²⁷¹ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

¹²⁷² Interview Th. Karremans, 30/11/00.

¹²⁷³ SMG, 1007. Chr. Klep, 'Debriefing report of Major Franken, 22 July 1995, Camp Pleso.

¹²⁷⁴ Interview R.A. Franken, 05/02/02.

¹²⁷⁵ Debriefing statement, R. Zomer, 07/09/95.

¹²⁷⁶ Interview Hasan Nuhanovic, 05/08 and 06/08/98.

¹²⁷⁷ Interview Omer Subasic, 19/04/98.

¹²⁷⁸ ICTY (IT-98-33-T) Testimony of N. Mandzic, 21/03/00.

prompted by his concern that the situation would get out of hand and the crowd would no longer be manageable:

‘At the moment when you announce: “We are indeed afraid that the men will all be killed”, there definitely will be panic among the crowd of Displaced Persons. Under those circumstances we gave priority to the fate of the women and children. We accepted that the fate of the men was uncertain and that they indeed might end up in the most deplorable of circumstances.’

Moreover, Franken was afraid of the effect that a massive panic would have on his own troops, who ‘were no longer that fit for deployment’: ‘At this time, it would have had absolutely the wrong effect’.¹²⁷⁹

The consequences of his stance emerged most embarrassingly during the conversation between Franken and Ibro Nuhanovic, the father of UNMO interpreter Hasan.

Nuhanovic explicitly asked Franken to put a stop to the deportations. It was an option that had occurred to Franken himself, so he said, but he had immediately dismissed it after consultations with the doctors and those responsible for logistics. When the Displaced Persons had entered the compound, all available food, ‘another two days’ rations for the men of the battalion’ had been scraped together and incorporated in a soup that was distributed among the people. This still was at least ‘administering calories’.¹²⁸⁰ After that there hardly were any food supplies available. At the same time the hygiene situation deteriorated rapidly. Dutchbat soldiers had dug latrines, but out of fear of being spotted by Bosnian Serbs, the refugees did not dare to leave the factory hall. The emergency toilets were soon clogged up, so people simply relieved themselves in the depot itself. Weapons, too, were found in the emergency toilets; in addition, women and children handed in Russian-made hand grenades and ammunition to Dutchbat personnel at the compound’s fence that were thrown in the nearby small stream by Dutchbat.¹²⁸¹ Amidst the chaos in the hall, a large number of women were also giving birth; the stress had prematurely induced labour. On July 12 alone, fifty babies were born.¹²⁸² Elderly people visibly got weaker by the minute, and a number of them passed away. Their remains were buried in a hastily dug grave at the edge of the compound.

A prospect of an improvement of the logistical situation was not possible either. There did not appear to be a reason to believe that after months and months of putting them through the mill, Mladic would now suddenly make a concession that would fly in the face of his interests in a rapid deportation. All in all it was clear that this situation needed to come to an end as quickly as possible.

Franken explained to Nuhanovic what kind of dilemma his request presented for him: ‘In fact he asked me to make a choice between thousands of women and children and the men’. According to Franken, Nuhanovic ‘understood this’ and left.¹²⁸³ Given the fact that Ibro Nuhanovic has not survived his own deportation, there is nobody who can corroborate that he consented to Franken’s considerations. Here too, the recollections partly contradict one another. According to Ibro’s son Hasan, such an exchange took place during a conversation that also involved Mandzic and in which Hasan acted as interpreter – Franken at that time did not know that one of the participants was Hasan’s father. And although both representatives of the displaced shared the opinion that women and children had priority, they decided in regard to the men that evacuation should only take place through the

¹²⁷⁹ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

¹²⁸⁰ Debriefing statement, R.A. Franken, 13/09/95.

¹²⁸¹ Debriefing statement, P. Wouters, 06/09/95.

¹²⁸² UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 434. UNMO Srebrenica update dated 131100B JUL 95; notes by B. Rave, submitted to the NIOD for perusal.

¹²⁸³ ICTY (IT-98-33-T), Testimony of R.A. Franken, 04/04/00; Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01. Franken said that his consideration was also based on the opinions of the doctors and logistics personnel that he had consulted.

International Red Cross and the UNHCR.¹²⁸⁴ This option, however, was not realistic. The original intention was that Dutchbat, assisted by the UNHCR, would arrange the evacuation themselves, but Mladic expressly had deviated from that, because, above all, he wanted to speed things up.

30. The ‘List Of 239’

As a concession to the concerns of Nuhanovic and Mandzic, Franken’s idea to have someone draw up a list of all men of military age inside and outside the compound was discussed soon afterwards. According to Mandzic and Omanovic, the idea of registering the names of all the Displaced Persons had already come up much earlier, after the meeting with Mladic.¹²⁸⁵ Rave, on July 12, indeed jotted down on a ‘shopping list’ of sorts that the discussions resulted in a ‘list with names’. However, his notes show that this subject had already been discussed with the representatives of the refugees during the preparatory talk for the meeting with Mladic.¹²⁸⁶

A great deal of commotion developed over the drawing up of the ‘list of 239’, both at the time and later in the media. The commotion centred around the presumption of some that the list had been used as a tool in the ethnic cleansing, although Franken has always explained that he had shown the list only briefly to a VRS officer – Colonel Jankovic – to point out the list’s existence, and thereafter concealed it on his person.¹²⁸⁷

Franken said that he followed the example of Amnesty International when he tried to find a means to offer the men at least some form of protection.¹²⁸⁸ For humanitarian organizations this was indeed a commonly used tool. It is significant that on July 13, *Human Rights Watch* in a reaction to the events in Srebrenica called for the creation of a ‘paper trail to document Serbian accountability for the civilian inhabitants of the areas they have overrun’.¹²⁸⁹ That same day, the Bosnian Government publicly demanded that ‘UNPROFOR must provide registration of all inhabitants whom the Serb terrorists are transporting by trucks and buses from Srebrenica, because it has been noted that a number of people are missing during the transport’.¹²⁹⁰ Prime Minister Silajdzic had also informed General Smith on July 13 that his colleague Muratovic demanded that a list of names be drawn up for each bus.¹²⁹¹ This turned out to be too late for Srebrenica, but after the fall of Zepa shortly afterwards, lists of the people who were put on the buses were indeed drawn up. This incidentally did not prevent a number of them being taken out of the vehicles en route, never to return.¹²⁹²

For a moment, Franken and Mandzic also considered registering the remaining men outside the compound, but it quickly became clear that the safety of those who were to take down the names could not be guaranteed. And without their frightened interpreters, who had been struck with terror the day before in the confrontation with Mladic and his troops, the Dutchbat battalion was unable to

¹²⁸⁴ Hasan Nuhanovic, ‘Letter of commentaries on the public statements made by Dr. Ir. J.J.J.C. Voorhoeve, Minister of Defence (Netherlands), and other officials of the Ministry of Defence on Srebrenica’ (1998), p. 6. Collection NIOD. Here too, the problem of correct chronology arises again, as Hasan Nuhanovic places these events on 12 July.

¹²⁸⁵ ICTY (IT-98-33-T) Testimony N. Mandzic, 24/03/00; interview C. Omanovic, 18/05/99. Omanovic was under the impression that Mladic had asked for a list with names, in the context of the idea of letting the elderly and children depart first.

¹²⁸⁶ Notebook of B. Rave. Submitted to the NIOD for perusal.

¹²⁸⁷ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

¹²⁸⁸ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

¹²⁸⁹ Press release, *Human Rights Watch/Helsinki*, New York, 13 July 1995. Archive UNHCR, file Srebrenica.

¹²⁹⁰ UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4 April-23 Aug. ‘95 (Biser reports). ‘Communique issued during an extraordinary session of the Government of the Republic/Federation of Bosnia and Hercegovina, held on 13 July, 1995’. Annex to: fax Ken Biser to Michel Moussalli, ‘subject: requests by the B&H representatives regarding the refugees from Srebrenica’, 13/07/95.

¹²⁹¹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 216, BH Commands, 13/10/95. 87298/1060 Jul 95-Jan 96. Fax Col. J.R.J. Baxter to HQ UNPF, ‘Notes on the meeting General Smith/Prime Minister Silajdzic – 13/07/95’, 14/07/95.

¹²⁹² Interview Ed Joseph, 11/07/00. Joseph was one of the UN Civil Affairs staff members who on site attempted to steer the situation in the right direction.

accomplish anything. On July 12, Emir Suljagic had left the compound with UNMO De Haan to talk with Mladic about the situation of the displaced. Emir's UN pass was taken off him by Mladic's bodyguard, and after having passed through several pairs of hands ended up in the hands of the General. Mladic called out to the interpreter to come forward. Emir would later recount that these few steps through the line of Mladic's people would stay with him for the rest of his life. 'My feet literally became heavier with each step. It felt as though another kilo was put on my shoulders with every move.' Mladic looked at his UN pass and asked: 'Where are you from? Did you mess about in the army?' Emir was extremely frightened. De Haan started to explain that Emir had been working for the UN for quite some time already, that he was too young to have served in the army, and that he personally guaranteed that Emir had nothing to do with the army. Mladic said that he himself had no problems with the interpreter, but that it was impossible to guarantee that none of his soldiers would flip out and shoot Emir on the spot. Emir interpreted this as an invitation to the soldiers to actually go ahead and do it. He had to return to the compound and expected at any moment that someone would 'flip out' and shoot him in the back. De Haan accompanied him as far as the main gate of the compound.¹²⁹³

Vahid Hodzic, who was even more worried because he had been part of the paramilitary at the start of the war, translated in Potocari originally for Captain Groen and later for Lieutenant Van Duijn. Groen was very shocked when Hodzic told him that a VRS soldier had asked him 'whom he should let live'.¹²⁹⁴ Later that day Hodzic had to explain the evacuation procedure by megaphone to the Displaced Persons. This drew the attention of Mladic, who subsequently read him the Riot Act and also had his men take Hodzic's UN pass off him. Rave later managed to get it back.

When a mother began to panic because the truck that held her children threatened to leave without her, Van Duijn wanted to stop the vehicle; he sent Hodzic to Mladic to quickly explain the problem. A little later he saw how the General had put his arm around the interpreter. After Van Duijn had succeeded in getting the woman on board the truck, he returned to Mladic. Mladic, through his own interpreter, Petar Usumlic, then threatened: 'I don't get it why you bother, but if you do this again and send a Muslim to me just like that, who starts talking to me without you knowing what he is saying, then I shoot him dead, right here on the spot.' Van Duijn immediately dismissed the shocked Hodzic, and Rave manoeuvred him quickly onto the compound.¹²⁹⁵

After the idea of registering the men outside the compound had been put aside out of sheer necessity, Mandzic and Nuhanovic reluctantly agreed to register the names of the men on the compound. Eight boys and girls were put in charge of drawing up the list, who, as already mentioned, came up with 251 names and not 239. The injured among the men were indicated with an 'R' – for *ranjen*, 'injured' – after the name.¹²⁹⁶ Some of the displaced refused to give their names, fearing that the

¹²⁹³ Interview Emir Suljagic, 24/05/99.

¹²⁹⁴ Interview Vahid Hodzic, 05 and 06/08/9898; see also: Rohde, *A safe area*, pp. 199 et seq.

¹²⁹⁵ Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

¹²⁹⁶ Hasan Nuhanovic, 'The Dutch UNPROFOR unit and UN structures in Bosnia complicit in war crimes'; see the website of the Women of Srebrenica in Tuzla, <http://www.srebrenica.org>. Here too, the problem of chronology resurfaces. Nuhanovic links the identifying of the injured to the evacuation of the injured persons in the evening of 12 July and with that also establishes a date when the list was drawn up. In the recollection of both Mandzic and Franken, however, the list was not drawn up until the morning of 13 July, in the context of the growing concern in light of the previous night and the events in the morning of 13 July (see also: ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony N. Mandzic, 22/03/00). The link to the evacuation of the injured persons is not watertight for other reasons. One of the injured whose name was on the list was Sadik Vilic, a officer of the ABiH. He and six other injured soldiers were not selected and taken away separately by the VRS until the 17th. He eventually ended up in the POW camp Batkovic (interview Sadik Vilic, 6/02/98). The very detailed reconstructions which Hasan Nuhanovic later gave of the event were met with scepticism by both Dutchbat personnel and fellow interpreters who at the time witnessed his mental state. However, it can not be discounted either that this condition resulted in an increased awareness of perception. The general impression of his statement is that many details are probably correct, but that the chronology and with it the chain of cause and effect are at times not correct. A thorough reading of Nuhanovic's very first statement made as early as August 1995 to two Netherlands Royal Military Police Officers conducting an on-site investigation into the 'list of 239', for example, produces inconsistencies. Although Nuhanovic

Bosnian Serbs would get their hands on the list. Sometimes it was the wives who were violently opposed against the men giving their names. The list with those who did in fact count on it having a protective effect was signed by Franken and subsequently faxed to various international and national organizations, including the Royal Army in the Netherlands. So much went wrong during this process, however, that ‘the list of Franken’ became one of the first hallmarks in what quickly was to become known as the ‘srebrenica affair’, which in this context will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. At any rate, the significance of the list as a means to check the arrival of deportees was not recognized by a single agency at the time.

Mandzic, who was afraid that the list might fall into Serb hands, was told by Franken that he would hide it in his underwear and not permit the VRS to frisk him.¹²⁹⁷ In a conversation with Defence Minister Voorhoeve after the fall of Srebrenica, Franken mentioned that he had also put a copy in a battalion box. He reportedly destroyed the original to prevent it from falling into Bosnian-Serb hands;¹²⁹⁸ why the same risk would not apply to a copy was not discussed. According to Bosnian-Serb interpreter Petar Usumlic, Franken had said to the VRS that they had to take into consideration the fact that Dutchbat had the list in their possession. He also said that copies had been forwarded to the International Red Cross in Geneva and the UN in New York. According to Usumlic, the Bosnian Serbs made no reaction. But he believed that Franken had indeed given them a copy of the list.¹²⁹⁹

In an assessment of the stance of Franken and the decision that he made, it is necessary to consider the formal framework that applied at that point in time. Earlier, in the description of the receipt of the first Displaced Persons in the compound in Potocari, reference has been made to the Standing Operating Procedure and the Standing Orders of Dutchbat and the footholds that these offered in the decision-making of battalion command. Also, with regard to the situation that emerged afterwards, both documents contained passages that were of importance and can serve as a reference for the behaviour of Dutchbat. The Standing Orders offered suggestions for actions to be taken in the event of a physical threat to so-called non-combatants (civilians).¹³⁰⁰ Contrary to other UN mandates, assistance, if possible, was to be offered in the above cases, albeit taking into consideration ‘the actual assignment, one’s own safety and the limited resources of UNPROFOR’. Here the directive led to problems right away. The previous paragraph listed the actual assignment, declaring that UNPROFOR was not responsible for the protection of the population, but might well ‘contribute’ to it.¹³⁰¹ The question then was of what constituted the relationship between ‘contributing to protection’ and ‘offering assistance’. This problem was compounded as other directives indicated how far this assistance could go. ‘Non-combatants in distress’ who received support from UNPROFOR should be equated to UNPROFOR personnel in the event of physical danger: ‘The enforcement instruction then takes effect’. It was presumably on these grounds that acting UNPROFOR Commander Gobillard on July 11 issued the instruction ‘to take reasonable measures to protect refugees and civilians in your care’. Karremans, however, had immediately given notice that this ‘was not possible’.¹³⁰² Franken too,

indicated the date of the list’s creation as being 12 July, he placed the time of completion at ‘around noon’ (SMG/Debrief. KMar Brigade UNPROFOR detachment Simin Han, official statement P20/SH/95, witness Hasan Nuhanovic 24/08/95. Part of PV P. 488/95, 28/08/95. In his third letter to Faber, Nuhanovic wrote about after 14.00 hours’ (*Trouw*, 13/07/99). This means it would have been right in the middle of the chaotic time of the commencing deportation. This does not seem logical.

¹²⁹⁷ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony of N. Mandzic, 22/03/00.

¹²⁹⁸ ‘Draft report of the conversation between Defence Minister, Dr. Ir. J.J.C. Voorhoeve, and Major R.A. Franken on 28/08/95’. Included in Voorhoeve’s diary (pp. 149-154), p. 151.

¹²⁹⁹ Interview Petar Usumlic, 14/09/99.

¹³⁰⁰ The following is, unless indicated otherwise, based on SMG/Debrief. Standing Order 1(NL) UNINFBAT, Chapter 3 Operations, paragraph 5: ‘Behaviour in the event of threat to personnel and/or material’.

¹³⁰¹ SMG/Debrief. Standing Order 1(NL) UNINFBAT, Chapter 3 Operations, paragraph 4: Safe Areas.

¹³⁰² See: H.F. Gobillard to Sector North East, ‘Orders for defence of Dutchbat and protection of refugees in Srebrenica’, 11/07/95. Included as Appendix 34 in: Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 340.

as was mentioned earlier, believed that force was impossible. In view of the situation this assessment was probably correct.

In regard to the situation concerning the list of 239 and several other incidents, the interpretation of the next directive was a great deal more complicated. People who had been offered assistance could not be sent away 'if this were to result in physical danger'. But here too, the provision was accompanied by criteria that offered room for interpretation. UN personnel, for example, was not to take unacceptable risks and also had to watch out for 'too much involvement in the conflict'. What is supposed to be understood by the latter is more difficult to make out than the former. In Karremans' and Franken's opinion, Dutchbat indeed 'ran unacceptable risks'; not only was Mladic's threat to shell the compound a statement that could not be taken lightly, but the looming humanitarian disaster in the event of the temporary freeze of the situation was the driving motive for their decision-making. Additionally there was nobody who at that point in time could suspect that it was Mladic's intention to eradicate all of the Bosnian men; that they would not fare well as prisoners of war was indeed obvious to those who remembered the images of Omarska and Trnopolje.

These kinds of impossible dilemmas were not covered by the regulations: in both cases the choice could turn out badly and so the main thing was to establish which was the lesser evil under the given circumstances. Franken considered the facts and made a decision with far-reaching consequences in regard to the Bosnian men on the compound. As the consequences of an alternative decision can only be guessed, care has to be taken in the assessment of his actions.

The same difficult and painful problem involved the local personnel of Dutchbat and the related issue of the Nuhanovic family. Here, regulations and interpretations played a decisive role in determining their fate.

31. The Issue Of Locally-Employed Personnel

In the wake of Srebrenica, both the fate of the Nuhanovic family and that of local Dutchbat personnel that had not survived the fall of the enclave led to many questions in Parliament and extensive reporting in the media. Much of this attention focused on the Nuhanovic family, with the first reports appearing in the newspapers in the autumn of 1995. Later, their uncertain fate regularly made the press, thanks also to the unrelenting efforts of Hasan Nuhanovic to obtain clarification of his family's fate and the events surrounding the 'list of 239'.

Other similar issues also surfaced. In April 1996 the fate of the local personnel turned into an embarrassing issue after the airing of a documentary in the VPRO programme '*Lopende Zaken*' (Running Affairs). This documentary centred around Rizo Mustafic, Dutchbat's local electrician, who disappeared without a trace because the battalion reportedly had not protected him.¹³⁰³

The broadcast made clear for the first time that only a small number of the people who had worked for Dutchbat were brought to safety by the battalion. Particularly for the Public Information Department and the Political Affairs Department of the Ministry of Defence, this was the umpteenth problem that fell out of the sky and prompted hasty investigations. The same applied in July of the same year during the commotion over the suspected death of an interpreter of UnCivPol, Bekir Hodzic. He reportedly had been denied access to the compound in Potocari. Out of sheer necessity he then started out towards Tuzla, but never arrived there.¹³⁰⁴ This issue was also cranked up by the media, after which politicians reacted by questioning Defence Minister Voorhoeve. Voorhoeve was surprised and embarrassed by these questions all the more as it turned out that he too, had been misinformed. At that time Voorhoeve was under the assumption that Dutchbat had succeeded in safely evacuating all the local staff of UN organizations from the enclave. Directly after it became known that the

¹³⁰³ VPRO programme *Lopende Zaken*, 04/04/96.

¹³⁰⁴ E. Nysingh, 'Dutchbat liet twee Moslimtolken VN aan hun lot over' ('Dutchbat left two Muslim UN interpreters to their fate'), *De Volkskrant*, 03/07/96.

documentary would air in *'Lopende Zaken'*, the Minister wrote an angry memo to Secretary General D.J. Barth with the question of why he had not been informed correctly: 'Why did I only hear on 12/4/96 that not 30, but only 4 local personnel rode out with Dutchbat on 21/7? So was this withheld from me to help 'to alleviate' the co-signing of the 'declaration' of 17/7?'¹³⁰⁵ (See 33, the 'Declaration of 7 July')

When the issue came to a head after the *'Lopende Zaken'* broadcast had aired and the Royal Netherlands Army and the Political Affairs Department attempted to investigate the matter, Voorhoeve kept his finger closely on the pulse. He involved himself directly in the editing of the letter to Parliament concerning this question.¹³⁰⁶

In the following reconstruction an attempt shall be made to re-examine these questions in mutual connection and in the context of the situation of Dutchbat after the fall of the enclave. The Defence Ministry's own attempts to obtain clarification will be analysed and compared to later findings. It was not possible to draw watertight conclusions in all cases; this is the reason why, in these morally-loaded questions, conclusions are to be drawn with care. Here this applies all the more because the most difficult factor for the historian to grasp is the role played by individual human actions in situations of grave stress and chaos. Often it is already difficult enough to determine which formal frameworks applied in certain situations and whether they were known at all, let alone to find out exactly why these were followed by certain actions.

A good starting point for dealing with the problem of the local staff and the dilemmas that Dutchbat found itself confronted with is the fate of the Nuhanovic family. They had gone to the compound on the strong urging of their son Hasan, one of the UNMO interpreters. The youngest, their 19-year old son Muhamed, nick-named 'Braco' (little brother), had for that reason turned down requests from friends to risk the walk to Tuzla.¹³⁰⁷ Hasan, a nervous young man, who after July 10, according to many who observed him in these days, could hardly cope with the tensions anymore, did everything in his power to save his younger brother in particular. Major Kingori, one of the UNMOs, later remembered: 'Hasan was upset. He kept asking if we could protect his family or at least his younger brother'.¹³⁰⁸ One of the other interpreters remembered how Hasan had asked him in a panicky manner where on the compound he could hide his brother, a question he could not answer.¹³⁰⁹ Hasan also asked the UNMOs for help, who, after all, were his employers. Hasan pleaded with them to take the risk and hide his brother in their jeep when they were to leave but the Military Observers are said to have answered that there was no room for him.¹³¹⁰

The 'list of 239' did not include the names of father Ibro and brother Muhamed Nuhanovic. Hasan later recounted that he has never understood why this was the case.¹³¹¹ But there are plausible assumptions for this. Ibro was part of a hastily formed committee that had to negotiate with Mladic on behalf of the population. Thus from this situation the impression developed that the Bosnian-Serb General would guarantee their safety and that they had a special status.¹³¹² The name of co-negotiator Nesib Mandzic was also not on the list of 239. His name and that of Camila Omanovic did, however, appear as representatives of the Displaced Persons on the list of local staff that was to be compiled on July 17, with the view that they were to leave together with Dutchbat. When Ibro Nuhanovic himself

¹³⁰⁵ SG. Memo from J.J.C Voorhoeve to SG, no. 448, 12/04/96.

¹³⁰⁶ Interview H.P.M. Kreemers, 16/04/99. Drafts with side notes by J.J.C. Voorhoeve were indeed located in the records.

¹³⁰⁷ Interview Almir and Zahira Ramic, 6-10/11/99; interview Muhamed Durakovic, 20/11/99. According to Durakovic, most of Muhamed Nuhanovic's friends survived the journey.

¹³⁰⁸ F. Westerman, 'Gezuiverd door Dutchbat', *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/10/95.

¹³⁰⁹ Interview Vahid Hodzic, 20/04/98.

¹³¹⁰ 'srebrenica lijst 242', Letter from Hasan Nuhanovic to Mient-Jan Faber, part 4, in: *Trouw*, 14/07/99.

¹³¹¹ 'Of hij het is vergeten, of dat hij Majorr Franken niet vertrouwde, weet ik niet.' ('If he did forget it, or if he did not trust Major Franken, that I do not know.' See: 'srebrenica lijst 242', Letter from Hasan Nuhanovic to Mient-Jan Faber, part 3, in: *Trouw*, 13/07/99.

¹³¹² According to interpreter Petar Usumlic, who was present at the conversation, Nuhanovic asked for priority treatment for himself and his family to be permitted to leave together with Dutchbat. Usumlic would not say what Mladic answered in response. Interview Petar Usumlic, 14/09/99.

finally decided to leave the compound with his wife and youngest son towards the end of the afternoon of July 13, Major Franken even approached him especially to say that he, as representative of the displaced, was allowed to stay.

That the name of Muhamed did not end up on the list of 239 may have to do with the attempts by Hasan to arrange another solution for his brother. This would become impossible once his name was put down on the list of 239, which was presumably completed by around noon of July 13 or shortly thereafter, when Franken counted up the names and signed the list. At the time Hasan was still frantically trying to get his brother's name on another list, namely that of the local staff, who were allowed to remain on the compound.

In the collection of lists, the existence of which would later become known with Much Ado, the list of 239, the list of the injured and the list of local staff of July 13, the list drawn up on July 13 of the local staff was missing. Only in 1996 was reference made to it for the first time, albeit in nondescript wording in a letter from Defence Minister Voorhoeve to Parliament.¹³¹³ Hasan Nuhanovic later referred much more explicitly to the existence of such a list in one of his letters to Mient-Jan Faber of the IKV, who later became the self-appointed representative of Hasan's interests.¹³¹⁴

Before discussing this list in detail, it is necessary to consider a number of statements made later by both Karremans and Franken about their efforts on behalf of the local staff. The Commander of Dutchbat stated soon after the fall of the enclave to representatives of the Ministry of Defence that he told Mladic 'right from the start that he wanted to take the local staff with him'. The Bosnian-Serb General reportedly did not express any objections.¹³¹⁵ Franken too recollected that Karremans had raised the matter of the local staff already during one of the first conversations with Mladic.¹³¹⁶ Besides, the Commander reportedly insisted on the right of safe conduct for the representatives of the displaced.¹³¹⁷

The question now is firstly what formal framework applied at the time for local staff. In 1996 the editors of the broadcast about the electrician Mustafic referred to the existence of general UN guidelines from July 1994 for the treatment of local employees in the case of a quick retreat of UNPROFOR from Bosnia. Based on this guideline, all local staff, irrespective of the nature of their employment, should have to be brought to safety by the UN. Viewed in that light, Dutchbat had not met its obligations. In response to questions in Parliament following the broadcast of '*Lopende Zaken*', Defence Minister Voorhoeve pointed out that the respective guideline had already been revised after only one month by General Sir Michael Rose, at the time the UNPROFOR Commander. Even if a retreat was to proceed in an organized fashion, with outside military support, it would be impossible to take with them all the local staff and their families. This problem was amplified in the enclaves. That is why only personnel formally registered as UN staff in permanent employment could claim special protection by UNPROFOR.¹³¹⁸

¹³¹³ TK, Annual meeting 1995-1996, 22 181, no. 157 (25/04/96). This letter mentions that on 12 as well as 13 July the names of local UN personnel who could be evacuated together with the unit were taken down. The actual source of this could not be established from the documents. The fact that no further attention was ever paid to this presumably has to do with the misconception that this list *was* known. Thereby the erroneous assumption began that the list of local UN staff which was forwarded by Karremans on 18 July to the former PBLS Van Baal, and which principally became known due to the enclosed so-called 'declaration by Franken' about the process of the evacuation, was originally overlooked. As shall become evident from the further reconstruction, this list presumably differed from the first.

¹³¹⁴ 'srebrenica lijst 242', Letter from Hasan Nuhanovic to Mient-Jan Faber, part 5, in: *Trouw*, 15/07/99.

¹³¹⁵ 'Report of the conversation with Lt. Col. Karremans, 16 August 1995', Appendix to: DAB. Memorandum from DAB (L.F.F. Casteleijn) to Minister of Defence, D95/429, 'Instruction to Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, 12 July 1995', 23/08/95.

¹³¹⁶ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

¹³¹⁷ DAB. Memorandum from DAB (L.F.F. Casteleijn) to Minister of Defence, D96/192, 'Local staff of Dutchbat', 16 April 1996. The transcripts and pictures of the meeting with Mladic provide no decisive answer about this issues, but, as already mentioned, these most likely do not cover everything that has been discussed. Only the first meeting appears to have been recorded in full.

¹³¹⁸ TK, Annual meeting 1995-1996, 22 181, no. 157 (25/04/96).

The employees who could claim this right had employment agreements known as ‘series 300’ contracts, drawn up in Sarajevo, where the special UN pass issued with this contract was also prepared. This category applied particularly to interpreters of both Dutchbat and other UN agencies, such as the UNMOs and the two local representatives of UNHCR. In addition there was the permanent local staff of organizations such as *Médecins Sans Frontières*, who also had an official identity permit, albeit issued by *Médecins Sans Frontières* and not by the UN. As far as Dutchbat was concerned, the only persons with a UN pass were the interpreters employed by the battalion, and, strikingly, the company’s hairdresser, Mehmedalija Ustic.¹³¹⁹

In addition to the staff in permanent employment there was a category of personnel who had a six-month contract with the Opstina, the local government that had made arrangements with Dutchbat for the supply of people who could perform simple work. These were paid through the Opstina. Such personnel, cleaners and kitchen help only had an access pass for one of the two compounds. About forty of them were working at the compound in Potocari on the eve of the fall of the enclave, and about ten in the compound in Srebrenica.¹³²⁰ In the weekend before the fall, when the security situation worsened, they had been sent home by the leadership of Dutchbat in the assumption that this would be temporary; in their view it was not expected that the enclave would fall at that time. When this did occur, however, they disappeared in the stream of refugees.¹³²¹

Karremans’ statement that he raised the issue of the local staff with Mladic at some point is all the more probable, as this problem did present itself concretely. In making plans for the evacuation of the population and battalion and particularly in determining the order of priority, the question of what should happen with the local staff, the UNHCR, *Médecins Sans Frontières*, and the UNMOs presented itself. As described earlier, this was also an urgent problem for a while for the UNMOs themselves, because they had absolutely no desire to stay behind. The same applied to the other categories, albeit for very different reasons.

Karremans presumably was aware of the formal regulations that he had to apply in these cases, but it does appear as though he did not act on his own accord. These questions were raised, amongst other things, in his consultations with the outside world. General Nicolai, for example, explained later, albeit in general terms, that he had also spoken with Karremans about the necessity of ‘ensuring as best as is possible a proper evacuation not only of the refugees but also of the local staff and *Médecins Sans Frontières* personnel’.¹³²² Even more striking nonetheless is that Karremans was advised by yet another source, namely the former Deputy Commander in Chief, Major General A. van Baal. Van Baal recounted that on 12 or 13 July he had pointed out to Karremans (whom he knew well) in a telephone conversation that only staff with a valid UN pass enjoyed special status in the evacuation.¹³²³

Nonetheless, this status did not necessarily mean that the local staff would also be able to leave with the battalion. On the afternoon of July 13 this issue was still very unclear. The UNMOs for example reported around 17.00 hours that ‘the local staff stays with the battalion and will probably leave with them’.¹³²⁴ This was probably a guess based on the lack of information coming from Dutchbat, about which the UNMOs complained at the time. For everything points to the possibility that on July 13 everyone had the idea that the local staff would be evacuated by the UNHCR or the International Red Cross. At any rate, Franken, in the early evening in a meeting with UNHCR Officer Andrei Kazakov (who with his colleague Rosana Sam had reached Potocari with a UNHCR

¹³¹⁹ See list: NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. ‘Local personnel employed by Dutchbat until 01 Nov 1995. (Potocari)’. On this list, the second page of which is missing and was possibly a listing of the personnel on the Srebrenica compound – the name of interpreter Vahid Hodzic, working for B-Company, is not included.

¹³²⁰ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. According to reports by Karremans and Franken to DAB employees in April 1996. See note: (DAB) to Bert (Kreemers), fax dated 12 April 1996.

¹³²¹ TK, Annual meeting 1995-1996, 22 181, no. 157 (25/04/96).

¹³²² SMG, 1006. From C.H. Nicolai to DCBC/ Army Crisis Staff, ‘Last days’ Dutchbat in Srebrenica’, 16/08/95.

¹³²³ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 01/11/01.

¹³²⁴ UNMO situation report dated 131715B JULY 1995.

convoy), made the suggestion ‘that all local staff will be evac.[evacuated] with patients when the ICRC [the International Red Cross] comes’.¹³²⁵ The patients in question were the more serious, non-ambulant cases, who could not be evacuated with the transportation of injured persons that had left the previous evening. Sam, who in the meantime had returned to Bratunac, expressed the hope that she and Kazakov themselves could take the local staff with them in her report concerning the ongoing discussions at that time.¹³²⁶

Shortly after the conversation, at around 20.00 hours, the long-awaited instructions for the negotiations with Mladic arrived, which Karremans had been asking for so frequently. De Ruiter had faxed them to the battalion from Sarajevo. The letter contained instructions in view of the discussions about the departure of Dutchbat. Item 6 listed: ‘Evacuation of local staff required in the employ of the UN’.¹³²⁷ Based on these instructions, Karremans sent a letter to Mladic still on the same evening in which he indicated the guidelines according to which he was to discuss the evacuation of the battalion. It included all who were to leave the enclave with the battalion. This included, among others, ‘Personnel assigned to the UN and to Dutchbat such as interpreters and the people from *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the UNHCR’.¹³²⁸ The interpretation of the instructions, however, was seemingly left open in regard to whether the local personnel actually were to leave in the company of the battalion.

In the meeting of officers and unit commanders regarding the various departure options of the battalion, which took place at 22.00 hours, the line set out by Franken to Kazakov still applied: ‘first out with the injured, *Médecins Sans Frontières* and local personnel’.¹³²⁹

In addition to the original idea that local personnel were to leave the enclave separately from the battalion, the decisions made by Karremans and Franken were influenced by yet another factor. Although they could not explain the exact meaning anymore, the number ‘29’ played an important part in the recollection of both Karremans and Franken of the discussion about the fate of the local staff. Franken had the strongest associations that this figure related to the number of local personnel that Karremans was to have indicated to Mladic in an early stage.¹³³⁰ The latter is more than likely, for it would fit exactly with the specific provision that can be found in the deal that was sewn up on 19 July 1995 between Smith and Mladic, in which the departure of Dutchbat formed one of the main elements. In the sixth paragraph it was defined that the movement of UNPROFOR would be facilitated by the VRS, ‘including all military, civilian and up to thirty locally-employed personnel’.¹³³¹ The number ‘29’ was even mentioned literally in the report sent by Nicolai to the Defence Crisis Management Centre on July 21 on the departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica. In this report he stated that the battalion had safely passed the border with all locally-employed personnel. Also Nicolai mentioned the number ‘29’. However, the definition of the elements which add up to this figure makes it clear that there is a problem.¹³³² Nicolai, as it happens, also added the two foreign employees of *Médecins Sans Frontières* to the 29, Christina Schmitz and Daniel O’Brien, who, strictly speaking, could not be considered local personnel. He further included two sick elderly persons who had only been brought to the compound on Tuesday, July 18 by the VRS and whose names were listed on the so-called ‘departure list’, the latest

¹³²⁵ UNGE, UNHCR, file 1995 FY00 ops. 16 situation reports Bosnia (Jan.-July). Capsat Rosana Sam to HCR-BH desk, 13/07/95, time unknown.

¹³²⁶ UNGE, UNHCR, file 1995 FY00 ops. 16 situation reports Bosnia (Jan.-July). Capsat Rosana Sam to HCR-BH desk, 13/07/95, 7:20 PM.

¹³²⁷ SMG, 1004. Fax from De Ruiter to CO Dutchbat, ‘Guidelines for negotiations with Gen Mladic’, dated 131800B JUL 1995. Included as Appendix 37 in: Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 344. These instructions were not received until 20.00hours.

¹³²⁸ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Letter TK 95115, CO Dutchbat to General Mladic, ‘Evacuation of Dutchbat’, 13/07/95. Included as Appendix 38 in: Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 346.

¹³²⁹ NIOD, Coll. Karremans. Fax TK 95118, Th. Karremans, ‘Brief summary of the events of the past period’, 17/07/95.

¹³³⁰ Interview Th. Karremans, 15-17/12/98 and R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

¹³³¹ ‘Agreement between General Smith and General Mladic’, 19 July 1995. Included as Appendix 41 in: Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 352.

¹³³² CRST. Fax report from DCBC to Royal Netherlands CS et al. ‘Report by Brig. Gen. Nicolai about the departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica’, 21/07/95.

version of which must have been drawn up afterwards.¹³³³ Moreover, it appears that Franken counted backwards on the basis of the assumption that there were 29 names, while the sum really should have been 28. In any case it is clear that the numbers on July 13 must have had a different compilation than on July 21.

Before delving deeper into the issue of its composition, some thought must be given to the reasons for drawing up a 'list of 29'. This almost certainly occurred as a result of an explicit request by Colonel Acamovic, the logistics officer appointed by Mladic as being responsible for the transport from Potocari, during a conversation on the morning of July 13. From the notes that Rave made during the conversation it can be deduced that on that occasion the matter of the local personnel was also discussed. Acamovic announced that they could stay on the compound for as long as the refugees remained and that they 'did not have to be afraid'. However, he did demand a list be given to him the same day containing the data of the local personnel. Rave jotted down that besides the usual data such as name, gender and date of birth, it also had to list 'duration of employment here!'¹³³⁴

The intention of the question about the working history of the local staff can only be guessed at. The picture that emerges from various sources is that the VRS looked at each Bosnian Muslim with great suspicion, to see if he had no military background and therefore was possibly involved in actions against Bosnian-Serb soldiers or civilians. The suspicion was increased even more due to the transportation of injured persons the evening before, from which the VRS soldiers, after inspection, had picked out several men who had pretended to be injured but seemed to be healthy. Various sources indeed show that the VRS played with the idea several times of letting both the local staff of the UN and *Médecins Sans Frontières* depart only after a prior screening. Rave later stated in Assen that the VRS wanted to be certain that no ABiH soldiers were among the local staff.¹³³⁵ What is striking is that Acamovic seemingly did not demand that the list should also contain the number of identity papers, though Franken believed that this demand was mentioned in the discussions at one point or another.¹³³⁶ The issue of the UN passes, as far as he was concerned, therefore played an important role in his decision to let Muhamed Nuhanovic depart from the compound. UNMO De Haan reportedly had originally promised his brother Hasan to put Muhamed on the list of local staff.¹³³⁷ But Emir Suljagic, who had to type the list, told Hasan that his brother's name was not mentioned on the list. The explanation he subsequently received from De Haan was that this – according to Franken – was impossible because of the Bosnian-Serb demand that all persons on the list had to have a UN pass. And such a pass, said De Haan, could not be produced on-site.¹³³⁸ Hasan recounted that Franken, from whom he had immediately attempted to get an explanation after De Haan's answer, reportedly told him:

'I have decided this because I don't want to have someone's name on the list who does not have a proper ID card and does not belong to the local staff of

¹³³³ The fact that the names of the two elderly persons are included on the list makes it possible to date this list. The elderly in question were 81-year old Halil Halilovic and his 80-year old wife Munira, who were brought to the compound with dehydration symptoms. See: MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina Schmitz to MSF Belgrade, 18/07/95, 20:38:08.

¹³³⁴ Annotations B. Rave, 13/07/95. Submitted to the NIOD for perusal.

¹³³⁵ Debriefing statement, E.A. Rave, 02/10/95.

¹³³⁶ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/11/01.

¹³³⁷ This was corroborated by interpreter Emir Suljagic. See: Frank Westerman, 'Gezuiverd door Dutchbat', *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/10/95.

¹³³⁸ Stas. Memorandum by Deputy CDS M. Schouten to Minister of Defence, S/95/061/4198, 'srebrenica', 27/10/95. De Haan informed Schouten that he had also stated this fact in the debriefing in Assen, but his debriefing statement is very vague on this point. Franken however confirmed that De Haan had approached him with this request. Interview R.A. Franken, 22/11/01.

one agency or another. I do not want to endanger those who do have an ID card by putting your brother's name next to theirs'.¹³³⁹

For that reason he reportedly also did not permit the UNMOs 'to employ' Hasan's brother. 'He was afraid that the Bosnian Serbs would find out', explained UNMO interpreter Suljagic later to reporter Frank Westerman.¹³⁴⁰

Franken endorsed the tenor of this account of the events before the NIOD. He strongly rejected the picture that was implied later by some, that in the case of the Nuhanovic family an unfortunate 'slip of the pen' had occurred. Franken recounted that he had made a conscious decision, which indeed came to mean 'that I sent this family to their death. That is correct'.¹³⁴¹ The Deputy Battalion Commander in making this decision was guided by his experience of the war in Bosnia, in particular the very extensive checks that the VRS carried out on all movements of persons and goods. In the convoys especially, everything always had to be accounted for in detail. The time-consuming inspections of the VRS were infamously known to all UNPROFOR troops. The successive Dutchbat personnel had also experienced these checks personally when on rotation and during leave travels. It was already extremely difficult to smuggle in certain crucial goods such as special medicines and spare parts of weapons systems, even though this sometimes worked thanks to clever hiding places in the vehicles. The transport of people without valid ID cards, especially if it concerned representatives of 'the other side', was practically impossible. Permission to leave the enclave was only given based on priorly submitted name lists. Various incidents had occurred in which VRS soldiers entered UN vehicles and removed persons travelling without such permission. In one of the most infamous incidents at the start of the war, a Bosnian Minister had even been shot to death in a French APC.¹³⁴²

So Franken assumed that he would be taking an enormous risk if the VRS in a virtually inevitable inspection would find someone without valid, or with dubious identity papers. He considered it to be a real threat that in doing so, he would also endanger the fate of the other local personnel:

'Taking the risk to hide someone was no option. During a normal check by the Bosnian Serbs this was impossible. The risk you would then be taking is that the people who are officially permitted to be there would all be taken out.'¹³⁴³

Moreover, all of this took place while he still assumed that the local staff would be evacuated separately.

However, having or not having a UN pass was not a decisive factor in all cases. In a number of cases the criterion of the duration of employment was presumably more important in determining whether someone would be placed on the list. At any rate, this conclusion obtrudes if the presumable compilation of the list of 29 is reconstructed.

As evident from the notes of Rave, the requested list of local personnel was handed to Acamovic at 16.25 hours.¹³⁴⁴ But it is unknown whose names were on that list because no copies of this list appear to have been saved. Yet this impression did persist for some time. When questions about the evacuation of the local staff led to questions in Parliament in April 1996 and Ministry of Defence officials attempted to reconstruct the events, they based these on the lists then known; a separate list of local personnel and representatives of the Displaced Persons which was drawn up on July 17 and forwarded to Van Baal on July 18 by Karremans, and the so-called 'departure list'. On this list – between the rows of names and personal data of Dutchbat personnel – were also the names of all the

¹³³⁹ 'srebrenica lijst 242', Letter by Hasan Nuhanovic to Mient-Jan Faber, part 5, in: *Trouw*, 15/07/99.

¹³⁴⁰ Frank Westerman, 'Gezuiverd door Dutchbat', *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/10/95.

¹³⁴¹ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

¹³⁴² Hakija Turaljic. A similar incident based on true events (although the person in question was not killed on the spot) was represented dramatically in the BBC film 'Warriors', which deals with the experiences and particularly the powerlessness of (British) UN troops in Bosnia.

¹³⁴³ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/00.

¹³⁴⁴ Notes B. Rave, 13 July 1995. Submitted to the NIOD for perusal.

local personnel, the two foreign *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers, five family members of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and two elderly persons from Srebrenica. And while the compilers of this document did indeed notice that the names of local personnel had been taken down on July 12 as well as on July 13 they overlooked the fact that the lists they used in discerning the matter had only been drawn up days later.¹³⁴⁵ Due to the missing additional documentation from non-Dutch sources this was a matter they could not clarify.

Based on this information the Defence Minister in his answer to Parliament came to an adjustment of the number. Not 29, but 28 persons had been brought to safety by Dutchbat. But the doubt that was raised against Nicolai's report about the departure of Dutchbat applies here as well: the 28 included two foreign workers and two elderly persons, as well as five family members of *Médecins Sans Frontières* personnel. Moreover, another error had crept into the calculation. It had been recorded erroneously that ten local personnel of *Médecins Sans Frontières* were evacuated, while in reality the number was eight. This means that the total number should have been 26.¹³⁴⁶ So the debate over the local personnel was conducted on the basis of tarnished and outdated numbers.

Nevertheless, the compilation of the group who left the enclave with Dutchbat on July 21 does offer a starting point for the reconstruction of the 'list of 29'. It can be discerned that in addition to the two aforementioned men, a total of four Dutchbat and two UNMO interpreters, two local UNHCR representatives, eight local *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff and finally the only remaining representative of the displaced, Nesib Mandzic, had departed.

One might naturally assume that those who ended up on the Dutchbat's departure list, minus the two elderly persons, were also on the list of July 13. The greatest uncertainty concerns the question of whether Schmitz and O'Brien had then already been added to the list and if the same applied to the five family members, the two sons aged 14 and 15 of the driver Omer Talovic and the wife, mother and little son of *Médecins Sans Frontières* worker Muhamed Masic.¹³⁴⁷ If the starting point was to establish who did not belong to UNPROFOR (or to UNMO) and probably should be evacuated separately, it is probable that the names of both *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers also were on that list. This establishes 23 of the 29 names. Of the remaining six it is very probable that three belonged to representatives of the displaced, Nesib Mandzic, Ibro Nuhanovic and Camila Omanovic. After all, in that capacity Mandzic and Omanovic were also on the list of July 18 that was forwarded by Karremans. At the time when the list of 29 was drawn up, Ibro Nuhanovic still remained on the compound, so that it is obvious that his name was also taken down. This would also tie in with the fact that Franken, when Ibro as one of the last, was about to leave the compound with his wife and youngest son, pointed out to him that Mladic's right of safe conduct also applied to him and that he therefore could stay. Ibro, however, chose to leave together with his wife and son.

¹³⁴⁵ TK, annual meeting 1995-1996, 22 181, no. 157 (25/04/96). The source of this comment could no longer be established. What is particularly striking is that two dates are mentioned, on which names reportedly had been recorded.

¹³⁴⁶ This was also the conclusion drawn by the Deputy Director of Political Affairs, L.L.F. Casteleijn, in the document he prepared with the help of staff from the Defence Ministry in preparation of an answer to questions in Parliament. He rightly based his view on the list with names which Karremans had faxed to PBL S Van Baal on 18 July. (DAB. Memorandum L.F.F. Casteleijn to Defence Minister, D96/192, 'Local personnel of Dutchbat', 16/04/96. The (incorrect) adjustment, i.e., from eight to ten names in the final letter to Parliament was presumably the result of a misunderstanding. At the end of 1995, the Defence Ministry had started its own investigation among MSF personnel, after the commotion over the so-called 'medical issue'. On that occasion, MSF had informed the Defence Ministry that ten local MSF staff members had survived the fall of Srebrenica. Two of them, however, the interpreters Damir Ibrahimovic and Kemal Selimovic, had set out to Tuzla on their own (Damir only arrived there two months later). See also: Thorsen, '*Médecins*', p. 145.

¹³⁴⁷ On the so-called 'departure list' of Dutchbat, the most relevant part of which was saved, the mother and wife is also incorrectly indicated as a 'child'. Their names are also erroneously added by hand to the list of 63 injured persons dated 17 July (so 60, in fact), who were supposed to be evacuated by the ICRC. They were indicated as 'family members of some wounded persons'. UNGE, UNPF, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. '95. List per fax UNMO J. Kingori to UNMO HQ BH NE, 17/07/95.

Depending on whether or not the names of the two *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers and five family members were on the list, as might well have been the case, three to eight persons on the list of 29 remain unidentified. The question is: who were they.

In answering this question it is necessary to involve two other issues that have played a role in the wake of events. It has already been mentioned that in April 1996 the VPRO programme '*Lopende Zaken*' dedicated their attention to the fate of Rizo Mustafic, an electrical engineer, who had made himself indispensable as electrician to the successive Dutch battalions. Various Dutchbat soldiers who had befriended Mustafic were interviewed and entertained as guests in his home in Srebrenica. The main focus of attention, however, was on the account of his wife Mehida, who at that time lived in the Netherlands as a refugee. She recounted how on July 13 a number of the interpreters for Dutchbat had climbed on to trucks and instructed the population in the compound to leave the Base. They added that the men were allowed simply to leave with the women and children. Mehida described how she and Rizo had walked down the pathway that had been created with tapes from the factory to the exit and subsequently to the buses and trucks. She recounted how Rizo, once he arrived at the depot, was picked out of the rows of people by the VRS troops. Turning to the Dutchbat soldiers she asked why they let this happen; after all, Rizo had been working for them. One of the other people she approached for help was Dutch female soldier M. Bergman, who walked part of the way with Mehida to support her. But she too, felt powerless: 'If I do something, I might mess things up for the rest of the battalion'.¹³⁴⁸

When Bert Kreemers, deputy director of the Information Department, sought contact with both Franken and former Dutch Personnel Officer Warrant Officer B.J. Oosterveen in regard to this issue, Oosterveen told him a story to the effect that Mustafic had bought his life by flogging his car to VRS Major Nikolic.¹³⁴⁹ Mustafic indeed owned a car, although he did not have petrol, and many Dutchbat troops later thought that he indeed had succeeded in saving his own life thanks to that exchange. Franken said:

'Rizo usually came to the Base in his car and the first thing I noticed was that the car was no longer there, but neither was Rizo. Then we saw Nikolic driving around in his car. Rizo was known for having contacts all over the place. That's when the conclusion was drawn that Rizo had made a deal with Nikolic.'¹³⁵⁰

There are indeed various indications that Rizo was one of the key persons involved in smuggling money into the enclave with the help of Dutch soldiers returning from leave. Thanks to his good contact with two girls who worked on the compound, he knew in time who would leave and whom he could approach. Mustafic had a partner who also occasionally did some work for Dutchbat; both had the reputation that of all those involved in the importing of money, they charged the lowest interest.¹³⁵¹ Also, in the investigation into money smuggling conducted by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the name of Mustafic emerged as an addressee/recipient.¹³⁵² The deal with Nikolic, however, did not work out. Rizo was not to survive these days in July.

That Mustafic's fate might have been different, only became clear in April 1996, but it still took longer before it surfaced that there was more to his disappearance. Kreemers himself discovered this when he made a visit not long afterwards to the barracks in Assen and had another conversation with Oosterveen: 'He had then admitted to me that he had more or less told me a wrong story. Because

¹³⁴⁸ VPRO programme *Lopende Zaken*, 14/04/96.

¹³⁴⁹ Interview H.P.M. Kreemers, 16/04/99.

¹³⁵⁰ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

¹³⁵¹ Interview Nijaz Masic, 25/10/00. Except for a short period, Masic was the Morale Officer of the 28th division during the entire duration of the conflict.

¹³⁵² OM Arnhem, KMar district G.O.F, (district Gelderland Overijssel Flevoland) R.04/95, 19/07/95.

something had obviously gone wrong within the battalion in terms of evacuating the local personnel'.¹³⁵³

What exactly went wrong remains obscure, although the essence of the accounts is the same: presumably as a result of a misunderstanding and contrary to Franken's wishes, Oosterveen had told several local staff members that the battalion could not do anything for them. He therefore was said to have advised Mustafic 'to slip away, get out'. Oosterveen presumably was in for a sharp reprimand from Franken later on.¹³⁵⁴ Although Franken himself remained vague on this last point, he did endorse the portrayal of Oosterveen's role: 'In a conversation with one of the local staff members, he said or gave the impression that the men would not leave with us'.¹³⁵⁵

In an attempt to reconstruct the course of events surrounding the compilation of the list of 29, it became clear that Rizo Mustafic was one of those whose name was on the list. It is true that he did not have a UN pass, but instead had some kind of continuous employment contract from the time when the first Dutch battalion had entered the enclave. This was the reason why Franken considered him as part of the category of 'local personnel' who could count on special protection.¹³⁵⁶ The fact that Mustafic apparently was not aware of this says something about the circumstances and pressure under which the list was drawn up. For that reason, the list presumably included a few more names of persons whom the battalion was prepared to take along, but it appeared later that they were not (or no longer) on the compound. In Franken's recollection the list afterwards indeed appeared to somewhat 'empty out'.¹³⁵⁷ A UNHCR report states that after the evacuation of the compound, there were still 18 members of the local staff in addition to the remaining injured.¹³⁵⁸

In view of the fact that it is no longer possible to establish whether on July 13 all five family members of *Médecins Sans Frontières* had been included in the calculation, it is well possible that a considerably large number of local personnel were on the list. At any rate, this is how Franken remembers it.¹³⁵⁹ It is possible that this concerned a number of other names that can be found on the list of personnel with an employment contract until November 1995. This list included two refuse collectors and two handymen, all with a so-called 'Opstina contract'. Not on this list was plumber 'sehid', who was specifically mentioned in the book *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, produced by Dutchbat itself.¹³⁶⁰ These five names precisely fill the gap of the *Médecins Sans Frontières* family members. It must be assumed that, supposing their names were indeed on the list of 29, these people too were found to have disappeared after the evacuation of the compound.

With Mustafic included, the number of presumed names on the list of 29 comes to 27. The last two missing names may have belonged to interpreter Senad Alic and hairdresser Mehmedalija Ustic. For both of their names also appear on the list of local personnel who were supposed to be working on the Potocari compound until November 1995.¹³⁶¹

About the fate of Ustic, who, as mentioned earlier, did have a UN pass, no more is known than the rumour that reached Franken later, namely that he had perished while defending Srebrenica.¹³⁶²

¹³⁵³ Interview H.P.M. Kreemers, 16/04/99.

¹³⁵⁴ Interview W.J. Dijkema, 21/09/98.

¹³⁵⁵ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

¹³⁵⁶ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/11/01.

¹³⁵⁷ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/11/01.

¹³⁵⁸ UNGE, UNHCR, File 1995 FY00 ops. 16 situation reports Bosnia (Jan.-July). Capsat Rosana Sam to HCR-BH desk, 13 July 1995, time unknown. The sum of: 8 MSF staff, 4 Dutchbat and 2 UNMO interpreters, 2 UNHCR staff members, and Mandzic and Omanovic, is eighteen.

¹³⁵⁹ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/11/01.

¹³⁶⁰ Dijkema, *Vredesnaam*, p. 215.

¹³⁶¹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. List: 'Local personnel working for Dutchbat until 01 Nov 1995. (Potocari)'. Only the first page of this two-page list of the names of personnel in Potocari was saved. The second page presumably contained the names of personnel working on the Srebrenica Base, as the first page does not include interpreter Vahid Hodzic, who does appear on later lists. Hodzic worked as interpreter for B-Company, apropos just as Alic did; though why Alic's name was included on the Potocari list is not clear.

¹³⁶² Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

However, more is known about Alic's fate. At Dutchbat it was rumoured that Alic was a nephew of Oric.¹³⁶³ At any rate, before he took up work as an interpreter, he was a member of a special unit belonging to Oric.¹³⁶⁴ Whether his conclusion was that he was in too much risk because of this, is not clear.¹³⁶⁵ In 1996 he told Dutch journalist Ewoud Nysingh that he had decided to risk the walk to Tuzla because he had lost all faith in Dutchbat. A Dutch officer reportedly tore up his UN pass 'because it supposedly was expired'. Instead he was given a letter that granted him access to the base in Potocari. He considered it to be inadequate in terms of guarantee. After a gruesome trek, having first gone to Zepa and from there to Tuzla on July 31, he only succeeded in reaching safe terrain on August 18.¹³⁶⁶ It was confirmed by various Dutchbat soldiers that the relationship between Alic and Dutchbat was difficult. Boering, for instance, recounted that of all interpreters, Alic was the one who trusted Dutchbat the least.¹³⁶⁷

At the same time as Alic's critique of Dutchbat in 1996, attention also focused on another case in which the suspicion was expressed that someone had been refused access to the compound because he did not have a UN pass. This concerned one of the two interpreters of UnCivPol, Bekir Hodzic. As early as 21 July 1995, his brother Nezir had reported him as missing to Ken Biser of the Civil Affairs Office in Tuzla.¹³⁶⁸ He himself had fled the enclave together with five others on July 11 and had arrived in Tuzla on July 18. There he went in search of his brother, whom he knew also wanted to escape the enclave. From talks with Displaced Persons from Potocari, he pieced together that by the side of the road in Kravica, they, from their bus windows, had seen how his brother and a number of others were being held and guarded by VRS troops.

Nezir recounted that on leaving the enclave on 30 June, the two UnCivPol employees (the Dutch Aalders and Klip) had instructed his brother to wait at home for the arrival of the new UnCivPol personnel. Hodzic did not have a UN pass, so his brother explained, but he had a copy of his UN employment contract. Biser verified the information and eventually was told by Zagreb that Hodzic was indeed a 'UNPROFOR Series 300 employee' and that the term of the contract was until 13 November 1995. That he still was without a new pass was 'common, because the entire transaction had to be done by mail, and that often took weeks'. A personnel officer of Sector North East told Biser that Hodzic 'had been reported to be with Dutchbat in Potocari'. Biser ordered him to verify this information with the Dutchbat personnel officer (Warrant Officer Oosterveen or possibly also Warrant Officer Schamp). Originally the answer was affirmative, but later a telephone call came back that a mistake had been made.¹³⁶⁹ There might have been some kind of mix-up about the existence of another Hodzic, Vahid, who had worked as interpreter for B-Company.

In the document in preparation of answers to the questions raised in Parliament, which Groen-Links (Green Left) Parliament member P. Rosenmöller submitted as a result of publications on this issue, L.F.F. Casteleijn of the Political Affairs Department assessed that it was 'unlikely' that Hodzic had been refused access to the compound. Dutchbat, after all, had allowed thousands of others inside.¹³⁷⁰ However, whether this is true entirely depends on when Hodzic did report to the main gate.

¹³⁶³ Interviews R.A. Franken, 21/05/01; E. Wieffer, 18/06/99; P. Boering, 14/12/01.

¹³⁶⁴ Interview Almir and Zahira Ramic, 08/11/99.

¹³⁶⁵ The NIOD was no longer able to interview Alic, as he lost his life in a traffic accident near Tuzla in 1998.

¹³⁶⁶ E. Nysingh, 'Dutchbat liet twee Moslimtolken VN aan hun lot over', *De Volkskrant*, 03/07/96; UNGE, UNPF, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 04/04/-23/08/95. Fax Ken Biser to A. Pedauye, 'Return of missing Dutchbat interpreter'.

¹³⁶⁷ Interview P. Boering, 14/12/01.

¹³⁶⁸ Unless indicated otherwise, the following is based on: UNGE, UNPF, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, Box 25/77, 4 April-23 Aug. 95. Fax from Ken Biser to Michel Moussalli, 'Missing UNPROFOR interpreter from Srebrenica', 21/07/95.

¹³⁶⁹ In the article that drew attention to the case of Alic and Hodzic, the story about the verification with Dutchbat is erroneously pinned on Alic. See: E. Nysingh, 'Dutchbat liet twee Moslimtolken VN aan hun lot over', *De Volkskrant*, 03/07/96.

¹³⁷⁰ CDS. Memorandum from acting Director DAB L.F.F. Casteleijn to Minister, D96/332, 'Local UN employee', 03/07/96.

If this occurred after the evening of 11 July (which is not improbable), the time when the compound was being flooded with Displaced Persons, then it does seem very likely that Hodzic was refused entry by the guard. 'At that point there really were no orders as such', as Warrant Officer Dijkema later remarked in response to the problems involving the local staff.¹³⁷¹ If the policy had escaped Oosterveen, then this surely also applied to the guards at the main gate. Casteleijn explained that Hodzic 'as far as is known' has not made any attempts to gain entry. This, however, directly contradicts the account of Hodzic's brother, who as early as July 1995 had approached Biser. Evidence for his deviating version was not presented by Casteleijn.

Casteleijn was also not sure if Alic and Hodzic would have been put on the list by Dutchbat, had they been in Potocari: 'In the view of the Dutchbat command, putting names of people on the list who didn't have an ID card from the UN was very dangerous for the UN personnel who did have such a pass'. However, as has become evident, having a UN pass was less important than proving that someone was already working for a UN organization for a longer period. To Alic, who already had chosen beforehand to flee to Tuzla, this did not matter. But in the case of Hodzic it does appear as though a request for assistance was wrongfully turned down. He was employed by the UN and as Biser remarked, 'UNPROFOR does have an obligation to this individual'.¹³⁷²

Except for Hasan, the Nuhanovic family was one of the last to leave the Dutch compound, on July 13. UNMOs at the main gate took their names down visibly to the VRS, in the hope that this might give them protection. Franken was also there, who, as earlier mentioned, had still pointed out in vain to Ibro that he could remain on the compound. He was completely astounded when Ibro Nuhanovic kissed him on the cheek and said goodbye.¹³⁷³

This was the last that was heard from Ibro, Naisha and Muhamed Nuhanovic. Their son Hasan, after first still having hoped that they were alive, meanwhile assumed that they had perished. Through the grapevine and through asking questions for a long time, he now has certainty.¹³⁷⁴

Shortly after the departure of his family, Hasan to his amazement found out that a number of family members of *Médecins Sans Frontières* had indeed remained behind on the compound. He could not understand why they had been saved but his brother had not. This question would also repeatedly arise in later debates. As early as November 1995 Deputy Spokesman Kreemers discovered that NRC reporter Frank Westerman had 'information that *Médecins Sans Frontières* had, in fact, cheated about the status of local personnel and that Dutchbat on the whole had not'.¹³⁷⁵ Groen-Links MP Sipkes couched her questions in similar terms in 1996, when she inquired why Dutchbat had gone strictly by the book, while *Médecins Sans Frontières* 'didn't give a hoot about the 'pass regulation''.¹³⁷⁶ Also Defence Minister Voorhoeve, in an internal correspondence, designated as a 'key question' 'whether Dutchbat could not have done a little more in order to save a number of lives'. With that he already indicated himself that an answer could not be given, 'as we do not know how far Dutchbat could have gone in stretching the possible limits'.¹³⁷⁷ Hence the attempt now to define this limit and examine to what extent the impression is true that *Médecins Sans Frontières* were more flexible in regard to their own personnel than Dutchbat was.

¹³⁷¹ Interview W.J. Dijkema, 21/09/98.

¹³⁷² UNGE, UNPF, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, Box 25/77, 4 April-23 Aug. 95. Fax Ken Biser to Michel Moussalli, 'Missing UNPROFOR interpreter from Srebrenica', 21/07/95.

¹³⁷³ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01; interview J. Otter, 26/05/99.

¹³⁷⁴ Various interviews Hasan Nuhanovic.

¹³⁷⁵ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Memorandum from Deputy Spokesman H.P.M. Kreemers to Defence Minister, V95021626, 'conversation with NRC journalist', 16/11/95. Kreemers deemed this knowledge 'extremely annoying' and announced that the issue would be discussed with Karremans and Franken the week after.

¹³⁷⁶ 'Kamervragen over lot personeel Srebrenica' ('Questions in Parliament about fate of employees in Srebrenica'), *De Volkskrant*, 16/04/96.

¹³⁷⁷ DAB. Hand-written note J.J.C. Voorhoeve to DAB, 24/04/96.

32. Uncertainties Surrounding The Deportation

The difference in stance between *Médecins Sans Frontières* and Dutchbat can to a major extent be reduced to the fact that the Netherlands battalion adhered to certain guidelines and instructions issued by the UN and the Netherlands. Moreover, the family members of *Médecins Sans Frontières* did not include men of military age. Aside from the two women there was a three-year old infant and two boys aged 14 and 15. At the most one could consider it to be an extraordinary circumstance that one of the male *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers had lost his UN pass. It also was not the case that *Médecins Sans Frontières* intended to evacuate all local personnel, even though Christina Schmitz did her best to evacuate as many men as possible.

So *Médecins Sans Frontières* and Dutchbat in that sense were not on the same wavelength, as during much of that time it was assumed that *Médecins Sans Frontières* would evacuate independently. The impetus for this came from two sides. Technically speaking, UNPROFOR was bound by rules. In the Annex to Standing Operating Procedure 308, 'Directive for the movement of personnel in UNPROFOR vehicles and convoys', it was stated that 'NGO vehicles cannot be incorporated in a UN convoy nor can they be offered protection by any UN forces'. Civilians were further prohibited from being transported in UNPROFOR vehicles under any circumstance, unless under specific permission from Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. Indeed it is not clear how these instructions related to those which dealt with the protection of civilians, but the tenor of the initial position was quite clear.

On the other hand, *Médecins Sans Frontières* also had much interest in leaving on their own. The correspondence and conversations of Schmitz with her superiors show that *Médecins Sans Frontières*, who after all had a somewhat anti-militaristic orientation, also wanted to underline their neutrality in regard to UNPROFOR. For example, Schmitz expressly prohibited anyone in military clothes from entering her hospital. When a girl who worked for *Médecins Sans Frontières* was once visited by a friend wearing military trousers, Schmitz did not allow him in, even though he was not a soldier. She apparently wanted to strictly guard the neutrality of *Médecins Sans Frontières*.¹³⁷⁸ She also refused the offer of an armed guard on July 10. Rave made the following entry in his logbook: 'No arms-uniform. *Médecins Sans Frontières* wants hosp. as neutral zone!' On that day she also turned down the offer to have some wounded people moved from Srebrenica to Potocari in an APC equipped for medical transport; this was only possible, she said, with permission from *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Belgrade.¹³⁷⁹ What it came down to was that *Médecins Sans Frontières* carried an entirely separate responsibility, which only gradually became mixed up with that of Dutchbat. In order to follow this process it is necessary to examine how the treatment of the issue of the local personnel developed from July 13.

To begin with, it is necessary to establish that also the UNHCR during the first days after the end of the deportation tried independently to arrange the evacuation of its two local personnel members. To achieve this the UNHCR in Pale was in contact with the Bosnian-Serb authorities.¹³⁸⁰ At any rate, until July 17 everything humanly possible was done – incidentally, to no avail – to obtain special permission for them to leave the enclave separately. On July 14, however, it was still so unclear as to what would happen that Schmitz reported that the UNHCR staff, as well as the interpreters for Dutchbat and the UNMOs 'are completely cracking. There is no clear idea what happens to them'.¹³⁸¹

As far as the two UNMO interpreters were concerned, the situation became a little clearer that evening, after a fax from Ken Biser had been received by battalion command: Irrespective of its own problems, the battalion was ordered to take all necessary measures to ensure the safety and safe evacuation of the two UNMO interpreters, Hasan Nuhanovic and Emir Suljagic. What is remarkable about this fax is that it could be deduced that the advice of the UNPF Legal Advisor apparently had to

¹³⁷⁸ Interview Zahira Ramic, 08/11/99.

¹³⁷⁹ Annotations of B. Rave. Submitted to the NIOD for perusal.

¹³⁸⁰ See: UNGE, UNHCR, File 1995 FY00 ops. 16 situation reports Bosnia (Jan.-July). UNHCR BH desk Belgrade/JPC (Jean-Paul Cavalieri) to UNHCR Zagreb, 14/07/95.

¹³⁸¹ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina Schmitz to MSF Belgrade, 14/07/95, 12:18:18.

be asked in order to determine the correct approach. The Legal Advisor pointed to the legal obligation to evacuate personnel ‘under the Series 300 contract’.¹³⁸² This says a great deal about their familiarity with the regulations applicable to these kinds of special situations.

On Saturday July 15, Schmitz was drawing up lists of the wounded and of the local staff and family members in view of the anticipated evacuation. ‘This is the day of the lists. (I can’t hear the word anymore)’, she entered in her situation report.¹³⁸³ *Médecins Sans Frontières* hoped to leave together with the International Red Cross when the evacuation of the wounded was to take place. On the previous day, Schmitz had assured the desperate staff (who also did not get any clarity about their exact fate from Dutchbat) that this is what she would try.¹³⁸⁴ There was much anger when the International Red Cross informed them that they considered the evacuation of the local staff to be an issue that had nothing to do with the medical evacuation.¹³⁸⁵ The uncertainty also continued on July 15. They anxiously awaited the result of the consultations with VRS Major Nikolic in the late afternoon of that day, in which the evacuation was once again on the agenda. The meeting, however, did not bring the desired clarification, because a meeting was to take place between Generals Smith and Mladic in which the issue would be discussed.¹³⁸⁶

The Bosnian-Serb General had replied to Karremans’ letter of July 13 that he would personally come and discuss the issue of the remaining evacuation on site, but afterwards nothing more was heard of him. It was correctly assumed that the capture of Zepa would demand all his attention. It must have come as good news for Karremans that he would finally be able to discuss the evacuation issue with someone of equal rank, as he had asked Mladic for increasingly higher-ranked negotiation partners.

In a telephone conversation between Karremans and Minister Pronk, who at that time was in Tuzla, the Dutchbat Commander also discussed the situation of the civilian staff on the compound. Pronk informed him that international pressure was being mounted to at least let the International Red Cross evacuate the wounded. Results, however, had not yet emerged.¹³⁸⁷ Only late in the evening did the Minister from the Netherlands hear about the agreement that had been forged in Belgrade. In his rendition of this in his travel report, a comment regarding the local staff is remarkable, which shows that at that time apparently no agreement had yet been reached about their fate: ‘serbs reportedly were still ‘examining’ compiled lists of local UNPROFOR forces in Srebrenica’.¹³⁸⁸ The final decision was indeed only to fall on July 19, albeit not without difficulty. Only ‘after some debate’ did Mladic seem prepared to unconditionally allow the local staff to leave with the battalion.¹³⁸⁹ This indicates once more just how precarious their position had been for a long time.

So on July 15 there was still total uncertainty, which prompted the battalion command to operate with extreme caution. Everything possible had to be done to avoid endangering the evacuation. It is probably also in this context that the incident which occurred that evening at the main gate of the compound should be seen. As dawn set in, five ABiH troops reported to the guard, asking for permission to enter the compound. They had presumably retraced their steps after nearly walking into the Bosnian-Serb trap in their attempt to get to Tuzla. At any rate, one of them was lightly wounded. A doctor took care of his wounds, but then they were sent away on orders by Major Otter, the Base Commander. The men were ‘too late’ and moreover, troops weren’t admitted ‘anyway’, as Otter would

¹³⁸² UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. ‘95. Capsat Ken Biser to Cdr. Dutchbat, Team Leader UNMO-Srebrenica, ‘Evacuation of local staff, 14/07/95.

¹³⁸³ MSF, Brussels. Christina Schmitz, ‘situation report Srebrenica – Potocari period 6.7. – 22.7.95’.

¹³⁸⁴ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina Schmitz to MSF Belgrade, 14/07/95, 12:18:18.

¹³⁸⁵ MSF, Brussels. Capsat ICRC Bijeljina to Christina Schmitz, 14/07/95, 14:30:47.

¹³⁸⁶ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina Schmitz to MSF Belgrade, 15/07/95, 17:20:19.

¹³⁸⁷ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 229.

¹³⁸⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/01654. Memorandum DMP/NP (J. Kappeyne van de Coppello) to R (Minister Pronk), DMP/no. 1023, NH-618/95, 31/07/95, (confidential) ‘Report of the journey of Minister Pronk to Tuzla and Sarajevo, 14-18 July 1995’.

¹³⁸⁹ DCBC, 897. Vsat 7201 LCol J.R.J. Baxter, MA to COMD, to (see distribution list), ‘Meeting Gen. Smith/Gen. Mladic – 19 Jul 95’, 19/07/95.

explain a short time later in Zagreb.¹³⁹⁰ Shortly after the men had walked away, shots were heard. A Dutch soldier was later to state that one death had occurred.¹³⁹¹ However, this observation could not be confirmed.

In the context in which Dutchbat was operating at that time, Otter's decision was presumably inevitable. After the incident with the 'so-called wounded' during the convoy of July 12, the VRS had become even more suspicious. Schmitz and Franken therefore had decided to take it upon themselves that the remaining wounded could be inspected by the VRS.¹³⁹² Only afterwards did they accidentally discover to their dismay that several ABiH troops were among the wounded, one of them an officer: 'a small time bomb in our hospital'.¹³⁹³ Admitting even more, and indeed healthy, soldiers, which incidentally was prohibited by UN regulations, would complicate the situation infinitely more, carrying with it all the risks of such an action.

The prospective outcome of an independent evacuation of *Médecins Sans Frontières* initially became gloomier on July 16 due to a report concerning the Norwegian medical unit in Tuzla, *Normedcoy*, that was to take care of the evacuation of the wounded in consultation with the International Red Cross. This unit had been attacked the day before by irregular VRS elements, in the same way as the Dutch logistics convoy with the KHO-5 group had been, and had to return to Tuzla.¹³⁹⁴ Only on the evening of July 16 did there seem once more to be positive developments as the results of the consultation between Generals Smith and Mladic became known. At 20.30 hours a report came in from Bosnia-Herzegovina Command that permission had been granted for the movement of all equipment to central Bosnia, and for the evacuation of the wounded, re-stocking of supplies and access by the International Red Cross to the wounded and prisoners of war.¹³⁹⁵ The 'Operations Room' then reported to the 'expedition force in Belgrade' – the reconnaissance group of what was to become Dutchbat IV, which had arrived in the area shortly before the fall of the enclave, in view of the then still anticipated rotation of the battalion – that the departure was planned for July 20 or 21. In addition it was stated: 'local staff are most probably coming with us'.¹³⁹⁶

However, what was to happen with *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the UNHCR was still not established. Representatives of both organizations were still heavily engaged in trying to independently arrange permits for their local staff and to determine how they had to be evacuated. Schmitz conferred with Major Franken over what the best strategy might be; he was of the opinion that it was best for *Médecins Sans Frontières* to leave with the International Red Cross.¹³⁹⁷ However, everything depended on permission being granted from the Bosnian Serbs as well as from Belgrade – Serbia had to issue transit permits – which simply did not emerge. The UNHCR was also struggling with the same problem; they too could not obtain certainty about how and when their staff was allowed to leave. In the office in Belgrade, Programme Officer J.P. Cavalieri even counted on the possibility 'that the Bosnian Serb army may attempt to consider them as POWs, for further exchange with the ABiH'.¹³⁹⁸

The uncertainty and fear among the local staff members was further intensified by the fact that the Bosnian Serbs suddenly announced on July 17 that the departure of the *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff and the women and children was alright, but that the male staff would first have to undergo a

¹³⁹⁰ SMG, 1007. Gen. Bastiaans (debriefing), C. Klep (report), 'Debriefing Report, Major Otter (C-St-Company) 23/07/95, Camp Pleso'.

¹³⁹¹ SMG/Debrief. *Feitenrelas* debriefing 'srebrenica', p. 289.

¹³⁹² MSF Brussels. Capsat (Christina Schmitz) to Stefan (Oberreit), 13/07/95, 16:56. This issue is described extensively in the chapter covering medical support to the local population.

¹³⁹³ MSF Brussels. Capsat Christina (Schmitz) to Barbara, 15/07/95, 14:49:01.

¹³⁹⁴ The involvement of Normedcoy was said to have been one of the results of the consultation between Smith and Mladic on July 15. See: MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina Schmitz to MSF Belgrade, 16/07/95, 10:07:12.

¹³⁹⁵ SMG, 1004. Monthly register of the Operations room, 16/07/95, entry 20.30.

¹³⁹⁶ SMG, 1004/53. Operations room, 16/07/95, 11.3, the original text lists the Dutch word 'zeer' (very) as 'zeeeeeer'.

¹³⁹⁷ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina Schmitz to MSF Belgrade, 16/07/95.

¹³⁹⁸ UNGE, UNHCR, File: Srebrenica, Statistics etc. Fax Jean-Paul Cavalier (UNHCR BH Desk, Belgrade) to UNHCR Tuzla, 'UNHCR local staff in Potocari', 17/07/95.

screening.¹³⁹⁹ Also, the UNHCR was told that same day that the clearances had been refused and that a new request for evacuation had to be submitted, albeit without the male local staff, who by now were ‘very scared’. The person who compiled the situation report added this comment: ‘it gives an idea of the climate’.¹⁴⁰⁰

33. The ‘Declaration Of July 17’

The climate indeed had much of the appearance of psychological warfare, in which seemingly arbitrary acts were in reality an instrument to manoeuvre the situation as much as possible in the direction that the Serbs wanted. On the very same evening that the demand had come through regarding the screening of the male staff, two incidents occurred which may be presumed to be related. It is not possible to ascertain this completely, as it is no longer possible to reconstruct the chronology.

In the morning, during a meeting between Franken and the representatives of the VRS, in which the medical evacuation, the evacuation of the local staff and that of the employees of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and Dutchbat was discussed, it was announced that President Karadzic had decreed an ‘amnesty’ for all the local personnel, including Nesib Mandzic.¹⁴⁰¹ The message had been conveyed by Bosnian-Serb interpreter Petar Usumlic.¹⁴⁰² No matter how reassuring this may have sounded, the amnesty said nothing about the manner and time in which everyone would be able to leave. The bureaucratic regulations were still in full effect and with this came also the possibility for endless procrastination and obstruction. This undoubtedly played a role when the representatives of the Bosnian Serbs produced a document during the same meeting that was supposed to seal their good intentions.

The priorities and starting points applied by Major Franken during the deportation of the Displaced Persons also dictated his stance during the signing of what was to become known as the ‘Franken declaration’ or ‘the declaration of July 17’. The latter reference was better than the first, which was an incorrect label coined by the media. It involved an agreement made between Serb authorities and Nesib Mandzic, as representative of the Bosnian civilians in Srebrenica. The agreement was signed on July 17 in the presence of Franken, who was asked to co-sign in the name of the UN. Lieutenant Colonel Karremans was at the time recovering from a stomach problem that had struck down a large part of the battalion, the result of the arrival of a convoy with decent food for the first time in months.¹⁴⁰³ Both Karremans and Franken incidentally disclaimed that the Commander, as was later frequently claimed, had also been taken ill at other times. According to Karremans, he was only stricken down with stomach problems on 15, 16 and a part of July 17.

The agreement also stated that the ‘evacuation’ of the Displaced Persons had been conducted according to humanitarian international law. According to interpreter Mujo Nukic, who was present, Franken at first was hesitant to put down his signature.¹⁴⁰⁴ After an exchange of looks with Mandzic, he yielded.¹⁴⁰⁵ However, before Franken signed the agreement, he added – to the fury of the present

¹³⁹⁹ MSF, Brussels. Capsat MSF Belgrade to Christina Schmitz, 17/07/95, 11:05.

¹⁴⁰⁰ UNGE, UNHCR, File 1995 FY00 ops. 16 situation reports Bosnia (Jan.-July). BH Desk Belgrade/Cavaliere to UNHCR Tuzla/CMB a.o., ‘Eastern BH daily update for 17/07/95’, 17/07/95.

¹⁴⁰¹ MSF, Brussels. Christina Schmitz, ‘situation report, Srebrenica – Potocari period 6.7. – 22.7.95’; SMG, 1006. Letter TK95119 from Th. Karremans, ‘Transfer of local personnel’, 18 July 1995. Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 233. Rave noted about the meeting that a reference to Omanovic was also made. (Notes B. Rave, 17/07/95. Submitted to the NIOD for perusal). This is why her name ended up on the list of names that was drawn up one day later. Due to her psychological condition, however, she was considered to be a patient and was evacuated with the ICRC convoy at the end of the day.

¹⁴⁰² Interview Petar Usumlic, 14/09/99.

¹⁴⁰³ Interview Th. Karremans, 30/11/00.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Interview Mujo Nukic, 07/02/98.

¹⁴⁰⁵ ICTY, (IT-98-33-T). Testimony N. Mandzic, 21/03/00.

lawyer in the Bosnian-Serb delegation – an annotation in English to the document: ‘as far as it concerns convoys [that were] actually escorted by UN forces’.¹⁴⁰⁶

According to Franken, no physical danger was apparent during the meeting.¹⁴⁰⁷ Mandzic understandably experienced the presence of the VRS troops in a very different way.¹⁴⁰⁸ Also, in Franken’s view this was still indeed a matter of an enforced situation. It is true that an amnesty had been declared, but at that time everyone was still in fact under the power of the VRS. In order not to endanger the position of the wounded, the local staff, employees of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the battalion itself, Franken ultimately decided to co-sign the declaration as an observer. At any rate, his annotation was intended as a cover for himself and to prevent the declaration from being misused all too easily for the purposes of propaganda.

Still, the manner in which he did this was not watertight. According to the Bosnian-Serb declaration, no incidents had occurred during the ‘evacuation’, but the operation included more than just the convoys which Franken emphasized by his annotation. Strictly speaking, he did not cover the events that occurred prior to the departure of the convoys, and in particular the violence that occurred during the separation of the men and women, let alone the executions.

Moreover, Franken forgot something else. Pursuant to applicable Standing Orders ‘not a single declaration may be made or signed, unless in the presence of an authorized UN official. It is further required to request that the closest UN headquarters may be informed’.¹⁴⁰⁹ Even if it is understandable that under the circumstances the first directive could hardly be complied with, it is a different matter for the latter. When afterwards much upheaval developed about the declaration, Defence Minister Voorhoeve informed Parliament that Franken ‘had not attached any special significance’ to the document: ‘For that reason, the Deputy Commander, prior to signing the declaration, did not have contact with the UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo’.¹⁴¹⁰ It was one of the reasons why the existence of the declaration remained unknown for a long time. Karremans later explained that during a consultation with Franken on July 18, the declaration was also not raised.¹⁴¹¹ However, Karremans had faxed the document with the list of local staff to Van Baal in The Hague. In the accompanying letter, he made reference to the added explanation.¹⁴¹² No attention, however, was paid to it in The Hague.¹⁴¹³

Afterwards, in the discussions over Franken’s actions in regard to these issues, it often was suggested that his decisions were prompted exclusively by the desire to get Dutchbat out of the enclave as quickly as possible. This undoubtedly played a role, but Franken pointed out that battalion command had made it clear that departure was only possible once the safe departure of the remaining wounded and the local staff was assured.¹⁴¹⁴ Karremans had already conveyed this message on July 14, and it was confirmed once more on July 17.¹⁴¹⁵

The implicit suggestion in such accusations that there was a clear alternative also appears difficult to maintain. As was earlier mentioned, Franken said that he briefly considered making a stand

¹⁴⁰⁶ A photo-copy of this statement is included as Appendix 39 in: Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 347.

¹⁴⁰⁷ DAB. Memorandum from J.H.M. de Winter to the Minister, D95/403, ‘Declaration’ Franken / role Karremans’, 10/08/95. De Winter based this upon a telephone conversation with Franken.

¹⁴⁰⁸ ICTY (IT-98-33-T). Testimony N. Mandzic, 22/03/00.

¹⁴⁰⁹ SMG/Debrief. Standing Order 1 (NL) UNINFBAT, Chapter 1, Personnel; Subject 1/14: Discipline; paragraph 8: Local authorities, p. 33.

¹⁴¹⁰ DAB. Draft of letter from the Minister of Defence to the Speaker of Parliament, D101/95/15825, August 1995, p. 11. This passage did not appear in this form in the final letter.

¹⁴¹¹ DAB. Memorandum from J.H.M. de Winter to the Defence Minister, D95/403, ‘Declaration’ Franken / role Karremans’, 10/08/95. De Winter based this upon a telephone conversation with Karremans.

¹⁴¹² SMG, 1006. Letter TK95119, from Th.J.P. Karremans to PBLs, ‘Transfer of local personnel’, 18/07/95.

¹⁴¹³ The commotion that developed in the wake of the 17 July declaration will be discussed in detail in Part IV, Chapter 8.

¹⁴¹⁴ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/99.

¹⁴¹⁵ Ken Biser reported on 17 July that the CO of Dutchbat had insisted upon that he should not leave without the local staff. Biser once more pointed out, perhaps needlessly, that this was also a matter of legal responsibility. UNGE, UNPF, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, Box 25/77, 04/04 –23/08/95.

Fax from Ken Biser to Michel Moussalli, ‘Local staff in Potocari with Dutchbat’, 17/07/95.

in Potocari, but had quickly rejected this idea. He only had 150 fighting men left, many of whom were completely drained. The others had done their absolute best to alleviate the stay of the Displaced Persons on the compound, but were not in a condition for being deployed in fighting action. Moreover, there was a large shortage of ammunition. Most convincing was the argument that conducting a battle in an environment with thousands of civilians was impossible. The Serb artillery held the civilians hostage, and therefore indirectly held Dutchbat.¹⁴¹⁶ Also, as was already described, Franken deemed impossible the consideration to ‘freeze’ the situation as far as the displaced at the compound were concerned by not permitting their deportation. A different kind of humanitarian disaster would then have resulted.

34. Development Of Evacuation Plans After July 17

On July 17, the evacuation plans of *Médecins Sans Frontières* finally seemed to move into fast gear. In the course of the day the permit finally arrived, albeit for a journey via the left bank of the Drina river to Tuzla. Although the directive worked out conveniently from the viewpoint of family reunification, it was first and foremost the result of the continuous refusal by the Serbs to let the *Médecins Sans Frontières* convoy cross their terrain.¹⁴¹⁷ The route to Tuzla, however, was not without danger, as was evident from the problems with the Dutch logistics convoy on July 15 and the Norwegian medical unit one day later. *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Belgrade would have preferred a UNPROFOR escort, or alternatively that *Médecins Sans Frontières* could travel along with a convoy of the International Red Cross. However, on that day they could not immediately leave with the convoy that came to pick up the wounded. In the permit it was stipulated that the *Médecins Sans Frontières* vehicles first had to drive to Bijeljina, where an office of the International Red Cross was located, and were only to join the convoy to Tuzla from there.

Schmitz felt very uncomfortable with the idea that she had to travel part of the trip on her own. Franken, with whom she discussed this problem, was very opposed to the plan due to the unsafe conditions. Also, Franken considered the idea of asking the VRS for an escort to be too dangerous, as there was a risk that the column might become a target for ABiH units that were still roaming around. Schmitz herself found the suggestion from Belgrade to ask Dutchbat for an escort not feasible. The equipment losses as a result of plundering during the attempts to escort the convoys on July 12 and 13 were still fresh in their memory: ‘they would lose everything and they are even more a target’. Moreover, Franken refused.¹⁴¹⁸ The same evening Schmitz felt steadily more uncomfortable about the journey: ‘Being with the local staff 10 hours a day, while they are totally frightened? I doubt it’. In addition, the local staff also included the cook, who had totally broken down after the fall.¹⁴¹⁹

The confusion was great over what should happen with *Médecins Sans Frontières*. In The Hague on the evening of July 17 it was assumed that *Médecins Sans Frontières* would leave with the interpreters and Dutchbat.¹⁴²⁰ Karremans, however, was very surprised when he met Schmitz that same evening on the compound, as he was under the assumption that *Médecins Sans Frontières* had left with the International Red Cross.¹⁴²¹ This incident makes it clear that even after the fall and the deportation internal communication did not always function well, although the fact that Karremans was temporarily out of the picture due to his short illness might have played a role. Whether or not Van Baal had got wind of this, he in any case called Karremans the following morning to discuss, among other things,

¹⁴¹⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33-T). Testimony of R.A. Franken, 04/04/00; Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

¹⁴¹⁷ MSF, Brussels. Capsat MSF Belgrade to Christina Schmitz, 17/07/95, 16:06:36.

¹⁴¹⁸ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina Schmitz to MSF Belgrade, 17/07/95, 19:40:48.

¹⁴¹⁹ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina Schmitz to MSF Belgrade, 17/07/95, 21:49:23.

¹⁴²⁰ DJZ. Report from Voets/Royal Netherlands Army to DCBC, dated 17/07/95, 21.11.

¹⁴²¹ Interview Th. Karremans, 15-17/12/98; Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 233.

‘the measures that need to be taken in order to ensure the safety of the ‘locally recruited personnel’ of Dutchbat’.¹⁴²²

In the letter to Van Baal written by Karremans after the conversation, which presumably contained the upshot of what he had discussed with him, he made it clear that both Dutchbat’s own interpreters as well as those of the UNMOs, the two UNHCR workers and Nesib Mandzic should be ‘moved (...) to the ultimate destination’ with the battalion.¹⁴²³ A list containing the data of the local personnel that had been already compiled on the previous day, which had then already been dispatched by the UNMOs, was stapled to the letter together with the list of the wounded.¹⁴²⁴ This was the reason why the name of Camila Omanovic was still on this list, although she had already been evacuated on the evening of July 17 with the International Red Cross.

The list which Karremans forwarded also contained the particulars of the eight *Médecins Sans Frontières* workers, although these were not mentioned in his letter. For Schmitz had set her doubts aside and, in consultation with *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Belgrade, decided to risk departure after all. In the morning she received the ‘Action plan - *Médecins Sans Frontières* team evacuation’.¹⁴²⁵ They were to attempt to leave for Belgrade on that day, in the hope that the permits from the Serbs would come in time after all. Should the Serb authorities refuse at the last moment, then, based on the VRS clearance which was valid for two days, the same route should be taken on July 19 as the one the International Red Cross had taken to Tuzla. Early in the morning the three *Médecins Sans Frontières* vehicles were loaded and checked, with Schmitz determining their distribution. Franken arranged that the UNHCR would meet the local staff at six o’clock in the evening at the airfield in Belgrade to put them on the plane for Zagreb.¹⁴²⁶

However, shortly afterwards Franken announced that the local staff were at risk of being arrested in Serbia or Croatia. This risk would be all the greater if their papers were not in order. Because one of the staff members had lost his UN pass and the family members also had no papers, Schmitz sent their names to Belgrade in the early afternoon. Upon crossing the border at Zvornik, *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff then could still hand them the necessary documents. Franken meanwhile tried to settle the question of the clearances through UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo. But shortly afterwards Schmitz received the despondent answer that once again everything in Belgrade was amiss: ‘It is so complicated that the whole thing could not have been imagined even by Kafka’. Now there were problems regarding the transit on the airfield.¹⁴²⁷

The plans were changed once more. Maybe it would, after all, be best to take the route to Tuzla on the next day. However, a new obstacle presented itself. In the afternoon of July 18, the VRS soldiers brought two elderly inhabitants from the south of Srebrenica to the compound. The couple, aged 80 and 81, had remained behind after the population had fled, and by now were suffering from dehydration.¹⁴²⁸ Their arrival overturned all the plans once again. *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Belgrade informed Schmitz that she could not possibly take them with her, as it would never be possible to make all the necessary changes to the plans in time. The clearances for the travel to Tuzla, along the left bank

¹⁴²² DCBC, 2828. Internal Memorandum from PHJZA (Deputy Head of Legal Affairs) to HJZ, SCO and BLS, ‘Declaration dated 17 July 1995 in the presence of UNPROFOR (Maj. Franken, Deputy C DUTCHBAT signed by representatives of the VRS and inhabitants of Srebrenica’, 07/08/95.

¹⁴²³ SMG, 1004/76. Letter TK95119, from Karremans to PBLB, ‘Transfer of local personnel’, 18 July 1995. In this letter Karremans also referred to the enclosed declaration of 17 July, which, however, would totally escape everyone’s attention in The Hague.

¹⁴²⁴ UNGE, UNPF, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 04/04-23/08/95. Maj. Kingori to UNMO HQ BH NE, ‘UN local staff and wounded’, 17 July 1995. Archive UNPF Geneva, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 404/04-23/08/95 (Biser reports).

¹⁴²⁵ MSF, Brussels. Capsat MSF BLG to all MSF stations, ‘Action plan – MSF team evacuation’, 18/07/95, 06:27:25.

¹⁴²⁶ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina Schmitz to MSF Belgrade, 18/07/95 11:18:30.

¹⁴²⁷ MSF, Brussels. Capsat MSF Belgrade to Christina Schmitz, 18/07/95, 14:11:53.

¹⁴²⁸ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina Schmitz to MSF Belgrade, 18/07/95, 20:28:31.

of the Drina river, would lose their validity if two people were to be added to the convoy. To do this it would require making arrangements all over again with the local authorities.¹⁴²⁹

Schmitz, however, reported on the same evening that Dutchbat was also unable to take the elderly with them. ‘UNPROFOR is not able to take them’, was all that Schmitz reported. She did not explain what the nature of the problem was, so it can only be guessed at: formally speaking, the battalion was not allowed to transport civilians, but the question is whether this would still have been a problem at this point in time. Practical problems may also have played a role; undoubtedly it was left unclear what the battalion should subsequently have done with them.

Also, the UNHCR could not assume responsibility, as, according to Schmitz, they couldn’t even take care of their own people: ‘How come our staff gets [a] protection letter, while their own staff is completely desperate here and cannot leave anywhere?’ There further was the possibility that Dutchbat might also get into trouble over the two UNHCR staff members, as the travel documents – which, in spite of the announced amnesty, were still required for a problem-free departure – still had failed to arrive. According to Schmitz, the battalion meanwhile even had written an angry letter to the UNHCR about this.¹⁴³⁰ It was typical, that the UNHCR as late as July 20, when by then another solution already existed, was still engaged in attempting to obtain safe conduct for a departure ‘before or at the same time with the Dutch troops’.¹⁴³¹

Schmitz and Franken decided to try and reach an agreement on the following day with the local VRS authorities that the two elderly persons would also be allowed to leave that day with *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Late in the morning of July 19 it turned out that this was no longer necessary, as the head office of *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Paris had succeeded in settling the matter directly with Pale.

Prospects of a real solution came during the day of July 19. On the day before, Karremans had received a letter from Mladic in which he announced that the departure of Dutchbat would be discussed on the following day with General Smith. Around noon the results filtered through and Schmitz was told by Franken that *Médecins Sans Frontières* was permitted to evacuate together with Dutchbat. Under no circumstances were the results of this sensitive meeting to leak out, and Schmitz was instructed to even keep it secret from her colleagues in Belgrade. The only thing she was allowed to report without any further explanation was that she would not be leaving on that particular day. Schmitz somewhat covered up the matter by saying that she would prefer to evacuate via Serbia, for which the required clearances were still outstanding. Moreover, in spite of the accord reached between *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Paris and the Serbs in Pale, the details of the clearances were still unknown. While Schmitz finally began to relax a little, her colleagues, who could only compliment her on her sudden and incomprehensible calmness, continued to make every possible effort to acquire the necessary permits.

The enormous bureaucratic complications and obstructions that had hampered the evacuation of the local staff had not reached an end for the head offices of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the UNHCR, who still did not know about the agreement reached between Generals Smith and Mladic. Although these were no longer relevant in the final course of events, they still reflect the climate which determined the negotiations until the very last moment. Perhaps they also say something about the internal differences of opinion within Republika Srpska. First there was the declaration on July 19 by Dragan Kekic, the chairman of the ‘Coordinating Council for Humanitarian Help’, that all local staff could be evacuated with Dutchbat. Schmitz heard about this in the early afternoon via the UNHCR.¹⁴³² However, on the next day *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Belgrade was informed that the clearances for the departure with Dutchbat to Belgrade had been approved for the local staff, women, children and the

¹⁴²⁹ MSF, Brussels. Capsat MSF Belgrade to Christina Schmitz, 18/07/95, 20:07:38.

¹⁴³⁰ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina Schmitz to MSF Belgrade, 18/07/95, 23:13:08.

¹⁴³¹ DCBC, 942. PV Geneva to The Hague, 20/07/95. Report of a conversation with Netherlands UNHCR official A.W. Bijleveld.

¹⁴³² MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina Schmitz to MSF Belgrade, 19/07/95, 13:45:40.

elderly, but: ‘no men’.¹⁴³³ Their fears had immediately returned. One day later, however, when it had become clear that everybody could leave, it was put down to being the ‘local sense of humour’.¹⁴³⁴

On the evening of July 19, the official confirmation of the agreement between Generals Smith and Mladic had arrived at Dutchbat. As there was now the possibility of leaving with Dutchbat, Schmitz and O’Brien decided to come to a final decision and leave with the battalion instead of making their own way. In spite of principles and practical considerations – a journey to Zagreb instead of Tuzla – the protection by Dutchbat was the decisive factor after all. It was also clear that the battalion did not want to leave without them. *Médecins Sans Frontières* even was placed in the first part of the convoy, together with the UNHCR, UNMOs and Karremans.¹⁴³⁵

Presumably sometime on July 19 or 20 the final departure list was drawn up, on which the names of the Dutchbat soldiers and the UNMOs, all the names of the local staff and foreign workers were listed. In the April 1996 letter which Defence Minister Voorhoeve sent to Parliament following the issue of Rizo Mustafic, he explained that this list had been inspected on 21 July by the VRS.¹⁴³⁶ It is open to interpretation what this means; most likely a copy of the list had gone to the VRS as part of the bureaucratic pressure described above. To everyone’s surprise, the usual physical inspection, with hours and hours of delay in which all information was examined in detail, did not occur. According to their own accounts, this created mixed feelings for many of the Dutchbat soldiers, including Major Franken. All the concerns over the possible risks, if Dutchbat were to have tried to circumvent the bureaucratic regime, turned out to have been in vain. The battalion, so it appeared, could have taken along everybody who was not registered unnoticed, such as the brother of Hasan Nuhanovic.¹⁴³⁷

Whether this should be cause for self-reproach is a question which can only be answered with great caution. Moral considerations quickly become involved here. These, however, have to be offset against the reality contained in Karremans’ and Franken’s assessments. The extremely difficult progress of the attempts to gain permission to depart from the enclave indicates that these risks were not imaginary. Moreover, there were the experiences of other UNPROFOR units and Dutchbat itself, with the exasperating dependence on the VRS for any movement. Added to this was the fact that, particularly after the fall of the enclave, UNPROFOR was a plaything of the VRS. Vehicles were taken away and convoys robbed. The idea of complete dependency on the whims of Mladic and his consorts gave cause to an understandable fear.

In those chaotic days, victims have thus fallen. Rizo Mustafic as such could have been saved, and as regards Bekir Hodzic it is clear that he – formally speaking – had a right to be saved. What went wrong in his case, however, remains even more unclear than in that of Mustafic.

The refusal to save Muhamed Nuhanovic is the hardest case to judge. Franken knew very well what he did when he sent him off the compound. Some would refer to it as courageous for him to take such far-reaching decisions. But it is clear that to each choice, real risks were attached, no matter how bitter the irony of the ultimate course of events. The latter therefore should not automatically be the standard against which Major Franken’s decision is measured.

Schmitz seems to have made a different assessment than Franken, although fairness begs the question of whether their situations and responsibilities were comparable. For to an important extent, they were not. In taking this into consideration under closer examination, however, there also seem to be similarities. *Médecins Sans Frontières* was also unable to evacuate all its personnel, simply because, as in the case of Dutchbat, a large number of them could no longer be traced after July 11. As mentioned before, in one case an employee decided of his own accord to stay with his family and it seems that nobody thought about adding him to the group which eventually left with Dutchbat. Of the *Médecins Sans Frontières* employees who did leave, everyone had a pass except for one person who had lost his,

¹⁴³³ MSF, Brussels. Capsat MSF Belgrade to Christina Schmitz, 20/07/95, 15:50:17.

¹⁴³⁴ MSF, Brussels. Capsat MSF Belgrade to Christina Schmitz, 21/07/95, 05:46:04.

¹⁴³⁵ MSF, Brussels. Capsat Christina Schmitz to Stephan (Oberreit), 20/07/95, 15.45 hours.

¹⁴³⁶ TK, annual meeting 1995-1996, 22 181, no. 157 (25/04/96).

¹⁴³⁷ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01

but whose employment was beyond doubt. The other original evacuees of *Médecins Sans Frontières* were women and children. At the most it could be said in hindsight that, based on practical experience, the two boys aged 14 and 15 belonged to an at-risk group, but technically speaking they did not belong to the category which Mladic had indicated for screening to find ‘war criminals’. The claim that *Médecins Sans Frontières* may have ‘cheated’ with ‘passes’ or ‘ignored’ regulations is therefore not tenable. From the dragging negotiations after July 13 regarding clearances to leave the enclave it is abundantly clear that *Médecins Sans Frontières* also emphatically went ‘by the book’, while the same negotiations also make it clear that the possession of an ID did not automatically mean protection from screening by the VRS. There was, after all, the continued threat by the VRS up until the last moment that the male personnel would be subject to separate treatment.

35. Conclusion Regarding the Killings in Potocari

Aside from being a scene of ethnic cleansing, Potocari was the site of a local exercise of revenge with outside assistance. The judges in the trial against Krstic could not determine whether the accompanied killings were sporadic or on a larger scale. As already mentioned, the historian tends to believe the latter. Exactly how many victims there were will never be possible to establish, but the number presumably lies between 100 and 400 dead. This number is considerably higher than was suspected in July 1995, based on the reports by Dutchbat. Already in Assen it became clear during the debriefing that the number of atrocities in Potocari must have been higher. The wholesale executions outside the enclave, however, drew much of the attention away from the victims in Potocari.

However, ever since that time the battalion has been pursued with accusations that it had failed in reporting war crimes. This assertion is now easily gaining weight, as it is clearer what the presumable scale of the atrocities in Potocari was. Still, some important remarks must be made in this context.

There are many indications that the perpetrators have consciously attempted to hide their deeds from the view of Dutchbat (and that of the UNMOs and *Médecins Sans Frontières*). The problems during the convoy escort, in particular the removal of the Dutch vehicles, were more than simple robbery. By rendering Dutchbat immobile, it became impossible for them to monitor what was taking place on the road and the VRS soldiers could stop buses unhindered. In Potocari the VRS intimidated the Dutch soldiers by taking away their weapons and equipment. Although the impression exists that some Dutchbat soldiers put up less resistance than others, it is an illusion to think that someone could ultimately have fully prevented this situation. Armed resistance was not an option in Potocari: the VRS held absolute sway.

The Dutch soldiers and UNMOs who tried to investigate possible abuses were stopped by the VRS. The discovery of the two execution sites by Rutten and Oosterveen and their colleagues, probably were – from the VRS’s perspective – ‘industrial accidents’. The same applied to the execution observed by Groenewegen. If there is one predominant pattern in the reports later made by Dutchbat soldiers in the Netherlands, then it is the very strong suspicion of executions having been committed, where the run up was indeed observed, but the murder itself was literally hidden from their view. A large number of soldiers thus also had an idea that things were ‘very wrong’, but this was a feeling that they had difficulties in handling due to the lack of incontrovertible evidence.

However, this does not mean that no other deaths, murders and rapes were observed. An above average number of Dutchbat soldiers developed serious psychological complaints after the events, which in a number of cases were caused by observation of killings and rapes.¹⁴³⁸ It is telling that only five years after the events, during the trial against Krstic, a Dutchbat soldier went public for the first time over the account of the rape he had witnessed. This circumstance prompted a reserved stance in the investigations on this point.

¹⁴³⁸ In talks between the NIOD and mental health professionals, various anonymous examples of such incidents came up.

The great impact of the events upon the soldiers was one of the factors in Potocari which determined that reports of possible human rights violations had fallen short. Although the number can not be established, there were various soldiers who collapsed under the stress (or at least folded temporarily). In others, their perspective narrowed to focus upon the immediate task and they shut themselves off from what was going on around them. The fact that the battalion was not prepared, or barely so, for the kind of situations that occurred during and after the fall of the enclave, undoubtedly played a role here.¹⁴³⁹

In some cases, there was also the factor that the Dutchbat soldiers were concerned more about the question of how they themselves could survive this hell than for the (military-aged) Muslims who had made things so difficult for them.

Due to all of these things, communication failed almost completely on July 12 and 13. It is illustrative of the situation that Commander Karremans only found out long after the fall of the enclave that his presumption that the men who had been screened were simply deported with the rest of the population was incorrect. As was earlier mentioned, Franken was also convinced that men had, in any case, left with the first four convoys.

The failure of the humanitarian reporting in particular is partly explicable due to these circumstances. However, there is one point which is particularly difficult to comprehend. It is strange that battalion command, and certainly Franken, who after all had already stated that he had gloomy suspicions early on, had undertaken nothing in the week after the fall of the enclave to determine for themselves the events surrounding the deportation. On July 15, for example, Franken heard from the returned OP-A unit that they, on the way back, had seen bodies lying by the side of the road.

In the week in which the battalion somewhat regained their composure, both Karremans and Franken had not made a single attempt to retrieve information in the form of an appeal or a debriefing about possible grave breaches of human rights. Both later admitted that they now were surprised themselves that this idea had not occurred to them.¹⁴⁴⁰

Finally, this also begs the question of whether initiatives should not also have been taken higher up in the UNPROFOR hierarchy. The reactions of General Nicolai and Lieutenant Colonel De Ruiter to the reports by Lieutenant Colonel Karremans raises questions. These questions are all the more relevant, as General Nicolai and Lt. Col. De Ruiter did have certain information at their disposal. In spite of their justifiable doubts over the reliability of what the Displaced Persons from Srebrenica told the media immediately after their arrival in Tuzla, this should nevertheless have been cause to inquire more emphatically of Dutchbat. Nicolai stands out as one of the few who, in those days, supported the statement by Minister Pronk that he feared a genocide – this shall be discussed in the following two chapters in detail.

When the battalion left Bosnia on July 21, Nicolai, who was present at that time, did indeed ask Mladic for permission to have a quick look around in Srebrenica before leaving, but this, of course, did not produce any results.

¹⁴³⁹ Interview E. Koster, 19/10/99.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Interview Th. Karremans, 13/11/00 and R.A. Franken, 21/05/00.

Chapter 5

The debriefings in Zagreb

‘What does it mean – that the UN peacekeepers saw it with their own eyes, or that they were just in the area, or something else again? The flexibility of this type of observation or statement must be investigated before the peacekeepers’ behaviour may be judged’.¹⁴⁴¹

1. Confusion surrounding the Dutchbat debriefings

The Srebrenica aftermath was not only dominated by the question of what Dutchbat members observed and reported in the way of indications and evidence of human-rights violations whilst the Dutch were still in the enclave, but also by questions concerning the information the Dutchbat members provided in Zagreb after they had returned to a safe environment. Much of the media and politicians’ attention was focused on the debriefings by the various Dutch military bodies, particularly the efforts of the Royal Netherlands Army. This chapter describes and analyses these efforts in conjunction with several related issues, such as the manner in which the responsible authorities – and in a number of cases the media - dealt with the obtained information.

There was much confusion concerning the nature and the course of the debriefing activities in Zagreb. Initially this concerned two groups – the 55 OP crew who were released after being held hostage and the members of the Army Hospital Organization (KHO) and the First-Aid Group. The Royal Netherlands Army’s Military History Section had been closely involved with Srebrenica from the 13th. On the 27th of July they still- assumed that the ‘first group’, as the ex-hostages and KHO members were called, had not been debriefed at all¹⁴⁴² and that misunderstanding was to continue for quite some time. Bert Kreemers, the deputy Press Officer at the Ministry of Defence’s Central Organization, notes in his memoirs of 1998: ‘It was curious for the group of 55 military personnel that had been captured by the Serbs not to have been interviewed’.¹⁴⁴³

Although after a period of time it became clear that there had been attempts to glean information from them, questions remained and misunderstandings persisted. For example, in 1998 KHO surgeon G. Kremer stated to investigator J.A. van Kemenade that he had been debriefed in Zagreb on the 17th of July, but he added – erroneously – that no report had been drawn up.¹⁴⁴⁴ In 1998, the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Army in 1995 Warlicht stated to the same committee: ‘A number of people had already undergone a psychological debriefing in Zagreb. A report was not drawn up, but it did happen’.¹⁴⁴⁵ Shortly before his conversation with the committee, Warlicht himself had refreshed his memory in a conversation with Lieutenant Colonel P.M.P. (Paul) Venhovens - the psychologist who had been responsible for undertaking the psychological debriefing in Zagreb.¹⁴⁴⁶ Although Bert Kreemers stated that he had only recently discovered that there were extensive reports

¹⁴⁴¹ J. de Milliano, of MSF, with respect to assertions that atrocities were to have taken place ‘under the eyes’ of Dutchbat members, in: K. Versteegh, ‘Nederlandse hulp was te beperkt’ (Dutch assistance was too limited), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/07/95.

¹⁴⁴² SMG, 1004. SMG Project Group Report, 27/07/95.

¹⁴⁴³ Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan*, p. 109.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*. Part 2, Appendix 4, Interview reports and additional notes: Report of conversation with G.D. Kremer, 08/09/98.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*. Part 2, Appendix 4, Interview reports and additional notes: Report of conversation with E.E. Warlicht, 20/08/98.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Interview P.M.P. Venhovens, 17/11/00.

of the separate conversations in Zagreb,¹⁴⁴⁷ these concerned the events of a week later. Although these debriefing reports were also made available to investigator Van Kemenade, he did not pay further attention to the debriefings in Zagreb and therefore it did not become clear that more had been going on than van Kemenade had outlined.

During the subsequent debriefing conversations in Assen in the autumn of 1995 members of the group of 55 ex-hostages said that they had not only received a psychological, but also an ‘operational debriefing’ in Zagreb. What is confusing is that some reported this to have been in writing - some Dutchbat military personnel of the group of 55 referred to ‘UN forms’.¹⁴⁴⁸ Others spoke of a ‘group debriefing’, such as Dutchbat member M. van der Zwan, who referred to this during a subsequent conversation with the Royal Netherlands Army spokesperson Hartman. He too was unclear whether the debriefing in Zagreb had been carried out by the UN or by the Royal Netherlands Army.¹⁴⁴⁹ This lack of clarity was caused by the fact that this group of 55 had three debriefings in Zagreb – one psychological debriefing by the Royal Netherlands Army which served to diagnose psychological complaints of the Dutchbat members; one albeit temporary operational/humanitarian debriefing by the intelligence section (G2 in military terms) of the UNPF headquarters in Zagreb, which aimed to chart the treatment of the Dutchbat members and the Muslims; and a hardly-worth mentioning operational debriefing by the operations section (G3 in military terms) of UNPF, which was no more than some brief conversations about the operational aspects with Dutch Colonel J.H. de Jonge. The confusion increases even more because a member of the Dutch Armed Forces, Major C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, played a prominent role during the debriefing by the UNPF intelligence sector. Already during the first debriefings of the ex-hostages in Zagreb the rumour started that the ‘MID’ (Dutch Military Intelligence) had also played a part in the debriefing activities.¹⁴⁵⁰ It was further complicated by the presence of not only Major Bourgondiën was present in Zagreb, but also Sergeant Major N. Franssen of the MID/Netherlands Army. He was the military security officer of Dutchbat IV that had been meant to relieve the third battalion whilst awaiting the arrival of a Ukrainian battalion. He was part of an advance unit, which in the framework of rotation had attempted but failed to reach Srebrenica before the fall (see difficulties with the relief of Dutchbat, Chapter 4 of Section III). In Zagreb Sergeant Major Franssen, who worked for the Intelligence and Security Section of MID/Netherlands Army, spoke with the members of KHO-5 who had arrived on the 15th of July;¹⁴⁵¹ In contrast to the group of 55 hostages the KHO group only had a psychological debriefing in Zagreb, but this shall be explained later.

The speculation concerning the flow of communication directly touches the crucial question surrounding the debriefings, i.e. which of the released Dutchbat members had information about possible human-rights violations and who had reported this during a debriefing conversation. Various lead players stated that they might have acted differently if they had possessed that knowledge in time. However such statements with hindsight should be treated with care, as they can easily serve as a false excuse. This applies to Commander Karremans for example - the Dutchbat Commander stated later that if he had been aware in Zagreb of possible human-rights violations observed on the outskirts of the enclave by personnel taken hostage, he would have spoken about Mladic in different terms on his return from Srebrenica – these words still haunt him.¹⁴⁵² The then UN Commander, the British General Smith, stated with hindsight that he would have treated Mladic totally differently during the

1447 Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*. Part 2, Appendix 4, Interview reports and additional notes: Report of conversation with H.P.M. Kreemers, 24/08/98.

1448 Such as in W.A. Ceelen’s debriefing statement 08/09/95.

1449 NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Note W. Hartman on conversation with M. van der Zwan, 09/08/95.

1450 Interview P.M.P. Venhovens, 17/11/00. Based on notes from that time.

1451 SMG, 1004. Chr. Klep, ‘Verslag gesprek SM1 N. Franssen’, 15/08/95. According to this report, Franssen reported to Major De Ruyter of I & V. During conversations with the First-Aiders Franssen heard the countless accusations of the battalion leadership.

1452 Telephonic information Th. Karremans, 08/02/99.

negotiations on the 19th of July (the follow-up of earlier conversations on the 15th) if he had been aware of what the 55 Dutch soldiers had seen en route.¹⁴⁵³

Commander Karremans and General Smith were by no means the only ones with the uncomfortable feeling of having been wrong footed. This chapter will show that the absence of knowledge of the hostages' observations possibly also played a role during the operational debriefing held by Brigadier G. Bastiaans on the 22nd and the 23rd of July following orders from General Couzy. Subsequently Brigadier Bastiaans too put a heavy emphasis on the observations originating from the group of 55. According to him he was only confronted with those during a telephone conversation with one of them after his return from Zagreb, which forced him to make considerable adjustments to his report and his conclusions. Brigadier Bastiaans wondered why General Couzy acted the way he did - General Couzy had been the first to have contact with the released, and Brigadier Bastiaans wondered why if he had heard something from them he had not reported that to him before Bastiaans started work with his debriefing team.¹⁴⁵⁴

2. Reporting human-rights violations – methodological problems

Besides the level of knowledge of General Couzy it is also important to establish the level of knowledge at the UN, where there was also a great need to ascertain what had happened and what would be an appropriate response. A considerable number of questions need to be answered to be able to determine that. The first question that should be answered is exactly which attempts were undertaken by the UN to obtain information on possible human-rights violations. There should be an investigation of what the Dutchbat military personnel observed and when this was reported. This requires a comparison of what the different witnesses reported and to whom on the various occasions, to determine what differences occurred if any, and to see how the recipients of this information dealt with the information and what value they attached to it. And before that there should be a study of the factors influencing the weighting of the data coming from the reporting person.

This concerns to what extent certain observations were ignored on purpose or trivialised in error. The final and most important question is whether the understanding that was obtained with hindsight on the basis of the available information could and should have led to that same understanding at the time. Although this is a question that concerns all those involved at the UN, it particularly concerns the Dutch as much of the subsequent criticism was directed at them. This applies to General Couzy in particular, because he appeared to 'make light of' the human-rights violations *in the eyes of the media*. It is important to determine to what extent this criticism is justified.

Answering the above questions forms the framework for the following account. Not all questions can be dealt with systematically, because of their mutual effects and the story line. A number of questions are therefore considered in a separate analysis and conclusion at the end, when the answers to some other questions are clear. In order not to stray from the line of reasoning, the question of the truthfulness of the individual reports is only considered when it is immediately relevant to the analysis. Furthermore, the reports themselves were fully dealt with in Chapter 3 of this section. However the manner in which the responsible authorities and/or persons, such as the UN and General Couzy, dealt with these sources and to which actions this led is considered. It is also important to consider whether their doubts were 'reasonable'. Sometimes hindsight seemingly indicates that certain sources were 'right' in their reading of the events and were ignored erroneously, but it may equally concern a prediction coming true by coincidence. Therefore it is important to determine the validity of the premise of a prediction (e.g. of a mass murder) rather than determining with hindsight who was

¹⁴⁵³ He is to have said this to the American journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner Roy Gutman of *Newsday*, who in turn reported this in a telephone conversation with Bert Kreemers. According to Kreemers, Smith was 'sweeping his own street at the cost of his own military personnel'. NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Memo H.P.H. Kreemers to Minister, V95018652, 'publiciteit Srebrenica', 03/10/95.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Interview G. Bastiaans, 26/10/00 and 20/11/00.

right. There can only be a fruitful discussion of the responsibilities of the authorities involved when this is clear.

3. Dutch reception of KHO-5 and the 55 ex-hostages

On Saturday afternoon, the 15th of July Minister Voorhoeve and the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army General Couzy were in Soesterberg at a parents' day, organized by Couzy and the Home-front Committee for the benefit of worried relatives and relations of Dutchbat members. The relatives' tension had increased considerably - they followed the news in every possible way, but that did not provide many answers regarding the fate of their nearest and dearest. In many cases the concern worsened and the number of questions increased. Countless parents, relatives and friends phoned the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, which looked like it might collapse under the pressure. There were days when they received as many as thousand telephone calls.¹⁴⁵⁵ Therefore Commander Couzy had suggested they gather all those involved in Soesterberg for a 'home-front contact afternoon', which offered the opportunity to provide further information. Minister Voorhoeve had decided spontaneously to be present too.

In as far as possible under the circumstances, the afternoon seemed to serve its purpose. Minister Voorhoeve stated that the government was doing everything in its powers to bring home the battalion as soon as possible. Furthermore he spoke positively of the deployment of the men in Bosnia. The initially downbeat mood of his audience improved noticeably, although they actually heard no current information. On behalf of Karremans Minister Voorhoeve said that nobody should worry. In his speech Commander Couzy gave the advice not to send 'the boys' on holiday immediately on coming home, as they would probably have a lot to cope with.¹⁴⁵⁶

During that same afternoon the first reports were coming in from Sarajevo on a possible release of the 55 Dutchbat military personnel taken hostage. However the news went no further than Minister Voorhoeve and General Couzy, as it was still unclear whether the 55 hostages would indeed be released. It was also not known exactly who would be released, as the figure quoted in the reports exceeded 55. Those figures may have incorporated the twenty Dutchbat members of KHO-5 and the First-Aid group who had left the enclave with the logistical convoy (known as Lima-7) returning to Zagreb at that time. After the fall of Srebrenica, this convoy had received permission to provision Dutchbat and some Dutchbat members were allowed to return to Zagreb. The confusion resulting from the simultaneous movement of the medical group and the group of the 55 hostages would only increase the concerns of the families and relatives, and the news was therefore kept quiet.¹⁴⁵⁷

The hostages did not return to the compound in Potocari, but to Serbia, which was a surprise for everyone, and made Zagreb the most obvious place for their reception rather than the Dutch logistics base in Busovaca, just north of Sarajevo. To get to Busovaca they would again need to travel via the Republika Srpska, which was out of the question. As set out in Chapter 9 of Section III, the Hague assumed that Dutchbat would go to Busovaca – against the wishes of Karremans – because of the available facilities and the geographical logic. The Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Van Baal, who was also involved with the organization of their return, intended to give the battalion a first short operational debriefing in isolation in Busovaca.¹⁴⁵⁸ None of this appeared possible, and an alternative reception had to be organized quickly. Physically this did not pose too much of a problem, as Camp Pleso, the UN base near Zagreb, had a Dutch contingent quartered there permanently. There was a veritable Holland House and sufficient accommodation. Subsequently it became clear that the site also had some disadvantages, but these were not insurmountable.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Interview H.A. Couzy, 07/09/98, 14/09/98 and 17/09/98.

¹⁴⁵⁶ 'Terugkeer 13^e: groot feest' (Return on 13th: big party), *Falcon*, (1995) (July/August) pp.2-5.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Interview H.A. Couzy, 07/09/98, 14/09/98 and 17/09/98.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 01/11/01.

As advice to the relatives already indicated, General Couzy himself thought that the biggest problem would be the psychological state of the soldiers: 'We had absolutely no experience of how military personnel returns after such a thing', said General Couzy.¹⁴⁵⁹ However this is relative – his deputy Van Baal stated the 'enormous expertise' acquired - particularly after the missions to Lebanon in the 1970s/1980s, which had provided countless useful lessons on that issue.¹⁴⁶⁰ In the meantime psychological guidance for troops to be deployed was commonplace. Apart from incidental involvement with all sorts of problems and calamities, there was a standard psychological final debriefing to which all participants in a mission were subjected. The aim was the prevention of risks, such as a subsequent occurrence of post traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS).

The deployed battalions had their own psychologist. The psychologist of Dutchbat III, Lieutenant Colonel P.M. (Paul) Sanders, had already started with such a final debriefing at the time the enclave was attacked. He continued this after the 13th, when the bulk of the Displaced Persons had left the compound. Lieutenant Colonel Sanders had done so in consultation with his colleague in the Netherlands, his predecessor at Dutchbat II, W.J. (Wil) Martens.¹⁴⁶¹ This psychologist had been deployed for the first time in 1992 and in 1994 he served another three months in Dutchbat II of Lieutenant Colonel P. Everts. In November that year, Wil Martens had experienced the leave convoy near Zvornik being taken hostage, which had lasted some days.¹⁴⁶² From the hostages' reactions it became clear to him that some had developed feelings of fear.¹⁴⁶³ Martens' personal experience was one of the reasons why General Couzy approached him to discuss the care and reception.

Later on Couzy dated all his initiatives, including the contact with Martens, on the 15th of July, but his recollection is likely to be incorrect. According to the notes of Deputy Public Relations Director Bert Kreemers, there had been a meeting in the afternoon of Friday the 14th of July concerning the care and reception of the two Dutchbat groups. The probable reason for the meeting was that day's message that the KHO group would be allowed to leave on the 15th. Both Minister Voorhoeve and Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen were present at this meeting. General Couzy stated that the main issue was the way the military personnel coped with their experience. Therefore an extensive team of psychologists and MDD members (Defence Social Work Team) were ready to provide care and reception, if possible, in Busovaca.¹⁴⁶⁴ Minister Voorhoeve's detailed notes also mention a conversation about the manner in which the Dutchbat members could best cope with their experiences.¹⁴⁶⁵

According to diary entries by Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen, General Couzy said that the plan came from the Dutch Army psychologists.¹⁴⁶⁶ General Couzy recalls that he decided on his plans after a discussion with the psychologist Martens. The conversation centred on the question whether it was desirable to have extensive psychological debriefing in Zagreb. According to General Couzy, Martens intimated that the Dutchbat members' only wish would be to return home as quickly as possible. He thus passed on a message he had received from the enclave - psychologist Sanders and social worker captain E. Dijkman later stated that in Potocari they had got wind of plans for a psychological debriefing, for which a special team was to be flown in. Such a set-up implied that the Dutchbat members would be detained a few days before being able to travel home. Both Sanders and Dijkman did not think that a good idea, because they did not think it necessary and the Dutchbat

1459 Interview H.A. Couzy, 07/09/98, 14/09/98 and 17/09/98.

1460 Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 01/11/01.

1461 Interviews P.M. Sanders, 12/12/00 and 13/12/00; W.J. Martens, 05/11/98.

1462 See: *Dutchbat on tour, juli'94 – januari'95* (Delft [1995]) pp. 131-137.

1463 See e.g. the statements of Sgt. Tiny Jansen: 'Doemdenken begon pas na afloop van gijzeling' (Defeatism only began once hostage-taking was over), *De Volkskrant*, 05/12/94.

1464 Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan*, p. 89. The detailed notes of Voorhoeve also mention a conversation about the manner in which the Dutchbat members could best cope with their experiences.

1465 'The best idea is to give them a day of rest in Santici.' The dates are problematic. The note is on 13 July, however the diary continues immediately to 15 July. Diary Voorhoeve, p. 120.

1466 NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. Diary entries H.G.B. van den Breemen.

members only wanted to go home as quickly as possible. Therefore Sanders and Dijkman had alarmed the battalion.¹⁴⁶⁷

There was a similar type of discussion during the following week around the care and reception of the rest of Dutchbat, and it is not impossible that in the recollections these two events have merged. The 15th was the last day before Marten's holiday and therefore he subsequently did not play a role for a while. He recalls that he had a discussion with General Couzy, during which he indicated that he did not see any direct cause for a psychological debriefing, because he had heard no noises 'of something being up'. Media reports that did point to traumatic events he took with a pinch of salt. On the basis of his own experiences in Bosnia he did not have high expectations of the reliability of the media who reported horror stories by the Displaced Persons.¹⁴⁶⁸

It is therefore certain that General Couzy took the decision to subject the Dutchbat members who arrived in Zagreb on the 15th of July to a psychological debriefing against the advice of Martens (and indirectly Sanders). General Couzy's reason for wanting to debrief the Dutchbat members was that such a debriefing would tell him whether it was responsible to let the Dutchbat members go home immediately. Later he said to NIOD in relation to Martens' advice: 'He was totally against it. I thought that sounded none too professional'. He also stated: 'I came along, because I believed that if you act against advice, someone needs to be there who is prepared to take decisions and responsibility'.¹⁴⁶⁹

However, General Couzy had other reasons to travel to Zagreb and to keep the released hostages together for the time being and to have them debriefed. To NIOD he indicated that he was driven by another reason, i.e. that he was 'terribly interested' in what exactly happened in Srebrenica: 'I had snippets of information, but large elements were missing'. Those elements not only concerned the way in which the OPs were overrun, but also another issue: 'My hidden agenda was that I had doubts about the leadership of the battalion commander.' The old rumours about Karremans' alleged unsuitability as battalion commander reared up again; in this context a conversation with KHO was also desirable 'because I really had a lot of questions on this issue'.¹⁴⁷⁰ The tensions between KHO and the battalion leadership had not escaped The Hague, and therefore General Couzy had good reason to be the first to check out the situation in Zagreb. Therefore what had been termed a psychological debriefing for him also had aspects of an operational debriefing. In the recollections of the spokesperson Major M. Beneker who had also travelled to Zagreb, General Couzy's operational questions played a role right from the start.¹⁴⁷¹

General Couzy travelled to Zagreb early on Sunday morning. The *Fokker Friendship* which left from Soesterberg carried not only the aforementioned spokesperson, but also his Warrant Officer R. Olijeve and a quickly gathered team of Majors, comprising the psychologist S. Berendsen of the AIH (Individual Support Department), and E. Schenkers and R. de Wolf of the MDD (Defence Social Work Team). At eleven o'clock in the morning they arrived in Zagreb, shortly before the plane from Belgrade with the 55 Dutchbat members landed at the airport.

4. KHO-5's journey to and arrival in Zagreb

The KHO and First-Aid group had arrived late on the previous evening, the 15th of July. They had received temporary care and reception from Chaplain N. Meurkens who was already in Pleso and from the psychologist Lieutenant Colonel Venhovens, who had been called up especially. On the 14th of July Lieutenant Colonel Venhovens had received orders from the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to travel to Zagreb to provide care and reception for initially just the KHO team. At that time he was the psychologist of the 42^e Battalion Limburgse Jagers, Dutchbat Griffin, that was to relieve the plagued

¹⁴⁶⁷ Interview P.M. Sanders and E. Dijkman, 12/12/00 and 13/12/00.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Interview W.J. Martens, 05/11/98.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Interview H.A. Couzy, 07/09/98, 14/09/98 and 17/09/98.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Interview H.A. Couzy, 07/09/98, 14/09/98 and 17/09/98.

¹⁴⁷¹ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

Dutchbat III as Dutchbat IV whilst awaiting the arrival of the relief Ukrainian battalion. As customary, a so-called reconnaissance group went to Srebrenica to prepare the relief. As it was a rule of thumb that the psychologist would be the first to enter the deployment area and the last to leave it, Venhovens was a member of that group. Furthermore, he hoped that he could assist his colleague Sanders with the final psychological debriefing in Potocari. His own commander, Lieutenant Colonel T. Damen, had agreed.¹⁴⁷²

On the 4th of July this company left Zagreb and consisted of the pre-deployment of 14 people, six Dutchbat III drivers and KHO-6, the surgical team led by Naval captain Hegge that was to be the long-awaited relief of the KHO-5 team of surgeon Kremer. The group encountered difficulties at Iron Bridge where it wanted to drive into the Republika Srpska. With hindsight and in the light of the subsequent attack on Srebrenica it is logical that only the KHO group was allowed through, as its members were not or only lightly armed. One of the military personnel even heard from a VRS soldier: 'In fourteen days Srebrenica will be gone'. He did not do anything with that information, 'as he did not know whether to take it seriously'.¹⁴⁷³ The KHO group arrived in Srebrenica on the 4th of July, the rest stayed behind.

After taking leave of KHO 6 those staying behind waited another night. On the 5th of July they tried again in vain and disappointed they withdrew to Hotel Yugoslavia in Belgrade where they awaited further developments. Finally on the 18th of July they returned without success – some to the battalion's home base in the German town Seedorf and others to the Netherlands.

On orders of The Hague Lieutenant Colonel Venhovens had travelled to Zagreb some days before. As already mentioned Chaplain Meurkens was there too. He had arrived in June to relieve a colleague who needed leave. He knew the region because he had been there the previous year. His reports had made an impression on his superiors in The Hague, which was a reason why Army Head Chaplain J. Broeders had asked him to relieve his colleague in Zagreb. There was another reason for asking Chaplain Meurkens to go to Zagreb - there had been an uncomfortable feeling around Srebrenica for some time. Chaplain Meurkens was part of the pastoral team of the Christian military trade union. In May there had already been some signals that 'it was going the wrong way' in the Eastern Bosnian enclave.¹⁴⁷⁴ The sad truth of that the chaplain experienced himself barely one month later - on the 9th of July he led the farewell ceremony for private Raviv van Renssen in Split. Almost one week later he had to make preparations for the care and reception of Dutch soldiers who had experienced all sorts of horrific things. Chaplain Meurkens had some dark sentiments. Although his first concern was to have all the Dutch as quickly and safely out of Srebrenica, he feared for the fate of the local people. On the 12th of July he faxed to Army Head Chaplain Broeders: 'In terms of the Muslims there is a threat of genocide. The worst case scenario is for this to happen whilst the world watches'.¹⁴⁷⁵

In that ominous atmosphere, Chaplain Meurkens and Lieutenant Colonel Venhovens consulted on the KHO's care and reception immediately after the Venhovens' arrival on Saturday morning, the 15th of July. The psychologist said that the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff had made him responsible and that reinforcement had been promised. As this would only arrive on Sunday, it was agreed that Chaplain Meurkens would remain on stand-by for the debriefing. That was in line with the tasks of spiritual carers who were involved with the final stages of deployments by holding e.g. so-called reintegration discussions. Lieutenant Colonel Venhovens and Chaplain Meurkens also agreed that the chaplain would deal with the first care and reception in Holland House.¹⁴⁷⁶

Only at quarter past twelve in the evening of Saturday the 15th of July did convoy Lima 7 arrive at the Pleso base after a journey of seventeen hours. In the morning, shortly after leaving Srebrenica,

1472 P. Venhovens, '*Verslag uitzending 1* (NL) VN INFBAT (Dutchbat Griffin)', p. 5. Access given by the author.

1473 Feitenrelaas Debriefing Srebrenica, p. 111.

1474 Interview N. Meurkens, 24/03/00.

1475 NIOD, Coll. Meurkens. Fax Chaplain N. Meurkens to Army Head Chaplain J. Broeders, 12/07/95.

1476 Interview P.M.P. Venhovens, 17/11/00.

irregular Bosnian-Serb soldiers had held up the convoy in the Zvornik area and weapons and vehicles had been stolen. In temperatures of 35 degrees Celsius, the KHO team had spent hours under the tarpaulin of the four-tonne truck. The atmosphere had been touchy, not only for the KHO team. Shortly after the convoy had started moving again and on its way to the border crossing near Iron Bridge, convoy leader A. Solkesz heard over the radio from one of his drivers that the hold-up had been in the news everywhere. During the twelve-o'clock news bulletin, the World Service had announced that a convoy of the so-called Log/T-bat had been held up in Bosnia. It was said that there had only been material damage, but Solkesz was wound up about 'the UN, my own leadership or whoever got it into his head to inform the press at this stage'.¹⁴⁷⁷ They were still in an unsafe area, and he did not want to provoke the Bosnian Serbs in any way.

Happily nothing further happened. Not long after the Bosnian-Serb checkpoint was passed with much cheering and the convoy came to a halt at the other side of the Drina before the Serbian border crossing. At that moment a satellite telephone message was received from Opsroom (the operations room) at the Busovaca home base that 'on behalf of the Minister of Defence' everyone was subject to a ban on speaking in public 'concerning the events of the morning, but also concerning our visit to the enclave'.¹⁴⁷⁸ Solkesz passed the message on to his drivers via the radio. During the hold-up at Iron Bridge Solkesz informed the KHO team of the ban on speaking in public. Colonel Kremer, supported by some others, let it be known immediately that he considered the ban ridiculous 'and that he would not obey it should the situation occur'.¹⁴⁷⁹ However, the ban on speaking in public was not new for him – when the convoy had left Potocari that morning, Karremans had given the order 'NOT to provide info until DB-3 is back in NL'.¹⁴⁸⁰

The reception in Pleso, almost half a day later, also seemed to have been organized in an atmosphere of privacy. Everything was set up for the immediate protection of the KHO group. When the vehicles arrived at the base at quarter past twelve in the evening, the convoy was met at the gate by someone from Logbase (the Dutch logistics base in Pleso). He explained what would happen further with the group – on arrival at the permanent parking area the KHO group would be taken to Holland House immediately and separately from the rest. Solkesz and his men would only be welcome there after the KHO team had left. Again it was impressed upon everyone that it was absolutely prohibited to talk to the press.¹⁴⁸¹ It appeared that the press was present, but the only two journalists that were allowed on the parking area were kept at a safe distance. According to the report of one of them, the vehicles had to continue to the 'dump', a sort of vehicle graveyard for scrapped UN vehicles. The lorries were parked in such a way that the access roads to the site were blocked to the press. Having reported off duty, the 'medics' at that point transferred to a minibus that took them Holland House.¹⁴⁸²

The very first care and reception was provided by Lieutenant Colonel Venhovens and according to some KHO members an 'unnecessary ritual'.¹⁴⁸³ After showering, changing and handing over the weapons, they arrived in Holland House to eat and drink around half past one. Everyone was very quiet at first, but after the meal the first stories started to come out and it became clear from which

¹⁴⁷⁷ Solkesz, *Hier Romeo!*, p. 142; interview A. Solkesz, 15/11/00.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Solkesz, *Hier Romeo!*, p. 143; Solkesz could not recall whether the message came from the contingent commander Lieutenant Colonel Verschraegen or from his own commander, Lieutenant Colonel Kablau. Interview A. Solkesz, 15/11/00.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Solkesz, *Hier Romeo!*, p. 143; interview A. Solkesz, 15/11/00.

¹⁴⁸⁰ SMG, 1004. 'Bericht C-DB-3 dtg 150800B JUL 95', in: 'Bericht diverse bronnen aan sitcen-A/ BLS', 15/07/95.

Shortly afterwards, this fact was also known to some media representatives. See: Gerard van Gils (ANP), 'Dutchbat heeft even geen trek in snacks' (Dutchbat has no appetite for snacks right now), *De Limburger*, 17/07/95.

¹⁴⁸¹ Solkesz, *Hier Romeo!*, p. 148; interview A. Solkesz, 15/11/00; see also: Gerard van Gils (ANP), 'Dutchbat heeft even geen trek in snacks', *De Limburger*, 17/07/95.

¹⁴⁸² G. van Gils (ANP), 'Dutchbat heeft even geen trek in snacks', *De Limburger*, 17/07/95.

¹⁴⁸³ NIOD, Coll. Meurkens. Fax Chaplain N. Meurkens to Army Head Chaplain J. Broeders, 18/07/95.

‘miniature Goma’¹⁴⁸⁴ they had escaped. The expression was in a fax in which Chaplain Meurkens reported his findings to his head army chaplain some days later. After he had reported the stories about the increasing ‘third degree’ by the Bosnian Serbs, he wrote:

‘sometimes there was the vision of fear that they would never get out. Some farewell letters had already been written ... The last month was really *unheimisch* - continuous mortar attacks or whatever that stuff is called, often really close by. ‘It is a miracle that we survived and that there were no more casualties bar poor Raviv!’ says one. And then particularly the experiences of the last week that are etched in your memory. How the Serbs took the town, combed house by house, streams of Displaced Persons started travelling... How the Serbs operated a perfect selection system, all able men of 12 [sic] to 60 years old were picked out and deported in lorries. How at a certain point a group of men was deported and a little later a number of volleys were heard, which must have been execution on the spot. How there are more statements about executions. Also witness accounts of raping women, young girls even. Other abuses, even mutilation of people. And then the indescribable chaos during the flight of thousands of women, children, old people. People who were run over, could have been trampled, which was sometimes only just avoided by the intervention of our people. People who were dying along the way. ... The penetrating stench that made you sick, shit everywhere, filth to make you puke.’

Meurkens stated to Broeders that he had no reason to doubt the veracity of these stories: ‘These are just fragments I believe. There is much more to come...!!!’.¹⁴⁸⁵

5. The group of 55’s journey to and arrival in Zagreb

The group of 55 hostages comprised the crew of the OPs that had fallen in Bosnian-Serb hands. A number of them, members of OP-U, had been captive in Bratunac since the 8th of July. On the 9th of July they had the company of the crews of OP-S, and on the 12th of July of the crews of OPs N, R and Q. Their colleagues of OPs C and K had ended up in a school building in Milici.¹⁴⁸⁶

At the latter location there was an unreal atmosphere, as - much to the amazement of the Dutchbat members - the local hotel was populated by tourists who were busy making use of the swimming pool. That luxury was not available to the Dutch – they had to bath in the polluted river. Whilst they were cooling down in the river countless buses arrived from the north, which continued on the road to Vlasenica and Kladanj. The military personnel realized quickly that the enclave’s population was being deported. Some soldiers waved to the overflowing buses - there was no response

The Dutchbat members were treated well by the VRS (military forces of the Bosnian Serbs) in Milici. The men were fed well and were even allowed to phone home. On the 15th of July, after a stay of a few days, the Dutchbat members were put on a bus that took them to Bratunac. The road taken went via the turn-off at Konjevic Polje to Bratunac over the roads that formed a line around the western and northern part of the enclave and which was to be crossed by the column of enclave dwellers which was starting on the way to Tuzla. It appeared later that some Dutchbat members made more or less similar observations during this journey. At least ten of them had observed a strong smell of corpses and here and there they saw corpses lying on the side of the road. At a certain point their

1484 A reference to the Displaced Persons camp Goma in D.R. Congo (Zaire), where Displaced Persons from Rwanda lived in inhumane conditions and that made world news in 1994.

1485 NIOD, Coll. Meurkens. Fax Chaplain N. Meurkens to Army Head Chaplain J. Broeders, 18/07/95.

1486 SMG 1006/20. Military History Section, ‘*Chronologisch overzicht van de gebeurtenissen in de enclave Srebrenica 6-21 juli 1995*’, p. 34.

bus stopped near a lorry, whose trailer was filled with bodies. The estimates of the military personnel range from ten to fifty bodies. A 'shovel' was loading the dead bodies in the back. Nearby there were little piles of clothing, shoes and personal effects. On a side path there were lorries, a hole and a bulldozer visible. Elsewhere on a grass field several rows with around fifty pairs of shoes were observed. The observations made a big impression.

In Bratunac the men from Milici were reunited with their colleagues. They too had information that did not bode well. Some had made contacts locally with Bosnian Serbs. Around the 13th of July they saw a four-tonne truck probably containing Muslim men. When asked the caretaker of the school in which they were kept prisoner said that it concerned a transport of 'key figures' who were going to be screened for war crimes. The innocent were to be transferred to the football stadium in Bratunac, as a stopover to the promised freedom in Tuzla, whilst the others were going to be tried. 'The caretaker made it clear that those who had committed crimes would be murdered.'¹⁴⁸⁷ Some Dutchbat members heard stories from Bosnian-Serb military about bloody cleansings, gruesome rapes and a 'manhunt' of some thousand Muslims – the latter was a story that would play a role during the subsequent events.

On the 15th of July - during talks in Belgrade between Milosevic and Bildt amongst others - it had been agreed by Generals Smith and Mladic that Dutchbat would be allowed to leave *at the end of the following week*. The immediate result of the meeting was furthermore that the hostages were to be released that very same day. Towards the end of Saturday morning the 15th of July, the 55 Dutchbat hostages were taken by bus with escort at high speed to Zvornik, where they were put across the border with Serbia. At half past seven in the evening they were in the suburb Ribarsko Ostrvo in Novi Sad, where they received the first care and reception from military attaché Colonel A. Oudwater and a Swedish UN Colonel.¹⁴⁸⁸ A Dutch journalist, Charles Sanders of *De Telegraaf*, and a photographer were also present.

Colonel Oudwater quickly heard the first stories pointing to suspected war crimes. There were reports of executions of male Bosnian Muslims, of the lorry full of corpses and the bulldozer digging a hole, as well as observations of (naked) bodies along the way to Zvornik. There were also stories about observations of around fifty to a hundred dead in Potocari. With hindsight the reference to Potocari is particularly intriguing, but it is difficult to determine whether Colonel Oudwater's rendering was correct or whether there were some misunderstandings. The hostages had all come from the OPs and they had not been back to Potocari. Further details were missing, because the hotel where Colonel Oudwater spoke with the Dutchbat members was not a suitable location for thorough conversations. Back in Belgrade, Colonel Oudwater discussed his findings with temporary *chargé d'affaires* Robert Engels, for whom the stories fitted with the uncomfortable suspicions he had had from some days. His employee Stella Ronner had good contacts with journalists and had heard all sorts of rumours. Therefore Engels took Colonel Oudwater immediately to the Dutch representation in order to draw up a code telegram in which he pointed out the possible implications of these reports.¹⁴⁸⁹

The code dated the 16th of July was sent to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the heading 'limited distribution': Minister (M), Junior Minister (S), DGPZ, Minister of Defence and the Dutch Army Crisis Staff. It is probably at Foreign Affairs where the code received the hand written note that 'mindef' should be read as 'vbdcen' (the Defence liaison centre that distributes messages) and 'sitcen' as 'MID' (Dutch Military Intelligence). It cannot be traced who received the information in the end, but Engels never received any response.¹⁴⁹⁰

¹⁴⁸⁷ Feitenrelaas Debriefing 'srebrenica', p. 290. See also the remainder of Section 4.5.15, '*Waarnemingen op 15 juli*', pp. 290-292. For an interview with one of the hostages, Martin van der Zwan, see: F. Lardenoye, 'Ik dacht: nu zijn er geweest' (I thought: now we've had it), *Oplinie*, 05/08/95.

¹⁴⁸⁸ The 'swedish UN Colonel' is mentioned by journalist Charles Sanders: 'Ik moest rennen voor mijn leven' (I had to run for my life), *De Telegraaf*, 17/07/95.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Interview R. Engels, 21/05/99.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Interview R. Engels, 21/05/99.

The code also suggested some attention be paid to this subject during the debriefing of the 55.¹⁴⁹¹ Given the time it was sent, it is unlikely that the message reached General Couzy and his team before their departure. Neither are there any indications that they were informed by the Netherlands in Zagreb.

On Sunday morning at half past eleven, these 55 Dutchbat members arrived by plane in Zagreb. They were taken to the American MASH (field hospital) in Pleso for immediate medical screening. Three of them required a drip, because of dehydration symptoms. In the meantime it was getting very busy in Holland House – a large number of journalists was steadily coming in. A little later Captain Wout Mulders summoned all the press members to leave Holland House, for ‘security reasons’. Only then did the group of 55 come in gradually to await their turn to be debriefed.¹⁴⁹²

6. Couzy’s role during the psychological debriefing

Immediately after the arrival on the 16th of his colleagues who had travelled with General Couzy, the psychologist Paul Venhovens organized a meeting to discuss the approach.¹⁴⁹³ The newcomers had also received instructions on the plane on the way to Zagreb. General Couzy later stated that on board ‘I had in fact briefed the team on what I expected from them. I did so by asking questions, as I had never experienced this in my life. They thought it was a good idea and they were very enthusiastic.’¹⁴⁹⁴ What General Couzy expected became clear very quickly. Paul Venhovens too got to know General Couzy’s decisiveness. The Commander took the lead immediately after his arrival in Pleso. The psychologist quickly got the strong impression – which subsequently turned out to be correct – that General Couzy had ‘all sorts of priorities’ and that he also had ‘a hidden agenda’.¹⁴⁹⁵

According to Lieutenant Colonel Venhovens in Zagreb General Couzy had the idea to unite the KHO group and the group of 55 with the rest of the battalion in Busovaca - the care and reception centre that had been planned for the entire battalion. The people in Camp Pleso would have to move to Busovaca, but the problem was that the precise date on which the rest of the battalion would leave the enclave was not yet known - there was just the expectation that this would not take too long. Lieutenant Colonel Venhovens says he protested strongly against this idea, because he feared that it could produce psychological damage in those already released: ‘You would let them drift, because it was not clear when Dutchbat would come out of the enclave’. General Couzy then wanted the debriefing team to check how those involved would respond to his idea. When Paul Venhovens indicated that this too would cause problems, General Couzy no longer insisted.

At that point Lieutenant Colonel Venhovens still assumed that the entire operation was to be completed by around ten o’clock in the evening. According to the psychologist, General Couzy was shocked when he heard that and he let it be known that he wanted to take a decision on whether people required further treatment on arrival in the Netherlands or whether they could go on holiday immediately before six o’clock. It was only later that it became clear to the debriefing team that a press conference had been planned for that time.¹⁴⁹⁶ General Couzy later denied that the time of the press conference had determined the time frame. According to him the issue was to take a decision on the question as to whether the men could go on holiday immediately or whether they needed to undergo a number of ‘coping sessions’ as a group. The Commander felt that he could not leave his men on tenterhooks for a whole evening or even a night: ‘It was simply a practical set-up. I wanted to stop at half past five. Then I get the information and I can tell them at seven o’clock what the decision is. They can either be really joyous and happy or they can deal with the pain of not going on holiday the next

1491 DCBC, 866. *Stg-confi* code Belgrade to Foreign Affairs, Engels 81, 16/07/95; interview R. Engels, 21/05/99.

1492 NIOD, Coll. Meurkens. Fax Chaplain N. Meurkens to Army Head Chaplain J. Broeders, 18/07/95.

1493 Interview P. Venhovens, 17/11/00.

1494 Interview H.A. Couzy, 07/09/98, 14/09/98 and 17/09/98.

1495 Interview P. Venhovens, 17/11/00.

1496 Interview P. Venhovens, 17/11/00.

day. Therefore I intervened in the time frame'.¹⁴⁹⁷ However, that immediately halved the time available for the debriefing. The balance sheet would have to be drawn up no later than half past four.

There was a time problem anyway. Initially it had been thought to debrief the KHO group too, because the group was not as big they could be briefed individually. However, the hold-up at Zvornik spoiled that plan. It did not appear necessary to debrief all the drivers involved directly, but about half a dozen of them did require attention and this put extra pressure on the debriefing team. It was therefore decided to debrief KHO and First-Aid group organically, i.e. as a unit. Professionally that did not pose a problem, as the importance of sharing experiences and emotions was beyond doubt. The numbers involved meant that the debriefing team also wanted to use this approach for the group of 55, where the ex-hostages would only be interviewed together with colleagues from their own OP. The problem cases would receive individual attention afterwards. It was not just the latter that came under pressure – halving the time also meant that the size of the groups was going to be doubled. Given the ninety minutes available for every group, that meant less room for every individual. One member of the group of 55 commented later on that the debriefing was limited to listening to ‘the biggest mouth’ and that he himself had only spoken for two minutes: “Then (too) they would look at their watch with the words “we will come to that later””.¹⁴⁹⁸

There were some snags in relation to the use of the psychological debriefing in providing answers to the question as to what was and what could have been known around the 16th of July in relation to the observations by the Dutchbat members. In that respect the criticism of the role the psychological debriefing played in Zagreb expressed by the doctor and psychoanalyst F.E.J. Bouricius in September 1995 is interesting. This was in relation to a complaint from the Yugoslavia tribunal that very little useable information had come from this debriefing. According to Bouricius, a psychological debriefing should only have happened if there were obvious complaints. Until that time the priority should have been an operational debriefing with the aim of gathering intelligence. Due to the time pressure, the latter came off badly.¹⁴⁹⁹

The aim of a psychological debriefing is indeed fundamentally different from an attempt to discover the truth. It concerns the prevention of psychological risks, such as a later incidence of PTSS. Lieutenant Colonel Venhovens: ‘During such a debriefing I’m not interested in discovering the truth. The point is that people must be able to express their story and their feelings’. During such sessions, the psychologist takes a backseat. In the case of group debriefings he stimulates the exchange of experiences and emotions, but he remains in the background as a listener. It is also crucial that he guarantees safety – the participants are told in advance that the conversation is strictly confidential. Lieutenant Colonel Venhovens therefore resolutely refused court requests to draw up reports. When General Couzy later asked him to be reticent towards the press, Paul Venhovens answered him almost indignantly that he would not speak to the press at any rate. For the same reason there is no formal report of the conversations. Afterwards Lieutenant Colonel Venhovens restricted himself to recording some general personal impressions.¹⁵⁰⁰

In the light of all this, it is understandable that the psychologist was less than pleased when General Couzy said he wanted to be present at a number of the group conversations. In the area of tension between professional ethics and military hierarchy, the Lieutenant Colonel lost out to the three-star General. General Couzy took a place in the group of all the KHO members, assisted by Venhovens and De Wolf. This group was incomplete, because three personnel members were too ill to

1497 Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

1498 NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Note by Royal Netherlands Army spokesperson W.P.P. Hartman on conversation with M. van der Zwan, 09/08/95.

1499 F.E.J. Bouricius, ‘Onduidelijke rol psychologen bij evaluatie Dutchbat’ (Unclear role for psychologists in evaluating Dutchbat), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 07/09/95.

1500 Interview P. Venhovens, 17/11/00 and 06/12/00.

take part. Their names and addresses were written down so that they could be approached after their return to the Netherlands.¹⁵⁰¹

As said, the Commander sought answers from the KHO group to his ‘many questions’ on the problems between the medics and the battalion leadership. In a manner of speaking he got what he was looking for. Strictly speaking he should not have been there, because this concerned a confidential contact between a psychologist and a client, but it is to his credit that he intervened little in the conversations. On the other hand this was not really necessary, as the opinions on the battalion leadership came out anyway. According to Venhovens the simple presence of the Commander produced ‘all anger against the Royal Netherlands Army organization’: ‘My pattern is always to ask people about their most positive and most negative experiences.’ Here one negative experience, the functioning of the battalion leadership, was starting to dominate the conversation.¹⁵⁰² However, that was the experience about which Couzy had been most curious.¹⁵⁰³

The manner in which General Couzy gathered knowledge on the actions of the battalion and the internal relationships and the role this was to play later will be dealt with further on in this chapter. The emphasis here is on the fate of the population and what General Couzy learned about that. The KHO members talked about this too, even though for them those internal relationships took the lead in the conversation. General Couzy made notes of them saying that on the road from Srebrenica to Potocari ‘there are many corpses with neck shots’. Someone reported an ‘execution of Muslim fighters’. Finally he noted ‘The Serbs picked out some people and deported them. They are convinced that the shots they heard were all just executions’.¹⁵⁰⁴

The next day, the 17th of July, in the morning before his return journey to Soesterberg, General Couzy had a separate 45-minute conversation with surgeon Kremer. It is unclear at who’s initiative this conversation took place. The Commander asked about frustrations with the battalion leadership, in response to which Kremer spoke about the invisibility of Karremans, the factual leadership of Franken, the conflict with *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the problems Kremer himself had had with the battalion leadership. Afterwards General Couzy asked him about the ‘terrible things concerning the Muslim Displaced Persons’. Kremer answered that the APC’s of B-company ‘drove over bodies to Potocari’ - referring to the withdrawal together with the Displaced Persons from Srebrenica city to Potocari. He also reported that there had been 5000 people in the compound in Potocari: ‘They were registered. L. col. K. has a list of all the men who were on the compound’.¹⁵⁰⁵ Kremer himself said later that he had also informed General Couzy of the photographs taken by Lieutenant Ron Rutten of the nine to ten executed men.¹⁵⁰⁶ However, nothing can be found regarding this in Couzy’s notes from Zagreb. The Commander was to announce this fact to world, but only a week later during his press conference of the 23rd of July in Camp Pleso in Zagreb.¹⁵⁰⁷

7. Couzy’s level of knowledge after the first debriefing

In order to find an answer to the many questions about Couzy’s role in the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica, the chronological order must be abandoned temporarily. The question of Couzy’s actions during the July days is so closely related to questions concerning his subsequent actions, that an analytical interim stage is required for the sake of clarity.

1501 P. Venhovens, ‘Verslag uitzending 1 (NL) VN INFBAT (Dutchbat Griffin), p. 13

1502 Interview P. Venhovens, 17/11/00 and 06/12/00.

1503 Interview H.A. Couzy, 17/09/98.

1504 SMG/Debrief. ‘Aantekening BLS. Strictly Confidential, [July 1995].

1505 SMG/Debrief. ‘Aantekening BLS. Strictly Confidential, [July 1995].

1506 Report G. Kremer to B. Kreemers on 08/09/98; see: B. Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan deel 2*, pp. 3, 37.

1507 Given that Lieutenant Rutten was only interviewed in Zagreb after the debriefing team had him pointed out, the question whether Kremer really did report this on the 17th is not academic when determining what Couzy knew and passed on or not.

Couzy has made it difficult for subsequent investigators to work out his knowledge level of those days. This is not only due to the silence and lack of clarity that characterized his actions for a long time, but also to the lack of written documents that could provide clarity on this issue. Couzy himself stated that he destroyed all his notes from those days later on.¹⁵⁰⁸ On further reflection this did not seem to apply to all the material. During the NIOD investigation, in the so-called debriefing archive, in which all the material was gathered from the subsequent big debriefing operation in Assen, an undated 'Note Commander of the Army' from Couzy was found. That document had a hand written note indicating that the document was to be accessed 'exclusively BLS/Ckab' (Couzy himself and his private secretary Colonel J.M.J. Bosch).¹⁵⁰⁹ The notes referred to the conversations with the released hostages of the OPs and KHO-5. As early as July 1995 Couzy's private secretary Colonel Bosch informed the Military History Section (SMG), who by order of Couzy had started an investigation of the existence of interview reports. Bosch added that he was not authorized to provide access to the investigators.¹⁵¹⁰

The former private secretary to the Commander of the Army Bosch, subsequently promoted to General, later stated to NIOD investigators that Couzy had returned 'very moved' by his encounters in Zagreb. Afterwards Couzy had written down for himself what he had heard, 'something he never or seldom did'. Bosch was one of the few who got to read something. A copy disappeared in his Srebrenica file, which he left behind for his successor when he changed post.¹⁵¹¹ The former private secretary believed he could remember a number of topics from the notes destroyed by Couzy, such as Dutchbat vehicles possibly driving over people. This did indeed occur in the record of Couzy's conversation with Kremer on the 17th of July. An extensive description of the moving farewell of Raviv van Renssen, notes of the words by the commander of his vehicle, had made the biggest impression on Bosch.¹⁵¹² This incident is not really described in the notes that were found, so there is the impression that General Couzy recorded more at the time than was eventually handed over.

In the retrieved 'Notes' General Couzy described his experiences with debriefing the KHO group and the separate conversation he had a day later with surgeon Kremer. It can also be deduced that he attended the conversation with the crew of OP-S. According to his notes, this was the first time General Couzy was confronted with negative statements about the ABiH, the military forces of the Bosnian Muslims and positive statements about the VRS, the military forces of the Bosnian Serbs. The psychologists had noticed that pattern too, and it appeared to be a precursor of the attitude General Couzy in particular noticed a week later amongst large parts of the main force of Dutchbat. According to Couzy's notes the military personnel also expressed criticism of Karremans, who had visited them in Bratunac after his conversation with Mladic. On that occasion he had not made an overwhelming impression on his men. The most noteworthy aspect of the report is that evidently none of the OP-S soldiers reported the incidents that attaché Oudwater had heard in Novi Sad.¹⁵¹³

The latter is perfectly plausible. It could be that General Couzy happened to come across a group of which the members had not made any observations on that issue. In the evening Chaplain Meurkens heard from the psychologists and the MDD members, with whom he was having a drink in the bar to celebrate his promotion that had just been announced, that they believed that 'some groups had experienced a relatively large and some a relatively small amount'.¹⁵¹⁴ However, it is equally possible that those particular Dutchbat members were reticent towards General Couzy for some unknown reason. Press spokesman Major Beneker noticed that the men were very quiet and had a

1508 The same applied to all his diaries from the beginning of the 1990s, which NIOD requested in the framework of a reconstruction of the decision making that led to deployment. To his own surprise there were only some notes concerning the question of the so-called 'leaking colonel'. Interview H.A. Couzy, 07/09/98.

1509 SMG/Debrief. 'Aantekening BLS. Strictly personal', [July 1995].

1510 Interview P. Groen, 17/02/99. The SMG study is considered further on in this Chapter.

1511 Interview J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99. During the NIOD study it became clear that the Cabinet archive had been purged and that it did not contain any other personal notes by the then former Commander of the Armed Forces.

1512 Interview J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99.

1513 SMG/Debrief. 'Aantekening BLS. Strictly Personal' [July 1995].

1514 NIOD, Coll. Meurkens. Fax Chaplain N. Meurkens to Army Head Chaplain A J. Broeders, 18/07/95.

defensive attitude when he talked about the stories he heard coincidentally.¹⁵¹⁵ From the report forms the Dutchbat members filled in for the UN on 16 July, and which will be discussed later, it appears that almost all of them had seen bodies along the way. Later during the debriefing in Assen, members of OP-S stated that when they were still on the OP, they got the impression that violent cleansing was happening around them. They heard all sorts of things that seemed to point to that, but they saw no victims.¹⁵¹⁶ One of the other Dutchbat members, Van der Zwan, later told how stories had been exchanged with the OP-S crew in Bratunac: ‘They were a little lower than we. They could hear the screaming of the Muslims on the positions around them who were being murdered. It was clearly a knife job’.¹⁵¹⁷

The possibility that General Couzy met a quiet group by coincidence is favoured by the fact that Couzy apparently did not exercise any self-censorship in his notes of the conversations with the KHO group. That makes it unlikely that he would not have recorded certain information. The question remains whether the Commander held more conversations than those recorded in his submitted ‘Note’ or whether he heard the results from the debriefing in another way and did or did not make notes of that.

Lieutenant Colonel Venhovens stated that Couzy never asked him what facts he heard from the Dutchbat members during the debriefing conversations, and because of the ethics already referred to he would not have been able to provide that. In his later notes, the psychologist recorded conversation topics as e.g. ‘seeing corpses along the road, bodies on a tractor in a field combined with little piles of clothes and personal non-military effects, such as passports, purses, papers’.¹⁵¹⁸ From his memoirs too it cannot be gleaned whether General Couzy heard anything about this. He refers to his conversation with Kremer in order to refer subsequently to conversations with ‘others’ who did not repeat Kremer’s observations: ‘They were contradictory opinions and observations, with which I could do little’. He had not heard of ‘mass murders’.¹⁵¹⁹

In November 1995 during the written preparation for the debate on the debriefing report, Dutch Parliament *did* ask the question which sources Couzy had available during his statement at the 23 July press conference that Dutchbat had not noticed any genocide. In the light of the above, the answer is not strange: ‘The Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army based his assessment during the press conference in Zagreb purely on the Dutch UN peacekeepers’ limited observations of some war crimes in Potocari. He was not aware of the observations of some of the 55 Dutch UN military personnel who were taken hostage and, as known, had been released earlier and were not present in Zagreb when Dutchbat arrived there. This concerns the observation of a dumper truck with corpses and a ‘shovel’ with corpses, which is included in the letter of the Minister of Defence to Parliament, dated 3 August 1995.’¹⁵²⁰

In 1998, Van Kemenade did not pay any attention to this issue during his investigation of a possible ‘hush up’ at the Ministry of Defence. During the conversation with General Couzy, Couzy was not asked about his conversations on 16 and 17 July. The General himself twice referred superficially to his first stay in Zagreb and he referred amongst others to a conversation with surgeon Kremer, albeit that he refers to this conversation in a totally different context.¹⁵²¹

1515 Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01. One of those stories, which he reported to Couzy, was that photos had been taken from the bus. When he asked about them he got no answer and he could not work out whether someone had boasted or whether things were kept silent.

1516 See amongst others: Feitenrelaas Debriefing ‘srebrenica’ (Assen 1995), pp. 135-136, 214, 217.

1517 Fred Lardenoye, ‘Ik dacht: nu zijn er geweest’, *Oplinie*, 05/08/95.

1518 P. Venhovens, ‘Verslag uitzending 1 (NL) VN INFBAT (Dutchbat Griffin)’, p. 14.

1519 Couzy, *Mijn jaren als bevelhebber*, p. 166.

1520 TK, Parliamentary session 1995-1996, 22 181, no.134, p.21; letter Minister of Defence, 03/08/95, in: TK, parliamentary session 1994-1995, 22 181, no. 111, p. 2. The quoted observations are a very brief representation of what the group of 55 and KHO-5 reported on the 15th and the 17th of July.

1521 J.A. van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*. Appendix 4, Reports of conversations and additional notes: Conversation with H.A. Couzy, 28/09/98.

Later, in 2000, doubts arose on the same issue during the hearings of the Temporary Committee For Deployment Decisions (TCBU). Some media quickly drew their conclusions. On 2 June 2000, *De Volkskrant* wrote under the headline ‘Top army knew of executions near Srebrenica’, that there ‘had been clarity much earlier about mass executions near Srebrenica [sic]’. Deputy Commander in Chief Van Baal was to have confirmed that during his conversation with the Temporary Committee for Deployment Decisions. He referred to the reports of the 55 ex-hostages who on ‘the 15th of July [sic] were in a plane on their way to the Netherlands’ and which concerned an observation of between fifty and a hundred corpses.

On reading the transcription of the reports it seemed less clear than the newspaper suggested. Van Baal gave a somewhat evasive answer to a question from committee member A. van Ardenne, whether Dutchbat members had reported their observations of the corpses to the top of the Army ‘before or during the plane journey from Zagreb to Soesterberg’. Van Baal answered: ‘As far as I know that happened’ and: ‘Afterwards I heard that he [Couzy] was told’. He did not know what had been done with the information.¹⁵²²

That the indication ‘50-100 bodies’ definitely did circulate in the week following the 16th of July is shown by a so-called ‘Deny Flight Intsum’ of the MID-KLu (an analysis of the KLu ‘Royal Netherlands Airforce’ by the Military Intelligence Service about maintaining the no-fly-zone over Bosnia) of the 19th of July 1995, which was copied to the Defence General Policy Directorate, the DCBC, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There was a specific reference to the debriefing of the Dutchbat members of some days before: ‘The first conversations with the released Dutch peacekeepers indicate that male Bosnians were executed – the estimate is between 50 and 100. Further debriefing is to provide particulars’.¹⁵²³ From which source this information originated is not clear from the documents, neither is it clear what the recipients did with it.

In the end Couzy more or less saved the situation by stating to the Temporary Committee for Deployment Decisions that in Zagreb he ‘probably’ had heard of the observations of a dumper truck with corpses, although he had his doubts at the time.¹⁵²⁴ Towards NIOD he spoke in more detail and without any trace of doubt. Outside the debriefings, Couzy had held a number of conversations, amongst others with the OP commanders:

‘There was a man, I believe a private, who told me that he saw that shovel with a couple of corpses in the boot. He had seen that from the bus. That is the only story of that nature, as far as I can remember. I did not hear any other stories from them. However, I did hear a story from one of the people of the hospital organization. That he had driven on a road – I believe from Potocari to Srebrenica – which according to him ‘was littered with corpses’. However, another said he had seen nothing. The times? Well there was five or ten minutes difference between them driving there. That story also stuck.’¹⁵²⁵

This lack of clarity gave Couzy reason to be very careful. The same applied to the other story: ‘When it was reported that one of the Dutchbat members had seen a lorry with some fifty dead from the bus, a question arose. I thought: be careful with drawing conclusions, as it could also be dead Muslims who fell in the enclave.’¹⁵²⁶

¹⁵²² NIOD, TCBU. TCBU, Hearing A.P.P.M. van Baal 14/06/00, 121U.doc-8.

¹⁵²³ DCBC, box 66. RNLAf Deny Flight Intsum Commcen MOD NL, stg confi Nato secret, dtg 191330z Jul 95. This sitrep went to a large number of addressees, including DCBC (Defence Crisis Management Centre).

¹⁵²⁴ NIOD, TCBU. TCBU, Hearing H.A. Couzy, 05/06/00, 106U.doc-25.

¹⁵²⁵ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01. Couzy claims to have destroyed his notes of the conversations with the OP commanders after publication of the debriefing report. Information from H.A. Couzy, 18/08/98.

¹⁵²⁶ Interview H.A. Couzy, 07/09/98.

So with hindsight the answer from the Minister of Defence to the Parliamentary question of 1995 was incorrect. Apart from the question how problematic the interpretation of the information was, Couzy did know. Against this background Couzy's attitude towards the media in July 1995 is placed in a clearer light.

8. Couzy, the group of 55 and the media

According to the psychologists and the MDD members, the debriefing of the 16th of July in Zagreb went 'smoothly and well'.¹⁵²⁷ At the end of the afternoon Couzy was able, in the words of Meurkens, '[to deliver] a clear and sound speech, where he managed to avoid tricky questions with evasive answers and by not dealing with them'.¹⁵²⁸

The Dutch and international press had turned up en masse and were kept at bay as far as possible. Press spokesman Beneker remembered that the theme was mainly 'careful'. Shortly before the press conference started, journalists told him the first stories of 'mass slaughter', probably from the mouths of the Displaced Persons who had received much attention from the media in Tuzla. Although not as explicitly as some days later, then too the word 'genocide' was bandied about. Just to be sure spokesman Beneker asked General Couzy whether facts were known that pointed to this. Through the grapevine he himself had heard of observations of bodies, but he had filed these in the category 'settling scores' - a category he had experienced during his earlier stay in Bosnia. Therefore spokesperson Beneker maintained to journalists that nothing had been reported that pointed to large-scale murders. When asked General Couzy told him that the debriefing had not produced any hard evidence on that issue.

That was also the line for the press conference, where General Couzy was asked 'ad nauseam' what he knew of observations of executions. However, the Commander maintained that there were no indications of large-scale murders.¹⁵²⁹ He also made a statement about Mladic that would be forgotten: 'As a military man I admire the manner in which he deals with things. That basic rules of combat are always: surprise the enemy and attack him where he is weakest. Well those starting points he applies daily with great insight'.¹⁵³⁰ That comment is remarkable, as Karremans suffered much criticism a week later when he made positive comments about the Bosnian-Serb General.

Twan Huys, a reporter from the Dutch television programme *Nova*, was also present at the press conference. He had arrived that morning in Zagreb from Tuzla, just before the first Dutchbat members arrived. Twan Huys' quick movements through Bosnia were the envy of many a colleague - he had managed to organize a UNHCR pass, which meant he could come on helicopter flights. Many journalists needed to cope with the problem of being committed to one location and had the greatest difficulty with movements. Poor connections meant they were not always aware of what news their colleagues, even those of their own paper, had managed to dig up in other locations. The editors 'at home' were difficult to reach and often did not have the ability or the time to analyse the flow of reports and to put them in context.¹⁵³¹ However Huys had the special advantage of being able to gather information from several different locations in a short time.

Huys had ended up in Tuzla after a tip from Margriet Prins, a Dutch UNHCR employee in Tuzla, who happened to travel with Huys' cameraman on the way back from leave in the Netherlands to Zagreb. She told him the real story was in Tuzla. The *Nova* reporter and his cameraman took the advice to heart and had left for the East-Bosnian town. There they did indeed hear the stories of the

¹⁵²⁷ NIOD, Coll. Meurkens. Fax Chaplain N. Meurkens to Army Head Chaplain J. Broeders, 18/07/95.

¹⁵²⁸ NIOD, Coll. Meurkens. Fax Chaplain N. Meurkens to Army Head Chaplain J. Broeders, 18/07/95

¹⁵²⁹ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

¹⁵³⁰ K. Bagijn, 'Karremans kon niets anders dan zuur kijken' (Karremans couldn't look anything but sour), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 21/07/95. This article was the result of images showing Mladic and Karremans raising a glass.

¹⁵³¹ Based on several conversations with former correspondents in Bosnia, such as Othon Zimmerman (*Algemeen Dagblad*), 28/04/00.

Displaced Persons who were staying on Tuzla Air Base. They also spoke with employees of aid organizations, who pointed to the disconcerting phenomenon that thousands of men were missing from the Displaced Persons from Srebrenica. On the way back from Tuzla via Split to Zagreb, Huys had also encountered the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation Pronk. On behalf of the government, the Minister had travelled to Bosnia to see what help the Netherlands could offer and to gather information about the events. On the basis of conversations he had held, Pronk stated frankly that there had been a 'genocide' – to which we will come back later in this chapter.¹⁵³²

When Twan Huys arrived in Zagreb on the 16th, he was especially alert. His attempts to have the stories confirmed by military personnel initially did not produce anything, because of the ban on speaking in public of which he had already got wind on the 15th. That morning in Holland House he had also encountered Chaplain Meurkens, whom he had met before. Twan Huys had asked him for an interview and the Chaplain had agreed, but then Twan Huys was made to leave Holland House together with the rest of the press. That afternoon he again sought contact with Chaplain Meurkens.

The Chaplain had been busy with the people who were being debriefed. Those still waiting their turn were hanging around on the sunny terrace of Holland House. Chaplain Meurkens claimed that whole afternoon he acted 'as a spider in a web'. He spoke with a large number of the Dutchbat members amongst whom he thought he detected 'layers' in the intensity of the experiences. Furthermore, some did not want to talk at all. Those who did talk specifically spoke about the worries the home front had experienced. But more came out: 'Again stories of particularly gruesome human-rights violations during the last week of Srebrenica', according to Chaplain Meurkens.¹⁵³³ During the conversation with NIOD he did not recall any details, but a week after the fall he told Elsevier journalist Bert Bommels at Pleso that one of the First-Aiders had seen two rapes – one of which was a girl - by VRS soldiers with their own eyes.¹⁵³⁴

When Huys approached him, Chaplain Meurkens said candidly that 'it was very bad'. The journalist explained the problem that he was not allowed to speak with the Dutchbat members and asked the Chaplain if he wanted to go in front of the cameras. 'I can remember that we sloped off secretly from Holland House. And somewhere at the back at a parking area, after long negotiations about the terminology he would use, he said something about what the Dutchbat members had seen. The implication was that it was serious.'¹⁵³⁵ The shots of Chaplain Meurkens were part of the Nova broadcast the next day, Monday the 17th of July. They showed a displaced woman from Tuzla who told a story of a rape. According to Huys other reports were also 'alarming'. Chaplain Meurkens then spoke in the programme of 'the most awful things' that had happened and that people 'were driven to death in all sorts of ways'. He also expressed the fear that the awful events would have a great 'impact' on the organization. The Dutchbat members would be 'haunted by the images'.¹⁵³⁶

'Do not say anything to the press'

Finally the broadcast contained some images that would make a strong contribution to the subsequent image of a closed Defence machinery. The departure of all released Dutchbat members was foreseen for Monday the 17th of July. Although they did not feel like it, this was accompanied by some ceremony. The press had already left, bar one or two such as Twan Huys' cameraman who happened to be in Holland House when he saw the military line up and General Couzy making moves to address them. Thus it came to pass that under the watchful eye of the camera General Couzy told his men that

¹⁵³² Interview T. Huys, 07/07/00 and 08/07/00. The next chapter deals with the manner in which Pronk arrived at his statements.

¹⁵³³ NIOD, Coll. Meurkens. Fax Chaplain N. Meurkens to Army Head Chaplain J. Broeders, 18/07/95.

¹⁵³⁴ Interview N. Meurkens, 24/03/00; Bert Bommels, 'De 'black box' Srebrenica'(The 'black box' of Srebrenica), *Elsevier*, 29/07/95.

¹⁵³⁵ Interview T. Huys, 07/07/00 and 08/07/00.

¹⁵³⁶ Nova, 17/07/95.

at home in the Netherlands they should not speak to the media about their experiences in order not to endanger their colleagues in Potocari. After this Nova broadcast the media quickly explained Couzy's actions as a 'ban on speaking in public', which was immediately refuted by the Ministry of Defence in a press release. Although this denial was formally correct, it ignored the fact that in military culture such a request from the highest commander is close to such a ban in practice.

The addressed Dutchbat members dealt differently with that instruction and the earlier calls for silence by Karremans and allegedly the Minister. Some did indeed maintain silence whilst their colleagues were still in Potocari¹⁵³⁷, whilst others did not wish to heed this urgent advice at all. To Huys' amazement, some military approached him almost immediately after the ceremony: 'At the end some men came to us of their own volition and said: "What we saw was very bad!" Then they talked about "dumper trucks with corpses" and "bodies on the way from Bratunac to Zvornik".'; said Twan Huys. He immediately went to General Couzy to confront him with that information and to say that he wanted to film this. He wanted to know what the situation was in relation to this ban on speaking to the press. Huys: 'He then gave a very plausible, reasonable explanation. Couzy urged me not to film and broadcast, as this would endanger the lives of those remaining in Potocari.' Although later he had serious doubts about whether he committed a cardinal error, Twan Huys agreed to General Couzy's request. In return he got the commitment that he could meet the main body of Dutchbat at the border, as soon as they were released.¹⁵³⁸ General Couzy also promised a videotape showing executions.¹⁵³⁹

As it did not appear possible to film the witnesses in Pleso, Huys asked for their telephone numbers. He immediately instructed his colleagues in Hilversum to have his contacts tell their story in front of the camera immediately on return of the 55 to the Netherlands. That set-up worked. Back in the Netherlands First-Aider Y. Schellens spoke of his observations during the bus journey from Milici to Bratunac and the dumper truck with bodies. Captain/Senior nursing officer F. Wessels, who had been in Potocari, outlined the separation of the men from their families. He also said that heard subsequent shots and that he saw how the men were deported in buses. He also contradicted the then current assumption that a UN soldier had travelled on every bus. Private Van der Zwan spoke of Bosnian-Serbs soldiers returning from the front, boasting about their rapes and murders. Finally Sergeant J. Bos described the escape plans he and his men had concocted to escape the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁵⁴⁰ The images were only broadcast on Saturday the 22nd of July – the day on which the rest of Dutchbat had arrived safely in Zagreb.

Most Dutchbat military personnel who granted interviews after their return home, kept their silence on sensitive issues whilst their colleagues were still in Potocari. Schellens for instance remained vague to some newspapers that approached him shortly after his return.¹⁵⁴¹ Only on Saturday the 22nd of July did *Trouw* publish an extensive interview with R. Joosten, crewmember of OP-K. He too described the bus journey from Milici to Bratunac in much detail: 'We went right around the enclave. All sorts of things were happening to the Displaced Persons. Anyone who came out of the woods was

1537 See e.g. 'Dutchbat zwijgt bij terugkeer op Soesterberg' (Dutchbat silent on return to Soesterberg), *De Volkskrant*, 18/07/95; J.K. Emmer, 'Verschrikkingen van gezichten af te lezen' (The ordeal is written on their faces), *De Telegraaf*, 18/07/95.

1538 Interview T. Huys, 08/07/95. When asked, Couzy could not recall whether he had made these commitments to Huys. Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

1539 Although it is not in Couzy's record of his conversation with Kremer, it is likely that the information about the videotape comes from Kremer. The question of the tape was to lead its own life later, when it appeared that it had been destroyed. Kremer, who had made the recordings himself, had destroyed the tape before his departure from Potocari, because it contained recognisable images of Close Air Support requests by FAC-ers (commandos and JCOs). In some way or another this element escaped Couzy in the first instance. It is inconceivable that he would otherwise have 'offered' this tape. In the NOVA broadcast of Saturday the 22nd of July Couzy reported from Zagreb in general terms that the tape had been destroyed for security reasons.

1540 NOVA, 22/07/95.

1541 He only said to *NRC Handelsblad*: 'Everybody saw it, everybody'. In: 'Emotionele ontlading bij aankomst VN-ers' (Emotional release as UN troops arrive), *NRC Handelsblad*, 18/07/95.

shot. Those men sat there waiting for them. Bulldozers were busy clearing corpses. There were dead people everywhere you looked. How many, I don't know. Not hundreds. We also saw a football pitch, with just clothing and shoes. That says enough.'¹⁵⁴²

Not everyone waited with his story until the 22nd. Prior to that there were some Dutchbat members who could not or would not be silent and told their story to journalists, including Karel Bagijn of *Algemeen Dagblad*. On Sunday the 16th of July he was also in the vicinity of Holland House. Karel Bagijn met a young Dutchbat soldier, who wanted to get things of his chest despite the advice to be silent. He painted a picture of the countless atrocities that had happened, which he summarized in a few words: 'The hunting season is in full swing'.¹⁵⁴³

Those were the words that hit UN Deputy Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Monday morning in New York when reading the morning paper. The press agency AFP had picked up the news from the *AD* and sent it around the world, where it was picked up by various news papers 'A hunting-season [is] in full swing (...) it is not only men supposedly belonging to the Bosnian government who are targeted (...) women, including pregnant ones, children and old people aren't spared. Some are shot and wounded, others have had their ears cut off and some women have been raped.'¹⁵⁴⁴

This news item led to the UN secretariat writing to Yashusi Akashi on the 18th of July that more and more disturbing information was coming out, which was 'widespread and consistent' and 'given credence by a variety of international observers, including UNHCR'. The secretariat noted that nothing had been heard from UNPROFOR on this issue and therefore Akashi received the request to ensure that those Dutch people who had already returned from Srebrenica would be interviewed as soon as possible. The instruction referred to growing concerns about being unable to confirm or deny the reports with authority, although it largely concerned events 'of which UNPROFOR in Potocari could not have been unaware'.¹⁵⁴⁵ Annan wrote that he had also understood that the Dutch military personnel 'may be reluctant to speak about the subject out of regard for the safety of their colleagues taken hostage by the Serbs', but believed that nevertheless they were obliged 'to report comprehensively to you about what they have seen'.¹⁵⁴⁶ In fact this instruction came too late – on the 16th of July there had already been an improvised debriefing, organized by Military Information Office of the UNPF in Zagreb.

9. Debriefing of the 55 by the intelligence section in Zagreb

The concerns of the UN in New York about the absence of information from UNPROFOR, with which they initially seemingly meant Dutchbat, had already been an issue at the UNPF in Zagreb for some days. A worried Force Commander Janvier had requested aerial photographs on the 11th of July, as he was taking account of the possibility of atrocities. However, the weather and priorities meant this had not happened. After the first deported people arrived in Kladanj, the UN in Zagreb decided to do everything for the 13th or the 14th of July to document any possible atrocities. Pressure groups also urged this. In a press release of the 13th of July Human Rights Watch called for NATO 'to immediately embark on intelligence gathering operations to monitor Serb actions in the safe zones'.¹⁵⁴⁷ But even requests from UNPF headquarters for 'atrocities verification' were turned down, because there were insufficient indications or proof. Only on the 15th of July, when the problem of the missing men

¹⁵⁴² M. van Houten, 'Blauwhelm aan de overkant van de rivier' (UN soldier on the other side of the river), *Trouw*, 22/07/95.

¹⁵⁴³ K. Bagijn, 'Vreselijk wat mensen elkaar kunnen aandoen' (Terrible, what people can do to each other), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 17/07/95.

¹⁵⁴⁴ *Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/35 (1998), A Srebrenica report* (New York 1999) paragraph 389. Hereinafter referred to as the UN Srebrenica report.

¹⁵⁴⁵ UN Srebrenica report, par. 390.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Coll. NIOD, Bo Pellnas diary, Annan to Akashi, 18/07/95, quoted in Bo Pellnas' diary.

¹⁵⁴⁷ UNGE, UNHCR, Fund 31 subfund Pale: Srebrenica. Press release Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 13/07/95.

manifested itself ever clearer, was such an attempt undertaken with a Predator (an unmanned espionage plane). However this failed due to technical imperfections during filming.¹⁵⁴⁸ That the Americans had gathered images on that day and the four previous days remained unknown to UNPF personnel.¹⁵⁴⁹

During the staff meeting of Force Commander Janvier in the early morning of the 13th of July, the possibility of an investigation into possible war crimes was already discussed.¹⁵⁵⁰ A few hours later, at 10 o'clock, the morning briefing of Akashi's staff also dealt with the first reports of possible atrocities. It was reported that UNHCR representative Bijleveld, who had returned the previous evening from Tuzla, had already lodged a protest with the VRS (the military forces of the Bosnian Serbs) against the separation of men and women in Potocari. Attempts by Deputy Force Commander Ashton to contact General Mladic on this issue had produced nothing. According to the notes of his Military Assistant Last, Yashusi Akashi had already sent an instruction to Karremans to document the separation. He also sent a letter to Karadzic in which he pointedly asked after the fate of the Displaced Persons and Dutchbat.¹⁵⁵¹

In the meantime the first few thousand enclave inhabitants had arrived in Tuzla and another group was waiting in Kladanj for further transport. The head of Civil Affairs of Sector North East in Tuzla, Ken Biser, reported that no men between the ages of 16 and 60 had been observed among the Displaced Persons. During the discussion of this issue there was a general assumption that they were hiding in the mountains.¹⁵⁵² Beyond that insecurity reigned, and had not disappeared two days later. However, the concerns increased. At the so-called SRSG (Special Representative of the Secretary-General) meeting later on in the morning of the 13th of July, Yashusi Akashi himself was also present and Bijleveld expressed fears of a bloodbath. Through UNHCR channels rumours had been heard of buses with men disappearing and of executions, including a possible massacre between Kladanj and Bratunac.¹⁵⁵³

The fall of the enclave produced mixed feelings amongst civilian and military staff members about the events that were to follow. Just like many other involved parties, Bosnians, NGO employees, UN organizations and journalists, the assessments of the consequences of the fall ranged from a likely bloodbath to a situation, albeit serious and tragic, that did not give cause for special fears. There was no reliable information available that could tip the scale one way or another. However very shortly after the fall stories about committed atrocities went around the media, but it was perfectly unclear how reliable all those stories were and whether they referred to incidents or to a systematic campaign of violence. They largely came from the first groups of Displaced Persons who were deported from Potocari, and started arriving in Tuzla from the 12th of July. During those first days there were statements from the Bosnian Government raising the alarm, but they were met with much scepticism – particularly within UNPROFOR.

Too many examples of news manipulation, seemingly aimed at undermining UNPROFOR's efforts, had damaged the Bosnian government's credibility. 'They had screamed blue murder so many times that nobody really took them serious. Every time they came with yet another awful story, which seemed to be much less clear cut later', according to the Dutch military adviser of Boutros-Ghali, Major General F.H. van Kappen.¹⁵⁵⁴ In an evaluation of the mission dated early 1996, there was even talk of

1548 Confidential interview (54).

1549 This concerned e.g. U-2 flights on 11, 12 and 13 July, where Potocari was photographed. The photos showed the lorries and the buses that were to deport the citizens. There were also traces of turned over earth. See: ICTY Dossier, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume 1, Ex. 5/2 and 5/4; 6/3 and 6/4. For an extensive consideration of these operations see: Appendix Intelligence, Chapter 8, dealing with Imint and Bosnia.

1550 Confidential interview (54).

1551 This is the only reference to such an instruction that was found. It is unclear in which shape and via which channels such an instruction was issued.

1552 Notes of D. Last; telephone interview D. Last, MA to the DFC UNPF, 05/07/00.

1553 UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2 SRSG Meeting, Srebrenica Staff 95 May-Oct. SRSG, Senior Staff Meeting, 13/07/95.

1554 Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

'blatant government campaigns in [Bosnia-Herzegovina] and Croatia to discredit the UN force'.¹⁵⁵⁵ The Bosnian government's lack of trust in UNPROFOR was sharpened by what the authors Burg and Shoup call 'the feud between the media and UNPROFOR' which was prompted by a conviction prevalent amongst journalists that UNPROFOR was indifferent towards the fate of the Muslims.¹⁵⁵⁶

In turn, this attitude amongst media representatives led to many within UNPROFOR believing that the Bosnian Muslims could count on the Western media during their campaigns. They believed the Western media to favour the Bosnian Muslims and to be hostile against UNPROFOR - CNN and its personification in Bosnia Christiane Amanpour in particular could count on increasing irritation on the side of UNPROFOR.¹⁵⁵⁷

This situation full of suspicion and lack of trust once again showed the painful absence of a fully-fledged intelligence service as a part of UNPROFOR - particularly one that was also equipped to signal and monitor humanitarian disasters. The information provision was so poor that according to some involved it was questionable whether the information levels in New York were much poorer than those in Zagreb, which was nearer the scene of battle.¹⁵⁵⁸ In May 1995, a Human Rights Office (HRO) was set up at the head quarters in Zagreb as part of the Department of Civil Affairs, but it was still in a difficult start-up phase.¹⁵⁵⁹ On the military side there was an intelligence department, which for political reasons – the UN did not undertake intelligence work as a 'transparent' organization - hid behind the concealing name Military Information Office.¹⁵⁶⁰

The name did not only have a purely cosmetic meaning, but reflected that this truly was a flawed intelligence department. Professional personnel was scarce in the department. Many officers had no intelligence background and were more or less dumped in that post. Some came from NATO member states and others did not, which produced a lack of clarity on procedures and, more importantly, a lack of trust in terms of information exchange. There were still traces of enemy thinking from the Cold War. It was literally impossible to work with some people - an Egyptian and Jordanian Lieutenant Colonel were part of the Military Information Office who did not speak English.¹⁵⁶¹ Such restriction of mandate, lack of manpower, and lack of means, meant the employees of the Military Information Office could do little. Where they could do something, they quickly developed a backlog.

The department, characterized as 'messy', depended on what filtered through its own inadequate information chain and what leaked through other channels deemed reliable. The internal information flow left much to be desired. The department was not on the normal mailing list for Civil Affairs reports and depended on copies the Force Commander or his assistant were prepared to distribute or on what could be 'arranged' through personal contacts, even though Civil Affairs documents were essential in a situation such as the one around Srebrenica. As the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo was also none too forward with information, the Military Information Office often had to gather this more or less directly and secretly from contacts at Sector North East in Tuzla. There was certainly no direct supply of reports from Dutchbat.¹⁵⁶²

¹⁵⁵⁵ Col N. Innell, Maj. J. Oosterwijck Veldhuisen, SAC (W) N. MacIntosh (ed.), *Force Commander's End of Mission Report* (31/01/96) par 63a, p. 56.

¹⁵⁵⁶ S.L. Burg and Paul Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ethnic conflict and international intervention* (New York/London, 1999) pp. 160-161.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Interview R. Theunens, 08/02/00. Theunens worked at the time for G2 at UNPF HQ in Zagreb. Also confidential interview (9). Also: Col N. Innell, Maj. J. Oosterwijck Veldhuisen, SAC (W) N. MacIntosh (ed.), *Force Commander's End of Mission Report* (31/01/96) pp. 35-35, where the international media are awarded an important role 'in exerting pressure for UNPROFOR to be manoeuvred into tasks beyond its capability and mandate.' At the end of the Chapter 'Circus Zagreb' the problematic relationship between the media and UNPROFOR shall be considered more extensively.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

¹⁵⁵⁹ The role of the HRO is dealt with extensively in the chapter '*Debriefings en mensenrechten*', section '*Meldingen door Dutchbatters aan UNHCR en UNPF Civil Affairs*'.

¹⁵⁶⁰ See the more extensive Chapter 1 of the intelligence appendix to this report.

¹⁵⁶¹ Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00. He was at the time employed by UNPF MIO.

¹⁵⁶² Interview R. Theunens, 08/02/00.

Therefore they were happy to make use of the information the European monitoring mission ECMM and NGOs such as UNHCR and the International Red Cross shared with the Military Information Office, but that exchange did not happen systematically and was also influenced by the interests of the relevant organizations. The only more or less formal contact consisted of the fortnightly co-ordination meetings with the NGOs chaired by Deputy Force Commander Ashton.¹⁵⁶³ It was generally assumed that all NGOs were infiltrated by employees of the various national intelligence services or people who were subsequently recruited, but the information that produced went to national channels and therefore played an unclear role in UNPF's information gathering.

Another problem was that the information was filtered at various places in the long UNPF line. When colleagues compared the information at the intelligence section (in military terms known as G2) of the UNPF and the UNMO organization in Zagreb, the general conclusion was that the information from the UNMO line was usually qualitatively speaking 'more useful' than that from the UNPF line. The Belgian Major Jean Segers, at the time head of the intelligence section at the UNMO head quarters in Zagreb, undertook that comparison together with his fellow countryman Renaud Theunens, who worked at the Military Information Office of UNPF. Segers noted: 'As head G2 UNMO I saw documents which had only passed through selection once. At UNPF there were more selection layers for information'.¹⁵⁶⁴ This meant much information was lost. He also stated that the selection of information at UNPF was dictated much more strongly by political wishes, which meant that even the UNMO information that came to the UNPF would undergo selection, however good the overall quality.

Although Deputy Force Commander General Ashton officially had the task to monitor the UNMO operations¹⁵⁶⁵, this did not dispel the UNPF's general reservations towards UNMO which reported directly to the UN in New York. UNMO employees had the fear that UNPROFOR would prefer to 'gobble up' the UNMOs, particularly when General Rose was Commander in Sarajevo.¹⁵⁶⁶ Not all UNPROFOR officers took the UNMO organization equally serious. The discrimination against certain nationalities within UNPROFOR also applied to the UNMO organization, which was a popular employer for many individual military personnel from various countries that did not wish to supply large contingents of troops. There was often the reproach, unjustified according to Major Segers, that the UNMOs were unreliable, because too many nationalities of 'dubious nature' were represented. However, the UNMOs had the advantage that they lived close to the population and operated in small teams, would could usually move easier than UNPF units. So the UNPF headquarters knew how to find the UNMOs when their activities provided usable scoops for the daily press conference. However, according to Majors Segers, 'not much was done with it analytically'.¹⁵⁶⁷

In the case of Srebrenica and Potocari later, the UNMOs present were an important source of information besides Dutchbat. However, the problem was that just like the UN peacekeepers their freedom of movement was seriously restricted. And as described earlier, the team members also experienced personal difficulties in dealing with the tensions. Therefore UNPF and UNMO were largely blind to what was happening outside Potocari.

Communication problems at the UNMO made the situation even more difficult and some UNMOs taken hostage elsewhere in Bosnia also partly detracted the UNMO headquarters' attention from Srebrenica. There was no direct contact between Zagreb and the enclave. The faxes sent from Srebrenica usually went to Zagreb via the regional headquarters in Tuzla.

When the importance of the UNMO line became clearer, the call from other parties at the UNMO sector headquarters in Tuzla to pass on information strongly increased at the cost of the

¹⁵⁶³ Interview R. Theunens, 08/02/00.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Interview J. Segers, 16/06/00 and 30/10/00.

¹⁵⁶⁵ Col N. Innell, Maj. J. Oosterwijck Veldhuisen, SAC (W) N. MacIntosh (ed.), *Force Commander's End of Mission Report* (31/01/96) par 66, p. 61.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Interview B. Pellnas, 03/11/99.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Interview J. Segers, 16/06/00 and 30/10/00.

UNMO organization in Tuzla gathering and analysing information itself. The resulting overload meant that Tuzla announced an information stop, because the employees could not manage and had lost grip of the situation. The intelligence section of the UNMO headquarters in Zagreb was therefore threatened to be bereft of information and had to exert pressure on Tuzla to pass on reports, if need be at the cost of other recipients.¹⁵⁶⁸ The reports that did reach Zagreb were passed on to UNPF.

The UNMO reports played an important role in New York focusing attention on the fate of thousands of imprisoned men from Srebrenica who were to be in the football stadium of Bratunac. Indirectly they played a role too, as apparently autonomous warnings in press reports of e.g. *Médecins Sans Frontières* could also be traced back to UNMO information. Not all UNMO reports became public - Yashusi Akashi suppressed a number of reports, because he feared they might endanger the UNMOs.¹⁵⁶⁹ So reluctance to disclose sensitive information, whilst the couriers were still in potential danger, was not just the prerogative of General Couzy and Dutch politicians.

Reports from Bratunac

For about a week, 'Bratunac' was the dominant centre of attention for the authorities involved with the fate of the inhabitants of the former enclave. On the basis of what he had heard, Kofi Annan had informed Yashusi Akashi as early as the 13th of July of his concerns over what was to have happened in Bratunac. A day later the figure of 4,000 men circulated around the intelligence section in Zagreb – a figure that originated from a conversation with the intelligence section in Sarajevo.¹⁵⁷⁰

In the media and the diplomatic service too 'the Bratunac affair'¹⁵⁷¹ played an ever more dominant role. On the 14th of July the press reported UNHCR reports from the previous day, based on witness accounts from Bosnian-Serb military personnel, that between seven hundred and one thousand Muslim men were held in Bratunac football stadium. The organization refused to speak of Prisoners of War ('POWs') for as long as this could not be verified and continued with the term Displaced Persons ('DPs'). On the 15th of July, UNHCR was already taking account of possibly 4,000 prisoners, but neither UNHCR nor the International Red Cross managed to gain access to the site. Two UNHCR Field Officers, who tried to determine the whereabouts of the prisoners and the remainder of the population, had been 'politely but firmly invited' by the local Bratunac police to leave Srpska before the end of the afternoon of the 14th and they were now just over the border in Serbia.¹⁵⁷²

Both the UNHCR and the International Red Cross signalled a worrying discrepancy between the estimated number of inhabitants of the enclave at the time of the fall (42,000) and the figure of 30,000 evacuees given by the Bosnian Serbs. The Dutch Minister of Defence Voorhoeve stated during a press conference that he could not confirm the reports on Bratunac, because the reported events were outside the observations of Dutchbat. Therefore the Dutch Government, through Minister Voorhoeve and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Van Mierlo, pleaded with the UN to send international observers to Bratunac as soon as possible. That concern fitted in with the concerns the UN had already expressed on the fate of men above the age of sixteen.¹⁵⁷³

On the 15th of July a UNMO source reported that possibly a thousand men (probably from Potocari) were deported in the direction of Bratunac with an unknown destination. The source also reported corpses with neck shots, men who had been beaten with rifle butts, VRS soldiers who had

¹⁵⁶⁸ Interview J. Segers, 16/06/00 and 30/10/00.

¹⁵⁶⁹ UN Srebrenica Report, par. 353.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Confidential interview (54).

¹⁵⁷¹ The expression originates from the aforementioned DCBC daily report, entry 151431. MvD, xxx

¹⁵⁷² UNGE, UNHCR, Fund 31 sub-fund Pale: Srebrenica. UNHCR Update ex-Yugoslavia, 15/07/95; UNGE, UNHCR, Fund 19 sub-fund 6: 1995 FYOO OPS 16, Sitreps Bosnia Jan-July. Fax Jean-Paul Cavalieri/BH Desk to SOFY [Special Operation in the former Yugoslavia] Desk/PI Section, Update on 14 /07/95.

¹⁵⁷³ 'Nederland wenst waarnemers bij gevangenen Moslim-mannen' (The Netherlands wants observers for imprisoned Muslim men), *De Volkskrant*, 15/07/95; 'UNHCR bezorgd om lot mannen' (UNHCR worried about men's fate), *Trouw*, 14/07/95.

‘gone berserk’ and many dead.¹⁵⁷⁴ When it became known that same day that the 55 Dutch UN hostages which had been gathered in Bratunac would be released and were to go to Zagreb, that seemed a perfect opportunity to find out more about the situation there.

How did the Military Information Office organize the debriefing?

The task to debrief the Dutchbat members fell first of all to the Military Information Office in Zagreb. It was going to be the first time that UNPF would subject its own military personnel to a debriefing. Following the hostage crisis in May UN Force Commander Janvier had given the order to design a debriefing procedure, but it had never been tested in practice. It is ironic that the first eligible group, French UN peacekeepers who had been taken hostage, escaped the debriefing. Their plane from Sarajevo landed in Zagreb, where the plane that would take them directly to France was waiting. The French changed planes fully protected by French troops, and UNPF could but watch.¹⁵⁷⁵

The foreseen procedure was also impossible for debriefing the Dutch, but in this case due to lack of time for both good preparation and implementation. It was also clear that the UN would take second place and that the priority for care and reception lay with the Royal Netherlands Army, although the Military Information Office did not realize that the Royal Netherlands Army only intended to undertake a psychological debriefing. The head of the Military Information Office, the Swedish colonel Jan Svensson, was on leave and therefore the responsibility to make the best of it under the circumstance lay with his deputy, the American Lieutenant Colonel and experienced intelligence man Rick Morgan.

His nationality was remarkable for somebody in that position. There was a curious phenomenon during the war in Bosnia and Croatia - although the US systematically refused to make ground troops available to the UN, a large number of American military and civilian (often ex-military) personnel could be found in key positions in both the military and civil branches of the UNPF bureaucracy. That did not always please the other nationalities, because there was a strong suspicion that most Americans wore several hats. Rick Morgan, who was characterized as hard to fathom, had a similar reputation. ‘He told little and needed to know much’, a former employee recalled later.

His accessibility meant he had a good name amongst journalists,¹⁵⁷⁶ but not everyone shared that positive image. In the classified Force Commander’s End of Mission Report that was completed early 1996, there were harsh comments about the situation at the Military Information Office. Although Swedish colonel (Svensson) officially headed up the section, he managed an American Lieutenant Colonel, ‘who, at all times had access to more accurate intelligence than his [Commander]’. This ‘deeply unhealthy relationship’ made their relationship more difficult and was awkward for those who had to work with them, according to a number of employees of the Military Information Office.¹⁵⁷⁷

Due to Svenssons’ absence, the responsibility for debriefing the 55 Dutchmen came to rest with Lieutenant Colonel Morgan. Together with his employees he designed a questionnaire that was intended to quickly select the most important witnesses and to subject them to further questioning.¹⁵⁷⁸ The bulk of the total of ten questions was relatively standard – they concerned the place and circumstances of any remaining hostages, any abuse experienced, what the instructions of the ‘hijackers’ had been on what they were and were not allowed to say, and their current destination. That last question led to most saying ‘home’ in several variants, whilst others filled in ‘Dutchbar’ or ‘What do you think!’. Only the last three questions of this debriefing concerned rumours about atrocities: ‘Do

¹⁵⁷⁴ According to the summary of the report given by Major De Ruiten in a telephone conversation with SCOCIS in The Hague of the UNMO reports. DCBC, 528; daily report DCBC, 151431 [15/07/95].

¹⁵⁷⁵ Interview R. Theunens, 08/02/00.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Interview E. Neuffer, 15/07/00. At the time Neuffer was head of the *Boston Globe*’s European desk.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Col N. Innell, Maj. J. Oosterwijck Veldhuisen, SAC (W) N. MacIntosh (ed.), *Force Commander’s End of Mission Report* (31/01/96) par. 77, p.66.

¹⁵⁷⁸ Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00.

you know something about atrocities in the stadium of Bratunac'; 'Did you see something special during the transport? For example dead bodies with neck-shot' and finally 'Did you see people with strange wound [sic]'.¹⁵⁷⁹

This English questionnaire, with a Dutch translation, ended with a comment in Dutch: 'This was the first brief operational debriefing. If we wish to speak to you again, we will contact you. Should you later remember things you forgot to report, please contact the security officer/non-commissioned officer of the Dutch contingent as soon as possible'.¹⁵⁷⁹ This Dutch addition and the translation of the questions came from Major C. (Cees) F. Bourgon diën. He was one of Lieutenant Colonel Morgan's employees at the Military Information Office and was involved in the debriefing because of his nationality. A large amount of the practical work surrounding the care and reception and debriefing of the 55 Dutchmen fell on his shoulders. Bourgon diën was originally an expert in nuclear and biological weapons, but had obtained some intelligence experience as deputy intelligence and operations officer of a helicopter squadron, and later at the Dutch Provincial Military Command Gelderland-Overijssel. Now he filled the post of head of the Croatia department in the Military Information Office, as the first Dutchman in an intelligence post at UNPF in Zagreb. He had had nothing to do with Bosnia, and the events in Srebrenica therefore were a big surprise for him. He received the first reports of the attack via Lieutenant Colonel Morgan who informed him of the expected release of the 55 Dutchbat hostages and the need to debrief them with the words: 'That is our job. You speak Dutch, so you do it!'

Major Bourgon diën felt confronted with a tough job. Normally, the immediate Commander undertakes the debriefing, but in this case the organic links were broken. Major Bourgon diën painted the picture as follows:

'A couple of people who had been prisoners of war came back separately, whilst the battalion itself is still in that enclave. We also knew that these people would be in Pleso for a very short period. They were to return to the Netherlands as quickly as possible. If you want to have any information, you need to interview those people on the spot. They really fell under Sarajevo, but they came back to Zagreb to us. That is why we did it like that. Of course I had little time. They were due to arrive in Pleso in a few hours. They needed a medical. We had no idea how they would come out. We had no information on that. Neither did we know how they would be psychologically.'¹⁵⁸⁰

According to Major Bourgon diën he worked on the questionnaire with fear in the back of his mind: 'We knew then that they [the Muslim men from Potocari] had been deported. We feared that there might have been massacres'. For the interviews he ensured the support from his colleague, the Belgian captain Theunens. Lieutenant Colonel Morgan was present during the debriefing for supervision and gathering of the forms.¹⁵⁸¹

On the 16th of July a Dutch operations officer of UNPF G3, Colonel J.H. de Jonge also reported for duty. He also spoke with some Dutchbat members, 'focussing [sic] specifically on operational aspects'.¹⁵⁸² Colonel De Jonge stated later that he had heard nothing to cause him concern on that very brief occasion.¹⁵⁸³

After the plane with the ex-hostages had landed and they had gone to the American MASH tent for a medical, Major Bourgon diën was the first to meet them:

¹⁵⁷⁹ NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Collection debriefing forms 'De-briefing Srebrenica', compiled by Major C. Bourgon diën, 26/09/95. Also: SMG, 1002.

¹⁵⁸⁰ Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgon diën, 26/04/00.

¹⁵⁸¹ Interview R. Theunens, 08/02/00.

¹⁵⁸² NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Interoffice memorandum, 'First debrief Dutchbat personnel', G3 Land Ops to FC [Janvier], 18/07/95.

¹⁵⁸³ Interview J.H. de Jonge, 30/05/01.

‘I had a lot of pens and pencils with me. Quickly fill in. No more than five minutes work. They had to hand it in to me or our Belgian captain. We could check quickly whether it was interesting. People who were not interesting could go straight to the medical and the clothes, food, etc. We could make a selection then.’

In his instruction he also pointed to the Dutch comment at the end of the form:

‘I told them also and put this specifically in the questionnaire: “If you remember something later or whatever, or when you’re back in the Netherlands ...” I could imagine that they did not want to say anything then. I don’t know what sort of pressure they were under. But keep it in the channels. Keep it in the line.’¹⁵⁸⁴

One of the lines referred to went via the security officers, and it is no coincidence that a number of the reports made here can be found in a note of the aforementioned MID/Netherlands Army Intelligence and Security Officer N. Franssen. Apart from that he also heard from individual members of the group of 55 in Holland House that they had seen many men ‘who had all died of neck and head shots’.¹⁵⁸⁵ This story fits well with the report from an UNMO source that reached the DCBC (Dutch Defence Crisis Management Centre) via Nicolai’s employee De Ruiter on the 15th of July.¹⁵⁸⁶

Franssen also recorded the rumour that military personnel had seen ‘that civilians had been driven together with a shovel (construction machinery) and were subsequently crushed to death against a wall’. He also heard reports of people who were run over during the chaotic retreat from Srebrenica to Potocari.¹⁵⁸⁷

How did the information from the debriefing reach the Dutch Army top?

Franssen reported his findings to a colleague of the MID/Dutch Army (Intelligence and Security Section) in The Hague, who deduced that the ‘shit was hitting the fan’. However, it seems that neither this impression nor the information on which it was based played any further role in the information provision towards the Minister or the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, although the head of the MID/Netherlands Army Colonel H. Bokhoven had ‘more or less free access’ to General Couzy.¹⁵⁸⁸ However, he hardly used the MID.¹⁵⁸⁹ The line via which this information reached Bokhoven cannot be traced, but Bokhoven – who was on holiday during these July days – later stated that he did not know the name Franssen.¹⁵⁹⁰

So the information does not seem to have reached the top of MID/Netherlands Army via this line. A number of the 55 reported to the Ministry of Defence on the return of the rest of the battalion to the Netherlands with the message that they had something to tell. At least one of them, E.P. (Eric) Smid, was subsequently referred to General G. Bastiaans, who was just completing his report on the operational debriefing of Dutchbat, carried out by him on the 22nd and the 23rd of July in Zagreb. The

1584 Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00.

1585 SMG, 1007/7. Note, ‘Information sources’, according to a handwritten note from smi N. Franssen, not dated. Judging by the content, the note was made before the return of the rest of the battalion on 22 July. Franssen noted that he had heard this information personally ‘or was told in Holland House (Zagreb)’.

1586 DCBC, 528. Daily report DCBC, 15/07/95. Report from SCOCIS cdr C.G.J. Hilderink, who had spoken to De Ruiter on the telephone.

1587 SMG, 1007/7. Note, ‘Information sources’, according to a handwritten note from smi N. Franssen, n.d.

1588 Confidential interview (20).

1589 See Chapter 3 of the appendix on the role of intelligence during the war in Bosnia 1992 – 1995.

1590 Interview H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01.

General was shocked by Smid's reports and they threatened to give his report an unexpected and disconcerting turn.¹⁵⁹¹

The answers during the debriefing

The debriefing and Bastiaans' report are dealt with more extensively further on in this chapter. However, the core of the reports heard by the General must be determined now, i.e. the observation of the lorries full of corpses, which can also be found on the forms that were filled in Pleso at the request of Major Bourgondiën. Sixteen of these contained 'relevant information' according to the debriefing team. In all but one of the forms, the key issue was the answer to question 9 – observations 'during your transport'. The answers concerned 'lined up clothing' along the road, and particularly the tractor with trailer, or a dumper truck or a lorry full of corpses. None of the debriefed people had information on Bratunac. Only one form contained an answer to the question whether something was known about possible atrocities in the Bratunac stadium: 'Yes, all Muslims were shot dead'.¹⁵⁹²

On the basis of this the intelligence section selected some Dutchbat members for a further conversation. 'I think we picked out eight people', Major Bourgondiën said later.¹⁵⁹³ The conversations were difficult – the Dutchbat members were tired and irritable and the debriefing team was in a hurry ('we had no more than an hour'). So it was not a real debriefing. 'It was a conversation to quickly pick up the *hot news* and to put that in the cauldron', Theunens said later.¹⁵⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the debriefing team did a proper job. One of those who was interviewed, Sergeant Ceelen, specifically remembered the feeling of relief when the debriefing was over. He had become angry, because the debriefing team kept 'banging on' about whether the observed bodies along the road were Bosnian Serbs or Muslims, although he was unable to say anything conclusive.¹⁵⁹⁵

However, this persistent approach was due to necessity. The debriefing team did not have the opportunity to weigh up the statements and therefore they were extra careful. Major Bourgondiën:

'For a number of days they had perhaps been in very strange circumstances. We did not know that at that time. What sort of pressure did they experience? How were those people worked on psychologically? You cannot make any heavy judgements. I am not a doctor. I do not know whether those people make things up. You have to be sure whether something really happened or not. That is of course very dangerous. If you have not seen it and you are operating on suspicions, you are of course accusing someone. That can spark things off. That is why we tried to stick to the facts.'¹⁵⁹⁶

Major Bourgondiën subsequently turned these facts as quickly as possible into a brief report of one and a half pages. The facts concerned partly military information about the attack and the composition of the troops involved, which could be found in a general comment and in 'detailed daily reports' running from the 6th to the 15th of July. The two other general comments concerned the issue of the

¹⁵⁹¹ Interview G. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

¹⁵⁹² NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Collection debriefing forms 'Debriefing Srebrenica', compiled by Major C. Bourgondiën, 26/09/95. Also: SMG, 1002: Debriefing form Private Peperkamp. Of the remaining 39 forms with 'non-relevant information' there were nine that referred to Bratunac, almost all with reference to 'rumours' and one to the World Service.

¹⁵⁹³ One UNPROFOR official remembered that he had spoken with 30 of the 55 Dutchbat members and that they had not wanted to say anything to him about atrocities. He had the impression that they were very traumatised and mistrusted him as an outsider. (confidential interview, 54) That silence had also been noted by the press spokesman present Major M. Beneker. Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01. Whether the number of 30 is correct is in doubt. It is possible that there is confusion, because a week later the intelligence section in Zagreb also approached some Dutchbat members from the main body in Potocari. More than thirty of them filled in debriefing forms.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Interview R. Theunens, 08/02/00.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Interview W. Ceelen, Assen, 02/07/99.

¹⁵⁹⁶ Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00.

observations. Under comment 2: ‘(...) On their way from the OP to Bratunac they saw a lot of civilian clothes on the road and a tractor with a trailer, this tractor was clearing away dead bodies’. And under comment 3: ‘In Bratunac, during the evening, they heard a lot of shooting, but they didn’t know whether it was from executions or feasting. (...)’. On the short chronological list the 13th of July also refers to this shooting, but the most relevant information concerned the 14th of July: ‘Two buses full of men were seen near the stadium, the men were sitting in a dejected manner. In the school building there were BSA-[VRS-]soldiers from almost all corps the Dutch knew about, for example Arkan-brigade, Banja-corps, etc.’¹⁵⁹⁷

The reference to the Arkan tigers was particularly interesting, but the debriefing team did not draw any conclusions from that. In conversations with Bosnian authorities, the name Arkan was one of the most alarming indicators for possible large-scale atrocities for the Dutch Minister Pronk (whose information mission in Bosnia round about the same time shall be discussed later).¹⁵⁹⁸ As in other cases there was no real agreement at UNPF or at NGOs about what could be considered an indication of impending human-rights violations and it remained a matter of individual ‘gut-feeling’.

Although the debriefing team had a disconcerting gut feeling, they did not have the image that there really had been large-scale, systematic executions.¹⁵⁹⁹ Later Major Bourgon diën discussed this with Captain Theunens: ‘What is very strange is that we thought “happily it did not happen like that.” Personally it would not have surprised me if it had happened. You were actually glad that your own fears and suspicions had not been confirmed.’¹⁶⁰⁰

That feeling was more prevalent, as shown by the words of Major Segers of the UNMO intelligence section:

‘We, the UNMOs, never realized that there had been a massacre of those proportions [as would become known subsequently]. First we heard the rumour of a few executions, and we had some questions. Are we not exaggerating? Has it all been hyped up perhaps? We had quite a few of such stories and you wonder whether you’re in the same situation – should we stand back and wait and see?’¹⁶⁰¹

The separation of the men and women in Potocari, where the Dutchbat members had not or hardly intervened, had not caused any special concerns.

‘That also happened in various other situations. That was quite logical for us military people. Women and children are not prisoners of war. They are approached differently. They are not questioned. Military people are. If you take somebody prisoner during a conflict, you question them. One of the functions is to determine whether you will release someone immediately or keep them for further interviews. We do that too. Every police service does it. So that selecting was not that unusual.’¹⁶⁰²

¹⁵⁹⁷ NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Maj. Bourgon diën to SMIO, ‘De-briefing of the Dutch soldiers from Srebrenica’, 18/07/95. Part of an Interoffice Memorandum from Major Bourgon diën to DCMIO, ‘De-briefing Srebrenica’, 28/09/95. Also in: SMG, 1002.

¹⁵⁹⁸ Interview J. Pronk, 03/04/00. See also: Jan Hoedeman, ‘VN hebben nooit luchtsteun beloofd’ (UN never promised air support), *De Volkskrant*, 11/07/00.

¹⁵⁹⁹ Interview R. Theunens, 08/02/00.

¹⁶⁰⁰ Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgon diën, 26/04/00.

¹⁶⁰¹ Interview J. Segers, 16/06/00 and 30/10/00.

¹⁶⁰² Interview J. Segers, 16/06/00 and 30/10/00.

10. Why was the KHO group not debriefed?

A simple lack of information meant that at that moment Zagreb did not realize that there was a different, much more threatening situation in Potocari. A report from the intelligence section dated the 17th of July notes: 'No specific information available regarding treatment of the males separated'.¹⁶⁰³ The reports from Dutchbat about confirmed observations of executions (see Chapter 4) had not reached the UN headquarters. Media reports on the 14th of July, which spoke about murders and rapes that were to have happened in Potocari, also did not receive attention. There are no indications that open sources were systematically monitored and analysed by the Military Information Office. There was probably no capacity, quite aside from considerable practical problems with obtaining newspapers and magazines - something journalists and others involved in the area also needed to cope with.

The irony was that the 55 ex-hostages were together with the KHO group in Pleso. The KHO group had come directly from Potocari and its members had all sorts to report as described. They were not debriefed by the Military Information Office and the question is why. Major Bourgondiën answers that question by: 'The order was purely to debrief the people who came from Bratunac. Not the others'.¹⁶⁰⁴ As reported, he nevertheless attempted to, but did not insist when Solkesz advised against it.

In the end this was also an important reason for not interviewing KHO-5, albeit in a less direct manner. In Pleso Major Bourgondiën encountered Major Solkesz, the plagued leader of the convoy that had taken KHO to Camp Pleso. They knew each other from before when there were both members of a division staff. Shortly after his arrival on the 15th of July, Major Solkesz had been caught by Lieutenant Colonel Morgan for a preliminary debriefing, of which the American sent the result to Hayden the next day: 'reports no details on fate men'.¹⁶⁰⁵ From a written note in English of the conversation with Major Solkesz it appears however that the convoy leader had heard stories from the Dutchbat members (these must have been members of KHO-5) about 'a lot of bodies on the way from Srebrenica to Potocari'.¹⁶⁰⁶

Major Bourgondiën probably received a similar report on bodies from Major Solkesz with the indication that the information could also be found with members of the KHO group. A reconstruction of the further course of their conversation appeared difficult because of the years gone by. According to Major Bourgondiën he intimated to Major Solkesz that he would like to get in touch with the KHO members: 'But he said that they absolutely did not want to discuss it'. This was a curious statement given the problems Major Solkesz had near Zvornik with a surgeon (Kremer) who did not seem minded to adhere to the ban on speaking in public, and had to be stopped rather than stimulated. The irony is that in the eyes of Chaplain Meurkens too the ex-hostages were 'less expressive than the people from the medical team'.¹⁶⁰⁷

Later the former convoy commander stated that it must have concerned a 'misunderstanding'. On the basis of his own experiences Major Solkesz did not have much faith in debriefings:

'It has all got to do with the way I see it. Debriefing in that situation and under those circumstances has everything to do with mollycoddling. And that's the last thing you need at such a time.' He had not realized that Major Bourgondiën's interest came from his position with the intelligence section:

¹⁶⁰³ Quote from documents during confidential interview (54).

¹⁶⁰⁴ Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00.

¹⁶⁰⁵ Quote from documents during confidential interview (54).

¹⁶⁰⁶ NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Note without date, 'FIR of the returning of the Dutch convoy Portocari-Plezo [sic] Convoy-commander Solkesz (Dutch)'. The note is part of the collection debriefing forms 'De-briefing Srebrenica', compiled by Major C. Bourgondiën, 26/09/95. Also in: SMG, 1002. The reports possibly referred to the stories going around Dutchbat that there had been casualties on the 11th of July during the Displaced Persons' journey to Potocari (in relation to possible runovers).

¹⁶⁰⁷ Interview N. Meurkens, 24/03/00.

‘That is because in such a period everyone is working on all sorts of things everywhere. That a Commander might hand out water as a manner of speaking and that the CSM [Companies Sergeant Major] arranges flight tickets. There is work and everyone mucks in. (..) So if someone says to me: “Should the people be debriefed?” The first thing that springs to my mind is mollycoddling. Here we go again! You don’t need it.’¹⁶⁰⁸

This attitude had already produced a run-in with psychologist Venhovens, who had come to ask which of his drivers might qualify for a debriefing and only after much insistence had he received a list of names.¹⁶⁰⁹

Given that Major Bourgondiën had no formal basis for approaching KHO he decided to heed Major Solkesz’ answer and to refrain from further attempts.¹⁶¹⁰ However he did get wind of the fact that KHO and Major Solkesz had come with videotapes and rolls of film. He attempted to intercept the shipment at the army postal service, but did not manage because of time pressure. Major Bourgondiën:

‘I then informed the Netherlands and told them where they were going – they knew that anyway – to have them intercepted. They were meant to go to the attached S-3 [operations officer] of the battalion (...) He was to ensure that [the videotapes and rolls of film] would arrive at people’s homes. He was asked to hold on to it for a week. That means nothing happens and you have a week’s time. The MID in The Hague was informed. Only after a few months did they phone me: ‘You were to have videotapes somewhere?’ I then said: ‘now you sort it out yourself.’¹⁶¹¹

Nevertheless Major Bourgondiën obtained another two rolls of film in Pleso, which had been handed in at the Contingent’s office. He consulted Colonel De Jonge, who claims he pointed out their importance and private nature.¹⁶¹² Major Bourgondiën: ‘They all came out. We had them developed by us in Zagreb. We looked at them and there was nothing interesting on them.’¹⁶¹³

¹⁶⁰⁸ Interview A. Solkesz, 15/11/00. This attitude also comes through in an incident Solkesz later described in his book. He fended off a spiritual carer (probably Chaplain Meurkens) when he asked after the need for a debriefing: ‘What he said I found logical on the one hand, but on the other hand it did not seem necessary to me to have everyone participate compulsorily in a debriefing session.’ Arco Solkesz, *Hier Romeo, we gaan rijden!*, p. 151.

¹⁶⁰⁹ Interview P.M.P. Venhovens, 17/11/00.

¹⁶¹⁰ Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00.

¹⁶¹¹ The videotapes belonged to Warrant Officer Dijkema, who had given them to Solkesz. They contain e.g. images of the arrival of the Displaced Persons on the 11th of July and the beginning of the deportation on the 12th. The videos were lost for a while and only got back into Dijkema’s possession on the 28th of August after the necessary efforts. The next day Dijkema made them available to the Intelligence and Security Section of the Royal Netherlands Army Staff. See: NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. [B. Kreemers] ‘summary sitrep videotapes Adj Dijkema’.

¹⁶¹² DCBC, 1109. J.H. de Jonge [to R.S. van Dam], 29/08/95.

¹⁶¹³ Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00. This conclusion fits with the information from the Royal Netherlands Army regarding these films - one of which belonged to Private M. van der Zwan, who had asked after his photographs. See: NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Memo B. Kreemers to G. ter Kuile, ‘Re: Roll of film’, 10/08/95. At a later stage, the NIOD heard from a source considered reliable, who spoke anonymously due to possible repercussions, that he had seen colour photographs in Zagreb (Pleso) of possible victims of executions. It concerned two series of photographs – one showed possibly two bodies in a ditch, another concerned two to three photographs of the front and back of a house. The photo of the back of the house showed three to five bodies. Given the description of the house, it is likely that the photos came from the military personnel who arrived in Pleso on the 22nd. They must have been developed there, because Potocari only had a black-and-white darkroom. Quite aside from that it would be very unlikely that someone would have dared to take the risk of smuggling photographs outside. Asking around a number of those involved made clear that the military personnel in Pleso had a lot of freedom of movement and could leave the camp. It is possible that some of them went into Zagreb to have their films developed at a 1-hour service. The source also reported that the owner(s) of the photographs, whose

Major Bourgondiën's report went to Lieutenant Colonel Morgan, who took it further up the line. He was to have given it directly to the Chief of Staff of the UNPF, Kolsteren, because it was 'appropriate' for him. Colonel De Jonge and Hayden also quickly received copies. It is likely that the results ('they didn't see atrocities nor women dragged off') were reported orally to UN Force Commander Janvier.¹⁶¹⁴

When on the 18th of July New York ordered Yashusi Akashi to subject the Dutch to a debriefing and he passed this task on to General Janvier, who could report shortly thereafter that the investigation had already taken place. He also let it be known that specific questions had been asked about human-rights violations, which had produced nothing: 'No information was obtained as apparently the BSA [VRS] was very meticulous in what it allowed the detained soldiers to see'.¹⁶¹⁵ General Janvier was possibly guided by Lieutenant Colonel Morgan, but possibly also by his Dutch Chief of Staff Kolsteren, who had asked the Military Information Office specifically whether questions about possible human-rights violations had been part of the debriefing. He reported the conclusion that 'nothing was seen by the soldiers' and he added the note that this seemed logical to him 'as they were under guard and the BSA [VRS] are not stupid' [underlining in the original].¹⁶¹⁶

Yashusi Akashi adopted General Janvier's conclusions and reported to New York that there had been a debriefing immediately upon arrival in Zagreb of those soldiers who had stayed in Bratunac, but 'that such debriefings did not reveal any first-hand accounts of human rights violations'.¹⁶¹⁷

11. The role of the Military Information Office during the debriefing of the rest of the battalion on 22-23 July

Only a week later could the Military Information Office fully focus its attention on Potocari, after the remainder of Dutchbat had arrived in Camp Pleso. Judging by the recollections of the UNPF officers, including Major Bourgondiën, and the submitted debriefing forms, some thirty two Dutchbat members were interviewed.¹⁶¹⁸

It mainly concerned officers and under officers and just one private. Why they were chosen could not be traced, but it is likely that the debriefing team considered the Dutchbat management a good access point to sources that could be amongst their lower ranks. In only one case did a specific question play a role. That was during the debriefing of naval Captain Doctor H.G.J. Hegge, who provided information on the Bosnian-Serb refusal to let pass medical supplies. That had in any case meant the death, through lack of insulin, of a fifteen-year-old diabetic girl.¹⁶¹⁹ This issue is considered more extensively in the Appendix 'Dutchbat and the population: medical issues'.

The other Dutchbat members had among them two of the main witnesses of possible executions - Rutten and Oosterveen. Groenewegen was missing, although colleagues had named him as the witness of an execution. The important witnesses of the separation of men and women, such as lieutenants Egbers and Van Duijn, were also interviewed. It was remarkable that neither Karremans nor Franken were interviewed by the Military Information Office, although they could have thrown light on

identity he could no longer remember, showed them 'from a folder'. It was also made clear to him that the owner(s) wanted to keep the material secret out of fear of Bosnian-Serb reprisals. As some Dutchbat members reported during the debriefing in Assen, this fear was not unfounded, because some VRS soldiers in Potocari had told them they had been in the Netherlands relatively recently.

¹⁶¹⁴ Confidential interview (54).

¹⁶¹⁵ UNGE, ICFY, Box 139, cryptofax in 46. Janvier to Annan, Z-1206, 20/07/95.

¹⁶¹⁶ NIOD, Coll. Kolsteren. Note on cover sheet with debriefing report, 19/07/95.

¹⁶¹⁷ *Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/35 (1998), A Srebrenica report*, (New York 1999) par. 390.

¹⁶¹⁸ Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00; confidential interview (54). The figure seems very high given the limited time available.

¹⁶¹⁹ NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Interoffice Memorandum FMEDO to DFC to FC, 'Debrief Dutch medical group medical supplies hindrances', 26/07/95.

the problems with communicating the observations.¹⁶²⁰ As it appears that no report was drawn up on the findings of the debriefing – or rather nothing was found in the archives nor references in other documents – the image Lieutenant Colonel Morgan and Major Bourgondiën distilled from the forms and the conversations cannot be reconstructed.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, Major Bourgondiën also played a role during other debriefings by the UN. Major Bourgondiën's, Lieutenant Colonel Morgan's and Captain Theunens' recollections of their activities on the 22nd and the 23rd of July was less vivid than those of the 16th of July when, however improvised, they did in fact undertake their only operational debriefing. A week later they were just a bit part in the play where General Bastiaans and his team of debriefing team took the lead. Furthermore, at that time their focus, just like the focus of the rest of the UNPF, the UN, the NGOs and the larger part of the media, had moved away from Srebrenica, because of the dramatic developments in Croatia, which lead to Operation Storm.

There was therefore no evaluation of the debriefing operation of the 15th of July, because the content did not provide any reason to do so. Only at the end of September 1995 did the debriefing of the Dutchbat members by the Military Information Office receive renewed attention, albeit only internally. The political importance of this effort had increased strongly because of what had become known – mostly through the efforts of the media – about the events in and around the enclave. The big debriefing operation of Dutchbat in the Netherlands had also started, and the Dutch UNPF officers in Zagreb were suddenly asked all sorts of questions about the set-up and the implementation of the debriefing in an attempt to reconstruct the course of the information process. This was against a background of media accusations that Dutchbat had been slack in reporting indications of large-scale human rights violations.

12. The debriefing of the 55 and KHO-5: conclusion

Against that background an analysis of the actions of the Dutch who were the first to come out of the disaster area provides a detailed picture. It is impossible to determine to what extent the emotions and experiences, the manner of the care and reception and the flawed debriefings prevented witnesses from providing statements and blocked the extent of detail therein. Some Dutchbat members expressed criticism of the (psychological) debriefing: 'We could not get what was bothering us of our chest'. Some months later it appeared that there were 'people with serious problems, who were at odds with themselves'.¹⁶²¹ It was established that some military personnel, who later publicly expressed criticism about the fact that their observations were not taken seriously, were very reticent when filling in the questionnaires and were probably not noticed as a source. It is also noticeable that sometimes they said very different things later. It is possible that some were reticent due to concerns about comrades left behind or due to a ban on speaking in public or advice to remain silent. Some military personnel only spoke publicly after the release of the rest of the battalion. A number of those did make statements to the Military Information Office. Finally there was also military personnel who did not heed the advice to remain silent in any way, and immediately spoke freely with the media, although in some cases that was in an emotional state or on the basis of anonymity.

When all the remarks are compared with the information that reached the Military Information Office, there are a number of obvious differences. Comments by anonymous Dutchbat members to journalists about rapes (possibly based on the boasts by the VRS soldiers in Bratunac) were almost certainly not reported to the Military Information Office. The story about the possible fifty to a hundred dead in Potocari, which military attaché Oudwater in Novi Sad had heard from released Dutchbat members, also did not go up the UN line. However, as said, that story was reported to The

¹⁶²⁰ NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Collection debriefing forms 'De-briefing Srebrenica', compiled by Major C. Bourgondiën, 26/09/95. Also in: SMG, 1002.

¹⁶²¹ Interview with radiographer Fons Wichink, in: 'Machteloos toezien' (Looking on helplessly), in *Trivisier*, September 1995.

Hague.¹⁶²² The absence of an obvious response to that message makes clear that nobody from the Netherlands passed it on to the UN.

The stories that came up during the psychological debriefing in the presence of Couzy - about the selection, deportation and probable execution of men in Potocari – also did not reach the UN. With hindsight it is very unfortunate that members of the medical team remained outside the debriefing by the Military Information Office due to an incomplete order and an apparent misunderstanding between Majors Bourgondiën and Solkesz. It is more difficult to understand why General Couzy did not realize the importance and meaning of the reports about probable executions, particularly those from surgeon Kremer.

To a lesser extent this also applies to the observation of a lorry full of bodies, of which General Couzy probably was aware (as he stated the Temporary Committee for Deployment Decisions in 2000). Probably, because Dutchbat members did report these matters to the Military Information Office and it is not impossible that those involved informed General Couzy of that fact.

There was also something curious about those reports of vehicles (the tractor and trailer and the dumper truck) full of bodies. Although the relevant Dutchbat members later made much more detailed statements – probably in more favourable circumstances – they cannot be reproached for having kept the events silent – something that applies to more incidents that started playing a role during the aftermath. The interpretation of the reports being important indications for large-scale murders only arose a week later. The observation of the ‘dumper truck with bodies’ later became an important building block in the reconstructions of the events that were published by the various media over time. This led to the question why that same information did not lead immediately to that interpretation at the Military Information Office and UNPF.

The answer probably does not lie in the shortcomings of the debriefing team. They were aware of the enormous shortcomings of the debriefing and the political need to be very careful with far-reaching conclusions on the basis of shaky evidence. On the other hand they were certain enough to experience some relief that their worst fears did not come true. The explanation for the differences in interpretation of the same observation lies probably in the change of the context in which the observations were placed during the course of the following weeks. The media played a crucial role in that process.

Because of the nature of newsgathering certain incidences and observations, such as those of the lorries with bodies, were taken out of proportion. The media’s prejudices also played a role. At that time, the incidents were placed in a context that assumed large-scale human rights violations largely perpetrated by the Bosnian Serbs – the context that this concerned that largest mass murder in Europe since the Nazis, came a little later. With the exponential growth of the number of indications for enormous abuses, and seemingly the plausibility of those events, the first fragmented reports obtained with hindsight a forecast value they could not or hardly have had at the time itself.

The question is to what extent all the information that was released surrounding the events around Srebrenica was interpreted correctly at the time, and whether it was awarded the meaning that it should reasonably have had at the time (and not later). It is also important whether *all* the data available at that time were analysed in conjunction. When one considers all (anonymous) utterances by the returned Dutch people during the psychological debriefing, which are considered in conjunction at the Military Information Office and towards the media, the sum is a much more disconcerting picture than when one just looks at the statements recorded by Lieutenant Colonel Morgan, Major Bourgondiën and Captain Theunens. Only well designed operational debriefing, undertaken by the Royal Netherlands Army on the spot or immediately on return to the Netherlands could have produced this complete picture. At the time there did not seem to be any cause for such an operation. General Couzy was not only interested in the mental well-being of his men, but also in operational information. However possible human rights violations did not dominate, because it was not an issue at that time. This

1622 DCBC, 866. *Stg-confi* code Belgrade to Foreign Affairs, Engels 81, 16 July 1995; interview R. Engels, 21/05/99.

changed gradually in the week following the 16th of July, until eventually it became Couzy's main problem.

It is not entirely surprising that General Couzy was caught unaware by the humanitarian question in a way. Until 1995 hardly any attention had been paid to the role of UN soldiers when reporting human-rights violations. The discussion on that only really started after the events in Rwanda in 1994 and in Srebrenica.¹⁶²³ 'It is a question of methods. That is crucial with Srebrenica', noted the human rights investigator Marguerita Lagos-Bossel of the UN Centre for Human Rights.¹⁶²⁴ And in July 1995 those methods had hardly been developed within the UN or the troop-contributing nations.

The difficulty in obtaining and verifying witnesses of possible human-rights violations not only played a role for the UN military. The investigators who on behalf of various organizations interviewed those deported from Srebrenica who had arrived in Tuzla faced the same crucial question of methodology and interpretation. (See Chapter 1 of this part) And the same applied, albeit not equally strongly, to the countless journalists who tried to find out from the Displaced Persons what had happened in the black box Srebrenica. In the week after the return of the first Dutchbat members, the problem manifested itself in its clearest form in the discussion that arose between Dutch Ministers Pronk and Voorhoeve and General Couzy about the use of the genocide label for the events surrounding Srebrenica.

13. 'The politics of suffering': Tuzla Air Base - Introduction

Earlier in Section IV attention was paid to the ousting of the inhabitants from Srebrenica. In a day and a half they were deported in buses and lorries to the border near Kladanj, from where they needed to cross the area of the Muslim-Croat Federation on foot. Particularly on the second day, the 13th of July, Dutchbat military personnel no longer provided adequate escort of the convoys. The VRS took their vehicles and took the crew hostage temporarily. Only four static posts, set up en route in response by Karremans, tried to maintain any view of the convoys. Truly adequate monitoring was absolutely impossible, and that appeared to be the intention. It gave the VRS free reign to stop buses as they pleased. The few men who had managed to board the buses were still stopped and deported, as were some young women. The other passengers were robbed and intimidated. En route they got an impression of the fate of their men, of whom a large number had meanwhile been captured after a failed attempt to escape from the enclave. Their observations during the deportations, in conjunction with what they had seen and heard in Potocari, made the group of Displaced Persons an important source for the events. They made the first reports of human-rights violations. Furthermore they were the first visible consequence of ethnic cleansing in Srebrenica. The images of the desperate Displaced Persons made a great impression on public and political opinion.

The central issue in this chapter is the care and reception of this group at Dubrave airport near Tuzla. The manner in which this took shape played an important role in the first perceptions of the fall of Srebrenica. From the 25th of May 1994 Dubrave had not been an operational airport, as it had come to be within the scope of the Bosnian-Serb anti-aircraft guns and also because the necessary equipment and personnel were lacking.¹⁶²⁵ After that it had been taken in use by the UN as accommodation for units and as storage space for supplies. The UNHCR also had the larger part of its supplies stored at

¹⁶²³ Interviews Diane F. Orentlicher, Director of War Crimes Research Office, American University, 06/07/00. ; Paul R. Williams, Washington Law Center, 06/07/00. Orentlicher also acts as the ICTY's adviser in The Hague. Williams was e.g. adviser of the Bosnian Government during the Dayton negotiations and of the Albanian delegation during the Kosovo discussions in Rambouillet. Together with Norman Cigar he wrote 'War crimes and individual responsibility: a *prima facie* case for the indictment of Slobodan Milosevic' (The Balkan Institute, Washington D.C., 1997).

¹⁶²⁴ Interview M. Lagos-Bossel, UN Centre for Human Rights (UN CHR), 20/12/00.

¹⁶²⁵ On the possible secret use of the airport for weapon shipments to Bosnian forces with so-called 'black flights', see the Appendix Intelligence, Chapter 4 'The Croatian Pipeline and Black Flights on Tuzla.

‘TAB’, the abbreviation for Tuzla Air Base, as it was called by the UN.¹⁶²⁶ UNPROFOR and aid organizations did everything in their powers to receive those dispelled from the enclave Srebrenica and to ameliorate the awful circumstances in which they stayed at the airport. The publicity function the suffering of the Displaced Persons provided to the Bosnian government gave a UN officer cause to speak of the ‘politics of suffering’.¹⁶²⁷ The manner in which this obtained a political life is central in the first section of this report on Tuzla Air Base.

As a result the airbase had been the centre of the attention of the international press for more than a week since the 13th of July. Camera teams and members of the press descended on the thousands of Displaced Persons to record their story of the fall of Srebrenica. All manner of international organizations too tried to find out what had happened in the former Safe Area. So the Displaced Persons community at the airbase functioned as a ‘barometer of genocide’.¹⁶²⁸

The second section deals with the role of both the media and some of the main organizations that interviewed the Displaced Persons. This Section also deals with the practical and methodological problems they experienced in establishing exactly what had happened in Srebrenica, and the difficulties with clarifying the fate of possibly thousands of missing persons.

14. The role of the Bosnian Government

From the moment the Bosnian-Serb attack on Srebrenica had started, both UNPROFOR and the aid organizations present in Sector North East had been put on a state of alert. Based on countless experiences with ethnic cleansing from the past, they prepared for the arrival of an enormous number of Displaced Persons.¹⁶²⁹

The Bosnian Government had to find an answer to the question how to care for this mass of people, and it became clear very quickly that they were not going to be helpful. The relationship between the Bosnian authorities and UNPROFOR was no longer what it had been when the first UN peacekeepers arrived in Sarajevo. The Bosnian Government had speculated some time on an armed intervention that would mean the balance of power would move in its favour. UNPROFOR seemed to be ever more of a hindrance to such a solution.

The impending fall of a Safe Area protected by the UN confirmed the UN’s failure to the Bosnian Government. It was clear to that same UN that they were going to be given the responsibility. As early as 10 July Displaced Persons from Srebrenica demonstrated against the UN in Tuzla – they had stayed there since the beginning of the war. Chapter 6 of Section III already discussed that the Deputy Commander of Sector North East, the Dutch Colonel C.L. (Charlie) Brantz, had been held together with some staff members and Swedish and Norwegian military personnel near the compound of Nordbat-2, which was blocked by demonstrators.¹⁶³⁰ The fierce demonstrations continued the next day, the day on which Srebrenica fell.¹⁶³¹

When it came to preparing for the care of thousands of homeless people, the Bosnian authorities responded with reproaches directed at UNPROFOR. Minister H. Muratovic accused the UN of co-operating with ethnic cleansing.¹⁶³² At the meeting in the morning of the 12th of July, the minister denied the local representatives in Srebrenica every authority to negotiate on behalf of the Bosnian Government and stated to be against ‘the movement of any people out of the enclave other

¹⁶²⁶ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Diary C.L. Brantz, p. 5.

¹⁶²⁷ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Fax Ken Biser to Philip Corwin, ‘srebrenica update/Tuzla weekly report’, 15/07/95.

¹⁶²⁸ This term was coined by Bill Frelick of the US Committee for Refugees (USCR). See his contribution ‘Refugees: a barometer of genocide’, in *World Refugee Survey: 1988 in review*. Quoted in: Bill Frelick, ‘Refugees: contemporary witnesses to genocide’, in: Helene Fein (ed.), *Genocide Watch* (New Haven, London 1992), pp. 45-58.

¹⁶²⁹ Although ‘Displaced Persons’ is the correct term, the text also uses the term refugees.

¹⁶³⁰ ‘Ellende opvangen. De werkplek: waarnemend sector-commandant Noord-Oost Bosnie’ (Coping with misery. Workplace: acting sector commander in North East Bosnia), in: *Trivizier*, 53(1998) 12.

¹⁶³¹ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Fax Ken Biser to Philip Corwin, ‘srebrenica update/Tuzla weekly report’, 15/07/95.

¹⁶³² UNGE, ICFY, Box 234, file 6 15. Akashi to Annan, Z-1152, ‘situation in Srebrenica’, 12/07/95.

than in case of medical emergencies'. According to him, the care and reception of the new Displaced Persons (those who had fled to Potocari before the Bosnian Serb attack) should be in Srebrenica - the Safe Area. According to Muratovic there was no room in Tuzla, which already housed many displaced persons. Evacuated wounded needed to go to foreign hospitals, because there was no room for them in Bosnian hospitals.¹⁶³³

When these demands were superseded by hard facts, the Bosnian authorities passed all responsibility for the fate of the deported to the UN with a precondition. When it became clear that the Displaced Persons would enter on the 12th of July near Kladanj, Muratovic determined in a meeting with ministers of Tuzla Canton and UN officials that the Displaced Persons should go to a new 'safe area' – the airbase near Tuzla.¹⁶³⁴

In the eyes of the UN this was a totally unsuitable location for the care and reception of people. It not only lacked the necessary facilities, but the airbase was also in the range of Serb artillery. Furthermore some time in advance 11,000 reception places had been prepared in Tuzla Canton in the event of more Displaced Persons.¹⁶³⁵ Minister M. Cero for Refugee Affairs, Canton Governor I. Hadzic and other relevant Bosnian authorities maintained that there was no other place to receive the Displaced Persons. They stated most explicitly that they considered the people from Srebrenica 'UN refugees'. As a veiled threat they added 'To avoid "social turbulence", it would be better to receive them'¹⁶³⁶, which given the demonstrations of the 10th and the 11th of July could not be seen as a throw-away comment.

As it was clear to UN officials that an enormous problem was on its way, General Smith was employed to turn the tide. On the afternoon of the 12th of July he spoke with Prime Minister H. Silajdzic and Minister Muratovic, where he brought it to their attention that no more than 2,500 people could be received at the airbase. However, the Bosnian Government were unwilling to take that on board. The aim of the Bosnian wish to bring everyone to Tuzla became very clear – they did not only think that the location had sufficient room, but furthermore: 'UNHCR would not be able to hide the problem from the world'.¹⁶³⁷ Srebrenica had to become a media event at Tuzla Air Base. The Bosnian Muslims wanted to show the world the kind of suffering the Muslims had to endure and they wanted to confront the UN with the consequences of a failing policy. That message came through clear to the UN officials – they considered the decision to 'dump' the Displaced Persons a 'punishment'.¹⁶³⁸

At a meeting with Yashusi Akashi the next day UNHCR representative A.W. Bijleveld expressed the expectation that 'the Bosnian Government will remain obstinate in its refusal to help the Displaced, until Tuzla Air Base is overflowing with people, and Sarajevo succeeds in embarrassing both the UN and the international community'.¹⁶³⁹ Later that day General Smith made a final attempt to personally convince President Izetbegovic that there were much better and safer reception possibilities and that the Bosnian Government would have to take its share of the burden. But the Bosnian President remained intractable.¹⁶⁴⁰

¹⁶³³ SMG, 1004. Telegram Akashi to Annan, Z-1142, 'situation in Srebrenica', 12/07/95.

¹⁶³⁴ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Fax Ken Biser to Philip Corwin, 'srebrenica update/Tuzla weekly report', 15/07/95.

¹⁶³⁵ UNGE, ICFY, Box 234, file 6 15. Telegram Akashi to Annan, Z-1154, 'situation in Srebrenica', 13/07/95; NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Diary C.L. Brantz, p. 298.

¹⁶³⁶ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Fax Ken Biser to Philip Corwin, 'srebrenica update/Tuzla weekly report', 15/07/95; interview C.L. Brantz.

¹⁶³⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, box 216 BH Commands '95. 87298, 1060, Jul 95-Jan 96. Fax Baxter to HQ UNPF, 'Notes on the meeting gen Smith/prime minister Silajdzic – 13 Jul 95', 14/07/95. At the headquarters of the UNPF in Sarajevo they also considered it a possibility that in this manner the Bosnian Government could regain possession of the airbase which was in UN hands. Interview A. de Ruyter, 26/06/00.

¹⁶³⁸ UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. '95 [Biser reports]. C.T. Sy, 'Briefing note', 13/07/95.

¹⁶³⁹ UNGE, ICFY, Box 234, file 6 15. Telegram Akashi to Annan, Z-1154, 'situation in Srebrenica', 13/07/95.

¹⁶⁴⁰ UNGE, ICFY, Box 234, file 6 15. Telegram Akashi to Annan, Z-1154, 'situation in Srebrenica', 13/07/95. See also: 'Reactie van C.H. Nicolai op artikel van kolonel Ch. Brantz' (C.H. Nicolai's response to article by Colonel C. Brantz), in

The next few days it became ever clearer that the Displaced Persons were pawns in a political game. The ABiH (the military forces of the Bosnians Muslims) in Tuzla refused to provide help in the form of housing and food to the ‘srebrenica rebels’, as the Displaced Persons were called.¹⁶⁴¹ As early as the 13th of July, when the flow of Displaced Persons reached its peak and the international media had flocked to the airbase in large numbers, Governor Hadzic issued a press release in which he stated a number of additional demands concerning the care and protection of the Displaced Persons. If there were insufficient reception facilities at the airbase, they should be taken to ‘third countries’; the Displaced Persons themselves had ‘expressed their wishes to be evacuated to the Netherlands, Great Britain, France as well as to other western countries’.¹⁶⁴² Muratovic, the highest representative of the Bosnian Government in Tuzla, underlined that demand and added that otherwise the Displaced Persons would stay at the airbase until the end of the war.¹⁶⁴³ Besides a few other demands about improvements in the care and reception, Hadzic required that the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs Ogata, would make a personal visit to Tuzla. When she did so on the 17th of July, she was greeted by a demonstration where more than 200 people carried English texts for the benefit of the international media.¹⁶⁴⁴ It was a protest by the local SDA, Izetbegovic’ party. One of the carried slogans read ‘UNPROFOR are fascists’.¹⁶⁴⁵

Although the Bosnian authorities did not want to lend a hand, they did take care of the transport of the Displaced Persons who arrived near Kladanj. That way they could be sure they would go to Tuzla Air Base. Near Kladanj, where the Pakistani battalion was stationed, the UN did organize a first reception with immediate medical attention and food. The Dutch General Nicolai of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo sent his deputy Colonel Ph. Coiffet on the 13th of July to make an inventory of the needs in Kladanj.¹⁶⁴⁶ The International Red Cross went backwards and forwards with armoured Landrovers to collect 29 seriously weakened Displaced Persons.¹⁶⁴⁷

15. Organization and course of the initial care and reception

Only late on the 12th of July, when it became clear that the buses would come to the airbase, did the UN military start preparations for the care and reception on the orders of Colonel Brantz. During the first 72 hours, up to and including the 15th of July, this would be purely on the shoulders of the UNPROFOR soldiers. Only afterwards were the NGOs able to take over the aid, although many complaints could be heard amongst UN officers about the slow response of UNHCR.¹⁶⁴⁸ It had been designated by the UN headquarters in Zagreb as ‘leading’, but could only formally take over the

Trivizier 53 (1998) 12’, in: *Trivizier*, 54 (1999) 1. Colonel Brantz had accused UNPROFOR Sarajevo of having chosen Tuzla Air Base as a site. Nicolai erroneously refers to 12 July as the day of the conversation between Smith and Izetbegovic.

¹⁶⁴¹ Interview D. Last, 16/11/99: Last’s notes of meeting on 13/07/95 with Janvier, Ashton and Moussali, HCA.

¹⁶⁴² NIOD, Coll. Brantz. I. Hadzic, ‘Request’ [by the Government of the Bosnia Herzegovina/Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Government of the Canton Tuzla/Drina], 13/07/95.

¹⁶⁴³ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Fax Ken Biser to Philip Corwin, ‘srebrenica update/Tuzla weekly report’, 15/07/95. Typifying Bosnian opportunism (or division within the leadership), Izetbegovic dismissed the statement about ‘third countries’ on the 14th of July as ‘false rumours’. Prime Minister Silajdzic also began to distance himself on the 14th of July from Muratovic and his ‘extreme position’. See: SRSG Senior Staff meeting, 14/07/95.

¹⁶⁴⁴ UNGE, ICFY, Box 234, file 6 15. Telegram Akashi to Annan, Z-1187, ‘situation in Tuzla and Srebrenica’, 17/07/95; interview N. Skokic, 21/02/98. Skokic worked as an interpreter for Colonel Brantz and regularly visited the airbase with him.

¹⁶⁴⁵ UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. ‘95 [Biser reports]. Fax K. Biser to M. Moussali, ‘srebrenica/Tuzla update’, 17/07/95.

¹⁶⁴⁶ ‘Reactie van C.H. Nicolai op artikel van kolonel Ch. Brantz, in *Trivizier* 53 (1998)12’, in: *Trivizier*, 54(1999)1.

¹⁶⁴⁷ CRST. Fax Y. Hoogendoorn (ICRC) to Col Dedden, 17/07/95; appendix ‘Update no. 9 on ICRC activities in the former Yugoslavia’, 17/07/95.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Interview N.E. Petersen, 29/10/99. Captain Petersen was Commander of the Danish tanks in Tuzla, who were protecting the Swedish soldiers on TAB. He led the construction of the camp at the airbase. According to Petersen, UNHCR was only able to organize adequate aid after some weeks.

responsibility on the 9th of August – two weeks before the camp was cleared.¹⁶⁴⁹ Journalists reported the UNPROFOR officers' accusations that the UNHCR apparently did not have any emergency rations and tents ready and that most of the senior officials were on holiday. Those who were there responded slowly.¹⁶⁵⁰ From the 13th of July representatives of the Joint Crisis Action Team had been present. This was the team Yashusi Akashi had set up in the light of the impending disasters, and in which officials from Civil Affairs, UNPROFOR, UNHCR, the International Red Cross and the European Monitoring Mission were represented.¹⁶⁵¹

With the use of material in the UNHCR depot, the UN military started the construction of an interim camp, whilst others tried to set up some organization, including security. They had only been working on this for one-and-a-half hours - the work was by no means finished - when the first buses with some 1,000 to 1,500 Displaced Persons arrived at 11 o'clock at night. Only at quarter to three in the morning that day did the last arrive at the airbase.¹⁶⁵² The bus drivers had clearly been given orders to collect a new load of passengers as quickly as possible. However in order to avoid being overwhelmed and losing control, the UN military prevented the buses from driving on immediately. In order to be absolutely sure this did not happen, two armoured vehicles were at the start and the end of the column of buses that were lined up on the narrow access road to the base.

The first deportees were partly housed in empty storage sheds, but most had to spend the night in the open air alongside the runway due to lack of space. They were too exhausted to protest. Brantz: 'Furthermore, they were utterly desperate and unable to follow our instruction to use the latrines dug by us. Because of the heat and the stench their misery appeared inhumane to us. We could but try to keep the thing manageable'.¹⁶⁵³ On the southern side of the runway a 'Tent City', as the UN people called it, was set up through the efforts of Norwegian troops in particular. The tent builders managed to stay a cluster ahead of the arriving Displaced Persons.¹⁶⁵⁴ Later other facilities were added, including a mosque even, in a big white tent.

The next day, the 13th of July, it became clear gradually that the situation was escalating despite all efforts. From sunrise to the end of the afternoon the number of people grew to nearly 8,000, although there was room for only 4,000 people. Eventually, after some extra provisions had been made, 6,259 homeless people could be housed on the base.¹⁶⁵⁵ Even then the flow continued¹⁶⁵⁶, and the arrivals only stopped on the 14th of July when the International Red Cross collected the last passengers. They were four old women who had been found a hundred meters from the 'crossing point' - the place where the Displaced Persons had to cross the front line on foot - where they had hidden for three days, because they were no longer able to walk. The UNHCR and the local authorities estimated that a total of 23,000 women, children and elderly people reached the airbase, although the majority would get no further than the gate.¹⁶⁵⁷ However, at UNPROFOR they were sceptical about those numbers, because they seemed a little high. It did become clear on the 13th of July that there was an alarming absence of

¹⁶⁴⁹ 'Ellende opvangen. De werkplek: waarnemend sector-commandant Noord-Oost Bosnie', in: *Trivizier*, 53(1998)12.

¹⁶⁵⁰ John Pomfret, "'We count for nothing': Srebrenica refugees unwelcome in Tuzla', *The Washington Post*, 15/07/95.

¹⁶⁵¹ UNGE, ICFY, Box 234, 6 15. Telegram Akashi to Annan, Z-1158, 'Emergency group for Srebrenica', 13/07/95. Idem: telegram Akashi to Annan, Z-1168, 'situation in Tuzla and Srebrenica', 14/07/95.

¹⁶⁵² UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. '95 [Biser reports]. C.T. Sy, 'Briefing note', 13/07/95; Diary Ch. Brantz, p. 298.

¹⁶⁵³ 'Ellende opvangen. De werkplek: waarnemend sector-commandant Noord-Oost Bosnie', in: *Trivizier*, 53(1998)12.

¹⁶⁵⁴ MvD, DCBC. Fax H. Post Uiterweer (dep CO UN Air Base Tuzla) to OCKLu, 'Refugee Safe Haven Tuzla Air Base Day 2', 14/07/95.

¹⁶⁵⁵ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Fax Ken Biser to Philip Corwin, 'srebrenica update/Tuzla weekly report', 15/07/95; interview Ch. Brantz. According to the Norwegian Lieutenant Colonel R. Holm, who worked on the base as an engineer, there were 7,800 Displaced Persons in 1,300 tents at the height of the situation. Interview R. Holm, 11/03/99.

¹⁶⁵⁶ Idem.

¹⁶⁵⁷ CRST. Fax Y. Hoogendoorn (ICRC) to Col Dedden, 17/07/95; appendix 'Update no. 9 on ICRC activities in the former Yugoslavia', 17/07/95. According to Colonel Brantz a count on the 21st of August showed that the number of Displaced Persons given by the UNHCR was 3,000 below the figures given by the Bosnian authorities. See: 'Ellende opvangen. De werkplek: waarnemend sector-commandant Noord-Oost Bosnie', in: *Trivizier*, jrg. 53, no. 12, December 1998.

able men amongst those arriving at Tuzla Air Base.¹⁶⁵⁸ The assumption was that most were hiding in the mountains.¹⁶⁵⁹

On Friday the 14th of July, the matter appeared to get completely out of hand. In the morning 5,100 Displaced Persons had been registered and housed on the airbase,¹⁶⁶⁰ however out of necessity the larger part of the Displaced Persons remained outside the base and became boisterous. That morning Colonel Brantz had been alerted by the base commander, who had asked him to address the Displaced Persons:

‘There are no words to describe what I encountered at the gate. Screaming, raging, beating, spitting, irrational and desperate people. The noise was deafening and I knew beforehand that this crowd would not listen to me. I tried to climb on a Swedish armoured vehicle, but I did not get far. People were spitting at me, I was hit by stones and sticks. From the corner of my eyes I saw how a number of Bosnian men in uniform were egging on the crowd.’¹⁶⁶¹

Swedish guards and Bosnian police prevented the storming of the airbase. After his failed attempt to calm the mass, Colonel Brantz telephoned Governor Hadzic:

‘Hadzic was not in, so they said. I said through the interpreter that he had half an hour to send someone. If not, I would personally put the first dead Displaced Person in his office. Twenty minutes later the scenes at the gate had calmed down through the efforts of Canton representatives. But I had not solved the problem of the estimated 10,000 people at the gate.’¹⁶⁶²

The heat of nearly 40 degrees and the lack of water had meanwhile taken their toll – the doctors of Nordbat reported that five people had already died of the consequences.¹⁶⁶³

That same Friday the attitude of the Bosnian authorities suddenly became more flexible. The reason for the change in attitude was possibly the down side of the publicity they themselves had helped to generate.¹⁶⁶⁴ Large numbers of media representatives had indeed descended. The images of the desperate Displaced Persons in inhumane conditions, where heat alternated with downpours that would flood parts of the camp, were sent over the world. However, the images of the chaotic scenes of the first few days also put pressure on the Bosnian authorities.¹⁶⁶⁵ Ken Biser, the head of Civil Affairs in Tuzla who had been appointed as co-ordinator by the UN in Zagreb, reported on the 14th of July that the authorities no longer used the term ‘UN refugees’.¹⁶⁶⁶ That same day both Minister Muratovic and

¹⁶⁵⁸ UNGE, ICFY, Box 234, file 6 15. Telegram Akashi to Annan, Z-1168, ‘situation in Tuzla and Srebrenica’, 14/07/95.

¹⁶⁵⁹ Interview D. Last, 06/11/97: Last’s notes of meeting on 13/07/95 with Janvier, Ashton and Moussalli, HCA, who made the statement about the men. However, two days later UNHCR representative Bijleveld expressed the fear of a ‘bloodbath’.

¹⁶⁶⁰ CRST. C. de Moel (MIO) to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, L. Weghagen”L.B. Morkholt [ECMM], ‘DP’s from Srebrenica’, 17/07/95.

¹⁶⁶¹ ‘Ellende opvangen. De werkplek: waarnemend sector-commandant Noord-Oost Bosnie’, in: *Trivizjer*, 53(1998)12; NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Fax Ken Biser to Philip Corwin, ‘srebrenica update/Tuzla weekly report’, 15/07/95; interview Ch. Brantz, 11/07/99.

¹⁶⁶² ‘Ellende opvangen. De werkplek: waarnemend sector-commandant Noord-Oost Bosnie’, in: *Trivizjer*, 53(1998)12.

¹⁶⁶³ UNGE, ICFY, Box 234, file 6 15. Telegram Akashi to Annan, Z-1168, ‘situation in Tuzla and Srebrenica’, 14/07/95.

¹⁶⁶⁴ On the 12th of July UNPROFOR itself had also used the weapon of publicity. Via his Public Information Officer, Colonel Brantz had called for the international media to pay attention to the demonstrations and blockades that threatened to hold up the expected convoys until they had stopped. See: NIOD, Coll. Brantz, H. Kjaerstad to international and local media, ‘Press release: fugitives from Srebrenica. Emergency: media attention needed immediately’, 12/07/95.

¹⁶⁶⁵ UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. ‘95 [Biser reports], fax. K. Biser to J. Ryan, ‘sector NE Civil Affairs weekly report’, 22/07/95.

¹⁶⁶⁶ UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. ‘95 [Biser reports], fax K. Biser to Ph. Corwin, ‘Communiqué of B-H Republic/Federation regarding Srebrenica’, 14/07/95.

the Canton Minister for Refugee Affairs, Cero, announced that the authorities would co-operate. However, in exchange the authorities wanted to enter into contracts with UNHCR concerning compensation for accommodation and goods and to make UNHCR fully responsible for the Displaced Persons. According to Governor Hadzic that was necessary, because the Displaced Persons could only be housed in homes left by Serbs and Croats. According to him this endangered the Muslim-Croat Federation, due to the fears of tension amongst themselves.¹⁶⁶⁷ However, for the time being the UNHCR did not feel like participating in that trade off.

Hadzic was not the only one who came asking for money – Sector Commander Brigadier General H. Haukland, who had returned from leave on the 15th of July, later received a visit from Osman Suljic, the Mayor of Srebrenica. He had walked from Srebrenica to Tuzla. Suljic came to ask for 50,000 dollars for UNPROFOR's rental of the bakery in Potocari and for services provided by local employees. Colonel Brantz: 'However, the latter we had already paid to the former employees we had managed to track down in Tuzla. The rent for the bakery appeared to be DM 8,000 after recalculations. We did not pay that person the money'.¹⁶⁶⁸

Shortly after the incident on the 14th of July, the canton authorities removed 10,000 bivouacking outside the gate in order to receive them in seven reception centres elsewhere in the canton.¹⁶⁶⁹ Although that stabilized the situation, not all problems had come to an end. 'Much political propaganda has been generated this week at the expense of the Srebrenica DP's', Ken Biser wrote in a report at the end of the first week.¹⁶⁷⁰ There were still large numbers of Displaced Persons on the base itself and the Bosnian authorities did not seem to take steps to provide housing for them elsewhere. Some Displaced Persons who had left the airbase of their own volition were returned by Bosnian police.¹⁶⁷¹ Furthermore, some Displaced Persons who had been housed elsewhere returned to their first reception location of their own volition, looking for relatives or because the facilities at the airbase were better.¹⁶⁷² The International Red Cross had quickly started to set up a tracing service where everyone could register. By means of a billboard and the camp's announcement system, this organization tried to reunite families.

The obstruction by the Bosnian side made resupplying the Displaced Persons at Tuzla Air Base considerably more difficult. Aid convoys had to deal with roadblocks and extensive checks by the Bosnian army. As early as the 14th of July, the Bosnian army announced that convoys within Sector North East 72 had to be announced 72 hours in advance and within Sector South West 24 hours in advance. A convoy was defined as 'two or more vehicles'.¹⁶⁷³ At a certain point the First and Third Corp even forbade all convoys from Sector South West to Sector North East. The argument they used was 'that the UN should not be getting involved in facilitating the movement of Displaced Persons what [sic] is a municipal authority problem'.¹⁶⁷⁴ The drivers of the convoys had to wait hours in the sun, because their papers were supposedly not in order. A convoy with tents was delayed more than sixteen hours by the ABiH.¹⁶⁷⁵

¹⁶⁶⁷ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Fax Ken Biser to Philip Corwin, 'srebrenica update/Tuzla weekly report', 15/07/95; interview Ch. Brantz.

¹⁶⁶⁸ 'Ellende opvangen. De werkplek: waarnemend sector-commandant Noord-Oost Bosnie', in: *Trivizjer*, 53(1998)12; interview Ch. Brantz, 11/03/99.

¹⁶⁶⁹ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Fax Ken Biser to Philip Corwin, 'srebrenica update/Tuzla weekly report', 15/07/95.

¹⁶⁷⁰ UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. '95 [Biser reports], fax. K. Biser to J. Ryan, 'sector NE Civil Affairs weekly report', 22/07/95.

¹⁶⁷¹ CRST. C. de Moel (MIO) to the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 'DP's from Srebrenica', 17/07/95.

¹⁶⁷² UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. '95 [Biser reports], fax. K. Biser to M. Moussali, 'srebrenica/ Civil Affairs update', 20/07/95.

¹⁶⁷³ UNGE, ICFY, Box 234, file 6 15. Telegram Akashi to Annan, Z-1162, 'situation of Displaced Persons in Tuzla', 14/07/95.

¹⁶⁷⁴ UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. '95 [Biser reports], fax J. Carter to J. Ryan, 'RoM' [restrictions of movement], 21/07/95.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Interview H. Haukland, 03/05/99; N.E. Petersen, 29/10/99.

However, around the same time the civil authorities seemed to become a little more flexible. As early as the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs Ogata's visit on 17th of the July, Minister Muratovic had promised that the people on Tuzla Air Base would be removed as soon as possible, although it remained no more than a statement.¹⁶⁷⁶ Only on the 21st of July did the Bosnian authorities promise that they would start transferring five thousand Displaced Persons to other reception centres that afternoon.¹⁶⁷⁷

After some days the press reports were no longer focused on just the Displaced Persons, because some Displaced Persons and Bosnian officials were no longer focused on just the UN, but also questioned the attitude of their own government. Particularly the poor defence of the enclave by their own troops started to become an issue, partly because from the 16th of July onwards the survivors of the column started arriving in Tuzla. However in conversations with UN officials on the 15th of July, Minister Muratovic had already expressed his amazement with the words: 'Why didn't they fight?'¹⁶⁷⁸ Representatives from Tuzla council also started to express their concerns that a 'deal' on Srebrenica and Zepa had perhaps been struck higher up and that perhaps Tuzla was part of that too.¹⁶⁷⁹ As early as the 12th of July, the chairman of the 'Association of Residents and War Invalids from Zepa', Becir Heljic, expressed the thought in Sarajevo that Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde had become part of an exchange (see Section III, Chapter 1). According to him that did not only involve the international community, but also the Bosnian authorities. His statement is to have received much support.¹⁶⁸⁰ When this topic was discussed increasingly more often in public during the next few days, the Bosnian officials took their foot of the pedal. In relation to these stories Ken Biser reported that 'regional authorities have suddenly become less vocal about UNPROFOR's role in defending the enclave, and are noticeably more agreeable to moving the Displaced Persons off the base, while utilizing their initial coup to obtain as much international financial support as possible'.¹⁶⁸¹

Yet it was still to take until the 28th of August until the last Displaced Persons left the airbase – the reason was a Bosnian Serb shelling of Tuzla Air Base.¹⁶⁸² In UNPROFOR circles the – rather predictable- rumour was doing the rounds that the shelling was in reality undertaken by ABiH, because Tuzla Air Base had served its purpose.¹⁶⁸³

16. Barometer of a genocide?

Tuzla Air Base provided journalists and representatives of local authorities and international governments the first opportunity to obtain information from Displaced Persons about what had happened in Srebrenica. However, it seemed very difficult for all those involved to obtain a clear picture of the events. UN military personnel who were the first to deal with the Displaced Persons were shocked by the traumatised impression many of them made. Some were literally paralysed with fear.¹⁶⁸⁴ Several women committed suicide shortly after arrival – one because VRS soldiers had taken away both

¹⁶⁷⁶ UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. '95 [Biser reports], fax K. Biser to M. Moussalli, 'srebrenica/Tuzla update', 17/07/95.

¹⁶⁷⁷ UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. '95 [Biser reports], fax K. Biser to M. Moussalli, 'srebrenica/Tuzla update', 21/07/95.

¹⁶⁷⁸ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Fax Ken Biser to Philip Corwin, 'srebrenica update/Tuzla weekly report', 15/07/95

¹⁶⁷⁹ UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. '95 [Biser reports], fax. K. Biser to M. Moussali, 'srebrenica/ Civil Affairs update', 20/07/95.

¹⁶⁸⁰ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts 18/07/95: Iraqi News Agency, 'Government criticized over fall of Srebrenica', Zagreb, 1404 gmt 16/07/95.

¹⁶⁸¹ UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. '95 [Biser reports], fax. K. Biser to J. Ryan, 'sector NE Civil Affairs weekly report', 22/07/95.

¹⁶⁸² Interview H. Haukland, 03/05/99; M. Prins, 03/01/98.

¹⁶⁸³ Interview G. Arlefalk, 18/05/00.

¹⁶⁸⁴ Interview N.E. Petersen, 29/10/99; NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Fax Ken Biser to Philip Corwin, 'srebrenica update/Tuzla weekly report', 15/07/95.

her sons of 12 and 13 with the empty promise that they would come later.¹⁶⁸⁵ The image of one young woman who hanged herself on a tree after she had taken off her shoes went around the whole world.

Given that professional interviewers required some time to organize themselves, the media were the first to descend on the Displaced Persons. All the big American networks were present with camera crew, as were a large number from other countries. Many got the impression that particularly certain media were looking for the most sensational stories and images. The Dutch print journalist O. (Othon) Zimmerman of the *Algemeen Dagblad* saw 'very strange things'. He witnessed a British camera crew filming from the roof of a car. Suddenly one of them, apparently an interpreter, called that the women should protest: 'At a certain point this became: "We want our men back!"' That was broadcast that evening. Shortly afterwards I got the editor on the line and he said: "Did you miss the demonstration? We just saw it on the news. A demonstration by Serb women in Tuzla!" I answered that it would be better not to write that.'¹⁶⁸⁶

Although there was much to be said about reporting on Tuzla Air Base, most journalists did their best to achieve responsible reporting of the events. An analysis of the extensive reporting where Displaced Persons were left to speak indicates how difficult it was to draw hard conclusions on the nature and the extent of the events in Srebrenica and Potocari. The journalists reported countless heartbreaking stories of the separation and deportation of the men, of bodies encountered with slit throats, of buses that were stopped on the way by the VRS and the men and girls who disappeared. However, the conclusion was often 'These tales of horror cannot be confirmed', also because the Bosnian Serbs refused access to the area.¹⁶⁸⁷ The journalists were hit by the emotion of the witnesses: 'The refugees' accounts of Serb cruelty – of slit throats and women raped – were impossible to verify, but nearly all said they had seen evidence of atrocities or suffered them themselves, and few could tell their stories without breaking down in tears'. In this case the Displaced Persons recounted how hundreds of men 'were killed by Serbs in the hours after their victory'.¹⁶⁸⁸

Evidently the authorities' opinions were also reported, but they were also in the dark. UNHCR spokesperson Kris Janowski in Sarajevo recounted that a woman had told representatives of his organization how her husband's throat had been slit and how she had seen other victims killed in the same way. Other refugees had on the way in the buses seen 'piles and piles, and indeed hundreds of bodies, stripped of clothing'¹⁶⁸⁹. 'All these are very alarming signals and we are afraid some very ugly things happened and are continuing to happen to these people', said Janowski.¹⁶⁹⁰

The Bosnian authorities' assertions also did not provide much to go on. As early as the 13th of July the Bosnian Government used the word 'genocide' to indicate what happened in Srebrenica. According to Prime Minister Silajdzic this concerned 'mass killing' and on the way to Kladanj refugees had seen at least 500 dead and at least 500 dead near Konjevic Polje. He also pointed to the separation of able men above the age of 15 and to rapes.¹⁶⁹¹ Although with hindsight it could be established that many of these stories were true, in the media and certainly at UNPROFOR they were received with a certain caution. That sort of statement had become too much a part of the standard Bosnian repertoire during real and alleged humanitarian disasters to be able to count with much credit. In that sense the Bosnian government became the victim of the 'cry wolf' phenomenon it had created itself.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Interview N. Skokic, 04/02/98. Skokic, Colonel Brantz' interpreter spoke with a large number of Displaced Persons at the airbase.

¹⁶⁸⁶ Interview O. Zimmerman, 28/04/00.

¹⁶⁸⁷ Christopher Bellamy, 'Refugee women 'see menfolk shot'', *The Independent*, 16/07/95.

¹⁶⁸⁸ Stephen Kinzer, 'Muslim refugees flee terror, find misery', *The Ausitn-American Statesman*, 15/07/95.

¹⁶⁸⁹ This quote appears to have been taken literally from a press release by the Bosnian Ambassador in Washington, Sven Alkalaj, after an audience between Prime Minister Silajdzic and Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Press-release PR704, Embassy of the Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina Washington D.C., 'slaughter in Srebrenica', 13/07/95.

¹⁶⁹⁰ Chris Simon, 'serbs tighten noose around Zepa', *UPI*, 14/07/95.

¹⁶⁹¹ Press-release PR704, Embassy of the Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina Washington D.C., 'slaughter in Srebrenica', 13/07/95.

There are many indications that despite statements to the contrary, the Bosnian Government too thought for a long time that thousands of missing men had been taken prisoner. On the 17th of July they reported that around 5,000 men were held prisoner by the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁶⁹² On the 21st of July there was even a meeting at Sarajevo airport between Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Serb representatives, under UN auspices, which dealt with the exchange of prisoners of war taken by the VRS in Srebrenica and with the evacuation of Zepa. The meeting failed, because the Serbs wanted an ‘all for all exchange’, but refused to provide the names of the prisoners they had taken in Srebrenica. The Bosnian Government, who at that point was assuming 6,500 missing persons, refused every agreement if there was not one, albeit partial, list of prisoners of war from Srebrenica.¹⁶⁹³ The scale of the murders was a surprise later.¹⁶⁹⁴

So it is no great surprise that for most journalists the perspective of a mass murder was outside their horizon. ‘It was terrible, but we simply did not get the scale. There was something very shady going on’, according to the Dutch journalist Zimmerman. He particularly referred to the secrecy surrounding the number of men who had survived Srebrenica.¹⁶⁹⁵

Zimmerman was one of those who quickly managed to reconstruct the gruesome story of the escape from Srebrenica, despite obstruction by the Bosnian Government. On the 16th of July the vanguard of the column which had left the enclave five days earlier for Tuzla arrived in a safe area. Some of them, probably the first who arrived immediately left of their own volition to family and friends. However, the majority was taken to a secret location just outside Tuzla, where they were protected from the media. However, some journalists still managed to find them. In the area of Tuzla Zimmerman saw a lorry full of men with old weapons and he followed it to Zivinice: ‘There we arrived at a small secret airfield. A small landing strip. That’s where all those men were gathered. They were not allowed to report and were not allowed to contact their family.’ Zimmerman had parked his car and had entered the terrain with his interpreter where he started conversations with the men. As soon as the authorities discovered this, they threw Zimmerman and his interpreter from the field. One guy came after them: ‘We gave him a coke a half a mile down the road and we spoke with him for a few hours. Three, four hours. He recounted the whole trip from Srebrenica to Tuzla in every detail.’¹⁶⁹⁶ The story was published on the 18th of July 1995.¹⁶⁹⁷ That day other newspapers also had a story about the journey.¹⁶⁹⁸ That way the UN also heard of the ‘secret camp’.¹⁶⁹⁹

A few days later some journalists encountered men who claimed to have survived mass executions. One journalist, who wants to remain anonymous, wrote down the story of Smail Hodzic, one of those survivors, on the 21st of July. The interview was not published, because there was no second independent source who could confirm his story. And although this is a good journalistic principle, they shot themselves in the foot.

Unintentionally this illustrated the fundamental problem with determining genocide or large-scale human rights violations – i.e. by definition there are very few witnesses. Dealing with this required

¹⁶⁹² AFP, ‘some Srebrenica soldiers reach government territory’, 17/07/95.

¹⁶⁹³ CRST. Fax C.L. de Moel to Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 22/07/95. Appendix: Memorandum David Harland to John Ryan, ‘Negotiations on Zepa’, 21/07/95.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Interview D. Harland, 11/07/00. Harland was present at the meetings on behalf of the UN. In his recollections a later meeting had been planned, with on the Bosnian side Izetbegovic, Silajdzic and Muratovic, but the Bosnian Serb delegation had not turned up. From that moment it started to sink in that perhaps something very different was going on with the missing persons.

¹⁶⁹⁵ Interview O. Zimmerman, 28/04/00.

¹⁶⁹⁶ Idem.

¹⁶⁹⁷ O. Zimmerman, ‘Moslimstrijders in helse tocht opgejaagd als wild’ (Muslim fighters hunted down like wild animals on hellish journey), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 18/07/95.

¹⁶⁹⁸ See e.g.: Clare Nullis, ; ‘After six-day flight, 4,000 Muslims arrive in Tuzla. Escape path from Srebrenica was littered with bodies’, *Associated Press*, 18/07/95. Published in several newspapers.

¹⁶⁹⁹ UNGE, Division of Civil Affairs UNPF HQ, box 25/77, 4th April-23 Aug. ‘95 [Biser reports], fax. K. Biser to M. Moussalli, 18/07/95.

a totally different methodological approach. Other journalists did manage to get the story about Hodzic and another survivor, Mevludin Oric, published in the last week of July.¹⁷⁰⁰

17. Investigations among Displaced Persons

These methodological problems, as well as the hindrances created by the Bosnian authorities, also confronted the interviewers who approached the Displaced Persons for information on behalf of various organizations. Important roles were assigned to UNHCR and the International Red Cross, but they were joined from Zagreb by a combined team of the Human Rights Office of Civil Affairs and the UN Centre for Human Rights. Furthermore various other bodies were active, such as the 'Bosnian State Commission for the collection of information on war crimes', as well as the Tribunal, Amnesty International and a number of smaller NGOs. Some of these were eager to publicize their findings as soon as possible. As early as 31 July, for instance, the US Committee on Refugees published an extensive report on the 'death march' from Srebrenica based on interviews conducted by its staff member Bill Frelick in Tuzla and the surroundings.¹⁷⁰¹

Due to the nature of their work most of the organizations were cautious about publicizing politically sensitive information. UNHCR was less reserved in this respect and several times its spokespersons released details from the 'unconfirmed reports' by Displaced Persons. This included the suspicion that the VRS had used Dutchbat uniforms to mislead refugees.¹⁷⁰² Serious research, however, was commenced only on 21 July after Protection Officer Manca de Nissa had arrived in Tuzla. He submitted his report a week later, based on 70 interviews with both normal Displaced Persons and survivors of the march. Manca de Nissa did not however draw any conclusions about possible large-scale murders.¹⁷⁰³

It was much more difficult for an organization such as the International Red Cross to publicize findings. The strictly observed neutrality ruled out any statements that could be given a political slant. Another factor in this case was that the delegates were too familiar with the Bosnian propaganda and thus usually regarded the rumours issuing from Tuzla with great suspicion. In a communiqué on 14 July, three days after the fall of the enclave, nothing was said about missing persons or possible summary executions. Nevertheless, staff of the International Red Cross had already gathered much information by this time. Although the International Red Cross had no official access to the men who arrived in Tuzla from 16 July onwards, staff had in fact spoken to several of them. A communiqué of 19 July however mentioned only that the International Red Cross demanded of the Bosnian Serbs that it be given access to prisoners. Still no mention was made of deaths. But according to Christoph Girod of the International Red Cross the pressure was increasing.¹⁷⁰⁴ Consequently, at a press conference on 31 July, Girod referred to the fact that there were 5000 to 6000 missing persons with the statement: 'We have no indications of this whatsoever'. It was only on 14 August that the International Red Cross first dared to publicly mention the possibility of executions.¹⁷⁰⁵

The UN headquarters in Zagreb had also issued instructions that Displaced Persons be questioned about possible human rights violations (actually: violations of international humanitarian law). As early as 17 July a mixed team from Civil Affairs/Human Rights Office (HRO) and UNCHR had left for Tuzla Air Base on a fact-finding mission, i.e. to interview the Displaced Persons from

¹⁷⁰⁰ E.g. the French newspaper *Libération* published an article about Mevludin Oric on 24 July. Quoted in: Alain Maillard, 'srebrenica, ce que le CICR savait', *L'Hebdo*, no 16, 18/04/96.

¹⁷⁰¹ 'special issue: the death march from Srebrenica', in: *Refugee Reports*, Vol. XVI, no. 7, 31/07/95; interview B. Frelick, 05/07/00.

¹⁷⁰² Alexander G. Higgins, 'UN Agency says refugee accounts of atrocities matching up', *Associated Press*, 19/07/95.

¹⁷⁰³ DCBC, unnumbered. Michele Manca de Nissa, Protection Officer, to Cynthia Burns, Senior Protection Officer, 'Report on recent arrivals from Srebrenica in Tuzla', 28/07/95.

¹⁷⁰⁴ Another factor was the discussion being conducted at that time about the silence of the Red Cross during the Second World War.

¹⁷⁰⁵ Alain Maillard, 'srebrenica, ce que le CICR savait', *L'Hebdo*, no. 16, 18/04/96.

Srebrenica. Ken Biser of Civil Affairs in Tuzla had already begun this task after an attempt to travel to Srebrenica, together with HRO staff member Peggy Hicks, had met with the resistance of the Serbs. From 18 July onwards Biser received the support of the team from Zagreb.¹⁷⁰⁶

A confrontation soon took place with a Field Delegate of the International Red Cross: 'He bluntly told us that the ICRC was not happy with our work because it potentially interfered with its own work'. According to the delegates it was possible that people would not report certain information to the International Red Cross if they had already spoken to other researchers; they might think it was no longer necessary. The humanitarian debriefers of the two UN organizations ensured that they avoided the potential confusion between the two organizations by telling their respondents that they should afterwards also talk to the International Red Cross.¹⁷⁰⁷

There were other problems too. The investigation was considerably hindered by the journalists present. Anyone could walk in and out of the relief camps. According to the Swiss investigator R. Salvisberg, UNCHR Bosnia coordinator based in Sarajevo, the journalists encouraged the Displaced Persons to say what they wanted to hear. In his eyes the media were engaged in 'a sensational hunt' for the worst crime, and this would then be published in the papers. As a result Salvisberg and his colleagues were constantly working in the wake of newspaper headlines and television sound-bites (however strange it sounds, televisions were soon present in the camp too).¹⁷⁰⁸ The investigators noticed in the process that the journalists were strongly focussed on Dutchbat. This possible distortion made it difficult to discern what the Displaced Persons had experienced themselves and what they were repeating from other sources.¹⁷⁰⁹

Salvisberg's team initially took a random approach, with evaluations taking place each day, after which the work became more systematic. The investigators chose a gentle, passive approach. They asked who wanted to talk to them, and then interviewed these people. According to Salvisberg they were not after 'sexy stories like the ones in the press'.¹⁷¹⁰ A total of five women came forward who said they had been raped. In general the stories of those who had been transported away in buses were relatively 'uneventful'. They had experienced few incidents. A picture gradually emerged, but the main question was whether the reported executions were isolated incidents or indications of a widespread phenomenon. It was also very difficult to gain a picture of the number who had been executed, but things certainly gave cause for concern, according to the investigator Peggy Hicks of the Human Rights Office of Civil Affairs in Zagreb.¹⁷¹¹

After about a week the investigators of the two UN organizations noticed that their respondents had been told what to say; they suspected that these instructions came from the Bosnian authorities. The gist of these prompted stories was that the Serbs and the UN (not specifically the Dutch) had been the bad guys, who had 'sold out' the people of the enclave. At this time Salvisberg had not yet heard any criticism of the actions of the people's own Muslim soldiers. It was to be some days before the first stories emerged which also assigned blame to the Bosnian government.¹⁷¹²

After a few days the team of investigators started looking for men who had entered the Safe Areas following the march. They visited a camp full of soldiers outside Tuzla. This proved a difficult affair: the authority of T. Mazowiecki, the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights who arrived in Tuzla on 22 July, was required to facilitate this visit. This solved only part of the problem: the interviewers were not permitted to approach people themselves but were 'accompanied' by the Muslim authorities.

¹⁷⁰⁶ NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Ken Biser ScvAO, Tuzla, to Michel Mousalli, HCA, 'sector Northeast Human Rights Update', 21/07/95.

¹⁷⁰⁷ NIOD, Coll. P. Hicks. Grace Kang, 'Note for the file: visit to Displaced Persons at UN Airbase', 18/07/95.

¹⁷⁰⁸ Interview M. Prins, 03/01/98.

¹⁷⁰⁹ Interview R. Salvisberg, 08/03/99.

¹⁷¹⁰ Interview R. Salvisberg, 08/03/99.

¹⁷¹¹ Interview P. Hicks, 10/07/00

¹⁷¹² Interview R. Salvisberg, 08/03/99.

‘They were presented to us’, reported the investigator Hicks. This was supposedly to save the investigators’ time. ‘It made me feel very uneasy’, said Hicks later.¹⁷¹³

Other investigators shared her experience. According to R. (Roman) Wieruszewski of the UNCHR office in Sarajevo, one of the consequences of this ‘accompaniment’ was that everyone with whom he and his colleagues spoke claimed that he had been unarmed. In later interviews conducted independently of the authorities the interviewees generally declared that of course they had carried weapons, otherwise they would not have survived the march.¹⁷¹⁴ Sometimes it was women who said that of course the soldiers had been armed. Salvisberg recounted: ‘They even laughed at us when we asked about this.’ He and the other researchers calculated that of the Muslim men, about one-third had been armed and about two-thirds had been unarmed. They gained the impression that there had been an element of organization in the distribution of the available weapons: ‘You get one, you don’t’, which according to them led to conflicts. Other Displaced Persons reported fights between the Muslim soldiers. There were also reports that Bosnian Muslims had executed Serbs.

The impression gained by the research team was that the soldiers had several prepared standard stories, such as a mass murder of 25 people conducted by the Bosnian Serbs, in which the respondent kept under cover or pretended to be dead. ‘We heard this story ten times or so’, said Salvisberg.¹⁷¹⁵ Although the reconstruction of the march presented problems, the biggest problem proved to be establishing what had happened to the group in Srebrenica and Potocari.¹⁷¹⁶

In the first report sent by Hicks on 21 July, she nonetheless concluded that there was sufficient basis ‘to believe that significant human rights violations occurred both before and during the transport from Srebrenica’.¹⁷¹⁷ Much remained unclear, however. In the final report finished by Hicks on 31 July, the issue of numbers remained open. She could do nothing else than to conclude that further investigations were required.¹⁷¹⁸ It was only in October 1995, following new revelations in the press, that even she realized what the probable scale of the murder had been.¹⁷¹⁹

Typical of the problems in defining the events shortly after the fall were the statements made by two high-ranking UN officials in Tuzla. The Peruvian diplomat H. Wieland, the highest official of the UN Centre for Human Rights in the region, said on 23 July that ‘we have not found anyone who saw with their own eyes an atrocity taking place’.¹⁷²⁰ On the same day, however, the Special Rapporteur for human rights, Tadeus Mazowiecki, also declared in Tuzla that ‘barbaric’ acts had taken place.¹⁷²¹ Thus for a long time it remained unclear what precisely had happened in Potocari and the surroundings, together with the fate of the thousands of men who had been missing since the fall. A major factor for those concerned was the disbelief that these thousands of men had been murdered in cold blood. It was thus the case that not only did the ‘barometer’ give no clear indications in itself: those reading it were also influenced by their own expectations and assumptions when trying to establish what had really happened. The discussion of the issue as to whether a genocide, or a mass murder, had been committed after the fall of Srebrenica, was to an important extent determined by the various points of departure.

1713 Interview P. Hicks, 10/07/00.

1714 Interview R. Wieruszewski, 06/02/98.

1715 Interview R. Salvisberg, 08/03/99.

1716 Interview P. Hicks, 10/07/00.

1717 NIOD, Coll. P. Hicks. Fax K. Biser to M. Moussalli, ‘sector Northeast Human Rights Update’, 21/07/95. Hicks was the author of this.

1718 NIOD, Coll. P. Hicks. Interoffice memorandum, M. Moussalli to Y. Akashi, ‘srebrenica human rights report’, 31/07/95. Hicks was the author of this too.

1719 Interview P. Hicks, 10/07/00.

1720 Tim Butcher, ‘serb atrocities in Srebrenica are unproved’, *Daily Telegraph*, 24/07/95.

1721 Alan Cowell, ‘Dutch cite limited abuse’, *New York Times*, 24/07/95.

18. Genocide?

The question as to whether the term ‘genocide’ was applicable to the events taking place after the fall of Srebrenica became one of the dominant themes in the aftermath. Above all the resistance by Lieutenant General Couzy to the use of this term to describe the events following the fall of Srebrenica was to play a major role in the negative impression of the way that Dutch military personnel had responded to the disaster. It also became an element in the speculations concerning the poor relations between Minister Voorhoeve and his Army Commander Couzy, because a difference in approach to this matter soon became evident. The following section of this chapter examines the way that this ‘genocide issue’ took shape, based on a description and analysis of the actions of the main players and their interrelationships. The role of the media is also spotlighted, as this formed an important ingredient in the complex of actions and events.

Firstly it will be described how, following Couzy’s activities between 15 and 17 July, the issue of interpretation of the events played an increasingly important role in the public discussion. It will then be recounted how Couzy responded, partly in consultation with others, and how his actions should be viewed in the light of the knowledge that he had of the events. This is why detailed attention is also devoted to the debriefing of the main Dutchbat group conducted on Couzy’s instructions in Zagreb on 22 and 23 July, as opposed to the group of the 55 hostages and the Military Hospital Organization group who had already been interviewed between 15 and 17 July. The points of departure and the methods applied for the debriefing of the main group, which influenced the sort of information thus obtained, are also closely examined. In this context the simultaneous attempts made by UN bodies to gather information specially relevant to human rights violations are also dealt with. The interaction between the two debriefings and the resulting problems then form a subsequent important theme. In addition to revealing how strongly the Dutch authorities influenced the events in Zagreb, this also enables a comparison of the results to conduct a better analysis of the way in which Couzy arrived at his statements on human rights violations in the concluding press conference on the afternoon of Sunday 23 July. The final question to be examined is to what extent these statements, later subjected to strong criticism, were justified and understandable under the circumstances.

19. Pronk’s use of the term ‘genocide’

The origin of the ‘genocide issue’ lay with the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, J. Pronk. On Friday 14 July he and an aide travelled to Tuzla on behalf of the Ministerial Council. Pronk was given permission to organize an airlift between Tuzla and the Netherlands for the Displaced Persons. On 15 July he arrived via Split in Tuzla in the company of a reconnaissance group under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel L.M.T. Kuijpers. The delegation was to establish what assistance the Netherlands could provide for the Displaced Persons from Srebrenica. Pronk also hoped, however, to find out more about the fate of the several thousand missing men – an issue that was raising a growing number of questions. He conducted a large number of conversations with representatives of the UN, NGOs, Bosnian authorities and Displaced Persons at Tuzla Air Base, where the Displaced Persons were accommodated. In the evening he appeared in a direct broadcast on Dutch television news at 8pm. Pronk stated that he had consulted with Prime Minister Kok and Defence Minister Voorhoeve on the ‘chief problem’ in Tuzla. According to him this problem was not the Displaced Persons, but the ‘stragglers’, the ones who had not arrived in Tuzla. He advocated that international pressure on Mladic be stepped up. When the news presenter Hennie Stoel asked whether pressure and threats would help to motivate the Serbs ‘to do something for the stragglers’, Pronk responded in irritation: ‘Do something for the stragglers? Stop the people being murdered, that’s the issue here.’¹⁷²²

¹⁷²² NOS news broadcast N1, 8pm, 15/07/95 (transcript)

On Monday 17 July the Dutch newspapers and radio reported comparable statements made by Pronk in Sarajevo on his return journey from Tuzla. Pronk once again expressed his concern for the men in Bratunac. *Het Parool* reporter Koliijn van Beurden noted his words: 'No one can get there and that makes you fear the worst'. Pronk was afraid that the Bosnian Serbs wanted to prevent the men from joining up with the Displaced Persons and then once again serving in the ABiH: 'This points to murder as a preventative measure'. Pronk advocated that satellite photographs be used to obtain more information.¹⁷²³

These signals sent by Pronk failed to make a major impact. That only changed when he expressed them in strong terms on television. On the evening of 17 July Pronk had arrived in Split, from where he was to travel back to the Netherlands. Twan Huys was now also in Split. Pronk gave the NOVA reporter a frank interview, telling Huys about a number of atrocities in Srebrenica which he said had cost 'thousands' of lives. The interview was to be broadcast the following evening.

In The Hague the first alarm bells started ringing when NOVA approached the Ministry of Defence on Tuesday 18 July, one day after the interview in Split. Twan Huys' team had also been in Zagreb on 16 July at the moment that the 55 ex-hostages and the Military Hospital Organization team were addressed by Couzy about their departure for the Netherlands. The camera was running when Couzy warned the assembled personnel about the expected media attention and urgently advised them to remain silent with respect to the press. The media quickly interpreted this as a 'muzzle', and it meant that the silence maintained by the 75 Dutchbat members who arrived at Soesterberg in the afternoon of 17 July was news in itself.¹⁷²⁴ The discrepancy between this 'muzzle' for the Dutchbat members and the frankness of Minister Pronk thus also smelled newsworthy. The question was also quickly raised as to why, if Pronk's account was true, the Dutch had done nothing to prevent the drama. The first critical commentaries appeared in the press, some of which did not shrink from comparisons with the Second World War. On the opinion page of *De Volkskrant* on 17 July, for instance, the old journalistic hand Herman Wigbold asked what the principal difference was between the engine drivers who drove the trains to Westerbork (the deportation transit camp set up by the Germans in the Netherlands during the Second World War) and 'UN peacekeepers who ride on the Bosnian Serb trucks'. The example of the mayor in wartime was cited again too.¹⁷²⁵ Voorhoeve, who had already been affected by the critical words of the historian Jan-Willem Honig about the actions of Dutchbat, hit back the following day with his own contribution to the opinion page in which he rejected all criticism of Dutchbat.¹⁷²⁶

It was thus no surprise that on 18 July NOVA contacted the Ministry of Defence to request that someone, preferably Voorhoeve or Couzy, should respond to Pronk's statements in the programme. The Deputy Director of Information of the Ministry of Defence, H.P.M.(Bert) Kreemers, who had already been approached by *Nova* without success, immediately warned his minister of the impending danger. He advised him to consult as soon as possible with Pronk, who was due to arrive at Valkenburg Navy Air Base in the afternoon and to hold a press conference there: 'Contact with the both of you seems advisable to me, because in the public eye we're heading for a 'clash'.¹⁷²⁷

This estimate proved to be correct. The interview recorded with Pronk in Split was broadcast on the evening of 18 July. Huys had initially not recognized the newsworthiness of Pronk's statements about 'large-scale murders', as 'everyone' already knew this. But when he reported the interview to his editor-in-chief Ad van Liempt, the latter instructed that the recording be sent to Hilversum as soon as

¹⁷²³ 'Extra geld Pronk voor vluchteling' (Pronk releases extra funds for Displaced Persons), *Het Parool*, 17/07/95.

¹⁷²⁴ 'Dutchbat zwijgt bij terugkeer op Soesterberg' (Dutchbat silent on return to Soesterberg), *De Volkskrant*, 18/07/95.

¹⁷²⁵ H. Wigbold, 'VN lieten zich manoeuvreren in rol van collaborateur' (UN allowed itself to be manoeuvred into the role of collaborator), *De Volkskrant*, 17/07/95.

¹⁷²⁶ J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 'Kritiek op Dutchbat volkomen onterecht' (Criticism of Dutchbat totally unjustified), *De Volkskrant*, 18/07/95. Honig, teacher at the Department of War Studies of King's College in London and in 1996, together with Norbert Both, the author of the first comprehensive study of the fall of Srebrenica, wrote that the Netherlands had virtually issued an invitation to the Bosnian Serbs with its inconsistent policy in Bosnia. See: 'Nederland droeg zelf bij tot vernedering in Bosnië' (The Netherlands contributed to its own humiliation in Bosnia), *De Volkskrant*, 15/07/95.

¹⁷²⁷ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Memo from H.P.M. Kreemers to Minister, 'Re: statements by Minister Pronk', 18/07/95.

possible because it would initiate ‘an enormous political debate’. He said he knew that the government had agreed not to make any statements about the situation on the ground until the Dutchbat members were in safety.¹⁷²⁸ The broadcast was thus announced with the words that the minister would say ‘what no politician or soldier has dared to utter’. Pronk said that no one should be fooled ‘by people who say that none of this had been confirmed. Thousands of people have been murdered. (...) Real mass murders have taken place. This is something that we knew could happen. The Serbs have done this several times. It’s genocide that is taking place.’ Pronk also referred to the presence of special Bosnian Serb troops who had frequently committed such actions before.¹⁷²⁹ A few years later Pronk told the NIOD that this remark was prompted by reports from the Bosnian authorities about the presence of Arkan and his Tigers in the operations against the population of Srebrenica.¹⁷³⁰

The ‘clash’ predicted by Kreemers had now come about. In the absence of Voorhoeve and Couzy, who remained silent due to the position of Dutchbat, it was the CDA (Christian Democrats) spokesman De Hoop Scheffer who responded to Pronk’s statements in the *Nova* programme. Shortly after the fall of the town the CDA spokesman had already declared in *Nieuwe Revu*: ‘As we already knew, the Serbs can commit the most terrible acts if they want to do harm.’¹⁷³¹ This may be why, in the *Nova* broadcast, he did not focus on the content of Pronk’s statements but on their political opportunism. Although ‘understandable from the human perspective’, De Hoop Scheffer considered them ‘politically irresponsible’. He felt that Pronk had mixed private opinions and emotion with political responsibility, and called this ‘a political mistake’. De Hoop Scheffer said that he himself had ‘a whole lot of questions about what has happened there’ – here apparently referring to the missing men – ‘But we as the Dutch government now have one major priority. And that is to get Colonel Karremans and his 306 men back to the Netherlands safe and sound.’ The CDA politician said that with his statements Pronk had deviated from the reserved attitude taken by his colleagues Kok, Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo in the past week.¹⁷³² Five years later De Hoop Scheffer, by then chairman of the CDA, was to declare four times that when making his criticism at that time he was bearing in mind the interests of both ‘Displaced Persons and Dutchbat’ – in that order.¹⁷³³ This is not, however, the impression gained from those days.

Although the D66 spokesman Jan Hoekema accused his CDA colleague of trying to make political capital from the statements, he too felt that Pronk was ‘jumping the gun’ and that his remarks were ‘not prudent and not opportune’. The VVD spokesman Blaauw described the statements as ‘extremely unwise’.¹⁷³⁴

One day after the programme, however, Pronk received support from an unexpected quarter. The AVRO radio news broadcast an interview with the Dutch Chief of Staff of the UN headquarters in Sarajevo, Brigadier General C. Nicolai: ‘Of course it’s ethnic cleansing. It’s only the scale that is completely unclear.’ Nicolai made his remarks two days before the departure of Dutchbat from Potocari, but he did not believe that he could thus endanger the return of the UN soldiers.¹⁷³⁵ The PVDA (Labour) spokesman Gerrit Valk also played down the risks for the 307 Dutchbat members in Potocari: ‘I don’t have the impression that Mladic tunes in to *Nova* every day.’¹⁷³⁶

¹⁷²⁸ Interview T. Huys, 07/07/00 and 08/07/00.

¹⁷²⁹ NOS/VARA, NOVA, N3, 18/07/95, 10.35pm (transcript).

¹⁷³⁰ Interview J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

¹⁷³¹ ‘Wie denkt Joris Voorhoeve wel dat hij is?’ (Who does Joris Voorhoeve think he is?), *De Nieuwe Revu*, no. 30, 19-26 July 1995.

¹⁷³² NOS/VARA, NOVA, N3, 20.35pm (transcript).

¹⁷³³ NIOD, TCBU. TCBU, Hearing J. de Hoop Scheffer, 29/05/00.

¹⁷³⁴ ‘Kok steunt Pronk na kritiek op genocide Serviërs in Bosnië’ (Kok supports Pronk following criticism of Serb genocide in Bosnia), *De Volkskrant*, 20/07/95.

¹⁷³⁵ AVRO, Radio news, R1, 19/07/95, 12.05am and 1.10pm; see also: ‘Generaal steunt verhaal Pronk’ (General supports Pronk’s account), *Het Parool*, 20/07/95.

¹⁷³⁶ ‘Kok: ‘Pronk ging boekje niet te buiten’ (Kok: Pronk did not overstep the line), *Trouw*, 20/07/95.

Jacques de Milliano, the director of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, who had arrived at airbase Valkenburg at the same time as Pronk, was equally forthright in using the word ‘genocide’.¹⁷³⁷ De Milliano had gone to Bosnia because he had strong indications that Dutchbat had not supervised the transport of the Displaced Persons as well as the Dutch military leadership had claimed. Reports from the representatives of *Médecins Sans Frontières* in the enclave had made it clear to him that this had not been the case. Dutchbat and Karremans in particular had given the Displaced Persons ‘a false sense of protection’ by creating the impression that the Dutch would accompany them.¹⁷³⁸ This picture was further strengthened by De Milliano’s conversations with Displaced Persons in Tuzla. This gave him grounds enough ‘to burst that balloon’.¹⁷³⁹

More important for Pronk from the political perspective, however, was the unreserved support from Prime Minister Kok the day after the *Nova* broadcast. He informed Parliament in a letter that he did not agree with the accusation that his party colleague had acted ‘irresponsibly’ and declared simply that Pronk’s actions were ‘not in conflict’ with the government policy: ‘under the present circumstances, maintaining the necessary degree of reserve when making public statements’.¹⁷⁴⁰ Kok also referred to the fact that other members of the government had also expressed their concern. Indeed, on 17 July the Minister of Foreign Affairs Van Mierlo, when attending a General Council with EU colleagues in Brussels, had given a ‘chilling account’ during an intervention in the debate of the atrocities committed by the VRS. But for security reasons he did not wish to provide any details.¹⁷⁴¹ On the other hand, Van Mierlo also asked Pronk to moderate his statements until Dutchbat was free.¹⁷⁴²

Reserved or not, Pronk’s statement about genocide was received in the international media as the ‘first’ serious political indication of a mass murder.¹⁷⁴³ His words led to a variety of reactions. Akashi, for instance, said he was not aware of the genocide that his ‘great friend’ Pronk had talked about. He said he would direct an inquiry to the Dutch government.¹⁷⁴⁴ The really fierce reactions, however, came from the side of the Dutchbat military personnel. In the Netherlands the military trade union ACOM, in the person of its chairman P. Gooijers, was one of the first to heavily criticize Pronk’s statements in a press release and a letter to Minister Voorhoeve. In this ACOM asked him to assign ‘the highest priority now’ to the safety of the Dutchbat soldiers, for instance by ensuring that ‘colleague politicians take a restrained approach to the situation in the former Yugoslavia until the Dutch UN soldiers have safely returned to the Netherlands’.¹⁷⁴⁵ Following this Voorhoeve asked his Deputy Director of Information Bert Kreemers to call Gooijers and to reassure him. This was successful, as Gooijers then expressed his support for Voorhoeve’s policy.¹⁷⁴⁶

The Dutchbat personnel in Bosnia also showed little understanding. In Potocari they had heard Pronk’s statements on satellite television. Some of the debriefing forms filled out by the group of 55 in

¹⁷³⁷ ‘Nederlandse hulp was te beperkt’ (Dutch assistance was too limited), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/07/95.

¹⁷³⁸ Karel Bagijn, ‘Dutchbat maandag naar huis’ (Dutchbat to return on Monday), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 21/07/95.

¹⁷³⁹ M. Wilbrink, ‘De littekens van Jacques de Milliano. “Karremans wist misdaden Serviërs uit”’ (The scars of Jacques de Milliano. “Karremans erases Serb crimes”), *Gelders Dagblad*, 28/07/95.

¹⁷⁴⁰ ‘Kok steunt Pronk na kritiek op genocide Serviërs in Bosnië’, *De Volkskrant*, 20/07/95.

¹⁷⁴¹ J. Palmer, ‘Dutch tell EU of rebel atrocities’, *The Guardian*, 18/07/95. Palmer also quoted an anonymous ‘Dutch official’ who declared that the Dutch government ‘had decided to suppress details of the atrocities until all the 400 Dutch UN troops (...) had been safely withdrawn’. It was not possible to establish who formed this source. During the same General Council the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs, Emma Bonino, also reported on her findings in Bosnia. Regarding the fate of the men she said, ‘Everything is possible’. See: ‘Bonino: 12.000 vermisten in Srebrenica’ (Bonino: 12,000 missing in Srebrenica), ANP 172114 July 95.

¹⁷⁴² Interview H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo, 02/02/00.

¹⁷⁴³ ‘Jan Pronk, (...) est le premier à parler d’assassinats de Musulmans par milliers’, Alain Maillard, ‘srebrenica, ce que le CICR savait’, *L’Hebdo* no 16, 18/04/96. [http://www.webdo.ch/hebdo/hebdo_1996/hebdo_16/cicr_16_usa]

¹⁷⁴⁴ ‘Akashi ‘niet op de hoogte van genocide’ (Akashi ‘not aware of genocide’), *ANP report*, 191435 July 95.

¹⁷⁴⁵ ‘ACOM verbijsterd over uitslatingen Minister Pronk’ (ACOM surprised at statements by Minister Pronk), *Press release ACOM*, 19/07/95.

¹⁷⁴⁶ Memo from Minister Voorhoeve, no. 1139, 19/07/95 (included in Ministry of Defence media collection ‘The fall of Srebrenica in the media, 15 to 21 July 1995).

Pleso contained gibes directed at Pronk. After the rest of the battalion had arrived in Zagreb on 22 July and the media put the issue of possible genocide to a number of Dutchbat soldiers, extremely angry reactions resulted which were aimed not only at Pronk. Minister Voorhoeve now also came under fire. On 21 July he had attended the international Bosnia Conference in London. He had an informal meeting with General Smith, who informed him confidentially that he feared the worst for the men still missing, even if hard proof was still lacking: 'He was the first from the military sector who told me informally, "I think they've murdered two to three thousand men." I don't know how he knew it, but he also said, "I don't have any hard facts, but things aren't right. There are too many men missing." That was on 21 July. He also said, "I don't precisely know why I'm saying this, but it's my feeling, intuition".'¹⁷⁴⁷ Strengthened by this information and the knowledge that Dutchbat had now left the Republika Srpska, Voorhoeve then issued strong accusations directed at the Bosnian Serbs: 'Genocide means murder of a group, and that is what the Bosnian Serbs are doing'.¹⁷⁴⁸ In the NOS television news of that evening he explained his words further:

'We now no longer have any constraints on the things we can say. We know that very serious things have happened in Srebrenica. We don't have the full picture yet, but I fear that hundreds if not thousands have died. There's no longer any need to keep our voices down. We know that very serious things have happened and we also want them fully investigated on behalf of the Tribunal that is to investigate war crimes. I believe that serious war crimes have indeed taken place.'¹⁷⁴⁹

The reactions of some Dutchbat personnel to these statements were so fierce that a rather nonplussed Voorhoeve had to back-pedal a day later before the cameras in Pleso. But it was not only the normal troops with whom he clashed. General Couzy also rejected the far-reaching statements of his own minister and his colleague Pronk.

20. Couzy and the pressure of the media

Chapter 9 of Part III described how the destination of Dutchbat was unclear for a long time. The battalion itself wished to keep to the route via Belgrade to Zagreb, but for a long time the Army Command in The Hague assumed a departure route via Busovaca to Split. By Monday 17 July the Ministry of Defence had prepared an initial publicity plan to deal with the arrival of 'the Karremans group' in Split, at that moment still the assumed departure point for the journey back to the Netherlands. Karremans and his men were to arrive there after an interim halt in Busovaca, where the commander of Dutchbat III would be able to draw up a plan for the press conference together with the Army Commander and a representative of the Information department.¹⁷⁵⁰ A day later a concerned Minister Voorhoeve wrote a 'strictly confidential' memo to Bert Kreemers in which he urged that caution be applied to interviews with Karremans. The minister now appeared to be aware of the criticism 'by his junior commanders of the course of events in the crisis; he seems to have been less solid than we thought'.¹⁷⁵¹ Voorhoeve had been warned by Junior Minister J.J.C. Gmelich Meijling, who had travelled to Zagreb to greet the released Dutchbat personnel and in the process had heard the

¹⁷⁴⁷ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.

¹⁷⁴⁸ ANP report, 21/07/95.

¹⁷⁴⁹ NOS Journaal, N 1, 8pm, 21/07/95, verbatim uncorrected text.

¹⁷⁵⁰ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Memo from H.P.M. Kreemers, deputy direction of information, to Minister and Junior Minister of Defence, 17/07/95.

¹⁷⁵¹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Memo from J.J.C. Voorhoeve to DV attn. Mr Kreemers, 18/07/95.

criticism of Karremans (and Franken).¹⁷⁵² The minister urged that no interviews should be agreed to yet.¹⁷⁵³

The idea of preparing the information for the public in peace and quiet in Busovaca came to nothing, because Smith and Mladic had agreed in their conclave in Belgrade on 15 July that Dutchbat would go to Zagreb. That meant that the preparations for meetings with the media had to take place by telephone or fax with Karremans in Potocari, or otherwise after his arrival in Pleso. The task of preparing Karremans was initially assigned to an army information officer who had now arrived in Tuzla. Troop Captain J.S. Riepen, press officer for the Royal Netherlands Army in Zagreb, had been sent to Tuzla to assist Brantz as spokesman during his contacts with the media, which had descended in large numbers on the Displaced Persons from Srebrenica who were staying at Tuzla Air Base.¹⁷⁵⁴ Riepen was thus well-situated to brief Karremans.

On 19 July in Tuzla Riepen wrote a memo in which he compiled possible questions that might be put to the soldiers in Zagreb. The questions had been supplied to him from various quarters (The Hague, Tuzla, Zagreb).¹⁷⁵⁵ This list of questions was sent to Karremans from Tuzla on 20 July.¹⁷⁵⁶ The idea was that he would read this at an early stage so that the parties could get to work immediately on his return.¹⁷⁵⁷ The list was drawn up with considerable expertise and knowledge: the 20-plus questions not only covered a wide range of tricky issues, but were also formulated in the suggestive and sometimes even provocative tone that Karremans could expect from mistrustful journalists. The issue of Close Air Support was dealt with, but also the issue of excessively light armaments ('Would Raviv van Renssen still be alive with a different weapon and a better armoured vehicle?') and the quality of training. Many of the rumours now in circulation were also incorporated in the questions. The support given to the separation of men and women was dealt with, the gift or even sale of uniforms to the VRS, as well as Karremans' 'toast' following conclusion of the negotiations with Mladic.

In the meantime media information was being prepared elsewhere too. On Thursday 20 July Couzy once more departed for Zagreb, where Dutchbat was now expected to arrive the following evening. On Friday afternoon of 21 July, on board the aircraft from Split to Zagreb, Couzy was informed by the Head of Army Information, Colonel W.P.P. (Paul) Hartman, of the 'Plan with action points' for the media information. 'We were in agreement', said Hartman later.¹⁷⁵⁸ The plan envisaged that the returned soldiers would first be able to rest and that the press would be kept away until the press conference had been conducted. To this end another information officer, Major M. Beneker, had agreed with the camp commander Livingstone that the area be completely sealed off.¹⁷⁵⁹ In consultation with the press officer at the UN headquarters in Zagreb, Beneker had arranged that Finnish UN soldiers would protect Dutchbat from the press.¹⁷⁶⁰

The press conference with Couzy and Karremans and the discussion with 'the men' were among the six 'major publicity moments' defined by Hartman in his plan. The first moment was the arrival in 'safe' Serbian territory, at 'Iron Bridge' near Zvornik. It was expected that an NOS news team would be waiting to film the passing Dutch soldiers; the chance of interviews being conducted there

¹⁷⁵² Telephone interview J.J.C. Gmelich Meijling, 04/12/01.

¹⁷⁵³ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Memo from J.J.C. Voorhoeve to DV attn. Mr Kreemers, 18/07/95.

¹⁷⁵⁴ Interview J. Riepen, 03/10/99.

¹⁷⁵⁵ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, Head of Army Information, 'Memo on publicity aspects of return of Dutchbat 3', 26/07/95.

¹⁷⁵⁶ Kreemers, *Achterkant van de maan*, p. 93.

¹⁷⁵⁷ Interview J. Riepen, 03/10/99.

¹⁷⁵⁸ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, Head of Army Information, 'Memo on publicity aspects of return of Dutchbat 3', 26/07/95.

¹⁷⁵⁹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Plan/action points for return of Dutchbat '300'', 21/07/95 (11am). Appendix to memo from H.P.M. Kreemers to minister, V95014995, 'Press conference in Zagreb, 23 July 1995', 02/08/95.

¹⁷⁶⁰ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

was considered to be small. The next moment would then not occur until the arrival at Pleso.¹⁷⁶¹ For unknown reasons Dutchbat's border crossing from Serbia into Croatia was not designated a 'major publicity moment'.

Following the arrival of Couzy and Hartman in Zagreb on 21 July, the final details were discussed on a sunny terrace of Holland House together with Beneker and Riepen, who had now returned from Tuzla. At this time the border crossing was indeed discussed. A discussion ensued of Beneker's idea that he himself would go to the border, but Hartman decided, as he was later to regret, to keep Beneker in Pleso. There was still a great deal to do there for just a small number of information officers.¹⁷⁶² Beneker did however take a number of measures. One of the problems was that they did not know where Karremans would be in the convoy, which consisted of four 'packets'. Beneker thus arranged three teams with their own transport, consisting of the Finnish UN soldiers who were also charged with sealing off Pleso. Each team was assigned one of the 'packets', with the strict orders not to allow any journalist to contact the soldiers and especially not Karremans and Franken. As he was lacking one team of 'minders', he asked a few Dutch military policemen to take care of the fourth packet.¹⁷⁶³

Despite these thorough preparations, everything went wrong. The majority of the Dutch press, more than 60 journalists, was waiting impatiently in Pleso in compliance with the request of Beneker, who had claimed that Karremans would first be available for interviews on 23 July. A few journalists however, including Jaap van Deurzen of RLT-4, had told him they would take their chance.¹⁷⁶⁴ There was no NOS team at Iron Bridge on Friday morning, 21 July, but Van Deurzen and a cameraman were waiting at the border crossing point between Serbia and Croatia at Lipovac, together with journalists from *Algemeen Dagblad* and *NRC Handelsblad*. Due to unexpected problems, including the toll charges, the convoy was held up at the border at 10am and was not allowed to continue until 12.30pm (i.e. after midnight).¹⁷⁶⁵ By sheer coincidence the Dutch military policemen ended up accompanying the packet Karremans. Possibly the long delay caused them problems, they lost track of the situation or were unable to withstand the pressure of the eager press. Whatever the case, for unknown reasons they could not prevent the Dutch journalists from approaching the soldiers.¹⁷⁶⁶

More went wrong at that moment. The list of questions that Karremans had faxed to Karremans also contained two questions on themes which were to strongly influence the later debate. One question concerned Karremans' opinion of Mladic: 'A brilliant general or a psychopath?' The other question consisted of a statement and a number of sub-questions: 'The Serbs are getting blamed in the press. Do you agree? We've heard that the Muslims are very unreliable. How do you view the Muslims, considering that they intentionally shot one of your men dead?'¹⁷⁶⁷ But one way or another these questions had totally failed to connect with Karremans: he was later unable to remember ever having seen this fax message.¹⁷⁶⁸ Beneker said that he had also telephoned the Dutchbat commander before his departure from Potocari on 20 July, urging him to avoid all contact with the press on the journey to Zagreb.¹⁷⁶⁹ This too was a message that had not registered with Karremans.

Consequently things went wrong. During the delay in Lipovac the Dutchbat commander made no secret to the press of his admiration for the military capabilities of General Mladic and he praised the Bosnian Serb organization of Dutchbat's departure. His line of argument was supplemented by

¹⁷⁶¹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Plan/action points for return of Dutchbat '300'', 21/07/95 (11am). Appendix to memo from H.P.M. Kreemers to minister, V95014995, 'Press conference in Zagreb, 23 July 1995', 02/08/95.

¹⁷⁶² Interviews M. Beneker, 04/12/01; J. Riepen, 03/10/99.

¹⁷⁶³ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

¹⁷⁶⁴ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

¹⁷⁶⁵ Frans Peeters, 'Konvooi Dutchbat urenlang vertraagd to grens Kroatië' (Dutchbat convoy held up for hours at Croatian border), *Het Parool*, 22/07/95.

¹⁷⁶⁶ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

¹⁷⁶⁷ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. J.S. Riepen, Memo 'Press conference and possible questions from journalists', 19/07/95.

¹⁷⁶⁸ Interview Th. Karremans, 15-17/12/98.

¹⁷⁶⁹ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

Medical Naval Captain Hegge, who dismissed some of the Muslim refugees' stories about the actions of the Bosnian Serbs as 'disgracefully exaggerated'. Moreover he claimed that many inhabitants of Srebrenica were happy to be gone because they were now free of the local mafia.¹⁷⁷⁰

When the media representatives who had remained in Zagreb as agreed found out that other journalists had scooped them, they were furious about this 'deceit by the Ministry of Defence'.¹⁷⁷¹ Twan Huys in particular, who had been informed by his editor Lars Anderson in The Netherlands about Karremans' statements to RTL, kicked up a major row.¹⁷⁷² Relations were already tense at that moment. The army information office Hartman remembers how Huys and his cameraman, both strongly under the impression of their experiences in Tuzla, had already peremptorily demanded of him and Couzy that they be allowed to interview Karremans and his men on camera as soon as they arrived. Hartman recounts: "That was exactly what we didn't intend, to let everyone in immediately. It would have meant open house for the soldiers. We could only guess what psychological state they were in. These guys had been confronted with death." The talk between Couzy and Huys, which took place until long after midnight in the foyer of the hotel in Zagreb, became increasingly unpleasant: "It was two in the morning. We'd had a long, hard day. The guys from *Nova* too, of course. Couzy said that the arguments were starting to repeat themselves and that he wanted to go to bed. He walked away. Twan Huys went after him, shouting, "Couzy! Come here!" That was very unpleasant. Extremely unpleasant."¹⁷⁷³

The next morning Huys was back. He now knew that Karremans had already spoken to the media at the border. Although no journalist had passed the gates of Pleso, according to Hartman the pressure now became almost intolerable. The telephone rang again and again: "Are you guys completely off your heads?! Now you're breaking your word too!". Saying that Karremans wouldn't be available and that now we'd given him to RTL and NRC too. An intolerable situation.'

Hartman felt 'put through the mangle':

"In my years with Information I've always tended to say: "I'm on your side!" That becomes difficult when this seems to be at odds with the interests of your own people and your own organization. I'm not talking about the political dimension, but about the poor guys who've just arrived, about Karremans who is totally exhausted. These are two disparate concerns. Then you realize that you have to do something. Something's going to erupt. Don't ask me how. Don't ask me what. But something's going to go very wrong if we don't take action."¹⁷⁷⁴

A debate about the course to be followed now broke out between the information officers. Beneker thought that they should stand firm, all the more so because there had not been time to agree on an official line with Karremans, who had already stirred up a commotion.¹⁷⁷⁵ This stubbornness had already led to a flaming row between Huys and Beneker, because the information officer had told the *Nova* journalist that he had 'simply had bad luck'.¹⁷⁷⁶ Hartman however bowed to the pressure and conceived of a brief press conference as a 'conciliatory gesture', to take place just outside the gates of Camp Pleso towards sunset. There would be opportunity for 'a nice photo' and moreover Couzy and

¹⁷⁷⁰ Bert Kreemers, *de achterkant van de maan* (unpublished manuscript, 1998), p. 94.

¹⁷⁷¹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Plan/action points for return of Dutchbat '300'', 21/07/95 (11am). Appendix to memo from H.P.M. Kreemers to minister, V95014995, 'Press conference in Zagreb, 23 July 1995', 02/08/95.

¹⁷⁷² Interview T. Huys, Washington D.C., 07/07/00 and 08/07/00.

¹⁷⁷³ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, former Head of Army Information (HLV), 08/10/99.

¹⁷⁷⁴ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

¹⁷⁷⁵ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

¹⁷⁷⁶ Interviews M. Beneker, 04/12/01; J.S. Riepen, The Hague, 03/10/99; Twan Huys, 07/07/00 and 08/07/00.

Karremans could withdraw at any desired moment. This option ‘wins no prizes for elegance, but under the circumstances it seems the only feasible one’, wrote Hartman in a note that morning.¹⁷⁷⁷

One of the shortcomings was the lack of clarity about what should be discussed during this gathering. Hartman had only generally indicated that it would involve just ‘a brief statement plus a few questions’, which could be about anything apart from the fall of the town and the following events. Hartman did not succeed in speaking to Karremans beforehand; the chaos that was to mark the following day, Sunday, was already present on Saturday.

The press conference at the gate of Pleso did indeed take place but it became, as one of the attending journalists later expressed it, ‘an embarrassing spectacle’.¹⁷⁷⁸ Once again it was unclear to what extent the battalion had witnessed human rights violations or the consequences of these. Karremans repeated that there was no question of genocide having taken place in Srebrenica.¹⁷⁷⁹ Otherwise he reported only that some of his men were suffering from symptoms of post-traumatic stress. He was also induced to make rather laconic statements about his negotiations with Mladic and the fact that he felt no regrets about his last greeting to the general on departure – short excerpts of corresponding footage had now been broadcast on television.¹⁷⁸⁰ ‘He seemed – to the indignation of some journalists – to consider this very normal’, noted Hartman later.¹⁷⁸¹ Karremans poured more oil on the fire by describing Mladic as ‘not a dangerous madman at all, but a professional who knows how to do his job’.¹⁷⁸²

Hartman also later recollected ‘the consistently sharp attitude’ of Couzy when stressing that he only wanted to talk about what ‘his’ people had seen, and also that – as previously agreed with Hartman – he rejected the use of the word genocide.¹⁷⁸³ Referring to the operational debriefing by the Brigade Commander General Bastiaans that was still underway, Couzy said that he did not know precisely what had happened: ‘We have to chart this in the coming hours’.¹⁷⁸⁴

According to Hartman these statements by Couzy stood in direct relation to Pronk’s mention of genocide.¹⁷⁸⁵ Since the Army Commander’s strategy was directed against Pronk, it came as an unpleasant surprise when a journalist startled Couzy with the statements about genocide that his own minister, Voorhoeve, had already made the previous evening in London. Hartman did not know about this either. He was also unable to remember later whether staff in The Hague (Bert Kreemers) had tried to reach him. The makeshift infrastructure at Pleso – no office, not enough telephones and faxes and large distances on the base – was taking its toll.¹⁷⁸⁶

Couzy’s rejection of the term genocide not only cemented the opposition between him and Minister Voorhoeve; his resolute statements also increased the scepticism felt towards him by a number of journalists, such as Twan Huys of *Nova*.

The Ministry of Defence plans had scheduled the real media event for Sunday 23 July, with a major press conference possibly followed by the opportunity for contacts between the media and Dutchbat personnel. The NOS was to conduct a special live broadcast. *Nova*, which did not broadcast

¹⁷⁷⁷ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, ‘Memo for the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army’, 22 July 1995. Appendix to: Memo from H.P.M. Kreemers to minister, V95014995, ‘Press conference in Zagreb, 23 July 1995’, 02/08/95.

¹⁷⁷⁸ Bert Bommels, ‘De “black box” Srebrenica’, *Elsevier*, 29/07/95.

¹⁷⁷⁹ Idem.

¹⁷⁸⁰ Van Gils, ‘Meer dan honderd keer “Welkom terug”’ (More than a hundred ‘Welcome backs’), *ANP Bericht*, 22/07/95. It was not until 2000 that the complete footage of the farewell from Mladic, including the presentation of gifts to Karremans and Nicolai, was seen on Dutch television.

¹⁷⁸¹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, ‘Plan/action points for return of Dutchbat ‘300’’, 21/07/95 (11am). Appendix to memo from H.P.M. Kreemers to minister, V95014995, ‘Press conference in Zagreb, 23 July 1995’, 02/08/95.

¹⁷⁸² B. Bommels, ‘De “black box” Srebrenica’, *Elsevier*, 29/07/95.

¹⁷⁸³ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

¹⁷⁸⁴ Van Gils, ‘Meer dan honderd keer “Welkom terug”’, *ANP Bericht*, 22/07/95.

¹⁷⁸⁵ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

¹⁷⁸⁶ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

on Sundays, would thus be sidelined. As already mentioned, Huys had already expressed his indignation about the unacceptably long time between the arrival of the battalion and the meeting with the media.¹⁷⁸⁷ Huys originally had the feeling, fed by professional jealousy, that he was not getting his fair share of the cake. But when he heard from his colleagues in the Netherlands how the programme on Sunday would be arranged, this mood changed. He started to fear that every critical objection would be eradicated. In the view of Huys, NOS was letting itself be (mis)used for a Ministry of Defence media spectacle: 'I found it terrible for *Nova* and for myself. I felt that a dirty trick had been devised to keep us away from the people who could tell us a lot.' He was even more angry because he had relied on the agreements that he made with Couzy a week earlier, as compensation for the delayed broadcast with testimonies by Dutchbat soldiers. At a further meeting, however, the Army Commander had told him that he had now been 'overruled' by The Hague. Huys later said, 'During that conflict with Couzy he literally said to me: "Twan, you're not getting the programme. We're celebrating our little party on Sunday." That was exactly what made me and others so furious.'¹⁷⁸⁸

One result of his anger was that Couzy agreed to the demand to appear, 'as a sort of peace offering', in a *Nova* broadcast from a studio in Zagreb.¹⁷⁸⁹ The Army Commander arrived there stinking of stale beer after several joyously celebrating Dutchbat soldiers had hoisted him onto their shoulders during a party and liberally sprayed his uniform.¹⁷⁹⁰ The programme was almost completely devoted to the issue of the possible genocide. The anchor man Charles Groenhuijsen responded to Couzy's statements from earlier in the day that there were no indications of genocide. According to the Army Commander this picture was still valid, even if not yet complete. Debriefing interviews were still underway and would hopefully be completed by Sunday afternoon. In general there was little to report. Up to that moment he was aware of nine deaths possibly resulting from execution, which was 'serious, but we're not talking about genocide here'. He also mentioned that one Dutchbat soldier had personally witnessed the execution of a person, but he wished to keep the details of this for the press conference on Sunday. Couzy's careful formulations did not rule out atrocities, but 'not in the enclave under the eyes of Dutch soldiers'. He also wished only to talk about what Dutchbat personnel had established themselves and to make no judgement about things that may have taken place out of their sight. With a variant of this answer he was also able to avoid Groenhuijsen's provocative question whether he was 'therefore in disagreement' with the statements made by Pronk and his own minister, Voorhoeve.

Nova started its programme that Saturday evening with footage of the Dutchbat personnel whom Huys had met in Pleso. However, due to technical problems the link did not function and the Army Commander missed the pictures and part of the sound from the Netherlands. He confirmed however that he was hearing stories from the Dutchbat soldiers now in Pleso 'which resemble or are precisely the same as what we just heard'. When Groenhuijsen asked for a specific reaction to Schellens' statements about 'trucks with corpses' and the noting of a strong smell of corpses, Couzy replied however that he had 'heard nothing [about that] this evening'.¹⁷⁹¹ Couzy later told the NIOD that he was surprised by the question and at that moment had simply not thought of the stories that he had already heard a week earlier. He also felt poorly prepared and 'dead-beat'. According to him he took the decision to respond guardedly 'in a split-second'.¹⁷⁹²

The fact that the reports by Schellens and his men did in fact satisfy Couzy's criterion for personal observations, even if the interpretation was not without problems, played no further role in the programme. Groenhuijsen did however, to be quite certain, ask Couzy whether he was not afraid

¹⁷⁸⁷ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Plan/action points for return of Dutchbat '300'', 21/07/95 (11am). Appendix to memo from H.P.M. Kreemers to minister, V95014995, 'Press conference in Zagreb, 23 July 1995', 02/08/95.

¹⁷⁸⁸ Interview Twan Huys, 07/07/00 and 08/07/00.

¹⁷⁸⁹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Plan/action points for return of Dutchbat '300'', 21/07/95 (11am). Appendix to memo from H.P.M. Kreemers to minister, V95014995, 'Press conference in Zagreb, 23 July 1995', 02/08/95.

¹⁷⁹⁰ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

¹⁷⁹¹ NOVA, 22/07/95.

¹⁷⁹² Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

that he might have to revise his conclusions in the future. The Army Commander remained confident about the observations in Potocari. Couzy based his firm stand on the results that the operational debriefing had provided up to that moment.

21. The instructions given to Bastiaans for an operational debriefing

Following his return to Zagreb on 17 July, Couzy had begun to prepare the return of the rest of the battalion with the support of various officers including the Deputy Commander in Chief of that time, A.P.P.M. van Baal. While the reception for the 55 and KHO-5 had been confined to psychological support, with unintended but major consequences for the supply of information, the emphasis was now placed on an operational debriefing. It cannot be clearly established who initiated this shift of policy. According to the diary notes of the Chief of Defence Staff of that time, H.G.B. van den Breemen, a meeting held in the Defence Crisis Management Centre, at which Couzy was present, revealed considerable resistance to the psychologists' plan, supported by the Army Commander, for a large-scale psychological debriefing. Minister Voorhoeve actually called these plans 'too bombastic' and Van den Breemen himself pointed to the fact that Karremans too had explicitly asked for a not overly elaborate reception. Van den Breemen also noted that Couzy had strongly urged that he be given full control of the organization in Zagreb. In order to arrange this the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army specially contacted the Junior Minister of the Ministry of Defence, D.J. Barth.¹⁷⁹³

When planning the debriefing, Couzy was however forced to make a concession. According to the Deputy Head of Operations of the Defence Staff, C.G.J. Hilderink, it was only thanks to the pressure exerted by Van den Breemen, the Head of the Defence Crisis Management Centre, Commodore P.P. Metzelaar, the Deputy Head of the Military Intelligence Service/Central Organization, R. Wielinga, and himself that an operational debriefing took place: "There were four people who used the term "operational debriefing"¹⁷⁹⁴. One factor playing a role here was that Minister Pronk had given a briefing in the Defence Crisis Management Centre following his return from Bosnia on 18 July, in which he had given emotional expression to his fears about a genocide. 'He was convinced that widespread murder had been committed', recollected Hilderink later.¹⁷⁹⁴

Within the Defence Crisis Management Centre this increased the already existing unease that something had gone very wrong. According to Hilderink this had been generated by 'three stories' which had reached the Defence Crisis Management Centre relatively quickly. These were firstly the reports about the uncertain fate of an estimated 5250 Bosnian men who were probably being held in Bratunac.¹⁷⁹⁵ In addition a report had been received via the contingent commander W. Verschraegen 'that things had been seen along the route'. Since Hilderink no longer remembered the details, it can only be assumed that this was a reference to the observations of the group of 55. Finally there was Karremans' report about the discovery of nine to ten corpses, which Hilderink thought the Defence Crisis Management Centre had received via Nicolai.¹⁷⁹⁶ Against this background Hilderink and his supporters resisted Couzy's wish that the battalion first be allowed to rest and be given psychological support. 'When things were decided differently, it definitely had to be arranged one way or another that

¹⁷⁹³ NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. Diary notes H.G.B. van den Breemen.

¹⁷⁹⁴ Interview C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

¹⁷⁹⁵ See for instance: DCBC, Sitrep Peace Operations no. 142/95, 18/07/95.

¹⁷⁹⁶ Interview C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00. As discussed earlier, this is a problematic issue in view of Nicolai's denial that Karremans reported anything to him. It is also not totally certain, as also mentioned earlier, that his assistant De Ruiters, who did confirm receipt of the message, passed it on to DCBC. This recollection by Hilderink does however increase this likelihood. Nonetheless there are two problems here. Firstly, that Voorhoeve's Diary contains no reference whatsoever to any message. Secondly, Bert Kreemers first heard of summary executions on 23 July. Shortly after this he received a telephone call from Hilderink, who was in the NOS studio in Bussum for the live broadcast of the press conference in Zagreb. According to Kreemers, Hilderink responded to his report of the executions by saying that he was surprised and had no knowledge of them. See: J.A. van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*. Appendix 4, Reports of conversations and supplementary notes: Report of conversation with H.P.M. Kreemers, 24 August 1998.

everyone could let off steam. So a whole load of people set off in that direction', recounted Hilderink in a reference to the substantial team of counsellors who were also to travel to Zagreb to join up with the troops on a 'low profile basis'.¹⁷⁹⁷ The other side of the coin, however, was that Couzy was indeed given control of the organization.

While according to Hilderink it was chiefly thanks to the Defence Crisis Management Centre that an operational debriefing took place, although the Defence Crisis Management Centre was unable to exert influence on its execution, Van Baal recollected that recourse was made to a practice that had become established since Lebanon. A selected part of the battalion would first undergo a brief operational debriefing 'in the field' in order to gain an initial impression of the main events. After this the troops had time to rest and it would be possible to interview the Dutchbat soldiers in more detail at a later stage, once they had put the events in perspective and had started to come to terms with them.¹⁷⁹⁸

Just as in the previous week, Couzy himself had full control of the arrangements. Even his own Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff was kept out of the reception facilities in Zagreb – indeed, he generally showed little interest in the staff. According to the Head of Operations of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff of that time, Lieutenant Colonel M.J.J. Felix, Couzy rejected their offer to take on the organizational work: 'We wanted to do it ourselves, but that was prevented by Couzy. He said, "I'll take care of that". He was insistent about doing it and arranging it himself. Couzy did Zagreb.'¹⁷⁹⁹ This included the selection of those who were to conduct the debriefing on his behalf. On 19 July the Army Commander assigned this responsibility to Brigadier General G. (Gerard) Bastiaans, according to Van Baal 'one of the few brigadier generals who knew what Srebrenica was and under what circumstances the troops had operated there'.¹⁸⁰⁰

Indeed, Bastiaans had acquired considerable experience in the theatre of operations. From November 1993 onwards he spent a year as Chief Military Observer of the UNMOs and in this capacity had been able to visit many parts of Bosnia personally. Although formally this relationship was irrelevant because Dutchbat came under the UN, Bastiaans had also been the commander of the Airmobile Brigade since March 1995. This meant that he was also fairly familiar with the history of the 13th Battalion (Dutchbat III) and, among other things, had also heard the stories being told about Karremans. His chief of staff and deputy commander, Colonel Th. Lemmen, who was also assigned to travel to Zagreb, had informed him of these.¹⁸⁰¹

Nonetheless, according to his own account Bastiaans departed for Zagreb with a relatively open mind and without any preparation. He travelled together with Couzy, with whom he once again discussed the structure of the debriefing during the journey. Insofar as the conversations between the two generals can be reconstructed, it seems clear that the point of departure was definitely to be operational. The basis for determining who would be interviewed was hence 'more a list of positions than a list of names'.¹⁸⁰²

In the recollection of Lemmen, who acted as practical coordinator, one of the most important reasons for the debriefing was Couzy's wish not to be surprised 'by anybody or anything'. All those involved were aware that the Army Commander would have to face the media on Sunday afternoon: 'He wanted the most complete public presentation possible, and only with information that had been corroborated by several people. So everything was focussed on that'.¹⁸⁰³ Bastiaans thus immediately made it clear that it was a serious matter. The entire battalion was to assemble at 4pm, the time at

¹⁷⁹⁷ Interview C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

¹⁷⁹⁸ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 01/11/01.

¹⁷⁹⁹ Interview M.J.J. Felix, 06/04/00. In the end the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff was involved only in the reception of Dutchbat at Soesterberg Air Base on 24 July.

¹⁸⁰⁰ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 01/11/01.

¹⁸⁰¹ Interview G. Bastiaans, 26/10/00.

¹⁸⁰² Interview G. Bastiaans, 26/10/00.

¹⁸⁰³ Interview Th. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

which the debriefing was to begin. The brigadier general addressed the battalion with a short speech which in his later recollection boiled down to the following: ‘Listen, men. This is about recording the story. It won’t always be easy. But in the next fourteen days the whole world will be knocking at our door. I don’t care what we find out, but if we don’t do it, then things will get really unpleasant’.¹⁸⁰⁴

According to Bastiaans he was convinced that the euphoria about the return of the battalion would be short-lived: ‘To begin with everyone’s happy that they’re all back. Then they’ll immediately ask why things went as they did’. He himself explained this statement with his mistrust of the media, resulting from Bastiaans’ own experiences from 1994. When still working as Chief Military Observer, Bastiaans made the front page of *NRC Handelsblad* after giving an interview in which he had accused the Bosnian Muslims of provocations at the Gorazde enclave.¹⁸⁰⁵

Not everyone was happy with Bastiaans’ speech. Medical Naval Captain Zwarts, for instance, recalled that ‘a whole load of unclear remarks’ were made about the investigation into the battalion’s performance. He had a strong sense that it would involve a search for guilty parties: ‘That was the feeling I got. Not: things have turned out well in the end. No, it was more like: “Men, we’re going to find out whose fault it was”’.¹⁸⁰⁶ Karremans even felt compelled, once Bastiaans had departed, to explain ‘in [his] own words’ what the general had meant ‘because no one had understood him’.¹⁸⁰⁷ However, the aims were simple. An anonymous memo, apparently intended to function as a guideline in the conversations, indicates that the interviewees should be asked to tell their ‘own story’, with attention initially directed at five themes: the phase in which the OPs at the southern edge of the enclave were ‘put under pressure and surrounded’ by the VRS; the phase of the blocking positions; the ‘fall-back’ of B Company to Potocari, ‘including the stream of Displaced Persons’ and finally how this same stream had then been received by the rest of the battalion.¹⁸⁰⁸

This agenda was however amended at an early stage. Probably on the basis of Couzy’s conversations with Medical Colonel Kremer and the earlier indications of problems with the medical staff, persons such as the doctors Hegge and Van Lent and the Warrant Officer Knapen of the Dressing Station had been placed on the list of the people to be interviewed. The schedule drawn up by Lemmen also included the obvious names of the battalion commander and his deputy, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans and Major Franken; Major Otter, the commander of the Staff Service and Supply Company, Captain Groen and Lieutenant Hageman, the commander and the deputy commander of C Company; the intelligence officer in the Ops Room, Captain Wieffer, and the operations officer in the Ops Room, Sergeant-Major Van Meer; Sergeant-Major of Cavalry Rave as the officer responsible for civilian-military contacts; Sergeants Mulder, Struik and Zuurman, as the only remaining OP commanders of the OPs M, H and D; the command’s Forward Air Controllers Lieutenant Caris and Sergeant Erkelens; Lieutenant Koster as adjutant logistics staff officer and finally, the Warrant Officer Oosterveen, in charge of personnel matters.¹⁸⁰⁹

The debriefers finally added two other names to the 19 people who were candidates for an in-depth interview. These were Medical Naval Captain A. Schouten and Captain R. Voerman, the battalion personnel officer. Schouten was debriefed after Hegge on Sunday morning, especially regarding the transport of wounded on 12 July and the disappearance from the hospital in Bratunac of

¹⁸⁰⁴ Interview G. Bastiaans, 26/10/00.

¹⁸⁰⁵ Interview G. Bastiaans, 26/10/00.

¹⁸⁰⁶ Interview S.J. Zwarts, 23/02/00.

¹⁸⁰⁷ Interview Th. Karremans, 15-17/12/98. See also: Th. Karremans, *Srebrenica who cares?*, pp. 242-243.

¹⁸⁰⁸ SMG, 1007/18. [Draft of] ‘Report on debriefing Dutchbat III/Debriefing’.

¹⁸⁰⁹ SMG, 1007/28. ‘Debriefing 11 Airmobile Brigade/Dutchbat IIP’, Appendix to letter C 11 Airmobile Brigade to Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, ‘Operational debrief Dutchbat IIP’, no. 172/confi, 28/07/95. It is evident that the main reason for Oosterveen’s inclusion in the list was his status as Warrant Officer for personnel and that he would thus surely be familiar with many of the internal ins and outs of the battalion. His observation of the executed persons were dealt with in the conversation that Colonel Lemmen conducted with Oosterveen in the presence of Petra Groen. See: SMG, 1007. ‘Debriefing Warrant Officer Oosterveen, personnel Warrant Officer (added to S1), Camp Pleso 23/07/95, 9am - 10am’.

a number of wounded who had been assigned to his care. Following his departure from the enclave with Boering, Voerman had originally returned to the Netherlands. Both he and Boering, who in the meantime had arrived home in Seedorf (Germany), were offered the chance of flying to Zagreb again.¹⁸¹⁰ Voerman was the only one to take up this offer, due to the responsibility that he as personnel officer felt towards the troops. Although he was debriefed in advance, he also became involved in the course of events at Pleso. He probably supplied the names of the list of functions that served as basis for the debriefing. Voerman was also given the task of collecting the questionnaire forms on Sunday morning. These forms had been distributed among the officers and NCOs by Major Bourgondiën on behalf of the intelligence section of UNPF in Zagreb, just as had been the case the previous week with the group of 55.¹⁸¹¹ On the basis of these forms and indications from earlier conversations, a few more Dutchbat soldiers were selected for closer questioning about the witnessing of war crimes.¹⁸¹² The resulting findings will be discussed later.

22. Involvement of the Military History Section

Apart from Bastiaans himself, Colonel Lemmen and Major N. Geerts, the logistics officer of the Airmobile Brigade, were the ones to actually carry out the debriefing. An attempt to involve spiritual counsellors in the debriefing had failed: they refused because they felt it was an improper task.¹⁸¹³ A number of minutes-keepers from the brigade had also been included. In practice however the reporting, as well as the first formulations of the final report, came to rest mainly on the shoulders of three historians of the Military History Section of the Royal Netherlands Army who had become involved in the operation in an unusual manner. As early as 13 July General Couzy had commissioned the head of the Military History Section, drs. P. (Piet) Kamphuis, to make a historical reconstruction at short notice of a number of events involving Dutchbat from 6 July onwards.

In the late afternoon Kamphuis received a telephone call from Couzy while Kamphuis was present at the opening of an exhibition in the Army Museum in Delft. This move illustrates, just like Couzy's own activities regarding the debriefing, the overriding desire of the Army Commander to establish as fast as possible what had happened. Besides the wish for a factual reconstruction, another important question was whether certain Dutchbat soldiers deserved a decoration for their actions. Kamphuis comments: 'That was actually the original work of the military historian, which always took place after a conflict. That is the organization's reflex'.¹⁸¹⁴

But the main focus of attention lay elsewhere. One of the things disturbing Couzy was the discrepancy between the reassuring words on 10 July that only a limited attack was underway and the taking of the entire enclave a day later. According to notes made during these days there were further questions marks regarding the abandonment of the blocking position by B Company and the issue of air support, but also regarding 'internal (informal) relations' within Dutchbat.¹⁸¹⁵ At this time the rumour was already circulating that it was not Karremans who had conducted the actual leadership of the battalion, but his deputy Franken. As early as 13 July Kamphuis was told by General Bastiaans, who like him was at the Army Museum when Couzy called him and with whom he subsequently discussed the assignment, that Karremans' function 'had been zero' and that Franken had been 'the real boss'.¹⁸¹⁶

¹⁸¹⁰ Interview P. Boering, 14/12/01.

¹⁸¹¹ SMG, 1007/28. 'Debriefing 11 Airmobile Brigade/Dutchbat III', Appendix to letter C 11 Airmobile Brigade no. 172/confi.

¹⁸¹² Interview G. Bastiaans, 20/11/00; SMG, 1007/28. Letter C 11 Airmobile Brigade to Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, 'Operationel debriefing Dutchbat III', no. 172/confi, 28/07/95.

¹⁸¹³ Interview B. Hetebrij, 16/11/00. Hetebrij was the Humanistic Councillor for Dutchbat III.

¹⁸¹⁴ Interview P.H. Camphuis, 08/04/99.

¹⁸¹⁵ 'Blocnote' notes by Petra Groen, 'Conversation Piet 14/07/95'. Loaned to the NIOD for reference by Prof. Dr P. Groen.

¹⁸¹⁶ Interview P. Camphuis, 08/04/99.

In the following days it soon became clear to the Military History Section investigators that Couzy and Van Baal must be aware of their responsibility in dispatching Karremans as Battalion Commander.¹⁸¹⁷

Couzy had another special worry. There were indications that the communication between the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff and the Defence Crisis Management Centre had not been without problems. It was clear that the gaps in his information supply and above all the relations with the Defence Crisis Management Centre were sensitive points which required a careful approach from the Section when conducting its investigations. In the discussion that Kamphuis conducted on 14 July with one of his main investigators, Prof. Dr P.M.H. (Petra) Groen, she noted that this part of the assignment should thus be kept 'strictly confidential'. Even internally, therefore, the 'need to know' principle was applied.¹⁸¹⁸ Kamphuis himself later mentioned 'a secret agenda'.¹⁸¹⁹ It was clear that the press in particular should get no wind of this operation.

All the involved investigators were aware of the tension between loyalty to the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army on the one hand and scientific integrity on the other.¹⁸²⁰ Groen had the feeling that the investigation group almost took on the nature of an 'internal investigation'.¹⁸²¹ Due to all the potential traps and minefields that threatened academics who were burdened with such a task, Kamphuis took the additional measure of verifying Couzy's remark that Deputy Commander Van Baal and Couzy's Head of the Personnel Office, Colonel J.M.J. (Hans) Bosch, had also been informed.¹⁸²² Bosch quickly became the main support for the Military History Section and ensured, for instance, that several key functionaries such as Colonel B. Dedden, the Chief of Staff of the Crisis Staff, and Colonel H. Bokhoven, the Head of Intelligence & Security Section of the Royal Netherlands Army Military Intelligence Service, were also informed of the assignment.¹⁸²³

Kamphuis, who was about to go on holiday (this was in fact in consultation with Couzy), appointed Groen as the coordinator of the investigation team. This team also comprised C. (Christ) Klep, the Section's specialist on peacekeeping operations, and M. (Martin) Elands, who had already done work relating to the peacekeeping operation in Angola.¹⁸²⁴ A few other staff were added at a later stage as support or as sounding-board. The Military History Section initially allocated one month for the entire project.

During the first week after the fall the investigators concentrated on compiling the greatest possible amount of information through interviews and a search for documents. This latter aspect proved an impossible task at the Defence Crisis Management Centre. The staff of the Section, who were not permitted to reveal their secret objectives, were unable to make headway there. Their status was too low, they knew no one at the Defence Crisis Management Centre and moreover they had no written assignment. Finally Groen decided to ask Bosch, who as mentioned became the main contact person, to 'take the royal road'. She asked him to get Couzy to write a letter to the Defence Crisis Management Centre which would open the doors for them. The request, initialled by the acting Commander Major General E. Warlicht (Couzy was in Zagreb), was sent on 21 July. However, the Military History Section was not granted the requested access to the information of the Defence Crisis Management Centre.¹⁸²⁵

On the same day Bosch informed the Military History Section that the staff of the Airmobile Brigade had left for Zagreb to receive Dutchbat III and to debrief the battalion. In the initial assumption that Dutchbat would first be debriefed in the Netherlands, the Military History Section had

¹⁸¹⁷ Interviews P. Groen, 17/02/99; Chr. Klep, 18/02/99.

¹⁸¹⁸ 'Blocnote' notes by Petra Groen, 'Conversation Piet 14/07/95'. Loaned to the NIOD for reference by Prof. Dr P. Groen.

¹⁸¹⁹ Interview P.H. Camphuis, 08/04/99.

¹⁸²⁰ Interviews M. Elands, 15/02/99; P. Groen, 17/02/99; Chr. Klep, 18/02/99.

¹⁸²¹ 'Blocnote' notes by P. Groen, attached to notes of 14/07/95.

¹⁸²² Interview P.H. Camphuis, 08/04/99.

¹⁸²³ 'Blocnote' notes of P. Groen, 13/07/95.

¹⁸²⁴ M. Elands, *Nederlandse militairen in Angola: de VN-vredesmissie UNAVEM II, 1991-1993* (The Hague, 1994).

¹⁸²⁵ SMG, 1004. 'Report of developments and agreements Srebrenica project group 26/0795'.

already made arrangements with the Military Security Section of the Royal Netherlands Army Military Intelligence Service, which normally debriefed returning troops. Colonel Bokhoven had offered the Military History Section the chance to attend the debriefings and also to ask their own questions.¹⁸²⁶ Following this call from Bosch the Military History Section conducted internal consultations and a discussion with Bokhoven, after which it was decided that the three investigators would travel to Zagreb the next day to attend the debriefing there and where possible to conduct their own interviews. Speed was of the essence because it was now evident that the battalion would go on holiday directly after its return to the Netherlands. The standard Royal Netherlands Army Military Intelligence Service debriefings were not to take place until September – the decision for a large-scale debriefing in Assen had not yet been taken.¹⁸²⁷

In the assumption that the investigators would be able to conduct their own interviews, they had in the meantime drawn up a list of key persons which generally paralleled the list prepared by the Brigade. Extensive lists of questions were also compiled for each functionary. The issue of internal command relationships was already being spotlighted, as can be seen from the supplementary remark relating to the comprehensive series of questions to be put to Karremans: ‘For every question confirm whether the order was given by him or his deputy’.¹⁸²⁸

On 22 July Groen, Elands and Klep left Eindhoven Air Base for Zagreb, in the company of the military band of the Engineering Corps. Bosch had arranged the trip. In Pleso Couzy introduced the investigators to the debriefing coordinator, Lemmen. It soon transpired that much of the preparation in the Netherlands was wasted effort. Quite simply, the Military History Section investigators were not to be given a fully independent role. Lemmen made it clear that lists of questions had already been compiled. ‘We understood from this that the input of the project team would mostly be confined to minutes-keeping’, was the rather resigned conclusion that would later be recorded in the Military History Section report of the trip.¹⁸²⁹ Each of the three investigators would accompany one of the debriefers: Klep with Bastiaans, Groen with Lemmen and Elands with Geerts.

Despite their limited role, the staff of the Section were to become to be the main recorders of the debriefing interviews. At the same time, as involved outsiders with a scientific background, they were also the chief observers of the internal progress of the debriefing and the final reporting. That created an ambiguous and uncomfortable position for the investigators, which they were to feel ever more keenly as the debriefing progressed.

23. The course of the operational debriefing

Bastiaans made a brisk start on 22 July. The brigadier general had a number of important sources on his list. Besides Captain Groen, who had played an important role in the defence of the enclave, the list also included Sergeant Mulder, the commander of OP-M. He could cast light on what had happened in the north-west corner of the enclave. Major Otter was important mainly in view of the events that took place in Potocari and around the compound. Bastiaans also decided to interview the doctors Hegge and Schouten, according to him because ‘the medical side of the matter’ was naturally to be a ‘main area of attention’.¹⁸³⁰

General Couzy was also present at many of the conversations conducted by Bastiaans. He attended some of them in part only. In any case he missed the interviews conducted in the evening because he first attended the barbecue and the ‘little party’ that had been arranged. After this he went to the studio in Zagreb for the live *Nova* interview. The precise nature of his contribution during the interviews can to some extent be derived from the experiences of MHS investigator Klep, who like his

¹⁸²⁶ SMG, 1004. ‘Conversation Co. Bokhoven IeV 200795 9am-11am by P.G.’.

¹⁸²⁷ SMG, 1004. ‘Report of developments and agreements Srebrenica project group 210795’.

¹⁸²⁸ SMG, 1007/16. ‘Karremans list of questions’.

¹⁸²⁹ SMG, 1004. ‘srebrenica Project: report of Zagreb visit, 22-24 July 1995’.

¹⁸³⁰ Interview G. Bastiaans, 26/10/00.

colleagues Groen and Elands had been thrust into the role of minutes-keeper and who attended all of Bastiaans' interviews. He recalled above all that sometimes the Army Commander was visibly irritated by the superficial manner in which Bastiaans asked questions. During some of the interviews, in fact, Couzy was mostly in a state of sleep. Insofar as the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army asked questions himself, these related less to military operational aspects (which he may have regarded as primarily a brigade matter) and more to humanitarian issues and the problems with relief and transport of the Displaced Persons. He asked Major Otter, for instance, about the assistance provided to the Displaced Persons at the fence of the Potocari compound.¹⁸³¹ Bastiaans himself had little recollection of Couzy's contribution, however.¹⁸³² In one case, which will be dealt with separately, Couzy did however clearly take the lead. According to Sergeant Mulder, who was debriefed on Saturday 22 July, Couzy was the one who asked all the questions and Bastiaans kept silent.¹⁸³³

This latter account sheds a slightly different light on the criticism of Bastiaans' actions that was expressed later. The other two Military History Section investigators, Groen and Elands, who accompanied Colonel Lemmen and Major Geerts respectively, recounted that the interviews were conducted in a generally relaxed manner and that the interviewers put open questions. Klep however soon became concerned about the way that Bastiaans 'heavily steered' the interviews he conducted, especially those with Karremans and Franken.¹⁸³⁴ General Bastiaans lived up to his nickname 'Iwab', which stood for *Ik weet alles beter* ('I know it all').¹⁸³⁵ Major Bourgondiën of the UNPF Military Information Office in Zagreb, who in this capacity also devoted attention to the Dutchbat soldiers and spoke to a number of those debriefed, was surprised at this fact. He heard their accounts: 'They [Dutchbat personnel] were already saying at this time: if this is supposed to be the debriefing, then what will be written down is sure to be no good.' Bourgondiën described how one Dutchbat soldier recounted:

'The map was on the table and the guys were describing how they went away. Then someone said: 'We came to a T-junction. You can turn left there or turn right. We turned right.' The general said: 'No, that can't be correct, because we always turned left at that junction'. 'No, we turned right.' [Then Bastiaans told the minutes-keeper:] 'Write down: we turned left.' Bastiaans commented: 'At this moment I don't think that anyone is prepared any longer to give a good account. You could just tell: this isn't going well, we haven't seen the last of it.'¹⁸³⁶

In particular the interviews with Franken and then Karremans took on a highly unpleasant quality for the interviewees. Because earlier interviews had taken longer than planned, Karremans first got his turn at 11pm. 'When I came in, Franken was almost going for Bastiaans' throat', said Karremans, who shortly afterwards experienced a similar clash.¹⁸³⁷ It showed a great lack of understanding, he felt, that after all the exhausting events they were ordered to report for debriefing in the evening: 'You just want to rest, and go home. It's fine that there's a chance to talk to someone. It's great that space is created for an operational debriefing. But do it during the day and not late in the evening. Not at the moment that you've been at the helm the entire day and night before. You're simply dead-beat', said Karremans later.¹⁸³⁸ Bastiaans had however intentionally scheduled him for the end of the day, so that Bastiaans

¹⁸³¹ Interview Chr. Klep, 18/02/99.

¹⁸³² Interview G. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

¹⁸³³ Interview M. Mulder, Ede, 06/10/98.

¹⁸³⁴ Interview Chr. Klep, 18/02/99; SMG, 1004. 'srebrenica Project: report of Zagreb visit, 22-24 July 1995'.

¹⁸³⁵ Karremans, *Srebrenica who cares?*, p. 244.

¹⁸³⁶ Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00. Bourgondiën already expressed this criticism during his debriefing in Assen in late 1995.

¹⁸³⁷ Interview Th. Karremans, 15-17/12/98.

¹⁸³⁸ Interview Th. Karremans, 15-17/12/98.

would be well-prepared on the basis of the preceding interviews conducted by himself and his colleagues.¹⁸³⁹ The interviewers regularly compared their findings with each other.¹⁸⁴⁰

The general took a particularly tough line with Karremans and Franken about the issue of Close Air Support. Bastiaans judged that he, as former head of the UN observers, was an old hand when it came to the international procedures for requests for Close Air Support.¹⁸⁴¹ In his opinion there had been no promise of Close Air Support, let alone – as Karremans and Franken had expected – of massive air strikes on all the targets they had indicated.¹⁸⁴² The smugness of Bastiaans led to considerable irritation. Karremans was furious about what he himself called ‘the cross-examination’ by Bastiaans.¹⁸⁴³ ‘When you sit down with a debriefer, you don’t expect to enter into argument. You don’t expect one-way traffic either, but the main idea is that you should tell your own story, in your way, under these circumstances. It makes no difference whether you’re tired or not. You tell your story. And of course it shouldn’t happen that you start to get needled because the person debriefing you puts words into your mouth or has a totally different idea about what happened. But that’s just how it turned out’.¹⁸⁴⁴

Karremans’ anger was also awoken by the questions, at the end of the interview, about the internal relations in the battalion. This theme had also been dealt with in the interview with Franken, especially the division of tasks between the commander and his deputy. Here Franken himself had already said that he had ‘played a prominent role’ and chiefly due to lack of time had taken a number of key decisions himself.¹⁸⁴⁵ According to Karremans, however, he was the one who had determined the essential matters and he had supervised, and approved or rejected, all of Franken’s suggestions. Furthermore Karremans sometimes refused point-blank to answer questions, referring to the three conversations he had already had about these with Colonel Lemmen;¹⁸⁴⁶ according to Lemmen he referred here to conversations that had taken place before the battalion’s dispatch, as these matters had not been dealt with in Pleso.¹⁸⁴⁷ On leaving the debriefing room Karremans slammed the door behind him.¹⁸⁴⁸

24. The conflict about the content of the debriefing report

While a few extra debriefing interviews took place on Sunday 23 July, attended by Groen and Klep, the minutes-keepers of the Airmobile Brigade started to write a report on the events in Srebrenica based on the interviews of the preceding day. This was to serve as background information for Couzy’s press conference, scheduled to begin on Sunday afternoon at 4.45pm. Elands joined these persons on the instructions of the Military History Section coordinator Groen.

Due to the quantity of the material and the internal contradictions contained therein, the team of writers found itself confronted with an impossible task. The disparate opinions of Karremans and Franken about their own and each other’s roles formed just one of a series of unclear aspects, which also included the issue of Close Air Support and whether a ‘green’ assignment had been issued or not. Around 3pm, when the first draft had been completed, Elands made it clear to his writer colleagues

¹⁸³⁹ Interview G. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

¹⁸⁴⁰ SMG, 1007/23. Letter Commander 11 LMB Brig. Gen. Bastiaans to Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, 172/conf, 28/07/95, ‘Re: operational debriefing Dutchbat III’.

¹⁸⁴¹ Interview Chr. Klep, 18/02/99.

¹⁸⁴² SMG, 1004. ‘Report of discussion of report debriefing personnel Dutchbat III by Staff 11 LMB Schaarsbergen, 27 July 1995’.

¹⁸⁴³ Karremans, *Srebrenica who cares?* pp. 244, 245.

¹⁸⁴⁴ Interview Th. Karremans, 15-17/12/98.

¹⁸⁴⁵ SMG, 1007. Chr. Klep, ‘Report of debriefing of Major Franken, 22 July 1995, Camp Pleso’.

¹⁸⁴⁶ SMG, 1007. Chr. Klep, ‘Report of debriefing C-Dutchbat III l Col. Karremans, 22 July 1995, Camp Pleso’.

¹⁸⁴⁷ Interview Th. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

¹⁸⁴⁸ Interview Chr. Klep, 18/02/99.

‘that he considered both the working method and result of this overhasty exercise to be of inferior quality’.¹⁸⁴⁹

To the relief of the team of writers, Couzy already appeared to have sufficient information from other channels; as will be shown, the operational dimension was now of subordinate importance in comparison to the humanitarian issues. This gave the writers the chance to continue their work on the report. In the course of the afternoon, when the unscheduled debriefings had been completed, the other debriefers joined the writing team. Bastiaans, who had also arrived, pressed strongly for the completion of the report.

The Military History Section project group found it a hopeless task: the impression gained by the military historians was not so much that the stubborn Bastiaans was trying to whitewash his Airmobile Brigade, but rather that he was, in a military manner, trying to perform his task (excessively) quickly.¹⁸⁵⁰ In the process it was not always clear which direction he was trying to take, but wherever it was, ‘it was always off-course’. ‘Where I hesitated, he planted a full-stop’, recounted Groen. Seemingly the only constant factor, according to the Military History Section team, was that Bastiaans bore a grudge against Karremans.¹⁸⁵¹ Bastiaans also created the impression that he wanted to confine himself to a factual, military operational report. For the military historians, however, it was already becoming clear that especially the reported indications of war crimes required more space for interpretation. In contrast to Couzy, however, it seemed to the Military History Section team that Bastiaans had no sensitivity to, or interest in, humanitarian aspects. Groen in particular felt emotionally affected by this.¹⁸⁵²

The three historians increasingly feared that Bastiaans wanted to see the name of the Military History Section linked to the report as a sort of quality guarantee. But an ‘alibi function’ like this did not appeal to them, all the more so because it could put them in an unpleasant position with regard to Couzy.¹⁸⁵³ After all, the latter was responsible for the Section’s original assignment, without Bastiaans being aware of this.¹⁸⁵⁴ When a second version of the report had been prepared by around midnight, the Military History Section project team once again made it clear to Bastiaans ‘that they considered the result to be sub-standard and that they did not wish for the Section’s name to be associated with such a product.’ But, as the historians concluded, ‘This message was not fully received’.¹⁸⁵⁵

In the early morning of Monday 24 July the three Military History Section members consulted on their further actions. The staff of the Airmobile Brigade still held important documents that the project team needed for its investigation. Groen, Elands and Klep thus initially decided, for tactical reasons, to attend the definitive formulation of the debriefing report, which in fact was not scheduled to take place until 27 July in Schaarsbergen: ‘We did not however expect that the final report would receive with our approval’.¹⁸⁵⁶ Following their return to The Hague from Zagreb later that Monday, the Military History Section members decided however that the Airmobile Brigade should write the report itself and that it would be submitted only to the Army Commander. Groen and Klep were in fact present in Schaarsbergen on 27 July but – partly on the advice of Colonel Bosch – they declared that the Military History Section accepted no responsibility whatsoever for the report, with the fabricated excuse that the Section’s assignment had been confined to the compilation of material.¹⁸⁵⁷ In his final

¹⁸⁴⁹ SMG, 1004. ‘srebrenica project: report of Zagreb visit, 22-24 July 1995’.

¹⁸⁵⁰ Interviews M. Elands, 15/02/99; P. Groen, 17/02/99; Chr. Klep, 18/02/99.

¹⁸⁵¹ Interviews P. Groen, 17/02/99; Chr. Klep, 18/02/99.

¹⁸⁵² Interview Chr. Klep, 03/03/99.

¹⁸⁵³ Interviews M. Elands, 15/02/99; P. Groen, 17/02/99.

¹⁸⁵⁴ Interview G. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

¹⁸⁵⁵ SMG, 1004. ‘srebrenica project: report of Zagreb visit, 22-24 July 1995’.

¹⁸⁵⁶ SMG, 1004. ‘srebrenica project: report of Zagreb visit, 22-24 July 1995’.

¹⁸⁵⁷ SMG, 1004. ‘Report of developments and agreements Srebrenica project group 260795’; ‘Report Srebrenica project group 270795’.

report Bastiaans mentioned that the Military History Section staff had attended the large majority of the interviews, but that he had determined the final report.¹⁸⁵⁸

The Military History Section insisted on distancing itself from the report during the discussion in Schaarsbergen because in a number of important points Bastiaans' report deviated strongly from the impressions gained by the project group in Zagreb. To give an example, under Bastiaans' direction the report stated that Karremans had protested against the separation of men and women, although Groen's impression from the interview with Rave was that no objections to this had been made. Bastiaans had also 'not been receptive' to critical remarks about the account of wounded persons missing from the convoy of wounded on 12 July, which had been captured by the VRS. Under Bastiaans' direction the report stated that the 'walking wounded' who had been removed from the convoy at Kladanj and were forced to walk had later been encountered by the supervising doctor Schouten in Bratunac Hospital. Klep had his doubts about this observation, but Bastiaans determined what the report should state.¹⁸⁵⁹ The same thing happened with regard to another passage dealing with Schouten's actions. The report indicated that a number of wounded Muslims had fallen into the hands of the VRS because Schouten had lost sight of them. This happened when he left for lunch on the urging of a nurse [of the VRS?], 'because he would otherwise run a major risk'. Schouten had interpreted this as a serious threat.¹⁸⁶⁰

During Schouten's debriefing Klep had gained the impression that this issue was dealt with much too superficially. In his opinion the situation in which Schouten found himself was not as dangerous as he had claimed. Klep felt this to be so because during the interview Schouten had repeatedly remarked that the laws of war gave the VRS a free hand to separate the men from the women. In Klep's opinion, Schouten had given a 'green' interpretation to a 'blue' assignment. Following the debriefing this had even led him to sigh: 'You wouldn't want him as your family doctor'.¹⁸⁶¹ The historian had not seen any opportunity to have his comments included in the report, because an irritated Bastiaans had repeated his version and followed this with the intimidating remark: 'That's how it was, wasn't it, Mr Klep?'¹⁸⁶²

Another reason for the Military History Section to distance itself was because the suspicion that the Military History Section staff had already felt in Pleso about possible war crimes had been fed since their return by the growing amount of information in the media. Bastiaans' report was highly summary in this respect, however, and confined itself to the neutral mentioning of observations without any form of analysis or interpretation. The chief observations – of an execution witnessed by Groenewegen and two discoveries of corpses by Oosterveen's and Rutten's small groups – were mentioned in the report. It was also mentioned that when persons who had remained behind were picked up from Srebrenica on 14 July, two corpses had been encountered. It was not mentioned however that both had gunshot wounds, one of them in the head.¹⁸⁶³

However, the issue of war crimes took an unexpected turn for Bastiaans too, and thus for his report. On 26 July it was reported to Bastiaans that a Sergeant Smid had information about war crimes

¹⁸⁵⁸ SMG, 1007/23. Letter Commander 11 LMB Brig. Gen. Bastiaans to Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, 172/conf, 28/07/95, 'Re: operational debriefing Dutchbat III'.

¹⁸⁵⁹ SMG, 1004. 'Report of discussion of report debriefing personnel Dutchbat III by Staff 11 LMB Schaarsbergen, 27 July 1995'.

¹⁸⁶⁰ SMG, 1007/23. 'Report on debriefing Dutchbat III', appendix to Letter Commander 11 LMB Brig. Gen. Bastiaans to Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, 172/conf, 28/07/95. See also in the NIOD report the appendix 'Dutchbat III and medical matters'.

¹⁸⁶¹ Interviews M. Elands, 15/02/99; P. Groen, 17/02/99; Chr. Klep, 18/02/99 and 03/03/99.

¹⁸⁶² Interview Chr. Klep, 18/02/99. When shortly after this Voorhoeve sent a letter to Parliament in which he threatened to adopt the passage in question, Groen and Klep were enabled to 'neutralize' or 'render harmless' the passage about Schouten. See: SMG, 1004.SMG, 1004. 'Report of Srebrenica project group 020895'; Groen and Klep, 'Report of conversation Col. Smeets, 02/08/95'.

¹⁸⁶³ This was based on the conversations with the Warrant Officers Elbers and Voets. See: SMG, 1007. Chr. Klep, 'Report of debriefing of Warrant Officer Voets and Warrant Officer Elbers, 23/07/95, Camp Pleso'.

by the VRS. E.P. (Eric) Smid was one of the members of the group of 55 who had returned to the Netherlands on 17 July. Bastiaans called Smid on 28 July and was confronted with 'a flood' of information about what he had experienced.¹⁸⁶⁴ Smid was surprised that he had not yet been approached by the Ministry of Defence and had then sounded the alarm himself. He told Bastiaans how the 'captive' Dutchbat soldiers had passed by the football pitch of Nova Kasaba while being moved from Simici to Bratunac on 15 July. On one part of the football pitch he saw a row of shoes and rucksacks lying on the ground, enough for about a hundred men as he estimated. Shortly afterwards he saw a tractor with a trailer on which corpses lay. Half a kilometre further on Smid saw another row of shoes and equipment, this time as he estimated for some 20 to 40 men. There he also saw a tip-up truck with corpses and shortly afterwards an excavator with corpses. His last observation was a corpse lying at a bend in the road.¹⁸⁶⁵ Bastiaans included this account in his report and in his covering letter to Couzy recommended that the other OP commanders and Sergeant J. (Johan) Bos (who had in fact taken part in Couzy's press conference on 16 July) also be debriefed.

Once Smid's report had been publicized by Voorhoeve, it quickly became viewed as one of the first indications of large-scale murders. Bastiaans himself was, in his own account, equally shocked.¹⁸⁶⁶ When Groen heard about it on 28 July, he immediately issued an 'advance warning' to Colonel Bosch, 'in relation to previous statements by the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army [Couzy] at the Zagreb press conference'.¹⁸⁶⁷ At that moment Groen had apparently not considered another vulnerable point: the presence of Couzy in Zagreb while Smid and his colleagues were also there. This could lead to the question as to whether Couzy had already heard these same stories.

The superficial attention given to possible war crimes in Potocari and the shock caused by Smid's account prompt a closer examination of the way that attention was given in Zagreb to the issue of human rights violations.

25. Debriefings and human rights: introduction

The issue of what became known about human rights violations in Zagreb on 23 July plays a central role in analysing Couzy's actions. In order to answer this, it is of course important to establish what relevant information was revealed both during and outside Bastiaans' operational debriefing. The way in which this was done should also be considered, as this can help to explain why during the debriefing the Dutchbat soldiers mentioned, or did not mention, the things they had seen. The answers to these questions allow Couzy's statements regarding the genocide issue made during his press conference on the afternoon of 23 July to be placed in perspective and to be analysed. The chief question here is whether the reserved position on the use of the term 'genocide' that he adopted as early as 16 July was still tenable on 23 July. In other words, what did Couzy know about the issues he talked about at the press conference, and how did he determine what he would and would not mention there?

Before these questions can be answered, it is first necessary to devote some attention to the debriefing activities of UN bodies, which in part took place parallel to the Dutch efforts. The role that the Dutch generals Couzy and Bastiaans played in the course of these is not only illustrative of the way that the Netherlands took control of the affairs in Zagreb. Even more important is that an analysis and comparison of the UN debriefings with the operational debriefing and Couzy's personal activities can clarify any differences and failings. It also highlights the various approaches taken to the issue of the human rights violations.

¹⁸⁶⁴ Interview G. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

¹⁸⁶⁵ SMG, 1007/23. 'Report on debriefing Dutchbat III', appendix to Letter Commander 11 LMB Brig. Gen. Bastiaans to Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, 172/conf, 28/07/95, p. 10.

¹⁸⁶⁶ Interview G. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

¹⁸⁶⁷ SMG, 1004. 'Report of Srebrenica project group 010895'.

26. The UN becomes involved

The UN investigative bodies that tried to obtain information from Dutchbat in Zagreb were prompted by the major concern that had arisen following the many interviews with Displaced Persons at Tuzla Air Base. They reported countless stories of atrocities that were difficult to verify for all sorts of reasons (see the passages on Tuzla Air Base earlier in this chapter).

As a consequence, interest rapidly grew regarding what the Dutch UN soldiers had to report. It is not clear whether there is a corresponding link to the request received from New York on 18 July to debrief the 55 ex-hostages, who had now returned to the Netherlands; it is however known that the report of the imminent return of the rest of the battalion set various UN bodies in motion. This particularly concerned the UN Centre of Human Rights (UNCHR) (not to be confused with the UN organization for Displaced Persons UNHCR), a part of the High Commission for Human Rights, with Field Offices in Sarajevo and Zagreb among other places. These came under the leadership of the Peruvian diplomat Hubert Wieland and the Personal Representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, José Ayala de Lasso. One of the persons with whom the staff of UNCHR cooperated was the Special Rapporteur appointed by the High Commissioner, the Polish ex-Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki. This cooperation took place in a fresh and sometimes difficult collaborative relationship with the recently created Human Rights Office, a section of the Legal Office of the Civil Affairs department of the UNPF headquarters in Zagreb. The practical advantage of this was that the UNCHR Field Office in Zagreb was accommodated in the same building. Both bodies became involved in the attempt to question the returning Dutch battalion in Zagreb about possible human rights violations.

Some time around 18 or 19 July Mazowiecki heard about the imminent departure of Dutchbat from Potocari. He was then about to travel to Tuzla to view the situation in person. On 19 July he submitted a formal request to the Force Commander, General Janvier, for a debriefing of Dutchbat.¹⁸⁶⁸ This had probably been preceded by telephonic contact, because a verbal agreement to this had already been received from the Frenchman on the morning of that day. This rapid approval was probably related to the request received shortly before from the alarmed Annan, asking for an investigation of what the freed Dutch hostages had reported.

Armed with this verbal agreement from Janvier one of the UNCHR staff members in Zagreb, the Chilean/Swiss psychologist Marguerite Lagos-Bossel, set out on the morning of 19 July. She had been notified by her superior Wieland, who remained in Tuzla, that the Dutch would soon be arriving in Zagreb.¹⁸⁶⁹ Probably both he and Mazowiecki had been informed of the agreement that was to be settled between Smith and Mladic on that day.

On the morning of 19 July Lagos-Bossel had a meeting with the Dutch major C.A.T.M. (Cees) Bourgondiën, who together with his immediate superior, Commander R. (Rick) Morgan, had provisionally debriefed the ex-hostages on behalf of the intelligence section of UNPF the previous weekend. Members of the group now returning would also be debriefed by this section, based on the same procedure that had been followed a little less than a week before and which consisted of the selection of sources on the basis of questionnaires.

By his own account Bourgondiën was given the task of coordinating all UN activities, even if this had probably not been finalized at that moment.¹⁸⁷⁰ The Dutchman confirmed the approaching departure of Dutchbat and initially referred Lagos-Bossel on to Colonel De Jonge, who had been appointed – probably by Janvier – as liaison officer for this matter.¹⁸⁷¹ He visited him the following afternoon.

¹⁸⁶⁸ NIOD, Coll. Hicks. T. Mazowiecki to Lt. Gen. B. Janvier, 19/07/95.

¹⁸⁶⁹ Interview M. Lagos-Bossel, 20/12/00.

¹⁸⁷⁰ Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00.

¹⁸⁷¹ NIOD, Coll. Hicks. M. Lagos-Bossel, Note for the file, 'Chronology of negotiations with Dutch military authorities for interviewing Dutch peacekeepers coming back from Srebrenica'. (Hereinafter referred to as: Lagos-Bossel, 'Chronology').

The course of the contacts between De Jonge and Lagos-Bossel is important because later the Ministry of Defence strongly relied on De Jonge's account of the developments in an attempt to show that the Netherlands had fully cooperated with the debriefing by the UN. This was prompted, as will be discussed in more detail in the chapter about the aftermath of Zagreb, by Mazowiecki's criticism of the poor cooperation supposedly provided by the Netherlands. De Jonge's account of the efforts undertaken was later cited to show that these accusations were unjustified. The irony here is that De Jonge was at that moment a UN officer and that his efforts, in the formal sense, chiefly resulted from the assignment issued by Force Commander Janvier to his staff to provide full cooperation with Mazowiecki.¹⁸⁷²

Much of the knowledge of De Jonge's activities is derived from a substantial and confidential memorandum that he wrote on 29 August, addressed to Commodore Hilderink at the Defence Crisis Management Centre in The Hague. De Jonge drew up this document on the day after he had consulted with Colonel R.S. Van Dam about the formulation of a letter from Minister Voorhoeve to Parliament about Mazowiecki's criticism that the Netherlands had not fully cooperated with the UN debriefing. De Jonge expressed the hope that Hilderink would be able to benefit from his recommendations, and he also asked the Chief of the Defence Staff to provide access to these. De Jonge wanted to make clear that, in his opinion, the Ministry of Defence 'was unnecessarily allowing itself to be manoeuvred into a corner'.¹⁸⁷³ According to De Jonge this was, among other issues, the case with Mazowiecki's criticism of the poor cooperation supposedly provided to his team in Pleso.

In order to refute this De Jonge supplied a reconstruction of the events, and in particular of his own role in the contacts with Lagos-Bossel. Here he sketched a picture of someone in considerable confusion, who acted conceitedly and who did not keep to agreements. At the same time he emphasized the unintentionally important role that, as a result of this, he then played in the organization of the UNCHR debriefing. Lagos-Bossel found it hard to understand this criticism and even wondered whether De Jonge had not confused her with a colleague from Civil Affairs, the department that also became involved in the debriefing. Following 23 July she herself quickly wrote a 'note for the file' in which she gave a chronological description of her contacts, by her own account based on notes that she made during the conversations.¹⁸⁷⁴

A reconstruction is thus forced to move chiefly between the two poles of De Jonge and Lagos-Bossel. One important point must immediately be made here. The direct personal involvement of De Jonge in the debriefing was mostly before 22 July, the day that the battalion arrived in Zagreb. His knowledge of what took place afterwards was initially based on the small amount of information that he received from one of his subordinates. Furthermore, after the event De Jonge created a strong impression that his proposals and suggestions to Lagos-Bossel, which will be examined below, were formulated more or less spontaneously on the spot. However, a certain framework probably already existed, which guided – among other things – the activities of the intelligence section.

In the letter sent by Janvier to Mazowiecki on 22 July and in which he promised full support, the Force Commander was in fact referring to a recently developed procedure for the reception of soldiers who had been involved in stressful situations. This procedure had been designed 'to be as short and painless as possible for the returning soldiers', and seemed to be aimed at identifying individuals who could provide relevant testimony: 'within those parameters, we may be able to identify individuals

¹⁸⁷² NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Lt. Gen. B. Janvier to T. Mazowiecki, Zagreb, 22/07/95.

¹⁸⁷³ DCBC, 1109. J.H. de Jonge to C.G.J. Hilderink, 29/08/95.

¹⁸⁷⁴ Interview M. Lagos-Bossel, 20/12/00. The chronology of her account and that of De Jonge sometimes diverge strongly. Some of the facts mentioned in one of the two overviews (but also in interviews) are not always corroborated by the other account. This occasionally necessitates an interpretation of the most plausible order of events, which will not be explained and justified in detail unless there is a special reason for doing so.

whose testimony may be helpful to you'.¹⁸⁷⁵ After so many years, however, the various involved persons were unable or hardly able to remember how this procedure had been created.

De Jonge's main impression from the first contact with Lagos-Bossel on the afternoon of 20 July was that Lagos-Bossel did not know what she precisely wanted. He was nonetheless convinced that her work could be important, 'because the stories about mass murders and the disappeared people are already starting to take affect'.¹⁸⁷⁶ He himself had conducted a very brief operational debriefing of a few members of the group of 55 the previous weekend. Although there is no indication that he had received any disturbing information from them, he was aware of the report prepared by Bourgondiën.

De Jonge later claimed that it was agreed that he was to draw up a plan of action and would then 'submit it [to Lagos-Bossel] for approval'.¹⁸⁷⁷ This does not tally with the account later given by the UNCHR officer herself. According to her she had a clear idea of what she wanted, although she admitted later that De Jonge was partly correct with his impression that there was an element of confusion on her side at that moment. Her organization was specifically interested in testimonies about human rights violations. While in the recollection of De Jonge, Lagos-Bossel wanted to interview 'everyone' in Dutchbat, both the documents and her recollections indicate that sample interviews were to be conducted. To this end a 'preliminary check-list' would first be distributed on a random basis to at least one-third of the Dutch UN soldiers. In this way Lagos-Bossel hoped to identify those who had been witness to human rights violations. It was intended to interview at least 30 to 40 Dutchbat soldiers, about ten percent of the total. The time required to do this was estimated at six to eight hours on both Saturday and Sunday.¹⁸⁷⁸

De Jonge told Lagos-Bossel that he would first have to consult with Commander Couzy; he considered this necessary because 'I was gradually getting the impression that "The Hague" seemed to regard the procedure with Dutchbat as a Dutch affair'.¹⁸⁷⁹ It can no longer be established precisely on what he based this impression. In any case De Jonge sought contact with the Army Staff in The Hague, where he spoke to Chief of Staff Colonel B. Dedden by telephone that evening. The latter promised, following De Jonge's account, that he would discuss the request with the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army on the following day, 21 July. Dedden then reported 'that the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army did not consider this desirable/possible'.¹⁸⁸⁰ As De Jonge felt that the importance of the matter had possibly still not been understood, this time he called Commodore Hilderink at the Defence Crisis Management Centre, who in turn called Couzy. De Jonge then heard from Hilderink 'that the matter was now seen a little differently so that we could make some detailed arrangements with the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army in Pleso'.¹⁸⁸¹ But the cooperation was limited. 'They weren't too happy about it. There was little enthusiasm about cooperating with the debriefing idea', said De Jonge later.¹⁸⁸² The hesitation by the Dutch soon became known. Lagos-Bossel heard the rumour from Civil Affairs circles that the Netherlands did not want the Dutchbat soldiers to be interviewed for political reasons.¹⁸⁸³ This therefore led to different aims for Lagos-Bossel and De Jonge. The former chiefly wanted to know what truth there was in reports of human rights violations; the latter did not agree with the Dutch objective but was instructed by the UN to cooperate.

Nothing could be done about the rapid return of Dutchbat to the Netherlands, as quickly became clear to De Jonge in his contacts with The Hague. A few hours after the first conversation with

¹⁸⁷⁵ NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Lt. Gen. B. Janvier to T. Mazowiecki, 22/07/95. The letter did not reach Mazowiecki until 23 July.

¹⁸⁷⁶ Interview J.H. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹⁸⁷⁷ DCBC, 1109. J.H. de Jonge to C.G.J. Hilderink 29/08/95.

¹⁸⁷⁸ Lagos-Bossel, '*Chronology*'; interview M. Lagos-Bossel, 20/12/00.

¹⁸⁷⁹ Interview J.H. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹⁸⁸⁰ Interview J.H. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹⁸⁸¹ DCBC, 1109. J.H. de Jonge to C.G.J. Hilderink, 29/08/95.

¹⁸⁸² Interview J.H. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹⁸⁸³ Interview M. Lagos-Bossel, 20/12/00.

Lagos-Bossel he told her that 300 soldiers would be arriving on Friday evening and departing again for the Netherlands on Monday. In view of the busy programme planned for them, the only possibility for a debriefing was on Sunday 23 July.¹⁸⁸⁴ The afternoon following the telephone call De Jonge went to Pleso ‘to arrange the “debriefing”’. A plan was drawn up together with the representatives of the Contingent Command who were present and the press officer M. Beneker. The idea was for ‘three periods of half an hour, in three groups of 10 men each. A total of 90 men’. Three rooms would be made available for this. The list of soldiers to be debriefed was to be compiled by Colonel Vellemans of the Contingent Command, on the assumption that he could use the results of the debriefing interviews already conducted by the Dutchbat battalion psychologist, Sanders, in Potocari. De Jonge also arranged for a project officer, the Warrant Officer Te Hennepe, who was to ensure ‘that each chap would be in the right place at the right time. I wanted to have the thing tightly organized’. He also discussed the plan with the Dutch Chief of Staff in Zagreb, Major General T. Kolsteren, who would in turn discuss this with Couzy following his arrival in Pleso.¹⁸⁸⁵

This appeared to be a good plan, since the UNCHR staff would be able to talk to a large number of relevant witnesses, even if these had been preselected by others, and even though it was in the form of group debriefings. But both these aspects proved to be a problem. To begin with the assumptions about the debriefing conducted by the psychologist Sanders were based on a misunderstanding about the nature of this activity. This was in fact originally nothing more than a standard debriefing like that held at the end of every deployment. Sanders had already begun this *before* the attack on the enclave and he had completed it after the fall.¹⁸⁸⁶ It is obvious that those whom he debriefed between the fall and the departure also described the most recent events. But Sanders conducted a psychological debriefing, not an operational one. Not only was this by definition confidential, but also left a great deal to the debriefed persons with regard to subject matter. Further counselling was standard in the event of shocking events, but insofar as problem cases had been reported, arrangements had already been made for follow-up treatment in the Netherlands.¹⁸⁸⁷ Sanders had already signalled from the former enclave to his colleagues in the Netherlands that there was no need for extensive sessions in Zagreb; this led to the decision that the team of counsellors who were to accompany Couzy would mix with the soldiers on a low-profile basis only. They would then offer assistance as the need arose.¹⁸⁸⁸ De Jonge was not however aware of all these arrangements when he presented his plan to Lagos-Bossel.

According to De Jonge she responded ‘with elation’ and agreed to all proposals. De Jonge also requested her to contact him immediately if there should be any problems.¹⁸⁸⁹ This account, with a prominent role for De Jonge, does not however correspond to the picture that Lagos-Bossel herself had of the contacts, even though she was grateful for the efforts of De Jonge.¹⁸⁹⁰ Furthermore, the information derived from the documents concerning the nature of the activities of the UN investigators indicates that they were less disoriented than De Jonge depicts.

27. The UN debriefs the main group in Zagreb

As described, the UN debriefing was jointly conducted by two organizations, UNCHR and the Human Rights Offices of Civil Affairs of UNPF, both based in Zagreb. Measured by the composition of the team that operated in Zagreb, however, the emphasis was more on Civil Affairs than on UNCHR. Of

¹⁸⁸⁴ Lagos-Bossel, *‘Chronology’*.

¹⁸⁸⁵ DCBC, 1109. J.H. de Jonge to C.G.J. Hilderink, 29/08/95.

¹⁸⁸⁶ Interview P.M. Sanders, 12/12/00 and 13/12/00.

¹⁸⁸⁷ Interview P.M.P. Venhovens, 17/11/00.

¹⁸⁸⁸ Interviews W.J. Martens, at that time head of the Counselling Department, Amersfoort, 5 November 1998; P.M. Sanders, 12-13/12/00; P.M.P. Venhovens, 17/11/00.

¹⁸⁸⁹ DCBC, 1109. J.H. de Jonge to C.G.J. Hilderink, 29/08/95.

¹⁸⁹⁰ Interview M. Lagos-Bossel, 20/12/00.

the six debriefers, four worked for Civil Affairs, and three of these as Legal Advisor at the Legal Office. One of them, the American David Brown, also formed part of the Human Rights Office of Civil Affairs. Brown, together with other legal rights lawyers such as Peggy Hicks, had been involved in setting up this organization at the end of May 1995.

Hicks, who also worked for Civil Affairs, had been requested specially for this post. She came to work in Akashi's office and reported directly to his deputy Harston and to the head of Civil Affairs, Moussalli. The initiative for the creation of the Human Rights Office derived from a change in policy of the UN that led to greater attention for human rights. Moussalli wished that a uniform structure be created for human rights issues, besides the traditionally strong attention given to political affairs in Civil Affairs. One of Hicks' first tasks was thus to examine the UN mandates to see what precisely the mandate in this field was. As she herself said, that proved to be a question of 'piecing together', but once all elements had been compiled 'a substantial mandate' was revealed. However, there was a major gulf between Civil Affairs and military practice. For instance, the UNPROFOR Standard Operating Procedures for humanitarian reporting were not known to the Human Rights Office. Ideally the civil and military lines should come together in Akashi's office, but in practice this was seen not to work: 'The ability to communicate with military personnel on the basis of the mandate proved very limited'.¹⁸⁹¹

As described in the section of this chapter dealing with Tuzla Air Base, another HRO/UNCHR investigation team, that included Hicks, had already started interviewing Displaced Persons on 18 July. These two teams maintained contact with each other. Salvisberg of the Tuzla team was also responsible for the content-related direction of the team in Zagreb.¹⁸⁹² In Tuzla the investigators became convinced that it was highly important to obtain information from other sources in addition to the Displaced Persons. The results in Tuzla thus played a role in determining the questions that the team in Zagreb wanted to ask the Dutchbat soldiers in Pleso.

Nonetheless there were differences in emphasis within the team. The point of departure for Civil Affairs in the Zagreb debriefing was to conduct as many interviews as possible with eye witnesses only.¹⁸⁹³ Second-hand testimonies should be ended or wrapped up as soon as possible. According to the report the questions were not given a specific focus, and concerned all possible human rights violations in the period leading up to the fall and shortly afterwards. The representatives of the Centre for Human Rights, by contrast, were much more interested in information relating to the specific accusations made by Displaced Persons and recorded by the investigation team in Tuzla. This concerned such matters as the separation of men and women, the removal of children, the deportation of Displaced Persons and information about the perpetrators of the crimes.¹⁸⁹⁴

The draft report that was prepared a few days after the debriefing shows how the UN debriefers had planned the execution of their task. Their idea was to use the random selection to discover the relevant sources that could provide information about human rights violations. This idea was at odds with the structure envisaged by De Jonge, in which the UN debriefers would be fully dependent on the indications provided by Dutchbat itself, in this case the battalion psychologist Sanders. Lagos-Bossel was not enthusiastic about this and her mood began to cool further on the following day, Saturday 22 July, when the exhausted battalion had finally entered the gates of Pleso.

According to De Jonge's account, the first cracks in the cooperation occurred at this point. In his account, in breach of what had been agreed Lagos-Bossel had already gone to Pleso instead of reporting for escort at the agreed time.¹⁸⁹⁵ Whether it was due to this or because the plans were less tightly arranged than De Jonge claimed, the UN officer certainly began to encounter problems. In the

¹⁸⁹¹ Interview P. Hicks, 10/07/00.

¹⁸⁹² Interview R. Salvisberg, 08/03/99. Salvisberg had however participated in the interviews with Displaced Persons and ABiH soldiers in Tuzla.

¹⁸⁹³ There is a probable connection with De Jonge's criticism that 'they wanted to talk to everyone'.

¹⁸⁹⁴ NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Confidential draft report, 26/07/95.

¹⁸⁹⁵ DCBC, 1109. J.H. de Jonge to C.G.J. Hilderink, 29/08/95.

early evening she had a meeting with the Warrant Officer Te Hennepe to discuss the activities for the following day. She found that he 'seemed to ignore anything about the agreement with Col. De Jonge'. At that time, for instance, it was still unclear at what precise time the debriefing could begin. It was only after a while that the Warrant Officer returned with the information that Lagos-Bossel and her colleagues could start at 10am the following day.¹⁸⁹⁶

28. Problems with Bastiaans

However, that Sunday morning suddenly appeared to be full of obstacles. When Lagos-Bossel and her colleagues reported to the Warrant Officer Te Hennepe at 10am, it appeared that they could not immediately start work. First of all a conversation needed to be conducted with General Bastiaans, who was conducting the Royal Netherlands Army debriefing. While they were waiting for this, the psychologist Venhovens informed them that he and his colleagues wanted to be present at all interviews, but Lagos-Bossel resolutely resisted this.¹⁸⁹⁷ Nonetheless Venhovens was in fact constantly nearby during the interviews.¹⁸⁹⁸ After half an hour Bastiaans was finally available.

The reconstruction of the contacts between the UN debriefers and Bastiaans is difficult because not all those involved could precisely remember the course of events many years later. For instance, it is thus no longer possible to establish the precise extent to which the efforts of Major Bourgon diën were also conducted on behalf of UNCHR and Civil Affairs, or whether they only concerned the activities of the intelligence section. His activities cannot always be chronologically integrated with the account of events later given by Lagos-Bossel.¹⁸⁹⁹ This does not however appear to be of crucial importance, because both give the same general description of the Dutch reactions. It is thus in any case clear that a conflict with Bastiaans took place on the morning of 23 July, in which both Lagos-Bossel and Bourgon diën were involved. This concerned the space that the UN debriefers were literally and figuratively to be assigned for their work.

On Sunday morning De Jonge sent a subordinate to Pleso to see whether everything was going as planned. Looking back, the colonel stated that 'the impression around 1pm was that the whole exercise was going satisfactorily'.¹⁹⁰⁰ That may have been the case around this time, but it was the hard-fought result of the actions that both Bourgon diën and Lagos-Bossel had to carry out to salvage something of the debriefing. On Saturday Bourgon diën had distributed the questionnaires among the Dutchbat soldiers; these were to form the basis for a selection of persons with whom further conversations were desirable. On the basis of the documents, they were mostly distributed among officers and NCOs and just a few normal soldiers.¹⁹⁰¹ The Dutch UN officer had himself arranged the rooms where the teams could talk to the Dutchbat soldiers, but discovered to his irritation on Sunday morning that Bastiaans and his staff had taken possession of them. According to Bourgon diën he was originally not even aware that the Dutch had set up their own debriefing.¹⁹⁰²

According to the notes made subsequently by Lagos-Bossel, Bastiaans declared that the UN debriefers could only start work when his own operation had been completed. He could then indicate on the basis of these results which soldiers came into consideration for a humanitarian debriefing.¹⁹⁰³ Bourgon diën recalled an unpleasant discussion about the question of who was actually to take the lead: 'Bastiaans had taken me off the list, because he was the one doing the debriefing. They were his troops,

1896 Lagos-Bossel, *'Chronology'*.

1897 Lagos-Bossel, *'Chronology'*; interviews M. Lagos-Bossel, 20/12/00; P.M.P. Venhovens, 17/11/00.

1898 Interview P.M.P. Venhovens, 17/11/00.

1899 This particularly concerns the moments at which Lagos-Bossel called on the assistance of Bourgon diën.

1900 DCBC, 1109. J.H. de Jonge to C.G.J. Hilderink, 29/08/95. De Jonge later declared that in his opinion 'Bastiaans put a spoke in the wheel' of the UN debriefings. Interview J.H. de Jonge, 30/05/01.

1901 NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Collection of debriefing forms 'Debriefing Srebrenica', compiled by Maj. C. Bourgon diën, 26/09/95. Simultaneously: SMG, 1002.

1902 Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgon diën, 26/04/00.

1903 M. Lagos-Bossel, *'Chronology'*.

he said. He was the commander of the Airmobile Brigade. “They are UN troops”, I said then, “I don’t think you are the one to decide”. Then he told me to count the stars on his shoulder. I felt sent away like a little kid’.¹⁹⁰⁴

This point was indeed not open to discussion for Bastiaans. His own operation took priority, and the UN would get a chance if circumstances allowed. ‘To put it bluntly, I had nothing to do with Janvier here’.¹⁹⁰⁵

Lagos-Bossel once again explained to Bastiaans about the agreements she had made two days previously with De Jonge and stressed the importance of being able to choose soldiers herself for individual interviews. The general countered that the soldiers had only a little time, ‘because there was an important programme with the press, and that there was a ceremony scheduled for the afternoon’. Lagos-Bossel then asked to speak to Couzy.¹⁹⁰⁶

Bourgondiën also turned to a higher level for help. He was ‘pretty angry about this debriefing’, as he declared later. He considered it to be a mistake that no use was made of the UN debriefing team: ‘At a moment like this you should create the impression that you want to be the first to know what has happened. Let the UN do that first, and then carry out your own debriefing afterwards. But whatever the case, try to remove the impression that you are influencing people’.¹⁹⁰⁷ Although the Netherlands was later often accused in UN circles of being the ‘most virtuous boy in the class’, this time Dutch interests were dominant. Bastiaans was indeed unrelenting on this point.

However, when Bourgondiën contacted Couzy to tell him that he had a problem with one of his generals, after some discussion the Army Commander finally agreed to a UN debriefing. The intelligence officer asked him, in view of previous experience with Bastiaans, to pass this message on to the general in person. Following the subsequent conversation between Couzy and Bastiaans, Bourgondiën was given his room together with the assurance that the UN could also conduct a debriefing.¹⁹⁰⁸

It was no longer possible to ascertain to what extent this intervention influenced or ran parallel to the efforts of Lagos-Bossel. According to her account it was only after considerable negotiation that permission was given to start debriefing at 11.30am, until 4pm, and that there would be a further opportunity in the evening from 7.30pm to 10pm.¹⁹⁰⁹ Couzy later recalled that he had indeed taken ‘some action, to make it clear that this should be done on a serious basis. I rather had the impression that people were giving it zero priority and not really taking it seriously’.¹⁹¹⁰ Lagos-Bossel noted with regard to her conversation with the Army Commander that in essence he repeated the arguments of Bastiaans: time was too short. In response to her repeated request that she should select her own subjects, Couzy answered that the soldiers were now distributed at various locations and it would be difficult to bring them together again. He did however say that ‘through the military and psychological debriefings’ twenty soldiers had already been selected who could provide ‘real testimonies’.¹⁹¹¹ As time was short, Lagos-Bossel could do nothing else than accept defeat on this last point. This departure from the agreement and the methodology was later to form an important element of Mazowiecki’s criticism.

In retrospect it proved difficult to establish who bore responsibility for the selection of the subjects for the humanitarian debriefing; both Couzy and Bastiaans had trouble with faulty memories on this point.¹⁹¹² Only Colonel Lemmen believed he could remember that Couzy was the one who had

1904 Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00.

1905 Interview G. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

1906 M. Lagos-Bossel, ‘*Chronology*’.

1907 Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00.

1908 Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00.

1909 M. Lagos-Bossel, ‘*Chronology*’.

1910 Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

1911 M. Lagos-Bossel, ‘*Chronology*’.

1912 Interviews G. Bastiaans, 20/11/00; H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

selected the soldiers: 'I certainly didn't do it, and Bastiaans didn't either'.¹⁹¹³ This latter point is however open to doubt. There is reason to assume that the selection took place on the basis of an arrangement between Couzy and Bastiaans, and was partly based on the information available at that moment. It does not seem probable that, as Lagos-Bossel suggested, the results of a psychological briefing played a role in the selection, because this had simply not taken place. It is likely that a role was played by the results of several interviews in the operational debriefing that had provided, more or less by coincidence, information about witnesses of human rights violations. There were also soldiers, such as Lieutenant Rutten and Private Dekker, who had themselves reported to Bastiaans. In addition Couzy, as will be described in more detail later, had also talked to people on his own initiative outside the formal interviews.

The questionnaires distributed by Major Bourgon diën on behalf of the intelligence section also played a part in identifying witnesses. These contained a number of questions about various sorts of human rights violations, but also a 'safety net' question for mentioning all unusual circumstances that could be of importance. The form gave an internal telephone number and a reference to the liaison officer.

Bastiaans had however ordered that all forms, which were to be submitted to Captain Voerman, should first be scrutinized by him. This course of action was dictated by his wish to put Dutch interests first and 'to maintain the initiative'. Bastiaans did not want to be surprised by testimonies which he would later hear about second-hand, and certainly not from the press. The general also wanted to prevent anyone experiencing unnecessary problems due to a faulty command of English. Here too he drew on his own past experiences as commander of the UNMOs.¹⁹¹⁴

It is an obvious step to suppose that the information from these forms played a role in designating candidates for the UN debriefing. Some of them had indeed not been debriefed by the Brigade, meaning that they had to be identified in another way.¹⁹¹⁵

The debriefing by the representatives of the Centre for Human Rights and of Civil Affairs finally started, after all the delays, at 12.30am. Due to the reduced programme, four groups were set up to conduct the interviews. The two members of the Centre of Human Rights, including Lagos-Bossel herself, formed one team with two of the Civil Affairs staff members. The two other Legal Officers operated independently. One of these was the American David Browne, a Legal Officer of Civil Affairs, who was on the team on behalf of the Human Rights Office.¹⁹¹⁶ There was also a Dutch Legal Officer, Frits Bontekoe, who was involved in the debriefing. He would conduct his interviews in Dutch.

The soldiers were interviewed individually in the prefabs made available for the task. The rest had to wait their turn outside in the sun. To begin with they did this, but as the afternoon wore on much time was lost in hunting down soldiers who had become tired of waiting and had disappeared. Four soldiers failed to turn up at all. The liaison officer too, who was supposed to ensure that the process went smoothly, had disappeared as well. The debriefers waited in vain until 7pm, at around which time Lagos-Bossel ran into Major Bourgon diën. As previously described in the chapter about the reception of the group of 55, he had already interviewed a number of Dutchbat soldiers together with Morgan and several other colleagues.

The UN debriefer explained to him the difficulties that she and her colleagues were experiencing and once more emphasized the need to obtain more information. She wanted to do this with the 'Preliminary Checklist' which she had been unable to distribute among the Dutchbat soldiers. At her request Bourgon diën was able to arrange for her another conversation with Couzy, who had

¹⁹¹³ Interview Th. Lemmen, 17/10/01.

¹⁹¹⁴ Interview G. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

¹⁹¹⁵ This can be established by a comparison of the names of persons debriefed by Brigade and the UN and the UN debriefing forms.

¹⁹¹⁶ In this capacity, on 23 July in Zagreb he received from Major Bourgon diën a copy of the 'list of 239', which he in turn had received from Franken. Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgon diën, 26/04/00; P. Hicks, 10/07/00.

now just completed his press conference. Lagos-Bossel told him that a number of the promised witnesses had not turned up and asked him about the possibility of distributing the checklist. According to Lagos-Bossel's account, Couzy said that this would be almost impossible but that he would take responsibility for distributing it during the flight back to the Netherlands. He would then return the completed forms to Lagos-Bossel via Major General Kolsteren, the Chief of Staff at the Zagreb headquarters. She then gave him more than 60 forms. Of these she received back just ten, from Major Bourgondiën on 3 August, together with ten 'debriefing forms' which she said derived from the Dutch military authorities.¹⁹¹⁷ At the same time she received the report from General Bastiaans about his own activities in Zagreb. On the basis of these developments the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, T. Mazowiecki, would later express considerable criticism of the low level of Dutch cooperation in Zagreb.

29. Reports by Dutchbat soldiers to UNCHR and UNPF Civil Affairs

In the draft report that the UN debriefers of UNCHR and Civil Affairs wrote on 26 April about their interviews with Dutch UN soldiers, the general impression was given that Dutchbat had enjoyed only a limited freedom of movement in the enclave. This implied that the observations of the soldiers were limited to their compounds and their immediate surroundings.¹⁹¹⁸ Bourgondiën had in fact given Lagos-Bossel access to his report on the debriefing of the hostage Dutchbat soldiers, but as already stated this said very little about observations at the outer perimeter of the enclave.¹⁹¹⁹ Taking this limitation into account, the investigators concluded that in four cases there was certainly first-hand evidence of possible human rights violations. This was firstly the separation, supposedly for questioning, of men of fighting age from the women, children and old people. Then there was the observation of a few executions; the discovery of nine executed persons; and finally the interference with and prevention of a medical evacuation of wounded local residents. In the latter case pressure had been exerted on seriously wounded persons to leave the ambulance and medical personnel had been prevented from seeing the patients 'while detained at the Bratunac check-point between 3am and 7am on [sic]'.¹⁹²⁰

These conclusions were reached on the basis of interviews with 17 persons. Further examination of who these people were shows that all those who are known to have been involved in the reports already made in Potocari were on the list of persons to be interviewed. These included the persons who had seen the corpses of the executed: Oosterveen, Dorst and Rutten. Lieutenants Schotman and Koster, who also played a role in the discovery of the executed persons, were also on the list of those to be interviewed, but they did not turn up for the debriefing.¹⁹²¹ This did not affect the

¹⁹¹⁷ M. Lagos-Bossel, 'Chronology'; NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Confidential draft report, 26/07/95; interview M. Lagos-Bossel, 20/12/00. The 'debriefing forms' cited here were possibly forms distributed by G2 and titled 'Debriefing form (*verslagformulier*)'. These must then have been copies of forms completed either then or later in the Netherlands. The entire collection of forms probably first became available in the form of copies to the Ministry of Defence in October. This is indicated by the fact that Major Bourgondiën sent these sets to the Dept. Commander MIO (Ric Morgan) on 28 September. NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Covering letter Bourgondiën to DCMIO, 26/08/95. The sets, which concerned both the first group of Dutchbat soldiers and the second group, were split into forms with 'relevant information' and 'no relevant information'. Considering the number of forms with relevant information (no less than 16 in the first group alone), the harvest of ten forms that was sent to Lagos-Bossel seems thin. In view of the many uncertainties regarding the distribution of the completed forms it is not possible to draw any conclusions from this.

¹⁹¹⁸ NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Confidential draft, 26/07/95.

¹⁹¹⁹ NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Lagos-Bossel sent this report to her direct superior, H. Wieland in Tuzla, on 22 July. Fax M. Lagos-Bossel, Field Office UN Centre for Human Rights Zagreb, to Hubert Wieland, Civil Affairs Special Office, 22/07/95.

¹⁹²⁰ NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Confidential draft, 26/07/95.

¹⁹²¹ This can be established by a comparison of the debriefing reports of the UN and list 'Interviewed personnel UN', included as an appendix to the Bastiaans' report on the debriefing in Zagreb. This list not only wrongly creates the impression that 21 persons were interviewed by the UN instead of 17; the name Schotman occurs twice and the name of the

reports; Groenewegen, who had been mentioned by Schotman in his form, did come to see the UN debriefers and told the story of the execution that he had witnessed.¹⁹²² The testimonies of the two other Dutchbat soldiers who did not appear, Lieutenant Egbers and Sergeant Reussing, presumably did not make any essential difference either, in view of what the other witnesses recounted. Egbers had reported the mistreatment of prisoners of war, the hindrance of the convoy escort by the VRS and the reluctance of the representatives of the International Red Cross whom he had met on the route to examine the situation. Reussing had seen wounded persons being beaten and kicked.¹⁹²³

The statements by Oosterveen, Dorst, Rutten and Groenewegen certainly belonged to the category of the 'real testimonies' that Couzy had promised to Lagos-Bossel. This did not however apply to all the witnesses called. Captain Matthijssen had been put on the list, but he declared that he had seen nothing.¹⁹²⁴ Karremans (strangely enough, Franken was not among those selected)¹⁹²⁵ also had nothing to report about his own observations, and he also made no mention of what had been reported to him in Potocari and what he had passed on. He did however make reference to the separation of the men for women, 'allegedly for questioning', and he mentioned the disarming of his men by the VRS.¹⁹²⁶ Groen gave an extensive account of the days between 10 and 12 July, and especially of the plight of the Displaced Persons.¹⁹²⁷

With some witnesses the description 'real testimony' proved problematic because they mostly provided indirect evidence. A number of them referred, like Karremans, to the separation and sometimes provided additional information. Sergeant Major H. Ritsema, for instance, recounted that the VRS had used 'photo albums' to identify persons.¹⁹²⁸ Some people described the course of events in and around the White House. A number of soldiers indicated that they were strongly convinced that executions had taken place, even though they had not seen any corpses. Sergeant R.H. van Beukering, for instance, stated that he was '99% certain' that he had seen an execution of a man aged between 30 and 40 in a white shirt, who had first been kicked and beaten with a rifle butt. VRS soldiers had then dragged him behind a house, after which a shot sounded.¹⁹²⁹ A similar suspicion of an execution was expressed by Sergeant R. Van der Vliet, who twice saw how men were mistreated and then disappeared out of sight behind a bus, after which shots were heard. Van der Vliet did not however see any corpses after the bus had been driven away. He also reported that after the departure of the Displaced Persons 'all of Dutchbat were confined by Dutch officers to the Dutch compound'.¹⁹³⁰

Lieutenant Mustert also expressed his grave fears. According to him it was made impossible for the Dutchbat soldiers to observe the men who disappeared on the other side of the road behind the buses following the separation of the women. He also reported that the men who were taken away through the White House had their identity papers taken from them. He also described how he heard a number of pistol shots from the direction of the cornfield which, according to the sketch he made, was

soldier Van der Vliet, who was interviewed by the UN, is missing. See Appendix to: SMG/Debrief. Brief C 11 Airmobile Brigade to Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, 'Operational debrief Dutchbat III', no. 172/confi, 28/07/95.

1922 NIOD, Coll. Hicks. UN debriefing form Schotman; Margarita Lagos-Bossel (UNCHR)/Edric Selous (CVAO), Incident report Paul Roeneuvegen [Groenewegen], 23/07/95.

1923 SMG/Debrief. Appendix 'Interviewed personnel UN', appendix to letter C 11 Airmobile Brigade to Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, 'Operational debrief Dutchbat III', no. 172/confi, 28 July 1995; idem NIOD, Coll. Hicks. UN debriefing forms from Egbers and Reussing.

1924 NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Statement C.J. Matthijssen, 23/07/95. The format of the reports and the references vary per debriefing team. Sometimes reference is made to an 'incident report', sometimes to a 'statement' and sometimes just 'interview'. The debriefers are not always mentioned either.

1925 According to Roland Salvisberg an interview with Franken was not permitted by the Dutch authorities. No confirmation of this could be obtained. Interview R. Salvisberg, 08/03/99.

1926 NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Statement Th. Karremans, 23/07/95.

1927 NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Margarita Lagos-Bossel (UNCHR)/Edric Selous (CVAO), Incident report Jelte Groen, 23/07/95.

1928 NIOD, Coll. Hicks. [interview] Homme Ritsema [23/07/95].

1929 NIOD, Coll. Hicks. [interview] Robert van Beukering [23/07/95].

1930 NIOD, Coll. Hicks. [interview] Robert van der Vliet [23/07/95].

situated behind the White House. ‘Nobody checked the field however, he assumed that the BSA [VRS] soldiers were killing [ABiH] soldiers there’, noted the debriefer.¹⁹³¹

One notable interview was the extensive conversation conducted by the Dutch Legal Officer Bontekoe with the doctor Schouten. His report, in which Schouten, as with Bastiaans, chiefly described the events involving the convoy of wounded, was in many respects more detailed than the account made by the Military History Section minutes-keeper Klep; the Military History Section was also present at these debriefings. In view of Klep’s uneasy feeling about Schouten’s account of the disappearance of the seven wounded, when he was ‘invited’ to go for a meal, it was striking how the doctor confided to Bontekoe ‘that he feared for their life’.¹⁹³² Other Dutchbat personnel also made statements about the convoy of wounded; these included Ritsema, who reported that two nurses of *Médecins Sans Frontières* had been taken away by VRS soldiers.¹⁹³³

In the draft report the testimonies which did not directly confirm human rights violations did not yet play a role. In the actual report drawn up on the basis of the reports, however, the authors did take these accounts seriously. In the internal ‘Srebrenica Human Rights Report’, written by his staff member Peggy Hicks and sent by the Head of Civil Affairs Moussalli to Akashi on 31 July, Hicks combined the information from the debriefings with the information gained from the interviews with Displaced Persons in Tuzla. Besides the confirmed reports of executions (Oosterveen/Rutten and Groenewegen), Hicks supplemented the statements by Displaced Persons with statements by Dutchbat soldiers ‘who witnessed beatings that apparently resulted in executions’. She specifically referred to the (anonymous) statement by Mustert about the pistol shots coming from the direction of the cornfield. She also cited ‘compelling testimony’ from Dutchbat soldiers about the way that the VRS had treated the convoy of wounded that left Potocari on 12 July.¹⁹³⁴ Mazowiecki even devoted a separate section to this event in his report, that was first published on 22 August.¹⁹³⁵ Furthermore he gave a general account of the same events and suspicions reported by Dutchbat soldiers. He did however sometimes add a detail that they had reported too. For instance, he described how VRS soldiers separated a father from his two children, who were estimated to be aged two and four.¹⁹³⁶

30. Reports by Dutchbat soldiers to Royal Netherlands Army debriefers

A comparison of the names of those interviewed by Bastiaans and his staff and those debriefed by the UN clearly shows that those who believed that executions had taken place, such as Van Beukering, Van der Vliet and Mustert, were in any case not formally interviewed by the Royal Netherlands Army debriefers. Couzy’s claim during his press conference on 23 July about the high priority given to obtaining information about war crimes during the debriefing seems in retrospect hard to sustain. ‘The key issue was not human rights’, said Bastiaans himself at a later date. Indeed, he had no reason to take this approach. The general was not previously informed about what Couzy had already heard from the ex-hostages the weekend before in Zagreb. As already remarked, Bastiaans only found out about this after his return to the Netherlands. In retrospect Bastiaans expressed the opinion that if this

1931 NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Margarita Lagos-Bossel (UNCHR)/Edric Selous (CVAO), Incident report Johannes Edgar Mustert, 23/07/95.

1932 NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Interoffice memorandum Frits E. Bontekoe to HCA [M. Moussalli], ‘Interviews of members of DutchBatt III’, 28/07/95.

1933 NIOD, Coll. Hicks. [interview] Homme Ritsema [23/07/95].

1934 Hicks, who worked at the Human Rights Office (HRO) of Civil Affairs, in fact wrongly dates this event to 13 July. Chronology was a generally weak point in the testimonies. See: NIOD, Coll. Hicks. Interoffice memorandum Michel Moussalli to Yasushi Akashi, ‘Srebrenica Human Rights Report’, 31/07/95.

1935 Section ‘E. The journey by medical convoy’ in: ‘Final periodic report on the situation of human rights in the territory of the former Yugoslavia submitted by Mr Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, pursuant to paragraph 42 of Commission Resolution 1995/89’. (hereinafter: Mazowiecki Report).

1936 Section ‘C. The situation in Potocari’, in: Mazowiecki Report. This observation was from Sgt. Van Beukering. See: NIOD, Coll. Hicks. [interview] R. van Beukering [23/07/95].

information had been at his disposal on the evening before the debriefing, instead of him receiving it later, he would have undertaken the task in a very different manner. However, Bastiaans, as he himself stressed, had an above-average experience of Bosnia and may have been able to assess certain indications on their correct significance.¹⁹³⁷ In the eyes of the Military History Section investigator Christ Klep however, who was present at all the interviews conducted by Bastiaans, the general lacked sensitivity for humanitarian issues.¹⁹³⁸ The trouble with Bastiaans' claim, which can certainly also be interpreted as an apology, is that it cannot be proved.

Couzy later declared that he had seen no reason to inform Bastiaans of his experiences. He felt there was no point in 'telling him a small thing' while Bastiaans would be talking to so many people. Moreover his main concern was the battalion, Couzy said. 'I wasn't so concerned about an overall picture of what had happened in Bosnia. I was interested in what Dutchbat had experienced.' The emphasis was on 'those turbulent days which were the subject of so much confusion.' Priority was given to course of the battle and the subsequent transport of the Displaced Persons: 'These events needed to be clarified. To begin with I was not in favour of the debriefing team establishing other things, such as what else happened in the enclave that we didn't know about? Or what happened to the ten to fifteen thousand men who left the enclave on foot? That was not the aim of the assignment I gave Bastiaans. We wanted to find out as quickly as possible what had happened to the battalion. That theme was already broad enough'.¹⁹³⁹

Couzy showed little interest in the fact that the observations of the hostage Dutchbat soldiers could be an indication of the nature of the events in Potocari and regarding the transports of Displaced Persons. While this can be understood to some extent, it is harder to understand that he did not pass on to Bastiaans the indications given by the Military Hospital Organization during the debriefing on 16 July, and in particular those received from the surgeon Kremer during the interview with him on 17 July and which certainly concerned the events in Potocari. What did however register with Couzy, and then played a role in the operational debriefing of 23 July, was his criticism of the battalion leadership. Couzy's attitude towards humanitarian affairs can thus at the least be called ambivalent.

As a result of this, the theme of human rights violations only came onto the agenda in the course of the debriefing conducted by Bastiaans. The UN activities too worked as a catalyst in this respect. But it was then too late for a systematic approach to be taken. The original concept and the tight schedule, dictated by the press conferences planned for Sunday afternoon, left little room for manoeuvre. The NOS live broadcast would be allowed to last until 5.15pm at the latest. 'After 5.45pm this would disrupt 'studio Sport' (the most important sports program in the Netherlands), and that is something that cannot be permitted', noted Hartman with rather acerbic irony in his plan of action. That meant that the Dutch-language press conference had to start by 3.45pm at the latest.¹⁹⁴⁰ Moreover, from 2pm onwards Couzy would be fully occupied with the visit by the dignitaries, including Prime Minister Kok and Crown Prince Willem-Alexander.

These circumstances meant that reports on humanitarian issues were initially more or less 'by-products' of the operational debriefing. The interviews conducted on Saturday did not provide a clear picture of the scope of human rights violations. Various witnesses, for instance, observed that the deportation took place in a manner that was 'not degrading'¹⁹⁴¹ and even 'correct'¹⁹⁴² and that 'not a single Serb atrocity was seen'.¹⁹⁴³ Karremans did mention the report of the discovery of nine corpses

1937 Interview G. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

1938 Interview Chr. Klep, 03/03/99.

1939 Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

1940 NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Plan/action points for return of Dutchbat "300"', 21/07/95 (11am).

1941 SMG, 1007. P. Groen, 'Debriefing Sgt. Maj. of Cavalry 1 B. Rave, member Sie 5 and security officer. Camp Pleso 220795, 9-9.30pm'.

1942 SMG, 1007. M. Elands, 'Debriefing Dutchbat 3 – Saturday 22/07/95. Interview II: Sgt. Suurman [Zuurman]'.

1943 SMG, 1007. M. Elands, 'Debriefing Dutchbat 3 – Saturday 22/07/95. Interview I: Sgt. 1 Erkelens, Lt. Caris – FAC 109'.

(and not the execution observed by Groenewegen) and the fact that he had raised this issue with a local colonel, with just as little success as with Mladic, whom he spoke to about mistreatments that had been reported to him. He also mentioned his protest, made in vain, regarding the separation of men and women.¹⁹⁴⁴ Franken, by contrast, said according to the report that the 'screening' of the men had taken place 'with the agreement of the Muslims'. There had also been some rumours and some convoy escorts had seen an occasional corpse along the route, but he was not aware 'of any eye-witness accounts of actual executions'.¹⁹⁴⁵ In no manner whatsoever did the report of the interview with Franken refer to the growing unease which he later emphasized so strongly in his testimony in the trial of Krstic.¹⁹⁴⁶

The debriefers did not hear the most important testimonies until Sunday. Oosterveen and Koster then reported the possible executions.¹⁹⁴⁷ Their debriefer Lemmen and the minutes-keeper Groen had already been informed by Rave, who had cited their names and those of Rutten and Dorst in this respect during his own interview.¹⁹⁴⁸ This explains why it was only Oosterveen's interview that started by asking about observations of war crimes.¹⁹⁴⁹

Franken himself had already advised Rutten to report to the debriefers, on Saturday evening of 22 July when the battalion was enjoying a celebratory barbecue. On the occasion Franken also asked Rutten whether he still had his roll of film.¹⁹⁵⁰ Following this, Franken had mentioned Rutten's photos in his debriefing interview which took place later in the evening.¹⁹⁵¹ Before the debriefers themselves could approach Rutten he himself reported on Sunday morning. However, there was hardly any room in the schedule until the start of the afternoon. It was not until around 1pm that Oosterveen and Rutten were brought together to establish whether they had seen the same corpses or different ones, at different locations.¹⁹⁵² This encounter was definitely attended by Colonel Lemmen and the Military History Section investigator Groen. Following this Rutten talked for a while more with Couzy and Groen separately.¹⁹⁵³ No separate report of this meeting is available, but some of the notes in the record of the encounter with Oosterveen probably refer to this. Groen noted that Rutten mentioned a house (the term White House had not yet been used) in which 'selected men' were held. He also recounted that troops were posted by the house to count the men, among whom were 'few young men'. Rutten also indicated that the selection was conducted by special troops, who did not wear any insignia of rank or unit. He specifically referred to the Arkan Tigers (who had also been named by Rave) and the Drina Wolves.¹⁹⁵⁴ What was not recorded, but what Rutten clearly remembered, was

1944 SMG, 1007. Chr. Klep, 'Report debriefing C-Dutchbat III | Col. Karremans, 22/07/95, Camp Pleso'.

1945 SMG, 1007. Chr. Klep, 'Report debriefing Major Franken, 22/07/95, Camp Pleso'.

1946 It should however be noted that none of the reports drawn up by the SMG were authorized by the debriefed persons. But in some cases, including those of Karremans and Franken, a minutes-keeper from the Brigade, Captain Lagaune, was also present; his notes were later incorporated in the SMG report.

1947 See: SMG, 1007. P. Groen, 'Debriefing Warrant Officer Oosterveen, personnel Warrant Officer (added to S1), Camp Pleso 230795, 9-10am'. No typed report has been preserved of the debriefing of Lieutenant Koster, but draft notes made by one of the debriefers were preserved. The same applies to the debriefings of Captain Voerman and the Warrant Officer Knapen.

1948 SMG, 1007. P. Groen, 'Debriefing Sgt. Maj. of Cavalry 1 B. Rave, member Sie 5 and security officer. Camp Pleso 220795, 9-9.30pm'.

1949 SMG, 1007. P. Groen, 'Debriefing Warrant Officer Oosterveen, personnel Warrant Officer (added to S1), Camp Pleso 230795, 9-10am'.

1950 Interview J.H.A. Rutten, 01/12/99.

1951 SMG, 1007. Chr. Klep, 'Report debriefing Major Franken, 22 July 1995, Camp Pleso'.

1952 SMG, 1007. P. Groen, 'Meeting between Warrant Officer Oosterveen and Lt. Rutten with respect to war crimes questionnaire. Camp Pleso 230795, 1-1.30pm'.

1953 Interview J.H.A. Rutten, 01/12/99.

1954 SMG, 1007. P. Groen, 'Meeting between Warrant Officer Oosterveen and Lt. Rutten with respect to war crimes questionnaire. Camp Pleso 230795, 1-1.30pm'; P. Groen, 'Debriefing Sgt. Maj. of Cavalry 1 B. Rave, member Sie 5 and security officer. Camp Pleso 220795, 9-9.30pm'.

that on this occasion Couzy also asked him more about his roll of film.¹⁹⁵⁵ Rave had informed Couzy about this.¹⁹⁵⁶

A number of other witnesses were also called because they had been mentioned in earlier interviews. In this context, later in the afternoon, Bastiaans also talked to the Warrant Officers Voet and Elbers. They had gone in the 4-tonner to Srebrenica on 14 July to look for stragglers on the instructions of the commander of the Dressing Station, Captain Hoogwaarden. Although they said that due to the tension and their position in the back of the truck they had not been able to observe everything well, they had certainly seen two corpses. One 'had clearly been shot through the head' and the other had a gunshot wound as well.¹⁹⁵⁷

Rutten was not the only one to report on his own initiative. The medical orderly Dekker, who afterwards also told the UN about the Bosnian-Serb mistreatment of the convoy of wounded, reported following a call for witnesses of war crimes to come forward.¹⁹⁵⁸ It is not clear whether an explicit appeal was actually made and by whom, or whether this refers to the appeal at the end of the UN debriefing forms to contact a designated person if one had anything special to report.

Finally, the screening of the UN forms provided Bastiaans with a few names. The most important of these was Private Groenewegen, who remarkably enough had not been mentioned by any of the interviewed staff officers, but whose name and the fact that he had witnessed an execution was indeed mentioned in the UN debriefing form filled out by Lieutenant Schotman.¹⁹⁵⁹ Couzy had already referred to this in the *Nova* broadcast on Saturday evening, albeit in a non-committal manner. The debriefers also filtered the name of Sergeant Van der Vliet out of the forms. He recounted that he had seen two probable executions. However, he had not dared to watch too obviously for fear of the VRS and he had not seen the corpses.¹⁹⁶⁰

Colonel Lemmen and the Military History Section investigator Groen listened to these five testimonies at a rapid tempo between 12am and 1.30pm. Couzy, who was now very busy with other matters, was kept abreast of the findings up to the last moment.¹⁹⁶¹

31. Couzy and testimonies of war crimes

While General Bastiaans and his debriefers had concentrated strongly on the operational aspects of the debriefing and only shifted their attention to reports of human rights violations at a later stage, everything indicates that this latter theme had become one of Couzy's main preoccupations in Zagreb. Insofar as can be established (his presence was not specially mentioned in the reports) he attended most of the debriefings of those who presented the most important testimonies concerning war crimes.

There is however a problem in establishing what Couzy actually heard. It cannot be definitively said whether the reports are a faithful representation of what was discussed. The Military History Section minutes-keepers never authorized their reports afterwards, and although one gains the impression that they did their work conscientiously, some reports give rise to questions. In a number of cases the debriefed persons later declared, on other occasions, that they had spoken in greater detail about certain observations that gave them the feeling something was wrong. Some of these observations are however missing from the Zagreb reports.

1955 Interview J.H.A Rutten, 01/12/99.

1956 Interview B. Rave, 13/12/00.

1957 SMG, 1007. Chr. Klep, 'Report debriefing Warrant Officer Voets and Warrant Officer Elbers, 23/07/95, Camp Pleso'.

1958 In view of the later controversy regarding this aspect, it is worth mentioning that Dekker also already made reference to the existence of a list with the names of wounded. SMG, 1007. P. Groen, 'Debriefing Medical Orderly Dekker, B-cie, 230795, time ca 12am'.

1959 NIOD, Coll. Hicks. 'Debriefing form Schotman'. Schotman was not interviewed by Bastiaans and his staff.

1960 SMG, 1007. P. Groen, 'Debriefing Sgt. Van der Vliet, Staff Supply Company, with regard to war crimes questionnaire. Camp Pleso 230795, 12.30am-1pm'.

1961 Interview G. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

It is striking, for instance, that the report of the interview with Lieutenant L. Van Duijn makes not mention whatsoever of his discovery of the passports and the remark by a VRS soldier that the owners would no longer be needing them.¹⁹⁶² Van Duijn's statement about this and the major significance he says he attached to it was only given close attention after the American journalist David Rohde gave it an important place in his book *Endgame* published in 1997.¹⁹⁶³ During his debriefing in Assen the lieutenant had already stated that the entire surroundings of the White House was strewn with passports and photographs and also mentioned the remark by the VRS soldier. In the debriefing report, however, this is just one observation in a series and there is no indication that this was assigned special significance. Van Duijn apparently also did not state at the debriefing, as he did later however, that due to the importance of this he had also reported it to someone at 'Battalion Ops' (he knew for certain that it was not Karremans or Franken).¹⁹⁶⁴ He did however say in the interview that 'it was impossible that the Serbs could have done things among the refugees that would not have been noticed. This would have been observed, because the slightest indications would have led to panic breaking out among the Muslims'.¹⁹⁶⁵

In Zagreb too, according to the interview report in question, Van Duijn had devoted attention to the separation of men and women. He declared here 'emphatically' that neither he nor a number of other Dutchbat soldiers had actively cooperated in this. He did however relate that in a number of cases where families – in fact mothers and children – threatened to become separated from each other when boarding buses and trucks he had ensured that the families remained together. He also remarked that during the evacuation he had seen nothing irregular. The only comment he added to this was the discovery of a number of corpses by his colleague Koster. He also made general mention of 'shocking scenes'.¹⁹⁶⁶

The impression created by all this is that Van Duijn did not mention the passports in Zagreb, although he afterwards declared that this was in fact the case.¹⁹⁶⁷ In the UN debriefing form filled out by Van Duijn, however, there is once again no reference to the incident of the passports. The space devoted to unusual circumstances of importance remained empty.¹⁹⁶⁸ Van Duijn later declared: 'I did complete that form. I believe that I wrote that I hadn't seen anything specific, apart from the transport of the Muslims and the separation of the men. Something like that. But it wasn't a good idea to do it like that. The last thing that people wanted to do then was to fill out a form. That simply wasn't the right approach.'¹⁹⁶⁹ There are further indications that the completion of the forms was not always taken seriously because the Dutchbat soldiers had simply 'had enough'. However one may try to explain things away, the result was that certain matters failed to be indicated. In the case of Van Duijn one may doubt the importance that he himself attached to his observations. It can only be speculated how this information would have been dealt with and to what extent this would have influenced the picture of the events.

A more or less comparable problem occurred in Zagreb regarding the statement by Sergeant Mulder, the commander of OP-Mike. In contrast to most of the other interviews, it was Couzy who dominated the conversation this time because he quickly became very interested in what Mulder had to report. This was particularly the case for what he related about the fighting among ABiH soldiers that took place near OP-Mike. It was the first time that Couzy heard about this (Caris and Erkelens were to

1962 SMG, 1007. M. Elands, 'Debriefing Dutchbat 3 – Saturday 22/07/95. Interview IV: Lt. Van Duyn (PC C-cie, section Blocking Force)'.
 1963 Rohde, *Endgame*. pp. 276-278.

1964 MvD, DAB. L.F.F. Casteleijn to minister, D96/349, 'statement Lieutenant Van Duijn', 12/07/96; appendix by O. van der Wind. 'Notes on interview with Lt. Van Duijn in Rijswijk on 12 July 1996'.
 1965 Debriefing L.C. van Duijn, 13/09/95.

1966 SMG, 1007. M. Elands, 'Debriefing Dutchbat 3 – Saturday 22/07/95. Interview IV: Lt. Van Duijn (PC C-cie, section Blocking Force)'.
 1967 Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

1968 NIOD, Coll. Hicks. 'Debriefing form L. van Duijn'.
 1969 Interview L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

mention a similar incident in their debriefing interview). It fascinated him so much, in fact, that he gave little attention to the rest of Mulder's account.¹⁹⁷⁰

As with Van Duijn, it is difficult to reconstruct precisely what Mulder reported because the report does not correspond to the memories of those involved. It is thus almost impossible to establish whether the minutes-keeper failed to include some of what was said at the time, or whether those involved later projected things onto the event. Some details occurring in later statements are recognizable in earlier versions, but significantly vaguer. Mulder, for instance, described the conflict between the two ABiH groups: one from the village of Jaglici where OP-M was located and one from elsewhere. The probable cause of the strife was whether Mulder's YPR should be seized or not. 'A short firefight broke out, which was won by the Jaglici group', noted Klep and Lagaune, the two minutes-keepers.¹⁹⁷¹ Mulder later stated that the local commander, 'Captain Enwir', with whom he had established a good relationship, had personally shot dead a soldier. This soldier had threatened the YPR with an anti-tank weapon when the Dutchbat soldiers wanted to move towards Potocari with the women and children. At least one day earlier the crew had observed a conflict that apparently was about whether the soldiers should leave the enclave or defend it. During this the soldiers had indeed fired on one another.¹⁹⁷²

Mulder also later stated that he had informed Couzy about the probable running-over of Displaced Persons between Jaglici and Potocari, later to become known as the 'OP-Mike incident'.¹⁹⁷³ The report from Zagreb mentioned only that the YPR 'was fired on again' when *en route*.¹⁹⁷⁴ Mulder had however, according to his own account, spoken to Couzy 'fairly briefly' about this.¹⁹⁷⁵ Couzy stated later that Mulder had indeed told him about the possible running-over, but that he had subsequently forgotten about it until Mulder approached him in 1998 because the matter still haunted him.¹⁹⁷⁶

According to the report of the Zagreb interview, Mulder had also witnessed the start of the separation of men and women in Potocari on 12 July. He had reported this to Captain Melchers, who took the information to Karremans, 'who started to curse and said that was going to Mladic to protest'. At that time, however, the convoy was already starting to move off. The following day, when Mulder was once again detailed as a convoy escort, he saw how a bus with 40 to 50 men left the convoy and drove off in a different direction. Mulder, who was following the rest of the convoy, was then stopped on the road and 'stripped'. He and his co-driver had to surrender their weapons and flak jackets. Then, he recounted, he and his colleague were forced to ride on a Dutch YPR manned by VRS soldiers, on a 'vehicle patrol against Muslims'.¹⁹⁷⁷ The aim of the VRS was doubtless to increase the impression of a Dutch vehicle, with the hope of luring Bosnian Muslims into the open. This was a breach of the laws of war, but Couzy made no mention of it during his press conference the following day.

Mulder briefly mentioned that he and a number of other Dutchbat soldiers had been forced to spend the night at a 'checkpoint', where things were very 'unsettled'. They only returned to Potocari the following day. On the way they saw a football field at Nova Kasaba that was full of prisoners, all with

1970 Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

1971 SMG, 1007. Klep/Lagaune, 'Report debriefing Sgt.1 Mulder, 22/07/95, Camp Pleso'.

1972 Interview M. Mulder, 06/10/98.

1973 Interview M. Mulder, 06/10/98.

1974 SMG, 1007. Klep/Lagaune, 'Report debriefing Sgt.1 Mulder, 22/07/95, Camp Pleso'.

1975 Official report, KMAR-Sebrateam. P. 506/C01B/1998, Official report of the 3rd interview with defendant M.A. Mulder, 18 November 1998, p. 6.

1976 Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01. One of Mulder's former colleagues, Dave Vaasen, stated to the Sebra team of the KMAR in 1998 that he had already heard from Mulder in Zagreb that he [Mulder] had told Couzy about the running-over. See: Official report, KMAR-Sebrateam. P. 506/C6D/1998, Official report of the 3rd interview with witness D.J. Vaasen, 17/11/98, p. 6.

1977 This incident too only was disclosed only later in the media. As early as the summer of 1995, staff of the Yugoslavia Tribunal gave extensive attention to the misuse of the UN vehicles during their interview with Dutchbat soldiers. Reference in: debriefing statement T.P. Lutke, 08/09/95.

their hands behind their heads. Later they saw ‘a number of dead ABiH soldiers (...) but they all looked like war casualties. I didn’t see any torturing or executions’.¹⁹⁷⁸

In later statements, however, Mulder indicated that he had made a much fuller report. He recounted that he, together with the other Dutchbat soldiers who included Lieutenant Egbers, had spent the night in a school in Nova Kasaba. With some regularity prisoners of war were taken to a small house in the vicinity. A ‘pear-shaped soldier’, with broad hips, narrow shoulders and a drooping moustache, came out of the school and went into the house. After an average of 15 minutes a shot was heard, after which the soldier and his colleagues left the house alone and returned to the school. Mulder said that this went on all through the night. From time to time ‘a sort of Black Maria’ drove up and parked with its rear side against the door, and then drove off again shortly afterwards. Mulder supposed that the corpses were removed in this manner.¹⁹⁷⁹

Bastiaans later declared emphatically that he had not heard this story.¹⁹⁸⁰ This raises the question as to whether Mulder possibly also spoke to Couzy. The Army Commander certainly recognized the story and he believed that he had indeed heard it in Zagreb, although he no longer knew from whom.¹⁹⁸¹ Mulder was however the only one to tell the story in this form, so that it seems clear that he was the source.

The available debriefing statements made in Assen by Mulder’s colleagues in Nova Kasaba seem to deviate from the interpretation given by Mulder, so that it is difficult to find confirmation for his story. His colleague, Sergeant Lutke, mentioned only one incident in which four prisoners of war were led into the house with their hands behind their heads, after which four shots were heard: ‘Everyone believed that the four Muslims had been executed’. Lutke mentioned however that a few Dutchbat soldiers had asked the VRS about the situation and were then granted permission to take a look inside the house. They found 30 captives in a room measuring three by three metres.¹⁹⁸² A number of them had swollen faces and this seemed to indicate that they had been mistreated.¹⁹⁸³ Lieutenant Egbers, who went to take a look a little later, saw a wounded man and someone with a black eye. Otherwise he not see any evidence of mistreatment.¹⁹⁸⁴

The problem already earlier encountered by Couzy, namely that there were major differences in perception between people who seemingly should have shared the same experiences, presented itself with another incident. According to Mulder he had related during his briefing in Zagreb that on 13 July, when returning from Nova Kasaba to Potocari, he had seen hundreds of corpses on the slopes around his old OP-Mike.¹⁹⁸⁵ This story is in line with what Theo Lutke also reported in Assen: he estimated the number of dead at no less than 500.¹⁹⁸⁶ Others however declared at that time, to Mulder’s surprise, that they had not seen anything.¹⁹⁸⁷

It is remarkable that all this information is missing from the report of the interview conducted with Mulder in Pleso. Since Couzy himself stated that he was familiar with these stories, in more or less detail, then it seems probable that they were indeed reported to him (even though one cannot rule out that both Couzy’s and Mulder’s memories are incorrect on this point). It can no longer be established whether this took place outside the actual debriefing, even though it certainly seems possible: the

1978 SMG, 1007. Klep/Lagaune, ‘Report debriefing Sgt.1 Mulder, 22/07/95, Camp Pleso’.

1979 Interview M. Mulder, 06/10/98. Shortly after the interview with the NIOD, Mulder repeated this story to the KMAR, the Sebra team of which was questioning him as part of the investigation into the OP-Mike incident. In fact he does not appear to have mentioned this on his return to Potocari. See: SMG/Debrief. Report Sgt. Mulder to S3, 15/07/95.

1980 Interview G. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

1981 Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

1982 Debriefing statement T.P. Lutke, 08/09/95.

1983 Debriefing statement M.R. Blom, 13/09/95.

1984 Debriefing statement V.E. Egbers, 02/09/95; interview V.E. Egbers, 02/09/99.

1985 Interview M. Mulder, 06/10/98.

1986 Debriefing statement T.P. Lutke, 08/09/95.

1987 Interview M. Mulder, 06/10/98.

interview with Mulder was the last one before the break.¹⁹⁸⁸ It cannot be ruled out that the conversation was continued informally during the break.

It is clear in any case that during his stay in Pleso the Army Commander showed particular interest in unusual circumstances and events. Various non-Dutchbat personnel who were at Pleso were asked by Couzy if they had heard anything that could be important. Major Solkesz of the Logistics Battalion, who as convoy commander was still in the area and thus debriefed again, remembered how on Sunday morning, in the vicinity of the Holland House, Couzy talked to about 15 people in a short time, 'no longer than five minutes', 'about that specific theme'.¹⁹⁸⁹ He too was approached by Couzy when he sat down with a cup of coffee on the terrace of the Holland House at the start of the afternoon. The Army Commander asked him about his experiences 'and whether I had seen or heard anything strange'. But just as the convoy commander had started to answer the questions, one of the information officers interrupted the conversation to discuss a number of problems with the press conference. Then Couzy's Warrant Officer appeared to lead him off because the aircraft with the dignitaries had landed.¹⁹⁹⁰

In the midst of all this activity Couzy also maintained contact with the psychologist Venhovens, who led the substantial team of psychologists, social workers and spiritual counsellors who had been specially flown in. They mixed informally with the Dutchbat soldiers and attempted to open conversations.¹⁹⁹¹ In general this proved not to be easy. The information officer Paul Hartman, who maintained contact with this team, recalled that the mood among the soldiers seemed so calm that some team members wondered why they had been sent to Zagreb at all.¹⁹⁹²

Couzy's main information was thus gained from the debriefing interviews. To the surprise of the Military History Section specialists Groen and Klep, who were present at a number of Couzy's interviews, the Army Commander gave a minimalistic interpretation to these observations. For the military historians it was already clear that what had been reported was just the tip of the iceberg.¹⁹⁹³ On the Sunday afternoon of the press conference, rumours were already doing the rounds of Camp Pleso about men who had reportedly been killed in the football stadium of Nova Kasaba.¹⁹⁹⁴ They found Couzy's attitude even more incomprehensible because he had previously given them the impression of high motivation in the search for possible war crimes. In the breaks between the debriefing interviews, for instance, he had asked their opinion about the reports of nine corpses and the possible bloodbath in the football stadium.¹⁹⁹⁵

Apparently the Army Commander, who the evening before had given a public preview of his conclusions in the *Nova* broadcast, was not inclined to deviate from this. On Saturday evening, before leaving for the studio in Zagreb for the live *Nova* interview, he was approached by Captain E. (Ebel) Dijkman, the social worker of the battalion. Dijkman recounted: 'I sat with Couzy in Zagreb on Saturday evening and asked him: "How can you say that? No genocide? We suspect that hundreds and maybe thousands have been killed." But he insisted: "We're going to stick to the facts." I also told him that shooting was going on every day after the population had been transported away, that the air was red from the fires and that we knew that something was happening there.'¹⁹⁹⁶ The following morning the Warrant Officer Dijkema, who had recorded the deportation on video, went to Couzy to ask him

¹⁹⁸⁸ In the recollection of Mulder, he talked to his debriefers for three to four hours. The size of the report, however, corresponds more to the one and a half hours envisaged in the schedule, from 6pm to 7.30pm, when dinner was due to start. Following this, Franken was due to be interviewed at 8pm. It is unclear whether Mulder's interview really lasted so long, or whether this was a false recollection, or whether the interview was unofficially extended.

¹⁹⁸⁹ Interview A.Solkesz, 15/11/00.

¹⁹⁹⁰ Solkesz, *Hier Romeo!*, p. 189

¹⁹⁹¹ Interview P.M.P. Venhovens, 17/11/00.

¹⁹⁹² Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/00.

¹⁹⁹³ Interview M. Elands, 15/02/99.

¹⁹⁹⁴ Interview P. Groen, 17/02/99.

¹⁹⁹⁵ Interview P. Groen, 17/02/99.

¹⁹⁹⁶ Interview E. Dijkman, 13/12/00.

how he had felt the previous evening when Dutchbat soldiers carried him on their shoulders. According to Dijkema, Couzy had answered: 'Listen, Warrant Officer, this afternoon there'll be journalists who think that you people saw everything and who'll want to hear everything from you, but you people didn't see anything, because nothing happened'.¹⁹⁹⁷

Couzy had to withdraw this remark to some extent as more became known in the course of the day about the Dutchbat soldiers' reports of (possible) executions. But apart from this the Army Commander did indeed take a reserved attitude to what he heard. Following Mulder's story about the possible executions in Nova Kasaba, Couzy remarked: 'I intentionally didn't make use of a lot of stories. This of course was a story that was totally unsuited for use. It was his feeling that this was the situation. But it wasn't a fact. I only cited confirmed facts or when four people told the same story. Then I assume that this is really how it was, and not just a story.'¹⁹⁹⁸

Couzy was also not impressed by the references made by Dijkman and others to the sound of shots and the suspicion of executions: 'I did hear stories that they had heard shooting in the vicinity. And some of them said it was an indication of executions. Or alternatively, that these were executions. So I responded to that with: "Heard shooting? I'm not going to draw any conclusions from that." Of course, it all needs to be investigated very closely. But I made a conscious choice. I didn't want to appear at the press conference with this sort of information, with this type of unconfirmed stories. I decided to leave them out.'¹⁹⁹⁹

The consequence of this was that some of the Dutchbat soldiers to whom Couzy had talked were, they claimed later, disappointed with the press conference. Sergeant Mulder stated that he had been unhappy with Couzy's performance on the afternoon of 23 July: 'In retrospect the interview with General Couzy was pointless for me, because on Sunday, after the interview with me, General Couzy declared that no genocide had taken place, while I had strong indications of this'.²⁰⁰⁰ Lieutenant Rutten also stated in an interview conducted at the Ministry of Defence in 1997, with the Head of Information Van den Heuvel and the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Schouten, that he did not understand why, at the press conference, Couzy 'did not make any mention of what he had reported earlier that day about the actions of the Serbs towards the Bosnian population'.²⁰⁰¹

32. Couzy at the press conference

During his press conference Couzy stuck strongly to the line he had decided on. According to him it was about the question 'what has really been observed with regard to war crimes?'. According to Couzy 'considerable attention had been given to this subject' during the debriefing. He also stressed that he possessed 'precisely the facts that have been revealed to date'. To this he added: 'And we think that that is just about all there is'. He then reported that it had been observed that men had been beaten and kicked in a bus, but that this stopped 'when BSA [VRS] soldiers realized that we could see it'. Couzy also mentioned the observation of an execution by Groenewegen (without mentioning his name) and the discovery of nine corpses who had been shot in the back; he added that photographs had been taken of these. As it was unclear whether this concerned the same incident or different events, he said he expected that after the photographs had been developed 'we'll have clear evidence for this'.

¹⁹⁹⁷ Interview W. Dijkema, 21/09/98.

¹⁹⁹⁸ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

¹⁹⁹⁹ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

²⁰⁰⁰ Official report, KMAR-Sebrateam. P. 506/C01B/1998, Official report of the 3rd interview with defendant M.A. Mulder, 18 November 1998, p. 6.

²⁰⁰¹ DAB. H. van den Heuvel, Report Strictly Confidential, 06/07/97. Regarding a conversation by Director of Information H. van den Heuvel and the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Lieutenant General M. Schouten with Lieutenant Rutten, following his decision to break his silence. He did this in response to the book by David Rohde, which he said did not give a correct account of his actions.

Couzy then drew the conclusion that ‘generally speaking the transport of the evacuees took place in a proper manner’. He said that no rapes had been observed in and around the compound, which had been constantly monitored by Dutch soldiers. ‘No such practices were established’ during the transport to Kladanj either. Finally he mentioned fighting between ‘groups of Muslims’ prompted by the issue of whether they should flee the enclave and head for Tuzla or should stay put.²⁰⁰²

Set against the findings of the UN debriefing and the stories that Couzy himself confirmed hearing, the claim of comprehensiveness is particularly striking. Although Hicks and Mazowiecki did not rule out the possibility of more executions, on the basis of reasoned suspicions expressed by a number of Dutchbat soldiers, Couzy refused to take this approach. His remarks about how of the transports were conducted also seem strange when compared to the UN findings about the fate of the convoy of wounded. Mistreatment and selection of wounded by the VRS, and the removal of nurses which prompted the suspicion of rape, were not consistent with the ‘proper manner’ in which, according to Couzy, the operation had ‘generally speaking’ been conducted. It is hard to understand that the UN, despite all the problems with Dutch cooperation, managed to reveal and report on these events while Couzy apparently did not, although the information was at his disposal.

With the benefit of hindsight it can also be established that many of the matters that were later to cause such controversy, such as the issue of the running-over, the statement by Franken about the ‘proper’ transport and the lists of names, had in essence already been reported in Zagreb.²⁰⁰³ It is hard to say how far the potential (political) sensitivity of all this should and could have been recognized. After all, the growing realization that mass murder or even genocide had probably been committed strongly influenced the political import of the affair. And this was precisely a conclusion which Couzy approached with the greatest caution.

Many of the questions that were put to Couzy during the press conference concerned his refusal to use the term genocide. He remained highly cautious in his statements, and emphasized that his remarks concerned only what the Dutch soldiers had seen in the enclave. In response to a question as to whether he thus did not rule out ‘that genocide has indeed taken place, but that the Dutch didn’t see it’, he answered: ‘That is correct’.²⁰⁰⁴ Moreover, in an interview after the press conference, with Harmen Roeland of NOS, Couzy admitted, following some probing questions, that he did not rule out genocide, ‘but then outside the enclave’.²⁰⁰⁵

In the NOS news of that evening, the newsreader Gerard Arninkhof thus concluded that things were ‘not as bad as feared’. Atrocities had indeed taken place, but no ‘genocide’, and in any case ‘not on the scale that was earlier assumed’.²⁰⁰⁶ In its news programme, RTL 4 put a much stronger emphasis on the question as to whether genocide had been committed or not. The editorial team came to a more cautious conclusion than NOS. RTL’s tone was much more in line with the spirit of the commentary that Prime Minister Kok, with good political instinct, had made on camera that afternoon. His words formed a counterweight to the sometimes fierce denials by the Dutchbat soldiers and the more tactical statements of Couzy. According to Kok, the fact that nothing had been seen did not mean that nothing had happened. Probably ‘many improper things had taken place’, and much of this out of sight of the Dutchbat soldiers.²⁰⁰⁷

2002 NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. ‘Excerpts from the press conference in Zagreb, 23/07/95 (complete text of the introduction by Lieutenant General H.B. Couzy)’, also in: *Diary of Voorhoeve*, pp. 139-140.

2003 According to the then Major Bourgondiën of G2, he received a copy of the ‘list 239’ from Franken. He was convinced that he also informed the debriefers of this, although he no longer knew to whom he had passed the list. He also faxed the list to The Hague – since the quality was poor he even did this several times at the request of The Hague. Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00. Both Bastiaans and Lemmen denied in interviews that they had received the list.

2004 SMG 1007/13. ‘Questions to lGen. Couzy and lCol. Karremans’ [verbatim transcript].

2005 Tape NOS broadcast 23/07/95.

2006 NOS, 8pm News, 23/07/95.

2007 Premier Kok in Brandpunt, 23/07/95.

This latter remark was in line with what Couzy had said, but his nuances of meaning quickly disappeared in the general impression that was created. His nuances were not heard. The picture was clear: Couzy denied that genocide had taken place.

33. The multiple meanings of genocide

The impression that arose about Couzy and the genocide issue was to a great extent determined by the disparities, stressed by the media, between on the one side Minister Pronk – and to a lesser extent Minister Voorhoeve – and on the other side General Couzy. The inability of Couzy to clarify his position was due not only to his own awkward communication or the selective reception by the media. A major part of the problem was contained in the term genocide. The legal meaning of the term was based on a number of international treaties, which determined that if genocide were to be legally established then intervention was *a duty*.

The burden that thus came to be placed on the use of the term became visible in all its political sensitivity right at the start of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia – and was in fact also to be revealed during the mass murders in Rwanda in 1994. The application of the term genocide to the conflict implied armed intervention. This was however not the wish of the majority of the Western world, and in particular of the United States. ‘Genocide’ thus became a contaminated term that subsequently, as the dreaded ‘G-word’, haunted the offices of the State Department and the foreign ministries in western Europe. In the eyes of critics, the term ‘ethnic cleansing’ came to function as a non-binding euphemism for horrors which apparently only external force could put an end to.²⁰⁰⁸

Besides the political connotations, the legal connotations were heavy too. The seriousness of the charge and the strength of the punishments, as well as the fact that furnishing proof was sometimes difficult, necessitated great caution. Seen from this latter angle, at least, Couzy’s refusal to use the term could be defended. Moreover, he was not alone in taking this position. The Human Rights Rapporteur T. Mazowiecki, who on 26 April resigned in protest against the failure of the West to protect Srebrenica, did not wish to apply the term genocide despite his shocking report on Srebrenica:

‘I’ve already written in my second report that the ethnic cleansing is not a ‘side effect’ of that war, but contrary, its objective. It seems to me that it is necessary to emphasize that once again. However, I’ve never used in my reports the term ‘genocide’, regardless of warring faction being reported. I think that such qualification has to be confirmed by the Tribunal, given its reputation and expertise (...) I didn’t use that term because I noticed its frequent and indiscriminate usage by all factions when accusing the other side. Misuse of words can strengthen hatred and that is why I hesitated to use final qualifications. I left it to the Hague Tribunal.’²⁰⁰⁹

Couzy did not, admittedly, formulate his arguments for not wishing to use the term genocide as explicitly as did Mazowiecki, but his caution seems attributable to the same motive. However, this can easily be used to present Couzy’s attitude in a more favourable light. The responsibility borne by Mazowiecki was of course different to that of Couzy.

Although the Army Commander played no role in the UN hierarchy and the command held by the UN had not yet formally been returned to the Netherlands, Couzy adopted a major responsibility in taking on the reception of Dutchbat. He thus, in a certain sense, became jointly responsible for the reports by Dutchbat concerning large-scale violations of human rights. In concrete terms this applied, for instance, to the nature of the cooperation lent to Mazowiecki’s staff who tried to interview

²⁰⁰⁸ Interview Prof. Diane F. Orentlicher, Director War Crimes Research Office, 06/07/00.

²⁰⁰⁹ Branko Madunic and Zeljko Zutelja, ‘Tadeusz Mazowiecki’, *Globus*, (1995)250(22 September 1995); published in translation on Bosnet/BosNews, ‘Mazowiecki: ‘Unprotecting the protected...’, 17/11/95.

Dutchbat personnel at Pleso. The responsibility for passing on all relevant information was even greater because it was not inconceivable, in the event of a worst-case scenario, that events could still be influenced militarily or politically. After all, waiting for legally watertight evidence of genocide is diametrically at odds with the obligation to prevent genocide.²⁰¹⁰ In this light one can question the minimalistic and reserved way that Couzy dealt with the indications of possible large-scale violations of human rights. Without committing himself to the term genocide, he could have more clearly indicated the possible, far-reaching implications of the overall picture that was available to him at that moment.

Minister Pronk applied the opposite reasoning. From the information at his disposal, which did not include any observations by Dutchbat soldiers, he quickly drew the most far-reaching conclusion. One can ask whether this step was justified, for instance when comparing this position to the caution shown by Mazowiecki.

The answer to this question has several aspects. The use of the term genocide by Pronk (and in a certain sense by Voorhoeve too) was based much more on the rhetorical meaning that the term has acquired in public and political debate. This underlines the lack of clarity regarding the use of the term. In the words of the sociologist Alex Alvarez: 'Widely applied in a variety of contexts with a tremendous range of definitional criteria, the notion genocide is marked by conceptual confusion, often compounded by its rhetorical use on the part of those seeking to inflame and stigmatize social and political discourse.'²⁰¹¹

Pronk too, when appealing to public opinion, did not consider the legal connotations of the term genocide: 'Right then I didn't think about that. What was important was that massive slaughter was involved'. He had come to the conclusion on the basis of the limited information that he had compiled in a short period. 'It was the sum of things, an analysis, in which everything pointed in that direction. You must be prepared to induce. It fitted like a hand in a glove. You heard all these things, and then a conclusion was possible.'²⁰¹²

His point of departure for reaching this conclusion was a conviction, based on years of personal experience and his interpretation of the nature of the events since the start of the war in Bosnia, that placed isolated observations in a context in which they immediately gained significance for him. This was, however, a historically and politically based point of departure that could not automatically be seen as universally valid. Criticism of Pronk's use of terminology and his timing would be much more justified if based on this aspect.

This problem also applied to a crucial element of Pronk's conviction: the predictability of mass murder following the fall of Srebrenica. He was not alone in arguing like this. An analysis of relevant statements by various parties clearly shows diametrically opposed views. Moreover, these contradictory positions are independent of political and other considerations which can often hinder the making of such predictions. Besides this, the opposing views do not run along predictable political lines.

Chuck Sudetic, journalist and author of the moving family chronicle *Blood and vengeance*, expressed the opinion that 'anyone who knows page one about Bosnia knew what would happen'.²⁰¹³ José Maria Mendiluce, in 1993 the UNHCR officer responsible for Srebrenica, declared in the same vein following the events in 1995: 'Those who did not predict the mass murders which were about to begin in Srebrenica share the responsibility for this genocide'.²⁰¹⁴ Mendiluce's assumption of the predictability of the events was not, however, widely shared even in the organization of which he himself was a member. The events in Srebrenica taking place at that moment were interpreted differently within UNCHR as well. In July 1995 Mendiluce's successor Karen Koning-Abuzayd

2010 Interview Diane F. Orentlicher, Director War Crimes Research Office, 06/07/00.

2011 Alex Alvarez, *Governments, citizens and genocide. A comparative and interdisciplinary approach* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2001) p. 33.

2012 Interview J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

2013 Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p. xxxv.

2014 Cited by Florence Hartmann, 'Chronologie d' une négligence criminelle', in: M.A. Allain et al., '*L'ex-Yugoslavie and Europe: de la faillite des démocraties au processus de paix*', (Paris, Montréal, 1997) pp. 113-121.

received concerned telephone calls from staff who were responsible for the safety of UNCHR personnel. They reported that they were afraid of ‘massacres’. But she heard from UNCHR staff in Tuzla that in their initial responses to the separation of men and women they had used restrained language ‘because we gave Mladic the benefit of the doubt’. It was only when she spoke to survivors of the journey, considerably later, that she came to the realization that ‘you can’t be impartial towards evil’.²⁰¹⁵

Some of those directly involved in Srebrenica also feared what was about to happen. Daniel O’Brien, doctor of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, wanted to be removed from the enclave because he did not wish to become a witness of a mass murder. ‘He doesn’t want to go through any kind of massacre of the population’, reported his colleague. He also feared for his own life and that of Christina Schmitz, because they were possibly the only two witnesses.²⁰¹⁶ It can be imagined that O’Brien’s panic was prompted by the fear expressed by the local personnel and especially by the Bosnian doctors. Schmitz noted in her logbook: ‘They are afraid that the situation in Vukovar will be repeated, where the Serbs forced their way into the hospital and killed everyone.’²⁰¹⁷

The ‘Vukovar’ comparison occurs again in relation to Srebrenica. As early as 1993, when the situation around Srebrenica deteriorated dramatically, Minister Pronk declared that he was afraid that the Serb attackers would kill the Muslim population ‘in masses’. ‘I’ll have based that on the history that started with Vukovar’, was how he later explained this statement.²⁰¹⁸ This is certainly possible: the journalist Chuck Sudetic remarked that as early as 1993 the threatened fall of the enclave awoke fears of ‘a second Vukovar’.²⁰¹⁹ Pronk was not the only one here. Around the same time the Serbian President Milosevic predicted to the negotiator Owen that a Bosnian-Serb conquest of Srebrenica would lead to a bloodbath.²⁰²⁰

The *Médecins Sans Frontières* representative Eric Dachy also cited Vukovar (where he himself had been) as the guiding framework for predicting the events after the fall of Srebrenica.²⁰²¹ In contrast, Eric Stover, currently Director of the Human Rights Center in Berkeley and at the time closely involved in the forensic investigation in Vukovar in his capacity as Executive Director of Physicians for Human Rights, was reluctant to assign a predictive status to Vukovar. For him, just as for Pronk in fact, the report of the presence of Arkan Tigers was seen as an indication of serious human rights violations.²⁰²²

There were others too who did not automatically assume the worst. UNPROFOR commander Smith in Sarajevo, who during the London Conference on 20 July prompted Voorhoeve’s firm statements about genocide, told the NIOD that he had not been so concerned about reports of the separation of men and women. The ABiH did precisely the same thing when they had conquered large villages. At that time he still had no idea about the mass murder.²⁰²³

The same equivocalness could be heard from those involved in the region itself, for instance with the opinion that the scale of the murders could not be predicted and was thus totally unexpected. Mehmed Suljkanovic, the signals officer of the Second Corps in Tuzla, also stated that no one expected the murders. The same went for the journalists Sefko Hodzic and Isnam Taljic, who were closely

2015 Interview Karen Koning Abuzayd, at the time UNHCR Regional Representative Bosnia-Herzegovina, 11/07/00.

2016 MSF Brussel. Christina [Schmitz] to Stephan [Oberreit], UTC Time 95-07-11 06:51:46.

2017 MSF Brussel. Logbook Christina Schmitz, notes for 11 July 1995. See also: *Extraits du journal de bord tenu par Christina Schmitz*, <http://www.paris.msf.org/Srebrenica> .

2018 Interview J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

2019 Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p. 204.

2020 Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

2021 Interview Eric Dachy, MSF, 17/12/97.

2022 Interview Eric Stover, Director Human Rights Center, University of California, 12/11/99. Stover wrote the text of the book that was prepared in collaboration with the photographer Gilles Peress: *The Graves. Srebrenica and Vukovar* (Zürich, Berlin, New York 1998).

2023 Interview R. Smith, 12/01/00.

involved in Srebrenica and who, in fact, differed in their opinions as to how far the enclave population realized the fate that awaited them.²⁰²⁴

It seems that some of these people too had more optimistic expectations then afterwards turned out to be justified. Hatidza Hren, who worked for the International Red Cross in the enclave until the fall and later became the spokeswoman for the Women of Srebrenica, declared that at the time she had expected that ten percent of the men would be killed, 'but not eighty percent!'.²⁰²⁵

The most harrowing example of the uncertainty about what the Bosnian Serbs planned is the discussion at the execution site, shortly before the Serbs opened fire, between the survivor Mevludin Oric and his nephew Haris Hasanovic. Oric believed the Bosnian Serbs who told him following his capture that he would be exchanged as a prisoner of war. 'They held hands. "They're going to kill us," Haris said. Mevludin replied: "No, they wouldn't do that" Then the Serbs opened fire, and Haris fell on top of his cousin.'²⁰²⁶

It is also notable that the Bosnian government, which on the one hand created a considerable commotion about large-scale murders, still believed for a while that it could negotiate on an exchange of prisoners of war. Many of those involved simply could not believe that a mass murder with thousands of victims could actually take place. The same applied to many journalists, some of whom would later realize the scale of the murders during further investigations. Elizabeth Neuffer, at the time head of the Europe office of *The Boston Globe*, stated that around 23 July 'we had no indications that anything serious had happened'. The Bosnian government 'was crying wolf, but that was standard'. The accounts of the women were recorded, but: 'We were not alarmed. We thought they were taken as POWs. The real story was the collapse of the safe-area policy'.²⁰²⁷ And Emma Daly, who was the Balkans correspondent for *The Independent* from February 1994 onwards, later wrote in a self-critical review: 'After the fall of Srebrenica (...) sensible reporters dismissed survivor's testimony as exaggerated – we simply could not believe in state-sanctioned murder on such a scale, so close to home. But a few months later we walked across the killing grounds they had described in such detail, dislodging bones and strips of the pink cloth used to blindfold the victims.'²⁰²⁸

It was only in retrospect that many of those involved realized the significance of their observations. In his testimony in the Krstic trial, the Dutchbat soldier Stoelinga, one of the 55 ex-hostages, said with regard to his observations of piles of clothes and a vehicle full of corpses: 'At that time I didn't see the connection. But in retrospect I believe that the corpses on the truck were the people who were forced to remove their clothes.'²⁰²⁹

The newspaper that reported on this in 2000 headlined the article with 'Captive Dutchbat soldiers saw signs of genocide'. The use of the term once more demonstrates how, with the passage of time, uncertainty has been transformed into something self-evident. This has been at the expense of the realization that this certainty was far from present in July 1995 – and even for a while after. The morally inspired accusation that this insight was not widely shared has served more to confuse than to clarify the discussion of what happened. As a result, the discussion of how responsibility takes shape during situations of great uncertainty and heavy political implications has never been conducted.

Looking back at Couzy's actions, this is the essential problem. It was defensible that the Army Commander refused to use the term genocide. Couzy did more, however: he linked his refusal to talk about genocide with a public presentation that strongly gave the impression that things were really not that bad. At the very least, however, he had grounds for taking a non-committal attitude.

2024 Interviews Mehmed Suljkanovic, 18/05/99; Sefko Hodzic, 24/05/99; Isnam Taljic, 18/05/99.

2025 Interview Hatidza Hren, 18/06/98.

2026 Interview Mevludin Oric in: Rod Nordland and Stacy Sullivan, 'Death of a village', *Newsweek*, April 15, 1996.

2027 Interview Elizabeth Neuffer, 15/07/00.

2028 Emma Daly, 'Reporting from the Front Line', in: Stephen Glover (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Journalism. Secrets of the press* (London 1999) p. 280. Also see the chapter: 'The disclosure of the executions and mass graves'.

2029 'Gevangen Dutchbatters zagen sporen genocide' (Captive Dutchbat soldiers saw signs of genocide), *Trouw*, 07/04/00.

According to Diane Orenlichter there is a difference between the duty to prevent genocide and waiting for watertight proof.²⁰³⁰ Due to the uncertain but potentially great risks that occur in situations of possible genocide, in combination with the pressure of time, Paul Williams thus advocated application of the 'precautionary principle', to some extent analogous to the possibility of major environmental disasters in the long term: the principle of 'better safe than sorry'.²⁰³¹ Peggy Hicks, who was directly involved in the investigation of the events in Srebrenica and who wrote the internal UNPROFOR report, was of the opinion that even without the mass executions the picture was already serious enough. She agreed that the greatest care should be taken in reporting. A close distinction should be made between different types of information: what was certain, what was speculative, and what required further investigation.²⁰³²

This approach differs strongly from the categorical statements made by Couzy in Zagreb. One can ask why he did not choose such an approach. Unfamiliarity with humanitarian reporting certainly played a role. At that time military personnel, and not only the Dutch, were generally at a loss with this subject. It was one of the aspects of peacekeeping for which soldiers were hardly prepared: acting more as a policeman than a soldier.

This is not however sufficient to explain Couzy's actions. Everything points to the fact that besides his justifiable hesitation and caution, another motive also played a role. If he had left open the possibility that the events differed fundamentally from the account given during his press conference, he would thus also have called into question the performance of Dutchbat. Couzy found himself in a dilemma in which the image of Dutchbat and of the Royal Netherlands Army ultimately carried more weight than the unpredictable effect of a statement betraying uncertainty about the true nature of the events taking place after the fall of Srebrenica. The responsibility that he shouldered at this time is not diminished by the knowledge, gained later, that the mass murder had for the most part been completed by 23 July, and indeed even by 17 July.

2030 Interview Diane F. Orentlicher, 06/07/00.

2031 Interview Paul R. Williams, 06/07/00.

2032 Interview Peggy Hicks, 10/07/00.

Chapter 6

'Circus Pleso'

1. Introduction

The press conference held by Couzy in Zagreb on 23 July became, in the eyes of the media, the issue that 'probably haunts him the most' and which even earned him the nickname of 'General Dud' (the Dutch *blindganger* also plays on the word 'blind')²⁰³³ However, it was not long before the fallout reached much further than the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army alone. The alleged 'denial of genocide' was one of the first in a series of controversies that would turn 'srebrenica' into the dreaded 's-word' within the Ministry of Defence.

The effect of Couzy's statement might never have been so great had it not been uttered in the wider context of failures and errors later associated with the Zagreb press conference. As one of the later analyses in the media put it 'In Zagreb the stage was set for a controversy that would fester for years'²⁰³⁴ The most striking image of this controversy, together with that of Karremans drinking a toast with Mladic, was the so-called 'party' on 22 July. During the barbecue on that Saturday evening, a member of Dutchbat filmed the footage of dancing and drinking Dutchbat troops, which was later widely broadcast and became synonymous with the Dutch soldiers' alleged indifference to the fate of the displaced population of Srebrenica. Those images, however, did not enter the public eye until months later. On Sunday, 23 July images were broadcast of the military band that had provided the entertainment the previous evening, but that footage only showed the musicians playing background music at Holland House. These images too generated a few disapproving remarks, but nothing more than that.

The controversial press conference given by Dutchbat Commander Karremans, which took place in the slipstream of Couzy's equally dubious audience with the press, was initially the main determinant of public opinion. In this regard it was especially telling to note how ministers within the government meeting shortly after Zagreb spoke of 'the damage done to the Netherlands' reputation by ill-considered statements by the military', referring to Karremans and Couzy.²⁰³⁵ Since so much went amiss on that Sunday afternoon in Zagreb, there is ample reason to stop and consider the circumstances that led up to this publicity disaster. The overture, in the form of Couzy's and Karremans' unfortunate confrontations with the media on 21 and 22 July, has already been examined in the previous chapter, but it is still necessary to return to the beginning of that week and the preparations for the press conference on 23 July.

2. The run-up

Press interest after the fall of Srebrenica was enormous. Requests for interviews with Karremans, preferably exclusive interviews, poured into the Directorate of General Information at the Ministry of Defence. Even shortly after the fall, some journalists succeeded in calling the Dutchbat commander in Potocari. The telephone numbers there, '00-871130224 and 00-38541180011 ext 5161', were 'widely known', according to Deputy Director of General Information Bert Kreemers.²⁰³⁶ As early as 14 July, during a meeting with Voorhoeve, Van den Breemen, Couzy and Army Press Officer Paul Hartman to discuss the return of the battalion, he pointed out the huge media interest and the need for a press conference.

²⁰³³ K. Colijn and P. Rusman, 'De dertien affaires Couzy' ('Couzy's thirteen controversies'), *Vrij Nederland*, 06/07/96.

²⁰³⁴ C. van der Laan, 'schaamrood' ('Red with shame'), *Trouw*, 02/09/00.

²⁰³⁵ Voorhoeve's diary, p. 146.

²⁰³⁶ E-mail H.P.M. Kreemers to P. Koedijk (NIOD), 06/01/02.

There was hardly any discussion about what form this should take, Hartman later recalled:

‘It all seemed pretty straightforward, since it was a conflict involving the Royal Netherlands Army. We hold a press conference with the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, the battalion commander and the Head of the Army Press Office [Hartman himself]. With that it was settled. There was no further discussion on the matter. There was no one who asked: ‘Is that the right way to do it? Shouldn’t we do it differently? Shouldn’t that be the Chief of Defence Staff? Should that be the Deputy Director of the Press Office?’ Or taking a step further: ‘shouldn’t that be Janvier?’ These issues were never discussed. They simply never came up.’²⁰³⁷

According to Couzy it was ‘a press conference for the military. That was the agreement’.²⁰³⁸

One of the elements of uncertainty still present in this connection was the position of the UN, which was still in command of the Dutch peacekeepers.²⁰³⁹ It is likely that the issue of UN jurisdiction was on the agenda which Army Press Officer Major Maarten Beneker had in mind when he travelled to Zagreb on Sunday, 16 July with Couzy to welcome back the first returning members of Dutchbat.²⁰⁴⁰ Beneker stayed behind after Couzy departed for the Netherlands with the first members of Dutchbat to prepare for the reception of the rest of the battalion as quartermaster.

On Monday or Tuesday, Beneker spoke with the responsible press officer from UNPROFOR. He hoped to reach agreement with him regarding the press conference to be organized on Dutchbat’s return. During the conversation he heard that Akashi had been ‘very annoyed’ because he or one of his representatives had not been invited to the press conference given by Couzy on Sunday, 16 July. The UN press officer took the blame for this because, given the fact that these were UN troops, he should have arranged this. Beneker pointed out that this was all the more reason to make sound agreements regarding the return of the rest of the battalion. He asked if there was a preference for a press conference in Pleso or in the press room at headquarters. The advantage of the latter was that then the press could be kept outside Camp Pleso and that all the facilities were already present. If the press conference was to take place at Pleso, then it might be held in the small cinema belonging to the French UN troops, but in that case support from the UN would be required. Beneker asked the press officer to put the matter to Akashi as soon as possible.²⁰⁴¹

On Wednesday, 18 July another meeting took place. Beneker was told, as he said ‘To my utter amazement’ that ‘It’s alright with Mr Akashi. It’s your show’. With Akashi’s irritation about 16 July at the back of his mind, Beneker once again made the point that the return of the battalion was after all a UN matter. The reply he was given was that it really was entirely up to him how he handled matters at Pleso. The UN would take care of the necessary facilities, including a platoon of Finnish UN troops to cordon off the camp: ‘You make all the arrangements’. When Beneker asked whether Akashi or his spokesman wished to be present at the press conference, the answer was short and clear: no. Upon leaving the meeting Beneker was overtaken by an uneasy feeling: ‘I thought: this doesn’t make sense. There is so much at stake with regard to the battalion but they’re leaving it all up to us. First Akashi is annoyed about an unimportant press conference, and when the battalion arrives he doesn’t want anything to do with it’.²⁰⁴²

Later, once the fiasco had taken place, the question of why the UN, in the person of Akashi or Janvier, did not play a prominent role in the publicity cropped up again and again. Beneker said he felt

²⁰³⁷ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

²⁰³⁸ Interview H.A. Couzy, 14/09/98.

²⁰³⁹ E-mail H.P.M. Kreemers to P. Koedijk (NIOD), 06/01/02.

²⁰⁴⁰ Beneker could not remember whether he had acted on instructions from The Hague. Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

²⁰⁴¹ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

²⁰⁴² Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

at the time that they wanted to distance themselves. It is not clear whether Akashi's decision to make it 'your show' was motivated by a suspicion of trouble ahead. When Beneker spoke with Akashi's press officer for a second time on 18 July, he was told that the UN diplomat had received a concerned message from Annan regarding 'widespread and consistent [information]' about possibly serious abuses following the fall of Srebrenica. Akashi then received, as has already been described, the order to debrief the Dutch troops shortly after their release. That happened with reference to the mounting unrest over the fact that it was impossible to confirm the reports or deny them with any authority, even though in many cases they concerned incidents 'of which UNPROFOR in Potocari could not have been unaware'.²⁰⁴³ It may therefore have been the case that this persuaded the diplomat Akashi to proceed with caution; in the end he limited his role to a visit to Pleso on Sunday, 23 July, during which he met with Prime Minister Kok, Prince Willem-Alexander, Minister Voorhoeve and Lieutenant General Couzy.²⁰⁴⁴ Akashi held fast to the position that neither he nor his spokesman wished to take an active part in the press conference.

Whether his unease was justified or not, Beneker decided to play it safe and immediately called Kreemers in The Hague. As Beneker remembers it, in spite of the reservations he expressed, he was ordered to go ahead with the preparations for the arrival of his superior, Hartman, and a group of journalists.²⁰⁴⁵ At that moment, negotiations with the NOS (Dutch Broadcasting Association) were already under way regarding a live broadcast from Pleso. Commitments forced the Press Office into a corner, restricting the room for manoeuvre still further. This also had an effect on the response to the first signals that problems may have been looming with regard to Karremans.

On 18 July, Minister Voorhoeve also wrote a 'strictly confidential' memo to Kreemers, in which he urged a cautious approach to allowing interviews with Karremans. The Minister appeared to have been informed of the criticism 'by his junior commanders regarding the way matters were actually handled during the crisis; he appears to have been less solid than we thought'.²⁰⁴⁶ Voorhoeve was warned by Junior Minister J.C. Gmelich Meijling. Since personnel was part of his portfolio, Meijling went to Zagreb together with his spokesman Veen to greet the members of Dutchbat after their release. On that occasion he had heard of the criticism of Karremans (and Franken) via Couzy. Because Voorhoeve at that moment was still considering whether the battalion, in the person of Karremans, had deserved a medal, Meijling decided to warn him.²⁰⁴⁷ Voorhoeve understood this message and therefore proposed that they 'wait and see' and not make any commitments at that stage regarding interviews to be given by Karremans.²⁰⁴⁸

Both Kreemers and Hartman later stated that at an early stage they expressed their scepticism about the euphoria that initially surrounded the approaching return of Dutchbat. Kreemers said that as early as 15 July he had predicted to the Army's Deputy Chief of Operations, Commodore Hilderink, and his colleague Veen in the Dutch Crisis Management Centre, that it would not be long before the first critical stories and dissenting reports appeared.²⁰⁴⁹ However, for a long time he saw no reason for apprehension about Karremans' performance because the Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen and Deputy Commander Van Baal indicated on 11 July that Karremans had done an outstanding job in

²⁰⁴³ Secretary-General, *A Srebrenica report*, par. 390.

²⁰⁴⁴ See: ICFY Genève, 139, crypto fax in 46. Akashi to Annan, Z-1251, 25/07/95, 'My meetings with the crown prince of the Netherlands, the Dutch prime minister, defence minister and chief of army staff. In a separate meeting with Akashi, Couzy informed him of the provisional results of the debriefing, which were in a similar vein to his later statement during the press conference.

²⁰⁴⁵ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01. Kreemers had no memory of this incident, nor did he find any reference to it in his notes. E-mail H.P.M. Kreemers to P. Koedijk (NIOD), 10/01/02.

²⁰⁴⁶ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Memorandum from J.J.C. Voorhoeve to DV attn. H.P.M. Kreemers, 18/07/95.

²⁰⁴⁷ Telephone interview J.C. Gmelich Meijling, 04/12/01; telephone interview J. Veen, 16/01/02; Voorhoeve's diary, pp. 125, 137.

²⁰⁴⁸ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Memorandum from J.J.C. Voorhoeve to DV attn. H.P.M. Kreemers, 18/07/95.

²⁰⁴⁹ E-mail H.P.M. Kreemers to P. Koedijk (NIOD), 06/01/02 (2).

carrying out his duties.²⁰⁵⁰ Hartman, who had a better idea of who he was dealing with, claims to have expressed to Kreemers during a meeting, probably shortly before his departure for Zagreb, the uneasy feeling that the combination of Karremans and the media would not be a happy one: 'I don't know what will go wrong and I don't know when, but believe me, something will go wrong when Karremans meets the press'.²⁰⁵¹

All things considered, on 18 July there were enough reasons for consultation between Voorhoeve and Kreemers regarding the strategy that should be followed. This resulted in the decision that the press conference upon the return of Dutchbat should go ahead nonetheless. The text of the statement that Karremans was to give would be sent to Kreemers in advance. Kreemers in his turn would keep the Minister informed. Meanwhile, follow-up interviews were to be discouraged as much as possible.²⁰⁵² As has already been stated, Riepen, the press officer present in Tuzla, compiled a list of questions the next day, which he faxed to Karremans. This list was to serve as part of the basis for preparing the press conference. No arrangements were made with regard to Couzy, although Voorhoeve in his memo of 18 July also described press contact with Couzy as 'asking for trouble'.²⁰⁵³ It would seem that the already strained relationships were not to be tested further.

On the morning of 20 July the negotiations with the NOS were completed and it was announced that Couzy and Karremans would give a press conference on Sunday. Oddly enough, the press had the impression that Minister Voorhoeve would also be present at the press conference, although as it turned out that was not to be taken for granted.²⁰⁵⁴ The final details were to be taken care of by the army press officers. The Director of General Information, Van den Heuvel, was on holiday and Kreemers' time was largely taken up with the London conference from 19 to 21 July. At that time, Voorhoeve was still afraid that Dutchbat could still be abducted in order to deter air strikes. The Minister decided to travel to London with Kreemers to discuss this matter with the United States Defence Secretary Perry and his fellow American, Shalikashvili.²⁰⁵⁵

3. Doubts about a press conference

That the preparation of Karremans had been lacking, became clear to Kreemers in London, when he was confronted with the positive statements about Mladic that the commander made at the border near Santici. He immediately called Couzy in Zagreb to inform him of the news.²⁰⁵⁶ That same morning, after the arrival of the battalion, press officer Beneker warned Commander Karremans of the massive interest from the press. The press officer had been unable to prevent Karremans from speaking to a couple of journalists who waited for the convoy at the gates of Pleso. The commander had 'curtly' said that he had not seen any atrocities himself but that his men had seen a number of incidents. He did not want to go into any detail until the press conference on Sunday.²⁰⁵⁷ Amid the bustle of the arrival and realizing the busy programme ahead, he could only sigh to Beneker: 'I'll just have to take it as all as it comes'.²⁰⁵⁸ Karremans had already let it be known in a telephone conversation with Brantz, while press

²⁰⁵⁰ E-mail H.P.M. Kreemers to P. Koedijk (NIOD), 06/01/02 (1).

²⁰⁵¹ NIOD, Coll. Beneker. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Memorandum for the Head of the Press Office. Subject: press conference Zagreb', 15/08/95 Kreemers was not aware of this memorandum. See: e-mail H.P.M. Kreemers to P Koedijk (NIOD), 06/01/02 (2).

²⁰⁵² E-mail H.P.M. Kreemers to P. Koedijk (NIOD), 06/01/02 (1).

²⁰⁵³ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Memo J.J.C. Voorhoeve to DV attn. Mr Kreemers, 18/07/95.

²⁰⁵⁴ See: 'Nederlandse blauwhelmen mogen weg uit Potocari' (Dutch UN troops allowed to leave Potocari), *ANP report*, 20/07/95.

²⁰⁵⁵ E-mail H.P.M. Kreemers to P. Koedijk (NIOD), 23/01/02.

²⁰⁵⁶ K. Colijn and P. Rusman, 'De dertien affaires Couzy', *Vrij Nederland*, 06/07/96.

²⁰⁵⁷ Van Gils, 'Meer dan honderd keer "Welkom terug"' ('More than 100 times "Welcome back"'), *ANP bericht*, 22/07/95, 11:10 CET.

²⁰⁵⁸ NIOD, Coll. Beneker. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Memorandum for the Head of the Press Office. Subject: press conference Zagreb', 15/08/95.

officer Riepen was present, that under no circumstances did he want ‘men in high places’ to be present; the situation was already bad enough and the battalion wanted nothing more than to be left in peace.²⁰⁵⁹ Despite these signals, the Commander was forced to go along with the ‘peace offering’ to the press, in the form of the improvised press conference at the gate of Camp Pleso in the evening, at which Karremans once again made ambivalent statements, this time regarding the military salute to Mladic at their farewell on the River Drina.

By this time, Couzy had or began to have his first doubts about Karremans’ appearance at the main press conference the following afternoon, because he had the impression that the battalion commander was ‘in a bad way’.²⁰⁶⁰ Couzy says he also expressed this opinion to Kreemers by telephone, but Kreemers categorically denies ever receiving such a call from Couzy.²⁰⁶¹ Before his departure on 20 July the Commander had promised both Kreemers and Commodore Hilderink that they would receive the statements for the press conference on time.²⁰⁶² But instead of receiving Karremans’ answers to Riepen’s list of questions, at around seven in the evening Kreemers received a telephone call from Hartman that bode no good.

Hartman and his colleagues were under a great deal of pressure. The programme for both days was being changed continuously. Beneker and Riepen initially had to cope with it all on their own and the demands on them were particularly heavy. In the words of Riepen:

‘We tried to organize it together. Something as simple as a hall or a sound system. Security, surveillance, transport from the Netherlands. What really bothered us was that the programme kept changing all the time. First hardly anyone was coming. Then only the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence were coming. Then Prime Minister Kok decided it merited his presence. In the end even Prince Willem-Alexander showed up. It just got bigger and bigger. Every time the whole plan had to be adapted. We barely had time to think about the content.’²⁰⁶³

Even the arrival of Hartman did little to ease the strain. ‘It felt like you’d been ordered to go and stand in the polder in a Force 9 gale and hold back the tide’, Hartman later said. Accordingly he was unable to remember the exact content of his telephone conversation with Kreemers.²⁰⁶⁴

According to the notes Kreemers took during the telephone conversation, Hartman painted a picture of the disastrous course of Saturday’s events, culminating in the ‘press conference at the gate’. Although Couzy’s statements about genocide were also problematic because of the threat of a difference of opinion with the minister, the conversation mainly focused on damage-control with regard to Karremans’ statements. Sunday’s press conference seemed to offer an opportunity for just such an operation. Hartman agreed to ‘put a spin’ on the words of praise about Mladic in his introduction. Kreemers suggested he include the sentence ‘Mladic is a scoundrel’: ‘Paul Hartman laughed out loud and said “Bert, I’ll do my best but I don’t know if I can get away with that. We have a very different view about what happened over there to most of Dutchbat.”’²⁰⁶⁵

Hartman was referring to the negative feelings many members of Dutchbat appeared to have towards the ABiH soldiers. He was able to observe this for himself in some members of the battalion, but he also heard it from outsiders. Shortly before calling Kreemers, the army press officer was present

²⁰⁵⁹ Interview J. Riepen, 03/10/99.

²⁰⁶⁰ K. Colijn and P. Rusman, ‘De dertien affaires Couzy’, *Vrij Nederland*, 06/07/96.

²⁰⁶¹ E-mail H.P.M. Kreemers to P. Koedijk (NIOD), 06/01/02.

²⁰⁶² Interviews H.P.M. Kreemers, 16/04/99; C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

²⁰⁶³ Interview J.H. Riepen, 03/10/99.

²⁰⁶⁴ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

²⁰⁶⁵ H.P.M. Kreemers, ‘*Achterkant van de maan*’, pp. 95-96. Hartman could not remember this conversation but agreed it was possible. Interview with W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

at the barbecue party organized for Dutchbat by Contingent Commander Verschraegen. Hartman sat in a group with six or seven aid workers, one of whom, Major R. de Wolf, he knew from a course they had taken together. From them he heard that many members of Dutchbat had strong negative feelings towards the local population, and were also positively disposed towards the VRS. Hartman: 'From what they said, I understood this reaction to be unusually strong. A name for this strange impression also occurred to me at that moment: the idea that people who are held captive do not turn against their captors but end up mixing with them: the Stockholm Syndrome.'²⁰⁶⁶ The Stockholm Syndrome is the common name for the phenomenon of hostages identifying with their captors, which takes its name from a study carried out into a hostage drama at a bank in Stockholm.²⁰⁶⁷

On his way to the studio in Zagreb, Hartman discussed his findings with Couzy. However, the Commander dismissed the notion of a syndrome. 'When we were in the car, stinking terribly due to a combination of beer and vomit, driving from that party to a studio in Zagreb to make an appearance on Nova [Dutch current affairs television programme], he didn't believe it at all. He thought it wasn't true; it was nonsense. After all, Dutchbat's predecessors had been through more or less the same experience. No, where he was concerned that Stockholm Syndrome was just some worthless idea dreamt up by a bunch of psychologists.'²⁰⁶⁸ Nonetheless, Couzy too was shocked by the attitude that many members of Dutchbat had towards the local population. Already the 55 former hostages showed clear understanding for the Bosnian Serbs who had held them captive. After his conversation with a number of Dutchbat members on 16 July, Couzy noted: 'They spoke negatively of the Muslim fighters and positively about the VRS'.²⁰⁶⁹ At that point, psychologist Venhovens had already used the term 'stockholm Syndrome' when talking to the press.²⁰⁷⁰ This defence mechanism of identification with the aggressor, as Venhovens described it, was he said 'mainly apparent in relation to the attitudes towards the Muslim fighters'.²⁰⁷¹

Although Couzy had therefore received some warning, he was shocked by the situation he encountered one week later in the rest of the battalion: 'Their psychological situation was much worse than I had expected and much worse than that of the individuals who had been prisoners of war. You could still see death in the eyes of many of them. They were very negative about the Muslims. That shocked me just as much'.²⁰⁷² Couzy decided to broach the subject himself to prepare the politicians and the media for what they would hear from Dutchbat themselves. 'On its arrival, the battalion was so very negative about the Muslims and so very positive about the Bosnian Serbs, it shocked me to the core. And yet they had done such a good job and they deserved to be reunited with the home front where the opinions were so very different. Bridging that gap was almost impossible. All I could do was stand in the middle. To reduce the psychological gulf by half'.²⁰⁷³ To the media the next day, Couzy spoke of 'the euphoric belief that they [the Bosnian Serbs] are the good guys. That feeling runs from the top to the bottom'.²⁰⁷⁴

This combined with Karremans' positive remarks about Mladic made Couzy begin to dread the moment when the members of Dutchbat would be confronted with the press. 'Long after midnight', after Couzy and Hartman had returned from the television studio in Zagreb from where the

²⁰⁶⁶ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

²⁰⁶⁷ The hostages in the Stockholm siege ultimately resisted release, later refused to testify against their captors and also collected money for their defence.

²⁰⁶⁸ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

²⁰⁶⁹ SMG/Debrief. 'Notes BLS. Strictly private', [July 1995]. Especially: 'Group session with team OP-S on 16 July 1995, time 14.30-16.00'.

²⁰⁷⁰ H. Moleman, 'VN'ers moeten zeggen hoe het voelde en rook' ('UN troops have to say how it felt and how it smelled'), *De Volkskrant*, 18/07/95.

²⁰⁷¹ P.M.P. Venhovens, 'Report of sending 1 (NL) VN Infbat (Dutchbat Griffin)' (01/08/95) p. 14.

²⁰⁷² Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

²⁰⁷³ K. Colijn and P. Rusman, 'De dertien affaires Couzy', *Vrij Nederland*, 06/07/95.

²⁰⁷⁴ W. op den Brouw and H. Meijer, 'sympathie voor Serviërs bij Nederlandse militairen' ('sympathy for Serbs among Dutch troops'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/07/95.

Commander had spoken to Nova, they once again discussed the next day's press conference.²⁰⁷⁵ It was then that Couzy came up with a drastic proposal:

'I thought: oh lord, that man has to attend the press conference tomorrow. That's going to be a disaster. I didn't think Karremans was in any state to carry it off well. It was then that I asked Hartman if they could keep Karremans away from the press conference and let me do it myself. Hartman replied: "I strongly advise you not to do that, because it will create the image that he's being kept quiet. Couzy's there on his own because Karremans clearly has something to hide. It'll make the press suspicious and that's the worst thing you could possibly do." I took his advice on the matter, though of course I've lived to regret it.'²⁰⁷⁶

Hartman stuck to the original plan because he felt he had no room for manoeuvre:

'Couzy and I discussed whether it was responsible to put Karremans at the mercy of the press in a state of such extreme fatigue. I had sixty journalists on my back at the time and it was driving me crazy. The first thing I thought was: what kind of terrible trouble is this going to create for us? There's no way I can persuade the world to accept this. The man's been home for 36 hours. The whole world thinks he's been sleeping it all off. And then, with the camera crew from the NOS [Dutch Broadcasting Association] on its way for a live broadcast in a national programme, you'd have to say: 'sorry boys, the show's been cancelled'. So I had the conviction that that just wasn't acceptable. That was a kind of '51 per cent' conviction. The other 49 per cent was saying: 'What in God's name are we doing here? This is probably going to go wrong.'²⁰⁷⁷

Couzy made a decision he was later to regret: the press conference would go ahead, with Karremans. In the allocation of roles the Dutchbat commander would be strictly limited to telling 'the facts as they occurred from the first threat to the observation posts until the supervision of the refugees'. Couzy took responsibility for addressing questions on the subject of 'torture/murder', basing his answers on the results of the debriefings by Bastiaans and his team.²⁰⁷⁸

4. 'No good guys, no bad guys'

Given the serious doubts about Karremans' performance, the preparations for the press conference became even more important. But in that respect too, everything went wrong. Hartman had only met Karremans briefly on Saturday, at 4.30 p.m., shortly before the impromptu press conference at the gate. Both before then and afterwards, the Dutchbat commander was unavailable to the Head of the Army Press Office, Hartman. Karremans later told him that after the tiring journey and the arrival in Zagreb, he went to bed shortly before 11 a.m., without being able to get to sleep straight away.²⁰⁷⁹ At three in the afternoon he had an appointment and at four o'clock there was the roll call that preceded the start of the debriefing. After the press conference at the gate Karremans had a meeting with Janvier. He then went to the barbecue party along with his men. While Hartman went to the studio in Zagreb

²⁰⁷⁵ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Memorandum on press-related aspects return Dutchbat 3', 26/07/95.

²⁰⁷⁶ Interview H.A. Couzy, 14/09/98.

²⁰⁷⁷ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

²⁰⁷⁸ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Memorandum on press-related aspects return Dutchbat 3', 26/07/95.

²⁰⁷⁹ NIOD, Coll. Beneker. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Memorandum for the Head of the Press Office. Subject: press conference Zagreb', 15/08/95. Later, in his book, Karremans said he went to bed at 10 o'clock. See: Karremans, *Srebrenica who cares?*, p. 242.

with Couzy, Karremans was being debriefed by Bastiaans. The Dutchbat commander left the debriefing well after midnight.

During the brief time they had together, Hartman arranged to meet Karremans at 8.30 the next morning at Holland House to look at the statement for the press conference and to prepare answers to possible questions. That would also be the opportunity to go through the list of questions drawn up by army press officer Riepen. In theory this would have given them enough time, were it not for the fact that again everything went wrong. That morning it was chaos, and in the words of Hartman a ‘time disaster’ occurred:

‘Keys were missing, people were impossible to track down, after promising to return immediately everyone got side-tracked by someone else, no one could be reached by phone, there was a computer in booth A, but the printer was hundreds of metres away...’.

Karremans was not on time for the appointment because he unexpectedly had to attend to other important business. The Dutchbat commander did not reappear until 10.15 a.m., when Beneker ran into him by chance and coaxed him to come with him to see Hartman.²⁰⁸⁰ However, Karremans had to leave again at 11.30 for meetings with Verschraegen and Lemmen about the ceremony for the next day and he also had to see representatives from the UN, Civil Affairs and UNCHR, for the UN debriefing on human rights violations.²⁰⁸¹

During their conversation, Hartman got the impression that Karremans was drained.²⁰⁸² Instead of the ‘collegial conversation’ Karremans had been expecting, his Dutch debriefing with Bastiaans the previous evening had been a ‘cross-examination’, in which he felt he had been treated like a ‘villain’. He had been shown no understanding at all for the position he had been in. After the conversation he stood out in the street, feeling very alone. His anger at the way he had been treated meant he was at first unable to get to sleep.²⁰⁸³ The effects were noticeable the next morning.

The time available ‘was just enough to go through his account of the last weeks of Srebrenica’.²⁰⁸⁴ Karremans’ notebooks formed the basis for this process.²⁰⁸⁵ ‘In plain language’ Hartman tried to write a chronological report of events in Srebrenica between 6 and 20 July. It proved to be no easy task: ‘I understood then, while we were talking, that it would be good if we could get that finished, but that it would be impossible to put together a preparatory text for this man, who was being required to do all kinds of things, who had to be everywhere at once and who was still utterly exhausted’.²⁰⁸⁶

These circumstances meant that there was no time to deal with Riepen’s list of questions, which was to have served as the guideline for preparing the press conference. Hartman:

‘I haven’t the faintest idea whether he even had a look at it. It’s a fact that we never discussed it. And then you walk into that carnival, that circus, that Jeroen Bosch painting that came to life there in Pleso, where we were dealing with a Karremans who was so tired. So very tired. I really had the feeling that he was only a millimetre away from the end of his tether. It just wasn’t possible to really talk with him.’²⁰⁸⁷

²⁰⁸⁰ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

²⁰⁸¹ NIOD, Coll. Beneker. W.P.P. Hartman, ‘Memorandum for the Head of the Press Office. Subject: press conference Zagreb’, 15/08/95.

²⁰⁸² Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

²⁰⁸³ Karremans, *Srebrenica who cares?*, pp. 242-243.

²⁰⁸⁴ Appendix to letter H.P.M. Kreemers to Minister, V95014995, ‘Press conference in Zagreb, 23 July 1995’, 02/08/95.

²⁰⁸⁵ Karremans, *Srebrenica who cares?*, p. 245.

²⁰⁸⁶ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

²⁰⁸⁷ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

There was one point the army press officer did make an attempt to get through to Karremans. Hartman foresaw that Karremans' previous statements about Mladic and the generally prevalent negative attitude towards the Muslim men constituted a great risk. In order to accommodate that feeling without alienating the Dutchbat troops too much, Hartman deliberately added 'the equalizing "no good guys, no bad guys" comparison' to Karremans' text, 'in an attempt to prevent a situation in which esteem for the VRS would set the tone'.²⁰⁸⁸

Hartman also suggested to Karremans a remark specifically intended to neutralize the previous statements about Mladic: 'About Mladic: tactically he is very clever. A strategist but no gentleman (a play on words in Dutch: *veldbeer* is the word for 'strategist' and *beer* is the word for 'gentleman'). There are no gentlemen in this war'.²⁰⁸⁹

After Karremans' departure, Hartman went to work on the texts. Meanwhile Beneker ran into the battalion commander by chance while the latter was in conversation with debriefer Lemmen. At that moment Karremans was apparently discussing Hartman's suggestion about Mladic. When Beneker heard this, he advised Karremans not to use the 'no good guys, no bad guys' remark, since in many people's eyes there were 'bad guys', in the shape of the Bosnian Serbs. Beneker felt that people would not understand such a comment. As Beneker remembers it, Lemmen agreed with him. Karremans continued to emphasize that he only wanted to evaluate Mladic in a military capacity, but Beneker pointed out to him that he would soon be speaking on behalf of the Netherlands and that he therefore had to view the matter differently. Beneker also says he expressed his doubts to Hartman. However, there was no time to look at the rest of the text as well: the plane bringing Prime Minister Kok and Prince Willem-Alexander and the plane carrying Minister Voorhoeve and the Dutch press had already arrived and this took up all their attention.²⁰⁹⁰

Karremans later said of the situation:

'When you're having all kinds of conversations with dignitaries and you have a spare half hour, you can't just walk up to Hartman and say: 'Okay, where were we? Let's take it from there.' It just doesn't work that way. On the basis of some notes I gave a general account of what happened. Then the Minister of Defence wanted to see me, then Prince Willem-Alexander, and so on and so forth. Not to mention a number of important debriefings. I don't think you can put the blame for that on Hartman personally. Half an hour before the final press conference I had to go and have a proper look at what had been set down on paper and make a coherent story out of it. Then I got myself a cola and went off to the chaplain's room and sat and made changes to the text. There were things in it that weren't correct.'²⁰⁹¹

Hartman, who was there: 'We made a few changes to the text together in pencil. Nothing essential. Removed a number here and there, that sort of thing. That was it! Then he had to go, just like Couzy had to go.'²⁰⁹² Hartman:

'Then it was clear as day that this wasn't going to work, because all hell had broken loose. Music was blaring. All the logistical problems meant there was no office available. Then all anyone was concerned about was Kok and the Prince. We're happy the boys made it out of there. No one knew anymore who had to

²⁰⁸⁸ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Memorandum on press-related aspects return Dutchbat 3', 26/07/95.

²⁰⁸⁹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. 'Karremans' introduction to press conference 23 July at Camp Pleso'. Appendix to letter H.P.M. Kreemers to Minister, V95014995, 'Press conference in Zagreb, 23 July 1995', 02/08/95.

²⁰⁹⁰ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

²⁰⁹¹ Interview Th. Karremans, 15/12/98.

²⁰⁹² Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

think of what for the press conference. I didn't have the manpower to say: "Okay boys, time for a quick about turn"²⁰⁹³.

There was no time for further discussion, nor to exchange ideas about the English translation of the text for the international press conference which was to follow the Dutch one. Karremans, however, expressed the opinion that this wasn't too much of a problem given his experience abroad with international military staffs.²⁰⁹⁴

The enormous time pressure meant that something else went by the board. While waiting for Karremans, Hartman had already started work on a statement to be given by Couzy that afternoon, but which met with resistance from Couzy. Hartman:

'It most definitely wasn't his style. He had something else entirely in mind. He said: "You know what? You haven't found a way to straighten this out either. There's no way you could. You concentrate on Karremans. Leave this to me." He wrote his story by hand on small sheets of paper. Which he read out word for word. He left and said: "The minister will be here soon, with Kok and the Crown Prince. So from now on, I'm not around." He closed the door. Another handful of sand'.²⁰⁹⁵

Together with a Minister Voorhoeve and an aeroplane full of press, Deputy Director of General Information Kreemers made a delayed arrival in Zagreb. For reasons of protocol, the plane had to wait until Prime Minister Kok and Prince Willem-Alexander had landed.²⁰⁹⁶

It was quarter to three and, in the words of Hartman, Holland House had been transformed into a 'festive whirlwind of a royal visit, elated members of the military and authorities hidden behind a barrage of microphones and cameras'.²⁰⁹⁷ Kreemers too was struck by the chaos at Pleso, which he later compared to the finishing line of a stage of the Tour de France.

While Voorhoeve went to see Janvier first, Kreemers immediately went in search of Hartman amid all the bustle. He found him at Holland House. The news that the Head of the Army Press Office had only been able to work on Karremans' statement, was just about the first thing he heard from the troubled press officer. Hartman handed him a copy of Karremans' introduction. When asked he confirmed that Couzy also had a copy in his case, along with the text he had written for himself. 'I couldn't very well do two things at once', said Hartman.²⁰⁹⁸ They had a look at Karremans' text together. Kreemers thought the separate addition about Mladic was very flimsy, but he didn't press the issue. He was most concerned about the concluding passage: 'We have learnt that you can't divide the parties in Bosnia into "good guys" and "bad guys"'. Kreemers wanted to have that passage removed, but according to him he met with objections from Hartman: 'Bert, that is written in stone in the minds of around three hundred men here. You'll never be able to take it out'.²⁰⁹⁹

There would still be another opportunity to set matters straight, or so it seemed. From London, where Voorhoeve was attending the conference on Bosnia on 21 July, it was arranged with Couzy's Warrant Officer that there would be an opportunity for consultation between the Minister, Couzy,

²⁰⁹³ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

²⁰⁹⁴ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Memorandum on press-related aspects return Dutchbat 3', 26/07/95; interview with W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

²⁰⁹⁵ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

²⁰⁹⁶ K. Schaepman and M. van Weezel, 'Pia Dijkstra had het al gezegd. Politici hebben spijt van "Zagreb"' ('Newsreader Pia Dijkstra said it already. The politicians regret "Zagreb"'), *Vrij Nederland*, 16/09/95.

²⁰⁹⁷ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Memorandum on press-related aspects return Dutchbat 3', 26/07/95; interview with W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

²⁰⁹⁸ Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan*, p. 97.

²⁰⁹⁹ Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan*, pp. 97-98.

Karremans, Kreemers and Hartman in Zagreb.²¹⁰⁰ In the programme drawn up by Voorhoeve's Warrant Officer, Major of the Marines R. Zuur, on 21 July, a 'Conversation with Lt Col. Karremans in the presence of Lt Gen. H. Couzy' was planned for half past three.²¹⁰¹ Army Press Officer Hartman later called this an 'outstanding initiative that could have prevented a great deal of trouble'. There was one problem, however: Hartman was not informed of it.²¹⁰²

When Kreemers was exchanging his last words with Hartman, Minister Voorhoeve arrived at Holland House. Kreemers gave Voorhoeve a copy of Karremans' text. He explained that the text was largely factual.²¹⁰³ Voorhoeve also heard from Kreemers that Karremans 'would retract his unacceptable statements about Mladic'. This doesn't really fit in with the criticism Kreemers said he expressed regarding Hartman's 'flimsy' suggestion to Karremans. It was not possible to ascertain whose memory had failed him on this point. While Kreemers went in search of the Dutchbat commander with a view to the consultation that had been arranged, Voorhoeve was taken aside by Couzy who had been looking for him for some time. The Commander wanted to settle with Voorhoeve the issue of the 'no genocide' statements. Reassured by Kreemers' words, the minister pocketed the copy of Karremans' statement he had just received from Kreemers 'in good faith'. The discussion with Couzy and the four or five interviews with television and radio that followed immediately afterwards, led to the situation that Voorhoeve first heard Karremans' statement from the man himself during the press conference.²¹⁰⁴

Before that time, Kreemers together with Major Zuur had tried in vain to get hold of Karremans for the planned consultation. Even in a physical sense, this proved to be a problem, since the danger of mines meant that some parts of the camp were out of bounds. Kreemers and Zuur had to make enormous detours in order to get from one small group of soldiers to another. Eventually Kreemers succeeded in reaching Karremans. Kreemers:

I introduced myself and asked him to come along for the meeting with the Minister and the Commander. He was unaware of the appointment and said he had something else to take care of first. He turned round to face a very tall Dutchbat NCO, spoke briefly to him and then turned around again. At that moment Prime Minister Kok and the Crown Prince came walking up to him. "What are you going to do now?" asked Major Zuur. "Rutger, what am I supposed to do, place him under arrest? This is a lost cause. Come on, we'd better be getting back", I said.²¹⁰⁵

Shortly before four, Karremans was finally able to get away. Hartman was already in the film hall to attend to the final preparations. He hadn't received any response to Karremans' text from anyone. Hartman had asked Karremans via Beneker to come and see him in advance, so that they could go through the details one more time. However, Karremans said he did not have the time and wanted to

²¹⁰⁰ Report of conversation with H.P.M. Kreemers, 24 August 1998. In: Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*. Part 2, Appendix 4, Conversation reports and supplementary notes.

²¹⁰¹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. [R. Zuur], 'Welcoming Dutchbat 3 in Zagreb on 23 and 24 July 1995', 21/07/95. Appendix to: H.P.M. Kreemers to Minister, V95014995, 'Press conference in Zagreb, 23 July 1995', 02/08/95.

²¹⁰² Hartman only became aware of this when he read a draft memorandum from Kreemers dated 3 August about the problems on 23 July surrounding the press conference. On 15 August he discovered that the meeting was also mentioned in the programme of Colonel Verschraegen, the Contingent Commander. See: NIOD, Coll. Beneker. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Memorandum for Head of the Press Office. Subject: press conference Zagreb', 15/08/95.

²¹⁰³ H.P.M. Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan*, pp. 97-98.

²¹⁰⁴ Memorandum Minister to Head of Press Office, no. 31/95, 'Press conference Zagreb', 17/08/95. Included in: Voorhoeve's diary, p. 138.

²¹⁰⁵ Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan*, p. 98.

prepare his English statement.²¹⁰⁶ Beneker was able to arrange a quiet corner for him where he could work uninterrupted for a while.²¹⁰⁷

When Kreemers returned empty handed to Holland House, the conversation between Voorhoeve and Couzy was over. In his interview with the NIOD Couzy claimed that nothing of note was discussed between himself and Voorhoeve; in contrast with the memories of Voorhoeve and Kreemers.²¹⁰⁸ 'The Minister had accepted the line that the Commander wanted to take about the 'no genocide' issue: that line was that as far as the observations of Dutchbat were concerned, there was no reason to apply that term. Later, when his comments came to be used against him, Couzy declared in interviews that no one in Zagreb had told him 'that that wasn't such a tactful thing to say'.²¹⁰⁹

However, the people who spoke with Couzy had to rely on what he told them about the findings of the debriefing. He only mentioned two or possibly three executions.²¹¹⁰ Couzy also said nothing of his reservations about Karremans.²¹¹¹ For lack of further information, Voorhoeve had no choice but to rely on the Commander. In addition to this, he must have been aware of the tensions that existed between himself and Couzy, and this was not the time to start a conflict.

There was also another reason to question the validity of Couzy's general accusation that no one had warned him about the effect his statement might have. Not everyone who was qualified to do so had been aware of what he was planning to say. Back in the Netherlands, in the studio in Bussum, Commodore Hilderink sat waiting for the start of the live link broadcast between Zagreb and Bussum with mounting vexation. The commodore was the programme's studio guest, together with Sergeant S. Pattiwael van Westerlo, who had returned to the Netherlands earlier, but he was feeling very ill at ease:

'I had one major concern and that was that [Couzy's] statement - the famous statement - wouldn't reach me or that I wouldn't know anything else about the programme. From the very beginning I was busy trying to get hold of that statement, together with Bert Kreemers. The day before Couzy left we made an agreement that he would call me. It was difficult for me to call him since I never knew who might be there with him. He was to tell me what was going to be said and what the further course of events would be. If he was unable to reach me, he would inform Bert instead. I know from Bert that he didn't call him either. I know for a fact that he never called me. Before I left home I made one last attempt to call him. I also know for certain that the people there gave him the message that I needed to speak with him and that I reminded him of his promises and what we had agreed. I heard nothing more from him. Nothing at all! Accordingly I was squirming in my seat at the television studio since I didn't have the faintest idea what was going to be said in those statements. When I went into the studio I gave my Warrant Officer Fokkema my mobile phone. "You never know!", I thought. Fokkema could always give me a sign or a nod once I was in there. I wasn't at all at ease. I was downright pissed off about it. In fact this was one example of the unpleasant situations that continually arose in our working relationship. It was anything but smooth.'²¹¹²

²¹⁰⁶ NIOD, Coll. Beneker. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Memorandum for the Head of the Press Office. Subject: press conference Zagreb', 15/08/95.

²¹⁰⁷ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

²¹⁰⁸ Interview H.A. Couzy, 14/09/98.

²¹⁰⁹ K. Colijn and P. Rusman, 'De dertien affaires Couzy', *Vrij Nederland*, 06/07/96.

²¹¹⁰ Kreemers spoke in his memoirs of 'one, possibly two executions, that was all according to the Commander'. This does not tally with Couzy's lengthier statement during the press conference. Kreemers, '*Aan de achterkant van de maan*', p. 98.

²¹¹¹ E-mail H.P.M. Kreemers to P. Koedijk (NIOD), 06/01/02.

²¹¹² Interview with C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

Hilderink was referring to the flaws in the cooperation between the Army and the Defence Crisis Management Centre). At a certain point, Hilderink did speak with Kreemers, who decided to take the call intended for the Commander because 'Couzy had too much on his mind to have a phone conversation'. Kreemers said that he had just heard from Couzy that there had been executions in Potocari. This shock was all the more powerful for the realization that this information was already almost ten days old. Hilderink, too, who went on to report it, was 'utterly amazed' that he had not been informed of this.²¹¹³ The previous chapter has already made mention of the problem inherent in this version of the facts because Hilderink was of the opinion that he had been given some of this information.²¹¹⁴

5. The press conferences

After his conversation with Couzy, Voorhoeve left Holland House to go and speak with a number of TV journalists. At ten to five, five minutes before the start of the press conference, the Minister took a seat at the rear of the hall, where Karremans had already started his account. Only Couzy and Hartman were sitting with him at the table. The Commander later stated that he 'hadn't seen properly' the copy of Karremans' text he had been given by Hartman but that he didn't think the comment about 'no good guys, no bad guys' was 'all that far off the mark'.²¹¹⁵ The Dutchbat commander gave a point-by-point summary of the main events, sticking by and large to the prepared text, adding the odd comment here and there.²¹¹⁶

Karremans made it clear that it would have been impossible to mount a proper defence of the enclave. Mladic had 'very cleverly manoeuvred' Dutchbat 'out [of the enclave] with a 'Pacman'-like approach in an 'outstandingly executed military operation'. He also described the failure of Close Air Support, with an accusatory undertone directed at the UN which could only have been picked up by those in the know. The written text was clearer on that point: there Karremans made it explicitly clear that the excuse of 'low-lying mist' had no basis in fact. He also contradicted the claim that the condition of 'a real attack' on the UN or the city had not been met: 'the first soldiers of the Serb infantry were walking into the outlying districts of the city from 7 a.m.'. Karremans did not include this in his spoken address. A noteworthy statement was that he himself 'had not asked for air strikes directly' but that 'air strikes' were a 'conclusion' that his superiors should have taken on the basis of the outline he had given of the situation. (Chapter 7 of Part III contains an in-depth examination of Karremans' other statements regarding Close Air Support.) Later, Karremans was unable to explain why he decided to use this particular phraseology to express his view of the air support issue, a statement which did not attract attention at the time.²¹¹⁷ Another noteworthy aspect is that this remark is very much in line with his defensive statements in the face of Mladic's tirade about air strikes.

Karremans also stated that he had 'emphatically' chosen to cooperate with 'the departure of the refugees' and had demanded of Mladic the 'supervision' over the transportation of the refugees and the wounded. This prevented a situation in which 'all kinds of terrible things could have taken place on the doorstep of the compound'. Karremans did say that men between the ages of seventeen and sixty 'were taken aside' and that this was done 'out of sight of the battalion'. This was in direct contradiction to what a number of Dutchbat soldiers had said during their operational debriefing. The statement not only highlighted what Karremans was and was not told in Potocari, but also that during the debriefing no extra attention had been focused on these contradictions. It underlined yet again how poor the

²¹¹³ Kreemers, *'Aan de achterkant van de maan'*, pp. 98-99.

²¹¹⁴ Interview C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

²¹¹⁵ K. Colijn and P. Rusman, 'De dertien affaires Couzy', *Vrij Nederland*, 06/07/96.

²¹¹⁶ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. 'Karremans' introduction press conference 23 July at Camp Pleso'. Appendix to: H.P.M. Kreemers to Minister, V95014995, 'Press conference in Zagreb, 23 July 1995', 02/08/95; SMG 1007/13, 'statement by Lt Col T. Karremans, press conference Camp Pleso (Zagreb) 23 July 1995'.

²¹¹⁷ Interview Th. Karremans, 15/12/98.

coordination regarding the factual content of the press conference was. A meeting with Bastiaans, Couzy, Karremans and Hartman to discuss the results of the debriefing was not considered. In any case, lack of time would have made it impossible.

To his statement about the fate of the population, Karremans added by way of reassurance: 'but take it from me that the number of able-bodied men among those twenty-five thousand refugees was not even five per cent. Most of the refugees were women, children and elderly'.

The Commander of Dutchbat III made another comment, the meaning of which, namely the position he had taken in his negotiations with Mladic, would only become apparent later. In answer to a question about those discussions, Karremans answered that the first meeting was 'not very pleasant'. For the second meeting he had taken a representative of the refugees along with him, Nesib Mandzic. Karremans spoke of how he had presented his wish to Mladic, 'in particular with regard to the wounded': 'and after that he let him [Mandzic] take over the negotiations'.

Although the director of *Médecins sans Frontières* De Milliano had already voiced reservations about the supervision of the convoy, based on what he had heard from the refugees and from the people in his organization in the enclave, it only became clear to Voorhoeve and Kreemers during the press conference for the first time that Dutchbat was not capable of supervising each individual bus properly.²¹¹⁸ During the press conference, Karremans did not use the explicit statement from his written text that 'one man per bus or truck' was impossible. He did speak of how he had lost fourteen Mercedes in one-and-a-half days and was forced to place the last remaining vehicles at various points along the route in order to check what was happening with the convoy to some degree at least. These details which were entirely new to Voorhoeve and Kreemers illustrated without their knowing it how important information had been left hanging in mid-air or had not been appreciated at its full value. On 13 July, Karremans had reported via Brantz that he had been forced to adapt the supervision procedure: 'There won't be one Dutchman per bus, but one per convoy'.²¹¹⁹ In addition to this, Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen had a telephone conversation that same day with the Bosnian foreign minister Sacirbey, in which the latter expressed his concern 'at the fact that the convoys are travelling without an escort'.²¹²⁰

After the presentations by Karremans and Couzy, various journalists asked questions on the issue of the convoy supervision. The lack of coordination between both speakers led to a situation in which Couzy could declare that 'the transportation of the evacuees took place in a proper manner' and that 'no incidents of that sort' were observed, by which he was referring to rapes.²¹²¹ At the same time, Karremans' words led to the conclusion that nothing could be maintained with any certainty because the supervision had left so much to be desired. One insistent journalist exposed this contradiction clearly. He asked about the length of the route ('around fifty kilometres'), and then about the number of observation posts ('four or five') and concluded: 'so that means every ten kilometres (...) and in the space in between, anything could happen?' Karremans: 'Yes'. 'Do you have any indications that anything happened?' 'No, we don't.' 'But you couldn't see for yourself?' 'No, I couldn't'.²¹²²

Another question put to Karremans was put by one of the two reporters from Dutch commercial broadcasting company RTL who were present, Jaap van Deurzen and Nico Steenbergen.²¹²³ One of them wanted to know from Karremans how many civilian casualties he

²¹¹⁸ K. Bagijn, 'Dutchbat Maandag naar huis' ('Dutchbat head home on Monday'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 21/07/95. The criticism that Voorhoeve could have found this out the previous week from the press coverage given to the findings of *Artsen Zonder Grenzen* was also expressed in the media. See the editorial 'Bescherming' ('Protection'), in: *Brabants Dagblad*, 26/07/95.

²¹¹⁹ SMG, 1004. Message dtg 131439 from Col Brantz (through DCBC). In: 'various sources to sitcen_A BLS', 13/07/95, 20:27.

²¹²⁰ DAB. Report by CDS in consultation with Sacirbey 131745 B JUL 95'.

²¹²¹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. 'Excerpts from the press conference in Zagreb, 23 July 1995. (Complete text of the introduction by Lieutenant-General H.A. Couzy)'. Also in Voorhoeve's diary, pp. 139-140.

²¹²² SMG 1007/13. 'Questions to Lt Gen Couzy and Lt Col Karremans' [literal transcript].

²¹²³ During the preparations for the press conference no one thought to arrange a microphone in the hall. Nor were the questions repeated by Hartman. Those who watched the NOS live broadcast were therefore unable or largely unable to hear

thought there had been. The battalion commander could not give an answer to this question and also said he was unable to give a general estimate. Van Deurzen then asked whether he had the impression 'that it was more than one thousand'. Karremans answered: 'Including the Muslim fighters, then yes, definitely'. When he was later asked what the basis for this answer had been, Karremans was unable to answer because he could not remember.²¹²⁴ We are only able to assume that he may have been referring to the statements made by Mulder, who had seen hundreds of dead bodies at OP Mike. Of the media present, only the *NRC Handelsblad* newspaper picked up on this statement, but no one pursued the matter further.²¹²⁵

Another topic that was brought up by the journalists several times, concerned Dutchbat's view of the parties in the conflict. Karremans had included in his text a remark about the feelings of the battalion towards the local people: 'Our people noticed that the refugees, the Muslim population, paid little heed to the old people lying by the side of the road'. This statement expressed a widespread irritation over the fact that Dutchbat had done all it could to bring the refugees safely to Potocari, while in particular the young men were only interested in saving their own skin.²¹²⁶ However, this statement was entirely overshadowed by Karremans' closing remark, about the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys', supplied by Hartman.

When Voorhoeve later described Karremans' text as 'adequate', he made an exception for this closing remark. He also regretted the fact that Karremans had not mentioned the points aimed at clarifying his position on Mladic, which had been part of his written text, in the actual speech.²¹²⁷ The result of this was that his positive remarks about Mladic were then brought up by the journalists. In his answer Karremans stumbled over the sentence that Hartman had prepared for him. Instead of saying that Mladic was 'a strategist but no gentleman' (*een veldheer, maar geen heer*), Karremans said he was 'not a good strategist by any means' (*geenszins een goed veldheer*) while at the same time speaking of a 'very correct' operation in the military sense. In the face of subsequent critical questions about Mladic, Karremans defended himself by saying that 'in the environment we have been in, different opinions about the conflict between both parties are held than in other parts of the world'. There then came a follow-up question asking whether he regarded all the parties as equally guilty and therefore thought that Mladic could not be labelled a war criminal. Karremans answered this question affirmatively.

While answering the questions, Karremans introduced another topic, which would eventually do him just as much harm or even more harm as the 'no good guys, no bad guys' statement itself. The opening question dealt with the issue of whether he felt he had been given an impossible assignment by the UN, having to protect such a large area with only a handful of men. In addition to his affirmative answer, Karremans went on to say that as a result of Dutchbat's inability to exercise proper supervision, 'Muslim fighters' regularly left the enclave 'to do one thing or another'. The next morning they then returned 'behind the shield of the UN, behind the shield of the battalion'. In answer to the following question about 'good guys' and 'bad guys', Karremans answered that you needed to consult the history books to form a proper understanding of the situation. He pointed out that in attacks by ABiH troops, over two years before, 'we know that in the area surrounding the Srebrenica enclave alone, 192 villages were razed to the ground and all the inhabitants killed. That's what I mean when I say "no good guys, no bad guys". As far as I'm concerned, they're all the same'.

many of the questions posed. It was also more or less impossible to identify who had asked a particular question. The transcript made later was therefore not clear on all points. In such cases, re-examining the recording of the live broadcast did provide the necessary information.

²¹²⁴ Interview Th. Karremans, 17/12/98.

²¹²⁵ W. op den Brouw and H. Meijer, 'Karremans: ten minste duizend doden' ('Karremans: at least one thousand dead'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/07/95.

²¹²⁶ This subject frequently came up in many debriefing statements and also in conversations with members of Dutchbat.

²¹²⁷ Memorandum from Minister to Head of Press Office, no. 31/95, 'Press conference Zagreb', 17/08/95. Included in Voorhoeve's diary, p. 138.

Gerrit Valk, Member of Parliament for the Dutch Labour Party PvdA, was part of the parliamentary delegation that travelled with Voorhoeve to Zagreb. He was present at the press conference with his colleagues. ‘We were definitely surprised by the phrase “no good guys, no bad guys”’, said Valk. ‘When I heard his comment that there had been large scale attacks from Srebrenica on the surrounding region, on villages, on farms, on houses where Serbs lived, I thought: that is Serbian propaganda! [Karremans] must have read it in pamphlets. Only later did the picture properly emerge of the violence committed in the region on a fairly large scale by Muslim fighters, some of it from Srebrenica.’ In connection with this last point, Valk referred to the book *Het zwartste scenario* (‘The blackest scenario’) by the journalists Frank Westerman and Bart Rijs, published in 1997. This volume contained the first extended account of the bloody previous history of the Safe Area.²¹²⁸

There had indeed been attacks on Serb villages and settlements in 1992 and 1993, led by Naser Oric, in which many people died. However, the figure of 192 mentioned by Karremans was on the high side. Since his source is unclear, it is not possible to work out what he meant by the term ‘villages’. The pattern of settlements in the area around Srebrenica was characterized by a large number of small settlements, often consisting of only a few houses but which did have their own names. The most reliable estimates indicate that in 18 months of attacks, around thirty Serb villages and seventy of these settlements had fallen victim to Oric’s troops. These attacks are dealt with extensively in the Appendix of this report, *History, Memory and Politics in Eastern Bosnia*.

Akashi, too, later declared in a conversation with the Dutch Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, Biegman, that in his opinion the Bosnian Muslims used the Safe Areas as ‘a place to recuperate and as a command centre for armed operations (...) The assessment must be balanced’, according to an account of Akashi’s words given by Biegman, who did not agree about ‘the scale of the provocations by the Muslims’.²¹²⁹

Although Karremans’ statements did therefore have a basis in truth, they left a great deal to be desired from a political point of view in the context in which he used them. After all, the attacks from that period were primarily foraging raids for food. The soldiers were spurred on by the *torbari* (‘bag people’), a horde of refugees consisting of thousands of men and women, young and old, who came in after the first wave of attackers to fill their empty pockets and bags with plundered food. It is interesting to note that once food drops began, this put an end to the military power that the *torbari*, in all their uncontrollability, signified for Oric.²¹³⁰

Even after the establishment of the Safe Area, expeditions took place, but Dutchbat only had a suspicion of this. News of the so-called attack on Visnjica (see Part III, Chapter 5), which Karadzic and Mladic used as the pretext for their attack on Srebrenica, only reached Dutchbat through the media. However, various members of Dutchbat, including chaplain A. Engberts, did experience instances of ABiH soldiers boasting of their expeditions outside the enclave. After the fall, Engberts stated that he had seen that Srebrenica was used as a base for attacks on the Serbs.²¹³¹

At that moment, Karremans’ statement about the 192 villages did not provoke a response among the Dutch journalists, let alone a question as to its veracity. When Hartman rounded off the first part of the press conference, he therefore felt reasonably satisfied:

‘When we stood up, Bert Kreemers came up to me from the back of the hall and gave me a firm handshake. “Well done, lad!” We were satisfied: here we were able to round things off neatly. Nice work! That was the Dutch press

²¹²⁸ Interview G. Valk, 15/10/99. Other MPs as well reported afterwards that they felt ‘very uneasy’ (Hoekema) while listening to the press conference. See: Kees Schaepman and Max van Weezel, ‘Pia Dijkstra had het al gezegd’, *Vrij Nederland*, 16/09/95.

²¹²⁹ DCBC, 1975. Coded telegram PR UN New York to Foreign Minister, Biegman 382, 01/06/96.

²¹³⁰ For a description of the role of the *torbari* see especially: Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp. 157-161, 163-164.

²¹³¹ G. Geerds, “‘Gebed geeft God ruimte”. Legerpredikant Engberts terug uit Zagreb’ (“Prayer gives God room”. Army chaplain Engberts back from Zagreb), *Nederlands Dagblad*, 29/07/95.

conference. There wasn't a single journalist who came up to us afterwards and said: "What are you up to? That man's saying all kinds of strange things!"²¹³²

This was not entirely accurate. Maarten Beneker had been sitting in the hall among the journalists, including Hans Moleman of Dutch daily *De Volkskrant*: 'When Karremans made his comment about "no good guys, no bad guys", I saw him shoot me a strange glance and then look round to see if anyone else reacted. But there was nothing'.²¹³³

Beneker himself did have the immediate impression that there was a problem. In the footage immediately after the press conference it is clear to see how he brings his hands up to his head in an expression of doubt.²¹³⁴ While most of the Dutch journalists left the hall, one or two remained seated, including Moleman. He told Beneker that he just wanted to see how the international press would respond. The press officer then went up to Karremans to entreat him not to use that phrase in front of the foreign media, among whom the Serbian and Croatian press would be represented.²¹³⁵

Voorhoeve also felt uneasy after the statements made by Karremans and Couzy and decided to sit at the table himself during the international press conference: 'At that point I said: sorry, now I'm going to sit at the table myself, so that it doesn't happen again'.²¹³⁶ This did not go at all smoothly. First of all Couzy was of the opinion that Voorhoeve had acted 'in contradiction to all previous agreements' by attending the first press conference. Now, as Couzy put it 'to my amazement', the minister was even going so far as to sit at the table. This led to irritated reactions back and forth. Couzy openly wondered if he should really be at the table at all, but Voorhoeve told him: 'You have to be at that table. All you have to do is sit there'.²¹³⁷

As Voorhoeve remembers it, initially the press conference proceeded without too many problems, and 'at a given moment I took over from Karremans'.²¹³⁸ The minister did his best to introduce nuances into the statements by Couzy and Karremans that Dutchbat had found no indications of genocide. Although Couzy in the second instance had also added the qualification that this said nothing about what might have taken place out of sight of the Dutch military, Voorhoeve put greater emphasis on the element of uncertainty. Couzy declared afterwards: 'All those rumours of massacres come from the refugees themselves'.²¹³⁹ Voorhoeve, however, offered a far more cautious response to a question on the discrepancy between the accounts given by the refugees and those of the members of Dutchbat: 'If only two-thirds of the refugee accounts are true, this adds up to horrible events. What we know is that several thousand men and boys are missing'.²¹⁴⁰

However, the minister was not the person the press had primarily come to see. Attention was focused on Karremans and the phrase 'no good guys, no bad guys' turned out to have a far more powerful effect on the international journalists than it had on their Dutch counterparts. As Hartman remembers it, it was a French journalist who first raised the issue: 'He asked a question to which Karremans answered: "Yes, but those Muslims also committed murders. They are after the enclave." It was then that my muscles began to tense, because this was something I'd never heard of'.²¹⁴¹ As in the Dutch press conference Karremans then referred to the story of the 192 Serb villages massacred by Bosnian Muslims. But unlike the Dutch journalists, the foreign media did not let the matter drop.

²¹³² Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99. Kreemers declared that he could not imagine having had any reason to extend his congratulations. E-mail H.P.M. Kreemers to P. Koedijk (NIOD), 23/01/02.

²¹³³ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

²¹³⁴ NIOD, Coll. Videotapes. NOS live broadcast, press conference Pleso, 23/07/95.

²¹³⁵ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

²¹³⁶ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 14/07/97.

²¹³⁷ K. Colijn and P. Rusman, 'De dertien affaires Couzy', *Vrij Nederland*, 06/07/96.

²¹³⁸ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 14/07/97.

²¹³⁹ J. Oosthoek, "We deden wat we konden" ("We did what we could"), *Defensiekrant*, no. 29, 27/07/95.

²¹⁴⁰ A. Cowell, 'Peacekeepers in fallen enclave confirm some atrocities but say they saw no rapes', *New York Times*, 24/07/95.

²¹⁴¹ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

Another journalist asked Karremans where he got this information from. Hans Moleman noted down his answer: 'From pamphlets. From newspapers. I heard it directly from the parties involved. From the Serbs, yes.' The journalist from *De Volkskrant* registered 'amazement' among his fellow reporters.²¹⁴² Voorhoeve tried to salvage what he could: 'I then said as a commentary: "There may be no good guys, there were many bad guys"'.²¹⁴³ The Bosnian Serbs were principally the bad guys, said the Minister. They had 'committed the most outrages in the war in the former Yugoslavia'.²¹⁴⁴

Since Karremans disappeared immediately after the press conference, the press then concentrated on Voorhoeve. They put it to him that Karremans' story of the over two hundred massacred villages was 'standard war propaganda' and that there was no proof of it. All the minister could do was concur and once again emphasize that the Bosnian Serbs were primarily 'the bad guys'.²¹⁴⁵ In this connection he pointed out that the Red Cross had still not been given permission to allow their observers to see the men who had been transported away after Srebrenica fell. Voorhoeve referred to information noted down by journalist Robert Block of *The Independent*: 'There is testimony from a Serbian couple who last week near the enclave saw sixteen hundred men killed in a school playground. But that story is unconfirmed. We don't have a clear picture. Nor do I know if we'll ever be able to uncover the truth.'²¹⁴⁶

6. The tide turns in the media

Despite some uneasy moments for Voorhoeve both during and after the press conference, the general impression at that moment was that it had all gone reasonably well. Hartman later analysed:

'The strange thing is that in principle things went wrong in the second half of the press conference, the international part. But no one really seemed to realize it at the time. I didn't speak to anyone there who said: 'What a disaster!' Quite the contrary. Apart from the fact that there wasn't much I could do with the story of the Muslims who went out plundering, we didn't really have any reason to assume that anything would go wrong.'²¹⁴⁷

Kreemers mainly remembered the praise that Voorhoeve received and the 'euphoric mood' of the MPs who had travelled out with him. The Minister and the MPs later dined together at a meal organized for them by the Bosnian diplomat Sacirbey in a restaurant in the hills above Zagreb. Before the dinner he was 'cautiously critical' about Dutchbat in a conversation with a journalist:

'The problem is too complex to say that the lives of a few hundred Dutchmen were more important than those of between five and ten thousand Bosnian refugees, but those people are gone. (...) I don't want to call it bitterness, but I cannot hide the fact that we are of course disappointed. We have lost thousands

²¹⁴² H. Moleman, 'Weet Karremans wel wat hij zegt, vraagt de internationale pers zich af' ('Does Karremans know what he's saying, the international press wonders'), *De Volkskrant*, 24/07/95.

²¹⁴³ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 14/07/97.

²¹⁴⁴ Interview H.P.M. Kreemers, 24/08/98. H. Moleman, 'Weet Karremans wel wat hij zegt, vraagt de internationale pers zich af', *De Volkskrant*, 24/07/95. On various occasions Voorhoeve would refer to a published CIA report that put the blame for the vast majority of human rights violations on the Bosnian Serbs.

²¹⁴⁵ Idem.

²¹⁴⁶ H. Moleman, 'Couzy verwijt NAVO falen bij luchtsteun' ('Couzy blames NATO for failure of air support'), *De Volkskrant*, 24/07/95.

²¹⁴⁷ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

of people. That is something that cannot simply be dismissed. Among friends this is something one should be able to talk about.²¹⁴⁸

However, Sacirbey did not utter a word about Srebrenica during the meal. All his attention was focused on the fighting in Bihac, about which he was called away to the telephone several times. At the end of the evening, after addressing a word of thanks to their host, Voorhoeve asked if the MPs felt the need for a discussion on the fall of Srebrenica or the return of Dutchbat. Kreemers, who was also present that evening, later paraphrased their answer as follows: ‘Oh no, Joris, everything went well. We’ll talk about it after the summer recess’.²¹⁴⁹

The initial reactions in the media were also mainly positive. This was not only true of the news bulletins and current affairs programmes that were broadcast on 23 July, but also for the morning newspapers on Monday, 24 July. There was one exception to this rule. *De Volkskrant* journalist Hans Moleman had grown more suspicious as a result of the reactions by the foreign press. Once the press conference had finished, he spoke to Beneker, who remembered how the journalist expressed his scepticism about the statements made by Couzy and especially Karremans. Beneker made another attempt to disabuse him of the notion that there was ‘a story’ in there somewhere: ‘I told him that the truth lay in Zagreb at the UN and not with Karremans’. On Monday morning, the press officer saw that Moleman had decided to publish after all.²¹⁵⁰

In addition to a more general account of the press conference, Moleman wrote a separate unattributed piece, about the reactions of the foreign media, which appeared under the heading ‘The international press wonders if Karremans knows what he’s saying’. ‘No good guys, no bad guys’, ‘no genocide’ and the ‘war propaganda’ about the 192 massacred villages were all featured, along with Voorhoeve’s attempts to keep matters under control. Although the piece was factual in nature, the real tone was set in the editorial commentary that appeared under the title ‘False reassurance’.²¹⁵¹ The commentator expressed understanding for the ‘series of contradictory feelings’ that the members of Dutchbat fell prey to after their arrival in Zagreb. With the exception of soldier Raviv van Renssen, all the members of Dutchbat returned from Srebrenica unharmed. It was therefore understandable that joy should be the overriding feeling. That there were also other feelings present was ‘psychologically logical’:

‘shock at the way in which they could be pushed aside by General Mladic’s superior numbers in the field. Sympathy, sadness and anger at the treatment of the civilians of Srebrenica whose care had been entrusted to them. Gratitude at the fact that in the end not a hair on their own heads was harmed. And above all, of course, a deep feeling of powerlessness.’

Against this background, the commentator opined, the press conference by Couzy and Karremans ‘was slightly less bizarre than its literal appearance’. However, that did not take away from the fact ‘that the press conference should never have taken place in this form’. An understandable ‘hostage syndrome’ was quite a different matter from political statement. The paper called ‘Karremans pretension of being able to make a political judgement’, backed by Couzy ‘therefore painful and misplaced’. An even more forbidding conclusion followed: ‘Karremans has made himself a laughing stock by complimenting Mladic as an “accomplished strategist”. His refusal to make a distinction between “good guys” and

²¹⁴⁸ F. van Vliet, ‘Voorzichtige kritiek Sacirbey op Dutchbat’ (‘sacirbey cautiously critical of Dutchbat’), *De Telegraaf*, 24/07/95. One week later Sacirbey was full of praise for Dutchbat in a Dutch radio news bulletin (Avro). ‘sacirbey prijst Dutchbat’ (‘sacirbey praises Dutchbat’), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 31/07/95.

²¹⁴⁹ Kreemers, *Achterkant van de maan*, p. 102. The MPs who travelled with the Minister were Benk Korthals (VVD), Jaap de Hoop Scheffer (CDA), Jan Hoekema (D66), Gerrit Valk (PvdA) and Oedrayraj Singh Varma (Groen Links). A number of them were also present at the first press conference.

²¹⁵⁰ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01.

²¹⁵¹ ‘Valse geruststelling’ (‘False reassurance’), *De Volkskrant*, 24/07/95.

“bad guys” unfortunately only goes to prove that under great psychological pressure, the ability to make clear distinctions vanishes’.

The editorial writer summoned up the image of the deportation and the separation of the women from the men, ‘a few of whom were even executed before the very eyes of the UN troops’. He saw Minister Voorhoeve’s comment about the credibility of the troubling testimonies of the refugees as ‘justified’. Dutchbat could not be blamed for failing to prevent war crimes. ‘However it is indefensible that the leader of Dutchbat and the head of the Royal Netherlands Army sought to create the impression that it probably wasn’t so bad after all. False reassurances are the last thing that we and the people of Bosnia need right now’, the editorial concluded.

With hindsight, the articles in *De Volkskrant* and in the evening newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*²¹⁵² were seen by the press officers involved as the turning point in the media’s attitude towards Dutchbat and the Ministry of Defence. Hartman observed that outside these two newspapers none of the other media ‘caught on’: ‘*NOS-journaal*, *RTL-Nieuws* [TV news bulletins], *Algemeen Dagblad*, *Trouw*, *De Telegraaf* [daily newspapers] made no mention of the contentious statements until Tuesday, 25 July.’²¹⁵³ According to Kreemers, Moleman put ‘his finger ruthlessly on the sensitive points of the press conference’.²¹⁵⁴ In Hartman’s recollection:

‘Of course, the *Volkskrant* report got you thinking: there’s another way of looking at this. The first impression was: it’s all been kept really neat and tidy. We had a good broadcast. It all ended up quite reasonably, in spite of that slippery, sickeningly hectic situation all around us. So perhaps it really did go well. The *Volkskrant* article then gave that first sense that there might be more to come. Then all hell broke loose, because the minister and Couzy started to say things against Karremans.’²¹⁵⁵

On the Monday after the press conference both Voorhoeve and Couzy began to distance themselves from Karremans, although not to the same extent. Upon his return to the airbase Soesterberg that day, the Minister told the press that he had not been aware of the lack of supervision by Dutchbat over the transportation of the refugees. Journalists noted that Couzy said that he did know, although it was not clear what he based this knowledge on.²¹⁵⁶

At Soesterberg, the Commander distanced himself from Karremans’s statement about the massacred Serb villages, which he called ‘unwise’: ‘You have to treat those stories about villages burnt to the ground with caution. I certainly wouldn’t confirm them. Dutchbat never observed that the Muslims did anything like that. It would therefore have been wiser not to present that so forcefully’.²¹⁵⁷ He was also not entirely happy with Karremans’ compliments about Mladic: ‘As a professional I too say that Mladic did his work skilfully, but I would never call someone like that a colleague’.

However, Couzy defended the statement that in Bosnia there were ‘no good guys, no bad guys’: ‘Both sides are equally guilty. In this war the norms and values are different than those in western European countries. Suspects aren’t taken to court, they’re shot on sight. It is highly likely that mistakes

²¹⁵² Ward op den Brouw and Harry Meijer, ‘Karremans: tenminste duizend doden’ (‘Karremans: at least one thousand dead’) and ‘serviërs zijn nu voor Dutchbatters de “good guys”’ (‘serbs are now the ‘good guys’ for Dutchbat’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/07/95. The day’s main editorial, ‘Ervaringen’ (‘Experiences’), was more understanding towards Karremans than the editorial in *De Volkskrant*.

²¹⁵³ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. H.P.M. Kreemers to Minister, V95014995, ‘Press conference in Zagreb, 23 July 1995’, 02/08/95.

²¹⁵⁴ Kreemers, ‘*Achterkant van de maan*’, p. 103.

²¹⁵⁵ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

²¹⁵⁶ ‘Voorhoeve werd slecht ingelicht’ (‘Voorhoeve was not well informed’), *Trouw*, 25/05/95.

²¹⁵⁷ ‘Minister distantieert zich van overste’ (‘Minister distances himself from lieutenant colonel’), *De Volkskrant*, 25/07/95.

in faces and names get made along the way. But that's a very normal thing there, here such a deed constitutes a war crime. But all the parties do it'.²¹⁵⁸

Without referring to a specific statement by Karremans, that evening Minister Voorhoeve distanced himself even more emphatically from the Dutchbat commander. He did so in the Nova current affairs programme, which was devoted entirely to the press conferences given by Couzy and Karremans. Coverage was also given to the statements made earlier that day by Mazowiecki, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights. On his visit to Tuzla he said that the Bosnian Serbs were guilty of 'flagrant violations of human rights "on a large scale'. After footage of Mazowiecki's press conference it was then the turn of Voorhoeve in the studio. He said that he did not agree with 'the comments of commander Karremans regarding the political aspects' 'because the actions of the Bosnian Serbs have for three years followed a pattern of uprooting, abusing and murdering large numbers of people'. Voorhoeve also wondered out loud how the commander had arrived at such statements. The Minister expressed the belief that as a result of his time in the enclave, Karremans had experienced the world differently 'than those who look at the overall pattern of the war in the former Yugoslavia'.²¹⁵⁹ That same evening, the first politicians, Hoekema (D66) and De Hoop Scheffer (CDA), both of whom were present in Zagreb, responded to Voorhoeve's statements by also distancing themselves from Karremans.²¹⁶⁰ They also criticized the 'mistaken direction' of the press conference in Zagreb by allowing Karremans to speak on his own about his experiences in Srebrenica. The politicians were of the opinion that Couzy and Voorhoeve should have prevented the Dutchbat commander from making his appreciative remarks about Mladic.²¹⁶¹

From that moment the 'Karremans issue' was born. The fact that Voorhoeve and Couzy openly distanced themselves from the Dutchbat commander led immediately to criticism from the Netherlands Officers' Association. Chairman N. Stuiver observed that Karremans' opinion 'did not fit in with the version adhered to by the politicians, who accuse the Serbs of genocide'.²¹⁶² The public discussion about Karremans' performance then went into overdrive. Couzy later stated that he was amazed at how quickly the climate changed: 'When I saw how the positive perception transformed into the current negative perception within only a few days, I had absolutely no idea what negative forces were at work. I just couldn't understand it at all'.²¹⁶³

Much had to do with the role of the media. The press's initially docile attitude turned around into a kind of shame at the relative lack of criticism with which they had followed developments in Srebrenica in the preceding weeks.²¹⁶⁴ Voorhoeve in particular had garnered a great deal of praise as 'the right man in the right place', with reference to the way he conducted himself in 'the bunker', among other things.²¹⁶⁵ But Karremans too had received good publicity as 'a man who was one with his troops' and who remained 'clear-headed and calm' in the midst of all the chaos.²¹⁶⁶

²¹⁵⁸ 'Generaal Couzy neemt afstand van uitspraken overste Karremans' ('General Couzy distances himself from Karremans' statements'), *ANP bericht* 196, 24/07/96 20.36.

²¹⁵⁹ NPS/VARA, NOVA, N. 3, 24/07/95, 10.34 p.m.

²¹⁶⁰ NOS, *Met het oog op morgen*, R. 1, 24/07/95, 11.07 p.m.

²¹⁶¹ 'steun officieren voor Karremans' ('Officers support Karremans'), *De Telegraaf*, 25/07/95.

²¹⁶² Idem.

²¹⁶³ 'Couzy: kritiek op Dutchbat niet terecht' ('Couzy: criticism of Dutchbat unjustified'), *ANP bericht*, 27/12/95. Couzy made this statement in the December issue of the Army publication *Flex*.

²¹⁶⁴ A more extensive account of this about turn is given in J. Wieten's appendix.

²¹⁶⁵ J. Hoedeman and E. Nysingh, 'Voorhoeve bewijst zich als de juiste man op de juiste plaats' ('Voorhoeve proves himself to be the right man in the right place'), *De Volkskrant*, 13/07/95. Other examples: Remco de Jong, 'Minister in bange dagen' ('Minister in troubled times'), *Het Parool*, 15/07/95; Wilco Dekker, 'Joris Voorhoeve, onbesproken crisismanager in bange dagen' ('Joris Voorhoeve, irreproachable crisis manager in troubled times'), *GPD Pers*, 15/07/95. The negative consequences of this image building were later blamed on the Defence Ministry. See: R.C.R. Siekmann, "'Bunker-beeld" Voorhoeve blunder Defensie' ('Voorhoeve's "bunker-image" a Defence blunder'), *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 05/09/95.

²¹⁶⁶ 'Karremans is een echte troepenman' ('Karremans is one with his troops'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 13/07/95; 'Nuchter en kalm' ('Clear-headed and calm'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/07/95.

Although the media also reported stories told by the first refugees in Tuzla, the dominant image was that the battalion had done what it could under difficult circumstances. Many of the apparent contradictions in the newspaper reporting and the apparent lack of will with regard to resolving them, could be traced back to failings in coordination between the various editors and the correspondents in the field.²¹⁶⁷ It is telling that what was essentially a storm within Dutch political circles should lead to the first cracks in the picture that everything had gone reasonably well. This storm was the controversial use of the term 'genocide' by then Overseas Aid Minister, Jan Pronk. Only after and above all thanks to 'Zagreb' did these cracks open up to become deep fissures.

The open discrepancies exhibited between the viewpoints held by Couzy and Voorhoeve served as an important first step in this process. But above all it was the phrase 'no good guys, no bad guys' which served as the springboard for all kinds of speculations, some of them extremely critical, regarding the origins and the justification for this statement. Karremans himself became subject to fierce criticism. His conduct attracted even more interest as a result of a report that appeared in *De Volkskrant* on Wednesday, 26 July. It was probably not by chance that it was now *Volkskrant* journalist Jan Hoedeman, who made waves, a mere ten days after co-authoring a laudatory portrait of Voorhoeve. His report was also typical of another phenomenon in times of looming crisis. In the centre of power in The Hague, the ranks were gradually being broken, now it began to be apparent that the question as to who was responsible would not be long in coming. In the initial stages of that game, Hoedeman was able to obtain the message sent to the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) by Colonel Brantz on 12 July. In this message he described the outcome of a conversation between Karremans and Mladic in which an 'arrangement' was made for the transportation of the local population in 'batches'.²¹⁶⁸ It also stated that the men would be subject to a 'debrief' by the VRS. In the words of *De Volkskrant* that became a 'deal' between Karremans and Mladic.²¹⁶⁹

In the days that followed, the discussion about the this alleged 'deal' dominated the media. A goaded Voorhoeve felt that he had been forced onto the defensive. He said he was becoming 'vexed' 'by all kinds of false accusations that are now being circulated, giving rise to a game of hunt the scapegoat'.²¹⁷⁰ On Thursday, 27 July he sent a letter to Parliament with an account of the fall of Srebrenica, in which he also denied that Karremans had signed a statement given him by Mladic. Voorhoeve cut short his holiday that same day in order to give further explanation in a special press conference. In it he made some attempts to amend the impression that he had abandoned all support for Karremans. The Minister stated that the Government had 'unanimously' refused to divide the refugees into categories: 'We gave our instructions, but Commander Karremans had the measures imposed upon him'. He also stated that the Dutchbat commander had protested against the 'debrief'. He rejected any suggestion that Karremans was an indirect accomplice in the executions of Muslim men. What is more, Voorhoeve said, the vast majority of the twelve hundred men debriefed by the VRS were released afterwards.²¹⁷¹

The very next day Voorhoeve discovered that his information was out of date regarding one point at least. A statement had in fact been signed, not by Karremans but by Franken. Both Franken and Rave had reported this in Zagreb and had stated that the document concerned the procedure for

²¹⁶⁷ This emerged from various interviews with Dutch journalists, for example with Othon Zimmerman (*AD*) and Theo Klein (*De Volkskrant*). Interviews O. Zimmerman, 28/04/00; Theo Klein, 19/10/00.

²¹⁶⁸ Two days later the Ministry of Defence issued a statement that Brantz was not the author of the report in question. It was a report by a civil servant based on a telephone call with Brantz. See: 'Term "regeling" met Mladic niet afkomstig van Brantz' ('Term "deal" with Mladic not used by Brantz'), *De Volkskrant*, 29/07/95.

²¹⁶⁹ J. Hoedeman, 'Inzet blauwhelmen verdeelde ministers ernstig' ('Role of Dutch UN troops caused split between ministers'), *De Volkskrant*, 26/07/95. In this article, Hoedeman reported an alleged 'sharp difference of opinion' between Minister Pronk on the one hand and Prime Minister Kok and Minister Voorhoeve on the other about the risks that Dutchbat should take to protect the local population.

²¹⁷⁰ NPS, *Nieuws op 1*, Radio 1, 27/07/95, 5.07 p.m.

²¹⁷¹ *Idem*.

the deportation.²¹⁷² The debriefers paid no further attention to the report. As will be described in greater detail in the next chapter, civil servants discovered the statement on 27 July, too late to have any influence on the press conference. Lieutenant General M. Schouten, the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, and the Director of General Policy Matters, J.H.M. de Winter, informed the Minister of the facts the next day.²¹⁷³

Parliament was unaware of that fact at the time. Politicians responded positively to the letter and the statements made by Minister Voorhoeve on 27 July. For example Gerrit Valk, Member of Parliament for the PvdA showed understanding for the ‘exasperated’ impression that Voorhoeve had given: ‘Karremans’ words of admiration for Mladic were downright unfortunate. But the reports of the ‘deal’ turned the judgement about Karremans all of a sudden into vilification, despite the fact that they did good work’.²¹⁷⁴ However, there turned out to be no way of stopping that process of vilification. At the end of the first week after ‘Zagreb’ *De Volkskrant* observed in an editorial that: ‘Dutchbat (...) has finally been dismantled. (...) We simply had to give up those men and boys’.²¹⁷⁵ The reputation of Karremans was also already damaged at this point, especially since Voorhoeve and Couzy had distanced themselves from him: ‘in a mere matter of hours Karremans was transformed from “hero of Srebrenica” into a psychiatric patient’, wrote Willem Wansink in Dutch current affairs weekly *Elsevier*.²¹⁷⁶ Others were of the opinion that he made a convenient scapegoat.²¹⁷⁷

7. ‘No good guys, no bad guys’ revisited

One of the most lasting legacies of ‘Zagreb’ was the phrase thought up by Hartman ‘no good guys, no bad guys’. For this reason it is worth taking a more detailed look at the background of the phrase itself but also at the considerable effect it had on the public perception of Karremans and Dutchbat III. The shock about the anti-Muslim feelings that the members of Dutchbat seemed to have also formed part of this judgement. The powerful reactions to this in the media and in political circles require at least as much attention as the controversial statements themselves. These condemnations say a great deal about the way in which the conflict in the former Yugoslavia was and to a certain extent still is regarded in the Netherlands. It also invites the question of whether it was the cold hard truth that caused the pain or if it was the poor timing of the comment that gave rise to all the criticism.

As early as 28 July, when these kinds of questions began to circulate and in particular when the criticism of the ‘disconcerting lack of orchestration’²¹⁷⁸ grew, the Minister launched an internal investigation into what went wrong in Zagreb. The result was presented in a letter which he sent to Parliament at the end of August. The Minister put the blame for ‘the press conference not proceeding as it should have done on the hectic situation and inadequate infrastructure in Camp Pleso and the overfull schedule of the battalion commander’.²¹⁷⁹ However, the letter did not address the nature and the origins of the controversial opinions themselves. Internally Voorhoeve had already given indications as to his personal ideas on this subject. In a memorandum on 17 August he stated the impression that the mistake was not that of the Directorate of General Information ‘but concerned the

²¹⁷² SMG, 1007. P. Groen, ‘Debriefing of Sergeant Major 1 B. Rave, member sie 5 and security officer. Camp Pleso 220795, 9-9.30 p.m.’; Chr. Klep, ‘Debriefing report Major Franken, 22/07/95, Camp Pleso’.

²¹⁷³ DS, S95/061/3199. J.H.M. de Winter to Minister, D95/400, “Statement” 17 July’, 08/08/95.

²¹⁷⁴ ‘Voorhoeve krijgt steun van Kamer’ (‘Voorhoeve wins parliamentary support’), *Het Parool*, 28/07/95.

²¹⁷⁵ ‘Een struikelende terugtocht’ (‘A stumbling return’), *De Volkskrant*, 28/07/95.

²¹⁷⁶ W. Wansink, ‘Een oorverdovende stilte in Den Haag’ (‘A deafening silence in The Hague’), *Elsevier*, 29/07/95.

²¹⁷⁷ Gen. Maj. B.d. J. Schaberg, ‘Karremans verstoorde het gekoesterde beeld’ (‘Karremans upset the cherished account’), *Het Parool*, 31/07/95; L. Wecke, ‘Karremans bood zich aan als zondebok’ (‘Karremans offered himself as scapegoat’), *Trouw*, 26/07/95; A. Munninghoff, ‘Gekakel over Karremans is bijzonder kleinburgerlijk’ (‘Fuss about Karremans is petty in the extreme’), *Haagsche Courant*, 27/07/95.

²¹⁷⁸ *Idem*.

²¹⁷⁹ ‘Alleen de minister kende tekst Karremans niet’ (‘Only the minister did not know Karremans’ text’), *De Volkskrant*, 29/08/95.

views held by Karremans and the more generally observed critical attitude of a number of army servicemen with regard to the Bosnian Muslims'.²¹⁸⁰ In relation to that last point, the minister referred to a large number of examples of Royal Netherlands Army officers who had expressed such opinions in a UN capacity:

I often noticed in conversation with Dutch troops who had served in Bosnia - I remember having such a conversation with General Brinkman - said, in some ways to my surprise: 'the Muslims continually provoke the Serbs in all kinds of different places. Then the Serbs hit back and the international press creates an image of the monstrous Serbs and the poor Muslims.' 'They exploit that,' Brinkman told me.²¹⁸¹

Although the press speculated briefly about the extent to which the term 'stockholm Syndrome' might apply to the statements of Karremans and his soldiers, the focus soon shifted in the direction of other causes. The psychological explanation seemed to be insufficient. The media referred to Dutch examples which seemed to show that Karremans was not alone in his views. M. van den Heuvel of the Clingendael Institute (the Netherlands Institute of International Relations) stated in *De Volkskrant* that a year earlier it already seemed as if 'the attitude "no good guys, no bad guys" was the official line of the Royal Netherlands Army' and that the use of that phrase therefore '[had] nothing to do with the isolated world in which commander Karremans had lived for six months'.²¹⁸²

In a similar vein *NRC Handelsblad* recalled how General Bastiaans in 1994 shortly after the Gorazde Crisis expressed his anger about the Muslim troops there in an interview with the newspaper. The general spoke of how the Muslims provoked an 'overreaction' from Mladic and how subsequently with the help of 'a wonderful propaganda campaign' they had managed to persuade NATO to carry out air strikes. Bastiaans was reprimanded for his comments. The same thing happened to Colonel De Jonge in May 1995, who again in the *NRC*, had complained that the Serbs could get away with 'almost nothing' while the Muslims could get away with 'a great deal' without bringing the anger of world opinion down upon them. As De Jonge saw it, the world had 'always been a bit anti-Serb'. As a result of these statements he was banned from speaking in public for a time.²¹⁸³

Part of the criticism was laid at the door of the training given to the Dutch soldiers sent on peacekeeping missions, which took place at the Centre for Peacekeeping Operations (*Centrum voor Vredesoperaties*, CVV) in Ossendrecht. There one of the main things that the future UN soldiers were drilled in was that they should remain impartial. The question of who was right and who was wrong was deliberately avoided. A journalist from the *NRC* newspaper who spent a day at the CVV following all the commotion about the 'no good guys, no bad guys' remark quoted one trainer as saying: 'The finer points only cause confusion'.²¹⁸⁴ Euro MP Arie Oostlander, who had championed the Bosnian cause from the very beginning, declared not long afterwards that the CVV's 'indoctrination course' made the UNPROFOR troops 'less suitable' to provide 'real support for the Bosnians'. Accordingly he called for 'a major clean-up' at the training centre.²¹⁸⁵

²¹⁸⁰ Memorandum Mindef to DV, no. 31/95, 'Press conference Zagreb', 17/07/95. Included in: Voorhoeve's diary, p. 137.

²¹⁸¹ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 14/07/97.

²¹⁸² M. van den Heuvel, 'Mening Karremans wordt door vele militairen gedeeld' ('Karremans' opinion shared by many soldiers'), *De Volkskrant*, 29/07/95.

²¹⁸³ 'Dutchbat kon niet toezien op wegvoeren van vluchtelingen' ('Dutchbat unable to monitor deportation of refugees'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/07/95. The ban came from the Dutch Defence Ministry, not from the UN.

²¹⁸⁴ F. Westerman, 'Zwarte humor houdt Dutchbat op de been' ('Black humour keeps Dutchbat going'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/08/95.

²¹⁸⁵ A.M. Oostlander, 'Nederlandse blauwhelm kan door indoctrinatie Bosnië niet echt steunen' ('Indoctrination of Dutch UN soldiers means they can't really support Bosnia'), *Trouw*, 29/08/95.

8. UNPROFOR, Dutchbat and the warring factions

The attention paid by politicians and the media to the psyche of the members of Dutchbat or the alleged shortcomings of their training in the Netherlands, largely obscured the fact that this was a much more widespread and not exclusively Dutch phenomenon. The media gave hardly any coverage to this.²¹⁸⁶

UN ambassador Biegman, who showed great personal concern about the events in Srebrenica, claimed that in international circles it had been known for two years that Dutch officers got along better with the Serbs than with the Muslims. 'In any case they [the Serbs] could salute better', said Biegman.²¹⁸⁷ This comment, however, only reflected part of the actual situation. What was already clear to some at the time has only been reinforced in the years after Srebrenica in studies and memoirs. The so-called 'no good guys, no bad guys' mentality was characteristic of UNPROFOR and went to the very heart of the 'feud' between the Western media and the peacekeepers, which existed since 1993.²¹⁸⁸ Without seeking to disregard the variations within this tendency, this attitude had a number of general characteristics. From the side of the UN, there was a powerful distrust of the strong links between the foreign press and the Bosnian government, 'treating foreign journalists almost as if they were a military asset'.²¹⁸⁹ Many UN soldiers held the belief that the media had no idea about the true nature of the war in Bosnia, in which the Bosnian government exploited and even encouraged suffering in order to win sympathy.²¹⁹⁰ One illustration of this was the - in this instance probably justified - conviction of many UN officials that the Bosnian authorities unnecessarily extended the accommodation of Srebrenica refugees at Tuzla Air Base.²¹⁹¹

But the statement by Karremans/Hartman about the warring factions also came from this same background. Lieutenant Colonel A. de Ruiter indicated the general UN scepticism once again in a memorandum written with a view to answering questions from Parliament. According to him it was based on the fact that 'the UN troops on the ground', unlike the politicians and the media, were confronted with 'the actual behaviour of the two sides'. The 'no good guys, no bad guys' statement could be traced back to these experiences:

'It has been widely confirmed that [A]BiH troops deliberately take shots at the UN, use the UN as a shield from behind which they can fire on the VRS (it is not uncommon for the BiH to pin the blame on the de VRS for a deed which they themselves committed or provoked), hijack vehicles, steal UN equipment, make personal threats and intimidate people. That is to say nothing of the way they treat their own people. All in all such conduct does not differ much from that of the party that is seen as the aggressor.'²¹⁹²

Commentaries supplied by non-military sources also pointed out that the problem did not lie with Dutchbat or their supposed Stockholm Syndrome, but with the politicians and the media who were unable to cope with an unpleasant reality. For example Professor W. A. Wagenaar of Leiden University

²¹⁸⁶ An example in which this did apply is an interview with retired Major General Van Vuren in *De Volkskrant*, who pointed out that in his time all of the officers in the then UN headquarters in Kiseljak ended up with an anti-Muslim attitude after a while. The article also pointed out that the Swedish Ministry of Defence had launched an investigation after it turned out that their UN soldiers had begun to hate the people they were supposed to protect. E. Nysingh, "Niet alleen Nederlanders anti-Moslim" ("Not only the Dutch were anti-Muslim"), *De Volkskrant*, 02/09/95.

²¹⁸⁷ E. Nysingh, "Niet alleen Nederlanders anti-Moslim", *De Volkskrant*, 02/09/95.

²¹⁸⁸ Burg & Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 160.

²¹⁸⁹ David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse. Bosnia and the failure of the West* (London 1995), p. 218.

²¹⁹⁰ Burg & Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 161.

²¹⁹¹ Interview C.L. Brantz, 11/06/99; M. Wijsbroek, 10/12/97.

²¹⁹² NIOD. Coll. De Ruiter. A. de Ruiter to DCBC and Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff/SCO, 'Answers to questions from the parliamentary debate', 14/08/95.

(professor of Experimental Psychology, specialising in memory), pointed out that the Dutch soldiers were not only exposed to one-sided propaganda from a single party: ‘They didn’t only experience the Serbs up close, but the Muslims as well. And they too turned out to have a political opinion and also wanted access to their weapons: in short they were less defenceless victims than we would like to convince ourselves’. As he saw it, in this war the side with the best PR had the best chance of winning: ‘The press has become a pawn in the chess game of war’.²¹⁹³

The question marks that the UN officials placed against a number of incidents which they suspected had occurred with the purpose of putting the VRS in a bad light, gave journalists the impression that these officials ‘so wanted to believe in Bosnian as well as Serb guilt that they could not let go of the idea that there were no heroes but only villains in the conflict’.²¹⁹⁴ EU peace negotiator David Owen wrote in his memoirs for example that ‘the prevailing view of the UN military commanders ... was that UNPROFOR’s worst problems were with the Muslims’.²¹⁹⁵ Following on from this was the comment heard from many members of Dutchbat that the VRS, who more closely approximated the status and outward behaviour of a regular army, were easier to deal with. The ABiH in contrast was a ‘motley crew’. Many elements of this view were also true, according to Clingendael staff member Van den Heuvel: ‘The first Bosnian “self-defence units” came from the most dubious (criminal) sections of society. (...) This criminal Muslim army was also responsible for a number of human rights violations. The fact that the Serbs were the aggressors does not of course excuse such actions’.²¹⁹⁶

Sociological explanations and nuances of this kind, for so far as the average UN soldier was aware of them, hardly played any practical role at all after a couple of months of actual experience in Bosnia. An outsider who thought he knew better could not count on a sympathetic ear from the UN troops, as Dutchbat sergeant W. Reussing (who also reported the hitting and kicking of refugees) made clear in an article he submitted to *De Volkskrant*. ‘No one knows the facts, so everyone just speculates. And above all they pay no attention to what Dutchbat observed in the enclave. Because the conduct of the Serbs is not representative for their behaviour in recent years. The Muslims always had the best propaganda.’ Reussing wondered how a ‘media consumer’ could pretend to be in a position to judge ‘a situation, about which he couldn’t possibly have the faintest notion’:

‘Of course it is terrible that Muslim families are being torn apart. But if the father flees into the mountains because he murdered people as a fighter, then he knows he can expect to become a prisoner of war. Thus he has to fight his way to Tuzla so that he can see his family again. In that case he is not a refugee but a combatant.’²¹⁹⁷

In his piece Reussing presented the practical side of what constitutes impartiality, as opposed to just the theory. An analysis written by American journalist Tom Gjelten describes the fractious relationship between the media and UNPROFOR, pointing out that the concept of impartiality meant different things to each of them. For the media the concept was more abstract, based on facts and principles but also based on the conviction that the Bosnian Serbs had committed the largest share of the war crimes

²¹⁹³ M. Schöttelndreher, ‘Niet de beste wapens tellen in Bosnië, maar de beste PR’ (“It’s not the best weapons that count in Bosnia but the best PR”), *De Volkskrant*, 25/07/95.

²¹⁹⁴ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, pp. 218-219.

²¹⁹⁵ Referred to in: T. Gjelten, *Professionalism in war reporting: a correspondent’s view* (Hamline University, 1999).

<http://www.hamline.edu/world/backissues/gjeltens>

²¹⁹⁶ M. van den Heuvel. ‘Mening Karremans wordt door vele militairen gedeeld’, *De Volkskrant*, 29/07/95.

²¹⁹⁷ W. Reussing, ‘Wij VN’ers zitten niet om uw kritiek verlegen’ (‘We, the UN troops, do not need your criticism’), *De Volkskrant*, 04/08/95.

and human rights violations.²¹⁹⁸ In the eyes of many UN officials, however, this media attitude led to a situation in which they came to harbour grave doubts about the image that journalists were creating of the war. In the words of De Ruiter, who made a comparison with Western politicians: ‘The media themselves choose the same position [of the Bosnian Serbs as aggressors] without paying heed to the complexities’.²¹⁹⁹ In an internal UNPROFOR review of the mission it was even argued that ‘the international media played a significant role in exerting pressure for UNPROFOR to be manoeuvred into tasks beyond its capability and mandate’.²²⁰⁰

While impartiality in the media therefore led to a more anti-Serb position, the reverse was true for the UN. There impartiality very often meant a more favourable view of the Bosnian Serbs. Since the UN operation had the primary aim of safeguarding the provision of humanitarian aid, they were heavily dependent on the strongest party in the conflict, the Bosnian Serbs. In negotiations on convoys and roadblocks, they were the main partner in discussions and so maintaining good relations with them was in the direct interest of carrying out the mandate. According to Gjelten, that aim became ‘an overriding mission interest’.²²⁰¹ An additional factor was that some UN troops, who like Dutchbat were partly sealed off, were forced into a situation in which good relations became important in order to defend other interests. In one of the many items that were published in the first week after Dutchbat’s return, radio correspondent Harald Doornbos revealed that for months Dutchbat had obtained large supplies of tinned goods and beer via ‘Jovo’. The Bosnian Serbs put an end to this in mid-April.²²⁰²

An interesting point in the light of Couzy’s hesitancy to use the word ‘genocide’ is the link that there seems to be between avoiding the ‘G-word’ and the phrase ‘no good guys, no bad guys’. The accusation of genocide, as opposed to that of war crimes, ‘fixes guilt on one party, and by implication, absolves the other (the victim).’ As a rule, such accusations are accompanied by the demand that the alleged culprits be punished, not only for the deeds directly associated with genocide, but also for everything else that happens round about it: ‘The charge of genocide thus becomes a vehicle for negating and denying all other issues surrounding the conflict’. Precisely because of that potential for political abuse, the charge called for ‘precise charges and precise evidence’.²²⁰³

Couzy declared both in Zagreb and the Netherlands that on the one hand he could sympathize with the ‘no good guys, no bad guys’ idea, but that he had also been very shocked by Dutchbat’s anti-Muslim attitude, even though he felt it was understandable. Not only did that opinion tie in with the attitude described above which was exhibited by UNPROFOR as a whole, but also within the Royal Netherlands Army it was long known that the previous Dutchbats and other units returned from Bosnia with mixed feelings towards the local population.²²⁰⁴

In the spring of 1995, the Ministry of Defence was startled by reports of incidents in which Dutch soldiers (not from Dutchbat III but during the time of Dutchbat II, see Chapter 9 of Part II) had harassed members of the local population. At the time the Lessons Learned Section immediately launched an interim investigation and analysed the probable causes. Apart from looking at the ‘manifestly anti-Serbian’ picture that was sketched by the media and the complexities subsequently

²¹⁹⁸ Gjelten, ‘*Professionalism in war reporting?*’, par. ‘*Whose truth to tell?*’ Burg and Shoup note that caution should be advised in comparing scope and method of such practices since the war crimes committed by the Serbs are better documented than those committed against them. Burg and Shoup, *War in Bosnia Herzegovina*, p. 173.

²¹⁹⁹ NIOD. Coll. De Ruiter. A. de Ruiter to DCBC and Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff/SCO, ‘Answers to questions on parliamentary debate’, 14/08/95.

²²⁰⁰ Col N. Innell, Maj J. Oosterwijck Veldhuisen, SAC (W) N. MacIntosh (ed), *Force Commander’s End of Mission Report* (31 January 1996) par 58c, pp. 33-34.

²²⁰¹ Gjelten, ‘*Professionalism in war reporting?*’, par. ‘*Bosnia: rival interests, competing agendas?*’.

²²⁰² H. Doornbos, ‘Dutchbat kocht bier en frisdrank bij Serbs’ (‘Dutchbat bought beer and soft drinks from the Serbs’), *Haagsche Courant*, 29/07/95.

²²⁰³ Burg & Shoup, *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina*, p. 184.

²²⁰⁴ For a more extensive analysis, see Part 2, Chapter XX, Section 4, ‘*Problems regarding the conduct of Dutchbat soldiers?*’.

discovered by the troops in practice, the investigators sought the causes in taking stress out on 'outsiders' and the ethical dilemmas which arose from impartiality.²²⁰⁵

Earlier in February 1995, the commander of Dutchbat II, Lieutenant Colonel P. Everts, gave a frank and open-hearted speech to the Royal Netherlands Society for Military Art and Science (*Koninklijke Vereniging ter Beoefening van de Krijgswetenschap*, KVBK). Not only did he present a picture of the negative effects that the withholding of convoys had on operations and morale but also of the relations between the locals and the mixed feelings that they had inspired in him. For example he found it difficult to have dealings with a Bosnian leadership that he suspected was keeping a large part of the population in the enclave against their will. Everts also 'had the very strong impression', something that he had also noticed in other missions abroad, 'that everyone in the battalion ended up feeling a strong antipathy towards the people we were there to help: the Muslims in the enclave'. He recognized the phenomenon from Lebanon, although there the balance was 'more unusual' (the troops, who formed a buffer between Israel and Lebanon, returned with strongly anti-Israeli feelings and more selectively anti-Muslim sentiments). The commander of Dutchbat II stated honestly that he had been most perturbed by the phenomenon, 'but unfortunately I wasn't able to change it. The mechanism was beyond my power'.²²⁰⁶

Given this previous history Couzy can only have been surprised in Zagreb by the extent and the intensity of the emotions vented by the members of Dutchbat. His public statements on the subject therefore seem to have been intended to channel the possible publicity on the matter before it began. The irony was that at the same time his approach attracted the media's attention. As early as 23 July the Dutch ANP news agency published its first story about the anti-Muslim feelings within Dutchbat, under the headline 'Muslims have exhausted Dutchbat's sympathies'. The article itself was more balanced than the headline suggests. The news agency's journalists spoke with a many members of Dutchbat, who 'to a man' felt that they had done their very best to help the displaced people of the enclave to find a decent refuge. They described how they were accused by some of them of cowardice and complicity. Among the members of Dutchbat there was 'to put it mildly' very little appreciation for the lack of courage and willingness to help fight in defence of the enclave among the Muslim soldiers: 'Conversations with the servicemen involved reveal that these feelings are running high among the people of Dutchbat. And those feelings run right throughout the ranks.' First lieutenant Egbers told how he 'got really pissed off' when he noticed that the Muslim fighters 'wanted to pressure the Dutch soldiers to attack the Serbs so that they themselves could escape'. According to Egbers a number of his colleagues even had to be 'given Valium to keep them going' because of the stress caused by the prospect of being caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. But the ANP also reported that Egbers 'didn't have a good word to say' about the 'propaganda tricks and banditry' of the Serbs: 'They handed out four cans of drinks to the people and then took a photo of it. Our weapons and vehicles, helmets and bulletproof vests were stolen'.²²⁰⁷

Just how complicated these feelings and mood swings were, emerges from the fact that, at the end of June, Karremans had already warned that, as a result of pressure from the Bosnian Serbs 'my battalion is not longer willing, able and in the position to consider itself as being impartial due to the imputing policy of the Bosnian-Serb government and the VRS'.²²⁰⁸

²²⁰⁵ Sie LL, nos. 00327/00368. Internal memorandum HSLI [Head of Lessons Learned Section], Maj. Stumpers to SCO, no. LL/333, 'Vermeende onpartijdigheid' ('supposed impartiality'), 28/08/95.

²²⁰⁶ DS, S95/061/3440. 'Lkol Everts: ervaringen in "de grootste openluchtgevangenis van Europa"' ('Lt Col Everts: experiences in "Europe's biggest open-air prison"'). Appendix to: Memo H.P.M. Kreemers to Minister, V95016778, 'statements by Lieutenant Colonel Everts', 01/09/95. The speech was published in the autumn issue of *Mars in Cathedra*.

²²⁰⁷ Van Gils & Van Meteren 'Moslims hebben het verbruid bij het Dutchbat' ('Muslims have exhausted Dutchbat's sympathies'), *ANP bericht*, 23/07/95, 23:24 CET.

²²⁰⁸ SMG, 1004. Letter TK95105, Th.J.P. Karremans to Commander BHC HQ UNPROFOR, 'subject: Continual hostage of 1 (NL) UN Infbn in Srebrenica', 29/06/95.

The ANP report also referred to the role that the death of Raviv van Renssen had played in the feelings towards the Muslim soldiers. It was also one of the main themes remarked on by the psychologists and press officers in Zagreb.²²⁰⁹ For many Dutchbat soldiers, the death of Van Renssen was a turning point; apart from the loss of a popular comrade there was also the confusion that was generated by the fact that this event was outside the frame of the soldiers' expectations and assumptions about their own position and that of the other parties involved. In the words of one of the soldiers, De Vries: 'At that moment all you feel towards the Muslims is hatred. You want revenge and you think: what the hell am I doing here? We're here to protect you, remember? You do your best to help them and this is the thanks you get'.²²¹⁰ His colleague Den Hertog, who had given emergency medical aid to Van Renssen, told British newspaper *The Independent*: 'After Raviv was killed, we asked ourselves: why are we here? Who are the good guys and who are the bad guys?'.²²¹¹ These feelings of hatred grew as time passed. As part of Minister Voorhoeve's preparations for the Consultation with Parliament on 31 August 1995, the civil servants of the Directorate of General Policy Matters presented an analysis of the background to the 'no good guys, no bad guys' statement. Here too they pointed out the significance of Van Renssen's death. In the strictest confidence, out of consideration for the family, the civil servants reported that the Dutchbat soldiers had seen Muslims making 'denigrating gestures' when the body of Van Rensen was taken away.

Other journalists also noted down stories as told by the members of Dutchbat. These contained more issues which were incorporated into the view of Dutchbat as 'anti-Muslim'. In contrast to the Serbs, 'who at least kept to their agreements', the Muslims 'were absolutely not to be trusted'. One of the soldiers, Mulder, expressed sentiments which would come up again and again in debriefings and interviews and to which Couzy and Karremans would also allude: the shock that many of the servicemen experienced at the way the local population treated each other. 'Those Muslims had no consideration for each other. They trampled each other underfoot to get into the buses and they left those who fell lying there.'²²¹²

In the same vein as the remark that Karremans had made on this subject during the press conference, other soldiers later described how, during the return from Srebrenica to Potocari, when the Dutchbat soldiers did all they could to get the people away in safety, the egoism of the young men in particular was evident. Franken experienced this at first hand:

'Two young men came along pushing a wheelbarrow. In the wheelbarrow there was an old man whose leg had been bandaged up but the blood was still pouring out of it. At the side of the road there was a rucksack. It was half open and it seemed to contain some kind of hi-fi equipment. The two young guys took a look at each other, threw grandpa out of the wheelbarrow, grabbed the rucksack and tossed it into the wheelbarrow. But not for long. Literally at gunpoint I forced them to put the old man back in the wheelbarrow and I walked with them to the camp.'²²¹³

Another of the Dutch soldiers, Honig, also described his irritation that while he and his comrades were doing all they could to get the exhausted refugees back on their feet and to help them make it to Potocari, 'healthy young men from Srebrenica sat around doing nothing, watching the parade'.²²¹⁴

²²⁰⁹ Interview W.P.P. Hartman, 08/10/99.

²²¹⁰ Quotes from his diary, published in: "'Er liggen lijken op de weg, maar de bus rijdt gewoon door'" ('There are bodies lying on the road, but the bus just drives on'), *Panorama*, 21-29/09/95.

²²¹¹ R. Block, "'They were led away and they were killed'", *The Independent*, 21/09/95.

²²¹² W. op den Brouw and H. Meijer, 'sympathie voor Serviërs bij Nederlandse militairen' ('sympathy for Serbs among Dutch soldiers'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/07/95.

²²¹³ Interview R. Franken, 04/05/01.

²²¹⁴ W. Kieskamp, "'We konden niet al die vluchtelingen op onze rug nemen'" ('We couldn't carry all those refugees on our backs'), *Trouw*, 29/07/95.

Honig belonged to B Company, which had the most problems with the local population and with the young Muslims in particular. He described the Muslim army as ‘an undisciplined crew’: ‘That mortar that caused so many deaths was a Serbian response to an incredibly stupid attack by a Muslim fighter. I saw with my own eyes how someone among the crowd, just outside our fence, fired off a small mortar in the direction of the Bosnian Serb positions. I saw the smoke from the shot. That Muslim soldier hid behind the women and children. What a disgrace for a soldier. That kind of incident didn’t do much to increase our respect for the Muslim army’.²²¹⁵

Some members of B Company were later linked to a small number of extreme right-wing incidents, including what became known as the ‘T-shirt incident’.²²¹⁶ For the media this was reason enough to search for an even stronger link between an anti-Muslim attitude and shortcomings in the help given to the local population. Shortly after Dutchbat’s return, this soon set the tone of the discussion on that subject. ‘Did that attitude affect Dutchbat’s performance?’, was one of the questions that was asked as a result of this discussion.²²¹⁷ Voorhoeve, however, soon observed for himself on the basis of conversations with Dutchbat soldiers that this attitude varied considerably and also varied in relation to various groups within the population.

The experience of Lieutenant Rutten also gives a good indication of the complexity of these feelings. Shortly after the fall he assisted in transporting and treating an injured woman who had a shell splinter in her leg. Her appearance was noticeable because of the pink tracksuit bottoms she was wearing. When she was leaving on the bus she expressed a great deal of gratitude for all the help she was given. Later, when things had become less hectic, Rutten was in the bar at Potocari when he saw a report on the arrival of the refugees in Tuzla on satellite television. A large group of women were voicing fierce criticism of Dutchbat, accusing them of not lifting a finger to help the refugees. One of them was the woman who had had the splinter removed from her leg. Rutten recognized her by her pink tracksuit bottoms: ‘I was speechless’.²²¹⁸

9. The ‘party’

The issue of how festive Dutchbat’s return should be quickly became a source of conflict between Minister Voorhoeve and Commander Couzy. It is difficult to reconstruct the events since the chronology is difficult to determine on some points. Voorhoeve had originally envisaged a ‘heroes’ welcome’, as he had suggested to the parents of the Dutchbat soldiers at the Home Front Day at airbase Soesterberg on 15 July. That idea was soon abandoned when Voorhoeve realized that there were some unexpected problems connected with the battalion’s return.²²¹⁹

Junior Minister Gmelich Meijling said he warned Voorhoeve from Zagreb not to organize a heroes’ welcome.²²²⁰ This representation is not entirely in line with the rest of the events as outlined later by Voorhoeve. Shortly after the fall Voorhoeve spoke with Couzy about how the returning Dutchbat soldiers should be welcomed. On that occasion, the Commander let it be known that he wanted to take a military band to Zagreb. Voorhoeve objected to that, because he was worried that ‘very serious things’ might have occurred after the fall of Srebrenica. According to the Minister, Couzy promised that the music would be limited to ‘sober music’ at a ceremonial gathering before boarding the plane back to the Netherlands.²²²¹

²²¹⁵ Idem.

²²¹⁶ On this subject see: Part 2, Chapter 9.

²²¹⁷ H. van den Berg and F. Westerman, ‘Het demasqué van Dutchbat’ (The unmasking of Dutchbat), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/08/95.

²²¹⁸ Telephone interview R. Rutten, 04/01/02.

²²¹⁹ Voorhoeve’s diary, pp. 135-136.

²²²⁰ Telephone interview J.C. Gmelich Meijling, 04/12/01.

²²²¹ Voorhoeve’s diary, pp. 135-136.

When the 55 soldiers who had been held hostage arrived back in Eindhoven on 17 July, Voorhoeve saw to his surprise the military band playing cheerful music. The Minister immediately asked Couzy and the conductor to stop. Both men protested, given the joyful mood of the occasion. In view of the presence of the media, Voorhoeve decided to avoid making a scene in public. He reports that the next day Couzy came to see him at the Ministry to tell him ‘that I shouldn’t interfere with “operational matters”’. A second conversation took place in private to sort the matter out. Since a joyful welcome for Dutchbat in Zagreb could create ‘entirely the wrong impression’ internationally, Voorhoeve asked that the band be ordered to keep the music ‘muted and sober’.²²²²

Even at the planning stage, the arrival of Dutchbat in Zagreb included a ‘party’ to be organized on Saturday evening, 22 July. Contingent Commander Colonel W. Verschraegen proposed the idea of holding a barbecue for the homecoming servicemen. Despite Voorhoeve’s insistence that there should be no alcohol at the party, Couzy felt that he couldn’t deny his men the enjoyment of a beer or two, after all they had been through:

‘I felt that those people deserved a warm welcome. That’s why I decided myself - I remember it very clearly - that the military band should be there in Zagreb. Not to make anyone into a hero, but just to express our relief after all that they’d been through: welcome back and I’m happy you made it back unharmed. I can remember that Voorhoeve said - I had discussed it with him beforehand on that Saturday evening - that no alcohol should be served. I replied that that would be unacceptable. How can you deny people who have spent six and a half months there and who have been through all of this, a beer on a Saturday evening once they have been released? No one would understand that. Of course it was important that things shouldn’t get out of hand. But to deny them a beer, that just wasn’t on. And that’s how things went that Saturday evening. It was a subdued party with the band supplying background music. Hamburgers were served and the men enjoyed a beer.’²²²³

The video footage taken by the battalion press officer W. Dijkema, showed that the members of Dutchbat each spent the evening in their own way. Some were engaged in what looked like serious conversation. As press officer Beneker recalls, most of the men were downcast, an impression shared by visitors to the camp the next day.²²²⁴ However, others, whether under the influence of alcohol or not, ‘were out to have a good time’. The latter were mainly the members of B Company, who had had the most to cope with in Srebrenica. Dijkema saw among them one young man who can also be seen in footage shot at Potocari helping to load a convoy of the injured:

‘The last of the wounded and a woman refugee gave him a pat on the shoulder out of gratitude. That was the lad who probably started off the conga line at the party. When you know the background, you look at those scenes through different eyes.’²²²⁵

Initially music was played on the hi-fi while the band played quiet music a short distance away. Convoy Commander Solkesz was also present: ‘It started off as an enjoyable meal, a good bite to eat. At some point the band began to play and everyone had a beer. Then you see the atmosphere change in a situation like that. It changed due to the beer and the music into a release of pent-up emotions that

²²²² Voorhoeve’s diary, pp. 135-136.

²²²³ Interview H.A. Couzy, 14/09/98.

²²²⁴ Interview M. Beneker, 04/12/01; W. Kok,

²²²⁵ Interview W. Dijkema, 21/09/98.

really couldn't be called a 'party'.²²²⁶ The *NOS-Journaal* news bulletin the next day referred to 'a party for comrades together and with a great deal of emotion'.²²²⁷ Hartman later wrote of 'a high-spirited but at the same time moving battalion party'.²²²⁸ Solkesz: 'People's deepest feelings at that moment and the thing that was uppermost in everybody's mind concerned the senseless death of Raviv van Renssen. That was something the boys just couldn't understand.'²²²⁹

During his leave, Van Renssen had held a party with his colleagues in Zagreb. The night before he died he talked for two hours on his handheld receiver with Corporal De Vries, one of his friends: 'He said: "Just another couple of weeks to go and then we'll be back home again. But first we'll make sure we have another party in Zagreb!"'²²³⁰ That was the mood in which a spontaneous commemoration of Van Renssen occurred.²²³¹ Couzy:

'I was there for a good part of the evening and I found it very moving. At one point the death of Raviv van Renssen was commemorated. In the hectic days before that was something that part of the battalion hadn't really been confronted with. Now they were all together and their attention was called to it and they were silent. I have never seen so many young soldiers cry as there, and quite a few people were led away, overcome with emotion. It was also a release: we're out of there, we survived. It had nothing to do with heroics. Just the relief that they had all survived, with one exception. That was the atmosphere at that party. They even sang the Dutch national anthem at one point. It was their own idea. They went up to the conductor and asked him to play the national anthem.'²²³²

Dijkema, who had started filming from that moment, remembered that the band leader said he would only agree if the mood was serious.²²³³ Couzy: 'I have never stood with so many tears in my eyes for the national anthem. Then they were all quiet. My goodness! That was quite an experience!'²²³⁴

After that moving moment there came the release, as often happens after a funeral, though not everyone took part. Solkesz saw a good friend of Van Renssen's crying in the corridor.²²³⁵ For others it was time to let their inhibitions go. The soldiers lifted both Captain Groen, who had got them through the ordeal, and Couzy onto their shoulders. The soldiers expressed their thanks to the Commander in the form of a chant ('Thank you Couzy! Thank you Couzy!'), and showered him in beer. After that the soldiers formed a conga line, with beer in their hands. These were the images that were later broadcast throughout the world. They became the symbol of Dutchbat's alleged indifference.

As already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the so-called 'party' did not come to play a part in the public perception of events in Zagreb until a much later stage. Ironically there had been very early warnings about the unintended negative effect that images of celebrating soldiers would have on public opinion. On 17 July C.C.J. Veldkamp, secretary at the Warsaw Embassy, sent a fax to Defence Spokesman Veen. He asked for guidelines for dealing with the press and attached the front page of the Polish newspaper *Zyche Warszawy* bearing the photograph of celebrating Dutch soldiers

²²²⁶ Interview A. Solkesz, 15/10/00.

²²²⁷ *NOS-journaal* news bulletin, N.1, 23/07/95.

²²²⁸ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. W.P.P. Hartman, 'Memorandum on press-related aspects return Dutchbat 3', 26/07/95.

²²²⁹ Interview A. Solkesz, 15/11/00.

²²³⁰ Quote from the diary of Eddy de Vries, published in: "'The road was strewn with corpses, but the bus drove on'", *Panorama*, 21-29/09/95.

²²³¹ According to *RTL-Nieuws* news bulletin on 23 July the troops also commemorated the death of soldier Jeffrey Broere from A Company, who died in Simin Han.

²²³² Interview H.A. Couzy, 14/09/98.

²²³³ Telephone interview W. Dijkema, 24/01/02.

²²³⁴ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

²²³⁵ Interview A. Solkesz, 15/11/00.

drinking beer. The caption read, ‘after their release by the Serbs and the deportation from Srebrenica of the Muslims, whom the Dutch UN troops *were supposed to defend*’.²²³⁶ The soldiers in question were the 55 hostages released on 15 July. The men spent their first evening out of captivity in Hotel Koliba on the Danube, in the vicinity of Novi Sad. Their drinks were paid by the Serbian government, who had even employed the services of ‘a Balkan music ensemble’ for the occasion. Charles Sanders, journalist with *De Telegraaf* and his photographer, the only Dutch journalists on the scene, had been invited by the soldiers: ‘There was a great deal of song and laughter’.²²³⁷

One day later, those same soldiers were filmed by Twan Huys’s cameraman in an equally elated mood in Holland House at Pleso (see Chapter 5).²²³⁸ Dutch current affairs programme *Nova* broadcast the pictures on Monday evening, 17 July, without prompting much reaction. Only the *Haagsche Courant* newspaper wrote in an editorial:

‘The bitterness that many Muslims demonstrate towards the UN is completely understandable. The celebrations by the Dutch UN troops in Bosnia and Croatia are equally understandable but it would be better if the uprooted Muslim population never gets to see those pictures’.²²³⁹

However, events were to take a different turn. The video of the dancing and beer-drinking Dutchbat soldiers was filmed by Dijkema on the evening of 22 July. In essence they were privately owned images of a private gathering. On 10 August Deputy Secretary-General Hulshof appeared on the *NOS-Journaal* news bulletin and made an urgent request to the Dutchbat soldiers to submit all of the visual material in their possession to the Ministry of Defence.²²⁴⁰ Dijkema, one of the main suppliers of this material, was approached by Hartman personally with this request.

As Dijkema remembers it the Army Press Officer emphasized the importance of complete openness. By that time Srebrenica had already become a full-blown political controversy and the Ministry of Defence was doing everything in its power to avoid every suggestion of concealment. Dijkema says he warned Hartman to be careful with certain footage. He was told that the videos would be deposited centrally at the NOS, who would then be able to make them available to whoever wanted to use them.

In Dijkema’s recollection, the ball started rolling when the German television channel ZDF ordered material from the NOS in the late autumn of 1995 and began to ask questions. The Dutchbat Press Officer, who was on field exercises at the time, was hastily recalled to The Hague, but to no avail. Before long the images had made it onto Dutch television as well.²²⁴¹ They prompted widespread disgust, even more so in light of the information about the scale of the Srebrenica tragedy which had been emerging in the months since the fall. That was accompanied by a growing tendency towards anachronism in the media’s approach to the subject, giving rise to the suggestion that the troops at the party were fully aware of the mass murders that had taken place. This was just as fallacious as the incorrect assumption that the party had taken place before the eyes of the assembled media. In that sense the controversy surrounding Dutchbat’s welcome-home party is more of a fascinating case study about the power of the selective image to create its own reality, than it is a reflection of what actually happened on that warm summer evening in Zagreb.

²²³⁶ NIOD, Coll. DEF Knipselkrant. Fax Caspar Veldkamp, HMA Warsaw, to Joop Veen, press relations, Ministry of Defence, ‘Kritiek op Dutchbat’ (‘Criticism of Dutchbat’), 17/07/95.

²²³⁷ Ch. Sanders, “‘Ik moest rennen voor mijn leven’” (‘I had to run for my life’), *De Telegraaf*, 17/07/95.

²²³⁸ Interview Twan Huys, 07/07 and 08/07/00.

²²³⁹ ‘Verbitting’ (‘Bitterness’), *Haagsche Courant*, 18/07/95.

²²⁴⁰ DS, S95/061/3511. Memorandum J.H.M. de Winter to Minister, D95/440, ‘Parliamentary Consultation on 31 August 1995’. Appendix draft compilation, ‘Other photo or film material from the enclave’.

²²⁴¹ Telephone interview W. Dijkema, 24/01/02.

Chapter 7

The big debriefing in Assen, 4 September 1995–4 October 1995

1. Introduction

The big debriefing held in Assen in September 1995 after Dutchbat III returned was unique in many respects. The Netherlands had never seen anything of the kind in terms of magnitude, aims and political repercussions. In the normal course of events all that is required once a mission has been completed is an operational debriefing plus a psychological component to identify and deal with personal suffering, from which lessons are learned for future peacekeeping missions. The military then returns to a state of calm.

A different fate befell the third Dutch UNPROFOR battalion in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Instead of completing their peacekeeping mission normally and successfully the Dutchbat forces left the enclave of Srebrenica on 21 July after it was overrun rather suddenly. They had failed to do the job they had come to do, and it soon became clear that terrible things had happened in and around Srebrenica. It seemed that thousands of men had been massacred and Dutchbat had certainly not performed flawlessly. Before this realization dawned, however, during the period around the fall of the enclave Dutchbat was spoken of almost unanimously in positive terms. The general impression was typified in Prime Minister Kok's observation on 14 July 1995 after the meeting of the Ministerial Council, 'The blue helmets performed their duties superbly'.²²⁴² By way of illustration he referred to the fact that Dutchbat had not wanted to leave the enclave until arrangements had been made to look after the men who had been separated from the other refugees and until the wounded had been taken away. The national dailies and weeklies searched desperately for a way forward for Srebrenica, but above all they were loyal to 'our boys'. There was a good deal of appreciation for Dutchbat. The press had not yet begun to discuss Dutch Government policy, on the other hand, although it had started considering the fate of Displaced Persons.²²⁴³ Parliament also kept up its end: in the emergency debate on 12 July with the Foreign Affairs and Defence Parliamentary Standing Committees MPs fully supported Minister Joris Voorhoeve and the Government, and there was only praise for Dutchbat.

This situation did not last long. As the media produced more evidence for what had happened the question of the role the Dutch blue helmets had played during the fall of the enclave and what they had seen became more and more pressing. Parliament kept asking the Defence Minister for clarification, and each time he had to turn to the military establishment for answers. It was not always easy to obtain accurate information from the Army in time, and this process was not without its problems. The Army's immediate attempts to provide some clarity about what had happened were based on interviews with a small number of Dutchbat personnel in Zagreb on 22 and 23 July. Dutchbat III had left Srebrenica on 21 July and arrived in Zagreb in the early morning of 22 July. This short, limited debriefing, however, yielded little concrete or useful information. The demand for information only increased when reports appeared, *nota bene* from Dutchbat personnel, of serious events which they had witnessed.²²⁴⁴ Thus there was a growing need for an overview of precisely what had happened and what the Dutch personnel had experienced and seen. On or around 24 July 1995 Defence Minister Voorhoeve had already decided off his own bat to organize a full debriefing in which all the Dutchbat personnel who had been in the enclave would be interviewed at length and in depth. The Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army in Zagreb, Lieutenant General Couzy, had also come to the

²²⁴² Prime Minister Kok at the press conference on 14/07/95.

²²⁴³ *NRC Handelsblad, Trouw, De Volkskrant, De Telegraaf*, 12-13/07/95.

²²⁴⁴ 'Verschrikkingen van gezichten af te lezen'; *De Telegraaf* 18/07/95, *De Volkskrant* 18, 19 and 20/07/95.

conclusion that a debriefing of all Dutchbat personnel was needed.²²⁴⁵ Only a small number of officers and NCOs had been debriefed in Zagreb. Voorhoeve and Couzy found this unsatisfactory and both of them considered that too many questions remained unanswered.

The full debriefing was indeed held. On their return Dutchbat III were granted special leave followed immediately by annual leave. The major inquiry in Assen began after this, on 4 September. There were a good few questions about and criticisms of the objectives, methods, responsibilities and results of the inquiry right from the start. At the end of August the newspapers reported that some politicians and a large number of military personnel were critical about holding a debriefing. Some politicians pointed out even then that the debriefing, by virtue of its internal nature – being carried out by the Royal Netherlands Army – would seem too much like a cover-up and that it was far too late. In the media Dutchbat personnel expressed confusion about the objectives.²²⁴⁶ Even after Parliament had debated and approved the debriefing on 19 December 1995, matters relating to Srebrenica kept emerging into the public arena.

First a comment on the organization of this chapter. The main objective of the big debriefing in 1995 was to reconstruct what had happened in and around Srebrenica in the period around the fall of the enclave. This period is examined in great detail in this report. It is emphatically not the aim of this chapter to compare facts and results in the report of the debriefing and this report, which would only result in unnecessary repetition. What we are concerned with here is the significance of the debriefing in the context of the aftermath of Srebrenica in Dutch society and politics. The focus is on describing the forces and processes that influenced the holding of the big debriefing. It goes without saying that in the process we shall consider the deficiencies of, and problems with, the debriefing and discuss a few examples of where it fell short.

This chapter first takes a close look at the main actors, the process leading up to the debriefing, what happened at the actual debriefing and how the final report came about. This includes looking at the set up, objectives and planning aspects. In this context we consider the contributions made by the Government and various military bodies and commanders, the relationship between the Netherlands Army and the Central Organization, how certain important information was handled, how the final plan of the debriefing was arrived at and whether influence was exerted by any of the parties involved.

We then consider the debriefing itself and the final report. Among other things we examine whether it was conducted with care, whether it fulfilled its objectives and whether the most important facts that came to light were actually reported, this latter based mainly on the reactions of third parties. Readers with a special interest in a particular episode during the period from 6 to 21 July 1995 will find their needs met in the earlier chapters of this report. The media in particular played an increasingly important role in shaping Dutch opinion on Srebrenica and its consequences since the fall of the enclave. MPs were often guided by media reports when putting questions to the Defence Minister and other members of the Government.²²⁴⁷ The role of the media in the changing image of Srebrenica in the Netherlands since the fall of the enclave is discussed in Part IV, Chapters 6 and 8.

Describing the various facets of the inquiry was a complex business. The whole period following the return of Dutchbat III to the Netherlands when the debriefing had to be organized was characterized by the failure of the Ministry of Defence and the Army to keep written records of policy decisions and agreements. It was only in the case of the detailed information from Minister Voorhoeve to Parliament and the Defence and Foreign Affairs Standing Committees, and the interaction between Parliament and the Minister and the Government, that most of this was recorded in writing. This chapter necessarily makes use of interviews and indirect sources such as the press and media to quite a large extent. For the purpose of carrying out its remit the NIOD was also permitted to see the available documentation and given an opportunity to speak to all those involved in the debriefing.

²²⁴⁵ Interviews H. Couzy, 04/10/01 and A.P.P.M. van Baal, 01/11/01.

²²⁴⁶ Report '*srebrenica in de Nederlandse Media*', ASCOR, UvA, July 2001.

²²⁴⁷ For a detailed study see the appendix to this report '*srebrenica and Journalism*', *J. Wieten*, July 2001.

The first major investigation – by the Ministry of Defence in 1995, into whether there had been obstacles placed in the way of establishing the truth – was carried out by Jos van Kemenade in August and September 1998 for the Defence Minister, Frank de Grave. This is discussed in the next chapter. The statements by the people Van Kemenade and his team interviewed are important for three reasons. Firstly, because they were subject to the precondition that they would be made public: in this way the information would be as reliable as if they had been heard under oath.²²⁴⁸ Secondly because most people at policy-making level who had anything to do with the debriefing were interviewed, and thirdly because these interviews took place relatively soon after the events (three years), so many people's memories of the 1995 events were still reasonably fresh.

2. The run-up

Among the many dignitaries who set off for Zagreb on the weekend of 22-23 July 1995 to welcome Dutchbat III was, of course, the Defence Minister, Joris Voorhoeve. His presence there, as Supreme Commander of the Dutch forces, was intended first and foremost to show his pleasure at and interest in the safe return of Dutchbat III. He was also very concerned about the fate of the Srebrenica population, the men in particular, having heard for the first time on 12 July about the separation of men and women in the enclave. The report that the able-bodied men had left on foot en masse, for a destination unknown to Dutchbat, on the night of 11-12 July, the day of the fall of Srebrenica, had only increased his concern.²²⁴⁹ It was clear that in Zagreb he would try, among other things, to obtain concrete information by talking to those directly involved. With this aim in mind he had given instructions a few days after the fall of the enclave to 'investigate thoroughly what could be reported among the returnees and thus to establish what had taken place, as we in The Hague realized that we knew only a small part of the reality'.²²⁵⁰

At the same time the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army had a growing need for information. On 19 July the Commander of the 11th Airmobile Brigade, General Bastiaans, was ordered by the Army Commander to hold a debriefing in Zagreb.²²⁵¹ Couzy had already been in Zagreb on 16 July to speak to the hostages who had been released and the Army Hospital Organization unit, as he had received strong signals there about what had happened in Srebrenica and how Dutchbat had behaved.²²⁵² The need for a debriefing had been discussed by the Minister and the Army Commander even before the 19th.²²⁵³ Meanwhile more and more reports began appearing in the international and Dutch press during the days after the enclave had fallen suggesting that terrible things had happened. These related both to the large group of Displaced Persons who had set off towards Tuzla on foot on 11 July and those who had been deported in buses from Potocari to Kladanj a few days later. There were soon reports from Tuzla from various military and political sources that among the thousands of women, children and elderly people arriving there and being received were few if any men of fighting age. The Dutch Colonel Brantz, UNPROFOR second-in-command in the North-East Sector of Tuzla, for instance, told an NRC reporter on 17 July that 20,000 people were still missing, adding ominously that if the Serbs intended to achieve their military objectives 'ethics' did not come into it.²²⁵⁴ At that stage the information still came mainly from the women refugees deported from the enclave, who gave the alarm almost immediately after arriving in Tuzla. Development Cooperation Minister Jan Pronk,

²²⁴⁸ Interview J.A. van Kemenade, 09/07/01.

²²⁴⁹ Voorhoeve Diary, 28/10/97.

²²⁵⁰ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 4. Report of the first conversation with J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 17/08/98.

²²⁵¹ DJZ (Directorate of Legal Affairs). Letter, KAB/10.540, 25/08/95; Interview G. Bastiaans, 26/10/00.

²²⁵² Part IV, Chapter 5.

²²⁵³ Voorhoeve Diary, 28/10/97, p. 136; Interview H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

²²⁵⁴ NRC *Handelsblad*, 17/07/95.

who had been in Tuzla on 15 and 16 July to coordinate Dutch aid to the Displaced Persons, also heard the stories and soon afterwards said it was possible that the Bosnian Serbs were guilty of genocide.²²⁵⁵

The main aim of the visit to Zagreb by Voorhoeve and the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, then, was to fill the information gap by talking to the Dutchbat personnel who had just arrived. As an initial attempt to bridge the gap a debriefing was organized by the Commander of the 11th Airmobile Brigade, General Bastiaans, from 22 to 23 September at Camp Pleso near Zagreb. Couzy's focus was narrower than the Minister's and concerned more with the organization itself, in particular how the battalion command had performed.²²⁵⁶ He wanted to know what had gone wrong with Dutchbat. The aim of this debriefing was an operational one, and a small number – just over 25 – of officers and NCOs of Dutchbat III were interviewed. Only to a very limited extent did this operational objective take account of the growing desire of the Defence Minister and the Government in The Hague to clarify the fate of the large numbers of missing persons and to establish what had happened to Dutchbat and the population during the period following the fall of the enclave.

Simultaneously with the Dutch debriefing the officers and NCOs of Dutchbat III had been issued a form by UNPF headquarters on 22 July. This was for a UN debriefing, as Dutchbat III had served under UN command in Srebrenica. After studying these forms it was decided to interview a number of persons additionally as part of the debriefing organized by Bastiaans. UNHCR had also held a debriefing of a number of Dutchbat personnel with the knowledge of the Dutch military authorities. The UNPF and UNHCR debriefings have been discussed in Part IV. With these two additional sources those in Zagreb should already have had reasonably clear indications of what had happened. Also, outside these official frameworks a large number of other formal and informal talks took place with recently returned Dutchbat personnel. As a result of the various debriefings and the informal talks a good deal of information from Dutchbat personnel had reached not only Ministry of Defence staff but also family members and representatives of the press.

However, given the narrow remit, the lack of time and the limited number of servicemen interviewed, the debriefing in Zagreb did not produce the desired results. Nor did it answer the question of what the men and women of Dutchbat III had seen or heard regarding violations of human rights in and around the enclave. The Airmobile Brigade was a new tactical concept for the Army and a lot of time and money had been spent on training and weaponry. The Brigade had been put to the test for the first time in Srebrenica and it was very important for Bastiaans to suppress the growing criticism of this showpiece. Very few people were satisfied with the results of his debriefing and the impression was that he had tried to sweep some things under the carpet.²²⁵⁷ The Minister, in fact, did not receive the definitive report of this debriefing until 28 July, after having to ask for it himself. The intention of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army had been for it to go no further than his desk.²²⁵⁸

As we have said, the Minister and the Army Commander flew back to the Netherlands after the welcoming ceremony in Zagreb on 24 July. In the course of their meetings they had discussed the need to debrief all the Dutchbat personnel who had been in the enclave. This decision was more or less definitive for both of them. At the same time there were other people in the Army planning a debriefing as a matter of normal routine following the return of a unit. The head of the Army's Intelligence and Security Section and the Deputy Commander of the 11th Airmobile Brigade had reported to the Military History on 22 July that there would be a debriefing in September in the Netherlands, when Dutchbat personnel returned from disembarkation leave.²²⁵⁹ Any plans to hold it more or less immediately on the return of the unit to the Netherlands could not be put into practice as

²²⁵⁵ 'Pronk: Serviërs plegen genocide in Srebrenica', *De Volkskrant*, 19/07/95.

²²⁵⁶ Part IV, Chapter 5.

²²⁵⁷ Interview R.F.J.H. de Ruyter, 31/05/01.

²²⁵⁸ SMG (Military History Section), 1004. Reports of Srebrenica Project Group, 27/07/95 and 02/08/95; Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 4. Report of the conversation with E.E. Warlicht, 20/08/98.

²²⁵⁹ SMG (Military History Section), 1004. Reports of Srebrenica Project Group, 25/07/95.

it had been decided to give them ten days' disembarkation leave followed immediately by annual leave as part of the scheduled relief of the battalion.²²⁶⁰ The Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army and others had pointed out that Dutchbat personnel had been through a good deal and many of them had holidays already planned. Furthermore, ran the argument, it would be very difficult to keep the families at home waiting for their loved ones any longer.

Meanwhile it had become clear that hundreds if not thousands of men had disappeared, and the information began to point incontrovertibly towards a massacre. The stories told by Dutchbat personnel and from other sources built up, and as early as 31 July the Minister summoned the Army Commander, Major General Warlicht, to discuss how to put an end to all the uncoordinated statements.²²⁶¹ In a letter to Parliament on 3 August the minister reported on the debriefing organized by Bastiaans in Zagreb and announced a debriefing at which all Dutchbat personnel who had been in the enclave would be interviewed.²²⁶² This was to begin as soon as everyone was back from leave on 4 September. In other words there was only just over four weeks to organize it, so speed was of the essence.

The minister's desire to hold a detailed debriefing had meanwhile been translated into an order to the Army to organize one. In the absence of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army and his deputy, General Van Baal, this task was initially entrusted to the Army Commander, General Warlicht, who in turn suggested General Van der Wind, the Inspector of the Military Legal Corps, as head of the inquiry. Van der Wind received a definitive order from Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Van Baal on 12 August.²²⁶³ At the instigation of the Army Commander, the Deputy Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, General Roos, was appointed as his adviser, and Colonel Bokhoven, head of the Intelligence and Security Section, as deputy head of the inquiry. The minister also appointed two external advisers, Job de Ruiter, ex-Minister of Justice and Defence, and General Huyser (retired), ex-Chief of Defence Staff.

The minister's decision to hold the debriefing and to have it begin on 4 September came in a period when most of those involved had already gone on holiday, or had yet to do so. This undoubtedly influenced the preparations, as meetings took place at the various levels with constantly changing participants. Also, during this important, hectic and tense phase a number of developments had taken place which directly influenced the aims, organization and implementation of the debriefing operation. Below we look at these developments, discussing them in some detail where this is necessary for a clear understanding of how some information was dealt with and the impact this had on the debriefing.

3. The aims of the debriefing

It had been standard practice in the Royal Netherlands Army for many years to debrief servicemen following an operation. These debriefings related mainly to the operational aspects of the particular mission. With the reorientation of the Army towards new roles, starting in the early 1990s, debriefings became more structured. According to Major Buurman of the Army's Lessons Learned Section,²²⁶⁴ debriefings came to be seen as falling into three categories. In principle everyone who took part in an operation was debriefed in the field just before it ended. This was done by a military psychologist and someone from the Military Intelligence Service (Sectie Militaire Inlichtingdienst]. The purpose of these two debriefings was to see (a) whether military personnel had suffered any psychological damage and (b) whether there was any important intelligence information to be had. These were followed by a third,

²²⁶⁰ Interview H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

²²⁶¹ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 4. Report of the conversation with E.E. Warlicht, 20/08/98.

²²⁶² TK, 1994-95 Session, 22 181, No. 109, 03/08/95.

²²⁶³ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/06/01.

²²⁶⁴ Interview L.L.M. Buurman of the Lessons Learned Section (Army), 19/07/01.

operational, debriefing – either in the field or on return to the Netherlands –, which from the early 1990s was normally organized by the Lessons Learned Section.

In the case of Dutchbat III in Srebrenica a start had been made on the psychological debriefing of the personnel. No start was made on the other two aspects, given the circumstances there.²²⁶⁵ This is why officials such as the Army Commander, the Commander of the 11th Airmobile Brigade and Bokhoven, the head of the Dutch Military Intelligence Service, had immediately, in July 1995, contemplated a debriefing in the Netherlands. The Ministry of Defence was, of course, aware of the Army's debriefing activities and their purpose, but the Minister was faced with other problems that needed to be solved. On 31 July – pressurized by all sorts of revelations from Dutchbat personnel in the media – he had confided to Acting Army Commander Warlicht that a way had to be found of putting an end to the 'uncoordinated statements'.²²⁶⁶ Following the arrival of Dutchbat III in Zagreb and their return to the Netherlands on 24 July 1995 the tone in the national press and media became increasingly critical of the role Dutchbat had played in connection with the fall of the enclave. To begin with the media had had to start from a point where little was known about what had happened there: at that time they were able to focus almost entirely on the fortunes of 'our boys'. At the end of July, however, when it became clearer what had happened in the enclave, and the problems and scandals concerning the roll of film, Franken's statement and the various lists came to light, the media adopted a more critical standpoint.²²⁶⁷ The minister also had to adopt a defensive attitude, as a number of facts that were already known were presented by the media as fresh revelations.²²⁶⁸

MPs seized upon information in the press to press the minister for clarification again.²²⁶⁹ To put a check on this confusing flood of information, a detailed overview of what had actually happened was needed. At the end of August Voorhoeve wrote to Parliament regarding the purpose of the debriefing:

‘To avoid confusion of this kind and obtain the fullest possible picture of the events it was decided at the end of July to hold a detailed “debriefing” of Dutchbat to supplement the preliminary “debriefing” in Zagreb. Parliament was informed of this on 3 August. Given the long period of time that the Dutch UN forces in Srebrenica had been working in difficult circumstances and the desire of their families to be reunited with them as soon as possible, it was decided at the end of July to give Dutchbat a few weeks' leave before any detailed “debriefing”. Starting next Monday, 4 September, interviews are to be held with all Dutch UN military personnel who were in the Srebrenica enclave during the Bosnian Serb offensive, and these will go into any possible indications of war crimes and operational aspects. Personnel will also be given every opportunity to bring up matters not strictly covered by these two headings. The aim is to obtain a complete overview of the events, which can then be seen better in context.’²²⁷⁰

The final report of the debriefing referred to the same aims as above, formulating more clearly the aspect of 'coming to terms with the impressions and experiences of the personnel involved'.²²⁷¹

As mentioned above, the proposed debriefing resulted in a debate in the newspapers. The general tenor of the articles was 'confusion and indignation among Dutchbat personnel', scepticism

²²⁶⁵ Part IV, Chapter 4.

²²⁶⁶ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 4. Report of the interview E.E. Warlicht, 20/08/98.

²²⁶⁷ E.g. in NOS, *NOVA*, 24/07/95; *NRC Handelsblad* 22, 23 and 24/07/95; *Elsevier*, 29/07/95.

²²⁶⁸ Minister Voorhoeve in *De Volkskrant*, 29/08/95.

²²⁶⁹ Directly traceable to reports in the media were e.g. the Letter from the minister of Defence to Parliament of 03/08/95 concerning accusations of misconduct and the written answers on 04/09/95 to questions in the Parliamentary Consultations of 31/08/95 on the developments surrounding the fall of Srebrenica.

²²⁷⁰ TK, 1994-95 Session, 22 181, No. 115, (28/08/95)

²²⁷¹ Report based on the Srebrenica Debriefing, Assen, 04/10/95, Sections 1.2 and 1.3.

among politicians and editors as to the timeliness of the debriefing and the likelihood of uncovering the facts regarding what had actually happened, and a call to examine the responsibility of the politicians as well.²²⁷²

The vast majority of those involved subsequently interviewed by the NIOD, Van Kemenade or others about the purpose of the debriefing, however, realized perfectly that Voorhoeve's main aim was to put an end to the uncontrolled flood of information which was constantly wrong-footing him. On 17 August, when the final plan was discussed and approved at the Ministry, it formalized the ideas on a debriefing which a number of the top-ranking military and the minister had in point of fact been considering since Zagreb. The green light had been given for what was to be an Army operation supervised by two independent advisers. The fact that the Army was to organize it meant that it would be done in the way they knew best. Right from the start it was planned to incorporate elements of the three standard types of Army debriefing: operational, psychological and intelligence. In a Priorities Memorandum to the minister, Deputy Secretary-General Hulshof formulated the real purpose of the debriefing as follows: 'The object is to collect all the information at the disposal of Dutchbat personnel and classify it and process it in a report, with the aim of bridging any information gap at the Ministry of Defence and giving Dutchbat personnel an opportunity to report what they saw or experienced. On the basis of the information steps can be taken in relation to operational aspects, any war crimes that emerge can be reported to the tribunal and the need for aftercare can be determined.'²²⁷³

As a result of the confusing reports on the aims of the debriefing, and differing expectations as to what it was supposed to achieve, it continued to be viewed in different ways in Ministry of Defence circles and elsewhere. Nor was everyone at the Ministry of Defence singing from the same song sheet. It had already become evident in Zagreb on 22-23 July that the information requirements of Couzy and Bastiaans – the Army Commander and Commander of the Airmobile Brigade – were narrower than those of the minister.

4. The relationship between the Central Organization and the Army

There were a number of discrepancies between the needs of the Central Organization and the Army. There were also fairly fundamental differences of opinion on how to respond to current issues in the media and politics. To some extent this was due to the awkward personal relationship between Minister Voorhoeve and General Couzy. The Army also had a mentality of 'We can fight our own battles'. Lastly, the structured consultations between the Minister of Defence and his commanding officers, the Defence Council, had been abolished by Ter Beek in 1991. As Voorhoeve did not reconvene the Defence Council there was no forum for communicating with his commanding officers regularly and directly.²²⁷⁴

These differences affected the relationship between the Central Organization and the Army and had a substantial influence on how the role of Dutchbat in the enclave and subsequent problems were dealt with within the Ministry of Defence apparatus following the fall of Srebrenica. Nor did the debriefing avoid the consequences of the diverging needs and opinions. This section looks at the relationship between the Central Organization and the Army based on a number of 'incidents'.

A typical example of a difference of opinion between the Central Organization and the Army was the way plans were made for the arrival of the main Dutchbat force in Zagreb on 21 July. A few days after the fall of Srebrenica Voorhoeve and Couzy had a meeting at the Ministry at which *inter alia* the arrangements for receiving Dutchbat personnel on their return from the enclave were discussed. Couzy wanted to take a military band to Zagreb, but Voorhoeve objected. Couzy, however, got his way, but promised only to play subdued music when the aircraft took off for the Netherlands. The fact that

²²⁷² For example VARA, *bet Terras*, 26/08/95; *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/08/95 and 01/09/95; *Trouw*, 30/08/95.

²²⁷³ DS. Memorandum, No. 15815/95, PSG H. Hulshof to the minister of Defence, 16/08/95.

²²⁷⁴ Interview H. Hulshof, 06/12/01.

this had to be discussed at all was the result of the minister's experience earlier that week. Voorhoeve had gone to Soesterberg air base on 17 July to welcome the returning group of hostages and the medical personnel. The military band was there but played cheerful music, contrary to what had been agreed. The minister tackled Couzy about this, but because of the presence of the press and happy relatives he did not intervene at the time. A few days later Couzy told the minister not to meddle in operational matters; he apparently turned a deaf ear to the minister's argument that events of this kind could have political implications.²²⁷⁵ Thus the welcoming of Dutchbat III in Zagreb on 22-23 July 1995 gave rise to another clash between Voorhoeve and Couzy. The stood by his own ideas about the arrangements for receiving Dutchbat personnel, which were not in line with those of Voorhoeve.²²⁷⁶ Deputy Director of Information Services Bert Kreemers, talking about the differing ideas of the minister and the Army Commander, said: 'This was discussed in the bunker. Couzy was the one who wanted a party with a brass band and the whole works. The Government and Couzy saw the nature of the return in totally different terms. The Government didn't want a party, they wanted a formal ceremony, an opportunity to say their piece, transfer command and then go home.'²²⁷⁷ Even Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, the Commander of Dutchbat III, could not prevent the event taking on a festive nature.²²⁷⁸

After this, problems ensued in rapid succession. There were differences of opinion with the Army and problems with the information provided by the latter following the speeches by Couzy and Karremans on 23 July in Zagreb. Here too Voorhoeve and the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army had been in touch before the event.²²⁷⁹ Then there was a difference of opinion about the timing of the debriefing (upon return from Zagreb or after returning from leave), and not long afterwards about the Smith-Mladic treaty, Franken's statement and the two lists of names of wounded and men in and around the compound on 12 July. The press made much of these points and contributed substantially to an unfavourable impression of the Ministry of Defence.²²⁸⁰

Another typical incident related to the report of Bastiaans' Zagreb debriefing of 22-23 September, as mentioned above, which Voorhoeve did not receive until after 28 July. He needed it for his letter to Parliament of 3 August. Warlicht, who was Acting Army Commander at that time and received the request, sent it immediately. As it turned out, however, it was not General Couzy's intention to let the minister have a copy; the fact that General Warlicht had sent one caused some panic in Army circles. Also, it contained at least two passages which the Army top brass did not want to get out, one about Colonel Dr Schouten 'leaving alone' the last group of wounded, the other about the statement signed by Franken supposedly indicating that he had agreed to this.²²⁸¹

The problems between the minister and the Army were not only fought out in the corridors and the media. The Military History Section had received a confidential order from the Army Commander on 13 July to investigate the flow of information between the Army Crisis Staff and the Ministry surrounding the fall of Srebrenica.²²⁸² One of the things that annoyed General Couzy was the fact that he was told on 10 July that the Serb attack was only directed at the southern part of the enclave, but the enclave fell the next day. He considered that the Defence Crisis Management Centre had kept information from him. The Military History Section investigators realized that a battle was taking place between the Army Crisis Staff and the Defence Crisis Management Centre as to who was, or ought to be, in charge of crisis control operations. This had made Military History Section a pawn in a conflict which was ultimately between Army Commander Couzy and Minister Voorhoeve. Almost at the same

²²⁷⁵ Voorhoeve's journal, 28/10/97, pp. 135-136.

²²⁷⁶ Part IV, Chapter 5.

²²⁷⁷ Interview B. Kreemers, 18/03/99.

²²⁷⁸ Interview T. Karremans, 25/06/98.

²²⁷⁹ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

²²⁸⁰ *Srebrenica, het publicitaire beeld*, 1992-1995, RVD/IV 10/11/99, Chapter 3, Negatieve beeldvorming.

²²⁸¹ SMG, 1004. Report of conversation with Col. Smeets, 02/08/95.

²²⁸² Part IV, Chapter V.

time Commodore Hilderink, who worked at the Ministry, at the Defence Crisis Management Control Centre, had received an order from the Central Organization to investigate the lines of communication between the Army and the Ministry. His investigation arose from the feeling of the minister and his immediate staff that the information flow to the top was not what it should be. These investigations were typical of the relationship that then existed between the minister and the ‘operating company’ (the Royal Netherlands Army).²²⁸³

The Minister of Defence and the top Ministry of Defence civil servants were sharply critical in 1995 and subsequently of the relationship between the Central Organization and the Army. Much of this criticism was not expressed until later, during the various investigations, but that there was something wrong with the relationship was clear. Among other things Voorhoeve said that the information on Srebrenica from the Army to the Ministry only emerged in fits and starts and that the Commander was very keen to hold a standard debriefing (i.e. an operational one) with limited objectives. The Minister also considered that there was a pattern of the Army top brass wanting to draw a line under the atrocious events as soon as possible for the sake of ‘calm in the army’. This, according to him, was why the then army top brass were not immediately and wholeheartedly in agreement with his plans to hold a debriefing to investigate thoroughly what had happened.²²⁸⁴ This was confirmed on the part of the Army Crisis Staff by one of Couzy’s close associates: ‘Couzy actually objected somewhat to the form of the debriefing. He would have liked a debriefing with operational people who knew what’s what.’²²⁸⁵

The Director of Information Services at the Ministry of Defence, Van den Heuvel, and his deputy, Kreemers, often had to depend on information from the Army to respond properly to media reports and to implement the Minister’s public relations policy in a worthwhile manner. Van den Heuvel said of the Armed Forces that they did have a tendency not to communicate immediately about things that were not going well; they wanted to see whether the mistakes could be remedied first.²²⁸⁶ Kreemers characterized this less diplomatically: ‘The Army, and Couzy in particular, adopted a “fighting stance” towards the Central Organization. Their image had been destroyed as a result of Srebrenica and they started criticizing the minister, the junior minister and Kreemers. The Army was engaged in conscious manipulation of information. Sometimes we simply did not receive documents from the Army even when we expressly asked for them.’²²⁸⁷ There was indeed a culture in the Army that resulted in the Minister not being informed (or not in time) about the existence of some documents for example in the case of Bastiaans’ debriefing in Zagreb, but even in the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army having no intention whatsoever of showing the report to the minister.

The feelings of distrust were mutual, however. This can best be illustrated by the management report of 5 October 1995 to the minister in which Fabius reported on the investigation that had been conducted as a result of the leaking to the media of information on the Smith-Mladic agreement of 19 July 1995.²²⁸⁸ In these newspaper articles an anonymous source accused the Defence Minister of having withheld information on the matter from Parliament.²²⁸⁹ During the investigation by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee it emerged when hearing witnesses and suspects that the Army was very frustrated about the circumstances in which it had been shown in a bad light in the media on a number of occasions. It was this frustration that had resulted in the anonymous letter being sent to De

²²⁸³ Interview M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00

²²⁸⁴ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 5. Second annotation for Dr J. van Kemenade by J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 21/08/98.

²²⁸⁵ Interview M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00.

²²⁸⁶ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2 Appendix 4. Report of the conversation with H. van den Heuvel, 24/08/98.

²²⁸⁷ Interview B. Kreemers, 18/03/99.

²²⁸⁸ Documenten Rapport – Van Kemenade, Part 1. Memorandum intended for the minister of Defence, by D.G.J. Fabius, 05/10/95.

²²⁸⁹ This scandal became known as the case of the ‘Leaking Colonel’. For a detailed account see Part IV, Chapter 8.

Volkskrant. Fabius' conclusion did not mince words: 'In the course of the investigation it became clear that the understanding between the officials of the Central Organization at the Ministry of Defence and officials on the Staff of the Army Commander is far from ideal. There is a good deal of frustration, especially on the side of the Army Commander, about the 'balance of power', which has a deleterious effect on the way they work together.'

Given that the understanding between them was not ideal it came as no surprise that the Army Commander expressed his confidence in the suspect before the minister had even received the results of the investigation into the leak. This was yet another *fait accompli* that the minister was faced with. The Memorandum went on to mention some reasons for frustration which the army officers had put forward when questioned for the investigation: these related to the minister's political handling of the statement signed by Franken, the incorrect development of the roll of film and the loss of the list of 239 names.

There were also tensions at the debriefing in Assen. At that time Voorhoeve was under constant pressure and needed information urgently. The Director of the General Policy Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Defence, De Winter, had gone to Assen on 29 September 1995 to try to prise material out of Van der Wind so as to enable questions in Parliament to be answered. The amount of cooperation was minimal. Van der Wind refused to allow access to a number of debriefing statements, citing confidentiality. Nor did the information that he promised would follow by fax arrive. De Winter subsequently placed this incident in the general context of the poor relationship with the Royal Netherlands Army.²²⁹⁰ According to him they were treated like a load of busybodies in Assen. Van der Wind mentioned this incident to Van Kemenade in 1998 in response to a question about possible attempts to exert external influence on the report. Van der Wind's deputy at the debriefing, Bokhoven, gave a different explanation for the incident. He suggested that it was an attempt by the Central Organization to obtain prior knowledge of the debriefing material,²²⁹¹ an opinion shared by Major De Ruyter of the Military Intelligence Service, who led a debriefing team in Assen.²²⁹²

With these examples in mind it is not surprising that the expectations of the minister and the Army Commander differed as to the intended outcome of the big debriefing. The debriefing envisaged by Couzy and the rest of the Army top brass was a detailed but in-house operation, intended to be a routine affair, working through the three objectives in the normal military way. The debriefing envisaged by the minister was a much broader one, the primary objective being not to examine the operational side but to get at all the information so as to avoid unpleasant surprises. In view of the distrust of the minister among the Army top brass, because of his openness about and handling of the series of incidents that had occurred hitherto, it was only natural that they did not want an inquiry that might produce even more damaging information. The type of debriefing the minister opted for – broad-based and involving external advisers – was regarded with deep suspicion in Army circles.

It is clear with hindsight that the minister's decision to allow the debriefing to go ahead as planned (i.e. with the Army playing a major role), despite the fact that he was aware of the Army's inward-looking, cautious culture, laid the foundation for many of the subsequent problems. The military were frustrated about various incidents, and this did not fail to affect the debriefing, resulting in fresh incidents in the flow of information. As far as the Army was concerned, the minister clearly failed to take sufficient public responsibility for everything that had happened, even where mistakes had been made by the Army. And most of the incidents that attracted attention did not involve mistakes at Central Organization level. Nevertheless minister who was being held to account and who felt himself placed in an embarrassing position. That the Army should account for its actions was only logical. All

²²⁹⁰ Interview J.H.M. de Winter, 20/07/00.

²²⁹¹ Interview H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01.

²²⁹² Interview R.F.J.H. de Ruyter, 31/05/01.

the problems, including those of obtaining information, were in fact reported in detail to Parliament by the minister.²²⁹³

5. The Management Report (MR)

The unsatisfactory relationship between the Central Organization and the Army, and the ensuing mutual distrust, was also to a large extent responsible for the way the Management Report was handled in August and September 1995. The MR was a by-product of the investigation into the roll of film. It was actually an internal Memorandum on two A4s from one of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigators to his commanding officer containing some observations and comments. The criticisms it contained related mainly to the way the battalion command had performed and suggested that Dutchbat had played a far less heroic role than had been assumed. These were all matters that the Army found extremely unwelcome. Although some key officials and debriefing personnel in the Army were aware of the MR at an early stage, no-one brought it up at the debriefing.

In July 1997, as part of the preparatory work for talks between the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army and Captain Ron Rutten, the owner of the notorious spoiled roll of film, a copy of the Memorandum of 4 August was found. The minister was informed immediately. In August 1998 the MR featured in the news and Van Kemenade dealt with it in some detail in his report 'On Srebrenica' of 28 September 1998. The MR appeared in the news even after the Van Kemenade report, and a detailed investigation followed. The large amount of interest in it was due mainly to two things. Firstly, this was yet another document that belonged on the long list of pieces of information not known, for whatever reason, to the Defence Minister. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, this was highly sensitive information about possible criminal offences committed by Dutchbat personnel in Srebrenica and the possible failure of the Dutchbat command. The MR had not been brought up at the debriefing and had not resulted in criminal investigations. The question is whether this was deliberate.

On 4 August 1995 Voorhoeve received a telephone call from the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Commander, General Fabius, who informed him of a number of things that were said to have taken place while Dutchbat III were stationed in the enclave.²²⁹⁴ These had been reported in two Marechaussee investigations, one into the spoiled roll of film and the other, following on from this, into war crimes committed by Serbs and observed by Royal Netherlands Army personnel in Srebrenica.²²⁹⁵ The MR was based mainly on the information from the second investigation. Fabius reported it to the minister on the basis of a so-called 'Management Report' on two sheets of A4 sent to him by the head of these investigations, Captain Rutten. Although the minister was not given details of all the points in this report, what he heard was enough to strengthen him in his opinion that a full debriefing was an absolute necessity. According to Voorhoeve, Fabius said, 'There is a lot of discontent among some officers and NCOs in the Dutchbat command about the way things went. A lot of discontent. Don't underestimate it! Karremans did not function.'²²⁹⁶ Fabius did not, however, report to the minister that he had this down on paper.²²⁹⁷

What was this all about? In the course of the investigations mentioned above the Marechaussee spoke to five Dutchbat personnel who gave them information on a large number of events related to Srebrenica. This concerned possible criminal offences committed by Dutchbat personnel and the possible failure of the battalion command, but it fell outside the remit of the two investigations and did not therefore belong in the statements taken there. This was all reported verbally to Besier at the Public

²²⁹³ TK, 1994-95 Session, 22 181, Nos. 112 (03/08/95), 115 (28/08/95), 120 (12/09/95), 121 (04/09/95), 122 (14/09/95) and 1995-96 Session, 22 181, No. 124 (04/10/95)

²²⁹⁴ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 4. Report of the conversation with D.G.J. Fabius, 18/08/98.

²²⁹⁵ PPD Arnhem. Report of the interrogation of P.H. Rutten by the National Police Internal Investigations Department, 25/08/98; see also Part IV, this chapter.

²²⁹⁶ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

²²⁹⁷ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 4. Report of the conversation with D.G.J. Fabius, 18/08/98.

Prosecutions Department in Arnhem by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigator on 2 August.²²⁹⁸ He told them that the Department saw no grounds for taking action, as the accusations were anonymous and not specific. In other words, a formal accusation by the witnesses would be needed before criminal investigations could be instituted. That this is the correct procedure was subsequently confirmed by a Marechaussee official. If investigator Rutten had wanted to do something with the information, the five anonymous witnesses would have had to report the matter officially.²²⁹⁹ This did not happen, and Rutten spoke to Fabius the next day and reported the facts that had emerged from the investigations to him. The Marechaussee Commander asked him to write them down and send them to him, which he did almost immediately in the form of the Management Report which landed on the Chief Constable's desk on 4 August. This contained the following information:

There were said to be no plans, or insufficiently prepared plans, to act in the event of a Serb attack on the enclave.

When leaving the town of Srebrenica for Potocari vehicles even ran over people or dead bodies.

During this action command was exercised not by the battalion commander but by his deputy.

There was frustration particularly at the fact that no (non-violent) resistance had been offered; personnel were even ordered to lay down their weapons.

The Bosnian personnel in the compound at Potocari were not given any protection; they too were deported.

Serbs were permitted to check whether there were any Muslims still hiding in the Dutch compound.

The air observers responsible for watching the air strikes were so upset that they were unable to carry out their duties.

Serbs who had free access to the compound were observed taking photographs there of Displaced Persons inside the fence.

Large sums of money – especially German marks – were seen being offered to Dutch military personnel to be banked in the Netherlands.

It was frustrating that the Dutchbat command took no action whatsoever when they knew that all the deported men's personal effects had been taken away and thrown in a heap at a nearby house in full view of the Dutch compound.

There was a lot of criticism of a Dutch Major, a United Nations Military Observer, who sought safe shelter as soon as the shooting started and took no further active part.

²²⁹⁸ PPD Arnhem. Report of the interrogation of P.H. Rutten by the National Police Internal Investigations Department, 25/08/98.

²²⁹⁹ Interview C.P.C. Kuijs, 20/06/01.

Nor was permission given, when the 'Displaced Persons' were deported, to patrol the enclave to see whether there were any wounded or dead.²³⁰⁰

These matters were of such importance that they could have been expected to guide the questioning at the big debriefing, especially as they were known at an early stage and there was more than enough opportunity, in the period of over four weeks between the writing of the MR and the start of the debriefing, to investigate the accusations. The 'discontent' that emanated from this, as reported verbally by Fabius on 4 August, was another strong motive for Voorhoeve to clarify matters by means of a large-scale general debriefing. In this sense the MR played a part in the urgent consultations held in the ensuing days on the form the Srebrenica debriefing should take.²³⁰¹ As regards subsequent developments it is important in any event to note that the minister did not ask the Marechaussee Commander to send him the MR and the latter did not consider it necessary to send him a copy.²³⁰² A copy was sent on 7 August, however, to General Warlicht, who was Acting Army Commander at the time. Fabius had telephoned Warlicht about the MR – also on the 7th – and they had discussed what Warlicht could do about it. The latter subsequently stated to Van Kemenade that he had stored the facts it contained in the back of his mind and had not passed it on to the Army Commander. He also stated that the MR had not been brought up by him or by Fabius at the initial meetings at the Ministry on 8 and 9 August at which the form the proposed debriefing should take was discussed. It did, however, play a role in the back of his mind at those meetings when he urged that the inquiry be as wide-ranging as possible.

Roos, the Deputy Marechaussee Commander of the Marechaussee, whom Couzy had appointed as an adviser to the inquiry team, was aware of the MR. He stated that he had seen it soon after his return from holiday on 8 August. Roos, who attended a number of policy meetings at the Ministry during the planning phase and was present in person on several occasions at the debriefing in Assen, also stated that he had not reported the document to those in charge of the debriefing.²³⁰³

At the same time the head of the debriefing, General Van der Wind, and his deputy, Colonel Bokhoven, also had opportunities to take note of it. In October 1998 Van der Wind reported to Minister De Grave that one of his close associates had informed him that two copies of the Management Report had been found in the archives of the Srebrenica debriefing. He emphasized that what he had told Van Kemenade shortly before then in the context of his investigation, that he had not seen the MR during the debriefing operation, was absolutely true. He admitted that he could have taken note of it. According to Van der Wind, Colonel Bokhoven, the deputy head of the debriefing team, was also not aware of the Report.²³⁰⁴ Defence Minister De Grave notified Van Kemenade of this personally by letter on 9 November 1998. De Grave saw this development as grounds for instituting a thorough investigation into how the MR had been handled at the time. The Director of the Defence Archives Recording and Information (DARIC) was entrusted with the investigation, which lasted from 15 October 1998 to 4 November 1998. The DARIC team began by visiting various records offices to see whether they had copies of the MR. They did indeed find the two copies mentioned above in the Srebrenica archives of the debriefing operation, one filed on 6 August 1995 and the other on 4 September 1995. Another two copies were found, one in the personal files of Fabius' Head of the Personal Office, Marechaussee Lieutenant Colonel Leupe, filed on 4 August 1995, and one in the records of the Military History Section, filed on 13 February 1998. No other copies were found. Further investigations and interviews followed in order to trace what had happened to the MR, beginning with the person who had written it.

²³⁰⁰ SMG, 1004. Report of Kodak team, drawn up in Venlo by the team leader of the Kodak team, P.H. Rutten, 04/08/95.

²³⁰¹ DAB (General Policy Affairs Directorate). Memorandum from DAB to the minister of Defence, 12/08/98.

²³⁰² Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 4. Report of conversation with D.G.J. Fabius, 18/08/98.

²³⁰³ Interview K.C. Roos, 13/07/00.

²³⁰⁴ BSG, box 19. DARIC Report, Report of investigation into documents relating to Srebrenica, 04/11/98.

Captain Rutten faxed the MR to the Marechaussee Commander, Fabius, on 4 August 1995 through the offices of Lieutenant De Ridder, who received the fax and immediately handed it to Leupe. The latter, after making a photocopy for his personal files, handed it over to General Fabius, who then immediately telephoned the minister. On arrival at the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Staff it was treated as an internal document that did not need to be recorded and filed. Fabius told DARIC that he regarded it merely as a note of a conversation enabling him to inform the Minister of Defence. The 4 September 1995 copy in the Srebrenica archives of the debriefing operation had been annotated by Acting Army Commander Warlicht. The procedure instituted as part of the debriefing operation for recording and dealing with incoming mail and other documents was a strict one, designed to ensure that nothing would be lost. The process was in line with Royal Netherlands Marechaussee procedures. In Assen Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Sergeant Stagge was responsible for this, and he was a key team member of the Activity Centre (AC) during the investigation. Documents were handled in line with the manual used on the training courses for investigators in Apeldoorn. This procedure ruled out the possibility of documents being lost and ensured that all documents were seen and dealt with.²³⁰⁵ It is remarkable that the two copies of the MR also escaped the notice of all the other people in Assen. It should be noted, by the way, that General Fabius did not send it to the Public Prosecutions Department either.²³⁰⁶ He considered that the matter had been properly reported to Besier on 2 August by those who had carried out the investigation into the missing roll of film. He knew that Besier had not seen grounds in their verbal communications to institute criminal investigations. Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Captain Rutten himself, on the other hand, following his conversation with Besier on 2 August, said that he had expected the latter, having heard what could be highly incriminating information, to institute one or more follow-up investigations.²³⁰⁷

It may be concluded, then, that Rutten, the author of the Management Report, properly reported the allegations to the competent authorities in his case. At the same time he ought to have taken steps to persuade his informants to report the crimes. The fact that the witnesses wished to remain anonymous for fear of possible repercussions from Muslim refugees in the Netherlands and for fear of harming their careers in the services made this more difficult, of course.²³⁰⁸ Responsibility for passing on the written account of these highly sensitive and in some cases incriminating allegations clearly rested in the first instance with the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Commander, General Fabius. The minister ought to have been sent a copy immediately, once the MR lay in black and white on General Fabius' desk on 4 August and the latter had had the opportunity to review the matter and realize its significance. According to A.J.M. Heerts, President of the Marechaussee Association, later on at a reception Fabius let slip that he had not dared to send the document to the Ministry as the place was as leaky as a sieve.²³⁰⁹ The Public Prosecutions Department too ought to have been sent a copy by Fabius. Rutten had personally informed Besier on 2 August and had been told that the latter saw no grounds to institute an investigation. One would have expected Fabius, who knew this, to send the Management Report to the PPD immediately with the aim of having one or more investigations instituted. Also difficult to understand, looking back, is Fabius' decision to regard the Report as an international document or 'non-paper' that did not therefore need to be recorded and filed.

It has to be said here that a clear responsibility was borne by Roos, who was aware of the content at an early stage. Given his position as Head of Operations at the Marechaussee and his remit

²³⁰⁵ BSG, box 19. DARIC Report, Report of investigation into documents relating to Srebrenica, 04/11/98, Appendix I, Report of the conversation held with RNIMilCon Sergeant J.H.A. Stagge.

²³⁰⁶ Interview D.G.J. Fabius, 19/10/01.

²³⁰⁷ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 4. Report of the conversation with P.H. Rutten and K. van Dijk, 19/08/98.

²³⁰⁸ PPD Arnhem. Report of the interrogation of P.H. Rutten by the National Police Internal Investigations Department, 25/08/98.

²³⁰⁹ Interview A.J.M. Heerts, 25/04/99.

in organizing the debriefing, one would expect him to have had an extremely serious appreciation of what was in the MR. He ought to have ensured that it was produced as a document in Assen.

The Deputy Army Commander, Warlicht, was already familiar with the MR on 7 August, and it was he who proposed that Van der Wind head the investigation. From the end of July Warlicht, as Deputy Army Commander, was in regular functional contact with Van der Wind and it was no coincidence that the latter was chosen for the debriefing. Van der Wind was tipped off by Warlicht as early as 8 August that the operation was imminent.²³¹⁰ That would have been an ideal opportunity to pass on essential information at an early stage to the person who had just been appointed to head the inquiry. Independently of this both the head of the debriefing, Van der Wind, and his deputy, Colonel Bokhoven, ought to have taken note of the Management Report individually. The procedures for handling incoming mail ruled out the possibility of documents vanishing into the files unseen.

It is unlikely, furthermore, that the MR was seen by J. de Ruiter or General G. Huyser (retired), the external advisers and quality controllers brought in by the Ministry of Defence. Huyser said in 1998 that he regretted that he and De Ruiter had not known about it. If they had, he said, the questions asked would have been more specific.²³¹¹ Given the number of generals with key functions who knew of the MR but did not consider it necessary to produce it at the debriefing, it is only to be expected that they too had no desire to involve the two external advisers. No doubt Van der Wind's later characterization of it as a 'piece of nonsense' was typical of how other military men thought of it.²³¹² The lack of political sensitivity shown in assessing this information was evidently substantial among all of them. On the one hand it indicates a high degree of deafness – or indifference – in the Army to what was going on in the community at the time. The media had seized upon Dutchbat's role in the enclave. Ministry of Defence 'blunders' such as Franken's statement, the incidents surrounding the press conference in Zagreb and the list of wounded Muslim males were made much of in the media. Voorhoeve was attacked from all sides by the press and politicians.²³¹³ The Management Report was yet another in the series of misjudgements by the Army.

The above account shows, furthermore, how unlikely it is that a lot more people did not know of its existence. Most of them probably judged it – with a complete lack of political sensitivity – in the same way as General Van der Wind, as a piece of nonsense. The fact that it contained allegations which were unwelcome to the Army will not have encouraged them to deal with it. Either they relied on Besier of the PPD, who saw no grounds for action, or they maintained, like Fabius, Van der Wind and Roos, that the facts would come out anyway at the debriefing.²³¹⁴ That might well have been the case with some matters. But the information would have been very useful when drawing up the questionnaires for the debriefing. It would have been better if Van der Wind and/or Bokhoven had been given it so that they could decide what to do with it. As far as can be ascertained, then, almost the only role the MR played in the debriefing operation in Assen was that telephone communication of part of it was an added incentive to the Minister to obtain proper clarification of a number of important matters quickly.

6. The implementation of the remit

The foregoing describes the political and media pressure on the Defence Minister after the fall of Srebrenica. That Voorhoeve needed to take action to put an end to the uncontrolled flood of reports from Dutchbat III is also very understandable. The cooperation shown by the Army was often unwilling and usually not adequate or timely. The relationship between the Central Organization and the Army was characterized by mutual distrust. And yet the Minister decided to follow existing

²³¹⁰ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²³¹¹ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 4. Report of the conversation with G. Huyser, 28/08/98.

²³¹² Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01; cf. interview D.G.J. Fabius, 19/10/01.

²³¹³ ASCOR Report, 'srebrenica in het nieuws in de tweede helft van 1995', July 2001.

²³¹⁴ Interview K.C. Roos, 13/07/00; Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01; interview D.G.J. Fabius, 19/10/01.

debriefing practice and give the job to the Army. It is also clear that the two sides had differing expectations.

In the absence of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, General Couzy, and the Deputy Army Commander, General Van Baal, General Warlicht – Army Head of Personnel – as Deputy Army Commander was given a verbal order by the Central Organization to organize the debriefing. He was also present initially at the coordinating meetings. Deputy Secretary-General Hulshof and Deputy Chief of Defence Staff Schouten gave Warlicht no choice when he hesitated because he thought the job was too difficult. The Army had to hold the debriefing, and if Warlicht did not want to do it he would have to bring Couzy back from holiday. This did not happen, presumably because Warlicht realized that Couzy would not have been able to refuse to carry out the order to the Army either.²³¹⁵ At one of the coordinating meetings at the Ministry General Van der Wind was soon chosen as actual head of the debriefing. Warlicht and Van der Wind knew each other, and moreover General Van der Wind, as Inspector of the Military Legal Corps, had recently made recommendations on the tracing of two rolls of films, among other things.²³¹⁶ Warlicht – and later Van der Wind – asked the Ministry on a number of occasions for written instructions for the debriefing. The reason for this request was that the Army (specifically the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army) had been made responsible for the operation by the minister, but Warlicht considered that the Army should be able to interpret the job as it saw fit.²³¹⁷ It was also customary in military culture for an onerous and important order to a high-ranking Commander to be given in writing. Another factor was that this was an unusual assignment and the Army had never done anything like it before.²³¹⁸ Van der Wind was initially very uncertain as to the precise scope of the remit. The only indications were verbal communications from various officials at the Ministry and in the Army. There was nothing in writing.²³¹⁹ Before he finally took the initiative and formulated the remit, he confided his uncertainty to the Military History Section Srebrenica Project Group, in the presence of General Roos, at a meeting on 16 August.²³²⁰

Over a week after the letter from Voorhoeve to Parliament announcing the big debriefing, on 11 August, the day before he went on holiday, Warlicht sent a letter to the Army Commander – who was himself still on holiday – setting out the developments regarding the planned debriefing. This letter gives an excellent impression of how the Central Organization and the Army thought about the responsibilities and shows that the Army well knew what the minister's ultimate aim was. It also makes clear that – although the order was imperative – there was a vacuum as regards organization and content which could be filled in by the Army having due regard to the four parameters laid down.

‘....His immediate motivation was to prevent uncoordinated publications in the press.

It was clear (at least to me) that the inquiry was so broad-based and subject to so many conditions that it must be a Ministerial matter, or at least a Central Organization matter. At a later stage an attempt was made to make the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army fully responsible for the debriefing.²³²¹ I opposed this because in my view the numerous conditions and limited degree of freedom stood in the way of genuine responsibility. After

²³¹⁵ Interview H. Hulshof, 06/12/01.

²³¹⁶ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 4. Report of the conversation with E.E. Warlicht, 20/08/98.

²³¹⁷ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 4. Report of the conversation with E.E. Warlicht, 20/08/98.

²³¹⁸ Interview H. Hulshof, 06/12/01.

²³¹⁹ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²³²⁰ SMG, 1004. Report of briefing of O. van der Wind and K.C. Roos, 16/08/95.

²³²¹ Warlicht maintained to Van Kemenade that he had heard from the CO that if he were to refuse the job, the Commander or Deputy Commander, or possibly both of them, could hand in their uniforms. DSG H. Hulshof confirmed on 06/12/01 to the NIOD that he had indeed used powerful language at the time.

some heated discussions – I will spare you the details –, the following was decided:

There was to be a overall coordinator for quality control.

It had to be carried out among all Dutchbat III personnel.

The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had to be involved.

It had to be finished by the end of September, and so on.

The Army cannot refuse an order of this kind in my view, so I accepted it. And as it is an order I have not consulted you about it.

As the (your) Principal Private Secretary told me your opinions on the matter last night, I decided I should tell you about it now. I understand that I have acted in line with your views.

As regards progress, this will require a good deal of work, but it will be OK. I have asked Brigadier General Van der Wind to draw up a plan of action with Royal Netherlands Marechaussee General Roos. I have also informed Ruurd. I reminded the DSG about the official instructions. He will organize that (also in consultation with Van der Wind and Roos).

As I do not want to hand over the matter to Ad van Baal only in writing, since there are some sensitive issues that are better explained verbally, I shall leave tomorrow, a day later than Fransje had planned.²³²²

It is interesting in this connection that the Army Commander had been telephoned at least once during the previous week by his Principal Private Secretary, Colonel Bosch, who says he talked to Army Commander in general terms about the planned debriefing.²³²³ So Warlicht knew about the contact between Bosch and the Army Commander, and the letter clearly indicated that the Army Commander had in any event made his ideas known to Warlicht through Bosch. This brings Couzy's role as a behind-the-scenes coordinator somewhat more clearly into focus. As there are no official reports of the coordination meetings at the Ministry, this letter is one of the few pieces of written evidence of what went on there.

In the meantime still no written instructions had arrived from the Central Organization. At an interview with the NIOD, Deputy Secretary-General Hulshof later stated that the Army had been ordered to organize a detailed debriefing of Dutchbat personnel long before 3 August. According to him this was also clear from the minister's letter to Parliament of 3 August.²³²⁴ Speaking to Van Kemenade in 1998, Hulshof could not remember whether Couzy (read Warlicht) had asked him for written instructions, but he considered it unlikely, as he went on holiday when Couzy had not yet returned from holiday. Hulshof adamantly rejected any responsibility for issuing instructions. He said that as head of the inquiry Van der Wind received his orders from the Army Commander, not from him or the minister. He stated that Van der Wind had not submitted a draft order to him and that if he had done so he would have referred him to his commanding officer. But Van der Wind had submitted a draft plan of action to him.²³²⁵ At the NIOD interview in 2001, Hulshof said that the answer that

²³²² SMG, 1004. Letter from Deputy CLS E.E. Warlicht to CLS H. Couzy, 11/08/95.

²³²³ Interview J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99.

²³²⁴ Interview H.H. Hulshof, 06/12/01.

²³²⁵ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 5. Answer from H.H. Hulshof, 08/09/98.

Warlicht just had to get instructions from the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army was feeble. He commented: ‘Looking back I think it was simply a mistake. I have no explanation for it either. But I can say that to the best of my knowledge there was – how should I put it? – no malice behind it. With hindsight, of course, I very much regret it, as I think it shows exceptional carelessness, as well as giving rise to all sorts of speculations as to the shrewdness shown here, not putting anything in writing so that... Keeping all your options open? Yes, I understand that perfectly.’²³²⁶

Warlicht and Van der Wind did not know at the time that it was so simple, and they had reason to doubt the Central Organization’s intentions. Strictly speaking it is true that Van der Wind did not receive the order from the Minister or the Deputy of Secretary General; he received it from Deputy Army Commander Van Baal on 12 August.²³²⁷ For a long time both Warlicht and Van der Wind assumed that there would be written instructions from the Ministry. During that period Van der Wind was in fairly frequent contact with SG Barth and DSG Hulshof and it seems unlikely that the order was not discussed.²³²⁸ In the letter quoted earlier Hulshof also noted that the instructions to the Army Commander were initially general. At five meetings at the Ministry, from 7 to 17 August, the conditions and the practicalities were developed little by little, always in consultation with Warlicht, Van der Wind and Roos. In his journal he noted records of meetings at the Ministry on 7 August chaired by the minister, on 8 August chaired by the minister, on 9 August chaired by himself, on 14 August chaired by himself, and on 17 August chaired by the minister.

Nor were the instructions to Warlicht as general as all that. The decision list of the meeting on 7 August was later dug up for the Minister by the Head of the General Policy Affairs Directorate, De Winter. It is clear from this that a number of fairly precise requirements had been laid down for the Army to meet. Requirements which were not noted, or not with the same precision, by Warlicht on the 11th in his letter to the Army Commander:

‘.... Conclusions

1. The inquiry must be finished by the end of September.
2. A letter is to be sent shortly to all military personnel about the inquiry. It will ask them to get in touch before 4 September for the purpose of attending interviews. The Director of Information is to draw up the letter in consultation with the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. The aim is to start holding interviews before 4 September if possible.
3. Investigation teams are to be set up comprising Army officers (with regard to the operational input by the battalion), the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (with regard to gathering evidence of war crimes) and the Military History Section (with regard to recording history). The teams will have shorthand typists assigned to them to reduce the workload on the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (drawing up official reports).
4. The inquiry is to be conducted under the supervision of outsiders. The following were mentioned at the meeting: J. de Ruiter, Dr W.F. van Eekelen, Prof. P.H. Kooijmans and Prof. F. Kalshoven. After the Minister left the following were added: A. Kosto and C.P. van Dijk.

²³²⁶ Interview H.H. Hulshof, 06/12/01.

²³²⁷ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²³²⁸ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

5. A letter is to be sent to Parliament shortly on the remit of the inquiry. Around 15 August a letter on the situation in the former Yugoslavia and around 24 August a letter in preparation for the Parliamentary Consultations on 31 August.²³²⁹ [Parliamentary Consultations: regular meetings between parliamentary committees and ministers and state secretaries on government policy]²³²⁹

The same decision list stated that the minister, who had to leave during the meeting, would be informed the next day by the DSG about the agreed remit of the inquiry. The DSG would also approach De Ruiter as the proposed supervisor of the inquiry at the request of Voorhoeve. At the last coordination meeting at the Ministry on 17 August – chaired by the minister, incidentally – the green light was given for the draft plan submitted by Van der Wind the day before. Three of the four conditions Warlicht mentioned in his letter were a reality which the Army was able to live with. The fourth condition, an external overall coordinator, they simply had to accept. That Royal Netherlands Marechaussee personnel would be involved was in itself not unreasonable and the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army had already ensured that the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee input would be structured by appointing Roos as adviser to those in charge of the debriefing. Otherwise the Army was free to choose the personnel to carry out the debriefing.

No instructions arrived from the Central Organization concerning the procedures to be used in the debriefing. The Army objective of keeping it limited could therefore be achieved. What this meant in practice Van der Wind and Roos stressed to the Military History Section Srebrenica Project Group for a second time on 16 August, when they said that they would adopt a narrow approach to the inquiry, an approach that meant it would be restricted to the battalion itself: ‘the investigation team will record the stories of the Dutchbat personnel. Complicating factors such as command and decision-making at the UN or in The Hague should preferably (particularly given the limited time available) be ignored entirely or as far as possible.’²³³⁰ As regards confining the debriefing to the battalion itself, this aim was not entirely achieved. Dutch military personnel who had served in Zagreb, Sarajevo and Tuzla during the fall of the enclave were ultimately also asked – at the urging of Parliament – to go to Assen for the debriefing. The interest in these four officers actually related only to the UN command insofar as it concerned the use of air power. The Close Air Support was the subject of a parliamentary hearing behind closed doors in December 1995.

It was at that time that the two external advisers were appointed to act as a guarantee of the independence of the inquiry. A total of seven names were put forward for these posts, and the choice fell upon Job de Ruiter, ex-Minister of Justice, and General Huyser (retired), former Chief of Defence Staff. De Ruiter was approached by the Deputy Secretary-General on behalf of the minister on 10 August. His participation was settled following a telephone conversation between Voorhoeve and De Ruiter on 12 August.²³³¹ General Huyser (retired) was recommended by De Ruiter, who knew him from the time when he himself was Defence Minister.

The final status of De Ruiter and Huyser in the inquiry was still under discussion. On 16 August Hulshof sent a Memorandum to the minister, with a copy to the Chief of Defence Staff, in which he stated that the first conversation with De Ruiter and Huyser on the purpose, scope and conditions of, and (in broad terms) procedures for, the debriefing would take place the next day, 17 August, at the Ministry.²³³² In the Memorandum the Deputy Secretary-General again formally drew the minister’s attention to the possible role of the two external advisers: option A, as external advisers, or option B, to head the inquiry. Hulshof advised the minister, ‘especially in view of the limited time available for the

²³²⁹ DCBC, 1115. Note from J.H.M. de Winter to the minister of Defence, ‘Overleg met de Tweede Kamer op 31/08/95’, 30/08/95.

²³³⁰ SMG, 1004. Report of briefing of O. Van der Wind and K. Roos, 16/08/95.

²³³¹ DCBC, 1115. Note from J.H.M. Winter to the minister of Defence, ‘Overleg met de Tweede Kamer op 31/08/95’, 30/08/95, Appendix, ‘De uitgebreide debriefing, belangrijkste data’.

²³³² DS. Memorandum, No. 15815, from DSG H. Hulshof to the minister of Defence, 16/08/95.

inquiry and Messrs De Ruiter and Huyzer's busy schedules, to go for option A', and this is what the minister finally decided. Various arguments played a role here. Firstly, the minister thought it was a good idea to have some eyes and ears that could follow the entire debriefing without taking direct responsibility for it. Secondly, being in charge of the inquiry would have placed them in a completely different position, and Voorhoeve was uncertain whether they would have accepted this.

The relationship between the Army and the Central Organization played a major role in minister's decision. On this subject Voorhoeve said: '...that simply taking the debriefing out of the formal structure of the Ministry of Defence organization would have been a very serious matter in the relationship between the Ministry and the Minister and the Army. At that time I also had a face-to-face talk with Couzy, who considered it a very serious matter that I had appointed two external advisers.'²³³³

Once appointed, De Ruiter and Huyzer began to get stuck in. To obtain a good idea of the events in Srebrenica they talked to Karremans, Franken, a Dutchbat doctor, the UNPROFOR Chief of Staff, General Nicolai and the Deputy Commander of the Northeast Sector, Colonel Brantz.²³³⁴ At the end of August there followed a detailed briefing for the two gentlemen by the Army's Military History Section. They also had access to all the documents collected by the debriefing team.

It was decided on 7 August that all Dutchbat personnel would be sent a letter from the Army Commander about the inquiry asking them to get in touch before 4 September – the date when all Dutchbat personnel were due to report to their units after their holidays – with a view to attending interviews. The minister was under increasing pressure, he was in a hurry and he wanted to make rapid progress.²³³⁵ From his point of view there was no time to lose. On 25 August, soon after the Commander returned from holiday, a letter signed by the Commander finally went out ordering all military personnel who had served with Dutchbat III to appear in Assen for the debriefing.²³³⁶ It was not evident from this letter that the minister had entrusted the inquiry to the Army. Couzy presented it as a logical follow-up to the debriefing he had ordered Commander 11-Lumblbrig, General Bastiaans, to carry out in Zagreb on 22-23 July – his inquiry, in other words. The Army Commander did state, however, that the final report of the debriefing would be presented to the minister. The main purpose, the letter said, was to draw lessons for the Army.

Voorhoeve subsequently complained that it had taken so long for the letter to be sent out.²³³⁷ At one point the Director of Information Services checked with Deputy Army Commander Van Baal whether the letter was on its way, but this did not result in any earlier response.²³³⁸ DSG Hulshof also contacted the Army to speed things up: 'They simply didn't want to'.²³³⁹ Objectively speaking, from the 17th – once the Ministry had given the green light for the operation – there was no reason not to start interviewing. There was someone in charge of the debriefing. Kuijs' final plan of attack was ready to be put into action on 16 August and Roos, moreover, could easily release Royal Netherlands Marechaussee personnel. The Military History Section was also participating fully and a wealth of background information had already been collected. On top of this, three members of the Military History Section had taken part in the debriefing in Zagreb from 21 to 23 July and were still full of the impressions they had gained there. Army Intelligence too had been preparing for a debriefing of Dutchbat III since July and knew at an early stage that they would be involved in Assen. In other words, there was someone in charge, a plan, background information and personnel – everything that was needed. Even the two external advisers had been appointed and briefed on the 17th.

²³³³ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

²³³⁴ Chief of Defence Staff's Diary,

²³³⁵ DCBC, 1115. Note from J.H.M. Winter, 'Overleg met de Tweede Kamer op 31/08/95', Appendix, '*De uitgebreide Debriefing, belangrijkste data*'.

²³³⁶ DJZ. Letter No. KAB/10.540, from the CLS to all Dutchbat servicemen, 25/08/95.

²³³⁷ Voorhoeve's journal, 28/10/97.

²³³⁸ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

²³³⁹ Interview H.H. Hulshof, 06/12/01.

Voorhoeve subsequently said that he had urged that the inquiry be started earlier. When he asked within the organization about this he was told that those involved were still on holiday and that the families would not understand if Dutchbat personnel were suddenly recalled from their holidays.²³⁴⁰

The Army Commander had reiterated clearly on 15 July, at a family day in Soesterberg, how much leave the returnees were to be given. The minister, who was also present, had not said anything. But shortly before the start of the debriefing on 4 September the Chief of Defence Staff had been asked to find out how it came about that Dutchbat had so much leave. The Army Crisis Staff answered by letter on 29 August.²³⁴¹ There was an arrangement dating back to 1992, formalized by Ter Beek in 1993 as the 'ten-day rule', which entailed military personnel being given ten days' disembarkation leave on return from a mission. Immediately following this they could take annual leave. In the case of Dutchbat III the Army itself had decided that the leave would last over four weeks. The Commander's reasons for granting a long period of leave were obvious: the men and women of Dutchbat had experienced horrific things in and around Srebrenica; a large number of Dutchbat personnel had bivouacked in the enclave for months without any leave; the families and loved ones were waiting anxiously for them, and postponing their reunions would have resulted in unpleasant situations, plus the fact that many of them had already booked holidays or made other plans.

The urgent need to debrief Dutchbat as soon as possible and collect information did not arise until the end of July. Deputy Commander Van Baal was the only person who had planned to hold an operational debriefing of Dutchbat III in the field.²³⁴² In this context it may be useful to note that countries such as Canada, Britain, Israel and the United States, which also have a tradition of debriefing, usually organize debriefings soon after leaving the area in question. The request to the Chief of Defence Staff to find out what the situation was regarding leave arrangements suggested that the Central Organization was not aware of the ten-day rule. Voorhoeve had been told what the plans were on 15 July, however. DSG Hulshof knew about the arrangements. According to him the matter had been discussed at the Ministry on several occasions and the minister ought to have known what arrangements had been made.²³⁴³ The earlier mentioned investigation by the Chief of Defence Staff therefore has to be seen in the context of an attempt to legitimize the delay. Voorhoeve subsequently maintained that he was not aware of the arrangements and could not understand why this had been decided.²³⁴⁴

Voorhoeve's problems, however, did not arise solely from his own organization. Dutchbat was still one of the main topics of conversation in Holland, and the search for news continued. The last week of August and the first week of September saw a high point in the reports in the press, which came up with 'fresh revelations' of what Dutchbat personnel had seen in the way of war crimes. As a result the pressure on Voorhoeve from Parliament increased. On 28 August the four national dailies were unanimous in their criticism, with headlines that did not mince words: 'Parliament threatens Dutchbat inquiry' (De Volkskrant), 'Parliament threatens Bosnia inquiry' (NRC Handelsblad), 'Inquiry into role of Dutchbat' (Trouw) and 'Voorhoeve in tight spot following blunders' (De Telegraaf).

Voorhoeve wrote a detailed letter to Parliament, again on 28 August, in which he tried to assess the events in Srebrenica and the role of Dutchbat. The press and the politicians were very critical of the letter because of the many questions it left unanswered. In addition to publishing fresh revelations of what Dutchbat personnel had seen, the press seized the opportunity to re-examine the Ministry of Defence blunders and scandals. Voorhoeve's standard defence at that time was that these were known facts; to avoid confusion and gain the fullest possible picture he had ordered a debriefing of all Dutchbat personnel who had been in the enclave when it fell.

²³⁴⁰ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

²³⁴¹ CRST. Letter No. 2868 from Lieutenant Colonel W. Patist of the Army Crisis Staff to the Chief of Defence Staff, 29/08/95.

²³⁴² Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 12/12/01.

²³⁴³ Interview H.H. Hulshof, 06/12/01.

²³⁴⁴ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

Meanwhile Voorhoeve had to answer to Parliament. In the Parliamentary Consultations on 31 August his letter of 28 August was discussed in the light of the revelations in the press and media. This was followed on 5 September by a plenary debate in Parliament lasting eight hours. The critical attitude of MPs towards Voorhoeve in the press, however, was in sharp contrast to the good will they showed him during the debate and their willingness to admit their own faults.²³⁴⁵ The call for an ‘independent inquiry’ from GroenLinks and the CDA was rejected by the coalition parties; Parliament decided to re-examine the matter later, once the report of the debriefing was published in October. The inquiry in Assen could go ahead and the Minister of Defence could breathe again.

7. The Master Plan

To clarify the role of the main actors involved in the debriefing operation in Assen and to provide a context for that role we first outline the plan of action adopted there.²³⁴⁶ This is followed, after a description of the actors, by a more detailed description of the plan and how the operation actually went.

Dutchbat III, on return from their disembarkation leave and holidays on 4 September 1995, were to go back to work at the barracks in Assen. Not in the same strength they had had in the field, of course, as Dutchbat in Bosnia had been a composite unit comprising personnel from all the services and from different units and disciplines. The decision to hold the debriefing in Assen thus made a lot of sense. Before Van der Wind actually took up his post as head of the inquiry on 12 August the Army had done lots of hard work in preparation. The information was sent through Warlicht and – from 12 August – Van Baal, who was then back from holiday. The Army Crisis Staff in particular worked on the implementation during this phase. According to Van der Wind the logistics were not really complicated: with a building and a few computers the show was nearly on the road. The head of the inquiry had little if any control over personnel after taking up his post, however.²³⁴⁷ This aspect will be examined in more detail in the next section. The plan of action was also at an advanced stage when Van der Wind took up his post.

While it is true that General Roos had been appointed as an adviser, his job was mainly to set up the inquiry – in accordance with Royal Netherlands Marechaussee rules for major inquiries – and assemble a team of Royal Netherlands Marechaussee personnel to take part. Once the preparatory work had been done his job would be finished.²³⁴⁸ Major V.C.P.C. Kuijs of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had been approached to write the plan of action on 8 August. The first plan he submitted the next day was based on having the inquiry carried out entirely by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. One or two days later he was ordered to write a modified plan. It was decided at a meeting at the Ministry that the Army would take charge of the inquiry and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee would play a supporting role. The practical input into the plan from the Army side was offered by Major De Ruyter, Intelligence and Security Section, and Major Stumpers, Lessons Learned Section.²³⁴⁹ Van der Wind did in fact have an opportunity to have some input to the plan of action, although he was not subsequently able to say what that had been.²³⁵⁰ On 17 August the draft plan was approved by the Ministry of Defence at a meeting chaired by Voorhoeve, with the Secretary-General, the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, the Deputy Army Commander, the Director of Information Services and the Deputy Director of the General Policy Affairs Directorate present.²³⁵¹ The draft plan was developed into a master plan with all the characteristics of a plan for a military operation. Creating

²³⁴⁵ ASCOR, ‘De Debriefing in het nieuws, juli 2001’, Study commissioned by the NIOD.

²³⁴⁶ Srebrenica Debriefing Master Plan, 31/08/95

²³⁴⁷ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²³⁴⁸ Interview H. Bokhoven, 15/05/01.

²³⁴⁹ Interview C.P.C. Kuijs, 20/06/01.

²³⁵⁰ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²³⁵¹ Van Kemenade Report, Answer from H.H. Hulshof, 08/09/98.

this master plan was nothing out of the ordinary for Major Kuijs of the Marechaussee and his colleagues: the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee was accustomed to using tools of this kind for major investigations. And yet it was clear that planning and implementing such a major inquiry in such a short time was a considerable achievement. To give some idea of the complexity and scale of the plan we briefly describe the duties, responsibilities and organization envisaged for Assen below.²³⁵² Some familiarity with the *modus operandi* in Assen will also be needed when we subsequently consider staffing, implementation and problems.

Van der Wind was the head of the inquiry, but he shared responsibility for the coordination and daily management of the debriefing activities with his deputy, Colonel Bokhoven, Head of the Army's Intelligence and Security Section. According to the master plan Bokhoven was also Head of Inquiry Coordination and Head of the Editorial Team in Assen. As such he was responsible for actually coordinating the debriefing activities, giving daily briefings to the members of the inquiry team, drawing up the duty rosters, supervising the reading and analysis teams, supervising the debriefing teams, supervising the Administrative Centre and management and progress monitoring. Van der Wind was – and remained – the person with ultimate responsibility, of course. In addition the Inquiry Coordination Office, along with the head of the inquiry, was responsible for distributing and dealing with incoming and outgoing mail and messages. In effect nothing could happen in Assen without the Office knowing about it.²³⁵³ An Information Post was also provided: this concerned itself mainly with reception and portage activities and a small internal section unit responsible for coordinating services to the inquiry team and the military personnel being debriefed and for the general security of the debriefing operation. Twenty debriefing teams were planned for the Assen operation, each consisting of two Royal Netherlands Marechaussee military personnel and an Army serviceman from the Intelligence and Security Section. At a later stage another five debriefing teams were formed, with more varied memberships. These were responsible mainly for holding debriefing interviews at other locations, mainly for personnel who were unable to be in Assen for some reason: some, for example, were still – or back – in Bosnia.

For the debriefing proper, predrafted questionnaires containing basic questions were used. The written documentation of the interviews was done in a such a way as to enable them to be processed by the reading and analysis (RA) teams. For this purpose a fixed format was used, with a fixed sequence to make processing easier and more efficient. There were three RA teams, each of which dealt with a separate set of topics, viz.: general aspects, operational aspects and the humanitarian law of war. They scanned the debriefing reports supplied to them for material that corresponded to their remits. The remit was laid down for each team and reflected in the basic questions, which could be added to or modified in consultation with the Inquiry Coordination Office. Each RA team had four members. The teams' work involved analysing debriefing reports in accordance with Appendix C (Instructions to reading and analysis teams),²³⁵⁴ in particular monitoring them for aspects relevant to the team, looking out for and marking special observations not covered by the remit of another RA team; coordination and progress monitoring of the compilation of the report of the facts; in particular monitoring the reports for aspects relevant to the team and initiating a second interview if necessary. The three separate teams scanned the reports for: chronology and consistency, operational aspects and aspects of the humanitarian law of war respectively.

8. Manning

Personnel were of course needed to carry out the debriefing as set out in the master plan. Planning began early in August, although it was not until about 10 August that it finally became clear that this

²³⁵² SMG/Debrief. Srebrenica Debriefing Master Plan, 31/08/95.

²³⁵³ DARIC. DARIC Report, Report of investigation into documents relating to Srebrenica, 04/11/98.

²³⁵⁴ SMG/Debrief. Srebrenica Debriefing Master Plan, 31/08/95.

would be an Army-led operation, not an Royal Netherlands Marechaussee operation. Around that time Kuijs was asked to rewrite his initial – Royal Netherlands Marechaussee-based – draft plan to make the operation Army-based.²³⁵⁵ The Army had to look for expertise within its organization. Van der Wind was the Inspector of the Military Legal Corps. He himself considered that holding this post influenced his appointment. A scrupulous, particular style of reporting was expected of him. According to him the manning was almost complete when he took up his post. Van Baal told him on 15 August that Bokhoven would be his deputy. The Army Crisis Staff had set about selecting the remaining personnel. Van der Wind only took on Major Derks from the Military Legal Corps. A real legal expert, thought Van der Wind.²³⁵⁶ For logical reasons personnel were selected from the Marechaussee, the Intelligence and Security Section and, as regards the preparatory phase, the Military History Section. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, in view of its policing function within the Armed Forces, had most experience of large-scale inquiries involving interviewing. It had also constantly had personnel in Bosnia. Lastly, the presence of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in an inquiry of this nature would be a guarantee of objectivity.

The Intelligence and Security Section had specialist knowledge of the political and military situation in Bosnia, for one thing because there had always been one of its officials stationed with the units in the former Yugoslavia. Through this official and from other sources it had access to analyses, reports and photographic material from the region. It had also gained debriefing experience with earlier Dutch units that had served in Bosnia. For the purpose of recording military history the Military History Section – like the Intelligence and Security Section – collected as many documents and other information as possible and thus had an overview of the events in Srebrenica. The Military History Section had also probed the Srebrenica issue when some of its staff took part in Bastiaans' debriefing in Zagreb.²³⁵⁷

The Intelligence and Security Section and the Military History Section were part of the Royal Netherlands Army; the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee operated independently. The contributions made by each of these parties were far from neutral; with all three of them complications, their own interests and their own agendas played a part to some extent.

The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee

The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee involvement in Bosnia in general and Srebrenica in particular dated back to the start of Dutch participation in UNPROFOR. To start with the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee supplied personnel to UNCivPol. There was also an Royal Netherlands Marechaussee detachment in Bosnia responsible for normal military policing, and a number of – often large-scale – investigations had been held in various units, such as those into money being smuggled into and out of the enclave and the case of the solid fuel tablets.²³⁵⁸ Investigations of this kind were the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee's daily work and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee was and is identified by the vast majority of regular servicemen as a policeman, the detective force within the services. As a result of these missions the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had also gained considerable knowledge and experience of the situation in which the Dutch servicemen found themselves.

This may be one of the reasons why, following the return of Dutchbat III, the Ministry of Defence considered having the big debriefing carried out entirely by the Marechaussee.²³⁵⁹ There were a number of problems with this from the point of view of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee top brass, however. The biggest problem was fear of how those in the services would regard the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee's role and status. In other words, it was considered that an inquiry of this

²³⁵⁵ Interview C.P.C. Kuijs, 20/06/01.

²³⁵⁶ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²³⁵⁷ Part IV, Chapter 5.

²³⁵⁸ Part VII, Chapter 9.

²³⁵⁹ Interview K.C. Roos, 13/07/00.

kind carried out by investigating officers would seem too much like a criminal investigation, which would not be fair on Dutchbat III in view of the extremely difficult conditions in which they had found themselves for many months.²³⁶⁰ The relationship between the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the other services, often a tense one, would suffer even more as a result.²³⁶¹ For them to act as investigating officers with full powers in the debriefing in Assen was therefore seen as problematic. A solution was found to this problem, however. It was agreed that an Royal Netherlands Marechaussee debriefer hearing any talk of possible criminal offences in an interview would advise the interviewee to report them to Royal Netherlands Marechaussee personnel elsewhere.²³⁶² This system became known as ‘criminal-law separation’. As an additional safeguard that nothing – including criminal offences – could get out through Royal Netherlands Marechaussee debriefers, the interviews were guaranteed to be completely confidential. As it had been decided that the debriefing was not to be a criminal investigation, unlike in normal Royal Netherlands Marechaussee proceedings there would be no ‘hearing of both sides’. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Deputy Commander, Roos, had argued against the use of investigatory powers for another reason: he was afraid that some Royal Netherlands Marechaussee officers would face a moral dilemma if they were not allowed to take action when hearing of a criminal offence. It was his warning that led to the system of criminal-law separation being devised. Roos was appointed as adviser to the debriefing operation on the recommendation of Army Commander Couzy. In effect, then, Roos was responsible for the planning stage, setting up the operation, for which he in turn recruited Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Major Kuijs, who did the actual planning of the entire operation.

The draft plan was drawn up in accordance with Royal Netherlands Marechaussee procedures. For Royal Netherlands Marechaussee personnel the deployment and modus operandi of the debriefing teams were a reflection of their daily routine. The plan was based on agreements at the highest level and was approved by the Army Commander at an early stage, before it was sent to the Ministry as a final draft on the 16th.²³⁶³ Since 7 August the Marechaussee had attended all the preparatory meetings at the Ministry of Defence and in that sense it was closely involved in the whole operation. Notwithstanding the fact that it was a hectic period, the Minister’s wishes had to be put into practice. The following passage from a NIOD interview with Roos in 2000 is a good description of the atmosphere in the early planning stage of the debriefing:

‘In preparation for the big debriefing in Assen that resulted in a number of meetings at the Ministry chaired by the Deputy SG, Herman Hulshof. It was not so easy. The holiday period had just started. Either someone was substituting for the chief or someone had just got back. Still, we had a number of sessions then. The Minister was in a hurry too – it was not the case that we could say, we’re going to take our time, a few months. No, it all had to be done very quickly. Finally someone said, “OK, so how should it be organized?” Well, the Army came up with a plan, with just two or three people. So I said, “That seems to me like a tough job if you’ve so little time and so little manpower”. That was clear.

Finally someone said, “Can’t the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee be involved?” I thought it would be a bit difficult for us, since we’re saddled with our reputation as investigators. That was a problem. On top of that I wondered whether it was a good idea anyway, as any soldier who sees an Royal

²³⁶⁰ Interview C.P.C. Kuijs, 20/06/01.

²³⁶¹ Interview K.C. Roos, 13/07/00.

²³⁶² Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01. Also discussed later in the context of the criminal-law separation agreement between Van der Wind and Roos with Besier of the Public Prosecutions Department.

²³⁶³ Interview K.C. Roos, 13/07/00.

Netherlands Marechaussee officer..... Well, the solution that was finally adopted was for General Van der Wind, who was responsible for heading the inquiry, would have De Ruiter and General Huyser, Chief of Defence Staff, as additional advisers. And I was made available as an adviser at the request of General Couzy by General Fabius.²³⁶⁴

The reluctance to take part was clear. It was also clear that the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee nevertheless took an active part in the discussions on the big debriefing from an early stage. In view of the fact that the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had practical criticisms of the Army's original plans – for one thing the idea of having the entire debriefing done by a small group of people – it is very likely that Roos placed himself in the spotlight. In view of the nature and size of the whole operation it was perfectly understandable that the Army should call upon the Marechaussee, who were considered to have good interviewing and reporting techniques.

‘There were logical reasons for this too, as the Army had no experience of interviewing people – in an operation of this kind, a major inquiry, interviewing such large numbers of people, a debriefing. So they ended up approaching the Marechaussee. A lot of people have experience of interviewing large numbers of people systematically.’²³⁶⁵

This shows just how the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee regarded its job in the debriefing. But experience of large-scale operations and good interviewing and reporting techniques were not the only reasons for involving the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Voorhoeve stated on 4 September 1995 that various steps had been taken to ensure the objectivity of the inquiry. The debriefing teams would include officers from the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Deputy Chief Constable would assist the head of the inquiry.²³⁶⁶ Evidently the Minister was aware of the special role of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee within the Armed Forces and valued their presence in the inquiry. For the Minister the image of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee among servicemen as an internal police force would no doubt have been a guarantee that the debriefing would be carried out in accordance with the rules and that objectivity would not be compromised during the Army operation.

The initial fear that Royal Netherlands Marechaussee officers, as competent investigating officers on duty, would come into conflict with their proper duties and their consciences if a criminal offence was mentioned, did not in fact play any significant part, either when they were appointed or during the debriefing. Roos, and above all Kuijs and Stagge, who were present in Assen during the entire period, never heard of any complaints, either at the start or during the debriefing. Nor can Van der Wind and others remember any problems of this kind. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee officers had been told before the debriefing started that if they had any complaints or problems at any time they should report them and they could return to their normal posts without consequences. No-one from the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee ‘walked out’ during the debriefing.²³⁶⁷ Two years after the debriefing, however, a few Royal Netherlands Marechaussee officers came forward with problems through internal channels. They reported retrospectively that they had faced a moral dilemma during the debriefing. Heerts of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Association sought publicity in August

²³⁶⁴ Interview K.C. Roos, 13/07/00.

²³⁶⁵ Interview J.H.A. Stagge, 29/06/99.

²³⁶⁶ TK, 1994-95 Session, 22 181, No. 121 (04/09/95), in answer to questions posed at the Parliamentary Consultations (*Algemeen Overleg*), 31/08/95.

²³⁶⁷ Interview J.H.A. Stagge, 29/06/99.

1998 to complain about this.²³⁶⁸ Given the fact that all the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee officers displayed complete commitment to the debriefing at the time, Heerts' criticism is somewhat difficult to understand after the event.

The Central Organization's initial aim of having the inquiry carried out entirely by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee faced the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee with the problems pointed out by Roos. Even when it was decided that the Army should run the inquiry there were still dark clouds over the horizon. Royal Netherlands Marechaussee officers with investigatory powers taking part in the debriefing would undoubtedly have caused problems if criminal offences had been reported. That they were was suggested by the reports in the press and the Management Report. In the back of people's minds, of course, was anxiety concerning the already tense relationship between the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the other services and in general the debate about the role of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee as an independent police force and its position in the Armed Forces. What Fabius and Roos had achieved was that the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee did not have to act as a police force in Assen. Neither of them brought up the Management Report in the debriefing organization and both of them accepted vague verbal agreements with the Public Prosecutions Department on how to act in the event of criminal offences being reported. They also understood the need for the debriefing interviews to be kept completely confidential. So when their investigatory powers had been 'neutralized' the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee were faced with a win-win situation. For Voorhoeve they ensured objectivity; for the Army top brass they were good colleagues making their investigation and reporting expertise available. The fact of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee taking part in an inquiry of this kind also suggested a degree of legitimacy and objectivity to the outside world. Royal Netherlands Marechaussee personnel made a major contribution to the smooth running of the operation in Assen. They played a crucial role in both organization and reporting. They did not eventually play their proper policing role in Assen.

The Army's Intelligence and Security Section

Every time a serviceman returned to the Netherlands after completing a foreign mission a debriefing took place for the military command. The aim was mainly to collect information on current missions and for other missions about to set off for the area in question. If an operation or campaign was still in progress the military command could use this information to adjust its tactics. In any event the information from the debriefing should be recorded and disseminated so that it could play a part in planning future missions/operations, even if only in terms of lessons learned. After a mission there was an examination of whether the aim of the mission had been achieved, in other words whether the job had been done.²³⁶⁹ Often the operational side contained, directly or indirectly, a component of intelligence from the region where the servicemen had carried out their mission. Secondly there was a psychological debriefing for the serviceman to get things off his chest by talking about unpleasant experiences he had been through while doing his job. If there were substantial psychological complaints or problems the serviceman would be referred on to a specialist.

Since the early nineties, with the advent of the Army's Lessons Learned Section, debriefings have become more structured.²³⁷⁰ In the Army, debriefings for Army Staff were generally held by both personnel from the particular unit and personnel from Military Security or Intelligence and Security. Returned servicemen were given a 'route card', a list of officials and offices they had to visit. In addition to such things as handing in personal items of equipment and firearms they had to visit the doctor and the Department of Individual Aid. From 1994 the list included a Military Security official. Based on interviews with the security officer of a unit, and perhaps information from the information

²³⁶⁸ 'Ministerie verdoezelde wangedrag', *Het Parool*, 11/08/95; 'Militairen: Defensie raakt in diskrediet', *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/08/98; Nova, 10/08/95.

²³⁶⁹ Interview R.F.J.H. de Ruyter, 31/05/01.

²³⁷⁰ Interview L.L.M. Burman, 07/07/01.

officer and operations officer, a list of key personnel and others who would have something to report was drawn up. The other criterion used to decide who was eligible for an Intelligence and Security Section debriefing was the checklist each serviceman had to fill in on return. This is a form containing a number of specific questions on the post, loss or theft of weapons and other equipment, e.g. personal equipment, contact with the combatants, incidents etc.²³⁷¹ In Bosnia Intelligence and Security Section had a security officer attached to each battalion in the field, whose job was to pass on information to Intelligence and Security in the Netherlands. Under the Head of Intelligence and Security, Colonel Bokhoven, most relevant information from debriefings went straight to the Army Commander through his Principal Private Secretary, Bosch, Bokhoven's predecessor in the post of Head of Intelligence and Security.²³⁷² With Bosch as Principal Private Secretary it became customary for the Army Commander to receive an A4 of the most important information on his desk the day after a debriefing. The aim of this was to avoid the Army getting into difficulties if information emerged that could have harmful effects. Other matters that fell outside operational and tactical objectives were noted and passed on to the responsible commanding officer, who could order an investigation if sensitive matters were involved. Although the Intelligence and Security Section as a rule prepared for the debriefing of military personnel returning from missions, things did not always go according to plan. According to Major De Ruyter of Intelligence and Security the 11th battalion was not debriefed in 1994 because the Commander of the Airmobile Brigade, Bastiaans, did not wish it. The Brigade preferred to wash its dirty linen in private. In the 12th battalion the Intelligence and Security section was only able to carry out its debriefing once the Commander of the Crisis Staff had given the green light.²³⁷³

Thus it was already Bokhoven's intention around 20 July 1995 to debrief Dutchbat III personnel on return. He wanted to contact the Commander of the 11th Airmobile Brigade, General Bastiaans, about this urgently. He told the Military History Section Srebrenica Project Group that he, like them, considered Bastiaans' debriefing in Zagreb to be inadequate.²³⁷⁴

In fact there were various factors that meant that a classic debriefing of Dutchbat III could not take place as such. On 16 July Couzy arrived in Zagreb with a team from the Sector of Individual Aid and the Social Defence Service, Staff. Their aim was to debrief the hostages who had been released from Serbia on 15 July and the Army Hospital Organization unit 5 personnel who had been relieved in Srebrenica. The emphasis was strongly on psychological aspects, although General Couzy had his own agenda for a fact-finding mission.²³⁷⁵ A second debriefing in Zagreb – of the main force – took place from 21 to 23 July under General Bastiaans of the 11th Airmobile Brigade. As mentioned above, this debriefing was concerned far more with operational matters and restricted to a select group of officers and NCOs.

In both cases there was no question of any substantial input from the Army's Intelligence and Security Section. Neither Couzy nor Bastiaans made use of the Section that had most understanding and experience of debriefing. Meanwhile Intelligence and Security had been making preparations with a view to the return of Dutchbat III. It was Bokhoven's intention to subject key personnel, and other personnel eligible for special reasons, to a classic debriefing as soon as possible. The Army Commander will undoubtedly have had this procedure in mind when he discussed the need for a full debriefing on the flight from Zagreb on 24 July 1995. But Voorhoeve's agenda cut right across this routine, as he was in favour of having all Dutchbat personnel who had been in the enclave debriefed. Describing and analysing the operational aspects of how Dutchbat had performed was not paramount here. It would also be necessary to examine what Dutchbat personnel had seen and heard of violations of the law of war and humanitarian law, and there would have to be a reconstruction of the events in Srebrenica – not only for use by the Army.

²³⁷¹ Interview R.F.J.H. de Ruyter, 31/05/01.

²³⁷² Interview H. Steinhart, 19/06/01.

²³⁷³ SMG, 1004. Report of conversation with R.F.J.H. de Ruyter, 01/08/95.

²³⁷⁴ SMG, 1004. Report of conversation with H. Bokhoven, 25/07/95. Interview H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01.

²³⁷⁵ Part IV, Chapter 5.

Intelligence and Security was brought into the preparations for the big debriefing in Assen by the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army/Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army at the beginning of August. Bokhoven, who was on holiday, received a telephone call from his deputy, Colonel Bleumink, on 15 August asking him to contact General Van der Wind. This was the same day that Van der Wind was told by Van Baal that Bokhoven would deputize for him. Van Baal was just back from leave and had been back on the job since the morning of 12 August, when his substitute Warlicht had gone on holiday.²³⁷⁶ On the 21st Bokhoven reported to Van der Wind in The Hague for an initial briefing. The plan of action was already definitive, as it had been given the green light on the 17th.

The plan that had been adopted called for a lot of experienced debriefers, people who were able to conduct a targeted interview without losing sight of the objectives. Intelligence and Security had such experience not only in general terms – by virtue of their function of drawing up reports regularly and following events –, they had also organized the debriefing of Dutchbat II, as a result of which they were reasonably well-informed about the situation in Srebrenica in particular. Also, Intelligence and Security had in its possession the reports of its personnel in the field since the beginning of 1994. As a result, and as a number of them had gained actual field experience in the former Yugoslavia, they could have started at short notice without much preparation. Soon after his first visit to Van der Wind, Bokhoven was to take some of his close associates with him to play a part in Assen, in particular Colonel Steinhart, Major De Ruyter, Major Schellekens, and Captain Triep and F. Pennin, who were both very familiar with the Bosnia material and skilled writers.²³⁷⁷ Questions that would normally figure in an Intelligence and Security debriefing were included in the questionnaire so that the Intelligence people would also be satisfied.²³⁷⁸ Central Organization Intelligence, which also had relevant knowledge and experience as regards the main objective – to collect information and describe the events surrounding the fall of the Srebrenica enclave – was not asked to participate. The fact that the Central Organization's Intelligence, in spite of the order it had been given to integrate the various intelligence services, did not object to this shows that it too realized that this was a job for the Army and it should not interfere.²³⁷⁹

From the end of July 1995 there was anyway considerable confusion about the role of the 'Intelligence Services' in the Srebrenica question, owing to the potential role the Intelligence and Security Section might have played in the spoiled roll of film. Subsequently more stories about alleged activities of the 'intelligence service' appeared. It was said to have played a special role in the debriefing in Assen and to have been involved in the loss of material from the Srebrenica archives and subsequently in keeping back information from investigations into right-wing extremism.²³⁸⁰ But what was meant by the 'intelligence service' was in fact almost always the Intelligence and Security Section/Army Intelligence, which operated independently. This distinction between Army Intelligence and Central Organization Intelligence is important in that the two organizations were controlled from different levels. There had been talk since 1994 of the three intelligence services of the Armed Forces being merged into a single unit under the umbrella of the Defence Intelligence Agency. Officially the merger did not take place until July 1996, and until then these services operated almost entirely independently. According to the ex-Head of Intelligence, Vandeweijer, the Army's Intelligence and Security Section in 1995 was accountable to the Army Commander in the first instance. Its main function vis-à-vis the Army was to guarantee security, and vis-à-vis the Army Commander to draw attention to anything that could harm the Army's image:

²³⁷⁶ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²³⁷⁷ Interview H. Bokhoven, 06/05/01.

²³⁷⁸ Interview H. Bleumink, 19/03/01.

²³⁷⁹ Interview H. Knapp, 21/03/01.

²³⁸⁰ Srebrenica in pers, ASCOR, Otto Scholten et al.

‘... in the case of Srebrenica, where those people also took part in the debriefing, the statements that were taken there, everyone refers to Intelligence – Bokhoven also called himself an Intelligence official, and he is often called Head of Intelligence – but they were all Army officials. They were people acting on the instructions of, and purely under the responsibility of, the Army. Of Couzy. The order to his head of department, Bokhoven, was: “You have to organize it”, and he did.’²³⁸¹

It is clear in any event that the Army had no desire whatsoever for Central Organization Intelligence to participate.²³⁸² The latter had other – wider – interests and would never be able to show sufficient understanding of the Army’s problems. It would only seize the opportunity to put through the integration.²³⁸³

The Head of Intelligence and Security was wearing two hats at the time. With a view to the forthcoming integration he was one of the three deputy heads of the Defence Intelligence Agency. The other two deputies were supplied by the Air Force and the Navy. This sharing of deputies did not mean very much, however, as there was not so much going on at central level. The involvement of Central Organization Intelligence as such with the debriefing in Assen was minimal, ultimately involving loaning or seconding three people, two of whom were officials who had gained experience of the region through their work. Like Bokhoven they were not even pure Intelligence officials, they were essentially Army persons. The fourth person, Sergeant Major Verhoef, was a member of the team of female debriefers in Assen: she was a real Central Organization Intelligence official.

The master plan laid down that each debriefing team would contain two Royal Netherlands Marechaussee personnel and one Army serviceman. The Army personnel were from its Military Security organization, they were Intelligence and Security officials. Aside from the normal exchange of information, such as reports from and about Bosnia, Intelligence played no substantive role in the debriefing.

More should be said, however, about the special position of Bokhoven and his section in the Army. On 20 July he was in any event aware of the special instructions the Army Commander had given the Military History Section on 13 July, to find out whether important information had been withheld from him owing to ‘miscommunication’ between the Army Crisis Staff and the Defence Crisis Management Centre. It was understood that, based on this order, the Military History Section would tie in with a future Intelligence and Security debriefing to which it would contribute its own questions and that Colonel Bokhoven would keep the ‘true role’ of the Military History Section to himself.²³⁸⁴ Bokhoven was in an ideal position to fulfil a key role for the Army Commander. As described in findings and recommendations based on the Van Kemenade report drawn up for the Head of Intelligence by Intelligence personnel:

‘The Military Security organization still existed in 1995. Herein lay the responsibility of commanding officers: the Army Commander demanded of his commanding officers that any errors be identified and dealt with at an early stage. It was also important to prevent escalation and (if at all possible) negative publicity. The Military Security organization was attached to the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army and therefore played a role in the

²³⁸¹ Interview J. Vandeweyer, 20/01/00.

²³⁸² See also the Appendix to this report by C. Wiebes, ‘Intelligence and the war in Bosnia 1992-1995’.

²³⁸³ Interview H. Knapp, 21/03/01.

²³⁸⁴ SMG, 1004. Report of conversation with H. Bokhoven, 20/07/95; SMG, 1004. Report of conversation with H. Bleumink, 25/07/95.

fulfilment of this responsibility of commanding officers in debriefings of returnees.²³⁸⁵

In addition to the Military Security Section's normal function of putting forward and processing tactical information for the Staff, it thus had a special relationship with the Army Commander and high-level commanding officers. They could use it to identify and deal with any errors at an early stage. The influence exerted by the Army top brass was exemplified by the fact that no security debriefing of the 11th battalion took place – notwithstanding the need for feedback and information – because the Commander of the 11th Airmobile Brigade wanted it to wash its dirty linen in private. In view of the command situation, however, it can be assumed that any atrocities, criminal offences or other sensitive matters would be reported to the Army Commander first and not straight away to the competent investigating bodies.²³⁸⁶ Central Organization Intelligence was well aware of the risks this kind of internal reporting entailed. In the document cited above Central Organization Intelligence accordingly calls for:

‘a formally established policy setting out the procedure for feedback of such discoveries²³⁸⁷ – as took place then and still takes place now – since a procedure involving e.g. feedback merely to the commanding officer and not to the judicial authorities could unintentionally promote cover-up scandals.’

Besides supplying personnel, Intelligence and Security made a substantive contribution to the debriefing: it helped with the drafting of the questionnaires and held a tactical briefing – following an introduction by the Military History Section – for the external advisers and debriefers. The Intelligence and Security contribution to the questionnaires was coordinated with the Military History Section.²³⁸⁸ Intelligence people were disproportionately involved in the last phase of the inquiry, writing the final report: Bokhoven, Pennin and Triep were all on the editorial team, which also included the heads of the three RA teams, including Steinhart of the General RA team. As far as contra-intelligence was concerned, the contribution by Central Organization Intelligence was minimal, being confined to a number of specific questions about the situation in the field. The decision had anyway been taken in The Hague that it would be an Army operation – an in-house operation – and the Army Commander wanted as little interference as possible from outside. Central Organization Intelligence, which was trying to get a grip on the Intelligence and Security activities of the various Armed Forces at the time, was naturally unwelcome.

The Army's Military History Section

Another body that made a substantive contribution to the preparations for the debriefing in Assen was the Army's Military History Section. The Dutch participation in UNPROFOR included a limited role for the Military History Section in making preparations for the posting of Dutchbat I, involving compiling and presenting a short course on the UN, peacekeeping operations and the historical background to the conflict in Yugoslavia. As there were not enough personnel, in the case of Dutchbat II and III the course was not even given by the Military History Section but by an Army NCO. After that the Military History Section's involvement was confined to collecting documents etc. which were generally of value to military history.

When the Section was ordered, on 13 July 1995, to find out for the Army Commander what had gone wrong in the communication between the Army Staff and the Defence Staff and to make a

²³⁸⁵ NIOD, Coll. Pennin. Findings of Van Kemenade Reading Group, undated.

²³⁸⁶ Interview H. Bleumink, 19/03/01.

²³⁸⁷ By 'such discoveries' is meant criminal offences.

²³⁸⁸ SMG, 1004. Report of briefing of O. van der Wind and K.C. Roos, 16/08/95.

reconstruction of what had happened in Srebrenica, they immediately set about collecting material and holding interviews. It was also agreed that they would take part in the debriefing under General Bastiaans. The three-member Military History Section team arrived in Zagreb on 22 July and each member was assigned to one of the three debriefing teams. As the Military History Section did not know the precise date of the debriefing until two days in advance, the preparations were minimal. The Military History Section came armed with a questionnaire containing fairly traditional questions about the operational aspects of Dutchbat.

The team soon realized in the course of the debriefings, however, that heart-rending episodes had taken place in and around the enclave. Once the debriefings were complete, differences of opinion arose between the Military History Section team and the Army rapporteurs when writing the report. General Bastiaans tried to confine himself to a factual operational report and set to work energetically to finish it as soon as possible. For the military historians this objective was far too restricted and ignored the accumulating indications that atrocities had taken place. Finally the Military History Section group largely distanced itself from the report. It started to consider how it could obtain material in line with its remit from the Army Commander. The Military History Section soon realized that taking part in the big debriefing in Assen would be the ideal way of obtaining information.

A meeting had taken place on 8 August with Warlicht, Principal Private Secretary to the Army Commander, Bosch, Military History Section Section Head Kamphuis and Military History Section researcher Professor Groen. The next day Kamphuis sent Warlicht an internal Memorandum in which Kamphuis suggested a number of conditions for the debriefing. The debriefing should result in a reconstruction of the events in the period from 6 to 22 July relating to the fulfilment of the UN remit in both operational terms and humanitarian terms. Violations of the law of war and cases of excessive violence which Dutchbat personnel had observed should be recorded for the UN organizations responsible for investigating whether human rights had been respected in the former Yugoslavia. In support of this aim the instructions to the head of the debriefing, said Kamphuis, should stress that this was to be a reconstruction of the actual events; otherwise there was a serious danger that the personnel involved (or some of them) could regard these inquiry commissions as a Council of Blood [a reference to the bloodthirsty special court set up by the Spanish in the Netherlands in 1567 - Trans.]. Kamphuis also suggested that the interviews should be guaranteed to be confidential and made a number of proposals for the staffing of the inquiry commission.²³⁸⁹

Meanwhile Kamphuis and his colleagues had been working intensively on 'srebrenica' for a few weeks. A lot of material had been collected and many Army Staff officials interviewed. Kamphuis had managed to formalize the role of the Military History Section in the debriefing in his memo of 9 August. They had a talk on 16 August – the day before the draft plan was submitted to the Ministry – with Brigadier Generals Van der Wind and Roos, at which they discussed in detail how the work of the Military History Section should tie in with the Army debriefing, among other things. Van der Wind had just been appointed head of the debriefing and felt insecure in the absence of written instructions setting out the objectives precisely. Van der Wind and Roos were in favour of a 'narrow' approach – a concise representation of the facts concerned solely with the battalion –, although they thought that the minister would not be satisfied with this. Van der Wind also said that he feared for his position in the Armed Forces if the report was too critical. Both Generals were told by the Military History Section that they would not be provided with the Military History Section's debriefing reports from Zagreb or the Intelligence information held by the Section. The report of the meeting shows that Van der Wind and Roos showed 'understanding' of this point of view and did not insist.²³⁹⁰ The Generals thus passed over an important source of information that was vital in the run-up to the debriefing. For its secret assignment the Military History Section tried to interest the two Generals in requesting material from the Defence Crisis Management Centre. Their response was unenthusiastic, as they considered that the

²³⁸⁹ SMG, 1006. Internal Memorandum from head of Military History Section to Deputy CLS, 09/08/95.

²³⁹⁰ SMG, 1004. Report of conversation with O. van der Wind and K.C. Roos, 16/08/95.

inquiry needed to be kept as narrow as possible, and involving the would only make it broader. It is likely, therefore, that the DCMC material, like the Military History Section material, was not brought up during the preparations.

The Military History Section contacted the Intelligence and Security Section at an early stage, resulting in fairly intensive cooperation. Bokhoven was informed soon after the 14th of the secret mission the Military History Section had been given by the Army Commander.²³⁹¹ They agreed that the Military History Section could add their own questions to the debriefing that Intelligence and Security were planning. At that time it was still to be a standard debriefing. The Military History Section also received the material from Intelligence and Security that they needed to do the job for the Army Commander and to draw up the chronology and brief the inquiry team and the external advisers in Assen. The Military History Section and Intelligence and Security screened, corrected and annotated each other's work. They agreed on who would do what in an advance briefing.²³⁹²

As the course of events above shows, there were a number of special circumstances and limitations in the run-up to the big debriefing that could affect the quality of the final report. Firstly, Van der Wind feared for his position in the Armed Forces²³⁹³, given his concern about a critical report. Secondly, he restricted himself by saying, even before his inquiry had begun, that it would only record and compile, not interpret. Conclusions could only be drawn if all the limitations on the inquiry were stated in detail and all the stories could be verified. Given the limited time available this latter in particular seemed to him to be an impossible condition.²³⁹⁴ Thirdly, we see that the Military History Section – with the approval of the head of the debriefing and his Royal Netherlands Marechaussee adviser – kept back important information, such as their own reports from Zagreb and the Intelligence and Security material, with the result that it could not be used in the operation in Assen. Lastly, Van der Wind did nothing to obtain material from the Defence Crisis Management Centre.

Van der Wind was subsequently unable to remember precisely what had been discussed with the Military History Section in what context. To clarify matters he told the NIOD that he did not feel called upon to consider the UN decisions, the events in the Crisis Staff or the talks between the Army Commander and the Secretary-General. He is also supposed to have told the Military History Section that if this were to be demanded of him in such a short time he would indeed have to report that he was unable to do it. As to the material he voluntarily passed over, Van der Wind said that the story would come out anyway, as they were going to set about things thoroughly and interview everyone. As regards the possibility of doing analyses and drawing conclusions as part of his inquiry, Van der Wind said that he had never thought about it in those terms; what he envisaged was an Army debriefing: reporting and recording.²³⁹⁵

All this shows that the opportunities afforded by an inquiry of this kind were not properly considered in the initial stages. Not only Van der Wind but also those in the Army top brass and the Central Organization who gave him his orders knowingly set themselves a very limited target. At that time there was still scope for making the inquiry more substantive. It is also difficult to understand how, in a situation where the Ministry was constantly complaining about lack of information and the debriefing was intended to get to the bottom of things, the head of the inquiry allowed valuable background material to slip out from under his nose – material which, despite his claim to the contrary, would have allowed him to be properly informed at the start of the debriefing.

The Military History Section wanted nothing to do with this. They were looking for a way of ducking out of the 'secret' assignment from the Army Commander and wanted to move out of the limelight. Ultimately their role would be limited to making a substantial contribution to the organization of the inquiry. Kamphuis had helped to formulate the objectives and strongly urged that the debriefing

²³⁹¹ SMG, 1006/17. Report of conversation with P. Groen, 14/07/95.

²³⁹² SMG, Activities of Srebrenica Project Group, 20/07/95.

²³⁹³ Interview T. Huys, 07/07 and 08/07/00.

²³⁹⁴ SMG, 1004. Report of conversation with O. van der Wind and K.C. Roos, 16/08/95.

²³⁹⁵ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

interviews be kept strictly confidential. Then, armed with the knowledge gained in Zagreb, the Military History Section helped to draw up questionnaires that went far more deeply into matters of a humanitarian and law-of-war nature than Bastiaans had in Zagreb. They also worked on compiling a chronology of the events in Srebrenica. They held a detailed briefing on 31 August for the members of the inquiry commission and the debriefers before the start of the debriefing. Lastly, on 6 September they held a briefing for the two external advisers De Ruiter and Huyser. Kamphuis' suggestion of appointing a member of the Military History Section staff as a military history consultant to the inquiry commission was not accepted.

9. Contacts with the Public Prosecutions Department

The handling of possible criminal offences committed by members of Dutchbat III in Bosnia merits a special place in the account of the big debriefing. There was a substantial likelihood when interviewing 460 people that criminal offences would be reported. In fact this need not have been a problem, as the Army had adequate procedures to deal with it. But the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the police force of the services, did not want to act in an investigatory capacity in Assen. Ultimately it transpired that they were not the only ones who were not keen on searching carefully for criminal offences.

As early as 1992 it was realized that there was a problem in the communication between the commanding officers and the Central Organization as regards the identification and reporting of criminal offences. On 27 January of that year the then Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, Patijn, laid down a procedure for passing on information concerning criminal offences to the Defence Minister. This was sent by letter to the Commanders of the three Armed Forces and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Chief Constable. It states:

‘If there are criminal offences of which the Commander has been informed, either in the course of investigation by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee or the police, or in the course of prosecution by the Public Prosecutions Department, the Director of Legal Affairs should be notified by the Commander’s staff lawyers, if there are offences or circumstances which the Commanders consider the Minister should know about, including in any event such offences or circumstances as could have political or media consequences. In such cases the Director of Legal Affairs should be notified not only of the charge but also of the subsequent progress of the case.’²³⁹⁶

Based on the various reports of outrages and criminal offences committed by members of Dutchbat I, II and III which reached the press in 1994 and 1995 there should have been a constant stream of information going from the Army Commander to the minister. Certainly a number of cases were investigated.²³⁹⁷ Essentially the point is that it was left to the Commander’s discretion to decide whether or not to report something to the minister. The Commander’s opinion on and attitude to this largely determined whether the minister could be saved from media problems in time and with correct information. In the case of the Army, then, it depended on the Commander’s willingness to wash dirty linen in public. The relationship between the Army and the Central Organization, among other things, had a bearing on this. This chapter has already considered the contacts between various actors in the debriefing and the Public Prosecutions Department. Besier of the PPD in Arnhem was notified on 2 August of the facts in the Management Report by the person in charge of the investigation into the rolls of film. He did not see that conversation as grounds for ordering an investigation. On 18 August a formal meeting took place between (a) the head of the debriefing, Van der Wind, and his Royal Netherlands Marechaussee adviser, Roos, and (b) Besier from the PPD. The aim was to agree what

²³⁹⁶ DJZ. Letter from M. Patijn to the three commanders and the RNIMilCon Chief Constable, 27/01/92.

²³⁹⁷ Part II, Chapter 9

should be done if a criminal offence were to be reported in a debriefing interview in Assen. A particular point discussed was the role of Royal Netherlands Marechaussee officers who, as members of the debriefing teams, also had investigatory powers.²³⁹⁸

Both Besier and Roos had been informed of the matters in the MR, one verbally, the other in writing. Van der Wind, so he said, had not yet taken note of them. It is strange that he was not informed at the meeting on 18 August, the ideal opportunity for matters of this kind to be dealt with, despite the fact that potentially highly sensitive and possibly serious criminal offences were involved. It is also difficult to believe that there is no written report of this official meeting with the PPD. As a result it is also extremely difficult to establish precisely what was agreed: the three gentlemen's memories of what was discussed differ. Roos accused Besier of 'subsequently suffering a sudden memory loss with Van Kemenade, as he could not remember at all that we had been there and put the problem to him'.²³⁹⁹ Most probably it was agreed with Besier on 18 August 1995 that a debriefing interview would be halted if a possible criminal offence was involved and the person being debriefed would have his attention drawn to the importance of what he was saying and then advised to report it officially to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Brigade in Assen. According to Roos, Besier said, "Look, I'm a public prosecutor and we are going to solve this as follows." He came up with some kind of criminal-law separation. As soon as a soldier evidently incriminates himself by the story he is telling the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee officer in question must say, "Stop! Stop! This is not for me. I'm here for a completely different purpose. You need to take this story to my colleagues at the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Brigade in Assen." That's how our position was decided. That's how it was explained to our people and that's how it was put into practice.²⁴⁰⁰

Roos and Van de Wind²⁴⁰¹ had identical memories of the conversation with Besier. Subsequent statements by personnel involved in the debriefing show that this procedure was discussed as such in Assen. The servicemen who were to be debriefed, however, were not told about it in advance.²⁴⁰² Only when the team saw or heard that a serviceman might incriminate himself – or someone else – was the interview to be halted. According to Roos this was done firstly to allow the person being debriefed to tell his story uninterrupted, and secondly because a serviceman could not always judge whether there was a criminal-law aspect to what he had to say. It is remarkable, though, that officially only one case of a possible criminal offence came out, viz. an incident in which dead bodies may have been run over. Van der Wind talked to Besier about this incident after consulting De Ruiter.

The Public Prosecutions Department had already started investigations in spring 1995 into possible criminal offences by Dutchbat personnel and was well aware of what was going on. Although he denies this, Van der Wind, as Inspector of the Military Legal Corps and adviser to the Army Commander, must have known about some of the cases under investigation, if only because it was his duty to advise the Commander where appropriate.²⁴⁰³ As far as can be established there was only one contact with the PPD during the debriefing about the possible running-over of Displaced Persons by Dutchbat personnel. If Patijn's instructions of January 1992 had been followed strictly the Ministry should also have been notified of the cases under investigation and the decision on criminal-law separation. DSG Hulshof wrote to the Minister on 16 August that there would be a system for dealing with criminal offences.²⁴⁰⁴ Once the draft plan had been approved on the 17th it was not until the 18th that the agreement between Van der Wind, Roos and Besier on possible criminal offences was reached. At this stage it was remarkable, especially in view of the minute scrutiny to which the press had subjected the conduct of Dutchbat III in the enclave, that a formula was adopted which did not foster

²³⁹⁸ PPD Arnhem. Interrogation of O. van der Wind, National Police Internal Investigations Department, 01/09/98.

²³⁹⁹ Interview K.C. Roos, 13/07/00.

²⁴⁰⁰ Interview K.C. Roos, 13/07/00.

²⁴⁰¹ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/0101.

²⁴⁰² Interview H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01.

²⁴⁰³ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²⁴⁰⁴ DS. Memorandum No. 15815/95 from the minister of Defence to DSG H. Hulshof, 16/08/95.

the uncovering of such offences. By discontinuing the interview when there was even a supposition that the person being debriefed might incriminate himself or someone else they were in effect guaranteeing that no-one would make use of this. The servicemen were also not told anything. It is evident that there was no attempt to seek out reports of atrocities and criminal offences. Unreported offences required no action, either from the Public Prosecutions Department or from the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee was faced with the tension mentioned above between its investigatory powers and its difficult relationship with the rest of the Armed Forces. For the Marechaussee criminal-law separation was a godsend, and a *sine qua non* for its participation in Assen. For the other main actors the arrangement was perhaps of lesser importance, but it fitted in perfectly with the idea that Dutchbat personnel had already suffered enough in Srebrenica itself and subsequently in the media.

10. The events in Assen²⁴⁰⁵

The plan of action approved on 17 August served as the basis for the master plan. Despite the exceptional and out-of-the-ordinary nature of the inquiry, the master plan was compiled entirely in accordance with military custom. The result looked like a master plan for a military operation. This time it did state that the Minister of Defence had instructed the Army Commander to organize the debriefing. It set out the planned details of personnel, organization, logistics and security as far as shielding the operation from the media and other interested parties was concerned.²⁴⁰⁶ Actual events proceeded more or less according to plan, but things did not turn out to be as easy as they looked on paper, of course. This section looks at the events based on the progress of the debriefing from the day the 13th Battalion reported in Assen. The emphasis is on identifying the problems that arose. The section ends by taking a critical look at the final report.

Turnout: who was interviewed?

There were problems, as was only to be expected, in merely contacting all the servicemen and bringing them together. Not everyone received the letter from the Army Commander sent out on 25 August. There were people who were travelling or on holiday, who had been discharged, who had moved or who were engaged in manoeuvres. The original number anticipated was higher than the 460 ultimately interviewed. Analysis showed that 24 had not been in the enclave after all and six were simply untraceable: most of them had gone abroad for a lengthy period without leaving an address. The organizers were busy trying to contact everyone until well into September. An opportunity was also provided for people to report in if for some reason they had not received a formal summons. The organization even contacted military personnel in Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

All the servicemen were required to undergo the normal procedure following a mission. A debriefing was a not-unfamiliar element in this procedure, especially for servicemen who had been on peacekeeping missions before. The routine included a visit to the Army Medical Corps and the Department of Individual Aid; to the quartermaster to hand in personal equipment and collect the personal equipment sent from Bosnia; and recording and handing in weapon accessories. Special activities during that period were the preparations and exercises for the ceremony on 14 September at which the Minister of Defence and the Army Commander were to present the UN commemorative medals, which were awarded to over 700 servicemen, of whom, as we have said, over two-thirds had been in the enclave during the fall of Srebrenica.

²⁴⁰⁵ There is very little written material with which to reconstruct what actually took place in Assen. Where there is specific information the source is indicated in a note. Otherwise this section is based on all the interviews held with people involved in any way in the debriefing. Use was also made of the 208 debriefing interviews at the NIOD's disposal.

²⁴⁰⁶ SMG/Debrief. Srebrenica Debriefing Master Plan, Assen, 31/08/95.

In the first week of the debriefing the main emphasis was on the operational deployment of Dutchbat, the air mobile element. This was simply because the 13th battalion was quartered at the Johan Willem Friso (JWF) barracks in Assen and summoned first. Support units such as medical personnel, engineers, commandos, logisticians and others had their turn starting on 11 September.²⁴⁰⁷

A small group of servicemen who were interviewed towards the end of the debriefing are examined more closely here. The original idea of those in charge of the debriefing was to interview only Dutchbat personnel who had been in the enclave during the fall of Srebrenica, but a number of people were nevertheless added in the third week. Van der Wind received the additional instructions from Secretary-General Barth and the Army Commander on 22 September.²⁴⁰⁸ These were officials who had served on the various UN staffs in Zagreb, Sarajevo and Tuzla during the fall of the enclave, viz. General Kolsteren, Colonel De Jonge, General Nicolai, Colonel De Ruiter and Colonel Brantz. Major De Haan had even been in the enclave when it fell, working as a UN Military Observer (UNMO). These officers had to be interviewed as well owing to pressure from Parliament because of the debate among politicians and in the media on the possibility that the Srebrenica enclave had been sacrificed by General Janvier, the UNPF Commander.²⁴⁰⁹ They were interviewed mainly about the issue of Close Air Support and the UN command.

The extension of the debriefing to include officers on the UN staffs was the only one. The military staffs in The Hague and the Ministry of Defence itself remained completely unscathed in Assen. The minister justified this in his letter presenting the report to Parliament as follows:

‘The staffs in The Hague were not involved in the debriefing as they were not part of the UN command line. I explained in my letter to Parliament of 28 August last (D101/95/16325) that the Ministry of Defence Crisis Management Centre and the Crisis Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army were responsible for following developments closely, not for operational command, which was in the hands of the UN Commanders. Communication between the Crisis Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army and the Ministry of Defence’s Crisis Management Centre turned out after the fall of Srebrenica to have been inadequate in a few cases. The resulting incidents have been discussed in detail in Parliament. The breakdown in communication led me to take steps in the area of management, supply of information and policy advice in the case of peacekeeping operations. These steps are set out in a separate letter to Parliament.’²⁴¹⁰

By taking these steps the minister showed himself to be responsive to MPs and gave the impression that the communication problems had been solved. The effect, nevertheless, was that the relationship between the Central Organization and the Army was kept out of the debriefing and an essential element in the reconstruction of the command and the flow of information was excluded a priori. Voorhoeve denied in 2001 that the steps he had taken were designed to keep the staffs in The Hague out of the debriefing: ‘At that time all eyes were fixed on the answer to the question of what Dutchbat personnel saw in and around Srebrenica. At that time the question was not how communication in The Hague itself had been – that later became a very pregnant question.’²⁴¹¹ If the communication in The Hague itself had been excellent, Voorhoeve’s measures would not have been necessary at that stage. By announcing measures early on, Voorhoeve made it easier to justify keeping events in The Hague out of the picture.

²⁴⁰⁷ Koreman, A.C., ‘*Mijn ervaringen met Dutchbat III en de val van Srebrenica*’, no date.

²⁴⁰⁸ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²⁴⁰⁹ For a detailed description of the problem see Part III, Chapter 6.

²⁴¹⁰ TK, 1995-96 Session, 22 181, No. 128, (30/10/95).

²⁴¹¹ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

There were in many cases no quarters available at the barracks in Assen for non-air-mobile military personnel, so alternative accommodation had to be found in the town and the surrounding area. The solution was to billet them in private houses. Almost the entire debriefing team, over one hundred strong, directly involved in the debriefing were billeted in the Van der Valk hotel. This was not only practical, it also promoted homogeneity and team spirit. The location selected for the actual debriefing was an empty military building outside the barracks. For logistics the Johan Willem Friso barracks was used, so that the supply of tables, chairs, desks and office supplies, as well as tea, coffee etc., remained under Army control. Computers were leased from a private company and delivered completely 'clean'.

The start of the debriefing interviews

The debriefing did indeed start on 4 September. Returned servicemen had been ordered to report to the barracks that day before 1.00 pm. The turnout on the first day was in fact very poor, with only a few people putting in an appearance initially.²⁴¹² Not all the men and women had arrived at the barracks, and coordination between the Information Post and the barracks left something to be desired. The battalion included servicemen who wanted nothing to do with the debriefing. Some of them had to be literally plucked out, and although no-one refused, gentle persuasion sometimes had to be used to get people to attend an interview.²⁴¹³ Things did not really start moving reasonably well until the next morning.

The procedure was for the personnel to be debriefed to be announced at the morning parade and then transported by shuttle bus from the barracks to the debriefing building. The shuttle service subsequently ensured that people who had been interviewed were brought back and in the meantime it could be used for special trips. Having arrived at the building the servicemen reported to the Information Post, where their names were checked against a roll. The receptionist then handed them an information sheet and asked them to read it carefully while waiting to appear before the debriefing team. The information sheet explained the organization and purposes of the debriefing.²⁴¹⁴ It referred to the letter from the Army Commander of 25 August and called upon everyone to talk about their experiences, positive and negative, in confidentiality. A depersonalized report of all the statements would be compiled for the Minister of Defence. The reason for writing this report, said the information sheet, was that the minister had been criticized in the media for not being sufficiently aware of the facts. The experiences of the interviewees would bridge the gap. The information sheet also said that observations of possible violations of humanitarian law (of war) would be sent to the UN tribunal in The Hague, and that the teams consisted of professional interviewers from the Army and the Marechaussee. This was followed by a description of what was to happen to the report of each debriefing interview and – very important with a view to confidentiality – that the reports of the interviews would be classified as STATE SECRET CONFIDENTIAL. No-one among their fellow-servicemen or commanding officers would ever see them. At the end were some telephone numbers in case an interviewee wanted to get in touch after being debriefed.

When the time came a member of a debriefing team collected the serviceman from the waiting room and took him to a room, where it was explained to him in broad terms how the interview would proceed. Before starting the interview his personal particulars were taken down. The interview reports and talks with those involved indicate that the serviceman being debriefed was not told about the criminal-law separation procedure agreed with the Public Prosecutions Department. This was the agreement that a serviceman would be advised to make an official report to an Royal Netherlands Marechaussee unit outside the building if a possible criminal offence was involved. Under this

²⁴¹² Interview C. Kuijs, 20/06/01.

²⁴¹³ Interview C. Kuijs, 20/06/01.

²⁴¹⁴ SMG/Debrief. Srebrenica Debriefing Master Plan, Assen, 31/08/95. Appendix E, Information sheet for personnel being debriefed.

arrangement the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee officers on the debriefing teams did not have investigatory powers.

A debriefing team consisted of two Royal Netherlands Marechaussee servicemen and one from Army Intelligence. In general the Army Intelligence officials were more familiar with the material, as they had had something to do with Srebrenica through their work or had actually served in the region.²⁴¹⁵ A few of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee officials had been posted, but they had clearly been brought in as rapport-writers. A total of 20 debriefing teams operated in Assen, two of them led by Major De Ruyter and Major Schellekens, both of Army Intelligence. These 'heavy' teams dealt with the special cases and the high-ranking battalion staff: Deputy Battalion Commander Franken, for example, who was asked *inter alia* about the list of 239 and the statement of 17 July signed by him. There was also a women-only team to interview female personnel. Later on another five ad hoc teams were formed to debrief servicemen who were still in Bosnia or in Seedorf.

The predetermined tactics of the debriefing teams was to kick off the interview with a few general introductory questions and then let the serviceman tell his own story. Van der Wind and Roos had stressed to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and Army Intelligence officers on the debriefing teams that the debriefing interviews should on no account take on the nature of an interrogation. They should try to create a relaxed, open-ended atmosphere so that the women and men of Dutchbat would feel at ease. The interviewers should intervene from time to time using predrafted questionnaires to ensure that all the topics had been dealt with.

During the planning of the debriefing the questions had been classified into three main categories that had to be dealt with in order to consider all the possible topics. The categories were: general, operational aspects and the humanitarian law of war. The debriefing teams in Assen had to observe this sequence in the interviews. The topics had been broken down on the questionnaires. The general topics were: evidence, contacts with the media, signed documents or agreements, possible criminal offences/misconduct²⁴¹⁶ and other matters. The operational topics were: location and organization, orders, experiences, reports, communication, assistance, command, logistics and other matters. The humanitarian law-of-war topics, lastly, were: identification, treatment of the sick and wounded, treatment of prisoners, treatment of civilians/Displaced Persons, how the interviewee had been treated as a hostage/prisoner, methods and means of waging war, and knowledge of the law of war.²⁴¹⁷

Most of the questions were indeed put in the agreed order. In practice this meant that matters of acute importance in saving the Minister from further scandals were checked first, as a reading of the debriefing reports which individual servicemen voluntarily placed at the NIOD's disposal confirmed.²⁴¹⁸ The first question was whether the interviewee still had evidence that could be of value to the inquiry. The subject was then always asked about any contacts with the media and whether he knew anything about possible signed documents or agreements. The idea was ultimately to work through the whole questionnaire in this way. This was not always entirely successful, however. This is difficult to glean from the interview reports available, as questions to which no answer was given were not consistently reported/recorded as such, so it is impossible to ascertain whether the questions were actually put. The questions had already been entered in the computer on a debriefing interview form. There were other factors too. The more people the interviewers had talked to the more knowledge they had and the more precise and appropriate the questions became. This was partly due to the fact that things had been organized in such a way that as far as possible each debriefing team saw servicemen who had been at the same location or done the same work.

²⁴¹⁵ Interview R.F.J.H. de Ruyter, 31/05/01.

²⁴¹⁶ Although criminal offences/misconduct were on the questionnaire, in view of the agreement between the PPD and those in charge of the debriefing, interviewees were not specifically asked about this insofar as possible criminal offences/misconduct by Dutchbat personnel were/was concerned.

²⁴¹⁷ SMG/Debrief. Srebrenica Debriefing Master Plan, Assen, 31/08/95.

²⁴¹⁸ The NIOD has had at its disposal 208 original interview reports provided voluntarily.

The drawback to this approach was that after a few interviews with the same content the debriefers became somewhat impatient and were not so keen to hear the same story yet again,²⁴¹⁹ so they did not press on with the questioning as hard as before. Then again it was possible for a serviceman to give no answer, or a wrong answer, to a question even though he knew the right answer. As a result of the decision not to listen to all sides it was virtually impossible to filter out this kind of thing.²⁴²⁰ Another reason why not all the questions were dealt with in the case of some interviewees was pressure of time. If a lot of time had been spent on a particular serviceman in order to get certain events or observations down on paper carefully this could be at the expense of the other questions, which were often rushed through or not even put. A small number of servicemen were interviewed by a debriefing team more than once to seek out information needed at that time to answer urgent questions.²⁴²¹

During an interview all the information was typed directly into a computer by a member of the debriefing team. It was normally possible shortly after the end of an interview to hand the interviewee a typed statement which he was required to sign. As far as can be ascertained this did indeed happen in all cases. Subsequently there was some confusion, as a number of servicemen thought that signing meant that they would automatically be sent a copy of the statement; this was only done, however, if the interviewee specifically asked for it. The confusion emerged afterwards when people concluded that as they had not been sent a copy they had not signed the statement.

A number of problems with the debriefing in fact became clear in the very first interview. The Military Security man who had served on Dutchbat III in Srebrenica as a seconded S5 was asked by his colleagues from Army Intelligence on a debriefing team to act as a guinea pig. The investigators realized almost immediately that Dutchbat personnel who had been in Srebrenica often had a confused notion of time. Often they were able to remember events but not when they had happened.²⁴²² Another problem that also became clear then, which a number of interviewees complained about afterwards, was the representation of the interview: looking back, they did not always find the information recognizable. There was also a feeling that the rapporteurs did not always have the knowledge or background to understand all the material.²⁴²³

The growing understanding the debriefing teams gained, resulting in the questions being revised, was also found at the next level. The completed reports of the interviews were copied and passed on, including all the personal particulars, to each of the three reading and analysis (RA) teams. Each of these had been assigned a particular topic to focus upon, viz.: general, operational aspects and the humanitarian law of war. This division was in line with that of the questionnaires used in the interviews. The RA teams' job was to mark those passages in all the texts that were of interest to their special subject. They encoded them using agreed codes all set out in the master plan and also noted in the margins certain relevant facets identified in the stories. From these the most important items were selected to be made known direct to Bokhoven, the actual coordinator of the day-to-day running of the inquiry, or Van der Wind.

The reading and analysis teams

The debriefing teams worked in a compartmentalized manner as a general rule, but the RA teams saw all the reports.²⁴²⁴ At this level each team had a complete overview of its equipment and was much better able to detect inconsistencies. Most of the changes to the questionnaires were based on observations by the RA teams. Only Van der Wind, Bokhoven and Kuijs at the Administrative Centre

²⁴¹⁹ Interview R.F.J.H. de Ruyter, 31/05/01.

²⁴²⁰ Interview K.C. Roos, 13/07/00.

²⁴²¹ Interview H.H. Hulshof, 06/12/01; Interview J.H.M. de Winter, 20/07/00; Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²⁴²² Interview R.F.J.H. de Ruyter, 31/05/01; Interview B. Rave, 13 and 14/12/00.

²⁴²³ Interview G. Kreemer, 13/07/98.

²⁴²⁴ DAB. Report based on the Srebrenica Debriefing, Assen, 04/10/95.

– and later on the members of the editorial team – had the overall picture. They also saw the marked-up reports from the three separate RA teams. Coordination meetings took place every day. If there were similar reports of excesses, for instance, it was important to investigate them. Thus it could happen that not only was the questionnaire revised but also a serviceman was called back to explain things that were unclear or to check contradictory information. Most of those involved regarded the daily coordination meetings as very worthwhile. This was the only time in the day when the whole group met. The meetings went as follows: Van der Wind generally opened with announcements and comments, then Bokhoven took the floor and went into the most important matters and trends that had emerged so far in more detail. The aim was not only to inform but also to draw attention to certain points, with the deliberate intention of revising the questionnaire if necessary. According to Van der Wind the questionnaires were totally different at the end of the debriefing compared with at the beginning.²⁴²⁵ After Bokhoven someone from the RA teams usually took the floor and explained some issue or other or drew attention to a particular subject. The morning meeting was always closed by Kuijs with announcements of a domestic nature. A regular item was the running total of people interviewed so far. Finally there was an opportunity for the participants to ask questions.

Some comments should be made on the staffing of the three RA teams. It is noteworthy that the RA team responsible for analysing the Operational aspects had the highest-ranking personnel of the three teams, viz. four officers: a colonel, two lieutenant colonels and a major. This was followed by the General team, which had a lieutenant colonel, a major, a lieutenant and an warrant officer. The third RA team was the Humanitarian Law of War team, which had two majors, an warrant officer and a staff sergeant. Given the public and political interest at the time one would have expected the main emphasis to be on RA team 3, the Humanitarian Law of War team.

Although Major Wilbert Kroon, head of the Humanitarian Law of War team, was known to be a good academic lawyer, he was certainly no specialist in the subject matter, in spite of the focus by the politicians and the media on the humanitarian dimension of the drama in Srebrenica. This assignment of priorities in staffing the RA teams shows that the Army still regarded its original aim of holding an operational debriefing as the most important one. The allocation of staff to the Operational team was part of a broader phenomenon, however. When Van der Wind took up his post as head of the debriefing on 12 August the personnel for the inquiry had already been designated. In any case he had no say in the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee personnel, as that was Roos' job. The other Army personnel – including the Army Intelligence officials – had been appointed mainly through the offices of the Army Crisis Staff.²⁴²⁶ Ultimately Van der Wind only brought in a lawyer as a kind of right-hand man. There was quite simply no way for him to appoint people himself.²⁴²⁷

There were other differences between the Operational team and the other two besides in their staffing. The Operational team set itself aside during the entire debriefing. They went so far as to continue wearing military uniform against the strict orders of the head of the debriefing. This behaviour was not appreciated by most of their colleagues. But there were other problems too. About a week after the start of the debriefing it became clear that the son of the head of the Operational team had served with B Company in Srebrenica. This fact led to a certain amount of discussion when it became generally known. Some people suggested that it might result in a conflict of interests. Van der Wind discussed the situation with the colonel concerned but saw no grounds to remove him from his post.

It also emerged at the very beginning of the inquiry that a virus had got into the Administrative Centre database. The Operational reading and analysis team, again against the orders of the head of the inquiry, had used their own laptops and floppy disks,²⁴²⁸ and it is probably as a result of this that the virus had got into the database. Fortunately the damage was minimal. The virus was discovered almost immediately and dealt with by the system administrator. It did not affect the report of the facts,

²⁴²⁵ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²⁴²⁶ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²⁴²⁷ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²⁴²⁸ Interview C.P.C. Kuijs, 20/06/01.

according to one of the writers, although it did affect the documentation centre: the stack of interview reports from that day had to be redone.²⁴²⁹ Later on there was another 'virus incident' and the 1995 virus in Assen was re-examined. In May 1999 the press reported that statements in the Srebrenica archives at the Frederik barracks in The Hague had disappeared or been destroyed, supposedly as a result of a hard disk crash. Intelligence instituted an inquiry, which was completed on 3 June 1999. The Ministry of Defence was told that the investigators had found no evidence of this. The diskettes still contained 485 of the 487 statements and all of them had been printed. Two statements had never been saved to diskette because they had been faxed in from abroad.

The discrepancy between the 487 statements and the only 460 people interviewed, incidentally, is due to the fact that some servicemen were interviewed more than once. There was no hard disk and in any case there had never been any question of storing statements on a hard disk, according to the investigators. The same inquiry report informed Minister De Grave of the Assen virus. Here again the conclusion the investigators came to was that the damage had been detected in time and had thus remained limited.²⁴³⁰ An inquiry was also carried out by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee during the same period, and this also indicated that no damage had been occasioned to the stored statements as had been suggested in the press.²⁴³¹

A subsequent incident involving the Operational team related to the creation of a dossier for the Lessons Learned (LL) Section of the Army. Major Stumpers sat on the team on behalf of LL and soon after the start of the debriefing began work on the dossier, alongside his work of coding the interview reports. For this purpose he used the full interview reports including all the personal particulars. In itself this should have come as no surprise, since he had notified those in charge of the inquiry of this work by letter on 18 August 1995.²⁴³² Especially since Deputy Army Commander Van Baal stated to the NIOD that he had been kept informed regarding the performance of the battalion and the battalion command by telephone by the head of the Operational RA team throughout the debriefing.²⁴³³ Van der Wind, however, was not taken with this and put an end to Stumpers' activities in the second week of the inquiry. This tallied with the instructions to all concerned that absolutely no information should be allowed out of Assen. As it turned out later, those in charge of the debriefing were very strict when it came to requests for information from the Central Organization. Van der Wind represented the Stumpers file to the NIOD as a mere incident, the work of a young, enthusiastic officer.²⁴³⁴ Lastly, there was one more incident where Van der Wind had to intervene. The Operational RA team had pulled in Major Franken from the corridor after his debriefing interview to ask him some questions. Some of those involved had a strong impression that this happened on numerous occasions.²⁴³⁵ The strict compartmentalization of the various levels in Assen was against this and explains Van der Wind's intervention. In view of the reports from the Operational RA team to Van Baal on the performance of the battalion and the battalion command, however, it is clear that they felt they were justified by instructions from the highest level.

The only official exception to the rule that absolutely no information on the debriefing was allowed out was the special relationship with the UN Yugoslavia Tribunal. The aim of finding out what Dutchbat personnel had seen of the war crimes committed by Bosnian Serbs was fleshed out in a special way in Assen. The red carpet was rolled out for the Yugoslavia Tribunal in The Hague. From the second week of the debriefing there were personnel from the Tribunal present on an on-going basis. Their office was in a hotel in Assen but they visited the debriefing frequently. Van der Wind set

²⁴²⁹ Interview de G. de Groot, 28/04/99.

²⁴³⁰ NIOD, Coll. Pennin, Report on Investigation, 03/06/99.

²⁴³¹ RNIMilCon. Memorandum from RNIMilCon Deputy Chief Constable G. Beelen to the minister of Defence, 24/06/99.

²⁴³² See LL. 'Fall of Srebrenica' investigation, letter from Head of Lessons Learned Section Major Stumpers to H-OB, SC-O and Colonel Bokhoven, 18/08/95.

²⁴³³ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 01/11/01.

²⁴³⁴ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²⁴³⁵ Interview R.F.J.H. Ruyter, 31/05/01; Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

up a special information room on the law of war where the people from the Tribunal could see the latest information. There were also frequent contacts with the Humanitarian Law of War RA team. The Tribunal staff were given full access to any statements in which matters of interest to them had been found. This had various consequences. Firstly, they used the information to check what they already had themselves. This could result in the questions for the debriefing being revised. Secondly, the UN often called in Dutchbat personnel, based on the statements, to question them again. They eventually interviewed dozens of Dutchbat personnel.²⁴³⁶ Subsequently a number were selected from this large group of people to actually testify before the Tribunal in 1996. Although Voorhoeve had indicated in advance that the Tribunal would receive full cooperation, it is thanks to the understanding and organizational capacities of the head of the debriefing that things were so well organized.

The Administrative Centre and the report of the facts

The Administrative Centre, where Major Kuijs held sway, was the next phase after the interview reports had been processed by the RA teams. It was he who had written the plan of action for the debriefing and oversaw the rather complex procedure of data processing and the subsequent computerized compilation of the interview reports. Once the RA teams had finished checking them and marking them up, the reports were submitted to the Administrative Centre, where the writers of the report of the facts processed each coded report. They put the story in a word processor, singled out the relevant passages and grouped those containing similar data together. A list on paper of e.g. observations on the lines of ‘I saw human remains at such and such a crossroads’ was then produced. If a story of this kind occurred in the word processor text, say, five times, there was a series: a dead body was seen at such and such coordinates and this was confirmed four times. All the condensed stories were subsequently put together by the writers of the report of the facts. Their job was to depersonalize the stories and reduce them to ‘bite-size chunks’, which were then pasted one after another and grouped into the complex of facts on which the final report of the debriefing was compiled.²⁴³⁷ It was necessary to depersonalize data because of the confidentiality promised to the servicemen. Depersonalizing the reports of the battalion commander and his deputy in the final complex of facts was more difficult, of course, as they were at the head of the chain of command and it was fairly easy to trace things back to them.

The Administrative Centre did more with the statements, however. Apart from Kuijs it was manned only by other Royal Netherlands Marechaussee officials, who were accustomed to using a report of the facts in major Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigations. What Kuijs and his men did was compile a complete report of the facts based on the statements as coded and supplied by the RA teams. The result was a very comprehensive report containing the primary reports of interviewees, often still including emotions and local colour. The report of the facts is the sum of all the relevant statements and thus contains a lot more information than the final report. The report of the facts was not primarily intended to serve as a basis for the report of the debriefing; that, after all, was what the statements marked-up by the reading and analysis teams were for. Kuijs wanted to be sure that the information was handled carefully and that nothing got lost. He regarded the report of the facts as an insurance policy for the future. He did not want Royal Netherlands Marechaussee personnel to be confronted afterwards with a discussion or facts that had been reported but not included. It was insurance that nothing would be swept under the carpet.²⁴³⁸ The report of the facts, then, was never intended to be published as a self-contained report. It was just standard practice in the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee to produce a report of the facts in major investigations. According to Van der Wind regular use was made of it to verify things while writing and editing the final report.²⁴³⁹ The

²⁴³⁶ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²⁴³⁷ Interview de G. de Groot, 28/04/99.

²⁴³⁸ Interview C.P.C. Kuijs, 20/06/01.

²⁴³⁹ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

people in the Administrative Centre had their hands full drawing up the three reports and the report of the facts at the same time. When the operation began there were two report-writers. When things hotted up a third was added so that each one had his own chapter. In the last week three Royal Netherlands Marechaussee officials were added, making two per chapter. The additional staff at least meant that they could cope with the work; the drawback was that each individual writer had less of an overview. Kuijs had the full overview, as he edited the report of the facts: there were two copies of this, one kept by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in Utrecht and one deposited with Military Intelligence in The Hague.

The editorial team

After the report-writers had depersonalized the statements and turned them into factual complexes it was the turn of the editorial team. Van der Wind and Bokhoven were in charge; the other members were the heads of the reading and analysis teams, Colonel De Jong, Colonel Steinhardt and Major De Kroon, and two Army Intelligence officers, Pennin and Captain Triep, whom Bokhoven had brought in for the actual writing. The two external advisers, De Ruiter and Huyser, were also closely involved in the editing and saw the various versions so that they could comment on them. As the editing took place mainly late at night, De Ruiter and Huyser did not see the edited versions until the next morning. Only when the report was nearing completion was the input from the heads of the RA teams substantially reduced. Pennin and Triep ensconced themselves in the cellar of the building and hardly anyone went down there apart from Van der Wind and Bokhoven. Until then, however, editorial meetings were held regularly, with all the members of the editorial team present, to discuss the content. The report of the facts, which was completed on 22 September, was also consulted in the final phase if clarification of particular matters was needed.

The external advisers played a fairly active role, according to many of those involved. They were often present at the inquiry in Assen and had access to all the interview reports, most of which they did indeed read. They also took advantage of their right to attend some interviews as listeners. Their involvement in the inquiry in the initial stages, however, was primarily in the capacity of observers and readers. Only when the inquiry progressed and the editorial team started work in earnest did they come more to the fore. An example already mentioned is Van der Wind's request to De Ruiter for advice on what to do with reports of Dutchbat personnel possibly having run over Displaced Persons. It was then decided in consultation that Van der Wind should take this up with the Public Prosecutor in Arnhem, Besier.

The advisers also made recommendations regarding the final report itself, initially about the organization of the report. The original idea was to keep to the classification into the subjects used for the debriefing: General, Operational and Humanitarian Law of War. In view of the nature and quantity of observations and reports from Dutchbat personnel on Displaced Persons and wounded persons, however, the advisers urged that these topics be dealt with in a separate chapter. De Ruiter in particular acknowledged that the problem of Displaced Persons was a serious one. Then there was a discussion about reports of Dutchbat personnel allegedly helping Bosnian Serbs by training them to use Dutch equipment.²⁴⁴⁰ There were also discussions about the problems with the Army Hospital Organization units, but this was seen as an interpersonal problem, which, as such, fell beyond the purview of the report. According to one of the editors it had been known from the outset that matters relating to commanding officers and personal relationships would be kept out of the report.²⁴⁴¹

²⁴⁴⁰ Interview F. Pennin, 07/03/01.

²⁴⁴¹ Supplementary telephone discussion with F. Pennin, 25/06/01.

The final report: a critical view

The completion of the report brought to an end a hectic period that, including the preparatory work, had started at the beginning of August. Interviewing 460 servicemen in barely four weeks had been a gargantuan task, and the majority of the personnel involved in the debriefing in Assen had found it so. For a period of just a few weeks they had worked extremely hard, 18-hour working days being no exception. Thousands of pages of witness statements on a wide variety of matters were ultimately distilled into a report of just over one hundred pages. The time frame – the period from 6 to 21 July – was strictly applied in the report. The style was factual and impersonal. To provide readers with some background a chapter on ‘Background and Chronology’ was included. At the end of the report were eight Appendices to clarify matters further.

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, this report deals with the topics in the report of the debriefing in detail. A topic-by-topic comparison with the report of the debriefing here would result in unnecessary repetition; nevertheless it is necessary to select a few examples to give an understanding of how things worked and to illustrate the kinds of shortcomings found. The three examples discussed below are described in detail in an Appendix to this report on the medical issues.²⁴⁴² This heading includes a number of cases where the performance of Dutchbat, the Army Hospital Organization units and the dressing station was demonstrably different from the way it was described in the report. A secondary reason for choosing these topics is the fact that the report of the debriefing generally gives very short shrift to medical matters, whereas there was a wealth of material in the interview reports, relating to the evacuation of the hospital in Srebrenica, internal squabbles among the medical staff and with the battalion command, and thirdly the problems regarding the ‘emergency supplies’.

The evacuation of the patients from the hospital to Potocari is the first topic on the list. The final report creates the impression that this was a Dutchbat operation and that MSF played at most an auxiliary role. The report of the debriefing says that Dutchbat managed to evacuate the hospital, albeit with a degree of improvisation.²⁴⁴³ The report of the debriefing goes on to say that MSF assisted with the transport, but once the stream of Displaced Persons got under way it was mainly Dutchbat that provided transport. A quote from an interview report was supposed to illustrate this: ‘As MSF personnel were in the shelter at the time it was decided to take the wounded in Dutchbat vehicles as far as possible.’²⁴⁴⁴ The reality was substantially different. Although there was some contradictory information on what actually happened, with hindsight it is clear that Dutchbat is given too much credit in the report of the debriefing. The evacuation from Srebrenica to Potocari took place in great haste and panic. No-one knew what was happening or where they were supposed to go: there was complete chaos. Captain Groen of B Company had understood that MSF wanted to evacuate and had given orders to make four-ton lorries ready to accede to a possible request for assistance from MSF.²⁴⁴⁵ The assembled Displaced Persons, however, thought that the lorries were there to take them north and climbed aboard. Each lorry had a load of a good hundred panic-stricken people, and the drivers had to pull people out of the cab in order to be able to drive. A few ambulant patients climbed on a Dutchbat lorry of Displaced Persons and set off for Potocari: it is not clear whether these were wounded from the hospital, as there were many wounded among the Displaced Persons and in the vicinity of the B Company compound. Just before the actual fall of Srebrenica, when the Bosnian Serb soldiers were already in the town, Lieutenant Egbers ordered his own men to set off for Potocari on foot to make room for twenty wounded supplied through MSF.²⁴⁴⁶ It is clear that there was absolute chaos in Srebrenica when the stream of Displaced Persons set off for Potocari.

²⁴⁴² See Appendix ‘*Dutchbat III en medische aangelegenheden*’.

²⁴⁴³ Report of the debriefing, 5.3, p. 55.

²⁴⁴⁴ Report of the debriefing, 5.10, p. 57.

²⁴⁴⁵ Debriefing report Y.M.C. Borst, 13/09/95.

²⁴⁴⁶ Interview V.B. Egbers, 02/09/99.

In all likelihood the reading and analysis teams in Assen mixed up the various locations where there were wounded. Dutchbat eventually transported 20 wounded, MSF 48. The result, though, was that in the report of the debriefing Dutchbat took the credit for an operation in which it had played a supporting role.

Another example was the poor relationship between the battalion staff of Dutchbat III and Army Hospital Organization units 5 and 6. A wealth of information on this subject emerged from the statements taken in Assen, not only from people who had served at the dressing station or in an Army Hospital Organization team but also from other Dutchbat III military personnel. The report of the debriefing gives reasons for the unsatisfactory relationships between the two Army Hospital Organization units and the battalion command which are in themselves relevant: the fact that unit 5 was relieved by unit 6 far too late, poor coordination between the battalion command and the Army Hospital Organization, the fact that Army Hospital Organization personnel had ridiculed a number of people in a satirical radio programme, the failure of the medical command to observe the normal rules, and a difference of opinion on whether to support MSF at the hospital in Srebrenica.²⁴⁴⁷ This list, however, in no way deals with the complaints and comments in the statements themselves and no connection is made with the resulting information on a failure of the battalion command. Far more serious is the fact that the report mentions that orders by the commanding officer of the dressing station were not carried out when the enclave fell.²⁴⁴⁸ The conclusion, that this was due to fear or cowardice and that refusing to obey an order is a serious offence in military terms, was not drawn. It is also remarkable that neither the minister nor the Army Commander instituted a criminal investigation after the report appeared.²⁴⁴⁹

For the third and last example from the report of the debriefing we now give a brief analysis of the problems regarding the 'emergency supplies'. The report says: 'It remains unclear whether applying the "for use only in emergency" rule resulted in the death of Displaced Persons in need of medical assistance.'²⁴⁵⁰ The debate that erupted following the Brandpunt current affairs programme on 26 November 1995 showed that there was a lot more involved, and the conclusion was that the discussion of this highly complex matter in the report of the debriefing was very incomplete. A member of the debriefing organization was not happy with the latter and claimed that the Operational reading and analysis team had omitted important facets and background information, inter alia on the question of the 'emergency supplies'.²⁴⁵¹ This sentence led Minister Voorhoeve to question whether this had resulted in the death of Displaced Persons, and he ordered an investigation.²⁴⁵²

The answers to these and other questions about the actions of the medical personnel could have found a place in the letter Voorhoeve wrote to accompany the presentation of the report of the debriefing to Parliament.²⁴⁵³ Ultimately Voorhoeve did not mention this issue in his letter.²⁴⁵⁴

These examples show on the one hand how chaotic the situation was in the enclave, and it is understandable that the debriefers and the RA teams initially had difficulty bringing a degree of order to

²⁴⁴⁷ Report of the debriefing, 6.4.

²⁴⁴⁸ Report of the debriefing, 6.4.

²⁴⁴⁹ The case was investigated in November and December 1995 by the Inspector of the Army Medical Corps. For a detailed account of this case see the Appendix '*Medische Kwesties*'.

²⁴⁵⁰ Report of the debriefing, 5.41.

²⁴⁵¹ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 7. Report of telephone conversations following the appeal by the minister of Defence, 17/08/98, p. 8, paragraph 6.

²⁴⁵² DCBC, 1214. Fax from Head of Operations Defence Staff to Brigadier General W. Vader, 18/10/95, No. OPNB/HE 1018.

²⁴⁵³ In anticipation of the final debate on 19/12/95 the minister did on 30/11/95 and 11/12/95 answer the 145-plus questions from MPs on the report of the debriefing. On the advice of the Inspector of Military Health Care, Air Commodore H.J.M. Groenhout, however, in the case of questions about medical intervention the minister referred to the investigation in progress led by Groenhout. Groenhout's 'highly confidential' report was ready on 15/12/95 but did not reach Parliament in time for the final debate.

²⁴⁵⁴ TK, Parliamentary Session 1995-96, 22 181, No. 128, (30/10/95).

the flood of information they were inundated with. We have seen earlier on in this chapter how the debriefing teams' understanding progressed, with the result that there was more and more context into which to fit particular pieces of information. There was also the possibility of editing the questions in the questionnaire if there was good reason to do so. According to Van der Wind the questionnaires were totally different at the end of the inquiry compared with at the beginning.

On the other hand these examples clearly show the discrepancy between the excessive amount of information in the statements and what actually ended up in the report. A definitive judgment of the report of the debriefing could only be given if all 487 interview reports could be examined without restriction. The report of the facts and the 208 statements placed at the NIOD's disposal do not permit this. A selection was in any event made from the vast quantity of material at three levels in Assen. The first selection took place during the debriefing interview: not everything the interviewee said was included in the report. Then one of the three RA teams made a further selection. The final selection was made by the members of the editorial team. Of the 460 servicemen only a few were interviewed more than once. It was rare for interviewees to be confronted with one another's statements.

The complaint made by some, that they did not recognize their stories in the report, was justified: the report falls short particularly when it comes to describing atmosphere and local colour. According to Van der Wind this was done deliberately so as to keep it as factual as possible.²⁴⁵⁵ Also, some interviewees did not feel that the debriefing was an open-ended conversation in which they had the opportunity to tell their stories at their leisure; others, however, found it open and pleasant. Here is a selection from the wide range of reactions to the report by those directly involved.

Dijkman was a chaplain and social worker with Dutchbat III. In the course of the debriefing he had tried to get things off his chest, but was disappointed. According to him the 'atmosphere of interrogation' provided little opportunity for him to talk about the emotional aspects of what he had been through.²⁴⁵⁶

As part of the investigation by Jos van Kemenade, Defence Minister De Grave in 1998 sent a letter to all Dutchbat personnel and other servicemen involved in the debriefing in which he asked anyone who had information that could be useful to Van Kemenade's investigation to come forward. There were 28 responses, mostly by telephone. Of 21 ex-Dutchbat personnel, just over half were critical of the debriefing: the interviews had felt too much like interrogations, they considered that the information they had reported was not included and the tone was too matter-of-fact. The other Dutchbat personnel's reactions to the debriefing were neutral or positive.

The remaining seven responses from servicemen who had played a role in the inquiry were reasonably positive. One had been a member of a reading and analysis team. He admitted that the teams' attitude was that Dutchbat ought not to be dragged through the mire any more. He also said that the report of the debriefing did not present an open, critical view of Dutchbat's actions, but that was not the remit. A more general problem, he said, was that the facts had been represented in a cold, factual manner; the report said nothing about the many moral and ethical dilemmas faced by Dutchbat personnel.²⁴⁵⁷

According to the then deputy of Colonel Ton Karremans in Srebrenica and Potocari, Major Rob Franken, the inquiry fulfilled its purpose, to look into disasters, to see if there was any 'shit'. He was also very critical of the fact that there had never been a proper operational debriefing of Dutchbat III.²⁴⁵⁸ Criticism was also voiced by Lieutenant Van Duijn. He found strange mistakes in the typed interview report handed to him to sign. Speaking of the debriefing team he concluded that 'the boys did their best but they were unable to gauge the situation'. Satisfaction was expressed by Warrant Officer Koreman, who had worked as head of the Ambulance Group in Srebrenica. He considered he had

²⁴⁵⁵ Interview O. van der Wind, 19/07/01.

²⁴⁵⁶ Interview E. Dijkman, 29/07/99.

²⁴⁵⁷ Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, Part 2, Appendix 7, 28/09/98.

²⁴⁵⁸ Interview F. Franken, 14/09/98.

been questioned fully. The interviews were relaxed and open and he was well supplied with creature comforts.²⁴⁵⁹

Some fairly fundamental criticism of the debriefing was also voiced by the Army's Individual Health Care, which was in Assen in case a serviceman broke down during an interview. There was no question, however, of giving the interviews a psychological element, and the Department was astonished to hear through Van Kemenade in 1998 that the psychological aspects were among the objectives of the debriefing.²⁴⁶⁰

Criticisms of the final report also came from the broader circle of people involved, at the level of the Staff of the Army Commander and the Central Organization. Deputy Chief of Defence Staff Schouten, for instance, is said to have let slip soon after the publication of the report that it might have been better to debrief the servicemen in Assen in groups of four. The idea behind this was that being confronted with one another's stories would have made for greater transparency and precision.²⁴⁶¹ General Huyser, who acted as adviser to the debriefing, regretted that the inquiry had been limited in place and time to Srebrenica from the start of the attack to the deportations. The then Director of the General Policy Affairs Directorate, De Winter, took the view that matters had been omitted during the editing of the report. There was a lot more in the report of the facts than in the final report, and a report with that kind of atmosphere would have been better.²⁴⁶²

From the start of the debriefing to the presentation of the final report to Parliament on 30 October not much was written about the debriefing itself in the national dailies.²⁴⁶³ Following the debate in Parliament on 5 September the politicians too awaited the promised report, confining themselves to responding to matters raised in the press and the media. During this period reports about Srebrenica and the actions of Dutchbat kept emerging. On 11 September the scandal regarding the suppression of the Smith-Mladic agreement erupted with an article by Hans Moleman in *De Volkskrant*.²⁴⁶⁴ On 22 September Frank Westerman reported that Dutchbat had drawn up a list of the names of 59 wounded for the Serbs. Christian Democrat MP De Hoop Scheffer responded that he was not satisfied that the debriefing would get to the bottom of things: he urged again that there be an 'independent' inquiry. Liberal Party MP Blauw urged a broad-based inquiry, as it had emerged that the information about the list had come from a UN observer and an MSF nurse. There was clearly a fear that if the debriefing were to be confined solely to Dutchbat it would not give a complete picture of what had happened. It was no coincidence, therefore, that Voorhoeve decided around that time to have the Dutch members of the UN staffs and Dutch observers debriefed in Assen as well.

The rumblings continued in October. On the 19th the CDA announced in the *NRC Handelsblad* that it wanted hearings of the three Dutch UN officers who had served in Sarajevo, Tuzla and Zagreb: it wanted to clarify the UN's role as regards Close Air Support. Then it was the turn of Frank Westerman of the *NRC Handelsblad*, who wrote an article on the 21st alleging that Dutchbat officers had removed the father, mother and brother of UN interpreter Hasan Nuhanovic from the compound in Potocari on 13 July.²⁴⁶⁵

11. The report and the aftermath

The big debriefing was completed on 4 October 1995, exactly one month after it had started. General Van der Wind went to The Hague with two copies bearing that date and personally handed one to

²⁴⁵⁹ Koreman, A.C., *'Mijn ervaringen met Dutchbat III en de val van Srebrenica'*, no date.

²⁴⁶⁰ Interviews W.J. Martens, B.S. Schutte and J.P. Knoester, 05/11/98.

²⁴⁶¹ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Letter from Lieutenant Colonel. J.A.C. de Ruiter to the Chief of Defence Staff and the CLS following his conversation with Frank Westerman on 06/11/95, 21/11/95.

²⁴⁶² Interview J.H.M. de Winter, 20/07/00

²⁴⁶³ Rapport Debriefing, ASCOR, August 2001.

²⁴⁶⁴ 'Voorhoeve zweeg over akkoord met Mladic', *De Volkskrant*, 11/09/95.

²⁴⁶⁵ *NRC Handelsblad*, 21/10/95.

Couzy and the other to Secretary-General Barth. The two external advisers had each received a copy the day before and reported on their work – by letter – on 4 October 1995. Looking back at the objectives and methods of the inquiry De Ruiter and Huyser concluded that ‘The final representation can be labelled correct.’²⁴⁶⁶ The word ‘inquiry’ took on a relatively narrow meaning in their letter, however: ‘What we have supervised at your request and what is recorded in the accompanying report is not an inquiry in the normal sense of the word, it is an ordered representation based on the communicated experiences of those directly involved.’ Otherwise they did not express an opinion of the content.

The Chief of Defence Staff, Van den Breemen, subsequently described in his journal how the Central Organization had viewed De Ruiter and Huyser’s remit in the debriefing: ‘The advisers advised on the organization of the report and assessed drafts of the report, paying particular attention to current issues in politics and society. They also checked that the report gave a representative picture of what the Dutch UN servicemen stated at the detailed debriefing.’²⁴⁶⁷

The fact that all this had to take place in four weeks was due to the enormous pressure Voorhoeve placed on the investigators, reflecting the pressure he was under himself. Voorhoeve thus waited anxiously for the report, which came out two weeks later than planned, in the hope of being able to answer the questions that kept arising. But the report did not have the desired effect. The fact that debriefing so many people in such a short time was a difficult feat did not prevent sharp criticism being expressed. Voorhoeve had been able to parry most questions during that time by saying that the inquiry in progress would provide answers. This only raised expectations as to the results of the inquiry still further. So it was not surprising that many people who had waited in vain for explanations and answers from the minister fell upon the final report eagerly.

The minister was saved from one possible headache. A discussion took place on 2 October 1995 involving the minister, the SG, the Chief of Defence Staff and the Army Commander about what should be done with the Van der Wind report, at which the Army Commander offered not to present an appraisal with the report so as to avoid discussion of differences of opinion with the minister.²⁴⁶⁸

At the Ministry of Defence itself the final report gave rise to a considerable fuss. The presumption there had been that the debriefing would actually answer all the questions. The Director of Information Services, Van den Heuvel, wrote a Priorities Memorandum to the Minister on 21 September anticipating the approaching completion of the report in which he expressed his expectations: ‘The servicemen involved, after all, have been able to make their findings known in the personal interviews with the “debriefing teams”. The principle should be that the report states the essential points of these interviews properly and without beating about the bush.’²⁴⁶⁹ In the same Priorities Memorandum Van den Heuvel judged that ‘It is not necessary for some servicemen to repeat or elucidate things “in public”.’

Here Van den Heuvel touched upon the essence of the problem. On first reading, the report turned out to be less complete than had been expected. But after all his references to the inquiry Voorhoeve could not afford to criticize it. He had to cover up. Privately, however, he concluded after its presentation that various important matters were not included. A detailed accompanying letter was discussed early on with a view to presenting the report to Parliament. According to Voorhoeve this letter was concerned ‘...particularly to highlight the context, which was missing, and inconsistencies in the report and ambiguities in the Appendices, where people contradict one another.’²⁴⁷⁰ Lists of additional questions were sent to various departments of the Ministry of Defence under the auspices of the Director of the General Policy Affairs Directorate, De Winter. These questions were based on three

²⁴⁶⁶ DAB. Letter from G.L.J. Huyser and J. de Ruiter, External Advisers to the ‘srebrenica Debriefing’, to the minister of Defence, Wassenaar/Naarden, 04/10/95.

²⁴⁶⁷ DCBC, box 66. Chief of Defence Staff’s journal, p. 108.

²⁴⁶⁸ NIOD, Coll. Couzy. Handwritten notes, undated.

²⁴⁶⁹ Memorandum intended for the minister of Defence, drafted by H. van den Heuvel, 21/09/95.

²⁴⁷⁰ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

typed A4s of comments on the report of the debriefing by the minister himself. The minister wondered, for instance, with reference to section 3.4.1 of the report, whether it was true that ten to fifteen thousand people had already assembled on 10 July and started to flee the enclave. This was important, he wrote, because it would prove to the critical world press that the Muslim fighters considered the enclave impossible to defend and had already given up before the Bosnian Serbs' final offensive on 11 July. The most striking point in the report, wrote the minister, was the discrepancy in the observations of four Dutchbat personnel described in section 4.28. He questioned how it could be that two servicemen had observed 500-700 dead bodies whereas two others in the same convoy from Nova Kasaba to Bratunac had only seen a few. Voorhoeve's next question about this section was about the number of servicemen who had observed 1,000 people squatting in the football stadium in Nova Kasaba. Answers needed to be found to questions of this kind, and Voorhoeve suggested doing this by going back to the debriefing statements themselves.

But in spite of its shortcomings, which resulted in additions and further internal questions, the report remained the basis of the minister's preparations for accounting to Parliament and defending Dutchbat. He drew an important, clear conclusion:

‘There is no data from the report that gives grounds for saying that Dutch service personnel did not do their jobs properly, with the exception of the two Forward Air Controllers, who were clearly unable to take the strain. Their duties were taken over by others. Nor does the report show that there was any misconduct on the part of Dutch servicemen. I think it would be useful to mention these two points in the accompanying letter. Nor does this report in any way show that Dutch servicemen suppressed information on war crimes committed by Serbs. It does, however, need to be examined how and to what extent the battalion reported to UNPROFOR and what information on war crimes they observed.’²⁴⁷¹

Once the minister had drawn this conclusion, responsibility for the tragedy in Srebrenica had to be borne by other people, but this was not without incident. The final report circulated round the Ministerial Council and various ministries in The Hague before being published. The Government needed an internal debate to discuss the content and reach a coordinated standpoint for the presentation to Parliament. The debate erupted well and truly with the Government meeting of 20 October, at which Ministers Van Mierlo, Pronk, Dijkstal and Borst and Prime Minister Kok criticized Voorhoeve.²⁴⁷² The immediate reason for this was the letter by Voorhoeve accompanying the report and intended for Parliament. The Ministers' criticism of Voorhoeve was that he did not take sufficient responsibility himself, he placed too much of the blame on the UN. Van Mierlo in particular was concerned about this latter point and concluded that ‘the relationship with the UN could come under pressure if Voorhoeve does not change his story’.²⁴⁷³ Kok moved the subject off the agenda and after the meeting had finished the ministers continued the discussion. Voorhoeve was ordered to bring the conclusions into line with the wishes of the members of the Ministerial Council. At the Government meeting of 27 October Voorhoeve's now edited letter to Parliament was approved, following a good deal of discussion. The emphasis on assigning blame had now shifted from the UN to the less tangible ‘international community’. The important point for the Defence Minister was that the Government backed his conclusion that Dutchbat could not be accused of failure to protect the Muslim population.²⁴⁷⁴

²⁴⁷¹ DAB. Appendix to memorandum from DAB to the minister of Defence, ‘Report of Srebrenica Debriefing’, 17/08/98.

²⁴⁷² There followed a reconstruction in the press of the Government meeting of 20/10/95; *De Volkskrant*, 20 and 25/10/95; *Algemeen Dagblad*, 26/10/95.

²⁴⁷³ ‘Van Mierlo hield rapport over Dutchbat tegen’, *De Volkskrant*, 25/10/95.

²⁴⁷⁴ *NOS Journaal*, Prime Minister Kok at the press conference following the Government meeting, 27/10/95.

That the report of the debriefing had its defects was self-evident, and criticism of it was not confined to the Ministry of Defence. Prior to the Ministerial Council Van Mierlo had received a paper drawn up by the Deputy Director-General for Political Affairs containing undiluted criticism of the report of the debriefing and its compilers. It said that the report was not transparent, veiled, clearly an in-house production, it left many questions unanswered and gave too much of an impression that the operation had been entirely a UN affair. The writer concluded by asking the question he saw as one of the essential points of the issue: 'was Srebrenica a UN tragedy where Dutchbat – and the Dutch Ministry of Defence – was the victim (as the Ministry of Defence would have us believe), or is it the case that the Ministry of Defence in The Hague should be imputed more direct involvement – and thus blame – (as will probably be concluded by international opinion)?'.²⁴⁷⁵ The Deputy Director-General for Political Affairs gave the following examples of tactical errors regarding Srebrenica: Karremans' press conference, the rolls of film, the dinner offered to Dutchbat on Serb territory by the Serb Government, the inadequate debriefing and the issue of the lists.

Finally Parliament was presented on 30 October with the report of the debriefing and a 29-page supplementary letter with five Appendices.²⁴⁷⁶ The letter read like a rundown of the shortcomings of the debriefing. Appendices 1 and 2 were the report of the debriefing and the letter from the two external advisers respectively. Appendix 3 contained 'additional information' on important matters that the minister and others at the Ministry of Defence had pointed out about which the report did not give sufficient information: the lists of names, the care and transport of the wounded, the strength of Bosnian Serb forces around the enclave, the telephone conversation between the Defence Minister and the Chief of Staff of UNPROFOR on 11 July, the Smith-Mladic agreement, various reports of dead bodies and Muslims who had been taken prisoner, the reports of war crimes, the collection of data and pictorial matter and the conduct of Dutchbat personnel in the enclave. Appendix 4 examined the fate of the missing persons from Srebrenica in detail. Appendix 5, lastly, was a chronological overview of the main events surrounding the fall of Srebrenica in the period from 6-23 July 1995. This was 'context' which was considered at the Ministry to be necessary to read the report of the debriefing properly – context which should not, however, detract from the definitive, canonical status of the report.

The next climax in the reporting on the debriefing occurred in the week of 28 October to 4 November, coinciding with the publication of the final report.²⁴⁷⁷ On Saturday 28 October Trouw, NRC Handelsblad and De Volkskrant all carried front-page reports of the press conference at which Kok presented the conclusions of the report: 'The aim of the report was to give a verdict on how Dutchbat did their work,' said Kok. Parliament debated the fall of Srebrenica and its aftermath for seventeen hours. 'We must be careful not to redo the report, otherwise there will be no end to it.'²⁴⁷⁸ These comments and the general criticism of the UN, however, could not prevent negative reactions. The report was incomplete and Voorhoeve had admitted as much. The editors of the national dailies were particularly negative about the report on 30 and 31 October. Frank Westerman in the NRC of 30 October, for instance, summed up the 'most sensitive aspects of the actions of Dutchbat' that had not been discussed in the report: Karremans' appeal to the Muslim fighters to leave the southern tip of the enclave in view of an announced NATO air strike (the Muslim army's accession to this appeal, said Westerman, left the enclave wide open to the Serb conquerors); the difficult relationship between Dutchbat and the Muslim population; and the list of 59 wounded which had fallen into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. Westerman also criticized the fact that it took three months for the many observations of dead bodies by Dutchbat personnel to come out. Other comments from the newspapers at the time: De Volkskrant 'Why didn't they scream blue murder as soon as possible?'; NRC Handelsblad, 'Any justification there may have been for the soothing explanations given by

²⁴⁷⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05279. Note from DAV (Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs) to the minister of Foreign Affairs, October 1995.

²⁴⁷⁶ TK, Parliamentary Session 1995-96, 22 181, No. 128, (30/10/95).

²⁴⁷⁷ Rapport Debriefing, ASCOR, August 2001.

²⁴⁷⁸ 'Kok wil val Srebrenica niet geheel aan VN toeschrijven', *De Volkskrant*, 28/10/95.

servicemen on the spot just after the fall has now vanished'; Het Parool, "This passivity or helplessness goes right to the heart of the Srebrenica trauma. (...) There is no escaping the impression that the actions of the Dutch regarding the refugees left a lot to be desired."²⁴⁷⁹

Responsibility for the fall of the enclave, however, was placed not with Dutchbat but with the UN and the failure to carry out air strikes. Trouw on 30 October reported that no-one other than the Bosnian Serbs was to blame for the fall of the enclave, while pointing out that this was not to say that mistakes had not been made at other levels and calling upon the Royal Netherlands Army to acknowledge this and learn from it. Although politicians generally responded negatively to the report, they let Dutchbat off the hook. They were also very critical of the Minister.²⁴⁸⁰

As a result of constantly giving additional information and explanations rather than admitting that the report in places displayed substantial shortcomings and inaccuracies, Voorhoeve had no option but to treat it as the yardstick when new questions arose. The many letters providing information to Parliament – including those dating back to well before the final report – subsequently had to be seen in the light of the report. A very close associate of Voorhoeve, De Winter of the General Policy Affairs Directorate, commented: 'We were constantly faced with the problem that when fresh incidents arose a comparison was made with what was in the letters, which was often missing or one-sided or half untrue. We could not say "the report of the debriefing is wrong" as it had been entrusted to the Army and Voorhoeve had said that it was an excellent report. Also, he did not dare distance himself from Couzy, that was naturally out of the question. He could not disown Couzy. That would also have shed serious doubt on the credibility of the rest of the report and only increased the calls for an inquiry. So we had to keep saying "Yes, it's all true, but we have some additional information." We kept saying we had additional information. Over and over again. That was the problem. So in a way we became prisoners of the report.' De Winter was furthermore inclined to believe that the Army had deliberately glossed over or suppressed certain matters, e.g. Karremans' leadership, the medical issue and the separation of men and women.²⁴⁸¹

The confidential nature of the interview reports, however, made it very difficult to check how inadequate the final report of the debriefing was. This problem dissolved to a large extent in summer 1998 when the report of the facts was suddenly 'discovered' and became accessible. The 'discovery' took place on 12 August 1998, after the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee sent it to the Legal Affairs Directorate in support of input by them to a Memorandum to the minister.²⁴⁸² There had been no clear announcement of its existence in 1995; apart from a cryptic reference to it in the report of the debriefing, the outside world knew nothing of it. The report of the facts turned out to be a very comprehensive document, containing all sorts of details that were not in the report of the debriefing, or only in highly abbreviated form – in sharp contrast to the latter. The media and the politicians immediately asked why this information had been withheld.

The report of the facts was in itself not an exceptional document: if it had been appended to the report of the debriefing – as an integral part of the procedure in Assen – it would never have subsequently become an issue.²⁴⁸³ But comparison of the two reports made it painfully clear that a selection had been made from the available material for the report of the debriefing. Given the internal nature of the report of the facts as an auxiliary document, however, it is not surprising that it did not figure prominently in the final report. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee procedure for major investigations required a report of the facts to be made, and Kuijs had personally ensured that this was carried out meticulously.

The result of the incomplete treatment, or even complete omission, of these matters was that the picture of Dutchbat's actions created by the report of the debriefing was too reassuring. The report

²⁴⁷⁹ RVD/IV, *Srebrenica, het publicitaire beeld, 1992-1995*, 10/11/99.

²⁴⁸⁰ Rapport Debriefing, ASCOR, August 2001.

²⁴⁸¹ Interview J.H.M. de Winter, 20/07/00.

²⁴⁸² DJZ, C95/277 98002299, Letter from the Legal Affairs Director, Dr S.B. Ybema, to J.A. van Kemenade, 02/09/98.

²⁴⁸³ Report based on the Srebrenica Debriefing, Assen, 4 October 1995.

of the facts contained more material than the report of the debriefing. The report of the facts had not served as a basis for the final report in 1995, rather it had been used as means of checking things. All the information in the report of the facts was in fact known, in the form of encrypted debriefing reports, to the RA teams and in principle to the editorial team as well. Moreover, the heads of the RA teams were members of the editorial team. It is important to note that the subjects mentioned above were generally touched upon in the report of the debriefing, but often in a veiled, abbreviated manner. Virtually all these matters had been raised in the media and by the politicians following Dutchbat's return to the Netherlands.

Parts III and IV of this report deal with most of the topics that merited much closer attention in the final report of the debriefing than they received, the most important being: the possibility that an Armoured Personnel Carrier had run over Displaced Persons; the story of Rizo Mustafic, the interpreter who disappeared; the treatment of local personnel; the evacuation from the hospital to Potocari; the problems concerning the Army Hospital Organization units and the 'emergency supplies'; problems in the battalion staff; the role of the UN staffs in Tuzla, Sarajevo and Zagreb; the confusion surrounding the provision of Close Air Support; and the relationships between the UN command and the national command.

After the publication of the report of the debriefing on 30 October 1995 there was a scandal that had unexpected consequences for the Minister. An article in the NRC Handelsblad of 11 November indicated that documents and word-for-word accounts of discussions at a secret meeting at the Ministry on 1 November had been leaked to the author of the article. The article claimed, firstly, that Dutch UN officers bore part of the blame for the fall of Srebrenica as a result of differences of opinion and misunderstandings between them. Secondly, it said that the UN had decided – probably as early as May 1995 – to allow the enclaves to fall: this was the reason for the absence of Close Air Support and the subsequent discomfiture of Dutchbat. The resulting scandal is described and analysed in the next chapter.²⁴⁸⁴

This case distracted attention from Dutchbat and the report of the debriefing with all its shortcomings. The role of Dutchbat and the battalion command was seen as being far more modest. It was partly as a result of this that the emphasis in reporting and political interest as regards responsibility for what had happened in Srebrenica shifted to the UN and the 'international community'. This suited Voorhoeve very well, of course. He had come to the conclusion that Dutchbat was not in any way to blame and he was happy with the approval he received. The parliamentary debate on the report of the debriefing also shifted accordingly: Parliament now directed its efforts at clarifying the role of the UN and the failure to attack, culminating in a hearing of the four Dutch UN officers behind closed doors. The conciliatory tone adopted towards Dutchbat and the minister in the final debate before Christmas was due largely to this.

12. The final debate

Before Parliament could concentrate all its attention on the final debate the discussion of the role of the UN had to be brought to a logical conclusion. On 30 November Voorhoeve had answered a list of over 145 questions on the report of the debriefing in Parliament, a large proportion of them relating particularly to the role of the UN and the Dutch UN officers. After this session Parliament decided to hear the four Dutch officers who had served with UNPROFOR itself. The immediate reason for this was the tenor of the Minister's answers to Parliament, that 'the United Nations from top to bottom left Dutchbat in the lurch at crucial moments'.²⁴⁸⁵ Parliament demanded greater transparency from the minister. On 11 December, the day of the closed hearing of the four UN officers, Parliament received written answers to its supplementary questions, again relating mainly to the role of the UN. The

²⁴⁸⁴ Part IV, Chapter 6.

²⁴⁸⁵ 'Nu VN-top nog over Dutchbat', *Trouw*, 01/12/95.

appearance of the four did not in fact create much of a stir, other than with De Hoop Scheffer of the CDA, who reported: ‘We have gained an enormous quantity of additional information for the final debate on Srebrenica’.²⁴⁸⁶

The ‘final debate’ on the report of the Srebrenica debriefing took place on 19 December 1995.²⁴⁸⁷ This nomenclature is actually misleading, as the detailed parliamentary discussion of the report of the debriefing had already taken place on 30 November and 11 December. A major factor for the majority of MPs was the desire to close the book on Srebrenica; the report of the debriefing was merely one chapter of that thick tome. That there had to be a debate taking the report of the debriefing as its starting point there was no question. The minister’s previous practice of constantly postponing answers to parliamentary questions and referring to the forthcoming report had created great expectations. After all its efforts to get at the truth it is remarkable that Parliament so readily accepted the reality of an imperfect report in the final debate.

The debate also needs to be seen against the background of the changed image of Dutchbat since July 1995 and the very extensive flow of information between the Defence Minister and the politicians since the fall of the enclave. Substantively Parliament had already dealt with all the points. Nor had Parliament escaped the dynamics of changing images. In the weekend of 21-23 July Dutchbat personnel had been welcomed to Zagreb as heroes. There was praise for everyone – including the Minister. From the end of July the picture began to change and attention focused on the fate of the men who had fled and the various scandals.²⁴⁸⁸ This phase continued until just before the publication of the report of the debriefing, when the attention shifted to the UN and the complex decision-making by the international community. It was the press that had played a major role in changing the picture, not Voorhoeve, who since the fall of the enclave had sent a constant flood of letters to Parliament, the Standing Committees on Defence and Foreign Affairs and the Ministerial Council. The Minister put an enormous amount of work into this: not only did he answer questions, he also kept putting forward information himself. And yet the information supplied on Srebrenica was not enough, mainly because the Government constantly felt it had to respond to fresh revelations and accusations of withholding information. The big debriefing, which was supposed to provide the answer to all outstanding questions, was inadequate.

Almost at the start of the debate De Hoop Scheffer stated that its aim had to be to close the Srebrenica tragedy politically – though he immediately added, ‘Whether it will ever be completely closed is doubtful, in view of the many questions that still remain unanswered’.²⁴⁸⁹ With this observation De Hoop Scheffer expressed the feeling everyone had. Even after the 145-plus questions to the Minister and the recent hearing of the UN officers, many matters remained unclear. This clear conclusion on the report of the debriefing was as far as it went, however. The press, in any event, was not sure what to make of the debate.

The newspapers placed it in the context of the past six months and came to the same conclusions. There was the odd criticism, though. An article in *De Volkskrant* of 19 December looked ahead to the atmosphere in Parliament for the debate that evening: ‘Parliament not holding a knife to Voorhoeve’s throat’.²⁴⁹⁰ The next day *De Volkskrant* quoted Voorhoeve, who again declared, ‘The UN failed, not Dutchbat’. The *NRC Handelsblad* shared that conclusion that Parliament had not wanted to hold a knife to Voorhoeve’s throat: its headline said that Parliament wanted to stop looking for people to blame for Srebrenica: ‘The blame for what went wrong rested with the Serb leaders. [...] The position of the responsible Ministers, Voorhoeve (Defence) and Van Mierlo (Foreign Affairs) was no longer

²⁴⁸⁶ ‘Weinig Nieuws bij hoorzitting Srebrenica’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/12/95.

²⁴⁸⁷ TK, Parliamentary Session 1995-96, Proceedings, 19/12/95, TK 40, pp. 3155-89.

²⁴⁸⁸ See also Part IV, Chapter V.

²⁴⁸⁹ TK, Parliamentary Session 1995-96, Proceedings, 19/12/95, TK 40, p. 3155.

²⁴⁹⁰ ‘Kamer zet Voorhoeve mes niet op de keel’, *De Volkskrant*, 19/12/95.

under discussion in the debate.’ The article went on to say that Voorhoeve took responsibility for the mistakes made after the fall of the enclave.²⁴⁹¹

Trouw concluded in an article on 20 December that Van Mierlo’s position had been discussed during the debate. The newspaper quoted the VVD Defence spokesman, Blauw, who, it said, had unexpectedly hotted up the debate: ‘If Van Mierlo (Foreign Affairs) had worked just as hard to get the United Nations moving as he did soon afterwards to help Lubbers to a high-ranking NATO post, Dutchbat would not have been so isolated when Bosnian Serbs attacked the enclave.’ The article was a vain attempt by Trouw to inject some tension into the debate: in fact there had been no real fireworks, as Blauw did not receive any support from the other parties for his attack on Van Mierlo.²⁴⁹² The final debate on the report of the debriefing ended in an anticlimax.

13. Conclusions

With hindsight it is fairly easy to see that the debriefing was doomed to failure right from the start, and it is also fairly easy to say why. This was not primarily because different – contradictory – objectives were set for it. Nor was it due to any mistakes that may have taken place in the implementation, nor even so much to errors of judgment when selecting information for the compilation of the final report. These were, of course, all reasons why the report was incomplete and turned out somewhat too favourable to the Army. The main reason was that Minister Voorhoeve was not able to get that bulwark the Royal Netherlands Army to do what was expected of it, to hold a broad-based inquiry that would get to the bottom of things. In other words, from the outset he came up against the inability and unwillingness of the Army top brass to go along with political objectives.

From the moment Dutchbat abandoned the enclave the Minister of Defence was constantly under fire owing to a long series of scandals and blunders which had for the most part been caused by the Army itself. Again and again ‘fresh’ facts emerged and again and again the Minister was at a loss for words, while the media and the politicians were constantly screaming for explanations. When he was under fire politically Voorhoeve thought he could rely on the Army for a correct political appraisal of the situation and unconditional support. But the Army had different priorities and not much political sensitivity, with the result that the Minister was generally not informed in time and/or properly of matters which the Army were well aware of; in some cases, indeed, he was not informed at all – in spite of instructions to the Commanders of the Armed Forces drawn up in January 1992 ordering them to report sensitive matters, and in spite of repeated attempts by the Central Organization to worm information out of the Army. The continuing series of scandals and blunders in which the Ministry of Defence was mixed up caused increasing damage to the image of both the Minister and the Army.

For Voorhoeve the primary aim of the debriefing was to put an end to the series of scandals and fresh revelations once and for all by interviewing all Dutchbat personnel who had been in the enclave when it fell and thus finally to be on top of the information rather than constantly running after it. But it was not up to Voorhoeve alone. A lot of the Army military considered that the Minister had left them out in the cold when dealing with the scandals. Couzy, moreover, had the idea that the Minister was interfering too much in matters that in his opinion were Army Commander business. Dutchbat in Srebrenica had been an Army affair and as such ought to be dealt with by the Army Commander, thought Couzy. Any debriefing ought to be an operational one carried out by the Army internally, without outside interference. Aside from the scandals in the political arena, the press and the media there were enough other differences of opinion between the Minister and the Army Commander to upset relations between them. To these was added, at the end of July 1995, the difference of opinion on the proposed debriefing. When the Minister and the Army Commander talked about a full debriefing after welcoming Dutchbat to Zagreb on 23 July 1995, each of them had something different

²⁴⁹¹ NRC *Handelsblad*, 20/12/95.

²⁴⁹² TK, Parliamentary Session 1995-96, Proceedings, 19/12/95, TK 40, pp. 3155-89.

in mind. The Minister's plan cut right across the limited operational debriefing, confined to the battalion, which Couzy and his associates envisaged.

In the preparatory phase of the inquiry the various actors manoeuvred frantically. The Military History Section had special instructions from Couzy to investigate whether information had been withheld from the Army Crisis Staff by the Central Organization's Crisis Management Centre. The Military History Section was initially involved in the debriefing as an extension of this. Their special remit was in effect an investigation directed against the Ministry of Defence. Having made a constructive contribution during the planning phase, the Military History Section withdrew before the debriefing began, for fear of being ground to a pulp. Army Intelligence, a body responsible *inter alia* for safeguarding the Army's image for the Commander by providing him with information of various kinds from their debriefings and other sources, played a prominent role in the debriefing. The Marechaussee, initially envisaged as bearing primary responsibility for the inquiry, did not want to miss playing a major role. On the one hand they enjoyed the Minister's confidence and had an aura of objectivity; on the other hand they were fearful of their position and image within the Army if their personnel were involved in the inquiry as investigating officers. They were accordingly relieved when their investigatory duties were 'neutralized' through an arrangement with the Public Prosecutions Department. Ultimately the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee military formed the backbone of the procedural element of the inquiry.

The meanwhile notorious Management Report had been known since 4 August 1995 to a large number of people directly involved in organizing the debriefing. Not one of them, evidently, saw any reason to discuss it or include it in the planning: this applied to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Commander, General Fabius, his second-in-command General Roos, who was also involved in the debriefing as an adviser, General Warlicht, and many other Royal Netherlands Marechaussee officers. In 1998 it was discovered that two copies of the Management Report had been in the Srebrenica archives at the time of the big debriefing. Van der Wind wrote to Minister De Grave that he had not seen them but ought really to have done so. As we saw earlier on in this chapter, the information in the Management Report comprised a series of accusations directed mainly at the performance of Dutchbat and the Dutchbat command. The commander, however, did not want to wash dirty linen in public. It is highly likely that it was read by far more of the military than can be proved. That they all failed to realize its importance and – in view of the forthcoming debriefing – did not talk about it is improbable. Evidently there was some kind of collective reflex that prevented them from reporting it as a basic document for the debriefing and bringing it up there.

Meanwhile there were indications from various other sources that Dutchbat personnel had done things that were unacceptable. And yet those in charge of the debriefing, in consultation with the PPD, opted for an approach that minimized the chances of anything of this kind being reported at the debriefing. Interviews with those concerned for the NIOD investigation revealed that there was no-one for whom this had any priority whatsoever.

The wisdom of entrusting the debriefing to the Army is highly dubious, especially in the light of the well-documented cases of unsatisfactory relationships and differences of opinion between the Army, in particular Couzy, and the Central Organization. But Voorhoeve considered that to have the inquiry conducted externally would have been to display distrust of the Army. On the other hand, of course, the Minister did have to ensure that the results of the inquiry were entirely above suspicion of being subjective. The idea that was contemplated for a while at the beginning, to have it conducted by the Marechaussee, was soon discarded because of the inevitable objection that it would seem too much like a criminal investigation. That the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee nonetheless took part, under Army supervision, was due to the fact that the Central Organization regarded them as a guarantee of the integrity and objectivity of the inquiry. The second guarantee was the appointment of the two external advisers.

As it was the Minister who had ordered the inquiry and appointed the two advisers, De Ruiter and Huyser, the Army felt in the first instance that they had been robbed of what they saw as their responsibility. When no written instructions with clear objectives and conditions arrived, however, the

Army were able to put their own stamp on the debriefing. According to De Ruiter and Huyser, Assen had been concerned mainly with current issues in the media and politics. Important questions on the actions of Dutchbat itself and the allocation of responsibilities were not dealt with in the final report, or only in a very incomplete manner.

But there was enough material on matters such as criminal offences, the performance of the battalion command, the problems with the Army Hospital Organization units and the sometimes negative attitude of Dutchbat personnel towards the Muslim population – as a reading of the debriefing reports showed, as well as the report of the facts that turned up in 1998. That the staffs in The Hague were not questioned weakened the evaluation still more. Dutch servicemen who had served under the UN were only questioned at the eleventh hour.

When the final report was complete, on 4 October 1995, Voorhoeve had no option but to laud it: not only had he held questioners off for weeks by pointing out that questions could only be answered once the report was complete, he also did not want now to disown the body that had carried it out, the Army. As a result of lauding the report and not acknowledging straight away that it had serious shortcomings the Minister was obliged to relate all the information on Srebrenica he had supplied and would supply in the future to the report. The Ministry of Defence became a prisoner of the report. The fact that it was deficient was clear to Voorhoeve and his civil servants immediately it was submitted, witness the long letter of 30 October 1995 full of additions and ‘context’ with which the Minister presented the final report to Parliament.

After Voorhoeve had answered questions on the final report in two marathon sessions on 30 November 1995 and 11 December 1995, Parliament was ready for the final debate on 19 December. This latter confrontation simply continued the series of debates since the fall of Srebrenica. The conclusion afterwards, if one could be drawn, was that Parliament did not want to hold a knife to the Minister’s throat. Voorhoeve persisted in his assertion that the UN had failed but took responsibility for the mistakes made after the fall. Parliament admitted that they too bore responsibility for the tragedy in Srebrenica. The picture most people were left with after the debate, however, was one of chaos, not only at the UN but also at the Ministry of Defence.

The Defence Minister concluded from the report of the debriefing that Dutchbat was not in any way to blame. The debate that had raged in the media around the time of the publication of the final report on the responsibility of the UN to provide Dutchbat with Close Air Support, and the theory that the UN had wilfully abandoned the Srebrenica enclave, had drawn attention away from the defects of the report and placed the role of Dutchbat in a different light.

The debriefing, then, did not fulfil the Minister’s urgent objective of putting an end to the flood of uncontrolled revelations by interviewing all those involved so that he would finally be on top of the information and not constantly running after it. Soon after the publication of the report ‘fresh’ facts came to light which it had omitted. Right from the start the Army had been able to put its own stamp on the organization of the debriefing. Wherever possible a ‘narrow’ approach had been adopted and unwelcome topics avoided or glossed over. If the Army had had any political sensitivity, Assen would not only have concentrated on issues that happened to be topical in politics and the media. The Srebrenica issue, after all, was not confined to lists of wounded and Displaced Persons, signed statements and pictorial matter that had been destroyed; there were matters closer to the hearts of Dutchbat personnel, matters that related to the essence of military operations: people being run over, the ‘emergency supplies’, the refusal to give aid to wounded people, the negative attitude towards Muslims, making timely and unambiguous reports of what was going on through the correct channels, helping to separate men and women, and the performance of the battalion command. These were the matters that the report had glossed over and subsequently, one by one, caused such a stir. This, unintentionally, laid the foundation for the lasting return of the topic of Srebrenica in the press and the media.

Chapter 8

The 'srebrenica affair' in the public domain

1. Introduction

The reporting on Srebrenica underwent a significant change from late July 1995. The press and media had already revised their initially positive attitude on account of certain incidents whose origins could be traced to Zagreb. But things did not stop there. After Dutchbat III had returned to the Netherlands on 24 July 1995, several other matters accelerated the change of heart in the media. These were the 'the statement of 17 July', the 'list of 239' refugees and the 'list of 59' wounded. Due to unskilful handling and errors of judgement within the Defence apparatus, the existence of these documents had not been reported to the Central Organization. Any references to the incidents were so minimal that Minister Voorhoeve was put in the awkward situation of always being one step behind events. This concerned matters that had still taken place in Potocari. Considering their significance, these should normally have been reported to Defence authorities without hesitation. Moreover, these three affairs also occurred before the major debriefing had started.

Sections 2 and 3 of this chapter deal at length with the 'statement of 17 July' and the 'list of 239'. The circumstances surrounding the signing of the statement and the drawing up of the list of 239 refugees have already been dealt with at length in Part III and Part IV. The scope of this chapter is therefore confined to a description of the (publicity) aftermath in the Netherlands. The problems surrounding the 'list of 59' wounded – including the aftermath in the Netherlands – are extensively discussed in the annexe to this report: *'Dutchbat III en de bevolking: medische aangelegenheden* (Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues). The present chapter devotes no attention to this matter.

The botched development of Lieutenant R. Rutten's roll of film in a Navy Laboratory on 26 July 1995 came at a very unfortunate time and formed the provisional culminating point in a series of incidents and blunders within the Defence apparatus. Particularly at a later stage, this 'roll of film' was to undermine the credibility of the Ministry of Defence. It had a negative impact on Dutch public opinion concerning Srebrenica and the military establishment. Section 4 contains a highly detailed reconstruction of this unfortunate affair. All the relevant people involved were heard and, moreover, all possible technical aspects of the roll of film, the development process and the camera were investigated.

During, but also after the debriefing, the spate of new revelations and further incidents continued. Any hope that the debriefing report would stem the flood proved in vain. Four issues that received a lot of attention in the press and media are looked at more closely in Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8. These are the 'smith-Mladic agreement', 'the bunker leak', the promotion of Lieutenant Colonel Karremans to the rank of Colonel in January 1996 and 'the OP-M incident', respectively.

Though the number of incidents started to diminish from 1996, Srebrenica continued to crop up as a news item. Failing new revelations, the annual celebration of the Fall of Srebrenica on 11 July could always be relied upon to trigger a search for 'new' perspectives. This literally and figuratively placed such a burden on the Ministry of Defence that other activities were neglected. The appointment of a new Minister of Defence in the summer of 1998 sparked a 'srebrenica offensive' in the media that unleashed yet another barrage of revelations. But it was also the ideal opportunity for the Minister to attempt to break with the past. An independent inquiry was perceived to be the road forward. J.A. van Kemenade was asked to examine whether Defence personnel had helped to obstruct the truth finding process. Section 9 of this chapter considers Van Kemenade's inquiry against the background of the circumstances prevailing at the time.

2. The statement of 17 July

The ball was set rolling when the newspaper *De Volkskrant* reported on 26 July 1995 that Dutchbat Commander Th. Karremans and the Commander of the military forces of the Bosnian Serbs, R. Mladic, had signed an agreement on 12 July 1995 about the evacuation of refugees from Potocari.²⁴⁹³ *De Volkskrant* went on to say that Karremans had conceded to Mladic's demand that the Bosnian Serbs would be permitted to subject men of able-bodied age to a 'debrief'. The current affairs programme *Nova* also featured this item that evening. The next day *De Volkskrant* presented a follow-up article containing a spectrum of opinion as to whether or not Karremans had been right to accept this agreement.²⁴⁹⁴ The controversy surrounding the agreement prompted Minister Voorhoeve on 27 July to write a letter to Parliament and also to hold a press conference. In the letter to Parliament and during the press conference Voorhoeve was adamant that the Dutchbat commander had not signed any document whatsoever. One day later, on 28 July, Voorhoeve was informed by Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff M. Schouten and Head of the Directorate General of Policy Matters J.H.M. de Winter that a statement that had already been signed on 17 July by Major R.A. Franken had come to light. The next day the newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* revealed the discovery in a critical article²⁴⁹⁵ and things snowballed from there. For over a week, it was the hot topic in the press.²⁴⁹⁶ The reporters almost instantly latched on to the fact that Voorhoeve had apparently been in the dark; the actual statement provoked much less controversy. On 4 August Voorhoeve called De Winter and instructed him to find out why the statement had been brought to his attention so late in the day. The inquiry was conducted in collaboration with the Defence Crisis Management Centre.²⁴⁹⁷ The following reconstruction is largely based on the results of the inquiry that De Winter and his staff started up on 4 August.

The statement of 17 July was a document that had been signed by representatives of the Muslim population and the Bosnian Serbs on the compound in Potocari. It was the written confirmation that the Bosnian Serbs wanted in order to prove that the evacuation of the refugees from Potocari as arranged in the so-called 'agreement of 12 July 1995' had been effected without any problems. The third signatory was the Deputy Battalion Commander of Dutchbat III, Franken, who, against the will of the Bosnians, had inserted a restriction. After the statement had been signed, it was put to one side for the time being.²⁴⁹⁸

Following a talk that Dutchbat Commander Karremans had on 18 July with Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army A.P.P.M. van Baal about the safety of the local personnel who were employed by Dutchbat and who were to travel with them to Zagreb, a letter was sent to Van Baal at 10:50am. This letter described the transfer of the local personnel and referred to the statement that was enclosed as an addendum. Van Baal sent the documents on to the head of the Legal Affairs Section, Colonel A.C. Zuidema, so that he could deal with them. In his absence the documents finally ended up on the desk of Lieutenant Colonel K.R. Lo Fo Wong, the Deputy Head of the Bureau of Constitutional, Public Administrative and International Law. He decided that the transfer of local personnel was a UN matter and that no action was necessary on the part of the Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Lo Fo Wong consulted with Lieutenant Colonel J.A.C. de Ruiter of the UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo. They decided that De Ruiter would take the transfer of the

²⁴⁹³ 'Inzet blauwhelmen verdeelde ministers ernstig' ('Deployment of UN peacekeepers seriously divided ministers'), *De Volkskrant*, 26/07/95. The implications of this agreement are explained in Part IV, Chapter 4.

²⁴⁹⁴ 'Deal Karremans oogst kritiek én bijval' ('Karremans' deal reaps criticism and applause'), *De Volkskrant*, 27/07/95.

²⁴⁹⁵ 'Verwarring leidt tot pijnlijke fouten' ('Confusion leads to embarrassing errors'), *NRC Handelsblad* 29/07/95.

²⁴⁹⁶ 'Majoor tekende verklaring onder druk' ('Major signed statement under pressure'), *Trouw* 04/08/95; 'Dutchbat tekende verklaring vertrek' ('Dutchbat signed departure statement'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/08/95; 'Voorhoeve kwetsbaar door slechte informatie' ('Poor information makes Voorhoeve vulnerable'), *De Volkskrant*, 05/08/95; 'Communicatie rammelt' ('Disjointed communication'), *Trouw*, 09/08/95; 'Defensie miskende politiek gewicht van fax Dutchbat' ('Ministry of Defence underestimated political weight of Dutchbat fax'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/08/95.

²⁴⁹⁷ DCBC, 1004. D95/400, Memo of J.H.M. de Winter, 08/08/95.

²⁴⁹⁸ For a description of how the statement of 17 July was drawn up, see Part IV, Chapter 5.

personnel upon himself. Lo Fo Wong finalized the matter administratively by sending an internal memorandum to the acting Deputy Head of Operations at the Army Crisis Staff, Colonel P.H. Smeets. In the afternoon Lo Fo Wong once again personally talked through the handing over of the personnel with Pollé. The memo said nothing about the statement and they did not raise the issue either.

After the current affairs programme *Nova* on 26 July and the article in *De Volkskrant* on 27 July, the personnel at the Central Organization found that nothing was known there about the agreement. Consequently the Defence Crisis Management Centre and S. Reyn of the Directorate of General Policy Matters contacted the Deputy Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, Colonel P.H. Smeets. He too had no knowledge of the matter.

Meanwhile the reports about the agreement had prompted others to look elsewhere. On the morning of 27 July the head of the International and Legal Policy Affairs Department, G.F.J. van Hegelsom, instructed his assistant B. van Lent to make enquiries about the existence of such an agreement. Van Lent also phoned Lo Fo Wong who said he knew nothing about an agreement between Karremans and Mladic concerning the evacuation of refugees. That same afternoon however, Lo Fo Wong rang back to say that he had found a statement from a representative of the civilian population about the way in which the population had been evacuated. This statement had reportedly been signed on 17 July in the presence of a representative of UNPROFOR, the Deputy Commander of Dutchbat, Major R.A. Franken. Lo Fo Wong offered to the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army Crisis Staff, Col. B. Dedden, and Colonel Smeets, to make further enquiries about other documents. At Van Lent's request he faxed the statement shortly afterwards to the Legal Affairs Department. Around four o'clock Lo Fo Wong spoke to Dedden and Smeets on the phone, telling them about the statement and the request from the Legal Affairs Department to send it to them. No further documents were known at the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff incidentally.

At 4:20 pm Smeets called the head of Operational Affairs of the Defence Staff, Colonel R.S. van Dam, who attended Voorhoeve's press conference to inform him of the statements and the fax to the Legal Affairs Department. After Van Dam had called Van Lent, the latter immediately rushed to the press room at the Ministry where he gave the fax to Van Dam, Reyn and Commander P.P. Metzelaar. But it never reached Voorhoeve's hands during the press conference. This compounded the Minister's loss of face. De Winter had asked Karremans about the existence of the statement just before the start of the press conference but he had answered in the negative.²⁴⁹⁹ After the press conference the statement ended up in the hands of the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff M. Schouten and the Director of General Policy Matters De Winter. They, however, did not tell the Minister about the statement until the next day. The Minister only sent the statement with comments to Parliament on 3 August. In the covering letter, containing 31 pages, Voorhoeve also mentioned several matters that had emerged during the operational debriefing in Zagreb. As described in Part IV Chapter 7, Parliament was not satisfied with the information that Voorhoeve had given them.

The reconstruction makes it clear that a serious error of judgement was made here after the statement rolled from the fax at the Netherlands Army Headquarters in The Hague. In this case nothing went wrong with the communication. The statement had been sent into the 'line' and was read by several military officers who were extremely familiar with the Srebrenica problem. In this case no one had the slightest inkling of how media-sensitive this issue was. On 15 August Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Van Baal was confronted at the office of Deputy Secretary-General H.H. Hulshof with the results of De Winter's enquiries. Again Van Baal said that he: 'had judged the statement in the first place as a document indicating that Mr Mandzic had fulfilled a certain formal role as representative of the refugees around the Potocari compound'.²⁵⁰⁰ Van Baal also again came to the conclusion that: '...the document is no more than a factual report of the events on 12 and

²⁴⁹⁹ Kreemers, '*Achterkant van de maan*' ('The other side of the moon').

²⁵⁰⁰ DS. No. 15815/95, Memo of Deputy Secretary-General H.H. Hulshof to the Minister of Defence, 16/08/95.

13 July, drawn up retrospectively (on 17 July), which in the light of the task of UNPROFOR is without significance'.²⁵⁰¹

The criticism in political circles and the media continued to focus on how the statement had been handled at the Ministry of Defence. In this sense there was a connection between this issue and the series of incidents that made the headlines after Zagreb. It prompted Voorhoeve to publicly announce measures designed to achieve more centralized coordination of the peacekeeping operations.²⁵⁰² How this was to be given shape was only unveiled in a long letter from the Minister of Defence to Parliament on 20 October 1995.²⁵⁰³ Before then however several other incidents would occur to underline even more forcibly that strong measures were imperative.

3. The list of 239

On 26 August 1995 *De Haagsche Courant* and *De Volkskrant* featured two articles mentioning a list of 239 Muslim men that had suddenly surfaced at the UN in Zagreb. Both articles claimed that the existence of the list had surprised the Minister of Defence. A feverish weeklong search had been undertaken to find it in The Hague, Tuzla and Zagreb.²⁵⁰⁴

The 'list of 239' was drawn up on 13 July 1995 in Potocari. It was an initiative of the Deputy Commander of Dutchbat, Major R.A. Franken. Until the very last moment there was talk of Muslim men being evacuated by UNHCR or the ICRC. When it became clear that Mladic would not allow this, two refugee representatives feared the worst. Franken thought he could give the able-bodied male refugees who were still there at least some guarantee of survival by putting them on a list. It was basically a concession to the fears of two refugee representatives. The idea of making a list of names had incidentally been raised before and it was not unusual to do this at international organizations. However, not all men wanted their name on the list because they were anxious about what would be done with it; they feared it would fall into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. It eventually turned out that the list did not contain 239 but 251 names of refugees. When the list was ready, it was signed by Franken and sent to various addressees in Bosnia and the Netherlands. The Netherlands Army Headquarters also received a copy.²⁵⁰⁵ A reconstruction of what happened to the list after it was signed is given below. A memo describing the search for the list at the Ministry of Defence provides the basis for the reconstruction. This memo was prepared for the Minister by the Directorate of General Policy Matters.²⁵⁰⁶

Earlier on the 16th of August, Karremans had pointed to the existence of the list during a conversation with Commodore C.G.J. Hilderink of the Defence Crisis Management Centre, Colonel R. van Dam, Head of Operations of the Defence Staff, S.J.G. Reyn and F.J.J. Princen of the Directorate of General Policy Matters and Colonel B. Dedden of the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. At the time he said that he had sent the list to the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. The report made of the conversation with Karremans had also been given to Voorhoeve. On 20 August Voorhoeve sent a hand-written memo to the Head of the Directorate of General Policy Matters and the Chief of Defence Staff, asking what had happened to the men mentioned on the list and what had happened with the list.

Meanwhile Dedden who worked at the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff had no recollection of ever having seen such a list. But he promised to look into the matter. Dedden was subsequently able to

²⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰² 'Defensie miskende politiek gewicht van fax Dutchbat' ('Defence underestimated political weight of Dutchbat fax'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/08/95.

²⁵⁰³ TK, Parliamentary session 1995-1996, 22 464, no. 1, 20/10/95.

²⁵⁰⁴ 'Verbijstering over nieuwe fouten bij Defensie' ('Bewilderment over further mistakes at Defence'), *Haagsche Courant*, 26/08/95; 'Zoekgeraakte lijst met Moslims uit Srebrenica terecht' ('Missing list of Muslims from Srebrenica found'), *De Volkskrant*, 26/08/95.

²⁵⁰⁵ For a more detailed description of how the list of 239 was drawn up, see Part IV, Chapter 4.

²⁵⁰⁶ DCBC, 1094. D95/423, Memo for the Minister of Defence from the Deputy Director of General Policy Matters, L.F.F. Casteleijn, 25/08/95.

inform Van Dam on 18 August that a list of 239 names had in fact been received at the Army Crisis Staff and that several members of staff had seen it at the time. Dedden then also remembered having seen the list himself. As far as he could recall, the fax had come in without a cover page so that the nature of the list had been unclear. Meanwhile the efforts to trace the list continued at the Crisis Staff.

Later, on the 18th a staff member of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave a letter from a Belgian non-governmental organization to Van Dam and Reyn asking for a list of '293' names.²⁵⁰⁷ Reyn and Van Dam concluded that this actually referred to the list of 239 mentioned by Karremans on the 16th. Van Dam called Dedden and heard that the list had still not been located at the Crisis Staff. Van Dam asked Dedden to send the list to the Central Organization if it was found.

On 21 August the list had still not surfaced. It was suggested that if all else failed Karremans and/or Franken should be asked for clarification. By now the Netherlands Army was looking everywhere and at all levels. The Army Staff and the Defence Staff were in constant touch with each other. When the list had still not been tracked down on the 22nd, it was decided at the instigation of the Defence Crisis Management Centre to contact the Deputy Commander of UNPROFOR's Sector North-East in Tuzla, Colonel C. Brantz, and Lieutenant Colonel J.A.C. de Ruiter of UNPROFOR in Sarajevo. Brantz said he had never heard of such a list until 19 August when ex-Dutchbat interpreter Hasan Nuhanovic had told him about it. To add to the confusion, Brantz thought Nuhanovic had said there were 793 names on the list. De Ruiter knew nothing of the list. Meanwhile the Directorate of General Policy Matters and the Defence Staff had put a number of questions on paper for Karremans and Franken. Both were approached by telephone the next day through the Netherlands Army Staff.

The answers of Karremans and Franken were documented in a report that was sent to the Defence Crisis Management Centre on the morning of 24 July.²⁵⁰⁸ The report said that the Crisis Staff had failed to find the list and that an initial investigation of the battalion records of Dutchbat III in Assen has also been fruitless. The answers of Karremans and Franken also suggested that Karremans accepted responsibility for the composition of the list of names. Due to linguistic problems, the composition of the list had been entrusted to representatives of the Muslims in the encampment. The presence of Bosnian Serbs outside the encampment meant it was genuinely dangerous for the interpreters and the Muslim representatives to register people there. For this reason, the registration process had been confined to the male refugees in the compound. The list was reportedly then sent to the headquarters of UNPROFOR's Sector North-East and the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. Evidently Franken then filed the list in the battalion's records.

In the evening of 22 August there was a dawning recognition of the serious publicity risks surrounding this affair. Princen discussed his concerns with Hilderink, M. Schouten and Van Dam, and during that conversation the Secretary-General was alerted. Later that evening Voorhoeve was also informed by Princen who sent a fax to his home address.

Franken smuggled the list out of the enclave attached to his body when Dutchbat left for Zagreb on 21 July. After arriving in Zagreb the list was handed on 23 July to Major C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën of the Information Section of UNPF. He made multiple photocopies of the list and then saw to it that copies were at least sent to the Civil Affairs Department of the UNPF Headquarters as well as to staff members of the UN Commission on Human Rights. He also gave a copy to General Bastiaans who had come to Zagreb for the debriefing. In addition, Bourgondiën faxed the list to the Defence Crisis Management Centre in the Netherlands.²⁵⁰⁹ Various people later confirmed having received the list. These included M. Bossel-Lagos who was attached at the time to the Centre for Human Rights at Zagreb and cooperated with the investigation of Tadeusz Mazowiecki.²⁵¹⁰

²⁵⁰⁷ DPV/PZ, 1667/95, Memorandum of DVPZ/PZ to DGPZ, 21/08/95.

²⁵⁰⁸ Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. Internal Memorandum from the Deputy Head of Operations to the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, 23/08/95.

²⁵⁰⁹ Interview C.A.T.M. Bourgondiën, 26/04/00.

²⁵¹⁰ Interview M. Bossel-Lagos, 20/12/00.

When it transpired that the list was nowhere to be found in the Netherlands, enquiries were made at the UN offices in Tuzla and Zagreb. Thanks to the fact that Bourgondiën had disseminated the list widely, it was relatively easy to find a copy. On 25 August the Defence Crisis Management Centre was finally faxed a list from the office of the UN's Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, Tadeusz Masowiecki. The list that Bastiaans received from Bourgondiën was never found.

The Minister was primarily interested in information about the fate of the men on the list. In late September the list was handed via Foreign Affairs to the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Red Cross was also requested to compare the list with their databases. One hundred and sixteen names with birth dates corresponded with the ICRC database. Family members claimed that, of this number, 103 men had been taken prisoner by the Bosnian Serbs, 7 had reportedly reached the Bosnian lines in safety and 5 had been found by the ICRC in the detention camp at Batkovic. As for the rest, 50 names did not occur in the ICRC database at all, 65 names occurred in the database but with different birth dates, two names possibly matched the records though there were minor spelling discrepancies, and finally three names matched the records but, in the opinion of the ICRC, were not the true names of the people in question. The ICRC also noted that the list included the names of an unknown number of men who had been released from the Batkovic detention camp at the end of September as the result of an exchange of prisoners.²⁵¹¹

After August 1995 the 'list of 239' refugees remained at the centre of public attention in the Netherlands, not least because Hasan Nuhanovic, one of the Dutchbat interpreters in Potocari, did not shy away from publicity in his efforts to find out what had happened to his family. In his quest to establish the fate of his family, Hasan also explored the events surrounding the 'list of 239'.

Meanwhile there were plenty of other matters in the summer of 1995 to keep Dutchbat and Srebrenica firmly in the public eye. The press lapped up all the news on the subject that came their way. But some news items proved more newsworthy than others.

4. 'There's nothing on it'. A ruined roll of film.

Introduction

The photos that Lieutenant J.H.A. (Ron) Rutten took after the fall of the Srebrenica Safe Area in and around Potocari²⁵¹² were to play a remarkable role in the media. But for a totally different reason than he had intended when he took them. Shocked by what he was seeing and hearing, Rutten had taken photos on 13 July 1995 in, among other places, a house where terrified Muslim men had been herded together and were evidently being interrogated (at least one of them was handcuffed to a stairway) and, later that day, also of nine bodies. He had heard about executions and had gone to the place in question with Lieutenant E.C.M.J. Koster and Sergeant-Major F. van Schaik to investigate. To prove the presence of the UN, Rutten got Koster to take up a position among the bodies for one of the photos. Though the Bosnian Serbs had forbidden any pictures to be taken out of the enclave, he (and he was not the only one, incidentally) had smuggled out his roll of film. His hope was that once back in the Netherlands the photos would help him to give forceful expression to his horror at and the gravity of what, in his firm conviction and according to his own observations, had happened.

How differently things turned out! The roll of film, which Rutten had on 25 July sent along with an officer of the Intelligence and Security Section of the Military Intelligence Service of the Royal Netherlands Army so that it could be developed and printed, was destroyed during development. The photos consequently never saw the light of day: not the men in the house, nor the bodies or anything else he had photographed, such as the separation of men and women during the evacuation of the population from Srebrenica. This caused a great deal of commotion, both immediately and later at

²⁵¹¹ TK, Parliamentary session 1995-1996, 22181, no. 128, 30/10/95.

²⁵¹² For a more extensive discussion of this, see Part IV, Chapter 4.

periodic intervals, in many different places in the army, at the Ministry of Defence and the government in general. But, above all, in the media. Not rarely, the official explanation, i.e. human error with fatal consequences, was brushed aside. This, so it was claimed, must have been done on purpose. Viewed in this light, the ruined roll of film could easily develop into a tangible symbol of a much more widespread cover-up, i.e. manipulation by the government in general, and Defence in particular, to conceal potentially embarrassing information. This was to make waves in the media, and high waves at that. In the summer of 1998 the storm grew to gale strength and until 2001 the wind was to return intermittently in varying degrees of intensity.

The fact that the controversy refused to die down compelled the NIOD, despite several earlier inquiries, to conduct its own investigation of the matter and bring out an extensive report. The findings of earlier inquiries were naturally taken on board in this connection.

One central problem must be made clear from the outset. If the roll of film was deliberately destroyed, then the fact that no group or person has claimed or admitted responsibility implies that there must have been some form of conspiracy, i.e. surreptitious activity with a view to preventing the disclosure of the pictures. If the conspirators did their work successfully, then their activity has indeed remained undetected. This gives rise to serious problems in terms of evidence, both for the proponents and opponents of the cover-up hypothesis.

The usual and, to all intents and purposes, only way to get round that problem is to reconstruct the events and circumstances as accurately as possible on the basis of available sources, in this case documents and persons. In addition, it is extremely important to answer the ‘why?’ question: what are the explanations and possible motives and what evidence is there to suggest these are the true, or at least plausible, explanations and motives? This chapter, therefore, is an attempt to reconstruct the events as accurately as possible and to discuss the plausibility of the explanations and motives given, both for the ‘human error’ and the ‘deliberate intent’ versions.

For the sake of clarity, the most important prior investigations are briefly discussed beforehand. This simultaneously allows us to mention a large number of the sources and put them in their true context. The first investigation was carried out by the investigation department of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, South Holland Section, which was started up immediately in the afternoon of 26 July 1995, the day on which the roll of film was destroyed. The investigative team formed under the direction of Captain P.H. (Peter) Rutten (no relation of the maker of the photos, incidentally) and called the Kodak team was provided that same afternoon with a brief report made immediately after the event by R.J.S. Schmöll, head of the photo section of the Military Intelligence Service of the Dutch Navy which had been entrusted with the development of the film. The assistance of the Forensic Laboratory was also immediately called in. A technical investigation was carried out and the persons most closely involved were heard. The investigators did not see the matter as a complicated affair. The investigation was rounded off by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee on 31 July with an official report (P 11/1995). The technical report of the Forensic Laboratory was signed on 11 August 1995²⁵¹³.

For an understanding of the wider context of this affair it is also important to know that the Kodak team had agreed with the leadership of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the Public Prosecutor not to confine their investigation to what had happened in the dark room. Partly in view of the evidence to be presented to the Yugoslavia Tribunal, Lieutenants Rutten and Koster, Sergeant Major Van Schaik and two other Dutchbat soldiers were heard about their observations of possible war crimes committed by Bosnian Serbs. The results of these interviews were recorded in a written report (P 13/1995) dated 2 August 1995.

The interviews with these five Dutchbat soldiers also touched on various matters other than Serb war crimes. The investigative team was particularly struck by the extremely emotional manner in

²⁵¹³ OM Arnhem, KMar P 11/1995. The report of Schmöll headed ‘proces-verbaal’ (which strictly speaking is not the correct name) is included in this official report P 11/1995. The same applies to the informative ‘Journal’ that the Kodak Team kept of its own activities. The report of the Forensic Laboratory can be found at the current Netherlands Forensic Institute (NFI) in dossier number 95.07.27.040.

which the witnesses spoke about the role played by Dutchbat in general and certain Dutchbat soldiers in particular. Mention was made of misconduct and/or what the interviewees considered an incorrect interpretation of the battalion's mission in the days after the fall. There was also a strong sense of frustration, so the Kodak team found, about the fact that many Dutch military and civil authorities underestimated the gravity of the situation. The leader of the investigation, P.H. Rutten, recorded these findings in what he called a 'Management Report' which could have a signalling function to all sorts of authorities. This document also became well-known because it was overlooked in certain places and originally had little impact. It is therefore extensively discussed in Part IV, Chapter 7 of this report.

As soon as word of the ruined film reached the media, they were naturally quick to pick up the story. But at this stage the journalists did not yet actually start doing their own fieldwork. The next investigation that devoted attention to the film was the major debriefing in Assen. But the destroyed film played only a subordinate part in this case and no new facts emerged. As the previous chapter has shown, the primary focus of the debriefing was on what had happened in Srebrenica.

The next moment that merits our attention occurred almost two years after the event when a *Nova* programme of 28 April 1997 rekindled interest in the subject. David Rohde, author of a successful book about Srebrenica entitled *Endgame*, voiced sharp criticism both of the actions of Dutchbat in the enclave and the subsequent publicity policy of the Dutch authorities. In general he considered the debriefing report as incomplete. As for the roll of film, he said he had heard that it had been deliberately destroyed.

This, among other things, led to talks between the photographer Rutten with, initially, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, General M. Schouten, and the Director of Information of the Ministry of Defence, H. van den Heuvel, and later with the Head of the Directorate of General Policy Matters, J.H.M. de Winter, about Rutten's experiences and grievances. The roll of film was not the sole subject of discussion, but it was raised. Apart from adding a few documents to the departmental archives²⁵¹⁴, this also led to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee being instructed to carry out another investigation into the roll of film. The ministry particularly wanted to know more about the involvement of the officers of the Military Intelligence Service of the Royal Netherlands Army. For this reason, apart from a further interview with Lieutenant Rutten, Major R.F.J.H. de Ruijter and his chief officer Lieutenant Colonel A. Bleumink were also heard. This time the inquiry concentrated both on the collection of the roll of film on 25 July 1995 and on the contacts that Rutten had with De Ruijter and Bleumink after the film was ruined. The interviews were conducted by Lieutenant K. van Dijk and warrant officer J.B. Vochtelo, both also members of the Kodak team in 1995. The investigation did not lead to fresh insights or the instigation of criminal proceedings. But the roll of film remained a sensitive issue even though it caused no further public outcry in the year 1997.

In 1998, by contrast, a media frenzy erupted and this time, unlike in 1995, the journalists did their own sleuthing. It all started quietly enough on 10 July 1998 in the relatively low-profile VPRO radio programme *Argos*. In an hour-long documentary the failure to develop the film was set against the background of the atrocities in and around Srebrenica and viewed from the perspective of a deliberate removal of information, in this case pictures, which was disagreeable to the authorities. In August *Nova* took over the torch. A series of broadcasts called various issues relating to Srebrenica into question. Recurring themes included the alleged cover-up in a broad sense. The roll of film caught the imagination as a telling example²⁵¹⁵.

The ensuing commotion in the media and therefore also in political circles was such that F.H.G. de Grave, the brand new Minister of Defence in the recently inaugurated second coalition government of Prime Minister Kok, was forced to cut his holiday short. On 13 August 1998 he ordered an in-depth investigation to find out whether any facts 'had been suppressed or carelessly handled, or if the truth

²⁵¹⁴ DAB. Memos of Director of the Directorate of General Policy Matters D97/244 29/04/97 and D97/472 12/09/97. DV. Memo of Director of Information 06/07/97.

²⁵¹⁵ Particularly about the roll of film in the *Nova* programme of 08/08/98.

finding process in this connection had in any way been obstructed or limited in scope'. This investigation was led by J.A. van Kemenade, who completed his report *Omtrent Srebrenica* (About Srebrenica) on 28 September. The investigation is discussed at length elsewhere in this chapter, and in the appendices to Van Kemenade's report which contain the transcriptions of the hearings the integrity of the truth finding process is an often recurring theme.

Van Kemenade's report did not provide the conclusive clarification that had been envisaged, particularly not in relation to the roll of film. The media especially took him to task for leaning too heavily on earlier inquiries and for not having done sufficient investigative work of his own, so that he could hardly have come up with anything other than the 'unsatisfactory' official version. As a result, the media attention for the roll of film continued unabated. In *Intermediair* of 8 and 22 October 1998 it was even emphatically argued that the portrayal of events as accepted by Van Kemenade was simply not possible.

In this way, the roll of film continued to attract attention, especially in 1998 but also later. On a few occasions it was even the subject of limited further research²⁵¹⁶. Several additional questions from 1998 long remained unanswered at the Forensic Laboratory, which in the meantime had been reorganized and renamed Netherlands Forensic Institute. In 2000, however, one of these questions was finally answered²⁵¹⁷. This sluggishness of response played a certain part in a new *Nova* programme about the roll of film on 19 June 2001 where a partially new variant of the cover-up hypothesis was put forward. The statement that members of the former Kodak team were also having second thoughts in turn prompted the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee to carry out some further investigation (a report of P.H. Rutten and a brief investigation by two retired officers). Still more sources for the NIOD, in other words²⁵¹⁸.

The NIOD could have restricted its own investigation of the ruined film to the dossiers of these earlier studies. But there were several good arguments for holding its own interviews with the people involved (including the investigators). First of all, it is in principle always preferable to do your own direct investigative work rather than rely on third-party investigations (even though efficiency considerations often prevented this), and all the more so if others have so emphatically cast doubt on the existing investigations. Secondly in this case even the investigators had their doubts about certain aspects of some of these investigations. Thirdly, while granting that there were few, if any, new facts to be considered, direct contact in the form of interviews offered an opportunity to talk over the events again with those involved as well as later investigators and experts with all the documents on the table. The arguments could be weighed up in these conversations and put in their proper context²⁵¹⁹.

All these considerations did indeed contribute to the following reconstruction of the events and the weighing up of the arguments for and against the competing interpretations. Very briefly put, it is 'human error' against 'deliberate intent' (in several variants). This chapter discusses as matter-of-factly as possible the failure to develop the roll of film that J.H.A. Rutten had handed in. The wider context must be taken on board as otherwise certain matters would either remain obscure or be capable of misinterpretation. But this context is not described *in extenso*. The events in the enclave, for instance, or the reception of Dutchbat in Zagreb and the press conference they are relevant, but have already been appropriately dealt with in other parts of this report. The same goes for the management report and the debriefing in Assen. It is no coincidence therefore that the following reconstruction starts with an exact

²⁵¹⁶ Attention in this connection was primarily focused on what had happened in Srebrenica/Potocari and the events surrounding the Management Report. This is discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this report.

²⁵¹⁷ NFI, dossier 95.07.27.040.

²⁵¹⁸ OM Arnhem, KMar. Report of P.H.Rutten 24/06/01 (Bureau of Internal Investigation, no.R.OZ: 034/2001); OM Arnhem, KMar. Report of H. Boersma and W.A.M van Dijk (retired captain and retired colonel respectively of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee) 03/07/01.

²⁵¹⁹ The roll of film was specifically discussed with twenty-five people in total. In a number of cases this took place in interviews in which other issues were also raised. In other cases, contact was sought specifically about the roll of film, sometimes only by telephone.

chronological account of the route followed by the roll of film and the discussions held in this connection from 23 July 1995 when the photographer Rutten had contact about this matter with General H. Couzy, among other people. This part is rounded off with the conclusion of the Kodak Team on 31 July. Subsequently, various aspects are discussed on a more thematic basis, but without ever losing sight of the chronological sequence of events. Though often difficult to prove, the motives underlying the actions of the various people involved and the various peculiarities in the story (the 'background noise' in the dossier) are also given ample attention.

From 23 through 28 July 1995

During the limited debriefing activities at Zagreb, Lieutenant J.H.A. Rutten was also interviewed. In his contact with the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, General Couzy, on Sunday 23 July 1995, Rutten also mentioned the photos that he had taken in the house and of the bodies. He did this to underscore the serious nature of the matter. At the time he said little or nothing about the separation of men and women. His attention was mainly focused on the executions. Couzy displayed an interest in the photos and Rutten agreed to provide him with prints.²⁵²⁰

During the press conference towards the end of that Sunday afternoon, which was relayed live in the Netherlands in a special broadcast of *NOS-Actueel*, Couzy also mentioned these executions and the photos of the bodies. It was one of the examples of evidence that war crimes had been committed. But to the great annoyance of Rutten and some other Dutchbat soldiers Couzy also declared, and this received more attention, that the provisional impressions from the debriefing provided no indications of genocide. Even during the live broadcast Couzy's statement was set against statements by Ministers Pronk and Voorhoeve. The latter, who was also in Zagreb, struck a much more sombre note on the grounds of stories of refugees in Tuzla and the fact that several thousands of men were still unaccounted for. When pressed to explain these different readings of events, Couzy and Voorhoeve maintained there was no question of conflicting statements. Couzy had spoken exclusively about what he knew on the grounds of Dutchbat soldiers' observations; Voorhoeve had spoken on the basis of information received from international sources. Later in the programme the fact that pictures had been taken was again mentioned in an interview with a member of Dutchbat.²⁵²¹

The next day, on Monday 24 July 1995, Dutchbat departed for the Netherlands. A chaotic arrival at Soesterberg followed. Rutten (with his roll of film) went home with his wife fairly quickly. Those who had come to pick people up at Soesterberg included Major R.F.J.H. de Ruijter of the Intelligence and Security Section of the Military Intelligence Service of the Royal Netherlands Army. He was there to welcome the contact officer of this department in Dutchbat III, Sergeant Major E.A. Rave, who was also a friend of De Ruijter. Though he had come to collect him purely for social reasons, the roll of film with the bodies soon cropped up²⁵²².

De Ruijter asked where the film was and whether it would not be advisable to get the Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army to develop and print it which was a perfectly normal procedure for films containing interesting information from an intelligence point of view. Rave said that he had said the same thing in Zagreb but that the commander, who knew about it, had felt it was private property and had agreed with Rutten that he would make prints available. De Ruijter insisted that this was not wise and that it was important both for the commander and the intelligence work to

²⁵²⁰ Rutten and Couzy made statements about this on various occasions. Apart from virtually all other dossiers already mentioned. See also interviews H. Couzy 04/10/01 and J.H.A. Rutten 13/09/01.

²⁵²¹ *NOS-Actueel* 23/07/95.

²⁵²² In retrospect it is no longer clear who brought this up first. As far as De Ruijter is able to recollect, it was Rave who started. But Rave thinks De Ruijter was the first to mention it. Nor was Rave surprised by this as he had also reported the existence of the film to others (certainly in Zagreb) and that information could quite easily have reached De Ruijter. Either way, the roll of film was mentioned in the course of the conversation. Interview R.F.J.H. de Ruijter 27/06/01 and 01/08/01 (additional telephone call) and interview E.A. Rave 13 and 14/12/00 and 11/07/01 (additional telephone call).

get the photos as soon as possible. What's more, there was also a certain risk that someone else would make off with the photos. After all, they would be worth a fortune in the media world²⁵²³.

Though this prevented Rave from going straight home, De Ruijter and he started to look for Couzy. The latter acknowledged the advantages of getting the Military Intelligence Service to develop and print the film (fast information also for him). He gave De Ruijter permission to ask Rutten to hand the film over to him. Rutten would naturally receive excellent prints free of charge. But Rutten had already left. De Ruijter therefore called Rutten the next morning, Tuesday 25 July 1995, and the latter was perfectly happy to hand over the roll of film: 'it was, after all, with that aim in mind that I had taken the photos, and also to serve as evidence and support for my observations'²⁵²⁴. That same afternoon De Ruijter picked up the film at Rutten's home. On this occasion they extensively discussed Rutten's experiences and their emotional impact on him. In this way, De Ruijter obtained an even more accurate picture of what could be expected to be on the photos. That evening and night he kept the roll of film at his own home.²⁵²⁵

Meanwhile De Ruijter had arranged for the film to be developed and printed first thing the next morning, on Wednesday 26 July 1995.²⁵²⁶ He could then bring the prints into the organization without further delay and present them to the commander. This would also allow him to return the photos and negatives to their rightful owner, Rutten, in the evening of that same day. De Ruijter asked warrant-officer H. Winkelman, head of the photo and video department of the Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army, to make sure that the film he was bringing with him on the Wednesday morning would be attended to immediately. As the development machine in the photo lab of the Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army was out of order, Winkelman asked his colleague of the Military Intelligence Service/Dutch Navy to help out. This was housed in the building of the Admiralty at the same barracks as where the Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army was based. These buildings at the Frederik Barracks in The Hague, 35A and 32 respectively, were at walking distance from each other. R.J.S. Schmüll, head of the photo section of the Military Intelligence Service/Dutch Navy, was unable to be present early the next day but arranged for the laboratory technician H.J.W. van Boetzelaer to be present at 8am to develop the roll of film. Winkelman himself would then make the prints.

The first steps in the early morning of Wednesday 26 July 1995 still went according to plan. Around eight o'clock De Ruijter arrived with the film at the Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army. Winkelman was waiting for him and took the roll of film. De Ruijter proceeded to his other work and Winkelman immediately made his way to the dark room of the Military Intelligence Service/Dutch Navy. Van Boetzelaer was waiting there as arranged. He had already made the preparations that were necessary with this particular development machine of the Mafina brand. Van Boetzelaer then took over the roll of film and carried it to the wet area of the dark room where the development machine was placed. Winkelman stayed behind in the front area. Van Boetzelaer continued the preparations, placed the film – according to his statement that same day to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee: a Fujicolor 100, type Super G, 36 colour exposures - together with a roll of

²⁵²³ No evidence whatsoever was found to corroborate the story that the photos had been promised to *Elsevier*. Everyone who ever told the story says they had no first hand knowledge, but had only heard it from others.

²⁵²⁴ OM Arnhem, KMar, P 970715.1200. Statement of J.H.A. Rutten 11/07/97.

²⁵²⁵ OM Arnhem, KMar, P 970715.1200. Official Report of Examination of witness R.F.J.H. de Ruyter 14/07/97.

²⁵²⁶ The following reconstruction is based on statements and reports in all earlier-mentioned dossiers. Particularly OM Arnhem, KMar, P 11/1995 is relevant because the statements were made very shortly after the events. In addition, interviews with H.W.J. van Boetzelaer 26/07/01, A.M. van Dijk and H. Boersma 09/08/01, K. van Dijk 12/09/01, D.G.J. Fabius 19/10/01, A. Lub 01/08/01, P.J.T. de Ridder 08/08/01, P.H.Rutten and S. de Wilde 30/07/01, R.F.J.H. de Ruyter 27/06/01, R.S.J. Schmüll 06/08/01, J.B. Vochteloo 19/09/01 and H. Winkelman 12/07/01. The version of events in the area in front of the dark room early in the morning was also confirmed by M. Blokland (telephone interview 03/11/01) who had a work room nearby and, as on so many other occasions, had come to have a cup of coffee and discuss a video that was to be made.

film handed in by the Navy (a Kodak Gold 200, 36 colour exposures) in the machine and started the process shortly after 8am.

The rest of the development process was automated, so to pass the time until the process had been completed Van Boetzelaer returned to the front area where he had a cup of coffee with Winkelman and Schmüll who had arrived in the meantime. During the conversation, they mentioned the possibility that the photos that Winkelman had brought might have something to do with Yugoslavia. Until then, all they knew at the Military Intelligence Service/Dutch Navy was that it was a 'rush job' and that, in itself, was nothing special. Nor was it unusual in intelligence work not to know what was on the films being developed. Winkelman had heard from De Ruijter what it was about in general terms. The main thing that had impressed him, incidentally, was the fact that the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army himself was evidently involved. That was unusual. He said that the photos had in fact been made by a Dutchbat soldier in Srebrenica. But at the time he himself did not know exactly what was on them.

At about a quarter to nine the signal that the development process had been completed went off and Van Boetzelaer went to the dark room to collect the developed rolls of film. To his amazement and dismay, he found himself confronted with the result of the mini chemical disaster that had taken place in the past 35 minutes. 'There's nothing on it' were the first words the others heard him say²⁵²⁷. It was immediately clear to everyone there that something with far-reaching consequences had occurred. The senior officers were informed straightaway. Schmüll alerted the head of Intelligence and Security Department at the Navy Staff (also deputy head of the Military Intelligence Service/Dutch Navy), Naval Captain W.Th. Lansink. Winkelman, who took the blank roll of film with him, went to inform De Ruijter. He too was shocked and then told Winkelman that the film had contained nothing less than the photos of the bodies that Couzy had spoken about at the press conference. De Ruijter took the empty film from Winkelman, mindful of his promise to return the photos and negatives that evening to R.J.A. Rutten.

Schmüll also quickly drew up a short report of what had happened. In essence, he already formulated what subsequent investigations repeatedly confirmed. Some serious error must have been made during the preparation of the development process, causing the developer to become contaminated with fixer. And as is clear, if something like that happens, the film is irreparably damaged and cannot possibly be developed.

The chief officers responded very alertly. Everyone was immediately informed right up to the highest level. It was decided that the Investigation Department of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee would launch an investigation. That same afternoon an 'embargo team' was installed by the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, General D.G.J. Fabius, himself. This was the Kodak Team under the direction of Captain P.H. Rutten. Its task was to establish whether the failure of the development process was the result of deliberate intent. Given the circumstances, a fast answer was clearly called for. The investigation was started immediately afterwards. The cooperation of the Forensic Laboratory was requested and granted²⁵²⁸. The first interviews were then held.

Meanwhile De Ruijter faced a dilemma: how do I tell the photographer, who had handed over his roll of film in good faith, assuming it was in safe hands? Also in view of the promise he had made and after speaking with his chief officer Lieutenant Colonel A. Bleumink, he saw no option other than to break the news to J.H.A. Rutten that same evening. Later that day the Kodak Team tried to trace the roll of film which, as was only logical, they wanted for their investigation. It soon transpired that De Ruijter had it. He was asked to come and hand in the roll of film at the building of the staff of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee on Raamweg, The Hague. On arrival there he found that the Marechaussee not only needed the film but, in the interests of the investigation, also objected to J.H.A.

²⁵²⁷ OM Arnhem, KMar, P 11/1995, Interview R.J.S. Schmüll.

²⁵²⁸ For this support from the Forensic Laboratory, apart from the dossier at the NFI 95.07.27.040, see also interviews with A.P.A. Broeders and H. van den Heuvel 27/07/01 and E. van Zalen 20/07/01.

Rutten being informed. De Ruijter's intention to inform Rutten was a matter of dispute right up to senior level. At the Marechaussee's building on Raamweg, strong words were also exchanged between De Ruijter and his opponents of the Marechaussee. De Ruijter did hand over the roll of film but would not be dissuaded from subsequently heading in the direction of Duiven (where Rutten lived), on the understanding that he would visit Bleumink, who lived nearby in Westervoort, from whom he was to receive further instructions.

The dispute as to whether De Ruijter could honour his promise to Rutten at least to the extent of being allowed to inform him of the failure or whether the interests of the investigation as perceived by the Marechaussee should prevail was resolved in the most unfortunate manner conceivable, namely with the following compromise. Instead of visiting J.H.A. Rutten together with Bleumink and telling him frankly what had happened, De Ruijter, on instructions from The Hague, was allowed to do no more than call him to say that he could not keep their appointment and that there were problems with the roll of film. But he was to say nothing about the nature and extent of the problems. After the telephone conversation with De Ruijter, Rutten also received a call from Bleumink who, without being able to enter into details, tried to convince Rutten that nothing fishy was going on. It is hardly surprising that these telephone calls made Rutten feel uneasy. It was precisely the vagueness of what was said to him that gave him the impression that the photos did exist. This impression was partly based on the fact that De Ruijter evidently knew what was on them. That De Ruijter had acquired this knowledge by other means (namely mainly from his conversation with Rutten himself the previous day) evidently did not occur to him at that time. In retrospect, it is clear that on this evening a sense of distrust was irreparably instilled in Rutten about the whole course of events.

On Thursday 27 July 1995 the Kodak Team continued their probe. An *in situ* investigation was carried out by the Forensic Laboratory, represented by two chemical experts, E. van Zalen and J.W. van Wilsem, and a forensic photographer H. van den Heuvel. They took away all sorts of samples of the chemicals present as well as the destroyed roll of film. Van Wilsem promised to give a provisional result the next day, Friday 28 July 1995. This result, the official report of which is dated on 11 August 1995, confirmed what Schmöll had already said. The reason for the failed development was that 'The roll of film was developed with a contaminated developer that possibly consisted of roughly 30% fixer and/or bleach'²⁵²⁹.

The Forensic Laboratory was also requested on 27 July to assist with a second film which warrant officer B.J. Oosterveen had already handed over in Zagreb so that it could be developed and printed and which in the meantime had reached the Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army.²⁵³⁰ Oosterveen, too, had photographed bodies. It was not clear whether this concerned the same location that Rutten had photographed. Rather than developing these photos itself, the Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army chose to avoid all risk and entrusted the film, via the Marechaussee, to the Forensic Laboratory. This institution was also wary of the situation. After discussing the matter, it was decided to follow the most normal procedure possible, i.e. the film was to be given to a professional development centre for the daily development session with the results being checked just before and just after the film in question. As an extra precaution, permission was asked and received to attend the development. The result was that most of the photos on the film were of excellent quality. This indicates that the film had been correctly developed. But precisely the photos of the dead bodies were very poor because of incorrect exposure and the great distance from which they

²⁵²⁹ One noteworthy point about this report is that it contains a < sign which is both illogical and in conflict with the text. The draft report in the complete dossier at the current Netherlands Forensic Institute (no. 95.07.27.040) does contain the logical > sign. What is evidently a typing error made during the production of the definite report has been overlooked when checked.

²⁵³⁰ In the course of time these two films were sometimes mixed up, even by those closely involved. There are in actual fact two separate films which were also separately discussed. No evidence whatsoever has been found to confirm rumours about the existence of further films that were destroyed or disappeared.

had been photographed. Efforts to enhance the quality by means of technical tricks helped to a certain extent but you still needed to be very well-intentioned to make out bodies on the prints²⁵³¹.

Another noteworthy activity of the Kodak Team that day was a second interview with the laboratory technician Van Boetzelaer who was now a suspect. While on 26 July the primary focus had been on the technical process, this time the investigators wanted to know how this could have happened to such an experienced laboratory technician as Van Boetzelaer. This question was all the more pressing as he, by his own admission, had noticed irregularities during the preparation of the process. These irregularities concerned the colour of the developer, which had initially been rather dark but had then turned very light. With hindsight he felt this should have made him conclude that something was wrong and that he should therefore have taken corrective action. He admitted that this was a culpable act and that he was guilty of destroying the film. By way of explanation, he said that due to personal circumstances he had had little sleep during a number of consecutive nights and that he had been very emotionally involved with the problems of a relative. This had possibly made him less accurate and attentive than he should have been. He emphatically denied destroying the film with deliberate intent.

Technically speaking a logical explanation was thus given for what had happened, the central cause being human error. No matter how clumsy and rare such an error may have been, it could have happened that way and all statements given pointed in that direction. It is important to state for the record that everyone involved, including both Van Boetzelaer's colleagues, the investigators of the Marechaussee and others who spoke to him later about the subject, regarded him as reliable and trustworthy. To this very day, most of them categorically rule out a deliberate cover-up. In the words of a few of the then investigators of the Marechaussee: he must be (or have been) a really fabulous actor if he took us all in.²⁵³² The dossier as a whole certainly makes a convincing impression.

And so the investigation of the Kodak Team drew to an end on the evening of 27 July. The next day, Friday 28 July 1995, the matter was basically rounded off insofar as the roll of film was concerned. On the 27th contact had already been sought with the Public Prosecutor for Military Affairs in Arnhem because, on the Minister's instructions, the investigation had now been given judicial status. This meant that an official report would be made and sent to the Public Prosecutor. On the 28th this led to further consultation with A.P. Besier. As far as the roll of film was concerned, this had virtually no further consequences as the dossier presented no grounds for prosecution (the cause, after all, was human error). After consulting with the press officer and the Ministry of Defence, Besier prepared a press release. But Besier was also the contact officer with the Tribunal and, as such, was interested in information on the observations of the makers of the photographs. He therefore asked for an official report of the findings in this connection.²⁵³³ This fired the starting shot for the aforementioned second part of the activities of the Kodak Team.

In the meantime a solution also still had to be found for properly informing J.H.A. Rutten, the maker of the photographs on the ruined film. After the Kodak Team and Lieutenant Colonel K.J.C. Leupe, Head of Staff of General Fabius, had consulted with Bleumink and De Ruijter, it was decided that Bleumink would explain by telephone what had happened. De Ruijter would then fill in the details in a personal talk with Rutten, after which the Kodak Team would hear him at the Arnhem brigade about his observations in Srebrenica. This, in fact, is what took place and the first interview was held, at Besiers' request, that same Friday on 28 July.²⁵³⁴

However, the explanation failed to dispel Rutten's suspicions regarding the events surrounding the roll of film. Confronted with the evidence in documents and later repeatedly in talks with the

²⁵³¹ The Forensic Laboratory initially made no report of this activity. It was not until 1999 that H. van den Heuvel drew up a statement from memory in which he recorded the events (also dossier no. 95.07.27.040). A chronological account of these events can incidentally be found in the Journal of the Kodak Team and in several official reports.

²⁵³² See in particular the interviews mentioned in note 34.

²⁵³³ These details are given very concisely in the Journal that the Kodak Team kept at OM Arnhem, KMar, P 11/1995.

²⁵³⁴ OM Arnhem, KMar, P 13/1995.

people involved and investigators, he was prepared to admit that he had little option other than to accept this version of the events. Besides, he did not have any proof for a different version. But every time he would say: And still I feel there's something wrong. In this connection it was not any help that the Kodak Team (which had been informed by De Ruijter who, in turn, had been told by Rutten himself) had such an accurate idea of what should have been on the photos. But apart from the unfortunate piecemeal manner in which Rutten had been notified and informed of the incident, this also had a lot to do with Rutten's overall dissatisfaction with the way in which the events in and around Srebrenica were being dealt with in the Netherlands.²⁵³⁵ The suppression of pictures with evidence fitted in with a broader pattern of concealing and downplaying information.

Nevertheless on 28 July the Kodak Team had basically completed its investigation into the ruined film. The 'Official Report of the findings relating to the destruction of a roll of film' was drawn up immediately after the weekend on 31 July 1995. The publicity that followed was naturally embarrassing for the people involved and particularly the Minister, as the politically responsible person, was forced to eat humble pie. The only avenue open to him was to admit that he was responsible for stupidities that really went beyond the pale. In *Nova* he spoke of 'utter clumsiness' and 'a daft mistake'.²⁵³⁶ At the same time he insisted categorically that human error really was the cause and that there was no question of ulterior motives. Sceptical noises were of course heard in the press and among political circles about the fact that such a rare accident could have happened to such an important roll of film that surely should have been handled with the utmost care. The suggestion of 'deliberate intent' was made, but finally in the summer of 1995 there appeared on balance to be a willingness to accept that such things do happen. Subsequently, however, this 'daftness' continued to feature prominently in a succession of blunders that were regularly dished out to the Ministry of Defence.

Deliberate intent after all? Motives and clues

Like the investigation in late July 1995 and various subsequent investigations, the reconstruction in the above section concludes that human error was the cause. As time went by, the 'deliberate intent' hypothesis was set against this with increasing insistence, particularly in 1998. The central thrust is always the same: the roll of film was deliberately destroyed. But there are a few different variants of the theory²⁵³⁷. Originally the emphasis was on the deliberate destruction in the dark room and Van Boetzelaer, as direct perpetrator, was the prime suspect. But naturally he would have been operating on someone else's instructions. The immediate command must thus have come from the 'the Military Intelligence Service/ the Royal Netherlands Army' (with De Ruijter in a central role) which, in turn, may have been acting in collusion with or on the instructions of others, such as the military leadership, the Ministry or the Minister himself.

A later and less common variant postulates the earlier destruction of the material by De Ruijter in the hours that the roll of film was in his possession (from Tuesday 25 July 1995 at the end of the afternoon when he took the roll with him until early the next morning when it was handed in at the dark room)²⁵³⁸. In this variant the fact that even more went wrong during the development process can evidently be seen either as an attempt to cover up the earlier destruction as well as a coincidental unplanned circumstance (leaving open the possibility that Van Boetzelaer ruined the film in good faith).

An even more complicated variant involves a double operation. In that hypothesis the roll of film handed in at the dark room was not Rutten's film at all but a random substitute intended to divert

²⁵³⁵ J.H.A. Rutten frequently vented this dissatisfaction. In the course of time he was heard or interviewed in numerous investigations and this issue was raised very frequently either as the central subject or as a side issue. Here, we only make reference to the interview with J.H.A. Rutten 13/09/01.

²⁵³⁶ *Nova* 04/08/95. See also all Dutch media during these days.

²⁵³⁷ The following is an attempt to summarize as well as possible the assumptions and convictions voiced over time in the media into more or less consistent variants.

²⁵³⁸ Particularly *Nova* 19/06/01.

attention. In this version the real film was developed elsewhere in the deepest secrecy. That ‘elsewhere’ might very well have been the Audiovisual Department of the Dutch Navy in Valkenburg South Holland. This, after all, had been mentioned more than once as the actual scene of events rather than the dark room in the building of the Admiralty: was this by mistake, as some claimed, or a momentary lapse of someone in the know? When the Military Intelligence Service (and possible accomplices) viewed the pictures, they were so shocked by the incriminating nature of the images that they were immediately destroyed. This variant explains the ‘remarkable’ knowledge of De Ruijter and the Kodak Team of what had been photographed. In all variants, incidentally, the investigation of that Kodak Team must be seen either as a *cover-up* of the operation to destroy the film or as serious blundering.

The assumption that the Audiovisual Department of the Navy in Valkenburg South Holland was involved in a conspiracy found no corroboration in the sources. The reason why the story was able to come into circulation was that many people immediately associated ‘a dark room of the Navy’ with ‘Valkenburg’. That was a well-known institution, whereas the dark room of the Military Intelligence Service of the Dutch Navy was not. Even people who were closely involved in the investigation but were not actually out in the field (such as the leader of the investigation P.H. Rutten) took this for granted for some time and also informed others accordingly.²⁵³⁹ With this third variant, therefore, the destruction of the roll of film must have taken place at another, as yet unnamed, location.

Either way, particularly the second and the third variants assume fairly complicated conspiracies involving many people and consequently a high risks of leaks. There is no concrete evidence for any of these variants. What initially looked like evidence failed to stand up to verification. However, given the secrecy in which the events took place according to the hypothesis, the absence of clear leads is not surprising. Its persuasiveness must therefore be sought in other arguments. The first thing to be pointed out in this connection is that it is very hard, if not impossible, to believe that an experienced laboratory technician would make such an utter mess of precisely this roll of film. “Totally incredible” Elsbeth ETTY succinctly wrote in 2001 in the middle of her column and then, mincing no words, continued in the certain assumption that a cover-up had taken place²⁵⁴⁰.

The notion of ‘deliberate intent’ is also persuasively supported by a much broader and more deeply rooted conviction that the Dutch government, and the defence authorities in particular, were systematically withholding and manipulating information: the cover-up theory in other words, which is considered particularly plausible in relation to the debriefing. This issue is discussed extensively elsewhere in this report.²⁵⁴¹ The destruction of an incriminating roll of film fits in well with such a cover-up theory. To some, it goes without saying that ‘the Military Intelligence Service’ (virtually no distinction is made between the various departments that still existed in 1995) played a role in this case. That, after all, is precisely the sort of thing you would expect of such a department. In a sense you could say that the army has this department precisely for such secret operations. Even so, all this is largely based on impressionistic conjecture that provides a ‘ready and willing’ background rather than concrete corroboration of the suggested course of events.

Consequently, we must turn our attention to two particular aspects: peculiarities and weaknesses in the dossier that support the ‘human error’ version and the question about the motives. First, let’s look at the ‘background noise’ in the dossier. A few minor points, such as dates in statements that are

²⁵³⁹ Interview P.H. Rutten and S. de Wilde 30/07/01. To make absolutely sure, the NIOD also looked for evidence at the Audiovisual Department of the Dutch Navy (which in the meantime had relocated to Amsterdam). The administrative records of work assignments for this period are no longer present. Material, particularly classified material, was always returned to customers after the assignment had been carried out. The then head of the photo department and the person in charge of the photo workshop rule out the possibility that the film in question was developed there. If it had been, they would certainly have remembered. What’s more, they weren’t able to develop colour film there. Interview A. Zagers 03/10/01 and report of interview with the Audiovisual Department of the Dutch Navy 06/08/01. The suggestion that ‘Valkenburg’ referred to an intelligence officer is also untenable. The only officer who answers to that name and could have been intended was in Croatia at the time of the events. Telephone conversation with A.H.J.M. Valkenburg 01/08/01.

²⁵⁴⁰ E. ETTY in *NRC Handelsblad* 23/06/01.

²⁵⁴¹ See elsewhere in this chapter and Part IV, Chapter 7.

obviously inaccurate, can, in retrospect, easily be recognized as understandable mistakes (certainly where the statements are of a later date) or typing errors made when transcribing rough notes to a clean copy.²⁵⁴² The suggestions concerning 'Valkenburg' have already been discussed. Far more important are the question-marks that can be placed with hindsight behind what exactly was investigated in that first week (and how thoroughly) and what was not. You obviously need to be careful when assessing a dossier years after the event from a hypercritical perspective and with a lot of knowledge that was not available at the time. Even so, it is telling that both the Kodak Team and the Netherlands Forensic Institute have made critical comments about the investigation conducted in July 1995 regarding this aspect.

When the media were emphatically pursuing allegations of deliberate destruction in the summer of 1998, the Kodak Team showed no signs of doubting their own investigation. In 2001, however, some slight doubts were expressed and these were made public in the *Nova* programme of 19 June. The leadership of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee asked the leader of the investigation P.H. Rutten to make a report about this. That report of 24 June in turn led to a request to two retired Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Officers, retired Colonel A.M. van Dijk and retired Captain H. Boersma, to investigate any such doubts. They reported on 3 July 2001.²⁵⁴³ In this connection they heard the members of the Kodak Team who, incidentally, were also interviewed by the NIOD around that time.

The conclusion of Van Dijk and Boersma, which corresponds with that of the NIOD, is that there were no doubts among the members of the Kodak Team regarding the investigation as carried out by them in July 1995. Only a few placed some professional question-marks, resulting from retrospective knowledge, behind the limited scope of the investigation. These are recorded in Rutten's report. In conformity with instructions, the investigation had concentrated entirely on what had happened in the dark room. All maintained that this had been carefully investigated and the outcome was beyond doubt, even though you could perhaps wonder why the development process had not been immediately simulated as accurately as possible from start to finish. At the time, the investigators had been content to take samples for further investigation. But what was even more remarkable was the failure to devote attention to the phase preceding the dark room, i.e. to what had happened to the roll of film after J.H.A. Rutten had handed it over. In other words, the role played by De Ruijter and the Military Intelligence Service of the Royal Netherlands Army had been disregarded. It was not until 1997 that attention was briefly devoted to this aspect following questions from the ministry, but these interviews had not amounted to much.

As it happens, a plausible explanation can be given for the course of events in 1995. In that week of 24 July 1995 it looked like a pretty cut-and-dried case to the members of the Kodak Team who were also expected to deliver a fast result (and they still maintain that their conclusion of 'human error' was in itself well-substantiated). That's why they were also able to report quickly. They did not leave it at that, however. But as explained earlier, the widening scope of their investigation did not lead them to the Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army (whose role only acquired a certain urgency as a result of later pressing questions) but to what had happened in Srebrenica, what Dutchbat soldiers had seen of this and what role they had played themselves. These were the compelling questions of the time and that was the trail that the Kodak Team followed up. Reading serious professional errors into this or assuming that the Kodak Team fell into the trap of a decoy is really taking things rather far.

The absence of an attempt to simulate the entire process that caused the destruction of the film takes on significance against the background of the statement that the story as told by Van Boetzelaer simply was not possible. In 1998 *Intermediar*²⁵⁴⁴ had done tests at a professional company with a Fuji development machine and had found that such errors were precluded by the nature of the process. The

²⁵⁴² Interview P.H. Rutten and S. de Wilde 30/07/01 concerning internal consistency in OM Arnhem, KMar, P 970715.1200. And, already mentioned, NFI, dossier 95.07.27.040 and interview A.P.A. Broeders and H. van den Heuvel 27/07/01.

²⁵⁴³ See note 26.

²⁵⁴⁴ *Intermediar* 34 (1998) p. 41,43.

problem with that test, however, was that it was carried out with a fully automated machine while the Mafina machine used on the morning of 26 July was not automated in every respect. Several operations had to be performed manually at the beginning of each development round and all those involved agree that such a blunder was therefore theoretically possible. With hindsight, it would have been better to simulate the process as accurately as possible. No one incidentally has any doubts about the effects of fixer in the developer: disastrous and irreparable. No tests are needed to prove that.

This matter focuses attention on the Forensic Laboratory. In an evaluation report commissioned by the NIOD, the head of the Handwriting, Speech and Document Examination Department of what is now the Netherlands Forensic Institute (NFI) was critical of the investigation carried out by the Forensic Laboratory in 1995.²⁵⁴⁵ Strictly speaking, this investigation did not satisfy the requirements for professional forensic investigations, which incidentally have been considerably tightened up over the past years. The failure to carry out a ‘replication investigation’ (simulation of the process) is one of the arguments in this connection. Later questions as to whether the film may have still contained latently present images and whether it really was a Fuji film were answered very late in one case and not at all in another. Evidently the seriousness of the matter was not (or had not been made) clear to the investigator in question.

Against this, the response in 1995 had been fast and, in addition, ‘there is no reason to believe that further investigation will change the essence of the investigation carried out by Van Wilsem into the composition of the developer used as stated’.²⁵⁴⁶ In response to the NIOD’s question as to whether the asserted version of events could be regarded as plausible, the report gives the following answer: ‘If the assumptions concerning the origin of the investigated photo chemicals can be considered correct, then technically speaking a more than plausible explanation has thus been given for the failure to develop the roll of film. However, for the sake of completeness a test could be carried out to replicate the effect’.²⁵⁴⁷

Given the desirability in this controversial case to leave no investigative channels unexplored, and also in view of this self-critical report of the NFI, the NIOD requested this institute to carry out a further three investigations or attend these investigations as an observer and to report on the findings.²⁵⁴⁸ Firstly, the above-mentioned replication investigation seemed desirable. Secondly, it seemed advisable to carry out a more thorough investigation into the possibility, as mentioned in 1998 by C. van Rij, of using a special chemical procedure to see whether images might be produced after all. Thirdly, the question as to whether the investigated roll of film was a Fuji film from Rutten’s camera seemed worth exploring further.

The replication investigation was carried out in January 2002. The outcome was that there was a ‘great deal of support’ for the assertion that the developer had been mixed with fixer on that morning of July 1995 and, more specifically, in a concentration rendering all information (including edge coding) invisible.²⁵⁴⁹ This, in other words, confirmed the conclusion drawn from the earlier evaluation report and thus supported the outcome of the investigation of the Kodak Team in 1995.

²⁵⁴⁵ NFI, dossier 1995.07.27.04. Report 07/09/01 made to the NIOD. Also NIOD archives. In this report some “remaining questions” were asked in addition to the issues to be discussed below. When read by the NFI of OM Arnhem, KMar P 11/1995 (which was originally not known there) it turned out that these questions “were easy to answer or even lost all relevance”. See NFI, dossier 1995.07.27.040. Additional report, 28/01/02.

²⁵⁴⁶ See note 53. Quote on p. 13 of the report.

²⁵⁴⁷ See note 53. Quote on p. 11 of the report.

²⁵⁴⁸ The NFI is the institution most eligible to conduct this kind of investigation in the Netherlands. The NIOD did ask itself whether, in the light of the doubts raised about the investigation of the NFI’s precursor, the *Gerechtelijk Laboratorium* (Forensic Laboratory), it was desirable to entrust this follow-up investigation to the NFI. It was however precisely the highly critical attitude evident in the evaluation report that made the NIOD confident that the questions would be answered with integrity. Added to this, the head of the department had had nothing to do with the whole affair before the NIOD approached him.

²⁵⁴⁹ NFI, dossier 1995.07.27.040. Additional report 28/01/02, p. 10 and 11.

At the test designed to try out the suggestion of C. Van Rij, the NFI acted as observer because Mr Van Rij, who had been found willing to cooperate, wanted to keep a promise he had made to *Nova*. The makers of this TV programme had managed to trace him and had invited him to carry out the experiment exclusively for their cameras. If images were indeed produced, a programme would be devoted to it. Despite this exclusivity *Nova* had no objections to a NIOD representative attending the proceedings. The experiment failed to produce any results, however. And so it never reached the TV screen.²⁵⁵⁰

As regards the third question, unpublished journalistic investigative work again proved important. In 2001 two journalists from *NRC Handelsblad* had investigated whether the roll of film had come from the camera of J.H.A. Rutten. For this purpose the latter had provided them with strips of the film, which he had managed to retrieve with a great deal of effort, and his camera which had not been used since Srebrenica. Their conclusion was that the strips of film and camera unmistakably belonged together.²⁵⁵¹ Using the brief report of this investigation, the NFI looked at this question more closely and also carried out its own tests. The conclusion was that Rutten's camera 'can be considered as the possible cause of the traces in the strips of negatives'. This supports the improbability of the film having been exchanged for malicious reasons. The wording is less conclusive than that of the editors of *NRC Handelsblad* because the unavailability of cameras of the same make and type meant that 'the individual character of the scratch lines caused by the camera' could not be determined in greater detail.²⁵⁵²

In this way the further analyses of the 'background noise' in the dossier and the technical investigation performed in this connection lead to the partial conclusion that, certainly with hindsight, the investigation could have been better. But they do not cast serious doubt on the 'human error' explanation and provide no concrete evidence whatsoever for deliberate intent.

Finally, the motives. What considerations could have led to the destruction of the film? Who could have expected to benefit? That is not very clear. During the press conference on 23 July in Zagreb Couzy had referred with some emphasis to the photographs and what would be on them. So it was widely known that these pictures could be expected. Couzy had also emphatically asked Rutten for these pictures. So an initiative on his part is really highly unlikely. The failure to publicize the photos could only be to his disadvantage. This applied in almost equal measure to the other persons involved. In general both the civil and the military leadership showed great interest in observations and evidence of any war crimes and/or genocide.

For this reason the suggestion that Minister Voorhoeve had an interest in the disappearance of the photos because their circulation around the world would have tainted his reputation to the extent of forcing his resignation²⁵⁵³ is not only purely speculative but also in conflict with his perception at the time. He in fact was particularly keen to obtain information. From the Netherlands too every effort was made to provide the Tribunal with all possible material. The extremely direct interest, and occasionally even involvement, in the investigation into the roll of film on the part of the authorities is also understandable and explicable given their understanding of the sensitivity of the subject matter and the desire to be informed as well and as quickly as possible.

Looking back in 2001, the leader of the Kodak Team P.H. Rutten was annoyed by the fact that when the 'photographer' J.H.A. Rutten was heard on 28 July 1995 about what he had seen in Srebrenica, General Fabius had called several times to hear at first hand what the outcome of the interview had been. According to Fabius, the Minister had been listening in on these calls. In 2001 P.H. Rutten saw this as a reason for having suspicions vis-à-vis the Minister.²⁵⁵⁴ But it was not the Minister

²⁵⁵⁰ NFI, dossier 1995.07.027.040. Additional report 28/01/02, pp. 13-15.

²⁵⁵¹ NIOD Archive, letter of Steven Derix to NIOD, 15 November 2001.

²⁵⁵² NFI, dossier 1995.07.27.040. Additional report 28/01/02, quotes p. 17.

²⁵⁵³ For instance, interview P.H. Rutten 30/07/01.

²⁵⁵⁴ OM Arnhem, KMar. Report of P.H. Rutten 24/06/01 (see note 30) and interview P.H. Rutten and S. de Wilde 30/07/01.

who had taken the initiative. It was Fabius who had contacted the Minister, who was actually on holiday, to invite him to come to the Raamweg in The Hague so that he would be informed as directly as possible.²⁵⁵⁵ It would appear that the retrospective reservations of P.H. Rutten mainly grew out of suspicions and suggestions of a later date.

So did the Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army itself have any interest in the destruction of the material? Nothing convincing has emerged to affirm this. But why then was this department so 'eager' about this issue, as again P.H. Rutten later put it? Something can be said in this connection. Two phases must be distinguished. The first phase preceded the destruction. It was the task of the Intelligence and Security Section to be informed as well as possible of all relevant events surrounding army operations. This of course applied in particular to what had happened in Dutchbat III's final phase in the enclave. The Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army needed accurate and fast information to adequately fulfil its role as provider of information to the military leadership. Speed was invariably of the essence to prevent the military (and political) leadership from being surprised by actions of opponents or, as is naturally relevant in this case, the media. In this sense it was logical that there was a certain habit of taking over visual material from military personnel arriving in the Netherlands for rapid development and printing. So you could say that De Ruijter's idea on 24 July at Soesterberg was in line with the 'departmental reflexes': make sure you get the material quickly, so that you at least stay one step ahead of the press (you never know) and inform the commander. Better safe than sorry. Viewed from this perspective, De Ruijter's statement about his initiative to pick up the film and develop and print it at the Military Intelligence Service fits in with a wider pattern and thus gains greater plausibility.²⁵⁵⁶

The second phase occurred after the destruction. It is mainly in relation to this phase that P.H. Rutten later complained about the pushy presence of the Military Intelligence Service. This complaint was no doubt also fed by the quarrel between De Ruijter and the Kodak Team or, more widely, between the Military Intelligence Service of the Royal Netherlands Army and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. As explained, this quarrel pitched two more or less valid arguments and interests against each other: De Ruijter's need to set things right with J.H.A. Rutten and the Kodak Team's need, in the interests of the investigation, either to make no statements or only to issue these statements themselves when the time was right. This alone is sufficient to explain a regular, 'eager' and persistent presence of de Ruijter. It can be assumed that he, having been put in such an embarrassing situation vis-à-vis J.H.A. Rutten, had a special interest in knowing how this could have happened and made no secret of this towards the Kodak Team. In short, here too a plausible construction can be put on events. This explanation also fits in with the effect that the compromise about informing J.H.A. Rutten had on the latter.

Because it is so difficult to find a motive for the destruction of the film in relation to what was known at the time in July 1995 about the content of the photos – the bodies in particular played a role as 'evidence' for war crimes²⁵⁵⁷ – suspicions of alternative grounds arose later. The roll of film also contained shots of the separation of men and women and the role of the Dutchbat soldiers in this connection. These in other words were extremely incriminating photos for Dutchbat, the Netherlands and, above all, for the responsible authorities in the country, who were actually trying to salvage a little glory for the role played by Dutchbat and, failing that, to at least portray them as victims and not as

²⁵⁵⁵ Interview D.G.J. Fabius 19/10/01. According to Fabius the main topic of discussion between the minister and himself was the need to prepare a press release about the events. In view of the media sensitivity of this matter, the minister had to be properly informed, also about how J.H.A. Rutten had responded to the explanation of the ruined film. P.H. Rutten mainly remembers having shown interest by telephone in what J.H.A. Rutten had to say about what had happened in Srebrenica. These two recollections are not mutually exclusive.

²⁵⁵⁶ Interview R.F.J.H. de Ruijter 27/06/01 and interview E.A. Rave 13 and 14/12/00 and 11/07/01 (additional telephone conversation).

²⁵⁵⁷ It should be noted in passing that certain accounts are based on the opinion that the destruction of the photos caused the loss of evidence for war crimes. This, however, is a misunderstanding. In criminal law the evidential value of eyewitness statements is superior to that of photos.

accomplices. In this line of reasoning the disappearance of these photos most definitely served the interests of the authorities, or at least could be viewed as such.

At first sight there appears to be more in this than in the same reasoning in relation to the photos with bodies, even though the absence of direct and concrete indications remains a handicap. On closer inspection, however, there is also a serious problem here. For this reasoning assumes that those who took the initiative to destroy the film knew it contained pictures of Dutchbat soldiers assisting the separation of men and women. That is not very probable. J.H.A. Rutten has declared several times that in this initial phase his attention was entirely absorbed by the events in the house and the executions (i.e. photos of dead bodies). In his conversations about the contents of the photos, he had never mentioned the separation of men and women.²⁵⁵⁸

So to accept this motive as the actual reason for the destruction, you really have to assume that the photos had been seen first either by the person who destroyed them or the person on whose instructions he was acting. This only fits in with the extremely complicated variant where many accomplices take part in a double destruction, with a 'decoy film' being substituted for the real film in the dark room of the Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army. But this variant is at odds with the result of the investigations into the origin of the strips of film returned to Rutten. It also assumes a certain blind spot among the 'perpetrators' for the corrosive effect of persistent media attention seeking to expose an unbelievable story about human error as the cause of the failure to develop the photos whose existence was known. As this motive could also not be demonstrably attributed to anyone, this explanation too must be seen as highly unlikely.

Conclusion

The roll of film of Lieutenant J.H.A. Rutten never produced photos. A painstaking reconstruction of the events based on various investigations from the day of the failed development of the film until very recently has led to the conclusion that human error was the cause. In retrospect, critical comments can be made about the investigation in the initial stage, but these do not detract from the validity of the conclusion. Plausible explanations can be given for a number of peculiarities in the story and their context (the 'background noise in the dossier').

Despite this conclusion, suspicions of deliberate destruction have never completely gone away. This is basically a serious accusation which was directed not only at 'defence' in general and the army in particular but also at individuals who in some cases were even publicly mentioned by name²⁵⁵⁹. In a state governed by the rule of law like the Netherlands you would expect such accusations to be supported with concrete evidence. But that is not the case. Assumed motives for (ordering) the deliberate destruction do not stand up to critical scrutiny either. Identified weaknesses in the reasoning leading to the conclusion of human error (indirect evidence in other words) turn out on closer inspection to be inaccurate or highly implausible.

The persuasive power of the deliberate intent hypothesis lies mainly in the combination of the incredibility of the trivial blundering in the dark room precisely with this important film, the imaginative appeal of an intelligence service cast in a conspiratorial role and the perfect manner in

²⁵⁵⁸ Emphatically reaffirmed in interview with J.H.A. Rutten 13/09/01. See also e.g.: OM Arnhem, KMar, P 13/1995. Statement of J.H.A. Rutten; OM Arnhem, KMar, P 970715.1200. Statement of J.H.A. Rutten; interview J.H.A. Rutten 01/12/99 (particularly 97-100); interview J.H.A. Rutten 22/12/99 (particularly 370-375).

²⁵⁵⁹ Various parties involved, both those at whom accusations were levelled as well as others who can be regarded more as witnesses, have told the NIOD of their extreme annoyance about the fact that their full names were published. This was sometimes done by press agencies but sometimes also by government institutions and civil servants. They believe they have a right to the protection of their privacy (even those suspected of very serious crimes are, for reasons of decency, usually only identified by their initials in the media). The NIOD subscribes to this standpoint. Nevertheless their names were again mentioned in full in this section. This was done because the people in question would have been very easy to trace even if mentioned anonymously. This would no doubt have been done with great frequency. In this case, therefore anonymization would have boiled down to unnecessary secretiveness and that would only have detracted from the clarity of the account.

which that fits in with a much broader cover-up theory. But in the absence of concrete evidence, all this cuts no ice. Set against the ‘human error’ explanation, which is based on strong foundations, this hypothesis is untenable.

In one respect, however, the story of the film does fit in with a wider context. The officer of the Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army who proposed to have the film developed within the organization itself later explained that this was the obvious procedure. In doing so, he referred to the tasks as assigned to and interpreted by his department: always get information quickly (preferably as the first) so that the commander can be informed as early and adequately as possible, thereby allowing him to respond optimally and if required to take preventative action. This interpretation of the tasks echoes the aspiration of the army, as discussed elsewhere, to manage and control any information flows about its own organization that reach the outside world.

The irony in this specific case of the ‘roll of film’ is that the attempt to be the first to see these important photos failed so blatantly and thus actually triggered an ultimately uncontrollable avalanche of publicity. And all this resulted from a human error nobody wanted.

5. The Smith – Mladic agreement

In the same period as the debriefing an incident occurred that put the Minister in a very embarrassing situation. On 11 September *De Volkskrant* carried an article headlined ‘*Voorhoeve zweeg over VN-akkoord met Mladic*’ (‘Voorhoeve kept silent about UN agreement with Mladic’).²⁵⁶⁰ The thrust of the article was that the Minister of Defence had failed to mention the agreement signed between Generals Smith and Mladic on 19 July 1995 during the consultation with the Permanent Parliamentary Committees of Defence and Foreign Affairs on 31 August and 5 September. One of the sources for the article was a letter dated 8 September from an anonymous military member in which the Minister and his staff were accused of withholding information, meddling with the UN operation and incompetence. It was implied that the existence of the Smith – Mladic agreement completely overshadowed Franken’s statement of 17 July about the properly conducted evacuation of the population. In addition, it was claimed that the Dutch Navy and Air Force were over-represented in the Defence leadership, leading to less understanding for Army operations as well as suppression of the fact that the ‘roll of film’ was ruined in a Navy laboratory.²⁵⁶¹ The anonymous author of the letter had also enclosed a copy of the agreement, a memo of a close aide to Smith about the meeting on 19 July when it was signed and a copy of the Proceedings of the Dutch Parliament.

What exactly was it all about? On 19 July 1995 an agreement was concluded at Sarajevo by Generals Smith of UNPROFOR and Mladic of the VRS (Bosnian-Serb army) about a number of points concerning the situation in Srebrenica, Zepa, Gorazde and Sarajevo. This agreement was prepared on 15 July 1995 when Milosevic, Bildt and Stoltenberg had held political consultations in Belgrade about the situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Smith and Mladic had also attended the consultation in Belgrade. The text contained 9 points in which arrangements were laid down for such matters as access to the various regions for the Red Cross and UNHCR, the evacuation of the remaining women, children, elderly and wounded, and Dutchbat’s departure from the enclave. In Part III, Chapter 9 of this report, the Smith – Mladic agreement was already discussed at length in the context of Dutchbat’s departure from the enclave.

In an article in *De Volkskrant* Defence spokesman B. Kreemers said that Parliament had not been informed, ‘..because the document was not believed to be relevant to the Dutch responsibility in Srebrenica’. The next day *De Volkskrant* devoted an indepth article to the agreement: ‘*VN bielden*

²⁵⁶⁰ ‘Voorhoeve zweeg over akkoord met Mladic’ (‘Voorhoeve kept silent about agreement with Mladic’), *De Volkskrant*, 11/09/95.

²⁵⁶¹ Anonymous letter to *De Volkskrant*, Subject: Bosnia, Srebrenica/UNPROFOR/Dutchbat/Ministry of Defence, 08/09/95.

akkoord met Mladic geheim ('UN kept agreement with Mladic secret').²⁵⁶² This article quoted extensively from the memo of Smith's aide while Defence said that the agreement had not been mentioned because it was intended to improve the UN's relationship with Mladic. The UN had strongly recommended secrecy and Voorhoeve had felt bound to observe this. Once again spokesman Kreemers was drummed up to give the official reaction. He declared that '...the agreement between Smith and Mladic was not relevant to the account that the Minister had given Parliament'.

Even in their initial reaction politicians expressed shock and clearly felt bypassed. On the evening of 11 September several MPs were asked to comment on TV. Sipkes (GroenLinks; Green Left Party) questioned the Minister's credibility; Hoekema (D66; Democrats) said he felt bypassed and saw it as yet another mistake in what was – unfortunately – a catalogue of errors and blunders; and Valk (PvdA; Labour Party) said that the Minister had had sufficient time and opportunity during the debates to mention the agreement.²⁵⁶³ That same evening on a different programme MP De Hoop Scheffer said that the Minister's failure to mention the information about the agreement was a 'fairly dubious intermediate step' en route to the 'final debate'.²⁵⁶⁴ As far as he was concerned, the answer given by Voorhoeve's spokesman that morning was merely an attempt to 'fob everybody off'. The impact of these revelations in political circles was predictable and should indeed be seen in the light of the growing number of errors and incidents surrounding Srebrenica in which the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Netherlands Army had been involved since the middle of July 1995. What's more, only recently there had been two marathon debates with Parliament about Srebrenica – on 31 August and on 5 September – and on 31 August the Minister had affirmed categorically that 'Janvier or Rupert Smith never negotiated with Mladic in person after Srebrenica fell'.²⁵⁶⁵

It was not a complete surprise that the press had got wind of the Smith – Mladic agreement. On Sunday 10 September *De Volkskrant* editor Hans Moleman had contacted Bert Kreemers at home to get a reaction to the anonymous letter. That same evening Kreemers tried to get advice from his bosses during the dinner that had been organized for the visiting NATO Military Committee at the Binnenhof. Not everyone recognized the serious nature of the problem.

I really needed advice from Van den Heuvel and Van den Breemen as well as Voorhoeve's view of the situation. The chaotic conclave between two corridors produced no results. Henk van den Breemen took offence when he saw his name associated with the ruined film. Voorhoeve did not even give the possible consequences of this anonymous attack a second thought: 'Just say it's a load of nonsense'. Hans van den Heuvel kept a cool head. We read through the text together and tried to formulate a reaction: the agreement had no relevance to the assessment of the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica.²⁵⁶⁶

Because Voorhoeve was travelling to Bratislava and Prague on 11 September, Prime Minister Kok was answerable in the first instance in his capacity as deputy Minister of Defence. Voorhoeve did have input in a letter to Parliament that had been drafted by the Directorate of General Policy Matters and was signed and sent by Kok on 12 September.²⁵⁶⁷ According to Kreemers, Kok was careful not to get his fingers burnt and during question time on 12 September he stayed miles away from Voorhoeve.²⁵⁶⁸ The letter itself reiterated the arguments that the Defence spokesman had used in the two *De Volkskrant* articles. Nothing was said, however, about the time when the ministry had first heard of the

²⁵⁶² 'VN hielden akkoord met Mladic geheim' ('UN kept agreement with Mladic secret'), *De Volkskrant*, 12/09/95.

²⁵⁶³ NOS, *Den Haag Vandaag*, 11/09/95.

²⁵⁶⁴ EO, *Het Elftde Uur*, 11/09/95.

²⁵⁶⁵ *De Volkskrant*, 11/09/95.

²⁵⁶⁶ Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan* ('On the other side of the moon'), p. 121.

²⁵⁶⁷ DAB. Front page for draft letter to Parliament, 11/9/1995, DAB/L. Casteleijn & S. Reyn.

²⁵⁶⁸ Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan* ('On the other side of the moon'), p. 121.

existence of an agreement. In addition, only the formal aspects of the agreement were looked at and no response was given to the actual content.²⁵⁶⁹ The Prime Minister had little else to say during question time. He told the critical MPs Sipkes and Heerma that if they had any further questions, the real minister would be happy to answer them.²⁵⁷⁰ However, Kok did promise to try to get a copy of the Smith – Mladic agreement from the UN. Meanwhile Voorhoeve, who was in Bratislava, saw the storm looming ahead. A meeting with the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Defence had already been arranged for Thursday 14 September. Shortly afterwards, he ordered an inquiry into the origin of the leak via the Secretary-General.²⁵⁷¹ On 14 September another letter was sent to Parliament; this time signed by Voorhoeve himself. Meanwhile the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been sent the text of the agreement from the UN Headquarters in New York and this was attached to the letter. But the UN did not release the memo with the agreement that a close aide of Smith had written after the meeting of 19 July.

Apart from the enclosed text of the agreement, the letter that Voorhoeve sent to Parliament on 14 September contained no new insights. On the basis of a few points from the agreement, the Minister tried to indicate that when the agreement was signed on 19 July it was no longer relevant to Dutchbat's role in Srebrenica. He said that access to the enclave for the Red Cross and the release of the Dutchbat personnel being held in Bratunac had already been arranged on 15 July in Belgrade during the discussion between Milosevic, Bildt and Stoltenberg. The arrangement for the evacuation of women, children and elderly people was emphatically intended for those still in the enclave after the actual evacuation, i.e. after 13 July.²⁵⁷² In the General Consultation that followed on 14 September the criticism of the MPs had already subsided. What did not go away, however, was the criticism that the Minister should have given Parliament timely information and that he had had ample opportunity to do this. The point of reference remained the General Consultation of 31 August, where several MPs had asked specifically about negotiations with Mladic at a level higher than Dutchbat. As is known, the Minister had answered these questions in the negative.²⁵⁷³ In his answer the Minister also pointed to a press release of the Ministry of Defence of 20 July in which mention was made of an agreement in the light of Dutchbat's departure from the enclave. While acknowledging that a press release was not the same thing as a letter to Parliament, the Minister said, 'There was no need to discuss the Smith – Mladic agreement any further. What's more, detailed information from the Dutch government about that confidential meeting would have been out of order. In any case, the information given by the Ministry of Defence to the media shows that, contrary to what the author of the anonymous letter wants to lead us to believe, there was no intention whatsoever to conceal the meeting of the two generals on 19 July'.²⁵⁷⁴

The most important argument remained that an individual country could not decide unilaterally to violate the confidentiality of a UN classified document. The next day *De Volkskrant* devoted a small article to the General Consultation. The article, headlined '*Kamer toont begrip voor minister*' ('Parliament shows understanding for Minister'), briefly summed up the situation surrounding the agreement:

'Assuming he had no alternative, Minister Voorhoeve of Defence should at least have informed Parliament confidentially about the existence of a secret agreement that the UN signed on 19 July with the Bosnian Serb General Mladic after the fall of the Bosnian enclave Srebrenica. But Parliament understands

²⁵⁶⁹ TK, Parliamentary session 1994-1995, 22 181, no. 120, (12/09/95).

²⁵⁷⁰ 'VN-akkoord met Mladic was niet bekend bij Kok' ('UN agreement with Mladic not known to Kok'), *De Volkskrant*, 13/09/95.

²⁵⁷¹ Kreemers, '*Aan de achterkant van de maan*' ('On the other side of the moon', p. 122).

²⁵⁷² TK, Parliamentary session 1994-1995, 22 181, no. 122 (14/09/95).

²⁵⁷³ TK, Parliamentary session 1995-1996, 22 181, no. 123 (26/09/95).

²⁵⁷⁴ TK, Parliamentary session 1995-1996, 22 181, no. 123 (26/09/95).

that Voorhoeve felt bound to secrecy and draws no political consequences from his failure to disclose the information'.²⁵⁷⁵

After the General Consultation on the 14th, the sting had been taken out of the debate. The subject was raised later in a general sense, but the Minister's skin had been saved for the time being. From a political/public perspective, the matter had thus basically been dealt with. However, at the Minister's instigation, a criminal investigation was initiated to find out who had sent the letter to the press and for what reasons. The anonymous letter, the series of newspaper articles, the criminal investigation and the political aftermath came to be known in September 1995 as the affair of the 'leaking colonel'. An investigative team of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee dubbed the '*Pleinteam*' was formed on 13 September. On the basis of the copies of the anonymous letter with annexes that they received from Kreemers – one had been sent to *De Volkskrant* and one to *NRC Handelsblad* - the investigators soon came to the conclusion that the writer should be sought near the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. The addresses on the documents and the legalistic language of the letter indicated that the author was probably to be found at the Legal Affairs Department of the Royal Netherlands Army. In addition, certain fonts and a stain on the text of the agreement quickly led them to the word processor and copier that had been used.

Each and every person whom the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee interviewed in the course of their investigation confirmed the extreme frustration that existed within the Royal Netherlands Army about the relationship with the Central Organization. The immediate cause mentioned was the problems that had arisen in relation to the statement of 17 July that Franken had signed, the missing list of 239 names and the ruined film.²⁵⁷⁶ So it was no coincidence that one of the main conclusions of the anonymous letter was that Franken's statement of 17 July was virtually meaningless in the light of the statement signed by Smith and Mladic.²⁵⁷⁷ To help restore the tarnished image of the Royal Netherlands Army, the anonymous letter writer had wanted to put the ball in the Minister's court by saying that he had withheld information; information which, if published, would certainly have focused attention on the Minister. After the *Pleinteam* had spoken with several members of the Legal Affairs Section of the Royal Netherlands Army, a colonel of that department, whose office was near the Cabinet of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, came forward.

The Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee reported to Voorhoeve in a confidential memorandum after the completion of the investigation. During its exploratory investigation among staff of the Royal Netherlands Army, the *Pleinteam* had noted a negative attitude towards the Central Organization and the Minister. During the investigation on 15 September witnesses had spoken extensively and had frequently consulted among themselves. This had continued into the evening when Colonel Zuidema, Director of Legal Affairs of the Royal Netherlands Army, spoke to 'a' colonel of Legal Affairs by telephone. In the course of this conversation Zuidema expressed his suspicion that a fellow lieutenant colonel had done it. Later that evening another colonel of Legal Affairs came forward and identified himself as the author of the letter.²⁵⁷⁸ The Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee concluded from this that in confessing his guilt the colonel had hardly been acting 'voluntarily'. The ideas expressed in this letter were shared by most of the officers of the staff. Both Kreemers and Fabius later reported attempts to thwart and manipulate the investigation of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. First of all, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army had tried to remove the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigators from the Juliana Barracks immediately after the colonel had come forward. This had only been prevented by the direct

²⁵⁷⁵ 'Kamer toont begrip voor minister' ('Parliament shows understanding for Minister'), *De Volkskrant*, 15/07/95.

²⁵⁷⁶ KAB. Memo for Minister of Defence, Management Report of the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, 05/10/95.

²⁵⁷⁷ DAB. Anonymous letter of 08/09/95 to *De Volkskrant*.

²⁵⁷⁸ NIOD, Coll. Couzy. Handwritten notes, undated.

intervention of General Roos, the Deputy Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee.²⁵⁷⁹ Evidently the army's reasoning was: the guilty person has been found, hasn't he? So why look further? After this, pressure was allegedly exerted on witnesses to give a particular statement or even no statement at all. The investigators of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had found proof of this and the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee reported this as follows in the earlier-mentioned memo to the Minister: 'In the course of the investigation it became clear during a conversation with a witness that the investigation was being manipulated. Evidently the manipulation had taken place by putting a few officials under pressure to make a particular statement or no statement at all'.

What, in fact, had happened? General Nicolai, who was working in Sarajevo as UNPROFOR Chief of Staff at the time of the fall of the enclave, suddenly announced that he wanted to make a voluntary statement about the Smith – Mladic agreement. In doing so, he intended to say that the secret classification assigned to the agreement had been superseded by time. The implication was that the 'leaker' had not committed a punishable offence in sending the agreement to the newspapers. During the investigation of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Nicolai found himself facing pressure from two sides. On the one hand, the Central Organization did not want him to make a statement because their main line of defence to the outside world was based on the undertaking to keep the agreement secret. In the weekend of 23 – 24 September 1995 a conversation with Nicolai did in fact take place. On the Minister's instructions and in the presence of Secretary-General Barth, the Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen convinced Nicolai by telephone that the agreement had not been declassified.²⁵⁸⁰ This conversation persuaded Nicolai not to make his statement.

In a hand-written note about the leaking of the Smith – Mladic agreement, Couzy partly confirmed this reading of events. According to Couzy, the Secretary-General had called him on 22 September and had asked him to speak to Nicolai in order to dissuade him from making his statement. During that conversation, so Couzy claims, he pointed out to the Secretary-General that this could be construed as manipulation. After consultation with Van Baal, it was decided that he should talk to Nicolai. On Monday 25 September Couzy heard from his Chief of Staff that during the weekend the Chief of Defence Staff had threatened Nicolai not to make a statement. According to the note, Van Baal did not speak to Nicolai until the 25th and the latter had promised only to speak about his term as Chief of Staff at the BiH Command.²⁵⁸¹

The Royal Netherlands Army, for its part, was pressuring Nicolai in exactly the opposite direction. They wanted him to make the statement on the grounds that this argument had lost its force as a new line of defence. When the efforts to make the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee abort the investigation proved fruitless, the Royal Netherlands Army Staff started to look for new arguments. The defence of the Colonel was now aimed at demonstrating that the agreement between Smith and Mladic was no longer classified in any way and that the colonel had therefore not committed a punishable offence.²⁵⁸² The Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army had used this argument when the *Pleinteam* interviewed him on 20 September.²⁵⁸³ The notion that the agreement was no longer classified had been formulated earlier in an internal memo marked 'strictly confidential' (dated 18 September) from the Director of Legal Affairs of the Royal Netherlands Army, Colonel Zuidema, to the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. The tone of the memo was clearly one of irritation and impatience towards the Minister: 'I am writing to point out that, as you may already know, the Minister has still not given any notification of Directive 2/95 of General Smith,

²⁵⁷⁹ Kreemers, '*Aan de achterkant van de maan*' ('On the other side of the moon'), p. 169.

²⁵⁸⁰ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 5, Questions to D.J. Barth 03/09/98 and to H.G.B. van der Breemen 03/09/98.

²⁵⁸¹ NIOD, Coll. Couzy. Hand-written note, undated.

²⁵⁸² KAB. Memo for the Minister of Defence, Management Report of the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, 05/10/95; Kreemers, '*Aan de achterkant van de maan*' ('On the other side of the moon'), p. 123.

²⁵⁸³ NIOD, Coll. Couzy. Hand-written notes, undated.

particularly point 7 of the Directive. (Essential for the role of Dutchbat.)²⁵⁸⁴ Point 7 of the Directive says, among other things, that: ‘fulfilling the mandate is secondary to the safety of UN personnel’. A little further on, the memo reads: ‘Already on 12 Aug. last the Directive and the agreement were faxed by Lt. Col. De Ruiter to the Defence Crisis Management Centre!’. Zuidema struck a strikingly indignant note in his memo. Apart from this, it was basically an analysis of the elements that the Staff was putting forward to defend the anonymous letter writer.²⁵⁸⁵ For the rest, the main line of defence of the Commander and the Director of Legal Affairs of the Royal Netherlands Army was that the agreement was no longer classified. The statement they wanted from Nicolai was intended to support this line of defence with evidence from an officer who had filled a key position at UNPROFOR.

As things turned out, only internal measures were taken against the colonel. He was transferred to a different post at a completely different department and was informed that he would not be considered for further promotion. It could not be proven that the colonel was guilty of betraying state secrets; but he was guilty of betraying official secrets. The maximum penalty for this offence was one year but the Public Prosecutor held that, in view of the disciplinary measures already taken and his irreproachable record, he already had been sufficiently punished.²⁵⁸⁶

One pressing question that remains, finally, is: when did the Minister know of the talks between Milosevic, Bildt and Stoltenberg – that were also attended by Generals Smith and Mladic – which resulted in the Smith – Mladic agreement? It is clear that as early as 15 July General Nicolai reported several times on this matter from Sarajevo to the Defence Crisis Management Centre. In the chronology of his diary the Chief of Defence Staff, Van den Breemen, indicated that during a telephone conversation that day at 11 o’clock in the morning he heard from Nicolai that a meeting would be held on the same day with Milosevic, Mladic, Akashi, Bildt and Stoltenberg. That evening the Chief of Defence Staff received ‘important’ news via the bunker from Nicolai about the results of the talks in Belgrade on a tape:

‘Dutchbat can leave with the vehicles and equipment and weapons at the end of next week. The first part is better than I expected, the second part, the timescale, is disappointing. All the wounded can be evacuated tomorrow. Restocking can take place if necessary. The Commander of Dutchbat must calculate how many convoys are involved and what he needs in the way of additional vehicles. The Red Cross will be given access to the Muslim men whom the Serbs consider to be prisoners of war. Free access to the enclaves (except Bihac) by UNHCR is permitted. The Kiseljak route will be opened by UNHCR (the modality is still to be elaborated). The details of other matters are also still the subject of negotiation. Which is why Nicolai is urging not to make anything known yet. Secondary reaction after joy, let’s see it happen first before we celebrate. I consult with Hans Couzy. We agree with Nicolai’s wish. Next I contact the Minister. We too rapidly agree on the line to be followed. After some further talk, we agree that the preparations for the meeting next Friday must be very thorough. At 10.30pm the Minister calls me to say we will be meeting the next day at 3pm at the home of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.’²⁵⁸⁷

This makes it clear, first of all, that the Minister had detailed knowledge of what was going on. The same applies to Couzy. On 19 July the Chief of Defence Staff again received a report from Nicolai. That same day the Chief of Defence Staff saw to it that this important information about the Smith – Mladic agreement was passed on. According to the notes in his diary, he gave a rough indication of

²⁵⁸⁴ SMG, 1004. HQ UNPROFOR Directive 2/95, 29/05/95.

²⁵⁸⁵ DJZ. Hand-written Memo of Director of Legal Affairs, Col. Mr. A.C. Zuidema to the BLS, 18/09/95.

²⁵⁸⁶ Press release of the Public Prosecutor at Arnhem, 01/11/95.

²⁵⁸⁷ DCBC, unnumbered. Diary CDS, Chronology, 11/10/96, p. 55-56.

what was recorded in the treaty. Again there can be no doubt that the Minister and others knew what was going on. The Chief of Defence Staff gave the impression that he was constantly liaising with everyone.

The negative feelings among the staff of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army about how the Minister handled Srebrenica and the consequences are known and were discussed earlier in Part IV. Nevertheless this attack on the Minister was unexpected. In view of the frequent consultations between all parties over the telephone and in various meetings, the Minister must have assumed that no problems were to be expected. After all, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army had indicated to the Chief of Defence Staff that he too felt that the agreement should be kept under wraps.

The perspective changed as soon as Dutchbat had safely left the enclave. Now the agreement was purely of historical interest. After the return of Dutchbat III, the leadership of the Royal Netherlands Army was confronted more and more with severe criticism about the way they handled information; information that invariably put the Royal Netherlands Army in a bad light. In this atmosphere the defence mechanisms were activated, eventually resulting in the type of ill-considered actions just described. In this way the Smith – Mladic agreement became an instrument in the battle that the Royal Netherlands Army was waging against what it saw as unfair treatment. The UN statement presented by the Minister to the effect that the secret classification status was still in force did not impress Couzy. He stated to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee that this had been ‘arranged’ by the Netherlands.²⁵⁸⁸ The colonel who leaked the information had merely been a mouthpiece for expressing the general feelings prevailing among the Royal Netherlands Army Staff. The poor relationships between the Central Organization and the Royal Netherlands Army that were described earlier in this chapter thus received yet another sequel in the public domain.

6. The Bunker Leak

Two months after the affair surrounding the Smith – Mladic agreement, information was again leaked to the press. This time, it was a leak in the true sense of the word. Not only were classified documents passed on to the press, but the content of confidential talks was also revealed, frequently verbatim. These talks had taken place during a closed and secret meeting on 1 November 1995 in the ‘bunker’ under the Ministry of Defence.

On 11 November 1995 an article of Frank Westerman appeared in *NRC Handelsblad*. This article alleged that the fall of Srebrenica was partly attributable to differences in opinion and misunderstandings between high-ranking Dutch officers in the UN line of command concerning UN permission for air support.²⁵⁸⁹ This, so Westerman claimed, was the outcome of secret talks held on 1 November in the bunker under the Ministry of Defence in The Hague. He reported that four officers from the UN line of command of UNPROFOR had been heard at this meeting. Westerman followed this up with a second article in the Saturday Supplement where he summarized the problems that the Minister of Defence was struggling with. First of all, communication between The Hague, the UN and NATO in Italy had been poor. Secondly the debriefing report contained ‘too many loose ends’ about the air support issue. Thirdly, it had to be investigated whether there were any indications that General Janvier had possibly sacrificed the enclave as part of a wider-ranging peace plan. This could explain the refusal to support Dutchbat with air strikes. The further implication was that Dutchbat had been knowingly and willingly left to fend for themselves. Finally Voorhoeve was under pressure because his possible intervention in the UN command structure made it look as if he had called off the air strikes.²⁵⁹⁰ The day after the debriefing report appeared, *The Independent* had published an article arguing

²⁵⁸⁸ NIOD, Coll. Couzy. Hand-written notes, undated.

²⁵⁸⁹ ‘Onenigheid bij VN-officieren’ (‘Discord among UN officers’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/11/95.

²⁵⁹⁰ ‘spookrijders in Srebrenica’ (‘Wrong-way drivers in Srebrenica’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/11/95.

that Janvier had already urged the UN to abandon the enclaves in May 1995. Taking this as his basic starting point, Westerman translated the matter to the Dutch arena.

The immediate reason for the meeting mentioned in *NRC Handelsblad* of 1 November was to establish the exact sequence of events surrounding the requests for air support by the battalion in Srebrenica.²⁵⁹¹ That next day Ministers Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo were to have a General Consultation with the Permanent Committee on Defence and Foreign Affairs.²⁵⁹² Two items that would definitely be on the agenda were the role of the UN and the air support issue. Only two days previously, on 30 October, the report on the major debriefing had been made public and presented to Parliament by Voorhoeve. The Minister and the leadership of the Defence Staff were of the opinion that the problems surrounding the air support had not been addressed, or at least not sufficiently. In his presentation letter to Parliament, Voorhoeve had already devoted extensive attention to the air support issue.²⁵⁹³ But he had not gone so far as to give a precise reconstruction. At the press conference held on the occasion of the presentation, Voorhoeve was unable to answer the question as to whether the UN had sacrificed the enclave. It was also clear that Parliament would sink its teeth into this issue. On 19 October *NRC Handelsblad* had already reported that public statements made by Dutch UN Commanders had prompted the Christian Democrats (CDA) to press for a parliamentary hearing.²⁵⁹⁴ The central focus of the matter under investigation was to be 'the attack that never came'. Given the prevailing atmosphere among parliamentarians, the article concluded that other parties would not oppose the Christian Democrats' request.

In view of the General Consultation, the coming parliamentary questions, and the subsequent debate, Voorhoeve had decided to hold the meeting in the bunker with those directly involved. According to Deputy Chief of Defence Staff Schouten, who led the debate, two questions were central in this connection: 'first, what were the thoughts of C-UNPF (Janvier) concerning air strikes and the enclaves in general and did these thoughts influence his actions and decisions during the fall of Srebrenica on 11 July 1995? and, secondly, how were the events surrounding the theme of the air strikes experienced at the various echelons?'²⁵⁹⁵ The best and most logical way of clarifying these subjects was to hear the four Dutch officers who had served in key positions at UNPROFOR. In view of the mounting pressure from Parliament to hold a hearing on this subject, it was important to do this as quickly as possible. There were too many things that remained unclear and still needed to be unravelled. Another concern in the back of people's minds was that the Minister had to be spared yet another embarrassing situation.²⁵⁹⁶ To achieve this, everyone had to follow the same line, and all the more so considering the fact that the four UN officers regularly answered questions from the press about various issues. Their willingness to speak to the press did not come to a temporary end until their debriefing in Assen in late September. Van der Wind had urged all persons involved not to have any further contact with the press until the final report appeared.

Notes of the deliberations show that – apart from the former UNPROFOR officers Nicolai, de Jonge, Brantz and de Ruiter – the meeting was also attended by: Metzelaar, Couzy and Smeets of the Royal Netherlands Army, De Winter and Princen of the Directorate of General Policy Matters and Verboom on behalf of the Directorate of Information. The two central questions of Schouten basically concerned the possible role of Dutch officers in relation to the request for air support. Another matter that needed looking into was whether the United States had foreseen the Serb attack and whether UN General Janvier had possibly allowed the enclave to fall on purpose. During the deliberations, the

²⁵⁹¹ For an extensive account of the content of the bunker meeting, see Part III, Chapter 7

²⁵⁹² TK, Parliamentary session 1995-1996, 22 181, no. 141 (07/12/95).

²⁵⁹³ TK, Parliamentary session 1995-1996, 22 181, no.128 (30/10/95).

²⁵⁹⁴ 'CDA wil hoorzittingen over rol van Dutchbat' ('CDA wants hearings on role of Dutchbat'), *NRC Handelsblad* 19/11/95.

²⁵⁹⁵ DAB. Notes of the meeting of 01/11/95 concerning the fall of Srebrenica, of DAB, [undated].

²⁵⁹⁶ DAB. Notes to the meeting of 01/11/95 concerning the fall of Srebrenica, of DAB, [undated].

debriefing and the final reports were also extensively discussed insofar as the air support was concerned.

While the deliberations were still in progress, Deputy Director of Information, Bert Kreemers, returned from a meeting where journalists had been given an opportunity to exchange thoughts with Minister Voorhoeve. On arriving back at his office, he was called by Frank Westerman who asked him about the outcome of the secret meeting in the bunker that was still taking place at that very moment. Accompanied by the Chief of the Defence Staff, Kreemers went to the bunker where the deliberations were drawing to a close. He informed those present that Westerman knew of the meeting.²⁵⁹⁷ When Schouten closed the meeting, he appealed to everyone to keep everything within four walls. Kreemers also said that if anyone was approached by the press, they should contact him first.²⁵⁹⁸

The matter would certainly attract press attention. Another tricky problem was the fact that, as two months earlier with the leaking of the Smith – Mladic agreement, the press now also had a number of classified documents in their possession. In Westerman's case this was not limited to the documents used for his article of 11 November. As was clear from an article of 21 October, he had also had access to classified UNMO reports and, in addition, possessed a copy of parts of the logbook of the UNPROFOR sector headquarters in Tuzla. In response to questions from the Minister about this, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, Lieutenant General Schouten, had carried out an investigation revealing that Westerman had received these documents from and through Dutch UN officers.²⁵⁹⁹ Subsequent talks that various persons involved had with Westerman showed how widely ramified his sources were in general, including long-standing close contacts and extensive written documents.²⁶⁰⁰

To discuss the consequences of the bunker leak, a meeting was held on 13 November between the Deputy Secretary-General, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff and the Deputy Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Roos. It was decided here that the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee should instigate an 'exploratory investigation'. The conclusions of the inquiry as reported by the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee were as follows:

- '(a) the journalist possesses classified documents which he, without any doubt, received from defence personnel.
- (b) the content of the article is so 'exact' that it is beyond doubt that one or several participants in the "bunker" meeting on 011195 must have spoken to the journalist.
- (c) the 'bunker' meeting was classified.
- (d) there are suspicions/indications that one of the participants in the 'bunker' meeting keeps his own private 'departmental records' which include the documents in question.
- (e) given the situation, there are three possible 'suspects' namely BG N, Col B and Lt Col De R.

²⁵⁹⁷ Kreemers, *'Aan de andere kant van de maan'* ('On the other side of the moon'), pp. 123-124.

²⁵⁹⁸ DAB. Notes of the meeting of 01/11/95 concerning the fall of Srebrenica, of DAB, [undated].

²⁵⁹⁹ DAB. Memo of the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, M. Schouten to the Minister of Defence, S/95/061/4198, 27/10/95.

²⁶⁰⁰ DV. Memo from the Deputy Director of Information, H.P.M. Kreemers, to the Minister of Defence, *'Gesprek met NRC journalist'* ('Interview with NRC journalist'), 16/11/95, V95021626; BSG. Letter of Lkol. Drs. J.A.C. de Ruyter to CDS and BLS following his talk with Frank Westerman on 06/11/95, 21/11/95.

The foregoing would appear to offer sufficient grounds for a ‘judicial inquiry’.
Ultimately the Public Prosecutor in Arnhem must decide on this matter.²⁶⁰¹

The exploratory investigation of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee most certainly did provide grounds for a judicial inquiry and this was initiated on 20 November under the direction of Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Captain P.H. Rutten. Very soon it transpired that two of those present at the secret meeting had had contact with Frank Westerman very shortly afterwards.²⁶⁰² Both were Netherlands Army officers who had served in staff posts at UNPROFOR. In addition, it was found that one of the two kept private records which probably contained the documents quoted by Westerman.²⁶⁰³ The inquiry extended over all those present at the meeting as well as senior civilian and military officials who could be expected to know what had been discussed at the secret meeting. Many did not shirk from trying to discredit others and lay the blame elsewhere.²⁶⁰⁴

The judicial inquiry was rounded off at the end of January 1996. Despite strong indications that a punishable act had been committed, the Directorate of Legal Affairs of the Ministry of Defence was advised: ‘..that in the case concerning the leaking of secret/confidential information from the ‘bunker meeting’ of 1 November 1995, which was published in *NRC Handelsblad* of 11 November 1995, it is not possible to prove legally and convincingly that one of the participants in this meeting passed on this information.’²⁶⁰⁵ The Public Prosecutor therefore concluded that none of the participants would be prosecuted. This decision prompted no in-depth analyses and the matter was given short shrift in the media. The investigation into this matter within the context of the present report also failed to establish who was the guilty party.

It was not until the beginning of 1997 that the bunker leak affair received a brief sequel. In the *Netwerk* programme of 24 January it was revealed that Voorhoeve had had virtually all senior civilian and military officials of his Ministry interviewed in 1995 in connection with the ‘bunker leak’ investigation that was carried out by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. *Netwerk* also claimed that the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had bugged the telephone and fax of *NRC Handelsblad* journalist Frank Westerman. The first accusation sparked a certain amount of speculation in the press about the relationship between the Minister and the military leadership.²⁶⁰⁶ The PvdA (Labour) MP G. Valk said he would ask in Parliament whether the Minister could trust his top military personnel.²⁶⁰⁷ The Ministry categorically denied the second accusation and Voorhoeve delegated that question to the Ministry of Justice.²⁶⁰⁸ But no genuinely new insights emerged from this renewed digging into the affair in 1997. What, in fact, had prompted *Netwerk*’s sudden interest in this subject was the publication in mid-January 1997 of the book ‘*srebrenica, het zwartste scenario*’ by Frank Westerman and Bart Rijs.

In 1995 Voorhoeve had attached great importance to finding out in detail what the attitude in the UN line had been towards the Srebrenica enclave. After receiving the final report of the debriefing

²⁶⁰¹ BSG. Memo for the Minister of Defence, D.G.J. Fabius, 16/11/95, Litt PC95/25.

²⁶⁰² Kreemers, ‘*Aan de achterkant van de maan*’ (‘On the other side of the moon’), p. 126; BSG. Letter from Lkol. Drs. J.A.C. de Ruiten to CDS and BLS, 21/11/95.

²⁶⁰³ BSG. Memo for the Minister of Defence, D.G.J. Fabius, 16/11/95, Litt PC 95/25.

²⁶⁰⁴ For this, see NIOD, Coll. Brantz. The Brantz Diary for the period January 1996; Kreemers, ‘*Aan de achterkant van de maan*’ (‘On the other side of the moon’); BSG. Letter from Lkol. Drs. J.A.C. de Ruiten following his conversation with Frank Westerman on 06/11/95, 21/11/95.

²⁶⁰⁵ DJZ. DJZ/9601/206, letter from the Public Prosecutor of the District Court at Arnhem, J.F. Boon, to the Minister of Defence, ‘leaking information’, 31/01/96.

²⁶⁰⁶ ‘Media-lek in militaire top’ (‘Media leak in military leadership’), *De Telegraaf*, 25/01/97; ‘Militaire top ondervraagd over lek Srebrenica’ (‘Military leadership quizzed about Srebrenica leak’), *De Volkskrant*, 25/01/97.

²⁶⁰⁷ ‘PvdA wil Voorhoeve horen over lek in militaire top’ (‘PvdA wants to hear Voorhoeve about leak in senior military circles’), *De Volkskrant*, 27/01/97.

²⁶⁰⁸ DJZ. C95/277, letter from the Minister of Defence, J.J.C. Voorhoeve, to the Minister of Justice, W. Sorgdrager, 27/01/97.

early in October, he concluded there was nothing to reproach Dutchbat for.²⁶⁰⁹ The problem now facing the Minister was that – disregarding the Bosnian Serbs – the guilt for what had gone wrong in Srebrenica rested with the UN and the international community. This had already led to a heated exchange with Kok, Pronk, Dijkstal, Van Mierlo and Borst during the discussions about the presentation letter accompanying the final report in the Ministerial Council on 20 and 27 October.²⁶¹⁰ They thought Voorhoeve was shirking his responsibility. Moreover Van Mierlo argued that the relationship with the UN would be damaged if all the blame were pinned on them.

The ‘bunker leak’ almost certainly arose because one of the persons involved felt the need to defend himself against the possible accusation that his actions made him partly guilty of the fall of Srebrenica. This person was one of the four officers who had filled key positions in UNPROFOR. By opening up the discussion and placing it in a broader context, it would be less relevant to probe the actions of individuals. In addition, shifting the action and responsibility to the more senior UNPROFOR level also relieved the pressure on Karremans and the battalion in relation to the air support. Viewed in this light, the same motives seen earlier in relation to the Smith-Mladic affair were again involved to a certain extent. The effect of this affair was indeed to bring the role of the UN under much closer scrutiny. The personal motive of the perpetrator was to delegate the blame to the other UN officers and the UN. He certainly succeeded in this aim.

In this sense the bunker leak came at a propitious time for Voorhoeve. After all, his conclusion that there was nothing to reproach Dutchbat for implied that the UN and the international community were to blame for the failure to provide air support. Because the discussion in political circles and the media concentrated on this aspect, the final report was viewed with a less critical eye. This was convenient, for the final report of the debriefing displayed quite a few shortcomings. But the question on everybody’s mind remained: was air support deliberately blocked to promote a peace arrangement involving the sacrifice of the enclaves?

The stir surrounding the possible guilt of the UN also distracted public attention from the final report of the debriefing, and therefore from the Royal Netherlands Army. Considering that the general conclusion was that Dutchbat was not to blame, Voorhoeve’s efforts will have been viewed with approval by the Royal Netherlands Army. The desire to restore the disturbed relationship with the Royal Netherlands Army probably also played a role with Voorhoeve. The vigour with which he defended Dutchbat certainly suggests as much. The most obvious reason for this, as was also repeatedly mentioned by Members of Parliament in the course of 1995, was that the Armed Forces were undergoing a sweeping reorganization and that the Royal Netherlands Army was having to make the greatest sacrifices. Srebrenica and its aftermath had put further pressure on the already strained relationship between the Central Organization and the Royal Netherlands Army. To bring the reorganization to a successful conclusion, it was absolutely vital to restore a relationship of mutual trust. Whether the perpetrator had also envisaged this effect is very much open to doubt.

7. The promotion of Karremans

Early in 1996 ‘srebrenica’ once again provided the media with an occasion for highlighting the stressed relationship between the Central Organization and the Royal Netherlands Army. On Saturday 13 January a VNU journalist asked Junior Minister J.C. Gmelich Meijling, who was in Eindhoven to send off Dutch military personnel, what he thought of the promotion of the Commander of Dutchbat III, Karremans, to the rank of colonel. Meijling had been informed about this that morning by J. Veen of the Directorate of Information: it turned out that neither he nor his Minister had been consulted by the

²⁶⁰⁹ DAB. Appendix to DAB Memo to the Minister of Defence, ‘Debriefingsrapport Srebrenica’ (‘srebrenica debriefing report’), 17/08/98, D98/431.

²⁶¹⁰ For a description of that period, see Part IV, Chapter 7.

Royal Netherlands Army in the decision-making procedure. A report to this effect appeared that same day in several regional newspapers.²⁶¹¹

It transpired that Karremans had been nominated for the new post of Netherlands Liaison Officer at the Training and Doctrine Command (Tradoc) in Norfolk (Virginia) as from mid-1996 in the United States.²⁶¹² The rank of colonel was attached to that post. It had been necessary to find a new job for him because he was handing over the command of the 13th airmobile battalion on 9 February of that year.

The political leadership felt bypassed, given the obviously sensitive nature of the promotion of this controversial commander. The pictures of the commander raising his glass with the Bosnian Serb General Mladic had gone round the world. His statement that there were no 'good guys and bad guys' in the conflict in Bosnia and his praise for the strategic qualities of Mladic had not gone down very well with a lot of people.

Even so, no formal breach of procedure had occurred. Transfers and promotions of colonels are ministerial decisions that are mandated to the Royal Netherlands Army. This means that the Minister and the Junior Minister need not be personally informed of promotions up to and including the rank of colonel. That authority has been mandated to the Royal Netherlands Army. The political and civil service leadership must only be informed of appointments concerning higher ranks of the Royal Netherlands Army, namely flag officers, general officers and defence attachés.²⁶¹³

Initially the issue failed to create any great publicity stir, despite the articles mentioned in the regional newspapers and, a little later, a publication in Elsevier on 27 January.²⁶¹⁴ However, G. Valk and K. Zijlstra, both members of the PvdA (Labour Party), did want to know why the Minister and Junior Minister had known nothing of the promotion. On 1 February they submitted their parliamentary questions. That evening *De Volkskrant* journalist Ewoud Nysingh had been invited to attend the festive installation of the new staff of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army at the Princess Juliana Barracks.²⁶¹⁵ With the information gathered there, he published two articles on 2 February headed '*Couzy bevordert Karremans tegen zijn van Voorhoeve*' ('Couzy promotes Karremans against Voorhoeve's will') and '*Defensie verwijt Couzy slecht politiek inzicht*' ('Defence condemns Couzy's lack of political insight'). A day later Nysingh continued his series of reports, claiming that Meijling, according to insiders, had insisted on tougher action against both Couzy and Karremans. The Junior Minister was opposed to Voorhoeve's plan to maintain Karremans as Commander in Assen for another few months.

²⁶¹¹ In e.g. 'Voormalig bevelhebber Srebrenica gestationeerd in Amerika. Karremans bevordert tot kolonel' (Former Srebrenica Commander stationed in America. Karremans promoted to colonel), *Eindhovens Dagblad*, 13/01/96; BSG.V96000607, memo from Kreemers to Voorhoeve, '*Bevordering Lieutenant-Colonel Karremans*' (Promotion Lieutenant Colonel Karremans), 12/01/96.

²⁶¹² Tradoc is the most important US centre for tactical studies, training and applications of new equipment. Karremans was there to help fine-tune Dutch tactical doctrines and training to US practices. The rank of colonel was attached to this post. Gert-Jan Pos, 'Karremans gaat naar Amerika' ('Karremans goes to America'), *Elsevier*, 27/01/96; Ko Colijn and Paul Rusman, 'Karremans kreeg bijna een onderscheiding' ('Karremans almost decorated'), *Vrij Nederland*, 09/02/96. According to Van Baal a large ally like the United States had been deliberately chosen: "They know how to handle things like this. And that has been proven too. In the three years that Karremans spent in America, nobody ever made any below-the-belt remarks about his time in Srebrenica. Not because they did not dare to; after all, he brought the matter up himself. But the way they saw it was: imagine it happening to you.' Interview A.P.P.M van Baal, 12/12/01.

²⁶¹³ In e.g.: 'Voorhoeve keurt gang van zaken rond bevordering Karremans af' ('Voorhoeve disapproves of events surrounding Karremans' promotion'), *ANP*, 05.02.96, 17.46. The Council of General Officers is the highest body on personnel qualifications and transfers and makes proposals for general appointments and promotions. The Council comprises the BLS (as Chairman) as well as a number of directors and commanders, including the Personnel Director of the Royal Netherlands Army. General promotions are royal decisions that are countersigned by the junior minister. At a level lower, the Advisory Council performs the same activities for colonels. This Council is not involved in promotions and advises exclusively on career developments. The PBL is the chairman and is assisted by the deputy directors and commanders. Interview G.M. Offers, 06/02/02.

²⁶¹⁴ Gert-Jan Pos, 'Karremans gaat naar Amerika' ('Karremans goes to America'), *Elsevier*, 27/01/96.

²⁶¹⁵ Kreemers, '*Aan de achterkant van de maan*' ('On the other side of the moon'), Part 1, p. 145.

He had wanted to give Karremans a different post earlier (in November); Voorhoeve, on the other hand, had intended to postpone the commander's promotion a little longer and offer him a new (regional) post in the Netherlands later in the year, a plan that Couzy had thwarted with this proposal, according to Nysingh.²⁶¹⁶

These articles unleashed a storm of indignation in the media.²⁶¹⁷ In the first place the criticism concerned this renewed manifestation of a lack of political *Fingerspitzengefühl* in top military circles in general and Couzy in particular. He, after all, had failed to gauge the political leadership's opinion before proceeding with the appointment. Secondly, it was in their eyes yet another instance of Voorhoeve's manifest failure to control his ministry. The PvdA (Labour) MP M. Zijlstra condemned Couzy's behaviour as 'more or less a provocation' vis-à-vis the Minister by leaving him in the dark about the promotion. 'This once again proves that the army is politically inept,' so the PvdA spokesman claimed.²⁶¹⁸ In the TV programme *Buitenhof* on 4 February former Defence Minister A. Stermerdink said that Voorhoeve should dismiss Couzy without notice. If he did not, he would '[give] the military leadership a free hand to side-step political authority'.²⁶¹⁹ The Minister was thus putting his credibility on the line.

Responding to this, Zijlstra reproached Minister Voorhoeve for lacking the guts to fire the commander: 'Voorhoeve should take tough action, but evidently he is not that kind of man'.²⁶²⁰ His party (PvdA; Labour) also pressed him to sack Couzy but the VVD (Liberals) did not want their own party member to go. The CDA (Christian Democrats) did not want that either, but was unsure whether the Minister still had a strong enough grip on his ministry. D66 (Democrats) refrained from expressing an opinion on the grounds that Couzy's behaviour was a matter of personnel policy, 'and that's none of our business', according to the Defence Spokesman for Personnel Affairs, M. de Koning.

Voorhoeve and Gmelich Meijling answered the parliamentary questions on 5 February. They wrote that the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army had that day been told in a personal interview that it would have been wiser to have held prior consultation about Karremans' appointment and promotion. Couzy, who would be leaving a few months later upon reaching the prescribed retirement age, had then offered his apologies.²⁶²¹ The parliamentary questions also asked about the date that Couzy would be handing over his command. Though the answers did not actually go into this, another ill-considered fact emerged during the interview mentioned above: the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army had initially planned to hand over his command

²⁶¹⁶ 'PvdA-kamerlid ziet zaak-Karremans als 'provocatie' (Labour MP sees Karremans affair as provocation), *De Volkskrant*, 03/02/96; during his visit to Zagreb on 15 and 16 July, the junior minister had heard critical noises about Karremans. Interviews J. Veen, 16/01/02 and J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01 (also Part III, Chapter 7).

²⁶¹⁷ TK, session 1995-1996, Proceedings Appendix, TK 552, p. 1119.

²⁶¹⁸ 'PvdA-kamerlid ziet zaak-Karremans als "provocatie"' (Labour MP sees Karremans affair as provocation) *De Volkskrant*, 03/02/96.

²⁶¹⁹ 'PvdA voor het ontslag van Couzy' (Labour Party wants Couzy's dismissal) *Het Parool*, 05/02/96; 'Oud-minister: "Voorhoeve moet Couzy ontslaan."' (Former minister: Voorhoeve must dismiss Couzy), *De Telegraaf*, 05/02/96.

²⁶²⁰ 'PvdA voor het ontslag van Couzy' (Labour Party wants Couzy's dismissal), *Het Parool*, 05/02/96; 'Oud-minister van Defensie bepleit ontslag Couzy' (Former Defence minister says Couzy must go), *Haagsche Courant*, 05/02/96. According to Van Baal, a discussion took place early in January 1996 between CDS Van den Breemen with the CO with a view to replacing Couzy before his official retirement because of the criticism levelled at the BLS in connection with the promotion affair, among other things. Van Baal blocked this, with the support of the army council. Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 12/12/01. Junior Minister Meijling was also in favour of Couzy's early departure. Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

²⁶²¹ TK, Parliamentary session 1995-1996, Proceedings Appendix, TK 552, p. 1119. SG Barth held the interview with Couzy. Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan* ('On the other side of the moon'), Part 1, p. 146. There was already a discussion on 15 January about this matter between the minister, the PCDS and the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army. The content of that discussion is not known. BSG. V96001763, memo from Kreemers to the minister, 'Karremans', 02/02/96; TK, session 1995-1996, 24 400X, no. 70 (08/02/96).

on 11 July, exactly one year after the fall of Srebrenica. The significance of this date had not occurred to Couzy and the ceremony was brought forward to 4 July.²⁶²²

Zijlstra accepted the answers. The underlying intention of his questions had been to awaken greater political awareness among the military leaders: 'I hope that Schouten [Couzy's successor] learns something from this incident. But it would be rather bad form to insist on Couzy's departure at this stage. He'll be leaving shortly anyway'. D66 (Democrats) Defence spokesman J.Th. Hoekema agreed and expressed the hope that the relationships between the Central Organization and the Royal Netherlands Army would improve.²⁶²³

NRC Handelsblad regretted this stance: 'Given the man's repeated lapses, Couzy should have been given an official reprimand. He could then have done the honourable thing and resign. The fact that Couzy's retirement is only a few months off takes nothing away from this. At least his successor would then have known where he stood with this minister.' *Het Parool* agreed. It was after all the umpteenth time that Couzy had embarrassed a minister without censure.²⁶²⁴ The media consequently placed the incident in the broader context of the problematic relationship between the political and military leadership, in this case Voorhoeve and Couzy (see also Part IV, Chapters 5-7).²⁶²⁵ Apart from Karremans' blunders in the media, many papers referred to Couzy's remark after the fall of Srebrenica that there had been no question of genocide, despite assertions to the contrary from the Minister for Overseas Development J. Pronk and Voorhoeve. The clumsy and conflicting remarks illustrated the poor communication and erratic working relationship between the leadership of the Central Organization and that of the Royal Netherlands Army.

The army vehemently opposed the criticism. Their line of argumentation rested, as so often, on the notion that the politicians were trying to offload the entire responsibility for the fall of Srebrenica on the military, with Couzy and Karremans in the role of prime scapegoats. The mandate and equipment with which Dutchbat had been sent on their way had been completely inadequate, so the retired Lieutenant General G.C. Berkhof fulminated in *De Haagsche Courant*. And he went on to add that Parliament, which for that matter knew nothing whatsoever about the art of warfare, had no business meddling with the personnel policy of the Royal Netherlands Army.²⁶²⁶ Couzy was admired within the Royal Netherlands Army as a man who always stood right behind his men and continued to support them in times of criticism and tension. And that was certainly necessary when accusation-happy politicians were turning their backs on the military. What's more, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army had successfully orchestrated a complicated and incisive reorganization resulting from the Defence White Paper and, subsequently, the Priorities Policy Document.²⁶²⁷

²⁶²² Gert-Jan Pos, 'Karremans gaat naar Amerika' ('Karremans goes to America'), *Elsevier*, 27/01/96; 'Voorhoeve keurt gang van zaken rond bevordering Karremans af' (Voorhoeve disapproves of events surrounding Karremans' promotion), *ANP*, 051746 February 1996; Kreemers, 'Aan de achterkant van de maan' ('On the other side of the moon'), Part 1, p. 146.

²⁶²³ 'Voorhoeve corrigeert Couzy over bevordering Karremans' ('Voorhoeve rebukes Couzy over Karremans' promotion'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/02/96.

²⁶²⁴ Editorial, *Het Parool*, 06/02/96.

²⁶²⁵ Couzy had also already had problems with Ter Beek at the time of the decision to send Dutchbat. But Srebrenica was not the only matter that showed up the difficult relationship and cultural differences between the political and military leadership. Examples from 1996 include the differences in Couzy's thoughts about the timing of the abolition of military conscription as expressed to the CO and the Royal Netherlands Army and the presentation of his book upon retirement. K. Colijn and P. Rusman present an overview of the contentious issues in 'De dertien affaires-Couzy' ('Couzy's thirteen contentious issues'), *Vrij Nederland*, 06/07/96.

²⁶²⁶ G.C. Berkhof, 'Met sterren van Karremans heeft Kamer niets te maken' ('Karremans' stars are none of Parliament's business'), *Haagsche Courant*, 07/02/96. TK. Parliamentary session 1995-1996, 24 400X, no. 70 (08/02/96).

²⁶²⁷ The voice of the Royal Netherlands Army could be heard in e.g.: A. van der Horst. 'De eigen oorlog van Couzy' ('Couzy's personal war'), *HP/De Tijd*, 16/02/96; Geert van Asbeck, Petra de Koning and Guido de Vries, 'sukkels!' ('Blundering fools!'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/08/98. Berkhof's article was to have minor repercussions because of his claim at the end that Voorhoeve had had the proposal on his desk and had signed it (either with or without reading it). This turned out to be false. However, this article did prompt Christian Democrat H. Hillen to demand a clarification of the procedure which Voorhoeve and Meijling set forth in a letter of 8 February. Voorhoeve wrote Berkhof a personal letter expressing his

This was why Voorhoeve had protected Couzy.²⁶²⁸ It was important for the reorganization of the Royal Netherlands Army to be a success and the commander's cooperation was necessary to achieve that aim. There was to be no rocking the boat in public.²⁶²⁹ In a letter of 8 February to Parliament, in which the course of events was reiterated one more time, Voorhoeve and Meijling wrote:

‘The Royal Netherlands Army is currently making a major contribution to the Dutch participation in IFOR, the implementation force in Bosnia-Herzegovina. At the same time, this part of the armed forces is undergoing extensive restructuring. Lieutenant General Couzy is giving competent leadership to these changes within the army organization and to the army's conduct of various peacekeeping operations.’

They added that differences in opinion, such as about the fall of Srebrenica, ‘had been thoroughly discussed and corrected where necessary’.²⁶³⁰

The other side of the coin was that Voorhoeve's position had come under pressure: the media were already saying he himself should go.²⁶³¹ But he did not do that either.

So what exactly had happened and what role had the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army played in this connection? Though the media had directly attacked Couzy²⁶³², it later became clear that his deputy A.P.P.M. van Baal had made most of the preparations for the promotion. The Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, as Van Baal's immediate boss, was of course responsible.

The Royal Netherlands Army had already felt for a number of years that Karremans was eligible for the rank of colonel: on 27 January 1994 he was found suitable to fill colonel-level positions. He was personally informed of this on 18 March of that year.²⁶³³ In Srebrenica he had fulfilled his third Lieutenant Colonel posting, making promotion to the rank of colonel the logical next step. As noted, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army was authorized to decide on this matter.

Fairly soon after the enclave fell – presumably already in August 1995 – the question was raised as to what Karremans's new position would be. In October Van Baal discussed a colonel's position with Couzy but the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army felt the time was not yet right.²⁶³⁴ Srebrenica and the battalion commander were still the subject of fierce debate. They decided to put off their decision until 19 December 1995 when Parliament was to give its ‘final’ verdict on the fall of Srebrenica and the way in which Dutchbat had conducted itself.

dissatisfaction over the damage that the accusations had done to the Ministry of Defence. Ko Colijn and Paul Rusman, ‘De minister laat Berkhof als een baksteen vallen’ (‘Minister dumps Berkhof without ceremony’), *Vrij Nederland*, 24/02/96; TK, Parliamentary session 1995-1996, 24 400X, no. 70 (08/02/96), letter from the minister and junior minister; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Handwritten letter from Voorhoeve to Berkhof, 07/02/96.

²⁶²⁸ Voorhoeve repeated his praise on 16 February in the TV programme *Buitenhof*. It was Van Baal's idea that Voorhoeve should publicly back Couzy in order to stop criticism being directed at the Royal Netherlands Army. Couzy himself did not embrace that idea, however; Van Baal took responsibility for it. Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 12/12/01; Voorhoeve's Diary, p. 191.

²⁶²⁹ In e.g.: ‘Voorhoeve corrigeert Couzy over bevordering Karremans’ (‘Voorhoeve rebukes Couzy over Karremans' promotion’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/02/96.

²⁶³⁰ TK, Parliamentary session 1995-1996, 24 400X, no. 70 (08/02/96).

²⁶³¹ In e.g. ‘Minister Voorhoeve moet z'n conclusies trekken’ (‘Minister Voorhoeve must draw his conclusions’), *Nederlands Dagblad*, 02/02/96; editorial in *De Limburger*, 06/02/96. Voorhoeve claims he considered resigning several times after the fall. Whether the same applied in relation to the promotion affair is not known. See e.g. Voorhoeve's Diary, p. 192.

²⁶³² See e.g. headlines: ‘Dwarsligger Couzy’ (‘Couzy plays obstructionist’), *Het Parool*, 06/02/96; ‘Nog eens Couzy’ (‘Couzy again’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/02/96; ‘Voorhoeve roept Couzy op het matje over promotie’ (‘Voorhoeve carpets Couzy over promotion’), *Trouw*, 06/02/96.

²⁶³³ TK, Parliamentary session 1995-1996, 24 400X, no. 70 (08/02/96).

²⁶³⁴ Couzy. *Mijn jaren*, p. 174; Bert Bommels, ‘“Srebrenica was de waanzin ten top”’ (‘srebrenica was height of madness’) *Elsevier*, 06/07/96; interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 12/12/01.

The conclusion of that parliamentary debate was that the international community had been unable to avoid this disaster and that there was nothing to reproach Dutchbat for.²⁶³⁵ Van Baal immediately latched on to this line of reasoning and concluded, also in view of the extreme circumstances under which Dutchbat had had to operate, that the same applied to Karremans.²⁶³⁶ It was emphatically clear that a position was to be found in the longer term and with a low profile. The Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army contacted the Deputy Head of Personnel Affairs, Brigadier General E.M.L.H. Termont, and asked him on 21 December to set in motion the proposed appointment attached to the promotion.²⁶³⁷ As Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Van Baal was entrusted with the direction of the Advisory Committee for Management Development (MD). This council advises on career development and its advice serves as the basis for personnel placement plans.²⁶³⁸ Whenever necessary, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army is duly informed of the proposed placements. The same applies to the army council which also has the power to make amendments. Karremans himself was informed of the proposal that day. On this subject, Van Baal said in 1998 that this by no means meant the matter had been finalized.²⁶³⁹

The next meeting of the army council was on 9 January 1996. At this meeting, the transfers and appointments proposed at the time, including that of Karremans, were dealt with. Couzy chaired the meeting.²⁶⁴⁰ Van Baal described the position he had in mind for Karremans as low-key: he would be out of the public eye and have a chance to unwind and collect his thoughts. As the post was only to be filled halfway through the year, it also accommodated Couzy's wish to wait a while. There was a dominating sense of satisfaction about the proposal. According to Van Baal, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army and Lieutenant General R. Reitsma even congratulated him: 'What a great find. Good thinking'.²⁶⁴¹ The proposal also fitted in with the army council's desire to 'move forward' after the parliamentary debate. 'Let that be the end of the matter. This will stay with us for the rest of our lives [but] we can make a new start. The Minister stays. The Commander stays. Karremans gets a new post,' so the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army said to the NIOD.

Army spokesman P. Hartman was present at the army council meeting and informed the Deputy Director of Information, Kreemers, the next day on 10 January.²⁶⁴² With G. ter Kuile, Head of the Minister's Staff, they tried in vain to reconstruct the course of events. As things stood, they assumed that the promotion had been put to the Minister and the Junior Minister – who at that moment were both absent because of the Christmas recess. Shortly afterwards Van Baal called

²⁶³⁵ TK, Parliamentary session 1995-1996, Proceedings, 19/12/95, TK 40, p. 3155-3189.

²⁶³⁶ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, Appendix to A.P.P.M van Baal: P.077/98, memo from Van Baal to De Grave, 'Bevordering Klol Karremans' (Lt Col Karremans promoted), 26/08/98; interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 12/12/01.

²⁶³⁷ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 12/12/01; TK, session 1995-1996, 24 400X, no. 70 (08/02/96). In 1998 Van Baal wrote a letter to the minister, saying that he had not only consulted the Directorate of Personnel of the Royal Netherlands Army about his opinion concerning Karremans, but had also raised the matter informally with the other members of the Advisory Committee. Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, Appendix to A.P.P.M. van Baal: P.077/98, memo from Van Baal to De Grave, 'Bevordering Klol Karremans' ('Lt Col Karremans promoted), 26/08/98.

²⁶³⁸ Interview G.M Offers, 06/02/02.

²⁶³⁹ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 12/12/01; Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, A.P.P.M van Baal, p. 8-9.

²⁶⁴⁰ Semi Static Archive of Royal Netherlands Army. Army Council Minutes, 09/01/96. However, the minutes contain nothing about the promotion because of "personnel confidentiality aspects". Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, Appendix to A.P.P.M. van Baal: P.077/98, memo of Van Baal to De Grave, 'Bevordering Klol Karremans' ('Lt Col Karremans promoted'), 26/08/98.

²⁶⁴¹ According to Van Baal the army council supported this line of reasoning. The fact that neither the Minister nor the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army resigned was sufficient reason for Van Baal not to raise any further questions about Karremans' performance. Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 12/12/01.

²⁶⁴² Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan* ('On the other side of the moon'), Part 1, p. 143-144.

Kreemers to inform him of the approved promotions, including that of Karremans.²⁶⁴³ Two days later, on 12 January, the spokesman received a call from the aforementioned VNU journalist who wanted confirmation of her suspicion that was based on information from ‘military circles’.²⁶⁴⁴ That evening Kreemers informed his minister who had returned from the Christmas recess.²⁶⁴⁵ Voorhoeve was furious when he heard the news.

So the main reason for the Minister’s anger was the fact that none of those present had realized the sensitivity of the appointment-cum-promotion or had thought of consulting him. Not Couzy; nor his deputy, Van Baal. ‘We just all misread the situation. It’s that simple, ‘ so the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army commented.²⁶⁴⁶

But was it that simple? Whatever the truth was, Van Baal stuck to the formal line. In 1994 he had promised Karremans promotion and he was honouring that promise. According to the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Karremans regularly called the office of Management Development to ask what he would be doing in the future. Van Baal saw nothing strange in that question: ‘If you are told in 1994 that you are eligible to be promoted colonel and the moment that you will be handing over the command of your battalion is drawing near, then surely it’s perfectly normal to ask: ‘What about my future? Where am I going?’²⁶⁴⁷

But the question remained whether Couzy knew about this. The Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army himself has always denied knowing about the nomination before 9 January 1996. He said that he agreed to the nomination at the time because the position (low-profile) and the effective date (not earlier than mid-1996) were in accordance with the line thought out in October. He was however irked by the fact that Karremans had already been informed, which in his view made the process irreversible. In his autobiography the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army wrote: ‘That bothered me, but such things happen in a large organization. I had been intending to inform the Minister of this promotion. Now it was too late.’²⁶⁴⁸

In 1998 the matter again reared its head when Couzy suggested in public that Van Baal had pushed the promotion through without his knowledge. ‘I was able to block that [Karremans’ promotion] once, but later my deputy General Van Baal went ahead with it behind my back. It was Karremans’ turn and that was that. That’s how military people think sometimes’.²⁶⁴⁹ Van Baal tried to set this straight towards Van Kemenade (see previous chapter). He repeated his version of events that it simply had not occurred to anyone to inform the Minister:

²⁶⁴³ According to Van Baal he had contact a day later, on 11 January, with Kreemers about the promotion of Karremans. NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Hand-written letter from Van Baal to Kreemers, 02/02/96.

²⁶⁴⁴ BSG. V96000607, memo from Kreemers to Voorhoeve, ‘Bevordering Lieutenant-Colonel Karremans’ (‘Promotion of Lieutenant Colonel Karremans’), 12/01/96. The memo contains a report of the talk with the VNU journalist. All promotions incidentally are published in *Legercourier*, which appears monthly.

²⁶⁴⁵ At the request of DV H. van den Heuvel, Kreemers made a report of the interview with the journalist for the minister. Kreemers, ‘Aan de achterkant van de maan’ (‘On the other side of the moon’), Part 1, p. 144; Voorhoeve was on a language course at a nunnery and was difficult to reach there, according to Kreemers. Interview H.P.M. Kreemers, 29/01/02.

²⁶⁴⁶ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 12/12/01; Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, Appendix to A.P.P.M. van Baal: P.077/98, memo from Van Baal to De Grave, ‘Bevordering Klol Karremans’ (‘Lt Col Karremans promoted’), 26/08/98.

²⁶⁴⁷ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 12/12/01. According to Kreemers, Karremans also wrote to the Directorate of Personnel to enquire about his opportunities. ‘Aan de achterkant van de maan’ (‘On the other side of the moon’), Part 1, p. 142.

²⁶⁴⁸ Couzy, *Mijn jaren*, pp. 174-175. The Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army described his failure to inform the minister as an ‘error’ and condemned this as yet another breakdown in communication. He told the same version of events to *Elsevier*, where he said: ‘Before I could write my note to the minister, a journalist was already on the phone to him’. B. Bommels, ‘Srebrenica was de waanzin ten top’ (‘srebrenica was the height of madness’), *Elsevier*, 06/07/96. The commander does condense the chronology here as three days lapsed between the decision and the notification to the minister.

²⁶⁴⁹ Jaco van Lambalgen and Cees van der Laan, ‘Het is niet pluis op Plein 4’ (‘strange things are happening at Plein 4’), *Tubantia*, 22/08/98.

‘And that was obviously wrong. He [Couzy] subsequently had to offer his apologies for that; he also took responsibility for the matter (...). But in my eyes it’s not done to start exclaiming afterwards: it all happened behind my back. Because that is simply not the case (...) This is beginning to get very annoying. Couzy is starting to throw mud’²⁶⁵⁰

It certainly seems hard to believe that Couzy knew nothing of the promotion before January 1996. After all, as early as October 1995 plans were already made with his involvement to give Karremans a position at colonel level. He wanted to put it off at the time, but not call it off – nor did he grasp the opportunities for doing that in October and January. What the actual position would be (in terms of content) and as from when, he probably did not know before 9 January; but that Karremans would be made a colonel, could, in the words of Van Baal, ‘no longer be a surprise’ for Couzy.²⁶⁵¹

Be that as it may, the proceedings surrounding the promotion certainly testified to the lack of political insight among the leadership of the Royal Netherlands Army. Their awareness that the promotion of the controversial commander would meet with resistance evidently did not prevent the military leadership from going ahead with the promotion. Van Baal stuck to the formal line and saw no reason to do otherwise; not on the grounds of Karremans’ actions (what’s more, formally speaking, he had never received a negative performance appraisal), nor in response to the stance taken by the political and military leadership who, after all, had stayed put. Whether there were any other reasons for going ahead with the promotion, such as a counter-move against the political leadership, is hard to say. This is certainly possible but there is no hard-and-fast evidence for it.²⁶⁵² Presumably the military leadership wanted to manifest their support for Karremans who, as the scapegoat, had taken the brunt of the criticism.²⁶⁵³ Another factor, no doubt, was the army’s desire to keep the matter in their own hands.

The affair highlighted in no uncertain manner the poor communicative relations and the untransparent procedures within the defence apparatus.²⁶⁵⁴ There was great mistrust between the military and politicians, and the unwillingness of the military leadership to comply with the Minister taking supreme responsibility for the actions of the Royal Netherlands Army was equally great. Or as Nysingh wrote in 1997 ‘at the time of handing over the command, Schouten had already subtly hinted that he would not continue to tentatively test the limits of the primacy of the political leadership, as Couzy had done’.²⁶⁵⁵ Though Couzy’s departure on reaching the prescribed retirement age marked the exit of one heavily criticized protagonist in the Srebrenica tragedy, Srebrenica continued to hang over the ministry like an oppressive blanket of cloud.²⁶⁵⁶ It was not until 1998 that a minister felt compelled to take tough measures in an effort to restore the damaged integrity of the Ministry of Defence.

²⁶⁵⁰ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (About Srebrenica), Part 2, Appendix 4, A.P.P.M. van Baal, p. 9.

²⁶⁵¹ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 12/12/01.

²⁶⁵² In 1997, for instance, the current affairs programme *Netwerk* had mooted the theory that the Royal Netherlands Army had gone ahead with the promotion to revenge themselves on the politicians, to show that they were rallying behind their commander. *Netwerk*, 26/01/97.

²⁶⁵³ See, for instance, the idea of retired General Major Bruurmijn: ‘Dutchbat Commander Karremans was used as a scapegoat. That was convenient for both Couzy and the minister. Karremans also drew the fire towards himself and in doing so covered others. He was rewarded for this later when he was promoted to colonel. But he has been damaged for life.’ In: Jaco van Lambalgen and Cees van der Laan, ‘Het is niet pluis op Plein 4’ (‘strange things are happening at Plein 4’), *Tubantia*, 22/08/98.

²⁶⁵⁴ Interview H.H. Hulshof, 06/12/01; Jaco van Lambalgen and Cees van der Laan, ‘Het is niet pluis op Plein 4’, *Tubantia*, 22/08/98.

²⁶⁵⁵ Ewoud Nysingh, ‘Liever onder de troepen’ (‘Rather among the troops’), *De Volkskrant*, 26/04/97.

²⁶⁵⁶ According to a “senior officier” in: Jaco van Lambalgen and Cees van der Laan, ‘Het is niet pluis op Plein 4’, *Tubantia*, 22/08/98.

8. The OP-Mike incident

What came to be known as the ‘OP-Mike incident’ played an important role in the aftermath of the events in Srebrenica. Here we propose to explore how allegations that a Dutch armoured vehicle ran over a number of Muslims developed into a full-blown incident and the effects that this had on those involved. In this connection, of course, it is important to establish the extent to which the great commotion caused by this incident was, in retrospect, justified by the facts. The history of the incident is largely also the history of the manner in which the information about it reached the outside world. But what was the core of the matter?

Part 3 already dealt with the difficult circumstances under which the troops manning OP-Mike started to pull back to Potocari on 11 July.²⁶⁵⁷ The Dutchbat soldiers had seen two men being liquidated before their eyes by the local Muslim commander ‘Envir’ for trying to prevent the departure of the Dutch. Subsequently, mutual fighting had broken out and more people had been killed.²⁶⁵⁸ The group of over one hundred refugees from the village of Jaglici, where the OP was located, then slowly moved in the direction of Potocari together with the Dutch. En route large numbers of civilians from the surrounding villages and hamlets joined the column. At 8.10pm the soldier on duty recorded in the register of the Ops Room: ‘OP-M goes back, but thousands of refugees head in this direction with them. ‘Huge problem’.²⁶⁵⁹

The YPR was laden with refugees. Everybody was trying to get themselves a place. The OP-commander, who was also the driver of the YPR at the time, sergeant M.A. (Martijn) Mulder, ‘kicked’ anyone who could walk normally off the vehicle. Mothers were throwing their children onto the YPR; some fell off again. Very soon, wounded people, victims of the earlier Bosnian Serb mortar shootings, were also lying ‘three layers thick’ on the armoured vehicle. Some were therefore at risk of asphyxiation. The medic did what he could. At a certain moment Mulder heard that a woman was in labour on the hatch of the armoured vehicle.²⁶⁶⁰

Mulder was in the YPR together with his liaison officer and the gunner. Two soldiers were walking behind the vehicle and one in front. Progress was very slow and Mulder feared being cut off from the compound, also because fuel was running low: ‘It was drive, stop, drive, stop’. Captain Matthijssen had ordered him to keep the refugees behind him, but at a certain point this was no longer possible as more and more people were continuing to join the column. Mulder stopped now and then just to show them his face, to reassure them.²⁶⁶¹ On one of these occasions he saw several dozens of refugees ahead of his vehicle, mostly women, young children and elderly people. Behind him he saw countless refugees as far as the eye could reach.

Around midnight a crisis situation arose. The YPR was on the road running between the village of Susjnari, just south of Jaglici, and Potocari, just beyond the village of Milacevici. At that point of the route there was a steep rock face on the south side and, on the north side, water with a steep slope behind it. Mulder had just climbed back onto the front of the armoured vehicle when he heard a burst of fire. The column was being fired at from the north with .50 tracer bullets. Great panic and chaos immediately ensued. Refugees fell from the YPR; it was not clear to the soldiers whether they had been hit or were scrambling for cover. Mulder had to decide instantly what to do. He thought the white YPR was attracting the fire and that there would be even more victims if he were to stay put. He ordered his men to get into the armoured car and go under armour. Then he switched on the lights of the YPR and blew his horn. He then accelerated.

²⁶⁵⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, the following is based on: OM Arnhem, official reports drawn up by the KMar -Sebrateam, P. 506/1998, completed on 25/11/98, and on debriefing statements of R.P. van Veen, 11/09/95; M. Doze, 12/09/95; information based on confidential debriefing statements (52).

²⁶⁵⁸ Confidential information (83).

²⁶⁵⁹ SMG/Debrief. Monthly Ops Room register, 11/07/95, entry 20.10.

²⁶⁶⁰ Interview M.A. Mulder, 06/10/98.

²⁶⁶¹ Interview M.A. Mulder, 06/10/98.

Though Mulder had looked when he drove off and the road appeared to be fairly free, he was partly unsighted because he was driving under armour. He had the impression that he had run over people. But under armour his view was restricted. This impression was however confirmed by his gunner who was responsible for keeping an eye on the driver's blind spot from his gun turret on top of the YPR. He was certain they had run over refugees. He saw how people were pressed against the rock face and pushing others away. It all went very quickly. There was no time to warn Mulder. The gunner saw at least three people end up under the tracks on the right-hand side of the YPR.

Mulder quickly drove on for another three hundred metres or so. After a bend in the road, where both the YPR and the refugees found cover, he brought his vehicle to a halt. The YPR was level with the Mosque on entering Potocari (the actual village is situated in east-west direction along the road to Susjnari, which leads to the north-south road from Srebrenica to Bratunac on which the factory complexes and the Dutchbat compound were situated). The crew discussed what had just happened. They also reported the shooting to the Ops Room of C company. Meanwhile the refugees were approaching, still in a state of great panic. No one came up to the Dutchbat soldiers to say refugees had been run over. Together they drove on to the *blocking position* of B Company at the T-junction with the road between Srebrenica and Bratunac. There they were met by their colleagues who told them they were to proceed to the compound; the refugees would be led onto the bus yard. Two sick people stayed on the YPR and were taken to the compound in Potocari.

After Mulder had parked the YPR in the factory hall, colleagues came out to meet them. Six of them then spoke in the bunker about the incident in order to form a clear idea of what had actually happened. The gunner knew for certain that they had run over people. Mulder then reported the incident to his Commander, Captain Matthijssen. Shortly afterwards the YPR crew heard (probably from colleagues) that blood and remains of flesh could be seen on the tracks and that these had had to be hosed down. Not everyone dared to go and look. Mulder consoled himself with the idea that this could also be the remains of a cow. The animal, that had probably been taken out of the stable by refugees, had crossed the path of the YPR when they had started to pull back. Mulder had been unable to avoid the animal and had run over it.²⁶⁶²

In Zagreb, after the battalion had returned on 22 July, Mulder was debriefed by Generals Couzy and Bastiaans. It is not clear from the written report of that interview whether the running over of the refugees was mentioned.²⁶⁶³ According to Mulder he had talked about it with Couzy, albeit briefly. This was confirmed by one of his colleagues who had already heard this in Zagreb from Mulder. Couzy himself later confirmed that Mulder had reported the incident to him, but that he had not given it any further thought. The Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army had been more interested in the mutual fighting between the Muslims that Mulder had witnessed.²⁶⁶⁴

During the debriefing in Assen in September 1995, Mulder was for unknown reasons the only person who mentioned the incident involving refugees being run over. On that occasion he said that 'quite a lot of people' had ended up under the YPR²⁶⁶⁵, but added that this was not based on personal observation. Because he had not read the report carefully, he had failed to notice that this was the impression he had conveyed. The story was not included in the debriefing report that appeared in October 1995.

All personnel who had manned OP-Mike left the military. The events in Srebrenica had made a deep impression on them. Most of them could not rid themselves of the memory. When the humanist chaplain of Dutchbat III, then Major L.W.A. (Bart) Hetebrij, heard in a roundabout way of the problems that the incident had caused among some of the soldiers, he managed to contact two of

²⁶⁶² Interview M.A. Mulder, 06/10/98.

²⁶⁶³ SMG, 1007. Klep/Lagaune, 'debriefing report of sgt1 Mulder, 22/07/95, Pleso Camp'.

²⁶⁶⁴ Interview H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

²⁶⁶⁵ Confidential information (83).

them, including Mulder, in the autumn of 1995.²⁶⁶⁶ They told him the story of the refugees being run over.

Early July 1996 Hetebrij received a telephone call from the Deputy Director of Information, H.P.M. (Bert) Kreemers. He had been approached early in May by the American journalist David Rohde, who had won the Pulitzer Prize for his reports in 1995 about the execution sites where the men from Srebrenica had been killed. Rohde was now writing a book about the fall of the Safe Area and had asked the Ministry of Defence to cooperate. Kreemers had promised the Ministry's cooperation. In June Rohde sent him a list of questions, including one about the soldiers who had manned OP-Mike. The journalist wanted to know what they had seen of the Muslims' departure. Kreemers tried to put Rohde in touch with them but heard that all the soldiers involved had in the meantime left the Royal Netherlands Army. He was given the name of Hetebrij who had evidently maintained contact with the ex-soldiers.²⁶⁶⁷

In the first week of July Kreemers called Hetebrij and put Rohde's request to him. The humanist chaplain's urgent advice was to keep Rohde away from the soldiers who had manned OP-Mike. The commander of the YPR had been compelled to decide to drive through a crowd of people, including women and children. Kreemers understood from Hetebrij's words that some twenty to thirty people may have been involved. The decision to start driving had been taken in a panic and on arrival at Potocari it had been necessary to hose down the tracks of the YPR because human remains were sticking to them. Two ex-soldiers now felt the incident weighing heavily on their conscience. According to Kreemers Hetebrij said that the crew had sworn secrecy to one another, but Hetebrij later denied this when speaking to investigator Van Kemenade in 1998.²⁶⁶⁸

Since the fall of Srebrenica Deputy Director of Information Kreemers had been the most important Defence spokesman on the subject. He had tried to keep the publicity as favourable as possible for Defence, but not everyone appreciated his approach. He gradually gained a reputation among journalists of being a spin doctor. They suspected him of trying to keep the lid on the cover-up. Some only changed that opinion when it became clear after the publication of all sorts of documents that much had also been unknown to Kreemers.²⁶⁶⁹ But even within the Defence organization not everyone was enamoured with the way he went about things. Many members of the Royal Netherlands Army saw him as the mouthpiece of Voorhoeve and felt he mainly served Voorhoeve's interests.

Kreemers recognized the great political risks attached to the OP-Mike story, at least if the version he had heard was true. There was no reference to the incident in the debriefing report as the Minister might then be accused of having failed to give Parliament full information. "I will resign within five minutes flat if it turns out that Parliament has been wrongly informed and the matter is not rectified", I said two or three times in my office to those present,' said Voorhoeve.²⁶⁷⁰ One of these occasions was when the OP-Mike incident was announced. On 9 July 1996, after the telephone conversation with Hetebrij, Kreemers informed Voorhoeve, in the presence of his Head of Staff, G. (Gijs) ter Kuile. The Minister was shocked when he heard about the incident and said he would resign if it was true.²⁶⁷¹ The highly charged nature of the affair was also significant from the fact that Lieutenant General M. Schouten, Couzy's successor, already had an order lying on his desk to disband the 13th Battalion of the Airmobile Brigade. Whether the order would actually be given depended on the outcome of an inquiry that Voorhoeve had requested.²⁶⁷²

²⁶⁶⁶ Interview L.W.A. Hetebrij, 12/01/01.

²⁶⁶⁷ Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan* ('On the other side of the moon'), pp. 151-152; *ibid*, Part 2, pp. 26-27; Interview H.P.M. Kreemers, 18/03/99; OM Arnhem, KMar Sebra-team, P. 506B 001/1998. Official report of interview of witness H.P.M. Kreemers, 25/08/98.

²⁶⁶⁸ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, L.W.A. Hetebrij and E. Dijkman, p. 2.

²⁶⁶⁹ This emerged in various interviews with journalists, including Twan Huys. Interview T. Huys, 08/11/00.

²⁶⁷⁰ Voorhoeve's Diary, p. 193. The other two occasions were the fall itself on 11 July and the publication of clear indications of mass murders in August 1995. Voorhoeve does not mention OP-Mike.

²⁶⁷¹ Kreemers, *Aan de achterkant van de maan* ('On the other side of the moon'), Part 2, p. 26.

²⁶⁷² Interview H.P.M. Kreemers, 18/03/99.

The decision to this effect was taken in a conversation with Junior Minister J. Gmelich Meijling, some senior officials and the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, D.G.J. Fabius, in which Voorhoeve repeated his statement about a possible resignation. Those present decided to ask the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee to conduct an inquiry. Voorhoeve wanted to know whether the OP-Mike story had been reported during the debriefing in 1995 and whether there had been any contact with the Public Prosecutions Department.²⁶⁷³ Fabius first called Hetebrij who was shocked to hear the news. When Kreemers called him he had assumed that the story about OP-Mike was known in The Hague. Now he realized that his statement about something he had been told in confidence had acted as a wake-up call for The Hague. So Hetebrij was furious with Kreemers. When Fabius called him, he refused to cooperate on the grounds that what he knew had been told in confidence.²⁶⁷⁴ The Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee then sent two of his investigators, P.H. Rutten and C.A. Martens, around to see him. Faced with this pressure, Hetebrij promised to contact one of the persons in question and ask him to cooperate. The chaplain called Mulder who gave him his permission. Hetebrij then passed his name and address on to the investigators.

Shortly after midnight, Rutten and Martens visited Mulder to pick up his debriefing report. Mulder handed it over on condition that only the Minister would receive a copy.²⁶⁷⁵ Meanwhile, Brigadier General O. van der Wind, the former leader of the debriefing in Assen, had received a request from senior ministerial level to carry out an inquiry into the OP-Mike incident. Van der Wind instructed two members of the Military Intelligence Service of the Royal Netherlands Army, F. Pennin and Captain Triep, to take the confidential statements out of the debriefing archive. On the basis of the statements, they formulated a draft reply which they took back to Van der Wind who drew up the definite reply.²⁶⁷⁶

On Friday 11 July Kreemers was told by Minister Voorhoeve that the inquiry of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had led to a version of the story which, certainly in terms of numbers, diverged strongly from that of Kreemers.²⁶⁷⁷ What remained unclear was whether the number he believed he had heard from Hetebrij was correct. What had transpired was that it had been mentioned during the debriefing and that there had been contact with J. Besier of the Public Prosecutions Department at Arnhem about the possibility that refugees had been run over. He, however, saw no grounds for criminal proceedings. The incident had not featured in any other statement and, even if true, it had taken place under circumstances of war.

The reference to the inquiry of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee by Voorhoeve was remarkable. As Kreemers himself noticed in 1998, that consisted of nothing more than the official report of the contacts that Rutten and Martens had with Hetebrij and Mulder on 9 July 1996. What's more, that report had merely quoted what Mulder had said about the refugees being run over in his debriefing statement.²⁶⁷⁸ The conclusion that there was no question of a new fact was drawn after comparing his statement with those of the other YPR crew members. It turned out that they had said nothing about the matter.

At the internal meeting where Voorhoeve reported the outcome of the inquiry, Kreemers received sharp criticism. He recalled that the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, Lieutenant General A.P.P.M. van Baal, had said in no uncertain manner that this should 'on no account happen again'. It was said that the information officer had wrong-footed the Minister. In future such matters were to be

²⁶⁷³ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica') Part 2, Appendix 4, J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 1st interview, p. 12.

²⁶⁷⁴ Interview L.W.A. Hetebrij, 12/01/01.

²⁶⁷⁵ Interview M.A. Mulder, 06/10/1998. This element was absent in the official report that the investigators made of their activities.

²⁶⁷⁶ OM Arnhem, KMar Sebra-team, P 506.D8d/1998. Official Report of additional interview with witness F. Pennin, 24/11/98.

²⁶⁷⁷ Kreemers, *'Aan de achterkant van de maan'* ('On the other side of the moon'), Part 2, p. 27; Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 1st interview, p. 12.

²⁶⁷⁸ Kreemers, *'Aan de achterkant van de maan'* ('On the other side of the moon'), Part 2, p. 29; OM Arnhem, KMar R 003/1996 JD, 'srebrenica Post M', 10/07/96. Included in: KMar Sebrateam, P. 506/1998, completed on 25/11/98.

handled through the Commander. Kreemers was also reproached for having caused unnecessary panic.²⁶⁷⁹ Later Van Baal declared to the NIOD that he ‘fully understood’ that Kreemers had gone directly to the Minister: “The relationship [of the Central Organization] with the Royal Netherlands Army was determined by the relationship between Voorhoeve and Couzy. So it was evident that the people at the Plein no longer wanted to have any dealings with the Royal Netherlands Army.” At the time Van Baal had shown little understanding for this: ‘so I was annoyed with him [Kreemers] about that: “(...) Bert, I see you often. I fail to understand why you did not bring this phenomenon immediately to the Army so that we could have looked into it straightaway.” Well, he didn’t do that. And then the relationship takes on a whole new dimension that can never be put right.’²⁶⁸⁰ Shortly afterwards, colleagues advised the information officer to lie low for a while. He took parental leave.²⁶⁸¹

Two years later, in 1998, the OP-Mike affair flared up violently again. The efforts to lay Srebrenica to rest seemed doomed to fail, with new or reportedly new incidents constantly coming to light. Every year, around the anniversary of the fall of Srebrenica on 11 July, the publicity would swell into a crescendo. ‘The S is in the month again’, people would say within Defence.²⁶⁸²

One of the main Srebrenica news-chasers was the current affairs programme *Nova*, with reporter T. Huys playing a particularly prominent role. In the summer of 1995 the editors had singled out Srebrenica as a journalistic spearhead and since then the programme had regularly caused controversy.²⁶⁸³ By now a great many parties with diverse interests had become involved with the Srebrenica affair, so that Huys, but also the other journalists who had sank their teeth into the dossier, had a field day. The people involved found that selective disclosure of information to the media was an effective way of promoting their own interests or damaging those of others.

Nova, too, made clever use of this. In the evening of 12 August 1998, Huys sent a fax to Kreemers in which he invoked the WOB (Freedom of Information Act) to request the disclosure of ‘Report 003/1996 JD’, drawn up by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee on 19 July 1996. The precise reference to this confidential document makes it clear that the reporter had been tipped off.

While preparing a reaction, Kreemers set eyes on the document for the first time. To his amazement, it appeared to confirm Hetebrij’s story about the part Mulder had played. On 13 August the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Fabius, went to deliver the report from 1996 in person to Secretary-General D.J. Barth, who allowed Kreemers to see it. The document contained the relevant passages from Mulder’s debriefing statement. Fabius said that he had called the Chief Public Prosecutor in Arnhem, De Wit. The Public Prosecutions Department was taking over the case and the documents were already on their way to serve as a basis for a new criminal inquiry.²⁶⁸⁴ For this

²⁶⁷⁹ Kreemers, ‘*Aan de achterkant van de maan*’ (‘On the other side of the moon’), Part 2, p. 29

²⁶⁸⁰ Interview A.P.P.M. van Baal, 12/12/01.

²⁶⁸¹ Kreemers, ‘*Aan de achterkant van de maan*’ (‘On the other side of the moon’), Part 2, p. 27.

²⁶⁸² The investigators encountered this expression various times during informal contacts.

²⁶⁸³ Interview T. Huys, 08/07/00. See also the appendix of J. Wieten, ‘*srebrenica en de journalistiek*’ (‘srebrenica and journalism’), July 2001.

²⁶⁸⁴ The OM was to investigate whether any punishable acts had been committed. The decision to carry out the inquiry was taken by the Chief Public Prosecutor in Arnhem after new material became available. Since 13 August the OM had had a report of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee from 1996 about OP-M. This had reached them after Defence had started to deal with the WOB (Freedom of Information) request from *Nova*. The OM would then also check the entire debriefing report again for any indications of alleged punishable acts. In e.g.: ‘Onderzoek OM naar Dutchbat’ (Public Prosecutor investigates Dutchbat); ‘Onvolledige weergave incidenten Srebrenica’ (‘Incomplete account of incidents in Srebrenica’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/08/98; ‘Toch onderzoek optreden Dutchbat’ (‘Dutchbat inquiry after all’), *Trouw*, 14/08/98; TK, session 1997-1998, 26 122, no. 1 (13/08/98). The Ministries of Defence and Justice together with the OM had incidentally announced in a press statement on Wednesday 12 August that, as in 1995, the recently received management report gave insufficient grounds for a criminal investigation. The reason for this statement was *Nova*’s claim that the management report had never reached the OM. The content had been made known to the OM in 1995 but the document had never been sent. The proviso was that this decision would be reviewed if the current inquiries revealed new facts. A day later this proved to

reason the request to access information under the WOB (Freedom of Information Act) was refused. Huys was furious when he heard this. In view of his personal involvement in 1996, Kreemers decided to stop acting as a spokesman in relation to this subject.²⁶⁸⁵

Still on 13 August dr. J.A. van Kemenade and his Chief of Staff D. Bijl were at the Ministry of Defence, where they were drawing up a press release about Van Kemenade's appointment as independent investigator. He was to ascertain how Defence had handled information in this connection (see Part IV, Chapter 8). This initiative was the consequence of all sorts of painful revelations, the main source of which was the *Nova* TV programme. De Grave was unwilling to inherit the blot that Srebrenica had left on his predecessor's image and had therefore decided to act immediately.

Elsewhere in the ministry, De Grave and Korthals (Justice) were at that moment meeting with their respective secretaries-general and several civil servants. De Grave repeated his instructions to review all dossiers on Srebrenica once again to find out whether there were any other matters that needed to be made public or handed over to the Public Prosecutions Department. The two ministers decided to write a letter about this as quickly as possible to Parliament.

This intention was thwarted by a telephone call from the NOS News. An anonymous source had come forward with a story that dozens of Muslims had been run over by a Dutch YPR at OP-Mike. The News was planning to give the story 'big' coverage and was inviting the Minister to respond in the programme. De Grave gratefully used this opportunity to announce that a criminal inquiry was to be carried out into the events at OP-Mike and that Van Kemenade would conduct an independent inquiry.

That same evening on 13 August 1998 the parliamentary parties expressed 'shock and sadness' at the NOS News report (which was based on a 'source within the defence organization that wished to remain anonymous') that a Dutch YPR had run over and killed twenty to thirty Muslims in July 1995. 'This is a blow to the Netherlands and to the Ministry of Defence,' said MP J. Hoekema of D66 (Democrats).²⁶⁸⁶ The great political nervousness created in The Hague by the steady stream of publicity about Srebrenica since July also had a visible effect on Prime Minister Kok. On returning from holiday a few days after the NOS News report, Kok stated, without having any other information, that he was 'dismayed' and that there could be 'no question of understanding' if the reports proved to be true.²⁶⁸⁷ He was later criticized for these overhasty and strong words.

The number of people that had been run over according to the NOS News (twenty to thirty) was the same number that Deputy Director of General Policy Matters L.F.F. Casteleijn had heard in 1996 from the mouth of Kreemers and had laid down in a memo.²⁶⁸⁸ The identity of the person who had leaked the information to the NOS News remained unclear, as did the motive. Huys claimed that the 'revelation' was designed to distract attention from his journalistic digging into this issue and other sensitive matters.²⁶⁸⁹ That is possible. Now Defence was one step ahead of him. Minister De Grave could demonstrate that he had immediately taken every step to get to the bottom of the matter and had thus avoided sustaining political damage at such an early stage in his career as a minister.

The media also raked up other incidents of people being run over, some of which had long been known. Amidst the commotion, the various stories were sometimes confused or mixed up. The inquiry in 1998 by the Sebra-team of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, which had been specially set

be the case. In e.g.: 'OM weigert onderzoek Srebrenica. Vervanger van De Ruiters gezocht.' (Public Prosecutor refuses Srebrenica inquiry. De Ruiters to be replaced.), *Het Parool*, 13/08/98; 'Justitie: geen onderzoek Dutchbatters' (Justice: no investigation of Dutchbat soldiers), *De Volkskrant*, 13/08/98; Kreemers, '*Aan de achterkant van de maan*' ('On the other side of the moon'), Part 2, p. 22-31; Media Release of the District Court in Arnhem, (14/08/99).

²⁶⁸⁵ Kreemers, '*Aan de achterkant van de maan*' ('On the other side of the moon'), Part 2, p. 29.

²⁶⁸⁶ 'Tweede Kamer geschokt over nieuwste feiten in zaak Srebrenica' (Parliament shocked by latest facts in Srebrenica case) *ANP*, 13/08/98, 21:23 CET.

²⁶⁸⁷ 'Kok onthutst door incident Dutchbat' ('Kok dismayed by Dutchbat incident'), *De Limburger*, 18/08/98.

²⁶⁸⁸ Interview H.P.M. Kreemers, 18/03/99.

²⁶⁸⁹ Interview T. Huys, 08/07/00.

up to investigate all Srebrenica-related matters that could lead to criminal prosecution, looked into these incidents as well as OP-Mike.²⁶⁹⁰

The findings of the Sebra-team concerning OP-Mike illustrated how two years previously Defence had become convinced that Hetebrij's story was inaccurate. It also became clear from the official reports how Defence had arrived at that conclusion. Due to the description of the activities of Van der Wind and his colleagues in 1996, the inquiry unintentionally cast light on the way in which intelligence was gathered in times of political emergency. This also made it clear that the conclusion drawn in that year was essentially the same as the conclusion of the compilers of the debriefing report: Mulder's story was 'hardly' corroborated by 'supporting statements'. Nor was this outcome particularly strange. After all, both in Assen in 1995 and in 1996 General Van der Wind had been involved in the inquiry and in both cases the conclusions had been exclusively based on material from the debriefing statement; no new facts had become available. In the course of the inquiry of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in 1998, the truth did come to light: during his interview one of the other crew members admitted having seen the YPR run over people, although in his opinion only over a small number of people. Because of the severe psychic problems that this event had caused and a number of other distressing incidents, he had kept silent about this matter all these years. He told the inquiry team that he was relieved to have told the story now. The same applied to his colleagues who made additional statements.

The Public Prosecutor decided not to prosecute the driver of the YPR, the former sergeant Mulder. Wilful intent and guilt could not be proven. In view of the critical situation – the YPR was under fire; there was great panic – the crew had taken the right decision in driving off; they had done what was to be expected to avoid casualties. There had been no violation of criminal law.²⁶⁹¹ To him and his five colleagues, the verdict that their decision had been understandable formally drew a line under a deeply distressing event. OP-Mike was a traumatic event for all Dutch parties involved and an example of the impossible dilemmas that some Dutchbat soldiers had faced. Shortly after the NOS News programme one of the former crew members of OP-Mike spoke anonymously in the press:

'shit, (...) I want to forget it all. It was all a shambles. You have no idea what we went through. Every day we were exposed to the madness of war. And now the press coolly isolates each incident and magnifies it out of proportion. Man, when you are fleeing under mortar fire [sic] you don't stop to wonder what's going on around you. You just think: how can I survive this hell? Will I ever make it back home?'²⁶⁹²

Apart from these indirect victims, there were also the refugees who had been run over and shot at. It never became clear how many there were. The media outcry in the Netherlands about the OP-Mike incident also alarmed the Bosnian press. Some media and interest groups responded with outright hostility to what they considered to be yet another instance of the anti-Muslim attitude among the Dutch military. They certainly fanned the flames. But there were also journalists who undertook serious investigative work. One of them was the former UNMO interpreter Emir Suljagic, who had come out of the enclave together with Dutchbat. He later became a journalist for the independent weekly *Dani*. In the summer of 1998 Suljagic also went after the story of refugees being run over, but found no confirmation.²⁶⁹³ A colleague of the daily newspaper *Dnevni Avaz* managed to trace a few people who

²⁶⁹⁰ For more details about this, see Part IV, Chapter 4.

²⁶⁹¹ Media Release Arnhem District Court, 24 March 1999. To reach a conviction, evidence was required of the consequence of the incident (injuries or deaths *as a consequence of*). Even if victims were identified, prosecution would have been inappropriate as the soldiers' actions had not constituted a deliberate attempt to kill or injure refugees.

²⁶⁹² P. Bolwerk, 'Over moslims gereden? Niets van gemerkt' ('Run over Muslims? Never noticed a thing?'), *De Limburger*, 15/07/98.

²⁶⁹³ Interview Emir Suljagić, 12/03/99.

were among the refugees walking with the YPR. They heard the story for the first time and were surprised. Nobody had seen anything. They did not rule out the possibility that such an incident had occurred. The paper headlined the article: ‘In that hell everything was possible’.²⁶⁹⁴

9. About Van Kemenade

The media, with the politicians in their wake, would not let go of ‘srebrenica’ after the concluding parliamentary debate in December 1995. Every year the fall of the enclave received broad coverage around 11 July. Existing reports issued by Defence, such as the debriefing report, had not yet given satisfactory answers to the events surrounding the fall of the enclave. The subjects that made the news were virtually identical, but each time the accents were different. What’s more, the object of the exercise was not just to find out exactly what had happened and who was responsible. Many assumed, or even became convinced, that the defence organization had willingly and knowingly swept unpleasant matters under the carpet to prevent putting the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Netherlands Army in a bad light. The Netherlands, so it was claimed, had covered up information on Srebrenica. In the summer of 1998 the lowest ebb in this affair was reached: the integrity of the Defence organization, and thus of the ministry, was explicitly called into doubt.

The brand new Minister of Defence, F.H.G. de Grave, promised improvements and announced that everything would be done to get everything out in the open. One of his actions was to initiate an inquiry into the collection and dissemination of information concerning the fall of the enclave.²⁶⁹⁵ The Royal Commissioner of the Province of North Holland, J.A. van Kemenade, agreed to carry out this task. The appointment of this political heavyweight was a clear indication that the government was taking the criticism seriously and that concrete action was being undertaken to bring the ongoing discussion about Srebrenica to a close.

Van Kemenade concluded that there had been no question of a cover-up in the sense of a deliberate obstruction of truth-finding efforts. He did immediately add that since July 1995 the flow of information on Srebrenica had often been muddled, sparse, haphazard, late and amateurish. Defence had also reacted rather forced to incidents.²⁶⁹⁶

De Grave heaved a sigh of relief²⁶⁹⁷. This was understandable considering there was so much at stake. In his own words: ‘I could not have continued in the job if there was any suggestion that Defence was

²⁶⁹⁴ ‘In that hell everything was possible’, *Dnevni Avaz*, 16/08/98. Translation in the daily press round-up of the US SFOR unit in Tuzla: *Tuzla Night Owl*, 17/08/98. During interviews of NIOD investigators in Bosnia after the summer of 1998, the general reaction was one of surprise and acceptance; these things happen in wartime.

²⁶⁹⁵ Several more measures followed that summer. On 13 August 1998 De Grave also announced that the OM would carry out a renewed inquiry into allegations that Dutchbat soldiers had run over Muslims (see elsewhere in this chapter). Then on 18 August 1998 the decision was taken that a parliamentary working group, later the Blaauw Committee, would investigate whether a parliamentary inquiry was necessary. The findings of Van Kemenade and the OM were awaited first. The Blaauw Committee then concluded that a parliamentary committee should investigate how the political decision-making on peacekeeping operations could be improved. This task was entrusted to the Bakker Committee which started its work on 24 March 1999. Mainly proponents of a parliamentary inquiry complained in the media about the long succession of (partial) inquiries into ‘srebrenica’ alongside the ‘major’ NIOD inquiry which, in view of the length of the project, could not yet answer any questions. In their eyes the political leadership was using all these inquiries as a means to avoid a parliamentary inquiry. In e.g. editorial, *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/08/98; J.A.A. van Doorn in *HP/De Tijd*, 21/08/98.

²⁶⁹⁶ Van Kemenade used these words at the press conference when the report was presented. In e.g. *Het Parool* and *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/09/98.

²⁶⁹⁷ The press made a big thing of De Grave’s relief. The headline in *Het Parool* speaks volumes: ‘De Grave haalt opgelucht adem. (‘De Grave heaves sigh of relief’), *Het Parool*, 29/09/98.

obstructing the truth-finding process'.²⁶⁹⁸ And: 'A minister can only do his job properly on the basis of full and correct information. Only then can he carry political responsibility'.²⁶⁹⁹

The inquiry had a calming effect; De Grave's position and that of the Ministry were no longer on the line. De Grave was praised for his incisive initiation of the inquiry and Van Kemenade for the speed with which he had reached a conclusion. Nevertheless critical noises were also heard. Van Kemenade, so it was said, had overhastily arrived at conclusions that were 'not too unfavourable' for the ministry.²⁷⁰⁰ In certain circles the decisiveness with which he presented his findings also fed, rather than removed, the feelings of mistrust.²⁷⁰¹ All this undermined the credibility of the inquiry. Doubts remained. The media frequently reproached Van Kemenade that he himself was part of the cover-up.

This reproach, in combination with the fact that the conclusions of the NIOD differ from those of the Van Kemenade report concerning the handling of certain matters (such as the debriefing, the Smith-Mladic agreement, the 'leaking' colonel, the 'Franken statement'; see elsewhere in this chapter), formed the reason for taking a closer look at Van Kemenade's inquiry in this report. How did he arrive at his conclusions and do they correspond with the sources at his disposal? Was his report motivated by the desire to close the book on Srebrenica? Why did the calls for answers continue after the inquiry?

Run-up to the inquiry

Early in August 1998 great unrest arose at the Ministry of Defence due to the persistent media attention for 'srebrenica'. The VPRO radio programme *Argos* and, inspired by this, *Nova* again made critical comments about the ruined roll of film. Parliamentary questions followed.²⁷⁰² From then onwards the subsequent *Nova* programmes 'impacted like meteorites on the Ministry of Defence', according to Defence spokesman Kreemers.²⁷⁰³ The question as to whether the 'missing' diary of a Dutch soldier who had served in Angola had been deliberately lost added fuel to the flames. The diary contained incriminating information and had disappeared without trace in mid-1997 after the completion of an inquiry into possible misconduct of Dutch troops on peacekeeping missions between 1992 and 1997.²⁷⁰⁴

On 11 August a crisis meeting took place at the office of the Secretary-General of Defence, D.J. Barth.²⁷⁰⁵ Something had to be done to end the persistent flow of rumours that was discrediting the

²⁶⁹⁸ Quoted in *Het Parool*, 29/09/98, 'De Grave haalt opgelucht adem.' ('De Grave heaves sigh of relief').

²⁶⁹⁹ 'Defensie werkte naar behoren mee' ('Defence cooperated satisfactorily'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/09/98; *Trouw* writes that De Grave would have been in big trouble if Van Kemenade had concluded that 'there had been any economising on the truth'. In: 'Geen Srebrenica-dooftpot gevonden' ('No Srebrenica cover-up found'), *Trouw*, 29/09/98.

²⁷⁰⁰ 'Twijfels na conclusies' ('Doubts after conclusions'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29/09/98.

²⁷⁰¹ Dick Berts, 'Van Kemenade tussen reputatie en dooftpot' ('Van Kemenade caught between reputation and cover-up'), *Trouw*, 30/9/98; interview J.H.M. de Winter, 20/07/00.

²⁷⁰² On 14 and 17 July and 11 August 1998 H. Hillen (CDA) posed written parliamentary questions about the ruined film. The questions in July came after the *Argos* programme on 10 July, those of 11 August after a broadcast of *Nova* on 8 August. Van Hillen together with M. Verhagen (CDA) posed a second series of questions on 11 August about both the ruined film and the Angola diary. <http://www.overheid.nl>

²⁷⁰³ Kreemers, '*Aan de achterkant van de maan*' ('On the other side of the moon'), Part 2, p. 11. *Nova*, incidentally, was the only current affairs programme that continued its broadcasts during the summer recess in 1995. Apart from the News it had no competition to fear and could easily win a leading position. The editors often took their time to flesh out the various Srebrenica items; sometimes entire programmes were devoted to the subject. Interview T. Huys, 08/07/00.

²⁷⁰⁴ The second inquiry into the lost Angola diary is not discussed here. Van Kemenade adopted the conclusion of the IGK, Vice-Admiral J.L.A. van Aalst, that the disappearance of the diary had not resulted in the loss of the incriminating information. The relevant data could also be found in the statement of the owner of the diary. The IGK also concluded that when the inquiry was completed the diary 'had, with probability verging on certainty, been destroyed by mistake' together with material that was found to be irrelevant. Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 1 (report), p. 36.

²⁷⁰⁵ Apart from De Grave and the Junior Defence Minister, H.A.L. van Hoof, those present at the meeting were: PSG H. Hulshof, PBLA A.P.P.M van Baal, Commander KMar D.G.J. Fabius, Chief of Staff G. ter Kuile, F.J.J. Princen of DAB and H.P.M. Kreemers. Kreemers, '*Aan de achterkant van de maan*' ('On the other side of the moon'), Part 2, p. 16.

integrity of the defence organization. Since the fall of Srebrenica, when the tragedy in Bosnia became a controversial affair in the Netherlands, the idea had grown among the civil service leadership that something had to be done to wipe the slate clean. Things had come to such a pass that the Minister and his staff were no longer able to do their job properly.²⁷⁰⁶ The unrest of ‘the summer of 98’ made action imperative; the political situation (a new minister on the scene) provided scope for this. Proposals along the lines of a lengthy letter with an explanation, as was Voorhoeve’s customary practice, or a parliamentary inquiry, were rejected by Barth and De Grave. The first method did not work and the second would lead to ‘an endless series of leaks and media clamour’, as the Minister put it.²⁷⁰⁷ De Grave decided to initiate an independent inquiry into the question as to whether defence personnel had impeded the truth-finding process in relation to Srebrenica. ‘such an inquiry is now necessary to cast light on the affair and clear Defence of all blame’, De Grave wrote on 18 August 1998 in a letter to Parliament.²⁷⁰⁸ If any ‘serious’ shortcomings on the part of defence officials were found, then these too must be disclosed and appropriate measures taken’. If no cover-up was discovered, trust had to be restored.

The search for a suitable leader of the inquiry first led to former Minister of Justice J. de Ruiter. He himself hesitated for health reasons; others questioned his suitability on account of his involvement as external advisor in the debriefing at Assen. The media also grumbled that this was not the right man. On 12 August De Ruiter solved the problem himself by not making himself available ‘for purely personal reasons’.²⁷⁰⁹ A talk with former Minister of Defence and former Vice-Chairman of the Council of State, W. Scholten, produced no results. De Grave then turned to Van Kemenade. The request was also made on behalf of the Prime Minister who made an ‘urgent appeal’ to the Commissioner.²⁷¹⁰ According to Van Kemenade this clinched the matter,²⁷¹¹ and on 13 August Defence announced his appointment as independent investigator. The media greeted this experienced public administrator with open arms.²⁷¹²

The first effect of De Grave’s decision was to silence the call for a parliamentary inquiry into the aftermath of Srebrenica which had been very loud in the summer of 1998. A parliamentary majority could no longer be found for this. The PvdA (Labour Party) which was initially in favour now decided to await the results of the Van Kemenade inquiry. Together with the VVD (Liberal Party), which had been opposed from the outset, the party blocked the proposal (the D66 Democrats and CDA Christian Democrats had wanted to go ahead with a parliamentary inquiry).²⁷¹³

²⁷⁰⁶ Interview H.H. Hulshof, 06/12/01.

²⁷⁰⁷ Kreemers, ‘*Aan de achterkant van de maan*’ (‘On the other side of the moon’), Part 2, pp. 16-18. He describes Srebrenica as a ‘virus that taints everything, bad and good’.

²⁷⁰⁸ BSG. D98002165, letter with memo from De Grave to the chairman and members of the ministerial council, ‘*Notitie ten beoene van de ministerraad over de nasleep van de val van Srebrenica*’ (‘Memo for ministerial council about the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica’), 18/08/98.

²⁷⁰⁹ Kreemers, ‘*Aan de achterkant van de maan*’, (‘On the other side of the moon’), Part 2, pp. 23-31. In the media in e.g.: ‘Van Kemenade onderzoekt rol Defensie’ (‘Van Kemenade investigates role played by Defence’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/08/98.

²⁷¹⁰ Interview J.A. van Kemenade, 09/07/01; see also: Kreemers, ‘*Aan de achterkant van de maan*’ (‘On the other side of the moon’), Part 2, pp. 23-31.

²⁷¹¹ Interview J.A. van Kemenade, 09/07/01. Van Kemenade did want to seek prior contact with the Director of the NIOD, J.C.H. Blom, in order not to get in the way of his inquiry. He also stipulated that the report would be made public and that he would receive all necessary support.

²⁷¹² ‘Van Kemenade geknipt voor onderzoek naar Dutchbat’ (‘Van Kemenade cut out for Dutchbat inquiry’) *De Volkskrant*, 15/08/98; ‘Veteraan Van Kemenade draait zijn hand niet om voor een commissie’ (‘Committee work a piece of cake for veteran Van Kemenade’), *Trouw*, 14/08/98; ‘Van Kemenade echt een buitenstaander’ (‘Van Kemenade is a real outsider’), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 14/08/98. *NRC Handelsblad* wrote on 14/08/98 that Minister De Grave hoped that Van Kemenade’s findings will “have sufficient authority to satisfy” the critics of Defence reports “to some extent”.

²⁷¹³ In e.g.: ‘Toch onderzoek optreden Dutchbat’ (‘Dutchbat inquiry after all’), *Trouw*, 14/08/98; ‘Kamer stuurt aan op enquête Srebrenica’ (‘Parliament sets sights on Srebrenica inquiry’), *De Volkskrant*, 15/08/98.

Nature and set-up of the inquiry

The exact wording of the assignment that Minister De Grave gave Van Kemenade was: ‘to establish whether there are any indications that personnel of the Ministry of Defence and/or the defence organizations withheld or carelessly handled any facts or statements relating to the events surrounding the fall of Srebrenica or obstructed or restricted the truth-finding process in any manner.’²⁷¹⁴

There was therefore no intention to make an analysis of the events in Srebrenica before, during and after the fall. That task, after all, had been assigned to the NIOD. Van Kemenade incidentally also had a say in the formulation of his assignment. He deliberately sought to draw a clear dividing line between his inquiry and the NIOD inquiry so as not to get in the way of the latter’s work.²⁷¹⁵

In his written instructions De Grave imposed no restriction whatsoever on the *manner* in which the inquiry was to be carried out. As for the timescale, the Minister asked Van Kemenade to hand over his recommendations ‘as soon as possible but not earlier than permitted by the required investigative rigour’.²⁷¹⁶ The report would then be sent without delay to Parliament, as well as to the Public Prosecutions Department, so that the latter could decide for themselves whether criminal proceedings needed to be initiated.²⁷¹⁷ In view of the time pressures, Van Kemenade decided to carry out the inquiry alone, i.e. not within the context of a committee. He did receive the support he required from the civil service.²⁷¹⁸

On 28 September 1998, six weeks after he had accepted the assignment, Van Kemenade presented the 55-page report entitled *Omtrent Srebrenica. Rapport over de verzameling en verwerking van informatie door de defensieorganisatie over gebeurtenissen rond de val van de enclave Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica. Report on the gathering and handling of information by the defence organization on events surrounding the fall of the Srebrenica enclave’)²⁷¹⁹. A bulky appendix with the reports of all the interviews held and several documents was included. The report contained a reconstruction in broad outline of the events from the preliminary debriefing in Zagreb on 21 to 23 July 1995 up to and including a number of controversial issues that kept cropping up (in the media). Then the rapporteur summed up his findings, followed by a number of recommendations.

In the introduction Van Kemenade explained his method. He pointed to the importance of the context in assessing the information gathering, handling and dissemination process. He added that the main significance of his inquiry lay in the possible lessons for the future and ‘not so much’ in any justification or condemnation of those involved. He also emphasized that the inquiry and the report had no scientific pretensions.

The inquiry was based on archive material and interviews with 35 persons involved, the rapporteur continued. In this connection, he had received full cooperation and all information that he

²⁷¹⁴ DJZ. C95/277 98002094, letter from De Grave to Van Kemenade, 17/08/98, in which the assignment was confirmed; TK, Parliamentary session 1997-1998, 26 122, no. 1 (13/08/98).

²⁷¹⁵ Interview J.A. van Kemenade, 09/07/01. In his introduction to the interviews, Van Kemenade stressed this demarcation between the two inquiries to those interviewed in the course of the inquiry.

²⁷¹⁶ BSG. D98002165, letter with memo from De Grave to the chairman and members of the ministerial council, ‘Memo for the ministerial council about the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica’, 18/08/98. The minister’s memo stressed the pressing nature of Van Kemenade’s inquiry in more urgent terms than the ‘letter of engagement’. In the memo De Grave asked for clarity “in the short term”.

²⁷¹⁷ The OM undertook no steps following the Van Kemenade report; as noted, a judicial inquiry into whether Muslims had been run over was already under way during ‘Van Kemenade’.

²⁷¹⁸ The support from the civil service consisted of: L.F.M. Verhey, W.J.G. Oosterveen, J. Rademaker (staff members of the Ministry of Justice), D. Bijl (Chief of Staff of Van Kemenade), J. Bos and Ms C. van Wijk of the CAOP (Centre of Labour Relations). Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 1, p. 4; interview J.A. van Kemenade, 09/07/01.

²⁷¹⁹ The presentation of the report took place at the CAOP because Nieuwspoor was already fully booked. The copies of the report were made available an hour before the press conference started.

had deemed necessary from the Ministry of Defence, personnel of various parts of the armed forces and the Public Prosecutions Department.²⁷²⁰

In view of the confidentiality of the debriefing interviews from 1995, the rapporteur was not given access to the individual interview reports. Therefore, in order to obtain relevant first-hand information, he asked De Grave to send letters to the Dutchbat soldiers involved, the members of the debriefing and analysis teams of the debriefing in Assen, and all persons in the defence organization, requesting them to get in touch with Van Kemenade if they had any further statements to make in relation to the information gathering, handling and dissemination process. Responses were received from 28 people. Their information, in many cases obtained by telephone, provided a lot of insight into the events and circumstances in the enclave and the subsequent information gathering, handling and dissemination process. The truthfulness of these statements was not verified however, nor was anyone given an opportunity to make a counter-statement. The statements were added to the report anonymously and summarized as an appendix. Subject to the approval of those involved, this information (including name and contact address) was handed over to the NIOD. The other information was destroyed.

Findings

The general conclusion of the report was that it 'has not been found that the truth-finding process was deliberately impeded, obstructed or restricted by persons in the defence organization'.²⁷²¹ However, the rapporteur did establish 'that the information gathering, handling and dissemination process was marred by remarkable shortcomings and acts of carelessness in relation to certain points'. He particularly reproached 'Defence' and the Public Prosecutions Department (at Arnhem) for having failed on several occasions to give sufficient attention to reports of possible misconduct by some Dutch soldiers.

Next Van Kemenade went into a number of matters that had had a negative influence on the information gathering, handling and dissemination process. He describes, for instance, the time pressures under which this process had taken place in 1995 (the debriefing) and the shifting focus of attention over the years which had meant that certain aspects were not given due weight. He also stressed the changes that had occurred in the field of defence after the end of the Cold War in 1989 (and the ensuing reorganization). As a result, Defence found itself more emphatically in the spotlights of publicity and public opinion. But the organization was insufficiently familiar with or prepared for this and had taken insufficient account of the consequences – both internally and in its relations with the outside world. Outsiders were too quick to read cover-up scenarios into this 'incompetence', so the investigator asserted.

More specifically, the poor mutual relations between the various parts of the defence apparatus had adversely affected the information gathering, handling and dissemination process. Van Kemenade spoke of 'poor lines of communication and difficult relations' between the Central Organization of Defence and the Royal Netherlands Army, as a result of which the Minister 'did not consistently receive timely and sufficient information'. This had negatively influenced the image presented to the outside world.

The role of the media was also touched on. Despite their share in the truth-finding process, they had contributed to the creation of the (incorrect) impression that Defence had systematically and deliberately withheld facts and that soldiers in Srebrenica had been guilty of misconduct. The reason for

²⁷²⁰ In this connection Van Kemenade had been able to make use of the collection of copies that Defence had kept of the documents that the NIOD had requested for its inquiry. The rapporteur thus received relatively rapid access to a large number of documents.

²⁷²¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the quotes from the Findings section are from the chapter with the same title in Van Kemenade's report, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 1, pp. 37-51.

this was that ‘in some cases’ incidents and situations had been presented as new facts or had not been shown in their full context.

The inquiry also highlighted the influence of the press on the political arena. Parliament had been frequently informed and MPs had also regularly requested information on their own initiative. Nevertheless on many occasions they had noticeably allowed themselves to be led by the publicity. The ‘confusing and fragmented’ flow of information caused by this made it difficult to form a complete picture of the events in and around Srebrenica. Public statements made by Dutchbat soldiers had also influenced the course things had taken after the fall. Military personnel had regularly spoken to the media out of discontent over the lack of recognition received during the debriefing, in the media and from politicians. The rapporteur therefore advocated greater understanding for Dutchbat soldiers in general, regardless of the question as to whether everyone had conducted themselves properly.

Van Kemenade was extremely critical of the stance taken by the Public Prosecutions Department, which he rebuked for showing no thorough or systematic involvement in the information gathering, handling and dissemination process. It was true that the supply of information from ‘Defence’ (i.e. the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee) to the Public Prosecutions Department had been limited and no follow-up steps for criminal proceedings had been arranged. But the Public Prosecutions Department had also been too passive. It had not taken sufficient initiatives to obtain and process information on possible punishable acts by Dutch soldiers in a timely and adequate manner.²⁷²² One of the reasons was the initial fixation on testimonies of war crimes allegedly committed by the belligerents themselves.²⁷²³

The Public Prosecutions Department argued that its restraint was deliberate. Van Kemenade found it understandable ‘up to a certain point’ that they had not wanted to trouble the soldiers who had just returned with inquiries of this nature. Even so, this had been an ‘unfortunate and unwise’ course to adopt given the Department’s duty to ensure a sound judicial procedure. Considering that signals of possible misconduct had already been heard shortly before the debriefing, heightened alertness to relevant types of behaviour during the debriefing would have been appropriate.

Van Kemenade had noted a similar attitude of restraint on the part of the Public Prosecutions Department in the first months of 1995, i.e. also before the fall of the enclave. The preliminary judicial inquiry into, for instance, the Esbit tablets affair (which incidentally occurred in the Dutchbat II period; see Part II, Chapter 9) had only been started in May 1995, even though the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee had information about this matter months earlier.²⁷²⁴ According to the rapporteur it was ‘hard to understand that no judicial inquiry of any kind was initiated’ after the Ministry of Defence received new reports of possible misconduct on 1 May 1995. The Minister had informed Parliament in a general sense about these reports and inquiries in May and June. But more specific information would have been desirable.

²⁷²² DJZ. 95000856, memo from PDJZ G.H. de Keizer to Voorhoeve, 29/08/95. She concluded that it was clear that Dutch soldiers were guilty of misconduct. This inquiry had been prompted by a report in the *Haagse Courant* of 12/08/95 about misconduct by Dutchbat soldiers in Lukavac (i.e. not in Srebrenica). Due to the limited scope of the inquiry, De Keizer had been unable to assess the scale of this misconduct. She believed that some of these instances of misconduct were in principle punishable and therefore concluded that the OM in Arnhem had evidently not been able to successfully prosecute the perpetrators. She emphasized, however, that it had not been made sufficiently clear that absence of criminal proceedings did not automatically entail that nothing improper had happened. Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 1, p. 24.

²⁷²³ In addition, time pressures also played a role according to Van Kemenade.

²⁷²⁴ This preliminary judicial inquiry had started on 9 May 1995 after Voorhoeve, who had only been informed of this at the end of April, had initiated an internal inquiry on 1 May and reports had appeared in the media. The OM had already been informed in February of the aforementioned Royal Netherlands Marechaussee inquiry (20/01/95), but saw no grounds for criminal proceedings. Van Kemenade summed up a number of inquiries into possible misconduct and noted that these did not always concern the same reports of possible misconduct. On the basis of the internal inquiry mentioned, PBLs Van Baal advised the minister on 12 May not to submit a request for the initiation of a judicial inquiry. Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 1, pp. 22-23 and 41; Bstas 519. 95/012, letter from Van Baal to Voorhoeve, 12/05/95.

Omtrent Srebrenica ('About Srebrenica') then singled out a number of issues which had attracted a lot of media interest. Van Kemenade concluded for instance that the development of the roll of film had 'simply been bungled on account of an unfortunate concurrence of circumstances'.²⁷²⁵ A report to the effect that Defence may have had a hand in the loss of other rolls of film had not been corroborated. A further point he made was that the information from the management report that was not related to war crimes perpetrated by the belligerents had 'not been adequately forwarded to the relevant parties'. Moreover, the inquiry into what came to be known as the YPR incident had taken place 'overhastily for reasons of political urgency'.²⁷²⁶ A more thorough inquiry would have been wiser to bring all the facts out into the open.

Another subject that attracted severe criticism from the rapporteur was the major debriefing operation in Assen. The criticism concerned both the set-up and implementation as well as its presentation in the accompanying report (see for a full description of the debriefing operation, Part IV, Chapter 7). The shortcomings of the debriefing report were attributed to the high level of abstraction with which the individual interview reports were drawn up. In addition, the elaboration of certain concrete aspects had been 'insufficiently explicit', such as the running over of refugees, the separation of men and women and the 'medical issues'. As a consequence, in some cases the debriefing report portrayed events in an 'incomplete or overly favourable' light. The exchange of information with the Yugoslavia tribunal was up to standard in so far as crimes of belligerent parties were concerned.

The follow-up to the debriefing was also flawed. Further inquiry into alleged punishable acts would have been desirable immediately after the publication of the debriefing report. 'Neither Defence, nor the Public Prosecutions Department took sufficient initiatives in this connection'. In that light Parliament in its capacity as controlling body was also rapped over the knuckles. After a lengthy debate in December 1995, the debriefing report had received broadly-based support from Parliament. But the shortcomings that Van Kemenade criticized had largely escaped their notice. Particularly the (poor) lines of communication between the debriefing organization and the Public Prosecutions Department had been completely overlooked.

Working method and points of criticism

Van Kemenade's report was thorough, informative and critical of certain aspects of the truth-finding process within the defence organization, particularly the way in which the debriefing was organized and the role played by the Public Prosecutions Department in Arnhem.²⁷²⁷ However, the interview reports in the appendix give the reader the impression that the entire information gathering, handling and dissemination process surrounding Srebrenica, the organization of this process and the time and places where it went wrong were much more widely ramified and complex than suggested in the Van Kemenade report.

As noted, Van Kemenade took six weeks to conduct his inquiry and write his report. In that short space of time he did a lot of work and gathered a large amount of information. The rapporteur, by his own admission, had been acutely aware of the time pressures. The crisis atmosphere at the ministry had to be dispelled as soon as possible. In his opinion the inquiry could be rounded off as

²⁷²⁵ At the press conference Van Kemenade said resolutely: 'Please. Forget about the roll of film'. And: 'We must accept it. However improbable it may seem, the development of the film was simply bungled'. In e.g.: 'De Grave haalt opgelucht adem' ('De Grave heaves sigh of relief'), *Het Parool*, 29/09/98; "'Hoe onwaarschijnlijk ook, het rolletje is gewoon mislukt'" ('However improbable, the development of the film was simply bungled'), *De Volkskrant*, 29/09/98. He wrote in his report that his opinion about the roll of film was based on the 'available information'.

²⁷²⁶ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 1, pp. 19-21 and 50-51.

²⁷²⁷ Questions about the debriefing focused on the structure and aims. The interviewees were also consistently asked about their involvement in such incidents as: the roll of film, the management report and the YPR incident, the relationship between the CO and the Army at meta level and 'lessons learned'.

soon as he and his staff ‘could make a statement to the Minister in a responsible manner’.²⁷²⁸ Evidently that moment arrived after six weeks.

Alongside admiration for the speed with which Van Kemenade completed his report, it is legitimate to wonder about the consequences of this hasty approach. It is reported that as the inquiry progressed the need arose for a more thorough exploration of certain matters. The option of postponement was even mooted, but Van Kemenade would not hear of it. However, a significant qualifying remark was added to the principal conclusion (i.e. that there were remarkable shortcomings and acts of carelessness in the information gathering, handling and dissemination process).²⁷²⁹

Time constraints will certainly have influenced the choice of interviewees. Though Van Kemenade spoke to many people involved, a number of pivotal figures were absent. These included the leader of the debriefing in Zagreb, Brigadier General G. Bastiaans, the ‘photo developer’ H.W.J. van Boetzelaer, Prime Minister Kok, Brigadier General W.F. Vader, Naval Captain H.G.J. Hegge and/or First Lieutenant L.C. van Duijn. Initially Colonel C.L. Brantz and Colonel Doctor G.D. Kremer were also not on the list, but they approached Van Kemenade on their own initiative.²⁷³⁰ Major R.A. Franken, who had not been called up either, did not come forward voluntarily because he was unwilling to cooperate with a ‘political inquiry’.²⁷³¹ Van Kemenade justified the omissions on the grounds of the limited scope of his inquiry (in relation to Hegge/Van Duijn) or the availability of material from earlier inquiries which in his view precluded the need for renewed interviews with the persons in question (in the case of Van Boetzelaer and Vader).²⁷³² It is unclear to what extent Van Kemenade’s opinion was decisive in selecting the people who were heard.

Van Kemenade largely held the interviews with the 35 people heard, with occasional assistance from his staff. All the interviewees had the opportunity to make confidential statements that would be processed anonymously. The reports of the interviews were incorporated in full in Van Kemenade’s reports, but the interviewees were given a chance to read them through and make changes or further confidential comments if they so desired. Only limited use was made of these options according to Van Kemenade.²⁷³³ It is no longer possible to find out exactly where and how such changes or further comments were made, as all this material was destroyed before the report was presented.

The rapporteur opened each interview with the standard remark: ‘I do not want to know any confidential information that I am absolutely unable to use’.²⁷³⁴ It was also impossible to establish whether Van Kemenade missed any information because of this. He himself was not under this impression; the interviewees all spoke fairly extensively in his opinion. However, the question remains whether such a restriction has consequences for an inquiry into a truth-finding process. It may have inhibited the interviewees from speaking freely. Chief of Staff of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Colonel J.M.J. Bosch, questioned the value of the inquiry in the light of that initial remark: ‘From that moment on you can almost throw the report in the wastepaper basket’.²⁷³⁵ As the interviews progressed and Van Kemenade acquired more knowledge of the affair, he visibly got into his stride and manifested himself as a critical interviewer. In at least three follow-up interviews

²⁷²⁸ Interview J.A. van Kemenade, 09/07/01.

²⁷²⁹ Confidential interviews (89) and (93). It was also said that a working visit to China was a further incentive for Van Kemenade to round off the inquiry as soon as possible.

²⁷³⁰ Confidential interview (89).

²⁷³¹ Interview R.A. Franken, 14/09/98.

²⁷³² Interview J.A. van Kemenade, 09/07/01.

²⁷³³ Interview J.A. van Kemenade, 09/07/01.

²⁷³⁴ Interview J.A. van Kemenade, 09/07/01. He then repeated that he had made the remark because he could do nothing with such information: ‘Then I’m stuck with it’.

²⁷³⁵ Interview J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99. Bosch wondered how much confidential material Van Kemenade had received on paper and how much had been destroyed. He regretted the fact that Parliament had not asked the rapporteur this. He himself was one of the persons who had been approached in writing on account of the talk with Couzy. Bosch was given the choice: if he wanted his information to remain confidential, it would be destroyed. Otherwise it would be incorporated in an appendix.

(with Voorhoeve, the Public Prosecutor at Arnhem A.P. Besier and debriefing leader Brigadier General O. van der Wind) the interviewees faced tougher questioning from him. Mostly this concerned the verification of statements made by others. Even so, the rapporteur regularly failed to persist where information clearly required further explanation. The lack of systematic and probing questioning left statements hanging in the air. He did not always seize opportunities to ask for more detail. Director of the Directorate of General Policy Matters, J.H.M. de Winter, for instance, once mentioned two examples of matters that in his view had been ‘deliberately omitted’ from the debriefing report, namely the leadership of Dutchbat and the medical affairs. When he added: ‘And I could mention a few others’, Van Kemenade let the matter rest.²⁷³⁶ In his report Van Kemenade also repeatedly passed over differences in opinion that could be heard in the reports and disregarded the complexity of causes and consequences. When asked about this by the NIOD, he pointed to the written questions that had been put to almost half of those heard after the oral interviews in order to fill this gap.²⁷³⁷ Though many subjects were touched upon in these questions, they were not thoroughly investigated.

What were the principal issues that Van Kemenade focused on? In his inquiry the rapporteur concentrated mainly on issues that were attracting a lot of media attention. Interestingly, a memo about Van Kemenade’s inquiry from De Grave dated 18 August 1998 to the chairman and the members of the Ministerial Council reconstructs the incidents that had proved particularly media-sensitive since the fall: the roll of film, the management report and the YPR incident.²⁷³⁸ In addition, it discussed the arrangements that the debriefing team had (not) made with the Public Prosecutions Department.

The choice of subjects in this memo corresponded largely with those in the subsequent *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’) report. Kemenade had seen the memo: he received it at his own request when the inquiry was still in progress.²⁷³⁹ It is striking that Van Kemenade’s report hardly ventures outside the contours of the focal issues identified in the memo. In other words: the inquiry was confined to a fairly ‘narrow’ scope. Many subjects remained untouched despite their relevance to the information-gathering process.

The most striking subjects hardly paid attention to from Van Kemenade’s report were: the problems with and within the battalion leadership and the functioning of the Ministry of Defence’s internal information gathering, handling and dissemination system. Van Kemenade recognized in his report that the debriefing report should have devoted more attention to the battalion leadership. But he failed to explain why that had not happened. The functioning of the Ministry’s Directorates of Information, General Policy Matters²⁷⁴⁰ and Legal Affairs²⁷⁴¹ was also left out of the picture. Moreover, the tensions between the Crisis Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army and the Defence Crisis

²⁷³⁶ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, J.H.M. de Winter, pp. 5-8.

²⁷³⁷ The answers to the written questions were, subject to permission, included in Appendix 5 to *Omtrent Srebrenica*.

²⁷³⁸ BSG. D98002165, letter with memo from De Grave to the chairman and members of the ministerial council, ‘Memo for the ministerial council about the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica’, 18/08/98.

²⁷³⁹ BSG. D98002292, letter from Hulshof to Van Kemenade, 27/08/98.

²⁷⁴⁰ Informing DAB was not standard procedure, e.g. DAB was not informed of the management report. De Winter said it was a given that: ‘Certain matters were conducted between the minister and those directly involved’ and pointed in this connection to the minister’s ‘discretion’ which prevented him from telling DAB certain things. Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, S.J.G. Reyn and L.F.F. Casteleijn; J.H.M. de Winter, p. 5.

²⁷⁴¹ DJZ. CST92/011 92001833, letter from SG of Defence M. Patijn to the BLS, 27/01/92. The letter contains a directive about information gathering, handling and dissemination in relation to punishable acts. DJZ had knowledge of the anonymized version of the KMar inquiry into observations relating to the roll of film (PV 13/95) with a presentation letter from Besier to J.J. Buirma of DJZ. This dossier also went to the ICTY. In order to protect the witnesses and not to jeopardize the handling of the matter by the ICTY, Besier prohibited publication of the content of the dossier. The content of the PV (official report) showed strong similarities with that of the management report. Director DJZ S.B. Ybema acknowledged to Van Kemenade that the contact between DJZ and the minister concerning the fall and during the aftermath of Srebrenica had shown severe shortcomings. DJZ. Besier/AK 6095-40095.95, ‘Mensenrechten/voormalig Joegoslavië’ (Human Rights/former Yugoslavia) 21/08/95; Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, D.G.J. Fabius, p. 4; S.B. Ybema, p. 8.

Management Centre were not mentioned as such in the report, though this point was clearly raised in the interview reports.²⁷⁴²

'Communication flows' on a number of subjects that apparently fell outside the scope of Van Kemenade's inquiry were also relevant, but these too were not taken on board. For instance, the rapporteur failed to investigate whether the radical change (from positive to negative) in the press's opinion concerning Dutchbat's role had been partly due to the (poor) communication about and (incorrect) impression conveyed of the events in Srebrenica by the political and military leadership in The Hague. The same applied to the discussion as to whether a speaking ban had ever been imposed on the soldiers – this supposition fuelled suspicions of a cover-up among many people.

Furthermore, not all aspects that Van Kemenade did describe in his report received exhaustive treatment. Certain aspects relating to the debriefing operation and the accompanying report remained underexposed, despite being mentioned in the interview reports. For instance, he offered no opinion on the functioning of the reading and analysis teams; he confined himself to a description of their composition and tasks. The divergent working method of the 'green' team, however, had been mentioned in the reports. Van Kemenade also did nothing with comments claiming that third parties had interfered with the editing of the debriefing report.²⁷⁴³ In addition, his report focused on the YPR incident (where Muslims were run over by an armoured vehicle driving away from an OP; see elsewhere in this chapter). The interview reports, however, mentioned another, similar incident where refugees had fallen from overcrowded vehicles and been run over on the road between Potocari and Srebrenica. What is more, he asked not a single question about the first operational and psychological debriefing in Zagreb of the group of 55 and the KHO-5 (Army Hospital Organization) on 16 and 17 July 1995, though it was precisely there that many disconcerting noises and indications of incidents had been heard (see Part IV, Chapter 5). The criticism that Van Kemenade vented about the flawed judicial process was mainly levelled at the role played by the Public Prosecutions Department. The entire connection with the Defence organization was left out of consideration. It was, for instance, the obligation of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee to inform the Public Prosecutions Department, as indeed was also indicated by the Deputy Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee K.C. Roos.²⁷⁴⁴

Unwillingness or incompetence?

One of the explanations for the poor lines of communication and the difficult relations between the Central Organization (CO) and the Royal Netherlands Army, according to Van Kemenade, was the incompetence with which Defence went about its new tasks. But Van Kemenade did not mention the fundamental cultural differences between the Royal Netherlands Army and the Central Organization at the level of information gathering, handling and dissemination. Nor did he mention the army leadership's distrust of political interference and the lack of political awareness within the Royal Netherlands Army.

In the interviews however it was precisely these factors that were pinpointed as the causes of the disjointed communication. The tendency of the Royal Netherlands Army not to wash their dirty

²⁷⁴² See e.g. Voorhoeve's remark about the Sitsen of the Army that there had been an indication in the reports of the KL, and particularly of the Sitsen to the DCBC, that the consequences of the fall of the enclave had initially been seriously underestimated. This was due to the slow information gathering, handling and dissemination process and the trivialization of the events to 'really nothing special'. Excessive trivialization of these events was particularly noticeable among officers who had served for a longer period in Bosnia. Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 2nd interview, p. 3.

²⁷⁴³ Brantz (to Van Kemenade) and De Winter (to the NIOD) also referred to interference by J. de Rooter (buffer stocks/medical affair). P.H. Rutten mentioned the possibility that the YPR incident had been omitted from the debriefing report with the approval of the OM. Interview J.H.M. de Winter, 20/07/00; Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, C.L. Brantz, p. 10; P.H. Rutten, p. 13.

²⁷⁴⁴ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, K.C. Roos, p. 13.

linen in public had impeded the information gathering, handling and dissemination process. Requested material was not released, not even if the Minister asked for it. Voorhoeve was striving for openness but was thwarted in this endeavour. Deputy Director of the Directorate of General Policy Matters L.F.F. Casteleijn spoke in this connection of the ‘tunnel thinking’ and ‘isolation’ of the Royal Netherlands Army. He did not call their attitude insincere but was surprised to note that the Army people would sometimes say that ‘they did not see the point or necessity of reporting certain things to the Plein’.²⁷⁴⁵ Voorhoeve’s heartfelt cry about the differences in judging situations that existed between the Central Organization and that of the Royal Netherlands Army is telling: ‘It is staggering to note this and, at the same time, when you transport yourself back to that period and the psychology of the time, you can only conclude: yes, that’s how things go in such situations’.²⁷⁴⁶ As an example he mentioned the fact that the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, A.P.P.M. van Baal, had received Franken’s statement of 17 July about the deportation of the population but had laid it aside. It was only after persistent queries from the Directorate of Legal Affairs that the document surfaced one and a half weeks later.

Other glaring examples of ‘miscommunication’ between the Central Organization and the Royal Netherlands Army are the aftermath issues surrounding the Smith-Mladic agreement and the ‘bunker leak’ (see elsewhere in this chapter). Van Kemenade had been told of a concrete case where a deliberate attempt was made to obstruct the truth-finding process in relation to the Smith-Mladic agreement. But he was unable to obtain confirmation that Nicolai had been forced to refrain from making a statement that the documents in question were no longer classified. This conclusion appears to be a simplification. The readings of those involved (Van Baal, H.G.B. van den Breemen, H.A. Couzy and C.H. Nicolai) were by no means unequivocal. Nicolai, for instance, had to make an effort to recollect the advice from Van den Breemen to ‘exercise restraint’ in providing information to the press in view of the debriefing inquiry.²⁷⁴⁷ He said that he had never felt pressurized. As for statements that Couzy himself had tried to stop or impede the inquiry of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee after the identity of the leaking colonel was known, Van Kemenade simply let them lie.²⁷⁴⁸

Inveterate habits obviously cannot be changed overnight, but the Royal Netherlands Army had shown little flexibility when it came to improving the communication flows. It was found that new procedures were rarely implemented in practice.²⁷⁴⁹ A genuine cultural change was thus difficult to realize.²⁷⁵⁰ This applied, for instance, to Defence’s continuous interference with the inquiries of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee that was noted in the reports. But since the reorganization of 1990/1991 only the Public Prosecutor was empowered to start up an inquiry, and not Defence.²⁷⁵¹ Referring to this subject in his recommendations, the rapporteur merely expressed the general desirability of further reflection on the consequences of the investigative authority of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee vis-à-vis the Public Prosecutions Department, on the one hand, and vis-à-

²⁷⁴⁵ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, L.F.F. Casteleijn, p. 6.

²⁷⁴⁶ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 2nd interview, p. 13.

²⁷⁴⁷ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, C.H. Nicolai. Appendix: ‘Further information on interview with genm. C.H. Nicolai dated Fri. 4 Sep 1998’, 09/09/98.

²⁷⁴⁸ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, A.P.P.M. van Baal, H.G.B. van den Breemen and H.P.M. Kreemers.

²⁷⁴⁹ DJZ. CST92/011 92001833, letter from the SG of Defence to the BLS, 27/01/92, in which the Royal Netherlands Army was requested to report matters that were politically and media sensitive to the DJZ, who would then inform the minister. Van Kemenade made a reference to this letter in his Recommendations, where he raised the question whether the recommendation of the SG possibly required any modification. Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 1, p. 54.

²⁷⁵⁰ See e.g. Warlicht to Van Kemenade. He said that opinions differed within the army regarding the approach to a future debriefing; openness as soon as possible versus ‘dampening things a little’. The calls for the former approach were growing louder according to him. Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, E.E. Warlicht, p. 7.

²⁷⁵¹ In e.g.: Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, P.H. Rutten, p. 18.

vis the political leadership, the different parts of the army and the Military Intelligence Service, on the other.²⁷⁵²

The description of the function and tasks of the Military Intelligence Service in the information gathering, handling and dissemination process was insufficiently clear, so Van Kemenade observed. That was all he had to say about the Military Intelligence Service's involvement in 'srebrenica'. Among the things he disregarded was the inquiry conducted in 1996 by the Military Security Department of the Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army into extreme right-wing behaviour. This inquiry came to light in the summer of 1999 and caused a lot of commotion because the Military Intelligence Service had reportedly failed to inform the Minister of it. De Grave saw the incident as a 'crucial error of judgement' and not as a cover-up.

The matter had far-reaching consequences for the then incumbent leadership of the Military Intelligence Service.²⁷⁵³ What set the ball rolling was the statement of an officer of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, G. Klomp, on 22 June in *Nova* about an unpublished secret Military Intelligence Service report containing indications of alleged punishable acts. The then Deputy Head of the Military Intelligence Service/Central Organization, R. Wielinga, denied the alleged involvement of the Military Intelligence Service to the Secretary-General. Klomp had got two things mixed up. These were, first of all, the activities of Major H. Stumpers who was a member of the Operational Actions LA team for the major debriefing in Assen and who was also personally collecting information for the Lessons Learned Bureau of the Royal Netherlands Army. Debriefing leader Van der Wind ordered the discontinuation of this activity as soon as he learnt of it (see Part IV, Chapter 7). Secondly, it concerned the separate debriefings of Dutchbat soldiers by the Military Intelligence Service/Royal Netherlands Army after the debriefing operation. Klomp had learned this information from hearsay. It was true that an inquiry had been conducted into alleged right-wing extremism about one and a half years after the fall of the enclave but, in contrast to what *Nova* had suggested, this had not produced hard-and-fast evidence of politically inspired right-wing extremism; racist and fascist forms of behaviour were confirmed.

After frank talks between De Grave and the incumbent leadership (which incidentally had only taken office in 1997), the latter decided to resign. The 'rotten apple' had thus been removed according to the Minister. The Military Intelligence Service felt hard done by and explained the course of events to De Grave in a letter of 20 July.²⁷⁵⁴ In his letter to Parliament the Minister had, among other things, failed to mention that alleged acts had been known to the political, civil service and military leadership as well as to Parliament. Moreover, at the time it was not customary practice to report 'unevaluated information or finalized matters pertaining to the commander' to the Secretary-General or the Minister.

Van Kemenade could have learned of the alleged acts. But he had exclusively asked the Military Intelligence Service for outgoing information reports. Consequently he had not received the internal document about alleged right-wing extremism. Nor had the rapporteur been informed of such a

²⁷⁵² Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica') Part 1, p. 54.

²⁷⁵³ Klomp's statement may have been partly inspired by the presence of the MID/KL at the debriefing. *De Volkskrant* observed at the time of the departure of the MID leadership, that De Grave was shielding the Army leadership. The MID leadership was not the first casualty. *De Volkskrant* and *Trouw* reported, for instance, that Srebrenica had cost Fabius promotion to Brevet Lieutenant General while the promotion of Roos to Commander of the KMar had been blocked because of his failure to deal with the misconduct of soldiers in Angola. Before then Defence spokesman Kreemers had been relieved of his duties and transferred in 1999 to a new post at Clingendael because his reputation as a spin doctor had made his position untenable. 'De Grave beschermt landmacht' ('De Grave protects army'), *De Volkskrant*, 14/07/99; 'Top MID weg na verwijten' ('Military Intelligence Service leadership goes amidst reproaches'), *Trouw*, 14/07/99; 'De Grave zet leiding Military Intelligence Service aan de kant' ('De Grave removes Military Intelligence Service leadership'), *De Volkskrant*, 14/07/99; 'De Grave hield rapport over Srebrenica stil' ('De Grave kept silent about Srebrenica report'), *De Volkskrant*, 23/06/99; editorial, *Trouw*, 14/07/99.

²⁷⁵⁴ MID. Memo R. Wielinga and De Grave, 'srebrenica', 22/06/99; litt 99/74, memo from G. Beelen to De Grave, 'NOVA programme 22-6-1999, 24/06/99; MID. DIS99003434, memo from HMID and PHMID to the minister of Defence, 'Chronologie m.b.t. vermeende rechts-extremistische gedragingen van militairen van de B-compagnie te Srebrenica' ('Chronology in relation to alleged right-wing extremist acts by soldiers of the B Company at Srebrenica'), 20/07/99.

document because until the *Nova* programme the Deputy Head of the Military Intelligence Service had not known of the existence of an internal document comprising interview reports on this matter. According to the Deputy Head of the Military Intelligence Service, the information contained in this document had been explained during the debriefing, incorporated in the debriefing report and the account of facts, and mentioned in Voorhoeve's presentation letter with the debriefing report. Van Kemenade was in the possession of the account of facts.²⁷⁵⁵

Responsibilities

Van Kemenade's conclusion that the cooperation and communication within the defence organization was not functioning properly was correct but very general.²⁷⁵⁶ Flaws in the organizational structure had been accurately identified but this was not enough to explain the full cause of the problems. Precisely in situations where things went wrong, individual responsibilities could not be shirked. A closer look at incidents like the bunker leak and the Smith-Mladic agreement and the statement of 17 July would have revealed to what extent certain people determined, or at least tried to determine, the course of events.²⁷⁵⁷

For instance, the report contained no reference whatsoever to the criticism directed at the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Couzy by several people (including people from his own leadership circle) in their interviews with Van Kemenade.²⁷⁵⁸ Even so, apart from being responsible for his own actions, he also carried the ultimate responsibility for the Royal Netherlands Army. The reports suggested that Couzy had repeatedly impressed, or at least tried to impress, his stamp on the course of events. The report made no mention, for instance, of the dominant role that Couzy had played vis-à-vis the Minister of Defence in relation to the organization of the debriefing. Voorhoeve indicated in his interviews however that he had placed the responsibility for this with the Royal Netherlands Army in order not to disown them (see Part IV, Chapter 5).²⁷⁵⁹

Generally speaking, various parties sought to shirk their responsibility. This could be done by shifting the responsibility to their superiors or deputies – people with the greatest responsibility were often on holiday at critical times, e.g. during the handling of the roll of film, the management report and the YPR affair. The Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee D.G.J. Fabius for instance referred in his absence to his deputy Roos and placed the entire responsibility for initiating criminal proceedings in the hands of the Public Prosecutor Besier. If the Public Prosecutor saw no grounds for prosecution, then Fabius endorsed that decision. He undertook no initiatives in this

²⁷⁵⁵ DJZ. C95/277 98002512, memo from J.F. R. Boddens Hosang to DJZ, 17/09/98. According to Van Kemenade, his staff made a comparison between the account of facts and the debriefing report. Interview J.A. van Kemenade, 09/07/01.

²⁷⁵⁶ See e.g. Voorhoeve's critical remark about Sitcen Landmacht that there had been an indication in the reports of the Royal Netherlands Army, and particularly of the Sitcen to the DCBC, that the consequences of the fall of the enclave had initially been seriously underestimated. This was due to the slow information gathering, handling and dissemination process and the trivialization of the events to 'really nothing special'. Excessive trivialization of these events was particularly noticeable among officers who had served for a longer period in Bosnia. Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 2nd interview, p. 3.

²⁷⁵⁷ Also in Ko Colijn and Paul Rusman, 'Nederland heeft nog steeds een begrafenisritueel nodig' ('The Netherlands still needs a funeral ritual'), *Vrij Nederland*, 03/10/98. The authors blame the failing information gathering, handling and dissemination process at Defence on the power that officials had built up simply because they had a knowledge advantage and not so much because of flaws in the rules and structure. By way of example, they mention the tug of war between Voorhoeve and Couzy for the reins of power during the days before the fall.

²⁷⁵⁸ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, D.J. Barth, A.P.P.M. Van Baal, J.J.C. Voorhoeve, J.H.M. de Winter and E.E. Warlicht. The criticism referred to the actions and subsequent explaining and justifying by Couzy. Van Baal was extremely critical of Couzy. Schouten pointed to the element of incompatible natures which no rules can remedy. In this connection, he also pointed indirectly to Couzy. Ibid, M. Schouten, p. 7.

²⁷⁵⁹ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 2nd interview, p. 2; J.H.M. de Winter, p. 3.

connection to carry out further investigations with a view to providing the Public Prosecutions Department with more information.

The long delay before the probe into the YPR incident got under way illustrated how little effort was made at various levels to address disconcerting signals in earnest. Besier expressed his surprise to Van Kemenade that Van der Wind had not informed him at the debriefing of the armoured car story (though he had mentioned other incidents where people may have been run over).²⁷⁶⁰ The Public Prosecutor only remembered the debriefing leader calling him to say that no evidence of punishable acts had been found during the debriefing. According to Van der Wind, he had informed Besier of a statement concerning an incident where people had been run over but had added that there was no material to substantiate the story. The Public Prosecutor therefore saw no grounds for a criminal investigation. According to Roos this gave the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee ‘something to hold on to’, as they were not allowed to start up an inquiry of their own accord.²⁷⁶¹

Van Kemenade naturally asked the interviewees for an explanation of the sketched problems. Many criticized the information gathering, handling and dissemination process at Defence but miscommunications were seen as human error with no malicious intent. They sprang from an inadequate organizational structure. According to the Director of Legal Affairs S.B. Ybema, Deputy Secretary-General H.H. Hulshof and Casteleijn, the defence organization was insufficiently prepared for the problems that it was confronted with. There was no organizational control structure or ‘countervailing power’. Ybema did not believe ‘in any deliberate intent or machinations’.²⁷⁶² Hulshof said that the course steered after the debriefing - ‘nothing new under the sun’ – had been decisive for the reaction to the subsequent issues: ‘The tone had been set’. It is worth noting, incidentally, that P.H. Rutten of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Hulshof and Defence Chief of Staff and Protocol G.J. Ter Kuile did not rule out the possibility of new issues coming to light.

Several persons told Van Kemenade more concretely that information had been withheld. This concerned both the content of the individual interview reports in the debriefing report and the communication of alleged punishable acts to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the Public Prosecutions Department.²⁷⁶³ Kremer, humanist chaplain L.W.A. Hetebrij and De Winter were explicit in their criticism that a deliberate attempt had been made at the debriefing to present certain matters to the outside world in the most sanitized and non-confrontational manner possible or to smooth the rough edges. ‘They certainly made every possible effort to do that’, according to Kremer.²⁷⁶⁴ He described the passages about the KHO (Army Hospital Organization) team in the debriefing report as a ‘cover-up’, because ‘in these passages certain matters are omitted or expressed differently from the way

²⁷⁶⁰ There were several alleged incidents of people being run over (see elsewhere in this chapter). The interview reports do not make it clear who of those directly involved at the investigative level (Besier, Fabius, Van der Wind) knew about what incident and when. Even they got the facts mixed up. Van Kemenade made no distinction between the incidents and said in a general sense that military vehicles may have driven over dead or living refugees. Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 1, p. 19; *ibid*, Part 2, Appendix 4, A.P. Besier, pp. 7-9; O. van der Wind, p. 8.

²⁷⁶¹ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, O. van der Wind, p. 8; D.G.J. Fabius, pp. 14-15; Roos, pp. 7-12. The war situation in which the YPR found itself was taken into account in the weighing up process.

²⁷⁶² Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, H.H. Hulshof, pp. 11-15; S.B. Ybema, pp. 8-9; L.F.F. Casteleijn, p. 6.

²⁷⁶³ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, J.H.M. de Winter, pp. 8-9; G.J. ter Kuile, p. 9.

²⁷⁶⁴ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* (‘About Srebrenica’), Part 2, Appendix 4, G.D. Kremer, pp. 6-10; L.W.A. Hetebrij, p. 7. As an example of the friction between the KHO team and the debriefing leaders, which had been ‘glossed over’ in the debriefing report, Kremer mentioned the handing over procedure between the KHO teams. In his eyes the battalion leadership had lied about the decision-making process in this connection. Moreover, the refusal to obey the command to wait in the bunker at the time when wounded refugees were coming in had, according to him, been deliberately omitted from the debriefing report.

they were originally said. If the Minister knows nothing about that, then I would say there is something seriously wrong with the communication between the Secretary-General and the Minister'.²⁷⁶⁵

P.H. Rutten and C. van Dijk of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee were critical of the fact that neither the management report nor the debriefing report had led to criminal proceedings. P. Rutten: 'The statements of Lieutenant [Ron] Rutten and the commander of Post M surely make it crystal clear that punishable acts may have been committed'. In this connection he pointed to Van der Wind and Besier who had done nothing with the information.²⁷⁶⁶ To many, the outstanding piece of evidence for the defence organization's failing policy, if not assumed cover-up, was 'the ruined film', even though there was no motive for ruining it (its contents after all were already known)²⁷⁶⁷ and too many people would have been involved to keep it secret (see elsewhere in this chapter). To Van Kemenade's question as to whether any facts had been withheld in a broad sense during the truth-finding process, Van Dijk replied: 'Yes, look, the facts are simply there. (...) If you just place the facts next to each other, facts have obviously disappeared. These were not disclosed to him [Besier]'. Rutten added: 'Defence at least has appearances against it'.²⁷⁶⁸ Brantz, too, was critical. He thought that certain things had been 'systematically suppressed' by the Royal Netherlands Army (as for the Defence Staff, he was unable to judge). The mere fact that the Minister had been caught unawares several times by bad news pointed to this. Van Kemenade did not press further for concrete examples.²⁷⁶⁹

Assignment with political-administrative focus

In 2001 the rapporteur still stood right behind his conclusions from 1998 that information had not been systematically withheld. He summed up his opinion as follows:

'Inaccuracies were rife due to poor lines of communication, the bad relationship between the military organization and the central defence organization, and above all with the Public Prosecutions Department. The fact that the Public Prosecutions Department was not involved in setting up the debriefing, that was totally wrong. But the impression I got through all the interviews was that this was really mainly due to inaccuracy, carelessness, [a consequence of] time pressures, an organization in transition that was totally incapable of handling its increased exposure to the public eye since the changes. They had no idea of how to deal with publicity. (...) It was a relatively closed organization where things like that do not speak for themselves. But to say: [there was] deliberate obstruction or opposition? No.'²⁷⁷⁰

What's more, he thought his criticism went pretty far. In response to the criticism that he had let certain matters lie, he pointed to the nature of the engagement, the time pressures and the fact that he had not wanted to encroach on the NIOD's territory.

Van Kemenade thus focused on the organizational structure of Defence and spotted a number of flaws. These observations are correct but do not completely cover the content of the reports. This raises the question: why did Van Kemenade accept, or in fact impose upon himself, the extremely constrained scope of his inquiry? It would seem that he allowed the need to set things right as soon as

²⁷⁶⁵ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, G.D. Kremer, p. 10. He was unable to assess the debriefing report in its entirety.

²⁷⁶⁶ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, P.H. Rutten and K. van Dijk, p. 10 and 17.

²⁷⁶⁷ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, D.G.J. Fabius, p. 16; P.H. Rutten and K. van Dijk, p. 1 and 5.

²⁷⁶⁸ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica* ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, P.H. Rutten and K. van Dijk, p. 20.

²⁷⁶⁹ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, ('About Srebrenica'), Part 2, Appendix 4, C.L. Brantz, p. 10. He also mentions the handling of the 'list of 239' and Franken's statement of 17 July.

²⁷⁷⁰ Interview J.A. van Kemenade, 09/07/01.

possible prevail over the truth-finding process. Viewed in this perspective, Van Kemenade's engagement had a political-administrative focus and he accepted and executed it as such.

The reactions of De Winter and Hulshof to the inquiry suggest that there was an important underlying aim: give Defence the chance to break with the past. De Winter said to the NIOD:

‘Van Kemenade could do nothing but conclude what he concluded. He is a decent and intelligent man who agreed to carry out the inquiry. But he obviously could not have come to the opposite conclusion. It would have been totally destructive for him to say: ‘I have come to the conclusion that the debriefing report is at odds with the truth’.²⁷⁷¹

The Director of the Directorate of General Policy Matters said that Van Kemenade had carried out a good inquiry but also pointed to the discrepancy with the reports: ‘If people read all these reports for a few days in succession, they will say: ‘Yes, there is more to this than meets the eye.’” There were also suggestions in the media that Van Kemenade's friendship and shared party membership with Prime Minister Kok also led him to tone down his conclusions.²⁷⁷²

Deputy Secretary-General Hulshof said that the findings could have led Van Kemenade to a different conclusion, without actually claiming that people at the top had contrived to suppress the facts. The Minister of Defence and his people were dogged by ‘srebrenica’ and they wanted to rid themselves of the problem. The main objective was to clear the air. Hulshof: ‘Of course you have to stop and think about the things that went wrong, but you also have to move forward. Van Kemenade gave us the chance to make a fresh start. To say: Yes, we made mistakes. We must do things differently’.²⁷⁷³ The Deputy Secretary-General spoke to Van Kemenade about the shape his inquiry would take: ‘At the time we had every opportunity to say: what is the best way to shake off that [negative] image?’

Van Kemenade made that possible by criticizing Defence, without actually accusing it of acting in bad faith.²⁷⁷⁴ He formulated his criticism in such a way that Defence could embark on a process of change with a view to adjusting its policy to the new needs of the times.²⁷⁷⁵

Conclusion

In the short term Van Kemenade's report certainly had the envisaged effect: calm was restored. His opinion about certain aspects of the information gathering, handling and dissemination process was well-founded and firm: particularly the debriefing operation and the Public Prosecutions Department in Arnhem received sharp criticism, as did the communication to the political leadership. De Grave termed the rapporteur's conclusions ‘tough and, with regard to certain aspects, serious’.²⁷⁷⁶ He promised to act on the conclusions. The big chill was over; the integrity of Defence was no longer fundamentally open to question. The ministry no longer laboured under the burden of the past and a window to the future had been opened.

But elsewhere, cracks were soon noted in the picture that Van Kemenade had sketched. Despite positive responses, his report was not regarded as absolutely convincing. *De Volkskrant* wrote: ‘Whilst

²⁷⁷¹ Interview J.H.M. de Winter, 20/07/00.

²⁷⁷² Dick Berts, ‘Van Kemenade tussen reputatie en doofpot’ (‘Van Kemenade caught between reputation and cover-up’), *Trouw*, 30/09/98; Cees van der Laan, ‘schaamrood’ (‘Red-faced’), *Trouw*, 02/09/0; interview J.H.M. de Winter, 20/07/00.

²⁷⁷³ Interview H.H. Hulshof, 06/12/01.

²⁷⁷⁴ Editorial, *De Volkskrant*, 30/09/98.

²⁷⁷⁵ Interview H.H. Hulshof, 06/12/01. He described that operation with the words ‘transparent and focused’.

²⁷⁷⁶ ‘Defensie wordt “onkunde, geen onwil” verweten’ (‘Defence is reproached for “incompetence, not unwillingness”’), *De Volkskrant*, 29/09/98.

containing useful recommendations, it turns a blind eye to far too many things²⁷⁷⁷ The report did not give a satisfactory answer to the underlying cause of the problems. *NRC Handelsblad* said that the border line between incompetence and unwillingness ‘was very thin indeed’.²⁷⁷⁸ And so the calls in the media for a parliamentary inquiry started to grow louder once again.²⁷⁷⁹ New incidents (such as the report of the Military Intelligence Service made in 1996 and released in 1999 about right-wing extremism and the publication of the Account of Facts in 1998) sowed further doubt about the value of the inquiry.²⁷⁸⁰

The central question in 1998 was whether the failing information gathering, handling and dissemination process was the consequence of deliberate intent (unwillingness) or of the sketched circumstances (incompetence). This question cried out for a speedy answer. It was essentially an administrative problem that could not be solved without an inquiry into the truth-finding process. But such an inquiry was, strictly speaking, a means rather than an end. The motive for asking this elder statesman to accept the assignment was rooted in that priority.

It was for this reason that Van Kemenade imposed a tight time schedule upon himself, interpreted the assignment very narrowly and aimed for a speedy conclusion. The inquiry itself, particularly the interviews, yielded a remarkably large amount of information and insights in that short space of time. The rapporteur concluded from this that the failing information gathering, handling and dissemination process was due to incompetence. The conclusion that could also be clearly distilled from the reports was that the efforts to keep painful matters outside the glare of publicity were aimed at damage control. In other words: identify the damage and then limit it as far as possible. This attitude sprang from a collective desire not to wash the dirty linen in public and that formed a natural part of the defence organization’s inward-looking culture. The material thus contained concrete indications for the further conclusion that a strong measure of unwillingness was also involved (as argued in the NIOD report). By ignoring critical comments about the information gathering, handling and dissemination process by and for the Army Staff in The Hague and the Ministry of Defence, both the political and military leadership of Defence escaped censure. Van Kemenade, however, guided as he was by the objective to create a new start, did not explore the unwillingness variant any further. As a result, emphasis was placed on the failure of the Public Prosecutions Department and the debriefing organization. Bypassing the responsibilities of individuals, Van Kemenade focused on the flawed organizational structure. He was thus able to arrive at a politically anodyne conclusion: there was no question of deliberate intent. It was the system that had failed.

Even so, organizations are partly made by people. As Hulshof put it: ‘We always claim that people cannot change the systems, the bureaucracy. But that, of course, is nonsense. This [Srebrenica] is a good example of how these people made these systems serve their own ends. The Royal

²⁷⁷⁷ Editorials, *De Volkskrant*, 30/09/98 and *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/09/98; Jan Blokker, ‘Vergeten’ (‘Forgotten’), *De Volkskrant*, 29/09/98.

²⁷⁷⁸ Editorial, *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/09/98.

²⁷⁷⁹ For instance: editorial, *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/09/98; ‘Kans op een parlementaire enquête Srebrenica groeit’ (‘Growing prospect of parliamentary inquiry into Srebrenica’), *Trouw*, 30/09/98; editorial, *De Volkskrant*, 30/09/98; Ton Heerts, ‘Enquête over Srebrenica louterend voor Dutchbat’ (‘srebrenica inquiry purifying exercise for Dutchbat’), *Het Parool*, 06/10/98.

²⁷⁸⁰ According to *Trouw* the MID’s silence about alleged extreme right-wing behaviour “revives doubts about the value of the Van Kemenade report”, Editorial, *Trouw* on 14/07/99; E. Kalse, ‘srebrenica’ blijft trauma Defensie’ (‘srebrenica remains trauma for Defence’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 14/07/99. As an explanation of the annual resuscitation of the Srebrenica dossier (“Despite or really thanks to Van Kemenade’s inquiry”), she pointed the finger at Van Kemenade for missing an opportunity to (help) close the dossier. In her weekly column Elsbeth Etty criticized the system of setting up committees to reassure rather than to reveal. In doing so, she referred to the investigative committees headed by Oosting (fireworks disaster in Enschede), Alders (fire in Volendam bar) and Van Kemenade: the ‘elitist system where members of the governing class carry out non-committal inquiries into the administrative failings of their fellow governors’. This leads to ‘untruthfulness and murkiness, not to say downright deceit and mendacity’. She denounced the system where the government conducted inquiries into its own affairs as their independence was open to question. Elsbeth Etty, ‘Herstel wantrouwen’ (‘Restore trust’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 23/06/01.

Netherlands Army did not want to be led and the Central Organization did not want to lead. They did not fulfil the very purpose for which they were created²⁷⁸¹ As it was not inconvenient for some of the people involved to keep certain matters out of the public eye, unwillingness was definitely also at work. The information gathering, handling and dissemination process therefore failed due to a combination of incompetence and unwillingness.

The administrative priority had led to the acceptance of a hybrid assignment: restore calm in the short term and an in-depth inquiry. It was predictable that the effect would not be long-lived. A critical report is obviously not the solution to the problem of persistent attention for and criticism of 'srebrenica'. This must be followed up by concrete measures and recognition of errors in order to meet society's need for accountable political and military leadership. A greater willingness on the part of Van Kemenade to expose the full scale of the problem could in the longer term have helped to dispel the mistrust. The inquiry failed to do this, particularly in the public domain. The wound was too deep and this suture too thin to silence the discussion once and for all.

²⁷⁸¹ Interview H.H. Hulshof, 06/12/01.

Chapter 9

The fate of the other eastern enclaves

1. Introduction

After the fall of Srebrenica two of the three eastern Safe Areas remained alongside the Safe Areas of Sarajevo, Tuzla and Bihac. These were: Zepa and Gorazde. Zepa was the next enclave to be lost with the international community looking on powerlessly. The fall of Srebrenica did however set a process in motion that led to the London Conference on 21 July 1995, where the international community took a decisive stance regarding a possible attack on Gorazde. The 'dual key' command system was modified to permit the more forceful deployment of air power. The new system was put into practice almost immediately afterwards when a mortar attack on the Markale market in Sarajevo killed a great many people. This triggered Operation Deliberate Force during which NATO and the UN conducted extensive air attacks. After the fall of Srebrenica and the discovery of the massacres perpetrated there, this marked a new turning point in the war in Bosnia.

Though the events in Zepa displayed many resemblances with those in Srebrenica, they were to take a very different course. Gorazde was ultimately saved as a Safe Area. The international community managed to draw a single line under the leadership of the British (who were responsible for Gorazde) to stop a further advance of the military forces of the Bosnian Serbs. This too was agreed upon during the London Conference. International political intervention came too late for Zepa. Evidently the Bosnian Serbs knew only too well that the international community would not act before the London Conference. This gave them time and space to direct their attentions to Zepa, Gorazde and the western enclave of Bihac.

The loss of Zepa will be described in more detail to implicitly provide material for comparison with the circumstances in Srebrenica as described in Part III and in this Part. The London Conference itself and the subsequent events in Gorazde are only sketched in outline, as is the role of the Dutch in this connection and the events in Bosnia until the Dayton Agreement. The fighting in Bihac, where no less than five warring factions were involved but which ultimately had no consequences for the map of Bosnia, has already been dealt with in Part II and is not discussed here. This had its own long prehistory and had no influence on the fall of Srebrenica.

Strictly speaking, Zepa did not fall. The Bosnian Serbs did not capture the enclave in the way they had overrun Srebrenica. Rather, it was abandoned by the Bosnian Muslim military forces and the population after which the latter made their way as Displaced Persons to Tuzla via Kladanj.²⁷⁸² The geographical and military circumstances at Zepa were also different from those in Srebrenica. The territory favoured the resistance that the Bosnian Muslim troops were able to offer and they were also better organized than their comrades in Srebrenica. What's more, there was less cause for revenge-taking fed by events in the earlier years of the war and by Bosnian Muslim actions outside the Safe Area.

There were various protagonists. Alongside the military forces of the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims, General Smith and his opponent Mladic were prominent players, while Milosevic and negotiator Bildt also had a crucial hand in preventing victims in Zepa. Wherever possible the differences with the fall of Srebrenica and the lessons learned from this tragedy will be indicated. The Netherlands played a part in the background owing to concerns over the safety of Dutchbat soldiers held by the Bosnian Serbs and fears that Dutchbat, which was awaiting the Bosnian Serbs' permission for departure, would be taken hostage after all.

²⁷⁸² Interview Hagrup Haukland, 03/05/99.

2. After Srebrenica, next objective: Zepa

After the fall of Srebrenica the UN leadership was deeply pessimistic about the possible fate of the other Safe Areas. Boutros-Ghali and Akashi detected a pattern in the behaviour of the Bosnian Serbs. The UN had been saddled with a mission impossible and not only Zepa and Gorazde would come under threat, but the Bihac area was also at risk. Apparently Boutros-Ghali was so pessimistic that he expressed the fear that Sarajevo too might be taken by the Bosnian Serbs.²⁷⁸³ On the evening of 11 July 1995 Janvier did not even rule out the possibility of the Bosnian Serbs seeking to force the UN to evacuate Zepa and Gorazde by threatening to refuse humanitarian aid into Srebrenica.²⁷⁸⁴ The Security Council was also aware that Zepa and Gorazde might be the next target but had been unwilling to include references to Zepa and Gorazde in Resolution 1004 of 12 July about the restoration of the Safe Area of Srebrenica on the grounds that the talks about this would have taken too long.²⁷⁸⁵

The fall of Srebrenica had again made the problem of the demilitarization of the Safe Areas acutely pertinent. Boutros-Ghali had already pointed to the flaws in the Safe Area concept and on 16 June 1995 the Security Council had again underlined the need for demilitarization in Resolution 998, but so far no concrete steps had been taken in this direction.²⁷⁸⁶ After the fall of Srebrenica, however, the Contact Group stressed that calls for demilitarization needed to be supported in order to promote the policy aimed at protecting the population.²⁷⁸⁷ The Russians were also of the opinion that one of the lessons to be learned from Srebrenica was that the Security Council should finally clarify the Safe Area concept. The only way to make these areas safe was to achieve a form of demilitarization acceptable to both parties.²⁷⁸⁸ The Russians incidentally believed at this stage that the demilitarization of Zepa and Gorazde was no longer feasible because the Bosnian government was opposed to it.²⁷⁸⁹ The British also regretted that the demilitarization was not supported by the Bosnian government, but added that this was still no justification for Bosnian Serb actions.²⁷⁹⁰ Stoltenberg therefore received instructions from New York to attempt to negotiate an end to the Bosnian Serb attacks on the Safe Areas as well as an official demarcation of borders and demilitarization.²⁷⁹¹ Time was beginning to run out. For the Bosnian Serbs had already set their sights on Zepa.

The Military Information Branch of the UN headquarters in Zagreb saw the frustration of the Bosnian Serbs regarding the demilitarization and the continuation of traffic between Srebrenica and Zepa as the prime motive for the attack.²⁷⁹² At the same time as launching the attack on Srebrenica on 6 July, the Bosnian Serbs had also commenced hostilities against the villages around Zepa. On 11 July the Ukrainian company came under fire from Bosnian Serb mortars and artillery and the unit was urgently requested to leave the enclave.²⁷⁹³ The Ukrainian company increasingly found itself caught between two fires. By way of a countermove, the Bosnian Muslims took over three OPs from the Ukrainians in Zepa to seize the weapons there. This tactic had already been recommended for Srebrenica but had not actually been carried out there. The Ukrainian company however had partly destroyed or disabled its weapons and armoured vehicles. Unlike in Srebrenica, the Bosnian Serbs had already emptied the UN Weapon Collection Point on 8 July but this contained little more than sixty miscellaneous weapons, only one 82 mm mortar and, most notably, two *Strela* ground-to-air missiles.²⁷⁹⁴

²⁷⁸³ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury's Diary, SRSG's briefing 12/07/95.

²⁷⁸⁴ SMG/1004/85. Brief report of the meeting of KL Crisis Staff and PBLs at FC UNPF, 11/07/95.

²⁷⁸⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02110. Code Biegman 611, 12/07/95.

²⁷⁸⁶ United Nations. S/RES/998 (1995), 16/06/95.

²⁷⁸⁷ DCBC 757. Code Loudon 270, 13/07/95.

²⁷⁸⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02110. Code Biegman 611, 13/07/95.

²⁷⁸⁹ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02110. Code Biegman 612, 12/07/95.

²⁷⁹⁰ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02110. Code Biegman 611, 13/07/95.

²⁷⁹¹ CRST. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 13/07/95, No. 2318.

²⁷⁹² NIOD, Coll. Theunens. Interoffice Memorandum G2 to COS, 'srebrenica: the Aftermath', 13/07/95.

²⁷⁹³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 13/07/95, No. Z-1153.

²⁷⁹⁴ SMG/1002. Annex A to Sitrep UNPROFOR 9 July 1995 from Chief G-3.

The commander of the Ukrainian battalion (who was not stationed in Zepa) was in favour of concentrating his troops in the village of Zepa. General Gobilliard, the sector commander of Sarajevo, which included Zepa, preferred to concentrate the troops at the OPs. He thought that was safer in view of the experiences at Srebrenica.²⁷⁹⁵

As usual, the Bosnian Muslims were deployed near UN positions, giving rise to the risk that the positions would come under Bosnian Serb fire and have to be abandoned. Shortly afterwards eighteen Ukrainian peacekeepers were in the hands of the Bosnian Muslims and the Bosnian Serbs in turn threatened to kill the others if NATO aircraft attacked their positions.²⁷⁹⁶ So the UN had to walk a tightrope in Zepa and there was little scope for warning off the Bosnian Serbs with the kind of tough talk used when taking up blocking positions in Srebrenica.

3. Reinforcement and air support?

With only eighty peacekeepers in Zepa and 280 in Gorazde, there was little UNPROFOR could do. From a military perspective Zepa was relatively easy to take and, after the fall of Srebrenica, the Bosnian Serbs were expected to start up an operation sooner rather than later. The UNPF headquarters in Zagreb estimated the Bosnian Muslim force in Zepa at 700 to 1300 men.²⁷⁹⁷ The location of the eastern enclaves was a complicating factor. Remote and surrounded by Bosnian Serb territory, it was virtually impossible to reinforce them with military equipment. Kofi Annan pointed out that the limited resources available to UNPROFOR meant that little could be done militarily to prevent Zepa and Gorazde from falling. Zepa was particularly vulnerable.²⁷⁹⁸

Pleas from Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic to send more troops to Zepa merely elicited indications from New York that the tasks in the eastern enclaves could not be credibly continued and that withdrawal to central Bosnia might be unavoidable.²⁷⁹⁹ Janvier had actually been thinking along those lines for some time. The first phase of a withdrawal from Zepa had already been set in motion with the abandonment of the observation posts. This regrouping enabled the UN to negotiate a possible departure from Zepa. A number of unarmed observers could then take their place without creating a supply problem. In making this proposal to New York Janvier tried in vain to breathe new life into his old plan to abandon the eastern enclaves, which had been torpedoed earlier by the Security Council.²⁸⁰⁰

Janvier and Deputy Force Commander Ashton had explored military options for retaining the remaining eastern enclaves but Janvier had seen a largely political problem in the fact that a decision to reinforce or defend the enclaves would mean UNPROFOR fighting with the Bosnian Muslims against the Bosnian Serbs.

From a military perspective an attempt could be made to block a Bosnian Serb advance to Zepa and Gorazde, but that was likely to fail as the heavy terrain made it easy to circumvent defensive positions.

A second option was to bring in reinforcements to make the Bosnian Serbs pay a heavier price for capturing the enclaves. Ashton, however, saw no point in sending more troops as this would only worsen the supply problems and increase the vulnerability. More viable options in his eyes were the deployment of aircraft, armed with Precision Guided Munition, and land mines. Visible preparations

²⁷⁹⁵ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Interoffice Memorandum MA to SC, DSC, DCOS, SOO, SLO, SMIO, PIO, 13/07/95, UN Conf.

²⁷⁹⁶ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury's Diary, SRSG's briefing 17/07/95; ABZ, DPV/ARA/00797. Code Biegan 632, 18/07/95.

²⁷⁹⁷ NIOD, Coll. Theunens. Interoffice Memorandum G2 to COS, 'srebrenica: the Aftermath', 13/07/95.

²⁷⁹⁸ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 12/07/95, No. MSC-2295.

²⁷⁹⁹ MID/KL. MID/KL, INTSUM 134/95, 141200Z July 95, Conf.

²⁸⁰⁰ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Code Cable Janvier to Annan Only, 14/07/95, No. Z-1163, UN Secret. (Janvier's attached memorandum 'Pour pas perdre fe fil en cette periode troublee' dated 12/07/95.)

combined with the resolution of the Bosnian Muslims to defend themselves and of the civil population to resist deportation might dissuade the Bosnian Serbs from attacking. Negotiations at all levels, together with the prevention of Bosnian Muslim raids launched from the Safe Areas, should accompany the military measures. If these steps failed, then the Security Council had to decide between peace enforcement and withdrawal, so Janvier concluded.

The only constant factor that Janvier had been able to distil from the resolutions of the Security Council was that the population had to be protected, but military action had so far failed to achieve this. In his view the UN's failure in Srebrenica had made the choice clearer than ever: side with the Bosnian Muslims or withdraw -²⁸⁰¹ Janvier had already opted for withdrawal.

The Rapid Reaction Force, which was on the point of becoming operational, could conceivably have been used to reinforce Zepa. However, this would have required opening up a corridor by force to get these troops into Zepa and that option was simply not on the table. On the contrary, in fact: Janvier took the view that it was impossible to send reinforcements and that defending the enclave was 'out of the question'.²⁸⁰² The sole option was a negotiated withdrawal. Only Gorazde offered possibilities for using the 'srebrenica model' involving a blocking position and pre-planned Close Air Support. The only practicable route was to keep crisis teams on stand-by and inform commanders of the lessons learned during the fall of Srebrenica.²⁸⁰³

In a Directive to General Smith, Janvier confirmed on 14 July that reinforcing Zepa was not feasible. It was impossible to open up an overland corridor. If the departure of the UN contingent could not be negotiated, Janvier wanted to make the UN troops less vulnerable and let them assist with the evacuation of the refugees.²⁸⁰⁴ Janvier added that the OPs in Zepa that were still manned should be abandoned in order to avoid a repeat of the situation in Srebrenica, where the Bosnian Muslims prevented withdrawal. Troops had already been pulled back from the OPs in Gorazde. The decision for Zepa was up to General Gobilliard who, as the commander of the Sarajevo sector, was also responsible for Zepa and Gorazde.²⁸⁰⁵

Zagreb did consider whether UNHCR staff should already be stationed in Zepa ahead of a possible fall of the enclave to avoid chaos, but the UNHCR representative feared that the Bosnian government would throw up a dam to prevent this.²⁸⁰⁶

Faced with the threat against Zepa, the UN took no further initiatives to step up the use of air power. Such initiatives did come from NATO. The fall of Srebrenica prompted the Military Committee to study ways of making air support to the UN more effective. After all, the fall of that Safe Area had brought the withdrawal of UNPROFOR closer. Apart from this fact, the threatening outbreak of hostilities on Croatian territory had also put the subject of air support back on the agenda. In the eyes of the Military Committee, the greatest stumbling block to the more effective deployment of NATO air power was the fact that the military leadership of UNPROFOR was still not empowered to authorize its use.²⁸⁰⁷

In addition, with further attacks on the Safe Areas in prospect, the North Atlantic Council had already concluded on 12 July that the execution of the extraction plans (Oplan 40104) had to be speeded up and the opportunities for assisting UNHCR explored.²⁸⁰⁸

Then the discussion flared up as to whether Zepa should be declared a Military Exclusion Zone; Gorazde already had this status. On 22 April 1994 the North Atlantic Council had determined

²⁸⁰¹ DCBC No. 2751. Code Cables Janvier to Annan, 16/07/95 and 17/07/95, Nos. UNPF-HQ Z-1177 and Z-1181.

²⁸⁰² UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2, SRSG Meeting, May-Oct 95. Senior Staff Meeting, 14/07/95.

²⁸⁰³ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87299, File 3066, Jul-Dec 95. Chief G3 Plans (Col K. Bache) to COS, 14/07/95, No. G3 Plans/698.

²⁸⁰⁴ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Letter Janvier to Comd UNPROFOR, SRSG, DFC, COS, 'Guidance to Commander UNPROFOR', 14/07/95.

²⁸⁰⁵ NIOD Coll. Banbury. Banbury's Diary. SRSG's Briefing 14/07/95.

²⁸⁰⁶ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2, SRSG Meeting, May-Oct 95. Senior Staff Meeting, 15/07/95.

²⁸⁰⁷ BSG, DS 95 III. Memorandum CDS to the Minister, 17/07/95, No. SN/95/938/4537.

²⁸⁰⁸ DCBC, 704. Fax PVNAVO to Min of FA and DEF, 12/07/95.

that a Military Exclusion Zone could be set up in the case of attacks with heavy weapons or the threat of such attacks. In that event, Bosnian Serb attacks could provoke air strikes. But NATO could not do this of its own accord. Consultation with the UN was necessary as otherwise a 'single key' situation would arise. However, as the UN was unlikely to embrace the idea of declaring Zepa a Military Exclusion Zone, NATO did not pursue the matter. Moreover, it was uncertain whether the NATO countries would be prepared to take action and, if so, what could be done and with what means. Zepa could not be defended: this was the inevitable conclusion and there was no point in inducing a counter-reaction from the Bosnian Serbs elsewhere. The UN did not request NATO action either.²⁸⁰⁹

Air support for Zepa could therefore be ruled out for the time being. Janvier had already decided that no permission would be given for Close Air Support above Zepa as long as Dutchbat had not left Srebrenica. Air support, for that matter, was also impossible for procedural and technical reasons: there was no Forward Air Controller in Zepa and it was not possible to work with an airborne Forward Air Controller as the Ukrainians lacked the required radio equipment. Little could be done beyond maintaining an air presence (circling above the enclave). The demand of the Permanent Representative of the Ukraine to the UN to support his compatriots with Close Air Support would only endanger the lives of the UN troops and was not feasible, according to the analysis in Zagreb.²⁸¹⁰ It was made clear to the Ukrainian representative that the Rules of Engagement did not permit Close Air Support under these circumstances.²⁸¹¹ The Ukrainian Defence Minister, V. Shmarov, then approached General Smith personally. Smith replied that he had ordered an air presence above the enclave and indicated that he was prepared to recommend the use of Close Air Support as soon as UNPROFOR troops were attacked.²⁸¹²

According to the Bosnian Minister for UN affairs, Hasan Muratovic, the UN troops in Zepa had submitted a request for air support. He said that the Bosnian Muslims had recorded this on tape. At the same time Muratovic said he no longer put the blame on UNPROFOR but on individuals; next he tried to damage General Nicolai. That was a name to remember, he said, because Nicolai had lost precious hours proving he had not received a request for air support. Nicolai had reportedly received such a request in the afternoon of 18 July and had requested an air presence, but the Dutch general had not given the order to bomb. According to Muratovic he had asked Nicolai why he had not yet given that order but Nicolai had then come up with 'all sorts of elaborate tales'. Muratovic consequently suspected Nicolai of waiting for darkness to fall so that he could then say it was too late: in his eyes this was tantamount to thwarting aid to Zepa and according to him thousands of lives were thus in the hands of Generals Nicolai and Janvier.²⁸¹³

However, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), General Joulwan, argued in a briefing to the North Atlantic Council that Close Air Support was not feasible for Zepa which, in his view, had little chance of survival. Nevertheless Joulwan sent Admiral Smith to Zagreb to discuss cooperation with Janvier and to see whether Zepa could thus be spared the same fate as Srebrenica. Janvier told Admiral Smith, however, that Zepa was doomed to fall because he could not reinforce it.²⁸¹⁴ Janvier therefore indicated in a directive to Smith that, given these circumstances, he was unwilling to consider air support.²⁸¹⁵

Even though air power had virtually no role to play in the case of Zepa, the Netherlands also took specific steps to avoid becoming involved in any air operations above Zepa. Chief of Defence

²⁸⁰⁹ Confidential information (155).

²⁸¹⁰ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury's Diary, SRSG's Briefing, announcement Deputy Force Commander, 15/07/95.

²⁸¹¹ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury's Diary, SRSG's briefing 15/07/95.

²⁸¹² NIOD, Coll. Smith. Lt-Gen R.A. Smith to V. Shmarov, 18/07/95.

²⁸¹³ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, 19/07/95, No. 02/IKM-698/10-227. Information Bulletin with interview Hasan Muratovic.

²⁸¹⁴ DCBC No. 729. Code Feith Navo 1039, 12/07/95, Confi; Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00; confidential information (156).

²⁸¹⁵ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Letter Janvier to Comd UNPROFOR, SRSG, DFC, COS, 'Guidance to Commander UNPROFOR', 14/07/95.

Staff Van den Breemen was against Dutch F-16s becoming engaged there. After the Close Air Support at Srebrenica and as long as Dutchbat was effectively held hostage by the Bosnian Serbs, his main priority was not to provoke the Bosnian Serbs. Major General C.J. van den Burg, Director of Operations of the Royal Netherlands Air Force, was instructed to arrange this with NATO. Van den Burg was unhappy with this assignment: on the one hand, the aircraft were not allowed to fly below 10,000 feet anyway; on the other hand, he could not guarantee that they could be identified as not being Dutch aircraft. From an operational point of view, the withdrawal of the Dutch aircraft was not a big problem for NATO: there were enough aircraft to maintain an air presence above Zepa.²⁸¹⁶

The Netherlands also included a proviso in the North Atlantic Council about the creation of an Exclusion Zone in Zepa. It would not oppose the initiation of the procedure agreed in this connection but if any danger to the Dutch hostages in Bratunac were to arise as a result, the Dutch government would feel compelled to contact the UN to call a halt to the air operations. SACEUR Joulwan promised he would bring the Dutch position to the attention of Admiral Leighton Smith.²⁸¹⁷ It was a fairly far-reaching and exceptional step that was prompted by concerns over the safety of the Dutchbat soldiers being held hostage.²⁸¹⁸ Or as Prime Minister Kok said, 'at the present moment we do not feel immediately called upon to be the first to help protect one of the two other enclaves while we are still up to our necks in trouble with four hundred men.'²⁸¹⁹

The impression that the negotiators Stoltenberg and Bildt, like General Smith, had got from their contacts with the Bosnian government was that the Bosnian Muslims assumed that Zepa was lost but would nevertheless protest vociferously.²⁸²⁰ The UN headquarters in Zagreb started to realize that plans already needed to be made in case aid to refugees from Zepa and Gorazde was necessary.²⁸²¹

Faced with the unavoidable fall of Zepa, Minister Van Mierlo wondered in the General Council of the EU on 17 July whether it wouldn't be wise to consider evacuating the population. 'Knowledge creates responsibility', Van Mierlo said in reference to Srebrenica. In his view such a decision was morally justifiable even though it entailed the risk of being accused of cooperating with ethnic cleansing. After it became clear that both President Izetbegovic and Prime Minister Silajdzic had responded positively to evacuation, EU negotiator Bildt was instructed to work out the details, assuming there was still enough time to implement this option.²⁸²² At an earlier stage UNHCR had already made preparations for the evacuation of the population but at that time the Bosnian government was still opposed to such a step.²⁸²³ As far as the Netherlands was concerned, the Dutch/Belgian transport battalion could be used for this purpose.²⁸²⁴ In any case, one of the lessons learned from Srebrenica was that refugees needed proper accompaniment and that every effort had to be made to ensure that UN observers, UNHCR and the International Red Cross were present from the word go.²⁸²⁵

4. Orders of the parties involved

When the Bosnian Serbs were deciding the battle around Srebrenica in their favour, the Drina Corps issued orders on 10 July to capitalize on the success and start offensive actions against the Bosnian

²⁸¹⁶ Interview C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

²⁸¹⁷ Confidential information (156).

²⁸¹⁸ Interview P.C. Feith, 24/08/01. The proviso was made on 14 July.

²⁸¹⁹ NOS, *Den Haag Vandaag*, Ned.3, 14/07/95, 11 p.m.

²⁸²⁰ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Box 234, File 6/15. Cryptofax Stoltenberg to the Secretary-General, 15/07/95.

²⁸²¹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87299, File 3061/3, Jul 95 - Nov 95. Interoffice Memorandum, Chief G3 Policy/Plans to FC, 14/07/95.

²⁸²² ABZ, DPV/ARA/00797. Code Van Mierlo 93, 18/07/95.

²⁸²³ NIOD, Coll. Banbury. Banbury's Diary, SRSG's briefing 15/07/95.

²⁸²⁴ 'Van Mierlo wil evacuatie van burgers Zepa' ('Van Mierlo wants evacuation of citizens of Zepa'), *De Volkskrant*, 18/07/95.

²⁸²⁵ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02110. Memorandum incl. DPV to DGPZ, 18/07/95, No. DPV/PZ-1509/95.

Muslim lines on the north side of Zepa. At that time such an action fitted in with the objective stated in relation to Srebrenica, namely to separate the enclaves and restore the dominance of the Bosnian Serbs in the area between the two enclaves.²⁸²⁶ On the same evening as the fall of Srebrenica, General Mladic announced that the attack on Zepa would be launched and appointed General Krstic as the commander of the operation.²⁸²⁷ But the Bosnian Serbs could not immediately set this plan in motion because the column of men fleeing from Srebrenica to Tuzla was taking up a lot of their attention and even forcing Bosnian Serb units that were already near Zepa to return. In the second instance the units were to be ready to advance on 17 July.²⁸²⁸

Initially, incidentally, the Bosnian Serbs had tried to seize the enclave without a fight. On 13 July the Bosnian Serbs tried to persuade the Bosnian Muslims to lay down their weapons, after which the population could choose to stay or leave. No answer was given; it was the Bosnian Muslims who wanted to fight.²⁸²⁹

The Bosnian Serbs, unlike the UN, estimated the initial Bosnian Muslim force at around 1200 men, who had subsequently been joined by a further seven hundred to one thousand soldiers from Srebrenica. In addition, the Bosnian Serbs were worried about groups of Bosnian Muslims who could still be anywhere between Srebrenica and Zepa and who could disturb the preparations for an attack. Drina-Corps Commander General Krstic unfolded a plan according to which the Milici and Bratunac Brigades, the 1st Vlasenica Brigade and the 1st and 5th Podrinje Brigades were to attack Zepa along several routes. Most of these troops had been engaged in the fighting around Srebrenica and, so the general reasoned, that success would no doubt have strengthened their motivation to capture Zepa too. The population and UNPROFOR were not to be targeted. Both groups were to be collected and placed under protective guard. Warning was given, however, that armoured UNPROFOR vehicles might have been stolen by the Bosnian Muslims and were consequently a legitimate target. The Bosnian Serbs' acute shortage of fuel is evident from the instruction that fuel tanks were not to be filled more than halfway.²⁸³⁰

On 15 July the Bosnian Muslim Army Commander Rasim Delic issued orders to defend Zepa with all possible means. There was no alternative. He believed that any hesitation in offering resistance could have only one outcome: wholesale massacre. Negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs had to be avoided at any price as those could merely lead to an exodus and certain death. Delic pointed out that none of the men from Srebrenica aged between 16 and 60 had reached Tuzla. Everything had to be done to block the work of UNPROFOR and seize their weapons for the Bosnian Muslims' own use. In addition, panic among the population was also to be avoided. The command had obviously learned from the events in Srebrenica. In this connection, Delic referred in particular to the actions of the military and civil leadership there, the actions of the Bosnian Serbs and what he called UNPROFOR's cooperation in the genocide. In addition, Delic gave military instructions to relinquish part of the enclave to shorten the lines of defence.²⁸³¹

Meanwhile, the Commander of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, Sead Delic, who was in charge of the area in which Zepa was located, exerted pressure on Brigadier General Haukland, the Commander of Sector North East, to stop the Bosnian Serb attack and bring in humanitarian aid. In doing so, he ignored the fact that Zepa was not in the latter's area of command. Delic said that if Haukland failed to meet this request, he would be held personally responsible and Delic would be unable to prevent acts of revenge against his person.²⁸³²

²⁸²⁶ ABiH Tuzla. Komanda Drinskog Kopusa to Komandi 1.Plbr, 07.1995 [sic], br. 03/157-3.

²⁸²⁷ ICTY, (IT-98-33), Judgement, 02/08/01, para 304.

²⁸²⁸ ICTY (IT-33-98), OTP Ex 538/a. Komanda 1. Brlpbr, Str.pov.br 468-2, 16/07/95.

²⁸²⁹ NIOD, Coll. De Ruitter. Interoffice Memorandum MA to SC, DSC, DCOS, SOO, SLO, SMIO, PIO, 13/07/95, UN Conf.

²⁸³⁰ ICTY (IT-33-98), OTP Ex 482/a. Komanda Drinskog Korpusa, IKM Krivace, 13/07/95, Str.pov.br 02/04-158-1.

²⁸³¹ NIOD, Coll. Trifunovic. BiH Generalstab Armije to KM 285 IB lbr, 15/07/95, br. 1/825-1212.

²⁸³² NIOD, Coll. Brantz. ABiH 2nd Corps to H.Q. UNPROFOR Sector N-E, 14/07/95, Conf No. 02/1-421/2.

To prepare for the reception of new flows of refugees into Tuzla, Haukland made an urgent appeal to the Minister of UN affairs, Muratovic, not to send still more refugees to Tuzla Air Base, which was already overcrowded with refugees from Srebrenica, but to look for reception facilities in Zenica. Muratovic had not wanted to make this undertaking but the Minister for Refugee Issues, Cero, had made this pledge.²⁸³³

5. Negotiations and battle

In the estimation of the UNPF headquarters at Zagreb, Zepa's chances of survival were very small. On 15 July Zagreb thought that the Bosnian Serbs could start advancing at any moment and that the Bosnian Muslims would lack the will and motivation to defend the enclave. The prognosis therefore was that the Bosnian Serbs would achieve the same result as in Srebrenica but in a much shorter space of time.²⁸³⁴

The Bosnian government was also gloomy about the prospects. At the express request of President Izetbegovic, General Smith and he met on 17 July to discuss the options for evacuating the population of Zepa in an emergency. Izetbegovic divided the population into two categories: the sick, wounded and elderly and the rest. He made no mention of soldiers. Smith did not so much foresee logistical problems but was unsure whether the Bosnian Serbs would grant permission.

Izetbegovic then asked Smith to contact Mladic in order to find out whether he would grant permission. Mladic did not appear averse to the idea and was prepared to discuss it with Smith. However, the Bosnian Serbs were wary of 'Muslim tricks' and proposed that, as a mark of good will, two representatives of the Bosnian government should attend the meeting with Smith at a location of Mladic's choice. Mladic offered a guarantee of safe conduct.

Izetbegovic agreed and appointed a Bosnian Muslim general and a civil servant as his representatives. Mladic was satisfied with the names given and arrangements for the meeting were set in motion. The Bosnian government had second thoughts, however, arguing that a meeting should take place on neutral territory. Smith, now acting as messenger between the two, continued his efforts to arrive at some sort of agreement. Mladic demanded unconditional surrender, after which arrangements could be made for the evacuation of the population. But before the population left, all fighting had to stop and all weapons handed over to the Bosnian Serbs. The Bosnian government turned down the demand to surrender all weapons before the negotiations. A proposal for a meeting without prior conditions was indignantly rejected by Mladic. He suspected the Bosnian government of playing for time. He stuck to his condition of unconditional surrender and a meeting at a location of his choice. Izetbegovic turned this down.²⁸³⁵

The next surprising twist came on 19 July when Mladic told Smith that a Muslim delegation in Zepa had surrendered to him; in his view, this meant that Zepa had fallen. At the same time, Mladic asked Smith to meet him and a representative of the International Red Cross the next morning in Rogatica and to send fifty trucks and fuel in case the population wanted to be evacuated to the region of the Federation. In addition, Mladic asked Smith to let the Muslim representatives know that he was willing to work together with them to ensure the entire operation proceeded safely. The wounded could be brought to Sarajevo in UN vehicles and the population could be taken to Kladanj.²⁸³⁶

Mladic did incidentally stipulate that only he would decide who of the men could leave and who would be placed in detention. Nor would Mladic tolerate British Joint Commission Observers (JCOs),

²⁸³³ UNGE. UNPROFOR Box 42, File 2-2, Sector Command Matters General, Fax Biser to Moussali, 17/05/95.

²⁸³⁴ CRST. Fax G3 LandOps/UNPF HQ to KL Crisis Staff attn. G2, 16/07/95, Daily UNPF Sitrep 150001B to 152359B Jul95.

²⁸³⁵ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 - SRE Vol. I, 15 Jul - 16 Nov 95. Fax HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF attn. SRSG, FC, DFC, COS, 172300B Jul 95, Secret, 'Meeting President Izetbegovic/General Smith: 17 Jul 95'.

²⁸³⁶ NIOD, Coll. Segers. Lt-General Ratko Mladic to UNPROFOR Command Sarajevo, HQ Army of the Republic of Srpska, 19/07/95, No. 06/17-470.

who acted as the eyes and ears of General Smith, being present in Zepa.²⁸³⁷ Mladic said all this to General Nicolai in Bratunac during the departure of Dutchbat. However, there were no JCOs in Zepa anyway, as the British government considered the situation in Zepa to be so dangerous that they would not allow General Smith to send a JCO team there.²⁸³⁸

Meanwhile, no one really knew whether Zepa had fallen or not. The UN in New York was unable to confirm this on 20 July. Mladic had already spoken with Civil Affairs in Sarajevo about the exchange of prisoners of war and the prisoners of war still to be captured in Zepa – if this was refused, the shelling of Zepa would resume – and sixty Bosnian Serb buses had been observed on the edge of the enclave, but Mladic's statement turned out to be premature.²⁸³⁹

In the evening of 21 July the fighting had started up again, but the Bosnian Serbs were in two minds whether to launch an infantry attack or not. They were worried that losses could be heavy in the inhospitable territory. Zepa was much more difficult terrain for the attacking force than Srebrenica. The Bosnian Muslims managed to hold the lines because the Bosnian Serbs did not press the attack. The local authorities let the Ukrainian commander know that they were intending to confiscate all UN equipment in order to facilitate their flight from the enclave.²⁸⁴⁰

On 24 July the seven thousand inhabitants of Zepa were surrounded by the Bosnian Serbs, who were constantly shelling and attacking the village. There were heavy casualties, with dozens of people being killed or wounded on both sides every day. The Bosnian Muslim lines had not yet been broken anywhere, but this seemed only a matter of time. A conversation between the Bosnian Muslim Chief of Staff in Zepa, Hamdija Torlak, and General Bjelajac in Sarajevo revealed that the defenders feared suffering the same fate as their comrades in Srebrenica; these apprehensions were fuelled by stories told by a group of 150 men who arrived from Srebrenica and a group of 53 men, some of whom were wounded, who were exhausted and shocked by what the Bosnian Serbs had done to the people in Konjevic Polje. It was said that one thousand men had been massacred.²⁸⁴¹ The defenders were running out of ammunition and soon none would be left. The scene appeared to be set for the Bosnian Serbs' next massacre, particularly as there were no international observers in the region. The commander of the disarmed Ukrainian peacekeepers had sought protection from the Bosnian Serbs.²⁸⁴²

This situation remained on a knife-edge for several more days. The London Conference held in response to the fall of Srebrenica on 21 July gave short shrift to Zepa. The central issue there was the prevention of the fall of Gorazde (see below). In New York too the attention was mainly focused on preventing the larger and strategically more important town of Gorazde from falling into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs.²⁸⁴³ Or, as Janvier noted, though the fall of Zepa was not yet a reality, international public opinion and the governments of the troop-contributing nations had already accepted and sanctioned this.²⁸⁴⁴ All this elicited an angry response from the UN representative for Human Rights, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who said that the world leaders should look into the eyes of the citizens of Zepa who were facing the same tragedy that had befallen Srebrenica.²⁸⁴⁵ During the conference Van Mierlo pointed to his earlier suggestion of a 'pre-emptive evacuation' of the population of Zepa on the grounds that the UN would have to withdraw from indefensible areas.²⁸⁴⁶

²⁸³⁷ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Meeting between Gen Nicolai and Gen Mladic at Bratunac on 21/07/95.

²⁸³⁸ Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force*, p. 53.

²⁸³⁹ DCBC 946. Code Biegman 644, 20/07/95.

²⁸⁴⁰ Confidential information (48).

²⁸⁴¹ NIOD, Coll. Trifunovic. BiH Generalstab Armije to KM 285 IB lbr, 15/07/95, br. 1/825-1212 with attached transcription of telephone conversation, Chief of Staff 285 lbr to ABiH-General Bjelajac, undated.

²⁸⁴² ABZ, DAV/ARA/00255. Turkish Delegation to NATO to Willy Claes, 24/07/95.

²⁸⁴³ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Fax UNPROFOR HQ DPKO Military Adviser to UNPF HQ Zagreb, 152200NYTJul95.

²⁸⁴⁴ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Concept Code Cable Janvier to Smith UNPROFOR Sarajevo (Only) info Akashi UNPF, Zagreb (Only), Kolsteren, UNPF, Zagreb (Only), 30/07/95.

²⁸⁴⁵ Eve-Ann Prentice, 'UN envoy claims Serbs mutilated civilians', *The Times*, 25/07/95.

²⁸⁴⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05244. Code Celer 69, 25/07/95.

Smith was unable to contact Mladic at the agreed meeting point in Rogatica.²⁸⁴⁷ It was not until 25 July that Mladic and Smith met, at the latter's request, to speak about the situation in Zepa. The meeting took place in Han Kran.²⁸⁴⁸ This time Mladic did bring along an agreement signed by the Chief of Staff of the Zepa Brigade of the ABiH, Hamdija Torlak. The agreement set forth arrangements for a ceasefire and an evacuation of the population, except for men of military age. These were to be exchanged for Bosnian Serbs under the supervision of UNPROFOR.²⁸⁴⁹ The International Red Cross was not happy with the situation and wondered whether sufficient safety guarantees were in place. Both the VRS and the Bosnian authorities had been offered assistance for the evacuation of the population provided that both parties agreed and the population clearly also wanted this.²⁸⁵⁰

The agreement with Hamdija Torlak depended on three conditions which, according to Smith, none of the parties could satisfy. The ceasefire had to be enduring, the Bosnian Muslims had to lay down their arms and accept prisoner of war status until an exchange took place, and the Bosnian government had to agree to an exchange of prisoners of war. Smith had accepted the agreement as a *fait accompli*. It was not clear to Smith whether the local Bosnian representatives were authorized to conclude such an agreement or whether the Bosnian government endorsed it; Minister Muratovic, for instance, said that he had no knowledge of the agreement. Hamdija Torlak was not a representative of the Bosnian government and had no authority. Muratovic assumed that this was another Bosnian-Serb trick, comparable to the one a week earlier when Mladic had told Smith that Zepa had surrendered. The Bosnians would however accept an evacuation from Zepa provided it was carried out by UNPROFOR in order to prevent a repetition of Srebrenica where people had been pulled from the buses.²⁸⁵¹

Even so, there appeared to be a good chance that an arrangement for the evacuation of the population would be reached and implemented. In a letter to the chairman of the Security Council, Izetbegovic requested that the evacuation of the population would take place under the protection of UNPROFOR and that General Smith would be permitted to use force to protect the convoys. After the fall of Srebrenica and after the Security Council had failed to make even the slightest attempt to defend Zepa, surely the UN could at least undertake to save the women and children of Zepa. Izetbegovic made no mention of the men.²⁸⁵²

Mladic was subsequently unwilling to do business with the Bosnian government because Minister Muratovic had drawn his good intentions into doubt. Mladic did however accept a talk with Muratovic to organize the exchange of prisoners. In order to ensure the smooth implementation of the agreement, a liaison group and a company of French UNPROFOR soldiers had been transferred from Sarajevo, and the presence of the International Red Cross and the media had been arranged to deter the Bosnian Serbs from committing crimes. Furthermore, UNPROFOR was responsible for registering and assisting refugees who wanted to leave the enclave and was available to act as an intermediary in the exchange of prisoners of war.

After this meeting with Mladic, Smith went on to Zepa to continue the talks with Mladic, review the situation and set the evacuation of the wounded in motion. At that moment representatives of the International Red Cross and UNHCR were already in Zepa. As in Srebrenica, the train of events swept along at a speed that UNPROFOR and the Bosnian government were unable to keep up with.²⁸⁵³

²⁸⁴⁷ NIOD, Coll. Shitakha. Diary, SRSG Meeting 21/07/95.

²⁸⁴⁸ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Concept Code Cable Janvier to Smith UNPROFOR Sarajevo (Only) info Akashi UNPF, Zagreb (Only), Kolsteren, UNPF, Zagreb (Only), 30/07/95.

²⁸⁴⁹ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. The Office of the Comd HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, SRSG, FC, DFC, 260300BJul95, 'Meeting Notes General Smith / General Mladic 25 July [1995]. Confi.

²⁸⁵⁰ ABZ, DAV/ARA/00255. Code Hofstee 258, 20/07/95.

²⁸⁵¹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, SNE, CVAO, 20 Jan - 12 Aug 95. Memorandum Harland to Ryan info Maj-Gen Gobilliard, 'Negotiations on Zepa (6)', 25/07/95.

²⁸⁵² ABZ, PVNY. Alija Izetbegovic to Gerardo Martinez Blanco, 25/07/95. Sent with fax PVVN to DPV/PZ and DEU/OE, 25/07/95, No. NYV-4568.

²⁸⁵³ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. The Office of the Comd HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, SRSG, FC, DFC, 260300BJul95, 'Meeting Notes General Smith / General Mladic 25 July [1995]. Confi.

The evacuation was already under way before Smith arrived in Zepa. The Dutch TV news even reported how Mladic had generously offered Smith buses and trucks to transport the wounded when it became clear that the UNPROFOR ambulances and vehicles would need another two and a half hours to reach Zepa.²⁸⁵⁴

Smith also made the same demand that he had made earlier to Mladic, i.e. that UNPROFOR personnel would be allowed to escort the buses transporting the population to Kladanj. A further sixty French soldiers arrived at night for this purpose. Mladic also agreed to allow organizations like UNHCR and the International Red Cross to travel freely to Zepa and raised no objections to the arrival of a CNN TV crew. The world could then witness how things were being done, said Mladic.²⁸⁵⁵

On 25 July a convoy with wounded civilians and relatives left for Sarajevo. That evening the first convoy of refugees also departed for Kladanj. The Bosnian Serbs had provided 21 buses for this. Each bus was escorted by UNPROFOR soldiers. A second convoy was planned for the morning of 26 July.²⁸⁵⁶ The population, excluding the men of able-bodied age, came down from the mountains to await the arrival of the buses that would take them to Kladanj. Many houses were on fire, evidently set alight by the people themselves.²⁸⁵⁷ UNPROFOR representatives got the impression that the Bosnian Serbs were intending a less aggressive ethnic cleansing than in Srebrenica.²⁸⁵⁸

As things turned out, the evacuation of the civilians of Zepa led to few problems despite the constant changes in circumstances and moods. Muratovic did claim, however, that two women and an estimated thirty men had been pulled from a bus. Also, there was no one within UNPROFOR who could give assurances that all buses that had left Zepa had actually arrived in Kladanj.²⁸⁵⁹ The refugees had received better treatment and they also looked less exhausted and anxious than the refugees from Srebrenica. Reports from UNHCR and in the media confirmed this impression²⁸⁶⁰ even though, unlike in the case of Srebrenica, the Bosnian authorities did not allow journalists to speak with the refugees.²⁸⁶¹

6. Departure of the men from Zepa

The biggest problem was the departure of men of military age from Zepa. This group comprised 1500 to 2000 men. They were staying in hiding while awaiting guarantees for their departure. On 26 July the Bosnian Serbs were in all population centres and it did not look as if they intended to continue fighting.²⁸⁶² Mladic confirmed in talks with Bosnian Muslim representative Hakija Torlak that those who handed in their weapons would be registered by the International Red Cross. However, unless the Bosnian government backed this plan, the men would be afraid to act upon it. But the surrender of weapons was a matter for the Bosnian Muslim Commander Avdo Palic. Mladic therefore proposed that Smith and Muratovic should clear up this point the next day. Mladic said that as 'a professional soldier

²⁸⁵⁴ 'Text from NOS News of Wednesday 26 July 1995.'

²⁸⁵⁵ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. The Office of the Comd HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, SRSG, FC, DFC, 'Meeting Notes General Smith / General Mladic 25 July [1995]'. Confi.

²⁸⁵⁶ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87304, File 3300-6, Vol. 5, 1 Jun 95 - 15 Sep 95. HQ UNPROFOR Sarajevo, Supplementary Order to OPO 12/95 - Evacuation of Refugees from Zepa, 26232 [sic] B Jul 1995.

²⁸⁵⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, SNE, CVAO, 20 Jan - 12 Aug 95. Memorandum Harland to Ryan info Maj-Gen Gobilliard, 'Negotiations on Zepa (8)', 26/07/95.

²⁸⁵⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, SNE, CVAO, 20 Jan - 12 Aug 95. Memorandum Harland to Ryan info Maj-Gen Gobilliard, 'Negotiations on Zepa (8)', 26/07/95.

²⁸⁵⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, SNE, CVAO, 20 Jan - 12 Aug 95. Memorandum Harland to Ryan info Maj-Gen Gobilliard, 'Negotiations on Zepa (11)', 28/07/95.

²⁸⁶⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, SNE, CVAO, 20 Jan - 12 Aug 95. Fax Tuzla (UNHCR) 26 Jul 95 11.40Z. 'Zepa refugees complain of betrayal', *The Times*, 'Concern for Zepa defenders left in hills', *Daily Telegraph*, 27/07/95.

²⁸⁶¹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, SNE, CVAO, 20 Jan - 12 Aug 95. Memorandum Harland to Ryan info Maj-Gen Gobilliard, 'Negotiations on Zepa (8)', 26/07/95.

²⁸⁶² UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, SNE, CVAO, 20 Jan - 12 Aug 95. Memorandum Harland to Ryan info Maj-Gen Gobilliard, 'Negotiations on Zepa (8)', 26/07/95.

he had a code of honour' but could not be held responsible if the men tried to cross the Drina or break out.²⁸⁶³

Later in the night of 25 July, Smith met Izetbegovic and Muratovic to give his report. It turned out that Izetbegovic had already obtained a copy of the agreement through Bosnian Serb channels and declared that he was prepared to exchange five hundred Bosnian Serb prisoners of war for two thousand men from Zepa. Izetbegovic feared however that Mladic would change his mind and not honour his part of the agreement. Another problem for the Bosnians was that they too suspected that Hakija Torlak had been forced to sign the agreement and that he had not been acting with the approval of the Bosnian Muslim Commander Avdo Palic or of the Bosnian Muslim army in Zepa. The extreme difficulties that Smith faced as he tried to operate in the heat of the moment are evident from the reproach he received from Muratovic that UNPROFOR was assisting in the evacuation from Zepa and even without the approval of the Bosnian government and that UNPROFOR was therefore responsible for the registration of the population and the checks in Kladanj.²⁸⁶⁴

Apart from the talks between Smith and Mladic, negotiations were in progress at the airport of Sarajevo about an exchange of prisoners of war and the role to be played by UNPROFOR in this connection. These talks however became deadlocked over the question as to which party was to take possession of the weapons. The Bosnian Muslims wanted to hand the weapons over to UNPROFOR, the Bosnian Serbs wanted to take the weapons themselves. Another sensitive issue concerned the question what to do with the group of men (estimated by UNPROFOR at three thousand men) who had reportedly been taken prisoner at Srebrenica. The Bosnian Serbs refused to hand over lists of these men – in reality they had already been murdered.

Chief Civil Affairs Officer David Harland, who was chairing the talks, believed that the Bosnian government had by now accepted that the Bosnian Muslims had been defeated at Zepa but did not rule out that groups would fight on. The 'srebrenica option', a military solution followed by a humanitarian disaster, thus remained a possibility.²⁸⁶⁵

All hopeful thoughts about a speedy settlement of the fall of Zepa were thus almost immediately dashed to the ground. UNPROFOR was also becoming increasingly concerned about other Safe Areas. The results of the London Conference had hardly filled the Bosnian Serbs with awe. Mladic publicly announced that the autumn would not only see Zepa and Gorazde in Bosnian Serb hands but also the Bihac area and, finally, Sarajevo, thus bringing the war to an end,²⁸⁶⁶ though Mladic did add to journalists that he would not need to attack Gorazde if the Bosnian Muslims handed over their weapons.²⁸⁶⁷ Meanwhile the situation in Gorazde remained tense and fierce fighting in the Bihac area had set a large flow of refugees in motion.²⁸⁶⁸

The hostilities around Zepa were beginning to subside, however. Regular combat units of the Bosnian Serb army had been pulled back and replaced with reservists. These seemed unlikely to start up operations to drive the Bosnian Muslims out of Zepa. Smith expected them to continue the siege and prevent the men from escaping. Smith had to decide whether the UNPROFOR personnel should stay on in Zepa. The Bosnian Serbs were refusing to let supplies through and UNPROFOR personnel were becoming mixed up with Bosnian Serb troops in their efforts to track down civilians still in the enclave. The Bosnian Serbs gave no guarantees for their safety and they could easily be taken hostage. Smith was particularly worried that something might happen to the French soldiers. There were still an

²⁸⁶³ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. The Office of the Comd HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, SRSG, FC, DFC, 'Meeting Notes General Smith / General Mladic 25 July [1995]'. Conf.

²⁸⁶⁴ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. The Office of the Comd HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, SRSG, FC, DFC, 'Meeting Notes General Smith / General Mladic 25 July [1995]'. Conf.

²⁸⁶⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, SNE, CVAO, 20 Jan - 12 Aug 95. Memorandum Harland to Ryan info Maj-Gen Gobilliard, 'Negotiations on Zepa (7)', 25/07/95.

²⁸⁶⁶ Confidential information (187).

²⁸⁶⁷ 'Mladic wil onderhandelen met autoriteiten Gorazde' ('Mladic wants to negotiate with authorities of Gorazde'), *Reuters*, 27/07/95, 05.23.

²⁸⁶⁸ DCBC, No. 1027. Code Biegman 653, 26/07/95.

estimated 1500 Bosnian Muslim troops and 2800 civilians left in Zepa and these would only be prepared to surrender if guarantees were given for a safe departure. Smith was worried that in this case it would be very difficult to separate the soldiers from the civilians.

The Bosnian government insisted that UNPROFOR should stay and help the people to reach safety. Mladic reportedly continued to demand surrender to the Bosnian Serbs and was unwilling to compromise. Smith felt that for moral reasons UNPROFOR should stay in Zepa for as long as civilians remained there. Withdrawal would be tantamount to abandoning them to their fate. It would also undermine the credibility of UNPROFOR and saddle the UN with negative publicity as well as difficulties with the Bosnian government. The risk of hostage-taking had to be taken, but Smith did put the matter to Akashi and Janvier.²⁸⁶⁹

The Croatian offensive changed the mood among the Bosnian Serbs in the days thereafter. At the next meeting that Smith had with Mladic, again at the former's request to resolve the Zepa issue, he found Mladic a changed man. Mladic made a tired and harassed impression. He was visibly strained by the serious military and humanitarian situation that had arisen in the Livno valley where the Bosnian Serbs were confronted with fifty thousand refugees as a result of the Croatian offensive. Zepa was no longer as high on Mladic's agenda as a few days previously. An exchange of prisoners of war had still not been arranged and Mladic remained unwilling to make concessions on that point. He claimed that the evacuation of the population had been completed but did not allow Smith to have patrols carried out to check whether anyone had stayed behind. According to Mladic, the Bosnian Muslim army was breaking out in the direction of Gorazde and Kladanj and to Serbia. Mladic offered a free conduct for the withdrawal of UNPROFOR but had no objection to UNHCR and the International Red Cross staying. Evidently certain things had also gone wrong: men who had been promised safe conduct to Kladanj had been taken prisoner. This was a matter of great concern to Smith, particularly as it would make the Bosnian Muslim soldiers still roaming around in the hills totally unwilling to surrender, while also doing little to encourage sympathy for the refugees that the Bosnian Serbs were confronted with. These arguments cut no ice with Mladic.²⁸⁷⁰

Talks about an exchange of prisoners continued but the standpoints of the warring factions remained as far apart as ever. The Bosnian Serbs would not budge and continued to demand the surrender of the men in Zepa. After this, an exchange could take place. The Bosnian Muslims too held on to their demand that the men should be evacuated and kept out of the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. They would be freed anyway after an exchange, so they argued. Mladic, for his part, stepped up the pressure by setting a deadline, after which any men who had not surrendered would be attacked. Muratovic countered by saying that the Bosnian Muslims would not surrender but that negotiations should continue nevertheless. UNPROFOR tried to work out a solution other than total surrender and the Bosnian Serbs appeared to hope that continuation of the fighting would lead to a *fait accompli*. The conclusion of UNPROFOR was: 'we appear to be in a mess'.²⁸⁷¹

On 30 July the talks between the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims about the evacuation of the Bosnian Muslims came to an end. Neither party had any new proposals to make. The Bosnian Serbs appeared to have abandoned the idea of a negotiated evacuation and were intending to cleanse the area at their own pace. Zepa was no longer a priority for Mladic now that he had his hands full with the Croatian offensive. The senior members of the General Staff had travelled to Banja Luka and Mladic let Smith know that he was no longer interested in an exchange of prisoners. It also meant for

²⁸⁶⁹ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Code Cable Smith to HQ UNPF Zagreb attn. SRSSG, FC, G3OPS, 292200BJul95.

²⁸⁷⁰ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. The Office of the Comd HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, SRSG, FC, DFC, 010050BAug95, 'Meeting Gen Smith / Gen Mladic 31 July 1995'. UNPROFOR Geneva, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 4 Apr - 23 Aug 94.

²⁸⁷¹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, SNE, CVAO, 20 Jan - 12 Aug 95. Memorandum Harland to Ryan info Maj-Gen Gobilliard, 'Negotiations on Zepa (10); (11)', 27/07/95 and 28/07/95.

UNPROFOR that the 150 men still in Zepa had to be pulled out soon to prevent them from becoming hostages in a remote area in Bosnia.²⁸⁷²

In the inaccessible area around Zepa the Bosnian Muslims ensconced on the mountain slopes and in the caves continued the struggle. The Bosnian Serbs were unable to achieve a victory but were combing the area to flush out any remaining Bosnian Muslim fighters. The road to the north via Srebrenica was cut off and the routes to Muslim areas at Gorazde and Sarajevo were far away and dangerous. One of the few escape routes left entailed crossing the Drina River to Serbia. Smith had already asked Bildt to persuade Milosevic to exert pressure on Mladic to give UNPROFOR better access to Zepa. Bildt also received the request from Muratovic to ask Milosevic whether the safety of the Bosnian Muslim soldiers crossing the Drina River could be guaranteed.

The flight across the Drina appeared to give a sudden twist to the situation and offer a way out of the morass. Bildt feared however that if Mladic were informed of the organized flight or found out about it himself, this could lead to a renewed massacre similar to the one that had taken place at Srebrenica. Secrecy was therefore essential. Milosevic could possibly be persuaded to see cooperation with the plan as a political investment. This, in fact, proved to be the case; the flight of Bosnian Muslim soldiers to Serbia prompted Milosevic to write letters calling upon Izetbegovic and Mladic to stop the war and bring the hostilities to an end. Remarkably enough, Milosevic wrote directly to Mladic, thus bypassing Karadzic. In his letter Milosevic referred to the images of the refugees from Srebrenica and Zepa who were fleeing to Tuzla and of the Serbian refugees who had fled to Banja Luka after the Croatian offensive.²⁸⁷³

The Bosnian Muslim army was instructed via the surviving radio lines with Sarajevo to make its way to Serbia.²⁸⁷⁴ Six hundred men from Zepa and a smaller contingent that had originally come from Srebrenica swam or rafted across the Drina at Bajina Basta.²⁸⁷⁵ Not all men fled across the Drina, incidentally: many escaping from Zepa (the exact number is not known) took the same route as the column of men from Srebrenica to Tuzla. This journey too was a horrific ordeal with no food. On the way they encountered a great many bodies lying around Konjevic Polje. The bodies had started to stink because of the warm weather and the Bosnian Serbs were trying to round up the men with dogs and guide them back to the road. Some did not arrive in Tuzla until 12 October.²⁸⁷⁶

Around Zepa there was no evidence of mass murders. Nor had any digging machines been observed in the surroundings. One notable victim was the local Bosnian Muslim Commander, Colonel Avdo Palic. Smith's Military Assistant, Lieutenant Colonel Jim Baxter was one of the last to see Palic alive. At the time he was in the company of the Bosnian Serb General Tolimir. An hour later Baxter saw Tolimir again, this time without Avdo Palic.²⁸⁷⁷ Mladic boasted that he had been shot because the surrender talks had not led to a result.²⁸⁷⁸ This was a severe blow to the negotiations as Palic was the only man in Zepa who was authorized by the Bosnian government to negotiate.²⁸⁷⁹

²⁸⁷² UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, SNE, CVAO, 20 Jan - 12 Aug 95. Memorandum Harland to Ryan info Maj-Gen Gobilliard, 'Negotiations on Zepa (14)', 31/07/95.

²⁸⁷³ UNPROFOR New York, Box 88039, File 1-2-1, Nov 94 - Aug 95. Slobodan Milosevic to Alija Izetbegovic, 01/08/95.

²⁸⁷⁴ Bildt, *Peace Journey*, pp. 70-71.

²⁸⁷⁵ *Borba*, 03/08/95.

²⁸⁷⁶ Confidential interview (51).

²⁸⁷⁷ Interview J. Baxter, 16/10/00.

²⁸⁷⁸ 'Bosnian Serbs Said to Have Killed Zepa Commander', *Reuters*, 29/07/95; 'Zepa Negotiator Detained, Fate of Another Unclear With BC-Yugoslavia', *Associated Press*, 29/07/95. On 26 July John Pomfret, *Washington Post Foreign Service*, wrote about Palic: 'Avdo Palic, a former Yugoslav army captain who has commanded Zepa's defence since the war began. In the spring of 1992, according to U.N. officials, Palic orchestrated a raid on a Yugoslav army communications tower near Zepa, capturing 60 guns and killing as many as 50 Serbs. In June 1992, when the Serbs tried to retaliate and add Zepa to their eastern booty, Palic ordered the only paved road into the valley dynamited and incoming tanks ambushed. The Serbs said 400 of their soldiers were killed -- their bloodiest defeat of the war.' Pomfret did not link this to the situation in 1995, but such a connection cannot be ruled out.

²⁸⁷⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, SNE, CVAO, 20 Jan - 12 Aug 95. Memorandum Harland to Ryan info Maj-Gen Gobilliard, 'Negotiations on Zepa (11)', 28/07/95.

7. Conclusions about Zepa

The warring factions and UNPROFOR appeared to have learned their lessons from the events at Srebrenica. On the one hand the Bosnian Serbs were willing to come to an arrangement in an evident attempt to avoid a repeat of Srebrenica, which had been extremely damaging to their position. The same applied to the Bosnian government which in the first instance was considering an evacuation of the population and then recoiled when confronted with Mladic's demand for unconditional surrender, but which ultimately did not resist the evacuation of the population and at a certain moment even insisted on it. The UN responded alertly and talks were held under the direction of UNPROFOR to arrange an exchange of prisoners and so spare the lives of the able-bodied men. These talks, incidentally, failed to produce results due to mistrust over the intentions of the Bosnian Serbs, but at any rate no mass murder took place at Zepa.

On 19 July 1995 Mladic had made generous promises to Smith concerning access to Zepa, but little came of these in practice. After 3 August there would be no UN presence in Zepa as the withdrawal of the Ukrainian garrison would then be completed. Though Mladic had agreed to the presence of two Civil Affairs Officers, the military authorities in Pale refused them permission to travel to Zepa. UNHCR now also failed to gain access to Zepa and it was no longer known whether the International Red Cross or other NGOs were present or not. The International Red Cross had been able to visit no more than 44 men while the total number of detainees was unknown. Estimates put the figures at several hundred men in addition to the group that was making its way to Serbia.²⁸⁸⁰ On 10 August the Security Council adopted Resolution 1010 demanding that UNHCR and the International Red Cross be granted access to Srebrenica and Zepa. This time, the scope of the resolution was restricted to humanitarian affairs. Unlike in the case of Srebrenica, there were no longer vigorous calls for a restoration of the Safe Area of Zepa.²⁸⁸¹

It was striking that Mladic went to a lot of trouble in Zepa to get Smith there as quickly as possible and also that he tried to use Smith as a link between the Bosnian Muslims and UNPROFOR. He also promised Smith that he would supervise the proceedings in person to ensure everything went in orderly fashion. It looked as if Mladic wanted to be personally involved to avoid a repetition of the events in Srebrenica.

Other factors also played a part: Mladic was losing the strategic initiative and he knew it. The operations in Krajina were going badly for the Bosnian Serb forces. Mladic made a hasty departure in the midst of the negotiations to go to Krajina. He placed the negotiations in the hands of Tolimir who, so Smith suspected, had been instructed to 'get it over quickly'. All sorts of demands regarding Zepa then suddenly proved acceptable to the Bosnian Serb negotiators and a lot could be arranged.²⁸⁸² This was in stark contrast with Srebrenica, where Mladic had denied negotiators access, thus leaving Karremans to fend for himself. Another marked difference was that in Zepa Mladic was prepared to permit the arrival of the International Red Cross and UNHCR as well as journalists at an early stage. The fact that nothing came of the proposed exchange of prisoners was due to a lack of trust over the intentions of the Bosnian Serbs, but was also because the Bosnian Muslims and UNPROFOR did not know how many men the Bosnian Serbs were still holding at Srebrenica. For this reason, the Bosnian Muslims were unwilling to conclude a comprehensive arrangement for the exchange of prisoners. That these men had already been murdered was not yet known at the time.

The grim reality behind the fact that no men from Srebrenica had arrived in Tuzla needed no further explanation in Zepa. Around 700 men from Srebrenica had reportedly fled to Zepa, including 109 Bosnian Muslim soldiers. Many of them could bear witness to the horrors that the column of men had encountered during their flight to Tuzla before heading for Zepa. The spectre of Srebrenica led to stiff resistance against the Bosnian Serbs in Zepa.

²⁸⁸⁰ UNGE, ICFY, Ordner 140(47) Cryptofax In 1-14 Aug 95. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 03/08/95, No. Z-1321.

²⁸⁸¹ S/RES/1010 (1995), 10/08/95.

²⁸⁸² Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

The local government in Zepa also appeared to have a better grip on things than their counterparts in Srebrenica. Compared with Srebrenica, Zepa was an enclave with fewer internal conflicts. After their initial refusal to assist the UN with the evacuation, the local representatives of the SDA (Muslim's Party of Democratic Action) were quickly able to indicate what was necessary to help the refugees. Evidently this had been carefully planned beforehand.²⁸⁸³ A reported 1245 Bosnian Muslim troops were in Zepa and these were better armed and organized than their comrades in Srebrenica. The Bosnian Muslims were able to put up a better and longer defence and when resistance was no longer possible they managed to stay out of the hands of the Bosnian Muslims by retreating in a well-organized manner to the mountains and caves. The Bosnian Serb army was reluctant to engage the enemy in such terrain, where its heavier equipment offered fewer advantages. In this way, time could be won to reach a political arrangement which allowed the majority of the men to cross the Drina to safety in Serbia. It was striking that Milosevic lent his support to this, thereby seizing the opportunity for a political initiative to move towards a peace settlement. It was also striking that, unbeknown to Karadzic, he turned directly to Mladic and Izetbegovic in this connection.

Lessons appeared to have been learned from Srebrenica. UNPROFOR was prepared for the fall of Zepa and, unlike in Srebrenica, it was not caught off guard by a stark and paralyzing reality. General Smith was able to play an active role and Mladic allowed him to do so. As a result, the International Red Cross could be involved at an early stage and arrangements could be made to remove the wounded and evacuate the population without leaving all initiative to the Bosnian Serbs. The Bosnian government had been cooperative up to a certain point and the political intervention of Milosevic through the intermediation of Bildt had prevented escalation when an arrangement for the exchange of men failed to materialize. Though this was not an easy process, it at least did not lead to the enormities on the scale of Srebrenica.

8. Gorazde: military plans are hatched

After the fall of Srebrenica and the threatening and unavoidable loss of Zepa, all the signs were that Gorazde, the only remaining Safe Area in Eastern Bosnia, would be the next target for the advancing Bosnian Serbs. Though Mladic had said on 15 July during talks in Belgrade that he had no intentions to take Gorazde and had given assurances to this effect, no one took his word at face value.²⁸⁸⁴ The UN, the French and the British set to work in a bid to find measures that would prevent Gorazde being taken. Gorazde was protected by a small Ukranian contingent and somewhat larger British contingent of peacekeepers. Skirmishing between the warring factions around Gorazde had already been going on for some time. The UNPROFOR presence had become almost totally ineffectual. The Bosnian Muslims had largely disarmed the Ukrainians. The British had pulled back from their observation posts to their compound.

After their earlier but hardly fruitful ideas for recapturing Srebrenica, the French turned their attention to Gorazde. They requested the US to air-lift a thousand French troops in US helicopters to Gorazde as the advance force of a brigade being sent to reinforce the town. The French exerted pressure on the Americans by saying that failure to meet their request would leave them with no option other than to withdraw from UNPROFOR. The Americans incidentally did not treat this French plan as a ploy to withdraw from Bosnia. After the rather unrealistic French plans for recapturing Srebrenica, the Americans did take the French proposals seriously this time, but opinions in Washington were divided over how to respond to the French request.²⁸⁸⁵

The French proposal put Washington in a difficult position. Not only was it perceived to be risky – Holbrooke called it 'Dien Bien Gorazde' – but it also entailed the danger of sucking the

²⁸⁸³ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. Postscript to Srebrenica, author Maj P.H.D. Wright, UNMO MIO SNE, 26/07/95. Secret.

²⁸⁸⁴ Confidential information (27).

²⁸⁸⁵ ABZ, DPV 452342. Code Jacobovits 454, 14/07/95.

Americans further into the conflict in Bosnia than they were willing to go; a flat rejection, however, was not really an option now that Chirac had managed to put the ball in Washington's court. Washington therefore decided not to reject the proposal but to try to replace the idea of reinforcing Gorazde with ground troops by a consensus on the strategic use of air power if Gorazde were attacked. Secretary of Defence William Perry was a particularly strong proponent of air strikes. He saw the fall of Srebrenica as providing the long-awaited opening to persuade the allies of the merits of an air campaign. President Clinton decided to send the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to London in order to arrive at a realistic military proposal with his British and French colleagues, Admiral Lanxade and Field Marshal Sir Peter Inge, giving due attention to the option of a NATO air campaign.²⁸⁸⁶

The Chiefs of Defence Staff of France, the United States and the United Kingdom met each other on 15 July in London to see whether they could reach agreement on a military reaction.²⁸⁸⁷ At this meeting there was a clash of views between the United States, France and the UK. The United States regarded reinforcing Gorazde as virtually unfeasible. After all, they argued, the Bosnian Serb air defences would have to be destroyed first to ensure the safety of the helicopters and aircraft. The Americans therefore favoured massive bombardments from the air to deter an attack on Gorazde; the French however stuck to their idea of a greater military presence in Gorazde. The British were prepared to reinforce UNPROFOR but believed that air strikes would lead to the departure of the British troops from Bosnia.²⁸⁸⁸ Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander General Smith was also opposed to bombardments but if these were to be carried out, he wanted the UN troops removed from Gorazde first. In his eyes SACEUR General Joulwan exaggerated the signals that the intelligence services were giving about Gorazde. But according to the American Gorazde awaited the same fate as Srebrenica.²⁸⁸⁹

The question was not only whether the United States was prepared to provide an airlift but also whether other countries were willing to take part. The Dutch UN ambassador Biegman saw room for Dutch participation after the release of the Dutch hostages in Bratunac on 15 July.

The British were not keen on sending reinforcements to Gorazde, mainly on technical military grounds.²⁸⁹⁰ The British Chief of Defence Staff, Field Marshal Sir Peter Inge, was indeed against military action. Speaking to Admiral Leighton Smith, the British Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, expressed fears that Gorazde could not be saved from the air either: the Bosnian Serbs had assembled 12,000 troops there.²⁸⁹¹ The British appeared more inclined to withdraw their contingent from Gorazde than to send in reinforcements. Even if reinforcements could reach Gorazde, this would still offer no prospect of a successful defence of the enclave. More was needed to achieve that. The Russians felt little good would come of using military units to avert the fall of Gorazde. In their viewpoint UNPROFOR had a peacekeeping and humanitarian mission and they felt it was not desirable for UN troops to become embroiled in hostilities.²⁸⁹²

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York also studied the military options for preventing Gorazde being taken by the Bosnian Serbs. If the international community failed in this endeavour, so New York feared, then the French would in all probability leave Bosnia and the Americans would lift their arms embargo. The only military option open to the UN was to station the Rapid Reaction Force units already in Bosnia in Gorazde. New York was not yet ready for the massive deployment of air power: that would trigger outright war with the Bosnian Serbs. What's more, it was also worried that any fighting between UNPROFOR and the Bosnian Serbs could jeopardize the release of the Dutchbat soldiers still being held in Bratunac.²⁸⁹³

²⁸⁸⁶ Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, pp. 69-72.

²⁸⁸⁷ Bildt, *Peace Journey*, p. 59.

²⁸⁸⁸ Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, pp. 69-72.

²⁸⁸⁹ Interview Jim Baxter, 16/10/00.

²⁸⁹⁰ Archive PVVN. Fax PVVN to M[inister], 15/07/95, und. Later sent as Code Biegman 629. (ABZ, DEU 05278).

²⁸⁹¹ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

²⁸⁹² Eric Schmitt, 'U.S. Sees French Plan as Nudging It to Brink of War', *New York Times*, 18/07/95.

²⁸⁹³ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Crypto Fax UNPROFOR HQ, DPKO, Military Advisor to UNPF HQ Zagreb, 152200NYTJul95.

Janvier was not very happy with the ideas from New York to transfer Rapid Reaction Force units to Gorazde. It was true that this might deter a Bosnian Serb attack, but Janvier feared an outcome similar to Srebrenica. NATO air strikes would represent an attack on the Bosnian Serb air defences. This could be interpreted as an act of war and the possible consequences of this were unclear. Janvier had already expressed this fear before. Moreover, the Bosnian Serbs would see the sending of reinforcements to Gorazde as a decision of UNPROFOR to fight along with the Bosnian Muslims. Also, Janvier argued, it was hard enough getting supplies through as things were and more troops in Gorazde would only aggravate this problem. Janvier wanted to follow the same tactics as in Srebrenica, namely to set up a blocking position with the units already in Gorazde, only this time with well-prepared defensive positions. Janvier realized that such a step would have little effect if these positions were circumvented in difficult and inaccessible terrain. That's why he also wanted to deploy mines and armed helicopters. Janvier saw this as a more viable option than the route that New York had chosen, i.e. sending reinforcements. He pointed out once again that in his opinion the objective of the resolutions of the Security Council was to protect the population and not the enclave as such.²⁸⁹⁴

In a lengthier analysis of the plans from New York, Zagreb reiterated the need to protect the population. Zagreb pointed out that New York had not defined the protection of the population as a clear objective of the UN efforts. Zagreb believed that there were ways other than purely military ones to protect the population. The deployment of military means would merely endanger the population and bring UNPROFOR into conflict with the Bosnian Serbs, thus exacerbating the danger for the population even further. The proposal from New York was dangerous, full of risk and 'smacks of military adventurism', so Janvier said. First of all, light had to be shed on the objective that the international community, and the UN as its mouthpiece, had set themselves. If New York issued military orders, then these had to fit in with the strategy that the UN proposed to pursue, Janvier concluded.²⁸⁹⁵

9. The London Conference

After the fall of Srebrenica and after a large number of men had been deported to an unknown destination, according to General Smith the British government panicked and was gripped by fears that the same thing could happen in Gorazde. Given the British presence in Gorazde this had to be avoided at all costs.²⁸⁹⁶ The British decision to organize a conference of the Foreign Affairs and Defence ministers of the most important troop-contributing nations had actually already been taken before the mass murders were made known (see Chapter 3 of this Part). On 14 July London announced its intention to organize a conference on 21 July. The French and Americans were not entirely happy with this British proposal: the French would have preferred to see a prior political *commitment* to defend Gorazde and the Americans wondered why it was necessary to wait an entire week before holding the conference. That would give the Bosnian Serbs a free hand to capture what they could in the meantime. The British however said they needed a week to think about the best course of action.²⁸⁹⁷

The French wanted the meeting in London to result in a consensus approach, consisting of a credible military signal to stem the advance of the Bosnian Serb army combined with a political signal, i.e. continuation of the negotiations on the basis of the Contact Group's plan and recognition of Bosnia by Belgrade. Presidents Chirac and Clinton at least agreed that a line had to be drawn before Gorazde also fell into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. But Washington and Paris did not agree about how that line was to be drawn. The French objected to a defence of Gorazde in combination with bombardments of strategic targets: the Bosnian Serbs could interpret this as an act of war and respond

²⁸⁹⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF, Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 16/07/95, No. UNPF HQ Z-1177.

²⁸⁹⁵ NIOD, Coll. Ashton, Code Cable Janvier to Van Kappen, UNHQ, DPKO MILAD, 17/07/95, No. UNPF-HQ Z-1183. The code was signed by Ashton.

²⁸⁹⁶ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

²⁸⁹⁷ ABZ, DPV 452342. Code Biegman 620, 14/07/95.

to it accordingly. The French also pointed in this connection to the vulnerable position of Dutchbat which was still in Potocari.²⁸⁹⁸

'Drawing a line in the hills' was also the advice that Boutros-Ghali received from the UN Secretariat in connection with his preparations for the conference. According to the UN, a *status quo* could no longer be maintained in Bosnia. The limitations of Close Air Support had now become sufficiently clear and further humiliation of peacekeepers could not be tolerated. Urgent changes were necessary otherwise the UN mission would lose the support of the United States, France and the Bosnian government, and that would herald the end of UNPROFOR. A – symbolic – reinforcement of Gorazde should make Mladic think twice before attacking. The underlying intention was to strengthen the deterrent rather than to fight. The Secretariat held the view that this could go some way towards restoring the credibility that the Security Council had lost, even though it was not completely without risk. Military adviser Van Kappen added that in this case it was desirable to already send a Forward Air Controller (in a Tactical Air Control Party) and a Fire Support Coordination Center to Gorazde so that air and artillery support could be given. In addition, a decision was needed to choose the side of the Bosnian Muslims. In the words of Van Kappen it basically meant that: 'the Bosnians will do the fighting and dying and we (NATO) will provide the firepower'.²⁸⁹⁹

The conference convened on 21 July. The ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence of the countries of the Contact Group and of the most important troop-contributing nations, the Secretaries General of the UN and the NATO and representatives of the European Commission took part. Generals Janvier and Smith were also invited.

While the fighting around Zepa continued, several options came up for consideration. These were partly a reiteration of the options that Boutros-Ghali and Janvier had put to the Security Council in May 1995: withdraw from vulnerable positions and write Gorazde off as a lost cause, withdrawal of UNPROFOR, or draw a line at Gorazde.²⁹⁰⁰ During the conference there was a growing awareness that such a line should indeed be drawn and that a further advance of the Bosnian Serbs to other Safe Areas had to be avoided. The fall of Gorazde would mark the beginning of the end for UNPROFOR. But how exactly could the fall of Gorazde be avoided? This was the burning question that remained unanswered. The Bosnian Serbs were told straightaway that 'any attack on Gorazde will be met with a substantial and decisive response, including the use of air power'.²⁹⁰¹ This stance was at least a good deal tougher than Akashi's earlier warning on 9 July to the Bosnian Serbs to discontinue their advance against Srebrenica. What's more, this warning had the full weight of the international community behind it.

Though that international community had not yet reached a consensus opinion, military measures to protect the Safe Area of Gorazde had now come a good deal closer. The differences that had existed before the conference had not been resolved, however. The United States wanted 'a decisive commitment' to defend Gorazde with a campaign from the air. General Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made no secret of what the Americans wanted: the abandonment of the proportionality principle by the UN, suppression of Bosnian Serb Air Defences, and modification of the dual key system. The French pointed out however that air power and ground troops were inextricably linked. The British stance was 'again essentially non-committal'. The Russians pressed for diplomatic action and did not support an air campaign. There was however consensus about the fact

²⁸⁹⁸ DCBC 940. Code Andreae 222, 20/07/95.

²⁸⁹⁹ DCBC 947. Secure fax PV New York to Min. of Foreign Affairs/DGPZ and Min. of Defence, 'Update UN study Gorazde, 19/07/95, No. nyv-4455.

²⁹⁰⁰ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter, UNPROFOR HQ Sarajevo, Weekly Situation Report, No. 128, 17-23 July 1995.

²⁹⁰¹ NIOD, Coll. Smith. 'Bosnia: International Meeting, London 21 July 1995, Chairman's Statement'.

that withdrawal of UNPROFOR was not an option or as EU negotiator Bildt put it: 'withdrawal was not a policy, but the abandonment of policy'.²⁹⁰²

The motto that General Smith had given his speech for the conference, 'the dilemma of killing the injured animal or allowing it to die in agony', appeared to have been resolved. Smith did raise a warning finger however: robust action might meet a 'pressing emotional need by nations who are *outside* the Balkans, it does little to solve the dilemma of the UN *within* the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina, whilst carrying considerable risks for the longer term'.²⁹⁰³ Smith also found it worth noting that only the Safe Area of Gorazde had been mentioned in connection with the bombardments. During the conference both Janvier and Smith had to stand up and say that there were still UN soldiers in Zepa and that that enclave had not yet fallen. The politicians appeared to take little account of this and Smith had also felt compelled to explain that there were still other Safe Areas and that he was also responsible for troops from countries that were not represented at the conference, such as Bangladesh.²⁹⁰⁴

Janvier emphasized the need for a realistic and pragmatic approach in London. In view of the limited resources at his disposal, there were no military solutions. In his view, the taking of hostages had demonstrated that the use of air power would be of only limited value. UNPROFOR was not able to defend the enclaves, so Janvier said.²⁹⁰⁵

10. The Dutch attitude towards Gorazde

The Netherlands Military Intelligence Service also predicted that the Bosnian Serbs were intending to seize all the eastern enclaves. It therefore seemed probable that the Bosnian Serbs would attempt before long to gain control of Gorazde too. For this enclave was of even greater strategic importance than Srebrenica,²⁹⁰⁶ and the Safe Area was also bigger in terms of size and population (60,000 inhabitants).

There were 10,000 well-armed Bosnian Muslim troops in Gorazde. Foreign Affairs therefore assumed that the Bosnian Muslim army would be capable of defending the enclave on its own. In that scenario the British UNPROFOR troops would have little option other than to leave. The British had already pulled back from the OPs and were now in the shelters. If the Rapid Reaction Force were deployed to reinforce the military presence in Gorazde, then the Netherlands could not avoid involvement: the Netherlands were represented in this Rapid Reaction Force with a mortar company of the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps and a mortar location radar unit of the Royal Netherlands Army. At the same time, the civil servants of Foreign Affairs believed that the enclave was not viable in the long term and that a negotiated solution had to be found for it. In addition, the Netherlands was to speak out in favour of maintaining a UN presence in Bosnia for as long as the UN played a principal humanitarian role.²⁹⁰⁷

In London, Minister Van Mierlo made this standpoint conditional on the departure of Dutchbat from Srebrenica. This was planned for 21 July, the day of the conference. Van Mierlo still appeared uncertain about the departure of Dutchbat after the tough language levelled at the Bosnian Serbs before the conference. Van Mierlo also took the view that the UN should abandon indefensible areas. Van Mierlo reasserted the standpoint that he had taken earlier in the EU concerning Zepa: the

²⁹⁰² NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter, UNPROFOR HQ Sarajevo, Weekly Situation Report, No. 128, 17-23 July 1995. The stance taken by General Shalikashvili is derived from: UN New York, De Mello Papers. OSE, UNHCR Zagreb to The High Commissioner, 'Note for the File on London Meeting', 28/07/95.

²⁹⁰³ NIOD Coll. Smith, 'Notes for Speech to London Meeting' [20/07/95].

²⁹⁰⁴ Interview R.A. Smith, 20/01/00.

²⁹⁰⁵ UN New York, De Mello Papers. OSE, UNHCR Zagreb to The High Commissioner, 'Note for the File on London Meeting, author Anne Willem Bijleveld, 28/07/95. See also ABZ, DDI-DEU 1/Bosnia-Herzegovina/NAVO, C-map. Code Van Mierlo 67, 24/07/95.

²⁹⁰⁶ DCBC 882. MID-briefing for Ministers Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo, 18/07/95.

²⁹⁰⁷ ABZ, DPV 452342. Memorandum 'Welke toekomst voor UNPROFOR?' (What future for UNPROFOR?), 18/07/95. The memo was a joint product of DAV, DEU and DPV.

population should be evacuated in that case. If Gorazde could be defended, then that is what had to be done, according to Van Mierlo. But even if Gorazde could not be defended, this did not, in his view, rule out an attempt to repel a Bosnian Serb attack. Though the eastern enclaves were indefensible, they were still counters in the political game. Nevertheless Van Mierlo was now prepared to look at plans for a 'realignment' of UNPROFOR in order to make this force less vulnerable. Before the fall of Srebrenica, he had rejected proposals for a realignment.²⁹⁰⁸

Voorhoeve asked Janvier in London how Gorazde could be protected by an air campaign if that was to be combined with a UNPROFOR presence; no clear answer was forthcoming.²⁹⁰⁹ Voorhoeve also asked Janvier whether the dual key system should be maintained, considering that the Americans had their doubts about this. Janvier calmly answered that the dual key was working well. As an example he mentioned the air support that had been given to Dutchbat on 11 July: on that occasion a decision had been taken in Zagreb within five minutes.²⁹¹⁰

11. The ball in NATO's court

No real decisions were taken in London. It was only after the conference that NATO and NATO commanders also became involved in the efforts to find adequate military measures to save Gorazde. The Military Committee of the NATO pressed for a reconfirmation of the decision whereby Gorazde had been declared a Military Exclusion Zone. Under this decision of April 1994, Bosnian Serbs were forbidden to possess heavy weapons within a 20 kilometre radius around Gorazde. In this way the Military Committee wanted to avoid a repeat of the situation where tough talk failed to lead to concrete actions; it would merely further undermine the credibility of the UN and NATO if there were any doubts about the existence of the political will to take tough measures even when faced with the threat of hostage-taking.²⁹¹¹ Consultation between the NATO headquarters in Mons (SHAPE) and the UN headquarters in Zagreb to map out plans for Gorazde initially yielded few results. Without being granted specific powers by the UN in New York, Zagreb did not feel authorized to make plans.²⁹¹²

Meanwhile the Americans had launched a diplomatic offensive to enable NATO to translate the decisive response achieved in London into deeds. In the first instance use could be made of massive Close Air Support and after further escalation an air campaign could be directed against strategic targets. The Americans preferred the key for this to be placed in the hands of General Smith. In view of the experiences with Srebrenica, a system of 'triggers' (see below) had to be put in place to achieve the envisaged deterrent effect. Once under way, an air campaign should be prosecuted until the end, regardless of the risks involved. By this time there was also a growing realization that the measures should not be confined to Gorazde; after all, it was by no means certain that this would be the Bosnian Serbs' next target. The Safe Area of Bihac was another possible target.²⁹¹³

The Americans were worried that the commitment to the consensus achieved in London about a decisive and substantial response was weakening. They met with resistance from the British: the British merely wanted to target the heavy weapons of the Bosnian Serbs, while the Americans believed that a disproportionate response was required to achieve a deterrent effect. Both the British and the French were hesitant about expanding the scope of the deterrent actions to Bihac and Sarajevo. While the countries all agreed that the authority to call in air power should be delegated to the military personnel within UNPROFOR, they failed to see eye to eye about the question whether this authority

²⁹⁰⁸ ABZ, DEU 05244. Code Celer 69 (lonu 069), 25/07/95.

²⁹⁰⁹ ABZ, DDI-DEU 1/Bosnia-Hercegovina/NAVO, C-map. Code Van Mierlo 67, 24/07/95.

²⁹¹⁰ UN New York, De Mello Papers. OSE, UNHCR Zagreb to The High Commissioner, 'Note for the File on London Meeting, author Anne Willem Bijleveld, 28/07/95.

²⁹¹¹ DCBC 1552. Memorandum HPMV to CDS/BDZ/BLS/BDL, 23/07/95.

²⁹¹² DCBC 1547. Code Feith NAVO 1105, 24/07/95.

²⁹¹³ DCBC 1546. Code Van Mierlo 294, 24/07/95.

should be placed with Janvier or Smith. The French preferred to leave the authority in the hands of Janvier.

There was also the threat that the progress made by Bildt on the diplomatic front would be lost. In these negotiations Milosevic had been prepared to recognize Bosnia in exchange for the lifting of the sanctions against Yugoslavia. The Bosnian government, however, had mixed feelings about this. The Americans, unlike the British and French, felt that after the events in Srebrenica it was no longer appropriate to exert pressure on the Bosnian Muslims to accept Bildt's proposal: Bildt reacted by threatening to quit.

On the American home front Senator Dole had condemned the results of the conference in London as an invitation to the Bosnian Serbs to continue their advance. Dole again pressed for lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims, but President Clinton vetoed this on 9 August.²⁹¹⁴

12. Modification of the 'dual key'

One of the effects of the London Conference was a growing realization that the dual key system needed to be modified. After the bombardments at Pale late in May 1995, Boutros-Ghali had drawn the authority to call in air strikes towards himself. He was fiercely opposed to giving up the dual key.

After the conference, the American UN ambassador, Albright, called the military adviser to Boutros-Ghali, Van Kappen, from the White House about the modification of the dual key. Van Kappen was told: 'General, you really have to do something now, because your boss Boutros-Ghali must give up that dual key!' In her eyes the dual key system was ripe for a major overhaul. Albright felt that it was up to Van Kappen, as the Secretary-General's military adviser, to point this out to him. Van Kappen agreed and asked Kofi Annan to help. He thought that the UN was barking up the wrong tree; New York had to give up the dual key and meet with NATO to draw up a plan for the deployment of air strikes and the Rapid Reaction Force. An old, but still relevant, problem in this connection was that the safety of the units on the ground had to be guaranteed, even if this meant moving them elsewhere. Otherwise UN personnel might be taken hostage again.

But the UN Secretariat found the member states unwilling to shift their units. A talk between Boutros-Ghali, Kofi Annan, Undersecretary-General Goulding and Van Kappen was arranged to find a solution. This was not easy, because Boutros-Ghali set great store by the dual key. He also had a clear preference for limiting the use of air power to Close Air Support. The vexed relationship between the UN and the NATO plus the fact that neither organization empathized with the other's position and culture, as well as the circumstance that the two Secretaries General did not get on very well also played a part. Moreover, Boutros-Ghali was under great pressure from the troop-contributing nations to avoid casualties and new hostages. He stressed this point during the talk, but found himself facing a closed front²⁹¹⁵

Boutros-Ghali finally conceded his 'key', but not before NATO Secretary-General Claes had renewed his assurances that NATO would not go it alone. Boutros-Ghali had first wanted clarification of the concrete shape that the decisive and substantial response agreed in London was to take and he also wanted to know what NATO had in mind regarding further Bosnian Serb military adventures against the surviving Safe Areas.²⁹¹⁶

Earlier Boutros-Ghali had kept his distance from NATO (see Chapter 2 of Part III) but when it became clear that NATO would still collaborate with the UN if air power were deployed, he pledged his support to NATO's plans. When Boutros-Ghali was reluctant to allow air strikes across the whole of Bosnia without Security Council approval, NATO was briefly worried that proposals could then be

²⁹¹⁴ Amb Washington, No. 139750. Code Jacobovits 480, 25/07/95; TK, session 1994-1995, 22 181, No. 116 (01/09/95).

²⁹¹⁵ Interview F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

²⁹¹⁶ ABZ, DEU 05278. Code Biegman 653, 25/07/95; ABZ, DEU 05244, Code Jacobovits 480, 26/07/95; ABA, DEU 05278. Code Feith NAVO 1119, 27/07/95; PV NAVO Brussels, No. 119539, Letter Secretary General [NATO] to Permanent Representatives, 27/07/95, No. SG/95/509.

vetoed by the Russians. Boutros-Ghali did however agree to a delegation of powers: from 26 July the authority to decide on air strikes was placed in the hands of Janvier. Janvier, in turn, was allowed to delegate the authority to call in Close Air Support to General Smith. Within NATO this was seen as a major step forward, provided that Janvier, as a French General, would follow the tough line taken by Paris, which he had not done in the case of Srebrenica.²⁹¹⁷

After lengthy meetings the North Atlantic Council had in the meantime decided to permit pre-emptive air strikes if Gorazde came under threat. Suspension of the air strikes would only be possible in exceptional cases. The Dutch had helped to persuade the British that troop concentrations should be included among the 'triggers' for an air strike. The British had a deep aversion to the kind of air strikes that had killed so many Iraqi soldiers during the Gulf War. They had therefore insisted that strikes on troop concentrations should be conditional on the approval of the North Atlantic Council. The Dutch argued however that the council's authorization could not possibly be obtained at such short notice. Another US wish was also fulfilled: authority was granted to suppress the Integrated Air Defence System of the Bosnian Serbs.²⁹¹⁸

In an exchange of letters the two Secretaries General laid down that 'graduated air operations' could be initiated as soon as NATO and UN commanders agreed that military preparations threatening Gorazde were under way. The same applied to Bosnian Serb attacks or shelling.²⁹¹⁹ This represented an enormous step compared with the situation during the Bosnian Serb attack on Srebrenica. It was NATO which, with an attack on Gorazde in prospect, was the motor behind the expansion of the scope to deploy air power. The North Atlantic Council decided that air strikes could be used against troop concentrations and concentrations of heavy weapons if these constituted a threat to Safe Areas and in the case of a direct attack. This decision led to an agreement between General Janvier and NATO Admiral Smith. The purpose of this agreement was not only to breathe new life into the idea of deterrence, but also to offer a concrete opportunity for responding sharply to attacks. The first step in this direction consisted of the identification of targets that were eligible for attack; the second step was to reduce the vulnerability of UNPROFOR (this included plans for an evacuation of the Safe Area). Only then could air operations be started up. The exchange of information formed part of the agreement between Admiral Smith and Janvier. One special aspect concerned the arrangements regarding a Zone of Action. This was the name for a large area with sufficient targets that could be related to a threat or attack, such as command centres, logistical installations and supply lines.

The agreement thus did away with the smoking gun principle, which had imposed restrictions at the time of Srebrenica. Air strikes were no longer limited to a small area such as the Srebrenica enclave, where aircraft had too little room to operate effectively and where there were hardly any targets. If air strikes were approved, Air Defences throughout Bosnia could be targeted. Admiral Smith's long-cherished wish was thus fulfilled. As soon as the military commanders agreed, an operation could be initiated. As a result, Akashi or Boutros-Ghali were excluded from the decision-making process.²⁹²⁰

Though the agreement marked an important new step towards strengthening the deterrent effect, certain automatic reflexes within the UN had not yet wholly disappeared. Janvier reiterated that the attacked party could see a NATO action as a declaration of war to which the UN would thus also become a party. Most UNPROFOR compounds were within range of Bosnian Serb mortars and artillery. Hostages could be taken and supplies would have to be air-dropped, humanitarian aid would grind to a halt and countries would want to pull out their troops. That would spell the end of

²⁹¹⁷ DCBC 1542. Code Feith NAVO 1119, 27/06/95.

²⁹¹⁸ DCBC 1544. Code Feith NAVO 1110, 26/07/95.

²⁹¹⁹ PV NAVO Brussels, nos. 119515 and 119539. Secretary-General to Permanent Representatives, 26/07/95, Ref. SG/95/502.p and SG/95/509, 27/07/95.

²⁹²⁰ UNNY, DPKO, UNPROFOR. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 10/08/95, No. Z-1379, MOU between CINCSOUTH and FC UNPF, Confi.

UNPROFOR and lead to a request to NATO to assist with the withdrawal. Janvier asked Admiral Smith to remind the NATO authorities of this yet once again.²⁹²¹

Boutros-Ghali was particularly worried about overhasty action against the Bosnian Serb air defences. He wanted no such strikes until these were genuinely necessary to protect the Safe Areas.²⁹²² NATO, for its part, pointed to the reduced number of flights that was currently possible over Bosnia because of the threat of Bosnian Serb air defences.²⁹²³ It was an old argument and Janvier saw no option but to accept the limitations.²⁹²⁴ Boutros-Ghali also repeated to Claes that the resolutions of the Security Council did not permit pre-emptive action.²⁹²⁵ The Netherlands – again – labelled the NATO demand to suppress Bosnian Serb air defences as exaggerated. It was unacceptable not to use air power because there were risks. The effectiveness of air power could very well be improved without NATO carrying out pre-emptive air strikes.²⁹²⁶

While the use of air power was being revitalized, UNPROFOR made arrangements with NATO about what exactly was to be defended in the Safe Area. This clarified another point that had long remained unclear and gave NATO the triggering mechanisms that it had always wanted. The arrangements incidentally were not intended to determine the exact borders of the Safe Areas, which was an old point. The Safe Areas were subdivided from the inside out into three zones. The inner zone, covering several kilometres that ‘can realistically be protected’, was the area with the largest population concentration. Around this, there was a tactical zone, outside the range of direct and indirect fire where troops could be brought in for reinforcement or evacuated, but where fighting could also be conducted. The third zone was the periphery of the Safe Area. The crossing of any zone line could act as a trigger. The fact that the attention was primarily focused on a small area was to be kept a close secret.²⁹²⁷

The commanders of the warring factions received a ‘formal notification’ from Janvier: any threat against or attack on a Safe Area would meet with a response and the reaction ‘will not necessarily be proportional, nor will it be limited to the area immediately surrounding the Safe Area’. The action would continue for as long as was necessary to eliminate the threat.²⁹²⁸

13. Measures ‘beyond Gorazde’

While the attention of the international community was firmly focused on Zepa’s downfall and the threat against Gorazde, concerns over a possible Bosnian Serb action against Bihac started to grow in late July. This could prompt the Croatians to spring to the rescue of the Bosnian Muslims living in Bihac. The Croatian government had said that Bihac was vital to Croatian safety and would not tolerate the area being overrun by the Bosnian Serbs. What’s more, it appeared to be only a matter of days before the Croatians would launch an offensive against Krajina, the self-proclaimed Republika Srpska Krajina on Croatian territory which was inhabited by Serbs. No one knew how the Bosnian Serbs and Milosevic would respond to this.²⁹²⁹

²⁹²¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 10/08/95, No. Z-1379, MOU between CINCSOUTH and FC UNPF, Confi.

²⁹²² UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 10/08/95, No. 2656.

²⁹²³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 11/08/95, No. 2674, with attached letter Balanzino to Annan, 11 August 1995, No DSG/95/535. Confi.

²⁹²⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 15/08/95, No. Z-1417.

²⁹²⁵ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable, Annan to Akashi, 17/08/95, No. 2757 with attached letter Boutros-Ghali to Claes, 15/08/95.

²⁹²⁶ BSG, DS 95 IV. Memorandum CDS to the Minister, 30/08/95, No. SN95/938/5603.

²⁹²⁷ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 10/08/95, No. Z-1385; Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 21/08/95, No. 1473.

²⁹²⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 16/08/95, No. Z-1429.

²⁹²⁹ ABZ, DAV 999.241. Code Scheffer 79, 27/07/95.

General Smith feared UNPROFOR being sucked into the war before a clear political policy line had been mapped out for Bosnia. In that case UNPROFOR would actually be part of the problem rather than the solution. What was needed was a decision allowing the Rapid Reaction Force and UNPROFOR to cast off their role as neutral peacekeepers and take sides with the Bosnian Muslims. Smith expressed this expectation on 11 August in a meeting with Akashi and Janvier, among others. Janvier believed however that the UN would be unwilling to choose between peace and war, though he too was worried that UNPROFOR would become mixed up in the fighting. He was particularly apprehensive about incidents that could trigger air strikes. Janvier also vented his earlier frustration: in May 1995 Boutros-Ghali and himself had sketched the opportunities for UNPROFOR, but the international community had not wanted to make a clear-cut choice then.

Smith summed up the new options in case no political arrangement was found in the short term: 'to join the fighting; to withdraw; or to reduce the force in strength'. If the UN opted to fight on the side of the Bosnian Muslims, then Smith wanted to send his 'white troops' home. Many UNPROFOR units had little to do, were not suitably trained or equipped for combat and would only be a nuisance. The Rapid Reaction Force could then be deployed and the operation possibly handed over to NATO. Meanwhile agreement had been reached with NATO about the possibility of large-scale air strikes but Janvier continued to struggle with the negative consequences of this for the troops on the ground and the mission.²⁹³⁰

In mapping out a new course for UNPROFOR Janvier assumed that all Serbs, whether they were living in Croatia, Bosnia or Serbia, were still aspiring to establish a 'Greater Serbia'. In Janvier's opinion, Pale and Belgrade had taken brilliant advantage of crises and had perfectly timed their offensive to gain more territory. General Smith disagreed with Janvier's analysis, asserting that the Bosnian Serbs merely wanted to end a threat – as in Srebrenica – in order to free troops for employment elsewhere.

UNPROFOR was gradually losing its impartiality but Janvier also now saw this as inevitable and felt that it should no longer be considered a problem. He quoted the words of the French Prime Minister Alain Juppé who had said that it could no longer be accepted that peacekeepers were passive witnesses to ethnic cleansing and the separation of men and women. Smith, however, said that if that was the case, he wanted the mandate to be changed first.

Janvier also changed his mind about Close Air Support. If the decision was taken to deploy air power, this should no longer be intended 'to disable a tank poking out of the woods'. Such a message would not get across to the Bosnian Serbs. Only substantial damage to their military potential would make it clear that the international community was determined to stop the Bosnian Serb army. This meant that air strikes were necessary.²⁹³¹ Though the UNPROFOR mandate had not been changed, this new strategic concept was nothing short of a revolution in Janvier's thinking. NATO, in fact, had already marched ahead of Janvier: strict impartiality of UNPROFOR was no longer a first requirement. Granting air support against a tank (a textbook example of Close Air Support according to Janvier at the time of Srebrenica) was now dismissed as inadequate.

On 2 August the North Atlantic Council addressed the question whether the decisions taken to deter an attack on Gorazde could be extended to the other remaining Safe Areas: Sarajevo, Tuzla and Bihac.²⁹³² The NATO military staff saw no objections to expanding the scope of the decisions for Gorazde to Sarajevo and Tuzla. Bihac was more problematic because the borders of that Safe Area had not been demarcated and because of the large number of warring factions.²⁹³³ Janvier therefore excluded Bihac from the arrangements, also in view of the fact that the Croatian advance in Krajina had

²⁹³⁰ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88401, File 4-4, Notes on Meetings 1995. 'Note for the File, Coordination Meeting on 11 August 1995'.

²⁹³¹ NIOD Coll. Smith. 'General Janvier's Concept "Charting a New Course"', 29/07/95, with notes by Smith. For the original French text see: NIOD, Coll. Ashton, 'Mémoire du Général Janvier "pour un changement de cap"'.
²⁹³² DCBC No. 1534. Code Celer 298, 01/08/95.

²⁹³³ DCBC No. 1537. Code Veenendaal NATO 1129, 02/08/95.

altered the situation there.²⁹³⁴ The threat against Gorazde thus appeared to have lessened. Now that the Bosnian Serbs had their hands full with West Bosnia, the UN no longer believed that an attack on Gorazde was likely.²⁹³⁵

14. Troops for Gorazde

The British had announced that they would be withdrawing their 180-strong military contingent from Gorazde on 22 August. Unlike the Netherlands in Srebrenica, they were unwilling to send fresh troops to relieve them. In trying to find a country willing to take the place of the British, the UN experienced more or less the same problems as those that had occurred in the case of Srebrenica. The main difference was that the British Defence Minister said it was not his concern and had placed the problem on the UN's plate. Not a single country was prepared to take over that task; nor, for that matter, did anyone seriously believe that the British would dig in their heels and persist in their refusal.

After all, if anyone was eligible for being relieved, it was the 90 Ukrainian troops: after their experiences in Zepa and Gorazde, Ukraine was only willing to provide troops as part of a multinational contingent of troops. This same wish had been expressed when there was question of Ukrainian troops relieving Dutchbat, but it had not proved an insurmountable obstacle on that occasion.

In the end the Russians offered to fill the gap in Gorazde; the Bosnian Serbs would not object to this, but the Bosnian Muslims presumably would. New York therefore exerted pressure on them not to frustrate the Russians' passage to Gorazde. Another concern of the UN was to get a Tactical Air Control Party in Gorazde; a Forward Air Controller would then be brought in from one of the NATO countries. Without their presence, Close Air Support was impossible.²⁹³⁶

On 9 August the military adviser to the Secretary-General of the UN, Van Kappen, asked if the Netherlands would be willing to contribute troops for Gorazde. Van Kappen not only asked for a Tactical Air Control Party, but also for the transfer of the Dutchbat IV company stationed in Simin Han to Gorazde as well as a Dutch Commander for the Safe Area. Ambassador Biegman was in favour of this, arguing that it would help to restore the Netherlands' image which, after the fall of Srebrenica, had become severely tarnished in the media. In view of the experiences in Srebrenica, Minister Voorhoeve was by no means keen to embark on a new adventure. What's more, he foresaw that Parliament would create problems if the government decided to send troops to Gorazde. He thought it would be more logical to send observers.²⁹³⁷

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs did seriously explore the possibility of dispatching Dutch troops to Gorazde, but the results were negative: 'if you're too eager to help, people will take advantage', was the official verdict. The Netherlands was still nursing the wounds of Srebrenica and, given the recent discovery of the first mass graves, the debate about the role played by the Netherlands was only just starting. Foreign Affairs was also worried that the Royal Netherlands Army would oppose deployment in Gorazde. Moreover Parliament had only recently been told that any units dispatched in the future to Central Bosnia would have to be more heavily armed. So it would be very hard to explain to them why a lightly armed company was now being transferred from Simin Han to Gorazde.²⁹³⁸

The matter did not go beyond a draft memorandum from Defence about a Dutch presence in Gorazde for the Ministerial Council. On 15 August, during a personal meeting with Prime Minister

²⁹³⁴ Confidential information (75).

²⁹³⁵ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF, 'Impact of the Withdrawal of Gorazde Force on the Warring Faction', attached to Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 01/08/95, No. 2513.

²⁹³⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF, Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 01/08/95, No. 2513.

²⁹³⁷ DCBC 1013. Code Biegman 713, 09/08/95. NIOD, Coll. Hilderink. Memorandum 'Herovering Srebrenica hoe verder' ('Recapturing Srebrenica, where to go from here?') in 'Chronologie der gebeurtenissen' ('Chronology of Events'); NIOD, Coll. Princen, fax F.J.J. Princen to the Minister, undated.

²⁹³⁸ ABZ, DEU 05278. Memorandum Chief DPV to acting DGPZ, 10/08/95, No. DPV-1631/95.

Kok in the latter's office, Minister Voorhoeve advised against this.²⁹³⁹ The draft memorandum also indicated that the Netherlands should not honour the requests; it pointed out that the Netherlands had already been performing tasks in Srebrenica under difficult circumstances for a year and a half. Voorhoeve considered the 'need for rehabilitation' an invalid argument: in his opinion the Netherlands' reputation had not been tarnished and so there was no need for rehabilitation.

A further argument was that according to the 'framework of assessment' for dispatching Dutch troops, which had already been submitted to Parliament, troops would only be sent if the operation was considered feasible. The experiences in Srebrenica and the situation in Gorazde suggested that the objective for this mission was unfeasible. The framework of assessment also stipulated that the troops had to be suitably armed for the circumstances; this was a further indication that a Dutch unit could make little or no contribution to an effective defence. A recent UN study had demonstrated that a whole division was necessary to defend Gorazde. NATO had worked out plans for the deployment of air power but this would never be enough to halt a large-scale Bosnian Serb attack. The circumstances in Gorazde would be the same as in Srebrenica: the troops would be a plaything for the warring factions, deprived of supplies and exposed to the risks of artillery fire and hostage-taking. It was telling that even the French, who were previously in favour of bringing reinforcements into Gorazde, now refused to supply troops. Members of Parliament had also commented negatively on a Dutch role in Gorazde.²⁹⁴⁰

The subject of Gorazde was later raised in conjunction with the Ministerial Council. Minister Van Mierlo was intending to send a Code to the Dutch representative at the UN, Biegan, in response to his request for the deployment of Dutch troops in Gorazde. The draft of the Code said that a decision on this subject would be difficult, but that in a first exchange of thoughts in the Ministerial Council the matter had not been dismissed out of hand. Voorhoeve objected to this wording as well as to the strong emphasis placed on the need to retain Gorazde. After all, if the Netherlands thought Gorazde was so important, why wasn't it prepared to defend the town itself? Voorhoeve did agree with the recommendation to send UN observers to Gorazde. The only option that made sense in Voorhoeve's eyes was to secretly reinforce the Bosnian Muslims with anti-tank weapons. This however was a task for the larger Western countries, and not for the UN or the Netherlands. Voorhoeve warned Prime Minister Kok that he expected problems both in Parliament and in the Defence organization if the government were to ignore the advice of the Defence people and send Dutch troops to Gorazde after all.²⁹⁴¹

In his letter to Parliament of 1 September about the situation in former Yugoslavia, Minister Van Mierlo made no further reference to Gorazde. It was still too early to draw lessons from the experiences in Srebrenica. The Netherlands would assess UN requests for contributions to peace operations on a case-by-case basis in a 'constructive-critical' manner and no contribution whatsoever was ruled out beforehand.²⁹⁴² The letter did not mention the fact that an informal request from the UN to contribute troops for Gorazde had been turned down.

The UN's search for a replacement proved fruitless. The British, for their part, had repeated that after eighteen months in Gorazde they were calling it a day. They were at most prepared to supply a few UN observers. Belgium, France, Germany and the United States had also refused to send troops. The planned multinational force of Russians and Ukrainians, which was to be supplemented (at the instigation of Kofi Annan and Van Kappen) with contingents from Malaysia and Pakistan, was thus put in jeopardy. After all, without the support of a Tactical Air Control Party from a NATO country, such a multinational contingent was not a workable solution. All the UN could do was station a number of

²⁹³⁹ AZ, PAZ-M, No. 95M006724. Letter J.J.C. Voorhoeve to W. Kok, 17/08/95, without No.

²⁹⁴⁰ ABZ, DEU 05278. Draft memorandum for the Ministerial Council, on Friday 18 August, about possible dispatch of Dutch units to Gorazde, 17/08/95.

²⁹⁴¹ DCBC 1083. Handwritten memorandum Voorhoeve to Kok, handed to the Prime Minister during the Ministerial Council at 2.45pm, 22/08/95.

²⁹⁴² TK, Parliamentary session 1994-1995, 22 181, No. 116 (01/09/95).

UN observers in Gorazde.²⁹⁴³ The UN Secretariat regretted this and, after the tough talk spoken in London, said it was a humiliation for the UN and NATO.²⁹⁴⁴

The last British troops left Gorazde on 30 August after first having to repel a Bosnian Muslim attack evidently launched in an attempt to steal weapons.²⁹⁴⁵ The Bosnian Serbs gave the British a free passage: even before Srebrenica fell General Smith had agreed with Mladic that the British would be allowed to leave Gorazde before the Bosnian Serbs started their attack. He had also agreed that UNPROFOR would not start air attacks before the British had left the enclave.²⁹⁴⁶

Boutros-Ghali was concerned on learning from the press that the UN were abandoning the enclave of Gorazde to its fate. The UN had no alternative, but UN spokesmen were to emphasize that the UN remained bound to its mandate to deter attacks on the Safe Areas in close collaboration with NATO.²⁹⁴⁷ The Americans feared that the Bosnian Serbs would occupy the enclave as soon as the British had left. This meant that, as had happened earlier in Srebrenica and Zepa, another bargaining counter or means of exchange for future peace negotiations had been lost.²⁹⁴⁸

15. Mortar shells on the Markale market in Sarajevo

The problem of Gorazde was swept from the public eye when five mortar shells exploded near the Markale market in Sarajevo on 28 August, with a single grenade killing 37 people and wounding 87 others. In February 1994 68 people had been killed and 200 wounded at the same spot. The Bosnian Serbs denied all guilt, but UNPROFOR concluded that their troops were the only ones who could have fired the 120 mm mortar shell.²⁹⁴⁹

UNPROFOR's conclusions were called into question, however. The Russians in particular raised objections. The Chief of Staff of Sector Sarajevo, the Russian artillery officer Colonel Andrei Demurenko, refuted the findings on the basis of his own analysis. In his opinion, the grenade could never have been fired from Bosnian Serb positions.²⁹⁵⁰ Russian intelligence officers told author Ljiljana Bulatovic that the Bosnian Muslim Commander Rasim Delic had organized the attack.²⁹⁵¹ But the British intelligence services also had doubts and thought that the Bosnian Muslims, rather than the Bosnian Serbs, were the perpetrators.²⁹⁵² US intelligence officers, too, admitted that the Bosnian Muslims had been responsible.²⁹⁵³ The US colonel J.E. Sray, who was an intelligence officer at the time in Sarajevo, also claimed in a publication in *Foreign Military Studies* that the Bosnian Muslims had been responsible.²⁹⁵⁴ This issue is dealt with more extensively in the intelligence appendix to this report.

On that same day of 28 August, Janvier, thinking of Gorazde, had informed New York that a single mortar shell, irrespective of its consequences, could not be interpreted as a threat to a Safe Area. This could not provoke the substantial or decisive reaction that had been agreed in London; in his eyes,

²⁹⁴³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF, Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 17/08/95, No. 2756.

²⁹⁴⁴ ABZ, DPV 00797. Memorandum R. Swartbol (DVL) to acting PV New York, 18/08/95, No. nyv-4947. The memorandum also indicated that Pakistan was the only Islam country prepared to go to Gorazde, provided the battalion was heavily armed.

²⁹⁴⁵ Christopher Bellamy, 'British kill Muslim raiders in Gorazde; Balkan turmoil: Bosnians seeking arms shot dead in firefight with troops quitting vulnerable enclave', *The Independent*, 26/08/95.

²⁹⁴⁶ Confidential interview (80).

²⁹⁴⁷ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF, Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 28/08/95, No. UNPF HQ-Z1524, with 'Guidance to MPIOs' attached, 26/08/95. For reports in the press see e.g.: 'Gorazde bitter at betrayal', *The Guardian*, 02/10/95.

²⁹⁴⁸ DCBC, No. 1107. Code Van Houtem 543, 26/08/95.

²⁹⁴⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, File BHC Weekly Sitreps 17 Jun-21Sep 95. UNPROFOR HQ Sarajevo, Weekly Situation Report, No. 133, 28 Aug - 3 Sep 95.

²⁹⁵⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, File BHC Weekly Sitreps 17 Jun-21Sep 95. UNPROFOR HQ Sarajevo, Weekly Situation Report, No. 133, 28 Aug - 3 Sep 95.

²⁹⁵¹ Bulatovic, *General Mladic*, pp. 125-6, 129 and 131.

²⁹⁵² Confidential interview (8).

²⁹⁵³ Confidential interview (54).

²⁹⁵⁴ John E. Sray, 'selling the Bosnian Myth to America: Buyer Beware', *Foreign Military Studies*, October 1995.

a single shell did not justify the deployment of NATO air power.²⁹⁵⁵ But the mortar shell that hit the Markale market was to bring about a radical change in this standpoint on that very same day: on 30 August NATO started a bombing campaign. NATO aircraft and the Rapid Reaction Force attacked the Bosnian Serb positions around Sarajevo in coordinated action involving Close Air Support and air strikes as well as artillery and mortar fire. The UN headquarters and NATO had acted on their new powers with extraordinary alacrity. The UN Secretariat was caught unawares and wondered why there had been a six-hour delay before it was informed of 'this momentous decision'. New York also wondered whether an investigation had been carried out into the mortar attack.²⁹⁵⁶

On 28 August Janvier was in Paris, so Admiral Leighton Smith arranged the matter with General Rupert Smith: they directed their sub-commanders, Lieutenant General Mike Ryan (AFSOUTH Air Commander) and Major General of the Royal Marines David Pennyfather (commander of the Rapid Reaction Force), to set up a Joint Targeting Board for the selection of targets. After having contact with General Smith, Janvier turned the key for air strikes from Paris. Smith had only asked for a 24-hour delay to give him time to warn his troops that air strikes were imminent.

Janvier returned to Zagreb on 29 August and was startled when he saw the list of targets; after Srebrenica this gave Admiral Smith another occasion to tell Janvier that 'there are things you have to learn about air power'. Janvier would not stand for that: he refused permission for a number of targets and told Admiral Smith he would be writing a letter to say he had overstepped the mark. Things were patched up, however, after it had been explained to Janvier that bombing a barracks did not entail destroying the buildings but only the fleet of vehicles.²⁹⁵⁷

The subsequent Operation Deliberate Force had been conceived without political input. The planning had actually started at the beginning of the summer under the name Dead Eye. The initial objective had been to destroy the air defences and command structure of the Bosnian Serbs. All military targets relevant to this objective were identified. During the London Conference of 21 July there had already been indications that such a plan existed and this had also been briefed to Secretary-General Claes and SACEUR General Joulwan on 2 August.

Admiral Smith's idea was to split Bosnia into two parts. If the Bosnian Serbs attacked Gorazde, he wanted to attack all targets in the east of Bosnia. If the Bosnian Serbs attacked near Banja Luka, he intended to attack all targets in the west. But Janvier did not approve this plan, pointing out that the Total Exclusion Zone only had a 20 km radius. Deadlock ensued.

Janvier spoke about this with NATO in Brussels and – again – was apprehensive about overly overt NATO aggression as proposed by Admiral Smith. A new map was made, on which a triangle around the Posavina corridor near Brcko in North Bosnia was excluded from attacks. It was also agreed that the list of targets had to be approved by Janvier; Janvier agreed to thirteen targets. What NATO had omitted to say, however, was that these targets each consisted of a large number of separate targets. For Smith, this was yet further proof that Janvier understood little about the deployment of air power.²⁹⁵⁸

On 29 August Janvier informed New York that he had turned the key. The mortar attack constituted a clear threat to a Safe Area as perceived by NATO. General Smith pointed out that the situation was not essentially different to the attack in February 1994 which had also caused a large number of casualties. NATO then set an ultimatum for the withdrawal of heavy weapons. The warring factions were warned. Smith had initially considered deploying the artillery of the Rapid Reaction Force, but then opted for the impact that an air strike could have, also on the assumption that this would effectively deter retaliatory action from the Bosnian Serbs. While Mladic denied all involvement in the

²⁹⁵⁵ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF, Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 28/08/95, No. UNPF HQ-Z-1524.

²⁹⁵⁶ Confidential information (26).

²⁹⁵⁷ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

²⁹⁵⁸ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

mortar attack on the Markale market, Smith remained convinced that the Bosnian Serbs were guilty.²⁹⁵⁹ Janvier informed Mladic that the UN had established that it was the Bosnian Serbs who had fired the shell. The British had also left Gorazde in the meantime, thus substantially reducing the Bosnian Serbs' opportunities to take hostages in a bid to prevent air strikes.²⁹⁶⁰

Operation Deliberate Force thus got under way on 30 August 1995. After Srebrenica, it was to prove a new turning point in the Bosnian war. Aircraft attacked the Air Defence system of the Bosnian Serbs, the Rapid Reaction Force attacked artillery and mortar positions.²⁹⁶¹ Mladic was required to remove all his heavy weapons from the Heavy Weapon Exclusion Zone with a 20 kilometre radius around Sarajevo. When New York found out that the Rapid Reaction Force was also taking part, it had to be withdrawn as it was exclusively supposed to operate as a defensive force. Admiral Smith termed this stance 'stupid'.²⁹⁶²

On 1 September there was a pause in the bombing to give Janvier an opportunity to meet Mladic and enable the Bosnian Serbs to withdraw the weapons. Admiral Smith later admitted it was a mistake to permit that pause. His NATO superiors were not happy about it. But the UN standpoint was that Janvier would recommend that the air strikes be suspended as soon as Mladic agreed not to threaten any further attacks on Safe Areas.²⁹⁶³ Mladic was prepared to withdraw the heavy weapons around Sarajevo on condition that this would not affect the military balance of power and that the parties would receive equal treatment. At the same time Mladic wanted to see another older wish fulfilled: an immediate ceasefire. Getting the Bosnian Muslims to agree to this would be a virtually impossible task for the UN. Janvier therefore dismissed this as unacceptable and required Mladic to immediately start withdrawing the heavy weapons from the Exclusion Zone and to refrain from further attacks on Safe Areas. Unless substantial progress had been made by 4 September, the bombing would be resumed.²⁹⁶⁴

After a fruitless meeting with Mladic lasting thirteen hours, and after consultation with the UN and NATO, Janvier stepped up his demands. UNPROFOR's freedom of movement was to be restored, as was the unimpeded use of the Sarajevo airfield. If Mladic failed to meet these demands, then the bombings would recommence. This was the case on 5 September.²⁹⁶⁵

Janvier and Admiral Smith established that the Bosnian Serbs had not fulfilled the demands. New York was dismayed to learn that a UNPROFOR spokesman had said that the objective of the resumption of the bombings was 'to cripple the BSA [Bosnian Serb Army] war machine and render its capabilities so devalued that General Mladic is forced to negotiate': according to New York the mandate went no further than ensuring the safety of the Safe Areas. Boutros-Ghali had always insisted that the UN was not at war with the Bosnian Serbs and even his NATO counterpart Claes had not claimed that the objective was to bomb the Bosnian Serbs to the negotiating table. Bosnia negotiator Holbrooke had also emphasized that this was not the intention. Janvier reiterated that his strategic objective was to achieve an end to the attacks on the Safe Areas, withdrawal of the heavy weapons, Freedom of Movement and an unhindered use of the airport of Sarajevo. He would subsequently be prepared to support any peace process that could provide a solution to the conflict. Janvier had agreed with Admiral Smith when he wanted to resume the bombings and had been 'very supportive' but Janvier 'got beaten up by the UN', according to Smith.

²⁹⁵⁹ Confidential information (42).

²⁹⁶⁰ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 30/08/95, No. Z-1541.

²⁹⁶¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cables Janvier to Annan, 30 August 1995, No. Z-1541 and Z-1549.

²⁹⁶² Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

²⁹⁶³ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

²⁹⁶⁴ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87295, File Office of the FC, 30 Oct 94 - 25 Dec 95. Fax FC's Office to UNMO Pale, with Letter Janvier to Mladic, 03/09/95; Interview Admiral Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

²⁹⁶⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, File Civil Affairs SNE, BHC Weekly Sitreps 17 Jun-21 Sep 95. UNPROFOR HQ Sarajevo, Weekly Situation Report, No. 133, 28 August - 3 September 1995.

Smith had wanted to escalate further and transfer F-117 Stealth aircraft to Italy in order to target radar systems but Italy withheld permission in a bid to lend force to its efforts to become a member of the Contact Group. Smith was allowed to launch thirteen Tomahawks (Sea-Launched Cruise Missiles) from ships in the Adriatic Sea. This enraged the Russians in the Security Council as Resolution 836 exclusively permitted the use of air power and not sea power. According to Admiral Smith the Tomahawks had mainly had a political impact in Belgrade. It had reportedly prompted Milosevic to urge Mladic to exercise restraint in relation to the Rapid Reaction Force and air operations.

After Karadzic and Mladic had signed an agreement on 14 September for the withdrawal of the heavy weapons, NATO suspended its operations and Holbrooke was able to start negotiating a peace settlement on 15 September. Holbrooke had already been in the region for some time, though he was still on the sidelines when the bombing started. The American UN ambassador Albright had expressed concerns as to whether UNPF had been keeping him sufficiently informed of developments after the air strikes started.²⁹⁶⁶ Holbrooke himself said however that the air strikes were to be effected without taking any account of the negotiation process.²⁹⁶⁷ In the first days of the fighting around Srebrenica this had been different, when the UN headquarters in Sarajevo had been wary of providing Close Air Support because of the mission of EU negotiator Bildt (see Chapter 7 of Part III).

The air strikes had a considerable impact on the Bosnian Serb Air Defences but left the ground forces largely unaffected because the Bosnian Serbs had taken protective measures.²⁹⁶⁸ The results that NATO achieved with the bombings were initially meagre: less than 50% of the targets were hit. The Bosnian Serbs managed to restore their communications system fairly quickly and the Integrated Air Defence System remained in operation. It was only towards the end of the campaign that no activity was detected on the Bosnian Serb target indication radars and substantial damage had been inflicted on the Air Defence and communication system. The Bosnian Serbs, incidentally, did succeed in bringing down a French Mirage.²⁹⁶⁹ The Netherlands played a sizeable part in the NATO actions, contributing 18 F-16s which conducted 5.6% of all sorties. The Dutch contribution thus came directly behind the efforts of the United Kingdom (9.3% of the sorties) and France (8.1%). The Americans accounted for the lion's share, with 65.9%.²⁹⁷⁰ The Dutch F-16s gave Close Air Support to the Rapid Reaction Force, carried out an air strike against a munitions factory and flew damage assessment missions. In addition, the mortar company of the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps fired at Bosnian Serb artillery and mortar positions around Sarajevo.²⁹⁷¹

16. The Croatian Operation 'storm'

Even before the air strikes had commenced late in August, the Bosnian Serbs had already suffered severe setbacks. On 4 August the Croats had launched their Operation 'storm', bringing the Republika Srpska Krajina to an end within a matter of days. The Bosnian Serbs also lost five per cent of their

²⁹⁶⁶ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00; UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cables Annan to Akashi, 31/08/95, No. 2894; Janvier to Annan, 02/09/95, No. Z-1561; Akashi to Annan, 03/09/95, No. Z-1580; Janvier to Annan, 05/09/95, No. Z-1593; Annan to Akashi, 05/09/95, No. 2922; Janvier to Annan, 06/09/95, No. Z-1607; Janvier to Annan, 07/09/95, No. Z-1619; Annan to Akashi, 11/09/95, No. MSC-2967.

²⁹⁶⁷ ABZ, DAV 999.241. Memorandum Visit Minister Solana to M[inister], 05/09/95. Holbrooke made his statement on 02/09/95 in the North Atlantic Council.

²⁹⁶⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 13/08/95, No. Z-1658.

²⁹⁶⁹ Confidential information (159).

²⁹⁷⁰ DCBC 1524. Fax NLLO AFSOUTH Naples to OCHKKlu, DCBC, 07/11/95 with AFSOUTH Fact Sheet Operation Deliberate Force, undated.

²⁹⁷¹ ABZ, DAV 999.241. Memorandum Visit Minister Solana to M[inister], 05/09/95. See also Tim Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force: The UN and NATO Campaign in Bosnia 1995*, Lancaster: Centre for Defence and International Security Studies, 1999; Wim Lutgert and Rolf de Winter, *Check the Horizon: De Koninklijke Luchtmacht en het conflict in voormalig Joegoslavië, 1991-1995*, The Hague: Sdu Uitgevers, 2001; M.C. Vogels and H. Pijning, eds., *Fire-Mission: Herinneringsboek KM-Detachment Bosnië 1, juli 1995-januari 1996*, Leeuwarden: Eisma, 2001.

territory as a result of the Croatian actions. Operation Storm sparked a massive flight of Croatian Serbs to the Republika Srpska and Serbia. It also aggravated the differences between Karadzic and Mladic. Karadzic took over the command of the Bosnian Serb Army from Mladic as supreme commander, with Mladic acting as his 'special adviser'. However, opposition from the General Staff meant that Mladic's position effectively remained intact.²⁹⁷²

The collapse of the army of the Republika Srpska Krajina, the Armija Republike Srpska Krajina (ARSK), also affected the Bosnian Serb Army. The undermanned Bosnian Serb Army was beginning to tire of the struggle and morale was sinking. Though the Bosnian Muslim efforts to break the siege of Sarajevo had failed, severe damage had been inflicted on the Bosnian Serbs. The large number of wounded totally disrupted the medical-logistical system. Bosnian Serbs who had fled to Serbia to evade conscription in the Republika Srpska were now forced to fulfil their military service after all and these newcomers hardly boosted the overall morale of the Bosnian Serb Army. UNPROFOR even thought that Bosnian Serb morale was so low that parts of the front would crumble if the Bosnian Croats and Muslims were to launch a concerted attack.²⁹⁷³

These were signs that change was in the air; the balance of power between Belgrade and Zagreb was shifting. The Serbs were no longer perceived to be invincible. The defeat of the Croatian Krajina Serbs and the fact that Milosevic did not lend them assistance, and possibly never would if the Bosnian Serbs found themselves with their backs to the wall, opened up fresh hopes of successful peace negotiations. Dialogue was also necessary to dampen the risk of a war between Croatia and Yugoslavia. The danger was that a Croatian invasion of Serb-inhabited Eastern Slavonia, which was located on the border with Serbia, would draw Yugoslavia into the war. This area had been captured from the Croats in 1991 after the bloody battle for Vukovar.²⁹⁷⁴

Milosevic was the crucial factor. Though his most important objective was the suspension of sanctions against Yugoslavia, he was not the kind of man to operate without a strategy for the longer term. What that strategy was remained unknown to the UN. For the short term, however, the UN foresaw no great change in Bosnia. It was true that 30–40,000 soldiers of the Armija Republike Srpska Krajina had entered Bosnia with their weapons and would probably soon be pressed into Bosnian Serb service, but defeat had strongly diminished their usefulness as a fighting force.²⁹⁷⁵

The situation in Croatia had been settled following the Croatian victory in Krajina, but a solution for the conflict in Bosnia was still a remote prospect. While the UN were struggling to map out a course in former Yugoslavia without directing – unwarranted – criticism at the Security Council, the Americans took the lead with the 'Lake initiative' to establish whether the altered landscape presented opportunities for restarting the peace process. In this connection National Security Advisor Anthony Lake went on a tour of Europe to gauge the level of support for his proposals. The core of his proposal consisted of mutual recognition between Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and Bosnia; a ceasefire; suspension of sanctions against Yugoslavia in exchange for the willingness to sit down at the negotiating table; a solution for Eastern Slavonia on the basis of the existing 'Z-4 plan' in which the UN would take the administration of Eastern Slavonia upon itself for a five-year period, after which the area would be handed over to Zagreb. As for a peace settlement in Bosnia, the Lake initiative provided for a modification of the map of the Contact Group. This was not only an old wish of the Bosnian Serbs but, after the loss of Srebrenica and Zepa, had also

²⁹⁷² UNNY, Box 88040, File 1-2-2, Jan-Dec 95. Memo Banbury to SRSG, 05/08/95, with attached Press Release from the Office of Dr Radovan Karadzic and Interview with the Bosnian Serb Television, 04/08/95.

²⁹⁷³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 434, File UNMO HQ UNPROFOR, Special Reports/4. UNMO HQ Sector North East to UNMO BH Comd/Zagreb, 17/08/95, No. MIO/POL.001, Confi.

²⁹⁷⁴ AZ, No. 95moo6020. Memorandum H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo to W. Kok, 16/08/95, without number with attachment 'Voormalig Joegoslavië, een evaluatie van recente gebeurtenissen (m.u.v. de gebeurtenissen in Srebrenica)' ('Former Yugoslavia, an evaluation of recent events (save the events in Srebrenica)').

²⁹⁷⁵ NIOD, Coll. Theunens. Note Tomiko Ichakawa to Zeid Raad to Yasushi Akashi, 'Fall of the Krajina - a possible explanation and prospect for the near future', 09/08/95.

become a sensitive issue for the Muslim-Croatian Federation. Gorazde could no longer be negotiated or bartered away by the international community.²⁹⁷⁶

Thus on 28 August, even before the bombardments around Sarajevo began, the Americans were already engaged in intense efforts to get the derailed peace process back on track. 'With a blitz of shuttle diplomacy which appears to have swept all adversaries onto the bandwagon of the peace process', Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke had embarked on a new mission. Even the formerly intransigent Bosnian Serbs were now prepared to take steps on the road to peace. They agreed to the proposal to form a joint negotiating team of Bosnian Serbs and Serbs under the direction of Milosevic and agreed in principle to the US initiative. Milosevic's voice would be decisive during the negotiations. The participation of Milosevic had also been a demand of the Bosnian government.

Milosevic felt the time had come that the Serbs could achieve more at the negotiating table than on the battlefield. This augured well for the US efforts. The Foreign Ministers of Croatia, Bosnia and Yugoslavia also met each other for the first time in a long time. According to UNPROFOR, thanks to the US initiative and – after the loss of Srebrenica and Zepa – the strong resolve of the international community, an atmosphere conducive to peace talks was beginning to emerge.²⁹⁷⁷

The Bosnians, for their part, raised objections to the US proposals. Both President Izetbegovic and Bosnian Muslim Commander Rasim Delic levelled criticism at the proposals. Evidently the Bosnian Muslims still felt that precisely at this juncture they stood to gain more by fighting on than by sitting down at the negotiating table.²⁹⁷⁸ The Bosnian Serbs, by contrast, saw negotiations as the best way to keep the Bosnian Muslims at bay and were therefore keen to stop the hostilities.²⁹⁷⁹

On 29 August the Contact Group chaired by Holbrooke discussed the US 'Lake initiative' which, incidentally, dated from before the bombardments. The Netherlands was miffed at being refused a place at the table, particularly as Canada, Spain and Italy were allowed to take part. Only these three countries were admitted to the talks, however.²⁹⁸⁰

The negotiations hardly got off to a propitious start. The warring factions would not budge from their irreconcilable standpoints. The Bosnian government wanted an undivided Bosnia with a strong central government and as little autonomy as possible for the Bosnian Serbs. The Bosnian Serbs wanted as few political ties as possible with the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats. They demanded equal status for the Republika Srpska and the Federation and the right to maintain their own international contacts. The Bosnian Muslims regarded this as hardly realistic. Attitudes hardened as the real negotiations drew nearer.²⁹⁸¹ As an additional condition for a peace agreement, President Izetbegovic demanded that NATO troops would be stationed on the entire territory of Bosnia as a further safeguard against the separation envisioned by the Bosnian Serbs.²⁹⁸² The only really tangible result to date was a the ceasefire commenced on 12 October, which was reasonably well observed.²⁹⁸³

²⁹⁷⁶ AZ, No. 95moo6020. Memorandum H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo to W. Kok, 16/08/95, without number, with attachment 'Voormalig Joegoslavië, een evaluatie van recente gebeurtenissen (m.u.v. de gebeurtenissen in Srebrenica) ('Former Yugoslavia, an evaluation of recent events (save the events in Srebrenica))'.

²⁹⁷⁷ NIOD, Coll. Theunens. UNPROFOR HQ Sarajevo, Weekly Situation Report, No. 133, 28 August - 3 September 1995.

²⁹⁷⁸ MID/CO. Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische Federatie ('Developments in the former Yugoslavian Federation'), No. 44/95, ended 311400B Aug 1995. Stg Confi.

²⁹⁷⁹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF, Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 05/09/95, No. Z-1595.

²⁹⁸⁰ DCBC, No. 1107. Code Van Houtem 543, 26/08/95.

²⁹⁸¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF, Outgoing Facsimile Pedauye, UNPROFOR HQ, Sarajevo to Akashi, UNPF-HQ, Zagreb, 30/10/95, No. Z 2018, Weekly Report, 23-29 October 1995.

²⁹⁸² MID/CO. Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische Federatie ('Developments in the former Yugoslavian Federation'), No. 49/95, ended 031200B Oct 1995. Stg Confi.

²⁹⁸³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF, Outgoing Facsimile Pedauye, UNPROFOR HQ, Sarajevo to Akashi, UNPF-HQ, Zagreb, 30/10/95, No. Z-2018, Weekly Report, 23-29 October 1995.

17. Dayton

On 1 November 1995 peace negotiations started at Dayton under the auspices of the United States. The parties remained entrenched with little indication of willingness to compromise. The Bosnian Serbs were sharply divided. The star of Mladic and the Bosnian Serb Army had lost its lustre; he had not flinched during the NATO bombardments, but now the political leaders were ready to make concessions. The infrastructure of the Bosnian Serb Army had been heavily damaged. Hopes that Karadzic and Mladic would disappear from the political stage did not materialize.²⁹⁸⁴

Assertions by the Bosnian Muslim Commander Delic that a failure of Dayton would reignite the hostilities and open up prospects for him to capture more territory suggested that the Bosnian Muslims still preferred to continue fighting. Progress could be achieved by strengthening the Muslim-Croatian Federation through more cooperation and a joint military structure. It also meant the end of Herceg-Bosna as a Croatian entity in Bosnia.²⁹⁸⁵

The fall of Srebrenica and the subsequent mass murder also dogged the Dayton negotiations. The Bosnian Foreign Minister, Sacirbey, accused Milosevic of complicity and argued he should therefore not be invited to Dayton. Holbrooke doused the flames with the words: 'you cannot sign peace with your friends. Milosevic is one of the key people in achieving peace and all the others agree that [he] should take part in the talks in Dayton'.²⁹⁸⁶

Srebrenica and Zepa played a very modest role in the negotiations. President Izetbegovic realized that these places could no longer be returned, but demanded suitable compensation.²⁹⁸⁷ An agreement was reached in Dayton on 21 November.²⁹⁸⁸

The Mission Chief of UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, the Spanish diplomat Antonio Pedauye, studied the map of Bosnia after the Dayton agreement. He concluded that though the Bosnian government had been allocated less territory than in earlier peace plans, they had been granted the whole of Sarajevo – the jewel in the crown – and a corridor to Gorazde. For the rest, the confrontation lines that existed on 12 October when the ceasefire started had been maintained as the lines of demarcation between the entities. The biggest change compared to the plan of the Contact Group was that Srebrenica and Zepa had been retrospectively 'exchanged' for parts of Sarajevo. In this way a settlement was reached which had been prevented earlier in the war by resistance from what Pedauye termed local hardliners.²⁹⁸⁹

After comparing the Dayton agreement and the Vance-Owen Plan, former EU negotiator Lord Owen expressed disappointment over the results that came out of Dayton: Dayton gave 6% more land to the Bosnian Serbs and was only achieved at the cost of two more years of war and many more dead.²⁹⁹⁰

18. Conclusion

The fall of Srebrenica, the loss of Zepa and the threat of losing Gorazde did not herald the end of UNPROFOR, but did painfully highlight the weakness of the UN mandate for the Safe Areas. Their

²⁹⁸⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF, Outgoing Code Cable Pedauye to Annan, 05/11/95, No. Z-2050.

²⁹⁸⁵ MID/CO. *Ontwikkelingen in de voormalige Joegoslavische Federatie* ('Developments in the former Yugoslavian Federation'), No. 57/95, ended 141000A Nov 1995. Stg Conf.

²⁹⁸⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF, Outgoing Code Cable Pedauye to Annan, 05/11/95, No. Z-2050.

²⁹⁸⁷ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, pp. 272-3, 294, 303.

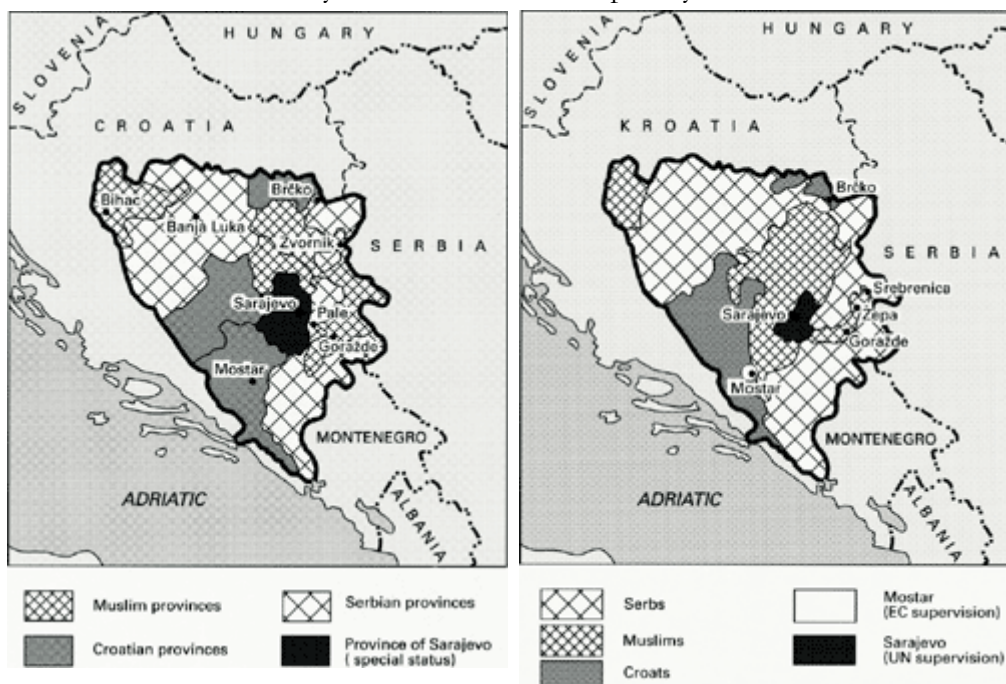
²⁹⁸⁸ Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, New York: Random House, 1998; Ivo H. Daalder, *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America's Bosnia Policy*, Brookings Institution Press, 1999; Bildt, Carl, *Peace Journey: The Struggle for Peace in Bosnia* [originally publ. in Swedish under the title *Uppdrag Fred* in 1997]. - London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998; Elizabeth M. Cousens & Charles K. Cater, *Toward Peace in Bosnia: Implementing the Dayton Accords*, International Peace Academy Occasional Paper Series, Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001.

²⁹⁸⁹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF, Outgoing Code Cable Pedauye to Annan, 23/11/95, No. Z-2168.

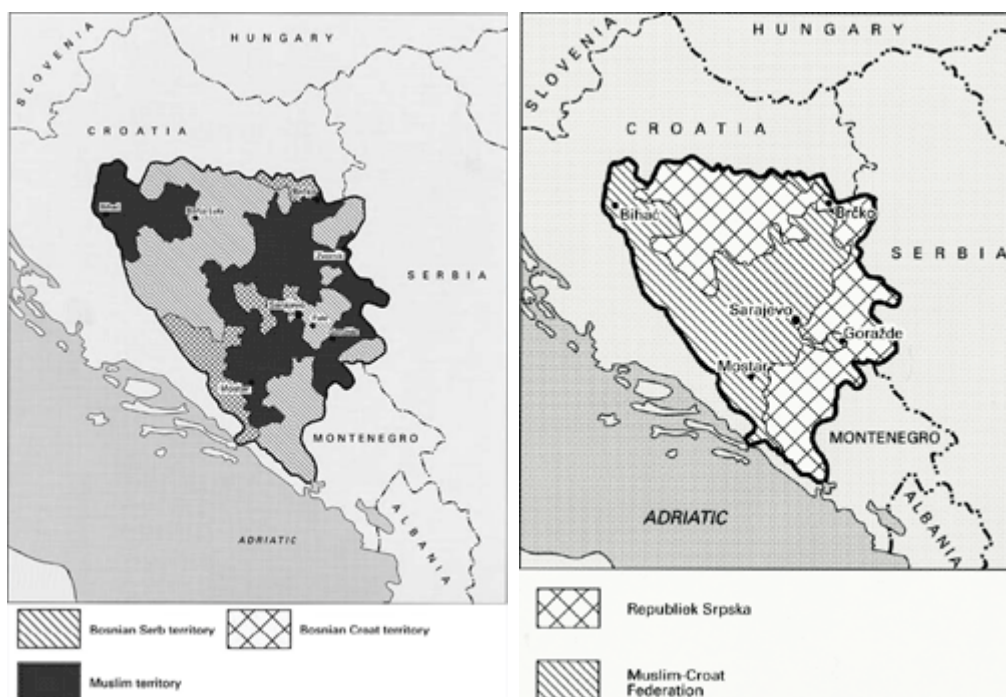
²⁹⁹⁰ Interview Lord Owen, 21/10/99.

impact, however, was not sufficient to make the troop-contributing nations and the permanent members of the Security Council consider the time ripe to withdraw UNPROFOR. Nor did the fall of Srebrenica bring the end of the war any nearer. The enclave was simply too insignificant in the Bosnian theatre of war to have such repercussions. Nor did the changes in Eastern Bosnia alter the strategic objectives of the warring factions or the military balance of power. Srebrenica and Zepa did show that the warring factions no longer respected Security Council resolutions or threats from NATO and the UN admonishing them to stop fighting. These instruments had been brandished so often that their value was hardly more than symbolic.

Air power had lost its magic. The UNPROFOR agenda was increasingly being driven by public opinion on the home front in the participating countries and the Bosnian government gratefully exploited every chance to accuse the international community of doing too little too late. Differences within the international community also gave the Bosnian government an opportunity to pin blame on UNPROFOR. The refugees packed together at Tuzla Air Base presented an excellent opportunity to remind the world of the ineffectuality of the UN and the depravity of the Bosnian Serbs.²⁹⁹¹



²⁹⁹¹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87717, File 7-8-1, Srebrenica, 11/07/09-31/07/95. [Memorandum] Mark Baskin, Marie-Janine Calic to SRSG through HAAU, 'How is the Fall of Srebrenica a Turning Point for the Mission?', 14/07/95.



The mass murder committed by the Bosnian Serbs after the fall of Srebrenica created a new situation, however. Their brazenness and total disregard of what the world would think made it possible for the Security Council, the United States and the UN to resort to force at a later stage. The massacre rocked institutions such as NATO and the UN to their very foundations. The bankruptcy of existing methods of crisis control had been exposed with stark and startling clarity. The executions in the wake of the fall of Srebrenica were, in the words of the American UN ambassador Albright, a clearly identifiable ‘trigger’ in the change in US policy.²⁹⁹² US Foreign Secretary Warren Christopher expressed himself in similar terms: ‘The overrunning of Srebrenica and Zepa created a circumstance that in some ways tragically enough makes the shape of the peace simpler than it would have been in the past.’²⁹⁹³

Without these murders, so General Smith said with hindsight, Mladic might have got away with the capture of Srebrenica.²⁹⁹⁴ But Mladic had miscalculated the reaction of the international community. According to General Morillon, Mladic had thought his attack on Srebrenica would accelerate the withdrawal of UN troops; this, so Morillon claimed, had always been his objective. (See Chapter 1 of Part III.) Mladic’s expectation that UNPROFOR would withdraw had apparently been strengthened by the reports he read in the international media and the continuous announcements of the US Congress that the arms embargo was to be lifted.

What Mladic had not bargained on, however, was the vehement public outrage over the manner in which Bosnian Serbs had treated the population of Srebrenica like animals. Mladic, so Morillon believed, was not aware that he had crossed a line in the sand that would ultimately enable President Clinton to overcome the resistance of Congress and authorize the deployment of US ground troops.²⁹⁹⁵

This was not achieved overnight however. For the time being the line in the sand was drawn at Gorazde. This was the unanimous signal that the international community gave the Bosnian Serbs at the London Conference: Gorazde was the line. The concrete military implications were not filled in at the conference, but these soon followed. The most important thing was that the UN Secretariat understood that the status quo could no longer be maintained and that the UN, faced with the prospect

²⁹⁹² Confidential interview (14) and interview M. Albright, 28/09/01.

²⁹⁹³ Lee Michael Katz, ‘Peace hope for Bosnia: Use of force’, *USA Today*, 19/09/95.

²⁹⁹⁴ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

²⁹⁹⁵ Morillon, *Mon credo*, p. 150.

of imminent disaster at Gorazde, had to abandon the strict neutrality of UNPROFOR that it had maintained for so long.

Peacekeepers would be unable to defend Gorazde, their supplies would not be allowed through and it would be impossible for them to do their job. Both warring factions could take the UN contingent hostage there. This, incidentally, was a lesson that the UN had been slow to learn from Srebrenica. Its initial intention had been to send fresh troops to Gorazde to replace the British, but not a single NATO country was prepared to dispatch a Tactical Air Control Party to Gorazde. As a result, the UN was forced to restrict itself to sending UN observers. This idea was not new either and had been advocated earlier by Generals Smith and Janvier and later Boutros-Ghali. UN observers lived among the population and were therefore less vulnerable to supply problems and hostage-taking.

The Netherlands, under the direction of Minister Voorhoeve, had drawn the lesson from Srebrenica that no more troops were to be sent to an enclave. Pressure on The Hague from the UN Secretariat and its own mission in New York to send Dutch troops to Gorazde were resisted. It was unusual for the Netherlands not to make the UN an offer when requested for support. A few weeks later Minister Van Mierlo was again planning to make an offer in conjunction with the General Assembly of the UN. This consisted of two infantry companies which could be ready to be sent to Gorazde from 1 November after being equipped with tracked APC armoured cars with 25 mm cannons and which had earlier been earmarked to relieve Dutchbat in Srebrenica (see Chapter 4 of Part III). Defence was not keen, however: UNPROFOR was already in the process of not replacing units in order to increase efficiency and reduce vulnerability. Moreover if the US peace initiative was successful, a NATO-led implementation force would be deployed and UNPROFOR would cease to exist.²⁹⁹⁶ As things turned out, no Dutch troops went to Gorazde.

Gorazde received no military reinforcements; this enclave simply could not be defended by reinforcing the local international garrison. NATO therefore took the lead to revive the idea of deterrence. It was aided in this endeavour by an international stance that was much clearer than at the time of the Bosnian Serb attack on Srebrenica: if a Safe Area was fired upon, this was sufficient reason to deploy air power. UNPROFOR now no longer required a demonstrable need for self-defence to call in air support. In addition, even initial indications of preparations for an attack could trigger air strikes: a 'smoking gun' was no longer necessary. Earlier, UNPROFOR had been restricted to adopting a wait-and-see attitude and merely responding to Bosnian Serb actions. From now onwards, it could act proactively. This was a world of difference compared to the situation at Srebrenica barely six weeks earlier. In the previous situation, an undermanned battalion had been considered a sufficient deterrent to keep the Bosnian Serbs in check.

Another important change was that the dual key for authorizing air strikes had been placed back in the hands of the military. What is more, Janvier largely overcame his earlier qualms about deploying air power. When shells hit the Markale market on 28 August, the military responded swiftly and used their new powers to implement the measures devised for Gorazde. After the fall of Srebrenica, the mass murders and the Croatian advance, this was another decisive turning point in the Bosnian conflict.

The UN was now in a position to turn the screws on the Bosnian Serbs and did this vigorously in cooperation with NATO. NATO was thus handed an opportunity to suppress the Bosnian Serb Air Defences. By virtue of powerful military activity, both from the air and ground, the safety of the remaining Safe Areas was finally secured and a credible deterrent against the Bosnian Serbs was put in place. This also helped to create the right climate for peace negotiations. As SACEUR General Joulwan said: 'Mladic was a good tactician but as a strategist he misjudged NATO.'²⁹⁹⁷

²⁹⁹⁶ DCBC No. 1149. Memorandum DAB to the Minister, 21/09/95, No. D95/480.

²⁹⁹⁷ Interview George Joulwan, 08/06/00.

Appendix I

Dutchbat III and the population: medical issues

Author: D.C.L. Schoonoord

Introduction

This appendix deals with how Dutchbat III handled the provision of medical care. The central theme is the battalion's intense exposure to medical problems during the fall of the enclave (the period from 6 to 11 July 1995), in particular to the question of whether a stock of medical supplies reserved for the treatment of possible wounded members of Dutchbat should after all be used for the treatment of the local population, which was in acute need of medical care.

First of all, however, the organization of medical aid in the Srebrenica enclave needs to be described. *Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)* and the staff of the local hospital were jointly responsible for the medical care of the population. When Dutchbat contributed to this care, this generally occurred under the aegis of and in support of *MSF*. This form of aid was under pressure even before the fall of Srebrenica, owing partly to the stagnation in the supply of medical supplies which made the provision of aid more difficult and partly to a conflict which arose in the spring of 1995 between the Opstina (municipal council) and *MSF*. While Dutchbat tried not to get involved in this conflict it did lead to internal problems and to a certain amount of forced inactivity in the Field Dressing Station.

Existing problems were aggravated as the Bosnian Serbs continued to seal off the enclave more and more hermetically from the outside world. This seriously hindered personnel changes, which had repercussions on morale and personal relationships. The transport of supplies to the enclave, which had long been a problem, got steadily worse, even before the Bosnian Serbs started actively interfering with the supply route. The consumption of medical supplies at Dutchbat was so high that the UN had difficulty replenishing the stock of these materials up to the proper level. The humanitarian aid provided to the local population gradually caused the medical supplies to fall to a level at which it was feared that it might be impossible to give wounded Dutchbat soldiers adequate treatment in the event of a calamity. This grew to be a source of tension between Dutchbat and the medical services, and also internally between individual members of the medical services.

All these factors exposed the existing tension between the mandate, i.e. the formal rules governing its deployment laid down by the UN, and the Dutch desire to be of as much service as possible to the population. The poor supply of medical materials ultimately led to the laying down of a stock of such materials for emergencies which came to be known as the 'emergency stock'. These supplies, which never reached the desired level, were later the cause of much controversy. The establishment of such emergency stock led to countless practical and ethical problems related to the question of whether these supplies could be used to treat the local population or should be reserved for the treatment of wounded Dutch troops if the need should arise. This proved to be an almost insoluble problem. The present appendix is thus largely devoted to a description of how this dilemma developed in practice.

Before these questions can be dealt with in depth, however, the organization of the medical units supported by Dutchbat must first be sketched and consideration must be given to the way the locally available resources were organized. To this end, a brief description of the medical organization of Dutchbat is first given, followed by a sketch of the medical aid provided to the local population, an impression of how this medical aid was temporarily halted by a conflict between *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the Opstina and the consequences of this situation for Dutchbat. Further details are then given of the problems associated with the above-mentioned 'emergency stock' of medical supplies, the rules governing the establishment of this stock and the relation between the UN regulations for medical aid to the local population and the maintenance of adequate supplies of medical materials.

An attempt is then made to give as clear a picture as possible of the medical aid provided by *MSF* and Dutchbat to the local population during the fall of the enclave. Next, attention is turned to the problems associated with the transport of wounded, first from the hospital in Srebrenica and subsequently from the enclave as a whole. This subject matter is dealt with in successive sections: the evacuation of Srebrenica hospital on 11 July, the attempt to send a convoy of wounded to Kladanj on 12 July and the transport of the remaining wounded from Potocari by the International Red Cross on

17 July. A picture is given of how these matters were dealt with in the report of the debriefing of Dutchbat and of the attempts to gain a better insight into what actually happened in the enclave, often in reaction to statements or comment from the media.

The second part of this appendix is mainly devoted to matters arising after the fall of Srebrenica and after the repatriation of Dutchbat, such as the internal problems which came to light within Dutchbat and the criticism from the media of the medical action of Dutchbat during the Bosnian Serb attack. This criticism concerned in particular the failure to treat a severely wounded Muslim woman brought to the Dutchbat compound on 10 July, a case which was later investigated both by the Military Health Care Inspectorate and by the Dutch Public Health Care Inspectorate. These investigations led to a discussion of the ethics of maintaining medical supplies for one's own use. The appendix closes with a summary of subsequent opinions on this matter.

The following comments may be made about the sources of information about the matters discussed in this appendix. Dutchbat reports for June 1995 contain little information about the situation of the population after the VRS (the Vojska Republika Srpska, military forces of the Bosnian Serbs) started its attack. The main emphasis lay on operational tasks, reports of the battle between VRS and ABiH insofar as this could be appraised by Dutchbat, and the situation at the various observation posts (OPs). The description given in this appendix of the efforts made to provide the local population with humanitarian and medical aid at the time of the fall of Srebrenica draws on reports by *Médecins Sans Frontières*, statements made during the debriefing of Dutchbat, subsequent investigations of the medical action taken by Dutchbat, internal investigation and interviews with the local population and other persons involved in the events described.

Chapter 1

The medical organization of Dutchbat

Three medical units within Dutchbat, with a total of 69 personnel in July 1995, were responsible for the primary and secondary health care: the Medical Platoon, the Field Dressing Station and the surgical team. The Medical Platoon, which formed an integral part of the Airmobile Battalion, provided the primary care. Ten men from this platoon were stationed in the compound at Potocari and manned a number of vehicles intended for the transport of the wounded. The battalion's first aid post and the remaining personnel of this platoon were situated with the company stationed in Srebrenica, with the Dutchbat company at Simin Han near Tuzla and at the Support Command in Lukavac. In addition, a number of soldiers received training in first aid for the wounded. One of these paramedics was present at all times at various observation points within the enclave and on patrol.¹

A Field Dressing Station for secondary care was also assigned to the battalion.² This composite unit had a total of 46 personnel and comprised a reception group, a group manning the crash room, a radiological and laboratory group, mortuary group, nursing department, blood supplies group, dispensary and operating theatre.³ The third medical unit was a team of usually ten specialists,⁴ working in the operating theatre and sent out by the Armed Forces Hospital Organization (KHO) for a three-month duty period. The Field Dressing Station had a maximum capacity of twenty beds, including four for intensive care. In addition there was the operating theatre and a space where the wounded could be stabilized, reanimated and given artificial respiration. Medical supplies were stored at various locations in the compound at Potocari. A second operating theatre for use in calamities was fitted out in a bunker, and provided with the appropriate medical supplies. This made it possible to continue to perform operations in the case of bunker alarm.

The dentist could make use of a treatment room within the Field Dressing Station. The equipment there was not up-to-date, and not all necessary functions were operative; for example, the dentist had to work with an improvised suction system. Better equipment had been promised from the Netherlands, but never reached the enclave. Dental treatment in the compound was reserved for Dutchbat personnel, other UN personnel and the local workers present in the compound. Patients from other parts of the enclave were treated in the hospital in Srebrenica, but once they were in the compound they did receive dental treatment if required. After the introduction of new measures to reduce fuel consumption on 11 May 1995, the Battalion Staff gave orders that local workers within the compound should no longer receive dental treatment. The dentist did however continue to treat these people in special cases, when he considered it necessary. Unlike the rest of the Field Dressing Station staff, the dentist had a good supply of medicaments. During the last few weeks of Dutchbat's stay in Srebrenica, the dentist worked in the hospital in Srebrenica one Monday morning a week.⁵

The Field Dressing Station had its own commander – not a physician – with the rank of captain. The surgeon, who had the rank of colonel, bore the final responsibility in medical matters but was functionally under the command of the Field Dressing Station commander. The normal procedure was that the latter reported on matters concerning medical organization in consultation with the surgeon to the deputy commander of Dutchbat, Major Franken. These differences in ranks and responsibilities within the Field Dressing Station sometimes led to friction.

¹ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

² TK, session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 136, p. 3-4.

³ Confidential debriefing statement (18).

⁴ KHO-5 had 9 personnel and KHO-6 had eleven. The additional members of staff in KHO-6 were an assistant physician and a staff nurse. CRST. Fax Commandant KHO aan Operationele Staf BLS (Fax KHO Commander to Operational Staff BLS), 30/11/95.

⁵ Debriefing statement by J.T.M. Huijgens, 14/09/95.

There were also great cultural differences between the personnel of the Airmobile Battalion and the part of the medical personnel that normally worked in hospitals. The medical specialists had a duty period differing from that of the battalion, which meant that few close links were built up between the two. These differences left a clear imprint on many of the matters discussed below.

The rotation of the surgical teams was a problem, since the Bosnian Serbs refused to give permission for this. As a result, one of the teams was forced to stay in the enclave much longer than planned; this led to the presence of two surgical teams in the enclave at the time of the attack.

After 1 April 1995, the Field Dressing Station was under the operational command of Dutchbat's Commanding Officer. This replaced the previous arrangement in which the station had been under the command of the Commander of Support Command in Lukavac, which was situated outside the enclave; when the Bosnian Serbs sealed off the enclave, this arrangement was no longer useful.

A physician was present as staff officer at the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff in The Hague. He advised the RNLA Crisis Staff and maintained contact with the medical staff in the enclave.⁶

⁶ TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 136, p. 3-4. See further § 2.2 of the report 'Incidenten bij de medische hulpverlening aan burgers door de Krijgsmacht Hospitaal Organisatie in Voormalig Joegoslavië' (Incidents during medical aid to civilians by the Armed Forces Hospital Organization in the former Yugoslavia), hereinafter referred to as the Report by the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96. A version of this report from which all personal details had been removed to preserve anonymity was also available for inspection in the documentation department of Parliament.

Chapter 2

Medical aid for the local population

The hospital in Srebrenica was poorly equipped, and could not possibly provide the local population with adequate medical care. It was not much more than an outpatients' clinic run as a hospital. The conditions there were very primitive – appreciably worse than those in the compound at Potocari. Electricity, from the hospital's own generator, was only available a few hours each day. The canteen had been turned into an operating theatre. The operating table was of poor quality, and the level of hygiene in the operating theatre was abominable. A dentist was sometimes present; the only dental equipment available was an old barber's chair, a selection of pliers and a dental treatment unit the water cooling of which was defective.

The hospital was dependent on the arrival of UNHCR convoys for medical supplies and dressing material. As long as the Bosnian Serbs controlled access to the enclave, and as such the situation in practice, a regular flow of these medical supplies and dressing material was not guaranteed. Accommodation was inadequate, as a result of the enormous flood of refugees coming to Srebrenica in 1993: there were only five physicians and one surgeon to treat 35,000 people.

A team from the Belgian branch of *Médecins Sans Frontières* supported the hospital staff. Since the Opstina had no separate Public Health department, the hospital management was also responsible for general public health matters in the enclave.⁷

The Bosnian state committee responsible for maintaining contact with UNPROFOR asked Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in February 1995 for help in attempts to get medical teams into the eastern enclaves and to do something about the shortage of medical staff. However, the Bosnian Serbs refused these teams access to the enclave, and sometimes took them prisoner.⁸ It is true that the Bosnian Muslims did manage to get a helicopter carrying a group of medical personnel into the air *en route* for Srebrenica in May 1995, the group in question seems to have been forced to make the trip, but the VRS shot the helicopter down in the hills round Zepa. Apart from the Chief of Staff of the 28th Division of the ABiH, Ramiz Becirovic, the physician Dzevad Džananović was one of the few survivors. After the incident, he was present in the hospital practically exclusively as a patient. He only started to learn how to walk again a week before the fall of Srebrenica. Standing on one leg, he tried to help as best he could in the treatment of the patients who had been wounded in the attack on the town.⁹

The *de facto* head of the hospital was the physician Ilijaz Pilav. He was also the only one to do any surgical work, though he had only received partial on-the-spot surgical training from a *Médecins Sans Frontières* surgeon. Avdo Hasanović was the titular head of the hospital. He only worked a few hours a day, during which time he did little more than perform (crude) abortions for high fees. *MSF* staff member Emira Selimović reported that he was mainly interested in money, and that he had refused to cooperate with the chief physician.¹⁰ She was not alone in this opinion: the Dutchbat surgeon Colonel G.D. Kremer characterized the man as a charlatan who earned large sums of money by performing circumcisions.¹¹ The relationship between *MSF* and Hasanović was problematic. Hasanović, a member

⁷ Interview Hans Ulens, 06/08/97; interview Ilijaz Pilav, 31/01/98; debriefing statement J.T.M. Huijgens, 14/09/95.

⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 82, File 4.2.1. HQ BH Command, 'Meeting with State Committee for Cooperation with UNPROFOR', 04/02/95, Ref. 8594.

⁹ Interview Dzevad Džananović, 04/03/98.

¹⁰ Interview Emira Selimović, 21/10/97.

¹¹ Stasdef, nasleep, medische zaken en genocide (aftermath, medical matters and genocide). IMG (Van Ormondt) to minister and junior minister, 28/11/95, No. IMG 95/27/475.

of the circle surrounding Naser Oric wanted *MSF* to allow him to distribute medicines that were provided free by that organization. It was rumoured that he sold them on the black market.¹²

The situation in the hospital was not new. As early as September 1994, the Civil Affairs Officer of Sector North East in Tuzla, Ken Biser, reported the existence of many problems that had been observed since the creation of the enclave. UNPROFOR or UNHCR officials had promised to clear up these problems, but tended to forget about them in the course of time. Biser was also confronted with Srebrenica's problems in Tuzla when he met the ministers of the Canton of Tuzla and the heads of the international organizations in the region. Biser commented that at these meetings, people tended to approach him according to a standard pattern. The existing problems were described in great (almost exaggerated) detail, after which radio and TV reporters asked the representatives of the international community what they intended to do about them. In fact, however, according to Biser the conditions in the enclave were not as dramatic as they were sometimes painted: no one was starving, and the people were not without shoes and clothing. Medical care was available, though Biser also knew that the hospital was plagued by corruption. Medicines and care could be bought by people who possessed hard currency.¹³ Local doctors even asked for money to refer people to the Dutchbat Field Dressing Station.¹⁴

Dutchbat I provided medical care by taking over operations from the local hospital three times a week and by holding an outpatients' clinic three times a week at regular times.¹⁵ Dutchbat doctors looked after two of the six *ambulancias* manned by *MSF*, and Dutchbat surgeons also helped to perform complicated operations. *MSF* brought patients to the Field Dressing Station three times a week for echography and X-rays, and the Dutch X-ray technician came to Srebrenica twice a week to take X-ray photos there.¹⁶ The hospital staff needed in particular the services of a clinical chemistry technician and an X-ray technician.¹⁷

'Monthly Morbidity Reports' gave an overview of the numbers of patients treated for certain categories of complaints. Only one example was found in the UNPROFOR archives, for the month of April 1994. In that month, Dutchbat I treated the following numbers of new cases in the morbidity categories heart (1), respiration (18), abdominal (33), genito-urinary (5), neurological (10), dermatological (55), rheumatological (69), ophthalmological (20), internal (23), psychiatric (7), dental (8) and one gunshot wound.¹⁸ Dutchbat sent reports of wounded patients to the Medical Logistical Officer and the Force Medical Office at UN headquarters in Sarajevo and Zagreb. These reports contained records of the persons treated and what was wrong with them, which would be used as a basis for determination of the clinical pictures that could manifest themselves in the enclave. Sarajevo did not often react to these reports, however.¹⁹

When Dutchbat left the enclave, the battalion's records contained data on about one thousand local people who had been treated at the Field Dressing Station. There were also medical files on about 300 patients who had undergone operations or been admitted for treatment.²⁰ Dutchbat took these

¹² Rohde, *Endgame*, p. 108 and n. 12. Hasanovic failed to turn up for an interview to be carried out by NIOD that had been arranged in Tuzla.

¹³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, File Civil Affairs SNE Srebrenica. Fax SCVAO (Ken Biser) to DSRSG, CAC (Victor Anreev), 29/09/94.

¹⁴ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 118, File Meetings. Points for the Civil Affairs Monthly Meeting, January 1995.

¹⁵ DCBC, 1114. Fax RNLA Crisis Staff (G2 Aooi Topper) to DCBC, 301625B Aug 95. Overzicht humanitaire activiteiten 11^e bat in de periode 1/03/94 t/m 28/07/94. Opsteller Hoofd Sie 1, 11 Kap Remie, 30/08/95. (Overview of humanitarian activities 11th bat in the period 1/03/94 – 28/07/94.).

¹⁶ DJZ archives, War Crimes Tribunal dossier. Answers to the Questionnaire *MSF* Local Staff, Emira Selimovic, Abdulah Purkovic, Tuzla. DJZ to ICTY, 29/01/96, No. C 95/277.

¹⁷ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

¹⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 203, file BHC 7-12/05/ 94. HQ BHC FWD Sarajevo to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb, 081515 May 94.

¹⁹ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

²⁰ Debriefing statement H.A. Folmer, 07/09/95.

documents with them when they left the enclave. They ended up in Zagreb, but no one knew exactly what to do with them; after the files had been lying about in Zagreb for some time, a captain there reported that he had a box of 'confidential medical information' in his possession about local people who had been treated at the Field Dressing Station. The Medical Service staff officer of the RNLA Crisis Staff, Lieutenant Colonel W.J. Wertheim, then proposed that the data about Bosnian patients should be made available to the International Red Cross.²¹ For unexplained reasons, this did not happen. Instead, the box full of information arrived at the Headquarters of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff in October 1995. Inspection of the contents there did not reveal any major new findings. It did show, however, that Dutchbat I, II and III had played a greater role in arranging medical transports from Srebrenica to Tuzla than had been previously thought.²² In February 2000 enquiries made by the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (NIOD) revealed that the documents were stored in Dutch military medical archives. They would have been able to play a role in the determination of *ante mortem* status in the framework of the identification of victims by the ICRC or Physicians for Human Rights. They were finally handed over to the Yugoslavia Tribunal later that year.

Dutchbat II continued the aid to the local population that had been started by Dutchbat I. Dutchbat II also made its own Field Dressing Station capacity available. In connection with the number of patients calling on the *ambulantas*, consideration was given on a case-by-case basis of whether Dutchbat surgical capacity should be made available. As a result, many local persons underwent operations or were admitted for treatment in Potocari. Dutchbat II managed, with a great deal of effort and after the necessary negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs, to get 30 civilians with serious illnesses or life-threatening injuries transported to Tuzla or Sarajevo. A few patients were transported by helicopter and the rest in a convoy. Dutchbat II also supplied both the local hospital and *MSF* with limited amounts of medicines. The Bosnian Serbs in Bratunac were also provided with medicines in emergencies. The institute for the mentally handicapped was provided with electricity via a line laid for the purpose from the compound in Srebrenica.²³

OPs often acted as links in the health care network for the more remote villages. Wounded Muslims turned up regularly at the OPs, where they received treatment from the paramedic present. In some cases, Dutchbat then took care of transport to the Field Dressing Station for further treatment. The same held true for pregnant women; one even gave birth in an APC.²⁴

During the period that Dutchbat III was present in Srebrenica, it continued to hold consultations at the *ambulantas* in the enclave till the end of May 1995. In addition, surgical consultations were held once a week at the compound in Potocari. An average of 15 patients attended each of these consultations. The numbers attending the consultations at the *ambulantas* were higher. Depending on their complaints, patients received treatment on the spot or were transferred to the Field Dressing Station or the hospital.²⁵

Dutchbat also provided incidental aid in repairing the medical equipment in the hospital in Srebrenica, or in keeping this equipment running.²⁶ Nurses assisted in the outpatients' clinic. During the early days of Dutchbat III's stay, First Aid lessons were also organized for the local population.²⁷ Children in the primary schools in Srebrenica and Potocari received such lessons with the aid of

²¹ SCGD. SSOGD (Wertheim) to CS RNLA Crisisstaf (Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff)/ (Dedden), i.a.a. IGDKL (Mels), 15/09/95, No. SCGD/15314/31.

²² SCGD. SSOGD (Wertheim) to RNLA Crisisstaf (Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff)/LSO DCBC/Hovers, 26/10/95, unnumbered.

²³ DCBC, 1114. Fax KL Crisisstaf (Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff) (G2 Aooi Topper) to DCBC, 301625B Aug 95. Dutchbat II, inzetperiode van 110794 tot 210195 (duty period 110794 to 210195), opsomming van geleverde humanitaire ondersteuning in het inzetgebied (summary of humanitarian aid provided in duty area). Opsteller Hoofd Sie 1 (compiled by head of Section 1), Capt. Van Dijk, 30/08/95.

²⁴ Debriefing statement E. Klinck, 12/09/95.

²⁵ DGP/IMG. Report by the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 9.

²⁶ Debriefing statement R. de Groot, 18/09/95.

²⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (6).

interpreters. The medical personnel took toothbrushes along to these lessons as presents, in order to promote personal hygiene.²⁸ The hospital staff prepared a weekly survey of the sick or wounded present in the hospital in Srebrenica or attending the consultation for those wishing to be evacuated. Accordingly, the surgeon selected a number of people for transfer to the compound in Potocari for further treatment. The transport to the compound was provided by members of the local population or by *MSF*. The return transport was provided by members of the local population or by a Dutchbat ambulance.²⁹ Dutchbat III performed an average of two operations per day. Patients outside the compound were also visited in exceptional cases. Humanitarian aid was not provided to ABiH soldiers if they were recognizable as such.³⁰

Dutchbat's medical personnel were more respected by the ABiH than the military. Civilians were also friendlier to the medical personnel who took care of the wounded. A certain amount of self-interest seems to have played a role here. Conversely, the Chief of Staff of ABiH's 28th Division, Ramiz Becirovic, twice received medical aid at the compound despite the ruling in force at the time that such aid should no longer be provided to inhabitants of the enclave. X-ray photos were taken of Becirovic after he had been wounded in May during the shooting down of a helicopter. The orders to have the X-ray photos taken were motivated by goodwill. These orders were given by Major Franken, at the suggestion of the liaison officers Major Boering and Captain Melchers.³¹ Radiology technician Warrant Officer A. Wiehink received the request from the leadership of the battalion via the Field Dressing Station commander to take X-ray photos and echograms of Ramiz Becirovic. He did so, but was surprised because the request was not in line with agreements that had been made previously.³²

Medical aid as an instrument of war

Defence Minister J.J.C. Voorhoeve visited Dutchbat on Sunday 11 September 1994. It was his first visit to the enclave. He summarized his impressions in a letter to his colleague Jan Pronk, Minister of Development Cooperation. The population of the enclave, estimated to amount to 37,000 persons (including 20,000 refugees), was living under miserable conditions: there was a lack of good housing, and medical provisions were extremely limited. Exchanges of fire, initiated first by one side and then by the other, occurred regularly at the borders of the enclave, as did kidnappings and murders. The population reacted apathetically to their hopeless position. Voorhoeve observed that humanitarian aid was only reaching the inhabitants of the enclave in limited amounts. Dutchbat would be glad to help the people more, but could do little in the face of the continued refusal of the Bosnian Serbs to allow medical supplies into the enclave.³³

Since there were hardly any Dutch soldiers requiring treatment in the Field Dressing Station, the staff there considered in consultation with *MSF* whether there was anything the staff of the nursing ward could do to help the local population. The bottleneck proved to be the supplies of dressing material held by *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Since these supplies were so low, patients' dressings could not be changed often. This led to frequent infections which in their turn had to be treated with antibiotics – which were also in extremely short supply. This vicious circle had already been in existence for some time.

Médecins Sans Frontières were also dependent on the Bosnian Serbs for their supplies. Their supply of fuel, which was kept at the UN compound in Potocari, fell and, like that of Dutchbat, was not replenished. The Bosnian Serbs argued in discussions with *MSF* that they were not bombarding the enclave, so no one could be hurt by their actions. They were not particularly interested in any wounded

²⁸ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

²⁹ Confidential debriefing statement (6).

³⁰ Debriefing statement H.A. Folmer, 07/09/95.

³¹ Confidential statement (14).

³² Confidential debriefing statement (10).

³³ DS No. S94/061/3164. Voorhoeve to J.P. Pronk, 19/09/94, No. V94022016.

there might be among the Muslim population. That being the case, why did *MSF* need so much in the way of medical supplies, the Serbs asked suspiciously. These supplies fell, and since Dutchbat's supply lines had also been cut it was only possible to help *MSF* out in cases of utmost need; and even then, only tiny amounts of the most essential supplies could be given. The Bosnian Serbs were not interested in arguments, and opposed clearances for the transit of convoys.³⁴

Dutchbat did sometimes let *MSF* have medical supplies of which adequate amounts were available, or which were near their 'use by' date (though still usable). The medical service did this on its own initiative, without consulting the battalion staff.³⁵ Conversely, *MSF* supplied medicaments, especially in children's doses which Dutchbat did not keep in stock. Gifts of medicaments were also used to ease negotiations with local authorities, both Muslim and Bosnian Serb.³⁶

In order to solve the problem of the shortage of medical supplies, these had to be smuggled in from February 1995. The Bosnian Serbs kept a close check on all medical supplies and equipment received, and assumed that Dutchbat only used these for its own personnel. Permission was also sometimes given for supplies that the Bosnian Serbs could use too; much of this material disappeared at checkpoints on Bosnian Serb territory. Dutchbat had to keep on improvising and shifting materials from one location to another in order to be able to continue to provide its own personnel with the necessary treatment.³⁷

In the meantime, the Bosnian Serbs complained that the Muslims got all the humanitarian aid, while they got none. The Civil Affairs section of Sector North East countered that the Bosnian Serbs did not ask for humanitarian aid, and did not allow UNPROFOR access to their territory.³⁸ Dutchbat did however get requests for medical supplies from time to time from the hospital in Bratunac, which was poorly equipped and suffered from a lack of medical supplies. Such requests were the subject of negotiations on a number of occasions. When asked for clearance for the delivery of such supplies, the Bosnian Serbs only gave a conditional 'yes'. Approval could only be 'arranged' if Dutchbat agreed in advance that more than half of the supplies delivered would be left at the hospital in Bratunac. Even then, it was by no means certain that the administration in Pale would approve the clearance.³⁹ Dutchbat did offer assistance to the Bosnian Serbs in Bratunac, but no medical supplies were actually delivered there up to the fall of the enclave.⁴⁰

A special form of assistance provided during the Dutchbat III period was the evacuation of elderly and vulnerable people. However, Bosnian Serb promises were not always realized on the ground. For example, General Mladic had said on 15 February and again on 7 March 1995 that he would agree to the evacuation of 450 persons from Srebrenica. President Izetbegovic also gave General Smith his approval for this on 20 March. The Opstina of Srebrenica had already asked UNPROFOR a month before to evacuate 450 to 1000 persons. However, no agreements about this evacuation had yet been made, no criteria had been laid down nor had it been decided who would draw up the list of persons to be evacuated. Experience had shown that this should be done by NGOs, to avoid corruption. However, this procedure could lead to confrontations with the local authorities who liked to retain control over their own people.

Since the media was already mentioning the possibility of evacuations, UNMOs in Srebrenica were instructed to avoid this issue in their contacts with the local authorities and to play down its importance by saying that negotiations were under way but no agreement had been reached yet. If such matters were discussed in too optimistic terms and no evacuation finally took place, UNPROFOR

³⁴ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Koreman's diary, 37th week, 7.

³⁵ Debriefing statement G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95.

³⁶ Communication from B.C. van de Borcht, 22/02/99.

³⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

³⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 118, File Meetings. Points for the Civil Affairs Monthly Meeting, [?] January 1995.

³⁹ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Koreman's diary, 37th week, 7.

⁴⁰ Confidential debriefing statement (19).

could be blamed for the failure.⁴¹ In fact, no results were achieved in this field, even though Dutchbat continued to urge the VRS up till the end of April to allow the evacuation of 30 persons (accompanied by 17 escorts) who were in a critical condition; however, no permission was given, as a result of which one of the persons died.⁴²

In May, 21 patients from the list of persons needing evacuation (the number of whom had in the meantime risen to 36) could be transferred to Sarajevo. Fifteen of the 17 attendants were allowed to go too.⁴³

Lack of guidelines

The situation in the enclave deteriorated very considerably in June 1995, after the NATO air strikes on Pale of 25 and 26 May. Dutchbat, which was also a victim of the block on the transport of supplies imposed by the Bosnian Serbs, no longer felt able to do anything to improve matters. The situation was threatening, and it did not take long for the expected escalation to occur: on 3 June, the VRS captured the southernmost point of the enclave, near OP-E. This led to temporary closure of the smuggling route to Zepa. The food shortage was exacerbated by the fact that UNHCR convoys were no longer allowed access to the enclave. The water mains system was no longer working either, and the hospital was hardly able to offer the population any medical services because of its ageing equipment and lack of medicines. *MSF* could do nothing to improve the situation, and neither could Dutchbat because of the block on the transport of fuel and other supplies.⁴⁴ Dutchbat's deployability and general scope for action were drastically reduced on all fronts.

There were no clear Dutch or internal guidelines or instructions about the provision of humanitarian aid to the local population. Dutchbat's Standing Orders went no further than giving some vague criteria for the provision of support for refugees (or 'non-combatants' in military terms) in need, if they were wounded or seriously ill and requested admission to a UN facility.⁴⁵ Hence, aid for the population largely developed on an *ad hoc* basis. Lieutenant Colonel Th.J.P. Karremans, Dutchbat's Commanding Officer, gave KHO-5 a free hand in this form of aid. The surgical teams (KHO-5 and KHO-6 during the Dutchbat III-period) were told nothing about the UN guidelines in this field before being sent out to Srebrenica. The surgeon in charge, Colonel Kremer, and his successor Naval Captain H.G.J. Hegge, did not learn of the existence of these UN guidelines until they had returned to the Netherlands.

In practice, they followed the line that had already been laid down by their predecessors, for which many arguments could be given: few soldiers required treatment at the Field Dressing Station, while the hospital of Srebrenica was overloaded and inadequately equipped to treat relatively large numbers of sick and wounded. The provision of humanitarian aid helped to prevent boredom among the medical staff and allowed them to maintain their practical skills, to learn to work as a team and to learn to work under special circumstances. The provision of humanitarian aid was also seen as a means of improving the relations with the local population.

Kremer made agreements with *MSF* about medical assistance on his own initiative. At the request of *MSF*, the KHO-5 team would provide assistance to the hospital. The possibility of holding

⁴¹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 116, File SNE Tuzla Memo out Jan 94 – Dec 95. Memorandum Ken Biser, Senior Civil Affairs Officer Sector NE to Mark Pengham, Senior Military Observer, Sector NE, 16/03/95, Ref. TUZ/CA/80.

⁴² UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, File Civil Affairs SNE, Srebrenica. Fax HQ Sector NE G5/Civil Military Operations to BH Command Fwd Sarajevo, 23 Apr 2330A 95, HQ SNE G5 Summary for Period 17-22 Apr 95. This report reached HQ UNPROFOR in Zagreb on 26/04/95, along with the report 'B-H Command Humanitarian Assistance Activities' mentioned in footnote 43. (UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 70, File 2.2.6.)

⁴³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 70, File 2.2.6. BH Command (Fwd) G5, Civil Military Operations to HQ UNPROFOR, 'B-H Command Humanitarian Assistance Activities', 11/05/95.

⁴⁴ CRST. C-Dutchbat to C-RNLA Crisis Staff, 05/06/95, No. TK9589.

⁴⁵ SMG, Debrief. Vaste Order (Standing Order) 1 (NL) UNINFBAT, Part 2: Operations, reports and other messages, Chapter 3: Operations.

consultations in Srebrenica was also discussed. It would then be decided in consultation with the local doctor whether a given patient should go to Srebrenica or to the compound at Potocari. The compound was regarded as the preferred destination for seriously wounded patients, since the Field Dressing Station had better facilities. Kremer did not consult the leadership of Dutchbat about this arrangement; this was to become a source of conflict between him and the battalion staff later.⁴⁶

In the 'good old days' when there were adequate medical supplies, the Field Dressing Station made no distinctions in medical treatment between Dutchbat personnel and civilians. The only difference was one of priority: Dutch soldiers received treatment before local civilians. Later, civilians were only treated if they were suffering from a life-threatening condition while Dutch soldiers received treatment at all times.⁴⁷

The shortage of fuel played an important role in limiting the extent of humanitarian aid. Restrictions had to be placed on the transport of wounded civilians, as a result of which it was no longer permitted to pick up wounded from the enclave and transport them to the Field Dressing Station or the hospital. Dutchbat did however continue to look for ways for patrols to pick up wounded from near a patrol route.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Report by the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 18 and 21.

⁴⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (10).

⁴⁸ Report by the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 23.

Chapter 3

The conflict between Médecins Sans Frontières and the Opstina

Low levels of supplies were not the only reason why humanitarian aid had to be limited. Solidarity with *Médecins Sans Frontières* also played a role. *MSF* got into a conflict with the municipal council (Opstina) of Srebrenica at the end of March 1995, which was based on a long-standing difference of opinion between the two about legal competences. The municipal council wanted to employ a number of experienced Bosnian staff members of *MSF* for other tasks, but the coordinator of *MSF* objected. To give force to the *MSF* position, she temporarily closed a number of ambulant treatment stations (*ambulantas*).⁴⁹ The situation then arose that the Opstina rescinded these staff members' work permits, while *MSF* would not allow anyone else to do their work.

The liaison officer of Sector North East, Major Guy Sands Pingot, approached the *MSF* authorities in Tuzla, in an attempt to exert pressure on the organization to resume work in Srebrenica.⁵⁰ The local *MSF* coordinator, Catherine Vandeneede, 'refused to budge, however'.⁵¹

The Opstina then asked *Médecins Sans Frontières* to make their medical supplies available, so that the municipal council could carry out the current health care programmes itself. *MSF* categorically rejected this proposal too as long as its local workers were not allowed back to work. The conflict got so heated that the police were ordered to arrest one of the local *MSF* staff members in question if he was found to be continuing his work for *MSF*.

In the meantime, the Belgian coordinator of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, Catherina Vandeneede, was succeeded by the German Christina Schmitz. The latter requested urgent consultation with the Opstina, but this was turned down. The director of the hospital, Avdo Hasanovic, supported the Opstina in this conflict. Christina Schmitz wanted to put an end to the situation she had inherited from her Belgian predecessor as quickly as possible. The work pressure in the hospital was high due to the closure of the *ambulantas*, and Schmitz found it unacceptable that the population should suffer as a result of the conflict with the Opstina.

Finally, the Opstina did agree to talk to *Médecins Sans Frontières*. It argued that the *MSF* staff were needed for work in the schools, and that others in Srebrenica should also be able to profit from the salaries paid by *MSF*. Furthermore, the Opstina made it clear that it was not happy that the *MSF* coordinator reported to the outside world about all kinds of matters concerning the enclave, which in its opinion could just as well be assessed and dealt with at local level. The Opstina continued to claim that it was authorized to commandeer the services of any member of local *MSF* staff it chose to. According to the Opstina, the population was suffering from the stubbornness of *Médecins Sans Frontières*; if the organization left the enclave, the Opstina was confident that it could manage things on its own, as it claimed it had demonstrated during the first year of the war.⁵²

Since the Field Dressing Station was working under the *MSF* flag, Dutchbat also stopped its humanitarian activities at this point;⁵³ only emergency aid was still provided. An underlying consideration was that Dutchbat and in particular its medical staff did not want to get involved in the

⁴⁹ Draft reply to Parliament question No. 139. The reply is not included in TK, 1995-1996 session, 22 181, No. 134 and only partially in 22 181, No. 136.

⁵⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, File Civil Affairs SNE, Srebrenica. Fax HQ Sector NE G5/Civil Military Operations to BH Command Fwd Sarajevo, 23 Apr 2330A 95, HQ SNE G5 Summary for Period 17-22 Apr 95³.

⁵¹ DJZ, Yugoslavia Tribunal dossier. Answers to the Questionnaire *MSF* Local Staff, Emira Selimovic, Abdulah Purkovic, Tuzla; DJZ to ICTY, 29/01/96, No. C 95/277.

⁵² NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsats 23/06/95 12:57, No. In 443; 29/06/95 11:45, No. Out 903; 30/06/95 07:36; 30/06/95 16:45.

⁵³ Confidential debriefing statement (25).

conflict between the Opstina and *MSF*, which was in fact being fought out at the expense of the aid to the local population.⁵⁴

The Medical Officer of B Company in Srebrenica, Captain R.A. Buijs, took a slightly different view of the matter: he thought that *Médecins Sans Frontières* had exceeded its competence by refusing to treat the local population in response to the stance adopted by the Opstina that it was empowered to order specified staff members of *MSF* to do other work in the enclave. Captain Buijs agreed with *MSF's* standpoint, but not with its consequences.⁵⁵

The Opstina then raised the stakes a notch by calling up two members of *MSF's* logistics personnel for military service. This was in line with the policy adopted by the Bosnian Government of putting locally recruited personnel of international organizations into the army and replacing them with 'ones better suited to the work'. This idea was not new, and had raised its head elsewhere in Bosnia; UNPROFOR opposed it strongly.⁵⁶ There were also examples in Srebrenica of attempts to send people working for *MSF* to the front;⁵⁷ according to UNPROFOR, this contravened the Status of Forces Agreement concluded with the Bosnian Government. The Bosnian Ministry of Defence was the main force behind this new initiative, according to which only men aged 45 and over, and women, could be employed by UNPROFOR and UN agencies.⁵⁸

Since the humanitarian aid activities had been stopped, the staff of KHO-5 had little to do. This enforced inactivity of the Field Dressing Station personnel irritated other Dutchbat personnel, who were having to do their work under increasingly difficult conditions because of the shortage of fuel. This led once more to conflict between the medical personnel and battalion staff, in particular between Colonel Kremer and Major Franken. Franken ordered Kremer to resume the humanitarian work; but Kremer was only prepared to work for *MSF* and not for the hospital since he was afraid that if the conflict between the Opstina and *MSF* led the latter to withdraw, he would become responsible for the health care of the population of the enclave.⁵⁹

Members of the Opstina then asked Dutchbat senior staff to provide the health care that was lacking. The leadership of Dutchbat was initially willing to accede to this request, but the members of the KHO team believed that this would undermine *MSF's* position. Colonel Kremer thought that it would be unjustified to assume responsibility for the health of 40,000 people with his small staff. Lieutenant Colonel Karremans 'could feel the force of this argument' but Major Franken could not, according to Colonel Kremer.⁶⁰

This indecisive situation continued for two weeks. Major Boering, who maintained the contacts between Dutchbat and the hospital, asked Karremans urgently to cut the Gordian knot so that he could announce a decision to the hospital staff. Franken appeared to be furious about Karremans' procrastination, and announced that he would settle the matter himself. He discussed the situation with Kremer, but this did not lead to the desired result.

Major Boering now by-passed the two fighting-cocks and approached the hospital on his own initiative, together with Warrant Officer Tops who was acting as Deputy Commander of the Field Dressing Station after the Commander, Captain R.E.L. Sweens, was unable to return to the enclave after having been away on leave.⁶¹ Once Tops had been convinced that the local population did need

⁵⁴ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Memo from Deputy Director of General Information to Chief of Defence Staff, or in his absence to O. Van der Wind, 16/11/95, No. V95021602.

⁵⁵ Debriefing statement R.A. Buijs, 19/09/95.

⁵⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 82, File 4.2.1. HQ BH Command, 'Meeting with State Committee for Cooperation with UNPROFOR', 04/02/95, No. 8594.

⁵⁷ Interview Almir Ramic, 06-10/11/99, concerning Muhamed Durakovic.

⁵⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 82, File 4.2.1. Fax Civil Affairs BH Command (Deyan Mihov) to Civil Affairs HQ Zagreb (Michel Moussali), 13/05/95 and annex Government of BiH, 'Instruction for Employment of Local Staff in UNPROFOR and United Nations agencies' of 28/04/95.

⁵⁹ Report by the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 23-24.

⁶⁰ Confidential debriefing statement (2), 13/07/98.

⁶¹ Debriefing statement A.J.A.M. van de Wiel, 15/09/95.

medical support, he made a number of internal ‘arrangements’.⁶² As a result, when Lieutenant Colonel Karremans gave orders on 9 May 1995 for an investigation to be carried out into alleged misconduct in Dutchbat (as discussed in Chapter 9 of Part II of the main report), he included the provision of medical aid to the local population without knowledge of the Commanding Officer as one of the items of alleged misconduct of Dutchbat III. It is not clear whether there was a connection between this and the conflict between the Opstina and *Médecins Sans Frontières*, nor whether this matter was ever actually investigated.

Karremans wanted this investigation because there had been accusations in the press which also involved Dutchbat III, and he wished ‘to clear Dutchbat III’s reputation’; the investigation would show that the misconduct had been not so much in Dutchbat III but during the Dutchbat II period, in the Transport Battalion, the Signals Battalion and Support Command, i.e. not in Dutchbat II itself (see Chapter 9 of Part II).⁶³

The ultimate decision, in consultation with the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, was to follow the line laid down by the representatives of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, since this organization had the primary responsibility for medical aid to the local population while Dutchbat only played a supporting role.⁶⁴ This in its turn led to an accusation by the War President of the Opstina, Osman Suljic, and Mayor Fahrudin Salihovic that Dutchbat was doing nothing, and had failed to convince *MSF* of the need for cooperation. Karremans responded by demanding written apologies from the Opstina. He received a letter to this effect and the apologies were repeated in the course of a meeting, after which Dutchbat considered the incident to be closed.⁶⁵ Medical specialists from Dutchbat resumed their aid to the hospital on 12 June.⁶⁶

⁶² Confidential debriefing statement (2).

⁶³ Karremans, *Srebrenica, Who cares?* Appendix 9

⁶⁴ Draft reply to Parliament question No. 139. The reply is not included in TK, 1995-1996 session, 22 181, No. 134 and only partially in 22 181, No. 136. See IMG, No. 95/27/476. Intern memorandum SSOGD aan chef-staf Operationele Staf BLS (Internal memorandum SSOGD to Chief of Operational Staff CinC RNLA), 16/11/95, No. SCGD/16110/15024.

⁶⁵ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 24/06/98.

⁶⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 70, File 2.2.6. BH Command (Fwd) G5, Civil Military Operations to HQ UNPROFOR, ‘B-H Command Humanitarian Assistance Activities’, 14/06/95.

Chapter 4

The 'emergency stock'

Definitions

The concept of 'emergency stock' (a minimum stock of certain specified supplies maintained for use in emergencies) ceased to apply in formal terms within the Royal Netherlands Army. The rule that such supplies should not be used without the permission of the higher commander dates from the 1950s, and was rescinded long ago. However, the idea continued to lead a life of its own. For example, even Lieutenant Colonel Karremans believed that permission from a higher level of command was required before a battalion could break into its emergency stock.⁶⁷ However, he also believed that a battalion command was always empowered to define minimum stock levels and to regulate the way in which supplies were used. This notion was based on tradition, and not on formal regulations: commanding officers can order part of the supplies to be set aside, though such a practice is not laid down in the Armed Forces' logistic regulations.⁶⁸

The idea of emergency stock was mainly used in Srebrenica in connection with medical supplies.⁶⁹ Dutchbat also kept a minimum stock of diesel fuel, for use in emergencies, the operational implications of which are discussed in Chapter 4 of Part III of the main report. It was never the subject of later controversy, however, as the emergency medical supplies were.

Procedures

The logistic supply of UN units is a UN matter, but exceptions can be made to this rule by means of a Letter of Assist. This allows a unit to be supplied by another country, which is paid for these services, if the UN lacks the necessary experience or if the items to be supplied are only available from the country in question (e.g. spare parts for equipment made in the Netherlands). The UN has its own system for more general supplies such as food, fuel and medical requisites: the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff thus played hardly any role in the supply of medical goods. Dutch battalions normally ordered goods from Bosnia-Herzegovina Command via Dutch Support Command.

Unlike the Dutch logistic system, the UNPROFOR supply system did not have minimum, maximum and warning stock levels. The UN did not stipulate what stock levels should be maintained. Scrutiny of UN regulations from 1994 did not reveal anything about the maintenance of medical supplies, though the possibility exists that these regulations were not complete - the Netherlands was not included in the list of recipients. The regulations only specified what a battalion should take with it for the first 60 days of deployment.⁷⁰

The supply of medical articles was associated with many problems. Bosnian Serb blockades were only one of these; the use of UN supply channels was another frequent cause of difficulties. 'Resupply that depends on the UN is doomed to failure,' said the special staff officer for medical services in the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Wertheim. This led to much irritation,⁷¹ to which the inflexible UN bureaucracy, with its sometimes ambiguous policies and regulations, contributed. UNPROFOR procedures were cumbersome, complicated and time-consuming. Funds were sometimes found to be suddenly exhausted; when UNPROFOR could not

⁶⁷ Karremans, *Srebrenica: Who Cares?*, p. 185.

⁶⁸ Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff regulation VR 2-1387 (Guidelines for Medical Care) offers no basis for such a view.

⁶⁹ Interview R.A. Franken, 04/05/01.

⁷⁰ The regulations in question were the Medical Administrative and Technical Instructions (MATI). The Force Commanders Policy Directive (FCPD) does not concern medical supplies. The word 'minimum' does not occur in the list of definitions.

⁷¹ DOKL/BDI, Crst/1550. SSOGD (W.J. Wertheim) to head G4 Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 04/12/94, No. SSGD/121223/5784.

meet its financial obligations in this way supplies dried up and the Netherlands had to make extra contributions to ensure that Dutch units got their supplies. The procedure for requesting supplies under the UNPROFOR system took between five and eight weeks. In view of the long delays, requests were made from time to time from Srebrenica for the Netherlands to deliver goods that were in short supply. Dutchbat was used to a better supply system in the Netherlands, and the goods could usually reach the field of operations from the Netherlands within one to two weeks. In extreme emergencies, supplementary supplies were sent directly from the Netherlands; later, it became customary to permit goods to be ordered in the Netherlands when the supply time would otherwise be excessive, if it could be shown with reference to a UN order form that delivery via the UN was taking too long.

If a particular medicament prescribed by a doctor was required urgently, this was also sent from the Netherlands because supplementary supplies took too long to arrive via UN channels. Another factor was that the medicaments supplied by the UN were not always known to the Dutch physician, in which case he would sometimes order medicaments with which he was familiar from the Netherlands. In addition, 10% of the articles supplied by UNPROFOR did not meet Dutch quality standards; such articles also had to be obtained from the Netherlands. As a result of the combination of all these factors, the majority of the medicaments required by Dutch units came from the Netherlands. The Hague complied with practically all requests for medical supplies and goods for humanitarian aid for the local population, though neither the UN nor the Netherlands were completely happy with this arrangement – the former for reasons of protocol, and the latter for financial reasons.⁷² Since the Ministry of Defence paid for such shipments, requests for extra deliveries sometimes encountered resistance from the Logistics section of Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff.⁷³

Dutch inspections showed that supplies and consumption in the enclave were properly administered. What no one had a good overview of, however, were the amounts of supplies in the pipeline to Srebrenica. One undesirable aspect of medical stock formation that developed during Dutchbat's initial period was the build-up of supplies at too many different sites: doctors had their own individual stock, Dutchbat's Field Dressing Station had its stock and the dispensary kept a store of medical supplies. There was also a distribution point at Support Command. When this duplication of stock was recognized, the organization was streamlined: in particular, the distribution point for medical supplies was coupled with the UN depot in Zagreb.⁷⁴

UN bureaucracy in Zagreb was one of the very factors contributing to this undesirable situation. When Dutchbat put in an order, it never knew how much it would get, or when the goods would arrive. The amounts delivered sometimes differed from those ordered for budgetary reasons. It was known in Zagreb that a considerable proportion of the goods requested were intended for humanitarian aid; the UN administrators seem to have accepted this fact, but they were not happy about it.

The Bosnian Serbs did not accept this fact, however. They did not wish to permit the provision of humanitarian aid by UNPROFOR units, and used this as an argument to block transport of medical supplies for Dutchbat. Since the need for supplies for humanitarian aid to the local population was quantitatively much greater than that for Dutchbat's own troops, there was no way of disguising orders for medical supplies that were not intended for the battalion's internal consumption.⁷⁵

⁷² Interview E.G.M. van Otterloo, 15/02/99; see also Operationele Staf RNLA Sectie G-4. Intern Memorandum Directie Materieel Koninklijke Landmacht van Hstsie B&B aan BLS (Operational Staff Royal Netherlands Armed Forces Section G-4. Internal Memorandum Armed Forces Ordnance Directorate, from Hstsie B&B to BLS), DOKL, SC-O, SC B&B, 27/02/95, unnumbered.

⁷³ Communication from B.C. van de Borgh, 22/02/99. CRST. Memo from Wertheim to Brig. Gen. Nicolai, 18/12/95.

⁷⁴ Interview E.G.M. van Otterloo, 15/02/99.

⁷⁵ CRST/2366. Officer seconded to General Medical Policy section (W.J. Wertheim) to DOKL/SC-O), 11/05/95, No. SCGD/13910/5414.

Supplies of blood were a separate issue. This required special attention, since the supply of blood was a national responsibility. The UN did not arrange this, and did not pay for it either.⁷⁶ While deep-frozen blood could be stored for a long time, ready-to-use blood always had to be available for operations. This meant that fresh supplies of deep-frozen blood were needed once every ten weeks on average.⁷⁷

Procedures and practice

The generous approach to humanitarian aid adopted by the Netherlands was a thorn in the flesh for the UN bureaucrats. UNPROFOR's Medical Logistic Officer spoke of 'excessive quantities requested'. Dutchbat was not very good at sticking to the UN catalogue of medical goods in its requests for new supplies, but it was in particular the 'enormous quantities of medical supplies' it requested that caused all Dutch orders to be examined under a magnifying glass. Requests for large amounts of supplies by Dutchbat had to be approved by senior staff. It had been noticed that Dutchbat often requested twice the normal amounts, sometimes even three times, and that was against the rules. The UN therefore wanted the amounts requested to be related to the number of UNPROFOR personnel requiring treatment: Dutchbat was explicitly informed that medical supplies provided by UNPROFOR were only to be used for UN personnel, and not for the treatment of refugees or for training purposes.⁷⁸ This edict did not cause Dutchbat to think again or change its ways, however.

Two senior Dutch medical officers, Colonel E.G. van Ankum and Lieutenant Colonel Wertheim, visited Srebrenica in January 1995 to study the procedure for maintaining medical supplies. The doctors working with Dutchbat had stated that they were not getting enough medical supplies to do their work properly, because of the cumbersome procedure for requesting new supplies, the limited range of supplies available from the UN and the fact that some medicaments the Dutch doctors were accustomed to using were not available at all via the UN, as well as the limitations on supply from the Netherlands. Both visitors observed that the procedure for ordering new supplies was in essence quite simple. Contingents requested supplies from UNPROFOR's Medical Provision Point (MPP). If they were not available from stock, the MPP ordered them. If the supplies requested had not been delivered within ten days, the contingent could order them in its country of origin and the UN would meet the costs. The failure of this system to work well in practice was due to poor management and administrative shortcomings at the MPP. The MPP used its own product numbers, while the Netherlands worked with NATO stock numbers; a separate administrative procedure was thus needed to process the requests. It sometimes took six months to obtain medicaments that had been requested. Moreover, all payments had been stopped due to the UN's disastrous financial situation. Any budgetary resources still available were used by the UN to guarantee supplies for 'poorer' UN contingents.

However, deliveries from the Netherlands were also subject to delays: when medical supplies were requested, the batch was only sent off when it was complete. The Commander of the Field Dressing Station in the enclave, Captain Sweens, recognized that supplies were too limited. He initiated a campaign aimed at tracing containers which should have contained stock destined for Dutchbat I during the initial stages of its deployment, but which never reached the enclave; this search was without results, however. Sweens conceded that blockades had not been the only factor adversely influencing stock levels and that the battalion had also been at fault in certain respects: the users of medical supplies were not well disciplined when it came to ordering new supplies; they often waited too long before submitting their requests and did not always follow the correct procedures.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 54, File 4.2.1.1. Annex D to FCPD 20 Medical, Revised 23/10/94, Amendment No. 1.

⁷⁷ BLS/OPS/CRST. Deputy Commander Armed Forces Medical Command (KTZAR G.J. Boer) to DOKL, 23/02/94, No. 10703/10274.

⁷⁸ IMG. UNPROFOR MEDLOGO to M.L. Vervelde, MedCoy Dutchbat, 05/12/94.

⁷⁹ IMG. Report of working visit to UNPROFOR January 1995, submitted as annex to Internal memorandum SSOGD to SCGD and Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 06/02/95, No. SCGD/12674/706.

In the judgement of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, humanitarian aid still had a low priority when Dutchbat I was sent to Bosnia, but grew steadily in importance during the duty periods of Dutchbat I and Dutchbat II. Moreover, the Minister of Defence had stated that he regarded the provision of humanitarian aid by Dutchbat as important. Even after the changing situation caused by the ceasefire at the end of 1994, international opinion continued to stress that guaranteeing humanitarian aid could be regarded as UNPROFOR's primary function. This was even truer at a local level. The Royal Netherlands Army believed that the Netherlands should find its own ways of supporting humanitarian aid, and should bear the costs of these measures itself.⁸⁰

An estimated 90% of all medical consumables were used in the treatment of the local population, and the remainder in the treatment of Dutchbat's own personnel.⁸¹ On arrival in the enclave, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans regarded the stopping of support to the local population, or a reduction in this support, as a serious threat to his mission. He believed, moreover, that it would damage the good relations with the local administration and population that had been built up with such great care and effort. He urged the maintenance of medical aid at its existing level.⁸²

The Netherlands Armed Forces had no guidelines for the provision of aid to third parties.⁸³ It was UNPROFOR policy that, except in emergencies, the provision of medical aid was a matter for non-governmental organizations and not for the military. The comment by General Rupert Smith when he took up his position as Commander of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command that humanitarian aid would become one of the troops' main objectives thus merely sowed confusion, since he had no say in logistic matters. When Minister of Defence Voorhoeve visited the enclave, he also welcomed the provision of medical aid to the population of Srebrenica: since the capacity of the Field Dressing Station was only partially used for the treatment of Dutchbat's own personnel, he saw aid to the local population as a useful way of maintaining the medical staff's skills at the proper level.

The Royal Netherlands Army wanted an unambiguous decision as to whether the provision of medical aid to the local population was or was not permissible: the aid given to the local population had made big inroads into the medical supplies, and after 1 January 1995 Dutchbat could no longer charge the UN for the costs of providing the local population with these supplies – which amounted to NLG 94,000 (about \square 42,500) per month. While the previous estimate had been that 90% of the consumption of medicaments and dressing materials had been for the purposes of humanitarian aid, this estimate subsequently rose, possibly to a figure as high as 98%.

Another cause for concern in the Netherlands was that the Bosnian Serbs were very well informed about Dutch activities in this field. This could be concluded from the refusal to grant permission for the supply of medical requisites. In this way, the Bosnian Serbs could regulate or block the provision of aid to the local population. At a given moment in February 1995, 30 pallet-loads of medical supplies were waiting for dispatch; this reinforced Dutch fears that a complete blockade, which might cover other categories of goods too, might be imminent.⁸⁴ These 30 pallets were in fact never dispatched, and Karremans asked the Commander of Sector North East to arrange for airdrops⁸⁵ if stock levels did not improve.

No supplies at all had been received since 5 February. Dutchbat had started using its back-up stock, and was also making use of medicaments that were past their use-by date; there were only

⁸⁰ SSOGD, No. 12637/5414. Internal memorandum RNLA Crisis Staff from Col C.L. Brantz to C-RNLA Crisis Staff, DOKL and BLS, 26/01/95, No. CRST/1637.

⁸¹ IMG. Report of working visit to UNPROFOR January 1995, submitted as annex to Internal memorandum SSOGD to SCGD and RNLA Crisis Staff, 06/02/95, No. SCGD/12674/706.

⁸² SSOGD, No. 12637/5414. C 1 (NL) VN Infbat to C-RNLA Crisis Staff, 22/01/95, unnumbered, annex to Internal memorandum RNLA Crisis Staff, 26/01/95, No. CRST/1637.

⁸³ TK, session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 136, p. 4.

⁸⁴ Operational staff BLS, Section G-4. Internal Memorandum DMKL from G4-Exec to BLS, C-RNLA CSOB, SC-B7B, Hfd Bur Oplog, 15/02/95, unnumbered.

⁸⁵ The Bosnian Vice President Ejub Ganic had already requested the dropping of medical supplies for the local population in November 1994. (CRST, Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 02/11/94, No. Z-1647).

enough supplies for the treatment of one single intensive-care patient; all the fresh blood had been used up, and there was only enough deep-frozen blood left for two patients, and while blood donation equipment was available, there were no means of testing it; there was only enough film left for 25 X-rays; there were no means of stopping an epidemic of diarrhoea if one should break out, and there was a shortage of dressing material and spare parts for medical equipment. All these supplies had been ordered, and were standing in Zagreb and Lukavac ready for dispatch.⁸⁶

Dutchbat had already sent a report to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo about the 'critical state' of the medical supplies in March 1995, and Commanding Officer Karremans had expressed his concern about stock levels to The Hague; as a result, these problems were brought to the attention of Minister of Defence Voorhoeve in March 1995.

The roots of such problems lay however in the conduct of Dutchbat I who, with the permission of the previous Minister of Defence Ter Beek, had started providing the local population with medical aid. This had been done at the expense of the medical supplies that Dutchbat I had brought with them for the treatment of the Dutch troops, and it now appeared that UN regulations did not permit the supplementation of supplies that had been used for humanitarian aid: as mentioned above, UNPROFOR stated that humanitarian medical aid was a matter for non-governmental organizations. In view of UNPROFOR's need to maintain an impartial stance, it was however unlikely that it would ever give formal permission for the provision of medical aid to civilians in the enclave.

The dilemma faced by The Hague was that a *de facto* situation had arisen in which the population of the enclave had become used to receiving medical aid from Dutchbat. Stopping this aid would not be good for the credibility and acceptance of Dutchbat, and could even lead to disruption of the medical care in the enclave. Chief of Defence Staff, General H.G.B. van den Breemen and Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Lieutenant General H.A. Couzy therefore adopted the standpoint that the aid had to be continued, on condition that the aid to civilians should be without prejudice to the primary responsibility, which was the medical care of Dutchbat personnel.⁸⁷ However, it is not clear whether Dutchbat was ever informed of this condition.

Van den Breemen and the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, Brigadier General F.J.A. Pollé, promised during a visit to the enclave in April 1995 that new supplies to be used for humanitarian aid would be sent.⁸⁸ At the same time, the Defence Staff tried to find a way out of the impasse as regards stock levels by investigating whether the flow of medical supplies to the enclave could be divided into two streams: a UNPROFOR supply channel for Dutchbat and a separate supply channel for the local population run by UNHCR, which would then have to assume responsibility for the medical aid in the enclave. The Defence Staff appears not to have been doing its homework properly, however: the memo did not mention the medical activities of *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Srebrenica, or the fact that UNHCR was already taking care of supplies for the population in general.

The memo went on to say that if UNHCR lacked the funds for these medical supplies, then 'official channels in International Development Cooperation' would not be averse to making a contribution. The Defence Staff added, in a somewhat patronizing tone, that such a contribution would be earmarked for medicaments and dressing materials intended for the population of Srebrenica; in this way, UNHCR would not have the option of determining the destination of these medical supplies itself.

The Defence Staff was, by the way, well aware that such a construction was dependent upon Bosnian Serb consent; if this was not given, the only alternative was to supply the goods in question by air. Even this route depended on Bosnian Serb consent, however, according to the Defence Staff; that this was indeed the case in practice is explained in the appendix 'Resupply by air'.

⁸⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 215, File BH-C 7-14/03/95. Medical Sitrep Srebrenica, date illegible.

⁸⁷ DCBC, 2052. Memo PCDS (LtGen Schouten) to the minister and the junior minister, 08/03/95, No. S95/061/1014.

⁸⁸ DJZ. IMG (H.J.M. Groenhout) to the minister and the junior minister, 15/12/95, No. 95/27/515.

The only way the Defence Staff thought these solutions could be put into practice was by approaches made via representatives of the Netherlands at various levels: the Chief of Staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Nicolai; the military advisor of the Dutch Permanent Representative to the UN; the Dutch UNHCR liaison officer in Zagreb; it was even suggested that the VRS might be approached with respect to this matter. The Emergency Aid Bureau of the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation was also informed of these ideas.⁸⁹

An approach was indeed made at the very highest level: Yasushi Akashi, the special representative of the Secretary-General of the UN, wrote a letter to Radovan Karadzic, the President of the *Republika Srpska*, about the serious nature of the lack of medical supplies in the eastern enclaves. He pointed out that permission for the transport of new supplies had been constantly refused since November 1994, while most medical convoys had been blocked since 19 January 1995. He went on to draw Karadzic's attention to Security Council Resolution 771 from 1992, according to which all parties were obliged to honour the terms of the Geneva Convention. Akashi urged Karadzic most strongly to draw up instructions to permit resumption of the transport of medical supplies; if this was not done, he would feel obliged to put the matter before the Security Council.⁹⁰

On 10 April 1995 the transport of medical supplies was resumed, greatly improving the situation as regards the stock of these goods. There were hardly any more shortages at that moment; indeed, supplies of some articles were actually much too high.⁹¹ All worries about the level of medical supplies were completely resolved. In a reply to questions in Parliament, Minister of Defence Voorhoeve stated that the supplies were once again sufficient to permit medical care both for civilians and for the Dutch soldiers. Medical aid to the local population was indeed resumed at full capacity, with an average of two operations per day.

According to Voorhoeve, the low levels of supplies in January and February had only led to a temporary reduction of the support for the local population. He ascribed this to a change in the position adopted by UNPROFOR, which no longer wished to bear the responsibility for the financing and transport of medical supplies. Voorhoeve stated further that humanitarian aid to the local population was not strictly speaking part of Dutchbat's mandate: according to the Minister, UNHCR was the organization responsible for this.⁹²

In practice, therefore, Dutchbat III took care of keeping the medical supplies needed for the population of the enclave at the right level and also took care of transport of the supplies needed for this purpose, while the Ministry of Defence paid the bill. However, the supply of medicaments and dressing material remained difficult, and not all batches that had been requested actually arrived.

Building up the emergency stock

From 10 April 1995, the supplies were again sufficient for the battalion's own estimated consumption for about 30 days, in line with the prevailing norm. Dutchbat III determined at that time that the warning level at which new supplies should be requested should be set at the size of the 'crash stock' required for the treatment of 30 patients with wounds caused by a single calamity, while supplies for seven days' consumption should be maintained at all medical posts (such as the Field Dressing Station and Dutchbat's various first aid posts).⁹³ The Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff had wanted to go

⁸⁹ DS, S95/061/1014. Memo PCDS (Schouten) to the minister and the junior minister, 08/03/95.

⁹⁰ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 1-2-2, 95 Jan-Dec. Code Cable Annan to Gharekhan, 04/03/95, No. Z-359 and Letter Akashi to Karadzic, 04/03/95.

⁹¹ CRST/2366. Officier toegevoegd Sectie Algemeen Medisch Beleid (W.J. Wertheim) (Officer seconded to General Medical Policy section (W.J. Wertheim))have to DOKL/SC-O, 11/05/95, No. SCGD/13910/5414.

⁹² Minister of Defence, also on behalf of the Minister of Development Cooperation, to the Speaker of Parliament, 27/04/95, No. D005/95/8514. See also TK, session 1994-1995, Appendix, p. 1523-24. The questions in Parliament to which this statement was a response dated from 7 April 1995, when the situation was even worse.

⁹³ CRST. Deputy C-1 (NL) UN Infbat APC (R.A. Franken) to Commander RNLA Crisis Staff, 101451B April 95, UN Secret.

further by setting aside enough supplies for three months' treatment of Dutchbat's own troops, which should not be used for the purposes of humanitarian aid.⁹⁴

Dutchbat II had already started taking steps to build up emergency medical supplies at the end of 1994. At that time, surgeon K. Snabel and anaesthetist F. Kamerling reported that supplies were much too low, in particular for humanitarian aid to the local population; even the care of Dutchbat's own soldiers was at risk. Dutchbat II had therefore also set aside emergency stock for operations on the battalion's own personnel. Maintaining these supplies already gave rise to problems at this time, however, because of the unreliability of the supply channels.⁹⁵ The emergency stock at that time was calculated to be sufficient for operations on 20 wounded patients and their care for five days. These figures were based on the workload the operating-theatre team could handle and on the capacity of the nursing ward.⁹⁶

During the Dutchbat III period, the surgical team (KHO-5) also initially set aside stock of 20 operation packets, to permit operations on Dutchbat personnel in emergencies. By April 1995, however, it came to be realized that the high frequency of operations was making a considerable dent in these supplies again. The surgeon, Colonel Kremer, therefore decided, partly on advice of the pharmacist Captain L.A.J. Chin,⁹⁷ that the stock should be extended to comprise 30 operation packets. This figure was arrived at with the aid of a guideline from the staff manual, which stated that an estimated 8% of the battalion's troops might be expected to be wounded in the case of armed combat. Even at that time, however, not all the emergency supplies required were actually present: there was not enough dopamine, intravenous antibiotics and material for intensive-care treatment. There was enough material for amputations, however. It was assumed in this context that the wounded could be transferred to the American UN hospital in Zagreb after stabilization.⁹⁸

The Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff used the data provided by Dutchbat to determine stock levels that could be used as a basis for decisions about forced transport of supplies or even evacuation of Dutchbat from Srebrenica. The Crisis Staff defined two logistic levels for answering these questions: the warning level, at which UNPROFOR would still have seven days to take measures to replenish stock, and the safety level, at which it could be decided either to continue the mission for a short period (about seven days) in a restricted form or to evacuate the unit. The warning level for medical supplies was set at enough material for 14 days' consumption, and the safety level at seven days.⁹⁹

There are no indications that Dutchbat consulted the Crisis Staff about minimum stock levels during the period after April 1995. The term 'emergency stock' (*ijzere voorraad*) does not occur in the memoranda and letters exchanged during this period; the Crisis Staff's logistics officers were not even aware that Dutchbat was maintaining emergency medical supplies. There was, however, regular consultation about which supplies could be sent with which convoy, assuming that the convoy in question could reach Srebrenica.¹⁰⁰ Major Franken, Dutchbat's Deputy Commander, took a different view of the matter. In fact, he believed that Lieutenant Colonel Wertheim, the staff officer in charge of medical services at the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, had given an order that a stock of medical supplies should be set aside in order to guarantee medical aid to Dutch soldiers, and that this stock should be maintained at a certain level. Franken also believed that the Crisis Staff was consulted on this matter during the VRS attack in July, and that it was stated that medical treatment of the Dutch soldiers

⁹⁴ CRST/2366. Officer seconded to General Medical Policy section (W.J. Wertheim) to DOKL/SC-O, 11/05/95, No. SCGD/13910/5414.

⁹⁵ Interview W.J. Wertheim, 14/02/00.

⁹⁶ Operational Staff RNLA Section G-4. Report by Head of dispensary CMH (M.L. Vervelde) to SCGD/PB, undated and unnumbered, sent as annex to Internal Memorandum DMKL, 09/01/95, No. 5113/31.

⁹⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (25).

⁹⁸ DJZ. IMG (Air Cdre MD H.J.M. Groenhout) to the minister and the junior minister, 15/12/95, No. 95/27/515.

⁹⁹ Operational Staff RNLA, section 4. E.G.M. van Otterloo to BLS, DOKL, SC-O and deputy CS KLC SOB, 19/04/95, No. 6002/31.

¹⁰⁰ Statement E.G.M. van Otterloo, 15/02/99.

should be given priority. According to Franken, the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff had informed Dutchbat that it was not allowed to use the minimum supplies for any other purpose.¹⁰¹

Composition of the emergency stock

The Statement of Facts (*Feitenrelaas*) produced on the basis of the debriefing of Dutchbat in Assen in October 1995 does not provide an answer to the question as to the precise contents of the emergency stock. A number of conflicting statements were made in this connection. It should be realized that the internal communication was not optimum at the time, and that various statements contained in the Statement of Facts were based on hearsay.

Several Dutchbat soldiers stated that the minimum stock level was set at the supplies needed for 30 patients requiring nursing and 15 requiring intensive care. They did not know who had decided on this level. Others stated that, as mentioned above, the number 30 was taken from a scenario that had been drawn up¹⁰² within the Field Dressing Station. Thus, it referred to a calculated numbers of patients rather than to a stock of medical supplies that was set aside.

A stock inventory was performed on 7 July 1995, after which the Battalion Staff decided that operations should henceforth only be performed on wounded UN soldiers. There was a shortage of materials for X-rays and for anaesthesia. Six members of Dutchbat personnel stated that a minimum level was decided on in consultation with the Field Dressing Station staff. According to them, support for non-UN personnel would automatically be stopped as soon as this minimum level was reached. As far as they knew, the leadership of the battalion had never been involved in determining the minimum stock level or in deciding under what circumstances the medical staff should start using these supplies and had not known the precise details of the actual course of events.¹⁰³ This testimony conflicts with a statement by Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, the Commanding Officer of Dutchbat III, who said that the 'emergency stock' levels were determined by the leadership of the battalion themselves in order to ensure that medical treatment would be available for the battalion's own soldiers in the case of a calamity.¹⁰⁴ As mentioned above, Major Franken also stated that he knew about this decision.

During the period of the attack, a conflict about the emergency stock arose between the two surgical teams (KHO-5 and KHO-6). The question at issue was whether it was a good idea to maintain such supplies. Roughly speaking, KHO-5 thought it was not while KHO-6 thought it was. This discussion took place mainly after the first few days of the VRS attack, when it became apparent that not many Dutch soldiers had been wounded. In the days before that, it had been feared that an appreciable number of Dutch casualties could occur: the explosions in the enclave and near OPs in the first few days of the VRS attack had increased the risk of serious casualties. If a large number of soldiers had been wounded, the shortage of medical supplies would have made proper medical treatment impossible.

It may be noted that the view that the 'emergency stock' of medical supplies should be reserved for the treatment of UN personnel was not only held by the surgeon Naval Captain H.G.J. Hegge at whom much of the subsequent criticism was directed (this criticism will be dealt with later on in this appendix); the Commander of the Field Dressing Station, Captain R. van Hoogwaarden, and staff nurse Major R.E. Ros joined with him in drafting a memorandum to Dutchbat's Commanding Officer on 10 July about the operational status of the Field Dressing Station, in which they adopted this standpoint.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Interview R.A. Franken, 04/05/01.

¹⁰² NIOD, Coll. Schouten. The plan was formulated by KTZAR Schouten and issued by the Commander of the Field Dressing Station, R.E.L. Sweens. This scenario was formulated for a calamity, i.e. more than four wounded presented for treatment at the same time. The scenario spoke of medical supplies for 30 wounded patients.

¹⁰³ SMG, Debriefing. *Feitenrelaas*, § 4.1.6.

¹⁰⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (20).

¹⁰⁵ SMG, Debriefing. Internal memorandum 'Operationele status verbandplaatspeloton Dutchbat 3' (Operational status dressing station platoon Dutchbat 3), Hegge, Ros, Van Hoogwaarden to C-Dutchbat 3, IGDKL and Wertheim, 10/07/95.

This memorandum was also addressed to the inspector of Medical Services of the Royal Netherlands Army and the Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Wertheim. Despite a request to this effect from Hegge, however, the Commander of the Field Dressing Station never sent this memo off,¹⁰⁶ though Hegge did inform the leadership of the battalion verbally about the conclusions. In this way, The Hague was deprived of information which would later prove to be crucial. The contents of this memorandum will be given in detail here, in view of the fact that they are not generally known and because other descriptions of the shortcomings of the operational situation at the time are often less complete.

The memorandum stated that as a result of consumption in the past, and also because many of the supplies were past their 'use by' date, the medical supplies available for use were reduced 'to a negligible amount'. Routine narcosis could be performed, but it was hardly possible to treat complications like arrhythmia and anaphylaxis. Surgical masks were in short supply and could no longer be used for operations on non-Dutch patients. Respirator capacity was limited: only two respirators were available, one of which was really only intended for emergency use. Most oxygen cylinders were more than three-quarters empty. The necks of tracheostomy tubes were porous, and most of them were past their use-by date. There was only enough material to stabilize patients for 48 hours, and only enough developer for 50 X-ray photographs. The laboratory had limited facilities for blood-gas analysis, while glucose tests could no longer be performed at all. The supplies of plasma substitutes and glucose solutions were also exhausted. There were 54 bags of O+ deep-frozen blood, and 12 bags of O-. This deep-frozen blood could not be used in the case of a bunker alarm; direct transfusion would have to be used in this eventuality, and there were only 40 blood-donor sets available for this purpose. Supplies of intravenous antibiotics were also limited. There were 29 ampoules of metronidazole (an anti-infection agent), and enough zinacef (an antibiotic) for five patients. The supplies of oral painkillers were practically exhausted.

In conclusion, the memorandum stated that the Field Dressing Station was unable to perform its duties in an adequate manner. Dutchbat personnel could be treated, as long as the casualty rate remained limited, and this should be the first priority. Medical supplies were being reserved for this purpose, as far as possible. The provision of humanitarian aid would however have to be kept to the minimum, and the available medical supplies should only be used selectively, and to a very limited extent, for this purpose.¹⁰⁷

The Field Dressing Station treated a Bosnian woman for seven weeks in the months of April and May 1995. She had been admitted with serious infection after a self-administered abortion. The consumption of medical supplies required for her heavy demands on the stock.¹⁰⁸ The attempts to keep the woman alive were recounted with appropriate professional pride in *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam* (an account of the Dutchbat III peacekeeping activities in Bosnia, the title of which may be freely translated 'Dutchbat, for goodness sake'). Since the hospital staff were unacquainted with this type of case and *Médecins Sans Frontières* had almost run out of medical supplies, an appeal was made to the know-how of Dutchbat's surgical team.

The hospital had asked Dutchbat for a second opinion on 5 April, after which the patient was transferred to the compound in Potocari, where she was stabilized and prepared for transport to Sarajevo. Although permission had already been granted for this transport, the Bosnian Serbs at Zvornik refused passage to the unit from the Norwegian medical detachment in Tuzla which was to fetch the woman. Since the woman would die if she was not given medical treatment, Dutchbat decided to continue to look after her. An entire team was needed for her intensive care; which meant that the programme of humanitarian operations had to be completely stopped. Her condition (sepsis and Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome) would normally have been treated in a university hospital,

¹⁰⁶ TK, session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 136, p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ SMG, Debrief. Intern memorandum 'Operationele status verbandplaatspeloton Dutchbat 3', Hegge, Ros, Van Hoogwaarden to C-Dutchbat 3, IGDKL and Wertheim, 10/07/95.

¹⁰⁸ Report by the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 27-28.

and even there the chances of survival would have been low. The materials required for her treatment had been in short supply to start with and were soon exhausted; the medicaments she needed then had to be smuggled in by convoys of Dutchbat personnel returning from leave, oxygen had to be made from atmospheric air, and her nutrition had to be improvised. After six weeks' treatment, however, the woman died of an intestinal infection which had affected many people in the compound from time to time.¹⁰⁹

One of the things that had to be smuggled into the enclave for the woman's treatment was a particular type of muscle relaxant. The Norwegians in Tuzla did not have it in stock, and so would not have been able to supply it even if they had been allowed access to the enclave. Naval Captain Schouten then contacted the American hospital in Zagreb. The Americans had limited supplies of this muscle relaxant, but stated that they were only prepared to provide it if it was required for Dutchbat and not for the general population. Schouten had replied that he needed it for a member of Dutchbat personnel, but still used it for the woman.¹¹⁰

Since the woman's general health, and her prognosis after curettage, were good, intensive care was continued. However, as mentioned above, her care up to the time of her death made great demands on the medical supplies: dopamine and intravenous antibiotics were completely used up, as were the drip feed supplies, though the pharmacist managed to make up a replacement mixture from tinned protifar, obtained by making an appeal to all bodybuilders in Dutchbat, and peanut butter.¹¹¹

As a result of the shortage of medical supplies caused by the woman's treatment, the members of KHO-6 (Major Ros, Captain Van Hoogwaarden and Naval Captain Hegge) agreed not to treat any more civilians if this would necessitate breaking into the emergency stock. According to Major Ros, all the medical staff were aware of this agreement.¹¹²

Major Franken was cognizant of the data compiled by Ros, Van Hoogwaarden and Hegge.¹¹³ The priority for medical treatment was determined in consultation with Major Franken, UN personnel being given first priority and the local population second priority.¹¹⁴ The standpoint that the treatment of Dutchbat's own personnel should come first was not regarded as a matter for discussion at the time.¹¹⁵ For this reason, Major Franken said that he was surprised later about the way people subsequently judged Hegge, how he was accused by others and had to justify his actions, while Hegge had been informed when he took up his duty of the boundary condition that the 'emergency stock' must be regarded as inviolable.¹¹⁶ This point will receive further attention later on in this appendix; the dilemma of whether or not to help civilians came under the spotlight again after commotion arose in connection with the case of a wounded Muslim woman who was refused treatment on 10 May after she had been brought to the compound in Potocari.

In order not to interrupt the chronology of the events, however, consideration will now first be paid to the provision of humanitarian aid to the local population by *Médecins Sans Frontières* and Dutchbat after the Bosnian Serbs started attacking Srebrenica.

¹⁰⁹ *Dutchbat in vredesnaam*, p. 75-79.

¹¹⁰ Interview A.A. Schouten, 21/02/00.

¹¹¹ Report by the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 22-23.

¹¹² Confidential debriefing statement (6).

¹¹³ Debriefing statement H.G.J. Hegge, 21/09/95.

¹¹⁴ Debriefing statement J.P.M. Tops, 18/09/95.

¹¹⁵ Debriefing statement H.G.J. Hegge, 21/09/95.

¹¹⁶ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

Chapter 5

Humanitarian aid in the period from 6 to 13 July 1995

The book *Srebrenica: Getuigen van een massamoord* (Srebrenica: Witnesses of a Massacre) published by Bob van Laerhoven contains, among many others, the story told by Christina Schmitz, the coordinator of the *Médecins Sans Frontières* team in Srebrenica. This organization played a major role in the provision of medical aid to the population before and during the fall of the town. Schmitz's account offers an insight into the local conditions and the medical aid activities during this period; extracts from her story are used to preface the following day-by-day accounts of the events during the fall of Srebrenica and to throw light on certain key aspects. The picture is one of confusion and much improvisation, but also of the problems that arose between *Médecins Sans Frontières* and Dutchbat concerning the transfer of patients from *MSF* to the latter.

The account presented by Van Laerhoven is supplemented here by information from other sources, in particular telex messages sent from the enclave by *MSF*, statements made by members of Dutchbat during debriefing and interviews with Bosnians who were involved in the events described. Dutchbat and UNMO reports offer little assistance in building up a picture of the humanitarian aid provided during the hostilities.

Chapter 6

6–12 July 1995

The attack proper starts on 6 July. Six rockets fall on the UN base shortly after midnight, two of them explode. The southern part of the enclave, in particular the village of Slapovic, comes under heavy fire between 4.30 and 7.30 am. We go to alarm phase red, and will remain in this condition till the 12th. The Muslim authorities will only react in response to a ground attack. (...) There is no ground attack during the following days, but the bombardment becomes heavier and heavier. It is becoming very dangerous to pick up the wounded from the streets without an APC. The local doctors are doing splendid work. Our radio has broken down, but the Muslim authorities refuse to give the local technician permission to repair it. (...) Since our medical supplies are limited, we have to ask Dutchbat if they will take over a couple of patients from us. They refuse. The local surgeon, who has been trained by *Médecins Sans Frontières*, is completely overloaded. He is at the end of his tether. We urgently need help from outside, but under the circumstances an international surgeon will doubtless be refused permission to enter the enclave. (...) We hear that four tanks penetrate the outer suburbs and cold-bloodedly fire into the overcrowded streets. And yet we still see people outside on the streets, even playing children. It is incredible how apathetic the years of isolation have made these people.¹¹⁷

Dutchbat had hardly anything to do with medical matters concerning the local population at the start of the attack on Srebrenica on 6 July 1995. Like all other personnel, the Field Dressing Station staff went to the shelters. There were few reports of victims at this stage; Dutchbat's liaison team merely reported that a rocket hit near the 'Belgian container village' had seriously wounded a girl and that one person had been killed.

When the report arrived that a wounded non-combatant had to be picked up, a discussion arose between Major Franken and the Commander of Dutchbat's Medical Platoon, Captain De Bruijn. Franken wanted the wounded Muslim to be taken to the hospital. However, reports of shells falling in the neighbourhood could be heard on the radio. De Bruijn therefore determined that the wounded person should be brought to the compound, especially because the victim was less than a kilometre from there in the first place.¹¹⁸

As soon as the shelling started, the KHO-6 team (which had only recently arrived) started making preparations to receive any Dutch soldiers who might be wounded.¹¹⁹ The transfer of tasks from KHO-5 to KHO-6 had already taken place, and had gone fairly smoothly.¹²⁰

The medical staff at the hospital had their hands full that day. They panicked when the attack started, and tried to improvise ways of regaining control of the situation. The hospital employees panicked too, and some members of staff did not turn up for work. Those who did show up, worked 24 hours, grabbed a little rest and then worked another 24 hours. The physician Ilijaz Pilav and the others operated 24 hours at a stretch. As a result of this hectic work tempo and the shortage of

¹¹⁷ Van Laerhoven, *Srebrenica*, p. 135-140.

¹¹⁸ Confidential debriefing statement (6).

¹¹⁹ Confidential debriefing statement (22).

¹²⁰ Report by the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 17.

personnel, hygiene in the hospital started to fall to deplorable levels: the floor was covered with blood, and wounded patients were left lying on the ground. The amputations were a terrible sight. Pilav and hospital director Avdo Hasanovic asked *MSF* to make their physician available. *MSF* was working in the basement of the health centre and had a shelter there, where some basic supplies had previously been laid up and which was in telex contact with Belgrade and Dutchbat.¹²¹

According to Pilav, the cooperation between himself and Dutchbat's surgical team had always been good, but this stopped at the moment when the Bosnian Serb attack began. The previous relationship changed in many ways from that moment. Pilav heard via the Opstina that Dutchbat could no longer help, for example by providing medical supplies for the hospital's use or by treating civilians on Dutchbat premises. Secondment of Dutchbat personnel for (part-time) assistance in the hospital was also excluded. This seemed to mean an abrupt end to the previous cooperation in the medical field – just when, according to Pilav, it was needed more than ever before.¹²²

After the start of the attack, *MSF* faxed requests for treatment of a number of patients to Dutchbat from the hospital in Srebrenica. One request sent to Naval Captain Hegge on 6 July concerned a woman with severe abdominal and thoracic wounds. The hospital did not have the capacity needed for her treatment. Hegge concluded, after consultation with the anaesthetists of KHO-5 and KHO-6, the Commander of the Field Dressing Station and the Battalion Staff, that there would be no point in treating this patient. On the basis of the description of her condition, it was concluded that her case was hopeless, and the request for Dutchbat to take over her treatment was turned down.¹²³ The Dutch Parliament was subsequently told that medical treatment would not have been able to save her life.¹²⁴

The telegrams exchanged between Dutchbat and *Médecins Sans Frontières* concerning this case show another side of the picture. In fact, Hegge replied that the patient could not be treated because of a shortage of intensive care capacity and material.¹²⁵ His reply did *not* refer to the patient's condition. Conversely, the fax sent by *MSF* did not refer to an offer by *MSF* to supply Dutchbat with medicaments, which were available in adequate amounts in the hospital. In any case, the questions concerning this patient had nothing to do with the subsequent controversy about the refusal to treat a woman brought to the compound on 10 July with similar wounds and wounds to her legs.

Six wounded patients died on 6 July. While Pilav could not say with any certainty whether they would have survived if a medical team from Dutchbat had supplemented the medical staff at the hospital, he did state that the treatment of these patients had been a 'terrible experience' for him and had left him 'totally shocked'. He had to make life-and-death decisions by choosing whom he would treat first. It remained incomprehensible to him that Dutchbat had flatly refused to provide medical assistance in such a situation. It was not a question of medical supplies, as he had sufficient supplies himself, but only of extra manpower, while Dutchbat medical staff were sitting in the bunker doing nothing.¹²⁶ *MSF* interpreter Emira Selimovic confirmed that the organization did not need medical supplies, of which they had enough, but the assistance of a surgeon. She regarded medical assistance at that time as primarily an ethical question. Women and children were bleeding to death in the corridors of the hospital or needed amputation. Unlike Pilav, Selimovic believed that more people might have been saved if more medical manpower had been available. As it was, patients had to be left in the corridor to die.¹²⁷

¹²¹ Interview Abdulah Purkovic, 21/05/99.

¹²² Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

¹²³ Report by the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 26.

¹²⁴ TK, session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 136, p. 9.

¹²⁵ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Capsat OPS Dutchbat to *MSF* Srebrenica, 06/07/95 20.49 hours. This was a reply to a message received at 20.17 hours. *MSF* to Dutch Ministry of Defence, 27/11/95, unnumbered.

¹²⁶ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

¹²⁷ Interview Emira Selimovic, 17/11/98.

7 July 1995

The situation in the enclave stabilized somewhat on 7 July. Apart from 30 shots fired over the compound at Potocari, intimidatory shelling of OP-M and OP-F and mortar fire directed at Srebrenica, Dutchbat had little to report about the situation of the civilian population.¹²⁸ A 14-year-old boy with a shrapnel wound in his upper leg was transferred to Potocari by APC after consultation with *MSF*.¹²⁹ Karremans mentions in his book *Srebrenica: Who Cares?* that in a talk with Dutchbat's liaison section on this day, Opstina War President Osman Suljic requested support for *MSF* in the hospital, in connection with an increase in the number of wounded to be treated.¹³⁰ Karremans does not mention, however, that Dutchbat's response was in the negative. It may be noted in passing that Karremans' book makes no further mention of medical matters after this incident.

The inventory of Dutchbat's medical stock, which had been disturbed by the shelling, led the recently arrived surgical team to express its 'extreme concern' about the low stock levels. The results of this inventory have already been given above. The surgeon of KHO-6 concluded on the basis of this information that it was practically impossible to guarantee optimal medical care of wounded Dutch soldiers – who in his opinion should be given the first priority when it came to treatment. He recommended further that a reliable rapid evacuation chain allowing Dutchbat casualties to receive treatment outside the enclave should be present.¹³¹

8 July 1995

On Saturday [8 July], Dr Ilijaz [Pilav] is completely exhausted. He can no longer handle his workload. The bombardment becomes so intense around noon that we count one shell every minute. More and more wounded are brought to the hospital. The International Red Cross tries to get permission to enter the town via the 'Yellow Bridge' but has to turn back without achieving its objective; I have never been able to find out whether it withdrew of its own free will because of the risks involved, or whether it was refused permission to continue. In the meantime, the local authorities have stated on both Radio Tuzla and Radio Sarajevo that they are glad to have *Médecins Sans Frontières* here.¹³²

The International Red Cross tried to gain access to the enclave on 8 July, but without success.¹³³ It is not clear whether the Bosnian Serbs refused them access to Srebrenica or whether the ICRC delegates, who were bringing 30,000 letters and parcels with them, turned back of their own accord because of the fighting and shelling they witnessed.¹³⁴

On this day, *MSF* was advised by its own organization in Belgrade not to pick up wounded in the enclave itself: in view of the shelling, the risk to its own personnel should be reduced to a minimum. *MSF* tended to regard the transport of wounded as a task for Dutchbat, because the latter had armoured vehicles, though no one at *MSF* had any idea how much scarce fuel this would consume. As long as *MSF* had sufficient supplies of fuel at its disposal, there was no reason why it should not

¹²⁸ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly logbook Dutchbat Ops Room, 07/07/95.

¹²⁹ Confidential debriefing statement (21).

¹³⁰ Karremans, *Srebrenica: Who Cares?*, p. 161.

¹³¹ IMG. Handwritten memorandum 07/-7/95. Author's name not given.

¹³² Van Laerhoven, *Srebrenica*, p.136.

¹³³ DCBC, 1180. Code Hofstee 378, 04/10/95, Geh.

¹³⁴ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', written by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

supply Dutchbat with fuel. The UNHCR supplies of fuel, which were stored in the compound at Potocari, comprised about 6000 litres of diesel at that moment.¹³⁵

After the shelling and the lifting of the 'siege' of the first OPs, orders were given at Dutchbat to prepare the operating theatres for use;¹³⁶ for operations on Dutch soldiers. Field Dressing Station staff did all they could to save the life of Private Van Renssen on 8 July.¹³⁷ The circumstances under which he was wounded are dealt with in Chapter 6 of Part III of the main report. An X-ray photograph showed about 150 small metal fragments in his head, from neck to cranium, with a small entry hole in the back of his head. The surgeon, Naval Captain Hegge, concluded on the basis of this evidence that he had been shot at close range with a shotgun. Hegge gave this as the cause of death on Van Renssen's death certificate, though he was aware that he was not a munitions expert.¹³⁸

Apart from the death certificate, Sergeant First Class J. Zwiers of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigated Van Renssen's death on the orders of Major Franken. Zwiers prepared a report of his findings, with a report by experts from the Explosives Disposal Service as an appendix. On the basis of the findings of these explosives experts, among other things, Zwiers considered that Van Renssen died as the result of the explosion of a hand grenade which landed on the edge of the APC in the gap round the turret of the 50-millimetre gun unit before exploding.¹³⁹ The Battalion Staff also informed UNPROFOR that Van Renssen was hit by a fragment of a hand grenade.¹⁴⁰ As mentioned in Chapter 6 of Part III, however, witnesses stated that he had been shot with a shotgun. According to them, Van Renssen had been wearing his helmet, but had been hit on the small unprotected part of his head.

Although Major Franken made transport available for further investigation, the location where the incident took place could not be revisited because it was considered to be unsafe there and there were probably VRS soldiers in the vicinity. It was impossible to identify the persons who had carried out this shooting. Zwiers identified the body together with Captain Groen and another member of Dutchbat, and the appropriate authorities in Bosnia and the Netherlands were informed.¹⁴¹

The Social Services department of the Ministry of Defence had the task of informing the next of kin. Even here, unfortunately, confusion abounded: there was no one at home at the first address given. Further inquiries revealed to be the address of a former partner of Van Renssen's; the relationship had been broken off shortly after he had left for Bosnia. Only a phone number had been given for the alternative next of kin. When the address belonging to this phone number had been traced with the aid of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, this proved to be that of Van Renssen's mother.¹⁴²

Van Renssen seemed close to death for a few minutes on the way to the Field Dressing Station; however, after he had been given artificial respiration at the Field Dressing Station and an infusion system had been set up to administer the necessary drugs, his condition was judged to be stable. According to Soldier M.E. Klaver, there was general relief at the thought that he would pull through with surgical aid.¹⁴³ This proved to be wishful thinking, however: although the KHO-6 team did their

¹³⁵ SMG, 1001. Capsat *MSF* Belgrade to *MSF* Srebrenica, 8-Jul-1995 11:21; NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Srebrenica to *MSF* Belgrade, 95-07-05 16:24.

¹³⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (5).

¹³⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (22).

¹³⁸ SMG, Debriefing. Statement concerning Van Renssen, R., 'shooting incident during evacuation of OP Foxtrot on 08-07-95; interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

¹³⁹ Interview J. Zwiers, 28/04/99.

¹⁴⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 287, File Dutchbat 30 Nov 94 – 11 Oct 95. Fax Dutchbat to HQ UNPROFOR Zagreb G1, 08/07/95, Noticas 004.

¹⁴¹ Interview J. Zwiers, 28/04/99.

¹⁴² SMG, 1004. Sitcen KL, aanvullende info (supplementary information) dtg 081630.

¹⁴³ *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, p. 281; SMG, Debriefing. 'Militaire analyse van het optreden van Dutchbat tijdens de Srebrenica-crisis' (Military analysis of the behaviour of Dutchbat during the Srebrenica crisis), Assen 28/09/95, compiled by A. de Munnik, see: OP-F REUSG215.

utmost best to treat him, the serious nature of his head wound meant that there was no chance of success.¹⁴⁴ Van Renssen was the first Dutchbat soldier to die in the enclave.

It may be noted that the calamity plan formulated by KHO-5 proved to work excellently. The objective of this plan was to ensure that the deployment of personnel and resources was streamlined, and that the personnel did not get in one another's way.¹⁴⁵ The KHO-6 team worked well together.¹⁴⁶

The body was then laid out and made presentable so that members of the OP-F team could pay their last respects. Problems were encountered in getting the body into the coffin, which was too small. Warrant Officer L.P.E. Knapen was very angry about this; according to him, Defence had been guilty of similar slip-ups in the past. Knapen was also annoyed that no members of Dutchbat's senior staff came to pay their last respects. He saw this as a sign of lack of involvement.¹⁴⁷

Van Renssen's death gave rise to both anger and sadness in Dutchbat, and to the realization that this was the logical consequence of the situation in which Dutchbat found itself: completely defenceless, caught between two completely unscrupulous rival parties. A funeral service was held on the day after Van Renssen's death, only interrupted by those who chose to record the ceremony on film or photos. It had been planned to transfer the body to Zvornik at about 8.45 am; a UN helicopter would transport the body onwards from there. It was then learnt, however, that the Bosnian Serbs had withdrawn their permission for the transport of the remains of the deceased: as one of the persons involved put it, 'Of course, indignation did not help to improve the situation'.¹⁴⁸ Refrigeration of the body then caused problems, since the supplies of diesel were all but exhausted. Colonel Kremer was annoyed at Major Franken's refusal to authorize use of some of the precious reserves of diesel for this purpose.¹⁴⁹ 'If things go on like this, we'll end up burying him here,' wrote Naval Captain Schouten in his diary.¹⁵⁰

On the evening of the day when Van Renssen died, an emergency message from the Ops Room in Srebrenica led to the establishing of an exceptional direct link with Colonel De Jonge at UN headquarters in Zagreb, to cut through the red tape surrounding the transport of the body. Colonel De Jonge worked late that Saturday night to complete all the necessary formalities.¹⁵¹ Since the transport to the Netherlands was routed via Split, the Croatian authorities were also involved. After General Nicolai had intervened on 9 July to remind VRS General Tolimir that permission for transport of the body via Zvornik had been granted the day before, the Bosnian Serbs finally agreed to confirm the permission. General Tolimir promised to give the necessary instructions immediately.¹⁵² As a result, the guard of honour could finally line up at about half past three. Many Dutchbat soldiers cried as they said farewell to their comrade.

One last hitch was that the four-ton truck that had been chosen as the transport vehicle was found to have a leak in the brake line, and a new truck had to be prepared for departure. At long last, after so many hindrances, Van Renssen's body could finally depart for Zvornik on the first leg of its last voyage back to the Netherlands.¹⁵³

When the convoy arrived in Zvornik, a Bosnian Serb army information officer tried to get the convoy commander to make a statement about who was responsible for the death of Van Renssen. He refused to do so.¹⁵⁴ A Dutch group commander who was being held hostage in Bratunac did make such a statement after some pressure from VRS Major Nikolic. While this OP team member had not actually

¹⁴⁴ NIOD, Coll. Zwarts. Zwarts Diary.

¹⁴⁵ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

¹⁴⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (6).

¹⁴⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (21).

¹⁴⁸ NIOD, Coll. Zwarts. Zwarts diary.

¹⁴⁹ Interview G.D. Kremer, 17/01/02.

¹⁵⁰ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Schouten Diary.

¹⁵¹ Interview J.H. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹⁵² NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. 'Telephone Conversation General Nicolai - General Tolimir, 9 July, 12.30 hours'.

¹⁵³ NIOD, Coll. Zwarts. Zwarts Diary.

¹⁵⁴ SMG, Debriefing. Feitenrelaas. § 2.2.1.

witnessed what went on near OP-F, he had followed events on the radio. He had to read out a statement, which was recorded on a tape recorder, in the presence of a VRS information officer. When asked to do the same in front of a video camera, he refused.¹⁵⁵

As soon as the report that Van Renssen was seriously wounded came through, Hegge appealed to Franken: 'Medical transport must be arranged immediately to a hospital with neurosurgical capabilities.' Franken passed this request on via UN channels, but never received a response.¹⁵⁶ In fact, the request never got further than Pale. According to Hegge, the UN was apparently afraid to make forceful demands, though it had been agreed that immediate medical evacuation by air could be arranged for UN personnel when necessary.¹⁵⁷ The fact that this did not occur led Hegge to believe that the UN had simply left them in the lurch.¹⁵⁸

After Van Renssen's death, Hegge tried to confront the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff with the fact that the medical aid that could be provided in serious calamities was inadequate. It cost him considerable effort to obtain permission to phone the Netherlands about the medical situation; when he did so, he failed to contact the staff physician of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Wertheim. He therefore turned to Colonel Herweijer of the Royal Netherlands Army Medical Inspectorate and sketched the problem that would arise if Dutchbat became involved in a conflict: the combination of inadequate medical supplies and the impossibility of airlifting wounded personnel to a suitable facility for further medical treatment could lead to fatalities among Dutchbat personnel.¹⁵⁹

Hegge said that he did not receive much understanding for the situation, though Herweijer did finally call back to suggest that Hegge should contact Major Van Empel of the medical staff of the First Army Corps in Apeldoorn. All that the latter could say, however, was that 'if there were multiple casualties or other serious problems, Hegge should call Colonel Brantz of the Sector North East staff in Tuzla.' Brantz was not able to do much to help, however. Hegge had the feeling that he was back to square one: he finally realized that he had landed in a hopeless situation, and that Dutchbat, after having existed on half rations for months, with everyone at the end of their tether, were completely dependent on the goodwill of the Bosnian Serbs. Rations were exhausted, personnel were no longer getting proper food and drink, and there were not even any decent bathroom facilities. The VRS captured one OP after the other, and Dutchbat could no longer count on outside assistance. They seemed to be in a classical medieval state of siege.

As a newcomer in the enclave, Hegge had the impression that the members of Dutchbat hardly realized that they were to all effects in a war zone; and he found it deeply ironic that, while Dutchbat was suffering all this misery, Parliament was holding a barbecue in the inner courtyard of the parliamentary buildings in The Hague to celebrate the start of the summer recess.¹⁶⁰

9 July 1995

On Sunday 9 July, we have a meeting with the UN and the mayor in the post office building. The mayor requests aid for the 4000 refugees from Slapovic, who have been given temporary accommodation in a school building. We would like to visit the building, but the heavy bombardment makes this impossible. The UN troops tell us that the Serb army already has the southern part of the enclave in its hands. It is rumoured that they have set fire to the villages of Borovac, Slapovic

¹⁵⁵ SMG, Debriefing, Feitenrelaas § 2.3.1.

¹⁵⁶ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

¹⁵⁷ Debriefing statement H.G.J. Hegge, 21/09/95.

¹⁵⁸ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

¹⁵⁹ Debriefing statement H.G.J. Hegge, 21/09/95.

¹⁶⁰ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00; debriefing statement H.G.J. Hegge, 21/09/95.

and Bucje. The shells keep on falling. One of them makes a direct hit on a room full of people. Fortunately, our radio has been repaired, so we can discuss our medical problems and safety precautions with Belgrade.¹⁶¹

Médecins Sans Frontières and the Opstina had not had any contact with one another since the previous conflict about local employees. The Opstina's War President Osman Suljic therefore wanted to re-establish communications on 9 July. On this occasion, he asked for protection for the local hospital from Dutchbat. *MSF* did not want this, however, as they feared that the military presence might give rise to a military response.¹⁶²

A kidney operation scheduled for 9 July on a woman who had already been treated for kidney stones for some time at the Field Dressing Station was cancelled, on the grounds that this was no longer the right moment for such an operation. The woman did not take the decision badly, though she did deduce from it, as she said later, that Dutchbat knew the enclave was going to fall.¹⁶³

Dutchbat's logbook also mentioned that a wounded civilian from Budak was transported to the compound.¹⁶⁴

10 July 1995

The medical team goes on working throughout the night of Sunday 9 to Monday 10 July. By 7 am, the hospital is completely overcrowded. Wounded, bleeding people, patients screaming and crying. We hear on BBC radio that the Bosnian Serb Government denies that the army has launched an attack on Srebrenica.(...) About 10.30 am, a shell falls on the road just opposite the hospital. Daniel [the Australian surgeon Daniel O'Brien] and I [Christina Schmitz] are in the bunker at that moment. The noise of the explosion is deafening. We realize that the hospital is a target too now. A little while later, a new shell falls a bit further along. Many windows are broken in the dispensary and the hospital. We check the patients' condition and telex information about the situation to Dutchbat and our team in Belgrade, who immediately send a press release to the world media (...) In the course of the afternoon, we hear salvos of explosions (which experts tell us come from rocket launchers) and heavy machine-gun fire. We may thus assume that the front line is moving in our direction, and a little later nine wounded (mainly civilians) with heavy shrapnel wounds and limbs ripped off are brought to the hospital. It is a bloodbath. I repeat my request for surgical assistance. Even while I am sending the telex, I know what the answer will be. I was right: they turn our request down. But we will get an APC to bring wounded from the town centre to the hospital.¹⁶⁵

The situation in Srebrenica on 10 July was confused and chaotic. The inhabitants of the Swedish Shelter Project had left their houses and sought shelter in the overcrowded schools in the town. *MSF* staff heard on BBC radio that the Bosnian Serbs had denied that they were engaged in an offensive

¹⁶¹ Van Laerhoven, *Srebrenica*, p.136.

¹⁶² SMG, 1002/14. Belangrijkste zaken uit verslagen UNMO's (Key points from UNMO reports).

¹⁶³ Interview Mevlida Selimovic, 10/12/99.

¹⁶⁴ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly logbook Dutchbat Ops Room, 09/07/95.

¹⁶⁵ Van Laerhoven, *Srebrenica*, p.136-37.

against Srebrenica. ‘How cynical,’ they commented. The wounded, brought to the hospital by the municipal refuse collection truck and an *MSF* pick-up truck, were mainly young men who seemed to come from the front.¹⁶⁶

The Bosnian Serbs were in complete control of the southern part of the enclave, and were preparing to continue their advance on the town. Dutchbat had in the meantime taken up blocking positions to the south of the town with six APCs, to stem any further Bosnian Serb advance. There was great uncertainty about future developments and the expected number of casualties among the Dutch troops.¹⁶⁷

The sound of the APCs moving south early in the morning to the blocking positions led *MSF* staff to ask Dutchbat if they could send an APC to assist in evacuation of the hospital if this should prove necessary. Dutchbat agreed. UNMOs counted over a hundred impacts round the town in the morning of 10 July. Two of these, probably 155 mm shells, exploded near the hospital, shattering windows and sending glass fragments flying into walls and rooms. This did not make the care of the wounded any easier. It was impossible to give an accurate estimate of the number of casualties that morning. The UNMOs asked *MSF* to provide figures, while the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff asked whether the Dutch representative at UNHCR in Zagreb knew already how many people had been killed or wounded by the shelling.¹⁶⁸

The artillery shelling of the town that afternoon wreaked terrible damage. There was hardly anyone to pick up the dead from the streets.¹⁶⁹ Nine wounded were brought to the hospital, with limbs torn off and countless shrapnel wounds. It was at this moment that Pilav again asked Dutchbat for assistance, via Christina Schmitz. She sent a telex to Dutchbat, knowing it to be a hopeless attempt. It did not take long for Dutchbat to refuse.¹⁷⁰ Major Franken did however offer an APC to transport the wounded to the hospital. The promised vehicle arrived at the hospital 10 minutes later, and was kept in readiness at the B Company compound.¹⁷¹ Dutchbat supplied a vehicle for transport of wounded on four occasions; they were used to bring a total of seven wounded to the hospital.¹⁷²

MSF Headquarters sent a desperate message to Yasushi Akashi (the special representative of the Secretary-General of the UN), General Smith, UNHCR, the ICRC and the press, pointing out that the hospital in Srebrenica was full to overflowing, with 50 wounded.¹⁷³ The Headquarters also tried to make personal contact with the representative at UNHCR in Zagreb, A.W. Bijleveld, while the organization’s Belgrade office approached the ICRC and the VRS.¹⁷⁴

The Opstina’s War President asked the UNMOs to visit the wounded, but the UNMOs replied, ‘the shelling of the town is nothing to joke with’ and declined to do so. The Senior Military Observer in Tuzla stated on the basis of UNMO reports from the enclave to Sarajevo that if things went on in the same way as they were at that moment, a bloodbath could be the result. Relations with the local population deteriorated, and the UN lost its credibility. UNMOs operating elsewhere in Bosnia were already hearing angry comments about the situation in Srebrenica: the enclave had first been

¹⁶⁶ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. ‘sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95’, compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O’Brien, 24/07/95.

¹⁶⁷ NIOD, Coll. Hegge. Situation report Potocari 10-07-1995: Monday morning and later (compiled by KTZAR H.G.J. Hegge)

¹⁶⁸ SMG, 1004. Capsats *MSF* Srebrenica to UNPROFOR Dutchbat, 10/07/95 03:24; Ops Room Dutchbat to *MSF*, 101157B Jul 95; Sitsen BLS to Ops Room DB-3, 101500B Jul 95.

¹⁶⁹ Interview Sadik Vilić, 15/04/98.

¹⁷⁰ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. ‘sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95’, compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O’Brien, 24/07/95.

¹⁷¹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. ‘sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95’, compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O’Brien, 24/07/95.

¹⁷² SMG, 1004/61. Monthly logbook Dutchbat Ops Room, 10/07/95, 15.20, 15.41.

¹⁷³ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87717, File 7-8-1, Srebrenica 11 Jul 95 – 31 Jul 95. Communiqué de presse de Médecins Sans Frontières to M. Akashi, Rupert Smith, Head of Mission UNHCR Zagreb, CICR M. Gnadinger, 10/07/95.

¹⁷⁴ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. ‘sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95’, compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O’Brien, 24/07/95.

demilitarized in the belief that the UN would provide protection and food, but in the words of a UNMO report, 'now people die first by starvation and the rest by bullets. UNPROFOR is observing how it looks when helpless people die, then starts counting dead bodies and destroyed houses as part of [their] duty'.¹⁷⁵

The situation at the hospital after the shelling was just as desperate as on 6 July. After hospital director Avdo Hasanovic had informed Ramiz Becirovic, the commander of the ABiH's 28th Division, that Dutchbat refused to accept sick and wounded patients at the compound in Srebrenica, Becirovic went to the compound. He said later, in a statement made in 1998, that a Dutchbat officer explained to him that they could not accept any wounded because he had not received permission for this from his superiors.¹⁷⁶ The Bosnian author Sefko Hodzic wrote that Becirovic had gone to the compound in Srebrenica with Dr Pilav to ask Dutchbat to accept wounded patients. Becirovic said that he had to stay in the compound between from 3 till around 5 pm because of heavy VRS shelling of the town during that period. He felt that he had been taken hostage by Dutchbat, believed that Dutchbat would not allow him to leave the compound, and got the idea that weapons would have been aimed at him if he had tried to leave at all costs. His reasoning is difficult to follow; Becirovic apparently left the compound without any trouble once the shelling was over.¹⁷⁷ There are no Dutchbat data on this incident. Neither the Dutchbat logbook nor that of B Company makes any mention of a visit by Becirovic to the compound in Srebrenica.

Wounded were admitted to the compound in Srebrenica again on 11 July, as described in the next subsection. Beirovic visited the compound of B Company on the afternoon of that day, but then it was compound Commander Groen's turn to be afraid that he was being held hostage (this incident is described in Chapter 6 of Part III).

Everyone in the hospital was crying out for help. There were patients whose arms had been torn off, and many with other serious wounds. Four patients were lying on operating tables, with the surgeon Ilijaz Pilav running from one to the other. Other doctors were looking after the rest of the wounded.¹⁷⁸ Pilav saw himself confronted with a hopeless situation: there were 25 wounded patients, seven of them with very severe wounds. He could only deal with five or six at most. Since Dutchbat had two surgical teams, he faxed a request to Dutchbat via *Médecins Sans Frontières*, asking whether it would be possible for members of the medical team to come to Srebrenica to render assistance, or alternatively if some of the wounded could be transferred to Potocari for treatment.¹⁷⁹ Up till 10 July, there were only two patients in Dutchbat's sickbay: a UNMO and a sergeant with back complaints. It may be mentioned in passing that it proved possible, with a great deal of difficulty, to get the sergeant out of the enclave with an ambulance on that day.¹⁸⁰

In fact, the two Dutchbat surgeons never even heard anything about *MSF's* request for the transfer of patients with shrapnel wounds: the request never reached them. Captain Hegge did not know who had replied to the request on behalf of the hospital. Colonel Kremer later found out from Pilav and the coordinator of *MSF* that the fax had been sent to Major Franken. That was correct: Franken had simply not consulted his surgical staff before replying.¹⁸¹ Minister of Defence Voorhoeve later explained to the Dutch Parliament that the fact that the battalion command did not show the fax to the staff of the Field Dressing Station, or even consult them about the request, could be explained by the hectic situation at the time.¹⁸² Franken had replied to the fax without consulting anyone: he had

¹⁷⁵ NIOD, Coll. Clingendael. UNMO HQ Sector BH-NE to UNMO HQ BH Comd, BH-NE Daily Sitrep 100001B - 102000B, 10/07/95 with Annex A, Capsat TA to TX, 101305B July 95.

¹⁷⁶ ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, unnumbered. Supplementary statement by Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on a previous statement dated 11/08/95.

¹⁷⁷ Sefko Hodzic, *Otpjecaceni koverat*, p. 268.

¹⁷⁸ Interview Emira Selimovic 21/10/97.

¹⁷⁹ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

¹⁸⁰ Confidential debriefing statement (21).

¹⁸¹ Report by the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 26.

¹⁸² TK, session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 136, p. 9.

answered with a 'troubled mind' that Dutchbat was not in a position to provide medical aid. 'Although really very willing,' he pointed out that it was his responsibility to ensure that his soldiers received medical treatment and that the medical supplies were already at a minimum. The only assistance that Franken could offer, despite the poor fuel situation, was (as mentioned above) an APC fitted out for medical transport to pick up wounded in the town, but even there the restriction applied that his own soldiers had to be given priority in cases of emergency,¹⁸³ since at that time Dutchbat was seriously considering the possibility that there could be casualties at the blocking position the Dutch troops had occupied to the south of Srebrenica.

Different views on this rejection of the request for help have been expressed. Ilijaz Pilav stated that he had said explicitly that he did not need more medical supplies, but more medical manpower. According to him, the Dutchbat medical team knew that *MSF*, unlike Dutchbat itself, was not short of medicaments at that moment. Pilav did not hear until later that the medical team had not even been consulted about the reply to his request: indeed, Franken had sent off his rejection within 20 minutes of receiving the request.

Apparently, Colonel Kremer heard of Major Franken's answer by chance from a Dutchbat soldier, two hours later. This made him so angry that he threw his helmet and flak jacket away and declared his intention to walk the four kilometres into Srebrenica to provide help after all – until he was forcibly restrained.¹⁸⁴ This version, which Pilav said he heard from Kremer himself, differs from Kremer's own version and from the view of the events expressed subsequently by The Hague.

Kremer said in this connection that he had promised Pilav, round about the time of the conflict between the Opstina and *Médecins Sans Frontières*, 'that if he was up to his neck in it, he could always call on me'. However, Major Franken rejected Pilav's call for help: he was not prepared to allow the wounded to be brought to the compound, and he told Kremer 'that I should go to the hospital. When I asked who I should go with, he replied, "no one; just go on your own." It was clear that he wanted me out of the way. The whole thing left a very nasty taste in my mouth'.

The only operating theatre in the hospital was at the rear of the building, facing the hills where the Bosnian Serbs had taken up their position and from where they could fire right into the operating theatre. 'It was deadly dangerous', Kremer went on. The Dutch Ministry of Defence later asked Kremer, after he had stated that he had been afraid that Franken's motives for sending him to the hospital were not purely humanitarian, whether his refusal to go to the hospital 'had perhaps been motivated by fear, or cowardice'.¹⁸⁵

The version constructed by The Hague after the event was different again: during the Bosnian Serb attack on the town, Dutchbat command had decided that a surgeon should go to the hospital in Srebrenica. The surgeon in question was of the opinion, however, the situation there was too hazardous to justify carrying out operations there. He had therefore suggested that the wounded should be transferred from the hospital to the compound in Potocari where the conditions were more suitable for proper treatment.¹⁸⁶

The coordinator of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, Christina Schmitz, tried to contact the *MSF* office in Belgrade that day, and also to talk to Dutchbat to obtain further instructions about what to do in these turbulent circumstances. Pilav wanted guarantees for the medical staff from Schmitz, so that they could remain with their patients. He also asked Dutchbat to guarantee his safety. Pilav had said in this connection that he did not want another Vukovar (where Serbs had killed the wounded men from the hospital) and that he therefore wanted to evacuate the wounded; if this was not done, the medical staff would consider themselves obliged to get themselves out, leaving the patients behind. It was, however,

¹⁸³ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Franken to Christina [Schmitz], 10/07/95 16.20 hrs. *MSF* to Dutch Ministry of Defence, 27/11/95, unnumbered. The complete text of the message is included in *Tweede Kamer* file 22 181, No. 138.

¹⁸⁴ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

¹⁸⁵ Interview G.D. Kremer, 13/07/98.

¹⁸⁶ Draft reply to *Tweede Kamer* question No. 139. The reply to this question is not included in TK session 1995-1996 session, 22 181, 134 and only partially in 22 181, No. 136.

impossible to guarantee the safety of the Bosnian doctors. Neither Schmitz nor Dutchbat were in a position to guarantee anything.¹⁸⁷

This evening, the people start to leave the centre [of town] and collect round the hospital. Our local members of medical staff crowd into the bunker with their relatives. The bunker is intended for a maximum of 5 people; at the moment, there are 80 people in it. We can hardly move, and radio contact is made very difficult by the crying children. The people refuse to leave the bunker: they are at their wit's end, and almost hysterical with fear. They want to leave this open-air prison and live in peace. I understand their situation and their fears only too well, but we can't work or find any rest like this. After a lot of palaver, I manage to persuade them to go and sleep in the hospital. (...) The night of 10 July is relatively quiet, and we manage to catch a few hours of rest towards the morning. In the morning, the rumour has spread that NATO bombardments are on the way, and when the UNPROFOR liaison team and the British soldiers who direct the air strikes leave the Post Office building, people flee in all directions from fear of air strikes. In consultation with the local doctors, we decide to move the operating theatre to the basement, and we discuss the evacuation of about 80 patients. The local doctors urgently want to move the patients to Potocari this morning because they are afraid of a repetition of the events of Vukovar, where Bosnian Serb troops forced their way into the hospital and murdered all the patients. We would prefer to leave the patients in the neutral zone of the hospital, but we accept the decision of the Muslim doctors, who will organize the evacuation with the aid of two trucks. (...) In the meantime, the situation has become very tense. Armed Bosnian soldiers have forced their way into the hospital and refuse to leave; but they really have to if the hospital is to retain its status as neutral zone.¹⁸⁸

Many ABiH soldiers suffered severe wounds on this day too. Soldiers carried their dead and wounded comrades for hours till they reached Srebrenica. ABiH officer Sadik Vilic decided to call briefly on his wife to let her know that all was well and that she did not need to worry about him. Shells falling just as he was entering his house wounded him and his mother-in-law, among others. Vilic suffered shrapnel wounds and burns. There was only one truck available, and the driver was brave enough to drive round collecting the dead and wounded. A few hours later, Vilic arrived at the hospital which was full of civilians.¹⁸⁹ Something like a ceasefire arose when the VRS approached to within a short distance of the town; the inhabitants waited to see what would happen next day.

In the night of 10 - 11 July, Dutchbat made preparations for the reception of any Dutchbat wounded at the compound in Potocari.¹⁹⁰ It was agreed that KHO-6 would take care of these wounded soldiers, while KHO-5 staff would be mainly engaged in organizing humanitarian aid to the refugees.¹⁹¹ Dutchbat had also prepared for the arrival of refugees at the compound in Potocari (see Chapter 4 of Part IV). That same night, Muslim men started to get ready to move out of the enclave on foot; but the big exodus did not actually begin until the next night (for further details, see Chapter 1 of Part IV).

Sergeant First Class H.M.W. Geurts, who took the above-mentioned woman who did not receive medical treatment at the compound in Potocari back to the hospital in Srebrenica (this affair is discussed at length later on in this appendix), saw large numbers of boxes being carried out of the *MSF*

¹⁸⁷ Interview Abdulah Purkovic, 21/05/99.

¹⁸⁸ Van Laerhoven, *Srebrenica*, p.137-38.

¹⁸⁹ Interview Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98.

¹⁹⁰ Debriefing statement W.J.G. Brands, 07/09/95.

¹⁹¹ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

building. These boxes were opened, and the contents put into bags and rucksacks – mainly belonging to soldiers and armed men. Geurts was surprised to see this, since the organization had often complained in the past about how few supplies it had; and now they were being distributed to none other than ABiH soldiers. This was not a case of plundering according to Geurts, but a well organized affair. MSF's cook, Abdulah Purkovic, was in charge and was distributing the supplies. Purkovic was a former teacher better known under his nickname of Dule; he was not only the cook at *Médecins Sans Frontières* but also their general factotum and a great organizer.¹⁹² Geurts had once seen Purkovic coming out of the mountains carrying a weapon, and was now quite indignant at what he had seen.¹⁹³

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It remains relatively calm till the early afternoon, when the bombardment breaks out again in full force. We can hear aircraft flying overhead from our bunker, and can only guess whether they are carrying out air strikes or not. We hear that most of the patients are on their way to Bravo Company, the Dutchbat compound, which is about 500 metres away from here.¹⁹⁴

A stream of refugees started to move towards Potocari and the compound in Srebrenica on the morning of 11 July.¹⁹⁵ There was great uncertainty about how the situation would develop in the course of the day. The APCs from the blocking positions, which had withdrawn to positions round the marketplace in Srebrenica during the night, went south again in the morning in order to ascertain how far the Bosnian Serbs had advanced into the enclave.

During a shooting incident near Potocari shortly after noon on 11 July, Captain Van Hoogwaarden, the Commander of the Field Dressing Station, was asked for medical support near the former bus stop opposite the zinc works. Van Hoogwaarden asked Naval Captain Hegge to send medical personnel there, but Hegge did not want to send members of the surgical team outside the compound at that time, since shots were being fired and there was a risk that Dutchbat soldiers could be wounded. Captain Van Hoogwaarden therefore went himself, together with Captain De Bruijn and a few soldiers. They encountered an armed patrol of six ABiH soldiers, who adopted an aggressive attitude towards the Dutch team trying to help. Van Hoogwaarden and De Bruijn returned to the compound with a 16-year-old girl.¹⁹⁶

The town of Srebrenica was subjected to artillery shelling (others say a mortar bombardment) about 1.30 pm, in the course of which a projectile hit B Company's vehicles park. It was not clear where it came from. The projectile landed between two APCs and four trucks. A Dutchbat soldier stated that he had seen a ball of fire approaching, followed by an enormous bang. According to him, the ball of fire had come from a mine shaft situated some distance away in terrain occupied by the ABiH; the Dutchbat soldier therefore concluded that the ABiH were bombarding their own people – probably, in his opinion, to blame the VRS for the incident and to sow confusion among the Dutch soldiers.¹⁹⁷ Another soldier also stated that this hit had been caused by a shell fired by the ABiH from

¹⁹² Interview Emira Selimovic, 21/10/97.

¹⁹³ Interview H.M.W. Geurts, 10/05/99. When Purkovic was questioned about this incident on 21/05/99, he answered evasively.

¹⁹⁴ Van Laerhoven, *Srebrenica*, p.138.

¹⁹⁵ Debriefing statement C.A. Koreman, 11/09/95.

¹⁹⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (18).

¹⁹⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (12).

hill 522 (near OP-H).¹⁹⁸ Yet others saw this as a deliberate attempt by the VRS to drive the refugees towards Potocari.¹⁹⁹

This hit caused the refugees to panic and to empty the compound, but they soon returned when it appeared that no further hits were coming. The transport of these refugees to Potocari was a slow affair. It was carried out with the aid of four-ton trucks which had really been earmarked by B Company for the transport of sick and wounded to Potocari.²⁰⁰ Attempts were also made to provide some assistance from Potocari in moving the refugees. After the report of the hit on the compound in Srebrenica had reached Potocari, Sergeant Zuurman (who had accompanied a group of refugees towards Potocari the previous evening) suggested that he should set off for Srebrenica with a couple of four-ton trucks. The masses of people making for Potocari made it impossible for the two trucks to get through, however, and they stranded a kilometre from Srebrenica. Refugees heading for Potocari were then given a place on the trucks, which returned to their home base.²⁰¹

The report of Dutchbat's initial debriefing in Zagreb mentions a number of casualties (at least one dead and a number of wounded) among the refugees at the compound in Srebrenica as a result of the above-mentioned hit.²⁰² The subsequent debriefing in Assen provides no evidence of any fatalities as a result of this incident, but does mention eight or nine wounded.²⁰³ The wounded included an old woman with shrapnel wounds, an old man with a wounded jaw and a girl with an open wound in her thigh.²⁰⁴ The severity of the wounds ranged from a few scratches to serious but not life-threatening injury.²⁰⁵ Compound commander Captain Groen had the wounded brought into the compound buildings, where the company's medical team gave four of them medical treatment.²⁰⁶ They were treated and given accommodation in a dormitory fitted out for this purpose.

A number of local *MSF* staff members were hard at work in the compound's bar. They had left the hospital with a number of sick or lightly wounded patients,²⁰⁷ and were also given the task of looking after the wounded who had been treated earlier by Dutchbat medical staff. After the local population had been persuaded, with the aid of interpreters, to go to Potocari, another five severely wounded patients were brought to B Company compound. All the remaining wounded from Srebrenica hospital were brought to Potocari later in the afternoon, bringing the total number of patients transferred in the course of the day to about 30.²⁰⁸

Captain Groen said that it did not bother him whether a wounded patient had been brought from the hospital or had been wounded in the vicinity. Anyone who had been wounded and needed treatment received treatment. It had not happened often before that wounded people had presented themselves at the gate of the compound: the hospital was not far away, and people knew they could be treated there. B Company's medical capacity extended no further than primary medical care for the company's own personnel.²⁰⁹

On 11 July, round about 3 pm, we see NATO aircraft carrying out air strikes. A long column of people is fleeing northwards, probably to Potocari. After a brief

¹⁹⁸ Confidential debriefing statement (4).

¹⁹⁹ Debriefing statement C.A. Koreman, 11/09/95.

²⁰⁰ Confidential debriefing statement (8).

²⁰¹ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing of Zuurman, Camp Pleso, 22/07/95.

²⁰² DCBC, 1650. C 11 Luchtmobile Brigade aan Bevelhebber der Landstrijdkrachten, 'Operationele Debrief Dutchbat III' (C 11 Airmobile Brigade to Commander in Chief of the RNLA, 'Operational debriefing of Dutchbat III'), 28/07/95, No. 172/Conf.

²⁰³ Debriefing statement 11/09/95.

²⁰⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (13).

²⁰⁵ Debriefing statement G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95.

²⁰⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (1).

²⁰⁷ Debriefing statement G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95.

²⁰⁸ Debriefing statement G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95.

²⁰⁹ Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.

radio conversation with our colleagues in Belgrade, we decide to follow the refugees. We pack all valuable supplies. The Australian doctor Daniel O'Brien sets off with a truck, together with the local staff and our supplies, for Bravo Company. We try to get the remaining patients – about 20 people – into two trucks. We manage to deliver them to Bravo Company, after which I return in a pick-up truck. More patients have left their wards in the meantime. I have to leave 6 old people behind, as the UN's tanks have already withdrawn beyond the hospital. Such chaos! What a mess!²¹⁰

During the Close Air Support in the afternoon, the APCs of the blocking positions were in the vicinity of the compound again. The problem was that if the blocking positions were withdrawn any further, the compound in Srebrenica would have to be evacuated as otherwise it would run the risk of being surrounded by the VRS.

After Captain Groen had given the order to take the wounded to Potocari, Captain Buijs (a doctor from the medical team), Sergeant Major Thijssen and a corporal collected them from where they were lying all over the compound – in the dining room, in the TV room, in the bar, and loaded them into a truck.²¹¹ Surrounded by refugees and mortar and rifle fire, the four-ton truck, the canvas cover of which had been removed, set off at a walking pace towards Potocari. Sergeant Major Thijssen sat at the steering wheel. A Muslim man stood on the loading platform, shouting at the refugees to get out of the way. The portion of the route near the football field came under mortar fire as the truck passed; some shells landed no more than 50 metres from the vehicle.²¹²

When the last vehicles had left the compound, the buildings were checked one last time to see, among other things, if there were any remaining refugees. The medical records of Dutchbat personnel and local patients were not destroyed before departure; there was no time for this.²¹³ One wounded person was found near the rear gate, and helped into a Mercedes. A few more children and one old woman were taken on board the truck halfway to Potocari.²¹⁴

On the way to Potocari, B Company personnel saw a bloody corpse with shoes on. It was unclear whether it had been there for some time, had been run over or had been killed by an exploding shell. The bodies of two older women also lay by the roadside. Refugees simply walked over them.²¹⁵ The cause of death could not be determined with any certainty, but it was likely that they had died from exhaustion. Several people were sitting exhausted by the roadside.²¹⁶

The men of B Company did their best to take as many people with them as they could on their way to Potocari: on the bonnet of the Mercedes, in a wheelbarrow, on the opened backwash deflectors on the deck of the APCs. Dutchbat soldiers made room to lay wounded in the APCs.²¹⁷ People, especially older people who were unable to walk any further, were given a seat in or on top of the APC. In fact, B Company did not encounter large groups of refugees, only a few individuals lying exhausted or lifeless by the roadside. As many of these people as possible were given a lift, but it was not possible to take all of them.²¹⁸ The vehicles were overloaded with people sitting on them or hanging on to them. Some people fell off because they were too tired to hang on.²¹⁹

²¹⁰ Van Laerhoven, *Srebrenica*, p.138-39.

²¹¹ Confidential debriefing statement (1).

²¹² Debriefing statement J. Thijssen, 07/09/95.

²¹³ Debriefing statement G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95.

²¹⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (8).

²¹⁵ Confidential debriefing statement (13).

²¹⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (8).

²¹⁷ Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.

²¹⁸ Interview J.E. Mustert, Assen, 18/06/99.

²¹⁹ Confidential debriefing statement (11).

Apart from the personnel of the returning blocking position APCs, 30 men from B Company were engaged in accompanying refugees to Potocari that afternoon.²²⁰ B-Company vehicles transported a total of 54 persons, most of whom were elderly, undernourished people, with no injuries.²²¹

There were, however, a number of cases in which Dutchbat personnel did not offer any transport assistance. One APC fitted out for the transport of wounded persons travelling from Srebrenica to Potocari did give a lift to three Dutchbat soldiers but refused to help a woman with a child. When she attempted to get inside, a paramedic kicked in her direction (without actually hitting her). The driver of the APC speeded up so that the woman had to let go. She was refused a lift in order to keep the APC on stand-by to pick up Dutchbat personnel in cases of emergency.²²²

In the night of 11 - 12 July, the troops manning a new blocking position camped near the compound, while part of B Company camped to the south of the refugees near Potocari. The platoon sergeants were largely responsible for organizing things, giving the necessary orders without the need for much intervention by superior officers. The paramedics of B Company were independently engaged in caring for the wounded in the neighbourhood.²²³

It is hot, and the streets are overcrowded. People are fleeing in panic, with their crying children holding their hands and with a few possessions in plastic bags. UN personnel accompany the refugees on foot while the shells continue to rain down from the hilltops. A truck is stalled in front of us. The UN soldiers get it on the move again, but it stops soon after to pick up people. I see people almost killing one another to gain a spot on a truck. (...) We finally reach the UNPROFOR base. The UN soldiers have already set up an emergency hospital. We still have 55 patients with us, but our medical supplies are used up. We request new supplies from Belgrade, knowing all too well that they will never arrive. Outside, some 20,000 people are trying to find shelter round the UN compound. The UN compound is not big enough to offer shelter to all, and the refugees take shelter in ruined houses. The shells keep on falling. Major Franken, Dutchbat's Deputy Commander, is trying to reach an agreement with the Bosnian Serb army that will allow us to go into the town to fetch supplies, but General Mladic sends a reply that all supplies are gone. (...) While *Médecins Sans Frontières* Belgrade proposes the setting up of a 'humanitarian corridor' to Central Bosnia, we keep on asking for external replacements for the medical team. In the meantime, the shells keep on falling till about 10 pm.²²⁴

A big stream of refugees had already been expected at the compound in Potocari on 10 July. Dutchbat Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, got the compound Commander, Major Otter, to draw up a plan for their reception then. Since the road passing along the side of the compound lay within the field of vision of the VRS artillery, a hole was cut in the perimeter fence to create an access route under cover, along the stream flowing behind the compound.

On 11 July, before the flood of refugees arrived in Potocari, Dutchbat personnel in the compound were warned to prepare themselves for the reception of the refugees. The original plan had been to use the corridor of the accumulator factory for this purpose. In view of the large numbers of refugees arriving, it was decided to offer them accommodation in the big hall of the factory instead.²²⁵

²²⁰ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly logbook Dutchbat Ops Room Dutchbat, 11/07/95.

²²¹ Confidential debriefing statement (31).

²²² Debriefing statement G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95.

²²³ Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99.

²²⁴ Van Laerhoven, *Srebrenica*, p.139.

²²⁵ Confidential debriefing statement (16).

Dutchbat personnel were ordered to leave the bunker and to be ready to receive the refugees as they arrived.²²⁶

As a result of the continuing shelling, the Dutchbat personnel remained in the shelters; hence the local population received very little assistance from the compound in Potocari until the shelling stopped. According to *MSF*, Major Franken had ordered Dutchbat personnel to remain within the compound even when it was no longer under fire. It therefore looked very much to *MSF* as if the VRS wanted to keep Dutchbat in the compound.²²⁷

The surgeon Colonel Kremer said later that he did not feel like sitting in the bunker wearing his flak jacket; he wanted to get out and help the wounded who were arriving from the B Company compound in Srebrenica. He said, however, that he received an order from the Commander of the Field Dressing Station, Captain Van Hoogwaarden, to stay where he was. Colonel Kremer believed that this command came from Major Franken.²²⁸ Kremer said he uttered a four-letter word, and went anyway. Only a lieutenant from the commandos (Van Klinken), who had had no medical training, was prepared to help him. Kremer was convinced that the Bosnian Serbs only fired at the compound to keep Dutchbat inside, but others were afraid and unsure of the Bosnian Serbs' intentions. Some members of Dutchbat personnel did believe that the Bosnian Serbs really were aiming to wound or kill them.²²⁹

It appeared that some form of selection had been made before the inhabitants of the enclave and the patients reached the compound: the ones who arrived tended to be among the more prominent members of the population.²³⁰ A tally kept of the refugees arriving at the compound yielded a count of about 4800 persons,²³¹ most of whom were women and children. It was estimated that five per cent of the arrivals were men of military-service age.²³² (For further considerations on this topic, see Chapter 4 of Part IV).

A few of these refugees wore ABiH uniform, but were unarmed. There were also some men who had previously been seen in uniform in Srebrenica, but who arrived at the compound after 11 July in civilian clothing.²³³ Some looked like soldiers, in view of their age and the type of footwear they wore.²³⁴ Conversations with an interpreter indicated that a number of these men had carried out operations outside the enclave.²³⁵ These men gave the impression of being particularly fearful.²³⁶ The Field Dressing Station personnel made no distinction between possible soldiers and civilians in the treatment of the wounded, and the fact that they had an impression that a particular person might be a soldier did not stop them from treating him.²³⁷

Around 30 members of Dutchbat personnel were involved in the initial reception. They formed small groups and brought the refugees to the vehicle hall. When the hall was full, only the sick and wounded were allowed in.²³⁸ Twelve to 15 members of Dutchbat were involved in administering First Aid after this initial period.²³⁹

²²⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (11).

²²⁷ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-12 10:21, No. Out 482.

²²⁸ Interview G.D. Kremer, 17/01/02.

²²⁹ Interview G.D. Kremer, 13/07/98.

²³⁰ Confidential debriefing statement (16).

²³¹ Debriefing statement E. van 't Zand, 06/09/95. The Company Commander Otter also mentioned this number (SMG, 1007/25, Verslag debriefing Kamp Pleso (Report of debriefing at Camp Pleso), 23/07/95.).

²³² SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing of Otter, Camp Pleso, 23/07/95.

²³³ Confidential debriefing statement (17).

²³⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (16).

²³⁵ Confidential debriefing statement (31).

²³⁶ Confidential statement (16).

²³⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (25).

²³⁸ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing Otter, Camp Pleso, 23/07/95.

²³⁹ Debriefing statement J.P.M. Tops, 18/09/95.

The wounded were kept apart from the other refugees²⁴⁰ and were accommodated in the passageway in the middle of this hall. Personnel without specialized medical training performed general tasks such as ushering the refugees to the appropriate spot, carrying children and personal possessions, fetching and carrying the wounded and sometimes even giving assistance in childbirth. The conditions in the hall were abominable. While sanitary facilities were provided outside (seven 'Dixy' toilets were available, and latrines were also dug), many people urinated and defecated in the hall (possibly from fear in some cases).²⁴¹ The sewer to which the toilets were connected overflowed.²⁴² Dutchbat personnel did their best 'to clean the shit', as *Médecins Sans Frontières* put it, but the compound was completely overcrowded.²⁴³

The situation was harrowing, and the stench in the warm surroundings was terrible. Unpurified water could be obtained from the stream flowing behind the compound, but the refugees declined the offer of spraying them with water from a hosepipe to cool them down or allow them to wash themselves. According to a Dutchbat doctor, there would have been no point in using showers because they would soon have become unhygienic. Dutchbat soldiers gave up their towels, which were moistened and brought into the hall. All these measures helped very little. Nevertheless, this group of refugees was better off than the much larger group outside the compound: they had more water, and received better medical treatment. There was a shortage of water outside the compound, especially in the beginning, and little possibility of sheltering from the blazing sun. The people in the compound were peaceful on the whole, because they felt safer than the refugees outside.²⁴⁴

As shells fell round the compound, people panicked and the crowd outside begged to be let in.²⁴⁵ A rumour also spread at a certain moment that the VRS was advancing with tanks from the direction of Bratunac towards Potocari.²⁴⁶ This was not true: there was little sign of the VRS in Potocari that day.

The *MSF* team had seen the VRS advance into Srebrenica, and during its journey to Potocari had witnessed an exodus interspersed with skirmishes. The last patients left the hospital at 3.30 pm;²⁴⁷ the evacuation of the hospital is described in the section below. The *MSF* staff arrived in Potocari at the same time as the main mass of refugees.²⁴⁸

The staff of the Field Dressing Station, now transferred to Potocari, had not been informed about the evacuation of the hospital in the afternoon of 11 July: 'We looked up at a given moment, and there they were'. The *MSF* and hospital staff and the patients were housed as well as possible under the circumstances.²⁴⁹ At about 5 pm, there were 65 wounded in the compound being cared for by *MSF* and Dutchbat staff. The total number of refugees in and around the UN compound was about 20,000.²⁵⁰

The *Médecins Sans Frontières* office in Belgrade did its best to draw the world's attention to the flight of the population to Potocari and the effects of the VRS offensive by sending press releases to various press agencies, radio and TV stations and newspapers in different countries. The organization made a plea for an immediate ceasefire. Its Belgrade and other offices were in close contact with the UN, and lobbied for an active search to be made for solutions. *MSF* had two scenarios in mind in this connection: a humanitarian corridor to Central Bosnia or, if negotiations on this point could not be brought to a successful conclusion, the granting of clearances for aid convoys and extra personnel.²⁵¹

²⁴⁰ Debriefing statement W.J.G. Brands, 07/09/95.

²⁴¹ Confidential debriefing statement (16).

²⁴² NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-11 20:33, No. Out 467.

²⁴³ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-12 10:21, No. Out 482.

²⁴⁴ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing of Otter, Camp Pleso, 23/07/95.

²⁴⁵ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-12 10:21, No. Out 482.

²⁴⁶ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat Out 95-07-11 19:15.

²⁴⁷ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 11/07/95 17.16, No. In 834.

²⁴⁸ Confidential debriefing statement (5).

²⁴⁹ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

²⁵⁰ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 11/07/95 17.16, No. In 834.

²⁵¹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 11 /05/95 17.16, No. In 834.

Médecins Sans Frontières in Belgrade instructed the team in Potocari to take steps on the following day, if the shelling had stopped by then, to set up an aid post for the treatment of the wounded and of dehydrated children, and to try to provide some form of shelter from the sun for children and pregnant women. They also gave the team the good advice to try to get some sleep.²⁵²

Christina Schmitz had a meeting with Warrant Officer Tops early that evening. According to her, Dutchbat's medical team was prepared to help, but she was not convinced that everyone in Dutchbat was happy about their arrival; she did not give reasons for this feeling, however. The organization had not managed to bring medical supplies with them from the hospital. *MSF* surgeon Daniel O'Brien drew up a list of things the team required. Schmitz was convinced that their requests would be met, though she knew that Dutchbat was short of supplies itself.²⁵³

Médecins Sans Frontières looked after its own patients from the hospital.²⁵⁴ Agreement about responsibilities was reached between Naval Captain Hegge on the one hand and Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien on the other when the *MSF* team arrived: the patients from the hospital were in the compound as guests, under the medical responsibility of *MSF*, though Hegge did express his willingness to help: 'If you need something, or if there is anything that can be done to help, just let us know.' Captain Hegge had chosen this stance on the basis of his previous experience in dealing with *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Cambodia. In his view, NGOs tended to adopt a fairly anti-militaristic attitude, and in such a case he thought it better not to force help on them but rather to let them ask for the things they needed. Dutchbat was already in a dependent situation, and if it started laying down the law to others this could be wrongly interpreted.²⁵⁵ The Commander of the Field Dressing Station, Captain Van Hoogwaarden, told his personnel that the construction chosen was that *MSF*'s chief physician (Daniel O'Brien) and coordinator (Christian Schmitz) were in charge of the medical activities, and they would receive support in the provision of aid to the refugees.²⁵⁶

That same evening, Christina Schmitz reported that, unlike the situation on previous days, contacts with Major Franken had been 'quite good' and that Dutchbat, in particular the old KHO-5 team, had been cooperative. Dutchbat personnel went outside the compound every hour to see whether any new patients had arrived. Sleeping accommodation for 16 local nurses was arranged within the compound. Schmitz reported to the *MSF* office in Belgrade that Dutchbat provided small amounts of important medicaments such as infusion fluids, penicillin and dressing materials that day.²⁵⁷

Although limits were set on the level of humanitarian aid that could be provided, mainly because of the shortage of the materials required for intensive care as explained in the previous section 'The emergency stock', this did not mean that orders had been given prohibiting humanitarian aid altogether.²⁵⁸ However, not much aid could be given in view of the lack of medical supplies. At a certain point, however, it was decided to start using up the 'emergency stock'; this meant that more aid could be offered.²⁵⁹

As mentioned above, the concept of 'emergency stock' was not clearly defined. The Commander of the Field Dressing Station took the viewpoint that the total amount of medical supplies should be considered rather than special stock set aside for emergency use.²⁶⁰ Others did use the term 'emergency stock', applying it to practically all of the medical supplies, which could only be used freely for humanitarian aid to the local population at a later date. Opinions differed as to the exact moment when this could be done; this point will be discussed in detail later on in this appendix.

²⁵² NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 11/07/95 21:17, No. In 160.

²⁵³ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat Out 95-07-11 19:15.

²⁵⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (31).

²⁵⁵ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

²⁵⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (6).

²⁵⁷ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-11 22:52, No. Out 471.

²⁵⁸ OM (Public Prosecutor) Arnhem. KMar (Royal Netherlands Marechaussee) District Gelderland/Overijssel/Flevoland, PV No. P. 77/95, 18/12/95.

²⁵⁹ Debriefing statement R. de Groot, 18/09/95.

²⁶⁰ OM Arnhem. KMar District Gelderland/Overijssel/Flevoland, PV No. P. 77/95, 18/12/95.

Lieutenant Colonel Karremans had, given orders, after consultation with Naval Captain Hegge, that no operations should be performed on refugees. The operating theatres should be reserved for Dutch wounded, and the supplies required for operations should not be used for other purposes. This material was only freed for use on the wounded present after all the OP personnel were back at the compound and all shelling had stopped. It has been suggested, however, that there were no urgent cases during this period. KHO-6 only performed one operation on a refugee during this period, on a boy who had lost part of one of his thighs.²⁶¹ *MSF*, on the other hand, spoke of two urgent cases.²⁶²

Most of the wounded were old people with signs of exhaustion, or people with bullet or shrapnel wounds.²⁶³ There were a few simulators, however. One man took off his artificial limb in the hope of being evacuated. The Bosnian Serbs were also aware of this. For example, one wounded person was hit on the leg with the butt of a rifle to check whether he really was wounded. In general, however, the Bosnian Serbs did not hinder Dutchbat in the provision of medical care.²⁶⁴

Seven children were born during the first night in the compound, one of them being a stillbirth. The next day the mother in question was allowed onto one of the buses deporting refugees to Tuzla. The conditions under which the mothers had to give birth were abominable: lying on a stretcher in a dark corridor in unsanitary surroundings, without any privacy and in full view of anyone who might be passing.²⁶⁵

The accommodation in the compound allowed no separation between men, women and children. Some of those present had been driven mad or suffered panic attacks as a result of all they had been through. Some refugees stated later that there had been little medical care or dispensation of medicines during the first few days. A woman who had been wounded in both legs said that she had been seen by two doctors, but had received no treatment. There were no toilets. There was no bread either, but sometimes the wounded were given biscuits. Later, the above-mentioned wounded woman was allowed to wash her very dirty legs herself.²⁶⁶

In the opinion of the wounded ABiH officer Sadik Vilic, who arrived in Potocari between 5 and 6 pm on 11 July, Dutchbat personnel were unfriendly towards the wounded and threw them roughly on the dirty ground in one of the halls of the factory. He stated that one doctor dealt with the wounded in a very rough, careless manner. Dutchbat medical staff gave little assistance according to him, and provided no medicines or injections. Vilic claimed that the wounded were only given soup once in the following three days. Dutchbat soldiers did come in and out from time to time, but gave little assistance, shouted, did not listen to the wounded and did not touch them. *Médecins Sans Frontières*, on the other hand, did provide assistance.²⁶⁷ According to *MSF* staff member Abdulah Purkovic, all the wounded were crying out for help simultaneously.

The chaos and misery in the compound were unlimited. Young Dutchbat soldiers looked worried or stood crying. The Dutchbat medical staff were in a state of panic, and seemed to be concentrating on looking after themselves. Abdulah Purkovic also stated that in his view, Dutchbat doctors did little to help during the first day in the compound. Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien did what they could, but were exhausted after working a couple of 24-hour days.²⁶⁸ Colonel Kremer, unlike other Dutchbat doctors, received general praise. 'He provided an enormous amount of help, and did what he could', said Purkovic; Kremer was in fact the first Dutch doctor to provide active assistance for the wounded.²⁶⁹

²⁶¹ Confidential debriefing statement (5).

²⁶² NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat Out 95-07-11 20:33.

²⁶³ Confidential debriefing statement (5).

²⁶⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (19).

²⁶⁵ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

²⁶⁶ Interview Bosnian woman, Tuzla, 03/02/98.

²⁶⁷ Interview Sadik Vilic. 06/02/98.

²⁶⁸ Interviews Abdulah Purkovic, 04/02/98 and 21/05/99.

²⁶⁹ Interview Abdulah Purkovic, 04/02/98.

Since *Médecins Sans Frontières* did not have enough staff to deal with all the medical needs, Dutchbat did continue to provide assistance.²⁷⁰ The Field Dressing Station staff took over most of the work from *MSF*, looking after the wounded especially during the evening and at night.²⁷¹

Dutchbat medical personnel also patrolled the area outside the compound at night. They provided medical assistance, or ensured that a number of paramedics brought wounded to the *MSF* unit in the compound.²⁷² People who developed symptoms of shock were given an infusion.²⁷³ Dutchbat infusion material and saline, which were in ample supply, were used for this purpose where necessary.²⁷⁴

The members of the KHO-5 surgical team took on the lion's share of the work in caring for the wounded during the first few days.²⁷⁵ Since the new surgical team had taken over the task of ensuring that medical care for Dutchbat personnel was available when needed, the old team took responsibility for the general medical supervision of the wounded, sick, women and children in the compound. When the risk for Dutchbat personnel had receded, a working timetable could be drawn up in which the members of KHO-6 also played a part.²⁷⁶

Water supplies within the compound were found to be adequate in the first instance. Conditions outside the compound were worse, especially as regards the water supply.²⁷⁷ Dutchbat had a water purification plant capable of producing 7000 litres of water per day from the stream behind the compound. That was inadequate, amounting to not much more than one litre per person per day just for the people in the compound. Besides, Dutchbat did not have enough fuel to keep the installation running. In addition, Dutchbat had supplies of bottled water sufficient for ten days' consumption.²⁷⁸ The refugees initially got their drinking water from the local fire-fighting mains, but this proved to be not so suitable. Refugees complained that the water, which they were given in plastic beakers, was not pure.²⁷⁹ The refugees were subsequently also given water from the purification plant.²⁸⁰ Later still, the VRS allowed Dutchbat to repair the water station to provide the refugees with water.²⁸¹ Dutchbat set up a water supply system for the refugees,²⁸² and placed the battalion's water trucks outside the compound.²⁸³ The Bosnian Serbs also sent two tankers full of water from Bratunac, as early as 11 July. This water was of good quality, and the people seemed to get enough drinking water in these days. There were no queues at the water distribution points.²⁸⁴ The number of people with signs of dehydration was not a cause for concern. Christina Schmitz did not at this point find any children with signs of severe dehydration, either inside or outside the compound, and no diarrhoea epidemic broke out. It is true, however, that the people were debilitated and the children apathetic.²⁸⁵

General Mladic offered to supply food and medicine from Bratunac.²⁸⁶ In practice, this offer remained restricted to a little food. The provision of adequate food supplies for the refugees was a

²⁷⁰ Confidential debriefing statement (6).

²⁷¹ Confidential debriefing statement (31).

²⁷² Confidential debriefing statement (5).

²⁷³ Confidential debriefing statement (25).

²⁷⁴ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

²⁷⁵ Debriefing statement R. de Groot, 18/09/95.

²⁷⁶ Debriefing statement R. de Groot, 18/09/95.

²⁷⁷ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-11 20:33, No. Out 467.

²⁷⁸ Fax SCVAO Sector NE (Ken Biser) to CAC/DSRSG (Philip Corwin), 14/07/95 with UNMO Sitrep Update 141420B July. UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, File SNE Fax Out Jan-Jul 95.

²⁷⁹ Interview the 'Women of Srebrenica', Tuzla, 06/08/97.

²⁸⁰ Debriefing statement A.J.A.M. van de Wiel, 15/09/95.

²⁸¹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-13 13:32, No. Out 524.

²⁸² Confidential debriefing statement (14).

²⁸³ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-12 21:10, No. Out 500.

²⁸⁴ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-11 22:52, No. Out 471.

²⁸⁵ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-12 10:21, No. Out 482.

²⁸⁶ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-11 22:52, No. Out 471.

practically insurmountable problem. The kitchen staff used 500 tins of soup²⁸⁷ to make 1000 litres of soup for the refugees when they arrived at the compound. This seemed like a lot, but it meant no more than a mug of soup for each of the 4800 refugees in the compound. This was distributed to the refugees, together with the biscuits from the combat rations, in the evening of 11 July between 9 pm and midnight.²⁸⁸

12 July 1995

Conditions in the enclave were somewhat calmer on 12 July. The fighting had stopped, and the VRS had declared a ceasefire up to 10 am that morning. However, this did not bring much change in the uncertain situation the refugees found themselves in. *Médecins Sans Frontières* made use of the relative calm to ask Dutchbat to erect three tents outside the compound and to set up a First Aid post in them; this would facilitate the selection of patients requiring treatment most urgently and the treatment of patients with signs of dehydration. Most of the patients were apathetic after having spent a night in the open.²⁸⁹ Nevertheless, *MSF* was busy that morning giving sedative injections to people who had woken up with hysteria. They did not have much chance to do their work in peace, as the VRS resumed the shelling shortly before the end of the ceasefire.²⁹⁰

Still, the overall picture of the day was completely different from that of the day before. Dutchbat's logbook states that only two wounded patients presented themselves at Potocari during the day: a man who had been bitten by a dog and a man who had hit himself on the head with a stone. They received treatment in the compound.²⁹¹

In response to the *MSF* request mentioned above, a First Aid post was set up outside the compound, and used to select wounded patients urgently requiring treatment who were transported to the compound in a four-ton truck.²⁹² *MSF* distributed sheets of plastic which the refugees could use to make makeshift tents, and patients were provided with blankets, buckets and towels.²⁹³

Members of the KHO-6 team also helped outside the compound in the distribution of bread and water and in taking people who had been overcome by the heat to the First Aid post where they could receive the necessary treatment. Dutchbat medical personnel set up watches to check on the condition of the refugees during the night and to dress wounds, provide food, administer sedatives or assist in the delivery of babies as required; this started on the first night that the refugees were in the compound (the night of 11 to 12 July).²⁹⁴ After the medical staff of B Company arrived in Potocari, they also helped the Medical Platoon there to care for and treat the sick and wounded and the other refugees, and provided support for the First Aid post set up by *MSF*.²⁹⁵ Dutchbat personnel helped *Médecins Sans Frontières* there in the application of plaster casts and changing of dressings, and also assisted in the medical care of the patients in the hall of the factory.²⁹⁶

In fact, Dutchbat personnel at all levels spontaneously offered to help. Everyone did so, without much need for guidance from the senior ranks. The personnel of C Company also provided various forms of assistance without being commanded or encouraged to do so; this included washing, caring for and feeding patients and other refugees, and in general doing all they could to make the

²⁸⁷ Debriefing statement L.H. Wesstra, 12/09/95.

²⁸⁸ Debriefing statement W.J.G. Brands, 07/09/95.

²⁸⁹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

²⁹⁰ Interview Emira Selimovic, 21/10/97.

²⁹¹ SMG, 1002/14. Belangrijkste zaken uit verslagen UNMO's (Key points from UNMO reports).

²⁹² Debriefing statement J.P.M. Tops, 18/09/95.

²⁹³ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. Capsat *MSF* 95-07-11 22:52, No. Out 471.

²⁹⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (25).

²⁹⁵ Debriefing statement G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95.

²⁹⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (31).

situation of all the refugees as tolerable as possible. They also put up tents for women and small children outside the compound, at the request of *MSF*.²⁹⁷

Dutchbat medical staff received an order on 12 July, in response to a demand from the Bosnian Serbs, to go and set up a medical aid post in Bratunac in preparation for transfer of the wounded from Potocari to there. Bratunac, the major centre of Bosnian Serb activities in the area with a hospital of its own, had been demanding various forms of medical aid from the UN forces for some time, as mentioned above. This order was rescinded later the same day²⁹⁸ - again in response to a demand from the Bosnian Serbs, who had apparently changed their minds; it will be clear that the whole situation was extremely fluid at this time. While the order was still in force, Naval Captain Schouten volunteered to take what seemed to him to be the necessary steps to this end. He collected some supplies, with the aid of the Medical Platoon. However, plans changed every ten minutes, and were then scrapped. The consensus was finally that the wounded would be sent to Tuzla instead.²⁹⁹

As indicated above, General Mladic had initially wanted to start moving the wounded from Potocari first, with the football stadium in Bratunac as their destination. Christina Schmitz tried to argue against this decision when Mladic visited Potocari, but he told her to mind her own business.³⁰⁰

It is not known whether Christina Schmitz's arguments had more effect than appeared at first sight or whether the Bosnian Serbs changed their minds for other reasons. In any case, nothing came of the idea of moving the wounded to Bratunac and setting up a medical aid post there for them. Instead, it was decided to move both the wounded and the refugees outside the compound to Kladanj, roughly halfway to Tuzla, from where further transport to Tuzla could be arranged as the Bosnian Serbs saw fit. The transport of the refugees to Kladanj started about 3 pm on 12 July, and is described in Chapter 4 of Part IV of the main report. A convoy carrying some of the wounded left at 6 pm. This convoy failed to get through the confrontation line, however, and some of the wounded it carried were returned to Potocari. The story of this abortive move is told in section 13 below.

An unusual case of medical aid was provided on this day by two members of Dutchbat medical personnel, Captain R.A. Buijs and Sergeant First Class F.C. Erkelens, who had accompanied the refugees during their journey to Kladanj. On the way back later that evening, they provided first aid to a number of VRS soldiers who had driven a stolen Dutch APC off the road into a ravine near Vlasenica. They took one severely wounded and one lightly wounded soldier to the hospital in Vlasenica, while the body of a third VRS soldier who had died in the accident was picked up by the Bosnian Serbs.³⁰¹

²⁹⁷ Confidential Debriefing statement (9).

²⁹⁸ Debriefing statement C.A. Koreman, 11/09/95.

²⁹⁹ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Schouten Diary.

³⁰⁰ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

³⁰¹ Debriefing statement R.A. Buijs, 19/09/95.

Chapter 7

Return to Srebrenica

At a meeting with the VRS on the afternoon of 11 July, Dutchbat had asked the Bosnian Serbs whether *Médecins Sans Frontières* and a UNMO could return to Srebrenica to pick up the six remaining patients from the hospital and the 10 to 20 old people who were understood still to be in the Social Centre. Major Franken managed to reach agreement with the VRS on this matter on the evening of the same day: they would be allowed to go back to Srebrenica to pick up patients who were still there.³⁰² Major Franken had also wanted to return to Srebrenica to try to pick up *MSF* supplies there,³⁰³ but General Mladic told *MSF* that everything had already been removed.³⁰⁴

Dutchbat considered it safe to return to Srebrenica because the town was completely in the hands of the VRS. An exhausted Christina Schmitz was not so sure.³⁰⁵

There was no time to arrange the return to Srebrenica on 11 July after the VRS had agreed to it. Christina Schmitz spoke briefly to General Mladic on 12 July, and she also asked whether *MSF* could pick up the remaining patients and bring them back to the compound. He agreed.³⁰⁶

At 4 pm on 12 July, Warrant Officer Tops was ordered to report to Lieutenant Rutten in order to pick up the remaining wounded and old people with a four-ton truck and three members of medical staff. Tops followed Rutten, who was driving a Mercedes jeep, in the direction of Srebrenica. The VRS stopped both vehicles after they had driven 1500 metres, and confiscated Lieutenant Rutten's jeep. It was only at this point that Warrant Officer Tops learned that they were making for Srebrenica to pick up patients who had been left behind there. The group was allowed to continue its journey in the four-ton truck. A distended corpse was observed lying in the B Company compound, to the north of the encampment building, and two other corpses in military uniform were seen later in Srebrenica near the UNHCR warehouse and *Dom Kultura*. The group picked up a total of nine refugees, old people who had been too exhausted to go any further. The many Bosnian Serbs in the town did not molest these refugees. They were too busy looting and collecting the vehicles present in the enclave.³⁰⁷

Christina Schmitz did not go back to Srebrenica till 13 July. When the Bosnian Serb delegation inspected the compound in Potocari, she took the opportunity to return to Srebrenica with a VRS escort and a UNMO. She found three old people in the hospital, in the same place where they had been left behind two days ago; they were still in good condition. One person was sitting on the pavement outside the Social Centre, and three more were found inside the building. The VRS soldiers who were accompanying them were very nervous, because they had expected ABiH soldiers to be hiding in the building. The town was however completely empty, apart from a few looters struggling under the weight of TVs and washing machines, and driving cattle in front of them towards Potocari.³⁰⁸

Three other patients who had been left behind during the flight from the hospital could not be found; Christina Schmitz had no idea where they could be. They were not allowed any more time to look for people left behind in the ghost town of Srebrenica.³⁰⁹

³⁰² NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-11 22:52, No. Out 471.

³⁰³ SMG, 1002/14. Belangrijkste zaken uit verslagen UNMO's (Key points from UNMO reports).

³⁰⁴ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

³⁰⁵ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-11 18:14, No. Out 496.

³⁰⁶ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-12 21:10, No. Out 500. Christina Schmitz also reported that a number of Bosnian Serb nurses from Bratunac were present outside the compound. (This was not confirmed by Dutchbat sources.)

³⁰⁷ Debriefing statement J.P.M. Tops, 18/09/95. The observation of the military uniform was taken from the statement made during debriefing by D.H. Ross.

³⁰⁸ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-13 22:02, No. Out 534; 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

³⁰⁹ *Trouw*, 27/07/95.

The refugees who were crowded together, waiting for transport, were close to despair at the end of the day on 12 July. It did not look as if the VRS were going to continue the evacuation that evening, which meant that the refugees who were forced to camp outside the compound would have to spend another night in the open air or in improvised shelters.³¹⁰ The conditions outside the compound were appreciably worse than those inside. Some *MSF* nurses from the hospital were among the refugees outside. They stated later that they thought they would be safer there than with the wounded, where they were afraid that the VRS would treat them in the same way as the ABiH soldiers.

The refugees tried to find temporary shelter in all kinds of places outside the compound. The nurses mentioned a dark, dirty, windowless shed as one of these places. There was practically nothing to eat, and nothing at all for babies. It was claimed that the Bosnian Serbs did not allow the UN soldiers to give them food or water.

One refugee spoke of spending two days at a spot where there was no room to sleep and no food or water; another said that he had lain on the ground in a factory for two days, also without any water. He stated that that he had asked Dutchbat soldiers for water, but they had not given him any. A woman said, "The UNPROFOR soldiers were bad. They treated people like animals. (...) My husband asked them for protection but they did nothing. I think there was cooperation between the UNPROFOR and the Cetniks. The UNPROFOR soldiers gave them their uniforms and nobody could know who was who."³¹¹ There is an element of truth in the last statement, since the VRS acquired an appreciable number of UNPROFOR uniforms when they occupied the Dutchbat OPs. As a result, it became increasingly difficult for the refugees outside the compound to distinguish Dutchbat soldiers from the VRS.³¹²

³¹⁰ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-7-12 21:10, No. Out 500.

³¹¹ 'Srebrenica Hospital Personnel and Local *MSF* Staff: Eye-witness Accounts of the Evacuation from Srebrenica and the Fate of Missing Colleagues', *Médecins Sans Frontières* Report, February 1996, p. 9-11.

³¹² Field Report monitoring Srebrenica 13 and 14 July 1995 from Andrei Kazakov and Rosanna Sam. (Provided by E. O'Dwyer, US State, Department BH Desk).

Chapter 8

13 July 1995

The Bosnian Serbs continued the deportation of the refugees with the aid of buses and trucks early in the morning of 13 July, from about 7 am. Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien of *MSF* were horrified at the scenes they witnessed:

UN soldiers are controlling the desperate crowd. Everybody who could have stopped this mass exodus, should be forced to feel the panic and desperation of the people, leaving even their belongings behind they managed to bring to Potocari. (...) Everybody should see the violence in the faces of the BSA [VRS], directing the people like animals to the buses, children are screaming on the arms of their mothers, everybody runs for his/her life into an uncertain future.³¹³

Major Franken and Christina Schmitz agreed in the course of the morning that after the failure of the attempt to send a convoy of wounded to Kladanj the previous day (as described in section 13 below), there was no point in trying to send another medical convoy; instead, all attention should be concentrated on the departure of the refugees.³¹⁴

MSF and Dutchbat continued to be active in caring for the sick outside the compound during the morning of 13 July. Dutchbat doctors selected patients for transfer to the compound; the main indications were hysterical reactions or invalidity. The total number of patients transferred in this way during the day was 22. Patients were given water or fruit juice if necessary. Severe diarrhoea was still not observed, even among children. The breast-feeding of children did yield difficulties, however, since some mothers experienced problems with their milk production due to the stress they were under. The situation of the refugees inside the compound also started to deteriorate. As mentioned above, there were too few toilets, and the ones there were starting to overflow. The refugees outside the sheds could move around more freely now that the threat of VRS shelling had receded.³¹⁵

The food situation

Médecins Sans Frontières reported that there was some food left in the compound in any case, in the form of bread, potatoes and biscuits, though not enough; but that water was more important. It was not clear to *MSF* whether the refugees outside the compound were getting any food.³¹⁶

UNMOs reported on 12 July that the food situation was starting to get critical. Major Franken stated that Dutchbat could give the remaining refugees two meals a day, but that there were not enough supplies to permit this to go on after 13 July.³¹⁷ Some Dutchbat personnel stated during debriefing that refugees were given two meals a day and that the UN personnel were sharing their emergency rations with them,³¹⁸ but the refugees outside the compound did not seem to be getting any of this.

³¹³ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

³¹⁴ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

³¹⁵ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

³¹⁶ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 97-07-13 13:32, No. Out 524.

³¹⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, File 1.1.57 Civil Affairs SNE Tuzla 4 Apr – 23 Sep 1995. SCVAO (Ken Biser) to HCA UNPF HQ (Michel Moussali), UNMO Report for 12 /07/95.

³¹⁸ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

It is not clear how much food Dutchbat actually had. As mentioned above, the UNMOs reported that the rations of food would be exhausted by 13 July. However, Dutchbat reported after the departure of the refugees on 13 July that the battalion still had ample food to last them for a week. Dutchbat also received some rations from *MSF*, but the nature of these rations was not mentioned. It would thus appear that the expression ‘for a week’ must have referred to the roughly 400 soldiers who were left, along with the sick and wounded.³¹⁹

The last logistic report from Dutchbat, dated 10 July, stated that the battalion still had enough combat rations to last them for eight days. There had not been any fresh food for some considerable time. That meant, roughly speaking, that the battalion had about 4000 rations left when the refugees reached Potocari. In line with this, Yasushi Akashi reported to New York on 12 July that there was enough food for less than 24 hours for the estimated 27,000 refugees in the vicinity of Potocari. The UNHCR had stores of food in Belgrade and Tuzla, but they would only provide relief if adequate transport could be found and if freedom of movement was granted for this purpose. In anticipation of such permission from the VRS, a Dutch convoy was already on the way from Zagreb to Belgrade in order to shorten the reaction time. This convoy comprised two fuel tankers and 15 trucks loaded with fresh and tinned food.³²⁰

If the figures for 10 and 13 July are correct, and the reported stock data did show appreciable variation, then it may be concluded that (in contrast to later reports) relatively few rations can have been shared with the local population. In theory, after allowing for Dutchbat’s own requirements, about 2000 rations were available to feed about 10,000 people for a day (from 11 to 12 July) and another roughly 10,000 people for two days (from 11 to 13 July), not to mention the practical difficulties of dividing the packed rations fairly.

In the opinion of *MSF*, the people still seemed to have enough food on 12 July, taking into account the fact that most had probably taken small amounts of supplies with them when they left home.³²¹ Emira Selimovic, the *MSF* interpreter, disagreed with this assessment however. She believed that the refugees had practically exhausted all their supplies of food and water before they reached the compound.³²²

According to a report by two UNHCR field officers, two VRS trucks with food had been sent to the refugees and this food had been distributed immediately to the refugees outside the compound. Dutchbat also reported that bread was brought to the refugees from Bratunac every day, but the UNHCR field officers could not confirm this.³²³ There had however been negotiations with the VRS about the provision of humanitarian aid, and the VRS had agreed to lend a helping hand with food and water.³²⁴ The extent of this assistance was not precisely known (see also Part IV, Chapter 4).

Some reports suggested, however, that this aid was intended to create an image of compassion for the Bosnian Serb cameras rather than being motivated by a real desire to help the refugees. A truck carrying 200 loaves of bread arrived on the morning of 12 July. The Bosnian Serbs distributed this bread, together with chocolate and cigarettes, under the eyes of the cameras. General Mladic was filmed patting a boy on the head. It goes without saying that 200 loaves were not enough to feed the 15,000 people waiting for transport outside the compound.³²⁵

³¹⁹ CRST. Sitcen BLS, dtg 132301B Jul 95: Tfncontact Opsroom. Bericht (Report) C-DB-3 dtg 130800B Jul 95.

³²⁰ DCBC, 751. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 12/07/95, No. Z-1141, sent with fax COS UNPF-HQ to MODNL, 13/07/95.

³²¹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-12 21:10, No. Out 500.

³²² Interview Emira Selimovic, 21/10/97.

³²³ Field Report monitoring Srebrenica 13 and 14/07/95 from Andrei Kazakov and Rosanna Sam. (Provided by E. O’Dwyer, US State, Department BH Desk).

³²⁴ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 42, File 1.1.57 Civil Affairs SNE Tuzla 4 Apr – 23 Sep 1995. Fax SCVAO Sector NE (Ken Biser) to CAC/DSRSG (Philip Corwin), 12/07/95.

³²⁵ Confidential debriefing statement (6).

Convoys

A UNHCR food convoy left Belgrade for Potocari on 12 July but had to spend the night at the Yugoslav border because the Bosnian Serbs did not give permission for it to continue its journey to Potocari. The VRS had started hunting the column of men from Srebrenica who were making for Tuzla through the mountains and forests. Even at that time, UNHCR was receiving reports that the situation in the area was serious: roads were blocked, and there was no freedom of movement even for local people.³²⁶ The VRS argued that it could not give the convoy clearance to pass because of the presence on ABiH troops in the neighbourhood who might open fire on the convoy and give the VRS the blame.³²⁷ General Mladic confirmed, however, that the arrival of the convoy did not represent a problem for the VRS. The convoy carried 20,000 combat rations, 15,000 litres of water, 36,000 litres of diesel, toilets and cleaning materials.³²⁸

MSF was also trying to get permission for a convoy carrying 30 tons of medical and logistic supplies, together with three persons to supplement its staff, to go to Potocari on this day, but the Bosnian Serbs refused permission on the same grounds as for the UNHCR convoy: the ABiH was still in the neighbourhood, and might open fire on the convoy.³²⁹

Director General P. Bernard of *Médecins Sans Frontières* discussed the situation with Kofi Annan, the UN Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping, who told him that General Mladic had given his assurance that the UNHCR convoy would be granted clearance and that all the refugees – including the men, would be brought to Tuzla.³³⁰

However, the UNHCR convoy and the fresh personnel for *MSF* did not get further than the frontier at Zvornik. UNPROFOR tried to get a UN helicopter to Potocari.³³¹ It was rumoured that Ken Biser, the head of Civil Affairs for Sector North East in Tuzla, intended to go there too. Since *Médecins Sans Frontières* had found it impossible to get extra personnel to Potocari, the organization reacted ironically to Biser's plans by commenting that he would 'doubtless get there on horseback'.³³² In a later comment, *MSF* conceded that travel by horse might not have been such a bad idea after all, since a helicopter certainly ran a high risk of being shot down.³³³ As it turned out, Biser never actually made the trip.

General Mladic finally gave the promised permission for the UNHCR convoy to proceed to Potocari about noon on the 13th. The convoy arrived at the Yellow Bridge about 3 pm.³³⁴ The UNHCR Field Officers Andrei Kazakov and Rosanna Sam observed a great deal of movement among the refugees there, who were being taken out of the enclave by bus. In fact, the convoy arrived in Potocari at just about the same moment as the last refugees were being taken out of the former enclave: 'how cynical,' was *MSF's* comment on this event.³³⁵

The UNHCR field officers met the Bosnian Serb Kekic (of the Coordination Board for Humanitarian Aid) and the president of the Opstina (municipal council) of Bratunac, Ljubo Simic, at the Yellow Bridge. The field officers and Kekic tried to enter the Dutchbat compound while the

³²⁶ Field Report monitoring Srebrenica 13 and 14/07/95 from Andrei Kazakov and Rosanna Sam. (Provided by E. O'Dwyer, US State Department BH Desk.)

³²⁷ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 13 Jul 1995 10:50, No. In 861.

³²⁸ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-13 11:34, No. Out 521.

³²⁹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

³³⁰ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-12 17:54, No. In 167.

³³¹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-12 20:13, No. In 264.

³³² NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-13 13:32, No. Out 524.

³³³ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

³³⁴ Field Report monitoring Srebrenica 13 and 14/07/95 from Andrei Kazakov and Rosanna Sam. (Provided by E. O'Dwyer, US State Department BH Desk.)

³³⁵ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-13 22:02, No. Out 534. Christina Schmitz also reported that a number of Bosnian Serb nurses from Bratunac were also present outside the compound. (This was not confirmed by Dutchbat sources.)

convoy waited. Kekic wanted to get into the compound to ensure the safety of the local UNHCR staff and to check the situation of the refugees. Dutchbat refused access to Kekic, however, since he had a TV team from Pale in his wake. The field officers discussed the situation with Dutchbat and *MSF*.³³⁶

The remaining population

The Bosnian Serbs completed the deportation of the refugees who had been outside the compound about 4 pm. The transport of the refugees from inside the compound started half an hour later. All male patients who were able to walk, along with the remaining nurses, left in these last convoys.³³⁷

At a certain moment, the VRS brought along a man with a year-old baby. The man had no one to take care of the baby. Christina Schmitz had to separate the baby from the crying father, while the VRS took the latter away with them;³³⁸ she got the feeling that the father would never see the baby again.³³⁹ Warrant Officer Knapen described this event slightly differently: when the men were being separated from the women at the orders of the VRS, a young man was found with a 15- to 16-month-old child. Knapen took charge of the child, noted its name and the name of the father and handed the child over to Christina Schmitz of *MSF*.³⁴⁰

Only those with more serious wounds were left in the compound. The arrival of a film crew from Pale did not go unnoticed inside the compound. Wounded patients said that it was announced at a given moment that the patient accommodation in the bunker was going to be filmed.³⁴¹ A question about this to *MSF*'s interpreter elicited the response that a CNN team was expected.³⁴²

One person who was confronted with a film crew outside the compound was *MSF*'s cook, Abdulah Purkovic. He had to repeat a message dictated to him by the Bosnian Serbs in front of the Serbian TV cameras; he had to say that they were being treated well. Purkovic played his own role in helping the refugees. He was walking round in *MSF* uniform he had managed to get hold of at the last moment, which allowed him considerable freedom of movement. This led the people around him to believe that he was a doctor, and they appealed to him in panic. Many were in need of help, mothers had lost their children; everyone asked him to help.

Purkovic started to draw up a list of missing children and he went outside the compound looking for them. He managed to re-unite a few children with their mothers. Dutchbat personnel asked him to organize the distribution of food; he agreed, on condition that Dutchbat would help in the actual distribution. Soup was taken round in thermos flasks; 15 Dutchbat soldiers helped him to distribute this. A food queue was formed, but not without problems. People were fighting to get a bit of food; Purkovic found it a frightening experience to see this. In particular children and babies had practically nothing to eat or drink. Dutch soldiers brought a few biscuits round, but it was practically impossible to distribute them properly because people were in such a state of panic.³⁴³

After his enforced appearance on Serbian TV, Purkovic announced that he was so ashamed that he was going to commit suicide. In preparation for this, he performed ritual ablutions. The *MSF* interpreter Emira Selimovic asked for two Dutchbat soldiers to keep a watch on him to prevent him

³³⁶ Field Report monitoring Srebrenica 13 and 14/07/95 from Andrei Kazakov and Rosanna Sam. (Provided by E. O'Dwyer, US State Department BH Desk).

³³⁷ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

³³⁸ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-13 11:34, No. Out 521.

³³⁹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

³⁴⁰ Information based on confidential statement (21) made during debriefing. Christina Schmitz gave the child's name as Irma Hasanovic. This was written on a card that was hung round her neck. She was re-united with her mother in Tuzla. The father, Mused Hasanovic, did not survive Srebrenica. (Dutch TV, *Brandpunt* 22/09/95).

³⁴¹ Interview Bosnian woman, 03/02/98.

³⁴² Interview Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98.

³⁴³ Interviews Abdulah Purkovic, 04/02/98 and 21/05/99.

from carrying out this deed.³⁴⁴ After it had been confirmed that there was indeed a possibility that Purkovic might commit suicide, Dutchbat provided two men for such guard duty.³⁴⁵

Purkovic's feelings of insecurity increased even further when a group of VRS officers entered the compound and made a round of inspection. He told Dutchbat's physician Colonel Kremer about this and asked him for poison, since he did not want to be tortured or murdered. Colonel Kremer told him that he had a 50% chance of survival if he stayed in the compound, and an equal chance if he tried to escape to Tuzla through the woods at night. If however he hung himself or took poison, his chances of survival would be nil. Purkovic replied that he did not want to die, but that if he had no choice he would rather kill himself than be killed. In response, Kremer said that he did not have the poison Purkovic wanted.³⁴⁶

There was yet another reason why Purkovic's life was at risk: he had been an ABiH soldier before he started working for *Médecins Sans Frontières*. This put both Major Franken and Christina Schmitz in a difficult position. Major Franken intended to ask Purkovic to leave the compound, as he was afraid that Purkovic's presence there could put others at risk.³⁴⁷ After consultation with Franken, Christina Schmitz invited Purkovic to accompany her in her vehicle when she left Potocari. This was not without risk either: if the VRS apprehended him, this could put all the other men in the convoy at risk. Something similar had happened during the attempt to take a convoy of wounded to Kladanj (see below). Purkovic was however only willing to accept this offer if Christina Schmitz gave him poison, so that he could commit suicide in full view of everyone if he was discovered. It did not make things any easier for Christina Schmitz that she disapproved of Purkovic: he had been trying to steal things, had been trying to mislead her, and had been chasing after another member of *MSF* personnel with an axe. All these facts, however, did not dissuade her from trying to get him out of Potocari.

An even greater problem was that he also wanted to kill his sister to prevent her from falling into VRS hands. She was already sitting in a truck, waiting to be evacuated. At that time, it was difficult to intervene because of the large numbers of VRS soldiers who were in the vicinity. Nevertheless, soon after that she appeared at the Field Dressing Station with clear signs of an attempted strangling. She needed protection; she wanted to get away from Srebrenica. *Médecins Sans Frontières* was afraid that Purkovic would make another attempt on her life. A Dutchbat soldier was therefore posted as a guard next to her bed.³⁴⁸

Later, when he was on the point of departure, Purkovic got terrible pains in his legs and could no longer walk. The medical staff ascribed this to depression. They gave him some pills and put him in a wheelchair. They wheeled him into the open where it was extremely hot, but after two to three hours in the sun he could walk again.³⁴⁹ Dutchbat also intervened in other cases of attempted suicide.³⁵⁰ When a wounded ABiH soldier tried to hang himself, he was saved by the medical staff.³⁵¹ One case of hanging outside the compound was reported, though not observed directly.³⁵² However, some Dutchbat soldiers who were outside the compound all the time did report that a man had hanged himself behind the bus station in Potocari.³⁵³

Dutchbat made no distinction between possible ABiH soldiers and civilians when treating patients.³⁵⁴ As a result, up to 60 ABiH soldiers may have been treated in the compound.³⁵⁵ While the

³⁴⁴ Interview Emira Selimovic, 21/10/97.

³⁴⁵ Debriefing statement A.J.A.M. van de Wiel, 15/09/95.

³⁴⁶ Interview Abdulah Purkovic, Tuzla, 04/02/98.

³⁴⁷ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. Capsat 95-07-15 09:15, No. Out 546.

³⁴⁸ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. Capsats 95-07-14 08:21 and 95-07-14 09:15, Nos. Out 536 and 537.

³⁴⁹ Interview Abdulah Purkovic, 04/02/98.

³⁵⁰ Interview Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98.

³⁵¹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, File SNE Fax Out Jan-Jul 95. Fax SCVAO Sector NE (Ken Biser) to CAC/DSRSG (Philip Corwin), 14/07/95 with UNMO Sitrep Update 141420B July.

³⁵² Confidential debriefing statement (18).

³⁵³ Confidential debriefing statement (21).

³⁵⁴ Debriefing statement F.H. Elbers, 14/09/95.

toilets were being flushed after the departure of the refugees, a number of weapons and documents were found in them.³⁵⁶

The VRS inspection

The Bosnian Serb military police (MUP) had wanted to search the compound on 13 July, but VRS Colonel Radoslav Jankovic refused to give permission for this because the MUP was known to have looted the compound in Srebrenica and to have removed UNPROFOR material.³⁵⁷

However, a Bosnian Serb delegation did arrive at the compound about 5 pm on 13 July. They were accompanied by a UNMO and Major Franken. Elmira Selimovic, the *MSF* interpreter, and a couple of Dutchbat soldiers also went round with them. The surgeon Daniel O'Brien and a Dutchbat surgeon were with the wounded during the inspection. ABiH officer Sadik Vilic, who was one of the patients, knew some members of the VRS delegation from before the war. He was afraid of being recognized, and averted his head as much as possible. Ljubisav Simic, a former teacher from Bratunac and now mayor, was one of the members of the delegation. The Bosnian Serb commander said that he wanted the exact name of all patients together with the name of their father. They did not ask Vilic anything, but they did ask his mother-in-law whether she was Esma, a former teacher at the primary school in Bratunac. A Dutchbat medical technician and a coloured Dutchbat soldier did ask Vilic afterwards whether he was an ABiH officer.

Sadik Vilic concluded from the whole proceedings that the Bosnian Serbs told Dutchbat exactly what they wanted done, and that Dutchbat followed all their orders. 'Dutchbat was scared', he commented.³⁵⁸ The VRS delegation stayed no longer than ten minutes in the compound: 'devastated by the shit and smell and the look of the patients they left quickly', *MSF* reported.³⁵⁹ The Bosnian Serbs took a list of the patients with them;³⁶⁰ this is discussed in greater detail below.

A Bosnian woman stated that there had been three or four Bosnian Serb checks on the compound during the seven days she was there. The nursing staff warned the patients of such inspections beforehand. The woman was scared, and pulled a blanket over her head. A Bosnian Serb pulled the blanket down and said, 'I have been looking for you.' This was Major Nikolic, who said he recognized her and believed her to be the above-mentioned Esma. Nikolic was looking for this former teacher at the primary school in Bratunac because she was suspected of having killed Bosnian Serbs. Her husband, who had died before the war, had been chief of police. The woman said that no members of Dutchbat personnel accompanied the Bosnian Serbs during these inspection rounds, because they were scared. On the other hand, the same witness stated that Dutchbat never left the wounded alone and that she had never seen the Bosnian Serbs taking wounded away from the areas where the patients were lying. She had further never heard any negative comments about the behaviour of Dutchbat.³⁶¹

³⁵⁵ Debriefing statement H.A. Folmer, 07/09/95.

³⁵⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (16). Otter mentioned two weapons (SMG, 1007/25. Report of debriefing at Camp Pleso, 23/07/95.)

³⁵⁷ NIOD, Coll. (8). KM DK Bratunac 13/07/95 No. str.pov.br. 08-444-10.

³⁵⁸ Interview Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98.

³⁵⁹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-13 22:02, No. Out 534.

³⁶⁰ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

³⁶¹ Interview Bosnian woman, 03/02/98.

Chapter 9

14 July

Dutchbat and *MSF* were still left with a large number of patients in the compound in Potocari after the deportation of the population. Major Franken gave up the idea of transporting these patients to Kladanj in Dutchbat vehicles, as he was convinced that this would simply cause the VRS to confiscate all the vehicles used for this purpose. He now preferred evacuation by the International Red Cross. *Médecins Sans Frontières* had no objection to this idea, but hoped that it would not take too long as otherwise the VRS might start developing their own initiatives. However, the ICRC announced on the evening of 14 July that they would carry out this task and were now simply waiting for permission to do so.³⁶²

The involvement of the ICRC in the transport of the wounded on 17 July is dealt with in section 14 below. The next point on the agenda once all the patients had been taken away was the departure of *MSF*, but so far there was no clear idea about how this was to be arranged.

Once the compound was empty of refugees, the opportunity arose to move the patients to somewhere with a bit more light and better hygiene. All the wounded who had come from the hospital were moved from the wet corridor in the plant to the bunker, where they were re-examined, washed and given the necessary treatment.³⁶³ Any gaps in the patients' documentation were filled in, and schedules were drawn up for the administration of medicaments and for the guarding of the patients. General Mladic announced that he was going to visit the compound, but in fact he never did.³⁶⁴

The wounded also reported that they were washed and given cigarettes, fruit and other food, and blankets. The use of paper pyjamas (which tore very quickly) made quite an impression on them.³⁶⁵ Some of these wounded subsequently suggested that the better treatment they were given was connected with the arrival of the film crew outside the perimeter fence of the compound on 13 July. This was not true, however: the real reason for the improved treatment was that a convoy had arrived, and that the departure of the refugees meant that all attention could be concentrated on the remaining sick and wounded.³⁶⁶ There were moreover ample medical supplies now, because all the goods that had been stockpiled in Zagreb for a considerable time, waiting for dispatch, had arrived.³⁶⁷

The convoy with supplies for Potocari that had been waiting in Belgrade for clearance finally arrived on 14 July, too late to be of any benefit to the refugees. One could never be sure in advance whether a convoy would be allowed through. Even in the present case, the VRS only permitted a few trucks with combat rations, water, fresh fruit and medical supplies to pass.³⁶⁸ According to Christina Schmitz, it was a clever move of the VRS to give clearance for these large amounts of medical supplies: there was so much that Dutchbat would have to leave most of it behind when they left.³⁶⁹

The surgical team continued their activities at the Field Dressing Station. A boy about six years old had an abscess lanced on the morning of 14 July, while in the afternoon the wound of the boy who

³⁶² NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

³⁶³ Statement made during debriefing by H.G.J. Hegge, 21/09/95.

³⁶⁴ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

³⁶⁵ Interview Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98.

³⁶⁶ Debriefing statement H.G.J. Hegge, 21/09/95.

³⁶⁷ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00. An offer of X-ray material made by a Norwegian doctor from Tuzla came too late to be of any real use.

³⁶⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, File SNE Fax Out Jan-Jul 95. Fax SCVAO Sector NE (Ken Biser) to CAC/DSRSG (Philip Corwin), 14/07/95 met UNMO Sitrep Update 141420B July.

³⁶⁹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

had been operated on 6 July underwent secondary closure. The KHO-6 team also performed three operations on 15 July, to treat a multiple fracture of the leg, an ankle wound and an abscess on a leg.³⁷⁰ A KHO-6 nurse described these operations as noteworthy, especially because in the preceding period so little had been done. He doubted whether these operations were strictly necessary from a medical point of view. He had the idea that they were performed mainly in the interests of the peace of mind of KHO-6's surgeon, Naval Captain Hegge.³⁷¹ A wounded ABiH soldier and a wounded VRS soldier were also treated after the refugees had left the compound. Both were discharged after treatment.³⁷²

Five deaths were registered at the compound during the period from 13 to 15 July: a stillborn baby and two men aged about 70 and 75 years, whose names were not known, who died on 13 July; a young woman who died in Bratunac (due to lack of insulin) on 14 July and who was brought to the compound by Naval Captain Schouten in a Dutchbat ambulance; and an old woman called Behara Delilovic who died on 15 July at the age of about 70. Captain Van Hoogwaarden, the Commander of the Field Dressing Station, ordered compound Commander Major Otter to make arrangements for the burial of these persons and the burial was performed under the supervision of Sergeant First Class J. Zwiers and Sergeant Major M. Moek of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. All the persons concerned had died a natural death and had been examined by the medical service of Dutchbat and *MSF*.

The mortal remains were buried in a common grave measuring 12 x 3.5 x 1.80 m, dug behind the compound.³⁷³ No material specifically intended for burials was available. Private Raghoebir (a conscript serving with Dutchbat) observed that a baby had been stillborn, and that the midwife (a member of *MSF* local staff) had put the body in a refuse bin. He took it out and placed it in a plastic bag, in which it was buried; the other bodies were placed in the ground as they were.³⁷⁴

Sergeant Zwiers arranged for the driver of the shovel to fill in the common grave. The driver could not look into the grave from his driver's seat. Thanks to this procedure, the team charged with looking after the burial were spared the task of manually shovelling hard earth on to a bin liner containing the body of the baby and on to the uncovered body of a man.³⁷⁵ The grave was marked with plates bearing the names and probable dates of birth of the persons concerned, in Serbo-Croatian.³⁷⁶ Sergeant Zwiers made an official report of the burial.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁰ NIOD, Coll. Zwarts. Zwarts Diary.

³⁷¹ Confidential debriefing statement (6).

³⁷² Confidential debriefing statement (8).

³⁷³ The grave was located at grid reference CP64489120.

³⁷⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (5).

³⁷⁵ Interview J. Zwiers, 28/04/99.

³⁷⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (21).

³⁷⁷ Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Brigade KMAR UNPROFOR, Srebrenica Detachment, Mutations report 10/07 to 16/07/95.

Chapter 10

15 July

On 15 July, the KHO-5 team was finally able to leave the enclave, after long postponement of its rotation. It travelled with the logistic convoy that was returning to Zagreb. A discussion between Dutchbat, VRS, UNMOs and *MSF* about the fate of the remaining wounded remained inconclusive. It was necessary to await the results of discussions at high political and military level that were to be held in Belgrade on that day concerning the access of the International Red Cross to Potocari and the departure of Dutchbat.

The care of the patients in the compound did not give rise to problems. *Médecins Sans Frontières* was still seen as bearing the responsibility for all patients, but according to Christina Schmitz Dutchbat was ‘more than willing to help to cope with the daily workload’. Another operation took place on 16 July. This involved several surgical interventions on the same patient, for treatment of a shrapnel wound and a urological complaint.³⁷⁸

On 15 July, Bosnian Serbs brought another five older people to the compound in Potocari. The VRS had found these women in Suceška, in the southwest corner of the enclave; they had been trying to get to Potocari but had been unable to do so unaided.³⁷⁹

A remarkable incident is reported to have taken place when these women arrived at the compound. When the Deputy Commander of the Field Dressing Station, Warrant Officer Tops, asked the doctors for help they are supposed to have refused, saying ‘Let them just go on to the next place; if we help them, the battalion won’t be able to get away on time.’³⁸⁰ However, the women did receive the necessary treatment and were later given transport from with the other wounded.³⁸¹ Queries about this incident during subsequent interviews of a number of doctors failed to produce any confirmation of the above-mentioned remark. There would have been no reason to refuse treatment to these women alongside the other sick and wounded who were already present in the compound. *MSF* made no mention of this incident either.

³⁷⁸ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. ‘sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95’, compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O’Brien, 24/07/95.

³⁷⁹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. ‘sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95’, compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O’Brien, 24/07/95.

³⁸⁰ Confidential debriefing statement (18); SMG, Debriefing. Feitenrelaas, § 4.1.4.

³⁸¹ Confidential debriefing statement (5).

Chapter 11

Afterthoughts about provision of medical aid by Dutchbat for the refugees

It is difficult to give a simple, clear answer to the question as to whether Dutchbat did all it could to supplement the efforts of *Médecins Sans Frontières* in helping the refugees, within the scope available to it and making use of the supplies at its disposal. After the fall of the enclave, Dutchbat had taken upon itself a subsidiary rather than a leading role with respect to medical care. The answer to this question must be based on the judgement of Dutchbat itself, of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, of UNMOs and refugees and of UNHCR personnel who were only briefly present in the enclave. No other independent sources are available. One problem in this connection is that differences of opinion arose within Dutchbat at the time about the refusal to treat a wounded Muslim woman on 10 July and about a few other incidents that came to light later. In particular the case of the Muslim woman monopolized the subsequent discussion for all kinds of reasons and made it difficult to take due cognisance of other efforts that had been made. The discussion about the failure to treat this woman and the other incidents is dealt with separately below. The opinions given in the present section date from shortly after the fall of the enclave, or were expressed during the debriefing in Assen.

The humanitarian aid given to the refugees inside and outside the compound was initially limited by concern that this could lead to exhaustion of the limited supplies available. When it was judged that Dutchbat personnel were no longer at risk, Dutchbat felt able to give more generous aid. Opinions differed about precisely when the supplies were released for general use.

According to Major Franken, the embargo on the use of the emergency stock was lifted on 11 July when the first refugees reached Potocari. The fall of Srebrenica meant that Dutchbat was no longer in immediate danger, and all restrictions on use of the emergency stock could be lifted.³⁸² Captain Van Hoogwaarden, the Commander of the Field Dressing Station, believed that the restrictions on the use of the emergency stock were lifted when the OPs were no longer at risk and agreements had been made with the VRS. According to him, the decision to lift these restrictions was made jointly by the leadership of the battalion and the doctors.³⁸³

The moment at which it was decided to lift the restrictions on the use of the emergency stock was later than that suggested by Major Franken. Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, was not quite clear about the precise moment; he merely indicated that after the fall of Srebrenica it was decided, in consultation with the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, that the emergency stock could be used to give as much medical aid as possible.³⁸⁴

Other members of Dutchbat personnel expressed divergent opinions. Some believed that the restrictions were lifted relatively late in the day on 11 July, when it was clear that the battalion's own men were safe. However, one member of Dutchbat personnel linked this moment with the time when it was known that the refugees would be taken away and the Bosnian Serbs left Dutchbat in peace. That was not until 12 July, and was announced on the radio.³⁸⁵

Christina Schmitz of *MSF* put the time when the restrictions were lifted late in the morning of 12 July. This was when Dutchbat decided to switch to a 'non combat situation' and to make all medical

³⁸² BSG, dossier DV 95 II. Memo from deputy director of Information (Kreemers) to the minister, 16/11/95, No. V95021626. The memo refers to a conversation between Kreemers and Franken on 15/11/95. A comment to the same effect is included in memo V95021602 dated 16/11/95.

³⁸³ Report by the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 41.

³⁸⁴ Karremans, *Srebrenica, Who cares?*, p. 202.

³⁸⁵ NIOD, Collection of material concerning Dutch TV (KRO) programme *Brandpunt*. Sworn statements, 24/11/95.

facilities and supplies available. Fluids, antibiotics, analgesics and dressing materials, which were in very short supply at *Médecins Sans Frontières*, were passed on at that time.³⁸⁶

Naval Captain Hegge said that he had discussed the lifting of restrictions on use of the supplies with Major Franken on his own initiative, and that this discussion had taken place about noon on 13 July when the OPs were no longer occupied and no more Dutch personnel were outside the compound. From that moment, there was no risk that Dutch personnel could not be given any treatment they might need, so any Bosnian Muslims remaining could be given the best treatment possible. Little could be done for the Dutchbat soldiers held hostage in Bratunac.³⁸⁷

The Commander of the Medical Command of the Netherlands Armed Forces, Brigadier General W.F. Vader, subsequently informed the Dutch Defence Staff that the restrictions were not lifted until 14 July when supplies started coming through again.³⁸⁸ Minister of Defence Voorhoeve stated in a letter to the Dutch Parliament that the restrictions were lifted when it had been determined that the risk of casualties among Dutch soldiers was reduced.³⁸⁹ Voorhoeve's letter did not mention who decided precisely when the restrictions should be lifted, or when this decision was taken.

In addition, it can be concluded from the Statement of Facts (*Feitenrelaas*) derived from the debriefing in Assen that several members of Dutchbat personnel stated that there was no shortage of medical supplies in the Field Dressing Station. C Company in Potocari had ample supplies of medical materials over and above the minimum stock. These dressing materials and infusion supplies would have been enough to give 120 wounded persons first aid treatment. A standard package of First Aid supplies for a company consisted of 60 sets and two of these packages (comprising a total of 120 sets) were available.

There was also enough infusion fluid for the treatment of two times fifteen severely wounded patients. In brief, something could have been done for the refugees without breaking into the emergency stock. KHO-5 had used material from these standard packages, and knew how much was available. However, there are some indications that KHO-6 may not have wanted to know that the total supplies were larger than those present in the Field Dressing Station.³⁹⁰ Communication within the Field Dressing Station and between the old and new surgical teams may have been less than optimum, as a result of which KHO-6 was not fully aware which supplies were present where.³⁹¹

These communication problems and ignorance of which materials were stored where probably meant that the wounded did not always receive the medical material that was available. One example of this is that wounded patients lay for days in disposable operation clothing even though it was subsequently discovered that boxes full of military pyjamas were in stock. Another example concerned a severely wounded Muslim man who was discharged from hospital with a catheter attached to a dirty urine collection system. A new catheter had to be improvised with the aid of a length of plastic tubing and an empty bottle. When the stocks were cleared up, however, at least a hundred catheter bags were found.³⁹²

Large amounts of medical supplies were left behind on Dutchbat's departure. This was partly due to the above-mentioned fact that three tons of medical material that had been waiting in Zagreb for

³⁸⁶ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95; Van Laerhoven, *Srebrenica*, p. 140.

³⁸⁷ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

³⁸⁸ DCBC, 1223. Comdr GCK to HOPN (Chief of Operations) Defence Staff, 20/10/95, unnumbered.

³⁸⁹ TK session, 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 136, p. 11.

³⁹⁰ Interview H.M.W. Geurts, 10/05/99. Geurts was not invited to take part in the debriefing in Assen. When he volunteered to give evidence, one of the officers in charge of his unit told him that he would be called up to testify if this was considered necessary. Geurts himself suspected that he was intentionally kept out of the debriefing because of what he knew about the failure to treat the wounded Muslim woman on 10 July, whom he had subsequently taken to the hospital in Srebrenica. Geurts' statement about the presence of enough material to treat 120 patients is confirmed in the Statement of Facts (*Feitenrelaas* § 4.1.6).

³⁹¹ SMG, Debrief. *Feitenrelaas*, § 4.1.6.

³⁹² Debriefing statement by F.H. Elbers, 14/09/95.

clearance from the Bosnian Serbs did not arrive in the enclave till 14 July.³⁹³ Dutchbat took the medicines in this batch with them when they left, but some of the dressing material was left behind.³⁹⁴ Goods worth about NLG 2,000,000 (roughly □ 900,000) were left in Potocari in this way. An echoscope system worth NLG 700,000 (somewhat more than □ 300,00) was donated to the hospital in Bratunac on humanitarian grounds.³⁹⁵

MSF interpreter Emira Selimovic denied comments by witnesses on the Bosnian Muslim side that Dutchbat did not provide good medical care in the compound. Such stories might have come from people who were outside the compound. *Médecins Sans Frontières* did treat wounded outside the compound, but was unable to reach everyone there and offer the necessary aid.³⁹⁶ Dutchbat itself could do little, and was equally a victim of the circumstances. It may be noted, however, that Colonel Kremer said later that he was sorry that he had been able to do so little, but a ‘command decision’ in the days of the fall of Srebrenica had prevented him from doing any more.³⁹⁷

The Bosnian Serbs did not engage in any form of care for wounded refugees,³⁹⁸ though a few cases were reported in which the wounds of Muslim men held captive in Nova Kasaba were dressed.³⁹⁹

When Christina Schmitz arrived at the compound, she was still aware of the problems that had previously existed between Dutchbat and *Médecins Sans Frontières*, but these were a thing of the past and played no further role. She reported on 16 July that her many contacts with Dutchbat had convinced her that the battalion was well aware of its responsibilities with regard to the persons still present in the compound and their evacuation.⁴⁰⁰ As mentioned above, she had already stated on 11 July that the contacts with Major Franken were good, and that cooperation with Dutchbat was also experienced as good. Schmitz thus had no criticism of Dutchbat. *MSF* and all its patients could never have left the enclave safely without Dutchbat. Dutchbat had supported the organization well in the crisis following the fall of Srebrenica.⁴⁰¹ Schmitz did not change her mind on this matter, and said that on the whole she had nothing but praise for Dutchbat’s stance during the fall of the enclave: ‘The UN personnel, and in particular Major Franken, were always ready to lend a helping hand.’ The main point of which she was critical was Dutchbat’s refusal to accept any wounded on 6 and 10 July.⁴⁰²

Conversely, Christina Schmitz’ contribution met with general appreciation in Dutchbat. She had had previous experience in Chechnya, though she commented that Srebrenica was much more difficult to deal with. ‘They only way we could keep going was to work flat out and not think too much about the things we saw’.⁴⁰³ When *MSF* left, UNMOs also expressed their great admiration for the activities of the organization in general and of Christina Schmitz and Daniel O’Brien: they were constantly ready to serve, 24 hours a day, and had continued their work during the shelling of Srebrenica.⁴⁰⁴

Some Bosnian witnesses, on the other hand, said that Daniel O’Brien was the wrong person in that situation and that he was unable to cope: ‘Daniel was completely lost’. The interpreter Muhamed Durakovic spoke to him during a meal at *Médecins Sans Frontières* shortly before the VRS attack. Durakovic had the feeling that something was going to happen, and he wanted to be prepared for any eventuality. He therefore asked O’Brien for some morphine and syringes, in case he or someone else

³⁹³ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

³⁹⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (5).

³⁹⁵ Debriefing statement C.A. Koreman, 11/09/95.

³⁹⁶ Interview Emira Selimovic, 17/11/98.

³⁹⁷ Interview Emira Selimovic, 21/10/97.

³⁹⁸ SMG, Debrief, Feitenrelaas, § 4.1.6.

³⁹⁹ Interview V.B. Egbers, 02/09/99.

⁴⁰⁰ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-16 15:54, No. Out 561.

⁴⁰¹ *Trouw*, 27/07/95.

⁴⁰² Netherlands Press Agency *ANP*, ‘AzG-arts bij terugblik mild over optreden Dutchbat’ (*MSF* doctor judges Dutchbat mildly in retrospect), 21/02/96.

⁴⁰³ *Trouw*, 27/07/95.

⁴⁰⁴ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 426, File UNPROFOR BH-C 4. UNMO BH SNE to UNMO HQ, Srebrenica Update dtg 181320JUL95.

got wounded. He knew that anyone who was wounded and was unable to continue because of the pain would be finished. This request from Durakovic seemed to shock O'Brien awake: he became pale, and said that he was unable to help.⁴⁰⁵ This request seems to have touched a sensitive nerve. O'Brien had wanted to be replaced when the VRS attack began, because he was afraid the local population would be massacred. He did not want to witness this himself, and was afraid that he might share the same fate.⁴⁰⁶

Within Dutchbat, the Commander of the Medical Platoon, Captain De Bruijn, considered that his personnel had delivered 'more than 200 percent' performance under the extreme conditions of July 1995. The refugees who were hit by shell blast in the B Company compound in Srebrenica on 11 July received excellent treatment and care from the personnel there. When the big flood of refugees started moving, the Medical Platoon arranged reception centres and places where the sick and wounded could get treatment, both in the compound and at the bus station, and at a later stage they transferred the wounded to the bunker in the compound.⁴⁰⁷

Everyone in the Field Dressing Station worked well, though one Sergeant Major was not very well suited to his function. He was 'the wrong man in the wrong place'.⁴⁰⁸ According to one Bosnian patient, one Dutchbat soldier completely lost control in the period between 11 and 13 July. He ran around, shouting continually 'the UN are Mafia'.⁴⁰⁹

A member of the Field Dressing Station staff considered that the medical personnel had functioned well and had done their utmost best at all times. Their morale was good, unlike that of the Dutchbat soldiers who had landed in a situation that made it impossible for them to perform the task set them.⁴¹⁰

There was however no one in the Field Dressing Station whose performance in the reception and medical care of the refugees stuck out head and shoulders above the average. Short-term personnel and in particular ex-conscripts performed well in the reception of patients, though a few showed a drop in performance in the final days before the fall of the enclave, as a result of the intense stress and emotions they were subject to.⁴¹¹ The local UNHCR representative Almir Ramic had special praise for the efforts of Colonel Kremer and Corporal C.J.M. Govaers. The latter was a (female) member of the quartermaster's platoon.⁴¹²

Dutchbat medical personnel showed that they had been adequately trained for the tasks demanded of them, though the training might have laid greater stress on the application of dressings and on triage, to prepare them for the treatment of large groups of wounded patients.⁴¹³

⁴⁰⁵ Interview Muhamed Durakovic, 20/04/98.

⁴⁰⁶ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*, *MSF* Capsat Out 95-07-11 05:51.

⁴⁰⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

⁴⁰⁸ Debriefing statement J.T.M. Huijgens, 14/09/95.

⁴⁰⁹ Interview Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98.

⁴¹⁰ Confidential debriefing statement (5).

⁴¹¹ Confidential debriefing statement (19).

⁴¹² Interview Almir and Zahira Ramic, 06-10/11/99.

⁴¹³ Debriefing statement H.A. Folmer, 07/09/95.

Chapter 12

The evacuation of the hospital on 11 July

Minister of Defence Voorhoeve wrote to the Dutch Parliament on 28 September 1995, ‘The humanitarian efforts on behalf of the refugees from the Srebrenica enclave continued till the last moment. This is underlined by the evacuation by the Dutch UN personnel of the hospital in Srebrenica as it lay under Bosnian Serb fire’.⁴¹⁴ Careful study of the sources shows that there is no basis for this representation of the events.

A previous statement to the Dutch Parliament, on 3 August, based on debriefing talks held with a number of members of Dutchbat’s cadre in Zagreb, said that Dutchbat had evacuated 58 wounded from the hospital in Srebrenica.⁴¹⁵ Karremans had written in a personal report intended for the eyes of the Minister that ‘the hospital is evacuated to Potocari’ with support from the battalion.⁴¹⁶ Even earlier, on 14 July, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs had sent a memorandum to various Dutch embassies mentioning the praise of Dutch actions in Srebrenica from the international community, with special reference to the request for Close Air Support when soldiers had already been taken hostage, and to ‘the evacuation of a hospital under artillery fire’.⁴¹⁷

The debriefing report also mentions that Dutchbat managed to evacuate the hospital, and states that this called for a fair degree of improvisation because of the large numbers of refugees climbing on to the vehicles intended for the evacuation of the hospital.⁴¹⁸ When this report was presented to the Parliament it was again stated that Dutchbat had evacuated 58 wounded from the hospital in Srebrenica to Potocari.⁴¹⁹

Even before the main debriefing operation started in Assen, however, the Military History Section (SMG) of the Royal Netherlands Army Staff had pointed out during an initial briefing for the leaders of the debriefing, the Generals Van der Wind and Roos, that an attempt to evacuate the hospital had failed due to the growing chaos. This conclusion presented by the Military History Section reflected the picture built up by a number of its staff members during the short debriefing in Zagreb (see Chapter 5 of Part IV of the main report).⁴²⁰

The report of the operational debriefing in Zagreb does indeed give another picture. It is stated there that 58 patients had to be evacuated, but that this was impossible because the patients could not be loaded on to the four-ton trucks from B Company that were intended for their transport, as these trucks were stormed by the refugees.⁴²¹ This previous report seems to have been forgotten later, since the main debriefing report states further that *Médecins Sans Frontières* initially assisted in the evacuation

⁴¹⁴ TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 115, p. 4 (28/09/95).

⁴¹⁵ TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 111 (03/08/95).

⁴¹⁶ BLS/Cabinet. Karremans to Crisis Staff BLS Attn. PBLB, Van Baal, 29/08/95, unnumbered. This document was intended for the minister of Defence via CinC RNLA.

⁴¹⁷ ABZ, DAV, 999.241. Memorandum DVL/BZ, 14/07/95, No. 619/95. There were many more confusing and incorrect reports concerning the evacuation of the hospital. The Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* stated on 12/07/95 that there had been many fatalities, and that more than 70 Muslims had been wounded, during a bombardment of the hospital. Similarly, the *Algemeen Dagblad* reported on the same day, citing an interview with Hans van Oort, project manager of *MSF* in Bosnia, that two Dutch members of *MSF* staff had tried to guide the fleeing masses towards the North on 11 July. *MSF* had no Dutch staff members in the enclave, however. The broadsheet also quoted Van Oort as saying that all patients left the hospital on foot and that *MSF* had only managed to arranged transport to Potocari for the ten most severely wounded patients.

⁴¹⁸ Debriefing report, § 5.3, p. 55.

⁴¹⁹ TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 128, Appx. 5 (30/10/95).

⁴²⁰ SMG, 1004. Briefing in preparation for Dutchbat III Srebrenica study, 23/07/95.

⁴²¹ DCBC, 1650. C 11 Luchtmobiele Brigade aan Bevelhebber der Landstrijdkrachten, ‘Operationele Debrief Dutchbat III’, 28/07/95 (Airmobile Brigade to Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, ‘Operational Debriefing of Dutchbat III’), No. 172/Conf.

but that when the mass exodus of refugees started, Dutchbat largely took over. A passage from a statement made during the debriefing was intended to illustrate this: 'since *MSF* personnel were in the bunker at the time, it was decided that the wounded would as far as possible be carried in Dutchbat vehicles.'⁴²²

Later reports from *Médecins Sans Frontières* and Bosnian witnesses give yet another picture of the course of events during the evacuation of the wounded. These sources state that *MSF* rather than Dutchbat evacuated most of the patients from the hospital.

It may be commented that it cannot have been an easy task for the compilers of the debriefing report to reconstruct the events in question. The picture is complicated by the fact that some wounded were taken to Potocari from the B Company compound in Srebrenica, while others were transported to Potocari from the hospital, either directly or via the B Company compound. These complications may have confused the debriefers and interfered with the debriefing process. Some statements made during debriefing contradict others. In several statements, it is said that Dutchbat evacuated the hospital, while others said that local *MSF* staff brought the wounded to the B Company compound in Srebrenica. The available information is however insufficient to be able to state definitely that Dutchbat took charge of the evacuation of the hospital.⁴²³ Careful weighing up of the statements of persons closely involved in these events could have led to a different picture. According to such sources as Sergeant Major Koreman and Sergeant Gillessen, *MSF* actually rejected the assistance offered by these members of Dutchbat personnel in the evacuation of the hospital and said that the organization could handle matters on its own.⁴²⁴

The picture will now be pieced together first on the basis of Dutchbat sources, and then with reference to *MSF* and local sources.

The Dutchbat version of the evacuation of the hospital

According to the view of the Commander of B Company, Captain Groen, *Médecins Sans Frontières* did want to evacuate the hospital after it came under fire on 10 July. He therefore gave orders for four-ton trucks to be held in readiness to permit an immediate response to any request that might be made.⁴²⁵ Other sources also confirmed that the possibility of transferring the sick and wounded from the hospital to some other location had already been considered on 10 July, though the vehicles were not actually used until 11 July.⁴²⁶

Médecins Sans Frontières did make a request, via B Company, at 12.58 pm on 11 July for the wounded to be moved from Srebrenica to Potocari because of shelling in the vicinity of the hospital. *MSF* was afraid that the ABiH would not be able to maintain its resistance to the VRS for more than a further half-hour. There were about 50 to 60 wounded who required transport at that moment. The battalion staff then asked whether *MSF* had transport available to take the wounded to the compound in Potocari. *MSF* answered in the affirmative: the organization would arrange the move itself, and would get to Potocari making use of its own resources.⁴²⁷

⁴²² Debriefing report, § 5.10, p. 57.

⁴²³ Confidential debriefing statement (6).

⁴²⁴ Debriefing statement G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95.

⁴²⁵ Confidential debriefing statement (11).

⁴²⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (8).

⁴²⁷ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly logbook, Dutchbat Ops Room, 11/07/95, 12.58. The Debriefing report also mentions differences of opinion between the doctors at the compound and *MSF* about who was supposed to evacuate the wounded from the hospital in Srebrenica (Debriefing report, § 5.10). The precise nature of these differences of opinion remains unclear. Further investigation at the Ministry of Defence revealed no details of this issue (TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 136, p. 9-10). According to the commander of the Field Dressing Station, the surgeon of KHO-6 interfered in the matter, which led to a row between him and the doctor from *MSF* (Confidential debriefing statement (18)). *MSF* does not mention this, however.

The Commander of the Field Dressing Station, Captain Van Hoogwaarden, also stated that the agreement with *MSF* was that that organization's own doctors would take care of their own patients and would evacuate them in their own vehicles.⁴²⁸ Shortly after this agreement had been reached, the UNMOs reported that the wounded could not be moved to Potocari because a cannon held the road under fire,⁴²⁹ despite the fact that Dutchbat had informed the VRS about the movement of the wounded and had requested them not to fire on the vehicles entering the compound because they were carrying patients from the hospital.⁴³⁰

Despite the agreements that appeared to have been made between *MSF* and the Field Dressing Station, the four-ton trucks from B Company were still held in readiness. They were drawn up in such a way as to allow them to drive off northwards and were intended, as mentioned above, to carry the 58 wounded who were in the hospital. However, these trucks could not be used as ordered because of the flood of refugees that had washed over the compound in Srebrenica.⁴³¹ The situation in the compound was completely chaotic at that moment: the refugees appeared to think that the trucks were intended to take them northwards, and more than a 100 frantic people climbed on to each truck and could not be persuaded to get off again.⁴³² Drivers had to pull people out of the vehicles in order to get into the cab.⁴³³ Major Franken also admitted that it had been the intention to use these four-ton trucks to evacuate the hospital, but that this was simply not possible because the mass of refugees took them over.⁴³⁴

Dutchbat did however play a role in the evacuation of the hospital in the afternoon, after the period of Close Air Support, when the blocking position APCs took up their position near B Company compound. The blocking positions commander, Captain Hageman, discussed the transport of the wounded with *MSF*.⁴³⁵ The latter wanted to know whether the route was safe, as they wanted to get the patients away. Lieutenant Egbers made as much room as possible for the wounded in his vehicles, and got his soldiers to get out and walk the five kilometres to Srebrenica. Egbers had been given orders to drive the APCs along with the column of refugees and set the column in motion, but he remained near the hospital while *MSF* brought patients out and laid them in his vehicles so that he could bring them to the Field Dressing Station:

Then you get situations like babies being handed to you. If the mother's not there, at the end of the day you're left with a baby that can't do anything. So I took the mother along too, and people from the mental home, those crazy people walking around, completely confused. We took them along too. And in that way, you collect a whole lot of people. Everyone wanted to come along.

They took about 20 wounded with them.⁴³⁶ Although others did not mention any numbers, they did confirm the picture that the Dutchbat soldiers accompanying the column of refugees helped to take wounded from the hospital to Potocari.⁴³⁷

Lieutenant Egbers continued to wait for *MSF* at the blocking position assigned to him, while *MSF* staff kept on asking him whether it was safe to return. When *Médecins Sans Frontières* announced

⁴²⁸ Confidential debriefing statement (18).

⁴²⁹ SMG, 1002/14. Belangrijkste zaken uit verslagen UNMO's (Key points from UNMO reports).

⁴³⁰ UNGE, Box 42. File 1.1.57 Civil Affairs SNE Tuzla, 4 Apr-23 Sep 1995. Fax Ken Biser, SCVAO SNE to Philip Corwin CAC DSRSG, 11/07/95 [17.25 hr].

⁴³¹ Debriefing statement G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95.

⁴³² SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing report Groen, Camp Pleso, 22/07/95.

⁴³³ SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, § 3.4.5.

⁴³⁴ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁴³⁵ Debriefing statement G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95.

⁴³⁶ Interview V.B. Egbers, 02/09/99. The Monthly Logbook of the Dutchbat Ops Room reports that about 30 men from B Company went to accompany the wounded at 3.01 pm.

⁴³⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (29).

that they were finished, Egbers drove off in his APC.⁴³⁸ Christina Schmitz reported to the *MSF* office in Belgrade that the evacuation of the hospital was completed at 3.30 pm. At that moment, the *MSF* team saw the VRS advancing into the town.⁴³⁹

The MSF and Bosnian Muslim version of the evacuation of the hospital

Dutchbat did not play such a big role in the version of the evacuation of the hospital derived from *MSF* and Bosnian Muslim sources. In the morning of 11 July, *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the doctors from the hospital discussed how they could adapt to the increasingly threatening situation. Various measures, such as moving the hospital's operating theatre to the shelter in the basement, were considered. The local doctors insisted, however, that the patients should be evacuated to the compound in Potocari. They were afraid of a repetition of Vukovar if the Bosnian Serbs should force their way into the hospital: there was a risk that the patients might be killed under these circumstances.

MSF, on the other hand, preferred the idea of keeping the patients in the hospital. That was neutral terrain, and Christina Schmitz did her best to keep uniformed men outside even though that seemed an impossible task. It was however difficult for her to resist the determination of the doctors. It was consequently agreed that the doctors would arrange the transport of the patients in two trucks.⁴⁴⁰

The evacuation of the hospital took place in an atmosphere of extreme panic. No one knew precisely what was going on in Srebrenica or where was the best place to go to. Meanwhile, the local medical personnel continued to do their best to help the patients. The latter were scared to death though they reacted in different ways. They asked what they should do, 'but we were scared too, and did not know what to tell them', according to the doctor Dzevad Džananović. He had no more answers to these problems than anyone else, though he did not really think that anything serious would happen because the UN would protect them; he did not believe that so many people would be handed over to the Bosnian Serbs. It was nevertheless decided that the hospital would be evacuated. Džananović suspected that Ilijaz Pilav, had been in contact with Dutchbat in connection with this issue.⁴⁴¹

ABiH Commander Ramiz Bećirović wrote in a subsequent report that the director of the hospital, Avdo Hasanović, had started to transport the wounded to Potocari on his own initiative because the VRS were already in the town.⁴⁴² *MSF* interpreter Emira Selimović, on the other hand, thought that Ilijaz Pilav had given the order to evacuate the patients from the hospital.⁴⁴³

According to Pilav's own account, he was in contact with B Company about the evacuation of patients. In the chaotic situation prevailing in Srebrenica at that time, Pilav saw transport of the wounded to the compound in Potocari as the only solution. The basic *MSF* team consisted of no more than two persons, and could not do much. There were not enough people taking care of the wounded, some of whom were in hospital while others were in private homes. Pilav therefore went to B Company compound in Srebrenica. He stood in front of the gate, which was closed off with barbed wire, and asked via the soldier at the gate to speak to the officer in charge. This request was initially refused, but when Pilav said that he knew that there was an officer there, one did finally come.

He said, however, that he could not help to transport the wounded. This made Pilav very angry, 'upset, revolted' and he told the officer that he had already loaded some of the wounded into two

⁴³⁸ Interview V.B. Egbers, 02/09/99.

⁴³⁹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. Capsat Belgrade team to Christina and Daniel, 11-jul-1995 17:16 (draft press release). The time of departure mentioned here is not confirmed by a message from Christina Schmitz to UNPROFOR at 11.10 am, which states that patients and local staff are on their way to the compound in Potocari (SMG, 1001).

⁴⁴⁰ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

⁴⁴¹ Interview Dzevad Džananović, 04/03/98.

⁴⁴² ABiH Tuzla. ABiH 2nd Corps, unnumbered. Supplementary statement by Ramiz Bećirović, 16/04/98, based on a previous statement made on 11/08/95.

⁴⁴³ DJZ, War Crimes Tribunal dossier. DJZ to ICTY, 29/01/96, No. C 95/277, Answers to the Questionnaire *MSF* Local Staff, Emira Selimović, Mr Abdulah Purković, Tuzla.

trucks and marked these trucks with a Red Cross emblem. These trucks would drive into B Company compound, whether the gate was open or not. In response to this threat, 'he knew I was speaking the truth', said Pilav, the officer promised that B Company trucks would help to transport the wounded to Potocari; the vehicles had been standing in readiness for this purpose since 10 July. Pilav did not want to wait for this, however; in his opinion, something had to be done in a matter of minutes. He had information that the Bosnian Serbs were already no more than 800 metres from the hospital.⁴⁴⁴

There was little fighting round the town till the early afternoon. There was some shelling of the town after that, but no one was wounded so the medical personnel of the hospital could stay in their shelter. The patients then left the hospital *en route* for the B Company compound (a distance of no more than 500 metres) in accordance with the plan of the Bosnian doctors. The situation changed however round about 1.30 pm when a shell landed on B Company compound. *MSF* staff seem to have lost track of events at this point: 'The patients return and all of a sudden are gone to Potocari', Christina Schmitz writes in her report.⁴⁴⁵

The Mayor, Fahrudin Salihovic, then informed *MSF* of the deterioration of the situation, though he did not know exactly where the front line was. *MSF* was in radio contact with the UNHCR representative, who was in the compound in Srebrenica, but there are no records of any exchange of operational information. The situation changed again when aircraft arrived over the town to provide Close Air Support. The *MSF* representatives hurried to the hospital to see how many patients were left there. They also observed the start of an enormous movement of refugees in the direction of Potocari.⁴⁴⁶

After all the wounded had been carried out of the hospital and laid on the platform in front of the hospital, the doctors made a final round and left the patients behind. Doctor Džananović said that he did not leave the hospital until all the wounded had been brought out. No Dutchbat personnel were in sight when he left the hospital. People were in a state of great panic and fear, and the streets were full of people milling about in various directions, without any well-defined objective.⁴⁴⁷

Schmitz consulted the *MSF* office in Belgrade by radio, and it was decided to follow the column of refugees. Daniel O'Brien left in one car, taking little more than the radios and computers with him, while some of the local staff went first to the compound in Srebrenica and then to Potocari. In the meantime, as many patients as possible went along in two other vehicles.⁴⁴⁸

In fact, *MSF* had already arranged for vehicles to be in readiness for the transport of the patients. Someone had got hold of a truck and a tractor to transport the wounded; unfortunately, however, there were no drivers. *MSF* driver Ibrahim had hidden himself and Abdulah Purković, the *MSF* cook and general factotum, had to ask a certain Hajrudin for help in getting the wounded into the vehicles. The wounded were lying on the asphalt in front of the hospital waiting for transport. According to Purković, there was no one apart from the wounded to be seen at that moment, and the Bosnian Serbs were only a short distance away. The wounded were placed in the truck, the tractor and a *MSF* Toyota pickup. There was so little room available that they had to be piled on top of one another in the truck.⁴⁴⁹

Envir 'Zeke' Dožić, one of the wounded who had had a hand amputated, managed to drive the truck; there was no one else available. Purković himself drove the Toyota. An unknown person drove the tractor. It had been the intention to make a couple of trips and to come back, as there was not

⁴⁴⁴ Interview Ilijaz Pilav, 22/10/97.

⁴⁴⁵ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

⁴⁴⁶ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

⁴⁴⁷ Interview Dževad Džananović, 04/03/98.

⁴⁴⁸ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

⁴⁴⁹ Interviews Abdulah Purković, 04/02/98 and 21/05/99.

enough room in the vehicles for the wounded. However, Christina Schmitz arranged for the remaining group of wounded to be transported in Dutchbat vehicles.⁴⁵⁰ A group of 20 patients had been left behind at the hospital.⁴⁵¹ These are the 20 that were transported by Dutchbat.

These patients, in particular those who could still walk to a certain extent, were then transferred to Potocari in Dutchbat vehicles. (A small number of old people who had been left behind were picked up in the next few days.) *MSF* interpreter Emira Selimovic saw the driver of one of these trucks crying at the sight of all the misery around him.⁴⁵² The wounded were among the last to leave the town.⁴⁵³

The patients seem to have expected that Dutchbat would move them. A woman who had only recently been admitted to the hospital said that she knew they would be evacuated by UNPROFOR.⁴⁵⁴ Another patient, Sadik Vilic, also said that Dutchbat had announced that they would evacuate the wounded, though in fact this did not happen. Friends of his who later went up into the mountains carried him to the truck, where the wounded lay stacked on top of one another like sandwiches.⁴⁵⁵

All the doctors and some of the nurses from the hospital, insofar as they were not *MSF* employees, disappeared into the woods as soon as all the patients had been taken out of the hospital. It was an emotional moment. While artillery shells burst round about, the patients begged them not to leave.⁴⁵⁶ The local doctors wanted to take the opportunity to escape from the enclave. The patients were thus left in the care of Daniel O'Brien and Christina Schmitz of *MSF* and a few local nurses.⁴⁵⁷ The local doctors had apparently not consulted *MSF* before leaving, since on the evening of 11 July Christina Schmitz expressed surprise that there were no local doctors in the compound at Potocari.⁴⁵⁸

According to Abdulah Purkovic, a conflict arose with Dutchbat Major Boering on arrival in Potocari. Purkovic knew Boering, who had often brought him good wishes and messages from old acquaintances in Bratunac, where Purkovic had worked in the Fontana Hotel and where many of his pupils lived. When Purkovic and the group of wounded from the hospital arrived at the Dutchbat compound in Potocari, Major Boering refused Purkovic admission. This elicited the comment 'Boering again!' from the Muslims. Purkovic showed his *MSF* pass and said in German that he wanted to get into the compound with the wounded. Major Boering replied that he might perhaps allow Purkovic in without the wounded, but the latter insisted that he wanted to stay with the wounded. In the end, Purkovic was admitted to the compound after Dutchbat had discussed the matter internally. Once he was inside, Purkovic saw that a lot of old people, sick people and children were already there.

Christina Schmitz did not mention any problems about gaining access to the compound. According to Purkovic, Dutchbat had taken the wrong decision of putting the wounded in a corner and a corridor of a windy factory hall where there was mud and water on the ground.⁴⁵⁹

It may be noted that Dutchbat soldiers from the B Company compound in Srebrenica were initially allotted space in the factory hall under the same conditions. They slept there for one or two nights, with the wounded on one side of the factory hall and the Dutch soldiers next to them. It is true that it was draughty, unhygienic and dirty, but the wounded were put there because it was considered that this would provide them with some shelter from the firing that was still going on outside. Besides, Dutchbat wanted to keep the wounded out of sight, under the motto 'out of sight is out of mind'.

⁴⁵⁰ Interviews Abdulah Purkovic, 04/02/98 and 21/05/99.

⁴⁵¹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95', compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

⁴⁵² Interview Emira Selimovic, 21/10/97.

⁴⁵³ DJZ, War Crimes Tribunal dossier. DJZ to ICTY, 29/01/96, No. C 95/277, Answers to the Questionnaire *MSF* Local Staff, Emira Selimovic, Abdulah Purkovic, Tuzla.

⁴⁵⁴ Interview Bosnian woman, 03/02/98.

⁴⁵⁵ Interview Sadik Vilic 06/02/98.

⁴⁵⁶ Interview Abdulah Purkovic, 21/05/99. Abdulah Purkovic said that he had promised the wounded under oath that he would not abandon them.

⁴⁵⁷ Interview Emira Selimovic, 21/10/97.

⁴⁵⁸ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat Out 95-07-11 20:33.

⁴⁵⁹ Interviews Abdulah Purkovic, 04/02/98 and 21/05/99.

Comments had been heard on the Bosnian Serb radio that the VRS did not want to refugees to be admitted to the compound.⁴⁶⁰

The wounded in the hall were laid on stretchers and given blankets. More and more wounded were brought in. Some members of *MSF* medical staff stayed with the wounded and did what they could, according to Purkovic. One Dutchbat soldier burst into tears as he was following the first group of wounded.⁴⁶¹

After the patients had been unloaded in Potocari, Christina Schmitz turned back towards Srebrenica. She noted that some patients reached the compound by other routes than that followed by *MSF*. She was unable to get back to the hospital, however, as the last APCs that had previously formed the blocking positions had already withdrawn past the hospital. Schmitz therefore returned to the compound, leaving a few old people behind in the hospital.

She described the situation she saw on the way back to Potocari as follows:

What a mess and chaos! People run in panic, carrying screaming children and their small bags, UN personnel walking with the fleeing population, shelling continues from the mountains, it is very hot, the road very overcrowded and dusty. A truck in front us is stuck in the mud; UN troops move it manually. Then this truck stops and people are allowed to climb on it. We are just behind the truck and have to witness, how people almost kill each other in order to get a lift for the 4 km ahead. Finally we arrive in the compound of UNPROFOR. The UN soldiers have already set up a makeshift hospital in a dark corridor. 55 patients have arrived here, mostly war wounded. We have no medical supplies with us.⁴⁶²

As described in Section 7 above, Major Franken made arrangements on 11 July for Dutchbat soldiers and *MSF* staff to return to Srebrenica to pick up patients who had been left behind, while Christina Schmitz made similar arrangements on 12 July. Dutchbat picked up nine refugees on 12 July – mainly old people who had been too exhausted to get any further.⁴⁶³ Christina Schmitz went back to Srebrenica on 13 July, and found three old people in the hospital and four persons by the Social Centre.⁴⁶⁴ Three other patients who had been left behind in the hospital could no longer be found.⁴⁶⁵

For Christina Schmitz, the fall of the enclave and the move of the refugees to Potocari had been ‘the most terrible week in my life’. It may be concluded from her remark that she saw many big soldiers crying that a considerable number of Dutchbat personnel had likewise not been left unmoved by these events.⁴⁶⁶

There was initially some confusion about the precise number of wounded in the compound on 11 July. Different reports within less than an hour mentioned first 25, then 80 and then 70. UNMOs reported early in the evening that there were 50 patients with severe wounds,⁴⁶⁷ while later the same evening the Commander of the Field Dressing Station reported the presence of 88 wounded, including

⁴⁶⁰ Interview J.R. Groen, 05/07/99. After C Company had vacated a number of their prefabs, B Company personnel could be accommodated there. The Dutchbat soldiers commented that it was particularly the persistent smell in the hall that they had found terrible.

⁴⁶¹ Interviews Abdulah Purkovic, 04/02/98 and 21/05/99.

⁴⁶² NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. ‘sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95’, compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O’Brien, 24/07/95.

⁴⁶³ Debriefing statement J.P.M. Tops, 18/09/95.

⁴⁶⁴ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-13 22:02, No. Out 534; ‘sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6.7 - 22.7.95’, compiled by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O’Brien, 24/07/95.

⁴⁶⁵ *Tromm*, 27/07/95.

⁴⁶⁶ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 95-07-13 22:02, No. Out 534.

⁴⁶⁷ SMG, 1002/14. Belangrijkste zaken uit verslagen UNMO’s (Key points from UNMO reports).

ten with severe wounds.⁴⁶⁸ A total of 58 patients were evacuated from the hospital, including 20 by Dutchbat.

⁴⁶⁸ SMG, 1004/61. Monthly logbook Dutchbat Ops Room, 11/07/95.

Chapter 13

Convoy of wounded destined for Kladanj fails to make it (12–13 July)

Following the commencement of the deportation of the populace on 12 July, a solution also had to be found for the relatively large number of patients present in the compound in Potocari. On 12 July it appeared possible to transfer a number of the less seriously wounded to Tuzla. It was said that better facilities were available in Tuzla to take care of the wounded than in the overcrowded compound.

However, the arrangements made with the Bosnian Serbs did not appear to be foolproof. Close to the front line, the convoy was unable to transfer the wounded to the Muslim area or to arrange further transport for them to Tuzla in an orderly fashion. In the dark of night the convoy became a plaything of the Bosnian Serbs, who selected patients at will, allowing them through or sending them back, and who molested the accompanying nurses. The Bosnian Serbs sent the more seriously wounded back with the Dutchbat convoy of wounded. They themselves returned a number of the wounded to the hospital in Bratunac. Some of the wounded were able to cross the front line on their own steam. To make matters worse, the Dutchbat convoy of wounded was not allowed to return to the compound in Potocari and patients had to be dropped off at the hospital in Bratunac. All of this occurred against the backdrop of highly confusing and chaotic circumstances, in respect of which documentation is scarce and later statements do not accord with each other in all respects. This section provides as accurate a description as possible of the fate of this convoy and the patients.

Once Mladic and Karremans had agreed on the departure of the population of Potocari, General Nicolai contacted General Gvero of the VRS. Nicolai informed Gvero that UNPROFOR was busy arranging helicopters to transfer the wounded for treatment elsewhere as soon as possible. The helicopters could also be used to bring in medical supplies. Details were worked out at that point in time and a formal request was soon to reach VRS headquarters. However, in anticipation of this, Nicolai asked Gvero to order his troops to cooperate in the meantime.

After venting his anger about the deployment of airpower the day before, Gvero stated that it was not possible to use helicopters in a war zone. Moreover, the VRS had offered to open its hospitals for the treatment of the wounded and they could be taken there by road. Further insistence on the part of Nicolai and a proposal to arrange a meeting came to naught. Gvero was only willing to consider the arrival of a convoy carrying fuel and food to Potocari.⁴⁶⁹

Following a previous offer made by the VRS to treat the wounded in Zvornik under UN supervision and a possible evacuation of the wounded through the town,⁴⁷⁰ at about midday on 12 July⁴⁷¹ Dutchbat made arrangements with the VRS for the evacuation of the sick and wounded. The idea was that vehicles would transport the wounded close to the front line and that further transport to Tuzla would be arranged by the Sector North East on the Bosnian side of the line.⁴⁷² The Norwegian medical company would be able to assume responsibility for the wounded at Kladanj and to drive them to Tuzla.⁴⁷³

Transporting the wounded separately appeared to be a good idea. It fitted in with the departure of the populace, a process that had already commenced, and sending the wounded in the bustle of the

⁴⁶⁹ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. MA/COS to MA/COMD, Telephone Conversation of Nicolai with Gvero, 12/07/95, 2.45 pm.

⁴⁷⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 42, File 1.1.57 Civil Affairs SNE Tuzla 4 April – 23/09/95. Fax SCVAO Sector NE (Ken Biser) to CAC/DSRSG (Philip Corwin), 12/07/9595 'UNMO Report for 12/07/95'.

⁴⁷¹ Parliament document 22 181, No. 111 incorrectly cites the date of 14/07/95 on p. 2 based on 'Operationele Debrief Dutchbat III'.

⁴⁷² Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁴⁷³ Debriefing statement C.A. Koreman, 11/09/95.

refugee convoys seemed to be less desirable. Tuzla was a better place for further treatment and it was difficult for *Médecins Sans Frontières* and Dutchbat to continue caring for them in the compound.⁴⁷⁴

Following consultations with the VRS, it was decided to depart despite the fact that it was evening.⁴⁷⁵ The order to ready the convoy for departure was given by Major Franken.⁴⁷⁶ The latter wished to make use of the opportunity provided, as soon as possible and sent notice to Colonel Lazar Acamovic of the VRS, who was responsible for the rear in the Drina Corps.⁴⁷⁷

In Sarajevo UNPROFOR was not aware of these developments.⁴⁷⁸ This also applied to a certain extent in the case of the Sector North East in Tuzla. Karremans only gave notice of this command relating to the composition of the convoy at 6 pm, and asked that it be met on the other side of the front line.⁴⁷⁹

The convoy's departure

The wounded began to be loaded at about 6.30 pm but the convoy was only able to leave at 8.30 pm. It was not an easy matter to load the wounded. The four-tonne vehicles first had to be positioned. Many Muslims stood around them and a lot of people crawled into the body of the trucks when they were opened. Except in the case of the first vehicle, which was intended to be used for seating wounded people, the tarpaulins around the body of the truck were rolled up to provide ventilation and views. There was water and some food on each vehicle. The drivers parked the vehicles one by one at the entrance to the plant where the team of nurses brought the wounded outside.⁴⁸⁰

The *Médecins Sans Frontières* doctor, Daniel O'Brien, selected the wounded in the plant. It was not clear to the members of Dutchbat what criteria he used for the purposes of his selection.⁴⁸¹ The selection process deteriorated into chaos and the young Australian had no control over the situation. When he pointed to one patient, dozens of people began to run and shove in order to get away.⁴⁸² Dutchbat left this job to O'Brien but he felt most unhappy about this. Everyone wanted to leave.⁴⁸³ One man threw away his prosthesis in order to have a better chance of being evacuated.⁴⁸⁴ A man sat in one of the trucks with a bloodied bandage, as though he had just had an amputation. However, the rest of his healthy appearance did not match the image of someone who had just undergone an amputation. For this reason he was removed from the convoy while it was still in the compound.⁴⁸⁵

Many other people emerged from the plant, who believed that they were eligible for evacuation: 'Many families had made their own selection and felt that their grandfather, grandmother, father or sick brother should be eligible'. Young boys suddenly started walking with crutches in order to have a chance. There was a suspicion that men in particular had put on bandages in order to be taken away as wounded individuals. After they were refused, some of them therefore became furious and had to be calmed down. Muslim onlookers showed that they understood that they were being turned down.

One woman wanted her baby of a few months given to its father in the plant. Intervention on the part of Dutchbat ensured that this did not happen, because the father was incapable of looking after the baby. The desperate mother then tried to hand her child to another woman on a truck. Finally,

⁴⁷⁴ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Koreman Diary, 41st week, p. 28.

⁴⁷⁵ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

⁴⁷⁶ Debriefing statement C.A. Koreman, 11/09/95.

⁴⁷⁷ Interview R.A. Franken, 21/05/01.

⁴⁷⁸ Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29 /06/00.

⁴⁷⁹ BLS/Kab. Karremans to the BLS Crisis Staff, Major General Van Baal, 29/08/95, unnumbered.

⁴⁸⁰ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Koreman Diary, 41st week, pp. 28-30.

⁴⁸¹ Confidential debriefing statement (16).

⁴⁸² NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Schouten Diary.

⁴⁸³ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 12/07/95, 9.10 pm, No. Out 500.

⁴⁸⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (16).

⁴⁸⁵ Interview M.J.L. de Bruijn, 09/01/02.

the baby was properly wrapped and assigned a place on a mattress next to the mother and one of the *Médecins Sans Frontières* nurses took care of both mother and child.

The sick and the wounded were loaded into the bodies of the four-tonne vehicles on the stretchers or mattresses on which they lay. Weeping and hysterical family members took their leave of each other and sometimes had to be forcibly removed from the vehicles. 'It was a hectic and heartrending event with many people crying and begging, thinking that this was their best chance of leaving this place', said one of the Dutchbat members involved. Only the number of people in the convoy was recorded. Registering names was an impossible task due to the language barrier and the fact that several of the wounded could not speak.⁴⁸⁶

A Bosnian witness said that those wounded people who could not move, were allowed to go and that a Dutchbat doctor also took part in the selection process. A man without an arm who had previously evacuated wounded individuals from Srebrenica thereby putting his own life in danger, begged to be allowed to leave otherwise he would not survive. The Dutchbat doctor is reported to have said that it was an old wound and he could therefore not be allowed to go.⁴⁸⁷ It was possible to identify the Dutchbat doctor as Naval Captain Schouten but the latter denied involvement in a statement to the NIOD.

When another Dutchbat doctor (it was not possible to identify this one) ordered a man who could not move, to accompany the convoy, and another patient, Sadik Vilic, made it clear that he disagreed with this, he was led to understand that he should also leave. This was not possible and the doctor finally gave Vilic permission to stay. The man who could not move, did go. This was because an interpreter with *Médecins Sans Frontières*, Emira Selimovic, who knew that Vilic was an officer in the ABiH, had told him that it would be better for him to stay in Potocari, as she expected the situation to improve there over time.⁴⁸⁸

The Commander of the Medical Platoon, Captain M.J.L. de Bruijn, commanded the convoy and manned the first vehicle. The convoy consisted of seven vehicles and 64 wounded people (the debriefing report referred to 54). The wounded were distributed across five four-tonne vehicles and the compound ambulance. All but one vehicle bore the Red Cross logo.⁴⁸⁹

Dutchbat had expected the VRS to provide an escort but this did not occur. The VRS had only stipulated the route. Following the customary control at Yellow Bridge, a number of wildly gesticulating and screaming Bosnian Serb troops stopped the convoy at Kravica. They revealed that fighting was ensuing between the Muslims breaking out en route to Tuzla and the VRS, and that they were not happy to be exposed in the glare of the convoy's headlights. The convoy was held stationary and, after Captain Schouten, the driver of one of the vehicles, had opened his window, he had a firearm pressed against his nose. Only after the man called out, 'Pantsir, Pantsir', did it become clear that he was interested in the bullet-proof vests worn by Dutchbat personnel. Schouten felt compelled to surrender his vest: 'In view of the shooting going on around me, I began to feel somewhat unprotected'.⁴⁹⁰

Arkan fighters seemed to be involved here. One could conclude this from their long hair, headbands and black clothing. Once the bullet-proof vests had been taken, the convoy was allowed to drive on with its lights off. Thanks to the moon's rays it was not entirely dark. Along a section of the road extending for about two kilometres Bosnian Serbs lay on the shoulder positioned in ones or twos at 25-metre intervals, waiting for any ABiH soldiers who wished to flee the enclave.⁴⁹¹ After buses with their lights on approached from the opposite direction, the vehicles turned on their own lights again.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁶ NIOD, Coll. Koreman. Koreman Diary, 41st week, pp. 28-30.

⁴⁸⁷ Interview Abdulah Purkovic, Tuzla, 04/02/98.

⁴⁸⁸ Interview Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98.

⁴⁸⁹ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

⁴⁹⁰ Debriefing statement by A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95; Schouten correspondence – NIOD 29/12/01.

⁴⁹¹ Debriefing statement A.J.A.M. van de Wiel, 15/09/95.

⁴⁹² Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

Arrival at the front line

The convoy's destination was a place close to Tisca seven kilometres east of Kladanj, where the refugees had to cross the front line on foot. There the convoy came across Lieutenant Caris of the 108th Commando Company. Caris acted as a liaison officer on the ground. Sergeant E. Klinck was also present at some distance from the place where the buses had stopped. Klinck had notified the Operations Room (the Dutchbat command post) whenever a convoy arrived. Following consultation with the commandos, he had decided to wait until the last convoy of the day arrived. This was the convoy of wounded, which arrived at about 11 pm.⁴⁹³

Caris was there because that morning he had escorted the second convoy of buses to Tisca. Colonel Radoslav Jankovic, the Intelligence Officer for the VRS General Staff, and an interpreter had accompanied him. Jankovic had been making a brief stopover in Tisca and left after this. Caris remained behind and kept an eye out for the arrival of the buses. No one from Dutchbat was in command at that time. The place where the refugees were required to leave the buses was critical. Major Boering and Captain Voerman, who had accompanied the first convoy of wounded, had already left Tisca at the time and were heading towards the front line. It seemed strange to Caris that both of them had gone and that neither had thought it important to remain at the destination. Both had been ordered by the battalion command staff to accompany the refugees from the place where they had alighted. However, neither Boering nor Voerman were equipped with a radio in order to consult others, nor did they have any contact with the ABiH on the other side of the front line. Boering and Voerman did not return to the destination venue.⁴⁹⁴

Lieutenant Caris had notified the Dutchbat Operations Room that he was remaining at this venue, because the Bosnian Serbs behaved reasonably well as long as there was a blue beret in the vicinity. With the exception of an isolated incident and verbal abuse, they conducted themselves properly. When a young VRS soldier felt that an elderly woman carrying a large number of bags was not walking fast enough and loaded his weapon, a VRS company commander took action to rectify this.

When the convoys arrived, VRS soldiers entered the buses to send the people out. The Dutch did not understand what was said in the process. Later the Bosnian Serbs checked the buses to see if nothing had been left behind. In one incident a young man had remained lying in a bus. The VRS also ran alongside the column en route to Kladanj to remove several men. Sometimes elderly people were left lying. Caris was not clear as to who was actually in charge of the VRS in Tisca. There was a major, perhaps Major Sarkic, the chief of staff of the 1st Milici Brigade, and a major who was the local area commander. The latter commanded his area as he saw fit and was not interested in what his headquarters wanted. This commander was present throughout the period in question.

When the convoy of wounded arrived, the Bosnian Serbs did not want it to drive through to the front in the dark. Sarkic informed Caris that he feared the Muslims would fire on the convoy and the VRS would be given the blame. However, Caris noticed that the two majors discussed the issue. Caris was under the impression that Sarkic was interested in making some arrangement but that the area commander was not.⁴⁹⁵

Caris had contact with the battalion's Operations Room via OP-C. Because Tisca was situated in a valley, it was not possible to have direct radio contact with Potocari. Shortly before the convoy departed, Caris was notified of its impending arrival. The VRS was also aware that a convoy of wounded would be arriving.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹³ Debriefing statement E. Klinck, 12/09/95.

⁴⁹⁴ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

⁴⁹⁵ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

⁴⁹⁶ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

Before the convoy left, its commander, Captain De Bruijn, was aware that it would not be able to cross the front line.⁴⁹⁷ Even while en route the convoy received a radio message that problems could arise at its destination in relation to those of the wounded who were unable to walk.⁴⁹⁸ In his contact with the Operations Room it was suggested to Caris that he do all in his power to secure transit. In response, Caris revealed that he was mainly sending people along to help the wounded in the event that they had to continue on foot but a great many hands would have been required to carry the 60 wounded individuals whose presence had been announced.⁴⁹⁹

Some 20 VRS soldiers greeted the convoy in Tisca. A number of them loaded their weapons. At the end of the road the vehicles were required to turn around one by one and drive back several 100 metres.⁵⁰⁰ 'A gang of sinister looking VRS guys reeking of alcohol have decided that were not allowed to continue,' was how Schouten, one of the escorts, summarized the situation.⁵⁰¹ The VRS had apparently stopped the convoy because the local commander had not been notified of its passage, according to a report by the UNMOs.⁵⁰² However, the VRS was certainly aware of their arrival and Caris had not noticed that alcohol played any role.

The presence of men of fighting age in the convoy caused those VRS soldiers who were present, to see red. When they noticed this and knew that they would be crossing the front line, nothing further could be arranged. The VRS soldiers who were present, fell on the four-tonne vehicles and the men were dragged out accompanied by loud screaming. It had to happen that the first vehicle which arrived, contained the seated group of wounded. Although the wounds of many of them were readily apparent, this had little impact. There was a man with an amputated foot, one with an amputated leg, one with an amputated arm and another with a leg in plaster. These amputations gave the VRS personnel the impression that they were ABiH troops who had been involved in battle. The VRS soldiers wished to settle a few scores. At that point Dutchbat had no further role to play and the convoy escorts were forced to retreat.⁵⁰³

Threatened with weapons, the Dutchbat troops were forced to stand behind the last vehicle.⁵⁰⁴ All the vehicles had to be opened, again under threat. The wounded were forced to stand, to state their names and to describe their wounds.⁵⁰⁵ The Bosnian Serbs checked these details against a list.⁵⁰⁶ The people in the first four-tonne vehicle, the one containing the seated group of wounded, were required to exit it, even those who were virtually unable to walk. They were ridiculed and several had to remove their bandages to allow their wounds to be examined.⁵⁰⁷ At least one of the wounded men was severely beaten.⁵⁰⁸ An elderly man with a broken leg and one wounded by shrapnel were required to walk a long distance. De Bruijn and Caris tried to halt this misconduct but with a weapon trained on them they were forced to watch the men being made to sit separately.⁵⁰⁹

The Bosnian Serbs said that they wanted to separate the lightly from the seriously wounded. The VRS personnel pulled the lightly wounded people (all were men between 20 and 40 years of age)

⁴⁹⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

⁴⁹⁸ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

⁴⁹⁹ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

⁵⁰⁰ Debriefing statement C.A. Koreman, 1/09/95.

⁵⁰¹ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Schouten Diary.

⁵⁰² SMG, 1002/14. Belangrijkste zaken uit verslagen UNMO's (Key points from UNMO reports), 13/07/95, 08.00.

⁵⁰³ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

⁵⁰⁴ Debriefing statement A.J.A.M. van de Wiel, 15/09/95.

⁵⁰⁵ SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, § 4.1.4.

⁵⁰⁶ SMG, 1007/25. Debriefing of the military nurse, Dekker, Kamp Pleso, 23/07/95.

⁵⁰⁷ Debriefing statement C.A. Koreman, 11/09/95.

⁵⁰⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 118, Civil Affairs SNE, Srebrenica. Interoffice memorandum from Michel Moussali to Yasushi Akashi, 3/07/95, unnumbered.

⁵⁰⁹ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

from the convoy. In fact, they separated wounded men between the ages of 20 and 40 years from the others, paying hardly any attention to their wounds. There were about 30 men.⁵¹⁰

The Dutch, positioned together at the side of the road, were forced to look on in the light of the headlights as the VRS soldiers dragged the wounded from the vehicles, especially those they felt were capable of walking.⁵¹¹ Pushing and prodding the wounded with their rifle butts, five VRS troops violently drove them out of the vehicles and kicked them in the direction of Kladanj. They also kicked their legs. From a medical point of view, this was irresponsible and it was feared that many would not reach Kladanj. Some of the wounded involved in this, went crawling on their way. The VRS personnel rejected attempts to accompany the wounded or carry them on their backs. Those of the wounded whom the VRS felt were able to move in some way or another (about 16), they sent into the valley.⁵¹²

Amongst those of the wounded who were required to walk further, there were several on crutches and a woman who had given birth shortly beforehand.⁵¹³ The staff escorting them were not given a chance to supervise the selection and remained together behind the vehicles acting on the advice of Naval Captain Schouten. In the meantime, Lieutenant Caris and Corporal Smit kept an eye on the vehicles.⁵¹⁴

It was disgraceful that the wounded were required to walk another seven kilometres to the front line. If this had been known beforehand, the number of wounded to be evacuated would certainly have been smaller.⁵¹⁵ Only those seriously wounded individuals who were unable to move, remained behind in the vehicles.⁵¹⁶

Negotiations conducted with the Bosnian Serbs about the supervision and treatment of the wounded were thus in vain. They wanted everything to be done on their terms and they made the demands. De Bruijn was ordered to turn his convoy around. When he refused, he was threatened. Caris too was given to understand that he should leave. He was not allowed to take one of his vehicles with him.⁵¹⁷ When Sergeant Klinck wanted to drive his vehicle off, the VRS commander told him to leave it behind for Major Boering and Captain Voerman. This seemed to be an easy excuse to appropriate a vehicle. The latter was indeed left behind, under duress. Klinck was also required to leave behind his bulletproof vest and FAL rifle.

The VRS had now appropriated two Mercedes vehicles: that of Klinck and Verhaegh, and that of Captain Buijs, the B Company doctor. All Dutchbat personnel who were still in Kladanj, returned with the convoy of wounded.⁵¹⁸ The more seriously wounded had to return, because intensive care was only available in the compound in Potocari.⁵¹⁹ After one o'clock in the night of 12 to 13 July the convoy turned in the direction of Bratunac.⁵²⁰

After spending an hour or two in Tisca, the convoy returned via Vlasenica, Milici and Konjevici. The VRS stopped the convoy in Konjevici. This was not accompanied by violence. The VRS merely asked Caris what he was going to do and where he wished to go, after which the convoy was allowed to continue on its way. During the trip the Dutchbat troops saw many armed VRS soldiers and heard a great deal of firing, including that of mortar shells.⁵²¹ The only delay occurred while evading VRS troops sleeping on the road.⁵²²

⁵¹⁰ Debriefing statement E. Klinck, 12/09/95.

⁵¹¹ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

⁵¹² SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, § 4.1.4.

⁵¹³ Debriefing statement A.J.A.M. van de Wiel, 15/09/95.

⁵¹⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (26).

⁵¹⁵ Confidential debriefing statement (21).

⁵¹⁶ SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, § 3.1.1.

⁵¹⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

⁵¹⁸ Confidential debriefing statement (30).

⁵¹⁹ SMG, 1002/14. Belangrijkste zaken uit verslagen UNMO's (Key points from UNMO reports), 13/07/95, 8 am.

⁵²⁰ Confidential debriefing statement (26).

⁵²¹ Debriefing statement E. Klinck, 12/09/95.

⁵²² Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

Those who stayed behind in Tisca

After the Dutch vehicles returned to Bratunac with the more seriously wounded, no Dutchbat personnel witnessed what happened to the people who had been forced to remain behind in Tisca. Wounded in the war in 1993, Sabit Ahmetovic was in the front truck with his wife and son. He was required to remain in Tisca, while his wife and child were taken to the hospital in Bratunac. When a Bosnian Serb doctor noticed that they were not injured, in the morning he stopped a bus in one of the refugee convoys that had left from Potocari to allow this woman and her child to leave. In this way they still managed to reach Kladanj.

A total of about 15 VRS troops were in Tisca, under command of someone nicknamed Voljvoda. Those who remained behind in Tisca, had to hand over their money and valuables, placing them on a rug in the middle of the group. The group was then searched. While doing this, the VRS soldiers repeatedly inquired after Naser Oric and the group was told that they had allowed themselves to be misused by Oric, because he had enriched himself at their expense. In addition, the VRS soldiers asked who was wounded where and when, and if any of them were former JNA officers or residents of towns such as Potocari and Osmace, where Oric had built up his power base. At around three in the morning a friendly VRS soldier came to hand out blankets and bread. He remained with the group for the night. That night six VRS soldiers managed to rape one of the nurses who were accompanying the group.⁵²³

At the beginning of 1996 *Médecins Sans Frontières* also tried to reconstruct events in Tisca by interviewing its former personnel and hospital staff.

After the convoy reached Tisca an unidentified VRS soldier asked why it had not gone to Bratunac. He was unable to do anything for these people in Tisca, even though he did not care. A VRS soldier threatened people with a hand grenade in order to get them out of the trucks. Another climbed into a truck and shone his torch in their faces. The woman who had just given birth, was ordered to get out. He frightened her and insulted the others.

Other VRS troops also threatened and insulted the patients, hitting some on their legs and asking them where they came from and what they knew about the ABiH. Valuables such as gold, money, papers, and handbags were confiscated. One of the nurses recognized several VRS soldiers as her former neighbours. One of the VRS majors recognized her, asked her a large number of questions, and wanted to send her back to Srebrenica. She asked if she could continue on her way and that they should definitely not send her back. In response, the major became angry and ordered a soldier to guard her. However, one of her former neighbours gave her moral support by talking to her for two hours. The group remained in Tisca throughout the night.

The following morning at about 10 am two red Volkswagens containing three Bosnian Serbs arrived, two men in a black uniform and one in an army uniform. They ordered everyone to stand up. They were looking for Naser Oric's sister and had a woman from Srebrenica with them who was supposed to be able to recognize Oric's sister.⁵²⁴

A wounded man could no longer stand and was beaten until he stood up again. The soldiers issued threats. A major then began to divide the patients into two groups. The medical staff had to stand between them. Women and men with old wounds, mainly amputees (about ten) stood on one side. Men with fresh wounds who could recover so as to be able to fight again (approximately 30) stood on the other side. The *Médecins Sans Frontières* technician, Abdulkadir Velic, and a woman from Potocari were also put into this group.

Throughout the selection process the major and other Bosnian Serbs instilled fear in them by making comments such as 'What shall we do with you? Shall we murder you or rape you?' The first group consisting of nurses and people with old wounds was sent to Kladanj. They were also threatened

⁵²³ Interview Sabit Ahmetovic, 23/10/00.

⁵²⁴ Interview Sabit Ahmetovic, 23/10/00.

that they would be killed if they reported what had happened to them, on television. In Kladanj Pakistani UN troops then took them to the Tuzla airfield.⁵²⁵

The fate of the assistants

When the convoy left in the direction of Kladanj, nine *Médecins Sans Frontières* nurses were present. *Médecins Sans Frontières* employed 13 local people in Srebrenica, while the hospital had 128. All the *Médecins Sans Frontières* nurses wanted to go with the convoy of wounded to Kladanj. This tallied with the overall view that the residents who had fled to Potocari, wished to leave the enclave as soon as possible.

Sergeant Geurts assigned two nurses to each vehicle. When the VRS stopped the convoy for the first time at Kravica, nothing happened to the *Médecins Sans Frontières* assistants. Upon their arrival in the valley near the front line, the Bosnian Serbs also removed all the assistants from the trucks.

Dutchbat personnel only partially witnessed how the VRS dealt with these assistants. Two of them were taken into the bushes and what happened to them remains unclear. This was also true for the other female *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff from the time they disappeared from sight.⁵²⁶ Another Dutchbat observer confirmed that, when the VRS isolated the men, VRS soldiers took two female members of staff with them to their barracks. They could be recognized by their *Médecins Sans Frontières* shirts. They were not seen again.⁵²⁷

Someone else saw an armed man walk 50 to 60 metres into the forest with a female *Médecins Sans Frontières* assistant. However, he did not hear anything further out of the ordinary.⁵²⁸

Bosnian witnesses declared that a car with more Bosnian Serbs arrived between 1 am and 2 am. One of them took a nurse from the group and left with her. She returned within 15 minutes, apparently without having experienced any difficulties. After this, these Bosnian Serbs took another woman, a cleaner from the hospital, with them and held her for about two hours. The woman returned in tears and was incapable of speaking. Various people have confirmed that she was raped by several VRS soldiers. The following morning she tried to commit suicide.⁵²⁹

According to Sergeant Klinck, three female members of *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff were permitted to cross the front line but they did not dare to do so, because it was dark. When the men had to seat themselves on a small grass field, these women went to sit with them.⁵³⁰ So that night eight nurses remained with the wounded. Without blankets in the open air, they were very cold. At about four o'clock in the morning a UN vehicle appeared, driven by two Bosnian Serbs. They selected one of the nurses and took her to VRS quarters located close by. The two alleged that one of the other nurses was a sister of Naser Oric and wished to confirm this. The nurse who was taken, said that she did not know. She was returned to the group without being harmed. Nevertheless, the two men took the alleged sister of Oric with them. After two hours she was returned in tears and said that she had been beaten and raped.⁵³¹

After the two Volkswagens carrying the three Bosnian Serbs arrived at about ten o'clock, a man in a black uniform inspected those that had remained behind, and took several of them aside, including the male *Médecins Sans Frontières* technician. Other vehicles then took the rest to Bratunac. The people

⁵²⁵ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. 'srebrenica Hospital Personnel and Local *MSF* Staff: Eye-witness Accounts of the Evacuation from Srebrenica and the Fate of Missing Colleagues', *Médecins Sans Frontières* Report, February 1996, pp. 4-6.

⁵²⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (26); SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, § 4.1.4. There is also a debriefing statement which indicates that all 14 *MSF* nurses were escorted into the houses arm-in-arm. The person in question did not know what happened to them.

⁵²⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

⁵²⁸ Debriefing statement A.J.A.M. van de Wiel, 15/09/95.

⁵²⁹ NIOD, *MSF* Coll. *Médecins Sans Frontières* Report, February 1996, pp. 5-6.

⁵³⁰ Debriefing statement E. Klinck, 12/09/95.

⁵³¹ NIOD, *MSF* Coll. *Médecins Sans Frontières* Report, February 1996, p. 4 and p. 7.

concerned were 12 seriously wounded individuals, including some who were missing limbs, two elderly men, seven nurses and the woman who had been raped.⁵³²

A UN report from Tuzla also revealed that one of the female assistants who had been violently removed from the group, returned utterly beside herself after several hours and said that she had been raped. This report confirmed that a new group of Bosnian Serb soldiers had arrived early in the morning on 13 July. This group selected 13 patients and seven medical staff, and let them go to Kladanj. Those who remained behind, including two nurses and the medical technician, were sent back to Bratunac.⁵³³

The numbers referred to in this Civil Affairs report differ from those mentioned in a previous UNPROFOR human rights report. At any rate, the statement concerning the medical technician was incorrect. He did not survive the trip to Tisca. The person concerned was Abdulkadir Velic, a 20-year-old student of medicine who was helping out in the Srebrenica hospital. He was also in the convoy of wounded. A VRS major took him aside, refusing to believe that he was a *Médecins Sans Frontières* technician. He said that Velic was either an ABiH soldier or could become one: 'It is best that I kill you. Whatever way you look at it, you are a Muslim'.

A witness stated that Velic had again been sighted near Tisca, where he was tortured and then killed. However, one of the nurses who later arrived in Tisca again as part of a refugee convoy, saw him standing there amongst several wounded people and surrounded by VRS personnel.⁵³⁴

None of the *Médecins Sans Frontières* nurses returned with the Dutchbat convoy. However, seven nurses returned with the wounded whom the VRS had dropped off at the hospital in Bratunac.⁵³⁵ One of these nurses was in a truck with two women who had just given birth. She took one of these babies to give the VRS soldiers the impression that she was a civilian. According to her, the VRS placed nurses in the same category as soldiers. After the wounded were dropped off at the Bratunac hospital, these nurses returned to Srebrenica, where they joined the refugees who were being evacuated to Kladanj, without being noticed.⁵³⁶ Later Dutchbat learned from *Médecins Sans Frontières* that all the nurses had arrived safely in Tuzla.⁵³⁷

The VRS refuses to permit the return of wounded individuals to Potocari

Back at Yellow Bridge, at about 2.30 am on 13 July the local commander, Jovan Ivic (nicknamed Jovo) refused to grant the convoy of wounded access to the enclave. According to him, no permission had been given for their return. Captain De Bruijn tried to persuade Ivic but to no avail. The convoy returned with 34 wounded people but no *Médecins Sans Frontières* personnel.⁵³⁸ The wounded were counted twice. Sergeant Major Ritsema counted the wounded and arrived at 34.⁵³⁹

There were individuals present who urgently required additional medical care. People were dying in the trucks. However, Ivic refused to budge, denied them access to Potocari and ordered the convoy to wait. According to the convoy commander, De Bruijn, no Dutchbat delegation arrived to help with negotiations, even though the staff were aware that the convoy also contained seriously

⁵³² NIOD, Coll. Hicks. UNPROFOR Centre for Human Rights, Report on Human Rights Violations, 25/07/95, No. Rep: hrrep.3., prepared by Ronald Salvisberg.

⁵³³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 118, Civil Affairs SNE, Srebrenica. Interoffice memorandum from Michel Moussali to Yasushi Akashi, 31/07/95, unnumbered.

⁵³⁴ NIOD, Coll. MSF. *Médecins Sans Frontières* Report, February 1996, p. 4 and p. 7.

⁵³⁵ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 13 /07/95 13:32, No. Out 524. Of the women, 'the easy women' – as Christina Schmitz cryptically referred to them – arrived in Tuzla and 'the heavy one[s]' returned to Bratunac. (NIOD Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 13/07/95 16:56, No. Out 526).

⁵³⁶ NIOD, Coll. MSF. *Médecins Sans Frontières* Report, February 1996, pp. 4-8.

⁵³⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (26).

⁵³⁸ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

⁵³⁹ Confidential debriefing statement (26).

wounded individuals.⁵⁴⁰ Although there was radio contact between the convoy and the Operations Room, the escort, Lieutenant Caris, did not consider using the radio to call the battalion for assistance.⁵⁴¹ As it happened, Dutchbat woke Christina Schmitz during the night after receiving news that the patients who had been sent back, needed to be taken care of. At that point in time no one knew why they had been sent back.⁵⁴²

Through the UN interpreter, Petar Usumlic, Dutchbat sought contact with the VRS in order to break the impasse in respect of the transit of convoys but the Bosnian Serbs remained intractable.⁵⁴³ Jovo had telephone contact with the barracks in Bratunac but he was informed that no permission had been given to allow the convoy through. In response to this, Captain De Bruijn asked whether Jovo was prepared to accept responsibility if the wounded Muslims did not survive the wait. However, Jovo refused to budge and merely stated that he had his orders.⁵⁴⁴

Lieutenant Caris denied that Dutchbat personnel were required to remain in their cabs and they were not allowed to tend the wounded, only to be allowed out of their cabs at 9 am when they discovered that one of the wounded (an old man) lay dead in one of the vehicles.⁵⁴⁵ Caris maintains that he said that the wounded should be checked regularly and that he had also spoken to Naval Captain Schouten about this. For the rest, Caris was preoccupied with security and posted a sentry.⁵⁴⁶

In the morning the convoy saw various empty buses again going in the direction of the enclave to collect refugees.⁵⁴⁷ That morning General Mladic came to the enclave again. Caris walked towards Mladic, shook his hand and explained the situation. In response, Mladic decided that the wounded were allowed to go to Bratunac. However, several lightly wounded individuals were permitted to go to Potocari to travel on the buses to Kladanj if possible. The convoy then turned in the direction of Bratunac and Colonel Jankovic of the VRS accompanied the convoy. Jankovic was a man of authority and managed to keep the populace at bay.⁵⁴⁸

When the convoy arrived in Bratunac, the people reacted quite aggressively.⁵⁴⁹ The press were present but again Jankovic revealed that he had considerable standing and that he could persuade people to step back with just a few words.⁵⁵⁰ According to Franken, Jankovic did everything in the interests of Dutchbat's return. In his view, this was also the reason why Jankovic involved himself in the speedy removal of the wounded.⁵⁵¹

At the hospital the wounded had to be dropped off at a side building. A VRS soldier approached Caris and, pressing a machine gun against the latter's bullet-proof vest, ordered him to remove it. Jankovic intervened and the VRS soldier left Caris alone. The man who had not survived the trip, was not taken to the mortuary, because Bosnian Serbs were being held there. The dead Muslim was taken to a building next to the hospital and placed on the ground in the shade at the back of the building.⁵⁵²

Those Dutchbat personnel who had escorted the convoy of wounded were rather shaken by their night-time adventure. According to Caris, they stood there like whipped hounds and had to be

⁵⁴⁰ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

⁵⁴¹ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

⁵⁴² NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 13/07/97, 1.52 pm, unnumbered.

⁵⁴³ Karremans, *Srebrenica: Who Cares?*, p. 218.

⁵⁴⁴ Debriefing statement E. Klinck, 12/09/95.

⁵⁴⁵ See SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, § 3.1.1.

⁵⁴⁶ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

⁵⁴⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (30).

⁵⁴⁸ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

⁵⁴⁹ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

⁵⁵⁰ Debriefing statement by E. Klinck, 12/09/95.

⁵⁵¹ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01. It was remarkable that Jankovic knew Frankens' home address and later even sent him a Christmas card.

⁵⁵² Debriefing statement E. Klinck, 12/09/95.

urged into action.⁵⁵³ After this the Dutchbat troops placed most of the wounded on beds in the side building. Ten people had to wait outside on a stretcher, because there was no more room at that point in time.⁵⁵⁴

Once they were in Bratunac, the sick and the wounded were treated well in the circumstances. After lengthy negotiations one of the Dutchbat troops was allowed to remain behind with the wounded.⁵⁵⁵ According to Caris, General Mladic had ordered that someone from Dutchbat should remain behind as some type of guarantee for safe passage. Caris was surprised that the medical staff wanted a corporal to remain behind. He intervened and assigned Naval Captain Schouten.⁵⁵⁶ The latter accepted this duty. In his book, Karremans writes that Major Nikolic heard that Schouten had remained in the Bratunac hospital to keep an eye on the situation.⁵⁵⁷ Apparently, Karremans was not aware that this had happened at Mladic's instigation.

After the convoy's return, Major Franken informed Christina Schmitz that the VRS had checked the bandages of the men in the convoy. It appeared that some were not wounded. That had made the VRS personnel angry, after which they had removed 30 men from the convoy. Some of the patients had been beaten. Two or three people were reportedly injured in the process. Franken said that he had notified senior UNPROFOR commanders and the International Red Cross about the VRS's actions. After this, Franken and Christina Schmitz agreed that in the case of the next convoy, as it happens, there was none, all the male patients should be checked by the VRS to prevent a repetition of what had happened in Tisca. When Schmitz made inquiries of O'Brien, it appeared that he had been unable to control who boarded the trucks.⁵⁵⁸

The wounded and Médecins Sans Frontières: who was where?

Early in the afternoon of 13 July it was clear that some of the patients and the medical staff of *Médecins Sans Frontières* were in the vicinity of Tuzla, while others were in Bratunac. The reports paint a somewhat remarkable picture of events. UNMOs reported that the convoy which had been stopped near Kladanj and which had returned to Yellow Bridge, was now en route to Bratunac with a special VRS escort acting according to instructions personally given by Mladic, and that the latter had given his assurance that the convoy would not encounter any problems. At the same time the UNMOs reported that the wounded at Yellow Bridge were still awaiting evacuation. Negotiations on the matter proceeded with difficulty, although the UNMOs hoped that they might be able to make their way directly to Tuzla by road.⁵⁵⁹

Médecins Sans Frontières itself reported that the medical convoy was en route to Tuzla with a VRS escort and that General Mladic had personally issued instructions for its safety.⁵⁶⁰ There was more to report later on about undertakings given in respect of the safety of the wounded. Helsinki Citizens' Assembly governor, Mient-Jan Faber, stated in October 1995 that several of the wounded had shown him documents and that Dutch officers had signed statements, which were said to reveal that on account of their injuries they were to be transferred to the Tuzla hospital with a Dutchbat escort and would not be handed over to the Bosnian Serbs. However, no evidence has been found to support the existence of such documents and statements.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵³ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

⁵⁵⁴ Debriefing statement C.A. Koreman, 11/09/95.

⁵⁵⁵ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

⁵⁵⁶ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00.

⁵⁵⁷ Karremans, *Srebrenica: Who Cares?*, p. 229 and 231.

⁵⁵⁸ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 13/07/95, 4.56 pm, No. Out 526.

⁵⁵⁹ SMG, 1002/14. Belangrijkste zaken uit verslagen UNMO's (Key points from UNMO reports), 13/07/95, 11 am and 12.12 pm.

⁵⁶⁰ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 13/07/95, 11.34 am, No. Out 521.

⁵⁶¹ ABZ, DAV 999.241. Letter from Mient-Jan Faber to the ministers, Pronk, Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve, 26/10/95. No reply was received from Mient-Jan Faber to a request for further information submitted by the NIOD.

By this stage Dutchbat had absolutely no idea of the location of the wounded or the numbers involved. There was still a group of patients in the compound who had undergone surgery during the preceding days, 14 of them men, six women and five children younger than five years of age. In addition, there were 18 other patients, 14 of them who had been admitted to the compound on 13 July. Most were old, exhausted or worn out. A five-year-old girl with a lung infection had also been admitted on the same day. In the preceding 24 hours seven children had also been born, one of them stillborn. In addition, 33 people had come back with the convoy of wounded on its return. Dutchbat had counted 34 but one had died on the way.⁵⁶² It was expected that of those patients who had since been admitted to the Bratunac hospital, another four or five would die within 48 hours if they did not undergo surgery.⁵⁶³

In the afternoon of 13 July O'Brien received confirmation from UNPROFOR that all the nurses and the wounded men who had been removed from the convoy in Tisca, had crossed the front line.⁵⁶⁴ The UNMOs added that of this group 15 wounded individuals were being treated in the hospital in Kladanj.⁵⁶⁵ Only the next day it was reported that the VRS had taken 16 patients from Tisca to the Bratunac hospital but Captain Schouten, who had remained behind in Bratunac, was not permitted to visit this group.⁵⁶⁶

Other reports paint a confusing picture. There are major discrepancies in respect of the number of patients involved. Sector North East reported to Zagreb that 88 wounded people had been transported to Kladanj and that 35 had returned to Bratunac. On 13 July Sector North East again addressed an urgent appeal directly to the UNPF headquarters in Zagreb to proceed with evacuation as soon as possible in order to save lives.⁵⁶⁷ A UNHCR report on the convoy to Kladanj indicated that there had been problems with 80 patients. Dutchbat doctors had urged an evacuation to Tuzla on medical grounds but the VRS had said that this was impossible to do with vehicles. However, it was possible to do so on foot but Dutchbat had turned this down, according to the UNHCR report, because the patients could not walk and because their mandate ordered them to protect the refugees. This was why the convoy had returned to Potocari. Nevertheless, 32 patients had gone on foot. The remaining 48 were subsequently admitted to the hospital in Bratunac.⁵⁶⁸

There are some grounds for doubting the accuracy of the figures that are cited. Originally there were 88 patients in the compound. Of this number 64 went to Kladanj with the convoy that failed to make it. Thirty-four of the people in this convoy returned in Dutchbat vehicles and one of them died. The VRS took 17 patients back to Bratunac and 15 succeeded in crossing the front line. This leaves a difference of two, which may mean that mistakes were made during counting, babies may or may not have been counted, or that 13 and not 15 patients – as reported by the UNMOs – had managed to cross the front line under their own steam.

In the Bratunac hospital

On 14 July UNHCR Field Officer Andrei Kazakov managed to visit the Bratunac hospital and the wounded who had returned from Kladanj. He recorded the names and diagnosis for a list of people who required evacuation on medical grounds, on behalf of the medical desk in Sarajevo. Kazakov noted that Schouten was positive about the assistance which the hospital staff provided. The Bosnian

⁵⁶² NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 13/07/95, 1.32 pm, No. Out 524.

⁵⁶³ NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 14/07/95, 1.33 pm, No. Out 266.

⁵⁶⁴ NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 13/07/95, 4.56 pm, No. Out 526.

⁵⁶⁵ SMG, 1002/14. Belangrijkste zaken uit verslagen UNMO's (Key points from UNMO reports), 13/07/95, 11 pm.

⁵⁶⁶ NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 14/07/95, 1.33 pm, No. Out 266.

⁵⁶⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 119, File Civil Affairs SNE, Srebrenica. HQ Sector North East to HQ UNPF Zagreb, dtg 132215 July 95.

⁵⁶⁸ Field Report monitoring Srebrenica 13 and 14/07/95 prepared by Field Officer Andrei Kazakov and Rosanna Sam. Provided by E. O'Dwyer, US State Department BH Desk.

Serbs did what they could. Nevertheless, two patients died over the next few days due to a lack of surgical facilities. Kazakov also reported that 18 of the patients were said to be soldiers. He had obtained this information from Schouten.

The Bosnian Serbs forced Kazakov to leave again. On 15 July he returned to Zvornik in a new attempt to reach Potocari. However, the VRS did not give him permission to do so on account of the poor security situation, and cited as their reason for this the fact that there were groups of armed Muslims en route from Srebrenica to Tuzla. Various roads were blocked and four Bosnian Serb civilians and ambulance personnel were said to have been killed near Konjevic Polje.⁵⁶⁹ Schouten also noted that fighting was going on. During his stay in Bratunac from 13 to 19 July he had seen three dead VRS soldiers and 12 to 13 lightly and seriously wounded ones brought to the hospital.⁵⁷⁰

The Bratunac hospital staff were not really happy with the enormous amount of work which came their way in the form of these wounded refugees but, as Schouten observed, they nevertheless cheerfully went to work.⁵⁷¹ Staff mentioned that they did not have enough supplies. In response to the question whether UNPROFOR could provide any, an answer was received from Dutchbat to the effect that this was not possible. However, General Mladic had informed Dutchbat's Commanding Officer that, once the logistics convoy arrived, medicine should be supplied by Dutchbat to the Bratunac hospital.⁵⁷²

When sufficient resources were available the following day after the arrival of this logistics convoy and a Dutchbat ambulance had taken various items to the hospital, the Bosnian Serbs attacked the escort vehicle. It seemed to be an act on the part of local irregular troops. With the aid of an interpreter, UNMOs managed to arrange a police escort to have the items delivered to the hospital. Due to the delay of the convoy's arrival a diabetes patient experienced difficulties.⁵⁷³ She died because no insulin was available in Bratunac. Four men were also in a relatively poor condition because they urgently required an operation. The facilities needed for this were unavailable in Bratunac. In this case the question was who could do what.

Schouten urged the director of the Bratunac hospital, Milan Vujic, to obtain assistance from the Red Cross and *Médecins Sans Frontières* or another aid organization, because no surgeons were available in Bratunac.⁵⁷⁴ Naval Captain Hegge raised the problem with Christina Schmitz but she first wished to discuss it with Franken. The latter then arranged for a Dutchbat ambulance escorted by Major Nikolic of the VRS to go to Bratunac to collect these patients but the ambulance returned empty. The VRS did not wish to relinquish these patients, who apparently had a history of involvement in the ABiH. This ambulance, one of the few that the VRS had not confiscated, took an ultrasound device and more medical supplies, which were supplied to the hospital in Bratunac.⁵⁷⁵

On the first day of his stay Schouten surveyed the wounded. He did this together with the polyclinic's staff. Schouten also acted as a guard by sitting on a chair in front of the entrance to the side building which housed the patients. On various occasions he was accosted by VRS soldiers who used threats and verbal abuse to create the impression that they 'wished to solve the problem of the wounded once and for all'. It was possible to prevent this thanks to intervention by Schouten and support from the nursing staff and two guards assigned to this post.⁵⁷⁶ At one stage two armed soldiers were standing inside. Screams from female staff raised the alarm and it was possible to remove the two

⁵⁶⁹ Field Report monitoring Srebrenica 13 and 14/07/95 prepared by Field Officer Andrei Kazakov and Rosanna Sam. Provided by E. O'Dwyer, US State Department BH Desk.

⁵⁷⁰ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

⁵⁷¹ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Schouten Diary.

⁵⁷² SMG, 1004/61. Dutchbat Operations Room Monthly Records.

⁵⁷³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 115, File SNE Fax Out Jan-Jul 95. Fax SCVAO Sector NE (Ken Biser) to CAC/DSRSG (Philip Corwin), 14/07/95 with UNMO Sitrep Update 141420B July.

⁵⁷⁴ Interview A.A. Schouten, 21/02/00.

⁵⁷⁵ NIOD, Coll. MSF. 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari Period: 6-22/07/95', prepared by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

⁵⁷⁶ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

with some difficulty. On at least two other occasions armed VRS soldiers attempted to enter the clinic. Schouten suspected that the patients included 18 ABiH troops.⁵⁷⁷

Later on Schouten got the impression that express orders had been issued by some authority that the wounded should not be interfered with.⁵⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the hospital staff did not entirely succeed in keeping Bosnian Muslims and Serbs apart. In the course of interviews conducted by the UNHCR protection officer in Tuzla with several patients later transferred there, it was revealed that VRS soldiers and civilians had entered a number of rooms in the Bratunac hospital, where they had kicked and beaten patients. A 60-year old man was said to have been hit on the chest with a rifle butt.⁵⁷⁹

Schouten was accommodated in the doctors' room on the top floor of the main building. At six o'clock in the morning of 14 July he was woken up by heavy fire from automatic weapons. Schouten wondered whether the Serbs were busy shooting the Muslims dead. However, this was not the case. From the balcony he saw that there was no panic and that the beds were full in the hospital ward. Everyone was still present in the (stinking) side building. The patients were terribly scared and mimed shots being fired at their heads. When he asked, Schouten was told that a number of Muslims had attempted to break out through Bratunac but were being restrained by the Bosnian Serb police. However, Schouten suspected that it was an execution.⁵⁸⁰

On 15 July the Bosnian Serb police used two teams to interview the patients. One was an anti-crime unit, while the other was a vice squad. This team was investigating the rape of Bosnian Serb women by Muslims. Schouten was allowed to be present during the interviews and to inspect the files. He fully availed himself of this opportunity and did not observe any intimidation or improper behaviour. He was told that those in question were people who could testify to the perpetration of war crimes committed by the ABiH. He spent the rest of his time treating and caring for patients. His attention was also drawn to the fact that the main building also housed a number of patients who had left Kladanj on a previous occasion. It turned out that there were 17 of them.

On 17 July the most seriously wounded were transported by a convoy of the International Red Cross. They had been selected on medical grounds. Schouten suspected that they also included several ABiH soldiers but the VRS did not impede their selection or transport. Another 17 wounded remained in the hospital after the International Red Cross had left. On 18 July little happened and Schouten was able to do his rounds and hand out cigarettes. On 19 July Colonel Radoslav Jankovic of the VRS announced that he wished to take the patients to the military hospital in Zvornik. Schouten was asked whether he had any objections to this on medical grounds. Schouten did not, provided that sufficient facilities were available to allow people to lie and sit down. Jankovic obtained a large truck. The Bosnian Serb police selected the wounded. The truck left, escorted by two armed military vehicles. This was curious because the truck was not full and seven patients had been left behind.

Two days prior to this Schouten had received an invitation to have lunch with a female nurse at her home. He accepted the invitation partly because there was hardly any food for him in the hospital. Schouten had been left at the hospital with one combat ration and had to buy his own food during the days he stayed there.⁵⁸¹ The VRS and local civilians supplied the clinic and collected the most diverse types of food.⁵⁸² Many local organizations (seven) were involved in feeding the patients but few results were achieved owing to a lack of coordination.⁵⁸³

⁵⁷⁷ *Washington Post*, 18/07/95.

⁵⁷⁸ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

⁵⁷⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box, 95, File 7.7.1. Preliminary Protection Report No. 1, 18/07/95 accompanying a fax from HRO (Peggy Hicks) to HCA (Michel Moussali), 21/07/95, Outgoing Fax No. 151-3062.

⁵⁸⁰ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Schouten Diary and interview, 21/02/00.

⁵⁸¹ NIOD, Coll. Schouten. PDPKM Ruling, 2/11/95, No. P.46.07.21.452/3.

⁵⁸² *Washington Post*, 18/07/95.

⁵⁸³ CRST. Sitcen BLS, dtg 132301B July 1995: Telephone contact with Operations Room. Communication C-DB-3 dtg 130800B July 1995.

During Schouten's lunch Colonel Radoslav Jankovic also arrived half an hour later. Because Jankovic was not in a rush now, Schouten began to scent trouble. Back at the hospital the seven patients appeared to have disappeared. Schouten demanded an explanation and indicated that he would not accept silence or evasive replies. However, the nurse in question led him to understand that such questions were not wise, were bad for one's health and were not appreciated by the VRS. Schouten assumed that his patients had been executed without any form of trial.⁵⁸⁴ However, it appeared that this was not the case. Nevertheless, widespread discussion was to ensue in the Netherlands about the fate of the wounded men who had been left behind. This is dealt with in greater detail further on in this appendix.

In the night of 13 to 14 July Jankovic had already notified the Drina Corps Intelligence Service that at the request of the Bratunac hospital staff a UNPROFOR doctor had remained behind to see that everything proceeded properly. At that time already Jankovic had announced that he intended to use a pretext to get Schouten out of the way and to say that he was no longer required. This was the same Jankovic who at 8 pm on 13 July, when the evacuation of the refugees had been completed, wrote that he was of the opinion that, if the Bosnian Serbs wished to take Gorazde and Zepa in the same way, the VRS would need to show through the media that they treated the populace properly, including soldiers of the ABiH who had surrendered.⁵⁸⁵

Conclusions pertaining to the convoy of wounded

To a large extent, the futile trip of the convoy of wounded to Kladanj appears to illustrate the uncertainty about the course of events and the chaos that reigned after the Bosnian Serbs captured the enclave. It appeared to be in the interests of the Bosnian Serbs, Dutchbat and the patients to transfer the latter to Tuzla as soon as possible. Better treatment was available in Tuzla than in the compound in Potocari and the Bosnian Serbs preferred to be rid of the residents of Srebrenica.

The Kladanj convoy was not only a victim of circumstance but also of inadequate preparation both on the part of Dutchbat as the Bosnian Serbs, and a lack of familiarity with the situation prevailing at Tisca, where the front line was to be crossed. There were insufficient guarantees that this could be effected without difficulty, even though the responsible VRS staff officer of the Drina Corps had approved matters.

It was not possible to transfer the wounded from Potocari to a convoy from Tuzla on the front line. This meant that the wounded would also be required to make the trip to Muslim territory on foot.

What then occurred was also typical of the hunt which the Bosnian Serbs commenced on 12 July for those Muslim men who tried to escape from Srebrenica. When the presence of men of fighting age was detected in the convoy, the VRS soldiers present in Tisca saw red. In the dark of night it led to a disgraceful situation in which the Dutchbat escort no longer had a role to play. Later on it appeared that some of the wounded had managed to cross the front line. Those who were unable to do so, were sent back with the Dutchbat convoy or appeared to have been dropped off at the hospital in Bratunac by the Bosnian Serbs. The latter denied the returning Dutchbat convoy access to Potocari, following which there was little left to do but drop the wounded off in Bratunac with the VRS's consent. It was remarkable that the hospital staff requested that a Dutchbat representative supervise the wounded in order to protect them against the VRS, who at that time had begun to execute the Muslim men whom they captured. The wounded were at any rate spared this fate.

⁵⁸⁴ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

⁵⁸⁵ NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic. KM DK Bratunac 13/07/95 No. str.pov.br. 08-444-10. The last announcement was contained in a handwritten note.

Chapter 14

Involvement of the International Red Cross

Introduction

After the people were deported, Dutchbat and *Médecins Sans Frontières* remained behind in the now deserted enclave of Srebrenica with a number of wounded individuals. The previous failure of the Dutchbat convoy of wounded to reach Kladanj did not encourage it to make any further attempt to move the wounded to Tuzla. This would only have been possible once arrangements had been made between UNPROFOR and the Bosnian Serbs at the highest level, and the only organization that would merit consideration for the implementation of any agreement, was the International Red Cross.

This section describes the departure of the wounded and can be broken down into two main sections. First an attempt will be made to reconstruct the role of the International Red Cross in this connection, the key issue being the efforts that were required to obtain permission for this organization to go to Srebrenica. Consideration is then given to the manner in which the wounded were collected on 17 July.

After this attention is devoted to subsequent discussions about the removal of the wounded. An extraordinary aspect of this discussion is found in the compilation of lists of the wounded who were to be evacuated, and the presentation of these lists to the Bosnian Serbs. According to comments made in the Netherlands, this would have made it easy for the Bosnian Serbs to select seven prisoners of war from amongst the wounded and to remove them from the International Red Cross convoy.

The International Red Cross and its access to Srebrenica

By adopting Resolution 1004 on 12 July the Security Council demanded unimpeded access for the UNHCR and humanitarian organizations in order to alleviate people's suffering.⁵⁸⁶ Attempts were also made locally to obtain access to Srebrenica. Early in the morning of 12 July *Médecins Sans Frontières* floated the idea in Belgrade of entering into negotiations about access to Srebrenica. They felt that this could be done through various channels. In Belgrade the International Red Cross would be able to establish contact with the organization's office in Bijeljina, in Pale the UNHCR could undertake action on behalf of the International Red Cross office in that town, and in Belgrade the UNHCR could consult Nikola Koljevic, the vice president of the Republika Srpska.⁵⁸⁷

Major Franken maintains that he also sought contact with the International Red Cross through *Médecins Sans Frontières*.⁵⁸⁸ Already on 11 July Hatidza Hren, a local female Red Cross assistant, had asked a Dutchbat soldier stationed at the edge of the area which Dutchbat had cordoned off around the compound, if she could phone the office in Tuzla. The Dutchbat soldier had refused to allow this because she was a local and not a foreign member of staff. However, no International Red Cross officials were stationed in the enclave. Hren made a renewed attempt the following morning. She was again refused permission by an officer. On both occasions Hren had shown her International Red Cross identification card and an interpreter was present on both occasions.⁵⁸⁹

After the International Red Cross had futilely demanded access to Srebrenica from the Bosnian Serb authorities on 13 July, the local Bosnian Serb medical authorities in Bijeljina and the security authorities in Bratunac in turn alerted the International Red Cross.⁵⁹⁰ These local authorities sought the

⁵⁸⁶ UN Security Council, S/RES /1004 (1995), 12/07/95.

⁵⁸⁷ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 12/07/95, 7.39 am, No. In 164.

⁵⁸⁸ Debriefing statement R.A. Franken, 7 and 20/09/95.

⁵⁸⁹ Interview Hatidza Hren, 02/02/98.

⁵⁹⁰ ICRC replies to questions posed by the NIOD, 1999.

evacuation of a number of seriously wounded to Tuzla via Kladanj on medical grounds. This was separate from the previous description of the convoy of wounded to Kladanj.

At the UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo the medical officer updated a delegation from the International Red Cross in the same city: an evacuation of war-wounded from Potocari and Bratunac on medical grounds could be provided on 16 July. The Red Cross delegation in Sarajevo had received a statement from *Médecins Sans Frontières* that 59 patients were in the compound in Potocari and 49 were in Bratunac, 24 of whom urgently needed to be evacuated. The International Red Cross planned a medical convoy to Tuzla. The operation was to be coordinated by *Sector North East* in Tuzla, because the International Red Cross was reported to be dependent on the Norwegian medical company in Tuzla. If this plan were to succeed, any wounded Dutch soldiers who were still in Potocari, would be able to accompany this convoy. However, there were no wounded Dutch soldiers.⁵⁹¹

Apart from a convoy of wounded, which was not yet envisaged at that point in time, once the refugees had been deported from Potocari, Major Franken and Christina Schmitz devised a plan on 13 July to enter into negotiations with the VRS to obtain a bus to remove those elderly people who did not need to be transported in a medical convoy, from the enclave. The *Médecins Sans Frontières* medical staff would be at liberty to accompany them. However, Christina Schmitz insisted that male staff should remain behind to accompany the convoy.⁵⁹²

In the evening of 13 July a rumour was also doing the rounds to the effect that the sick and the wounded would be transported by helicopter or road. According to *Médecins Sans Frontières*, Major Franken was very busy also investigating this and insisted that the patients who were present in Bratunac, would be taken with them at the time.⁵⁹³ Franken contacted the International Red Cross and told them he would prefer it if they would conduct the evacuation, because he feared that UNPROFOR would again fail to reach Kladanj in vehicles. This was because it soon became clear that no helicopters would be coming and that there was still a delay in arranging a medical convoy to collect the patients.⁵⁹⁴

The VRS in the person of Colonel Radoslav Jankovic had already wanted the wounded evacuated on 14 July. Jankovic had proposed that the wounded be transferred to Zvornik on condition that UNPROFOR would provide first-aid materials. However, Major Franken had already assured him that he would do all in his power to make arrangements through international channels for them to receive further treatment in Yugoslavia.⁵⁹⁵

The International Red Cross had five trucks and a fleet of ambulances ready in Bijeljina to collect all the patients and was only awaiting permission. Both the International Red Cross and the UNHCR brought pressure to bear in an attempt to obtain this permission.⁵⁹⁶ In Potocari too Franken was, in Christina Schmitz's words, 'pushing like hell'. General Mladic wrote a letter saying that he would personally be visiting the compound in Potocari to consider the evacuation proposal. Dutchbat had to be patient.⁵⁹⁷

On 14 July the confusion grew because the UNHCR was also making preparations in Tuzla to get an evacuation underway, with the result that new arrangements had to be made as to who was going to be doing what.⁵⁹⁸ In Sarajevo General Nicolai had already made a futile attempt to agree with the VRS on an evacuation of patients by helicopter. Andrei Kazakov, the UNHCR field officer present in Bratunac, also wanted to try and take the patients on to Sarajevo by helicopter after this. This plan was

⁵⁹¹ ICRC replies to questions posed by the NIOD, 1999.

⁵⁹² NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 13/07/95, 3.56 pm, No. Out 526.

⁵⁹³ NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 13/07/95, 10.02 pm, No. Out 534.

⁵⁹⁴ NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 14/07/95, 9.15 am, No. Out 537.

⁵⁹⁵ NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic. KM DK Bratunac 13/07/95 No. str. pov. br. 08-444-10.

⁵⁹⁶ NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 14/07/95, 11.32 am, No. In 183.

⁵⁹⁷ NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 14/07/95, 12.18 pm, No. Out 262.

⁵⁹⁸ NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 14/07/95, 1.07 pm, No. In 183.

evolving parallel to that of the International Red Cross, which was already prepared for an evacuation by road.⁵⁹⁹

Christina Schmitz felt that the UNHCR plan was ‘messy’, more so because Kazakov did not have any contact with the VRS. Every organization was trying to do things its own way. For the purposes of his plan Kazakov wanted a list of the patients and their details from *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Based on the fact that Christina Schmitz said that this would take more than two hours to prepare, one can conclude that no list was yet available at that point in time.⁶⁰⁰

Contact with the hospital in Bratunac, which was routed through Naval Captain Schouten, revealed that the wounded included various ‘ABiH soldiers with a good record from the past’ and that the VRS did not simply wish to allow these soldiers to go. A similar time bomb was ticking in the compound. Dutchbat personnel recognized one of the patients as a lieutenant in the ABiH and Christina Schmitz had since learned that her cook, Abdulah Purkovic had an ABiH past. What surprised her was that the VRS had apparently not yet discovered this. On the other hand, by now the entire world knew how many wounded people were lying in the compound, with the result that the VRS could not simply have them disappear. The outcome appeared to be that no one would receive permission to enter the enclave for the time being. Franken was of the opinion that Mladic, who had announced his intention to visit the compound, would not be coming before this problem had been solved.⁶⁰¹

Médecins Sans Frontières learned from the Bijeljina office of the International Red Cross that the latter had submitted an offer to the Republika Srpska to assume responsibility for the evacuation of the wounded to Kladanj. The International Red Cross had not yet received a response to this offer. A meeting of UNPROFOR, the UNHCR, *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the VRS was first scheduled to occur on the afternoon of 14 July.⁶⁰²

Frustratingly little was happening in relation to this matter. Koljevic, the vice president of the Republika Srpska, and Jo Marie Fecci, the head of the UNHCR mission in Bosnia, were to travel to Bratunac to inspect the situation and to negotiate a solution. Koljevic said that he did not know what was happening because contact between Pale and Bratunac was impossible. However, the delegation failed to arrive on account of ongoing fighting involving the column of men fleeing to Tuzla. Consequently, there was further delay in replying to the request for permission submitted by the International Red Cross.⁶⁰³

In Potocari Christina Schmitz informed the *Médecins Sans Frontières* office in Belgrade, which maintained constant contact with the International Red Cross and the UNHCR and acted as a source of pressure, that the International Red Cross should be allowed to perform the evacuation and not the UNHCR, because the latter did not have a mandate to deal with prisoners of war.⁶⁰⁴ On the other hand, the International Red Cross would certainly encounter difficulties performing an evacuation without being able to inspect the situation. It would also be unwilling to provide any undertaking in respect of Purkovic’s position as a former ABiH soldier. In Belgrade *Médecins Sans Frontières* merely hoped that the presence of ABiH troops would not cause any problems. It was believed that the local *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff were not aware of this and would treat them normally.⁶⁰⁵

Personally, Christina Schmitz felt that the VRS knew who was a soldier but that it did not want to do anything until such time as an evacuation got underway. Although the VRS was aware of the ABiH patients in Bratunac, nothing had happened to them until then. The most serious problem as *Médecins Sans Frontières* saw it, was that the VRS would be able to delay the convoy of wounded for this

⁵⁹⁹ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat, 14 /07/95, 7.38 pm, No. In 187.

⁶⁰⁰ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsats 14 /07/95, 4.05 pm, No. Out 262; 15/07/95, 2.49 pm, No. Out 270.

⁶⁰¹ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsats 14/07/95, 4.05 pm, No. Out 262; 15/07/95, 2.49 pm, No. Out 270.

⁶⁰² Capsat ICRC Bijeljina to MSF Srebrenica, 14/07/95, 2.30 pm, No. In 184.

⁶⁰³ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 14/07/95, 4.08 pm, No. In 185.

⁶⁰⁴ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat, 14/07/95, 4.18 pm No. Out 263.

⁶⁰⁵ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 15/07/95, 6.42 pm, No. In 191.

reason and that the problem of the ABiH soldiers who were present, needed to be discussed openly with the VRS.⁶⁰⁶

In the morning of 15 July Minister Pronk (Development Cooperation) informed Karremans that considerable international pressure was being exerted to ensure that the International Red Cross was given permission to collect any wounded people who were still present. Negotiations were being conducted at all levels, albeit without success so far.⁶⁰⁷

Nevertheless, by 15 July the International Red Cross had still not contacted UNPROFOR or *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Srebrenica to obtain information about the nature of the wounds, nor had any preparations been made to accommodate the wounded in the hospital in Tuzla.⁶⁰⁸ However, the VRS, UNPROFOR, *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the UNMOs did have contact with each other. The VRS said that they were aware of the gravity of the situation but that no decisions had yet been made. However, the VRS was said to agree that the International Red Cross would perform the evacuation. The destination would not be Kladanj on account of fighting in the vicinity and was yet to be determined.⁶⁰⁹

Access to the area was the topic of discussion in Belgrade on 15 July, when Milosevic, Stoltenberg (in his capacity as the special representative of the UN Secretary-General) and the EU negotiator, Bildt, reached agreement in general terms. The details of the International Red Cross's access to the area was to be worked out by Generals Smith and Mladic, who were also present in Belgrade. Smith had a major fallout with Mladic on the access he sought to Muslim prisoners on behalf of the International Red Cross. Until then, it was thought that they were being held in Bratunac. Initially, Mladic refused and said that they had been imprisoned because they had been soldiers. After Smith stated that they could not all be soldiers, Mladic held himself in check and gave his permission.⁶¹⁰

In the evening Bosnia-Herzegovina Command informed Karremans that permission had been granted for the transfer of Dutchbat to Central Bosnia and also for the evacuation of the wounded. The Norwegian Medical Company in Tuzla was to assume responsibility for this. *Médecins Sans Frontières* personnel were required to try and join this convoy. The International Red Cross was also given permission to visit the wounded in the meantime. The details for this were to be finalized on 16 July.⁶¹¹

The plan adopted by the UN headquarters in Sarajevo was to get the wounded out of Potocari as soon as possible. Sarajevo maintained contact with the Bosnian Serb authorities in Pale in this connection and with the VRS liaison officer, Major Indic. Contrary to the procedures, it had been agreed that an application for permission would be submitted afterwards. Vrolijk, a Dutch Lieutenant Colonel, agreed to this with Major Dudic, the VRS liaison officer with the staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. The VRS were prepared to cooperate in this respect. On 14 July the International Red Cross in Bijeljina had already declared that they were willing to assume responsibility for this task. They could leave immediately and could reach the area via a checkpoint which was normally not open. However, the ABiH fired on the convoy en route, after which it returned without accomplishing its objective. Initially, Sarajevo was not aware that the ABiH had a hand in this and Major Dudic had the book thrown at him.⁶¹²

The vehicles of the Norwegian medical company which were to be used for the Red Cross convoy, ran into an ambush near Zvornik on 16 July. Miroslav Deronjic, the newly appointed civil governor of Srebrenica, had just told Dutchbat that the convoy had passed Zvornik but something strange appeared to be happening: five minutes later a report was received from Tuzla that the convoy

⁶⁰⁶ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 16/07/95, 1.03 pm, No. Out 558.

⁶⁰⁷ Karremans, *Srebrenica: Who Cares?*, p. 229 and p. 231.

⁶⁰⁸ ABZ, DPV/ARA 2001654. Memorandum from DMP/NH to R, 31/07/95, No. NH-618 1995 with a summary of the trip undertaken by R (minister of Development Aid) to Tuzla and Sarajevo, 14-18/07/95. The delegate with whom Pronk spoke was Agnes Badji-Page.

⁶⁰⁹ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 15/07/95, 5.20 pm, No. Out 17:20.

⁶¹⁰ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

⁶¹¹ Karremans, *Srebrenica: Who Cares?*, p. 229 and p. 231. In his book Karremans does not deal with the arrival of the International Red Cross and the transfer of the wounded in further detail.

⁶¹² Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

had been fired on.⁶¹³ Zvornik was considered to be a safe zone behind the front line. This led to speculation that the ABiH party which was on the way from Srebrenica to Tuzla, was shooting at anything that moved.⁶¹⁴ This was certainly not a strange idea, because also the VRS feared that this group on the run would attack Zvornik. It was also possible that the Norwegian medical convoy had run into VRS units that were engaged in the hunt for the Muslim men. General Nicolai submitted a complaint to the VRS headquarters that the convoy had been fired on by their forces.

Nicolai was put through to Colonel Markovic, the most senior officer. He denied that an agreement had been reached on the transfer of the wounded. At that point in time General Gvero was holding discussions with the UNHCR about the destination of the wounded and the route that a convoy would need to take. According to Markovic, it would be best to have the convoy return behind the front line and to contact the VRS again once an agreement had been reached.⁶¹⁵

Major Franken was not aware of the plans of the International Red Cross by the evening of 16 July. However, on that day staff from the International Red Cross were present in Bratunac and Dutchbat had expected the delegation to visit Potocari as well. In Belgrade *Médecins Sans Frontières* received a request from its people in Potocari to find out what the plans of the International Red Cross were.⁶¹⁶ The latter was in Bratunac to consider the problems of the wounded prisoners of war in the hospital. As yet, little progress had been reached in respect of the prisoners of war. For this reason discussions were held between representatives of the UNHCR and the International Red Cross, and the Bosnian Serb authorities in Pale that afternoon. The UNHCR representative did appear to be unaware that an evacuation on medical grounds was envisaged. Because war-wounded were involved, the UNHCR representative to these discussions felt that the matter fell under the jurisdiction of the International Red Cross. It was agreed that UNPROFOR would transport the sick and the wounded from Potocari to Bratunac and that the International Red Cross would then assume responsibility for all the patients in Bratunac and transport them to a suitable location in Serbia or to Tuzla.⁶¹⁷

There was not a great deal of consultation with the Bosnian Serb authorities on the situation in Potocari. The lengthy meeting in Pale focused mainly on access to Sarajevo. Srebrenica was only discussed towards the end of the meeting and the VRS had told the International Red Cross that it could not remove the patients from Potocari and Bratunac, leaving it little choice in this respect. This would then have to occur in Bratunac. No access to prisoners of war was permitted. For this reason the International Red Cross sought permission in respect of the civilian patients. Apparently, it was not yet clear who had been designated a prisoner of war in Bratunac and Potocari. The International Red Cross inquired about numbers and the condition of the patients. This was already known in respect of Bratunac, because local doctors had already supplied this information. In Belgrade *Médecins Sans Frontières* expressly stated that no names were required in this connection but only a list of seated or bedridden wounded and their condition. However, earlier that day the Belgrade office of *Médecins Sans Frontières* had inquired whether Dutchbat had already provided the organization with a list of names.⁶¹⁸ Transferring the patients from Potocari to Bratunac presented no problems for Dutchbat. Christina Schmitz had already discussed the possibility with Major Franken.⁶¹⁹

Initially, the International Red Cross planned to accommodate the seriously wounded in hospitals in Serbia but, because several patients refused to go to this country, this plan was abandoned.⁶²⁰ *Médecins Sans Frontières* considered it more likely that the Yugoslavian officials would not

⁶¹³ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 16/07/95, 3.54 pm, No. Out 561.

⁶¹⁴ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 16/07/95, 2.39 pm, No. In 306.

⁶¹⁵ SMG, 1004. MA/COS to MA/COMD, Telephone conversation between Nicolai and Markovic, 16/07/95, 3 pm.

⁶¹⁶ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 16/07/95, 6.41 pm, No. Out 566.

⁶¹⁷ ICRC replies to questions posed by the NIOD, 1999.

⁶¹⁸ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 16/07/95, 12.14 pm, No. In 301.

⁶¹⁹ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat, 16/07/95, 6.57 pm, No. In 310.

⁶²⁰ *Washington Post*, 18/07/95. Announcement of ICRC assistant, Josue Anselmo.

permit this. It also seemed to be better to reunite the families in Tuzla as soon as possible.⁶²¹ The most direct route to Tuzla had been closed for security reasons. One would need to move along secondary routes crossing Serbian terrain along the Drina (Bratunac, Ljubovija, Zvornik, Zepak and Bijeljina) and proceed to Tuzla from there.⁶²² General Milan Gvero of the VRS gave his approval for the operation.⁶²³

On 16 July Dutchbat had made preparations for the transfer of the sick and wounded to the International Red Cross.⁶²⁴ On 17 July the latter's convoy arrived in Bratunac after some delay due to problems crossing the front line at Tuzla.⁶²⁵ Contrary to what the International Red Cross had envisaged and what had been agreed with both the VRS and Dutchbat, the latter had not moved the wounded from Potocari to Bratunac.⁶²⁶

The International Red Cross subsequently stated that Dutchbat could not be blamed for anything, because the battalion was not aware of the agreement of Jahorina, which it had entered into with the Bosnian Serbs the day before. This agreement stipulated that UNPROFOR was responsible for transferring all the sick and wounded from Potocari to Bratunac by midday on 17 July.⁶²⁷ Apparently, other organizations had also not been informed of this. The UNHCR explained that this had not happened due to Dutchbat's lack of capacity to transport the 87 patients to Bratunac.⁶²⁸ *Médecins Sans Frontières* explained this by referring to an attitude of restraint on the part of Dutchbat: the organization had detected a reduction in the latter's willingness to assist since Dutchbat had started packing up preparatory to its own departure.⁶²⁹

The International Red Cross did not have any objections to going to Potocari but would need permission from the VRS to do so, because the latter had previously stated that Potocari was a war zone to which it could not receive access.⁶³⁰ However, it was possible to obtain access to Potocari on-site and without the intervention of UNPROFOR.⁶³¹

The wounded are collected

When the Red Cross delegates arrived in Bratunac, they were asked to go to Potocari in order to report to a special committee at the VRS headquarters for the purpose of visiting the wounded and separating the prisoners of war from the rest.

According to Franken, the mood was rather tense and the female coordinator of the Red Cross convoy was irritated by problems experienced en route. The convoy had been forced to leave a vehicle containing medication destined for the hospital in Bratunac on the Serbian side of the border. When Colonel Jankovic of the VRS heard about this problem, he managed to solve it with a single telephone call and he was able to inform the International Red Cross delegation that the truck was on the way.

This was followed by difficulties encountered parking the Red Cross vehicles in Bratunac. The International Red Cross was opposed to this. They had to go on to the enclave, although this meant that they were governed by the VRS's convoy regulations with an inspection and all its attendant

⁶²¹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 17/07/95, 4.06 pm, No. In 3330.

⁶²² ICRC replies to questions posed by the NIOD, 1999.

⁶²³ ICRC Press Release 95/32, 18/07/95.

⁶²⁴ DCBC, 1650. C 11 Airmobile Brigade to the commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, 'Operationele Debrief Dutchbat III', 28/07/95, No. 172/Conf.

⁶²⁵ NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsats 17/07/95, 9.15 am, No. Out 573; 17/07/95 8.52 am, No. In 318.

⁶²⁶ NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 17/07/95, 11.05 am, No. In 321.

⁶²⁷ ABZ/DIO/ARA 2000407. Letter from HUM/PV Geneva to the Ministry of Defence (DAB), 30/1195, No. gev/hum-3683/1995.

⁶²⁸ CRST, UNHCR. (UNHCR) BH Desk, Belgrade/Cavalieri to UNHCR Tuzla, UNHCR Geneva, UNHCR Zagreb, UNHCR Pale, UNHCR Sarajevo, 17/07/95.

⁶²⁹ NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 17/07/95, 9.15 am, No. Out 573.

⁶³⁰ NIOD, Coll. *MSF. MSF* Capsat 17/07/95, 11.05 am, No. In 321.

⁶³¹ CRST, UNHCR. (UNHCR) BH Desk, Belgrade/Cavalieri to UNHCR Tuzla, UNHCR Geneva, UNHCR Zagreb, UNHCR Pale, UNHCR Sarajevo, 17/07/95.

problems and sources of irritation, which was apparently not something the International Red Cross had to put up with on a daily basis.

The mood prevailing during the meeting between the International Red Cross, the VRS and Dutchbat was equally unpleasant, partly due to difficulties experienced in relation to a declaration that the people had been properly evacuated. Franken had signed this declaration, because he feared that it would be impossible to remove the wounded from Srebrenica if he did not.⁶³² (In this respect see Part IV, Chapter 4.)

During the discussions held with the International Red Cross, Major Nikolic checked to ensure that the available lists of wounded included all the information he required. He wanted something added to it but, following a brief discussion with Colonel Jankovic and Major Franken, he was given to understand the list contained information which the VRS had dictated in a previous meeting and that there would be no deviation from it. It contained the names of the people in question, their date and place of birth, the name of their father and the nature of their injuries. The latter was included, because there were quite a few men who used bandages to simulate wounds.⁶³³ Recording wounds represented a lesson learned after the failure of the convoy of wounded to reach Kladanj.

The International Red Cross convoy then left without any problems and consisted of 15 Land Rovers, two trucks and 30 delegates, including medical teams from Pale, Bijeljina and Belgrade. After it left Bratunac without incident, the convoy crossed the Serbian border. In Bijeljina the Bosnian Serb police stopped it in the middle of the night. The police wanted it to take a different route from the one that had been agreed. After a liaison officer intervened, the convoy was able to proceed on its way to Tuzla, where it arrived in the morning of 18 July.⁶³⁴ This did not apply to the wounded ABiH soldiers. They did not accompany the International Red Cross convoy and remained behind in Bratunac as prisoners of war.

Prisoners of war

The VRS designated a total of 23 wounded individuals prisoners of war. They consisted of a group of 16 in the Bratunac hospital, one of which was said to have been recognized to be a war criminal,⁶³⁵ and an additional group of seven in the compound in Potocari. The Bosnian Serbs asked the International Red Cross to take these 23 people to the hospital in Bijeljina. However, the International Red Cross refused to do this, because the transfer of prisoners of war had not been provided for in the agreement it had concluded with the Bosnian Serbs in Jahorina, and also because such a transfer entailed a certain amount of risk for it. More importantly, the International Red Cross did not want to confuse the transport of the sick and wounded, because two different categories were involved.⁶³⁶ As detailed below, this approach was to place Dutchbat in a difficult position.

The International Red Cross did indeed view the 23 as prisoners of war and recorded their identity, so as to be able to visit them at a later stage.⁶³⁷ However, the organization was not permitted to formally register prisoners of war as such and to notify their families. The delegates had to do with an undertaking given by the local VRS commander that it would be possible to visit all the prisoners in hospital or a POW camp in the near future.⁶³⁸

⁶³² Interview R.A. Franken, 18 /05/01.

⁶³³ Confidential debriefing statement (3).

⁶³⁴ ICRC replies to questions posed by the NIOD, 1999. See also *ICRC News* 29, 19/07/95.

⁶³⁵ NIOD, Coll. (5). UNMO HQ NE to UNMO HQ BHC Sarajevo, 181654B July 95.

⁶³⁶ ABZ, DIO:JS: UN Human Rights. Letter from HUM/PV Geneva to the Ministry of Defence (DAB), 30/11/95, No. gev/hum-3683/1995.

⁶³⁷ ICRC Press Release 95/32, 18/07/95.

⁶³⁸ ABZ, DIO:JS: UN Human Rights. Letter from HUM/PV Geneva to the Ministry of Defence (DAB), 30/11/95, No. gev/hum-3683/1995.

The International Red Cross assured Franken that they would continue to monitor the men who had been designated prisoners of war. According to Franken, he was told that the seven men in Potocari had themselves confessed to being soldiers.⁶³⁹ He said that he had also indicated that he was not prepared to hand over the wounded in the compound to the Bosnian Serbs but only to the International Red Cross. He had categorically refused to hand them over to the VRS. However, in Sarajevo UNPROFOR had consented to the VRS questioning them in the compound, subject to the condition that a UN representative would be present at all times and that no one was permitted to be handed over.⁶⁴⁰ On 17 July the International Red Cross delegation also consented to the Bosnian Serbs visiting the wounded.⁶⁴¹

Major Franken, Major Nikolic and the *Médecins Sans Frontières* doctor, Daniel O'Brien, visited the patients. Nikolic had a brief discussion in Serbo-Croatian with a number of them, and it was consequently not clear what was said.⁶⁴² Nikolic had previously been in the compound, had had a good look around, had had a chat, had handed out cigarettes, and had then left again. The patients are reported not to have been afraid at the time. Only the *Médecins Sans Frontières* assistant, Purkovic, crept away at the time and concealed his presence. Apart from Major Nikolic, five Norwegians from the Norwegian medical company were present during the selection but they did not say anything. Nothing had been said to the Dutch who were present in the plant, with the result that they were not prepared for what was about to happen.⁶⁴³

Dressed in the blue and purple uniforms of the Special Police and green camouflage uniforms, Bosnian Serbs walked around with a camera and a camcorder. They talked to the wounded and took photographs of some. They also pointed to several Muslim men, whose names were then checked against a list. If a name appeared on the list, the person in question was drawn aside from the rest of the wounded.⁶⁴⁴ The Bosnian Serbs also spoke to a Dutchbat interpreter from B Company, who was asked to state his name and rank but was barely believed. One of the interpreters was a former ABiH soldier. The Bosnian Serbs were in the compound for half an hour and were guarded by Dutch commandos.⁶⁴⁵ Franken had assigned Lieutenant Caris to perform security duties with a number of his men during the visit.⁶⁴⁶ Finally, Major Nikolic designated seven relatively young men as prisoners of war.⁶⁴⁷

The ABiH officer, Sadik Vilic, spoke about this episode. For some four to five days the situation was very good for the wounded and there was an abundance of everything. After not knowing what had been happening outside for five days, Vilic wished to have a look. He managed to make it outside on his own steam but was sent back inside again. One could sense that there was tension within Dutchbat and the *MSF* interpreter, Emira Selimovic, warned that a Bosnian Serb delegation was coming. This delegation, headed by Major Nikolic who was armed with a pistol, began to check the men and ask them their names while Dutchbat personnel looked on. Nikolic wrote down the names and dates of birth of seven men and spoke to Vilic's mother-in-law, because they again thought she was Esmā. Vilic mentioned his name, because he thought that they had already recognized him but this only happened once he had stated his name. He was given to understand that the VRS had been searching for him for three years already. The Bosnian Serbs then gave the list to the doctor, Daniel O'Brien. Vilic did not know what they said to O'Brien. They then left and half an hour later a message was received that the Red Cross vehicles were coming to evacuate the wounded to Tuzla. Dutchbat

⁶³⁹ Debriefing statement R.A. Franken, 7 and 20/09/95.

⁶⁴⁰ Interview J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

⁶⁴¹ Interview R.A. Franken, 18 /05/01.

⁶⁴² Confidential debriefing statement (26).

⁶⁴³ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

⁶⁴⁴ Debriefing statement G.W. Reussing, 12/09/95.

⁶⁴⁵ Confidential debriefing statement (13).

⁶⁴⁶ Debriefing statement R. Franken, 7 and 20/09/95.

⁶⁴⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (26).

personnel entered to carry the wounded out. According to Vilic, O'Brien gave the list of seven men to a Dutchbat officer and told him to take the men to a Dutchbat truck.⁶⁴⁸

The interpreter, Emira Selimovic, stated that the VRS had said that International Red Cross trucks were waiting in Bratunac to take the seven from the Dutchbat trucks. The VRS commander had told one of his men that the seven should enter the trucks last, so as to make it easier to keep them separate from the rest of the wounded. This already happened in the plant within the compound.⁶⁴⁹ According to *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the Bosnian Serbs allowed the International Red Cross to take the seven men to the hospital in Bratunac but the latter organization was not further concerned about them. At any rate, the names of the seven were known to both the International Red Cross and *Médecins Sans Frontières*.⁶⁵⁰ In reply to a questions from Franken as to whether it was not too risky to let the seven go to Bratunac, the International Red Cross delegate responded by saying that someone from their organization in the town would monitor the men.⁶⁵¹

In the course of the meeting with the International Red Cross, Major Franken had given orders for a four-tonne vehicle to be prepared to transport the seven wounded men but whether this occurred at the instigation of the International Red Cross or Dutchbat, was unclear to those who implemented this decision.⁶⁵² Captain De Bruijn then ordered Sergeant Major H. Ritsema to transport the seven men to Bratunac in the four-tonne vehicle. The reason cited for this was that the International Red Cross had too few vehicles at its disposal.⁶⁵³ Because wounded individuals were involved, this had to be done under medical supervision. Apart from the wounded, the following people were present in the four-tonne vehicle: UNMO Major De Haan to keep an eye on things and Naval Captain Schouten. De Haan had been asked by Major Franken to remain with the vehicle to see that the wounded were properly treated.⁶⁵⁴ Schouten had briefly returned to the compound from Bratunac to pick up medicine. Ritsema lined up his vehicle as the second in the column of the hastily departing Red Cross convoy, in order to ensure that it did not leave without him.⁶⁵⁵

Schouten went to sit at the back of the four-tonne vehicle with De Haan in order to prevent one or more of the wounded from jumping out of the vehicle on the way. Most of the patients were not confined to bed and sat on benches. If they did, they were likely to be shot and killed, and this would also cause difficulties for their escorts.⁶⁵⁶

According to Ritsema, the Bosnian Serbs in the person of Colonel Vukovic undertook to use their own transport to take the seven wounded to a military hospital in Zvornik after their arrival at the hospital in Bratunac. There was nowhere to put the seven in Bratunac. Before they could enter the hospital, the side building where the wounded had been held whom the International Red Cross had taken away that day, was being cleaned and disinfected. This only occurred at 9 pm. Until that time the seven were treated as patients and their treatment did not occasion any fear for their lives or to doubt Vukovic's words. Although the Bosnian Serb police guarded the hospital, the seven were not transferred to their custody but to the care of the medical staff.⁶⁵⁷

Upon arrival in Bratunac, quite a few civilians gathered around the Dutchbat four-tonne vehicle in front of the medical centre. They threw stones at it. Several old men in the area were told to remove the wounded from the truck and to guard them. Because the wounded included several sturdily built men, the UNMO and Dutchbat personnel helped remove the stretchers from the truck in a decent

⁶⁴⁸ Interview Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98.

⁶⁴⁹ DJZ, doss. Tribunaal. Answers to the Questionnaire *MSF* Local Staff, Emira Selimovic, Abdulah Purkovic, Tuzla. DJZ aan ICTY, 29/01/96, No. C 95/277.

⁶⁵⁰ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*. *MSF* Capsat 17/07/95, 7.40 pm, No. Out 584.

⁶⁵¹ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁶⁵² Confidential debriefing statement (3).

⁶⁵³ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁶⁵⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (3).

⁶⁵⁵ Confidential debriefing statement (26).

⁶⁵⁶ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 1/10/95.

⁶⁵⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (26).

fashion.⁶⁵⁸ Escorted by the Bosnian Serb police, Ritsema then returned to the compound together with Major De Haan.⁶⁵⁹ Schouten remained behind and only returned to the compound on 19 July, brought back by the hospital's medical superintendent.⁶⁶⁰

Sadik Vilic saw that some of the wounded taken from the hospital in Bratunac to the Red Cross vehicles, were people he knew from Potocari. That took half an hour, after which the Red Cross vehicles set off for Tuzla. The seven men remained behind and were then removed from the truck and taken inside. After the seven men were dropped off, the two Dutchbat military escorts left. The hospital was guarded and stern warnings were issued against attempting escape. Another 16 wounded men who had been evacuated from Kladanj five days earlier, were brought in to join the seven. A number of them wept and said, 'We are the only ones left.' The guards cursed and shouted things such as, 'We killed everyone in the forest,' an unmistakable reference to the executions which the VRS had perpetrated in the past few days following the hunt for the column of men who had tried to reach Tuzla.

However, Colonel Vukovic told them that he was using all the resources at his disposal in his struggle to get the men out of Bratunac alive. They were transported again a day later on 18 July. The Bosnian Serbs placed the wounded in trucks with temperatures between 35 and 40 degrees. The trucks drove for three hours and stopped a number of times when stones were thrown at them en route. Then they arrived at a field that had been fenced off with barbed wire. It appeared to be a Bosnian Serb POW camp located near Camp Batkovic in the vicinity of Bijeljina. After three months Vilic and other camp inmates were exchanged for VRS soldiers. There were 35 wounded individuals in the camp. Of those present, 55 had already been there for up to three years and 15 had not even attained the age of 18. Conditions were poor, no medical care was available and they were mistreated.⁶⁶¹

Because a Dutchbat four-tonne vehicle was used to transport the seven wounded men, it appeared as though this action had not occurred under the auspices of the International Red Cross. Sadik Vilic said that he wondered why Dutchbat had handed over the seven wounded men to the Bosnian Serbs. This question was his only criticism of Dutchbat.⁶⁶² Purkovic's subsequent view was that the wounded had even been selected and sent with the VRS without *Médecins Sans Frontières* or the International Red Cross being present.⁶⁶³ However, this was not the case. The men were transferred to the custody of the VRS as prisoners of war with the consent of the International Red Cross and in accordance with international law, and an undertaking was given that they would be placed in a POW camp, where they could be visited by the International Red Cross.

Lists of names

The question was how the Bosnian Serbs were able to designate the seven men in the compound in Potocari as prisoners of war. This raises the question as to whether the Bosnian Serbs had received any lists, which could serve as the basis for selecting these seven.

The Bosnian Serbs used a list which was not drawn up or signed by anyone from Dutchbat in 1995 according to Major Franken. However, *Médecins Sans Frontières* had drawn up a list of names of 59 wounded individuals. In his view, this was nothing more than a routine procedure, which was required in order to take people out of the enclave in a convoy. The Bosnian Serbs demanded a list of all the names of the people being transported in the case of every convoy. No specific request was made for such a list. His 'list of 59' also included the names of local *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff as well as five

⁶⁵⁸ Confidential debriefing statement (3).

⁶⁵⁹ Confidential debriefing statement (26).

⁶⁶⁰ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 26/09/95.

⁶⁶¹ Interview Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98.

⁶⁶² Interview Sadik Vilic, 06/02/98.

⁶⁶³ Interview Abdulah Purkovic, 21/05/99. In Purkovic's account, a Serbian TV camera team had even been inside the compound, and Mladic and Nikolic had selected the wounded individuals who were allowed to be presented on TV.

elderly people whom the VRS had dropped off at the camp after the people had been evacuated. This list was later passed on to the Red Cross and Franken. The latter stated that he did not witness the transfer of a list. He himself had not given a list to the VRS nor had he arranged for this to be done.⁶⁶⁴

A closer investigation of the question as to who provided a list to whom, is important because discussions later ensued on this point. Dutchbat would have made matters very easy for the Bosnian Serbs to select prisoners of war based on any list.

The various statements made about the provision of lists of names to the Bosnian Serbs do not paint a picture that is entirely clear. Several lists appear to have been drawn up on different days. Christina Schmitz refers to 15 July as ‘the day of the lists (I can’t hear the word anymore)’. Together with the UNHCR, she prepared a list of all the patients in the compound and their diagnosis. She also drew up a list of local *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff. These lists were then distributed to the UN and also the VRS.⁶⁶⁵

During a meeting with the VRS on 16 July *Médecins Sans Frontières* presented a list containing the names of its local staff but only the number of patients.⁶⁶⁶ However, the organization confirmed in Belgrade on 17 July 1995 that it had sent a list containing patients’ names to the International Red Cross.⁶⁶⁷ Almir Ramic, the local UNHCR staff representative had drawn up this list on 17 July and had handed it to *Médecins Sans Frontières*. He was certain that the Bosnian Serbs had also received a copy of this list but he did not know who had given it to them.⁶⁶⁸ The International Red Cross confirmed that it had received two lists containing patients’ names. The organization received one list from *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Potocari and one from the local hospital, Dom Zdravlja, in Bratunac.⁶⁶⁹

It is remarkable that the VRS had already reported in the evening of 13 July that UNPROFOR had provided it with a list containing the names of 54 wounded individuals who were held in the compound in Potocari.⁶⁷⁰ A Dutchbat serviceman stated that at about 9 pm on 13 July after the refugees had left, one person, whom he thought was Mladic’s interpreter, appeared at the compound and requested a list. He suspected that this referred to a list containing the names of wounded people. He waited at the gate for some time and received a list. The Dutchbat member did not know who provided this list.⁶⁷¹

This incident closely resembles that referred to in another statement made by a Dutchbat serviceman, although the latter referred to the event as having occurred a day later. Towards evening this member of the battalion had been ordered by Franken to prepare a list of the names of injured refugees. He was told that it was urgent. Together with a female *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff member this Dutchbat serviceman prepared a list. Franken also ordered him to draw up a copy of this list and to present it to him. He was to wait for him at the gate to the compound. There stood Karremans, Franken, Major Nikolic of the VRS, another VRS soldier and an interpreter. A Dutchbat sentry was also present. The Dutchbat serviceman in question stated that he saw Franken hand the list to Nikolic.

In this respect the VRS is also reported to have said that they were certainly willing to remove the wounded if they were to receive diesel from Karremans for this purpose. Karremans clearly showed that he did not wish to help them with this. Consequently, no deal was struck. Nikolic left taking the copy of the list containing the names of 59 wounded individuals.⁶⁷²

⁶⁶⁴ Debriefing statement R.A. Franken, 7 and 20/09/95.

⁶⁶⁵ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*, ‘sitrep Srebrenica – Potocari Period: 6-22/07/95’, prepared by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O’Brien, 24/07/95.

⁶⁶⁶ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*, *MSF* Capsat 16/07/95 51:01, No. Out 560.

⁶⁶⁷ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*, *MSF* Capsat 17/-7 1995 11.05 am, No. In 321.

⁶⁶⁸ CRST, Fax from Herman de Kleine, MLO to DCBC, 10/10/95.

⁶⁶⁹ ICRC replies to questions posed by the NIOD, 1999.

⁶⁷⁰ NIOD, Coll. Ivanisevic. KM DK Bratunac 1307/95 No. str. pov. br. 08-444-10.

⁶⁷¹ SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, p. 23.

⁶⁷² NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Extract debriefing statement of J. Feenstra, 14/09/95. Franken could no longer recall if he had or had not handed over a list but neither did he wish to deny that it could have happened (interview, 13/01/02).

The compound commander, Major J. Otter, understood that there was a discussion about a list. A female member of *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff was busy writing down the details of the wounded. One of the questions was whether surnames should be listed or not. Otter thought that this list was destined for internal use by *Médecins Sans Frontières*. The list was changed at least twice because people arrived. Otter did not know whether the Bosnian Serbs had received a copy.⁶⁷³

Emira Selimovic, the *Médecins Sans Frontières* interpreter, had indeed drawn up a list of the wounded in the compound. This list was handed to Dutchbat. Whether the latter in turn handed it to the VRS, Selimovic did not know.⁶⁷⁴ On the other hand, a Dutchbat soldier said that he had heard from *Médecins Sans Frontières* that the names of the sick and wounded had been given to the Bosnian Serbs with a view to their transport.⁶⁷⁵

Karremans believed he could recall that a list of the wounded was drawn up by the commander of the Field Dressing Station. He also said that this list was required to transport people. He was not aware of any lists prepared by *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Karremans was of the opinion that the wounded had ultimately left the enclave based on a destination arranged by the International Red Cross.⁶⁷⁶

The Field Dressing Station staff had prepared a medical file for all the patients in the compound, which stated in English what their condition was along with the policy proposed for their treatment. A list of names was also provided to the staff of the Norwegian medical company, which helped the International Red Cross with transport on 17 July. The list prepared by the Field Dressing Station was not revealed to the Bosnian Serbs.⁶⁷⁷

After studying photographs of the departure of the wounded from Potocari on 17 July, which had been presented in the course of the debriefing, on 18 October 1995 the Directorate of General Information in the Ministry of Defence ascertained that an International Red Cross assistant could be seen holding a list.⁶⁷⁸ This coincided with a statement made by a Dutchbat soldier, who said that the men whose names appeared on a list provided by the VRS, were separated from the rest and that Christina Schmitz had read out the list of names.⁶⁷⁹

Nevertheless, it is difficult to unravel the clues because, in addition to the lists summarized above, there were also others doing the rounds. Already on 14 July while visiting the wounded who had been brought back from Kladanj by Dutchbat and the VRS, in the hospital in Bratunac, the UNHCR field officer, Andrei Kazakov, had noted down their names and diagnosis for the purposes of a medical evacuation list for the UNPROFOR medical cell in Sarajevo.⁶⁸⁰

Even the local staff in the hospital in Bratunac drew up a list of the patients there. This list was typed with two carbon copies. Naval Captain Schouten briefly had this list in his possession. However, an interpreter did not feel that it was a good idea for him to have it and asked him to return it. In addition, there was also a 'hospital treatment register' containing the patient's names. The representatives of the International Red Cross also noted down the details of all the sick and wounded who were present in the hospital.⁶⁸¹ During a meeting with the International Red Cross, *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff, the civilian governor of Srebrenica Miroslav Deronjic, and the VRS, amongst others, it was decided to give the International Red Cross permission to record names.⁶⁸² The UNMOs also

⁶⁷³ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (24).

⁶⁷⁴ DJZ, Tribunal file. Answers to the Questionnaire *MSF* Local Staff, Emira Selimovic, Abdulah Purkovic, Tuzla. DJZ to ICTY, 29/01/96, No. C 95/277.

⁶⁷⁵ SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, § 4.1.5.

⁶⁷⁶ Debriefing statement by Th. J.P. Karremans, Assen, 27/09/95.

⁶⁷⁷ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

⁶⁷⁸ BSG, No. 19635. Plv. DV to the minister, 18/10/95, No. V95019631.

⁶⁷⁹ SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, p. 23.

⁶⁸⁰ Field Report monitoring Srebrenica 13 and 14/07/95 by Andrei Kazakov and Rosanna Sam. Provided by E. O'Dwyer, US State Department BH Desk.

⁶⁸¹ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09 and 1/10/95. Based on the personal description provided by Schouten, the person in question was the UN interpreter, Petar Usumlic.

⁶⁸² SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, § 4.1.5.

possessed a list of the names of the wounded. On 17 July they sent this list to the UNMO headquarters in Tuzla.⁶⁸³

There were thus many lists doing the rounds but this does not answer the question whether or how the Bosnian Serbs obtained any and if it served as an aid in the selection of prisoners of war.

Subsequent discussions about lists of names

There was an extraordinary twist to the events concerning what came to be called the 'list of 59' after the journalist, Frank Westerman, published an article in *NRC Handelsblad* on the issue on 22 September 1995 following the completion of the debriefing interviews in Assen. According to Westerman, Dutchbat had a list of wounded Muslims drawn up on the orders of the Bosnian Serbs. This was said to be evident from the statements made by the UNMO, Major De Haan, and Christina Schmitz. Minister Voorhoeve had not informed Parliament about this matter. A Defence spokesman could only confirm the transfer of the 59 wounded individuals and concede that the Bosnian Serbs were aware of their identity. According to De Haan, in the course of various discussions the VRS had demanded a list of personal details including age, place of birth and nature of injury. The VRS were said to want to compare it to their own lists in their search for war criminals. De Haan, who was present at the discussion, maintains that the Dutchbat leadership did not protest. They also agreed to a demand to screen the wounded. 'We literally had our backs to the wall. The Serbs [sic] dictated everything,' said De Haan. *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff then recorded the names preparatory to transport.

Nor was it Christina Schmitz' intention to help the Serbs: 'At that point in time I did not realize that I would be endangering the patients'.

Once the list was completed, Major Nikolic and other military personnel visited the wounded. Nikolic asked them their names and selected seven: 'We want this one, and this one and this one'. The panic was reported to have been considerable and the patients who were most afraid, were given sedatives. Schmitz added that the seven who had been selected, were taken away by Dutchbat and that Major Franken had offered a Dutchbat truck for this purpose. They are reported to have still been alive at the end of July but nothing has been heard of them since.⁶⁸⁴

Westerman wrote about the matter again four days later. This time he wrote that the *Médecins Sans Frontières* doctor, Daniel O'Brien, had already been ordered by an unnamed Dutchbat official to prepare a list of the wounded people on 13 July. He was told that the Bosnian Serbs had requested it. The VRS subsequently selected all the men they were under the impression might ever be able to hold a rifle, according to O'Brien. The Ministry of Defence conceded, according to Westerman's article, that when the patients were handed over to the International Red Cross on 17 July, the Bosnian Serbs appeared to know their identity. The Ministry of Defence also stated that the list even included the names of 66 exhausted elderly people, hysterical men and women, and children with bullet wounds.⁶⁸⁵

On 28 September the CDA (Christian Democrats) Member of Parliament, De Hoop Scheffer, posed questions in person in response to the first article in *NRC Handelsblad*. In a nutshell, these questions sought to ascertain whether Dutchbat had prepared a list of wounded men. The question was whether the Minister knew about this. If not, the Member of Parliament wanted to know why the Minister did not.⁶⁸⁶ In response, from abroad Minister Voorhoeve directed his officials to find answers to a large number of questions about the fate of the seven wounded men.⁶⁸⁷ This was ultimately what the issue was all about.

⁶⁸³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 25/77, File 1.1.57, SNE 4 Apr - 23 Aug 95. Fax UNMO Team Srebrenica via Dutchbat to UNMO HQ BH NE, [sent at 12.42 pm on 17/07/95]. The list was faxed through to UNPF HQ Zagreb on the same day.

⁶⁸⁴ *NRC Handelsblad*, 22/09/95.

⁶⁸⁵ *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/09/95.

⁶⁸⁶ *Tweede Kamer*, Question Time, 28/09/95, TK 6-323 to 6-328.

⁶⁸⁷ DCBC, 1160. Handwritten fax from Joris [Voorhoeve] to Gijs ter Kuile, undated (25/09/95?). Appended to DAB, D95/488 of 27/09/95.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs approached the International Red Cross. The latter stated that it had no knowledge of a list containing the names of the wounded. According to a source at *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the MSF in Belgrade had provided one on 17 July. The situation was not entirely clear. On 17 and 18 July 87 people had been transported from Bratunac to Tuzla for medical reasons. When the International Red Cross counted on 23 September, it arrived at 87 evacuees, 28 of whom came from Bratunac, 58 from Potocari and there was one whose origin was unknown. A child who had just been born and who was probably not registered anywhere, brought the total to 88. Indeed, on 18 July 1995 the International Red Cross released a figure of 88 evacuees.⁶⁸⁸

The Bosnian Serbs had originally given the International Red Cross permission to transport 110 sick people to Tuzla but at the last moment this was withdrawn for 23 of them, including the seven men from Potocari. The International Red Cross drew up a list of these people. 22 of these 23 individuals were found during a visit to Camp Batkovic on 19 September. The missing person was said to have died in the hospital in Bijeljina.⁶⁸⁹ Prior to this, on 26 July, Rosanna Sam, the Field Officer for the Bosnia-Herzegovina desk at the UNHCR in Belgrade, reported that 22 wounded individuals had been taken from the clinic in Batkovic to the hospital in Bijeljina and other hospitals.⁶⁹⁰

Consequently, only 22 wounded people may have arrived in Batkovic and the Bosnian Serbs may have managed to mislead the International Red Cross with regard to the whereabouts of the person who died in Bijeljina. Of the group of 23, the VRS had transferred Osman Halilovic to the custody of the CSB (Security Service) in Zvornik. According to the Intelligence Department of the Bratunac Brigade, Halilovic had himself confessed to participating in the mass slaughter of civilians.⁶⁹¹

Observations made by Naval Captain Schouten appear to confirm that there was something going on with Osman Halilovic. This was because Schouten managed to remember the name of one of the wounded men: Osman. The only Osman cited in the list of the 23 wounded individuals was the 32-year old Osman Halilovic. As Schouten recalls, Osman was not one of the seven prisoners of war who were taken to Bratunac in a four-tonne Dutchbat vehicle on 17 July. He had already been there for a longer period of time and must therefore have been one of the patients in the convoy of wounded that failed to reach Kladanj. Schouten had his doubts about the fate of this person. Osman was young and only lightly wounded. Schouten was under the impression that his wounds were self-inflicted in order to be considered for evacuation. He walked quite normally when he thought that no one was looking but limped when he was being observed. The local populace used the name, 'butcher' to refer to this Osman, based on his preference for slitting the throats of Serbian men, women and children with a knife in order to conserve ammunition. He was said to have lived in Bratunac before the war and was therefore very well known.⁶⁹²

Schouten had good reason to entertain doubts about the fate of this person. However, these doubts were challenged by a report from the ABiH to the effect that a certain Osman Halilovic of the 28th Division had survived the VRS executions and had already reported to another ABiH unit on 18 July.⁶⁹³ However, it is impossible to confirm with any certainty that the same person was involved.

The International Red Cross in Geneva was able to check this again following the appearance of the list of 59 wounded people via Zagreb after a Dutch UN soldier had handed it to an assistant of the UN special human rights investigator, Mazowiecki.⁶⁹⁴ The preliminary findings of the investigation

⁶⁸⁸ ICRC replies to questions posed by the NIOD, 1999. See also ICRC Press Release 95/32, 18/07/95.

⁶⁸⁹ DCBC, 1160. Code Hofstee 364, 27/09/95.

⁶⁹⁰ CRST, UNHCR. Note for the file from Rosanna Sam to Bill Tall, 26/07/95.

⁶⁹¹ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 371/a. Command of the 1st Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade Intelligence Organ (Momir Nikolic) to VRS General Staff, Intelligence Sector. Command of the Drina Corps, Intelligence Department, 18/07/95, No. 08-34 1995.

⁶⁹² The comments about 'Osman' have been sourced from debriefing statements made by A.A. Schouten on 14/09/ and 1/10/95.

⁶⁹³ ABiH Tuzla. Komanda 24. Divizije O.S.V.B. to Komandi 2. Korpusa O.S.V.B., 24/07/95, br. 06-1321 1995. (Nedžad Avdic was another person who escaped execution near Brane Djilici.)

⁶⁹⁴ DCBC, 1160. Memo from F.J.J. Princen to the minister, undated.

conducted by the International Red Cross were that, while it was true that the list contained 59 numbers, it only cited 56 names. In so far as these names were legible, one could conclude that there were 55 people in the medical convoy to Tuzla which the International Red Cross had organized. Two names were illegible, two were not listed in the International Red Cross's files, and one name was that of someone who had been taken prisoner by the Bosnian Serbs according to that person's family. It was known that five people had been taken prisoner. They were being held in the POW camp in Batkovic.⁶⁹⁵

This investigation conducted by the International Red Cross did not provide a great deal of clarity about the fate of the prisoners of war. Based on these findings, which were anything but clear, the Ministry of Defence resorted to delaying tactics. Defence Department spokespeople were instructed to say that the transfer of the wounded Muslims would be dealt with as part of the extensive debriefing process in Assen.

In view of the fact that several parts of the debriefing statements were already in the Ministry's possession contrary to what had been agreed in Assen, it was improper to assert the need to await the outcome of the debriefing process. The argument to the effect that the information could change on the basis of the findings of the investigation encompassing the current round of debriefing was weak.⁶⁹⁶ The debriefing sessions had already been held. How the Bosnian Serbs could be aware of the identity of the Muslims was apparent from at least one of the debriefing statements.

On the other hand, Major Franken had emphatically denied that Dutchbat had transferred the wounded to the VRS. Dutchbat had transferred them to the International Red Cross and the latter had undertaken to continue to monitor those persons designated as prisoners of war.

Parliamentary questions

When answering the questions about the lists of wounded posed by the Member of Parliament, De Hoop Scheffer (CDA-Christian Democrats), Minister Voorhoeve was advised by his officials not to go into detail. This was risky because a great deal was still unclear. There were objections to this approach in that it only raised expectations about the outcome of the debriefing process. In the interim Naval Captain Schouten tried to have the medical superintendent of the hospital in Bratunac send him a copy of the names listed in the patients' register but no reply was forthcoming.⁶⁹⁷

In Parliament Minister Voorhoeve replied that a list had indeed been prepared but that it was possible that different lists had been prepared by different people. The situation was not clear to the Ministry. According to Voorhoeve, the list of 59 had been prepared by *Médecins Sans Frontières* and had been handed to a representative of the special UN human rights investigator and the Red Cross. In stating this, the Minister was rather free in his approach to time, because the list had only been handed over in Zagreb upon departure from the enclave and the International Red Cross only received it on 28 September. The Minister said that he had not known about the list. The Ministry had only come into possession of the 'list of 59' on the day of the relevant question time (28 September 1995). Voorhoeve incidentally found it 'a normal procedure' that lists of wounded individuals were drawn up to record their identity and what happened to them. For the rest, the Minister presented an accurate record of details provided by the International Red Cross. Voorhoeve suspected and hoped that the seven wounded men were amongst the wounded who had been found in Camp Batkovic.

De Hoop Scheffer did not appear to be satisfied. The Minister and Parliament should have known about the matter. The debriefing process had at any rate started too late. He wanted to know who had given the list to the International Red Cross and whether it had passed through the hands of the Dutchbat commanding officers. The Minister did not really consider these questions, only saying

⁶⁹⁵ DCBC, 1160. Code Hofstee 364, 27/09/95.

⁶⁹⁶ DCBC, 1160. Speech with comments. Undated, author unknown.

⁶⁹⁷ Interview A.A. Schouten, 21/02/00.

that he had doubts about a number of points raised in the article that had appeared in *NRC Handelsblad* on 22 September. According to him, this article did not entirely coincide with the information that the Ministry had at its disposal but, as it happens, he did not indicate which information he was referring to.

In the second session the Member of Parliament, Hoekema (D66), asked the Minister whether the Red Cross had checked the identities and whether he had yet ascertained how the Bosnian Serbs had established the identity of the wounded. In his response to the article in *NRC Handelsblad*, Minister Voorhoeve had said that this was to be investigated. By way of reply, Voorhoeve again referred to the fact that lists of names had been required for the transport of people through Bosnian Serb territory. With regard to checking identities, it appeared to Voorhoeve to be a good idea to ask the International Red Cross to do this when it again visited the camps where the men were being held. Voorhoeve added that, without being asked, the International Red Cross had revealed that it had no criticism of the manner in which Dutchbat had dealt with the wounded and the refugees.⁶⁹⁸ This statement was somewhat exaggerated as it did not represent an observation by the International Red Cross itself. In its discussions with witnesses the International Red Cross had not heard of anything negative about Dutchbat.⁶⁹⁹

The 'list of 23'

On 4 October 1995, the day on which the debriefing report was ready, the International Red Cross announced the findings of a new investigation. The International Red Cross had had contact with 22 of the 23 prisoners of war that it had not been allowed to transport. One of them had died in the hospital of Bijeljina. The International Red Cross had had contact with five of the people who were also mentioned in one of the *Médecins Sans Frontières* lists. However, at the end of September prisoners had been exchanged on two occasions in Camp Batkovic. People whose names were on the list of 23 could have been involved. There was a problem in that the International Red Cross had not been present during one exchange, with the result that it was impossible to provide a conclusive answer.⁷⁰⁰

The International Red Cross had shown itself to be particularly helpful but did not wish to go as far as permitting a subsequent investigation in the course of which Ministry of Defence officials would be allowed to approach International Red Cross staff with lists of questions or requests for additional information in person. After all, it would not be possible to deny others whatever was permitted in the case of the Netherlands. It would make it difficult if not impossible for the organization to work in the region.⁷⁰¹

The Directorate for General Policy Affairs in the Ministry of Defence then tried to reach a conclusive decision itself based on the findings of the International Red Cross and a comparison of the lists containing 23, 59 and 239 names respectively. The latter list contained the names of those men who had allowed themselves to be registered in the compound prior to their deportation (see Part IV, Chapters 4 and 8). The International Red Cross had previously examined the list containing 239 names and had compared it with its databases and statements made by family members. This list contained 236 rather than 239 names because three had been crossed out. 50 names could not be traced in the files of the International Red Cross. 65 of the 236 names coincided with those in the organization's files, albeit that their dates of birth differed. Two names might have coincided if it were not for minor differences in spelling. Three names could have coincided but the question remained as to whether they referred to the same person. 116 names and dates of birth coincided perfectly with the International Red Cross database. According to reports made by the relevant family members, 103 of these 116 men

⁶⁹⁸ *Tweede Kamer*, Question Time, 28/09/95, TK 6-323 to 6-328.

⁶⁹⁹ DCBC, 1160. Code Hofstee 364, 27/09/95.

⁷⁰⁰ ABZ, DIO: JS: UN Human Rights. Code Palthe 395, 12/10/95; DCBC 1180. Code Hofstee 378, 04/10/95, Secret.

⁷⁰¹ DCBC, 1180. Code Hofstee 378, 04/10/95, Secret. This passage can be found in T K session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 128, p. 9.

had been taken prisoner. Seven were said to have escaped to areas under the control of the Bosnian Government. The International Red Cross had registered five people in Batkovic. One person was said to have been seen there.⁷⁰²

The complex comparison performed by the Directorate for General Policy Affairs revealed that seven names coincided and not five as the International Red Cross had concluded. In all cases they involved men of fighting age. The man who had died in Bijeljina was not reported to be one of the seven wounded selected in Potocari. These seven were said to have been alive on 19 September 1995. One was later reported to have died of unknown causes. Three or four of the six survivors were said to have still been alive following the exchange of prisoners. The remaining two or three could have been involved in the second exchange, in which the International Red Cross was not involved.⁷⁰³

It is not clear what the basis was for these assumptions made by the Directorate for General Policy Affairs. The International Red Cross did not mention any numbers in connection with the exchange of prisoners. Nevertheless, the Directorate for General Policy Affairs asserted that the Minister could disclose its findings publicly if necessary. This occurred in virtually identical words when the debriefing report was tabled in Parliament on 30 October.

The Ministry of Defence subsequently remained reserved in connection with the seven wounded people whom the Bosnian Serbs had selected in Potocari. The reason for this lay in the fact that the investigation performed by the Directorate for General Policy Affairs had revealed that the depiction of the events surrounding the removal of the sick and wounded from Bratunac in the debriefing report differed significantly from the version of the International Red Cross. According to the debriefing report, 17 wounded individuals had remained behind in Bratunac. This was said to have been due to negligence on the part of the International Red Cross and insufficient capacity to transport all the wounded. Moreover, the International Red Cross wanted to leave the area as soon as possible because it was getting dark. It was reported that there had not been any consultation about the manner in which the remaining wounded were to be removed. As a result, ten (an inaccurate number) wounded people remained behind in Bratunac in addition to the seven designated as prisoners of war in Potocari, according to the debriefing report.⁷⁰⁴

The version presented by the International Red Cross was that the Bosnian Serbs had originally granted it permission to transport all 110 of the sick and wounded but that they revoked this in respect of 23 of them at the last moment, and the latter therefore remained behind.⁷⁰⁵ As revealed in the course of debriefing in Zagreb immediately after Dutchbat's departure from the enclave, the explanation for this could be found in the fact that the VRS had compiled files on these people.⁷⁰⁶

Criticism of the International Red Cross

While it may not be very diplomatic to air criticism about the actions of the International Red Cross, not everyone within Dutchbat was positive in his assessment. The arrival of a delegation from the International Red Cross was the first time Dutchbat personnel had a glimpse of the world outside the enclave again. It was an utterly different world that was entering the enclave: there were people who had washed and shaved, women who were properly clothed and men wearing suits. After a week of unpleasantness and misery, this seemed 'less than brilliant' to those who were involved. Apparently, this

⁷⁰² DCBC, 1160. PV Geneva to the minister of Foreign Affairs, 27/09/95, No. Gevi364, Confi.

⁷⁰³ DV, 95019453. DAB to the minister, 16/10/95, No. D95/524, Secret.

⁷⁰⁴ DV, 95019453. DAB to the minister, 16/10/95, No. D95/524, Secret. Cf. Debriefing report p.65, § 5.34. TK, session of 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 128, p. 15.

⁷⁰⁵ DCBC, 1160. PV Geneva to the minister of Foreign Affairs, 27/09/95, No. Gevi364, Confi. This communication states that seven people had come from Bratunac and 16 from Potocari. This should have been seven from Potocari and 16 from Bratunac.

⁷⁰⁶ DCBC, 1650. C 11 Airmobile Brigade to the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, 'Operationele Debrief Dutchbat III', 28/07/95, No. 172/Conf.

nurtured the idea and the stories that in Dutchbat's view the International Red Cross did not act properly in the sense that the delegates thought: within several hours we will be back in our hotel in Bratunac and tomorrow we will be here again. Within the battalion this led to the following attitude: 'You will not be leaving the compound until we make arrangements for the wounded, so you may as well stay for a while'.⁷⁰⁷

In the course of the meeting in the compound in Potocari the female representative of the International Red Cross had managed to cause so much irritation with the VRS that a temporary halt to proceedings was required. She had to be taken aside to have the position of the VRS following its capture of the enclave explained to her.⁷⁰⁸

Yet there were also other types of criticism. At the end of the afternoon on 12 July Captain V.B. Egbers saw a white vehicle belonging to the International Red Cross in Nova Kasaba containing two men and two women from Switzerland. Egbers thought that this was a response to the fact that people in Nova Kasaba were in the middle of a battle between the VRS and the ABiH forces fleeing to Tuzla. He asked the International Red Cross delegates whether they wished to see the prisoners of war whom the VRS were holding on the football field, but this did not appear to be the case. The delegates had come from Pale and wanted to go to Belgrade via Zvornik. They merely asked whether the road to Belgrade was safe. The vehicle turned around and drove off. 'Then you feel that you have been left reasonably to your own devices, whereas the Red Cross is precisely an organization which is impartial and which could be looking after people,' said Egbers.⁷⁰⁹ The latter's remarks found their way into the debriefing report.⁷¹⁰ The president of the International Red Cross, Cornelio Sommaruga, responded to this by informing Minister Voorhoeve that the staff in question had not been alerted to the presence of prisoners at that point in time.⁷¹¹

Two representatives of the International Red Cross were busy in Bratunac from late in the morning until early in the evening of 17 July trying to arrange the departure of patients from the hospital. Naval Captain Schouten found it strange that they did not once contact him. They selected the wounded without asking him for advice. Schouten felt that the representatives were aloof and chaotic in the way they performed their work. He also commented on the inadequate transport capacity of the International Red Cross.⁷¹² He was not alone in this. Sergeant Major Ritsema of the Medical Platoon which drove the four-tonne vehicle containing the seven prisoners of war from Potocari to Bratunac, assumed the same: a lack of capacity on the part of the International Red Cross. The convoy soon left Bratunac but the four-tonne vehicle containing the seven men remained where it was. There was no explanation or consultation.⁷¹³

Dutchbat was not alone in its judgement of the International Red Cross. Christina Schmitz of *Médecins Sans Frontières* described the evacuation as 'very unorganized and messy'. It gave one the impression that the delegates on site did not have their heart in their work. On 17 July the International Red Cross was to be present for an inspection of the patients by the VRS and everyone waited for them. The organization had set a deadline of midday for itself but its representatives only arrived at 3.30 pm. According to Schmitz, they were only interested in getting away as soon as possible. Consequently, *Médecins Sans Frontières* had to join Major Nikolic to inspect the patients together with a UNMO, in the course of which the seven men were selected. Schmitz called this a 'disgusting' task.⁷¹⁴

⁷⁰⁷ Interview J. Otter, 26 /05/99.

⁷⁰⁸ Interview A.A.L. Caris, 06/03/00.

⁷⁰⁹ Interview V.B. Egbers, 2/09/99.

⁷¹⁰ Debriefing report, § 4.28.

⁷¹¹ ABZ, DIO: JS: UN Human Rights. Letter from HUM/PV Geneva to the Ministry of Defence (DAB), 30/11/95, No. gev/hum-3683/1995.

⁷¹² Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 1/10/95.

⁷¹³ Confidential debriefing statement (26).

⁷¹⁴ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 17/07/95, 7.40 pm, No. Out 584.

Later Schmitz said that Major Franken had resisted the VRS's inspection of the last wounded people in the compound. According to Schmitz, the Bosnian Serbs were only prepared to agree to an evacuation subject to an inspection. Franken's opposition was futile. The Bosnian Serbs simply did as they pleased.⁷¹⁵

After that confusion ensued. First, news was received that the International Red Cross had not been given permission to enter the enclave. However, suddenly it was possible for the International Red Cross to start the evacuation and its representatives told the doctor, Daniel O'Brien that he had to leave the patients behind because it was then too late. Nevertheless, in one way or another the patients began to be loaded and the convoy left Potocari at 6.15 pm. According to Schmitz, the International Red Cross was permitted to transport the seven men to the hospital in Bratunac themselves but the organization was not concerned about them.⁷¹⁶ Similarly, Franken was also irritated by the fact that transport was not available for everyone, even though the numbers were known and the male prisoners of war would have to remain behind in Bratunac without adequate supervision.⁷¹⁷

These were the critical remarks uttered by Dutchbat, which partly and in a modified form found their way into the debriefing report.⁷¹⁸ In his letter presenting the debriefing report to Parliament, Minister Voorhoeve distanced himself from the criticism levelled at the staff of the International Red Cross. They merely reflected the personal views of the Dutchbat soldiers involved. According to Voorhoeve, the Dutch Government had a great deal of admiration for the International Red Cross and its activities in the former Yugoslavia.⁷¹⁹

The 'list of 59' revisited

Finally, in a letter addressed to Parliament on 30 October 1995 in relation to the list of 59 wounded people, Minister Voorhoeve wrote that it had not been established whether they had been handed over to the Bosnian Serbs and, if so, by whom.⁷²⁰ This is remarkable because the debriefing report is clear and forthright in this respect. Both of the Dutch statements cited in connection with the handover of lists to the VRS are reported in anonymous and somewhat abstract form but are presented in detail in the debriefing report. However, this report does indicate that it was impossible to obtain confirmation for the statement about the handover of the list to the VRS.⁷²¹

An investigation conducted by the Ministry in reply to questions posed by Minister Voorhoeve revealed that the list of wounded referred to in the article by Frank Westerman in *NRC Handelsblad*, had been drawn up on 17 July. This occurred following a meeting which involved *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the International Red Cross, Dutchbat and the Bosnian Serbs. In each case this list stated the name, date and place of birth, the name of the person's father and the nature of his injuries. *Médecins Sans Frontières* passed on this list to the Red Cross and Major Franken. As far as is known, UNPROFOR, the Defence Crisis Management Centre and the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff were not informed of the existence of this list. It remains unclear how many other lists had been circulating.⁷²²

According to the debriefing report a list had already been handed to the VRS on 14 July.⁷²³ In a report prepared at the end of July 1995, Christina Schmitz of *Médecins Sans Frontières* wrote that a list of patients had been handed over on as early as 13 July when a VRS delegation had paid its first visit to

⁷¹⁵ ANP, 'AzG-arts bij terugblik mild over optreden Dutchbat', 21/02/96.

⁷¹⁶ NIOD, Coll. MSF. MSF Capsat 17/07/95, 7.40, No. Out 584.

⁷¹⁷ Interview R.A. Franken, 18 /05/01.

⁷¹⁸ See Debriefing Report, p. 54 and pp. 64-65.

⁷¹⁹ This was in §§ 4.28 and 5.34. TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 128, p. 15.

⁷²⁰ TK session of 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 128, p. 16.

⁷²¹ Debriefing Report, p. 64, § 5.32.

⁷²² Appendix 3 to DAB, No. D95/488 from 27/09/95. DCBC, 1160.

⁷²³ Debriefing Report, p. 64.

the compound. However, the report does not mention whether this was done by *Médecins Sans Frontières* or Dutchbat.⁷²⁴

More lists had indeed been prepared. In itself, it was not all that remarkable that lists were drawn up. The transfer of the wounded on 17 July without a list would have raised more questions, because there would not have been any way of checking matters afterwards. The question in this respect is whether lists were handed to the VRS which could have made it easier for them to pick out possible ABiH soldiers amongst the wounded. While this is likely, the VRS could also have got this far without any lists. The Bosnian Serbs themselves interrogated people of fighting age and used cameras and video equipment. It would not have been too difficult to recognize people with the aid of images, because the people knew each other from before the war.

In its preparations to answer the parliamentary questions, the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff failed to obtain any clarity on the policy governing lists of names from the UN in Zagreb or the Netherlands Red Cross. At any rate, it was customary to hand over lists of sick and wounded people to the warring factions when they were to be transported. This procedure was followed by UNPROFOR, the UNHCR, NGOs and also local authorities.⁷²⁵

Another question which Minister Voorhoeve posed to his officials was whether Dutchbat had sought guarantees for the safety and medical treatment of the seven wounded Muslim men. This did not appear to be the case. Dutchbat had only transported the seven men to Bratunac at the request of the International Red Cross. To be absolutely sure, a UNMO had been sent along to monitor whether any irregularities occurred.⁷²⁶

The last time that the issue of lists of wounded was raised in the Dutch press, was in *Vrij Nederland* on 28 October 1995. The editors, Ko Colijn and Paul Rusman stated that, even if it was unclear whether Dutchbat was responsible for those lists, a list of wounded should never have been allowed to find its way into Serb hands.⁷²⁷

In February 1996 Christina Schmitz of *Médecins Sans Frontières* revisited the issue on the occasion of the publication of the book, *Srebrenica: Getuigen van een massamoord* (Srebrenica: Witnesses of a Massacre), published by Bob van Laerhoven. She was astonished by the commotion that had arisen in the Netherlands in connection with the preparation of lists of wounded. She did not find anything strange about the preparation of such lists. In this connection she referred to the Geneva Conventions which, according to her, required that such lists be drawn up in cases of this nature and that they be handed to all the parties concerned, including the occupying force, in this case the Bosnian Serbs.⁷²⁸ Questions may be raised about Schmitz's interpretation but she is right when she states that the Conventions provide for the preparation of lists and the presentation of names, albeit that if this is applied to the situation prevailing in Potocari, it was more a duty of the Bosnian Serbs to prepare lists of prisoners of war. In addition, the Conventions make it mandatory for a prisoner of war to state his name when asked.⁷²⁹

⁷²⁴ NIOD, Coll. *MSF*, 'sitrep Srebrenica - Potocari period: 6-22/07/95', prepared by Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, 24/07/95.

⁷²⁵ IMG No. 95/27/476. Internal memorandum from SSOGD/ W.J. Wertheim to the chief of Staff, CRST / B. Dedden, 16/11/95, No. SCGD/16110/15024.

⁷²⁶ DCBC, 1160. Appendix 3 to DAB, No. D95/488 of 27/09/95.

⁷²⁷ Ko Colijn and Paul Rusman in *Vrij Nederland*, 28/10/95.

⁷²⁸ *ANP*, 'AzG-arts bij terugblik mild over optreden Dutchbat', 21/02/96.

⁷²⁹ See the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, 12 August 1949 (Geneva Convention III), Art. 17: Every prisoner of war, when questioned on the subject, is bound to give only his surname, first names and rank, date of birth, and army, regimental, personal or serial number, or failing this, equivalent information. Art. 20: The Detaining Power shall take all suitable precautions to ensure their safety during evacuation, and shall establish as soon as possible a list of the prisoners of war who are evacuated. Art. 46: The Detaining Power shall take adequate precautions especially in case of transport by sea or by air, to ensure their safety during transfer, and shall draw up a complete list of all transferred prisoners before their departure. In addition, former soldiers may also be treated as prisoners of war (Art. 4).

The evacuation of the wounded by the International Red Cross: conclusion

Ultimately, intervention was required at the most senior political level in relation to the departure of the wounded from Potocari. Only then was it possible for Generals Mladic and Smith to make arrangements for the International Red Cross to have access to the enclave. With hindsight, the delay before the International Red Cross was granted access to Potocari can be explained by the fact that it was not in the interests of the Bosnian Serbs to allow busybodies into an area where Muslim men were being transported and executed.

The transfer of the wounded to the International Red Cross did not proceed without a hitch but was a hastily executed operation owing to the late arrival of the Red Cross convoy from Tuzla. The transfer of the patients was complicated even more by the fact that the Bosnian Serbs had designated seven of them as prisoners of war. Because these men were not taken in the International Red Cross convoy but had to be transported to Bratunac in a Dutchbat truck, this led to consternation in what was a hectic situation. The International Red Cross did not provide an adequate explanation for adopting such a different approach and many Dutchbat personnel were also left in doubt.

This situation created a breeding ground for subsequent speculation about the fate of these men and for questions about Dutchbat's involvement in it. Part of the discussion concerned the question as to what extent the provision of lists enabled the Bosnian Serbs to select these seven men. This led to as detailed as possible a reconstruction of the preparation of the lists of wounded in various places. However, one cannot conclude from the preparation of such lists that Dutchbat and *Médecins Sans Frontières* had thus helped the Bosnian Serbs select prisoners of war. Within the reality of Bosnia the question about this, which was mainly posed in the Netherlands, was largely an academic one. Without names or passenger lists it was simply impossible to cross the front line, in this case the border with Serbia.

A request for guarantees addressed by Dutchbat to the Bosnian Serbs at a time when the International Red Cross appeared on the scene, would also have amounted to an overestimation of Dutchbat's role. The evacuation of the wounded was an issue which was dealt with at the highest level and Dutchbat had hardly any idea what transpired there. Beyond the boundaries of the former enclave only the International Red Cross was able to monitor in some way or another the manner in which the evacuation was proceeding and the subsequent fate of the wounded men. Moreover, the International Red Cross recognized that prisoners of war were involved and registered them, so as to be able to visit them at a later stage. The fact that prisoners of war were involved, was not raised in any of the subsequent discussions in the Netherlands. It was also remarkable that these discussions focussed entirely on the seven men and did not cover the sixteen who were present in Bratunac and who had previously left the compound in Potocari with the convoy of wounded that had failed to make it to Kladanj.

What is also striking, is the extent to which the departure of the wounded became a question of improvising in the midst of ongoing chaos, in which an array of organizations with powers that were not clearly defined, intervened in the situation, and in which the Bosnian Serbs constantly made demands in an arrogant fashion, thereby complicating matters even further.

Chapter 15

Dutchbat's internal problems

Introduction

The following sections have been written in the light of penetrating medical, ethical and military issues pertaining to the fall of Srebrenica. Dutchbat plays a central role in this respect. In particular, the Dutchbat medical service is put under the microscope and is considered from within. This is important because many questions were subsequently raised about the performance of this medical service, and it can explain a number of matters referred to in the broader review above.

This section seeks to deal with a number of questions systematically, returning in parts to Dutchbat's organizational structure and medical service, which were raised at the beginning of this appendix. These issues relate to the internal tensions that existed and the situation in which the medical service found itself. The sources cited date from a subsequent period.

The media also devoted a great deal of attention to this. In this connection, it concerns the manner in which the battalion leadership and the surgical teams assigned to Dutchbat, KHO-5 and KHO-6, viewed their duties and the personal conflicts that played a role. The relations between the people involved were not clarified and this rendered their performance additionally vulnerable in the prevailing circumstances.

Relatively soon after the fall of Srebrenica and even before the debriefing report appeared, information was received about the serious breakdown of relations between the Dutchbat leadership and one of the surgical teams (KHO-5) and between both surgical teams (KHO-5 and KHO-6), and the internal relations within the Field Dressing Station.

During the attack on the enclave Dutchbat had two of these surgical support teams, which had been deployed by the *Krijgsmacht Hospitaal Organisatie* (Armed Forces Hospital Service - KHO) and which, unlike other medical personnel, normally remained in the enclave for three months. Regular relief had fallen considerably behind schedule due to the refusal of the Bosnian Serbs to grant permission for this to occur. When KHO-6 was finally able to travel to Srebrenica after a long wait, the onset of fighting made it impossible for KHO-5 to leave. In normal circumstances, KHO-5 would have left the enclave immediately once they had been relieved and had handed over their duties. However, they did not receive permission to do so and were forced to remain in Potocari. In addition, the day after the arrival of KHO-6 the shelling of the enclave began and the VRS commenced its attack, with the result that tensions rose dramatically.

This led to the exceptional situation where Dutchbat had two surgical teams. The presence of these two KHO teams muddied the already complex waters of the medical service's performance in addition to a lack of clarity as to what was referred to as the 'emergency stock'. It was an unpleasant fact that this situation was largely the result of the policy pursued by the Bosnian Serbs with a view to isolating the enclave. In addition, due to its forced wait in Zagreb for permission to enter the enclave relations within KHO-6 and with the commander of the Field Dressing Station had been disrupted somewhat even before the team arrived in the enclave.

However, the Bosnian Serb policy of isolating the enclave also had an effect on relations between KHO-5 and the Dutchbat leadership. Tensions arose partly because the KHO teams and the staff at the Field Dressing Station had different duty rosters. What was more important, was that, owing to their background and approach to work, the KHO teams had a culture which differed from that of the airmobile battalion. Amongst other things, this was expressed in a more flexible approach to dress regulations.⁷³⁰ The dress code applicable in the Field Dressing Station was more informal than the

⁷³⁰ SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, § 3.1.1.

battalion was accustomed to, and this caused friction between the battalion leadership and the KHO team.⁷³¹

Discord and differences in character played an even greater role in this respect. Forced inactivity owing to a reduction of the humanitarian help provided to the population as a result of supply problems exacerbated by conflict between *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the Opstina led to a proverbial situation where the devil finds work for idle hands. The Dutchbat leadership was irked by the forced inactivity of KHO-5.

Apart from this, there was also friction between the battalion staff and the medical personnel in relation to medical ethics and patients' rights. The lengthy intensive treatment (lasting seven weeks) of a woman with an infected uterus, who later died, contributed to the friction, because nursing her made draw on scarce supplies of medicine and energy, thereby consuming fuel.

As if that was not enough, the presence of two surgical teams of varying nature boosted tensions further. The failure to treat a wounded woman on 10 July affected the relationship between the two surgical teams at a time when the Bosnian Serbs had commenced their attack on the town of Srebrenica. This matter was to receive a great deal of attention after Srebrenica fell. If the KHO teams had managed to confine themselves to their actual operating room duties, relations may have deteriorated to a lesser extent but after the fall of Srebrenica, these members of staff also had to be deployed for duties outside their actual field of operation. This led to difficulties, because some of them had problems performing such duties. All these circumstances had a profound impact on personal and working relations.

Chain of command

The debriefing process in Assen revealed that there were tensions between the Dutchbat leadership and the personnel of the *Krijgsmacht Hospitaal Organisatie*. The facts presented in the debriefing report related mainly to KHO-5. With regard to KHO-6 the debriefing report only stated that during the fall of the enclave the commands given by the commander of the Field Dressing Station were not carried out.⁷³²

It had already been stated in the course of the debriefing that the preparation of the surgical teams should have been based on a different approach. The KHO teams should have been more closely matched before they were deployed. The fact that the surgical teams were sent on tour of duty lasting only three months compared to six months in the case of other Field Dressing Station staff, also meant that it would always be impossible to establish a closely-knit team. The Ministry of Defence should have also decided whether to deploy military personnel only or a combination of military and civilian staff but in this case it would have needed to be structured properly.⁷³³ The surgical team also included civilian staff who had been seconded to the military for this purpose. The people involved did not know each other before they were sent on their tour of duty and only met their commander for the first time in Zagreb. This was hardly an encouraging start. Preparations for deployment were rather brief in some cases. In one instance a warrant officer was appointed in the weekend, required to attend a course at the *Centrum voor Vredesoperaties* (Centre for Peacekeeping Operations) the very next Monday, and was immediately sent on a tour of duty after this.⁷³⁴ The training received by the bulk of the Field Dressing Station staff, those that did not constitute part of the KHO teams, also left much to be desired. Schouten, the anaesthetist, referred to the lack of practical experience as annoying at times.⁷³⁵

Military relations between the battalion and the Field Dressing Station, and also within the latter, were charged. The battalion commander and medical specialists had little contact with each other. Formal contact was routed through the Commander of the Field Dressing Station, a non-

⁷³¹ Confidential debriefing statement (21).

⁷³² Debriefing Report, § 6.4, p. 69.

⁷³³ Confidential debriefing statement (23).

⁷³⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (16).

⁷³⁵ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

medical officer of a much lower rank. Mainly the medical specialists from the Navy had difficulties with this structure. The medical specialist from the Air Force had problems with the battalion leadership for other reasons, which are dealt with below.

In practice, the logistics staff officer and acting deputy battalion commander, Major Franken, managed the Field Dressing Station. The battalion commander was not involved in this. However, communication was strained between the Field Dressing Station and the battalion staff. There was also friction because the latter assumed command of the Field Dressing Station and the Medical Platoon, and because commands were not given by their own commanding officers. This was partly due to the organizational structure of the Field Dressing Station. A captain commanded it. His deputy and the head of the internal service was an warrant officer. Final medical responsibility was borne by the surgeon who, along with the anaesthetist, were both colonels, the highest ranking military personnel in the enclave. Because they normally worked in a hospital, they were used to a different culture. The Dutchbat Medical Platoon that was part of the Airmobile Battalion, was partly unaffected by these problems.

KHO-6 was accompanied by a coordinating staff nurse with the rank of major to mediate between the surgical teams and the commanders. In the opinion of Naval Captain S.J. Zwarts, the KHO-6 anaesthetist, this was an inferior structure from a military point of view. It carried the risk of further undermining what was already a difficult command structure owing to the differences in rank.⁷³⁶

Communication between the battalion staff and the Field Dressing Station was sometimes inadequate. The commander of the Field Dressing Station attended the battalion staff's daily briefing. This commander then informed the members of the Field Dressing Station but the latter were not under the impression that they were always fully informed about the current situation prevailing in the enclave. In particular, questions about supplies of fuel and food were not satisfactorily answered.⁷³⁷

Communication between the Dutchbat Medical Platoon and the battalion staff was also poor. Information, even if it was relevant, was not always communicated. Nevertheless, because the Medical Platoon had access to various communication networks, it still managed to obtain the information it required. However, they felt that they needed to do everything themselves and that little attention was devoted to those points which were raised by medical personnel. While it was true that the battalion staff devoted a great deal of attention to the conduct of tactical issues, it was less attentive to the performance of medical duties. The staff, and this mainly concerned Major Franken, had their own view of the manner in which these medical duties were performed. He interfered in everything. Views expressed in the field received little attention. Orders simply had to be obeyed.⁷³⁸ However, the mood prevailing in the Field Dressing Station was good. Internal communication was fine and a staff meeting was held once a week.⁷³⁹

Communication from the battalion to the Field Dressing Station was routed through Major Franken. The latter acted in a rather dominant fashion in this respect, which sometimes led to a situation in which one could barely work as the medical personnel saw it.⁷⁴⁰ In this connection, Franken commented a great deal about the Field Dressing Station, which gave rise to irritation and had a negative impact on the atmosphere.⁷⁴¹ The cultural differences between the airmobile and medical troops were not divorced from this. Franken simply issued a command and it was a question of 'Forward march'.⁷⁴²

In particular, the strict approach he adopted in his actions to conserve fuel sometimes had a negative impact on their work. From the middle of May 1995 fuel rationing increasingly affected the

⁷³⁶ Interview S.J. Zwarts, 23/02/00.

⁷³⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (25).

⁷³⁸ Confidential debriefing statement (14).

⁷³⁹ Debriefing statement J.P.M. Tops, 18/09/95.

⁷⁴⁰ Debriefing statement J.P.M. Tops, 18/09/95.

⁷⁴¹ Confidential debriefing statement (10).

⁷⁴² Debriefing statement E. van 't Zand, 6/09/95.

operations of the Field Dressing Station. For example, there were difficulties running the emergency power supply for the operating room during operations. If any member of staff, and this applied to all the services in the compound, switched on a unit to do essential work for a short period of time without requesting permission from Franken beforehand, the person in question was reprimanded.⁷⁴³ The duty of having to request permission to use power every time, made it impossible for the Field Dressing Station to operate independently. This was also one of the causes of the conflict between the battalion and the Field Dressing Station.⁷⁴⁴ During the ‘minimize’ period, for example, it happened that a soldier switched off a unit on the orders of Major Franken. At that point in time it was providing power to an autoclave (sterilizer) running computer-operated software. As a result, the sterilization process was not completed. The instruments therefore needed to be packed in again and the process started anew.⁷⁴⁵ Fuel rationing is said to have gone so far that Major Franken also said that fuel should be used sparingly when the units were switched on for the operation on Private Van Renssen,⁷⁴⁶ and after the latter’s death Franken found it difficult to use fuel to keep his corpse cold.⁷⁴⁷

If no wounded were brought in or little of the Field Dressing Station’s capacity was utilized, it happened that the KHO team was forced to be inactive while the battalion worked hard. This was an unsatisfactory situation which also led to false positions with the other personnel on the compound and instilled in KHO staff a feeling that they were useless and an undesirable add-on to the battalion.⁷⁴⁸ Because the Field Dressing Station did not have any work in the last few weeks of May 1995, staff were regularly found sunbathing en masse. This greatly displeased Major Franken who had to contend with a battalion that had now fallen well below strength because those on leave were unable to return to the enclave. At a certain point KHO-5 personnel were also assigned to guard duty in order to make up the shortfall in staff. Discussion ensued the first time this occurred, because, according to the Geneva Conventions, medical personnel were only permitted to carry weapons to defend themselves or the sick and wounded in their care.⁷⁴⁹ Ancillary duties for medical personnel remained a subject of discussion between the battalion leadership and the staff of the Field Dressing Station.⁷⁵⁰

During this period Major Franken indicated that he would ensure that the Field Dressing Station could get back to work, even if this merely involved cleaning the local hospital. However, this did not lead to an order being issued to do so.⁷⁵¹ However, some people have indicated that in June Franken did indeed order the KHO-5 staff to go and work in the hospital in Srebrenica. No clear reason was given for this order and Colonel Kremer did not obey it.⁷⁵²

People were angered by the fact that without consulting them Franken announced his decision and is reported to have said, ‘I shall personally see to it that you go and help Muslims in the hospital, even if you all have to sweep the floor together. I don’t give a damn about that’.⁷⁵³ In this respect Kremer said that Franken was ‘tired’ of people doing nothing. He wanted KHO-5 to work. However, Kremer held the view that what he did was none of Franken’s business and, if necessary, he would approach Karremans: ‘It was war between us from that moment on’.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁴³ Debriefing statement R. de Groot, 18/09/95.

⁷⁴⁴ Debriefing statement J.P.M. Tops, 18/09/95.

⁷⁴⁵ Confidential debriefing statement (25).

⁷⁴⁶ Confidential debriefing statement (16).

⁷⁴⁷ Interview G.D. Kremer, 17/01/02.

⁷⁴⁸ Debriefing statement by A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

⁷⁴⁹ First Geneva Convention, Art. 22.

⁷⁵⁰ Information based on confidential debriefing statement (5).

⁷⁵¹ SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, pp. 64-65.

⁷⁵² Confidential debriefing statement (31).

⁷⁵³ Interview Schouten in *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 31/08/95.

⁷⁵⁴ Interview G. Kremer, 13/07/98.

The order to help out in the hospital led to further actions undermining authority in that contact was established with the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff without the knowledge of the battalion staff.⁷⁵⁵

Another reason for the division between the battalion and medical leaders was that some medical officers did not wish to comply with the orders and regulations that applied in the compound. This was expressed in an array of provocative behaviour including the consumption of beer contrary to the regulations governing medical personnel. Applicable military regulations were sometimes dismissed with comments such as 'They [the staff] mustn't go on moaning like that'. This type of provocation in turn had a disruptive effect on lower ranking medical staff.⁷⁵⁶ What also played a role was the fact that, due to the actions of Bosnian Serbs, Captain Sweets, the Commander of the Field Dressing Station, was unable to return after being on leave. Prior to this, he had managed matters capably.⁷⁵⁷

The conflict about the enforcement of military regulations culminated in what came to be known as the 'footpath affair'. It was customary for KHO-5 staff to walk round the compound after their evening meal. Part of their route took them past the gate and provided them with a view of life around a small creek. The alternative route went past a two-metre high dam with no view. No one had ever worried about it until a duty officer gave notice that the route past the gate was no longer to be used because otherwise the sentries would no longer be able to perform their duties properly. After a tussle that went on for five weeks, Major J. Otter, the compound commander, issued an order specifying 'alternative routes of varying distances'. This would make it possible to avoid 'undesirable contact at the gate' (that is to say, with the local populace) and sentries and patrols would no longer be hindered.⁷⁵⁸

This order was issued on Karremans' instructions. It was a rather strained response in which differences in culture, rank and also personality played a role. One person was a colonel and the other a lieutenant colonel or major. The compound commander, Major Otter, felt that it should have been possible for people to resolve this together. This incident undermined not only the position of the battalion's Commanding Officer but also that of the medical specialist with the rank of colonel.⁷⁵⁹ The prohibition led to further incomprehension and to conflict which expressed itself in the form of a radio programme in which 'Radio Dutchbat' read out short poems, several of which were offensive to the battalion commander, Karremans, and his deputy, Franken. They were limericks about 'Franco' and 'Karrespoor' and occasioned hilarity in the compound and aroused anger amongst the battalion's leaders. Major Franken announced that if it were to occur one more time, he would personally pull the plug on the radio. As it happens, Franken was not the only person who felt that such radio broadcasts were inappropriate.⁷⁶⁰ Captain Schouten also acknowledged that the limericks were of an offensive nature. Even though Kremer and Schouten received the limericks from the battalion, the latter later said, 'If you have a quarrel with your commanding officer, you should not take the piss out of him on the radio'.

The members of KHO-5 also felt that they were being 'victimized' in that their departure from the enclave had been delayed. The battalion leaders were said to have been guided in this matter by personal feelings of ill will. 'In such a case one is not really capable of leading a battalion,' Schouten said.⁷⁶¹ Kremer defended himself by saying that he only read out poems which others had written and that he was not responsible for their content.⁷⁶²

⁷⁵⁵ Confidential debriefing statement (25).

⁷⁵⁶ Debriefing statement by F.H. Elbers, 14/09/95.

⁷⁵⁷ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 23/09/98.

⁷⁵⁸ *Dutchbat in Vredesnaam*, pp. 80-81.

⁷⁵⁹ Interview J. Otter, 26/05/99.

⁷⁶⁰ SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, p. 64-65.

⁷⁶¹ NRC *Handelsblad*, 1/0995.

⁷⁶² SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, pp. 64-65.

KHO-5's tour of duty was unintentionally extended by two and a half months. This constituted important grounds for its conflict with the battalion leadership. After this both sides 'moaned and groaned' with the KHO team displaying provocative behaviour. Relations broke down due to cultural differences and responses about trivial issues. This was the reason why, despite being appreciated, criticism of Kremer was also forthcoming from the Field Dressing Station, where it was asserted that he had no understanding of military matters and that he should have abided by the maxim, 'stick to what you know'.⁷⁶³

The mood prevailing within KHO-5 in the first three months was good. Hardly any distinction was drawn between rank and social standing. The announcement that they could not return home after three months brought about a rapid change in mood. Irritation increased because planned holidays had to be abandoned.⁷⁶⁴ Kremer accused Karremans of 'abusing his powers' by halting his team's roster: 'Everyone was allowed to leave except the first-aid team'. The battalion leaders said that this had occurred on the orders of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. Kremer then phoned the latter himself, after which it appeared that this was not true and that it had indeed been a battalion decision. 'Perhaps it was a bet that the colonel would not leave before they did,' said Kremer. This is dealt with in the next section. According to Kremer, Karremans even later tried to intimidate him in the Netherlands after he had filed a complaint about abuse of power: 'You will pay for that!'. When Kremer also lodged a complaint about this, Karremans backed down and said that he had only been bluffing.⁷⁶⁵

Relations between the battalion staff and the Field Dressing Station were strongly influenced by cultural differences between the doctors sourced from other services and some nurses on the one hand, and on the other, the structure and mentality of the airmobile battalion. Naval Captain Schouten, who had been around for some time, said that he did not care much for squabbling between 'the tough guys and the softies' and that he got on well with Karremans and Franken, although he added, 'They are excellent soldiers but they have hardly been blessed with communicative skills'. Another source of irritation lay in the intimidating tone with which Franken issued orders to staff in the Field Dressing Station and the fact that he was a poor listener.⁷⁶⁶

It was primarily the relationship between Karremans and Kremer that caused difficulties. Initially, they got on reasonably well with each other in view of the fact that they both had similar situations at home and spoke about this. Later on, however, Karremans was annoyed with Kremer for publicly trumpeting around his private problems in the Field Dressing Station. This situation deteriorated when it became impossible for KHO-5 to be relieved and for its members to proceed with their holiday arrangements. Estrangement also occurred due to the fact that in the eyes of Karremans Kremer did not conduct himself appropriately as a military officer. Holding the rank of colonel, he should conduct himself accordingly. It must have also annoyed the younger officers in the battalion staff when Kremer turned against them and gave them the impression that he thought his superiors were just a 'bunch of stubborn arseholes'. Karremans felt that it was unacceptable to personalize issues and sneer on the radio. On the other hand, he said that he valued Kremer as a person and a medical practitioner.⁷⁶⁷

Nor was there an optimum relationship between Schouten, the anaesthetist, and Kremer, the surgeon. Schouten did not fully agree with the schedule of operations performed by Kremer for the population. It was argued that it was good to keep staff busy. Doctors who had nothing to do, became grumpy and it was good for people to gain experience in case anything should actually happen. Adopting this approach, it was not difficult to find work. However, Schouten had difficulties with the types of operations that were performed. He felt that operations on hernias and gall-bladders

⁷⁶³ Confidential debriefing statement (19).

⁷⁶⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (10).

⁷⁶⁵ Interview G.D. Kremer, 13/07/98.

⁷⁶⁶ *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 31/09/95.

⁷⁶⁷ Interview Th.J.P. Karremans, 23/09/98.

constituted senseless work. This was nothing more than a means of keeping staff busy. Moreover, it imposed a considerable burden on one, because these patients required post-operative care. After lunch the surgeon did something else, while the rest of the first-aid staff spent the entire day providing this care.

In addition, it also drew on stock at a time when there were no incoming supplies. On top of this there was the need to nurse the woman with the infected uterus for seven weeks. Relations between Kremer and Schouten also deteriorated then. The little that was left of the resources was then set aside as 'essential stock'. Schouten imposed restraint by refusing to provide any more anaesthetic. Although there were still large quantities of dressings and certain types of drips, this did not help one all that much in the case of operations. Schouten believed that available stock did not include resources to care for more than three seriously wounded individuals.⁷⁶⁸ The KHO-6 anaesthetist, Zwarts, was somewhat more optimistic, because it would also be possible to improvise. He felt that manpower would be the main limiting factor in the event of a 'multiple casualty'.⁷⁶⁹

However, such matters were seldom discussed with the battalion leaders and one got the impression that it was an issue with which they were preoccupied. If such matters were raised in the course of consultations, it was considered to be the duty of the commander of the Field Dressing Station to raise it. There was a strict hierarchy but the commander of the Field Dressing Station was not the type of person to spend much time discussing such matters. Schouten was used to a shorter chain of command in the Navy.⁷⁷⁰ However, the difficulties between Colonels Kremer and Schouten were subordinate to the problems between KHO-5 and the battalion leadership.

Typical of their relations was a fax which Captain H.A. Folmer sent to the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff in the first week of June with Major Franken's approval asking that more fresh food be sent to Dutchbat. In this connection, Folmer pointed to the medical effects which a shortage of fresh food could have in the course of time. A day later this fax was published in *Brabants Dagblad* and the following day in the national daily newspapers citing Folmer's name. The TV programme, *Nova*, then called Folmer in the compound. The press seemed to interpret the fax as though medical problems had arisen due to a lack of food. How the fax had been made public was a mystery to Folmer and the staff in the Field Dressing Station. The information had only been provided to the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff.⁷⁷¹

Colonel Kremer presented a different version of these events. According to him, the newspaper article was based on a fax which was only allowed to leave the enclave after a week. Kremer was the actual person who had drawn up the communication.⁷⁷² He was unduly troubled by the prevailing health situation and wished to raise the alarm. Karremans was opposed to this. Kremer believed that it was medically irresponsible that troops were on their last legs. They had lost a great deal of weight and were suffering from diarrhoea. Karremans is reported to have then said, 'As long as they do not have scurvy and their teeth are not falling out of their mouths, we can still manage to do with a little less.' Dutchbat's Lieutenant Koster felt that the fax should nevertheless be sent and he faxed it to his father who worked in the communications centre in The Hague. The latter in turn passed it on to *Brabants Dagblad*. According to Kremer, it was only after it had been published, that Karremans felt a need to send an urgent letter to The Hague and UNPROFOR about the deplorable situation in which Dutchbat found itself.⁷⁷³ This is dealt with in Part III, Chapter 4 of the report proper.

⁷⁶⁸ Interview A.A. Schouten, 21/02/00.

⁷⁶⁹ Interview S.J. Zwarts, 23/02/00.

⁷⁷⁰ Interview A.A. Schouten, 21/02/00.

⁷⁷¹ SMG, 1004/24. Acting C vbpl (AOOI TOPS) and Folmer to deputy SSOGD, Crisis Staff, Lankhorst [07/06/95]; debriefing statement H.A. Folmer, 7/09/95. See also *ANP*, 071234 June 95, 'salmonella-infectie bedreigt Nederlandse VN'ers in Srebrenica' (Salmonella infection threatens Dutch UN troops in Srebrenica).

⁷⁷² NIOD, Coll. Schouten. Schouten Diary, 7/06/95.

⁷⁷³ Interview G. Kremer, 13/07/98.

As it happens, the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff was already alarmed by reports that amoeba dysentery was threatening to become endemic and requested a list of current sicknesses, hygiene and bodily complaints due to the lack of fresh food and inquired whether the unit's deployment potential had been reduced as a result.⁷⁷⁴ It appeared that amoeba dysentery had only been detected on three occasions but there had been a remarkably large number of diarrhoea complaints, although it was impossible to point to a specific cause. While the lack of fresh food was a source of concern, no symptoms had yet been observed which could be traced back to poor hygiene. However, such complaints could be expected in the long term. However, it was concluded that the battalion's deployment potential had not been reduced. The fax sent to the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff only refers to an expected situation which could occur if the existing situation were to persist.⁷⁷⁵

Hegge, the Naval Captain who arrived later on, said that he did not have many problems with Major Franken's leadership. Whatever decision he took, Franken was someone who dared to make decisions and was capable of doing so. However, he gave everyone short shrift and had little patience. Hegge was never involved in any conflict with either Karremans or Franken. Karremans was inaccessible and withdrawn, although this was sometimes true for Franken as well if he did not know how to deal with certain issues.⁷⁷⁶

For his part, Franken said that he experienced few difficulties with Hegge. This had been different with the latter's predecessor. The naval captain was straightforward.⁷⁷⁷ Hegge only saw Karremans at the morning briefing. In addition to the commander of the Field Dressing Station, Hegge also decided to attend these briefings because, as the person responsible for the medical side of things, he wished to obtain information himself.⁷⁷⁸ As it happens, the quality of the information which was received every day from the new Field Dressing Station commander who had arrived at the same time as KHO-6, Captain Van Hoogwaarden, is reported to have been good. Van Hoogwaarden did his best to avoid rumours.⁷⁷⁹

On 8 July, at a time when shooting and fighting had already started, Van Hoogwaarden wrote that the prevailing mood was good, even though the Bosnian Serbs' refusal to permit the rotation of KHO-5 was a pain in the neck to everyone.⁷⁸⁰ Within KHO-6 morale was reasonably high and he was working closely with Major Ros. His working relationship with Hegge is said to have been poor. They did not consult each other properly and Hegge acted rather impulsively. Internal communication was good but that between them and the battalion leadership left much to be desired. Due to its lack of consultation with the battalion leaders, the Field Dressing Station felt that it did not receive enough support. Additional information was available because Captain De Bruijn of Dutchbat's Medical Platoon provided information about the tactical situation in the enclave on a daily basis.⁷⁸¹

One ship, two captains

The two surgical teams (KHO-5 and KHO-6) did not get on well together. When KHO-6 arrived in the enclave on 4 July, the KHO-5 and Field Dressing Station staff focussed all their attention on the newcomers. Their arrival in Srebrenica occurred in less than fortunate circumstances and highlighted the cultural differences between the veterans and newcomers in the enclave. While the team was at the VRS checkpoint at Yellow Bridge for the customary check, the VRS and ABiH fired on each other from opposite hills at the very moment that the KHO-6 team alighted from the vehicle. Just when they

⁷⁷⁴ SCGD. Deputy SSOGD Crisis Staff (Lankhorst) to C-Vbpl, C-13 Infbat, 7 /06/95.

⁷⁷⁵ SMG, 1004/24. Deputy C vbpl (AOOI TOPS) and Folmer to deputy SSOGD, Crisis Staff, (7/06/95).

⁷⁷⁶ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

⁷⁷⁷ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁷⁷⁸ Debriefing statement H.G.J. Hegge, 21/09/95.

⁷⁷⁹ Confidential debriefing statement (16).

⁷⁸⁰ Letter to relatives appended to confidential debriefing statement (18).

⁷⁸¹ Debriefing statement J.C. Voets, 14/09/95.

arrived in the compound in Potocari, the warring factions again fired on each other, with the result that two people sought cover under the bus, while all the first-aid staff stood waiting for the newcomers. This led to hilarity and comments such as, 'Nothing to worry about. You'll get used to it'.

Shortly after this a bus stop opposite the compound was hit by a shell. Some of the KHO-6 members saw this happen while they were sitting on a small bench close to the Field Dressing Station. They hesitantly asked whether this was normal but now they were told that it was time to move to the shelter.⁷⁸²

On 4 July it was agreed that the new team would adopt a leading role and the old one a supportive one as long as the latter could not leave the enclave. However, according to Schouten, Kremer instinctively found it difficult to accept the fact that he was no longer running the Field Dressing Station and had passed on this duty to his successor.⁷⁸³ Hegge's arrival led to some friction. It concerned Hegge that various resources were not available. This produced the following response amongst the staff in the Field Dressing Station: 'Do you realize under what circumstances we are required to work here?'

As it happens, the staff of the Medical Platoon, which had been in the enclave longer than the first-aid personnel, had observed the same attitude when Kremer had taken over the work of his predecessors.⁷⁸⁴

The two surgeons already had a quarrel about instruments during the changeover. Hegge found it disagreeable to hear Kremer comment that, if there was a need to amputate, one would need to fetch the cook's knife.⁷⁸⁵ He responded by saying, 'Do you think that I have never performed an amputation? I will be the judge of that myself.' However, Hegge stated that he was not aware of any personal argument or competition with Kremer. Others must have started rumours about this. However, they had had a serious disagreement about the treatment of a Muslim woman on 10 July (see the next section). After the fall of Srebrenica they again had a disagreement about the treatment of a small boy with fever and a swollen leg. Kremer wanted to treat the boy with antibiotics. Hegge thought this was incorrect and removed an abscess in an operation.⁷⁸⁶

In the eyes of the incumbent personnel the new team was rather obstinate, with the result that there were constant problems. They are said to have failed to comply with all sorts of existing regulations, yet this team was not given much time to find its feet. For instance, KHO-6 was reproached because, while an operation was being performed during an alert on 6 July someone had to leave the operating room in the bunker five times because an incomplete set of medical equipment was available in the bunker.⁷⁸⁷ The question is whether the former team could also not have been accused of such lapses. When it was noticed that the new team had a different way of working, the incumbent team interpreted this as though there was something wrong with the new team because they did not operate in the same manner as in the past. On the other hand, the new team was not overly charmed at having to hear about the problems the old team was experiencing with the battalion leadership, immediately after their arrival. Yet, like the old team, the new one also had difficulties with the culture prevailing in the Airmobile Brigade. The elitist attitude adopted by the Airmobile Brigade and, in particular, the manner in which the battalion leadership imposed matters without any form of consultation, was also a source of irritation to the new team.⁷⁸⁸

The mood prevailing in the Field Dressing Station is said to have changed significantly following the arrival of KHO-6.⁷⁸⁹ The situation only improved when the old team was able to leave

⁷⁸² Interview M.J.L. de Bruijn, 09/01/02.

⁷⁸³ Debriefing statement A.A. Schouten, 14/09/95.

⁷⁸⁴ Interview M.J.L. de Bruijn, 09/01/02.

⁷⁸⁵ Interview A.A. Schouten, 21/02/00.

⁷⁸⁶ IMG. 'situatierapport Potocari' prepared by H.G.J. Hegge, 27/12/95; interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

⁷⁸⁷ Debriefing statement J.P.M. Tops, 18/09/95.

⁷⁸⁸ Debriefing statement H.G.J. Hegge, 21/09/95.

⁷⁸⁹ SMG, Debrief. Feitenrelaas, § 3.1.1.

the enclave on 15 July.⁷⁹⁰ Hegge, the surgeon, and Zwarts, the anaesthetist, are said to have had a different perception of their duties than their predecessors, Kremer and Schouten. Hegge had assumed final responsibility for medical matters, and whereas Kremer tried to help people as much as possible while sweating and clothed in a T-shirt, Hegge prepared to perform any operations attired in a neat uniform and polished shoes.⁷⁹¹ Still, comments were also forthcoming from the new team. After the fall of the enclave the KHO-6 team was deployed to provide on-site aid without any consultation. Consequently, medical specialists were taken from the team to lend a helping hand. Hegge wished to be informed about this but was reproached for not wanting to provide humanitarian assistance. Hegge felt that this was wrong, because he was still making allowances for the eventuality that there could still be casualties amongst Dutchbat personnel in the observation posts that were still held. Once the danger subsided, KHO-6 staff also worked inside and outside the compound, and conducted social patrols outside the compound at night.⁷⁹²

Within KHO-6 army staff felt that their naval counterparts did not approach their work 'with the appropriate mentality' and had thereby left their stamp on the Field Dressing Station. One needed to explain to naval personnel that the commander of the Field Dressing Station, the staff nurse and the head of the internal service, all of whom were not medical officers, represented the captain of the ship. In the Royal Netherlands Navy, field hospitals are headed by a medical officer.

Later the commander of the Field Dressing Station also conceded that in circumstances such as those prevailing in Srebrenica, it would have been wiser to have the surgeon or anaesthetist assume this position. A captain from the medical corps could then have acted as his deputy.⁷⁹³

It was reported that naval personnel did not always promptly obey operational orders given by Captain Van Hoogwaarden. Incidentally, there were also examples involving army personnel. An order to serve at a casualty post near the bus station was initially disregarded but later obeyed. The naval anaesthetist is said to have once failed to perform service at a casualty post from 6 am to 10 am. Afterwards it appeared that he had been there but had returned of his own accord. The army personnel considered it strange that Hegge himself had contact with The Hague and continued to insist on obtaining medication, even if it was available in Zagreb, and that he passed on information to the home front telephone network that had been set up for KHO-6.⁷⁹⁴

Afterwards many people cited the cultural differences between the army and navy personnel as an explanation for the differences in their approach which were noticed. Naval Captain Zwarts could not really imagine this. Every person had his own character and this was not overly related to differences between the various armed services. What did make a difference, was that naval personnel were sent on tours of duty together more frequently. The three medical specialists from the navy had worked together both in Cambodia and in the Gulf, and naval staff had learned to operate within a military structure in military conditions. In such cases the commanding officer decided which wounded individuals the medical officers would have contact with. According to Zwarts, the issues at stake were inexperience and the absence of proper leadership. Due to lack of experience, Dutchbat did not know how to deal with the situation. This bothered many people. People had not been trained for this situation. They had been led to believe that nothing serious would happen and that, if anything did, the RNLA organization would be ready to help. In Srebrenica people did not have any certainty and not everyone was able to cope with this equally well. Zwarts felt that this had little to do with cultural differences.⁷⁹⁵ Hegge too pointed out that several nurses had never been on active service before. The

⁷⁹⁰ Debriefing statement J.P.M. Tops, 18/09/95.

⁷⁹¹ Confidential debriefing statement (25).

⁷⁹² Debriefing statement H.G.J. Hegge, 21/09/95.

⁷⁹³ OM Arnhem. PV KMar District GOF, 08/01/96, No. 01 1996.

⁷⁹⁴ Confidential debriefing statement (6).

⁷⁹⁵ Interview S.J. Zwarts, 23/02/00.

difference lay in the fact that naval personnel frequently spent long periods of time away from home and managed to cope with this better.⁷⁹⁶

Problems in Zagreb

After the return to Zagreb, the chain of command again led to difficulties. Command of the Field Dressing Station then shifted from Van Hoogwaarden to the warrant officer, following which a Naval Captain refused to accept any further orders from him.⁷⁹⁷ In the Netherlands Navy officers did not muster and colonels were not marched around. There was said to be absolutely no idea within Dutchbat of how to treat officers of superior rank. While the commander and the head of the internal service of the Field Dressing Station were billeted in single rooms, the Naval Captains had to share a five-person dormitory.⁷⁹⁸ Franken referred to this matter, which occurred upon the falling in of the battalion to hear Force Commander Janvier's address a 'non-incident'.⁷⁹⁹ One and a half years later Captain Zwarts, who had not been involved in the above-mentioned 'incident', spoke to the Director of Personnel in the Royal Netherlands Army and the latter conceded that a number of matters presented in connection with these internal relations had been justified. To Zwarts this was another indication that such matters had little to do with cultural differences but with a lack of experience.⁸⁰⁰

Codes of conduct had led to problems earlier on. On 23 May 1995 Captain Van Hoogwaarden, the Commander of the Field Dressing Station, was sent to Bosnia. He was first introduced to KHO-6 in Zagreb. At the time this team had already spent three weeks in Camp Pleso waiting for permission from the Bosnian Serbs to travel on to Srebrenica. This transit camp near the Zagreb airport was only suitable for brief stays. The behaviour of the officers, some of whom came from the Netherlands Navy, had an effect on other staff, according to Van Hoogwaarden. He was concerned about complaints about their accommodation and resistance to the Royal Netherlands Army's code of conduct.

In the course of time the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff ordered its waiting personnel back to the Netherlands. It was acknowledged that the state of hygiene in Camp Pleso left much to be desired. Respiratory infections which resulted, were said to have been presented in a form more exaggerated than was actually the case in order to force a return to the Netherlands. Four soldiers were sent to an internist in the American UN hospital and the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff was informed that there were 11 similar cases. The diagnosis could not be confirmed following examinations in the Netherlands.⁸⁰¹

It subsequently appeared that there had been an abuse of medical authority. No action was taken because it would have been difficult to prove it and it would have happened at an inconvenient time as the KHO team was on the point of being redeployed.⁸⁰² Naval Captain Hegge, against whom this reproach was directed, felt that this accusation was unfounded. He had not made the diagnosis, the Americans had. In this connection, they had noted that it was a pulmonary disease, possibly of epidemic proportions. The return was ordered by the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. Everyone was treated as a precaution and the rules quite simply stipulated that anyone who was receiving medical treatment through the *Centraal Militair Hospitaal* (Central Military Hospital), was to be repatriated and examined again after the initial treatment.⁸⁰³

⁷⁹⁶ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

⁷⁹⁷ Confidential debriefing statement (18).

⁷⁹⁸ Debriefing statement H.G.J. Hegge, 21/09/95.

⁷⁹⁹ Interview R.A. Franken, 18/05/01.

⁸⁰⁰ Interview S.J. Zwarts, 23/02/00.

⁸⁰¹ DJZ. IMG (Groenhout) to the minister and junior minister, 15/12/95, No. IMG 95/27/515, p. 5 and 10, Highly Confidential.

⁸⁰² Stasdef. Memorandum from DAB to the minister, 19/12/95, No. D101/677.

⁸⁰³ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00. On another occasion involving the rotation of 42 LBJ who was awaiting their departure for Srebrenica in Pleso, Hegge was asked by the commander of the Zagreb Logbase to state his opinion of long-term stays in Pleso. The camp was only suitable for no more than two overnight stays and 20 people shared a room in the

After spending several days in the Netherlands, the KHO team returned to Zagreb. Again, poor accommodation caused problems. Following consultations between the Camp Pleso staff and the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, it was decided to accommodate KHO-6 in a hotel in the city. Van Hoogwaarden and other personnel from the Field Dressing Station remained behind in Pleso. The fact that the members of the surgical team were able to enjoy themselves in the city while the others remained in the less-than-ideal accommodation of Camp Pleso, where a curfew applied, did not help promote good relations. As a result, relations between the KHO team in Zagreb and the staff of the Field Dressing Station deteriorated to rock bottom.⁸⁰⁴

Criticism and action

In a memorandum written after the fall of Srebrenica, Van Hoogwaarden indicated that there had been a resurgence of difficulties in the days before and after the fall. A member of the KHO-6 staff refused to obey an order given by Van Hoogwaarden to go to Srebrenica in order to see if anything could be done for the refugees. He felt it was too dangerous. Staff are said to have categorically refused to provide medical aid to refugees during shellings and had created difficulties in respect of patrols amongst the refugees. There was even a nurse who found it difficult to be assigned duties in the part of the compound where the wounded refugees lay. Partly in view of the fact that other personnel and KHO-5 performed their duties properly, Van Hoogwaarden felt that this amounted to reprehensible conduct which was hardly professional. Within KHO-6 'the sloppiness and negative attitude' stood in sharp contrast to the efforts of others. An example of this contrast was Naval Captain A.A. Schouten, the only name referred to in the relevant memorandum, who had volunteered to assume responsibility for the treatment of wounded Muslims in Bratunac, thereby missing out on his relief scheduled for 15 July. The members of KHO-6 had not been properly prepared for their duties. According to the memorandum, team building had been required outside the hospital where they worked.⁸⁰⁵

The remarks which Van Hoogwaarden had made in his memorandum, led to further action on the part of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff but the Ministry of Defence was not aware of any of these matters. Minister Voorhoeve only saw Van Hoogwaarden's memorandum on 4 December 1995. He described its contents as very serious and wondered what had been done in this respect. He wanted to know how criticism was dealt with, what steps had been taken to improve motivation, training and discipline, and what additional measures were required.⁸⁰⁶

In mid-December Voorhoeve received replies from the chief of Defence Staff to his question as to what had been done with the memorandum of the Field Dressing Station commander. The possible refusal to obey orders was being investigated by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. The *Inspecteur Militaire Gezondheidszorg* (Military Health Care Inspector) was considering the medical and ethical issues. Other problems concerned the unclear position of and lack of appreciation for a number of medical specialists, inadequate evaluation, excessively protracted absence from specialist practice, and unfamiliarity with some aspects of surgery. The Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army had assured the chief of Defence Staff that the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the commander of the Field Dressing Station had been taken to heart. Training and exercises had been improved. At the request of the chief of Defence Staff, the Commander-in-Chief of

case of larger groups. The few sanitary facilities available were in a deplorable condition. Clean bedding was barely provided. According to Hegge, this created all the conditions for minor epidemics. (IMG, notes KTZAR H.G.J. Hegge).

⁸⁰⁴ SMG, 1007/8. Internal memorandum, 'Functioneren KHO-6 in voormalig Joegoslavië', R. van Hoogwaarden (C-Vbpl Potocari) to W. Wertheim, 29 /07/95.

⁸⁰⁵ SMG, 1007/8. Internal memorandum 'Functioneren KHO-6 in voormalig Joegoslavië', R. van Hoogwaarden (C-Vbpl Potocari) to W. Wertheim, 29/07/95.

⁸⁰⁶ DCBC, 2339. Handwritten memorandum from the minister to the SG and CDS copy to DAB, 4/12/95, No. 1772.

the Royal Netherlands Army personally went to inspect the personnel of the Field Dressing Station of the Dutch battalion (formerly Dutchbat IV) that was scheduled to participate in IFOR.⁸⁰⁷

A number of issues were definitely tackled. In order to ensure that surgical teams were better prepared, the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff had immediately launched the idea of setting up the equipment used in the Field Dressing Station in Srebrenica in the Central Military Hospital in Utrecht. This would make it possible to practice and to evaluate the equipment that was available. Following deployment in Srebrenica, it had taken six months before the Field Dressing Station was operating optimally due to the fact that insufficient instruments and equipment had been sent to it.⁸⁰⁸

Later this plan had a proposal added to it entailing that the materials actually be used for three days in the course of preparation to ensure that people were properly prepared when they started a tour of duty.⁸⁰⁹ Although not all surgical teams had experienced difficulties when deployed, in the case of KHO-5 and KHO-6 it appeared that they could partly be traced back to the unclear position of specialist members of staff and insufficient appreciation of them. In the future it would be important to ensure that the battalion leadership and the medical specialists understood each other better. In addition, there were other matters that played a role, such as lack of familiarity with surgical equipment, excessively long tours of duty and inadequate evaluation following deployment.⁸¹⁰

Even before the Minister had posed his questions, the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff had investigated what had been done with Van Hoogwaarden's memorandum. Its *Speciale Stafofficier Geneeskundige Dienst* (Special Medical Service Staff Officer), Lieutenant Colonel Wertheim, had received Van Hoogwaarden's memorandum on 9 August. He had realized its 'combustible nature' and had immediately forwarded it to the Chief of Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. In addition to the latter, Wertheim also provided a copy of the memorandum to the inspector of the RNLA Medical Service, Brigadier General B.C. Mels. Wertheim had also told the latter, 'This is trouble'. Apart from the ethical and military aspects of the memorandum, something had to be done with it. Mels is said to have passed on the contents of the memorandum to Deputy Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army and the director of Operations Van Baal but this information is said to have got 'stuck' there. Brigadier General Pollé, the commanding officer of the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, is also said to have passed this matter on to his superiors.

Van Baal decided to first await the outcome of the debriefing process in Assen. Wertheim then invited Van Hoogwaarden to provide additional information but this could only occur once the latter had returned to the Netherlands. Van Hoogwaarden provided his explanation on 25 August and this painted a clearer picture of events. Again, Wertheim passed on his findings to Mels. After this, events caught up with everyone in that the matter was publicly disclosed.⁸¹¹

Already in Srebrenica, on 16 June, KHO-5 had approached the professional organizations for military personnel with complaints about the Dutchbat leadership. This team had been scheduled to return to the Netherlands on about 12 May. The team linked the grudge which Major Franken was said to have towards one of its members with his attempts to force people to perform work in the hospital in Srebrenica. However, *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the team had agreed not to choose sides in the conflict between this organization and the Opstina.

In response, the acting commander of the Field Dressing Station consulted the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. The situation was saved when a message was received stating that no support was to be provided to the hospital until the conflict had been resolved. At the recommendation of a spokesperson for the KHO team, Karremans received appropriate directions from the Royal

⁸⁰⁷ DS, S/95/061/4922. Memorandum from CDS to the minister and junior minister, 15/12/95.

⁸⁰⁸ CRST. SSOGD (Wertheim) to CS KL CRST/ B. Dedden, 22/08/95, No. SCGD/15099/5784.

⁸⁰⁹ CRST. SSOGD (Wertheim) to H-G4 KL CRST/ E. Otterloo, copy to CS KL CRST, SCGD/H-FB, KHO, DMKL/ Gnkdgdn Dept., 2/11/95, No. SCGD/15930.

⁸¹⁰ DCBC, 2340. SSOGD (Wertheim) to DCBC/ R. van Dam, 6/12/95, No. SCGD/718/153/Conf.

⁸¹¹ CRST. SSOGD (Wertheim) to CS KL CRST/ Smeets, 30/08/95, no SCGD/15168/1210; interview W. Wertheim on 14/02/00 and A.P.P.M. van Baal on 01/11/01.

Netherlands Army Crisis Staff: orders for the provision of humanitarian aid could not be issued by Dutchbat's Commanding Officer but only by the commanding officer of the Field Dressing Station.⁸¹²

The first evaluation involving the Dutch navy specialists of both KHO-5 and KHO-6 took place on 16 August.⁸¹³ These naval personnel had already filed a complaint with the Director of Personnel in the Royal Netherlands Navy, Rear Admiral J.L.A. van Aalst, about the treatment they had received at the hands of army personnel. This complaint was kept out of the public eye. The three naval captains and one sergeant major said that they had been faced with 'gross discourtesy and improper treatment' but did not enter into detail. However, their most serious grievance appeared to involve their reception in Zagreb, which they experienced as humiliating and insulting. They had not been afforded any opportunity to settle down. These four people had previously been deployed under the auspices of the UN within a naval context and were concerned about the manner in which the army had dealt with them and the fact that it was impossible to arrange a speedy trip home for them.⁸¹⁴

Van Hoogwaarden's memorandum had also already been discussed in the course of a debriefing interview at the Central Military Hospital in Utrecht in the presence of the Commander of the Armed Forces Hospital Service, Naval Captain C. van der Pompe. There was some concern about this document owing to the potentially negative impact it could have. It had been prepared without any consultation and Naval Captain Hegge was of the opinion that it contained several allegations that could not be proved, even though he confined his response largely to what had occurred in Camp Pleso. In his response he referred to the memorandum as 'an emotional kick while the man is down'. KHO-6 had been in Camp Pleso since 9 May when Van Hoogwaarden arrived there on 23 May. After his arrival he is reported to have said that he wished to travel to Srebrenica as soon as possible otherwise he wanted to go home. In this period Van Hoogwaarden is said to have done little to ensure the closer integration of KHO-6 and the Field Dressing Station. He spent most of his time at the UN headquarters in Zagreb which he knew from a period tour of duty as a UN observer. A further source of concern was his failure to conceal his dislike of Croats, Serbs and Bosnian Muslims.⁸¹⁵

The emergence of disquiet in medical circles

Already prior to the debriefing process in Assen on 30 August some indication of the disquiet prevailing in medical circles was publicly revealed. The *GPD/Utrechts Nieuwsblad* journalist, Henk van Ess, had heard that 12 soldiers of the Armed Forces Hospital Service, amongst them Colonel Kremer, had filed a complaint with the *Algemene Christelijke Organisatie voor Militairen* (ACOM, General Christian Organization for Military Personnel) about the leadership provided by Commanding Officer Karremans and his Deputy, Franken. They said that they were treated like 'dogs', that the mood was tense and that incidents had occurred. The jokes about the battalion leaders on the Dutchbat radio station run by KHO staff were also mentioned. Major Franken was said to have postponed their relief in response. Colonel Brantz appeared to have confirmed this story commenting only that 'those softies in the medical service should not moan like that'.

Van Ess asked the Ministry of Defence's Directorate of General Information if it was true that Colonel Kremer had spoken to General Couzy in Zagreb. He wanted to know what had been discussed and what had been agreed. The chairperson of ACOM, W.J.G. Gooijers, confirmed that a complaint

⁸¹² CRST. SSOGD (Wertheim) to CS KL CRST/, 30/08/95, No. SCGD/15168/1210.

⁸¹³ CRST. SSOGD (Wertheim) to CS KL CRST/, 30/08/95, No. SCGD/15168/1210.

⁸¹⁴ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. KT'ZAR H.G.J. Hegge, KT'ZAR A.A. Schouten, KT'ZAR S.J. Zwartz and SMJRBA, L.W. van Hazel to DPKM, cc. T. Karremans, 10/08/95. The Naval Director of Personnel (Van Aalst) faxed the letter on 1/09/95 to the Directorate of General Information (Kreemers).

⁸¹⁵ NIOD, Coll. Hegge. Response of the KHO-6 commanding officer to the internal memorandum of Van Hoogwaarden dated 29/07/95, 18/08/95.

had been lodged. He had discussed the matter with the Royal Netherlands Army's Director of Personnel and his deputy for personnel matters, Brigadier General E.M.L.H. Termont.⁸¹⁶

General Couzy was indeed aware of the situation. It was already clear at an early stage that there were problems involving the Armed Forces Hospital Service. This matter was raised during discussions involving Couzy and the medical specialists in Zagreb: first of all with Colonel Kremer on 17 July about the approach and attitude of the battalion staff, and then on 22 July with the medical specialists from the navy. It was anticipated that the doctors' experience would be raised in the course of the debriefing process that began in Assen on 4 September. Because Couzy had agreed with Minister Voorhoeve 'in general terms' that no information would be released until the report of the debriefing process had been released, the Royal Netherlands Army and the Ministry of Defence did not respond.⁸¹⁷

Even Gooijers preferred to await the debriefing findings before he was prepared to respond. However, an internal examination conducted by the army revealed that Van Baal, the Deputy Commander-in-Chief, was aware of the contents of Van Hoogwaarden's memorandum. In so far as it was possible to establish, the Ministry had nevertheless not been informed about this affair.⁸¹⁸ The Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff promptly brought this memorandum to the attention of the debriefing centre in Assen.⁸¹⁹

The *Utrechts Nieuwsblad* published the article on 31 August. It stated that Minister Voorhoeve and General Couzy had given the impression that all was well within the Dutchbat unit. Now this did not appear to be the case. There were differences in opinion about the manner in which humanitarian aid was to be provided. There were conflicts relating to the way in which Franken was providing leadership. These problems were escalating. Limericks were read aloud on the radio in which Franken was compared with Franco. The Dutchbat leadership was said to have rescheduled relief in response to this by order of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff in The Hague. According to the newspaper, none of this incidentally appeared to be true following further inquiry. It was said to be a deliberate campaign of revenge, with the result that, partly due to these circumstances, KHO-5 would only be returning to the Netherlands on 17 July.⁸²⁰

A day after the *Utrechts Nieuwsblad* had done so, *NRC Handelsblad* also devoted attention to the matter. Again, it was the KHO-5 anaesthetist, Naval Captain Schouten, who raised his voice. According to him, medical officers and soldiers did not get along together by their very nature. There were cultural differences. Skill counted amongst the medical officers and not the number of stripes. In addition, military specialists received a higher rank without having had a military career. This was due to remuneration and recruitment. Schouten pointed to the navy's different culture. While it was true that the commanding officer was sacred in this service, the moment he stepped into the sick bay, the medical officers were in charge. It was precisely the unique world of the medical officers and the coming and going of patients to and from the Field Dressing Station which fell outside the ambit of military affairs, and this irked the Dutchbat leadership.

According to Schouten, Franken's actions and strong personality had the reverse effect. Franken wanted to bait the medical officers now and then and was delighted when they responded. The result was the emergence of two camps and people ensconced themselves in their own camp. Aid to the populace had been suspended in view of the scheduled relief, with the result that no friction would arise in relation to the transfer of patients. Consequently, KHO personnel were loafing about. Neither

⁸¹⁶ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers, No. 259. Afdeling Legervoortlichting (Army Information Department) (J. van de Laarschot) to DV, 30/08/95.

⁸¹⁷ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers, No. 260. Memorandum prepared by DCBC Head of Shift 7: 'Telefonisch van Gen Striek op vraag van Gen Schouten, voor col. van Dam', undated (probably 30/08/95).

⁸¹⁸ SMG, 1007/34. Memorandum from the deputy chief of Planning in the RNLA Staff (Brigadier General P.J.E.J. Striek), 30/08/95.

⁸¹⁹ CRST. SSOGD (Lieutenant Colonel Wertheim) to CS KL CRST/Colonel Smeets, 30/08/95, No. SCGD/15168/1210.

⁸²⁰ The *Haagsche Courant* also published this report in virtually identical words on 31/08/95.

was living on rations good for morale. However, the conflict really got underway when limericks about 'Franco' and 'Karrespoor' were read out on the radio.⁸²¹

In November 1995 the Royal Netherlands Army's Directorate of Personnel devoted closer attention to the relationship between the battalion leadership and KHO-5. The *ACOM* chairperson, Gooijers, had requested that attention be devoted to it. According to Brigadier General Termont, the person dealing with it, the fact that the matter was only pursued in November was not due to an official delay but because he wished to have further consultations with Gooijers prior to this.⁸²²

Termont spoke to the people involved on 11 December 1995 and 9 February 1996. The aim of these consultations was to provide a sounding board. Termont felt it was undesirable to have further discussion occur in the media. According to the minutes contained in the report of the meeting, those who were present, agreed with him in this respect. The chief subject of discussion was the irritation felt by the battalion leadership and KHO-5, and the unanswered request to review the decision pertaining to KHO-5's unfavourable rotation. Following discussions with Karremans, Franken and those involved under the auspices of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, Termont concluded that 'the incompatibility of character exacerbated by the pressure of the circumstances and events' had led to a situation in which communication had virtually broken down. People were irritated by each other. On the one hand, this produced an uncompromising approach to the question of rotation and the improper handling of a complaint,⁸²³ while on the other hand it led to discussions of matters of a non-medical nature with the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff behind the battalion leaders' backs.⁸²⁴

⁸²¹ *NRC Handelsblad*, 1/09/95.

⁸²² NIOD, Coll. (14). Draft letter from the deputy director of Personnel (Brigadier General Termont), 3/11/95.

⁸²³ This complaint was lodged with Lieutenant Colonel Karremans on 16/06/95 and essentially stated that auxiliary staff who had been waiting to be relieved for two weeks, were given preference over the team of specialists who had been waiting for five weeks. The auxiliary personnel had no families at home and the absence of a specialist team amounted to a serious disruption of operations in the Netherlands.

⁸²⁴ NIOD, Coll. (14). Report of the meetings of the members of the KHO-5 team and the deputy head of personnel. undated, unnumbered. Sent to the members of the KHO-5 team, copy to other persons involved, the director of Personnel in the RNLA, the BLS chief of Operating Staff, the chairperson of the *ACOM*. This document was not found in the RNLA files.

Chapter 16

Criticism of Dutchbat's medical actions

Introduction

In relation to criticism of Dutchbat, this section focuses on what was partly a public debate about the medical aid which Dutchbat did or did not provide to the populace. In this connection one can notice interaction between the internal, within the Ministry of Defence, search for explanations and solutions for the problems that had been detected, and the publicity received by the Ministry of Defence in the period from October to December 1995, some of it highly critical. Here we are therefore mainly concerned with matters which have been dealt with in the form of a reconstruction of events in the preceding sections of this appendix. It also shows that the 1995 parliamentary debate which was to serve as a conclusion, did not mark the end of the criticism levelled at Dutchbat, and that other vital questions arose, which had remained unanswered.

Incidents, the debriefing report and further investigation

On 18 October 1995 the *Algemeen Dagblad* referred to a report of the Bosnian Government about Srebrenica, which cited an unnamed witness who had been hit by shrapnel on 11 July and had sought medical assistance at about 3 pm. He had been refused assistance on the pretext that Dutchbat was required to hand over its weapons within six minutes. This announcement came from Mevlida Salkic who had previously served as a laundry worker for Dutchbat. As it happens, her name does not appear on the list of wounded admitted to the compound in Potocari.⁸²⁵

Another witness, a patient in the 'hospital of Potocari', stated that the Bosnian Serbs, one of whom was said to be called Goran Erkić, had killed two young men with knives in the presence of two UN doctors on 12 July. Although the doctors protested, they did nothing to stop the murder. *Médecins Sans Frontières* knew nothing of this witness's story even in the form of a rumour.⁸²⁶ The question is what was meant by the 'hospital of Potocari': the improvised first-aid post operated by *Médecins Sans Frontières* outside the compound or the plant holding wounded people inside the compound. Admittedly, three VRS soldiers were permitted to inspect the compound briefly in the morning of 12 July but this was done under the supervision of Major Franken and others who were present. There are no indications that anything out of the ordinary happened on this occasion. In response to this newspaper article the issue of medical aid was again raised within the Ministry of Defence and this led to a further examination of this aid.

The debriefing report itself contains a cursory treatment of medical affairs and, in particular, the problem of 'essential stock'. It only states the following: 'It is still unclear if maintaining such "essential stock" led to the death of refugees who needed medical assistance'.⁸²⁷ A member of the debriefing team was not quite as pleased with this state of affairs, because the analytical team had omitted important aspects and background information, amongst other things, about the question of 'essential stock' when it described these operational matters.⁸²⁸ The organization of the debriefing process is dealt with in greater detail in Part IV, Chapter 7 of the report proper.

⁸²⁵ *Algemeen Dagblad*, 18/10/95; ABiH Sarajevo. 'Archief Arnautovic', 11/07/95. For a list of the wounded see DCBC, 1165.

⁸²⁶ *Algemeen Dagblad*, 18/10/95.

⁸²⁷ Debriefing Report, § 5.41, p. 67.

⁸²⁸ Van Kemenade Commission, Report of telephone conversations following the appeal made by the minister of Defence on 17/08/98, p. 8, § 6.

To Minister Voorhoeve this sentence was reason enough to pose the question as to whether the maintenance of ‘essential stock’ had or had not resulted in the death of refugees.⁸²⁹ The replies to Voorhoeve’s questions had to be assigned a place in the letter he wrote to Parliament covering the presentation of the debriefing report. The latter also raised other questions. For instance, no answer had been given to the question pertaining to the different views as to who was required to remove the wounded from the hospital in Srebrenica. The tension described between the battalion leadership and the KHO also required further elaboration. Similarly, the question as to who was primarily responsible for the wounded, had also not been dealt with. The officials of the Ministry of Defence were given less than three days to produce answers.⁸³⁰

The fact that this was not a simple task, was evident alone in the fact that no answers to these questions were to be found in the covering letter to Parliament. However, the debriefing report had pointed out that the Bosnian Serbs had denied convoys carrying medicine and dressings access to the enclave on several occasions and that, as a result, supplies had diminished to minimum levels and were not enough to allow medicine to be administered to every wounded person in the enclave.⁸³¹ However, the fact that supplies were at minimum levels, needs to be approached with some qualification. As dealt with in detail earlier on in this appendix, in itself it was not Dutchbat’s duty to supply medicine to all the wounded in the enclave but the battalion had nevertheless started to provide the local population with medical aid.

At the Minister’s request, the Commander of the *Geneeskundig Commando Krijgsmacht* (Armed Forces Medical Command), Brigadier General Vader, who was responsible for the Armed Forces Hospital Service, spoke to six of the medical practitioners involved. The answer that Vader presented, was that one could not say with certainty that the decision not to release any of the ‘essential stock’ for aid to the local population, had resulted in the death of anyone who needed assistance. However, one could similarly not exclude the possibility. In one case it was even probable. Vader also asked if anyone was aware of the incidents referred to in the *Algemeen Dagblad*. No one had ever heard of them.⁸³²

The Ministry of Defence did not delve any further into the relationship between the ‘essential stock’ and the aid provided to the local population. This only occurred after the current affairs programme, *Brandpunt*, raised the matter for public scrutiny on 26 November. Four members of the Dutchbat medical service presented their story anonymously in the *Brandpunt* broadcast. Even though it was not entirely clear about the matter, the broadcast covered two separate sets of facts: a request made by *Médecins Sans Frontières* for assistance in the hospital in Srebrenica on 6 July and a refusal to help a wounded woman in the Field Dressing Station on 10 July. One of the reasons given for refusing to provide assistance as requested by *Médecins Sans Frontières* was said to be prompted by ‘essential stock’. According to those who were interviewed, this request should have been honoured, more so because *Médecins Sans Frontières* had offered them medical supplies. The programme mentioned horse and rider: the person bearing ultimate medical responsibility, Naval Captain Hegge, and the battalion leaders, Franken and/or Karremans, were said to be responsible for the decision to refuse assistance. It was not clear to the *Brandpunt* informants, which of them was to blame.

It was also not entirely clear what the nature of the wounds were that the woman had suffered. She was said to have had three bullet wounds. Colonel Hegge is reported to have forbidden anyone to treat the woman following some discussion amongst the doctors.

Brandpunt wondered what the debriefing report contained in connection with the refusal to provide aid. It stated the following: ‘The statement made by a Dutchbat soldier to the effect that doctors had not performed an operation on a wounded resident of the enclave, has thus been denied.’

⁸²⁹ DCBC, 1214. Fax from the Defence Staff head of Operations (R.S. van Dam) to W. Vader, 18/10/95, No. OPNB/HE 1018.

⁸³⁰ NIOD, Coll. Princen. Memo from the Directorate for General Policy Affairs, undated and unnumbered.

⁸³¹ Debriefing Report, § 5.40, p. 66.

⁸³² DCBC, 1223. Fax from the Defence Staff head of Operations (R.S. van Dam) to W.F. Vader, 18/10/95, No. OPNB/HE 1018. For his reply see DCBC, 1214. Cdt GCK to HOPN Defence Staff, 20/10/95, unnumbered.

However, *Brandpunt* failed to quote this in full. A comparison of the transcription of the broadcast and the debriefing report reveals that an essential element was omitted, namely, that it was decided not to operate 'because they did not wish to use "essential stock"'. Similarly, it was stated that the text of the report had not been cited but rather an italicized quotation taken from an individual debriefing statement. Another quotation on the same page stated that the decision not to treat the wounded woman was based on medical grounds and not on the fact that they did not wish to use 'essential stock'.⁸³³ The programme thus exposed a fundamentally weak point in the debriefing process in the sense that contradictory statements were not highlighted in juxtaposition to each other.

As it happens, General Vader was not the first to speak to several of the medical practitioners involved. Following the return of the surgical teams, the KHO commanding officer, Naval Captain C. van der Pompe, had already pointed to the fact that the two surgeons were at odds with each other. Apart from the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, its director of Personnel, Major General E.E. Warlicht, had already been informed of the problems affecting KHO-5, the battalion leadership and KHO-6 by Van der Pompe on 22 September. A meeting had been held at the Armed Forces Hospital Service on 20 September to evaluate KHO-5. The publicity and indications obtained from discussions that had been held, constituted the reasons for this meeting.⁸³⁴

In his letter to Warlicht, Van der Pompe also drew attention to an article published in the *Gelders Dagblad*. This article quoted an officer in the debriefing organization who, contrary to an agreement not to disclose matters in public, revealed that one of the colonels had refused to obey an order to treat wounded Muslims.⁸³⁵ According to a telephone announcement on 29 September, the Inspector of the Royal Netherlands Army Medical Service, Brigadier General Mels, had also received information about slip-ups in Srebrenica: 'It would be a good idea for the Military Health Care Inspectorate to investigate this as well'. Incidentally, this is followed by the word 'cesspool' on the record of this telephone call at the *Inspectie Militair Geneeskundigedienst* (Military Health Care Inspectorate). On 3 October the Central Military Hospital announced that Colonel Kremer wished to have a talk with Major General Warlicht. If that took too long or proceeded unsatisfactorily, he wanted to speak to the IMG.⁸³⁶

The Royal Netherlands Army was thus aware of these explosive issues even before the Assen debriefing findings were published and well before the *Brandpunt* broadcast of 26 November 1995. The Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff and leadership were also aware of the above-mentioned memorandum written by Van Hoogwaarden, which reported the existence of conflict.

KHO-6 was debriefed about medical and other matters on 3 November. Both medical specialists from the Royal Netherlands Navy objected to the evaluation. In their view it was meaningless in the absence of the commander of the Field Dressing Station, who was indispensable for this purpose.⁸³⁷

The outcome of the evaluation has not been recorded. Only a memorandum presented by one of the people involved as a contribution to the discussion has been found. This person said that due to the publicity, which was often negative, discussions and the debriefing process in Assen, he had come to feel sorrow, anger and shame. A certain amount of friction had developed between the two KHO teams in Potocari. Partly as a result of this it had become almost impossible for them to consult and collaborate with each other. Individual actions had dominated the situation. This had exacerbated

⁸³³ DCBC, 1327. Transcription of *KRO Brandpunt*, 26/11/95, No. 1RED9476. The quotations taken from the debriefing report can be found on p. 67.

⁸³⁴ KHO. C-KHO to despatch list [KHO-5], 4/09/95, No. 12.393/3541 and N.F.H. Snoek to KTZAR C. van der Pompe, 21/09/95, unnumbered.

⁸³⁵ KHO. C-KHO to DPKL, 22/09/95, No. 12.502. A date has not been provided for the article published in the *Gelders Dagblad*.

⁸³⁶ IMG. Telephone records of 29/09 and 3/10/95.

⁸³⁷ KHO. C-KHO to despatch list [KHO-6], 5/10/95, No. 12.578/3541 and KTZAR S.J. Zwarts and KTZAR H.G.J. Hegge, 10/10/95.

feelings of disquiet and as a result it had become virtually impossible to provide leadership to this group.⁸³⁸

As Van der Pompe, the KHO Commander, subsequently informed the members of KHO-5 and KHO-6, despite the evaluation, dissatisfaction and frustration had overwhelmed fraternal relations and internal discipline, and they had sought publicity. People's names had been disclosed in public. However, issues and dilemmas needed to be discussed with him in his capacity as commanding officer.⁸³⁹

Van der Pompe had asked General Vader if he would see Colonel Kremer to offer him the opportunity to express the frustrations he felt. On this occasion Kremer related his story of the death of the Muslim woman, which he believed had not been properly investigated. At the time Vader found the accusation so serious, partly because Kremer had announced that he intended to file a complaint about the matter, that he believed he should also consult others. He made notes of these consultations.⁸⁴⁰ However, these notes have not been kept. In 1998 they again played a role in relation to the Van Kemenade Commission as well as in the media. Vader had asked Kremer to join him for a second discussion. According to Vader, this discussion was solely designed to ascertain whether the facts were correct and that the appropriate medical terminology had been used. This was because, contrary to what Kremer stated to the Van Kemenade Commission, Vader was not a doctor.⁸⁴¹ At the time Kremer was critical of the debriefing session because the official from the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee who had drawn up the relevant report, had failed to understand difficult terminology, which had implications for its quality.⁸⁴²

According to Vader, Kremer agreed with the description of events but not the conclusions. This concerned the question as to whether it could be established with certainty that the woman had ultimately died. Kremer was certain that the woman had died, because no further action was said to have been taken in the hospital in Srebrenica,⁸⁴³ even though Ilijaz Pilav is reported to have still done what he could.⁸⁴⁴ Vader felt that one could not draw this conclusion, because no one in Dutchbat had seen the woman die or had been able to determine the cause of her death. Kremer was angered by this line of reasoning. The wording of the report was therefore modified somewhat by adding that it was 'reasonable to assume' that the woman had died. To Vader this did not amount to an unwillingness to modify conclusions but to record the truth as accurately as possible.⁸⁴⁵ Kremer found this modification to be half-hearted: concede a little but not entirely, an answer that was more diplomatic.⁸⁴⁶ As it happens, the Military Health Care Inspector felt that this conclusion went too far, because no one had been able to determine the cause of death.⁸⁴⁷

Vader said that it was not correct that he had put pressure on Kremer to sign the report. That had not been requested but Kremer continued to maintain that Vader had required him to sign a statement.⁸⁴⁸ As it happens, Kremer did not mention this in his statement to Van Kemenade and, according to Vader, this was a conclusion drawn by the television programme, *Netwerk*, which later

⁸³⁸ IMG. Memorandum from AOOV F.H. Elbers to M. van Ormondt, 'Evaluatie d.d. 03-11-1995'.

⁸³⁹ KHO. C-KHO to all involved in the relief of KHO-5 and KHO-6, 28/11/95, No. 12.980/3541.

⁸⁴⁰ These consultations are said to have occurred in August 1995 already. The nature of these discussions are said to have been reported in person to the Deputy Commander of the Armed Forces. Because some personnel had been relieved, General Vader was no longer able to say with certainty which person had received a report or whether anything had been done with this information. The request for a further investigation which was made on 18/10/95, was routed through channels other than the Army Staff.

⁸⁴¹ Interview W.F. Vader, 27/01/00.

⁸⁴² Interview G.D. Kremer, 13/07/98.

⁸⁴³ Van Kemenade Commission, Report of an interview with G.D. Kremer dated 08/09/98.

⁸⁴⁴ Interview Emira Selimovic, 17/11/98.

⁸⁴⁵ Interview W.F. Vader, 27/01/00.

⁸⁴⁶ Van Kemenade Commission, Report of an interview with G.D. Kremer dated 8/09/98.

⁸⁴⁷ Interview W.F. Vader, 27/01/00.

⁸⁴⁸ Correspondence between W.F. Vader and the NIOD (copy to G.D. Kremer), 12/04/00.

devoted attention to this issue.⁸⁴⁹ Vader had no means of forcing him to sign a report. The Van Kemenade Commission did not hear both sides and Vader was not summoned to appear before it. When he learned that his name had been mentioned, the commission had already been disbanded.⁸⁵⁰

The information supplementing the debriefing report, which Minister Voorhoeve sent to Parliament on 30 October, did not contain any further statements on 'essential stock'. The Ministry of Defence's investigation had only revealed that during the fall of Srebrenica the workload was hastily divided between the various organizations such as Dutchbat, the International Red Cross, *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the UNHCR, and that this was done on an ad hoc basis:⁸⁵¹ there was little substance to this generalization because the UNHCR did not play a role during the fall and the International Red Cross was not present.

Partly in response to questions posed in Parliament, Air Commodore H.J.M. Groenhout, the Military Health Care Inspector, drew the Minister's attention to the fact that his inspectorate was conducting an investigation into the deployment of medical officers in Srebrenica. He had received unspecified indications in this respect following the release of the debriefing report. It would be possible to have a report ready on the subject by December 1995. Groenhout recommended that reference be made to his investigation when answering the relevant parliamentary questions and that Parliament be given the undertaking that it would be informed accordingly at a later stage. In view of the sensitive nature of his investigation, he assumed that this would occur while maintaining a 'low profile'.⁸⁵²

It soon became impossible to maintain a low profile. The fat was in the fire after *Brandpunt*, as is stated above, devoted a broadcast to the fall of Srebrenica entitled *Dutchbat zou medische hulp hebben geweigerd aan zwaar gewonde Moslimburgers* (Dutchbat is reported to have refused aid to seriously wounded Muslim civilians) broadcast on 26 November 1995. The debriefing report did not refer to this.

The Brandpunt broadcast and the debriefing report

The Ministry of Defence was aware that a *Brandpunt* instalment about Dutchbat was due to be aired. However, the content of this broadcast still appeared to be uncertain. In the event that *Brandpunt* might request a comment, the Deputy Director of General Information, Kreemers, had been updated by Major Franken. It was suspected that the programme would be devoted to the request of the Opstina of Srebrenica to Dutchbat in April to provide staff and supplies following the emergence of a conflict between Opstina and *Médecins Sans Frontières* about local personnel. At the time the Belgian coordinator, Catharina Vandeneede, had decided not to deploy any more *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff, after which Franken had notified the council that he would be unable to satisfy its request. Franken had also said that he resented *Médecins Sans Frontières* engaging in a conflict at the expense of the local population. Another issue which could be raised, was the time when 'essential stock' were drawn on.⁸⁵³

In response to questions which the Standing Committee for Defence had raised in connection with the debriefing report, the Royal Netherlands Army had already reported on 17 November 1995 that guidelines did indeed exist for maintaining 'essential stock' to cover approximately 30 of the unit's 'own' wounded personnel. However, Dutchbat had disregarded these guidelines when more medicine was required for local residents who had been wounded. Inroads had thus been made into these

⁸⁴⁹ See also *NRC Handelsblad* of 28/07/99.

⁸⁵⁰ Interview W.F. Vader, 27/01/00.

⁸⁵¹ TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 128, p. 15.

⁸⁵² Stasdef. Memorandum from the Military Health Care Inspector, 12 /06/96 (H.J.M. Groenhout) to the minister and junior minister, 24/11/95, No. IMG 95/27/AAA.

⁸⁵³ DV. Memorandum from the acting director of General Information (Kreemers) to the chief of Defence Staff, copy to O. van der Wind, 16/11/95, No. V95021602. The Ministry of Defence was aware of a possible broadcast on 10 November.

‘essential stock’.⁸⁵⁴ This rather general reply was not presented to Parliament along with the other answers on 30 November, because the Minister required further investigation first.⁸⁵⁵

The four affidavits⁸⁵⁶ which *Brandpunt* held, and which constituted the essence of the programme, also provide an insight into the reasons why these Dutchbat members had sought publicity. What played a role, was that decisions not to provide medical aid were not really discussed, albeit that it was acknowledged that there had not been a great deal of opportunity for discussion owing to the prevailing tension. The staff in the Field Dressing Station only heard the outcome of any decision-making from the mouth of Naval Captain Hegge. They knew that he had consulted the Dutchbat leadership about the matter and that he supported the relevant decisions, but they did not know exactly who took these decisions. It had taken a long time for any decision to be made. Someone suspected that Hegge had disclosed the decision. No one knew whether The Hague had been consulted about this. At any rate, some people had difficulty with the decision not to provide the local population with any further assistance.

What also played a role, was the fact that during the debriefing process in Assen no attempt was really made to elicit the truth. Questions were only asked as to whether any civilians may have died due to the failure to provide medical treatment. One could not answer such a question in the prevailing circumstances. It was impossible to determine this.⁸⁵⁷

Two people who were interviewed by different debriefing teams, found it strange that the latter did not inquire further about their statement that Dutchbat had not provided medical aid to civilians for a number of days at the most critical points in time. No further questions were asked about this. According to the affidavits, someone else was not asked a single question about the events of 10 and 11 July. They therefore felt that the debriefing report was incomplete and inaccurate. Someone had indeed died because they did not draw on the ‘essential stock’. There had been a war going on and, however bad it may be, people died in such circumstances but due to ‘moaning about Srebrenica’ in the media and the ‘carry-on’ about the debriefing report which was incorrect in respect of this matter, attention was again focussed on the image of the woman not receiving treatment, according to the affidavits.

Nevertheless, these matters were most certainly dealt with in Assen. One member of staff in the Field Dressing Station, Warrant Officer F.H. Elbers, stated in the course of his debriefing session that the wounded Muslim woman was not treated owing to the agreement between the medical officers and the battalion leadership to ensure that Dutch soldiers could be treated at all times. On the one hand, this was based on the feelings raised by the death of Private Van Renssen and, on the other hand, by poor communication between KHO-5 and the battalion leadership, and between the two KHO teams about the alternatives still available to the medical officers. Because the shelling of the enclave had already commenced the day after the arrival of KHO-6, the latter was unable to obtain a comprehensive insight into the quantity of medical supplies available. Moreover, due to the lack of communication, the nursing staff and doctors of KHO-6 did not know what and where supplies were available.⁸⁵⁸

Again according to the affidavits, many people knew that a fax had been received from *Médecins Sans Frontières* requesting assistance for two patients, although they did not know the precise nature of this request. The request became a hot potato in the Field Dressing Station. Later they heard from the

⁸⁵⁴ DCBC, 1314. Document entitled *Kamervragen Srebrenica met aantekening* (Parliamentary Questions about Srebrenica with Notes) RNLA contribution 17/11/95, 4 pm.

⁸⁵⁵ TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 13, question 138.

⁸⁵⁶ These affidavits reveal that the junior notary public, M. Bos, had established the identity of the four individuals in question in the office of the notary public, Donker, in Utrecht on 24 November 1995, and that the statements constituted a true record of what had previously been told to the KRO *Brandpunt* reporter, Bart Nijpels. The questions posed by Nijpels were not included in the affidavits. No names are mentioned. KRO *Brandpunt* has placed these affidavits at the NIOD’s disposal.

⁸⁵⁷ This is related to the following clause in the debriefing report: ‘that none of the local population died because ‘essential stock’ could not be drawn on’.

⁸⁵⁸ Debriefing statement F.H. Elbers, 14/09/95.

MSF aid worker, Christina Schmitz, that the organization had offered to send along medication, which had not been mentioned in the fax. However, Hegge is said to have announced that aid would be suspended in view of the division of labour and the shortage of supplies. One of the witnesses felt that this line of reasoning was not nonsensical at that point in time. Some of their own number could have been wounded by the artillery shelling of Srebrenica, which had resulted in the death of 11 and the injury of about 30 members of the local population.

Another member of staff felt that supplies should also be set aside for themselves, because they bore initial responsibility but that this should be a minimum quantity. One could not evade one's duty to provide humanitarian aid.

Later on the decision not to help the local population in difficult cases began to gnaw at those involved when they accounted for the supplies that remained. There was indeed a shortage of some types of medicine and as long as Dutchbat personnel were still stationed at observation posts, they had to be used sparingly. While it is true that X-ray equipment, antibiotics and intensive care facilities were in short supply, on 11 July one would have sooner been able to say that it was possible to provide humanitarian aid with limited resources. There was still some leeway because the minimum level of 'essential stock' had not yet been reached in the case of most types of medication. More than enough was available for first aid. Something should have been done, even if only with minimum resources. Yet, when those Dutchbat personnel in the observation posts were no longer at risk, the refugees in the compound were helped where possible.

Conflicts and disagreement between the old and new KHO teams also played a role. Four or five members of the new team were said to be opposed to going to the hospital in Srebrenica and to have felt that it was too dangerous to do so. The others and the old team were reported to be in favour of going. However, another person asserted that the opposite was true: 70% of first-aid staff were said to be opposed to providing aid during the attack while 30% were in favour of doing so.

All these mixed feelings were exacerbated when a wounded woman was not treated on 10 July, particularly by the puzzling manner in which she was dealt with and the fact that she was nevertheless taken to the hospital in Srebrenica without any dressing, where she had to do with treatment by an unqualified surgeon. Hegge is reported to have said that there were not enough supplies available to help the woman. The intensive care treatment she required, would have drawn too heavily on supplies and it was feared that the woman would die anyway. Kremer was however in favour of treating her but the other people who were present, could not assess whether this would be sensible to do or not. At the time none of those present objected and they apparently resigned themselves to the decision not to treat the woman. However, it only appeared to be true that it was worthwhile treating the woman, precisely because little was done for her subsequently and she died.

Chaos reigned amongst the many people in the plant and virtually nothing could be done for the refugees. It was bedlam, an enormous quagmire, and the smell was terrible. There was a great deal of sorrow and misery, and a mild form of panic. With Dutchbat's assistance, *Médecins Sans Frontières* rearranged part of the hall, setting up a Field Dressing Station and installing lights. Initially, the prohibition against the provision of humanitarian aid was maintained and Dutchbat personnel found it difficult that a single *Médecins Sans Frontières* doctor had to treat all those wounded people, not understanding why no assistance was forthcoming while Dutchbat had sufficient personnel. It was anticipated that the prohibition against the adapted provision of humanitarian aid was more likely to be relaxed. Something had been done, although this could hardly be described as medical treatment. The odd person ignored the prohibition and fetched dressings to bandage people. Many refugees were dehydrated and required a drip.

Discussions led to tension which discharged itself mainly in the direction of Hegge. Not only was there tension between the old and new KHO teams, and between the surgeons, complaints were also made about a medical officer who refused to follow orders and relieve Kremer, who was caring for wounded people at the Potocari bus terminus. He had refused to do this because shots were being fired and it was too dangerous. A sergeant major refused to join a patrol designed to determine the medical problems encountered by refugees outside the compound, because he felt that it was not his duty to do

so. While Srebrenica was being fired on, Major Franken had ordered that a survey be conducted to ascertain what aid could be given to the refugees in Srebrenica. A nurse had then refused to do this, because it was too dangerous and shots were being fired. When others wanted to go some time later, they were refused permission to do so, because it had become too dangerous by then. Because there was not much left in the way of blood supplies, a medical officer was asked to prepare a list of donors. The doctor refused to do this. He did not wish to do so, because he felt it was absurd. To this point, the discussion of the affidavits.

On 28 November *De Volkskrant* published a report about the *Brandpunt* programme and several quotations taken from the Dutchbat staff affidavits with a splashy layout. The article also mentioned that a sergeant major had refused to go in search of refugees with medical problems outside the compound and that a medical officer had found it too dangerous to treat the wounded at the Potocari bus terminus. Incidentally, the words uttered by this doctor ('I shall not do that. Bugger off. They are shooting. It is far too dangerous.')

were not new and can be found almost literally in the debriefing report.⁸⁵⁹

The fact that a sergeant major had refused to join a social patrol for the purpose of determining the refugees' medical problems because he did not believe that it was his duty to do so, had already been dealt with in the course of the debriefing process. While Srebrenica was being bombarded, Major Franken had ordered the commanding officer of the Field Dressing Station, Captain Van Hoogwaarden, to ascertain what assistance could be given to the refugees in Srebrenica. Van Hoogwaarden had asked a nurse to do this. The latter had refused to do so, arguing that it was too dangerous because shots were being fired. Van Hoogwaarden had then decided to go to Srebrenica himself along with Sergeant Major Rave. Ultimately, this did not happen due to the enclave's rapid fall.⁸⁶⁰

Reactions, investigation and regulations

Responding to *De Volkskrant*, Minister Voorhoeve felt that, if what the newspaper had written, was true, this was a case of insubordination and cowardice. He wanted this investigated. If it was true, action needed to be taken.⁸⁶¹ The debriefing report had already referred to the possibility that insubordination had occurred. Nevertheless, Secretary-General Barth requested the managers of the debriefing team, Van der Wind and Roos, to ascertain as soon as possible what was known about this matter and to advise him as to what else could be done. The Military Health Care Inspector was ordered to expedite his investigation and to report to the Minister immediately if he came across any new facts.⁸⁶²

Four Members of Parliament, Valk (PvdA-Labour), Hoekema (D66-Democrats), Blaauw (VVD-Liberals) and De Hoop Scheffer (CDA-Christian Democrats) responded during the KRO broadcast. All of them pointed out that one was entitled to expect a debriefing process to deal with such serious matters and noted that it contained gaps. De Hoop Scheffer understood that it was difficult to cover ethical and moral questions in depth during a war but he failed to understand why orders were issued to refrain from providing assistance when medicine and personnel were available. In this respect, Hoekema seemed to be better informed than the higher echelons of the Ministry and the Royal Netherlands Army, when he said that he was aware that discussions had also ensued within Dutchbat about the maintenance of 'essential stock'.

⁸⁵⁹ Debriefing Report, p. 69.

⁸⁶⁰ Confidential debriefing statement (18).

⁸⁶¹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Handwritten memorandum from the minister to the SG, copy to the junior minister and CDS, 28/11/95, No. 1734.

⁸⁶² NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Handwritten memorandum from SG to the minister and junior minister, copy to CDS, DAB, DV, 28/11/00, unnumbered. See also Stasdef, notes with the reference, Office of the secretary-general 27/11/95, No. 22192 on the IMG memorandum of 24/11/95, No. IMG 95/27/AAA.

Throughout Dutchbat's stay in Srebrenica the question of 'essential stock' was never discussed at senior levels in The Hague. General Couzy only heard later of the existence of 'essential stock'. He was only informed of this following Dutchbat's arrival in Zagreb, when the affair of the Muslim woman who had not been treated, was raised for discussion.⁸⁶³ One can find an explanation for this in the fact that much of the communication about medical matters was routed through medical channels and consequently did not go through 'the line' and reach the responsible commanders or the minister. Senior officials in the Ministry of Defence first spoke about the problems pertaining to 'essential stock' after replies were given to parliamentary questions about medical treatment in Srebrenica.

The Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, Lieutenant General M. Schouten, noted that while one medical officer endeavoured to limit the suffering of civilian patients as much as possible, another was doing the same for the potential military casualties that were anticipated, and that the latter had occurred at the expense of a Bosnian woman. As it happens, the Commanders-in-Chief of the various branches of the Armed Forces remained convinced that the medical facilities of Dutch units should first and foremost be available to treat one's own troops. In the course of these discussions the Director General of Personnel, W. Bunnink, pointed out that it had been agreed that, when troops were sent on tours of duty, they were entitled to a quality of care which corresponded with that available in the Netherlands as far as possible. The Director of General Policy Affairs, J. de Winter, added that UN instructions were based on the assumption that the extent of any care is determined on the basis of military requirements. The provision of care to civilians was the responsibility of non-military organizations. On the other hand, these instructions also referred to the Geneva Conventions, which covered the treatment of seriously wounded civilians if the relevant military facilities were adequate.⁸⁶⁴

The Ministry of Defence had not provided any further written instructions or directions.⁸⁶⁵ No one in The Hague consulted Dutchbat's Standing Orders. The latter stated that a policy of restraint was to be pursued in relation to the treatment of civilian casualties in military medical institutions and that 'in principle no medical aid will be provided'. There were exceptions in the provision of first aid in serious accidents and incidents, following which civilian doctors were nevertheless required to assume responsibility as soon as possible.⁸⁶⁶ In this connection one can only state that Dutchbat apparently did not comply with its own instructions.

The Ministry of Defence's Directorate of Legal Affairs tried to establish whether any regulations provided for the provision of medical aid to the local population. The initial problem was that humanitarian provisions of the law of war did not apply to troops participating in a UN peacekeeping operation, because they were not party to an armed conflict. However, the UN adopted the position that UN troops were bound to comply with the 'principles and spirit of the general conventions applicable to the conduct of military personnel'. This referred to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977. However, it was not clear in The Hague what was exactly meant by 'principles and spirit'. It was impossible to provide soldiers with clearly defined orders based on such a general approach.⁸⁶⁷

Neither were UNPROFOR's orders clearly defined. The guidelines for urgent medical treatment stipulated that UN personnel bore primary responsibility and that UNPROFOR needed to be cautious about becoming involved in emergencies, as well as that it was self-evident that UNPROFOR would treat wounded individuals until it could transfer responsibility to the local medical

⁸⁶³ Interview H.A. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98.

⁸⁶⁴ BSG. Report of SG/DG Consultations, Confi, 5/12/95.

⁸⁶⁵ Report of the *Inspectie voor de Gezondheidszorg* (Health Care Inspectorate), 12/06/96, p. 12.

⁸⁶⁶ Standing Orders (NL) VN INFBAT, Annex 10, SOP GNK, point 5.1.

⁸⁶⁷ DS No. S95/139/4712. DJZ, *Afd. Internationale en Juridische Beleidsaangelegenheden* [Department of International and Legal Affairs] (B. van Lent) to DMGB/MJZ, through DJZ, copy to DAB and CDS, 30/11/95, No. 95001244.

authorities.⁸⁶⁸ In addition, there was also a *Force Commander's Policy Directive*, which stipulated that emergency cases which could not be dealt with locally, could be treated following consultations at a senior level.⁸⁶⁹

Nevertheless, the 'principles and spirit of the general conventions' did not seem to permit one simply to refuse medical aid to civilians, because 'essential stock' needed to be maintained. The Additional Protocol of 1977 stipulated that one was not permitted to distinguish between the wounded other than on medical grounds, and that medical staff were not allowed to be forced to refrain from acting.⁸⁷⁰

On the other hand, UN orders allowed military doctors and commanders considerable scope to exercise their discretion when deciding whether or not to provide assistance to civilians. The relatively broadly formulated UN orders could have been contrary to the 'principles and spirit of the general conventions applicable to the conduct of military personnel'. Nevertheless, The Hague held that an order prohibiting the provision of medical aid did not contravene the applicable regulations. The Additional Protocols did not formally apply to UN personnel. However, assessed in accordance with the moral standards embodied in these 'principles and spirit of the general conventions', at the end of 1995 The Hague held that one was not allowed to refuse medical aid.⁸⁷¹

The *Inspectie voor de Militaire Gezondheidszorg* (Military Health Care Inspectorate) came to a similar conclusion. Pursuant to the Fourth Convention of Geneva on the protection of civilians in times of war, Dutchbat did not have a legal duty to provide medical aid. Neither was this prohibited, of course. However, based on the 'Martens clause', which is confirmed in the First Additional Protocol, it did have a moral and legal duty to provide medical aid to both civilians and combatants.⁸⁷²

⁸⁶⁸ This refers to Article 19 of the chapter entitled 'Guidance on Emergency Medical Treatment to Locals' to the 'sOP 506 Medical Operations' of 1 September 1993: 'Primary responsibility of medical staff in this Command, is to UN personnel and we must be careful not to become officially involved with local medical emergencies which could take doctors away and jeopardize the lives of our own medical personnel. However, Commanders should be prepared to judge individual cases on their own merits and act accordingly in the circumstances prevailing at the time.' Article 20 provides as follows: 'Naturally BH Command Medical personnel are ready to attend any accident involving UN personnel in their area of operation. If local civilian or military personnel are involved or injured, they will of course attend to these casualties as well until they can be transferred to the local medical authorities.'

⁸⁶⁹ UNPROFOR, Force Commander's Policy Directive, Number (22), Medical (SOP), Part 4 – Personnel, Chapter 8 – Medical, Article 24: 'On occasion, an emergency medical need in the civilian population, which cannot be met by civilian resources, may be identified and treated on an emergency basis by UNPROFOR medical staff after consultation with the Sector/Comd Medical Liaison Officer and the Commander of the Sector/Comd. Due to the operational and diplomatic situation, military assistance may also be required.'

⁸⁷⁰ Additional Protocol of 8/06/97 to the Geneva Conventions, Article 7: 'All the wounded, sick and shipwrecked, whether or not they have taken part in the armed conflict, shall be respected and protected. In all circumstances they shall be treated humanely and shall receive, to the fullest extent practicable and with the least possible delay, the medical care and attention required by their condition. There shall be no distinction among them founded on any grounds other than medical ones.' Article 10(2): 'Persons engaged in medical activities shall neither be compelled to perform acts or to carry out contrary to, nor be compelled to refrain from acts required by, the rules of medical ethics or other rules designed for the benefit of the wounded and sick, or this Protocol.'

⁸⁷¹ DS, S95/139/4712. DJZ, Afd. Internationale en Juridische Beleidsaangelegenheden [Department of International and Legal Affairs of Policy] (B. van Lent) to DMGB/MJZ, through DJZ, copy to DAB and CDS, 30/11/95, No. 95001244; UNPROFOR Force Commander's Policy Directive Number (20) – Revised – Medical Support stated that 'the principles embodied in the Geneva Conventions, and Protocols, are to be strictly adhered to at all times'. See the report of the Health Care Inspectorate dated 12/06/96, p. 11. This report also refers to Section 450 of the Criminal Code, which makes it a criminal offence to fail to provide assistance to someone in a life-threatening situation. However, Dutch criminal law did not apply to offences committed by Dutch citizens abroad.

⁸⁷² IMG. IMG question of 27/11/02 as interpreted by mja/van Diest and a memorandum by J. de Vreese (MJA) and C. Lelkens (military medical care), undated. The Martens clause provides as follows: 'In cases not covered by this Protocol or by other international agreements, civilians and combatants remain under the protection and authority of the principles of international law derived from established custom, from the principles of humanity and from the dictates of public conscience.' (Art. 1(2) AP I, see also Clause 4 of the Preamble AP II).

The Dutch legal adviser to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Lieutenant Colonel H.A. van Gameren, also considered the question as to whether a UN unit was entitled to reserve medicine for its own use and whether it was required to provide medical aid to the local population. He concluded that neither the UN mandate, the Force Commander's Policy Directives, nor the Standing Operating Procedures made it a duty for one to provide medical aid to the local population. Van Gameren referred to Force Commander's Policy Directive No. 20, which stipulated that medical facilities were only allowed to be used for UNPROFOR personnel. With regard to UN units, it literally provided as follows: 'They are not manned or equipped to provide humanitarian aid'. The directive only stipulates that people other than UNPROFOR personnel were allowed to be treated in the case of life-threatening situations until such time as they can be transferred to a local medical facility. There was only a duty to treat one's own military personnel. Standing Operating Procedure No. 506, Article 52 stressed that medical supplies were intended for UN personnel. The primary responsibility of medical staff was to treat UN personnel.⁸⁷³

There were however some negotiable aspects to the legal adviser's dogmatic assertions. According to the Dutch staff officers at the UN headquarters in Zagreb, who subsequently studied the relevant documentation, the UN regulations could not be interpreted so unambiguously. Apparently, the Force Commander's Policy Directive No. 20 left something to be desired when it came to clarity. Medical supplies were intended for the treatment of UN personnel except in very serious cases and/or if authorized by the medical officer of the force in question. However, these concepts were open to interpretation.⁸⁷⁴ Similarly, the explanation provided by the Force Medical Officer in Zagreb provided little in the way of certainty. Based on this Policy Directive, Dutchbat was authorized to use all its supplies for 30 days, if the relevant doctor assessed the on-site problem to be 'emergency care'. However, what was to be deemed to constitute 'emergency care', was not defined. On the other hand, a decision to keep some of these medical supplies separate for one's own use was one to be made at the discretion of the commanding officer or doctor on the spot. They were also 'naturally' responsible for their own troops. There were no further guidelines covering this nor historical data.⁸⁷⁵

However, one could find more ambiguity in the UN regulations. The same Policy Directive also stipulated that the provision of humanitarian aid was one of UNPROFOR's primary objectives. While medical units were admittedly intended to support UNPROFOR, they were also required to be 'actively involved' in the provision of humanitarian aid to the extent that this did not prevent UNPROFOR from caring for casualties and patients. This aid depended on the requirements of the local population and the resources at the disposal of the units in question. The medical supplies distributed within UNPROFOR may therefore have been primarily intended for the care of UN personnel but it was permissible to use these resources for patients who would otherwise not be eligible for them, in the event that emergency aid was provided. However, alternative sources of supplies needed to be found for this purpose if units did not regularly provide emergency medical aid, or support mobile services or local hospitals. In such a case the units were entitled to collaborate with the UNHCR, the World Health Organization (WHO), non-governmental organizations in the area covered by their mission, and national organizations.⁸⁷⁶

Elsewhere it was stipulated that medical supplies for humanitarian aid had to be applied for from the World Health Organization, the UNHCR or non-governmental organizations.⁸⁷⁷ The *Aide Memoire for Troop-Contributing Nations* stipulated that medical supplies and equipment for the treatment of civilians and refugees was to be sourced from the WHO, the International Red Cross and the UNHCR.

⁸⁷³ CRST. Legal Adviser to COS, undated, forwarded at 7.45 pm on 27/11/95 by COS UNPROFOR to SC-O/C-RNLA Crisis Staff.

⁸⁷⁴ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 54, File 4.2.1.1. Annex D to FCPD 20 Medical, Revised 23/10/94, Amendment No. 1.

⁸⁷⁵ DCBC, 1248. Fax AMA COS UNPF-HQ (Sondag) to Van Dam, DCBC, 281000A November 1995.

⁸⁷⁶ DCBC, 1248. Force Commander's Policy Directive No. 20 Medical, Revised 23/10/94, §§ 17 and 18. Appended to the fax from AMA COS UNPF-HQ (Major Sondag) to Colonel Van Dam, DCBC, 281000A November 1995.

⁸⁷⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 54, File 4.2.1.1. Annex D to FCPD 20 Medical, Revised 23/10/94, Amendment No. 1.

Another observation contained in this *Aide Memoire* was that units needed to maintain medical supplies covering 30 days' consumption in the area in which they were deployed.⁸⁷⁸

When difficult medical questions needed to be answered in November 1995, relations between 'The Hague' and the battalion were at rock bottom. Discussions were strained and there was a mutual distrust and little candour. It was therefore difficult for 'The Hague' to ascertain precisely what the situation was like. This was already the case on the eve of the *Brandpunt* broadcast. One Sunday Steven de Vogel of *Brandpunt* called the Deputy Director of General Information, Kreemers, asking whether the minister wished to participate in the broadcast in the evening to comment on the programme about the 'essential stock'. De Vogel mentioned that *Brandpunt* had a fax from Franken addressed to *Médecins Sans Frontières*, in which the former stated that no medical aid could be provided to the residents of Srebrenica at that point in time. The Ministry did not accept the invitation but the latter did provide an incentive to determine the precise situation. Kreemers called Franken but the latter said that there was no fax. After the broadcast Franken called Kreemers and again said, 'If you are asked any questions, you can safely say that there was no fax'. This did not make it easy to provide an explanation and led to caution.

However, Franken had apparently made a mistake. This emerged several days later when the Directorate for General Policy Affairs, which was involved in drafting a letter to Parliament, saw the relevant fax from *Artsen zonder Grenzen* in Brussels.⁸⁷⁹

The day after the *Brandpunt* broadcast Minister Voorhoeve explained to Parliament that he was conducting a further investigation into a number of questions. The Ministry was already conducting an investigation to supplement the debriefing report. 'All relevant information should be contained in it,' said Voorhoeve. In the meantime contact was made with the humanitarian organizations that had had representatives on the spot during and after the fall of the enclave. In addition, the Minister reported that one of the Dutchbat doctors had presented information about the issues relating to the refugees and the 'essential stock' to the Health Care Inspector, and that he had instructed several Ministry of Defence officials to conduct a more wide-ranging investigation of Dutchbat's provision of medical aid during the fall of the enclave. Voorhoeve also wrote that *Médecins Sans Frontières* and UNHCR staff had not previously reported that medical aid had been withheld.⁸⁸⁰

Judicial inquiry?

At the request of Secretary-General Barth, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee analysed the article published in *De Volkskrant* on 28 November, based on which the Minister could decide to launch a judicial inquiry if necessary. However, it appeared that no legal basis for such an inquiry could be found in respect of the problems that had been raised, and the differences of opinion as to whether medical aid should not have been provided. At best, an inquiry could be ordered based on an assessment by the Military Health Care Inspector (IMG) in accordance with Section 255 of the Criminal Code.⁸⁸¹

The debriefing report, the TV broadcast and the newspaper articles did not provide the Ministry of Public Prosecutions with firm enough grounds to initiate a judicial inquiry into a possible refusal to obey orders. Brigadier General K.C. Roos, who had been one of the heads of the debriefing operation, raised the question as to whether that was an opportune moment to launch a judicial inquiry.

⁸⁷⁸ DCBC, 1248. Aide Memoire for Troop Contributing Nations, Article 239, appended to the fax from AMA COS UNPF-HQ (Major Sondag) to Van Dam, DCBC, 271330 November 1995.

⁸⁷⁹ Interview Bert Kreemers, 19/05/99.

⁸⁸⁰ BSG. The minister of Defence (J.J.C. Voorhoeve) to the Speaker of the Parliament, 27/11/95, No. D101 1995/22196. See also TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 132. The name of the doctor referred to, P. Iljaz, should rightfully be stated as Iljaz Pilav.

⁸⁸¹ Section 255 of the Criminal Code provides as follows: 'Any person who wilfully places or leaves another person, whom he has a duty to maintain, nurse or care for pursuant to the law or an agreement, in a helpless situation, shall be sentenced to imprisonment'.

It seemed to him that one could not preclude the possibility that such an inquiry would reveal ‘a cesspool’. Publications as well as confidential information obtained in the debriefing statements pointed in that direction. Comparisons would be drawn with the conviction of two non-commissioned officers for insubordination in Sarajevo in 1994, where the personal safety of those involved had also played a role. There was also a danger that those medical personnel who had incited this controversy about the provision of aid, might hide behind the Dutchbat leadership or take out more of their frustrations with the latter in public. Minister Voorhoeve was advised to accord priority to the IMG’s investigation into the medical problems. A decision could be taken about issuing instructions to the Ministry of Public Prosecutions after this.⁸⁸²

Secretary-General Barth shared General Roos’s view that it would be wise to first wait for the IMG to conduct its investigation before making a decision about a judicial inquiry.⁸⁸³ The analysis produced by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee confirmed Voorhoeve’s suspicions. He wanted to know there and then whether insubordination or cowardice had been involved, irrespective of whether or not the issue should be investigated further through judicial channels following receipt of the IMG report. Could insubordination not be dealt with under military disciplinary regulations? Negative publicity should certainly be avoided as this would again tarnish the army’s image but Voorhoeve also did not wish to turn a blind eye to it. This would be bad for the army’s image in the future.⁸⁸⁴

The Commanding Officer of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Major General D.G.J. Fabius, investigated whether insubordination had occurred. He answered this question in the affirmative. A limited number of cases had been revealed in the course of the debriefing process. Fabius had found at least three instances. One of the cases referred to in the press was not known to the debriefing team. KHO personnel were involved in all cases. The debriefing report did not mention cowardice but in view of the wording that was used, one could conclude that the insubordination was due to cowardice. No conclusions could be drawn about the extent of the insubordination. A more focussed investigation would be required in order to obtain a better understanding of the nature and extent of it. The debriefing report did not offer any firm grounds in this respect and the debriefing statements were not available because of the undertaking not to disclose them. Given Voorhoeve’s view that one could not turn a blind eye to insubordination, only one alternative was available: have the Ministry of Public Prosecutions launch a judicial inquiry. The conduct in question was no longer punishable under military disciplinary procedures because the deadlines for the applicable legal limitations had long since elapsed. It was possible to set one’s own time for the start of an inquiry, if necessary in relation to the completion of the other reports pertaining to Srebrenica. Fabius decided that one could not preclude the possibility that a judicial inquiry would receive publicity.⁸⁸⁵

Official investigation

On the same day as the *Brandpunt* broadcast a team of officials started investigating precisely what had happened in order to be able to inform Parliament. This investigation was separate from the one which the IMG was already conducting. Initially, a decision was made with the Minister’s approval in favour of an investigation to be conducted by this inspectorate.⁸⁸⁶ At the time the inspector presented a preliminary report (see the section on the IMG below in respect of the various reports). The issues

⁸⁸² BSG. Memorandum from the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Director of Operations to the minister of Defence, 29/11//95, unnumbered, attached to Cabinet Minister No. 1747.

⁸⁸³ BSG, File on the former Yugoslavia. Memorandum from SG to the minister, 29/11/95, unnumbered.

⁸⁸⁴ Memorandum from the minister to the SG, undated, No. 1747, Confi. Accompanying the memorandum from the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Director of Operations to the minister of Defence, 29/11/95, unnumbered. Cabinet Minister No. 1747.

⁸⁸⁵ DJZ. Memorandum from the Commanding Officer of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee to the minister of Defence through the secretary-general, 5/12/95, No. Litt PC95/29, Confi.

⁸⁸⁶ DJZ 9513/660. Memorandum from SG to the commander of the Navy, 27/12/95, No. 24006 1995.

were related to 'essential stock' and the treatment of local wounded individuals. On 28 and 29 November Van Hoogwaarden, De Bruin and Elbers, the Commanders of the Field Dressing Station, Medical Platoon and Arrivals Team respectively, the Surgeons, Hegge and Kremer, and Karremans and Franken were interviewed. The interim report still stated that the information that the officials had collected could only be disclosed publicly by the Minister. The meetings of the official working party and interviews with the people involved really had to remain confidential.⁸⁸⁷

At the beginning of October staff from the Ministry of Defence also approached representatives of *Médecins Sans Frontières* who had been in the enclave. Some time elapsed before the organization agreed to such contact. In the former Yugoslavia a committee consisting of Lieutenant Colonel H.A. van Gameren, the legal adviser to the UNPROFOR staff in Sarajevo, and Captain D.E.C. Scheffrahn of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the commanding officer of the UNPROFOR Royal Netherlands Marechaussee Brigade in Busovaca, travelled through the country from 27 November to 4 December with a list of questions that had been drawn up, collecting answers from former *Médecins Sans Frontières* staff.⁸⁸⁸

In view of the speed at which the Ministry of Defence wished to act, this was not an easy task. Despite an undertaking given by the chief witness, the doctor Ilijaz Pilav, to hand in his answers the following day, it took a further five days and a good deal of insistence before they were available to be translated. Moreover, the response was poor: 15 respondents yielded three statements. The others had not experienced the fall of the enclave, could not be traced, or did not wish to collaborate. Apart from questions about negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs, signing documents, violations of human rights and the separation of men and women, most of them dealt with the treatment of the wounded in Potocari and Bratunac. What was also remarkable, was the inclusion of a question as to whether anyone was familiar with the fate of the family of the UNMO interpreter, Hasan Nuhanovic. No one was.

The answers provided by Emira Selimovic, the interpreter and manager of the *Médecins Sans Frontières* pharmacy, were the most precise and businesslike. The technician, Purkovic, provided emotional answers. The doctor, Ilijaz Pilav, had not witnessed the care of refugees in Potocari but pointed out that they had always collaborated well with Dutchbat by transferring equipment and providing help in those cases where the hospital could not do so. The most valuable form of assistance had taken the form of diagnosing conditions with the aid of ultrasound and X-ray equipment, and a laboratory. However, absolutely no assistance was received from Dutchbat during the fall of the enclave. Of the 21 people to be wounded in the town on 10 July, 11 required surgical assistance. Six of them died while awaiting an operation. According to Pilav, he had addressed a request to Dutchbat by fax through the *Médecins Sans Frontières* coordinator to take over five or six (the fax referred to two) of the most serious cases.

In the compound in Potocari *Médecins Sans Frontières* had been responsible for caring for the wounded. In this respect Selimovic said that she had objected to the place in the plant where they had been placed, but that they had received proper medical care from Dutchbat and *Médecins Sans Frontières*. This organization had also been responsible for the selection of those wounded individuals who had been transported making up the first convoy of wounded.⁸⁸⁹

The Ministry of Defence completed its initial series of internal interviews on 29 November. The next step was to use them as the basis for drawing up an internal report, presenting it to the Minister and then transforming it into a letter to Parliament. When the report was drawn up, the question was raised as to exactly what the duties of the Field Dressing Station had been. These duties were briefly

⁸⁸⁷ DCBC, 1326. 'Programma interviews betreffende 'ijzeren voorraad'', undated, unnumbered. The team of officials consisted of the director of General Policy and two of his assistants, the Defence Staff head of Operations and the deputy chief of Operations in the Royal Netherlands Army.

⁸⁸⁸ DJZ. H.A. van Gameren and D.E.C. Scheffrahn to S. Reyn (DAB), 4/12/95. The file was sent to the ICTY on 29/01/96 (No. C 95/277. DJZ).

⁸⁸⁹ DJZ, File Tribunal. Answers to the questionnaire for local *MSF* staff, Ilijaz Pilav, Tuzla. DJZ to ICTY, 29/01/96, No. C 95/277.

described as follows: to care for the wounded or dead members of Dutchbat staff in the Srebrenica enclave. While it is true that the centre fell under the command of the Dutchbat Commanding Officer after 1 April, this only meant that the latter and the head of the military logistics division were entitled to issue instructions and even then this was confined to orders for transfers and raising the alarm. Neither the commanding officer nor the logistics officer was entitled to issue orders for the performance of medical tasks.⁸⁹⁰

On 5 December, additional investigative findings arrived at Parliament by way of a supplement to the results of the debriefing process and as a reply to several parliamentary questions that had not yet been answered. The letter stated that the medical care provided during the fall of the enclave had been dealt with 'as comprehensively as possible'. The report of the official working party and the letter to Parliament were identical, albeit that the phrase, 'as comprehensively as possible', was not included in the official report. The officials had pointed out that the supplementary investigation had been performed in a brief period of time and that it may therefore have been incomplete in a number of respects.⁸⁹¹

A week later on 11 December while additional questions were being answered about the debriefing process, Parliament again received some information about medical matters. Headed by the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, Lieutenant General M. Schouten, discussions were also held on the provision of medical aid with a number of the people involved, such as Colonel Kremer, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, Major Franken and Major Otter in his capacity as the commander of the compound in Potocari.⁸⁹²

Although one could understand the haste with which Parliament was informed, it did not help to clarify the issue of medical aid. The IMG had not yet completed its investigation at the time, even though the official working party had had close contact with it. The IMG presented its report on 15 December. Parliament was not provided with any further information about this 'highly confidential' investigation.

The official investigations revealed that the term, 'essential stock' had only gained currency *outside* Dutchbat following the latter's departure from the enclave. Stock had been maintained at the instigation of Dutchbat's medical leadership.⁸⁹³ It was also clear that because of shortages these supplies had been incomplete from the very beginning. The day after KHO-6 arrived in the enclave on 4 July, the battalion leadership informed the person responsible for medical affairs, Naval Captain Hegge, of the existence of these 'essential stock'.

However, stocktaking revealed that only a limited amount of essential resources were available, after which Hegge came to the conclusion that it would only be possible to treat a limited number of seriously wounded Dutch troops. This was followed by a decision taken in consultation with the battalion leadership that it would be necessary to limit the provision of medical aid to the local population. No order was issued to this effect. Hegge was of the opinion that in each new case one would need to weigh up whether it was prudent to draw on supplies, so as to safeguard their primary task of providing medical care for Dutchbat. The gravity of the situation in both military and medical terms was underscored by the shelling of the enclave on 6 July and the death of Private Van Rensen on 8 July. The deployment of 50 soldiers for a 'blocking position' on 10 July was also not without its dangers. In addition, it was also found that the two surgical teams had different views of their duties, which was also partly due to the prevailing circumstances. KHO-5 had shown itself to be highly concerned about the fate of the local population and had learned to improvise. They imposed few limitations on themselves in relation to the provision of aid. This had partly resulted in inroads being

⁸⁹⁰ DCBC, 2360. Fax from the Department of Operations (Van Dam), Defence Staff to Nicolai, 29/11/95, unnumbered.

⁸⁹¹ DS, S95/061/4841. Memorandum from DAB to the minister, 8/12/95, No. D95/658.

⁸⁹² DS, S95/061/4841. Acting DAB (Casteleijn) to the minister, copy to the junior minister, CDS and the IMG, 8/12/95, No. D95/558, Confi.

⁸⁹³ TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 136, p. 7.

made into supplies. KHO-6 was not familiar with the prevailing circumstances and took over these duties at a time when the security situation was changing drastically.⁸⁹⁴

Naval Captain Hegge felt that his good reputation was being eroded by all the publicity accompanying the replies to the parliamentary questions. He sought a debate with his colleague, Kremer, about the medical and ethical dilemmas during the fall of Srebrenica. He had already contacted the KRO current affairs programme, *Brandpunt* for this purpose. In addition, Hegge felt that there were no grounds for any accusations directed against the medical officer and sergeant major in relation to their performance. The Deputy Director of General Information Kreemers advised against proceeding with such a discussion. It would simply stir up debate and would undermine the validity of the minister's replies to parliamentary questions. Such a broadcast could serve as a springboard for new questions or even a hearing.⁸⁹⁵

Not long after this the alarm bells again started ringing at the Directorate of General Information. By coincidence it heard that Colonel Kremer was to give a talk to the *Vereniging Officieren van de Geneeskundige Dienst* (Association of Officers of the Medical Service) entitled 'Potocari versus Hippocrates'. It was agreed with the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army that the Directorate of General Information would be informed about the content of this speech. The Secretary-General was also to be subsequently notified about the publicity risks involved in allowing the talk to proceed. All the ingredients for unfavourable publicity seemed to be present. *Médecins Sans Frontières* was on the point of publishing a book about medical care in Srebrenica. Ilijaz Pilav the doctor from Srebrenica, who was a friend of Kremer's, was visiting the Netherlands, and *Brandpunt* was producing a report about this visit. An assistant to the Member of Parliament, Hoekema (D66), and a reporter had already sought information about further investigations which the Health Care Inspectorate was to conduct. Kremer's scheduled talk had caused a commotion in navy circles, with the result that some of Hegge's supporters planned to attend the talk.⁸⁹⁶

The talk went ahead but no incidents occurred. However, there was a discussion, without any clear outcome, about the question as to whether it was or was not permissible to deny medical supplies to civilians, and who was or could be responsible for such a decision.⁸⁹⁷

This was the key question to medical officers in military organizations. That it would continue to demand attention, was self-evident and was a logical follow-on from the investigations that the Ministry of Defence initiated. For the subsequent discussion of ethical questions in relation to medicine, one is referred to the section on 'subsequent opinions about the medical and ethical issues of "essential stock"' further on in this appendix.

⁸⁹⁴ TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 136, p. 8.

⁸⁹⁵ BSG. Acting DV to the minister and junior minister, copy to PCDS, DAB, CKMar, 7/12/95, No. V95022956. Hegge had approved the answers to the parliamentary questions. In addition, it had been agreed that Hegge would no longer accede to media requests without consulting Kreemers. The latter did not exclude the possibility that any publicity would spread 'a new fatal spark'.

⁸⁹⁶ BSG No. 2958. Note by the acting director of General Information (Kreemers) to the SG, 22/02/96, No. 96002913. The SG asked Kreemers to exercise the 'greatest possible caution' while supervising this task.

⁸⁹⁷ Statement by A.J. Noordhoek, 05/12/01.

Chapter 17

Investigation conducted by the Military Health Care Inspectorate

Introduction

The handling of the questions which had been raised in response to medical performance within Dutchbat was followed by the investigation which the Military Health Care Inspectorate (IMG) conducted into it. This investigation brought new information to light but also led to the question as to what should be done next and whether its findings justified the adoption of further measures. There was one key issue in this connection: the failure to provide medical aid to the wounded Muslim woman on 10 July 1995 as mentioned above. This investigation also revealed several other matters that had nothing to do with Srebrenica, but which pointed to incidents that had occurred prior to arrival in the enclave. On the one hand, they clarified the nature of personal relations at the time and, on the other, they further complicated an already complex situation.

This led to a further investigation conducted by the Public Health Care Inspectorate. This represented a partial repetition of events. It again revealed information about the situation in which Dutchbat was required to operate, and the inadequate preparation for the deployment of medical personnel when faced with the choice between assuming medical and military responsibilities. Again there was the question as to what should be done with the findings of the investigation performed by the Public Health Care Inspectorate and what action should follow.

Both of these investigations are dealt with one after the other. Their conclusions and implications are then summarized in a single section.

The Military Health Care Inspectorate's report

At the end of November 1995 when *Brandpunt* publicly disclosed a number of issues pertaining to the medical actions of Dutchbat, little headway had been made in the investigation being conducted by the Military Health Care Inspectorate. The term, 'interim report', which was used to describe the document presented to the minister at that time, was somewhat exaggerated. Only one interview had been conducted, namely, with Colonel Kremer. This interim report consequently contained Kremer's views in the main.

Kremer had expressed serious objections to the failure to treat the wounded woman who was brought into the Potocari compound on 10 July. He said that he did not initially intend to express any complaint. However, he had met several Dutchbat members who still had huge difficulties coming to terms with the image of the dying woman and who spoke to him about this. The Military Health Care Inspector, Air Commodore H.J.M. Groenhout, had then invited Kremer to present his story. This was the catalyst for a complaint.⁸⁹⁸ Ultimately, it was Kremer who filed a formal complaint with the Military Health Care Inspector once he had been invited to do so.⁸⁹⁹ In this connection, Kremer did not himself record his complaint in writing. It was only put into words in the IMG report.⁹⁰⁰

What was striking, was that, as in the case of the *Brandpunt* affidavits, Kremer's complaint was prompted by problems relating to the debriefing situation in Assen. A Military Intelligence Service officer had been present along with someone from the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and a third person who actually produced the report. It has been noted above that Kremer had been struck by the

⁸⁹⁸ Interview G.D. Kremer, 17/01/02.

⁸⁹⁹ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12 /06/96, pp. 35-36.

⁹⁰⁰ IMG. IMG to government attorney, 22/12/95, No. IMG 95/27/537.

fact that the latter person had not been taught how to deal with medical terms and that this had had an impact on the quality of the report.⁹⁰¹ According to Kremer, his words were incorrectly recorded in the debriefing report. This related primarily to his conclusion that it had been decided not to treat the woman without a thorough examination. Kremer had wanted to start treating the woman but was forbidden to do so by the newly arrived Hegge who was now responsible for medical operations. The latter felt that there were insufficient supplies and that the few that were left, should be reserved for any Dutch casualties. This occurred on the orders of the battalion staff.

In the meantime the IMG learned from Kremer what difficulties he had encountered with the Dutchbat leadership. He also pointed to the absence of clearly defined guidelines for the treatment of the local population. Because little work was required for the treatment of Dutch soldiers, Kremer had begun to treat casualties amongst them in emergencies and other cases.⁹⁰²

After interviewing 21 people involved, the IMG completed its report on 15 December.⁹⁰³ Although the complaint that had been submitted, only referred to negligence in relation to the treatment of the wounded woman who had been brought in on 10 July, the report could not avoid dealing with an array of other issues as well. The 'bus incident' was also raised in the course of the interviews. Initially, it was only a report of an event which Kremer transformed into an additional complaint against Hegge (even though he was not a witness). The IMG ignored a third fact which was cited in evidence against Hegge, namely, that he had failed to conduct himself in accordance with military standards in Zagreb in that he failed to comply with an warrant officer's order. Investigating such conduct where it involves ignoring the chain of command, is not one of the tasks of the IMG.⁹⁰⁴

The 'bus incident' occurred near Zagreb on 14 May 1995. While on an excursion in the city where it was awaiting permission for departure to Srebrenica, KHO-6 witnessed a traffic accident. A general practitioner who was with Dutchbat, but not part of KHO-6, who was sitting in the front of the bus, provided first aid together with a local neighbourhood nurse. It appeared to involve facial injuries, massive internal bleeding and a collapsed lung. As an experienced surgeon, Hegge should have taken the initiative and should have taken over from this general practitioner. A nurse who was a sergeant major should have provided assistance or first aid to the other injured people. As it happens, an ambulance had already been called and it arrived within ten minutes. Hegge is reported to have said that there would have been little point in providing help on the spot and that it was not very wise to get involved in the case in a strange country. The inspectorate held the view that this argument, founded or unfounded fear, was not enough to justify a failure to help. A captain who was also a doctor, and who had remained seated in the bus, made scornful remarks about the situation but no complaint had been filed in this respect. The IMG deemed this failure to take action and the 'diagnosis at a distance' to be the most reprehensible.⁹⁰⁵

According to Hegge, the 'bus incident' only became relevant after it had been discussed with the IMG in December 1995. It did not have any impact on the KHO-6 team's performance in Srebrenica. For the rest, Hegge viewed the three complaints against him mainly as an attempt to find a scapegoat for what had happened in Srebrenica.⁹⁰⁶

The inspector did not rule on the question as to how one should deal with minimum stock of medical supplies for military units. The minister had been informed by his officials that this was precisely the question the IMG would deal with.⁹⁰⁷ However, upon closer examination the IMG felt

⁹⁰¹ Interview G. Kremer, 13/07/98.

⁹⁰² Stasdef. IMG (Van Ormondt) to the minister and junior minister, 28/11/95, No. IMG 95/27/475.

⁹⁰³ DGP. Military Health Care Inspector, 12/06/96 (H.J.M. Groenhout) to the minister and junior minister, 15/12/95, No. IMG 95/27/515. Highly confidential.

⁹⁰⁴ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

⁹⁰⁵ DGP. Military Health Care Inspector, 12/06/96 (H.J.M. Groenhout) to the minister and junior minister, 15/12/95, No. IMG 95/27/515. Highly confidential.

⁹⁰⁶ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

⁹⁰⁷ DS, S95/061/4841. Acting DAB (Casteleijn) to the minister, copy to the junior minister, CDS and the IMG, 8/12/95, No. D95/558, Confi.

that it was not its duty to do so even though, in view of its instructions, it would nevertheless have been in a position to note, for example, that the relevant regulations were incomplete or unclear. What these regulations should stipulate, was an issue for the *Directeur Militair-Geneseskundig Beleid* (Military Medical Policy Director) and the head of the Ministry of Defence. The establishment and maintenance of 'essential stock' represented a decision of policy which ostensibly had nothing to do with the quality of military health care. The IMG's duty was to assess the quality of medical actions.⁹⁰⁸

The IMG investigation only indicated that Dutchbat had initially assumed it would have a casualty rate of 5%. Because it was impossible to guarantee the removal of patients within 48 hours after their condition had stabilized, a higher casualty rate of 8% was assumed to apply. Due to faltering supplies, the provisions earmarked as 'essential stock' were not enough for lengthy intensive care. At the time KHO-5 based its actions on the assumption that any supplies over and above these 'essential stock' could be freely used for the provision of humanitarian aid to the population. A large proportion of the operational supplies were consumed as a result of the admission of a woman from the hospital in Srebrenica who had an infected uterus, her intensive care, and the refusal on the part of the Bosnian Serbs to allow a Norwegian medical unit into the enclave to transport her to Tuzla.

The IMG wondered to what extent this had been acceptable in view of the halt to the woman's treatment, although it did acknowledge, on the other hand, that one could not stop treatment once it had commenced, as this could result in the patient's death. Responsibility for her treatment lay with the doctor treating her and could not be transferred to the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. The exhaustion of supplies had had a negative impact on the mood prevailing in the Field Dressing Station. As it happens, Hegge did not comment negatively about this. According to the IMG, the friction between the two surgeons could partly be traced back to their incompatible characters.

The decision taken by the battalion leadership and the surgeon responsible not to provide humanitarian aid any longer, was one which the IMG considered to be understandable. It appeared that this decision had been implemented with the necessary degree of flexibility. The IMG also deemed it acceptable to have refused to accept patients from the hospital on 6 July. This decision was justified by the shortages, the danger of casualties amongst the battalion's own personnel and the fact that the patients concerned were already being treated by *Médecins Sans Frontières*. The IMG did not consider the question as to who was entitled to make decisions in this connection, because this had been done by the battalion leadership without consulting the surgeon responsible. The decisions not to tolerate the lengthy use of operating room capacity in the bunker and to permit the further use of essential stock were also held to be acceptable by the IMG.

The IMG was also quite explicit about the failure to treat the woman: it was reprehensible. The situation prevailing at the time could not constitute grounds for not performing a proper medical examination to ascertain the nature of her injuries. There were no other patients at the time and there was ample capacity for an examination. In primitive conditions, even outside the operating room, an experienced surgeon would have been able to install a thorax drain and to determine the extent of the injuries to her abdominal organs within approximately an hour. After this, it would have been possible to make a decision about her further treatment, using makeshift facilities if necessary, or to refrain from this. Owing to the absence of medical data, it was impossible to establish whether such treatment would have saved her life. However, the fact that the woman was still alive many hours later, could have led one to consider performing an operation anyway.

In the absence of corroborating statements by the staff of the Field Dressing Station, it was impossible for the IMG to determine whether Dutchbat personnel had withheld care from patients. This statement pertained in part to the refusal of a medical officer, this referred to Hegge, to provide assistance in and around the compound. The IMG branded this approach 'unprofessional', an attitude that did not reveal any significant involvement in the situation in his capacity as a medical officer. This

⁹⁰⁸ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

assessment thus focussed mainly on the attitude of the doctor concerned. An investigation into a refusal to obey an order was not a matter for the IMG.

Without drawing any conclusion from it, the IMG did not have anything good to say about the preparations of the surgical teams. In the course of preparations for deployment at the former Centre for Peacekeeping Operations, the specific duties of a KHO team had barely been referred to. Only a syllabus containing insufficient information for the Field Dressing Station had been handed out. What the precise duties were in relation to the provision of care to UN soldiers and emergency and other humanitarian aid to the local population was not stated or recorded in a medical plan. As a result, there was insufficient clarity about the medical policy to be pursued on the spot and the facilities required for this purpose. Consecutive surgical teams had acted in accordance with the situation as they had found it, with all the attendant consequences.

Nowhere in this syllabus which was drawn up by the Centre for Peacekeeping Operations in July 1994, was there any reference to UN regulations, and where the subject of humanitarian aid was covered, the relevant documentation was contradictory. For instance, it was stated that the Field Dressing Station had a duty to provide humanitarian aid to the local population in consultation with *Médecins Sans Frontières*. The commander of the Field Dressing Station was responsible for drawing up the programme for the provision of humanitarian aid in consultation with this organization. However, the description of the internal operations of the Field Dressing Station states that the latter could only be used to provide medical care to the residents of the enclave in incidental cases. The Field Dressing Station was only intended for first and second-rank medical care in Dutchbat. The syllabus stated that the prerequisite for this was that the quality of the care provided to the troops was to be identical to what is customary in the Netherlands. This reflected the views held by the Royal Netherlands Army but was barely feasible to achieve in other countries and had not been included in Defence Department policy for this reason.

Similarly, the syllabus failed to cover relations between the captain commander of the Field Dressing Station and the colonel surgeon. The only special duty cited for the surgeon was that he was to act as a mentor for other doctors within Dutchbat. The commander of the Field Dressing Station who was not a medical officer, was responsible for coordinating the performance of medical duties and maintaining contact with the senior commanding officer. Maintaining medical and first aid supplies was both a task for the operating room team, which included a surgeon, and for the distribution team, which included a pharmacist.⁹⁰⁹ The UN regulations governing the supply of medical service goods and humanitarian aid to the local population were thus not covered in the syllabus or the lessons.

In their free time the trainees at the Centre for Peacekeeping Operations could have inspected a field hospital at a far away training ground near Zoutkamp. The members of the KHO-6 team had been recruited from different places and did not know each other. Introductory meetings, discussions about the policy that was to be pursued, and getting used to know each other in training conditions could have had a favourable impact in relation to differences in culture and practice. Although there was contact between the team waiting in Zagreb and the enclave, the situation prevailing on the ground was not explicitly dealt with. The problems associated with delayed convoys were familiar, as was the exhaustion of supplies for the lengthy care of one female patient.

After reaching Potocari in the evening of 4 July following a long bus trip, KHO-6 took over responsibility the following day. The investigations are silent on the question as to why this had to occur so soon in view of the fact that KHO-5 was unable to leave the enclave immediately. On the other hand, everyone was used to a rapid transfer. Hegge did not make an issue of this. Friction arose between the two surgeons immediately in respect of the manner in which leadership was provided and the instruments that were to be used. The people representing the various disciplines within KHO-6 took stock of the potential for the provision of care. They noted that, after setting aside emergency

⁹⁰⁹ NIOD, Coll. Hegge. 'Interne werkwijze verbandplaatspeloton (VN) KHO', published by the Centre for Peacekeeping Operations, 1/07/1994.

stock, there were hardly any supplies left. This led to the recommendation presented to the battalion leadership to halt humanitarian aid. Major Franken acted on this recommendation. The IMG report is silent about the extent of the shortfall of 'essential stock'.

Follow-up to the IMG investigation

To Secretary-General Barth the IMG's report largely confirmed the familiar 'hardly inspiring impression'.⁹¹⁰ Minister Voorhoeve's response to the IMG's findings was one of fury.⁹¹¹ In particular, Voorhoeve was upset by the 'bus incident', which he described as 'scandalous negligence' on the part of several people. Because the incident occurred as early as 14 May, it must already have been known to a large number of people. Voorhoeve wanted to know to whom it had been reported and who was responsible for covering it up. It appeared that the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff only became aware of the incident following the commotion surrounding the *Brandpunt* broadcast. It was assumed that the doctor who had provided help, apparently wished to prevent his colleagues from being discredited. He had also failed to mention it to the IMG and was only willing to confirm it once he was confronted with statements made by other people.

In response to Voorhoeve's question as to who was responsible for the poor preparations, an answer was received from Brigadier General Nicolai, by then the commanding officer of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff following his position as the chief of staff of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, to the effect that it was Lieutenant Colonel Wertheim, the special staff officer of the medical service at the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. However, this was questioned because it bypassed the responsibilities of the commanding officer of the Armed Forces Hospital Service and the next senior commander, the commander of the Medical Command of the Netherlands Armed Forces, as well as the School for Peacekeeping Operations, which was supposed to have received guidelines from the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army for this purpose.

The fact that the order issued by the commander of the Field Dressing Station to a captain of KHO-6 to provide first aid at a bus terminus in Potocari, had been disobeyed, also aroused the Minister's wrath. It finally happened after the order was repeated. However, the matter was subsequently reported to the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff and medical bodies without mentioning any names but it remains unclear as to whether any action was then taken within the Royal Netherlands Army.⁹¹²

The final answer that the Minister received to his question about the provision of aid at the bus terminus in Potocari, was that the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff and the relevant medical organizations were of the opinion that the issue would be taken up by the debriefing team in Assen. As stated, the debriefing process had ended by then and the debriefing team had certainly not taken it up. This exposed one of the weaknesses of the debriefing process. The debriefing officials did not confront people with each other's statements. The doctor involved in the bus terminus incident had been debriefed before the person who reported it, and the doctor was not summoned for a second interview. No one reported this criminal offence in the course of the debriefing process. What also played a role was the order to conduct the debriefing sessions in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible and to have everyone present their story as candidly as possible. In addition, the debriefing team felt that there were insufficient reasons to initiate a criminal investigation.

However, in response to the public disclosures made in *De Volkskrant* and *Brandpunt*, on 18 December the commander of the Field Dressing Station reported that there might have been a failure

⁹¹⁰ Stasdef. Memorandum from SG to the minister and junior minister, copy to CDS, DGP, DJZ, DAB, DV, 18/12/95, unnumbered.

⁹¹¹ Memorandum from the DAB to the minister, 19/12/95, No. D101/677. This memorandum was a response to that of MINDEF to the SG, 18/12/95, No. 41/95.

⁹¹² Stasdef. Memorandum from the DAB to the minister, copy to the junior minister, the CDS, the DGP, the IMG and the DV, 19/12/95, No. D101/677.

to obey an order.⁹¹³ The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee investigated all these cases. In various instances it appeared that no order had been given. The findings of the judicial inquiry were released shortly after the IMG's report was completed.

Naval Captain Hegge had never issued any order which amounted to a prohibition against the provision of aid to civilians. There were two views of another order given by the commander of the Field Dressing Station to prepare a list of blood donors, which was never executed. One view had it that no one insisted on it because the relevant doctor did not believe that it was necessary and two officers, one of whom was not a doctor, had resigned themselves to this view. The other had it that the list had indeed been drawn up after it had been made clear that this had to be done, even though the doctor felt that he did not actually have a duty to do so.

The order issued on 10 July to proceed to the hospital in Srebrenica in order to ascertain what possible aid could be provided to the refugees, which the person concerned had felt was too dangerous, was revoked by Major Franken because shellings were indeed making it too dangerous. A trip to Srebrenica was also not interpreted as an order but as a type of consultation in which the person concerned had indicated that he preferred not to go to Srebrenica because he was not familiar with conditions outside the compound in Potocari. Perhaps it had also been said that it was dangerous at that point in time because shots were being fired.

The doctor who is said to have relieved the person at the first-aid post at the bus terminus, had indeed gone after some hesitation. As a doctor, he believed that he could do more in the compound. He was not aware that he had refused to obey an order and only later understood that the commander of the Field Dressing Station was also his military commanding officer. The concept of an order was alien to this doctor thanks to his lack of military training, which was deficient and had only lasted four weeks. The Navy anaesthetist was definitely at the first-aid post near the bus terminus at 6 o'clock in the morning of 12 or 13 July but had returned to the compound because there was nothing to do. When he was told that no doctor was available at this post, he returned 'spontaneously and immediately'.

The sergeant major carried out a patrol as prescribed for the night. He himself was not aware that he had refused to obey an order after being requested to go on patrol. He had only said that care should be taken when rostering personnel in view of their actual duties in the event that it might be necessary to operate. A soldier of higher rank recalled that the sergeant major initially did not really feel up to it but that the latter had accompanied him on patrol once the object of it had been explained to him. No order had been given. Everything had occurred through proper consultation.⁹¹⁴

The head of the public prosecutor's office in the district of Arnhem came to the conclusion that there had been no refusal to obey an order. While it was true that hesitation had been displayed when the order had been given to prepare a list of blood donors, but this order had been carried out. The same conclusion applied to the sergeant major who is said to have refused to go looking for refugees with medical problems outside the compound. In this case too there had been no refusal to obey an order.⁹¹⁵

⁹¹³ Stasdef. No. 2513. Memorandum from the DAB to the minister, 19/12/95, No. D101/677.

⁹¹⁴ OM Arnhem. PV KMar District Gelderland/Overijssel/Flevoland, No. 01 1996, 08/01/96.

⁹¹⁵ DV. Head of the Public Prosecutor's Office in the District of Arnhem (Van Gend) to the minister of Defence, 03/01/96, No. AH/9000/1001/96/BvdK/AdV.

Chapter 18

Investigation conducted by the Public Health Care Inspectorate

How one should formulate a complaint

After the IMG's report had been completed, Minister Voorhoeve wanted to lodge a complaint with the Medical Disciplinary Tribunal. This did not happen. In the course of discussions held with the Military Health Care Inspectorate and the Deputy Secretary-General H.H. Hulshof, the question was raised as to whether it might not be better to pass on this matter to *Staatstoezicht* (Government Supervisory Authority). Voorhoeve's advisers wondered if it would be politically expedient for the Minister to drag his own staff before a disciplinary tribunal, because this could result in negative publicity for the Ministry of Defence. Indeed, apart from the Minister of Defence, the Government Supervisory Authority was also entitled to initiate proceedings before a disciplinary tribunal.⁹¹⁶

Formulating a complaint was inevitably fraught with difficulties. Because the *Wet Beroepen Individuele Gezondheidszorg* (*Wet BIG*, Individual Health Care Professions Act) had not yet come into force, any case against the sergeant major would not have been covered by the medical disciplinary regulations. It would not be possible to use the IMG report as evidence in support of a decision to institute criminal proceedings. The persons concerned had not been informed beforehand that the statements they were to make, could be used in criminal proceedings. A criminal investigation could only be made contingent to the findings of a disciplinary assessment of the medical actions in question. An additional problem in relation to medical disciplinary regulations lay in the fact that a military order was at issue. Moreover, the territorial operation of medical disciplinary regulations raised the question as to whether a complaint pertaining to Bosnia would be admissible. That would first need to be investigated.⁹¹⁷

On 18 December the IMG, Air Commodore H.J.M. Groenhout, consulted the *Hoofdinspecteur voor de Preventieve en Curatieve zorg* (Chief Inspector for Preventative and Curative Care) at the *Staatstoezicht op de Volksgezondheid* (State Supervisory Authority for Public Health), G.H.A. Siemons, about the report he had published. The purpose of this discussion was to establish whether a medical disciplinary tribunal was competent to hand down a ruling. Following internal deliberations in the Public Health Department and consultations with the government attorney, it was concluded that this was certainly the case in relation to the 'bus incident'.⁹¹⁸

On 19 December Minister Voorhoeve then phoned his colleague, E. Borst, the Minister of Public Health, in order to find out whether the *Inspectie voor de Volksgezondheid* (Public Health Care Inspectorate) wished to pursue the complaint. Siemons had already informed Minister Borst accordingly.⁹¹⁹

Siemons concluded that the IMG report provided grounds for further investigation and assessment by disciplinary tribunal. According to the government attorney, an evaluation was not impossible in itself, because the operation of the *Medische Tuchtwet* (Medical Discipline Act) was not territorially limited. Moreover, under criminal law a court of law was entitled to judge the actions of any Dutch citizen irrespective of the context or geographical area within which they occurred. There were no grounds to assume that this was different in the case of disciplinary procedure. However, if a court

⁹¹⁶ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

⁹¹⁷ DEF Stasdef aftermath, medical affairs, genocide. Memorandum from the IMG to the minister through the DGP and SG, 18/12/95, unnumbered.

⁹¹⁸ IMG. Memorandum from the IMG on behalf of the minister of Defence through the DGP and SG, 19/12/95, unnumbered.

⁹¹⁹ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

case were to ensue, the jurisdiction of a disciplinary tribunal would be challenged by way of a defence. The relevant disciplinary tribunal would only be able to rule on this in the case itself. The government attorney saw no reason in itself to refrain from filing a complaint because there was a chance that jurisdiction would be denied. The competence of the Chief Inspector to lodge a complaint was beyond dispute. The Minister of Defence could also file a complaint himself but this could give rise to debate.⁹²⁰

By transferring the investigation to the State Supervisory Authority for Public Health, one was indeed subsequently left with some impression that Minister Voorhoeve wished to rid himself of the case but this did not coincide with the view held within the department. It was Voorhoeve's precise intention to tackle this matter with gusto, according to an IMG investigating officer.⁹²¹

Chief Inspector Siemons requested a number of documents in order to draw up a disciplinary complaint, and he asked whether certain issues had been committed to paper. Amongst other things, this pertained to the recommendation made to the battalion leadership to halt humanitarian aid in July, and possible records of the examination of the Muslim woman. This was not the case. Records of interviews previously conducted by the IMG were not handed over, because they were handwritten notes which the IMG held were not to be used by other parties. The available documents were forwarded to the office of the government attorney.⁹²²

In mid-January 1996 Siemons reported that he had studied the IMG's report and other information. He deemed it necessary to conduct a further examination of the facts before he would be able to draw a conclusion as to whether it was advisable to file a complaint against one or more individuals with the medical disciplinary tribunal. Siemons therefore intended to interview a number of people. Before doing so, he preferred to let them familiarize themselves with the IMG's report.⁹²³ Minister Voorhoeve did not wish to consent to this. He did not want to go further than allow them to peruse the relevant passages. He wanted restraint to be exercised when making the report or any part of it available with a mind to possible leaks, so as to prevent unnecessary harm to people. However, should Siemons file a disciplinary complaint, Voorhoeve had no objections to submitting the report to the medical tribunal.⁹²⁴

A complaint of this nature would be unprecedented. After Siemons consulted the chairperson of the *Centraal Medisch Tuchtcollege* (Central Medical Disciplinary Tribunal), it was agreed that the regional disciplinary tribunal in Amsterdam could consider the matter at a later stage.⁹²⁵

Using the findings of the previous investigation and the names and addresses provided by the IMG, the State Advisory Authority commenced its work. All was quiet in relation to the investigation for some time after this. In February 1996 the specialists in the Armed Forces Hospital Service were somewhat dissatisfied with the fact that the matter had been handed over to the Health Care Inspector, its new commander, Air Force Colonel A.J. van Leusden, revealed. The medical specialists wondered why the IMG had done this, and inquired about the differences in the jurisdiction of the two inspectorates. They also asked what the current status of the matter was.⁹²⁶ Minister Voorhoeve was

⁹²⁰ IMG files. The chief inspector for Preventative and Curative Care to the minister of Health, Welfare and Sport, 19/12/95, reference: PCG/H.

⁹²¹ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

⁹²² IMG. Fax from G.H.A. Siemons to Groenhout, 21/12/95 and from IMG to G.R.J. de Groot *Bureau Landsadvocaat* (Office of the Government Attorney), 22/12/95, No. IMG 95/27/537. The Health Care Inspector had also wanted to know the name of the general civilian surgeon who had acted as a consultant for the IMG in relation to general surgical principles for the examination of a patient. The IMG denied this request.

⁹²³ IMG. The chief inspector for Preventative and Curative Care, 12/06/96 to the minister of Defence, 11/01/96, No. PCG/H 9627, Highly Confidential.

⁹²⁴ IMG. Minister of Defence to the Chief Inspector for Preventative and Curative Health Care, 12/06/96, 16/01/96, No. IMG 96/27/015, Confidential.

⁹²⁵ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

⁹²⁶ IMG. Telephone record produced by an IMG staff assistant of a conversation with Van Leusden (CMH), 23/02/00.

asking the same question. By this time it was already May 1996. Voorhoeve wanted to know what development could be expected on the part of the Public Health Care Inspectorate.⁹²⁷

The inspectorate was busy drawing up a report, which was to be discussed with the government attorney on 22 May. As it happens, its preliminary conclusions were not quite as incisive as those of the IMG. However, it was clear that its assessment would be that medical performance had been below par. The question whether it must be deemed to be in the general interest to file a disciplinary complaint, would only be considered once the conclusions had been finalized and after a discussion with the people concerned.⁹²⁸ The IMG inspector was under the impression that the State Supervisory Authority was involved in considerable debate about the nature of the conclusions, and that in this connection the question was being weighed up as to whether they constituted grounds for a disciplinary procedure.⁹²⁹

The State Supervisory Authority completed the report of its investigation on 12 June 1996. This report stated that the purpose of the investigation was to determine whether members of the Armed Forces Hospital Service had failed to provide medical care to civilian casualties and whether action needed to be taken against any individuals. The inspectorate had interviewed 13 people who had been involved. The question of 'essential stock' and medical performance during the fall of Srebrenica had been reconsidered in the process. Of all the investigations that were conducted, this one produced the most far-ranging but also the most fragmented report. It should be noted that, like the military inspector, the chief Inspector of the State Supervisory Authority deemed the behaviour of the relevant individuals involved in the bus incident near Zagreb to be more reprehensible than the actions of those in relation to the seriously wounded Muslim woman.⁹³⁰

What follows is a reconstruction of events based on the report of the investigation drawn up by the Public Health Care Inspector.

The day after its arrival in the enclave, the KHO-6 team started to take stock of available medical supplies. The former team, KHO-5, was not involved in this. Impeded by VRS shellings, it took two to three days to complete the stocktaking. Minimal supplies were still available, enough to care for 20 patients who would need to be moved out within 24 hours. Intensive care treatment was no longer possible due to a lack of drip kits, plasma-replacement facilities and antibiotics. Problems caused the supply of blood to stall and artificial respiration was no longer possible. However there was enough drip fluid available and Dutchbat possessed extensive supplies of dressings. It was still possible to make about another 12 X-rays. Hegge knew that there had been a halt in supplies and had himself asked what items he should smuggle into Potocari.

However, the surgeon who had been relieved, Kremer, had the idea that there was still sufficient potential to provide humanitarian aid. It was said that the stocktaking had not been accurate enough due to the considerable pressure of time under which stocktaking occurred. Actual supplies were said to exceed this, although one had to concede that there were shortages and that a great deal of scarce diesel was required to sterilize the instruments.⁹³¹

The investigation of the failure to treat the Muslim woman

Under the impression that the wounded Muslim woman was at the gate of the compound on 10 July 1995, two orderlies were ordered to fetch her.⁹³² However, they did not find any woman there. On their

⁹²⁷ IMG. Memorandum from the minister to the DGP through SG, 10/05/96, No. 589.

⁹²⁸ IMG. Memorandum from the IMG to the minister, 14 /05/96, No. IMG 96/27/168.

⁹²⁹ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

⁹³⁰ DJZ No. 9512/660. Memorandum from the secretary-general to the Commander in Chief of the Dutch Navy, copy to the DGP, IMG and DJZ, 27/12/95, No. 24006 1995.

⁹³¹ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 17, p. 20 and pp. 27-28.

⁹³² IMG. The persons in question were the national servicemen, K. Platje and B.A. Gerretsen. IMG to the chief inspector for Preventative and Curative Health Care, 12 /06/96, 11/01/96, No. IMG 96/95/27/010.

own initiative these orderlies left the compound and, directed by a lieutenant, made their way along the safe route at the back which had been opened for the refugees. They found the wounded woman on a homemade stretcher of branches and a blanket about one and a half to two kilometres from the compound. Elsewhere it is mentioned that she was found at the third bus shed at the bus terminus about 500 metres from the compound.⁹³³

A Dutchbat soldier was with the woman, as was her husband. The orderlies got the impression that the woman had suffered injuries to her abdomen and legs caused by shrapnel. They returned within 15 to 30 minutes for the most part at double-quick pace with the woman on the stretcher. Her husband remained behind. One of the orderlies subsequently felt that he had risked his life, because he sensed that he had been a target. On the way out two mortars were fired at them and bullets hit close by on their return. There was no discussion about admitting the woman to the compound. The situation prevailing in the Field Dressing Station was confusing, because the bunker alert had been sounded. It was not exactly clear who took care of the woman.⁹³⁴

Apparently, no one was concerned about the orderlies' prolonged absence. The inspectorate attempted to ascertain who had given the order to collect the wounded woman and concluded that it was the acting commander of the Field Dressing Station. According to the Dutchbat logbook, the battalion staff were aware of this and radio reports even refer to the provision of guidance.⁹³⁵

The woman was bleeding on all sides, 'The stretcher was "full",' and she was not bandaged. She was placed in a quiet corner of the plant and not in the bunker, because it had been reserved for wounded soldiers.⁹³⁶

Because Hegge declined to treat the woman, the State Supervisory Authority focussed its investigation on her condition, the manner in which she was examined and the reasons for refusing her treatment. Witnesses were not unanimous in describing what the examination entailed and what the precise reason was for declining to treat the woman. Hegge is said to have failed to examine her thoroughly. Little could be done, because she was going to die anyway, some people felt.⁹³⁷ Kremer, who also examined the woman, was of the opinion that she was not close to death. One could not conclude from her wounds, bullet holes in her thorax, abdomen and upper thigh, that she was going to die immediately. However, she would if she had to wait too long. Kremer felt that the woman should receive assistance. A thorax drain and a minor laparotomy (opening of the abdominal cavity) would in themselves be of help. One would not be able to determine the gravity of her wounds without examining the inside of her abdominal cavity. Kremer offered to operate on the woman himself, because he was of the opinion that the woman could be saved with a minimum of resources. According to him, Hegge would not permit this and felt that any supplies that were then available, should be kept for those Dutchbat personnel still manning the observation posts. Kremer maintains that Karremans supported Hegge: the supplies that were still available needed to be reserved for Dutchbat. Kremer submitted to Hegge as the person who bore ultimate medical responsibility. However, the precise nature of the communication between the two surgeons in relation to the examination and treatment of the woman was not clarified during the investigation.

In December 1995 the commander of the Field Dressing Station had already stated there that Hegge had seen the woman immediately after her arrival but believed that there would not be any point in treating her. Kremer had a different view of the matter, after which a discussion between the two surgeons is said to have ensued as to whether or not to operate on the woman. In his capacity as the

⁹³³ Report of the IMG, p. 8.

⁹³⁴ Report of the Health Care Inspector, 12/06/96, pp. 29-30.

⁹³⁵ The Inspectorate's report is not clear about the precise time. Some people stated that it was somewhere between 4 pm and 5 pm, the orderlies that it was about 8 pm. The Dutchbat logbook contains the following report at 8.01 pm: 'seriously wounded woman, guide for route, stretcher being arranged'. It noted at 8.12 pm that the stretcher team was on its way. (SMG, 1004/61. Dutchbat Operations Room Monthly Records).

⁹³⁶ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 30.

⁹³⁷ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 32.

person ultimately responsible, Hegge decided against an operation, because subsequent treatment would have required excessive medication drawing on medical supplies that were already limited.⁹³⁸

According to Hegge, his discussion with Kremer had been confined to several comments he had made after Kremer had expressed the view that an operation should be performed on the patient. Kremer had not replied to Hegge's countering questions as to the chance of the time-consuming operation achieving subsequent results and what demands this would make on the availability of the operating room and intensive care facilities.⁹³⁹ Hegge maintains that he had then said the following to Kremer: 'so you want to operate? Go ahead. Those are the rules.' After this, Kremer is said to have walked away without replying. Based on the approach that Kremer had adopted, Hegge believed that he did not wish to accept the consequences yet he had sought publicity.⁹⁴⁰ The IMG inspector, Kloos, also held the view that Kremer's attitude was not entirely clear. He too had asked Kremer why he had not done anything then. It was precisely because Kremer was so involved and felt that something had to be done, that he could have intervened himself and did not need to submit to Hegge's authority, the inspector felt.⁹⁴¹ Captain De Bruijn, another person who was involved, also asked himself years later why Kremer had not acted himself.⁹⁴²

When asked about this, Kremer said that things simply did not work that way once you had handed over responsibility. Hegge simply did not want the operation to be done. Kremer was also unable to operate on his own without an anaesthetist. As it happens, he had not discussed the matter with the anaesthetist, Zwarts, nor had he asked the latter to help him. He had assumed that he would side with Hegge. Kremer also said that at the time he was not aware of any agreement made between Hegge and Franken to limit the provision of humanitarian aid. Nevertheless, in his view a thorax drain should have been inserted in the woman at the least in order to remove the fluid that had accumulated in her chest cavity, and there was no shortage of thorax drains. There were still 12 in stock.⁹⁴³

Hegge told the Health Care Inspectorate that he had examined the woman in the normal manner. He had already been informed as to what her condition was and he merely had to verify the diagnosis. She could not be operated on due to a combination of shock and the nature of her wounds. In the prevailing circumstances her injuries were of such a nature that she would make such demands on the operating room and surgery time – with a probable unfavourable prognosis – that she fell in the category, not treatable. In addition, the shortage of supplies and the impossibility of providing intensive care treatment also played a role. These considerations were of a medical nature. A youth with a mortar wound and another small boy with a large abscess on his lower leg had been helped earlier. Firing had also been going on then. The difference was that their prognosis was favourable and their treatment did not draw on supplies.⁹⁴⁴

A discussion also arose in relation to the administration of morphine. The woman had been kept apart and Hegge had instructed a nurse to tend to her and to fight the pain with morphine as required. A nurse experienced in terminal care was ordered to sit next to the woman in the plant.⁹⁴⁵ Because there was no light, candles were placed next to her. Other individuals stated that the administration of morphine was initially denied and was only permitted after an express request to this effect by a nurse in the knowledge that she could suffer a respiratory collapse as a result. Morphine was administered to her for two hours. She was expected to die within two hours. After two hours she received more morphine. The woman's condition did not deteriorate after the morphine was

⁹³⁸ Public Prosecutor's Department, Arnhem, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, District GOF, Judicial Service, 18/12/95, No. P. 77/95.

⁹³⁹ IMG. 'situatierapport Potocari 10-07-1995' [Drawn up by KT'ZAR Hegge].

⁹⁴⁰ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 02/02/00.

⁹⁴¹ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

⁹⁴² Interview M.J.L. de Bruijn, 09/01/02.

⁹⁴³ Interview G.D. Kremer, 17/01/02.

⁹⁴⁴ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, pp. 32-35.

⁹⁴⁵ IMG. The nurses who remained with the woman were F.A. Elbers and R.E. Ros. The IMG to the chief inspector for Preventative and Curative Health Care, 12/06/96, 11/01/96, No. IMG 96/95/27/010.

administered, and remained reasonably stable. The morphine calmed her down and made it possible to speak to her. Hegge saw her once again during this period. He remained of the opinion that the woman did not have a chance. She was in a stable but poor condition. Approximately two hours later, once the bunker alert had passed, an armoured vehicle took her to Srebrenica.⁹⁴⁶

Kremer became angry when he heard that the woman had been transferred to Srebrenica, because he was familiar with the abilities of the caregivers there: 'Her removal would definitely mean her death'.⁹⁴⁷

There were different opinions about who had given the order to have the woman taken to Srebrenica. What is known, is that the Commander of the Dutchbat Medical Platoon, Captain De Bruijn, issued the order after Franken had consented to this. De Bruijn had consulted Hegge about the question as to whether anything could be done for the woman and if it was not possible to operate on her. When Hegge said that no operation was to be performed, De Bruijn wanted to take her to Srebrenica to give her another chance. He asked Hegge if she would survive being transported. Hegge had no objections to this. According to him, this was entirely a humanitarian consideration designed to allow the woman to die in her own surroundings. The woman was taken away contrary to the rules, because shots were being fired.⁹⁴⁸ An ambulance APC left in the night of 10 to 11 July and returned to the compound at 1.23 am.⁹⁴⁹

The orderly who was charged with the transfer of the woman to *Médecins Sans Frontières*, and who was not interviewed by the inspectorate, made the following statement about this:

A stretcher mounted on an undercarriage was pushed in my direction. On it lay a young woman of about 21 years of age. She was bleeding heavily and the stretcher was covered with blood. Several KHO nurses were with her and Major Ros also stood there. People were speaking and they were a bit giggly, and no one was allowed to do anything for this wounded person: 'she may not be treated here. She has to go to *Médecins Sans Frontières*'. I felt her pulse. She was suffering severe shock and was semi-conscious. She had had heavy painkillers. I asked again, 'Where is she bleeding?' And the reply was, 'Where isn't she?' I also asked, 'shouldn't you have at least put her on a drip?' However, the KHO-6 surgeon was mentioned as the man who had decided that that should not be done. I saw from the others' response that they did not agree with this. I loaded her into the APC, closed the door and drove a little way outside. There I made a number of attempts to insert a drip in her, in both her left and right arm, and in her right ankle. However, she had lost so much blood that I could no longer find a vein. I looked under her clothes to see what was wrong. Her abdomen and legs were covered with dozens of shrapnel wounds. She had bled a great deal and was lying in a pool of blood from her head to her toes. I thought: 'Do not try to do any more smart things and proceed as quickly as possible to *Médecins Sans Frontières*'.⁹⁵⁰

⁹⁴⁶ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, pp 37-39.

⁹⁴⁷ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, pp. 35-36.

⁹⁴⁸ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, pp 39-40.

⁹⁴⁹ SMG, 1004/61. Dutchbat Operations Room Monthly Records.

⁹⁵⁰ Interview H.M.W. Geurts, 10/05/99.

Chapter 19

Conclusions and consequences of the investigations

Conclusions

The two investigations that were performed, did not differ all that much from each other, albeit that the report of the one conducted by the Public Health Care Inspectorate was more detailed than that of the IMG. For the first investigation the people involved were interviewed more extensively and more thorough research was conducted by exercising greater control over the coherence of the investigation.⁹⁵¹ It also took considerably more time to do.

Nevertheless, the conclusions drawn by the Military Medical Inspectors were substantially tougher than those of the Health Care Inspectorate. Whereas the State Supervisory Authority concluded that there had been a failure to provide a prudent level of care, the military inspector ruled that the medical performance of the KHO-6 surgeon should be deemed to be ‘grossly negligent’, and while the State Supervisory Authority came to the conclusion that three members of the KHO-6 team ‘had felt that they did not need to provide assistance on flawed grounds’ when the road accident occurred in the vicinity of Zagreb, the IMG held that they ‘had acted in a manner that was highly reprehensible and undermined confidence contrary to disciplinary procedure’. The Public Health Care Inspectorate did not draw a separate conclusion in relation to Naval Captain Hegge. The IMG deemed his attitude to be ‘unprofessional’ in several respects. For the rest, it did not appear to the IMG that civilian patients had been denied medical care and/or nursing.

Ruling on the policy in respect of ‘essential stock’, the Public Health Care Inspectorate held that it had been pursued in accordance with UN guidelines. However, in view of the fact that it was impossible to remove patients from the enclave promptly, ‘substantial stock’ of medical supplies needed to be maintained. It remained possible to provide assistance to civilian casualties in dire emergencies and such aid was also provided in a number of cases. The fact that the Bosnian Serbs were able to isolate the Srebrenica enclave at will and could also suspend the supply of medical provisions and diesel, played a significant role in the development of the problems noted by the Health Care Inspectorate. Owing to the growing risk of casualties amongst the unit’s own troops, it was understandable that priority had been accorded to ensuring the availability of medical care for its own personnel.⁹⁵²

The two KHO teams did not have different opinions about this policy and the battalion leadership supported it. However, in practice they did have different interpretations as was manifested in the case of the wounded woman. This was also evident when the woman was fetched so far outside the compound. To the State Supervisory Authority the question was whether this could be accommodated by applicable policy. However, once the wounded woman arrived at the compound, there was a duty to help her based on the rules governing medical ethics.⁹⁵³

Another matter in respect of which the State Supervisory Authority felt that less than appropriate action had been taken even though it seemed that this had occurred pursuant to agreed medical policy, was Major Franken’s refusal to accept patients referred to him by fax by the hospital in Srebrenica without consulting the medical staff responsible.⁹⁵⁴ As it happens, the State Supervisory Authority did not question Karremans and Franken about this.

⁹⁵¹ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

⁹⁵² Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 52.

⁹⁵³ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 48.

⁹⁵⁴ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 48.

With regard to Hegge's examination, the inspectorate concluded that it had been too cursory. At the time there was no need to conduct examinations based on the rules of triage⁹⁵⁵ because there were no other wounded individuals. There was adequate time and manpower available to obtain a more reliable prognosis for the woman using simple means. Her blood pressure could have been measured and her pulse taken. A simple laboratory examination would have yielded an overall view of the amount of blood that she had lost. The other surgeon or the anaesthetist could have been consulted. The decision to deny her medical care had been premature. As it happens, Hegge did briefly consult the anaesthetist, Zwarts. In his view, drawing on 'essential stock' did not play a role. He agreed that there would be no point in providing treatment. It would have been impossible to provide the woman with the best possible treatment. According to Zwarts, poor communication played a dominant role.⁹⁵⁶

The State Supervisory Authority deemed it reasonable to assume that the stressful circumstances of the time had an impact on the haste with which this decision had been made. The inspectorate found that there were insufficient grounds to sustain a complaint before a medical disciplinary tribunal. The team's internal division was reflected in its contradictory reasons for transferring her to Srebrenica in dangerous conditions in the middle of the night.⁹⁵⁷ Apart from the nature of her wounds and the shock the woman was suffering, the situation which Hegge experienced as dangerous and threatening, also played a role. Hegge's perception of the prevailing situation is said to have had a dominant impact, which saw him take into account that he might be required to provide aid to Dutch troops at any time.⁹⁵⁸ What was not mentioned in this respect was that Private Van Renssen had died while being treated by KHO-6 on 8 July. Now the team was again facing the prospect that casualties might fall amongst its own troops.

The State Supervisory Authority also concluded that preparations for the deployment of KHO-6 had not been optimum. Its members had been recruited from the three branches of the Armed Forces. Military personnel of varying backgrounds were brought together in a single team. There were also differences in their professional and operational experience in relation to deployment. Several nurses had held an administrative position for years and had insufficient practical experience. The team was poorly prepared for its actual duties in the enclave. It was remarkable that little or no time had been devoted to team development. Nothing had been said about the provision of humanitarian aid to the local population and most members were not familiar with UN guidelines. Due to the major differences in their background, experience and the information they had at their disposal, the members of the team had varying expectations of their duties in the Field Dressing Station. Not everyone had realized that medical and military responsibilities could produce conflicting interests. No attention had been devoted to this problem during the preparations for their deployment. A military doctor could see himself placed in a situation with conflicting interests: the interests of a civilian in a dire emergency and those relating to his duty of care within his own military organization in the sense of providing care to soldiers where necessary, and his responsibility in so far as it related to the creation and maintenance of the medical prerequisites for the performance of Dutchbat's mission. The UN guidelines did not offer a solution for this dilemma. In practice, one was required to make one's own choices, for which one could subsequently be held accountable.⁹⁵⁹

The consequences of the investigations

Informing Parliament about the findings of the investigation conducted by the Public Health Care Inspectorate was a task for the Minister of Defence. A nameless version of the inspectorate's report

⁹⁵⁵ The inspectorate's report defines triage as 'selection and ordering, for example of casualties in a disaster or a war based on the nature and gravity of their wounds' (p.49).

⁹⁵⁶ Interview S.J. Zwarts, 22/02/00.

⁹⁵⁷ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, pp. 49-50.

⁹⁵⁸ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 35.

⁹⁵⁹ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12 /06/96, p. 43.

was released for public consumption. Chief Inspector Siemons provided an explanation in *Brandpunt*. This was expected to generate a positive tenor, as explained to Voorhoeve by his officials. To be sure a number of less fortunate matters were covered but the medical teams had done much for the civilian population.⁹⁶⁰ However, the outcome was different. In particular, the harsh comments that Siemons uttered about the military doctors, were broadcast. However, his remark that ‘Humanitarian aid was provided on a large scale, also during the shellings’, which had been recorded on tape twice, was not broadcast contrary to what Siemons had agreed with *Brandpunt*.⁹⁶¹

On 14 June Minister Voorhoeve presented the findings of the investigation to Parliament. Voorhoeve shared Siemons’ conclusion that there were insufficient grounds to file a complaint with the Medical Disciplinary Tribunal. In addition, Voorhoeve pointed out that preparations for medical units had since been radically changed. Special attention was devoted to dealing with medical aid in situations of war and its ethical aspects in a medical context. Attention was also devoted to the hierarchical position of medical teams in the military command structure, albeit without specifying what this was. Duties of medical officers were primarily within their military unit. Nevertheless, they had a duty to act in accordance with their professional oath. The UN guidelines offered no means of resolving this dilemma. ‘They only reflect it,’ Voorhoeve stated.⁹⁶²

Virtually all attention was directed towards the assessment of the individual actions of two doctors. The underlying question as to whether one was justified to maintain medical supplies solely for the use of one’s own unit, was not referred to in the letter addressed to Parliament. Incidentally, the Public Health Care Inspectorate had stated in its report that, owing to the increasing chance that the unit’s own troops would suffer casualties, priority had been given to ensuring the availability of medical care for its own personnel for understandable reasons.⁹⁶³ Unlike the *Brandpunt* programme covering the Public Health Care Inspector’s report, the press hardly devoted any attention to the inspectorate’s report and Voorhoeve’s letter to Parliament following the upheaval six months earlier.⁹⁶⁴

Accountability remained a thorny issue in many respects, even after Parliament had been informed. The Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Navy, Vice Admiral L. Kroon, pointed out that those involved should have understood from the relevant newspaper reports that an investigation had been launched and those around them could have deduced who was its subject. In view of the uncompromising conclusions drawn by the IMG, Vice Admiral Kroon also expressed his concern about the manner in which the IMG had conducted its investigation. Any investigation that had implications for one’s legal position in relation to criminal law and medical disciplinary regulations, needed to be conducted with the necessary procedural guarantees in place and, according to him, this had not occurred adequately in this case. The purpose and status of the committee which performed the investigation for the IMG, had not been fully clarified. The right to hear and be heard had not been respected and the relevant documents had not been presented for inspection. Statements had not been committed to paper and had not been open for perusal. Initially, those involved had not been given the opportunity to seek legal assistance. Similarly, they had not been presented with the opportunity to have the conclusions of the inspectorate’s surgical consultant submitted for a counter-appraisal in the surgical field. The navy personnel who found themselves in the dock, perceived the investigation to be exceptionally unfair. When they were first interviewed by the inspector himself, Air Commodore Groenhout,⁹⁶⁵ only those passages relating to them, which had been taken from a report that had apparently already been completed, were read to them. The surgeon and the assistant doctor who were at the centre of attention, were interviewed on 18 and 19 December, while the draft report had already been presented to the minister on 15 December, albeit on the understanding that some amendments

⁹⁶⁰ BSG. Memorandum from the DGP (Bunnik) to the minister, 13/06/95, unnumbered. BSG.

⁹⁶¹ IMG. Record of telephone conversation between Siemons and Kloos, 16/06/96.

⁹⁶² TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 161 (14/06/96).

⁹⁶³ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 52.

⁹⁶⁴ See *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*, 14 /06/96, 4.28 pm, *De Stem* published the *ANP* report on 15/06/96.

⁹⁶⁵ Groenhout was already dead at the time the NIOD conducted its research.

might be required once those involved had been informed of its contents, even though it was not anticipated that this would have any effect on its conclusions. However, according to Admiral Kroon, new facts were raised in that interview, which were 'therefore not' included in the report.⁹⁶⁶

It was also remarkable that in addition to the IMG Groenhout, Siemons, the Public Health Care Inspector, was present at the final discussion of the report with Hegge. One could conclude from this that neither the IMG investigation nor the later one performed by the State Supervisory Authority were conducted independently of each other and that the Public Health Care Inspector was not impartial when he commenced his investigation, a conclusion which the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Navy and Hegge did not come to, as it happens. Siemons had asked the IMG whether the latter had any objections to his presence, so that he could hear both sides of the case before investigating the facts himself. Any barrier separating the two investigations was also breached in that the IMG's full report was sent to Siemons at his request.⁹⁶⁷

Air Commodore Groenhout, the IMG, who felt rather under attack by the Navy,⁹⁶⁸ defended himself by saying that whatever had been published in the press, was not covered by his investigation. In response to the assertion that the investigation was not based on applicable regulations, one of those involved had maintained this, Groenhout argued that it was his duty to assess the quality of medical performance on the part of Defence Department personnel. The IMG had the power to decide to report on this to the minister and the chief inspector for Public Health Care. This had been done in view of the gravity of the matter. Ultimately, the decision to investigate the matter in relation to disciplinary procedures or criminal law would only be taken after this. It was not customary to receive support from advisers at this stage. During interviews held before the completion of the report, those concerned were questioned and presented with facts and circumstances drawn from previous witnesses' testimony.⁹⁶⁹

In his explanation to the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Navy, Secretary-General Barth stated that, together with S. Ybema, the Director of Legal Affairs, W. Bunnik, the Director General of Personnel, and the Military Health Care Inspector, he had pondered how to ensure that the alleged perpetration of reprehensible acts were investigated as carefully as possible. A decision had been taken precisely against an approach involving aspects of disciplinary procedure and criminal law. With the minister's approval it was initially decided that the IMG would conduct an investigation adopting the same approach as that of the State Supervisory Authority. This meant that those involved were presented with statements or documents which they could respond to during an interview with the IMG. Statements did not have to be committed to paper but were incorporated into the report. Formal requirements such as those stipulated in procedural law, only applied in the case of medical disciplinary regulations. It was permissible to use the IMG report in a case heard by a disciplinary tribunal but not in criminal proceedings.⁹⁷⁰ The navy had presented objections against the fact that the IMG report, which had been classified as highly confidential, had been publicly disclosed.⁹⁷¹

Following in the footsteps of the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Navy, Hegge's legal adviser was also critical of the manner in which the IMG's report had been produced. It had only been stated beforehand that this investigation was being conducted by order of the Minister of Defence and that it would cover the performance of the KHO teams. It subsequently appeared that the investigation had focussed on the medical and ethical aspects of the actions of two medical officers. Inspector Groenhout had objected to a written response and the legal adviser was of the opinion that

⁹⁶⁶ DJZ. BDZ to SG, 20/12/95, No. BDZ/287/95. The relevant newspaper articles were published in *NRC Handelsblad* and *Gelderse Courant* on 7/12/95.

⁹⁶⁷ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

⁹⁶⁸ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

⁹⁶⁹ DJZ. Memorandum from the IMG to the SG through DGP, 21/12/95, unnumbered.

⁹⁷⁰ DJZ No. 9512/660. Memorandum from the secretary-general to the Commander-in-Chief RNLN, copy to the DGP, IMG and DJZ, 27/12/95, No. 24006/95. This memorandum was based on notes made by the DGP on 21/12/95.

⁹⁷¹ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

this was due to the fact that the minister had presented the findings of the investigation to Parliament on the same day (19 December 1995).⁹⁷² According to Groenhout, Hegge's view of the investigation was also presented to the Secretary-General on 19 December.⁹⁷³

Although the minister had been informed when the IMG report was released on 15 December, that it was possible that it might be amended, this did not happen. According to the legal adviser, the report did not do justice to the situation and the difficult circumstances, more so because no clear instructions were provided: 'An apparent lack of understanding and experience on the part of the Ministry of Defence in these types of situations was to blame for the fact that the military personnel who were deployed, were sent into war or dangerous situations without adequate preparation'. This was exacerbated by the fact that Hegge, who had experienced such deployment before, had requested clear guidelines. Hegge had held Dutchbat's interests paramount and had sought to ensure their medical care before anything else.⁹⁷⁴

The report that massive air strikes would be launched and that there was a chance that the VRS would fire on Dutch positions as a reprisal for these air strikes, was not stated as a consideration in the IMG's report. Similarly, Hegge could not agree with the IMG's medical assessment. According to him, an incision in the abdominal wall would not shed any light on the nature of any internal injuries and it would have been impossible to conduct another examination on the compound for the purpose of making a diagnosis.⁹⁷⁵

On the other hand, Minister Voorhoeve described the Public Health Care Inspectorate's report as 'thorough and extensive'. He agreed with the report's conclusions and concurred with the conclusion that the medical performance of the surgeon and the doctor assisting him had been deficient.⁹⁷⁶

Bunnink, the Director-General of Personnel also felt that that the report was beyond reproach. The inspectorate had made due allowance for the circumstances in which these actions had occurred.⁹⁷⁷ However, the Ministry of Defence had expressed internal criticism in this respect. The conclusions were cursory precisely in respect of an essential matter such as that of conditions of war. However, the report was there. At the Public Health Care Inspectorate's request, the draft had been discussed with Groenhout, Bunnink, the director general of Personnel, and the Inspector of the Navy Medical Service, Naval Captain E.H.D. Romswinkel.⁹⁷⁸

Again the question was raised as to what needed to be done now. The State Supervisory Authority recommended that no complaint be filed with the Medical Disciplinary Tribunal. In order to do so, the interests of the public health needed to be at stake with the chance of a recurrence. While it was true that the Minister of Defence was entitled to lodge a complaint, its feasibility was a different question. The inspector, the legal adviser to the inspectorate and the state attorney consulted each other about this. The hurdle to be taken remained the question whether medical disciplinary regulations applied in another country. In the meantime those concerned believed that it did but the defence would contest this. In addition, the experts were of the opinion that, based on the inspectorate's findings, it was doubtful whether anyone would be held to be liable, if this was the intention. Bunnink, the Director-General of Personnel, also advised against proceedings before a disciplinary tribunal, more importantly because such a case would make it impossible to close the 'srebrenica file' for a long period of time.⁹⁷⁹

When action had already been considered following the release of the IMG report, the Minister of Defence had contemplated suspension but had decided against this. Given the findings of a report which he felt was more lenient, one could not again opt for a suspension, more so because the State

⁹⁷² IMG 96/95/27/059. Letter from Caron & Stevens (M.H.F. van Buuren) to H.J.M. Groenhout, 2/12/96.

⁹⁷³ IMG. The IMG to M.H.F. van Buuren 9/02/96, No. IMG 96/95/27/066.

⁹⁷⁴ IMG 96/95/27/059. Letter from Caron & Stevens (M.H.F. van Buuren) to H.J.M. Groenhout, 2/02/96.

⁹⁷⁵ IMG. Notes by Hegge appended to IMG 96/95/17/059.

⁹⁷⁶ TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 161.

⁹⁷⁷ BSG. Memorandum from the DGP (Bunnink) to the minister, 13/06/95, unnumbered.

⁹⁷⁸ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

⁹⁷⁹ BSG. Memorandum from the DGP (Bunnink) to the minister, 13/06/95, unnumbered.

Supervisory Authority was not overly keen to defend the matter in the courts.⁹⁸⁰ Without a disciplinary tribunal holding someone accountable, it would not be opportune to take legal action.⁹⁸¹

That was not yet the end of the matter to the Ministry of Defence. Allusions were still being made to taking action against others who were the subject of negative conclusions in the report of the State Supervisory Authority. However, no criminal offences were detected. The actions in question had occurred far too long ago for the application of military or other disciplinary regulations and misconduct was required before administrative action could be taken.⁹⁸² No evidence had been presented of any. The State Supervisory Authority saw no reason to file a complaint with a disciplinary tribunal. No negative action or conduct on the part of the persons involved had previously been established.⁹⁸³ After weighing up everything, it seemed best to Voorhoeve that the relevant Commanders-in-Chief speak to the people involved, express disapproval of their actions and inform them that a more humane approach was expected of Defence Department doctors. This was even more relevant in the case of the bus incident, when there had been no threat.⁹⁸⁴ Naval Captain Hegge was informed by the Royal Navy director of personnel that his principles did not accord with those of the Ministry of Defence.⁹⁸⁵

Hegge's legal adviser informed the Public Health Care Inspectorate that he contested the accuracy of the conclusions. Although it had been concluded that culpable actions had been committed, owing to the threat of the prevailing conditions of war this was not enough to bring a case before the Medical Disciplinary Tribunal. These conditions of war should have been considered when dealing with the question as to whether there had been culpable behaviour. Conditions of war did not constitute a defence but were an element to be considered in any decision-making as to whether culpable actions had been performed. However, in any case where the inspectorate had decided not to file a complaint, Hegge did not have an interest in pursuing any action of his own.⁹⁸⁶

However, Hegge did contemplate the possibility of having Siemons' statement considered by a disciplinary tribunal but refrained from proceeding. The conclusions that had been drawn, did not have any legal implications for him. He wanted the matter closed. According to Hegge, there was a feeling within the navy that there had to be a scapegoat. He felt overwhelmed by the inquiries and had landed up in a situation for which no one was prepared. They had not been briefed on UN guidelines and only after their return to the Netherlands did it become apparent that the chain of command for medical matters did not run from Potocari to The Hague, but that there was also a UN chain of command which ran to Sarajevo and Zagreb via Tuzla. This had not been clarified either at the School for Peacekeeping Operations or in the course of exploratory visits to the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff and the UNPF unit in Zagreb. KHO-6 and Major Franken had consulted and agreed with each other on priorities. Hegge had made a choice and had opted in favour of helping potential Dutchbat casualties. This was the essence of the matter to him. He felt that in this respect he had the support of Major Franken and his two naval colleagues. He had made that choice. It was quite permissible to assess this but in the light of the prevailing circumstances.⁹⁸⁷

It was the opinion of the IMG inspector, Kloos, that Hegge and Kremer had adopted a different approach. Something could be said for either. Hegge's approach was better from a military

⁹⁸⁰ Interview E. Kloos, 16/02/00.

⁹⁸¹ BSG. Memorandum from the DGP (Bunnik) to the minister, 13/06/95, unnumbered.

⁹⁸² Reference was made to Section 39(2)(1) of the AMAR, which stipulates as follows: 'misconduct within the service or in any other capacity in so far as this conduct is or may be detrimental to the performance of one's duties, or which does not accord with the standing of the office in question'.

⁹⁸³ BSG. Memorandum from the DGP to the minister, 14/06/96, unnumbered. Personnel – highly confidential.

⁹⁸⁴ BSG, map of the former Yugoslavia. Memorandum from the minister to the DGP, copy to the junior minister, SG and CDS. Undated, 14/06/96, No. 785.

⁹⁸⁵ IMG. Memorandum from the DMGB to Kloos, undated

⁹⁸⁶ IMG. Letter from Caron & Stevens (M.H.F. van Buuren) to G.H.A. Siemons at the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, 2/07/96, No. 032381717/FVB/bt.

⁹⁸⁷ Interview H.G.J. Hegge, 2/02/00.

point of view, Kremer's from a human perspective. 'Imagine being in such a situation yourself. It is easy to talk from the comfort of your armchair.' In connection with this assessment one should not lose sight of the fact that the IMG did not so much hold it against Hegge that he had not treated the woman but that he had failed to examine her properly. His suspicion that the woman was bleeding internally and that this would result in her death within several hours, later appeared to have been unfounded.⁹⁸⁸

Further judicial inquiry

The matter still did not end for those involved following the publication of the Public Health Care Inspector's report. In 1998, after debriefing Statement of Facts (*Feitenrelaas*) became known the Public Prosecutor's Office in Arnhem decided to conduct a preparatory judicial inquiry with a view to determining whether the denial of care to the wounded in Srebrenica and Potocari on about 11 July 1995 constituted a criminal act or situation. This was to be carried out by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. The inquiry commenced on 31 May 1999. The following six matters were considered:

1. The death of a Muslim child following the premature removal of a drip due to negligence or incompetence;
2. The refusal to treat or operate on a wounded woman in Srebrenica in connection with keeping 'essential stock' intact;
3. The refusal to accept two seriously wounded people from *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Srebrenica;
4. The failure to treat a bullet wound in the leg of a Muslim fighter or to provide aid to a large number of seriously wounded individuals in connection with a lack of medical supplies;
5. The failure to amputate a man's leg after it had turned blue due to inadequate blood circulation;
6. The failure of two doctors to provide medical treatment to two road accident victims near Zagreb in May 1995.

With the exception of the last point, all these matters had been taken from the Statement of Facts. In addition, the inquiry also sought to gather information about deaths due to the denial of medical care to injured individuals.⁹⁸⁹

Although the so-called 'sebra [sic] Care Team' of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee interviewed a large number of people in the relevant medical field of operations in the matter of 'withholding care', this yielded little in the way of results. Most of them were not aware of these matters, had heard about them through hearsay, had only heard about them on their return to the Netherlands in some cases, or believed that they had occurred during the fall of the enclave, while this was not the case. Although it was conducted more than four years after the debriefing process and the compilation of the Statement of Facts, this judicial inquiry also confirms that many incidents were derived from secondary sources. There were only two cases where clear-cut answers were given to questions, because people who had been directly involved, were able to present the ins and outs of the matter.

The death of the Muslim child occurred in January 1995 during Dutchbat II's tour of duty. In fact, there were two cases. A nine-year-old boy was accidentally knocked down by a four-tonne vehicle. He was taken to the Field Dressing Station with serious head injuries. Artificial respiration was applied and he received multiple drips but his injuries were inoperable. The boy died the next day and the drips that had been attached to him, were removed.

The second death was that of a baby several months old. KHO-4 took over responsibility from this baby at the request of the hospital in Srebrenica. The baby was unable to eat or drink. A drip was attached to the child but it accidentally fell out at one stage, possibly when its mother took it in her

⁹⁸⁸ Interview Kloos, 16/02/00.

⁹⁸⁹ PV KMar District Noord-Holland/Utrecht, No. 412/1999, 16/08/99.

arms. A new drip was then attached to it, which was not an easy matter in view of the child's small blood vessels. After being treated in the compound for two weeks, it appeared that any further treatment was impossible. The child was returned to the Srebrenica hospital in consultation with *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Its condition was reasonably stable at the time. The drip remained attached during the transfer. However, the child died several days later.⁹⁹⁰

The inquiry made little headway in respect of the failure to treat the ABiH soldier's bullet wound. The problem was that it was often not known whether someone was a member of the ABiH or not. One witness stated that, following consultation between Colonels Kremer and Schouten, it was decided to put the individual's leg in plaster. Someone else believed that there had been an argument about the treatment. Again, another person said he knew that someone with a bullet wound had been brought in but had heard that he had not been treated. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee did not investigate a statement made by one witness who had heard that several ABiH soldiers had been standing at the gate to the compound in Potocari, one of whom was wounded, and that who had been sent back.

However, the Marechaussee did manage to find out what orders had been issued to the sentries at the gate to the compound in Potocari. They stated that wounded civilians and patients had to remain outside. The Field Dressing Station was then to be notified and a doctor would be sent. The latter would assess the patient's condition. If admission was required, the doctor accompanied the injured individual in question.⁹⁹¹ It was not stated why these orders were appended to the official report. Perhaps this was related to the case of the wounded Muslim woman who was collected and brought to the compound on 10 July contrary to the relevant regulations. However, the Department of Justice did not investigate the failure to treat this woman and were content with a reference to the investigations conducted by the Military Health Care Inspector and the Public Health Care Inspectorate

Clarification was also forthcoming in the matter of the failure to amputate a leg that had turned blue. This happened in the hospital in Bratunac. The man in question had a bullet wound and had been treated with antibiotics for four days. Due to the lack of surgical facilities in Bratunac, the people there were faced with the problem as to what they should do next. Although anaesthetics were available, there was no equipment. However, the medical staff in Bratunac was saved from having to decide to perform an amputation themselves using improvised equipment, when an International Red Cross convoy arrived and took the patient to Tuzla.⁹⁹² Apart from several relevant remarks based on UN regulations, the judicial inquiries did not devote special attention to the issue of 'essential stock'. It is also remarkable to note that the battalion leadership was not interviewed. This would have been appropriate in the case of the refusal to accept patients from *Médecins Sans Frontières* without notifying the medical service. The battalion leaders were also not interviewed as part of the investigations conducted by the Military Health Care Inspectorate and the Public Health Care Inspectorate.

⁹⁹⁰ PV KMar District Noord-Holland/Utrecht, No. 412/1999, 16/08/99.

⁹⁹¹ Standing orders for compound guard duties 1 (NL) VN INFBAT, Chapter 3, Section 1(c), quoted by the Public Prosecutor's Office in Arnhem. PV KMar District Noord-Holland/Utrecht, No. 412/1999, 16/08/99.

⁹⁹² Public Prosecutor's Office, Arnhem. PV KMar District Noord-Holland/Utrecht, No. 412/1999, Appendix 13, 16/08/99.

Chapter 20

Subsequent opinions about the medical and ethical issues of 'essential stock'

When Minister Voorhoeve presented the Public Health Care Inspectorate's report to Parliament on 14 June 1996, he pointed out that the 'interests of civilians in a dire emergency and those pertaining to the duty of care within our own organization' represented a dilemma that was as yet unresolved. Military doctors had a primary duty within their military unit. Nevertheless, they had an obligation to act in accordance with their Hippocratic oath. UN guidelines did not provide a solution for this dilemma, with the result that the Dutchbat medical personnel were faced with it.⁹⁹³

In stating this, the Minister was presenting more of a moral than a legal argument. Only the applicable legislation and regulations applied in the case of a legal assessment. At any rate, the aftermath of Srebrenica generated intense discussion of medical and ethical issues, partly because the regulations and professional codes of conduct for individual care givers did not present clear-cut answers. Medical and military duties clashed. Vague chains of command, conflicting interests, chaotic circumstances and panic responses could cause confusion. Different situations could produce different solutions, because the line of reasoning adopted by individual caregivers can play a role, as can different views of ethical matters and a consideration of the risks run by a person or his unit.⁹⁹⁴

Hence, in addition to formal and legal arguments, ethical questions played the primary role in respect of matters such as the maintenance of 'essential stock' of medical supplies for Dutchbat. In 1997, during a symposium held under the auspices of the *Stichting Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht* (Society and Armed Forces Foundation) Lieutenant Colonel Vermeulen, the Commanding Officer of Dutchbat I, raised a number of such ethical questions based on the reality of Bosnia, namely:

- Should it become the rule that Dutch military hospitals provide medical aid to the local population in order to supplement that given by the hospital of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, for example?
- How far should a military unit go along with this bearing in mind its limited medical facilities and supplies, which are intended for its own wounded soldiers in principle?
- In view of the impartiality required, how will people view the provision of medical care to wounded soldiers (every healthy man is a soldier) from one of the warring factions?⁹⁹⁵

Vermeulen also pointed to attendant problems which manifested themselves on the spot, such as variations in the views held by military units and NGOs, as well as differences in insight between the leadership of a military unit and the latter's medical staff. The battalion commander was responsible for the welfare of his own personnel and was ultimately held to account for his decisions and policy in this respect.⁹⁹⁶ The problem involved in medical officers being bound by laws of military discipline in addition to their professional oath, was not discussed.

The theologian, A.H.M. van Iersel, and the international lawyer, T.A. van Baarda, pointed out that Hippocratic oath, which is also taken by military doctors, requires that medical assistance be

⁹⁹³ TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 161 (14/06/96).

⁹⁹⁴ Working party, 'Handreiking voor militair geneeskundige zorgverleners' ('Assistance for military medical care providers') of the Joh. Wiers Foundation, 'Mensenrechten en de militair geneeskundige zorgverlener' ('Human rights and the military medical care provider') in *Nederlands Militair Geneeskundig Tijdschrift*, 53 (2000)147-152.

⁹⁹⁵ C.H.P. Vermeulen, 'Humanitair optreden als militaire missie' ('Humanitarian operations as a military mission') in Baarda, Ted van, and Schoeman, Jan, *Werelden apart?: Militairen en burgers: vredeshandhavers en hulpverleners.* ('Worlds apart? The military and civilians: peacekeepers and aid workers') The Hague, 1997, pp. 91-92.

⁹⁹⁶ Vermeulen, 'Humanitair optreden als militaire missie', in Baarda and Schoeman, *Werelden apart?*, p. 92.

provided irrespective of the person concerned. Based on applicable medical ethics, a military doctor was not entitled to distinguish between military and civilian patients.⁹⁹⁷

However, the question is whether the oath constitutes the norm or is not the law in so far as it may be applicable. Other commentators do not believe it is self-evident that medical ethics did not permit a distinction between military and civilian patients. In a response to the *Brandpunt* broadcast, Leo van Bergen, an associate of the *Studiecentrum voor Vredesvraagstukken* (Research Centre for Questions of Peace) in Nijmegen, made it clear that moral indignation at the refusal of aid is an empty gesture. A military medical service is an inseparable part of an army. This was also the reason why a military unit is actually unsuitable for the provision of humanitarian aid. An order not to provide aid to wounded civilians can be explained and be morally unacceptable at the same time. In conflicts military necessity and the oath of allegiance are accorded priority over the pangs of medical conscience. From a military point of view an order not to provide aid could be justified. According to Van Bergen, any doctor who wanted his medical conscience to prevail above all else, was better off pursuing his profession in civilian society.⁹⁹⁸

Jacques de Milliano, who was asked for a response as part of the *Brandpunt* programme in his capacity as the director of the Dutch branch of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, felt that as a doctor it was shocking to see aid refused but he simultaneously acknowledged that the safety of the troops was paramount when viewed in a broader context. As long as the troops found themselves in an unsafe situation, it was realistic for them not to use medical supplies for patients but to save them to treat any Dutch casualties. Nevertheless, an area of tension remained.⁹⁹⁹

Looking back, the Dutchbat surgeon, Colonel Kremer, did not appear to agree with such views. While he acknowledged that certain types of medicine had been used up in their entirety or almost so, he felt that reserving medical supplies exclusively for the troops should not have been allowed. UN guidelines provided scope for the treatment of the local population in urgent cases. However, the reality of the situation was completely different as a result of extensive aid provided to the local population. Owing to the utterly conflicting views of various doctors and a confusing chain of command, the provision of medical aid was not a self-evident matter in the chaotic and dangerous situation prevailing in Srebrenica. Nowhere was it stated or assumed that 'essential stock' were only intended for wounded Dutch and UN soldiers. Greater attention should have been devoted to the clash of military and humanitarian interests, according to Kremer. Both military doctors and commanding officers needed to provide input when drawing up policy, so as to prevent any misunderstanding from occurring.¹⁰⁰⁰

Unlike Kremer, his colleague, Hegge, did not get involved in the public debate about medical and ethical issues. However, he did notice that discussions about medical neutrality in the professional publications called for all sorts of measures but that nowhere was any advice provided as to how to act in situations in which one needed to make a choice. There was little understanding for the dual role of doctor and soldier.¹⁰⁰¹ The Defence Department placed medical officers in situations in which they were confronted with dilemmas. In addition to its usual assessments, the Defence Department should therefore also bear responsibility for the choices that were made and not distance itself from them.¹⁰⁰²

⁹⁹⁷ A.H.M. van Iersel and Van Baarda, 'Balanceren op de rand van een scheermes' ('Balancing on a razor's edge'), in Baarda and Schoeman, *Werelden apart?*, p. 105. The authors refer to Article 16(2) of the First Additional Protocol (1977).

⁹⁹⁸ *De Volkskrant*, 30/11/95.

⁹⁹⁹ Radio news, 28/11/95, in response to the *Brandpunt* broadcast. In the same programme the former Member of Parliament and Junior Minister of Defence, Ton Frinking, said that it was 'evident' that troops needed to maintain their own supplies in order remain available for deployment.

¹⁰⁰⁰ G.D. Kremer, 'Medische neutraliteit in crisisbeheersingsoperaties: Hoezo vanzelfsprekend?' ('Medical neutrality in crisis management operations: not to be taken for granted') in *Medisch Contact*, 51 (November 1996)1462-1464.

¹⁰⁰¹ NIOD, Coll. Hegge. (draft letter) H.G.J. Hegge, October 1996.

¹⁰⁰² KHO, No. 15.805/12.712. KTZAR H.G.J. Hegge to CDRAR W.F. van Marion, Inspector of the Navy Medical Service, copy to the Director of Navy Personnel, SBN W.J. E. van Rijn and C-KHO, A.J. van Leusden, 11/12/96.

Viewed with hindsight, one can conclude that the discussions of the time mainly occurred on a small scale within the Dutchbat medical service in the enclave and that there was relatively little coordination with the battalion leadership. Much of the debate therefore occurred at a later stage. It should have been extended to the political level in The Hague earlier in 1995, precisely because the Ministry of Defence had devoted insufficient attention to the relevant regulations and the provision of information to the medical practitioners about the provision of humanitarian aid to the local population and its implications in the extraordinary circumstances in which Dutchbat had to operate during the last few months of its stay in Srebrenica. This would have made it possible to establish political guidelines or to work through the UN in New York in an attempt to have the guidelines for UNPROFOR stated more precisely or to seek additional ones when the provision of supplies for the medical service ceased. Dutchbat's Standing Orders provided for internal instructions but as such were never raised for discussion in the form in which they were known. These orders do not appear to have played a role once a different practice had evolved in the enclave.

The question therefore arose within the Armed Forces as to whether medical units actually met the stiff requirements stipulated for crisis management operations. While preparations for a scenario such as that of Srebrenica may have been impossible, it was feared that the training of medical officers for crisis situations and teamwork could have been poor. While medical officers did receive military training, it was minimal and this was also a source of concern.¹⁰⁰³ As it happens, preparations for the deployment of medical units were indeed changed. Attention was devoted to team formation as well as work within a hierarchical structure. Supplementary training was provided prior to deployment and attention was also devoted to its medical and ethical aspects.¹⁰⁰⁴

On the other hand, the debate revealed that it was impossible to draw up any protocol that accommodated the requirements of both the commander in the field and the medical officers. In particular, those personnel who were to be deployed, had a need of further discussion which could produce a better understanding of the manner in which military doctors act. Lieutenant Colonel W.J. Wertheim, who worked for the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff at the time, lamented the fact that the media and politicians had come to dominate the issue, taking certain aspects out of context. In Srebrenica the problems had partly been caused by difficulties with supplies which had originated beyond the control of the Dutch military organization. Guidelines issued by The Hague were not much more than a support and could only have an effect if commanders and doctors were familiar with all their provisions relating to the provision of medical care on the spot, and if the logistical operations were able to ensure adequate medical supplies under all circumstances. A military medical unit had to pursue a well-considered policy which accorded with the requirements of both its commanding officer and its doctors. Precise arrangements needed to be made with the local authorities and NGOs for the manner in which action was to be taken in emergencies and, which patients if any would be eligible for treatment in a field hospital. Collaboration with *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Bosnia and the hospital in Srebrenica represented a contravention of UN regulations.¹⁰⁰⁵

Already prior to Dutchbat's deployment there had been confusion about the extent of the humanitarian aid to be provided, the relevant UN instructions, and the division of professional medical and military operational responsibilities.¹⁰⁰⁶ Medical neutrality, the right of aid workers to perform their duties without any form of duress or obstruction, could be described properly in abstract terms but could barely be operationalized in concrete situations. It was not permissible for health care to be held

¹⁰⁰³ This debate occurred in the Royal Netherlands Air Force in January 1996. See BDL. Exh B95092612/252.

¹⁰⁰⁴ TK session 1995-1996, 22 181, No. 161 (14/06/96).

¹⁰⁰⁵ W.J. Wertheim, 'Medische neutraliteit bij Out-of-Area operaties' (Medical neutrality in Out-of-Area operations) in *Nederlands Militair Geneeskundig Tijdschrift*, 49 (October 1996)148-151. In a different article in the same issue A.J. van Leusden came to similar conclusions in relation to the implementation of regulations.

¹⁰⁰⁶ G.H.A. Siemons, 'Medische hulp aan burgerslachtoffers: Srebrenica onder de loep' ('Medical assistance for civilian casualties: Srebrenica in focus') in *Medisch Contact* 51 (November 1996)1465. This article contained no more than a brief summary of the investigation Siemons had conducted in his capacity as the Public Health Inspector.

ransom to political, ideological or military arguments.¹⁰⁰⁷ Yet this is precisely what the Bosnian Serbs did. The VRS used all the means at its disposal to weaken the enclave and deliberately cut Dutchbat's medical supplies, because the bulk of them found their way to the local population. The Bosnian Serbs assumed that the ABiH was also benefiting from this. Since as early as the end of 1992 the VRS had been complaining about the fact that the ABiH had been conducting attacks from Srebrenica since the convoys started and that this pattern of events was repeatedly resulting in the prohibition of UNHCR and UNPROFOR convoys.¹⁰⁰⁸

The clearly defined terminology framework of the Geneva Conventions and Protocols did not simply apply to peacekeeping forces and the collaboration with humanitarian organizations.¹⁰⁰⁹ After all, the UN was not a party to a regional conflict or to the Geneva Conventions. Lars van Troost of Amnesty International was of the opinion that the international norms were not so much a source of confusion as the question of what standards applied to peacekeeping operations. Until then the UN and NATO member states had shown little interest in clarifying the situation. As a result of the confusion an international legal problem became a dilemma for individual medical officers or commanders. Before providing troops for peacekeeping operations, the countries supplying them had to state as precisely as possible which standards they deemed their military personnel would be governed by. This was to be disclosed to the intergovernmental organization that was to make use of the troops, and to the troops themselves. Only in this way was it possible for everyone to know beforehand which standards he was subject to, and for this to be taken into account in training and planning.¹⁰¹⁰

H.D.C. Roscam Abbing, a professor of health-related law, held the view that the Geneva Conventions and accompanying protocols did not draw a distinction between a country's own military personnel and casualties amongst the local population.¹⁰¹¹ The provision of aid was to be determined on the basis of medical emergency criteria. Although it was doubtful whether the Geneva Conventions applied to peacekeeping operations, military medical units needed to rely on the framework of standards which constituted the basis of the conventions. Roscam Abbing called for 'clear, unambiguous and appropriate legal and other prerequisites for the protection and optimum enforcement of human rights with a view to medical care' in the case of deployment for peacekeeping operations. Questions which were important, were those such as the legal significance of the provision of humanitarian aid, UN instructions and how they related to national obligations. Another related question pertained to the breakdown of medical and professional military responsibilities. It was also important to have a clear view of the Dutch Government's responsibilities because it had a duty of care towards the troops it deployed in its capacity as their employer.

In Roscam Abbing's view the government also had a duty of care towards the population on humanitarian grounds. The restraint of the relevant UN instructions did not detract from the fact that the Dutch Government had a duty as an organization providing aid. Apart from its duty to provide the troops it deployed with a responsible level of care, the government was simultaneously required to take into account the fact that it could be necessary to provide medical aid to the local population, unquestionably in emergencies and, where necessary, to supplement any existing facilities and NGOs that may be active on the spot. If any shortage were to occur, one could not resolve this by means of a military order. Professional responsibility was to prevail. According to her, the UN guidelines could not

¹⁰⁰⁷ Roel Otten, 'Medische neutraliteit in gewapende conflicten' ('Medical neutrality in armed conflicts') in *Medisch Contact*, 51 (February 1996) 247-248.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Confidential coll. (15). HQ BH Kiseljak to UNPROFOR HQ, 27/01/93.

¹⁰⁰⁹ T. A. van Baarda, 'Zo helder als koffiedik: de toepassing van het internationaal humanitair recht' ('As clear as mud: the application of international humanitarian law') in Baarda and Schoeman, *Werelden apart?*, p. 131.

¹⁰¹⁰ Lars van Troost, 'Medische neutraliteit en vredesoperaties: Vage regels en valse dilemma's' ('Medical neutrality and peace operations: vague rules and false dilemmas') in *Medisch Contact*, 51 (November 1996) 1466-1476.

¹⁰¹¹ H.D.C. Roscam Abbing, 'Gezondheidsrechtelijke aspecten bij uitzendingen' ('Health-related legal aspects of sending out troops') in *Nederlands Militair Geneeskundig Tijdschrift*, 50 (February 1997) 64-68.

stand up to critical scrutiny in view of the fact that human rights were at stake. The provision of medical aid to the local population could not occur in minimalist fashion and could not be confined to first aid in emergencies. It was not permissible for an armed conflict which occurred in the course of peacekeeping operations, to lead to the adoption of principles other than those that applied in times of peace. To Roscam Abbing the lesson of Srebrenica was that the government had a duty to ensure that sufficient facilities were available in order to 'be able to provide the troops and the civilian population with medical aid in a qualitatively responsible manner under varying circumstances'.

Several comments are in order in relation to Roscam Abbing's argument. For instance, it ignores the transfer of authority for the Dutch units to the UN. The Dutch Government transfers its power to deploy these troops to the UN Secretary-General, who in turn delegates command to the local UN commander. The UN is responsible for supplying medical provisions which, in principle, are determined in relation to the size of the medical unit in question. The fact that the Netherlands provided Dutchbat with some of its medical supplies does not in any way negate UN regulations. Roscam Abbing's argument also ignores the division of duties between the UNHCR and UNPROFOR. The latter was not the organization intended to alleviate need amongst the local population.

If Roscam Abbing's argument is upheld and the Dutch Government was responsible for ensuring that there were sufficient facilities to provide the local population with a responsible level of medical aid, how could this government have succeeded where the UN failed? As described in the appendix, 'Resupply by Air', it was impossible to force through supplies against the will of the Bosnian Serbs. The UN and the relevant national governments were not prepared to risk human lives for this purpose or to endanger the provision of humanitarian aid held elsewhere in Bosnia as a result.

The actions of the Bosnian doctors in the enclave were not covered by the debate on medical and ethical issues. Based on the example of Vukovar¹⁰¹² where patients and hospital staff had been murdered, they did not dare to rely on the protective operation of the Geneva Conventions and Protocols. They left their patients on 11 July and joined the column fleeing to Tuzla.

It was only a number of years later that the *Nederlands Militair Geneeskundig Tijdschrift* (Military Medical Journal of the Netherlands) devoted attention to medical and ethical questions by publishing an article written by the working party, '*Handreiking voor militair geneeskundige zorgverleners*' (Guidelines for Military Providers of Medical Care) of the Joh. Wiers Foundation. This article covered a number of scenarios in which military caregivers could be faced with a dilemma. It elicited responses within the profession, which only revealed that there was little in the way of a common view held by military providers of care, and that the suggestions that had been proposed, failed to provide an adequate guarantee to avoid conflicts such as the question as to which oath should prevail, the Hippocratic or officers' oath. For instance, medical officers with experience of deployment in crisis areas had their doubts about ethicists who took a 'holier than thou' attitude and who threatened to get the Medical Disciplinary Tribunal involved. The name of Roscam Abbing was also cited in this respect. Were the same standards required in relation to the medical performance of Dutch doctors working for NGOs? It should be possible for the interests of the relevant military unit to prevail in a military situation. For example, how should one act if a commanding officer who is not Dutch, were to issue an order which would impose a risk on a medical officer of being disciplined by a Dutch disciplinary tribunal? However, in the case of the ethicists referred to above this appeared to be a cut-and-dried case.

In the case of medical officers the assertion that the principle should apply whereby troops serving a tour of duty should be able to count on receiving adequate medical care under all circumstances, was offset by the view that it needed to be made clear to the troops that this was not all that absolute. 'Cast iron rules' were unacceptable and each case would need to be assessed in order to

¹⁰¹² In Vukovar local Serb paramilitary groups were said to have been responsible for the murder of 200 people. This statement was made by Cherif Bassiouni, the chairperson of the UN's Exoerst Committee on war crimes in the former Yugoslavia. (ABZ, DIO/ARA/00043. Code Celer 289, 30/11/93).

establish the extent of the aid that could be provided to civilians without drawing on ‘essential stock’.¹⁰¹³

The solution to the problem of ‘essential stock’ which Van Iersel, a theologian, and Van Baarda, a lawyer, proposed by way of a compromise, appeared somewhat too simple. They called for a change to the ‘essential stock’ norm to accord with the practical requirements of humanitarian peacekeeping: a more liberal interpretation of ‘essential stock’ along with a heightened presence of military personnel to ease the dilemma.¹⁰¹⁴

It would be difficult to define such a standard for supplies. There would have been less of a need to maintain ‘essential stock’, if UNPROFOR’s freedom of movement had not been limited and convoys had been granted unimpeded access to Srebrenica.

At the end of 1995 following the Dayton Accord, attention was again devoted to the term, ‘essential stock’, within the Ministry of Defence in the course of preparations for Dutch participation in the NATO implementation force. Maintaining ‘essential stock’ for one’s own troops was not expedient under the terms of the Geneva Convention,¹⁰¹⁵ the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff stated at the time. However, what also played a role was that, contrary to the previous situation in Srebrenica, proper logistics were now guaranteed.¹⁰¹⁶ In December 1995 the Ministry presented guidelines. The director of Military Medical Policy issued preliminary guidelines for the provision of medical aid to the civilian population: all civilian patients who were wounded, had to be helped. In this connection, it did not matter if a NATO soldier caused the medical problem in question.¹⁰¹⁷

The final instructions, which were still geared towards the NATO operation in Bosnia, were issued in January 1996. These instructions, which were also drawn up by the Director of Military Medical Policy, were ratified by the chief of Defence Staff. Now the most senior rank was involved, which had not been the case in Srebrenica. Medical officers had a duty to act in accordance with the Hippocratic oath they had taken. This was an unfortunate statement as the relevant legislation is decisive when assessing medical performance and not the Hippocratic oath.

These instructions drew a distinction between ‘humanitarian medical aid’ and ‘emergency medical aid’. Humanitarian medical aid could be provided to the civilian population if one’s orders, the circumstances and one’s resources permitted this. Only primary essential aid was allowed to be provided to civilians who directly requested access to military medical facilities. One was entitled to select those to be admitted. In the case of emergency medical aid, one needed to alleviate any critical threat to life as quickly and appropriately as possible. The extent of emergency aid that was to be provided, had to be detailed in plans along with the question as to how to ensure continuity.¹⁰¹⁸ This appeared to set a limit to the unbridled provision of humanitarian medical aid. However, no solution was forthcoming at the highest political level to the question which had greatly preoccupied the surgical

¹⁰¹³ *Nederlands Militair Geneeskundig Tijdschrift*, 53 (2000) 147-152, 54 (2001) 26-27, 54 (2001) 63-64.

¹⁰¹⁴ Van Iersel and Van Baarda, ‘Balanceren op de rand van een scheermes’, in Baarda and Schoeman, *Werelden apart?*, p. 105.

¹⁰¹⁵ KHO, No. 13.205/12.712. SSOGD/ W.J. Wertheim to the chief of Staff, OPS ST BLS/ B. Dedden, copy to IGDKL/ B. Mels, DMGB/ E. van Ankum and KHO/ F. van der Hulst, 28/12/95, No. SCGD/16531.

¹⁰¹⁶ This may refer to Article 55 of the Geneva Convention relating to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, 75 U.N.T.S. 287, which entered into force on 21 October 1950: ‘To the fullest extent of the means available to it the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring the food and medical supplies of the population; it should, in particular, bring in the necessary foodstuffs, medical stores and other articles if the resources of the occupied terrain are inadequate. The Occupying Power may not requisition foodstuffs, articles or medical supplies available in the occupied terrain, except for use by the occupation forces and administration personnel, and then only if the requirements of the civilian population have been taken into account. . .’

¹⁰¹⁷ KHO No. 13.134/12.712. Memorandum from the IMG (Groenhout) to the deputy chief of Operations Defence Staff, 13/12/95. No. PMG7303/95023278.

¹⁰¹⁸ ‘Aanwijzing voor geneeskundige hulp aan de burgerbevolking in voormalig Joegoslavië’, DMGB, 22/01/96, No. PMG3175/96001053 and CDS 3101 January 1996, No. S96/061/96001053. These instructions were published in *Nederlands Militair Geneeskundig Tijdschrift*, 49 (April 1996) 32.

teams, namely, how far can one go when drawing on one's own medical supplies to provide humanitarian aid to the local population.¹⁰¹⁹

¹⁰¹⁹ Stasdef. DAB to the minister, 19/12/95, No. D101/677.

Chapter 21

Conclusions relating to Dutchbat III and medical matters

The special circumstances which were inherent to the problems besetting the enclave, and the Bosnian Serbs' refusal to permit regular supplies, had a major impact on the performance of both Dutchbat and the medical service. The latter's orders did not unquestionably accord with the principle that the commander of a unit is required to ensure that his mission is not endangered. This means that he is required to ensure that his personnel are capable of deployment for as long as possible or that they can be deployed again. Reasoning in line with this concern, his mission cannot be rendered subordinate to the individual interests of any third party without the express consent of his commanding officer. However, these commanding officers, from the UN commander to the members of the Dutch Government, were not involved in the discussion that ensued within Dutchbat about maintaining 'essential stock' for one's own use. Although these commanding officers were aware of the benefits of providing medical aid to the local population to alleviate need or to win their hearts and minds, UN regulations actually went no further than to permit the provision of aid in dire emergencies. As the authority in command, the UN had thus ensured that there were regulations but scant regard was paid to them within Dutchbat, assuming they were aware of their existence.

When supplies stalled, the limitations on the provision of further aid to the people became painfully obvious. The use of medical supplies for purposes other than one's own unit then appeared to depend greatly on the prevailing situation and the question as to whether there were adequate supplies and alternatives. The primary purpose of Dutchbat medical personnel was not to care for civilians. While it is true that the Dutchbat medical service had acknowledged this problem and that in the course of time it had endeavoured to set aside 'essential stock' for emergencies, the circumstances did not permit them to do so and to maintain them.

Abstract rules and ethical principles presented no solution for situations where critical supplies were exhausted. Military and medical ethics clashed. With hindsight, the Public Health Care Inspectorate therefore held that it would have been desirable if the Ministry of Defence had devoted express attention to the dilemma posed by potentially conflicting interests of a professionally medical nature on the one hand and military and operational on the other. As far as possible, medical units needed to be provided with as much guidance as possible in the form of written instructions and decision-making models which could be used in practical situations. The existing regulations and training provided in the Netherlands did not provide sufficient guidance, nor did the UN guidelines. They needed to be translated and converted into protocols which were geared towards practical situations.¹⁰²⁰

In the event that military rules and ethical principles clashed, it was up to the person bearing final medical responsibility to make a decision for which he had to be held accountable at a later stage. In the case of Srebrenica the decision not to draw on 'essential stock' was a joint one taken by the medical officers and the battalion leadership, although this was not equally clear to everyone in the Field Dressing Station. This decision was not made on the basis of a sound knowledge of UN regulations but was born of necessity when there was a threat to the possibility of providing intensive care to any casualties at a later stage.

The establishment of 'essential stock' was already an issue before the arrival of Dutchbat III and appears to have had its origins in the medical field of operations. Paradoxically enough, it was precisely from the quarters of medical personnel that criticism was eventually expressed of the concept of 'essential stock' once its implications had become painfully obvious and a dying woman had been

¹⁰²⁰ Report of the Health Care Inspectorate, 12/06/96, p. 52.

abandoned. There were no further casualties amongst Dutch troops following the death of Private Van Rensen, with the result that there was no need to draw on critical supplies. This later compounded the remorse felt about the fact that so little had been done to treat the wounded woman.

In this connection, it is remarkable that those involved both in the Netherlands and in Bosnia gave so little thought to the problems involving the clash of military and UN regulations on the one hand, and ethical principles on the other, and that the medical officers and commanders had received so little information about this in the course of preparations for their despatch to Bosnia. Potential supply problems had already been acknowledged prior to Dutchbat's move to Srebrenica and they had already made themselves felt prior to the arrival of Dutchbat III. A greater awareness of UN regulations and an exchange of views between Srebrenica and The Hague, and between The Hague and Zagreb could have created more clarity in relation to the question as to how to act if any problems were to occur.

It does not appear that the battalion leadership and the medical officers made any precise arrangements. Even though the Field Dressing Station later fell under the command of Dutchbat's Commanding Officer, no clear answer was forthcoming to the question as to who had the power to make decisions about medical supplies: Dutchbat's Commanding Officer or the responsible medical officer. While it is true that the battalion leadership and the responsible medical officer had made arrangements by the time the Bosnian Serbs commenced their attack on Srebrenica, they were not properly communicated or presented within the Field Dressing Station.

The Royal Netherlands Army and the Minister of Defence in The Hague were not aware of problems pertaining to 'essential stock' and of conflicts relating to priorities. This only occurred once it was too late. Later on only the responsible medical officer was called to account and not the battalion leaders, who were also party to this policy.

Poor personal relations, problems relating to relief, differing assessments of the gravity of the situation, varying views within the medical service, the breakdown of relations between the Dutchbat command and the medical service, and the coincidental presence of two surgical teams muddied the waters even further. In addition, there was also a lack of familiarity with UN regulations. All these matters played their own independent role.

A further complication occurred when the Bosnian Serbs commenced their attack, in the form of a new surgical team which assumed responsibility for the provision of medical care to Dutchbat without having had much preparation and with little knowledge of the amount of supplies still available, while the old team was unable to leave the enclave. The speed with which duties were transferred is barely comprehensible in the light of the fact that the old team could not leave the enclave, although those involved naturally hoped they would be able to and had already waited a long time to be relieved.

Relations were further strained when a wounded woman was brought to the compound in Potocari on 10 July contrary to the relevant regulations. This led to a clash of views between the two surgeons who were present, at a time when it was not overly clear what had been agreed in relation to the provision of medical aid to people other than Dutchbat personnel. The medical specialists who came from the Dutch navy were more inclined to accord priority to operational interests than the specialist from the Royal Netherlands Air Force, who did not wish to distinguish between military and humanitarian actions.

Following the deportation of the local population, the medical service was still involved in caring for those wounded individuals who had remained behind, until 17 July. The time remaining until Dutchbat's departure from the enclave was spent 'licking their wounds' and preparing for their move. During this period Dutchbat made no move to produce preliminary reports for itself as a whole or its various units. The timely collection of information about the various events and its provision to senior officers could have provided a clearer insight into the relevant issues at an earlier stage. While it is true there was a fear that information which was incriminating or displeasing to the VRS, could fall into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs when the unit left the enclave, it could have been transmitted through the normal communication channels, secure or insecure.

The debriefing process which occurred upon Dutchbat's arrival in Zagreb, was of a highly limited nature, certainly in so far as it pertained to medical performance. The relevant reports were cursory. Nevertheless, various issues relating to the medical field of operations soon became known more or less. General Couzy also conducted interviews with the people concerned while they were still in Zagreb. At a later stage information about the operations of the Field Dressing Station and the surgical teams also reached the Royal Netherlands Army via different routes. Many of these matters, which later became issues, were thus known in general terms but nothing was recorded nor was news about them disseminated to those who bore political responsibility in the Ministry of Defence. The Royal Netherlands Army does not appear to have played a fortunate role in determining the political impact that a number of issues had or could have had. Only in December did the Minister become aware of issues that in some cases were already known prior to the debriefing process. There was hardly any coordination or joint effort on the part of the army and the department to ascertain as much information as possible.

In particular, what also played a role in the medical field of operations was the idea, which was common to both the Army and the Ministry, that it would be wise to await the outcome of the debriefing process in Assen before conducting any inquiry. It was anticipated that virtually everything would be covered in the course of the debriefing process. However, the latter only began in Assen at a relatively late stage, because it was decided to allow staff to go on leave first. In this sense the wait for the outcome of the debriefing process was counterproductive. One could not insist that the media remain silent. Issues continued to be aired and this increased public disquiet.

In addition, the debriefing process failed to provide adequate answers to the questions that were raised. Although the debriefing report devoted attention to the phenomenon of 'essential stock' and the performance of the surgical teams that joined Dutchbat from the Armed Forces Hospital Service, the information it provided in this respect was rather cursory. The disquiet mounted further when it emerged that the debriefing process was unable to meet the high expectations held for it in respect of a number of points. When information was disclosed at the end of 1995 about the refusal to treat the seriously wounded woman on 10 July 1995, the media raised a veritable storm of indignation, more so because this incident was not referred to in the debriefing report.

Because of dissatisfaction with the course of events, their feeling that they had not been properly heard during their debriefing sessions and their irritation about the treatment which Dutchbat had received in the press, several of the unit's medical personnel publicly disclosed a number of matters. These were issues that had not been referred to in the debriefing report or which had been dealt with in an unsatisfactory manner. At the end of 1995 this led the Ministry of Defence to conduct a number of subsequent investigations under considerable pressure of time into numerous aspects of medical aid, so as to be able to inform Parliament accordingly on different occasions. It was mainly the Ministry and Minister Voorhoeve himself who took the initiative in this respect. Unlike the debriefing process in Assen, the central organization assumed direct control. The result was a hasty and fragmented communication of information to Parliament. It produced an impression that smacked of an overestimate of Dutchbat's potential and role.

Once the storm had brewed and refused to subside, more inquiries followed. The social and ministerial indignation that greeted the investigation conducted by the Inspector of the Military Health Care Service, led to another investigation performed by the Public Health Care Inspectorate. These investigations focussed primarily on the medical performance of several individuals. Neither investigation doubted the decision not to provide further humanitarian aid and to accord priority to ensuring the availability of medical care for the unit's own personnel but less attention was devoted to this.

The investigations concentrated on incidents and at a later stage the judicial authorities focussed on the alleged failure of individuals to perform. Although this did reveal many facts, it took little into account of the overall situation pertaining to the provisions of humanitarian and medical aid during the fall of the enclave. Neither did these investigations start out from the problems experienced by

Dutchbat in that it became a plaything of the Bosnian Serbs as a result of the circumstances prevailing in Srebrenica.

Appendix II

Intelligence and the war in Bosnia 1992–1995: The role of the intelligence and security services

Author: Dr. C. Wiebes

Document Information

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2. List of Acronyms and Terms

AbiH - Armija Bosna i Hercegovina

APC - Armoured Personnel Carrier

ATM - Air Task Message

AWACS - Airborne Warning and Control System

BfV - Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz

BHC - Bosnia-Herzegovina Command

BID - Buitenlandse Inlichtingendienst

BND - Bundesnachrichtendienst

BSA - Bosnian Serb Army

BSS - British Security Services Organization

BTF - Balkan Task Force

BVD - Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst

CAOC - Combined Air Operations Centre

CDS - Chief of the Defence Staff

CEE - Central and Eastern Europe

CENTCOM - Central Command (US)

CFIOG - Canadian Forces Information Operations Group

CI - Counter Intelligence

CIA - Central Intelligence Agency

CIC - Current Intelligence Centre

CINCSOUTH - Commander in Chief Southern Europe (NATO)

CIR - Comité Interministériel du Renseignement

COMINT - Communications Intelligence
COS - Chief of Staff
COS - Chief of Station (CIA)
CSE - Communications Security Establishment
CVIN - Committee on the United Intelligence Services in the Netherlands
DARO - Defense Airborne Reconnaissance Office
DCBC - Defence Crisis Management Centre
DDIS - Danish Defence Intelligence Service
DFC - Deputy Force Commander
DGSE - Direction Generale de la Securité Exterieur
DIA - Defense Intelligence Agency
DIS - Defence Information Summary
DIS - Defence Intelligence Staff
DMZ - Demilitarized Zone
DND - Department of National Defense
DPA - Department of Political Affairs
DPKO - Department of Peace Keeping Operations
DRM - Direction de Renseignement Militaire
DSF - Deployed Shed Facility
DSD - Defence Signals Directorate
DST - Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire
ECMM - European Commission Monitoring Mission
ELINT - Electronic Intelligence
ERRF - European Rapid Reaction Force
ESDI - European Security and Defence Identity
ESDP - European Security and Defence Policy
EU - European Union
EUCOM - European Command (US)
FBI - Federal Bureau of Investigation
FC - Force Commander
FISINT - Foreign Instrumentation Intelligence
FRY - Former Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)
GCHQ - Government Communications Headquarters
GPS - Global Positioning System
GMO - Gratis Military Officers
HF - High Frequency
HIC - High Intensity Conflict
HUMINT - Human Intelligence
HV - Hrvatska Vojska
HVO - Hrvatsko Vijece Odbrane
IAEA - International Atomic Energy Authority
ICFY - International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia
ICRC - International Commission of the Red Cross
IDB - Inlichtingendienst Buitenland
IFOR - Implementation Force (NATO – Bosnia)
IMINT - Imagery Intelligence
INTERFET - International Force East Timor
IOB - Intelligence Oversight Board
JAC - Joint Analysis Center
JARIC - Joint Aerial Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre
JCO - Joint Commission Observer

JCS - Joint Chiefs of Staff
JIC - Joint Intelligence Committee
JNA - Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija
KFOR - Kosovo Force
KLA - Kosovo Liberation Army
LIC - Low Intensity Conflict
LOCE - Linked Operational Intelligence Centre Europe
MIC - Mid Intensity Conflict
MICIV - Ministerial Committee for the Intelligence and Security Services
MID - Militaire Inlichtingendienst
MIO - Military Information Office
MIS - Netherlands Military Intelligence Service
MPRI - Military Professional Resources Incorporated
MSC - Military Staff Committee of the United Nations
MSF - Médecins sans Frontières
NAC - North Atlantic Council
NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NETHNIC - Netherlands National Intelligence Cell
NFZ - No Fly Zone
NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation
NIE - National Intelligence Estimate
NIMA - National Imagery and Mapping Agency
NORAD - North American Air Defense Agreement
NPIC - National Photographic Interpretation Center
NSA - National Security Agency
NRO - National Reconnaissance Office
NSC - National Security Council
OP - Observation Post
OPSTINA - District of local government in Bosnia Herzegovina
ORCI - Office for Research and the Collection of Information
OSCE - Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSINT - Open Source Intelligence
OVIC - Operational Sigint Centre in the Netherlands
PDD - Presidential Decision Directive
PGP - Pretty Good Privacy
PHOTINT - Photo Intelligence
PJHQ - Permanent Joint Headquarters
PRD - Presidential Review Directive
RADINT - Radar Intelligence
RM - Royal Marines
RS - Republika Srpska
SACEUR - Supreme Allied Commander Europe (NATO)
SAM - Surface to Air Missile
SAS - Special Air Services
SAT - Southern Air Transport
SATINT - Satellite Intelligence
SBP - Staff Bureau Foreign Political Developments
SBS - Special Boat Services
SCS - Special Collection Service
SEAD - Suppression of Enemy Air Defence
SFOR - Stabilisation Force (NATO - Bosnia)

SGR - Service Generale de Reinseignement
 SHAPE - Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (NATO)
 SHED - Special Handling and Evaluation Detachment
 SIE - Special Intelligence Estimate
 SIGINT - Signals Intelligence
 SIS - Secret Intelligence Service
 SISMI - Servizio Informazioni e Sicurezza Militare
 SNE - Sector North East
 SPOT - Système Pour l'Observation de la Terre
 SVIC - Strategic Sigint Centre in the Netherlands
 SWENIC - Swedish National Intelligence Cell
 TAB - Tuzla Air Base
 TACRECCE - Tactical Air Reconnaissance
 TACSAT - Tactical Satellite Radio
 TIVC - Royal Netherlands Navy Technical Information Processing Centre
 TWRA - Third World Relief Agency
 UAV - Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
 UN - United Nations
 UNDOF - United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
 UNDP - United Nations Development Programme
 UNHCR - United Nations High Commission for Refugees
 UNMIK - United Nations Mission in Kosovo
 UNMO - United Nation Military Observer
 UNOSOM - United Nations Operation in Somalia
 UNPROFOR - United Nations Protection Force
 UNPF - United Nations Protection Force
 UNSCOM - United Nations Special Commission in Iraq
 USMC - United States Marine Corps
 VHF - Very High Frequency
 VJ - Vojska Jugoslavija
 VOPP - Vance Owen Peace Plan
 VRS - Vojska Republika Srpska
 WEU - Western European Union

3. Introduction

Sarajevo was a nest of spies at the time of the war in Bosnia. Everyone spied on everyone: the warring parties as well as the countries of the UN peacekeeping force.¹

On 3 March 1994, 570 Dutch peacekeepers formally relieved the Canadian soldiers who had been stationed in Srebrenica since 1993. Within the framework of the United Nations peace mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Dutch unit arrived there as part of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). The Dutch battalion (Dutchbat) was placed in a small town located in East Bosnia in a deep valley with steep mountainsides, close to the river Drina. Except for a couple of days in April 1992, the Bosnian Muslim Army, the *Armija Bosne i Hercegovine* (ABiH), had control of the town – which was declared a Safe Area by the UN Security Council on 6 May 1993 – for three years of the war. However, Srebrenica was never completely demilitarized and small-scale confrontations around the

¹ ‘sarajevo zat vol spionnen in oorlog’ (‘sarajevo was full of spies during war’), *Het Parool*, 24/04/98.

enclave would continue to take place for more than two years. A Bosnian-Serb attack on Srebrenica started on 6 July 1995. The ABiH was not in a position to defend the enclave, and the Dutch soldiers had neither the resources nor the mandate for the purpose.

When on 11 July the Bosnian enclave of Srebrenica was captured by the Bosnian Serb Army, the *Vojaska Republika Srpska* (VRS), under the leadership of General Ratko Mladic, an ethnic cleansing operation began in which a large proportion of the Muslim men would be executed. Between 6 and 20 July, the Bosnian Serbs gained control of 'the safe areas' Srebrenica and Zepa, and drove out tens of thousands of Bosnian Muslims. Under the eyes of Dutchbat, the women, children and elderly were deported to Bosnian territory. Out of view of the Dutch peacekeepers, more than 10,000 men and boys, walking in a long line, tried to get from Srebrenica to the area around Tuzla, which was under the control of the Bosnian government. Several thousands became the victim of encounters with the Bosnian Serbs or fell into the hands of the VRS during that journey. They were killed in a horrifying way.

This study is an appendix to the Srebrenica report by the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (NIOD). A central position in the study is occupied by the role of national and international intelligence and security services in the war in Bosnia in general and Srebrenica in particular.

From the outset, much remained unclear regarding the fall of the enclave, something, which was also considered on 18 August 1995 in the Dutch Ministerial Council. A minister was of the opinion that more information should be made available about the events before and after the fall of Srebrenica. According to this minister, this also applied to the role of the Western intelligence services prior to the attack on Srebrenica.²

This investigation sets out to satisfy this wish. The study has three objectives. Firstly, it is the intention to present in as much detail as possible the information position of the most important Western intelligence and security services during the war in Bosnia. The relevant question is what opportunities these services had for following the developments in East Bosnia. Secondly, this study sets out to examine whether these services were used in the armed conflict around Srebrenica. Finally, an objective of this investigation is to establish the information position of the Dutch intelligence and security services: were these services in a position to support the Dutch peacekeepers in Bosnia satisfactorily?

These three objectives lead to the question: did the Western intelligence services have prior knowledge of the Bosnian Serb attack on Srebrenica? If the answer is no, the next question is why not? Was it an intelligence failure? However, if there was prior knowledge, the question then is what was done with this information, and whether that intelligence could not have prevented the attack on Srebrenica and the subsequent executions.

It was no simple matter to try to obtain answers to the above questions and to satisfy the above objectives. Foreign intelligence and security services were not prepared to provide the NIOD investigators with direct access to the intelligence they had gathered. Fortunately, some services were prepared to provide some degree of insight into their information position through confidential briefings or background discussions. For the Srebrenica report by the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (NIOD) more than 900 persons were interviewed. Ultimately, as regards this study off-the-record discussions were held with one hundred people in the Netherlands and other countries: many were officers who were involved in intelligence work in Bosnia. This involved not only many former or still active staff of intelligence and security services, but also responsible ministers, politicians, diplomats and officials that acted as recipients of intelligence products concerning Bosnia.

Inevitably, these one hundred off-the-record interviews did have consequences for the references of this study. This is why in the acknowledgement of sources, this study regularly has to

² Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 18/08/95, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

resort to references such as ‘Confidential interview’.³ Staff of foreign intelligence and security services were prepared to speak to the NIOD on condition that their identities were protected in view of privacy considerations, because disclosure of their names and identities could considerably impede their work as analysts or operators in the future, or make it completely impossible, or because the prevailing legislation in their country did not permit it. Anonymity was promised by the NIOD to a large number of current and former staff of services in the Netherlands and other countries for reasons of their own. It was therefore necessary to opt for the footnote form that has been used. The most important consideration in making this choice was that the main issue was to reconstruct a general picture and not to establish the specific influence of individual people on the course of events.

Moreover, there will be regular references to ‘Confidential information’. In general, these are written sources that the archive controller still considers to be confidential, or documents that have been passed to the NIOD privately, but which are still classified as ‘secret’ in the country concerned. It goes without saying that every effort has been made to verify the statements by means of supplementary interviews, background briefings or archival research whenever this was permissible.

History is a discussion without end. This is all the more true for the history of intelligence and security services, the archive material of which is subject to far longer terms than other government archive material before disclosure is permitted. Researchers are generally not given access to catalogues, but have to ask for relevant documents more or less in the dark. Also because of confidentiality agreements imposed on staff does information on intelligence and security services reach researchers, and consequently the public, and then after a much longer period than in other cases. Whereas, with history of other kinds, the picture of the subject generally changes in the course of time only as a result of new points of view. In the case of the history of intelligence and security services, new information can continue to lead to an adjustment of the picture for far longer.

Fortunately this was not the case in the research for this study where Dutch archives were concerned.⁴ Generous access was given to the archives by the Netherlands intelligence and security services, especially the Military Intelligence Service (MIS), where the author was able to make independent selections. In a number of cases, more detailed agreements had to be made for specific sources. These cases were concerned with the unity of the Crown, the private lives of those involved and the Netherlands national security and security of the state. The latter point was especially relevant to sources for the activities of Dutch and other intelligence and security services. In particular, the identity of informants, the origin of information that was gathered by these services and the relationship of trust with foreign counterpart services had to be protected. An additional study of related archives was also carried out in the Netherlands, for example at the Cabinet Office, Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Justice. Comprehensive research in the archives of the United Nations in Geneva and New York sometimes yielded additional background material.

It was also possible to speak freely with a large number of staff of the MIS and the Netherlands National Security Service (BVD). In addition to the usual privacy considerations, the fact that disclosure of their names and identities would impede or make impossible their future work as analysts or operators with intelligence and security services it was necessary to opt for referring to these more than thirty interviews as ‘confidential interviews’.

Finally, we must not omit to mention that much information for this study was obtained from open sources. Historical research is usually based on all available literature on the events to be studied. At the start of this investigation, it was expected that a large number of publications would not be relevant. However, it turned out that articles in daily and weekly newspapers and some books actually contained more information than originally thought. This concerned the history of the Balkans in general and how this was represented, as well as the history of the conflict in Yugoslavia. Some of those involved wrote memoirs. In addition, private and government archive collections in Canada, the United

³ The number in brackets after the Confidential interview note refers to the interviewee concerned.

⁴ De Graaff & Wiebes, *Villa Maarbeezje*, pp. 9 - 25.

States and several Western European countries were studied. Against this background it is only possible to state that the author has attempted in all good faith to verify the data issued to the institute. The possibility of errors cannot be ruled out. But this should not discourage anyone from writing about the role of intelligence and security services.

Chapter 1

The United Nations and Intelligence

‘If you understand the situation in the former Yugoslavia, you must have been poorly briefed’.⁵

1. Introduction

The final assessment of the UNPROFOR Deputy Force Commander (DFC), the Canadian Major General Barry Ashton, as formulated in his End of Tour Report, did not beat about the bush:

‘Operations were frequently impaired by a lack of credible and dedicated intelligence means. This was the case, in particular, for information concerning Serb offensives against Srebrenica and Zepa and for Croat, Bosnian-Croat, and Bosnian government offensive actions against the Bosnian Serbs in western Bosnia in September. While NATO information was often made available, the caveats placed on it made it awkward to use in a transparent international organization’.

Ashton also pointed to a recent UN operation that had had the same problems.

‘As has been pointed out for other UN missions, for example by Major-General Dallaire in Rwanda, operating in a complex and higher risk peacekeeping environment without adequate means of information limits the ability of UN forces to carry out their mandated tasks, impairs operational capabilities, and places UN personnel at greater risk’.⁶

The Swedish Force Commander, Lieutenant General Lars Eric Wahlgren, had gone before him in 1993, arguing that the UN in New York ‘must rethink the entire approach to information versus intelligence gathering’.⁷ The UNPROFOR Generals Francis Briquemont and Lewis MacKenzie also complained about the problems surrounding the availability of intelligence during their UNPROFOR period.⁸ MacKenzie, for example, had urged the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) of the UN in New York to use Imagery Intelligence (‘Imint’: see below for an explanation of the different types of intelligence) in order to establish who was the greatest culprit of ceasefire violations around Sarajevo. His request was rejected or ignored. He complained that the DPKO in New York just did not understand that the military and police situation in Bosnia was different from that of a normal peacekeeping operation, such as the one in, for example, Cyprus. The rules of the UN had nonetheless not been adapted to the new circumstances. MacKenzie was left empty-handed because ‘an outdated attitude regarding intelligence kept us from gaining the information we needed’. Help was sometimes offered by foreign intelligence services, but, because of the insecure connections, this intelligence often reached MacKenzie too late or not at all.⁹

⁵ Smith, *New Cloak. Old Dagger*, p. 210.

⁶ Confidential collection (6), End of Tour Report by Major General Barry W. Ashton, Deputy Force Commander United Nations Peace Forces (UNPF) in the Former Yugoslavia, ca. March 1996.

⁷ Paul Johnston. ‘No Cloak and Dagger Required: Intelligence Support to UN Peacekeeping’, *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 12 (1997) 4, p. 104.

⁸ John M. Nomikos, ‘Intelligence Requirements for Peacekeeping Operations’, *RIEAS Papers and Reports*, 07/02/01.

⁹ MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, pp. 281-282.

Lieutenant General Bertrand De Lapresle did not touch upon this sensitive subject at all on his departure. He had been the UNPROFOR Force Commander between March 1994 and February 1995, but opted 'not to raise that substantive subject at this moment'. However, the French general omitted to explain when the right moment was supposed to be.¹⁰ The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Yasushi Akashi, stated likewise that he had no intelligence at his disposal. He had never received anything in the way of intelligence regarding the attack on Srebrenica.¹¹

This might suggest the immediate conclusion that the UN had little affinity with intelligence gathering during peacekeeping operations, and apparently had refused to learn any lessons from earlier operations. There appeared to be no reliable intelligence available in Bosnia, and what was to hand presented great difficulties in terms of dissemination. Consequently, at a lower level the provision of intelligence to the troops on the ground during the UNPROFOR mission in Bosnia would also be woefully inadequate (as had been the case in Rwanda). Intelligence and UN peacekeeping operations would seem to be ill-matched from the outset.¹²

Peacekeeping has been described as 'the prevention, containment, moderation and termination of hostilities between or within states, through the medium of a peaceful third party intervention organized and directed internationally, using multinational forces or soldiers, police and civilians to restore and maintain peace'.¹³ Accordingly, the breaking of sanctions, clandestine weapon deliveries to the warring parties, secret plans for aggression, ethnic cleansing or genocide (Bosnia and Rwanda), and threats on the lives of the peacekeepers need to be discovered as rapidly as possible. Everyone involved will therefore have to recognize sooner or later that the success of a peacekeeping operation demands reliable intelligence.

Another important factor in peace operations in general is that the superpowers sometimes lose their influence over the warring parties and that they 'do not control the clashing parties as much as they used to do'. Because it is becoming more common for peacekeepers to be deployed while an armed conflict is still in progress, the risk to the soldiers on the ground is also increasing. The more complex tasks, which may involve significant ethnic, social and nationalist factors, and ever greater difficulties in properly distinguishing the warring parties in an intrastate conflict, demand an accurate understanding of their strategies, interests and activities. In addition, the UN and other peacekeeping organizations cannot afford 'to have less knowledge of the parties' intentions and activities than the parties themselves if the organizations desire to achieve any political tasks at the negotiating table'.¹⁴ Pär Eriksson even takes the view that a peacekeeping operation cannot be considered impartial because 'it is unable to see to it that all parties follow an agreement on disarmament'.¹⁵

During a peacekeeping operation there is also a need for strategic intelligence to assist in understanding the political and military situation between the warring parties. Strategic intelligence can be defined as an activity undertaken by a state or community with the aim of 'gathering, analysing, distributing and utilizing information and know-how to further its own ends relative to other states, political groups, military powers, movements or individuals'.¹⁶ This is especially relevant in the phase *before* the direct involvement of the UN. In concrete terms, examples would be asking questions about the origin of the conflict, what is at stake and the strategic political objectives and interests of the international community. Strategic intelligence is often read by the senior-most policy makers charged

¹⁰ Confidential collection (7), Lieutenant General De Lapresle's statement to the troop-contributing nations, 06/03/95.

¹¹ Interview with Y. Akashi, 29/11/99.

¹² See for an overview of the problems of modern peacekeeping missions: Mats Berdal, 'Whither UN Peacekeeping?', *Adelphi Paper*, no. 281, October 1993, passim.

¹³ David M. Last, 'Peacekeeping Doctrine and Conflict Resolution Techniques', *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 22 (1995) 2, p. 188.

¹⁴ Pär Eriksson, 'Intelligence and Peacekeeping Operations', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 10 (1997) 1, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁶ Välimäki, *Intelligence*, p. 27.

with setting the objectives of grand strategy and ensuring that military force is exercised for purposes of achieving national interests.¹⁷

In addition, a peacekeeping operation needs operational intelligence, which has to guide the most effective use of resources and manpower for the execution of the mandate. This is especially important in a fairly fluid political and military setting, where it would be concerned with the intentions, plans and capabilities of the warring parties, the nature of the military activities (conventional military actions, guerrilla warfare, ethnic cleansing), the military objectives of the parties, and how their propaganda is organized.

At the same time, tactical intelligence is necessary in support of the troops on the ground, so that they are able to carry out peacekeeping activities, such as monitoring a ceasefire or a suspension of hostilities. Examples might include the locations of ceasefire lines, trenches, minefields and checkpoints. After all, the intentions and capabilities of all warring parties, especially in a local area, must be mapped out if the UN mission is to have any chance of success.¹⁸ Finally, reliable intelligence is a prerequisite for minimizing the risk to troops on the ground and aircraft in the air.¹⁹ In brief, credible and sound intelligence is of great importance, and perhaps crucial, to the success of a peacekeeping operation.

The above arguments would appear to be ample justification for devoting considerable attention to the intelligence component of peacekeeping operations. However, it can be deduced from the quoted statements made by Force Commanders and Deputy Force Commanders that this was not the case. This chapter therefore discusses the difficult relationship between the UN and intelligence, which the peoples' organization has actually wrestled with since its foundation.

Before paying further attention to this issue, Section 2 first defines intelligence, and explains the various categories of intelligence.

Section 3 examines the history of the UN's difficult relationship with intelligence gathering during peacekeeping operations. This is illustrated by the words 'In 1960 it was suggested that the word "intelligence" should be banned from the lexicon of the United Nations', which have been attributed to the commander of the UN operations in Congo at the time.²⁰ Intelligence has apparently been regarded as a 'dirty word' in UN parlance.²¹ Section 4 dwells on the UN culture regarding the use and deployment of intelligence in UN operations. It raises the question of whether there has been any change in the past fifty years.

Section 5 covers the (mainly American) intelligence support of the UN in general and of UN peacekeeping operations in particular. The fact is that some intelligence input was forthcoming, especially when American ground forces were involved. Section 6 presents a view of the war in Bosnia and the UNPROFOR intelligence structure, and discusses the capabilities that the UN forces had available for gathering and disseminating intelligence. Resistance from the UN notwithstanding, the fact that some efforts were made to gather intelligence was not actually so remarkable. As one author remarked:

'The need for intelligence is being increasingly felt by both the UN and by states contributing to peacekeeping operations. Particularly in more complex and fluid situations, intelligence will be crucial in achieving the goals of the mission as laid down by the UN Security Council'.

¹⁷ Richard L. Russell, 'CIA's Strategic Intelligence in Iraq', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 117 (Summer 2002) 2, p. 193.

¹⁸ David A. Charters, 'Out of the Closet: Intelligence Support for Post-Modernist Peacekeeping', *The Pearson Papers, No. 4, Intelligence and Peacekeeping*, Halifax, 1999, pp. 42-44.

¹⁹ Hugh Smith, 'Intelligence and UN Peacekeeping', *Survival*, Vol. 36 (1994) 3, p. 176.

²⁰ A. Walter Dorn, 'The Cloak and the Blue Beret: Limitations on Intelligence in UN Peacekeeping', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 12 (1998) 4, p. 414.

²¹ Sir David Ramsbotham, 'Analysis and Assessment for Peacekeeping Operations', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 10 (October 1995) 4, p. 162.

This need is still growing, because

‘...peacekeepers are liable to find themselves in countries in which no government is in undisputed control, social order has broken down or is on the point of collapse. Sometimes hostilities are under way or imminent, and the use of force against peacekeepers is a manifest possibility’.²²

Finally, a number of conclusions are drawn in Section 7 .

2. A definition of ‘intelligence’

There is no Dutch equivalent of the word ‘intelligence’.²³ But also in the English language, according to CIA historian Michael Warner, there is, even today, no accepted definition of intelligence.²⁴ This therefore raises the question of how best to define intelligence. The overall description ‘gathering information’ is inadequate: intelligence is more than that. There is no lack of English definitions. Webster’s dictionary defines the term as ‘the gathering of secret information, especially for military purposes’. Winn Taplin, an ex-employee of the CIA, agrees and adds that strict confidentiality characterizes intelligence. However, this definition is too limited: it is not only secret information that is gathered, but also data from open sources. According to Taplin, gathering information from open sources cannot be called intelligence, but arguably this is incorrect.²⁵ The same difficulty in this regard I have with the definition of Warner that ‘intelligence is secret, state activity to understand or influence foreign entities’. So, information gathered about terrorists who are US nationals is not intelligence? Furthermore, Taplin’s definition is unusable because intelligence is not gathered for use on a military level alone. However, it is significant that intelligence in this definition is clearly described as a process.

Neither can we be satisfied with the common definition that ‘intelligence is information designed for action’. After all, not all information is destined by definition for taking action. The definition given by a CIA employee, the late John Macartney, as ‘supporting information for government policymakers’, is equally unsuitable.²⁶ This definition leans too heavily towards national decision-makers, and this is not necessarily the case: multinationals or foreign services may likewise be consumers of intelligence. Richelson has another definition, in which intelligence is ‘the product of gathering, processing, integrating, analysing, evaluating and interpreting available information concerning countries and foreign areas’.²⁷ One problem with this definition is that it overlooks the fact that people may also be the subject of intelligence. Furthermore, the focus of attention could well be within a country, and raw information can also be considered to be intelligence. In brief, it is not easy to provide a good definition. It is, as one author once wrote, like ‘making a microscopic portrait of an entire continent’.²⁸

It is important in any case - and this aspect is emphasized by many experts - that a definition should always contain more than one attribute. Intelligence is actually a product that is created in a complex process, and is delivered to one or more consumers. If the consumers are national players or decision-makers, then it is sometimes referred to as ‘national intelligence’. Considering these criteria,

²² Hugh Smith, ‘Intelligence and UN Peacekeeping’, *Survival*, Vol. 36 (1994) 3, pp. 174-175.

²³ Cees Wiebes, ‘Hookers and sportscars? De theorie van het inlichtingenwerk’ (The theory of Intelligence), in: Koedijk, Linsen & D. Engelen (eds.), *Verspieters*, pp. 11-35.

²⁴ Michael Warner, ‘Wanted: A Definition of Intelligence’, *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 46 (2002), 3, passim.

²⁵ Winn L. Taplin, ‘six General Principles of Intelligence’, *The International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 3 (1989) 4, p. 477.

²⁶ John Macartney, ‘Intelligence: A Consumer’s Guide’, *The International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 2 (1988) 4, p. 458.

²⁷ Jeffrey T. Richelson, *The U.S. Intelligence Community*, Boulder, 1995, p. 2.

²⁸ National Archives (referred to below as NA), RG 263, *CLA records*, Entry 27, Box 12, Martin T. Bimfort, ‘A definition of Intelligence’, *Studies in Intelligence*, Fall 1958, no. 8, pp. 75-78.

Jennifer Sims's definition is probably the most appropriate. She defines intelligence as information that is gathered, organized and analysed for players or decision-makers.²⁹ The consumers of the product in her definition are therefore not necessarily national decision-makers. Intelligence is a complete product that can be divided into various categories: political, military, economic, scientific, medical, technical and sociological.

Some examples will help clarify this point. Political intelligence is concerned with both the domestic and the foreign politics of a state, because developments not only on the domestic front (for example the civil war in the former Yugoslavia), but also in the foreign sphere (political policy changes) can influence international relations between countries. Military intelligence is important to a state in helping it determine its military needs. It can also be useful in better assessing the current or future bilateral relations between two or more states (for example between Serbia and Albania). Economic intelligence refers to information on, for example, the expansion of a country's Gross National Product, the state of affairs surrounding the production and the prices of strategic and energy resources, or possible problems with the balance of payments. Sociological intelligence relates mainly to relations between various communities within a country, for example, the situation in Kosovo.³⁰

Regarding the forms of intelligence, there are two elements that, strictly speaking, have nothing to do with the activities surrounding the gathering of intelligence, but are closely associated with them nonetheless: counterintelligence and covert action. Counterintelligence (CI) can best be defined as the identification and neutralization of the threat emanating from foreign services, as well as the attempts made to manipulate these foreign services and to use them to one's own advantage.³¹ It is a more specific form of intelligence, which also involves the gathering of information on hostile and friendly foreign services. Counterintelligence also involves the use of open and secret sources to acquire more knowledge of the structure, working methods and operations of these services. As stated, counterintelligence can also involve the penetration and destabilization of such foreign services. Finally, economic counterintelligence has emerged in recent years and is attracting increasing interest. It is used to combat the theft of information and technology by both hostile and friendly foreign powers.³²

In general, covert action is concerned with secret activities intended to influence foreign governments, persons and organizations, or political, economic and military developments, as part of a national security policy. An important point is that a nation's own involvement is kept strictly secret. There are various forms of covert action, ranging from propaganda, paramilitary or political activities that are intended to overthrow or support a given regime, to the secret support of individuals or organizations (trade unions, newspapers and political parties), secret arms supplies, economic destabilization operations, or even lethal attacks.³³ Covert action therefore mainly involves influencing and manipulating an opponent's political policy. Strictly speaking, it is therefore not an activity that falls within the concept of intelligence, although it can contribute to gathering intelligence and always requires substantial intelligence support.³⁴ An example of a planned covert action in the Balkans involving foreign services was the secret arms supplies to the Bosnian Muslim army, which we will return to in Chapter 4.

²⁹ Jennifer Sims, 'What is Intelligence? Information for decision makers', in: Godson, May & Schmitt, *U.S. Intelligence at the Crossroads*, p. 4.

³⁰ NA, RG 263, *CLA records, Entry 27, Box 12*, Max F. Millikan, 'The Nature and Methods of Economic Intelligence', in: *Studies in Intelligence* (Spring 1956), 3, pp. 3-4. Economic intelligence, incidentally, is not the same as industrial espionage!

³¹ Roy Godson, 'Counterintelligence: An Introduction', in: Godson, *Intelligence*, pp. 1-2.

³² Randall M. Fort, 'Economic Espionage', in: Godson, May & Schmitt, *U.S. Intelligence at the Crossroads*, p. 182. See also: *Annual Report of the Dutch National Security Service 1995*, The Hague 1996, pp. 29-30. As it happens, CI is also one of the tasks of the Dutch Military Intelligence Service, but only within the confines of military establishments.

³³ Cf. Roy Godson, 'Covert action: neither exceptional tool nor magic bullet', in: Godson, May and Schmitt, *U.S. Intelligence at the Crossroads*, p. 155.

³⁴ William J. Brands, 'Intelligence and Foreign Policy: Dilemmas of a Democracy', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 47 (1969) 2, p. 288.

3. The intelligence cycle

As described above, intelligence is actually a product that is manufactured in a (sometimes complicated) production process. This process is known as the intelligence cycle. The production of reliable and accurate intelligence in such a cycle does not have a precise starting point. It is a continuous process, but, broadly speaking, five phases or activities can be distinguished.³⁵

The first phase consists of surveying the needs of the consumers and planning the entire intelligence operation. In this phase, the 'intelligence needs plan' is drawn up, identifying the special subjects or areas that are of particular interest to the policy makers or military commanders. An example of such tasking could be to discover what military capabilities the supreme command of the *Vojska Republika Srpska* (VRS, the Bosnian Serb Army) has at its disposal in respect of the eastern enclaves (including Srebrenica) and what its intentions are.

However, the military intelligence requirements during a peacekeeping operation will have more to do with the circumstances surrounding a low intensity conflict than a conventional war. The threat during a peace-supporting operation (or in asymmetric warfare) is generally more diffuse and more difficult to identify than in a conventional war. Regular armed forces play a subordinate role, while controlled or uncontrolled paramilitary 'volunteers' and other obscure conflicting elements - such as criminal factions - have the initiative.³⁶ During a low intensity conflict, intelligence on matters like the overall state of the local population is at least as important as information on the number of tanks in a region.

Furthermore, intelligence will have to be gathered on the ethnic, linguistic, social and religious situation (to avoid cultural blunders, such as offering a lavish lunch to local Muslim leaders during Ramadan) and on the socioeconomic conditions in a given region (for example, by investigating whether a black market exists, and who is in charge). Again, in a low intensity conflict it is important for peacekeepers to take into account the possibility of a confrontation with 'barely controllable ethnic and criminal groups warring over a large area', as was the case in Bosnia. Such a situation has consequences for gathering intelligence.³⁷ Another significant factor in Bosnia was the constant asymmetrical warfare, in which a warring faction attempted to focus on its own 'comparative advantages against its enemy's relative weaknesses'. UNPROFOR was frequently confronted with asymmetric threats, which meant that a warring faction was not in a position 'either due to his own inabilities or the strength of the force opposed to him, of confronting an opponent in a conventional manner', and would consequently resort to 'using similar means or weapons to his opponent'.³⁸ For instance, the obstruction of convoys by the warring factions was an effective weapon for reducing the fighting power of UNPROFOR units.

In a 'traditional' collective defence operation, the emphasis is on studying the (measurable) military capabilities of the opponent (aimed at answering the questions of what the opponent is capable of and where this is possible). In peacekeeping operations and asymmetric warfare, knowledge of the capabilities of the parties is subordinate to a deep understanding of their intentions and motives, without losing sight of the capabilities. The intentions and motives of a warring faction can in some cases appear to be irrational when viewed from the outside.³⁹

³⁵ CIA, *The Acme of Skill*, Washington, undated, pp. 6-7.

³⁶ R. Theunens, 'Intelligence en vredesoperaties' ('Intelligence and peace operations'), *Militaire Spectator*, Vol. 170 (2001) 11, p. 599.

³⁷ Pär Eriksson, 'Intelligence and Peacekeeping Operations', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 10 (1997) 1, p. 7.

³⁸ Kevin O'Brien & Joseph Nusbaum, 'Intelligence gathering for asymmetric threats, Parts I and II', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, October/November 2000.

³⁹ R. Theunens, 'Intelligence and peace operations', *Militaire Spectator* Vol. 170 (2001) 11, p. 601.

The second phase in the intelligence cycle is the gathering of raw data.⁴⁰ This can happen in a number of ways: firstly via open sources, such as newspapers, magazines, books, government studies and radio and television broadcasts. This has also been referred to for a number of years as Open Source Intelligence ('Osint'). It is concerned with everything that appears in printed form or is broadcast on radio or television. Thanks in part to the Internet, most services currently draw a large amount of their information from open sources. It is estimated that (and it is only a guess) that under ideal circumstances, open source information will comprise somewhere around 10%-15% of the intelligence input into an all-source analysis. It is therefore incorrect to equate intelligence with 'espionage', although this mistake is commonly made. Espionage actually refers exclusively to various clandestine ways of gathering information. An example of such a furtive method would be the use of technical resources like film, photography or electronic intercept traffic, typically carried out from stations on land, special ships, aircraft or satellites. We will later deal more extensively with these special forms of intelligence, which include Signals Intelligence ('sigint'), Communications Intelligence ('Comint'), Radar Intelligence ('Radint') and Imagery Intelligence ('Imint').

A second method of gathering intelligence is from human sources, which is known as Human Intelligence ('Humint'). Humint involves intelligence gathering through person-to-person contacts, including through a party's own agents, reports from attachés, other diplomatic reporting and the systematic debriefing of Displaced Persons, emigrants, deserters, captured soldiers, released hostages, and so on. The clandestine part of Humint is concerned in general with the use of case officers or agents, who furnish information that is unobtainable in any other way from open sources. Here, case officers are employees of national intelligence services, and agents are mostly of foreign origin.⁴¹ Humint is particularly important in peacekeeping operations. Both the local population and senior soldiers or politicians may deliver valuable intelligence. Displaced Persons from a Safe Area can often also come up with important information in systematic debriefings, as can the non-governmental organizations that operate in certain areas.

The third and most important step in the cycle is the processing of all received data, from both open and secret sources. The large intelligence services, for example, deal with enormous quantities of intercepted message traffic that has to be decoded or translated. It is also necessary to process data in the first instance using advanced computers. Moreover, photographs, films and other recordings have to be developed before they can be studied and investigated further. Furthermore, Humint reports have to be analysed in more detail and verified against intelligence obtained from Sigint and Imint. In a battalion, this is mainly done by a section known as S-2 and, at UNPROFOR level, G-2. The other sections are dealt with more comprehensively in the main report, whereas this study focuses on the intelligence activities usually designated as such in military organizations.

A low intensity conflict demands that intelligence is appraised differently from intelligence gathered in a war situation, which is what army training focuses on. In a normal war, for example, four tanks on a road would be assessed in the traditional way as 'reinforcement or reconnaissance', whereas in Bosnia it often heralded a large-scale offensive.

On receipt of data, the intelligence would without doubt have been analysed in further detail at sector level (such as Sector North East of UNPROFOR, which included Srebrenica). In this connection, the information provided by the United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs) would have played an important role. This was a two-way process: intelligence would have flowed from the higher echelons of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo (later known as UNPROFOR) and the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb (later known as UNPF) to Sector North East and to Dutchbat, and vice versa.

⁴⁰ De Valk points out that the Netherlands National Security Service (BVD) used the word 'gathering' and not collecting. De Valk, *De BVD en Inlichtingenrapportages*, p. 25.

⁴¹ Godson, May & Schmitt, *U.S. Intelligence at the Crossroads*, p. 4. There is also the third, somewhat vaguer, category known as 'grey sources'. These are people or companies who, intentionally or unintentionally, disclose sensitive information in the course of conversations.

The fourth step is the analysis, integration, evaluation and production of the gathered material, which ultimately appears as a finished intelligence product. Analysts play a key role in this process, because they have to assess the information and the source for reliability, substance and relevance, and to compare it with data that became available earlier. They process the information. The resulting product can be relevant to the short, medium or (very) long term. Therefore, in this respect too, there is a variety of types of intelligence.

For the short term, Current Intelligence is important. This consists of reports on current developments, such as the changes in a given situation in the last 24 hours. In addition, intelligence as it is produced by the analyst can have a warning function (Warning Intelligence) and can send the consumer a clear signal of imminent crises. Operational Intelligence can also be important in the short term because it is especially relevant in situations involving military tensions or war. Intelligence can therefore also play a supporting role during crises. This short-term importance also applies to raw, unevaluated intelligence (Raw Intelligence). For the medium term, Basic Intelligence, which is also referred to as the 'heart and soul' of the product, is important. This involves more in-depth studies. Other categories can be identified below this, such as Targeting (the identification of military targets), and intelligence that serves to support the observance of accords on arms control (Arms Control Support).⁴²

Products that are generated for the very long term are known as Estimates, in which an analyst - on the basis of a thorough analysis of all available intelligence - expresses an expectation of future developments. An example is the American National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs), which during the Cold War were mainly analyses of the military power and political intentions of the Soviet Union.⁴³

The fifth and last step in the intelligence cycle is the dissemination of the product among the national and international consumers. For instance, every morning in Washington, a daily briefing book containing finished intelligence is sent to the President. Other consumers include the State Department, the Pentagon and the other government departments. An almost identical process takes place every morning in most European and Asian capitals. This results in new questions which in turn cause new needs to be formulated, and so the cycle starts all over again.⁴⁴

4. The intelligence cycle in practice

It is evident that, if the dissemination works properly, the cycle never ends, because a good use of the delivered product is as important as the continuation of the cycle. A significant example is the Suez Crisis of 1956, when, thanks to their having cracked the British, French and Israeli diplomatic and military code traffic, the American National Security Agency (NSA) was fully informed of the attack on Egypt. However, the delivered information, 'the NSA product', was left accumulating dust on a desk in the State Department for too long.⁴⁵ There are clearly pot-holes on the road to a finished product in the intelligence cycle. However, the process described is an academic ideal, not a practical reality. Generally it is too rigid to work very well and requires last-minute adaptation to match fluid situations. As Loch Johnson says: 'so the cycle is anything but smooth; it is bumpy and disjointed and sometimes collapses altogether'.⁴⁶

Some examples will make this clear. Firstly, collected information can be referred to as intelligence even if no finished product is created. Information that has not been processed by analysts

⁴² John Macartney, 'Intelligence: A Consumer's Guide', *The International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 2 (1988) 4, pp. 464-472.

⁴³ Currently, many NIEs have been released by the CIA for the period 1951-1993. An example of this is as follows: cf. NA, RG 263, NIEs 1951-1993, Box 6, Folder 47, NIE 11/4-82: The Soviet Challenge to US Security Interests, 10/08/82.

⁴⁴ CIA, *Factbook on Intelligence*, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁵ Interview with Matthew Aid, 29/09/01.

⁴⁶ Loch K. Johnson, 'Making the Intelligence "Cycle" work', *The International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 1 (1986) 1, p. 3.

can also be or become intelligence. For instance, the predecessor of the National Security Agency (NSA) intercepted more than 17,500 coded diplomatic and military telegrams from the Netherlands between 1 July 1944 and 31 June 1945. The code breakers issued a daily bulletin. Of the almost four thousand messages that were decrypted in 1945, 1857 were included in the bulletin. The messages that were not included can definitely also be considered intelligence because they were immediately available for translation and perusal at the request of the consumers.⁴⁷

In the second place, there are always permanent needs for intelligence (known as standing requirements), which do not have to be constantly re-established in consultation. In conflict situations or wars, as in Bosnia or Croatia, this involves the military state of affairs of the opponent, or the developments at the front. In many Western capitals before the fall of the Berlin Wall it also involved, for example, the political, military and economic developments in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. Other examples would be relevant political and economic developments in certain regions that are deemed to be of unchanging importance to a state's national security policy.

Again, the intelligence cycle outlined above is a simplification of the reality. Situations will always arise in which this cycle is quickly abandoned. During a political or military crisis, within the framework of crisis management, policy makers will have a greater interest in raw intelligence. There is no time to wait for a fully digested intelligence product at such moments. An example is the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1961, during which information on the positions of the Soviet nuclear missiles and the movements of Russian vessels were crucial to rapid decision-making on the US side.⁴⁸

A final example, which further clarifies the difference between the theory and practice of the cycle, concerns a general problem for secret services, which in a certain sense disrupts the intelligence cycle. This problem is known as the compartmentalization principle. Even in 'ordinary' organizations, problems arise because different departments have interests that do not run in parallel, or staff who pursue their own objectives, which are not immediately beneficial to the objectives of the organization. This is all the more true of secret services, where departments, bureaux and individual staff build walls around their areas of work, and lose sight of the overall organization or policy objectives. This is justified by the need-to-know principle (only someone who needs the information gets it; whoever does not need it, does not get it). This background sometimes creates conflict between the various departments within a service, which can have an impact on the cycle. Not all information then reaches the cycle.

For example, if an intelligence service fails to predict a crisis, invasion, nuclear test, or missile launch, then the service will often claim that it did not have the correct intelligence at its disposal in good time. It is often described as an intelligence failure. However, like the author Russ Travers already said, the system is sufficiently dysfunctional (despite the best intentions) that intelligence failure is guaranteed. Though the form is less important than the fact, the variations of an intelligence failure are endless. Failure may be of the traditional variety: the intelligence community fails to predict the fall of a friendly government or does not provide sufficient warning of a surprise attack against one of the allies or interests. The intelligence community is completely surprised by a state-sponsored terrorist attack or fail to detect an unexpected country acquiring a weapon of mass destruction. Or, as Travers observes, it may take a more non-traditional form: the intelligence community overstates numerous threats leading to tens of billions of dollars of unnecessary expenditures. Database errors can for example lead to a politically unacceptable number of casualties in a peace-enforcement operation or an operation does not go well because the intelligence community was not able to provide the incredibly specific data necessary to support a new generation of weapons.⁴⁹

Others define an intelligence failure as the failure to provide warning to commanders and policymakers where a duty to provide such warning exists. As an example, the Japanese certainly knew

⁴⁷ NA, RG 457, *NSA Records, Box 1028, Folder Monthly Production Trends Report*, Tab E: Annual Production 1944-1945, June 1945.

⁴⁸ CIA, *CLA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis 1962*, passim.

⁴⁹ Russ Travers, 'The Coming Intelligence Failure', *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 1 (1997), passim.

of their own plans to attack Pearl Harbor, but for the Japanese, it was not an intelligence failure because they had no duty to warn American commanders. For the Americans, on the other hand, there was such a duty to provide warning of an attack, and none was forthcoming. In this sense, it was an intelligence failure. So, there are three elements of an intelligence failure: failure to provide warning, to commanders and policymakers and where a duty to provide such warning exists.⁵⁰

It must be made absolutely clear that intelligence failures are seldom caused by a lack of information. The cause more often lies in its processing and interpretation. For instance, it emerged after the event that the Israeli intelligence community had a great deal of information on imminent Arab military action prior to the outbreak of the October War in 1973.⁵¹ The same was true of the American intelligence services, which had also received signals that an Arab offensive was imminent. The NSA especially had many intercepts (intercepted message traffic) that pointed to a military offensive. However, the enormous volume of intercepts (several hundreds of reports each week) overwhelmed the service. The analysts simply could not process the growing flood of messages in good time.⁵²

Many authors think, however, that the weakest link is actually the last phase of the cycle: the dissemination and the correct use of the intelligence product. John Macartney points to the Grenada operation in 1983 and the Iran Contra affair as examples in which intelligence was not involved in the operational plan.⁵³ Copley argues that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait too was certainly not an intelligence failure: intelligence was available, but it was not analysed in good time and reached the consumers too late. His assertion was therefore: 'intelligence is only intelligence when it is in the hands of the consumer'.⁵⁴

In the case of the fall of Srebrenica, it is essential to ascertain whether there was an element of intelligence failure that was caused by a lack of information. According to a former employee of Yasushi Akashi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in the case of Srebrenica there definitely was an intelligence failure. He assumed that if the UN had known what was about to happen, it would have reacted differently. The employee also thought that Akashi's political ambitions would have led him to respond in a different way.

During the war in Bosnia, Akashi had fallen out of favour with the prominent members of the Security Council. According to this source, the fall of Srebrenica was only one more reason to have him ushered off the stage by a side door. It was said to be a form of standard thinking in the UN (and therefore an intelligence failure) that the Bosnian Serbs would have no idea what to do with the tens of thousands of Displaced Persons from the enclave. The greatest intelligence failure, however, was not so much that no one knew whether half or all the enclave would be captured, but that no view had been formed in advance that the VRS would massacre all the men. After all, military logic demands that the worst case is assumed, which in this case was still that the VRS wanted to capture the enclave.⁵⁵ Chapter 8 deals with this subject in more detail.

It can be said in conclusion that intelligence is a product resulting from a complicated and sometimes long-term process and subsequently distributed among its consumers. Typically, this 'production process', which involves many 'employees', takes place in a 'large factory'. The production demands considerable financial investment, which must be used for the purchase of technical resources to acquire the intelligence, to keep the production process running, and to improve it through

⁵⁰ Confidential information (80).

⁵¹ Ytzhak Katz & Ygal Vardi, 'strategies for Data Gathering and Evaluation in the Intelligence Community', *The International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 5 (1991) 3, p. 313.

⁵² Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*, p. 391.

⁵³ John Macartney, 'Intelligence: A Consumer's Guide', *The International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 2 (1988) 4, p. 474.

⁵⁴ Gregory Copley, 'Intelligence and the Iraqi Invasion: Why Did So Many Services Fail?', *Strategic Policy*, September 1990, pp. 38-39.

⁵⁵ Confidential interview (46).

additional financial and other investments, as well as to pay the hundreds if not thousands of employees for their work. It is obvious that national governments will have such intelligence ‘factories’ at their disposal. Even small states generally have a national intelligence capacity in the form of civil and military intelligence services. However, this was not the case at the UN.

5. Intelligence and UN peacekeeping operations

The author Walter Dorn passes harsh judgement on the relationship between intelligence and peacekeeping operations in a UN context: ‘Many failures in the history of UN field operations might have been avoided had the UN taken a more forthright approach to intelligence and possessed a stronger mandate to gather information and improve its information-gathering system.’⁵⁶

Since 1945, the use of intelligence in peacekeeping operations has always been difficult. All those involved understood well enough that some intelligence input had to exist, but the UN in New York never took any substantial action to improve the existing situation, even though intelligence should be an integrated part of planning and policy. After all, intelligence is essential for the assessment of a political or military situation, and for taking the correct decisions. It can have far-reaching consequences, so that demanding requirements have to be set on its quality.⁵⁷

The only direct experience of the UN with its own intelligence collection capability took place in the 1960 Congo Crisis. In spite of the aversion that existed in New York, UN armed forces (especially at the initiative of Sweden) did set up a rudimentary intelligence cell: the Military Information Branch, which was operational between 1960 and 1964. The negative undertone of the term ‘intelligence’, which inferred all sorts of illegal and shady operations, meant that it was avoided, with preference given to ‘information’, hence the unit’s title ‘Military Information Branch’. During the peacekeeping operation in Congo, use was made of Sigint by intercepting communications traffic, Imint by deploying reconnaissance aircraft and Humint by systematically debriefing and interrogating prisoners via informants and agents. Comint was a source of much valuable information during the Katanga campaign (*Operation Grand Slam*) in December 1962 and January 1963, the objective of which was to remove foreign mercenaries, to restore freedom of movement, and to bring an end to the secession of Katanga. The Swedish battalion in Congo used Sigint with great success in the period 1961-1962. The communications of the other party, the Katangese units, were always ‘open’, because they assumed, incorrectly, that the Swedish soldiers could not understand Swahili, and therefore they revealed extremely valuable intelligence.⁵⁸ In addition, in November 1962 the Swedish government also made special photographic reconnaissance aircraft and photographic analysts available.

During this operation, the UN had little contact with national intelligence services. There is nothing remarkable about this, because the CIA was operating in Congo with a goal entirely of its own, which did not correspond with that of the UN. According to Dorn, the American, British and French intelligence services supplied little or no intelligence to the UN mission in Congo. This should have helped convince New York of the usefulness of having its own independent intelligence capability, by illustrating that the agenda of foreign intelligence services may well differ from the UN agenda, even if the governments in the Security Council sanction the operation.

In other peacekeeping operations, the UN had more intelligence available, especially because American Imint was shared with the UN. This was shown (not handed over!) to the commander of the UN Emergency Force in the Middle East in the mid-1960s. For instance, a military consultant of the Secretary-General of the UN was shown Imint from the American U-2 espionage aircraft during the Cuba Crisis in October 1962. Similarly, the military command of the UN Disengagement Observer

⁵⁶ A. Walter Dorn, ‘The Cloak and the Blue Beret: Limitations on Intelligence in UN Peacekeeping’, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 12 (1998) 4, p. 414.

⁵⁷ De Valk, *De BVD*, p. 10.

⁵⁸ Pär Eriksson, ‘Intelligence and Peacekeeping Operations’, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 10 (1997) 1, p. 11.

Force (UNDOF) on the Golan Heights in the Middle East in 1993 was sometimes allowed to study American U-2 photographs.⁵⁹ And in January 2003 two American U-2s were loaned to the UN for gathering intelligence about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. However, former US officials expressed immediately fear that intelligence given to the UN could leak.⁶⁰ During the operation in Somalia in 1993-1994, American services supplied much intelligence through their Intelligence Support Element, but then American ground forces were also participating. Whether this intelligence was shared with Pakistani UN troops is open to question, because on 5 June 1993, 24 Pakistanis were killed in an operation in Mogadishu. Mohammed Sahnoun, an Algerian diplomat and former special envoy to the UN for Somalia, felt that this indicated 'a complete lack of political and military intelligence capabilities'.⁶¹

In several other recent operations, the headquarters of the peacekeeping mission had an intelligence staff (referred to in military terms as 'the G-2', or 'J-2' in joint operations), as is usual in military operations. In Rwanda (UNAMIR) in 1995 (after the genocide) the G-2 cell comprised six intelligence officers. Of all the peacekeeping operations, various authors have stated that the operation in Haiti was the best organized with respect to intelligence gathering and processing, with a total of 29 Canadian officers. There was also an important intelligence component in the UN Special Commission in Iraq (UNSCOM). This monitoring mission was established as an independent agency with the responsibility to inspect and verify the destruction of Iraq's chemical, biological, nuclear, and missile programs. Although it was wearing a UN hat, it was in reality a Western operation. In early August 1991 UNSCOM began to create an in-house Information Assessment Unit. As Tim Crawford points out in his excellent paper, its primary purposes were to receive, analyze, and store overhead imagery, liaison with providing nations, the analysis and archiving of inspection reports, and the maintenance of data bases on Iraqi sites and equipment. The first four staff members of the IAU came from Canada, Australia, France, and the US. The nationalities of these expert analysts were no accident.⁶² The mission even had British eavesdropping equipment at its disposal to intercept Iraqi military communication traffic.⁶³ This did not mean, incidentally, that the staff of the UN verification mission in Iraq were provided with a better insight into the Iraqi military program. They constantly complained that they provided all their Sigint to the American and British intelligence services, but seldom saw the results.⁶⁴

The UNSCOM mission realized all too well that the Iraqi intelligence services would try to monitor their communication traffic. UNSCOM therefore made serious attempts to effectively secure the links with New York. Their efforts were in vain: the Iraqi intelligence service was in a position to decipher and read the coded traffic with the UN headquarters in New York. It turned out that the UNSCOM encryption program that was used to code the messages was very weak and easy to break. At that time it was impossible to buy American strong encryption software, because of the stringent export controls imposed by the American government. This also gave the American intelligence services a chance to read the weakly-encrypted messages. After the discovery that Iraq had broken the code, UNSCOM switched to the encryption program Pretty Good Privacy (PGP).⁶⁵

In parenthesis, we might observe that there were other reasons for not setting too much store by the impartiality of UNSCOM as a UN mission. From time to time, the mission included a large number of CIA staff, and furthermore the UN supplied intelligence to Israel, which further

⁵⁹ Robert J. Allen, 'Intelligence Support for Peace Operations', in: Pickert, *Intelligence*, p. 116.

⁶⁰ David Ensor, 'US spy planes to aid UN inspectors', *CNN.com*, 14/01/03.

⁶¹ Connaughton, *Military*, p. 116.

⁶² Timothy W. Crawford, 'Why Ever Not Never? Intelligence Cooperation in United Nations Security Affairs', *Paper prepared for the Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies*, Ottawa, 28/09/02, p. 20.

⁶³ A. Walter Dorn, 'The Cloak and the Blue Beret: Limitations on Intelligence in UN Peacekeeping', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 12 (1998) 4, p. 438.

⁶⁴ Marian Wilkinson, 'Revealed: Our Spies in Iraq', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28/01/99, p. 1.

⁶⁵ 'UNSCOM Hurt by Weak Encryption', *Intelligence Newsletter*, no. 403, 05/04/01 as published on 18/04/01 on: <http://216.167.120.50/>.

undermined the idea that the intelligence was first and foremost for the UN.⁶⁶ The American government also supplied and continues to supply satellite photographs to the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) in Vienna, which ‘monitors’ the nuclear programs of Iraq and North Korea.⁶⁷

However, as Tim Crawford points out, there were various things counting against the IAEA as regards sharing intelligence with this body. One of them was that IAEA officials, steeped in the UN culture of transparency, simply did not have the “mindset” to properly handle and use sensitive information. For example, on one occasion, a senior IAEA inspector was reported to have casually showed sensitive over-head imagery to an official not involved in inspections. On another occasion, that same inspector left overhead imagery out on his desk during a meeting with Iraqi officials.⁶⁸

To summarize, it can be stated that, during peacekeeping operations in a UN context, independent intelligence gathering was sometimes carried out, with the 1960 Congo experience being a highlight, but in general the UN remained completely dependent on what a member state (mostly the United States) was prepared to supply. The exception was UNSCOM, which received intelligence support from a wide array of governments. But this tells us more about the real character of UNSCOM than about intelligence sharing with the UN in general.⁶⁹

6. Intelligence within the existing UN culture

Since the extensive military enterprise in Congo, much has changed concerning peacekeeping operations in a UN context. Until 1992, the mission in Congo with 20,000 peacekeepers was the largest military operation so far, but that record was broken in the same year: UNPROFOR had more than 40,000 personnel, plus the support of a substantial air force from NATO and a fleet from the WEU. It is also significant that the mandate of most peacekeeping operations nowadays is much broader than used to be the case. For instance, missions are now charged with supervising compliance with sanctions, protecting Safe Areas, providing humanitarian relief, supporting Displaced Persons, monitoring local elections, or assisting in the development of the infrastructure.⁷⁰ However, this expansion of tasks triggered neither a new attitude to intelligence within the UN, nor any significant change of organizational culture.

The then Secretary-General of the UN, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, had tried in the late 1980s to improve the flow of intelligence to UN Headquarters but this ran into immediate trouble. He then created an Office for Research and the Collection of Information (ORCI) in the Secretariat. He tasked ORCI with collecting, organizing, and analyzing political information received from all available sources to support his activities and to advise him of threatening developments. ORCI also did not last. According to a UN veteran who served on Cuéllar’s executive staff, ORCI was stymied, not only by ‘insufficient managerial skill’ but also by ‘bureaucratic resistance from other Secretariat departments that were fearful of encroachment on their territory’. ORCI was disbanded in March 1992 by the new Secretary General, Boutros Boutros Gali and its functions were parceled out to other parts of the UN. Like Crawford correctly observed: a central organ for handling and analyzing sensitive information,

⁶⁶ A. Walter Dorn, ‘The Cloak and the Blue Beret: Limitations on Intelligence in UN Peacekeeping’, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 12 (1998) 4, pp. 439-440.

⁶⁷ Robert J. Allen, ‘Intelligence Support for Peace Operations’, Pickert, *Intelligence*, p. 117 and Richelson, *The U.S. Intelligence Community*, pp. 293-294.

⁶⁸ Timothy W. Crawford, ‘Why Ever Not Never? Intelligence Cooperation in United Nations Security Affairs’, *Paper prepared for the Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies*, Ottawa, 28/09/02, p. 19.

⁶⁹ See for the recurrent problems as regards US intelligence support for the UN weapon inspections in Iraq: Colum Lynch, ‘U.N. Arms Inspector Seeks U.S. Intelligence’, *The Washington Post*, 10/10/02; Julia Preston, ‘Weapons Inspector Ask U.S. to Share Secret Iraq Data’, *The New York Times*, 07/12/02; David E. Sanger and Julia Preston, ‘U.S. is to release spy data on Iraq to aid inspectors’, *The New York Times*, 20/12/02 Pieter Spiegel, ‘Pentagon offers drone in hunt for weapons’, *Financial Times*, 16/01/03.

⁷⁰ A. Walter Dorn, ‘The Cloak and the Blue Beret: Limitations on Intelligence in UN Peacekeeping’, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 12 (1998) 4, pp. 414-427.

with direct reporting to the Secretary General, was killed off and was replaced by a fragmented and balkanized system, in a department further removed from the Secretary General's control. This pattern would become a familiar one in the years to come.⁷¹

Working with a Military Information Branch and the large-scale application of intelligence during the 1960 operations in Congo was thus a one-off event. Since Congo, every attempt within the UN to create its own permanent intelligence section has met with resistance. Both individual countries and the various UN departments have great qualms about the idea. Therefore, in no way did the UN prepare effectively for dealing in a systematic and well thought-out way with secret intelligence: neither in the area of gathering, nor of its dissemination within the UN bureaucracy. There are no guidelines regarding the question of how information is to be gathered, what material must remain secret, which classification levels should be attached, and when documents can and should be released. This raises the question of the nature of the background to the resistance.

An important legal and political reason for the UN not to indulge in gathering intelligence is the mandate of the mission and the associated agreement with the local government. This obliges the UN peace mission to respect all local laws and rules. A peacekeeping mission must therefore be executed with great care, with no diversion from the mandate or the original agreement.

A 'splendid' but at the same time tragic example of such sovereignty constraints in the matter of the gathering and disseminating of information is the experience of the UN Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group shortly before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The mission had the mandate to supervise the suspension of hostilities between Iran and Iraq. Since July 1990 the observers had observed the movement of large numbers of Iraqi units to the south, towards the border with Kuwait. However, because the troops concerned did not move to the east (in the direction of Iran) the observers were officially unable to report anything. It was not even permitted by the headquarters of the UN mission in Baghdad. In addition, the Iraqi government threatened to expel the mission if the troop movement was reported through UN channels. This was a real threat, because Iraq monitored UN communication traffic.

Nor apparently, were there any reports to New York through informal channels. The then Secretary-General of the UN, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, wrote on this matter in his memoirs: 'The major powers knew in advance that a very large Iraqi force was moving towards the Kuwaiti border. I did not have such knowledge (...). I failed to anticipate [Saddam Hussein's] aggressive intent'. However, he fails to mention the knowledge that his own observers had in their possession, but did not pass on. Nonetheless, he draws another important conclusion:

'The United Nations, and the Secretary-General in particular, should have better sources of information on developments such as large troop movements that pose a threat to the peace. And the United Nations, as much or more than national governments, should have the skill and insight to understand the import of such information and take appropriate preventive action'.⁷²

However, virtually nothing would come of this. The most important explanation, which is often given, is the political climate within the UN, where doctrines of impartiality, transparency and international law are held in high esteem. The gathering of intelligence during peacekeeping operations does not fit in with UN culture, which must be seen as open and transparent. It would mean that the UN would be gathering intelligence about its own members, which is regarded as completely undesirable.⁷³

This attitude could be detected most clearly within the humanitarian part of the UN system, such as in UNHCR, UNDP and UNICEF. The reason is that the humanitarian community is worried

⁷¹ Timothy W. Crawford, 'Why Ever Not Never? Intelligence Cooperation in United Nations Security Affairs', *Paper prepared for the Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies*, Ottawa, 28/09/02, p. 24.

⁷² Pérez de Cuéllar, *Pilgrimage for Peace*, pp. 237-238.

⁷³ Mats Berdal, 'Whither UN Peacekeeping?', *Adelphi Paper*, no. 281, October 1993, pp. 43-44.

that the safety of their personnel is endangered if they are associated with intelligence gathering. Another reason is that the humanitarian agencies are not accountable to the Security Council for their operations.⁷⁴ According to the military advisor to the UN Secretary-General, Major General F.H. van Kappen, who held this position from 1 July 1995, this did not apply to the UN Secretariat, in particular for the two most important departments within the Secretariat, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA). Although these two departments also traditionally uphold the principle that gathering intelligence is undesirable, the thinking there is starting to shift.⁷⁵

Matters are complicated by the fact that the UN member states have no consistent view on intelligence. Furthermore, the discussion is clouded by problems of definition. What one member state sees as gathering intelligence, another describes as collecting information. As became clear, this was to have serious consequences in Yugoslavia. By way of illustration, the Canadian battalion and the French company who were responsible for reopening the Sarajevo airfield in June 1992 were given no insight by the UN into the positions and activities of the warring factions around that airfield. The UN expected the troops to go in 'blind'. Because of the excellent relationship with its neighbour to the south, Ottawa could gather the intelligence it needed by a roundabout route, which was not only necessary for protecting the units, but also to cover an emergency withdrawal strategy.⁷⁶

It can be deduced from this that, at the commencement of the conflict in Yugoslavia, the problems with passing on intelligence to the United Nations had yet to be solved. Indeed, there is still no intelligence culture at the UN. Within UNPROFOR, there was even an emphatic anti-intelligence culture. 'Intelligence, even if it was to be used only for force protection, was still being resisted by some senior military officers in command positions at UNPROFOR in Zagreb', according to an intelligence officer who worked at the headquarters there.⁷⁷

In the summer of 1992, at the start of the UNPROFOR mission in Bosnia, the UN Secretariat rejected the American offer of (military and other) intelligence.⁷⁸ At that time the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague had already concluded that without good intelligence 'the UN operation was doomed to be rudderless'.⁷⁹ The American offer was later repeated under the Clinton administration, but again rejected.⁸⁰ An anti-intelligence culture was also dominant at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) of the UN headquarters. For example, the head of this department, Kofi Annan, stated suspiciously: 'We have to be careful because the big powers only give us what they want us to know.' There was still a deep aversion to the UN gathering its own intelligence. They preferred to use the term 'military information', and the gathering had to be done by military observers, who were only allowed to report visual observations. When some (mainly American) intelligence was passed on to the DPKO, past experience showed that no feedback was to be expected from New York to the local UNPROFOR commanders.

Another reason for the UN's objections to intelligence is that there is an element of restraint in most countries when it comes to passing on information to the UN. This applies not only to smaller states, but also to the United States, which until now has had the closest intelligence liaison with the UN. This restraint was mainly caused by the 'leaks' within the organization itself, and also because UN personnel were unaccustomed to dealing routinely with classified material. This was an issue not only in New York but also locally in Bosnia, where insecure communication equipment was often used, so that

⁷⁴ F.E. van Kappen, 'Strategic Intelligence and the United Nations', Paper presented at the NISA/IDL Conference 'Peacekeeping and Intelligence', Delft, 15/11/02.

⁷⁵ F.E. van Kappen, 'strategische inlichtingen en de Verenigde Naties' ('strategic intelligence and the United Nations'), *Militaire Spectator* Vol. 170 (2001) 11, p. 593.

⁷⁶ Confidential interview (3).

⁷⁷ Confidential interviews (9) and (47).

⁷⁸ NMFA, PVNY. Van Schaik, PVNY to Foreign Affairs, no. 594, 23/06/92.

⁷⁹ NMFA, DEU/ARA/00085. Memorandum of the Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (DAV) on the Gymnich meeting held on 12-13/09/92.

⁸⁰ Interview with M. Albright, 28/09/01.

the *Armija Bosna i Hercegovina* (ABiH, the military forces of the Bosnian Muslims), the VRS and the *Vojska Jugoslavija* (VJ, the army of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) could listen in on UNPROFOR message traffic without much difficulty.⁸¹ A similar pattern had emerged during the UN operations in Lebanon.⁸²

The Secretariat in New York is notorious for its many leaks ('a leaky organization'), which has thoroughly dampened the enthusiasm among the member states for sharing intelligence with the UN.⁸³ The military advisor to the UN Secretary-General, Van Kappen, was once told by a foreign intelligence officer: 'If you enter this building and even think about something, it is known in 185 different capitals in the world within one hour.'⁸⁴ This is one of the reasons why the Security Council commonly met in 'closed session' to discuss UNPROFOR, with the consequence that some troop-contributing nations, such as Canada and the Netherlands, were kept outside the decision-making process surrounding UNPROFOR.

What is more, smaller countries are fearful that a smoothly running intelligence organization at the UN would damage their national interests and integrity. This risk would arise in particular if such a department were to become dominated (which is not unlikely) by Western intelligence officers.⁸⁵

It is also significant that many UN officials are simultaneously (and primarily) on the staff of foreign intelligence services, and consequently intelligence shared often lands on the desks of a foreign intelligence service. Van Kappen was also occasionally told that certain officials within the DPKO were active in gathering intelligence for various intelligence services.⁸⁶ For instance, many Russians and Chinese at the UN were in fact officials of their country's intelligence services. The Soviet intelligence service, the KGB, had even penetrated to the level of the Undersecretary-General for Political and Security Council Affairs. In the 1970s this was Arkady Shevchenko.⁸⁷

It is true that for intelligence sharing with the UN, a special intelligence liaison official was attached to the American Permanent Representative, but the former Director of the CIA James Woolsey admitted that this arrangement was awkward. The actual sharing of sensitive intelligence only happened there on a bilateral basis, according to the 'quid pro quo' principle. At the lower levels of classification there was broader sharing.⁸⁸ However, another American intelligence official was a bit offended but the complaints from UN officials. The UN was indeed incapable of dealing with the most rudimentary classification controls. However, the American response was to drive the classification to the unclassified level, and send it to the UN. Based on a concerted analytical effort, it was possible to attribute nearly every report to some unclassified newspaper report or openly available information. As long as the US intelligence community was not asked to provide information on sources and methods, the downgrading of extremely sensitive information could be accomplished, usually without threatening the far more frangible sources and methods. Teams of intelligence analysts at various US locations, including Naples, Molesworth, Stuttgart and Washington DC pushed the downgrading limits of published guidelines in an effort to release vitally needed information to the UN at the unclassified level. Usually the intelligence sources themselves were quite sensitive, but a report stripped of the source material, perhaps attributed to press or other open sources, the vital report could reach those who needed it without jeopardizing intelligence sources.

According to this official, the challenge of getting vital information to the UN became a two-step process. First, a truly all-source analytical effort was undertaken in at least four separate locations

⁸¹ For this, see Chapters 5 and 6 in particular.

⁸² Hugh Smith, 'Intelligence and UN Peacekeeping', *Survival*, Vol. 36 (1994) 3, p. 180.

⁸³ Robert J. Allen, 'Intelligence Support for Peace Operations', in: Pickert, *Intelligence*, pp. 124-125.

⁸⁴ F.E. van Kappen, 'strategic intelligence and the United Nations', *Militaire Spectator*, Vol. 170 (2001) 11, p. 596.

⁸⁵ Pär Eriksson, 'Intelligence and Peacekeeping Operations', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 10 (1997) 1, p. 5.

⁸⁶ F.E. van Kappen, 'strategic intelligence and the United Nations', *Militaire Spectator* Vol. 170 (2001) 11, p. 596.

⁸⁷ Shevchenko, *Breaking*, passim and Polmar & Allen, *Spy Book*, pp. 564-565.

⁸⁸ Interview with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00.

to generate an all-source perspective. Second, that all-source product was gone through with a fine lens to provide for the fullest possible disclosure to the UN. This resulted in two sets of products, or sometimes even more, for every product produced by these four specialized all-source analytical centers producing daily or twice-daily intelligence reports on developments in the Balkans. The US official complained (perhaps rightly so) that there remain too many individuals who judge the value of a report based on the classification it bears. This was foolishness, and the official hoped that such a perspective will die out soon enough. The US official remarked adamantly that it was such an ignorant perspective by asserting that 'unclassified = worthless'.⁸⁹

Nonetheless, within the UN in New York, there was constant resistance to the use of intelligence in peacekeeping operations. Van Kappen did personally have a strong suspicion that the permanent members of the Security Council do not consider this to be a problem and there is certainly no urge to change the situation.⁹⁰ The question arises, however, as to whether that position is now outdated, and whether the UN needs its own intelligence service and should engage in intelligence gathering. Smith points out that such signals have already been sent. For instance, the Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs has proposed that 'a group of professionals from various countries with expertise in intelligence (...) be recruited and approved by the Security Council'. This unit should have access to classified material, with a view to providing independent advice to the Security Council. However, this suggestion was given a sceptical reception, because it appeared unlikely that the officials of this unit would be able to completely divorce themselves from their national intelligence services. The question that then arises is whether the intelligence to be gathered by this unit would actually be reliable and free from value judgements.⁹¹

In 1992, the European Community, Russia, the Scandinavian countries, Australia, Canada and New Zealand made a proposal to establish an independent intelligence-gathering facility at the UN for early warning purposes, and to give the UN an effective instrument for preventive diplomacy. The proposal 'touched off a furious response from the United States, which appears to be resolutely opposed to any moves that would enhance the UN's ability to gather and analyse sensitive information in an independent fashion'.⁹²

Another problem, of course, is that the UN, with more than 180 members, is unusual in the world of intelligence in that it has no 'national interest' on which to concentrate. The needs among the policy makers in the UN Secretariat are also highly diverse, making it difficult to give direction to such intelligence gathering.⁹³

Provisionally, it would therefore appear that an effective intelligence organization under the DPKO is not to be expected in the very near future. The unwillingness among most countries is still too great, because intelligence would then have to be gathered about the member states. Eriksson therefore asserts: 'peacekeeping organizations (especially the UN) as they exist today cannot maintain an advanced, comprehensive and combined intelligence service of their own at a strategic level'.⁹⁴ The former British permanent representative at the UN, Sir David Hannay, expressed himself in similar terms. His first argument was that member states would not be prepared to pay. Secondly, he suggested that it would form too great a threat to their own national security. And thirdly, the DPKO in New York would not know what to do with all the information gathered, because it had insufficient personnel to process it.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Confidential information (80).

⁹⁰ F.E. van Kappen, 'Strategic Intelligence and the United Nations', Paper presented at the NISA/IDL Conference 'Peacekeeping and Intelligence', Delft, 15/11/02. A senior German intelligence official expressed similar views to the author. Confidential interview (99) and confidential information (88).

⁹¹ Hugh Smith, 'Intelligence and UN Peacekeeping', *Survival*, Vol. 36 (1994) 3, p. 188.

⁹² Curtis, *Deception*, pp. 200-201.

⁹³ Välimäki, *Intelligence*, pp. 34-38.

⁹⁴ Pär Eriksson, 'Intelligence and Peacekeeping Operations', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 10 (1997) 1, p. 1.

⁹⁵ Sir David Hannay, 'Intelligence and international agencies', in: Shukman (ed.), *Agents*, p. 179.

In April 1993, the Situation Centre was established in DPKO, as a 24 hour hub for communications between peace operations in the field and HQ. By the end of the year, the center was staffed by 24 gratis military officers (GMOs) on loan from 16 different member states from Australia to Zimbabwe, Norway to Pakistan, Jordan to Russia. This UN Situation Centre (SitCen) in New York carried out some intelligence-related work, but in practice this centre mainly sucked in all information while releasing little.⁹⁶ The SitCen has also a small analysis section, the Information and Research Cell (I&RC), which employed five officials. This organ was founded in 1994 originally with one American intelligence official, who was rapidly joined by three more staff from Russia, France and the United Kingdom. This organ is completely dependent on input from the national intelligence services, which leaves open the possibility of the manipulation of intelligence.⁹⁷

However, as Crawford observed, this benign view of DPKO's increasing intelligence capacity and the role of intelligence Western officials was not shared by many developing countries, or by most parts of the UN bureaucracy, where both the influence and the concerns of those countries predominate. Indeed, DPKO was increasingly seen by them as a 'beach-head' in the Secretariat for the US, its Western allies, and Russia. This could only mean the intrusion of great power priorities in the Secretariat, priorities, which often conflicted with those of developing nations. The developing nations, under the aegis of the Non-Aligned Movement, voiced major concerns and in the end also this organ was doomed to disappear. Various other attempts were made but, despite various recommendations, there is in 2002 still no coherent and autonomous organ within the Secretariat capable of serious intelligence handling and analysis.⁹⁸

Another major problem appeared to be the rapid turnover of personnel.⁹⁹ The Military Advisor to the Secretary-General of the UN, Van Kappen, confirmed this. In addition he said that he received hardly any reliable intelligence. The quality of the intelligence obtained was variable. Whatever he asked the American representative, he would receive 'no answer, or answers that made no sense.' Van Kappen himself said that his most useful contact was the Russian representative, Sergei Lakonovski, a former KGB officer. The problem with this was that his information could also be used to manipulate Van Kappen, who therefore had to treat it with extreme caution. He also received much information from the French, which, however, he often judged to be unreliable because assumptions were frequently elevated to the status of facts. Van Kappen received rather less information from the British, but what he received was mostly reasonably reliable.¹⁰⁰

Another problem that Van Kappen identified was the large proportion of intelligence that was supplied to him verbally, often with the instruction to share it with only a limited number of officials. Occasionally he was not permitted to inform the official in the DPKO who was responsible for the political aspects of a peacekeeping mission. According to Van Kappen, the management of this department was completely unclear, which resulted in constant friction and discord, both within the DPKO and elsewhere within the Secretariat. Van Kappen also had frequent suspicions that products that were passed to him were intended to manipulate the UN, or at least the DPKO. As an example he mentioned the humanitarian crisis in East Zaire. If a permanent member of the Security Council was in favour of intervention, intelligence would be supplied showing that there were too many Displaced Persons and that they were in a wretched state. If a permanent member was against intervention, then the number of Displaced Persons would be less alarming and their condition would be reasonable. All

⁹⁶ Confidential interview (3) and Robert J. Allen, 'Intelligence Support for Peace Operations', in: Pickert, *Intelligence*, pp. 111-129.

⁹⁷ A. Walter Dorn, 'The Cloak and the Blue Beret: Limitations on Intelligence in UN Peacekeeping', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 12 (1998) 4, p. 433. See also: David A. Charters, 'Out of the Closet: Intelligence Support for Post-Modernist Peacekeeping', *The Pearson Papers, No. 4, Intelligence and Peacekeeping*, Halifax, 1999, pp. 51-52.

⁹⁸ Timothy W. Crawford, 'Why Ever Not Never? Intelligence Cooperation in United Nations Security Affairs', *Paper prepared for the Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies*, Ottawa, 28/09/02, pp. 24-27.

⁹⁹ Välimäki, *Intelligence*, pp. 53-55.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with F.H. van Kappen, 21/06/00.

in all, Van Kappen found it a 'shameful exhibition'.¹⁰¹ A senior German intelligence official confirmed this description. A specific person was pinpointed and this particular person was the only one to receive intelligence from the BND. The official also confirmed that files with national intelligence were designed in order to influence certain UN officials.¹⁰²

American intelligence support to the UN was limited, partly because of the 'varied' composition of this unit. The documents that were handed over were often unclassified. However, the disadvantage of this, as a UN employee explained, was that it was 'dated' and often consisted of a summary of earlier UN reports.¹⁰³ However, as an US official adamantly remarked: it is such an ignorant perspective by asserting that 'unclassified = worthless'.¹⁰⁴

Actually, the UN was constantly confronted with an internal dilemma: they did not want to carry out intelligence gathering themselves, but it was also clear to the organization that intelligence is necessary in peacekeeping operations. For instance, the Military Advisor to the Secretary-General, Major General Maurice Baril, admitted in January 1995 at a meeting of troop-contributing nations, that access to intelligence was important, but that such help would have to be arranged bilaterally, for access to intelligence was, as Lord Owen was able to recall, 'a potentially difficult one'.¹⁰⁵

The reluctant attitude to active and independent intelligence gathering was therefore not a sign that the UN believed that it had absolutely no need of intelligence in its peacekeeping operations. According to Johnston, there were in fact no compelling reasons for the UN not to provide effective intelligence support to its own peacekeeping missions.¹⁰⁶ However, the resistance to intelligence remained a part of the UN culture, and that would also initially be the case with UNPROFOR. In traditional peacekeeping operations, the policy of the troop-contributing nations was to minimize and disregard the military-intelligence component, because they assumed that intelligence gathering could undermine the principle of impartiality.

In addition, New York wanted to avoid awkward questions, such as whether the intelligence that the UN would gather had to be shared with all the warring parties. With respect to 'openness' versus 'confidentiality', the UN was confronted with a dilemma, because there are advantages and disadvantages to both. A potential advantage of openness is that it makes the operation more acceptable and less threatening to all warring parties. It would also reduce the fear of all manner of covert operations, and build trust. A disadvantage of too much openness is the danger of leaks, for which the UN was renowned and which would lead to a sustained refusal among the troop-contributing nations to share more and better intelligence with the UN.¹⁰⁷

An added factor is that states can have different political interests in a peacekeeping operation, which are not necessarily in line with the mandate of the Security Council. This can be a reason for a troop-contributing nation to share gathered intelligence only selectively, or not at all.

Another problem is the diversity of nationalities within a UN operation. The kind of intelligence that can be shared between a Dutch and a British official, for example, cannot be shared with an official from Ukraine. As an example from the practical situation in Bosnia, the first Force Commander of UNPROFOR, Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, had no NATO intelligence at his disposal because he came from India.¹⁰⁸

The official NATO guidelines on sharing intelligence with non-NATO member states are extremely stringent: intelligence is only intended for the member states, and therefore cannot be

¹⁰¹ F.H. van Kappen, 'strategic intelligence and the United Nations', *Militaire Spectator* 170 (2001) 11, p. 595. Also: Bert Bommels, 'Marinier in New York' (*Being a Marine in New York*), *Elsevier*, 30/05/98.

¹⁰² Confidential interview (99).

¹⁰³ Robert J. Allen, 'Intelligence Support for Peace Operations', in: Pickert, *Intelligence*, p. 122.

¹⁰⁴ Confidential information (80).

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Lord Owen, 27/01/01.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Johnston, 'No Cloak and Dagger Required: Intelligence Support to UN Peacekeeping', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 12 (1997) 4, p. 111.

¹⁰⁷ Sir David Hannay, 'Intelligence and international agencies', in: Shukman (ed.), *Agents*, pp. 179-180.

¹⁰⁸ Hugh Smith, 'Intelligence and UN Peacekeeping', *Survival*, Vol. 36 (1994) 3, p. 177.

disclosed to 'a non-member nation or any international organization containing non-member nations. Whatever different requirements emerge for peacekeeping operations this fundamental principle must be upheld.'¹⁰⁹ In this connection, in a 'lessons learned' article, an Irish peacekeeper outlined a fairly idealistic picture of the relationship between peacekeeping and intelligence. In his opinion, intelligence gathering is essential for all peacekeeping operations, but intelligence operations in a UN context must be carried out by teams of various nationalities. He feels, moreover, that gathering intelligence 'should be controlled and conducted solely at the discretion of the Force Commander'. Consequently, the intelligence must not be gathered for or by the various national intelligence services or the interests of troop-contributing countries. How intelligence would have to be gathered in that case, and what structure is available for the task, this military official at the UN Training School in Ireland does not say.¹¹⁰

Another obstacle within the UN is the divergent general attitude to intelligence from one country to another. Some countries reject intelligence activity by the UN or underestimate the importance of intelligence.¹¹¹ The dissemination of intelligence between parties is sometimes also hindered for political reasons, which, for instance, accounted for the suppression of intelligence on attacks by ABiH snipers in Sarajevo on their own population.¹¹²

In spite of the dismissive attitude and culture within the UN towards intelligence, some reasonably serious attempts have nonetheless been made to provide the UN, and especially the DPKO, with better intelligence in peacekeeping operations.

7. Intelligence support for UN peacekeeping operations

In the summer of 1992, UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali launched his Agenda for Peace, which announced a considerable expansion of the number of UN peace operations. Between 1945 and 1988 there were a total of fourteen such operations, but between May 1988 and October 1993 the number had already risen to twenty. The nature of these UN operations changed significantly over the years, with the environment for soldiers shifting from non-hostile to hostile. This also meant an increasing need for intelligence, the importance of which was recognized by the American government.

In November 1992, President George Bush Sr. announced¹¹³ in an address to the UN General Assembly that his government would start intelligence sharing with the UN with immediate effect. He also said that the Security Council would have to play a more central role in such operations. This shift in policy was a recognition that the UN operations needed considerable intelligence support if they were to have even a reasonable chance of success.

'such peace enforcement operations would require strategic military and political intelligence for pre-deployment planning; operational intelligence support to deployed UN forces regarding the disposition, capabilities, and intentions of potentially hostile forces; and tactical intelligence to support UN forces that might themselves be engaged in sustained combat'.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ John M. Nomikos, 'Intelligence Requirements for Peacekeeping Operations', *RIEAS Papers and Reports*, 03/10/00.

¹¹⁰ Lt. Colonel Oliver A.K. Macdonald, 'Peacekeeping Lessons Learned: An Irish Perspective', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 4 (1997) 4, pp. 100-101.

¹¹¹ Hugh Smith, 'Intelligence and UN Peacekeeping', *Survival*, Vol. 36 (1994) 3, p. 177.

¹¹² John Sray, 'selling the Bosnian Myth', in: *Foreign Military Studies*, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, October 1995 and confidential interviews (9) and (47).

¹¹³ He was Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) from January 1976 to January 1977. See: CIA History Staff, *Directors*, pp. 24-25.

¹¹⁴ Joseph G. Hays III, 'Oversight of U.S. Intelligence Support to UN Peacekeeping Operations', in: Pickert, *Intelligence*, pp. 435-439. Quote on p. 439.

The first step taken by the Bush administration to put this new policy into effect was the 'launch' of National Security Directive 74, which set down guidelines for more generous intelligence sharing during peacekeeping operations.¹¹⁵ The Americans established a separate structure for the necessary liaison, and also built in levels for the classification of documents that could be handed over to the UN. The Director of the CIA, Robert Gates, designated the Defense Intelligence Agency as the most important channel for the intelligence support to the UN by the United States in peacekeeping operations. This support was not to be permanent but subject to review on a case-by-case basis. The first UN mission to benefit was the UNTAC operation in Cambodia.¹¹⁶

President Clinton inherited this policy from his predecessor, and produced Presidential Review Directive (PRD) 13, in which he expressed support for the more extensive participation of American armed forces in peace operations. Domestic political considerations tripped up this apparent success, however, because the directive met with resistance in Congress and was then withdrawn.¹¹⁷ This again showed the popularity of UN-bashing in Congress.

Congress felt vindicated by the dramatic events of October 1993, when 18 US Rangers were killed and 78 wounded at Mogadishu in Somalia. This even led to a small rebellion in Congress.¹¹⁸ James Woolsey, former Director of the CIA, confirmed that matters had indeed gone wrong in Somalia and there were suspicions that American intelligence had been leaked via the UN, enabling the warlord Mohammed Farah Aideed to strike. The sharing of intelligence between the Americans and the Italians had also been known to go wrong. In the absence of a clear policy underlying the sharing of intelligence, decisions were made on the spot. 'It was a verbal decision with no paper moving around', according to Woolsey. In his opinion, a local Chief of Station (COS) could only share intelligence if he or she was duly authorized.

However, there was no clear policy on this point.¹¹⁹ It would appear that policy was mostly decided in the field, certainly where tactical intelligence was involved. Woolsey suspected that sharing with UNPROFOR was at a low level, going no further than confidential status. He commented that, in the case of a normal peacekeeping operation, there would not actually be very much need for intelligence, but in the case of a war there obviously would. Therefore, according to him, a CIA liaison officer was posted to Zagreb and Sarajevo at UNPROFOR headquarters.¹²⁰ However, a senior US intelligence official remarked that the situation described by Woolsey was Somalia in the early 1990's, not the Balkans in mid-1995. By 1995, there was a clear written US policy, thoroughly understood at multiple levels, on the thresholds of information release from US channels into the UN. According to this official, this new policy was aggressively pursued by the most senior leadership.¹²¹

In any case, the intelligence leaks in Somalia led American Congress one month later to draw up the International Peacekeeping Policy Act of 1993, which among other things proposed curtailing intelligence sharing with the UN. An amendment to the Peace Powers Act of 1994 was also submitted with the same objective in January 1994. It is true that both proposals were never raised for discussion, but the tone in Congress had been set. President Clinton took no notice of this, and in May 1994 he issued Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 25, which was a revision of his earlier PRD 13. PDD 25 also went against the wishes of Congress by providing for an expansion of intelligence support to the UN.¹²²

¹¹⁵ George Bush Library, FOIA, *National Security Directive 74, Peacekeeping and Emergency Humanitarian Relief Policy*, 24/11/92.

¹¹⁶ Robert J. Allen, 'Intelligence Support for Peace Operations', in: Pickert, *Intelligence*, p. 117.

¹¹⁷ See for the text of PRD-13: <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pddd13.htm>.

¹¹⁸ For this, see also: John Gerard Ruggie, 'Peacekeeping and U.S. interests', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 17 (1994) 4, p. 175.

¹¹⁹ See for the personal recollections of the COS in Mogadishu: Garrett Jones, 'Working with the CIA', *Parameters*, Winter 2001/2002, pp. 28-39.

¹²⁰ Interview with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00. For this, see also Chapter 3.

¹²¹ Confidential information (80).

¹²² For a description of the content of PDD-25: <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pddd13.htm>.

After the Republicans gained a majority in Congress in November 1994, they announced in their Contract with America that they would overrule PDD 25. In its place they wanted to tighten the rules of the game for exchanging intelligence, and felt that this should require at least an official agreement between the President and the UN Secretary-General. It goes without saying that the Republicans knew that the UN would never consent to such an agreement.

A considerable curtailment was also provided for in the Peacekeeping Policy Act of 1995, which the Republicans submitted. However, this bill was provisionally rejected by Congress.¹²³ A huge commotion broke out in February 1995 about the sharing of US intelligence with the UN. American personnel discovered large quantities of US intelligence documents and classified Imint in open cabinets at a deserted UN office in Mogadishu. This was top-secret material that had been shared by the United States with the UN, but had been left behind unguarded by local UN personnel. This was grist to the Republicans' mill, and resulted in amendment after amendment to associated legislation. In May and June 1995, entire bills were submitted that would go as far as to make handing over US intelligence to the UN almost impossible. The bills were not raised for discussion, partly because Clinton threatened to use a presidential veto, but it was clear that the tide could not be turned if the UN were to become involved in a new scandal about leaking US intelligence. In that case the Democrats would probably also endorse the curtailment of the intelligence support, and public opinion, which until then had not stirred, would likewise start to move.

It was also clear that the American intelligence community could not be 'involved' simultaneously with every crisis in the world. On 2 March 1995 the Clinton administration therefore issued PDD 35, which was an attempt to set priorities in the matter of the intelligence needs of all American services. It identified four priority levels, the highest of which was the gathering of intelligence on indications or warnings of approaching hostilities, crisis management information and support for military operations. The following priorities related to gathering political, military and economic intelligence about countries that were hostile to the United States. The lowest priority was given to intelligence on countries that were unimportant to the United States. The consequences of PDD 35 are discussed below.

The solution opted for seemed at first glance to be ideal, because giving priority to intelligence needs was in itself an excellent starting point. It gave the intelligence community a handle on what information the political leaders wanted to see and it gave the highest priority to supporting crisis operations. It rapidly became apparent, however, that PDD 35 also had significant disadvantages. The intelligence community turned out to be incapable of predicting serious crises. An American Congress study on the subject stated that the intelligence community had responded to PDD 35 by focusing 'resources on the highest priority issues at the expense of maintaining basic coverage on "lower" tier issues'.

The lowest intelligence levels were therefore more or less ignored, because the entire intelligence community concentrated on the most important priorities. Less important intelligence needs were therefore pushed to the background. Even before PDD 35 was issued, the great emphasis of intelligence on acute security issues had proved to be a problem. PDD 35 served only to confirm this situation. It had become apparent at a much earlier stage that this could create problems, for instance in Rwanda and Somalia. These countries were probably on priority level 4, but when both states suddenly shifted to level 1 because of a crisis, the American intelligence community turned out to be poorly prepared.¹²⁴ For example, after US troops left for Somalia in 1992, the country continued to be the 18th intelligence priority of the nineteen countries in the area under the responsibility of US Central Command. American ground forces there had virtually no intelligence, and the local CIA refused to provide it. CIA staff sent the intelligence required first to their headquarters in Langley,

¹²³ Joseph G. Hays III, 'Oversight of U.S. Intelligence Support to UN Peacekeeping Operations', in: Pickert, *Intelligence*, pp. 445-449.

¹²⁴ Becker, *Coming*, pp. 21-23.

Virginia, where it was decided which intelligence could be sent to the ground forces in Somalia. This process would often take between 12 and 72 hours.¹²⁵ A later study of the operations in Somalia indicated that there had been insufficient Humint, and that important 'intelligence indicators were not assessed and analysed from first principles but were rather conveniently tailored to fit around what was wanted to be believed'.¹²⁶

The question now was whether this problem of being unable to handle an unexpected high priority also occurred in Yugoslavia, and in particular with respect to the political and military situation in Eastern Bosnia. Only after Clinton was elected at the end of 1992 was a more aggressive Bosnia policy introduced, moving the region to the top priority level.¹²⁷ The question is whether this happened in time to gather sufficient intelligence. Some experts believe that this was not the case, and that Humint efforts in particular were undertaken far too late. Because building up a properly functioning network often takes months or years, it is likely that this failed to happen in time in Bosnia, and especially in the Republika Srpska. The Humint efforts in Bosnia were only stepped up with the arrival of the first US ground forces.¹²⁸

However, what would appear to have been more crucial were the negative signals from the American Congress, which the American intelligence community would hardly have ignored. In spite of all the measures and President Clinton's attitude, this is bound to have led to a more restrained policy on sharing intelligence with the UN in peacekeeping operations such as the one in Bosnia. As a result, most countries that were involved could not rely on UN intelligence and were obliged instead to arrange their own, which had to be acquired either by their own activities or via liaison with another country. UNPROFOR therefore had an ill-starred beginning to the war in Bosnia: no intelligence culture within the UN; no organizational structure in the UN itself devoted to active and timely intelligence gathering and the analysis of the intelligence gathered; little intelligence contribution from outside; and finally little willingness to cooperate among foreign intelligence services.

8. The Military Information Office (MIO) in Zagreb

Since the UNPROFOR mission, with its peacekeeping character, was essentially a military operation, what is known as a G-2 intelligence staff was set up to provide the Force Commander with intelligence. Zagreb, Sarajevo and Sector North East in Tuzla had similar sections. Because intelligence could not be referred to by name, here too the term 'military information' was introduced. The staff of the Military Information Office (MIO) in Zagreb was a multicultural affair and consisted of a large number of different nationalities, but it had no network of sources or agents of its own, and no autonomous resources for gathering intelligence. They were completely dependent on what the UNMO's and the staff on the various echelons within UNPROFOR reported and on the voluntary intelligence contribution of other states. Initially, this led to intelligence often being gathered along national or allied lines. Informal communication channels were exploited and informal agreements were entered into to gain access to the intelligence obtained.

Even after its wavering start, the MIO never managed to build its own collection capacity: the financial resources, the manpower and the political will were all lacking. In this respect, the MIO could not be considered to be a real intelligence service: the staff were unable to direct the gathering of information. Nonetheless, some collection management was possible, but generally through national or NATO centers and auspices alone, with the exceptions of the unofficial relationship to the UNMO's and the NGO's. But there was no direct tasking authority from the MIO in Zagreb to any collection

¹²⁵ Becker, *Coming*, pp. 35-39.

¹²⁶ Connaughton, *Intervention*, p. 116.

¹²⁷ For this see also Chapters 2 and 4.

¹²⁸ Becker, *Coming*, passim.

capacity in the theatre. But nevertheless, some collection did take place under the direction and control of the MIO office in Zagreb, especially through NATO and national resources.¹²⁹

Originally, the UNPROFOR mission was intended for Croatia, and the headquarters were established in Sarajevo. There too, there was absolutely no real intelligence capacity. A staff was hired locally to watch TV and to listen to the news on the radio in order to inform the UNPROFOR command of the latest developments.¹³⁰ Little changed when this mission moved to Belgrade on 17 May 1992. Only after the move to Zagreb and the escalation of the war in the summer of 1993 was there any serious attempt to tackle this deficiency, but even then it remained tough going.

The MIO only really got down to work when the first American Deputy G-2 Officer arrived in Zagreb in March 1994. There were between ten and fourteen members of staff under the Spanish G-2 Officer, Colonel Juan Palomar. As well as the American officer, there were representatives of the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Kenya, Denmark, Nepal, Belgium and Sweden. Various other countries, such as Jordan and Poland, were also represented from time to time. The Spanish G-2 Officer was succeeded first by another Spanish soldier Colonel Fidel Ramos and then on 9 January 1995 by the Swedish Colonel Jan-Inge Svensson.

According to a former head of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) of the Royal Netherlands Army who served in UNPROFOR under Force Commander Jean Cot, it was difficult to obtain reliable intelligence in Zagreb. The American Deputy G-2 Officer in Zagreb had his own office where in the beginning no one was admitted. From the American side, little sharing of intelligence took place, but neither did much intelligence arrive, according to this source. The fact that everyone had a so-called blue-beret mentality (a reference to the blue colour of the UN) reinforced the situation, because intelligence was considered 'dirty'.¹³¹

However, the description of the situation by this Dutch officer pertained to 1994 and this was certainly not the case in 1995. In that period the office of the American Deputy G-2 was always open for other members of the MIO staff. Throughout this period, the Deputy G-2 Officer position was held by Americans. From September 1994 this was LCO Gary Bauleke and from March 1995 onwards (also during the fall of Srebrenica) the officer concerned was Commander Ric Morgan, who had a secure E-mail and secure data net access with the US intelligence community, which kept him thoroughly up-to-date on intelligence. Morgan shared as much as possible of the intelligence acquired in this way with some other staff at the headquarters in Zagreb.¹³² However, this was sharing within limits. According to some Unprofor staff he only shared with fellow Americans or some privileged partners, such as the British and Canadians. This caused resentment, not least among personnel of the non-privileged NATO countries, who sometimes felt they were being sidelined.

However, according to an US intelligence source a distorted picture is painted here. The American Deputy G-2 acted under the specific and detailed instructions of his US superiors, based on broad policy guidance from Stuttgart and Washington. Morgan did share to the very limits of his authority. The US intelligence support flowing to the UN in Zagreb and Sarajevo was far, far better in volume, quality and responsiveness than ever before in any other UN undertaking, anywhere in the world. His orders were to share information on sources and methods only with specific parties, including NATO parties, individuals in leadership positions (including the Dutch Chief of Staff, Canadian Deputy Force Commander, the French Force Commander (and French members of his staff), Mr. Akashi (Japan) and Mr. Annan (Ghana) and select members of their staff.

In many cases, the details regarding sources and methods to those specific individuals, exceeded those which could normally be provided to regular NATO channels under then-existing guidelines. The specific instruction from his superiors was that those key decision-makers were to be provided access to information, exactly as though they were American commanders controlling US troops. Morgan had

¹²⁹ Confidential information (80).

¹³⁰ MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, pp. 135-136.

¹³¹ Confidential interview (36).

¹³² Confidential interview (54).

a dual responsibility to support the leadership as well as the troop contingents. With that in mind, the substantive content of the intelligence was disseminated broadly to other UN parties without any similar restriction. This was done by helping to shape the NATO intelligence flow disseminated via Linked Operational Intelligence Centre Europe (LOCE) network¹³³ (an intelligence system set up by the NATO countries based on a specially constructed highly-secured communication network), as well as the US products flowing directly to the UN. British and Canadian contributions were similarly most substantial. Also the French contributed. As an aside, MIO staff interviewed could not ever remember a single intelligence report from the Dutch. Even the reports from the released Dutchbat soldiers were extensively edited by Dutch debriefers and staff and relinquished only under protest.¹³⁴

Especially during Operation Storm in August 1995 (the Croatian offensive in the Krajina) members of the MIO felt being sidelined. According to one former MIO staff, clear that the Deputy G-2 Officer had special relations with Croatia, and the American officer was said to have known of the attack well in advance.¹³⁵ However, an American intelligence official denied this strongly and some US officials in Zagreb even felt 'betrayed' by the US Military Attaché, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Herrick, who seemed to know in advance about the Croatian offensive but apparently did not share this intelligence with his US colleagues.¹³⁶ The American opinions and intelligence regarding the launch of the Croatian offensive against the Krajina was shared with Unprofor. Zagreb knew on the basis of this that something was about to happen. He pointed for example to the message of July 7th which Akashi forwarded the message to New York. Akashi reported that he was gravely concerned about the dangerous situation in Croatia. The developments could quickly deteriorate in a full scale war. There was an expectation of a renewed Croatian military offensive at 'practically anytime'. And indeed: US intelligence assessments on July 10th indicated that Croatian forces were poised to attack with virtually no advance warning. However, the attack did not actually begin until August 4th. The reason for the delay has never been adequately explained.¹³⁷

According to former staff of the MIO in Zagreb, the quality of the local staff was varied. Some were professional intelligence officers, but others often had no operational or intelligence background at all. Their performance was therefore mediocre. What is more, in common with many other missions, some officers were only interested in the financial rewards, and did little work.

Neither was there a culture of debating opposing perceptions or unusual opinions, which would have been beneficial to forming balanced views. This applied not so much to the MIO but in particular to the debates in the UN staff in general. Furthermore, the intelligence officers would often take heed of the prevailing political and military views in their country of origin, which sometimes led to the production of politicized intelligence, or the deliberate disregarding of certain unwelcome issues.

Originally, no input at all came from the UN DPKO and UNPROFOR itself with respect to building up the necessary facilities. The office of the new MIO received only office furniture, telephone connections and a few old PCs. Standard office items were also issued rather frugally, which led to newcomers being advised to bring their own items with them. Moreover, the MIO originally had no connection with the outside world by modem, so that e-mail traffic and Internet access were impossible. Neither did the MIO have any strongboxes or secure rooms, so it was not safe to leave documents there. The office was accessible to everyone throughout the day. Locally hired cleaning personnel could walk in and out unobstructed. Some of the staff assumed that all rooms were bugged and that most discussions were monitored. Only later this situation at UN HQ in Zagreb improved considerably. In 1995, for example, the personal office of the Force Commander, the personal office of the Deputy Force Commander and the office of American Deputy G-2 were regularly checked and confirmed by competent authority to be free of bugs on a recurring basis.

¹³³ Another network was BICES: Battlefield Information Collection and Exploitation System.

¹³⁴ Confidential information (80).

¹³⁵ R. Theunens, 'Intelligence en vredesoperaties' ('Intelligence and peace operations'), *Militaire Spectator*, 170 (2001) 11, p. 603.

¹³⁶ Confidential information (80).

¹³⁷ Confidential information (80).

Moreover, the MIO had no resources of its own to gather intelligence nor the authority to order certain units on the ground, in the air, or at sea to gather intelligence. Most attempts to do so got no further than lower-level UN commanders, who refused on the grounds that the UN does not indulge in intelligence. Some collection management was possible, but generally through national or NATO centers and auspices alone, with the exceptions of the unofficial relationship to the UNMO's and the NGO's. But there was no direct tasking authority from the MIO in Zagreb to any collection capacity in the theatre. The staff also had no secure connections or computer networks for communications traffic, and not even an encrypted telephone for holding secure conversations. The only system was the 'open' UN telephone network, plus a few telephones, which again were connected to the Croatian telephone network. Furthermore, the MIO had no access to external databases. Some members of staff therefore remarked mockingly that they had better access to information at home than in the Military Information Office.¹³⁸

Initially, the MIO had no source of intelligence from outside the region specifically providing a daily or weekly intelligence input. It would even have been impractical to receive daily messages, faxes or telexes from outside the region because the staff had no secure connections at their disposal. For this reason, the field of vision at the MIO remained limited to what arrived from UN sources, and sometimes via national lines. The MIO functioned mainly on the basis of the daily and weekly reporting of the units in the field and from the United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs) who were military observers under direct orders from the UN headquarters in New York.¹³⁹ The quality and quantity of the information varied considerably, and depended greatly on the capacities and expertise of the person providing it.

Experience taught the MIO that it took two to three months before a 'fresh' battalion would start to deliver high quality intelligence. In view of the fact that most units were relieved after six months, quality was under pressure. There was also a language problem: the official language was English, but this created difficulties for some units.

The best source of information for the MIO turned out to be the UNMOs, whose headquarters in Zagreb had its own G-2 section. A former prominent UNMO officer went so far as to assert that these UNMO headquarters generally had better intelligence than the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb: 'We were living among the population.' However, this was not the only reason. This UNMO had once compared the information positions with a member of the UNPROFOR G-2 staff in Zagreb and concluded that the UNMOs' information was much more usable than that of UNPROFOR. Filtering took place at many more levels within UNPROFOR: 'I saw documents that had only been through a selection once. At UNPROFOR there were many more layers of selection for information', this UNMO officer said.

Furthermore, the UNPROFOR G-2 staff in Zagreb dealt with the different national capitals, which (whether or not via the UN Security Council) requested a wide variety of information. Answering these requests formed an additional burden. According to a senior UNMO official, this is a permanent problem where intelligence is concerned, and it is exacerbated because political desires may influence the flow of information: 'Information only has an effect if people are open to it.'

At UNPROFOR, according to this UNMO officer, this was definitely the case: 'At UNPROFOR the political reality mainly dictated which information was reported upwards.' As an example he mentioned the observance and reporting of shelling incidents, which was a regular UNMO task. 'If we said that Muslims were shelling themselves, this was not accepted by UNPROFOR, for political reasons.'

As a specific example he mentioned the mortar attack on the water distribution point in Sarajevo on 28 August 1995, which had been the trigger for the later NATO air strikes. The UNMOs

¹³⁸ Confidential interviews (9), (45), (44) and (47).

¹³⁹ For this, see also: Paul Johnston. 'No Cloak and Dagger Required: Intelligence Support to UN Peacekeeping', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 12 (1997) 4, p. 109.

had indications that this attack had indeed been carried out by Bosnian Muslims themselves. However, all associated evidence was brushed aside by American officers in Sarajevo. A British colonel of the Special Air Services (SAS), who investigated the matter together with a senior UNMO official, then passed on the contrary findings to a British daily newspaper.¹⁴⁰

At a later stage, the MIO was reorganized in April 1995 by Svensson who also asked New York for more manpower. The UN then approved to strengthen the analyst capacity and the organization in Zagreb was tightened up. Svensson then had a staff of 13 nationalities, which spoke 11 different languages.¹⁴¹ After that the MIO not only observed the military situation, but also assembled information on political, economic and humanitarian matters. According to Smith, a standing joke in the MIO until then had been that: 'If you understand the situation in the former Yugoslavia, you must have been poorly briefed.'¹⁴²

In April 1995, some members of the staff of the MIO were finally given access to the intelligence stored in the Linked Operational Intelligence Centre Europe (LOCE) network. LOCE was used to obtain American Imint and to exchange the results of electronic and other intelligence. The situation in other military information offices was sometimes similarly poor. The G-2 officer at the headquarters of Sector North East in Tuzla, Major Knut Eilertsen of Norway, had absolutely no access to LOCE, and he was the only intelligence officer there. Visits to units or areas were impossible because of the shortage of staff. Eilertsen therefore hoped for a speedy expansion of his G-2 section, as he expressed during a visit by Dutch soldiers. The Dutch Chief of Staff of Sector North East, Colonel J. Engelen, had to admit frankly after this visit that the provision of information in the UN was minimal.¹⁴³

In 1994 and 1995, the access to 'the rest of the world' at the Zagreb office of the G-2 staff consisted of a few daily newspapers and a TV that could pick up the European broadcasts of the news station CNN and the music station MTV. The latest news 'as seen by CNN' and the latest video clips were therefore the only contact with the region outside the Balkans. This is how the MIO discovered that the CNN news was not free of an anti-Serb bias. During the Gorazde crisis in April/May 1994, CNN showed pictures of the VRS attack on the enclave, which surprised the staff, who wondered how CNN could have acquired the pictures. What they found even stranger was that a French APC was visible in the film pictures in Gorazde, because they knew that no French units were stationed there. It transpired later that the pictures concerned had been recorded several years earlier, when the ABiH were engaged in driving out the Bosnian Serbs from the region.¹⁴⁴

Despite the fact that the MIO was inadequately equipped, the staff attempted to make the best of things. The MIO had three departments in Zagreb. One was responsible for keeping an eye on the Orders of Battles of the different warring factions and updating a complete map overview. The second department was responsible for analysing the situation on the ground. This covered a wide spectrum of subjects, such as weapons imports, local skirmishes, food shortages, thefts and attacks on convoys. The third department fulfilled all the administrative functions and was responsible for some degree of management as regards the intelligence efforts. Moreover, there turned out to be no archives from the periods 1991, 1992 and 1993, so that all the experience gained and earlier 'lessons learned' were unavailable to the new MIO team (since 1994).¹⁴⁵

Again the work of the MIO staff only really got under way when the first American Deputy G-2 Officer arrived in Zagreb. The staff then held a briefing every morning between 7.30 and 8.00 for the officer responsible for operations (in military terms known as the G-3). The briefing was open to UNMOs, NGO's and various aid organizations, such as the International Red Cross (ICRC) and the

¹⁴⁰ Confidential interview (44).

¹⁴¹ Interview with Jan-Inge Svensson, 15/11/02 and E-mail Jan-Inge Svensson to the author, 26/11/02.

¹⁴² Smith, *New Cloak. Old Dagger*, p. 210.

¹⁴³ MoD, *CRST, Morning Briefing, No. 378*, G-2 Cap. Hagenars to HINL, no. CBST/941, 15/09/94.

¹⁴⁴ Collection NIOD (3).

¹⁴⁵ Confidential interviews (9), (45) and (47).

UNHCR, the UN's organization for refugees. They discussed the current intelligence situation and provided an overview of the acts of war. The inclusion of aid organizations was a conscious choice, because they were often an important source of intelligence for the MIO, both through official reports, and unofficially through personal contacts. For instance, in the spring of 1994, the UNHCR representative in Gorazde was the first to report VRS troop movements around the enclave. NGO staffs were therefore briefed on a near-weekly basis and they provided extremely valuable information, both in-theatre and also on strategic issues of importance in areas such as Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro.¹⁴⁶

In addition, the MIO provided a regular briefing for the Force Commander, which was attended by the Deputy Force Commander, the Chief of Staff, the Head of Civil Affairs and other UNPROFOR staff members. Both a daily and a weekly information report were produced by a British military official. Information from the reports was used in turn by the Force Commander and Akashi in their reporting to the DPKO in New York.

The MIO produced Daily Defense Information Summaries, Information Reports and Information Summaries. The former mostly contained operational information, while the latter were often more analytic in nature. Analyses for internal use could be found in the Inter Office Memoranda. The intelligence input improved considerably as a result of the arrival and working methods of the American Deputy G-2 Officer. Via highly secured communication links and via his embassy in Zagreb, a steadily increasing supply of American intelligence then got under way. The other MIO staff members, in so far as they came from NATO member states, likewise received the American intelligence via the NATO LOCE network and from him, and this intelligence was also handed over to NATO.

Set against this background, the statement made by General Bertrand Janvier is quite remarkable. The French Force Commander claimed during his first hearing before the French parliamentary investigation committee that he received *no* NATO intelligence, because he was not in Bosnia on behalf of NATO. The question was why he would not have received intelligence from NATO, while the British General Rupert Smith and the Canadian Deputy Force Commander Barry Ashton clearly did. Janvier explained that he was not in the line of command and that he therefore had no access to NATO intelligence. 'That is the sad truth', according to the French general, who did admit to having received intelligence from the French military intelligence service, the *Direction de Renseignement Militaire* (DRM). This service also made use of French officers in Zagreb who reported to it.¹⁴⁷

Janvier's statement is surprising indeed. We must assume that Janvier, like Akashi's statement above about Srebrenica, was not speaking literally. In fact, the French general definitely received NATO intelligence via the US Deputy G-2 Officer in Zagreb. Actually, what this officer delivered on a daily basis to Janvier was US intelligence, not NATO intelligence. Some of what the Deputy G-2 provided to Janvier may have also been released to NATO channels, but generally he did not spend time telling Janvier things that he would hear from the NATO liaison officer, or his own staff. Janvier's time was always at a premium, and the Deputy G-2 avoided redundancy.¹⁴⁸ Of course, France did not form part of the military structure of NATO, but Paris did participate in the NATO operation over Bosnian air space (Operation Deny Flight) and in so doing gained access to intelligence. At the same time, the French general had permanent and direct access via the national intelligence cell in Zagreb to intelligence produced by the NATO member states.¹⁴⁹ So, Janvier was very economical with the truth when he claimed that he did not receive NATO intelligence.

Alongside the dissemination and analysis of intelligence, the MIO also made recommendations on the securing of links (Communications Security, 'ComSec'), but these were generally ignored. For

¹⁴⁶ Confidential information (80).

¹⁴⁷ Assemblée Nationale, *Srebrenica: report sur un massacre*, Assemblée Nationale, no. 3412, 2 parts, Paris 2001, Part 2, Audition de M. Bernard Janvier, 25/01/01, pp. 106-139.

¹⁴⁸ Confidential information (80).

¹⁴⁹ Confidential interviews (9), (12), (44), (45) and (47).

example, the following is contained in the UNMOs' Post Mission Report on the period 1992-1996 regarding secure links: 'that was a real disaster for UNPROFOR/UNPF' [UNPF was the new name of UNPROFOR after 31 March 1995]. Both the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb and that of the UNMOs used insecure land lines for their daily reporting, and 'for that period UNMO (and UNPF in general) has become unwillingly (let's hope) "the second intelligence agency" for the Croatian Army.'

The satellite links that were used by UNPROFOR were also an easy target for the warring factions' monitoring services. Openness of communication traffic had until that time always been considered one of the essential principles of a peacekeeping operation. One participant remarked: 'It is right for an academic peacekeeping operation, but for such an active operation like UNPROFOR it is not. There is a strong belief that it should be reconsidered on the basis of sad experience of this Mission.' The report again indicated that all the warring factions had captured or confiscated much UNPROFOR communication equipment. The VRS, ABiH and the Army of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Sigint units were therefore in a position to intercept UNMO communication traffic 24 hours a day, and they regarded it 'as the most reliable source of information'.¹⁵⁰

The attitude of high-ranking UNPROFOR officials towards the MIO was unclear, and differed greatly from one individual to another. Another problem was that some countries wished to maintain command over their own UNPROFOR units through national lines. The result was that 'the overall UNPROFOR command process was deemed disorganized and unable to make use of the information supplied to it by the intelligence process'.¹⁵¹ An MIO intelligence officer agreed with this observation in some areas, but felt that the Dutch G-3, Colonel H. De Jonge, as well as his cadre of Canadian officers understood the importance of intelligence very well, and were able to absorb it effectively for planning and operations purposes. But other elements of the staff did indeed not do nearly as well. The political office, headed by a Russian, Colonel V. Ratso also dealt with the intelligence provided to him very well. Furthermore, the UNMO's, regardless of nationality, always absorbed and utilized the intelligence provided to them exceptionally well.¹⁵² And according to a former MIO staff member, Akashi was an eager consumer of intelligence, and had a preference for consulting personally with the briefer while referring to detailed charts.

There was also useful contact between the MIO and Akashi's Analysis and Assessment Unit, and information was regularly exchanged. The Force Commander in 1994 and 1995, and later advisor to negotiator Carl Bildt, the French General De Lapresle, was also a fervent intelligence consumer, as was the head of the Civil Affairs Department in Zagreb, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and General Rose, the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander in Sarajevo.

Others were apparently less interested in intelligence, and some senior officers even openly expressed their opposition to the use of intelligence from outside the mission area. According to a former MIO official, in early 1994 the Canadian Deputy Force Commander General John MacInnes objected to the use of any intelligence from outside. He even told some members of the MIO team that they were only allowed to use information produced by UNPROFOR or UNMOs themselves because he did not permit the use of intelligence from national sources.¹⁵³

The intelligence organization of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (BHC) in Sarajevo

The Chief of Staff under General Rose, General A.P.P.M. van Baal, confirmed that the UN did not indulge in intelligence. Rose did have his own intelligence channels through the British SAS. Van Baal served from 24 February to 1 September 1994 in Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (BHC) in Sarajevo, and formally had 27 positions on his staff for intelligence officers. These were only partially filled, however. When he arrived in Sarajevo, there were still five officers who had little to do. This was

¹⁵⁰ Confidential collection (5), *UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF, Post Mission Report 1992-1996*, Zagreb 1996, p. 29.

¹⁵¹ Välimäki, *Intelligence*, p. 87.

¹⁵² Confidential information (80).

¹⁵³ Confidential collection (3).

evident, for example, from the fact that little had changed in the Order of Battle Book since 1992.¹⁵⁴ Van Baal was directly concerned with the US involvement in Sarajevo and the associated tensions between the British and Americans. He saw many examples of this, sometimes with his own eyes, because the US embassy was based next to his BHC office.

‘suddenly we saw many Americans appear, including the former SACEUR Galvin, who had been engaged to build up the army of the Muslim-Croat Federation. My British intelligence contacts said that the other Americans were CIA. Some of them were in civilian clothes and others in uniform’.

Van Baal also had Americans on his staff, including one who was responsible for the helicopter operations, but also an American who officially worked as a liaison officer for humanitarian operations (food drops), ‘but actually he only watched what we did to pass it on to his counterparts’. There were also CIA officers who had tried to get into Van Baal’s staff, but he had managed to keep them out. American generals were also constantly arriving on visits, which, according to Van Baal, had no other objective than to urge a harder approach. On this point there was a great difference between these generals stationed in Europe and their more cautious colleagues in the Pentagon. According to Van Baal, there was also a difference of opinion with the Americans over the dual key procedure for Close Air Support (for this, see Chapter 2 of Part III of the Srebrenica report): ‘They had absolutely no grasp of the fact that in the event of a wholesale air strike the revenge would be directed at the UN’. According to Van Baal, General Rose once commented: ‘we will bomb as soon as American troops are here on the ground. Then I will skip the dual key.’¹⁵⁵

J.W. Brinkman succeeded Van Baal in Sarajevo and was Chief of Staff of BHC from September 1994 to March 1995. He confirmed the US influence. According to Brinkman, the head of the G-2 section in Sarajevo was an American. ‘It was obvious what his role was’. BHC gathered no intelligence itself but received intelligence from the participating countries. According to Brinkman, some countries, such as the United Kingdom and France, had their own Comint in the region, but they rarely gave away the information obtained.¹⁵⁶

From February 1995, Colonel A. de Ruiter became the new Chief of Staff under General Rupert Smith. He was also able to confirm the heavy US involvement because BHC was still physically located next to the embassy. The ambassador and his staff paid regular visits, during which the staff would almost immediately go through to the G-2 section. De Ruiter actually had a quarrel with an American major, because De Ruiter felt that only blue berets (UN personnel) should be allowed to walk around. According to De Ruiter, all other people were welcome, provided they reported to him. This helped somewhat, but the American officers and diplomats continued to visit the G-2 section all the time.

The head of the G-2 section was also an American, Brian Powers. An interesting development came when Powers had to be replaced, and numerically it was the turn of the French to supply a head of the G-2 section. However, in the end it was another American who took over - the Frenchman was sidelined and appointed second-in-command. This involved considerable discussion between the two countries. De Ruiter felt that the choice had been deliberate.

Since the UN had no intelligence network of its own, the neighbours (the US embassy) were to become one of the key sources of the information that UNPROFOR received. However, that reporting was provided to the UN at large, but rather to specific individuals in positions of leadership in the UN in Sarajevo. Meanwhile, the embassy received information from UNPROFOR on the state of affairs in the operational area. The fact is that, in the intelligence world, the *quid pro quo* principle (‘this for that’)

¹⁵⁴ Interview with A.P.P.M. van Baal, 27/05/98.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Interview with J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

played an important role. For this reason, the head of the G-2 section in Sarajevo had to continue to be an American.¹⁵⁷

The levels of intelligence at the Military Information Office in Zagreb

The absence of its own intelligence network and the lack of capabilities meant it was possible to distinguish various intelligence levels at the MIO in Zagreb.¹⁵⁸ First there was 'the UN MIO', as envisaged by New York. As stated above, its facilities and resources were limited, which resulted in a second level of activities, based on the links with the nations' own intelligence services and the input from them. Some staff members had direct connections with their home country, usually via the secure links at their own embassies, or their home country had its own intelligence headquarters in the region itself. The United States, France, Canada and the United Kingdom opted for their own National Intelligence Cell in Pleso, close to Zagreb. The staff of the MIO regularly exchanged intelligence with that organization.

A third level of activities was based on allied intelligence liaison relationships. This mainly meant input from the long-established CANUKUS network, whose name is derived from the first letters of the participating countries: Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. If an MIO briefer (who would usually be American, British or Canadian) could not answer specific questions from Janvier or Akashi, there were always resources, which could be queried for a response. This happened (certainly in 1995) when Imint was made available to the highest policy makers in Zagreb, although this was not a regular occurrence.

If the national authorities deemed it necessary, important intelligence was sometimes also passed on without a specific underlying request. According to an insider, some representatives of Western services took this to great lengths, and sometimes exceeded their mandates. However, they did put the importance of a properly functioning MIO first. The MIO also received much intelligence through the Monitoring Close Air Support Centre in Zagreb, the liaison cell for contacts between Zagreb and the Fifth Allied Air Force of NATO in Vicenza. Only MIO staff from NATO member states had access to this operations centre.¹⁵⁹

It is a stubborn myth that NATO has an independent intelligence capacity. NATO's intelligence section is a department that is completely dependent on the intelligence input of the member states. This was evident, for example, from the informal and indirect contacts through a national intelligence line of the MIO with the intelligence staff in the NATO armed forces headquarters (in military terms, SHAPE) in Bergen/Mons. It had already come to the attention of MIO staff that many NATO reports were identical to their own, even down to the choice of words. On a visit to Zagreb, NATO staff officers praised the work of the MIO to the American Deputy G-2 Officer. They were extremely surprised to learn that the daily reporting that they read was produced by a Non-Commissioned Officer with the rank of sergeant, whose spelling was later checked by a captain in Zagreb.

Some troop-contributing nations realized that intelligence officers were badly needed Bosnia and so they sent intelligence personnel to Bosnia themselves. UN headquarters in New York never requested these personnel, but once they were in the area the officers concerned were used intensively. Someone with the appropriate security clearances could gain access to intelligence material that could not have been used otherwise. This did occasionally give rise to bizarre situations within UNPROFOR. For instance, a Canadian peacekeeper with a NATO security clearance received American satellite photos, but he was not allowed to show them to his UN commander, because he was French. However, some are convinced that this must have happened before 1995.

In Sector North East (SNE) of UNPROFOR in Tuzla, this led to the Danish deputy commander being forbidden to share the intelligence that he received through NATO with his Swedish

¹⁵⁷ Interview with J.A.C. De Ruiter, 29/06/00.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

¹⁵⁹ Confidential interview (16).

commander,¹⁶⁰ because Sweden was not a member of NATO. The rule within NATO is that some sorts of intelligence are specifically released to NATO channels under the treaty agreement but they will not be disseminated by any NATO member to any non-NATO member. The idea is that if the Danes want to release their intelligence to a non-NATO member, they have to make that decision for themselves, and not have for example the Greeks decide for them. That's exactly the way the treaty reads, and most NATO countries adhere to it. The Swedish colonel G. Arlefalk, who was commander of the Swedish battalion with a Danish tank company in Tuzla from 30 March to 14 October 1995, was later confronted with exactly the same problem. He was extremely dissatisfied with the information that reached him through UN channels, because it was not accurate enough. The news station CNN was the source of information that he used most. Later he could sometimes access additional information that came through NATO channels to his Norwegian deputy, but formally and officially he should not have been allowed to see this intelligence. As a commander he was also not allowed to enter the room where the intelligence it arrived.¹⁶¹ On the other hand: one might wonder why would he need to enter the room where NATO cryptographic equipment was kept? Was this somehow crucial to his performance as a commander? After all, he received the NATO intelligence.

9. Conclusions

The final assessment of the difficult relationship between intelligence and the UN is actually fairly simple to formulate. The UN 'does not collect, process and disseminate intelligence in the directed and comprehensive way that major powers do as a matter of course'.¹⁶² According to the military advisor of the Secretary-General of the UN, Van Kappen, the UN is neither willing nor able to properly produce a sound, reliable and independent intelligence product. This limitation is rooted in the structure of the organization.¹⁶³ Apart from the fact that the UN does not wish to take responsibility for active intelligence gathering in peacekeeping operations, and is therefore completely dependent on what member states are prepared to supply (which by the way also applies to NATO), the aversion to intelligence at the UN sometimes takes on ill-advised forms.

For instance, the events in Rwanda demonstrated that a local commander was not allowed to make use of highly sensitive intelligence.¹⁶⁴ In December 1993, the Canadian Force Commander, General Romeo Dallaire, managed, through Humint, to gain access to highly explosive intelligence on a genocide plan, including information on secret weapons stores. General Dallaire had a Kigali sector commander, Colonel Luc Marchal of the Belgian Army, someone who had served for five years in Zaire. On 10 January 1994, a senior figure made contact with Marchal. He sought political asylum because he had received orders from the Hutu leadership to draw up plans for the extermination of the Tutsis. The source said that although he was a Hutu, he could not carry out his orders because it was against his principles. The informant told Marchal of the location of a major weapons cache containing at least 135 weapons. The man was prepared to go to the arms cache himself that night if he and his family were placed under UN protection. Marchal told Dallaire of his meeting.

Although Dallaire held certain reservations, he informed Major-General Maurice Baril, Military Adviser to the Secretary-General in New York: 'It is our intention to take action (by means of a cordon and search) within the next 36 hours with a possible H Hour of Wednesday (12 January) at dawn (local)'.¹⁶⁵ Dallaire's signal to Baril should have received rigorous attention but it was signed off without any indication of action taken. The immediate effect had been to deny Dallaire permission to conduct the proposed cordon and search. 'They refused', said Marchal, 'because UNAMIR was deployed under

¹⁶⁰ Confidential collection (3).

¹⁶¹ Interview with G. Arlefalk, 18/05/00.

¹⁶² Hugh Smith, 'Intelligence and UN Peacekeeping', *Survival*, Vol. 36 (1994) 3, p. 174.

¹⁶³ F.E. van Kappen, 'strategic intelligence and the United Nations', *Militaire Spectator*, Vol. 170 (2001) 11, p. 597.

¹⁶⁴ For a description of the events: Connaughton, *Military Intervention and Peacekeeping*, pp. 153-158.

¹⁶⁵ FOIA, State Department, Code Cable Dallaire to Baril/DPKO, No. 2052, 11/01/94. See also: Off *The Lion*, pp. 69 - 70.

a Chapter VI mandate, traditional peacekeeping. New York argued that a cordon and search was an offensive operation for which permission would not be granted'. The Secretary-General was out of UN Headquarters for much of January and was not to learn of the signal and recognise its significance until three years later. New York withheld permission for a military operation to capture the weapons. Once the massacres had started, General Dallaire had neither the resources nor the mandate to prevent the planned genocide.¹⁶⁶ The advisor to the Secretary-General, Iqbal Riza, later explained that this was due to a feeling of 'not Somalia again' in New York, with which he referred to the fear in New York that peacekeepers would be killed.¹⁶⁷

The UN attitude towards active intelligence gathering in peacekeeping operations can be understood in the light of a long-standing anti-intelligence culture, but nonetheless it can hardly be considered responsible. The increasingly complexity of the situations in which peacekeepers have to operate, such as internal conflicts in UN member states, means that there is actually a growing need for intelligence. The author David Charters states in no uncertain terms that 'intelligence is central to the effectiveness of peacekeeping in the new conflict environment'.¹⁶⁸ Van Kappen is convinced that the lack of strategic intelligence was an important cause of the failure of a number of UN operations.¹⁶⁹ In doing so, he raises a problem that the UN, as an international organization, has so far been unable to solve in a structured way.

The anarchic or almost anarchic situations which have created this increasing demand for more and better intelligence are at the same time making it more difficult to acquire and disseminate intelligence. The rapidly changing situations and alliances on the ground are also ensuring that intelligence gathered by observers on the spot is rapidly out-of-date. Even the 'old' established intelligence services have the greatest difficulty in keeping up with these developments. The UN must therefore, according to the author Hugh Smith, formulate a clear answer in the short term to the question of which role intelligence should play in future peacekeeping operations, and perhaps also in preventive diplomacy. After all, he argues, there happens to be a great need for strategic intelligence in order to understand the political and military situation between the warring parties before the UN becomes directly involved. There is also a great demand for operational intelligence, which is needed to ensure the most effective deployment of resources and manpower for the execution of the mandate. This is especially important with regard to issues that have a fairly fluid political or military context. Finally, tactical intelligence is necessary for the support of ground forces in performing their peacekeeping tasks, such as monitoring a ceasefire or a suspension of hostilities.¹⁷⁰ The American Kenneth Allard, who carried out a study of the peacekeeping operation in Somalia, also arrives at the conclusion that 'intelligence is as vital to the success of a peace operation as it is to any other military activity'.¹⁷¹

The brief history of the relationship between intelligence and the UN outlined above shows it to be a relationship fraught with difficulties. In any case, it rapidly became clear to the Military Intelligence Service of the Royal Netherlands Army (MIS/Army) that they should expect nothing of the UN. In 1995, the memorandum 'Intelligence Needs of the Ministry of Defence' rightly observed that the lack of sufficient security guarantees caused great reluctance among the countries that participated in UN operations to issue intelligence to the UN or the nations participating in UN operations.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁶ David A. Charters, 'Out of the Closet: Intelligence Support for Post-Modernist Peacekeeping', in: *The Pearson Papers*, no. 4, *Intelligence and Peacekeeping*, Halifax, 1999, p. 52. See also the documents that were declassified on 20/08/01 on: <http://www.gwu.edu>.

¹⁶⁷ Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 275.

¹⁶⁸ David A. Charters, 'Out of the Closet: Intelligence Support for Post-Modernist Peacekeeping', *The Pearson Papers*, No. 4, *Intelligence and Peacekeeping*, Halifax, 1999, p. 61.

¹⁶⁹ F.E. van Kappen, 'strategic intelligence and the United Nations', *Militaire Spectator* Vol. 170 (2001) 11, p. 594.

¹⁷⁰ Hugh Smith, 'Intelligence and UN Peacekeeping', *Survival*, Vol. 36 (1994) 3, p. 175.

¹⁷¹ Hartcock, *The Peace Operations*, p. 41.

¹⁷² MoD, *MIS/Army. CASS no. 49*, Dossier DB reports, Letter + Appendix I, no. DIS/95/24.1/1486, 22/06/95.

According to the author Paul Johnston, UNPROFOR ultimately enjoyed a 'fairly comprehensive and smoothly working intelligence organization'.¹⁷³ This assessment is debatable, and was not shared by former staff of the MIO in Zagreb.¹⁷⁴ It must be concluded from the analysis presented of the set-up, structure, working method, intelligence input and output, as well as capabilities, resources and infrastructure, that the MIO was never able to function as effectively as a professional G-2 staff would have been able to during an extensive and complex military operation. 'The key to good intelligence output is all source assessment', according to the British author Andrew Rathmell.¹⁷⁵ However, there was no sign of this at the MIO in Zagreb or the other G-2 staffs of the UN organizations in BHC in Sarajevo or SNE in Tuzla. Other former staff of the MIO confirmed this picture in interviews: the MIO never held any all-source intelligence capability at any level during the crisis in Bosnia.¹⁷⁶ This can be explained as follows. All source analysts first require all-source intelligence. This was never available to the analysts at the Zagreb MIO: far from it. Second, all-source intelligence analysts take years to groom and train. This was never envisioned for the MIO at Zagreb. Third, the communications infrastructure must be in place to put such intelligence into the hands of battalion commanders and their subordinates in near real time. No such infrastructure existed. Finally, the consumer must understand the value, and be able to utilize the product effectively. No such awareness existed or was likely to come into being. The UN architecture lacked the communications resources, personnel, training, intelligence sources, development time and awareness to grow anything remotely resembling all-source intelligence. In fact, as has been pointed out, the senior UN leadership had no interest in intelligence at all, much less developing an advanced capability like all source intelligence center.

Johnston neglects to mention many problems and obstacles, such as insufficient financial resources, the unwillingness of most troop-contributing nations to exchange intelligence with non-NATO allies, the question of who determines the tasking, and which official draws up the requirements to be set on the intelligence. A subsequent foreign internal investigation revealed that intelligence efforts for the benefit of the UNPROFOR commanders had been insufficient. As a consequence, the UN was 'rarely able to predict intentions of the warring factions'. Although there is no doubt that much intelligence was available, the intelligence operation of UNPROFOR lacked a communal point of coordination. Much intelligence, especially human intelligence, was therefore lost.¹⁷⁷

The absence of a good intelligence structure within UNPROFOR also deprived the leading political and military policymakers and UN headquarters in New York of a good view of the developments in Bosnia. According to the Military Advisor to Boutros-Ghali, Van Kappen, there were no agreements on exchange with the UN of intelligence gathered by Western countries on Bosnia. In other words, the normal intelligence process was missing. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Akashi, later made suggestions to improve this situation in the future.¹⁷⁸

Ultimately the question is whether the use of intelligence and active intelligence gathering in UN peacekeeping missions actually are such formidable hurdles. It is obvious that warring factions will not agree to special operations by UN commandos behind the lines. But there will be less resistance to verification flights by unmanned espionage aircraft, such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), provided the UN monitors *all* warring factions. The combatants will also find supervision through intelligence easier to accept if they know that all parties are subject to the same strict supervision

¹⁷³ Paul Johnston. 'No Cloak and Dagger Required: Intelligence Support to UN Peacekeeping', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 12 (1997) 4, p. 110.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas Quiggin, Response to 'No Cloak and Dagger Required: Intelligence Support to UN Peacekeeping', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 13 (1998) 4, pp. 203-207.

¹⁷⁵ Andrew Rathmell. 'Privatising intelligence', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. XI (1998) 2, p. 203.

¹⁷⁶ Confidential interviews (9), (44), (45), (47) and (54).

¹⁷⁷ Confidential collection (6).

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Y. Akashi, 29/11/99.

regime. This can have a stabilizing effect. The situation was more difficult in Bosnia, where UNPROFOR was often seen as an organization that took sides with the Bosnian Muslims. Eriksson points out that the UN's response to ABiH operations from the eastern enclaves was less 'hard' than its response to operations carried out by the VRS.¹⁷⁹

Hugh Smith feels that 'the need for intelligence is being increasingly felt by both the UN and by states contributing to peacekeeping operations. Particularly in more complex and fluid situations, intelligence will be crucial in achieving the goals of the mission as laid down by the UN Security Council.' This need has grown steadily, and Smith believes that it will continue to do so in the future, because 'peacekeepers are liable to find themselves in countries in which no government is in undisputed control, social order has broken down or is on the point of collapse. Sometimes hostilities are under way or imminent, and the use of force against peacekeepers is a manifest possibility'.¹⁸⁰

Several Force Commanders and Deputy Force Commanders who were quoted in this introductory chapter concluded that during their UNPROFOR period they had no usable and timely intelligence at their disposal. They were therefore of the opinion that the UN Secretariat in New York needs an independent intelligence analysis unit, because otherwise the organization will not be able to fulfil its tasks within the framework of preventive diplomacy or peacekeeping. An US intelligence official agreed that the infrastructure in Zagreb was far from ideal in providing timely, useable intelligence. Security was always a pain, and finding some quiet corner to speak to the decision-maker was often very difficult. Apart from that, none of the crucial intelligence came from UN sources, and most of it could not be conveyed within the UN communications architecture. Commanders in Zagreb (and Sarajevo) were unable to convey key pieces of intelligence or even operational information securely to their field commanders who had an immediate need to know it.¹⁸¹

The UN is now sometimes forced to intervene as a result of provocation or manipulation by one of the warring parties (sometimes supported by the press). For instance, an effective disinformation campaign by the Bosnian Muslims in April 1994 during the siege of Gorazde provoked NATO air strikes - an excellent example of manipulation of the UN by one of the warring factions, and one which could possibly have been prevented by independent analysis.¹⁸² The lack of regular intelligence gathering by UNPROFOR in Bosnia led to a situation in which various international and national intelligence and security services took matters into their own hands. The undesirable consequences for the peacekeeping operation briefly outlined above were innumerable.

¹⁷⁹ Pär Eriksson, 'Intelligence and Peacekeeping Operations', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 10 (1997) 1, p. 17.

¹⁸⁰ Hugh Smith, 'Intelligence and UN Peacekeeping', *Survival*, Vol. 36 (1994) 3, pp. 174-175.

¹⁸¹ Confidential information (80).

¹⁸² Robert J. Allen, 'Intelligence Support for Peace Operations', Pickert, *Intelligence*, pp. 114-115.

Chapter 2

The Western intelligence community and the war in Bosnia

‘America’s allies have long complained that it is particularly mean with its intelligence.’¹⁸³

Bosnia was an intelligence theme park’.¹⁸⁴

1. Introduction

The previous chapter contended that the United Nations has always had a wait-and-see or even a dismissive attitude to active intelligence gathering in peacekeeping operations. This was also the case during the war in the former Yugoslavia. It is therefore little surprise that on his departure from Bosnia, the UN commander General Lewis MacKenzie’s experiences with UNPROFOR concerning the application and use of intelligence were, to put it mildly, not particularly good:

‘I was also upset that I had to get my intelligence from the BBC. The UN was still following its outdated rules that precluded our even saying the word ‘intelligence’, let alone producing it. Here we were, almost 300 kilometers from the nearest semi-secure border, and we scarcely had the foggiest notion what was going on around us’.¹⁸⁵

This quotation illustrates again that the UN had not prepared sufficiently in terms of active intelligence gathering for the war in the former Yugoslavia, and in particular, for the war in Bosnia. This chapter raises the question of whether the same was true of the Western intelligence community (the assembled Western intelligence and security services). We will consider whether, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, these services were sufficiently prepared for that war, both mentally and in terms of resources. According to some authors, this was not the case. Andrew Rathmell had the following comment: ‘Western intelligence bureaucracies built up during the Cold War have changed remarkably little since the disappearance of their main enemy, the Soviet Union.’¹⁸⁶ We will discuss whether the picture he outlines is a fair reflection of the reality. Section 2 will deal comprehensively with the position of these services after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Attention was paid for many years to the perceived threat from the East and that was where all technical and other resources were focused. Now, suddenly, a different type of conflict demanded attention, and the question was whether these intelligence services were capable of providing it.

If intelligence services have little or no intelligence on certain political and military developments or on people in a certain region, an appeal is usually made to their fellow services. An exchange of intelligence then takes place: mostly on quid pro quo basis (‘this for that’). Section 3 discusses this international intelligence liaison or exchange. We will discuss what precisely this exchange involves, why states exchange intelligence with each other, what forms of liaison exist and whether such an exchange automatically arises from alliances of many years’ standing, such as between NATO allies. Section 4 will answer the question of whether the intelligence machines of UNPROFOR’s and

¹⁸³ Grant, *Intimate Relations*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁸⁴ Richard Aldrich quoted in: Alexandra Poolos, ‘Yugoslavia: Dutch Srebrenica Report Reveals Role of Western Intelligence Services in Bosnian War’, *RFE/RL*, 26/04/02.

¹⁸⁵ MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, pp. 284-285.

¹⁸⁶ Andrew Rathmell. ‘Privatising intelligence’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. XI (1998) 2, p. 199.

NATO's most important troop-contributing nations were prepared for the war in Bosnia, and whether UNPROFOR was able to rely on intelligence support from NATO or from individual troop-contributing nations. Consideration will be given to the associated problems and the attempts made to overcome them. Section 5 presents the conclusions to this chapter.

2. The Western intelligence mindset

Publications and interviews indicate that officials of Western intelligence services were confronted with a problem that was recurring and difficult to solve: the general attitude and state of mind with respect to intelligence after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The international intelligence community traditionally had an East-West mentality. The technical infrastructure was also mainly East-West oriented. The intelligence image of the former enemy built up by NATO over these years was 'relatively' simple: the political and military policy of the Soviet Union and its allies was reasonably stable, as was the military doctrine of the Red Army and the Warsaw Pact. For example, if Western intelligence services had located a regiment of soldiers, it was generally not particularly difficult to trace the other regiments that together formed a larger unit. This was also true of the location of the Soviet missile forces and the Soviet air force and navy. This intelligence image had been built up since 1950 mainly by means of technical gathering methods, which led to the Human Intelligence (Humint) activities being neglected: after all, it was no easy matter to set up good penetration operations behind the 'Iron Curtain'. The resultant neglect of Humint in the Western intelligence services may have played an important role in Yugoslavia.

This tendency had been prevalent in the United States since the 1970s. This was to plague the American intelligence services in Bosnia, because it proved to be a Low Intensity Conflict (LIC), in which technical resources often performed inadequately. In a low intensity conflict, Humint is one of the most important sources of intelligence. In 1976, only thirteen per cent of all American intelligence was gathered from Humint, and only one seventh of the total Intelligence budget was devoted to it. During the period of Stansfield Turner (the director of the CIA between 1977 and 1981), even less was invested. In the 1980s, the US intelligence community realized that, in spite of their impressive technical capabilities, Humint could still play an important role in some areas. One such issue was the political intentions and the attitudes of politicians and soldiers.¹⁸⁷

William Casey (the director of the CIA under President Reagan) was a particularly great supporter of the expansion of Humint. This form of intelligence was relatively inexpensive, and more suitable for gathering difficult-to-obtain political intelligence on the intentions and the attitude of leading foreign officials. Furthermore, Humint operations made it possible to gather documents or install sensors. These factors among others led the US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the CIA to devote more attention in the 1980s to Humint, which had until then been neglected.

It would take until 1993 before the United States Assistant Secretary of Defense would resort to founding the Defense Human Intelligence Service, which came to reside under the DIA. It was only on 1 October 1995 that this Service was officially activated by the DIA and it was even later, on 12 September 1996, that the Service was declared fully operational.¹⁸⁸ The Defense Human Intelligence Service would therefore play no significant role during Dutchbat's stay in Srebrenica.

The lack of effective Humint was not the only factor that hindered the services. The complete mindset of Western military and intelligence personnel had often been influenced strongly by the years of threat from the East. The fact that the conflict in Yugoslavia was of a different nature did not stop these officials from viewing the conflict in the 'old' way.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, certain developments were too complicated for them to understand. That was particularly true of the ever-changing alliances in

¹⁸⁷ Bobby R. Inman, 'spying for a Long, Hot War', *The New York Times*, 09/10/01.

¹⁸⁸ Becker, *Cold war*, pp. 12-19.

¹⁸⁹ For this topic see also: Roger Hilsman, 'After the Cold War. The Need for Intelligence', in: Eisendrath, *National Insecurity*, pp. 8-22.

Yugoslavia. A good example was the Bihac region in the north west of Bosnia. Muslim armed forces there who rejected the regime in Sarajevo and who were led by Abdic, hired tanks from the Krajina Serbs. Abdic's opponent was General Dudakovic of the *Armija Bosna i Hercegovina* (ABiH). He, in turn, hired tanks from the Bosnian Serbs. Another example was that it was hard for many Western military and intelligence officials to comprehend that the Bosnian Serbs were fighting the Croats in some areas, but at the same time they could be the greatest allies of the same Croats in other areas.¹⁹⁰

In the general Western intelligence perception, alliances and enemies were 'fixed concepts'. However, for the warring factions in Yugoslavia, such concepts were reviewed from day to day, with due regard to potential local advantages that could come from an alliance. This, of course, had consequences for UNPROFOR, because the cooperation of the local warring factions is a condition for the success of a peacekeeping mission. This was hardly possible in an environment of constantly variable alliances.

Obviously, much also depends on the nature of the conflict. If the warring factions are two regular armies, certain patterns may be expected. It is then also relatively simple to gather intelligence. But the less central control and state authority there are, the more unpredictable the developments become, and the greater the risk that the conflict will become uncontrollable and that there will be, for example, outbursts of violence against innocent civilians.

This does not detract from the fact that regular and well-controlled army units are also capable of carrying out operations against civilians, as the Croats did in May 1995 in West Slavonia and in the Krajina in August 1995, and the *Vojska Republika Srpska* (VRS) in general did in Srebrenica. In general, however, attacks on civilians were usually carried out by irregular units.

Nonetheless, the willingness to collaborate with each other and the assent of all warring factions to the presence of a peacekeeping force are important factors for determining the legitimacy of a peacekeeping mission, together with the question of when force will be used. If there is no such general willingness and there is a vacuum of power, the warring factions - who are mostly more numerous and better armed than the UN troops - will challenge each display of force by the peacekeepers. In such a context, the role of reliable intelligence becomes all the more important. The larger the external influence as a deterrent to the warring factions, the less force will have to be used to protect the civilians. During the conflict in Bosnia, neither these conditions for enforcing the peace, nor the conditions for a deterrent, were present. Therefore, intelligence was badly needed.¹⁹¹

All this led in 1992 to a situation in which Western intelligence services were confronted with an intelligence structure that was generally geared towards the 'old' threat from the East, and not suited to the Balkans. The Western intelligence services had built up a complex set of warning indicators that enabled them to detect this threat from the East in good time.¹⁹² The complete capacity for gathering intelligence was therefore concentrated on analysing a large-scale conflict, which had little to do with the crisis in Yugoslavia. In general, the warring factions did not operate in large units, but mainly in small and decentralized units that undertook no large-scale operations. This war was what is referred to as a low intensity conflict of which NATO (with the exception of a few member states) generally had no experience. However, according to one source the principle US organizational and military policy shifts marking the departure from the 'cold-war mentality' were already completed by February 1993. According to this intelligence official they were certainly in place in Europe by that time. In particular,

¹⁹⁰ Confidential interview (45).

¹⁹¹ David M. Last, 'Peacekeeping Doctrine and Conflict Resolution Techniques', *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 22 (1995)2, p. 188.

¹⁹² According to an US intelligence official was the US indicator system being alluded to here totally worthless, and an unsuccessful effort to adapt a cold war bean-counting mentality (where it never worked either) to an even more intractable scenario in the Balkans, and elsewhere around the world. It was broadly ignored, and only fed information because somewhere in Washington DC there was an avid audience for its absurd color-coded indicators. It was an enormous waste of US time, money and manpower and was never regarded as being even remotely useful outside of Washington. Confidential information (80).

strategic systems were revamped to ensure operational utilization by theatre users, in Europe and elsewhere around the world. For instance, an American National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) official, who was responsible for Imagery Intelligence (Imint) from satellites, espionage aircraft and unmanned aircraft, confirmed this. He complained that the fall of the Wall had not made the work any simpler: 'There are probably more areas today, in a broader sense, than we had to worry about during the Cold War. There are a lot more places that are volatile...'¹⁹³

Furthermore, the terrain in which the conflict was being fought was completely different from that of the 'old' threat: woods and mountains severely limited the field of vision of the international intelligence community. This was less true of the Austrian, Italian and Swiss services, which, because of the high altitude of their mountain-top monitoring stations, sometimes did succeed in intercepting message traffic. Many a Western intelligence service was completely unprepared for the outbreak of fighting in the former Yugoslavia. General Michael Hayden, in 1995 EUCOM and later commander of the Air Intelligence Agency at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas, admitted that prior to the war in Yugoslavia there was not a real need for as much experience in that area. His organization was not manned in some of those fields as he would like to be.¹⁹⁴ The intelligence resources and methodology were, as stated, still focused on the enemy in the East, and especially on the timely detection and analysis of large military units operating in a mainly open and flat area. The services were prepared for symmetrical warfare (two equally large armed forces against each other) and the military and economic objectives were reasonably familiar. The armed forces of the Red Army and the Warsaw Pact no longer existed in the same form after the fall of the Berlin Wall, however.

Some intelligence services had paid relatively little attention to Yugoslavia until the outbreak of the war in Bosnia. For instance, only one analyst of the Royal Netherlands Army worked on Yugoslavia at the Intelligence Department of the Military Intelligence Service. He was concerned with the military order of battle, which could also be considered to be something of a subsidiary activity, because his primary focus was on a different subject. His service concentrated especially on Poland and the GDR, and this analyst confirmed that other Western intelligence services in general paid little attention to Yugoslavia, which in a certain sense put him in a unique bartering position.¹⁹⁵ The same perceptions existed in the British counterpart. They had 'a bit of trouble getting up to speed. It wasn't a priority they could quickly get good at. SIS [Secret Intelligence Service or MI-6] and GCHQ [Government Communications Headquarters] needed to improve their expertise in the language.'¹⁹⁶

Within intelligence services there were sometimes only a handful of political analysts who were occupied with Yugoslavia. After all, the country was counted among the 'friendly' communist powers; the expectation was that in the event of an outbreak of an international crisis, the country would take the side of the West. In this respect, Yugoslavia had long been considered to be within the Western sphere of influence, as was demonstrated in the attack on Czechoslovakia in 1968, when Yugoslavia was given backdoor guarantees by NATO.¹⁹⁷

When the conflict in Bosnia finally broke out, the shortage of 'trained personnel' often meant that people would be plucked from anywhere. Analysts who until then had worked mainly on the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe and were therefore new to the job, now had to deal with Bosnia. There was also a lack of staff who spoke Serbo-Croat and who were able to translate large quantities of information. In 1993, the American electronic eavesdropping service, the National Security Agency (NSA), appeared to have a lack of translators and analysts with a command of Serbo-Croat. This originally affected the capacity to read intercepted Yugoslav message traffic. The service thought that

¹⁹³ Confidential information (80) and Robert Dreyfuss, 'TECHINT: The NSA, the NRO, and NIMA', Graig Eisendrath, *National Insecurity*, p. 156.

¹⁹⁴ Deedee Doke, 'U.S. to beef up long-term air intelligence in Balkans', *European Stars & Stripes*, 18/07/96.

¹⁹⁵ Confidential interview (37).

¹⁹⁶ Urban, *UK Eyes*, p. 215.

¹⁹⁷ Cees Wiebes & Bert Zeeman, "'I don't need your handkerchiefs': Holland's experience of crisis consultation in NATO', *International Affairs*, Vol. 66 (1990) 1, pp. 91-113.

this would create problems for them in the event of President Clinton deciding to make a military contribution to UNPROFOR. The NSA consequently decided to place an advertisement in several newspapers to recruit translators.¹⁹⁸

The most important man with responsibility for Bosnia at the British military intelligence service - the UK Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS)- Captain Jonathan Cooke of the Royal Navy, confirmed this picture. According to him, at the start of the war the services had teething troubles, and the pace at which intelligence gathering got up to speed was slow. 'On the frequencies [to be intercepted], GCHQ had to start almost from scratch' in Bosnia. For instance, at the outbreak of the war in the Balkans, the British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), had only a few Serbo-Croat specialists who were actually fluent in the language. The British had to build absolutely everything from the ground up; the area was really *terra incognita* for GCHQ.¹⁹⁹ The journalist Michael Smith likewise contended that there were difficulties in the beginning.²⁰⁰ Moreover, the interpreter of the British General Rose and General Smith, Milos Stankovic, argued in his book that in the British Army there were only two people who spoke Serbo-Croat.²⁰¹

The Netherlands also lagged behind in this area. The training for interpreters in Serbo-Croat at the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) did not get under way until early 1994.²⁰² Ultimately, five translators would be appointed, who started a six month training course from May 1994 at the 'MID School'.²⁰³ This slow start naturally had consequences not only for the exploitation of the existing Signals Intelligence (Sigint) in the former Yugoslavia, but also for the opportunities to utilize Open Source Intelligence (Osint) effectively. For this reason it was impossible to adequately exploit daily and weekly newspapers, other periodicals, or radio and television at the start of the armed conflict. UNPROFOR could not handle that information.²⁰⁴

The mental attitude of many Western intelligence service staff was also completely different. A prospective conflict with the Soviet Union and its allies was entirely different in nature from a variety of warring factions in a hilly and wooded area, who would collaborate closely with each other in one area but in another area, sometimes only a few kilometres away, would engage in battle. It was also difficult to become accustomed to the fact that once alliances were made they were often soon broken again. This image was at odds with the static situation (NATO versus the Warsaw Pact) that the Western services had been dealing with for almost fifty years. This also caused a new phenomenon. In the past, military intelligence could often be separated from other forms of intelligence, but in Yugoslavia no such clear distinction could be made. The political forces within the warring factions, the political, financial and economic relationships between the leaders of the warring factions and the black market at the front lines actually necessitated an integrated intelligence picture. And this is precisely what tended to be missing.²⁰⁵

It was for example estimated in a report drawn up by the British intelligence community that about 30 per cent of convoy-borne aid was being diverted to the armies of the warring factions and the black market. UNHCR was particularly worried about this, but was reluctant to quantify the amount. The British estimated that in Sarajevo, where the Muslim military was reported to be moving aid parcels out of the city, the government continued to inflate refugees figures by perhaps as much as a third. However, the Bosnian Muslims of all warring factions would be worst affected if aid was reduced.²⁰⁶

¹⁹⁸ Bamford, *Body of Secrets*, p. 554.

¹⁹⁹ Urban, *UK Eyes Alpha*, pp. 215-216 and confidential interview (79).

²⁰⁰ Smith, *New Cloak. Old Dagger*, p. 210.

²⁰¹ Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, pp. 34-35.

²⁰² MoD, *MIS. No. 443,0801*, Col. Bosch, HAI&V MIS/Army to Commando Training Netherlands Army, no. 21892/1/270593, 18/05/93.

²⁰³ For this, see also Chapters 3 and 5 of this study.

²⁰⁴ Donna Winslow and Peer Everts, 'Cultural Interoperability, Schmidt, *A History of NATO*, p. 101.

²⁰⁵ Confidential collection (3).

²⁰⁶ Confidential information (83).

Another problem was that good (not to mention military) maps were hard to come by. It was sometimes necessary to work with Michelin, ADAC or Hallwag maps, which were available from travel agents or motoring organizations. Standard maps with a scale of 1:50,000 were not available in the short term. What is more, the maps produced by the *Vojska Jugoslavija* (VJ, the Army of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) sometimes led to great confusion. The VJ had actually used a 'different datum point than any other military in Europe'. As a result, grid references used by military and intelligence units on a Yugoslav map were different from those on a comparable European map. 'An eight figure grid reference, plotted on a Yugoslav map would be about 600 to 700 metres away from the exact grid reference plotted on a European or American produced map of the same area', according to a Western intelligence official who worked at UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb and elsewhere in the region.²⁰⁷

The Western intelligence community therefore came up-to-speed 'slowly' and had various teething problems in the area of Sigint, Humint and Imint. One might have expected that collaboration within NATO, as well as bilateral agreements, would have been able to compensate for this shortcoming in the first instance. It would also have been a reasonable assumption that the exchange of intelligence would have been intensified. The reality, however, was different.

3. The problems surrounding intelligence liaison in Western intelligence services

As Michael Herman states in his study: the international intelligence liaison is often 'a patchwork of bilateral and multilateral arrangements of all kinds and all degrees of intimacy'.²⁰⁸ One might add that it may also even hinge on the personalities involved. The responsibility for the coordination of the gathering and exchange of intelligence in the matter of Yugoslavia was not precisely defined in the Western intelligence and security services. Something was done in a NATO context, but, as mentioned in the previous chapter, contrary to what is commonly believed, NATO has no independent intelligence capacity. The treaty organization does not itself indulge in 'intelligence tasking and collection'.²⁰⁹ The only system for this purpose belonging to NATO is the AWACS reconnaissance aircraft. The NATO intelligence section is completely dependent on the input from the member states, and more closely resembles a unit for intelligence sharing. Internally it consisted of various smaller areas, such as the sharing in the areas of anti-submarine warfare, Sigint, Imint and Elint. A further comment in this context is that the main focus of attention was the Eastern bloc: almost everything was taken as read about the Orders of Battle and the military doctrines. In this respect it was difficult to spring any surprises on NATO.²¹⁰

Intelligence liaison between friendly states, even within a treaty organization that has existed for fifty years, cannot therefore be taken for granted. The extent to which services recognize shared risk apparently influences intelligence liaison. Liaison is not something that automatically arises from alliances of many years' standing. Even in an ideal coalition, during the Gulf War, there was a deluge of complaints in this respect. It was not just the European allies of the United States that complained about the uncooperative American attitude to sharing intelligence. Even American and British troops frequently complained about the slow dissemination and poor quality of the intelligence that actually came from their own national intelligence services and was intended for them.²¹¹ One should add that this was frequently a technical issue, hinging on available systems for dissemination. The systems for rapid dissemination was usually very complex, very expensive, and prone to difficulties of various sorts, especially in a deployed field environment. These systems included effective inputs, fluid analysis and dissemination and maintenance of a robust, reliable communications system. Not just a collection of radios: such systems hinged on people, satellites, ground systems and national policies. Many national

²⁰⁷ Confidential collection (3).

²⁰⁸ Herman, *Intelligence*, p. 203.

²⁰⁹ See also: NMFA, *PVNAVVO*, Deputy HPMV to A, 21/10/96.

²¹⁰ J.R. Kassing, 'De NAVO en inlichtingen' ('NATO and intelligence'), *Militaire Spectator*, Vol. 170 (2001) 11, pp. 604-612.

²¹¹ Andrew Rathmell. 'Privatising intelligence', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. XI (1998) 2, p. 208.

infrastructures, including the Dutch, could neither afford, maintain, effectively field, nor politically support these systems. It is also interesting to note that the Western intelligence climate in the years surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall was somewhat subdued, because Western intelligence services increasingly started to spy on each other. The conflict in Bosnia aggravated the animosity between Europe and the United States even further.²¹²

Intelligence liaison covers a wide variety of forms and intensity of collaboration between mostly national intelligence and security services. These services can trade information on operations, provide intelligence support in the form of training, advice and equipment or access to installations. Liaison is not only important for the large services but also for the small ones. International liaison is always cloaked in the greatest secrecy. An ex CIA official once said: 'Liaison secrecy has the sanctity of the Bible.'²¹³ Even more hesitance exists regarding the sharing of intelligence gathered by NATO member states with non-member states. The official NATO guidelines on this point are extremely stringent: the intelligence is only destined for the member states and must therefore not be disclosed to 'a non-member nation or any international organization containing non-member nations. Whatever different requirements emerge for peacekeeping operations this fundamental principle must be upheld.'²¹⁴

Despite all the problems, states do cooperate in the area of intelligence, however.²¹⁵ One of the main reasons for this is that more information is always available than any separate intelligence service (even the largest) can gather independently. The disappearance of the former Eastern European services meant, for example, that the Humint input to Moscow declined by thirty per cent, partly because some services were abandoned and partly because they stopped their input. Another reason is that some states have unique resources at their disposal for gathering unprecedented intelligence; this involves resources and information to which other states have never had and never will have access. The geographical position of a state can likewise be an important reason to resort to liaison. For instance, Norway played a crucial role in following developments in the Russian Kola Peninsula, the most important port of which is Murmansk. Financial aspects also play a role: more can be achieved jointly through the distribution of tasks²¹⁶

Intelligence liaison also has disadvantages, such as the reliability of the information from the partner. It is a fact that there is often an institutional conviction that a service's own analysis or intelligence is better and more reliable than that of another service. There is always a risk associated with sources. Material obtained via liaison can enable one service to discover the other service's sources. Other restraints and dangers are that too close a liaison between two countries can sometimes lead to manipulation of the intelligence that is passed on. Furthermore, a service loses control over the intelligence that is passed on via liaison. For example, it happened within NATO that Dutch intelligence that had been passed on exclusively to a foreign ally suddenly emerged in the NATO circuit a number of weeks later as intelligence from a completely different ally. The greatest danger for a service lurks in the intrinsic possibility of being penetrated by a foreign service. Too close contacts can lead to attempts to recruit the liaison officer.²¹⁷

The *special relationship* between the United States and the United Kingdom is, with respect to intelligence, unique: there is much collaboration in the area of Humint between the CIA and the Secret Intelligence Service (formerly MI-6). In the military area there is a close relationship between the American DIA and the UK Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS). London and Washington also collaborate in the area of Imint. Satellite photos, espionage aircraft and unmanned aircraft are shared by the

²¹² Loch K. Johnson, 'spies', *Foreign Policy* (September 2000), p. 35.

²¹³ Bradford Westerfield, 'America and the World of Intelligence Liaison', *Intelligence and National Security* 11 (1996) 3, pp. 523-60.

²¹⁴ John M. Nomikos, 'Intelligence Requirements for Peacekeeping Operations', *RIEAS Papers and Reports*, 03/10/00.

²¹⁵ See for an effect of the 'liaison' topic also: Cees Wiebes, 'The Netherlands Intelligence Community: Past, Present and Future', in: Jennsen & Riste (eds.), *Intelligence in the Cold War*, pp. 149-165.

²¹⁶ Herman, *Intelligence*, pp. 204-208.

²¹⁷ De Graaff & Wiebes, *Villa Maarbeeze*, pp. 343-354.

American National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) with its British counterpart, the Joint Aerial Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre (JARIC), which is part of the DIS. In the area of Sigint, the American and the British Sigint services, the NSA and GCHQ, have been cooperating closely since World War II. Every British service has a liaison office in the United States that handles the exchange of intelligence. In certain areas, British officers are also attached to American services, and vice versa. No such close collaboration exists between any other European or Asian intelligence or security services. The collaboration in the area of Humint is mainly geared towards the exchange of intelligence assessments and not principally to joint operations.

There are also differences in working methods between the Americans and the British. The British intelligence services are more oriented to working with agents and informants, while the American services devote more energy to the use of advanced technology and the processing and analysis of large quantities of information. This means in practice that collaboration in joint operations is difficult.

The links between the American and British services are maintained not only through practical collaboration, but also through a joint approach to the use of intelligence. For instance, in the United States and the United Kingdom intelligence is said to have more influence on foreign policy than is the case in continental European countries. The explanation for this could be as follows:

‘The Anglo-Saxons use intelligence in an empirical way: it is about gathering facts, and if the facts are significant, the policies may get changed. The view in London and Washington is that the French and other continentals, being essentially deductive in their thinking, develop sophisticated analyses and policies and then draw on intelligence to support them; but that they seldom allow intelligence to shift policy’.²¹⁸

According to a French intelligence officer, this analysis is incorrect, however; in his opinion it is true that in Paris it plays a less influential role in the formulation and execution of the French national security policy, but not because the French political and military leadership ignore the intelligence. Bureaucratic and historical factors offer more likely explanations, such as on the one hand smaller investments in acquiring intelligence, and on the other hand recruitment problems. Furthermore, there is no good intelligence structure that ensures a rapid and efficient dissemination of intelligence among the political and military policymakers.²¹⁹

In today’s world, intelligence liaison still causes many problems. A British analyst recently wrote: ‘America’s allies have long complained that it is particularly mean with its intelligence.’²²⁰ They have often succeeded in gathering intelligence thanks to large financial investments, and generally it is ‘heavily guarded’ within the framework of their own national security. An important White House advisor during the Clinton administration made the following comment on international intelligence liaison: ‘The U.S. intelligence community will never release its intelligence because of methods and sources.’²²¹ A remarkable statement because there is rarely a genuine need to release methods and sources. What is usually needed in time-sensitive scenarios is the intelligence itself, not how the intelligence was acquired.

Nonetheless, even within certain long standing intelligence alliances, such as the so-called UKUSA agreement between the United States, Canada, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, not all intelligence is automatically shared. The British intelligence services, for example, were confronted in 1992 with the aftermath of the open British support of George Bush’s election campaign. The later President Clinton held this against London. Initially this also translated into the intelligence (albeit not

²¹⁸ Grant, *Intimate Relations*, p. 6.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-8.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

²²¹ Confidential interview (14).

Sigint) area, so that some British services more or less ‘ran dry’.²²² There was in particular American concern about General Rose’s alleged sympathy for the Serb cause and there were manifest political differences between the Clinton government and Whitehall about policy regards Bosnia. The animosity mentioned between the US and the British was probably also partly caused by the secret training programmes that the Americans had given to the Muslims in the past, and later to the Croats. Furthermore the Americans did not wish to disclose much to their NATO partners about the clandestine operations that the CIA and DIA carried out behind enemy lines in Serbia.

During the US election campaign Bob Dole lashed out at the British, who were said to be frustrating many American operations, but this was denied on the British side. When Dole paid a visit to London, he was said to have been taken aside and shown a long list of covert operations that the CIA was involved in at that moment in Yugoslavia. The British told Dole that if he were to carry out one more political attack on London, the list would be made public. After that, Dole backed down.²²³

The British intelligence services became increasingly dependent on the United States. For instance, in 1993 approximately 95 per cent of the Sigint dealt with by the GCHQ was, according to Urban, of American origin. Also with respect to financing, monitoring posts and secure transatlantic communication links, the British were completely dependent on the NSA.²²⁴ It should be noted, however, that a senior US intelligence official interviewed by the author rejected this 95 per cent and came to a much lower figure.²²⁵ The American-British intelligence relationship in later years improved again, especially after Tony Blair came to office.

The above example shows that fundamental political and military differences of opinion can influence intelligence liaison. There was a disagreement between America and Britain on Bosnia. The constant US pressure to deploy air power, and Washington’s refusal to deploy ground forces particularly galled London. This ultimately resulted in the partial reduction of American intelligence input to the British. Captain Cooke of the UK Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) had the following to say on the subject:

‘They more or less admitted they were holding stuff back from us, not everything but really the bits relating to most pronounced political divide. They didn’t feel we took their information about Serb atrocities seriously enough (...) They pushed the stuff which favoured more punitive action against the Bosnian Serbs’.²²⁶

Mistrust of an ally’s political intentions can strongly influence a liaison. An example of American mistrust was the fact that the CIA’s Directorate of Operations had a special cell of approximately twenty staff whose most important task was to analyse the British reports, in order to establish the identities of agents that SIS (the British foreign intelligence service) had recruited in the former Yugoslavia, and what other sources the British services in Bosnia had at their disposal. From the CIA side, incidentally, this statement was described as complete nonsense.²²⁷ Only in the summer of 1995 were transatlantic relations to improve somewhat, although the Americans persevered in not passing on all intelligence about Bosnia to the British.

The American-Canadian intelligence alliance may probably be described as the most harmonious, in the sense that in this context probably information is shared completely. This close link came about through the very prominent Canadian role in the North American Air Defense Agreement (NORAD), which necessitated the most effective possible intelligence liaison. It so happens that the

²²² Interview with Pauline Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

²²³ Confidential interview (47).

²²⁴ Urban, *UK Eyes*, pp. 238-241.

²²⁵ Confidential information (80).

²²⁶ Urban, *UK Eyes*, p. 241.

²²⁷ Confidential interview (79).

Soviet Union's intercontinental ballistic missiles and long-distance bombers were, and still are, most easily detected from Canadian territory.²²⁸

This is further reinforced by the unique Canadian geography, the common Anglo-Saxon background, the similar systems of government, an almost identical military culture and the strongly integrated economies. This does not detract from the fact that the Canadian intelligence service was sometimes also cut off from important American intelligence, especially if Ottawa was pursuing a different policy from America. This happened on some occasions during the Vietnam War, the Falklands Crisis and the Gulf War (but not during the war in Bosnia).²²⁹

There is also a large amount of intelligence sharing in Western Europe between European services. This sometimes happens multilaterally within NATO or the Western European Union (WEU). It must be pointed out here that many services are reluctant to share their highest grade intelligence within multinational organizations, because its dissemination then threatens to become excessive. There is a preference for sharing intelligence bilaterally. When intelligence is shared, it usually does not involve agents' reports, intercepts, or satellite photos, but rather analyses derived from them.

The joint approach in the EU on terrorism, the drugs trade and organized crime is also leading to increased collaboration in the area of intelligence. The fact is that effective control demands the exchange of intelligence. The domestic security services, such as the British MI-5, the French *Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire* (DST), the German *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* (BfV) and the Dutch BVD, exchange intelligence within the so-called Club of Bern. Most European Union countries have bilateral agreements with each other²³⁰ for intelligence liaison and bilateral agreements with the United States. However, these do not go as far as the American-British-Canadian collaboration.

France is a difficult country with respect to intelligence liaison, because the many French intelligence services seldom keep each other informed of what they are doing. While France has a *Comité Interministériel du Renseignement* (CIR), which establishes priorities for the various services, there is no central system for the consolidation and analysis of all intelligence gathered. A centrally organized mechanism would also be difficult to achieve, for both the president and the prime minister would want to be at its head. The British and French intelligence services have often worked closely together, which is a tradition that goes back to the beginning of World War II. The French for example assisted in intercepting Libyan arms shipments to the Irish Republican Army (IRA). On the British side, it is admitted that the quality of Humint that is shared with the US services is better than that shared with France, but 'it is the quantity, rather than the quality of the UK-US "human intelligence" trade that is unique'.²³¹

Personal links between the SIS and the French foreign intelligence service, the *Direction Generale de la Sécurité Exterieur* (DGSE) and the French domestic security service (DST) are supposedly sometimes better than those with the CIA. However, some claim that the relation with the DGSE is not good because the DGSE is 'simply' not good.²³² The collaboration between the GCHQ and the French Sigint organization is less warm. The main reason for this is that close links exist between the NSA and GCHQ, and the fact that the French Sigint priorities lie mainly in France itself and the French-speaking world. However, French Sigint efforts from Guyana were extremely useful to the GCHQ during the Falklands War.

By contrast the allies of Germany remain fearful that the German services (and especially the foreign intelligence service, the *Bundesnachrichtendienst*) are still infiltrated by Russian and Eastern European agents. There is therefore still a degree of hesitation on the part of some services regarding sharing intelligence with Germany. However, this fear is steadily decreasing. Furthermore, there are different ideas about the quality of German intelligence, but it is generally considered to be mediocre.

²²⁸ Richelson & Ball, *The Ties That Bind*, pp. 157-159 and 236-237.

²²⁹ Confidential interviews (9) and (62).

²³⁰ For this, see the various annual reports of the MIS and BVD.

²³¹ Grant, *Intimate Relations*, pp. 4-5.

²³² Confidential information (87).

Sources in SIS nonetheless asserted that, after the US services, the largest volume of British intelligence sharing takes place with the German services but also the Scandinavian services. The prevailing political climate in Europe also plays an important role. If the German-French political axis is functioning well, the collaboration in the area of intelligence is usually excellent, and joint operations are sometimes executed. If a change takes place in the political climate, this immediately influences the intelligence liaison.²³³

Within NATO, the entire subject of intelligence liaison is much more sensitive than is usually made known to the outside world. It seems in general that member states are prepared to share only the intelligence that they wish to share, and which does not endanger national security in the widest sense. Furthermore, certain member states have already been on a 'war footing' with each other for a considerable time, such as Greece and Turkey. This plays a role not only in the conflict in Cyprus and in certain territorial disputes, but also in the conflict in the Balkans: Athens took the side of Serbia and Srpska, and Turkey the side of Bosnia. This strongly reduced the willingness of other NATO member states to share intelligence on Yugoslavia within the alliance, because Greece and Turkey could 'misuse' it in some way.

There was also a great fear of leaks within NATO. While the war surrounding Kosovo was still in progress, for example, more than six hundred officials at NATO headquarters knew the next NATO bombing targets approximately 24 hours in advance. It was no surprise that the Serbian intelligence services were able to gather intelligence in Brussels and Bergen/Mons. The long-term absence of France in the NATO military committee also did nothing to improve intelligence liaison. In addition, member states will have been more careful with their intelligence because of the Partners for Peace programme (the collaboration between NATO and Russia) and a fear that information would be leaked to some former Warsaw pact countries. The sharing of intelligence in peacekeeping operations is further impeded because permission is always necessary from national headquarters. The bureaucracy means that this can take some considerable time, as a result of which the intelligence to be shared may already be out of date.²³⁴ An US intelligence official who worked in Bosnia dismissed this representation. According to him, US policies were well-defined, and release authority was delegated appropriately to the lowest possible level, to ensure fluid sharing of defined products within acceptable guidelines.²³⁵

Apart from NATO, European organizations played no role whatsoever in the field of intelligence. Although the WEU took part in the sea blockade within the framework of the sanctions, this treaty organization had no intelligence capacity of its own. Neither did the EU. Originally, the conflict was not immediately a NATO problem. A factor for the UN (like the WEU and EU) was that it did not undertake its own intelligence gathering, in the sense that the headquarters in New York and the commanders in the region formulated their own objectives, and were themselves able to deploy the necessary resources.

A well-structured exchange of intelligence within NATO would, in spite of all these problems, nevertheless have been desirable, because a large number of NATO member states also took part in UNPROFOR. In addition, the nature of the crisis in Yugoslavia was of a completely different order from that which NATO was accustomed to. The intelligence liaison regarding Bosnia stands or falls, however, on two things. On the policy decision to share at all. Once that decision is made, the scope of the obligations under the agreement defines the technical, political, financial and intelligence geography of the exchange. Secondly, whether the Western intelligence services were sufficiently prepared for the crisis in Bosnia, and whether there was sufficient intelligence to share.

²³³ Grant, *Intimate Relations*, pp. 4-5.

²³⁴ Hugh Smith, 'Intelligence and UN Peacekeeping', *Survival*, Vol. 36 (1994) 3, p. 177.

²³⁵ Confidential information (80).

4. The perception and information position of the Western intelligence services

The extremely complex and chaotic conflict in Bosnia, with its various warring factions and constantly changing alliances, sometimes caused not only confusion within the Western intelligence community, but also internal division. The question arose as to which warring faction to attach credence to, and whether the 'good guys, bad guys' view, which was so often expressed by politicians and in the press, was appropriate. It was not always clear how authentic all the assertions of the warring factions were, and neither were the actual power relationships, nor whether each faction observed the recently agreed ceasefire. A clear, ready and reliable answer to these questions could not always be given by the intelligence sources.

In the United States there were significant political differences of opinion between the American intelligence community, the White House and the State Department.²³⁶ This was evident from various interviews, but also from a top secret Canadian document, which contained a comprehensive analysis of the thinking in the intelligence community in Washington, which reflected the Canadian intelligence view on the conflict. The document, from the late autumn of 1994, offers a revealing glimpse into American foreign policy.²³⁷

The American intelligence and security services adopted the position that all warring factions were guilty of atrocities, and that there were no 'good guys'. All the parties did unspeakably brutal things to all the other parties and this was the collective view of US military analysts throughout Europe.²³⁸ Furthermore, the services felt that the Bosnian Serbs until then were the best at observing the agreement on ceasefires and humanitarian relief. The fighting between the Muslims and Croats in central Bosnia formed the greatest obstacle for the relief. The American services felt that they set down a more balanced view in their reports, but that 'US policy statements do not portray a balanced view of events in Bosnia'. The State Department and President Clinton, according to these services, were consistently pro-Muslim and anti-Serb, and the political statements on the situation in Bosnia were 'generally distortions of the truth which portray the Serbs in a very negative way compared to the other factions. This was generally accomplished by failing to note undesirable activities on the parts of the Croats and Muslims.' Both American and Canadian services knew, for example, that the ABiH harassed VRS positions around Sarajevo almost daily, but this was never reported or confirmed by American policymakers. Furthermore, many of the humanitarian problems in Sarajevo were said to be caused by the Muslims, and a great deal of money was apparently made on the black market. In spite of this 'hard' intelligence, the State Department continued to pin the blame for the conflict on the Bosnian Serbs.²³⁹

This was also true for the negotiations in Geneva. The Croats and Bosnian Serbs had adopted a cooperative attitude, in contrast to the Muslims, who, in the view of the American and Canadian services, caused the majority of the problems in the negotiations. This was partly due to the American political and diplomatic support of the Muslims. Many representatives of the State Department were of the opinion that the Bosnian Serbs must not retain territory that had been gained through 'aggression' against the Muslims. In this, they overlooked that this was a civil war, 'fought by unequal "partners", not an invasion of a sovereign state by a foreign aggressor', according to their Canadian counterparts.

In 1994 the Canadian intelligence community arrived at the conclusion that a disjoint existed between the American intelligence services and the State Department. The latter body conducted a policy of confrontation against the Bosnian Serbs ('bad guys'), and from a Canadian point of view this was an undesirable policy. It appeared as if the Clinton administration was following a strategy oriented towards failure of the negotiations; this policy actually conflicted with the general view within the American intelligence community. Canadian officials who drafted this report were pessimistic about the future. If a peace accord were to be achieved and a peacekeeping mission were to fall under American

²³⁶ For example: Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, pp. 282-331.

²³⁷ Confidential information (7).

²³⁸ Confidential information (80).

²³⁹ Confidential information (7).

overall command, then this would prove awkward because of the bias in the American view. 'It is likely that any such mission will be interventionist rather than neutral in nature (anti-Serb sentiments on the US part will continue even after a peace accord).'²⁴⁰

One Canadian intelligence official with considerable experience in Serbia confirmed this picture. Neutral reports came from the Western services in Belgrade, which was theoretically the primary purpose of intelligence. This balanced view was also supplied to the headquarters of NATO. But subtle distinctions should have been picked up by policymakers in Washington and elsewhere, which did not happen, according to this official. The US policy was partisan, and the intelligence community was insufficiently involved. American politicians were stuck in a 'good guy, bad guy' mindset. The Canadian view was that the involvement of the international community made the conflict worse, and that they would have done better to keep out.²⁴¹

Confronted with this view, the then CIA director, James Woolsey,²⁴² agreed that his analysts generally had no black-and-white typology of the warring factions. According to Woolsey it was not the case that the CIA during his tenure was stressing Bosnian atrocities or giving any policy advice against intervention. 'Indeed we were giving no policy advice at all'. What the CIA was consistently saying was that the Bosnians committed a small number of atrocities, the Croats more, and the Serbs a great many. As regards conveying this message to the Clinton administration, he stated: 'it was swimming against the stream.' The CIA also suggested that the killing would not stop without someone's intervening.²⁴³

The Deputy Commander US European Command (EUCOM), US General Chuck Boyd, claimed that EUCOM was the best source of intelligence concerning the Balkans. However, EUCOM officials claimed that when US assessments got to Washington DC the intelligence seemed to go through a metamorphosis into pro-Bosnian statements. Even when US military intelligence exposed many media reports from Sarajevo as little more than Bosnian propaganda, Clinton Administration officials were more likely to believe press reports than EUCOM or the UN. The willingness of Washington's policy elite to base its rhetorical responses on one-sided media reports, dismayed senior US military officials. Boyd also found out how badly informed US Secretary of Defence, William Perry, was.²⁴⁴

That the CIA had a different view was also evident from remarks Woolsey made during his visit to Minister Ter Beek in The Hague on 10 December 1993. The situation in Bosnia was described by Woolsey's staff as a 'postponement of the surrender of the Muslims, so that the conflict was kept going'.²⁴⁵ Woolsey in an interview with the author gave Haiti as an example of a similar situation, where the American government wished to provide full support to opposition leader J.B. Aristide. However, the intelligence community immediately said: 'Hey, wait a minute. He is a problem.' But the politicians did not wish to listen. Woolsey gave another example: according to the political leaders in Washington, a coalition government would be formed in Somalia. The US intelligence community pointed out that this would never happen,²⁴⁶ but again the politicians did not wish to hear the message.²⁴⁷

The American services opposed this political wishful thinking and repeatedly pointed out that the Muslims had close links with various fundamentalist Islamic governments and terrorist movements and were also supplied with arms from Iran. The intelligence services also argued that the Bosnian Muslims had also committed massacres, although there was a difference in scale: the Bosnian Muslims had perhaps murdered hundreds, the Croats thousands and the Serbs tens of thousands, but that did

²⁴⁰ Confidential information (7).

²⁴¹ Confidential interview (2).

²⁴² See for his appointment: Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 190.

²⁴³ Interviews with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00 and 01/10/02.

²⁴⁴ Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force*, p. 92.

²⁴⁵ MoD, *DJZ*, Memorandum for the minister, D93/514, 13/12/93. Further: Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

²⁴⁶ See also: Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 253.

²⁴⁷ Interview with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00.

not detract from the fact that ‘there were Bosnian atrocities’. The Clinton administration wanted to hear nothing of this, however. It asserted that it was possible to establish a multi-ethnic society in Bosnia. Again the American intelligence community clearly had a different view: ‘no way and forget about that.’ They expressed great scepticism, but this was a view that was not supported in the White House and at the State Department. Woolsey’s assessment was that some members of the Clinton administration had too easy views about how a century old conflict could be overcome. The CIA’s view was more or like similar to that of General Colin Powell, the chairman of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), who resisted American military involvement in Bosnia.²⁴⁸ The interest in the deployment of small military units, after the tragedy in Somalia, had definitely disappeared. The later chairman of the JCS, General John Shaliskashvili, had identical ideas.

The question arises as to whether the then director of the CIA, Woolsey, had sufficient opportunities to change this view: after all, he was a member of the National Security Council (NSC). Woolsey stated in a response that he was a different CIA director than Bill Casey had been under President Reagan. Casey proposed policy directives to Reagan, but according to Woolsey the situation had changed over the years. The director of the CIA may well have still been a member of the NSC, and in that capacity also attended meetings of the NSC, but he no longer came to the fore as a political advisor. The traditional role that he played had always been to provide the president with intelligence, with politics being kept at arm’s length. This of course did not mean that no recommendations were made to the president, but they were not made independently, only on request.²⁴⁹ As it happens, most recommendations pertaining to Bosnia appeared to fall on deaf ears and the White House and the State Department persisted in their original course.²⁵⁰

As the conflict in Bosnia progressed in 1995, the internal differences of opinion within the American intelligence community increased. Woolsey admitted that there was no such thing as ‘a single intelligence community view’ on the war in Yugoslavia. There were different ideas in the services about the origin and the further progress of the conflict in the Balkans.²⁵¹ Nonetheless, the predominant view within the US intelligence community was that the VJ = VRS. Individual VJ officers and troops were offered VJ benefits and sometimes cash bonuses to return to Bosnia and serve designated stints with the VRS. Sometimes those individuals were from Bosnia, sometimes not. After their stint with the VRS, they would return to the VJ, with seniority, benefits and rank intact. Some officers and troops remained in the VRS out of either personal commitment to the conflict, desire to get combat experience, nationalistic fervour, or various other reasons. In the final analysis, the VJ and the VRS were indistinguishable, except by where they were to be found. If found in Bosnia, they were called VRS, and in Serbia, they were VJ. Other intelligence services did agree that the Yugoslav army (the VJ) provided full support to the VRS, but they also had to acknowledge that this collaboration decreased in the course of time. In confidential interviews it was confirmed time and again that there were no consistent ideas on Yugoslavia within the American intelligence community among intelligence officials.²⁵²

The DIA and the State Department in particular appeared to adopt a less balanced position. A possible role was also played by the fact that Woolsey’s predecessor, Robert Gates, had designated the American military intelligence service (the DIA) as the most important channel for intelligence support to the UN during peacekeeping operations. This support would not be permanent, but would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.²⁵³ In view of the dismissive attitude of the CIA to becoming involved in the conflict in Bosnia, it is not surprising that the State Department resorted to hiring in a company

²⁴⁸ For Powell’s resistance to American military involvement in Bosnia: Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, pp. 34-42.

²⁴⁹ Interview with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00.

²⁵⁰ Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace* p. 299.

²⁵¹ Interview with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00.

²⁵² Confidential information (80).

²⁵³ Robert J. Allen, ‘Intelligence Support for Peace Operations’, in: Pickert, *Intelligence*, p. 117.

like Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI).²⁵⁴ This company employed various retired American generals and intelligence officers and had trained the *Hrvatska Vojaska* (HV, Croatian Army) and later also the ABiH.²⁵⁵

The American services originally adopted a wait-and-see attitude to the conflict in Bosnia. They did not work with black-and-white views on the roles and operating methods of the warring factions; according to the services, the Muslims were also guilty of misdeeds. It was concluded that the Bosnian Muslims were often guilty of frustrating agreements and peace arrangements in the political and military spheres, and that they bore a large responsibility for the poor humanitarian situation in Sarajevo and other areas. At the end of 1994, the CIA in particular performed an about-turn, and the service started to adhere to the Clinton administration's course more closely. According to a senior US intelligence official, Woolsey resigned from the CIA because he had no working relationship with the President. He had only two semi-private meetings with the President in two years and thus no real direct access to Clinton who was more involved with domestic priorities. Apart from that, Woolsey was not an intimate of the Clinton team. Despite the fact that vice-president Al Gore in November 1994 asked him to stay, Woolsey decided to resign.²⁵⁶ There is no doubt that the departure of Woolsey, in early 1995 somewhat contributed to the fact of the CIA becoming more political and more hawkish. Later, the CIA was even accused of releasing 'blatantly distorting' intelligence products to support the Muslims' case.²⁵⁷ However, Woolsey doubts that the CIA was distorting intelligence on this subject but admitted that he had no first-hand knowledge either way.²⁵⁸

Not only the American, but also the Canadian services were originally not alone in having such a nuanced attitude to the Bosnian conflict. The British services had a relatively balanced view of the matter, which in the case of the United Kingdom was supported and adopted by the policymakers. SIS clearly had a non-interventionist attitude, and the general motto was: 'stay out as long as possible.'²⁵⁹ The view of the UK Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) was also balanced.²⁶⁰ This was evident, among other things, from a secret operation. At the beginning of 1994 two articles appeared in the conservative magazine *The Spectator* which railed against the Western policy in Bosnia. This magazine was often used as a front by SIS staff. 'Journalists' worked for *The Spectator* in Bosnia, Serbia and Moldova. The articles were written in Sarajevo by a certain 'Kenneth Roberts', who had apparently worked for more than a year as a UN advisor in Bosnia. In reality this was SIS worker Keith Robert Craig, who worked for the Balkans Secretariat of the UK Ministry of Defence.

The first article was published on 5 February 1994 and advocated an UNPROFOR withdrawal from Bosnia, because all factions had committed war crimes. The second article, of 5 March, attacked the entire reporting in the British media. According to the unofficial historian of SIS, Stephen Dorril, this was a pro-Serbian approach. 'Without the slightest evidence, the carnage that took place in Sarajevo's marketplace was described as the work of the Muslim-led government, which was alleged to be massacring its own people to win sympathy and ultimately help from outside.' According to Dorril, the SIS operation worked perfectly and the article was carried by the world press. He also suspected that a large part of SIS was pro-Serb. This is probably incorrect: in reality it was an expression of a wider disenchantment. This British view was consistent with the Canadian analysis that there were no good guys and no bad guys in this war. Western services had more balanced ideas than the Western media, who were more emphatically pro-Muslim. SIS presumably used the conservative magazine here

²⁵⁴ For this, see Chapter 4 of this study.

²⁵⁵ Daniel Burton-Rose & Wayne Madsen, 'Corporate Soldiers. The U.S. Government Privatizes the Use of Force', in: *Multinational Monitor* (March 1999), pp. 17-19, Ripley, *Mercenaries*, p. 59 and Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force*, p. 90.

²⁵⁶ Confidential interview (97). According to Polmar & Allen, *Spy Book*, p. 601 Woolsey resigned mainly by the exposure of a Russian mole within the CIA (Aldrich H. Ames).

²⁵⁷ George Jones, 'Evidence builds up of Muslim bias by CIA', *The Daily Telegraph*, 03/06/95.

²⁵⁸ Interview with James R. Woolsey, 01/10/02.

²⁵⁹ Confidential interview (79).

²⁶⁰ Confidential interview (8).

as a counterweight to sound a balanced note. For the press this confirmed the image of SIS as pro-Serbian, and from that moment on this service was unreservedly branded as 'pro-Serbian', while many British journalists followed the CNN view ('good guys, bad guys') of the war.²⁶¹

For instance, anti-Serbian reports were shown on television of the battle around Gorazde in April-May 1994, according to the former American head of the intelligence section (in military terms: the G-2 section) in Sarajevo, Lieutenant Colonel J. E. Sray. A British SAS soldier was killed by the VRS and a British aircraft (a Sea Harrier) was shot down. US networks accused General Rose of cowardice and reluctance to deploy NATO air power against the Bosnian Serbs. What was not mentioned on television, however, was that ABiH soldiers had left their positions during the VRS attack and taken up new positions behind the SAS unit, which caught the British in the middle. No one took the trouble to make enquiries of the Public Affairs Officer of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (BHC), or to request an interview with UNPROFOR staff in Sarajevo. In later documentaries this story would indiscriminately be repeated on American television.²⁶² More generally, the press in the crisis around Bosnia was transformed from mere opinion shapers into prominent policy drivers who, depending on the situation, had an influence on the political decision-making that should not be underestimated.²⁶³ This is not the appropriate place to give a comprehensive analysis of the role of and reporting by the press on the war in Bosnia, but it is clear that this helped to shape a manifestly pro-Muslim view.²⁶⁴

Another example of misleading information was probably the mortar attack on the Markale market in Sarajevo, which killed 68 civilians in February 1994. Eleven artillery specialists subsequently spent nine days studying the shell attack.²⁶⁵ The official final assessment was that the attacks were executed by the VRS, but there were serious doubts about this within the Western intelligence community. Various staff of intelligence and security services from Canada, the UK, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Belgium and the Netherlands established independently of each other that this was an act by the ABiH to show the Bosnian Serbs in a bad light.²⁶⁶

A similar suspicion arose when on 28 August 1995 a shell landed on a busy square in Sarajevo. As early as October 1995 journalist David Binder reported in the weekly *The Nation* that four UNPROFOR specialists (a Russian, a Canadian and two Americans) had arrived at the incontrovertible conclusion that it was an ABiH shell. American intelligence officers admitted that the ABiH had taken responsibility for this incident.²⁶⁷ Sray, head of the intelligence section in Sarajevo, subsequently signalled in a publication that the ABiH was responsible for both shellings.²⁶⁸ Even the most important British policy body in the field of intelligence, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), came to the conclusion that the shelling of Sarajevo market was probably not the work of the VRS, but of the Bosnian Muslims.²⁶⁹

In a third incident that followed this pattern, the head of the UNMOs (UN Military Observers) in Sarajevo investigated the mortar attack on the water distribution point in Sarajevo, which was the trigger for the later air strikes by NATO, and in doing so demonstrated that the attack was executed by the ABiH itself. However, all the associated evidence was pushed aside by American officers.²⁷⁰ Russian

²⁶¹ Dorril, *MI 6*, 2000, p. 791.

²⁶² John Sray, 'selling the Bosnian Myth', in: *Foreign Military Studies*, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, October 1995. Other American, Canadian and European intelligence officials repeatedly expressed their dislike of CNN reports. Confidential interviews (9), (12), (47) and (54).

²⁶³ Drs. R. Theunens, 'Intelligence en vredesoperaties' ('Intelligence and peace operations'), *Militaire Spectator*, 170 (2001) 11, p. 599.

²⁶⁴ See also the Scholten appendix to the main report.

²⁶⁵ David Binder, 'Bosnia's bombers', *The Nation*, Vol. 261, No. 10, 02/10/95.

²⁶⁶ Confidential interviews (8), (9), (12), (21), (37), (44), (45), (47), (68) and (69).

²⁶⁷ Confidential interview (54).

²⁶⁸ John Sray, 'selling the Bosnian Myth', in: *Foreign Military Studies*, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, October 1995.

²⁶⁹ Confidential interview (8).

²⁷⁰ Confidential interview (44).

intelligence officers even told the author Ljiljana Bulatovic that the Bosnian General Rasim Delic had organized the attack.²⁷¹

Various interviews reveal that the French intelligence services generally leaned towards to the British position on the war in Bosnia. However, a conflict of competence arose in response to the far-reaching French involvement in UNPROFOR and the conflict in Bosnia between the foreign intelligence service (DGSE) and military intelligence service (DRM). Indeed in October 1994, an official agreement had to be made between these two services to delineate their tasks. This was also necessary because the two directors, Jacques Dewatre and General Jean Heinrich, were constantly at odds with each other. Furthermore, General Jean Heinrich frequently quarrelled with General Raymond Germanos, the Chief of Operations of the French Army, and this would give rise to many problems in Bosnia.²⁷²

The quarrel was ultimately settled to the advantage of the French DGSE, which was given exclusive authority to conduct clandestine operations in other countries and to run agents and sources. From now on the French military intelligence service would have to rely for the gathering of intelligence on the military attachés in the French embassies and uniformed officers, such as those serving with UNPROFOR. Senior officials of the French DGSE confirmed that their service had received an unprecedented flow of foreign requests for intelligence since the outbreak of the crisis in the Balkans. The DGSE was extremely active in Bosnia, and the sharply increased pressure of work had led to the recruitment of five hundred civilians in the five years since the start of the war.²⁷³ Incidentally, the director of the French foreign intelligence service, Dewatre, later had to resign because the service's operations in Serbia had misfired.²⁷⁴

German intelligence services also had a biased assessment: they were pro-Croatian, but leant towards the American anti-Serb position. The foreign intelligence service, the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND), was always very concerned (like the Italian and Austrian services) about the situation in Yugoslavia. These services expected major disturbances already after Tito's death and, according to a former BND official, had a better understanding of the ethnic and cultural problems there, compared to other services. The German service collected much intelligence by operating with special teams who debriefed refugees in Germany or Bosnia itself. There was a serious fear for the German national security in view of the enormous influx of refugees from the Balkan. In particular because there worked in Germany already more than 1 million Yugoslav immigrant workers.²⁷⁵

The BND is said to have also cooperated closely with Croatian intelligence services, such as the Bureau for National Security (*Ured za Nacionalnu Sigurnost*), the intelligence service of the Croatian Army (OSHV), the intelligence service of the General Staff of the Croatian Army and the Security Information Service. It is noteworthy, incidentally, that these Croatian services operated actively and specifically against UNPROFOR. For instance, Bureau IV of the intelligence service of the Croatian Army was responsible for military Communications Intelligence (Comint) operations against the headquarters of UNPROFOR in Zagreb, which were carried out from the air force base Lucko in Zagreb. This section was said to have maintained close links with the BND and CIA. The Germans made equipment available to both and arranged training and education. In addition, NATO intelligence, including Sigint, is said to have flowed via the BND to the Croatian services, to the great dissatisfaction of the NATO member states, especially because the Serbian intelligence and security services (such as SDB and KOS) had heavily infiltrated the Croatian services. Intelligence supplied by

²⁷¹ Bulatovic, *General Mladic*, pp. 125-126, 129 and 131.

²⁷² 'Changes at the Top in French Intelligence', *Intelligence Newsletter*, No. 266, 15/06/95.

²⁷³ Protocole d'accord DGSE-DRM, *Le Monde Du Renseignement*, No. 249, 06/10/94.

²⁷⁴ Chuck Sudetic, 'The Reluctant Gendarme', *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 2000.

²⁷⁵ Confidential information (86) and confidential interview (98).

American and German services ended up via this German-Croatian route in Belgrade.²⁷⁶ However, former BND officials strongly denied that this ever took place.²⁷⁷

This close American-German collaboration did *not* exist in the American relationship with other Western services, including between the British and the Americans, in spite of their special relationship. There was no question of an optimum sharing with the British by the Americans, according to an employee of the UK Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS). In early 1995 the Americans had become 'pretty anti-Serb', and had abandoned their balanced view. This brought them into conflict with the British services, which still had a balanced view of the conflict. This led to the American services adopting an increasingly unfriendly attitude towards the British. The difference of opinion led to a curtailment of American intelligence input to the Defence Intelligence Staff.²⁷⁸ As the then CIA director Woolsey remarked, such a balanced view amounted to 'swimming against the stream' in the American political context. According to a senior US intelligence official there were actually two streams. Those who idealized the Bosnian Muslims and those who blamed them equally with the Serbs. The CIA swam against both.²⁷⁹

American domestic politics were furthermore strongly influenced by the excellent media campaign in the United States by the Bosnian Muslims, who had hired the prominent New York PR firms Hill & Knowlton and Rudner Finn. Sray, who in 1994 was head of the intelligence section in Sarajevo, even stated that this was a pure disinformation campaign. He pointed out that the first firm was responsible for the Kuwaiti government's public relations campaign during the Gulf War, and had successfully spread the outrageous lie that Iraqi troops had thrown Kuwaiti babies out of their incubators. The management of Rudner Finn would later boast that it had succeeded in marshalling a significant part of the American Jewish community behind the Bosnian Muslims, in spite of the fact that the Bosnian Muslims had brought many Islamic fundamentalists into Bosnia who were vehemently anti-Israel.²⁸⁰

The approach of the intelligence services to the crisis in Bosnia

There were different levels of activities within the Military Information Office (MIO) at UNPROFOR in Zagreb. Firstly there was the MIO, as intended by the UN in New York, whose opportunities and resources were limited. This resulted in a second level of activities: the links with the national intelligence services and their contributions. A third level was based on liaison relationships within NATO, which mainly meant contributions from networks that had long been in existence. The most important levels were the second and third.²⁸¹ In Chapter 1 extensive attention was paid to the MIO in Zagreb. Below we will focus attention on the second level: the role of the various national services, and on the third level, the relationships within NATO.

Various troop-contributing nations soon realized that for gathering intelligence in the former Yugoslavia they should not count on intelligence contributions from the UN or the MIO. Because these countries considered it to be absurd 'to send troops to a sensitive area without the capability to analyse the situation properly' this quickly led to the establishment of well-organized national intelligence structures. Although these units were formally under UN command, in reality they were controlled by their national governments. There was a danger attached to this: this national control greatly influenced the policy conducted with respect to the conflict, which officially remained UN policy. UN intelligence needs were not always in agreement with those of the individual troop-

²⁷⁶ Marko Milivojevic, 'Croatia's Intelligence Services', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Vol. 6, No. 9, pp. 404-410. See also: Hagman, *UN-NATO*, p. 63.

²⁷⁷ Confidential interviews (98) and (99).

²⁷⁸ Confidential interview (8). For this, see also Chapter 5 on 'sigint'.

²⁷⁹ Confidential interview (97).

²⁸⁰ John Sray, 'selling the Bosnian Myth', *Foreign Military Studies*, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, October 1995.

²⁸¹ See Chapter 1 of this study.

contributing nations, which could also interpret the mandate differently or which possibly wanted to avoid conflicts with the warring factions.²⁸² Potentially, the 'grip' of national governments on the UN peacekeeping mission in Bosnia would therefore tighten.

Troop-contributing nations took the gathering of intelligence into their own hands. France, Denmark and the UK, for example, deployed special commando units, which operated behind enemy lines to gather intelligence. In March 1994 a joint covert operation was executed in Bosnia in which various troop-contributing nations participated, such as Canada, the United Kingdom and France. This was because at this point large parts of Bosnia had still not been explored and mapped out.

Another example: one day a group of European intelligence officers reported to the Bosnian government. As a cover they claimed to be members of a European tourist organization, and told the government in Sarajevo that once the war was over, Bosnia was certain to become a major tourist attraction. Therefore the group were keen to explore in particular those areas where UNPROFOR was not yet active. They especially wanted to survey the state of hotels and boarding houses, restaurants, public buildings, ski centres, the landscape, the state of the road network and so on, so as to be better prepared for 'the great tourist invasion'. The Bosnian government in Sarajevo fell for it and gave them permission. In this way, completely outside the knowledge of the UN, a great deal of intelligence was gathered on poorly accessible areas in Bosnia.²⁸³ However, this must have been in a timeframe when UNPROFOR did not control yet almost all Bosnia. Various interviewed intelligence officials had doubts about this story.²⁸⁴

British and French national intelligence cells were created, which operated independently of each other and of the UN. London and Paris did not want to be dependent on the intelligence contribution from the UN, which was minimal. The director of the DIS, Air Marshal John Walker, had the following to say on this subject:

'Intelligence is a dirty word in the United Nations. The UN is not a thing in itself; it's an amalgam of 183 sovereign nations. If it does intelligence, it will be doing it against a sovereign UN member, so it's incompatible. But you need a military intelligence job to protect your troops. If you don't, you pay for it in body bags'.²⁸⁵

In brief, most Western intelligence services created new structures (usually ad hoc) in order to deal with the crisis in Bosnia.

The US intelligence community, because of the considerable political involvement of the Clinton administration in the conflict in Bosnia, had bundled its forces in the form of a 'Balkans Task Force' (BTF), in which the most important national services were represented. Its director was Gene Wickland. The BTF included representatives of the CIA and DIA, with intelligence supplied by the NRO and NSA. Military analysis was carried out mainly by the CIA. Each night a daily situation report was drawn up for the following morning, which was incorporated in the presidential morning briefing by the CIA. President Bush (Sr.) was always briefed personally, but President Clinton was apparently a speed reader: he read the material provided extremely rapidly and dispensed with the briefing. The material for the briefing also went to the special Balkans advisor of Vice-President Al Gore, Leon Fuerth, who was responsible for monitoring the sanctions against Serbia and did so 'very much in detail'.²⁸⁶

²⁸² Pär Eriksson, 'Intelligence and Peacekeeping Operations', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 10 (1997) 1, pp. 5-6.

²⁸³ A. Walter Dorn, 'The Cloak and the Blue Beret: Limitations on Intelligence in UN Peacekeeping', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 12 (1998) 4, p. 429.

²⁸⁴ Confidential interviews (45) (54) and (98).

²⁸⁵ Urban, *UK Eyes*, p. 214.

²⁸⁶ Interview with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00 and Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, pp. 243-244.

A separate Balkans Task Force was also created in the Intelligence & Research section of the State Department, which received its information from the American intelligence community. A special Bosnia group also existed at the National Security Agency since 1994. Despite the initial shortage of translators American intelligence officials felt at the time that this team carried out one of the best operations in the intelligence service's existence. There was a 'four hour turnaround time' for Sigint from Bosnia and Serbia. This meant that after the interception of a message it would be translated, processed, analysed and delivered to the desk of the consumer of the intelligence, such as the CIA or the State Department, within four hours.²⁸⁷ In addition, in Vicenza, Italy, a special NSA unit was created for the rapid processing of intercepted message traffic: the Special Handling and Evaluation Detachment (SHED).²⁸⁸

In the United Kingdom too, all manner of new structures were created in all haste within the intelligence community to deal with the conflict in Bosnia. SIS had a number of official sources in the old Yugoslavia, but produced little valuable intelligence. The service also had too few experts who could speak Serbo-Croat, and it had to build everything from the ground up on the outbreak of the war, much like GCHQ. The coordinating body for intelligence, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), established the Current Intelligence Group for the Balkans. Within eighteen months, the Balkans department of SIS had recruited a number of sources among all warring factions and placed them effectively in Bosnia. Furthermore, SIS, reportedly carried out an operation in Macedonia in 1993, in which clandestine arms drops to the border were executed as part of an operation to set up a clandestine resistance network.²⁸⁹

Another secret operation in which SIS was said to have been involved was a detailed plan to eliminate President Milosevic. Former SIS worker Richard Tomlinson gained access to a secret two-page document, originating in SIS, with the title: 'The need to assassinate President Milosevic of Serbia'. It stated that Milosevic must be removed because he supported Karadzic. Meanwhile, American and French intelligence services made preparations to assassinate Karadzic; Milosevic apparently fell under the auspices of the United Kingdom. The plan was never executed, probably because the American government felt that Milosevic was a stabilizing factor.²⁹⁰ One American intelligence official rejected this notion. According to him, there was, and is, an absolute ban on any 'wet' work for US clandestine operations. Since 1974, each US clandestine operation is reviewed and approved by Congressional oversight, which flatly prohibits any such assassinations.²⁹¹

In 1994 Tomlinson worked under the cover of 'political advisor to General Rose' in Bosnia. He made trips to Belgrade, Skopje, Zagreb, Tuzla and Ljubljana, where he recruited new sources or spoke to senior Bosnian agents who already worked for the British service.²⁹² He successfully ran various high-level agents in Sarajevo.²⁹³ An official once asserted that these agents 'produced a very detailed intelligence picture which included not just the military plans and capabilities of the different factions but also early warning of political intentions'. Another source asserted, however, that important agents were recruited, but that these produced no 'substantial intelligence of quality'.²⁹⁴

A nationally oriented Bosnia Cell was created in the UK Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS). This special unit mainly had access to intelligence that was gathered by British and US services. This cell provided strategic, but not tactical intelligence to the Ministry of Defence. As regards the sources of the

²⁸⁷ Confidential interview (13) and Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 128.

²⁸⁸ Tim Ripley, 'Operation Deny Flight', *World Air Power Journal*, Vol. 16 (Spring 1994) pp. 19-20; Dylan Eklund, 'The Reconnaissance Squadron', *Air World International* (November 1995), p. 36 and Chris Pocock, 'U-2: The Second Generation', *World Air Power Journal* (Spring 1997), p. 94.

²⁸⁹ Dorril, *MI 6*, pp. 790-792.

²⁹⁰ Dorril, *MI 6*, p. 791. The French would also later have plans to remove Milosevic. See: Chuck Sudetic, 'The Reluctant Gendarme', *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 2000).

²⁹¹ Confidential information (80).

²⁹² Tomlinson, *The Big Breach*, pp. 130-174.

²⁹³ T. Kelsey & D. Leppard, 'MI6 gags spy who has vanished into the cold', *Sunday Times*, 22/09/96.

²⁹⁴ Dorril, *MI 6*, p. 792.

DIS: firstly this was GCHQ, after which came SIS, followed by Imint. In fourth place came the Foreign Office political reports. In addition, intelligence arrived via liaison and originally much was shared with the Americans (especially with the DIA).²⁹⁵ As the United Kingdom's political, military and humanitarian involvement in the events in Bosnia became more extensive, the British services started to become increasingly active in the Balkans. A national intelligence cell was established, as London no longer wanted to be dependent on the MIO in Zagreb. One such cell was set up in the Croatian port of Split and one in BHC in Kiseljak in central Bosnia, later in Sarajevo.

The sharing of intelligence with other UNPROFOR countries remained a problem throughout the UNPROFOR mission. The British also ran up against the difficulty that the UNPROFOR staff comprised many nationalities, including staff of former Russian and other Eastern European services. In Bosnia, the British Army Intelligence Corps originally worked closely with the French and Canadian military intelligence services.²⁹⁶ These operations were especially intended for gathering data for briefings for the commanders. Nonetheless, the same problems that frequently affect the world of intelligence soon appeared, characterized by the BBC journalist Urban as follows: 'Any channelling of Signals Intelligence or agent reports from the Government Communications Headquarters and MI6 to troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina was constrained by the intelligence community's strict rules about dissemination.' The result of this limitation on the dissemination of intelligence was that important information often did not reach the troops on the ground, as had happened during the Gulf War, where the command structure was almost ideal. Because troops from Russia and the Ukraine also took part in UNPROFOR in Bosnia, the probability that London would be allowed or able to supply valuable intelligence was small. If any intelligence was passed on, it was 'sanitized to the point of near-uselessness'. However, one should always remember, as mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study, that unclassified is not the same as worthless. Nonetheless, reports of intercepted message traffic from GCHQ were only passed on to a special British Sigint cell in Sarajevo, which was equipped with special communication equipment. This select group of specially appointed officers briefed the British General Rose and his successor General Smith personally.²⁹⁷ Furthermore, special Bosnia units were set up in the various headquarters of the Canadian, German and French (military) intelligence services. Until now, little has become known about the activities of these special units.

The information position of the Western intelligence services: the United States, France and the United Kingdom

The Western intelligence and security services appeared to be insufficiently prepared for the war in Bosnia. For instance, intelligence author Andrew Rathmell states that these services were still equipped for the situation as it had been before the fall of the Berlin Wall. 'Military forces embarking for remote trouble-spots overseas, for instance, find that they receive more timely and comprehensive background information from private sector information providers than through their own chain of command.'²⁹⁸ The question arises as to what the most important causes for this were, and whether there was a lack of information in the first place.

The former director of the CIA, James Woolsey, contested Rathmell's view. Discussing the information position of the CIA in 1993, he stated that his service had a firm grip on events and developments. According to him, this was because the interest in Yugoslavia within the CIA had always been great. For many years, much good intelligence had been gathered about that country. Yugoslavia had been an important player in the Cold War and had close ties with China. In this respect too, the country had been of interest to the CIA. There were therefore sufficient analysts and language specialists available when the conflict acquired a military dimension. The CIA knew fairly well who was talking to whom about what. That is also why the CIA held a balanced view (i.e. all groups committing

²⁹⁵ Confidential interviews (8) and (79).

²⁹⁶ Interview with Pauline Neville-Jones, 15/11/91.

²⁹⁷ Urban, *UK Eyes*, pp. 213-215.

²⁹⁸ Andrew Rathmell. 'Privatising intelligence', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. XI (1998) 2, p. 201.

atrocities but the Bosnian Serbs much more). They were also able to follow what weapons and other goods were being brought into the region. The CIA also knew that many 'visitors' from the Middle East were entering the region in an attempt to influence the conflict.²⁹⁹

The journalist Halberstam is of the same opinion. According to him there has been no lack of American political, military and intelligence talent in Yugoslavia for the last forty years. Belgrade was 'a good listening post' for developments in the Warsaw Pact. In the autumn of 1990, the CIA predicted in a thorough analysis that within one year Yugoslavia 'would no longer function and in two years it would begin to dissolve'. The CIA pointed to the dangers of armed conflicts between the various ethnic factions in Yugoslavia. Neither the United States nor the European countries would be able to stop this process, according to the service.³⁰⁰ It would nonetheless appear that the American information position in general was not actually that good. There were shortcomings, especially in the area of Humint, Imint and Sigint, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters.

Humint did play an important role for the Americans; not so much in the CIA, but in the DIA. One of the best sources of intelligence was formed by the flows of Displaced Persons that left Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia and the Republika Srpska to apply for asylum in European Union countries. Not only these refugees, but also deserters, were an extremely important Humint source. The US Army Intelligence and Security Command was running a sizeable programme in Germany and Italy that was aimed at debriefing refugees and deserters. They were interviewed in joint interrogation centres about their experiences in the former Yugoslavia. These special units were later incorporated into the Defense Humint Service. The CIA also had a separate unit in Croatia, the Refugee Debriefing Center, to interview and screen Displaced Persons from Bosnia.³⁰¹ The Austrian and Swiss intelligence services, incidentally, are also said to have gathered much intelligence thanks to the debriefing of refugees from the Balkans.³⁰²

The US community also acquired information from other similar projects. Via the 66th Intelligence Brigade in Munich, for example, which was also occupied with debriefing Displaced Persons. Furthermore, the American DIA had the 'Formica' project, in which all US military personnel that had been stationed with UNPROFOR or had travelled through the Balkans were comprehensively interrogated. Declassified American government documents reveal that in 1992 and 1993 this service already had a good insight into the atrocities committed in Bosnia in various camps where Muslims had been held prisoner, for example, Luka-Brcko and Omarska. It was also clear to the service that captured Muslims and Croats had been murdered on a large scale in Brcko. In order to mislead the International Red Cross, Bosnian Serbs were said to have inflicted minor wounds on themselves and pretended that they had been prisoners who had otherwise got off reasonably lightly.³⁰³ According to a senior US intelligence official US awareness on this issue was broad and well-defined. Nevertheless, the reporting priority given to the atrocities was nil. Many felt that the issue was very important, and reported extensively on it, but the direct application of the reportage was nil. Reporting on atrocities was seen as being aimed at three to five years down the road, for some ill-defined effort to hold parties accountable. It was an expression of faith in the system. All reporting on atrocities was done "out of hide", and in addition to the required reporting on tactical and operational requirements.³⁰⁴

Another US intelligence officer confirmed that the debriefings of refugees resulted in much useful intelligence. All raw intelligence from counterintelligence, Humint operations and Osint from the

²⁹⁹ Interviews with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00 and 01/10/02.

³⁰⁰ Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 94. See also: Cohen, *Hearts grown brutal*, p. 173.

³⁰¹ H.K. Roy, 'Betrayal in the Balkans: undercover Central Intelligence Agency officer introduced to Iranian Intelligence', *World and I*, Vol. 16 (2001) 8, 01/08/01.

³⁰² Confidential interview (26).

³⁰³ FOIA, *US Army Intelligence, Annual Historical Review, 1 October 1992 to 30 September 1993*, no date (approx. end 1993). With thanks to Jeffrey Richelson for making this document available. See further: Jeffrey Richelson, 'As World Fiddled Army Intel gathered World Of Serb Butchery', *Defense Week*, Vol. 17 (1996) 37, 16/09/96.

³⁰⁴ Confidential information (80).

Balkans was entered into the so-called *Blackbird Database*. However, this officer also stated that the DIA had botched the recording of a great deal regarding evidence of atrocities. For instance, the service interviewed hundreds of Displaced Persons in Germany without noting in the debriefing reports who said what. Therefore these witnesses could not be used as witnesses by the Tribunal in The Hague.³⁰⁵

The following can be said about the United Kingdom with respect to the information position of the DIS. In the first place the information of GCHQ was important. They supplied mainly military-tactical Sigint on troop movements and, for example, to calls for meetings. This intelligence went by satellite directly to the service in Cheltenham; the information comprised approximately seven thousand reports a week. In the second place the British foreign intelligence service, SIS, played its part. SIS also supplied tactical intelligence, but only small chunks. According to a British intelligence official, incidentally, this intelligence was not of the highest quality; on a score of 1 to 5 this official would value the material at 2 or 3, or in other words: 'Not really good stuff'. In the third place Imint was of interest. Photos were supplied by (Nimrod-type) aircraft that carried out photo reconnaissance flights in the region. AWACS aircraft were also used for espionage. They supplied Elint and Comint. Flights of the American U-2 espionage aircraft often also supplied good photos. Unmanned espionage aircraft (for example UAVs) mainly supplied Imint regarding Gorazde. The satellite photos were supplied directly to the Joint Analysis Center (JAC) in Molesworth. This is a wholly American organization, which forwarded the intelligence to the British. Only in fourth place was the political reporting of the Foreign Office of interest to the DIS. In addition, intelligence arrived at this service via the intelligence liaison with other countries (the main source originally was the liaison with the DIA).

British intelligence officers were often unimpressed with the UK Eyes Only intelligence supplied by the Special Air Services (SAS) and Special Boat Service (SBS) as part of the British collection operations. For example, the SAS reported one day that two Serbian tanks had been spotted at a given location. The DIS certainly found this interesting, but, according to the earlier mentioned official, the service also wanted to know where the tanks were going. In this way, the SAS did deliver much tactical intelligence, but the Humint that accompanied it was often difficult to assess and its value was difficult to ascertain. Later in 1995 the SAS carried out laser designation of Bosnian Serb targets and called down artillery fire on VRS positions.

From the United Kingdom there was also some intelligence liaison with the ABiH, but the information that was supplied was always taken with a grain of salt by DIS workers. Usually the Bosnian Muslims supplied *all source intelligence* (all types together), but the ABiH never supplied intercepted message traffic. Very often, the ABiH information came down to urging the UN to become involved in the conflict.³⁰⁶

Regarding the Sigint cover of Bosnia, an DIS employee said that Sigint resulted in 'no good picture'. The VRS and the VJ (the army of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) often used couriers or existing fixed land lines that could not be monitored, except in special operations where the lines were tapped directly. According to UK officials, this was in any case never done by the British services.³⁰⁷

An outline has now been given of how the intelligence and security services 'at home' acquired their information, and the question now remains as to what exactly the services themselves did in Bosnia in order to get the intelligence gathering off the ground. In addition to the outlined methods of Sigint³⁰⁸ and Imint³⁰⁹ there were also plenty of methods for gathering Humint, such as recruiting agents and informants or using existing structures, organizations and official bodies.

As far as Humint is concerned the impression is that the British information position was not so good. This was evident during the hostage crisis in the spring of 1995: regarding the hostages the British Chief of Defence Staff had to conclude in an internal intelligence memorandum that the greatest

³⁰⁵ Confidential interview (13).

³⁰⁶ Confidential interview (8).

³⁰⁷ Confidential interviews (8) and (79).

³⁰⁸ See Chapter 5 and 6 of this study.

³⁰⁹ See Chapter 7 of this study.

problem was that there was a lack of good intelligence. For this reason the British services simply did not know where the hostages were.³¹⁰ Until now very little has become known about the information position of other Western intelligence services, although all important services were active in Bosnia and they all had their 'own' official (diplomatic) and unofficial representatives in Bosnia.

The work of the intelligence services in Sarajevo, Belgrade and Zagreb

The most important Western intelligence services had a branch office in the region. This 'station' was usually connected with the embassies concerned; this was the case in Zagreb, Sarajevo and Belgrade. For instance, the German *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND) had a representative in the German embassies in Belgrade and Zagreb. According to CIA officers, the BND also had Humint sources close to Mladic and Izetbegovic.³¹¹ In practice, the BND had a special interest in the violations of the embargo against Serbia and Montenegro by Romania and Greece.³¹² The service occasionally came up with reports the reliability of which turned out to be highly dubious. For instance, on 16 March 1995 the German embassy, probably on the authority of the *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, reported that a temporary bridge had been built over the Drina at Jagustica between Serbia and the Republika Srpska, and that this bridge was being used to transport equipment to the Bosnian Serbs. It appeared later that the local landscape resembled a Norwegian fjord: a steep wall of rock more than 200 metres high. The German intelligence was incorrect.³¹³

The American CIA was likewise represented by a station in Belgrade. The CIA and the monitoring service, the NSA, had already operated for some time from the embassy with a secret post that monitored the communication traffic in and around Belgrade. The CIA and NSA operated from a similar post in Zagreb to track the Croatian communication traffic.³¹⁴ Matters were arranged differently in Bosnia. The first CIA Chief of Station to arrive in Sarajevo, had formerly worked in Belgrade, Zagreb and Kosovo. Originally, the new Chief of Station was supposed to leave for Sarajevo with a small team in mid-1994. However, this was deemed to be too dangerous by CIA headquarters; eventually the team did not leave until June 1995, shortly before the fall of Srebrenica. During his stay in Sarajevo, the Chief of Station also reported on the fall of the enclaves Srebrenica and Zepa. Albright in particular was said to have asked the Chief of Station to provide the correct numbers of dead in Srebrenica. When he indicated that this number was between six thousand and eight thousand, Washington responded with great scepticism.

The work of the Chief of Station in Sarajevo proved to be not without risk. Later in 1995, the Bosnian security service revealed his identity to the Iranian secret service, so that he had to make a hasty retreat from Sarajevo.³¹⁵ Only in late 1995 was the American station in Sarajevo reopened, after obtaining some security guarantees from the Bosnian side. The new Chief of Station in Sarajevo had to work with a small staff of three, which meant in practice that he had an assistant, an administrative worker and a communications man at his disposal. Furthermore, there was a strict separation of tasks between the CIA stations in Zagreb and Sarajevo. The CIA station in Zagreb, where the Chief of Station had a larger staff at his disposal, was responsible for the Republika Srpska. The Chief of Station in Sarajevo would not dream of running sources or agents in the Republika Srpska or of carrying out clandestine operations there. The tasks were distributed as follows: the most important task of the CIA station in Zagreb was to follow the political, military and economic developments in Croatia and the

³¹⁰ Confidential information (8).

³¹¹ Confidential interview (61).

³¹² 'Bundesnachrichtendienst: Handel mit Serbien geht weiter; Embargo wird umgangen', *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 21/07/92.

³¹³ Confidential information (10).

³¹⁴ Confidential interviews (6), (99) and (100).

³¹⁵ H.K. Roy, 'Betrayal in the Balkans: undercover Central Intelligence Agency officer introduced to Iranian Intelligence', *World and I*, Vol. 16 (2001) 8, 01/08/01.

Republika Srpska. The work was nonetheless focused on the gathering of intelligence regarding the Croatian armed forces.³¹⁶

The CIA station in Sarajevo was mainly concerned with an operation to expel Mujahedeen fighters from the country, and (partly overlapping) with fighting 'terrorism and the removal of foreigners'. This mainly concerned fundamentalists from Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and Revolutionary Guards from Iran and Yemen. As it happens, they were stateless Muslim soldiers, who had been recruited from the slums of cities like Cairo and Algiers. At the time considerable sums of money flowed from Iran to the ABiH to pay these fighters. The ABiH, however, wanted nothing to do with fundamentalists within Bosnia in the beginning. The ABiH may not have seen them as a danger and was not anxious to observe the wishes of the Chief of Station, who had been ordered from Washington to expel those particular fighters from the country. According to CIA workers, the Bosnian Muslims constantly tried to mislead the CIA and to downplay the problem of the Mujahedeen fighters. By the spring of 1996 CIA field officer Robert Baer worked with a half-dozen people in Bosnia on counterterrorism.³¹⁷

The CIA continued to actively pursue the order to expel these fighters from the country. For instance, they put pressure on Izetbegovic to force the Iranian Revolutionary Guards to leave. The president did not want to comply and in the first instance denied that such fighters were playing an important role. The CIA demonstrated that the Mujahedeen were closely involved with the Minister of the Interior of Bosnia, and also demonstrated that the Revolutionary Guards were occupied with training the ABiH to produce car bombs. However, a blind eye was turned to these Revolutionary Guards in the interest of what was considered to be the good cause of the struggle of the Bosnian Muslims. In these Iranian training centres in Bosnia, the CIA also encountered models of buildings that were evidence that the Iranians were planning to storm certain premises. In addition, the ABiH had engaged mercenaries from Albania and the Chechen Republic, which were needed because it had no other choice for training soldiers: most of its soldiers had no combat experience. Iran was permitted with American tacit agreement to supply weapons to the Bosnian Muslims,³¹⁸ but after the arrival of the first American troops the Revolutionary Guards had to leave Bosnia again. CIA workers, incidentally, admitted this 'tacit agreement' for arms trading; one of them remarked: 'That is politics.'³¹⁹

The CIA in Sarajevo soon discovered that the Bosnian Muslims had a 'white hot hatred' on all political and military levels towards the French. The CIA station, for example, received lists from the ABiH of French equipment, which had ostensibly been confiscated by the VRS. According to CIA officials, however, this concerned 'normal' French supplies to the VRS, for example two field kitchens, where each kitchen could feed approximately six hundred soldiers. These kitchens were transported in enormous trucks with low loaders and 'you do not just lose one of these accidentally along the way', according to a CIA official. In addition, the lists included summaries with serial numbers of radios, firearms, uniforms, rifles, military systems and communication equipment which were supposed to have been confiscated by the VRS. According to CIA officials, this was evidence that the ABiH had highly placed agents within the VRS or were able to intercept their communication traffic.³²⁰ The CIA itself also ran agents in Pale, who, according to a former official of the Dutch MIS, supplied excellent intelligence.³²¹

German, Turkish, Italian, Russian, Iranian and French intelligence services were also active in Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo and Tuzla. CIA officials in Sarajevo and Zagreb had a golden rule: no contacts with the French foreign and/or military services; the CIA apparently did not trust the French services. There was no Chief of Station of the British foreign intelligence service SIS present in

³¹⁶ Confidential interview (12).

³¹⁷ Baer, *See No Evil*, pp. 236 - 237.

³¹⁸ For this, see Chapter 4 of this study.

³¹⁹ Confidential interview (12).

³²⁰ Confidential interviews (6) and (12). See also Chapter 6 of this study for the Bosnian Sigint capacities.

³²¹ Confidential interview (78).

Sarajevo, which was quite remarkable in view of the presence of the many British troops there, according to a CIA official.³²² And the BND also met with distrust. According to German intelligence sources the French themselves were also reluctant to share information with the BND. And later during the war in Kosovo the CIA was sometimes reluctant to share UAV Imagery with the BND.³²³

There was definitely a British representation of SIS, albeit not on the level of Chief of Station. This is apparent from the book written by Richard Tomlinson, who spent some time in Bosnia for SIS and carried out various clandestine operations in Sarajevo and Tuzla, under cover as a political advisor to General Rose.³²⁴ The problem with his book, however, is that it probably does not describe the personal adventures of Tomlinson. Instead he presumably presents the experiences of his predecessor as his own. However, it is true that he ran agents in Sarajevo and Tuzla.³²⁵ Interviews conducted for this report have revealed that the SIS recruited agents up to the highest regions of Izetbegovic's government and cabinet.³²⁶

The British SIS, like the German *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, also had excellent sources close to Mladic, according to the Canadian intelligence officers. The Canadians themselves recruited good sources within the Bosnian government. From the Canadian side it was emphasized that in Sarajevo too the French intelligence services had built up an excellent working intelligence system. According to Canadian intelligence officials, the French military intelligence service was the best organized in Sarajevo. The French had an excellent and centralized working system which operationally, tactically and strategically stood head and shoulders above everyone else's. It was an integrated all-source intelligence system.³²⁷ The Canadian view was, not surprisingly, shared by the former head of the French military intelligence service (*Direction de Renseignement Militaire* or DRM), General Jean Heinrich. According to him, up to 1995 this service had an information level that was actually above that of the CIA. The American services had an extraordinarily weak intelligence image 'at home'; their point of view on the war in Bosnia was to change only in the practice of the conflict. According to Heinrich, the CIA knew what was happening on the ground in Iraq, because there they were dealing with a desert. It corresponded well with the CIA's method. But, as Heinrich observed, flying over an area that was wooded and hilly, with people who moved in small groups in a misleading manner, was different from what the US services were accustomed to from Iraq.

Heinrich pointed out that the CIA had other resources, but that all resources were deployed for technical investigation, electronic monitoring and Imint. According to him, the CIA had almost no Humint whatsoever. According to Heinrich, an intelligence service, especially in a conflict involving problems of this type, must have a large number of '*censeurs humains*' on the ground, as well as a very strong analytical capacity. Heinrich claimed that the director of the CIA, Woolsey, even visited him to discuss changes in his own intelligence system.³²⁸

This assertion was not based on French chauvinism, but was probably consistent with reality. Many interviews with (former) staff of the Dutch Military Intelligence service (MIS) and foreign services indicate that the American information position was indeed not highly regarded.³²⁹ A DIS official recalled Heinrich as 'a dreadful chap', who was extremely anti-American. Neither did he speak a word of English, which did not make bilateral contacts and liaison any easier.³³⁰ This did not detract

³²² Confidential interview (12).

³²³ Confidential interviews (98) and (99).

³²⁴ Tomlinson, *The Big Breach*, pp. 130-174.

³²⁵ Confidential interview (80).

³²⁶ Confidential interviews (8), (79) and (80).

³²⁷ Confidential interviews (9), (12) and (47).

³²⁸ Assemblée Nationale, *Srebrenica: rapport sur un massacre*, Assemblée Nationale, no. 3412, 2 parts, Paris 2001, Part 2, Audition de Jean Heinrich, 08/02/01, pp. 179-186.

³²⁹ For this, see Chapter 3 of this study and confidential interviews (8) and (9).

³³⁰ Confidential interview (8).

from the fact that the *Direction de Renseignement Militaire* (DRM) under General Heinrich, in terms of the gathering of intelligence about Bosnia, was generally judged positively in Paris too.³³¹

The problem, however, was that the DRM absolutely refused to share its intelligence with NATO allies. The service was able to locate the positions of ABiH and VRS snipers and even employed Black Teams to take out snipers at night. The uncooperative attitude of the French caused great problems when a combined Danish-Swedish unit took over a part of the sector in Sarajevo that until then had been under French units. The DRM refused to disclose the positions of the ABiH snipers to this new unit, insofar as they were aware of these, which resulted in dead and wounded on the Scandinavian side. According to staff of the Canadian intelligence community, however, the DRM cooperated on special operations with the German BND.³³²

The need for intelligence steadily increased during the conflict. Therefore, in addition to the United Kingdom, other NATO member states also established their own national intelligence cells in order to safely provide the 'national' commanders within UNPROFOR with timely and accurate intelligence. The French intelligence services had their own intelligence cell, and turned out to be able to build up an excellent intelligence network in Sarajevo in a relatively short time.

The Canadians also had their own cell and a special unit in Pleso, near Zagreb, which was responsible for processing the daily flow of Comint from Ottawa. This was the **Canadian Forces Information Operations Group (CFIOG)**, which was stationed in Pleso during the war in Bosnia. There was also a special Sigint unit there, which reported directly to the Deputy Force Commander (DFC), the Canadian General Ray Crabbe and later General Ashton. This unit arrived in Pleso in March 1995, where it worked with all source intelligence. The DFC therefore had an analysis unit with all capabilities and resources at his disposal. There was a direct line with the Department of Defence in Ottawa. Sometimes the American services would pass on intelligence to General Ashton, to which he remarked that he had already received it from 'his boys' in Pleso.³³³

Only some considerable time after the fall of Srebrenica, in January 1996, did a Netherlands National Intelligence Cell (abbreviated to NETHNIC) become attached to NATO headquarters in Zagreb. This was in principle a 'one-way gateway', intended to pass on Dutch intelligence to the intelligence officer in Zagreb.³³⁴ Other countries also had a national intelligence cell. For instance, the Swedish Vice-Admiral Magnus Haglund was head of the Swedish National Intelligence Cell (SWENIC) in Zagreb. Haglund collaborated closely with the German, British and Danish cells (GEMNIC, UKNIC and DANNIC) in particular to procure intelligence; he had fewer dealings with the Dutch cell. He did point out that the Dutch cell was usually avoided, because it was often affected by viruses in the computer systems.³³⁵

Besides technical resources, such as Imint and Sigint that were deployed for national intelligence gathering, various intelligence services often made use of Humint sources and the secondment of intelligence officers to a suitable location. The favourite secondment locations were in the various staffs and in Akashi's supporting unit in Zagreb. For instance, Akashi had a French advisor who worked for the French foreign intelligence service. The problem for this advisor, as he told another of Akashi's advisors, was that most other staff members knew what was going on, and at some meetings this Frenchman was consequently no longer welcome. This official's crowning glory was on his departure in August 1995, when he spent an entire afternoon loading a truck with boxes of documents. He later went to work for the European Commission Monitoring Mission (ECMM). According to this advisor to Akashi, this was also a favourite 'hangout' for intelligence personnel.³³⁶ Indeed, it will become clear

³³¹ 'Changes at the Top in French Intelligence', *Intelligence Newsletter*, no. 266, 15/06/95.

³³² Confidential interview (9). See also Chapter 4 of this study.

³³³ Confidential interview (54).

³³⁴ MoD, *MIS/Army, No. 2636, DOKL/IV*, Kol. J. Mulder to Head AI MIS, Col. B. Werger, 23/02/96.

³³⁵ Interview with Magnus Haglund, 04/11/99.

³³⁶ Interview with Tone Bringa, 13/07/99.

below that Western intelligence services were already active in Bosnia in 1991, when the collapse of Yugoslavia started with the separation of Slovenia.

Western intelligence services in Yugoslavia from 1991

The ECMM mission operated in Slovenia from July 1991 and in Croatia from September. The mission originally comprised thirty to fifty observers with diplomatic status, whose safety was guaranteed by the parties involved. Thanks to the white suits that were intended to emphasize their civilian status, they were soon nicknamed the 'ice cream vendors'. The number of ECMM observers was to grow within two years to approximately four hundred. The ECMM later also operated in Bosnia and had a regional centre in Belgrade. From August 1991 the monitors also included observers from the CSCE member states: Canada, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Sweden. The mission received its instructions from the presidency of the European Community, to which it reported, as well as to the UN and the International Red Cross.

Immediately upon arrival in Zagreb, it was already clear that many observers had their own national agenda. A lack of consensus immediately came to light between the countries that contributed the observers. It had been agreed with the EC that the observers would not report independently to their own national capitals, but exclusively through the head of the mission to the presidency of the EC.³³⁷ There was no question of this. Immediately on arrival in Zagreb some observers installed their own satellite dishes on the balconies of their hotel rooms, while others kept themselves completely out of sight and worked, apparently under cover of the ECMM, on their own national agenda.³³⁸

Although the mission's attempts at mediation met with little success and the mission was hardly able to play a significant role in supervising ceasefire agreements, they would acquire a certain value as the eyes and ears of the European Community in the field. From the autumn of 1991, the ECMM teams also started investigating human rights violations. In addition, the mission started to play a role in the exchange of prisoners of war, the execution of confidence-building measures decided on by the EC, and monitoring aid convoys.³³⁹ It goes without saying that the mission was attractive to the intelligence services. The diplomatic status of the observers meant that they were exposed to little danger, and another major appeal was that the ECMM observers were able to travel through many areas and so, under cover of diplomacy, could gather intelligence at reasonably low risk.

Confirmation that the ECMM observers were a cherished cover of Western intelligence services was provided in various confidential interviews. Staff of the Dutch MIS were also active in the ECMM as observers. According to one MIS official, the organization was full of staff from European intelligence services. The French ECMM observers all had special aerials on their hotel room balconies or their rented accommodation in Zagreb. Their task was to monitor the communication traffic in and around Zagreb for their own military intelligence service. When this was no longer permitted by the heads of the ECMM, the French observers rapidly complied.³⁴⁰

Danish intelligence officers were also stationed as observers within ECMM by their military intelligence service.³⁴¹ The German current affairs programme *Monitor* revealed in September 1996 that *Bundesnachrichtendienst* staff were also active in the ECMM. An official of this service worked in the ECMM under the pseudonym 'Ebenberg'. He was allegedly involved in at least two cases of illegal arms supplies. Bonn admitted that an official was active within the ECMM, but he was said to be not

³³⁷ NMFA, *DAV (Directorate for Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs)*. ISN 4824115, COREU of the EC presidency, no. Cpe/pres/hag 381, 16/07/91.

³³⁸ Interview with M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

³³⁹ NMFA, *DEU/ARA/05267*, COREU of the EC presidency, CPE/Pres/Bru/928, 22/09/93.

³⁴⁰ Confidential interview (81).

³⁴¹ Confidential interview (82).

involved in intelligence activities.³⁴² The ECMM, in other words, was used by a large number of intelligence services to station staff and so to gather intelligence in Yugoslavia.

Of course, Western intelligence services also placed staff within UNPROFOR and among the UNMOs, the UN military observers. Both these groups reported in the first instance mainly to the UN, but also to their own national governments. A former Chief of the UNMOs confirmed that his staff did hold various intelligence officials. These came mainly from France, Great Britain, Russia and the US. For example, his deputy came from the Russian Speznatz. A company in Texas 'delivered' the American UNMOs but this company was affiliated with the CIA. The British UNMOs came often from the SAS.³⁴³ During nearly all UN operations in other countries it happened that staff of intelligence and security services worked in UN organizations. For instance, the UNSCOM mission in Iraq had a large number of CIA workers.³⁴⁴ There was no great need for this during the war in Bosnia for the European intelligence services, because they happened to be 'in command' within UNPROFOR. Hence, it was mainly American services used UNPROFOR for intelligence gathering. After all, there were no American ground forces involved in the war, so their information position was therefore not always good.

The same was true for Eastern Bosnia. It was often suggested in publications and interviews that a certain Civil Affairs official of the UN in Tuzla worked for the CIA. For instance, a former ABiH general said about this official that the American services shared no intelligence with the ABiH, but that this person did occasionally pass on intelligence. According to this general, this official was a CIA representative. He sometimes went, according to the ABiH general, under the cover of Civil Affairs to Srebrenica and shared much information with the ABiH 2nd Corps headquarters in Tuzla.³⁴⁵ A Bosnian military intelligence service official confirmed that he knew various CIA workers and identified several of them. He received no intelligence from these persons, but did provide them with information, with the permission of the 2nd Corps.³⁴⁶ It was impossible to establish whether this official indeed worked for the CIA. Repeated requests for an interview were declined.

The position of Civil Affairs was often used as a cover for intelligence operations by American intelligence services (CIA or DIA). For example, an American captain in Lucavac worked for Sector North East, and he constantly interrogated Dutch UNPROFOR personnel about routes, convoys, and what they had encountered. If an incident had taken place, he asked about everything that had happened and how well the VRS was armed. This American captain frequently travelled throughout Bosnia. He suddenly disappeared after the attack of the 5th Corps in Bihac; he was picked up by an American colonel and never returned.³⁴⁷

Another UNPROFOR official in Tuzla was also said to have worked for the American intelligence community, in particular for the US Special Forces. He was first spotted in 1994 in Sarajevo at the headquarters of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command. He had an UNPROFOR identity card and told exciting stories about his ten-year stay in Vietnam. His credibility was soon brought into doubt, however, because he wore Airborne stripes on the wrong side of his uniform, and was therefore requested by General Rose's staff to leave the headquarters in Sarajevo.³⁴⁸

In 1995 the same official emerged in Tuzla, where he was working for UNPROFOR as head of the section for civil-military relations (in military terms: the G-5). In Tuzla, the US official made no secret of his Special Forces background.³⁴⁹ According to an UNPROFOR official, the American

³⁴² Bundesregierung: Mitarbeiter des BND in Bosnien im Einsatz, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21/09/96.

³⁴³ Interview with Bo Pellnäss, 03/11/99.

³⁴⁴ A. Walter Dorn, 'The Cloak and the Blue Beret: Limitations on Intelligence in UN Peacekeeping', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 12 (1998) 4, pp. 439-440.

³⁴⁵ Confidential interview (5).

³⁴⁶ Confidential interview (83).

³⁴⁷ MoD, MIS/Cie. Van Jawad to Hakort, debriefing report 101 MIS/Cie, 23/12/95.

³⁴⁸ Confidential information (10).

³⁴⁹ O'shea, *Crisis at Bihac*, p. 159.

services always worked through this section.³⁵⁰ The same official was probably involved in secret arms supplies to the ABiH in Tuzla, and was also the one who maintained the contacts with the staff of a firm that had warm relations with the American intelligence world, Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), whose staff were sometimes spotted in Tuzla. The Norwegian commander of Sector North East (SNE) described him in an interview with the BBC as ‘a pain in the ass’. After a number of warnings about his behaviour, he was finally again requested to leave the organization; he had been caught on the spot trying to break into the SNE intelligence cell. In 1996 he was back in Sarajevo again, where, this time in plain clothes, he worked for MPRI.³⁵¹

General Rose himself also reported possible CIA staff. He had dealings with a ‘strange shadowy figure straight out of a Graham Greene novel’. This turned out to be an American marine, who ran a water project for Sarajevo for the International Rescue Committee. Rose assumed that he worked for the CIA.³⁵² The Chief of Staff under General Rose, the Dutch General A. van Baal, also suspected that in 1994 many American intelligence officers were operating in Sarajevo, where he stayed between 24 February and 1 September. He had seen many examples of this, because the American embassy was situated next to the residence of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command: ‘We suddenly saw a host of Americans appear, including the former SACEUR Galvin’. According to Van Baal, Galvin had apparently been hired in to provide military advice.³⁵³ The interpreter of General Rose and General Smith, Milos Stankovic, refuted this. According to him, Galvin was in Bosnia on a reconnaissance mission at Clinton’s behest.³⁵⁴ Also an US intelligence official vehemently disputed this claim by Van Baal: ‘This is paranoid to the point of being comical!’³⁵⁵

As for the other Americans, Van Baal’s British intelligence contacts said that they were CIA. Some were in plain clothes, others in uniform. Van Baal also had an American on his staff who officially worked as a liaison officer for humanitarian operations such as food drops, but who in fact only kept an eye on what UNPROFOR was doing and passed it on to his counterparts. There were also CIA employees who attempted to get onto Van Baal’s staff, but he managed to keep them out. Van Baal also found it highly significant that the Sarajevo airlift was almost exclusively maintained by American aircraft and was therefore largely under American control (also on the ground). Regarding espionage at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo, Van Baal commented that on his arrival he found books in which all the positions of the warring parties, orders of battle, and so on were recorded: ‘The UN was transparent. I do not know who had seen this data.’³⁵⁶

The French military intelligence service also made use of French officers who were working undercover in UNPROFOR in Zagreb and Sarajevo, but who also reported directly to the DRM.³⁵⁷ According to a senior UNMO official, the infiltration of intelligence organizations was ‘normal’ in relief organizations such as UNHCR, UNICEF, the International Red Cross and NGOs. He gave as an example the American official who was the head of UNICEF in Sarajevo; he later discovered that he was a captain in the DIA. French NGOs were also said to have been used for arms smuggling.³⁵⁸

One UNMO official expressed his suspicion that UNHCR in particular was probably infiltrated by some services,³⁵⁹ which was not surprising, because this organization was responsible for the relief throughout Bosnia and took care of the supply by road of the eastern enclaves. American Special

³⁵⁰ Interview with H. Holm, 13/03/99.

³⁵¹ Interviews with C.L. Brantz, 11/06/99 and H. Haukland, 03/05/99. See also UNGE, *UNPROFOR, Box 193*, SNE 23 May-15 October 1995. Haukland to Comd. Unprofor, 31/05/95 and Hagman, *UN-NATO*, p. 93.

³⁵² Michael Evans, ‘US bugged me in Bosnia, says General Rose’, *The Times*, 10/11/98.

³⁵³ Interview with A.P.P.M. van Baal, 27/05/98.

³⁵⁴ Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, pp. 239 and 244-248.

³⁵⁵ Confidential information (80).

³⁵⁶ Interview with A.P.P.M. van Baal, 27/05/98.

³⁵⁷ Assemblée Nationale, *Srebrenica: rapport sur un massacre*, Assemblée Nationale, no. 3412, 2 parts, Paris 2001, Part 2, Audition de M. Bernard Janvier, 25/01/01, pp. 106-139.

³⁵⁸ ‘Freigelassene Franzosen zuruckgekehrt’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20/05/94.

³⁵⁹ Confidential interview (44).

Forces were said to have received permission to use UNHCR jeeps with special number plates for their operations.³⁶⁰ According to an internal investigation by UNHCR in May 1993, the Bosnian Muslims also repeatedly smuggled ammunition in aid convoys. For instance, 30,000 American camouflage uniforms were said to have been transported by the UNHCR to the ABiH 2nd Corps.³⁶¹ A load of weapons and ammunition was also discovered in an aid convoy of the Caritas organization on the way to Busovaca in March 1993. Whether this was a deliberate Bosnian-Serb attempt to discredit UNPROFOR, or a similar attempt by the Bosnian Croats, remained unclear.³⁶² The VRS was later to discover DM 30,000 in an NGO convoy bound for Gorazde.³⁶³

According to an UNMO official, from an intelligence point of view, 'the most interesting' organizations were the NGOs. Personnel of NGOs were therefore often recruited by intelligence services, because a variety of relief organizations were able to travel to provide humanitarian aid in areas that were closed to the outside world. Meanwhile, the ABiH also drove around in trucks marked with NGO stickers, and which proclaimed 'scottish European Aid', 'UNHCR', or 'European Aid'.³⁶⁴ An American intelligence service even recruited agents in one of the NGOs that worked in Srebrenica.³⁶⁵ It also became evident during the fall of Srebrenica that NGOs and a variety of other relief organizations supplied reliable intelligence. Officials from the American intelligence community declared at the time that 'their best information came from human rights groups, the United Nations and the press, not from spies, satellites or eavesdropping'.³⁶⁶

In other words, many intelligence services in particular were represented in UNPROFOR in various cities and areas in Bosnia. However, the above also reveals that the American services were not the only ones that were active. Other services likewise had sources and agents locally, and this was also true of intelligence services from countries like Russia, Turkey, Greece and Iran. The functions of these national elements were often unrelated to any support to an UN agenda. These nationalities worked to support their own agenda's, and some of those interests overlapped with on-going Western efforts. However, where it made good sense to do so, some cooperation with these services was permitted on a case-by-case basis. Whether this was also true of the Dutch intelligence community will be discussed in the next chapter. After all, it is relevant to know whether the Dutch intelligence and security services were also active in this grand intelligence 'theme park'. How well prepared was the Netherlands in the area of Humint, Sigint and Osint? Did it have sufficient technical, personnel and financial resources to 'tackle' the crisis in Bosnia and to provide Dutchbat with sufficient intelligence support?

5. Conclusions

The UN was extremely wary of active and focused gathering of intelligence, and UNPROFOR itself as an organization had no well-organized structure for gathering intelligence. This meant almost automatically that not only the United States, but also the countries that contributed troops to this peacekeeping operation, started to gather intelligence independently. This was carried out not only by the intelligence services from the different national capitals, but also in the region itself. By harnessing all possible resources and deploying more people, the services tried to gain a view of the political, economic and military developments in the region. As described above, there were initially a variety of teething troubles, which were psychological, political, structural and technical in nature.

³⁶⁰ Harald Doornbos, 'Groene spionnen tussen blauwhelmen' ('Green spies among blue helmets'), *De Stem*, 10/05/95. See also: US Special Operations Command, *10th Anniversary History*, MacDill AFB, Florida, 1997, pp. 52-55.

³⁶¹ MoD, *MIS/CO*, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 32/93, 10/05/93 and 101. MISCie. Van Jawad to Hakort, debriefing report 101 MISCie, 23/12/95.

³⁶² MoD, *MIS/CO*, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 18/93, 25/03/93.

³⁶³ Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*, p. 183.

³⁶⁴ UNGE, *UNPROFOR*, No. 330-6, G-2 HQ SNE to BHC, Zagreb, no. 2725, 08/01/95.

³⁶⁵ Confidential interview (54).

³⁶⁶ Stephen Engelberg & Tim Weiner, 'The Days of Slaughter', *The New York Times*, 29/10/95.

For instance, the general mental attitude in the area of intelligence was still too much oriented towards the old East-West way of thinking. Many analysts found it hard to abandon this habitual pattern. There was still too much thinking, reasoning and analysis in the context of the Cold War and the transition took place only with difficulty. Furthermore, the intelligence services were now confronted with a different sort of conflict, a low intensity conflict, which was new to them. Many services found this difficult to cope with, because there was often no well-defined concept that made clear who exactly the enemy was.

The operations of different paramilitary organizations increased this confusion further. Alliances of warring factions could shift within 24 hours, and allies in a given region or town could suddenly turn out to be enemies in a different district or town. After all, a conflict with ethnic and religious backgrounds is quite a different matter to a few Soviet tank divisions on the North German plains.

The Western intelligence community had sufficient resources to gather timely warnings about preparations for war. But, as the British author Rathmell put it so aptly: 'These warning systems are not appropriate for warning of threats such as ethnic conflicts. Such threats require more holistic assessment but defence intelligence agencies do not yet appear to have adapted their approaches.'³⁶⁷

As far as political problems were concerned, this chapter has argued that intelligence services often had a different view of the conflict in Bosnia from policymakers. In some Western intelligence and security services the thinking was not in terms of 'good guys, bad guys', and usually a more balanced view could be detected than that adhered to by the politicians. Former CIA director James Woolsey confirmed that the CIA was balanced compared both with those who said there were no Muslims atrocities and those who said the Bosnian Muslims killed as many as the Serbs. Both views were wrong. The same issue was also raised in the many confidential interviews and in the comprehensive analysis of the Canadian intelligence community that has been quoted extensively above.

However, as the conflict progressed, and the press, public opinion and the politicians increasingly took the side of the Bosnians, some intelligence services 'turned'. This was especially true of the Americans. The phenomenon of the politicization of intelligence emphatically raised its head.³⁶⁸ Studies were sometimes written to please the most senior policymakers, as opposed to providing them with intelligence. This had already been the case during the Cold War, and it was sometimes no different in Bosnia. Unwelcome issues with respect to the activities of the Bosnian Muslims and Croats were only reported to a limited extent, if at all. Political correctness also crept into the analyses, which was evident from the fact that the deeds of the Bosnian Serbs came fully into the spotlight while the misdeeds of the Muslims and Croats were given hardly any attention.

As an example, there is the trouble that the spokesman of the State Department had in recognizing that the Bosnian Muslims had concentration camps. According to him, they were merely detention centres.³⁶⁹ Furthermore, the reporting of the armed conflict between the different factions was not always uniformly 'policy neutral'. Cause and effect, as well as action and response, were often presented out of sequence, either by policymakers, or the press. In this respect, the political policymakers were often supported by a press which expressed very little criticism and which, with respect to television reporting, was mainly dependent on the large television networks.

The views of some Western services increasingly diverged and no longer corresponded with each other. This had the consequence that transatlantic collaboration in the area of intelligence liaison also started to suffer. As outlined comprehensively above, intelligence liaison was already a delicate subject. The exchange of intelligence is not automatic, as is sometimes assumed. It usually happens on the basis of bilateral agreements and according to the quid pro quo principle. If a service has nothing to

³⁶⁷ Andrew Rathmell, 'Privatising intelligence', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. XI (1998) 2, p. 203.

³⁶⁸ This had also frequently taken place in earlier years. See: Bill Gertz, 'study reveals "politicization" of intelligence', *The Washington Times*, 09/10/00.

³⁶⁹ Sremic, *War of Words*, p. 115.

exchange, then generally speaking it cannot expect to be provided with much in return by a friendly service.

Neither was the international exchange encouraged by the turnaround within the American services, such as the DIA and CIA. Especially after Woolsey's departure as CIA director, intelligence started to serve as support to the policy of the Clinton administration, which was largely pro-Bosnian. This meant that parts of the American intelligence community were brought into conflict with friendly Western services. The British military intelligence service in particular suffered: the British did not share the American views, and the Americans slowly shut down the flow of intelligence. In particular the flow to General Rose in Sarajevo seems to have been cut off. This apparently did happen in Zagreb. This would only be restored again after some considerable time.

It seemed as if only the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* could count on a continuation of the cordial collaboration, but this was because officials there shared a very pro-Croat *and* pro-Bosnian attitude with many people at the CIA. The interests of the American and German intelligence services ran in parallel in this respect, which was obviously to the great benefit of the mutual collaboration and exchange of intelligence.³⁷⁰ This chapter has made clear that the extent to which services recognize a perceived shared risk (in this case Serbia), apparently influences intelligence liaison.

Different political views on the origin of and solution to the conflict had an impact on the international intelligence liaison about the war in Bosnia between the other Western services. This meant an additional impetus for European and Canadian intelligence services to become active themselves in the region. Although Ottawa was able to rely heavily on the American services, the specific acquisition of reliable intelligence within the framework of force protection of their own units remained central to Canadian thinking. After all, a reliable intelligence contribution was not to be expected from the UN.³⁷¹ This led to the undesirable situation that various services sought special intelligence that was primarily of potential interest to their own national units in Bosnia. For example, the British in 1995 concentrated heavily on Gorazde, the Canadians on Sarajevo and Visoko and the Scandinavians on Tuzla, with the serious consequence that the eastern enclaves were left to their own devices concerning the gathering of intelligence. In any case the areas did not enjoy the highest priority, as will be demonstrated later in this study.³⁷²

In various European capitals various special task forces were set up in great haste to regulate and coordinate the intake of the intelligence gathered, and to provide the policymakers with reliable intelligence. However, the gathering did not proceed smoothly and only after solving various teething troubles did the services get reasonably 'up-to-speed'. There were technical problems, ranging from a lack of good maps to not having enough Serbo-Croat interpreters and translators. The lack of translators was a particularly great problem on both sides of the Atlantic, which considerably limited the opportunities for an optimum use of Osint and Sigint at the start of the war. It was also impossible to arrange the recruitment of reliable sources and agents and to build up an extensive and reliable Humint network within 24 hours. It took intelligence services months if not years to obtain good Humint sources. Ultimately, most European services appear to have succeeded reasonably well in recruiting informants at the highest level of the political and military leadership in Bosnia and Croatia. They appear to have been less successful where the Bosnian Serbs and the Serbs were concerned, although it has been suggested in retrospect that American and British military and civil intelligence services eventually recruited informants and sources close to Mladic and Karadzic.³⁷³

It is also relevant that the overall Western intelligence climate in the years after the fall of the Berlin Wall had chilled somewhat, because Western services increasingly started to spy on each other. The conflict in Bosnia aggravated the animosity between Europe and the United States even further.³⁷⁴

³⁷⁰ Confidential interview (12).

³⁷¹ Confidential interview (9).

³⁷² Confidential interview (8).

³⁷³ Confidential interview (11).

³⁷⁴ Loch K. Johnson, 'spies', *Foreign Policy* (September 2000), p. 35.

Most of the CIA officials interviewed stated, for example, that in Sarajevo they were not allowed to share intelligence with the French. The same was true in reverse: the French services in Sarajevo often exchanged no information with their NATO allies, which could well appear extremely illogical to an outsider in the light of a joint peacekeeping operation. This observation would appear to be justified considering that Scandinavian peacekeepers died for the French had not told them where snipers were located, though they did have this information. Established and habitual patterns apparently do not change in leaps and bounds. The extent to which services recognize shared risks apparently influence liaison. On the other hand, intelligence officials remarked to the author that the allegations about the French were not true as a categorical statement. Information was exchanged with the French in Zagreb and other capitals, by many different parties. The French exchanged with their German and Canadian counterparts. Also US and other officials of different nationalities exchanged a great deal of information with the French at a variety of levels.³⁷⁵

The unwillingness to share intelligence was boosted further because UNPROFOR's political and military course during the entire war in Bosnia was a thorn in the side of the US political policymakers, while senior military circles and the intelligence community in the United States actually had a more balanced view of the conflict.³⁷⁶ These political differences resulted in American but also other Western services sending agents to try to infiltrate the most important staffs of UNPROFOR and the humanitarian relief organizations, a strategy, which in some cases proved successful. Furthermore, American services tried to monitor as much of the UNPROFOR communication traffic as possible.³⁷⁷ Sometimes a variety of operations were executed against UNPROFOR and against the policy that UNPROFOR favoured on behalf of the UN. This repeatedly led to great tensions and conflicts. The conflict in the area of intelligence was therefore sometimes no longer directed against the jointly perceived enemy (Bosnian Serbs and Serbs): there was sometimes also a 'conflict' between Western services themselves.

Now, the reader may get a bit confused here at the end because the stage the author of this study set is that on the one hand, the cold-war mentality has the western intelligence architecture crippled and unable to respond to the crisis in the Balkans, and on the other hand, a scenario of the Balkans 'swarming with spies'. The correct answer is probably that both were partly true. While capabilities were building, they were not what they would eventually come to be. It was in this sombre constellation of a lack of preparation for the conflict in Yugoslavia, mutual animosity between Western services, little willingness for international intelligence liaison, various different political points of view on the origin and progress of the military conflict, and a different perception of who were the good guys and who were the bad guys in the conflict, that Dutchbat departed for Bosnia at the beginning of 1994. At that time various intelligence officers were already present there playing all kinds of roles in different organizations.

³⁷⁵ Confidential information (80).

³⁷⁶ See Part II of the Srebrenica report.

³⁷⁷ This is discussed further in Chapter 5 of this study.

Chapter 3

Dutch intelligence and security services and the war in Bosnia

Question to General Couzy: *What was your general view of the role that the Dutch intelligence community could play in the deployment and later stationing of Dutch troops in Bosnia?*

Answer by General Couzy: *What I actually thought was: zero. Yes!*³⁷⁸

1. Introduction

Western intelligence and security services encountered many problems when the war in the Balkans broke out. There were many teething troubles of a psychological, structural, technical and political nature. All the services sought mainly independently for solutions in order to cope with these problems, and attempted to build up a system as quickly as possible that would be able to supply the various national capitals with rapid and reliable intelligence. Various considerations and circumstances were involved. For example, the American intelligence community had no need to take into account the interests of American troops on the ground in Bosnia: only those of the US Air Force and the US Navy. The main function of intelligence in Washington DC appeared to be a source of information for the political and military policymakers. The priorities at first sight appeared to be different in The Hague, London, Paris, Ottawa, Oslo, Stockholm and Copenhagen. However, this was not the case. The priorities for the US intelligence community were very similar, but involved no ground forces. Force protection from surface-to-air assets extended beyond the coastal area, and served to support airlift efforts and enforcement of the No-Fly Zone deep inside the country. The dimension of the problem was different, but the function was fundamentally the same, and completely natural for any nation: to protect the military assets inserted into harm's way. As well as the function described above, intelligence in those capitals served mainly for the protection of the countries' own ground forces, air force and navy. The question that is now in the spotlight is how the gathering and dissemination of intelligence was organized in the Netherlands.

This chapter examines the Netherlands intelligence and security services in greater detail. The political willingness to send troops to Bosnia, both in Parliament and in the government, was greater after pictures had been shown on television of the camps in northwest Bosnia. In the debates on the deployment there was nonetheless a lack of clear statements on intelligence support for the deployed troops. Neither could anything be read on the subject in the parliamentary motions that were adopted.³⁷⁹ It can be deduced from this that parliamentarians and the government had no interest in the relationship between peacekeeping and intelligence. The question arises as to whether this political interest in intelligence was indeed zero, especially on a ministerial and parliamentary level, and if so what the underlying reason was. One possibility is that the services failed to press their demands on the politicians sufficiently firmly; another is that they did not present themselves effectively enough.

Even if the interest had been stronger, the question remains as to whether the services were well enough prepared for Dutch participation in the Bosnia mission. The question arises as to what was the information position of the foreign intelligence service (*Inlichtingendienst Buitenland*, IDB), the national security service (*Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, BVD) and the military intelligence service (*Militaire Inlichtingendienst*, MID, hereafter MIS). The IDB hardly played any role in the conflict in Bosnia; this

³⁷⁸ Interview with H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

³⁷⁹ See Chapter 13 of Part I of the Srebrenica report.

service was actually disbanded in January 1994. Section 2 discusses how the IDB was occupied with the Balkans nonetheless.

Section 3 covers the role and information position of the BVD, which was involved in the conflict because the stationing of soldiers in Bosnia could have consequences for the Netherlands national security and the democratic rule of law. From the Netherlands, the secret services of the warring factions might carry out operations, attempt to raise funds, or send weapons and ammunition to the region. Section 4 comprehensively considers the MIS, whose most important task was in distributing intelligence to the army leaders and the most senior politicians and officials of the Ministry of Defence on the dispatch and deployment of Dutchbat in Bosnia. The question arises as to what the MIS did in the way of Force Protection and whether any intelligence was supplied that was of benefit to Dutchbat.

A comment that immediately can be made on the role of the MIS is that small and medium-sized states that participated in peacekeeping operations, such as the Netherlands, often do not have the capacity to gather accurate and timely intelligence on each part of the world where troops are sent in a UN context. These countries are therefore completely dependent on what other intelligence services are prepared to exchange with them via liaison. But it should be said that this is not a natural fact, but often, as will be shown, the result of policy decisions hinged on funding, capability and political will.

Section 5 discusses the intelligence gathering in the enclave under Dutchbats I, II and III. Section 6 considers the collaboration between the MIS of the Central Organization (MIS/CO) and the Army's MIS (hereafter MIS/Army), which did not always appear to be particularly good in practice. Another MIS department that was responsible for gathering intelligence on Bosnia was the Royal Netherlands Air Force. Section 7 pays attention to the production of the Air Force section of the MIS (hereafter MIS/Air Force). Section 8 then considers the support the MIS received from UNPROFOR. The question remains as to what the MIS supplied in the way of intelligence to senior Ministry of Defence officials. This will be discussed in Section 9. Section 10 considers the role of the MIS in relationship to military security. Finally, Section 11 presents the conclusions.

The Ministerial Committee for the Intelligence and Security Services

When the war in the Balkans broke out, the Netherlands had a clear intelligence structure, with the three services mentioned above. All three were engaged in following the war in Bosnia. The three services were controlled by the Ministerial Committee for the Intelligence and Security Services (MICIV), which was formally responsible for the general policy on intelligence and security and the coordination of these services. This Ministerial Committee consisted of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Justice, the Interior, Defence, Finance, and Economic Affairs, as well as the chairman of the Committee on the United Intelligence Services in the Netherlands (CVIN), the heads of the three intelligence and security services and a senior official from each of the ministries mentioned. The Ministerial Committee is chaired by the prime minister and is convened when ministerial level decision-making is desirable on intelligence and security issues. The decisions of the Ministerial Committee are subsequently always discussed in the next session of the Ministerial Council.³⁸⁰

The Ministerial Committee for the Intelligence and Security Services (MICIV) met five times between 1991 and 1995. The meetings in 1992-1995 were concerned mainly with winding up the IDB. It was decided in 1991 to slim down the IDB, and the consequences of the developments in Central and Eastern Europe for the work of the services were discussed.

In 1992, the agenda included updating the BVD's tasks in Central and Western Europe. The take-over of the activities of the IDB by the BVD and MIS received particular attention, as did the

³⁸⁰ W.J. Kuijken, 'De coördinatie van de Nederlandse inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten in verleden, heden en toekomst' ('The coordination of the Dutch intelligence and security services in the past, present and future'), in: *Militaire Spectator*, Vol. 170 (2001) 11, pp. 562-563.

reorganization of the MIS. In 1993, the most important item on the agenda was the change in the Intelligence and Security Services Act. Moreover, in handing over the IDB's tasks to the MIS and the BVD, the Ministerial Committee for the Intelligence and Security Services determined in 1993 that the MIS and the BVD could make use only of 'passive' human sources, such as Displaced Persons from the region who resided in the Netherlands. Only if necessitated by national interests could 'offensive' use be made of human sources.³⁸¹ In other words, restraints were hereby imposed on actively recruiting and working with agents in other countries. There was no session of the MICIV in 1994, but there were two sessions in 1995. The agenda included matters concerning cryptography, the stationing of BVD liaison officers in other countries, and a reinforcement of the controlling and monitoring function of the MICIV. It was therefore impossible to find anything in the agendas of the Ministerial Committee for the Intelligence and Security Services that was related to the former Yugoslavia.³⁸²

The Committee on the United Intelligence Services in the Netherlands (CVIN)

This committee (CVIN) is the official portal to the Ministerial Committee for the Intelligence and Security Services (MICIV), and it coordinates the execution of the services' activities. The committee consists of the Coordinator of the Intelligence and Security Services (since 1991 the Secretary-General of the Ministry of General Affairs) and his adviser, the heads of the IDB (until 1994), the BVD and the MIS, and representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice. Meetings are sometimes convened in a form known as 'CVIN-Plus', in which the constitution is extended to include the secretaries-general of the ministries that participate in the MICIV.

Until 1991, the coordinator was a full-time official who was drawn from defence circles. With effect from 31 December 1990, Major General F.H. Alkemade (ret'd.) resigned as Coordinator of the Intelligence and Security Services. It was then decided not to appoint another full-time coordinator, but to incorporate this function in the portfolio of the Secretary-General of the Ministry of General Affairs, who at the time was R.J. Hoekstra. Immediately after his appointment as coordinator, he announced that he wished to restrict the dispatch of the MIS reporting to the committee's monthly contribution, reports on the Antilles, and otherwise only those reports that were of interest to the prime minister, at the discretion of the head of the MIS. Hoekstra also requested that a stop be put to the dispatch of the so-called Green Edition, which comprised intercepted message traffic.³⁸³

The CVIN met fifteen times in 1991. The agenda included subjects such as the consequences for the security of the Netherlands arising from the Gulf Crisis, developments in Central and Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia, the threat of terrorism and Chinese intelligence activities. The committee met ten times in both 1992 and 1993. Then too, the impact of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia was on the agenda. The Committee met eight times in 1994 and twelve times in 1995. Yugoslavia was on the agenda on various occasions.³⁸⁴ For instance, the unanimous assessment in the committee meeting of 17 February 1994 was that, in view of the involvement in the conflict in Yugoslavia, sufficient national interest existed to require a more active deployment of human sources. This meant intensifying the interviewing in the Netherlands and abroad of Displaced Persons, soldiers and other Dutch citizens who were or had been present in the conflict region.³⁸⁵

The CVIN-Plus also met on several occasions between 1992 and 1995. We will return to the contributions the IDB, the BVD and the MIS made to this committee below. It must be concluded, however, that the top of the Netherlands intelligence pyramid hardly discussed the developments in

381 MoD, *Archive CDS 1993*, Head of department P.C. Kok to Minister Voorhoeve, No. DIS/94/095/398, 18/02/94.

382 For this, *BVD Annual reports 1991 - 1995*; Letter from the Minister of General Affairs to NIOD, No. 99M001449, 25/03/99 and telephone communication from G. van de Hil (Cabinet Office), 26/10/99.

383 MoD, *MIS/CO, File 443-0393*, Memorandum from HMID Duijn, No. DIS/90/134/5879, 27/11/90.

384 For this: *BVD annual reports 1991-1995* and telephone communication by G. van de Hil (Cabinet Office) to the author, 26/10/99.

385 MoD, *Archive CDS 1993*, Head of Department P.C. Kok to Minister Voorhoeve, No. DIS/94/095/398, 18/02/94.

Bosnia. This raises the question of the extent to which this was also true in the various services that supplied the information concerned.

2. The Netherlands Foreign Intelligence Service

In its initial form, the Netherlands foreign intelligence service was founded in 1946 as the *Buitenlandse Inlichtingendienst* (BID) and, by Royal Decree, was replaced by the *Inlichtingendienst Buitenland* (IDB) on 5 August 1972. Significant information on the history, terms of reference and working method of the IDB only became available in 1998.³⁸⁶ The most important task of the IDB was the gathering of information on foreign countries that was of potential interest to the government.

The IDB was disbanded in 1994 after an often turbulent existence. In this period, the service suffered from a number of recurring problems for which no solutions were found. For instance, it proved difficult to find a balance between gathering and processing intelligence. The distribution of 'raw' intelligence, without analysis, hindered the acceptance within the government departments of the intelligence gathered. The ministries were at a complete loss to know how to deal with unprocessed data from agents and informants. When the messages were processed, it often led to bureaucratic arguments and competence disputes, especially between the IDB and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which saw this information as a threat to its own diplomatic reporting.

The IDB was poorly informed of the needs of its users. Even when in 1982, after many years a National Intelligence Requirements Plan (*Nationaal Inlichtingen Behoeften Plan*) was finally formulated, the document was so comprehensive and demanding that even an intelligence service of a major power would have had trouble satisfying the wishes it expressed, let alone the IDB, which had always been kept small.

The budget that was available for the service, approximately 4.8 million Dutch guilders, indeed only permitted a limited ambition. For example, there were insufficient resources for establishing pseudo-companies or to 'build up' agents over many successive years, so that they could operate at ever higher levels. It was repeatedly decided not to incorporate the IDB within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, because the leaders of this department did not want to burn their fingers on any incidents that might have arisen from secret operations. Therefore, for reasons of principle, the service was 'suspended' within the prime minister's department, the Ministry of General Affairs.

Between 1970 and 1972, by way of experiment, the service was brought under the Ministry of Defence, but this was not a success. Although one may perhaps expect otherwise of an elite department such as that of the prime minister, the political and civil service control of the IDB by senior Ministry of General Affairs officials left much to be desired. The IDB did not know what the government actually expected from it. Direct exchanges of views between the prime minister, who had political responsibility for the service, and IDB leading officials were at best 'only sporadic'.³⁸⁷

Of course, it would be doing the IDB an injustice to refer only to its failures. It must be stated that to the extent that the service succeeded, this was largely determined by external factors, such as the Sigint (intercepted message traffic) that was supplied by the MIS. The IDB analysts were able to use this information to produce reports that were rated relatively highly by their users. For instance, in 1973 the IDB was able to give the government a timely warning of the planned oil embargo by the Arab world. The IDB's performance was moreover favourably influenced by the reports of a limited number of friendly foreign services. Although different ideas existed within the service about the material supplied and the assessments of reports by the American CIA, the British SIS and the German BND (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*) were sometimes far from favourable, the information - obtained on the basis of exchange and liaison - certainly had a positive effect on the service's performance.

³⁸⁶ De Graaff and Wiebes, *Villa Maarheeze*, passim.

³⁸⁷ Engelen, *Inlichtingendienst Buitenland*, p. 51.

A study of the history of the IDB between 1946 and 1994 shows that there were major internal problems within the service from the outset. There was an element of a sort of ‘crisis cycle’, with a commotion flaring up within the service every couple of ten years, which could lead to an explosion that often found its way into the press and - to a lesser extent - Parliament. Ultimately, the government of Prime Minister Lubbers decided in 1992 to disband the IDB, and a start was made on scaling it down. At the end of 1994 the curtain finally fell for the IDB, and the service no longer played a significant role in the conflict in Bosnia. The final reports on Yugoslavia date from the early 1990s.³⁸⁸ The disbanding of the IDB made the Dutch government completely dependent on the BVD and MIS for the provision of intelligence on developments in Yugoslavia and their possible impact on the Netherlands.

3. The National Security Service (BVD)

The National Security Service (*Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, BVD) was created in 1949 and falls under the responsibility of the Minister of the Interior. The BVD’s tasks are, briefly, as follows: gathering data, carrying out security investigations, and promoting security measures. At the time of the Yugoslav conflict, the BVD was not yet involved in tracking flows of money (from Yugoslavia to the Netherlands and vice versa); the financial-economic investigation unit of the BVD is only 3 years old.³⁸⁹

It was mainly the first task that was relevant to the situation in Yugoslavia. The BVD’s activities were geared towards limiting the risks for Dutch national security, democracy, economy and society. The service therefore followed the letter of the law by focusing on the gathering of data on organizations and persons that, because of their objectives or their activities, might give reason for serious suspicion that they formed a danger to the survival of the democratic rule of law, or to national security or other important interests of the state.³⁹⁰

The Staff Bureau Foreign Political Developments (SBP)

The gathering of data not only had a domestic component but also a foreign one. The analysis of foreign political developments actually took place not only at the IDB, but also at the *Staff Bureau Foreign Political Developments* (SBP) of the BVD. This department was founded on 3 October 1963, and its duty was to gather knowledge on political developments in the communist countries, and moreover on communist parties in non-communist countries at least to the extent that this was useful for the BVD’s performance. When it was founded, it was determined that the SBP could gather as much or as little data as it saw fit with respect to foreign countries and other parties abroad. At the time it already appeared that the ground had been prepared for a competence conflict with the IDB’s predecessor, but the authority of the SBP was mainly limited, as the official jargon put it, to warning of international phenomena and developments that could form a threat to the democratic rule of law, or the security or other important interests of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.³⁹¹ The IDB had a much wider remit, namely the gathering of intelligence in other countries for the Dutch government. The analyses of the SBP served operations that were aimed at giving BVD agents in communist organizations as much information as possible about developments or impending developments in the international communist movement, so that they could use this knowledge to penetrate the communist ranks in the Netherlands.

The existence of a department such as the SBP within a domestic security service was unique in the Western world. In the major powers, the foreign intelligence services managed to prevent the

388 NMFA, 911.31 *Yugoslavia*, CVIN contribution: Centrifugale tendenzen in Joegoslavië versterken zich, No. 5125/RC/90, 30/07/90; CVIN contribution: Joegoslavië drijft verder uiteen, No. 8099/RC/90, 12/11/90 and CVIN contribution: Slovenië en Kroatië aan de vooravond van afscheiding, No. 4610/RC/91, 17/06/91.

389 Confidential interview (15).

390 Kluiters, *De Nederlandse Inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten*, pp. 31 - 32.

391 De Graaff and Wiebes, *Villa Maarheeze*, pp. 219 - 225 and Kluiters, *Inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten*, p. 35.

national security service from occupying this territory. In most small states, the security services were too small to fulfil such a role. In the Netherlands, however, the BVD was large enough to permit itself this luxury, and the foreign intelligence service was too weak to obstruct its creation. Due to the specific nature of the work, there was hardly any contact between the SBP and the IDB. Nevertheless, overlaps in their activities did occur. For instance, the SBP occupied itself extensively with investigating the disputes between the Soviet Union and China in the 1960s, a field in which the IDB also attempted to gather intelligence.

On 1 November 1990, it was decided to disband the SBP, although analysts continued to be involved in compiling analyses of foreign political developments that were regularly contributed to the CVIN. The disbanding took place within the framework of the complete reorganization of the BVD by the then head of the service, A. Docters van Leeuwen. Its objective was to cure the BVD of its Cold War syndrome, and to create a different working culture. Vertical departments were abandoned in favour of small teams working on finite projects, to bring an end to internal divisions and forms of specialization. The staff of the SBP were subsequently distributed as analysts around the various directorates, to be used on a project basis.

Changes to the new organization soon followed. Some projects turned out to have no real end, such as the fight against terrorism or Yugoslavian organized crime. This meant that analysts remained continuously engaged in studying overall political and economic developments in the Balkans. This was primarily carried out in Team Radar within the State Security Directorate. The leader of Team Radar rapidly came to the conclusion that a separate team would have to be created for Yugoslavia. This was to be Team Adriaan, which also incorporated the BVD's counterintelligence section on Yugoslavia, which here refers to the gathering of intelligence on the activities in the Netherlands by Yugoslav intelligence services.³⁹²

Team Adriaan

Team Adriaan started with 7 staff but expanded, especially after the arrival in The Hague of the Yugoslavia Tribunal, to approximately 20 staff. This was excluding the capacity of the Regional Intelligence Services, because in each large Regional Intelligence Service, in which the BVD and the police closely cooperated, one person was responsible for Yugoslavia. When the threat as a consequence of the arrival of the Tribunal proved to be less severe than expected, the number of staff dropped again to between 12 and 15.

Team Adriaan's responsibilities included giving security advice and gathering intelligence among Yugoslav Displaced Persons, as well as tracking the activities of Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Serbs, Serbs and Croats in the Netherlands. The team independently debriefed refugees from these areas. The team employed several translators, who in addition to translation work were also responsible for monitoring tapped telephone traffic. The BVD had many Russian-speaking staff; because the major threat from Russia had ebbed meanwhile, they were retrained to become proficient in Serbo-Croat. In the first instance, the BVD approached the translators training school of the Military Intelligence Service, the SMID, but they were turned down because of a lack of capacity. A BVD official was even requested by the SMID to lobby the leaders of the MIS/Army for the training of more Serbo-Croat translators at the MIS. Because of the time and the trouble that this would have involved, the BVD then approached a reputable language institute, which retrained the BVD staff in 3 months. After that, there were no more language capacity problems. It was then possible to obtain much intelligence from the Yugoslav community that had long resided in the Netherlands. This source supplied the BVD with more than the intercepted message traffic of the MIS.³⁹³

³⁹² Confidential interviews (15), (16) and (17).

³⁹³ Confidential interview (15).

The collaboration of the BVD with its foreign counterparts was not excellent, but from 1993 it improved somewhat, thanks to the arrival of the Tribunal. One BVD official stated that this suddenly appeared to make the Yugoslavian conflict a concern of other countries. The associated conclusion is again that the extent to which services recognize shared risk apparently influences the sharing of intelligence.³⁹⁴ Until that time, the BVD's experience had been that its foreign counterparts had little or no intelligence on Bosnia. Only the French national security service had an effective counterintelligence system. The German security service was poorly informed, and the Americans (the CIA) asked many questions but supplied little intelligence themselves. Dutch intelligence officers state that liaison with the US services has always been difficult. Intelligence liaison was seen especially by Americans as a means of reinforcing or maintaining their position in every respect - including economically. In this respect, the Dutch services can be reproached for a degree of naivety, because the Americans had always adopted that attitude. It was simply a fact of life that the Americans seldom gave away intelligence, and when they did it was often almost exclusively to serve their own interests. They did not have a strongly developed awareness of other people's interests. The BVD subsequently complained to the CIA that matters could not continue as they were, after which the CIA became somewhat more obliging. The first American Chief of Station in Sarajevo subsequently paid a visit to the BVD. The BVD could not expect much from the British services either. The security service, MI-5, gave absolute priority to its own military apparatus and UK national security. The BVD was able to obtain most from the Eastern European services.

Team Adriaan also pursued closer collaboration with the larger regional police forces, for various networks of Yugoslav criminals were active in the Netherlands. At the time, the National Police Services (*Korps Landelijke Politiediensten*, KLPD) had no coordinated approach to Yugoslav organized crime. Each regional force muddled through, and departments within a regional force would often know nothing of each other's operations. A joint operation in Amsterdam, for example, did not go ahead because the leaders of the police did not recognize its usefulness.³⁹⁵

The work on Yugoslavia therefore had a domestic and a foreign component. The former was mainly concerned with monitoring the events in Yugoslavia from the Netherlands and assessing the probability of negative consequences on the Yugoslav community in the Netherlands. Particular attention was paid to possible conflicts between different factions and to the physical threat to the consultation between the various Yugoslav leaders in The Hague at the time of the Dutch EC presidency. In addition, the service paid attention to activities related to the civil war, such as press-ganging, arms purchases and the raising of funds in Yugoslav circles in the Netherlands. What is more, the fact that soldiers were located in Bosnia could also have consequences for state security and the democratic rule of law. For example, secret services of the warring factions could attempt to carry out operations or to raise funds in the Netherlands, or send arms and ammunition to the region.³⁹⁶

In 1992, the BVD concluded that the warring factions in Yugoslavia were receiving increasing support from 'larger powers in the background'. For instance, the Islamic world had positioned itself behind the persecuted Muslims in what had developed into a conflict against 'a strange association of East European conservative (ex-communist) forces'. The BVD expected terrorist activities mainly from the Serbian side. In mid 1992, the First Secretary for Consular Affairs at the Yugoslav embassy in The Hague, Radoslav Jankovic, was asked to leave. According to the BVD, he had been identified as an officer of an intelligence service of his own country. He was said to be carrying out activities that were incompatible with his diplomatic status (including manipulative relations with Dutch government officials). The BVD wanted to declare him *persona non grata*, but this was opposed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was always extremely reserved in such matters. Jankovic had to leave anyway on 17 June 1992, because of the UN resolution that prescribed the freezing of diplomatic relations with

394 Confidential interview (15).

395 Confidential interviews (15) and (16).

396 Minister of the Interior, *BVD annual report 1991*, p. 25. See also: 'Van den Broek zou doelwit zijn van Servische terreur' ('Van den Broek alleged to be target of Serbian terror'), in: *Trouw*, 12/12/91.

Serbia. The embassy counsellor Milorad Sredojevic suffered the same fate in September 1992 and also had to leave.³⁹⁷ The two positions remained vacant and no attempt was ever subsequently made from Belgrade to place new officials from the Yugoslav security service SDB in The Hague. After this, contacts with Serbs in the Netherlands took place only from SDB headquarters in Belgrade.³⁹⁸

In two confidential reports - *Joegoslavië. Brandhaard in Europa* (Yugoslavia. Hotbed in Europe) from November 1991 and *Joegoslavië. Onverminderd brandhaard in Europa* (Yugoslavia. Undiminished hotbed in Europe) from September 1992 - the BVD again presented in a comprehensive analyses all the problems that were connected with the war in the Balkans and the possible impact of Yugoslavia's civil war on the Yugoslav community. The first 'Hotbed' report was an exploratory action by Team Adriaan. According to an official closely involved, obtaining approval was a struggle because the report actually contained too many hypotheses and assumptions.

With respect to what was known as the horizontal threat (within the Yugoslav community), and the vertical threat (to Dutch subjects and institutions), the service's outlook in 1992 was more sombre than it had been one year earlier. Both in 1991 and 1992, attention was paid to the recruitment of Dutch mercenaries for the conflict in Croatia. Finally, in both years, the BVD devoted approximately 20 pages to the general political, military and economic situation in Yugoslavia, even though this was actually a task for the IDB, which was then still functioning.³⁹⁹

An example of such IDB-like BVD reporting was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in July 1992. The political and military developments were analysed in an interim report on Yugoslavia. In military terms, the BVD analyst was sombre about the attempts to control the conflict; perhaps it would still be possible to achieve something with economic sanctions. From a political point of view, according to the analyst, it was necessary to settle the minorities issue, because otherwise a sustainable peace could not be achieved. Support from the Netherlands for the opposition leader Vuk Draskovic appeared to be advisable, but the disadvantage of this was that the BVD had reason to believe that a Yugoslav criminal organization in the Netherlands was providing Draskovic with financial support, a fact of which the politician himself might not necessarily be aware. However, it did give food for thought as regards the people in his entourage.⁴⁰⁰ In this period, the BVD also made overtures to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in order to arrive at joint analyses. Representatives of the Directorate-General of Political Affairs did once consult with the BVD management team, but after that nothing more was heard from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴⁰¹

Yugoslavia continued to attract the BVD's attention in 1993. The more the conflict intensified, the more the service shifted its interest to the activities of the warring factions inside the Netherlands. On 21 April 1993, the service organized a 'separatism Conference' at ministerial level, at which there was a comprehensive discussion of the activities of the organizations from ex-Yugoslavia, and of Yugoslav political crime. The recommendations that emerged from this conference extended to a tighter control on the flow of Displaced Persons from the former Yugoslavia, and registration of Displaced Persons according to ethnic origin, so as to facilitate separate relief and accommodation. Furthermore, the Displaced Persons were to be informed as clearly as possible about their rights and obligations. Finally, the collaboration between government bodies had to be intensified.⁴⁰²

The BVD also investigated the extent to which politically related crime among ex-Yugoslavs was geared towards supporting the war effort of states and paramilitary groups in the Balkans, such as

397 Minister of the Interior, *BVD annual report 1992*, p. 20 and confidential information (12). See also: Frank Vermeulen, 'Joegoslavische consul uitgewezen wegens spionage' ('Yugoslav consul expelled because of espionage'), in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/07/92 and 'Jankovic heeft niets illegaals gedaan' ('Jankovic has done nothing illegal'), in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/07/92.

398 Confidential interview (15).

399 Archive BVD, No. 116679, Memo BVD: Yugoslavia. Brandhaard in Europa, 08/11/91, p. 56 and NMFA, 911.31 *Yugoslavia*, Memo BVD: 'Yugoslavia. Onverminderd brandhaard in Europa', 10/09/92, 96 p.

400 NMFA, *Archive BZ 345169*, Koerten to DEU/OE, No. 2165741, 17/07/92.

401 Confidential interview (15).

402 NMFA, 911.31 *Yugoslavia*, Memo BVD to CVIN+ participants, 24/09/93, p. 34. See also: Archive Ministry of General Affairs, *Archive KMP*, Minister of the Interior to the prime minister, No. 37.253 SG/KAB, 26/05/93 plus memo from the BVD (no. 21822138-08) regarding the current state of the Yugoslav communities in the Netherlands.

the Arkan Tigers and the White Eagles. For the first time, it was also published in an annual report that the Bosnian Muslims too were the subject of the BVD's attention. The SDA, President Izetbegovic's ruling party in Bosnia, was active in the Netherlands in the *Merhamet* foundation, which was part of an international Muslim humanitarian aid organization. However, items were repeatedly found among their relief goods for Bosnia that could be described as non-humanitarian, such as military uniforms hidden under a consignment of flour. Nonetheless, nothing could be done about this, because, according to the Militias Act, a green military camouflage suit was only a uniform if it bore military emblems, which was not the case.⁴⁰³

Merhamet in the Netherlands also maintained relations with the Turkish organization *Milli Gorus*, which sometimes collected money for the Bosnian Muslims. This relationship cooled, however, when the Turks discovered that much of the money collected was being skimmed off by the Bosnians. The activities of the Bosnian civil intelligence service (AID) were also monitored, mainly because representatives of different movements existed within the Bosnian delegation in The Hague. Finally, the BVD followed the activities of the Macedonians and Kosovo Albanians. Activities by the Yugoslav SDB were no longer observed in 1993.⁴⁰⁴

As well as the possible influence of the developments in Yugoslavia on the Netherlands, the political events in Yugoslavia itself were also the subject of investigation. In a contribution to the CVIN-Plus on 11 May 1993, the BVD produced an evaluation of the events. In a comprehensive survey, a summary was given of the ethnic distribution of the Yugoslavs in the Netherlands, the situation in Yugoslavia, geostrategic consequences, the threat of war and the position of Zeljko Raznjatovic, the leader of Arkan Tigers. At the time, there were approximately 80,000 Yugoslavs in the Netherlands, mostly Bosnian Muslims, followed by Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Serbs, Kosovars and a small number from other groups. The BVD established that until then there had been no question of the application of (interethnic) force on a large scale, but that it was becoming more probable.

The service expected that the active participation of the Netherlands in a UN intervention force would act as a catalyst. Serbia in particular had repeatedly announced that it would carry out reprisals if it was attacked. Terrorist attacks outside Yugoslavia were likewise to be expected. The BVD established that all parties were guilty of barbaric practices. The Bosnian Serbs and Serbs were especially guilty of systematic and large scale crimes. The BVD expected that if all parties were to agree to a peace plan, there was a possibility of a large scale military intervention in Yugoslavia, in which, according to the BVD, the lion's share of the troops would be contributed by the United States.⁴⁰⁵

Increasing attention was paid to the situation in the Balkans from 1993 on. This is also evident from the 1993 and 1994 BVD annual reports, in which an increasing number of pages were devoted to Yugoslavia. As mentioned earlier, an additional task was also introduced at that time: monitoring the internal and external security of the Yugoslavia Tribunal in The Hague, which was seen as a pre-eminent focal point for subversive and violent activities.

The BVD established that a Dutch citizen who had long been involved in Serbian networks, had been instructed by the Serbian secret service (SDB) to organize protest demonstrations at the Tribunal. This Dutch citizen rapidly departed to the United Kingdom, however. After this the BVD observed that, with the exception of a few incidents, there was hardly any question of a threat of violence against the Tribunal. Personal security was occasionally stepped up, such as during the Kosovo Crisis. The BVD otherwise took account not only of Serbian but also of Bosnian actions. For instance, in September 1996 in Sarajevo, Nedžad Ugljen, one of the deputy chiefs of the Bosnian civil intelligence service, was liquidated. He was the head of the department that was responsible for tracing war criminals and was one of the Tribunal's contacts in Sarajevo. Although various views existed on the background to this liquidation, it was assumed in the Western intelligence community that he was too

403 NMFA, 911.31 *Yugoslavia*, Memo BVD to CVIN+ participants, 24/09/93, p. 11.

404 Minister of the Interior, *BVD annual report 1993*, pp. 33 - 36 and Confidential interview (33).

405 NMFA, 911.31 *Yugoslavia*, Memo BVD to CVIN+ participants, 24/09/93, p. 17.

unreliable in the opinion of some factions within Izetbegovic's government party and too inclined to cooperate with the Tribunal on tracing Bosnian war criminals.⁴⁰⁶

The service furthermore observed in 1994 that there were a number of war criminals from the former Yugoslavia among asylum seekers in the Netherlands. The investigation into this issue was started early in 1993 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At that time a start had yet to be made in the Netherlands on gathering information from ex-Yugoslav Displaced Persons, which could be used as evidence for a Tribunal. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs took the initiative of setting up a task force.⁴⁰⁷ The BVD collaborated closely with the Yugoslav war criminals investigation team of the National Criminal Intelligence Agency (CRI) and with the Public Prosecutor (OM) in Arnhem, who was responsible for investigating whether these alleged war criminals could be prosecuted. The Chief Public Prosecutor, A.P. Besier, constantly hesitated about resorting to prosecution, however. 'The Public Prosecutor saw little reason to do so, and that is putting it mildly', according to a BVD official. The performance of the war criminals investigation team was consequently limited.⁴⁰⁸

Secret services of the various Yugoslav republics were meanwhile becoming increasingly active on Dutch territory. The BVD had serious indications that a network of Serbian criminals had branches in Holland and it had connections with the Serbian secret service and Serbian government. There was a fear of violent actions on the part of these criminals. The BVD also observed that the Bosnian government obliged Bosnian refugees in other countries by law to pay income tax to finance the conflict. Refusal could have serious consequences for family members remaining in Bosnia. The service had not yet found any firm evidence of this, however.⁴⁰⁹

In 1995, the BVD had to admit that the developments in the former Yugoslavia had only limited consequences for the national security. The changed situation in the Balkans prompted only a muted response among ex-Yugoslavs in the Netherlands. It had not led to any form of organized political activity in the Netherlands. With respect to the horizontal threat (within the Yugoslav community) and the vertical threat (oriented against Dutch subjects and institutions) the fear had receded significantly in 1995, and with it the attention of the BVD.⁴¹⁰ The BVD continued to keep a watchful eye on monitoring and influencing activities by the Yugoslav embassy. The remarks made in 1994 regarding the criminal network with political connections were more or less retracted. While organized crime was indeed a phenomenon to be taken seriously, there were hardly any indications of continuous control from political power centres in the former Yugoslavia. The BVD was therefore not prepared to start investigations of its own into this area.

A remarkable affair that the BVD (and later also the MIS) was involved with, was that of the Serb defector Cedimir Mihailovic, who was said to have fled Serbia in October 1994 with the help of the Dutch embassy, which had given him a temporary passport on 6 October. Mihailovic had important documents on Milosevic's involvement in war crimes in Bosnia. Furthermore, he put himself forward as an intermediary for Karadzic, who - he claimed - was prepared to exchange the three eastern enclaves of Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde for other Bosnian-Serb areas in Bosnia. The BVD suspected that Mihailovic was working for the Serbian secret service, SDB, and was attempting in this way to map out how the Western intelligence and security services operated, and who the discussion partners were.

The Mihailovic case gave rise to friction between the BVD and the MIS, because the MIS was not immediately given access to him when he had arrived in the Netherlands. Both services arrived at the conclusion, however, that he was probably not to be trusted. The Tribunal judge, Richard Goldstone, would later also arrive at the conclusion that the documents he had handed over were

406 Confidential interview (15) and MoD, Archive MIS/CO, 438-0190, Box 307, Memorandum: The Bosnian civil intelligence service AID, 07/05/97.

407 NMFA, DDI DIO, Memorandum: War crimes in former Yugoslavia, 06/01/93 and Coordination meeting on the former Yugoslavia, 10/02/93.

408 Confidential interview (15).

409 Minister of the Interior, *BVD annual report 1994*, pp. 32 - 35.

410 Confidential interview (15).

falsifications. After that, Mihailovic was said to have left the Netherlands;⁴¹¹ he sought publicity from abroad⁴¹² and ultimately received a United States visa. How reliable he was remained unclear.⁴¹³

The BVD collaborated closely on Yugoslavia with the Economic Intelligence Unit (Economische Controledienst, ECD) of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. The ECD supervised compliance with the embargo against the warring factions, and also discovered a number of irregularities. For instance, in 1994 the ECD investigated a consignment of canned baby food, in which 7.62 mm ammunition was found that was probably destined for the Bosnian Army. On another occasion, the ECD investigated part of a consignment of 200 kg of vacuum-packed tins of milk powder destined for Bosnia, where 13 of the 24 tins turned out to contain rifle ammunition. Each tin contained two boxes of 24 cartridges each. This consignment was destined for a hospital in the Muslim enclave of Bihac; the tins were from a Dutch company. The ECD investigation revealed that the ammunition was not put into the tins during the production process. Neither was it plausible that a stopover had been made somewhere in the Netherlands during the transport to Bosnia to fill the tins with ammunition. The most plausible explanation was that the tins of baby food were filled with ammunition during a stopover in Croatia. It is possible that a great deal of ammunition and explosives were smuggled to the warring factions in this simple way. The ECD did not rule out that this was part of a well-prepared operation that had already been in existence for some considerable time. Perhaps this smuggling system was an important supplier of ammunition to the *Armija Bosna i Hercegovina* (ABiH).⁴¹⁴ The German *Bundesnachrichtendienst* was probably also involved,⁴¹⁵ and in this way more than 17,000 cartridges were said to have been smuggled to the ABiH in Bihac.⁴¹⁶

The BVD collaborated with its foreign counterparts to acquire information on the role and activities of Yugoslav organized crime. In addition, the BVD had arrangements for sharing information with the Bosnian security service. This was used especially for sharing intelligence on war crimes. In the Netherlands, the BVD collaborated particularly closely with the MIS, the National Criminal Intelligence Agency (CRI), the Criminal Intelligence Service, the local police intelligence services, and the Ministry of Justice with respect to administering the Temporary Regulation for the Reception of Displaced Persons. There were also frequent contacts with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND), whose responsibilities included monitoring the legal residence of foreigners.

For the BVD, the IND kept an eye on which Displaced Persons could supply interesting information, which made this body the first point of contact for the BVD. The IND worked with what were known as 'profile' data concerning those whom the BVD found interesting, for example whether the Displaced Person had belonged to a certain paramilitary group or had worked for an intelligence or security service. Sometimes this approach would be productive, but in the majority of cases it failed to deliver results. In this regard, much more information came from the local police and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, to which the refugees always reported first.⁴¹⁷

The MIS's countermove: Team Olivier

The tense situation in Yugoslavia and the increasing flow of Displaced Persons led, as mentioned, to the creation of Team Adriaan in the BVD. The MIS responded to this by setting up its own unit: Team Olivier, which included representatives of the MIS/Central Organization (part of the Counterintelligence and Military Security Bureau) and the MIS/Army (Operations Department).

411 Roger Cohen, 'serb Says Files Link Milosevic To War Crimes', in: *The New York Times*, 13/04/95; Roger Cohen, 'serbian documents prove Milosevic is a War Criminal', in: *The New York Times*, 14/04/95 and Roger Cohen, 'Dutch Hold Serb War Crime Documents', in: *The New York Times*, 04/05/01.

412 Minister of the Interior, *BVD annual report 1995*, pp. 33 - 34.

413 Cohen, *Hearts grown brutal*, p. 410.

414 Archive ECD, *International Economic Investigation Branch*, Statement no. 2005178, 27/04/94 plus appendices.

415 See Chapter 4 of this study.

416 Tim Judah, 'German spies accused of arming Bosnian Muslims', in: *The Sunday Telegraph*, 20/04/97.

417 Confidential interview (15).

Different ideas existed on the collaboration between Team Adriaan and Team Olivier. The collaboration between the BVD and the Counterintelligence Bureau of the MIS/CO proceeded satisfactorily, according to some. There was a regular meeting once a month, and once every 6 months there was a major meeting.⁴¹⁸

The complete picture surrounding the assessment of the MIS regarding this collaboration is hazy. Various MIS workers have completely different assessments of the collaboration between the BVD and the MIS. Team Adriaan (BVD) and Team Olivier (MIS) allegedly had fierce conflicts with each other on occasion, especially when it came to recruiting informants.⁴¹⁹ This recruitment took place on the basis of the screening of refugees by the IND for the BVD, which subsequently debriefed them. Team Olivier then received all the intelligence that the BVD distilled from this process. The most serious complaint of the MIS was that it was not itself allowed to interrogate Displaced Persons on specific military aspects and perceptions, so that much intelligence was lost. MIS employees asserted that the BVD put its own interests first. Refugees who might be of interest to the MIS because of their level of military knowledge were only referred by the BVD in dribs and drabs. BVD officials claim they saw little sign of this. According to them, all information of relevance to the MIS was sent to that service.⁴²⁰ The working method improved later, and in particular refugees with a military background were passed on to Team Olivier. The collaboration was complicated because of the anti-BVD attitude in some sections within the MIS, especially in the Navy and the Army sections of the MIS (MIS/Navy and MIS/Army). The MIS sections of the Air Force (MIS/Air Force) and Central Organization (MIS/CO) were said to have been on better terms with the BVD.⁴²¹

Another factor was that the BVD and the MIS did not always share the same views on the conflict in Bosnia. The BVD's political-military analyses sometimes led to differences of opinion between these services. This was not particularly remarkable, since political or military analyses from the IDB, the BVD and the MIS on certain subjects had in the past frequently given rise to mutual differences of opinion. For instance, the distribution of the BVD's interim report on the situation in the former Yugoslavia of July 1992 led to criticism from the MIS. The superficial formulations in the BVD report were a particular target. For instance, the BVD analyst stated that the conflict in Croatia regarding the Serb-occupied Croatian areas had definitely not abated. The MIS stated on the contrary that in Croatia there were hardly any Serb-occupied areas, just as there were virtually no Croat-occupied areas in Serbia. The Bosnian Serbs had been present for centuries in the areas of Croatia in which they were dominant, according to the MIS, and the BVD formulation overlooked the fact that the Croatian Serbs had good reason to fear for their safety. In other words, the BVD presentation of matters, that Serbia dominated these areas, was too simple. The comprehensive commentary concluded with the MIS's wish to arrange coordination or cooperation meetings on a more or less regular basis, which could lead to the exchange of data and improve the information position of both service's intelligence products.⁴²²

This appeal apparently did not have the intended effect. At the CVIN meeting of 19 November 1992, there was debate if there had been contact between the BVD and the MIS regarding the BVD report that had been discussed at the meeting in question. The coordinator of the committee, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of General Affairs, Hoekstra, expressed the concern that ministers would be confronted with reports that presented divergent views or that even contradicted each other. The BVD announced at this meeting through deputy head A. Kievits that the head of the MIS had correctly observed that the report was dated: it described the situation of the previous summer. Kievits also observed that this was indicated in the text. According to him, there had been good contact

418 Confidential interview (19) and interview with HMID, P.J. Duijn, 04/04/01.

419 Confidential interview (20).

420 Confidential interview (15).

421 Confidential interview (29).

422 Archive BVD, *N^o 116679*, Letter O. Koerten, Director of State Security BVD, to Head MIS, No. 215435, 07/07/92 plus Interim report on Yugoslavia, 06/07/92 and Letter from HMID Commodore P. Duin to the BVD, No. DIS/92/095/2852, 23/07/92.

between the BVD and MIS analysts who were concerned with Yugoslavia since that time. Kievits emphasized that there could be no question of completely harmonized documents or coproductions given the differences between the two services as regards powers and tasks. This did not detract from the fact that collaboration and coordination were called for on the work floor but he did not have the impression that this was lacking at that time.⁴²³

The above showed yet again that the work of the BVD on Yugoslavia had both a domestic and a foreign component. Throughout the entire period, the activities of the BVD nonetheless provided no intelligence that could be of relevance to the position in which Dutchbat found itself in the enclave. Such intelligence would have to come from the MIS.

4. The Military Intelligence Service (MIS)

After 1945, the three branches of the Dutch Armed Forces each had their own separate intelligence and security services: the Military Intelligence Service of the Royal Netherlands Army (MIS/Army), the Military Intelligence Service of the Royal Netherlands Air Force (MIS/Air Force) and the Military Intelligence Service of the Royal Netherlands Navy (MIS/Navy). They had duties in both the intelligence and security fields. The intelligence duties consisted of gathering the necessary data on the potential and the armed forces of other powers, with a view to achieving an appropriate structure and an effective deployment of the Dutch Armed Forces. Intelligence duties also involved gathering the information needed for the mobilization and concentration of the Armed Forces. The gathering of intelligence is a broad concept. It was taken to include the entire intelligence process from gathering (basic) data, evaluating, processing and documenting the data, to producing and distributing intelligence tailored to the users. Until approximately 1990, the activities of the military intelligence services focused on studying the capacities of the Warsaw Pact countries.⁴²⁴ Security duties comprised countering espionage, sabotage, terrorism and propaganda, securing data and performing investigations of a confidential nature. At the end of 1985, in discussing the Intelligence and Security Services Act, Parliament passed an amendment that urged the integration of the three military intelligence services mentioned above. When the Intelligence and Security Services Act came into force on 1 February 1988, Article 9.1 stipulated: ‘There is one Military Intelligence Service.’

Only one Military Intelligence Service?

The new law may have been couched in absolute terms but the actual situation proved stubbornly resistant to change. The integration of the MIS, which went into operation on 1 January 1987 pursuant to a promise made by the Minister of Defence to Parliament, only represented the coming together of personnel from the Intelligence and Security departments of the Defence Staff (part of the Central Organization) and from the individual Armed Forces. The ‘integrated’ MIS did not therefore amount to much more than ‘a sum of the parts’⁴²⁵ of the three former intelligence services and the Intelligence and Security Department of the Defence Staff.

For intelligence purposes, the heads of the Intelligence and Security Departments of the three Armed Forces remained hierarchically subordinate to their own Commanders-in-Chief. Each of these department heads was simultaneously Deputy Head of the MIS/CO, and were to be controlled by the new Head of the MIS. He alone was directly accountable to the Minister. In terms of organization, the Head of MIS was initially subordinate to the CDS and from the early 1990s to the Secretary-General. In rank, the Head of MIS (brigadier, commander or commodore) was always subordinate to the Commanders-in-Chief, so that, in the event of a conflict of interest, in all probability the heads of department would appeal to their respective Commanders. The command of the *security activities*, on the

423 Archive BVD, No. 116679, Letter A. Kievits to R.J. Hoekstra, 07/12/92.

424 Engelen, *De Militaire Inlichtingen Dienst*, pp. 62 and 82.

425 Engelen, *De Militaire Inlichtingen Dienst*, p. 95.

other hand, did fall completely under the Head of MIS, but the units responsible for executing security activities again continued to be organized per branch of the Armed Forces.

It was observed as late as March 1995 that the three Armed Forces had ‘not sufficiently’ subscribed to the political order of 1987 to arrive at one undivided and integrated MIS under a single commander, so that too little came of the execution. According to a final report by a reorganization commission led by the former Head of the Naval Intelligence Service, Rear Admiral S.W. van Idsinga (retd.), there was a ‘high resistance factor’ and ‘infighting (...) with all the mistrust which that entails’.⁴²⁶

For the Head of MIS, not much work appeared to remain in the first instance. His responsibilities included drawing up the Defence Intelligence and Security Requirements Report, but little would come of this in practice. It was still observed at the end of 1998 that this document was actually an extrapolation of work that was already being done. Moreover, the heads of the Air Force and Navy Intelligence and Security Departments backed out of participation in a central statement of requirements.⁴²⁷ Another duty of the Head of MIS was to produce intelligence for policy making, with special reference to crisis management. The Head of MIS was also Deputy CDS for Intelligence and Security. Together with the heads of the other intelligence and security services, he was a member of the CVIN. He took part in the twice-yearly NATO meetings of the NATO Intelligence Board and in the SHAPE Intelligence Conference.⁴²⁸

In 1987, an Intelligence Staff and a Security Staff were attached to the Head of MIS. The first was to be mainly concerned with the production of intelligence in the military-political, strategic and economic fields, while the three Armed Forces intelligence organizations would concentrate mainly in the operational, tactical and technical fields. The Security Staff was to concern itself with counterintelligence, industrial security and, in due course, security investigations. Only gradually would personnel and resources become available at the level of the Central Organization that was based on the Kalvermarkt in The Hague. An MIS Management Meeting took place almost every week chaired by the Head of MIS, and attended by the heads of MIS of the three armed forces (MIS/Army, MIS/Navy and MIS/Air Force) and the two MIS/CO staff departments: the Intelligence Staff and the Security Staff.

Discussions on the international political and military changes after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Defence cutbacks, the takeover of the tasks of the disbanded Foreign Intelligence Service (IDB) and continuing discussion on the organization of Signals Intelligence, formed new reasons for the integration process. Ultimately it would be mid 1996 before the Intelligence and Security Services of the three Armed Forces would be brought under the single command of the Head of MIS. And only in 1997 were the various units of the Armed Forces that were active in Sigint incorporated in this one MIS. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the MIS’s intelligence interest shifted from the Warsaw Pact to crisis management and peace operations in which the Netherlands Armed Forces took part. This tendency had already started earlier in the Army’s Military Intelligence Service at the time of Dutch participation in the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon (1979-1985).⁴²⁹ The MIS still focused some attention on the Soviet Union’s successor, because of its large military potential combined with the political instability of the region. NATO commitments also played a role.

In addition to the defence task, the MIS also gathered intelligence with a view to the risks that soldiers could run in deployment in crisis management, peace and humanitarian operations. This was also true for assessing the risks of Dutch involvement in enforcing the flight restrictions over Bosnia. The MIS, in close consultation with the BVD, also assessed the risks to Defence personnel from

⁴²⁶ MoD, *Archive MIS/CO*, Report Van Idsinga, DIS/95/21.11/809, 29/03/95.

⁴²⁷ MoD, *Archive MI S/CO*, Organization and Information Directorate, New balance. MIS Audit Report, Phase 2, p. 30, 04/11/98.

⁴²⁸ Engelen, *De Militaire Inlichtingen Dienst*, p. 97.

⁴²⁹ Archive MIS, *Archive MIS/CO*, Report Van Idsinga, DIS/95/21.11/809, 29/03/95.

criminal organizations of Serbian origin.⁴³⁰ The intelligence capacity of the part of the MIS based in The Hague, the MIS/CO, constantly lagged behind due to understaffing. In March 1995, in spite of cutbacks recommended by the Van Idsinga Commission, a strengthening of the MIS/CO analysis capacity from 28 to 42 staff was deemed necessary, whereas the same commission recommended that the number of Army intelligence positions could be reduced from 47 to 41. For the intelligence domain, the desirability of a decentralized approach was confirmed, however: in other words in the Armed Forces as opposed to the Central Organization.⁴³¹

In the 1990s, crisis management and peace operations also made their mark on the counterintelligence and security domain. This mainly involved promoting the security of Dutch soldiers. The debriefing of military personnel that had participated in peace operations was becoming increasingly important with a view to security aspects. All in all, the crisis management operations led to new intelligence requirements, which would seriously aggravate the pressure of work on the MIS, especially after the summer of 1995.⁴³²

The MIS/CO's sources

The Intelligence Staff of the MIS/CO was to make use of Open Source Intelligence (Osint), Human Intelligence (Humint) and Signals Intelligence (Sigint) for its intelligence production. The MIS has invested in the development of open sources, especially in recent years. This has meant more use of commercial data banks and Internet. It goes without saying that the service also had many national and international professional journals, weekly magazines and daily newspapers at its disposal. The MIS also exhibited the international tendency of making exhaustive use of open sources prior to resorting to more clandestine sources of information, such as human sources and Sigint. Another source of intelligence was the reports of the military attachés in other countries.⁴³³

With respect to information from human sources, there was an Operations Department within the MIS/CO that was responsible for recruiting and running informants and agents. This department was mainly created from the collaboration of the Counterintelligence (CI) departments of the 'old' military intelligence services of the Royal Netherlands Army and the Royal Netherlands Air Force. This department originally restricted itself to counterintelligence operations, but after the Foreign Intelligence Service (IDB) was disbanded on 1 January 1994, Operations started to make its own contribution to 'filling the hole' left by the IDB. A start was then made on building up Humint resources and closer collaboration with the BVD.⁴³⁴ Since mid 1996, this Operations Department has made an actual start on operations in the intelligence and counterintelligence area. The written accounts of the operational work can be found in what are known as the 'O Files' that contain data on the source, the operation files with information on the development of the operation, and finally the information files containing the intelligence provided by the source. The information reports were sent to users, such as the Intelligence Department, also at the MIS/CO.⁴³⁵

The MIS/CO also engaged in procuring Sigint. In 1995 there were three military units involved in this, one for each branch of the Armed Forces: the First Air Force Signals Group, the 898th Royal Netherlands Army Signals Battalion, and the Royal Netherlands Navy Technical Information Processing Centre (TIVC). Until 1996, these three operated separately from each other, but in that year they were integrated to create one Sigint Department, which comprised two sections: the Operational

430 See for example: MoD, *Archive StatDef, No. 2846*, HMID Duijn to the Secretary-General, No. DIS/93/011/113, 12/01/93 and No. 2850, HMID Duijn to the Secretary-General, No. DIS/93/095/1094, 30/03/93.

431 MoD, *Archive MIS/CO*, Report Van Idsinga, DIS/95/21.11/809, 29/03/95.

432 MoD, *Archive MIS/CO*, Organization and Information Directorate, New balance. MIS Audit Report. Phase 2, pp. 1 and 78, 04/11/98. See also: MoD, *Archive CSKL 1994*, DOKL/IV, Staff 1 Lk to Crisis staff, No. G2/5818, 11/07/94.

433 Engelen, *De Militaire Inlichtingen Dienst*, p. 145.

434 Interview with HMID, P.J. Duijn, 04/04/01.

435 Engelen, *De Militaire Inlichtingendienst*, pp. 143-144.

Sigint Centre (OVIC) located at Eibergen (in the Dutch province of Gelderland) and the Strategic Sigint Centre (SVIC) in The Hague.

The Royal Netherlands Army's 898th Signals Battalion in Eibergen was engaged primarily in intercepting military tactical message traffic (in the HF band). The Royal Netherlands Navy's TIVC with its Granger antenna at Eemnes (Utrecht) then concentrated on international communication traffic (in the HF band), and via two satellite dishes in Zoutkamp (Groningen) on the message traffic sent via satellites. The military and political Sigint obtained in this way was primarily destined for the Intelligence Bureaus of the three branches of the Armed Forces.⁴³⁶

In addition, intelligence was obtained via (not from) NATO. The MIS had access to a few NATO databases containing intelligence summaries and specific studies contributed by the participating intelligence services of the member states. Furthermore, intelligence was supplied to the MIS by its foreign counterparts, since the MIS maintained bilateral contacts with the intelligence services, military and otherwise, of a large number (over 30) non-NATO countries.⁴³⁷ This outline of the MIS's sources, which was taken from the historian Engelen, assumes the most ideal and desirable situation. The everyday reality was often different and more complicated, however: the MIS had to make do with what the its foreign counterparts were prepared to supply.

What foreign services wanted the MIS to receive

It was firmly stressed in various interviews that a NATO member state does not automatically have access to the intelligence of the other member states. There is a persistent misunderstanding that NATO member states can automatically receive intelligence data from NATO. This misunderstanding also extends to 'politicians'.⁴³⁸ NATO has no capacity of its own for gathering intelligence. When NATO was founded in 1949, it was assumed that intelligence gathering always entailed a certain risk of being compromised. Therefore, the gathering of data had to be carried out by the member states exclusively. The member states did undertake to supply intelligence to NATO, but only those data that they wanted to make available: it was therefore a voluntary arrangement. The general picture is that in a qualitative and quantitative sense less intelligence could be obtained via NATO than via bilateral contacts. A revealing fact is that NATO's Intelligence Division appealed to the heads of the military intelligence services of the NATO member states in May 1994 to make more intelligence available to the Organization.⁴³⁹ NATO was completely dependent on intelligence made available by its member states.

In June 1995, the MIS determined that the intelligence that was obtained via NATO was inadequate for taking responsible decisions concerning crisis management operations. What is more, NATO intelligence was based on a consensus of allies, and was therefore politically coloured to some extent. With respect to countries and developments outside the treaty area, it was also the case that issuing intelligence to NATO member states could be made subordinate to national (economic) interests of the member states.⁴⁴⁰ According to a MIS memorandum from 1989, the international bilateral intelligence liaison between the Netherlands and other countries took place on the basis of agreements - reached formally or informally - for collaboration and liaison and based on common intelligence interest, according to subject and region. The extent to which, and the way in which, these bilateral collaborative contacts were maintained varied greatly, however. It depended, among other things, on the willingness of the partner to engage in de facto collaboration, the quality of the partner's information, the information that could be obtained from the partner in a quantitative and qualitative sense, the information that the partner wished to receive in exchange, and political considerations.

436 For this see in particular Chapter 5 in this study on Sigint.

437 Engelen, *De Militaire Inlichtingendienst*, pp. 146-147.

438 Confidential interview (24).

439 MoD, *Archive CDS NATO, No. 375*, Request from NAMILCOM, No. 2902, 05/05/94.

440 MoD, *Archive MI S/ Air Force* CASS No. 49, File Reports DB, Letter + Appendix I, No. DIS/95/24.1/1486, 22/06/95.

As far as NATO member states were concerned, bilateral exchange between the Netherlands and another NATO member state did not arise automatically out of NATO membership. It goes without saying that common interests are beneficial to the willingness to exchange. On NATO's foundation, the member states already emphasized that the Netherlands' lack of its own adequate intelligence gathering capacity would mean that the majority of the partners had no need of the Netherlands. In the other direction, this was most definitely the case, and as a result, when it came to engaging and maintaining contacts, the MIS could never determine in advance how cost-effective those contacts would be. It could only be determined over the course of a considerable period which partners were valuable and which were less valuable. In 1989, the MIS used three categories of countries, which were not restricted to NATO member states. Intelligence from countries in Category A 'cannot be missed'; information from countries in Category B was 'extremely useful' and intelligence from countries in Category C was 'desirable'. Category A included the Federal Republic of Germany, Denmark, France, the United Kingdom and the United States. Category B included Israel, Italy and Switzerland, and Category C contained Belgium, Canada, Austria and Spain. In addition, the MIS maintained contacts with foreign intelligence services from considerations of efficiency.⁴⁴¹

In theory, the situation appeared to be clear, but in practice liaison with these partners showed that the Netherlands had too little to offer. The strength of the MIS was in the analyses, but this generated a vicious circle. The MIS's foreign counterparts could only benefit from sound analyses on the basis of a good foreign intelligence source, and in view of the fact that none existed where the Netherlands were concerned, the MIS's analyses were therefore not interesting enough to the foreign intelligence services. The Netherlands had little intelligence to share with fellow services, which put the MIS in a weak intelligence position by definition. The result was that officials of another European service stated that they had occasionally seen foreign intelligence reports with the following inscription: 'Not for Dutch eyes'.⁴⁴² For a clear understanding of the significance of the MIS for the Dutch troops in Bosnia, it is important to examine how the Heads of the MIS in the period 1992-1995 view their service with hindsight, and what problems they encountered in this period.

The views of the heads of the MIS/Central Organization

Commodore P.J. Duijn was Head of the MISD from July 1990 to December 1993. Before that, from 1986 to 1990, he had been Head of the Air Force Intelligence Service. He was therefore a man with broad intelligence experience. From interviews transpired that a general problem for Duijn was that he was confronted with a CDS, General A.K. van der Vlis, who had some trouble letting go of the old Warsaw Pact mentality. On Duijn's appointment, the MIS/CO was oriented almost exclusively towards the East.

A fundamental problem that Duijn had to deal with was the question to whom he reported to as Head of MIS. At the time, he attended the generals' meeting of the Defence Staff each week, and was regularly confronted with the recurring discussion of whether the Head of MIS reported to the CDS or the Minister. His own opinion was and remained that he reported to the Minister, sometimes to the irritation of the Deputy CDS, Lieutenant General of the Marines H.G.B. van den Breemen, who considered that the Head of the MIS reported to the CDS. Duijn refused to adopt this position, and his refusal generated constant conflict.

As Head of MIS/CO, Duijn was also directly confronted with the stand-offish attitude of the senior officers of the Royal Netherlands Army to the MIS/CO's involvement in the events in Bosnia. There was no one from the MIS/CO among the first group of observers that departed for the Balkans. Senior Royal Netherlands Army officials would not allow it, because the general attitude in the Army at the time was that intelligence had no part to play in UN operations. Other European services made less

⁴⁴¹ MoD, *Archive MIS/CO, Folder⁴⁴³⁻⁰³⁹³*, Memorandum Collaboration with foreign intelligence services, No. 4051/1/290889, 29/08/89.

⁴⁴² Confidential information (48).

of an issue of this, but in the area of intelligence, the Netherlands therefore did nothing towards the protection of its own troops.

In 1993, a senior British military officer had already publicly stated about Bosnia that 'intelligence is a vital element of any operation and the UN needs to develop a system for obtaining information without compromising its neutrality'.⁴⁴³ This recommendation was not followed up, however. One year later, a British brigadier came to the conclusion that UNPROFOR was still working with the traditional UN system of reporting events, without being actively engaged in intelligence gathering. Furthermore, rarely was anything done in the way of analysis.⁴⁴⁴ A fact which was certainly true of the Netherlands.

The more the conflict in the Balkans intensified, the more the verbal advice of the Head of the MIS to senior Defence officials was not to burn their fingers on the Balkans, to keep well away, not to intervene or send troops, and simply to allow the conflict to burn itself out. In early 1993, when the first Dutch signals troops were already in Bosnia, this recommendation was issued via the Deputy CDS and the Secretary-General to the Minister. The British and Danish military intelligence services also gave identical recommendations to their ministers. The MIS/CO persisted in this position, and the MIS/CO therefore never made an analysis of the situation in Bosnia to consider where Dutch combat troops could operate if they did actually have to go there. Duijn did express negative advice on the light arms with which Dutchbat was sent to Bosnia.

On his appointment, Duijn was confronted with a MIS/CO that had at its disposal only one Balkans analyst, who initially had to work mainly with open sources. In this phase, the Netherlands still had a military attaché in Belgrade, who proved to be an extremely useful source of information.⁴⁴⁵ However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wanted to freeze relations with Serbia, so that there was a threat that the attaché would have to leave, the consequence of which would be a further deterioration in the information position of the MIS/CO. At the time, the former Yugoslavia did not have a high priority in the MIS/CO. MIS staff were then also already heavily burdened with other tasks. Another factor was that MIS/CO staff themselves, like the CDS, continued to cling to the old East-West mentality, and had trouble making the shift to the new relationships in the Balkans.⁴⁴⁶

Relationships between the MIS/CO and the other three MISs

In the early 1990s, the MIS/CO was not able to get to grips with the intelligence units of the branches of the Armed Forces. The MIS of the Royal Netherlands Army (MIS/Army) was said to be relatively cooperative compared with the MIS of the Royal Netherlands Navy and the MIS of the Royal Netherlands Air Force. The last-mentioned was particularly reticent in sharing intelligence with the MISs of the other Armed Forces and the MIS/CO. This sometimes meant that intelligence would not be shared by the MIS/Army. In addition, the MISs of the Armed Forces sometimes wanted to win favour with their own Commander-in-Chief, and that led to situations in which intelligence was deliberately withheld.

The MISs of the Armed Forces were completely dependent on the Commanders-in-Chief. Another factor was that the CDS in that period did not yet wish to be a supreme commander, and as a consequence various crisis centres were created in the three branches of the Armed Forces. The Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) supervised the whole, but that happened only when it was activated in a crisis situation. The MIS cell at the DCBC (Current Intelligence Centre, or CIC) was activated on 14 March 1994 in connection with Dutchbat's presence in Bosnia, but was poorly staffed at the time, with the exception of the one Balkans MIS/CO analyst mentioned above.

443 Rear Admiral J.J.R. Todd, 'UK Perspectives of Current Security Arrangements', in: *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 139 (February 1994) 1, p. 35.

444 Michael Herman, *Intelligence after the Cold War: contributions to international security?*, unpublished paper, p. 3.

445 NMFA, *Archive D^{EU}*, Coordination meeting on the former Yugoslavia, No. 32/93, 20/01/93.

446 Confidential interview (25).

It can be considered remarkable that nothing was ever requested of the MIS/CO again by senior Ministry of Defence officials or at the instigation of the Ministerial Council within the framework of Yugoslavia. This was all the more remarkable because considerable doubts existed among senior Defence officials, on the part of CDS Van der Vlis and Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Lieutenant General H.A. Couzy, regarding sending troops to Bosnia. Negative advice on the subject from the MIS could possibly have strengthened their position, but they made no use of the services of the MIS/CO or the MIS/RLNA. In other words, the MIS was given no part to play. This was reinforced by the fact that the political decision to go to Bosnia had already been taken in the summer of 1993: the MIS had not been involved in that decision beforehand and afterwards the decision was irreversible.⁴⁴⁷

Another problem in this respect was that the Army's 898th Signals Battalion in Eibergen also assumed a Cold War mentality regarding the military communication traffic intercepted there. Furthermore, the Air Force and Army units operating there had capacity problems, and there was no Serbo-Croat language capacity in Eibergen whatsoever. One bright spot was that the Eibergen Air Force unit did have a good liaison with the German *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, and valuable military traffic was sometimes received via liaison. An issue in Eibergen at the time was whether the Sigint structure could continue to exist. The intelligence associated with it, Sigint, had an uncertain future in the Netherlands at the time because the Ministry of Defence was not then alert to Sigint. In Eibergen, there were three groups engaged in Sigint, one from each branch of the Armed Forces, without any coordination.

The capacity of the First Air Force Signals Group was cut back sharply, and Sigint in the Navy relied on the Technical Information Processing Centre (TIVC), while the Navy's commanders were interested in more strategic political and maritime information. It was because of this situation that the political need arose in the mid 1990s to integrate the operational Sigint of the three Armed Forces units in Eibergen. Another factor was the economic cutbacks, which meant that in September 1994 the senior officers of the Royal Netherlands Army came close to closing down the unit that was engaged in Sigint in Eibergen, the 898th Signals Battalion. The Head of the Cabinet Office of the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army managed in a memo to persuade his boss, Couzy, not to go ahead with this proposal.⁴⁴⁸ It had already been indicated in Van Idsinga's report that the Navy wanted as rapidly as possible to hand over the TIVC in Amsterdam to the Strategic Sigint Centre in The Hague, because the upkeep of a separate centre for operational and strategic Sigint was a severe drain on the Navy's budget. However, at the time, the Army and the Air Force were opposed to any cofinancing of a new, yet to be established joint centre for strategic Sigint; the Commanders-in-Chief stated that they had no need for this type of intelligence.⁴⁴⁹

The Army and Air Force Sigint units were at the time still resources purely under the auspices of the Commanders-in-Chief. Almost no Sigint went to the MIS/CO, except for the Green Edition containing intercepted communications traffic. Neither was there any capacity for analysing Sigint, and there were problems with the MIS/Navy, which, in spite of all the financing problems surrounding the TIVC in Amsterdam, did not wish to hand over the raw Sigint to the MIS/CO.

In addition, the Head of MIS/Navy was not at all happy with the appointment of Duijn as the Head of the MIS, because this also made Duijn what was known as a Sigint Senior. This meant that Duijn would be the Netherlands' sole representative at the annual meeting of the nine most important Western Sigint countries instead of the Head of the TIVC, which was under the command of the Head of the MIS/Navy. The MIS/Navy would therefore find itself out of the loop, and for this reason it was fiercely opposed to transferring this task from MIS/Navy to MIS/CO.

447 Interview with H.J. Vandewēijer, 19/01/98. See also: MoD, *Archive DEF/AT Ottawa 1994*, Map 14.8, Werger to Defats, 23/03/94.

448 Interview with H. Bosch, 10/10/01.

449 MoD, *Archive MIS/CO*, Report Van Idsinga, DIS/95/21.11/809, 29/03/95.

However, because Duijn's appointment did go ahead, he went on to visit Norway, Denmark, Belgium and Hungary. As well as friction between MIS/CO and the Royal Netherlands Navy, problems also arose in relation to the Royal Netherlands Army. The senior Army officers did not want Duijn to discuss Sigint in Denmark. This was claimed by MIS/Army as an exclusive right. Duijn was, however, able to establish good contact with the Hungarian MIS regarding the sharing of Sigint.

Yugoslavia did not prove to be a subject that attracted the attention of the highest political policymakers and intelligence officers in the Ministerial Committee for the Intelligence and Security Services (MICIV) or its portal, the Netherlands Committee on United Intelligence Services. According to the Head of MIS/CO, Duijn, the conflict in Yugoslavia was not a subject of discussion in the Committee; in his view the Committee's members were far too occupied with disbanding the IDB. There was constant discussion on which IDB tasks should be taken over by which service. The picture was the same in the Ministerial Committee: under Prime Minister Lubbers, the meetings took only approximately 20 minutes each, and there too, according to Duijn, there was no interest in Yugoslavia.⁴⁵⁰

After Duijn's departure, Commodore P. Kok was appointed Head of MIS/CO. He held this position from 1 January 1994 to 25 June 1995, in other words until shortly before the fall of Srebrenica. Prior to that, from mid 1991 to the end of 1993, he was Head of the Military Intelligence Service of the Royal Netherlands Navy (in which position he was also Deputy Head of MIS/CO) and at the same time Head of the Intelligence and Security Department of the Navy Staff.

The new Head of MIS/CO was already confronted shortly after his appointment with a collaboration agreement that was intended to provide for 'a conflict reduction in the possible areas of tension' between MIS and BVD; Commodore Kok had not yet been involved in this process as Deputy Head of MIS. To this end, however, collaboration on the basis of equality would be necessary between the *de facto* still existing three MISs of the Armed Forces and, according to Kok, there was little evidence of such equanimity. According to this plan, the MIS as a whole would be dependent on the assent of the BVD as regards its actions in a number of areas. Kok proposed a new agreement as an alternative to this plan, which Docters van Leeuwen of the BVD agreed to, 'albeit grumpily'. Kok would later understand that not everyone in the BVD was happy with the new agreement as a replacement of the old plan.⁴⁵¹ Incidentally, this did not apply to various staff of his own MIS/CO, who considered the agreement to be excellent.⁴⁵²

The new Head of the MIS was left with a feeling of considerable frustration with regard to his period at MIS. He was obliged to occupy himself primarily with the task of reorganization, and had little time to focus on the military intelligence work. The parochialism, to which he himself had once actually diligently applied himself in his time at the Royal Netherlands Navy Military Intelligence Service, now turned against him at the MIS/CO. After a year in his position, he came to realize that things could not continue as they were, and he made serious attempts to integrate the three services in the MIS/CO. In his view, the MIS/CO was 'a jar of fleas all jumping in different directions'. Like his predecessor, he was also confronted with attempts to take the MIS away from the Minister and restore it to the CDS. Kok himself said that he attempted to obstruct this, but according to others he 'kept in with' the CDS, in contrast to Duijn who did business directly with the Minister.

The MIS at the time of the fall of Srebrenica

Kok confirmed that under him the MIS/CO was never consulted in decision-making on the deployment of Dutchbat to Srebrenica, as was also the case under his predecessor Duijn. Nor did the MIS/CO under Kok ever make a risk analysis of the enclave in East Bosnia. The MIS/CO, under Kok, and also under Duijn, did produce risk analyses on account of the Royal Netherlands Air Force's

450 This reconstruction is based on an interview with HMID P.J. Duijn, 04/04/01 and various confidential interviews (18), (19), (23), (25), (27) and (87).

451 Jensen and Platje, *De Manid*, pp. 369 - 394.

452 Confidential interviews (24) and (25).

involvement in enforcing the no-fly zone over Bosnia. In this, the MIS/CO followed on from the MIS/Air Force in constantly examining the risks for defence personnel at Italian air bases, in connection with possible Serb terrorist and sabotage actions. The MIS/CO arrived at the proposal that the authorities should be extremely cautious in giving information on combat actions, and on the nationalities of the attacking aircraft.⁴⁵³

As the Head of the MIS/CO, Kok is also said to have urgently advised Defence Minister Voorhoeve, shortly after his appointment, to pull out of Srebrenica. Like his predecessor, the Head of the MIS was also confronted with CDS Van der Vlis, who must have been in despair about the position in which Dutchbat had ended up in Srebrenica. On his appointment, Kok therefore wanted a discussion with the Minister as soon as possible, but according to Kok the Minister was shielded by the Secretary-General, a state of affairs which Kok found extremely frustrating.⁴⁵⁴ Later, it did become possible for the Head of the MIS/CO to brief Voorhoeve on a regular basis. The Minister did have some interest in the work of the MIS, but this mainly involved the integration of the services and not the military information that the MIS had to offer. The problem for Kok was that he was given no political guidance by Voorhoeve, and had to write his own statement of requirements. Voorhoeve never informed the MIS or Kok what sort of information he actually required from the MIS.

For all these reasons, the MIS under Kok played hardly any role in the conflict in Bosnia. Neither was the MIS accepted as a serious discussion partner by the political policymakers, as was also confirmed by Voorhoeve.⁴⁵⁵ The MIS did arrange daily briefings in the Defence Crisis Management Centre on the political and military intentions of the warring factions, but when the briefing was over, the MIS had to leave and the doors were closed.

The information position of the MIS in the period of the fall of the enclave was also not terribly impressive. There were no contacts at a strategic level with the Scandinavian countries or the United Kingdom, which had troops in the vicinity. Furthermore, Eibergen was still geared towards a Cold War mentality and absolutely not towards Yugoslavia, so that no Sigint on Yugoslavia was gathered there. What is more, at the time of the fall of the enclave Eibergen still reported to the Commander-in-Chief of the RNLA, who demanded that the unit continue to operate according to the old East-West mentality. That was the order on the table, and it was not to be deviated from. In Eibergen and within the RNLA it was seen as a 'mortal sin' to glance in the direction of conflicts that did not fit into that mould.

Organizational problems exacerbated the situation still further. The fact that Eibergen was not allowed to do anything on 'Bosnia', coincided with resistance to a further integration of the three MISs of the Armed Forces, a process which only started to gain momentum in 1994. Senior RNLA officers blocked this integration, because they wanted to preserve the MIS/Army.⁴⁵⁶ Couzy confirmed that he had never ordered Eibergen to step up its activities regarding Bosnia. As Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army he did not have the impression that important information was being withheld from him in the sphere of Sigint.⁴⁵⁷

Otherwise, the image that the MIS/CO was entirely uninvolved in Bosnia deserves some correction. It was even clear to Kok as Head of the MIS that the enclave would disappear in due course. This was confirmed to him by a meeting in the first half of 1994 with his Hungarian counterpart in Budapest. He brought Kok into contact with the Head of the Serbian MIS, who confirmed the picture that the enclaves would disappear in the long term. Ideas were occasionally exchanged after that in the MIS management meetings, and consideration was given to using Dutch F-16s to take photos of Srebrenica. This did not happen because the Air Force thought that it was neither

453 MoD, *Archive CDS 1994, No. 2854*, HMID Kok to the Secretary-General, No. DIS/94/095/856, 13/04/94.

454 Interview with P. Kok, 07/06/00.

455 Interview with J. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

456 Confidential interview (41) and interview with J. Vandewijer, 27/01/00.

457 Interview with H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

possible nor permissible. The MIS/Air Force was focused on protecting the security of Air Force personnel, and their assessment was that such an action could put them in danger.

In early 1995, it was more or less known that Kok had to leave. From that moment on, the MISs of the Armed Forces no longer wished to share any information with each other and with the MIS/CO. Intelligence sharing with the foreign sister services was also proceeding poorly. There were complaints from abroad in the direction of the MIS; they kept asking when the Netherlands was going to start producing intelligence on Bosnia. However, the MIS was able to provide extremely little, and therefore also received little intelligence from abroad in return. There was actually some Sigint available, but the Technical Information Processing Centre (TIVC) of the Royal Netherlands Navy had a tendency to keep it to its chest.

The foreign services knew perfectly well that the MIS was strongly divided internally. Partly for this reason, the balance in the relationship between the MIS and its foreign counterparts constantly worked to the detriment of the Netherlands. The foreign intelligence services also took advantage of this under the motto 'divide and conquer': they 'went shopping' for information at the MISs of the Armed Forces and invariably obtained something in this way; the one service often did not know what the other had given away.⁴⁵⁸ Furthermore, the MISs of the Armed Forces were more concerned with getting credits from their respective Commanders-in-Chief than with informing the Minister. Former MIS/CO staff spoke of 'a sick atmosphere' within the service and its productivity at that time was completely undermined by mutual competence conflicts and the lack of actual operations. These were the circumstances under which Kok departed as Head of the MIS in June 1995.⁴⁵⁹

His successor was Brigadier General J.C.F. Knapp, who was appointed on 25 June 1995 as the new Head of MIS. It was apparent not long after his arrival that relations between the MISs of the Armed Forces in this period were still less than cordial, to put it mildly. Knapp too was confronted with the strong territorial boundaries that the three MISs had erected around their own areas. This was sometimes taken to extremes; the demarcation between the MISs was so emphatic that Knapp, as Head of the MIS, was not welcome at the TIVC complex in Amsterdam or the MIS/Air Force building.

Van Idsinga's report on the integration of the MISs into a single MIS was Knapp's starting point upon taking office. The report stated that the Royal Netherlands Army, Navy and Air Force were reluctant to contemplate an expansion of the MIS/CO,⁴⁶⁰ but Knapp had now been given a very clear political signal and instruction to realize the goal of one unified MIS.⁴⁶¹ Knapp's motto was always that the MIS was a support service, primarily to serve the Ministry of Defence and secondarily the interests of 'The Netherlands Incorporated'. In his 'will and testament' on his departure on 1 October 1997, he again indicated that an intelligence section and a section for military security would have to be formed.

As Head of the MIS, Knapp regularly visited the three MISs of the Armed Forces, and then reported directly to the Minister. To this end, Knapp did not first approach the CDS, and in so doing he reinstated Duijn's tradition. With strong backing from Voorhoeve, Knapp made a start on the onerous task of integrating the MISs. He initially received little cooperation from the individual MISs, but this later changed. On the one hand, this was because he appointed civilian personnel from the Ministry of Defence to various key posts in the MISs of the Armed Forces. From the point of view of integration, this was a smart move, because it diminished the pull that the Commanders-in-Chief of the various Armed Forces exerted on the Heads of their respective MISs. Financial aspects also lent a helping hand. The MIS/Navy in particular realized that collaboration was beneficial, because the MIS/CO was holding the purse strings. This attitude resulted in the MIS/CO taking over the TIVC from the MIS/Navy. Knapp's main reason for leaving the job was that he was given no formal appreciation expressed in the form of rank.⁴⁶²

458 Confidential interview (25). See also: De Graaff and Wiebes, *Villa Maarheeze*, pp. 343 - 354.

459 This reconstruction is based on an interview with P. Kok, 07/06/00 and various confidential interviews (18), (34) and (86).

460 MoD, *Archive MIS/CO*, Report Van Idsinga, DIS/95/21.11/809, 29/03/95.

461 For this see also: MoD, *Archive MIS/CO*, Letter from HMID Knapp + Memorandum Realization Memorandum Department MIS/Army, No. DIS/96001532, 19/07/96.

462 This reconstruction is based on an interview with J. Knapp, 21/03/01 and confidential interviews (29), (34) and (35).

It can be deduced from the above that, in the first half of the 1990s, the heads of department of the MIS/CO had little room for manoeuvre in their task of advising the Minister and providing him directly with intelligence. What is more, the MIS/CO only had one analyst available with respect to Yugoslavia. This made the information position of the MIS/CO less than strong. A more precise reconstruction of the MIS/CO's capacities, resources and staffing regarding Yugoslavia is given below.

The MIS/Central Organization and Bosnia

An analysis of the MIS reports in the period 1992-1995 reveals that intelligence on Bosnia was gathered on all sorts of levels. This happened firstly at the MIS/CO Intelligence Staff, where processing and reporting was carried out on the political, economic and strategic terrain. Strategic intelligence was primarily intended for the political, administrative and military leaders (Minister, Junior Minister, Secretary-General and CDS). The Head of Intelligence Staff was responsible for the coordination and fine-tuning of the reporting. The department was subdivided into a Military Analysis Bureau and a Political-Economic Analysis Bureau.⁴⁶³ It employed 12 staff in total, who mainly studied strategic developments in the fields of politics, economics and the military in the CIS, the Middle East, Surinam and the Balkans. The MIS/CO personnel capacity was insufficient to allow the Balkans to be handled properly. From 1996, after the final reorganization, this support department was expanded from 12 to 45 FTEs.⁴⁶⁴ Only one analyst worked almost full time on the Balkans, but he also had to cover developments in Surinam. This one-man outfit was also given little or no guidance: the analyst had to determine his own policy and occupied himself mainly with political-strategic developments. Yugoslavia was a target at the MIS/CO from 1988 onwards. This is when the first signals began to arrive that all was not well. According to insiders, the war in Yugoslavia (in spite of Dutchbat) was not given high priority. 'The Berlin Wall didn't fall at the MIS until years later', according to one analyst.⁴⁶⁵

Where sources were concerned, the MIS/CO Intelligence Staff had only rare access to Sigint. The relationship of the MIS/CO with special intelligence gathering bodies such as the TIVC in Amsterdam or the 898th Army Signals Battalion in Eibergen was in fact almost non-existent. The MIS/CO mainly had to make do with Open Source Intelligence (Osint) and sometimes with material supplied by UNPROFOR. Approximately 80% of all intelligence came from these sources. The MIS/CO also received information on Bosnia from Dutchbat, UNCivPol, UNMOs, ECMM (the European monitoring mission) observers and, initially, from the Military Attaché in Belgrade, who was later recalled. Further intelligence was obtained from the TIVC and NATO, and the political analyses that the BVD sent to the CVIN.

The MISs of the Armed Forces also supplied intelligence to the MIS/CO, but the MIS/Army only sent finished intelligence to the MIS/CO, and not the material on which it was based. It was therefore never possible for the MIS/CO's only available Balkan analyst to independently check the sources for reliability. A telling detail in this connection: the MIS/Army had English-Dutch translators at its disposal, but the MIS/CO did not. The Ministry of Defence made no additional effort to expand the capacity of the MIS/CO. One analyst continued to bear the complete responsibility for Yugoslavia, and received no support whatsoever. As a consequence, the MIS/CO was never actually able to make a thorough analyses of its own but had to rely completely on the finished intelligence product of the MIS/Army. The MIS/CO was never allowed to make direct contact with Dutch staff officers in Tuzla, Sarajevo or Zagreb. Everything ran via the MIS/Army. The three heads of the MIS at the time confirmed the picture outlined here regarding the information position of the MIS/CO.

Neither did the MIS/CO have imagery from satellites or U-2 spy planes at its disposal. It occasionally received material from the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND), the Italian MIS (the *Servizio Informazioni e Sicurezza Militare* or SISMI), the Danish MIS (DDIS), the CIA or DIA. There was a secure

463 Kluiters, *Supplement*, pp. 214 - 215.

464 Confidential interview (27).

465 Confidential interview (37).

telex link with most services. The US intelligence on Yugoslavia tended to be in-depth in the military-tactical area, but it lacked breadth in the sense of offering a complete political and military picture.⁴⁶⁶ German, Italian and Danish intelligence was generally rated as good. The intelligence of the British and French military intelligence services, the DIS and the *Service Generale de Reinseignement* (SGR) and later DRM, was rated as reasonable. The MIS/CO had good access to the DIS. Furthermore, the Swiss and Austrian services provided excellent reports based on the debriefings of refugees from the Balkans. It was often observed in interviews that the quality of the partner information depended heavily on the personal contacts of the analyst. Contacts with Spain, for example, were pro forma while those with the BND were good. Contacts with the DIA were sporadic: usually once a year.⁴⁶⁷

Prior to 1994, the MIS/CO had no contact whatsoever with the CIA or with SIS: this was carried out by the IDB. After the IDB was disbanded in 1994, the MIS/CO did establish some contacts in the direction of the British and the Americans. MIS/CO Head Kok therefore had regular contact with the CIA Chief of Station. The Head of the MIS/CO Intelligence Staff was also responsible for all other foreign contacts. Initially, the Chief of Station visited Kok, but, after Knapp's arrival, he approached the Head of the Intelligence Staff, whom he visited once every two weeks. The overall feeling at the MIS/CO was that the Chief of Station generally came more to request intelligence than to supply it on behalf of the CIA. The US official occasionally gave briefings at the Defence Crisis Management Centre, where use was sometimes made of Imagery Intelligence from satellites and U-2 spy planes.⁴⁶⁸

In short, the information position of the MIS/CO on strategic developments in the political, economic and military sphere could certainly not be called strong, due to a lack of sufficient personnel, unique sources and intelligence gathering facilities of its own. The sole analyst had to 'make do' with information from the UN, the final analyses (not the sources) from the MISs of the Armed Forces, foreign counterparts and open sources.

The MISs of the branches of the Armed Forces and Bosnia

Alongside the MIS/CO, the Intelligence and Security departments of the three branches of the Armed Forces (MIS/Army, MIS/Air Force and MIS/Navy) were responsible for gathering intelligence on Yugoslavia. This section is mainly devoted to the activities of the MIS/Army, which bore the primary responsibility for gathering military intelligence destined for the leaders of the Royal Netherlands Army and the Dutch units in Bosnia. There will also be a brief description of the work of the MIS/Air Force, which gathered intelligence within the framework of the Force Protection of the Dutch F-16s that operated from Italy over Bosnia. Although the Royal Netherlands Navy participated in operations in the Adriatic Sea, there will be no separate section on the MIS/Navy, because it played no role in the situation surrounding the eastern enclaves.

It might have been expected that the MIS/Army would become more actively involved in gathering intelligence as part of the process of decision-making on the deployment of Dutchbat, certainly after Dutch troops left for Bosnia. An interview with the Head of the Intelligence and Security Department, who was also Deputy Head of the MIS/Army, Colonel H. Bosch, revealed that this only took place to a very limited extent.⁴⁶⁹ A related impetus could also have been the appointment of a new Head of the MIS/Army, Colonel H. Bokhoven, who held this position from 19 April 1994 to 15 December 1995.⁴⁷⁰ He had built up considerable experience in Bosnia. In 1993 and 1994, he was Plan Officer with the French Force Commander, Jean Cot.

⁴⁶⁶ Interview with P.J. Duijn, 04/04/01.

⁴⁶⁷ Confidential interview (28).

⁴⁶⁸ The minutes of these confidential briefings were not found in the archives of the MoD.

⁴⁶⁹ Interviews with H. Bosch, 10/05/99 and 10/10/01.

⁴⁷⁰ Kluiters, *Supplement*, p. 133.

The organization of the MIS/Army

The Intelligence and Security Department of the Military Intelligence Service of the Royal Netherlands Army (MIS/Army) occupied itself with the question of what equipment was situated where, and which equipment the warring factions had at their disposal. There was no formal intelligence requirements plan.⁴⁷¹ In 1994 and 1995, the Intelligence and Security Department operated with the following structure.

Section A: intelligence;

Section B: Security, including Counterintelligence;

Section C: liaison with military attachés and foreign partners;

Section D: military geography.

Section A, Intelligence,⁴⁷² was further subdivided into:

A-1: Bureau Current Intelligence, Situation Centre (SitCen) and Daily Intelligence Summaries;

A-2: Europe Bureau (Orders of Battle and Land Forces);

A-3: Scientific and Technical Intelligence Bureau;

A-4: Signals Intelligence Bureau;

A-5: Literature Research and Translations Bureau (no Serbo-Croat translators);

A-6: Administration, Documentation and Archive Bureau;

A-7: Non-Eastern-European States Bureau (Middle East, North-Africa and the rest of the world).

The most important Bureau for gathering intelligence were A-2 and A-4, and for the production of finished intelligence, A-1. Some analysts at the European Bureau had experience in Bosnia because they had worked in the intelligence staff of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Kiseljak. There they had access to the Linked Operational Intelligence Center Europe (LOCE) system. Intelligence in NATO was shared through this system, which was a heavily secured communication network, and the results of Imagery Intelligence, Electronic Intelligence and other intelligence were shared in this way.⁴⁷³

The Situation Centre of Bureau A-1 had three tasks: drafting the daily Intelligence Summary of 2 to 2 1/2 pages, which covered Yugoslavia in particular, but also the entire world; processing and disseminating daily intelligence; and supervising the streamlining operation that had been initiated in November 1994. The daily schedule was: from 8 am - 10 am processing and analysis; 10 am -12 noon writing; 12 noon - 1 pm reading and revising draft and 1 pm - 2 pm dissemination. The most important sources for the Situation Centre were the products of the Europe Bureau and the Signals Intelligence Bureau, the intelligence section of UNPROFOR and material from foreign intelligence services. It soon came to the notice of the SitCen staff that the sister services copied much of what the UNPROFOR intelligence section supplied, but they too had to accept that the MIS/Army had little good intelligence and certainly not a unique information position. The Intelligence Summary analysis and the European Bureau analyses sometimes contradicted one another.

471 Confidential interview (22).

472 Kluiters, *Supplement*, p. 131.

473 Confidential interview (38).

Originally, the European Bureau's products relating to Yugoslavia resulted from barter with the foreign partners, which had been set up by one of the staff more than 20 years previously.⁴⁷⁴ An US official who had served in the US Army for 20 years, confirmed while he still worked at the DIA that the MIS/Army had been the most prolific producer of intelligence on the former Yugoslavia within NATO during the Cold War. In his opinion, the MIS had excellent intelligence, but the analysis was of inferior quality. Conversely, some US intelligence occasionally came the way of the MIS/Army via NATO in Mons, but there was no real will to share it on the part of the Americans.⁴⁷⁵

The European Bureau's sources were mainly Osint, UNPROFOR, sister intelligence services and the military attaché in Belgrade. The European Bureau did not originally have Sigint at its disposal. There was rigorous compartmentalization within the MIS/Army. Separate reports with Sigint went to the Deputy Head of the Intelligence Department, and European Bureau staff originally did not get to see them. This improved later; the European Bureau staff then did receive Sigint (once a week). The quantity also grew, because the head of the MIS/Army Intelligence Department at the time wanted a weekly briefing.

The European Bureau also had access to foreign material through organizations such as the ECMM and UNMO. With respect to the foreign partners: good and direct contacts with the Americans, the Germans and the Italians had been built up over the years. At the MIS/Army too, the quality rating of intelligence from foreign intelligence services was variable. 'Not so good' and 'nothing unique' were common characterizations. The liaison with the French services did not function well: French intelligence that did find its way to the MIS/Army was generally considered to be unsound. Contact with the DIS was limited. The European Bureau did receive DIS reports for perusal. More generally, the DIS was said to have come up-to-speed slowly, but the reports were later rated as good quality. In addition, material was occasionally obtained from the Danish MIS and the DIA.⁴⁷⁶ The products of the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* were rated as good; this service had good Humint sources, especially in the vicinity of Banja Luka and on the border with Serbia. The BND was also said to have access to Comint from communications traffic by the *Vojaska Republika Srpska* (VRS) and the ABiH.⁴⁷⁷

The MIS/Army made do with what it had

A significant problem with which not only the European Bureau, but also other Bureaus initially had to contend, was a lack of good and reliable maps. The maps of Yugoslavia dated from the 1960s or sometimes even earlier, and it was even the case that the words '*Führer Stab des Heeres, Ausgabe 1943*' could be found printed at the bottom of some maps used by the MIS/Army.⁴⁷⁸ The most reliable maps used were the Royal Dutch Touring Club (ANWB) map of Yugoslavia and the street map of Sarajevo produced for the 1986 Winter Olympics. The maps that subsequently became available were repeatedly updated on the basis of Imagery Intelligence supplied by the French SPOT satellite.⁴⁷⁹ The MIS/Army made a three-dimensional sketch at the time of Dutchbat's deployment.

Dutchbat worked in the enclave with ten year old Yugoslavian maps, which was extremely inconvenient in discussions on establishing a demarcation line or in the event of incidents. After a visit to the enclave by the Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, the maps were translated to Dutch standards,⁴⁸⁰ but this revision also failed to improve communication between Dutchbat and the higher levels of command within UNPROFOR. The higher command levels worked with maps made

474 Confidential interview (57).

475 Confidential interviews (38) and (75).

476 Confidential interview (22).

477 Confidential interview (38).

478 Confidential interview (34). See also: Paul Ruigrok, 'Den Haag wist van niets, maar de onderofficieren moesten terug' ('Den Haag knew nothing, but the NCOs had to go back'), in: *Vrij Nederland*, 30/10/93.

479 Interview with H. Bosch, 10/10/01.

480 MoD, *Archive CSKL, no. CRST/374*, Brantz to BLS et al, 06/06/94, appendix: Trip report to Bosnia-Hercegovina, p.3.

by UNPROFOR in Zagreb, and there was a slight discrepancy between Dutchbat's maps and UNPROFOR's maps. This discrepancy led, for example, to Force Commander De Lapresle's helicopter only being able to land in the Srebrenica compound at its third attempt on his visit to Srebrenica on 2 February 1995.⁴⁸¹ Maps with coordinates became available later, but in general it can be stated that there was initially no overabundance of geographical intelligence.⁴⁸²

Once the dispatch of soldiers to Bosnia had got under way, it would be logical to expect that members of Dutchbat would be used as sources of intelligence. The information position of the MIS/Army could have been improved considerably by using the ears and eyes on the ground, but this did not happen. For instance, the European Bureau was not allowed to pass on questions to the intelligence officers of Dutchbat and its 'predecessors', the Signals Battalion and later the Transport Battalion. Although this was proposed by MIS/Army, the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Army refused permission. The Deputy Head of the MIS/Army was later rapped on the knuckles again for this by senior Army officers, whereupon the heads of the MIS/Army forbade MIS/Army analysts to re-establish direct contact with Dutchbat,⁴⁸³ because intelligence activities were not permissible in a UN context. Via a detour, the questions were subsequently presented through the MIS/Army Security Section, so that some information did then dribble in.

Where Sigint at the MIS/Army was concerned (Bureau A-4), the MIS/Army had instructed the 898th Army Signals Battalion in Eibergen to take a 'look' at Yugoslavia in 1994 or thereabouts. The operational order from the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army indicated that day-to-day operational command in this regard lay with the MIS/Army. From 1993 to 1995, Bureau A-4 only had the unit in Eibergen at its disposal as far as Sigint was concerned, and it had no say over the Technical Information Processing Centre (TIVC) in Amsterdam, which was the province of the MIS/Navy. The TIVC's only customers were the Navy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the BVD. The MIS/Army and MIS/Air Force therefore had no direct access to the communications traffic that was mainly intercepted in Zoutkamp and Eemnes. At this time the first language course in Serbo-Croat was initiated at the MIS School by the Signals Intelligence Bureau of the MIS/Army. The problem was that the Eibergen antenna was oriented on the East-West axis, which made it difficult to intercept message traffic in the Balkans. The MIS/Army also had insufficient translation capacity and there were technical problems too. During the war in Bosnia, use was mainly made of walkie-talkies such as the Motorola. A separate analysis capacity is necessary for intercepting Motorola message traffic. This was not feasible in the Netherlands; it was only possible on the spot.

In 2001 some (former) employees of the MIS stated that, in 1995, their service was still mentally and technically oriented towards the East. There were two other reasons why the MIS had so much difficulty 'averting its gaze' from the East with regard to Sigint. In the first place, there was an investment freeze and departing from the East-West axis would have been an expensive business. A second reason had to do with the undertaking that had been made within NATO to this effect. If the MIS/Army were not to fulfil its existing obligation, then it would have nothing whatsoever to share with its partners.

Meanwhile, there were still no resources and military direction being given, not even from the leadership of the Ministry of Defence. Between 1993 and 1995, the Ministry simply took no interest in Sigint, the procurement of which was considered too expensive. The use of Sigint during the Dutchbat deployment was therefore tightly restricted by a dearth of resources, personnel and equipment. The Bureau A-4 (Signals Intelligence) was, as has already been stated, severely handicapped by the fact that no Sigint on Bosnia was being obtained from the Americans. According to some MIS workers, the Americans were also extremely frugal when it came to sharing such intelligence with the United Kingdom and Germany as well.⁴⁸⁴ MIS/Army staff stated that it was only after the fall of Srebrenica

481 MoD, *Archive, Box 1004*, TA9A to TX8, 21/02/95.

482 Confidential interview (34).

483 Confidential interview (38).

484 Confidential interview (21).

that an insight was obtained using Sigint into the VRS communication networks, which then succeeded through makeshift measures and personal contacts.⁴⁸⁵

The MIS/Army had no unique sources for Bosnia, and the political need in this respect did not appear to be great. In order to follow the war in Bosnia as well as possible, the analysts were dependent on fellow intelligence services, UNPROFOR, UNMOs, and the ECMM. At the request of the MIS/Army, the CDS, Van den Breemen made enquiries of General Shaliskashvili, the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), for more intelligence, but this revealed that the American intelligence services also had no clearer picture concerning the eastern enclaves. Attempts were also made to gather additional intelligence from the German *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, but they had little effect.⁴⁸⁶

Should the MIS/Army or Dutchbat have done more themselves in the domain of intelligence?

According to MIS employees, foreign intelligence on Yugoslavia yielded little or nothing on Srebrenica that proved valuable after analysis. This prompts the question of whether Dutchbat itself could or should have resorted to intelligence gathering, to support the work of the MIS/Army for the subsequent benefit of the battalion. Many studies have shown that in complex peacekeeping operations, Human Intelligence (Humint) is often the most important source of intelligence. An American military officer therefore argued for keeping the methods of intelligence gathering 'simple'.⁴⁸⁷ In an area such as Bosnia, there was a shortage of all sorts of (especially American) advanced technical systems. Advanced espionage aircraft were not able to locate mines or snipers, or to determine the role of the local mafia.⁴⁸⁸

The author David Charters asserts that each peacekeeper is in fact a gatherer of intelligence. Each contact with the local population and authorities should provide added value. In his view, intelligence gathering and reporting should be second nature to each commander involved in a peacekeeping operation.⁴⁸⁹

Dutchbat's need for a good intelligence structure was already evident from the earlier experiences of the British Army in Bosnia. This was reported on in February 1994 by the military attaché in London. The experiences of the British battalion in Bosnia between May and November 1993 indicated that a successful task execution depended on the intelligence. For example, intelligence would provide more advance assurance of whether a convoy would reach the final destination. Without some assurance there was hardly any point in setting out. Dutchbat's intelligence information sources were local military commanders, the population, ex-soldiers from the region, UNMOs, International Red Cross workers, and their own officers.⁴⁹⁰

It became clear in June 1994 that the Dutchbat commander felt that he was not receiving enough intelligence. It is evident from the reports by the Dutch Deputy Commander of Sector North East in Tuzla, Colonel C.L. Brantz, of his visit to Srebrenica that since the deployment of Dutchbat I on 1 March 1994, the Dutchbat commander had repeatedly stressed that his 'world' was extremely limited by a lack of intelligence. Anticipating developments outside the enclave and verifying the information given by the warring factions was hardly possible, if at all, in the situation as it existed, argued Brantz. He pointed out that the intelligence picture was mainly based on irregular discussions with ABiH and VRS soldiers, UNMOs and observations from OPs. Support from the Netherlands could possibly alleviate part of this shortcoming. Whether this was feasible in practice remained to be seen, according to Brantz; the Royal Netherlands Army did not have much in the way of resources of its own in the mission area.

485 Confidential interviews (21), (33), (35), (37) and (39).

486 Confidential interview (36).

487 Cf. Colonel H. Allen Boyd, 'Joint Intelligence in Support of Peace Operations', in: *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, January-March 1999 and Välimäki, *Intelligence*, p. 56.

488 Cf. Lt. Colonel Collin A. Agee, 'Too Much Data -- Too Little Intel?', in: *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, January-March 1999, *passim*.

489 David A. Charters, 'Out of the Closet: Intelligence Support for Post-Modernist Peacekeeping', in: *The Pearson Papers, No. 4, Intelligence and Peacekeeping*, Halifax, 1999, p. 61.

490 M_{oD}. *Archive CSKL 1994*, Bureau Army Attache to Head SitCen, No. 2602/1827, 26/02/94.

It is important to note that the British and the Danes each in their own way appeared to be able to partially alleviate these same shortcomings for their units. Brantz proposed the formulation of an action plan to minimize the perceived difficulties in the short term.⁴⁹¹ In a response, the Commander-in-Chief stated that all that needed to be established was why the promise of intelligence support to the Dutchbat commander made by the Head of the MIS could not be kept; this was information that the Dutchbat commander had to have. There was to be consultation on the action plan with the MIS/Army's Intelligence and Security Department.⁴⁹²

Dutchbat therefore provisionally received no optimum intelligence support from The Hague, but neither had it set up any intelligence-gathering structure of its own. The intelligence staff officer was not a key officer. In fact, Dutchbats I and II were not even allowed by its commander to take an intelligence staff officer with them. It is true that there was an intelligence officer with the transport battalion, but he was located in Simin Han with the Alpha Company, not in Srebrenica. In September 1994, no official intelligence officer was present in Simin Han either; only later was a soldier assigned to this specific work. At the Netherlands Support Command in Lukavac there was likewise no officer with the function of gathering intelligence.⁴⁹³ However, one officer there was given responsibility for Military Security.

The debriefing reports of this Military Security section in Lukavac showed that in the period July-November 1994 there was no good collaboration with Dutchbat ('useless' was the pronouncement made by the section itself). There were numerous problems. The information on the order of battle of the warring factions and other intelligence went in the first instance to Dutchbat in Srebrenica, who were supposed to provide feedback to Support Command in Lukavac. The officer responsible for Military Security did report to Dutchbat in Srebrenica, but discovered that his reports were not being incorporated in Dutchbat's daily Situation Reports (Sitreps) further along the UN line. Instead of the information received, the Dutchbat Sitreps simply stated 'Nothing To Report'. The reports were apparently of no interest to Dutchbat. At a certain point, Commander P. Everts of Dutchbat II even wanted to abolish this post in Lukavac, but The Hague nipped this plan in the bud. The last straw for the officer in Lukavac was when he phoned the compound in Potocari and a soldier in the Operationsroom (the command post) asked him who he was. Subsequently, this military security man started up his own network.

In contrast, Lukavac's collaboration with the Dutch company in Sapna and with the Transport Battalion worked well. Everything the convoy commanders encountered that might be of interest from an intelligence point of view was passed on to the intelligence officer in Lukavac, who forwarded it to his opposite number in Sector North East (SNE). Incidentally, this Scandinavian officer regularly warned him that the VRS listened in on UNPROFOR's communication traffic, and for this reason advised him not to include everything in situation reports.⁴⁹⁴ The warning was probably intended as a signal: not long afterwards the MIS/Army discovered that a Scandinavian intelligence service was monitoring the traffic between various units of the Dutch Signals battalion in Bosnia. Two Dutch soldiers were overheard making extremely denigrating remarks about their commander.⁴⁹⁵

5. Intelligence gathering in the enclave under Dutchbats I, II, III

In Dutchbat I, intelligence was gathered by the team for civil-military relations (in military terms: the S-5) under the leadership of Major A. Derksen. This team arranged the liaison with the ABiH and VRS, compiled a great deal of information, and made a 'mugshot album'. The team had no example to follow in terms of how it was supposed to operate and interpreted its task in its own commando-like way.

491 MoD, *Archive CSKL*, No. 379, Brantz to BLS, No. CRST/374, 06/06/94.

492 MoD, *Archive CSKL*, No. 380, the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff 'Morning Briefing', No. CRST/497, 22/06/94.

493 MoD, *Archive CSKL*, Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff 'Morning Briefing', No. 378, G-2 Cap. Hagenaars to HINL, No. CBST/941, 15/09/94.

494 MoD, *Archive 101 MI S/Cie*, Van Jawad to Hakort, Debriefing report 101 MIS/Cie, 23/12/95.

495 Interview with H. Bosch, 10/10/01.

They made civil and military risk analyses. Risk analysis was carried out in a strictly military fashion: Derksen was a Major in the commandos with his own platoon, and acted accordingly.

This team also established the basic structures for consultations with the NGOs, UnCivPol and UNMOs. They operated 'with a blue cap on, using green methods'. Dutchbat II also boasted a good liaison team. Contacts were initiated, developed and maintained. The objectives were as follows: escorting convoys, monitoring relief goods, fighting corruption, and maintaining contact with the population. This team also functioned well and was given a pivotal role in the battalion. Collaboration with the battalion commander was also good.⁴⁹⁶

The problems in this regard started with Dutchbat III. According to various MIS staff, the fact that Dutchbat III provided little tactical military intelligence was a problem. As they saw it, Karremans took the position that he was in charge of a UN unit, not a national one. The intelligence officer was considered to be one of us. There was no structural reporting;⁴⁹⁷ in his period as Head of the UNMOs, General Gerard Bastiaans also turned against supplying intelligence. No intelligence was allowed to be supplied to the MIS/Army. Little or no response was made to specific or special questions from the MIS/Army.⁴⁹⁸ It is strange in this regard that Karremans and Franken even refused to go into specific logistics questions. In May 1995 the logistics section (in military terms: the G-4) of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff was even forbidden to gather logistics data.⁴⁹⁹

Dutchbat III did have its own intelligence officer, Captain E. Wieffer, but he reported exclusively to the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, and not directly to the MIS/Army. This explains why Karremans' alarming letter (of 5 June) to the Army Crisis Staff did not become known to the MIS/Army until much later.⁵⁰⁰ Wieffer sent daily Situation Reports to Sector North East (SNE) and Military Information Summaries to the Army Crisis Staff. He was only able to make extremely limited use of the experience of Dutchbat I and II during the additional training period in preparation for the deployment of Dutchbat III. Wieffer concluded that the Army was no good at passing on experiences. As he saw it, the Army carried out debriefings, identified problems and discussed opportunities for improvement, but often failed to carry things through. As a consequence, when evaluating a deployment, the same defects were observed as in the previous deployment, but no solutions were generated with a view to helping the following deployment.⁵⁰¹

Dutchbat III therefore took its own initiatives. Dutchbat II soldiers on leave were invited to Assen for a day to inform their successors of the activities and working conditions. The initiative for this was taken by the battalion staff and from one company. In this respect, there was a significant difference with Dutchbat I, which had been unable to fall back on a predecessor. Dutchbat I was ordered to optimise the intelligence gathering process on the situation in and around the enclave. With regard to the military aspect, all the objectives and intentions of the warring factions at all levels had to be identified. In terms of the humanitarian situation, the borders of the areas containing ethnic minorities, refugees and the homeless had to be defined, with a view to supervising and protecting the occupants. Dutchbat I was also ordered to seek out accurate information on local needs with respect to food, heating, shelter and medical assistance. This had to be passed on to UNHCR and BHC.⁵⁰²

An important part of the transfer of knowledge was formed by analysis of the situation in and around Srebrenica drawn up by Dutchbat I, and developed further by Dutchbat II. This document was also used in the training.⁵⁰³ This meant that Dutchbat III did have good basic information at its

496 MoD, *Archive 101 MIS/Cie*, Van Jawad to Hakort, Debriefing report 101 MIS/Cie, 23/12/95.

497 MoD, *Archive SMG, 1004*, report of a discussion with Col. Bokhoven, 20/07/95.

498 Confidential interviews (28) and (37).

499 MoD, *SMG, DocID 18428, File 530, Box 1004*, Interview with E. Otterloo on the logistics aspects of Dutchbat, 31/07/95.

500 See for this letter: Chapter 8 of this study. In June, the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff came to the following conclusion: "Karremans is reaching the end of his tether". This conclusion was drawn on the basis of his correspondence. Confidential interview (23).

501 Interview with E. Wieffer, 07/05/01.

502 MoD, *Archive MIS/Army 1994*, Memorandum S2 BVT from Lmbl, May 1994.

503 MoD, *Archive MIS/Army 1994*, File 1589, Zylab 13837 milinfo Srebrenica, October 1994.

disposal. Their intelligence officer, Wieffer, had two daily Situation Reports as input: one from SNE and one from BHC. On the basis of these, the intelligence officer held a briefing for the battalion staff and the commanders every day. Within a company, the commanders kept their staff and ranks informed via a weekly briefing on developments in Srebrenica.⁵⁰⁴

The flow of information that Wieffer received from below once he was in Srebrenica came from patrols and OPs. They were reported on paper, via communications equipment, or both. This data was then translated into a flow of information that was sent to the higher echelon. In his case, this was SNE in Tuzla. The problem with this flow of information was that on a number of occasions Wieffer found that when he wanted to have more information on a specific subject, this information was not forthcoming. Dutchbat knew, for example, that a reconnaissance flight had been carried out by NATO, because they saw the aircraft overhead. They then issued an 'overflight report'. However, Imint from reconnaissance flights was not handed over to Dutchbat by UNPROFOR or NATO.

What were Dutchbat's intelligence needs?

The question then is what sort of information did Dutchbat want. There was a need for intelligence on overall developments in Bosnia in order to build up an accurate picture. If the fighting flared up elsewhere in Bosnia, this could have consequences for an intensification of the activities of the warring factions themselves. Of more direct interest was knowledge of the events in the immediate surroundings of the enclave, for example, within a radius of 5 to 10 kilometres.⁵⁰⁵ Sector North East (SNE) and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (BHC) did not supply this information, and the sporadic reconnaissance platoon patrols outside the enclave during Dutchbat I and II could only provide fragments of the information requirement. The UNMOs were also barely able to fill this gap. Their freedom of movement was limited and they had no access to Bosnian-Serb areas.⁵⁰⁶ Dutchbat patrols sometimes supplied information on activities around the demarcation line, but it was not possible for them to patrol in secret. The departure of a patrol was often reported to the ABiH or VRS commanders by informants at the compound gate or in the vicinity of the OPs, so that measures could be taken to conceal military activities and weapons from the patrol.

Did Dutchbat receive no intelligence at all, then?

All of the problems listed above could lead to the conclusion that Dutchbat was completely intelligence-blind, but that was most certainly not the case. As a result of its frequent contacts with the warring factions and with the refugees in the enclave, Dutchbat I had a large amount of information at its disposal, which was also analysed. The battalion commander usually added a Commander's Assessment to the Sitreps, in which he gave an evaluation of developments in the enclave, their possible relationship with external events and a short-term outlook. This happened to a lesser extent with Dutchbat II, partly due to the deteriorating relationship with the ABiH. Under Dutchbat III, this trend continued.⁵⁰⁷ An important source of intelligence disappeared because of the sharp decline in contact with the ABiH and VRS.

All in all, the intelligence picture remained limited for Dutchbat III. Information on military developments in the area around the enclave was barely available, which fostered the feeling of isolation that visitors sometimes also noticed. General Smith spoke of a 'siege mentality' on the part of Dutchbat III, an assessment shared by the Operations Officer at SNE, the British Lieutenant Colonel Le Hardy.⁵⁰⁸

504 Interview with E. Wieffer, 07/05/01.

505 Interview with E. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

506 Interview with E. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

507 *Dutchbat in vredesnaam*, pp. 108 and 156.

508 Interview with R. Smith, 12/01/00 and C.A. Le Hardy, 08/10/97.

In other words, the flow of information from the higher echelons to Dutchbat III in Srebrenica was zero. For instance, Wieffer tried regularly for six months and three weeks to reach the Ukrainian battalion in Zepa by telephone. He had reams of different telephone numbers, yet he never managed to reach a single Ukrainian on the line. This meant that he remained in the dark as to what exactly was happening in Zepa, even though it was only 8 kilometres to the south as the crow flies. The flow of information from another UN unit, stationed right alongside Dutchbat III, was therefore non-existent.

The only thing left for Wieffer to do was to analyse the daily Situation Reports from BHC, extract some general information from them and use it in briefings within the battalion. Wieffer was an intelligence officer, but, certainly in the final months, he worked 18 to 20 hours a day in the Operations room (the command post) because of the shortage of staff. He had only been on six patrols and had therefore been outside the compound six times. Therefore, according to Wieffer, a complaint in a debriefing statement to the effect that the intelligence section personnel had little freedom of movement was correct.⁵⁰⁹ The importance of good contact with the local population from the point of view of intelligence gathering was also lost on Dutchbat III. Dutchbat I had frequent contact with the population but Dutchbat II adopted a more detached attitude. Dutchbat III copied this attitude and became even more detached. This was also caused by the fact that, for security reasons, Karremans banned contact between the locals and Dutchbat soldiers. This ban was not generally observed; at some OPs there was an element of regular contact with the local population.⁵¹⁰

Intelligence gathering via Humint was severely restricted in this way. In addition, no structure was set up for intelligence gathering. The Military Security man, Sergeant Major E.A. Rave, occupied himself in Dutchbat III mainly with counterintelligence and security, and not so much with the gathering of military intelligence. That was supposed to be Wieffer's task, but he did not get the chance to carry it out.⁵¹¹ The lack of diesel diminished contact even more. Reducing the number of patrols saved fuel, but it also meant even less contact with the local population and the ABiH, so that the supply of intelligence diminished. Because Dutchbat also operated no night-time patrols and the static OPs were fully illuminated at night, so that they were visible from a distance, 'our intelligence story was of course not really kosher. It just doesn't work like that. You have to be active at night, because that's when it's all happening in the enclave. Your OPs also have to have maximum observation. This means you have to switch the light off. But what can you do? Those were the rules and so that's what we did'.⁵¹² Neither did Wieffer receive any additional intelligence from the British JCO unit in the enclave.

Intelligence from the JCOs?

Since the end of 1994 there had been a JCO team in the enclave.⁵¹³ On 18 March 1995, a two-man JCO team arrived in Srebrenica. They relieved a team of four JCOs consisting of two British marines, another British soldier and a Swedish soldier. General Rose had sent the JCOs⁵¹⁴ to Srebrenica because he was receiving no intelligence whatsoever from the enclave. He wanted to have his 'own ears and eyes' in the eastern enclaves. According to a British UNPROFOR officer, there was a closed circle of Dutch officers who gave little away and also shared little information with UNPROFOR commander Rose (later Smith).⁵¹⁵

On 17 May, a third British soldier joined this new team. The patrol was detached to the commandos in Potocari. The JCOs were mainly involved in the regular reconnaissance patrols. Shortly after his arrival in the enclave, the JCO commander had a meeting with Karremans and offered him

⁵⁰⁹ Interview with E. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

⁵¹⁰ See Chapter 8 of Part II of the Srebrenica report.

⁵¹¹ Interviews with E.A. Rave, 13/12/00 and 14/12/00.

⁵¹² Interview with E. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

⁵¹³ Interview with C.A. Le Hardy, 08/10/97.

⁵¹⁴ The JCOs in Srebrenica were British SAS soldiers.

⁵¹⁵ Confidential interview (43).

immediate support such as the use of secure satellite communication equipment. Karremans was not very forthcoming and insisted that the JCOs only cooperate with the commandos and not with the rest of the battalion. Karremans banned them from operating independently outside the enclave borders, a decision that did nothing to improve Dutchbat's intelligence picture. They were bound to the enclave for their operational action. Karremans stated that the JCOs would be forced to leave the enclave if his order was ignored.⁵¹⁶

The JCOs encouraged the commandos to explore 'hot spots' and to talk with the warring factions, which until then they had not done for fear of compromising their neutrality. Patrolling was important because it 'allows the commander to gain an intelligence advantage over the parties to the dispute at the tactical level'.⁵¹⁷ Shortly after their arrival in the enclave, the JCOs soon met representatives of the ABiH. Subsequent meetings were forbidden by Karremans. He had also prevented the JCOs from attending the regular meetings between Dutchbat liaison officers and the warring factions. It has to be concluded that Karremans mainly considered the JCOs to be Forward Air Controllers (in which position they were also used) and not so much as handy instruments for gathering intelligence. According to a British UNPROFOR officer, the JCOs were not adequately used, partly because it was an option Karremans was not inclined to consider: he refused to grant the commander of the JCOs permission to operate outside the enclave.⁵¹⁸ Furthermore, there were a number of differences of opinion between the JCOs and Karremans, and the latter restricted the scope of their operational action considerably.⁵¹⁹

Wieffer asserted that information was sometimes exchanged with the JCOs, but in spite of this he always had the feeling that the JCOs, notwithstanding the fact that they were physically based with Dutchbat in the enclave, were purely an intelligence organ for the British UNPROFOR commander. The JCOs were more likely to use Dutchbat as a source of information than the other way round. According to Wieffer, the JCOs sometimes set off separately, but not often. On these occasions they nipped across the enclave border to take a look somewhere, Wieffer heard later. But the JCOs did not leave the enclave often; they did not have the means to do so. Furthermore, there were mines here and there outside the enclave. Apart from these incidental forays, the JCOs only left the enclave together with the Dutchbat patrols.⁵²⁰

General Cees Nicolai (Chief of Staff BHC in Sarajevo) confirmed that the JCOs sometimes went outside the enclave. Smith did not keep it secret from him, although he did not state in detail where they had been or what order he had given them. It could be deduced from the nature of the intelligence that he occasionally received.⁵²¹ A British intelligence officer with access to the JCO reports confirmed that the JCOs occasionally operated outside the enclave.⁵²² The JCOs reported directly to BHC, as 'spies' of Rose and later Smith, and had access to the Dutchbat III reports. Wieffer assumed that there were no substantial differences between the two flows of reports.⁵²³ In other words, Dutchbat III was 'poor' with respect to intelligence so that the situation differed little from that of Dutchbats I and II.

What did the other units do?

Other UNPROFOR units had set up a better intelligence structure. For instance, Canbat II, the Canadian battalion stationed in the enclave before Dutchbat I, had a Military Information Cell with

516 Interview with A.A.L. Caris, 03/03/00 and confidential information (13).

517 Pasi Välimäki, *Intelligence*, p. 79.

518 Confidential interview (43).

519 Confidential interview (49).

520 Interview with E. Wieffer, 18/06/99 and confidential information (1).

521 Interview with C.H. Nicolai, 11/06/99.

522 Confidential interview (8).

523 Interview with E. Wieffer, 07/05/01.

three tasks: looking for indications and warnings, following the tactical and strategic developments, and drawing up threat analyses. The greatest problem encountered by this military information cell was the lack of Order of Battle information and tactical information regarding the warring factions in the region. An additional problem was the limited opportunity for reconnaissance. With respect to their information sources, Humint proved to be the best (and almost exclusive) source of intelligence. Contacts with representatives of the warring factions, the population, their own liaison officers and a network of local informants delivered the best information, alongside humanitarian organizations and NGOs. In order to gather additional intelligence, Canbat (in Visoko) had a series of OPs on both sides of the confrontation line.⁵²⁴

The Scandinavian soldiers also engaged in intelligence gathering. Five people worked in the intelligence sector at the Nordic battalion (Nordbat) in Tuzla. Their performance is said to have been extremely professional. Moreover, the British also devoted much attention to intelligence work. They had six two-man teams that worked for the British sector commander of Sector South West. The Support Command intelligence officer stationed in Lukavac from July to November 1994, could therefore reach no other conclusion than that the Dutch operations, compared with those of other European countries, were relatively unprofessional and totally uncoordinated.⁵²⁵

To summarize the information position of the MIS and that of Dutchbat, it can be stated that the MIS/Army and the MIS/CO had no unique military-tactical intelligence as a result of a lack of their own sources and own intelligence gathering facilities. This position was not improved by the fact that Dutchbat hardly generated any intelligence. Sometimes Dutchbat intelligence got 'stuck' at the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff and did not even reach the MIS/Army. MIS/Army analysts had to 'make do' with intelligence from the UN line, from partners and from open sources.

Bringing about an improvement in this position through Sigint was not an option for the Netherlands because of a lack of language capacity, and technical and personnel problems. In this area, the MIS/Army was still completely caught up in Cold War thinking. It is also striking that, because of the uncooperative attitude of senior MIS/Army officials and senior Royal Netherlands Army officers, Dutchbat was not allowed to engage in improving its own information position.

It emerged from many interviews that there was a dominant attitude that UNPROFOR did not and ought not to gather intelligence. Given such a situation, it might be expected that, although the MIS/CO and MIS/Army each served a different master (Minister of Defence and Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army respectively), they would join forces in order to improve their own information position, but nothing was further from the truth.

6. The collaboration between MIS/CO and MIS/Army

The MIS/CO was quick to observe that, when it came to intelligence work, the Intelligence and Security Departments of the three Armed Forces remained hierarchically subordinate to their own Commanders-in-Chief. On the shop floor there was a healthy relationship between the staff of the MIS/CO and the staff of the MIS/Army and the MIS/Air Force, but it faltered at the higher levels. What collaboration there was (to put it mildly) was not very good. Senior officials of the MISs at the branches of the Armed Forces obstructed collaboration, and this was particularly true of the MIS/Army leadership. There was a predominantly parochial attitude among senior officials of the three MISs. As a result the MIS/CO always lagged behind the MIS/Army, where intelligence regularly 'stranded'. This sometimes led to totally different analyses of the same subject. The various opinions to be found in the MIS/Army camp can be broken down into three categories.⁵²⁶

524 Captain Daniel Villeneuve, 'Intelligence and the UN: Lessons From Bosnia - A Canadian Experience', in: *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, No. 4 (October-December 1996). This publication can be found at: www.fas.org/irp/agency/army.

525 MoD. *Archive 101 MIS/Cie*, Van Jawad to Hakort, Debriefing report 101 MIS/Cie, 23/12/95.

526 Confidential interview (26).

A few MIS/Army workers admitted that there were great differences between the MIS/CO and parts of the MIS/Army. Sections of the MIS/Army leadership were actually in favour of more collaboration, but that was not true of everyone by a long way. Others continued to attend to the interests of the Army's Commander-in-Chief, and not the interest of a single MIS, as the law required. An example of the parochialism that prevailed: the European Bureau had no access of its own to LOCE, the system for intelligence liaison between the NATO countries. This was not permitted by the MIS/Army leadership. However, European Bureau staff were not allowed access to the MIS/CO via the LOCE system to check their own intelligence. There were constant competence disputes. The mutual divisions between the MISs meant that raw intelligence sometimes 'stranded'. These sources denied that this was also the case with Srebrenica. But in general there was a fierce level of competition between the individual MISs, with the MIS/CO, and even within the MIS/Army. For instance, the MIS/Air Force was not happy if the MIS/Army discussed helicopters in an analysis. The MIS/Air Force and the MIS/Navy also distanced themselves from each other.⁵²⁷

Other staff and former staff at the MIS/Army admitted frankly that in this period they attended first and foremost to the interests of their Commander-in-Chief, but at the same time they painted a milder picture of the poor relationships outlined above. While accepting that there were sometimes professional differences of opinion with the MIS/CO, these sources described the collaboration as otherwise going well. It was confirmed that raw intelligence was not always passed on and that the MIS/Army functioned as a filter, but, according to these MIS/Army employees, information never stranded if the impression existed that the MIS/CO did not have it. Partner information was always passed on.⁵²⁸

A third group challenged the idea that the collaboration around 1995 was not as good as it could have been. According to them, absolutely no intelligence was held back by MIS/Army; it was even the case that more had been reported than was strictly necessary.⁵²⁹ Officers from this last group were prepared to admit that Bureau A-1 (including the Situation Centre) was in a better information position, because there was more material available to the MIS/Army than the MIS/CO. However, according to them, intelligence was definitely made available in the form of analysis: the MIS/Army never 'sat' on it. The MIS/CO's lone analyst did not entirely agree with this: because the raw intelligence was not supplied, the MIS/CO analyst could not form his own balanced view, and he was forced to trust blindly in the MIS/Army analyses. This made the MIS/CO (and in particular their one Balkans analyst) dependent on what the MIS/Army supplied.

Relationships at the top

Collaboration at the very highest level between the heads of the MIS/CO and the three MISs of the individual branches of the Armed Forces did not proceed as well as it might have. The management meeting was held every two weeks. This was where the MIS/CO met the other MISs. The management meeting was actually a constant competence battle.⁵³⁰ Those involved stated that it boiled down to the fact that the MIS/CO served a different interest: that of the Minister. The MIS/Army looked to its Commander-in-Chief, rather than the Minister.⁵³¹ This was not all that strange, because the heads of the MISs had to return to their respective Armed Forces units. According to one person involved 'you didn't even entertain the idea' of going against your own Commander-in-Chief because it could damage your career. The absolute priority within the MIS/Army was to inform the Army to the best of your ability. Only once this duty had been fulfilled did the Minister become part of the equation.⁵³²

⁵²⁷ Confidential interviews (21), (31) and (37).

⁵²⁸ Confidential interview (23).

⁵²⁹ Confidential interviews (22), (23), (24) and (28) and (36).

⁵³⁰ Confidential interview (24).

⁵³¹ Confidential interview (36).

⁵³² Confidential interviews (27), (28), (35), (36) and (37).

In reality the MIS/Army functioned as an intelligence organization for the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Tactical intelligence was gathered, geared towards the deployment of units. The MIS/Army constantly assessed the intelligence to see whether it was relevant for passing on to the MIS/CO. The CDS rather fell outside MIS lines: he may have been an adviser to the Minister, but so was each individual Commander-in-Chief and they saw themselves as occupying an independent position relative to the Minister. Every Commander-in-Chief wanted an autonomous and independent intelligence position, and felt no actual need for integration.⁵³³

Defence Minister Voorhoeve answered the question of whether he was aware of the conflicts and differences between the MIS/CO and the MIS/Army as follows: 'No. I did not know, and so it was covered up'. Voorhoeve went on to provide an explanation for this phenomenon: 'this is a normal response within an organization, I would say, because people never want to reveal to the upper echelons that differences of opinion exist. Generally speaking the information you are given is boringly uniform. People report what they have been able to agree on and leave out what they could not agree on.'⁵³⁴

Ultimately, a last-ditch attempt was made to improve the collaboration between the MIS/CO and the three MISs. This happened in early 1995 in the form of the Yugoslavia project organization.⁵³⁵ The Deputy Head of MIS/Army functioned as chairman; the coordinator was the Head of the MIS/Army's Production Section, and the MIS/Army, MIS/Navy, MIS/Air Force and MIS/CO could each supply a representative. The aim of this was to ensure the compilation or formulation of the complete intelligence and/or counterintelligence requirements for the area of the former Yugoslavia; the gathering and, where necessary, sharing of all relevant information with respect to the area; dissemination of overviews with key questions and/or ad hoc questions; the periodic distribution of a list of the existing forms of reporting, and coordination of efforts related to the recruitment or liaison process.⁵³⁶

The purpose of this project team's meetings was to improve the structure of the intelligence on Yugoslavia and to prevent duplication.⁵³⁷ This remained an aspiration, however, partly because of the attitude of various department heads. An example of this is the meeting of 30 June 1995, at which, according to the agenda and the minutes, the state of affairs in Srebrenica was not covered. The minutes did state that it had been agreed to carry out a survey within the Ministry of Defence into the Serbo-Croat capacity there. The next meeting would not take place until 4 August.⁵³⁸

Ultimately, in spite of the limited resources and all the mutual differences and conflicts, impressive quantities of reports were delivered by the MIS/CO and MIS/Army analysts; the contact on the shop floor was, as already mentioned, good. These reports mainly took the form of Intelligence Summaries, which could be divided into the categories daily and weekly. The daily messages attempted to provide an insight into the current developments and also presented forecasts. The weekly edition presented an outline of the events of the past week and the outlook for the coming week. Monthly summaries, annual summaries and Intelligence Reports (Intreps) were also produced, including the incidental sup(plementary) intreps.⁵³⁹

In addition, the MIS analysts produced threat analyses (assessments), order of battle basic documents, country studies, studies on tactics and the operations of the warring factions.⁵⁴⁰ For instance, a comprehensive threat analysis of the situation in Mostar and a counterintelligence

⁵³³ Confidential interview (27).

⁵³⁴ Interview with J. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

⁵³⁵ MoD, *Archive MIS/CO*, Letter Bokhoven to Management meeting, Desirability and possibility of instituting a project organization for Intelligence on the former Yugoslavia, No. 27265, 12/01/95.

⁵³⁶ MoD, *Archive MIS/Air Force*, CAS 49, Dutchbat reports, Draft decision on instituting a project organization for the former Yugoslavia, approx. March 1995.

⁵³⁷ Confidential interview (28).

⁵³⁸ MoD, *Archive MIS/CO*, DIS/9512134/1709, Minutes of meeting and agendas, No. 32764/140795, 14/07/95.

⁵³⁹ See for example: MoD, *Archive MIS/Army Management Operations*, Supintrep Zepa and Srebrenica, No. 28401/4/080394, 15/03/94 and Intrep Srebrenica No. 32729/4/060795, 10/07/95.

⁵⁴⁰ MoD, *Archive MIS/Army, Operations Directorate*, Memorandum on Intelligence products for Dutch deployment in the former Yugoslavia, No. 22279/1/061093, 04/10/93.

assessment of the local security situation was drawn up in July 1994 for the CDS and the senior Ministry of Defence officials. This was in support of the Dutch presidency of the WEU.⁵⁴¹ Information files on Yugoslavia were also drafted to provide general information on the conflict. These documents were destined for observers who were dispatched by the UN or within the framework of the ECMM, and for staff officers of the Dutch units, of BHC and UNPROFOR staff.⁵⁴²

The question of the extent to which the MIS/CO or MIS/Army were in a position to provide a timely and accurate prediction of the attack on Srebrenica, or received relevant timely warnings, will be covered comprehensively in Chapter 8, 'Was Srebrenica an intelligence failure?'

7. The output of the MIS/Air Force

Another important producer of intelligence was the MIS/Air Force's Intelligence Department. After all, the involvement of the Royal Netherlands Air Force in the war, within the framework of the Deny Flight operation, meant that the MIS/Air Force took an active part. Every day, the Air Force Operation Centre published the Deny Flight Intelligence Summary (DFIS). One of the analysts at the MIS/Air Force had considerable experience of the war in Bosnia. In 1993, he was present in Italy as an intelligence officer in Villafranca. There he discovered that there were many 'holes' in the intelligence on Yugoslavia. For instance, AFSOUTH, the southern NATO command, maintained that a certain anti-aircraft missile installation (a SAM site) was operational in Serbia, while AFCENT (the NATO command in Central Europe) asserted that it was not operational.

This sort of intelligence was 'nice' for the pilots, because it raised the question of what was actually right. Analysts were of the opinion that the DFIS could be better. The intelligence provision to the unit in Italy was not deemed to be optimal. In this respect, the MIS/Air Force did engage in force protection, in contrast to the MIS/Army. It was for this reason that the MIS/Air Force Balkans analysts started to give more intelligence to Villafranca, the Commander-in-Chief of the Netherlands Air Force and the Air Force Board. The DFIS filled approximately 4 pages each day and always started with a political section, followed by a military section, and ended by detailing the violations of the flight ban. The DFIS was issued every evening at 18.00 hours, and always went to SHAPE, the NATO organization in Mons. The analysts worked about 60 hours a week and taking leave was out of the question.⁵⁴³

The Balkans section of the MIS/Air Force received intelligence support from Villafranca, where an MIS/Air Force analyst operated. He had a direct line to The Hague. At Villafranca he received American Imint, but it could never be established whether this came from a U-2 or a satellite. In addition, the photos were, according to a Dutch intelligence official, made a little 'fuzzier' to hide the actual resolution. The latter remark is probably incorrect. The photos were U-2 imagery, and were very often better than available satellite imagery due to high resolution from the film-based technology, as well as the much lower altitude. According to a senior US intelligence analyst 'no one had time to "fuzzy" pictures for specific consumers'. The U2 imagery was, according to this official, ideal for dissemination to other agencies, for it was completely releasable, coverage was so broad and revisit times in most areas were nearly weekly; sometimes twice weekly.⁵⁴⁴

The MIS/Air Force analyst supplied as much material as possible for the Deny Flight Intelligence Summary. Among the resources at his disposal was the NATO Linked Operational Intelligence Center Europe (LOCE) system. He also received the reports of the UNMOs and the Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) in Vicenza but also a daily NATO releasable air intelligence summary from the purely US Joint Analysis Center (JAC) in Molesworth, disseminated via LOCE for

⁵⁴¹ MoD, *Archive CDS*, Head of Intelligence Department to CDS, No. DIS/94/095/1620, 22/07/94.

⁵⁴² The following serves as an example: MoD, *Archive MIS/Army*, Infomap Yugoslavia, 26/10/94.

⁵⁴³ Confidential interview 6 (31) and (32).

⁵⁴⁴ Confidential information (80).

his benefit, and many others. It was initially released through the NATO Intelligence Center at AFSOUTH and later directly from JAC, Molesworth.

The staff in Villafranca was constantly aware of possible espionage by the Bosnian Serbs. Highly secure links were used. The staff had crypto telephones and the crypto code on LOCE was changed every day. This meant that little information leaked out. What did leak out, to Belgrade to be precise, were the daily Air Task Messages (ATMs).⁵⁴⁵ They were drawn up 12 hours in advance and they described the mission and the targets. Too many people within NATO knew of this. At the same time, the VRS is said to have had a good source in NATO circles.⁵⁴⁶ These efforts were not always appreciated by senior MIS/Air Force officials. In spite of the enormous pressure of work, the Balkans unit received no additional personnel, for example, but were sometimes reproached for their analyses. However, analysts admitted that this never led to a direct intervention by the heads of the MIS/Air Force, nor to a demand that the text be amended.

At shop floor level, the relationship between the MIS/Air Force and the MISs at the other two branches of the Armed Forces was excellent, but personnel were reminded from above that distance should be maintained. This led to bizarre situations, such as an MIS/Army analyst furtively delivering an envelope containing raw intelligence to the home of an MIS/Air Force analyst under cover of darkness, and depositing it in the letterbox. According to MIS/Air Force personnel, senior officials at the other two MISs blocked more intensive collaboration, which was actually a bitter necessity. The fact was that in principle all of the MISs had largely the same intelligence on the table, but what really mattered was the analysis. This could vary somewhat, because each MIS looked at the data through different eyes. The attack on the Krajina was given as an example. MIS/Air Force and MIS/Navy determined: *'es geht los'*. The MIS/Army was of the opinion that nothing was going to happen. This was the position taken by their analyst at the daily briefing at the Defence Crisis Management Centre. Unfortunately for him, Operation Storm started the following day, in which the Croats attacked the Bosnian Serbs in the Krajina.⁵⁴⁷

Intelligence support for the air operations was deemed to be of eminent importance to the Netherlands Air Force detachment in Villafranca. The demands on this were that the information issued had to be of the highest possible quality, up-to-date and tailored to suit requirements. The intelligence section in Villafranca made use of NATO reports generated, for example, by the intelligence cell of the Fifth Allied Air Force in Vicenza and the US Joint Analysis Center (JAC) in Molesworth.

Secondly, consistent use was made of the messages from the Deny Flight Intelligence Summaries, compiled by the MIS/Air Force in The Hague. According to the detachment commander in Villafranca, Lieutenant Colonel J. Eikelboom the Deny Flight Intelligence Summary was of excellent quality. He spotted a problem with the intelligence generated by Vicenza and the Joint Analysis Center. They were completely dependent for their information on the American, British, German and French services, and what they were willing to release in the way of intelligence.

In the case of Deny Flight especially, political interests played a significant role. The idea existed that various intelligence services were only releasing those items that suited the political interests of their government. It often turned out to be the case that the intelligence passed on by them was incomplete or even incorrect. This was regularly demonstrated to the compilers of the DFIS. Through a better use of other sources, the Deny Flight Intelligence staff later arrived at a much better and realistic assessment, which resulted in an indispensable product. When the decision was taken to distribute the DFIS weekly instead of daily with effect from 15 September 1995 due to personnel problems, Eikelboom protested. This was because the intelligence from the Combined Air Operations Centre and JAC, Molesworth was of inferior quality.⁵⁴⁸

545 Confidential interview (32). The same probably happened during the Kosovo Crisis: Jon Henley, 'Former major denies treason', in *The Guardian*, 12/12/01.

546 Interview with Milovan Milutinovic, 20-22/03/00.

547 Confidential interview (31). For Operation Storm: Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force*, pp. 177 - 194.

548 MoD, *Archive DOPKlu*, J. Eikelboom to Operations Directorate Klu D. Berlin, No. VF/95/3066, 23/09/95 and attached memo from HAVI, 04/10/95.

An US intelligence official rejected vehemently the idea that intelligence was doctored for political reasons. According to this source, it may well be that the information was sometimes incomplete or incorrect, and for that one must make accounts for human error. But to attribute the errors to some vast political conspiracy is 'absurd'. The same official also remarked somewhat offended that the intelligence staff of the US Joint Analysis Center (JAC) at Molesworth would have welcomed any constructive criticism from a Dutch analytical cell. The staff did frequently get analytical assistance from other nationalities, which led to better, more useful products for all involved. To the best of his knowledge, any improvements made by any Dutch analysts were kept to themselves. And if it was no good according to this Dutch source, the US official asked, what did they do about it? Where did they go to get what they needed? Did they explore bilateral avenues? Did they advise higher authority of the shortfall? Did they do anything about it, or did 'they go back to their cup of coffee, and show up sour grapes after the fact?'⁵⁴⁹

But Dutch intelligence officials persisted that thanks to thorough analysis, the Balkans Section of the MIS/Air Force discovered matters that had escaped the notice of others. For instance, the analysts determined that in early 1995, French Mirage aircraft had flown a secret mission from France and bombed Pale. UNPROFOR was not informed of this.⁵⁵⁰

8. Support for the MIS from UNPROFOR

At the MIS/CO, MIS/Army and MIS/Air Force it was completely clear that nothing could be expected of the UN in the area of intelligence gathering. This had already been made clear to the Dutch in the peacekeeping operation in Cambodia in 1992-1993. Even simple aerial photographs were frowned upon by the UN. It was established that the Dutch battalion had too few intelligence officers to gather information systematically itself.

At the time, the battalion commander in Cambodia had already established that he might have been able to obtain more knowledge from Sigint, but that Humint was what was really needed in a peacekeeping operation: 'If you have dealings with four factions who are unreliable or are unable to describe the situation in the field, then you have to have an intelligence service of your own'.⁵⁵¹ The Netherlands Ministry of Defence apparently drew no conclusions from this. In mid 1995, it was again observed in a Defence Intelligence Requirements memorandum that the lack of adequate security guarantees meant that the countries participating in UN operations were extremely reluctant to issue intelligence to the UN or the nations participating in UN operations.⁵⁵² Couzy was often described as having little or no interest in intelligence on this aspect. He never asked for special intelligence briefings. The assessment of the then head of his private office was that 'Couzy easily distances himself from matters he thinks others ought to take care of'. He stated that Couzy attached great importance to military security, but that he did not associate this with an additional intelligence effort.⁵⁵³

Nonetheless, Couzy too knew that the UN had no intelligence service of its own, because 'they were not there to fight. They were there for a humanitarian operation, for which you do not need an intelligence service'. The question is whether such an assessment is correct. According to many, good intelligence is also absolutely necessary for the satisfactory execution of humanitarian operations. It is essential to gather intelligence on such important issues as the manning of roadblocks, the condition of roads, the attitude of the warring parties, the situation on the ground, whether the local mafia is playing a role in the distribution of aid, the involvement of paramilitary units, and the extent to which a ceasefire is being upheld. In a nutshell, intelligence is of great importance to peacekeeping operations

⁵⁴⁹ Confidential information (80).

⁵⁵⁰ Confidential interview (31).

⁵⁵¹ Bais, *Het mijneveld van een vredesmacht*, pp. 83 - 85.

⁵⁵² MoD, *Archive MIS/Air Force*, CASS No. 49, File Reports DB, Letter + Appendix I, No. DIS/95/24.1/1486, 22/06/95.

⁵⁵³ Interview with H. Bosch, 10/10/01. For example, there was also no exchange of information between Couzy and the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. Couzy never asked to be briefed. Interview with M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00.

too. This had already been established by Dutch officers who had taken part in the UNTAC peacekeeping operation in Cambodia in 1992-1993. 'Even disregarding the fact that it is hardly possible to verify agreements without intelligence work, it is also quite simply risky for UN soldiers not to have intelligence available. Until the last moment, UNTAC had no clear picture of the troop strength of the Khmer Rouge, nor of where Khmer Rouge units were located', one Dutch battalion commander explained.⁵⁵⁴ The lack of military intelligence because of the UN's dismissive attitude was felt to be a great deficiency. This was an important lesson learned from Cambodia.

This raises the question of whether it ever made Couzy feel uncomfortable, knowing that the UN supplied no intelligence and that the Netherlands had too little intelligence. Some MIS officials stated that the Netherlands was more righteous than its masters on that point.⁵⁵⁵ Couzy was matter-of-fact about it all: 'Look, the UN had no intelligence service, which was logical because they were not at war. The UN was there to perform humanitarian operations, with that strange appendage of those Safe Areas, for which you don't need an intelligence service. That was always the case. What's the point of gathering intelligence, assuming you can get it, when you can't do anything with it? The fact is you have to go to the UN: it has to do something. We didn't need intelligence to let the UN know that we had drifted into a hopeless position.' According to Couzy, it would have made no difference to the fall of Srebrenica if the knowledge that emerged by 2001 had been available at the time.⁵⁵⁶

It remains a matter for speculation, but good intelligence could have sharpened The Hague's international negotiating position and could have been a significant supplement to the level of knowledge of the political, civil service and military policymakers, who, as things were, often had to take important decisions while completely in the dark. In any case, senior officers of the Royal Netherlands Army could have learned a lesson from the Dutch exercise 'Intell-Torch 1993' in which a large number of problem areas were brought to light in the intelligence field and related points for action identified regarding crisis management operations. The items examined during this exercise included the risks of deploying army units in operations ranging from crisis management to peacekeeping in a UN context.⁵⁵⁷

Couzy's position has not changed in the intervening years. The former Commander-in-Chief is still of the opinion that there was no role for the Dutch intelligence community in Bosnia. It was, after all, a UN operation. Couzy realized well that the UN had no intelligence architecture of its own, but saw that as no reason to encourage his own MIS/Army to gather additional intelligence: 'What were we supposed to do with that information? It's no help at all'. The Commander-in-Chief also had no need for additional intelligence within the framework of Force Protection because, according to him, it was no help either and Dutchbat was trapped like rats anyway. Couzy therefore never considered having the MIS/Army put in additional effort. Couzy said such an effort was never requested, not by Ministers Ter Beek and Voorhoeve, not by the Ministerial Council and not by Parliament.

The result of all this was that Couzy gave no guidance to the MIS/Army concerning the production of intelligence. Nor did any signals reach Couzy from senior MIS/Army officials. Was the MIS/Army or MIS/CO then a serious discussion partner for the policymakers and the Defence leaders? In an interview, Couzy said this service was 'not always a serious discussion partner'.⁵⁵⁸

Furthermore, it was possible to establish that the many Dutch officers in the UNPROFOR chain of command also supplied no intelligence for national use. In 1992, The Hague did occasionally make inquiries of Dutch UNPROFOR staff officers. The poor information position of the Intelligence and Security Department of the MIS/Army at that time was also evident from a fax sent to two Dutch

554 Bais, *Het mijnenveld van een vredesmacht*, p. 83.

555 Confidential interviews (22), (24), (31) and (37).

556 Interview with H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

557 MoD, *Archive Lessons Learned, Box 55*, Lt. Letter Colonel R. Petri, No. G2/929/SIGConf, 08/04/93.

558 Interview with H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

UN observers in Sarajevo,⁵⁵⁹ which stated frankly that the MIS/Army's information position was mediocre at best. There was no contact with UNPROFOR at that time.⁵⁶⁰

The Minister was said later to have issued an edict on reporting more often through the national line. Dutch representatives at UNPROFOR did not do so regularly, however. Data from a briefing for Voorhoeve in November 1994 revealed that 60 Dutch soldiers worked at UNPROFOR in Zagreb at the time and 51 at BHC in Sarajevo. The briefing covered the arguments 'for' and 'against' dispatching a third company to yet another enclave, Bihac.⁵⁶¹ The deployment of soldiers for a nation's own purposes was an established practice among other nationalities that were represented in UNPROFOR. The Dutch line, however, was that combat intelligence was important, but that other intelligence was 'dirty'.

The Dutch also did not engage in intelligence for UNPROFOR

A former head of the MIS/Army provided further confirmation of this. When he was still serving with UNPROFOR under General Cot, he occasionally reported via the national line to The Hague. This was discovered by Akashi, who immediately called him to account and warned that it must not happen again. Another factor was that everyone had a Blue Beret mentality; intelligence was not an acceptable activity at the UN.⁵⁶² The MIS/Army proposed supplying the representatives at UNPROFOR with their own secure crypto link with the minister and the CDS, but this idea was rejected.⁵⁶³

This meant that the MIS/CO and MIS/Army were already destined at the outset to lag further behind.⁵⁶⁴ Neither did the MIS/Army look specifically for *intelligence* in UNPROFOR through former UNPROFOR staff. For example, after his departure from the service, the deputy head of the MIS/Army's Intelligence Department was Deputy Head of Operations in Zagreb from August 1994 to August 1995. He had no direct line or contacts with the MIS/Army and the personnel of this section never called on him.⁵⁶⁵ In this way, important information sources were cut off, because the Netherlands was intent on being 'the best-behaved boy in the class'.⁵⁶⁶ As said earlier, the Netherlands became therefore completely dependent on what other intelligence services are prepared to supply to them. This was not a natural fact, but the result of policy decisions hinged on funding, capability, military and political will.

9. Intelligence and senior Ministry of Defence officials

The next question is what the political and military leaders thought of the usefulness of the MIS, and whether a view existed in those circles on the role that an intelligence service could play. Was the MIS involved in the decision-making surrounding the deployment of Dutchbat, and was a risk analysis or advice ever requested on the deployment of Dutchbat? MIS/CO personnel assert that they were not actively and directly involved in the preparation of the deployment of Dutchbat. This was really the task of the MIS/Army. The Minister and (the office of) the Secretary-General never requested a risk analysis of the situation. From other interviews it also appears that Defence Minister Ter Beek was never provided with a thorough risk analysis.⁵⁶⁷ Nonetheless, the MIS/CO independently produced a

⁵⁵⁹ Paul Ruijgrok, 'Den Haag wist van niets, maar de onderofficieren moesten terug', in: *Vrij Nederland*, 30/10/93.

⁵⁶⁰ Wondergem, *Je komt anders terug*, p. 114.

⁵⁶¹ MoD, *Archive DCBC*, Briefing ministers, 07/11/94.

⁵⁶² Interview with H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01.

⁵⁶³ Interview with H. Bosch, 10/10/01.

⁵⁶⁴ Confidential interview (24).

⁵⁶⁵ Confidential interview (34).

⁵⁶⁶ Confidential interviews (28) and (37).

⁵⁶⁷ In answer to questions in Parliament, Ter Beek claimed that troops were always dispatched on the basis of a careful analysis of the risks. It is unclear whether the Minister had also involved the MIS in this. *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Session 1992-1993*, Parliamentary questions No. 462.

negative assessment: not to go to Bosnia.⁵⁶⁸ Neither was there ever a request from senior Royal Netherlands Army officers or from the Commander-in-Chief for the MIS/Army to produce a threat analysis. The Commander-in-Chief at the time, General Couzy, confirmed this: 'I did not give such an order. Simply because I did not need it'.⁵⁶⁹ The Intelligence Department then issued an assessment on the planned light arming, which was negative, but the recommendation was not followed.

Otherwise, the information on order of battle and arming of the warring factions was sent to the Army Staff.⁵⁷⁰ Various interviews show that before the deployment, analysts also issued a negative opinion on the dispatch area;⁵⁷¹ Srebrenica was seen as a mousetrap. This recommendation was passed on to the head of the MIS/Army. Subsequently in the autumn of 1993, the MIS/Army sent a negative recommendation to the Ministry of Defence: do not deploy. This was before the final round of decision-making with regard to the deployment had taken place. These objections were said to have been raised in a verbal consultation with senior Royal Netherlands Army officers by the head of the MIS/Army. But the political decision-making was already at such an advanced stage that the objections were pushed to one side. The objections lodged against the light arming of the Dutch troops were also said to have been brushed aside.⁵⁷²

Netherlands Army officers had only two questions for the MIS/Army. The first concerned the extent of the risk. The answer was that the risk was limited but that something untoward could certainly happen. The second question was what could be done in Bosnia within the framework of a peacekeeping operation. Here the answer was that, from a military point of view, it would not be possible to ward off any attack, but it would be possible to 'show the flag'. Dutchbat could possibly play a stabilizing role, but not forever. Neither did any request come from senior Royal Netherlands Army officers for the MIS/Army to supply additional intelligence. The MIS/Army was not involved in the decision-making surrounding the deployment of Dutchbat and the road to Srebrenica, and it also took no part in the reconnaissance teams sent to the enclave. All that European Bureau personnel were allowed to do was to brief Dutchbats I and II, but this did not happen with the deployment of Dutchbat III.⁵⁷³ The fact that there was no Force Protection meant at the same time a reduction in the opportunities for acquiring foreign intelligence on a *quid pro quo* basis. If the Netherlands Army had arranged for Force Protection for Dutchbat, and for a better intelligence structure, then the information position of the MIS/Army would have been improved considerably, and the liaison possibilities would have been better.

The question is how Minister Ter Beek viewed the information he received from MIS/CO. With respect to the relationship between the decision to deploy Dutchbat and whether the MIS was engaged regarding the definite location, he stated: 'No explicit role. There was no question of a specific role for the MIS in relation to the Minister or suchlike. I did receive some analyses from time to time, a few reports, which were more extensive than the daily situation reports, but they came from the Defence Staff.'

On the question of whether there was then absolutely no role for the MIS, Ter Beek answered: 'An independent, risk analysis or risk appraisal carried out by the MIS to be sent to the Minister: no. There was no independent advice; never any independent advice from the MIS. Again, there were those reports'. By which the Minister was referring to intelligence summaries? 'Yes. In extremely small print. I always had trouble keeping my attention focused on them. They weren't all that exciting. In other words, no specific role for the MIS'. How did Ter Beek rate these reports in terms of the level of information, and did documents that he received from the MIS have any specific added value? 'Then

568 Confidential interviews (25) and (28).

569 Interview with H. Couzy (ret'd.), 04/10/01.

570 Confidential interview (22).

571 Confidential interview (36).

572 Confidential interview (37).

573 Confidential interview (30).

the answer is a flat “no”. If you just followed *The Herald Tribune*, CNN and *Le Monde* a little, you could find out quite a lot. They were often compilations of open sources. That sums it up neatly’.⁵⁷⁴

Under Ter Beek, the MIS/CO was sometimes involved in confidential briefings on the security situation in Bosnia at the request of the Parliamentary Permanent Committee for Defence. For example, such a briefing was requested on 22 February 1994, shortly before the deployment to Srebrenica. The Head of the MIS was to take account of the objectives and resources of the warring factions, the threat to the Dutch troops and the living conditions in Srebrenica and Zepa.⁵⁷⁵

The next question is whether Ter Beek’s successor, Voorhoeve, had a different view of the role that the MIS could play. According to the Minister, the task of the MIS/CO was to continue to give a current, accurate analysis of the state of affairs on the basis of what they heard, saw and especially picked up from allies. He had the impression that the Netherlands had ‘only very limited intelligence resources. Therefore we were very heavily dependent on what the larger allies told us’. His assessment was that the best intelligence on Bosnia resided with the British, the French and the Americans. The Minister therefore admitted that there were only limited opportunities to actively gather intelligence in other countries. An official from the MIS/CO once said to Voorhoeve: ‘It is really a pity that we have disbanded the foreign intelligence service’.⁵⁷⁶

The Hague therefore had only extremely limited intelligence resources. The question then is whether the ministry or the government made any additional effort in the area of intelligence, and if the MIS ever remarked that, should Dutch soldiers be sent to Bosnia, they might need more resources and manpower. Voorhoeve was unable to recall any instance when this had been raised for discussion. Neither did Parliament ever insist that additional efforts be made in the area of intelligence. This also applied to Sigint: there was no additional effort put into this. He confirmed that the conflict in the Ministry of Defence had more to do with protecting Sigint against excessive cutbacks: intelligence capacity was also expected to make a contribution to the almost one billion guilders worth of cuts. There were also Defence officials who thought that Sigint generally yielded little. There was a familiar expression: ‘We’d rather have a frigate than ...’, which could be completed with a term like ‘signals Intelligence’. ‘You then know exactly where the resistance lay’, said Voorhoeve. In brief, there were no additional enhancements in the area of intelligence; neither Parliament nor the Ministry of Defence nor the Cabinet insisted on it. Voorhoeve: ‘I think that conclusion is correct’. Otherwise, up until the fall of the enclave he had not noticed that the Dutch intelligence position was nothing special. The Minister assumed that what he received in MIS reports was mainly based on the resources of far larger foreign services, which also operated under fewer legal restrictions.

Voorhoeve stated later that he was not impressed by the information position of the MIS/CO. The analyses that he received every two weeks did not rise above the average *International Herald Tribune* level.⁵⁷⁷ This was also clear from the report of a parliamentary hearing of Minister Voorhoeve. The Minister declared that for a number of reasons the possibility of gathering reliable intelligence did not exist. According to him, this was related to whether or not a country had a history as a great power. As an example, he referred to Britain, which had the possibility of dropping special forces behind enemy lines and thereby starting espionage activities. In a war situation, the Netherlands could do the same, but ‘within the framework of UNPROFOR we had no spies among the Serbs’, Voorhoeve said. ‘We therefore relied on the UN’s larger intelligence capacity. That makes you the requesting party, and then you simply have to take what you’re given. My assessment is that we did not receive any timely, adequate warnings from other intelligence services regarding what was about to happen. I say deliberately: no timely, adequate warnings. The Netherlands made maximum use of its own analysis capacity, and was therefore left with the “fog of war”’.⁵⁷⁸ Voorhoeve therefore relied on the intelligence

574 Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

575 MoD, *Archive Stasdef 1994*, Brigadier General A. Kolsteren to BLS and HMID, No. S94/061/589, 13/02/94.

576 Interview with J. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

577 Interview with J. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

578 Vertrekpunt Den Haag, *Deel 1 Rapport*, p. 182.

capacity of the UN, but as described in Chapter 1 of this study, this was something that the UN did not possess. Voorhoeve had previously declared this to Parliament as well: the UN had no intelligence service of its own and was therefore unaware of the VRS strategy.⁵⁷⁹

This demonstrated that the Minister had not fully fathomed the process behind gathering intelligence. Dropping special units behind enemy lines is one method of gathering intelligence, but, of course, not the only one. Perhaps the Ministry of Defence and the Netherlands Army should have focused on utilizing the possibility of gathering Sigint from the enclave as effectively as possible. It would have been possible to operate an Electronic Warfare Unit from Tuzla in support of their own battalion. This unit could have concentrated on intercepting VHF communication traffic, and would have been effective within an area of over 50 kilometres around the deployment position. This option was even proposed by the MIS/Army, but Couzy rejected it. In a UN context, no intelligence tasks needed to be executed.⁵⁸⁰

Such an arrangement would have strongly improved the negotiating position of The Hague in the international intelligence community. Furthermore, the remark that within the framework of UNPROFOR the Netherlands had no spies among the Serbs was a strange starting point to adopt. For the sake of Force Protection, the Minister should perhaps have encouraged the MIS/CO or the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army through his MIS/Army to take such a step. Force Protection in particular implies that special attention be paid to counterintelligence (subversion, espionage and terrorism).⁵⁸¹ If this had succeeded, then The Hague would no longer have been a requesting party on the national and international stage, and would also have received more intelligence in return on a *quid pro quo* basis.

The question then remains as to how the ministers and the senior Ministry of Defence officials actually did receive their intelligence. The MIS/CO reported directly and through special briefings to the Ministers Ter Beek and Voorhoeve, the senior ministry officials and military officers. These briefings, by the MIS/CO's only Balkans analyst, took place in the meetings of the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC). They were carried out on behalf of the CDS responsible for policy guidance and evaluation of crisis management operations. The Centre was founded during the Gulf War. The branches of the Armed Forces contributed the necessary officers and NCOs, but until the autumn of 1994 they still did not have the requisite qualities.⁵⁸²

At the time there was an MIS cell at the Defence Crisis Management Centre, (DCBC) but the department's senior officials took hardly any interest in it. The Balkans analyst himself considered the information given in the briefings to be 'pearls cast before swine'. MIS/Air Force staff, who sometimes attended briefings at the Centre, confirmed this. The team at the MIS cell was not a strong one: only the MIS/CO analyst had sufficient calibre but he only carried out the political-strategic part. This influenced the Head of the MIS, Kok, in backing a proposal to disband the cell. It was later decided, under Knapp, to re-establish a similar MIS cell, but that was after the fall of Srebrenica. Better qualified people were then assigned.⁵⁸³

On weekdays, the MIS cell arranged briefings and intelligence summaries. According to some MIS officials, the briefings by the MIS/CO were occasionally too pro-Serbian in tone. However, they saw this mainly as an attempt to offer a counterweight to the pro-Bosnian attitude of the senior Ministry of Defence officials. According to many MIS personnel, there was a constant 'good guys, bad guys' mentality in the air, with no room for subtle distinctions. The MIS/CO analyst discovered this during briefings for the DCBC, where occasionally there was an element of a selective perception of the events in Bosnia. This analyst was to receive a 'reprimand' from Voorhoeve in June 1998. He was

579 'Voorhoeve wist van aanvoer Serviërs naar Srebrenica' ('Voorhoeve knew of supply of Serbs to Srebrenica'), *De Volkskrant*, 11/07/96.

580 Interview with H. Bosch, 10/10/01. See especially: Chapter 5 of this study.

581 Drs. R. Theunens, 'Intelligence en vredesoperaties' ('Intelligence and peace operations'), *Militaire Spectator*, Vol. 170 (2001) 11, p. 600.

582 MoD. *Archive DCBC, Cabinet 15, File 1, 2212*, Notes 'Improving effectiveness and efficiency', 19/10/94.

583 Confidential interviews (25), (26) and (31).

told by the Head of the MIS that the Minister's eye had been drawn to a number of wordings that in his view showed too much sympathy for Serbian military action in Kosovo.⁵⁸⁴

MIS/Air Force analysts confirmed that there was indeed sometimes an element of politicized intelligence in the direction of the senior military officers and ministry officials. MIS/Army officials likewise stated that intelligence was sometimes used in support of the 'good guys' versus 'bad guys' scenario.⁵⁸⁵ Certain politically sensitive issues were sometimes dropped from the weekly intelligence summaries. The overall climate dictated that the reporting to the leadership of the Ministry of Defence had to be 'politically correct'. Therefore what went to the senior officers and officials was 'polititized intelligence'. Examples included the mortar attack in Sarajevo or the secret flights to Tuzla. While there were no instructions that reports should be politically correct, the politicized aspects still crept in gradually and unconsciously.⁵⁸⁶

Almost all the MIS officials interviewed admitted that account was taken of pro-Bosnia attitudes at senior political and military level within the Ministry. The prevailing political preference definitely influenced perceptions. It was repeatedly pointed out that foreign intelligence sources, such as the NATO network LOCE, were also not entirely free of a political pro-Bosnia slant.⁵⁸⁷ On the subject of political intelligence a former head of the MIS/Army stated that 'as far as I am concerned it should not' have existed. But he too had to admit that the political mood was indeed taken into account. For instance, he was able to recall that once after Srebrenica he had given Voorhoeve a Serbian book on the ABiH hit and run operations from Srebrenica to the surrounding villages with Bosnian Serb residents. The Minister did not appear particularly pleased.⁵⁸⁸

Voorhoeve obtained no intelligence via a direct connection with the Head of the MIS. There was no structural contact; the Head almost never met Voorhoeve. Neither was there a particularly regular pattern of reporting. The Head reported to the Minister via the CDS and the Secretary-General. The Head always sent memos destined for the Minister via the Secretary-General, as in December 1994, when it was reported to Voorhoeve that the VRS and Croatian Serbs had approximately 140 American Stinger anti-aircraft missiles at their disposal. The presence of these arms could represent an additional risk to Dutch air operations over Yugoslavia.⁵⁸⁹

The limited frequency of the contacts was partly due to the CDS's conviction that the Head of the MIS was under his authority. Voorhoeve changed this situation by summoning the Head directly on a couple of occasions. He had the impression that the CDS and the Secretary-General did not think this was normal. Voorhoeve requested the new Head, Knapp, to provide him with intelligence more regularly, and to draw up a periodic summary of all relevant international intelligence. This happened from mid 1995. Voorhoeve then received an Intelligence Summary (IntSum) two or three times a week.⁵⁹⁰ To sum up briefly, the MIS/CO played no central role in the 'daily political life' of the Ministers Ter Beek and Voorhoeve.

10. The MIS and Military Security

In addition to an intelligence component, the MIS/CO also had a security component in the form of the Military Security Bureau. On the one hand, its task came down to carrying out security investigations as part of the defensive counterintelligence task. The aim was to ensure the integrity and reliability of defence personnel. On the other hand, this bureau concentrated on collecting data that were necessary to guarantee military security. This consisted of gathering data on people and

584 MoD, *Archive Private Office of the Minister*, Voorhoeve to HMID, No. 1000, 26/06/98.

585 Confidential interview (34).

586 Confidential interview (37).

587 Confidential interview (26).

588 Confidential interview (36).

589 MoD, *Archive Memorandums Min Def 958 - 962*, HMID Kok to the Minister, No. DIS/94/095/2534, 01/12/94.

590 Interview with J. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

organizations that could possibly inflict damage on the security or readiness of the Armed Forces. A military security officer was therefore also responsible for activities that were geared towards protecting his own units (personnel and equipment) against sabotage, subversion, terrorism and espionage.⁵⁹¹ This was a combination of defensive and offensive counterintelligence work. Osint, Humint and Sigint were available for the execution of all these tasks.⁵⁹²

In order to carry out this task, the MIS/CO included a Counterintelligence and Security Department, and together with the Security Bureaus of the MISs of the three Armed Forces this formed the Security component. As with the intelligence component, the nature of the security task has changed drastically since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Although Russian services are still monitored, and account is still taken of antimilitarist actions, the attention has shifted somewhat. Foreign intelligence services were also active in areas where Dutch soldiers were deployed in peacekeeping operations and as such could constitute a threat.

The Counterintelligence Bureau within the Counterintelligence and Security Department had two components: a Counterintelligence Section with 3 analysts (from the Army, Navy and Air Force) and an Operations Section. In September 1992, the Head of the MIS, Duijn, made a start on setting up an Operations Department, under the control of the Counterintelligence Bureau. The formal objective of the Operations Department was the acquisition of high grade, not freely accessible information via Humint and technical resources. The operational activities consisted of planning, tracing, approaching, training, securing, running and controlling human sources, and using them with Humint-related technical resources.⁵⁹³ This section started with 12 and gradually expanded to 50 people. Originally it was only concerned with counterintelligence, but later it also became involved in intelligence gathering operations at home and abroad.

From the outset, the collaboration between the Counterintelligence Bureau and the Operations Department was not as good as it could have been. There were different views on counterintelligence work. The Operations Department also did not want to share all its intelligence with the Bureau, and allowed no access to its sources; only finished intelligence was issued. In August 1993, the Operations Department started drawing up an outline for taking over the tasks of the Foreign Intelligence Service (IDB). The MIS/CO Operations Department had a close relationship with the National Security Service (BVD). Within the MIS/CO, various sections within the counterintelligence domain were then merged to form a department of 24 people.⁵⁹⁴ Initially the Operations Department had nothing to offer in the way of intelligence. In connection with the rapidly escalating situation in Yugoslavia, the Head of the MIS therefore asked the Minister whether the MIS/CO could be permitted to take a more 'offensive' approach in other countries.

As outlined above, the Ministerial Committee for the Intelligence and Security Services (MICIV) had determined in 1993 to hand over the tasks of the IDB to the MIS and BVD and that in principle the MIS and BVD would only be allowed to use 'passive' human sources in the Netherlands. Only if necessitated by the national interest could 'offensive' use be made of human sources. In brief, actively recruiting agents and operating with agents and sources in other countries was subject to restrictions. The Head of the MIS at the time, Kok, therefore advocated a more active use of Humint, partly because the information position of the MIS/CO was insufficient. He also referred to the meeting of the Committee on the United Intelligence Services in the Netherlands (CVIN) of 17 February 1994. There it was established unanimously that, in view of the involvement in the conflict in Yugoslavia, the national interest was then such that a more active use of human sources was required. This might involve stepping up the interrogation in Bosnia of Displaced Persons, soldiers and other Dutch citizens stationed in the conflict region.⁵⁹⁵ However, Kok was not given the go-ahead to operate

591 MoD, *Archive MIS/Army*, DOKL./IV, Col. J. Mulder to Head AI MIS, Col. B. Wegerer, 23/02/96.

592 Engelen, *De Militaire Inlichtingendienst*, pp. 148 - 151 and Kluiters, *Supplement*, pp. 131 - 132.

593 MoD, *Archive MIS/CO*, Folder 438-0420, Head AO to HMID, Annual plan 1997 of the Operations Department, No. AO 960708, 06/1/97.

594 Confidential interviews (19), (29) and (25).

595 MoD, *Archive CDS*, Commodore P.C. Kok to Minister Voorhoeve, No. DIS/94/095/398, 18/02/94.

on a large scale in Bosnia. The memorandum to the Minister proposing an increase in foreign operations was a step in this direction, but Kok could have known in advance that permission would not be forthcoming.⁵⁹⁶ He would have to make do with the resources available.

Kok, then attempted to more or less 'neutralize' the Operations Department. In March 1994 he sent a memorandum to the Deputy CDS and senior Ministry of Defence officials. He argued that the structure and organization of the MIS/CO needed to be changed. Kok proposed a reorganization that offered the prospect of a structural solution to major problems in the Intelligence domain. In the short term, a number of emergency measures needed to be taken to fulfil the most elementary requirements demanded by the MIS/CO. He wanted a reallocation of resources and personnel. It was possible for the Counterintelligence and Security and Operations Departments to be put on hold temporarily. This entailed undesirable risks, but Kok estimated that these were less hazardous than allowing the existing situation to continue. He especially wanted to strengthen the intelligence position of the MIS/CO, and was apparently content to leave aspects of Military Security entirely to the MIS/Army.⁵⁹⁷

Ultimately, the proposals were not implemented, but in 1994 the Operations Department was still not in a position to gather intelligence on Yugoslavia. There were no sources or trained people. Subsequently, the Operations Department made cautious attempts to set up operations in other countries, but everything needed to be built up from scratch. The Operations Department mainly gathered tactical military intelligence. Given this state of affairs, the CIA and the SIS, the British foreign intelligence service, were consulted as to whether they could train personnel for Yugoslavia, but that plan also faltered. The Operations Department also wanted to use Dutch troops or local interpreters for gathering intelligence, but this again was blocked by the MIS/CO leadership, for fear of conflict with the MIS/Army.⁵⁹⁸ The Operations Department only got 'up to steam' after 1995. In 1996, the Operations Department had a total of 5 operational bureaux and an administrative department: three regional bureaux (Eurasia, the Middle East and Africa/the Far East/Western Hemisphere), a Maritime Information Bureau and a Special Assignments Bureau.⁵⁹⁹

The MIS/Army's Military Security Bureau

The problems in the relationship with the MIS/Army were not confined to the Intelligence domain; the Military Security sector was also affected. The MIS/Army counterpart to the MIS/CO Counterintelligence Bureau was the Military Security Bureau (MV), which had three detachments at its disposal in the Netherlands. The Military Security Sector was extremely important to the Army, and was also a priority for the Air Force and Navy.⁶⁰⁰ In 1992, the Counterintelligence and Military Security components of the MIS/Army were separated from each other, in what was experienced as a 'painful' process. Good Counterintelligence personnel suddenly found themselves confronted with Military Security work, and that was a whole different craft. In addition there was confusion about the division of tasks: what constituted Counterintelligence and what came under Military Security?

The following serves as an example. Some considered that issues such as drugs, prostitution and morale were a matter for the commander. Military Security disagreed: it saw such issues as part of its remit. In the process, people tended to forget that Military Security often paved the way for Counterintelligence. The two processes could not be cleanly separated and attempts to do so proved unworkable. The Military Security Section claimed much at that time, and although the relationship on the shop floor between the personnel of the Counterintelligence Bureau and Military Security was good, there was (as usual) a conflict at management level. As was the case in the Intelligence

⁵⁹⁶ Confidential interviews (25) and (29).

⁵⁹⁷ MoD, *Archive CDS*, HMID Commodore Kok to deputy CDS, No. DIS/94/001/484, 02/03/94.

⁵⁹⁸ Confidential interview (18).

⁵⁹⁹ MoD, *Archive MIS/CO, File 438-0420*, Head AO to HMID, Annual plan 1997 AO, No. AO 960708, 06/1/97.

⁶⁰⁰ Confidential interview (20).

Department, the Counterintelligence Bureau and Military Security personnel communicated with each other through informal channels because nothing could be exchanged officially.⁶⁰¹

One Military Security official was responsible for deployments to peacekeeping operations, a task which made up approximately 90% of his work. The Military Security Section took particular notice of conduct. The same was incidentally true of the Counterintelligence Bureau, but its approach was considerably influenced by its 'old' background. The Counterintelligence Bureau wanted to concern itself with deployments, and pay special attention to issues like threats, risks and preservation of integrity. This was not allowed and as a result, a considerable amount of security information remained within the confines of the Military Security Bureau, according to an official⁶⁰² of the Counterintelligence Bureau. There was a built-in mechanism for drawing a discrete veil over many issues.

The impression at the MIS/CO was that the main concern of the Military Security Section was to protect the image of the Army. All the MIS/CO was allowed to do was brief and debrief UNMOs, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee personnel that had worked for UNCivPol, and personnel from the European monitoring mission. The problem here was again that these were often Army people, who therefore had no wish to cooperate. The Marechaussee also resisted the involvement of the Counterintelligence Bureau. Dutchbat was claimed completely by the Military Security Bureau. The MIS/CO Counterintelligence Bureau was not allowed access. Its head was explicitly told so on two occasions: not a single Dutchbat soldier may be approached. Involvement with the big debriefing in Assen after the fall of Srebrenica was also forbidden. The Counterintelligence Bureau was allowed to pass on questions to MIS/Army's Military Security Bureau, who then reported back on the intelligence gathered, but no direct access to Dutchbat was given.⁶⁰³

This restricted access probably influenced the investigation into extreme right-wing statements or behaviour. From early 1993, a specific request was made to the Armed Forces and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee to report such matters to the Counterintelligence Bureau. In the case of deployments within the framework of peacekeeping operations steps had to be taken to prevent the personal conduct of the personnel having repercussions on the duties of the deployed unit. It was necessary to identify defence personnel who were members of extreme right-wing organizations and factions, and record any incidents, which had taken place. In March 1993, the Head of the MIS, Duijn, gave his approval to the 'Extreme Right Project', and from that moment the Counterintelligence Bureau would specifically map this area out within the framework of the project.⁶⁰⁴

The MIS/CO was in no way involved in the deployment of Dutchbat. This was done by the Military Security Bureau. The Counterintelligence Bureau did not consider secretly building up its own information network. There was some internal discussion, but the fear of being compromised was too great. The Counterintelligence Bureau did occasionally have access to Dutch officers that had worked at BHC. The Counterintelligence Bureau, like the Operations Department, was also interested in interpreters and translators. An attempt was made to monitor them within UNPROFOR. These interpreters often worked for Balkans intelligence services, and they turned up in various places in Bosnia.

Involvement in controversial incidents

The Counterintelligence Bureau was also involved in the tins of rice affair. The tins were used in an attempt by Bosnian Muslims living in Germany to smuggle money to Muslims in Srebrenica. This was discovered when a package was sent to a Dutchbat sergeant who had already left. The package was then opened, and it was decided to distribute the tins among the Displaced Persons. Several tins were very underweight, and once they were opened, it turned out that they contained documents and money.

601 Confidential interviews (18), (19), (20) and (31).

602 Confidential interview (19).

603 Confidential interview (19).

604 MoD, *Archive MIS/CO*, Memorandum for HMID, No. BCI/224/930558, 10/03/93.

There were several tins involved, and they had been sent from the Netherlands to the enclave. After the fall of Srebrenica, the deputy commander of Dutchbat brought and handed over that money to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, which collected the German Marks. The money was subsequently returned to the original source in Germany. This consignment was probably the tip of the iceberg.⁶⁰⁵

Furthermore, the Counterintelligence Bureau always requested that attention be paid to indications of services or favours being carried out in the Netherlands. In March 1995, there were a number of known incidents where amounts of money were brought into Yugoslavia from the Netherlands. These involved soldiers of the Army who were approached by Bosnian Muslims while on leave in the Netherlands and who were asked to take parcels back with them. In these cases amounts were known to vary from approximately DM 500 to DM 25,000. The soldiers involved were usually not told of the contents of the mail. The Dutch soldiers' home addresses were apparently obtained in the conflict region. In this area the MIS/Army and the BVD did cooperate.⁶⁰⁶ Sometimes, the Bureau received reports of this sort through the Military Security Section from the Dutchbat security officer.

The Counterintelligence Bureau kept track of which services were attempting to recruit in Bosnia. An attempt was even made by the CIA to recruit a Dutch UNPROFOR soldier. This matter was discussed thoroughly by the Bureau with the CIA. The Bureau also observed that the ABiH and VRS recruited intelligence officers who had lived in the Netherlands. It collaborated closely on counterintelligence with its foreign counterparts, who, surprisingly enough, often appeared to have had equally little access to reliable intelligence. The US Army Intelligence and Security Command was always grateful to the Counterintelligence Bureau for supplying it with good intelligence on extremist factions that were active in Yugoslavia.

The US services had little data on this. In fact, the Americans appear to have been milking their partners dry. This meant that the US services had a hard time in the beginning; apparently they had trouble adjusting to the new international relationships in which there was no clear enemy anymore. The Counterintelligence Bureau's collaboration with the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* was solid, as it was with the British Security Services Organization (BSS), a British MI-5 security service unit in Germany. Generally, however, the MIS/CO did not have much use for British services. They attended mainly to British interests in Bosnia, such as Gorazde, and gathered no intelligence that might be useful to other countries. In contrast, this was something that the Netherlands often did.⁶⁰⁷

The Counterintelligence Bureau reported regularly on the activities of paramilitary groups in Yugoslavia.⁶⁰⁸ It also examined the behaviour and the activities of Dutch mercenaries in the Balkans. They were mainly active in Croatia and involved in war crimes. For instance, the Dutch mercenary Johan Tilder was followed intensively, partly as a result of a failed attempt to gather intelligence from UNPROFOR. Tilder later died in Croatia. MIS personnel said he was '*auf der flucht erschossen*' by local soldiers. Incidentally, the Counterintelligence Bureau passed on the available intelligence on mercenaries to the Yugoslavia Tribunal.⁶⁰⁹

There was also a Military Security Section in the MIS/Air Force. Its head was at the same time the Deputy Head of MIS/Air Force. Security in Vicenza was especially important; compartmentalization was thoroughly implemented there because of possible penetration. Account was constantly taken of aeroplane spotters.⁶¹⁰ An excellent opportunity for the MIS/Air Force to greatly improve its information position with respect to Eastern Bosnia presented itself when the Deputy Head of the MIS/Air Force was appointed deputy commander of Tuzla Air Base, which would play an important role in clandestine arms supplies⁶¹¹ to the ABiH in February 1995. In March 1995, the

⁶⁰⁵ For this see also Chapter 6 in Part III of the Srebrenica report.

⁶⁰⁶ For reports on this, see: MoD, *Archive MIS/CO*, Memorandum BCI, No. DIS/95/12.14/777, 27/03/95; No. DIS/95/12.14/1208, 22/05/95 and No. BCI/950869, 19/05/95.

⁶⁰⁷ Confidential interview (19).

⁶⁰⁸ MoD, *Archive MIS/CO*, Memorandum of Head of Analysis and Production Section of BCI L. Zentgraaff, to the Secretary-General, No. BCI/0143/931402, 14/06/93.

⁶⁰⁹ Confidential interview (19).

⁶¹⁰ Confidential interview (39).

⁶¹¹ See Chapter 4 of this study.

MIS/Air Force officer went to Tuzla and would remain there until November 1995. He was responsible for the preparations for opening the airfield as a UN air base. Surprisingly enough, nothing in the way of an order to gather intelligence was forthcoming in the wake of this posting. Of course, the events around Tuzla were not of direct interest to the Netherlands Air Force, but they were to the MIS/Army. This officer was therefore dispatched to Tuzla by the Air Force without any national order. It soon became clear that other nationalities had a different approach to intelligence. A team of the British SAS had its own section in the control tower, which was responsible for monitoring the ABiH and VRS communications traffic, and probably that of UNPROFOR. This was a locked room full of special equipment. The British special forces maintained daily contact with their headquarters in Bosnia via secure signals equipment. The Dutch officer had to make do with an open satellite telephone link via the Netherlands Air Force Operations Centre. Other links were also open and were easy for the ABiH and VRS to monitor.⁶¹²

Although the Military Security Bureau took the Dutchbat deployments entirely for its own account, the task proved more difficult in practice than had been outlined. The debriefing of Dutchbat soldiers turned out to be a source of constant fighting between the Military Security Bureau and the Army. It was regarded as normal for a doctor and a psychologist to be involved with the returning Dutchbat soldier, but a representative from Military Security was not tolerated at first. This changed later, and the returning soldiers were given a schedule of people to visit that included an officer of the Military Security Section.⁶¹³ The debriefings usually took place on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The report was drawn up on Friday, and it was sent to General Couzy the same day. There was sometimes feedback, after which the debriefing could be steered in a certain direction. The Security Section had particular interest in issues such as missing documents, equipment, arms, and ammunition. The Head of the Bureau made a selection of the intelligence to send to Couzy. He also decided which information would reach the Counterintelligence Bureau. There was no standard procedure for sharing intelligence. Under the new head of the MIS/Army, Colonel H. Bokhoven, who held this position from 19 April 1994 to 15 December 1995, progress was made in this area. The reports of the Military Security Bureau then went via Bokhoven directly to his predecessor, Colonel Hans Bosch, the head of Couzy's Private Office. A Military Security officer admitted that the underlying order was indeed to keep the Army out of the wind. The Commander-in-Chief was looked to first, and only in the second instance was the Minister attended to. The Military Security Bureau's primary responsibility was to its Commander-in-Chief. The Military Security Bureau was ordered to report in cases where the image of the 'Firm' could suffer any damage.⁶¹⁴

In the area of military security too, the Military Security Bureau was not directed by the Commander-in-Chief. The Bureau did not report directly to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee or the Public Prosecutor. This gave a Commander-in-Chief - in this case Couzy - the chance to examine an issue internally first, and possibly resolve it informally before the Marechaussee or the Public Prosecutor became involved. A grey area therefore existed in which, for example, there might be strong indications or even proof of criminal offences, but in which a commander or the Commander-in-Chief would refrain from communicating this to the Marechaussee or the Public Prosecutor. There were no rules or regulations on reporting criminal offences to the Marechaussee or the Public Prosecutor. The personnel of the Military Security Bureau admitted that they operated on a moral and legal slippery slope.

There was comprehensive discussion within the MIS/Army about the possible risks for soldiers in Bosnia, and the chance that Dutchbat soldiers could be approached, even before Dutchbat's departure. It was assumed that the Bosnian community in the Netherlands would attempt to take such action. When the smuggling of funds was discovered, this information was passed up the chain of

612 Confidential interview (39).

613 Confidential interview (20).

614 Confidential interview (20).

command. The incident involving the tins of rice did not result in a criminal prosecution; Couzy decided no action was necessary.⁶¹⁵

The Military Security Bureau and Dutchbat

The Bureau thought it important to have its own representative in the enclave. Someone was assigned to this task in the deployment of Dutchbat I. However, Commander Vermeulen did not want him to go to Srebrenica, so that Military Security ended up having no contact of its own. They had no direct lines of communication of their own either, and everything was arranged through soldiers on leave who brought with them reports from the deputy S-2. Someone from the Bureau was attached to Dutchbat II, but his commander sent him to Simin Han, after which the Military Security Bureau again had no one in the enclave. Accordingly, there was little reporting on internal problems in DutchBat I and DutchBat II, while in contrast, there were many reports concerning internal problems in DutchBat III.

In mid 1994, a first signal was sent to senior officers of the Army that ‘this situation could not go on’; it was not possible to keep the Commander-in-Chief properly informed in this way. The Deputy CDS for Operations then issued a written instruction to the commander telling him to cooperate, and to give the Military Security Bureau all the space they needed from that point on. The Bureau’s representative was only to be allowed to carry out only military security tasks and no other activities. This only worked well in the case of the individual charged with this task in Dutchbat III, E.A. Rave. An additional advantage was that Rave and the Military Security Bureau officer responsible were old friends. They had worked together previously in an observation team. This officer went to Karremans and explained to him what Rave had to do. Rave occupied himself mainly with counterintelligence and security, and not so much with gathering intelligence.⁶¹⁶

Rave’s predecessor in Dutchbat II had given him the tip of working in the liaison team, because this would give him the most freedom of movement. Rave was also advised: ‘make sure that you get into the enclave’. This was certainly necessary since the lack of a Military Security representative had meant that the rules with regard to security in the enclave were extremely disorganized. Nonetheless Rave was given a role in Dutchbat III. Another important reason for Rave’s arrival was that Karremans was the first commander to understand the importance of such an officer. His predecessors found it unnecessary. The problem was that Rave had no special secure link, which prevented him from performing his duties optimally. The Army or MIS/Army apparently did not deem it as essential, which was remarkable (to say the least). Rave therefore often had to make all sorts of cryptic remarks on the telephone.⁶¹⁷ This gave the Military Security Bureau an incomplete picture of the situation in Srebrenica. In spite of this, Rave was regularly able to issue intelligence.

Preparation for the deployment

During a meeting in Assen, the Military Security Bureau gave a briefing prior to the departure of DutchBat III. In the period of Dutchbats I, II and III, this bureau was responsible for the military security aspects during the deployments. The briefings generally lasted two hours. After the briefing, there was another one from the Intelligence Department. It was observed that Karremans and his deputy Franken adopted a ‘tough’ attitude; they expected that the VRS would not even consider confining Dutchbat III to the enclave. ‘If necessary Dutchbat III would fight its way out’, according to Franken. The latter was often to be reminded of this tough talk later.⁶¹⁸

During the briefing, attention was paid to issues such as taking good care of personal property, not leaving personal documents lying around, not admitting interpreters to the Operations room, not

⁶¹⁵ Confidential interview (35).

⁶¹⁶ Interviews with E.A. Rave, 13/12/00 and 14/12/00.

⁶¹⁷ Interviews with E.A. Rave, 13/12/00 and 14/12/00.

⁶¹⁸ Confidential interview (20).

entering into close relationships with the local population, not putting envelopes in the wastepaper basket, and so on. A warning was also given that the UNMO interpreters had a direct line to the local political and military leaders, and that everything that was discussed with them was passed on immediately.⁶¹⁹

Karremans said he already recognized this danger and had ordered the commander of the Operations room to keep an eye on the interpreters. Main reason: the Dutch could not be certain that the four interpreters were reliable.⁶²⁰ These doubts proved justified: one of them was a cousin of ABiH commander Naser Oric. This was confirmed by intelligence officer Wieffer. Dutchbat was aware that they had to exercise extreme caution where their interpreters were concerned. Dutchbat therefore ensured that the interpreters had only a limited amount of knowledge; they never entered the Operations room. They had to remain outside, were not allowed to look at the maps and could not attend certain discussions. The same was true of the cleaning ladies who were hired in. They were allowed to do certain things and not others. This had to do with security. According to Wieffer, this system was mainly geared towards keeping the ABiH at a distance and it functioned reasonably well. The ABiH was not to know what Dutchbat knew about them or what was being said left and right about the VRS. Wieffer thinks that Dutchbat dealt with this problem fairly well.⁶²¹

The Military Security Bureau or Counterintelligence Bureau did not investigate the background of the dispatched soldiers, including the battalion leaders. Staff of both Bureau's stated that they were never asked to investigate the pasts of Dutchbat soldiers, and Couzy never indicated to the MIS/Army that an extra check should be carried out on the battalion leaders. However, the Royal Netherlands Army did receive an offer to investigate the battalion leaders from the MIS/CO. It was not accepted.⁶²²

The military security of Dutchbat in the enclave

The next question concerns the state of affairs of Dutchbat's military security once the battalion arrived in the enclave. Much came to light during debriefings after the fall of Srebrenica. It is true that not all the personnel were debriefed after deployments, but attention was focused on key staff and soldiers who had experienced something specific. The list of people to be debriefed was drawn up in agreement with the unit's security officer, and sometimes with the staff officer for personnel or intelligence.

On their return, every soldier had to complete a form containing a number of specific questions. Questions were asked on the following: the function, loss or theft of arms and other equipment, contact with the warring factions, incidents, etc. Based partly on prior knowledge of the individuals concerned, this checklist determined who should be debriefed. After Colonel Bosch was appointed Head of Couzy's Private Office, it became customary to send General Couzy a report on a single A4 sheet of the most important items of information the very next day after a debriefing. Shocking matters sometimes emerged from these debriefings relating to security.⁶²³

For instance, it emerged from a debriefing of one Dutchbat soldier that the Opstina (the municipal council) assigned cleaners who spoke reasonable English or German. However, in spite of all the recommendations made by the Military Security Bureau, they were still allowed to clean the C Company Operations room in Potocari at the time of Dutchbat II. The Dutchbat soldier concerned found this rather surprising from a military security point of view. Yet the Operations room was cleaned twice a day by 3 or 4 women, and it was simply impossible to watch their every move. Patrol schedules, leave rosters, duty and guard schedules, and a detailed map showing the division into sectors all hung in the Operations room. There was also the communication equipment, and the logbook of incoming messages was left open in front of the radio. There were no classified documents or telexes,

619 MoD, *Archive MIS/CO, File 443-0224*, lecture to the LSO personnel 13th AMB, date unknown (approx. end 1993).

620 Karremans, *Who Cares*, p. 41.

621 Interview with E. Wieffer, 18/06/99.

622 Confidential interview (25).

623 Confidential interview (20).

but there were UNPROFOR Military Information Summaries. A bag containing all the outgoing post from C Company also hung in the Operations room. The local employees also entered the weapons room and kitchen and so also knew much about stocks and the food situation.

A Military Security official observed after the debriefing that this was particularly disturbing. In the light of this knowledge, it was not surprising that family members of dispatched soldiers were approached by Yugoslavs who knew everything about the soldier concerned. Another problem was that all envelopes were thrown away in the wastepaper basket, which the cleaners emptied. The addresses of the senders were written on the envelopes. This is how it came about that the home front was approached with requests to smuggle money. The cleaners were also in a position to make copies of leave lists, and in this way put together a picture of who was about to leave the enclave. No one was checked on leaving the compound, except for some hand baggage.⁶²⁴

Did the arrival in the enclave of a Military Security officer with Dutchbat III mean an improvement in military security? In any case, Rave soon noticed that the Bosnian Muslims were very well informed about the personal background of the battalion leaders. Rave knew, for example, that the deputy commander Franken was keen on horse riding, and shortly after Dutchbat III arrived in the enclave an invitation arrived from Oric for Franken to go riding. Rave wondered how Oric had found this out.⁶²⁵ It was also remarkable that the buildings and rooms that were in use by Dutchbat in Srebrenica and Potocari were never 'swept', so that it was unknown whether they contained hidden microphones. Only after the summer of 1995, during the periods of IFOR and SFOR, was this done. One such 'sweep' did indeed uncover a microphone at the later headquarters of Dutch soldiers in Bosnia. The battalion leaders operated from the office of the manager of an old flourmill. He called in occasionally to look through his old accounts, and while he did so he locked the room for approximately one hour.⁶²⁶

The Bosnian security service attempted to gather intelligence in the units. For instance, Dutch UNPROFOR soldiers were sometimes questioned during 'social patrols' by people who probably worked for this service. The Bosnian Muslims also attempted to gather information by other methods. One day, a local artist offering paintings appeared outside the Support Command compound fence in Lukavac. In order to buy one, the Dutch had to write their name, rank, registration number and home address on a list. This 'artist' was probably an ABiH intelligence man.⁶²⁷ Rave immediately intensified the military security in Srebrenica. Even before Dutchbat III arrived, there were reports that the interpreter for the transport battalion operations officer was typing out letters in his office. This was definitely against Rave's wishes, and indeed security risks of this nature did not occur in practice during Dutchbat III.⁶²⁸

The floppy disk affair

Nevertheless, a remarkable incident still took place, brought to the attention of the NIOD by a former officer of the MIS/Army Intelligence and Security Department.⁶²⁹ When Dutchbat departed for the Netherlands via Zagreb after the fall of Srebrenica, the equipment was left behind in the Croatian capital. During an inspection of the vehicles, a Dutch UNPROFOR officer encountered a chaotic scene: maps, documents and personal effects were all mixed up together. They were collected, put into a couple of large envelopes and taken away. Three members of the Military Security Bureau met the UNPROFOR officer concerned at Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, and the material from the Dutchbat APCs was handed over to them.

624 MoD, *Archive 101 MIS/Cie*, Jawad to Van Dijk, Debriefing report, 09/02/95 and Archive MIS/TCBU, Vreman to Van Dijk, Debriefing report, 09/03/95.

625 Interviews with E.A. Rave, 13/12/00 and 14/12/00.

626 Confidential interviews (19) and (20).

627 MoD, *Archive 101 MIS/Cie*, Van Jawad to Hakort, Debriefing report 101 MIS/Cie, 23/12/95.

628 Confidential interview (19) and (20).

629 Confidential interview (35).

One envelope contained several floppy disks. The floppy disk in question (probably one of several floppy disks) contained part of the archive of Dutchbat's internal and external communication traffic. This was stored on floppy disks because the computer's hard disk was erased after the fall of Srebrenica, in order to prevent it falling into the hands of the VRS. On 12 July, Franken was ordered by the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to ensure that as little as possible fell into VRS hands. The highest priority was the destruction of computers, laptops and satellite communication equipment.⁶³⁰ However, this instruction did not prevent material ultimately falling into the hands of the VRS. In total, equipment worth more than 31 million guilders, including 5 million guilders in communications equipment, was lost, destroyed or taken by the VRS.⁶³¹

One of Karremans' last messages was found on one floppy disk, translated into Serbo-Croat. It was message TK 95114 to Janvier, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Sector North East, Voorhoeve and the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, in which he reported on his meetings with Mladic on 11 and 12 July. In it, Karremans announced that he was not in a position to protect the Displaced Persons and his own battalion, that at that time he was unable to identify a suitable representative among the Displaced Persons, and also no ABiH representative, because the ABiH was in the process of attempting to open a corridor to Tuzla. How this translation had found its way onto the floppy disk was a mystery to interviewed MIS personnel.⁶³² If there was a question here of espionage or of a far-reaching breach of security in the compound, the translator would have had access to one or more stand-alone Dutchbat computers. This individual may have been working for an intelligence or security service of the ABiH or the VRS.

The head of the MIS/Army, Bokhoven, was on holiday in these days in July. He said his deputy never informed him of this incident. He acknowledged immediately that this should have happened because of the potentially compromising nature of this fact. The Chief of Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, Colonel Dedden, was informed on 12 August 1995 by the MIS/Army about a document in Serbo-Croat found in a Dutchbat vehicle in Zagreb. However, Dedden was unfamiliar with the existence of such a floppy disk.⁶³³

The discovery of the floppy disk would appear to be astonishing. It raises the question of who translated the text and who ordered it. The interpreters were fluent in English, and were in a position to convey the substance of the discussions as well as the requirements of Mladic verbally or in writing to the highest authorities in Srebrenica. The incident also raises the question of whether this translator had long had access to Dutchbat's internal communication system or to Karremans' laptop. It has been established that many interpreters regularly worked for intelligence and security services and had a duty to report to the ABiH.⁶³⁴ Since the discovery of the floppy disk was never reported to the Head of MIS, he never ordered the matter to be investigated. Karremans stated that he himself knew of no diskette from Zagreb, nor of the translation of one of his own messages. Neither had he given instructions for anything to be translated: 'Why should I?'⁶³⁵

This answer from Karremans is remarkable, because one of the interpreters of the UNMOs stated before a Bosnian State Committee that on the morning of 12 July he was translating a letter that Karremans had sent to Janvier and the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff in The Hague. The interpreter did not make clear who had instructed him to do so.⁶³⁶ Deputy Battalion Commander Franken was equally unaware of this translation.⁶³⁷ Rave also had no explanation for the translated TK 95114; according to him, Karremans normally wrote this sort of message on his own laptop in his

⁶³⁰ MoD, *Archive SMG, Box 1005*, the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to Franken, No. 6146/31, 12/07/95.

⁶³¹ MoD, *Archive SMG, Box 1005*, G-4 Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to CS Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, No. G4/950810/05, 10/08/95.

⁶³² Confidential interviews (28), (23) and (25).

⁶³³ MoD, *Archive SMG, Box 1004*, Interview with Colonel Dedden of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 12/08/95.

⁶³⁴ Confidential interviews (19), (20) and (37).

⁶³⁵ E-mail from Thom Karremans to NIOD, 17/07/01.

⁶³⁶ Bosnian State Commission for the Collection of Facts of War Crimes, Witness X.

⁶³⁷ E-mail from Franken to NIOD, 01/06/01.

office, which was opposite the communication centre: ‘normally speaking, no interpreter was involved.’⁶³⁸

Ultimately, it was the Dutchbat officer, Major P. Boering, who was able to give a possible explanation. He immediately associated this incident with the preparation of the Displaced Persons’ delegation for the meeting with Mladic on the morning of 12 July. Information was given to the interpreter in connection with this meeting, and he had attempted to phone members of the Bosnian government. With this in mind, the interpreter was given a desk and a telephone.⁶³⁹ But still no answer has been given to the question of how the text came to be on the floppy disk. It may have been that the interpreter was also permitted to translate this letter on the laptop. In this case there was therefore probably no question of espionage or of a far-reaching breach of security in Dutchbat III.

11. Conclusions

The information position of the Dutch intelligence and security services at the start of the outbreak of the conflict in Yugoslavia was neither strong nor unique. In this area, the Foreign Intelligence Service (IDB) no longer played any significant role, as the service was on the point of being disbanded. During the deployment of soldiers to Bosnia, the Netherlands therefore had no independent foreign intelligence service of its own, which meant that the government was deprived of a potentially important information source. According to various intelligence officers, this was regrettable during the war in the Balkans.⁶⁴⁰ They were of the opinion that each state that cherishes its sovereignty and independence must have not only a diplomatic service and armed forces, but also an intelligence organization of its own. The voice of a state that does not have such a facility counts for less in the choir of nations. As Peter Hennessy once said: ‘Intelligence is without question an influence-multiplier in the sense that it enables a state to apply its other instruments of influence more effectively’.⁶⁴¹ One could add to this that a nation also has a duty to protect its sons and daughters from the consequences of having no intelligence. It is not just about taking a place at the table of nations, it is about honouring those who sacrifice on their nation’s behalf. A well-functioning IDB could have played an important role in gathering intelligence on Bosnia. As things were, only scant intelligence was available.

The National Security Service (BVD) concentrated on domestic security. After all, the stationing of Dutch soldiers in Bosnia could have consequences for state security and the democratic rule of law. With hindsight, that threat was not as bad as might have been expected. Serb, Bosnian or Croat secret services were all but inactive in the Netherlands, and hardly carried out any operations. Attempts were made on a limited scale to raise funds or to send arms and ammunition to the region. The service did keep close track of whether mercenaries were recruited and who was responsible for this. The BVD was also very much occupied with mapping out politically related crime among ex-Yugoslavs, and investigating whether this was geared towards supporting the war effort of states and militias.

In 1995, the service established that the developments in the former Yugoslavia had only limited consequences for state security. The changed situation in the Balkans prompted only a muted response among the ex-Yugoslavs. This did not develop into organized political activity. The fear of a horizontal threat (within the Yugoslav community) and a vertical threat aimed against Dutch subjects and institutions receded sharply. After the expulsion of two Serb intelligence officers, the BVD continued to pay attention to monitoring and influencing activities on the part of the Serb embassy. The remarks made in 1994 about a criminal network with political connections were more or less withdrawn. Organized crime may have been a phenomenon to be taken seriously, but there were hardly

⁶³⁸ Report of telephone conversation with Sergeant Major E.A. Rave, 11/06/01.

⁶³⁹ Interview with P. Boering, 13/12/01.

⁶⁴⁰ Confidential interviews (18), (25), (31), (34) and (36).

⁶⁴¹ P. Hennessy, ‘The secret service, open to question’, in: *The Independent*, 15/10/96. See also: ‘Intelligence and policy: What is constant? What is changing?’, in: *Commentary*, No. 45 (June 1994), p. 4.

any indications of continuous guidance from political power centres in the former Yugoslavia. For this reason, the BVD decided not to start its own investigation in this area. The only perceived danger was to the staff of the Yugoslavia Tribunal, but with only a few exceptions this threat was never serious in nature.

Intelligence had to come mainly from the MIS/CO and the Military Intelligence Services of two of the three branches of the Armed Forces: MIS/Army and the MIS/Air Force. It must be concluded that the information position was neither unique nor special. This did not change after the departure and stationing of Dutch soldiers in Bosnia. The MIS/CO had no special sources and the same was true of the MIS/Army. No Humint operations were executed, since such operations were not permitted by senior Ministry of Defence officials. Another tool for gathering intelligence from Dutch soil, Sigint, could not be used optimally because of technical obstacles. However, technical obstacles did not apply to DutchBat. Like nearly every other contingent they could have brought some tactical capability with them. Except for the Bangladeshis, Kenyans, Nepalese, and maybe the Indonesians, practically every other contingent had some sort of capability. As outlined above, this was not a technical problem, but a political problem, which prevented DutchBat from being able to protect themselves.

In this respect, the intelligence services of other countries were also unable to fill the void because they too had little intelligence available or had other priorities and areas for attention. Statements by the Ministers of Defence that the MIS analyses did not rise above the average level of the *International Herald Tribune* do no justice, however, to the quality of the many products that, in spite of all the internal and external problems, were actually supplied. What the Ministers were mainly given to read were the MIS/CO analyses, but this service was at a constant disadvantage relative to the MIS/Army. The MIS/Army, for example, ultimately had a clear insight into the order of battle of the warring factions and was definitely in a position to supply good political-strategic analyses. The same applied for work such as the Deny Flight Intelligence Summary supplied by the MIS/Air Force. However, the supply of information could have been much better, and this is a view shared by many MIS personnel.

Intelligence liaison was further obstructed because the Dutch intelligence and security services had little material to share. There was no intelligence input from Dutchbat, because no serious intelligence-gathering structure was set up with respect to the battalion. The local population was a potentially important source of information but contact with them was reduced to a minimum, particularly under Dutchbat III. Not only did this mean that Dutchbat itself remained deprived of potentially important intelligence, but neither could anything be passed on to Sector North East, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command or The Hague. This meant that on many levels political and military policymakers were groping in the dark. Another contributory factor was the awkward contact between Dutch staff officers and troops under UNPROFOR command. Other nationalities had less trouble with this and they did provide their respective capitals with information. Apparently, the instruction from New York that 'while serving the UN, officers must follow the UN Chain of Command and respond to orders from the UN, not from their national governments' was taken extremely literally.⁶⁴² Dutch UNPROFOR soldiers operated as prescribed: intelligence was not to be gathered within a UN context, although certain staff officers sometimes did issue intelligence directly to the Defence Crisis Management Centre. In this respect, the Netherlands was in fact more righteous than its UN masters.⁶⁴³

The information position of the military services was also weakened by the mutual infighting. This sometimes took place between the BVD and the intelligence services, but also within the MIS itself. There was also an element of competition between the various MISs. For many years, the MIS was an 'island kingdom; one service in name but in reality fragmented, difficult to manage, barely transparent and poorly understood', according to the former director of the MIS, Major General J.A.

⁶⁴² Everyone was reminded of this at the end of 1995: MoD, *Archive, Operations file, BL-S*, Biegmans to Foreign Affairs, No. 1205, 07/12/95.

⁶⁴³ Confidential interview (37).

van Reijn.⁶⁴⁴ It is likewise clear that the information position of the MIS/CO, which had to advise the Minister, the CDS and senior Ministry of Defence officials, constantly lagged behind that of the MIS/Army. Raw intelligence was often held back by senior MIS officers in the Armed Forces, who attended first to the interests of their own branch of the Armed Forces and their own Commander-in-Chief. In this sense, it reflected the relationship between the senior RNLA officers and the Central Organization as a whole. Here too, there was no question of a regular exchange of information, and the Minister complained about the paltry amount of intelligence that reached him from the Army.

This mutual infighting had a significant influence on the coordination and rapport between the MIS analysts. In the period up to 1996, there were serious problems at the MIS as a consequence of the 'independence' of the departments in the Armed Forces; management problems as a consequence of the lack of insight into these departments; a lack of insight into the effective use of personnel and material resources; lack of clarity among foreign intelligence services as a consequence of diffuse and fragmented deployment of the Dutch intelligence services. The tensions between the intelligence services worked to the considerable detriment of their information position. Only after Srebrenica did the realization dawn that the MIS could not continue in this way. It also needs to be said, however, that political, administrative or military guidance was also sadly lacking. An anti-intelligence attitude prevailed in The Hague as regards the use of intelligence and security services in peacekeeping operations in a UN context. There was no insistence from senior Army officers that additional intelligence be gathered, and no control was asserted. What is more: no role whatsoever was set aside for the MIS/Army. Senior Ministry of Defence officials also asserted no control or showed any special interest in the work of the MIS. No additional financial or other resources became available, and they had to make do with what they had. The Minister's interest in the work of his service did not increase significantly, and in any case no specific requests were made for threat or risk analyses prior to deployment. The MIS/CO and the MIS/Army were not consulted by the Minister and senior military officers regarding the deployment. Once the decision had been taken, the service was not given additional equipment to step up its efforts. The cutbacks in the Armed Forces appear to have been more important than obtaining additional intelligence that could have been important to the security of the Dutch soldiers in Bosnia. There was no sign of heightened awareness at the Ministry of Defence in terms of evaluating this situation.

The same was true of Parliament. Neither before the decision to deploy nor after the actual deployment did Parliament insist on an improvement in the Dutch information position in the field of intelligence. Intelligence and security services played no significant role in Parliament either. Parliament even thought it unnecessary to inquire cautiously about the information position. The same applied to the press: there too, intelligence and security services played no role. If they had done, it would possibly have been a reason for the Ministry of Defence to do something structural about it. In terms of structural consideration of the use and availability of intelligence, the Netherlands is a 'poor' country. No enthusiasm existed for carrying out serious intelligence gathering. This is regrettable, because former GCHQ employee Michael Herman rightly pointed out that good intelligence acquired by civilian and military intelligence services puts a country in a position 'to punch above its weight'.⁶⁴⁵ There was apparently no such need in the Netherlands.

When a senior foreign intelligence official did read a draft of this study chapter his comments were very harsh. 'Where Dutch policymakers, military leaders and lower ranking military personnel were derelict in their duty, and failed to take the least effort at remedial action, some heads should roll'. He added to this: 'Leaders knew the risk, sent those young boys in there with nothing but their spoons. Commanders knew it, and made it worse. General officers in UN positions of influence went out of their way to spit on those who may have been able to help. And they're spitting still'. He finished with this remark: 'They failed to act in anticipation of the known risk, they stood by idly as the facts became

⁶⁴⁴ Major General Joop van Reijn, 'De Militaire Inlichtingendienst, vandaag en morgen' (The MIS, today and tomorrow), in: *Militaire Spectator*, Vol. 170 (2001) 11, p. 585.

⁶⁴⁵ M. Herman, *Diplomacy and Intelligence*, Diplomatic Studies Programme Discussion Paper no. 39, z.p.l. 1998, p. 10.

more and more clear, turned a deaf ear to knowledgeable voices crying out, and afterwards seek to blame all others but themselves. These were not casual mistakes, nor easy to overlook. They extended over years, and were deliberately continued in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary'.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁶ Confidential information (80).

Chapter 4

Secret arms supplies and other covert actions

‘Embargo! What Arms Embargo?’⁶⁴⁷

Tuzla is a diplomatic can of worms.’⁶⁴⁸

1. Introduction

There is an element that, strictly speaking, has no connection with all the activities surrounding the gathering of intelligence, but is intertwined with it: covert action (special or clandestine operations). Covert action involves secret activities oriented to influencing foreign governments, persons and organizations, or political, economic and military developments for the benefit of a country’s own national security policy. A crucial point is that the country’s own involvement remains strictly secret.

There are various forms of covert action, ranging from propaganda, paramilitary or political activities oriented to overthrowing or supporting a given regime; secret support to individuals or organizations (trade unions, newspapers and political parties); secret arms supplies; economic destabilization operations, and lethal attacks.⁶⁴⁹ Covert action is therefore concerned with attempts to influence or to manipulate a country’s political policy. Strictly speaking, it is not an activity that falls within the definition of intelligence, although it can contribute to intelligence gathering.⁶⁵⁰ Covert operations took place throughout the world during the Cold War.⁶⁵¹

In this chapter, we will investigate which secret activities were carried out during the war in Bosnia. Attention will be paid to the resources that foreign services threw into the fray to support or to weaken one of the warring factions. In this, little or no attention will be paid to forms of covert action such as propaganda, coup attempts and assassination attempts. The reason is simple: so far nothing has been discovered on these activities. However, there will be a comprehensive discussion of one of the traditional resources in secret operations, the clandestine arms supplies to one of the warring factions. Such an operation, involving foreign services, was the secret arms supplies to the Bosnian army from Iran through what was known as the ‘Croatian pipeline’, which we will return to in Section 2. We will consider the role that the United States played in this.

Section 3 will go into further detail on the so-called Black Flights to Tuzla. In addition to Iran, other countries were actively involved in secret operations to supply the *Armija Bosna i Hercegovina* (ABiH) with weapons and ammunition. Section 4 will describe what has become known about the logistical military support to the other warring factions, Bosnian Serbs and Croats, and the associated role of Serbia and other countries. We will also pay attention to the ICFY Monitoring Mission that was

⁶⁴⁷ O’shea, *Crisis at Bihać*, p. 155.

⁶⁴⁸ Ian Bruce, ‘Big stick may not work second time round’, *The Herald (Glasgow)*, 23/02/94.

⁶⁴⁹ Cf. Roy Godson, ‘Covert Action: neither exceptional tool nor magic bullet’, in: Godson, May & Schmitt, *U.S. Intelligence at the Crossroads*, p. 155 and Godson, *Dirty Tricks or Trump Cards*, passim.

⁶⁵⁰ William J. Brands, ‘Intelligence and Foreign Policy: Dilemmas of A Democracy’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 47 (1969), 2, p. 288. The same is true of counterintelligence (CI), which can best be defined as the identification and neutralization of the threat coming from foreign services and making attempts to manipulate these services and to use them for a country’s own benefit. CI is more a specific form of intelligence, and it also includes the gathering of information on foreign services, which may be either hostile or friendly services. CI also makes use of open and clandestine sources to gain information on the structure, working method and operations of these services. CI can also involve the penetration and destabilization of such services. See: Roy Godson, ‘Counterintelligence: An Introduction’, in: Godson, *Intelligence*, pp. 1-2. Further: Randall M. Fort, ‘Economic Espionage’, in: Godson, May & Schmitt, *U.S. Intelligence at the Crossroads*, p. 182. See also: *Annual report of the National Security Service (BVD) 1995*, pp. 29-30.

⁶⁵¹ For a historical overview of US operations: Richelson, *The US Intelligence Community*, pp. 342-364.

intended to monitor the border crossings on the Drina river. Section 5 will discuss the deployment of mercenaries. Much press attention has been devoted to the Mujahedin, who were said to have taken part in the conflict in substantial numbers on the side of the ABiH: numbers ranging from 1000 to 3000 Islamic fighters were mentioned.⁶⁵² Attention will also be paid to the deployment of mercenaries, including Dutch ones, by the other parties. Section 6 will deal with the deployment of Special Forces, such as the British SAS. The final section will present the conclusions.

2. Arms supplies to the ABiH: the Croatian pipeline

When the Security Council adopted resolution 713 on 25 September 1991, a document was on the table that requested every member state to stop supplying weapons and military goods to the warring factions from their own territory to the Balkans. It was the first Security Council resolution dealing with an embargo, three months after the outbreak of the conflict in Slovenia. By that time, various arms transactions had already been discovered. In early 1991, the Bosnian Minister of the Interior personally started purchasing Kalashnikovs and ammunition in Vienna.⁶⁵³ On 15 August 1991, Russian-manufactured Kalashnikovs, American M-16 rifles, anti-tank grenades and rocket launchers destined for Yugoslavia were intercepted. The same happened in November. Furthermore, weapons that had first been delivered to Lebanon were sold off by this country because of the 'relative quiet' there. Various lots were bought back by Yugoslavia.⁶⁵⁴ The German foreign intelligence service, the *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, was also said to be involved in arms supplies to Croatia via Hungary.⁶⁵⁵ At that time, the Bosnian Serbs had allegedly already received weapons.⁶⁵⁶

Resolution 713 did not imply that member states also had to stop the supplies from third party countries to the region. An enforcement mechanism for resolution 713 was adopted only in November 1992 via resolution 787. This called on the member states, individually or jointly via regional agreements, to stop the import by sea. The arms embargo was further tightened by the UN on 30 May 1992. On 9 October 1992, the Security Council adopted resolution 781, which imposed a ban on military flights over Bosnia that had not been approved in advance. This was the well known No Fly Zone resolution. According to the mediator Lord Owen, his lobbying for the No Fly Zone resolution was partly inspired by his fear that Iranian aircraft would land at Tuzla Air Base, and the Bosnian Serbs would retaliate by stopping all humanitarian relief to them.⁶⁵⁷ In spite of all the resolutions, UNPROFOR was not given the mandate to monitor or enforce violations of the arms embargo on land,⁶⁵⁸ NATO and the WEU did do so at sea.

On 31 March 1993, the Security Council adopted resolution 816 to enforce the earlier resolution 781. It permitted military action by the UN against 'fixed wing and rotary aircraft', if permission was given by UNPROFOR. NATO Council imposed a No Fly Zone above the former Yugoslavia to monitor flight movements, and within the framework of Operation Sharp Guard, a fleet on the Adriatic Sea attempted to apprehend and inspect all suspicious vessels. Nonetheless, all the warring factions attempted to purchase weapons, ammunition and military equipment from abroad and

⁶⁵² Harald Doornbos, 'Het is tijd voor de jihad' ('It is time for the Jihad'), in *Elsevier*, 14/11/92 and 'Bewijs tegen moslim-generaals hele klus' ('Finding evidence against Muslim generals a tough job'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 09/08/01.

⁶⁵³ Interview with B. Spasic, 16/09/01.

⁶⁵⁴ 'Beiroet en de Balkan-connectie' ('Beirut and the Balkans connection'), *Trouw*, 10/07/91; 'Joegoslavische partijen op zoek naar wapens' ('Yugoslav parties in search of weapons'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/08/91 and 'Evacuatie waarnemers in Dubrovnik vertraagd' ('Evacuation of observers in Dubrovnik delayed'), *De Volkskrant*, 13/11/91. See also: NMFA, *DEU/ARA/00081*, PR Geneva to Foreign Affairs, no. 0 Gevi478/15043, 26/07/91.

⁶⁵⁵ Blank, *Yugoslavia's Wars*, p. 115.

⁶⁵⁶ Cekic, *Aggression*, pp. 86-88.

⁶⁵⁷ Owen, *Balkans Odyssey*, p. 59.

⁶⁵⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR, *Box 124*, Akashi to Annan, Z-1106, 22/07/94.

to import them into the region.⁶⁵⁹ The question now is what military impact these secret weapons supplies had on the events in Yugoslavia.

The supplies were firstly a violation of the arms embargo imposed by the international community on the warring factions. The embargo was officially sanctioned by the Security Council. The supplies to, for example, the ABiH, could be interpreted by the other warring factions, such as the *Vojska Republika Srpska* (VRS, Bosnian-Serb Army) and the *Hrvatsko Vijeće Odbrane* (HVO, the Croatian Defence Council, the army of the Bosnian Croats) as a violation of the embargo, and thus could provoke a military response. In retaliation, the VRS could shell airfields with tanks, mortars or artillery so as to impede the supply.⁶⁶⁰

The supply of arms to the warring factions also affected the stability in the region, and in many cases inflamed the armed conflict. It is no coincidence that military equipment was often delivered a few weeks before the start of new large-scale offensives by the ABiH, VRS or Croats. This often went according to a fixed pattern: clandestine supplies; training, possibly supervised by instructors, for operating the new weapons; and subsequently the start of military offensives. Logically this could lead, or did lead, to situations in which UN troops were put in immediate mortal danger. After all, the UN troops' task was to control or monitor these airfields.

Finally, the secret operations are of interest because various statements pointed to the conclusion that the clandestine supplies usually led to rapid transit to the eastern enclaves, such as Srebrenica and Zepa. The VRS complained that the supply of new weapons usually facilitated new sorties from the enclaves into Bosnian-Serb villages and military positions, which in turn provoked a response from the VRS. This action-reaction cycle again put UNPROFOR troops in danger. In the enclaves, the ABiH actually all too often used the Observation Posts (Ops) as a cover in military actions against the VRS. It is important to reconstruct the secret arms supplies from Iran via the 'Croatian pipeline' and the Black Flights to Tuzla, because this will make clear that different NATO member states had different political and military views on the possible consequences for the UNPROFOR troops on the ground.

The background to the Croatian pipeline

On 4 September 1992, the CIA discovered an Iran Air Boeing 747 at Zagreb airport. Subsequent investigation revealed that the jumbo jet was loaded with weapons, ammunition, anti-tank rockets, communication equipment and other military equipment, such as uniforms and helmets, destined for the ABiH in Bosnia.⁶⁶¹ President Tudjman informed mediator Lord Owen accordingly. Apparently, he rejected Iranian involvement.⁶⁶² The Bush administration protested in Zagreb and the arms were confiscated, after which Croatia appeared to stop all further clandestine arms transport via Zagreb.

On 29-30 October 1992, Bosnian President Izetbegovic paid a visit to Teheran and entered into an agreement according to which Iran would again attempt to supply necessary goods via Zagreb. Turkey and Saudi Arabia also offered assistance but attached the condition that Izetbegovic should not request assistance from Iran. This did not dissuade the Bosnian from reaching an agreement with Teheran.⁶⁶³ According to officials of an European intelligence service, Izetbegovic was a president who was less tied to the apron strings of the United States than everyone thought.⁶⁶⁴ At least the former chairman of the British Joint Intelligence Committee, Dame Pauline Neville-Jones, was of this

⁶⁵⁹ Confidential information (14).

⁶⁶⁰ James Risen and Doyle McManus also point specifically to this danger in 'U.S. Okd Iran Arms for Bosnia, Officials Say', *The Los Angeles Times*, 05/04/96.

⁶⁶¹ Jacques Charmelot, 'Arms supply embargo is copiously violated', *AFP press release*, 08/04/96.

⁶⁶² Owen, *Balkans Odyssey*, p. 47. The reporter Robert Dulmers was a witness to the arms smuggling with the Iranian aircraft, but refused to make it public. See: Karskens, *Pleisters op de Ogen*, p. 263.

⁶⁶³ MoD, *MIS/CO*, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 30/93, 28/04/93.

⁶⁶⁴ Confidential information (48). It was even asserted that the CIA had evidence that Izetbegovic was on Iran's payroll. See: *Vesti*, 03/01/97.

opinion.⁶⁶⁵ After Croatia had normalized its diplomatic relations with Iran in April 1992, it was represented in Teheran by the Croatian Muslim Osman Muftic, who elaborated the details of the agreement with the Bosnian ambassador in Teheran, Omer Behmen, and a confidant of Izetbegovic, Hasan Cengic.

On 1 November 1992, an Iranian Boeing 747 landed in Zagreb with sixty tons of 'humanitarian goods'. A few days later the Iranian religious leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei donated \$ 3.3 million to Sarajevo. At the end of November, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ali Akbar Velayati, paid a visit to Zagreb to discuss the further logistical details.⁶⁶⁶ This was surprising, because in this period there was heavy fighting between Croatia and Bosnia.

Perhaps Bonn put pressure on Zagreb to cooperate. Close connections happened to exist between the German *Bundesnachrichtendienst* and the Iranian services. For example, this German service allegedly supplied computer hardware to Teheran, and it trained Iranian intelligence officers in Munich in 1992.⁶⁶⁷ In the same period, a variety of clandestine arms supplies were set up for Croatia and Bosnia by Croatian Catholic relief organizations. They ran via Ludwigshafen under the leadership of Father Johannes, and involved walkie-talkies, helmets, sleeping bags, field kitchens and uniforms, which mainly came from old stocks from the GDR.⁶⁶⁸

On 19 January 1993, the Dutch Permanent Representative to NATO, Jacobovits, reported that his British colleague had announced that the United Kingdom had made *démarches* in various capitals in connection with large-scale violations of the arms embargo. Certain Islamic countries were then said to be in the process of collecting hundreds of millions of dollars for providing the ABiH with a serious offensive military capacity. The arms had to be purchased before a resort was made to enforcing the No Fly Zone.⁶⁶⁹

Clinton on the stage: American initiatives to lift the arms embargo

Around the time of the inauguration of President Bill Clinton, on 20 January 1993, the ABiH was in a poor position militarily, partly because the fighting between Croatia and Bosnia had flared up again. However, Clinton had a much more positive attitude towards the Bosnian issue than his predecessor, Bush, and during his presidential election campaign he argued for lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims. The future Vice-President Al Gore especially was a supporter of tough politics in the Balkans and the arming of the Muslims.⁶⁷⁰ According to the later Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, a sense of frustration was felt during the election campaign because of the Bush administration's Bosnia policy. Little attention was paid to Bosnia under President Bush. His priorities were the Gulf states and Somalia rather than holding Yugoslavia together. For ideological and political reasons, Bush explicitly opposed any further involvement with the developments in Yugoslavia. The Clinton campaign capitalized on this.

Differences of opinion existed in the American administration under Clinton about the extent to which they should become involved in the conflict in Bosnia. There were different ideas, because some (including Albright) had 1938 Munich as a frame of reference in their heads, while others had Vietnam. Everyone did realize that the Balkans would provide the United States with better access to the Middle East. They also looked at the united Europe and constantly asked why the United States always had to take care of everything. The Clinton administration therefore also looked more often to

⁶⁶⁵ Interview with P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

⁶⁶⁶ Blaine Harden, 'Middle eastern Muslims Helping Bosnian Defenders Against Serb Forces', *The Washington Post*, 27/08/92 and John Pomfret, 'US Allies Fed Pipeline Of Covert Arms in Bosnia', *The Washington Post*, 12/05/96.

⁶⁶⁷ Erich Schmidt-Eenboom, 'The Bundesnachrichtendienst, the Bundeswehr and *Sigint* in the Cold War and After', in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *The secrets of Signals Intelligence*, p. 155. See for other accusations: Dzamic, *Psi Rata na Balkanu*, p. 220.

⁶⁶⁸ Thomas Deichmann, 'Pater Johannes, patriotischer Waffenhaendler', *Die Tageszeitung*, 19/03/96.

⁶⁶⁹ NMFA, *PVNATO*. PVNATO to Foreign Affairs, no. Brni068/1872, 19/01/93.

⁶⁷⁰ Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 159.

the UN, which had expressed its concern about the conflict. Albright remained opposed to lifting the arms embargo. According to her, this would serve no purpose whatsoever. The opposing pressure from Congress and the media to lift the embargo, should certainly not be underestimated.⁶⁷¹

The later National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake, was also already a supporter of a tougher Bosnia policy in the 1992 campaign. Lake had considerable experience with foreign policy. In 1969 he served on Henry Kissinger's staff and resigned in 1970 after differences of opinion with Kissinger on Vietnam, especially on the invasion of Cambodia. These experiences had formed Lake's ideas: there must be no involvement at all of American ground forces, because 'Bosnia is a much tougher neighbourhood'. For him, Vietnam was still the reference: 'Think ahead. Don't make commitments that you can't meet. And just don't wander into something.'

In his function, Lake constantly had to mediate in a wide variety of conflicts about Bosnia between and within ministries and intelligence services. The relationship between Lake and Christopher was also said to be under constant tension.⁶⁷² In the spring of 1993, Lake was closely involved in 'selling' the so-called lift and strike strategy, which advocated lifting the embargo and a more rapid and heavier deployment of air power. He discussed this proposal with Canadian officials, and said that his government envisaged only one option: 'lifting [the] arms embargo with arms going to Bosnian Croats and Muslims and air power to stop Serbian interference with these shipments.' According to Lake, lifting the arms embargo was the right path for the Americans. Training must be provided by a third party country, which must certainly not be the United States, but preferably a non-radical Arab or Muslim state. As far as Lake was concerned, any country except Iran could supply arms to the ABiH, preferably by lifting the arms embargo, but if necessary illegally.

Approximately 30,000 ABiH soldiers would be armed in the subsequent 3 to 5 months, starting with small arms. The force would slowly be built up from this basis. Germany would put pressure on the Croats to prevent them from claiming too large a share of the supplies that were to run through Croatia and were destined for Bosnia. Germany would also put pressure on Tudjman to prevent an attack by Croats on the Bosnian Muslims. Humanitarian relief should probably be stopped because of these supplies, but should be reinstated later once the ABiH had gained territory. According to Lake, the arms supplies would not prolong the conflict.⁶⁷³

Responses to the proposal to lift the arms embargo

This new approach was discussed with the United Kingdom and France. The response was somewhat predictable. London was fiercely opposed to supplying arms and ammunition, and Lake expected Paris to respond in an identical way. According to Lord Owen, the French view on the arms embargo on Bosnia was largely the same as that of the British. British diplomats were said to have reported from Paris that the American solution of lifting the arms embargo was the worst solution imaginable. Moving along this path would enable everyone to arm all other parties, which they said was sure to happen. Russian weapons would find their way to the Serbs, and the Islamic countries would respond in turn.⁶⁷⁴

A Canadian official asked Lake whether account had been taken of the safety of Canadian UNPROFOR and other troops on the ground, Lake's answer was a revealing and at the same time disconcerting: 'no'. According to Lake there were 'no easy answers. If he were back at college debating the issue he would take the no side.'⁶⁷⁵ In Ottawa, highly placed officials responded indignantly to

⁶⁷¹ Interview with M. Albright, 28/09/01.

⁶⁷² Jason DeParle, 'The man inside Bill Clinton's foreign policy', *The New York Times*, 20/08/95. See for Lake's attitude to the participation of ground forces: Anthony Lake, 'Bosnia: America's Interest and America's Role', *Inside The Army*, 11/04/94.

⁶⁷³ Confidential information (19).

⁶⁷⁴ Interview with Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

⁶⁷⁵ Confidential information (19).

Lake's statement.⁶⁷⁶ As a Canadian functionary in the same time remarked: 'We are back to a world of big power politics and that is not kind to nations like Canada. We are just another troop contributor now, and no one is asking our opinion'.⁶⁷⁷

Lake had evidently paid no attention whatever to the safety of the UN troops on the ground, and had accordingly also seriously underestimated the possible reactions of the Bosnian Serbs to lifting the arms embargo. According to the Canadians, most military analyses demonstrated that, even with sufficient arms, the ABiH would first require long-term training before any improvement in the command could occur. Ottawa, London and Paris, which all had ground forces in Bosnia, opposed this initiative. Although lift and strike was officially adhered to, it had now become clear to the American administration that it would not be feasible, partly as a consequence of criticism from Europe.⁶⁷⁸ The Chief Political Officer of UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, Corwin, expressed it as follows:

'Any sign of lifting the embargo will encourage a wider war, and a wider war will mean more refugees. The main reason why the European powers are in the former Yugoslavia in the first place is to prevent refugee flows to their own countries'.⁶⁷⁹

As David Hannay, Britain's permanent representative at the UN from 1990-1995, acknowledged later, the failure to take decisive action at crucial moments in the conflict was more due to the tensions between those member states with troops on the ground and those like the United States without. Whilst anxious not to undermine publicly the impression of allied unity, many NATO allies with troops on the ground were markedly reluctant. According to Dame Pauline Neville-Jones, formerly chairing the JIC and later leader of the UK delegation at Dayton, Ohio, the allies for a long time frustrated each other and were unable either to convince others of their position, or to concede to a different viewpoint.⁶⁸⁰ And Boutros-Ghali cynically remarked: Washington devised a way to gain domestic political benefit from tough talk about air strikes, knowing that it was shielded from acting because its European allies would never agree to put their personnel serving with UNPROFOR in danger.⁶⁸¹

In the spring of 1993, there were various spheres of influence that affected the United States. After the Gulf War it was payback time for the United States: there was an expectation in the Arab world (especially Saudi Arabia) that Washington would support the Bosnian Muslims. Furthermore, there was great pressure on the American administration from the media and from Congress, which was dominated by Republicans. In June 1993, Clinton received the head of the Saudi Arabian intelligence service, Prince Turki al Faisal, who was a close adviser to his uncle, the King. The Prince urged Clinton to take the lead in the military assistance to Bosnia. The American administration did not dare to do so: the fear of a rift within NATO was too great. However, the United States did consider the Saudi Arabian signal to be important, and therefore a new strategy was elaborated. Its architect was to be Richard Holbrooke, who started to look for a way to arm the Bosnian Muslims. In the summer of 1993, the Pentagon - the American ministry of defence - was said to have drawn up a plan for arms assistance to the ABiH, which included supplies of AK-47s and other small arms. This operation was to demand almost three hundred C-130 Hercules transport aircraft flights. The weapons were going to have to come from former Warsaw Pact stocks. The plan was rejected, however, for fear that it would leak out and to prevent protest from the European allies.⁶⁸²

⁶⁷⁶ Confidential interviews (2) and (62).

⁶⁷⁷ Norman Hillmer and Dean Oliver, 'Canada and the Balkans, in: Schmidt, *A History of NATO*, p. 82.

⁶⁷⁸ James Risen, 'Administration Defends Its OK of Bosnia Arms', *The Los Angeles Times*, 04/08/96 and Owen, *Balkans Odyssey*, p. 73. See also: Jason DeParle, 'The man inside Bill Clinton's foreign policy', *The New York Times*, 20/08/95.

⁶⁷⁹ Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*. p. 85.

⁶⁸⁰ Pauline Neville-Jones, 'Dayton, IFOR and Alliance Relations in Bosnia', *Survival*, Vol. 38 (Winter 1996-97) 4, p. 64.

⁶⁸¹ Mats Berdal, 'Relations Between NATO and the UN', Schmidt, *A History of NATO*, pp. 61-64.

⁶⁸² Paul Quinn-Judge. 'US Denies Giving Arms', *The Boston Globe*, 18/11/94.

The Croatian pipeline in practice until the beginning of 1993

In the meantime, Iran, and by then also Turkey, supplied arms via Zagreb to Bosnia.⁶⁸³ In April 1993, there were again discussions on this subject in Teheran between Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Iranians, which were also attended by the Iranian President Rafsanjani and the Bosnian President Izetbegovic. Rafsanjani took this opportunity to offer to supply all old Russian weapons to Bosnia and Croatia, under the condition that the Bosnian Muslims arranged for the transport. There were still some rather sensitive issues between the two countries: during the visit Rafsanjani expressed indignation to the Croatian delegation about the bloodbath in Ahmici, a village in central Bosnia, where more than one hundred Muslims were killed by Croatian units on 16 April 1993.⁶⁸⁴

Arms and ammunition transport did not always proceed without a hitch. For instance, the Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic was able to recall an incident in February 1993 in which a delivery of Milan anti-tank missiles, destined for East Bosnia, was confiscated by Croatian militias. And the leader of the Bosnian Croats, Boban, told Vance and Owen frankly in March 1993 that he and Croatia had suspended the transit of arms because of the ABiH operations around Mostar.⁶⁸⁵ Boban had done so before, in July 1992.⁶⁸⁶

Sometimes the Croats sent a signal to Sarajevo referring to the dependence on the Croatian pipeline. For instance, a convoy of the relief organization *Merhamet* was intercepted in central Bosnia. It was transporting relief goods, but arms and ammunition were found under false floors. At the end of March, the two governments attempted to reconcile these problems: President Tudjman and President Izetbegovic reached an agreement in which Croatia would continue to transport arms in exchange for Bosnian electricity to Croatian Dalmatia. Tudjman visited Turkey in April 1993 in enhancement of this agreement. Furthermore, Croatia purchased Russian helicopters destined for Bosnia, which were properly delivered in Tuzla.⁶⁸⁷ As Sarajevo was very much aware of its dependence on Croatia, Izetbegovic visited Teheran again on 14 September 1993 to deepen the defence relationship.

Meanwhile Holbrooke⁶⁸⁸ was becoming increasingly frustrated that the Croatian pipeline was not progressing well. Lake once described Holbrooke as 'high-maintenance'⁶⁸⁹. Holbrooke therefore proposed to deliver arms and ammunition to the ABiH via third party countries. Lake, who had always welcomed such covert operations⁶⁹⁰, nonetheless found the plan 'too risky'. The Secretary of State, Christopher, shared this view. They did support 'lift and strike' but not 'lift, arm and strike'.⁶⁹¹ Holbrooke's proposals did lead to a debate within the administration. Clinton and State Department officials considered supplies via Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan. This was not new: in the 1980s, Saudi Arabia had already supplied arms worth \$ 500 million via the CIA to the Mujahedin fighters in Afghanistan. There had also already been a close relationship with Turkey in the area of intelligence for some considerable time. For instance, there were various American monitoring stations in Turkey, and there was close collaboration of the Turkish domestic security service with the CIA and the FBI in opposing the terrorism of the PKK.⁶⁹² It was proposed at least three times between 1993 and 1995 to

⁶⁸³ F. Chipoux, 'Bosnians getting arms from Islamic countries', *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 30/08/92.

⁶⁸⁴ Magas and Zanic, *The War in Croatia and Bosnia Hercegovina*, pp. 268-269.

⁶⁸⁵ MoD, *MIS/CO*, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 21/93, 22/03/93.

⁶⁸⁶ 'Bosnische president wil wapens van de Verenigde Staten' ('Bosnian president wants arms from the United States'), *De Volkskrant*, 09/07/92.

⁶⁸⁷ MoD, *MIS/CO*, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 24/93, 05/04/93 and no. 25/93, 13/04/93 and Duygu Bazolu, 'Implications for Turkey's relations with Western Europe', in: Jopp (ed.), *The Implications of the Yugoslav Crisis*, p. 36.

⁶⁸⁸ Holbrooke was never available for an interview with the NIOD despite various vigorous attempts by the Netherlands embassy in Washington DC.

⁶⁸⁹ Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 178.

⁶⁹⁰ Vernon Loeb, 'Tony Lake and the CIA', *The Washington Post*, 27/11/00.

⁶⁹¹ Interview with P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

⁶⁹² Confidential information (35).

engage these countries, but each time Lake and Christopher rejected it out of fear of leaks and European protests.

Will the Americans support the Croatian pipeline?

The head of the Croatian intelligence service - the son of the Croatian president - Miroslav Tudjman, visited Washington DC in the autumn of 1993. He spoke there with James Woolsey, the director of the CIA, and others. The cynical Woolsey welcomed him with the words: 'I hear that you've discovered the best kept secret in Washington - that we have no policy towards the former Yugoslavia.' When Tudjman stated later to the director of the National Security Agency (NSA) that intelligence for a stable regional solution to the conflict should not be sought in Bosnia, but in Washington, the American stated: 'If something is a secret, we can discover it, but not if it's a mystery.' Whether Izetbegovic's earlier visit to Teheran was also on the agenda remains unclear, but in any case Tudjman opposed the involvement of Iran.⁶⁹³

Meanwhile, from mid 1993, the idea arose within the American administration of establishing a Muslim-Croat federation. Washington wanted to bring an end to the conflict between Bosnian Muslims and Croats. In early 1994, the frustrations in Washington increased, partly because of the VRS attacks on Sarajevo and Gorazde. On Saturday 5 February 1994, shortly after noon, a mortar shell exploded on Sarajevo's Markale market, close to the cathedral. As a consequence of the attack, approximately seventy people died and some two hundred were wounded. It was the heaviest attack on the city. Blood and severed limbs could be seen all around the market. Western television companies chose not to broadcast large parts of the available image material because it was too dreadful. Nevertheless, the pictures that were broadcast did have 'a transforming political impact'.⁶⁹⁴

The incident coincided with a reorientation of the policy of the major Western countries, and two new major players entering the Bosnian drama. In addition to the UN Secretary-General's special representative, Akashi, the new British Bosnia Hercegovina Commander (BHC) in Sarajevo, General M. Rose, had taken over the function on 21 January of the Belgian General F. Briquemont. It was already noticeable during the NATO summit of 9 and 10 January 1994 that the US administration was in the process of reconsidering its position on Bosnia. William Perry, who had succeeded Les Aspin as Secretary of Defense, and General John Shalikashvili, who as the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had taken the place of Colin Powell, were more inclined to deploy air power than their two predecessors. During a visit by US Secretary of State, Christopher, to Paris on 24 January, the French government had also firmly insisted on a greater US involvement in the crisis in Yugoslavia. One week later, on 1 February, the British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, addressed Christopher in similar terms in Washington. What had happened on 5 February in Sarajevo market also eased the turnaround of the American administration to become more closely involved in Bosnia.⁶⁹⁵

The US diplomats Charles Redman and Peter Tarnoff were dispatched to Europe after the attack in Sarajevo. The message that they took with them was that the United States was prepared to cooperate towards peace in Bosnia, but at the same time wished tougher actions against the Bosnian Serbs; also, humanitarian convoys must also no longer be obstructed.⁶⁹⁶ A suspension of hostilities on 23 February and the formation on 13 March 1994 of the federation of Croatia and Bosnia, in which Redman played an important role, calmed the armed conflict.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹³ Miroslav Tudjman, 'The First Five Years of the Croatian Intelligence Service', *National Security and The Future*, Vol. 1 (2000) 2, p. 60.

⁶⁹⁴ Bell, *In Harm's Way*, p. 177.

⁶⁹⁵ Cf. *Tweede Kamer, Session 1993-1994*, Proceedings, p. 3895 (Kooijmans, 16/02/94); Drew, *Edge*, pp. 410-411 en Schoemaker, 'Oorlog', p. 30.

⁶⁹⁶ Interview with Charles Redman, 27/06/01.

⁶⁹⁷ Andreatta, *The Bosnian War and the New World Order*, p. 14.

The role of the Croats

The Americans were aware that Iran had been supplying arms via Croatia since 1992, but that this had stopped or had been significantly reduced temporarily because of the conflict between Muslims and Croats in Bosnia. The establishment of the federation now offered an opportunity to reopen the Iranian pipeline. That, and the increasing American involvement, were important milestones in boosting the arms pipeline between Iran and Croatia. The Croatian Minister of Defence, Gojko Susak, also stated that in 1992 and 1993 the Americans still had no interest in the smuggling operations: 'The Americans never protested. When they asked, we would say that our original weapons were simply hatching babies.'⁶⁹⁸

The government in Zagreb was nonetheless divided on the transit issue, which was understandable, because Croatia and Bosnia had been involved in fierce fighting around Travnik and Zenica. This died down only after the establishment of the Federation in March 1994. On the other hand, Zagreb also needed arms and ammunition. At first, Croatia suffered the most under Security Council Resolution 713, in which every member state was requested to stop supplying arms and military goods from their own territory to the warring factions in the Balkans.⁶⁹⁹ However, Susak was a fervent supporter of Iranian supplies because, in spite of the conflict with the ABiH, by 'skimming' the consignments, many weapons could remain in Zagreb. Furthermore, with the new arms the ABiH could tie up Bosnian-Serb units and resources, so that they could no longer be deployed against the Croats.

Miroslav Tudjman and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mate Granic, were opposed to the resumption of the supplies, however. They feared an excessive Iranian influence and an intensification of the fighting between Bosnia and Croatia. President Tudjman nonetheless took Susak's side because the additional arms could ensure military successes. Tudjman need have no more worries that UNPROFOR would take action against the supplies: in spite of all the resolutions, there was no mandate to monitor violations or to enforce the embargo. Observers were not even allowed to inspect aircraft.⁷⁰⁰ Classified CIA documents to which the *Los Angeles Times* managed to gain access, proved that the American ambassador in Zagreb, Peter Galbraith, had already taken initiatives for supplies. In February or March 1994, he spoke with his CIA station chief about the option of secret arms supplies to Bosnia, to which the United States would turn a blind eye. The station chief reported this immediately to his headquarters.⁷⁰¹

On 16 April 1994, Galbraith spoke with the religious leader of the small Muslim community in Zagreb, Iman Sefko Omerbasic, who later informed the Iranian ambassador that American diplomats had urged him to purchase arms for the ABiH. The CIA managed to gain access to a report of this discussion, and they suspected that Galbraith was engaged in a secret operation.⁷⁰²

On 27 April 1994, the Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Granic, visited the American ambassador, Galbraith. The Croatian government wished to reinstate the Iranian pipeline. Granic was still opposed to the supplies and urged Galbraith to say no. The following day, President Tudjman wished to discuss this with Galbraith. Tudjman wanted a formal answer to the question of how the Clinton administration would respond to a resumption of the supplies. Granic had expected Tudjman to accept a resumption of the supplies, as Zagreb wanted good relations with Washington. Galbraith, who was as frustrated as Holbrooke, thought that the supplies should be resumed. The next day, Galbraith had a brief discussion with Tudjman, who conveyed to him the Croatian request to consent to a resumption of the supplies.⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁸ John Pomfret, 'US Allies Fed Pipeline Of Covert Arms in Bosnia', *The Washington Post*, 12/05/96.

⁶⁹⁹ Owen, *Balkans Odyssey*, p. 48.

⁷⁰⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 124, Akashi to Annan, Z-1106, 22/07/94.

⁷⁰¹ James Risen, 'secret messages by U.S. spies anger envoys', *Los Angeles Times*, 24/12/96.

⁷⁰² James Risen, 'Closer U.S. role seen on Bosnia Iran arms pipeline', *Los Angeles Times*, 23/12/96.

⁷⁰³ Ed Vulliamy, 'Clinton's Irangate spooks CIA', *The Observer*, 02/06/96.

Later that day, Galbraith reported to the State Department: ‘This matter is time-urgent.’ He was referring to the fact that the Croatian prime minister, Mikica Valentic, was due to depart for Teheran on 29 April. Without an American ‘green light’ the trip was cancelled. Galbraith proposed using disguised Iranian Boeing 747s for the supplies. Half of the consignment of arms would be destined for Croatia and the other half for the Bosnian Muslims.⁷⁰⁴

The die is cast in Washington

Galbraith approached Alexander Vershbow, the Assistant Secretary of State for Bosnia, who passed the problem on to the Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott, and to Lake. Both understood the dilemma: the disadvantage was that Iran would be drawn into the region. This could have major consequences and could even cause the sudden collapse of the Muslim-Croat Federation. The advantage was that it would finally assure assistance to the Bosnian Muslims.

Meanwhile, State Department lawyers assessed the operation. They came to the conclusion that encouraging a foreign government to procure arms from Iran was not a secret action.⁷⁰⁵ Talbott and Lake decided to inform Galbraith that he had no instructions: ‘a deft way or saying that the United States would not actively object.’

On 27 April 1994, Lake and Talbott discussed this with Clinton on board Air Force One. It was then decided to give a green light to the arms supplies from Iran to Croatia. The opponents were thereby overruled: Christopher was confronted with a *fait accompli*, and CIA director Woolsey was not informed at all.⁷⁰⁶ According to Redman, Lake had ‘come around’ and he was the man behind the idea of supplying arms to the ABiH. The ‘No instructions’ instruction to Galbraith and Redman came from Lake.⁷⁰⁷ Doubts remained about Iran’s possible role, but the complete change in policy rapidly became clear.⁷⁰⁸

At first Galbraith did not understand the ‘no instructions’ message. He wondered whether it meant that he should give Tudjman the green light. He phoned the Europe chief of the National Security Council, Jenonne Walker, who then consulted Lake. Walker then phoned Galbraith back: ‘no instructions’ was what Lake had said to her but ‘Tony [Lake] was smiling when he said it.’⁷⁰⁹ On 28 April 1994, the architect of the Muslim-Croat federation, Charles Redman, accompanied by Galbraith, visited the Croatian president, Tudjman. Redman told him that Washington would have no objection to a clandestine channel through which arms would be transported to Bosnia. They told Tudjman specifically that they had ‘no instructions’ on this sensitive subject. Lake had again impressed upon the two American diplomats on 2 May that it was unnecessary to report on their ‘no instructions’ discussion with Tudjman to the State Department.⁷¹⁰

Tudjman did not understand this message at first, was confused and asked for clarification on the following day. Galbraith then said to him: ‘focus not only on what I had said yesterday but what I had not said.’ Redman was clearer: ‘We don’t want to be the ones who say no to this.’⁷¹¹ That was all

⁷⁰⁴ James Risen, ‘Closer U.S. role seen on Bosnia Iran arms pipeline’, *Los Angeles Times*, 23/12/96. See also: James Hill, ‘Unwrap Arms Deal’, *The Phoenix Gazette*, 27/12/96.

⁷⁰⁵ Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence US Senate, *U.S. Actions Regarding Iranian and Other Arms Transfers to the Bosnian Army, 1994-1995*, Washington DC, 1996, p. 4.

⁷⁰⁶ Walter Pincus, ‘Woolsey, in testimony, Criticizes White House’, *The Washington Post*, 11/06/96.

⁷⁰⁷ Interview with Charles Redman, 27/06/01.

⁷⁰⁸ Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, pp. 332-340.

⁷⁰⁹ James Risen & Doyle McManus, ‘U.S. had options to let Bosnia get arms’, *Los Angeles Times*, 14/07/96.

⁷¹⁰ Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence US Senate, *U.S. Actions Regarding Iranian and Other Arms Transfers to the Bosnian Army, 1994-1995*, Washington DC, 1996, p. 4.

⁷¹¹ James Risen & Doyle McManus, ‘U.S. Envoy May Have Aided Arms Convoy to Bosnia’, *The Los Angeles Times*, 17/04/96; Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence US Senate, *U.S. Actions Regarding Iranian and Other Arms Transfers to the Bosnian Army, 1994-1995*, Washington DC, 1996, p. 13; Ed Vulliamy, ‘Clinton’s Irigate spooks CIA’, *The Observer*, 02/06/96 and Cohen, *Hearts grown brutal*, pp. 314-317.

Tudjman needed to hear and after talks with Izetbegovic he decided to take immediate action. From 29 April to 2 May 1994, the Croatian prime minister, Valentic, and the Bosnian deputy prime minister visited Teheran for consultations with President Ali Akbar Rafsanjani. A tripartite agreement was drawn up for arms supplies and humanitarian assistance to Bosnia.

Resumption of the arms supplies

The first consignment from Iran landed in Zagreb on 4 May, with sixty tons of explosives and military equipment on board. The arms were transported in Croatian army trucks along the Adriatic coast to Bosnia. The first consignment was probably an Iranian gift. Subsequently it appeared that Teheran wanted hard currency for the supplies. On 6 May, Ali Akbar Velayati visited Zagreb to discuss the further logistics arrangements. He travelled on to Sarajevo to present a cheque for \$ 1 million to Izetbegovic. Because the supplies attracted too much attention at Pleso Airport in Zagreb, the flights subsequently went mainly to the Croatian island of Krk. Shortly after Iranian cargo aircraft had landed there, a number of Croatian helicopters arrived to continue transporting the load after dusk. Moreover, Albania was prepared to act as a transit port.⁷¹²

In the summer of 1994, the first reports started to arrive that the Croats and Bosnian Muslims had again travelled to Teheran to reach a new agreement. According to British diplomatic sources, a secret agreement was reached in Teheran between the Iranians and Croats in June 1994. The foundation for this was laid in May, during the Croatian prime minister's visit to Teheran. The following agreement was reached: Iran purchased five oil tankers and three cargo vessels from Croatia worth \$ 150 million. Teheran was to pay this amount as follows: 25 percent in oil; 50 percent in cash and 25 percent in credit. In exchange, Iran would be provided unhindered access to Bosnia via Croatia. In this way, Teheran would initiate a flow of humanitarian relief and arms to Bosnia.⁷¹³ One consequence of the new US policy was that the British intelligence and security services stood alone in this phase because the American services no longer provided intelligence on violations of the embargo.⁷¹⁴

Not everything went smoothly with the supplies in practice, because a helicopter (an MR-8 MTV-I) exploded at Zagreb airport in the night of 4 December 1994. It was President Izetbegovic's personal helicopter, which was completely filled with ammunition and explosives. The official statement to UNPROFOR was that a tanker had exploded, and the European Monitoring mission, ECMM, was told that a pyromaniac had committed suicide.⁷¹⁵

The American assistant secretary Vershbow admitted to Dutch diplomats in July 1994 that he was aware of Islamic supplies and that part of the arms were handed over as 'bounty' to the Croats. He also expected that once the arms embargo had been lifted, a part of the American supplies would remain behind in Zagreb to ensure the cooperation of the Croats. He acknowledged that this could have negative consequences for UNPROFOR and the UN's refugee organization, UNHCR, but they would just have to be 'redeployed' somewhere else.⁷¹⁶ It was apparently that 'simple'.

The American division on the Croatian pipeline remains

After this secret agreement to resume arms supplies, the ball started to roll in the United States. The CIA gathered an increasing amount of evidence of Iranian arms supplies via Croatia to Bosnia, in the

⁷¹² For statements from 1993: MoD, *MIS/CO*. Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 24/93, 05/04/93 and no. 50/93, 24/08/93, and interview with Paul Koring, 05/07/00. Further: John Pomfret, 'Iran ships material for arms to Bosnians', in: *The Washington Post*, 13/05/94 and 'US Allies Fed Pipeline Of Covert Arms in Bosnia', *The Washington Post*, 12/05/96.

⁷¹³ Confidential information (20).

⁷¹⁴ Interview with P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

⁷¹⁵ O'shea, *Crisis at Bihac*, p. 156.

⁷¹⁶ NMFA, *DEU/ARA/05274*. Bentinck to Foreign Affairs, no. Wasi485/13220, 15/07/93.

form of photos taken by spy satellites that revealed aircraft on Turkish airfields. Two days later, the CIA saw the same aircraft in Zagreb or other airports in Croatia. The aircraft flew via Turkey, where a stopover was sometimes made, before resuming the flight over the Black Sea via Bulgarian and Romanian air space to Zagreb, where the arms were unloaded. Part of the consignment was forwarded to Bosnia; Croatia was said to have received thirty per cent of the supplies. The CIA recorded approximately eight flights a month and also received reports from the Croatian intelligence services.

When the CIA got wind of the supplies, it produced a difference of opinion between the American ambassador Galbraith and the CIA station chief there. The station chief asked Galbraith to explain, and he answered that he was aware of the secret consignments from Iran; the station chief would just have to contact Miroslav Tudjman. The station chief would not be palmed off so easily. As a matter of fact, the State Department can covertly encourage anything the President tells them to. What would have been illegal was the involvement of the CIA without a 'written finding'. Covert diplomacy is not illegal. Covert action by the CIA is, however, illegal unless there is a finding. The station chief therefore asked Galbraith where the finding was, because without a finding he was not allowed to cooperate in the operations, which would then be illegal. If that was the case, it could have major policy consequences.

The chief of station raised the alarm with his headquarters in Langley, which subsequently wondered who knew about this at the State Department and in the National Security Council (NSC). A parallel was drawn with the Iran-Contra affair, which was also led from the NSC. The CIA wondered, although the ambassador can do what he wants, whether Ambassador Galbraith might have encouraged Tudjman to make requests for arms supplies. This fear would later be dismissed as unfounded by the Senate, but it did lead rapidly to speculations that the CIA had begun spying on State Department staff.⁷¹⁷ However, this fear proved to be correct. But the station chief in question had indeed decided to watch Galbraith's movements.⁷¹⁸ The station chief also became concerned because Iranian officials, who were apparently involved in the Croatian pipeline, visited the library of the United States Information Service, which was located immediately beneath Galbraith's office, daily. Out of fear of terrorist attacks, from then on only visitors with a membership card were allowed to enter the library, after which the Iranians disappeared.⁷¹⁹

According to Langley, a covert operation had indeed been started in which the CIA was not involved. In response, the CIA in Washington took action at the highest level. The director of the CIA, Woolsey, approached in succession Lake, Christopher, and Talbott. On 5 May 1994, Talbott told Woolsey 'the essence of what had been decided'.⁷²⁰ Galbraith had received no instructions. Incidentally, Woolsey later stated that he was not given the impression in this discussion that the policy on Iranian involvement changed with this instruction; although in practice this was definitely the case. According to a senior US intelligence official, Woolsey did not ultimately approach President Clinton. Once it was clear that the ambassador was acting on the authority of the White House and the Secretary of State and not off his own, the CIA interest stopped except to report the arms flows as intelligence.⁷²¹

Talbott told Woolsey that another reason for permitting the operations had been that the ABiH was at the end of its tether. The American intelligence community arrived at a different conclusion, however: it thought that the ABiH could retain the major part of Bosnia without needing military assistance. There were apparently divergent assessments of the power of the VRS versus the ABiH. According to Corwin, something else played a role in Sarajevo:

⁷¹⁷ Interview with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00; Tim Weiner & Raumont Bonner, 'Gun-Running in the Balkans: CIA and Diplomats Collide', *The New York Times*, 29/05/96.

⁷¹⁸ Interview with Tim Ripley, 12/12/99.

⁷¹⁹ John Pomfret, 'US Allies Fed Pipeline Of Covert Arms in Bosnia', *The Washington Post*, 12/05/96.

⁷²⁰ See also his statement to the 1996 Congressional Hearings before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 23/05/96. Further: Walter Pincus, 'Woolsey, in testimony, Criticizes White House', *The Washington Post*, 11/06/96.

⁷²¹ Confidential interview (97).

‘In fact, one of the great miscalculations of Serb military strength in the former Yugoslavia was made by Russian military intelligence (GRU). Out of a wish to strike a blow at NATO hegemony and out of revenge for having lost the Cold War, the GRU constantly overestimated the Serb’s ability after summer 1994, to withstand Croatian and/or Bosnian offensives’.

According to Corwin, the US administration also had a tendency ‘to overestimate the military strength of the Bosnian Serbs, at least publicly, albeit for different reasons’.⁷²²

In spite of the fact that the CIA had been bypassed in these operations, Woolsey offered to have the CIA set up the secret operation for smuggling arms to Bosnia, only if a finding was signed by President Clinton. But this was rejected: Lake still feared that it would leak out.⁷²³ Otherwise Lake appeared to have a pathological fear of leaks; he shared little information with others and was difficult to approach. He was nicknamed ‘the submarine’.⁷²⁴ Woolsey confirmed that he was not aware of a presidential finding, and that in May 1994 he went to the NSC, and later to the Secretary of State to obtain information on the supplies, but to no avail. Talbott told him that his station chief in Zagreb must do nothing and make no comment. According to the Assistant Secretary of State, it concerned a ‘policy decision of the US Government’; the president could after all ask an ambassador to do something.

Woolsey was surprised at this state of affairs; after all, the CIA had built up the necessary experience with covert operations. If policymakers were to have requested him to organize the secret arms supplies, then his service would have taken care of the execution, even if he was opposed to it: ultimately this was one of his duties. Woolsey:

‘We would rather have had control and could have done it better and without Iranian involvement (...) The CIA did not move weapons to Bosnia. We were perfectly willing to do that. We had enough experience in this field but the policy level did not want the CIA to do that’.⁷²⁵

The Senate concluded later in 1996 that Talbott should have explained the policy - not to block the transit of Iranian arms for Bosnia via Zagreb - more clearly to Woolsey. Meanwhile the Iranian arms supplies had indeed leaked out: on 24 June 1994, the *Washington Times* printed the story of the ‘wink’ towards Tadjman. The precise details remained rather vague for now.⁷²⁶

There were also suspicions regarding the Croatian pipeline within UNPROFOR. On 18 July 1994, Akashi reported that the Bosnian Muslims were receiving large quantities of new arms via Croatia, which was demanding financial compensation or a share of the goods. Akashi was unable to take any action against this because UNPROFOR was not even allowed to inspect the Iranian aircraft at Pleso Airport in Zagreb.⁷²⁷

Iran may well have been permitted to supply arms to Bosnia, but not to receive any arms itself. The fact that the CIA was not involved in the Croatian pipeline did not yet mean that Iran had a free hand: for instance, in August 1994 a shipment of advanced technology from Slovenia, destined for Iran, was intercepted in Vienna following a tip off from the CIA.⁷²⁸

⁷²² Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*, p. 127.

⁷²³ J. Risen & D. McManus, ‘U.S. had options to let Bosnia get arms’, *Los Angeles Times*, 14/07/96 and W. Pincus, ‘Woolsey, in testimony, Criticizes White House’, *The Washington Post*, 11/06/96.

⁷²⁴ Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 243.

⁷²⁵ Interview with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00.

⁷²⁶ See: <http://www.fas.org/irp/news/1996>, Congressional Record, ‘Arms Shipments to Bosnia from Islamic Countries (Senate - April 17, 1996), Speech by Senator Joseph Lieberman.

⁷²⁷ O’Shea, *Crisis at Bihac*, p. 156 and UNGE, UNPROFOR, *Box 124*. Akashi to Annan, Z-1106, 22/07/94.

⁷²⁸ Marko Milivojevic, ‘slovenia - An Arms Bazaar’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, Vol. 6 (1994) 11.

In the summer and autumn of 1994, brainstorming continued at an informal level within the American government on the possibility of executing secret operations. Plans were elaborated for training the ABiH.⁷²⁹ An US ‘mercenary outfit’ was to arrange this training. This was carried out by Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), a company based in Virginia that employed various retired American generals and intelligence officials, such as the former director of the DIA, Lieutenant General Harry Soyster. With the consent of the State Department, MPRI trained the *Hrvatska Vojska* (HV, the Croatian Army) and later also the ABiH.⁷³⁰ MPRI’s role arose from the signing of the agreement between the United States and Croatia on military collaboration. By engaging MPRI, Washington also reduced the danger of ‘direct’ involvement.⁷³¹ Interestingly, DPKO was never officially informed about these activities of MPRI.⁷³²

Holbrooke, meanwhile appointed⁷³³ as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs with the primary task of bringing an end to the war in Bosnia,⁷³⁴ was becoming increasingly actively involved with the option of secret arms supplies to Bosnia. In reality, he was against this, because of the danger for European ground forces in Bosnia. On 6 September, he met Akashi and stated ‘on a strictly confidential basis’ that he wanted to avoid the embargo being lifted, because of the far-reaching consequences for UNPROFOR on the ground. ‘He appeared to be genuinely looking for alternative policies’, according to Akashi.⁷³⁵

What these alternatives were would soon be apparent. When in October Holbrooke visited Zagreb, Galbraith told him about the ‘no instructions’ instruction and the Croatian pipeline. Holbrooke apparently knew nothing of the matter;⁷³⁶ which is remarkable because various articles had already been published on the subject. The political adviser to the British prime minister, Pauline Neville-Jones, was also convinced that Holbrooke was aware of the ‘no instructions’ instruction.⁷³⁷

On 2 November, the Dutch Permanent Representative to NATO also reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about cargo aircraft from Teheran, which were delivering arms to Croatia via the Ukraine. His Canadian counterpart had tipped him off, referring to the *Globe and Mail*, which stated that UNPROFOR was aware of the matter, but was turning a blind eye.⁷³⁸

Holbrooke also spoke on this trip (on which he was accompanied, among others, by Brigadier General M. Hayden⁷³⁹, the head of intelligence of US European Command)⁷⁴⁰ with the Bosnian prime minister, Haris Silajdzic, who urged him to do more for Bosnia. Holbrooke came up with a plan in which Sarajevo would accept that the arms embargo would not be lifted for the coming six months in exchange for American encouragements to third party countries to violate the UN embargo and to step up the supplies of military goods. Holbrooke had already instructed State Department lawyers to investigate the legal snags attached to such a separation of words and actions. Holbrooke said that their recommendation was ‘encouraging’:

⁷²⁹ Ed Vulliamy, ‘America’s Secret Bosnia Agenda’, *The Observer*, 20/11/94.

⁷³⁰ Danile Burton-Rose and Wayne Madsen, ‘Corporate Soldiers. The U.S. Government Privatizes the Use of Force’, *Multinational Monitor*, March 1999, pp. 17-19 Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force*, p. 90 and Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, pp. 334-335.

⁷³¹ Thomas H. Henriksen, ‘Covert Operations, Now More Than Ever’, *Orbis*, Vol. 44 (2000) 1, p. 153.

⁷³² F.E. van Kappen, ‘Strategic Intelligence and the United Nations’, Paper presented at the NISA/IDL Conference ‘Peacekeeping and Intelligence’, Delft, 15/11/02.

⁷³³ For the difficult relationship between Lake and Holbrooke: Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, pp. 178-182.

⁷³⁴ Doder & Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 218.

⁷³⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, *Box 124*. Akashi to Annan, Z-1367, 06/09/94.

⁷³⁶ James Risen and Doyle McManus, ‘U.S. had options to let Bosnia get arms’, *Los Angeles Times*, 14/07/96. See also: Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force*, p. 91.

⁷³⁷ Interview with P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

⁷³⁸ Paul Koring, ‘Iran believed arming Bosnia’, *Globe and Mail*, 03/11/94; John Pomfret, ‘Iran ships material for arms to Bosnians’, *The Washington Post*, 13/05/94 and NMFA, *PVNATO*, *PVNATO to Foreign Affairs*, no. Brni1718/17242, 02/11/94.

⁷³⁹ General Michael Hayden declined to be interviewed by the author.

⁷⁴⁰ Ed Vulliamy, ‘America’s Secret Bosnia Agenda’, *The Observer*, 20/11/94.

‘... suggesting to a foreign country that it might consider a covert action appeared perfectly legal; going one step further and encouraging a foreign country appeared legal but potentially risky from a political standpoint. Actually supporting the foreign action through direct participation, the reports said, crosses the line into covert action’.

Lake and Christopher rejected Holbrooke’s plan, however; Christopher still feared leaks and angry reactions from London, Ottawa and Paris, which could lead to the departure of UNPROFOR. Lake thought that this was a sort of covert operation anyway, in which case the president and Congress must be let into the secret.⁷⁴¹

Reactions in the Netherlands and in UNPROFOR to the lifting of the arms embargo

Meanwhile, a debate was raging in the US Congress about lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia. This debate also did not go unnoticed in various capitals and in UNPROFOR. For instance, Netherlands Prime Minister Wim Kok told President Clinton by phone of his great concern about the possible lifting of the arms embargo. Clinton expressed understanding, but pointed to the domestic political pressure from Congress for lifting the arms embargo, which he himself called ‘hypocritical’, because in the event of a unilateral decision it would not be American but other troops who would run large security risks.⁷⁴²

In a gloomy and comprehensive scenario, Akashi outlined from Zagreb the possible consequences for the UN peacekeeping operations. The UNPROFOR commanders considered that lifting the arms embargo could be deemed by the Bosnian Serbs to be a *de facto* declaration of war by the international community. This had consequences for the humanitarian efforts and would lead to the VRS stepping up military actions against UNPROFOR. Furthermore, the VRS could feel forced to start large-scale military operations before the arms reached the ABiH, and UNPROFOR would lose any semblance of impartiality. The VRS would consider lifting the arms embargo to be new evidence of Western support to the Bosnian Muslims. Furthermore, the VRS would immediately withdraw its heavy weapons from the Weapon Collection Points in Sarajevo and other areas.⁷⁴³

In the autumn of 1994 there were in fact two tendencies that could be observed. The American government had to operate more cautiously, to prevent the ‘truth’ about the Iranian connection being revealed. At the end of 1994 a wide variety of rumours were circulating that Holbrooke had discussed a plan with foreign officials for Washington to make secret funds and/or arms available to the ABiH. A high American government official was said to have urged the Croatian government to continue certain military supplies to Bosnia.⁷⁴⁴

Investigation by the Intelligence Oversight Board

Holbrooke’s activities gave Woolsey renewed concerns; in October 1994 he approached Lake again, but again this had little effect. In the autumn of 1994, Woolsey then approached the Intelligence Oversight Board, a small unit in the White House that is responsible for internal investigation into possible false steps within the intelligence community. The reason for Woolsey’s move was that Congress was

⁷⁴¹ James Risen & Doyle McManus, ‘U.S. had options to let Bosnia get arms’, *Los Angeles Times*, 14/07/96.

⁷⁴² Archive Cabinet Office, Speaking notes for the prime minister’s telephone conversation with President Clinton, 09/09/94 and Letter Kok to Van Mierlo, no. 94G000062, 12/09/94. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked if Kok wanted to broach the subject of lifting the embargo with Clinton himself.

⁷⁴³ UNNY, DPKO, *File #87306, Box 6*. G-3 Plans to DFC, 31/10/94 and UNGE, UNPROFOR, *Box 124*. Akashi to Stoltenberg and Annan, Z-1646, 02/11/94.

⁷⁴⁴ Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence US Senate, *U.S. Actions Regarding Iranian and Other Arms Transfers to the Bosnian Army, 1994-1995*, Washington DC, 1996, p. 4.

starting to have concerns about the Iran connection, and Woolsey wanted to prevent his service becoming the object of this concern.⁷⁴⁵

Some sections of the Clinton administration resented this move, because it ultimately led to an extremely thorough internal investigation by the Intelligence Oversight Board (IOB) that lasted six months, and that concentrated on three questions: whether Galbraith and Redman had offered assistance to Tudjman; whether either one of the ambassadors had actively intervened with Croatian officials for the transit of arms; and whether Galbraith or Holbrooke had offered arms and funds to Bosnia or Croatia. At the same time, the Intelligence Oversight Board examined whether French accusations from March 1994, that the Americans had executed airdrops over Bosnia, were correct.

And the IOB also scrutinized the deployment of US Special Forces, who originally went to Bosnia to assist in humanitarian relief. However, some Canadian and Swedish UNMOs had seen these units unloading and handling cargo. The Canadian report came from Visoko; the Swedish report came from Tuzla, where a Civil Affairs official of Sector North East made no secret of his Special Forces background.⁷⁴⁶ Otherwise, American Special Forces were present throughout Bosnia: a British officer had personally witnessed an US Special Forces colonel scouting out the territory during a visit to the British headquarters in Gornji Vakuf in 1993. When asked what he was doing there, the American answered that he was looking for suitable helicopter landing places. In a night-time operation one day later, American C-130s dropped equipment, ammunition and arms, which were apparently transported in helicopters for the ABiH, and a few days later ABiH soldiers were walking around in brand new American uniforms carrying M-16 rifles. This was remarkable, because those were nowhere to be found in the Balkans.⁷⁴⁷

In May 1995, the IOB arrived at a better than expected conclusion for the supporters of the arms supplies resumption via the Croatian pipeline, namely that no definitive conclusions could be drawn on what had happened, but that no 'covert action was conducted in arms shipments and no U.S. laws were broken'; there had been no 'improper encouragement to President Tudjman', and the activities of Redman and Galbraith fell under 'traditional diplomatic activity', which required no permission from Congress. According to Redman, the Bosnian Muslims actually never discussed arms supplies with the Americans, because it was known in Sarajevo how legalistic American government thinking was.⁷⁴⁸ A subsequent conclusion of the IOB was that Holbrooke had made no offer. The Pentagon and the CIA had already investigated these French accusations and arrived at the conclusion that no such activities took place, and that furthermore no US Special Forces had been involved.⁷⁴⁹

The further American policy on the Croatian pipeline

In early 1995 James Woolsey resigned as Director Central Intelligence. A senior White House adviser stated that Woolsey's relationship with the White House and Congress was poor, and that this caused his departure. He described him as someone with 'an inherent tendency of always swimming against the stream'.⁷⁵⁰ Woolsey agreed with this observation but for other reasons. 'If you are a Director of Central Intelligence and you let the politicians tell you what intelligence should say, then you are a menace to the country's security'.⁷⁵¹ Woolsey's successor was John Deutch, and in 1997 Clinton appointed Lake as

⁷⁴⁵ Interview with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00.

⁷⁴⁶ O'shea, *Crisis at Bihac*, p. 159.

⁷⁴⁷ Confidential interview (80).

⁷⁴⁸ Interview with Charles Redman, 27/06/01.

⁷⁴⁹ Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence US Senate, *U.S. Actions Regarding Iranian and Other Arms Transfers to the Bosnian Army, 1994-1995*, Washington DC, 1996, p. 4.

⁷⁵⁰ Confidential interview (14).

⁷⁵¹ Interview with James R. Woolsey, 01/10/02.

Deutch's successor. However, according to a prominent French military officer, the Senate, was to oppose Lake's appointment as CIA director, partly because of the Croatian pipeline.⁷⁵²

A second tendency in the autumn of 1994 was that Clinton came under increasing pressure from the prospective Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole to lift the arms embargo against Bosnia. Dole described the embargo as outrageous and indefensible.⁷⁵³ It must not be forgotten that Dole had a former Croatian as political adviser, and that the lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia almost automatically also meant lifting the same embargo against Croatia. Croatia would after all have to forward the arms in transit to Bosnia. For the Croatian government it was therefore absolutely unacceptable to lift the arms embargo for Bosnia only.⁷⁵⁴ The American government had to do something to respond to this pressure, and on 28 October Albright submitted a draft resolution to the Security Council for lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia. This was more of a political gesture, because the implication of accepting this resolution would be that UNPROFOR would have to withdraw from Bosnia,⁷⁵⁵ which the Americans definitely did not want.

In November a law drafted by the Democratic senators Sam Nunn (Georgia) and George Mitchell (Maine) came into force banning the use of government funds for the support of, or assistance in enforcing the arms embargo against Bosnia. This law was incorporated in the Defense Budget Authorization Bill. The consequence was that American vessels that took part in Operation Sharp Guard no longer 'diverted or delayed vessels that contained arms or other cargo for the purpose of enforcing the arms embargo' against Bosnia. This would also mean that the exchange of intelligence on arms supplies would be stopped.⁷⁵⁶ This put the commander of the southern NATO command (CinCSouth), Admiral Leighton Smith, in a curious position relative to Force Commander Janvier and the new BHC Commander Rupert Smith,⁷⁵⁷ and the overall efficiency of the operation consequently suffered.⁷⁵⁸ Lake himself described this as an 'uneasy compromise with Congress'.⁷⁵⁹

Senator Dole also remained active on lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia; with this goal in mind he introduced Bill S.21 on 4 January 1995. According to Dole the bill also had an ulterior motive: '[A] decision to arm the Bosnians would reduce the potential influence and role of radical extremist states like Iran' in Bosnia. It was clear that Iran had meanwhile started to be an important political factor in Bosnia. On 7 June 1995 Dole stated:

'When those of us who advocate lifting the arms embargo point out that other countries would also participate in arming the Bosnians, we are told that this would allow Iran to arm the Bosnians. Well, the fact is that the arms embargo has guaranteed that Iran is a key supplier of arms to Bosnia and administration officials have actually used that fact to argue that there is no need to lift the arms embargo. From statements made by State Department officials to the press, one gets the impression that Iran is the Clinton Administration's

⁷⁵² Confidential interview (1). Also: James Risen, 'Closer U.S. role seen on Bosnia Iran arms pipeline', *Los Angeles Times*, 23/12/96. Lake later expressed regret that he had not informed Congress in good time. Senate Testimony by CIA Director-Designate Anthony Lake before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 11/03/97.

⁷⁵³ Ed Vulliamy, 'America's Secret Bosnia Agenda', *The Observer*, 20/11/94. Dole was very critical of UNPROFOR's performance and accused French troops of setting up a 'Bihac pipeline' to put Sarajevo under pressure. UNNY, DPKO, coded cables, Stoltenberg to Annan, Z-1588, 15/12/93 and 'Dole seeks Investigation of UN Spending', *Associated Press*, 04/11/93.

⁷⁵⁴ Owen, *Balkans Odyssey*, p. 47.

⁷⁵⁵ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Annan to Akashi, no. 3545, 28/10/94. For the Security Council debate on the lifting of the arms embargo: see Chapter 10 in Part II.

⁷⁵⁶ Interview with P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

⁷⁵⁷ Välimäki, *Intelligence*, p. 90.

⁷⁵⁸ Congressional Record, Page: E1054, Letter by Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, State Department, Barbara Larkin to Hon. Lee Hamilton, House of Representatives, 24/04/96. Further: W. Drozdiak, 'France, Russian Warn U.S. On Tilt Toward Bosnia', *The Washington Post*, 17/11/94.

⁷⁵⁹ Lake, *6 Nightmares*, p. 145.

preferred provider of weapons to the Bosnians. If the Administration has a problem with Iran arming Bosnia, it should be prepared to do something about it'.⁷⁶⁰

Dole therefore appears to have been aware of the Croatian pipeline, and of Iran's involvement in secretly providing Bosnia with arms. The fact that he was aware of the supply of arms was denied by the Republican party. On the other hand, Senator Lieberman (Connecticut) pointed out that Dole could not have failed to notice the article in the *Washington Times* of 24 June 1994 regarding the Iranian supplies; Dole said nothing then and he did not demand that Clinton do something.⁷⁶¹

Clinton remained set against lifting the arms embargo, but openly stated that he was no longer prepared 'to enforce the arms ban'. Washington itself would supply no arms, but neither would it intervene if other countries were to do so.⁷⁶² Dole was not the only important politician who supported lifting the arms embargo. For example, in August 1995 he quoted from a letter from the former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who said the following to Dole:

'I am writing to express my very strong support for your attempt to have the arms embargo against Bosnia lifted (...) The safe havens were never safe; now they are falling to Serb assault. Murder, ethnic cleansing, mass rape and torture are the legacy of the policy of the last three years to the people of Bosnia. It has failed utterly'.

With this attitude she was (not for the first time) publicly turning against the British Conservative government's national security policy.⁷⁶³

The Croatian pipeline after 1994

Meanwhile, arms flowed liberally through the Croatian pipeline. In early 1995, Iranian cargo aircraft landed in Zagreb three times a week. The CIA and the White House and State Department continued to have different opinions, this time regarding the scale of the military support via the Croatian pipeline: the CIA settled on 14,000 tons between May 1994 and December 1996. According to the State Department from May 1994 to January 1996 Iran delivered a total of 5000 tons of arms and ammunition via the Croatian pipeline to Bosnia. The clandestine Iranian arms supplies were to stop only in January 1996, after American ground forces were stationed in the region.⁷⁶⁴

Sarajevo would nevertheless have felt uncomfortable at the time. The fact is that the ABiH was completely dependent on Zagreb's cooperation. Croatia could stop or reduce the transit at any moment. The Bosnian government will also have been disturbed by Croatia's 'skimming' of the supplies that were destined for it. According to Lord Owen, the percentage of arms that Croatia confiscated was fifty per cent or more.⁷⁶⁵ Turkey and Saudi Arabia possibly exerted pressure in the background to allow fewer arms to flow via the Iranian connection. These two countries had in the

⁷⁶⁰ See: <http://www.fas.org/irp/news/1996>, Christopher Cox, House Republican Policy Committee: Policy Perspective, p. 2.

⁷⁶¹ See: <http://www.fas.org/irp/news/1996>, Congressional Record, 'Arms Shipments to Bosnia from Islamic Countries (Senate - April 17, 1996)', speech by Senator Lieberman.

⁷⁶² The *Washington Post* reported on this matter on 14 & 15 April 1995. For this see for example:

<http://www.fas.org/irp/news/1996>, Congressional Record, 'Arms Shipments to Bosnia from Islamic Countries (Senate - April 17, 1996)', speech by Senator Lieberman.

⁷⁶³ See: <http://www.fas.org/irp/news/1996>, Christopher Cox, House Republican Policy Committee: Policy Perspective, p. 2.

⁷⁶⁴ J. Risen & D. McManus, 'U.S. OK'd Iran Arms for Bosnia, Officials Say', *Los Angeles Times*, 05/04/96 and James Risen, 'Iran gave Bosnia leader \$ 500,000', *Los Angeles Times*, 31/12/96.

⁷⁶⁵ Owen, *Balkans Odyssey*, p. 47.

past already indicated that they were not happy with the situation. Izetbegovic appeared as a clever politician to be playing all parties off against each other, and so held the different movements (a Western oriented one and a more Islamic-fundamentalist one) within his political party in balance.⁷⁶⁶

For this reason, it was decided at the highest level to seek out opportunities for the ABiH to acquire arms and ammunition without the intervention of Zagreb. This meant direct supplies, but this was impossible via Sarajevo because the airfield was frequently under fire. Therefore Tuzla Air Base, in East Bosnia was decided upon.

3. Secret arms supplies to the ABiH: the Black Flights to Tuzla

At 17.45 on 10 February 1995, the Norwegian Captain Ivan Moldestad, a Norwegian helicopter detachment (NorAir) pilot, stood in the doorway of his temporary accommodation just outside Tuzla. It was dark, and suddenly he heard the sound of the propellers of an approaching transport aircraft; it was unmistakably a four engine Hercules C-130. Moldestad noticed that the Hercules was being escorted by two jet fighters, but could not tell their precise type in the darkness.

There were other sightings of this secretive night-time flight to Tuzla Air Base (TAB). A sentry who was on guard duty outside the Norwegian medical UN unit in Tuzla also heard and saw the lights of the Hercules and the accompanying jet fighters. Other UN observers, making use of night vision equipment, also saw the cargo aircraft and the fighter planes concerned. The reports were immediately forwarded to the NATO Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Vicenza and the UNPF Deny Flight Cell in Naples. When Moldestad phoned Vicenza, he was told that there was nothing in the air that night, and that he must be mistaken. When Moldestad persisted, the connection was broken.

The secretive C-130 cargo aircraft flights and night-time arms drops on Tuzla caused great agitation within UNPROFOR and the international community in February and March 1995. When asked, a British general responded with great certainty to the question of the origin of the secret supplies via TAB: 'They were American arms deliveries. No doubt about that. And American private companies were involved in these deliveries.'⁷⁶⁷ This was no surprising answer, because this general had access to intelligence gathered by a unit of the British Special Air Services (SAS) in Tuzla. The aircraft had come within range of this unit's special night vision equipment, and the British saw them land.⁷⁶⁸ It was a confirmation that a clandestine American operation had taken place in which arms, ammunition and military communication equipment were supplied to the ABiH. These night-time operations led to much consternation within the UN and NATO, and were the subject of countless speculations. The question is whether the British general was right in his allegation that these were American consignments, and who was involved in these supplies on the Bosnian side.

The Bosnian connection: the Cengic family

It would seem likely that Bosnian intelligence services played a role in such supplies. They were closely connected with the Cengic family, who were described by Western intelligence services as 'Mafia'. The family was based in Visoko.⁷⁶⁹ It controlled this region entirely through its own militias. Before the war, the Cengic family already had connections in Europe and the Middle East, and owned countless companies in Turkey and Croatia. When the war broke out, the Cengic family proved capable of sidestepping the international embargo and of equipping the ABiH with arms and ammunition.

⁷⁶⁶ MoD, *Archive Bystas. Aftermath*, HMIS Kok to Minister, no. DIS/95/12.13/1286, 31/05/95.

⁷⁶⁷ Confidential interview (87).

⁷⁶⁸ Interview with H. Nicolai, 11/06/99.

⁷⁶⁹ This profile is based on: MoD, *MIS/CO, File 438-0190*, Box 307, The Bosnian civil intelligence service AID, 07/05/97; MIS profile of Hasan Cengic, undated, and John Pomfret, 'Bosnian Officials Involved in Arms Trade Tied to Radical States', *Washington Post*, 22/09/96.

Because of the logistical usefulness of the family Cengic, it was logical that a family member, Hasan Cengic, was involved in the arms supplies.

Hasan Cengic's family was devoutly Islamic. His father Halid was appointed in 1990 as an SDA member of the Foca town council, and after the outbreak of the hostilities he organized the defence of Foca. When the town fell in 1992, the Cengic family moved to Visoko and later to Zenica. Halid Cengic was the most important person responsible for ABiH logistics from Visoko.⁷⁷⁰ All donations and the acquisition of arms and military technology ran via him. This made him one of the wealthiest Muslims. Halid Cengic also controlled the Bosnian intelligence service.

Of his two sons, the best known in intelligence circles was Hasan. The other son, Muhammed Cengic, had an important position within the SDA. As deputy prime minister he concluded a military collaboration agreement with Turkey in March 1992 under the pretence of assuring Bosnia of Turkish purchases from Bosnian arms manufacturers who were no longer able to supply to the Yugoslav army, the JNA.⁷⁷¹ It is reasonable to assume that the Turkish-Bosnian arms traffic in reality went in the opposite direction.

Hasan Cengic studied at the faculty of theology at Sarajevo university, and his studies meant that he spent some time in Teheran. Izetbegovic was his great example and mentor. After completing his studies, the friendship persisted. From 1977 the Yugoslav state security service kept an eye on him. In 1982, the Iranian consulate in Vienna organized an 'educational trip' to Teheran, in which Cengic participated. After his return from Iran he was convicted together with thirteen other Muslim intellectuals of 'activities directed against the state'; Izetbegovic was one of the other accused. From 1983 to 1986 he served his sentence in Zenica.

Cengic moved to Zagreb in 1989, where he worked as an Islamic cleric. He was also active outside the religious community and organized countless symposia and lectures. At the same time, he intensified the contacts with Izetbegovic. On the foundation of the SDA, Cengic fulfilled a main role in the area of organization, party rules and statutes. He also organized the party's financial affairs. In 1990, he became secretary of the SDA. After the outbreak of the hostilities that marked the start of the war, Cengic was instructed to organize Muslim combat units. He succeeded in collecting Muslim officers from the Yugoslav army, he organized a General Staff and was involved in founding the 'Patriotic League', which was later integrated into the territorial defence from which the ABiH was formed.

Cengic carried out his activities partly from Zagreb, where he collaborated with staff of the Croatian Ministry of Defence. From 1992, he worked for the Bosnian army, especially in the area of arms procurement. He was responsible for contacts with Iran and Islamic fundamentalist organizations, which contributed to the Bosnian war effort with arms, money and people. Because he worked from Zagreb, transactions could therefore only take place with the assent of the Croatian authorities.

Cengic was also closely involved in executing the agreement that Izetbegovic had concluded in October 1992 on a visit to Teheran, according to which Iran was to supply military goods via the Croatian pipeline.⁷⁷² In exchange for this, between twenty per cent and fifty per cent of the arms and equipment accrued to the Croats.

Slovenia was also involved in the arms trade; for instance, in the event of transport problems, goods could be stored temporarily at Maribor airport. This led on 21 March 1993 to the 'airport affair', when large quantities of arms and ammunition were discovered. After the outbreak of the hostilities between Bosnian Muslims and Croats, Cengic left Zagreb and sought refuge in Turkey, where he held the position of military attaché at the Bosnian embassy.⁷⁷³ He remained in Ankara until early 1996, when he was appointed Deputy Minister of Defence and acquired a large amount of influence over the ABiH and the military intelligence services. Cengic's appointment in January 1996 was intended to

⁷⁷⁰ Charlotte Eagar, 'Invisible US Army defeats Serbs', *The Observer*, 05/11/95 and James Risen, 'Report of Bosnian Spy Network stirs concerns in U.S.', *Los Angeles Times*, 06/02/97.

⁷⁷¹ Moore, 'Relations', p. 9.

⁷⁷² John Pomfret, 'US Allies Fed Pipeline Of Covert Arms in Bosnia', *The Washington Post*, 12/05/096.

⁷⁷³ 'Murder of Bosnian general ordered by Izetbegovic's son', *Agence France-Presse*, 01/05/94.

allow him (as one of the SDA confidants) to keep an eye on Vladimir Soljic (Croat and Minister of Defence). The Americans (and Croats) agitated against the lack of cooperation in the creation of a Federal Army and Cengic's contacts with Islamic countries. In protest, Washington refused to continue arms supplies and demanded his resignation.⁷⁷⁴ He was dismissed on 6 November 1996 and was given another post.

Cengic was a personal confidant of Izetbegovic and had fairly radical views. For instance, he stated that a Muslim may never receive blood from a non-Muslim and that a Muslim may also never give blood for a non-Muslim. He was also said to have insisted on striking a deal between the Bosnian Muslims on the one hand and the Serbs and Bosnian Serbs on the other, and fighting out the war with the Croats. This was consistent with the prevailing view of the rulers in Teheran. It was in the joint interest of Islam and the orthodox faith to fight the Catholics together.

In September 1997, it was reported that Cengic had been involved since 1993 in building an airfield in Visoko, which was intended for arms supplies. He was said to have invested a total of \$ 5 million in this project. According to British sources, this airfield was built by the Americans. It was situated in a valley to the northwest of Sarajevo. The runway was long enough to handle C-130s or larger transport aircraft. However, Visoko was within VRS artillery range. The airfield was managed in 1995 by Hasan's father, Halid Cengic; many arms were said to have been brought via Visoko, and the flights would not be observed by NATO and UNPROFOR. This was because the arms flights would always arrive in Visoko when there were no NATO AWACS aircraft in the air, or only AWACS with a purely American crew.⁷⁷⁵

These assertions are incorrect, however. UNPROFOR certainly did report on flights to Visoko. For instance, in March 1995, Force Commander Janvier reported to Kofi Annan that Visoko was in use.⁷⁷⁶ Bosnian intelligence officers, incidentally, dispute that Visoko was important for arms supplies; according to them, arms arrived via convoys from Croatia, and not via Visoko. The airfield was allegedly never finished and the meteorological conditions were said to be too poor; the reason for its existence was simply that the SDA wanted to build an airfield no matter what.⁷⁷⁷

Hasan Cengic also dominated the Bosnian military intelligence services, which were closely involved in the arms supplies. In 1995 there were two military intelligence and security services, the VOS and Vojna KOS. The Vojna KOS was the counterespionage service of the Ministry of Defence, which collaborated closely with the military police. In December 1996, the former Chief of Staff of the ABiH, Safet Halilovic, was head of the Vojna KOS. The *Vojna Obavjestajna Služba* (VOS) was the intelligence service of the ABiH. This was led by Brigadier Mustafa Hajrulahovic, alias *Talijan* (the Italian). He had worked for a long time for the pre war Yugoslav secret service, the KOS, and had been stationed in Italy. The most important task of the VOS in other countries was to arrange logistics for the ABiH. The service occupied itself with arms deals and raising funds. This was carried out via umbrella firms and Islamic humanitarian organizations. The Cengic family was involved in many of these logistics activities: for instance, the arms imports from Iran ran mainly via the Cengic family's logistics network. Iran supported the ABiH not only with arms, but also with advisers, though there were never very many of them. In addition, the ABiH obtained its arms via the VOS from Austria, Germany, Turkey, Argentina and Czechoslovakia.⁷⁷⁸ British services also came into the possession of evidence that Iran supplied military equipment and arms directly to the ABiH. The supplies consisted of anti-tank weapons of the Red Arrow type (a Chinese variant of the Russian AT-3 Sagger) and detonators for artillery and mortar ammunition.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁴ Christine Spolar, 'US-Bosnian Dispute Delays Major Arms Delivery', *Washington Post*, 27/10/96.

⁷⁷⁵ Charlotte Eagar, 'Invisible US Army defeats Serbs', *The Observer*, 05/11/95.

⁷⁷⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, *Box 139*. Janvier to Annan, Z-350, 02/03/95. Further: Confidential collection (4), G-2 Air Desk to COS, Visoko Airfield, 28/06/95.

⁷⁷⁷ Confidential interview (5).

⁷⁷⁸ Bulatovic, *General Mladic*, p. 192.

⁷⁷⁹ Confidential information (31).

An Islamic humanitarian organization that the Cengic family made much use of, was the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA). It was led by the Sudanese diplomat Elfatih Hassanein, and arms transactions were carried out, funds were collected, and intelligence gathered under its cover. It was said to have amounted to \$ 350 million. TWRA had offices in Sarajevo, Budapest, Moscow and Istanbul. They had direct links with the Bosnian government: in October 1992, the Bosnian minister of foreign affairs, Haris Silajdzic, visited the First Austrian Bank in Vienna and issued a bank guarantee for Hassanein, and in 1993 Izetbegovic sent a letter to this bank to the effect that this Sudanese official had the complete confidence of his government.

Later, in 1994, incriminating material was found at the Third World Relief Agency office in Vienna during a police raid. Cengic was a member of the supervisory board of this organization, and was said to have used it in 1992 to smuggle arms from Sudan to Bosnia. The arms were collected in Khartoum and delivered to Maribor, Slovenia. Chartered helicopters from an American-Russian company continued the transport of the arms, with Croatian permission, to Tuzla and Zenica. The funds were also used to bribe Croatian officials after the conflict between Croatia and Bosnia had flared up again. Cengic also used the Slovenian company Smelt International to have 120 tons of arms and ammunition flown in from Libya using Slovenian cargo aircraft to Maribor in July 1993.⁷⁸⁰ TWRA was used by the military intelligence service, not by the Bosnian intelligence service, AID, which used the *Cenex* company for arms transactions. The then Bosnian Minister of the Interior, Deli Mustafic, was involved in 1991 in smuggling Kalashnikovs and ammunition from Vienna to Sarajevo.⁷⁸¹

Even UNPROFOR was covered by Cengic's network: his TWRA was also involved in smuggling light arms worth \$ 15 million with the involvement of Turkish and Malaysian UNPROFOR troops.⁷⁸² Not only Turkish or Malaysian, but also other UNPROFOR detachments brought more arms than they needed for themselves. For example, soldiers from Bangladesh sold ammunition on a large scale to the ABiH, which was officially to have been used during exercises,⁷⁸³ and the battalion from Malta ordered four thousand mortar-shells while they only had four mortars.⁷⁸⁴ In other words: in spite of the international arms embargo, Bosnia was to receive arms through a variety of channels. The ABiH even bought arms and ammunition in Serbia. In November 1993, the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) already reported the possibility that Arab donations were being used to purchase arms in Serbia. These arms transactions ignored the political differences in the Balkans. The Bosnian minister Muratovic, frankly admitted to the European negotiator, the Swede Carl Bildt, that the ABiH had crossed the Drina in the vicinity of Zepa to buy arms in Serbia. Bildt apparently responded with surprise, to which Muratovic answered: 'This is the Balkans. Things sometimes work rather differently.'⁷⁸⁵ A former VRS officer confirmed that the ABiH in Zepa received many goods from Serbia for it was situated on the Drina. This took place both with convoys and by means of smuggling.⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸⁰ MoD, *MIS/CO*. Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 54/93, 08/09/93; Marko Milivojevic, 'slovenia - An Arms Bazaar', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Vol. 6 (1994), 11, and a three-part series in *Nasa Borba*, Instalment 3, 26/09/96.

⁷⁸¹ Interview with Bozidar Spasic, 16/09/01. Many transactions were dealt with through the Bosnian embassy in Vienna. According to press releases, Osama Bin Laden received a Bosnian passport there. See: 'Bin Laden was granted Bosnian passport', *Agence France-Presse*, 24/09/99.

⁷⁸² John Pomfret, 'How Bosnia's Muslims Dodged Arms Embargo', *The Washington Post*, 22/09/96 and 'Background on group', *Agence France-Presse*, 22/09/96.

⁷⁸³ MoD, *MIS/CO*. Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 10/94, 15/02/94. Further: 'UNPROFOR sells Weapons', in *Strategic Policy*, Vol. XXII (1994), pp. 11-12, and 'Kriminalci u plavom', *Borba*, 06/01/95.

⁷⁸⁴ Confidential interview (34).

⁷⁸⁵ MoD, *MIS/CO*. Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 66/93, 24/11/93 and Carl Bildt, *Peace Journey*, p. 70.

⁷⁸⁶ Interview with Momir Nikolic, 20/10/00.

The choice of Tuzla

Various European countries meanwhile became increasingly suspicious concerning the expanding arms supplies to Croatia and Bosnia. Little credence was attached to the assertions that Washington had nothing to do with them. There was a suspicion that one of the US intelligence services had received the green light to set up an operation for which assent was probably sought and obtained in from the Republicans.⁷⁸⁷ Tuzla was chosen for the supplies to East Bosnia. This was logical. *Dubrava* airport had been in use as a Yugoslav Army military airfield until 18 May 1992. The airfield had better facilities than Sarajevo, it was at a lower altitude (237 metres) and climatologically it was a better location, which assured the pilots of better visibility during takeoff and landing.

Tuzla Air Base (TAB) was one of the largest airfields and the most important airfield in East Bosnia. It was said to have been used by the ABiH for covert operations with helicopters around Srebrenica.⁷⁸⁸ Another reason for using Tuzla was probably that the transit of arms to the ABiH in East Bosnia, which were delivered via Croatia or to Visoko airfield, presented too many problems. TAB was leased by UNPROFOR from the Bosnian government on 7 March 1994. Akashi opened it on 22 March, but after 39 flights the airfield was closed again on 31 May 1994 because the VRS were unwilling to guarantee the safety of the aircraft.⁷⁸⁹

The UN controlled the largest runway (Tuzla Main) which was 2300 metres long and 8 km to the southeast of Tuzla, but exercised no control over the other three runways, which were not close to each other. The most important of them was without doubt the Tuzla Highway Strip, approximately 6 km to the south of Tuzla Main. This runway was approximately 1800 metres long. Tuzla East was approximately 1.5 km further to the east of the Highway Strip, and was a grass track approximately 1100 metres long. Finally, there was Tuzla West with a runway of approximately 2 km, but, to all appearances, this could not be used because there were large piles of earth on it. As it happens, an UNPROFOR worker stated that Tuzla West certainly could be used: according to him the piles of earth were removed after dark, so that small aircraft could land and the arms could be transported further.⁷⁹⁰ The advantage of using the three runways other than Tuzla Main was that they were out of sight of the VRS, and also outside VRS artillery range.⁷⁹¹

The equipment that was delivered in Tuzla consisted mainly of quick-firing weapons, ammunition, uniforms, helmets, new anti-tank weapons and Stingers. The archive of the 281st ABiH Brigade in Zepa reveals that much military equipment was delivered from Tuzla by helicopter for Zepa, largely to be forwarded in transit from there to Srebrenica. The ABiH commander of Zepa reported, for example, that on 14 February 1995, a few days after the first observations of the Black Flights, forty machine guns were transported by air, some of which were to be brought to Srebrenica. The VRS did fire on the helicopter, but without result. At the same time, the flight delivered DM 308,000. The commander of Zepa did not know what he was supposed to do with this money, but he assumed that it was destined for the 28th Division in Srebrenica.

Two days later, on 16 February, an ABiH helicopter was hit by VRS anti-aircraft fire.⁷⁹² The increasing number of helicopter flights with military equipment not only to Zepa, but also directly to Srebrenica, led to an order from the Drina Corps to various VRS units to shoot down these aircraft.⁷⁹³ In mid April, the ABiH commander of Zepa gave a summary of what he had received by air and what had been forwarded in transit to Srebrenica. Zepa had received the following items: 23,500 7.62 mm calibre cartridges, 15 mines (82 mm), 25 mines (60 mm), 4 TF-8 rockets, 34 B.R. M-93 machine guns

⁷⁸⁷ Confidential interview (11).

⁷⁸⁸ 'Tanjug details Muslim 'secret operation' to down air-drop planes', *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 01/03/93.

⁷⁸⁹ Confidential collection (12), Memo from Le Hardy to Brigadier Ridderstad, 'Tuzla Airbase - The Rationale', 29/01/95.

⁷⁹⁰ Confidential interview (45).

⁷⁹¹ Confidential collection (12), 'Reports of Possible Fixed Wing Flight Activity at Tuzla 10/12 Feb 95', 18/02/95.

⁷⁹² NIOD, *Coll. Ivanisovic*. Avdo Palic, Zepa to Enver Hadzihasanovic, Sarajevo, Broj:08--20-114/95, 11/02/95, Broj:08--20-129/95, 14/02/95, Broj:08--20-140/95, 16/02/95 and Broj:08--20-141/95, 16/02/95.

⁷⁹³ ICTY, Krstic Trial, Order Supreme Command of the Drina Corps, no. 08/8-15, 25/02/95.

and 1 rocket launcher for a TF-8 rocket. The total forwarded in transit to Srebrenica was 50,000 7.62 mm calibre cartridges, 35 mines (82 mm), 75 mines (60 mm), 90 B.R. M-93 machine guns, 123 uniforms and 124 pairs of shoes. A computer and a printer were also delivered to Srebrenica.⁷⁹⁴

Evidence of flights to Tuzla Air Base

Nothing was done with Moldestad's report on 10 February 1995 that he had heard a Hercules C-130 on Tuzla Air Base. The Norwegian logistics battalion (known as NorLogBat), 4 kilometres from Tuzla West, also reported observing three unidentified aircraft: one cargo aircraft and two jet fighters. The cargo aircraft was described as a four-engine Hercules; the two fighters each flew close to either of the wing tips of the C-130 and left the area immediately after the Hercules has started the final approach. This was a familiar flying trick, because it created the impression on the radar screen that only one aircraft was in the air. Independently of this, Norwegian medical personnel (of NorMedCoy) reported seeing the same C-130. Shortly afterwards, observers heard how the jet fighters skimmed over Tuzla. At 18.45 hours a report arrived that all the aircraft had left again. These events were repeated on 12 February.⁷⁹⁵ After these observations, the Norwegian commander drafted an official report (*Vakrapport*), which summarized all the reports of NorLogBat and NorMedCoy, including the observations of 10 and 12 February. The NorMedCoy observer was extremely emphatic: he had seen the Hercules.⁷⁹⁶

Not only did the Norwegians draft a report, but the headquarters of Sector North East also immediately sent a report to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo. The author was Lieutenant Colonel C.A. Le Hardy. It started with: 'this is a sensitive report.' The report set out the events: immediately after the first reports, a patrol was sent to investigate. It arrived on the spot one and a half hours later. This patrol was fired on near the Tuzla Highway Strip, and then surrounded by thirty ABiH soldiers. The patrol saw five trucks near a few old hangars,⁷⁹⁷ but were forced to leave without being able to observe an aircraft or inspect any possible military cargo. There was nothing strange about the fact that the patrol did not see a Hercules: the aircraft left again within barely one hour at 18.45 hours, while the patrol only arrived at 19.30 hours. The ABiH had sufficient time to hide, camouflage, or remove in trucks the delivered arms and military goods.

In fact, the Hercules would not actually have had to land: according to Le Hardy, it was possible that a 'para-extraction delivery method' was used, which is a way of performing 'low-altitude extraction of cargo airdrops'. In this method, 'kickers' at the ends of the cargo holds push the load out of the aircraft at extremely low altitude. Le Hardy was otherwise unable to confirm this. Tuzla Main was certainly not used in this operation.⁷⁹⁸ Le Hardy considered the risks attached to the operation to be relatively high, and therefore the value of the load was probably considerable. There was a suspicion that what was delivered was not so much heavy arms but rather communication equipment.⁷⁹⁹ Heavy arms may well have been urgently needed, but this risk, in view of the limited quantity that a Hercules was able to transport, would not have been justified. Furthermore Le Hardy pointed out that Moldestad's and the Norwegian sentry's statements were made in quick succession, so that there could be no question that they were both mistaken.

The Norwegian sentry, Lieutenant Saeterdal, was an observer with a great deal of experience, which he had gained with UNIFIL in Lebanon.⁸⁰⁰ The staff temporarily attached to the Fifth Allied

⁷⁹⁴ NIOD, *Coll. Ivanisovic*. Avdo Palic, Zepa to Asima Dzambasocicha, Sarajevo, Broj:08--20-454/95, 19/04/95.

⁷⁹⁵ Confidential collection (12), 'Reports of Possible Fixed Wing Flight Activity at Tuzla 10/12 Feb 95', 18/02/95.

⁷⁹⁶ Confidential collection (12), Letter from the AftenPosten editorial team to BBC Panorama, 03/10/95 plus Norwegian Vaktrapporten.

⁷⁹⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, *Box 139*. G-2 HQ UNPROFOR, Daily Info Summary, 11/02/95.

⁷⁹⁸ Interview with Hans Holm, 08/03/99.

⁷⁹⁹ Confidential interview (43).

⁸⁰⁰ O'shea, *Crisis at Bihać*, p. 158.

Tactical Air Force in Tuzla were unaware of any flight, and they were 'as mystified as the rest of us. There is apparently a high level of consternation at the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force because of this incident', according to Le Hardy. According to him, it was still possible that an aircraft had landed on the Tuzla Highway Strip, without being noticed by nearby OPs, but it was deemed impossible for a Hercules to leave without the OPs noticing. The noise produced by the jet fighters could well have drowned out that of the C-130.⁸⁰¹

This assessment was adopted by the French Force Commander, General De Lapresle. He reported to Annan that on both 10 and 12 February, a Hercules, escorted by two fighter aircraft, had made a landing. De Lapresle had NATO aircraft sent to Tuzla, which were able to find nothing above Tuzla, however, but then they did arrive three hours later. According to De Lapresle, their departure was repeatedly postponed, but in principle the aircraft could have been flying above Tuzla within 10 to 30 minutes. De Lapresle's conclusion was very plain: according to him it involved 'two clandestine resupplies' probably with 'high value/high technology such as new generation anti-tank guided missiles or perhaps surface-to-air-missiles'. Because, however, two deliveries would have been insufficient, from a military point of view, substantially to strengthen the ABiH, the French general expected more supplies by secret flights to be on the cards.⁸⁰²

On 16 February, another C-130 was observed, and in the following days two more. A British daily newspaper even made a connection with a visit by Holbrooke to Turkey in mid February.⁸⁰³ This was not the end of the matter, because a further four flights were observed, where one aircraft was seen by a British UNMO using night vision binoculars.⁸⁰⁴ On 17 and 19 February, UN personnel made sixteen reports of helicopters that landed on Tuzla Air Base. Yet another cargo aircraft was said to have landed, or to have ejected its load at low altitude. Norwegian UNPROFOR patrols were consistently hindered by the ABiH. They did observe a few days later that the ABiH were wearing new American-manufactured uniforms.⁸⁰⁵ UNPROFOR soldiers established that a convoy of approximately 75 trucks left the airfield in the evening.

Furthermore UNPROFOR observers saw how on 17 February, late in the evening, the head of the Bosnian Air Force suddenly showed up at Tuzla Air Base. No explanation was forthcoming from the Bosnian side. NATO deployed aircraft on that day, but they lost radar contact.⁸⁰⁶ It was still remarkable that the Black Flights were able to enter Bosnian air space and not be detected by the NATO AWACS over the Adriatic Sea. Le Hardy paid no attention to this: according to his report, no AWACS aircraft of NATO member states other than the United States were flying on that night. According to him there were two possible explanations: 'Either the mission was carried out by powers capable of neutralizing the radar surveillance or it was made with the consent and support of the authorities commanding the assets in the area at the time.'⁸⁰⁷ The clandestine flights almost always seem to have taken place on nights either when no AWACS were in the air, or AWACS aircraft with US crews. On the night in question, there were only US aircraft (Grumman E-2c Hawkeye Radar and F/A-18C Hornets), which have a much smaller radar range. This allowed the Black Flights to fly to Tuzla unhindered. 'It is like Nelson putting the telescope to his blind eye and saying: "I see no ships"', according to a British researcher.⁸⁰⁸

On Friday 13 February, the daily overview report of UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo stated that there was 'continued evidence of [A]BiH arms re-supply activity'. Since early January 1995,

⁸⁰¹ Confidential collection (12), Report Le Hardy to MA Commander, BHC, 'Incident at TAB', 13/02/95.

⁸⁰² Confidential collection (12), De Lapresle to Akashi, Zagreb, UNPROFOR Z-0257, Unidentified fixed wing aircraft flight in Tuzla (4p), 14/02/95 and Confidential interview (67).

⁸⁰³ Richard Dowden & John Carlin, 'US secretly supplying weapons to Bosnia', *The Independent*, 26/02/95.

⁸⁰⁴ UNGE, UNPROFOR, *Box 139*, G-2 HQ UNPROFOR, Daily Info Summary, 11/02/95.

⁸⁰⁵ Interview with N.E. Petersen, 29/10/99.

⁸⁰⁶ Confidential collection (12), J2 Report Tuzla Air Activity, 17/02/95.

⁸⁰⁷ Confidential collection (12), Report Le Hardy to MA Commander, BHC, 'Incident at TAB', 13/02/95 and UNGE, UNPROFOR, *Box 124*. De Lapresle to Annan, Z-268, 15/02/95.

⁸⁰⁸ Confidential interview (67).

the convoys from Croatia with arms and ammunition had increased considerably, and in other parts of Bosnia the same observations were made.⁸⁰⁹ In the spring, Dutchbat would also establish that the ABiH received new arms from Tuzla and that training was being stepped up.⁸¹⁰ This news spread rapidly, and in due course this could only have negative consequences for the clandestine arms supplies to the ABiH. The American pressure on Le Hardy was apparently increased, because he 'became involved in an acrimonious exchange with Americans on this subject'.⁸¹¹ Under apparent American pressure (see below in this chapter) he produced a second report on 18 February in which he stated that his earlier report was incorrect and he made recommendations for achieving more accurate reporting from then on. According to him, no one had seen the aircraft - which was not true - but only heard it. He also made a number of suggestions so that the Norwegians could report better.⁸¹² This second report is remarkable: on the one hand Le Hardy states that all alleged observations of the Hercules were wrong, but at the same time he makes a wide variety of recommendations, including stationing a Danish tank on Tuzla Air Base, to control the Highway Strip and to occupy more favourable positions, to improve the chance of actual 'hard' observations.

On the question regarding Black Flights, the commander of the Norwegian battalion, Colonel G. Arlefalk, stated that his soldiers sometimes reported six to eight aircraft to him, approaching from the direction of Brcko. The aircraft flew low and mostly without lights. One night, Arlefalk himself saw a Hercules approximately at 100 metres above his head at 03.00 hours. Arlefalk himself had flown in a C-130 on several occasions, and its sound and silhouette were unmistakable according to him. A temporary observation post was set up to gain a better view of these flights. In response to one of his reports, he was told that they had been AWACS, and moreover that they had been much further to the east: 'all the soldiers laughed themselves silly when that answer came', Arlefalk said.⁸¹³ It is clear, and Le Hardy's second report in no way detracts from this, that aircraft were observed above Tuzla in February that landed on the Highway Strip or ejected their load from a very low altitude. It was abundantly clear to all parties that something was going on.⁸¹⁴ There were even aerial photographs of crates on the Highway Strip.⁸¹⁵

Awareness of the Black Flights under the Bosnian Serbs

All in all, sufficient evidence exists that these flights took place. However, little protest was forthcoming from the Bosnian Serbs, and the question is why that was the case. No definite answer was obtained to this question.⁸¹⁶ The VRS was in any case well aware of these flights. On 13 and 24 February 1995, General Mladic sent letters to General De Lapresle in Zagreb and to General Smith in Sarajevo. According to Mladic, aircraft had landed in Tuzla on these days, escorted by two jet fighters, and they had delivered arms and ammunition. Mladic complained that this had happened in front of the eyes of UNPROFOR, but they had not intervened. He accused UNPROFOR of bias and stated that from now on he could no longer guarantee the safety of NATO aircraft in the air space.⁸¹⁷ On 5 March 1995, Mladic again complained to General Smith about the flights.⁸¹⁸

It was also possible to deduce that the VRS was well aware of the state of affairs from an interview with the former Minister of Information of the Republika Srpska, Miroslav Toholj. He was minister from 1993-1996 and asserted that the Bosnian Serb regime in Pale realized all too well that the

⁸⁰⁹ O'shea, *Crisis at Bihac*, p. 157.

⁸¹⁰ For example: MoD, *Sitreps*. Milinfo DutchBat, 25/04/95, 02/05/95, 08/05/95 and 14/05/95.

⁸¹¹ Simms, *Unfinest Hour*, p. 202.

⁸¹² Confidential collection (12), Colonel Le Hardy to NordBat, no. 3471.3/TAB/008, 18/02/95.

⁸¹³ Interview with G. Arlefalk, 18/05/00.

⁸¹⁴ For example: 'Muslimanski 'fantomi' u Tuzla', *Borba*, 01/03/95.

⁸¹⁵ Confidential interview (31) and confidential information (32).

⁸¹⁶ Confidential interview (67).

⁸¹⁷ O'shea, *Crisis at Bihac*, p. 161. See also: interview with Eric-Lars Wahlgren, 03/06/99.

⁸¹⁸ UNNY, DPKO. Akashi to Annan, Z-363, 06/03/95.

military and other assistance from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Malaysia and other Islamic countries would eventually enable the ABiH to conduct a long war. Toholj asserted that Pale knew of the flights of the C-130s - according to him not American but Turkish Hercules aircraft, with an element of 'logistics patronage' from the United States. According to Toholj, the arms were transported from Tuzla to Srebrenica and Zepa.⁸¹⁹ The VRS would not have dared to fire on these aircraft for fear that this would be interpreted and presented by the media in the West as an attack on an aircraft with humanitarian relief goods. Attempts had been made, however, to take photos of the Turkish C-130s, but without success.⁸²⁰

A problem with Toholj's statements is that it is unclear whether the former minister already knew this in March 1995 or that he found out with the passing of the years through the many publications. However, the fact that Mladic already complained about the matter in writing at an early stage is a clear indication that Pale already knew about the Black Flights in March 1995. Another indication is that after the first flight the VRS immediately moved its anti-aircraft missiles (SAMs) from Han Pijesak to a position that was the closest to Tuzla Air Base.⁸²¹

There are indications that the Bosnian Serbs turned a blind eye to the Black Flights, for example in Bihac, where similar flights took place. This siege made the situation for ABiH General Dudakovic's 5th Corps in the Bihac enclave almost untenable. He told General Rupert Smith so via the Joint Commission Observers. One night, the Danish General Helsø - the UNPROFOR commander in the Bihac enclave - heard the sound of propellers on a gravel airstrip in the enclave. He recognized the specific sound of the four propellers of the Hercules C-130, because they kept turning. The Krajina Serbs fired a number of shells, but they all fell next to the runway, and this while the Krajina Serbs at other times fired very accurately with their artillery. This was, according to General Helsø, a warning along the lines of: 'we know what you are up to, but don't go too far'. This is an indication that the only reason for the VRS to permit the flights was that the VRS did not want the Americans against them. Helsø wanted, like his colleagues in Tuzla, to start an investigation, but he and his patrol were also obstructed by ABiH soldiers. In the following days it became clear that American-manufactured arms, uniforms and helmets had arrived.⁸²²

The Netherlands MIS also knew as early as 1992 of the existence of supplies transported by smaller aircraft from Cazin airfield to the north of Bihac.⁸²³ From 1992 onwards, daily helicopter flights were made into Bihac. East European pilots were paid \$ 5000 per trip by the Bosnian Army's 5th Corps. In August 1994, a large Antonov An-26 transport aircraft, owned by a Ukrainian air charter, was shot down by the VRS and the crew killed while flying from Croatia to Bihac.⁸²⁴ There were also Black Flights to the besieged Muslims in the Maglaj. According to a former SAS officer the flights were executed by C-130s and the CIA was involved. These flights departed from a US Air Force base in Germany, like Ramstein or Rhein-Main.⁸²⁵ However, the reliability of some Russian and East European pilots was not always that great. In the spring of 1995 a helicopter pilot flying amongst others 150.000 Deutschmarks into the enclave Gorazde disappeared with his cargo.⁸²⁶ The many independent observations of UN observers who had night vision equipment were included in Le Hardy's very first report, which was sent by means of a Code Cable from De Lapresle to the UN headquarters in New York. It was time for damage control on the American side.

⁸¹⁹ Interview with Miroslav Toholj, 14/12/99.

⁸²⁰ Interview with Milovan Milutinovic, 20-22/03/00.

⁸²¹ Confidential interview (31).

⁸²² Interview with K. Helsø, 28/11/99. See also: Confidential collection (4), UNMO HQ Bihac and UNMO HQ BHC, 01/08/94.

⁸²³ MoD, *MIS/CO, No. 2721*, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 94/92, 07/12/92.

⁸²⁴ Ripley, *Mercenaries*, p. 59.

⁸²⁵ Spence, *All Necessary Measures*, pp. 99 - 104.

⁸²⁶ Ripley, *Mercenaries*, p. 59.

The attempt at a cover-up

As mentioned above, Le Hardy's report covered the Black Flights, and therefore had to be rendered 'harmless'. For this reason, the Americans were said to have exerted pressure on Force Commander De Lapresle to withdraw his earlier report to New York, in which he reported that, among other things, advanced military technology had been delivered, and that the origin of the military cargo and the cargo aircraft themselves was unknown.⁸²⁷ A British researcher stated that this could only mean that American military experts must also have flown to Bosnia to train the ABiH to handle this equipment. The Americans did not want this to be revealed, and they therefore wanted De Lapresle to issue a statement to the effect that 'no unauthorized air activity occurred at the Tuzla airfield' on 10 and 12 February.⁸²⁸

The morning briefing of South European NATO Command (AFSOUTH) on 16 February paid attention to the flights. According to these reports, there was no question of actual observation of Hercules aircraft (the Norwegian observations were therefore simply denied) and the escort aircraft mentioned were involved in Close Air Support training, according to the report. The Dutch liaison officer, Colonel J. Beks, considered this to be a strange moment for such training. He had 'picked up' a letter from Mladic to Smith and he found it remarkable that Mladic had already protested on 13 February. Beks interpreted the instructions and overreaction of American officers involved as an attempt to cover up the Special Operations activities, in the context of arms supplies to the ABiH. According to Beks, this was not to the benefit of NATO cohesion, and could even jeopardize the implementation of Deny Flight. Beks made the following comparison: 'A defensive player on the football team has no trouble with occasionally (...) letting a ball through.'⁸²⁹

The actual cover-up started with the 'official report' of Colonel Douglas J. Richardson of the US Air Force. He spoke to Moldestad, and made it clear to him that he had not used night vision binoculars, had not seen a cargo aircraft, and had only heard sounds that resembled the engines of a C-130. According to Richardson, Moldestad then started to have doubts. Richardson also made clear to him that on that night NATO jet fighters were in the process of a Close Air Support training mission over Tuzla, between 20.00 and 05.00 hours. According to Richardson, these had been under UNPROFOR control. Richardson came to the conclusion that Moldestad had made a mistake, and that he could have seen neither any NATO aircraft nor a C-130.⁸³⁰ Unfortunately for Richardson, Moldestad's observation was at 17.45 hours, well before 20.00 hours. The question now is what was really going on.

According to the American Colonel Timothy C. Jones, two Danish Forward Air Controllers were working with two A-6 E jet fighters, which were exercising at low altitude over Tuzla. According to him, two F-18 jet fighters were also flying to the south of Tuzla. Besides the two Danes, according to Jones, no one else knew that NATO aircraft were operating in this region, which is rather unlikely: Le Hardy's earlier report suggests that Norwegians in Tuzla also saw them. They had made subsequent enquiries in Sarajevo, but neither had Bosnia-Herzegovina Command been informed of Close Air Support training. Sarajevo had therefore not responded to the messages from Tuzla.⁸³¹

Jones denied furthermore that the UN observers used night vision binoculars. This was actually incorrect: a British SAS soldier had made an observation with such binoculars. In October 1994 the Force Commander had already been pointed out blind spots in the No Fly Zone that were apparently inevitable. It was decided then to issue night vision binoculars to observers in the areas around Tuzla.⁸³² The use of night vision binoculars was also confirmed in the Senior Staff Meeting with Akashi on 13

⁸²⁷ O'shea, *Crisis at Bihac*, p. 157.

⁸²⁸ Confidential interview (67).

⁸²⁹ MoD, DCBC, Fax to Col. Van Veen, 16/02/95.

⁸³⁰ Confidential collection (12), Memo for the Record by Colonel USAF Douglas Richardson, Tuzla 'sitings', 17/02/95.

⁸³¹ Confidential collection (12), Report Le Hardy to MA Commander, BHC, 'Incident at TAB', 13/02/95.

⁸³² UNNY, DPKO, File #81302, FC Eyes Only, Point Paper No Fly Zone Monitoring, 23/10/94.

February 1995.⁸³³ According to Jones, neither were any visual observations made. This too conflicted with Le Hardy's report, which stated that various people had seen the wingtip lights.

Jones pointed out further that a Jordanian unit that was stationed to the east of the Tuzla West runway had observed nothing. This was not so strange, because the Hercules had landed or dropped its load on the Tuzla Highway Strip, which was approximately 10 km away from the Jordanian unit. And as Le Hardy had already indicated in his report, it was deemed possible that a large aircraft had landed on the Tuzla Highway Strip without nearby OPs noticing, let alone the Jordanian unit 10 kilometres away. According to Jones, the aircraft noises could be explained easily. This was 'serbian airline traffic.' The flight movements and lights that had been seen were 'consistent with the normal civilian airline traffic patterns in Serbian airspace', according to Jones. This statement is extremely implausible: there was actually a No Fly Zone above Bosnia, and Belgrade was far away from Tuzla. It is then illogical for regular Serbian commercial traffic to be flying so low, at a height of 300 metres over Tuzla. If that had been true, the ABiH could have fired at those aircraft. Jones did not explain this, however.

The sound of the cargo aircraft that different witnesses had heard could be explained, according to Jones, because they had been two A-6 E jet fighters. This too is peculiar, because the noise of an aircraft with four propellers is unmistakably different from that of a jet fighter. It was not even necessary to be a practised observer to notice this such as the people who had seen and heard the Hercules actually were.

Other evidence for the Black Flight was that an UNPROFOR patrol had been fired on by the ABiH when it wanted to inspect the Tuzla Highway Strip, but Jones apparently did not find this unusual. He concluded that 'there was no evidence that an aircraft landed or delivered any supplies by air at the Tuzla airfields'. This report was offered as a joint NATO/UNPROFOR investigation to the highest NATO authority in the region, Admiral Smith, to Force Commander De Lapresle and to Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose. According to Jones, all the commanders agreed with the conclusion: there was no evidence that on 10 and 12 February 'unauthorized air activity' had taken place over Tuzla.⁸³⁴ An indication that the report left much to be desired was that a senior French military official even spoke of a forged NATO report.⁸³⁵ However, the document was sent to the UN in New York and the Americans could be satisfied.

The response from the UN in New York

Anyone who thought that the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations would easily accept the reassuring reports was in for a surprise. On 17 February, Akashi reported that there were discrepancies between the UNPROFOR and NATO reports.⁸³⁶ On 21 February, the political adviser to Boutros-Ghali, Ghinmaya Gharekhan, drafted a secret memo for Under-Secretary-General Annan, in which he indicated that the affair would come before the Security Council before too long: 'For us to tell the Security Council that there was no evidence to suggest any unauthorized air activity would be tantamount to saying that UNPROFOR should, in effect, stop reporting any air activity.' Force Commander De Lapresle had recently established helicopter flights from Zagreb to the Bihac, and Gharekhan wondered rhetorically whether this would also be retracted.

Gharekhan criticized the official NATO report and the explanations 'such as there were'. He wanted to know what that so-called regular commercial Serbian airline traffic had been.⁸³⁷ Two days later, Akashi told Annan that the investigation was deadlocked: he had discussed the affair with the

⁸³³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, *Box 124*. Akashi to Annan, Z-284, 17/02/95 and FC, File #88040, SRSG Meetings, Senior Staff Meeting, 13/02/95. Cf. Harald Doornbos, 'Groene spionnen tussen blauwhelmen' ('Green spies between blue helmets'), *De Stem*, 10/05/95.

⁸³⁴ Confidential collection (12), 'Reports of Possible Fixed Wing Flight Activity at Tuzla 10/12 Feb 95', 18/02/95.

⁸³⁵ Confidential interview (1).

⁸³⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, *Box 124*, Akashi to Annan, Z-284, 17/02/95.

⁸³⁷ MoD, *CRST*. Annan to Akashi, 566, 22/02/95 and O'shea, *Crisis at Bihac*, p. 158.

Force Commander and with General Smith, and the conclusion was that the investigation would not yield any satisfactory answers. The NATO report had meanwhile been modified somewhat to bring it more in line with the UNPROFOR findings. It now stated that there was no 'conclusive evidence' of the flights.

It was difficult to maintain, however, that nothing at all had happened.⁸³⁸ The later Deputy Head of the MIS, Colonel Bokhoven, confirmed that during his time at UNPROFOR he had also heard of the Black Flights. According to him it was clear that they were American or Turkish aircraft.⁸³⁹ Another Dutch officer who had dealings with the Black Flights was Brigadier J.W. Brinkman, who was Chief of Staff at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command from September 1994 to March 1995. Brinkman never found any evidence for the clandestine American support to the ABiH, but neither had he ever looked for any. He did observe that within six months of the supplies in February and March, the ABiH's appearance improved considerably: they were wearing real uniforms and carrying better arms. Brinkman heard from local UN commanders that aircraft of unknown origin landed in Tuzla. They were C-130s, protected by fighter planes, the signatures of which bore a suspicious resemblance to those of NATO.⁸⁴⁰ Another Dutch staff officer at Bosnia Hercegovina Command, Lieutenant Colonel De Ruiter, had also heard that supply flights had taken place. Whether the Americans were behind them was unclear to him, because there were no identifying markings on the aircraft. The supplies also went via third party countries, 'but whatever, there were landings', according to De Ruiter.⁸⁴¹

On 23 February, Annan sent a 'most immediate code cable' to Akashi. He referred to De Lapresle's report and to the Moldestad's statement. The Norwegian stated in the 'joint' NATO/UNPROFOR report that he had not seen a C-130, but only heard one. De Lapresle's earlier report, however, stated that he definitely had seen a transport-type aircraft, and had also made an analysis of the flight pattern. Annan wanted to know whether Moldestad had really been interviewed by the researchers, and Annan also pointed out that the commercial airline traffic to Belgrade usually closed after 16.00 hours. He was prepared to agree to the joint report provided the outstanding questions and identified contradictions were resolved, and if it could be clearly indicated that the UNPROFOR report was drawn up professionally and in good faith in the first instance, but that new facts had emerged after a NATO investigation that were not available at the time of the earlier investigation.⁸⁴²

This was not the only message that reached Akashi from New York. On 24 February he was told through his adviser, Jesudas Bell, that UN headquarters through Shashi Tharoor was 'extremely upset' about the clandestine arms flights reports. Meanwhile, more reports had arrived from UNPROFOR soldiers, who had seen aircraft over Tuzla on 17, 22 and 23 February. Tharoor stated that New York was outraged at an investigation, described as a joint NATO/UNPROFOR investigation, that contained so many unanswered questions. If this had been a joint investigation to which UNPROFOR had linked its name, then the Norwegian report and the commercial airline traffic in Serbian airspace should also have been investigated. On this last matter, UNPROFOR should have contacted the Serbian authorities through its office in Belgrade and asked them to confirm the commercial airline traffic, according to Tharoor.

Tharoor added that UNPROFOR had put its name to an official investigation report that on the one hand contradicted the UNPROFOR reports and on the other hand provided no conclusive evidence why there were such divergent final conclusions. Tharoor felt that the document seriously undermined the credibility of UNPROFOR and the UN secretariat. Various delegations had already asked questions because the UNPROFOR reporting on the incidents was so contradictory and

⁸³⁸ UNGE, *UNPROFOR, Box 124*. Akashi to Annan, Z-310, 23/02/95. For a similar ECMM analysis: NMFA, *DDI/DEU*, Paris Coreau, 14/03/95.

⁸³⁹ Interview with H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01.

⁸⁴⁰ Interview with J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99.

⁸⁴¹ Interview with A. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

⁸⁴² Confidential collection (12), Annan to Akashi, no. 578, 23/02/95.

sometimes incorrect. Adding new building blocks would only further fuel this debate, Tharoor predicted. His preference was therefore for a separate investigation and a supplementary NATO report, to which UNPROFOR would only attach its name if it incorporated its earlier information: this would benefit UNPROFOR's credibility. Bell told Akashi that General Smith was aware of this view. Meanwhile, a variety of rumours was circulating in the press. If a request was made for comment, New York would state that the report had been received but that a more detailed explanation had been requested.⁸⁴³

Akashi responded several days later. According to him, the NATO investigation team had not heard all the witnesses, because a few of them were on leave. Moldestad was interviewed by telephone. Akashi was disappointed with 'the lack of rigorous documentation in the NATO team's report, and its failure to substantiate contradictions with original UNPROFOR observations'. He had decided not to put NATO under further pressure by producing a more reliable report, but he had agreed with the sentence 'We agree that the United Nations should not put its name to a report that falls short of achievable standards', which represented General Smith's conclusion.⁸⁴⁴ The new Force Commander, Janvier later referred back to the matter in a curious way: at the beginning of March he told Annan that the Hercules aircraft had actually been helicopters.⁸⁴⁵

The consequences of the reports about the Black Flights

The Black Flights led to tense relations between the United States, the UN and NATO. According to SACEUR, General George Joulwan, Islamic countries were involved in the supplies to the ABiH.⁸⁴⁶ The commander of the southern NATO command, Admiral Leighton Smith, promised Janvier and Akashi that he would resign if it should appear that American uniformed military personnel were involved in this operation, and wanted a thorough investigation. It had become known to him that on the day in question, 10 February, indeed no AWAC aircraft had flown above Bosnia. E-2 jet fighters from US aircraft carriers had taken over this task at the last moment. However, these fighters do not have the same capabilities as AWACS. So, it is no surprise that they spotted nothing. This then raises the question as to the nationality of the transport aircraft: Smith wanted to know if perhaps they were Turkish aircraft. Some British officials told him later that in Gorazde too the ABiH had been provided with new uniforms.⁸⁴⁷ The Bosnian Minister Toholj also claimed that the entire affair led to tense relations within the UN. Akashi's spokesman, Williams, had told him so. He hinted that NATO did not want UNPROFOR to reveal the secret supplies to Tuzla.⁸⁴⁸

It was not only in New York that this was a sensitive matter. The British Foreign Secretary, Hurd, also took the matter seriously. According to Lord Owen, he informed various embassies by telegram that the United Kingdom certainly was not involved in a cover-up of the Black Flights. Hurd stated that the flights were observed on 10, 12 and 23 February; meanwhile, according to Hurd, it was also known that there had been many more flights. Hurd reported further that one of the observers was a British officer who was at the head of the Operations Section in Sector North East, referring to Le Hardy. Hurd referred to Jones's report and then established that neither NATO, nor UNPROFOR had been able to produce a complete and definitive report. He therefore deemed it possible that these clandestine flights had taken place, although there was still no hard evidence.

According to Hurd, it had now been decided that both the UN and NATO should end this affair. NATO had decided not to investigate the affair further as long as no new facts appeared on the table. However, Hurd pointed out that Moscow did want further investigation, and Paris was also

⁸⁴³ Confidential collection (12), Memo Jesudas Bell to Akashi, 24/02/95.

⁸⁴⁴ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 124, Akashi to Annan, Z-328, 27/02/95.

⁸⁴⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 139, Janvier to Annan, Z-350, 02/03/95.

⁸⁴⁶ Interview with George Joulwan, 08/06/0.

⁸⁴⁷ Interview with Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

⁸⁴⁸ Interview with Miroslav Toholj, 14/12/99.

urging it, because they suspected that the United States was behind the clandestine operation, even if British diplomats in Washington were told repeatedly that this was not the case. The US ambassador in London made a special trip to the Foreign Office to forcefully deny this.⁸⁴⁹

The Black Flights were also raised for discussion at a summit between the US Secretary of Defense and the Ministers of Defence of the United Kingdom, France and Germany. They discussed the situation in Bosnia from 3 to 5 March 1995 in Key West (Florida). There was a comprehensive discussion of the options of direct support to the Bosnian government and a continuation of the UNPROFOR presence. At the end of the meeting, the American Secretary of Defense, Perry, made a statement. He had apparently been asked by the other ministers about the secret arms supplies to Bosnia. Perry stated for the record that 'if any aircraft were landing at Tuzla, they were neither US aircraft nor arranged by the US'.⁸⁵⁰ This in turn raised the question of whether Perry actually knew nothing, or that he was being rather economical with the truth.

In any case, earlier assertions in the NATO/UNPROFOR report to the effect that 'all those involved' had been heard, were incorrect. The British journalist Nik Gowing tracked down several Norwegian witnesses to the Black Flights, who stated that they had never spoken with Jones or his team. They declared in front of the camera that they had seen and heard an aircraft with propellers. Furthermore, a Norwegian relief worker had met two Americans in plain clothes in a warehouse in Tuzla, who were in the process of unpacking arms, apparently from the Black Flights. A Norwegian patrol that had gone to investigate on the night in question, had also clearly seen and heard a Hercules. Neither had the members of this patrol been questioned. The same was true for the Norwegian sentry who was one of the first to have heard and seen the Hercules.⁸⁵¹

Later, one of the most important Norwegian witnesses, Moldestad, would be taken aside by three American officers. They took him to a balcony on the fifth floor of a hotel in Zagreb, and made clear to him that if he stuck to his account and said any more on the subject, things could get messy for him. After reports on British television and articles in the press, journalists were also put under pressure by the American embassy in London. They heard all manner of threats. The embassy was said to have been acting on the instructions of the State Department.⁸⁵² Flights were reported into April, also by the Netherlands MIS.⁸⁵³ The question remains, of course, whether American aircraft were actually involved in the clandestine flights to Tuzla.

Who flew to Tuzla?

Former CIA director, Woolsey, was not aware of the Black Flights. Of course, these took place after his departure from the CIA. If the CIA had been involved with the flights to Tuzla, then, according to him, a written presidential finding would have had to have been issued for such a covert operation or for the ones that the CIA helps with.⁸⁵⁴ The affair was also examined by the US Senate. The flights had been investigated at an earlier stage by the Pentagon, as part of a NATO investigation and of an investigation for US policymakers. After studying the Pentagon investigation report, the Senate found in November 1996 that the investigation was scantily documented. It came to the conclusion that no activities had taken place that pointed to supplies of arms and there was no American involvement. The Senate was able to peruse documents of the Department of Defense and the CIA, to conduct interviews, but

⁸⁴⁹ Interview with Lord Owen, 27/06/01 and confidential information (33).

⁸⁵⁰ Confidential information (34).

⁸⁵¹ See also: Press release of *Channel 4 News*, 17/11/95 and ITN documentary by Nik Gowing.

⁸⁵² Confidential interview (67)

⁸⁵³ MoD, *MIS/CO*. Situation in the former Yugoslavia, briefing 21 April, 20/04/95.

⁸⁵⁴ Interviews with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00 and 01/10/02.

concluded nonetheless that there had been 'no U.S. role in any clandestine military airlifts'. No comment was made on who was involved, or what actually happened.⁸⁵⁵

Journalists and researchers have asked the question whether it was not American aircraft after all that carried out the Black Flights. The most common answer was that only one country actually qualified for these night-time operations: the United States. The fact is that it is unlikely that the Americans would 'blind' their AWAC aircraft for Iranian planes. The operation was said to have been paid for from a Pentagon Special Operations budget, with the complete assent of the White House. Probably the most important members of Congress were informed in the deepest of secrecy, and they were therefore 'in the loop' concerning the events.⁸⁵⁶

In Tuzla itself it was impossible to establish via interviews with Bosnian military and intelligence officials the identity of the C-130s. It was clear from observations that not all aircraft physically landed, but that some dropped their load from a low altitude. From a technical point of view, later explanations that no American aircraft had 'landed' were then correct, but the question remains as to whether absolutely no American aircraft were involved.

In *Deliberate Force*, Ripley describes how three Southern Air Transport C-130s from Rhein Main airfield in Germany carried out the flights. It is not so strange that Southern Air Transport (SAT) crops up in this account: it was, like Civil Air Transport, Air Asia and Air America, former CIA property. These companies were involved in many secret CIA operations. They carried out hundreds of Black Flights around the world. It was only in the mid 1970s that these companies were sold, but they continue to perform so-called contract work for the CIA, and the service still exercises considerable influence on the affairs of the airline company.⁸⁵⁷

However, the involvement of SAT is still not self-evident. After all, if the CIA was not involved in the secret operations in Bosnia, who then did use SAT? There is another reason why the involvement of Southern Air Transport was not self-evident: the company was far too notorious because of its past. On the discovery of these Black Flights, fingers would quickly be pointing at the CIA. Other sources assert, according to Ripley,⁸⁵⁸ that the Bosnian air force had a modest fleet of planes, consisting of a C-130 and CASA 212, *Antonov* AN-26 and AN-32 transport aircraft. These aircraft were allegedly stationed in Cyprus and Slovenia and were to have operated from Ljubljana and elsewhere.⁸⁵⁹

The question remains, however, whether this 'relatively young Bosnian air force' was capable of performing such operations. Ripley is of the opinion that the State Department and the National Security Council (NSC) were involved in the operation, and not the CIA or DIA.⁸⁶⁰ This is probably correct: it seems that after the scandals of recent years the CIA has become more cautious with foreign covert operations. They must be covered 'by the book' by the White House.⁸⁶¹ In addition, the director of the CIA, Woolsey, was of the opinion that clandestine operations probably could not remain secret for long.⁸⁶² Others concluded that private companies, such as Tepper Aviation, or Intermountain Aviation were involved in the Black Flights. Both companies have a CIA background.⁸⁶³ A British

⁸⁵⁵ Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence US Senate, *U.S. Actions Regarding Iranian and Other Arms Transfers to the Bosnian Army, 1994-1995*, Washington DC, 1996, p. 4.

⁸⁵⁶ Confidential interview (67) and interview with Tim Ripley, 12/12/99.

⁸⁵⁷ See for the history of CAT: Leary, *Perilous Missions*, passim. For SAT and Air Asia: Prados, *President's Secret Wars*, pp. 184, 231 and 325.

⁸⁵⁸ Interview with Tim Ripley, 12/12/99.

⁸⁵⁹ Confidential information (35).

⁸⁶⁰ Ripley, *Deliberate Force*, pp. 59-63.

⁸⁶¹ Confidential interview (12).

⁸⁶² Interview with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00 and Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence US Senate, *U.S. Actions Regarding Iranian and Other Arms Transfers to the Bosnian Army, 1994-1995*, Washington DC, 1996, p. 4.

⁸⁶³ Ranelagh, *The Agency*, p. 335. See also http://pw.1.netcom.com/~ncoic/cia_infor.htm, *Results of the 1973 Church Committee Hearings on CIA Misdeeds*, p. 3 in Richard Kolb, 'Into the Heart of Darkness. Cold War Africa: Part 2 Angola', *VFW Magazine*, May 1999.

General and researcher, Brendan O'shea, also concluded that private companies were involved here; to be precise, reservists or retired American pilots (not in uniform and not in the active service of the American armed forces) were to have flown these C-130s.

The aircraft that took part in the various Black Flights were also seen by observers of the ECMM, the European monitoring mission. On 23 February they saw four C-130s on Split airfield. One of them was a Spanish cargo plane that was used for supplying the Spanish battalion in Mostar, but the other two aircraft were American C-130s. According to O'shea, they belonged to the 37th ALS Blue Tail Flies. The fourth plane had only a small American flag on its tail and no registration numbers, and was painted in different colours from the other two planes. The observers noticed that the crew were wearing green uniforms without rank or nationality markings. They were able to continue to work undisturbed and were not hindered by the Croatian police or UNPROFOR observers. Shortly before their departure from Split, the ECMM observers 'coincidentally' encountered the Croatian Colonel Kresimir Cosic, President Tudjman's personal adviser, in the departure lounge. Cosic was also the liaison with the State Department in the matter of the activities of the military company Military Professional Resources Incorporated.⁸⁶⁴ The ECMM launched its own investigation, but it yielded nothing.

The conclusion is that there are only suspicions but no hard evidence that American aircraft carried out the Black Flights. A British researcher put a question regarding American involvement to various sources, and most ('eyes were raised ceiling-wards') answered him as follows: 'Who else has the skill and expertise to carry out such a swift, delicate mission covertly? The Saudis? The Turks? The Iranians?' The specialized crews and the types of aircraft for these night-time operations indeed appeared to point in only one direction: that of the United States.⁸⁶⁵

Nonetheless, it is improbable that US aircraft were involved, but this does then raise the question of who had organized the operation. Woolsey was willing to have the CIA to carry out such a secret operation; his service had relevant experience. Woolsey stated, however, with great certainty: 'The CIA did not move weapons to Bosnia. We were perfectly willing to do that. We had enough experience in this field, but the policy level did not want the CIA to do that.'⁸⁶⁶ Woolsey's offer was therefore rejected, also because Lake (again) feared leaks⁸⁶⁷ and Christopher was afraid here too of angry reactions from London and Paris which could lead to UNPROFOR's departure. NATO Secretary-General Claes had warned Clinton of this.⁸⁶⁸ Lake also considered this a covert operation; another reason for it not to be allowed to go ahead was that Congress would have to be informed.⁸⁶⁹ The strategy via third party countries was then opted for. This indeed seems to be the course that was followed.

Turkey flies to Tuzla

There are other indications that the CIA was not involved in the Black Flights to Tuzla. Like the attitude of the CIA station chief in Zagreb, who gave a negative recommendation regarding Galbraith's plans for the Croatian pipeline and the later negative recommendations of the CIA on the clandestine supply of arms to the Croats and Muslims as Holbrooke had wanted.⁸⁷⁰ Much points in the direction that this was an operation by a third party country, with the assent of parts of the US government. Another indication that US services were not directly involved, was Holbrooke's evidence to Senate:

⁸⁶⁴ O'shea, *Crisis at Bihać*, pp. 159-160.

⁸⁶⁵ Confidential interview (67).

⁸⁶⁶ Interview with R.J. Woolsey, 08/06/00.

⁸⁶⁷ James Risen & Doyle McManus, 'U.S. had options to let Bosnia get arms', *Los Angeles Times*, 14/07/96 and Walter Pincus, 'Woolsey, in testimony, Criticizes White House', *The Washington Post*, 11/06/96.

⁸⁶⁸ Ed Vulliamy, 'America's Secret Bosnia Agenda', *The Observer*, 20/11/94.

⁸⁶⁹ James Risen & Doyle McManus, 'U.S. had options to let Bosnia get arms', *Los Angeles Times*, 14/07/96.

⁸⁷⁰ Confidential interviews (12) and (13).

'US intelligence agencies were not involved.' This is correct if it refers to an operation that was sanctioned 'remotely'. Leighton Smith's promise to Janvier and Akashi that he would resign if it were to appear that uniformed military personnel were involved in the Black Flights, is also consistent with this picture. A prominent White House adviser confirmed that the United States did not wish to violate the arms embargo. It would undermine the authority of Security Council resolutions, however much the Americans were uncomfortable with this embargo. If the Americans themselves were to violate the embargo, then the imposition of an embargo elsewhere would be made impossible.⁸⁷¹

Washington definitely did play a role in the background, however. The attempts at a cover-up after the first observations of the flights to Tuzla point to this involvement. Why otherwise would the Norwegian key person be physically threatened, would several witnesses not be heard, the reported facts be distorted, journalists put under pressure, and attempts made to hold back De Lapresle's report? The fact that the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNPROFOR ultimately agreed and let the matter rest, probably has more to do with the wish no longer to disturb the relations between Washington and the UN and NATO; after all, the 'lift and strike' debate had already caused a considerable deterioration in transatlantic relations.⁸⁷²

A number of countries are candidates for having supplied directly to Bosnia. Pakistan delivered equipment, as did the Sultan of Brunei, who paid for anti-tank missiles from Malaysia. In January 1993 already, a Pakistani vessel with ten containers of arms, which were destined for the ABiH, was intercepted in the Adriatic Sea.⁸⁷³ Pakistan definitely defied the United Nations ban on supply of arms to the Bosnian Muslims and sophisticated anti-tank guided missiles were air lifted by the Pakistani intelligence agency, ISI, to help Bosnians fight the Serbs, an ex-ISI Chief has officially admitted in a written petition submitted before a court in Lahore. The document was submitted by Lt. General (Retd) Javed Nasir, who was head of the ISI from March 1992 to May 1993, in a case he filed against the owner and editors of the largest newspaper and TV group of Pakistan, in an anti Terrorism Court.⁸⁷⁴ It remains unclear how the missiles were transported to Bosnia and who did it.

Furthermore, tons of diplomatic post regularly arrived by air in Sarajevo from Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran. Doubts were raised about the diplomatic immunity of the content of the load.⁸⁷⁵ A foundation that was affiliated to the Saudi royal family also provided millions of dollars in arms assistance.⁸⁷⁶ Moreover, Malaysia attempted to sidestep the embargo via merchant shipping and the Malaysian UNPROFOR soldiers that were stationed in Bosnia.⁸⁷⁷ All of these were direct supplies to Bosnia, because the Bosnian government was dissatisfied with the Croatian authorities' practice of skimming the arms supplies, or because the government did not want to become entirely dependent on Zagreb. This could be avoided by direct flights from certain countries.⁸⁷⁸

In addition to Iran (via Croatia), Turkey proved to be the most important supplier of arms to the ABiH. Turkey had been closely involved in the secret arms supplies to Bosnia for some time. As early as 1992 Iran had opened a smuggling route to Bosnia with the assistance of Turkey; this was two years before the Clinton administration gave 'permission' for creating the Croatian pipeline. Bosnian government officials acknowledged that in 1993 a Turkish pipeline also existed, through which the above-mentioned arms from Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Brunei and Pakistan were smuggled. Other consignments came from Belgium, Hungary, Uganda and Argentina. In Argentina a scandal erupted because President Menem had issued a decree for the delivery of 8000 FN-Fals (automatic rifles), 155

⁸⁷¹ Confidential interview (14).

⁸⁷² For this, see Chapter 10 of Part II of the Srebrenica report.

⁸⁷³ 'Wapens moslims onderschept' ('Muslim arms intercepted'), *Trouw*, 21/01/93.

⁸⁷⁴ 'Ex-ISI Chief Reveals Secret Missile Shipments to Bosnia defying UN Embargo', in: *South Asia Tribune Publications*, Issue No 22, Dec 23-29, 2002.

⁸⁷⁵ Confidential interview (44) and James Risen, 'Iran gave Bosnia leader \$ 500,000', *Los Angeles Times*, 31/12/96.

⁸⁷⁶ 'The Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Janes's Intelligence Review*, February 1993, pp. 63-65.

⁸⁷⁷ For example: MIS/CO. Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 26/95, 01/06/95.

⁸⁷⁸ Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force*, p. 90.

mm guns, 2000 pistols, 211,000 hand grenades, 3000 rockets, 30,000 grenades, 3000 landmines and millions of rounds of ammunition to Bolivia. This country stated, however, that it had ordered nothing and the Argentine parliament discovered that the arms and ammunition were destined for Croatia and elsewhere.⁸⁷⁹

At the beginning of 1993, the name of Turkey was again dropped as direct supplier.⁸⁸⁰ The Bosnian Vice-President Ganic had an interview in mid February with the Turkish President Özal, but denied that he had promised him an aircraft full of arms. Ganic did admit to receiving arms in a different manner.⁸⁸¹ During a visit to Sarajevo of the later Prime Minister of Turkey, Tansu Ciller, and the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, both ladies publicly called for a lifting of the arms embargo.⁸⁸² In the summer and autumn of 1994, the CIA reported that spy satellites had taken photos of Iranian aircraft on Turkish airfields. Two days later, satellite photos were taken of the same aircraft in Zagreb or at other airports in Croatia, where the arms were unloaded.

According to O'shea, Turkey's involvement was clear. Specially modified C-130s from American bases in the United Kingdom and Germany would pick up their cargo on remote runways in the Turkish part of Cyprus. The cargo, which consisted of arms and ammunition, would have been delivered there by Iranian and Turkish aircraft. The aircraft would fly to Croatia via the Adriatic, and then on to Bosnia. If the Hercules, with its modest range, could not achieve its objective in one hop, it could always make a stopover on the Croatian island of Brac, close to the coast near Split. The population there indeed often observed C-130 aircraft that operated from this airfield. From this island the CIA also operated its UAVs flying over Bosnia.⁸⁸³ The Croatian Minister of Defence, Susak, claimed that most of the aircraft that landed there came from Turkey and not Iran.⁸⁸⁴ Also quite some military goods were delivered to the Pula airport on the Istrian peninsula.⁸⁸⁵

The Turkish government therefore provided full cooperation to the Croatian pipeline. There was more: the Turks also flew directly to Tuzla with C-130s. This allegedly happened after the Chief of Staff of the ABiH 2nd Corps was sent to Ankara as an additional military attaché.⁸⁸⁶ UNPROFOR officers assumed that Turkish aircraft flew in from Cyprus, with American military authorities acting as intermediary.⁸⁸⁷ French military officials likewise asserted that Turkey was responsible for the flights. NATO officers stated in a British daily newspaper that if the American intelligence services used a cover, 'Turkey would be the obvious choice'. The Turkish air force had C-130s that could reach Tuzla. This was otherwise also true of the Iranian and Pakistani air forces, which were also mentioned as possible third-party countries for supplies via Turkey to Tuzla.⁸⁸⁸

The UK Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) was also aware of the American secret arms supplies to the ABiH. According to a British intelligence official, the DIS never made an issue of them, so as not to further damage the sensitive relationship with the US services. An internal DIS analysis concluded that the arms were delivered via 'a different network', and that the entire operation was probably led by the NSC. It was stressed that the CIA and DIA were not involved in the Black Flights

⁸⁷⁹ John Pomfret, 'US Allies Fed Pipeline Of Covert Arms in Bosnia', *The Washington Post*, 12/05/96 and Johan Peleman, 'Wapenhandel naar Bosnië-Herzegovina' ('Arms trade to Bosnia-Herzegovina'), *Noord-Zuid Cabier*, No. 22(3), September 1997, pp. 88-89.

⁸⁸⁰ Robert Fox, 'Dangerous games of fact and fantasy', *The Daily Telegraph*, 10/02/93. See also the statements of former FC L. MacKenzie: 'Interventie zal in Bosnië geen vrede brengen' ('Intervention will bring no peace in Bosnia'), *De Volkskrant*, 06/02/93.

⁸⁸¹ 'Bosnische vice-president: Kroaten hebben ons nodig' ('Bosnian president: Croats need us'), *Trouw*, 23/02/93.

⁸⁸² Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, p. 81.

⁸⁸³ O'shea, *Crisis at Bihac*, p. 159.

⁸⁸⁴ John Pomfret, 'US Allies Fed Pipeline Of Covert Arms in Bosnia', *The Washington Post*, 12/05/096.

⁸⁸⁵ Interview with Jan-Inge Svensson, 15/11/02.

⁸⁸⁶ Confidential interview (68).

⁸⁸⁷ William Drozdiak, 'US Accused of Covert Bosnia Aid', *Chicago-Sun Times*, 28/07/95.

⁸⁸⁸ William Drozdiak, 'US Accused of Covert Bosnia Aid', *Chicago-Sun Times*, 28/07/95; Richard Dowden & John Carlin, 'US secretly supplying weapons to Bosnia', *The Independent*, 26/02/95 and Robert Fox, 'Iran's cases of cash helped buy Muslim victory in Bosnia', *The Daily Telegraph*, 01/01/97.

to Tuzla. Incidentally, the DIS received a direct order from the British government not to investigate this affair. This was not permitted for the simple reason that the matter was too sensitive in the framework of American-British relations. The DIS also obtained intelligence on the secret supplies to the ABiH from the German military intelligence service and the *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, because some of the flights departed from Frankfurt. However, no American-German alliance existed in the matter of clandestine support to the ABiH.⁸⁸⁹

Cengic had set up the entire operation. The Cengic family owned numerous companies in Turkey, and during the war Cengic worked in Ankara as a military attaché, and would reach an agreement there with the Turkish government on secret arms supplies. They were to take place in Tuzla with the involvement of the Special Branch of the Turkish General Staff. This unit had also been responsible for covert operations in the past.⁸⁹⁰ The Pentagon had likewise identified Cengic as the main link between the supplies from Islamic countries, such as Iran, Turkey and Pakistan.⁸⁹¹ Even the Dutch national security service BVD observed that Turkish aircraft repeatedly dropped arms over areas that were under ABiH control. The service described the Turkish action as a 'solo performance'.⁸⁹² MIS/Navy reports also mention the involvement of Turkish aircraft; it was observed that Turkey was in a position to fly with C-130s to Tuzla directly or via third party countries.⁸⁹³ The conclusion must be that the United States 'turned a blind eye' to the Croatian pipeline, but in the case of the Black Flights to Tuzla Air Base, they deliberately closed their 'eyes' (of the AWAC aircraft) for the direct Turkish flights. US aircraft did not themselves fly to Tuzla, because their discovery would have seriously embarrassed the US government and put transatlantic relations under even greater pressure. Supplies via a third party country were a simpler solution for the United States.

4. Military assistance to the Bosnian Serbs

The clandestine arms supplies to the ABiH were not the only thing to stir up feelings: so too did the supplies to the Bosnian Serbs. According to some sources, Russian intelligence services even had a secret arms agreement with the Bosnian Serbs.⁸⁹⁴ Throughout the entire war, accusations were made that Serbia supplied arms and ammunition on a large scale to the VRS. For example, an article in the *New York Times* asserted that hundreds of Serbian helicopter flights had been recorded over northeast Bosnia. An anonymous UNPROFOR officer stated: 'We have not seen anything on this scale before and doubt that the Bosnian Serbs could organize this number of helicopter flights without the active involvement of the Yugoslav Army.'⁸⁹⁵ To Annan's irritation, this article, 'which runs counter to every element of analysis provided to us by yourselves', led directly to a request from the non-aligned countries for a debate in the Security Council. Annan requested Akashi to report all messages about helicopter flights directly. Akashi had already informed Annan that cross border flights were probably not involved, and that the number of flights observed from the ground was exaggerated.⁸⁹⁶

It was evident that the border between Serbia and Srpska was used regularly for the clandestine supply of arms and oil. A special organ was even created for its supervision: the ICFY Monitoring Mission, a product of the Yugoslavia Conference, which was established on 17 September 1994. The Finnish General Tauno Nieminen was the head of the mission from 13 January to 14 December 1995. He maintained regular contact with UNPROFOR, but worked mainly for the ICFY. There were

⁸⁸⁹ Confidential interview (8).

⁸⁹⁰ 'Turska pokusavala da naoruza bosanske Muslimane', *Borba*, 05/12/94 and confidential information (36).

⁸⁹¹ Robert Fox, 'Iran's cases of cash helped buy Muslim victory in Bosnia', *The Daily Telegraph*, 01/01/97.

⁸⁹² NMFA, 911.31. BVD to CVIN+ participants, 29/04/93, p. 25.

⁸⁹³ MoD, MIS/CO, File 438,0315, AR Briefing, no. 7/1995, 20/02/95.

⁸⁹⁴ Johan Peleman, 'Wapenhandel naar Bosnië-Herzegovina' ('Arms trade to Bosnia-Herzegovina'), *Noord-Zuid Cahier*, No. 22(3), September 1997, pp. 92-94.

⁸⁹⁵ Roger Cohen, 'U.N. Reports Serbian Helicopters Are Flying Into Bosnia', *The New York Times*, 21/09/94.

⁸⁹⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 124. Akashi to Annan, no. Z-1457, 22/09/94 and Annan to Akashi, no. 3101, 22/09/94.

divergent opinions on the Serbian supplies to the VRS. In a comprehensive report, the Bosnian government complained about the Serbian support to the VRS. From August 1994 to July 1995, Serbia and Montenegro are alleged to have supplied to the Bosnian Serbs a total of 512 tanks, 506 APCs, 120 howitzers, 130 other artillery pieces, 6 MIG 29s, SU-25 and SU-27 aircraft and more than 20 helicopters. These were formidable quantities, enough to equip an entire army. For this reason alone, these Bosnian quantities were implausible. According to Nieminen, these data were incorrect, and the checks at this border were watertight. He pointed out that the checking was not random, but that every car was inspected and completely investigated. Observers were even authorized to have cars or trucks dismantled.⁸⁹⁷

According to staff of a European intelligence service, the sanctions did not work on the Drina, however. For example, the observers had instructions to withdraw immediately in the event of danger. The Serbs usually fired a series of salvos in the air as darkness fell to frighten the observers, who then withdrew rapidly. On the basis of reliable intelligence data, this service came to the conclusion that military equipment was often transferred at night from Serbia to Srpska, usually consisting of 2 tanks (T-54), 2 APCs, 2 trucks with artillery, 2 buses with soldiers of the Yugoslav army and 2 trucks with fuel.

This was the normal pattern of Serbian support to the VRS; they also considered the sanction committee to be a political mission. It was confirmed from the side of the VRS that much fuel had been supplied from Bulgaria and Romania to Serbia, which was forwarded in transit to the VRS. Train wagons crossed the border, and fuel also arrived on the Danube. The observers were repeatedly put on the spot by a skipper who would say that he was going to sail on, or otherwise dump the oil in the Danube.⁸⁹⁸ However, General Nieminen persisted in claiming to the NIOD that reports of deliveries of tanks, APCs and trucks over the Drina had no basis in truth. If Milosevic supported the VRS on a large scale, then the question remains as to how this happened. Milosevic ran enormous political risks in doing so. What is clear is that support was provided from Serbia in the form of soldiers, technical recommendations, integrated air defence and financial assistance, but therefore not in the form of large-scale military equipment.⁸⁹⁹

A senior White House adviser confirmed this. He had never seen convincing evidence that arms had been delivered to the Bosnian Serbs via the Drina. The road via Croatia, however, was open for this purpose. He called the embargo 'fairly effective' but admitted that there were leaks. According to this source, intelligence on the violations was all Sigint, but it was not permitted to share this information with foreign intelligence services. What particularly stung the senior official was that Washington had failed in bringing about a financial embargo, because central banks in the EU, such as the Bank of England and the *Bundesbank* did not cooperate. The Security Council resolutions did not take this into account, and the banks hid behind national legislation. The particular culprit here was the Austrian central bank. According to this official, no progress was booked on this point against 'serbia Incorporated'. Milosevic was able to launder his money via Cyprus. Money was also laundered in Moscow, which was made easier by the state of the Russian banking system. Otherwise, according to this official, the war could have finished earlier, because then Milosevic would no longer have been able to pay the VRS officers.⁹⁰⁰

According to Sarajevo, in addition to arms and ammunition, other items were supplied to the Bosnian Serbs. The Bosnian government claimed that 8700 tons of fuel were supplied.⁹⁰¹ According to Nieminen, Serbia supplied the oil mainly via the Krajina, and there was a back door via Croatia because of the relationship between Tudjman and Milosevic. The problem was that the mandate of his mission

⁸⁹⁷ Interview with Tauno Nieminen and Aaro Suonio, 25/05/00.

⁸⁹⁸ Confidential interview (48). See also: Robert Block, 'serbs march in secret to the aid of Bosnian kin', *The Independent*, 05/07/95.

⁸⁹⁹ Interview with Tauno Nieminen and Aaro Suonio, 25/05/00.

⁹⁰⁰ Confidential interview (14).

⁹⁰¹ NMFA, PL/NY. Biegan to Foreign Affairs, attached Bosnian memo, 04/09/95

did not extend to Croatia. What was supplied from this region via the Krajina to the VRS therefore fell outside his field of view.⁹⁰²

There were rumours about pipelines across the Drina that provided the Bosnian Serbs with oil, but Nieminen stated that he knew for certain that they had never existed. His mission had foot and vehicle patrols in operation 24 hours a day along the banks of the Drina: they would at least have seen their tracks or trucks. The same applied to all the claims about pontoon bridges. In an official report, the Bosnian government actually claimed that 25 secret military pontoon bridges were being used. Half of them were between Bijeljina and Zvornik.⁹⁰³ In one of the weekly overviews, Nieminen did report on such a Serbian pontoon bridge. According to the Yugoslav Army liaison officer, it was built in this sector to deal with refugees in case of a possible ABiH offensive.⁹⁰⁴ Sometimes oil would be taken across in small boats or with a number of barrels at once. Trucks also drove to and fro with full diesel tanks between Serbia and Srpska.

The question then remains as to how the Yugoslav Army, the *Vojska Jugoslavija* (VJ), supported the VRS. According to an European intelligence service, the VJ was active in East-Bosnia. This service gathered intelligence that proved that many parents in Serbia were complaining that their sons had to go to Bosnia. The obituaries in Serbian newspapers were scrutinized, only to reveal that soldiers had perished in Bosnia. Conscripts were sent over the border in groups by bus. They consisted mostly of approximately fifty soldiers without equipment, who had probably exercised in Serbia. Furthermore, Serbian staff officers worked in Pale, VRS officers were trained in Serbia and the VRS were paid their salaries via Belgrade. Much logistics support was also given to the VRS. Repairs and spare parts were provided by the VJ, and the VRS equipment was kept up-to-date by Serbia. The transportation of tanks and APCs was coordinated by the VJ.⁹⁰⁵

According to Nieminen, it must not be forgotten that before the arrival of the observers, Milosevic had had all the time he needed to supply as much as possible.⁹⁰⁶ His opposite number in Serbia, Kertis, was the greatest smuggler, according to sources within Western intelligence services.⁹⁰⁷ He was instructed by Milosevic to keep Nieminen's mission happy. Whatever Kertis said happened, the objective of which was 'to keep us happy so that nobody would blame Milosevic', according to Nieminen.⁹⁰⁸ Violating the embargo actually meant that the sanctions against Serbia would be intensified again.

The mission of Nieminen would run into trouble in late May 1995. There were air strikes on Pale on 25 May 1995 and hostages were taken in reprisal. On 29 May, the American embassy reported that information had been obtained about a direct threat to the American observers. This resulted in all US and ten Canadian observers immediately being withdrawn. The majority of the observers came from MPRI and the others were from the State Department. According to an intelligence officer, after much urging Nieminen, who in the first instance disagreed with the withdrawal, was finally shown reliable intelligence that proved that they actually were in danger. The CIA was said to have shown the Finnish General reports that made clear that the US service had a source or sources close to Mladic or Karadzic. They also showed him intercepted message traffic. In Pale the decision had already been made to take American observers hostage and to abduct them over the Serbian border to Srpska; after that the Finnish General agreed with the withdrawal of the observers.⁹⁰⁹

The original plan was that the mission would comprise 250 observers. This was never achieved, however, and the maximum staffing was 210, from September to October 1994. Nieminen's mission

⁹⁰² See for the military border traffic: UNNY, *DPKO*. Janvier to Annan, Z-1120, 09/07/95.

⁹⁰³ NMFA, *PVNY*. Biegman to Foreign Affairs, attached Bosnian memo, 04/09/95

⁹⁰⁴ Confidential information (148).

⁹⁰⁵ Confidential interviews (48).

⁹⁰⁶ Interview with Tauno Nieminen and Aaro Suonio, 25/05/00.

⁹⁰⁷ Confidential interviews (48).

⁹⁰⁸ Interview with Tauno Nieminen and Aaro Suonio, 25/05/00.

⁹⁰⁹ Confidential interview (42).

had total freedom of movement along the border with Serbia. The ICFY mission did not occupy all border crossings; many of them were not monitored or were monitored by hired-in Serbian personnel. The mission itself was said to have admitted that 71 potential border crossings on the Drina were not under their control. The Bosnian government then concluded that the mission was not in a position to exercise effective control. This would have required 1760 static observers, 310 mobile observers, 100 interpreters and 80 administrative staff. Furthermore, according to the Bosnian government, the mission would have to have 2 helicopters, 214 vehicles and a radar detection system for tracking low flying aircraft.

In May 1995 the number declined sharply; when the American and Canadian observers had been withdrawn, Nieminen had 151 observers left. Of the 18 Border Control Points, four were closed. There were then observers from 18 countries: mainly from the EU, Norway, Russia, and Czechoslovakia. They were professional customs personnel, who operated in every sector.⁹¹⁰ Other countries sent additional personnel, and in July 1995 the mission again had 185 observers who manned 19 border crossings 24 hours a day. It appears from their comprehensive reports that smuggling attempts were occasionally made over the border between Serbia and Srpska via the Drina,⁹¹¹ but no large smuggling operations were recorded. Three days before the attack on Srebrenica observers even noted that on two occasions buses with men of compulsory service age were held up at the border by Serbian militias, and were not allowed to enter the Republika Srpska.⁹¹²

Nieminen constantly complained about the lack of cooperation of the US intelligence community. They regularly took aerial photographs above the Republika Srpska, but when Nieminen asked for them, he was not given them. A White House adviser confirmed that this intelligence was not shared, and was kept for the Americans themselves.⁹¹³ Nieminen only received intelligence piecemeal, sometimes in the form of intercepts, but the question was whether it was always reliable. The Bosnian services also intercepted communication traffic, which showed evidence of Serbian involvement.⁹¹⁴ The intermediary concerned was Mirko Krajisnik, the brother of the chairman of the Bosnian-Serb parliament, Momcilo Krajisnik. The intercepts revealed that the Serbian Minister of the Interior and head of the Domestic Security service, Jovica Stanisic, were involved in clandestine supplies of arms and fuel.⁹¹⁵

The French and British intelligence services did give information to Nieminen 'to balance US intelligence reports', and the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND) contributed observers only in the autumn of 1995, who had an anti-Serbian attitude, however. Nieminen also had to take disinformation into account; the German embassy in Belgrade occasionally produced reports of suspect reliability. For instance, the embassy reported on 16 March 1995, probably on the authority of the BND, that a temporary bridge had been built over the Drina between Serbia and Srpska at Jagostica, which was used to transport equipment to the VRS. Four border crossings were also mentioned across which goods were smuggled to the VRS. The messages immediately raised doubts; the bridge would actually have been in the Zepa pocket and the smuggling of military goods destined for the VRS via a Muslim area was unlikely. The British Army sent an SAS patrol to inspect the alleged bridge. The surroundings turned out to resemble a Norwegian fjord, with a steep rock wall more than 200 metres high. The German information was therefore incorrect, and the account of the smuggling via four border posts also proved to be incorrect because all posts were monitored 24 hours a day by UN observers.⁹¹⁶ The information of the Bosnian Muslims was likewise not always to be trusted. Sometimes Nieminen

⁹¹⁰ NMFA, *PVNY*. Biegman to Foreign Affairs, attached Bosnian memo, 04/09/95. Interview with Tauno Nieminen and Aaro Suonio, 25/05/00. Confidential collection (6), Letter Nieminen to Owen and Stoltenberg, 31/05/95.

⁹¹¹ Confidential information (149).

⁹¹² Confidential information (150).

⁹¹³ Confidential interview (14).

⁹¹⁴ See Chapter 6 of this study for the Bosnian Sigint capabilities.

⁹¹⁵ Roy Gutman, 'Arms-Running Traced To Yugoslav Regime', *Newsday*, 29/05/96.

⁹¹⁶ Confidential information (9).

received intercepts, but account was always taken of the possibility of disinformation. In that period, as mentioned, many Bosnian reports were sent to the UN of large quantities of tanks and trucks that crossed the Drina.

The American observers in his team were often frustrated by the response from Washington, which only complained there that their reports were incorrect. Contradictory reports came from Washington, but they also often appeared to contain incorrect information. Although one of Nieminen's closest colleagues was a State Department official, the Americans remained reluctant to share their intelligence openly.⁹¹⁷ Therefore the mission was constantly confronted with disinformation about sundry tanks that crossed the Drina. A member of the mission gave as an example the attack on Zepa, in which American and German services claimed that tanks had been moved across the Drina. It turned out later that the two services used different aerial photographs, where the German photo was not of the Drina but of a completely different river.

The relationship with the US services improved later. The mission then received intelligence from the CIA on trucks that were moving to and fro between Serbia and Srpska. This service was able to say precisely which trucks were involved, the nature of the cargo, and the time and the place that they would cross. However, it was only in the autumn of 1995 that the mission received this intelligence rapidly and in good time;⁹¹⁸ by which time American ground forces had arrived.

A 'very hot potato' were the helicopter flights from Serbia to Srpska. The following mysterious episode may serve as an illustration. On 7 February 1995, Nieminen was phoned by UN negotiator Stoltenberg. Fifteen to twenty helicopter flights were said to have passed the border, and to have landed somewhere near Srebrenica. These helicopters came from Serbia.⁹¹⁹ The US intelligence community had probably informed Stoltenberg of this.⁹²⁰ Nieminen then drafted a special report for the Security Council. On 8 February came the Serbian denial that there had been any flights; on 22 February, Nieminen had a talk with Milosevic on the helicopter flights, which he also denied. On 2 March, UNPROFOR reported again that between 21 and 27 February nineteen helicopters had flown from Serbia to Bosnia. Nieminen demanded immediate clarification, but the VJ claimed that it knew nothing.⁹²¹ A new report was made on 27 March: this time it involved 27 helicopters, which flew at an extremely high altitude from Serbia to VRS territory. On the way back, the helicopters probably deliberately flew very low, so as to avoid the radar systems; Nieminen was told that the AWACS had problems tracking helicopters.

Nieminen had earlier ordered a large-scale investigation. On 28 March 1995, Lieutenant Colonel R. Gudmundsson presented his findings to Nieminen. Between October 1994 and March 1995, observers from the Belgrade airfield, Surcin, had recorded a total of 73 cross border helicopter flights. Radar tracks from various radar posts confirm this. All posts were linked with the two most important air traffic control centres: one in Zagreb and one in Belgrade. Four radars were available in Surcin, but they did not have a wide range. They were too far from the border between Bosnia and Serbia to be able to track low flying aircraft.

The radar tracks came exclusively from a radar post that was situated approximately 90 kilometres from the border with Bosnia. The 79 violations were distributed as follows: there were 6 violations of the No Fly Zone in Bosnia. This also included ABiH flights.⁹²² There were 13 violations involving flights from Serbia to Bosnia. The remaining 60 violations were helicopter flights from Bosnia to Serbia. In March 1995, in other words shortly after the Black Flights to Tuzla, a total of 30

⁹¹⁷ Also regarding the financing of the mission. At the beginning of March 1995, the United States had still made no financial contribution. Nieminen also complained about this: UNNY, UNPROFOR, *Box #88041*, file 4.4 Notes on Meetings, Bell to Akashi, 16/03/95; confidential information (152).

⁹¹⁸ Confidential interview (42).

⁹¹⁹ Interview with Tauno Nieminen and Aaro Suonio, 25/05/00.

⁹²⁰ Confidential interview (42).

⁹²¹ Interview with Tauno Nieminen and Aaro Suonio, 25/05/00.

⁹²² For example near Srebrenica: UNNY, *DPKO*. Janvier to Annan, Z-483, 26/03/95.

violations were observed. These included 26 helicopter flights from Bosnia to Serbia and 4 violations of the No Fly Zone in Bosnia. The track headings were mainly in the direction of Belgrade.

Gudmundsson also had an opinion on what the helicopters were transporting from Bosnia to Belgrade as opposed to the other way around. According to him, the helicopters were transporting valuable goods on their return journey, and flying back unobserved from Serbia was no great problem, because look-out posts on the airfields and at the borders could be used to check if UNPROFOR or ICFY mission observers were in the vicinity. Gudmundsson observed further that these flights sometimes took place after one or two days of heavy fighting in Bosnia. They were apparently not medical flights, because they were permissible, and these flights were unannounced.

Gudmundsson determined that in two cases a NATO jet fighter had been close to a helicopter, but that no action was taken. Neither were the helicopters ever intercepted, but the question was whether an AWACS was able to detect these low and slow flying helicopters; according to Gudmundsson it was possible, but 'the findings are normally filtered out by the computer system'. He had noticed something else remarkable: not a single violation was seen simultaneously by both the Belgrade airfield Surcin and by UNPROFOR or ICFY. This could mean that only helicopter flights at high altitude were seen by Surcin, but if that was the case, the Serbian air defence alarm would have sounded after observation, which never happened. This could indicate that the air defence was aware of the origin of these helicopters; perhaps the helicopters were equipped with a transponder that operated on a certain military frequency, to simplify coordination with the Serbian anti-aircraft defence.⁹²³

Gudmundsson concluded that if a helicopter had been 'seen', it would also have to return, so that the total number of violations would have to be doubled. All in all, the air border between Serbia and Bosnia was not closed, and if the aircraft flew back from Serbia to Bosnia they would be able to transport important cargo. 'The amount of suspected helicopters turning back to Bosnia have capacity of carrying substantial operational, logistic and personnel support to local authorities or commanders.'⁹²⁴ On 30 March, Owen was briefed on Gudmundsson's findings. It remained unclear who carried out the flights, with what goal, and what the helicopters had transported. An attached map did indicate that there were many flights near Srebrenica.⁹²⁵ Serbia responded with irritation to the conclusions of this report.⁹²⁶

On 11 April, Nieminen had another talk with Milosevic, the basis for which was an UNPROFOR report with evidence that between 2 and 7 April 1995, 25 helicopters had flown from Serbia to Bosnia. He showed Milosevic all the reports and demanded that this stop. If not, then he and his mission would finally depart. After this, the flights from Serbia to Bosnia did not stop completely, but they did become less numerous.

Western intelligence services on the support of the VJ to the VRS

The reports of Serbian supplies continued. According to a Canadian UNPROFOR worker, many heavy trucks arrived in the area, which was controlled by the Bosnian Serbs, through border crossings with Serbia.⁹²⁷ At the same time, British intelligence services also investigated the supplies to the VRS. In March 1995, the British military intelligence service determined that this was taking place, and by the VJ using helicopters, according to various intelligence reports. British diplomats in Belgrade were not completely convinced, however; they disagreed with this analysis by Joint Headquarters in Salisbury of

⁹²³ A transponder issues a unique signal enabling air traffic control to identify the aircraft on the radar screens.

⁹²⁴ Confidential collection (12), Lt.Col Gudmundsson to Brig. General Tauno Nieminen, 28/03/95. Report of 5 pages plus 2 maps of violations.

⁹²⁵ Confidential collection (6), Nieminen to Owen and, 30/03/95.

⁹²⁶ UNNY, DPKO. Nieminen to Owen and Stoltenberg, 11/04/95; Kirudja to Akashi, CBZ-956, 11/04/95 and Kirudja to Annan, Z-588, 12/04/95.

⁹²⁷ Tom Quiggin, 'srebrenica en de internationale gemeenschap in Bosnië' ('srebrenica and the international community in Bosnia'), *De Internationale Spectator*, Vol. 52 (1998) 2, p. 81. Quiggin pointed out that supporting supplies continued to flow from Croatia and Serbia to the Muslim rebel Fikret Abdic in Bihac.

8 March. It stated that ‘the VRS are clearly being resupplied across the Drina by helicopters’. According to British diplomats, this claim completely contradicted the ICFY report of one week earlier. They wondered why, if intelligence existed, it was not made available to the ICFY. British diplomats suspected that this was ‘repeddling of others’ unsupported intelligence reports’.⁹²⁸

The BND and Netherlands MIS likewise reported on violations of the embargo against Serbia and Montenegro by Romania and Greece. The Greek covert support to Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs during the war in Bosnia is extremely well documented by the Greek journalist, Takis Michas.⁹²⁹ Russian and Ukrainian oil supplies to Serbia took place across the Danube. Hungarian cargo vessels, officially in transit to Romania, were also said to have actually been unloaded in Serbia, and the oil forwarded to the Republika Srpska. These services also reported that Greece violated the embargo by drawing large quantities of electricity from Bosnia each day. Otherwise, this ran properly via Serbia to Greece, and the Greek state energy company paid \$ 20,000 a month to Belgrade for using the electric power lines. Furthermore, according to these services, the arms embargo was evaded on a large scale via Macedonia.⁹³⁰ Greek banks on Cyprus were also used and via these banks more than 770 million Euros was spent by Serbia to buy arms from Russia and Israel. The Greek Central Bank would later refuse to cooperate with the Chief Prosecutor of the Yugoslavia Tribunal in The Hague, Carla Del Ponte.⁹³¹ The trial at the Tribunal in The Hague against Serbia’s retired President, Milan Milutinovic, might perhaps bring more evidence to light as regards the Greek involvement. He apparently played a pivotal role in the alliance between Greece and Serbia during the Balkan conflict.⁹³²

Much fuel was also brought in by train from Skopje. The British press accused Akashi of failure in this regard: ‘Akashi just wanted to push this into a black hole so we could forget about it’, according to an anonymous official. This reproach of Akashi is unjustified: UNPROFOR had no mandate to monitor violations of the arms embargo or to enforce the embargo.⁹³³ Finally, it is remarkable that no report was made of smuggling of nuclear fuels to Serbia, although this country did have a secret nuclear programme.⁹³⁴

Other ‘donors’ to the VRS

The VRS also received support from the Russian mafia, who supplied arms and oil abundantly. Much would reach Serbia in transit via the Danube; payments were made from Cyprus. In the summer of 1995, more than 480 Serbian companies were based on that island, a number of which had direct links with Milosevic. Oil, petrol, trucks, arms, ammunition, machine parts and consumer goods were purchased through these companies. Each week, the trade was estimated at £ 6 million. The Russian mafia was also said to be involved with the sale of tanks from Red Army stocks.⁹³⁵

Israel is also alleged to have supplied arms to the VRS. The intermediary in this was Jezdimir Vasiljevic, a banker and a confidant of Milosevic. In October 1991, he reached an agreement with Israel, and after that transactions went via the Croat Boris Krasni and the state companies *Jugoeksport*

⁹²⁸ Confidential information (15).

⁹²⁹ Michas, *Unholy Alliance*, passim.

⁹³⁰ MoD, *MIS/CO. No. 2694*, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 66/92, 14/09/92 and ‘Bundesnachrichtendienst: Handel mit Serbien geht weiter; Embargo wird umgangen’, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 21/07/92 and Marko Milivojevic, ‘The Balkan Medellin’, in; *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, Vol. 7 (1995), 2.

⁹³¹ Cees van Zweeden, ‘DutchBat in Srebrenica beschoten door Grieken’ (*DutchBat in Srebrenica shot at by Greeks*), *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 22/06/02.

⁹³² Helena Smith, ‘Greece faces shame of role in serb massacre’, *The Observer*, 05/01/03.

⁹³³ Robert Fox, ‘UN failing to halt sanction-busting trade with Serbia’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 12/05/94 and UNGE, *UNPROFOR, Box 124*, Akashi to Annan, Z-1106, 22/07/94.

⁹³⁴ William C. Potter, Djuro Miljanic & Ivo Slau, ‘Tito’s Nuclear Legacy’, *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 56 (2000) 2, pp. 63-75.

⁹³⁵ Josef Bata, ‘serbiens geheime Auslandskontakte’, *Aussenpolitik, No. IV*, 1993, pp. 378-381 and David Williams, ‘How Russian Mafia helps fuel Serbs’ campaign of slaughter’, *Daily Mail*, 15/08/95.

and *Jugoslavija Publik*. According to press publications, in 1992 Bosnian Serbs allowed large parts of the Jewish community in Sarajevo to leave the city in exchange for arms supplies from Israel. There were more indications of Israel's involvement: at the end of 1994, an investigation into the remains of a mortar grenade on Sarajevo airfield revealed that it bore Hebrew letters, and in August 1995, a news programme on Israeli television reported that private Israeli arms dealers were supplying the VRS. This must have taken place with the consent of the government.⁹³⁶

In summary: the VRS, like the ABiH, was supplied with arms, ammunition and oil on a large scale. Serbia, as well as other countries, was responsible. The supplies ran partly through the border crossings on the Drina, but also via Croatia. The ICFY mission did its best to monitor the embargo, but received hardly any intelligence, and was also not in a position to man all the checkpoints, so there was a great deal that they were unable to observe.

5. The deployment of mercenaries, advisers and volunteers

The fact that the war in Yugoslavia attracted mercenaries and volunteers was to be expected.⁹³⁷ This phenomenon manifests itself in almost every armed conflict; examples are volunteers of the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War in 1936-1939, or the Belgian mercenaries in Katanga during the fighting in the Congo in the 1960s. The distinction between mercenaries and volunteers was also clear in Yugoslavia. The first group were paid for their activities; the second group were not, and they fought for 'a just cause'. A search in the press turns up many articles on the involvement of mercenaries, volunteers and advisers. They are said to have operated with all the warring factions, where it is noticeable that some nationalities - such as British and Germans - worked for the Bosnian Croats, the Bosnian Muslims and for the Bosnian Serbs.

The first reports of Russian volunteer units, which consisted mainly of Afghanistan veterans, appeared as early as the end of 1992. Russian mercenaries and advisers generally worked for the VRS.⁹³⁸ According to accusations made by the Bosnian government, Russian military advisers were sent from Serbia and more than 4000 mercenaries from Russia, the Ukraine, Romania and Greece supported various paramilitary organizations.⁹³⁹ Romanian mercenaries were supposedly fighting with the Bosnian Serbs near Sarajevo in 1992.⁹⁴⁰ Greek and Russian mercenaries were also involved in the attack on Srebrenica. A Greek Volunteer Guard, a unit based in Vlasenica, was formed in March 1995 and was fully incorporated in the Drina Corps.⁹⁴¹ Only about one hundred men fought with this unit and in September 1995 Karadzic decorated four members of the Guard with the medal of the 'White Eagle'.⁹⁴² The ABiH also intercepted a message from the VRS, which stated that the Serbian flag had been run up on the destroyed orthodox church.⁹⁴³ Another message suggested that the Greek mercenaries should also run up their flag, and that 'because of the marketing' this should be recorded on video.⁹⁴⁴

⁹³⁶ Glisic, *Srpska Vojska*, p. 27 and Igor Primoratz, *Israel and the war in the Balkans*, see: <http://www.hr/darko/etf/isr2.html>.

⁹³⁷ For a good overview: Ripley, *Mercenaries*, pp. 40 - 59.

⁹³⁸ MoD, *MIS/CO. No. 2726*, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 100/92, 21/12/92; UNNY, *DPKO*, coded cables. Janvier to Kittani, Z-2056, 06/11/95; Robert Fox, 'Dangerous games of fact and fantasy', *The Daily Telegraph*, 10/02/93 and 'Nederlands konvooi in oosten Bosnië overvallen' ('Dutch convoy attacked in east Bosnia'), *De Limburger*, 30/05/94.

⁹³⁹ NMFA, *PVNY*. Biegman to Foreign Affairs, attached Bosnian memo, 04/09/95.

⁹⁴⁰ Ripley, *Mercenaries*, p. 57.

⁹⁴¹ Interview with Emira Selimovic, 21/10/98.

⁹⁴² Michas, *Unholy Alliance*, pp. 17-41.

⁹⁴³ ABiH Tuzla. *Komanda 2. Korpusa*, Str. Pov. Br. 02/8-10-1223, 11/07/95.

⁹⁴⁴ ABiH Tuzla. *Komanda 2. Korpusa*, Str. Pov. Br. 02/8-10-1224, 11/07/95 and interview with Semsudin Murinovic, 17/0/99.

The number of mercenaries was never considerable, because the warring factions generally paid poorly.⁹⁴⁵ Therefore it was mainly volunteers that were active. Their military duties ranged from taking part in hostilities to gathering intelligence. For instance, a Danish volunteer travelled through Srpska in a car with Danish registration plates. His Danish passport gave him sufficient protection for intelligence gathering for Croatia. Many soldiers claimed that they had served with the French Foreign Legion or the SAS, but that seldom proved to be the case.⁹⁴⁶ Dutch mercenaries likewise fought on the side of the Croats 'at Zageb, Zabeg, Zagreb, or whatever it is called'.⁹⁴⁷ The mercenaries responded to an advertisement on 2 November 1991 in the newspaper *De Telegraaf* by the Dutch-Croat Foundations, which was set up by the right-wing extremist Douwe van de Bos. Their applications led to the deployment of the First Dutch Volunteer Unit in Croatia.⁹⁴⁸

Most Dutch mercenaries were, like their American, British, Canadian, German and French counterparts in Croatia, active in the 103rd infantry brigade, which was formed in the winter of 1992 as an International Brigade. There was also a special Italian unit, the Garibaldi battalion. In addition, there were reports of Dutch mercenaries in Bosnia. According to Serbian accusations, some mercenaries, including Dutch, were guilty of war crimes.⁹⁴⁹ One of them was the Dutch mercenary Johan Tilder, who was mentioned in the previous chapter.⁹⁵⁰

The Mujahedin in Bosnia

The greatest tension was caused by the participation of Muslims from Western Europe and the Middle East in the ABiH. 'Approximately 4000 Mujahedin, supported by Iranian special operations forces, have been continually intensifying their activities in central Bosnia for more than two years', according to the American Lieutenant Colonel John Sray, who was an intelligence officer in Sarajevo from April to August 1994.⁹⁵¹ There are no reliable figures on the number of mercenaries or volunteers in Bosnia, Srpska and Croatia. Neither is anything known about their effectiveness. According to Bosnian-Serb sources, in the Muslim-Croat Federation there were more than 1300 fighters, including those of Kurdish, Algerian and other Arab origin. This group was said to be centred around Zenica. The MIS considered the number mentioned to be exaggerated.⁹⁵² Like the author Ripley points out, there was no joint Muslim

⁹⁴⁵ For an overview of most of the paramilitary factions and the role of mercenaries and volunteers, see: MoD, *MIS/RNL4*, Supintrep no. 29417/4/040794, 04/07/94.

⁹⁴⁶ A. Rogers, 'Yugoslavia', in: *Flashpoint 1994*, London, 1994, pp. 139-148.

⁹⁴⁷ 'Het moet daar gewoon afgelopen zijn' ('It just has to stop there'), *De Volkskrant*, 02/12/91.

⁹⁴⁸ See for example Sluik & Kurpershoek (eds.), *De Duiveljager*, pp. 97-109; 'Oud-strijders mobiliseren Nederlands steunkorps voor onderdrukt Kroatië' ('Ex-servicemen mobilize Dutch support unit for repressed Croatia'), *Trouw*, 06/11/91; 'Extreem-rechts schiet leger Kroatië te hulp' ('The extreme right leaps to the aid of Croatia's army'), *Trouw*, 07/11/91; 'Garanties ontbreken: vrijwilligers gaan niet naar Kroatië' ('No guarantees: volunteers not going to Croatia'), *Trouw*, 08/11/91; 'Vrijwilligers alsnog "op verkenning" bij militairen Kroatië' ('Volunteers "on reconnaissance" with Croatia's soldiers after all'), *Trouw*, 25/11/91; 'Ultra-rechts in Europa op de bres voor Kroatië' ('The extreme right in Europe into the breach for Croatia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/11/91; 'Werving Kroatië-strijders gestopt na kritiek op comité' ('Recruitment of Croatia fighters stopped following criticism of committee'), *De Volkskrant*, 08/11/91; Jos Slats, 'De huurling gaat omdat de hele wereld Kroatië laat stikken' ('The mercenary goes because the whole world is leaving Croatia in the lurch'), *De Volkskrant*, 11/12/91; idem, 'Nederlandse huurlingen vuren op Serviërs' ('Dutch mercenaries fire on Serbs'), *De Volkskrant*, 23/12/91; idem, 'Vrijwillige strijders vereerd door Kroaten' ('Voluntary fighters honoured by Croats'), *De Volkskrant*, 14/01/92; 'Nederlandse huurlingen gevangen in Hercegovina' ('Dutch mercenaries captured in Hercegovina'), *De Telegraaf*, 25/07/92; and Bert Huisjes, 'Opgejaagd op de Balkan' ('Rout in the Balkans'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 19/09/01.

⁹⁴⁹ 'servische media: Nederlandse huurlingen pleegden oorlogsmisdaden' ('serbian media: Dutch mercenaries committed war crimes'), *De Limburger*, 18/05/95.

⁹⁵⁰ Confidential interview (19). See also: 'serviërs schieten Nederlandse huurling dood' ('serbs shoot dead Dutch mercenary'), *De Limburger*, 17/05/94.

⁹⁵¹ John Sray, 'selling the Bosnian Myth', *Foreign Military Studies*, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, October 1995 and MoD, CRST. Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, Bastiaans to Brantz, 11/07/94.

⁹⁵² MoD, *MIS/CO. No. 2694*, Developments in the former Yugoslav federation, no. 02/94, 08/09/92. See also; Andrew Hogg, 'Arabs join in Bosnia battle', intelligence service *The Times*, 30/08/92.

command and the rival Iranian, Saudi, Turkish and Malaysian-back groups all operated according to their own agendas.⁹⁵³

Mercenaries of non-Yugoslav origin were involved from the outbreak of the armed conflict. An active group was the Mujahedin. These were non-Bosnian, Islamic-fundamentalist fighters from Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, Afghanistan, Jordan, Lebanon, Algeria and Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the names of *Jihad*, *Fis*, *Hamas* and *Hezbollah* were linked with the Mujahedin in Bosnia. Sray estimated the number of Mujahedin fighters at 4000; in April 1994, the CIA arrived at the conclusion that there were approximately 400 fighters.⁹⁵⁴ In 1994, the UN put the number⁹⁵⁵ at 450 to 500, and in 1995 at approximately 600. American estimates, however, spoke of 1200 to 1400. A BVD report from late 1995 likewise gave an estimate of only 200.

This group withdrew from the control of the Bosnian authorities, both politically and militarily. There were unconfirmed reports of control by authorities of the countries of origin, by Islamic-fundamentalist terrorist organizations and by criminal organizations.⁹⁵⁶ The Mujahedin formed part of the 4th, 7th and 8th *Muslimski* brigade, stationed around Zenica in central Bosnia, and took part in the activities of several paramilitary units, such as the Black Swans. They fell under the responsibility of the ABiH 3rd and 7th Corps. Furthermore, there were approximately 25 other Muslim factions and units active in Bosnia, which also included women.⁹⁵⁷

These groups were supplied by the ABiH, but operated decentrally as special units or shock troops. Many ABiH sources, according to an internal UNPROFOR report, considered their military value to be limited. Nonetheless, the UNPROFOR intelligence staff followed their movements closely. The UN estimated their number in the summer of 1995 to be no more than 1500 fighters.⁹⁵⁸ Military experts were, according to the BVD, of the opinion that because of their small number, the threat from these Mujahedin should not be overestimated.⁹⁵⁹

Furthermore, the population was not particularly enthusiastic about the fighters and appeared to be indifferent to their religious propaganda. The Bosnian government appeared to have less antipathy to the Mujahedin. President Izetbegovic especially appeared to see the fighters as 'a conduit for funds from the Gulf and Middle East'.⁹⁶⁰ Within the framework of the Dayton agreement, the Mujahedin fighters should have left Bosnia before 13 January 1996.⁹⁶¹ In October, UNPROFOR concluded that the numbers had declined to between 700 and 800. The presence of the Mujahedin was used by the Croats in particular to delay the process of reconciliation and normalization. The number of clashes with the local population around Tuzla increased, and the risk to the British UNPROFOR units was deemed to be significant. According to the ABiH, radical elements within the 7th *Muslimski* Brigade were responsible. The mood deteriorated after a British soldier killed a Mujahedin fighter. According to UNPROFOR, the US pressure on Izetbegovic was stepped up strongly to force the Mujahedin out of Bosnia.⁹⁶² Janvier also appealed to the UN in New York to step up pressure on the Bosnian and Croatian ambassadors.⁹⁶³ Iran did continue to support Izetbegovic, and in the autumn of

⁹⁵³ Ripley, *Mercenaries*, p. 57.

⁹⁵⁴ James Risen, 'Iran gave Bosnia leader \$ 500,000', *Los Angeles Times*, 31/12/96.

⁹⁵⁵ UNNY, *DPKO, Coded Cables UNPROFOR*. De Lapresle to Annan, Z-1371, 07/09/94; UNNY, *UNPROFOR, Box 88039*. DFC to Brigadier Baril, 03/11/94.

⁹⁵⁶ Archives BVD, BVD Report *The Mujahedin in Bosnia*, 29/01/96.

⁹⁵⁷ For an overview of most paramilitary factions and the role of mercenaries and volunteers, See: MoD, *MIS/RNLA*. Supintrep no. 29417/4/040794, 04/07/94.

⁹⁵⁸ UNNY, *DPKO, File #87303*. G-2 to COS, 07/01/95 and UNGE, *UNPROFOR*, Janvier to Annan, Z-1623, *Mujahedin in Bosnia*, 08/09/95.

⁹⁵⁹ Archives BVD, BVD Report *The Mujahedin in Bosnia*, 29/01/96.

⁹⁶⁰ UNGE, *UNPROFOR*. Janvier to Annan, Z-1623, *Mujahedin in Bosnia*, 08/09/95.

⁹⁶¹ Archives BVD, BVD Report *The Mujahedin in Bosnia*, 29/01/96.

⁹⁶² UNGE, *UNPROFOR*. Akashi to Annan, Z-2024, *Update on Mujahedin in Bosnia*, 31/10/95.

⁹⁶³ UNGE, *UNPROFOR*. Janvier to Kittani, Z-2040, *Mujahedin Activities in Bosnia*, 03/11/95.

1996 they donated another \$ 500,000 to his election campaign. Only at the end of 1996 did the US government get its own way, and Bosnia severed the military and intelligence links with Iran.⁹⁶⁴

6. Special Forces in Bosnia

The signing of the Washington Agreement in March 1994 and the institution of a ceasefire in central Bosnia made an effective liaison between UNPROFOR and the warring factions necessary to supply accurate information to the UN commanders. The activities, expertise and competence of the UNMOs was deemed insufficient. Furthermore, the UNMOs did not fall under the authority of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander Rose. London therefore decided to introduce special troops into Bosnia, which were known as Joint Commission Observers (JCOs).⁹⁶⁵ In reality these were units of the Special Air Services (SAS) and Special Boat Service (SBS).

The JCOs operated in small teams of a few soldiers. Attempts were made to create a multinational JCO organization, but because of the different levels of skill, poorly coordinated communication facilities and the lack of a joint intelligence infrastructure, the mixed patrols were no great success. There were various SAS operations in Bosnia. *The Guardian* reported a special SAS operation involving ambulances, which carried communication equipment instead of stretchers. These 'ambulances' were donated to Bosnia by the British Humberside health authority out of humanitarian considerations, but would often suddenly appear in the most surprising places, such as in the Bihac.⁹⁶⁶ According to a former UNPROFOR worker, the JCOs were already active in Bosnia from 1992 and gathered UK-eyes-only Humint. These JCOs reported within a UK-eyes-only chain. Part of what they gathered was shared with the UNPROFOR Military Information Office in Zagreb.⁹⁶⁷

An SAS unit was stationed in Gorazde⁹⁶⁸ and an SAS unit was also sent as JCOs to Srebrenica.⁹⁶⁹ The primary underlying objective of the JCOs in Srebrenica was to gather intelligence on Dutchbat and to discover whether anything illegal was happening between the ABiH and Dutchbat.⁹⁷⁰ On 18 March 1995, a new two-man JCO team arrived in Srebrenica. They relieved a team of four JCOs, consisting of three British soldiers and a Swedish soldier nicknamed 'schwarzenegger'.⁹⁷¹ On 17 May, a third British soldier joined this new team. The patrol was attached to the commandos in Potocari. The JCOs were mainly involved in the normal reconnaissance patrols. This SAS unit was easy to identify by their British uniforms.⁹⁷² Shortly after his arrival in the enclave, their commander had a meeting with Karremans, whom he immediately offered support, such as the use of secure satellite communication equipment. The SAS unit also worked with one time pads (codes for one-off use) and cryptography equipment. According to a British intelligence service official, the SAS communication traffic was unbreakable.⁹⁷³

Karremans insisted that the JCOs should work only with the commandos. The JCOs encouraged the commandos to explore 'hot spots', and to talk with the warring factions, which until then they had not done. However, Dutchbat soldiers were not allowed by the battalion leaders to have

⁹⁶⁴ Barry Schweid, 'CIA: Bosnia has broken military, intelligence ties with Iran', *Associated Press*, 31/12/96; James Risen, 'Iran gave Bosnia leader \$ 500,000', *Los Angeles Times*, 31/12/96 and James Risen, 'Report of Bosnian Spy Network stirs concerns in U.S.', *Los Angeles Times*, 06/02/97.

⁹⁶⁵ Confidential information (1).

⁹⁶⁶ Ed Vulliamy, 'Britain's secret war in Bosnia', *The Guardian*, 02/04/96 and Franchet, *Casque bleu*, pp. 27-30.

⁹⁶⁷ Confidential information (39).

⁹⁶⁸ MacDonald, *SAS*, p. 153-154.

⁹⁶⁹ See for a personal account of one of the SAS soldiers: Nick Cameron, 'Witness to Betrayal', *The Sunday Times*, 07/07/02; 'Left to Die', *The Sunday Times*, 21/07/02 and 'Going in for the Kill', *The Sunday Times*, 21/07/02. 'Britse Defensie wil SAS'er Srebrenica de mond snoeren' (*British MoD wants to silence SAS soldier*), *Leidsch Dagblad*, 01/08/02.

⁹⁷⁰ Confidential interview (68).

⁹⁷¹ Interview with D.J.E. Veen, 11/01/99.

⁹⁷² Interview with C.J. Matthijssen, 11/10/99.

⁹⁷³ Confidential information (1) and interview with J.R. Mulder, 06/10/98.

much contact with the population. The JCOs did rapidly meet ABiH representatives, a consequence of which was that Karremans banned such meetings in the future, and he also banned the JCOs from attending the regular meetings between Dutchbat and the warring factions. The JCOs continued with their patrols together with the commandos. In April, the fighting increased, and there were rumours that the VRS was going to attack the enclave. The local ABiH commander, Oric, seemed to have disappeared; another SAS patrol then arrived from Zepa on a 'visit' to Srebrenica. Dutchbat soldier Van Duijn recalled this incident; he later became acquainted with a British soldier on an SAS course in the UK who had been in the enclave in April 1995. Van Duijn did not recall seeing the soldier, which turned out to be correct, because the SAS soldier stated: 'I arrived with a patrol from the outside.' They were looking for Naser Oric, who had meanwhile left the enclave and was in Tuzla. The SAS soldiers wanted to know where he was. Van Duijn later asked how they ended up in Srebrenica; it seemed that the SAS unit had simply walked from Zepa to Srebrenica. One of them spoke fluent Serbo-Croat.⁹⁷⁴

On 25 May, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command informed the commander of the JCOs that an operation against the eastern enclaves was a realistic probability, and that Srebrenica would then be the first on the list. This was passed on to Karremans, but he did not believe it. On 27 May, the VRS announced to Dutchbat that it intended to capture OP-E. The VRS threatened to use force and Dutchbat reinforced the OP; an offer of help from the SAS was rejected by Karremans, because he said he had enough soldiers available. Subsequently, on 3 June, OP-E fell into VRS hands.⁹⁷⁵

On 8 June, the ABiH announced to Dutchbat that an attack on the entire enclave was expected soon; the JCOs too then reported that to Karremans. The JCO commander pointed out afterwards, however, that such rumours circulated constantly and were difficult to take seriously. The JCOs had furthermore no intelligence of their own that indicated an attack. Only on 9 July was it clear to the JCOs that the VRS wanted to capture the entire enclave.⁹⁷⁶ Karremans considered the JCOs mainly as potential Forward Air Controllers and not so much as useful 'instruments' for gathering additional intelligence. There were differences of opinion between the SAS and Karremans on several occasions, and the battalion commander restricted the opportunities for their operational action considerably.⁹⁷⁷ Had the SAS gone against the wishes of Karremans, they would have been asked to leave the enclave.

After the start of the attack, the JCOs contributed to guiding NATO aircraft to VRS targets (for this see comprehensively Chapter 6 of Part III of the main Srebrenica report). The JCOs were led by Major Jacko and had their own communication equipment. Their mission was also to serve as 'forward observers' during NATO air strikes. That this came too late, had, according to Muslim witnesses, to do with the fact that the JCO unit had refused to make a correct assessment of the severity of the VRS attack.⁹⁷⁸ Eventually, the SAS would leave the enclave at the same time as Dutchbat. In May 1996, the *Daily Telegraph* revealed the presence of the SAS in Srebrenica, which had been given the task of reporting to General Smith in Sarajevo.

The SAS also operated in the area of the Scandinavian battalion. This battalion was not authorized to give orders to them. The ten-man SAS unit did not report to the Scandinavian battalion nor was this unit responsible for the safety of the SAS soldiers. An agreement was reached later with the commander of Sector North East at least to know in which areas the SAS were located. According to commander Arlefalk of that battalion, the SAS soldiers moved 'hither and thither' and so occasionally got caught up in skirmishes.⁹⁷⁹

In addition to British, there were also French Special Forces active in Bosnia, especially in the Skenderija district of Sarajevo. A number of them came from the French Gendarmerie's special

⁹⁷⁴ Interview with L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99. A British intelligence source denied that a SAS patrol ever walked from Zepa to Srebrenica. Confidential information (85).

⁹⁷⁵ For this, see also Part III of the main Srebrenica report.

⁹⁷⁶ Confidential information (1).

⁹⁷⁷ Confidential interviews (43) and (49). Further: Tom Walker, 'SAS Book on Bosnia blocked', *The Sunday Times*, 09/07/00.

⁹⁷⁸ Jon Swain, 'The Damned', *The Sunday Times*, 12/05/96.

⁹⁷⁹ Interview with G. Arlefalk, 18/05/00.

intervention team, where they were responsible for anti-sniper duties. These teams had been through a very special training, and they had the most up-to-date optical devices and equipment. The French determined that Bosnian-Serb snipers were not the only ones that were active and causing large numbers of victims among the population, but some sniper fire also came from ABiH soldiers, who deliberately fired on their own civilian population to be able to blame the Bosnian Serbs.⁹⁸⁰ The ABiH 'hated' the French special unit, because they sometimes used laser weapons to disable their opponents.⁹⁸¹ The French Special Forces also operated in the Maglaj. In early 1993 they are said to have been on standby in Split to free Morillon from Srebrenica in a secret rescue operation.⁹⁸²

How the Canadian battalion got out of the enclave

American special units were also often spotted in Bosnia. The most important operation in which Special Forces were involved took place in March 1993. Until then, neither the VRS nor the ABiH had permitted the Canadian battalion to be relieved by Dutchbat. On 12 February 1994, an agreement was reached between the Canadian prime minister, Jean Chrétien, and President Clinton: American Special Forces were to remove Canbat from Srebrenica in a night-time operation with helicopters and Suppression of Enemy Air Defence (SEAD) aircraft. It was more or less an execution of the agreements set down in an earlier secret American memorandum, destined for the Canadian Chief of Defence Staff, containing the promise that the American army would come to the aid of the Canadian peacekeepers if 'circumstances warranted and their safety was in peril'.

It was agreed that in addition to Canbat, a Dutch reconnaissance unit would also be removed from the enclave in this operation, which after many problems⁹⁸³ had meanwhile arrived in Srebrenica at the end of February. The Chief of Operations on the Canadian side was General Maisonneuve. There were two landing sites, Dorval and Mirabel, named after the Montreal airports. The Canadians and Dutch were to muster at Dorval, and all vehicles and heavy materiel was to be placed at Mirabel. This site was to be destroyed after removing the soldiers, so that the ABiH and VRS would not benefit from the equipment. NATO in Naples was informed of this plan.⁹⁸⁴ It is not known whether UNPROFOR command in Zagreb, or Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo, were aware of it.⁹⁸⁵ General M. Baril, Boutros-Ghali's Canadian military adviser, said otherwise that he was unaware of these plans to remove Canbat from the enclave by force.⁹⁸⁶ The same was true of Netherlands Defence Minister Relus Ter Beek.⁹⁸⁷

The tension in Ottawa increased: Canbat could not leave Srebrenica and Dutchbat had still not arrived. The question was whether Dutchbat would arrive before the rotation was forced by the deployment of air power and the Special Forces. On 20 February, a discussion took place between the Canadian commander in Srebrenica, Yvan Bouchard, and the overall Canbat commander, Moore, through coded messages. Moore spoke, for example, of visitors from Italy (being US Special Forces). The following day, the two talked to each other again about the execution of the operation.

On 22 and 23 February, a meeting took place in Naples between a Canbat representative and four members of the Canadian Joint Task Force Two (JTF2), which can be compared with the British SAS.⁹⁸⁸ In the nine-page operation plan that was discussed in this meeting, the operation for removing

⁹⁸⁰ John Sray, 'selling the Bosnian Myth', in: *Foreign Military Studies*, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, October 1995 and Tom Quiggin, 'srebrenica and the international community in Bosnia', *The International Spectator*, Vol. 52 (1998) 2, p. 83.

⁹⁸¹ Confidential interview (9). These arms were forbidden by international conventions. See also: Harald Doornbos, 'Groene spionnen tussen blauwhelmen' ('Green spies among blue helmets'), *De Stem*, 10/05/95.

⁹⁸² Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, p. 105.

⁹⁸³ DND, Ottawa, *Green Folder Confidential*, Memo J3 Ops Note, 24/01/94.

⁹⁸⁴ Interview with D. Moore, 15/11/99.

⁹⁸⁵ The British government was also informed. Confidential information (16).

⁹⁸⁶ Interview with M. Baril, 21/12/99.

⁹⁸⁷ Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

⁹⁸⁸ For JTF2 operations in Bosnia: Pugliese, *Canada's Secret Commandos*, pp. 41 - 46.

from the enclave a total of 140 Canadian UN soldiers, six members of the Dutch reconnaissance party, six UNCivPol workers, two UNMOs and four *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) workers with Sea Stallion helicopters was covered in great detail. The code name of the plan was Operation Royal Castor/Blue Jay. It described on a minute-by-minute basis how, from takeoff to landing in Brindisi, Italy, a total of 158 people would be removed from the enclave in a secret night-time operation in a matter of few hours. Different scenarios were considered, including one in which the operation would be carried out in a moderately to highly hostile environment. The Joint Task Force Two together with US Special Forces were to carry out the operation.⁹⁸⁹

On 24 February, the Special Forces arrived in Zagreb and were brought to a state of readiness. An air fleet of 2 C-130 Gunships and a few F-18s were to provide close air support and the operation was to start at 18.00 hours. The mission was flown from the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga and from the air force base Brindisi (Italy). Bouchard received instructions that the Dutch were not allowed to come to Dorval and Mirabel, but they would be taken along. In the meantime, Canbat had started with the expansion of the night-time APC patrols, so that neither the ABiH nor the VRS would be alarmed by Canadians driving around in the dark. In total, five people were informed of the entire operation, but otherwise it was a completely American-Canadian affair, in which UNPROFOR was entirely uninvolved. The expectation was that there would be approximately fifteen deaths.

The plan was sent to Visoko. A Canadian officer, whom Moore sent to Srebrenica with an aid convoy as a courier, carried the secret operation plan on his body. On 2 March, this officer returned from Srebrenica, after speaking extensively with Commander Bouchard about the operation. On 3 March, the official handover to Dutchbat took place; one day later, the Canadian compound in Srebrenica was blocked by five hundred ABiH soldiers. Canbat was accused in a hostile atmosphere of permitting the VRS lines to be advanced. The VRS also stepped up the pressure and refused to allow the convoy that had come to collect Canbat access to the enclave.⁹⁹⁰ On 5 March 1994, the ABiH surrounded the compound again, this time with more than 2000 people.⁹⁹¹

After this news, Ottawa decided to execute the plan. Apparently only Canbat was to be evacuated, and there were no plans to take along the Dutch reconnaissance unit. The evacuation of Canbat was to be carried out with helicopters, and furthermore the aircraft carrier Saratoga was standing by. Bouchard told the Dutch that he had developed a plan involving close air support and tear gas to clear a path out of the enclave.⁹⁹² He gave the impression of being under severe stress in those days.⁹⁹³

On 7 March, everyone was ready and the special operation should have taken place, but ultimately it was abandoned at the last moment, because the VRS lifted the blockade and Canbat could leave by road after all.⁹⁹⁴ Canbat was therefore able to leave the enclave without intervention, although it was a close shave.⁹⁹⁵

The evacuation of the Canadian battalion appeared to be problematic and raises the question of whether similar plans also existed for Dutchbat. According to the Chief of Staff of BHC, General Brinkman, the evacuation of Dutch units was never seriously discussed. The grip on the UN troops was actually extremely loose. The headquarters in Sarajevo was not a normal headquarters, and there was not even any formal transfer of authority over the troops. All the national governments maintained varying degrees of frequent contact with their own units in the field. They also took their own measures

⁹⁸⁹ Confidential information (17).

⁹⁹⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR. Declassified by DND, Briefing Note for COS J3, 07/03/94 and 'serbs stall Canadian withdrawal', *The Toronto Star*, 04/03/94.

⁹⁹¹ 'Bosnian Muslims want Canadian troops to stay', *The Toronto Star*, 07/03/94 and Interview with Yvan Bouchard, 15/11/99. Further: Confidential information (18).

⁹⁹² Canadian AIA, Relief in Place, p. 95.

⁹⁹³ Jellema, *First-In*, pp. 105-106.

⁹⁹⁴ Interview with D. Moore, 15/11/99. See also: 'Canadian convoy heads to Srebrenica' *The Toronto Star*, 09/03/94.

⁹⁹⁵ NMFA, *Embassy Ottawa*, Fietelaars to Foreign Affairs, no. 046, 22/04/94.

to support or evacuate their units. Nonetheless, the US Secretary of Defense, Perry, had indicated that the Dutch soldiers in Bosnia would be able to count on support if they were to find themselves in difficulty. The promised support was not specified in detail at the time, and neither did that appear to be necessary then, with this promise on the table.⁹⁹⁶ According to Brinkman, UN-plans for an evacuation continued to be no more than paper tigers. The serious plans had to come from NATO, such as the withdrawal plan Oplan 40104 as well as from the national governments: the British for Gorazde and the French for Sarajevo.⁹⁹⁷

US Special Forces also remained active in Bosnia later. They were said to have been given permission to use UNHCR jeeps fitted with special registration plates for their operations.⁹⁹⁸ The security services of the Bosnian Serbs had allegedly occasionally picked up CIA or SAS personnel, but an arrangement was worked out with UNHCR, that they would then issue a statement that it was one of their people.⁹⁹⁹ Dutch soldiers for example observed fifty US Special Forces soldiers in Mostar, who vanished again abruptly.¹⁰⁰⁰ After July 1995, US Special Forces and the SAS were even more active in the region; there were said to be serious plans to have them capture Karadzic.¹⁰⁰¹

7. Conclusions

The following quotation gives a clear indication of what the secret operations in the Balkans were all about.

‘All the conflicts concerned are fundamentally struggles for power, irrespective of whether the operations are initiated in order to provide humanitarian aid or to limit the scope of an armed confrontation. (...) Experience shows that the parties to the intervention inevitably become parties to the conflict, with their own distinct interests’.¹⁰⁰²

The secret arms supplies to the warring factions took place within the framework of a complex international political constellation.

The United States had to deal with a variety of fields of tension. After the Gulf War, it was payback time and in the Arab world (especially Saudi Arabia) it was expected that Washington would support the Bosnian Muslims. Furthermore, great pressure was brought to bear on the Clinton administration by the media and Congress, which was dominated by the Republicans. On the other hand, open military support would bring the United States into conflict with European countries that were contributing ground forces to UNPROFOR. The European countries expected that additional arms would encourage the conflict to flare up, resulting in a growing stream of Displaced Persons. The lift and strike strategy (lifting the embargo and resorting to air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs) that the Americans opted for, was partly motivated by a desire to meet domestic and foreign pressure: a ‘political gesture’, because the US government knew that the Security Council would not agree and that it would lead to a decision in London and Paris to withdraw from UNPROFOR. The US lobby in the Security Council for lifting the arms embargo was also connected to the desire not to have to deploy any American ground forces.¹⁰⁰³

⁹⁹⁶ Interview with J.C. Gmelich Meijling, 04/12/01 and also Interview with M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00.

⁹⁹⁷ Interview with J.W. Brinkman, 11/10/99 and F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, 28/08/00. See also: Välimäki, *Intelligence*, p. 87. See also Part III of the main Srebrenica report.

⁹⁹⁸ Harald Doornbos, ‘Groene spionnen tussen blauwhelmen’, *De Stem*, 10/05/95.

⁹⁹⁹ Interview with Milovan Milutinovic, 20-22/03/00.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Confidential interview (38).

¹⁰⁰¹ Confidential interview (69) and Maggie O’Keane, ‘Hunting Radovan’, *The Guardian*, 20/02/01.

¹⁰⁰² Välimäki, *Intelligence*, p. 86.

¹⁰⁰³ David Morrison, ‘How Bosnia is Becoming a Priority’, *National Journal*, 20/08/94.

The third party country strategy offered an even better way out of this dilemma: the so-called 'Croatian pipeline' (arms supplies from Iran to Croatia and from there to Bosnia) was an alternative to strengthening the Muslims and Croats in a military sense after the creation of the Muslim-Croat Federation. Furthermore, a stronger Bosnia and Croatia would ensure a reduction of the pressure on Washington to send ground forces.

The American government could do nothing towards supplies by third party countries, because Congress had removed that possibility. A law drafted by senators Nunn and Mitchell banned the use of government funds for the support of or assistance in enforcing the arms embargo. It is the firm conviction of Dame Pauline Neville-Jones, who in 1993-1994 was chairman of the British Joint Intelligence Committee, that American personnel themselves were not involved in the purchase and transport, but were responsible for the funding. According to her, these supplies definitely were a flagrant violation of international law: the actions of these bodies meant that the American government violated Security Council resolutions.¹⁰⁰⁴

As such, the UN itself in part also generated these secret operations. The fact is that Bosnia was officially admitted to the United Nations as the 177th member state. It is strange then that the Security Council did not draw the logical conclusion that a new state may take measures for defence against an armed attack. The embargo curbed the legal arms trade, but did nothing to reduce the demand for, and the supply of, arms, and only displaced it onto illegal circuits.¹⁰⁰⁵

Although the US government will have observed the increasing influence of Iran, they put up with it. Sarajevo would ultimately, it was thought, allow the political and military solidarity with the United States to take precedence over that with Teheran. In the course of time, US intelligence services will have established that the number of Mujahedin fighters was not considerable and moreover that they were not in great favour among the Bosnian population. The military leaders of the ABiH also had a low estimate of their fighting power. The Mujahedin seen especially as a 'political tool' for obtaining the support of some countries in the Arab world.

At the same time, the Islamic fighters played a role as a political lever: Izetbegovic was aware that Saudi Arabia and Turkey were unhappy with the Iranian influence.¹⁰⁰⁶ There is no doubt that the Bosnian government will have played this trump card to gain the support of these two countries. Izetbegovic clung as long as possible to the Iranian connection, but in 1996 Sarajevo had to let go of this under US pressure. The same was also true of bringing in the Mujahedin. They were tolerated in Bosnia, and were used by Izetbegovic as a political lever for attracting funds in the Middle East.

In view of the long history of Turkey in the Balkans, an active role in the region for this country was predictable. The traditional Greek links with Serbia and the political support of Athens to Belgrade will without doubt have played a role. Furthermore, Ankara will have wished to contain the Iranian influence. Turkey was a perfect candidate to serve as a direct supplier. The armed forces had the aircraft, arms and logistic infrastructure. Operations could take place undisturbed from the Turkish occupied part of Cyprus, and Croatia and Bosnia were easy to reach. The American 'logistics patronage' moreover ensured that the flights to Tuzla remained 'unseen'. It was likely that the Croatian pipeline would be discovered, but because UNPROFOR did not have the mandate and the resources to act against it, it did not matter. It was likewise to be expected that the direct flights to Tuzla, Visoko and Bihac would be seen, in spite of the fact that the AWACS had been rendered 'blind' or did not fly. The Americans managed through damage control to limit the damage, while taking a further step-up in the pressure on transatlantic relations into the bargain.¹⁰⁰⁷

The indirect American support of the ABiH by looking the other way in the presence of direct arms supplies and the Croatian pipeline were described as a sort of 'Vietnamization' of the war. In other words: a strong ABiH was created, which was able to compensate for the lack of American

¹⁰⁰⁴ Interview with P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Johan Peleman, 'Wapenhandel naar Bosnië-Herzegovina', *Noord-Zuid Cabier*, Vol. 3 (1997) 22, pp. 94-95.

¹⁰⁰⁶ See also: Roger Cohen, *Hearts grown brutal*, p. 408.

¹⁰⁰⁷ See also: 'Allies and Lies', *BBC Correspondent*, 22/06/01.

ground forces with a robust mandate.¹⁰⁰⁸ Something similar happened at the end of the war in Vietnam. It is not strange that different views existed within the Clinton administration on arms supplies to Bosnia and the influx of Mujahedin. There were also greatly divergent views within the CIA on a comparable operation during the Reagan administration, when Stinger missiles were supplied to the Mujahedin fighters in Afghanistan. The then Head of Operations for the Middle East at the CIA, T. Twetten, described the supporters of collaboration with the Mujahedin fighters within the Reagan administration as 'strange people developing strange ideas' at the time.¹⁰⁰⁹ Now too there were dangers attached to illegal arms supplies, which some certainly did recognize.

The direct results of the clandestine arms supplies to the warring factions are difficult to identify precisely. In general terms, the VRS will have consolidated and sometimes reinforced its military position. The problem with the Bosnian Serbs was not so much the availability of light and heavy arms, but rather shortages of trained soldiers. They were supplied amply from Serbia. The clandestine arms supplies were therefore of greater importance to the Croats and the Bosnian Muslims. The training and the supplying of arms, for example, simplified the Croatian operations in the Krajina in mid 1995.

Alongside secret arms supplies, the company MPRI provided training. An observer who was a witness to the operations in which Croatian commandos crossed the river Una during the offensive against the Bosnian Serbs, observed that this was a 'textbook US field manual river crossing'.¹⁰¹⁰ By engaging this company, Washington at the same time also reduced the danger of 'direct' involvement.¹⁰¹¹ The operation resulted in the killing of more than 500 civilians and the exodus of more than 150.000 ethnic Serbs from the Krajina. In view of the US covert support to the Croats it will be interesting to see if the International War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague will seriously investigate this matter.¹⁰¹²

The ABiH had no lack of soldiers, but did lack arms. Heavy arms especially were necessary, but these did not flow through the Croatian pipeline. Only light arms and ammunition came through, because Zagreb was all too afraid that the Bosnian Muslims would terminate the Muslim-Croat Federation sooner or later, and would turn on Croatia with these 'Iranian arms'. The Croats had for instance not yet forgotten the fighting around Mostar in the autumn of 1993. The ABiH then paid the VRS to shell Croatian positions. In some areas, the Croatian authorities therefore also collaborated with the VRS, and there were supporters of containing the flow of arms to Bosnia.¹⁰¹³

The clandestine arms supplies through the Croatian pipeline and Black Flights were a violation of the arms embargo imposed by the international community against the warring factions in the former Yugoslavia. This embargo was officially sanctioned by the Security Council. The Black Flights were moreover a serious violation of the No Fly Zone over Bosnia.¹⁰¹⁴ This could have led to the total ruin of the peace process, and the negotiations on reopening Tuzla airfield for humanitarian flights were put directly at risk.¹⁰¹⁵ The special representative of the UN Secretary-General, Akashi, reported regularly in 1994 and 1995 on new arms and weapons systems. UNPROFOR, however, had no mandate to monitor or to oppose the violations of the arms embargo.¹⁰¹⁶ The sanctions and the No Fly Zone were violated systematically and could not be seriously enforced. This sent the wrong signals to

¹⁰⁰⁸ Sean Gervasi, 'Involvement of the US and German intelligence services', *Strategic Policy*, No. 3, 1995, passim.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Bill Gertz, 'study reveals "politicization" of intelligence', *The Washington Times*, 09/10/00.

¹⁰¹⁰ Charlotte Elgar, 'Invisible US Army defeats Serbs', *The Observer*, 05/11/95. See also W. de Jonge, 'Train and Equip', in: *Militaire Spectator* Vol. 169 (2000) 9, pp. 480-489.

¹⁰¹¹ Thomas H. Henriksen, 'Covert Operations, Now More Than Ever', *Orbis*, Vol. 44 (2000) 1, p. 153.

¹⁰¹² George Rudman, 'Hague tribunal could spell trouble for former U.S. officials', *The Washington Times*, 18/05/02 and Jeffrey Kuhner, 'Tribunal probes U.S. aid to Croatia', *The Washington Times*, 06/12/02.

¹⁰¹³ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 385-386.

¹⁰¹⁴ James Risen & Doyle McManus, 'U.S. Okd Iran Arms for Bosnia, Officials Say', *The Los Angeles Times*, 05/04/96.

¹⁰¹⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, *Box 139*. G-2 HQ UNPROFOR, Daily Info Summary, 11/02/95.

¹⁰¹⁶ UNGE, UNPROFOR, *Box 124*. Akashi to Annan, Z-1070, 18/07/94.

the warring factions, namely that the international community was not prepared to put serious effort into this issue.¹⁰¹⁷

The influence of the supplies was also felt in East Bosnia when in April 1995 the ABiH Spring offensive started. The ABiH in Srebrenica also received new arms. It has been demonstrated that the clandestine supplies usually led to rapid transit by helicopter to the eastern enclaves such as Srebrenica and Zepa. New arms generally facilitated new sorties from the enclaves into Bosnian-Serb villages and military positions, which in turn provoked a response from the VRS. This sometimes put Dutch soldiers in danger, because in the enclaves the ABiH all too often used Dutchbat's OPs as cover in military actions against the VRS.¹⁰¹⁸ Therefore the enclave increasingly acquired the status of a 'protected area' for the ABiH, from which the ABiH could carry out hit and run operations against, often civilian, targets. These operations probably contributed to the fact that at the end of June the VRS was prepared to take no more, after which they decided to intervene: the VRS decided shortly after to capture the enclave.

In this respect, the Black Flights to Tuzla and the sustained arms supplies to the ABiH in the eastern enclaves did perhaps contribute to the ultimate decision to attack the enclave. In this connection it is not surprising that Mladic and other Bosnian Serbs constantly complained about this, but usually received no response to their complaints.¹⁰¹⁹ In the eyes of the VRS, the complaints were perhaps justified, but it must not be forgotten that UNPROFOR did not have the mandate to oppose the supplies. In fact the sanctions and the arms embargo had little substance. At most, the flow of arms, ammunition, resources, oil and other goods was reduced somewhat. The smuggling trade flourished, and otherwise organized international criminals, including Russians, ensured sufficient supply.¹⁰²⁰ The border between Serbia and Srpska over the Drina may well have been monitored by the ICFY mission, but this check was far from watertight.

Smuggling operations from Serbia to Srpska took place daily. There were perhaps too few observers to man all the crossings, but neither did any major supplies of tanks, APCs and artillery take place, as the Bosnian Muslims claimed. There was cooperation from the Yugoslav authorities, because Belgrade had much to lose in the event of excessively visible violations of the embargo. The UN headquarters in Zagreb did hear constant rumours of support of the VJ, but hard evidence of it was never received.¹⁰²¹ Secret UN documents, to which the media referred and that indicated that the VRS was receiving 'high-level military support' from the VJ and that personnel and equipment was being supplied across the Drina¹⁰²², were not found by the NIOD in the UN archives. The conclusion was therefore that there was Serbian involvement in the war in Bosnia in 1995, but not in a direct way. The military infrastructure of the old Yugoslavia was still largely intact; the Serbian assistance related to logistics support, components, payment of officers' salaries and communications.¹⁰²³

From the American side it was confirmed that no evidence was ever supplied that arms went to the Bosnian Serbs across the Drina. The road via Croatia was open, however. The conclusion therefore was that the embargo along the Drina was 'fairly effective', albeit not watertight.¹⁰²⁴ There was another Western intelligence service that never had hard evidence in the period before the fall of Srebrenica of the VRS receiving arms from the VJ, but it still cannot be ruled out completely.¹⁰²⁵ In addition, the ICFY mission had to contend with a formidable opponent in the form of Kertis, who is described by

¹⁰¹⁷ Filippo Andreatta, *The Bosnian War and the New World Order*, WEU Occasional Paper No. 1, October 1996, p. 14.

¹⁰¹⁸ For example: UNNY, *DPKO coded cables* De Lapresle to Annan, Z-528, 04/04/94.

¹⁰¹⁹ For this: see also Chapter 8 of this study and especially Part III of the Srebrenica report.

¹⁰²⁰ William C. Potter, Djuro Miljanic & Ivo Slaus, 'Tito's Nuclear Legacy', *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 56 (2000), 2, pp. 63-75.

¹⁰²¹ Interview with Tony Banbury, 11/05/00.

¹⁰²² See: 'Documentary alleges Serbian Arms Used to Invade Srebrenica', *ANP English News Bulletin*, 30/05/95 and *Reuter*, 29/05/96.

¹⁰²³ Interview with R.A. Smith, 12/01/00. Smith did not rely on intelligence reports from UNPROFOR.

¹⁰²⁴ Confidential interview (14).

¹⁰²⁵ Confidential interview (8).

Western intelligence services as the best organized smuggler in the Balkans. Large deliveries probably took place completely outside the view of ICFY, and much was supplied with low-flying helicopters or through the Krajina; this then happened with the knowledge of Croatia, which had an interest in a sustained conflict between the ABiH and the VRS because it tied up Bosnian-Serb troops, who could then not be deployed against the Croats. It also assured that the ABiH was not nurturing any particularly large-scale offensive plans against Croatia. Zagreb will moreover, as with Iran, have skimmed the Serbian supplies.

The arms supplies to the warring factions increased the instability in the region and allowed the armed conflict to flare up. It is no coincidence that offensives by the ABiH, VRS or Croats took place a few weeks after the military material was delivered. A common pattern was as follows: clandestine supplies, training - whether or not supervised by instructors - and after that the start of offensives. New arms mostly facilitated, the VRS complained, renewed sorties from the enclaves into Serbian villages and military positions, which in turn provoked a response from the VRS. Finally, the reconstruction of the secret arms supplies shows that divergent views existed in the various NATO member states on the possible consequences for the UNPROFOR troops in the former Yugoslavia. Washington had different ideas on this from most European capitals, but then Washington had no ground forces in Bosnia.

Chapter 5

The Signals Intelligence war of the Western intelligence services in and around Bosnia

‘In God we trust, all others we monitor’

(motto of an intercept operator)

1. Introduction

Intercepted conversations played an important role during the war in Bosnia and intercepted communications traffic had become an area of interest just a few months after the fall of Srebrenica. ‘Intercepts’ and prior knowledge of the attack on Srebrenica have been inextricably linked in various publications. The article by the journalist Andreas Zumach published in October 1995, also printed in various newspapers in the Netherlands, can serve as an example here.¹⁰²⁶ According to Zumach various sources claimed that from 17 June 1995 onwards, more than three weeks before the attack started, American intelligence services had monitored the daily conversations between General Momcilo Perisic, Chief of Staff of the Yugoslav Army, the *Vojska Jugoslavija* (VJ), and General Ratko Mladic.

Zumach is not specific which US intelligence service was supposedly reading this traffic and is more or less lumping all 17 US intelligence services into one group. Nevertheless, in these conversations the two generals are said to have planned the operation against Srebrenica. Excerpts from these conversations were reportedly published. The conversations proved that the initiative for the attack on Srebrenica came from Belgrade. Perisic is said to have had command of the actual attack on the enclave. This intelligence about the planned attack was not passed on to UNPROFOR in order not to disrupt the peace efforts of President Clinton.¹⁰²⁷ When asked about this, Defence Minister Voorhoeve said he was aware of these reports; he addressed an inquiry about their correctness to his American colleague William Perry.¹⁰²⁸

Until the present day, knowledge about the role and importance of Sigint in the years after the end of the Second World War can actually best be described as ‘an inventory of ignorance’. The British historian Christopher Andrew wrote:

‘The biggest gap in our knowledge of United States intelligence collection during the Cold War concerns the role of Sigint. No history of the Second World War nowadays fails to mention the role of the Anglo-American code breakers in hastening victory over Germany and Japan. By contrast, most histories of the Cold War make no reference to Sigint at all’.¹⁰²⁹

¹⁰²⁶ Andreas Zumach, ‘US Intelligence knew Serbs were planning an assault on Srebrenica’, *Basic Reports*, No. 47, 16/10/95. See also: ‘VS wisten van komende val Srebrenica’ (US knew of impending fall of Srebrenica), *Nederlands Dagblad*, 13/10/95 and ‘VS wisten al weken tevoren van val Srebrenica’ (US knew about fall of Srebrenica weeks in advance), *De Gelderlander*, 13/10/95.

¹⁰²⁷ See also: ‘Amerikanen verzweigen voorkennis Srebrenica’ (Americans kept advance knowledge of Srebrenica for themselves), *De Stem*, 13/10/95.

¹⁰²⁸ Ewoud Nysingh, ‘Joegoslavische generaal leidde aanval op Srebrenica’ (Yugoslavian general led attack on Srebrenica), *De Volkskrant*, 31/10/95.

¹⁰²⁹ Christopher Andrew, ‘Conclusion: An Agenda for Future Research’, *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 12 (1997) 1, p. 228.

To date little is known about the role of Sigint and the interception of communications traffic during the war in the Balkans and in Bosnia in particular. This is chiefly because Sigint is one of the most secret methods of gathering intelligence.

To begin with we need a good definition of Sigint. A US Marine Corps manual describes it as 'intelligence gained by exploiting an adversary's use of the electromagnetic spectrum with the aim of gaining undetected firsthand intelligence on the adversary's intentions, dispositions, capabilities, and limitations'.¹⁰³⁰ Sigint involves the acquisition of information from electromagnetic transmissions (of any type whatsoever) aiming to intercept electronic message and data traffic and is always conducted under the greatest secrecy by technical means. This is usually conducted from ground stations, special ships, aircraft or satellites. Sigint consists of three separate, mutually interconnected gathering techniques: Communications Intelligence (Comint), Electronic Intelligence (Elint) and Foreign Instrumentation Signals Intelligence (Fisint).¹⁰³¹

Communications Intelligence (Comint) concentrates on intercepting and processing domestic and foreign communications by means of voice and data traffic through telephone, radio, Morse, code, fax, video and telegraph links, and by means of other electronic media. Comint does not relate to the interception of postal traffic or the monitoring of foreign radio and TV broadcasts.¹⁰³² A typical target of Comint during the Cold War was formed by the routine activities of Soviet airfields in the GDR, Poland and elsewhere: the radio links, the traffic between the ground personnel and the control towers, the conversations of the pilots and the weather reports for the pilots.

Electronic Intelligence (Elint) concentrates on all the other information and data traffic transmitted by domestic and foreign electronic equipment. The most common Elint targets are transmissions by radar stations and navigation systems. By means of Elint these radars can be identified by function, type, range and capabilities and their location can be precisely determined. This intelligence is chiefly of importance to the Military Intelligence Services.¹⁰³³ Foreign Instrumentation Signals Intelligence (Fisint) involves the gathering and processing of emissions related to the testing of certain aircraft, missiles and (un)manned space vehicles. Fisint is also involved in the interception of electronic traffic transmitting video images to ground stations, and of transmissions intended to test all sorts of weapons systems.¹⁰³⁴

Over the last ten years Sigint has increasingly been used to intercept a new electronic communication medium: digital data traffic. Its main purpose is to transmit enormous quantities of digital data between computer systems and networks. One example is a special program for the monitoring of electronic banking traffic. This program was used, for instance, to closely monitor Milosevic's cash flows abroad (especially to and from Cyprus).¹⁰³⁵ During the Balkan war too the intelligence services devoted attention to Comint, with particular attention given to the gathering, intercepting and decoding of military and diplomatic messages. This traffic can be conducted over an 'open' line, but it may also be coded or encrypted. In cryptography (the art of secret writing) information is converted in a way that third parties are not thought capable of deciphering.

¹⁰³⁰ US Marine Corps, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP), 2-15.2, *Sigint*, June 1999, p. 1-1.

¹⁰³¹ US House of Representatives, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, *Annual Report by the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence*, 95th Congress, 2nd Session, 1978, p. 50.

¹⁰³² US Senate, Report No. 94-755, *Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities*, 94th Congress, 2nd Session, 1976, Book III, p. 737; US House of Representatives, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Report No. 95-1795, *Annual Report by the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence*, 1978, pp. 31, 58; Department of Defense Directive S-5100-20, *The NSA and the Central Security Service*, 23/12/71; David L. Christianson, 'sigint', in: Hopple & Watson (eds.), *The Military Intelligence Community*, p. 41.

¹⁰³³ E.A.O. Onderdelinden, 'Verbindingsinlichtingen. Wat is dat eigenlijk?' (Signals Intelligence. What is that actually?), in: *Militaire Spectator*, Vol. 170 (2001) 12, pp. 675-683.

¹⁰³⁴ Fisint was earlier known as Telemetry Intelligence. David L. Christianson, 'sigint,' in: Hopple & Watson (eds.), *The Military Intelligence Community*, p. 40.

¹⁰³⁵ NAIC, *Draft, Technical Requirements Document (TRD) for the SIGINT System Integration Contract*, 24/07/00. See: http://www.pixs.wpafb.af.mil/pixslibr/DATAEX/sigsoo_drft1.doc.

In addition Comint can be important even if the code is not broken, because an analysis of the traffic in combination with Elint can enable intelligence services to establish the location, movements and even the strength of the Armed Forces.¹⁰³⁶ Increasing transmission activity from a military headquarters can, for instance, be an indication of an imminent military operation. Before this chapter moves on to a closer examination of the claims made in publications regarding intercepted communications traffic and the possible successes and failures in this Sigint war between the warring parties, Section 2 will first outline the advantages and disadvantages of Sigint. This is important because these are also reflected in the war in Bosnia during the period 1992 to 1995.

Subsequently, section 3 devotes brief attention to the history of the most important Sigint Services that focused on the war in Bosnia. A description is given of the largest (in budget and staff) service in the world, the American National Security Agency (NSA). Attention is also devoted to several other western bodies, such as the Canadian Communications Security Establishment (CSE), the British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), the German *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND) and the French *Direction du Renseignement Militaire* (DRM). This section also describes the resources that these services employed in Bosnia.

Section 4 then turns to the difficult issue of exchanging Comint (especially of a strategic nature) between friendly Western Services. The results of Comint are generally subject to strict secrecy and are not automatically shared by Western services with sister services. Even within NATO Sigint is not exchanged with full freedom; this is partly because the Intelligence-gathering Service does not wish to reveal its own capacities. A variety of accounts have been published regarding the results achieved in the field of Comint.

In Section 5 these are compared and supplemented by the author's own research. On the basis of the goals of Comint and Elint a distinction is made between the following categories: firstly the diplomatic and military communications traffic of the warring factions (the military targets), such as the VJ in Serbia; secondly the VRS in the Republika Srpska and the ABiH in Bosnia; thirdly the Elint targets in and around Bosnia; and finally UNPROFOR as a target. What can be said about the successes and the reliability of the published accounts? This section also considers the capacities and activities of the *Afdeling Verbindingsinlichtingen* (Sigint Department) of the Netherlands Military Intelligence Service (MIS). Finally, the conclusion in Section 6 looks back at the Sigint war between 1992 and 1995 and examines the role and the importance of Comint during the war in Bosnia.

2. The advantages and disadvantages of Signals Intelligence

Little is known about Sigint during the Cold War and following the fall of the Berlin Wall.¹⁰³⁷ A blanket of secrecy has always lain over this subject. Sigint is rather technical in nature and it is thus often difficult to explain its importance. This is one reason why scientists and journalists have generally avoided the subject. The little attention that has been devoted to Sigint in print mostly relates to World War II.¹⁰³⁸ Nonetheless, thanks to the specific information that it provided Sigint has been of enormous importance in military conflicts during and after the Cold War. Since time immemorial, governments have always wanted to know what their enemies (but also their friends) are up to. The easiest way to find this out is simply to listen to their communications traffic. By way of illustration, the former head of the US Navy Comint organization wrote: 'The ambition of every nation has been to develop unbreakable ciphers for its own use and to solve every cipher in use by its actual or potential enemies.'¹⁰³⁹

¹⁰³⁶ Polmar & Allen, *Spybook*, 1998, p. 131 and Richelson, *The US Intelligence Community*, pp. 24-27.

¹⁰³⁷ This section makes extensive use of: Matthew Aid & Cees Wiebes, 'Introduction on the importance of SIGINT in the Cold War', Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 1-24.

¹⁰³⁸ For a detailed discussion of this see: Matthew M. Aid, 'Not So Anonymous: Parting the Veil of Secrecy About the NSA', in: Theoharis (ed.), *Culture*, pp. 65-67.

¹⁰³⁹ NA, RG-457, CP, SRH-264, *A Lecture on Communications Intelligence by Captain J.N. Wenger, USN*, 14/08/46, p. 8.

Advantages of Sigint

Due to the specific nature of the information obtained, Sigint has a number of special qualities making it a highly effective method for gathering intelligence. Indeed, Sigint proved to be one, if not the, most important source of intelligence during and after the Cold War. In October 1998 John Millis, the late Staff Director of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, said that Sigint ‘has been and continues to be the intelligence of choice of the policymaker and the military commander’. He added: ‘the fact of the matter is, it’s there quickly when needed. It’s always there. Or it has always been there.’¹⁰⁴⁰ Nine advantages are listed below. One major advantage of this form of intelligence is that it is a passive method, generally conducted without the target knowing about it. Moreover, Sigint can be used against a target that is sometimes hundreds or even thousands of kilometres away. It is often not necessary to position the intercepting equipment close to the target. Sigint thus has few political or physical risks; an exception is formed by the gathering of this information by aircraft flying along the coasts of various states.

Secondly, Sigint is objective; it has a high reliability and that can sometimes even result in a perfect intelligence product. Sigint will, in contrast to intelligence gained from Humint, always be free of political prejudice and will not be influenced by the political perception of the agent’s sources. Humint can sometimes be politically coloured because it is supplied by traitors, or for reasons of blackmail, corruption, or political or financial gain. But Sigint provides, in a raw state, exactly what has been recorded in an unembellished, uninfluenced and undistorted form. Sigint has thus acquired an important status with the recipients of intelligence. As a former CIA agent put it: ‘You know the origin and you know that this is genuine. It’s not like a clandestine (Human Intelligence) report where you don’t know if this is a good agent or a weak agent or a bad agent or a double agent.’ Another CIA officer immediately pointed out the down-side too: ‘Electronic intercepts are great, but you don’t know if you’ve got two idiots talking on the phone.’¹⁰⁴¹

A third advantage is that some – certainly not all – intercepts can be an autonomous intelligence product, without the information needing to be verified through other sources. The former director of the CIA, Stansfield Turner, wrote in 1991:

‘Electronic intercepts may be even more useful [than agents] in discerning intentions. For instance, if a foreign official writes about plans in a message and the United States intercepts it, or if he discusses it and we record it with a listening device, those verbatim intercepts are likely to be more reliable than second-hand reports from an agent’.¹⁰⁴²

An intercept can thus supply unique intelligence. This is why every morning the American president is presented with not only a Top Secret Intelligence Summary but also a ‘Black Book’ with the most important intercepts of the past 24 hours. In The Hague the highest government policymakers are provided with a similar publication focussing on the Netherlands, known as the *Groene Editie* (Green Edition).¹⁰⁴³

Fourthly, Sigint is usually the form of intelligence most rapidly available to the intelligence recipient. The NSA in particular can, thanks to its global eavesdropping network, supply Sigint faster than any other form of intelligence. During the 1962 Cuba Crisis, for instance, on average more than a week was needed before a Humint report reached the CIA. Intercepts were directly available to the

¹⁰⁴⁰ ‘Address at the CIRA Luncheon, 5 October 1998; John Millis’ Speech’, in: *CIRA Newsletter*, Vol. XXIII (1998/1999), 4, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴¹ Matthew Aid & Cees Wiebes, ‘Introduction on the importance of *SIGINT* in the Cold War’, in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, p. 6. See also: Bob Drogin, ‘At CIA School, Data Outweigh Derring-do’, *Los Angeles Times*, 27/08/00.

¹⁰⁴² Stansfield Turner, ‘Intelligence for a New World Order’, *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1991, p. 158.

¹⁰⁴³ De Graaff & Wiebes, *Villa Maarbeeze*, pp. 280-282. In the UK this is known as the Blue Book. See: Urban, *UK Eyes Alpha*, p. 8.

policymakers, however. As a result Sigint and Imagery Intelligence (Imint) started to play an ever more important role in warning about an enemy attack.

Fifthly, Sigint provides much more intelligence on a broad range of subjects than any other form of intelligence. At the end of the 1960s the NSA was already producing more than 400,000 intelligence reports a year, i.e. more than a thousand reports every day.¹⁰⁴⁴ Sixthly, Sigint ‘never sleeps’. After all, agents and their sources need to rest from time to time and Imint is sometimes unavailable due to darkness, sandstorms or meteorological conditions. Sigint, however, can be used day and night: 24 hours a day and 365 days a year.

Seventhly, Sigint is more flexible and more focussed on the recipient than most other forms of intelligence. This is why a report by the American Congress in 1998 stated: ‘much of the NSA’s past strength has come from its localised creativity and quick-reaction capability’.¹⁰⁴⁵ In particular the larger Sigint organizations are able to eavesdrop on new targets quickly. After all, intelligence services are not able to establish a whole new network of agents and spies within 24 hours. Imint is not flexible enough either, because bringing an espionage satellite into a new orbit involves huge costs. Eighthly, the potential of Sigint is much greater than any other form of intelligence. A successful breakthrough in cracking a foreign code can provide more valuable information than all other intelligence sources together. Breaking a code is sometimes ‘equivalent not of one but of a thousand spies, all ideally placed, all secure, and all reporting instantaneously’.¹⁰⁴⁶ Even the most fervent advocate of Humint, the legendary CIA director from 1953 to 1961 Allen W. Dulles, had to admit that Sigint provided ‘the best and “hottest” intelligence that one government can gather about another’.¹⁰⁴⁷

Finally, Sigint is said to be the most effective manner (compared to other methods) of gathering intelligence: despite its high costs, Sigint generally provides ‘more value for money’.¹⁰⁴⁸ Sigint is admittedly expensive. During the Cold War the American government spent four to five times more money on Sigint than on Humint. Since 1945 the NSA has probably spent more than \$100 billion, 75 percent of which was on Sigint and the remainder on Communications Security (making communications links secure).¹⁰⁴⁹ In short, Sigint was and is probably one of the most productive ways of gathering intelligence. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall the relative importance of Sigint has increased even further. This goes not only for the United States, but also for its European allies. The latter, due to the lack of a major Imint capability are probably even more dependent on Sigint.

By way of illustration one can cite the corresponding links between the United States and the United Kingdom: even during the 1980s the majority (80 to 90 percent) of the intelligence supplied to the UK Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) every day was derived from Sigint. In May 1999 the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, stated that ‘the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) work is vital in supporting our foreign and defence policies’.¹⁰⁵⁰ The 2000 annual report by the Intelligence and Security Committee to the British Parliament also indicated the importance of Sigint: ‘The quality of the (Government Communications Headquarters) intelligence gathered clearly reflects

¹⁰⁴⁴ Vladislav M. Zubok, ‘spy vs. Spy: The KGB vs. the CIA, 1960-1962’, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (1994) 4, pp. 22-33. As comparison: in 1960 the Soviet Union decoded 209,000 diplomatic code telegrams from 51 countries and 572 intercepts were distributed per day. In 1967 Moscow was able to read the coded traffic of 71 countries. See: Raymond Garthoff & Amy Knight, ‘New Evidence on Soviet Intelligence: The KGB’s 1967 Annual Report’, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, (1998) 10, p. 214.

¹⁰⁴⁵ US House of Representatives, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Report 105-508, *Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999*, 105th Congress, 2nd Session, 05/05/98, p. 10.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Codevilla, *Informing Statecraft*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁰⁴⁷ David Kahn, ‘Cryptology’, in: *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. 8 (1987), p. 276.

¹⁰⁴⁸ An exception may be formed by the spy satellites of the American National Reconnaissance Office (NRO).

¹⁰⁴⁹ David A. Fulghum, ‘sigint Aircraft May Face Obsolescence in Five Years’, *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 21/10/96, p. 54 and William Rosenau, ‘A Deafening Silence: US Policy and the Sigint Facility at Lourdes’, *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 9 (1994), 4, p. 726. In the former Soviet Union, Sigint took up 25% of the annual KGB budget.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Press Release, ‘GCHQ Accommodation Project Site Announced’, 07/05/99. To be consulted at: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/news/newstext.asp?2391>.

the value of the close co-ordination under the UKUSA agreement.’¹⁰⁵¹ This refers to a treaty signed by London and Washington in June 1948, known as the UKUSA Comint Agreement. This set out the division of the Comint efforts that at that time were directed against Moscow and its allies. At a later stage Canada, Australia and New Zealand also joined this agreement.¹⁰⁵²

Sigint was of great importance to other countries too, such as Canada, a major supplier of troops to UNPROFOR. The national Sigint agency, the Communications Security Establishment (CSE), was the most important supplier of intelligence in Ottawa.¹⁰⁵³ And in the Netherlands too Comint has played an important role in the past, for instance during the oil crisis. In later years too the *Afdeling Verbindingsinlichtingen* (Signals Intelligence Department/AVI) of the MIS supplied important intelligence.¹⁰⁵⁴

Disadvantages of Sigint

Despite its advantages, Sigint also has a number of disadvantages. These weak aspects and limitations are however sometimes also applicable to other intelligence disciplines. Twelve disadvantages are listed below. Firstly, intercepts are always a matter of the greatest secrecy. The distribution of the Sigint product is thus always very limited. Only a very small circle of the highest political and military policymakers have access to Sigint. This secrecy is also important in the context of intelligence-sharing between the United States and its allies. Sigint is often incorporated into intelligence reports, but Sigint is often available to just a few people and then mostly only on a need-to-know basis. The main reason for this is that leaked Sigint can cause considerable damage. If the person or organization being monitored, the ‘target’ in intelligence jargon, discovers this, then he or it can quickly change codes or ciphers, thus at a stroke rendering useless all the previous effort expended in breaking this code or cipher.

The disadvantage of this extreme secrecy is that Sigint often fails to reach the right people at the lower levels. Sometimes Sigint does not reach the commander on the ground, because it has been decided that this Sigint has a need-to-know classification and hence the intelligence is not distributed any further. This was the case, for instance, during the war in Korea. The Comint not only failed to reach the US troops on the ground, but also failed to reach the US Navy and Air Force. As a result highly valuable tactical and strategic intelligence remained unused. Little was learned from the Korean War, because virtually the same thing happened in the Vietnam War. Important Sigint about the locations of North Vietnamese defence systems and MIG fighter aircraft remained ‘hung up’ at the NSA and never reached the US Air Force and Navy. The consequences were far-reaching: more US aircraft were shot down and more pilots were killed needlessly.

In the mid-1980s, under the Reagan administration, the NSA initially even refused to pass on to the CIA intercepts about support provided by Cuba and Nicaragua for the armed resistance in El Salvador. Such limitations also apply to other countries than the United States. In Moscow the KGB and the Military Intelligence Service (GRU) supplied their Sigint only to a small group within the Politburo. Sharing Sigint with members of the Warsaw Pact was even officially forbidden. In European countries too, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, France and the Netherlands, access to Sigint is confined to a select group of policymakers and military commanders.¹⁰⁵⁵

¹⁰⁵¹ CM 4897, Intelligence and Security Committee, *Annual Report 1999-2000*, 02/11/00. For this see: <http://www.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm48/4897/4897-02.htm>.

¹⁰⁵² Andrew, *Eyes Only*, p. 163 and Hager, *Secret Power*, pp. 61-62.

¹⁰⁵³ For the importance of CSE: Martin Rudner, ‘Canada’s Communications Security Establishment from Cold War to Globalization’, in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Signals*, pp. 97-128.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Cees Wiebes, ‘Dutch Sigint during the Cold War, 1945-1994’, in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 243-284.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Matthew Aid & Cees Wiebes, ‘Introduction on the importance of SIGINT in the Cold War’, in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 12-14.

A second disadvantage of Sigint, besides the extreme secrecy and limited distribution, is the inhibition regarding its use. During the 1950s and 60s each American Comint report started with the following standard sentence: 'No action is to be taken on information herein reported, regardless of temporary advantage, if such action might have the effect of revealing the existence and nature of the source.' This initial sentence is probably still used today. This limitation has led to extremely bizarre situations. To give one example, it is claimed that in October 1995 the Australian Sigint agency, the Defence Signals Directorate (DSD), intercepted Indonesian military messages which indicated that there were plans to execute five Australian journalists who had been arrested in East Timor. The service decided not to pass on this information to the Australian Prime Minister, because it was feared that he would then act on the basis of these intercepted messages, or would even publicize them. This, it was reasoned, could reveal the ability of the Defence Signals Directorate to eavesdrop on Indonesian military traffic. Following this decision, all five journalists were murdered by Indonesian Special Forces.¹⁰⁵⁶

A third disadvantage was that Sigint was often not valued properly or sometimes not even believed. During the Cold War, for instance, Sigint was not regarded as a sufficiently reliable source. As early as the Korean War, the top commanders of the US Armed Forces attached no value to Comint regarding the true strength of Mao's Red Army. During the war in Indochina, French commanders refused to heed intercepts of enemy communications traffic because these did not fit into their own analysis of the military situation.¹⁰⁵⁷ A further disadvantage was to be found in the converse possibility, namely that during the Cold War many countries were too dependent on Sigint. In 1978 the US intelligence community had become so dependent on it that President Jimmy Carter issued a clear warning: 'Recently (...) I have been concerned that the trend that was established about 15 years ago to get intelligence from electronic means might have been overemphasized.'¹⁰⁵⁸ Equally, the Soviet military leadership became fully dependent on Sigint when it came to early warning of a nuclear or conventional attack. This had very unpleasant consequences, as became apparent in the autumn of 1983. A serious nuclear crisis threatened then, as a result of misunderstandings: Soviet and Warsaw Pact ground stations interpreted a NATO exercise totally wrongly. On the basis of Sigint they thought that a surprise attack by US Pershing missiles was imminent.¹⁰⁵⁹ And in May 1998 a false interpretation of intercepts by the Sigint service of the Indian Army almost led to a nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan.¹⁰⁶⁰

This relates to the fifth disadvantage: blind faith in Sigint can lead to a sort of 'sigint snobbery'. During and after the Cold War ever greater importance was attached to Sigint. In particular the introduction of spy satellites and the U-2 spy plane led to a neglect of Humint. A sort of intelligence elitism arose, also known as the 'Green Door syndrome': the notion that only Sigint (and to a certain extent Imint) could still be trusted. Humint was then frequently dismissed as unreliable. The 'BrixMis' espionage missions in the GDR suffered from this, for example, because their mission reports sometimes diverged from the Sigint reports on the same subject. Then it was usually the Sigint that was believed, simply because reports from GCHQ were classified much higher ('secret' or 'Top Secret'), while the same intelligence in the BrixMis report was only classified as 'UK Confidential'.¹⁰⁶¹

Excessive faith in Sigint can also bring another risk, listed here as the sixth disadvantage: this intelligence product must often be viewed together with Humint and Imint. If Sigint is the sole intelligence product then it provides a sure foundation only in special cases. Sigint often provides only part of the puzzle and not the entire puzzle, as such intelligence is often fragmentary and indirect. This

¹⁰⁵⁶ Marian Wilkinson, 'Our Spies Knew Balibo Five at Risk', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13/07/00.

¹⁰⁵⁷ For the latter see: Roger Faligot, 'France, Sigint and the Cold War', in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 177-208.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Godson (ed.), *Intelligence*, 1982, p. 118.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Gates, *From the Shadows*, pp. 270-273.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Matthew Aid & Cees Wiebes, 'Introduction on the importance of SIGINT in the Cold War', in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁰⁶¹ Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, pp. 282-285.

also means that the intelligence of the NSA does not form a strong basis because it consists only of raw Sigint (a single source product) and not of 'finished intelligence' (an all source product). The responsibility for creating a finished intelligence product lies with the consumers of the raw material supplied by the NSA. Consequently, analysts within the US intelligence community must analyse hundreds or even thousands of Sigint items if they want to get a clear picture. A member of an American intelligence service stated with regard to this: 'You rarely get a Sigint smoking gun. It's usually very fragmentary (...) Very often you don't even know who you're listening to.'¹⁰⁶² This confirms that neither Sigint provides all the answers; used alone, it is certainly not enough to expose the political plans or internal political machinations of a foreign government. For that matter, Imint and Humint are seldom able to do this either.

A seventh disadvantage is that although Sigint is fast, it can still sometimes arrive too late. During the Suez Crisis in 1956 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 there was enough Sigint available in the NSA for instance, but its processing, analysis and reporting proved to be too time-consuming. The Sigint first became available days after these two invasions. This relates to the eighth disadvantage, which is probably the most important one: the flow of information is enormous but the analysis capability is not sufficient. Powerful computers can carry out a rapid preselection and separate the wheat from the chaff, but it is the analyst who must ultimately decide if a message is valuable. In a time of crisis Sigint organizations are flooded with masses of intercepts. CIA analysts were not able to predict the war in the Middle East in 1973 because they had hundreds of Comint reports from the NSA on their desks and thus, to put it simply, were unable to see the wood for the trees.

Admiral McConnell, the director of the NSA in 1995, stated for instance that 'NSA's capability to intercept far exceeds its capability to decode, analyse and report. The good news is the agency can decode and analyse a million messages a day; the bad news is the agency must decide which million, of the billions of messages sent globally, to decode.'¹⁰⁶³ Around 1995 the NSA did indeed process about just one percent of the intercepts that reached its headquarters in Fort Meade: in the 1980s this figure had been twenty percent. It was typical for the relationship between incoming intercepts and outgoing intelligence that the current director of the NSA, General Hayden, had to admit that the NSA now produces *less* intelligence than it did ten years ago. The intelligence production of the NSA was also not helped by the fact – revealed by an internal study in early 1995 – that there was constant bureaucratic infighting between the military and civilian sections of the Operations Division of this organization. This brought a considerable delay in the flow of intelligence to other departments: in mid-1995 many consumers of the intelligence products of the NSA complained that the NSA was not meeting their needs.¹⁰⁶⁴

A ninth disadvantage is formed by the inherent vulnerability of Comint. Signals are rendered secure, codes can suddenly be changed, the transmitters can frequency-hop (whereby the transmitter jumps between different frequencies in a pattern known only to the legitimate recipient). Burst transmissions can be conducted as well, in which enormous amounts of information are sent in a few seconds. A spread spectrum can be used, whereby the information for transmission is distributed over simultaneously transmitted frequencies. Another way for the 'eavesdropped' party to disrupt Comint is to intentionally disseminate false messages in the hope that these will be intercepted. Cryptography is another excellent method of protecting communications traffic. Millis described this as one of the major threats to the efforts of the NSA: according to him Sigint was in a crisis due to these factors and the world of communications traffic could no longer be called Sigint-friendly.¹⁰⁶⁵

¹⁰⁶² Bob Drogin, 'Crash Jolts US e-Spy Agency', *Los Angeles Times*, 21/03/00.

¹⁰⁶³ Charles Smith, 'The information vacuum cleaner', *WorldNetDaily*, 09/04/00.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Matthew M. Aid, 'The Time of Troubles: The US NSA in the Twenty-First Century', in: *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 15 (2000), 3, pp. 17-20.

¹⁰⁶⁵ 'Address at the CIRA Luncheon, 5 October 1998; John Millis' speech, in: *CIRA Newsletter*, Vol. XXIII (1998/1999), 4, p. 4; E.A.O. Onderdelinden, 'sigint. What is this actually?', *Militaire Spectator* Vol. 170 (2001) 12, pp. 675-683.

All efforts can of course also be negated by espionage or betrayal. Soviet spies such as William Weisband, William H. Martin and Bernon F. Mitchell caused enormous damage to American attempts to acquire Comint. Mistakes by the American president can have the same effect. In 1969, for instance, President Richard M. Nixon revealed during a press conference that the NSA was able to read the communications traffic of the Soviet Union and North Korea. Following this statement Moscow and Pyongyang changed their cryptographic systems and the NSA was immediately rendered 'deaf'. The NSA needed months to repair the damage caused by Nixon's slip-up.

A tenth disadvantage is that Sigint, due to its limited distribution, can also be used for personal political ends. Henry Kissinger did this when he was national security advisor to Nixon: certain sensitive intercepts were not shared with the State Department and Pentagon.¹⁰⁶⁶ And in 1986 the NSA even refused to share Sigint about the Iran-Contra affair with the Minister of Defence, Casper Weinberger: the reasoning used was that the Pentagon did not have a 'need-to-know'.¹⁰⁶⁷ An eleventh advantage often cited is the lack of coordinated intelligence gathering activities. During the Cold War the various Sigint units of the three branches of the US Armed Forces and of the various intelligence services were often engaged in the same tasks. This led to an enormous multiplication of Comint. This even occurred after the Cold War, for instance during the hunt for the drugs king Pablo Escobar in 1992-1993. The NSA and Sigint units of the CIA and the Armed Forces all operated totally independently of each other, in an attempt to show that their staff and equipment were 'better' than those of the other organizations. In the Soviet Union too the KGB and GRU often worked separately, and this phenomenon was not confined to the superpowers. In Germany the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND) and Military Intelligence Service spent more than 20 years in a mutual struggle for authority over Sigint.¹⁰⁶⁸ In Chapter 3 it has already been noted that in the Netherlands too there were three separate military organizations for Sigint, and there was virtually no cooperation or serious effort to achieve integration. It was only in 1996 that these three services were merged to form one Signals Intelligence Department (AVI).

As twelfth factor, technical obstacles can also hinder Sigint. Such factors as atmospheric disturbance, static, poor reception and the occasional 'drop-out' of signals can prevent a good intercept. Built-up areas, or mountains and valleys too, can often make good long-distance interception impossible. Finally, serious disruptions can also be caused by industrial activities.¹⁰⁶⁹

To summarize, Sigint is an important, safe, fast, permanently deployable, valuable, productive and highly reliable method of gathering intelligence in the form of Comint. It also has a number of disadvantages, however, the most important of which are the avalanche of intercepted information, the lack of sufficient analysis capacity, the limited possibilities for interception due to cryptographically protected signals via landlines, the nature of the topography and human habitation, and atmospheric conditions. Before considering which of these factors were important during the war in Bosnia, the focus first turns to the history of the most important Sigint organizations.

3. The most important western Signals Intelligence organizations

Sigint organizations do not need to be physically close to the land or region being monitored: this is possible from considerable distances, although the interception of specific types of communications traffic does require that monitoring posts be in the vicinity. If the region is very mountainous, then

¹⁰⁶⁶ Hersh, *Price*, p. 207.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Weinberger did not know that this took place on the orders of the White House. See: Walsh, *Iran-Contra*, pp. 13 and 207 and Stephen Engelberg, '3 Agencies Said to Have Received Data About Iran Money Transfers', *The New York Times*, 27/11/86.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Erich Schmidt-Eenboom, 'The Bundesnachrichtendienst, the Bundeswehr and *Sigint* in the Cold War and After', in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 129-176.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Matthew Aid & Cees Wiebes, 'Introduction on the importance of *SIGINT* in the Cold War', in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 17-21.

communications traffic via walkie-talkies, radio telephones or VHF traffic, for instance, is hard to pick up. Turning to the Bosnian conflict, the question is which organizations monitored, or 'targeted', the various warring factions (especially the VRS and the ABiH). First of all we will look at the American National Security Agency (NSA).

The National Security Agency

Since its creation in November 1952, the NSA has been responsible for the management and control of all activities relating to the gathering and processing of Sigint for the American federal government. With regard to the history of the NSA, an expert states: 'It is extremely difficult for an outsider to accurately evaluate the current importance of this agency to the US foreign intelligence effort. No agency of the US intelligence community has been able to better insulate itself from public scrutiny.'¹⁰⁷⁰

In the year 2002 the NSA is the biggest intelligence service in the world. It is the primary gatherer and processor of Comint and Foreign Instrumentation Sigint (Fisint), and since 1958 has been the central coordinator for all Elint. The NSA produces only Sigint, and not finished intelligence reports based on analysis. This responsibility lies with the consumers of the NSA product within the American intelligence community. Furthermore the NSA is responsible for monitoring the security of the signals, the communications traffic and the data traffic of the American federal government. Within the NSA this is known as Information Security (Infosec). Since the mid-1980s the NSA has also been responsible for the Operations Security (Opsec) programme of the American government.

The most important customers of the NSA are the White House, the Pentagon, the Departments of State, Energy, Trade, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the CIA, DIA, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the leadership of the US Armed Forces, the three Military Intelligence Services and several foreign intelligence services with which the NSA cooperates. At the end of the 1960s more than 100,000 people worked for the NSA. At the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, some 75,000 American military personnel, civilians and temporary staff were engaged in Sigint operations in the United States and at bases overseas. Of these 75,000, more than 25,000 people worked at the headquarters in Fort Meade (Maryland).¹⁰⁷¹

The NSA is not the only agency engaged in Sigint, but it is at the top of a pyramid formed by three other Military intelligence services: the US Army Intelligence and Security Command, the Naval Security Group and the Air Intelligence Agency. The NSA also closely collaborates with the Sigint division of the CIA, the Office of Technical Collection,¹⁰⁷² and the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), which manages the US spy satellites.¹⁰⁷³ Since 1962 the United States has had special Sigint satellites such as Magnum, Orion and Jumpseat operating in space, as well as special Comint satellites such as Vortex and Intruder which have the job of 'hoovering up' Comint.¹⁰⁷⁴

Right from the start the NSA took a strong interest in the conflict in Bosnia. The activities were increased further after Clinton had been sworn in as president in January 1993. In the same year the lack of translators and analysts who spoke Serbo-Croat proved to be a problem. The NSA thought it would encounter problems if Clinton decided to make a military contribution to UNPROFOR, and the NSA decided to place an advertisement in daily newspapers in order to recruit translators. On April 1993 this ad appeared in the *Commerce Business Daily*, announcing the need for 'a group of approximately

¹⁰⁷⁰ Matthew M. Aid, 'The Time of Troubles: The US NSA in the Twenty-First Century', in: *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 15 (2000) 3, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷¹ Matthew Aid, 'The National Security Agency and the Cold War', in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 27-66 and CIA, *A Consumer's Guide to Intelligence*, September 1993, p. 17.

¹⁰⁷² Richelson, *Wizards*, pp. 254-265.

¹⁰⁷³ Matthew M. Aid, 'The Time of Troubles: The US National Security Agency in the Twenty-First Century', in: *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 15 (2000) 3, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Richelson, *Intelligence Community*, pp. 176-180.

125 linguists to provide translation and interpretation support for US forces in Yugoslavia'. According to the advertisement the work would take place in 'a hostile, harsh environment'.¹⁰⁷⁵

From 1991 to 1995 NSA was interested in virtually all aspects of the conflict in Bosnia: diplomatic, military and economic. Much emphasis was placed on diplomatic Sigint, i.e. intercepting the communications of the Croatian, Bosnian Muslim, Bosnian Serb and Yugoslav governments about the conflict and related political issues, as well as the role of various outside governments in the conflict, such as the involvement of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. This was generally referred to as 'strategic Sigint', much of which was very sensitive in nature. The organization is said, for instance, to have monitored telephone conversations that the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, conducted with the Croatian president Franjo Tudjman. At the same time, NSA (not the military) also collected massive amounts of Sigint about military developments in the region, much of it tactical in nature (such as Croatian Army battalion xx moving from place A to place B), using listening posts and mobile reconnaissance platforms. In addition to diplomatic and economic, NSA also monitored a wide range of other subjects, such as wire transfers coming in and out of the various former Yugoslav republics, illicit arms shipments, petroleum smuggling into the former Yugoslavia, terrorist activities, narcotics trafficking, etc. It is probably fair to say that by 1995, the former Yugoslavia was probably the single most important Sigint target for NSA, despite the fact that there were no American troops yet on the ground.¹⁰⁷⁶

Due to the involvement of the US Air Force and Navy, the NSA also focused on the Serb air defence in Bosnia. The agency was interested in the military developments on the ground despite the fact that US Ground Forces were not stationed in Bosnia. The NSA supplied intelligence for Operation Deny Flight, in the form of Sigint from the military communications traffic and Elint from Serb air defence operations. This was fed into the Linked Operational Intelligence Center Europe (LOCE) system. The Americans were interested in the air defence systems of the (Bosnian) Serbs. US intelligence officials indicated, however, that it was not impossible that information on this subject that was passed on by the NSA to the Pentagon for further processing then became 'hung up' at the Pentagon.¹⁰⁷⁷

The deployed American aircraft and satellites

Sigint satellites and aircraft formed the chief resource for 'hoovering up' the telephone, radio, digital and analogue computer data, fax and modem transmissions between computers and GSM traffic. A new generation was in use at this time: the Mercury (Advance Vortex) satellite which is supposedly able to intercept from space even very low-power radio transmissions, such as those from walkie-talkies.¹⁰⁷⁸ Moreover, between 1994 and 1997 three new Sigint satellites (Trumpet) were launched, intended for amongst others monitoring military targets. Because Trumpet used a special orbit, it could not hover over designated points on the Earth's surface as geosynchronous Sigint satellites do. These satellites copy primarily civilian traffic. Because of the unique dynamics of these special orbits, the system has no utility for monitoring civilian telecom nets because it passes too quickly over designated points over the Earth; but the system does have great utility against mobile military-type communications and Elint emitters in the northern hemisphere.¹⁰⁷⁹

¹⁰⁷⁵ Bamford, *Body of Secrets*, p. 554. Strangely enough Bamford otherwise writes nothing at all about the Sigint operations in Bosnia.

¹⁰⁷⁶ E-mail message Matthew Aid to the author, 13/09/02 and confidential information (80). See also: 'Andreas Zumach Responds to Philips', in: *Covert Action Quarterly* (1995-96), 55 p. 59.

¹⁰⁷⁷ The head of the Balkan Sigint unit in Stuttgart at that time was Pat Donahue. Confidential interviews (6), (13) and (54).

¹⁰⁷⁸ The *Mercury* also has Electronic Intelligence and Fisint tasks. For the 'Mercury' see the FAS Space Policy Project: www.fas.org.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Matthew M. Aid, 'The Time of Troubles: The US NSA in the Twenty-First Century', in: *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 15 (2000) 3, pp. 13-14 and E-mail Matthew Aid to the author, 13/10/02.

In fact the existence of Sigint satellites remained secret until 1996 until officially confirmed by the Director of the CIA of the day, John Deutch. This confirmation was long discussed within the US government. The State Department was mainly afraid of the impact this would have in certain countries. Despite the blacked-out sections in a State Department document¹⁰⁸⁰ it is clear that the main concern was countries hosting US ground stations responsible for receiving and processing Comint from Sigint satellites. The countries in question are the United Kingdom (Menwith Hill), Germany (Bad Aibling), Japan (Misawa Air Base) and Australia (Pine Gap). These stations are linked to the stations of the UKUSA partners: Morwenstow in the United Kingdom, Leitrim in Canada, Kojerena in Australia and Waihopai in New Zealand.¹⁰⁸¹

Nonetheless, many doubt whether there is still much point in equipping satellites for Sigint tasks. The late John Millis, former Staff Director for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, believed that the possibilities provided by ground stations for Sigint were sufficient. In his opinion the next generation of satellites no longer needed to include Sigint in their package, with the possible exception of Elint.¹⁰⁸² In addition to satellites, special manned and unmanned aircraft were also used to monitor the warring parties in Bosnia: RC-135 *Rivet Joint* Sigint aircraft from the 922nd Reconnaissance Squadron flew from RAF Mildenhall, and U-2R *Senior Span* reconnaissance aircraft from Fairford in Great Britain and in 1996 from Istres Le Tube in France. US Navy EP-3 Aries aircraft, stationed at Souda Bay Air Base on the Greek island of Crete, operated over the Adriatic Sea and were used to monitor the military activities of the Bosnian Serbs, Muslims and Croats. The gathered Sigint (chiefly Elint) was passed on to the NATO Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) in Vicenza in Italy, which coordinated air operations over Bosnia. The Special Handling and Evaluation Detachment (SHED), in which the NSA participated, received this intelligence in Vicenza.¹⁰⁸³ In Mildenhall were also linguists, analysts and other specialists stationed the 488th Intelligence Squadron of the US Air Intelligence Agency.¹⁰⁸⁴

The first RC-135 *Rivet Joint* Sigint mission was flown over the Adriatic on 10 July 1992. As part of Operation Provide Promise, the UN's humanitarian air bridge to Sarajevo, the RC-135s flew more than 600 missions, monitoring Serb and Bosnian Serb air defence systems, military radio traffic and radar pulses. These aircraft also tracked the cargo planes that transported the aid to Sarajevo. These missions were continued during Operation Deny Flight, which once again monitored the air defence systems of the Yugoslavian Army and the Army of the Bosnian Serbs in the No Fly Zone. The RC-135s were also active in the air strikes on VRS positions during Operation Deliberate Force in 1995.

The RC-135 was not the only Sigint weapon. U-2R Senior Span reconnaissance aircraft also regularly flew over Bosnia. The aircraft are based at Beale Air Force Base in California, but these *Beale Bandits* later flew from Aviano Air Force Base in Italy and Istres in France.¹⁰⁸⁵ The intercepts from these U-2s were immediately passed on by satellite to a specially created unit, known as the Consolidated Remote Operating Facility, Airborne (CROFA) at the headquarters of the NSA. If an intercept is immediately passed on to a unit, this is known in the jargon as 'real-time intelligence'. The near-real-

¹⁰⁸⁰ American FOIA, Letter from Daniel Krutzer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, to Vice Admiral J. McConnell, Director NSA, 06/09/95. See: www.gwu.edu.

¹⁰⁸¹ The NRO strongly advocated revealing the existence of Sigint satellites. DIRNSA, 'Fact of Overhead SIGINT Collection', January 4, 1996. For the release of information see State Department memorandum: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB23/index2.html#13>.

¹⁰⁸² 'Address at the CIRA Luncheon, 5 October 1998; John Millis' speech, in: *CIRA Newsletter*, Vol. XXIII (1998/1999) 4, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸³ Tim Ripley, 'Operation Deny Flight', *World Air Power Journal*, Vol. 16 (Spring 1994), pp. 19-20; Dylan Eklund, 'The Reconnaissance Squadron', *Air World International*, November 1995, p. 36 and Chris Pocock, 'U-2: The Second Generation', *World Air Power Journal*, Spring 1997, p. 94.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Deedee Doke, 'US to beef up long-term air intelligence in Balkans', *European Stars & Stripes*, 18/07/96.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Gert Kromhout, 'Op de grens van lucht en ruimte' (On the boundary of air and space), in: *De Vliegende Hollander* (1997) 3/97, pp. 13-15 and 'Overwerk voor de Dragon Lady' (Overtime for the Dragon Lady), in: *ARMEX*, 81 (1997) 3, pp. 22-25.

time intercepts involved here were processed and translated and then distributed as raw intelligence.1086

Aircraft of the US Navy were also involved in Sigint missions over Bosnia. By around the end of May 1997, the EP-3 Aries Sigint aircraft stationed at Souda Bay had flown more than 1100 Sigint missions against VJ and VRS targets since 4 July 1992, clocking up over 10,000 flying hours in the process. Smaller ES-3A Shadow aircraft, stationed on US aircraft carriers in the Adriatic, also flew thousands of hours over Bosnia. The first ES-3A missions were carried out over Bosnia from February 1994 onwards, from the aircraft carrier *USS Saratoga* in support of Operations Provide Promise and Deny Flight.1087 A unit of ES-3A aircraft on the carrier *USS Theodore Roosevelt* also supplied Sigint support for the air strikes on Bosnian Serb targets.1088 American submarines were also involved in Sigint operations. Teams of navy cryptologists, including Serbo-Croat translators, were on board the *USS Archerfish* and *USS City of Corpus Christi*, which operated in the Adriatic during 1991 and 1992. These American submarines chiefly monitored the military activities of the VRS during Operations Provide Promise and Sharp Guard.1089

The Canadian Signals intelligence service

The Communications Security Establishment (CSE) is a part of the Department of National Defence. In April 1946 Prime Minister MacKenzie King agreed to the creation of a Sigint agency; in the same year all Sigint units of the three branches of the Armed Forces were merged into the Communications Branch of the National Research Council¹⁰⁹⁰ Canada became a member of the UKUSA intelligence alliance between the US, UK and Canada. In 1957 the Communications Branch stopped its cryptanalysis activities, meaning that Canada was 'demoted' to a simple supplier to the NSA and GCHQ. This step made the Communications Branch dependent on the NSA with regard to decoding, translation and processing of the Canadian Comint. In 1975 the Communications Branch of the National Research Council was given a new name: the Communications Security Establishment (CSE). Due to Canada's unique special relationship with the United States, the CSE had (and has) unlimited access to all Comint generated within the aforementioned UKUSA alliance. This special position exists because Canadian territory is absolutely essential for American defence against nuclear missile attacks by hostile powers: Sigint sites in the far north would be the first to pick up corresponding signals. This gave CSE unique access to the innermost secrets of the US intelligence community.

The CSE reports to the intelligence coordinator in the Privy Council Office and the intelligence cells at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and the Department of National Defence. At the operational level Canada's Sigint monitoring stations are not manned by CSE personnel, but by specialist military personnel on detachment from the Canadian Forces Information Operations Group (CFIOG), who do however work under the command of the CSE. The CFIOG has about a thousand employees, mostly military Communications Research Operators, known internally as '291-ers'. They work at the Leitrim monitoring station, but also at highly isolated stations such as Alert, Gander and Masset. Until recently it was not known that a special CFIOG unit was stationed at Pleso (near Zagreb) during the war in Bosnia. This unit arrived at Pleso in March 1995, where a special Sigint unit was stationed; this unit, among other tasks, supplied information directly to the deputy Force

1086 Mark Harlfinger, USAF, 'C-ROFA Becomes Arsenal of IO', *Spokesman*, December 1997, p. 9.

1087 Command History Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron Six for CY 1994, Enclosure 1, p. 4; David A. Fulghum, 'Flexibility, Endurance Are Valued EP-3 Assets', *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 05/05/97, p. 52 and Lt. Col. Richard L. Sargent, 'Deliberate Force' in: Owen, *Deliberate Force*, pp. 8-15 - 8-16.

1088 Command History Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron Six for CY 1995, Enclosure 1, p. 3 and 'Operation Deliberate Force', *World Air Power Journal*, Vol. 24 (Spring 1996), pp. 24 and 28.

1089 'Naval Security Group Sailors of the Year', in: *NCVA Cryptolog*, Summer 1997, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Kevin O'Neill, *History of CBNRC* (1987) [Classified]. Parts of this internal history have been released under the Canadian Access to Information Act.

Commanders, the Canadian Generals Ray Crabbe and later Barry Ashton.¹⁰⁹¹ There was a considerable overlap between the activities of the NSA and the Canadian unit in Pleso. Both services ensured a constant flow of Comint for the Canadian troops participating in UNPROFOR, who were stationed in Visoko and at other locations. This CFIOG also had a special, secure link to the intelligence staff at the Canadian Department of National Defence, thus giving them access in near-real-time to UKUSA Sigint.¹⁰⁹²

The British Signals intelligence service

The United Kingdom was also active in Bosnia in this field, through the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). Compared with the two other British intelligence services, MI5 and MI6, much less has been published and much less is known about the GCHQ. A bibliography of the British intelligence and security services refers to hundreds of publications, of which only six relate to the GCHQ in the time following 1945. Nevertheless, this service, measured by the volume of produced intelligence, by the size of the annual budget and by the size of its staff, is the biggest service. In 1966 the GCHQ, and the organizations that gathered intelligence for the service, employed some 11,000 people: more than the combined strengths of MI6 and MI5. The service was also larger than the entire British diplomatic service, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London and the overseas embassies and consulates.¹⁰⁹³

Thanks to the participation in the UKUSA alliance, the GCHQ is said to have acquired a strong position in the United Kingdom. However, the GCHQ was rather overshadowed by the NSA. At the start of the 1950s, due to budgetary reasons and the 'shrinkage' of the British Empire, London was forced to reduce its activities in the field of Comint and cryptanalysis. GCHQ had to close monitoring stations and make staff redundant. As a result it became increasingly dependent on the NSA for financial support and technical equipment, such as receivers and fast computers.¹⁰⁹⁴ Two British authors issue a tough verdict on this period: from a 'post-Second World War partnership of equals' the relationship between the NSA and the GCHQ became a 'master-servant arrangement of convenience'.¹⁰⁹⁵

GCHQ became used to this situation and was even able to gain an advantage from it. The attraction of US dollars and sophisticated technology was irresistible. Former GCHQ official Michael Herman wrote, for instance: 'For Britain and others, access to the United States' weight of resources, technology and expertise is an overwhelming attraction'.¹⁰⁹⁶ The relative decay of the strength and capacity of the GCHQ meant that over the years London gained more advantages from the relationship with the NSA than it contributed. This did however mean that the GCHQ seemed even more strongly 'married' to the NSA.¹⁰⁹⁷ The annual report of the British Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee thus stated, with regard to the intelligence of GCHQ, that 'the quality of the intelligence gathered clearly reflects the value of the close coordination under the UKUSA agreement'.¹⁰⁹⁸

The fear of being marginalized in the UKUSA alliance, due to the shrinking significance, budgets and technical resources of the GCHQ, became a serious concern in London in the 1970s and 1980s. An internal memorandum of the GCHQ, the Strategic Direction Summary, came to the

¹⁰⁹¹ Confidential interview (54).

¹⁰⁹² Confidential interviews (9), (62) and (90).

¹⁰⁹³ For the early period of GCHQ see: Richard J. Aldrich, 'GCHQ and Sigint in the Early Cold War 1945-1970', in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 67-96.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Richard Norton-Taylor, 'GCHQ's Service to US Crucial', *The Guardian*, 17/05/94.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Lanning & Norton-Taylor, *Conflict*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Herman, *Intelligence*, p. 204.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Grant, *Intimate Relations*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰⁹⁸ CM 4897, *Intelligence and Security Committee*, Annual Report 1999-2000, 02/11/00. For this report see: <http://www.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm48/4897/4897-02.htm>.

conclusion that the contribution of GCHQ within the UKUSA alliance needed to be sufficient ‘and of the right kind to make a continuation of the Signals Intelligence-alliance worthwhile to our partners’.¹⁰⁹⁹ Direct and hidden subsidies for the British Sigint efforts have certainly contributed to this. To give one example, British interception equipment was bought that was more expensive than comparable American equipment.

In 1992 MI6 and the GCHQ encountered problems as a result of the open British support for George Bush’s presidential campaign. Clinton took exception to London’s behaviour and this was initially felt in the field of intelligence too, when the British services were to some extent ‘starved’ by Washington. Anglo-American intelligence relations improved after Prime Minister Tony Blair took office in 1997, but nonetheless GCHQ became increasingly dependent on the NSA. As early as 1993, much of the Sigint processed by GCHQ was of US origin. In terms of finance, monitoring stations and secure transatlantic communications links as well, the British were more or less dependent on the NSA. The British could for instance make partial use of an US Sigint satellite and GCHQ staff were seconded to the NSA facility at Menwith Hill to share in tasking and operating the satellites. Early in 1995, during the war in the former Yugoslavia, GCHQ exercised its capability to change the orbit of one of the US satellite constellations to obtain better coverage of Bosnia, but ‘the NSA could override GCHQ, even in tasking the craft’.¹¹⁰⁰

According to a senior US intelligence official this National Command override authority was never used, so far as he knew. According to this official it was a topic of a lot of policy discussion, and played far bigger than it ever really was. In this respect he remarked the following. ‘Why would the US relinquish command authority over their own satellite when US vital National interests were at stake and under what circumstances would a vital US National interest not also be of crucial concern to the UK?’ He knew of no circumstance when such an unusual conflict arose, much less require the implementation of the National Command override authority.¹¹⁰¹

It was in this relationship of dependency for the GCHQ that the war in Bosnia started. GCHQ had traditionally been interested in Yugoslavia, and this did not change when that country fell apart. The British services soon realized that when it came to intelligence in the former Yugoslavia they could place no reliance at all on the UN or UNPROFOR. The Head of the UK Defence Intelligence Staff, Air Marshal John Walker, put it as follows:

‘Intelligence is a dirty word in the United Nations. The UN is not a thing in itself; it’s an amalgam of 183 sovereign nations. If it does intelligence, it will be doing it against a sovereign UN member, so it’s incompatible. But you need a military intelligence job to protect your troops. If you don’t, you pay for it in body bags’.¹¹⁰²

As the United Kingdom’s political, military and humanitarian involvement in the events in Bosnia increased, the British services soon started to set up a wide range of intelligence units in the region. The most important task of these units remained the gathering of this intelligence for the British government, not for UNPROFOR.

The British resources

One British intelligence unit was stationed in Split, one at Bosnia Hercegovina Command (BHC) in Kiseljak in central Bosnia, and later one in Sarajevo itself. This growing involvement in the war also led

¹⁰⁹⁹ Richard Norton Taylor, ‘GCHQ’s Service to US ‘Crucial’, *The Guardian*, 17/05/94.

¹¹⁰⁰ Urban, *UK Eyes Alpha*, p. 300. The results were reportedly disappointing given the types of communications systems used by the Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims. Also: Mark Urban, ‘The Magnum Force’, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 01/09/96.

¹¹⁰¹ Confidential information (80).

¹¹⁰² Urban, *UK Eyes*, pp. 238-241.

to a greater use of intelligence resources. British warships in the Adriatic started gathering Sigint more actively and E-3 AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) aircraft of the Royal Air Force were increasingly deployed for Elint and Comint missions. Comint monitoring personnel of the 9th Signals Regiment of the British Army operated from Akrotiri Air Base on Cyprus.¹¹⁰³ Britain's two sovereign bases areas (SBA's) in Cyprus cover 98 square miles (250 square kilometres), which is an area a quarter the size of Hong Kong, and are considered to have vital strategic interests as listening and military posts. The centres include the *Episkopi* garrison and RAF (Royal Air Force) Akrotiri, as well as a listening station at *Ayios Nikolaos*. Akrotiri is the largest RAF base outside Britain and an important staging post for military aircraft. It is also an essential element to Britain's global communications and surveillance network. The bases enable Britain to maintain a permanent military presence at a strategic point in the eastern Mediterranean and provide a training ground for its forces. About 3,000 UK-based military personnel train annually in Cyprus.¹¹⁰⁴

Probably the most important activity on the bases is the work of the electronic eavesdroppers listening to radio traffic in the Balkans and the Middle East. They are linked to Britain's GCHQ.¹¹⁰⁵ The 399th Signals Unit of RAF Digby in the UK was also active in Bosnia, as were elements of the British army's only electronic warfare unit, the 14th Signals Regiment (EW) from RAF Brawdy in Wales. This section was active in Bosnia with a Sigint unit of fifty soldiers in Banja Luka in the British zone, and passed on Comint and Elint to the British army commanders in Bosnia. Nimrod aircraft of the RAF flew missions over the Adriatic from *Goai delle Colle* Air Base in Italy, while the frigates of the Royal Navy in the Adriatic were equipped with a Classic Outboard Sigint system to monitor VRS and VJ radio traffic.¹¹⁰⁶

In addition, GCHQ also received information from the Combined Group in Pullach, where it closely cooperated with the *Bundesnachrichtendienst*. While in Bosnia from April 1995 onwards members of the British Intelligence Corps worked together with other NATO member states in the Military Information Office in Zagreb (see Chapter 1). This body monitored the military situation but also gathered political, economic and humanitarian intelligence, although in the UN context reference could only be made to military information and not to intelligence. One British military officer within the MIS had the sole task of liaising with the commander of the British troops and with London. In addition some of the information gathered by the Joint Commission Observers (JCOs), who were also present in Srebrenica, was shared with the MIO.¹¹⁰⁷

The British working methods in Bosnia

The British author Mark Urban makes an interesting remark concerning the gathering of Sigint which probably also illuminates the way that other countries deal with their intelligence:

‘Any channelling of Sigint or agent reports from the Government Communications Headquarters and MI6 to troops in Bosnia Hercegovina was constrained by the intelligence community's strict rules about dissemination’.

As already demonstrated in Section 2, this is a major disadvantage of Sigint. Due to this limitation much important and extremely interesting information fails to reach the troops on the ground, as even

¹¹⁰³ Udo Ulfkotte, ‘Die Nato ist im Bilde, doch gibt sie nur wenig preis’ (*NATO is informed, but it is not letting on*), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10/04/99.

¹¹⁰⁴ ‘British bases in Cyprus vital military staging point’, *AFP Report*, 27/12/01.

¹¹⁰⁵ Colin Smith, ‘Cypriot rebel to continue fight on ‘satan masts’’, *The Sunday Times*, 08/07/01.

¹¹⁰⁶ Urban, *UK Eyes*, p. 216; *The Rose and the Laurel: Journal of the Intelligence Corps*, 1996, p. 43; *The Rose and the Laurel: Journal of the Intelligence Corps*, pp. 83-85; Major Robert L. McPeck, ‘Electronic Warfare British Style’, *Military Intelligence*, January - March 1996, p. 23 and Graig Covault, ‘Joint Stars Patrols Bosnia’, in: *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 19/02/96, p. 45.

¹¹⁰⁷ Confidential information (39). Smith, *New Cloaks*, p. 210 talks about a Forces Military Information Unit in Zagreb but he probably confused this with MIO.

happened during the Gulf War, where the command structure was almost ideal. In Bosnia, Russian and Ukrainian troops also formed part of UNPROFOR and thus the chance was very small that London would pass on valuable intelligence. If intelligence was passed on, then this was ‘sanitized to the point of near-uselessness’.¹¹⁰⁸

The officer on the UK Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) chiefly responsible for Bosnia was Captain Jonathan Cooke. He had an excellent perspective on the results of the Sigint. According to him MI6, the GCHQ and also the DIS had various teething troubles, and intelligence gathering only slowly got off the ground. GCHQ ‘had to start from scratch in Bosnia’ regarding the frequencies that needed to be monitored. At the outbreak of the war in the Balkans, the service apparently had only a few specialists in the field of Serbo-Croat who really spoke the language fluently. In fact everything had to be built up; Bosnia was actually *terra incognita* for the GCHQ.¹¹⁰⁹

It is remarkable, and actually hard to understand, that an area in which the United Kingdom had shown such interest in the past, especially during the Second World War and the Cold War, should suddenly be totally unknown territory for a service such as the GCHQ or SIS. The website of the GCHQ, for instance, did not actively advertise for Serbo-Croat linguists. On the other hand the NSA had initial problems with the availability of sufficient Serbo-Croat translators as well. According to Cooke another problem was that the flow of Comint and Humint to the Balkan Current Intelligence Group in Whitehall was often sufficient to give ministers good general briefings, but ‘the usual rules on the dissemination of sensitive reports further limited what was given to troops serving in-theatre’. British commanders in UNPROFOR noted this lack of intelligence and often had to fall back on Osint to get a better picture.¹¹¹⁰

The German Signals intelligence service

In Germany the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (Federal Intelligence Service, BND) is responsible for gathering Sigint. This service, which reports to the Federal Chancellor, was set up on 1 April 1956. The forerunner to the BND, the *Organisation Gehlen* (Gehlen Organization) was based in Pullach near Munich and the BND was established there too.¹¹¹¹ The main responsibility for all Sigint was given to the BND. The German Military Intelligence Service, the *Amt für Nachrichtenwesen der Bundeswehr* (Intelligence Office of the Federal Armed Forces) in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, did have its own Sigint capabilities through its three Armed Forces, but intercepted messages were supplied directly to the BND for processing. It was not until 1978 that the *Amt für Nachrichtenwesen der Bundeswehr*, following considerable resistance from the *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, was given its own military Sigint analysis and processing centre.¹¹¹²

The *Amt für Nachrichtenwesen der Bundeswehr* remained however fully dependent on the material supplied for analysis, because the ultimate responsibility for selecting targets and for the analysis remained with the BND. The *Amt für Nachrichtenwesen der Bundeswehr*, with its 620 employees, was in this respect more a consumer of intelligence than a producer. Over all these years there was a continual struggle between the BND and the Ministry of Defence with regard to the authority over Sigint, and nowadays this struggle seems to have turned to the disadvantage of the BND. During the war in Yugoslavia the *Bundeswehr* (German Army) started its own Sigint operations (independently of the BND) by making use of its own tracking and monitoring stations in Germany.¹¹¹³

¹¹⁰⁸ Urban, *UK Eyes*, pp. 213-215.

¹¹⁰⁹ Urban, *UK Eyes*, pp. 215-216. A senior British intelligence official confirmed this to the author: Confidential interview (79).

¹¹¹⁰ Urban, *UK Eyes*, p. 217.

¹¹¹¹ For the creation of the BND: Zolling & Höhne, *Pullach intern*, pp. 95-247. For the relationship between Gehlen and the CIA: Reese, *General Reinhard Gehlen*, passim.

¹¹¹² Schmidt-Eenboom, *Schnüffler*, p. 236.

¹¹¹³ Erich Schmidt-Eenboom, ‘The Bundesnachrichtendienst, the Bundeswehr and Sigint in the Cold War’, in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 129-176.

According to press reports the BND operated from a monitoring station in the Austrian Alps. This station was originally manned by the Austrian Army, which used it to monitor signals in the former Yugoslavia. The *Bundesnachrichtendienst* is said to have been involved in setting up a joint intelligence centre of the BND, the CIA and the NSA in Augsburg (Germany). At this centre Sigint data from the NSA and BND was combined with Humint information gathered by both services in the former Yugoslavia. When the Bosnian crisis reached its climax in the summer of 1995, the BND flew daily Sigint missions with a Breguet Atlantique aircraft over the Adriatic. This aircraft had been active since 1992 and was chiefly directed at Serb military activities in Bosnia.¹¹¹⁴ Interviews by the author established that the BND was initially quite successful from 1993 onwards as regards Sigint operations against the VRS and VJ. However, the Bosnian Serbs soon found out and began to use different crypto and better equipment. The BND could no longer eavesdrop on the Bosnian Serb traffic. For this reason there was no Sigint available regarding the VRS attack on Srebrenica.¹¹¹⁵

The war in Bosnia also brought the German Sigint services an alliance. In 1995 the NSA concluded the first tripartite airborne tactical Sigint exchange programme between the American, German and French Air Forces. As part of this agreement, the German *Luftwaffe* flew Sigint missions over the Adriatic in support of ground operations in Bosnia, while the French Air Force flew Sigint missions with the same goal over the Mediterranean. In addition, the American, German and French Air Forces agreed to share all the intelligence they gathered and to distribute it via the headquarters of the NSA/CSS Europe in Stuttgart.¹¹¹⁶ Another source of information for the Germans was the close cooperation with the French in Austria, where a joint French-German unit was active on the border to the former Yugoslavia. The German contribution was drawn from the 320th *Fernmelde Regiment* (Signals Regiment) and a joint monitoring station was maintained in the Austrian Alps to the North of Slovenia. This station was formally under the command of the Austrian Military Intelligence Service, but the Sigint was shared with the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* and probably with French services too.¹¹¹⁷

The French Signals intelligence service

In recent years more has become known about the activities of the French services responsible for intercepting diplomatic and military traffic.¹¹¹⁸ The French foreign intelligence service, the *Service de documentation extérieure et de contre-espionnage*, was set up on 28 December 1945. This contained two units responsible for Sigint: the *Service des matériels techniques*, better known as the *Service 26*, and the *Service 28*, responsible for intercepting and decoding foreign diplomatic coded cables sent by the foreign embassies in Paris. On 4 April 1982 this service was given a new name: the *Direction générale de la sécurité extérieure* (DGSE). Following the arrival of a new director for this service, in January 1988, its budget for Sigint was increased considerably. In the period 1970-1980 Sigint was mostly handled by this service. The French Military Intelligence Service was much less involved in this area.

The Foreign Intelligence Service and the Military Intelligence Service operated jointly in the Mediterranean with a spy ship, the *Berry*. The Sigint infrastructure of the intelligence service abroad was further expanded in the 1990s. In 1996 the number of employees totalled more than 2500, while new monitoring stations were built on the Plateau d'Albion in the Haute-Provence and in Saint-Laurent-de-la-Salanque on the border with Spain. To begin with the main task of these stations was to intercept communications traffic from African countries, but they were later directed towards Bosnia as well.

¹¹¹⁴ Bruce, 'Allies Hamper Inquiry', *The Glasgow Herald*, 01/12/95; Ian Bruce, 'Why These Men Remain Free', *The Glasgow Herald*, 09/05/97; Dierhart Goos, 'Marine-Offizier soll Kfor-Abteilung im Kosovo führen' (*Navy officer to lead KFOR section in Kosovo*), *Die Welt*, 13/05/00 and 'Report Details Luftwaffe Support for NATO', in: *FBIS-WEU-95-171*, 03/09/95.

¹¹¹⁵ Confidential interviews (98) and (99).

¹¹¹⁶ Biography, Lt. Col. Garry E. Sitze, USAF, undated. See: http://jitic-emh.army.mil/iop_conf/bios/sitze.htm.

¹¹¹⁷ Confidential Interviews (21) and (45).

¹¹¹⁸ For the following brief history of French Sigint operations, see: Roger Faligot, 'France, Sigint and the Cold War', in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 177-208 as well as information from the Intelligence Resource Program of the FAS. See: www.fas.org.

The Gulf War showed that there were ‘major gaps’ in the French monitoring network. This led to the dissolution of the Military Intelligence Service, which was replaced in 1992 by a larger service, the *Direction du Renseignement Militaire* (DRM). This service was to receive considerable Sigint capabilities, later strongly increased by the launch of the Helios spy satellite. The Sigint production was also increased by a new organization, the *Brigade de Renseignement et de Guerre Electronique*, which was set up on 1 September 1993. This latter service reported directly to the French Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and was chiefly active in Sarajevo and Bihac. The former Director of Operations of this service, General Jean Heinrich, became the Head of the *Direction du Renseignement Militaire*. He immediately started the recruitment of some 300 new intelligence specialists. In 1995 the DRM had some 1600 employees. The accumulated expertise and its extensive network were also directed at Bosnia.

French resources

The service had excellent Sigint resources at its disposal, such as DC-8 Sigint aircraft and ‘sarigue’ (*Système aéroporté de recueil d’informations de guerre électronique*), belonging to the 51st *Electronique ‘Aubrac’* (EE.51) Squadron, normally stationed at Evreux Air Base. This DC-8 flew countless Sigint missions over the Adriatic in support of French ground operations in Bosnia. In addition two Transall C-160 ‘Gabriel’ reconnaissance aircraft were in the air over Bosnia, originating from the 54th Electronics Squadron stationed at Metz-Frescaty Air Base in eastern France. The C-160 Gabriel can intercept communications traffic and radar emissions at a distance of 800 km. This aircraft and the DC-8s were used over Yugoslavia. Paris also had four AWACS aircraft at its disposal, as well as the Helios satellite which includes Sigint monitoring equipment and was built in great secrecy by the French company Matra.¹¹¹⁹ The *Direction du Renseignement Militaire* had kept this secret from its European partners and, by the same token, did not share this Sigint with them although they had made major financial contributions to Helios. Finally, French Mirage F1-CR reconnaissance aircraft also flew Elint missions over Bosnia.¹¹²⁰

Other European countries

Besides the United Kingdom, Germany and France, other European countries also conducted Sigint operations in the former Yugoslavia. To date almost nothing has been known about this. One known fact is that Italian monitoring stations were active during the war in Bosnia. To give one example, some time before the attack on the enclave the Italian monitoring service, via a monitoring station in Italy, intercepted a telephone conversation between the mayor of Srebrenica and President Izetbegovic. In this call the mayor requested permission to evacuate the population, but this was refused by Izetbegovic.¹¹²¹ In 1995 the Italian Military Intelligence Service, the *Servizio per le Informazioni e la Sicurezza Militare* (SISMI) operated a major satellite communications (Satcom) monitoring station in Cerveteri outside Rome. Ten parabolic antennas listened in to communications traffic in the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa.¹¹²² It also seems that elements of the 8th *Battaglione Ricerca Elettronica ‘Tonale’* of the Italian Army were active in Bosnia.¹¹²³ Furthermore, the Italian Navy probably had special trawlers for Sigint operations.

¹¹¹⁹ Guisnel, *Pires*, p. 156 and Lt. Col. R.L. Sargent, ‘Deliberate Force’, in: Owen, *Deliberate Force*, pp. 8-15 - 8-16.

¹¹²⁰ ‘Les Avions-Espions Français Gabriel et Sarigue’ (The French spy planes Gabriel and Sarigue), *Air & Cosmos/Aviation International*, no. 1460, 21-27/02/94; ‘French Support Bosnian Elint Ops’, *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 14/08/95, p. 23 and ‘French and US MillInt’, *Intelligence Newsletter*, 07/12/95.

¹¹²¹ Confidential information (77).

¹¹²² Alberto Sisto & Francesco Sorti, ‘Echelon: Italia nel mirino’, *Il Mondo*, 10/04/98. See also:

<http://www.privacy.it/nigro20010619.html> and ‘L’Echelon segreta di casa nostra’, *La Repubblica*, 19/06/01.

¹¹²³ ‘Abruzzo: Rischio smobilitazione per la stazione radar di Sant’Antonio Abate’, *Il Messaggero*, 22/06/98.

The military intelligence services of the Scandinavian countries also monitored the communications traffic in Bosnia. The Netherlands military intelligence service discovered, for instance, that a Scandinavian intelligence service monitored the traffic between various military units of the Dutch signals battalion in Bosnia: this service had intercepted a conversation in which two soldiers had made highly derogatory remarks about their commander.¹¹²⁴ The Danish military intelligence service managed to intercept telephone traffic between the Generals Rose and Mladic; these generals spoke to each other very regularly on the telephone.¹¹²⁵ The Austrian military intelligence service was also very active in the field of Sigint; the Balkans had long been one of Austria's major centres of interest. For many years Austria had been a Third Party and had cooperated closely with the NSA. The Austrian monitoring stations on Mount Königswarte close to the Slovenian border, in Salzburg, Sankt Johann (Tyrol) and Mühlenviertel were the main stations aimed at the former Yugoslavia. The NSA is said to have played a major part in funding these stations.¹¹²⁶ This also applied to the Greek, Turkish, Spanish, Swiss and Hungarian Sigint organizations, which were active in monitoring signals traffic in the Balkans. It is still not known what results they achieved.

The Netherlands Signals intelligence service

Hence, the question now to be asked is whether Dutch Sigint operations also targeted the warring factions in the Balkans. This was indeed the case: in 1995 there were three Dutch military units engaged in Sigint activities. These were the *Eerste Luchtmacht Verbindingsgroep* (First Air Force Signals Group), the *Verbindingsbataljon* (Signals Battalion) of the Netherlands Army and the *Technische Informatieverwerkingscentrum* (Technical Information Processing Centre) of the Netherlands Navy. In 1996 these three services were merged to create the *Afdeling Verbindingsinlichtingen* (Sigint Department) of the Military Intelligence Service. These events were examined in detail in Chapter 4. This account shows that many Western Sigint services were extremely interested in the developments in the military theatre of operations in Bosnia. This is not surprising in view of the involvement of European ground troops in UNPROFOR and the role of the US Air Force within NATO. Much energy was expended, but the key question to be examined in the rest of this chapter is what results were achieved. To this end we will examine whether the intercepted messages were also shared between the allies within UNPROFOR, and if analytic capability was also present; this is a crucial issue due to one of the major disadvantages of Sigint, namely its extreme confidentiality and problems regarding its dissemination.

4. The international exchange of Signals Intelligence

As described above, the dissemination of intercepted signals is always accompanied by great secrecy. The exchange of Comint in particular is very limited; only a small circle of the highest political and military policymakers are given access to this. This secrecy is also important when it comes to sharing intelligence between the United States and its allies. The British Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, is reported to have resisted the release of intercepts made by the GCHQ which the NSA wanted to hand over to the Yugoslavia Tribunal in support of the prosecution of Slobodan Milosevic. This related to intercepts from Cyprus, and which supposedly showed the connection between Milosevic and the Serb atrocities in Bosnia. At the end of 1996 too the Clinton administration was prepared to release intercepts for this purpose, but once again the British government blocked the process.¹¹²⁷

¹¹²⁴ Interview with J.M.J. Bosch, 10/10/01.

¹¹²⁵ Interview with H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

¹¹²⁶ 'USA zahlten Horchposten' (USA paid for monitoring stations), *Magazin*, No. 16, 21/04/99.

¹¹²⁷ D. Leigh & J. Calvert, 'Rifkind put paid to war crimes inquiry', *The Observer*, 18/05/97.

Despite this reservation there is a long history of Sigint cooperation between the Western intelligence services.¹¹²⁸ The intensive collaboration in this field dates from the Second World War, when the United States and the United Kingdom collaborated closely to break the German and Japanese codes. This endeavour proved highly successful and the cooperation was formalized after the war had finished. On 5 March 1946 the British-United States Comint Agreement was signed, opening the way for cooperation in the field of Comint. In June 1948 this was superseded by the UKUSA Comint Agreement.¹¹²⁹

During the Cold War the relationship between the NSA and the other Sigint partners, such as GCHQ and CSE, gradually developed to the disadvantage of the non-American services. After UKUSA increasingly started to deliver more Sigint, on an almost industrial basis, the Sigint services had to work ever more efficiently to process the avalanche of intercepted signals. This was made possible by a new division of tasks, the use of US technology and better and faster computers. This was noticed in the rest of Europe, and the interest in joining this collaboration thus grew steadily. Various European countries, such as the Scandinavian states, had started giving priority to Sigint from 1950 onwards. Other countries invested chiefly in Humint. The *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, for instance, spent most of its budget on Humint at the expense of Sigint.

In April 1968 the famous founder and Head of the BND, Richard Gehlen, ended his tenure. This was followed by a shift from Humint to Sigint. The German Military Intelligence Service also drastically increased its investments in Sigint from the start of the 1970s onwards. The French Intelligence Service was another organization that initially showed little interest in Sigint. The Dutch situation was different: from 1945 onwards major investments were made in Sigint although there was constant dispute about the budget and which ministry should 'cough up' for it.¹¹³⁰

Declassified American government documents show that from the mid-1950s onwards the United States and the United Kingdom concluded a series of bilateral agreements with Norway, Austria, West Germany, Italy, Greece and Turkey. These countries are known as the Third Parties, and were ideally located gathering Sigint on the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. The NSA exchanged not only intercepts with these countries, but also information regarding cryptography and cryptanalysis. Moreover, major investments were made to equip certain countries with the required antennas, monitoring equipment and computers. The Netherlands was not among the Third Parties.

However, according to some publications, there was a 'price tag' attached to this cooperation. The independence of the Third Parties, and also of the non-American UKUSA countries (Canada, Australia and New Zealand) decreased further with regard to Sigint, and their dependence on the NSA became ever greater. The NSA asked for and received practically all intercepts gathered by the UKUSA partners. A former Sigint analyst of the US Air Force expressed the lopsided relationship between the US and Third Party countries as follows: 'they received absolutely no material from us, while we get anything they have, although generally it's of pretty low quality.'¹¹³¹ However, this was an observation from 1972. Has much changed?

According to some authors, around 1985 the GCHQ was nothing more than an extension of the NSA. An internal GCHQ document stated the following, for instance: 'This may entail on occasion the applying of UK [Sigint] resources to the meeting of US requirements'.¹¹³² A senior US intelligence official added that this observation was true, 'as it should be between partners in a global intelligence effort'. In return, he observed that US resources were routinely committed to meet purely UK requirements. Classic example is the routine commitment of British HF intercept capabilities to meet

¹¹²⁸ For this section much use has been made of: Matthew Aid & Cees Wiebes, 'Conclusions', in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 314-332.

¹¹²⁹ Andrew, *President's Eyes*, p. 163 and Hager, *Secret Power*, pp. 61-62.

¹¹³⁰ Cees Wiebes, 'Dutch Sigint during the Cold War, 1945-1994', in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 243-284.

¹¹³¹ 'US Electronic Espionage: A Memoir', *Ramparts*, August 1972, p. 45.

¹¹³² Richard Norton-Taylor, 'GCHQ's Service to US 'Crucial'', *The Guardian*, 17/05/94.

US requirements for open ocean HF intercept, particularly high speed burst data streams. Similarly, US Elint assets were committed to meet UK Elint requirements during conflicts such as the Falklands.¹¹³³

Indeed, the NSA could dictate in general terms which targets the UKUSA and Third Party allies should focus on. In these countries this was at the expense of certain targets that the governments were also interested in: the investment needed to monitor these targets independently was too great for them. Furthermore, most of the allies were dependent on the American computer-assisted analysis capability. Only the NSA was able to break and to translate the greatest number of, and hardest, codes. This relationship of dependence meant that the NSA could ultimately determine which decoded and analysed Sigint it was prepared to share with its allies. Limitations were even placed on the sharing of Comint with London. The reason given for this was that British personnel could be unmasked as KGB spies.

In those cases where this intelligence was shared, technical details such as frequency, date and time were first removed from the intercept. The compartmentalization (the strict separation of the activities of Americans and other personnel) at monitoring stations was taken to extremes. To give one example, British staff working at the US Sigint site at RAF Chicksands were explicitly forbidden to enter the so-called Joint Operations Centre Chicksands. This centre was manned exclusively by US personnel.¹¹³⁴

However, the NSA was not the only party to withhold intelligence: the GCHQ also kept some things to itself, such as decoded communications traffic contained in clandestine Soviet radio traffic between Moscow and the Soviet mission to Mao's Communist forces in Yenan. At a later date the British were prepared to hand over these intercepts.¹¹³⁵ Third Party countries were often treated even worse by the United States. They were expected primarily to simply deliver Sigint, while they seldom got back decoded, translated and analysed intelligence products derived from this raw material: this was not considered desirable by the NSA or the CIA. The reason for this was usually American fears of leaks, or incorrect or uncontrolled use of the information.

This situation was often a cause for complaint, for instance by the West German, Norwegian, Danish and also Dutch governments, but it made little impression on the Americans. Staff of the *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, for instance, complained that they were treated by the NSA as a second-grade ally. At the joint American-German Sigint station in Augsburg, for example, German requests regarding certain targets were always put at the back of the queue: the American targets always took priority. The BND staff were also not allowed to enter certain parts of the monitoring station. British staff at the Anglo-American Teufelsberg monitoring station in Berlin experienced similar treatment. In September 1999, a tour of the station was conducted during a public, CIA-organized conference; some former British Sigint staff then discovered for the first time that this monitoring station contained rooms that they did not even know existed.¹¹³⁶ However, this must have been fairly junior Brits because senior GCHQ staff helped to plan that station with the Americans and walked all over the place whenever they wanted.¹¹³⁷

The fear of leaks often prompted the NSA to break off contacts with other services. The collaboration with France was broken off in the 1960s, for instance, when it was discovered that the French Foreign Intelligence Service had been infiltrated by the KGB. It was only after ten years that the collaboration was resumed.¹¹³⁸ The forerunner of the Dutch *Afdeling Verbindingsinlichtingen*, the *Technisch Informatie en Verwerkings Centrum* (TIIVC) (Technical Information and Processing Centre), also encountered regular rebuffs. It became clear that the love was felt on one side only, that of the Dutch.

¹¹³³ Confidential information (80).

¹¹³⁴ Duncan Campbell, 'Over Here and Under Cover', *The Independent*, 06/10/93, p. 24.

¹¹³⁵ Matthew Aid & Cees Wiebes, 'Conclusions', in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, p. 322.

¹¹³⁶ Various interviews during the conference on *The Intelligence War in Berlin, 1946-1961* at the Teufelsberg, Berlin, 10-12/09/99.

¹¹³⁷ Confidential information (84).

¹¹³⁸ Mangold, *Cold Warrior*, p. 134.

The NSA and CIA, as well as GCHQ, did not intend to institute extensive intelligence exchange with the Netherlands. In the year 2003 this matter has still not been arranged to the satisfaction of the Dutch.¹¹³⁹

The complaints from the Cold War were repeated in the 1990s: the NSA received much more Sigint from its European partners than it itself was prepared to share with them. One specific European complaint concerned the NSA's refusal to share high-level (the most secret and thus most valuable) Comint. This had been the case in the Cold War too. As early as 1951 the forerunner of the Dutch Sigint agency stopped the weekly transmission of intercepts of communications traffic from the Soviet embassy in The Hague, which were supplied to the CIA station attached to the American embassy in The Hague. The reason for this embargo was that the CIA refused to share its analysis of these intercepts with The Hague. So little has changed in this respect.

Third Party countries received the same treatment from America. A former Norwegian intelligence officer stated: 'Where it was not in the interest of the NSA that we should possess cryptographic insight, they did not have to share such matters with us.'¹¹⁴⁰ A British analyst recently wrote the following: 'America's allies have long complained that it is particularly mean with its intelligence'.¹¹⁴¹ Staff of the UN verification mission in Iraq (UNSCOM) constantly complained that all their Sigint was supplied to the NSA, but that they seldom got to see the results.¹¹⁴²

The American refusal to share high-level Comint is based on a directive dating from the 1950s, which derived directly from the NSA. It is not clear whether this directive is still in force,¹¹⁴³ but this is probably the case. The bilateral Sigint relations of the NSA with other countries were certainly continued into the 1990s. In the process, some partners received more intelligence than others; this was often determined by geopolitical and geographical considerations. Norway, for instance, always had a favoured position, but this was because the NSA was dependent on Norway for the information that was indispensable to the Americans: Norwegian monitoring stations provided Foreign Instrumentation Sigint on the Soviet launch base in Plesetsk and the testing base at *Nenoksa* on the White Sea.¹¹⁴⁴

Other Third Parties, such as Greece and Turkey, were involved less generously. The relations with these countries were regarded as a relic of the Cold War. European intelligence officers also suspected that the NSA sometimes played off these two countries against each other. The problem of dependence on the Americans still exists today. Some European countries tried to overcome this by collaborating more closely. France and the United Kingdom exchanged Sigint, for instance, even in the period following 1966 when Paris had left the military structure of NATO. Since the 1970s Paris and London have exchanged much Sigint relating to international terrorism. Another sign that European countries were trying to decrease their dependence on the Americans was seen during the Falklands War in 1982. The United States initially failed to help London, upon which the GCHQ received direct help from allies such as the Netherlands, France, Germany and Norway.¹¹⁴⁵ Moreover, on French initiative the cooperation with the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* was increased through bilateral agreements. And since the end of the 1990s the cooperation between the Dutch, German and French monitoring services has been growing strongly. Together with Denmark and Belgium, a so-called 'Group of Five' is slowly taking shape, intended as a counterbalance to UKUSA.¹¹⁴⁶ The irritation in Washington at this fact is clearly noticeable. It was revealed by the sudden decision to close the sizeable US monitoring station at Bad Aibling, Germany.¹¹⁴⁷

¹¹³⁹ Confidential interview (21).

¹¹⁴⁰ Riste, *Norwegian*, p. 95.

¹¹⁴¹ Grant, *Intimate Relations*, pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁴² Marian Wilkinson, 'Revealed: Our Spies in Iraq', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28/01/99.

¹¹⁴³ Matthew Aid & Cees Wiebes, 'Conclusions', in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, p. 323.

¹¹⁴⁴ Berdal, *The United States*, pp. 30-31.

¹¹⁴⁵ Grant, *Intimate Relations*, p. 6.

¹¹⁴⁶ Confidential interview (22).

¹¹⁴⁷ Duncan Campbell, 'Fight over Euro-intelligence plans', *The Guardian*, 03/07/01.

Another way of retaining some independence from the NSA and GCHQ is not to admit these services onto one's sovereign territory. The Scandinavian countries, France, Belgium and the Netherlands have succeeded in this resolve to date. In the countries where US ground stations are located, this has been a constant source of diplomatic tension. Some Third Parties, such as Turkey, used the presence of these ground stations to make extra financial and material demands on the Americans; the NSA responded to this by gradually closing its ground stations there.

In fact, the history of the Cold War shows that when it comes to Sigint no intelligence service is really the friend of another service; instead, there are only intelligence services of countries that are friends with each other. In the world of Sigint all NATO and EU member states spy on each other. The forerunners of the NSA and GCHQ started this during World War II, and have never stopped doing it since 1945. These services and the Canadian CSE still read the coded telegrams of the larger and smaller NATO and EU members states, including those of the Netherlands. The Dutch diplomatic code was broken back in 1943, and in the 1960s Dutch diplomatic coded cables were still being read by the NSA. In the 1950s, as appears from an internal newsletter, Dutch was one of the languages taught in the translation training; this was still the case in 2001.¹¹⁴⁸ In 2000 the GCHQ openly advertised on its website for analysts who spoke Dutch. The CSE in Ottawa is also able, thanks to the collaboration in the UKUSA alliance, to read secret Dutch code telegrams. Inside the Netherlands intelligence community, it is known that this country is high on the list of targets of the biggest NSA base in the United Kingdom, Menwith Hill. Every hour this station scans more than 2 million domestic and foreign telephone calls.¹¹⁴⁹ The above account shows that the international exchange of Sigint has not always been a smooth affair. In particular the exchange of high-level Comint has often proved to be problematic, as such intelligence gives direct insights into the capabilities of the monitoring service in question.

Exchange between monitoring services with regard to Bosnia

The previous sections have indicated that political differences are sometimes an inhibiting factor in the exchange of Sigint. It can thus be assumed, for instance, that in view of the tense relations between Greece (pro-Serbia) and Turkey (pro-Bosnia) little intelligence was exchanged between these countries. It was less difficult to exchange military-tactical Sigint and Elint. Such intelligence was generally released easily. During the conflict in Bosnia much Elint was exchanged between the NATO allies between 1992 and 1995. This intelligence was channelled to the Linked Intelligence Operations Centre Europe (LOCE) network of the American Joint Analysis Center (JAC) in Molesworth (see Chapter 3). This joint system handled mostly Elint, as is indicated by the daily intelligence summaries of the JAC. This related chiefly to emissions from hostile radar stations and other air defence systems. Tactical military Comint was also contained in this LOCE system, with the main focus on lower-level communications traffic. But there is no trace in LOCE of the 'better' high-level Comint, such as conversations between Milosevic and Mladic: assuming these were intercepted.¹¹⁵⁰

The question to be asked now is why the information in this LOCE network was so limited and contained so little Comint. To begin with one should consider the highly limited distribution of this intelligence product. High-level Comint was indeed available to the Americans, but it was not shared. There were further problems at the NSA, however. Between 1990 and 1998 almost 7000 employees left the organization, which strongly reduced the processing capacity. This personnel problem, together with the strong growth in international communications traffic, better encryption, increased use of fibre-optic cables and communications satellites such as Intelsat and Inmarsat, meant that the NSA was gradually 'going deaf'. Interception no longer seemed a problem, but processing certainly was. The capabilities of the NSA and its UKUSA partners are certainly impressive: around 1995 more than 90

¹¹⁴⁸ Bamford, *Body of Secrets*, pp. 134 and 616.

¹¹⁴⁹ Udo Ulfkotte, 'Die Nato ist im bilde, doch gibt sie nur wenig preis', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10/04/99.

¹¹⁵⁰ Confidential interviews (31) and (32).

million messages, sent via Intelsat and Inmarsat communications satellites, were intercepted each month. The technical structure was strongly upgraded from 1994 onwards. The problem was that the NSA ‘was buying all these new toys, but they don’t have the people to use them’, according to an intelligence expert.¹¹⁵¹ The inevitable happened: the NSA found itself unable to process the enormous flow of intercepts.¹¹⁵²

The greatest problem for the agency proved to be ‘the continuing decline of its Sigint processing, analysis and reporting infrastructure’. There was a major lack of trained personnel as a result of early resignations and departures for the private sector. Around 1995 the service was in serious trouble, because there was no money available to recruit new and competent personnel. The NSA encountered ‘a particularly severe problem with the size, age, skills and make-up of its workforce’. Internal problems probably also created further obstacles to the ‘free flow of intelligence information to the Agency’s customers’. Indeed, the internal communications systems within the NSA proved to be questionable.¹¹⁵³ Moreover, the NSA is said to have had a poor relationship with the Pentagon, which often complained about the NSA’s unwillingness to share Sigint for fear of compromising the source.¹¹⁵⁴ Pentagon staff openly complained that the NSA was often unwilling to part with the military Sigint that they needed to carry out their tasks. One Pentagon employee even said that staff of the NSA ‘are still fighting the Cold War and are more worried about maintaining security than improving tactical warfighting capabilities’.¹¹⁵⁵ In short, besides the inherent objection to sharing high-level Comint, insufficient analysis capabilities and internal bureaucratic struggles proved a further hindrance to the exchange of Sigint.

The initial lack of US Comint capabilities was also revealed by the creation of an intelligence unit at the Southern European NATO Command at Naples (AFSOUTH), known as the Deployed Shed Facility (DSF). The chief American reason for participating in this intelligence unit was that the NSA had major gaps in its Sigint in Bosnia.¹¹⁵⁶ The NSA did not have the personnel capacity to man this unit on a 24-hour basis, so other countries were asked to help out; reportedly the Netherlands Military Intelligence Service (MIS) also had to contribute to this multinational unit.¹¹⁵⁷ The proposal was supported by NATO, but before the Head of the MIS, Piet Duijn, was prepared to agree to this he first wanted to know the view of Defence Minister, Relus ter Beek, who immediately agreed to participation.¹¹⁵⁸

In the course of time the US services became prepared to share more Sigint. The U-2 reconnaissance aircraft were also able to supply valuable Sigint. The US services wanted to contribute this to the multinational gathering and processing unit in Vicenza, which was to work closely with the new DSF. In administrative terms this cell would report to NATO; the MIS supplied personnel for this unit too.¹¹⁵⁹ Apart from the LOCE system, and within the DSF, the NATO member states also mutually exchanged Sigint on Bosnia. This took place (and takes place) traditionally on a bilateral basis. There was also a regular exchange between NATO member states and non-alliance countries such as Austria and Finland, and also with neutral states such as Switzerland and Sweden.

¹¹⁵¹ Confidential interview (62).

¹¹⁵² Seymour M. Hersh, ‘The Intelligence Gap: How the Digital Age Left Our Spies Out in the Cold’, *The New Yorker*, 06/12/99, p. 58 ff.

¹¹⁵³ See: Matthew M. Aid, ‘The Time of Troubles: The US NSA in the Twenty-First Century’, in: *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 15 (2000) 3, pp. 1-32.

¹¹⁵⁴ Matthew M. Aid, ‘The Time of Troubles: The US NSA in the Twenty-First Century’, in: *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 15 (2000) 3, pp. 17-20.

¹¹⁵⁵ David Fulgrum, ‘Compute Combat Rules Frustrate the Pentagon’, *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 15/09/97, p. 68.

¹¹⁵⁶ Confidential interview (22).

¹¹⁵⁷ MoD, *MIS/CO. No. 14312*, Report of Directing Council, no. DIS/93/157/1645, 23/04/93.

¹¹⁵⁸ MoD, *DS. no. 335*, Memorandum from Commodore P.J. Duijn, no. DIS/93/214/1474, 28/04/93 and Memorandum from Commander J. Waltmann to the Minister, no. SN93/938/2918, 12/05/93.

¹¹⁵⁹ MoD, *MIS/CO. HMID Kok* to the Minister of Defence, no. DIS/95/50.1/1366, 09/06/1995.

The Americans also profited from intelligence from NATO member states through the back door. At that time the US General Hayden received Sigint as Director Intelligence of the US European Command (EUCOM), an American national command outside the NATO lines of communication. In this capacity he was supported by a team of 60 Sigint experts from the NSA, that operated from Stuttgart, and from the Regional Sigint Operations Center at the US base Fort Gordon, which had the special task of providing Sigint support for this US EUCOM. This enabled the Americans to combine their own information from intercepts with the information gathered for them by NATO member states. An American intelligence officer stated with regard to this: 'if the NSA knew, Stuttgart would know'.¹¹⁶⁰ All things considered, the Americans had considerable information available to them from Sigint, but the exchange with other countries was limited. The next question is whether this also applied to the Sigint shared with the UNPROFOR staffs in Sarajevo and Zagreb. This seems indeed to be the case: the American and other Sigint agencies shared some intelligence with UNPROFOR.

In 1995 the Head of the intelligence staff in Zagreb was the Swedish officer Colonel Jan-Inge Svensson. He was assisted by his compatriot Lieutenant Colonel Ingmar Ljunggren, while the deputy intelligence officer was an American from the US Navy, Commander Morgan. The Swedes had national intelligence input at their disposal, and were also supplied with intelligence by the Americans, French and British. The French and British intelligence was rated as 'good'. One should bear in mind here that Sweden was not an 'official' member of NATO. Sometimes Svensson and Ljunggren received both tactical and strategic Sigint, such as fragments of telephone calls between Generals Mladic and Perisic. Briefings were also held on the basis of Sigint. However, they also rated Humint as an important source.¹¹⁶¹

Another UNPROFOR staff member confirmed that the intelligence staff in Zagreb sometimes received tactical military Sigint. These intercepts were also occasionally translated into French for Janvier, partly so that the interpreter did not then have to translate the English text out loud and thus to prevent the Croatian intelligence service from eavesdropping on this.¹¹⁶² The fact that Janvier had this information has already been dealt with in Chapter 1.

Some members of the intelligence staff in Zagreb also had access to valuable Sigint relating to Bihac. This was obtained through the LOCE system and national channels. In addition, intelligence officers in Zagreb often monitored the communications traffic between local commanders and Sarajevo, and they are even said to have monitored the regular telephone calls between their commanders in Zagreb and Sarajevo.¹¹⁶³ Members of the UNMO intelligence staff in Zagreb confirmed that they too had Sigint at their disposal. This is said to have originated from monitoring stations near Naples. During a critical situation in Bihac in November 1994 the UNMO officers working there at the time received copies of intercepts of communication between the Commander in Chief of the ABiH, Rasim Delic, and the ABiH General Dudakovic.

What Sigint was exchanged regarding the attack on Srebrenica?

In 1995 too, foreign monitoring services managed to intercept the communications traffic of the ABiH Commander in Chief Rasim Delic. An interviewed UNMO officer therefore wondered: 'Why didn't we receive this sort of information regarding the fall of Srebrenica?'¹¹⁶⁴ The probable reason for this was that this Comint did not in fact exist, because the various Western services did not have good Sigint coverage of Eastern Bosnia and thus were not able to monitor this area intensively.

There are further indications that there was no Sigint that directly indicated that the attack on Srebrenica was imminent. A few days before the attack the Deputy Head of the intelligence section in

¹¹⁶⁰ The head of the Balkan Sigint unit in Stuttgart at that time was Pat Donahue. Confidential interviews (6), (13) and (54).

¹¹⁶¹ Interviews with Jan-Inge Svensson and Ingmar Ljunggren, 04/11/99.

¹¹⁶² Confidential information (35).

¹¹⁶³ Confidential interview (45).

¹¹⁶⁴ Confidential interview (44).

Zagreb, Morgan, – Svensson was on holiday in Sweden – arranged a briefing for Akashi. Morgan told him that the Croatian attack in the Krajina was imminent. Reliable intelligence had been received on this, partly on the basis of Comint. Morgan reported nothing about Srebrenica; he had access to almost all US Sigint, and would certainly have mentioned that attack if he had seen any cause to do so. The British intelligence unit in Sarajevo did not have any knowledge of the true intentions of the VRS either. The regular consultations between the intelligence sections in Zagreb and Sarajevo reveals that BHC was also unaware that the VRS intended to take over more than the southern tip of the enclave.¹¹⁶⁵

A former US intelligence officer who could follow the flow of intelligence to the intelligence section in Zagreb stated that Comint is one of the most difficult forms of intelligence. An analyst needs to weigh up, translate and analyse all intercepts and compare them with other forms of intelligence such as Humint. Nonetheless, Sigint was the best way of determining where the parties were located, or wanted people to think they were located. This officer also pointed out that unfortunately there were no monitoring stations in Eastern Bosnia. In his opinion this could have provided valuable Comint, since the links between Belgrade, Pale and the VRS headquarters in Han Pijesak traversed this area.

This US official was flooded with Sigint on a daily basis, but according to him this was mostly tactical military data and policy information; none of it had any reference to Srebrenica. He did however confirm that Morgan, the intelligence officer in Zagreb, shared this information as much as possible with the generals Janvier and Ashton. This was indeed the aim of the American presence in the Zagreb intelligence section. He was sure that there was no Sigint available with regard to the attack on Srebrenica.¹¹⁶⁶ A foreign intelligence evaluation also concluded that at the tactical level Sigint provided little information about the activities of the warring factions below the corps level.¹¹⁶⁷

Exchange of Signals Intelligence elsewhere in Bosnia

Comint was also supplied to the intelligence staff of the UNPROFOR Commander Smith in Sarajevo. As a British officer he received mostly intercepts from GCHQ, but this consisted mostly of tactical military messages from the warring factions. Smith's staff in Sarajevo is not reported to have received any high-level Comint (such as conversations between Mladic and the Chief of Staff of the Yugoslav army, Perisic), but instead only tactical military traffic. According to British sources the GCHQ had major problems intercepting this communications traffic because the VRS and the ABiH almost always used secure land lines or Motorola walkie-talkies. The GCHQ sometimes managed to intercept the communications traffic between Mladic's headquarters in Han Pijesak and the various communications towers. The intercept site at Gornji Vakuf was the primary station to achieve this.¹¹⁶⁸

On one other occasion valuable intercepts were managed. It was probably this same monitoring station that was responsible for intercepting a conversation between an ABiH and a VRS commander at the end of 1993. At this time heavy fighting was taking place around Mostar between Bosnian Croats and Muslims. The ABiH, it seems, wanted to buy artillery shells from the VRS and to pay for these in German marks. After an agreement had been reached on the quantity and the means of transport – by truck – the ABiH commander decided on another approach: he asked whether the VRS would be willing to shell the Croat positions themselves. The VRS commander agreed to do this for an extra charge. When Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg told Milosevic about this, he was furious. Karadzic, who was also present, confirmed that this had happened and promised that it would not happen again.¹¹⁶⁹

¹¹⁶⁵ Confidential interview (45).

¹¹⁶⁶ Confidential interview (54).

¹¹⁶⁷ Confidential interview (8).

¹¹⁶⁸ Confidential interview (43).

¹¹⁶⁹ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 384-385.

Smith's staff also received intelligence from the UK Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS). The Bosnia Cell in this service was also very nationally oriented, and chiefly had access to intelligence gathered by British and US services. This unit supplied mostly strategic intelligence to the Ministry of Defence. The Bosnia Cell supplied almost no tactical intelligence. Much material from the DIS did go to General Smith, however, via a specially created secure communications system of the British Army. The contact person for this service on General Smith's staff was his military assistant, Lieutenant Colonel Baxter.¹¹⁷⁰ In addition to his own intelligence cell, Smith also received intelligence from the British 'Black Box' intelligence cell in Sarajevo, according to a foreign intelligence officer.¹¹⁷¹

International negotiators, such as Lord Owen and Carl Bildt, also sometimes received Comint to support their work. Asked whether he received intelligence, Bildt answered that formally he did not, but informally he did. He did not wish to say much about this, but did admit that he also received Comint when he asked for it. He had noticed that the raw data in the reports from the various organizations was often the same as the intelligence resulting from it. This implied that he received his intelligence from his own Swedish Intelligence Service and from the Americans. According to Bildt, however, this intelligence did not constitute an important factor: moreover, it related to military affairs and this was of no use to him when he had to deal with international organizations. According to him, the Americans were usually busy counting tanks, and that was not relevant for a politician. Bildt cited BBC radio as a particularly important source of information for him. The information he received from their broadcasts was, in his opinion, faster and often more relevant than the analysed and processed Sigint reports.¹¹⁷²

In short, the basic Sigint situation was far from ideal. Nevertheless, it was in this situation that joint cooperation and mutual exchange on Bosnia needed to take place. It was a difficult affair, because the war in Bosnia led to divisions between the European countries and also put pressure on the relationship between the United States and the NATO member states. The political ideas about a possible solution to the armed conflict were disparate, and this was reflected in the way that Sigint was (or was not) shared.

5. The results of Signals Intelligence in Bosnia

In view of the extreme secrecy surrounding Sigint and the very limited distribution, in particular of Comint (often only on a need-to-know basis), it is not surprising that little is known about the results of the use of Sigint in the former Yugoslavia. Governments have never released any information about possible results achieved through Comint. Moreover, such material has never been declassified on the basis of the US Freedom of Information Act or any other similar act.

Nonetheless, disclosures have occasionally been made in recent years. These were mostly by journalists and other authors, who have found out more about the successes and failures of Sigint during the war in the former Yugoslavia through interviews and off-the-record media briefings with members of the western intelligence community. This section aims to sketch the achieved results, successes and failures, based on these publications and the author's own research. When describing targets for Comint and Elint, a distinction will be drawn between the following categories: diplomatic traffic and military communications traffic of the warring factions (military targets), such as the 'old' Yugoslav Army (the VJ) in Serbia, the VRS in the Republika Srpska, and the ABiH in Bosnia, in that order. This is followed by an examination of the Elint targets in and around Bosnia, and finally UNPROFOR as target.¹¹⁷³

¹¹⁷⁰ Confidential interview (8).

¹¹⁷¹ Confidential interview (9). It was not possible to confirm this through other interviews.

¹¹⁷² Interviews with Lord Owen, 27/06/01 and Carl Bildt, 13/12/00.

¹¹⁷³ The Croat Sigint operations are not considered because Croatia had probably nothing to do with the attack on the eastern enclaves.

Monitoring targets in Serbia

Officials of the international intelligence community, who are mostly quoted anonymously in publications, believe that the NSA certainly gathered Comint from Serbian and Bosnian Serb government communications links. Intensive monitoring of the microwave telephone network of the Yugoslav government, by means of satellites, special aircraft and other interception methods, reportedly enabled the NSA to intercept telephone calls between Milosevic in Belgrade and the Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic in Pale. According to officials of the US intelligence community, these intercepts clearly showed that Milosevic gave considerable political and military support to the military operations of the Bosnian Serbs.¹¹⁷⁴ Milosevic is reported to have been informed of the attack on Srebrenica (see also Chapter 8).¹¹⁷⁵ Intercept reports showed that Milosevic was equally aware of, and also agreed to, the programme of ethnic cleansing as conducted by the Bosnian Serb government. This material is said to be so incriminating that long before his arraignment by the Yugoslavia Tribunal, in July 2001, the authorities had been considering the prosecution of Milosevic. The US government decided however to keep the peace process alive, and thus to continue to make use of the services of Milosevic, because he was seen as the most important political personality in the Balkans.¹¹⁷⁶ The trial of Milosevic will need to show whether these claims are correct.

The existence of these intercepts was confirmed by a western diplomat. During a meeting at the White House between Gore and Bildt, the Swedish negotiator tried to convince the US vice-president that he should not form an excessively black-and-white image of President Milosevic. Gore responded to these statements by reading from US intercepts, which showed that Milosevic had consulted with Mladic about the attack on Srebrenica. Gore then reportedly said to Bildt: 'Forget about this. Milosevic is absolutely not the friend of the West.'¹¹⁷⁷ However, it should be noted that Bildt has no recollection that this happened.¹¹⁷⁸

US intelligence officials claimed, however, that in fact there are no intercepts, which might indicate a possible involvement by Milosevic in the war crimes around Srebrenica. 'After all, he's not an idiot', commented one CIA officer. According to this official, the microwave traffic was indeed monitored, but this resulted mostly in tactical military intelligence, gathered by the 'vacuum cleaner' method. The down side of this method has already been mentioned: due to the enormous quantity of intercepts much important material was missed by the Serbo-Croat translators. A Vortex satellite, for instance, intercepted 22,000 telephone calls a day. As a result, the Americans gained most of their strategic intelligence not from satellites, but mostly from taps on hardware.¹¹⁷⁹

A former French intelligence official confirms that Milosevic had no prior knowledge of the attack on Srebrenica. Asked whether the French Military Intelligence Service (DRM) had intercepts of conversations that Mladic and Karadzic conducted with Belgrade (Milosevic or the Chief of Staff of the VJ, Perisic), or whether this service had any indications about what Mladic was planning, the former Head of this service, General Heinrich, answered negatively. The reason he gave for this was that Mladic and Karadzic did not trust other people. Heinrich claimed that Mladic mostly communicated with Belgrade via an underground fibre-optic cable. He said that the Americans had employed many secret methods, but ultimately failed to intercept this communications traffic regularly. When they did

¹¹⁷⁴ 'Washington gaf tribunaal bewijs over oorlogsmisdaden Milosevic' (Washington provided tribunal with proof of war crimes by Milosevic), *De Volkskrant*, 29/05/99.

¹¹⁷⁵ According to the Bosnian Serb politician Rajko Dukic, Milosevic reacted with great surprise to the attack. Interview with Rajko Dukic, 14/06/00.

¹¹⁷⁶ Karsten Prager, 'Message from Serbia', *Time*, 17/07/95 and Tim Sebastian, 'The Secret Deal: Why Justice Won't Be Done', *The Sunday Times*, 25/02/96. See also: Ian Bruce, 'Allies hamper inquiry', *The Glasgow Herald*, 01/12/95.

¹¹⁷⁷ Confidential interview (53).

¹¹⁷⁸ Confidential interview (101).

¹¹⁷⁹ Confidential interviews (12) and (13).

finally manage to do this – thanks to the DRM and by means that Heinrich did not wish to describe in detail – the Dayton Accord had already been signed.¹¹⁸⁰

In view of the long animosity between the Americans and the French, it is however doubtful whether the US services showed all their cards to the French. Various Canadian intelligence officials stated, according to the German author Udo Ulfkotte, that the NSA did in fact monitor many high-level conversations. Ottawa was ideally situated in this respect, because through participation in the UKUSA alliance the Canadians had access to American and British Comint and to material from Third-Party countries. According to Canadian officers the NSA was able to intercept, break and read the coded military traffic of the Bosnian Muslims, the Serbs and the Bosnian Serbs. The Serbs and the Bosnian Serbs tried to prevent this with the use of electronic warfare equipment, but this usually made no difference. The code was often broken within about 15 minutes. Most other communications via telephone, fax, telex and e-mail were monitored too. The NSA reportedly also received many intercepts from the Austrian Military Intelligence Service (HNA) and for a long time the GCHQ was able to locate and monitor Karadzic by his mobile phone.¹¹⁸¹ This last claim may be doubted, however, because at that time there was no extensive GSM network in place in the Republika Srpska. It could only have been his satellite phone, which indeed could be intercepted for satellites as was done, for example, in the case of tracking Osama Bin Laden.¹¹⁸²

Since 1994 a special Bosnia Group had been operating at the NSA. A ‘four-hour turnaround time’ was applied for Sigint from Bosnia and Serbia: following interception a signal was translated, processed and analysed and within four hours was on the desk of the intelligence customer, such as the CIA or the State Department. According to an American intelligence official, in this period this NSA team carried out one of the best operations in its history.¹¹⁸³ Canadian and US officials drew however attention to the problem already mentioned earlier: the issue of how the flow of communications traffic should be processed. A Canadian analyst cited the example that the NSA was able to search for the work ‘tank’ in the intercepted signals; the problem was that this could also turn out to be a Serb who spent an hour complaining on the phone about the leaking petrol tank of his truck.¹¹⁸⁴ Besides all these factors, one should also consider that the interception of diplomatic communications before the fall of Srebrenica was of very limited value: the attack was a purely military operation. It was not to be expected that relevant military signals regarding the eastern enclaves would be exchanged through diplomatic channels. Only the traffic between Pale and Belgrade could have contained such information. This is why the NSA mostly focussed on military communications traffic during the Bosnian conflict.

Messages to and from units of the Yugoslavian Army was sometimes relatively easy to intercept as these units often used conventional radio equipment. The intercepts were supposedly revealing. It appeared that the VJ was closely involved in the war and handled almost all tasks for the VRS in the field of ‘command, control and communications’. Moreover, Belgrade reportedly ensured the operational status of the VRS air defence and early warning systems and is said to have provided military experts to do this work. The NSA and CIA are also reported to have discovered the coaxial cable system that linked Belgrade to the sites from where air defence missiles were fired (in military terminology, SAM sites). ‘We have unequivocal intelligence that Milosevic has his hand in the cookie

¹¹⁸⁰Assemblée Nationale, *Srebrenica: rapport sur un massacre*, Assemblée Nationale, no. 3412, 2 parts, Paris 2001, Part 2, Audition de Jean Heinrich, 08/02/01, pp. 179-186.

¹¹⁸¹ Ulfkotte, *Verschlusssache BND*, p. 31.

¹¹⁸² Peter Finn, ‘Bin Laden Used Ruse to Flee’, *The Washington Post*, 21/01/03.

¹¹⁸³ Confidential interview (13). Later 15 translators from this unit were offered to the Tribunal in The Hague, but the Tribunal did not wish to employ them.

¹¹⁸⁴ Confidential interviews (9), (47) and (62).

jar', said an US intelligence official. Intercepts apparently showed that Belgrade was involved in the 'loan' of military equipment to the VRS.¹¹⁸⁵

Intercepting Serb communications traffic in practice

It is established that conversations between Karadzic and Mladic were intercepted. According to intelligence officials who had access to these UKUSA intercepts, these conversations were sometimes entertaining to read: the two gentlemen did not like each other and constantly shouted at each other on the telephone. Sometimes they swore at each other too. However, the intercepts of such conversations can also lead to confusion. Mladic once shouted down the telephone at a local commander, telling him that he should take tough action and should put an end to 'the damned trouble'. Otherwise Mladic would intervene personally and remove the commander's head in the process. When this call was intercepted an alarm was immediately sounded (by a 'critic') at the NSA in Fort Meade. Was this taken to mean that the VRS was about to attack an ABiH position? US officials in the region were alerted. They in turn contacted UNPROFOR, but the force was unable to detect any heightened state of readiness or any preparations for an attack. Following long and intensive investigation, it was revealed that Mladic had ordered that an end should be put to the political unrest in the local commander's unit.¹¹⁸⁶

Comint operations were certainly not a simple matter, as members of US, Canadian and European Sigint organizations all emphasized. Interception by the 'vacuum cleaner' method was conducted by means of satellites, ships, aircraft and from the ground. The most common method of monitoring Comint was by satellite and special AWACS flights, conducted from Hungary. The VRS and the Yugoslav Army were aware of these flights, however, and usually all electronic equipment was then turned off. An US intelligence official admitted that there was no good Sigint coverage of the eastern enclaves, even though Sigint satellites do cover eastern Bosnia from a fixed geostationary orbit 22,000 miles over the Earth. These satellites targeted in particular the high-level command-control-communications, which used very extensively the microwave radio relay/telephone network. Vortex and other spy satellites in orbit at the time were designed specifically to collect this kind of microwave traffic.¹¹⁸⁷

If interception did succeed, then a further problem was that really *everything* was intercepted, from conversations between Mladic and Karadzic to a music channel. Hundreds of thousands of signals were intercepted on all possible frequencies. Sigint organizations thus needed to conduct highly focussed searches for 'a needle in a haystack'. One important thing that these agencies needed to know, for instance, is what HF frequency Mladic's communications equipment was using. But even then, for instance, a pilot of a scheduled KLM flight, could contact Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam on precisely the same HF frequency, in which case this call would be recorded too. The services thus had to refine their 'search key' more and more, and to note call times in order to discover whether, for instance, there was a regular pattern in the conversations conducted by Mladic. The calls finally selected were then screened for key words by computers. In most cases this still resulted in more than a hundred simultaneous conversations. These were then analysed on content and usefulness, and that required a lot of time. Ultimately only a few relevant intercepts landed on the desks of the policymakers.¹¹⁸⁸

Something else that made interception much more difficult was that the majority of the most important communications traffic took place via landlines or couriers, in order to prevent intelligence services from listening in. Moreover, there were no monitoring stations close to Belgrade or Pale. Another factor was that if the Serb forces were withdrawn far into the hinterland, they were outside the

¹¹⁸⁵ Karsten Prager, 'Message from Serbia', *Time*, 17/07/95 and Tim Sebastian, 'The Secret Deal: Why Justice Won't Be Done', *The Sunday Times*, 25/02/96.

¹¹⁸⁶ Confidential interview (47).

¹¹⁸⁷ Confidential interview (13) and E-mail Matthew Aid to the author, 17/12/02.

¹¹⁸⁸ Confidential interview (47).

range of the RC-135 and U-2R reconnaissance aircraft, as these usually flew over the Adriatic. Due to all these reasons, a detailed and substantial Sigint coverage of Serb military activities was fairly difficult. The previously mentioned taps on hardware sometimes presented an alternative.

The cryptography offensive against the Serbs

The use of cryptography equipment by the Serbs also made it harder to monitor their communications traffic. Despite this it was possible to discover weak points: in the past the VJ and the former Yugoslav government had bought most of their equipment from *Crypto AG* in Switzerland. The VRS and the current Serbian government inherited most of this equipment. It is now known that this company had a secret agreement with the NSA to build in a 'back door' in the computer software of the supplied encryption equipment. This enabled the Americans to read the coded messages.¹¹⁸⁹ Interviewed persons in Washington and London claimed that as a result of this secret agreement the coded traffic between Belgrade and various Serbian embassies abroad was systematically intercepted and read by the NSA, thanks in part to the use of *Crypto AG* equipment. Other countries were also 'victims'. Officials at the Vatican even labelled *Crypto AG* as 'bandits'.¹¹⁹⁰ Representatives of a European intelligence service confirmed this weak link in the Serb communications, but they also point out that in the past the Croats had supplied much computer equipment to Belgrade. This equipment too was provided with a 'back door'.¹¹⁹¹

Another relevant fact in this context is that the western (and above all the French) intelligence services had long suspected that the NSA had made an agreement with the producer of the most widely used computer software, Microsoft. According to a report by the French Ministry of Defence, this agreement meant that Microsoft reportedly provided all its Windows software with a 'back door'. Microsoft immediately denied all the accusations and stated it was prepared to cooperate with the French Government. The author of the French report, Admiral J. Marguin, was frank in his comments to journalists: 'After all, what would we do if we possessed such an effective group as Microsoft?'¹¹⁹² Furthermore the NSA is said to have made agreements with American, British, Swiss, Dutch, Belgian, Swedish, Italian, Finnish and Hungarian software companies engaged in marketing encryption programs.¹¹⁹³

The scandal in Washington involving the Cylink Corporation is another indication that both the required encryption software and the encryption equipment can be penetrated from outside. Cylink has been producing encryption software for foreign governments and companies for more than 16 years. However, the company had always managed to export its products, even to countries officially subject to a trade embargo, such as Libya, Cuba, North Korea, Iran, Iraq and probably also Serbia. Following all events around Cylink, the Cryptome website put the question: 'How is Cylink able to freely export security products, while other encryption companies were punished?'¹¹⁹⁴ It is in fact also known from other sources that Washington constantly encourages companies making code equipment or encryption software to include a back door in their products; this was confirmed to the US Congress by FBI director Freeh.¹¹⁹⁵

¹¹⁸⁹ Interview with Wayne Madsen, 21/06/99.

¹¹⁹⁰ Confidential interviews (6), (11) and (91) and interview with Wayne Madsen, 21/09/96. See also: Wayne Madsen, 'Crypto AG. The NSA's Trojan Horse?', *Covert Action Quarterly*, No. 63 (Winter 1998), passim and 'Huge NSA Encryption Scam', *GSRReport*, 10/02/99.

¹¹⁹¹ Confidential interview (48).

¹¹⁹² Charles Bremner, 'French accuse Gates of bugging software', *The Sunday Times*, 23/02/00.

¹¹⁹³ Madsen, *Data*, pp. 6-7.

¹¹⁹⁴ 'Cylink decrypted?', op: <http://cryptome.org/cylinked.htm>, 10/03/00. Cylink's lawyers - Morrison & Foerster - threatened to take the owner of this website, John Young, to court for libel. However, nothing more has come of this threat - which is unusual for American circumstances. See letter Morrison & Foerster to John Young, 09/03/00.

¹¹⁹⁵ E-mail from Stephen Peacock about Encryption on *Intelforum*, 10/03/00.

Naturally the Serbs had taken precautionary measures to prevent eavesdropping. To give one example, they used – and still use – ‘one-time pads’ for their most secret and most important communications. These are number or letter codes which are used only once and are thus very difficult or impossible to crack, even for the NSA. This has led to other methods of breaking the codes: increasingly often, clandestine operations are carried out in which specialists of the CIA (abroad) and the FBI (in embassies and consulates in the United States) penetrate a building to place monitoring equipment in the code room or to copy encryption software. This type of special operations has seen a strong growth in recent years as it is an easier way to gather intelligence than breaking difficult codes. However reliable and sophisticated the encryption equipment may be, vulnerable points will always exist. To give one example, if every night a Serb unit transmits the same sentence in code to the headquarters in Belgrade like ‘Quiet night: nothing to report’, then sooner or later this will lead to the code being broken. A comparable example was that all Saudi-Arabian diplomatic coded cables to the king ended with the sentence: ‘May Allah prolong your life to eternity.’ Once this is known, then every crypto-analyst can break the code quickly. A cryptography attack is always aimed at such weak spots.

The Special Collection Service

The only resource that the NSA and CIA were sometimes able to use was the joint Special Collection Service (SCS) of these two organizations. This unit manned special monitoring stations, which were based, in the greatest secrecy, in American embassies. These monitoring stations were set up in specially separated and closed rooms. The SCS had a monitoring station in the American embassies in Belgrade and Zagreb,¹¹⁹⁶ and from time to time the SCS managed to achieve high-level intercepts, such as a conversation between Mladic and Perisic or Milosevic.

The SCS also occasionally achieved high-level intercepts of conversations between Yugoslav political and military leaders. This happened sporadically however, and not in a systematic manner.¹¹⁹⁷ The activities of the SCS usually remained unknown to the ambassador and sometimes even to the CIA station chiefs in Belgrade, Zagreb and Sarajevo. These SCS stations produced extremely useful Comint from the communications traffic around Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb. An US intelligence official confirmed that the most important intelligence derived from these Embassy Collection Sites at the American embassies in Zagreb and Belgrade. There was also a SCS station in the US embassy in Sarajevo; this was accommodated in separate containers at the headquarters of Bosnia Hercegovina Command.¹¹⁹⁸

Interception of Serb communications traffic: which country knew what?

One thing cannot be emphasized often enough: it was not easy for the Sigint services to intercept Serb communications traffic. One-time pads, the use of secure landlines or couriers hindered western services in their attempts to eavesdrop on Serb communications. The Special Collection Service post at the US embassy in Belgrade was probably the only monitoring station inside the Serbian capital. Moreover, the Armed Forces operated on the mainland, not always within range of the US reconnaissance aircraft flying over the Adriatic. This made it hard to achieve a detailed and extensive Sigint coverage of (Bosnian) Serb military activities. Only when the Serbian Army operated close to the border of, or even within Bosnia, and communications traffic increased strongly, did the NSA manage to intercept these activities effectively. This was the case shortly before the attack on Srebrenica: around this time much intelligence was intercepted regarding logistical matters, such as relocation of tanker trucks, trucks and other military support.¹¹⁹⁹

¹¹⁹⁶ Confidential interview (6).

¹¹⁹⁷ Confidential interview (13).

¹¹⁹⁸ Confidential interview (13).

¹¹⁹⁹ Confidential interview (6).

The Americans generally had strong capabilities for intercepting high-level communications traffic. This is also indicated by the fact that the NSA trained and employed Serbo-Croat translators.¹²⁰⁰ However, the main focus of the efforts was on important military traffic, and that was harder to monitor. Statements by US sources are confirmed by members of the Canadian intelligence community. This is important, because only Canada – and to a lesser extent also the United Kingdom – has a special relationship with America in this respect, and thus access to high-level Sigint. Despite American concern about General Rose's alleged sympathy for the Serb cause and political differences between the Clinton government and Whitehall about policy regarding Bosnia, the British like the Canadians continued to have direct access to the Sigint archives and databanks of the NSA and CIA. But GCHQ also independently achieved successes in the Sigint war. British sources confirm that GCHQ (not necessarily via the UKUSA alliance) sometimes managed to intercept and monitor the conversations of the major political and military leaders in the former Yugoslavia.¹²⁰¹ The question is whether this also included communications traffic relevant to the eastern enclaves. This is probable, but the British services concentrated exclusively on Gorazde because British ground troops were stationed in this enclave. When the threat to Gorazde became greater in July 1995, communications traffic – probably intercepted by the British – indicated that the VRS was building up a Command and Control Architecture. At the same time it was admitted that it was difficult to gather intelligence on the Bosnian Serbs.¹²⁰² The GCHQ also had difficulties getting started in this area, and thus gave priority to Comint regarding the VRS and ABiH around Gorazde. The second area of attention was formed by the other British military units in Bosnia.

Monitoring military targets in the Republika Srpska

A major part of the efforts of the NSA regarding Comint was concentrated on the VRS, under the command of General Ratko Mladic and his headquarters in Han Pijesak in eastern Bosnia. Spying on the military communications traffic of the VRS originally seemed relatively simple, so that the NSA was able to follow the military activities of the VRS in general terms. The VRS had minimal capabilities and resources for transmitting tactical military and operational radio traffic in encrypted and coded form. Military units of the VRS were, to begin with, completely dependent on the radios and walkie-talkies provided by the Yugoslav army (the VJ) in Belgrade.

Later however the VRS also acquired walkie-talkies that had been bought on the open market. These were used to maintain contacts with the local commanders. This often created difficulties for intelligence services, regarding not only the VRS but the Yugoslav army as well. Comint staff who worked in Bosnia had good reason to call the war in the region a 'walkie-talkie war', since most of the VRS communications took place via Motorolas or walkie-talkies of Japanese manufacture. Nowadays this traffic would be easier to intercept by satellite, but in 1994-1995 satellites were not yet able to intercept communications via Motorolas on a large scale given the extremely mountainous terrain of Eastern Bosnia. Only RC-135 aircraft were able to do this, but even then only under perfect conditions.

Due to the limited range of these walkie-talkies (3 to 25 km), proper interception of such communications traffic required a monitoring station in the vicinity, but there were none. In mountainous terrain it is not possible to pick up signals from walkie-talkies, radiotelephones or VHF transmitters at long range. Additionally, the communications equipment of a tank had a maximum range of 60 km, thus making it difficult to monitor these as well. US intelligence officials admitted this frankly to the journalist Gutman. The UK Defence Intelligence Staff was faced with the same problem. Due to the mountainous terrain in Bosnia, the results of the intercepted military Comint from the GCHQ and NSA were not spectacular.¹²⁰³ When asked about this, Canadian intelligence officials

¹²⁰⁰ Bamford, *Body of Secrets*, p. 616.

¹²⁰¹ Confidential interview (11).

¹²⁰² Confidential information (183).

¹²⁰³ Roy Gutman, 'UN's Deadly Deal', *Newsday*, 29/05/96 and Urban, *UK Eyes*, pp. 216-217.

confirmed that monitoring walkie-talkie communications in Bosnia initially presented problems. They confirmed the story that Belgrade had concluded an agreement with the Motorola company and had bought a large number of walkie-talkies from this company. After pressure on Motorola to cooperate as regards certain technical specifics¹²⁰⁴, it became easier to monitor this type of traffic.¹²⁰⁵

The HF frequency is less suitable for tactical military operations. The warring factions did however often use this frequency for long-distance links of a strategic military nature. This meant that for a great deal of the remaining signals traffic, the VRS had to use what was left of the telephone and fax networks. Much of this traffic was routed via short-wave towers, located on all hill and mountain tops along the most important roads in Serbia and Bosnia. As soon as the signals were transmitted from these towers, the satellites and aircraft of the NSA 'had a field day'.¹²⁰⁶ The VRS commanders were equally aware of the dangers of communications through these channels and took this into account.

In early 1995 it became clear that the Americans were able to monitor this traffic. In diplomatic discussions about the (temporary) suspension of the sanctions against Serbs, the greatest stumbling-block was how reporting of violations of the embargo should be conducted. US diplomats revealed to European colleagues that they had intercepts with instructions from Belgrade to drivers of trucks to cross the border with the Republika Srpska. The diplomats had considerable difficulty with how they should use this evidence. The American services considered that this should remain secret in order to protect their methods and capabilities.¹²⁰⁷

A second example which showed that the Americans could read this communications traffic dates from the end of May 1995. At this time all US staff operating within the ICFY Border Mission were suddenly withdrawn (the task of this mission was to supervise the observance of the sanctions, for instance on the Drina). The Americans were suddenly withdrawn because the US embassy in Zagreb had received Comint and Humint about a direct threat to these Americans.¹²⁰⁸ A third example dates from August 1995, when it appeared that the NSA had access to the signals traffic from the headquarters of the Drina Corps of the VRS. This service intercepted the instructions from this corps to four units to shoot down NATO aircraft, operating close to Split, as soon as these aircraft entered the territory of the Republika Srpska.¹²⁰⁹ This was within the capabilities of the Drina Corps because the VJ and VRS had an integrated air defence system. The aforementioned examples show that the NSA was apparently able to tap the military communications traffic in the region. The units of the Special Collection Service at the American embassies in Belgrade, Zagreb or Sarajevo were probably responsible for this.¹²¹⁰

The VRS did possess code and encryption equipment, but it was often of poor quality or out of date. In times of crisis or armed conflict the VRS was regularly forced to use open links. Insofar as the VRS used encryption equipment, the NSA succeeded in intercepting and monitoring this traffic because the VRS also used equipment from Crypto AG. Since the NSA employed an increasing number of linguistic specialists, a marked improvement was also to be seen in the quantity and quality of the Comint product. Intercepts of HF and short-wave radio traffic from Pale confirmed the long-existing suspicion that Mladic had a direct fibre-optic line to the former Yugoslav General Staff in Belgrade, and also a direct line to Milosevic. This latter fact seemed obvious in view of earlier attempts

¹²⁰⁴ Confidential interviews (6) and (12).

¹²⁰⁵ Confidential interview (47).

¹²⁰⁶ Urban, *UK Eyes*, p. 217 and Charles Lane & Thom Shanker, 'Bosnia: What the CIA Didn't Tell Us', in: *New York Review of Books*, 09/05/96, p. 11.

¹²⁰⁷ Confidential information (36).

¹²⁰⁸ Confidential information (42).

¹²⁰⁹ Confidential information (37).

¹²¹⁰ As regards intercepting cellular phone traffic, Motorola has even applied for a patent for this. According to Motorola, all GSM or other mobile communications traffic routed via a satellite is relatively easy to intercept. See: Barry Fox, 'The Spy who bugged me. Why make it easy to eavesdrop on satellite telephone calls?', *New Scientist Magazine*, 11/03/00.

by Milosevic to get rid of Karadzic through a *coup d'etat* by Mladic in the Republika Srpska, as Lord Owen recalled.¹²¹¹

The analysis by the NSA of this high-level military traffic gave US policymakers and analysts from the intelligence community important information about the VRS activities in Bosnia. The messages from Mladic's headquarters in Han Pijesak were intensively monitored, which led to considerable insights into the military activities and capabilities. The regularly intercepted communications also told the analysts, however, a great deal about Mladic's personality and changing moods. The GCHQ was also reportedly able, via the British Army Intelligence Corps in Gornji Vakuf, to monitor the communications to and from Mladic. Various sources confirm that GCHQ and the British Sigint units in the region had successfully intercepted this military communications traffic. Later in the war these intercepts gave 'a dramatic insight into the general's depression, paranoia and growing mental instability'.¹²¹²

Did Sigint provide prior knowledge of the aims of the VRS regarding Srebrenica?

Up to now it is not clear whether, through Sigint, Western intelligence services knew of VRS plans to conquer Srebrenica. The issue of prior knowledge of the attack is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 8. There have been many press publications about Comint relating to the Srebrenica attack. In July 1995 the NSA, the *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, the French and also the Austrian Military Intelligence Services are reported to have intercepted military radio traffic which, it is said, proved conclusively that the VRS planned to attack Gorazde, Zepa and Srebrenica. This intelligence supposedly showed that the offensive was supported in deep secrecy by Belgrade.

However, a CIA employee with access to high-level Comint dismissed these reports as false. He noted that much tactical military information about the reinforcement of the VRS around Srebrenica was available, but according to him the aims of the VRS were totally overlooked by analysts of the US intelligence community due to insufficient analysis capacity.¹²¹³ Staff of the GCHQ and the UK Defence Intelligence Staff, also discovered that Comint only seldom produced reports containing a warning of impending military offensives by the VRS. An employee of the former organization told the journalist Urban: 'A lot of communication is done by [secure] land line or face-to-face. Mladic likes to be there in person during a big operation.'¹²¹⁴ Indeed, this proved highly relevant to the events in Srebrenica.

The first press articles claiming that the American intercepted messages indicating a planned VRS attack on Srebrenica date from August and November 1995. According to articles in the international media, three weeks before the attack on Srebrenica and for the period of a full week the NSA intercepted a large number of messages between Mladic and the Serbian general Perisic in Belgrade. These intercepts related to the planning of the offensive, which was then in full swing. The number of required troops and suitable dates for the VRS offensive are said to have been discussed. A western intelligence officer claimed that 'Mladic and Perisic conferred constantly about their strategy and what they were doing'. According to him it was also the case that 'Mladic is always asking Perisic about what he should be doing'.¹²¹⁵ It should be noted here that a great deal of preparatory planning was not required for the taking of Srebrenica. Mladic could probably do what he needed to on his own. Mladic probably did not need Perisic for the actual attack, apart from logistic support, and this was already constantly available. These considerations do not however rule out the possibility that they had contacts.

¹²¹¹ Interview with Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

¹²¹² Urban, *UK Eyes*, pp. 216-217 and Karsten Prager, 'Message from Serbia', *Time*, 17/07/95.

¹²¹³ Confidential interviews (12), (13) and (54).

¹²¹⁴ Urban, *UK Eyes*, pp. 216-217.

¹²¹⁵ Cabell Bruce, 'Belgrade Blamed', *Newsday*, 12/08/95 and Roy Gutman, 'Federal Army Tied to Bosnia Crimes', *Newsday*, 01/11/95.

The same month new articles appeared in the press. According to Daniel Plesch, the director of the British American Security Council, his organization had seen intercepts, which indicated prior American knowledge of the VRS attack on Srebrenica. He also mentioned intercepted calls between the Yugoslav Chief of Staff, Perisic, and Mladic. The contacts reportedly concerned the planned attack and later executions of Muslims. This information, said Plesch, was not passed on by the US services to the UNPROFOR and NATO partners.¹²¹⁶ A British researcher had also heard rumours about the existence of Comint relating to the VRS attack. He had tried to track this down, but had never made any discoveries. According to the rumour, the NSA and the CIA did have intercepted messages, but these were probably never shared with the GCHQ or other western services.¹²¹⁷

Janvier is said to have been told about the VRS plans for an attack on the enclave at least two weeks in advance by the French Military Intelligence Service, the *Direction du Renseignement Militaire*. The French services, just like the British ones, are said to have managed this without US intelligence. This Comint was reportedly passed to Janvier in his capacity as French commander, not as commander of the UN forces.¹²¹⁸ In Chapter 8 it will be shown that the veracity of these reports must be doubted.

Little is known about the British Comint successes against the VRS and the ABiH in the Balkans. In Bosnia the Army Intelligence Corps operated from Gornji Vakuf in close collaboration with the French and Canadian troops within UNPROFOR. This mostly concerned operations aimed at gathering tactical military intelligence on the VRS and the ABiH, to be used in briefing commanders. This British Army base also later functioned as a conduit: intercepts from GCHQ were passed on to a special British Black Box intelligence cell in Sarajevo that was equipped with special communications equipment. Staff gave daily briefings to General Rose and later to General Smith.¹²¹⁹ The GCHQ was the major supplier of Comint to the UK Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS): this mostly comprised tactical Sigint on troop movements, with logistical information on matters such as fuel stocks and summons to meetings obtained through Elint. In 1995 the priorities of the GCHQ lay almost exclusively with Bosnia, but UHF/VHF traffic was often very hard to intercept, even from British ships in the Adriatic. The only possibility in this respect was the British monitoring station in Gornji Vakuf.

It has already been mentioned that British Sigint did not provide a clear picture because the VRS and the VJ used couriers and secure direct lines. There was only a limited exchange between the British and the ABiH, because the Bosnian Muslims actually interpreted everything in the sense that the UN should join them in the fight against the VRS. High-level intercepts, such as those of the conversations between Mladic and Perisic, were in any case not provided to the DIS, according to former staff members. Such intercepted messages may have existed, but if so then they remained at the very highest levels.

According to members of the DIS, high-level intercepts may have been gathered by the NSA, but this agency kept much intelligence to itself. Moreover it sometimes lasted a very long time – one to two weeks – before NSA analyses reached the desks of the DIS. The British could do little about this, however, because the GCHQ was dependent on the NSA when it came to Sigint in Bosnia. After all, this agency had greater capabilities due to its satellites and special aircraft. Besides this, the relationship between the American and British services became increasingly difficult: the British had a much more differentiated view of the conflict than the Americans. This more differentiated British vision led the CIA and DIA to limit the supply of information to the DIS from early 1995 onwards.¹²²⁰ This also meant that the British were deprived of intelligence regarding the actions of the ABiH.

¹²¹⁶ Ambrose Evand-Pritchard, 'Americans bow to forces of realpolitik in Bosnia: US steps in only when the minefield is clear', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 26/11/95.

¹²¹⁷ Confidential interview (79). See also: Urban, *UK Eyes*, p. 217.

¹²¹⁸ Andreas Zumach, 'Grosser Lauschangriff auf Srebrenica' (Major bugging operation for Srebrenica), in: *Die Tageszeitung*, 30/10/95 and Ian Bruce, 'Allies hamper inquiry', *The Glasgow Herald*, 01/12/95.

¹²¹⁹ Urban, *UK Eyes*, pp. 213-215.

¹²²⁰ Confidential interview (8).

The Bosnian government and the ABiH as Comint target

The traffic between Pale, Han Pijesak and Belgrade was not the only target of the Americans. The NSA also intercepted the communications of the Bosnian government in Sarajevo. This became apparent in 1994 when the NSA intercepted conversations between a number of Bosnian government officials, who talked on the telephone about future secret weapons deliveries that had obviously been arranged by the US government. The NSA also intercepted conversations between Bosnian officials in Sarajevo and several foreign governments, in which the Bosnians let drop that they were receiving military support from Washington.

Furthermore, in 1996 intercepts of Bosnian government communications revealed that hundreds of militant Iranian fighters of the Revolutionary Guard were still operating throughout Bosnia, despite the government's promise that they would be removed from the country, as agreed in the Dayton Accord of 1995.¹²²¹ The Americans probably leaked this information to the press on purpose to give a political signal to the government in Sarajevo. Also Iranian intelligence agents were active in Sarajevo. There were even accusations that these agents were using advanced German spy technology to eavesdrop on US peacekeeping forces in Bosnia. This equipment was bought from the BND but the German service denied this.¹²²²

As described above, the British Army Intelligence Corps also conducted operations against the Bosnian government and the ABiH from Gornji Vakuf. The Bosnian Army was well aware of this, as was revealed by an internal memorandum of the National Security Service, which warned about British eavesdropping activities from Base A in Gornji Vakuf. The security service also reported that newly arrived British troops on the Kiseljak - Kresevo line possessed the same Sigint equipment. This involved operations chiefly intended to gather tactical military intelligence on the ABiH, for use in briefing commanders.¹²²³

The French intelligence services were also active, from both France in Sarajevo, in intercepting Bosnian traffic. Not only the communications of the government was targeted but also the messages between ABiH snipers. These snipers caused a large number of dead and wounded among French UNPROFOR soldiers. According to a member of the Canadian Military Intelligence Service, the French in Sarajevo had the best-working intelligence system of all UNPROFOR participants, with both Sigint and Imint capacities. According to the Canadians, the French service was the best-organized in Sarajevo: it had an excellent, centrally operated all-source intelligence system that stood head and shoulders above the other services in operational, tactical and strategic terms. The problem, however, was that the French service simply refused to share its intelligence with NATO allies. The Canadian intelligence officials in Sarajevo did however, thanks to the bilingual character of this country and some good personal relations, receive some French intelligence.¹²²⁴

UNPROFOR as target of the US Sigint operations and the British-American animosity

Despite the close relationship within the UKUSA framework, fundamental differences of opinion about Bosnia remained between the Americans and the British. London was particularly disturbed by the wish for a more substantial use of air power, and the US refusal to deploy ground troops. This created animosity between the American and British services, which at one moment led to some of the US intelligence flow to London being cut off. Captain Cooke of the UK Defence Intelligence Staff commented on this:

¹²²¹ Walter Pincus, 'US Sought Other Bosnia Arms Sources', *Washington Post*, 26/04/96 and James Risen, 'Iran Paid Bosnian Leader, CIA Says', *Los Angeles Times*, 31/12/96.

¹²²² 'Bonn denies Tehran using German spy gear in Bosnia', *Reuters Report*, 09/12/96.

¹²²³ NIOD, *Coll. CD-ROMS*. 2nd Corps ABiH to 28th Division, no. 06-05-173/95, 14/06/95.

¹²²⁴ Confidential interview (9).

‘They more or less admitted they were holding stuff back from us; not everything, but really the bits relating to most pronounced political divide. They didn’t feel we took their information about Serb atrocities seriously enough (...) They pushed the stuff which favoured more punitive action against the Bosnian Serbs’.¹²²⁵

In other words, the Americans did not cut off the flow of intelligence completely, but it was gradually reduced. In fact, US ideas for a solution to the Bosnian conflict failed not only to meet with the approval of the British, but also not with the approval of the Canadians and the French for instance. This led to considerable mistrust on the part of the Americans. The consequences were wide ranging: UN traffic became a Sigint target for the NSA. This involved the communications between the military and civil UNPROFOR representatives in Bosnia.

The headquarters of Bosnia Hercegovina Command (BHC) in Sarajevo and of UNPF in Zagreb were notorious for their ‘near stone age communications’. Generally speaking both headquarters communicated with each other or with the UN via Inmarsat or via the non-secure satellite telephones (VSAT). Moreover, there were initially just four channels available for the entire BHC. According to intelligence experts the UN communications were monitored ‘as a matter of course’.¹²²⁶ There was almost no encryption equipment for links with New York and Zagreb, just a few purely national satellite lines in BHC and the American STU-III satellite telephone for the contacts with NATO in Italy. When General Smith left Sarajevo, for instance, then US Special Forces provided communications with a mobile satellite telephone. This meant, however, that the American services were able to listen in to what Smith discussed on the telephone, and this is just what they did, as Stankovic revealed in his book.¹²²⁷

Moreover, Smith’s staff was convinced that most offices were bugged by Bosnian and Serb services. Some suspected that the nearby US embassy also bugged their conversations.¹²²⁸ This certainly seems possible because the embassy had a special Sigint cell of the NSA, the existence of which was not even known to the Chief of Station who was later assigned to the embassy. Moreover, US intelligence services operated from three containers at Smith’s Sarajevo headquarters: this involved a unit of the Special Collection Service.¹²²⁹ Smith himself regarded his surroundings as non-secure with regard to communications. This is why he did not often correspond with Zagreb. He also assumed that most conversations he conducted at his headquarters were bugged by the Bosnian Intelligence Service.¹²³⁰ Two studies issued by the headquarters of the British troops in Sarajevo, BritFor, in July and September 1995 also assumed that all three of the warring parties had Sigint capabilities. These studies pointed out that the former Yugoslavia had possessed a substantial Sigint organization. Various cases had been noted in which communications traffic to and from UN troops had been intercepted, or jammed. Consequently the Sigint threat was estimated as ranging ‘between medium and high’.

As already described, most UN communications traffic was routed via Inmarsat and VSAT satellite telephones. According to the British, all links via VSAT, Inmarsat and the local post office telephones were completely non-secure. The ‘Tempest’ threat was also rated as high; this involves the scanning of data emissions from computer screens, telephones and telephone cables in a given building from *outside* the building. In particular the non-secure UN telephones could be used by the warring factions as a suitable means for monitoring data. It was thus recommended that computers be positioned at least three metres away from non-secure telephones. Moreover, power cables and

¹²²⁵ Urban, *UK Eyes*, p. 241.

¹²²⁶ Confidential interviews (44) and (80). Also: Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, p. 459.

¹²²⁷ Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, pp. 250-252.

¹²²⁸ Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force*, pp. 40-41.

¹²²⁹ Confidential interview (12).

¹²³⁰ Interview with R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

telephone cables should not run next to each other.¹²³¹ There had been many past cases when a telephone receiver 'on the hook' had been used to monitor conversations in rooms.

The UN's 'secure fax' also had to be regarded as completely insecure and 'compromised' because the UN had lent such a fax machine to the VRS for a while in order to enable communication with Pale from Sarajevo and Zagreb. The experts of the VRS and the VJ are sure to have taken all steps to study this 'secure communications resource' in detail. Moreover, the communications centre regularly made mistakes, such as sending Coded Cables via non-secure fax machines.¹²³² In January 1995 there was not even a secure communications link by fax or telephone between NATO Southern Command Headquarters (CINCSOUTH) and UNPF in Zagreb. In fact it was intentional UN policy not to use secure links; this was permitted only at the very highest level.¹²³³ The former UNPROFOR commander, Rose, claims in his memoirs that his former headquarters in Sarajevo was monitored by US services in 1994-1995. The monitored conversations are said to have been sent directly to the US military leadership in Naples. He also claimed that his communications traffic with the UN headquarters in New York was intercepted by the NSA. According to Rose the Americans did this because they feared he was too sympathetic towards the Bosnian Serbs.¹²³⁴ Rose did not reveal how he was monitored. It would indeed not be surprising if Rose was monitored, because the Americans did not automatically have access to all the general's correspondence. Rose was probably also monitored by the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs.¹²³⁵ In an interview Rose also claimed that the Bosnian secret service eavesdropped on him.¹²³⁶

Milos Stankovic's book also revealed that the communications links of the highest UNPROFOR commanders were a major target for the US intelligence services. Stankovic worked as interpreter and translator for Rose and later Smith. The Americans provided secure encrypted links between Sarajevo and NATO for General Smith. These conversations normally took place via a secure link, known as the Tactical Satellite Radio (TacSat). This link consisted of two components: a receiver component and a transmitter component. During the time of Rose, and later under Smith, this suddenly became three components. One day a member of General Smith's staff discovered what the third component was for. Smith had just carried out a number of conversations on this TacSat with Washington and London. Then Smith, accompanied by an aide, hurried to the neighbouring US embassy for a meeting. This member of Smith's staff took a look around the embassy building while the general was in the meeting, and suddenly heard Smith's voice coming from a room. It transpired that an American official was making a report of the telephone conversations that Smith had conducted half an hour earlier. Smith's staff then knew for sure: the third component of the TacSat was an extra transmitter, which passed on all calls directly to a receiver at the US embassy.¹²³⁷ After this Smith, to the fury of the Americans, started using a special TacSat of the British SAS for his communications. This worked with the help of an encrypted link, which was difficult to intercept and to break. The NSA is however reported to have managed to do this. It all points to a deep-rooted American distrust of British foreign policy.¹²³⁸

The Americans monitored not only Smith and Rose, but probably the entire UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo. Special 'sweeptams' sometimes came from the UK to Sarajevo to sweep the building clean. But each time new eavesdropping microphones were found, which could however also

¹²³¹ UNGE, *UNPROFOR, Box 220*, File RRFOS/2300-3 Opsec. Memorandum RRFOS, 25/07/95 and 08/09/95.

¹²³² UNGE, *UNPROFOR, Box 211*, BHC Communications to HQ Zagreb, Security Violation, T-040, 30/11/94.

¹²³³ Confidential collection (7), Annan to Akashi, MSC-337, 27/01/95 and G 6 to COS Log, no. G6/94/031, 15/08/94.

¹²³⁴ Rose, *Fighting*, pp. 72-73; Andrew Gilligan, 'American Satellite Spied on Britain', *Daily Telegraph*, 01/09/96 and *Intelligence Newsletter*, no. 347, 26/11/98.

¹²³⁵ Confidential interview (13).

¹²³⁶ Marijnissen & Glastra van Loon, *De Laatste Oorlog*, pp. 108-109.

¹²³⁷ Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, pp. 251-252 and confidential interview (80).

¹²³⁸ Ed Vulliamy, 'How the CIA intercepted SAS signals', *The Guardian*, 29/01/96 and 'CIA luisterde VN-commandant generaal Rose in Sarajevo af' (CIA eavesdropped on UN commander General Rose in Sarajevo), *De Volkskrant*, 30/01/96.

have been part of a Bosnian government operation.¹²³⁹ The UNPROFOR headquarters was probably also monitored from the site itself. Under both General Rose and Smith the UNPROFOR compound, which accommodated the headquarters of the British generals, also always hosted three interconnected containers. A forest of antennas projected from this installation,¹²⁴⁰ and only American officers were allowed to enter the containers; no other nationalities were allowed access. The only exception was occasionally made for the Head of the Bosnian Intelligence Service, General Taljan Hajrulahovic. The service that these Americans worked for and the precise nature of their tasks was shrouded in secrecy: no one knew and no questions were asked. It was suspected that this Special Collection Service unit was engaged in 'vacuuming up' all the communications traffic in and around Sarajevo.¹²⁴¹ In this way not only UNPROFOR was monitored, but also the activities of the Mujahideen fighters in Bosnia.¹²⁴²

Another example of the animosity between the Americans and the British was that the NSA intercepted the calls made by General Rose to the Forward Air Controllers in Gorazde. This was done because the Americans had a certain distrust of the British political line in the region. They viewed Rose as pro-Serb because, according to the Americans, he constantly cited instances that the ABiH and the Croatian Army were also guilty of breaking cease-fires and other misdemeanours. In the view of Washington, Rose simply had 'the wrong agenda'; according to the American services General Rose was 'fucking up the script'. They did not trust Rose and suspected that he did not sufficiently encourage his Forward Air Controllers to promptly report Serb violations of the Gorazde Safe Area, and to keep a close watch on the intentions of the VRS. Cooke of the UK Defence Intelligence Staff told Urban this:

'We certainly believed the Americans tapped into communications of that sort (...) the Americans interpreted the threshold for air strikes differently to us. They could use those sorts of interceptions to say the UN knew the Serbs were doing something and didn't react'.¹²⁴³

Another example that seems to indicate major distrust was that the CIA Directorate of Operations had a special cell of about twenty employees whose most important task was to analyse British intelligence reports. The aim here was to establish which agents MI6 or the DIS had recruited in the former Yugoslavia and which other sources the British services had in Bosnia. It should be said that the CIA dismissed this report as absolute nonsense.¹²⁴⁴ It was only in the summer of 1995 that the transatlantic relations were to improve again, but the Americans persisted in not passing all their intelligence on to the British.

The Electronic Intelligence war: the (Bosnian) Serb air defence

It can thus be seen that the cooperation within NATO in the field of Sigint, and above all the sharing of high-level Comint, was not, to put it mildly, all it could have been due to the considerable American distrust of London (and Paris). Things were very different when it came to Elint: here mostly relevant to the interception of radar signals. American operational collection platforms, supplemented by other Sigint equipment, were not only intended to intercept communications traffic. Elint and also Foreign Instrumentation Sigint (Fisint) enabled the NSA to chart the VJ and the VRS air defence systems in detail. It is no surprise that the cooperation in this field was good, in view of the participation of the US Air Force and Navy in operations over Bosnia. American aircraft mostly collaborated closely with aircraft of other NATO allies, so there was a direct interest in sharing Elint. Furthermore, Elint was

¹²³⁹ Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, p. 292.

¹²⁴⁰ Interview with A.P.P.M. van Baal, 01/11/01.

¹²⁴¹ Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, pp. 251-252 and confidential interview (6).

¹²⁴² James Risen, 'Iran gave Bosnia leader \$ 500.000', *Los Angeles Times*, 31/12/96.

¹²⁴³ Urban, *UK Eyes*, p. 241 and Mark Urban, 'The Magnum Force', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 01/09/96.

¹²⁴⁴ Confidential interview (79). See also: Urban, *UK Eyes*, p. 241.

usually not subject to any political considerations, thus reducing the secrecy constraints and making distribution easier. Cooperation was thus almost perfect in the field of Elint. A constant stream of Elint was sent via NATO's LOCE system to the allies. Radar stations, frequencies, surface-to-air missiles and other air defence systems were charted in great detail and most of the VJ and VRS systems were no secret to the NATO planners.

The analysts had more trouble with the fact that the VRS and the VJ sometimes did not switch on the radars of their air defence systems, or relocated them, in order to avoid discovery. The Elint and Fisint clearly showed that the VRS air defence was operated from Belgrade, and in fact it was commanded and coordinated there too. In the summer of 1995 the American services broke into the Serbian and Bosnian Serb HF and microwave radio networks and established that the headquarters of the VJ in Belgrade was 'feeding the Bosnian Serb anti-aircraft network information on NATO overflights' over Bosnia. Elint showed that Serbian early warning radar sites were stationed on Bosnian Serb territory, and that these tracked NATO flight movements and that this radar data reached the VRS headquarters in Han Pijesak almost in real time.¹²⁴⁵

The VRS had a network of eight large early warning radar sites of Soviet manufacture, as well as Swedish *Ericsson Giraffe* radars. These covered the Krajina and Bosnia, and thus gave Mladic sufficient warning, in the event of NATO air strikes, to move equipment to safety. The VRS air defence also had advanced early warning systems with which the Bosnian Serbs could monitor the radio traffic of NATO, the UN and the Bosnian and Croatian armies. This radar network, mobile surface-to-air missiles and early warning systems were linked together by a network of more than twenty short-wave relay towers centred around the military headquarters at Han Pijesak. Via links in Han Pijesak and Bijeljina these towers were linked to the VJ air defence network.¹²⁴⁶ Moreover, Bosnian Serb spotters who hung around the air bases in Italy kept a close watch on the movements of NATO aircraft. This information was passed on to Belgrade via amateur radio links.

Electronic intelligence in practice: the shooting down of O'Grady's F-16

One clear instance of the close collaboration between the VJ and the VRS was the shooting down of the aircraft flown by US Captain Scott O'Grady. On 2 June 1995 a U-2R Senior Span Sigint aircraft is reported to have intercepted radar waves from an SA-6 Gainfall surface-to-air missile, of Soviet manufacture, in North-Western Bosnia. This meant that the NSA knew of this threat. One day later O'Grady's F-16 was shot down by a surface-to-air missile of the Bosnian Serbs, close to Banja Luka. According to press reports the NSA intercepts never reached O'Grady: apparently this commander was firmly convinced that there were no surface-to-air missiles stationed in the area over which he was flying. The Russian representative in the UN Security Council had originally doubts about the SAM of Soviet manufacture but Albright told him: 'If something looked like a duck, quacked like a duck and walked like a duck, then it probably was a duck'. Later analyses by the NSA revealed that the U-2 Senior Span had discovered brief radar emissions by the VRS tracking radar, before O'Grady's F-16 was brought down. This intelligence reached Fort Meade in just a few seconds, but never reached the AWACS aircraft that were monitoring O'Grady's mission and checking that no hostile air defence was in the vicinity. This AWACS was not an American aircraft, and as a result it did not have any communications equipment compatible with the warning systems on board the F-16.¹²⁴⁷

Following the shooting down of the American F-16, it was Sigint that gave the first indication that O'Grady was still alive. Sigint aircraft and submarines monitored the VRS military radio traffic, and this provided evidence that O'Grady had survived. This ultimately resulted in a successful operation to

¹²⁴⁵ Karsten Prager, 'Message from Serbia', *Time*, 17/07/95.

¹²⁴⁶ Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force*, p. 78.

¹²⁴⁷ Dana Priest, 'US Fliers Didn't Get Missile Data: Antiaircraft System Was Detected By NSA', *Washington Post*, 11/06/95; 'system Failed Downed Pilot, CIA Official Says', *Washington Post*, 28/06/95; Dana Priest, 'Communications Glitch Blamed in F-16 Downing', *Washington Post*, 08/07/95 and 'Commander's Comments', *Spokesman*, May 1996, p. 3.

get O'Grady out of Bosnian Serb territory alive (see Chapter 2 of Part III of the main Srebrenica report).¹²⁴⁸ Despite the technical causes that led to the failure to prevent O'Grady's F-16 from being downed, the alliance cooperation in the field of Elint was generally good. It has already been concluded that this was much less so regarding the exchange of American high-level military and political Comint. The role played by the Netherlands in this Comint flow has not yet been discussed. This chapter thus concludes with a closer examination of the position of the Netherlands Military Intelligence Service in the field of Sigint.

6. Dutch Sigint in the Bosnian conflict

Between 1992 and 1995 there were three units engaged in Sigint: the First Tactical Air Force Signals Groups (1LVG), the 898th Signals Battalion (898 Vbdbat) of the Royal Netherlands Army, and the Technical Information Processing Centre (TIVC) of the Royal Netherlands Navy. In 1996 these three services were merged to produce the *Afdeling Verbindingsinlichtingen* (Sigint Department, AVI) of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS). Until this time each of the three branches of the Armed Forces intercepted Sigint for itself.

Around 1995 the situation was as follows. The 898th Signals Battalion, with its home base at Eibergen, was then still under direct command of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. The Sigint material was passed to the MIS/Army. The Sigint units at Eemnes, Zoutkamp and Amsterdam were then under the command of the MIS/Navy. Eibergen concentrated mostly on intercepting military communications traffic on the HF frequency. The TIVC, with its Granger antennas in Eemnes, also concentrated on intercepting international traffic on the HF frequency and also, via two receiving dishes in Zoutkamp, on intercepting signals sent by satellite. The Sigint section of the Air Force, 1LVG, also concentrated on intercepting military traffic on the HF frequency. This section did not however engage in any interception of HF links in the former Yugoslavia.¹²⁴⁹ Interception of Comint was carried out in various ways. The first method is to search the ether, and especially satellite links, with a 'vacuum cleaner'. This is done with the help of a computerized dictionary that can search for key words. Another method was to program computer systems for specific telephone, fax or GSM numbers. If the material received at Eemnes or Zoutkamp was coded then it was passed to the encryption analysis section in Amsterdam, where attempts were made to break the code with computers.

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall the tasks of these three units – i.e. one unit for each branch of the Armed Forces – generally involved the production of operational Sigint for the Netherlands Armed Forces with regard to Sea, Ground and Air Forces in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Another task was to produce strategic Comint; this related to political and strategic decision-making, organized crime, proliferation of nuclear weapons, terrorism and economic developments. This intelligence was produced for the Ministries of Defence, Justice, Foreign Affairs and Internal Affairs. Both the operational and strategic intelligence production was based on the interceptions and subsequent processing by each of the three aforementioned units, combined with shared Comint from foreign partners. It was only following the reorganization in 1996 that the exchange of Comint was also extended to crisis management operations.¹²⁵⁰

At no time during the deployment of Dutchbat did the Army, Air Force and Navy interception services actively focus on the events in the former Yugoslavia. The only exception to this was on 17 July 1994, for one of the three, the 898th Signals Battalion at Eibergen, concentrated on intercepting

¹²⁴⁸ Daniel Williams, 'I'm Ready to Get the Hell Out of Here', *Washington Post*, 09/07/95 and Richard J. Newman, 'Breaking the Surface', *US News & World Report*, 06/04/98, p. 30. See for the problems regarding sharing of US national intelligence with US marines supposedly to rescue O'Grady: Margaret S. Macdonald and Anthony G. Oettinger, 'Information Overload', *Harvard International Review*, Vol. XXIV (Fall 2002) 3, p. 48.

¹²⁴⁹ NIOD, Letter from MIS, Department AVI/BR&C to C. Wiebes, 10/07/00.

¹²⁵⁰ MoD, MIS, HAO to HMID, no. AO 960708, 31/12/96.

military communications. The Commander in Chief of the Army, General Couzy, then gave the unit a task relating to the former Yugoslavia: to produce an overview of the possibilities (or impossibilities) of receiving and recording Yugoslav military communications traffic. It was thus only at a late stage that the Eibergen unit was told to ‘take a look’ at Yugoslavia. The first problem was that the antennas were, as had always been the case, aimed at the East-West confrontation; it has already been discussed in Chapter 3 how it was a ‘mortal sin’ to focus on conflicts that did not fit into a Cold War view of things.¹²⁵¹

Eibergen’s slow turn towards Bosnia

On 14 July 1995, three days after the fall of Srebrenica, the 898th Signals Battalion received the order from Couzy to ‘take a look’ at Bosnia. The Eibergen unit immediately submitted a request for support; supplementary technical material and translation support was urgently needed. In addition, the Western partners were informed that certain interception activities would be halted due to ‘srebrenica’.¹²⁵² It was not until March 1996 – none too late – that Eibergen was actually ‘up and running’; this was when a second Beveradge antenna had been installed. The monitoring station was now able to look south. It needs to be said that Minister Voorhoeve provided little support in this respect. He had little affinity with intelligence in general and with the work of the MIS in particular. He mostly asked why the Netherlands needed to engage in Sigint activities, if foreign services did the same, and whether it couldn’t be done more cheaply. The minister could only be convinced if a successful result was presented from time to time.¹²⁵³

The Deputy Head of the MIS, Lieutenant Colonel A. Bleumink, confirmed that it was only after the summer of 1995, with the help of Comint, that some insight was obtained into communications networks of the VRS and the ABiH. This was only managed with ‘jury-rigging’ methods, because Eibergen’s monitoring installations were oriented towards the east, being the wrong direction. One reason why Dutch Sigint services only gradually abandoned their Cold War mode, and continued to look towards the East, was that the Netherlands would otherwise be left with nothing at all to exchange with its Western allies.¹²⁵⁴

Furthermore, the MIS was faced with a shortage of Serbo-Croat translators. This problem had already been raised in May 1993: the 898th Signals Battalion in Eibergen announced that in order to conduct its tasks it had an immediate requirement for an initially limited interception of communications traffic in the former Yugoslavia, and Serbo-Croat translation capabilities. It was proposed that five members of the 898th Signals Battalion should undertake this training from the start of 1994 onwards.¹²⁵⁵

Ultimately five intercept operators, also active as translators, were assigned to start a six-month training course at the Military Intelligence Service School from May 1994 onwards. Actual interception of communications traffic slowly started in January 1995, with limited use of personnel (ca. six people) who at that time still had relatively poor language skills. These operators worked in a five-shift system, with one interceptor on duty per shift. The translator examined all the intercepted messages fairly quickly, and later translated the most important ones. However, a long start-up phase was required in order to get to grips with the Yugoslav communications traffic. Frequencies needed to be located, for instance, transmitters and units charted, call-signs recognized and the battle order defined. A number of months are required for a Sigint organization to get to grips, even on a basic level, with a region as large

¹²⁵¹ Confidential interviews (21, 22 and 33).

¹²⁵² MoD, *MIS*, Memorandum: HINL to Wnd. SC-O, no. INL/194/140795, 14/07/95 and Message ‘Change of Targets’ to partners, 13/07/95.

¹²⁵³ Interview with H.J. Vandeweyer, 27/01/00.

¹²⁵⁴ Interview with A. Bleumink, 19/03/01.

¹²⁵⁵ MoD, *MIS*, *File 443.0801*. Colonel Bosch, HAI&V MIS/RNLA to Training Command Netherlands Army, no. 21892/1/270593, 18/05/93.

as the Balkans. Two to three years were needed to get the operation running really well. However, it was not until 15 August 1995 that Eiberger made its first tactical military reports on Yugoslavia.¹²⁵⁶

The military and political Comint relating to Bosnia that was nonetheless intercepted while Dutchbat was in that country was primarily intended for the intelligence agencies of the three branches of the Armed Forces (see Chapter 3). According to a MIS member, all relevant information obtained from Comint was passed on (in paraphrased form) via the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to Dutchbat.¹²⁵⁷ This claim can be doubted, however, because hardly any Comint was available at the MIS.

Research by the NIOD in the Military Intelligence Service archives in The Hague, the former Technical Information Processing Centre (TIVC) in Amsterdam and the former 898th Signals Battalion in Eiberger indicates that, prior to the fall of Srebrenica, there were just a few intercepts or integral transcriptions of intercepted signals traffic from Bosnia, and these bore no relation to the attack by the VRS on the enclave.¹²⁵⁸

The archives did however contain standard reports on unidentified military networks in Bosnia. These did not however contain any hard information, but dealt more with procedural traffic. This could in itself be useful to the MIS for localizing and charting certain troop forces. This material was obtained via interception by both the Dutch and foreign sister organizations. None of the data present makes reference to fighting in or around Srebrenica. This could be ascribed to the geographical location of the enclave (in a valley), which made it technically almost impossible to intercept local radio traffic around Srebrenica from Eiberger.¹²⁵⁹ Research in the archives of the First Tactical Air Force Signals Group and the 898th Signals Battalion also shows that, between 9 and 20 July, no information was available on the Drina Corps of the VRS, which carried out the attack on the enclave.¹²⁶⁰

On 15 August 1995 Eiberger started producing and supplying reports. This resulted in reports on the target area, but still in modest quantities. Moreover, the capabilities did not extend beyond military traffic on the HF frequency. Intercepting military VHF traffic in the region was not feasible, as this could not be 'netted' in Eiberger. The shorter the range of the transmitter, the harder it is to intercept this. VHF communications from tanks have a range of about 60 km, for instance, and can only be monitored from aircraft or some satellites. Indeed, no Western partner is reported to have had monitoring equipment on the ground in the Srebrenica area in this period which could have intercepted such short-range traffic. The mountains and the topography also made it harder to intercept the military traffic.

So even from August 1995 onwards the Sigint situation was not good; one should also note that differences between day and night, between summer and winter, and technical factors could also all affect the interception of communications traffic. It was not possible to precisely determine the transmission point of signals. The TIVC, operating with HF interception from Eemnes and satellite interception from Zoutkamp, was not aimed at the Balkans in 1995 either. In the period from 1993 to 1995 the interception capabilities of the TIVC were confined to HF radio traffic and telex communications via satellite. It was not possible to intercept telephone and fax traffic via satellite. Furthermore, between 1993 and 1995 the TIVC exchanged raw interception material with sister organizations; this material comprised intercepted HF and satellite communications traffic (telex material). Fax material was not exchanged during this time.¹²⁶¹

To sum up, some intelligence was exchanged with partners, but since the MIS did not have much to offer it also did not receive a great deal of intercepted Sigint. In addition, the MIS did not focus on the Inmarsat satellite, and it was precisely through this channel that most communications

¹²⁵⁶ Confidential interviews (21) and (33).

¹²⁵⁷ MoD, *SMG*, Report of interview with Col. Bokhoven, 25/07/95.

¹²⁵⁸ MoD, *MIS*, Overview report Bureau A-4 to HMID/RNLA, no. 31701/4/130395, 13/03/95.

¹²⁵⁹ Confidential interviews (21), (22), and (33). See also: MoD, *MIS*, Internal information by mr. D. Bijl to the WOB request from the NOS Journaal, Strictly Confidential, undated (ca. 24/03/99).

¹²⁶⁰ MoD, *MIS*, Signal days 95190 to 95199.

¹²⁶¹ NIOD, Letter from MIS, Department AVI/BR&C to C. Wiebes, 10/07/00.

were routed, such as the UN communications traffic. Furthermore, the Serbs and Bosnian Serbs made considerable use of encryption equipment, land lines, beam transmitters and one-time pads (codes used one time only) for their most important diplomatic and military traffic. This too made it almost impossible for Dutch services to monitor their traffic or to break their codes. In view of the above, MIS staff admitted that while the events in the Balkans, with the presence of Dutch troops, necessitated a corresponding intelligence response, this response by the Dutch intelligence services in fact came too late.¹²⁶²

What did the Netherlands hear from other western services?

The fact that the MIS had little to exchange is indicated by the following. On 5 October 1995 Minister Voorhoeve had a meeting with his US colleague Perry. Voorhoeve asked him if it was true that the US intelligence community had intercepted a telephone call by Mladic in which the general had requested buses. Perry confirmed that such a request by Mladic was indeed known to the American sources, but left open whether this information had been obtained through intercepts or other intelligence sources. Voorhoeve asked Perry to check the date on which this call had been made, and whether the recipients of the call were the authorities in Pale or in Belgrade. If the request had been directed to Belgrade, it could be concluded that the Serbian authorities were involved in the forced deportation, and could possibly even have been aware of the plans for mass executions. Perry promised that General Shalikashvili would investigate this.¹²⁶³

On 18 October the Americans, via their embassy in The Hague, presented an Information Paper in which they dealt with Voorhoeve's question. The memorandum stated that the US services had no information about a telephone call between Mladic and Milosevic regarding the use of buses for the deportation of citizens from Srebrenica. This answer seems evasive, because Milosevic was, after all, not a bus operator. In such a matter Mladic would have been more likely to have consulted with the General Staff in Belgrade. Voorhoeve had also not asked whether Mladic had spoken to *Milosevic*, but only whether a telephone call had been intercepted in which the general asked for buses.¹²⁶⁴

Did the MIS have access to calls between Janvier and Chirac?

Nonetheless, reports about this matter reached the NIOD from MIS officers who wished to remain anonymous. These persons reported that calls between Janvier and the French president Chirac had been intercepted during the attack on Srebrenica. The use of Close Air Support for Dutchbat is reported to have been discussed in these calls. In view of the weak information position of the Netherlands in the field of Sigint, it seems rather unlikely that the MIS should be aware of such high-level intelligence. The NIOD has sought indications for this in the archive of the Sigint Department of the MIS. Research in the material of foreign partners was excluded in view of relevant international agreements.

The archiving process in Eibergen is as follows. The intercept operators write down what they intercept, and these handwritten notes are kept for two years. These handwritten notes regarded mostly geographic locations, coordinates and frequencies. They are also kept in another form, in radio logbooks. Everything intercepted electronically is recorded on tape (intercepted conversations) or in the computer. In addition the physical intercepts are stored in the Comint archive. The Yugoslavia archive also contains the messages from the NATO Sigint cell in Vicenza and Naples. This intelligence cell works exclusively on the basis of Comint supplied by the alliance partners.

This author conducted research in Eibergen with the help of a very extensive list of keywords. This was aimed at material from the unit's own archive of Comint, the Yugoslavia archive, the raw

¹²⁶² Confidential information (38).

¹²⁶³ NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. Report of a meeting between Voorhoeve and Perry, 05/10/95.

¹²⁶⁴ NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. US Information Paper, 18/10/95.

Comint archive and other archive material. Keywords (including ‘srebrenica’) were entered for the years 1992 to 1999. This research in the intercepts and reports resulted in a good picture. It transpired that although a great deal of intercepted material is present, very little of it concerns the events around Srebrenica in the summer of 1995. This tallied with the statements in a confidential briefing given to the author. There is some material at Eibergen that concerns Srebrenica, but this can be regarded as non-relevant. There is very little material about the military developments in the region. It is highly probable that foreign-partner material does not contain any intercepted calls between Janvier and Chirac either, because their presence would always have left traces, in disguised form, in the normal MIS reports.

In this way it was established that the claims made by anonymous sources that the Eibergen archive contained intercepts of calls between Janvier and Chirac were not correct. The same went for the archive of the TIVC in Amsterdam and the central Comint archive of the Signals Department in The Hague. This author conducted extensive research in these archives too. On the basis of a large number of relevant keywords a search was made for possibly present intercepted telephone calls, such as between Janvier and Chirac or between Mladic and Perisic. This material was not found in these archives either. Hence it can be concluded that these intercepts are not present in the Netherlands. Another reason why it is unlikely that these intercepts would be present in Eibergen is that the 898th Signals Battalion of the Netherlands Army concentrated only on strictly military networks, not on telephone traffic between UNPROFOR and national governments. In July 1995, however, Eibergen was not even capable of monitoring the military networks in view of the limited interception capacity and technical resources. The same applied to the TIVC of the Netherlands Navy in Amsterdam. It can further be assumed that General Janvier and President Chirac did not talk to each other on an open and non-secure telephone line.¹²⁶⁵

The claim that staff of the MIS have been enjoined to secrecy on this matter, as claimed by one MIS staff member, has not been substantiated. The author was able to speak freely to every staff member. On the basis of research in the MIS archives it can be concluded that if American high-level Comint was available on such conversations, it was not shared with the MIS. Thorough study of the MIS reports, and many interviews, indicated that nothing relating to this matter was exchanged with the Netherlands. In this respect the MIS was treated the same as the services of other alliance partners.

A secret request to the MIS: a suitcase for Dutchbat

The MIS would have been able to acquire a good intelligence position if a secret American offer had been accepted. Staff of American, Canadian, British and Dutch intelligence services confirmed that the NSA intercepted only few conversations in Eastern Bosnia. The Americans had problems with their Comint coverage, although they intercepted fairly large quantities of information. Communications via walkie-talkies presented a problem however, as described in the previous section. This provided an opportunity for the Netherlands. The Head of the MIS/CO Commander P. Kok – he occupied this post from 1 January 1994 to 25 June 1995 – was approached by the CIA representative in The Hague immediately after Kok took up his post at the start of 1994.¹²⁶⁶ Dutchbat I was then about to leave for Srebrenica and the CIA made an offer ‘which you cannot refuse’.¹²⁶⁷

Kok was told the following. The NSA, it appeared, had a serious problem: the service was unable to intercept communications via Motorola walkie-talkies in and around the eastern enclaves. The range of such communications equipment was no more than about 30 km. The Americans wanted to set up an interception network at various points in the Balkans, and envisaged Srebrenica as one of

¹²⁶⁵ MoD, *SMG*, Report of visit to Lt. Col. A. Bleumink, 09/08/95.

¹²⁶⁶ Confidential interview (78). A request for a confidential interview with this American chief of station was refused by the CIA.

¹²⁶⁷ An initial indication of this operation was received during a confidential interview (6) with a former employee of the NSA.

these points. They proposed setting up a reception and transmission installation at a number of OPs in the enclave. This involved equipment with the format of two 'samsonite' suitcases. One suitcase was for interception of the traffic, and the other provided a direct link to an Inmarsat satellite. The intercepted messages would be shared with the MIS. In exchange for this cooperation the MIS was also offered other 'broad' intelligence, taken to mean also Imagery Intelligence.

For Dutchbat, then about to depart for Srebrenica, it would be easy to take along a few suitcases. The Bosnian Serbs would not be suspicious because these looked like normal communications equipment. The Dutch could decide for themselves how many of these suitcases they installed and how many hours a day the equipment would be operated. Two or three soldiers of the Electronic Warfare Company would need to operate the equipment and the Americans would provide a brief training course. Three men would provide round-the-clock coverage. The suitcases would be larger in size than the 'satellite Communication-M' system that had been in service with the Netherlands Army since 1994 and weighed less than 7 kg. The system was usable globally and very user-friendly.¹²⁶⁸

Kok first took this request to a member of the Intelligence & Security Section of the MIS/Army. He asked whether this was a realistic option in technical terms. The official in question confirmed to the author when asked that Kok had talked to him about the American offer for provision of a 'sort of box'. This official thought it was an excellent idea; in his view it would even be possible to camouflage the suitcases.¹²⁶⁹ Another official within the MIS/CO had also heard about this American request. He believed it concerned boxes in which Sigint equipment was hidden. He knew nothing about suitcases, but that was not unusual. Kok always kept such matters concealed from his subordinates.¹²⁷⁰

Kok then approached the head of the MIS/Army, H. Bosch, with this proposal. This was logical since all matters regarding intelligence and the operations of Dutchbat were the responsibility of the Army. Kok went together with Bosch to the Commander in Chief of the Army, General Couzy. The latter was not happy about the idea, however. Couzy said he could not remember the reason for this visit.¹²⁷¹ Bosch, who was to establish a good relationship with Kok, could not remember this incident either. He declared emphatically however that he had full confidence in Kok's account. Bosch, a great advocate of Comint, later tried to convince Couzy again about the usefulness of deploying an Electronic Warfare unit in the enclave, but Couzy rejected this proposal too.¹²⁷²

The CIA, also acting on behalf of the NSA, is said to have asked five or six times between March 1994 and January 1995 whether the MIS would cooperate in this project. Kok always had to reply in the negative.¹²⁷³ Kok was to try five times to get approval from the MIS/Army for this idea. He tried again with Bosch's successor as Head of MIS/Army, Colonel H. Bokhoven. According to Bokhoven, Kok passed this request to him just once; he could not recall that Kok said that he had been approached by the CIA several times. Kok presented this to Bokhoven as a 'spectacular' proposal, but Bokhoven considered that the MIS should not cooperate in this project. He viewed it as an offensive intelligence task that did not fit the context of UNPROFOR, and also felt it was more suitable for the intelligence services of other countries. Bokhoven confirmed to the author that he had refused to cooperate in the installation of these Comint devices in the enclave.

Bokhoven's view was based on his experiences in UNPROFOR: he was afraid that the Bosnian Serbs would discover the purpose of the suitcases and this would compromise him. Kok claimed that following positioning of the suitcases The Hague would receive more American intelligence, but Bokhoven still viewed the risk as too great. Bokhoven informed Couzy of the matter. According to

¹²⁶⁸ See: MoD, *MoD LL*. Internal memorandum from G-6 OPS/BLS, no. OPS/BLS/1997/6927, 27/06/97.

¹²⁶⁹ Confidential interview (22).

¹²⁷⁰ Confidential interview (25).

¹²⁷¹ Interview with H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

¹²⁷² Interview with J.M.J. Bosch, 10/10/01.

¹²⁷³ Confidential interview (78).

Bokhoven Couzy supported him in his rejection of the offer.¹²⁷⁴ It is remarkable that Couzy can remember nothing of this. He could not recall ever having been approached by Kok, Bosch or Bokhoven about this matter. He could also not recall whether he had ever gone to Ter Beek or Voorhoeve with this proposal. Couzy did however tell the author that Kok could have stuck to his guns and have had him overruled by the Chief of the Defence Staff. This clearly did not happen.¹²⁷⁵

In November 2002 both Defence ministers testified before the Dutch Parliamentary Inquiry into Srebrenica that they were never approached regarding the Sigint suitcases. Both ministers claimed that they would have gone along with this operation.¹²⁷⁶ Former Minister Voorhoeve had earlier already confirmed to the author that he had never received the suitcases proposal. Asked whether he would have cooperated, in view of the poor information situation of Dutchbat, Voorhoeve answered: 'Yes, certainly. The non-defensible position of Dutchbat, and what could happen, caused me to lose sleep from the moment I took office.'¹²⁷⁷ The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, M. Patijn, had never received information about a request from a foreign intelligence service either.¹²⁷⁸ In 2001 Bokhoven still held the opinion that it would not have been possible to keep this operation properly concealed or secret. Even if the suitcases had been camouflaged as normal communications equipment, he thought the Bosnian Serbs would have discovered them and then the equipment would not have reached the enclave. Bokhoven was, and remained, convinced on the basis of his earlier experience in Bosnia that the VRS would have discovered the suitcases. As an example he cited the special encryption communications equipment of the British Joint Commission Observers (JCO) unit in the eastern enclaves. He said that these devices had been brought into the enclave secretly by land or air and not via the normal route in convoys or suchlike, as they would otherwise have been discovered.¹²⁷⁹ Bokhoven is mistaken here however: the British JCO unit had taken along its own communications equipment in its Land Rovers.

For Bokhoven the risk of this secret operation failing seemed real. The secure encryption equipment could then have fallen into hands of the ABiH or the VRS. The only way of transporting the suitcases without drawing attention to them would have been for Dutchbat I to take them along when all other communications equipment went to the enclave. Discovery of the equipment during the presence of Dutchbat would not have been a major problem. If the equipment threatened to fall into the hands of one of the warring factions, it could simply have been destroyed.

Kok finally visited Couzy again with the American request, but on the advice of Bokhoven the latter refused, as recounted, to provide his cooperation. Couzy did not want the MIS to carry out any intelligence or Sigint operations regarding Srebrenica; this related to the fact that Couzy was not particularly intelligence-minded.¹²⁸⁰ Kok did not give up however and made a second direct attempt with Couzy, but the latter once again rejected the idea: no spying for the Americans, he said; this was a peacekeeping mission and not a war. He was not receptive to the Force Protection argument, and the likelihood that this exchange would, in Kok's view, result in much intelligence on a *quid pro quo* basis. Kok continued to insist this involved equipment of a modest scale would not endanger Dutchbat. Couzy stuck to his previously adopted standpoint: he wanted a strict separation between strategic and operational intelligence. Couzy could not recall anything about this visit either. The possibility that the MIS/Army, responsible for gathering operational military intelligence, would benefit from such an operation was not regarded by Couzy as an argument of sufficient importance.

¹²⁷⁴ Interview with H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01. From April 1994 to December 1995 he was Head of the MIS/Army. Before this in 1993 and 1994 he was Plan Officer in UNPROFOR under General J. Cot.

¹²⁷⁵ Interview with H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

¹²⁷⁶ Testimonies by Relus ter Beek, 14/11/02 and Joris Voorhoeve, 28/11/02.

¹²⁷⁷ Interview with J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

¹²⁷⁸ Interview with M. Patijn, 28/08/00.

¹²⁷⁹ Interview with H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01.

¹²⁸⁰ Interview with A. Bleumink, 19/03/01.

Kok then went to R.J. Hoekstra, Secretary-General of the Ministry of General Affairs and in this capacity *ex officio* intelligence coordinator. The latter said that he could do nothing either, and the Deputy Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, Barth, also told Kok he could do nothing. Barth was more interested in cutting back the MIS. These events frustrated Kok intensely. By his own account he could not adopt a harder stance than he already had, because everything relating to Dutchbat fell under the authority of Couzy as Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. Other top officers of the Army did not wish to burn their fingers once Couzy had said 'no'. The Chief of Defence Staff, General A. Van der Vlis, had earlier taken a sympathetic attitude to the MIS/CO, but Kok did not involve him in this operation for Srebrenica. According to Kok, taking along the suitcases would have led to a win-win situation.¹²⁸¹

The MIS actually had another good opportunity to achieve an excellent information position, because most of the official international communications traffic in the region went via the KPN (Dutch Post Office) satellite reception station in Burum, in the northern Dutch province of Friesland. Letters from, for example, Karadzic to General Cot and General Briquemont, sent via the fax of the UNMO liaison officer in Pale, went always via Burum.¹²⁸² According to an employee of a Western foreign intelligence service, such a commercial ground station involved in international communications traffic could have provided valuable intelligence for the MIS.¹²⁸³ The situation in the Netherlands would disappoint this official, however. The KPN had in fact previously broken off all links with the MIS in this field; in the past the KPN had already experienced great difficulties with such proposals.¹²⁸⁴ The MIS did not expect that the government would permit the service to make use of this satellite reception station. This was indeed never proposed, in the belief that Voorhoeve or the government would never agree to it. Voorhoeve may have recognized the importance of Comint,¹²⁸⁵ but he would probably never have agreed to such an operation. Members of foreign intelligence services would doubtless be surprised to hear that the Dutch did nothing to use the possibilities offered by Burum.

Another question is whether the Military Intelligence Service could have managed this technically. When one considers the possibilities of the TIVC in 1993, it must be concluded that this centre could never have intercepted the satellite communications on its own. The organization was not able to intercept Inmarsat satellite traffic, and this was the route taken by all the communications. There was also virtually no chance that the TIVC could have obtained such intercepts in that period through exchange with a sister service, partly due to the refusal of the American offer.¹²⁸⁶ The only serious chance that the MIS probably ever had of obtaining excellent Comint about the VRS and the ABiH was thus the US offer of the suitcases for Dutchbat. This chance was not taken: Couzy refused to cooperate, partly on the advice of the head of the MIS/Army. The chances of the operation succeeding seemed large. Then the MIS and Dutchbat would have been given 'ears' and probably 'eyes' too. It would in any case have brought a major improvement to the weak Dutch intelligence situation and thus to the position of Dutchbat; this would now remain weak right up to the fall of the enclave.

7. Conclusions

With regard to the successes achieved during the war in Bosnia, one can conclude that American, British, French, German and other European services intercepted a great deal of military and political communications traffic. Comint targets included the VRS, the VJ, the ABiH but also the

¹²⁸¹ Confidential interview (78).

¹²⁸² Confidential collection (7), Letter from Karadzic to Cot and Briquemont, R 4574, 25/012/93.

¹²⁸³ Confidential interview (62).

¹²⁸⁴ Cees Wiebes, 'Dutch Sigint during the Cold War, 1945-1994, in: Aid & Wiebes (eds.), *Secrets*, pp. 243-284.

¹²⁸⁵ Jensen & Platje, *De Marid*, p. 390.

¹²⁸⁶ MoD, MIS, Memorandum AVI/00/0471, Analysis of the message from Karadzic to Cot of 25 December 1993, 24/03/00.

communications traffic of UNPROFOR. In particular, much interception was conducted in the field of Elint, and Sigint was exchanged between the NATO partners. The Comint seems mostly to have been low level. This too was shared between some NATO member states.

Was high-level intelligence also intercepted?

Members of the American and Canadian intelligence community confirm that high-level diplomatic Comint was also available, but this was not shared with the allies. Probably it was only the Canadians who had access to this, thanks to their special relationship, while the British services – despite the UKUSA alliance – did not. This particular Comint is in fact of less importance to research into the fall of Srebrenica, because plans for the attack on Srebrenica were probably not discussed in these channels. Things are different with regard to high-level military Comint, such as conversations between the Army commanders of the VRS with each other or with the leaders of the VJ. The overriding opinion among many intelligence experts, authors and journalists is that above all the US services, but also German and French intelligence services withheld information regarding the VRS attack. Highly important intercepts revealing prior knowledge of the attack were supposedly not passed on to UNPROFOR and not even to NATO allies, including the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.¹²⁸⁷ This view is opposed by a senior US intelligence official who had access to archival Sigint. When the first articles appeared in the press, such as the one by the journalist Zumach, he went through all the old Sigint archives of the US intelligence services and found nothing that vaguely resembled the intercepts referred to by Zumach. This suggests that the intercepts in question do not exist after all, or that this official had no access to these secret intercepts. However, a large number of those interviewed continue to have doubts, and believe that such intercepts do indeed exist.

This immediately raises two questions. If these important messages were intercepted, why did the intelligence services not pass them on to UNPROFOR? It would be the height of cynicism to suggest that these services wanted Srebrenica to fall into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. As a senior intelligence official declared to Lane and Shanker: ‘We make mistakes but we don’t withhold information and let people get killed.’¹²⁸⁸ In turn, one can note that at least in Australia people sometimes thought differently about this, in view of the fate of the five journalists executed in East Timor (see Section 2).

It seems more likely that in the case of Srebrenica it was a problem of information not being made available in time, of priorities and of insufficient analysis capacity. This in turn relates to the fact that there were no American, German or French ground troops active in the region. That raises the penetrating question as to whether, if the information had been passed on, the killing of thousands of soldiers and civilians after the conquest of Srebrenica could have been prevented. This question will be returned to in Chapter 8.

One must conclude that high-level intercepts did exist. The evidence for this was provided by the conversation between Gore and Bildt, when Gore read aloud from these intercepts. The NSA will have concentrated chiefly on the international political developments; the question as to whether the intercepts also contained important intelligence about the attack and the later events in Srebrenica must probably be answered negatively. The eastern enclaves did not enjoy a high priority within the US intelligence community. The same went for the GCHQ, which concentrated on Gorazde. The French Military Intelligence Service mostly concentrated on Sarajevo for the same reason. The Comint coverage in Eastern Bosnia was poor, and the VRS is sure to have frequently applied strict communications security. The messages, which the NSA nonetheless intercepted will, due to insufficient analysis and translation capacity, have landed in the ‘pending but not urgent pile’. What

¹²⁸⁷ Roy Gutman, ‘Federal Army Tied to Bosnia War Crimes/Serb Leaders ‘Death Camp’ Link’, *Newsday*, 01/11/95; Richard Norton-Taylor, ‘Inside Story: The Ghosts of Nuremberg’, *The Guardian*, 28/11/95 and Charles Lane & Thom Shanker, ‘Bosnia: What the CIA Didn’t Tell Us’, *New York Review of Books*, 09/05/96, pp. 12-13.

¹²⁸⁸ Charles Lane & Thom Shanker, ‘Bosnia: What the CIA Didn’t Tell Us’, *New York Review of Books*, 09/05/96, p. 11.

remained were items of military Comint. Apart from this, the history of the exchange of Sigint is not exactly encouraging. Since 1945 this liaison has never been optimal, and the exchange of important diplomatic and military Sigint between the countries contributing troops to UNPROFOR and within NATO never took substantial form in Bosnia either. Much Comint was not analysed on time or was not allowed to be distributed due to its high classification – not among NATO allies and sometimes not even to a country's own national commanders. The exchange of Elint did go well, due to the common threat of the (Bosnian) Serb air defence.

Reasons for not sharing Sigint

The reason for any high-level intercepts from VRS or ABiH communications not being shared must thus be sought in the reasons cited in this chapter. Intercepts are always surrounded by the greatest secrecy, meaning that the distribution of the Sigint product is always very limited. Only the highest political and military policymakers have access to high-level Sigint. Only a few are privy to such information, and even then only on a need-to-know basis. Many of the consulted members of the western intelligence community state that this presented a major barrier. During the war in Bosnia between 1993 and 1995, and later during the war in Kosovo, the NSA was faced with problems specifically relating to the exchange of Sigint with its NATO allies. This was mainly caused by the fact that most of the allies were not part of the UKUSA alliance – while not even the United Kingdom was given everything.

An initial summing up of the interception operations in the Balkans was made at a conference of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association in Washington in June 2000. Bill Black, the former head of the European Center of the NSA and later deputy director of the NSA, declared that operations in the region had suffered strongly under the difficulties relating to an effective sharing relationship with allies. Black stated that in the past the NSA had only exchanged information on a bilateral basis, and that the American legislation regarding compartmentalization made it difficult to do the same in a coalition of allies. Bill Nolte, the Former Head of the NSA's Legislative Affairs Office, declared that the 'compartmentalization of intelligence doesn't really work anymore in modern coalition operations'. He also complained about 'the current problems of getting the NSA to modernize both its practices and mentality'. A British speaker said that there was a well-coordinated sharing arrangement between the English-speaking countries, but this was not the case between Washington and other foreign services.¹²⁸⁹ Staff of the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* are also reported to have complained repeatedly in this context about the American refusal to share really high-level Sigint.¹²⁹⁰

In short, the exchange between the allies in Bosnia (but also Kosovo) was not optimal. This extreme secrecy brought major disadvantages. Sigint often failed to reach the right commanders on the ground because it was decided that this Sigint had a need-to-know classification. As a result the intelligence product was not distributed any further. In fact this had already been the case in the Korean War, but the situation continued in the 1990s. A former intelligence official of the US Air Force, Richard Boyd, stated for instance that the 'intelligence connectivity between Air Force units and the NSA was "not good" in Kosovo'.¹²⁹¹ According to Cooke another problem was that the flow of Sigint and Humint to the Balkan Current Intelligence Group in Whitehall was often sufficient to give good briefings to ministers. The most important limitation of Sigint is the enormous flow of information in relation to an insufficient analysis capability. Many customers of the NSA product complained in mid-1995 that the NSA was not able to meet the needs of the intelligence consumer.

¹²⁸⁹ 'How Co-operation in Balkans Works', *Intelligence Newsletter*, 29/06/00.

¹²⁹⁰ Udo Ulfkotte, 'Die Nato ist im bilde, doch gibt sie nur wenig preis', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10/04/99 and confidential interviews (99) and (100).

¹²⁹¹ 'How Co-operation in Balkans Works', *Intelligence Newsletter*, 29/06/00.

Moreover, the NSA is reported to have had a poor relationship with the Pentagon, which often complained about the unwillingness of the NSA to share Sigint for fear of compromising the source.¹²⁹²

The limited usefulness of Sigint sometimes prevented the taking of practical action. This was the case in Bosnia too. Even the supply of British Comint to UK commanders was a problematic affair. Cooke, responsible for Bosnia at the DIS, was clear about this: ‘the usual rules on the dissemination of sensitive reports further limited what was given to troops serving in-theatre.’ But British commanders in UNPROFOR felt this lack of intelligence and often had to fall back on open sources intelligence to get a good intelligence ‘picture’.¹²⁹³

In the case of Bosnia the disadvantages of Sigint probably outweighed the advantages. The disadvantages were: an avalanche of intercepted data; the lack of sufficient translators and analysis capability; and the limited possibilities of interception due to cryptography, secure links via land lines, the nature of the terrain and atmospheric conditions. In particular the interception of the most common form of communications traffic in Bosnia, the walkie-talkie, presented serious problems. In September 1995 an American commission established that some of the ‘limiting factors identified in tactical Sigint were outside the range of technical fixes – the fact that the former Yugoslav forces practice very good Communications security/Operational security and the shortage of Serbo-Croatian linguists’. It also established that the result of tactical Sigint (especially HF and VHF) had been inadequate.¹²⁹⁴

Another reason for not passing on intelligence could have been the aftermath of the open British support for Bush’s presidential campaign and the dominant opinion in Europe about how the Balkans crisis could best be solved. The more or less neutral attitude taken by London and Paris towards the Balkans conflict was not properly appreciated.¹²⁹⁵ The US-UK animosity led to the Americans gradually reducing the flow of information from their side. The tap was not totally shut off, for that would have been in conflict with mutual agreements. But the flow slowly became less and of poorer quality, and the processing time was longer. Canadian intelligence officials, who still received this US intelligence, confirmed that the Americans imposed these limitations. They declared that the Americans had also reduced the flow of intelligence in the past, for instance during the Gulf War.¹²⁹⁶ A Canadian official confirmed that 85 percent of all intelligence from the United States ‘was stamped Can-US Only’, chiefly to keep the British out of the circuit. According to this official London reacted to this by reducing the intelligence flow to the other side of the Atlantic too.¹²⁹⁷

Despite all the resources employed by the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Austria and other countries, and despite all the successes apparently achieved, it must provisionally be concluded that little Sigint landed on the desks of policymakers and of UNPROFOR commanders. Members of the British intelligence community claim that if American high-level intercepts did exist, they were definitely not passed on to UNPROFOR. Officers of UNPROFOR were noticeably bitter about this cynical behaviour by the US ally.¹²⁹⁸ A former UNPROFOR intelligence officer said in this respect that his organization ‘lost ownership of the picture of the battlefield to the point where it was irrecoverable’.¹²⁹⁹

This non-sharing by the Americans involved both strategic and tactical Sigint. With respect to the latter an US military expert said: ‘NATO-releasable Sigint reporting consistently was a day late and a dollar short. It often comprised only marginally useful information as much as three to four days old.’

¹²⁹² Matthew M. Aid, ‘The Time of Troubles: The US NSA in the Twenty-First Century’, in: *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 15 (2000) 3 pp. 17-20.

¹²⁹³ Urban, *UK Eyes*, p. 217.

¹²⁹⁴ Zachary Lum, ‘Balkan Eyes: Airborne Recon over Bosnia’, in: *IED On-Line*, November 1995. For this see: <http://jed-prod.weblabs.com/jed/hml/new/now95/feature.html>.

¹²⁹⁵ Confidential interview (47).

¹²⁹⁶ Confidential interviews (62) and (90).

¹²⁹⁷ Confidential interview (9).

¹²⁹⁸ Ian Bruce, ‘US let safe haven fall. US knew of Serb build-up’, *The Herald*, 24/10/95.

¹²⁹⁹ Smith, *New Cloak*, p. 210.

He concluded that in Bosnia Humint formed a much more valuable, precise and rapid source of tactical military intelligence, as compared to Sigint.¹³⁰⁰ His remark related to the SFOR period, following the Dayton Accord. It can safely be assumed that the situation was no better before the summer of 1995, as at this point no American ground troops were present in Bosnia. It can be concluded that much intelligence material gathered through national strategic platforms, such as satellites and special aircraft, was simply not automatically provided to UNPROFOR.

Akashi confirmed this to Annan. Some of the countries that had contributed troops did indeed have access to a 'very large pool of detailed tactical and strategic intelligence'. After all, Yugoslavia was the object of scrutiny by all intelligence services. Akashi said that a large part of the intelligence gathered by the leading troop-contributing nations was indeed Sigint, 'the most jealously guarded of all intelligence products'. In the case of the US, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand this is governed through the UKUSA alliance, and 'sharing outside this agreement is simply not possible', according to Akashi.¹³⁰¹

It is also important that UNPROFOR, and probably Akashi himself, were important American and European monitoring targets. Not only was the communications traffic of the Generals Rose and Smith intercepted; their headquarters in Sarajevo, and that of Janvier in Zagreb, were permanently monitored with special eavesdropping equipment. In this respect the headquarters and the communications traffic with New York, Zagreb, Geneva and other capitals was also a relatively easy target, as virtually nothing was done to raise communications security. After all, the UN was an open and transparent organization. This made it possible, for instance, for a Scandinavian service to intercept the communications between various Dutch units,¹³⁰² and the Danish Military Intelligence Service managed to monitor telephone conversations between Rose and Mladic.¹³⁰³

Bosnia was an 'intelligence carnival' with dozens of intelligence actors, all seemingly operating independently of each other in the area of SIGINT. In this respect it is only fair to say that SIGINT was given to different UN intelligence officers in Zagreb and Sarajevo, but to them where it was coming from and in what form it was being received was not clear. It is also indisputable that the vast majority of the raw intelligence that was being provided to UN forces in Bosnia came from US sources, including much of the low-level SIGINT. However, the complaints were often that there was no source information attached to the intercepts, so the consumers in Bosnia had no idea where it was coming from, how reliable it was, etc.

But it is easy to have critique on Washington DC. For instance, why did the European Sigint organizations contribute so little to UNPROFOR? The Germans, French, Brits, Austrians, Italians, etc. all conducted extensive Sigint collection in and with respect to Bosnia. However, this material was hardly forwarded to UNPROFOR or the Dutch but mostly used in support of their own forces in Bosnia and not for sharing with the smaller nations participating in the Bosnia peacekeeping operation. There is much in this chapter about NSA's history of failing to liaise with NATO allies. However, the truth is also that British, French, German, Austrian or other national Sigint services operating in and with respect to Bosnia were any better than the Americans in providing comparable Sigint. The 'simple' answer probably must be that they were just as 'bad' as the Americans, which should be one of the lessons of Bosnia from an intelligence standpoint. It was not until Kosovo in 1999 that the system was partially repaired through greater sharing of intelligence, including Sigint. But this was a NATO operation rather than a UN sponsored operation.

¹³⁰⁰ Lt. Col. George K. Gramer, Jr., USA, 'Operation Joint Endeavor: Combined-Joint Intelligence in Peace Enforcement Operations', *Military Intelligence*, October-December 1996, p. 13.

¹³⁰¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPROFOR, Akashi to Annan, Z-1189, 18/07/95.

¹³⁰² Interview with J.M.J. Bosch, 10/10/01.

¹³⁰³ Interview with H.A. Couzy, 04/10/01.

The role of the Netherlands: no to the suitcase operation

The Netherlands MIS hardly played a role in this Sigint war between 1992 and 1995. The service, and thus also the Ministry of Defence, were completely dependent on the intelligence that allies were prepared to exchange. Since the MIS had almost nothing to offer, however, this exchange remained very limited. The MIS could have played an important role if the secret American proposal for Dutchbat to take Comint suitcases into the enclave had been accepted. If true that the CIA made this offer five or six times, then it can be concluded that the US services themselves clearly were not achieving good results. Following each refusal the Americans came back to ask again; this is an indication that they were apparently not able to intercept the short-range communications traffic from satellites, U-2R aircraft or other aircraft. This was confirmed by British and Canadian intelligence officials. Flights by the U-2R did not provide much useful intelligence either. The main reason for setting up one intelligence cell, the Deployed Shed Facility in Naples, was therefore because the NSA had major gaps in its Comint in Bosnia.¹³⁰⁴

The US services were obviously desperate to change the situation; this meant that if the Dutch had agreed to the suitcases operation, the Americans would presumably have done everything they could to maintain friendship with the MIS. Agreeing to the operation would probably also have resulted in the MIS being able to give Dutchbat ‘ears’ and perhaps also ‘eyes’ in Srebrenica. The ‘ears’ would have been the capability to monitor VRS and ABiH radio traffic in and around the enclave, and ‘eyes’ would have been provided because the CIA, as part of the exchange of intelligence, would probably have also been able to share aerial photographs – which the Canadians had also been able to access. This would have given the MIS a strong position of power; if the Americans had not kept to their promises, then turning off the switch would have been an effective threat.

Turning to the opinion of the former head of the MIS that the Bosnian Serbs would not have let this monitoring equipment through, one can note that it is unlikely that the VRS soldiers who manned the checkpoints would really have been capable to judge whether the suitcases were intended for communications or for monitoring equipment. The entire interception capability was contained in the software supplied with the package: the equipment itself looked like a normal transmitter and receiver. It would have been easy to ship in a few suitcases with the arrival of Dutchbat I, because Dutchbat I was allowed to take its own communications equipment in the normal manner.

For national use the Royal Netherlands Army had already provided a coded telephone and fax for the commander of Dutchbat, for the Defence Crisis Management Centre and the Army Crisis Staff in The Hague, for the Dutch Deputy Commander of Sector North East in Tuzla, Colonel C. Brantz, and for General Nicolai of Bosnia Hercegovina Command.¹³⁰⁵ During the fall of the town this satellite telephone worked well. This sophisticated technology was packed in six suitcases;¹³⁰⁶ and if these could be taken into the enclave, then why not the American suitcases? The only answer to the question why the suitcases were not permitted to be taken in was because the ‘top brass’ of the Netherlands Army did not wish to allow this type of operation. Refusing the deployment of their own national Sigint assets in Bosnia meant that DutchBat was cut off from an important flow of intelligence. Would the Netherlands have been unique as a smaller member of NATO by deploying their own assets? Not at all because other smaller members of NATO like Denmark had already deployed their own national assets with respect to Sigint in Bosnia. Refusing the American offer was not wise and shortsighted.¹³⁰⁷ Therefore it is very difficult to understand why general Couzy until this day is defending this decision.¹³⁰⁸

¹³⁰⁴ Confidential interview (22).

¹³⁰⁵ MoD, CRST. G-6 RNLA Crisis Staff to CS Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, 09/05/95.

¹³⁰⁶ ‘Binnen halve minuut is Dutchbat thuis’ (Dutchbat home in half a minute), *Haagsche Courant*, 13/07/95.

¹³⁰⁷ Interview with General T. Lyng, 29/10/99.

¹³⁰⁸ Testimony of General H. Couzy before the Netherlands Parliamentary Inquiry into Srebrenica, 21/11/02.

Chapter 6

The Signals Intelligence War of the Warring Factions

‘A huge human mass of about 5,000 concentrated around Cerska and Kamenica. So many, you can’t kill them all...’ quoted from a Bosnian intercept of a conversation between VRS soldiers, 17 July 1995.

1. Introduction

The key role played by intercepted conversations during the conflict in Bosnia came to light in the spring of 2001 when the commander of the Bosnian-Serb Drina Corps, General Radislav Krstic, was standing trial in The Hague. At the Yugoslavia Tribunal a tape was played on which – according to the prosecution – Krstic could be heard issuing orders to eliminate groups of Bosnian Muslim prisoners. This message had been intercepted by the ABiH and was now being used as evidence against Krstic. One speaker on the tape identified himself as Krstic and was addressed as ‘General’ by the other speaker. The prosecution claimed that this was a recording of a conversation that took place on 2 August 1995 between Krstic and Lieutenant-Colonel Dragan Obrenovic, Chief of Staff of the VRS Zvornik Brigade. At that moment the Zvornik Brigade was scouring an area in search of ABiH soldiers, which were heading from Srebrenica to Tuzla. One voice on the tape said that Muslims were still being taken prisoner now and then. The other voice, allegedly that of Krstic, issued orders such as ‘Kill all in turn’ and ‘Don’t leave a single one alive’.

This incriminating intercept was immediately challenged by Krstic himself and his lawyers, but the prosecution had a trump card up its sleeve in the form of an identical recording of the same call registered at another Bosnian interception station. The ABiH had intercepted the same call from two different stations: Okresanica and Golija.¹³⁰⁹ So, it looked as if it had been monitored by both stations on 2 August 1995. The operators had recorded it on an audio tape and then entered it in their logbooks. Their notes were later typed out and sent on to army headquarters for further analysis.

It never became clear during the trial why these intercepts were not introduced as evidence against Krstic until November 2000.¹³¹⁰ One possible explanation is that at the end of 1999 the ABiH was still busy working out transcripts for the benefit of the Tribunal.¹³¹¹ One former ABiH general said that it was a miracle, or sheer coincidence, that the tapes had survived at all, as the ABiH archives had suffered serious fire and water damage in 1998.¹³¹² During the conflict in Bosnia it was not only the US, Canadian and European services that used Communications Intelligence (Comint). The Serbs, the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims also used it to obtain important advance information on military operations and activities. This chapter explores the resources and capacity of the VJ (*Vojaska Jugoslavij*, the Yugoslav Army), the VRS and the ABiH as they fought out a Sigint war alongside a ‘normal’ war. The main reason for investigating the signals war is that, insofar as can be determined, the following question has never been addressed at the Yugoslavia Tribunal or by the reports on Krstic’ trial in the international and domestic press or by current affairs programmes on radio and television.

If the Bosnian Muslims had intercepted calls relating to the attack on Srebrenica, the hunt for the column of men and boys, and the orders to kill everyone and carry out mass executions – calls

¹³⁰⁹ It is somewhat strange that Golija was mentioned; this lies in Western Bosnia and, given its distance from Srebrenica, it is hard to believe that the communication around the enclave was intercepted.

¹³¹⁰ ‘srebrenica Trial - Expert witness assesses key radio *intercept* evidence’, in: *IWPR’s TRIBUNAL UPDATE 214*, March 19-24, 2001.

¹³¹¹ Interview with S. Arnautovic, 05/11/99.

¹³¹² Confidential interview (73) and interview with S. Arnautovic, 05/11/99.

made by Krstic and other Bosnian Serbs – why did they not loudly announce this to the world in the summer of 1995? It is after all very hard to believe that the Bosnian signals services would have listened in ‘live’ to the killing of their friends, colleagues and perhaps even members of their family without raising the alarm. To be sure, world-wide publication of these intercepted messages might have saved a lot of lives and prompted the Bosnian Serbs to halt their atrocities. Before addressing these questions and drawing conclusions it is important to shed light on the intelligence capacity and the targets of the hostile parties.

Section 2 will discuss the Signals Intelligence (Sigint) operations of the VJ and the VRS; it will describe the resources that the Serbs and the Bosnian Serbs had at their disposal, the ways in which they cooperated and the ABiH communication traffic that was intercepted by the Sigint units of the VJ and the VRS. The VJ and the VRS will be discussed in the same section because many documents and interviews have revealed that they cooperated closely on this type of intelligence.

Section 3 will concentrate on the Sigint operations of the ABiH. These appeared to be of high-quality, as demonstrated by the tape produced at the trial of General Krstic. It will also describe which Bosnian-Serb communication traffic the ABiH was able to intercept. Section 4 will answer the pressing question of whether the ABiH was able to follow these conversations in real time. In other words, were the intercepted messages and conversations directly available to the recipients of the intelligence product? And, if so, why did the Bosnian politicians and military commanders then decide to do nothing with this highly volatile intercepted communication? Why did they keep it under wraps and only reveal it years later to the researchers of the Yugoslavia Tribunal in The Hague?

This section will also deal with the exchange of Comint with UNPROFOR. Between 1992 and 1995 the ABiH and the Bosnian politicians wanted more western involvement in the war on the ground. They could have achieved this by throwing their intercepts into ‘the fight’ at UNPROFOR, but they would have had to be able to produce them at that moment, specifically those on the attack on Srebrenica and the flight to Tuzla by the Muslim soldiers. The VRS and ABiH had each other as Comint target. However, all the warring factions, including the VJ, also had a common target, namely, UNPROFOR units in general and Dutchbat in Srebrenica in particular. Section 5 will therefore consider UNPROFOR and Dutchbat as a Comint target for all the warring factions. Section 6 will draw some conclusions on this local Sigint war.

2. The Signals Intelligence War of the VJ and the VRS

The following extract is taken from a secret the British report of August 1995.

‘The former Yugoslavia had a considerable Signals Intelligence organization. The present location of Signals Intelligence assets cannot be accurately ascertained, but it must be assumed that all three Warring Factions have an intercept capability. There are recorded examples of limited Warring Faction intercept and jamming against UN troops. The Communications Intercepts threat has to be considered medium to high’.¹³¹³

It appears therefore that UNPROFOR knew about the excellent Sigint operations and capacity of the VJ. Certain background details can be established about this capacity.¹³¹⁴

The VJ (formerly the JNA) set great store by Sigint materiel and capabilities during the Cold War. In the 1980s the equipment was radically modernized to bring it up to western standards. This modernization programme took place under the code name *Arios*. Between 1989 and 1991 the VJ

¹³¹³ UNGE, UNPROFOR, File RRFOS/2300-3 Opsec, Memorandum RRFOS, 25/07/95 and 08/09/95.

¹³¹⁴ The information which follows on the Sigint of the VJ is taken from confidential interviews (5), (6) and (73) and the MoD, *MIS*, Report by the Dutch NIC, 04/02/99. The information dates from October 1998. See also: http://www.vj.yu/vojska_e/struktura/vidovi/kov/.

obtained the components for four *Arios* electronic warfare systems. Each system consisted of 14 vehicles which, during the conflict, had to collect Sigint across a 50-kilometre front. At the heart lay the Watkins Johnson WJ-8955 Electronic Support Measures System. During the conflict in the Krajina in 1991 the VJ used this system to launch artillery attacks on Croatian targets within one minute of a Croatian radio transmission. At the same time, it had enough supplies of older materiel which could be lent to the VRS, the army of the Bosnian Serbs. This consisted largely of French, Japanese, Swedish and older Russian systems. Some of the special equipment had been purchased in the USA by rich Serb businessmen who then smuggled it into Yugoslavia.

Before the conflict broke out in Bosnia the Serbs had all the Comint on hand: this comprised a complete system with defence attachés, Signals Intelligence (Sigint), Human Intelligence (Humint), Electronic Intelligence (Elint), Radar Intelligence (Radint) and direction-finding. Most of the equipment came from Japan and was assembled in Hungary. The Hungarian firm of Videoton was especially involved in this. This firm also helped to build special Sigint trucks for the VJ. The VJ acquired other crypto equipment from Siemens, but developed its own crypto systems later on the basis of the Siemens products. It set up its own institute for this purpose.

There were Sigint units in Izvor and Vranje with targets in Macedonia and the Adriatic. Sigint stations were set up in Valjevo and Vojvodina for operations against Bosnia and Croatia. Permanent interception stations were established in Batajnica with a staff of around sixty, which battalions were under the direct command of the VJ General Staff. This site was unquestionably the most important HF site and was also responsible for direction-finding; other sites were situated in Novi Sad, Podgorica, Kraljevo and Pirot. The interception station in Batajnica analysed the intercepts of domestic and foreign telephone lines as well as diplomatic communication, data transmission and encrypted digital traffic. It is not known whether the VJ was able to decode this; but it was considered unlikely in NATO circles as far as high-level communication was concerned.¹³¹⁵

Western embassies in Belgrade will also have been key targets for Comint. It is known, for instance, that Serb intelligence services monitored communication from the Australian Embassy.¹³¹⁶ UNPROFOR and later SFOR¹³¹⁷ and IFOR were, at any rate, important Comint targets. The operators were trained at Banjica military academy in Belgrade. The time taken for intercepting, processing and sending the report to the Ministry of Defence ranged from 20 minutes to two hours. This station was also able to send important intercepts direct to Belgrade via secure land lines. Another important Sigint listening post was situated on top of a mountain in Kutlovo. In addition to all of this, the VJ had the so-called 109th Electronic War Battalion, stationed in Prokuplje, at its disposal. This battalion had, in turn, various Sigint detachments at diverse locations. Its operations included analysis, communication traffic and radar detection.

In addition, the VJ used mobile interception trucks, which monitored and registered specific frequencies. These trucks were constantly on the move from one location to another and did not, as a rule, stay longer than two days in the same spot. They had to follow and intercept tactical military frequencies at the front. Most of the intercepted traffic was recorded on tape and analysed at brigade level. Decisions were also taken at this level on the number of Sigint trucks allocated to each sector.

During the conflict in Bosnia the Serbian air force also had access to special Sigint aircraft. For example, the VJ had a squadron of twelve special MIG-21 planes. This squadron, which was fitted with 'pods' on the underside of the aircraft, carried out Imagery Intelligence (Imint) and Sigint tasks from the air base in Ponikve and Belgrade. These aircraft carried out a maximum of five reconnaissance missions a day. The special *Obrva Soko* aircraft were also used for Sigint missions. UHF/VHF radio

¹³¹⁵ Confidential interviews (6), (8) and (13).

¹³¹⁶ P.J. Spielman, 'ABC TC Yanks Lead Story on Aussie Spying on Chinese Embassy', in *Associated Press Worldstream*, 25/05/95.

¹³¹⁷ See for example: Alix Kroeger, 'Bosnian Serbs eavesdrop on NATO', *BBC News*, 23/05/02. The sites Prijedor and Livno were mentioned: 'UN Radio Headlines, *UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 28/05/02 and 'sFOR Block Livno Telecommunications Center', *FBIS-EEU-2000-1120*, 20/11/00.

messages, which were intercepted using Yugoslav and Russian equipment, were taped but were not directly relayed to a ground station. It was not until the end of a mission that the tapes were analysed. These MIGs were stationed at Ladjevci air base near Krajevo in Serbia. They were often moved to keep them out of sight of US spy satellites and U-2 missions. Sometimes, they flew over the Drina for operations above Bosnia. The VJ also used special Elint freight aircraft.¹³¹⁸

Like Croatia, Serbia had special UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) for Sigint operations. Before the war these were stationed in Bihac, and some of them fell into Croat hands. They were originally made in East Germany and ran on MIG 21 engines. They took off like a jet and could stay in the air between 45 and 60 minutes. The Yugoslav Navy had a special Sigint ship which was initially stationed in the port of Split but which was later transferred to Kotor in Montenegro. This ship was equipped with both Comint and Elint capabilities and was used constantly to monitor UNPROFOR and NATO traffic. During the war in Kosovo the VJ also used Sigint to mislead NATO. Special units were assigned the task of sending out disinformation. It was not possible to ascertain whether this also took place during the conflict in Bosnia, but it cannot be ruled out.

The VJ was the first organization responsible for Sigint in Serbia and had specially trained personnel for this purpose. Each worker was allocated a specific set of frequencies and had to tape the most important messages. The interceptor noted the time of interception and the subject of the message. He then took his notes and the tape recording to his superior for analysis. The interception station then informed the commanders of the other military units, who decided whether or not to inform the president. Routine military intercepts were sent direct to a brigade for analysis. If the messages turned out to be highly important, they were sent on immediately to the Commander-in-Chief via secure land lines. Every week, President Milosevic received a two-hour intelligence briefing, which included Sigint. Milosevic considered Comint especially important to the political and military decision-making process. He would have received tapes of, among other things, the telephone calls between Izetbegovic and political and military policy-makers in Washington.¹³¹⁹ He supposedly also heard telephone calls made by Karadzic. This led him to conclude that Karadzic was only using the Krajina as a concession to Mladic in exchange for areas in Bosnia: Karadzic knew that, in terms of military strategy, Mladic was more attached to Western Bosnia and the Krajina. Karadzic himself was more interested in Eastern Bosnia as it was geographically contiguous with Serbia.¹³²⁰

The telephone traffic between the enclave Srebrenica and Izetbegovic was also monitored. On 22 April and 4 May 1994 the VRS intercepted and allegedly taped two calls between Naser Oric and Izetbegovic in which Oric announced a military offensive. The two men also discussed the humanitarian situation in the enclave.¹³²¹ Oric was in permanent contact with the General Staff in Sarajevo and sent them reports on a regular basis.¹³²²

The VJ assisted the VRS by giving them old equipment. Up to the Dayton Accord VRS officers could participate in the special Sigint training in Belgrade. Afterwards, the VJ stopped this, saying that the VRS could not afford to pay for the training. Between 1993 and 1995 the VRS and the VJ cooperated closely in Sigint and Elint. Intelligence on NATO air strikes were especially shared in full; this gave the VRS time to switch off their radar systems and bring certain installations to safety (see also Chapter 7). The Krajina Serbs were also connected to this warning system and had excellent Sigint capabilities. Nevertheless, the bombings inflicted serious damage on the VRS Comint and Elint systems¹³²³, which made the VRS even more dependent on the VJ for Sigint. When the conflict was

¹³¹⁸ Confidential interview (73).

¹³¹⁹ Berislav Jelinic, 'Croatian citizen is the primary financier of both Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic', in: *Nacional*, Issue 294, 05/07/01.

¹³²⁰ Confidential interview (95).

¹³²¹ MoD, *Sitrap*s. HQ DutchBat to HQ SNE, 15/05/94.

¹³²² Report of a meeting with the *Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Committee for Compiling Data on Crimes against Humanity and International Law*, Belgrade, 11/06/98.

¹³²³ For a photo of the elimination of such a communication antenna see Lutgert & De Winter, *Check The Horizon*, p. 445.

underway the VRS could sometimes call upon the Serb planes operating from Banja Luka, where some 40 or 50 aircraft were stationed, some with Sigint capabilities. According to a ABiH general, the MIGs could do very little or nothing at all because of the No-Fly Zone.¹³²⁴

Like the VJ, the VRS had a network of permanent interception stations at diverse locations. This was based on a detailed plan for the communication traffic of the Bosnian Serbs, which went under the code name of *Vatra* (Fire).¹³²⁵ The interception device that was used most by the VRS was the RPK-3. It also used Hungarian-made Sigint trucks which had come from the VJ. Bosnian military sources claimed that the Hungarians had always had excellent technical equipment. These trucks were converted by the VJ and fitted with the most suitable equipment. These trucks were capable of intercepting two HF, four VHF, and two air force frequencies.

Furthermore, the VRS had special scanners, which could easily intercept tactical intelligence at battalion level. A former ABiH general claimed that the VJ and VRS also had special helicopters with Sigint and Imint capabilities at their disposal. Some Bosnian Serb MIG-21s had Sigint as well as Imint equipment on board. The information would allegedly be relayed directly to the special Sigint trucks.¹³²⁶ Comint turned out to be a crucial source of information for the VRS. A VRS document dated 1993 shows that 70% of all intelligence received by the VRS high command came from Sigint.¹³²⁷ The main intelligence targets of the VJ and the VRS were the radio connections of the ABiH. When the conflict erupted, the VRS seized the Stolice tower to the north of Tuzla. This tower was the axis of all the communication traffic in Eastern Bosnia. The VRS cut off all the connections between Bosnian territory and Eastern Bosnia, with the result that Tuzla became isolated. It then cut off all connections with Croatia, Sarajevo, and Srebrenica.

Until early July 1993 this communication tower was still being used by the ABiH. At that time the telephone connection ran from Tuzla via the Stolice Tower to Srebrenica; this line was definitely tapped by the VRS. After that, the communications of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla ran to Sarajevo via Konjuh and to Croatia via Okresanica. When the main centre of communication, the Stolice Tower, fell into the hands of the VRS, the number of ABiH phone lines fell from 1080 to only 24.¹³²⁸ After the tower had been seized, the ABiH made several attempts – also with the aid of tanks – to destroy it, but without success. It did, however, manage to inflict some damage.¹³²⁹ Thereafter, the 2nd Corps switched to high voltage cables for their communication. Most likely, the lightning conductors were used for connections.¹³³⁰ This gave the ABiH access to a few extra channels for which special equipment was used. This type of telephone connection was set up mainly with Sarajevo because the high-voltage cables with Croatia were severed. In addition, there were underground telephone cables between Tuzla and Srebrenica and between Srebrenica and Sarajevo, which were probably destroyed by the VRS during the conflict. There were no separate telephone lines for the army.

The VRS units responsible for electronic warfare did not have such a difficult job, as the ABiH had no special receivers. Most of the units, including the 28th Division in Srebrenica, used a YEASU FM Receiver FT-411E. This was a Japanese-made walkie-talkie which worked on the 144 - 146 MHz frequency. It had a range of between five and ten kilometres and a capacity of 2 Watts. The VRS could monitor this traffic because it normally operated with the same equipment or with Motorolas, which could intercept the YEASU. Though the YEASU had a small aerial, the 28th Division could still reach Tuzla from the enclave if they used an extended aerial (such as a wire in a tree) on the top of a mountain. Initially, an extended aerial was mounted on the roof of the Telecom building in Srebrenica;

¹³²⁴ Confidential interview (73).

¹³²⁵ Cekic, *Aggression*, p. 199.

¹³²⁶ Confidential interview (73).

¹³²⁷ *Judgement in the Krstic Trial*, § 112, p. 41.

¹³²⁸ For suspicions: MoD, *MIS/Bakker Commission*, Vreman to Van Dijk, Debriefing report, 09/03/95.

¹³²⁹ Confidential interview (73). See also: MoD, Sitrap, HQ SNE to BHC, Sitrep, 29/06/94.

¹³³⁰ MoD, *MIS/Bakker Commission*. Vreman to Van Dijk, Debriefing report, 09/03/95.

later treetops were used. Throughout the conflict the ABiH purchased this version of the YEASU in consignments of twenty, costing approximately DM 25,000.¹³³¹

The Electronic Warfare units of the VRS also had to intercept the permanent ABiH transmitter in Srebrenica. This was a RUP-20 transmitter and receiver, which was used in 1992 and had a range of around 50 kilometres. The RUP had a capacity of 20 Watts and operated on a frequency of 2-20 MHz. A second transmitter came later. Still later, the Presidency of the town, Opstina, obtained a RUP-12 with a range of 12-15 kilometres and a capacity of 2 Watts which operated on a VHF of 30-70 MHz.¹³³² The ABiH used two other extra communication systems. HF traffic with ABiH headquarters in Sarajevo and the headquarters of the 2nd Corps in Tuzla ran through the 'Pactor'. HF communication had a range of between 50 and 500 kilometres. One Pactor was flown by helicopter to Srebrenica via Zepa in January 1995. The so-called Paket VHF Radio System was connected with Tuzla and became operational on 20 March 1993. An encrypted message was fed into the Paket in Tuzla through a personal computer and then sent to Srebrenica, where it was subsequently decoded. Up to 1 March 1994, 586 messages were received and 525 were transmitted in Srebrenica.¹³³³ There are no figures available for subsequent years.

The 28th Division of the ABiH in Srebrenica received direct orders from Sarajevo via the Pactor. The 2nd Corps received a transcript. Sarajevo also issued orders to the 28th Division via Tuzla.¹³³⁴ As the incoming orders never bore the signature of the commander, they were sometimes ignored. The connections ran initially through the old telephone network, which was then still operational. Later, this was no longer possible.¹³³⁵ The Electronic Warfare units of the VRS were, however, confronted with Bosnian crypto programmes, designed by a team led by Dr Muhidin Lelic at the ABiH. These were based on the NATO crypto programme. US intelligence services supposedly helped Lelic to compile them. According to an ABiH general, the VRS never cracked this code.¹³³⁶ This claim is unlikely as the VRS could read the open as well as the encrypted communications of the ABiH before, during and after the attack on the enclave. The VRS had broken the ABiH crypto software and could read most of the communication traffic of the 28th Division in Srebrenica.

What ABiH communication traffic did the Bosnian Serbs intercept?

As early as 14 June 1995, Tuzla sent a warning to the 28th Division that the VRS had penetrated the ABiH radio network. Tuzla issued instructions to improve the communications security: makeshift landlines laid by the ABiH were to be monitored and checked every week. Telephone connections close to VRS territory had to be checked every day.¹³³⁷ These precautions were to no avail. On 9 July the 2nd Corps announced that the VRS was still constantly intercepting the open and coded messages of the 28th Division and that the Bosnian intercepts were being sent direct to the Command of the VRS Drina Corps for processing. The analysed messages were then immediately sent back to the VRS units at the front around Srebrenica. In the meantime, the commander of the 28th Division was again warned that their communications system had weak cryptographic protection.¹³³⁸

No doubt the VRS also intercepted messages regarding a possible joint defence of Srebrenica by Dutchbat and the ABiH. Bosnian Muslims have claimed that Dutchbat and the ABiH had agreed on

¹³³¹ Confidential interview (73).

¹³³² Interview with Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

¹³³³ NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms*. 28th Division to 2nd Corps, No. 02/8-537/2, 13/03/94. The claim by General Sead Delic that the 28th Division did not have its own crypto equipment is untrue. Interview with Sead Delic, 10/03/98.

¹³³⁴ Confidential information (37).

¹³³⁵ Interview with Sefko Hodzic, 24/05/99.

¹³³⁶ Confidential interview (73).

¹³³⁷ NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms*. Section MSS, 2nd Corps to 28th Division, no. 06-05-159/95, 14/06/95.

¹³³⁸ NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms*. 2nd Corps to Odbrana Republike VoVJ TaVJ, no. 02/8-01-1130, 09/07/95.

a concerted defence shortly before the attack.¹³³⁹ These assertions were denied by Dutchbat.¹³⁴⁰ The belief by the ABiH soldiers that such an agreement had been reached was more a question of wishful thinking. They referred to it in early July in their communications with 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla. It is only logical that the VRS would have intercepted these transmissions and would have been aware of the discussions between Dutchbat and the ABiH.

On 9 July Osman Suljic, the War President of Srebrenica, called President Izetbegovic. During this call Suljic asked the Bosnian President to save the population of Srebrenica but Izetbegovic did not respond. It is likely that this too was intercepted by the VRS.¹³⁴¹ The belief that this call indeed was intercepted, is supported by the fact that, on 10 July 1995, the headquarters of the 2nd Corps in Tuzla sent another message to, among others, the 28th Division saying that the VRS had again deciphered some coded ABiH documents. This had happened because of weak cryptographic protection: the code had been cracked with the aid of a calculator. A special measure was then introduced whereby the 28th Division in Srebrenica was ordered to keep messages which were transmitted through HF, VHF and UHF to a bare minimum and to use the K-2 crypto programme. General documents had to be coded by means of frequently changing frequencies and keys. Telephonic contacts with the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla could only take place after changes had been made to the secret names and numbers.¹³⁴² However, Lelic's apparently weak crypto programme was used right up to the fall of Srebrenica.

Interception of the column heading from Srebrenica to Tuzla

The flight of the column of Bosnian Muslims from Srebrenica to Tuzla is addressed in detail in Chapter 1 of Part IV of the Srebrenica report.¹³⁴³ This section explores how far the VRS was able to intercept calls made during this event. The ABiH took along a laptop computer with crypto software, which was later destroyed by the operator. The VRS found the demolished laptop and took the operator prisoner. He was taken to Zvornik where he was tortured in the hope that he would disclose his secrets. The ABiH knew through Comint that he had been arrested and taken to Zvornik. The operator did not break under torture and the VRS eventually released him.¹³⁴⁴

It was fairly easy for the VRS to track the ABiH column as it made its way to Tuzla. Throughout the journey the ABiH used various Motorola walkie-talkies, including the YEASU. These had probably been supplied to the 28th Division in the spring of 1995; spare batteries were charged before the column set out. The different parts of the column communicated through couriers and Motorolas; the vanguard maintained contact with the command of the 28th Division, the middle section and the rearguard (on another frequency). The commander of the 28th Division was in the middle and had an overview of the whole column. Some 20 Motorolas were used in the course of the manoeuvre. The VRS were constantly tuned in to the YEASU Motorolas and knew the exact locations of the different segments of the column. Hence, they could easily launch targeted shelling and claim many victims.¹³⁴⁵ Two intercepts by the intelligence service of the Drina Corps of the VRS, sent through the police station at the town Bijeljina, indicated that two groups in the column attempted to get instructions on how to act when they ran into an ambush near Kamenica. Later, the VRS experienced increasing difficulty when it tried to intercept the Motorolas of the ABiH, because the batteries gradually ran out and use had to be kept to a minimum. When the ABiH reached the village Baljkovica the batteries were flat.¹³⁴⁶

¹³³⁹ *ABiH Tuzla, 2nd Corps*, no number. Additional statement by Ramiz Becirovic, 16/04/98, based on an earlier statement of 11/08/95.

¹³⁴⁰ See Chapter 6 of Part III of the main Srebrenica report for a detailed discussion.

¹³⁴¹ Interview with Osman Suljic, 04/03/98.

¹³⁴² NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms. 2nd Corps to 28th Division*, no. 02/08-684/2, 10/07/95.

¹³⁴³ See for the English version: www.srebrenica.nl

¹³⁴⁴ Confidential information (37).

¹³⁴⁵ Confidential information (37).

¹³⁴⁶ For the journey to Tuzla: Chapter 1 in Part IV of the main Srebrenica report.

Conclusions on the interception by the Bosnian Serbs

As far as the attack on Srebrenica is concerned, the measures taken by the ABiH for the defence of the enclave probably held no secrets for the Bosnian Serbs if they were passed on through radio. It has become apparent that the ABiH had been making considerable use of these channels in 1993 and 1994 as well. Communication traffic between Dutchbat and the ABiH was also constantly and successfully monitored by the Sigint units of the VRS. The men and boys in the ABiH column heading for Tuzla must therefore have been an easy prey for the VRS units. It must have been relatively easy to pinpoint the positions of the various groups in this long column by working out cross-bearings on the basis of the intercepted messages. In addition, the VRS must have been able to gather intelligence on the internal problems in the column, the difficulties it encountered, and the internal agreements and planning. Sigint provided the VRS with clear insight into what was happening within the ABiH and gave it a permanent head start on a group that was already in serious trouble.

3. The Signals Intelligence operations of the ABiH

‘We were listening to their communications and we could hear them as they crossed the river and headed to Bratunac.’ This statement was made by a Bosnian intelligence officer, who concluded from intercepts that the VJ was involved in the attack on Srebrenica.¹³⁴⁷ Sigint not only played a key role in the VRS attack on Srebrenica in 1995, but also much earlier, in 1993. However, at that time the attack on Srebrenica (and Zepa) did not ultimately go ahead. Mladic knew from his own intelligence service that the local ABiH commander of Srebrenica, Naser Oric, was desperate and ready to surrender and therefore he probably decided to ‘push on’. ABiH soldiers claimed that they had intercepted a radio message from Mladic to the VRS besiegers of Srebrenica; at that moment the VRS was 800 metres from the centre. Mladic ordered a local VRS colonel to ‘move forward’ and take the town.¹³⁴⁸ The exact wording of the intercepted message was allegedly: ‘Tell all units to enter Srebrenica this night. Go straight into town, no journalists, no reports, no statements’.¹³⁴⁹ In the same period the Bosnian Foreign Minister, Haris Silajdzic, showed a journalist from the *Washington Post* VRS messages intercepted by the ABiH which indicated that Zepa was to be taken and that everyone there was to be killed.¹³⁵⁰

The limitations of the ABiH Comint capacity in Srebrenica in the spring of 1993 did not make it any less effective. For instance, the ABiH could intercept VRS communications on HF as well as on walkie-talkies. They usually achieved this with the assistance of the Srebrenica amateur radio club, which operated in the enclave and was also responsible for the connections with Tuzla and Sarajevo. Two ABiH officers headed a group of forty, all members of the amateur radio club, which had two transmitter-receivers. Later, the 28th Division obtained an extra transmitter-receiver, which was capable of intercepting VHF communications.¹³⁵¹ This equipment, which was flown into the enclave, was suitable for tracking VRS walkie-talkie communications. In addition, VRS radio equipment was sometimes captured.

The Comint reports were always sent to the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla for further analysis and not to the 28th Division. The results were, of course, sent back to the 28th Division in Srebrenica. ABiH soldiers admitted that the Bosnian Army was not able to decipher the VRS coded messages.¹³⁵² During the demilitarization of Srebrenica in 1993 the radio equipment was hidden from UNPROFOR.

¹³⁴⁷ Cabell Bruce, ‘Belgrade Blamed’, *Newsday*, 12/08/95

¹³⁴⁸ Mladic would after the fall of Srebrenica boast to DutchBat Commander Karremans that he had again excellent intelligence. Interview with Th.J.P. Karremans, 17/12/98.

¹³⁴⁹ ‘srebrenica on the verge of falling to Serbs’, *The Toronto Star*, 17/04/93.

¹³⁵⁰ Phil McCombs, ‘At the Bosnia Crossroads’, *The Washington Post*, 05/05/93.

¹³⁵¹ Confidential information (38) and interviews with Sefko Hodzic, 24/05/99 and Isnam Taljic 18/05/99.

¹³⁵² Confidential information (38).

After the summer of 1993 the Comint network was greatly extended; new equipment was smuggled in, especially in 1994.¹³⁵³ The couriers between Srebrenica and Zepa were issued with ten pieces of RUP-12 and IC H 10 portable radio equipment, which was also used to track and intercept VRS messages en route. In January and February 1995 additional portable radio equipment, including a short-wave radio, 50 metres of coax cable, a short-wave antenna and telephone cables were brought into Srebrenica.

The Comint experts of the 28th Division were constantly requesting new equipment, as the quality of the supplied equipment left much to be desired. New problems soon arose: the batteries could not be charged easily. There was not enough fuel for the generators and the ABiH was forever wrestling with flat storage batteries. A decision was taken to bring an 'energy-saving' Bertoli generator by helicopter to Srebrenica. Later, the ABiH illegally tapped electricity from Dutchbat to help solve this problem.¹³⁵⁴ Sigint experts often dub the conflict in Eastern Bosnia 'the Motorola War'. Everyone used walkie-talkies in the mountainous terrain because they were ideal for short-range military-tactical communications. The ABiH was very active in intercepting traffic around Srebrenica, both from the enclave itself and from special interception stations. The fact that the Muslims were intercepting VRS radio communications around the enclave was also brought to light by Milos Stankovic, translator-interpreter to General Rose and later Smith. During his stay in Srebrenica in the spring of 1993 Stankovic had tried to win the trust of the Bosnian Serbs by disclosing the burial place of his father, a Cetnik, who was handed over by the British and was subsequently executed by Tito's troops. ABiH officers referred to this a day later; suddenly, they also knew of the burial place.¹³⁵⁵

Not only the ABiH tried to intercept (sometimes successfully) walkie-talkie communication from Srebrenica, it also had various interception stations outside the enclave. The most important of these were in Okresanica and Konjuh, which formed the operational base of the Electronic Warfare Unit of the ABiH 2nd Corps, the Electronic Warfare Unit of the 21st Division and – from April 1993 – the Sigint section of the Bosnian National Security Service. Though this latter unit worked independently, it shared some of its intelligence with the Electronic Warfare Unit of the 2nd Corps, especially during the events in Srebrenica. This unit focused on the interception of civil communications in Srpska in the Podrinje and around Zvornik and Vlasenica, though it also followed military communications.

In 1992, the ABiH started organizing activities related primarily to Comint in Eastern Bosnia through permanent interception stations. There is not much archive material for this start-up period, but it was possible to build the following reconstruction on the basis of interviews and confidential information. There was, to begin with, very little technological expertise. Only one unit had interception equipment, as a lot had been taken by the VJ. At that time, it was possible to intercept two HF, four VHF and two air force channels from Konjuh and Okresanica; one soldier was available per wavelength for this purpose. He decided which frequency to intercept and reported verbally. The information was not analysed, and there were no crypto analysts, so the ABiH could only intercept open communication.

The intelligence was, however, good because the VRS did not bother to encrypt its messages at first. The Bosnians discovered that the higher the rank of the commander, the more open was the VRS communication. The VRS was scarcely aware of communications security, even though it emerged at Krstic's trial that it had always known that the ABiH could intercept their messages. Apparently, this was a risk they were willing to take. In 1992 the Bosnian Serbs had already pinpointed the location of nine well-equipped and manned ABiH interception stations. A signals officer of the Drina Corps testified to the Yugoslavia Tribunal that the communications security was not properly observed.¹³⁵⁶ Consequently, the ABiH could collect intelligence on, say, VRS units, the location of VRS radio

¹³⁵³ UNGE, *ICTY*. 283rd Brigade to 2nd Corps, no. 191-10/94, 07/11/94.

¹³⁵⁴ UNGE, *ICTY*. Cos Enver Hadzihasanovic to Naser Oric, no. 1-1/224-1, 07/02/95 and NIOD, *MIS CD-Roms*, 28th Division to 2nd Corps, no. 02-08-04/95, 17/02/95.

¹³⁵⁵ Stankovic, *Trusted Mole*, p. 251.

¹³⁵⁶ *Judgement in the Krstic Trial*, § 113, p. 42.

equipment, planned operations, the supply of fresh troops, the order of battle, losses, new operational plans and logistical problems.

Before long, the ABiH in Eastern Bosnia needed more Sigint personnel in order to cope with the flow of information. The VRS realized that the ABiH could intercept their messages. Pressure was then put on the VRS command to use crypto equipment, but apparently without much effect. The ABiH also discovered that the VRS could easily follow UNPROFOR communication traffic. It is for this reason that the 2nd Corps exhorted Sector North East in Tuzla on various occasions to use crypto equipment. The intelligence officers of the Scandinavian battalion in particular were alerted to this threat but the UN allegedly refused to do anything about it.

To convince UNPROFOR of these threats one ABiH general even carried out a test designed to elicit a response from the VRS. The ABiH sent out a false radio message about an ABiH patrol. The Scandinavian battalion sent this message on to Sarajevo whereupon the VRS responded immediately with shelling.¹³⁵⁷ This was confirmed by the British Lieutenant-Colonel C.A. Le Hardy, Intelligence and Operations Officer from Sector North East in Tuzla. He believed that there was indeed a leak in the radio transmission with Bosnia-Herzegovina Command: there was no question of secure communication. Le Hardy claimed that the Bosnian Serbs had excellent Sigint and had come into possession of a lot of information by eavesdropping on phone lines.¹³⁵⁸

Later, it became increasingly difficult for the ABiH to monitor VRS communication as the Bosnian Serbs were making more frequent use of better crypto equipment; in addition, sometimes important discussions were carried out in Romanian or Hungarian. However, the ABiH could still follow the traffic at brigade level and lower. Usually, the communication was carried out at set times. Sometimes the ABiH intercepted calls from senior VRS officers who complained about logistical and other problems. At that time, the ABiH still had only limited technical capabilities, a personnel shortage and no mobile interception trucks. It was also plagued by a shortage of spare parts and fuel to keep the electricity generators running at the interception stations.¹³⁵⁹ The interception stations at Konjuh and Okresanica targeted the military communications of the VRS. Various witnesses at the trial of General Krstic testified that these communications were followed before, during and after the fall of Srebrenica. The Electronic Warfare Unit in Konjuh focused primarily on the Drina Corps and the General Staff of the VRS. The 2nd Corps of the ABiH also had its own interception station in Tuzla.¹³⁶⁰

The ABiH encountered considerable problems with the interception of this type of radio traffic. The VRS used the Stolice Tower, which it had seized from the Bosnian Muslims, for most of their communications, which the ABiH was unable to disrupt. The VRS also used mainly radio links. As all the stations and antennae were on Bosnian-Serb territory they could not be intercepted by the ABiH; these were line-of-sight radio links with a maximum point-to-point range of 50 kilometres. An electronic warfare unit can only intercept this type of communication if it has a 'highly directional' antenna, which for a good interception needs to be positioned directly under the radio link as the beam travels in a straight line from antenna to antenna and can cover anything from 100 to 1,000 channels.

There were no radio links between the Stolice Tower above Srebrenica and the military nerve centre of the VJ in Tara (Serbia). That connection was maintained via Veliki Zep. At that time, the ABiH did not have receivers to tap in to radio links; this equipment was not among secret weapon deliveries such as the 'Black Flights'. However, early in the conflict the ABiH, working from Zepa, had managed to destroy the tower in Veliki Zep and put it out of operation for a long time.¹³⁶¹ The VRS repaired it later during the war.

¹³⁵⁷ Confidential interview (73).

¹³⁵⁸ Interview with C.A. Le Hardy, 08/10/97.

¹³⁵⁹ Confidential information (37).

¹³⁶⁰ Overview of Court Proceedings, statements by 8 witnesses, 23/06/00 and 30/06/00, on: <http://www.un.org/icty/news/Krstic/Krstic-cp.htm>.

¹³⁶¹ John Pomfret, 'Bosnian Muslims Flee As Serbs Seize Town', *The Washington Post*, 25/07/95.

As far as the technological capabilities of the Bosnian Comint stations in Konjuh, Okresanica and Tuzla were concerned, the ABiH only had old scanners at the start of the conflict. These could only be used for listening in to tactical intelligence at battalion level; strategic and operational intelligence were not obtained with Comint. The Comint itself was analysed at the headquarters in Sarajevo. There were no teleprinters or computers for crypto analysis. Though the ABiH did sometimes manage to obtain strategic intelligence, this was more by coincidence and usually took the form of communication between VRS soldiers.

The search for frequencies in Konjuh and Okresanica took place manually. There were not enough tapes to record conversations, so the same tapes were used over and over again. Every evening a report appeared containing the information collected on that day. In Konjuh only two or three people, working in eight-hour shifts, tried to follow the communication; they independently selected the frequencies and recorded only parts of the VRS communication on tape. No real-time intelligence was possible here. The VRS also used the normal telephone connections between Bratunac, Skelani and Milici. The ABiH were unable to tap these lines for they could not get near it. They did not launch any special operations to break this connection.¹³⁶²

In Konjuh the ABiH also had several RUP transmitters and receivers with a range of over 50 kilometres and a capacity of 20 Watts. They operated on a frequency of between 2 and 20 MHz. The RUP could only listen in to one frequency at a time, and, though between four and eight receivers were in use, they could not all be used at once because of a shortage of fuel and batteries. A maximum of four frequencies could be listened to at the same time. In total, both Konjuh and Okresanica had around ten people, including security, who worked in shifts. So, work did not continue non-stop on Comint. One person worked on two stations, concentrating on finding frequencies that were used for the command. Sometimes there were long periods of silence, or the frequencies changed and the search had to begin again. Most of the VRS communication took place in the morning and evening.¹³⁶³

The crew of the Electronic Warfare Unit of the 21st Division in Okresanica was small, consisting of three interception positions which were manned round-the-clock in shifts. Each team worked between four and eight hours a day for a whole week and then had a week off. Operators who intercepted the message made crude notes and worked it out later in their logbooks. These notes were passed on to the commander, who typed out the messages on a computer. The intercepts were then sent by courier to the command of the 21st Division for further analysis. Important messages were phoned through immediately to the 2nd Corps in Tuzla. There was no direction-finding equipment and frequencies were identified on the basis of the knowledge of the Comint operator.¹³⁶⁴

In the course of the conflict the Electronic Warfare Unit of the ABiH in Konjuh, Okresanica and Tuzla encountered more and more difficulties as it tried to intercept the messages of the Bosnian Serbs. The civil authorities and the VRS made increasing use of crypto equipment, which they borrowed or obtained from the VJ. The VRS used the KZU-31 system and frequently changed the keys. For example, it would start with Code 11. After two hours it would change keys and use Code 12. This made it impossible to penetrate the traffic. The KZU-31 was mechanical and was used for connections between headquarters of a corps and headquarters of a brigade.

The constantly changing keys often presented the ABiH code breakers with insurmountable problems. The Electronic Warfare Unit did, however, discover during the attack on Srebrenica that the Bosnian-Serb General Milenko Zivanovic had a direct line to Mladic, who since 9 July had been in the forward commando post of the Drina Corps in Pribicevac. These communications were always protected by a crypto connection. The decoding programme of the Drina Corps ran via a telex and the KZU-31 encrypting machine which was produced in Serbia. According to a former ABiH general, this

¹³⁶² Confidential interview (73).

¹³⁶³ Confidential interview (73).

¹³⁶⁴ 'srebrenica Trial - Expert witness assesses key radio *intercept* evidence', *IWPR's TRIBUNAL UPDATE* 214, March 19-24, 2001. See also statement by witness CC (Radio Interception operator in Okresanica) on 27/06/00.

made it impossible to follow these messages.¹³⁶⁵ This was confirmed by a message sent by the 2nd Corps to the 28th Division on 9 July 1995. The 2nd Corps had intercepted a encrypted message between the VRS General Staff in Han Pijesak and the Drina Corps, which the ABiH was unable to decode. The 2nd Corps suspected that it related to the shelling of Srebrenica.¹³⁶⁶ At a lower level, VRS units used codebooks. For instance, the word ‘tank’ was assigned number 323 and ‘lorry’ 325. The ABiH sometimes managed to get their hands on VRS codebooks during military operations, but the VRS changed the system every day. All the words were assigned new numbers. It was only when the fighting started that plain language was used again.

A study conducted by some foreign Sigint experts in Konjuh, Okresanica and Tuzla in 2000 revealed that the interception equipment used during the conflict was suitable for intercepting the aforementioned messages. In Okresanica a twelve-metre high antenna was found with different types of aerials attached. There was also a parabola antenna with a diameter of 1.5 metres which was intended for monitoring UHF radio traffic (above 300 MHz) and a YAGI antenna to intercept the VHF frequency (30-300 MHz). These were placed on a two-metre-high mast on top of the reception tower, giving an effective height of 842 metres above sea level. This tower stood at the top of Majevisa Mountain.

One of the radio systems that were used was the RRU 800. This was a 12- or 24-channel radio receiver that worked on the 610-960 MHz frequency and had a maximum range of 70 kilometres. An extra RRU 800 was available for communication traffic at greater distances. This system targeted communication between brigades and their headquarters. The second radio system was the RRU 1. This receiver intercepted messages at 230-270 MHz and had a range of approximately 50 kilometres. The RRU 1 targeted the communication traffic between the headquarters of battalions and brigades and could also be used as a mobile Comint system. One of the key ABiH targets was Veliki Zep. Both the RRU 800 and the RRU 1 systems in Okresanica focused on this. Veliki Zep, Cer and Gucevo were the most important communication nodes of the VRS. Communications in Veliki Zep were intercepted with an ICOM IC-R100 VHF/UHF receiver. Seven UHER tape recorders were used during the conflict. An ABiH officer in Okresanica said that he had read an intercept, which indicated involvement by the local police in the VRS operations after the fall of Srebrenica.

Konjuh was an interception station, which was not far away from Olovo and Kladanj. It was situated at the top of a mountain at some 1,316 metres above sea level. Originally, Konjuh had been an important relay station for communication in former Yugoslavia. When the ABiH threatened to seize Konjuh, the VRS tried to destroy the station, but were prevented from doing so by a swift ABiH operation. Konjuh was then converted into an ABiH intercept site. This is where the VRS communications on the column from Srebrenica to Tuzla were followed. It was closed after the Dayton Accord.¹³⁶⁷ There were still tape recorders in the building in 2000. The former staff in Konjuh said that they had only UHER tape recorders at their disposal during the conflict. Communications were intercepted with a parabola antenna with a diameter of 1.5 metres and two other antennae. These were still directed at Veliki Zep.¹³⁶⁸

What warning did the ABiH claim to have about the attack on Srebrenica?

In 1995 the Comint capabilities in Srebrenica itself were still very limited. The 28th Division of the ABiH did not have enough specialists or equipment. They used the Paket and Pactor to listen in to VRS communications. According to a former ABiH general, the VRS observed a radio silence from the moment it opened Pribicevac as its command centre and headquarters (from which the attack on

¹³⁶⁵ Confidential interview (73).

¹³⁶⁶ NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms*. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa to Komanda 28. Divizije br. 02-/8-1132, 09/07/95.

¹³⁶⁷ Konjuh is now being used as an intercept site by the US Army's 103rd Military Intelligence Battalion from Fort Stewart, Georgia. E-mail from Matthew M. Aid to Cees Wiebes, 19/12/00.

¹³⁶⁸ Confidential information (39).

Srebrenica would be coordinated) until 6 July. Though this radio silence was not entirely observed, no major preparations could be construed from an analysis of the communications. All that the ABiH knew was that troops were being regrouped near Skelani and Bratunac.

The ABiH could also follow, to some extent, the movement of VRS tanks and troops and the arrival of reinforcements. However, it had no insight into the actual intentions of the VRS. So, as there was no real-time intelligence, the ABiH did not realize that the VRS was preparing a major offensive. It was unknown which units of the Zvornik Brigade were heading south. Nor was anything reported about buses that were ferrying in fresh troops. An ABiH soldier who was involved in this said that there was no foreknowledge and that the ABiH could not break the VRS code.¹³⁶⁹

This is contradicted by other ABiH military, who allege that there was intelligence available and that it was possible to break the code. Statements by witnesses could imply that the army command of the ABiH in Sarajevo, or at least the leaders of the 2nd Corps in Tuzla, were actually aware of the preparations the VRS were making to attack Srebrenica. For example, the electronic warfare expert of the 2nd Corps in Tuzla, Captain Hajrudin Kusic, stated that the 2nd Corps knew from Sigint that the attack was pending long before it happened.¹³⁷⁰ Kusic initially worked in the Operations Section, but was seconded to the Electronic Warfare Unit because there were no Sigint experts in the 2nd Corps. In his estimation, Sigint provided important prior information on the forthcoming attack. It was not too difficult for Kusic to construe this from intercepted messages: he had lived in Serbia for nine years, during which time he worked for the Operations Section of the VJ. He said that the training he received there – under heavy Soviet influence – and the operations left little scope for originality: he could easily identify the same patterns in the VRS. The main VRS communication tower, situated at an altitude of 1,537 metres at Veliki Zep, had a wide range, so Kusic's unit picked up real-time intercepts from Tuzla. The VRS used an analogue signals system and coded as well as open traffic, but these, according to Kusic, presented no problems for the ABiH.

The VRS communication ran between Veliki Zep and Pribicevac. A lot of information was derived from high-placed officers' complaints about the vision and behaviour of Mladic. The ABiH was also assisted by the frequent use that Mladic made of open lines. This is how one of Kusic's units managed to intercept calls between General Zivanovic, Commander of the Drina Corps, and Colonel Vukovic of the Skelani Brigade. The Skelani Brigade was positioned on both sides of the road at Zeleni Jadar; the Bratunac Brigade was in the east, the Milici Brigade in the north-west and the Romania Brigade in the west. There were no conventional front lines. The VRS controlled the key communication lines and the heights. Covert allusions were made to the planned attack in the form of comments such as 'spring is coming'; Kusic could remember that OP-E was captured around the time of this intercept.

General Sead Delic, Commander of the ABiH 2nd Corps, confirmed that the leaders of his Corps in Tuzla had prior intelligence of the VRS attack. The 2nd Corps is supposed to have warned Commander Karremans, but he did not believe them. The ABiH also sent warnings to Sector North East of UNPROFOR, but they did not share in its conviction. ABiH intelligence was not taken seriously.¹³⁷¹ The ABiH commander in Sarajevo, General Rasim Delic, also stated that messages from Mladic had been intercepted, which indicated that he was gearing up for an attack. According to General Delic, confidential information from one of the US intelligence services confirmed that a conversation had taken place between Mladic and Milosevic. For a whole week all sorts of subjects were discussed with Belgrade. Delic reported the conversation as follows: 'Look, Mladic, are you really going to Srebrenica?'. The answer was 'Of course, I haven't finished the job. I'm going to take Zepa and Gorazde as well.' There were other signs, such as the regrouping of troops, propaganda, the increasing frequency of incidents around the Safe Areas, and statements from the international

¹³⁶⁹ Confidential interview (73).

¹³⁷⁰ Interview with Hajrudin Kusic, 17 and 18/05/99.

¹³⁷¹ Interview with Sead Delic, 10/03/99.

community that the situation was becoming critical and prompting serious thought.¹³⁷² There are also reports of intercepts of Serb communication that pointed to VJ involvement in the attack on Srebrenica¹³⁷³ and indicated that the commands for executions were issued from Belgrade.¹³⁷⁴

The Croats supposedly had identical intelligence, which they passed on to the Bosnian Muslims.¹³⁷⁵ According to these sources, no clear orders were ever issued for mass executions but there were vague references such as ‘getting rid of the problem’.¹³⁷⁶ Delic concluded that VJ troops were involved in the attack on Srebrenica, claiming that the ABiH had documents and intercepts to indicate this. These would prove that the VJ and specifically the Arkan Tigers were involved in the attack.¹³⁷⁷ However, these documents were not made available.

What did the ABiH claim to know about the column to Tuzla?

After the fall of Srebrenica, a long column of over 10,000 Muslims trekked through the mountains to Tuzla. On 12 July 1995 the intercept site at Konjuh was ideally positioned for tracking the progress of the column and the 2nd Corps in Tuzla also had an approximate idea of the size of the column. This was confirmed by a Sigint expert of the ABiH. The VRS used denigrating terms, like ‘swines’, to refer to the men from Srebrenica. VRS Colonel Vukovic asked: ‘Are you ready for the hunt?’ and orders to ‘kill all the beasts’ were issued. The order to catch Oric alive was also intercepted;¹³⁷⁸ apparently, not everyone was aware that Oric was already in Tuzla. The 2nd Corps also knew from Comint from Okresanica that the VRS was hunting down the column.¹³⁷⁹

The Sigint unit of the 2nd Corps in Tuzla knew the VRS frequencies and followed the fate of the column, often through intercepts of orders issued to VRS commanders inside and outside the enclave. During an interview held with the intelligence officer of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, Major Sefko Tihic had some intercepted messages brought in which he then read aloud.¹³⁸⁰ The first was allegedly a conversation that took place between Colonel Obrenovic and General Krstic after the fall of Srebrenica. It ran as follows: ‘How are you? Are there more fish to catch?’ Mention was then made of the column. The two men agreed that most of the Muslims would probably step on mines anyway. Then the order was issued to ‘kill all of them’. The second intercept concerned a question from a VRS commander to the commander of a VRS Special Forces unit: ‘Where are my units? Are they in Milici?’ The answer was: ‘Yes, they are. They are working there and capturing people’. A third intercept indicated, according to Tihic, that the VRS knew that the ABiH were listening. Here, a VRS soldier warned Krstic, ‘They are listening to us’. Krstic replied, ‘Let them hear us talk. We will do the same in the other areas’.

At Krstic’s trial intercepts of 15 July were submitted in which a VRS colonel complained to Krstic that he still needed to distribute 3,500 parcels. ‘Parcels’ was the code for Muslims and ‘distribute’ was the code for execute. The colonel asked Krstic for more men to finish the job.¹³⁸¹ Some of these intercepts had already been published in the summer of 1998 in *Sarajevo Slobodna Bosna* by journalist Mehmed Pargan, who had managed to lay his hands on 200 pages of intercepted VRS messages and

¹³⁷² Delic provided no clear answer when asked by the NIOD whether the knowledge obtained from the US source came only after the attack.

¹³⁷³ Ed Vulliamy, ‘srebrenica killer in the dock’, *The Guardian*, 01/06/96.

¹³⁷⁴ Roy Gutman, ‘Bosnia Evidence Secret’, *Newsday*, 08/11/95.

¹³⁷⁵ FOIA State Department, Washington DC, US Mission Vienna to SecState, no. 2135, 26/07/1995.

¹³⁷⁶ Interview with Sefko Tihic, 08/03/99.

¹³⁷⁷ Interview with Sead Delic, 10/03/99.

¹³⁷⁸ Interviews with Hajrudin Kistic, 17 and 18/05/99.

¹³⁷⁹ UNGE, ICTY, No. 00924932, Okresanica to 2nd Corps, no. 01/12795, 12/07/95.

¹³⁸⁰ Interview with Sefko Tihic, 08/03/99.

¹³⁸¹ Annieke Kranenberg, ‘Krstic liet ‘pakjes’ in Srebrenica doden’ (Krstic had ‘parcels’ killed in Srebrenica), *De Volkskrant*, 14/03/00 and ‘Krstic aangeklaagd voor volkerenmoord’ (Krstic indicted for genocide), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 14/03/00.

other documents relating to the period from 30 June until the end of July. He revealed that on 14 July the ABiH had intercepted VRS orders to kill the men in the column.

According to Pargan, the Electronic Warfare Units of the 2nd Corps were disseminating disinformation on 14 July by sending out messages that Oric and his unit had broken the stranglehold on the column. This message triggered a panic in Zvornik, which led to the mobilization of larger numbers of VRS soldiers. As a result, it was even more difficult for the refugees to break through the VRS lines. Intercepts on 14 July revealed that the VRS asked for bulldozers at Konjevic Polje. Intercepts disclosed that a panic had broken out in the VRS ranks about the events. The VRS leaders had no clear idea of what was going on, so they consented to a ceasefire of 24 hours, which was negotiated by ABiH Major Semsudin Muminovic.¹³⁸² The actual existence of this Comint could be construed from interviews with the commander of the 2nd Corps, General Sead Delic, the Sigint experts of the 2nd Corps, Captain Hajrudin Kusic, the Head of Intelligence of the 2nd Corps, Major Sefko Tihic and the ABiH commander in Srebrenica, Ramiz Becirovic. It was moreover confirmed by Bosnian Comint that was placed at the NIOD's disposal¹³⁸³ and by the report by researcher the ICTY researcher Richard Butler, *Srebrenica Military Narrative – Operation Krivaja 95*, which was specially compiled for the Yugoslavia Tribunal.

The question at the Tribunal was, however, if the information from the interviews was accurate, and if the ABiH troops were not bluffing about their ability to intercept VRS communication. Butler answered these questions by testifying to the Tribunal that the tape recordings of the intercepted VRS radio communications were credible. He admitted that he too was sceptical at first but had later reviewed his assessment. Butler stated that he had listened to 80-90% of the militarily relevant radio traffic and had studied thousands of documents. It appeared to him from the intercept protocols that people were speaking openly over the radio about the mass murder of the Muslims from Srebrenica. Two men whom Butler could not identify spoke about 10,000 Muslims of military age who had fled. 'Have we halved them yet? Four or five thousand must be dead by now.'¹³⁸⁴ Another expert, who was called in by the prosecutor at the Yugoslavia Tribunal, also judged the intercepts as authentic.¹³⁸⁵

Orders issued by Krstic and other conversations about 'parcels' were also registered. On 17 July a message was intercepted about 'A huge human mass of about 5,000 concentrated around Cerska and Kamenica, so many you can't kill them all'. When Krstic, in an intercepted conversation with an unidentified person, asked who had issued orders to send soldiers to a specific place, he was told that the orders had come from the General Staff. This implied that the General Staff was directly involved in leading the operations. Intercepted calls indicated that the VRS also had 'secure lines'. However, although the VRS did have secure means of sending messages, the Tribunal heard evidence that these systems were not always functional and that often unsecured lines were used for expediency. In addition, secured communications took much longer to prepare and send.¹³⁸⁶ The 2nd Corps had ascertained this earlier after a military operation around Zepa. Two VRS soldiers who were killed in this operation had documents on them which revealed that calls were being made to Han Pijesak via fixed telephone lines from barracks to the north of Zepa. The documents listed the direct telephone numbers of Mladic, Gvero, Milovanovic and other generals.¹³⁸⁷

It can safely be concluded that the Sigint units of the ABiH were highly capable. This is also evident from the tape recording of the (disputed) intercepted conversation in which the former

¹³⁸² Mehmed Pargan, 'B-H Army Eavesdropped on VRS', *Sarajevo Slobodna Bosna* (FBIS translation), 11/07/98.

¹³⁸³ Confidential information (38).

¹³⁸⁴ *Judgement in the Krstic Trial*, § 115, p. 23 and Butler, Testimony 5107. See also: 'Verslagen afgeluisterde tapes zeer geloofwaardig' (Reports of monitored tapes highly credible), in: *ANP Press release*, 18/07/00 and 'Tapes val Srebrenica zijn zeer geloofwaardig' (Tapes on fall of Srebrenica highly credible), *METRO*, 19/07/00.

¹³⁸⁵ *Judgement in the Krstic Trial*, § 114, p. 42.

¹³⁸⁶ See for example: ICTY (IT-98-33) D 66a, 28th Division to 2nd Corps, Weekly Morale Report, no. 04-113/95, 30/06/95. See for all intercepts: Coll. NIOD, *ICTY, OTP Ex. 738*, List of Exhibits contained in Ex. 364 (2 volumes of Intercepts). For the existence of the special secured connections: *Intercept* 17 July/12/ii.

¹³⁸⁷ NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms*. 285th Brigade, Zepa to General Staff ABiH, no. 08-13-52/95, 17/05/95.

commander of the Bosnian-Serb Drina Corps, General Radislav Krstic, issues orders to kill the ABiH soldiers. A British expert, Dr Peter French, testified to the Tribunal that he had not been able to definitively identify the voice as that of Krstic. According to the prosecution, the intercepts showed that Krstic had issued the order to kill the Muslim prisoners. The prosecution claimed that this was a tape of a conversation, which took place on 2 August 1995 between Krstic and Major Obrenovic, Chief of Staff of the Zvornik Brigade of the VRS. At that moment, the Zvornik Brigade was busy combing an area searching for ABiH soldiers from the column. One voice on the tape said that Muslims were still being captured. The other voice, presumably belonging to Krstic, responded with 'kill them all; don't leave anyone alive'. At the trial Krstic and his lawyers maintained that the intercept was a complete and utter fake. French, an expert in the analysis of speech and language, said that the recording was 'inconclusive'. He claimed that the poor quality and the brevity of the conversation made it impossible to determine whether the voice did indeed belong to Krstic. But an American witness testified that it was a conversation between 'speakers of ethnic Serb background' which according to this expert would be difficult for Muslims to imitate.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the prosecution had a trump card up its sleeve: the same intercept, but registered from another Bosnian interception station. Since the ABiH intercepted VRS communication from two different stations, Okresanica and Golija, on 2 August both stations had listened in to the conversation. The intercepting operators recorded it in their logbooks. It was typed out later and sent to the Army command for further analysis.¹³⁸⁸

All things considered, there are enough grounds for assuming that the Muslims had, since 1992, indeed been capable of intercepting important political and military communication traffic of the Bosnian Serbs. This took place from Srebrenica, Tuzla, Konjuh, Okresanica and perhaps at other stations as well and by other ABiH units. The evidence that the ABiH was actually capable of this was presented in the form of intercept texts to the NIOD, the Yugoslavia Tribunal and journalists. But the question still remains as to whether this was real-time intelligence. In other words, were the intercepts also directly available to the recipient of the intelligence or did it take days, or even weeks, before the contents were known?

4. Was the ABiH Signals Intelligence real-time?

Despite the emphatic claims by Bosnian military that they did have real-time Comint, there is still room for doubt. First, the ABiH was incapable of following most of the encrypted messages of the VRS. This is suggested by a message on 9 July 1995 from the 2nd Corps of the ABiH to the commander of the 28th Division in Srebrenica, which said that the codes could not be cracked.¹³⁸⁹ There may well have been intercepts which showed that VRS soldiers were incidentally ordered to kill ABiH soldiers, but no messages have been found in which Mladic or others ordered a mass execution.¹³⁹⁰

As neither the Bosnian Army nor the political leaders ever shared intercepts with UNPROFOR or the UN in New York, it is vital to establish whether these intercepts were real-time or near-real-time. If they were real-time, then the military of the Electronic Warfare Unit of the ABiH must have listened 'live' to orders to kill their Muslim brothers without taking any action. An US intelligence official commented that these VHF intercepts were 'authentic, genuine intercepts communications of Serb VHF communications and phone communications at tactical, operational and command levels'. He estimated that some 15,000 hours must have been spent on interception between 15 June and 15 July 1995. The Electronic Warfare Units in Konjuh, Okresanica and Tuzla reported to the 2nd Corps as well

¹³⁸⁸ 'srebrenica Trial - Expert witness assesses key radio *intercept* evidence', *IWPR's TRIBUNAL UPDATE* 214, March 19-24, 2001.

¹³⁸⁹ NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms*. ABiH Komanda 2nd Corps to 28th Division, no. 02-/8-1132, 09/07/95.

¹³⁹⁰ Interview with S. Arnautovic, 05/11/99.

as ABiH headquarters in Sarajevo and the senior politicians. The Bosnian national security service in Okresanica probably reported only to the Bosnian political leaders.¹³⁹¹

The question that now needs to be answered is: what was possible regarding the processing of the intercepts in real time? Simple arithmetic shows that, if the number of channels multiplied by the number of required personnel is greater than the number of available personnel, then near-real-time processing and reporting is impossible. A conservative estimate indicates that the monitored channels probably covered telephone calls from Okresanica via live interception or relayed intercepts. In addition to non-military traffic, the Bosnian national security service was bound to have been interested in the VRS high command and the operational levels immediately below. If we assume on the basis of this estimate that an absolute minimum of ten channels had to be monitored continuously, that three persons were needed per channel for interception, transcription and reporting and that there was a rotation of three shifts a day and a seven-day working week, then at least 90 Sigint operators would have had to be active in Okresanica. Not to mention 15 or 20 staff for support, technology, security, catering and so on. Hence, if there were 20 channels – probably a more realistic estimate – then at least 180 people would be needed. In reality, a maximum of ten people worked in Okresanica. Most of the communication was recorded on tape. It seems therefore that near-real-time analysis and processing was unattainable.

The VHF radio traffic was intercepted by the Electronic Warfare Units of the ABiH in Okresanica and Konjuh. We can perform some simple arithmetic on these activities as well. It appears from all the descriptions that these were standard Comint sites where the listener tuned in manually to the channels that were being monitored. On the basis of a very conservative estimate, around 30 channels would have to be manned permanently, including five frequencies at the level of high command, ten at operational level and ten tactical frequencies between units in the field. Thirty frequencies are regarded as the absolute minimum by US Sigint experts. The command and operational frequencies had to be monitored round-the-clock and the tactical frequencies 18 hours a day by three teams, each consisting of three listeners, who were individually responsible for interception, transcription and reporting. On the basis of this absolute minimum, around 210 people would have had to be working in Okresanica and Konjuh. The station was, moreover, not only responsible for monitoring communications around Srebrenica, but also the battles around Mount Vis, the northern part of Republika Srpska and other areas. At least 400 people would have been needed to follow all this traffic. In fact, the level of personnel was no higher than twenty. So, near-real-time analysis was impossible here as well.¹³⁹² We have already shown that the Electronic Warfare Units were also very modest in size.

The processing of Comint can only be described as long and laborious. With only a limited number of receivers at his disposal the interceptor probably decided to listen to the most valuable frequencies. If the number of valuable frequencies was greater than the number that could be intercepted, then tape recorders were used. In addition, the interceptor missed much of the messages when he had to leave his post to make his transcriptions in rough notes. Presumably, the interceptor spent 25% of his working hours away from his receiver and missed a lot, because there was no-one to relieve him. The commander then had the thankless job of 'handling' the intercept for the third time and typing it out. Probably, Okresanica did not have a direct phone line with Tuzla. As a result, the worked-out intercepts had to be stored on a floppy disk and sent by courier to the headquarters of the 21st Division or the 2nd Corps.

According to witnesses at the Tribunal, the working methods were exactly the same in Okresanica and Konjuh.¹³⁹³ In some cases the intercepted calls were first recorded on tape and then later worked out on paper or in a logbook. The messages were then typed out on a computer and sent

¹³⁹¹ Confidential information (54).

¹³⁹² Confidential interviews (6), (13), (54) and (62).

¹³⁹³ See: <http://www.un.org/icty/news/krstic/krstic-cp.htm>.

to headquarters. The Comint operators often – but not always – made a note of the date and time of the intercepts.¹³⁹⁴ The conclusion is that though some phone calls and VHF channels may have been monitored ‘live’, the bulk of the very extensive military traffic of the VRS was tape-recorded and was not analysed until later. This undermined cohesion and meant that VRS communication that was actually intercepted in real time could not be placed in the right context. For the Electronic Warfare Units to have operated in real time the Bosnian national security service in Okresanica would have needed a staff of at least 120 while the ABiH units would have needed at least 210 people in both Okresanica and Konjuh. The very fact the Electronic Warfare Units existed implies, however, that they must have delivered valuable intelligence from time to time, but this will only have been a drop in the ocean compared with the huge flow of Bosnian-Serb communications. It may be safely assumed that the VRS used more than a hundred walkie-talkies during the attack. Given the number of available personnel, there can never have been any question of large-scale real-time intelligence.

In summary, we can draw certain conclusions about the Bosnian efforts regarding Sigint. To begin with, intelligence is useless (except in hindsight) if the information is not presented to the consumer promptly in a form that is both understandable and usable. If the intelligence is not reported or is kept secret for fear of compromising the source, then there is no point in collecting it, except for later use or storage in an archive. Taking the Bosnian efforts as a whole, it must be concluded that the service responsible for the Sigint was simply too undermanned (ten people per station) and too poorly equipped to fulfil its mission adequately. Though there were many intercepts, the processing, analysis and reporting were totally inadequate. Intercepts were not typed out immediately in a word-processing programme but transcribed by hand in a logbook; tapes bearing messages were re-used and hardly any use was made of computers to process and disseminate the data flow.

Moreover, there were no Comint analysts at the interception stations to analyse the messages and assess their value. There were no secure lines with various regional ABiH headquarters and no indications that the Bosnian services had any intelligence analysts at brigade, corps or higher level who were able to swiftly integrate the Comint with, say, Humint. Even if Bosnia had had the political will to publish the most volatile intercepts worldwide, it would never have succeeded because the intelligence structure was simply not geared for this. Even the real-time intercepts were too fragmented. There is, furthermore, no evidence that the ABiH Comint service shared intelligence with Dutchbat, western services or UNPROFOR.

Or was there near-real-time intelligence after all?

Nonetheless, an ABiH general claimed that the messages were actually intercepted and analysed in real time.¹³⁹⁵ This assertion should, however, be treated with the utmost scepticism. If the Bosnian Muslims did have real-time Comint then why did they not use it? According to an US intelligence official, this would have been the ‘best PR stunt ever’, and the Bosnian Muslims could have screamed ‘bloody hell and murder’. He suspected that the ABiH simply did not have real-time capacity. He offered the following example. If, in the best-case scenario, the ABiH had had 150 people in Konjuh, some of them would have had friends or even family in the enclave or in the column. Keeping the Comint under wraps would have triggered a ‘stampede’ among the staff in Okresanica, Konjuh or Tuzla for they would have done everything possible to save these people. According to this official, the ‘absence of a stampede’ implies ‘an absence of real-time intercepts’. In his opinion, the ABiH did not know about the contents of the intercepts until weeks, months, or even years after the fall of Srebrenica. If ABiH intercepts were to have any influence on military and political measures, they should have been available on the evening of 10 July at the latest.

¹³⁹⁴ *Judgement in the Krstic Trial*, § 107, p. 40.

¹³⁹⁵ Confidential information (38).

It is more likely that the Electronic Warfare Units did not realize at that moment what the intercepted messages actually meant. Though the ABiH intercepted many messages, they did not conduct enough analysis to form a measured judgement. Perhaps priority was accorded to other targets in the region so that Sigint on Srebrenica had to take a back seat.¹³⁹⁶ It is also quite likely that Sigint on Sarajevo had top priority. Another American intelligence officer also believed the tapes had been processed weeks, months or possibly even two years after the event.¹³⁹⁷ The Bosnians openly admitted that the ABiH had a huge backlog of unprocessed intercepts.¹³⁹⁸

There is yet another indication that the Bosnian Muslims did not have real-time Sigint. The many intercepts that were later published and disclosed at the trial of General Krstic give the impression that the VRS troop movements were efficiently followed by the Muslims in real time. There were dozens of intercepts which showed that the ABiH interception stations in Konjuh, Okresanica and Tuzla closely followed the VRS conversations about the column heading for Tuzla. However, at Krstic's trial no attention was paid to whether this intelligence was shared with UNPROFOR. This would, after all, have been a logical step, given that the Bosnian Muslims dearly wanted to get UNPROFOR or NATO on their side in the fight against the VRS.

Why did the ABiH not share intelligence with the western powers?

According to Lieutenant-Colonel Baxter, military assistant to General Smith, the ABiH in Sarajevo never delivered as much as a snippet of intelligence to Smith, his staff or the rest of UNPROFOR. ABiH General Rasim Delic only consulted with Smith four times a year. Smith's door was always open to the Head of the Bosnian Intelligence Service, General Taljan Hajrulahovic, but he never dropped by. On the other hand, the ABiH had excellent intelligence contacts with the Americans. Smith's staff discovered, through a slip of the tongue of the US Ambassador John Menzies, that General Wesley Clark called General Delic in Sarajevo every day from the Pentagon to discuss the latest military developments.¹³⁹⁹ General Janvier also denied ever having received Bosnian intercepts of VRS communication.¹⁴⁰⁰ Members of the US Intelligence Community said they were sure that, if the Bosnian Muslims had passed on these intercepts to the CIA or NSA, the US Administration would certainly have done something. Balkan experts from the CIA stated that the reports of the executions first reached Washington after soldiers from the column arrived in Tuzla.

It did not take long for rumours to circulate about the executions, but no one had the slightest idea of the scale. The ABiH did not share its Comint on the executions or the VRS hunt for the members of the column with the CIA. Rumours about mass graves and various stories prompted a search for the truth. No-one could confirm the rumours or give any indication of the scale. The Americans had never seen intercepts by the ABiH which referred to 'parcels' or 'swine'. According to the US intelligence officials, the ABiH frequently made 'a lot of noise' during the conflict but it was very difficult to prove such rumours.¹⁴⁰¹

Other officials who were working for the US Intelligence Community in 1995 stated that they too were unaware of the existence of the Bosnian intercepts; it was definitely news to them. If the NSA or CIA had known about these intercepts in 1995, then the officials would have known as well through their close involvement in the Balkan Task Force at the State Department.¹⁴⁰² Canadian intelligence officers made similar statements.¹⁴⁰³ Journalist Roy Gutman also heard from US officials that the US

¹³⁹⁶ Confidential interviews (13) and (54).

¹³⁹⁷ Confidential interview (13).

¹³⁹⁸ Interview with S. Arnautovic, 05/11/99.

¹³⁹⁹ Interview with James Baxter, 16/10/00.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Assemblée Nationale, *Srebrenica: rapport sur un massacre*, (Srebrenica, report of a massacre) Assemblée Nationale, no 3412, 2 Vols, Paris 2001, Vol 2, Interview with M. Bernard Janvier, 21/06/01, pp. 106-139.

¹⁴⁰¹ Confidential interview (7).

¹⁴⁰² Confidential interviews (12) and (13).

¹⁴⁰³ Confidential interviews (9), (62) and (90).

Intelligence Community had no access to such intercepts. The ABiH ‘was in a better position to collect tactical intelligence such as this’.¹⁴⁰⁴

The Comint on the attack on Srebrenica, the column, and the later executions of the ABiH soldiers was not passed on to the Dutch Military Intelligence Service (MIS) either. Archival research and interviews with MIS staff revealed that no-one knew anything about the intercepts until the publication in the press in 1995 and the trial of General Krstic.¹⁴⁰⁵ The fact that this Comint was not shared is another indication that the intercepts were not available in real time. Otherwise, one has to countenance the cynical idea that the ABiH and the political leaders in Sarajevo were prepared to sacrifice Srebrenica and thousands of Muslims to win over the West once and for all to the side of the Bosnian Muslims. This thought was actually expressed before and after the fall of Srebrenica by the Bosnian Foreign Minister Sacirbey, who said: ‘Well, now we have one problem less’.¹⁴⁰⁶

A CIA official who worked in the region also suggested during an interview that there was a certain disinterest regarding the events in the enclave. Srebrenica was scarcely broached in his talks with senior Bosnian commanders and government officials. The war crimes committed in the enclave did not top the list of questions that the ABiH wanted to solve or urgently discuss with the CIA. Instead, pertinent questions posed earlier by the CIA officer on the matter were avoided. There has never been a clear explanation for this. Apparently, everything revolved around Sarajevo, and Srebrenica was pushed into the background.¹⁴⁰⁷ That this should apply to the mass murders is, however, a cynical scenario that cannot be supported with convincing evidence.

What if the ABiH had shared its intelligence with UNPROFOR?

If the ABiH had actually been in possession of real-time Comint and passed it on to UNPROFOR, could this have influenced the fate of Srebrenica or saved the male Muslims? ‘What if’ questions are, by definition, difficult to answer. A senior member of the US Intelligence Community took the view that it would have made no difference; he pointed out that both the ABiH and UNPROFOR knew that the enclave was under attack. They knew that a large group of soldiers had left the enclave but, for various reasons, neither of them took action.

UNPROFOR could perhaps have interpreted its mandate more freely or exerted pressure on Pale and Belgrade, but this would have taken so much time that it would not have helped to save Srebrenica or the men.¹⁴⁰⁸ On the other hand, the immediate publication of these intercepted messages might have turned the tide for the men and boys in the column. The Bosnian Serbs might have halted the mass executions if their scale had been made known to the outside world. Pale and Belgrade would probably have had to give in to diplomatic, military and other pressure. The only people with whom the Bosnian Government was prepared to share its volatile Comint were journalists. In October and November 1995 the Bosnian Foreign Minister, Sacirbey, offered the aforementioned ABiH intercepts to various journalists. However, he waited until months after the fall of Srebrenica, perhaps in an attempt to improve his own negotiating position.¹⁴⁰⁹ The obvious conclusion from this is that neither the Bosnian military nor political leaders shared the intercepts with UNPROFOR, the UN in New York or the US intelligence services. Presumably, this was mainly because the Muslims did not have real-time communication intercepts.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Roy Gutman, ‘UN’s Deadly Deal’, *Newsday*, 29/05/96.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Confidential interviews (21), (22), (24) and (27).

¹⁴⁰⁶ Interview with Anđeljko Makar, 12/06/00.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Confidential interview (12).

¹⁴⁰⁸ Confidential information (13).

¹⁴⁰⁹ Confidential information (6).

5. UNPROFOR and Dutchbat as a target for Communications Intelligence

As already mentioned in a previous chapter, according to an article published in the Dutch newspaper *Het Parool*, 'During the conflict in Bosnia, Sarajevo was a hive of espionage. Everyone was spying on everyone else: the warring factions and the countries of the UN peace force.' *Het Parool* reported in 1998 that the telephone of General Rose was being tapped not only by one of the allies but by the Muslims as well.¹⁴¹⁰ The Chief-of-Staff under General Rose, General A.P.P.M. van Baal, also confirmed that the residence of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo was bugged. This building, Tito's former country retreat, was filled with bugging devices. Furthermore, the two lower storeys of an outbuilding were being used by the Bosnian intelligence services. Van Baal said that General Rose sometimes called out – for a joke – that an attack was pending. Shortly afterwards, a call would come from ABiH headquarters claiming that an attack was underway.¹⁴¹¹

UNPROFOR communications were a key target for all warring factions (VJ, VRS and ABiH). As far as Comint operations of the VRS in and around Sarajevo are concerned, virtually all the conversations between UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo and Zagreb and the leaders of the Bosnian Government were intercepted. But the Bosnian national security services and the ABiH were not sitting idle either. In November 1994, during the Bihac crisis, the Bosnian Muslims intercepted phone calls between General Rose and the political advisor of Karadzic, Jovan Zametica.¹⁴¹² The previous chapter has already addressed the fact that UN telephones and faxes were insufficiently protected against interception. Sometimes interception was not even necessary and the VRS and the ABiH got direct access to the UNPROFOR communications network due to internal errors at the UN.¹⁴¹³

In addition, the Bosnian intelligence services had been heavily infiltrated by the Serb military intelligence service. The Serbs had realized before the conflict broke out that the federal intelligence services would disintegrate. Hence, the Chief of the Federal Intelligence Services (KOS), Aleksandar Vasiljevic, started up an operation aimed at infiltrating various sections of the Bosnian secret service. He is thought to have succeeded in the case of the Bosnian military intelligence service (VOS) and the Bosnian civil intelligence service (AID). The VRS intelligence service probably received further assistance from the Serb Foreign Ministry (MUP), which had its own satellite monitoring station in Belgrade. The main targets of the MUP were the UNPROFOR and NATO communications that ran via Inmarsat and/or Intelsat. Here, the VRS was doubly successful: the Bosnian military intelligence service led by Brigadier-General Mustafa Hajrulahovic permanently listened in to UNPROFOR headquarters and all international telephone calls. As the VRS, in turn, intercepted the communications of the Muslims, it also had access to these intercepts.¹⁴¹⁴

This is how the VRS discovered through Comint that a senior UNPROFOR official had struck a deal with a prominent Bosnian minister. During the negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs the UNPROFOR official would try to get the access routes re-opened for humanitarian convoys to Sarajevo. A member of General Smith's staff heard this from VRS liaison officer, Major Milenko Indjic, and reported it to his superior. Smith disbelieved it at first, but it was quickly confirmed by another UN worker who had heard the same thing from the secretary of the Bosnian minister. In return for keeping the access routes open for four days a sizeable sum of money would be deposited in the UNPROFOR official's Swiss bank account. The Bosnian minister had already transferred substantial sums into this account. The Bosnian but also Bosnian-Serb mafia was namely making a fortune from the humanitarian

¹⁴¹⁰ 'sarajevo zat vol spionnen in oorlog' (Sarajevo full of spies during war), *Het Parool*, 24/04/98.

¹⁴¹¹ Interview with A.P.P.M. van Baal, 27/05/98.

¹⁴¹² Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, pp. 203 - 204.

¹⁴¹³ Confidential collection (7), UNPROFOR Outgoing Fax, C. White to Sector Sarajevo, no. 007, 27/02/95.

¹⁴¹⁴ In Croatia this operation was known as *Operation Labrador*. MoD, MIS, File 438-0190, box 307, Memorandum: The Bosnian civil intelligence service AID, 07/05/97.

aid being sent to Sarajevo. Both parties even shot at UN planes bringing the aid. As these were then prevented from delivering the goods, the prices on the black market rose.¹⁴¹⁵

Corruption hit UNPROFOR in another way, too. A member of General Smith's staff said: 'The Coded Cables of the UN were sold in Sarajevo for \$1000'.¹⁴¹⁶ The Bosnian Minister Muratovic made no secret to the temporary Dutch *chargé d'affaires*, Glaubitz, of the fact that Bosnian Muslims were intercepting UNPROFOR communications.¹⁴¹⁷ Insiders knew this already, but that did not make Muratovic's admission any less remarkable.

The fact that UNPROFOR messages were being intercepted at the very highest level was also confirmed by a message from the 2nd Corps, which reported on 11 July 1995 that it had listened in three times to a phone call through an open line between Generals Janvier and Zdravko Tolimir.¹⁴¹⁸ The ABiH also intercepted phone calls between Generals Mladic and Janvier on 9 and 10 July,¹⁴¹⁹ and between the Dutch General Nicolai and the General Staff of the VRS.¹⁴²⁰ UNPROFOR headquarters was also a favourite target of the Bosnian intelligence services.¹⁴²¹ For example, all faxes from the Chief Political Officer of UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, Phillip Corwin, were intercepted by the Bosnian Muslims.¹⁴²² This equally applied to the UNPF headquarters in Zagreb; here the Croatian services were responsible. According to a member of the UNPF intelligence staff in Zagreb, the Croatian national security and military intelligence services systematically monitored UNPROFOR traffic in Croatia and had engaged interpreters especially for this purpose. Rumour had it that they were experiencing problems with Belgian traffic, because Belgian officers tended to switch often between French and Flemish.¹⁴²³

The Croatian Army benefited considerably from UNMO intercepts, especially during the attack on the Krajina. They were among their best sources of intelligence.¹⁴²⁴ This was confirmed by the Post Mission Report of the UNMOs in UNPROFOR and UNPF, which said that, between 1992 and 1996, the Communications Security of UNPROFOR 'was a real disaster for UNPROFOR/UNPF'. The UNPF headquarters in Zagreb and the UNMO headquarters both used unprotected land lines for their daily reports and 'for that period UNMO (and UNPF in general) has become unwillingly (let's hope) "the second intelligence agency" for Croatian Army'. The satellite connections used by the UNPROFOR units were also an easy prey for the warring factions' interceptors. The headquarters of UnCivPol and the UNMOs in Srebrenica were monitored by the ABiH. Dutchbat made this public after it was discovered.¹⁴²⁵ The communications traffic of the UNMOs was similarly intercepted and read by the ABiH and as such became another a key source of military information.¹⁴²⁶

Up till then, open communications had been one of the cardinal principles of a UN operation. However, an UNPROFOR evaluation report stated: 'It is right for an academic Peacekeeping Operation, but for such an active operation like UNPROFOR it is not. There is a strong belief that it should be reconsidered on the basis of sad experience of this Mission'. The report stressed yet again that all the warring factions had stolen or seized large amounts of UNPROFOR communication

¹⁴¹⁵ Confidential interview (80).

¹⁴¹⁶ Interview with James Baxter, 16/10/00.

¹⁴¹⁷ NMFA, *DEU Srebrenica*, Glaubitz to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no. 25, 03/09/96.

¹⁴¹⁸ NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms*. Message from 2nd Corps to Odbrane Republike VoVJ TaVJ, no. 02/8-0101215, 11/07/95.

¹⁴¹⁹ ICTY, *OTP Ex. 738*, List of Exhibits contained in Ex. 364 (2 volumes of Intercepts), Conversation 9 July/1 and 10 July/1, 09/07/95 and 10/07/95.

¹⁴²⁰ NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms*. ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa to Komanda 28. Divizije br. 02-/8-1132, 09/07/95 and ABiH Komanda 2. Korpusa to Komanda 28. Divizije br. 02-/8-1142, 10/07/95.

¹⁴²¹ 'sFOR discovers eavesdropping center in Sarajevo', *Glas Javnosti*, 13/01/01.

¹⁴²² Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*, p. 165.

¹⁴²³ Confidential interview (45).

¹⁴²⁴ Thomas Quiggin, Response to 'No Cloak and Dagger Required: Intelligence Support to UN Peacekeeping', in: *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 13 (1998) 4, p. 206.

¹⁴²⁵ Interviews with Bob Patchett, 19/11/99 and E.A. Rave, 13 and 14/12/00.

¹⁴²⁶ For example: NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms*. Komanda 2. Korpusa, Tuzla to Generalstab ABiH, Sarajevo, no. SP. 06-712-24-7/95, 15/07/95.

equipment and that the Sigint units of the VJ, the VRS and the ABiH were therefore able to intercept UNMO communications 24 hours a day ‘as the most reliable source of information’.¹⁴²⁷ A Scandinavian UNMO in Sarajevo was for example introduced to a Bosnian Serb officer who would act as his liaison. The VRS official told him simply that he actually did not need an introduction because he knew already everything about the UNMO because he did read the daily reports sent to this UNMO.¹⁴²⁸ Even the Coded Cables sent from Sarajevo or Zagreb to New York were unsafe. All sides to the conflict were able to read them.¹⁴²⁹

As was revealed during the UNSCOM mission in Iraq, the UN had learned very little from the Sigint war against UNPROFOR. The Iraqi intelligence service was able to decipher and read coded communication with UN headquarters in New York. Apparently, the crypto programme was too weak and could be easily broken. At that time, it was impossible to buy strong American crypto software because of the stringent export controls imposed by the National Security Agency. After all, weak crypto software also enabled the NSA to read the messages. After the Iraqi operation was discovered, UNSCOM switched to the *Pretty Good Privacy* software, which was still unbreakable at that point.¹⁴³⁰

Various Croatian intelligence services carried out intelligence operations against UNPROFOR. The Office of National Security served as an umbrella organization for the Croatian Foreign Intelligence Service, the Intelligence Service of the General Staff, the Security Intelligence Service of the Ministry of Defence, and the Intelligence Service of the Croatian Army. All of these agencies were active against UNPROFOR. Bureau IV of the latter organization was in charge of military Comint operations, which were coordinated from the Lucko air base in Zagreb. Bureau IV had close ties with the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* and the CIA, both of which provided equipment and organized training. The Croatian National Signals Intelligence service also collected Sigint outside Croatia.¹⁴³¹

Members of an European intelligence service also emphasized that at the start of the conflict the Croatians delivered a lot of computer hardware to Belgrade. All this hardware had, however, been fitted with a ‘back door’ so that the Croatian intelligence services could look over the Serb shoulders. Tudjman’s son reportedly played a key role in these operations.¹⁴³² The Croatian weekly publication *Globus* printed quotations from telephone conversations which purportedly took place between President Clinton from his presidential plane *Air Force One* and President Milosevic. The Croatian services allegedly listened in to hundreds of such calls.¹⁴³³

In addition, NATO intelligence flowed to the Croatians via the *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, much to the displeasure of NATO members, who knew that the Serbs had infiltrated deep into the Croatian intelligence services. This had been going on since 1989 through *Operation Labrador*, when Milosevic had ordered that a Serb network be set up within the Croatian intelligence community. Intelligence from US and German services ended up in Belgrade via this route.¹⁴³⁴ However, BND officials deny that this happened.¹⁴³⁵

The National Service for Electronic Monitoring – which formed part of the Croatian Agency for National Security – focused on intercepting civil internal and foreign communications. This section,

¹⁴²⁷ Confidential collection (5), *UNMO in UNPROFOR/UNPF, Post Mission Report 1992 - 1996*, Zagreb 1996, p. 29.

¹⁴²⁸ Confidential interview (100).

¹⁴²⁹ MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, p. 319.

¹⁴³⁰ ‘UNSCOM Hurt by Weak Encryption’, in: *Intelligence Newsletter*, no. 403, 05/04/01 as published on 18/04/01 on: <http://216.167.120.50/>

¹⁴³¹ Miroslav Tudjman, ‘The First Five Years of the Croatian Intelligence Service’, *National Security and The Future*, Vol. 1(2000) 2, p. 47 - 74.

¹⁴³² Confidential information (48).

¹⁴³³ ‘Ophef over gesprekken tussen Clinton en Milosevic’ (Commotion about calls between Clinton and Milosevic), *De Volkskrant*, 07/02/02; Alex Todorovic, ‘Tapes reveal Sloba chummy with Bill’, *The Gazette (Montreal)*, 07/02/02 and ‘In leaked Milosevic tapes, father knows best’, *The New York Times*, 07/02/02.

¹⁴³⁴ Marko Milivojevic, ‘Croatia’s Intelligence Services’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, Vol. 6, No. 9, pp. 404 - 410 and Confidential interview (15).

¹⁴³⁵ Confidential interviews (99) and (100).

established in 1991, also received considerable American support. It was able to intercept 40,000 GSMs at the same time and to register over 100 conversations with the aid of target words in computers. The Berlin firm *Rhode & Schwarz* supplied the hardware and the CIA supplied the programs. The NSEM reportedly collected 70% of all the intelligence delivered to the Croatian political and military leaders.¹⁴³⁶

But not only high-level UNPROFOR communication was a key target for all the warring factions; tactical military communications were important as well. A member of the UNPF intelligence staff in Zagreb said that the ABiH and the VRS constantly intercepted this traffic, using Motorolas from captured UNPROFOR vehicles. The Chief Political Officer of UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, Phillip Corwin, said that as it was impossible to change communication codes every time a car was hijacked. They had to assume that their mobile communications were being monitored by all sides.¹⁴³⁷ ABiH soldiers even broke regularly into these UNPROFOR communications to, for instance, improve target bearings in observation reports.¹⁴³⁸ The Croats followed suit.¹⁴³⁹ The British Royal Welch Fusiliers partially solved this problem by using Welsh-speaking communications staff; none of the warring factions could follow the conversations in Welsh.¹⁴⁴⁰ UNPROFOR traffic was regularly tapped by the VRS. Scandinavian UNPROFOR units meticulously observed the locations hit by VRS mortar grenades around Tuzla and passed this information on direct to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command via an open radio link. The VRS listened in to these messages and used the UNPROFOR observations to correct their aim.¹⁴⁴¹ The VRS only had to 'capitulate' when the Scandinavians communicated in one of their national languages.

Yet another target was the communications of the British SAS. It was not only the NSA that listened in to these connections;¹⁴⁴² the ABiH did so as well, but they never managed to break the code. A member of a British intelligence service said that the ABiH probably read 'open routine traffic' but not crypto traffic. This was 100% safe.¹⁴⁴³ The fact that the ABiH was following SAS communication was revealed by a report sent by the Bosnian national security services to the 28th Division. This report mentioned information that was being passed on by the JCO unit in Srebrenica to the Joint Commission Observer headquarters in Sarajevo on the fighting around the enclave and the numbers of dead and wounded.¹⁴⁴⁴

Dutchbat intercepted

The communication traffic of Dutchbat was an equally important target for Comint. Communication equipment was regularly stolen from Dutchbat personnel.¹⁴⁴⁵ The VRS listened in to the traffic between the various OPs and between the OPs and the Dutch base in Potocari. As the OPs were situated on ABiH territory, the VRS collected a lot of information on all sorts of military operations, because the Dutchbat soldiers dutifully reported all the movements of the ABiH troops. Accordingly, the VRS sometimes fired on targets where Dutchbat had just spotted the ABiH. The connections between the

¹⁴³⁶ Ivo Pukanic, 'Echelon Spy System' and 'The Details behind the Lepej Affair', *Nacional*, Issue 291, 14/06/01; Ivo Pukanic, 'The Wiretapping Fever has Shaken the New Government', *Nacional*, Issue 292, 21/06/01; Milivoj Dilas, 'The Wiretapping Affair', *Nacional*, Issue 293, 28/06/01 and 'Croatia Using Advances US-Installed Intelligence Technology', *Belgrade Glas Javnosti*, 03/01/02.

¹⁴³⁷ Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*, p. 4.

¹⁴³⁸ Confidential interview (45).

¹⁴³⁹ Confidential interview (44).

¹⁴⁴⁰ Thomas Quiggin, Response to 'No Cloak and Dagger Required: Intelligence Support to UN Peacekeeping', in: *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 13 (1998) 4, p. 207.

¹⁴⁴¹ A. Walter Dorn, 'The Cloak and the Blue Beret: Limitations on Intelligence in UN Peacekeeping', in: *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence*, Vol. 12 (1998) 4, p. 416.

¹⁴⁴² Ed Vulliamy, 'How the CIA intercepted SAS signals', *The Guardian*, 29/01/96.

¹⁴⁴³ Confidential information (1).

¹⁴⁴⁴ NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms*. Section MV, 2nd Corps to 28th Division, No. 06-05-174/95, 27/06/95.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Hans van Alphen, 'Binnen halve minuut is Dutchbat thuis' (Dutchbat home in thirty seconds), *Haagsche Courant*, 13/07/95.

UNPROFOR OPs and Sector North East were also intercepted by all the warring factions. This explains how a Danish report of an ABiH column near Tuzla led directly to VRS shelling. The ABiH also had knowledge of the communications between Dutchbat and the UNMOs. Sometimes, their reports contained literal quotations from Dutchbat reports.¹⁴⁴⁶

In October 1994 the Royal Netherlands Army used satellite communication equipment in the form of Inmarsat-A terminals as a key communications channel. These terminals were primarily intended for operational voice/fax traffic to the Netherlands, as well as contacts with the home front. However, they proved inadequate as the units were barely accessible due to the saturation of the Inmarsat system. The communication with the home front also impeded operational contact. Consultations were held and a suggestion was mooted to switch to a multiple-channel VSAT network, which used the PTT ground station in Burum (Friesland). This system was also suitable for data, crypto and video applications.¹⁴⁴⁷

However, on 10 December 1994 two Dutch UN vehicles fitted with satellite communication equipment were stolen by the Bosnian Serbs near Sarajevo. This gave the VRS the equipment and technology to improve their capability for listening in to the Dutch troops.¹⁴⁴⁸ The Dutch units in UNPROFOR used two civil satellite systems, namely, VSAT and Teledata. Secure and open telephone and fax traffic could be sent through these systems. It was possible to communicate with Dutchbat through the PTT and the satellite communication link. In addition, the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff had a radio connection (HF-EZB) with Dutchbat, which could send written messages, even those classified as 'secret'. Four international telecom land lines rented from the Bosnian PTT were also used for the Transport Battalion. In the meantime, Dutchbat was engaged in negotiations with the Bosnian PTT for the rental of international lines at Lukavac.¹⁴⁴⁹

The Dutch ambulances and command vehicles were fitted with satellite communication equipment for maintaining contact with the command post in the compound. This traffic was unencrypted. Under the terms of a contract signed with KPN (Dutch PTT) each message was relayed first by satellite to Burum and then sent on by satellite or fax. This procedure took approximately three minutes. Communication with the home front also went by satellite.¹⁴⁵⁰ The ABiH and the VRS monitored this open communication to determine the general atmosphere and actual military situation at Dutchbat. Karremans's predecessor had already discovered that this was going on.¹⁴⁵¹ This came to light, for example, in a memo at the end of 1994 on efficiency improvements at Dutchbat which stated: 'At the moment all connections are being intercepted by both the Muslims and the Bosnian Serbs'. The Dutchbat commander found it absolutely necessary that a secure connection be set up; apparently there was none at that moment.¹⁴⁵² These requests, which were submitted in December 1994, did not meet with an animated response. Indeed, it was not until 9 May 1995 that the Netherlands Army Crisis Staff started addressing the problem.

The compiler of a memo of May 1995 proposed that Dutchbat use the VSAT system of the UN to establish secure connections between the battalion and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command and Sector North East. The argument was that, as the system could also deal with crypto fax traffic, it could 'therefore not be intercepted'. This was wrong: the traffic could certainly be followed. Secure voice connections were not possible. As intense use was made of the telephone in a serious crisis, this traffic was indeed also 'open' to all the warring factions. For national use, the Army staff had placed the

¹⁴⁴⁶ NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms*. Zilich Mehmed to 28th Division, no. 06-401-103-2/95, 25/06/95.

¹⁴⁴⁷ MoD, *CRST*. Nr. 976, G-6 RNLA Crisis Staff to DOKL.HCIV, no. CRST\1004, 06/10/94 and 'VSAT-systeem voor teledata'. Compiler F. Polle, no. CRST/1132, 28/10/94.

¹⁴⁴⁸ MoD, *MIS*. File 1378, De gebeurtenissen in het voormalig Joegoslavië van juli 1994 tot januari 1995, (Events in former Yugoslavia from July 1994 to January 1995), 101 MIS/Cie, February 1995.

¹⁴⁴⁹ MoD, *CRST*. File 2504, Information on the communications structure from Major Luiting, 18/05/95.

¹⁴⁵⁰ NIOD, *Coll. Koreman*. Diary Koreman.

¹⁴⁵¹ MoD, *Sitreps*. Dutchbat Sitrep, 19/04/94.

¹⁴⁵² MoD, *BDL*. File 7914, Commander W.J.E. van Rijn to the Minister, no. S/94/061/4497, 23/12/94.

crypto telephone and fax with the Dutchbat commander, the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC), the Army Crisis staff, the Dutch Colonel Brantz in Sector North East in Tuzla and Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (General Nicolai).¹⁴⁵³

Bosnian military officials confirmed that the traffic of Dutchbat was a vital source of intelligence for the VRS. This was further borne out by intercepted communications traffic of the VRS. Sometimes, the ABiH could follow Dutchbat communications between patrols or vehicles, but they could not intercept the more important traffic. The messages sent from Dutchbat OPs to Potocari could not be received in Tuzla, but intercepts of the VRS communication led the 2nd Corps to realize that the VRS could listen in to UNPROFOR as well as Dutchbat lines. According to ABiH soldiers, the VRS could follow the communication of UNPROFOR perfectly, and the Bosnian Serbs were always well informed.¹⁴⁵⁴ This was illustrated by a message at the end of June 1995. Probably, the ABiH intercepted a message from the VRS which referred to a Dutchbat report. Dutchbat had just noticed newly arrived VRS formations and spotted new tanks. According to Dutchbat, a full mobilization had taken place in Bratunac. The Dutchbat report said that the Opstina had ordered that no new building was to be carried out in the enclave. Dutchbat subsequently concluded that a political deal had been struck and that an exchange of territory was in the pipeline. Moreover, people were being allowed to leave Srebrenica for a payment of DM6,000.¹⁴⁵⁵

Similarly, the NGO *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) in Srebrenica was an important source of information for the VRS. A study of the reports of this NGO revealed that it was passing on a lot of tactical information to MSF in Belgrade. This information stemmed from Dutchbat meetings with the UNMOs, local ABiH commanders and the Opstina of Srebrenica, where MSF was also represented. These messages often went by telex or satellite to Belgrade, but it would not have been too difficult to intercept them there. After all, the Serb national security service had its own listening station in Belgrade which used word databases. This service was allegedly capable of tapping 440,000 phone calls simultaneously.¹⁴⁵⁶ The main targets were the communications traffic of UNPROFOR and NATO via Inmarsat and/or Intelsat. The traffic of *Médecins Sans Frontières* fell under this.

The same applied to the UNHCR, the UN refugee organization, whose reports were even more meticulous than those of MSF, because its network in the enclave probably gave it access to better information, especially on the humanitarian situation. This connection also ran through the KPN communication node in Burum (*It grutte ear*). This likewise applied to the open connections of the International Red Cross and the communication sent from Srebrenica by the Swedish Shelter Project and Norwegian People's Aid. The traffic of these humanitarian organizations was an easy target for the intelligence and security services of the (Bosnian) Serbs. This was probably also true of the Muslims because they, like the VRS, usually saw the representatives of UNHCR and the International Red Cross as members of the intelligence services.¹⁴⁵⁷ The conclusion is that no-one trusted anyone in the enclave and that everyone was spying on everyone else.¹⁴⁵⁸ To complete the paranoia, President Izetbegovic even distrusted his personal staff. He had over 600 telephones in the presidential headquarters tapped by the Bosnian national security service.¹⁴⁵⁹

¹⁴⁵³ MoD, *CRST*. G-6 RNLA Crisis Staff to CS RNLA Crisis Staff, 09/05/95.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Interview with Harudin Kusic, 17 and 18/05/99.

¹⁴⁵⁵ NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms*. Section MV, 2nd Corps to 28th Division, no. 06-401-103-2/95, 25/06/95.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Interview with Bozidar Spasic, 16/09/01. See also: Udo Ulfkotte, 'Milosevic Geheimdienst' (Milosevic Secret Service), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17/04/99.

¹⁴⁵⁷ NIOD, *Coll. CD-Roms*. Section MV, 2nd Corps to 28th Division, no. 130-13-75/94, 09/09/94.

¹⁴⁵⁸ See also testimony to the Tribunal of the British General Francis Richard Dannatt: ICTY, (IC-98-33) Testimony Dannatt, 25/07/00.

¹⁴⁵⁹ 'sFOR discovers eavesdropping center in Sarajevo', *Belgrade Glas Javnosti*, 13/01/01.

6. Conclusions

It has to be said that the Comint activities of the VRS in Eastern Bosnia were excellent. Before, during and after the fall the VRS was able to read the open and encrypted communication of the ABiH. This traffic held no secrets for the VRS and enabled Mladic and his generals to pinpoint ABiH operations when Muslims referred to them via radio connections. An ABiH general claimed that the VRS never managed to break the crypto programmes of the ABiH. He was wrong. The VRS had certainly broken the crypto software of the ABiH and could read most of the communication of the 28th Division. It was not without good reason that the 28th Division was warned by Tuzla on 14 June that the VRS had penetrated the ABiH radio network. Orders were issued to especially improve the security of the communication, but to no avail.

During the attack on Srebrenica the VRS continued to read the communications of the 28th Division. Hence, on 10 July 1995, the headquarters of the 2nd Corps in Tuzla sent another message to the 28th Division in Srebrenica that the VRS had broken its crypto traffic. It could not, however, prevent the fall of Srebrenica. The ABiH plans for defending the enclave – if they were not sent by courier but rather through technological channels such as walkie-talkies and other radio connections – presumably held no secrets for the VRS. If the ABiH was convinced that agreements had been reached with Dutchbat and then radioed this to Tuzla and Sarajevo, then it must be assumed that the VRS knew what was afoot. The Comint units of the VRS constantly monitored the communication traffic of Dutchbat and of the ABiH – with considerable success judging by official documents.

The evidence clearly suggests that the ABiH column of predominantly men and boys heading for Tuzla was an easy prey for the VRS units. It must have been relatively easy to pinpoint the positions of the various segments, for example on the basis of cross bearings. At no point in the journey were the ABiH soldiers safe. Their Motorola connections afforded the VRS an excellent opportunity to follow the progress of the journey. Intercepts not only enabled the VRS to determine the location of the column but to also gather intelligence on the internal problems, the difficulties, and the internal agreements and planning. This gave them clear insight into the *modus operandi* of the ABiH and a permanent head start. The column never had a chance.

Some of the intercepted messages which Butler, the military analyst at the Yugoslavia Tribunal, had access to were already published in the summer of 1998 by the journalist Mehmed Pargan in *Sarajevo Slobodna Bosna*. He accused the 2nd Corps of flagrant neglect and passivity because it made no attempt to lure the VRS away from the column. In his estimation, the 2nd Corps merely waited until the fighting stopped and observed the murders.¹⁴⁶⁰ However, his accusations are ungrounded: there was simply not enough real-time intelligence available. The murders were not observed and the 2nd Corps was not passive. That said, the efforts to help the column were small.¹⁴⁶¹ The Civil Affairs Officer of Sector North East, Ken Biser, seemed to share Pargan's opinion on the inaction of the 2nd Corps. He reported, for example, from Tuzla on the eve of the fall that high-placed military personnel at the 2nd Corps thought that the VRS attack on Srebrenica was merely an attempt to divert attention from Sarajevo and they were not prepared 'to create any additional diversions to relieve pressure on the enclaves'.¹⁴⁶²

If the ABiH knew about the VRS attack on the enclave, the column of between 10,000 and 15,000 males (including around 5,000 soldiers) and the subsequent murders, why did it not pass this information on to UNPROFOR or friendly western intelligence services? High-ranking officials of the ABiH who were interviewed, insisted that this crucial intelligence was definitely passed on. But the members of UNPROFOR staff who should have received it were equally insistent that it never arrived. Notably, nothing was found relating to the matter in the UNPROFOR reports or archives. According

¹⁴⁶⁰ Mehmed Pargan, 'B-H Army Eavesdropped on VRS', *Sarajevo Slobodna Bosna*, (FBIS translation), 11/07/98.

¹⁴⁶¹ See Part IV, Chapter 1 of the main Srebrenica report.

¹⁴⁶² UNGE, UNPROFOR, *Box 67, Folder 25*. Report for week ending 7 July, 10/07/95.

to Baxter, the Military Assistant of General Smith, the ABiH in Sarajevo never delivered intelligence to General Smith, his staff or anyone else at UNPROFOR.¹⁴⁶³

Various members of foreign intelligence services also said during interviews that no intelligence had been received from the Bosnian Muslims. This also holds true for the MIS and the Netherlands National Security Services. Studies of UNPROFOR documents revealed that no 'hard' tactical intelligence based on Comint and Humint that were apparently collected was ever passed on. Nonetheless, Sigint was altogether a principal source of intelligence information for both the ABiH and VRS for Humint penetration was probably extremely difficult other than low-level Humint collection.

It has to be concluded that the Bosnian Muslims did not have enough personnel, interception equipment, crypto analysts, analysis capabilities or even an adequate internal communication network to get the collected Comint to the right destination quickly and efficiently. The monitoring methods were so labour-intensive that many recorded messages are 'missing'. Only snippets were intercepted. These snippets could still, on occasion, have provided important intelligence, but never the complete picture. It is clear that the ABiH did not have a centralized Sigint service, but rather depended on independent collection efforts by electronic warfare units assigned to corps and divisions. This is obviously important because it explains the disorganized nature of the ABiH intelligence effort in general. It also important to emphasize the fact that the Sigint effort by the ABiH was crude and created from nothing, which explains why they used a hodge-podge of commercially available and military radio equipment in their Sigint effort. There were no computers to assist in decryption work, which meant that they were dependent on plain-language voice intercepts for the bulk of their information.

In this regard, the ABiH was always a step behind the VRS in its intelligence operations. In addition, the Bosnian Muslims could not count on the support of the Americans or other intelligence agencies for the delivery of Comint. And, as was shown in the previous chapter, their Sigint coverage of Eastern Bosnia was poor. The question still remains as to why the Bosnian Government or the military leaders did not pass on to UNPROFOR even the small amount of intelligence which they claimed to have. One possible explanation is that, according to many documents and official agreements, UNPROFOR in Safe Areas was considered ineffective by the ABiH and partial by the VRS.¹⁴⁶⁴ In 1995 ABiH hostility towards UNPROFOR merely intensified.¹⁴⁶⁵ Sarajevo was even contemplating non-renewal of the UNPROFOR mandate because the UN troops had not clearly and openly taken the side of the Muslims or helped the ABiH in the fight against the VRS. Very little came of attempts to gain more active armed involvement from the international community, specifically NATO. This triggered calls in the spring of 1995 to face the future without the UN. Relations between the ABiH and UNPROFOR deteriorated while Muslim offensives continued to increase. More and more UNPROFOR soldiers were shot or attacked and the ABiH imposed more and more restraints on UNPROFOR freedom of movement.

It is often forgotten that the freedom of movement of the Canadian troops around Visoko was almost reduced to zero by the Bosnian Muslims and that Canadian soldiers were even held hostage by the ABiH in June 1995. Canadian units at observations posts were also cut off from convoys carrying food, medicine and fuel. So, it is not only the Bosnian Serbs who were guilty of such practices. Perhaps its low level of expectation and downright hostile attitude contributed to the fact that the ABiH passed no intelligence on to Sector North East in Tuzla, BHC in Sarajevo, or UNPF in Zagreb. The Bosnian Government may have accorded prime importance to exploiting the unconditional support of the international media in its campaign to blame UNPROFOR for the failure of the defence of Srebrenica and Zepa.¹⁴⁶⁶

¹⁴⁶³ Interview with James Baxter, 16/10/00.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Confidential information (178).

¹⁴⁶⁵ Confidential collection (7), Janvier to Annan, no. Z-1068, 28/06/95.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Confidential collection (4), G-2 UNPF HQ, '*ABiH Hostile Attitude towards UNPROFOR*', G-2 Rick Morgan (drafter Capt. Theunens) to COS, 12/07/95.

Secondly, the ABiH and the Sigint Unit of the Bosnian national security service may have been trying to protect their sources, capabilities, methods and techniques. This is conceivable but less plausible, given that the ABiH and the VRS knew that they were monitoring each other's communication. After all, most of the Sigint experts had worked for the VJ before the disintegration of Yugoslavia and each party knew that the other had the expertise.

But if the protection of sources was the real reason behind the decision not to pass on intelligence to UNPROFOR, then this would lead to the highly cynical conclusion that senior Bosnian military and political echelons did nothing to prevent the executions, simply in order to protect their sources. It is therefore more likely that the Bosnians knew nothing about what actually happened until days, weeks or months after the executions. By then, Comint efforts were too late to make any difference to the fate of those fleeing. Perhaps the contents of these intercepts were, however, considered useful at a later date to serve the wider political interests of Bosnia.

Chapter 7

Imagery Intelligence in Bosnia

‘Communications without intelligence is noise; intelligence without communications is irrelevant’,

General Alfred M. Gray.

1. Introduction

The capture and fall of Srebrenica were soon followed by allegations that the American intelligence services had aerial and overhead (satellite) images showing VRS preparations for the attack on the enclave. Photographs of the arrest and later executions of the Muslim males were also believed to exist. This can be illustrated by citing some examples. According to Westerman and Rijs, US spy planes and satellites had photographed the fleet of buses which were brought in to transport the Displaced Persons after the enclave fell: ‘It beggars belief that the American satellites did not also observe the build-up of tanks and artillery near Zeleni Jadar’.¹⁴⁶⁷ Magda van der Ende, a member of the Netherlands-Srebrenica association, also claimed that satellite photos which ‘must have shown troop concentrations’ were taken in the weeks leading up to the attack. Van der Ende said that she did not receive these photos from Minister De Grave because the CIA refused to release them.¹⁴⁶⁸ Some accusations went even further and, being of a somewhat cynical nature, were also less credible. The newspaper *La Croix* claimed that the CIA had followed the executions ‘live’ on large screens in their Observation Room. This allegedly took place in the presence of one of Clinton’s aides, who reportedly directly informed the White House and all the allies.¹⁴⁶⁹

Not only were accusations levelled, questions were asked as well. Why did satellites and spy planes such as the U-2 fail to spot the VRS troop movements and reinforcements around the eastern enclaves? Why did the US intelligence community with all its sophisticated technology fail to ‘see’ the deportation of the Muslims at an early stage, thus enabling timely intervention? And why was the imagery of the buses at Potocari, the rounded-up prisoners and the later executions discovered so late?¹⁴⁷⁰

As in the previous chapter, the question that needs to be answered is whether real-time intelligence was available and, if so, why Washington did not inform the other NATO partners in time. Some Dutch parliamentarians appeared confused and ignorant about this issue. For example, a written question was submitted in the Dutch House of Commons on why NATO satellites were not used. Apparently, the politician was evidently unaware that NATO does not have any such satellites at its disposal.¹⁴⁷¹ These and other questions were asked after Madeleine Albright, the US Permanent Representative at the United Nations had, on 10 August 1995, shown the Security Council photographs of Bosnian Muslim prisoners and churned-up earth where their bodies had been buried after execution.¹⁴⁷²

¹⁴⁶⁷ Westerman & Rijs, *Het Zwartste Scenario*, pp. 149 – 150; ‘VS wisten al weken tevoren van val Srebrenica’ (The US knew about the fall of Srebrenica weeks before), *De Gelderlander*, 13/10/95; Bert Steinmetz, ‘Voorhoeve door VS fout ingelicht’ (Voorhoeve wrongly briefed by US), *Het Parool*, 15/05/96.

¹⁴⁶⁸ *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 10/03/99.

¹⁴⁶⁹ ‘AICG call to indict General Janvier’, *Bosnia Report*, No. 1, November-December 1997, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷⁰ This question was also asked during a Netherlands Ministerial Council meeting. See: Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 25/08/95, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

¹⁴⁷¹ MoD, *DCBC*, box 59, No. 1307, HMID to DS/HOPN, Parliamentary Questions on Srebrenica, 16/11/95.

¹⁴⁷² ‘US Reveals Photographs Of Apparent Mass Grave’, *International Herald Tribune*, 10/08/95 and ‘Up to 2,700 Massacred By Serbs, UN is Told’, *International Herald Tribune*, 11/08/95. Doubts were also expressed as to the existence of mass graves

The principal aim of this chapter is to clarify the ‘story’ behind these satellite images. It will begin by studying the general substance of the various accusations. Section 2 will present an inventory of the ‘eyes’ which the international intelligence community (also in the Netherlands) had at its disposal in Bosnia in the summer of 1995 and answer the question whether these instruments were actually deployed above Eastern Bosnia at that time. The images in question taken from the air are referred to as ‘Imagery Intelligence’ (Imint). The section will conclude by discussing the limitations of imagery intelligence.

Section 3 will explore the question whether Imint was also shared with UNPROFOR and the NATO allies and whether the photos – if available – were passed on by US intelligence services. Section 4 will analyse the ‘discovery process’ of the photos. Various interpretations and versions of this process have been mooted over the years. Concrete evidence – the actual photos, in so far as these have been released – will be used to ascertain what kind of photos were taken and on which dates. The deployment and success of Imint have always been cloaked in obscurity. Some claim that more Imint existed than has been published to date. Photos taken by US satellites and spy planes purportedly show the location where the estimated 4,000 men were taken by the Serbs.¹⁴⁷³ However, the first reports that the Americans had photos indicating a planned VRS attack on Srebrenica did not surface until October 1995. A journalist said to have heard this from sources in the US intelligence community. US Intelligence also allegedly had photos of mass executions to the north of Srebrenica.¹⁴⁷⁴

The argument that was put forward for not passing on the intelligence on the planned attack was that nothing could be allowed to upset President Clinton’s efforts to broker a peace deal.¹⁴⁷⁵ The implicit suggestion here is that the Bosnian Serbs had a free hand to go ahead. Several weeks later, reports appeared in the press that US satellites and unmanned spy planes had taken photos of tank and artillery concentrations in the vicinity of the enclave. Allegedly, reinforcements of VRS infantry were also observed from the air and from space. This prior knowledge of VRS movements was not, however, communicated to UNPROFOR. Officers at UNPROFOR were said to be somewhat embittered by this ‘cynical behaviour’ on the part of the Americans.¹⁴⁷⁶

At the end of 1995, reports again emerged of the operations of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). *The Sunday Telegraph* and *The Herald International Tribune* both claimed that UAVs had been deployed above Bosnia and that the Americans had video footage from Predators (unmanned aircraft vehicles) of the murders in and around Srebrenica.¹⁴⁷⁷ The accuracy of these allegations will be addressed in this chapter. To begin with, a few things need to be placed in perspective: the principal question is whether photos existed of the military preparations of the Bosnian Serbs in addition to the photos of mass graves.

and the estimated number of executed Muslim males. The finger of blame was also pointed at the press who had not taken the trouble to sound out the situation locally. See the letter of George Jatras, ‘Vilifying the Serbian Scapegoat’, *The Washington Times*, 20/07/97. For a more or less identical story see: Stella L. Jatras, ‘srebrenica - Code Word to Silence Critics of US Policy in the Balkans’, 31/07/00. At: www.antiwar.com/orig/jatras.3.html

¹⁴⁷³ ‘Onduidelijkheid over nieuwe luchtfotos val Srebrenica’ (Obscurity on the new aerial photos of Srebrenica), *Drentsche Courant*, 23/09/98. This report appeared in most of the GPD newspapers.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Andreas Zumach, ‘US Intelligence knew Serbs were planning an assault on Srebrenica’, *Basic Reports*, No. 47, 16/10/95. See also: ‘VS wisten van komende val Srebrenica’ (US knew of impending fall of Srebrenica), *Nederlands Dagblad*, 13/10/95; ‘VS wisten al weken tevoren van val Srebrenica’ (UN knew weeks in advance of the fall of Srebrenica), *De Gelderlander*, 13/10/95.

¹⁴⁷⁵ See also: ‘Amerikanen verzwegen voorkennis Srebrenica’ (Americans withheld foreknowledge of Srebrenica), *De Stem*, 13/10/95.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Ian Bruce, ‘US let safe haven fall. US knew of Serb build-up’, *The Glasgow Herald*, 24/10/95. See also: Ian Bruce, ‘Cover-Up led NATO to betray Muslims’, *The Glasgow Herald*, 20/04/01.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Ambrose Evand-Pritchard, ‘Americans bow to forces of realpolitik in Bosnia: US steps in only when the minefield is clear’, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 26/11/95; Ian Bruce, ‘Allies hamper inquiry: Serb war crimes hidden’, *The Glasgow Herald*, 01/12/95.

2. What instruments were available for imagery intelligence?

Before examining the role of Imint in Bosnia it is necessary to determine what the term actually means. As explained in Chapter 1, the bulk of Imint consists of photos taken from a high altitude outside the atmosphere. This involves, for example, the use of photo satellites (Satellite Intelligence, Satint), some of which are fitted with infra-red sensors, which enable them to operate night and day, but only in the absence of cloud cover. Infra-red gives a night capability, but not all-weather because infra-red energy is blocked by moisture in the air. To get an all-weather capability, one has to use radar. Another form is photo intelligence (Photint) provided by photo satellites. This also includes Imint obtained from special planes or unmanned aircraft, which are designed to take photos of an area from a high altitude at a high speed or by high-speed planes at a low altitude. It should be remembered that most high-altitude aircraft taking pictures are not high speed at all. The U-2 is a good example of a low-speed, high altitude platform, which has survived so well in the satellite era. There are important reasons for that. Satellites were not designed to provide tactical intelligence. The U-2 can often overfly an area several times before a satellite can be reprogrammed. A U-2 can also provide Imint along any given path while a satellite may be over a portion of the path at one point because it is orbiting around the earth. Finally, U-2 Imint is less sensitive to dissemination compared to Satint.¹⁴⁷⁸

The American National Reconnaissance Office (NRO)

Most of the knowledge on the Imint capacity that was deployed above Bosnia relates to the Americans. In 1995, the NRO was primarily responsible for collecting Satint and for operating the various Imint tools.¹⁴⁷⁹ The existence of NRO was officially confirmed on 18 September 1992. In previous years it had been a standard joke that the abbreviation NRO stood for 'Not Referred to Openly'.¹⁴⁸⁰ The NRO, which is based in Chantilly, Virginia, designs, builds and manages the US reconnaissance satellites. It forms part of the US Defense Department, but it also has CIA members on its staff. It gets part of its budget from the National Foreign Intelligence Program.¹⁴⁸¹

The US intelligence services deployed a considerable number of Imint tools during the crisis in former Yugoslavia. These included satellites, U-2 planes and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), such as the Predator. The Imint satellite that was deployed above the Balkans was the Keyhole KH-11. The first KH-11 was launched on 19 December 1976. Unlike its predecessors, the KH-8 and KH-9, this satellite relayed Imint directly to Earth via a satellite data system. The first KH-11 had a life-span of 'only' 770 days, but it soon became possible to extend this to over three years.

On 28 November 1992, an 'advanced KH-11/Improved Crystal Metric System satellite' was launched, which operated in a higher orbit (around 1,000 kilometres) and had a life-span of approximately eight years. A second was launched in December 1995.¹⁴⁸² These satellites have infra-red capabilities, which enables them to operate in darkness. They also have a highly advanced crystal metric system so that they can meticulously register differences in height on the ground. Not much later, a third satellite of the same type was launched. Thanks to a much larger fuel reservoir, this KH-11 could be used more flexibly and positioned in new orbits around the earth.¹⁴⁸³ All Advanced KH-11 satellites circled regularly above Bosnia and sent back Imint.¹⁴⁸⁴ The same is true for the Lacrosse and other radar-imagery satellites, which are capable of penetrating clouds.¹⁴⁸⁵

¹⁴⁷⁸ Polmar, *Spyplane*, pp. 232 - 233.

¹⁴⁷⁹ For an overview of the development of the US satellite programme: Burrows, *Deep Black*, passim.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Laura Sullivan, 'A peek into secrets most jealously guarded', *The Baltimore Sun*, 08/09/01.

¹⁴⁸¹ See: www/nro.gov/background.html.

¹⁴⁸² For the orbits of these Keyhole satellites see: Allen Thomson, 'satellite Vulnerability: a post-Cold War issue?', *Space Policy*, Vol. 11 (1995) 1 pp. 19-30.

¹⁴⁸³ Richelson, *The U.S. Intelligence Community*, pp. 150-170.

¹⁴⁸⁴ E-mail from Jeffrey Richelson to Cees Wiebes, 29/11/99.

¹⁴⁸⁵ See: Jeffrey Richelson, 'U.S. Satellite Imagery, 1960-1999', 14/04/99, at: www.gwu.edu.

Very little is known of the technical operation and capabilities of Imint satellites, but some information can be gleaned from interviews with intelligence experts who had access to Imint. On average, the satellites fitted with pivotal cameras can cross a region once or twice a day. Making zigzag movements, they photograph swathes of territory, sometimes with a width of as much as 40 kilometres. The cameras take raster images (similar to those on a television or computer screen) made up of pixels (tiny points). Each pixel forms part of the overall image. If the satellite has a resolution of one metre, then each pixel represents a diameter of one metre. This means that objects of one metre or larger can be observed. The lower the resolution of the satellite photo, the easier it is for the Imint analyst to detect small objects. These pixels are relayed to Earth and, with the aid of the reflected radar beam, the analyst can precisely determine the height of buildings, installations and other objects.

He or she can also determine with a reasonable degree of accuracy whether a pit has been dug at a specific location for an execution and filled up again later as loose earth holds the radar beam slightly longer than compact earth. This brief absorption is enough to indicate whether the soil has been disturbed. Also, interred bodies cause a difference in ground temperature that can be picked up by infra-red sensors. This is how satellites discovered disturbed soil along a road near Srebrenica, which later turned out to contain a mass grave. Other locations identified in the same way, incidentally, later turned out (through air and ground inspections) to be loading sites for timber transport.¹⁴⁸⁶

For many years the resolution of the cameras was around one metre. Stories that circulated around 1995 about photographs of number plates or matchboxes were myths which were kept alive to mislead the enemy. This has all changed by 2002: even commercial satellites can now produce photos with a resolution of about 6 inches.¹⁴⁸⁷ People with daily access to US satellite images say that car number plates can now be distinguished without too much effort.¹⁴⁸⁸ The new generation of US satellites will be much smaller in size and will soon be able to produce photos with a resolution almost ten times better than the resolution of the photos taken by commercial satellites. These new satellites will be capable of delivering real-time images to US ground commanders anywhere in the world.¹⁴⁸⁹ The extensive and near-real-time capacity of US satellites can be inferred from the current generation of commercial satellites. These circle the earth at an altitude of around 700 kilometres, moving in a zigzag pattern that enables them to look 350 kilometres to the left and right. Images from these satellites are available within 18 minutes. It can safely be assumed that in 2003 the US satellites perform far better than in 1995.¹⁴⁹⁰

Could satellites 'see' the executions?

Imint experts have offered explanations for the failure of the satellites to photograph the summary executions of the Bosnian Muslims. Before a satellite could have recorded these images a lot needed to have happened under truly ideal circumstances. Normally, a satellite crosses an area (like Srebrenica) once or twice a day. As the demand for Imint is enormous, it is impossible to assign the satellites extra tasks above the region. There are geo-stationary satellites with a fixed position in relation to the earth but these are only used for Sigint, Elint and early warning systems for observing rocket launches.

Srebrenica was simply in too low a position on the list of priorities. But even if it had had higher priority and more Imint tools had been deployed, it would still be debatable whether the executions would have been discovered sooner. One Imint expert illustrated this point by offering the following calculation. If four satellites above the region were to circle the enclave four times a day, this would result in 16 sweeps for each video camera. If each sweep lasted 10 minutes, this would produce 160

¹⁴⁸⁶ Confidential interviews (13), (47), (54) and (62).

¹⁴⁸⁷ See for example: www.globexplorer.com/imgallery/image

¹⁴⁸⁸ Confidential interview (62).

¹⁴⁸⁹ Joseph Fitchett, 'spying From Space: U.S. to Sharpen the Focus', *International Herald Tribune*, 10/04/01.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Mark Stout and Thomas Quiggin, 'Exploiting the new high resolution satellite imagery: Darwinian imperatives?', *Commentary*, (1998) 75, pp. 3-4.

minutes of footage of Srebrenica. Only some of this would be taken in daylight: in the summer this would leave around 18 hours out of every 24. The satellite would then deliver two hours of footage, assuming that there were no low-hanging clouds, mist or heavy rain, as not all the satellites had infra-red equipment. The dense fog and cloud cover that often shrouded the mountains of Bosnia reduced the effectiveness of orbiting satellites. So, the executions would have had to have taken place at some point in these two hours, and in ideal circumstances, i.e. in broad daylight, with a full sun and no clouds, and precisely at the moment when the satellite was overhead.¹⁴⁹¹ The fact that executions usually took place at the edge of a wood, under trees or in a building is an additional factor which further reduces the chance of satellite detection. In short, a large percentage of these two hours must be subtracted in order to establish the period during which these executions could actually have been observed.

Even if more satellites had been targeting Eastern Bosnia it would still have been a 'lucky shot' – all things considered – if they had photographed the executions. Obviously, there were no 'lucky shots', but even if there had been, it is still possible that the Bosnian Serbs took account of the capacity of the US satellites. It is easy enough to find their orbit times on the Internet. Conversely, the possibilities of concealing objects or events from satellite reconnaissance should not be overestimated. For example, experts say that a spy satellite need not necessarily follow an exact path above a target to make good photos. As soon as it appears above the horizon there are already enough photo options, even if the target is hundreds of kilometres away.¹⁴⁹² That said, there will always be moments when a target is outside a satellite's range.

There are also other problems that need to be considered. For instance, where exactly should the analysts have looked? They did not know if executions had been carried out on a road to the north or the south of Srebrenica. They did not know which enlargements to make of which sectors in a sweep of 40 km x 10 km. It is, moreover, extremely difficult to identify a small group of people who are about to be executed. This takes a considerable amount of time, even for the most experienced analyst. All of this is typical of a classic intelligence problem, which also figures in other types of intelligence, namely, the intricate process of the intelligence cycle, whereby all data must first be converted into information. This information frequently leads to knowledge, but such knowledge is only useful if placed in the right context by thorough analysis. This can be a highly time-consuming procedure in both Satint and Sigint. Two US intelligence experts claimed that in 1995 the fastest Imint from satellites was ± 2 days old, provided that all the analysts worked on nothing else.

The intelligence gathered from the above-mentioned satellites revealed that though satellite photos of the whole of Bosnia and the eastern enclaves were constantly available, they definitely did not take priority in the analysis of all the incoming Imint. There was always a satellite with near-real-time intelligence in a good orbit above former Yugoslavia, but this had to cover the entire country. It then crossed Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Kurdistan in Northern Iraq, the rest of Iraq, Iran and the area to the south of Iran. In the words of an American intelligence expert: 'I'm sorry for Dutchbat, but if you take a good look at this list, you can understand that the enclaves had absolutely no priority'.¹⁴⁹³ When one looks at the broader picture, it is hardly surprising that the photos which Albright presented to the Security Council turned up so late in the day. The countless number of photos and the abundance of rumours prevented the Imint analysts from searching for evidence of the deportations and executions until the start of August 1995. This matter will be returned to in Section 4.

¹⁴⁹¹ Confidential interview (47) and James Risen, 'Experts Warn U.S. Intelligence Help Has Limits', *Los Angeles Times*, 07/06/95.

¹⁴⁹² Confidential interviews (13) and (62).

¹⁴⁹³ Confidential interview (75).

The Imagery Intelligence technology of other countries than the US

Where the importance attached by the UK, one of America's closest allies, to Imint is concerned, it can be said that this country was bound hand and foot to the Americans for Imint after the failure of its ZIRCON spy satellite. It was also dependent on them for Sigint and other sorts of intelligence. London paid £ 500 million to get access to the Imint of the second generation Magnum satellite, which was launched in 1995.¹⁴⁹⁴ The UK did not, therefore, have its own satellite for overhead photo's.

Another satellite intelligence player in Yugoslavia was the Soviet Union. In the 1970s and 1980s the Soviet Union launched over thirty spy satellites a year. After the USSR collapsed, this number declined sharply. In 1999 there was only one launch and in 2000 there were three. There were four types of Russian satellites. The first was the Yantar-1KFT (codenamed *Kometa*) which gathered topographical intelligence for the Ministry of Defence. The second series was the Yantar-4K2 satellite (codenamed *Kobalt*) with an endurance of between 60 and 120 days. The Cobalt satellites had three small re-entry vehicles on board: two to bring back films to Earth and one to bring back the camera and the last roll of film. The Yantar-4KS1 (codenamed *Neman*) satellites were capable of sending digital images to ground stations in Russia directly or via communications satellites. They operated for over a year. During the 1980s it looked as if Moscow would be keeping at least one Neman and one Cobalt satellite permanently in space, but this was no longer possible after the country disintegrated.¹⁴⁹⁵

Experts claim that Moscow may have provided the VJ or the VRS with photos, especially satellite photos of the military positions of the ABiH and the Croatian forces. This is doubtful, given the limited Imint capacity of the Russians and the mediocre resolution of their photos. It is also debatable whether such photos would have been of any real use to the VRS in the area of Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde. The information position of the Bosnian Serbs on top of the mountains and hills around the enclaves was so good that in reality they did not need satellite photos. In this respect Imint did not play a role in the VRS attack on Srebrenica.¹⁴⁹⁶ Apart from the USA and Russia, the only other country with a reasonably good satellite intelligence capacity is China. There are no indications that Beijing played a role in Bosnia. Despite the close ties between the Chinese and Serb intelligence services in Belgrade, no Imint appears to have been exchanged in 1995.¹⁴⁹⁷

Commercial satellites, such as Landsat, did not play an important role in the conflict either, because of their limited resolution. The French SPOT (*Système Pour l'Observation de la Terre*), though more suitable, also had a low resolution: it produced monochrome photos with a resolution of some ten metres.¹⁴⁹⁸ More could be expected of the Ikonos satellites, launched by Space Imaging Eosat (SIE) in Arlington, Virginia. SIE also manages the Landsat satellite.

Germany was not significantly involved in Satint, as the joint Franco-German Helios satellite was not launched until August 1995, i.e. after the fall of Srebrenica. It appears therefore that the only country, which was really active in gathering Imint was the US. They had sufficient capacity to take satellite photos of the ground situation, because a US spy satellite crossed Bosnia twice a day.¹⁴⁹⁹ Imint was shared with the BND but according to a senior German intelligence official, it often arrived after a specific German request after only 4 to 5 days. For example, Imint of the Muslim prisoners in the town of Bratunac arrived after the men already had been removed.¹⁵⁰⁰

¹⁴⁹⁴ Dorril, *MI-6*, p. 778.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Moscow did not even have a single spy satellite in space between 28 September 1996 and 15 May 1997. The most recent photo-reconnaissance satellite is the Orlets-2 (codenamed *Yenisey*) which can carry more than 20 capsules that can be sent back to Earth. See: Phillip S. Clark, 'Russia has no reconnaissance satellites in orbit', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 08/05/01.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Confidential interviews (6) and (91).

¹⁴⁹⁷ Jasper Becker, 'spy boss welcomed by Serbian counterpart', *South China Morning Post*, 23/06/95.

¹⁴⁹⁸ See: Jeffrey Richelson, 'U.S. Satellite Imagery, 1960 - 1999', 14/04/99, at: www.gwu.edu.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Confidential interview (13).

¹⁵⁰⁰ Confidential interview (98).

American Imint technology

The American U-2s were essential for reconnaissance above Bosnia. Building started on the U-2 in 1953 and the first flight over the USSR took place in July 1956. The U-2 programme was the direct responsibility of the CIA. Since then, the U-2 has proven indispensable in diverse international crises and has provided policy-makers with intelligence by photographing targets and objects. For example, the U-2 and the later version, the TR-1, flew over 800 missions during the crisis in the Persian Gulf in 1990 and 1991. It comes in various versions, not least the U-2R (Comint version), which collects information on enemy radar systems. Another model of the U-2R carries out Elint assignments as well as photographic reconnaissance. The production figures are a state secret, but it is likely that many versions were built of the U-2 and the TR-1.¹⁵⁰¹

According to various sources the U-2s which were active above Bosnia sent 'imaging radar data via satellite links' for processing and analysis to their home base, the 99th Reconnaissance Squadron at Beale Air Force Base, California. Beale then sent the processed intelligence back to the commanders in Bosnia.¹⁵⁰² The U-2s were fitted with special radar equipment for taking photos night and day at an altitude of around 30 kilometres, regardless of the weather. The resolution of the photos was around 2.87 metres.¹⁵⁰³ However, one can have some doubts about this. The radar-version of the U-2, which flew over Bosnia was probably pulled from duty in Korea only in October-November 1995. A problem was also on having the available satellite bandwidth for relay of the imagery. Downlinking to a ground station was the conventional approach, but nobody wanted to put such a ground station within the footprint in Bosnia. The satellite uplink was the only solution, and that wasn't available until the US troop deployments began in October-November 1995, which jacked up the priority as the Dayton Accords took shape. In addition, there was probably never adequate data storage on-board the aircraft to hold the radar imagery for later analysis.¹⁵⁰⁴

Some aircraft, including the U-2R, were equipped with sophisticated video systems and produced near-real-time Imint. The U-2s have a range of over 11,000 kilometres and a cruising speed of 700 kilometres per hour. Their cameras presently have a resolution of 35-45 centimetres. The U-2 missions over Bosnia were usually launched and recovered in 1995 from RAF Alconbury in England.¹⁵⁰⁵ No missions over Bosnia were flown from the RAF base at Akrotiri on Cyprus. U2 flights out of Akrotiri flew missions in support of the treaty commitments from the Camp David Accords in Golan Heights and elsewhere in the Israel-Arab theatre.¹⁵⁰⁶ One of the recipients of the U-2 product in 1995 was the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) at the air-force base in Vicenza (Italy). The U-2s were managed by the Defense Airborne Reconnaissance Office (DARO) in Washington.¹⁵⁰⁷

Although the U-2 activities were stepped up after the Dayton Accord, when US ground troops arrived in Bosnia, U-2 aircraft were already operational above the enclaves in the spring and summer of 1995 and delivered considerable amounts of Imint. Each U-2 flight was not meticulously charted beforehand on the basis of intelligence requirements and targets but they did fly a huge pattern over Bosnia each time, and took pictures of everything that wasn't cloud covered. If there was a requirement for an unusual, special target area, such as Srebrenica, then they would amend their flight path as

¹⁵⁰¹ Polmar and Allen, *Spybook*, pp. 561 - 563.

¹⁵⁰² Graig Covault, 'USAF U-2 Satcom Link Employed in Bosnia Operation', *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 26/02/96, p. 26.

¹⁵⁰³ Gert Kromhout, 'Op de grens van lucht en ruimte' (At the border between air and space), *De Vliegende Hollander*, (1997) 3, pp. 12 - 15 and Gert Kromhout, 'Overwerk voor de *Dragon Lady*' (Overtime for the Dragon Lady), *ARMEX*. 81 (March 1997), p. 25.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Confidential information (80).

¹⁵⁰⁵ Richelson, *U.S. Intelligence*, pp. 158 - 159.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Confidential information (80).

¹⁵⁰⁷ In 1996 the U-2s were stationed at the French air base of Istres, near Marseilles. They originally came from the RAF Fairford base in England. In August 1995 a U-2 crashed near Fairford. See: 'U.S. Spy Plane Crashes', *The New York Times*, 30/08/95.

needed. In general, they had only a few flight patterns, each of which was submitted and approved to a special reconnaissance command element in Washington. The flight pattern was divided into 'boxes'. After take-off (from the UK) the Polaroid camera was activated. A full mission delivered between 9 and 11 kilometres of film, which was analysed in small sections on a priority basis and priority basis here means less than one day. Sometimes, the U-2s flew over Bosnia twice a week. If the first flight was successful, the second was called off. After the U-2 film, all eleven kilometres of it, was developed, the U-2 photos were analysed and reported within 18 hours. Some target boxes were studied but most were not. It was totally impossible to analyse a whole U-2 film because there were not enough skilled analysts.¹⁵⁰⁸ However, according to an intelligence analyst all eleven kilometres of film was examined. He added that it perhaps was not reviewed with the scrutiny one might wish, if personnel, time and other demands were optimized. But a special team of photo-interpreters did their best to cover the film from one end to the other, and did a remarkable job to meet the requirements levied on them.¹⁵⁰⁹

The new requirements and targets were then defined and the second U-2 mission (if necessary) was planned and executed. The photos from U-2 planes arrived via the purely US Joint Analysis Center (JAC) at Molesworth. At that time, the intelligence team was well-coordinated and worked at wartime capacity. However, the pressure was so high that some people even committed suicide.¹⁵¹⁰ US intelligence officials responsible for Bosnia regularly issued additional assignments which required movements from target box to target box. The most suitable Imint tool for these target boxes was always determined beforehand: U-2, Predator, satellite or Tactical Air Reconnaissance (TACRECCE) like the F-16. Some tasks were not only performed by Molesworth but also by US European Command (EUCOM) in Stuttgart where Brigadier General Michael Hayden ruled the roost.¹⁵¹¹

The planned successor of the U-2 was the Lockheed A-12 (Oxcart), which made its first test flight at the end of 1964. Eighteen Oxcart are thought to have been built. The Oxcart was a success, but the last flight was carried out in 1968. The A12/Oxcart programme was terminated in 1968 because of a political decision to let the US Air Force assume responsibility for the missions. Its successor, the SR-71 Blackbird, became operational in 1968. The SR-71 was immune to fighter planes and air-to-air missiles, because it moved at such a high speed (Mach 3.3) and was undetectable on radar screens. The SR-71 was decommissioned in March 1990. Some went to museums and a few were stored in hangars. In 1994, Congress asked the US Air Force to keep some SR-71s ready for use or to make them operational again. The Air Force refused the request because of the high costs: \$39,000 per flight hour. In 1995, Congress decided to foot the bill itself and offered \$100 million. In return, the US Air Force had to keep three aircraft in working order. The resources were, however, never used and all requests by commanders to access the money were rejected by the Air Force Command.¹⁵¹²

Contrary to certain claims, these aircraft did not carry out photographic or Sigint missions above former Yugoslavia.¹⁵¹³ An official press statement announced that two SR-71s with crew would not be operationally deployable until 1 January 1997.¹⁵¹⁴ It is more plausible that, after 1997, they carried out missions and test flights in the USA for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). This was the main reason for the decision by Congress to recommission them in the first place. In any case, up till now no convincing evidence has been gleaned from documents or interviews that the Lockheed SR-71 operated above Bosnia.¹⁵¹⁵ In March 1998, the US Secretary of Defence, after

¹⁵⁰⁸ Confidential interviews (6), (13) and (91).

¹⁵⁰⁹ Confidential interview (80).

¹⁵¹⁰ Confidential interviews (8) and (54).

¹⁵¹¹ E-mail from Jeffrey Richelson to Cees Wiebes, 05/05/01.

¹⁵¹² E-mail from Jeffrey Richelson to Cees Wiebes, 01/08/99 and Gert Kromhout, 'Overwerk voor de Dragon Lady', *ARMEX*, 81(1997) (March), p. 25.

¹⁵¹³ Steve Macko, 'The SR-71 Blackbird Rises Like a Phoenix', *Emergency Net News Service*, Vol. 2 (1996) 45, 14/02/96.

¹⁵¹⁴ 'sR-71 Blackbird Back in Business', *Air Combat Command News*, 24/01/97.

¹⁵¹⁵ E-mail Jeffrey Richelson to Cees Wiebes, 29/07/99.

a review of options for the Blackbird program termination, approved permanent retirement of the SR-71.¹⁵¹⁶

Other aircraft with ‘eyes and ears’ that *were* active in the region were the RC-135 Rivet Joint, US NAVY F/A-18C fighters and the ERC-130 Airborne Command and Control Centers. These were fully operational in Bosnia, like the P-3C and EP-3 Orion planes (used by NATO). The P-3C Orion had ‘eyes’ and ‘ears’ and had been active since early 1994. After the arrival of US ground troops, it sent live images to ground stations in Mostar, Banja Luka and Tuzla. However, it is unlikely that these were deployed in operational Imint missions above the eastern enclaves in the summer of 1995.¹⁵¹⁷ However, from 1994 onwards there been problems because the overwhelming majority of targets were small or mobile rather than large, fixed sites. In the beginning US flyers even used 15 year-old hand-held 35 mm cameras, for they lacked timely imagery, according to a published account and Pentagon memos. In July 1994, a confidential NATO report claimed that of the 206 aircraft assigned to the operation Deny Flight only 14 were capable of air reconnaissance tasks. But some NATO members had their own national assets, which contributed to the overall intelligence picture.¹⁵¹⁸

Another excellent tool for observing troop movements and the repositioning of tanks and artillery was the Joint Stars aircraft, more commonly known as JSTARS, but these were not fully operational in the Balkans until 27 December 1995. The JSTARS were one of the great successes of the Desert Storm campaign. These E-8Cs (converted Boeing 707s) were able to register troop movements, tank formations and artillery positions at great distances with almost 100% accuracy. This is known as the detection of ‘Moving Target Indicators’ in military jargon. The JSTARS had direct contact with the ground commanders via near-real-time satellite connections.¹⁵¹⁹

But, as was pointed out by the former director of the French military intelligence services, General Jean Heinrich, Bosnia was not Iraq. The CIA knew what was happening on the ground in Iraq because it was desert terrain, something US intelligence services were comfortable with. The Americans were not used to flying over mountainous, densely-forested areas where small groups moved around in misleading ways, Heinrich said.¹⁵²⁰ The JSTARS also owed its success in the Kuwaiti desert to a string of other factors: large numbers of tanks, armoured vehicles and trucks that operated in large formations; low levels of civilian motorized traffic; a clear and broad dividing line between the two sides; no place to hide military materiel from radar missions; minimum vegetation and inhabited areas; flat terrain; air supremacy; and clear targets. Apart from air supremacy, none of these ideal operational conditions existed in Bosnia. On the contrary, in Bosnia the JSTARS were later confronted with mountains and hills and with ‘false radar returns’ from bare mountain expanses in what was later the French sector (in Republika Srpska). These signals were interpreted as moving targets and formations.¹⁵²¹

The JSTARS did not operate well in Bosnia. They could not distinguish between civilian and military traffic along the narrow roads. Sometimes a signal denoting a convoy was received, but this usually turned out to be vehicles passing each other. In any case, the ABiH and VRS generally travelled by bus to the theatre of war and not in long military convoys. Aside from the fact that the enclaves had

¹⁵¹⁶ FOIA National Security Archive, Letter William J. Lynn to Members of Congress, 21/0898. See also: Jeffrey T. Richelson (editor), *The U-2, OXCART, and the Srebrenica-71. U.S. Aerial Espionage in the Cold War and Beyond*, NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 74, 16/10/02.

¹⁵¹⁷ Daniel Wakin, ‘Camera in Sky Keeps Eye on Bosnia’, *The Washington Post*, 19/12/97.

¹⁵¹⁸ Tony Capaccio, ‘Intelligence, Imagery Shortfalls Mar NATO Air Campaign’, *Defense Week*, 05/12/94 and confidential information (81).

¹⁵¹⁹ *Annual Command History, U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command, Fiscal Year 1995, Top Secret*, 30/09/96.

¹⁵²⁰ Assemblée Nationale, *Srebrenica: rapport sur un massacre*, Assemblée Nationale, No 3412, 2 part, Paris 2001, Deel 2, Audition de Jean Heinrich, 08/02/01, pp. 179 - 186.

¹⁵²¹ Colonel Collin A. Agee, ‘Joint Stars in Bosnia. Too Much Data - Too Little Intel?’, *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, (October-December 1996), pp. 6-10. See also in the same issue: Captain Bruce A. Niedrauer, ‘Joint Stars Support to Special Operations Command’, pp. 15 - 17.

no priority in the US intelligence community, the JSTARS had the greatest difficulty observing movements of troops, tanks and artillery in Bosnia.¹⁵²²

As the JSTARS were not fully operational in the Balkans until December 1995, the American and the international intelligence community (especially within NATO) did not have access to this intelligence platform in the summer of 1995. But even if they had, it is unlikely, given the local conditions, that the operational performance of the JSTARS would have contributed much – if anything at all – to the general intelligence on the situation in the enclaves. Finally, another air intelligence platform that could have been important was the ‘Guardrail’ mission, which had long been flown to all sorts of hotspots. The US Air Force had a fleet of 12 Guardrails (mainly for Comint and Elint), but they were not deployed in Bosnia before 1995.¹⁵²³

The European NATO allies did not have much to offer in this field. As far as the UK Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) concerned, Imint took third place as a source of intelligence. Photos were delivered by the RAF Nimrods which carried out photo reconnaissance flights in the region. The U-2 flights also frequently produced good results. The British had borrowed U-2s in the past for various missions over the Soviet Union, but it is not known whether British pilots still fly U-2s. As a rule, the British used RAF Nimrods, Jaguars and Sentry AWACS for air reconnaissance and photography.¹⁵²⁴ None of these aircraft was active above the eastern enclaves. The DIS also had access to photos from UAVs, but most of the intelligence they provided pertained to Gorazde. These photos came from US UAVs, as the British UAV (Raven) was not flying over Bosnia at that time. According to a DIS official, Satint were delivered directly to the purely US Joint Analysis Center (JAC) in Molesworth.

The Nimrods performed Sigint as well as Imint tasks and were used chiefly for intercepting communications and electronic traffic.¹⁵²⁵ France deployed its own Mirage photo-reconnaissance planes above Bosnia but mainly for national assignments. In short, most of the western nations were capable of collecting their own Imint above Bosnia with special (spy) planes. However, as in the case of the spy satellites, American technology predominated.

The question that now needs to be answered is whether unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) such as the GNAT 750 (1987-1996) and the Predator (1994-1997) delivered intelligence. The only UAVs which were operational in the region in the summer of 1995 were those of the CIA.¹⁵²⁶ At the start of 1994, the first report appeared that the CIA had placed two long-range UAVs in Albania plus a ground station for satellite links. These were GNAT-750s, which had been flying since 1989. The GNAT fell under a CIA project known as ‘Tier 1’.

Depending on the terrain, the GNAT could make normal take-offs and landings, thanks to its retractable undercarriage. It could also be launched from a container and recovered with a parachute. The GNAT 750 is fitted with a data-link which needs a continuous line-of-sight connection. The CIA used to work with SGM-2-37A *Schweitzer* gliders which were flown by a two-man crew. It used these for photo reconnaissance missions. To secure the line-of-sight connection with the GNAT 750 a military version of the *Schweitzer*, the RG 8A, was later deployed as a relay station for the GNATs. The RG-8A is specially designed for silent flight operations; its acoustic signature is so low that it can operate above enemy territory without being heard. Two or three RG-8As are used by the CIA for special missions.

This manned aircraft had an endurance of only eight hours; as it operated from Albania, it meant that the GNAT 750 had an on-station time of only two hours. The aircraft had to operate from Albania because the Italian government had refused a CIA request to operate from Italy. The Albanian government was apparently less reluctant. The GNAT 750s were brought to Europe in January 1994

¹⁵²² Captain Kristin M. Baker, ‘Operation Joint Endeavor. Joint Stars in the Balkans’, *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, (October-December 1996), pp. 27 - 29 and Graig Covault, ‘Joint Stars Patrols Bosnia’, *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 19/02/96, p. 45.

¹⁵²³ Ronald W. Wilson, ‘Eyes in the Sky: Arial Systems’, *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, Vol. 22 (1996) 3, p. 23.

¹⁵²⁴ Smith, *New Cloak*, p. 210.

¹⁵²⁵ Confidential interview (8).

¹⁵²⁶ For the history of the UAV see: Richelson, *Wizards*, pp. 224 - 226.

and stationed in Gjader, 30 miles north of Tirana. They became operational on 4 February 1994. They were fitted with several cameras (one with a 900 mm lens) and infra-red sensors.¹⁵²⁷ The GNAT had a range that covered the whole of Bosnia and Belgrade as well. It had an endurance of 24 hours and a maximum altitude of over five kilometres. Presumably these GNATs were used mainly for collecting near-real-time military information.¹⁵²⁸ The targets were air bases, entrenchments, fortifications, supply lines and troop movements. After approximately twelve flights, however, the CIA discontinued operations with the GNAT-750. The intended 30 missions did not go ahead due to bad weather, technical difficulties and problems with the relay of video images.¹⁵²⁹ They were later used to protect US troops in Macedonia against possible attacks.

In June 1994, the CIA renewed their efforts. It again wanted to fly three GNATs, preferably from Italy and otherwise from Albania. The home base was eventually Albania once again, but a new launch-site was set up in Croatia in November 1994. Now the GNATs were also fitted with Sigint capabilities to intercept communications and electronic traffic and radar emissions. As the GNAT was suitable for Comint, the CIA could now easily intercept ground communication passing through GSM phones or Motorolas and other walkie-talkies. The new GNATs could follow convoys and could even distinguish between fake and authentic artillery fire.¹⁵³⁰

The GNATs appear to have played a key role in November 1994. The stationing of the twenty members of the GNAT team on the island of Brac off the coast of Dalmatia (*Operation Lofty View*) coincided with the signing of the American-Croat military agreement on 29 November 1994. According to the journalist David Binder, the placement of the GNATs in Croatia also had a lot to do with the Bosnian-Serb counter-attacks against ABiH offensives. In return for their cooperation, the Croatian military commanders received intelligence about the positions, troop movements and communication links of the Bosnian Serbs. This information was allegedly also shared with the ABiH.¹⁵³¹ At any rate, UAV flights by the CIA and the Pentagon were carried out in January 1995 in the air space of the warring factions.¹⁵³² As will be shown later, the eastern enclaves were also on the target list and photos were taken by Predators. The GNATs definitely flew until 1996.¹⁵³³ At least, at the end of June 1995, GNAT UAVs with RG-8As were still flying for the Pentagon.¹⁵³⁴

Apparently, the results delivered by the GNATs were disappointing, though, because reports appeared before long that serious work was in progress to produce a successor. This would eventually be the Predator.¹⁵³⁵ The Predator, a more sophisticated version of the GNAT 750, falls under the 'Tier 2' programme of the CIA. It is much larger than its predecessor, but the greatest difference is the addition of a satellite data-link, which dispenses with the constant line-of-sight connection through the interim station of the RG-8A. The Predators were allegedly deployed in July 1995. The Americans are alleged to have had Predator video footage of the murders in and around Srebrenica.¹⁵³⁶

Images were indeed relayed by UAVs. Though the Predators were still in the test-flight phase, they were operational above Bosnia. These ground-controlled UAVs were deployed by the US Defense

¹⁵²⁷ Frederic Lert, *Wings of the CIA*, Paris, 1998, pp. 395 - 399 and MoD, *MID/TCBU, Folder 443-0350*, MID/KM Report, UAV's boven Bosnië (UVAs above Bosnia), PIR 95/1, 02/02/95.

¹⁵²⁸ David A. Fulgham, 'CIA to deploy UVAs in Albania', *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 31/01/95, pp. 20 - 22.

¹⁵²⁹ 'GNATs Weathered Out', *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 14/02/95, p. 19.

¹⁵³⁰ 'spying on Bosnia', *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 06/06/95, p. 23 and David A. Fulgham, 'CIA to fly missions from inside Croatia', *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 11/07/95, pp. 20 - 21.

¹⁵³¹ David Binder, 'GNATs for Bosnia', *The Nation*, 08/05/95, pp. 620 - 621.

¹⁵³² MoD, *DCBC, File 792*, DocId, 9221, AFSOUTH to ASCAL, 27/01/95.

¹⁵³³ David A. Fulgham, 'Predator survives lost satellite link', *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 25/03/96, p. 24.

¹⁵³⁴ MoD, *DOKP.u. STAOOPER*. Telegram from Commander 5ATAF to AIG 5781, 27/06/95.

¹⁵³⁵ David A. Fulgham, 'Tier 2 UAV aborts first test flight', in *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 11/07/95, p. 22 and David A. Fulgham, 'Predator UAV produces high-quality images', *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 28/11/95, p. 62.

¹⁵³⁶ Ambrose Evand-Pritchard, 'Americans bow to forces of realpolitik in Bosnia: US steps in only when the minefield is clear', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 26/11/95 and Ian Bruce, 'Allies hamper inquiry: Serb war crimes hidden', *The Glasgow Herald*, 01/12/95.

Department and the CIA. The Predator therefore carried out various missions depending on the actual 'owner', ranging from intelligence gathering on potential threats against US ground troops and planes (Defense Department) after the Dayton Accord to the collection of general intelligence on the warring parties (CIA). Hence, different types of UAVs were operational in the Balkans with Elint and Imint tasks.¹⁵³⁷

John. M. Deutch, the later Director of the CIA, was a particularly staunch advocate of UAVs. As Defense Secretary, he had already argued for a broader deployment in July 1993.¹⁵³⁸ It was also known at the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) of the Royal Netherlands Navy that the CIA was using seven Predators. The 'Periodic Intelligence Report' of February 1995 stated that for some time the CIA had been operating with this type of UAV above Bosnia. At the end of June 1995, the MIS/Air Force informed the MIS/Navy that the US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) wanted to station the Predator in Albania for 60 days.¹⁵³⁹

Qualitatively, the Predator was definitely the best UAV.¹⁵⁴⁰ This Medium-Altitude Endurance UAV (MAE UAV) can operate day and night and has huge merits compared with most spy satellites. It has an infra-red sensor for reconnaissance and target recognition. An important mission of the MAE UAV is to gather Sigint.¹⁵⁴¹ The Predator also delivers Imint in the form of photos, but it can produce live video footage as well. These UAVs constantly relayed Imint with a resolution of 30 centimetres to ground stations. Thanks to zoom lenses this can provide sharp images. The UAV controllers on the ground could therefore observe targets such as tanks, APCs and other military vehicles on the ground from an altitude of ten kilometres. From an altitude of five kilometres they could distinguish a tank from an APC and from 1,800 metres they could identify the type of tank. The UAV has a range of over 800 kilometres and an endurance of 40 hours. It flies virtually silently at an altitude of 10,000 feet and it is more or less undetectable by radar systems, partly because it flies very slowly.¹⁵⁴² The UAVs were later guided to their targets by JSTARS. For instance, in 1996 the Predators were apparently capable of sending live images of VRS activities in Northern and Central Bosnia to the USA with a delay of one second.¹⁵⁴³

The deployment of UAVs in *Operation Nomad Vigil* became particularly relevant after the hostage-taking of UNPROFOR personnel in the spring of 1995. The shooting down of an American F-16 on 2 June 1995 was the main reason for bringing additional Predators to the region. Only then were the operational activities of the UAVs stepped up from Gjader (Albania) in order to support UNPROFOR and to prevent Serb air attacks in Bosnia.¹⁵⁴⁴ For example, on 5 June 1995, a UAV heading towards Kososka mountain was spotted close to the confrontation line at Drazevici in Sector South West. According to UNMO observers, this Drone was shot down by the VRS.¹⁵⁴⁵ It was not until after the summer that larger numbers of UAVs were deployed by the US Army and Air force. But, from the very start, the deployment of UAVs in Bosnia was not exactly successful. The Predators turned out to have serious flaws. In August 1995, two Predators were destroyed in four days. This led to an internal joke that 'they managed to add "soil-sampling" to their collection techniques'. One

¹⁵³⁷ A tactical UAV, the *Hunter*, was deployed by the Pentagon in 1999 in Kosovo but probably never flew above Bosnia. See: Lt. Commander J.D.R. Dixon, *UAV Employment in Kosovo: Lessons for the Operational Commander*, Naval War College paper, 08/02/00, p. 4.

¹⁵³⁸ See for example: www.fas.org/irp/aganecy/daro/uav95/endurance.html

¹⁵³⁹ MoD, *MID/TCBU*. AR Briefing MID/KM, State Secret, AR No. 26/1995, 03/07/95.

¹⁵⁴⁰ In 1998 followed by the *Outrider*.

¹⁵⁴¹ The planes will also be fitted with options for detecting minefields. See: Ronald W. Wilson, 'Eyes in the Sky: Arial Systems', *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, Vol. 22 (1996) 3, p. 23.

¹⁵⁴² Raymond D. Pickering, 'Tactical UAVs: A Supported Unit's Primer', *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, Vol. 23 (1997) 2, pp. 45 - 48 and Donald Harvey, 'Intelligence Notes', *American Intelligence Journal*, Vol. 16 (1995) 1, p. 94.

¹⁵⁴³ David A. Fulgham, 'Bosnian sky spy snoops for crime', *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 06/05/96, p.25.

¹⁵⁴⁴ *Annual Command History, U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command, Fiscal Year 1995, Top Secret*, 30/09/96, pp. 31 - 32.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Confidential information (50).

Predator was hit by anti-aircraft fire when it descended to fly under the clouds. The other had engine problems.

Later versions of the Predator were fitted with Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), which meant that they would not have to fly below the clouds and hence could undertake reconnaissance missions in bad weather.¹⁵⁴⁶ SAR enables the Predator to look through clouds and even to detect planes through the roofs of metal hangars. Its range was extended to 925 kilometres and it could fly at a maximum altitude of 7.5 kilometres. It was only after September 1995 that the Predators started sending important intelligence about VRS tanks, heavy weapons, ammunition depots and artillery positions around Sarajevo and Gorazde. This information was passed on to UNPROFOR for the eventuality of air attacks on the VRS positions. Croatian Army officers admitted that the success of their offensive in the Krajina was partly attributable to the information from the Predators.¹⁵⁴⁷ They appear to have received this intelligence from the Americans. Late 1995 the Pentagon pulled its advanced Predator drones out of Bosnia because they were not equipped with the radar to see through dense Bosnian cloud cover. The drones were being flown so low beneath the clouds that they became easy targets for VRS ground fire. It did not take the Bosnian Serbs long to find a fast and effective weapon against low-flying UAVs. One tactic was to fly an Mi-8 HIP helicopter alongside the UAV. The gunner then shot the UAV to pieces with a 7.62 mm machine gun through the open side-door. This was a popular tactic during the war in Kosovo until NAVO fighter planes brought it to an end by firing at the helicopters.¹⁵⁴⁸ The CIA declined to discuss whether it also had withdrawn its drones from the Balkans.¹⁵⁴⁹

Besides the UAVs of the CIA, the US marines had their own UAVs, the Navy VC-6 Pioneers, which had been operating from sea and land since 1994, supporting the Sixth Fleet in the Adriatic. This was a short-range and older US Navy aircraft.¹⁵⁵⁰ Missions were flown over Bosnia from September 1994.¹⁵⁵¹

The deployment of other unmanned aerial vehicles

Did UNPROFOR itself have UAVs at its disposal? The Swedish Force Commander Wahlgren had already commented early on that his experience of getting correct and accurate information about Srebrenica and Zepa was not always positive. Getting intelligence from NATO was not much of a success. He suggested approaching Israel, which had used unmanned Drones for air reconnaissance missions in the past. UNPROFOR could perhaps buy or borrow some Drones for deployment in Bosnia. They were to be allocated to temporary ultra-mobile Drone teams which could be used quickly in problem areas.¹⁵⁵² In the summer of 1993, France also had deployable UAVs at its disposal. Brigadier General C. Ritchie, who was working for UNPROFOR in Zagreb, told DPKO in New York as early as at the end of 1993 that intelligence-gathering tests had been conducted with French UAVs. These five UAVs were rented from Paris but were only used above Bihac for the benefit of the French troops stationed there. They flew from Pleso airfield with the consent of Generals Briquemont and Cot. Their main task was to monitor troop and artillery movements.¹⁵⁵³

¹⁵⁴⁶ David A. Fulgham, 'Two Predators Destroyed in Bosnia', *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 21/08/95, pp. 24-25.

¹⁵⁴⁷ David A. Fulgham, 'Predators bound for Bosnia soon', *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 13/11/95, p. 73 and MoD, *MIS/TCBU*. MID/KM Report, UAVs above Bosnia, PIR 95/1, 02/02/95.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Lt. Commander J.D.R. Dixon, *UAV Employment in Kosovo: Lessons for the Operational Commander*, Naval War College paper, 08/02/00, p. 10.

¹⁵⁴⁹ James Risen and Ralph Vartabedian, 'spy Plane Woes Create Bosnia Intelligence Gap', *Los Angeles Times*, 02/12/95.

¹⁵⁵⁰ 'UAVs in Bosnia', at: <http://www.edwards.af.mil.pmay98/cover/bosnia.htm>.

¹⁵⁵¹ See for example: www.fas.org/irp/aganecy/daro/uav95/pioneer.html

¹⁵⁵² UNGE, UNPROFOR. Wahlgren to Annan, Unprofor Z-596, 067/05/93.

¹⁵⁵³ Confidential Collection (4), CoS Unprofor, Zagreb to BHC, Kiseljak, No. C811, 18/11/93.

As it happened, these UAVs did not perform up to scratch, but despite negative recommendations, UNPROFOR still rented them for \$ 1,000,000 for a period of three months.¹⁵⁵⁴ A second bill arrived at the end of 1993 in which the French company *CAC Systèmes* charged UNPROFOR almost \$ 253,000 for two UAVs which had crashed. UNPROFOR had doubts as to who was to blame for the accidents. A problem was, however, pinpointed: UNPROFOR had agreed not to fit UAVs with parachutes. This inevitably meant that the UAVs would crash in the event of problems. So the advice in August 1994 was to pay the bill.¹⁵⁵⁵ The intelligence product that was eventually delivered by the French UAVs could not be found in the archives of UNPROFOR or DPKO. Be that as it may, the problems with these UAVs prompted Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (BHC) to ask the headquarters in Zagreb to have other aircraft carry out photo reconnaissance missions at low altitudes.¹⁵⁵⁶

Though previous experience had proven negative, these were again French UAVs, namely, the FOX, which came in three versions: AT1, AT2 and TX. The French started developing these UAVs in 1986. The AT1 and AT2 were used for short-range battlefield reconnaissance and the TX was used for electronic warfare. The FOX was launched with a catapult and could be programmed or controlled from the ground. It landed by means of a parachute. The FOX had a real-time data-link and could be fitted with TV cameras, infra-red sensors, VHF or radar jammers (TX version). The UN is said to have had ten FOX AT1s at its disposal for reconnaissance flights above Bosnia. The FOX had a limited action radius of 55 km and a maximum endurance of 1.5 hours. The Netherlands Military Intelligence Service (MIS) had no knowledge of the operational base of these UAVs or who was responsible for their deployment. Nor did it know where the intelligence arrived, how it was processed and who was responsible for the processing.¹⁵⁵⁷ Again, the Imint which the French UAVs eventually delivered could not be traced in the archives of UNPROFOR or the DPKO. It did, however, clearly emerge that UNPROFOR footed the bill for the force protection activities of the French Army. The French also neglected to inform UNPROFOR that their military intelligence services were also working with their own UAVs. These were only operational in Sarajevo in the form of small, unmanned helicopters with a limited flying time. The results were not shared with UNPROFOR; the French were playing things close to their chest.¹⁵⁵⁸ It is therefore also unknown what Imint was collected by these UAVs in 1995.

The 'Raven', the UAV tested by the British in the 1990s, was not operational above Bosnia, but the German UAV, the Dornier CL-289 UAV, is thought to have been active in the region in 1995. These UAVs, which had a Zeiss camera and infra-red capacity, were especially involved in military tactical reconnaissance. An official of the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* claimed that this Imint was passed on to NATO.¹⁵⁵⁹ Most likely, these German UAVs were mainly active above Croatia. Their limited flying distance (less than 200 kilometres) continued to constitute a major problem. During the war in Kosovo, the German photos were rated as the sharpest, and the colour video of the Predator was deemed the best Imint.¹⁵⁶⁰

Among the warring factions, only the Croatians made regular use of UAVs – the MAH-1 and the MAH-2 – for gathering Imint. These machines were built in Croatia. In February 1995, UNMOs observed a launch near Karlovac. The Croatian UAVs were frequently deployed above Bihac. A

¹⁵⁵⁴ UNGE, *DPKO, No. 81307, File DFC Office*, Brig. Gen Ritchie, UNPROFOR, Zagreb to Annan, UNPROFOR-Z-1628, Drone Deployment, 23/12/93, 6p.

¹⁵⁵⁵ UNNY, *DPKO, No. 81307, File DFC Office*, 02/08-04/08/95, DFC Crabbe to COS, BHC, DFC 233, 24/08/94 and DFC, Crabbe to COS, BHC, DFC 266, 31/10/94.

¹⁵⁵⁶ UNGE, *UNPROFOR*. BHC to Unprofor, Zagreb, No. AOCC/OPS/30, 07/12/93.

¹⁵⁵⁷ MoD, *MID/TCBU*. MID/KM Report, UAVs above Bosnia, PIR 95/1, 02/02/95.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Confidential interview (54). See also: Eriksson, 'Intelligence and Peacekeeping Operations', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter-intelligence*, Vol. 10 (1997) 1, p. 11.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Confidential interview (58).

¹⁵⁶⁰ Tim Ripley, 'UAVs above Kosovo - did the Earth move?', *Defence Systems Daily*, 01/12/99. Later during the Kosovo crisis in 1999, besides the Americans, various European countries reportedly deployed UAVs including the French with their *Segem* and the Germans with their *Dornier CL-289*. Even the Italians operated UAVs from Albania.

Croatian officer who participated in this programme said that the Croatian UAVs even flew above Belgrade. Croatian electronic warfare experts were also reportedly able to get access to the American VSAT downlinks which relayed images from the Predators to the ground.¹⁵⁶¹

During the conflict in Bosnia the Serbian air force also had access to special Imint aircraft. For example, the VJ had a squadron of twelve special MIG-21 planes. This squadron, which was fitted with 'pods' on the underside of the aircraft, carried out Imint and Sigint tasks from the air base in Ponikve and Belgrade. These aircraft carried out a maximum of five reconnaissance missions a day. They were often moved to keep them out of sight of US spy satellites and U-2 missions. Sometimes, they flew over the Drina for operations above Bosnia.¹⁵⁶² It may be construed on the basis of this information that especially American, French and presumably also Croatian UAVs were active above Bosnia, Srpska and Serbia. Quite a lot is known about the performance and results of the American UAVs, but nothing is known as yet about the performance and results of the French and Croatian UAVs.

Dutch reconnaissance flights

The Dutch Ministry of Defence also had access to Imint. Reconnaissance flights were carried out above Bosnia by four Dutch RF-16s.¹⁵⁶³ On 7 and 8 April 1993, four RF-16 photo reconnaissance aircraft of the 306th Squadron were dispatched to Bosnia. These RF-16s could take photos from a special pod attached to the fuselage. The pod contained five daylight cameras and one infra-red camera, which could operate in the dark.¹⁵⁶⁴ These four RF-16s were later withdrawn but four RF-16s were sent to Villafranca in February 1994.¹⁵⁶⁵ Before long it emerged that the intelligence flow to this unit was below par. This was partly due to the fact that updated intelligence was not available on time.¹⁵⁶⁶ While the four RF-16s photo reconnaissance aircraft of the 306th Squadron were stationed in Villafranca, there were squabbles among the personnel and a lack of cooperation between the Dutch detachment commander and the head of the Intelligence & Security Office at Villafranca. This came to light during a visit to Villafranca by two members of the Intelligence & Security Department of the Operational Command of the Netherlands Air Force. The commander and the head of Intelligence & Security were no longer on speaking terms, and the commander had a low opinion of the daily Deny Flight Intsums. Relations on the workfloor between the flyers and Intelligence & Security personnel were, however, good.

It also emerged that the Combined Air Coordination Center (CAOC) in Vicenza was being run by Americans and that US politics was determining the deployment of the resources. In addition, the possibility of national tasking for photo reconnaissance was being explored. The Dutch Senior National Representative was not averse to this but he pointed out that operations above Bosnia were subject to stringent constraints. It was even impossible to take photos above Croatia. In a later discussion with the Dutch tasker for reconnaissance flights it turned out, however, that such possibilities did exist after all. Implementation might then have to be undertaken by other NATO member states. Finally, the deployment of the UAVs was discussed and efforts would be made to find out what had become of this intelligence. It was, in any case, clear that The Hague did not receive any UAV Imint.¹⁵⁶⁷

¹⁵⁶¹ Ripley, *Operation*, p. 83.

¹⁵⁶² Confidential interview (73).

¹⁵⁶³ MoD, *MID/TCBU. MID/KL*, AI, Report on the enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa, undated.

¹⁵⁶⁴ 'Eerste fotoverkenningsvliegtuigen naar Villafranca vertrokken' (First photo-reconnaissance planes leave for Villafranca), ANP press release, 08/04/93. For the role of the Royal Netherlands Air Force in Bosnia see: Lutgert & De Winter, *Check the Horizon*, passim.

¹⁵⁶⁵ 'Vier photoverkenners naar Villafranca' (Four photo reconnaissance vehicles to Villafranca) *Defensiekrant*, 17/02/94 and P.E. van Loo, 'Een open oog voor de Balkan' (An open eye for the Balkans), *Militaire Spectator*, Vol. 170 (2001) 12 pp. 684 - 697.

¹⁵⁶⁶ MoD, *DOPKlu*, No. 1475, Notes on intelligence problems, No. 9400603/01/U, 28/11/94.

¹⁵⁶⁷ MoD, *DOPKlu*, No. 1482, Summarized report: Visit to Villafranca, No. DOP 95004673/956, 20/01/95.

A search in the photo archives of the 306th Squadron failed to uncover any additional photographic material. The 306th Squadron carried out a few photo reconnaissance flights to Tuzla, Srebrenica and the surroundings between February 1994 and May 1997. The most interesting photos are of the compounds in Potocari and Srebrenica, which were taken on 2 March 1995. However, no photos were taken by Dutch aircraft of VRS military activities in the months before the fall.¹⁵⁶⁸

But this does not rule out the possibility that photos were taken by other NATO aircraft, even though aerial activities were scaled down after a US F-16 had been shot down on 2 June 1995. The Netherlands never ordered flights for its own purposes; it always adhered strictly to orders. This could not be said of the USA, the UK and especially France, which regularly executed operations for its own national intelligence authorities. This was demonstrated when a Dutch aerial photo showed a French reconnaissance plane in an area where it had no right to be.¹⁵⁶⁹

The last flight of the 306th Squadron (mission 1357), which was stationed in Villafranca and in charge of photo reconnaissance missions above Bosnia, dates from 27 May 1995. The activities on the western side were more or less stopped after the American F-16 of O'Grady was shot down. This incident showed that radar signals from were detected by the NSA before it downed the F-16 over Bosnia but that the vital intelligence was not relayed to the pilot. The deputy director of the CIA admitted that the system designed to collect and disseminate intelligence in Bosnia failed.¹⁵⁷⁰ An American U-2R aircraft, operating on behalf of the NSA, picked up SA-6 missile radar transmissions on and off for almost 3 hours before the shootdown. If this intelligence had been timely forwarded O'Grady would have had time to get out of the area, according to the chairman of the JCS, General John Shalikasvili.¹⁵⁷¹

In fact, no reconnaissance flights on behalf of UNPROFOR were carried out at all between 11 and 30 June. Apparently, it was considered too dangerous to operate after this date, given the mounting threat from the Bosnian-Serb anti-aircraft systems. During the war in Bosnia, the Bosnian Serbs and Serbs often fired their guided missiles without radar. If the flight route was roughly known, the VRS could adjust its anti-aircraft systems accordingly. The VRS radar was usually switched off out of fear of US HARM missiles. Another factor was that the VRS and the JNA had an integrated air-defence system, especially for early warning tasks. The JNA had also positioned air missiles along the Drina to support the VRS. These were also activated in the summer of 1995 during the operations against the eastern enclaves. Most of the time, the VRS worked with mobile missile launchers, which they moved around. The Dutch reconnaissance flights were not resumed until 2 August 1995 (mission 1358).¹⁵⁷² Unlike France, the Netherlands did not carry out independent missions (outside UNPROFOR and NATO) above Bosnia.¹⁵⁷³

The limitations of Imint

Though the Imint capacity of satellites, spy planes and UAVs appears impressive, it should not be overestimated. The claims of the French newspaper *La Croix* that the CIA even followed the murders 'live' on large screens in its Observation Room must be consigned to the realm of fantasy.¹⁵⁷⁴ Usually, there is no real-time Imint from satellites; there is only near-real-time intelligence. An explanation for this is the following. Near real time translates into available on the ground in 10 minutes, analysed

¹⁵⁶⁸ MoD, DCBC, box 61, Lt-Colonel J. Eikelboom to DOPKlu, No. VF/2498/95, 12/08/95.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Interview J. Schouren, 04/12/99 and Confidential interview (31).

¹⁵⁷⁰ Bill Gertz, 'NATO jet broke radar relay to U.S. pilot', *The Washington Times*, 28/06/95 and Dana Priest, 'system Failed Downed Pilot, CIA Official Says', *The Washington Post*, 28/06/95.

¹⁵⁷¹ 'Bosnia', *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 03/07/95 and Dana Priest, 'Data Delay Blamed for Plane Loss', *The Washington Post*, 12/07/95.

¹⁵⁷² Confidential interview (32) and MoD, *Archive 306 SQN PI-SECTIE*, Overview of all reconnaissance flights above Bosnia, undated.

¹⁵⁷³ MoD, DCBC, File 1486, Memorandum from P.C. Berlijn to K. Hilderink, 02/08/96.

¹⁵⁷⁴ 'AICG call to indict General Janvier', *Bosnia Report*, No. 1, November-December 1997, p. 3.

sometime later, ranging from tens of minutes for US National Command priorities like destruction of Arafat's Compound, to several hours, like the sort of priorities discussed here. The dwell time of any imagery satellite from horizon to horizon would be less than ten minutes, from start to finish. Even best case, 'live' only lasts ten minutes, and would only be seen ten minutes after the fact. To do that, the satellite must pivot for the duration of its view time, looking only at a specific point on the ground. All other coverage of the theatre would be lost while the satellite stared at the one spot (like Srebrenica) on the ground. If such a feat were technically possible, which is arguable, it would mean the loss of hundreds of other targets across the theatre from the central Mediterranean to the Baltic. No one would imagine that any imagery target in the Eastern Enclaves would warrant that sort of priority.¹⁵⁷⁵ So, it would have been impossible for the CIA to have followed everything live. The claims of *La Croix* were also technically implausible: the number of satellite orbits makes it scarcely credible that the CIA watched live.

But the *La Croix* article contained even more errors. The CIA does not have an Observation Room, though it does have a Watch Center. Any Imint that went to the CIA was delivered by the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) to a CIA department, the National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC). It is indeed true that Imint went to the CIA Watch Center. But the CIA and pretty much everybody else in the US intelligence architecture does have access to imagery which was acquired using a near real time system. NPIC, more than anybody else except for a ground station element, has access to near real time imagery, arriving there about eight-ten minutes after the shutter of the satellite goes 'click'. These are all still photos. 'Live' coverage requires satellite gymnastics that are impractical, if not impossible.¹⁵⁷⁶

Nowadays, all Imint goes direct to a unit of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) at Fort Belvoir. Established on 1 October 1996, this agency is an amalgamation of the Defense Mapping Agency, the Central Imagery Office, the Defense Dissemination Program Office and NPIC.¹⁵⁷⁷ It was created largely to meet the fast-growing need for Imint and to bundle the Imint production of the various organizations and intelligence services. It was also probably the result of PPD 35, which decreed intelligence support for foreign armies and crisis operations.¹⁵⁷⁸

A unit of this new institute is currently stationed at Fort Belvoir in the USA. It has access to all Imint as soon as the satellite has relayed it to the ground. The only source of delay is the time that the Imint needs to reach the various ground reception stations from the sophisticated KH-11 satellite via the special satellite link. Fort Belvoir therefore has real-time Imint, but its analysts perform 'a primary analysis, particularly to determine if the imagery indicates something that requires immediate attention from policy-makers and analysts'.¹⁵⁷⁹

It may therefore be safely assumed that as real-time intelligence only became available after 1997, it could certainly not have been at the disposal of the CIA in 1995. It should also be remembered that, in 1995, the priorities of American intelligence did not lie with Srebrenica. In this light, it is hardly surprising that the satellite photos produced by Albright were not found until very late in the day and after a thorough search of archival Imint. In addition, before the establishment of the NIMA, a huge problem was who could issue orders to the satellites. There were more customers and orders than the satellites could cope with, which led to an almost daily bureaucratic fight in Washington.¹⁵⁸⁰

¹⁵⁷⁵ Confidential information (80).

¹⁵⁷⁶ Confidential information (80).

¹⁵⁷⁷ See: <http://www.nima.mil/>

¹⁵⁷⁸ Jeffrey Richelson, 'Examining US intelligence failures', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, September 2000, pp. 41 - 44. The establishment of the NIMA led to the departure of many *Imint* analysts who used to work for the CIA. A direct result of this was for example that the preparations for an Indian nuclear test in May 1998 was not discovered on time.

¹⁵⁷⁹ E-mails from Jeffrey Richelson and Matthew Aid to Cees Wiebes, 19/07/00 and 21/07/00.

¹⁵⁸⁰ The Permanent Select Committee of the US House of Representatives also pointed this out. Now the director of the CIA decides on the tasking. See: Joseph Fitchett, 'spying From Space: U.S. to Sharpen the Focus', *International Herald Tribune*, 10/04/01.

During the war in Kosovo, UAVs like the Hunters and the Predators were capable of sending real-time Imint to the ground with the aid of the Pentagon Global Broadcast System. Real-time Imint from UAVs arrived at the CAOC in Vicenza. But given the limited capacity, the tasking of the UAVs and the lack of a real-time downlink to the CAOC, there was no question of live Imint in the summer of 1995.¹⁵⁸¹

But there were more problems attached to the collection and processing of Imint. First, the bureaucratic obstacles: effective and fast dissemination of Imint has long been a problem at the Pentagon.¹⁵⁸² The success of Imint during the Gulf War increased the demand for Imint so much that it could only be met with the greatest difficulty. This problem was exacerbated by chronic rivalry between the various US intelligence services. The computer systems of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines were often incapable of communicating with one another. The chairman of a Congress Committee which investigated this said ‘When it came to Imint, it was like we had four separate countries out there rather than four services from one country’.¹⁵⁸³

Second, low-hanging cloud, mist between the mountains and valleys, poor weather and darkness often made it impossible to make good quality photos. Third, the ‘enemy’ often takes account of Imint and employs counter-measures. For example, India was able to conceal its nuclear tests from spy satellites by planning and conducting these tests during a period beset by sandstorms.¹⁵⁸⁴ During the Gulf War all sorts of cardboard missile systems were attacked which had been identified in the desert on the basis of Imint. Tanks and artillery that had already been eliminated were sometimes re-targeted because the analysis of the Imint was inconclusive. Sometimes, the Iraqi Army moved these destroyed tanks to another area to create the impression that they were new materiel. The same happened in Bosnia with the result that NATO planes attacked previously eliminated VRS tanks. After nightfall VRS soldiers moved the tanks a few hundred metres, giving the impression that they were new tanks. However, opportunities for misleading the enemy, though present, are often limited. For example, experts say that a spy satellite does not have to follow a circuit exactly above a target in order to take good photos.¹⁵⁸⁵

Then there is the issue of time. This must not be overlooked. The analysis of Imint makes heavy demands on specialists, as new images must constantly be compared with previous ones. The question that needs to be answered is what has changed in relation to the old situation and what conclusions can be drawn from this. These analyses are highly labour-intensive, even with the aid of sophisticated computer systems. The ‘enemy’ takes account of the capacity and possibilities of Imint and constantly moves operational weapon systems to confuse the observations of satellites, U-2s and UAVs. For example, Serb Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) sites were moved every three or four hours with the result that the Americans regularly attacked old and deserted sites.¹⁵⁸⁶ Sometimes, dummy SA-6 missiles were set up, only to be identified after a U-2-mission, a UAV flight and a thorough analysis.¹⁵⁸⁷

Systems can also be hidden in bunkers, caves, sheds and garages. These can only be detected by infra-red sensors, and then only on the basis of heat emanating from the engine. These operations are also beset by problems because it is often impossible to determine whether the shed holds a tractor or a tank. Such problems can have a profound influence on the intelligence product derived from Imint. Members of the US intelligence community claimed that Imint was not the best method for locating the confrontation lines, especially amid the mist-covered and forested mountains around Srebrenica. By way of example, they pointed out that, in the spring of 1995, Imint was no use in pinpointing the

¹⁵⁸¹ Tim Ripley, ‘UAVs over Kosovo - did the Earth move?’, *Defence Systems Daily*, 01/12/99.

¹⁵⁸² James Woolsey, ‘The American Intelligence Community’, in: Carmel (ed.), *Intelligence*, p. 175.

¹⁵⁸³ Christopher Andrew, ‘How we won the spy game’, *The Times*, 10/12/01.

¹⁵⁸⁴ Jeffrey Richelson, ‘Examining US intelligence failures’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, September 2000, p. 44.

¹⁵⁸⁵ Confidential interview (62).

¹⁵⁸⁶ Confidential interview (31).

¹⁵⁸⁷ See for example: MoD, *MID/TCBU. MID/Klu*, Missile Order of Battle, 22/10/95.

whereabouts of the UNMO hostages, because there was no approximate idea of where they were being held.¹⁵⁸⁸

Finally, it is a misconception that all Imint is published in the form of photos. No more than two or three photos of Bosnia appeared each week in most reports because photos take up too much space. Usually, it is only the analysis of the Imint that is published. After all, reports sent by the intelligence services to high-level policy-makers must be short and concise. For example, the Intelligence & Research section of the State Department could only produce two-page reports upon the orders of Secretary of State Christopher. One American analyst wondered how on earth he could explain such a complicated conflict to Christopher, given the permanently shifting political and military circumstances.¹⁵⁸⁹

3. With whom was imagery intelligence shared?

Imint was used from the very start of the conflict in Bosnia. In August 1992, *Newsday* accused the Bush Administration of deliberately withholding evidence of prison camps and executions of Muslims and Croats. Imint from Keyhole satellites was said to have delivered proof of this. Originally, the US intelligence services had purportedly even refused to use U-2s to take a closer look at the concentration camps. This was considered 'too provocative'. Earlier revelations by *Newsday* supposedly led to the clearance of camps which had been identified by Imint. After criticism from presidential candidate Clinton, Bush declared that he had ordered the intelligence community 'to use every asset' to track down war crimes in Bosnia.¹⁵⁹⁰

The US diplomat Ron Neitzke confirmed that Imint was available in 1992.¹⁵⁹¹ The newspaper *The Guardian* managed to lay its hands on a report of a secret briefing by the CIA and NSA from late May 1992, in which Imint was shown of the VRS artillery around Sarajevo.¹⁵⁹² In 1993, satellite photos were also used to ascertain the precision of the American food droppings by C-130s.¹⁵⁹³ The fact that the Americans were gathering Imint on the prison camps came to light at the start of 1993 when the US negotiator Cyrus Vance was handed a list of camps which had been compiled partly from satellite photos and partly from Humint.¹⁵⁹⁴ Special aircraft were also deployed for photo reconnaissance above the enclaves. The subsequent intelligence was then shared with NATO. The Chairman of the Military Committee, Sir Richard Vincent, told NATO in January 1994 for example that detailed air reconnaissance was being carried out above Bosnia and that NATO now had a large database of the positions of the warring factions. Closer attention would now be paid to air reconnaissance above the enclaves of Srebrenica and Tuzla.¹⁵⁹⁵ No doubt Vincent made this promise because he was aware of the difficult predicament of the Canadian battalion at that time. The handover to Dutchbat was being impeded by the VRS and the ABiH, and a plan was being considered to send in US and Canadian Special Forces to extract the Canadians from the enclave by force (see Chapter 4). Probably, these photos were taken by normal NATO air reconnaissance planes and not by specialized aircraft such as the U-2.¹⁵⁹⁶

The Imint was shared within NATO through a heavily protected communication network known as the Linked Operational Intelligence Center Europe (LOCE) system. The results of imagery, electronic and other types of intelligence were exchanged through the LOCE system. In principle, U-2

¹⁵⁸⁸ Confidential interview (54).

¹⁵⁸⁹ Confidential interview (13).

¹⁵⁹⁰ K. Royce and P. Sloyan, 'The U.S. waited back in June, CIA told Bush officials of atrocities', *Newsday*, 15/08/92.

¹⁵⁹¹ Cohen, *Hearts grown brutal*, p. 173.

¹⁵⁹² Ed Vulliamy, 'US feud sealed Bosnia's fate', *The Guardian*, 20/05/96.

¹⁵⁹³ Tony Capaccio, 'Bosnia Airdrop', *Air Force Magazine*, July 1993, p. 56.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Confidential information (52).

¹⁵⁹⁵ Confidential information (53).

¹⁵⁹⁶ For the history of the U-2 see: Van der Aart, *Spionage vanuit de lucht*, pp. 28-45.

Imint went to all NATO members, but often analyses ('read-outs') were distributed instead of photos. Initially, Satint could only be released to the US Secretary of State or a four-star general at the head of the US EUCOM.¹⁵⁹⁷ Later, U-2 and other Imint arrived more often via LOCE. However, in the early stages of the Balkan War, LOCE registered no Imint. Presumably only the Canadian services had direct access to this. Inevitably, the fact that no Satint was shared with most European allies often led to complaints within NATO. Keith Hall, Director of the NRO, pushed for more comprehensive sharing with the European allies, but diplomats expected that this would be met by protests from the rest of the US intelligence community and Congress.¹⁵⁹⁸

A military analyst of the MIS/Air Force who worked in Villafranca between 1 April and 1 October 1995 said that he received Imint in Villafranca, but there was no way of determining whether it came from a U-2 or a satellite. Experts claim that U-2 imagery was of a better resolution. Nevertheless, it is often claimed that the Imint was made a bit fuzzier to conceal the actual resolution. However, this is disputed. Like one US intelligence official claimed: Who had time to 'fuzzy' pictures? The transmission across second-rate communications paths alone degraded the resolution to near unrecognizable.¹⁵⁹⁹ The analysis was carried out by the US Joint Analysis Center (JAC) in Molesworth. Normal imagery always went to Vicenza. In Villafranca this analyst had a direct national line to The Hague and delivered material every day. He had access to LOCE and telex for communicating intelligence and received finished intelligence from Molesworth. He also received the reports from Vicenza.¹⁶⁰⁰

Imint in the form of written reports was also made available to the UNPROFOR staff in Zagreb. From 1993, the workers at the Military Information Office had regular access to U-2 Imint, none of it relating to the Safe Areas.¹⁶⁰¹ Under General Rose, Imint from satellites was originally passed on to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (BHC) in Sarajevo via the American deputy intelligence officer at BHC. Rose discovered from satellite photos that Sarajevo was not as isolated from the outside world as most of the observers believed. There were more supply lines than just the tunnel under the airport. Rose enjoyed telling his staff the story of how, one morning in early 1995, he received a satellite photo of the city. There had been a fresh fall of snow and the confrontation lines and the trenches were clearly visible. The next day Rose received another photo. No further snow had fallen during the night and a comparison of two photos showed a total of 25 lorry tracks cutting right across the lines. Apparently, during the night, lorries had crossed the lines with the permission of the warring factions. Everybody was cashing in on Sarajevo's 'isolated position'.¹⁶⁰²

An US military official for example watched how 55 tons of luxury goods, cigarettes and women's clothing - not food - being lifted out of the tunnel. But senior political figures in Washington DC and other capitals continued to believe that Sarajevo was under some sort of medieval siege. When The Deputy Commander US EUCOM, US General Chuck Boyd, told US Secretary of Defence, Perry, about the tunnel it seemed it was the first time that Perry heard about it.¹⁶⁰³

Later, the Americans came to regard Rose as too pro-Serb, and US intelligence services suspected that there were Bosnian-Serb spies among his staff. This reduced the flow of Imint. Scarcely any Imint was supplied to BHC in Sarajevo or SNE in Tuzla. The military aid to General Smith, Lieutenant Colonel Baxter, confirmed that Smith's staff had no access to satellite photos. Smith did, however, get U-2 photos. This probably had less to do with American reluctance and more with the

¹⁵⁹⁷ Confidential interview (54).

¹⁵⁹⁸ Joseph Fitchett, 'spying From Space: U.S. to Sharpen the Focus', *International Herald Tribune*, 10/04/01.

¹⁵⁹⁹ Confidential information (80).

¹⁶⁰⁰ Confidential interviews (31), (32) and (38).

¹⁶⁰¹ Confidential interview (47).

¹⁶⁰² Confidential interview (80).

¹⁶⁰³ Ripley, *Deliberate Force*, p. 92.

lack of secure connections with the Bosnian capital. Images from UAVs were not made available to BHC until August and September 1995.¹⁶⁰⁴

However, General Janvier in Zagreb already had access to military-tactical Imint from UAVs in June 1995. Imint was also shared with other officials in the Zagreb staff. The Deputy Force Commander, the Canadian General Barry Ashton, confirmed that he received Imint on a regular basis. However, it was not shared with the Dutch Colonel H. de Jonge, who was responsible for determining the military targets. He pointed out that the US Deputy G-2, Commander Morgan, was concerned that he scarcely received any Imint and could do little for UNPROFOR that way. This prompted Morgan to visit the US embassy Zagreb every two days, where he 'shopped around' for more information through secure communication links at organizations unknown to De Jonge.¹⁶⁰⁵

However, US intelligence officials claimed that the Deputy G-2 was receiving regular Imint reports from a variety of sources. This was shared with De Jonge and his staff. However, De Jonge wanted actual photos, which was a much tougher nut to crack, given the sort of communications links available.¹⁶⁰⁶ The head of the intelligence section in Zagreb, the Swedish Colonel Jan-Inge Svensson, and his assistant Lieutenant Colonel Ingmar Ljunggren also occasionally received photos from Predators after mid-July. Other intelligence from Predators was also phoned through to them after analysis. They had never seen photos taken by German UAVs. The analyses of photos and other intelligence from satellites or the U-2 *Dragon Lady* were always passed on to them by word of mouth. As Sweden was not a NATO member, neither Swede ever actually saw the Imint.¹⁶⁰⁷

So, many UNPROFOR officials in Zagreb had access to Imint: sometimes in the form of written reports. One member of the UNPROFOR staff even recalled that the first aerial photos of suspected mass graves and relating excavations were available a few days after the fall of Srebrenica.¹⁶⁰⁸ However, requests from SNE for Imint were to no avail. On 21, 22, 24, 26 and 29 April, General Haukland repeatedly and urgently requested satellite or other aerial photos of areas where the Bosnian Serbs were operational. NATO never even acknowledged his requests and Haukland never received the photos.¹⁶⁰⁹ When the Dutch Minister Jan Pronk confronted General Nicolai about this during a visit to Bosnia in July 1995, he was told that troops from a non-NATO state (Pakistan) were manning the reception station for the requested photos.¹⁶¹⁰ If that was the case, then UNPROFOR should have intervened. After all, a station is useless if the personnel stationed there are not authorized to receive Imint. It might have been better at the time to deputize a US intelligence officer with secure connections to Haukland's staff in Tuzla. This example is a further indication that neither UNPROFOR nor NATO accorded high priority to Eastern Bosnia.

Initially, the Americans shared their photos with The Hague (probably from U-2s), but that was during the Dutch presidency of the European Union. Later on, they only shared them for the purposes of planning a possible joint emergency helicopter evacuation of Dutchbat from Srebrenica. But this was months before the attack.¹⁶¹¹ Canada was probably the only ally with whom the Americans shared everything. The intelligence analysts at the Canadian Ministry of Defence had permanent access to imagery and other intelligence (raw as well as finished). The Canadian intelligence community in Sarajevo – and also in Zagreb – had access to Imint in their own intelligence cells. This was mostly current near-real-time Imint.

¹⁶⁰⁴ Interview James Baxter, 16/10/00.

¹⁶⁰⁵ Interviews Barry Ashton, 30/05/00 and J.H. de Jonge, 30/05/01.

¹⁶⁰⁶ Confidential information (80).

¹⁶⁰⁷ Interview Jan-Inge Svensson and Ingmar Ljunggren, 04/11/99.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Confidential information (58).

¹⁶⁰⁹ Interview V. Haukland, 22/09/00.

¹⁶¹⁰ NIOD, Letter from J. Pronk to NIOD, 29/05/01; NMFA, DMP to R, draft report of the trip by J. Pronk to Tuzla and Sarajevo, NH-618/95, 31/07/95.

¹⁶¹¹ Interviews with M.J.C. Felix, 06/04/00 and A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

There was also Satint available on Eastern Bosnia which occasionally showed VRS troop movements. The Canadian intelligence cell in Bosnia itself had near-real-time Imint which was about five days old. Sometimes it had been processed, but the Canadian officers could always get archival Imint. The Canadian intelligence cell in Bosnia never received Imint on Croatia from the Americans.¹⁶¹²

The British community also had some idea of the events around Srebrenica through Imint. According to an official of the UK intelligence community, most of the information on the troop build-up came from Imint. It never emerged whether this came from satellites or U-2s. Anyway, Imint delivered pictures of VRS troop concentrations, though it did not show that the VRS was preparing to launch an attack. Eventually, this was also concluded by the UK Defence Intelligence Staff.¹⁶¹³ The British services also categorically insisted that Srebrenica was not an important area, not even for the DIS, which had focused all its attention on Gorazde and Sarajevo.¹⁶¹⁴

4. How were Albright's satellite photos discovered?

On 10 August 1995, the American Permanent Representative at the UN, Madeleine Albright, produced the previously mentioned photos in the Security Council. The photos showed Bosnian-Muslim prisoners and upturned earth where the bodies of the executed men had been buried.¹⁶¹⁵ Every set of U-2 imagery recovered at RAF Alconbury in Great Britain had a complete, separate copy run for shipment to DIA in Washington DC. The images shown by Albright to the UN unquestionably came from the DIA copy of Molesworth developed U-2 film.¹⁶¹⁶ The DIA copy was shipped separately by air to Washington, usually within a week or so. Albright showed these photos to the Security Council because initially there was nothing to suggest that executions had taken place. This came later, after the survivors reached Tuzla. Their testimonies then prompted a search for specific Imint. Albright used the photos to provide the Security Council with evidence of the atrocities and to pressurize both the Security Council and the Clinton Administration into taking a harder line. She stated that there definitely was sharper and better Imint but this had not been released in order to safeguard the techniques and the technology.¹⁶¹⁷ Albright also reputedly used the photos in an attempt to win support for the idea of a larger peacekeeping operation in Bosnia with US involvement.¹⁶¹⁸

Other UN officials suspected more sinister motives. In August 1995, the UNMOs in Zagreb organized a press conference on large-scale human rights violations by the Bosnian Croats during the recently completed Operation Storm (carried out with US assistance). The room was full of journalists and things were just about to start when an official from the US Embassy in Zagreb suddenly entered and announced that a press conference was about to begin at the embassy where information would be released on aerial photos of possible mass graves around Srebrenica. The room emptied immediately. The UNMOs had an uneasy feeling that the announcement was planned to divert attention from the Croatian crimes.¹⁶¹⁹ It is, however, likely that there were no sinister motives.

There are various versions of how the photos eventually were discovered. In one version Sacirbey, the Bosnian Permanent Representative to the UN, plays a role. Very soon after the fall of Srebrenica, Albright was tipped off by Sacirbey that atrocities had either already taken place or were about to do so. After consulting the Deputy National Security Advisor, Samuel Berger, she requested assistance from the US intelligence community. This request probably did not get high priority: the

¹⁶¹² Confidential interviews (9), (47), (62) and (90).

¹⁶¹³ The question of 'Foreknowledge' will be addressed in detail in the following chapter.

¹⁶¹⁴ Confidential interview (8).

¹⁶¹⁵ 'US Reveals Photographs of Apparent Mass Grave', *International Herald Tribune*, 10/08/95 and 'Up to 2,700 Massacred by Serbs, UN is Told', *International Herald Tribune*, 11/08/95.

¹⁶¹⁶ Confidential information (80).

¹⁶¹⁷ Interview with M. Albright, 28/09/01. A request by SAGE for the release of other satellite photos of Srebrenica was rejected by the court on 7 August 2001. For the judgement see: www.fas.org/sdp/news/2001/08/sage/html

¹⁶¹⁸ Confidential interview (13).

¹⁶¹⁹ Confidential interview (44).

NPIC, which had a special team for analysing photos satellite and U-2 photos, allegedly did not start searching for the photos until mid-July. Priority rested with the VRS advance towards Zepa and Gorazde and the anti-aircraft threat to the NATO planes.¹⁶²⁰ The National Photographic Interpretation Center is said to have discovered the first photos on 2 August.¹⁶²¹ It revealed this on 4 August in the *National Intelligence Daily*, a publication which is intended only for the eyes of the most senior policy-makers. On 10 August, Albright took the photos to the Security Council.¹⁶²²

Another version of the run-up to 10 August stemmed from interviews with Tune Bringa, a member of Akashi's Analyses and Assessment Unit, and the former US Ambassador in Croatia, Peter Galbraith.¹⁶²³ Galbraith was recalled to Washington for talks between 5 and 18 July 1995. At that moment, two UN researchers were busy screening displaced persons in Tuzla. Bringa came into contact with them and spoke with someone who had escaped the executions. She realized then that large-scale war crimes had probably been perpetrated. On 25 July, she returned to Zagreb and asked Galbraith whether this could be further investigated. On the same day, he sent a message to Washington through special channels (probably the CIA) requesting an investigation into possible war crimes. Holbrooke is said to have taken the telegram personally to Christopher, asked him to read it and take urgent action. This led to, amongst others, a mission by John Shattuck, who found more indications and reported his findings to Christopher on 4 August.¹⁶²⁴ The Deputy Director of Intelligence at the CIA, John Gannon, thought that it was a combination of reports and visual observations by Dutchbat and the interviews by Shattuck, which had led to the discovery of Imint.¹⁶²⁵

Galbraith also asked the CIA through the Intelligence and Research Bureau of the State Department to find out whether there were satellite and U-2 photos of ABiH prisoners or the mass murders in Konjevic Polje. Enough intelligence had been gathered by 2 August to indicate search areas. After searching for twenty-four hours and comparing thousands of Imint photos, one analyst at the intelligence service discovered that such photos did indeed exist.¹⁶²⁶

The third version is the most credible. The other two could easily be mistaken interpretations of personal actions in response to Albright's photos. What the fore-mentioned people could not know was that one US intelligence service had an invaluable Humint source. Only a handful of people knew the identity of this source. Since 1992, the DIA had been running an extensive programme for debriefing refugees. By the end of 1992, important intelligence had been gathered from over 800 interviews. American debriefers, who officially worked for the UN, also went to work in Tuzla and, after the fall of Srebrenica, their reports went to the highest echelons in the US Administration. Nothing was yet known in mid-July.

On 17 July, the Balkan Task Force of the CIA wrote in its secret daily report that countless eyewitness accounts had delivered details which strongly implied that atrocities had been committed. It also added that 'we lack authoritative, detailed information to substantiate this information'. Reporters of the *Washington Post* got no answer when they asked whether the intelligence analysts had taken any steps to get hold of the missing information. 'It was not a military priority,' said a CIA official. 'A lot of this [atrocities] stuff is not looked at at the time it is collected, the official said'.¹⁶²⁷ Another CIA worker who wishes to remain anonymous told the *New York Times* that his service 'lacked information regarding specific places and atrocities'.¹⁶²⁸

¹⁶²⁰ M. Dobbs & R. Jeffrey Smith, 'New Proof Offered of Serb Atrocities', *Washington Post*, 29/10/95.

¹⁶²¹ Rohde, *A Safe Area*, pp. 334 - 335.

¹⁶²² Confidential information (54).

¹⁶²³ Interviews with Peter Galbraith, 23/07/99 and Tune Bringa, 13/07/00.

¹⁶²⁴ American FOIA Declassification, John Shattuck to Secretary of State, 04/08/95.

¹⁶²⁵ DDI Speech by John Gannon for the SFRC, 09/08/95. See: www.209.207.112/irp/cia/product/

¹⁶²⁶ Rohde, *A Safe Area*, pp. 334 - 335.

¹⁶²⁷ M. Dobbs & Jeffrey Smith, 'New Proof Offered of Serb Atrocities', *Washington Post*, 29/10/95.

¹⁶²⁸ 'srebrenica: the Days of Slaughter', *The New York Times*, 29/10/95.

These scenarios are not entirely implausible because they do not contain the crucial data, such as the dates and times of the executions, the locations and the units involved. This kind of information could not possibly have come from interviews with refugees. What is more, if this information is missing, then a random search through old Imint is useless. Specific information is needed in order to select and compare the right images from a collection that runs into hundreds of thousands. It was, in fact, a crucial Humint source which eventually triggered the search for the execution sites and the mass graves. This source, who was unknown to Bringa, Galbraith and others, decided to pass on detailed information to an intelligence agency at the end of July.¹⁶²⁹

The source claimed to have personally witnessed the atrocities of the Bosnian Serbs and provided detailed information including dates, times, precise locations and drawings of the execution sites, such as the Branjevo state farm in the village of Donja Pilica on the road between Bijeljina and Zvornik. A bloodbath had also taken place there in the local theatre.¹⁶³⁰ It was only after the witness had described the atrocities to the intelligence service that the search really got underway. It appears therefore that the late availability of the photos was not due to US reluctance to release them, as was suggested by a minister of the Dutch Cabinet.¹⁶³¹

It emerged eventually that a satellite and U-2 had photographed hundreds of Muslim men on 13 July. CIA analysts had paid no attention to this because they were busy with other priorities. These photos from the U-2 were shown to President Clinton and his advisors for the first time on 4 August.¹⁶³² This was probably be the DIA copy of the RAF Alconbury U2 mission. This chain of events was largely confirmed in a talk with a US intelligence officer. Srebrenica and the other eastern enclaves had absolutely no priority in the summer of 1995. So, Imint from this region was not studied or analysed.¹⁶³³

5. What photos were taken and on which dates?

The question still remains as to what kind of photos were actually taken, when these were taken and what they provided in the way of imagery. The search in the Imint archives after the tip-off from the Humint source eventually produced a lot of material. As has already been described, satellites, U-2s and UAVs were operational above Bosnia. Using background interviews, documents and aerial photos it is possible to reconstruct the various missions above Bosnia and specifically above Srebrenica. The shooting down of the F-16 flown by O'Grady on 2 June was the main reason for bringing extra Predators to the region. On 16 June, the US intelligence community approved the target plan for the UAVs. The most important targets were Bihac and the Croatian areas; the Livno valley had priority. However, UNPROFOR's priorities lay with Sarajevo. Janvier was briefed on the possibilities of UAVs and said that he wanted to receive Imint. On 19 June, the intelligence staff in Zagreb asked the US intelligence community for Predator photos of Bosnia.¹⁶³⁴

The first report based on UAV images dates from 26 June and relates to the Livno valley. One important piece of information was that all the retreat routes from the Krajina could be cut off by the Bosnian Croats. The American UAVs also took photos above Croatia, but these were sent straight to the Croats and not to the intelligence section in Zagreb: at that time, the CIA was running the Predators. The Predator operations were based out of Croatia, and the photos for Croatia were part of the quid-pro-quo for that basing agreement. Thanks to a UAV flight, it was reported on 28 June that the Bosnian Croats could attack within 24 hours.

¹⁶²⁹ Confidential interview (13).

¹⁶³⁰ See for photos: ICTY, (IT-98-33) Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume II, Ex. 25/6-25/14.

¹⁶³¹ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 25/08/95, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

¹⁶³² Interview with Peter Galbraith, 23/07/99 and Tune Bringa, 13/07/00.

¹⁶³³ Confidential interview (13).

¹⁶³⁴ Confidential interview (54).

On 26 June, a U-2 flew over the whole of Bosnia, which was 65 per cent cloud covered. The U-2 Imint reports were received and disseminated at HQ Zagreb on 28 June, but presumably paid no attention to the eastern enclaves. Given the earlier UAV reports, the focus of interest was probably Croatia. So, the priorities of the Imint analysts lay elsewhere. On 26 June a Predator indeed conducted a test flight over Liki Petrovo Selo.¹⁶³⁵ On 27 June, the MIS/Air Force also knew that the Americans had decided to send some Predators to the Balkans for a period of 60 days. An analysis concluded that this may have stemmed from the agreed support for the Rapid Reaction Force.¹⁶³⁶ All aircraft in Operation Deny Flight were warned to watch out for UAVs.¹⁶³⁷ Things settled down for a while after this.

On 2 July BHC in Sarajevo was requesting imagery emphasis on the Mt. Dinara area, where VRS artillery and mortar fire was threatening Tuzla area. A flight with an UAV was planned but the UAV was grounded on 4/5 July for unknown reasons but probably because of maintenance. On 5 July, a US national asset (unknown is what Imint system) photographed the now notorious Branjevo farm at Donja Pilica.¹⁶³⁸ Most of the photos of the region around Srebrenica were probably a spin-off from a wider reconnaissance mission above Bosnia and were not specifically intended for the collection of intelligence on the situation around Srebrenica. The same Imint asset took photos of the village of Glogova and of Orahovac, the area around Karakaj-Dulici, Kozluk and Cerska.¹⁶³⁹

Imint during the attack on and fall of Srebrenica

On 7 July, another UAV flight was carried out, this time above Western Bosnia. On the same day there was also a flight above Eastern Bosnia, which lasted until 11.20 hours. This US national asset also flew over Dvor, where a Danish UNPROFOR soldier had been killed. It is unclear whether Srebrenica was included. Given the start of the VRS attack, it might have been expected that this asset also flew above Srebrenica. Vicenza reported at 08.45 hours on 9 July that a U-2 was present. However, at 11.30 hours, a report came through that it had a defective camera. It was being protected by SEAD planes in order to stave off VRS anti-aircraft fire. This is remarkable and hard to believe statement. It was probably not a U-2 but another US national asset. This can be explained as follows. The U-2 required no SEAD support at 50-60 thousand feet and it did not fly at low altitudes, especially over a SEAD threat. It would run out of gas if it didn't get shot down. The engines of a U-2 are optimized for high altitude and that is where its fuel efficiency is best. Any low altitude operations would require aerial refuel immediately off-station over the Adriatic, and the fuel tankers operating in that area were already heavily committed to refuelling fighter aircraft in Deny Flight.¹⁶⁴⁰

On 10 July, a US national asset flew over Pusmilici at 15.00 hours and observed burning houses in West Rajne. At 19.00 hours, this asset passed the front line directly to the east of the town. By now, Janvier, who regularly received finished Imint via his intelligence staff in Zagreb, was beginning to realize the value of the UAVs like the Predator. It should be observed that the analysts at the MIS/Air Force were in this phase still under the impression that the Predator was not operational. They incorrectly thought that the Predators would not fly until 14 July.¹⁶⁴¹

On 11 July Zagreb HQ asked for UAV support over Srebrenica but an UAV was not yet available. An US official pointed to the problems as regards getting an UAV flying over Srebrenica. He claimed that the UAV in the months preceding to the attack on Srebrenica did not have a night landing

¹⁶³⁵ Confidential information (80).

¹⁶³⁶ MoD, *JMG*, 1002. Summary of Intsums MID/KL, 27/06/95.

¹⁶³⁷ MoD, *DOKP.u. STAOOPER, Dossier 312*, DocId, 6241, COMFIVEATAF to AIG 5781, 27/06/95.

¹⁶³⁸ Confidential interview (7). See also: ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume II, Ex. 24/.

¹⁶³⁹ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume I, Ex. 9/2 and Volume II, Ex. 16/1, 2020/1-20/2, 22/1 and 27/1.

¹⁶⁴⁰ Confidential information (80).

¹⁶⁴¹ MoD, *DCBC*, 392. MID/Klu DFI (NATO secret), 13/07/95.

capability in June, and recovery at Brac in Croatia would have been very dicey after dark. There were hesitations to risk the UAV at this time, and Srebrenica was at the farthest edge of the UAV envelope. It would be very surprising, according to this US official, if it flew over to the eastern enclaves at all due to range considerations, and certainly not at the risk of losing the platform altogether due to crashing in the dark. The same official wondered if the Dutch intelligence community ever submitted collection requirements for Srebrenica? If nobody ever asked for it, 'you can bet it was never provided'. To his knowledge, the Dutch never submitted any collection requirements in support of DutchBat.¹⁶⁴²

Despite all these problems a discussion took place on 11 July in the US community on how to get a UAV above Srebrenica. This discussion was prompted by this request from Janvier for Imint on Srebrenica as he suspected 'atrocities'. This suggests that, up till then, Janvier knew that UAV missions had been flown over Bosnia. This was the same Janvier who claimed that he did not receive NATO intelligence. The US intelligence community told Janvier's intelligence staff in Zagreb that there was a probability that a UAV could be flown above Srebrenica early in the day (usually from 09.00 hours). But this mission never materialized partly because of the poor weather conditions in Eastern Bosnia (mist and low-hanging cloud), the fact that Srebrenica was at the farthest edge of the UAV envelope and partly because the US intelligence community still refused to give priority to Eastern Bosnia.¹⁶⁴³

One source claimed that a U-2 reconnaissance flight was sent out over Srebrenica during the VRS attack around 10 or 11 July, but it returned with engine problems and no photos.¹⁶⁴⁴ This statement was probably incorrect. It was not a U-2 but another Imint asset which actually took photos of the post-strike area on 11 July. These photos, shown in Washington DC to the author, were classified as 'secret, Releasable to NATO'. They showed four bomb craters that were caused by the air attack of 11 July. The first was taken at 09.34 hours and showed the route to the south. The second was taken at 13.17 hours and showed the four bomb craters.¹⁶⁴⁵ Did this Imint come from a U-2, a UAV or another platform like a Tactical Air Reconnaissance (TACRECCE) flight with an F-14 or F-16?

The standard classification on all U2 imagery was 'Confidential: Releasable to NATO'. All U2 imagery was subject to declassification upon approval of specific requests. But the standard classification on all NATO TACRECCE photos was 'secret: Releasable to NATO'. This suggests that the U2 photos described above, taken at 0934 and 1317 may have been in reality TACRECCE photos. Another rationalism for this was that the U2 would ordinarily not retrace its flight path for a revisit of the same area at all, much less four hours later. If the Srebrenica area just happened to correspond to an off-angle view from an adjacent track, a second look was feasible, but highly unlikely. In sharp contrast to the improbability of the UAV and the U2, NATO aircraft flew 25-30 sorties per day over Bosnia, most of which were at liberty to fly over the eastern enclaves. In addition to US Navy F-14's, which were the only American TACRECCE capability, French and British TACRECCE capabilities (and of course Dutch F-16's) all were much more probable platforms for any photos taken, by several orders of magnitude.¹⁶⁴⁶ So, the photo's shown to the author came probably not from a satellite, U-2 or UAV.

On 12 July, an Imint platform (probably a TACRECCE mission by a NATO-member) took photos of Potocari showing the Dutch compound.¹⁶⁴⁷ The photos that were later released during Krstic's trial show the Fontana Hotel, the football pitch and other buildings.¹⁶⁴⁸ Presumably, this photo-reconnaissance mission was specifically searching for clues about the situation on the ground. Another photo, taken at 14.00 hours, shows a fleet of over twenty parked buses. Photos with a better resolution

¹⁶⁴² Confidential information (80).

¹⁶⁴³ Confidential interview (54).

¹⁶⁴⁴ Confidential interview (25).

¹⁶⁴⁵ Confidential information (55).

¹⁶⁴⁶ Confidential information (80).

¹⁶⁴⁷ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume I, Ex. 5/15.

¹⁶⁴⁸ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume I, Ex. 6/2.

show the football stadium with the prisoners.¹⁶⁴⁹ At 14.00 hours on 13 July, photos were taken above Potocari, which clearly showed the buses and lorries that had come to collect the women, the children and the elderly from the civilian population. It also registered signs of disturbed earth.¹⁶⁵⁰ On 13 July, photos were also taken of a warehouse in Kravica, situated between Bratunac and Konjevic Polje. Researchers of the Yugoslavia Tribunal in The Hague later found bloodstains and numerous bullet holes in this warehouse.¹⁶⁵¹ The collection of Imint was difficult because of bad weather. US systems confirmed heavy cloud cover over eastern Bosnia. Finally, on 18 July US assets confirmed the presence of two VRS tanks at Srebrenica HQ.¹⁶⁵²

During this period the CIA conducted several test flights with Predators in Croatia and on 15 July a Predator made a flight but the quality of the Imint was not what had been hoped for. The same day other US national systems confirmed heavy cloud cover over eastern Bosnia. On 17 July a Predator took off just after midnight and was recovered in the afternoon. All target areas were cloud covered and the UAV encountered mostly thunderstorms mostly. The Predator collected good imagery of Mostar and loitered in Zepa area for three hours. However, the UAV was confronted with bad weather but no artillery or refugees were observed. Bad weather played an important role in these days because on 18 July a Predator flight cancelled due to foul weather. But the US intelligence community had more Imint platforms at its disposal.

American C-130s with special infra-red sensors were also deployed above Srebrenica. These flew from Brindisi (Italy) above the eastern enclaves if circumstances were favourable for nocturnal operations. They probably flew on the orders of the DIA. On 10 July these platforms identified at 17.00 burning houses in the enclave. At 22.30 hours on 12 July, the infra-red sensors of these C-130s detected a large mass of prisoners in the vicinity of Srebrenica (the exact position is unknown). The infra-red sensors enabled these special C-130s to follow both the column of Muslim men and the VRS advance on Zepa and Gorazde. The C-130s observed campfires along the road throughout the night and registered the heat from the tank and lorry engines. Other US Imint platforms confirmed 4 military trucks plus sedans next to a house.¹⁶⁵³

What happened to this Imint and was it shared with Zagreb HQ and BHC? It was shared indeed with the senior UN leadership. This intelligence regarding campfires was conveyed to UN leadership on the morning of the 14th. In particular, intelligence passed was about the primary and secondary position of the VRS, with campfires at locations 2 km, 4.5 km and 6 km south-west of Srebrenica, and approximately 13, 14, 15 km north-east of Zepa. The position of additional VRS units located in a certain area was also reported. This intelligence was also delivered to Sarajevo, briefed to the UN leadership, and injected into the Zagreb overall threat assessments for Zepa delivered again to the UN leadership, in the COS's office at noon on 15 July.¹⁶⁵⁴

In this phase the stories about warcrimes started to circulate more persistently. The stories about mass executions were greeted with incredulity at first. But when more and more signs emerged that atrocities had taken place on a mammoth scale and that thousands of men were still missing, the Imint activities were stepped up. The photos which a KH-11 had taken of Srebrenica and the immediate surroundings were now analysed. Suddenly, the Americans were taking the rumours of mass murders more seriously. The U-2 flights now targeted the eastern enclaves more often and the analysts were instructed to analyse the images.

A report to General Michael Hayden, Director of Intelligence at US EUCOM, stated that Mladic had told a UN official that hundreds had been killed in the Bandera triangle inside the enclave Srebrenica. By then, the 'collection priorities' in the American intelligence community had changed.

¹⁶⁴⁹ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume I, Ex. 6/3 and 6/4.

¹⁶⁵⁰ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume I, Ex. 5/2-5/4.

¹⁶⁵¹ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume I, Ex. 8/3 - 8/8

¹⁶⁵² Confidential information (80).

¹⁶⁵³ Confidential interview (54) and confidential information (80).

¹⁶⁵⁴ Confidential interview (54) and confidential information (80).

They were now: '1) Zepa; 2) Potocari and Srebrenica; 3) Gorazde and 4) Tuzla camp and the column of men and boys'. Even so, requests for 'atrocities verification' through Imint were still rejected. At that time, there was still insufficient evidence or indications.¹⁶⁵⁵

As described earlier, on 15 July, a Predator again headed for Eastern Bosnia. Its main assignment was 'Bratunac males key priority'. But the quality of the video footage was disappointing. The main targets were still the men in Bratunac. The UAV flew above Zepa, and then more reports came on a regular basis which entered the LOCE directly. On the same day, Hayden heard that, according to UNMO reports, some 10,000 men had disappeared. On 17 July, another US asset flew over Branjevo farm at Donja Pilica.¹⁶⁵⁶ A photo was later released by the US Administration.¹⁶⁵⁷ However, the author was shown much sharper photos than this one, which clearly showed a great many people and corpses as well as lorry tracks and digging operations.¹⁶⁵⁸ On 21 September, another U-2 flight showed that Branjevo farm seemed totally deserted.¹⁶⁵⁹ This U-2 also flew above Glogova, where comparisons with the photos of 5 July revealed that digging had also taken place.¹⁶⁶⁰ At 18.12 hours on 18 July, satellite intelligence on Srebrenica was also available in the US intelligence community. A satellite had spotted two tanks in front of the headquarters at Potocari. The photos also showed an APC in Glogova.¹⁶⁶¹

The fact that US Imint was available in this period emerged in Belgrade on 15 July, during the negotiations on Srebrenica between Akashi, Bildt, Stoltenberg, Smith, Milosevic and Mladic.¹⁶⁶² US Imint (presumably from a U-2 or UAV) was on the table. It had been provided by the US Embassy in Belgrade and was causing Mladic serious discomfort. These photos, incidentally, were not the same as those, which Albright presented to the Security Council.

Albright's photos came as a complete surprise to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in general and to Smith in particular. Bosnia-Herzegovina Command (BHC) knew nothing of their existence.¹⁶⁶³ Again, this was not so much attributable to reluctance on the part of the Americans but rather to the insecure connections with the Bosnian capital. An intelligence analyst with access to American Imint said that Satint of (the surroundings of) Srebrenica again became available on 19 July. The content of these photos is unknown. On the same day, it was announced that the Predators would no longer fly above this area because of the situation around Zepa. Judging from their Deny Flight Intelligence Summary, the analysts at the MIS/Air Force found this a remarkable message, especially considering that UAVs were perfect for performing such local reconnaissance operations. Regular aircraft could not do it. On the other hand, the Deny Flight Intsum stated that the MIS analysts at the Air Force had the impression that the VRS troops around Zepa were not pushing forward. There was no real need for this, because the international community had already given up on Zepa and, according to the MIS/Air Force, an evacuation was being considered.¹⁶⁶⁴ This could indeed explain why the Predator reconnaissance flights were halted above Zepa. Perhaps the fear of a repetition elsewhere of the atrocities of Srebrenica also played a role in this; apparently, the UAV had more important missions to perform. Paris reacted immediately. The French would step up its reconnaissance flights above Bosnia because Paris thought that Washington was not sharing aerial photo intelligence with the allies.¹⁶⁶⁵

After the fall of Srebrenica, the Dutch Chief of Defence Staff asked the United Nations if detailed satellite photos or UAV photos could be taken of the surroundings of Srebrenica and Bratunac

¹⁶⁵⁵ Confidential interview (53).

¹⁶⁵⁶ Interview with J. Schouren, 04/12/99.

¹⁶⁵⁷ For the photos: www.fas.org.irp/Imint/bosnia16.html

¹⁶⁵⁸ Confidential interview (7). See also: ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume II, Ex. 24/2-24/3.

¹⁶⁵⁹ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume II, Ex. 24/4.

¹⁶⁶⁰ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume I, Ex. 9/3.

¹⁶⁶¹ Confidential interview (54).

¹⁶⁶² For example: Rohde, *A Safe Area*, pp. 309 - 310

¹⁶⁶³ Confidential interview (43).

¹⁶⁶⁴ MoD, DCBC, 1696. MID/Klu DFI (NATO secret), 19/07/95.

¹⁶⁶⁵ 'Onwaarschijnlijk dat Belgen Zepa helpen evacueren' (Belgians unlikely to help evacuate Zepa), *De Standaard*, 19/07/95.

to ascertain whether there were prison camps in the area. Minister Voorhoeve wanted to know whether this request had been productive and sent a memo to this effect to the deputy Chief of Defence Staff.¹⁶⁶⁶ The Director of Atlantic Cooperation and Security at the Foreign Ministry also wanted more details. On 6 August, it had asked the UN Permanent Representative for further information on aerial photos of men deported from Srebrenica. No photos were available at the NATO Situation Centre or Intelligence Division; NATO said that there may have been US satellite photos but that national intelligence was only shared with allies in exceptional cases.

This did not deter the Dutch Permanent Representative from making inquiries of his American counterpart, who had sent out an all-stations call on the same day but had received no answer. The Permanent Representative thought that perhaps in this case the request would get a positive answer.¹⁶⁶⁷ The government had also asked Minister Voorhoeve if it could see Imint.¹⁶⁶⁸ The Chief of Defence Staff, the Director of Atlantic Cooperation and Security and the minister did not have to wait long.

Albright shows the photos

On 10 August, Albright produced the photos of the disturbed ground where the executed men were buried.¹⁶⁶⁹ They were also passed on to the Ministry of Defence by the US Embassy in The Hague.¹⁶⁷⁰ If the Dutch Government wanted to see more photos or more detailed photos then Washington would be prepared to look favourably on this request.¹⁶⁷¹ The DPKO did not, however, receive the same treatment because, on the same day, all that Annan's advisor, Tharoor, received was a copy of Albright's speech. He did not get the photos because of 'technical difficulties'.¹⁶⁷² He would get them on 15 August through a separate briefing. DPKO was also shown a sketch of a classified photo of a wider area one kilometre north of Nova Kasaba. The actual photo was not released.¹⁶⁷³

On 18 August, Minister Voorhoeve received an answer to the memo he had sent two weeks before. In the meantime, the Albright photos had been published. The US military attaché also had some classified detailed imagery of the vicinity of Srebrenica, but they could betray the technological possibilities of the satellite. For this reason, his government had instructed him not to release them. But it would not object if they were studied, analysed and interpreted by government photo analysts at the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC). The Royal Netherlands Air Force was therefore asked to make a team of photo analysts available on 21 August.¹⁶⁷⁴

On the same day, American representatives showed the strictly classified satellite photos to analysts of the Air Force. During the weekend Joup Schouren and his colleagues were allowed to briefly analyse the photos at the DCBC under the watchful eye of an US colonel. Schouren would have liked to have inspected them at the Volkel air base, but this was not allowed. The Americans did not offer their own interpretation of the photos. Standard details were also missing, including the type of film, the time, the height and the focal distance of the lens for calculating the scale of the photos. The only available information was the date and the position. After a short analysis the photos had to be returned directly to the US Embassy.¹⁶⁷⁵

¹⁶⁶⁶ MoD, *PCDS, DE01108*, Voorhoeve to PCDS, No. 26/95, 04/08/95.

¹⁶⁶⁷ NMFA, *PV/NATO*, Permanent NATO representative to Foreign Affairs, No. 0017, 07/08/95.

¹⁶⁶⁸ Interview with C. Hilderink, 11/08/00.

¹⁶⁶⁹ 'US Reveals Photographs of Apparent Mass Grave', *International Herald Tribune*, 10/08/95 and 'Up to 2,700 Massacred By Serbs, UN is Told', *International Herald Tribune*, 11/08/95.

¹⁶⁷⁰ MoD, *DCBC, Box 61*. US Army Attaché to Commander Hilderink, 11/08/95.

¹⁶⁷¹ MoD, *DJZ*. Permanent NATO representative to Foreign Ministry, No. 1147, 11/08/95.

¹⁶⁷² UNNY, DPKO. Annan to Akashi, No. 2686, 11/08/95.

¹⁶⁷³ Confidential Collection (8), Annan to Akashi, No. MSC 2720, 15/08/95 plus a copy of photos.

¹⁶⁷⁴ MoD, *DS, No. DE01107*, Acting Commander of Defence Staff Schouten to Minister Voorhoeve, No. S95/061/3269, 18/08/95.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Interview with J. Schouren, 04/12/99 and J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97.

However, an erroneous observation is presumably made here by Schouren. Time, date and geographic co-ordinates are standard annotations for any sort of imagery, but altitude and focal length are definitely not. This observation clearly comes from a TACRECCE person (which Schouren was), where such information is normally imbedded in the photo with a matrix arrangement. It does not apply to UAV imagery, U2 imagery, or any sort of satellite imagery.¹⁶⁷⁶

One interpretation of Albright's satellite photos was as follows: two groups of 'possible' prisoners were discernible on a football pitch near Nova Kasaba, 19 kilometres west of Bratunac and Srebrenica and five kilometres south of Konjevic Polje: one of approximately 100 persons and one of approximately 500 persons. Both groups were seated on the ground and surrounded by twenty or so sentry posts. There were five vehicles at the entrance to the football pitch. On the photos Schouren saw a football pitch with guards, space for loading people onto transport, people (some of whom were kneeling), two bulldozers and two T-55 tanks with a bulldozer blade, a hole in the ground, buses and trucks.

He could also see a British Warrior in UN colours driving in a bus convoy. It was not a Dutch APC; the British had lost a few Warriors to the VRS earlier in the war. Schouren counted 600 men kneeling at an assembly point. There was also a camp enclosed by fencing, which reminded him of aerial photos he had seen of a POW camp in World War II during his training in England. One photo had been made 16 kilometres west of Srebrenica. Photos that were later released to the Yugoslavia Tribunal did indeed clearly show two groups of prisoners and a convoy of buses in Nova Kasaba. An enlargement left no doubt about there being two groups.¹⁶⁷⁷ This was probably the same Imint which was released at the start of August, which Schouren was allowed to examine.

Two groups of possible prisoners were discernible in the enlargement of the satellite photo of Sandici taken at 14.00 hours on 13 July.¹⁶⁷⁸ one group of 80 and one of 320. Five large buses were parked at the entrance. A U-2 flight (codenamed *Creek Quick*) produced photos of digging operations at exactly the same spots on 27 July.¹⁶⁷⁹ Excavations performed later by personnel of the Yugoslavia Tribunal revealed that bodies were buried there.¹⁶⁸⁰ The U-2 also took photos in the vicinity of Konjevic Polje, Cerska, Orahovac and the area around Karakaj-Dulici, Kozluk and Glogova.¹⁶⁸¹ These photos also clearly showed digging operations and many lorry tracks leading to and from the location.¹⁶⁸² U-2 flights on 14 August, 7 September, 27 September, 2 October, 12 October, 18 October, 20 October, 23 October, 30 October and 9 November again registered traces of digging at the fore-mentioned sites, but also at various other locations, such as HodZici, Liplje, Snagovo, Cancari and Redzici.¹⁶⁸³ Photos taken at the end of September showed that the bodies at Branjevo farm had been exhumed.¹⁶⁸⁴

Photos of the compound in Potocari also show traces of digging operations.¹⁶⁸⁵ These photos illustrate how the interest of the Imint analysts always focuses on the roads and the surroundings. As U-2s always followed the connecting routes in the valleys, they did not register the column of Muslim

¹⁶⁷⁶ Confidential information (80) and confidential interview (54).

¹⁶⁷⁷ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume I, Ex. 12/1 - 12/3 and Volume II, Ex. 14/2. See also: ICTY Dossier, Krstic Case, Case IT-98-33-T, OTP Exhibits, No. 87.

¹⁶⁷⁸ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume I, Ex. 7/3 and 7/4.

¹⁶⁷⁹ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume I, Ex. 7/7 and Volume II, Ex. 14/2 - 14/4 and 15/1.

¹⁶⁸⁰ For photos of the exhumed bodies: ICTY Dossier, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume II, Ex. 14/7-14/8 and 17/2-17/3. See also: Rohde, *A Safe Area*, pp. 334 - 350.

¹⁶⁸¹ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume I, Ex. 9/3 and Volume II, Ex. 16/1-16/2, 20/1-20/2, 22/1 and 27/1.

¹⁶⁸² MoD, *MID/TCBU*. American analysis (secret), undated and analysis by Schouren and Molleman, 22/08/95. The latter memorandum is more or less a literal translation of the American analysis.

¹⁶⁸³ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume II, Ex. 12/5 - 12/6 and : ICTY Dossier, Krstic Case, Case IT-98-33-T, OTP Exhibits, No. 161/5, 161/6, 162/4, 162/5, 162/2, 164/3, 1662-166/11.

¹⁶⁸⁴ ICTY, Krstic Case, Case IT-98-33-T, OTP Exhibits, No. 165/4.

¹⁶⁸⁵ ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume I, Ex. 5/27.

men or the fighting between the VRS and the ABiH in the mountains and the forests. The satellites, on the other hand, did not have these limitations.

Schouren confirmed that it is difficult to analyse photos taken by U-2s. Though an experienced photo interpreter, he too would have failed to notice the presence of people. He might have spotted the buses and trucks, but would probably have paid no attention to them because he was looking for other things. After all, huge amounts of data can be gathered from Imint. Many of the photos taken by satellites, U-2s and UAVs are a by-product of a specific mission. The analyst's attention therefore focuses on the mission, and not on the by-products.¹⁶⁸⁶

Certain comments may be mooted about the signs of digging operations and the bulldozers. According to analysts, photos which were produced at the Yugoslavia Tribunal showed the arrival of bulldozers of the 5th Engineer Battalion of the Drina Corps at Konjevic Polje on 5 and 27 July. Other photos taken on the same dates also reportedly showed the arrival of bulldozers.¹⁶⁸⁷ However, no bulldozers are discernible on the actual photo, but (according to the official description on the actual U-2 photo) mobile bridge trucks, some low-loaders and a tractor with a trailer.¹⁶⁸⁸ These may have been intended for the transportation of forestry equipment across the River Drina. Another photo, which was taken some time in 1999, even shows two similar trucks which had apparently been abandoned because they were defective.¹⁶⁸⁹

The photos do not make clear whether the murders had been planned in advance. However, the photos of bulldozers did lead to additional evidence, for the 5th Engineer Battalion of the Drina Corps and other units involved in the digging operations had kept meticulous records of the fuel consumption (with a view to theft) and also of the heavy machinery that was used for trips between the execution sites and the burial sites.¹⁶⁹⁰ One member of the British intelligence community verified that there was no Imint on the executions, but there was intelligence about the Muslim fighters who had been taken prisoner and about the start of the flight to Tuzla. It was unclear whether this Imint came from U-2s or satellites.¹⁶⁹¹

Albright had personally shown the Dutch deputy military attaché to the Permanent Representation at New York, Major E. Koestal, detailed photos which even showed an arm protruding from the ground. These photos were never released, ostensibly because they were considered unsuitable for publication.¹⁶⁹² The real reason was that the capabilities of the satellites had to be safeguarded. On 24 August 1995, the Americans responded to further Dutch questions in a Secret Nofoan memorandum.

When asked when the mass graves were first discovered the US services replied that there was evidence of digging operations on 2 August. This emerged when an Imint analyst was examining a U-2-film from a mission flown on 27 July. The analyst was studying specific locations on the basis of Humint (presumably the US Humint source) and intelligence reports from open sources. He discovered areas that appeared to indicate the presence of mass graves. A comparison between this and other Imint, taken by a satellite on 13 July, revealed that changes had occurred in the soil structure. It was then that the groups of prisoners were discovered on the Imint.

The fact that this was not discovered earlier was explained by saying that the people on the ground 'could have been mistaken for vegetation and overlooked where the analyst was not aware of subsequent press reports from refugees claiming that people were herded onto soccer fields in the area'. The explanation further stated that there was 'no usable coverage, however, between 13 and 27 July,

¹⁶⁸⁶ Interview with J. Schouren, 04/12/99.

¹⁶⁸⁷ ICTY, Krstic Case, Case IT-98-33-T, OTP Exhibits, No. 160/5 - 160/9.

¹⁶⁸⁸ ICTY, Krstic Case, Case IT-98-33-T, OTP Exhibits, No. 160/1 and 160/3.

¹⁶⁸⁹ ICTY, Krstic Case, Case IT-98-33-T, OTP Exhibits, No. 160/4.

¹⁶⁹⁰ Mirko Klarin, 'Analysis: Danube surrenders Kosovo Cover-up evidence', *IWPR's TRIBUNAL UPDATE* No. 223, Part I, May 28-June 2, 2001.

¹⁶⁹¹ Confidential interview (8).

¹⁶⁹² Interview with E. Koestal, 24/02/00.

because of bad weather or poor image quality – the principal factors affecting whether we have coverage'. This meant that the Americans only had images of the locations before and after the executions and no images of the execution itself. The conclusion was that the people in the football stadium had probably been executed shortly after 13 July.¹⁶⁹³ This was confirmed by an official at the US intelligence community.¹⁶⁹⁴

On 28 August, the Minister of Defence was briefed at the Defence Crisis Management Centre on the basis of this analysis. In addition to Voorhoeve, the Chief of Defence Staff and his deputy were present. The Director-General of Political Affairs was also invited to attend.¹⁶⁹⁵ In an interview Minister Voorhoeve said that, during the briefing, he had asked the Americans if they had more photos dating from before the fall of the enclave. He was told that this would be looked into.¹⁶⁹⁶ Voorhoeve again raised the question of whether there were more satellite photos when he met his American counterpart, Perry, on 5 October 1995. Perry told him that he had closely studied the Imint and Sigint and that though these did not provide conclusive evidence of mass executions, there were certainly indications to that effect. Perry said that no alternative picture had been pieced together from additional intelligence. He was prepared to release this additional intelligence to the Yugoslavia Tribunal.¹⁶⁹⁷

To make doubly sure, Voorhoeve listed all the points a few days later: the US intelligence services did not have foreknowledge of the VRS attack on Srebrenica on the basis of Imint. He added: 'Not even on the basis of the photos taken on 11 July'. Perry had admitted that there was plenty of photographic material pointing to mass executions. This material pertained mainly to the period between 13 and 27 July. Perry was prepared to hand these photos over to the Yugoslavia Tribunal but 'some conditioning/adjustments would be needed' in order to protect the sources and the technology. The Minister pressed for further action through the US Embassy in The Hague.¹⁶⁹⁸ On 18 October, he received an Information Paper via the US Embassy but this document did not contain any further information.¹⁶⁹⁹

6. Conclusions

On the basis of the above and the released Imint it has to be concluded that photos were available which were taken by US spy satellites, U-2s and UAVs of the events before, during and after the fall of the enclave. Reports of the existence of these photos appeared regularly in the press and other publications from the autumn of 1995. The debate on the photos began after the US Administration released photos of mass graves and locations where the Muslim men had been executed. This action triggered all manner of wild speculation that the agencies, such as the CIA, had more photos of Srebrenica and the surroundings. It prompted a battery of accusations, not least that these services had withheld from their European allies vital intelligence regarding prior knowledge of the attack. There were also rumours of photos showing the summary executions. However, as the researcher for the Yugoslavia Tribunal, Ruez, testified to the French Parliamentary Inquiry in Paris, there were no such photos. Hence, the Yugoslavia Tribunal only had photos of before and after the executions.¹⁷⁰⁰

This was confirmed by intelligence officials who had full access to the Imint on Eastern Bosnia during the Bosnian conflict. The characteristics of Imint, analogous in many regards to the shortfalls in

¹⁶⁹³ MoD, *DCBC, box 61, No. 2850*, American memorandum, 24/08/95.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Confidential information (57).

¹⁶⁹⁵ NMFA, *DGPZ*, Memorandum from Acting DAV to DGPZ, 23/08/95. At the bottom was written: "This will also provide an opening to push the United States for the release of any additional photographic material (vide dzz memo dd. 15/8)". This took place on 31 August. See: NMFA, *DDI DAV 999.241*. Letter from J. Vos to T. Dornbush, 31/08/95.

¹⁶⁹⁶ Interview with J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 13/03/97.

¹⁶⁹⁷ NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. Report of a meeting between Voorhoeve and Perry, 05/10/95.

¹⁶⁹⁸ NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. Voorhoeve to CDS, No. 32/95, 09/10/95 and Report of Main Points Confidential interview Perry, 05/10/95.

¹⁶⁹⁹ NIOD, Coll. Van den Breemen. American Information Paper (*Secret Releasable Netherlands*), 18/10/95.

¹⁷⁰⁰ 'Ruez testifies for French committee', *AFP Press Release*, 22/02/01 and confidential information (56).

the Sigint realm, resulted in documenting the war crimes, but not preventing them. After the fact, the information came slowly, but only, and this must be said, as a result of a lengthy effort by the US.¹⁷⁰¹ If the Americans had possessed any such photos then they would, of course, have informed the allies accordingly. Janvier later told the French Parliamentary Investigative Commission in Paris that he had never seen Imint such as those, which Albright presented to the Security Council. He knew nothing of their existence until 16 August.¹⁷⁰²

The publications on whether or not Imint existed have also resulted in a general conviction among the public and the press that satellites function as a sort of ‘ubiquitous eye’. This is a misconception. Though satellites, U-2s and UAVs have impressive capabilities, most of the systems are occasionally hampered by unfavourable local weather conditions, which can affect their operational performance. As has already been demonstrated, other elements also play a role. The analysis speed, the focus and expertise of the photo-analyst and other factors can affect the quality of the Imint product. The problem is not so much the dispatch speed of the Imint but rather the whole time-consuming process of analysis, processing and searching for further confirmation. One author concluded: ‘For that reason, it would be difficult to intervene in a specific incident of ethnic cleansing. Nevertheless, tracking the civilian toll had value in a war where the political stakes are high.’ In a nutshell, Imint is basically unsuitable for stopping war crimes, but it can detect them.¹⁷⁰³ One should add that they can also be used to document war crimes, but not to prevent them. The Dutch photo-analyst Schouren confirmed that it is extremely difficult to analyse photos taken by satellites and U-2s.¹⁷⁰⁴ In addition, it is undeniable that the Americans did not accord Srebrenica high priority in their Imint. To be perfectly frank: the Dutch intelligence community did neither. Obviously, Sarajevo was the main US target and not the eastern enclaves, including Srebrenica.¹⁷⁰⁵

Summarizing, it can safely be said that US spy satellites, U-2s and UAVs collected a lot of Imint showing buses, trucks, tanks, male prisoners, corpses and disturbed ground where the executed men could have been buried. The failure of this Imint to arrive on time (i.e. not until early August) on the desks of the policy-makers was probably due to the priorities within at the US intelligence community. Other hard targets were more important than the eastern enclaves, where no US troops were stationed at that moment. A foreign intelligence evaluation therefore concluded that Imint was useful but, given the guerrilla character of the fighting, few regular units could be photographed from the air and space.¹⁷⁰⁶

In addition, the American analysts had no idea that the VRS was planning to seize the whole enclave. The expectation was that the Bosnian Serbs would be deterred from such action because it would bring heavy losses on their side, air attacks and floods of refugees which they could not cope with. These points will be discussed in the next chapter. Spy planes had spotted bus convoys at various locations at the end of June, but it was assumed that these were being used to transport VRS troops.¹⁷⁰⁷ CIA Director Deutch referred to this when he categorically denied that the CIA had foreknowledge of the attack. He once again called attention to the laborious process that eventually led to the discovery of the photos of the mass graves.¹⁷⁰⁸

The general picture that emerges from the currently available information indicates that the eastern enclaves were not (high) priority for Imint analysis. Executions on such a large scale were totally unexpected. Although it must be said that some analysts in Zagreb anticipated executions, but the

¹⁷⁰¹ Confidential interviews (8) and (54) and confidential information (80)..

¹⁷⁰² Assemblée Nationale, *Srebrenica: rapport sur un massacre*, Assemblée Nationale, No 3412, 2 parts, Paris 2001, Deel 2, Audition de M. Bernard Janvier, 25/01/01, pp. 106-139.

¹⁷⁰³ Alan Boyle, ‘spies in the watch for atrocities’, *MSNBC Interactive*, 26/03/99.

¹⁷⁰⁴ Interview with J. Schouren, 04/12/99.

¹⁷⁰⁵ Confidential interview (46).

¹⁷⁰⁶ Confidential interview (8) and confidential information (29).

¹⁷⁰⁷ Charles Lane and Thom Shanker, ‘Bosnia: What the CIA Didn’t Tell Us’, in *The New York Review of Books*, 09/05/96.

¹⁷⁰⁸ ‘The CIA and Bosnia: An Exchange’, *New York Review of Books*, 06/06/96.

eventual scale of thousands of dead was far beyond expectations. Though satellites and U-2s were active, other instruments such as UAVs were not fully operational above Bosnia until a later date. Moreover, the American services never analysed this Imint on time. However, it must be said that if some of the photos referred above to were TACRECCE photos, than the analysis was done by NATO analysts at various bases near the Adriatic, not by American analysts. That being the case then NATO was also very slow. Though the UK Defence Intelligence Staff had actually identified the concentration of troops around the enclave on the basis of Imint, it had not paid too much attention because the VRS had always had enough troops on hand to take the enclave in any case. Most of the intelligence on the troop concentrations came from Imint; whether from satellites or U-2s never became clear. There was, at all events, no Imint on the executions; but there was Imint on the ABiH prisoners and on the start of the journey to Tuzla. This is borne out by information from an American report which stated that ‘there was no usable coverage between 13 and 27 July because of bad weather or poor image quality’. There can be no doubt that the US community had permanent (near-) real-time information on what was going on in and around Srebrenica via satellites and spy planes. The claim by a member of the Dutch Cabinet to the effect that Washington had, at ‘his’ special request, taken satellite photos of the area around Bratunac showing probable mass graves is, however, incorrect.¹⁷⁰⁹

The inevitable conclusion is that not enough personnel were deployed to quickly utilize and analyse this real-time coverage of Eastern Bosnia in the summer of 1995 and pass it on to the allies. Also, military intelligence support for the UN ground troops, such as Dutchbat in Eastern Bosnia, did not have top priority in the US intelligence community. According to Hayden,¹⁷¹⁰ the military intelligence priorities in the summer of 1995 were as follows:

1. Force protection; chiefly to combat terrorism against US troops in Macedonia and the anti-aircraft threat to NATO planes;
2. Ground truth; information on what was happening between the warring factions;
3. Support for air operations, such as searching for suitable targets;
4. Support for NATO ground force planning;
5. Support for UN ground troop operations.

This list of priorities in itself is not surprising, as the Americans were not yet deploying ground troops. On the other hand, it indicates that American intelligence support to, for example, Dutchbat, was not high on the agenda. Again to be frank: it was also not very high on the Dutch intelligence agenda. Perhaps it ranked even lower. But the lack of US intelligence support for UN troops on the ground places in perspective the comment by ‘a senior intelligence official’ at NATO in Mons that General Rose ‘lost ownership of the picture of the battlefield to the point where it was irrecoverable’. In his view, this resulted in operational decision-making, which was not based on an objective picture.¹⁷¹¹ What was left unsaid was that the Americans distrusted Rose and therefore slowly cut off the flow of intelligence. Apart from this, at the BND it was noticed by senior officials that there was no good Imint coordination within the US intelligence community and hardly any analyses was done regarding Eastern Bosnia.¹⁷¹²

All of this does not alter the fact that Imint could have played a key role in intelligence-gathering before and during the fall of Srebrenica. The availability of good intelligence on the operations of the warring factions is always absolutely vital to the troops on the ground, also in peacekeeping operations. All peacekeepers should have clear military insight into the operational zone. One might therefore expect commercial satellites to have a future in peacekeeping operations. The authors Stout and Quiggin are pessimistic in this respect. They maintain that warring factions, rebels

¹⁷⁰⁹ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 18/08/95, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

¹⁷¹⁰ Michael V. Hayden, ‘Warfighters and Intelligence: one team - one fight’, *Defense Intelligence Journal*, Vol. 4 (1995) 2, p. 24.

¹⁷¹¹ ‘Bosnia underscores intelligence gaps’, *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 20/03/95, p. 56.

¹⁷¹² Confidential interview (98).

and terrorists are more likely to use the information provided by satellites than the UN or other international organizations involved in peacekeeping. This is because, they say, good Imint is greatly in the interest of the warring factions: it always pays for itself and can be used immediately in the theatre of war. There is always an inherent urge to stay one step ahead of the enemy; otherwise the war may be lost. International organizations do not share this kind of Darwinian perspective. Probably, all the warring factions in Bosnia would have made use of commercial Imint if it had been easily and relatively cheaply available in 1995.

In addition, the command structure of terrorist or rebel groups is usually small and new procedures and methods are more easily accepted and adopted there than in a highly complex structure such as that of the UN. Moreover, the UN suffers from a sort of ‘intelligence phobia’. Though New York has had fewer qualms about intelligence since the establishment of the Situation Center for the processing of US intelligence, it is still to undergo a full cultural change. Both authors believe that the day when the UN will make use of commercial Imint is still far in the future, as someone will then have to control this form of intelligence and determine the targets. If this task is assigned to UN headquarters, the question still needs to be addressed as to who will perform the analysis, who will be the recipients and how the Imint can be quickly distributed among the recipients. The authors see the solution to such problems in *ad hoc* peacekeeping operations, where the communication lines are shorter.¹⁷¹³

It also must be stated that the Dutch Government was not properly briefed on Imint. An American memorandum, which was drawn up for The Hague in response to questions posed by the Dutch, proved to contain incorrect statements. The memorandum stated that there ‘was no usable coverage, however, between 13 and 27 July, because of bad weather or poor image quality - the principal factors affecting whether we have coverage’.¹⁷¹⁴ This was factually untrue: there was certainly ‘usable coverage’. On 15 July, a Predator flew to Eastern Bosnia with the primary mission: ‘Bratunac males: key priority’. The quality of the subsequent video was disappointing, but other Imint was available: on 17 July, a U-2 flew over Branjevo farm at Donja Pilica, the scene of countless executions. A – rather blurred – photo of people who were executed shortly afterwards was released later by none other than the US Administration.¹⁷¹⁵ The NIOD was even shown far sharper photos of the same target, which clearly showed a larger and a smaller group of bodies and lorry tracks and digging operations.¹⁷¹⁶ Similar but less sharp photos were later given to the Yugoslavia Tribunal for use at the trial of General Krstic.¹⁷¹⁷

At 18.12 hours on 18 July, Imint on Srebrenica was again available within the US intelligence community. An asset had identified two tanks outside the headquarters in Potocari. U-2 photos also showed an APC in Glogova. The availability of US Imint came to light in Belgrade on 15 July during the negotiations with Milosevic and Mladic on Srebrenica. American Imint was lying on the table. According to an intelligence analyst with access to Imint, Satint of Srebrenica and the surroundings were already available on 19 July.¹⁷¹⁸ Despite all of this, there was probably no conscious attempt to mislead: the American memorandum with the answers to the questions asked by the Dutch in which reference was made to these photos is dated 24 August 1995. At that time, the US community still did not have full insight into and access to all the Imint on the events around Srebrenica. The Dutch Government was therefore not incorrectly informed, but the US memorandum was certainly premature.

¹⁷¹³ Mark Stout and Thomas Quiggin, ‘Exploiting the new high resolution satellite imagery: Darwinian imperatives?’, *Commentary*, No. 75 (Summer 1998), pp. 5 - 10.

¹⁷¹⁴ MoD, DCBC, *box 61, No. 2850*, American memorandum, 24/08/95.

¹⁷¹⁵ For the photos: www.fas.org.irp/Imint/bosnia16.html

¹⁷¹⁶ Confidential interview (7). During this interview classified U-2 photos could be studied.

¹⁷¹⁷ See: ICTY, Krstic Case, OTP Exhibits, Volume II, Ex. 24/2-24/3.

¹⁷¹⁸ Confidential interview (54).

Finally, a word about the Dutch intelligence community and Air Force could have played in this respect. It is of course also a bit ‘easy’ to blame the US intelligence community for conceivable shortcomings. It is also not true that the Dutch were totally dependent on other sources for their Imint. As said earlier, the Dutch had excellent TACRECCE capabilities in the area. However, the last flight of the 306th Squadron (mission 1357) of the Royal Dutch Airforce, which was stationed in Villafranca and in charge of photo reconnaissance missions above Bosnia, dates from 27 May 1995. The activities on the western side were more or less stopped after the American F-16 of Scott O’Grady was shot down. In fact, no reconnaissance flights were carried out at all between 11 and 30 June. Apparently, it was considered too dangerous to operate after this date, given the mounting threat from the Bosnian-Serb anti-aircraft guns.

As said earlier in this study. In brief, there were no additional enhancements in the area of *intelligence*; neither Parliament nor the Ministry of Defence nor the Cabinet insisted on it. However, the 306th Squadron of the Royal Dutch Airforce could have provided the Dutch with a unique opportunity. One of the best, if not the very best Imint asset in the theatre was the Dutch RF-16 TACRECCE capability. It was newer, more flexible and better technology than any other TACRECCE system in the theatre. It can provide better resolution, more flexible coverage and offset the effects of foul weather better than any satellite. Unlike the UAV, it has a man on-scene, at the controls, with a full situational awareness, which is always superior to a remote control system, and it yields far better imagery. One must conclude again, like in the precious chapters, that the Dutch shortfall in intelligence was recognized at the policy level, but that action was not properly taken. Dutch political and military leadership never took the courage to order the 306th Squadron of the Royal Dutch Airforce to fly over Srebrenica in order to support DutchBat.

The Dutch had assets at their command, which in many ways were superior to any others available. Perhaps the Dutch political and military structure deserve, according to an US intelligence official, far more blame regarding Imint than they do under the Sigint category. Perhaps they did not understand the value of their own Imint system, and the incredible utility it can provide. Experts who worked with TACRECCE systems and Imint collections systems of every stripe claimed that in a tactical situation, where the targets are troops on the ground (or prisoners for that matter), in a known area of limited dimensions, there is no other system that even comes close to TACRECCE. The Dutch RF-16 pod system in this respect was considered to be one of the very best in the world. And it was under the exclusive control of the Dutch. One American intelligence official posed these questions to the author: where was it when all this was going on? What was the higher priority that they sought to satisfy somewhere else with that precious Dutch Imint system and was that more important than DutchBat? They knew they wanted information, they had the assets, and they did nothing to get the information. Instead, the ‘voice from the sofa’ vilifies, according to this official, the US intelligence effort.¹⁷¹⁹

Despite this critique it remains a serious fact that on the basis of the above and the released Imint it has to be concluded that photos were available which were taken by US spy satellites, U-2s and UAVs of the events before, during and after the fall of the enclave. However, this Imint was not made readily available to the Dutch.

¹⁷¹⁹ Confidential information (80).

Chapter 8

Was 'Srebrenica' an intelligence failure?

'Gentlemen, I notice that there are always three courses (of action) open to an enemy and that he usually takes the fourth.'

- General Helmuth von Moltke

'Intelligence did not prepare us adequately for the attack on Srebrenica.'

- Richard Holbrooke.¹⁷²⁰

'Many intelligence reports in war are contradictory; even more are false, and most are uncertain and in short, most intelligence is false.'

- Carl von Clausewitz.¹⁷²¹

1. Introduction

Ever since the fall of Srebrenica there has been speculation about prior knowledge of the VRS attack. The Dutch *Nova* current affairs programme, for instance, revealed on 11 July 2000 that on 8 June 1995 the DutchBat commander Karremans had sent a warning to the Netherlands Ministry of Defence stating that he expected a major attack. Large troop concentrations and special combat troops had been reported around the enclave. This warning was apparently ignored and no further action was taken. Moreover, the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army General Ad Van Baal did not consider it necessary to inform Defence Minister Voorhoeve about this. A Ministry of Defence spokesman referred the matter to the UN: according to him it was this organization that should have acted on the information, not the Army. But according to the report UNPROFOR did nothing with this information from Karremans.¹⁷²²

This NOVA report can be seen as a late echo (prompted by a newly discovered document) of concerns that had already been raised in 1995. In earlier years it had been the press that had contained most of the speculation on this matter. It was claimed that in June 1995 American and German intelligence services had spectacular evidence that the Bosnian Serbs were planning to take the enclave: it was reported that as early as three weeks before the dramatic fall, the US government was already informed of the details. Washington, it was said, did not want to share this prior knowledge of the attack with the UN. As already discussed in the previous chapter, spy aircraft and satellites reportedly photographed the fleet of dozens of buses that were to be used to transport the Displaced Persons after the fall of Srebrenica. In the process, journalists wrote, they could hardly have overlooked the tanks and artillery pieces at Zeleni Jadar.¹⁷²³

¹⁷²⁰ Roy Gutman, 'UN's Deadly Deal', *Newsday*, 29/05/96.

¹⁷²¹ Howard and Paret (ed), *Clausewitz von, Carl: On War*, p.117.

¹⁷²² 'Alarm Karremans over enclave werd genegeerd' (Karremans' alarm for the enclave was ignored), *De Volkskrant*, 12/07/00. Also the VPRO radio programme *Argos*, Radio 1, 11.00-12.00, 02/07/01. In fact, in Chapter 5 of Part III of the Srebrenica report it was proven that Voorhoeve was indeed informed.

¹⁷²³ 'VS wisten al weken tevoren van val Srebrenica' (US knew about Srebrenica weeks in advance), *De Gelderlander*, 13/10/95; Bert Steinmetz, 'Voorhoeve door VS fout ingelicht' (Voorhoeve wrongly informed by US), *Het Parool*, 15/05/96; Westerman & Rijs, *Het Zwartste Scenario*, pp. 149-150.

Speculation was rife not only in the press. This question was also put to Akashi by New York. On the day of the fall of Srebrenica Annan declared that the situation raised serious and urgent questions for UNPROFOR:

‘How was it that UNPROFOR was taken unaware again, as with Gorazde and Bihac last year, by the true extent of Serb intentions? What intelligence resources do you [Akashi] have and what information, if any, was provided to UNPROFOR by those troop-contributing nations with intelligence-gathering assets in the area?’

Annan continued: ‘I find it difficult to accept that no “early warning” was possible when the evidence suggests that a major build-up of troops and heavy weapons by the VRS occurred prior to the offensive’.¹⁷²⁴ It was to prove no easy matter to answer this.

The central question in this chapter is whether intelligence and security services or other directly involved parties had prior knowledge of the VRS plans for the attack on Srebrenica, or in other words whether they were forewarned. Were there intelligence indications before the attack that the VRS planned to reduce the enclave in size or possible to conquer it entirely? And if these indications were received in time, who gathered or withheld this dramatic information, and why?

The answer is to be found in the intelligence situation of various intelligence and security services on the eve of the fall. In the process, a distinction must be drawn between ‘strategic’ and ‘tactical’ prior knowledge, or forewarning. Strategic prior knowledge relates to the patterns of expectation extending over a long period. This knowledge existed in plenty, because the Bosnian Serbs had often declared that they would one day take over the enclaves. Various officials of one European intelligence service thus expected that the eastern enclaves would be conquered sooner or later, and they were not surprised when this finally happened.¹⁷²⁵ A memorandum from the MIS/Army written in June 1995 predicted that the tension around the eastern enclaves would continue unabated, and would increase even further if the smuggling of weapons and ammunition from Zepa to Srebrenica were to continue. An attack on the enclave was not expected, but attempts to create better lines of communication were forecast.¹⁷²⁶ But as a member of the MIS/Army declared after the fall: such strategic indications offer little or no practical insight. The core of intelligence work is formed by tactical indications, such as troop concentrations, tanks, trucks and new trenches.¹⁷²⁷

If these tactical indications were not noted, then the attack on Srebrenica should indeed be regarded as an ‘intelligence failure’. Section 2 first provides a description of this term. The primary causes of such a failure are described; this may relate to a lack of intelligence, or to a failure to correctly interpret, or to evaluate in time, the intelligence which did exist.

Section 3 then examines strategic prior knowledge. The issue here is whether it was expected that the Srebrenica enclave would disappear in the long term, either as a result of political negotiations or through an attack. Section 4 deals with intelligence aspects of the actual course of the attack on the enclave.¹⁷²⁸ Section 5 turns to the information situation of UNPROFOR, and looks at the tactical prior knowledge in more detail. The question asked here is whether any prior knowledge based on hard indications really existed. This involves an examination of the Signals Intelligence (Sigint), Imagery Intelligence (Imint) and Human Intelligence (Humint) gathered by the various national intelligence services. An important question is whether this information was shared with the UN or the troop-contributing nations. Then the various parties in the enclave are dealt with, such as Dutchbat, the JCOs, UNHCR, NGOs and the ABiH. The Sigint capabilities of the ABiH are analysed. If these players

¹⁷²⁴ Confidential collection (7); Annan to Akashi, ‘situation in Srebrenica’, No. 2280, 11/07/95.

¹⁷²⁵ Confidential interview (48).

¹⁷²⁶ MoD, *SMG*, IntSum MIS/Army, Department I&V, 010609-070695, 07/06/95.

¹⁷²⁷ MoD, *SMG*, Report of a conversation with an Military Intelligence Service official, 03/08/95.

¹⁷²⁸ The attack itself is described in detail in Chapter 6 of Part III of the main Srebrenica report.

gathered intelligence, then it must be asked what elements of this arrived at UNPROFOR's headquarters in Tuzla, Sarajevo and Zagreb, and the UN, New York.

This analysis of the tactical prior information that was available with regard to the preparations for the attack is concluded in Section 6 with a review of the information present in the Netherlands at various levels. A description will be given of what information was received by NATO and what the information situation of the Dutch MIS was. Section 7 then takes a closer look at the information situation of the foreign intelligence services. This chapter ends with conclusions in Section 8 about the available prior knowledge regarding the Bosnian Serb attack. An answer is then given to the question: was this operation expected or did it come 'out of the blue'?

2. An intelligence failure?

Many publications describe the attack on Srebrenica as an intelligence failure. In the words of the author Metselaar: 'Increasingly, the attack tended to be seen as a tragic consequence of a combination of failures in intelligence estimates, of failing anticipation, or, perhaps even worse, as a cynical chess game in international "Realpolitik".'¹⁷²⁹ Military and political policymakers within UNPROFOR and NATO are said not to have received indications and warnings in time.

A warning can be associated with four possible aspects:

1. Hit: a warning is given and the event takes place;
2. Miss: no warning is given and the event still takes place;
3. False Alarm: a warning is given and the event does not take place;
4. Correct Rejection: no warning is given and the event does not take place either.

Whether a warning is correct or not depends on the actions of the recipient of the warning and of those who plan to take action. If the recipient makes the right analysis and takes action then he will try to reduce the future uncertainties.¹⁷³⁰ If warnings were received about the attack on Srebrenica, then the next question is whether these warnings were correctly identified and taken seriously by the recipient (e.g. UNPROFOR or others), whether no warning at all was given, or whether this came too late, or whether it was taken seriously enough.¹⁷³¹

A warning may not be effective for a number of reasons. One reason may be that there is a lack of information about the capabilities of the opponent. This does not seem to have been the case however: UNPROFOR had a reasonably reliable picture of the capabilities and the order of battle of the VRS. But it was harder to gain good insights into the short-term and long-term aims of the VRS. Mladic and Karadzic had, after all, often announced that the eastern enclaves would be reduced or conquered; this was nothing new. The more important question was *when* this would happen.

In fact, in the spring of 1995 there were continual rumours that an attack was going to take place. Both UNPROFOR and the US government were regularly warned by the Bosnian Muslims that a VRS attack was about to begin. But each time this proved to be a false alarm. This could easily create a 'Cry Wolf' mechanism: the more often a false alarm was sounded, the less credibility was attached to a following warning.¹⁷³² One particular CIA report concluded that this mechanism did indeed affect UNPROFOR. There were indications of the attack, such as the flow of reinforcements, but the authors of this report themselves noted: 'similar troop movements had been recorded around the enclave

¹⁷²⁹ M.V. Metselaar, 'Understanding Failures in Intelligence Estimates - Unprofor, the Dutch, and the Bosnian-Serb Attack on Srebrenica', *Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies. The Bosnian Experience*, 1997, p.25.

¹⁷³⁰ Arie Ofri, 'Crisis and Opportunity Forecasting', *ORBIS*, Vol. 26 (1983) 4, pp. 822-827.

¹⁷³¹ R.K. Betts, 'Intelligence Warnings: Old Problems, New Agendas', *Parameters*, Spring 1998, pp. 26-35.

¹⁷³² Handel, *Diplomacy*, pp. 478-479. In the Netherlands this is referred to as the 'Major Sas Syndrome'. Sas was the Dutch military attaché in Berlin who since November 1939 had repeatedly warned of a German attack that always failed to materialize. In the end he was no longer believed, after which the attack then came. See: De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, pp. 117-143.

dozens of times in the past, and the VRS was constantly adjusting its forces all across Bosnia. There was no special indicator, which would particularly distinguish these reports among hundreds of reports over the months and across the country.¹⁷³³

Another aspect of the Cry Wolf mechanism is that the credibility of the messenger starts to be doubted.¹⁷³⁴ Toby Gati, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research, made an interesting observation about this: '[The Bosnians] wanted us in more (...). Do you know how many times we heard this? They were getting bombed out. Which one do you respond to? The times they cried wolf in one month - the problem is, they were crying about a real wolf.'¹⁷³⁵

Intelligence and security services are well aware of the Cry Wolf mechanism. The credibility of policymakers is also affected if reports sound the alarm too often. As a consequence the services generally wait to see which way the wind is blowing in an attempt to gather extra information on the nature of the threat. But this often leads to a new problem: services tend to gather as much information as possible for fear of missing something. This can often result in the information flow becoming 'uncontrollable in the search for eventual certainty as a basis for decisions and the essential information will be obscured by "noise"'.¹⁷³⁶

Metselaar, drawing on the work of the late Handel, who published a great deal about surprise attacks, wrote that the stream of information is sometimes filtered by 'noise barriers', such as the enemy and the international environment. Mladic had already declared several times that he wanted better control of the route to the bauxite mine at the southern tip of the enclave, and therefore wanted the relocation of a Dutch observation post, OP-E in this specific area.¹⁷³⁷ However, he left open how and when he planned to do this. Plans that are continually and frequently changed at the last moment also form a filter. As Metselaar comments 'Obviously, what an aggressor does not yet know himself can hardly be expected to be determined by one's own intelligence sources. Even the enemy's military and political elite itself is often, until the last moment, not completely certain about many of these elements'.¹⁷³⁸

The international environment can also function as a noise barrier, because the attention of the political and military policymakers, such as Janvier, Akashi and R. Smith, was directed at issues of a more strategic nature and not at the eastern enclaves. This is revealed by Janvier's remark on Operation By-Pass. The general recognized on 8 July, when the attack on Srebrenica had already begun, that the situation in Sarajevo was certainly not the only problem in Bosnia requiring a solution, but 'the focus of attention is such that we must deal with Sarajevo first'.¹⁷³⁹ This indicates that the attention in Zagreb and Sarajevo was directed towards other, more strategic issues.

Finally, the aspect of self-generated noise can also play an important role. This happens when policymakers are not able to adjust their expectations about the intentions and capabilities of a party on the basis of reality.¹⁷⁴⁰ This is also known as the 'sheer nerve scenario': the VRS would never have the 'nerve' to conduct an attack on the enclave. On 7 July, for instance, Karremans thought that the VRS attack was an attempt to provoke and intimidate the ABiH.¹⁷⁴¹ Analysts in the US intelligence community did not suppose either that Mladic was aiming for the entire enclave: after all, what would he do with so many Displaced Persons?¹⁷⁴²

Indeed, even on 10 and 11 July the true intentions of the VRS were not believed; not only in Dutchbat, but also in Zagreb, Sarajevo and The Hague. It did not fit the pattern of expectations that

¹⁷³³ Confidential information (57).

¹⁷³⁴ Michael Handel, 'The Study of Intelligence', *ORBIS*, Vol. 26 (1983) 4, p. 819.

¹⁷³⁵ Roy Gutman, 'UN's Deadly Deal', *Newsday*, 29/05/96.

¹⁷³⁶ Välimäki, *Intelligence*, p. 34.

¹⁷³⁷ See also Chapter 6 of Part II of the main Srebrenica report at: www.srebrenica.nl

¹⁷³⁸ M.V. Metselaar, 'Understanding Failures in Intelligence Estimates', p. 37.

¹⁷³⁹ Confidential collection (7); Janvier to Akashi and Smith, Z-1129, 11/07/95.

¹⁷⁴⁰ Interview with P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

¹⁷⁴¹ M.V. Metselaar, 'Understanding Failures in Intelligence Estimates', pp. 39-40. See also: *Debriefing Report*, p. 23.

¹⁷⁴² Confidential interview (7).

the VRS attack should aim to take over the entire enclave. This aspect of self-generated noise was, according to Metselaar, actually the logical consequence of the fact that Dutchbat had been a 'hostage' of the VRS for a longer period. The Serbs had always been in a position to take over the enclave; why should that suddenly happen now? Both UNPROFOR and The Hague assumed that the VRS 'would not dare to go to such brutality and thereby provoke the whole international community'. It was viewed as totally inconceivable that Mladic would in fact do precisely this.

The policymakers clung to belief systems: a cohesive collection of views, convictions and values that have adopted an influential position in one's thinking. These belief systems form a filter in the perception of reality and the corresponding statements one makes. Here, reality is not determined by the actual situation but by the picture that those involved have formed of it. They try for as long as possible to perceive their surroundings in the most cohesive way possible and to avoid certain contradictions. Many tend to avoid what is known as 'cognitive dissonance' (the tension between new information and established ways of thinking).¹⁷⁴³ A study of the operations in Somalia, for instance, showed that important 'intelligence indicators were not assessed and analysed from first principles but were rather conveniently tailored to fit around what was wanted to be believed'.¹⁷⁴⁴

Another aspect of self-generated noise is the exaggerated value assigned to air power. It was long assumed that this would prove a sufficient deterrent to the VRS. After the fall of Akashi's advisers stated: 'The magic of air power is gone.'¹⁷⁴⁵ Self-generated noise can also occur if the analyst 'allows his own cultural background to influence the result rather than the culture, ideology, society and logic of the country concerned, giving rise to the Mirror Image phenomenon'. This refers to the inability to understand that the opposing party would act differently to the way the analyst himself would act. Decision-makers often tend to report the events that confirm their predictions and 'ignore those that fail to conform'.¹⁷⁴⁶

On the basis of the information available at the time, Metselaar concluded in 1997 that the way in which warnings of a VRS attack were handled can be regarded as an intelligence failure. At the same time he asks how great the failure was and to what extent it also explained the later tragic events. 'Could it be possible that the lack of capabilities and (probably even more importantly) the lack of willingness of (most if not all) members of the international community (at least until the end of July 1995) were more crucial?' In other words: would the result have been different if the indications and intelligence had been taken more seriously?¹⁷⁴⁷

One important question is whether there were sufficient intelligence capabilities to perceive the preparations in time. It is often assumed that a surprise attack is able to take place because enemy preparations are not discovered early enough to sound the alarm. According to the author Brady, history shows that in many successful surprise attacks the attacked party had enough information to make an accurate prediction of the enemy's intentions. The problem was that the signals were ignored or interpreted wrongly.¹⁷⁴⁸ Preventing a surprise attack is 'not simply a problem of detection, but very much a problem of assessment and acceptance'. The Argentinean attack on the Falkland Islands can serve as an example. Despite many warnings, the British government did not believe that Argentina would attack the islands. In turn, the Argentineans did not believe either that the United Kingdom would take the trouble to regain the territory.¹⁷⁴⁹

Previous chapters have described the resources and capabilities deployed by the international intelligence and security services in Bosnia. Attention has been given to the resources at the disposal of

¹⁷⁴³ Van Staden, *De fuik*, p. 10.

¹⁷⁴⁴ Connaughton, *Military Intervention*, p. 127.

¹⁷⁴⁵ UNNY, *ICFY, SRSG*, Mark Baskin to Akashi, 'How is the Fall of Srebrenica a Turning point for the Mission', 14/07/95.

¹⁷⁴⁶ Välimäki, *Intelligence*, p. 37 and 41.

¹⁷⁴⁷ Metselaar, 'Understanding Failures in Intelligence', p. 46.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Christopher Brady, 'Intelligence Failures: Plus Ça Change ...', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 8 (1993) 4, p. 86.

¹⁷⁴⁹ Gordon H. McCormick, 'surprise, Perceptions, and Military Style', *Orbis*, Vol. 26 (1983) 4, pp. 836-837.

the ABiH. The question to be examined now is what intelligence services or the ABiH were able to discover and report about the military preparations of the VRS. Did they provide indications in time, and if so, how were these evaluated and interpreted, and finally: what was done with this intelligence?

3. Strategic prior knowledge

Ever since the establishment of the Safe Areas there had been discussions – albeit quiet ones – in the international political arena, about the inevitability of giving up the enclaves. This could take place through forced or voluntary surrender or through an exchange of the Safe Areas for other territory. Robert Hayden reported for instance that staff of the State Department had told him at the start of 1994 that they were convinced that Srebrenica would no longer be under Muslim control at the end of the war, but that they ‘were unwilling for moral reasons to urge the Muslims to cede the town’.¹⁷⁵⁰ The author Sadkovich pointed out that US negotiator Charles Redman travelled to Pale at the end of 1994 with a proposal that the eastern enclaves be exchanged for territory around Sarajevo.¹⁷⁵¹ Indeed, during international consultations Redman had indeed considered the option of exchanging Srebrenica and Zepa for territory around Sarajevo. At the same time, however, he thought that public opinion and the Clinton government would block this proposal.¹⁷⁵² But even before this, the matter had been discussed within the Bosnian government.

It was clear that the abandonment of the enclaves had been the subject of discussion in diplomatic circles for some time, because it was generally acknowledged that they were not viable. A senior German diplomat confirmed that Redman was aiming for ‘an exchange of territories. However, Bosnia had to agree. Sarajevo always maintained mixed feelings about the enclaves as a bargaining chip.’ The Bosnian Serb side showed interest too, as revealed by all sorts of direct bilateral contacts. Karadzic regularly bombarded Bonn with all sorts of secret letters and memos in this respect.¹⁷⁵³ Members of the US intelligence community confirmed that in Pale there were advocates of the plans for the exchange of territories.¹⁷⁵⁴ The existence of mixed feelings in Sarajevo was confirmed by a member of the State Department. The body language of the Bosnian representatives showed that some of these too were in favour of ‘swapping away the enclaves’: this issue created tensions within the Bosnian government.¹⁷⁵⁵ All things considered, there was thus some willingness among the warring factions to exchange the enclaves for other territory.

From the military perspective too it was assumed that the enclaves had little chance of survival in the long term. In a secret memorandum to the Canadian Chief of Defence Staff in the autumn of 1994, the Canadian Major General Ray Crabbe, at the time Deputy Force Commander of UNPROFOR, reported that UNPROFOR staff in Zagreb had ‘a very uneasy feeling regarding the situation in the eastern enclaves’ and regarding ‘the potential vulnerability of the enclaves to military action by the BSA [VRS]’. This latter possibility should not be ruled out, according to Crabbe.¹⁷⁵⁶ He did not fear an imminent attack, but in the long term the situation could only get worse. A briefing at the Ministry of Defence in December 1994 also stated the expectation that ‘in the long term, the enclave will fall to the Bosnian Serbs’. But the aim of the VRS was not, it was thought, the conquest of Srebrenica, because it had no military significance and a conquest would provoke a serious international response. Srebrenica would fall because of the intolerable humanitarian and socio-economic situation there.¹⁷⁵⁷

¹⁷⁵⁰ Robert M. Hayden, ‘Reply’, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 55 (1996) 4, p. 777.

¹⁷⁵¹ Sadkovich, *Media*, p. 216.

¹⁷⁵² Honig & Both, *Srebrenica*, p. 163.

¹⁷⁵³ Confidential interview (53).

¹⁷⁵⁴ Confidential interviews (7).

¹⁷⁵⁵ Confidential interview (3).

¹⁷⁵⁶ Confidential information (58).

¹⁷⁵⁷ MoD, CRST. G-2 Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff to Military Intelligence Service/CO, 07/12/94.

In January 1995 a European intelligence service also concluded that the VRS could have taken the enclave long before; Pale probably had political reasons for not launching an attack. An important factor in all considerations was what would happen to all the refugees. Moreover the VRS saw advantages in the current situation too, according to this source, because UNPROFOR soldiers were hostages in the enclave. The VRS could make excellent use of this in both the political and military arenas. It was thus expected that no attack would take place in the short term.¹⁷⁵⁸

But in February 1995 the British Lieutenant Colonel C.A. Le Hardy of Sector North East (SNE) in Tuzla concluded that 'srebrenica has to be dealt with before the situation further deteriorates'. He warned that the Security Council resolutions on Safe Areas provided no guarantee whatsoever of stability in or around the enclave.¹⁷⁵⁹ Analysts in Western intelligence agencies thought that the VRS would take action before, during or after the summer and that this could well mean the end of the eastern enclaves. Mladic and Karadzic wanted to end the war; the VRS and above all the Drina Corps was approaching the end of their resources and the VRS was simply no longer able to bring the war to a positive conclusion in any other way. So sooner or later the VRS would have to get rid of the enclaves.¹⁷⁶⁰ Since early 1995 US intelligence analysts had also been expecting the offensive as part of a VRS campaign 'to finish up the eastern enclaves this summer'.¹⁷⁶¹

The analysis of a European intelligence service reflects this sombre view of the future of the eastern enclaves. In a report dating from May 1995 it was claimed that one of the VRS goals was to exert maximum control over Eastern Bosnia. The most extreme variant of this scenario was the annexation of the enclaves. According to this analysis, the operational goal of the ABiH was to secure the links between Zepa and Srebrenica. An intelligence report of June 1995 said that Karadzic believed he could achieve the following goals through escalation: breaking through the isolation; re-establishing his own internal political position; extending the war and demonstrating to Milosevic that the latter could not make an agreement without including Pale. And it was noted that Karadzic could not afford a further escalation of the war. The only possible success could be achieved in the eastern enclaves.¹⁷⁶² The same opinion was put forward during a briefing for the NATO council.¹⁷⁶³

After the event too it transpired that UNPROFOR had viewed the eastern enclaves as untenable. In an interview General Smith admitted that Srebrenica would fall sooner or later. He received the first confirmed intelligence during his first meeting with Mladic in Vlasenica on 7 March 1995, when the latter declared that the eastern enclaves were definitely in his way; Mladic wanted to get rid of the Safe Areas. In Smith's estimation, from that time on the VRS strategy was aimed at freeing troops and resources, because Zepa, Srebrenica and Gorazde caused a constant drain that Mladic could not afford.¹⁷⁶⁴ The Military Assistant to General Smith, Lieutenant Colonel Baxter, later added that during this visit Mladic showed a map on which one could clearly see that the size of the enclave had been reduced.¹⁷⁶⁵

Smith's view was confirmed by an American official. In early 1995 general Smith had told the US ambassador in Sarajevo: 'If I were Mladic, I would take the enclaves.' The ambassador and Smith were good friends and the American visited Smith or Baxter at least once a week. This was not a forecast, but a rational calculation.¹⁷⁶⁶ Smith himself wrote in a Situation Report in April 1995 that Mladic had a choice: either to concentrate his troops on the western front (the Krajina and Bihac) or on the eastern front. Fuel shortages, the proximity to Serbia and the possible strategic plans for Sarajevo

¹⁷⁵⁸ Confidential information (59).

¹⁷⁵⁹ Simms, *Unfinest Hour*, p. 316.

¹⁷⁶⁰ Confidential information (60).

¹⁷⁶¹ R.J. Smith, 'Bosnian Forces Capturing Territory From Serbs, Intelligence Indicates', *Washington Post*, 21/07/95.

¹⁷⁶² Confidential information (61).

¹⁷⁶³ NMFA, PVNATO. PVNATO to Foreign Affairs, No. brni665/8434, 04/05/95.

¹⁷⁶⁴ Interview with R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

¹⁷⁶⁵ Interview with James Baxter, 16/10/00 and NIOD, *Coll. Westerman*. Notes from a conversation with Lt. Coll. Jim Baxter, 03/05/96.

¹⁷⁶⁶ Confidential interview (3).

'lead me to think that his main effort will be in the east. In order to achieve a sufficient concentration of force, he will probably have to neutralize one or all of the Eastern enclaves.' His intelligence staff shared this opinion.¹⁷⁶⁷ One of Smith's intelligence officers, the American Brian Powers, later concluded that Mladic would probably take over the enclaves in June. A source in the Serb general's staff is said to have confirmed this.¹⁷⁶⁸ An officer who analysed the intelligence for Smith later told Roy Gutman: 'We felt it would occur by June.'¹⁷⁶⁹

At the meeting with Akashi and Janvier in Split at the start of June 1995¹⁷⁷⁰, Smith declared that he was convinced that the VRS would continue to challenge the international community to show that the Serbs would not submit to control. In his opinion this could lead to an intensification of the siege of Sarajevo, or in the long term an attack on the eastern enclaves. He said that UNPROFOR would have great difficulty in finding a suitable response to this crisis, with the exception of air strikes. Smith reportedly stood alone with this sombre analysis; the French intelligence community attached little credit to this view. General Clark at the Pentagon did not believe either that an attack would take place.¹⁷⁷¹

Early in the year the intelligence section in Sarajevo pointed out, with regard to the capabilities of the VRS for conducting offensive operations, that the VRS response to the ABiH offensives had not yet materialized. In previous cases this response had been relatively swift, with the use of heavy equipment and troops. Possible reasons cited for this phenomenon were: problems with logistics and supplies, lack of infantry, dissatisfaction among the officers and NCOs about the course of the war, long preparation periods needed to carry out military operations, internal disputes within the political leadership in Pale and finally the possibility that the Bosnian Serbs had not closed all their doors on a peace agreement. Every major operation aimed at the enclaves would exclude the possibility of an international settlement. The VRS counteractions would thus not be aimed at the enclave, but at other areas. The goal was thus to lure ABiH troops out of other areas and thereby to force the Muslims onto the defensive.¹⁷⁷²

In 1995 a discussion on the possible abandonment of the enclaves also began within the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). The fact that this option was discussed was typical of the mood at that time. According to the Assistant Secretary-General for Planning and Support, the German General Manfred Eisele, the idea of letting the enclaves go originated with Smith and Janvier. The Security Council opposed this, however, because agreement to the proposal would be an admission that the Safe Area concept devised by the Council had failed. Moreover, most of the Security Council members generally took their lead from the United States and the US felt that the eastern enclaves should be maintained.¹⁷⁷³

At the end of May tension in Bosnia increased. The NATO bombardments near Pale on 25 and 26 May, following by the taking hostage of UN personnel, had a strong influence on the situation. The Bosnian Serbs not only took UN personnel hostage, but also threatened observations posts around the eastern enclaves. This happened around Gorazde and Zepa, but Dutchbat was to encounter problems too.

The question is whether the threat to the enclaves increased at the start of June 1995, following intensification of the hostage crisis when western countries announced their plans for troop reinforcements in the form of a Rapid Reaction Force. An analysis by the intelligence staff in Zagreb

¹⁷⁶⁷ Confidential collection (7), BHC Situation Report by General Smith, No. 8800 Confidential, 05/04/95, and BHC G-2 Assessment, 05/04/95.

¹⁷⁶⁸ NIOD, *Coll. Westerman*. Interview Cable Bruce with Brian Powers, undated.

¹⁷⁶⁹ Roy Gutman, 'UN's Deadly Deal', *Newsday*, 29/05/96.

¹⁷⁷⁰ NIOD, *Coll. Banbury*. SRSG's Meeting in Split, 09/06/95; See also Chapter 1 of Part III.

¹⁷⁷¹ Interview with James Baxter, 16/10/00.

¹⁷⁷² Confidential collection (4). Memorandum *VRS – Ability to conduct offensive operations* from Capt. Wallace to COS, Zagreb, 11/04/95.

¹⁷⁷³ Interview with Manfred Eisele, 14/10/99.

stated that the deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force could have serious implications. Although it was not intended for deployment in the enclaves, the VRS could well view the Rapid Reaction Force as a renewed threat and as additional proof of support for the Bosnian government.¹⁷⁷⁴ The VRS could take retaliatory measures against UNPROFOR, including direct attacks on troops and installations. It would also become more difficult to move reinforcements to the enclaves. Sarajevo would initially welcome these developments, but the reaction would be negative if the new troops were intended to assist the withdrawal of UNPROFOR from the enclaves.¹⁷⁷⁵

Smith remained gloomy about the long-term prospects. In an analysis issued on 6 June he concluded that the VRS 'wants a conclusion this year'. In his opinion the ABiH had no interest in a ceasefire; moreover UNPROFOR was no longer seen as a peacekeeping force. The VRS wanted to neutralize UNPROFOR; as said, the troops in the enclaves were actually hostages. Moreover, Close Air Support would in the future be 'of doubtful value except as a measure of last resort and once potential hostages have been removed to safety'.¹⁷⁷⁶

The low-level effect of Close Air Support was also revealed by a conversation held on 2 June in Naples between the British Foreign Minister, Douglas Hurd, and the NATO Admiral Leighton Smith, who gave a detailed account of the problems in the relationship between the UN and NATO. Admiral Smith saw no political goals in Bosnia that could still be achieved in the long term. The existing mandate was mainly responsive in nature; consequently there was no realistic military goal. Admiral Smith was satisfied with the air operations; he had 216 aircraft at his disposal. But, emphasized Smith, 'it was impossible to win the battle with the Serbs by air power alone'. Hurd then asked if it was a myth that the enclaves could be defended and protected from the air. Admiral Smith's answer to this was: 'absolutely'. Most attacks were carried out with mortars, which were often transported by two men; these could be set up and dismantled within a few minutes and then be concealed in barns or houses. Close Air Support could do nothing against this type of operation.¹⁷⁷⁷

Despite this General Smith did not expect any operations by the VRS in Sarajevo in view of the political implications, negative publicity and lack of infantry. The VRS tactics boiled down to increasing pressure 'to degrade and deplete the ABiH to the point of capitulation'. Mladic was convinced that this method of slow strangulation would not provoke any response from NATO, and thus the VRS would continue to attack military targets in and around the enclaves. He expected that the ABiH would slowly lose much of its territory around the eastern enclaves and would gradually run out of ammunition. This would force the ABiH to withdraw for its own safety into more populated areas among the large numbers of Displaced Persons. The ABiH would try to use UNPROFOR as a shield and this in turn could provoke a VRS response against UNPROFOR.¹⁷⁷⁸

Following the fall of OP-E the intelligence section of Unprofor in Zagreb drew up an 'Eastern Enclaves Assessment' which predicted that the VRS would try to gain a stronger hold on the activities of the ABiH in the enclave. Although it was not expected that the VRS would attack the enclave, one could expect operations intended to force the ABiH further away from the most important communications links to the north and south of the enclave. Since the ABiH was not in a position to take effective countermeasures, the intelligence cell predicted that the VRS operation would progress slowly and methodically so as to minimize the number of casualties in its own ranks. The intelligence officer was convinced: 'The VRS is not expected to seize the Safe Area, preferring to leave the refugee problem to the local ABiH authorities to solve.' This analysis was partly based on the previously mentioned report and estimate by Karremans.¹⁷⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷⁴ United Nations, *Srebrenica Report*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁷⁷⁵ Confidential collection (4). Memorandum *Warring factions' responses to UN 'reinforced' peacekeeping* from Capt. R. Theunens to COS, Zagreb, 02/06/95.

¹⁷⁷⁶ Confidential collection (4). Memorandum *Unprofor reinforcements* from General Smith, No. 8190, 06/06/95.

¹⁷⁷⁷ Confidential information (62).

¹⁷⁷⁸ Confidential collection (4). Memorandum *Eastern Enclaves Operations - Assessment* by General Smith, No. 8940, 06/06/95.

¹⁷⁷⁹ Confidential collection (4). *Eastern Enclaves Assessment*, Annex A to Unprofor 800, 06/05/95.

On 9 June the intelligence staff in Zagreb produced the analysis entitled 'Intentions of the Warring Factions in the Eastern Enclaves'. The VRS, it was thought, would maintain its strategy of keeping a firm hold on the enclaves. This could lead to a further deterioration of the living conditions and possibly to civil unrest. Augmented by military pressure, in the long term this could lead to the capitulation of the ABiH. The VRS did not need to make any extra efforts to achieve this. 'Consequently, large-scale offensive operations of the VRS to eliminate the enclaves are not likely.' The intelligence officer expected that the ABiH would continue with small-scale sorties and ambushes, to which the VRS would respond with heavy weapons. The ABiH would continue to try to involve UNPROFOR or NATO in the conflict. 'sudden abandoning of positions along the confrontation line or (unconfirmed) alarming reports from Bosnian side on the situation in the enclaves, will be indicators for this.' In conclusion, the intelligence staff assessed the intentions of the VRS as follows: 'Large scale operations (assessed to be very unlikely), would only serve psychological aims'. In the short term the VRS would continue to pressurize Dutchbat to withdraw from certain OPs. Once this succeeded, the VRS would then try to reduce the size of the enclave in order to secure the communications links and access routes. A major military operation to eliminate Srebrenica was considered unlikely.¹⁷⁸⁰

On 29 June General Smith indicated that he was uneasy. If the ABiH continued its offensive elsewhere in Bosnia, then: 'we can expect the VRS to counter attack at some stage'. He then wrote: 'I am particularly sensitive to the situation of the units in Sarajevo and the Eastern Enclaves who for no fault of their own are without clear direction.'¹⁷⁸¹ This expectation was of a more strategic nature, however, because Smith did not indicate where he expected a VRS operation and at what time. This sombre view of Smith's was reproduced a year later in an article in *Newsday*. Smith's intelligence cell had predicted that a 'major push' directed at the three enclaves would take place sometime around the summer.¹⁷⁸² This is in line with the accounts given to the journalists Charles Lane and Thom Shanker by the CIA staff. In early 1995 the CIA had reportedly had 'bad indications'.¹⁷⁸³ It was not specified what these were.

The ABiH high command also had little hope that the enclaves could survive in the long term. The great weakness of the Safe Area concept was that the fear of attack continued: the Areas were not safe. In 1998 Minister Muratovic declared that Srebrenica had not been defensible.¹⁷⁸⁴ It was estimated that the main obstacle for the VRS would be the refugees; in the logistical sense this was bound to present a major problem. The general expectation was, as often said, that the VRS would never want to take the entire enclave, and was only interested in its southern tip. According to the Commander in Chief of the ABiH, General Rasim Delic, this was a flawed estimate. He later said that he had seen omens of the coming events:

'I was not 100% sure about what was going to happen, but I had my fears, partly because of the bilateral contacts with Akashi. But all we could do was to tell the population of Srebrenica to be on their guard (...) We tried to alert the international community, we didn't stand around with our arms folded, event though our hands were tied'.¹⁷⁸⁵

However, Delic never expressed this fear directly to General Rupert Smith in 1995.¹⁷⁸⁶

¹⁷⁸⁰ Confidential collection (4) Memorandum *Intentions of the Warring Factions in the Eastern Enclaves*, from G-2 drafter R. Theunens for COS, UNPF HQ, 09/06/95.

¹⁷⁸¹ Confidential collection (7). General Smith to FC, 'Commander HQ Unprofor Directive 3/95', 29/06/95.

¹⁷⁸² Roy Gutman, 'UN's Deadly Deal', *Newsday*, 29/05/96.

¹⁷⁸³ Charles Lane and Thom Shanker, 'Bosnia: What the CIA Didn't Tell Us', *The New York Review of Books*, 09/05/96.

¹⁷⁸⁴ Interview with Hasan Muratovic, 30/01/98.

¹⁷⁸⁵ Interview with Rasim Delic, 21/04/98.

¹⁷⁸⁶ Interview with James Baxter, 16/10/00.

The Military Intelligence Service of the Central Organization of the Ministry of Defence (MIS/CO) made a negative estimate of the long-term viability of the enclave right from the start. Since the creation of the Safe Areas, the MIS/CO had consistently pointed to the risk inherent for UNPROFOR. The strength of UNPROFOR was not sufficient to be able to successfully defend the existing positions. This was indeed not the aim, because the mandate stated that attacks or aggression should primarily be deterred by the presence of the UN troops.

From the moment that Dutchbat arrived, the VRS was in a position to take the enclave. The question was not *whether* the VRS was able to do this, but whether and when the VRS *wanted* to do it. The MIS/CO did not expect, however, that a potential offensive would go further than occupation of the south-eastern corner of the enclave, which was of tactical relevance to the VRS.¹⁷⁸⁷ On 23 May Karadzic stated that the VRS would conquer the eastern enclaves and Sarajevo unless the ABiH was disarmed and withdrawn in these areas. The MIS/CO analysis was that he had primarily said this in order to direct international attention to the fact that the UN had not responded to the presence of Bosnian heavy weapons in towns and enclaves. MIS/CO also pointed to the recent sorties from these 'safe areas'.¹⁷⁸⁸ Karadzic's declaration on 23 May that the VRS was going to conquer the eastern enclaves was also by the Canadian diplomat Snider and the Canadian intelligence community not viewed as a threat. Only if Mladic were to say the same would it have been a real threat.¹⁷⁸⁹

It was thus expected by many organizations and persons that in the long term the enclaves were not viable and would disappear. However, no major attack was expected. But strategic prior knowledge is not the same as tactical prior knowledge. The latter involves clear intelligence which makes it very clear that an attack is being prepared. Below it is examined whether this type of prior knowledge was present or not. This is done by reviewing the hard intelligence that was available at various levels. Were there tactical indications, such as military transports, troop concentrations and reports that provided mutual corroboration? Before answering these questions it is important firstly to give a brief reminder of how the actual attack took place¹⁷⁹⁰, as this will provide a framework for answering the formulated questions.

4. The attack on Srebrenica

On 3 June, OP-E at the southern tip of the enclave fell into the hands of the VRS. After this attack Dutchbat expected on 4 June that the VRS would continue the assault within 36 hours. The indirect declared objective of the VRS was to take the valley of the River Jadar and the mountains to the north of this up to Mount Kak: 'As a coincidence this line matches the southern border of the enclave as the VRS sees it.'¹⁷⁹¹ In an assessment a day later Karremans reported that the VRS attitude had hardened and the *status quo* had disappeared. He feared that if UNPROFOR did not take any effective military countermeasures, the VRS would respond to this by trying to take the entire southern flank, which would make the situation of the population worse. Karremans did not consider the use of air strikes to be opportune either.¹⁷⁹²

The situation remained threatening. On 8 June ABiH representatives requested an urgent meeting with Dutchbat. The deputy commander of the ABiH said that he expected a major attack. The VRS was concentrating around the enclave and special combat troops had been reported; these units were the same ones that had attacked OP-E. Zero Hour was expected to be the evening of 8 June or the morning of 9 June. Mladic was to personally lead the attack, which was intended to neutralize all

¹⁷⁸⁷ NIOD, Memo from Military Intelligence Service to the NIOD, January 1998.

¹⁷⁸⁸ Military Intelligence Service/CO. Memorandum on Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation, No. 24/95, 23/05/95.

¹⁷⁸⁹ Interview with Dennis Snider, 17/11/99.

¹⁷⁹⁰ This is dealt with in detail in Chapters 5 and 6 of Part III of the main Srebrenica report.

¹⁷⁹¹ MoD, DCBC, Box 4, HQ Dutchbat to CO SNE, T-068, 04/06/95.

¹⁷⁹² MoD, CRST. No. DE00309, Karremans to C-KL Crisis Staff, TK9589, 05/06/95.

OPs. Karremans noted that this information should be regarded as reliable because it came from the same source that had announced the attack on OP-E. Nonetheless Karremans was not impressed by the situation. He concluded with: 'Reaction Dutchbat: continue task and, if necessary, defend the OPs.'¹⁷⁹³

The intelligence report sent by the liaison officer of the 28th Division of the ABiH, Ekrim Salihovic, to the 2nd Corps in Tuzla was less alarming in its tone, like the reports from Karremans. This report did indicate that Dutchbat had been informed of details regarding the possible attack, but the reported activities of the VRS mostly related to the north-western section of the enclave. The VRS was engaged in intensive reconnaissance in Zalazje close to OP-R, but the ABiH had not seen this for itself in the area.¹⁷⁹⁴ Other ABiH officers were however of the opinion that the situation was alarming and that a VRS attack on the enclave was imminent. There was intensification of VRS propaganda, logistical support had been received from Serbia and the morale of the VRS was improving. These indications led Captain Nijaz Masic (responsible for the morale of the 28th Division) to conclude that the VRS definitely planned to conquer Eastern Bosnia.¹⁷⁹⁵

In his book, Karremans mentioned that on 8 June the British Joint Commission Observers (the JCOs) who had been detailed to the battalion came to him with the suspicion that the VRS would attack all the enclaves within two weeks. Karremans also reported in his book that he had passed on reports from the JCOs and from the ABiH to the higher command,¹⁷⁹⁶ but the report that he sent to Tuzla, Sarajevo and The Hague in fact gave only the information that the ABiH had gathered about an attack, and not the suspicions of the JCOs.¹⁷⁹⁷

Strangely enough this 'alarm letter' from Karremans was never passed on to the MIS/Army. Its Head at that time, Bokhoven, confirmed that in May and July 1995 Karremans had written two alarm letters to the Commander in Chief of the Army, for the attention of the minister. He had expected that a copy of these letters would be sent to the MIS/Army, but this never happened. As Head he knew nothing about the letters. If he had received copies; then the MIS/Army might have been able to make an analysis of the situation and his service might have been more alert. But he first heard about these two letters during the major debriefing operation in Assen.¹⁷⁹⁸

The MIS/CO did however receive Karremans' reports and analysed the report deriving from the ABiH. The MIS/CO concluded that there were no indications of large-scale troop concentrations. On the other hand, this analysis concluded that the VRS around the enclave was strong enough to carry out a limited operation on the territory of the enclave and it did not seem unlikely that, just as in Gorazde, the VRS would try to gain control of parts of the enclave. The MIS/CO considered however that it was premature to view the limited operation against OP-E as the start of further operations. In Gorazde such warnings from the ABiH had reached UNPROFOR, but they seemed intended to prompt Dutchbat to abandon the observations posts so that the ABiH could take them over. It was conceivable that the Bosnian warnings on Srebrenica had the same goal. Another possibility considered by the MIS was that the ABiH warnings could be intended to place responsibility for any escalations with the VRS right from the start. The minister was properly informed of the matter.¹⁷⁹⁹

The United Nations Military Observers, the UNMOs, had not expected the attack on OP-E either. The UNMOs had a very limited perspective in and around the enclave. This was later confirmed

¹⁷⁹³ MoD, *DCBC*, Box 4. HQ Dutchbat to CO SNE, 08/06/95. See also: MIS/CO. Memorandum to CDS; Re: Intelligence on attack on Srebrenica; Author: L. Col. Van Geldere; Annotation: Col. J. Mulder Head MIS/Army; 18/03/97.

¹⁷⁹⁴ NIOD, *Coll. CD-ROMs*. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa, , Str. Pov. Br. 02-06-27/95, 08/08/95.

¹⁷⁹⁵ NIOD, *Coll. CD-ROMs*. ABiH Komanda 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa RBiH Odjeljenje morala, Str. Pov. Br. 04-93/95, 09/08/95.

¹⁷⁹⁶ Karremans, *Srebrenica*, p. 149.

¹⁷⁹⁷ MoD, *DCBC*, Colonel R. van Dam to the Minister, 09/06/95.

¹⁷⁹⁸ Interview with H. Bokhoven, 16/05/01.

¹⁷⁹⁹ MoD, *MIS/CO*. Memorandum from Head of Operations (Col. R.S. van Dam) to the Minister, Junior Minister, CDS, PCDS and SCOCIS, 09/06/95, unnumbered. The press reports to the effect that the minister was not informed are thus incorrect. It is not clear if and how Karremans was informed of the findings of the MIS/CO.

by the Norwegian Brigadier General Haukland, Commander of SNE, who said that the UNMOs had a difficult time and knew no more than Dutchbat. They had no freedom of movement and the team was not able to travel through the region around Srebrenica.¹⁸⁰⁰ This is also clear from the reports made by the UNMOs and their later debriefing following their return from Srebrenica. A Dutch UNMO, Major A. de Haan, did however report that on 2 June rumours were circulating with regard to an attack on OP-E. A day later these rumours proved to be true. Their report showed that the attack on OP-E was evaluated by the UNMOs on 3 June as an operation aimed at gaining control of the southern road,¹⁸⁰¹ and not taking over the enclave itself. Furthermore, the report portrayed things as not so serious. At that time neither the observers nor anyone in Dutchbat imagined that the Bosnian Serbs would take the entire enclave. It was however thought that the VRS might try to carve off pieces of the enclave.¹⁸⁰²

The loss of OP-E was not experienced as a shock within SNE. Ken Biser, the head of Civil Affairs, stated in his weekly report of 9 June that this was not a surprise. It had long been known that the VRS wanted to use the southern road. If UNPROFOR was not prepared to permit this 'they might feel the need to take it by force'. In a summary Biser wrote that on the basis of the 'rhetoric of the past few days, I warned that they would seize it by force. I did not think they would do it prior to Sunday or Monday though.' Biser did however expect problems in the long term. Moreover, the Bosnian governor in Tuzla had urged that OP-E be regained 'without regard to civilian casualties from any subsequent shelling', as in the event of such a retaking the VRS would shell the enclave. In Biser's opinion the situation around the road would probably escalate, because the VRS was already using it. It would not be long before the ABiH started setting up ambushes. In turn the VRS would then take reprisals and shell the enclave, and would then proceed with 'seizure of additional territory'.¹⁸⁰³ However, things remained fairly quiet until the start of July.¹⁸⁰⁴

The first sign that the VRS intended to do something around Srebrenica was the arrival of a group of staff officers of the Drina Corps in Eastern Bosnia at the end of June,¹⁸⁰⁵ led by the Chief of Staff of the Drina Corps (and after 13 July its commander), Major General Radislav Krstic. This marked the start of the planning for *Operation Krivaja '95*.¹⁸⁰⁶ On 2 July this led to the issue of an operations plan by the Drina Corps. The aim of *Krivaja '95* was to separate the enclaves of Zepa and Srebrenica, to reduce them to the built-up areas and to create the conditions for their 'elimination'. This goal was to be achieved with a surprise attack. Units around the enclave were ordered to conduct an active defence, while separate combat units were to reduce the enclaves. Full radio silence was to be observed so that no military traffic could be monitored.

The consulted Bosnian Serb sources claim that the continual ABiH sorties from the enclave were a major reason for this operation. The former Chief of the General Staff of the VRS and later Minister of Defence of the Republika Srpska, General Manojlo Milanovic, stated that the attack was a response to the sortie towards Visnjica, in the direction of the headquarters of the VRS in Han Pijesak. This attack resulted in many civilian casualties.¹⁸⁰⁷ The historian Milivoje Ivanisevic also believed that the attack on Srebrenica was caused by the ABiH sorties. In order to prevent a repetition the ABiH lines had to be taken.¹⁸⁰⁸ The journalist Zoran Jovanovic, at the time the information officer of the Drina Corps, confirmed when asked that the murder of the five VRS woodcutters close to Milici on 28 May and the sortie on 26 June near Visnjica, followed by an attack on a VRS signals patrol at Crna Rijeka (three kilometres from the headquarters of the Drina Corps) prompted Mladic to take definitive

¹⁸⁰⁰ Interview with H. Haukland, 03/05/99.

¹⁸⁰¹ SMG. UNMO SNE to UNMO HQ, Sarajevo, No. IN 854, 03/06/95. The UNMO headquarters at BHC came to the same verdict. UNMO, BHC to UNMO, HQ Zagreb, No. IN. 891, 04/06/95.

¹⁸⁰² Interview with L.C. van Duijn, 02/07/99.

¹⁸⁰³ UNGE, *UNROFOR*, Box 55. Biser to Joseph, SSN 467, 05/06/95 and Biser to Corwin, SSN 209, 09/06/95.

¹⁸⁰⁴ How the VRS attacked is described in detail in Chapter 5 of Part III of the Srebrenica report.

¹⁸⁰⁵ This brief reconstruction draws on Part III (Chapters 5 and 6) of the Srebrenica report.

¹⁸⁰⁶ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 403/a, Butler Report, p. 6 and 15.

¹⁸⁰⁷ Interview with Manojlo Milovanovic, 18/11/98.

¹⁸⁰⁸ Interview with Milivoje Ivanisevic, 17/09/99.

action on the enclave.¹⁸⁰⁹ At the time there were varying accounts of the numbers of Serb dead resulting from ABiH attacks.

Another significant reason for the VRS general staff to start the operation was to release troops who were badly needed elsewhere. The troops were required around Sarajevo and elsewhere on the front line held by the Drina Corps.¹⁸¹⁰ The NATO bombardment on Pale on 25 and 26 May also influenced the decision to attack the enclaves, according to the ABiH. The bombardments led to a further degradation of the military infrastructure and strengthened the support for a military solution to the crisis.¹⁸¹¹ Moreover, the morale of part of the VRS was low and a victory at Srebrenica could help to restore this.¹⁸¹² Possibly the strategy pursued by the Croats also influenced the decision to initiate the attack on Srebrenica. Releasing troops to resist the Croatian operations in the Krajina (which had started on 4 June 1995) could, according to ABiH Corps Commander Sead Delic, also have played a role.¹⁸¹³ On the Bosnian side there were no further insights into the motivation for the VRS attack.

As regards the progress of the attack: it suffices to say here that the operational plan for *Krivaja '95* was developed in a very short period and that there was also little time for the preparations. Moreover, the aim of the operation was not the conquest of Srebrenica but to reduce the size of the enclave in order to cut the links with Zepa. It appears that UNPROFOR and the Bosnian Muslims had no knowledge of the VRS plans for this operation. Although Mladic once again pointed out to Janvier on 29 June that there were a large number of armed men in the enclaves who formed a threat to the VRS,¹⁸¹⁴ there was little that pointed to preparations for an attack. At the start of July it was still fairly quiet in the enclave, despite an increase in battle incidents, which was however limited. The last situation report issued by Dutchbat on 5 July, hours before the start of the attack, reported that the general situation was assessed as calm and stable. No major changes were expected in the coming 24 hours.¹⁸¹⁵

On 5 July the 28th Division of the ABiH in Srebrenica reported to 2nd Corps in Tuzla that there were indications of a possible major offensive. The population had been observing troop movements for some time and reconnaissance had revealed that VRS units had arrived in the area around Zeleni Jadar in the afternoon of 5 July.¹⁸¹⁶ It is striking that it was not until the morning of 6 July that the 28th Division reported that a large column of armoured and mechanized units was moving from the area around Zvornik towards Bratunac.¹⁸¹⁷ The relocation of the VRS's heavy equipment, chiefly moved in from Zvornik, had not been noted by the ABiH and had also not been revealed by intercepts of radio traffic. This would have been the chief indication of an attack. It was pure coincidence that a passing convoy of the UN's refugee organization, UNHCR, noticed these convoys. Starting from the positions that had been taken up around the enclave on 5 July, the Bosnian Serbs were to conduct the final act in what was to become the drama of Srebrenica.

On 6 July the VRS started its attack on positions of Dutchbat and the ABiH at the southern edge of the enclave. Almost all efforts were aimed at this sector, which was in line with the primary goal to separate Srebrenica and Zepa. The VRS advance went so well that the evening of 9 July saw an important 'turning point' of which Dutchbat, UNPROFOR and the ABiH were not aware. The

¹⁸⁰⁹ Interview with Zoran Jovanovic, 13/09/99.

¹⁸¹⁰ ICTY (IT-98-33) D 160/a, Radinovic Report, section 3.3.

¹⁸¹¹ Interview with Semsudin Murinovic, 17/05/99.

¹⁸¹² Interview with Sefko Tihic, 08/03/99.

¹⁸¹³ Interview with S. Delic, 10/03/99.

¹⁸¹⁴ UNNY, *DPKO coded cables*. Code Cable Janvier to Annan New York, No. UNPF Z-1082, 01/07/95.

¹⁸¹⁵ NIOD, *Coll. Sitreps*, HQ Dutchbat to Sector HQ North-East, Sitrep for period 041700 to 051700B Jul 95.

¹⁸¹⁶ ICTY (IT-98-33) OTP Ex. 403/a, 28th Division Combat Report, No. 01-161/95, 05/07/95. Butler Report, p. 17. In a report of 6 July as well, the 28th Division indicated that a strong concentration of tanks and artillery had been seen the previous day. See also: Collection NIOD, Collection CD-ROMs, Komanda 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa, Str. pov. br. 01-163/95, 06/07/95.

¹⁸¹⁷ NIOD, *Coll. CD-ROMs*. ABiH 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa, odjeljenje bezbjednosti, General Stab ARBiH Uprava bezbjednosti, Str. Pov. Broj. 13-05, 06/07/95.

Bosnian Serbs decided that they would no longer confine themselves to the southern part of the enclave, but would extend the operation and take the town of Srebrenica itself. Karadzic was informed that the results achieved now put the Drina Corps in a position to take the town; he had expressed his satisfaction with this and had agreed to a continuation of the operation to disarm the 'Muslim terrorist gangs' and to achieve a full demilitarization of the enclave. In this order, issued by Major General Zdravko Tolimir, it was also stated that Karadzic had determined that the safety of UNPROFOR soldiers and of the population should be ensured. Orders to this effect were to be provided to all participating units. The safety of the population should also be guaranteed in the event that they should attempt to cross to the territory of the Republika Srpska. The orders made no mention of a forced relocation of the population. The VRS units were to be ordered not to destroy any civilian property unless they met with resistance. Buildings were not to be set on fire. A final instruction, also of significance, was that the population and prisoners of war should be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention.¹⁸¹⁸ On 11 July all of Srebrenica fell into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁸¹⁹

The conquest of Srebrenica was, according to some authors, 'not to be attributed to an unexpected decision taken by unpredictable Serb leaders at an unguarded moment; it was probably a carefully planned operation that had been prepared four months before the actual start of the attack'.¹⁸²⁰ This is incorrect. The plans for an attack on the enclave were actually drawn up at a very late stage and in a very short time; there was no months-long preparation. It was a question of days. Equally, it was not intended to occupy the enclave in its entirety. This decision was taken only on the evening of 9 July. This *ad hoc* decision was confirmed by a VRS soldier in an interview with the *Banja Luka Srpska Vojska*. He took part in the attack and was involved in the 'rectification' of the chaotic situation that arose later. According to him the Bosnian Serbs had not planned to take Srebrenica at all, but on 9 July the VRS had come so close to the enclave that it was decided to press on. This was due to the lack of any serious resistance by the ABiH.¹⁸²¹

The question of whether there was prior knowledge of the attack on the entire enclave is thus relevant only to 9 and 10 July; the issue of prior knowledge of the attack on the southern tip of the enclave, by contrast, must focus on the period from 2 to 6 July, because this is when preparations for the *Krivaja '95* plan were made. It needs to be established what information was gathered during this time and how this was interpreted by the UNPROFOR staff in Tuzla, Zagreb and Sarajevo. Following this, it will be examined whether documents of UNPROFOR, DPKO and official documents from private and government archives or conducted interviews cast light on the question as to whether there were relevant indications, and whether Western intelligence services passed on intelligence to the political and military policymakers within UNPROFOR.

5. The intelligence situation of UNPROFOR

According to press reports General Smith had been warned by an UNPROFOR report that if the ABiH continued its offensive around Sarajevo, the VRS would attack the enclaves in order to conquer them and thus to free soldiers for the battle in other areas.¹⁸²² Smith himself claimed that the attack came as a great surprise and the Political Director at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and former chairwoman of the British Joint Intelligence Committee, Pauline Neville-Jones, stated the same.¹⁸²³ By the same token, the Swedish negotiator Carl Bildt said he had no indications of a military

¹⁸¹⁸ ICTY (IT-33-98) OTP Ex 64B, Main Staff of the Army of Republika Srpska to President of Republika Srpska, for information, Drina Corps IKM/Forward Command Post, Generals Gvero and Krstic, personally, 09/07/95, Strictly Conf. No. 12/46-501/95.

¹⁸¹⁹ For a detailed analysis of the fall of Srebrenica: Chapter 6 in Part III of the main report.

¹⁸²⁰ Van Staden, *De fuik*, 1997, p. 9 and Westerman & Rijs, *Het Zwartste Scenario*, p. 148.

¹⁸²¹ Zeljko Planincic, 'The call for help goes out to the best', *Banja Luka Srpska Vojska*, (FBIS translation), 03/11/95.

¹⁸²² S. Sullivan and A. Sage, 'Britain's UN forces gave warning of Serb attacks', *The Times*, 15/07/95.

¹⁸²³ Interview with P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

build-up or of the aim to conquer Srebrenica. Bildt stated that the general assessment by ‘all analytical and intelligence units in and out of the theatre of war at this point of time’ was that the VRS did not intend to take the entire enclave.¹⁸²⁴

When verifying these views it is important to examine the flow of information within UNPROFOR. Such prior information would initially have had to come from players operating within the enclave, such as Dutchbat, UNMOs, the British JCOs (SAS units), or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In addition, the ABiH in the enclave and in the 2nd Corps in Tuzla could have been an important source of intelligence for UNPROFOR. Information from these sources would have reached SNE, from where it would have been passed to Bosnia Hercegovina Command (BHC) in Sarajevo and then to the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb. This would have been the route for the most important intelligence concerning Srebrenica, which could then have been supplemented by the information available to the various national intelligence and security services. The issue to be examined next is to what extent this actually happened.

Prior knowledge held by, and assessments made by, Dutchbat and the UNMOs

All documents and interviews indicate that Dutchbat was completely surprised by the attack: Karremans had no prior knowledge. The final situation report sent by Dutchbat on 5 July, just hours before the start of the VRS attack, stated only that the situation was calm.¹⁸²⁵ Things were quiet in the enclave. At one OP 43 men and women set off in a southerly direction at the end of the afternoon. The only other report that indicated military activity was that the ABiH had occupied many positions close to the line of confrontation and that another OP had reported seeing a trailer with a tank.¹⁸²⁶ In Bratunac nothing had been noticed of the build-up for the attack on the enclave. The VRS liaison officer actually heard from Dutchbat, through the special telephone line, that the attack on the enclave had begun.¹⁸²⁷ The commander of the SAS reported to his headquarters that he too had received reports mentioning VRS troop movements. He did not believe that Karremans regarded the VRS as a serious threat. In June Karremans had told a doctor of *Médecins sans Frontières* (MSF) that the ABiH would be able to resist for at least seven days and was strong enough to prevent the fall of the enclave.¹⁸²⁸

A first indication of the approaching storm was received on 5 July. Dutchbat reported that a convoy had been seen consisting of five APCs, four T-55 tanks and five trucks, and the relocation of five artillery pieces from Bratunac to the south, as well as reporting that five tanks had been seen on the road south of Zvornik. The report about the tanks originated from a UNHCR Field Officer, and the report about the artillery from the Dutchbat liaison team.¹⁸²⁹ These were not however indications that led Dutchbat or UNPROFOR to draw conclusions about an attack. The closest thing to a ‘storm warning’ came from the G-2 (intelligence staff) of SNE. The reports from Dutchbat here led to the following comments:

‘It is not known what the final destination is for the convoy or the arty [artillery] pieces but it may be a show of strength to keep the pressure on the enclave or to stop the movement of arms between the two enclaves of ZEPA and SREBRENICA. This may mean an increase in Warring Faction activity around

¹⁸²⁴ Bildt, *Peace Journey*, pp. 55 – 57.

¹⁸²⁵ MoD, *Sitreps*. HQ Dutchbat to Sector HQ North-East, Sitrep for period 041700 to 051700B Jul 95. The report of the tanks to the south of Zvornik came from a UNHCR Field Officer, and the report of the artillery at Bratunac from the LO Team of Dutchbat. (Supplement to Daily Milinfosum 4 Jul 95. Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff).

¹⁸²⁶ MoD, *SMG*. Fax S2/3 Dutchbat to A-Comp. (Simin Han), 1 (Nederland/BE) Logtbat, Logbase Zagreb, Comcen Crisis Staff, Milinfo 040600 - 050600B Jul 95.

¹⁸²⁷ Interview with Jovan Ivic, 20/10/00.

¹⁸²⁸ Confidential information (1).

¹⁸²⁹ MoD, *CRST*. Supplement to Daily Milinfosum 04/07/95 and SMG 1004/59, Logbook G3 Sarajevo 4 July 18.00B.

the enclaves in the very near future. The tks [tanks] were not reported as being on low loaders so it is assumed that they will not be going too far remembering that DUTCHBAT will shortly be in the process of rotating and the BSA [VRS] may wish to test the new boys out'.¹⁸³⁰

This test came even faster than 'the near future' and Dutchbat was completely unaware of the peril. This danger showed itself totally unexpectedly in the early morning of 6 July, when shells landed in the enclave. The fact that this marked the start of the VRS attack on the enclave penetrated only slowly to the higher echelons.

It does not seem likely that the UNMOs had noted the preparations, otherwise they would have reported this to Dutchbat. The UNMOs were a separate organization. When the Canadian battalion arrived in Srebrenica, the UNMOs took up accommodation in the Post Office building in the centre of Srebrenica because of the central location and the good telecommunications facilities.¹⁸³¹ According to the UNMO interpreter Emir Suljagic the UN and Dutchbat should have known about the impending attack. According to him, a month before the attack several UNMOs travelled from Srebrenica to Sarajevo. En route, about twenty kilometres from Srebrenica, they reportedly saw large numbers of tanks, soldiers and weapons, including SA-3 missiles. According to Suljagic it was obvious that something was going to happen. He reportedly also passed on this intelligence to the ABiH.¹⁸³² But in fact these observations had nothing to do with the attack on Srebrenica because at that point the preparations had not yet begun.

The alarming vision can also be found in claims that the UNMOs had prepared a confidential report on 2 June regarding the presence of the Arkan Tigers (a notorious Serb paramilitary unit) in the vicinity of Bratunac. According to the author Hartmann, Arkan's reputation '*aurait dû alerter les hauts commandements militaires de Sarajevo et de Zagreb*' ('should have alerted the military high commands in Sarajevo and Zagreb'). The UNMOs in the region should have concluded that the Arkan Tigers 'were evil enough to cleanse "an enclave" and emphasizing the probability of an offensive in the near future'. This report of Arkan dated from the end of May, however, at a time when the VRS preparations had not yet begun.¹⁸³³

Westerman and Rijs also refer to reports from the UNMOs, who concluded from the arrival of the Arkan Tigers that the VRS was not able to conquer the enclave. The Arkan Tigers were needed to do this.¹⁸³⁴ Apart from the issue of whether this is a correct estimate of the military strength of the VRS, it must be established that the UNMOs did not present hard and concrete indications for a coming attack. Statements were confined to vague suggestions that something like that might possibly happen.

It seems that the UNMOs observed nothing of the VRS preparations. According to the Canadian UNMO Bob Patchett, who remained in the enclave until the end of June 1995, no VRS build-up had been noted. In the months of April and May it was even possible to cross the ceasefire line to talk to VRS soldiers, which at the time comprised local military personnel. They asked about people in the enclave whom they knew and about the state of certain houses. Patchett was the only UNMO who was allowed to leave on 23 June; he had not expected to be permitted to travel via Bratunac. He saw no military build-up or checkpoints in the town. He also saw no artillery positions close to the bridge over the Drina. For weeks the VRS had been complaining that the ABiH had been

¹⁸³⁰ MoD, *SMG*. HQ Sector NE Daily Milinfosum from 031700B to 041700B Jul 95. UN Conf. The report of the tanks to the south of Zvornik came from a UNHCR Field Officer. MoD, *SMG*, LO Team to UNMOs Srebrenica, Milinfo, 05-07-95 16:46.

¹⁸³¹ Interview with Emir Suljagic, 24/05/99.

¹⁸³² Interview with Emir Suljagic, 23/11/97.

¹⁸³³ Florence Hartmann, 'Chronologie d'une négligence criminelle: le génocide de Srebrenica', in: Allain, e.a., *L'ex Yougoslavie and Europe*, p. 115, and 'AICG call to indict General Janvier', *Bosnia Report*, No. 1, November-December 1997, p. 3.

¹⁸³⁴ Westerman & Rijs, *Het Zwartste Scenario*, p. 149.

digging trenches and was going around heavily armed. The VRS had however showed Patchett a map with new lines of confrontation, which indicated that the Swedish Shelter Project would come under VRS control. He expected that once the VRS had started its attack this would be continued; that was the usual pattern. The VRS aim was to bring its own lines closer to the boundaries of the enclave. In June Patchett observed that the VRS was cutting down a lot of trees and dragging them away with tractors. This could be to open a route, or for commercial purposes. It was not possible to say that the VRS was engaged in a build-up.¹⁸³⁵

On 25 June the UNMO team in Srebrenica reported that there was very little news about the VRS. The ABiH were openly displaying their weapons and new uniforms were reported.¹⁸³⁶ The overview for the period 25 June to 1 July, drawn up by the UNMO headquarters in Zagreb, also gave no indication that an attack was imminent. No forecasts to this effect were made.¹⁸³⁷ The UNMOs were therefore surprised when ABiH commander Becirovic reported that two buses and two trucks had been observed at Zeleni Jadar on the afternoon of 5 July which had dropped off VRS troops. All through this day, 5 July, troop concentrations had been observed around the enclave. In their report the UNMOs expressed their surprise that the ABiH had not reported these preparations (which had not been observed by Dutchbat).¹⁸³⁸

It was only on 6 July that more serious reports were received from the UNMOs. It reported serious bombardments; at this point however the attack had already begun. Becirovic stated at a meeting with Dutchbat and the UNMOs that in the past 24 hours a concentration of VRS troops had gathered. He requested Karremans to plan his rotation of DutchBat III with its successors, the Ukrainians, carefully so that the VRS was given no chance to allow UN soldiers to depart and then not to permit any replacements. He seems not to have expected the conquest of the enclave.¹⁸³⁹ The UNMOs commented that the ABiH had prior knowledge of these preparations but had not reported them, which can be interpreted as an indication of the 'underrated attitude they attached to it'. The UNMOs thought that if the VRS movements on 5 July were reported at an early stage then the attack of the following day 'could have been pre-empted and counter measures taken to prevent it'.¹⁸⁴⁰

According to all three UNMOs the collapse of the defence was due to a weak chain of command in the ABiH. The orders, sometimes contradictory, were simply not followed by some units. This led to total confusion, which in turn resulted in pointless troop movements from one side of the enclave to the other. The VRS knew about this weakness and exploited it.¹⁸⁴¹ In addition the weak position of Commander Becirovic, following the departure of Oric from the enclave, may have played a part as well. To summarize: diaries, UNPROFOR reports, debriefings of and interviews with UNMOs provide evidence that is at odds with the claims by various cited authors: the UNMOs did *not* have prior tactical knowledge.

The observations of the JCOs

In an analysis of reports by Joint Commission Observers in Tuzla and Srebrenica it is concluded that they had no indications whatsoever of an attack.¹⁸⁴² It should be noted here that the JCO team in the

¹⁸³⁵ Interview with Bob Patchett, 19/11/99.

¹⁸³⁶ MoD, *SMG*. UNMO SNE to UNMO HQ, Sarajevo, No. IN 551, 25/06/95. See also the report from UNMO HQ Zagreb: UNPF, *Geneva, Box 75*, UNMO HQ Daily Sitrep, 25/06/95.

¹⁸³⁷ UNGE, *UNPF, Box 75*, UNMO activities, UNMO HQ Zagreb, MIO Office, Infosum for the period 25 June-01 July, 1995, 03/07/95.

¹⁸³⁸ NIOD, *Coll. CD-ROMs*. Komanda 28. Divizije to Komanda 2. Korpusa, 6 July 1995, Str. pov. br. 01-163/95. UNMO Srebrenica to TX 061700B Jul 95 and Archive MoD, *MIS/Army*. UNMO HQ Sector BH-NE to UNMO HQ BH COMD, 06/07/95.

¹⁸³⁹ Confidential collection (5). Report: *Report on The Battle of Srebrenica*, 21/07/95.

¹⁸⁴⁰ MoD, *MIS/Army*. No. 153, UNMO Srebrenica to TX, No. 5220, 06/07/95.

¹⁸⁴¹ Confidential collection (5). G-2 Air, Flt. Lt. Hooper, 'Debrief in UNMOS from the Srebrenica enclave', 23/07/95.

¹⁸⁴² Confidential information (1).

enclave was seriously confined by Karremans in its freedom of movement; they were allowed only to accompany Dutch patrols. The commander of the JCOs reported in May that 'there were constant rumours at this time from the ABiH that the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) were planning to attack the Enclave'. On 25 May the JCO commander reported that BHC had informed him that 'a move on the eastern Enclaves was a real possibility and that if this occurred then Srebrenica would be the first'. This was probably an analysis by Smith following the NATO bombardments near Pale. This information was passed to Dutchbat, 'who it is reported, did not believe it'.¹⁸⁴³

On 8 June representatives of the ABiH convened an urgent meeting with Dutchbat and the JCOs and 'gave them detailed plans for an 'imminent attack' on the Enclave'. This did not lead to any alarms being sounded: the JCOs were not impressed. Such rumours had often been heard and 'were thus hard to take seriously'. Furthermore the JCOs had received 'no confirmatory evidence for the plan'. From this it can be deduced that General Smith and the British intelligence services also knew of no such plans. This was also revealed during the morning briefing on 25 June, where General Smith declared that the problems was 'that we have very little intelligence on what Mladic's movements are'.¹⁸⁴⁴

On 5 July five tanks, five APCs and four trucks were seen heading in a southerly direction. This report came from a UNHCR official and the commander of the JCOs reported this to his headquarters in Sarajevo; the attack started a day later. On 7 July the commander reported that Dutchbat and his headquarters in Sarajevo both believed that the VRS operation would be on a limited scale and was intended only to teach the ABiH a lesson. He did however add: 'There was (...) no way of knowing for sure.' The attack was continued but the JCOs still remained uncertain about the intentions of the VRS. The team clung to the analysis that the attack was aimed only at the southern tip and 'even after the attack had started in July it was only in the last 2 days that it became evident that the Serb objective was to overrun the whole enclave'.¹⁸⁴⁵ It must therefore be concluded that the JCOs, due in part to their limited operational freedom, knew little or nothing about the build-up of the VRS troops and the planned attack. There was constant uncertainty about the true aims of the VRS. Apparently the JCOs' headquarters had no additional information either.

Prior knowledge at UNHCR

In a report of 25 June the UNHCR representative examined the situation around Srebrenica in more depth. The population was starting to become worried by statements made by Karadzic about stopping the supplies to the enclave.¹⁸⁴⁶ The following day the director of the hospital in Srebrenica gave an interview to the Bosnian state broadcasting company. The director declared that if nothing was done within 14 days to improve supplies, the situation in Srebrenica would become disastrous. The policymakers in Pale could not have wished for a better confirmation that the Serb strategy of strangulation was working. The director mentioned the many rumours about military operations outside the borders of the enclave. ABiH troops had reportedly infiltrated in Han Pijesak; a Serb village had been burned down close to Milici; there was fighting around Vlasenica, and shelling of the enclave was expected. Dutchbat had warned the population not to gather at the marketplace.¹⁸⁴⁷

The UNHCR reports contain no further references to a planned attack. Nonetheless, according to an article written in 1997 by the UNHCR special envoy to the former Yugoslavia, José Maria Mendiluce, things were very clear.

¹⁸⁴³ Confidential information (1).

¹⁸⁴⁴ Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*, p. 130.

¹⁸⁴⁵ Confidential information (1).

¹⁸⁴⁶ MoD, *CRST. UNHCR, Srebrenica to UNHCR, Zagreb, No. IN. 001, 25/06/95.*

¹⁸⁴⁷ MoD, *CRST. UNHCR, Belgrade to UNHCR, Zagreb, No. IN. 004, 26/06/95.*

‘We knew what was going to happen in Srebrenica. Mladic was going to be more merciless than ever to get revenge for his setbacks. Only a fool couldn’t have seen it coming, or someone very badly informed. I don’t know whether General Janvier is a fool or very badly informed, but he is an accessory to this genocide’.¹⁸⁴⁸

The question is whether Mendiluce had this knowledge at the time or whether he first arrived at this viewpoint after the event; the latter seems more likely.

Prior knowledge held by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

MSF was the only organization that heard the rumours that the VRS was busy preparing an attack. This is revealed by an MSF report of 27 June 1995. Important sources ‘close to the VRS said that the VRS might soon launch a large-scale offensive on Srebrenica with the intention of taking the entire enclave’.¹⁸⁴⁹ This report came one day after the ABiH attack on Visnjica.¹⁸⁵⁰ It was probably not passed on to Dutchbat or Zagreb UNPROFOR HQ. Since the actual order was first issued on 2 July, one might ask whether this MSF information was of a tactical or strategic nature. It is also unclear who the source in the VRS was.

Prior knowledge held by the ABiH

The ABiH claimed to have had prior knowledge. The commander of the 2nd Corps in Tuzla, General Sead Delic, claimed afterwards in an interview that the attack did not come as a surprise. The 2nd Corps, said Delic, had corresponding intelligence and warned Karremans, but he did not believe this.¹⁸⁵¹ It is strange, however, that no traces of this have been found in the Dutchbat reports. It is also strange that the reports of the 2nd Corps to the ABiH headquarters in Sarajevo also make no mention of this fact. On 3 July the Corps reported exclusively on the humanitarian situation in Srebrenica. There was an almost catastrophic shortage of food and the ABiH troops could not operate properly without enough food.¹⁸⁵² Moreover, the 8-page post-mortem analysis drawn up by the 2nd Corps for the ABiH headquarters in Sarajevo does not indicate any prior knowledge.¹⁸⁵³

The ABiH also sent reports to UNPROFOR, but there too, according to Delic, nothing was done about the Bosnian warnings.¹⁸⁵⁴ As described in Chapter 6, Sigint played an important role for the ABiH and reportedly provided important information. The most important monitoring stations were in Tuzla, Okresanica and Konjuh, operated by the Electronic Warfare unit of the 2nd Corps and the Sigint section of the Bosnian national security service. This latter section worked independently of the Electronic Warfare unit, but shared intelligence with it. The goal of these stations was to monitor and record the military radio traffic of the VRS. This was also carried out before, during and after the fall of Srebrenica, according to various testimonies for the Tribunal during the trial of General Krstic. Konjuh focussed chiefly on the Drina Corps and the general staff of the VRS.¹⁸⁵⁵

¹⁸⁴⁸ AICG call to indict General Janvier’, *Bosnia Report*, No. 1, November-December 1997, p. 4.

¹⁸⁴⁹ Archives MSF, Brussels. *MSF Capsats*, Message IN 481, 27/06/95.

¹⁸⁵⁰ MoD, DCBC, Box 66. Captain RNLAf P.C.J. Blonk, ‘*Chronologisch overzicht Srebrenica 1 maart 1996 t/m 26 juli 1996, Stg. Geheim*’ (Chronological overview of Srebrenica 1 March 1996 to 26 July 1996, Strictly Confidential), 11/07/96.

¹⁸⁵¹ Interview with Sead Delic, 10/03/99.

¹⁸⁵² ABiH, Tuzla. *Archive 13-05-95*, Report from 2nd Corps to HQ, no. 02-2-13-489, 03/07/95 and Report from 2nd Corps to HQ, unnumbered, 04/07/95.

¹⁸⁵³ ABiH, *Tuzla, Archive 13-05-95*, Report from 2nd Corps to HQ, Report of the events in Srebrenica for the General Staff of the ABiH in Sarajevo, Document No. 24, Draft Top Secret (8 pp.), 28/08/95.

¹⁸⁵⁴ Interview with Sead Delic, 09/03/99.

¹⁸⁵⁵ Overview of Court Proceedings, statements by 8 witnesses, 30/06/00 and 23/06/00, on: <http://www.un.org/icty/news/Krstic/Krstic-cp.htm>

The VRS's most important communications station was located on Mount Veliki Zep close to Han Pijesak. This communications tower had a wide range and, according to Bosnian military personnel, the Electronic Warfare unit had access to real-time intercepts and intelligence. In each case, it would seem that the ABiH in Tuzla was aware of the preparations. Lieutenant Colonel Semsudin Murinovic, as Deputy Commander responsible for security in the 24th Division of the ABiH, stated that the 2nd Corps had prior knowledge. About four months before the attack reports were already being sent to the headquarters in Sarajevo that 'something' was going to happen. This was indicated in particular by intercepts of VRS traffic. According to Murinovic it was chiefly Comint that betrayed this fact. The surface-to-air missiles at Srebrenica had to come from another area, and the instructions for their relocation were intercepted. All air defence resources were concentrated in Eastern Bosnia. Comint also showed that Mladic was seriously planning, in the event of continued air strikes, to take Dutchbat hostage and to expose the soldiers to the strikes.

Another Sigint expert, Captain Hazrudin Kistic, confirmed that thanks to Comint the 2nd Corps was informed well in advance.¹⁸⁵⁶ His unit intercepted real-time intercepts and intelligence from its base in Tuzla. On 3 June the ABiH received new indications that something was about to happen;¹⁸⁵⁷ this was after the attack on OP-E. General Sead Delic confirmed that intercepts of messages from Mladic showed that he was planning an attack.¹⁸⁵⁸ On the basis of Comint it was possible to report to Tuzla by the ABiH in the enclave about the results of the Muslim attack on Visnjica. A day later the army received an overview of the most important intercepts relating to this attack. The VRS wanted to track down the units involved in this attack and to this end sent special instructions to troops, codenamed 'yellow'.¹⁸⁵⁹ On 2 July Kistic discovered, through intercepts, the plans for an attack on Srebrenica: one week before the actual attack he had intercepted messages which incontrovertibly showed that the VRS was going to attack. This also indicated that the VRS was requesting logistical support and a large number of buses. The intercepts were of conversations between Krstic and his deputy; the operation was led from Prebicevac.¹⁸⁶⁰

The trial of Krstic showed that around 5 July the ABiH in Srebrenica and the 2nd Corps in Tuzla were informed about the planned military operations. Humint from the local population indicated that extra VRS units had arrived. ABiH reconnaissance groups discovered that these fresh units arrived in the afternoon of 5 July. The aim of the VRS operation was to cut the line of communication between Srebrenica and Zepa.¹⁸⁶¹

Some of the intercepts at the disposal of the Yugoslavia Tribunal had already been published by Mehmed Pargan in *Sarajevo Slobodna Bosna*. Pargan revealed that at the end of June the commander of the Drina Corps passed on to the local commander in Zvornik Mladic's instruction to prepare for the attack. Following initial reconnaissance, on 3 July the Drina Corps sent more than 40 vehicles, including buses and trucks, towards Srebrenica. The next day the Corps already had more than 1200 litres of fuel and four tanks were dispatched. On 6 July the logistical preparations were complete and the armbands were distributed.¹⁸⁶² In Pargan's article the transcriptions of the intercepts made of the attack by the 2nd Corps are printed. His account also indicates that the intelligence section in Kladanj closely followed the progress of the battle.

In short, the ABiH and the Bosnian security service seem to have been well-informed about the imminent attack, but also about the battle and the later murders. In this context one can also refer to the statements by Becirovic, who on 6 July told Dutchbat that the ABiH had observed the build-up by

¹⁸⁵⁶ Interview with Hazrudin Kistic, 17 and 18/05/99.

¹⁸⁵⁷ NIOD, *Coll. CD-ROMs*. 28e Division to Section MV, 2nd Corps, No. 02-06-25/95, 06/06/95.

¹⁸⁵⁸ Interview with Sead Delic, 10/03/99.

¹⁸⁵⁹ NIOD, *Coll. CD-ROMs*. Section MV, 2nd Corps to 28th Division, No. 02/8-01-998, 27/06/95 and 02/8-01-1012, 28/06/95.

¹⁸⁶⁰ Interview with Hazrudin Kistic, 17 and 18/05/99.

¹⁸⁶¹ Rapport Butler, *Srebrenica Military Narrative – Operation Krivaja 95*, 15/05/00, pp. 950763 - 950764.

¹⁸⁶² Mehmed Pargan, 'B-H Army Eavesdropped on VRS', *Sarajevo Slobodna Bosna*, (FBIS translation), 11/07/98.

the VRS on 4 and 5 July but had not passed this information on. A reason for this was not given.¹⁸⁶³ The report drawn up by Butler for the Tribunal reveals that a report was indeed prepared by the 28th Division.¹⁸⁶⁴ It is unclear however what then happened to this ABiH report. Westerman and Rijs also reported that two weeks before the fall the Bosnian Intelligence Service had clear indications that the Bosnian Serbs were planning something. An elite Serb unit had been reported; unusually busy military traffic had been observed and intercepts revealed large deliveries of fuel.¹⁸⁶⁵

Despite this, one must seriously question all the aforementioned claims about prior knowledge of the attack on Srebrenica. To begin with, there were in fact no preparations that started weeks before. The planning for the operation only started on 2 July. Secondly, in Chapter 6 it has been shown that the Bosnian Muslims did not have real-time Sigint at their disposal. It thus seems probable that their knowledge of preparations was gained only after the event. After all, although there were Bosnian intercepts which show that it was possible to monitor VRS communications traffic, the Bosnian military or political leadership never shared these intercepts with UNPROFOR or the UN in New York.

The intercepts were however later provided to journalists and to the NIOD (directly and via the MIS). It is important to ask whether these were near-real-time or even real-time intercepts. If this was the case, then the Bosnian intercept operators listened in live to attack orders. Konjuh, Okresanica and Tuzla reported both to the 2nd Corps and to the ABiH headquarters in Sarajevo and to the higher political leadership. The Bosnian national security service in Okresanica reported chiefly to the political leaders of Bosnia.¹⁸⁶⁶ The fact that the Bosnian permanent representative to the UN was certainly not informed is revealed by statements by Sacirbey. On 10 July Sacirbey called Minister Voorhoeve with the news that Bihac was to be the next VRS target. He made no mention at all of the other eastern enclaves.¹⁸⁶⁷

Were real-time intercepts possible? As previously described, a simple calculation shows that the number of channels to be monitored multiplied by the required personnel was larger than the number of people available to process and report in near-real-time. The processing of the Comint was very slow and labour-intensive. Chapter 6 concluded that some telephone calls and VHF channels may have been monitored live, but that the large majority of the substantial VRS military communications traffic was recorded on tape and first analysed much later. Moreover, up to 6 July the VRS had maintained radio silence. As a result, much of the context was lost and VRS messages that were indeed intercepted in real time could never be placed in the correct context.

Reviewing the Bosnian Comint efforts, it can be concluded that the service responsible for Sigint was simply too small (ten people per monitoring station) and too poorly equipped to fulfil its mission adequately. When the attack started it is possible that a great deal was intercepted (mostly traffic via walkie-talkies), but there was not enough processing and analysis capability for these intercepts, and insufficient reporting of the intercepted messages. Intercepts were not processed in a computer, but written by hand in logbooks. Tapes of intercepts were re-used and almost no use was made of computers to process and disseminate the stream of information. Moreover, there were no Comint analysts working at the monitoring stations to analyse the intercepts and to evaluate its true value. In addition, there was a lack of fixed, secure communications links to the ABiH headquarters.

Moreover, there are no indications that the Bosnian services had analysis capabilities at the level of brigade, corps or higher to facilitate the swift integration of Comint with other intelligence, such as Humint. Even if the political will to publicize these dramatic intercepts had existed, this would still not have succeeded because the intelligence structure was not geared to this. The real-time intercepts were too fragmentary. In any case, the study of archives of Dutchbat, UNPROFOR, the MIS and of foreign

¹⁸⁶³ NIOD, *Coll. Brantz*, Diary Brantz, pp. 277, 281 and 284.

¹⁸⁶⁴ Rapport Butler, *'srebrenica Military Narrative – Operation Krivaja 95'*, 15/05/00, pp. 950764.

¹⁸⁶⁵ Westerman & Rijs, *Het Zwartste Scenario*, pp. 209-210.

¹⁸⁶⁶ Confidential interview (54).

¹⁸⁶⁷ Diary Voorhoeve, p. 103.

archives, together with interviews, has not indicated that the ABiH shared intercepts with Dutchbat, UNPROFOR or Western intelligence services. General Delic is thus not correct in claiming that intercepts of Mladic already in June and July revealed he was planning an attack.

Another ABiH general claimed, however, that intercepts in real time did exist.¹⁸⁶⁸ This must however be doubted. If the Bosnian Muslims did indeed have real-time Comint, why did they not make use of it? According to a senior US intelligence official, it would have been the best public relations stunt of all time because the Muslims could have shouted 'bloody hell and murder'. The ABiH would never have missed this chance if they had had real-time intelligence. This official supposed that the ABiH simply did not have real-time capabilities.¹⁸⁶⁹ One must also ask why the ABiH, if it knew of the attack, did not pass on this knowledge to UNPROFOR or Western intelligence services. All available intelligence was actually passed on to UNPROFOR, according to Major Sefko Tihic, Head of Intelligence of 2nd Corps. Intelligence was passed on to SNE, but nothing was done with it there, according to Tihic. Supposedly it was estimated that the VRS wanted to take over all of Srebrenica and that June/July would be the best time for this. There were indicators, such as the relocation of surface-to-air missiles from the left bank to the right bank of the Drina.¹⁸⁷⁰ No proof has been found for this latter claim.

The diary of the Deputy Commander of Sector North East, Colonel C. Brantz, shows that officers of the ABiH did indeed regularly give indications that the developments around the enclave were being monitored closely. On 28 June, for instance, Brantz spoke to the Chief of Staff of the 2nd Corps, who showed on a map the place where ABiH reconnaissance units operated to monitor developments. They had established that increasing numbers of soldiers and amounts of equipment were being moved from Serbia to Srpska.¹⁸⁷¹ During this conversation the Chief of Staff was constantly informed by telephone of the situation around the enclave. But it was not until 6 July that Dutchbat heard anything from the ABiH about the build-up of the VRS on 4 and 5 July.¹⁸⁷² This is very late. If the 2nd Corps was already informed at an early stage, then why were no stronger warnings given to UNPROFOR? Various Bosnian Muslims claim that they did this but that they were not heeded. This is categorically denied by officials working at SNE and other staff at UNPROFOR.

Was it then, as Mehmed Pargan accused the 2nd Corps, a question of gross negligence and enormous passivity?¹⁸⁷³ Probably not: there was simply not enough real-time intelligence available. Interviewed ABiH military personnel continue to claim that the crucial intelligence was passed on. But UNPROFOR officials who would have been the recipients of this intelligence state that they never received it. Their statements are supported by the fact that little to nothing has been found in the UNPROFOR reports. Virtually nothing was found that could be interpreted as alarming information or explicit prior knowledge at the ABiH. According to Lieutenant Colonel Baxter the ABiH have never provided a snippet of intelligence to General Smith, his staff or the rest of UNPROFOR.¹⁸⁷⁴ In various other interviews with staff of foreign intelligence services, interviewees also denied that Bosnian intelligence had been received. In short, it must be concluded that the ABiH did not have prior tactical knowledge.

Prior knowledge at Sector North East (SNE) in Tuzla

The attack on the enclave came as a total surprise to the Norwegian Brigadier General Haukland, the commander in SNE. He went on leave on 25 June. At that moment some troop movements had been

¹⁸⁶⁸ Confidential information (71).

¹⁸⁶⁹ Confidential interview (54).

¹⁸⁷⁰ Interview with Sefko Tihic, 08/03/99.

¹⁸⁷¹ NIOD, *Coll. CD-ROMs*, Ziulich Mehmed to 28th Division, No. 06-05-171/95, 24/06/95.

¹⁸⁷² NIOD, *Coll. Brantz*, Diary Brantz, pp. 277, 281 and 284.

¹⁸⁷³ Mehmed Pargan, 'B-H Army Eavesdropped on VRS', *Sarajevo Slobodna Bosna* (FBIS translation), 11/07/98.

¹⁸⁷⁴ Interview with James Baxter, 16/10/00.

reported, but the reasons for these could only be guessed at. As said, it was not thought that these presaged an attack. There was no reason that the staff of SNE could see why Haukland's planned holiday leave should not go ahead. Following his return he discovered that Tuzla had known nothing. He doubted whether the ABiH had indeed known of the attack. If that had been the case, then Delic would have contacted him, but he never did this. The Norwegian did not receive any intelligence from UNPROFOR or NATO. His SNE was 'blindfolded in the dark'.¹⁸⁷⁵ In April 1995, for instance, the Sector command had submitted five requests to NATO for Imint, but NATO had refused to supply these.¹⁸⁷⁶ According to the British Lieutenant Colonel C.A. Le Hardy of SNE in Tuzla, his organization had insufficient priority at BHC in Sarajevo. When SNE sent documents to Sarajevo no answer was received. When Le Hardy paid a visit to BHC, no map of SNE could be found 'Outside Sarajevo we couldn't get BHC's attention for any case', he added critically. No intelligence was ever received from BHC.¹⁸⁷⁷

The attack also came as a great surprise to the Commander of the Danish tanks in Tuzla, Captain N. Petersen. In the preceding months he had never received any reports about a possible military build-up of the VRS. Just a few days before the attack he received reports about a troop build-up, supplied by the intelligence officer of the Swedish battalion. The final attack on Srebrenica was a major surprise. He immediately put his unit in the highest state of alert and started deploying his tanks over various defensive positions. If he had had any earlier indications, he would have taken these measures earlier too.¹⁸⁷⁸ The same went for the Commander of the Scandinavian battalion, Colonel G. Arlefalk.¹⁸⁷⁹

But according to the liaison officer of the 2nd Corps, Mehmed Suljkanovic, UNPROFOR was indeed informed. All available intelligence, according to him, was shared. Before the fall Suljkanovic also tried to make clear to the Deputy Commander of SNE, Colonel Brantz, that the matter was serious, but the latter attached little credibility to the reports.¹⁸⁸⁰ On 8 July it was still (rightly) assumed at SNE that the VRS did not plan to take the entire enclave. In line with this, in the evening of 8 July 1995 the Chief Political Officer of UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, Phillip Corwin, received a telephone call from the Civil Affairs Officer in SNE, the American Ken Biser, who told him that the VRS planned to take over a few OPs in order to control the southern route. This would shorten the Serb supply line by about 60 kilometres. According to Biser the VRS did not appear to want to take the entire enclave 'since there are 50,000 Muslims in it and they wouldn't know what to do with them'.¹⁸⁸¹

What was known by Bosnia Hercegovina Command (BHC) in Sarajevo?

BHC not only had all UNPROFOR reports at its disposal, but also national intelligence. General Smith could call on the British intelligence services, and his own intelligence officer was an American. On 15 June the Office of the Regional Senior Military Observer in Sarajevo reported in a general, periodic assessment that the situation in Srebrenica was possibly the most threatening, compared with the two other eastern enclaves. According to this organization Mladic had instructed his VRS to conduct offensive operations. The VRS was reportedly concentrating troops around the enclave for this operation, or had already done this. Here too it was not expected that an attempt would be made to conquer the enclave, but possibly Mladic wanted to reduce the size in a first phase, or to better control

¹⁸⁷⁵ Interview with Hagrup Haukland, 03/05/99. Early in 1995 he received constant complaints about ABiH attacks from the enclave on Serb villages. Haukland then went to General Sead ('little') Delic and asked him to end these provocations. This was because the VRS retaliated with artillery and mortar bombardments on the population of the enclave. General Delic declared: 'I do not care'.

¹⁸⁷⁶ NIOD, Letter from Minister J. Pronk to NIOD, 29/05/01.

¹⁸⁷⁷ Interview with C.A. Le Hardy, 08/10/97.

¹⁸⁷⁸ Interview with N.E. Petersen, 29/10/99.

¹⁸⁷⁹ Interview with G. Arlefalk, 18/05/00.

¹⁸⁸⁰ Interview with Mehmed Suljkanovic, 18/05/99.

¹⁸⁸¹ NIOD, *Coll. Clingendael*. Note for the File, Drafter P. Corwin, 08/07/95.

the hills and mountains along the boundary, and might then aim to achieve the rest later in the summer.¹⁸⁸² It was clear that BHC was concerned. But it would be another matter if there had been hard indications at the end of June for a planned attack aimed at taking over the southern tip of the enclave.

General Smith stated that while he was in Sarajevo he had never received any prior indications, not from national military sources or intelligence channels either. In any case, he said, he received no British intelligence with any indication of a VRS attack. He consistently and categorically stated that he received nothing from MI6, DIS or GCHQ, because 'otherwise he would have done certain things differently'. In fact, Smith left Sarajevo for a short holiday during the fall of Srebrenica. He said that 'there were no forewarnings regarding an imminent attack on Srebrenica'. If any British intelligence was supplied, then it mostly regarded Gorazde, because that was indeed a national issue.¹⁸⁸³

This was confirmed by his military assistant, Lieutenant Colonel Baxter. Smith was dependent on the reports from Tuzla and the UNMOs. The American intelligence officer Brian Powers occasionally supplied something, and they also had a direct link to the British services. They did not have any direct access to US Imint. Photographs from UAVs first became available in August and September 1995. According to Baxter an attack on Gorazde was considered more likely. Baxter commented: 'In Sarajevo we had absolutely no intelligence about a build-up of the VRS around the enclaves.'¹⁸⁸⁴ Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, who was on Akashi's staff as a political adviser in 1994 and 1995, confirmed the expectation that Gorazde would be the next target.¹⁸⁸⁵ The Chief Political Officer of UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, Phillip Corwin, also noted on 10 July 1995 in his diary that it was clear 'that our intelligence has been faulty'. Sarajevo expected a limited operation but, according to Corwin, 'we were dead wrong'.¹⁸⁸⁶

According to press reports UNPROFOR supposedly intercepted telephone calls which revealed the military organization of the offensive, in collaboration with the VJ, and the arrival of new troops and weapons from Serbia.¹⁸⁸⁷ This is not a credible statement, because UNPROFOR did not have its own interception capabilities. This information could, at the most, have been supplied by the one of the countries that had troops stationed in Bosnia but it is strange that this is not to be found in UNPROFOR documents. Another member of Smith's staff declared that no one at BHC believed that the VRS intended to conquer Srebrenica.¹⁸⁸⁸ The American intelligence officer in Sarajevo, Powers, was surprised too. According to the Dutch Lieutenant Colonel A. de Ruiter, at that time Military Assistant to the Chief of Staff of BHC and as someone who knew Powers well, the G-2 analyses were produced under the auspices of Powers. If US services had possessed any indications, then Powers certainly did not have this information at his disposal. No hard indications were available in Sarajevo.¹⁸⁸⁹ This was confirmed by the deputy military assistant, the Danish Major J.M. Wallin.¹⁸⁹⁰ The Canadian Lieutenant Colonel R. Hatton, operations officer in Sarajevo, admitted that things were 'cooking' around Srebrenica and Zepa; the frustration of the VRS was known and had been pointed out several times. But the intention of the VRS to take the enclave had never been clear.¹⁸⁹¹

¹⁸⁸² Confidential collection (5). RSMO's Periodical Assessment 16 May to 15 June 95, 15/06/95.

¹⁸⁸³ Interview with R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

¹⁸⁸⁴ Interview with James Baxter, 16/10/00.

¹⁸⁸⁵ Interview with Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, 06/06/97.

¹⁸⁸⁶ Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*, p. 203.

¹⁸⁸⁷ 'AICG call to indict General Janvier', *Bosnia Report*, No. 1, November-December 1997, p. 3.

¹⁸⁸⁸ Confidential interview (56).

¹⁸⁸⁹ Interview with J.A.C. de Ruiter, 29/06/00.

¹⁸⁹⁰ Interview with J.M. Wallin, 28/10/99.

¹⁸⁹¹ Interview with Rick Hatton, 16/11/99.

The level of knowledge of Zagreb

The attack and conquest thus came as a surprise to BHC in Sarajevo. But did the UN headquarters in Zagreb have prior knowledge? Janvier had national French intelligence input at his disposal, with an US deputy intelligence officer who had national intelligence input. What warnings arrived one way or another in Zagreb? About a week before the attack on OP-E Janvier wrote down his Personal Directives for Smith. In his analysis Janvier concluded that the VRS had restored the balance and even held the advantage. Were the eastern enclaves a target for the VRS? According to Janvier there were two goals. The first was to neutralize UNPROFOR and secondly to achieve military goals which until now had been hindered by the presence of UNPROFOR. These goals included the complete isolation of the eastern enclaves. According to Janvier the situation there was exacerbated by Bosnian provocations in the form of attacks which then led to counter responses by the VRS. All that UNPROFOR could do was to remain alert and undertake initiatives without unnecessarily endangering its own troops.¹⁸⁹² This shows that Janvier did not reckon with a rapidly planned conquest of Srebrenica, but simply pointed out that the eastern enclaves could be in danger.

According to journalists Janvier is said to have been told about the VRS plans for an attack on the enclave at least two weeks in advance by the French Military Intelligence Service, the *Direction du Renseignement Militaire* (DRM). The DRM, just like the British ones, are said to have managed this without US intelligence. This French Comint was reportedly passed to Janvier in his capacity as French commander, not as commander of the UN forces.¹⁸⁹³ However, in view of the author's findings one can doubt this. On 27 June General Janvier wrote a 'Dear Rupert' letter to General Smith in which he mentioned a 'window of opportunity' for the peace process. This could however close again within three to four weeks. He would quickly arrange a meeting with Mladic. Gaining time and exercising patience was the most important thing at that moment.¹⁸⁹⁴ If Janvier had had specific prior knowledge (possibly from French national sources) then he would have surely have couched his letter in different terms and would have struck a more alarming tone. Others at the headquarters in Zagreb lacked this prior tactical knowledge as well. The Canadian Deputy Force Commander, Ashton, started the briefing for Akashi on 6 July 1995 with the words: 'overall a quiet day militarily'. During the fall Janvier was initially in Paris for discussions. It is clear that he would not have departed if he had had advance warning. Janvier discussed a wide range of questions, but in Paris that day Srebrenica was not on the agenda.¹⁸⁹⁵

General Ashton stated that the available intelligence did not indicate that an attack on Srebrenica was imminent.¹⁸⁹⁶ Zagreb was not aware of any attack because the reports generally related to the past 24 hours. Tony Banbury, who at that time was working in Zagreb as Political Affairs Officer for Akashi, confirmed that they knew nothing about it.¹⁸⁹⁷ This was corroborated by Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein. He pointed out that there was no 'early alarm'.¹⁸⁹⁸ The daily report sent by Akashi to New York also made no mention as yet of the bombardment of Srebrenica. The situation in Croatia, the Croat offensive in the Livno Valley and the increase in fighting around Bihac were the centres of attention. As was often the case, the situation in Sarajevo dominated the agenda of the morning briefing in Zagreb, together with a statement by the French Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Lanxade: he wanted to use the Rapid Reaction Force to open a corridor for the withdrawal of the French troops

¹⁸⁹² Confidential collection (7), FC Janvier to General Smith, *FC's Personal Directives to Unprofor Comd*, File Ref. FC/95/0801, 29/05/95.

¹⁸⁹³ Andreas Zumach, 'Grosser Lauschangriff auf Srebrenica' (Major bugging operation for Srebrenica), in: *Die Tageszeitung*, 30/10/95 and Ian Bruce, 'Allies hamper inquiry', *The Glasgow Herald*, 01/12/95.

¹⁸⁹⁴ Confidential collection (7). Letter from Janvier to Smith, 27/06/95.

¹⁸⁹⁵ Assemblée Nationale, *Srebrenica: rapport sur un massacre*, Assemblée Nationale, No 3412, 2 parts, Paris 2001, Part 2, Audition de M. Jaen-Claude Mallet, 05/04/01.

¹⁸⁹⁶ Interview with Barry Ashton, 30/05/00.

¹⁸⁹⁷ Interview with Tony Banbury, 11/05/00.

¹⁸⁹⁸ Interview with Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, 06/06/97.

from Sarajevo, because they were at too much risk. Srebrenica was indeed mentioned in the Zagreb briefing, but only because UNHCR reported that it had heard from Bosnian sources that 13 people had died of hunger. UNHCR was however unable to confirm this.¹⁸⁹⁹ The Canadian Major David Last, Military Assistant to General Ashton, also emphasized that the attack came as a total surprise to Zagreb. Srebrenica was a low-profile point of attention, and an issue that was marked with a yellow and not a red flag. Zagreb needed to concentrate on much more urgent matters, and in this respect Srebrenica was only a minor issue.¹⁹⁰⁰ The same picture is provided by the diary of Emma Shitaka, personal assistant to Akashi in 1994-1995. On 7 July all she noted with regard to the Zagreb briefing was that Gorazde was of strategic importance. No attack on the enclave was expected. The VRS would try 'to reduce size of enclaves and cutting of humanitarian aid'.¹⁹⁰¹

At that time the intelligence section in Zagreb was led by the Swede Svensson and his military assistant Ljunggren. Their diary notes reveal that on 11 July they still expected that the VRS would not take the entire enclave. When that actually happened, it came as a total surprise to Zagreb. The two Swedes noted that the French officer General Andre Soubirou held a briefing that morning in the Zagreb headquarters in which he declared that the VRS wanted a stronger hold on the enclave. Soubirou did not expect the VRS to conduct a major attack with infantry. Mladic needed these troops in Sarajevo and the VRS would mostly attack Srebrenica with artillery. But at that moment the enclave had already fallen. Both Swedes came to the conclusion afterwards, on the basis of all available information, that Srebrenica was a retaliation for the ABiH hit and run operations conducted from the enclave, the use of Close Air Support and the creation of the Rapid Reaction Force.¹⁹⁰² However, Srebrenica did not remain a topic on the agenda for long. Major Last noted in his diary at 4 pm on 12 July that all attention had shifted to the Croats and the Krajina.¹⁹⁰³

Officials who worked for the intelligence staff in Zagreb were later to declare that information was withheld by the Americans. Their claims were, however, fiercely disputed by US and European intelligence officials. According to them The US Deputy G-2, Morgan, had indeed direct access to all US intelligence, but there was no prior knowledge of the assault. Up to the last moment, according to an UNPROFOR official who worked in Zagreb at the time, Morgan and others remained convinced that the VRS planned only to take the southern part of the enclave.¹⁹⁰⁴

The fact that also the US military establishment was taken by surprise can be deduced from a later analysis. The document was drawn up by the wholly US Joint Analysis Center in Molesworth in the United Kingdom, the final destination of all available intelligence from various (inter)national channels, and gives an overview of the event. The analysis of the operation notes that the VRS attack 'runs counter to what has been expected of them for several years'. Normally pressure was exerted only on the borders of the enclave to take control of the high ground. No attempt to attack the entire enclave or the town was expected, due to the number of soldiers needed for house-to-house fighting. The US Joint Analysis Center in Molesworth thought that the VRS had insufficient infantry and that the ABiH would be too strong. In retrospect it was supposed that ABiH units had departed at the end of June and that those who remained behind had insufficient courage and fortitude to put up a long and determined resistance.¹⁹⁰⁵

The British intelligence cell in Sarajevo also had no insights whatsoever into the true intentions of the VRS. In fact, consultation took place between G-2, Zagreb and the British cell in Sarajevo, but

¹⁸⁹⁹ NIOD, *Coll. Banbury*. Diary Banbury, 06/07/95 and UNNY, DPKO coded cables. Code Cables Akashi to Annan, No. Z-1104, 06/07/95 and Janvier to Annan, No. Z-1111, 06/07/95.

¹⁹⁰⁰ Interview with David Last, 05/07/00.

¹⁹⁰¹ Interview with Emma Shitaka, 11/05/00.

¹⁹⁰² Interview with Jan-Inge Svensson and Ingmar Ljunggren, 04/11/99.

¹⁹⁰³ Interview with David Last, 05/07/00.

¹⁹⁰⁴ Confidential interview (54) and confidential information (80).

¹⁹⁰⁵ Confidential collection (4), JAC Analysis Balkan Crisis Group to Capt Theunens, 14/07/95. Also: Interview with General George Joulwan, 08/06/00.

BHC also had no indications of VRS goals beyond the southern tip of the enclave.¹⁹⁰⁶ The US ambassador in Zagreb, Peter Galbraith, also stated that he had not seen any intelligence about the attack.¹⁹⁰⁷ The operations officer in Zagreb, the Danish officer Colonel K. Bache, could only surmise at a possible attack. He expected that the VRS would respond to the ABiH's nightly hit and run operations. The VRS could no longer summon the patience and wanted to put an end to this. He also made the following observation. Zagreb was totally dependent for its decision-making on the reports supplied by Sarajevo. And this was precisely the problem: in General Smith's perspective Zagreb was a long way away. Little information arrived from Sarajevo. According to Bache Zagreb was completely 'out of touch with the events in SNE' due in part to the relationship between Janvier and Smith: 'they did not like each other'. The attack on Srebrenica ultimately came as a great surprise to Zagreb.

Bache's diary and that of Tony Banbury clearly show that the possibility of an attack on Srebrenica did not once appear on the agenda of the daily briefings.¹⁹⁰⁸ Colonel Harm de Jonge, who attended all crisis meetings in Zagreb, also confirmed that the attack came unexpectedly.¹⁹⁰⁹ The reports of the Senior Staff Meetings chaired by Akashi and the Force Commander give the same picture. A study of the reports from 30 June to 12 July indicates that Srebrenica received almost no attention in Zagreb and that the VRS build-up was completely overlooked.¹⁹¹⁰

All official documents, diaries and interviews indicate that the VRS intentions remained unclear right up to the last moment and up to the very highest level of UNPROFOR. The records of the daily council between Akashi and Janvier in Zagreb shows that even when the enclave had already fallen into the hands of the VRS, there was still uncertainty about the intentions of the Bosnian Serbs. On 12 July an Interoffice memorandum from the Zagreb intelligence section provided an estimate of the VRS intentions. This update was based on the events of the previous day. Two options were noted; a limited VRS operation to take a firmer hold on the enclave, to minimize the ABiH activities, to free troops, to take hold of the black market in the enclave and to further increase the pressure; or conquest of the enclave. The reasons for the second option were the same as the first, plus to test how far UNPROFOR was prepared to respond seriously and to send a strong signal to the ABiH. The VRS showed in this way that it was still able to carry out such operations. The bombardments in the north of the enclave 'point to VRS intentions to collapse the Enclave further'. Possibly the events around Sarajevo had led to a decision to free troops more quickly, and this 'now outweighs the political bargaining value of the enclaves'. If Mladic wanted Srebrenica, then it was expected that Zepa would soon follow. The VRS might leave Gorazde alone.¹⁹¹¹ An 'after action analysis' by the G-2 Staff in Zagreb also shows that no tactical prior knowledge was present. This document kept to the view that, in the short term, the VRS would continue to concentrate on the strategy of strangulation and the use of the 'humanitarian weapon' instead of launching major operations. The conquest had created a totally new situation.¹⁹¹² To summarize: there are no indications that senior military and political officials of UNPROFOR in Zagreb had any knowledge of the troop build-up around the enclave. Officials in Tuzla, Sarajevo and Zagreb were totally in the dark as to the intentions of the VRS.¹⁹¹³ But did the same go for New York too?

¹⁹⁰⁶ Confidential interview (45).

¹⁹⁰⁷ Interview with Peter Galbraith, 23/06/99.

¹⁹⁰⁸ Interview with K. Bache, 29/10/99.

¹⁹⁰⁹ Harry Meijer, 'Voor VN kwam aanval onverwachts' (Attack came as surprise to UN), *NRC Handelsblad*, 27/07/95 and interview with J.H. de Jonge, 27/09/99.

¹⁹¹⁰ UNNY, ICFY, *Archive FC*, Senior Staff Meetings, 30/06/95-14/07/95.

¹⁹¹¹ Confidential collection (4). G-2 UNPF HQ, *Update: Assessment on Srebrenica enclave – VRS intentions*, G-2 Rick Morgan (drafter Capt. Theunens) to COS, 12/07/95 and G-2 UNPF HQ, 'BIH Hostile Attitude towards Unprofor', G-2 Rick Morgan (drafter R. Theunens) to COS, 12/07/95.

¹⁹¹² Confidential collection (4). G-2 UNPF HQ, *Srebrenica: the Aftermath*, G-2 Rick Morgan (drafter Capt. Theunens) to COS, 13/07/95.

¹⁹¹³ See also: Westerman & Rijs, *Het Zwartste Scenario*, p. 148.

The UN headquarters in New York

The headquarters of the UN did not have its own intelligence channels. As described earlier, the headquarters had a ‘situation centre’, which included a special cell with representatives of the intelligence services of the five permanent members of the Security Council. Intelligence was provided to the Secretary-General, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and specially selected officials. Within the DPKO, not everyone at the highest level received intelligence from all services. Some received intelligence from the Russian foreign intelligence service but not from Western services. The CIA sometimes supplied Imint and the British mostly Humint. But this special cell too received no intelligence about Srebrenica.¹⁹¹⁴ The report of the informal consultation with the members of the Security Council held on 3 July 1995 indicates that no major military operation was expected. The eastern enclaves were not even mentioned.¹⁹¹⁵ The Canadian General M. Baril, the Canadian Chief of Defence Staff and former Senior Military Adviser to the Secretary-General of the UN, had no forewarning either. However, it did not surprise him that Srebrenica fell. Very laconically he remarked: ‘If deterrence works, it works, if not, not.’¹⁹¹⁶

In other words, senior policymakers and the UN headquarters in New York had no relevant intelligence. Akashi declared that he did not have intelligence and had no knowledge of the Bosnian Serb plans. ‘If any government had such reports, they were not shared with the UN.’ Akashi did not know whether Mladic aimed for the fall of the enclave right from the start. Perhaps the VRS general was an opportunist who, when he realized that no resistance was being offered, pressed on. ‘NATO may have had intelligence’, but Akashi did not wish to comment on press reports to this effect. He had earlier asked for intelligence reports on Rwanda and Zaire, and then received documents of foreign origin on a non-attributable basis. He had never received anything about Srebrenica.¹⁹¹⁷

It should be noted that Akashi, of course, was speaking figuratively rather than literally. For example, during the month of June alone, Srebrenica was reported on in the Zagreb Defense Information Summary on 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 20, 25, 26, 28, 29. Akashi and his staff were the primary consumer of this report, along with the Force Commander and his staff. Of these 18 reports on Srebrenica, none predicted the imminent collapse of the enclave. Presumably Akashi was referring to any predictive intelligence which spoke unequivocally of the collapse of the Srebrenica enclave. The deputy G-2 Morgan personally briefed Mr. Akashi on 29 June, covering the overall theatre situation. His intelligence brief covered the following strategic issues: Croatia: 1) polarization of factions over Krajina; 2) Sector east update. Bosnia: 1) Summer long VRS campaign expected to focus on north-south lines of communication as well as stabilizing the Posavina Corridor. 2) emerging tactical confidence on part of the ABiH. 3) Parallels between factions in BiH and VRS. However, no predictive intelligence of an attack on the Srebrenica enclave (or any enclaves) was broached, but anticipation of a summer-long VRS offensive was discussed. Not only was this anticipated for some time, and it was the usual pattern for summertime warfare in Bosnia and Croatia. Additionally, VRS strategists recognized that without substantial gains in the summer of 1995, any negotiated settlement would be that much more disadvantageous to the Serbs. However, a major problem with Akashi was also that he was not very often available. The US Deputy G-2 personally tried to brief Akashi as often as possible whenever his schedule would permit, which was not terribly often. Akashi did receive genuine all-source briefings during the tenure of the US intelligence official in Zagreb.¹⁹¹⁸

At the time Annan had put critical questions to Akashi about the ignorance of Zagreb and what was ‘provided to UNPROFOR by those troop-contributing nations with intelligence-gathering assets in the area’? He had also stated: ‘I find it difficult to accept that no “early warning” was possible when the

¹⁹¹⁴ Confidential interview (58).

¹⁹¹⁵ UNNY, DPKO. *Coded cables*. Annan to Akashi, No. MSC 2182, 03/07/95.

¹⁹¹⁶ Interview with Maurice Baril, 21/12/99.

¹⁹¹⁷ Interview with Y. Akashi, 29/11/99.

¹⁹¹⁸ Confidential information (80).

evidence suggests that a major build-up of troops and heavy weapons by the VRS occurred prior to the offensive.¹⁹¹⁹ Akashi declared that the possibilities for monitoring the military activities of the VRS, apart from static OPs, were very limited. The exchange of national intelligence between countries was governed by bilateral treaties to which the UN was not party. Sometimes local ambassadors or national contingents supplied extra information, but this did not happen in the case of Srebrenica. Furthermore, Akashi had received no additional intelligence relating to Zepa and Gorazde. Akashi continued with the notable statement: 'It would not be appropriate for us to attempt, at our level, to improve access to national intelligence.'¹⁹²⁰ In fact one might have expected just the opposite. In view of the threatening situation for the other enclaves and the fate of the refugees, an order to gather extra intelligence would have been highly defensible.

A week later Akashi returned to Annan's questions. The general issue of the availability of intelligence and the problems with its dissemination were complex and required separate treatment. Some countries had access to a 'very large pool of detailed tactical and strategic intelligence'. After all, Yugoslavia was an object of interest for all intelligence services. A part of the intelligence gathered by the leading troop contributors was Sigint. This was 'the most jealously guarded of all intelligence products'. In the case of the US, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand this was arranged through agreements and 'sharing outside this agreement is simply not possible', according to Akashi. This is not correct: it is permitted to share national intelligence products. He mentioned that special arrangements had been created for senior officers to receive intelligence support from their national governments, but this exchange was 'so surrounded by national caveats that it takes considerable effort and ingenuity to make use of it in any multi-national activity'. This led to unavoidable tensions which could better be solved among the military. After all, they were used to such problems.

Akashi recommended Annan to review, when times were quieter, whether new mechanisms for the operational aspects of peacekeeping should be created within the UN; these could serve the task of gathering national intelligence to be made available to a special secure information unit¹⁹²¹ at the New York headquarters. Akashi concluded with the following observation: 'For the moment enquiries here suggest that with the current group of TCNs [Troop Contributing Nations] and the support of NATO the flow of intelligence is as efficient, timely, and detailed as it can be within the constraints of individual perceived national security considerations.'¹⁹²² It is not clear who prompted Akashi to say this, but this conclusion certainly did not apply to all the troop-contributing countries at that moment. In June 1996 Akashi repeated in a conversation with Dutch Foreign Minister Van Mierlo that Janvier 'did not have the US intelligence and in fact had insufficient insights into the intentions of the Serbs'.¹⁹²³

Annan later complained to the Netherlands Permanent Representative at the UN about the fact that 'the UN was not given intelligence available to some allies about the imminent Serb attack'. Game-playing had been widespread. He referred to an article that had earlier been published in *Time* about a deal between the US and Milosevic, whereby the Serbs could take over the enclaves and the Croats the western part of Bosnia.¹⁹²⁴ And during a meeting of the NATO Council at which Annan was a guest, he had declared that Srebrenica had involved an intelligence failure. At that time he had given no further explanation.¹⁹²⁵ So, New York was in the dark too.¹⁹²⁶

¹⁹¹⁹ Confidential collection NIOD (7). Annan to Akashi, 'situation in Srebrenica', No. 2280, 11/07/95.

¹⁹²⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 239, File 6/15. Akashi to Annan, Z-1147, 12/07/95.

¹⁹²¹ Akashi was apparently still unable to utter the word 'intelligence'.

¹⁹²² UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 139, File Crypto Fax In 46. Akashi to Annan, Z-1189, 18/07/95.

¹⁹²³ MoD, DCBC. Van Mierlo to PR New York, No. 183, 07/06/96.

¹⁹²⁴ MoD, DCBC. PVVN Biegan to Foreign Affairs, No. 389, 05/06/96.

¹⁹²⁵ NMFA, PVNATO. Feith to Foreign Affairs, No. 1467, 03/11/95.

¹⁹²⁶ See also: United Nations, *Srebrenica Report*, 15/11/99, §486, p. 143.

Who did have prior knowledge? In 4 July 1995 in Belgrade, Vladimir Matovic, the former adviser to President Cosic, heard from his foreign ‘political friends’ that something was going on near Srebrenica. He did not wish to reveal who these friends were. He called political sympathizers in Pale, but they knew nothing. On 7 July local newspapers wrote that the VRS was going on the offensive. Matovic knew nothing. ‘His friends’ had told him on 4 July that an attack was imminent, but advisors of Karadzic and Mladic in Pale said (after Matovic contacted them) this was not the case. Who should be believed? He later realized that people outside Mladic’s circle did indeed know nothing.¹⁹²⁷ If Matovic’s claims are true, then the VRS army command was the only group to be aware of what was coming. This can also be deduced from a conversation with Dragan Milovanovic, who at that time had already been a war photographer for eight years. A woman had told him that two days before the attack women in Bratunac noticed that something was about to happen. Mladic had told local military personnel that they should reveal nothing of what they were doing, not even to their mothers and wives. Milovanovic found this striking, because other Serb attacks had generally been discussed long and openly beforehand.¹⁹²⁸

In Belgrade, however, politicians responded to the events with incredulity. The Canadian diplomat Dennis Snider, who worked at the Canadian embassy, experienced this for himself. According to him the mood in Belgrade was one of disbelief. The hunting of the column of men on the route to Tuzla was understandable, but not the later executions. Most of the people he talked to found this hard to accept. General Momcilo Perisic¹⁹²⁹ of the VJ apparently did know of the attack. He told the Canadian diplomat that he knew of a ‘significant force to Srebrenica’. Officers of the VJ were stationed at the headquarters in Han Pijesak and regular officers of the VJ constantly accompanied Mladic.¹⁹³⁰ The question is whether he had informed Milosevic of this. An interview with Rajko Dukic, who talked to Milosevic after the fall of the enclave, indicates that the president was indeed surprised. The president had asked the group of persons that included Dukic ‘which idiot’ had taken the decision to attack Srebrenica. According to the president the enclave would have bled dry or have become depopulated anyway. Milosevic then drew a comparison with letting water flow away over a plank of wood. According to Dukic the struggle for prestige between Mladic and Karadzic also played a role. Mladic needed a success.¹⁹³¹

6. Did The Hague have prior knowledge?

According to staff of the MIS, they never received hard intelligence from sister services which warned of an attack. One of the sources from which intelligence might have been obtained was NATO. Reports were sent daily from the Deployed Shed Facility (DSF) in Naples. The DSF was an intelligence cell operated by several member states (including the Netherlands). It should be stated again: NATO has no intelligence capabilities of its own apart from AWACS, and is totally dependent on the intelligence supplied by the member states. If a tactical warning had been available then it would have been very likely to have arrived through NATO channels. An analysis of the reports, which the NIOD was able to access gives the picture described below.

The Balkan Intelligence Summary by the purely US Joint Analysis Center (JAC) in Molesworth on 6 June, i.e. shortly before Karremans’ ‘alarm warning’, predicted for the next 24 to 96 hours that the VRS might possibly increase its military activities on the line of confrontation in Bihac, but not elsewhere. Such a development was not expected in SNE. Only certain OPs would come under heavier

¹⁹²⁷ Interview with Vladimir Matovic, 16/12/00.

¹⁹²⁸ Interview with Dragan Milovanovic, 17/12/99.

¹⁹²⁹ Perisic was later accused for working for the CIA. ‘Court Postpones Spy Trial of Former Yugo Army Chief’, *Reuters*, 24/12/02.

¹⁹³⁰ Interview with Dennis Snider, 17/11/99.

¹⁹³¹ Interview with Rajko Dukic, 14/06/00.

paramilitary pressure, now that the Arkan Tigers had been reported in Bratunac at the end of May.¹⁹³² In a memorandum for the period 8 to 9 June, and sent on 10 June by the DSF, the military developments were noted but no predictions of a conquest of the enclave were made.¹⁹³³ After this time things were comparatively quiet, but at the start of July tensions rose again. The Balkan IntSum for 2 July made no mention of preparations.¹⁹³⁴ The summary for 6 July noted the outbreak of fighting. For the next 24 to 96 hours it was predicted that warfare activities in Bosnia would be increased, because the ABiH would undertake new sorties around Sarajevo and the Majevica hills. No indications could be found that the VRS planned to launch an attack.¹⁹³⁵

A 'Cosmic Top Secret Bohemia' report in a Balkan Intelligence Summary on 8 June noted that fighting around Srebrenica was escalating. It was expected that the VRS would try to reduce the size of the enclave.

'However, this course of action had been forecast for several months. The VRS would probably shift forces from other areas before totally reducing any of the eastern enclaves. Such a VRS move could potentially be risky given the ABiH pressure in such areas as Sarajevo'.¹⁹³⁶

Once again there is no prediction whatsoever of a major attack. Rather, in fact, it contains the expectation that such an attack would not take place. Another analysis concluded that the intensification of fighting was a consequence of the local military situation and the conflict around Sarajevo. It seemed that the VRS goals were limited, aimed at reducing the ABiH defence line and not at conducting a general assault. If the VRS was successful, however, and the number of Serb casualties remained low and the ABiH intensified the fighting around Sarajevo and Bihac, then the VRS might possibly expand its operations and could thereby take the enclave.¹⁹³⁷ On 9 July it was predicted for the next 24 to 96 hours that the VRS would continue the attacks in order to neutralize the ABiH. A report of the latest military developments was made, in which it was concluded that the VRS would do all it could 'to avoid involvement with UNPROFOR troops'. It was expected that the relationship between the ABiH and Dutchbat would seriously deteriorate as a result of the death of the Dutch soldier R. van Renssen.¹⁹³⁸ He was killed by an ABiH soldier. Another NATO report, drawn up on 10 July, still did not expect that the VRS would take the entire enclave. The true intentions of the Bosnian Serbs remained unclear right up to the last moment.¹⁹³⁹

During telephone calls on 9 and 10 July Mladic assured Janvier that he did not intend to attack the enclave. On this basis it was concluded that the VRS had successfully carried out a limited attack to gain possession of the bauxite mines to the south of the town.¹⁹⁴⁰ On 10 July the US Chargé d'Affaires in Zagreb discussed the situation in Srebrenica with Akashi and Janvier. The Japanese diplomat declared that following consultations with Major General Herve Gobilliard (the French commander Sector Sarajevo), Janvier and himself on 9 July a warning had been sent to Mladic. It was demanded of Mladic that the offensive be halted and that the VRS withdraw 'to the perimeter of the demilitarized zone as delineated by the Morillon agreement of 8 May 1993'. Akashi threatened the use of air power. Although Mladic had not yet responded, Akashi believed that the suspension of the offensive by the VRS was a 'strong sign' that the warning had been received. In an American commentary it was remarked that this comment was totally opposed to a statement by an adviser to Akashi that the VRS

¹⁹³² Confidential information (64).

¹⁹³³ Confidential information (65).

¹⁹³⁴ Confidential information (66).

¹⁹³⁵ Confidential information (67).

¹⁹³⁶ Confidential information (68).

¹⁹³⁷ DCBC, Box 66. Balkan Intsum, Nato Secret, No. CT9507072217270, 07/07/95.

¹⁹³⁸ Confidential information (69).

¹⁹³⁹ Confidential information (70).

¹⁹⁴⁰ Confidential information (182).

offensive was stopped before the ultimatum. An US diplomat later spoke to one of Akashi's political advisers, John Almstrom. He recounted that the offensive with 100 to 200 soldiers had been halted at 1pm. Janvier had sent the warning to Mladic at 6pm but, Almstrom remarked that 'it was not an ultimatum'. Since no deadline had been set, no answer had been received until then. Almstrom was surprised that the VRS had attacked from just one side, had used such a small force and had suddenly stopped its advance for no apparent reason. He concluded that the VRS simply wanted to exert pressure and did not plan to take Srebrenica: 'Perhaps the worst is over.'¹⁹⁴¹

Janvier declared later that in view of the small size of the VRS force he did not expect that the VRS would try to take Srebrenica or one of the other enclaves. 'What would they do with them if they did?' he wondered. Janvier regarded the action more as a signal to Sarajevo to show what the VRS was capable of. Furthermore the VRS offensive could in part be prompted by recent ABiH sorties in which a Serb village had been destroyed.¹⁹⁴² This shows that Janvier was not aware that on the evening of 9 July Mladic had decided to take the entire enclave. This is also indicated by the diary entries of the military assistant to the deputy FC, Major David Last. On 9 July at 11pm a further briefing took place in Zagreb. The US intelligence officer Morgan informed those present that the VRS was not aiming to cause the collapse of the enclave: 'The BSA [VRS] was moving from the West'. The ABiH was responsible for the tense situation due to the sorties from the enclave: 'This incident was triggered by the ABiH attacks.' The events were local, but tank bombardments had taken place in Zepa and the crisis could well start there too.

A briefing for Janvier was held on 10 July at 10am. Last noted in his diary that it was around mid-morning that Zagreb began to fear the worst. They still had no idea of the VRS aims. 'BSA [VRS] is unworldly in their logic.' On 10 July at around 3pm Zagreb began to suspect that Srebrenica would fall. The deputy G-2, Commander Morgan, reported that the attack had originally been a local initiative but had now become VRS policy. It was only on 11 July at 11am that Janvier realized that the issue at stake was the conquest of the entire enclave. Until then two options had constantly been applied: a limited attack or the conquest of the enclave. It was not yet clear in Zagreb which option was being followed. Late in the morning of 11 June Janvier concluded that the attack was aimed at the entire enclave.¹⁹⁴³ Lieutenant Colonel Baxter, the military assistant to General Smith, passed on the latest intelligence at 4.50pm. Dutchbat had withdrawn to Potocari, where more than 20,000 Displaced Persons had gathered. The NATO liaison officer announced that the situation was very poor and 'the enclave was lost'.¹⁹⁴⁴

On 10 July the situation in Srebrenica was discussed during informal consultations in the Security Council. The representative of the Secretary-General, C. Gharekhan, briefed the members about the latest developments. He reported that the ABiH had attacked a Dutch APC. According to Albright the Security Council should first have additional information before conclusions could be drawn. In response to her question about Close Air Support, Gharekhan stated that the commanders on the ground could request this if their troops were endangered. He declared, *nota bene*, that 'there had not yet been any requests for close air support'.¹⁹⁴⁵ If Gharekhan really said this on 10 July, then it would seem that he informed the Security Council wrongly. Indeed, earlier on that day Karremans had already made various CAS requests.

In the Balkan IntSum of the JAC at Molesworth on 10 July it was reported that air strikes had been threatened if the VRS continued with attacks. The prediction for the next 24 to 96 hours was that the VRS attack on Srebrenica and Zepa would be continued with a possible escalation around Zepa. In an analysis the JAC concluded that despite the threats it was unlikely that air strikes were imminent above all because the VRS had taken Dutch soldiers hostage. Boutros Ghali had spoken out in support

¹⁹⁴¹ Confidential information (71).

¹⁹⁴² Confidential information (72).

¹⁹⁴³ MoD, DAB. Notes of the meeting regarding the fall of Srebrenica, 01/11/95.

¹⁹⁴⁴ Interview with David Last, 02/07/00.

¹⁹⁴⁵ Confidential information (73).

of the use of air power, but since final approval still lay with Akashi, and in the light of previous UN reactions, the threat of air strikes presumably remained ‘a hollow one’. The VRS knew this and this was why the Dutch had been taken hostage.¹⁹⁴⁶ In a Cosmic Top Secret Bohemia report by the Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) in Vicenza on 11 July, all the developments were summarized. The attack had been interrupted for some time. The VRS had now set an ultimatum that UNPROFOR and the ABiH should depart, leaving behind their weapons and equipment. Even now, no mention was made of the intention to take the enclave as a whole.¹⁹⁴⁷ In the Balkan IntSum of 11 June, however, it was noted that the VRS now controlled Srebrenica. For the coming 24 to 48 hours it was predicted that more UNPROFOR soldiers and UNMOs would become hostages or targets. The VRS operation could well be the start of a new (either planned or *ad hoc*) strategy. The aim could be twofold: force the Bosnian Muslims to accept Bosnian Serb conditions for peace negotiations and/or the elimination of the eastern enclaves (‘always a thorn in their side’). In addition it would release troops for other purposes.¹⁹⁴⁸

An analysis by JAC Molesworth on 11 July noted that the attack ‘runs counter to what has been expected of them for several years’. The VRS had encountered little resistance and had conquered more territory than expected. After Srebrenica the focus turned to Zepa and Gorazde. It was also expected that the VRS would pressure the population to leave the town and to head for the surrounding hills and villages or to go to Zepa. This stream of refugees would cause a humanitarian crisis, by which the VRS could achieve one or possibly two goals. First of all, Srebrenica was no longer a military factor. Secondly Sarajevo would be forced to the negotiating table. In the meantime 400 Dutch soldiers could be used as hostages against possible air strikes. ‘It is basically a no-lose situation for the Bosnian Serbs’, according to JAC, Molesworth. If Sarajevo did not wish to negotiate, then the VRS had at least eliminated the enclave and the Serb army would switch its attention to Zepa. The story would be repeated and once again the VRS might manage to achieve its earlier goals: elimination of Zepa and force Sarajevo to negotiate. If this once again failed to work, then it would be Gorazde’s turn. Although the ABiH was stronger in Gorazde, the VRS would have new troops (about ten brigades) at its disposal.¹⁹⁴⁹

Intelligence briefings at NATO in Brussels in the days after the fall were confined to the actual course of the battle around Srebrenica. No attempts were made to predict VRS strategy. It was thought unlikely that the VRS was carrying out a coordinated attack on the eastern enclaves, or that the conquest of Srebrenica had been ordered by the high command.¹⁹⁵⁰ In short, it can be concluded that no intelligence reached the MIS that indicated an attack. But was intelligence possibly received in a bilateral context? And how did the MIS actually analyse the situation?

The Military Intelligence Service and the attack on Srebrenica

As earlier described, the information situation of the Military Intelligence Service of the Central Organization (MIS/CO) and the Military Intelligence Service of the Royal Netherlands Army (MIS/Army) was not a unique or special one. Analyses by the MIS/Army made following the fall of OP-E regarding a possible VRS attack went no further than the supposition that the VRS could continue to take over OPs and that the ABiH would try to increase the tension through provocation, resulting in bombardment of ABiH positions and possibly of civilian targets.¹⁹⁵¹ This analysis was confirmed a few days later: a repeat of the scenario that had been applied during the taking of OP-E was possible, but as long as the hostage crisis was not solved, this would be unwelcome to the

¹⁹⁴⁶ Confidential information (74).

¹⁹⁴⁷ Confidential information (75).

¹⁹⁴⁸ Confidential information (76).

¹⁹⁴⁹ Confidential information (77).

¹⁹⁵⁰ Confidential information (168).

¹⁹⁵¹ MoD, *MIS/Army*. INTSUM 107/95, 07/06/95.

leadership of the Republika Srpska for political reasons, according to an analyst. If the VRS should nonetheless take action, then this would probably be confined to OPs; occupation of large sections of the enclave was thought unlikely for the time being.¹⁹⁵² At the end of June the MIS/army did not expect any major changes in the positions of the warring factions.¹⁹⁵³

A briefing by the MIS/Army on 5 July dealt with the chances of an attack. Which advantages and disadvantages could this have for the VRS? One reason to attack was that the VRS needed a success that could not be achieved elsewhere. Furthermore, this could be conducted with relatively little effort and without many casualties on its own side. Moreover, the VRS would then have a free hand in Eastern Bosnia and could significantly shorten the line of confrontation. A disadvantage was that the Bosnian Serbs would be seen as the guilty party and the Americans would urge reprisals. There were a variety of reasons not to attack. The ABiH in Gorazde was strong and well-organized. Zepa, in contrast to Gorazde, did not provide any improvement to road and river communications. The analysts believed that Srebrenica could indeed be taken in a relatively short time, but that the VRS would have to make considerable sacrifices to do it. It was easier to work for collapse from within. Moreover, the enclave could be taken piece by piece.

It was already possible to use the southern road following the taking of OP-E. From April 1993 onwards the road lay on VRS territory with the exception of a small section at OP-E. The bauxite mine was also in VRS hands, but lay within reach of the ABiH. Taking the entire enclave could be attractive in that it would provide a good north-south route. If the VRS decided to take apart the enclave piece by piece, then considerable difficulties could be expected with the ABiH. The Muslims could isolate OPs, use UN troops as a shield or kill a number of UN soldiers and then give the VRS the blame. The ABiH could attack Dutchbat to gain heavier weapons, or isolate the battalion by surrounding it with civilians. This could be organized in a few hours and would render Dutchbat immobile.¹⁹⁵⁴ The MIS/Army briefing thus did not give indications of an attack, even though a certain predictive value could not be denied.

The MIS/Army therefore did not have prior knowledge. The intelligence section of the Army Crisis Staff had its suspicions, but it never expressed these out loud. In the daily briefings it constantly stuck to the MIS/Army analysis. All parties involved thought that the attack was aimed at the southern road and the adjacent bauxite mines. In the worst case Dutchbat would be forced back into a small (VRS 'recognized' Safe Area) around Potocari. This reduction in size would have roughly corresponded to the Bosnian Serb interpretation of the enclave borders, i.e. the actual demilitarized area of April 1993.¹⁹⁵⁵ According to one MIS official the MIS/Army had started to receive reports of movements around the enclave as early as the end of June. Communications links were being laid by the VRS along the line of confrontation, which indicated the desire to communicate securely. Buses had been observed too. What did this mean? Tanks had also been reported and heard by OPs, but it was consistently assumed that the VRS was interested only in the southern road.¹⁹⁵⁶

The Head of Intelligence Production and also acting Head of Intelligence of the MIS/Army declared, however, that there were 'absolutely no' tactical indicators that revealed a pattern. Observations from the enclave were particularly summary, and the only possible source of information could have been American UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles). But the Americans never passed this intelligence to the Netherlands. However, the Dutch official forgot to mention that the Dutch F-16s were also very suitable TACRECCE assets which could have been used outside UNPROFOR. In this respect a senior US intelligence official complained to the author that it was all too easy to lament about

¹⁹⁵² MoD, *MIS/Army*. INTSUM 109/95, 09/06/95.

¹⁹⁵³ MoD, *MIS/Army*. INTSUM 120/95, 26/06/95.

¹⁹⁵⁴ MoD, *MIS/Army*. Notes on briefing dates 5 July 1995. No author indicated.

¹⁹⁵⁵ MoD, *SMG*. Report of conversation with Colonel Dedden, 10/08/95.

¹⁹⁵⁶ Confidential interview (38).

the US behaviour. However, ‘the Dutch never got their own information from assets under their control!’¹⁹⁵⁷

Nonetheless, on the other hand the value of the UAVs should not be exaggerated, because the VRS had sufficient options for concealing its troops, tanks, artillery and mortars in the mountainous terrain. Apart from this the US intelligence services did not expect a further VRS advance either, but instead that Mladic would be content to control the southern road. The conclusion by British intelligence services, as reported in the press, that an attack was imminent was a typical report at strategic level that was of no use to the MIS. A few MIS officers talked to the British services but the report was too vague and did not fit any pattern.¹⁹⁵⁸

The former Head of the MIS/Army, Colonel Bokhoven, also stated that his service did not anticipate the crisis and the fall. The problems were associated with the approaching rotation, whereby the battalion due to be relieved (and now under-strength) was subjected to ‘pricking’. Perhaps the VRS was angry about the attack on a Serb village two weeks earlier. The only thing that possibly gave more insight was a report made when the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla was ordered to lay mines on all roads to and from Srebrenica. The reason for this was that a VRS attack was expected from the direction of Milici and Han Pijesak.¹⁹⁵⁹ But this report dated from 7 June. Conversations with other MIS officers show that small-scale actions such as that in Srebrenica can almost never be predicted on the basis of intelligence. The VRS already had sufficient military resources in the region to conduct such an operation.¹⁹⁶⁰

On 6 July the MIS/Army concluded that the VRS would attempt to occupy one or more Dutchbat OPs. It was assumed that this did not involve ‘a large-scale attack (Srebrenica has no great strategic value), nor an attempt by the ABiH to break out (too weak)’.¹⁹⁶¹ The situation was analysed a day after the start of the attack. One possible reason cited for a large-scale attack was the need for a success that could not be achieved in other parts of the operational area. The occupation of the enclave would cost the VRS relatively little effort. This would then give the VRS greater freedom to act in Eastern Bosnia, the line of confrontation would be reduced, troops would be freed for other tasks and the Drina crossings could be better used and exploited. The disadvantages of a major attack were condemnation by the international community and the use of NATO air power.

Such an attack might not be necessary, because the VRS could switch to a battle of attrition and simply wait for the enclave to collapse from within. Dutchbat was faced with considerable potential problems, such as individual blockades within and outside the enclave, organized group actions, attacks, taking of hostages, escalation through provocation, etc. In the event of the enclave being dismantled the ABiH could be expected to try to isolate the OPs and to use the troops remaining there as a shield. A direct ABiH attack on Dutchbat to gain possession of heavy weapons was also possible. The ABiH could quickly achieve complete isolation and total division of Dutchbat. The VRS could in turn also isolate OPs and then give Dutchbat the chance to withdraw or to take them off as hostages or prisoners. It could well be expected that the VRS would try to occupy one or more OPs but, once again, it was not assumed that a major attack was underway. Srebrenica had no great strategic value. No attempt by the ABiH to break out was expected either.¹⁹⁶²

This analysis probably never reached Dutchbat. In any case on 5 and 6 July Karremans told the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff that he did not expect any notable changes to the situation in the

¹⁹⁵⁷ Confidential information (80).

¹⁹⁵⁸ MoD, *SMG 1006/18*. Report of conversation, 03/08/95. For the reports see also: *House of Commons Hansard*, Vol. 264, Column 1010, 25/10/95.

¹⁹⁵⁹ Confidential information (36). Also: MoD, *SMG 1006/18*. Report of conversation, 20/07/95 and Confidential interview (36).

¹⁹⁶⁰ MoD, *SMG*. Report of a conversation, 09/08/95.

¹⁹⁶¹ MoD, *MIS/Army*. Intrep Srebrenica from the Director of Operations, AIV/KI, No. 32729/4, 06/07/95.

¹⁹⁶² MoD, *MIS/Army*. Kooijmans to YUGO Dept., around 07/07/95 and INTSUM No. 129/95, 07/07/95.

coming 24 hours.¹⁹⁶³ On 11 July the analysis of the MIS/Army still stated that it was ‘hardly likely’ that the Bosnian Serbs wanted to take the entire enclave. After all, the VRS did not have sufficient infantry to occupy the enclave in the long term.¹⁹⁶⁴ In an analysis from March 1997 of the information position of the MIS/Army it was established that the service’s own sources and those of its counterparts offered little indication that the VRS was planning an attack. Shelling and troop movements were in evidence at the start of July, but these occurred frequently and ‘were thus not of an exceptional nature’.¹⁹⁶⁵

Was there thus no specific plan from which such an operation could be inferred? As early as August 1995 a MIS officer claimed that the conquest was not a preconceived strategic plan. The VRS wanted to control the southern road and to achieve this had to clear the adjoining area. When the VRS troops realized how weak the resistance was, they pushed on further. When the resistance of the ABiH proved to be negligible, the enclave fell swiftly and unexpectedly. Perhaps an operational plan had been prepared and ‘shelved’ earlier, which the VRS then put into practice when the resistance proved to be weak. This could explain why Dutchbat considered that the whole operation was prepared and executed so well.¹⁹⁶⁶ This is an analysis which seems to fit the later findings of the Tribunal. *Operation Krivaja '95* originally did not envisage the conquest of the enclave, but when the resistance of the ABiH and UNPROFOR proved to be so limited on 9 July, on that day it was decided to conquer the entire enclave.¹⁹⁶⁷ The *ad hoc* nature of the VRS decision-making was confirmed by the military security officer of Dutchbat IV, N. Franssen. He spoke to a Dutchbat soldier who was among the 55 prisoners. He attended a celebration in Bratunac at which high-ranking VRS officers were also present. They told him that they originally had no intention of taking the enclave as a whole. But their probing attacks met with almost no resistance, and so the VRS proceeded with the conquest.¹⁹⁶⁸ A former official of the Tribunal confirmed this *ad hoc* nature of the VRS attack to the French parliamentary investigation commission.¹⁹⁶⁹

What was true of the MIS/Army was also true of the MIS/Air Force. One year after the fall an analyst drew up a ‘Chronological Overview Srebrenica 1 March 1995 to 26 July 1995’ on the basis of the facts available at the time. This once again shows that the MIS/Air Force had no prior tactical knowledge. Troop movements were observed at the eastern edge of the enclave on 5 July, although these were not reported by Dutchbat. On 6 July the same happened in the south of the enclave. This time it was reported by Dutchbat.¹⁹⁷⁰ But an attack on the enclave was not expected.

The Military Intelligence Service of the Central Organization (MIS/CO)

A study of the reports by the MIS/CO produces the picture described below. At the start of May 1995 the Intelligence Department of the MIS/CO stated that probably no new major military operations would be undertaken by the ABiH and the VRS. It was, however, conceivable that the VRS would once more take the military initiative. The possibilities for doing this seemed limited in view of the shortage of infantry.¹⁹⁷¹ At the start of June it was reported that VJ troops were regularly being deployed, around the eastern enclaves in particular. This was chiefly being done to allow VRS soldiers to take a few days’

¹⁹⁶³ MoD, *SMG*. Report on Srebrenica project, Overview Sitrep Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff Morning Report, 05/07/95 and 06/07/95.

¹⁹⁶⁴ MoD, *MIS/Army*. INTSUM No. 131/95, 11/07/95.

¹⁹⁶⁵ MoD, *MIS/Army*. Memorandum: to CDS; Re: Intelligence on attack on Srebrenica; Drafter: Lt. Col. Van Geldere; Annotation: Col. J. Mulder Head MIS/Army; 18/03/97.

¹⁹⁶⁶ MoD, *SMG*. Report of conversation, 03/08/95 and confidential interview (28).

¹⁹⁶⁷ Butler, *Srebrenica Military Narrative – Operation Krivaja 95*, 15/05/00, pp. 950764-950765.

¹⁹⁶⁸ MoD, *SMG 1006/18*. Report of conversation with N. Franssen, 15/08/95.

¹⁹⁶⁹ AFP Press release, Testimony by Ruez, 22/02/01.

¹⁹⁷⁰ MoD, *DCBC, Box 66*. ‘Chronological overview of Srebrenica 1 March 1995 to 26 July 1995’, 11/07/96 and confidential interview (31).

¹⁹⁷¹ MoD, *MIS/CO*, Memorandum: ‘Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation’, No. 20/95, 02/05/95.

leave. No mention was made of the chance of a coming attack.¹⁹⁷² A study of the weekly reports by the MIS/CO about the developments in Bosnia also provided no indication that an attack was predicted.¹⁹⁷³

The report from the end of June stated that the political leadership in Pale had hinted at possible negotiations, but with conditions unacceptable to Sarajevo. Mladic, however, had declared that the chances for peace in the short term were negligible. Following the ABiH sorties from Srebrenica, Pale had once again cast doubt on the neutrality of UNPROFOR. There was no indication that the cited Serb accusations of ABiH infiltrations and sorties were accurate. According to the MIS/CO it was conceivable that with such reports the VRS was hoping to create a justification for new operations in Eastern Bosnia.¹⁹⁷⁴ In fact, just three days after the attack on Visnjica the MIS/CO was wrong in this respect.

The first report by the Intelligence Department in July mentioned Karadzic's announcement that the VRS would shortly start offensive operations to force the Muslims to accept a political solution. According to Karadzic a rapid and coordinated attack on the ABiH would enable the VRS to gain maximum advantage from its dominance in heavy weapons. This was preferable to a continuation of the current situation in which the initiative lay with the ABiH, forcing the Bosnian Serbs to deal simultaneously with a large number of relatively small-scale operations. The MIS/CO judged this statement as notable because Mladic had just predicted a longer war.¹⁹⁷⁵

On 5 July the MIS/CO prepared a briefing for the Defence Crisis Management Centre. One reason for a 'major' attack could be that the VRS needed a success that could not be achieved in other parts of Bosnia. The advantage was that these enclaves could be occupied with relatively little effort. After clearing away the enclaves, the VRS would be free to act in Eastern Bosnia, the line of confrontation would be reduced and troops would be freed for other tasks. Srebrenica would probably not be attacked because the enclave could be reduced piece by piece, partly through collapse from within. The taking of OP-E provided an example of this. Although the VRS could take the enclave in a relatively short time, it would probably result in a large number of casualties. A disadvantage of such an attack was thought to be that the VRS would be seen as the main guilty party and UNPROFOR could be prompted to use NATO air power.¹⁹⁷⁶ The MIS/Army drew an identical conclusion.

The fact that both the MIS/CO and the MIS/Army remained in the dark as to the intentions of the VRS after 9 July is also indicated by the weekly report by the Intelligence Department of the MIS/CO issued on 11 July. In this document it is concluded that for the time being there was no reason to assume that the latest VRS operations were the start of attempts to take total control of Srebrenica. The VRS units involved (a hundred men and four tanks) were insufficient for the task. It was assumed that the VRS would maintain pressure on the enclave and would continue with gradual and modest territorial gains. It was true that the VRS had advanced close to the edge of the town, but the main road was now blocked by Dutchbat.¹⁹⁷⁷ This conclusion was not remarkable, because all the analyses available up to then (BHC in Sarajevo, Zagreb, Deny Flight Intelligence Summary in Naples, the UK Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) and JAC, Molesworth) pointed in precisely the same direction. And since the MIS analysts mostly gained their information from these sources, their conclusions and prognoses were in line with the other available analyses. It was only in the analysis made after the fall

¹⁹⁷² MoD, *MIS/CO*, Memorandum: 'Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation', No. 27/95, 08/07/95.

¹⁹⁷³ MoD, *MIS/CO*, Intelligence Dept., 'Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation', No. 28/95, concluded 14/06/95, No. 29, concluded 21/06/95 and No. 30/06, concluded 27/06/95.

¹⁹⁷⁴ MoD, *MIS/CO*, Intelligence Dept., 'Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation', No. 31/95, concluded 29/06/95.

¹⁹⁷⁵ MoD, *MIS/CO*, 'Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation', No. 32/95, concluded 04/07/95.

¹⁹⁷⁶ MoD, *MIS/CO*, Memorandum on briefing dd. 05/07/95.

¹⁹⁷⁷ MoD, *MIS/CO*, Intelligence Dept., 'Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation', No. 33/95, concluded 11/07/95.

that it was established that the initial analysis of the previous week had been off the mark. Everything seemed to indicate that the lack of ABiH resistance had led to the rapid conquest.¹⁹⁷⁸

What precisely did the MIS/CO receive from its foreign counterparts? According to MIS/CO personnel they never received any hard intelligence which gave explicit warning of an attack.¹⁹⁷⁹ Staff of a Canadian intelligence service claim that a warning did go to the MIS but ‘in disguised form’ so as not to reveal the Humint source.¹⁹⁸⁰ This was nowhere to be found in the MIS archives. A British warning can, however, be reconstructed. Interviews with British and Canadian officials revealed that at the end of June the DIS became concerned about the eastern enclaves.¹⁹⁸¹ This was also indicated on 28 and 29 June during a bilateral meeting between the MIS/Army and the DIS. A Dutch analyst was told in confidence that there were indications for a VRS attack on the eastern enclaves.¹⁹⁸² This intelligence originated from MI-6 and according to a DIS official this threat deserved particular attention. It was assumed that the VRS was busy increasing the pressure on all three enclaves, whereby the British expected that the first move would be an attempt to take Srebrenica. The threatening, reduction or conquest of the enclaves could be an extra means of bringing Sarajevo to the negotiating table. It would also put the UN in a difficult position. Karadzic’s position was still seen as stable, but Mladic’s attitude was a cause for concern. He wanted to solve the conflict on the battlefield, while Karadzic envisaged a solution through political consultation.¹⁹⁸³

The assessment of the conversation with the DIS led to a difference of opinion within the MIS/Army. The most important question was whether this was an official DIS position that had been taken outside the bilateral discussions. This proved not to be the case, because it was revealed in confidence. A fierce discussion then ensued within the MIS. How seriously should this report be taken? The majority of the analysts continued to believe that the VRS aimed only to take the southern road. Another problem was that Dutchbat reported no military details, making it difficult to form a complete picture. Sometimes the gathered intelligence was confusing. Several analysts weighed up the British report and set it off against the other intelligence available at the time. The British intelligence sounded unlikely. The VRS would never have the ‘sheer nerve’ to do something like that. The report on the bilateral talks with the DIS was never passed to the Heads of the MIS or the MIS/CO. The only Balkans analyst in the MIS/CO first heard about this report years later. The MIS/Army was a very closed organization and the DIS information remained ‘stranded’ there. The matter needed to be weighed up because there was no further corroboration.¹⁹⁸⁴

In an assessment after the attack the MIS/CO concluded that the international community seemed to accept the fall as a *fait accompli* and to be awaiting the further course of events. The unexpected nature and speed of the operation had taken the international community by surprise. How could this have happened? It was unclear whether the VRS plan had been established beforehand or whether the VRS had exploited its unexpected success in taking the south-western part of the enclave. On the other hand the occupation of the enclaves had always been a strategic goal. Perhaps the easy conquest of OP-E had given the impetus for further action. Following this more VRS troops were shifted to the southern edge of the enclave, also serving to cut off the link with Zepa. The speed and effectiveness of the VRS showed – according to the MIS – that Srebrenica had been taken with clear intent. The entire operation indicated lengthy preparation and the presence of Mladic ruled out a spontaneous local offensive.¹⁹⁸⁵

¹⁹⁷⁸ MoD, MIS/CO. ‘Developments in the former Yugoslav Federation’, No. 34/95, concluded 20/07/95.

¹⁹⁷⁹ Confidential interviews (25) and (40).

¹⁹⁸⁰ Confidential interview (9).

¹⁹⁸¹ Confidential interviews (8) and (9).

¹⁹⁸² Confidential interview (38).

¹⁹⁸³ Confidential information (30) and MoD, MIS/CO. Report Bilat 28-29 June 1995, q.v. (late June/early July 1995).

¹⁹⁸⁴ Confidential interviews (25), (26), (28), (37) and (38).

¹⁹⁸⁵ MoD, MIS/CO. The situation in the former Yugoslavia, briefing, ± 13/07/95.

The Central Organization and the attack on the enclave

What elements of the intelligence gathered by the MIS actually reached the policymakers? In the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) the question as to the true intentions of the Bosnian Serbs consistently remained unanswered. Did they want the entire enclave or just the southern road? During a hearing in Dutch Parliament a senior Defence official, J. de Winter, declared that ‘only later’ did he realize that the aims of the Bosnian Serbs went further. ‘That became clear, at least as far as I am concerned, three or four days before the fall’. As explanation for this De Winter cites the fact that the VRS then started to attack OPs at the western and northern edges of the enclave. ‘That would be strange if they aimed only to occupy the south-eastern tip’. De Winter thus concluded on 6 or 7 July that there was something strange going on, but declared that his further inquiries resulted in nothing apart from the statement that the only Serb goal was the southern road.¹⁹⁸⁶

General Couzy was on holiday but was in constant contact with the Ministry of Defence. The Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Major General A.P.M. van Baal, also appears to have had no prior knowledge, and was also unaware that warnings had been received. He was completely in the dark.¹⁹⁸⁷ The same was stated by Lieutenant Colonel M.C.J. Felix, Head of Operational Affairs of the Royal Netherlands Army. No signals regarding the coming danger had been received from foreign military attachés in The Hague either. Regarding the Dutch intelligence situation Felix said: ‘The Netherlands is a small country. In the intelligence community you’re at the bottom of the pile if you yourself have nothing to offer. In my view, this played a role during that period as well.’¹⁹⁸⁸ However, the Dutch with their excellent F-16s had TACRECCE to offer.

It is also important that in the decisive weeks before the fall of Srebrenica, the MIS/CO and the MIS/Army were not present at the DCBC for crisis consultations. Their presence was in fact not customary and was obviously not considered necessary during this time of tension.¹⁹⁸⁹ Minister Voorhoeve confirmed to Parliament that no prior knowledge was held. The MIS appeared not to have had any. Voorhoeve admitted that The Hague remained in great uncertainty right up to the end and did not have its own independent intelligence.¹⁹⁹⁰ Couzy also admits in his memoirs that he had no prior knowledge. He thought that the operation was aimed at the southern road, and it was only on Thursday evening, 10 July, that Couzy realized that the VRS were out to take the entire enclave.¹⁹⁹¹

In short: ‘The Hague’ was surprised at the sudden attack. Is it true that, apart from a few unclear indications from the DIS, no other foreign intelligence and security services were aware of the situation? It is almost inconceivable that with all their Sigint and Imint, the US services should have gathered no information. Moreover, the Bosnian intelligence and security services also had good Sigint. Was this not shared with UNPROFOR or the United States?

7. The foreign intelligence services

In Section 3 it was established that the plans for a VRS attack on the enclave were made only at a very late stage and in a short time. There were no preparations beginning months earlier. The preparations for the attack on Srebrenica took place between 2 and 6 July. The goal of the operation was, as said, not to conquer the Safe Area but to reduce it in size and to cut the link with Zepa. Prior knowledge about the occupation of the entire enclave could thus only have been available after 9 July, because this was when the decision was taken. The question as to whether prior knowledge existed must thus focus on a

¹⁹⁸⁶ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt The Hague*, Part 1, pp. 182-183.

¹⁹⁸⁷ Hearing of Bakker Commission, Stenographic report of testimony by A. Van Baal, X19/14-06-2000, No. 121U.doc-3, 31/05/00.

¹⁹⁸⁸ Interviews with M.J.C. Felix, 06/04/00 and A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

¹⁹⁸⁹ Confidential interview (26).

¹⁹⁹⁰ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt The Hague*, Part 1, p. 182.

¹⁹⁹¹ Couzy, *Mijn Jaren*, pp. 155-163.

very short period: 2 to 6 July. This was when the preparations took place. In addition 9 and 10 July are important because this was when it was decided to take the entire enclave. What was perceived during this time and how was this interpreted?

According to claims in the press Western intelligence and security services had prior knowledge of the attack. In the autumn of 1995 various daily papers reported that the Americans knew about the assault plans three weeks before the fall. This was reportedly held back from NATO and the UN in order not to disrupt the peace efforts of Clinton's emissaries. These articles¹⁹⁹² were to a great extent derived from an article by Roy Gutman in *Newsday* and an article by Andreas Zumach in *Die Berliner Tageszeitung* on 12 October in which it was reported that unmanned US reconnaissance planes (UAVs) had followed and photographed the preparations for the Srebrenica attack for days in advance. US intelligence services had intercepted the daily conversations between the Chief of Staff of the VRS, General Perisic, and Mladic more than three weeks before the attack began, from 17 June 1995 onwards. In these calls the generals planned the operation. Excerpts from the reports of these conversations had been shown to him, and proved that the initiative for the operation came from Belgrade. Perisic reportedly commanded the actual attack. Moreover, UAVs had collected Imint on the build-up of the VRS around the enclave and relocation of tanks and artillery.¹⁹⁹³ As shown in Chapter 7, the question is whether UAV's were flying over Bosnia around this time and if so, whether this Imint was analysed in time. This was very probably not the case.

According to journalists the German government also knew about the VRS plans. Through liaison the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND) is said to have received about 90 per cent of all its intelligence on Yugoslavia from the US services. But a senior BND official seriously distrusted this percentage.¹⁹⁹⁴ This would have been a more substantial intelligence liaison than with the British or French services, while NATO received even less intelligence. The US cooperation with the BND is said to have intensified even further from September 1994 onwards when the US intelligence services cut back their cooperation with the French and the British. Independently of the Americans, the BND was able to monitor the communications traffic between the Serbs and the Bosnian Serbs. Journalists also claimed that the BND eavesdropped on the traffic between Mladic and Perisic. A joint CIA-BND listening post even monitored 'all' key telephone conversations between Belgrade and Serb field commanders in Bosnia.¹⁹⁹⁵ The German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Klaus Kinkel, categorically denied that the BND or the government had known anything.¹⁹⁹⁶ A senior German diplomat with permanent access to BND intelligence confirmed this statement. No immediate forewarning was provided by the BND. There had been rumours, but these caused a sort of 'cry wolf' effect.¹⁹⁹⁷

Interviews by the author established that the BND was initially quite successful from 1993 onwards as regards Sigint operations against the VRS and VJ. However, the Bosnian Serbs soon found out and began to use different crypto and better equipment. The BND could not any longer eavesdrop on the Bosnian Serb traffic. For this reason there was no Sigint available regarding the VRS attack on

¹⁹⁹² See for instance: 'Amerikanen verzwegen voorkennis Srebrenica' (Americans kept prior knowledge of Srebrenica to themselves), *De Stem*, 13/10/95 and 'Verenigde Staten wisten al weken tevoren van val Srebrenica', *De Gelderlander*, 13/10/95.

¹⁹⁹³ Andreas Zumach, 'US Intelligence knew Serbs were planning an assault on Srebrenica', *Basic Reports*, No. 47, 16/10/95. See also: 'VS wisten van komende val Srebrenica', *Nederlands Dagblad*, 13/10/95; 'VS wisten al weken tevoren van val Srebrenica', *De Gelderlander*, 13/10/95 and Ian Bruce, 'Massacre helped Nato take charge of Bosnian conflict', *The Herald (Glasgow)*, 12/07/01.

¹⁹⁹⁴ Confidential information (87).

¹⁹⁹⁵ Andreas Zumach, 'BND wusste von Srebrenica-Angriff' (BND knew about Srebrenica attack), *Berliner Tageszeitung*, 20/10/95; 'Angriff auf Schutzzone Srebrenica. BND wusste angeblich vorab von serbischer Offensive' (Attack on Srebrenica Safe Area. BND allegedly knew about Serb offensive in advance), *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 20/10/95; Ian Bruce, 'Massacre helped Nato take charge of Bosnian conflict', *The Herald (Glasgow)*, 12/07/01; 'Woman of iron with a steely resolve', *The Herald (Glasgow)*, 07/07/01 and 'Why these guilty men remain free', *The Herald (Glasgow)*, 09/05/97.

¹⁹⁹⁶ Andreas Zumach, 'Ich muss diese Enklaven loswerden' (I have to get rid of these enclaves), *Die Tageszeitung*, 01/11/95.

¹⁹⁹⁷ Confidential interview (53).

Srebrenica. A senior BND official also confirmed that the BND had no foreknowledge regarding the attack on Srebrenica and was completely surprised by it. Like the US and British services, the Germans also had recruited sources close to Mladic but they apparently produced no timely warning. The BND knew all the time that the VRS had the capabilities and intentions in the longer run but the attack and also the scale of the subsequent atrocities was a surprise.¹⁹⁹⁸ And the BND did also not receive much intelligence from its European partners like the French. According to German intelligence sources the French were even reluctant to share information with the BND.¹⁹⁹⁹

On 29 October 1995 the *New York Times* responded to the European reports. In June the US intelligence community received indications that the VRS was going to concentrate on the enclaves. At that time it was unclear what the scale of the operation would be.²⁰⁰⁰ On the same day the *Washington Post* also provided a reconstruction. At the end of June US intelligence services reportedly observed a build-up around the enclave. Mladic was furious about the raids being conducted from the enclave and wanted to put an end to them. But analysts had concluded that the aim was to neutralize Srebrenica 'rather than take it over all together'.²⁰⁰¹

In a new article a day later it was claimed that the French intelligence services were also aware of the situation. The French also intercepted the communications traffic between Perisic and Mladic.²⁰⁰² Florence Hartmann received, more or less, a confirmation of this in a conversation with a high-ranking member of the French military intelligence service. According to Hartmann's anonymous source the buses and trucks had been waiting for days on the border with Serbia. The French service knew that a large-scale operation to deport the population was going to take place. However, these latter claims are both completely untrue and totally unfounded. Hartmann's source directly added that it was absolutely impossible to predict the mass murders.²⁰⁰³ This last statement is directly at odds with that of a British official of the DIS. In an interview this person declared that the murders did not come as a surprise. It was only the scale that was surprising and that Mladic let them take place, which was 'a very stupid thing to do'.²⁰⁰⁴ Also a US intelligence official claimed the same. In the Force Commander's briefing at 1630 on 7 July when a question was asked about the aftermath of a collapse of the enclave to a VRS offensive the US Deputy G-2 response was 'there will be a bloodbath'. Anybody who had watched the war in Bosnia and Croatia unfold could not rationally believe otherwise, according to this official. On the contrary, the only question in the minds of reasonably informed observers was not whether atrocities would occur, but rather how bad they would be. After all, military logic demands that the worst case is assumed, which in this case was still that the VRS wanted to capture the enclave. But on the other hand, according to a senior US intelligence official, even if the intelligence was available that the enclave was to be collapsed by the VRS that still provided no indication that a massacre was about to happen. Any knowledgeable observer of the war in Bosnia and Croatia would still have doubted that the VRS had the audacity to do it anyway.²⁰⁰⁵

After this things remained quiet for a while, but an article in *The New York Review of Books* in May 1996 caused a new stir. According to the journal, US intelligence services had sufficient warning of an attack. Research revealed that the intercepts as described did indeed exist. The VRS planned, it was said, 'to shave the enclave'. Analysts expected that the VRS would not take the entire enclave for fear of major losses, air strikes and the problem of the thousands of refugees. It was true that US spy aircraft had observed large numbers of buses at Bijeljina but it was assumed that these would be used to

¹⁹⁹⁸ Confidential interviews (98) and (99).

¹⁹⁹⁹ Confidential interviews (98) and (99).

²⁰⁰⁰ 'srebrenica: the Days of Slaughter', *The New York Times*, 29/10/95.

²⁰⁰¹ M. Dobbs & R. Jeffrey Smith, 'New Proof Offered Of Serb Atrocities', *Washington Post*, 29/10/95.

²⁰⁰² Andreas Zumach, 'Grosser Lauschangriff auf Srebrenica' (Major eavesdropping offensive against Srebrenica), *Die Tageszeitung*, 30/10/95.

²⁰⁰³ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 338.

²⁰⁰⁴ Confidential interview (57).

²⁰⁰⁵ Confidential interview (46) and confidential information (80).

transport VRS troops.²⁰⁰⁶ However, it was forgotten to mention that this town was outside the territory of the Drina Corps and that the observed buses therefore had little to do with the attack on Srebrenica. Just like the ABiH, the VRS transported all its soldiers by bus. The CIA director John Deutch, in a letter sent to *The New York Review of Books*, denied that his service had had prior knowledge. This was a remarkable step, because in the past the CIA had seldom responded to a wide range of accusations. There were also no intercepts of conversations between Perisic and Mladic. An internal State Department document also denied that there had been any prior knowledge.²⁰⁰⁷ In addition the author spoke to two U.S. intelligence officials who independently from each other checked US Sigint archives and not a trace could be found of the intercepts.²⁰⁰⁸ Apart from this, these important intercepts certainly would have ended up in the daily reporting of the purely US Joint Analysis Center (JAC) in Molesworth. The author was able, thanks to a foreign intelligence agency, to study these reports over a period of many months before, during and after. However, these intercepts as mentioned by journalists never showed up in the daily reporting of JAC, Molesworth, which sometimes had the highest classification grade. It was again an indication that one can have doubts about the existence of these intercepts.

In a response the authors of the article in *The New York Review of Books* stood by their story. An anonymous source confirmed the existence of these raw intercepts. There was a 'week's worth of such intercepts about the coming assault on Srebrenica'.²⁰⁰⁹ As the VRS had imposed radio silence and communicated over secure landlines, this claim may be doubted. *Nemday* also wrote about the existence of prior knowledge. General Nicolai saw reports concerning the Arkan Tigers. 'They always showed up at places where something was about to happen', according to Nicolai. 'That also was an indication that Srebrenica was on their wish list'.²⁰¹⁰ But a report of the wandering Arkan Tigers, weeks before the attack, is absolutely not the same as a hard indication of an attack on Srebrenica.

What was the response in the Netherlands to all these revelations? The information was so disturbing that Voorhoeve contacted his US colleague and asked him for clarification. Perry assured Voorhoeve during their meeting in Williamsburg that the Pentagon knew of nothing. An investigation by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) showed that a 'review of the intelligence prior to 10 July does not reveal any tangible evidence of an intent to completely take control of the enclave'.²⁰¹¹ The question of whether the CIA or the NSA knew something was not asked, and so was not answered either. In order to be quite sure, General Van den Breemen also inquired with the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), General John Shalikashvili, who assured him that no crucial intelligence had been kept back.²⁰¹² The military adviser to Boutros-Ghali, General Van Kappen, had also talked to various sources in the Pentagon about the issue of prior knowledge, where he had been assured 'hand on heart' that the information in question had not been held. He had no reason whatsoever to doubt this.²⁰¹³

So what is true of all these claims in the press and other publications that the CIA or other agencies was aware of the preparations for an attack? Since Mladic first decided on 2 July to 'shave' the enclave at the southern edge and on 9 July to take over the entire enclave, any prior knowledge of the attack would have been minimal and the aforementioned press reports cannot be true. Ambassador

²⁰⁰⁶ Charles Lane and Thom Shanker, 'Bosnia: What the CIA Didn't Tell Us', *The New York Review of Books*, 09/05/96. For Lane's background in the debate on Bosnia: cf. UNNY, UNPROFOR, *Archive SRSG, Box 87717*. Jim Shear to Akashi, 15/10/94 and Charles Lane, 'Brock Crook', *The New Republic*, 05/09/94.

²⁰⁰⁷ American FOIA, State Department memorandum, 19/12/96.

²⁰⁰⁸ Confidential interviews (13) and (54).

²⁰⁰⁹ 'The CIA and Bosnia: An Exchange', *New York Review of Books*, 06/06/96.

²⁰¹⁰ Roy Gutman, 'UN's Deadly Deal', *Nemday*, 29/05/96.

²⁰¹¹ Charles Lane and Thom Shanker, 'Bosnia: What the CIA Didn't Tell Us', *The New York Review of Books*, 09/05/96.

²⁰¹² MoD, *MIS/CO*. Memorandum: to CDS; Re: Intelligence on attack on Srebrenica; Drafter: Lt. Col. Van Geldere; Annotation: Col. J. Mulder Head MIS/Army; 18/03/97.

²⁰¹³ B. Ummelen, 'Verenigde Staten ontkennen wetenschap aanval op Srebrenica' (United States denies knowledge of attack on Srebrenica), *De Limburger*, 14/10/95.

James Pardew, who was the head of the Balkan Task Force (BTF) at the Pentagon, confirmed that there was no prior knowledge. The BTF did indeed note an increase in fighting and troop movements from the end of June onwards, but an attack was not expected. The enclave was of no great value to the VRS, which would then also become responsible for all the Displaced Persons. Moreover, it would mean a direct confrontation with UNPROFOR and NATO.²⁰¹⁴ It thus seems more likely that the troop movements and tanks were first established in analyses made after the event. Indeed, Srebrenica did not enjoy high priority in the US intelligence community. Moreover, American officers in the G-2 staffs in Sarajevo and Zagreb, Powers and Morgan, had no prior knowledge.²⁰¹⁵ When journalists write that US intelligence services were informed ‘weeks in advance’, one can doubt this.

Nonetheless, the ABiH also declared that the Americans knew about the intentions of the VRS. This was stated by a Bosnian officer, General Andjeljko Makar. He even spoke of knowledge a month in advance. He came to hear of the VRS plans from a foreign source. According to him the German services also knew about it. The raid on Visnjica on 26 June was thus not the ‘famous last straw’. Knowledge a month earlier would be logical too, because the planning for the attack required at least four weeks.²⁰¹⁶ Just as with other claims, these statements can be questioned because all foreign intelligence analyses in 1994 and 1995 established that the VRS was in a position to take the enclave at any moment without having to make any substantial extra preparations beforehand.

Various military analysts of the US intelligence community interviewed by the author also denied that they had prior knowledge. In fact, the CIA had great difficulty in keeping tabs on the VRS. Most of its troops were infantry, and this field of VRS operations was well-organized. It was difficult to keep track of its structures. There were no hard indications that the VRS wanted to take over the enclaves in their entirety; no significant build-up was observed. One should also not forget, according to the interviewed analysts, that ultimately it was only a small unit that attacked Srebrenica. At the time it was almost impossible to establish which VRS units carried out the assault. This knowledge was first gained by the US intelligence community in retrospect. Regarding the motives for the attack on the eastern enclaves, US analysts stated that the VRS was afraid of losing the war. This fear also played a role in the decision to attack Srebrenica. Pale wanted to put an end to the war and therefore they had to get rid of the enclaves.²⁰¹⁷

In this respect there are two important parallels between the attack on Srebrenica and Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. The assessment by the CIA on the eve of Iraq’s invasion was that Saddam Hussein would likely launch a military campaign to seize a limited piece of Kuwaiti territory. This ‘limited objective’ was forward leaning at the time. Many of the most astute observers of Middle East politics, including Arab heads of state intimately familiar with Saddam Hussein such as King Hussein of Jordan and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, were predicting that Iraq was militarily posturing to politically pressure the Kuwaitis over oil production levels. King Hussein even assured President Bush in a phone conversation that the crisis between Iraq and Kuwait would be resolved without fighting. Another parallel between Srebrenica and Iraq’s invasion was the lack of Humint. A major shortcoming in warning of the Gulf war was the lack of Humint to help decipher Saddam’s political intentions. And the poor Humint achievement is not an isolated incident in CIA’s history. Civilian policy makers shared this assessment. As U.S. Secretary of State James Baker characterized the situation: ‘U.S. intelligence assets on the ground were virtually nonexistent’. He judged that ‘there wasn’t much intelligence on what was going on inside Iraq’. The same applied to Bosnia: there was also a lack of Humint regarding short-term Bosnian Serb intentions.

²⁰¹⁴ Interview with James Pardew, 01/04/98.

²⁰¹⁵ Confidential interviews (9) and (54).

²⁰¹⁶ Interviews with Andjeljko Makar, 12/06/00 and 16/06/00. For the attack on Visnjica see for instance: Part III, Chapter 6 of the main report. Also: Stephen Kinzer, ‘Government Troops attack Bosnian Serb village’, *The New York Times*, 26/06/95.

²⁰¹⁷ Confidential interviews (9) and (54).

In this respect the author Russell points to the following distinction. Secrets are facts that can be stolen by Humint collectors. Mysteries, on the other hand, are projections of the future that are less vulnerable to human collection and tend to be the bailiwick of analysis.²⁰¹⁸ However, as Russell correctly observed, these criticisms, moreover, neglect the fact that CIA is not designed to be a 'combat support agency'. CIA's charter has been to provide strategic-level intelligence primarily to civilian policy makers and not tactical intelligence to battlefield commanders. While military commanders are often prone to fault CIA for perceived shortcomings, they appear reticent to fault their own military service intelligence shops and the DIA whose charters are to provide tactical combat support to field commanders. Accordingly, DIA and military intelligence manpower for conducting tactical military analysis dwarfs that of CIA.²⁰¹⁹

Nevertheless, an initial signal regarding Srebrenica was sent by Karadzic in his speech on 23 May, in which he said that he wanted to get rid of the enclaves, but at that time the CIA was unaware that this announcement fitted in with the VRS strategy. According to US analysts the operations in July 1995 were to some extent coordinated with Belgrade. There was no pressing military need for the VJ to assist the VRS in an attack; the VRS had sufficient manpower. But did the VRS only want the southern section, or did it want the entire enclave? This question long remained unclear. The CIA did not expect Mladic to go for the entire enclave. The service had little intelligence regarding Serb intentions and the actual course of events, and was confronted with an army that operated with small units and a few tanks in the woods.²⁰²⁰ This made it hard to keep track of the VRS and no hard indications were obtained. What was the situation for other US intelligence services?

The Bureau of Intelligence & Research (I&R) at the State Department had no prior knowledge either. This bureau was in a unique position: it liaised with all US intelligence and security services. A great deal of tactical military intelligence was held on the warring factions. The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) did some fine work and kept track of the order of battle. There were few surprises in the *modus operandi* of the VRS because this did not deviate from that of the VJ. The standard approach was: firstly artillery and mortar bombardments, then the deployment of tanks and infantry, and then paramilitary units and special police. This was the systematic pattern that almost always presented itself. This service managed to chart all VRS positions involved in the siege of Sarajevo. The DIA also had excellent intelligence on Northern Bosnia, but there was very little intelligence on Eastern Bosnia. One problem was that the DIA gathered a great deal of humanitarian intelligence, but this was never analysed within the DIA and was thus often lost. The DIA concentrated only on military operations and many humanitarian issues were not passed on to I&R. Besides this, although the DIA was good on 'capabilities' it was weak on 'intentions'.

Much tactical military intelligence was not shared with other services, but retained by the DIA for itself. Four months after Srebrenica, for instance, much DIA material was discovered in Washington that had never been sent to Zagreb. Much of its intelligence was chiefly examined for its military value, and in this case attention was mostly devoted to variations in the military battle order. The best sources were formed by the press, NGOs and Displaced Persons. In any case the State Department's I&R did not expect an attack.²⁰²¹ Many interviews confirm that most intelligence and security services were not aware of the coming attack. This is not so surprising in view of the short time needed by the VRS to set up the operation. Moreover, the radio silence observed by the VRS meant that little was intercepted.

²⁰¹⁸ Richard L. Russell, 'CIA's Strategic Intelligence in Iraq', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 117 (Summer 2002), 2, pp. 196-197 and 206.

²⁰¹⁹ Richard L. Russell, 'CIA's Strategic Intelligence in Iraq', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 117 (Summer 2002), 2, p. 204.

²⁰²⁰ Confidential interview (7).

²⁰²¹ Confidential interviews (12), (13) and (76).

So which organizations did have clear indications?

The question remains: despite Mladic's late decision to undertake an assault on Srebrenica might there, notwithstanding all denials, be indications that foreign military intelligence services knew something? Research has shown that this Canadian did have suspicions that the VRS was up to something. For some considerable time Ottawa had been warned by Canadian staff in Zagreb and Sarajevo that in the longer term the VRS would go on the attack. Reportedly the build-up was monitored by Ottawa through Humint, Sigint and Imint. But it still remained unclear whether the VRS aims were confined to the southern tip or encompassed the entire enclave. It had often happened that the VRS massed troops at certain places. Everyone then expected an attack or an operation, but ultimately it failed to materialize. When the ABiH did this, however, it was a sure indication that a military operation was going to take place.²⁰²² On the basis of Imint the J-2 Military Intelligence Cell at the Canadian Department of National Defence (DND) reportedly ascertained that two groups of T-54 tanks were moving in the direction of the enclaves. One later turned off towards Srebrenica, heading for the southern tip of the enclave, and the other unit headed for Zepa. This happened 2 to 3 weeks before the event, and the intelligence officials wondered whether this was a reconnaissance mission. 'What was going on?' The Canadian military intelligence service also established that the VRS had moved new and heavier long-range artillery to Sugar Hill, the mount that controlled Tuzla and Tuzla Air Base. Relocations of other artillery in the direction of Zvornik and Bratunac were also observed.

Imint from satellites and U-2s over Eastern Bosnia was, according to some Canadian sources, rapidly available in Ottawa. One can, however, doubt if this was indeed so rapidly as outlined to the author. Even if DIA gave the Canadians the second copy from RAF Alconbury, they still had more than a week's delay, because the shipment out of the UK was usually at least a week after the U-2 mission was flown. If the DIA took the time to make a third copy for the Canadians from their own DIA copy, one must add at least another day. Satellite imagery is a different story of course, but it does not provide the comprehensive coverage required to maintain the sort of picture as described by the Canadians.²⁰²³

In addition, the SAS had managed to take photographs of the new artillery and tanks from close up. Reports were also received that frequently changing VJ units had been observed at the southern tip of the enclave. This was evident from the shoulder emblems on the uniforms and the Belgrade dialect spoken. Partly on the basis of this intelligence a briefing was given to the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, General Armand Roy, two weeks before the attack. In this briefing analysts forecasted that something would happen around Srebrenica in the near future. Roy is said to have rejected the however: he did not believe in an attack. Ottawa probably had the same intelligence at its disposal as the British DIS, but a different conclusion was drawn.

It also seems that the Bosnian Muslims, on the basis of Comint, also knew of a Serb action long in advance. In Chapter 6 of this study it was established that they did have intercepts, but that these were first analysed weeks or months later. The Muslims had insufficient personnel, interception equipment, cryptoanalysts and analysis capabilities, and no internal communication network to get the gathered Comint to where it was needed quickly and efficiently. The method of interception and processing was too labour intensive, meaning that many messages were 'missed'. It is likely that only fragments were intercepted. Nonetheless, these fragments could sometimes have provided quite important intelligence, but not the full picture. But let us suppose that these intercepts were indeed available in real time and not too late. Were they then passed on to the US intelligence services? Or did the Americans gather such information themselves via satellites or aircraft? In June 1995 US officials admitted that intelligence about tactical military matters provided largely through technical sources

²⁰²² Confidential interviews (9) and (60).

²⁰²³ Confidential information (80).

(presumably they were referring to Elint and low-grade Comint) would be a much easier issue for them than gathering political intelligence on what the Serbians and Bosnian Serbs were thinking.²⁰²⁴

If the CIA or the NSA were able to access Bosnian intercepts, then one must ask what reasons there might have been for not sharing these. One of the biggest problems seems to be the dissemination of Sigint among the US and foreign consumers. In the US intelligence community this is referred to as the Green Door Syndrome, in which the vast majority of political and military policymakers do not have access to Sigint. This prevented an effective integration of Sigint in other intelligence products. It was only in the course of the 1980s that Sigint started to be spread a little more widely, but this process still cannot be described as optimal.²⁰²⁵

But if Sigint on operation *Krivaja '95* was possibly available to the CIA or the National Security Agency, why was it not passed on? A variety of possibilities present themselves. The Green Door Syndrome may have played a role. The highly sensitive nature of Sigint may have led to the intercepts not being fed into 'the line'. Perhaps the US services wanted to conceal the original source and the relationship with the 2nd Corps. A third possibility is that the intercepts did enter the pipeline but then remained 'stuck' due to a lack of analysis capability. Despite all the publications implying that intelligence services have become 'deaf' due to the avalanche of information,²⁰²⁶ it seems that gathering intelligence is no problem. In reality the biggest problem is 'the continuing decline of its Sigint processing, analysis and reporting infrastructure'.²⁰²⁷

But in Bosnia this was not the case. The Bosnian Sigint was not passed on to UNPROFOR. Was it perhaps passed on to the Americans, and was there a special liaison between the 2nd Corps and the US services? Hagman establishes that 'it was general knowledge that US advisers (without any affiliation to the UN) were deployed in Sarajevo and Tuzla throughout 1994 and 1995, working out of, for example, the HQ ABiH 2 Corps (Tuzla) and Bosnia Hercegovina Government buildings.' According to various reports this was a 'two-way street', as Americans are said to have passed on intelligence to the ABiH.²⁰²⁸ It is likely that staff of the CIA and DIA were active in the region, but they concentrated mostly on Humint. The CIA did not open its first official station in Sarajevo until September 1995. There was also no official representation of the NSA and no formal or informal liaison with the Bosnian intelligence services.²⁰²⁹

However, as already stated in Chapter 6, the Americans never gained access to these intercepts. Following publication of the first press reports, a US intelligence analyst undertook a lengthy search but it was found that these Bosnian intercepts were not held in the relevant archives. The conclusion was that these were not shared. This analyst pointed out that his government would not have kept such information to itself and would have immediately publicized it in order to save many lives.²⁰³⁰ This was also indicated by interviews with other US policymakers. Like the head of the Balkan Task Force at the Pentagon, James Pardew, who categorically denied that this Task Force ever received this intelligence in 1995. One or more (video) conferences between the Pentagon, the NSA, the CIA and the US EUCOM were held almost daily in order to exchange intelligence, but these intercepts were never mentioned.²⁰³¹ An intelligence analyst of the US State Department also denied ever having seen Bosnian intercepts and declared that this material would certainly have been used by the State Department.²⁰³² This is a further

²⁰²⁴ James Risen, 'Experts Warn U.S. Intelligence Help Has Limits', *Los Angeles Times*, 07/06/95.

²⁰²⁵ Matthew M. Aid, 'Not so Anonymous: Parting the Veil of Secrecy About the National Security Agency', Theoharis, *A Culture of Secrecy*, pp. 64-65 and confidential interviews (6) and (13).

²⁰²⁶ Seymour M. Hersh, 'The Intelligence Gap: How the Digital Age Left Our Spies Out in the Cold', *The New Yorker*, 06/12/99, p. 58.

²⁰²⁷ See: Matthew M. Aid, 'The Time of Troubles: The US National Security Agency in the Twenty-First Century', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 15 (2000) 3, pp. 1-32.

²⁰²⁸ Hagman, *UN-NATO*, p. 92.

²⁰²⁹ Confidential interview (13) and interviews with James Pardew, 30/11/00 and Matthew Aid, 02/12/00.

²⁰³⁰ Confidential interview (54).

²⁰³¹ Interview with James Pardew, 30/11/00.

²⁰³² Confidential interview (13).

confirmation that the ABiH intercepts released later were not in real time. And again, the reports of JAC, Molesworth as studied by the author also did not contain any reference to these intercepts.

To summarize: American, British, Canadian and perhaps other agencies did have some indications of troop movements and the relocation of equipment, but did not conclude from this that a large-scale attack was imminent. If something was about to happen, then it would be a limited operation. The warning from the DIS to the MIS/Army was on a confidential, personal basis. It is also quite possible that all this 'prior knowledge' was first established after the event and that the indications were not signalled in time in July. After all, Srebrenica was not assigned high priority. Then there is the analysis of the Canadian intelligence cell at DND, made at the end of June, that an attack was imminent. How can this be explained? To begin with this information came from a single source and can be confirmed nowhere else. One possible explanation is that the Canadian analysts had access to the same intelligence as did their US and British colleagues but took a different view of it and drew different conclusions. It is also possible that the Canadian unit in Bosnia made an extra national contribution which tipped the general analysis of the situation in a different direction. Another possibility is that the Canadians may have followed developments in Eastern Bosnia more closely. The American and the French concentrated mostly on Sarajevo and the British mostly on Gorazde.²⁰³³

One of the political advisers to Akashi, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, noted that at the end of June attention was directed mostly at Sarajevo and Gorazde.²⁰³⁴ However, the involved Canadian analysts failed to impress the significance of their findings on their superiors, who rejected their analysis. The latter apparently continued to adhere to the general view of the Western intelligence community that no VRS attack would take place. This is also indicated by a Canadian intelligence analysis of 11 July, which still did not expect that Mladic would try to take the enclave. It was thought that the VRS would probably concentrate on limiting the abilities of the ABiH to conduct operations from the enclave.²⁰³⁵

If the Bosnian Muslims were unable to share intelligence because their Sigint was not in real time, then did Western intelligence services gather relevant Sigint? As concluded in Chapter 5, high-level intercepts did indeed exist. The NSA will have concentrated mostly on international political developments. The question as to whether these intercepts also contained important tactical military intelligence on the attack must, in all be probability, be answered in the negative. The NSA did not assign the eastern enclaves high priority either. This also went for GCHQ, which focused on Gorazde, and the French DRM, which was mostly interested in Sarajevo. The head of the French military intelligence service, General Heinrich, confirmed that his service had only limited sources. The capabilities that his service had were concentrated in the zones for which the French troops were responsible. 'We had very few exchanges with the British and no relations with the Dutch at that time.'²⁰³⁶ In fact, during the fall of Srebrenica the DRM was reportedly totally unaware of what was happening.²⁰³⁷

Furthermore, the Comint coverage in Eastern Bosnia was poor. The VRS had imposed strict communications security and observed the radio silence conscientiously; the communications that the NSA was nonetheless able to intercept were uneven; due to a lack of analysis and translation capacity they will have landed in the 'pending but not urgent pile'. What remained were often items of Elint. Moreover, the history of the exchange of Sigint is not exactly encouraging. Since 1945 this liaison has never been optimal, and the exchange of important diplomatic and military Comint between the troop-

²⁰³³ Interview with P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

²⁰³⁴ Interview with Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, 06/06/97.

²⁰³⁵ Confidential information (78).

²⁰³⁶ Assemblée Nationale, *Srebrenica: rapport sur un massacre*, Assemblée Nationale, No 3412, 2 parts, Paris 2001, Part 2, Audition de Jean Heinrich, 08/02/01, p. 186 and 'US not keen to nab Bosnian Serb leaders in 1996: French general', *AFP* press release, 08/02/01.

²⁰³⁷ Assemblée Nationale, *Srebrenica: rapport sur un massacre*, Assemblée Nationale, No 3412, 2 parts, Paris 2001, Part 2, Audition de M. Bernard Janvier, Remark by Member of Parliament Lamy, 21/06/01.

contributing nations and within NATO never took substantial form in Bosnia either (apart from Elint). With regard to the non-exchange of strategic and tactical Sigint, an US military expert declared: 'NATO-releasable Signals Intelligence reporting consistently was a day late and a dollar short. It often comprised only marginally useful information as much as three to four days old.' He concluded that in Bosnia Humint formed a much more valuable, precise and rapid source of tactical military intelligence than Sigint.²⁰³⁸ His remark referred to the SFOR period after the Dayton Agreement. It can be inferred that the situation before the summer of 1995 was no better, because at that point there were no US ground troops in Bosnia. It must be concluded that much intelligence material was gathered by national strategic platforms such as satellites and special aircraft. It was sometimes released to NATO like Elint data which, as already established, was collected by US national platforms and which was automatically released to NATO via the LOCE system, and this worked quite well. But this kind of intelligence was of course not automatically released to UNPROFOR. Much Comint is never analysed, or not analysed on time, or due to its high classification is not permitted to be distributed – not among NATO partners and sometimes not even to a country's own national commanders.

Did spy satellites, U-2s, UAVs or other national assets possibly take photographs of the preparations? The section on Imint established that photographs were available of the events before, during and after the fall of the enclave. This has created a general pattern of expectation that Imint functions as a sort of 'Eye of God': an eye that is able to perceive absolutely everything on the ground. Satellites, U-2s, UAVs and other national assets may have impressive capabilities, but most systems are sometimes impeded by weather conditions above a certain area that can influence the operational possibilities. As described in Chapter 7, other elements play a role too. The speed of analysis, the specific focus of the analyst's expertise and other factors can all affect the quality of the Imint product. It is not so much the speed of transmission of the Imint to the ground that is the problem, but rather the speed of the entire process of analysis, processing and searching for further confirmation. One author concluded in this respect: 'For that reason, it would be difficult to intervene in a specific incident of ethnic cleansing. Nevertheless, tracking the civilian toll had value in a war where the political stakes are high'.²⁰³⁹ As said earlier, the characteristics of Imint, analogous in many regards to the shortfalls in the Sigint realm, resulted in documenting the war crimes, but not preventing them.

From the start of July 1995 onwards, spy satellites, U-2s, UAVs and other national assets started collecting large amounts of Imint, which presented images of buses, trucks, tanks, etc. The fact that this Imint did not arrive promptly on the desks of the US policymakers (i.e. not until the start of August) is closely related to the set priorities, as demonstrated in Chapter 7 of this study. Other hard targets were more important. Furthermore, a foreign intelligence evaluation concluded that Imint was 'useful', but in view of the guerrilla nature of the fighting few regular units could be photographed from the air and from space.²⁰⁴⁰ The overall picture created by the currently available data is that the eastern enclaves did not enjoy (high) priority with regard to Imint.²⁰⁴¹ Satellites and U-2 aircraft were indeed active, but other resources such as UAVs only became fully operational over Bosnia at a later stage. In addition, the Imint gathered about Srebrenica was not analysed in time. The imagery intelligence process will always remain a balancing act between available analytical resources, and the urgency of the tasks at hand. As more imagery comes in the door, the ability to analyze all of it becomes dependent on the resources that can be committed. Even as that imagery is analyzed, more continues to come in the door, every frame ripe with more urgent tasks. Prioritization of analytical tasks becomes paramount. Moreover, the intelligence community did not assign top priority to supplying military intelligence support to UNPROFOR. According to Hayden²⁰⁴², in the summer of 1995 the provision of support for

²⁰³⁸ Lt. Col. George K. Gramer, Jr., USA, 'Operation Joint Endeavor: Combined-Joint Intelligence in Peace Enforcement Operations', *Military Intelligence*, October-December 1996, p. 13.

²⁰³⁹ Alan Boyle, 'spies in the watch for atrocities' *MSNBC Interactive*, 26/03/99.

²⁰⁴⁰ Confidential information (1).

²⁰⁴¹ Confidential interview (13).

²⁰⁴² Michael V. Hayden, 'Warfighters and Intelligence: one team - one fight', *Defense Intelligence Journal*, Vol. 4 (1995) 2, p. 24.

UN operations took fifth place in the list of priorities for military intelligence. In this context it is not surprising that 'a senior intelligence official' at SHAPE, Mons stated that General Rose 'lost ownership of the picture of the battlefield to the point where it was irrecoverable'. According to this official, this resulted in decision-making on military operations that was based on a non-objective picture.²⁰⁴³ What was not stated here was that the US services did not trust Rose and thus slowly cut off the supply of intelligence.

Another important factor was that US analysts did not expect that the VRS would wish to take the enclave due to the risk of high losses, air strikes and the problem of the refugees.²⁰⁴⁴ CIA director John Deutch emphatically denied that his organization was forewarned and also pointed to the difficulties experienced in finally discovering the photographs of the mass graves.²⁰⁴⁵ Deutch's claims were confirmed by others. The Intelligence Head of the US EUCOM and later Director of the NSA, General Michael Hayden, concluded in the *Defense Intelligence Journal* with respect to the attack on Srebrenica: 'The quick fall of Srebrenica was as significant as it was unexpected. It was brought about by the "massing" of a force that would have been a disappointing crowd at many high school basketball games.' The major strategic changes that were usually generated by long-term processes were in this case, according to Hayden, the result of just a few tanks.²⁰⁴⁶

And Hayden was in a position to know because he had access to virtually all intelligence. His Yugoslav Joint Planning Cell at US EUCOM interpreted 'the gathering of groups of people in school yards in connection with the capture of Srebrenica as being "in the nature of a demonstration" when these had in fact been troops belonging to the Serb Army in Bosnia'.²⁰⁴⁷ There was a consensus at the State Department, the Pentagon and the CIA: the VRS would never want to conquer the entire enclave. Following the assault the US intelligence community established that intelligence was indeed available, but that the indications were too vague to be analysed effectively and in time. The journalists Stephen Engelberg and Tim Weiner of the *New York Times* were told more or less the same at a confidential briefing at the State Department and NSA. They were reportedly presented with a very accurate picture in which the Americans held nothing back.²⁰⁴⁸ A former director of the NSA declared: 'Gleaning hard facts from the avalanche of information was like trying to take a drink of water from a fire hose.' It transpired that the best information was obtained from NGOs, the UN and the press.²⁰⁴⁹

After the fall of Srebrenica the Netherlands MIS started an investigation into what its foreign partners knew. It transpired that in June 1995 the CIA and SIS received indications that the VRS was planning to start operations. The CIA had a 'variety of reports' which stated that an offensive would start in June 1995. According to the CIA the ABiH offensive around Sarajevo had caused a temporary delay in the VRS operations. A CIA report of 10 July, that was first received by the MIS/CO after the fall of Srebrenica on 12 July, also showed that the aforementioned 'variety of reports' never reached the MIS. The British foreign intelligence service is also said to have had indications that the VRS would attack the enclave with ethnic cleansing as the ultimate objective. The report itself was dated 15 June but (just like the CIA report) it was first received by the service on 12 July. Due to a misunderstanding it remained at the British embassy. The report was in fact not dated, had no attached evaluation, no indication of the reliability of the source, etc.²⁰⁵⁰ The news of the attack had, according to a senior British intelligence official, been passed to SIS by a source close to Mladic. This possible attack was the subject of discussion within the British intelligence community, where opinions were divided as to the reliability of the source. In the first week of June the British Joint Intelligence Committee repeated the

²⁰⁴³ 'Bosnia underscores intelligence gaps', *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 20/03/95, p. 56.

²⁰⁴⁴ Charles Lane and Thom Shanker, 'Bosnia: What the CIA Didn't Tell Us', *The New York Review of Books*, 09/05/96.

²⁰⁴⁵ 'The CIA and Bosnia: An Exchange', *New York Review of Books*, 06/06/96.

²⁰⁴⁶ Michael V. Hayden, 'Warfighters and Intelligence: one team - one fight', *Defense Intelligence Journal*, Vol. 4 (1995) 2, p. 18.

²⁰⁴⁷ Välimäki, *Intelligence*, pp. 104.

²⁰⁴⁸ Confidential interview (13).

²⁰⁴⁹ Stephen Engelberg and Tim Weiner, 'srebrenica', *The New York Times*, 29/10/95 and confidential interview (13).

²⁰⁵⁰ Confidential interview (18)

expectation that ‘on balance it is judged that the Bosnian Serbs will probably not seek to over-run the “safe areas” for the moment’.²⁰⁵¹ It must be doubted whether this US and British intelligence about an imminent attack was ‘hard’, as Mladic first decided at the end of June to set the operation in motion.

At a meeting in The Hague on 15 November 1995, a senior DIS official, Commodore J.G.F. Cooke, emphatically denied that the British services had had prior knowledge of the attack. Cooke had been sent to The Hague on behalf of this service to calm matters at the request of the British Chief of Defence Staff, Field Marshall Sir Peter Inge. There was great concern at the Dutch Ministry of Defence that British and other Western services had withheld information. Cooke talked to the Commander in Chief of the Army and to the Head of the MIS and made clear that the DIS had not known anything more than had been passed on to the Dutch.²⁰⁵² The CIA later also denied that it had held such information.

The highest US military commanders also firmly denied having had prior knowledge of the event. According to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO (SACEUR) General George Joulwan, it was only two or three days before the fall of Srebrenica that a feeling arose that an attack might take place. It was clear that the VRS wanted to take control of Eastern Bosnia. This intention did not change over the years, and in this respect their aims were clear. Good intelligence was available about the way that the VRS acted; the VRS very quickly gathered troops around Srebrenica ‘to support forward elements already in place’. The same later happened at Zepa. This should have been a ‘trigger’: the reports of troops being massed and artillery being moved into position.²⁰⁵³ Admiral Leighton Smith also stated that he had had no hard intelligence that Mladic was planning to attack. His intelligence was not good; the VRS efficiently rendered its communications secure. It was only three to four days beforehand that troop movements were observed. At this point it became clear to him that an operation was probably imminent.²⁰⁵⁴

Despite this, articles about prior knowledge continued to appear. In response to a spate of publications at the end of 1996 the Dutch Chief of Defence Staff, General Henk van den Breemen, wrote to his British colleague Inge and requested him to investigate what signs the British intelligence community had received concerning the attack on Srebrenica. Would a warning have been possible? The response from Inge and the enclosed DIS Assessment from 30 June 1995 indicates the following. The assessment was based on various sources and no further analysis was made until after the fall. The DIS regarded the enclave as ‘virtually indefensible’. The VRS had the military strength to take the enclave at any moment they wished. When the attack finally materialized, the DIS believed that the VRS was interested only in the southern road. ‘It was only the rapid and unexpected collapse of government defences which led them to push on and take the enclave at that point.’

According to Inge the Ministry of Defence in London had once again checked the archives of the British intelligence community to see whether this analysis still stood. Following a detailed study of documents it appeared that this was still the case. Inge concluded with the remark: ‘I am clear that we had no tactical warning on timing which might have helped to forestall events there.’²⁰⁵⁵ A study of the DIS Assessment of the situation around Srebrenica on the eve of the definitive attack reveals that the DIS was highly uncertain about the intentions of the VRS. This document was drawn up shortly before the final attack on Srebrenica and the DIS did not have a ‘tactical warning of an upcoming attack’. There were no indicators that the ‘VRS would launch an attack without warning’. The service did, however, establish that the VRS had long been complaining about the ABiH sorties conducted from a ‘demilitarized zone’. At the end of June 1995 the DIS concluded that ‘tension is high around the Srebrenica enclave, but there are no indicators to suggest that the VRS are about to launch an attack to

²⁰⁵¹ Confidential interview (8).

²⁰⁵² Confidential interview (8).

²⁰⁵³ Interview with George Joulwan, 08/06/00

²⁰⁵⁴ Interview with Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

²⁰⁵⁵ NIOD, *Coll. Van den Breemen*. Letter from Sir Peter Inge to Henk van den Breemen, No. D/CDS/1/8/6, 29/01/97 plus DIS Assessment, 30/06/95.

take the whole pocket'. If the VRS did however attack, it was not expected that the ABiH would be able to stop this. The Bosnian Muslims might be able to delay the assault for a few days, but 'they are not strong enough to halt indefinitely a pre-planned assault'. The UN was also not in a position to 'dissuade or prevent' the VRS from such an action. Armed resistance by Dutchbat 'would be of no value even if the UN mandate authorised such action'. The nature of the terrain and the small number of VRS soldiers required for such an attack 'would render air strikes relatively ineffective as a preventative measure; NATO would have difficulty in acquiring worthwhile targets as the VRS forces would be relatively dispersed.'

The VRS did not need to bring in troops from elsewhere because the local units were sufficient. It would thus be difficult 'to identify a VRS attack before it had begun. It is anticipated that if the VRS did decide to attack Srebrenica there would very little, if any, warning time.' The VRS would not be significantly deterred by the presence of the UN once the final decision had been taken to attack Srebrenica. However, there were no indications that the VRS had taken a 'command decision' to attack Srebrenica, although this 'does not preclude opportunistic campaigns as happened in Gorazde last year'. If the VRS did however attack then 'there would be little or no warning from imagery; the VRS do not need to move troops and equipment into the area to take the enclaves, the local troops are sufficient in number for the task'. In reality it was only the forbearance of the VRS that allowed and enabled the continued existence of the enclave. Srebrenica and Zepa had always been completely indefensible, according to the UK Defence Intelligence Staff.²⁰⁵⁶

This analysis was confirmed by British intelligence officials. The DIS had no hard tactical intelligence on the attack. The concentration of troops had been noted, but the service had attached little importance to this because in fact the VRS constantly had sufficient troops at its disposal. The intelligence about the 'massing of troops' that was supplied was chiefly obtained through Imint. These pictures definitely did not indicate that the VRS was about to start an assault. Furthermore, it should be remembered that Srebrenica was not a major area of attention for the DIS. Its eyes were turned towards Gorazde and Sarajevo.²⁰⁵⁷

Up to a week before the actual attack the service did not reckon on a planned attack. It can be assumed that the DIS analysis was based in part on information obtained from other British services such as SIS and GCHQ and on intelligence supplied by foreign partners such as US and Canadian agencies. This was confirmed by Dame Pauline Neville-Jones, who was the chairwoman of the British Joint Intelligence Committee in 1993-1994. Srebrenica came as an enormous surprise; there were no prior indications. Mladic conducted the operation without consulting others. 'London was completely ignorant as regards the upcoming attack.'²⁰⁵⁸ It must be concluded that foreign intelligence and security services did not have specific operational information or hard indications from sources and technical intelligence resources indicating that the Bosnian Serbs would move to attack Srebrenica on a particular date. Indeed, the presence of such information was not likely either in view of the very short-term preparations needed by the VRS to set up the operation.²⁰⁵⁹

8. Conclusions

Many organizations and persons expected that in the long term the eastern enclaves would be given up and would disappear. At the diplomatic level, as early as the start of 1994 the eastern Safe Areas were seen as an obstacle to the peace process that needed to be 'cleared up'. The US mediator Redman had already made reasonable progress in persuading the Bosnians to give up the Safe Areas; abandoning and exchanging these areas were options that Sarajevo was prepared to discuss, but it remained a very

²⁰⁵⁶ NIOD, *Coll. van den Breemen*. DIS Assessment of the UN's Prospects in the event of a VRS Assault on Srebrenica as at 30 June 1995, NATO Restricted, 30/06/95, appendix to letter from Inge to Van den Breemen.

²⁰⁵⁷ Confidential interviews (8) and (43).

²⁰⁵⁸ Interview with P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

²⁰⁵⁹ Confidential information (83).

thorny issue. A foreign intelligence service established that opinions were divided in Sarajevo on this issue.²⁰⁶⁰ That was understandable, because as long as the enclaves had military value and could be used in the propaganda war against the Bosnian Serbs, some Bosnian ministers were not prepared to consider giving up this bargaining chip.

It was clear that in particular Srebrenica and Zepa would not be able to continue for long, in both humanitarian and military terms. The VRS had the areas in a stranglehold and the 'neck' was being squeezed ever tighter. Less and less humanitarian aid was arriving and the Serbs had a constant military advantage in equipment, firepower and troops, making a swift conquest a constant possibility. In addition, there were no logistical limitations. The main reasons why the Serbs had still not taken the enclaves were international political motives and because they would become responsible for the population.²⁰⁶¹ In short, most negotiators assumed that the enclaves would disappear sooner or later through a political or military solution. Srebrenica was tolerated by Mladic.²⁰⁶² Nothing more and nothing less.

However, strategic prior knowledge is not the same as tactical prior knowledge. Did the latter exist? According to some publications it did. US services reportedly had indications that the Bosnian Serbs were planning an attack. It was even written that the US government was informed in detail three weeks before the fall of the enclave. Washington was said to have intentionally withheld this information. In view of the above, what evidence still stands?

First of all it must be stated that no one can have known of an attack intended to conquer Srebrenica as a whole. Although the options contained in *Krivaja '95* included the conquest of the enclave, it was only late in the evening of 9 July that it was decided to actually take this step. Hence there cannot have been any prior knowledge of this. There can only have been prior knowledge of the preparations, which had a limited military goal, namely the southern road.

Furthermore, an essential element is overlooked in many publications: the attack was not comparable to Operation Barbarossa or the invasion of Normandy, with hundreds of thousands of troops, aircraft and tanks involved. This was a small military operation with a limited amount of troops, a maximum of ten tanks and APCs and supported by twelve artillery pieces and mortars that were already in position around the enclave. The VRS needed to bridge only a short distance to reach Srebrenica, and since the troops and equipment were hidden in the wooded hills there was an extremely limited chance of issuing a warning in time.²⁰⁶³ ABiH reconnaissance troops observed something on 5 July but this was not reported to Dutchbat until 6 July.

But let us assume that preparations such as troop concentrations, tank movements, new artillery positions, etc. had been observed and reported. The question then remains: preparations for what precisely? The intentions of the VRS remained unclear up to the last moment. The players in the enclave had little information; Dutchbat's view of the situation was very limited view. The little intelligence available came from patrols, observations posts, convoy commanders, the local population and authorities, and at the higher level from SNE, BHC and UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb. Since operations were strictly limited due to lack of fuel and by military activities, Dutchbat became dependent on static OPs. Reports based on Humint became ever fewer, partly because DutchBat Commander Karremans sharply reduced the interaction of Dutchbat with the local population. As little was supplied through other channels, the information situation of Dutchbat was very weak indeed. The sources of information dried up more and more. The only possible method was photo-reconnaissance flights, but these were limited after an American F-16 was shot down on 2 June. Besides this, the VRS apparently strengthened the air defences around the enclave after the decision to attack was taken. This

²⁰⁶⁰ Confidential information (61).

²⁰⁶¹ Confidential information (59).

²⁰⁶² Interview with P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

²⁰⁶³ This conclusion is also drawn in the CIA report made available to the NIOD. See the chapter 'srebrenica: Background and Battle', CIA, 'Balkan Battlegrounds: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1991-1995', unpublished, p. 17, 13/07/99.

latter fact could have been an important source of intelligence for NATO if the VRS had activated the radars.²⁰⁶⁴

However, were the Dutch military not again too prudent? TACRECCE played an important role throughout the summer, and into the air campaign in September. There may have been tactical restrictions placed on NATO aircraft due to the proximity of Srebrenica to the Serbian border and the SAM defenses on the other side. Nevertheless, there were tactical aircraft operating in the vicinity of the enclave (as shown in the previous chapter) before, during and after the fall. But such restrictions would certainly not prohibited them. Nothing would have prevented the Dutch from flying their own TACRECCE assets over their own troops and in support of the interests of the UN. According to a US intelligence official 'no NATO commander would stand in the way of such action, especially not a man like Admiral Snuffy Smith'.

The F-16 would probably have been ideal for such reconnaissance missions. Probably even better than an UAV, which often encountered frequent morning mist and low cloud cover. An UAV loiters at medium altitude and uses its substantial focal length to observe objects on the ground. Typical loiter altitudes were 5000 feet above ground level, well above any small arms fire. But TACRECCE is most capable against medium foul weather, and a properly equipped aircraft like the F-16 can use cloud cover to its significant advantage, especially in a heat-seeker SAM threat. According to a senior US official, the SAM can't see through the clouds, and the aircraft can drop below the cloud cover, to altitudes of 500 meters or even less, just long enough to collect the imagery and then retreat to safety back above the clouds, or in the clouds. 'That sort of flying takes guts, and willingness to take some big chances'. For TACRECCE aircraft, there's no intent to remain hidden while taking the pictures, unlike the UAV. One TACRECCE pilot once said: 'I know I never bombed any of the enemy, but by God, there's a bunch of them that can't hear too good'.²⁰⁶⁵

A number of precautionary measures were taken following rumours that the Arkan Tigers had been sighted. After consultation between BHC and Karremans it was decided to prepare a swift evacuation of the OPs. The report of Arkan Tigers in the area is cited by many publications as the ultimate proof that something was going to happen. However, this was information that dated from the end of May.²⁰⁶⁶ It was assumed that, in view of the number of VRS troops, their strength and the lack of heavy weapons on the ABiH side, there would be hardly any warning. An attack could take place at any minute and this situation had actually existed since 1993. In short, most of the players in the region had no clear indications. This also went for the JCOs (SAS), NGOs, SNE and BHC.²⁰⁶⁷ At the end of June there were a few indications that something was going to happen, but nobody knew exactly what. The UNPROFOR intelligence officers in Sarajevo and Zagreb had no forewarning and continued to believe that the operations were aimed at the southern tip of the enclave. On 12 July it dawned in Zagreb that the VRS had taken over the enclave.²⁰⁶⁸

The Force Commander's meeting on 12 July announced that the UN forces had accomplished their task within the means available. In the aftermath of Srebrenica, the Force Commander's primary concern was the food, health of refugees; secondary concern was assisting DutchBatt in their retrograde (from the fallen enclave). The Force Commander's meeting concluded that support from NATO had been good and DutchBatt had reacted in a remarkable way.²⁰⁶⁹

The MIS/CO and MIS/Army were equally unaware of what was coming. Right up to the end analysts were unsure as to the real intentions of the VRS. The MISs assumed, just like UNPROFOR and other intelligence services, that the attack would be aimed at the southern part of the enclave. This

²⁰⁶⁴ Interview with Jan-Inge Svensson and Ingmar Ljunggren, 04/11/99.

²⁰⁶⁵ Confidential information (80).

²⁰⁶⁶ Confidential interview (3).

²⁰⁶⁷ Annan stated the same. See: United Nations, *Srebrenica Report*, 1999, p.143.

²⁰⁶⁸ Interview with Jan-Inge Svensson and Ingmar Ljunggren, 04/11/99.

²⁰⁶⁹ Confidential information (80).

was a correct analysis, as was later revealed by VRS documents.²⁰⁷⁰ Although conversations in London had indicated that the British services were fairly concerned, there was no hard intelligence on this either. The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) doubted the reliability of a source in the VRS. The reports of the Defence Intelligence Staff and the CIA only reached the Netherlands MIS after the fall. A study of it shows that these did not contain any hard indications. Furthermore, the Service did not receive any intelligence from other services, such as the German or the French organizations. Dutch analysts concluded that other foreign intelligence services had no information either. The DCBC and civil servants on the Minister's staff, who were dependent on the reports from UNPROFOR and the MIS, therefore knew nothing either. Perry gave his word to Voorhoeve that the Pentagon also had no prior knowledge. The report to the effect that the US intelligence community had discovered from intercepted telephone calls before the attack that buses were being gathered was not confirmed either.²⁰⁷¹

The Americans did not have good Sigint coverage in Eastern Bosnia and did not operate with their own interception equipment from Tuzla. In any case, documents and interviews have not indicated that active Sigint support was provided to the ABiH. The only assistance came from the US Special Forces officer, who worked in Tuzla as a liaison officer. According to an UNPROFOR official the US services always worked through this officer.²⁰⁷² This officer was probably involved in the secret flights to Tuzla and was probably the contact man for the MPRI staff who were sometime reported to be in Tuzla.²⁰⁷³

It was not only that the attack came totally unexpectedly but, as the Dutch Ministerial Council also established,²⁰⁷⁴ from the Western perspective it also represented new tactics and a new strategy, irrespective of whether these were applied *ad hoc* or had been devised beforehand. The usual approach was to exert pressure on the boundaries of the Safe Areas to gain control of the higher ground. No one expected that the enclave would be taken. This was because some assumed that the VRS had insufficient troops to overcome the numerically superior ABiH forces in house and street fighting.²⁰⁷⁵ Apparently the Western intelligence services overlooked the possibility that more local factors might play a role in deciding to attack. Giving evidence to the Yugoslavia Tribunal, General Krstic of the VRS stated that the decision to attack Srebrenica was taken for two reasons. The first was a directive from the general staff in March 1995, ordering the separation of Srebrenica from Zepa. The second reason was the hit and run operations conducted from the enclave and the constant infiltrations into Bosnian Serb territory.²⁰⁷⁶ The Western services had an insufficient perspective on the local events and the effects these had on the thinking of the Bosnian Serbs. Their goal – to reduce the size of the Safe Area – was not known either. This also applied to the decision of 9 July to go ahead and take the entire enclave, when this appeared opportune due to the weak resistance of the ABiH and possibly also due to the lack of a vigorous response by UNPROFOR in the form of NATO air strikes or armed resistance on the ground.

The Bosnians had equally little insight into the reasons for the VRS attack. Insofar as can be established they never became aware of the directives issued by Karadzic and Mladic for the separation of Srebrenica and Zepa. Unfortunately there are no reliable sources which can be consulted to give a precise answer to the question why the decision was taken to attack, and why 6 July was chosen.²⁰⁷⁷ The

²⁰⁷⁰ MoD, *MIS/CO*, Chronology of the Events by Lt. Col. Van Geldere, 23/10/97.

²⁰⁷¹ MoD, *MIS/CO*, Chronology of the Events by Lt. Col. Van Geldere, 23/10/97.

²⁰⁷² Interview with Hans Holm, 13/03/99.

²⁰⁷³ Interviews with C.L.Brantz, 11/06/99 and H. Haukland, 03/05/99. See also UNGE, *UNPROFOR, Box 193*, SNE 23 May – 15 October 1995. Haukland to Comd. Unprofor, 31/05/95 and Hagman, *UN-NATO*, p. 93.

²⁰⁷⁴ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meetings of 18/08/95 and 25/08/95, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

²⁰⁷⁵ Confidential information (25).

²⁰⁷⁶ ICTY, (IT-98-33), OTP Ex. 399/a bis, Interview with Radislav Krstic, 18/02/00.

²⁰⁷⁷ Attempts by the NIOD for interviews with Karadzic or his political advisor Zametica faltered. An appointment for an interview with Mladic was granted by the Bosnian Serb general but the war in Kosovo did him change his mind.

explanations given for this are taken from testimonies after the event, although they do not contradict each other. The general picture created here is that the main reason was the activities carried out by the ABiH outside the enclave. This already played a role in March, when Karadzic and Mladic issued their directives. The military activities in June will simply have confirmed the VRS in this aim. It also cannot be ruled out that Mladic's fear of an ABiH corridor from Tuzla to the eastern enclaves played a role. In addition, the elimination of the enclave offered several further advantages, even if these did not constitute a primary motivation. Freeing troops from around the enclaves would help the infantry-starved VRS and a victory would bolster the flagging morale. Moreover, it would force new political negotiations by turning the map of Bosnia on its head.

Many publications have described Srebrenica as an intelligence failure. The preceding sections have established that military and political policymakers within UNPROFOR and NATO did not receive the indications in time. However, a senior British intelligence official observed to the author that intelligence did as much as it could reasonably be expected to have done about the attack on Srebrenica. The problem, according to this official, was that decision-makers all too often expected analysts to be prophets with the ability to forecast coming events. What the analyst must do is set out the range of possible outcomes and the assessed likelihood of each and leave it to the policy-maker or the military commander to judge the probability and damage equation. He knew from experience that policy-makers are very resistant to unwelcome messages from intelligence. In the opinion of this official, policy-makers 'know' their policies are right and don't want unwelcome reality to intrude.²⁰⁷⁸

Nonetheless, as previously said, a warning about an upcoming event or war can have four relationships with reality: hit, miss, false alarm and correct rejection. But like Von Clausewitz once wrote: 'War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty'.²⁰⁷⁹ It is clear that 'false alarm' and 'correct rejection' are not applicable here. So 'hit' and 'miss' remain. The ABiH has constantly claimed that Srebrenica was a 'hit'. It gave the warning, but Karremans in Srebrenica and SNE refused to believe it. As indicated above, one must doubt the reliability of claims that real-time Sigint was available. However, a military build-up was established on the basis of Humint. This took place on 4 and 5 July, but the reports by Dutchbat, the UNMOs and JCOs show that this was not passed on by the ABiH until 6 July, after the start of the attack. ABiH commander Becirovic's request to Karremans to plan his rotation with the Ukrainians carefully so that the VRS was given no opportunity to allow Dutch soldiers to depart and then not to allow in any replacements was an indication that he too did not expect a reduction or conquest. Hence one must doubt the claims that a warning of the VRS assault plan was given. No indications of this were contained in the UN reports and in interviews conducted with UNPROFOR officials.

But let us suppose that the ABiH did sound the alarm. In this case, why was the warning not effective? There was no lack of intelligence about the capabilities and the battle order of the VRS. UNPROFOR had a relatively reliable picture in this respect. However, obtaining a good insight into intentions was more problematic. Mladic and Karadzic often announced that the eastern enclaves would be reduced or even conquered. The chief question was: when would this happen? In early 1995 there were constant rumours that an attack was imminent. Every time it proved to be a false alarm. Did a 'cry wolf' mechanism creep into people's minds? Did the alertness of the recipient grow less each time the warning proved not to be true?²⁰⁸⁰

This may well have played a role. To give one example, on 26 June 1995 the UNPROFOR Chief Political Officer in Sarajevo, Corwin, and his staff burst out laughing when the Bosnian radio reported troop movements around Srebrenica and Gorazde 'Nobody believes the local news. Nobody

²⁰⁷⁸ Confidential information (82).

²⁰⁷⁹ Quoted in: Richard L. Russell, 'CIA's Strategic Intelligence in Iraq', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 117 (Summer 2002) 2, p. 191.

²⁰⁸⁰ Handel, *Diplomacy*, pp. 478-479.

believes any news in Sarajevo.²⁰⁸¹ This observation was also made in a CIA report, which stated that there were some indications, such as the bringing up of reinforcements. But:

‘similar troop movements had been recorded around the enclave dozens of times in the past, and the VRS was constantly adjusting its forces all across Bosnia. There was no special indicator, which would particularly distinguish these reports among hundreds of reports over the months and across the country’.²⁰⁸²

This mechanism may have been reinforced by the many false alarms, which the Bosnian Muslims frequently issued in their attempts to get UNPROFOR and NATO on their side. This applied to Eastern Bosnia too. In May the JCOs reported that ‘there were constant rumours at this time from the ABiH that the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) were planning to attack the Enclave’. This did not lead to all alarm bells going off: the SAS was not impressed. They had often heard such rumours and they ‘were thus hard to take seriously’. The same was true of 8 June, when a major alarm was sounded. But at the time that the VRS was busy with its preparations the ABiH did not issue any serious warnings.

Did ‘noise barriers’ play a role? At various times since the start of 1994 Mladic had declared that he wanted better control over the southern tip of the enclave, but he did not say how and when he wanted to achieve this. His intentions remained unclear right up to the last. The international context also worked as a noise barrier, because the attention of the major policymakers such as Janvier, Akashi and Smith was directed towards matters of a more strategic nature, and not Srebrenica. Eastern Bosnia had low priority and the same attitude was true of most of the Western intelligence and security services. According to an ex-member of Akashi’s staff, it was an enormous intelligence failure. If Akashi had known what was going to happen then he would have reacted differently: above all because of his political ambitions. He thus brought himself into an impossible position with regard to the leading members of the Security Council. Srebrenica proved the decisive reason for ushering him from the stage through a side door. According to this source it was a sort of standard thinking at the UN (and hence an intelligence failure) that the Bosnian Serbs simply would not know what to do with the tens of thousands of refugees. The greatest failure was that it was not imagined in advance that the VRS would murder all the men and less the question of whether they would take over half the enclave or all of it. In itself this is strange because military logic demands that one should assume the worst, i.e. the VRS wanted to take the entire enclave. The failure therefore also lay with the Dutchbat personnel, according to this source, because they were the only ones who, possibly with the help of the JCOs, could have gathered intelligence about an attack.²⁰⁸³ However, this former member of Akashi’s staff forgot to mention that nobody could foresee the massmurders. There was no automatic link between the attack and atrocities.

Self-generated noise also played a role. Policymakers were not able to adjust their expectations about the Serb intentions and capabilities in accordance with reality. Thinking was dominated by the ‘sheer nerve scenario’ (i.e. the VRS would never have the nerve to attack the enclave).²⁰⁸⁴ A VRS assault with the aim of conquering the entire enclave did not fit the general pattern of expectations. In other words, policymakers clung to belief systems, and these created a filter in the perception of reality and the making of corresponding judgements. Reality was not determined by the actual situation, but by the image that those involved had of it. For as long as possible they attempted to perceive their environment in the most cohesive manner possible and to avoid certain contradictions. Many were inclined to avoid cognitive dissonance (i.e. the tension arising between new information and established

²⁰⁸¹ Corwin, *Dubious Mandate*, p. 131.

²⁰⁸² See: CIA Report, Chapter Srebrenica: Background and Battle, p. 15, CIA, ‘Balkan Battleground: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1991-1995’, unpublished, 13/07/99.

²⁰⁸³ Confidential interview (46).

²⁰⁸⁴ Interview with P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01.

patterns of thought). On 7 July, therefore, Karremans still thought that the VRS attack was an attempt to provoke and intimidate the ABiH. Analysts in the US intelligence community also failed to realize that Mladic was aiming for the entire enclave, because what would he then do with so many refugees? In such a situation signals are constantly interpreted wrongly and perceived intentions are subject to disbelief. This aspect of self-generated noise was important. Both UNPROFOR and The Hague actually assumed that the VRS 'would not dare to go to such brutality and thereby provoke the whole international community'.²⁰⁸⁵ It was thought inconceivable that Mladic would do precisely this. Perhaps this self-generated noise also includes the exaggerated effect that was attributed to air power. Policymakers long assumed that this would prove a sufficient deterrent to the VRS.

Metselaar concluded that the way in which the warnings about a VRS attack were treated can be regarded as an intelligence failure. But the problem was precisely that there were no warnings. In spite of this, can Srebrenica still be called an intelligence failure, and under what circumstances could we call it a 'hit'? A warning would have needed to be based on adequate intelligence capabilities. In that case the preparations could have been noted in time. History shows that in the case of many successful surprise attacks, the attacked party had sufficient information to make an accurate prediction of the enemy's behaviour.²⁰⁸⁶ However, the indications were ignored or interpreted wrongly. Preventing a surprise attack was therefore 'not simply a problem of detection, but very much a problem of assessment and acceptance'.²⁰⁸⁷

In Srebrenica it was possible for a surprise attack to take place because enemy preparations were not discovered in time. So in Eastern Bosnia it was indeed 'simply a problem of detection', and thus also 'very much a problem of assessment and acceptance'. If Dutchbat had had been given its own 'eyes and ears' then the preparations might have been discovered in time. Let us suppose that the Netherlands Army had agreed to the positioning of the US Sigint equipment in the enclave or that the MIS/Army had been permitted to operate with an Electronic Warfare unit from Tuzla or the enclave (and this option was possible, as shown in Chapter 5 of this study). In such a case the information situation could have been strongly improved. There was an 'intelligence shortage' and this could and should have been exploited. As it was, the Dutch intelligence and security services remained 'poor'. By agreeing to the US offer, The Hague would not only have been given 'ears' but also 'eyes', because the Americans would then have been dependent on the Dutch for a large proportion of their Sigint on the enclaves.

This could even have led to the timely provision of Imint from U-2s and UAVs in exchange for Dutch Sigint. The MIS would probably have analysed the Imint quickly. Sigint and Imint would have revealed more about the intentions of the VRS. And if Karremans had set up an active structure for gathering intelligence, had given his men explicit orders to have more contact with the local population in order to gather information, and had also given the JCOs a free hand within and outside the enclave, then his Humint situation might have improved. These were missed opportunities, because as it was the Dutch intelligence services had little or nothing to expect from their foreign counterparts and from UNPROFOR. The most important partners were concentrating on Sarajevo, Gorazde and Croatia. This could and should have been exploited, because intelligence on Eastern Bosnia would have considerably improved the *quid pro quo* position of the MIS.

On the other hand, one should not blame other intelligence services too easily. From day One, the Dutch policymakers and military leadership knew the incredibly precarious position of their troops in Srebrenica. They refused the assistance of foreign capabilities, offered to reduce the threat like the US offer to bring tactical Sigint equipment into the enclave. The Hague refused to employ their own assets to learn about the threat, both Sigint and Imint. No Dutch indigenous Sigint assets were deployed nor were the readily available Dutch TACRECCE assets like the RF-16s properly used. And

²⁰⁸⁵ M.V. Metselaar, 'Understanding Failures in Intelligence Estimates', p. 46.

²⁰⁸⁶ See for instance: Hughes-Wilson, *Military Intelligence Blunders*, passim.

²⁰⁸⁷ Gordon H. McCormick, 'Surprise, Perceptions, and Military Style', *ORBIS*, Vol. 26 (1983) 4, pp. 836-837.

as said before, this is not a natural fact, but the result of policy decisions hinged on funding, capability and political will. In the light of these refusals, the prospect of castigating American, British, Canadian, German, etc. intelligence for failing (albeit perhaps negligently) to do what the Dutch armed forces had deliberately and consistently refused to do themselves seems not always justified.

Nonetheless, various members of the MIS also believed that, for various other reasons, Srebrenica was an example of an intelligence failure. It was often posited that if the MIS had had more resources it could have exchanged more with foreign partners and thus could have gathered more intelligence through liaison.²⁰⁸⁸ According to another MIS official it was a failure because the MIS/CO was not geared to supporting this operation in an adequate manner. Through its internal method of functioning the organization also made it difficult for itself to get information about Srebrenica to the right places. Couzy and Voorhoeve were given different pictures of events. This could have had fatal consequences in other ways too because, in the opinion of one MIS official, if things had gone a little differently an entire battalion could quite possibly have been killed.²⁰⁸⁹ One official thought that Srebrenica was an intelligence failure because the Army had learned nothing from the events.²⁰⁹⁰ For others it was the refusal of the US offer that represented a major failure.²⁰⁹¹

Metselaar was of course correct when he wrote that a major noise barrier was created by Mladic's plans, which changed constantly and often at the very last moment.

‘Obviously, what an aggressor does not yet know himself can hardly be expected to be determined by one’s own intelligence sources. Even the enemy’s military and political elite itself is often, until the last moment, not completely certain about many of these elements’.²⁰⁹²

This does not detract from the fact that some indications of the preparations could still have been gathered in time. As it was, the assault but also the quick collapse of the enclave came as a total surprise to Dutchbat and UNPROFOR. This was therefore a ‘miss’: no warning was given, but the event took place. The same probably went for most of the other Western services, although the American, Canadian and British services did receive indications. There was Imint regarding buses, but it was thought that these would be used for the transport of troops. There was some Sigint about logistical support by the VJ.²⁰⁹³ Troop movements and tanks were reported. There were Humint sources close to Mladic. But the indications were too unclear, the reliability of sources was doubted, intelligence was often interpreted wrongly or not analysed in time or had insufficient priority.

How big was the intelligence failure actually and would the result have been different if more intelligence had been available? This is of course a ‘what-would-have-happened-if’ question. Let us suppose that intelligence had been available on the directives from Karadzic and Mladic, the planning for operation *Krivaja '95*, the orders from the general staff of the Drina Corps and the operational plan issued by the Drina Corps on 2 July. Let us suppose that the initial preparations had been noticed and correctly interpreted. Then UNPROFOR and NATO would still have had time to react. After all, the Bosnian Serbs were not always insensitive to international political pressure, as the solution to the hostage crisis indicated, and as was later the case in Gorazde. This is also a conclusion drawn in the UN report on Srebrenica. ‘Had the United Nations been provided with intelligence that revealed the enormity of the Bosnian Serbs’ goals, it is possible, though by no means certain, that the tragedy of Srebrenica might have been averted.’ The UN report stated that this did not apply to Zepa. This

²⁰⁸⁸ Confidential interview (22) and (36).

²⁰⁸⁹ Confidential interview (26).

²⁰⁹⁰ Confidential interview (37).

²⁰⁹¹ Confidential interview (78).

²⁰⁹² M.V. Metselaar, ‘Understanding Failures in Intelligence’, p.37.

²⁰⁹³ Confidential interview (6).

enclave did not fall due to lack of intelligence, but due to the unwillingness of the international community to do anything else than accept a *fait accompli*.²⁰⁹⁴

The intelligence failure described throughout this work made clear that there was no effective warning, except of the most general sort provided to commanders and policymakers, at virtually any level or nationality. The issue of a duty to provide warning becomes the next question. The author is not aware of any treaty, or a bilateral or multilateral agreement that definitively obligates any of the allied forces operating in Bosnia to provide intelligence of the sort involved here to the UN or the Dutch in particular. Even under the NATO Treaty, a member nation is not obligated to come to the aid of any other member if an attack occurs, rather, a member need take only 'such action as it deems necessary' to restore and maintain the security of NATO. All NATO intelligence sharing in voluntary and NATO members need share only that intelligence which they choose. There is no obligation to do so.

However, it should also be stated that this intelligence failure occurred within the context of a massive operational and policy failure by the UN, which placed civilians and soldiers in an impossibly indefensible position with full knowledge of its tenuous character. To lose sight of the monumental operational failure by focusing exclusively on the equally substantial intelligence failure is to doom oneself to repetition. The intelligence failure was of several days or even weeks duration, but the policy failure was systematically ignored for years at a variety of UN and national levels. The unsupportable operational posture at Srebrenica, and the decision by key policy-makers in the UN, and various western nations to ignore the volatile potential is directly connected to the lack of intelligence focus on the potential for a VRS effort to collapse the enclave. Intelligence assets are nearly always focused on collection issues as directed by the policymakers. It were those policymakers at the UN and national levels who chose to turn a blind eye to the desperate situation in the eastern enclaves. And as a result, the limited intelligence assets committed to the Balkans were much more rigorously applied to other problems where production was more fruitful and more central to the vital national interests represented. The enclaves in Bosnia fell off the collection priority list of a dozen countries when those limited collection assets were committed against the numerous intelligence problems elsewhere in the Balkans.

It can also be concluded from the above that if no structural intelligence gathering and intelligence activities take place, or if crucial decisions are taken only at a very late stage, then intelligence has only limited significance. But since the international community continued to hold the view that the Bosnian Serbs would ignore political pressure, this should clearly have led to greater alertness and should have been a signal to strengthen intelligence gathering. The same argument applies to the fact that UNPROFOR knew that Mladic was seriously short of troops for meeting the Bosnian offensive elsewhere in Bosnia and the Croatian operations in the Krajina

In the case of a good follow-up by UNPROFOR, it is possible that the southern part of the enclave would not have been attacked and that the rest of the enclave would therefore also have been spared. Perhaps the rapid collapse of the ABiH could have been prevented if it had been decided earlier to return the still serviceable heavy weapons at the Weapon Collection Point in Srebrenica to the ABiH, if agreements had been made about the joint defence of the enclave, and if Close Air Support had been deployed faster and more effectively. Although the first measures would have been at odds with the mandate of Dutchbat, this aspect should have been tolerated in view of the emergency at hand. This remains speculation of course but since it is now evident that none of those involved had prior knowledge of the assault, a 'proper' response was ruled out right from the start. In this respect Srebrenica was an intelligence failure.

²⁰⁹⁴ United Nations, *Srebrenica Report*, § 487, p. 143.

Chapter 9

Survey of archival records

Introduction

A large number of records and collections of documents were consulted for the Srebrenica inquiry and this study. Private organizations and individuals also made documents available. It is a generally accepted rule that the curator, manager or owner of such archives or documents must give permission for third parties to consult them. This usually means, certainly in the case of all documents belonging to government agencies and international organizations, that applications have to be submitted to the bodies concerned in order to inspect the material. In several cases the institutions or individuals involved gave the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (NIOD) permission to have third parties inspect the documents (originals or copies). In such cases the NIOD was obliged to check whether there were any restrictions on making the documents public by virtue of the Freedom of Information Act, the Personal Data Protection Act and the Public Records Act. It is possible that as a result of these Acts certain data and/or names of individuals must be made illegible. Below a survey is provided of the records, collections and separate documents consulted, with mention of the abbreviations used in the report. The aim of this survey is to provide insight into the archives, which were consulted for the purposes of this study. Important archives consulted in the Netherlands for this study were those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence. All other Dutch and foreign archives and private collections have been brought together in a section: other archives and collections.

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs archives (NMFA)

1. Cabinet archives, strictly confidential codes, Red telegrams.
2. Documentary Information Service (Dutch DDI)
3. European Department (DEU)
4. Political UN Affairs (DPV)
5. Atlantic Security Department (DAV)
6. Archives of the UN Permanent Representation in New York
7. Archives of the Netherlands embassy in Washington.
8. Archives of the Canadian embassy in Washington.

Collection Hattinga van 't Sant

Working archive of the Deputy Director of the Europe department

The Netherlands Ministry of Defence archives (MOD)

The archives present at the Ministry of Defence on the subject of the Dutch mission in Srebrenica, its background and its consequences fill more than one hundred metres of shelf space. The study of the archives focused mainly on the period from 1993 to 1996, but in connection with the run-up to the Dutch military involvement in the former Yugoslavia and the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica, it also extended to 1992 and 1997.

1. Department of the junior minister of Defence.
2. Secretary-General's Department.
3. Defence Staff.
4. Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC).
5. Directorate for General Policy.

6. Directorate of General Information.
7. Directorate of Legal Affairs, Department of Administrative Law, Criminal Law and Disciplinary Rules.
8. Directorate-General of Personnel.
9. Directorate-General for Equipment.
10. Directorate-General for Economy and Finance.
11. Military Intelligence Service (MIS), Central Organization.
12. First Air Force Signals Group (1LVG),
13. The 898 Signals Battalion (898 Vbdat) of the Royal Netherlands Army in Eibergen,
14. Royal Netherlands Navy Technical Information Processing Centre (TIIVC) in Amsterdam
15. Signals Intelligence Department (AVI) in The Hague
16. Defence attaché in Ottawa.

Royal Netherlands Army Archives

1. The Army Council.
 - Archive of the Cabinet/Staff Group of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army.
2. Archive of the Royal Netherlands Army Operational Staff.
 - The archive of the former Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff
 - Operational Staff's 'Lessons Learned' Section.
 - Department of Operational Affairs.
 - Archive of the Department of Operational Policy.
3. Archive of the Military Intelligence Service, Royal Netherlands Army (former Department of Intelligence & Security).
4. The First Army Corps.
5. The 11th Airmobile Brigade at Schaarsbergen.
6. Collection of the Military History Section.
7. Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Archive of Srebrenica Debriefing.
8. The 101st MI platoon at Ede.
9. 'Lessons Learned' Section.
10. Archives consulted at the Royal Netherlands Air Force
11. Staff Department of Operations, Exercises, Plans, Evaluations & Reporting (STAOOPER)
12. The photo archive of the 306th Squadron at Volkel Air Base.

Other archives and collections

Ministry of Home Affairs, The Hague

Collection of the Dutch National Security Service (BVD) in Leidschendam. Files 98272 and 116679 concerning the situation in the former Yugoslavia and its possible implications for Dutch national security and the democratic system were made available.

Collection of the Economic Investigation Service, International Economic Investigations Branch in Utrecht.

Documents concerning evasion of the embargo against the former Yugoslavia were consulted.

Cabinet Office, The Hague

1. The archive of the Prime Minister's office (KMP)
2. The archive of the Secretary-General.
3. Objectivized summaries of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meetings from 1992 – 1998 made for the purposes of the present NIOD study.
4. The archive of the Committee of the United Intelligence Services in the Netherlands (CVIN).
5. The archive of the Ministerial Committee for the Intelligence and Security Services (MICIV).

United Nations, Geneva

1. UNPROFOR Collection. The archive contained documents from the UN headquarters in Zagreb, Sarajevo and Tuzla. Many of the documents from Tuzla originally came from the UNPROFOR Civil Affairs official in Tuzla, who reported on a wide variety of subjects.
2. Collection of the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) Papers, Palais des Nations. This collection includes the most important correspondence between the European negotiators Lord Owen, Vance, Stoltenberg and Bildt, the UN Secretary-General's special envoy Akashi, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations led by Annan and the Unprofor military representatives in the period from 1992 – 1996.
3. Collection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In the UN refugee organization's archive many documents concerning humanitarian affairs in the Srebrenica enclave were found.

United Nations, New York

1. Collection of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). This collection includes all of the United Nations coded cables which were exchanged between DPKO and the Unprofor representatives and diplomatic negotiators during the war in Bosnia. The part of this collection covering the period from 1992 – 1995 was inspected.
2. Collection of Siergo Vieira de Mello. This archive contains correspondence between DPKO and UPROFOR officials in Bosnia.
3. UNPROFOR Collection. This archive contains the most important correspondence between the UN Secretary-General's special envoy Akashi, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the UPROFOR commanders during the period from 1992 – 1996 and also the archives of the Force Commander, Deputy Force Commanders and Chiefs of Staff.

International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslavia, The Hague

A collection of documents used in the trial of Serbian General Krstic before the Yugoslavia Tribunal (IT-98-33).

Canada

1. Collection of the Canadian Ministry of Defence in Ottawa. In the so-called *Green Folder Confidential* and *Red Folder Secret I & II* documents concerning the Canadian UNPROFOR units in Bosnia in general and Srebrenica in particular were inspected. They were mainly reports from Bosnia to the National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) of the Ministry of Defence and correspondence with

Canadian UPROFOR units in Srebrenica. There were also Situation Reports from the Canadian UPROFOR unit in the enclave.

2. Collection of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) in Ottawa. A total of 39 dossiers from the so-called File No. 21-14-6-UNPROFOR were consulted from the archive of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). This collection contains Canadian diplomatic telegrams which were exchanged between the ministry in Ottawa and the Canadian diplomatic representations abroad relating to UNPROFOR affairs.

3. Canadian Access to Information Act (AIA), Kevin O Neill, *History of CBNRC* (1987) [Classified].

4. Canadian Access to Information Act (AIA), Dossier 1972.

5. Reports from ECMM observers in Bosnia were acquired through the Ministry of Defence.

6. A total of 76 documents of various sorts were sent by the headquarters of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla.

7. Several documents connected with the journey of the men of Srebrenica to Tuzla were received from the Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska (*Ministarstvo Unutrasnjih Poslova*).

Ivanisevic Collection.

This collection contains documents which are kept at the *Centar za istraživanje zločina nad Srpskim narodom* at Belgrade, of which Milivoje Ivanisevic is the director. The collection contains about 300 documents including 86 Bosnian army documents from a plundered computer in Zepa, containing commands and reports connected with Srebrenica and Zepa. The authenticity of these documents has been confirmed by Ramiz Becirovic, former Chief of Staff of the 28th Division from Srebrenica. One hundred documents came from the Republika Srpska and were mainly witnesses' statements, drawn up in the Opstinas of Skelani, Srebrenica, Zvornik, Milici and Bratunac, about Muslim-perpetrated violence from 1992 to 1994. Also in this collection are about 60 UN documents dating from July and August 1995, from UNMOs, and messages exchanged between UN agencies in Bosnia about Displaced Persons from Srebrenica. Several Dutchbat documents were also found in the collection. At a later stage two diaries from Srebrenica were also made available through this centre; they are mainly concerned with administrative matters. The Ivanisevic collection also contains Bosnian Serb newspaper and magazine articles and videotapes recorded by private individuals, which give an impression of everyday life and were found in Srebrenica after 11 July 1995.

1. Trifunovic Collection. This collection is kept at the Law Projects Centre in Belgrade, an organization affiliated with the Republika Srpska. The collection contained video tapes from both Srebrenica and surrounding Bosnian-Serb towns and villages. The material includes pictures of victims of Muslim attacks in 1993 and 1994. A small number of documents relating to the presence of Dutchbat in Srebrenica was also found at this Centre.

2. Yugoslav Ministry of Information. A collection of articles from international periodicals and newspapers concerning the media warfare between the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnians was received from this ministry.

3. Situation reports dating from July 1995 and a few unrelated letters were received from the archive of the Danish Army Operations Command.

4. 'The Clingendael Collection', a pack of UNPROFOR documents thought to be originally from the archives and staffs of the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia. These documents were made available to the Clingendael Institute for research by an anonymous source in the autumn of 1996.

Médicins sans Frontières, Brussels

In the archive of *Médicins sans Frontières* (MSF) there were reports dating from 1993 about the situation in Srebrenica and a complete series of 'Capsat messages' exchanged between the coordinator of *Médecins sans Frontières* in Srebrenica and coordinators elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. In this

archive a number of messages from Dutchbat about medical matters were found, as well as messages concerning Dutchbat.

This organization ran the so-called Swedish Shelter project, a village made up of prefab houses offering shelter to about 3000 people. This organization made its 1994 and 1995 reports, written mainly in Swedish, available. The last report dates from 11 July 1995.

Norwegian People's Aid (NPA, Norsk Folkehjelp), Oslo, Norway

This organization was involved in humanitarian projects in Srebrenica and Bratunac and made all its documentation from Srebrenica and Bratunac available. The documents written in Norwegian and Swedish from collections 28 and 29 were adapted by Krsti Thørsen at the request of the NIOD.

U.S. National Archives, Washington DC

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2. RG 263, *CLA-records, Entry 27, Box 12*, Max F. Millikan, 'The Nature and Methods of Economic *Intelligence*', in: *Studies in Intelligence*, (1956)3(Spring), pp. 3-4.
3. RG 263, *NIE's 1951 - 1993, Box 6, Folder 47*, NIE 11/4-82: The Soviet Challenge to US Security Interests, 10/08/82.
4. RG 457, NSA-Records, Box 1028, Folder Monthly Production Trends Report, Tab E: Annual Production 1944 - 1945, June 1945.
5. RG-457, CP, SRH-264, A Lecture on Communications Intelligence by Captain J.N. Wenger, USN, 14/08/46.

George Bush Library

FOIA, National Security Directive 74, Peacekeeping and Emergency Humanitarian Relief Policy, 24/11/92.

US Freedom of Information Act

1. FOIA, State Department, Code Cable Dallaire to Baril/DPKO, No. 2052, 11/01/94.
2. FOIA, US Army Intelligence, Annual Historical Review, 1 October 1992 to 30 September 1993, no date (\pm late 1993).
3. FOIA, Letter of Daniel Krutzer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, to Vice-Admiral J. McConnell, Director NSA, 06/09/95.
4. FOIA State Department, Washington DC, US Mission Vienna to SecState, No. 2135, 26/07/1995.
5. FOIA State Department, John Shattuck to Secretary of State, 04/08/95.
6. FOIA, State Department, State Department memorandum, 19/12/96.
7. Sector North East Collection, 1994 and 1995.

Collection of UNHCR Tuzla reports

UNHCR messages to and from Tuzla, concerning relief for Displaced Persons after the fall of Srebrenica. Acquired from a private source.

Voskamp Collection

Documents concerning the provision of Close Air Support to Dutchbat in July 1995.

1. Collection of De Weerd, former adviser to the NATO Permanent Representative at Brussels: diary and abstracts of NATO documents, compiled for the purposes of the NIOD.

2. Sudetic Collection: abstracts of UN documents originally from the UN Headquarters in New York. At the time of the war in Bosnia, Sudetic was a correspondent for the *New York Times* and author of *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*.
3. Karremans Collection: letters and documents belonging to the former commander of Dutchbat III.
4. Rohde Collection: various documents including UN documents, collected during David Rohde's time in Bosnia as a correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*.
5. Westerman Collection: documents collected for the book *Srebrenica: Het zwartste scenario* (Srebrenica: the Blackest Scenario), of which Frank Westerman, at the time a correspondent for *NRC Handelsblad* in the former Yugoslavia, was a co-author.
6. Brantz Collection: documents belonging to the former Deputy Commander of UNPROFOR Sector North East at Tuzla. In addition to notes dating from the period when Brantz was Chief of Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, this collection also contains an (adapted) diary of the Crisis Staff Situation Centre which was not found anywhere else in the archives. The collection also contained a series of diaries which were supplemented over the years. The original version of the diary was not made available.
7. Van Duijn Collection: several documents relating to the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica.
8. Wahlgren Collection: documents belonging to the former UNPROFOR Force Commander, mainly about the realization of the Safe Areas.
9. Stagge Collection: several documents about the organization of the debriefing in Assen.
10. Nicolai Collection: documents originally belonging to the former BH-Command Chief of Staff in Sarajevo. The documents are mainly concerned with the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica and came from a Dutch source.
11. Collection of Momcilo Cvijetinovic: the diary of an ABiH soldier, found at Srebrenica, and a newspaper published in Srebrenica on 8 February 1994.
12. Stanojevic Collection: several diaries and a collection of internal ABiH documents pertaining to the administrative affairs of several brigades in Srebrenica.
13. Kolsteren Collection: diary notes and several documents from the UNPF Headquarters in Zagreb.
14. Vader Collection: correspondence relating to the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica.
15. Hegge Collection: documents about training and the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica.
16. Vandewijer Collection: diskettes containing notes and briefings dating from 1993-1994.
17. Hilderink Collection: chronology and notes on various subjects, written after the fall of Srebrenica.
18. Collection of Rupert Smith: 58 documents which were not found in the UNPROFOR archives in Geneva were selected from four files containing personal correspondence, documents and notes.
19. Vermeulen Collection: personal documents belonging to the commander of Dutchbat I.
20. Schouten Collection: diaries from Srebrenica covering the period from February to July 1995 and documents about medical matters and training courses.
21. Collection of David Moore (Commander of Canbat): documents about Canbat's time and rotation in Srebrenica.
22. Collection of Bo Pellnäss (Chief UNMO): diary and several documents.
23. Collection of General Kjeld Hillingsø (Commander of Danish Operational Forces): Danish situation reports.
24. Collection of Berry Ashton (Deputy Force Commander, United Nations Protection Force): diary notes and policy documents.
25. Collection of Tony Banbury (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General): diary notes, accounts of talks and a 'srebrenica dossier'.
26. Collection of Emma Shitakha (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General): diary notes and accounts of talks.
27. Meurkens Collection: correspondence and diary notes.
28. Jacobovits de Szeged Collection: diary notes.
29. Van den Breemen Collection: annotated copies of archive documents.

30. Uiterweer Post Collection: notes and documents about Tuzla Air Base and relief for Displaced Persons there.
31. Jansen Collection: Diary fragments and documents from the UN headquarters in Zagreb and intelligence briefings for the Army Council.
32. Lubbers Collection: notes made for the purposes of the NIOD enquiry.
33. Rave Collection: diary notes.
34. Neisingh Collection: diary notes dating from 11 July 1995.
35. Hicks Collection: documents concerning humanitarian affairs associated with the fall of Srebrenica.
36. Bourgondiën Collection: documents concerning humanitarian affairs associated with the fall of Srebrenica.
37. Groen Collection: notes of the debriefing in Zagreb.
38. Beneker Collection: document about the press conference in Zagreb.
39. TCBU Collection: documents collected for the purposes of the Temporary Committee for Despatch Decision-Making.
40. Svensson Collection: UNPF documents and diary notes.
41. Jacobovitz de Szeged Collection: diary notes made as NATO Permanent Representative.
42. Ter Beek Collection: archive documents and newspaper articles used to write his book *Manoeuvreren* (Manoeuvring).
43. Pennin Collection: several documents relating to the debriefing in Assen and the aftermath of Srebrenica.
44. De Ruiter Collection: documents originally from the UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo.

Personal memoirs

1. For the purposes of the NIOD enquiry, the former Netherlands Minister of Defence J.J.C. Voorhoeve compiled a diary on Bosnia policy and Srebrenica covering the period from 22 August 1994 to August 1995.
2. Deputy Director of General Information of the Ministry of Defence, B. Kreemers, recorded his memories of Srebrenica and its aftermath for the purposes of the NIOD.
3. Adjudant Koreman (Dutchbat III) lent the NIOD a manuscript he himself had written about his time in Srebrenica, illustrated with abstracts of reports.

Archives of Political Parties

1. CDA, D'66, GroenLinks, PvdA and VVD.
2. Blaauw Collection: documents from the archive he had compiled on the former Yugoslavia as VVD parliamentary party spokesman and also from his term as chairman of the so-called Blaauw Parliamentary Committee on Srebrenica.
3. Valk Collection.

CD-ROM Collection

This collection appears to contain the complete correspondence between the 28th Division in Srebrenica and the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla during the period when Srebrenica was a Safe Area. The CD-ROMs also contain material from civilian authorities in Srebrenica, and VRS archive material from the 'Zivojin Misic' barracks at Zvornik, which sheds some light on the conflict at Baljkovica where the retreating column had to fight its way through VRS lines after the fall of Srebrenica. The printouts of the most relevant documents in these CD-ROMs were about two metres long.

Another twelve private collections were consulted which it was agreed would remain confidential.

Confidential Collection (1): documents originally from the American State Department.

Confidential Collection (2): a large number of documents dating from 1994-1995 which were originally from G-2 UNPF Zagreb, and 11.000 military diary notes on CD-ROM.

Confidential Collection (3): report on Unprofor intelligence acquisition.

Confidential Collection (4): several Interoffice Memoranda from the Military Information Office UNPF-HQ.

Confidential Collection (5): UNMO documents from the UN headquarters in Zagreb.

Confidential Collection (6): diplomatic correspondence of foreign origin.

Confidential Collection (7): military documents of Canadian origin.

Confidential Collection (8): military documents of foreign origin.

Confidential Collection (9): notes and policy documents.

Confidential Collection (10): notes and policy documents.

Confidential Collection (11): notes and reports of Bosnian origin.

Confidential Collection (12): documents about secret arms supplies to Tuzla.

Confidential Collection (13): documents related to the trial of General Krstic before the Yugoslavia Tribunal, which were not included in the trial documents.

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Appendix III

Chemical weapons used?

Author: D.C.L. Schoonoord

1. Reports about the use of chemical weapons during the war

A number of people who took part in the journey to Tuzla after the fall of Srebrenica thought that on the way they had been attacked with chemical weapons by the Bosnian-Serb army. In endeavouring to answer the question of whether chemical agents were used after the fall of Srebrenica and in what form, we will begin by examining what was known about the use of such agents in the period before the fall.

Throughout the war in Bosnia it was continually asserted that chemical weapons had been used. Parties accused each other of their use, although there was no evidence for the use of lethal chemical agents. Even before the war in Bosnia broke out it was asserted that poison gas had been used by the Yugoslav army (the VJ) at Osijek in Croatia on 25 September 1991. The Yugoslavs denied the claim, and American observation on site did not show that the VJ had taken protective measures.

After the war in Bosnia had started, the Western media repeatedly reported the use of chemical weapons. They based their accounts on UN, Serb, Bosnian-Serb and Bosnian sources. Dutch sources also mention a possible use of chemical agents. It was notable that the reports on the subject mainly involved North-East Bosnia and the Tuzla region. It cannot be ruled out that these early rumours stirred up the fear of possible use of chemical weapons. Such fears may possibly have led people to interpret strange phenomena on the explosion of shells observed during the journey from Srebrenica to Tuzla as the use of chemical weapons.

When discussing the possible use of chemical agents it is important to consider how they should be defined. The Chemical Weapons Convention of 1994 makes a distinction between 'munitions and devices, specifically designed to cause death or other harm' and 'Riot Control Agents', chemical agents that 'can produce rapidly in humans sensory irritation or disabling physical effects which disappear within a short time following termination of exposure'. Possession and use of lethal agents is prohibited. The convention does not prohibit the possession of Riot Control Agents, but it does forbid their use as 'a method of warfare'.

It would appear that the agents used before the fall of Srebrenica in Bosnia belong to this second category. There is no evidence that chemical agents that cause death were ever used in Bosnia. They were available on the Bosnian side, albeit in improvised form. As early as October 1992, President Izetbegovic said in Teheran that the Bosnian Muslims possessed poison gas and might find themselves forced to use it against the Bosnian Serbs. Selim Beslagic, mayor of Tuzla, declared to the NIOD that this was chlorine, the only chemical agent available in 1992. He had had preparations made at the Tuzla chlorine factory so as to be able to use chlorine in the event of a Bosnian-Serb attack. He said he was aware of the international ban on the use of chemical weapons 'but what can you do in an attack if you have no other weapons?'

The Bosnian Muslims were indeed making preparations to use chlorine gas. In July 1993 radio reporter Salih Brkic reported from Tuzla that the 2nd Corps of the ABiH (the army of the Bosnian Muslims) was preparing to use it in the Posavina Corridor near Brcko. Tanks with the gas had been brought to the area. Detailed instructions for its use had been issued by the 2nd Corps. In the event of an attack by the Bosnian Serbs, first a small quantity of chlorine gas and other 'highly dangerous gasses' would be released as a warning. Subsequently a number of barrels containing several tons would be opened. The population would be warned to evacuate. If they were to end up in the zone where the chlorine gas had been released, the Bosnian Serbs would be held responsible.

That use seemed imminent; on 10 August 1993 the 2nd Corps issued an ultimatum for the Bosnian Serbs to halt the march on Brcko. However, the Deputy Commander of the 2nd Corps, Brigadier General Andjelko Makar, said he decided not to ignite at the very last moment because the VRS (the army of the Bosnian Serbs) abandoned further action. The municipal authorities in Tuzla are also thought to have exerted pressure not to deploy the gas because such a desperate act would only provoke retaliation.

Shortly afterwards the Commander of the 126th Brigade of the ABiH told UN personnel in Tuzla that chemical shells - presumably chlorine gas - had been used against the VRS to demonstrate the capabilities of the ABiH. The Security Council was informed about this. In October 1993, the Bosnian Serbs also reported that ABiH artillery near Zvornik in Eastern Bosnia fired chemical shells. The commander of the Zvornik garrison, Major Vinko Pandurevic, contended that over 60 shells had been fired, of which at least one-third had a charge based on chlorine gas.

A team of UN observers was instructed to carry out an investigation and to take samples. However, tests of remnants of the shells showed that they were smoke shells. The only other shells that could be categorized as chemical shells were CS shells (ortho-chlorobenzyl-malononitrile). This gas is not lethal and was often used by soldiers to test gas masks. Moreover, the small quantity of chlorine gas that a shell could hold would make its use relatively ineffective, unless it exploded in a confined space. UNPROFOR knew that threats about exploding barrels of chlorine had been made in the Tuzla region, but that they were probably meant to terrify and were not to be taken literally. UNPROFOR saw no evidence that such threats would be carried out.

At an earlier stage, mid-1993, there were reports from the other side that shells fired by the VRS at the positions of the ABiH near Sarajevo included some shells with riot-control gas (CS gas). UN observers had seen shells that produced white smoke. Shots by Reuters television of a UN observer wearing a gas mask and photographing an unexploded 122 mm shell increased the fear among the public that chemical weapons had been used. However, a UN spokesman declared that there was no evidence that either of the parties had used warfare gasses. At the same time in Belgrade, Cedric Thornberry, deputy head of the UN mission there, declared that the UN would investigate what the contents of the shells had been and who had fired them. Earlier the British government had declared that all three parties in the Bosnian war possessed improvised shells with riot-control gas.

In late 1993 it was the turn of the Bosnian prime minister Silajdzic to send a letter to the Chairman of the Security Council accusing the Bosnian Serbs of firing 2000 shells with toxic gas during an attack on the region Teocak, near Tuzla. In Washington, also in late 1993, Marshall Harris, former Chief Desk Officer for Bosnia at the State Department, suggested that Bosnia was on the brink of a chemical war. Harris referred to the threats by ABiH commanders about using chemical weapons against the Bosnian Serbs and 'credible evidence' of traces of chemical weapons on artillery shells around Sarajevo. Through the ambassador in Sarajevo, Washington warned the Bosnian government that this would constitute a violation of the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which banned the use of chlorine gas and other lethal gasses. However, the Bosnian government denied the possession or use of chemical weapons and the Yugoslav government in Belgrade denied having supplied chemical weapons to the Bosnian Serbs.

Subsequently, from the Croatian side came allegations that the ABiH had used chemical weapons on 22 December 1993 in Krcevena near Nova Bila in Central Bosnia. The Croatian ambassador brought the allegations during consultations in Geneva attended by the UN Secretary-General and the Undersecretary-General Marrack Goulding. The complaint was accompanied by a toxicological report from a Franciscan hospital indicating that intoxication of a girl had been caused by an unspecified 'chemical warfare agent'. With the message that, on the basis of a resolution by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General had to respond as soon as possible to a complaint by a member state that chemical, biological or toxic weapons had been used, New York searched the reports of UNPROFOR and newspaper cuttings. Nothing was found there.

The British battalion in Vitez started a further investigation. The incident had not been reported to them, though the British did know about three other reports during the period November 1994 - January 1995. A 120 mm mortar shell manufactured by the Bosnian Muslims was alleged to have contained chlorine. However, test results were negative. Responding to a subsequent report, the British could not find any traces of chemical weapons with what is known as NBC detection equipment (the abbreviation for Nuclear, Biological and Chemical weapons). Reported symptoms matched those after breathing in cordite released during explosions. Once again, despite efforts by the British and the UN, no evidence had been revealed for the use of chemical weapons.

In June 1994 new reports appeared about the use of toxic gas. During attacks by the ABiH south of Doboj in Western Bosnia, sources within the VRS claimed that gas shells were used. It was alleged that a patient had died in Doboj hospital of the effects of such an attack and that a second was in recovery. During the same period there were also reports that the VRS were using toxic gas in the eastern enclaves. British Joint Commission Observers (JCOs) reported that the VRS had used gas during an attack on Gorazde. The reports did not speak of CS gas, but an unspecified suffocating gas, which had nevertheless not caused any fatalities. In Zepa a girl was overcome by breathing in what was presumably CS gas. She recovered after a few hours. Mother and child were playing a ball game with something that looked like a tennis ball, but in fact was a remnant of the air raid on Zepa at the start of the war. Residents said that at the time explosives had been used which had produced strange red and white hazes. Reports about such hazes would appear again later.

On 11 November 1994 during an offensive in the Majeвица Hills in the area of Velika Jelica the VRS allegedly fired shells at the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, where every second shell caused a yellow cloud. At the request of the 2nd Corps, officers of the Scandinavian battalion accompanied by the staff physician and the NBC officer of the 2nd Corps visited the field hospital in Rainci where 17 soldiers had been admitted with symptoms such as red faces, perspiration and fatigue. Three hours later, after drinking milk, most of them had recovered. It was concluded that the symptoms were probably caused by a strong type of tear gas.

Because the contagion had taken place only ten kilometres from the Dutchbat A Company in Simin Han, this last event caught the attention of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. On top of that, a few days later a Dutchbat physician went to visit the hospital in Tuzla after a report from an interpreter that three patients had been admitted who had been in contact with warfare gasses. The patients in question were soldiers with respiratory problems and irritated mucous membranes. One patient had transient paralysis symptoms in the lower body. The symptoms disappeared after three hours. From the symptoms, the Dutch medical officer was unable to conclude what gas was involved. In view of the transient nature of the complaints, nerve gas seemed unlikely.

Two separate debriefing statements by Dutch soldiers describe similar and possibly the same events. A first report indicated that during the fighting near Visoko and in the Sapna Thumb (where A Company was stationed) the VRS had carried out attacks with chemical weapons. It was a yellow gas. Some 40 ABiH soldiers suffered eye complaints, collapsed lungs and nervous system failure. After five hours they had recovered. According to the UN the gas used was comparable to pepper spray. However, a Dutch Medical Officer who visited the Tuzla hospital thought it was a stronger type of gas. A second report indicated that the commander of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH, General Sead Delic, had called the A Company of Dutchbat in Simin Han to tell them that the VRS had used chemical weapons. Delic appeared horrified and said that the victims had been transferred to a field hospital at Rainci Gornji but that they had recovered after a few hours. It was asserted that the VRS had used a strong type of tear gas. In addition, the Dutchbat company heard from the ABiH that they had been shot at with shells that emitted yellow smoke. Subsequently, the ABiH had handed out atropine injectors to their own soldiers as a countermeasure. Because the chemical agents had not been used on a large scale, Dutchbat did not expect any problems. Questions about the type of agents possibly used by the VRS were posed to The Hague.

The Engineering Training Centre investigated these reports but was unable to reach a conclusion without further information about effects, texts on unexploded shells and samples. The symptoms were not really typical of a tear gas attack. Nevertheless, the presence of such agents in the former Yugoslavia made it likely that such an attack was the case. Yellow smoke could be an indication of chlorine compounds. However, under the NATO doctrines the use of such compounds did not mean that the chemical threshold had been crossed. According to Dutch manuals tear gas (ortho-chlorobenzyl-malonitrile (CS)), chloroacetophenone (CN) and also sneezing gas, chlorodihydrophenarsazine (DM), are used for training purposes to simulate chemical warfare agents and to control riots. They could also be used to hinder the enemy by forcing him to wear a gas mask. Exposure to high doses could, in addition to the usual irritation of eyes, mucous membranes and skin,

cause nausea and paralysis symptoms. Usually the effects of CS disappear in 5 to 10 minutes, the effects of high concentrations CN in a few hours and of DM in high concentrations after about three hours. The Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff concluded that the warring factions had apparently used tear gas and CS gas. These agents are not prohibited chemical warfare agents.

In early 1995, the fear suddenly increased that the war would escalate through the use of chemical weapons. In an ABiH training area north of Maglaj, a British battalion observed an exercise by soldiers in protective clothing with decontamination equipment. The local battalion commander refused to answer the question whether the ABiH had the capacity for chemical warfare. For the British, this confirmed the existence of chemical weapons and the will to use them.

In 1995 there were more reports about the possible use of chemical weapons. Eighty ABiH soldiers had been taken to the hospital in Tuzla to be treated for the effects of the use of gas shells during the fighting around the Stolice tower east of Tuzla. However, the gas turned out to be tear gas. Reports that on 7 June 1995 first one and later 21 French UN soldiers in Sarajevo had been admitted to hospital possibly as a consequence of chemical weapons, also appeared to be incorrect: only one soldier had been admitted after he had been exposed to the smoke of what was probably a phosphorus shell. Once again no lethal weapons were involved. From UN and Dutch sources no further reports are known about the use of chemical warfare agents in Bosnia.

2. Chemical weapons used against the column on the way to Tuzla?

After the fall of Srebrenica and after the arrival of the column of fleeing men in Tuzla (see Chapter 1 of Part IV of the main report), the possible use of chemical weapons came up again. Human Rights Watch investigated this possibility. The focus was on the possible use of BZ gas (tri-quinuclidinyl benzilate) that was available in the arsenals of the former JNA (the Yugoslav army), among other things in the form of 82 and 120 mm mortar shells. The new Yugoslavia had not acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention and it appeared that old stocks had not been destroyed, which fuelled fears of a possible use of BZ by the Bosnian Serbs.

According to the Dutch NBC Defence Manual, BZ is categorized as an incapacitant. It is a smokeless agent that in summer has a contagion duration of one to ten minutes and a slow rate of effect (between one and four hours). The gas enters the body through respiration and the gastrointestinal tract. Symptoms are a rapid pulse, dry mouth, restlessness, memory loss and delusion. Use of a gas mask offers sufficient protection; protective clothing is not required.

A JNA doctrine from 1981 indicates that BZ is highly suitable for disorienting armed groups in an ambush in such a manner that they can no longer operate as combat unit, making it easier to kill or capture them. After one hour BZ causes mental confusion that can continue for several hours or even days. Particularly in parts of the area with few possibilities for escape, such as the wooded and rough terrain on the route from Srebrenica to Tuzla, the use of BZ could be effective, more so because BZ could also lead to fighting within a group, screaming, shooting at random and leaving hiding places.

Human Rights Watch concluded that the use of BZ could not be excluded, but that there was no solid evidence. It was impossible to test the clothing of victims for traces of BZ. A Finnish investigation, the results of which were published in July 1997, could not identify traces of BZ in clothing that had been found on a mountain where heavy shelling had taken place.

Human Rights Watch was aware of the limitations of the investigation. Most witnesses had been in the front part of the column, which had been less exposed to shelling than the rear section. That was where most of the casualties had been, which made it harder to find witnesses.

Human Rights Watch also noted that recollections of the journey to Tuzla should be handled with due care. The journey had been one long terrifying experience and the traumas suffered were extensive. People were intent on survival rather than observing special events in detail. The observations could also have been influenced by the fact that those who made the journey knew there were chemical weapons in the Yugoslav arsenal and therefore in that of the Bosnian-Serbs. A number of witnesses suspected in advance that chemical weapons would be used. Such reports had already appeared in Bosnian newspapers before the investigation by Human Rights Watch and they have been described above. In an interview with the magazine *Ljiljan* the authority Avdo Hasanovic, managing director of the hospital in Srebrenica, declared that during the journey to Tuzla toxic shells had been fired and also that the water wells used by the fleeing people had been poisoned. As a result, people started to hallucinate and imagined that they were suddenly face-to-face with the Bosnian Serbs; they supposedly reacted by shooting at people they knew or by committing suicide to avoid having to surrender. Hasanovic himself said he had experienced such influences after drinking water, but also confirmed that the effects were also partly caused by lack of food, fatigue, insomnia and the continuous pressure applied by the Bosnian Serbs.

Mainly as ways of explaining the hallucinations, these last elements caught the attention of one of the Human Rights Watch investigators, Britain's Alistair Hay of the Leeds School of Medicine. He published an article of his own in *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*. Although these studies partly overlap, it seems very much as if Human Rights Watch was very keen to demonstrate the use of chemical weapons, while on the basis of the same witnesses, Hay was trying to find a psychological explanation for the phenomena that were observed.

It is true that the Human Rights Watch report also mentions other explanations for the hallucinations than chemical weapons, but Hay concentrates on psychological causes. To Hay it appeared that the phenomena observed during the journey to Tuzla were mainly the result of stress, exhaustion, drinking polluted water, and the continuous threat of the VRS. According to him one or two per cent of all individuals run the risk of becoming schizophrenic under normal conditions, and these people are especially likely to become psychotic when placed under great strain. If chemical ammunition had been used, many more people and groups would have shown psychotic symptoms or strange and aggressive behaviour. Although Hay did not exclude its use as cause of hallucinations, in his opinion it was more feasible to regard them as psychological symptoms exhibited by individuals. According to the Bosnian physician Ilijaz Pilav quoted in the magazine, the number of hallucinations increased after every VRS attack. Many of these people lost their sense of direction and surrendered. Suicides on the way also seemed to be a consequence of the enormous stress. Scientific literature supports Hay's assumption that there were other causes for aberrant behaviour than BZ. According to him, there was no conclusive evidence for the use of chemical weapons. The head of the intelligence section of the 24th Division of the ABiH in Zivinice, Major Semsudin Muminovic, told Human Rights Watch:

We followed everything that happened during the days of the march with our monitoring equipment. We gained most information by listening to Serb radio communications. We learned from their messages that in Konjevic Polje, Nova Kasaba, Udrc and Kamenica the VRS used tear gas and psychochemical agents in ambushes. According to the information we received the purpose of the VRS was to break up the column into smaller groups.

However, transcriptions made available by the ABiH to the NIOD do not report the use of tear gas or chemical agents. According to Major Muminovic the tapes had been transcribed and subsequently reused, wiping out the information in the process.

The content of these messages could not therefore be verified. It seems less likely that the VRS used rifle shells or hand grenades filled with BZ – these were also reportedly available in the Yugoslav arsenals – because of the very short distance at which such weapons are used; it would have been noticed, and nobody saw VRS soldiers wearing gas masks. Moreover, during the days of the fall of Srebrenica the weather forecast warned of thunderstorms with gusting winds. Consequently, use of the agent would not have been entirely without risk for the VRS's own troops and would certainly have been less effective.

Interviews did not offer Human Rights Watch enough of a basis on which to demonstrate the use of BZ. The various witnesses mainly spoke of the use of smoke shells, and they had noticed shells with blue-green, green, red, purple, grey and yellow smoke. However, such smoke shells may also have been used to mark impacts in wooded areas or to indicate the position of the column.

Situation reports by the Zvornik Brigade of the VRS did indeed state the use of smoke shells. For instance, on 14 July they fired 20 155 mm smoke shells at the column on its way to Tuzla. No information is available about the preceding days. However, for the following days the reports make no more mention of the firing of smoke shells.

In the interviews held by the NIOD little of substance surfaced about the possible use of toxic gas either. Yet there were widespread stories about its use. In addition to the alleged use of toxic gas, other mysterious phenomena were described. Stories were told that on the roads along the route bottles with honey-coloured water had been left. The contents of those bottles could only have been produced in Serbia. People who drank from it went berserk and started shooting at each other.

One interviewee, Hamdija Fejzic, deputy mayor of Srebrenica, said that although he had not noticed any shelling with chemical shells, he did see small bags with unknown content in rivers. However, no effect from these could be identified. People also drank mud and polluted water. Some men who became hysterical could be brought to their senses by slapping them in the face. Others went

insane and blew themselves up. A 30-year-old deaf-and-dumb man went insane just before reaching Muslim territory, ran away and could not be caught by anybody. Fejzic thought that the heat and the lack of water were more likely causes of the insanity. Everybody was afraid, even those who had previous combat experience and who had behaved bravely.

The journey from Zepa to the area of the Muslim-Croat Federation, two weeks later, also caught the attention of Human Rights Watch. It offered starting points for comparison. During that march the men experienced similar circumstances: lack of food, water and sleep. Again the VRS were a continuous threat. Yet there was less shelling and people did not move in one large column, but in small groups. But the breakout from Zepa and the journey of the men to Tuzla also brought hardship: they broke through the VRS lines in an unorganized manner while in fact there were hardly any VRS soldiers. They shot at each other while the VRS were 30 metres further on. This journey too was a horrific ordeal.

From Zepa they took roughly the same route as the one that had been followed earlier from Srebrenica to Tuzla. One man who made the journey declared: 'all the way from Zepa to Tuzla I had nothing to eat.' Around Konjevic Polje there were a large number of dead bodies, which had started to emit a cadaverous smell because of the hot weather. On 18 July near Konjevic Polje there were 200 VRS soldiers with dogs who tried to surround the men and steer them to the road. However, none of the men interviewed by Human Rights Watch were aware of hallucinations or aberrant behaviour.

So although Human Rights Watch did not produce any evidence, the organization did point out that during the summer of 1996 American military personnel had interviewed survivors of Srebrenica and that those results had supported the suspicion of a 'chemical incapacitant'. In addition, a more extensive American military investigation was reportedly carried out in late 1996 and early 1997. Information about it was not released, but it may be assumed that if there had been any reasonable suspicion of the use of chemical weapons, the United States government would have made it public.

After publication of the Human Rights Watch report the US government denied knowing anything about the use of toxic gasses against fleeing Muslims. It did admit that tear gas had apparently been used. Several teams of investigators had investigated the use of chemical weapons, but had found no evidence of the use of weapons classified under the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993.

In the opinion of the Prins Maurits Laboratory the Bosnian Serbs did have BZ, but there were only rumours about the use of this gas in Bosnia and the investigation had not revealed any facts.

In the Netherlands the report by Human Rights Watch prompted parliamentary questions. The Dutch government took the position that so far it had not been made clear that chemical weapons had been deployed in Bosnia or that supplies of the former JNA had been used. Nor did the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) based in The Hague appear to have any clues to this effect. In reply to the question of whether a further investigation was being carried out, the Dutch government referred to the 'comprehensive report' about the Safe Area Srebrenica that had been announced by the UN. However, the UN report, published in November 1999, did not address this issue.

3. Conclusion

Though the Bosnian Muslims had chlorine gas and threatened to use it, there is no evidence whatsoever that it was used. There are no indications that the Bosnian Serbs had combat gasses. During the war in Bosnia there were widespread stories about possible use of chemical agents, but in so far as these were used it never involved lethal agents, but rather tear gas and smoke. It is understandable that rumours and reports in the media about the use of chemical weapons led people to think that their use was possible and understandable that symptoms that could point to the use of a chemical weapon were readily identified as such. For instance the War President of Opstina (municipality of) Srebrenica, Osman Suljic, thought that the VRS had already used chemical weapons in their offensive against Srebrenica.

In particular in the column fleeing to Tuzla, strange symptoms were linked to the use of chemical weapons. The Bosnian Serbs fired heavy smoke shells at the column, which may have given rise to the idea that chemical agents were being used. Discolorations in water courses that were difficult to account for also contributed to this notion. Along the route followed by the column there were no substances, like bauxite for example, which could have coloured the water. Mention was made of the possibility that the yellow coloration of the water could have been caused by clay that had been stirred up by passing people.

Consequently, the explanation for the alleged use of chemical weapons should rather be sought in the circumstances under which the journey to Tuzla took place. Fear, confrontation with death, insufficient rest, lack of food and water and not being able to explain phenomena such as coloured smoke may have led to the conclusion that chemical weapons were involved here. The fact that some people were hallucinating supported this opinion. However, this supposition does not withstand the scrutiny of thorough investigation.

Finally it should be pointed out that there were major differences between the men fleeing from Srebrenica and those who fled from Zepa to Tuzla. Though their numbers were smaller, there were considerably fewer casualties in the group exfiltrating from Zepa. Almost all ABiH soldiers managed to escape and they arrived in Tuzla in better condition. The commander of the 2nd Corps, Sead Delic, attributed this to the fact that the situation in Zepa was much better than in Srebrenica. Moreover, the journey from Zepa had been better organized and people had covered the terrain in small groups.

Yet in terms of the horrors that had to be faced there was little difference. Here too men had to face death, hunger and the VRS in hot pursuit. Still it was notable that, unlike the column from Srebrenica, no hallucinations and other phenomena were reported that could be interpreted as the consequence of the use of chemical weapons by the VRS.

Appendix IV

History and Reminders in East Bosnia

Author: G. Duijzings

Introduction

“If people in Bosnia cannot reach consensus on how to remember the past, the country will have no right to exist. In fifty years time, there will be either one Bosnia or no Bosnia”.

Jakob Finci, President of the Jewish Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, NIOD interview 24/10/2000

“If the identity of a nation lies upon its memory, then the memory that makes the foundations of the Bosniak people is made of the chain of genocides and innumerable crimes committed against it”.

Smail Èekic, History of genocide against Bosniacs, p.47

On the eleventh of July 1995 the Bosnian Serb Army conquered Srebrenica, a Muslim enclave in Serb-held eastern Bosnia which had been proclaimed a ‘safe area’ by the United Nations two years before. When the Serbs marched into Srebrenica’s town centre, general Ratko Mladic, who led the operation, gave a brief statement in front of a Bosnian Serb television camera: “Here we are in Srebrenica on the eleventh of July 1995, on the eve of yet another great Serbian holiday. We present this city to the Serbian people as a gift. Finally, after the rebellion against the *dahis*, the time has come to take revenge on the ‘Turks in this region’”.¹ The events that followed are all too well-known: under the eyes of Dutch UN peace-keepers, hundreds of Muslim men were separated from their women (at the Dutchbat base in Potoèari), while thousands of others decided to try to escape through the forests to Bosnian-held Tuzla. Most of them disappeared: they died or were executed by the Serbs in the aftermath of the fall of the Srebrenica enclave.

From Mladic’s statement – he was referring to events two centuries ago – it is clear that history played a prominent role in the Bosnian war, in a way that was often hard to accept for outside observers, and often led to reactions of sheer disbelief and exasperation on their part. One can still hear the complaints of Western journalists, diplomats and UN personnel, who had to listen to endless ‘history lessons’ presented to them by politicians, intellectuals, soldiers, and ordinary peasants, about battles that took place centuries ago and the ultimate wrongs their nation had suffered in a recent or more distant past. As Nena Tromp notes in her contribution (see appendix), history was used extensively at the negotiation table, not only to justify political demands, but also to outmanoeuvre foreign diplomats who had no grasp of the region’s complicated history. For some the surplus of history that seems to exist in the region became an obstacle to peace: in the final stages of the Bosnian war, US envoy Richard Holbrooke, for instance, refused to attach special importance to historical claims, which he thought obstructed any attempt to come to a settlement of the conflict. In his memoirs he writes that he put the Bosnian Serbs one important condition for negotiations: “(...) they must not give us a lot of historical bullshit, as they have with everyone else. They must be ready for serious discussions”.²

It is clear that ‘history’, or rather the various strands of national histories, were conducive to the wars in the former Yugoslavia, and it is therefore understandable that Holbrooke refused to take them into account in his attempts to find a settlement to the Bosnian conflict. His objective was not to grasp the historical ramifications of the conflict but to bring an end to it in a swift and pragmatic manner. Our aim here is quite different, i.e. to develop a deeper understanding of the conflict and its specific

¹ David Rohde describes this episode in his book *A safe area. Srebrenica: Europe’s worst massacre since the Second World War* (p.167). See also Stover and Peress, *The graves*, p.122. The televised images of Mladic’s entry into Srebrenica were included in the British tv documentary *A cry from the grave* (1999). The holiday Mladic is referring to is Petrovdan, the Serbian-Orthodox St Peter’s Day (12 July), which the Serbs have now proclaimed the town’s official patron saint’s day.

² Holbrooke, *To end a war*, p.148

characteristics, and the starting point is that we cannot fully understand the war, and particular events such as the Srebrenica massacre, if we leave history aside, or more particularly, if we ignore the living historical memories and *perceptions* of history that exist among local players.³ In Bosnia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia, some historical episodes are ‘remembered’ as if they happened yesterday, and people often refer to them if they try to justify their actions. Thus, it is not just the past itself but current visions of the past which are important for an understanding. The word ‘history’ itself reflects this duality, meaning both the past and stories about the past, representations and what is represented.⁴ Historical narratives shape people’s cognition and perception, and as a result help to motivate, justify or contextualise action.⁵ Sudetic’s account of events in eastern Bosnia and Srebrenica offers an excellent illustration of this. He points out –and demonstrates throughout his book– that there is more to the story of the Srebrenica massacre than just the naked sequence of events in July 1995. His informants told him many stories, which went far back in time, to the time of other wars, invasions and rebellions. The stories he heard “began with memories of a time long before the war, memories of fistfights, funerals, and feasts, of great-great-grandfathers who struggled to be free of feudalism, of great-grandfathers who helped ignite a world war, and of grandfathers who fought to survive Fascist butchery, who exacted blood vengeance to appease their dead, and who suffered defeat and buried their guns for another day”.⁶

It should be clear from the outset that it is not my main intention here to provide a full and comprehensive history of eastern Bosnia and Srebrenica. I will focus on those historical episodes which present-day actors actively remember and point at when they explain their motives, aims and actions (the revolutionary wars of the nineteenth century, the Balkan wars, the First and Second World Wars). It is quite obvious that what many Bosnians tend to talk about are the more turbulent episodes of their history, i.e. those events which drastically changed realities on the ground and left deep traces in collective memory. It is striking to see how the much longer periods of relative peace and coexistence have almost become ‘blank spaces’ in collective memory and official historiography (even though they have not become completely obsolete in people’s private narratives). It is clear that this present-day obsession with wars, violence and ethnic conflict, inevitably leads to simplifications and distortions which I will try to correct by keeping my eyes open for the nuances and complexities of these events, as well as by giving attention to the fact that people in this region have also managed to live together peacefully for considerable periods of time. I have decided not to try to historically represent all these periods of relative peace and coexistence (which is an almost impossible task seen the lack of good local source material), but instead to focus on the communist period which is still fresh in people’s minds. As a corollary, I have invested much effort in trying to describe the process of transformation from the relatively peaceful conditions under socialism to the outbreak of ethno-nationalist violence in the 1990s. Although I will describe this process in its wider Yugoslav context, I will primarily focus on the micro-level: my narrative will include those local events that led to the outbreak of the war (in April

³ Several journalists and academics who were interviewed for this report have stressed the importance of historical memories for an understanding of the war events in eastern Bosnia. Most often reference is made to the violence in World War Two, which was particularly ruthless in these parts of the former Yugoslavia, and has left deep traces in personal and collective memories. Interviews and conversations with Endre Bojtar 28/05/1997, Zoran Kusovac 01-11-1997, Uros Komlenovic 06-11-1997, Bratislav Grubačić 06/11/1997, and Momčilo Mitrović 07/11/1997.

⁴ With regard to my (anthropological) approach to ‘history’ and ‘memory’, I am indebted to the work of E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Anthropology and history*; Peter Burke ‘History of events and the revival of narrative’; Emiko Ohnuki-Thierney, ‘The historicization of anthropology’; Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of history*; and Anton Blok, ‘Reflections on “making history”’.

⁵ It is the influential article “Theory in anthropology since the sixties” by Sherry Ortner (1984), which has become paradigmatic for this idea of a culturally structured praxis. See also John Davis, who formulates this idea in historical terms: “Thought about the past is a cultural activity which varies from place to place and from time to time, and it is a consequential activity: when people take decisions, one of the things they consider is the past” (Davis, ‘History and the people without Europe’, p.14).

⁶ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.XXXVII.

1992), as well as those in the first year of the war until Srebrenica was declared a 'safe area' by the United Nations (April 1993).⁷

All of this is not an easy task. 'History' in the former Yugoslavia has been very much subject to revision and manipulation by historians, intellectuals, journalists, and nationalist politicians. Historical narratives and myths have been used as vehicles for political messages, and the politics of memory also imply that rival factions may compete for historical truth: some claims on the past have obtained recognition, while others have been marginalized, and this is an ongoing process which has brought previously silenced discourses to the surface again. This is visible at the individual and personal level as well. Due to the things that happen in people's lives, they may change their perspective on the present as well as the past (in some cases even quite radically). Let me quote from David Rohde's book *A Safe Area* (1997), where this is illustrated by one of the main characters of this book, Zoran Radic (a pseudonym), a Serb policeman who participated in the attack on Srebrenica in July 1995:

"Like so many other people in Bosnia, he had joked with his Muslim and Croat friends as Yugoslavia disintegrated and believed that war would never come. But a book he read during 1992 in a Serb trench around Sarajevo had answered many questions for him. Entitled *Bloody Hands of Islam*, it described atrocities carried out around Srebrenica by Muslim and Croat Fascists allied with Hitler during World War II. The book had been banned by Tito's government. Forty Serbs had been executed in Zalazje, a village just outside Srebrenica. Radic could see that history was repeating itself. Roughly fifty years later, on July 12, 1992 – the Serb Orthodox holiday of St. Peter's Day – Naser Oric's men killed 120 people in the same town. As time passed Radic decided the war was a good thing. The Serbs needed to live separately from the Muslims for their own protection."⁸

This small passage describes the change of perspective of an ordinary Serb who first genuinely believed, like many other Bosnians, that war was impossible in his country because he had powerful memories of a common and shared existence, and then is forced to reconsider –or literally reread– history in the light of his war experiences. Under these new circumstances, communist views of 'brotherhood and unity' become obsolete and the old nationalist narratives are recovered to explain what is happening. These narratives, which were silenced and censored away during the communist period, come to the surface again and start to function as a vehicle for understanding and guideline for further action. However, what this example also shows is that memory is multi-layered and contains certain contradictions. As such, cultural praxis –of which the work of memory is part– can often be described as mixed, fragmented and incoherent, at least from the point of view of national and religious orthodoxies. Thus, elements of conflict and coexistence may be part of the same person's sense of social existence and identity.

Any attempt to come to grip with the history of the region is therefore hampered by the existing multiplicity of 'histories' and 'memories', which are often at odds with one another, within the same community or even within the same individual: there is the former communist historiography which in recent years has been replaced by various nationalist representations of the past, and underneath the official histories there is a reservoir of collective folk and personal and individual

⁷ My description of subsequent events, and of conditions in and around the Srebrenica 'safe area', are included in the main NIOD report.

⁸ Rohde, *A safe area*, p.14. The book mentioned by Radic (*Bloody hands of Islam*) is probably Momir Krsmanovic's historical novel *Krvave ruke Islama* which was also translated into English: *The blood-stained hands of Islam*. The book was also mentioned in conversations with other local Serbs.

memories which are often hidden and contradictory.⁹ In the case of Srebrenica this is exemplified by the different perspectives that exist about what happened during recent years, perspectives which seem to be wholly incompatible: although similar in style and rethorics, the ‘official’ Muslim and Serbian accounts of the war tell completely different stories, which are difficult to match, even if they dovetail on the level of particular events, specific dates, places and actors.¹⁰ In addition, there are many individual narratives which do not fit into these larger schemes. Although I do not claim that there is only one historical truth, I still believe that out of these divergent and often mutually exclusive histories it is possible to shape a more inclusive and ‘truthful’ version of events, the challenge of which I will take up here.

A major undercurrent of my account is that there is no historical inevitability in the way the recent conflict developed. I subscribe to the idea formulated by the British social anthropologist Evans-Pritchard that we should not mistake the irreversible for the inevitable.¹¹ In the case of Srebrenica, it might be tempting to write a kind of ‘culminatory history’, explaining the end of the story, the fall of Srebrenica and the massacre of Muslim men, as the final and inescapable outcome of what has gone before. Although this view seems compelling when we look all at the evidence of repeated violence and brutality in the region –which two of the most astute observers have recently called “the most bitterly contested area in Bosnia-Herzegovina”¹²– I think that history is never completely decided in advance. Similarly, I would like to argue that it is too easy to say, as some Bosnians did in the midst of the war, that ‘history is repeating itself’: people are not only the objects of the forces of history, i.e. the passive recipients of social, economic, political, and cultural legacies inherited from the past, they are also its subjects. My approach is based on the fundamental presumption that people ‘make’ history in two related ways: 1. by imagining and constructing a past, which is relevant for the present, and 2. by the way they choose to act, taking –among other things– their visions of the past into account. This kind of approach has certain implications: instead of accepting the view that the brutalities of the Bosnian war were the result of ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’, i.e. the product of irrational and almost impersonal historical forces which are beyond everybody’s control, I would rather adhere to the idea that there is always a clear element of personal choice, agency and responsibility in the ways people decide to act or not. It underscores that history is the work of people, who act and interact with different motives and interests in mind, the chemistry of which leads to results that are often unintended in their final outcome.

⁹ One could add here a variety of discourses about the Balkans and the Yugoslav crisis in western sources. It is far beyond the scope of this report to address this issue. It is dealt with in Nena Tromp’s and Bruno Naarden’s contributions (see annexes...). See also: Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*; Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania*; Kent, ‘Writing the Yugoslav wars’; Stokes et al, ‘Instant history’; Gow, ‘After the flood’; Campbell, ‘MetaBosnia’.

¹⁰ The main Serb sources are Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*; and Miljanovic, *Krvavi Bosic sela Kravice*. The main Muslim ones are Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*; Masic, *Srebrenica*; and Oric, *Srebrenica svjedoči i optužuje*.

¹¹ See Davis, ‘History and the people without Europe’, p.16.

¹² Burg and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p.25.

Chapter 1

Serbs and 'Turks' – The Ottoman Heritage



Title page of the war edition of the local Serb newspaper, *Nasa Rijec* (Bratunac, March 1994) on the occasion of the 190th anniversary of the start of the first Serbian uprising. The upper right corner features a picture of the leader of the uprising, Karadjordje, against the background of the Drina River. Below it is a quote from a well-known Serbian epic poem:

“Drina water, O thou noble barrier, Thou that partest Bosnia from Serbia! Soon the day will dawn, O Drina water, Soon will dawn the day when I shall cross thee, Pass through all the noble land of Bosnia.”¹³

The first Serbian uprising (1804-1813)

Let us return to the eleventh of July 1995. Mladic’s reference to the first Serbian uprising (1804-1813) is a good starting point in our discussion, for more than one reason. Apart from the apparent role the uprising played in Mladic’s mindset –at the time he was attacking the Srebrenica Safe Area – it is the first major event in modern Serbian history to have a direct impact on eastern Bosnia, leaving clear traces in local collective memory and history writing. As Mladic’s statement demonstrates, the event is central to Serb nationalist thought, as it ties together two of its most important themes: the long period of suffering under the ‘Turks’, and the struggle to liberate the Serbs from the Muslim yoke. The stories and imagery connected to the first Serbian uprising have a strong thematic link to the Kosovo myth that has become so central to Serbian nationalist thought. The uprising was the first attempt to put an end to the long period of Ottoman rule, which started after the Serbs lost their mediaeval empire during the famous Battle of Kosovo (1389). Moreover, it symbolises their efforts to avenge the humiliation and injustices inflicted upon them by the ‘Turks’, comprised both of the Ottomans and the

¹³ Translation taken from Morison, *The revolt of the Serbs*, pp.72-73.

Bosnian *poturice* (members of the indigenous population who ‘became Turks’, i.e. converted to Islam and ‘betrayed’ their Serb brethren).

Let us take a closer look at the events themselves. The first Serbian uprising began in 1804 as a rebellion against the Turkish *dahis* (local military or janissary leaders). It occurred at a time when the Ottoman Empire was losing control over its Balkan provinces. Its rule was undermined by rebellions, both by unruly Muslim elements who opposed the centralising policies of the Sublime Porte, and the Christian subject populations who wanted to free themselves from Ottoman rule.¹⁴ These centrifugal tendencies were visible throughout the Balkan provinces. They explain in part why the Great Powers (Austria and Russia, in particular) were able to shift the borders of the Ottoman Empire to the south.¹⁵ Aside from relinquishing territory to its European rivals, the Ottoman Empire was also disintegrating from within; it failed to maintain peace and security in what remained of its provinces in southeastern Europe. Life had been made increasingly difficult, particularly in the countryside, by (legal or illegal) armed bands. In addition, local centres of power had sprung up throughout the empire, filling the political vacuum caused by its decline.

It was, however, the ever-growing unrest and revolts among the Christian populations that posed the most serious threat to Ottoman rule in these parts. The first Serbian uprising was the earliest major example, followed by the Greek revolution (1821-1829). Although in Serbian collective memory, it is seen as the first attempt at liberation from Ottoman rule, it did not start in this way. The immediate cause of the uprising was another rebellion, that of a group of unruly local janissary commanders who had been expelled from Belgrade, but who had managed to re-assert themselves against the will of the Ottoman establishment (the government officials, merchants and landlords) and the Serbian population.¹⁶ Initially, the Ottoman establishment and the Serbian insurgents formed a common front, but both remained powerless in the face of janissary terror.¹⁷ Among those ‘Turks’ supporting the uprising were Hasan-pasha from Srebrenica, who at the time of its outbreak was district governor of Zvornik, as well as Hadzi-Salihbeg (or Hadzibeg), the local governor of Srebrenica.¹⁸

Even as early as 1801, the janissaries assassinated Mustafa Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Belgrade whose benevolent attitude towards the Christian population was resented. In 1802, four *dahis* (high-ranking janissary officers) took full territorial control of the Belgrade pashalik.¹⁹ Serbian peasants set up armed resistance units, and in the spring of 1804, their leader, Karadjordje Petrovic, a prosperous livestock trader, organised them into an army of thirty thousand men ready to fight. When the *dahis* learned of these clandestine activities they started liquidating Serb leaders. This finally triggered the revolt against the *dahis*. Initially, the Sultan and most other Ottoman officials supported the Serbs in

¹⁴ Srebrenica was also the scene of clashes between local autonomous forces and the Ottoman centre. In 1820, Ottoman forces attacked the town. See Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p.120.

¹⁵ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, Vol.1, pp.62-72. The siege of Vienna by the Ottoman army (1683) is seen as the beginning of the end of Ottoman rule in the Balkans. It ended in failure, after which Austria and its Catholic allies launched successful (but devastating) military campaigns into Ottoman territory. This had severe repercussions, among other things, for the position of Roman Catholics in the Ottoman Empire, which was one of the factors that also put an end to their centuries-old presence in Srebrenica. In 1686, the Turks set the town on fire, burning down the Franciscan monastery, which had been a main centre of Catholic activity in Bosnia. The Catholics, who formed a substantial part of the town’s population, if not the majority, fled over the Sava River into Austrian territory. For Srebrenica’s past, see in particular the articles by Jusuf Hasic, Zivan Jovanovic and Bosko Milovanovic in *Srebreničke Novine*.

¹⁶ The janissaries formed the backbone of the Ottoman army, at least starting in the fifteenth century. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Sultan tried to abolish them, as they had become a state within the state, a force that the Ottoman centre was unable to control. They were finally suppressed in 1826.

¹⁷ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, Vol.1, pp.193-204. Local historians claim that Ottomans and Serbs fought side by side. See, for instance, Jovanovic ‘Posljednje decenije turske vlasti’ [2].

¹⁸ Both later participated in military actions against the insurgents. Jovanovic ‘Posljednje decenije turske vlasti’ [1]. The story is that Hadzibeg was friends with the Serbs, providing them with information after he was mobilised into the Ottoman army. Because of his Serb sympathies, he was killed in 1827 by order of the Sultan (Deroka, *Geografsko-turistička monografija*, p.248).

¹⁹ Pantelic, ‘Dahije’.

their efforts to overthrow the *dabīs*. However, after the insurgents achieved an important series of military successes, and threatened to become an uncontrollable force, the Sultan decided to suppress the movement in the summer of 1805. At this point, the uprising developed into a direct confrontation between Serb and Ottoman (including Bosnian) forces, in which the Serbs' main objective became outright independence. From the start, some of the major battles were fought near the Drina. It was at this stage that the Drina valley became a frontier between lands under Serbian and those under Ottoman control. By early 1804, Muslim refugees began to cross the Drina from Serbia into eastern Bosnia.

As eastern Bosnia was in a state of anarchy, local reactions to the uprising varied widely. Some Ottoman officials (like Hadzibeg) sympathised with the Serbian insurgents, while others (such as Mehmed *kapetan* of Zvornik) sided with the *dabīs*, although they showed little willingness to come to their rescue. Among the Orthodox population of eastern Bosnia, however, there was an outburst of enthusiasm for the uprising, at least according to historian, Vaso Èubrilovic, who produced an interesting, though romanticised, account of the events.²⁰ He writes that during the summer of 1804, local Serbs were singing epic songs about Karadjordje, hoping that he would come to liberate them from the Turkish yoke. In spring 1805, the uprising spread to western Serbia: insurgents attacked towns such as Karanovac, Soko, and Uzice. As a result, the Serbs and Muslims in eastern Bosnia became increasingly embroiled in the conflict. The friendly relations between the Serbian insurgents and local Muslim leaders in eastern Bosnia started to deteriorate, especially after the former won a series of important victories against the Ottomans. As readiness among Bosnian Serbs to join the uprising grew, Bosnian Muslim leaders realised that the uprising could endanger their position. Relations also deteriorated when Muslim leaders from eastern Bosnia joined in military operations to suppress the Serbian uprising. By autumn 1805, Bosnian units crossed over into Serbia, and suffered their first major defeats.²¹ Muslim leaders from Srebrenica also shared this fate. In February 1806, for instance, Hasan-pasha from Srebrenica was defeated, after which Serbian forces burned Muslim villages along the Drina. A few months later, Hadzibeg from Srebrenica lost a battle near Valjevo. The most humiliating defeat for the Ottoman forces was the famous battle at Misar, which was won by Karadjordje.²² Despite these military defeats, Bosnian forces managed at this stage to prevent the uprising from spreading into Bosnia.

These constant battles on the Serbian side of the Drina affected conditions in eastern Bosnia. The Serb population suffered from marauding Ottoman (Bosnian) troops who pillaged Orthodox villages on their way to Serbia, and later, back home. In addition, Serbs were forced to supply the Ottoman troops. In some cases, they were recruited into the army to fight the insurgents in Serbia, for instance, by Hasan-pasha of Srebrenica. Serbs became increasingly restless, preparing themselves for an uprising and forming small, armed bands of *hajduk* irregulars. Muslim leaders believed these bands had been sent by Karadjordje to cause trouble in Bosnia. Finally, in 1807, the uprising spilled over into Bosnian territory. On late March of that year, the Serbian insurgents started a major offensive westward and reached the town of Loznica. By early May, troops crossed over into Bosnian territory. Major battles were fought between Zvornik and Bijeljina, and some Serbian troops managed to reach the outskirts of Tuzla. In June, however, Bosnian forces drove the Serbs back into Serbia, forcing many local Serbs who had joined the fighting to flee as well. During the summer and autumn, Ottoman and Serbian units engaged in constant battles along the Drina, raiding each other's territories, and burning

²⁰ Èubrilovic, 'Bosansko Podrinje i prvi srpski ustanak (1804-1813)'. Vasa Èubrilovic is one of several well-known Bosnian Serb historians who were direct participants in events that led to the establishment of Yugoslavia after World War One. During his youth he had been a member of *Mlada Bosna*, a socialist youth organisation that advocated South Slav union and the liberation of Bosnia from Austrian rule. As such, he was involved in the assassination of Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914. The attack was carried out by members of this organisation and triggered off World War One.

²¹ See also Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, p.328.

²² Novakovic, *Die Wiedergeburt des serbischen Staates*, pp. 40-41; Jovanovic, 'Posljednje decenije turske vlasti' [1].

and looting enemy villages. In October 1807, serious clashes occurred, including near Srebrenica: Serbian units entered Bosnian territory, scorching Muslim villages and returning home with large booties. Turkish troops had to rush in to rescue Muslim houses and property.²³ It was through Russian mediation that this cycle of mutual violence was brought to a halt. However, as Èubrilović writes, Serbian units still found it difficult to give up the habit of pillaging Muslim villages in eastern Bosnia.

One of Karadjordje's major objectives was to extend his control to the Bosnian Krajina, where most of the Bosnian Serb population was concentrated. Eastern Bosnia, with its large non-Serb population, formed a kind of 'Muslim' wedge and was, therefore, crucial to the Serbs' ability to break the enemy's resistance (especially around Tuzla). In spring 1809, the revolt spread again across the Drina into eastern Bosnia. Serbian forces besieged Bijeljina in the north and attacked Muslim strongholds near Srebrenica in the south. Èubrilović claims that local Serbs massively joined the uprising, sending their wives and children to Serbia. In the end, however, the Serb uprising in Bosnia resulted in huge disappointment. Though many had expected it would take only one last effort and a little luck to free Bosnia from Ottoman rule, they faced serious defeats in June, including near Srebrenica. In the north, the Serbian forces were also pushed back over the Drina. A substantial portion of the Serb population fled into Serbia and settled on the other side of the Drina, in villages abandoned by the 'Turks'. The Drina River remained the border between Serbia and Ottoman Bosnia. As the Serbian revolution was now on the decline, and Russian support for the insurgents was diminishing, the Sultan finally managed to suppress it. In October 1813, Karadjordje was forced to flee to Austrian territory.²⁴

The uprising was remembered in oral tradition, including in Srebrenica, particularly in the legendary figure of Karamarko ('Black Marko'), a local Serb hero who fought on Karadjordje's side.²⁵ But more importantly, it became a major source of inspiration for the nineteenth-century Serbian national movement and later generations of Serbian nationalists (of whom Mladic is the most recent example). The revolt was remembered in the form of epic songs, sung, among others, by Filip Visnjic, the most celebrated epic singer in Serbia's history. As a native of eastern Bosnia, Visnjic had witnessed these events, and in 1809 he had fled together with many other Serbs from eastern Bosnia to Serbia. Visnjic's songs were included in Vuk Karadžić's famous collection of epic poetry.²⁶ One of his songs, *Poèetak bune protiv dahija* ('The beginning of the revolt against the *dahis*?'), was to become particularly famous.²⁷ It presents the revolt as a Holy War of the Christian Serbs against Islam, as the first opportunity to avenge the forebears who had suffered under Ottoman rule, and to take back Serbian lands on the other side of the Drina in Bosnia. It contains the famous lines which have since become part of Serb nationalist folklore, including in eastern Bosnia (see the vignette at the beginning of this chapter): "Thus spoke Djordje to the Drina water – Drina water, O thou noble barrier – Thou that partest

²³ Novaković, *Die Wiedergeburt des serbischen Staates*, pp.64-65.

²⁴ Morison, *The revolt of the Serbs*, pp.XV-XXVII.

²⁵ Marko was a smith who lived near the settlement of Crvica (along the Drina). According to local tradition, Karadjordje gave him an army and ordered him to conquer the region of Osat, which he did. As he was left without gunpowder, he was forced to flee to Serbia, where he manufactured mighty ('shaking') guns for the Serb insurgents (Beatović, *Bratunac i okolina*, pp.18-19; see also Sudetić, *Blood and vengeance*, p.140). Other local participants who are remembered in songs are Birëanin Ilija, who was one of the first leaders of the uprising, and Hadzi-Melentije Stevanović, the abbot of a Serb-Orthodox monastery on the Serbian side of the Drina. A third figure, whom we encountered earlier, is the Muslim local governor, Hadzibeg. He was killed by order of the Sultan because he provided assistance to the Serbs (Deroka, *Geografsko-turistièka monografija*, p.248; Deroka, *Kajakom i splavom niz Drinu*, p.81).

²⁶ Vuk Karadžić was a pivotal figure in this formative period of the Serbian national movement. He was responsible for the standardisation of the Serbian vernacular language and the development of the Serbian Cyrillic script, both key steps in the process of Serbian nation-building. He also published a well-known collection of folksongs, *Srpske narodne pjesme*, which became the classic anthology of traditional Serb oral poetry. He himself was a native from the Podrinje area, born in the village of Trsic, near Loznica on the Serbian side of the Drina in 1787.

²⁷ See, for instance, Corović, 'Historiska vrednost'. Other well-known epic songs about the first Serbian uprising by Visnjic are 'The Battle of Misar' and 'The Battle of Loznica' (for a translation of the former, see: Morison, *The revolt of the Serbs*, p.74-87).

Bosnia from Serbia! – Soon the day will dawn, O Drina water – Soon will dawn the day when I shall cross thee – Pass through all the noble land of Bosnia”.²⁸

Interestingly enough, this famous epic song also makes references to the *dahis*' plans to kill all male Serbs above the age of seven. This shows a striking parallel between the old 'epic' history of the first Serbian uprising and the new 'real' history of events in July 1995, one being the mirror image of the other.²⁹ It would be far too simplistic on our part to draw a clear line of causation between the cultural images contained in an epic song and real historical events. Yet looking at the images contained in songs can be helpful in understanding the ideological context behind the massacre of Muslim men in 1995, and the mentality in at least some of those who orchestrated and committed these crimes. We can only speculate as to whether Mladic had this particular song in mind in his reference to the revolt at that crucial point in time when he took the Srebrenica enclave. However, it is indeed plausible that his general outlook was permeated by this complex of national Serbian epics about the fight against the 'Turks', especially the Kosovo songs, the songs about the first Serbian uprising, and Njegos's 'Mountain Wreath' (a classic in Serbian literature that celebrates the massacre of Montenegrin converts to Islam as a revenge for the defeat suffered in Kosovo).³⁰ It is abundantly clear that these epic elements were part and parcel of the discursive patterns that Serb nationalists and populists employed to 'explain' recent and more distant events and to justify certain decisions and actions.³¹ Since Mladic saw his take-over of Srebrenica as revenge for the defeat suffered against the *dahis*, he may very well have seen the massacre of Muslim men as a legitimate historical act from the perspective of these national epics.³²

From the very beginning of the Bosnian war, the Kosovo mythology was among the things that played a key legitimising role, presenting Serbian war efforts in Bosnia as an attempt to avenge Kosovo and turn back the clock in history. The Bosnian Muslims were persistently labelled as 'Turks', the direct descendants of the Turkish oppressors, while the conflict was continuously understood in terms of a battle between Christianity and Islam. The importance of the Kosovo myth as a legitimiser in Republika Srpska was expressed most poignantly in the adoption of *Vidovdan* as the Bosnian Serb Army's official holiday and patron's day at the very beginning of the war (1992). It is also reflected in the fact that many Bosnian Serbs saw Mladic as a modern-day Lazar (the Serbian army leader during the Battle of Kosovo), a kind of epic hero who was fighting a new Holy War against the 'Turks'.³³ The clearest manifestation of the ideological significance of the Kosovo myth for the events in Srebrenica occurred on 28 June 1995, just a few days before the Bosnian Serb army opened the attack on the Muslim enclave. On that day, Mladic made direct allusions to the myth in a speech to his soldiers, who had gathered at the annual Vidovdan ceremony of the Bosnian Serbian Army in Bijeljina. Speaking of the importance of the Battle of Kosovo, he told them, "Prince Lazar gave his army the Communion, and bowed for the Heavenly Empire, defending fatherland, faith, freedom and the honour of the Serbian people. We have understood the essence of his sacrifice and have drawn the historical message from it. Today we make a winning army, we do not want to convert Lazar's offering into a blinding myth of sacrifice".³⁴

²⁸ Morison, *The revolt of the Serbs*, pp.72-73.

²⁹ Morison provides a translation of the relevant lines: "We will slaughter all the Serbian knezes, All the knezes, all the Serbian leaders, All the kmets who are a danger to us, All the village priests, those Serbian teachers; Only will we spare the helpless children, Children weak of seven years and under; Then the Serbs in truth will be a rayah, Truly will they serve their Turkish masters." (Morison, *The revolt of the Serbs*, p.46-49)

³⁰ See Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity*, p.188. Some authors have presented this work as a blueprint for genocide and ethnic cleansing (see, in particular, Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed*, p.51).

³¹ See, in particular, the work of Ivan Eolovic, *Bordel ratnika* (1993), *Pucanje od zdravlje* (1994), *Jedno s drugim* (1995), *Politika simbola* (1997).

³² That there was an undeniable link between the epic mindset of Bosnian Serb peasants and politicians and the violence committed against the Muslim population (for instance, during the siege of Sarajevo at the beginning of the war) was also demonstrated in the documentary film *Serbian epics* made by Paul Pawlikowski and first broadcasted by the BBC (Bookmark, BBC 2, 16 December 1992).

³³ See, for instance, Block, 'The Madness of General Mladic'.

³⁴ Bulatovic, *General Mladic*, p.154 (my own translation).

As I have explained elsewhere, an important aspect of this myth is its a-historical or pan-chronic nature. It tends to be timeless. It fuses past and present, and locates the actual events above historical time, fitting them into an all-encompassing cosmological order. In times of crisis and war, myths can help to give meaning to the kind of historical events that cause intense distress and chaos in the lives of those directly affected by them. If the events seem to be similar to those remembered in epic songs, myths can impose themselves once again as their most adequate representation. Regardless of the actual social, political, and economic circumstances that led to the conflict, and the active role present-day politicians and (para)military played in bringing about war, it was clear to many Bosnian Serbs that history was repeating itself. And indeed, there were clear parallels with earlier events, such as the first Serbian uprising, at least –and this is important – in the ways Serbs have remembered these events through various genres of historical folk tradition. What has been remembered is how the Serbs fought for their freedom, how the Ottomans suppressed the uprising and how Turks and Bosnian Muslims retaliated against the rebels by plundering Serb villages, enslaving Serb women and children, torturing and executing Serb leaders, and in some places by murdering all males capable of carrying guns.³⁵ Even if we were to adopt the view that ‘history’ is not an objective reality, but is always mediated through forms of historical representation, the parallels between the first Serbian uprising and the latest conflict are striking indeed, at least as regards eastern Bosnia. During the recent conflict, Serbs took up arms again against the Muslims or ‘Turks.’ And again, the Drina became the frontier between them. The actual battlegrounds were often the same (Tuzla, Bijeljina, Srebrenica). Warfare was equally brutal (as reflected by the burning and looting of villages along the Drina). Political goals, at least on the Serb side, were also identical and the overall geopolitical and military configuration was similar. Muslim-inhabited eastern Bosnia was, once again, perceived as an obstacle to the unification of Serb territories in Bosnia with motherland Serbia, a Muslim wedge that ran deep into Serb lands and was the product of historical injustices that needed to be undone.

The Drina River: a frontier

“The Drina River has long – one may say for centuries – been the border between the Serbian state (...) and the states that succeeded one another during various periods of occupation (...) of the territory of present-day Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Drina was long the frontier between Serbia and the Turkish Empire. Then it formed the border with the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and during World War Two, with Hitler’s and Pavelic’s Independent State of Croatia. Each of these occupiers aimed at removing the Bosnian Serbs from this border region with Serbia, which has led to large-scale expulsions of the Serb people. As a consequence, the national structure of the population has changed, leaving the Serbs with an ever-smaller share in the total population. Today, one can find the traces of our centuries-old presence only in destroyed churches, the names of certain settlements and other toponyms, but, unfortunately, not in the population of these settlements, where no Serb elements are left”.

Milivoje Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, p.1

“Oh, you Serb, do not worry

There will be no border at the Drina”

³⁵ See also Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.15.

Turbofolk star Baja-mali Knindza, in the song *Nece biti granica na Drini* (There will be no border at the Drina), on the tape *Pobediće istina* (Truth will win), 1994

In interviews, local Serb nationalists point out that eastern Bosnia was always Serb territory even though Muslims have managed, in more recent times, to outnumber the Serbs demographically. Many explanations have been given for this Muslim demographic dominance, one of which is the higher birth rate in eastern Bosnia's Muslim population. As in Kosovo, this is seen as one of the elements of a deliberate policy to reduce the Serb element in previously held Serb lands. Much effort has been invested in demonstrating that until quite recently, eastern Bosnia had a predominantly Serb population. In fact, the more extreme nationalists try to convince ignorant outsiders that this was the case even up until the 1970s and 1980s. I will deal with the more extreme claims later on in this discussion. At this point, however, we can gain greater insight by focusing more closely on the late Ottoman period. It was during this period that eastern Bosnia became a kind of permanent frontier between Serbia and Ottoman Bosnia, resulting in a very clear change in the region's demographic make-up. I will demonstrate that these changes were not merely the result of some Muslim 'master plan' to make eastern Bosnia Islamic territory. Rather, the changes were also produced by nineteenth-century Serbian policies that made Serbia's small Muslim population flee into Bosnia.

Although the first Serbian uprising failed, the second uprising, which started in April 1815 under the leadership of Milos Obrenovic (a rival of Karadjordje), finally put Serbia on the road to independent statehood. Within a few months, the insurgents liberated several towns in central Serbia, after which Obrenovic struck a political deal with the Ottomans consolidating his military successes. Serbia acquired a limited degree of autonomy, while Obrenovic was recognized as the prince of Serbia, who was to pay tribute to the sultan. In the years that followed, he managed to further reduce Ottoman influence in Serbia's internal affairs. He also strengthened his own position by securing the Sultan's recognition of his title on a hereditary basis. In July 1817, Obrenovic also struck hard against his major internal rival. When Karadjordje returned to Serbia, he was immediately executed and Obrenovic had his head sent to the Sultan.³⁶

One of the consequences of creating an autonomous Serbia was that the Drina, as already mentioned, became a permanent frontier between Ottoman and Serbian territories. Initially, only the lower reaches of the Drina river formed the border. However, with Serbia's southward expansion in 1833, the border was also stretched to include the areas near Srebrenica. This border, now an international border, remained in place until the establishment of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918. Throughout the nineteenth century, massive population 'exchanges' occurred at this border, bringing about important demographic changes on both sides. The general trend was for Muslims (from Serbia) to cross the Drina into Bosnia, and for Serbs (from Bosnia) to migrate to the liberated territories in Serbia. The first trend was by far predominant, as it was the official policy of Serbia's successive rulers to expel all 'Turks' from Serbian soil. Bosnian Muslim authors today present this as the first episode in a long and continuous Serbian campaign of ethnic cleansing of the Muslim population in Serbia (and Bosnia).³⁷

Supported by Russia, Milos Obrenovic first negotiated the expulsion of Muslim landowners and peasants with the Ottoman government. In a firman or imperial decree (the *Hatiserif* of 3 August 1830), the Sultan summoned all of them to leave Serbia, except for the urban 'Turkish' population of the six garrison towns that remained under Ottoman control.³⁸ Bajina Basta, at the border near Srebrenica,

³⁶ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, Vol.1, pp. 203, 207, and 238-240.

³⁷ See, for instance, Oric, *Srebrenica svjedoči i optužuje*, pp.9-10; Ćekić, *Historija genocida*, pp.56-58.

³⁸ It is important to note that during Ottoman times, towns such as Belgrade, Valjevo, SSabac, and Uzice were garrison towns with a considerable Muslim population. Serbs formed only a minority there. In addition, the Serbian side of the Drina river was lined by many Muslim villages (Dedijer et al, *History of Yugoslavia*, p.263). The Bosnian historian, Mustafa

drove out its Muslim population in 1832, while Muslims of other nearby villages like Perucac and Ljubovije left in 1834. Many of these Muslim peasants resettled in the Osat region southeast of Srebrenica. The few thousand Muslims who were still left in Serbia, mainly consisting of urban Muslims living in Turkish garrison towns, were expelled in the 1860s by Milos Obrenovic's son, Mihailo. Under a protocol that he signed with the Ottoman empire in 1862, all Muslims from Uzice, the most important 'Turkish' town in western Serbia, and Soko, a fortress near Zvornik, were forced to leave. Finally, in 1867, the Ottomans agreed to withdraw the four remaining Turkish garrisons (Belgrade, Sabac, Smederevo, and Kladovo).³⁹ Among this last wave of Muslim refugees were the ancestors of Alija Izetbegovic, who had been living in Belgrade as merchants.⁴⁰

Many of these Muslim refugees resettled in eastern Bosnia. Yet, the first wave of rural Muslim immigrants in the 1830s was much less of a problem for the Bosnian authorities than was the urban exodus of the 1860s. As the Bosnian historian Hodzic writes, the former group was less demanding. Aside from that, there was sufficient land for them to resettle, which guaranteed them a means of subsistence. The urban Muslim immigrants of the 1860s had a much higher living standard. They were also much more embittered and were also less inclined to accept the resettlement options that the Bosnian authorities proposed to them. Thus, their integration into Bosnian society, i.e. their resettlement into towns such as Zvornik, Srebrenica, Vlasenica, Tuzla, and Bijeljina was a much more painful process.⁴¹

In terms of numbers, there were 297 refugee households (approximately 1,770 people) living in the district of Srebrenica in 1864. Most of these were from the villages on the Serbian side of the Drina. However, some were from the towns of Uzice and Belgrade. In the Zvornik *sandžak*, the number of immigrants exceeded the 5,000 mark (1,037 households). Clearly, this influx of Muslim refugees drastically changed the ethno-demographic balance, causing a rapid increase in Muslim-dominated settlements.⁴² Relations also changed, not only in quantitative, but also in qualitative terms. Muslim refugees, particularly those from towns, harboured intense animosity towards Serbs, which contributed to the rise of Muslim radicalism and fanaticism in the second half of the nineteenth century. Probably, this was also one of the factors that prompted local Serbs from eastern Bosnia to emigrate to 'liberated' Serbia.⁴³

The ethno-demographic changes in the area of Srebrenica, i.e. the regions of Osat (southeast of the town of Srebrenica) and Ludmer (northwest), have been studied in some detail by Nikolic, who has compared data collected by Vuk Karadzic in 1860 with those of the Austrian period. These data seem to indicate that the majority of the rural population was still Serb in 1860. At that time, thirty-three out of a total of sixty-five settlements, were predominantly 'Christian' (i.e. Serb-Orthodox). Twenty-eight were mixed, and only three were entirely Muslim.⁴⁴ The comparison with the Austrian data suggests that the mixed villages soon became predominantly Muslim or were divided into Serb and Muslim sections. Although most Serb villages remained (almost) exclusively Serb throughout the period, a few

Imamovic, puts the number of Muslim Slavs (Bosnjaci) living in Serbia before the first Serbian uprising at about 20,000 (Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, p.328-329).

³⁹ Hodzic, 'Migracije muslimanskog stanovništva', pp.65-66. Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, pp.329-31; Jovanovic, 'Kraj turske vlasti u Bosni?'

⁴⁰ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.82. These measures did not pertain to Muslim Gypsies, who were allowed to stay. Muslim Gypsies, as well as Muslims who adopted a Gypsy identity, continued to stay in Serbia, mostly in the towns. In 1874, the Muslim community in Serbia counted 6,176 members (Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, p.331).

⁴¹ Hodzic, 'Migracije muslimanskog stanovništva', p.76. Hodzic provides some data for Srebrenica on the basis of Ottoman documents: twenty-two Muslim households had come from Uzice in 1862, of which roughly half were Gypsies. The same families were still living in Srebrenica at the time of Hodzic's research. See Hodzic, 'Migracije muslimanskog stanovništva', pp.134-36.

⁴² Nikolic, 'Jedno interesovanje Vuka Karadzica'; see also Kulenovic, *Etnologija sjeveroistoène Bosne*, p.189.

⁴³ See: Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p.105-106.

⁴⁴ For a detailed list of villages and the ethnicity of their inhabitants, see: Nikolic, 'Jedno interesovanje Vuka Karadzica', pp.145-47.

Serb villages became mixed as well.⁴⁵ The three villages Dobrak, Osatica, and Osmace, which had been the only three entirely Muslim villages in 1860, remained Muslim (until the 1990s).

In short, the number of Muslim settlements soared in the second half of the nineteenth century. Mixed villages became almost exclusively Muslim, and as a consequence, the number of mixed settlements (almost half of all settlements in 1860) fell drastically. The end result was a geographic pattern of juxtaposition of ethnically 'pure' Muslim and Serb villages, a situation that continued until the Bosnian war. Only the town of Srebrenica, and later, the town of Bratunac, retained a mixed population. The relatively small size of the settlements has also characterized the situation over the long term. Until the 1980s, villages usually contained no more than a few hundred inhabitants (and rarely more than 500). As will be demonstrated later, these ethno-demographic factors in the countryside may explain in part the ethnic mobilisation and nationalist voting patterns in the countryside before and during the elections of November 1990. They also explain why it was very easy to discriminate between villages on the basis of ethnic criteria during the waves of attacks (and counter-attacks) on both Muslim and Serb villages during the first year of the Bosnian war. Even before the war, everybody knew which village was Muslim and which village, Serb.⁴⁶ As there were hardly any mixed villages, the danger of inflicting damage on members of their own group was negligible. Moreover, because of the small size of rural settlements and the inability to organise an effective defence, 'enemy' villages were usually easy targets for armed groups on both sides.

Rising Serb-Muslim antagonism

“Q: Do you think that the Muslims should get something?”

A: They can get something in Iran or Iraq if these countries are willing to give them their own state. Let them pursue their Jihad and state there if they wish. There is no place for them in Europe. They are Serb martyrs, but they do not understand they are Serbs. These are Serbs who have become Turks and adopted the Islamic faith.”

“Q: Where did you get such a [martial] talent from?”

A: I am from a warrior house. I have an ancestor, Jokelj Raznjatovic, who once, during the Serbo-Turkish war, cut off seventeen Turkish heads and seized two Turkish banners.”

Zeljko Raznjatovic 'Arkan' in an interview with journalist Dusica Milanovic, November 1992⁴⁷

All of the factors discussed earlier (i.e. memories of bloodshed during the first Serbian uprising, the creation of a Serb-Ottoman frontier at the Drina, and the ensuing population exchanges and ethno-demographic changes) contributed to the growing antagonism between Orthodox Serbs and Muslims

⁴⁵ It should be noted here that there were no villages with a homogenous or largely Serb population (in 1860) that became predominantly Muslim in the twentieth century, except for the village of Blazijevici. This village southeast of Srebrenica, which was mixed throughout the period, was initially predominantly Serb and then predominantly Muslim. Of course, some villages had already been Islamicised or abandoned by their Christian inhabitants long before the nineteenth century. The village of Sase is an example: it was abandoned by its Catholic (Saxon) population during the early Ottoman period, and is said to have remained uninhabited for about three centuries. It became Muslim during the nineteenth century when 'Turks' from Valjevo settled in the village (Deroka, *Kajakom i splavom niz Drinu*, p.87).

⁴⁶ Interview Mitko and Mevla Kadric 17/01/1998.

⁴⁷ Milanovic, 'Arkanov srpski san'

during the nineteenth century. The Muslims perceived the creation of an independent Serbian state on the other side of the Drina as an immediate threat to their own privileged position. The Bosnian Serbs, in turn, saw in it a promise of liberation from the Ottoman yoke and inclusion into that new autonomous state. Among the Bosnian Muslims, national feelings, in the modern sense of the word, were largely absent: because of the religious supremacy of Islam and the privileged position Muslims enjoyed within Ottoman society, their sense of group identity was primarily confessional, rather than ethnic. Even during most of the twentieth century, when Bosnia became part of Yugoslavia, the Bosnian Muslims retained an ambiguous sense of ethnic identity. Some considered themselves to be Serbs, Croats, or Yugoslavs, and others as Bosnians or ‘Turks’ loyal to the Sultan.⁴⁸

It may be helpful here to examine the structural organisation of the Ottoman empire, since it explains the specific forms that Serb-Muslim antagonism took, as a clash between two sides: 1. a conservative and confessionally defined Muslim community and 2. a modern, though also religiously inspired, ethno-nationalist movement on the Serb side. The Ottoman state had always assigned a crucial role to religious affiliation as the main means of defining communal identities. Regardless of their ethnic origin, Muslims formed the privileged strata of society. However, what was termed the *millet* system allowed non-Muslim religious communities (Christians and Jews) to enjoy a high degree of autonomy, which guaranteed their continued existence and protected them against attempts at religious assimilation. For the Serb populations, it was the Orthodox *millet*, especially the lower clergy that played a crucial role in preserving their separate identity vis-à-vis the dominant Muslim layer of society. Although differences were religiously defined (making no formal difference between Greek, Serb, and Bulgarian believers within the Orthodox millet), the fact that ordinary priests shared a common language and ethnic background with their flock guaranteed closely intertwined religious and ethnic affiliations on the grassroots level. Not surprisingly, therefore, religious ideas and doctrines became crucial in articulating nationalist discourse when modern concepts of nationhood developed in the nineteenth century. This merging of national and religious identity was reinforced by the creation of several autonomous and autocephalous (‘national’) Orthodox churches in the newly established Balkan national states.

In the case of Serbia, religion (or rather the religious imagery and symbolism of Serbian Orthodoxy) became an important element of Serbian national identity. This development took place even though many early nineteenth-century national ideologists, (such as Vuk Karadzic), advocated a language-based definition of Serbian identity, which was designed to justify Great-Serbian claims to Bosnia, Slavonia, Dalmatia and Croatia and to assimilate the non-Orthodox Catholic Croats and Muslims into a future Serb or South-Slav state.⁴⁹ Even so, social, political, and church pressures always remained strong to identify ‘serbianness’ closely with Orthodoxy, rendering non-Orthodox Serbs as potentially ‘anomalous’ or ‘ambiguous’, or as ‘not really’ Serb. This idea was particularly prevalent among the more powerful traditionalist and conservative nationalist circles linked to the clergy. Thus, it is not surprising that the Serbian state and Orthodox church developed a relation of close co-operation and symbiosis from the very beginning. Even as early on as the first Serbian uprising, Serb Orthodox priests were actively involved in the armed struggle against the Turks.⁵⁰

On the ideological level, the Kosovo myth, with its strong religious or Christian overtones, moved to the centre of Serbian nationalist discourse. It served as a source of inspiration to avenge the loss of Kosovo, to stand up against the Ottoman empire, to resurrect the Serbian nation and to recover the national homeland at the expense of the Muslim oppressor and his indigenous collaborators. During Ottoman times, the Kosovo tragedy was kept alive in the popular epic songs. Performed by

⁴⁸ The most salient example is perhaps the Bosnian Muslim leader, Alija Izetbegovic, who admitted during an interview to have once declared himself a Serb. See: Lazovic, ‘Nekad sam se pisao kao Srbin’.

⁴⁹ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, p.80. See, for instance, Vuk Karadzic’s text ‘srbi svi i svuda’ (1849) in which he writes that there are five million Serbs belonging to three different religions: Orthodoxy, Islam and Catholicism. A French translation (‘serbes, tous et partout’) can be found in: Grmek, Gjidara and Simac, *La nettoyage ethnique*, pp.42-53.

⁵⁰ Petrovich ‘Religion and ethnicity in Eastern Europe’, p.399. An example already mentioned is Hadzi-Melentije Stevanovic, who was the abbot of the monastery of Rača near Bajina Basta on the Serbian side of the Drina.

folk singers, these songs retold the tragic events in Kosovo and hailed contemporary heroes and battles with the Turks, such as those in the first Serbian uprising.⁵¹ Vuk Karadzic compiled a particularly large collection of these songs from Serbian popular tradition. He pieced them together into one literary body, thus ‘canonising’ the Kosovo myth and providing Serbian national ideology with its mythical cornerstone. In drawing on folk songs as his source, he also bridged much of the gap between the nationalist intelligentsia and the peasant masses.⁵²

These steps towards building a nation in Serbia had an effect on the Bosnian Serbs as well. Aside from the spill-over effects of the first Serbian uprising and the lofty example that the autonomous Serbian state held up to Bosnian Serbs, the growth of national consciousness was further intensified by the establishment of Serb schools, which were administered by the Serbian Orthodox church. Instead of viewing this process of national ‘awakening’ merely in terms of a reaction against an increasingly oppressive Ottoman regime, as Serbian historiography usually does, I would propose a different perspective: the opportunities for national mobilisation within the Ottoman empire (for instance through the establishment of schools) were growing as a result of the new conditions created during the period of Ottoman reforms, a period commonly referred to as the *Tanzimat* or ‘Reordering’ (1839-1876). The primary goal of this Ottoman ‘Perestroika’ was to save and revitalise the Ottoman Empire by introducing European standards of organisation and administration. In part, this was the result of growing interference from European powers, which were pressing for the equal status of the Christian populations living in the empire.

The reforms started with the imperial edict of the *Gülhane* (Rose Garden). This was a declaration of the Ottoman government’s intentions to establish security of life, honour, and property, to introduce a fair and effective taxation system, to create a regular army based on conscription, and to establish equality of all subjects irrespective of religious affiliation. In 1840, a revised penal code was introduced, which recognised legal equality for Muslims and non-Muslims. In practice, however, the success of these reforms was hampered by conservative opposition from the *ulema* and the majority of Ottoman officials. Many ordinary Muslim believers resented the doctrine of religious equality for Christians, seeing it as against the natural order of things.⁵³ Conservative Muslim elites became increasingly suspicious of Christians, whom they feared would invite foreign powers to interfere in their affairs. The reforms were particularly sabotaged in the provinces, where they were yet to be implemented even decades after their introduction. High-ranking local officials refused to comply with measures that would inevitably bring an end to their almost absolute power and would introduce a great degree of intervention from the Ottoman centre. Resistance against these reforms also grew in eastern Bosnia, especially against the new conscription (*nizam*) system. When Omer-pasha Latas, the new Bosnian governor, started to implement this system in the fall of 1850, high-ranking eastern Bosnian Muslim officials took up arms. In November 1850, the *muselim* of Srebrenica Hadzi Rustembeg and a group of volunteers from Srebrenica joined the uprising, but they were defeated near Kladanj. Hadzi Rustembeg, who was initially one of the Sultan’s supporters in Bosnia, was killed.⁵⁴

It was only in the 1850s, under the enlightened Bosnian governor, Topal Osman-pasha, that the Ottomans started modernising Bosnian society. Under his rule, schools, roads and railways were built, as was the first public hospital in Bosnia (in Sarajevo).⁵⁵ During the 1860s, measures were taken to

⁵¹ The heartland of this tradition of epic singing was the mountainous terrain of Bosnia, the Sandzak, Montenegro and northern Albania. One of the major functions of these songs was to keep the memory of important historical events alive and to spread news about contemporary events among an illiterate population. Ugresic has aptly called it ‘gusle journalism’ (Ugresic ‘Balkan blues’).

⁵² Ekmečić, ‘The emergence of St. Vitus Day’, p.335.

⁵³ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman empire*, p.43; Zürcher, *Turkey*, p.53; Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p.122-23.

⁵⁴ Jovanovic, ‘Otpor Hatiserifu’.

⁵⁵ See: Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p.127-28. In 1851, Topal Osman-pasha also organized the first census, according to which Bosnia had 964,095 inhabitants. The Orthodox formed the largest category with 45.3% of the total population, while Muslims and Roman-Catholics comprised 39.9%, and 14.1% of the population, respectively. The Srebrenica district had 31,422

improve the economy and reduce illiteracy. For the first time, the Ottomans opened secular (secondary) state schools, called the *ruždija*-s, which were attended by pupils of all religious backgrounds.. There, they were prepared for official positions in local administrations. Nonetheless, these reforms did little to change the enormous percentage (97%) of illiteracy in Bosnia.⁵⁶ They did, however, improve the legal position of the Christians communities. During this period, many new churches and schools were built, which contributed to a revival of Serbian Orthodox church life and the development of an indigenous and nationally minded intellectual elite. In addition, a class of wealthy Christian merchants emerged, who were able to finance much of these activities. This educational and economic advancement provided the Christians with a renewed sense of superiority. At the same time, it deepened their resentment of the conservative Muslim elite who tried to block them from political power.

School teachers did much to stimulate national feelings among the peasant population. They even travelled to villages to encourage peasants to call themselves Serbs instead of *briscani* (Christians).⁵⁷ The Ottoman authorities viewed such activities with suspicion and tried to slow down the process. Despite their efforts, trade and community schools soon began to flourish in towns with active and wealthy populations. The first schools, run by the clergy, were often fairly primitive. However, new teaching methods and the rise of a class of qualified teachers introduced a growing trend towards professionalism in education. Support also came from Serbia proper, especially in the 1860s, when the Serbian government supplied teachers with textbooks.⁵⁸ In Srebrenica, the first Serbian school was established before 1850, and schoolbooks were smuggled in from Serbia by builders from the Osat region.⁵⁹ Some years later, during the final years of Ottoman rule, another school was built in the Serb stronghold of Kravica, next to the Serbian Orthodox church.⁶⁰ Some wealthy local Serb peasants sent the priest's son away to Belgrade to study there, and he later became the school's first teacher. It was one of the very few boarding schools in eastern Bosnia, attracting pupils from Srebrenica, Vlasenica, Han Pijesak, and other nearby Serb villages.⁶¹ Kravica soon became one of the most important - if not the main - centre of Serb nationalist activity in the region. Many Serbs from Kravica participated as volunteers in the wars that Serbia fought against the Ottoman Empire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Vaso Eric (born 1844) became the Serbs' first important leader in Kravica.⁶²

inhabitants, 15,272 of which were Muslims (48.6%) and 15,182 Orthodox Christians (48.3%). There was also a relatively large community of Gypsies. Jovanovic, 'Kraj turkse vlasti u Bosni'.

⁵⁶ Curic, 'sSkolstvo u sjeveroistoènoj Bosni', p.149.

⁵⁷ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p.126.

⁵⁸ Curic, 'sSkolstvo u sjeveroistoènoj Bosni', p.150, 153.

⁵⁹ Serbs from the Osat region made a living as *dundjeri* (carpenters), who went to Serbia during the summer season to look for work. They were much in demand for their wooden house constructions. As travelling artisans, they had their own secret language (the so-called *banalaèki jezik*), which they used among themselves and which contained numerous Albanian words. See: Beatovic, *Bratunac i okolina*, p.17-18; Jovanovic, 'srebrenica kroz vijekove (5)'; Milovanovic, 'Neki zanati u Srebrenici'.

⁶⁰ Kravica is the centre of a cluster of Serb villages and hamlets that all gravitate towards the local Serb Orthodox church, which stands on a hill. The present church was built in 1910, near an old church that had been built during Turkish times. As it always was the only church in this region, it formed an important gathering place for the whole Serb community. Kravica belongs to the region of Ludmer, which until the 1970s, was a relatively isolated stretch of territory because of poor road connections (Miljanovic, *Krvari Bozic sela Kravice*, p.11; Nikolic, 'Kravica u proslosti', p.19). Local oral tradition has it that the entire region experienced a constant influx of Montenegrins and Hercegovinians from the end of the seventeenth until the middle of the nineteenth century. These people fled for various reasons, including to escape epidemics, poverty, and hunger, and to find refuge from blood feuds (see Jovanovic, 'Kraj turske vlasti u Bosni'). Thus, the majority of the Serb Orthodox population in and around Srebrenica is said to be of Montenegrin and Hercegovinian origin. See Hasic 'Porijeklo prezimena' [1].

⁶¹ Nikolic, 'Kravica u proslosti', p.18-19. After the Serb schools in Srebrenica and Kravica were established, Muslims in Srebrenica also decided to form a school. In the 1860s, they collected money and established a medresa, which continued to function for a considerable period of time. See: Curic, 'sSkolstvo u sjeveroistoènoj Bosni', p.184.

⁶² Nikolic, 'Kravica u proslosti', p.15-17; M.Dj., 'Uprkos carskoj zabrani?'; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.140-141.

Class also played a clear role in the growing Serb antagonism towards the Muslims. The majority of the Serb peasant population belonged to the class of *kmets* (serfs), whereas Muslims largely belonged to the class of landlords and free peasants. This Serb peasant population enjoyed few – if any – benefits from the Ottoman reforms and only saw their taxes raised. It was primarily towards the late 1850s that peasant unrest started to surface. Initially, it was directed against the tax collectors and not so much against Muslim landowners. The first peasant uprisings occurred in 1857 and 1858 in eastern Hercegovina. Later, in 1862, the tobacco planters in the Srebrenica district also revolted.⁶³ In some cases, Muslim peasants participated in these protests, which shows the cause of the dissatisfaction to be primarily economic rather than religious or ethnic.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Serbs were disproportionately affected by deteriorating conditions in the countryside, as they comprised the bulk of the most deprived rural class of *kmets* (serfs). The growing unrest among the Serb peasant masses was thus increasingly directed against the Muslim landowning classes and conservative elites. They, in their turn, developed anti-Christian sentiments, which contributed to the ever-increasing Serb-Muslim divide.

Thus, the large Bosnian peasant uprising of 1875 quickly evolved into an uprising of the Serb peasant masses, which wanted to join Serbia and be liberated from their oppression in the Bosnian countryside. Serb peasants attacked Muslim landowners, who retaliated by mobilising Muslim irregulars, burning hundreds of Serb villages and killing several thousand peasants.⁶⁵ When the uprising was still in full swing, public pressure mounted in Serbia to come to the rescue of the Bosnian Serbs. As a result of that pressure, Serbia (and Montenegro) declared war on the Ottoman Empire in June 1876, and many Serbs from Kravica went to Serbia to fight as volunteers in the Serbian army.⁶⁶ As Serbia was still unprepared for war, it suffered almost immediate defeat, and was forced to sign a truce with the Ottoman Empire in November 1876. Yet its objectives remained unchanged throughout this period: to push the Ottomans out of the Balkan peninsula, and to liberate and unite all Serbs into a Greater Serbian state. It was primarily Ilija Garasanin, the Serbian prime minister and minister of foreign affairs in the 1860s, who put the *reconquista* of Ottoman territories and the unification of all Serbian territories at the heart of Serbia's foreign policy. In a secret document entitled *Načertanije* ('Outline', 1844) he justified the annexation of Bosnia and Kosovo. This document also sought to bring about a union with Montenegro, and to secure an outlet to the Adriatic sea.⁶⁷ Bosnian Muslims usually see him as the spiritual father of the Greater Serbian Idea, and one of the evil masterminds behind Serb plans to cleanse Muslims from Bosnia. It should be noted here, however, that Garasanin was primarily inspired by Vuk Karadzic's linguistic nationalism, which aimed at assimilating the non-Orthodox 'serbs' into a Serbian state. Although he was critical of defining Serbian national identity exclusively in religious terms, most of his contemporaries favoured a much cruder version of these Greater Serbian claims, pairing Serbianness to Orthodoxy and showing open hostility towards Muslims. The Bosnian Muslims were depicted as traitors, who had collaborated with the Turks since the Battle of Kosovo. The liberation of 'Christian' territories under 'Muslim' control became a kind of sacred duty, an obligation to avenge and reverse the injustices of Kosovo.

⁶³ Jovanovic, 'Kraj turske vlasti u Bosni'.

⁶⁴ See Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p.130.

⁶⁵ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.16.

⁶⁶ Nikolic, 'Kravica u prošlosti', p.16.

⁶⁷ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, Vol.1, p.331.

Chapter 2

The Austro-Hungarian Period And World War One

“My motive in collecting these paintings is my admiration for these Serb warriors, these soldiers from 1916 and 1917, when the Serbian army showed the most tremendous endurance and bravery until today. I admire these Serbian soldiers and can look at these paintings endlessly”.

Zeljko Raznjatovic ‘Arkan’ talking about his hobby of collecting World War One paintings, in an interview with journalist, Dusica Milanovic, November 1992⁶⁸

Under Austro-Hungarian Rule

It took several decades, until the Balkan Wars and World War One, before Serbia achieved its primary objectives of annexing Kosovo and Bosnia, and of unifying all Serbs into one state. Until then, Kosovo and Macedonia remained in Ottoman hands. At the Congress of Berlin (1878), Vienna was given the right to occupy and administer Bosnia-Herzegovina, though the Ottomans retained sovereignty over the region. While the Ottoman empire was falling apart, the Balkans were being divided into an Austrian and Russian sphere of influence, which placed Serbia’s ambitions in Bosnia in jeopardy. Serbia’s only gain from what was called the Eastern Crisis was full independence. In Bosnia proper, both Muslims and Serbs were angered by the news that Austria-Hungary was going to occupy the country, although for different reasons. Muslims thought that it would put an end to the privileges they had enjoyed living in an Islamic empire, while most Serbs feared that Austrian rule would postpone unification with Serbia indefinitely. In eastern Bosnia, particularly in Tuzla, Muslims took up arms en masse to resist the Austrians. In Srebrenica, Muslim landlords encouraged peasants to join the resistance.⁶⁹ Even so, it took the Austrians just a few weeks to crush resistance, though they were forced to call in numerous reinforcements to do so. They soon took control of major towns, such as Sarajevo and Tuzla. Even Srebrenica fell into Austrian hands.⁷⁰ Rebellions continued during the first years of the Habsburg occupation. In 1881 and 1882, for instance, the introduction of universal conscription by the Austrians provoked a Serb insurrection in Herzegovina, which also had support from the Muslim population. The insurrection rapidly spread over the country, but was soon suppressed by Austrian forces.⁷¹ Not very eager to live under Christian rule, Muslims – not only the Turkish elite, but also a huge number of indigenous Islamicized Slavs – immigrated to the territories still in Ottoman hands. According to Muslim historians, approximately 150,000 Muslims left Bosnia between 1878 and 1914. This led to a decline in their number in the general population: from 38.7% in 1879 to 32.3% in 1910.⁷²

⁶⁸ Milanovic, ‘Arkanov srpski san’, p.48.

⁶⁹ Burg and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p.35; Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p.23.

⁷⁰ Jovanovic, ‘Kraj turske vlasti u Bosni’.

⁷¹ Batakovic, *The Serbs of Bosnia*, p.64.

⁷² Èekic, *Historija genocida*, p.58; Musovic,, p.454.

Bosnia-Hercegovina fell under the governance of the Common Ministry of Finance of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1882, Benjámín Kállay, a Hungarian nobleman who had spent some years in Belgrade as the Austrian consul, was appointed governor. He was familiar with the situation in this part of the Balkans and developed a policy aimed at reducing Muslim resistance and countering Serb nationalist and irredentist ambitions. As he noticed the widespread appeal that independent Serbia held for Bosnian Serbs, he tried to bring about a rapprochement between the Muslims and Catholics. This was his attempt to isolate the Serbs in their endeavours to join Serbia, the *Piedmont* of a new and expanding southern Slav state on the Balkans.⁷³ He tried to achieve this by appeasing the *agas* and *begs*, who owned most of the land, and whose ownership titles he left untouched. Another important element in this policy was that of promoting a separate Bosnian nation, into which all three ethno-confessional groups were intended to merge.

Kállay's attempts to construct a separate Bosnian identity were paired with measures aimed at severing economic ties with neighbouring Serbia and Montenegro, and strengthening those with the Habsburg empire. During those years, trade between Bosnia and Serbia declined dramatically, a trend that continued for decades.⁷⁴ Austrian policies in Bosnia led to growing tensions with Serbia, which deeply resented the fact that Austria was keeping Serbia out of Bosnia and was blocking Serbia's access to the Adriatic. Yet in many ways, the Austrian period had also positive effects on the economic development and industrialisation of Bosnia, although much of these development activities were basically tailored to exploit the rich natural resources of the country.⁷⁵ The Austrians built roads and railways, for example, between Sarajevo and Visegrad in eastern Bosnia, where forestry was the most important growth industry. They also took the first steps towards developing a mining industry, particularly in eastern Bosnia. During the 1880s and following decades, Austrian geologists and mining experts mapped out the area to see whether its mineral resources could be turned into profit. Srebrenica was one of the areas explored for mineral reserves. And indeed, the Austrians did discover substantial reserves of bauxite there at the onset of the twentieth century.⁷⁶

These Austrian geological explorations also led to the discovery of the ancient Roman history of Srebrenica. The Austrians already knew that Srebrenica had been a mining town in mediaeval times. They also suspected that the town was the site of the ancient Roman toponym 'Argentaria'.⁷⁷ With that in mind, they tried to discover all sites where mining had taken place in the past. As a result, mining expert, Ludwig Pogatschnig, discovered a Roman settlement in Gradina (near Sase) in 1883. An Austrian mining company called 'Bosnia' then launched archaeological excavations that uncovered the remains of the Roman *municipium* (town) of Domavia, a town that, until then, had been known only from written sources.⁷⁸ It became clear that during mining Roman times had been an important economic activity around Srebrenica: the area had contained the most important silver and lead mines

⁷³ According to the first census the Austrians held in 1879, the total number of inhabitants in Bosnia was 1.2 million. Serbs formed the largest group (42.9%). In parts of eastern Bosnia, Serbs formed an absolute majority, such as in the districts of Vlasenica (64.4%), Zvornik (54.8%), and Bijeljina (70.6%). See: Batakovic, *The Serbs of Bosnia*, p.64.

⁷⁴ Batakovic, *The Serbs of Bosnia*, p.66. For a more detailed historical study of Kállay's rule in Bosnia-Hercegovina, see: Kraljačić, *Kalajev režim*.

⁷⁵ Sugar, *Industrialization of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp.

⁷⁶ See: Milovanovic, 'O rudarenju u Srebrenici'; Dukic et al, *Dvadeset pet godina rada*, p.12.

⁷⁷ The work of Austrian historian, Konstatin Jireček, particularly his book, *Die Handelsstrassen und Bergwerke von Serbien und Bosnien während des Mittelalters: historisch-geografische Studien* (1879), was instrumental in this respect. As the names Srebrenica and Argentaria are both derived from the word 'silver' (i.e. 'srebro' in Serbian and 'argentum' in Latin), it was assumed that the two toponyms were different historical designations for the same area. For accounts of Srebrenica's history as a mining town see: Jovanovic, 'srebrenica kroz vijekove (1-4)'; Jovanovic, 'Gradska uprava i vlasti'; Jovanovic, 'Trgovina u Srebrenici'; Jovanovic, 'Zanatsvo u Srebrenici'; Hasic, 'Privredno stanje Srebrenice i njene okoline 1906. godine'; Hasic, 'Privredno stanje Srebrenice i okoline (1906-1926)'; Hasic, 'Dubrovačke zanatlije u Srebrenici'; Hasic, 'Dubrovačke zanatlije u srednjovjekovnoj Srebrenici'.

⁷⁸ Ibisevic, 'Bosnien-Herzegowina', p.15; Munro, *Rambles and studies*, pp.348-350. For a local account of the discovery of Argentaria see: Milovanovic, 'Traganje za Argentarijom'; Milovanovic, 'Argentarija je otkrivena'; Milovanovic, 'Iskopine Argentarije'; Milovanovic, 'Život i obiçaji'.

of the western parts of the Balkans.⁷⁹ Further excavations during the 1890s, financed by the Austrian *Landesregierung* of Bosnia, led to a more complete picture of the Roman settlement of Gradina.

The Austrians themselves never opened mines in the area of Srebrenica. However, their explorations prepared the way for the mining activities that developed there later, during Tito's time (particularly bauxite, silver, lead, and zinc mining). Until the 1990s, the exploitation of these resources was based on the original drawings and plans of Austrian geologists and engineers, which still existed at the beginning of the war (in the archives of the local museum of Srebrenica). Austrian economic activity remained confined to the exploitation of the Crni Guber mineral water source. The Heinrich Mattoni company built a small bottle factory, mainly using a local female work force, which produced 20,000 bottles of mineral water a day for export. The demand seems to have been highest during World War One, when the water was used to treat wounds of injured soldiers. The Austrians also built a paved road from Srebrenica to the Crni Guber source, with the intention of developing it into a spa. However, these plans were foiled by the outbreak of World War One. In addition, the Austrians built an ochre plant in a suburb of Srebrenica, which produced the yellow pigment that was used to paint houses and buildings throughout the Habsburg empire. This plant was closed down when the Austrians left in 1918.⁸⁰ The Austrians did much to improve the local infrastructure. Apart from the paved road to Crni Guber, they also built macadam roads between Srebrenica and Bratunac. Between Srebrenica and Milici, they built a road that passed by a Muslim cluster of villages around Suceška.⁸¹ They also built schools (in Srebrenica as well as Skelani), a hospital, and several other public utility buildings, most of which were still in use in that capacity at the onset of the Bosnian war. One of the most beautiful Austrian buildings in Srebrenica is the old *konak* or hotel, built in 1906, which later became the seat of the municipal council. Along the Drina, several Austrian military and police posts were set up to defend the border against Serbian incursions. Around this time, the town had approximately two thousand inhabitants.

After Kállay's death in 1903, his policy of suppressing ethnic divisions by promoting a 'Bosniac' identity was abandoned. New policies were introduced, allowing ethno-national cultural associations to be established among the three main communities. In 1905, for instance, the Bosnian Serbs received ecclesiastical and educational autonomy, which the Austrian authorities hoped would bring a halt to rising Serb nationalism and irredentism. Yet a new generation of young and educated Serb politicians emerged. And they made much more radical demands than had their predecessors (who had always shown more willingness to compromise with the Austrians).⁸² This was the formative period of ethnic politics in Bosnia. Between 1905 and 1910, Muslims, Serbs and Croats established the first political parties along confessional or ethnic lines. The first Muslim party was the Muslim National Organisation (*Muslimanska Narodna Organizacija - MNO*) created in 1906. The first Serb party was the Serb National Organisation (*Srpska Narodna Organizacija - SNO*) established in 1907. The Croats, in their turn, set up the Croat National Union (*Hrvatska Narodna Zajednica - HNZ*) in 1908. The first inter-confessional party was the Social Democrat Party established in 1909 (*Socijaldemokratska stranka BiH*).⁸³

As a result, ethnic divisions and rivalries very much affected political life in Bosnia, even more so as relations between Austria and Serbia deteriorated. Austria-Hungary's sudden annexation of

⁷⁹ From the third century AC on, Domavia was the seat of the Roman prokurator metalorum (the mining administrator) for the two Roman provinces of Pannonia and Dalmatia. At that time, it was the most important urban centre in the territory of present-day Bosnia-Herzegovina (Kulenovic *Etnologija sjeveroistočne Bosne*, p.184). Other Roman settlements in this area were found in Voljavica and Skelani (Municipium Malvesiatium). The latter was a Roman garrison, from which the Roman armies organized their campaigns on the eastern borders of their empire. When the Western Roman Empire collapsed, Domavium's mines closed, and the town was destroyed (Renner, *Durch Bosnien*, p.182).

⁸⁰ Ibisevic, 'Bosnien-Herzegowina', p.15-16; Renner, *Durch Bosnien*, p.184-85.

⁸¹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, p.X. The Muslim inhabitants of Suceška later always complained that the Austrian road was never repaired during the seventy years of Yugoslavia's existence. To them, this was a clear sign that the Serb and Communist authorities were never interested in developing this remote Muslim area (Ibisevic, 'Bosnien-Herzegowina', p.16).

⁸² Corovic, *Političke prilike*, p.38.

⁸³ Arnautovic, *Izbori u Bosni*, pp.26-27.

Bosnia-Herzegovina in October 1908 only fuelled these tensions. In Belgrade, this led to a huge public outcry. Nationalist associations sprung up, such as *Narodna Odbrana* (National Defence), which recruited volunteers to cross into Bosnia and help to organise resistance against Austrian rule. This organisation was also active in Kravica, through the farmers' cooperation.⁸⁴ Another group was formed by junior officers from the Serbian army, who rallied around the powerful and charismatic figure of Dragutin Dimitrijevic 'Apis' ('The Bull'). They established the secret organisation 'Unification or Death!' (also called Black Hand), which saw Serbia as the heart of a new South Slav national state, and propagated an armed revolutionary struggle in order to liberate and unite all Serbs. Later, in 1911, on the eve of the Balkan Wars, the 'Black Hand' organisation became an instrument of the Serbian government's foreign policy in its preparations for war. From its ranks, a network of secret agents was created, which was active in Habsburg and Ottoman territories, and whose main goal was to wrest these regions from Austrian and Turkish control.⁸⁵

The Balkan Wars and World War One



'Rest in peace, you immortal heroes of the immortal and brave leader,
Major Kosta.
You sacrificed your lives for our freedom Brave avengers of Kosovo
rest in peace.
Because better times have now come to us.
Sunnays of freedom warm us from all sides.
The painful wounds of Kosovo are no more.'

Text on a plaque commemorating Major Kosta Todorovic and his
soldiers, who fought in eastern Bosnia at the start of World War One
and fell in battle near Srebrenica.

Serbia grew increasingly confident after its military victories during the two Balkan Wars (1912-1913), as it had doubled in size by taking control over Kosovo and Macedonia. The annexation of the Serb inhabited regions of the Habsburg Empire seemed within reach, and the Serb population in Bosnia thought that their liberation from 'the Ottoman yoke' was imminent. Many young Bosnian Serbs,

⁸⁴ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.141.

⁸⁵ Dragutin Dimitrijevic Apis was a high Serbian army officer, who played an important role in Serbian political life in the first two decades of the twentieth century. See MacKenzie, 'Dragutin Dimitrijevic-Apis'.

including from the Srebrenica and Bratunac area, crossed over the Drina into Serbia to join the Serbian army as volunteers. Some were arrested by the Austrians at the border, who tried to prevent them from joining the Serbian forces.⁸⁶ As the ideology of these young insurgents was an ambiguous mixture of socialist, South Slav and Serbian ideals, some Muslims also went to Serbia to join the Serbian army. Austria became increasingly nervous and started to strengthen its military presence along the border. In 1913, the Austrians imposed martial law, introducing various repressive measures against the Serb population.⁸⁷

These events were just the prologue to World War One, which was triggered by the assassination of Austria's heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife on their visit to Sarajevo on 28 June 1914. The assassins, a group of Bosnian youths (five Serbs and one Muslim), were all members of the youth socialist organisation, *Mlada Bosna* (Young Bosnia), which advocated South Slav union and the liberation of Bosnia from Austrian rule. They had received assistance from Dragutin Dimitrijevic Apis, Chief of Military Intelligence of Serbia at the time, who supervised a network of secret agents operating inside Bosnia. Although his role has never been clarified, he probably supplied the group with weapons without informing the Serbian government.⁸⁸ These arms were then smuggled into eastern Bosnia, which was an important chain in the conspiracy network. According to the local chronicler of these events, Djordje Beatovic, young Serbs from villages along the Drina and even Gypsy musicians were involved in carrying out certain tasks. The person who coordinated these activities from Serbia was army officer and border guard captain, Kosta Todorovic, who was stationed in Loznica on the Serbian side of the Drina. Later, when Austria declared war on Serbia, he led military operations in and around Srebrenica.

On this particular Sunday in June, Serbs in eastern Bosnia were commemorating Vidovdan, which is celebrated as the anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. According to the description of events in Bratunac on that day, people had gathered in the yard of the Serbian Orthodox church to celebrate with music and dance. Around noon, something terrible happened in Sarajevo, after which people went home immediately. In the afternoon, at about five, the Austrian authorities announced a curfew and established a drumhead trial. Army and police units patrolled the empty streets of Bratunac.⁸⁹ Throughout Bosnia, the murder caused an immediate outburst of anti-Serb sentiment. The very same day, demonstrations were organised in all major Bosnian towns, as well as in Zagreb, where Croatian nationalists called for revenge on the Serbs. As one speaker there said: "Vidovdan is the day of Serb vengeance, and from this day onwards let it be the day of our revenge as well, because he who does not avenge himself will not live in honour [...]. We will avenge the death of the Croatian Crown Prince, we will take revenge for Croatia!"⁹⁰ All over Bosnia, anti-Serb pogroms began, against which the Austrian authorities undertook little, if any, action. For several days, Croats and Muslims looted Orthodox churches and Serb shops, and in Sarajevo, criminals were released from prison to participate.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire sent an immediate ultimatum to Serbia. When the Serbian government refused to comply, the Austrians declared war on the country on 25 July 1914. They recruited Bosnian Croats and Muslims into special auxiliary militia, the so-called *Schutzkorpsen*, which were assigned the task of paralysing Serb resistance and intimidating the Serb population. All over Bosnia, they exerted a reign of terror and fear.⁹¹ Thousands of Serbs, particularly intellectuals, teachers, merchants, and priests, were arrested and put in prisons and concentration camps. Nineteen Serbs from

⁸⁶ Beatovic, *Bratunac i okolina*, pp.6-7. This source mentions 239 names of local Serbs, from the Bratunac and Srebrenica area, who joined the Serbian army during the 'wars of liberation', i.e. from the Serbian-Turkish wars of 1876-1878 until the end of World War One (pp.57-59). Another source says that more than fifty Serbs from the Kravica area fought as volunteers in the Serbian army during World War One (Nikolic, 'Kravica u prošlosti', p.17).

⁸⁷ Corovic, *Političke prilike*, pp.46-48.

⁸⁸ Batakovic, *The Serbs of Bosnia*, p.84-87; MacKenzie, 'Dragutin Dimitrijevic-Apis', pp.71-73, 78-82; Ljubibratic, *Mlada Bosna*, pp.153-64.

⁸⁹ Beatovic, *Bratunac i okolina*, p.28-29.

⁹⁰ Corovic, *Crna knjiga*, p.31 (translation mine).

⁹¹ Corovic, *Crna knjiga*, p.32; Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, p.149.

the Srebrenica district were also arrested and spent the rest of the war years in Austrian prisons.⁹² In some cases (as in Foča), Serbs were taken hostage and kept as human shields at strategically important places, such as bridges.⁹³ In Srebrenica and elsewhere in Bosnia, Serbs were 'mobilised' into the Austrian army in order to keep them under close surveillance. They were also forced to dig trenches and carry out hard labour. Their treatment was harsh. Many suffered from hunger and disease, while others were killed in retaliation, particularly at times when the Serbian army achieved major military successes. (In fact, this is how a dozen Serbs from villages near Srebrenica died).⁹⁴

When the war started, the Serbian-Austrian border along the Drina River was one of the main lines of confrontation, where clashes occurred almost immediately. During the first months of the war the Austrian forces invaded Serbia three times crossing the Danube, Sava and Drina rivers. But the Serbs – battle-hardened as they were from the two Balkan wars – managed to drive the Austrians back. Serb forces intruded into eastern Bosnia, forcing thousands of Muslims from the Visegrad area to flee.⁹⁵ Major battles were also fought near Srebrenica, between Austro-Hungarian forces and a unit of Serb volunteers commanded by Kosta Todorovic.⁹⁶ Todorovic's unit first crossed into Bosnia on 1 August 1914, taking up positions along the Drina. In reaction, Hungarian soldiers – helped by *Schutzkorpsen* and local Muslims – plundered Serb houses and shops in Srebrenica and some nearby villages, also killing a number of Serbs.⁹⁷ A Muslim priest from Srebrenica, a member of the *Schutzkorpsen*, is reported to have participated in killing three Serbs on a hill near Srebrenica. At the end of the month, local Austrian police forces and *Schutzkorpsen* burned the Serb village of Podravanje after they killed four inhabitants and looted the village. A number of Serb peasants from Podravanje were hanged in the town of Srebrenica.⁹⁸

Todorovic was ordered to give up his positions along the Drina, after which he returned to Bajina Basta. Almost three weeks later, he renewed his attacks on Bosnian territory. On 18 September, his unit of some 150 well-armed volunteers managed to take Srebrenica and Bratunac, but they were soon forced back by the Austrian army. During the clashes that followed, near Brezani and Zeleni Jadar, fifty of Todorovic's volunteers died. Todorovic himself was heavily wounded, and the story goes that the Austrians took him to Srebrenica, where they burned him alive together with one of his soldiers, on 27 September 1914.⁹⁹ In reaction to Todorovic's actions, the Austrian army and Muslim and Croat *Schutzkorpsen* retaliated against the local Serb population. They rounded up its leaders, particularly priests who were seen as the disseminators of Serb nationalist propaganda. Between August and October 1914, nine Serbs from Srebrenica were accused of 'crimes against the army.' They received the death sentence and were subsequently shot or hanged. In Vlasenica, revenge was carried out by Muslim and Croat *legionasi*, or volunteers, who killed local Serbs on a hill above the town by decapitation.¹⁰⁰ According to Serb historians, Srebrenica was among the districts that suffered most from Austrian reprisals during the war, due to its proximity to the border and Todorovic's actions at the beginning of the war.

⁹² Beatovic, *Bratunac i okolina*, p.34.

⁹³ Corovic, *Crna knjiga*, p.50.

⁹⁴ See Corovic, *Crna knjiga*, p.83.

⁹⁵ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.21. One of the participants in these clashes at the Drina front was Josip Broz Tito, who, as a young conscript, had been recruited into a Croat infantry unit of the Austro-Hungarian army. See: West, *Tito*, pp.40-41; Pavlowitch, *Tito*, pp.10-11.

⁹⁶ Some volunteers were Serb émigrés, who had come back from the US, Canada and Australia to join the fighting. Also several Yugoslav-minded Croats and Muslims were part of these units. For instance at least half a dozen of Bosnian Muslims from villages at the border near Skelani joined the Uzice corps (Beatovic, *Bratunac i okolina*, pp.48-50).

⁹⁷ Beatovic, *Bratunac i okolina*, p.39.

⁹⁸ Corovic, *Crna knjiga*, p.84.

⁹⁹ For Kosta Todorovic see: *Vojna enciklopedija*, vol.10, 1975, p.12; Beatovic, *Bratunac i okolina*, p.42-43; Ljubibratic, *Mlada Bosna*, p.218; Deroka, *Geografsko-turistička monografija*, p.247.

¹⁰⁰ Corovic, *Crna knjiga*, p.210; see also Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.142. Beatovic provides all the names of local Serbs from Srebrenica and Bratunac who were hanged (18 persons) or executed (102 persons), or who went missing or died in Bosnian prisons or in concentration camps (111 persons) (Beatovic, *Bratunac i okolina*, p.54-59).

After World War One, major Kosta Todorovic remained a hero in the eyes of local Serbs and still is today. In September 1924, on the tenth anniversary of his death, a monument was erected in Srebrenica's town centre, commemorating Todorovic and the members of his unit who perished.¹⁰¹ The monument remained there until the beginning of World War Two, when Ustashe forced local Serbs to remove and destroy it. The Serbs, however, kept the monument somewhere, 'hiding' it for the next five decades: it turned up again after they took Srebrenica in July 1995. It is perhaps one of the clearest local examples of how official 'history' and 'memory' are subject to revision and manipulation, and how claims on the past that have been silenced can be revived.¹⁰² The two stone plaques, one with a short biography of Todorovic and the other containing a poem referring to the Battle of Kosovo, now stand in the park in Srebrenica's centre. (See the photo at the beginning of this section). While Serbs revere him as a hero, who avenged Kosovo and who helped to liberate Bosnia, Muslims regard him as a war criminal. The local historian and SDA leader, Besim Ibisevic writes, for instance, that Kosta Todorovic killed "hundreds of Bosniacs of the district of Srebrenica" during "terrorist" actions in 1914. In other recent Muslim publications, such as the books of Naser Oric and Nijaz Masic, Todorovic is said to have pillaged and burned numerous Muslim homes and to have killed many Muslims.¹⁰³

It is worth mentioning that from the Serb nationalist perspective, World War One is just one episode in the long history of local Serb victimisation at the hands of foreign occupiers and their Muslim and Croat collaborators. As the chronicler of Serb suffering in Srebrenica and Bratunac, Milivoje Ivanisevic, writes that "they" (the Turks, the Muslims, the Austrians, the Ustashe and the Germans) have persistently tried to exterminate the Serbs from this region. He claims that during World War One, the Serb population in the districts of present-day Srebrenica, Bratunac and Skelani, was reduced by half, the underlying message being that Srebrenica became predominantly Muslim because of the 'genocide' committed against the Serbs.¹⁰⁴ This, he says, is a recurrent crime against the Serbs in this region, even up to the present day. The one case he presents to illustrate his point can serve as an icon of local Serb suffering throughout twentieth-century history. Milan Petkovic, an Orthodox priest from Srebrenica, spent World War One in an Austrian labour camp. During World War Two, he was arrested by the Germans and died in Dachau. His only mistake, Ivanisevic writes, was that of being a Serb. Throughout his book, Ivanisevic draws one straight historical line from these events to the present. The same thing is recurring time and again, he says, and the perpetrators are basically the same people: the Austrians and/or the Germans, and their local servants, the Muslims (who sometimes belong even to the same families).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Beatovic, *Bratunac i okolina*, p.49. There have also been songs about Kosta Todorovic's death (see for instance Beatovic, *Bratunac i okolina*, p.43). During the 1990s the primary school in Skelani, which was named after the Bosnian Partisan hero Slavisa Vajner, was renamed into the Kosta Todorovic primary school (Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, p.72). For Todorovic see also Oric, *Srebrenica svjedoči i optužuje*, p.9-10.

¹⁰² The first attempts to revive the memory of Kosta Todorovic occurred in the late 1980s. Besim Ibisevic, the then custodian of the Museum of Srebrenica, was approached by a Serb from a village near Skelani, who told him that he possessed Todorovic's monument. The Serb offered the marble plaques to the museum, but Ibisevic refused to accept them. He also remembers that the town's mayor, Salih Sehomerovic, asked for advice in this matter. Serbs had asked for permission to re-erect the monument in the park of Srebrenica. Ibisevic told him not to grant permission because "Todorovic had been a Chetnik" (conversation Ibisevic 01-06-2001).

¹⁰³ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, p.X; Oric, *Srebrenica svjedoči i optužuje*, p.9; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p.15. For Serb actions against the Muslim population in southeastern Bosnia in general, at the start of World War One, see also Èekic, *Historija genocida*, p.60; and Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.142. Ibisevic claims to have seen a document written by a member of the District's Council of Srebrenica, containing 233 names of Muslims killed in Serb actions in 1913-1914. They were murdered by Serbian *komita*, who crossed the border from Serbia into Bosnia and attacked Muslim villages. Massacres were for instance committed in Suceška and Tokoljaci. Conversation with Besim Ibisevic 01-06-2001.

¹⁰⁴ Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, p.15.

¹⁰⁵ Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, p.13.

Land Reforms between the two World Wars

“The land that was taken from Muslims was given to Serbian kmets and their relatives, so they can now boast in Geneva that no less than 64% of Bosnian land, according to the cadastre, belongs to them”.

Naser Oric, *Srebrenica svjedoči i optužuje*, p.10

In the anarchy ensuing Austrian withdrawal from Bosnia towards the end of World War One, Serb peasants attacked Muslim landlords. War veterans also harassed and killed other Muslims in retaliation for Serb casualties during the war.¹⁰⁶ During the years that followed, Muslims remained at the receiving end of violent and drastic measures meant to eliminate the social, cultural and political legacies of the Ottoman past. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which was created in 1918 from the remnants of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires, introduced land reforms at the expense of Muslim landowners, who, though compensated, were often reduced to poverty and economic hardship. In describing their experiences of national suffering and victimisation, Muslims often refer to this particular period in their history. This was when Bosnia became part of a non-Muslim state which transformed them into second-rate citizens and took away most of their land. According to Adil Zulfikarpasic, a well-known Muslim intellectual and member of a dispossessed Muslim family, the land reform was a “calculated move to impoverish the Muslim population in Yugoslavia”.¹⁰⁷ This issue of land reforms between the two world wars has had far-reaching implications even during the recent years. Bosnian Serb politicians have claimed more than fifty percent of the land based on ownership rights that were partly acquired during the land reforms in the aftermath of World War One.¹⁰⁸ Muslims, on the other hand, have pointed out that Serbs acquired this land at their expense, claiming that most of the land had initially been Muslim property.

Agrarian reform started in 1919, and was seen by those who introduced it as a revolutionary undertaking aimed at abolishing the feudal estates, which, in Bosnia, were owned primarily by Muslims. The plan was to redistribute the land among the former tenants of these estates. The reforms were meant to redress the inequalities on the Bosnian countryside, where a small class of large and wealthy Muslim landowners possessed the land, while Christian *kmets*, the class of serfs or customary tenants to which the bulk of Serbian peasants belonged, cultivated it.¹⁰⁹ Clearly, the land reforms had a political aspect in that they were intended to weaken the position of the old Muslim elite and ‘break’ them economically and politically. Although the reforms formally applied to other regions in Yugoslavia as well, in practice, they were carried out only in Muslim-dominated areas, such as Bosnia and Kosovo, in a final attempt to settle accounts with the ‘Turks’. Only Muslim landowners were targeted, whereas

¹⁰⁶ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.22.

¹⁰⁷ Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosnia*, p.13.

¹⁰⁸ This issue of who historically owns the land is highly contested, which explains the hugely varying figures given by Muslim and Serb sources concerning landownership in eastern Bosnia. According to Muslim sources, Muslims have held most of the land in the municipalities of eastern Bosnia until the start of the recent war. In Srebrenica, Muslims are said to have owned 79,4% of the land, while Serbs are said to have held only 20,6%. According to the same source, Muslims also owned most of the land in the Bratunac (71,8%), Vlasenica (61,8%), and Zvornik (75,1%) municipalities (*Ratni zločin*, pp.32-3). A Serb source, however, provides us with quite opposite figures: in the four municipalities of Srebrenica, Bratunac, Milici and Skelani together, Serbs are said to have held 52% of the land, and Muslims only 29%, while the rest was state owned (Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, p.6). It seems that already during Communist times land ownership titles were highly contested; in Srebrenica, for instance, the Communist authorities registered around 2.000 legal requests for the return of land usurped before April 1941. It is not clear whether these cases also included land taken from Muslims and given to Serbs (*Delegatski bilten* (Srebrenica), no.11, 06/06/1977, p.10-11).

¹⁰⁹ Almost all landowners whose land was cultivated by *kmets* were Muslims, while the great majority of *kmets* were Serbs. There were hardly any Muslim kmets. Most Muslim peasants were smallholders, who had full ownership rights over their land, although this usually did not mean that life was much better for them. It is clear from these figures that the agrarian question in Bosnia had a strong confessional or ethnic dimension (Eric, *Agrarna reforma*, pp.72-73).

Serb landowners in Serbia and Bosnia were usually exempted. In Bosnia, several large Serb landowners increased their property at the expense of the former Muslim elite.¹¹⁰ The compensation offered to Muslim landowners for confiscated land was insufficient, while they were only allowed to keep a limited amount of land under the condition that they would work it themselves.¹¹¹ Muslim authors usually point out that Muslim smallholders and peasants lost their land as well.

In eastern Bosnia, the well-known Zulfikarpasic-Èengic family was among the Muslim nobility seriously affected by these reforms. The family was based in Foča, but also owned large tracks of land around Srebrenica. As Adil Zulfikarpasic relates in his conversations with Milovan Djilas, his relatives lost almost all of their possessions. Although he is usually known for his liberal and moderate views, Adil Zulfikarpasic is uncompromising when it comes to the land reforms: “Agrarian reform in Bosnia was in effect the theft of estates, and conducted with a brutality that can only be called genocidal”.¹¹² State owned and communal lands were also confiscated. In the Srebrenica district, common pasturelands and forests were given to so-called *Solunci*, Serbian World War One veterans who had fought at the Thessaloniki front.¹¹³ It seems, however, that although local Serbs, especially World War One veterans, benefited from the land reforms, the advantages they took from it were modest. They often received land of inferior quality, or in remote areas, such as in Srem, Slavonia or the Banat, where they often did not want to settle.¹¹⁴ Agriculture remained primitive, on plots of land that were too small and fragmented to produce crops beyond a subsistence level.

The economic crisis of the 1930s made life even more difficult for the Serb peasant population. Yet politically, the Serbs had the upper hand. Quite a number of World War One veterans became leading members of the local branch of the Agrarian Party, which supported radical agrarian reforms. Among them were Jovan Nikolic and Pero Djukanovic, who were both from Kravica. Nikolic was appointed president of the newly established municipality of Kravica. Muslims, on the other hand, feeling deeply threatened by these ‘revolutionary’ political designs and by Serb supremacy, rallied massively behind the JMO (the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation).¹¹⁵ Many others left Bosnia for Turkey, reducing the Muslim segment of the population and making the Serbs by far the largest ethnic group in Bosnia. In November 1939, at the eve of World War Two, Bosnia had 2.75 million inhabitants, 44.8% of whom were Orthodox (Serbs), 31.2% Muslim, and 22.8% Catholic (Croats).¹¹⁶ Although Serbs did not possess the absolute majority, they were the most numerous and politically the most influential group in the Bosnian population, a position reinforced by Serb political hegemony in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as a whole. This continued to fuel existing rivalries and nationalist tendencies among the other groups, particularly the Croats. With the growing threat of the Axis powers, this finally resulted in the Cvetkovic-Maček agreement or *Sporazum* (August 1939), which was meant to appease the nationalist Croat demands for autonomy. For the sake of the preservation of Yugoslavia, the idea of a unitary state was abandoned in favour of a dualist Yugoslav state, including the Banovina of Croatia. One of the results of the agreement was that Bosnia was partitioned between Serbia and Croatia, without the faintest regard for Muslim interests. Most of eastern Bosnia was included into what was in effect a reduced Yugoslavia or Greater Serbia. During the early 1990s, the Cvetkovic-Maček agreement formed the source of inspiration for the Tudjman and Milosevic regimes to launch new talks about dividing Bosnia between Croatia and Serbia.

¹¹⁰ Eric, *Agrarna reforma*, p.175.

¹¹¹ Eric, *Agrarna reforma*, pp.440-41.

¹¹² Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p.14.

¹¹³ Oric, *Srebrenica svjedoči i optužuje*, p.10.

¹¹⁴ Nikolic, ‘Kravica u prošlosti’, p.20.

¹¹⁵ Nikolic, ‘Kravica u prošlosti’, p.21-22.

¹¹⁶ Radovanovic, ‘Evolucija verskih odnosa’, p.482. These figures are almost identical to the census results of 1931, when the Orthodox population made up 44.6% of the population, Muslims 31.2% and Catholics 21.7%. Radojevic, ‘Bosna i Hercegovina u raspravama’, p.32.

Chapter 3

World War Two, 1941–1945¹¹⁷

“This war is the continuation of World War Two; the same criminals from the same criminal hordes are, once again, exterminating the same Serb families in the very same villages; and they are all lined up under the same banner, using exactly the same fascist rhetoric”.

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, in an interview with Pogledi, 11 December 1992.¹¹⁸

“In Karadzic’s mind, the need to avenge Serb deaths during World War II would justify anything his people might do. In his mind, the blood on the hands of the Serbs during the war had been justified by the Ustase genocide. ‘The Serbs are endangered again,’ Karadzic warned. [...] ‘This nation remembers well the genocide. The memory of those events is still a living memory, a terrible living memory. The terror has survived fifty years. The feeling is present still because they won’t allow us to bury the dead’”.

Excerpts from a conversation New York Times journalist Chuck Sudetic had with Radovan Karadzic in September 1990.¹¹⁹

“We are back again in 1946 - World War Two never finished here.”

Ljubisav Simic, SDS leader and President of the Municipality of Bratunac, in an interview with *Nasa Rjec*, 23 October 1992.¹²⁰

The onset of the war and of Ustashe terror

Yugoslavia did not enter the war until April 1941. On 25 March, after months of German pressure, the Yugoslav government joined the Axis powers. Only two days later, however, it was overthrown by an army putch, which was backed up by huge mass demonstrations in Belgrade and other towns in Serbia,

¹¹⁷ For this chapter, I have made use of various sources, which describe the same events from different perspectives. In the former Yugoslavia, there was a great diversity in (pseudo-) historiographic genres dealing with World War Two. On the one hand, there is a tradition of scholarly works, most of which were written during the socialist period. Although this body of work is serious, it usually suffers, at least to some extent, from ideological constraints imposed by the communists. These works are supplemented by many other works of a more mundane or autobiographic nature, which can be characterised as ‘Partisan’ historiography. In addition, two new developments emerged during the 1980s: scholars began to tackle themes that had been taboo during communism, while popular works began to disseminate revisionist views, replacing old communist stereotypes with new nationalist ones. As far as events in Srebrenica are concerned, I relied mostly on scholarly works and Partisan sources from the communist period. Muslim or Chetnik accounts are practically non-existent. I did, however, draw on a historical novel by Momir Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands of Islam*, which sums up the events in eastern Bosnia at the beginning of the war from a Chetnik perspective. It is based on numerous interviews, which the author conducted with local Serbs who participated in these events.

¹¹⁸ Jankovic, ‘Primorani smo na nove uspehe’, p.16.

¹¹⁹ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.84.

¹²⁰ Anonymous, ‘Ima zaista, mnogo teskih izazova’.

Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Prince Paul was removed from power and the 17-year-old King Peter II was installed on the throne. Although the new government tried to ward off German intervention by offering declarations of loyalty, Germany responded by attacking Yugoslavia and bombing Belgrade on 6 April. Almost at the same time, German, Italian, Hungarian and Bulgarian forces entered the country. They defeated the Yugoslav defence within days. King Peter hastily fled the country, passing through eastern Bosnia to Niksic airport, from where he escaped to Greece. In the eastern Bosnian town of Vlasenica, as the story goes, local Muslims tried to stop the king and his following by strewing nails over the road, presumably in an attempt to kill him.¹²¹

Most Croats and Muslims, unlike the Serbs, welcomed the Germans, whom they thought would put an end to Serbian hegemony as it had existed during the interwar period. Nationalist Croats hoped that Nazi Germany would enable them to create an independent Croatia, which they could only achieve with German support. The conservative Muslim elite in Bosnia hoped that the Germans would give them back control over the land they had lost during the agrarian reforms of the 1920s. Before long, the Axis forces carved up Yugoslavia. Serbia was occupied by the German army, which installed a puppet government under general Milan Nedic. Bosnia became part of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), a fascist puppet state, which was headed by Ante Pavelic, the leader of the fascist Ustashe organisation. The Drina was seen as the historical border of this Greater Croatia. Bosnian Muslims were proclaimed to be 'the flower of the Croatian nation' in a deliberate attempt to define the NDH as inhabited by a Croat majority.¹²² Although most of the Bosnian Muslim political and cultural elite was sceptical of the NDH and Ustashe rule – they preferred an autonomous Bosnia under German tutelage – others soon joined the Ustashe movement. The movement was to swell from a few thousand followers at the beginning of the war to a 100,000 members in May 1941, many of whom belonged to the less educated classes and the rural poor.¹²³ Eastern Bosnia was one of the regions where non-Catholics joined the Ustashe in substantial numbers.¹²⁴ One of the ways in which Muslims were induced to join the Ustashe was by promising them the return of land that was taken from them during the land reforms in the 1920s.¹²⁵

The new regime was fanatically anti-Serb, and was determined to get rid of the large Orthodox community that lived within the borders of the NDH (about one third of the total population). This caused an almost immediate upheaval among the Serbs living in the NDH. That upheaval was later to evolve into a complex civil war in which the major fault lines ran along different ethno-religious and political lines. Bosnia became one of the central stages of this civil war. There, aside from the occupying German and Italian forces and various Croat and Muslim militia, two other parties were involved: the communist Partisans (comprised of Serbs as well as a growing number of Muslims) and the royalist and Serb nationalist Chetniks. In most regions, such as eastern Bosnia, the situation was complicated even more, as local 'Chetnik' and 'Ustashe' militia acted independently of the leaders of the movements to which they belonged, at least nominally. Throughout the war, alliances often shifted, depending on local circumstances, and people switched (sometimes *en masse*) from one side to the other. The Ustashe and Chetnik forces, in particular, committed numerous massacres in eastern Bosnia. According to post-war communist sources, 2,267 people from the territory of the district of Srebrenica were killed, died in concentration camps, or disappeared during the war.¹²⁶ Srebrenica changed hands several times, which led to mutual acts of revenge, regularly causing large groups of people to flee.

¹²¹ Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, p.19.

¹²² Goldstein, *Croatia*, p.135-6; Galic, *Veze narodnoslobodilačkog pokreta*, p.36.

¹²³ Redzic, *Muslimansko Autonomastvo*; Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, p.105. Goldstein, *Croatia*, pp.133-4.

¹²⁴ Karchmar, *Draža Mihailovic*, p.459.

¹²⁵ Tuzla Archive, document 48/2214.

¹²⁶ Lazarevic, 'Napad partizana', p.85. Other sources mention only 1,200 to 1,280 'victims of Fascist terror' in the municipality of Srebrenica. See for instance: *Privredni pregled*, 4(2), 1986, p.1; *Srebreničke novine* 4(33), 1981, p.1. This figure may not take into account all victims on the Muslim or 'Ustashe' side. Recent Muslim estimates vary between 1,000 to 1,500 people for the Srebrenica district. (See for instance: Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, p.XI).

Once the Ustashe installed their government, they soon proved to be extremely intolerant of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies. Within a few weeks, the Pavelic regime adopted discriminatory laws that were more extreme in some respects than those of Nazi Germany. The Serbs were a primary target: one third were to be expelled, one third were to be exterminated, and the rest converted to Catholicism. Ustashe forces, consisting mainly of volunteers, committed innumerable crimes and became notorious for their brutality.¹²⁷ Aside from the Ustashe forces, the NDH also possessed a regular army, the Home Guardists (*Domobrani*), consisting of Croat and Muslim recruits. They were not as extreme as the Ustashe, and proved to be a somewhat unreliable force from the Ustashe perspective.¹²⁸ In eastern Bosnia, Ustashe formed the backbone of NDH rule. They controlled major towns and roads, while the interior was in the hands of various other forces (Chetniks, Partisans, local Muslim militia, etc.). German and Italian forces only appeared in this region at the beginning of the war, and later, during major offensives against the Chetniks or Partisans.

The Germans first appeared in Srebrenica at the start of the war, when three German soldiers entered the town on motorbikes and left again. Soon a small German unit was stationed in Srebrenica, while civil administration was taken over by officials of the NDH, Croats as well as Muslims. Some local Muslim notables and religious leaders, such as the mayor of Bratunac, Jusuf Verlasevic, welcomed them as liberators from twenty years of 'slavery' under Yugoslav rule. The Ustashe started recruiting local Muslims into their ranks, which was particularly successful in the villages.¹²⁹ In the town of Srebrenica, many Muslims remained sceptical of the Ustashe extremists. They tried to mitigate the consequences of Ustashe terror for the Serb population, partly out of fear of possible Chetnik reprisals in the future. The newly established head of the Srebrenica district, Salih Redzepovic, a Muslim who was married to a Serb, was among those who did his best to offer protection to local Serbs. Others included Pavao Petrovic (a Catholic Croat who became head of the district court) and Asim Èemerlic (a Muslim doctor).¹³⁰ Some of these moderate Muslims were killed by the Ustashe later during the war. Even up to the present day, many people recall the acts of mutual help and solidarity between Serb and Muslim neighbours during World War Two. It seems that efforts to protect each other from the violence of 'outsiders' (Chetniks as well as Ustashe) were much more common then than during the recent war.¹³¹

Because of the positive role of moderate Muslims, the urban Serb population in towns such as Srebrenica initially suffered less from Ustashe terror than those in the villages of eastern Bosnia. There, as Karchmar writes, the Ustashe militia "applied their anti-Serb measures with such lack of discretion and disregard for sequence as to cause tens of thousands of frightened Serbs to flee across the Drina River into German-occupied Serbia".¹³² Ustashe searched and plundered Serb houses under the pretext

¹²⁷ Ustashe units were normally located in administrative centres, small towns and villages. The smallest units, the so-called *tabor-s* (of twenty to forty men) were stationed in larger village settlements. At the district level, they were labelled *logor-s* (consisting of fifty to one hundred men), placed in towns or administrative centres. The regional Ustashe headquarters was called *stožer*, which in eastern Bosnia, was located in Tuzla. See Kovaèevic, 'Partisan and enemy forces in the Tuzla region', p.462.

¹²⁸ Goldstein, *Croatia*, p.135-6; Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, p.108. The number of Home Guardists peaked at the end of 1943 (130,000), but dropped dramatically in 1944. The Ustashe (volunteer) units simultaneously increased their numbers to 76,000 (Goldstein, *Croatia*, p.149). The *Domobrani* often performed poorly in combat. Increasingly demoralized, they frequently surrendered large quantities of materials to the Partisan forces. The Ustashe referred to them as the 'Partisan supply units'. See Trew, *Britain, Mihailovic and the Chetniks*, p.275.

¹²⁹ Nikolic, 'Kravica u proslosti', p.22; Hodzic, *Hronika*, p.6.

¹³⁰ See the two documents published in Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, p. 237-238 and 229-233. Ivanisevic has provided the NIOD research team with copies of the original documents. Muslims of high rank and status in other parts of Bosnia (judges, teachers, professors, businessmen, religious leaders) also protested against the Ustashe massacres, which they feared would provoke Serb reprisals against the Muslim population. See Banac, 'Introduction', p.XII; Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p.62-63.

¹³¹ Interviews and conversation with Damir Skaler 06/02/1998, Becir Hasanovic 17/05/1998, Hasa Selmanagic 07/08/1997, Branko Filipovic 14/11/1998, Mitko and Mevla Kadric 17/01/1998, and Mehmed Malagic 14/06/1998.

¹³² Karchmar, *Dražica Mihailovic*, p.438.

of weapon searches. They were also reported to have raped Serb women. Some Serbs were arrested and imprisoned, for instance in Kravica, which was a Serb nationalist stronghold.¹³³ Churches were closed down and religious services were prohibited, while priests were forced to leave Bosnia. Dragoljub Jolovic, for example, an Orthodox priest from Srebrenica, received an ultimatum: he was to leave town within three days, which he did. The new parish house (built in 1937) was transformed into the local Ustashe headquarters. Later that summer, a number of Serb village priests were arrested (for instance in Kravica, Fakovici, Vlasenica, Milici, and Han Pijesak). Some of them were killed or taken to concentration camps.¹³⁴ Kravica's priest was detained in Drinjača, in the building of the local peasant association, where Ustashe tortured Serb prisoners to death.¹³⁵ The persecution of Serbs only intensified when, at the end of July 1941, the German troops left Srebrenica and the Ustashe forces took control. The very same day, forty-five Serbs from Srebrenica were arrested and put in jail, where some were to stay for the next two months and be subjected to terrible treatment from local Muslim guards.¹³⁶ As an ultimate humiliation, the Ustashe ordered the Serbs from Srebrenica to remove and destroy the monument of Kosta Todorovic. As mentioned earlier, the monument went into 'hiding', only to turn up again after the Serb take-over of Srebrenica in July 1995, when it was remounted in a park in the town's centre.

Among the crimes most shocking to the Serbs in this part of eastern Bosnia were the massacres in the village of Rasica Gaj, near Vlasenica, which occurred after the German army left the town on 21 June 1941. Even today, local Serbs refer to these events as one of the worst Ustashe crimes in the region at the beginning of the war.¹³⁷ The local Ustashe commander, Mutevelic, a carpet salesman who had regularly visited Vlasenica before the war, reigned by terror. Daily, black uniformed Ustashe rounded up prominent local Serbs, transported them to a makeshift prison in Vlasenica and killed them there or executed them in Rasica Gaj. During those massacres, which continued for several weeks, at least seventy Serbs were killed, although other sources list death tolls as high as two hundred.¹³⁸ Historical novelist, Krsmanovic, presents an almost 'epic' description of these massacres in his book, *The blood-stained hands of Islam*. In it, he condenses the massacres into a single event that takes place early one morning. The Ustashe round up all Serbs living in Vlasenica and force them to shout, "Long live Pavelic!" as they are taken to prison. Next, the Ustashe form a column of two hundred Serbs, who, tied to each other, are forced to walk to Rasic's grove, where they are ordered to undress and are then slaughtered with knives and thrown into an abyss. According to this account, only two Serbs escaped the massacre.¹³⁹ He also writes that the 'Turks' of Vlasenica planned these massacres well in advance. Before the start of the war a local Muslim official who joined the Ustashe drew up a list containing the names of over two hundred Serbs who were to be killed.¹⁴⁰ As we have already seen, Krsmanovic's fictionalised account seems to have had a clear impact on the views of local Serbs in eastern Bosnia during the last war. It also strikes the reader, not only with the amount of open and explicit brutality in its descriptions, but also for very different reasons. In July 1995, for instance, Rasica Gaj was one of the

¹³³ See for instance Nikolic, 'Kravica u proslosti', p.22-23.

¹³⁴ See for instance Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, p.226.

¹³⁵ For these events in Drinjača see: Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja* pp.228-229; Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, p.65-66; Nikolic, 'Kravica u proslosti', p.23. According to the latter source, more than a hundred Serbs were killed in Drinjača by 12 August 1941. Ivanisevic claims that the basket full of eyes from Serbs came from Drinjača. This basket was found by Italian war journalist, Curzio Malaparte, at Ante Pavelic's desk during a late-summer visit to Zagreb in 1941, (an episode which he described in his autobiographical war novel *Kaputt*). The Ustashe had sent these as a 'present' to their leader (Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, p.23). See Malaparte, *Kaputt*, pp.221-28.

¹³⁶ Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, pp.229-33, 237-38.

¹³⁷ Interview: Rajko Dukic 14/06/2000. Ivanisevic's book contains several eyewitness accounts of the events in Vlasenica and Rasica Gaj. See Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, pp. 238-246 and 249-255.

¹³⁸ See for instance: Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, p.241-242; Jaksic, 'Activity of the Communist Party', p.382.

¹³⁹ See especially: Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, pp.54-56. The same author writes that the Ustashe killed several dozens of local Jews in a similar way: they cut their throats and threw them into a cave (p.74).

¹⁴⁰ Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, p.16. This is corroborated by another (Partisan) source. See: Jaksic, 'Activity of the Communist Party', p.382.

sites where Muslim captives from the safe area of Srebrenica were executed by Mladic's forces, a choice of location that may have been more than mere coincidence. At least 21 Muslims were killed here.¹⁴¹

Partisans and Chetniks organise the resistance

These Ustashe massacres and the brutality with which they conducted their actions against the Serb population of the NDH shocked even the Germans, who feared that this could provoke armed Serb resistance. Indeed, already in June 1941, Serbs started a rebellion in Hercegovina, which was the first in a long series of uprisings that erupted throughout the NDH as the summer went on. Two forces appeared: the royalist and nationalist Chetniks, headed by the Yugoslav army colonel Draza Mihailovic, and the communist Partisans, led by Josip Broz Tito. Throughout most of 1941, the two movements cooperated, burying their ideological differences and gaining control over most of eastern Bosnia. At the local level, it was very difficult to distinguish the two because they both had the same recruitment base: the Serb peasant masses who felt threatened with extinction. The Partisans, many of whom had fought in the Spanish Civil War before, kept a low ideological profile, presenting their struggle as a war of liberation from fascist occupation. On this 'patriotic' basis, they managed to rally segments of the traditional and apolitical peasant masses to their side, segments that were more inclined to support the nationalist Chetniks.¹⁴² As Banac writes, at this early stage of the war, it was Communist policy to appease Serb nationalism, and not to punish the Chetnik assaults on the Muslim population if the Serb perpetrators showed signs of willingness to join the partisans.¹⁴³ Yet the communists remained determined to put an end to Chetnik attacks on Muslim villages and the massacres of Muslims in eastern Bosnia during 1941. They even created special Partisan units whose exclusive task it was to protect Muslim villages against these Chetnik attacks.¹⁴⁴

It was clear that the political aims and ideological orientations of the Chetniks and Partisans were very different. The Partisans aimed at a common and united struggle of all nations and ethnic groups to liberate the country from fascism, a struggle in which they never lost sight of their plans to take power after the war. The Chetniks' mission, by contrast, was to create an ethnically homogenous Greater Serbia as an answer to very similar Ustashe objectives to engineer an ethnically homogenous Greater Croatia. Inevitably, therefore, the two movements were later to become very fierce opponents.¹⁴⁵ In eastern Bosnia, the Partisans had very little initial support from the Serb peasant population (except in Sekovici which became their main stronghold in the region). Many of them came from elsewhere, particularly from the region of Srem (the southern part of the Pannonian plain), which bordered on eastern Bosnia and had been included in the NDH.¹⁴⁶ The resistance against Ustashe rule developed mainly along the lines of a traditional peasant *ustanak* or rebellion, in a spontaneous and disorganised manner. Entire adult male populations of villages would take up arms, organise themselves into local armed village bands, and begin fighting without any clear purpose beyond making life difficult for the enemy.¹⁴⁷ They were often under the command of prominent local peasant leaders and World War One veterans.

¹⁴¹ International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Transcripts of proceedings for Krstic trial (case IT-98-33), 24 March 2000, p.1295 <<http://www.un.org/icty/transe33/000324ed.htm>>. The executions in Rasica Gaj were first reported by David Rohde in *The Christian Science Monitor*, 2 October 1995.

¹⁴² Goldstein, *Croatia*, p.142.

¹⁴³ Banac, 'Introduction', p.X. Zulfikarpasic writes that Muslims who joined the partisan units (such as Zulfikarpasic himself) received Serb noms de guerre, ostensibly to protect them from Serbs who were still not well educated in socialist dogma (Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniaks*, p.71-72).

¹⁴⁴ See for instance: Novakovic, 'Legendarna Romanija', pp.727-728.

¹⁴⁵ For these political and ideological clefs between Partisans and Chetniks, see in particular: Antonic, *Ustanak u istoènoj i centralnoj Bosni*, pp.417-486. See also Antonic and Peric, *Biraè u Narodnooslobodilaèkoj borbi*.

¹⁴⁶ Galic, *Veze narodnooslobodilaèkog pokreta*.

¹⁴⁷ Karchmar, *Draza Mihailovic*, p.440-41.

According to most Serb narratives, the resistance started on the eve of *Vidovdan*, the anniversary of the Kosovo Battle, when the Ustashe began arresting large numbers of Serbs out of fear that the Serbs would launch an uprising on that particular date. Many Serb peasants left their families, took up their weapons and went off to the hills and forests. One of the main Chetnik figures in the Srebrenica and Vlasenica area was *vojvoda* Acim Babic, a well-to-do landowner and trader from a village near Han Pijesak, who led the revolt in the area between Han Pijesak and the Drina River.¹⁴⁸ According to Krsmanovic, Babic's first speech to his men was about Kosovo:

“On the first day of the uprising, brothers, over one hundred men have gathered here to form the proud èetnik army. May the St. Vitus's day of so long ago and Prince Lazar's curse on those Serbs who did not come to fight in the Battle of Kosovo be ever present in our minds, inspiring us to defend our people and our homes from the blood-thirsty Croats and Turks. They want to wipe the Orthodox Serbian nation from the face of the earth”.¹⁴⁹

In early August 1941, Chetnik forces carried out their first successful attacks on Ustashe positions in eastern Bosnia. Babic took control of Han Pijesak, while Rajko 'Èelonja' Èelonjic (a peasant from a village near Vlasenica) entered Derventa near Milici. There they established their joint Chetnik headquarters, which became one of the main Serb strongholds in eastern Bosnia.¹⁵⁰ In Kravica and surrounding villages, the uprising started on 8 August 1941 with the tolling of the church bell. There the uprising was led by World War One veterans Jovan Nikolic and Pero Djukanovic. Within a few days, they brought most Serb villages under their control, and between 15 and 19 August they also liberated Drinjaèa, Bratunac, and Srebrenica.¹⁵¹ On 5 August 1941, Partisans took control of Sekovici, which was singled out as the most suitable base for their operations in the region. Throughout the war, it remained a Partisan stronghold, even though initially, the Partisans only had the support of the Communist youth.¹⁵²

Even as early on as this stage, Chetniks and Partisans were struggling for control over the uprising. Frequent clashes occurred, for instance, regarding the question of who was to be credited most for certain military successes. One example was the take-over of Vlasenica on 10 August 1941. Both sides claim to have led and carried out the attack, with either very limited or no assistance at all from the other side. Partisan commander, Cvijetin Mijatovic, writes that he took control of the town, while Babic's Chetniks only showed their faces after the job was done.¹⁵³ In Krsmanovic's narrative, by contrast, it was not the Partisans but Babic who organised the attack on Vlasenica soon after he taken control of Han Pijesak. The 'communists' rushed to the scene from Sekovici to join the fighting and to prevent Acim Babic from claiming victory.¹⁵⁴ After Vlasenica was liberated, Partisan and Chetnik commanders continued to quarrel about who was to exert authority over the town, as well as about the

¹⁴⁸ Zekic, 'The uprising in Biraè', p.344-5; Karchmar, *Draza Mihailovic*, p.461; Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, p.252. Babic had been a Serbian army commander during World War One, and had fought at the Salonica front (Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, p.15; Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, p.252). According to Krsmanovic's account, he started to organise the resistance after he escaped from Ustashe captivity in June 1941 (Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, p.44-49).

¹⁴⁹ Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, p.64.

¹⁵⁰ Partisan sources claim that the headquarters in Derventa was initially shared by all insurgent groups, Chetniks as well as Partisans (Mijatovic, 'Memories', p.332-333).

¹⁵¹ Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, p.14 and 52-55; Nikolic, 'Kravica u proslosti', p.23-24; Galic, *Veze narodnooslobodilaèkog pokreta*, p.45; see also Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.143. For Pero Djukanovic, see: Milivojevic, 'Dobrovoljac sa Soluna'.

¹⁵² Jaksic, 'Activity of the Communist Party', p.382; Mijatovic, 'Memories', p.328-9. Sekovici was suitable as the Partisan regional headquarters because of its isolated location in the mountains. From there, it was easy to maintain contacts with other areas both in Bosnia and Serbia (Zekic, 'The uprising in Biraè', p.341).

¹⁵³ Mijatovic, 'Memories', p.337. Chetniks are reported to have been unreliable as partners in battles with the enemy on other occasions as well. See for instance: Zekic, 'The uprising in Biraè', p.344-6.

¹⁵⁴ Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, p.68-70.

distribution of arms and ammunition seized from the enemy.¹⁵⁵ According to Karchmar, the fact that the Chetniks alone governed the town after it was taken probably shows that the capture was mostly their doing.¹⁵⁶

As Partisan leader Mijatovic Chetniks writes, the Partisans had very different ideas regarding who was the enemy. He describes his first encounter with Babic's men, just before the attack on Vlasenica:

“They had beards, black fur caps with some kind of ribbons on them. Right away, they started asking who I was, where I came from, what my name was, was I a Serb and so on. They wanted to know if there were any ‘Turks’ in our group. I answered that there were some Moslems with us and that they were fine comrades and fighters. The men from the ‘Planina’ group stopped talking freely with us and wanted to leave right away. ‘Are we going to make plans for attack?’ I asked them. ‘We don't know anything!’ they answered and prepared to leave. On their way back, they told the messengers who were accompanying them, ‘We don't want any Turks in this’.”¹⁵⁷

The Chetnik-Partisan divide was perhaps the most crucial one, but there were also many internal divisions within the Chetnik forces, which were usually locally based and loosely organised. The label ‘Chetnik’ was widely used by various armed Serb bands throughout Yugoslavia, many of whom had little to do with Mihailovic except by a formal declaration of allegiance to his movement.¹⁵⁸ Mihailovic's forces operated from Ravna Gora, just across the border in Serbia. They were poorly organised, however, and had little contact with Chetnik groups in Bosnia, which often ignored Mihailovic's orders.¹⁵⁹ Mihailovic's Chetnik movement was never anything more than a loosely organised conglomerate of Serb nationalist bands, which usually followed their own course and carried out numerous crimes against Muslim civilians, particularly in eastern Bosnia. It is clear that Mihailovic never dissociated himself from their actions (claiming after the war that he did not know at the time), and that he tried to establish his authority over them. He sent Jezdimir Dangic into eastern Bosnia to bring the Chetnik resistance more under his control. Dangic, a Yugoslav army officer, was born in Bratunac and was also the son of a local Serbian Orthodox priest.¹⁶⁰

Apparently, local Chetnik leaders did not particularly welcome Dangic as their new commander-in-chief.¹⁶¹ On his arrival at the Chetnik headquarters in Derвента, Dangic was informed immediately that the Èlonjic brothers, who led the Srebrenica brigade, had no intention to submit themselves to his command: “Rajko's Srebrenica brigade is independent. With his army, he liberated the entire district of Srebrenica, and he deserves to have the command his own way”.¹⁶² Krsmanovic's description of the first meeting between Dangic and Babic in Han Pijesak also clearly shows that Acim Babic claimed the leadership of the uprising for himself. Nonetheless, Dangic showed him the authorisation he received from Mihailovic to take command over the Chetnik units in eastern Bosnia. Babic seems to have

¹⁵⁵ Zekic, ‘The uprising in Biraè’, p.345-6; Mijatovic, ‘Memories’, p.337.

¹⁵⁶ Karchmar, *Draža Mihailovic*, p.516. Nonetheless, a document in the Tuzla Archive states that a [Partisan] unit from Sekovici (led by Mijatovic) took the northern part of the town at 7:00 PM, while a [Chetnik] unit from Milici captured the eastern part at 8:00 PM. At that point, only the army barracks remained under Ustashe control, which were finally taken by the Partisans (Tuzla Archive, Document 5294).

¹⁵⁷ Mijatovic, ‘Memories’, p.334.

¹⁵⁸ Trew, *Britain, Mihailovic and the Chetniks*, p.8-9; Karchmar, *Draža Mihailovic*, p.444.

¹⁵⁹ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, p.156; Trew, *Britain, Mihailovic and the Chetniks*, p.191-195; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.26.

¹⁶⁰ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, p. 157; Djuric, *Novi prilozi*, p.6-7; Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, pp. 229-33. Major Dangic had been the commander of the Royal Gendarmerie, who had organised King Peter's retreat to Niksic airport at the start of the war. See: Karchmar, *Draža Mihailovic*, p.515; Djuric, *Novi prilozi*, p.5; Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, p.24.

¹⁶¹ See for instance, Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, p.142.

¹⁶² Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, p.87.

reluctantly accepted Dangic as his chief-of-staff, apparently under a condition of some form of shared power.¹⁶³ Even though he was appointed by Mihailovic, Dangic exhibited a large degree of independence in his actions. In November 1941, after the Chetnik attack on Tito's stronghold in Uzice ended in disaster, he completely ignored a desperate plea for assistance from Mihailovic.¹⁶⁴ Dangic developed good contacts with Nedic's government in Serbia. Through Nedic, he tried to persuade the Germans to remove their Ustashe protégés from eastern Bosnia, with a view to ending the Ustashe brutalities against the local Serb population.¹⁶⁵ In Partisan historiography, Dangic is presented as a tough nationalist, who called on the Serbs to take vengeance against the "Turks" and who should be held responsible for the Serb massacres of the Muslim population.¹⁶⁶

Chetnik terror against Muslim villages

"Draza Mihailovic's Chetniks killed about ten thousand Bosniacs in south-eastern Bosnia and Sandzak; they plundered and burnt down thousands of houses; they completely exterminated the Bosnian population in some places and destroyed their settlements; they expelled hundreds of thousands of Bosniacs from their homes, etc. South-eastern Bosnia and Sandzak, especially the river Drina, are the biggest Bosnian cemetery from the Second World War [sic]".

Smail Èekic, *History of genocide against Bosniacs*, p.69.

As the recently published memoirs of Pero Djukanovic, a local Serb leader from Kravica, demonstrate, the situation on the ground was extremely complex, especially during the first year of the war, as well as later. At the start of the war, the divisions between Chetniks and Partisans had still not crystallised. There was also a certain degree of cooperation between moderate Muslims and Serbs vis-à-vis the Ustashe.¹⁶⁷ Even though local Serbs and Muslims belonged to different camps and militia, people in villages were much less afraid of their immediate neighbours, whom they usually knew well, than they were of outsiders.¹⁶⁸ Older people from Srebrenica and Bratunac, who had experienced World War Two, often point out that that war was not as brutal and inhumane as was the recent conflict. Muslims offered assistance and protection to their Serb neighbours in the event of an Ustashe attack, and Serbs offered shelter to Muslims when attacked by Chetnik forces. In Kravica, for instance, Muslims from a neighbouring village intervened to prevent the Ustashe from massacring local Serbs.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the fear resulting from brutal and indiscriminate violence of both Ustashe and Chetnik extremists drove a wedge between moderates on both sides. They were hardly in a position to exert control over these unruly forces and even risked being killed by them if accused of 'collaboration' with the enemy. In the

¹⁶³ Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, p.90. It is not exactly clear what kind of deal was made. Krsmanovic writes that Dangic appointed Babic as his first deputy (p.91). Another source claims that Babic was appointed as head of the so-called national liberation government of eastern Bosnia, leaving command over the armed forces in the hands of Dangic. (Statement by Muharem Djozic, undated; Collection Ivanisevic). See also Jaksic, 'Activity of the Communist Party', p.383; Karchmar, *Draza Mihailovic*, p.464.

¹⁶⁴ Karchmar, *Draza Mihailovic*, p.478; Trew, *Britain, Mihailovic and the Chetniks*, p.76, 210; Djuric, *Novi prilozi*, p.16-17; Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, p.138.

¹⁶⁵ Karchmar, *Draza Mihailovic*, p.467; Trew, *Britain, Mihailovic and the Chetniks*, p.257-8.

¹⁶⁶ Jaksic, 'Activity of the Communist Party', p.385. For Dangic, see also Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p.71; Miletic, 'O saradnji komandanta'.

¹⁶⁷ See, for instance, Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, p.39-50 passim, and 57-58.

¹⁶⁸ Hodzic, *Hronika*, p.10.

¹⁶⁹ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.143.

eyes of some, Chetniks and Ustashe actually cooperated in trying to eliminate the moderate voices in their own camp before assaulting the other side.¹⁷⁰

After the Ustashe had terrorized Serb villages at the beginning of the war, Serb 'Chetnik' bands started to do the same in Muslim villages during autumn 1941. As Karchmar writes, local peasant leaders "never succeeded in establishing effective control over their followers, nor did they, on the whole, make any conspicuous effort in that direction. Worse than that, from their original self-defence against the Ustashe, they soon progressed to attacks on Muslim villages, to the accompaniment of widespread looting, in which some of the commanders, unfortunately, were the bellwethers and principal beneficiaries".¹⁷¹ The groups led by Acim Babic and Rajko 'Ēelonja' Ēelonjic (from Derventa) were particularly notorious in the area around Srebrenica. Their main activity was to roam the countryside and plunder Muslim villages under the pretext of weapon searches. During such attacks, the Muslims inhabitants of such villages were frequently killed.¹⁷² Other Chetnik leaders, such as Pere Djukanovic from Kravica, condemned these activities and did their best to prevent them.¹⁷³

In one such raid in the village of Sebiočina, over thirty Muslims, including women and children, were killed.¹⁷⁴ The Serb take-over of Srebrenica on 18 August 1941 was also carried out with a great deal of violence against the Muslim inhabitants of the town and its surrounding villages. Approximately four hundred Chetniks, some of them armed with guns and others carrying axes and clubs, entered the town. They confiscated all arms and ammunition from soldiers, policemen and other officials, and immediately installed their authority in the town. They plundered Muslim shops, requisitioned food from the population, seized small and large cattle, and forced Muslims to work for them.¹⁷⁵ In Muslim accounts published after the Bosnian war, the Chetnik forces are said to have terrorised the Muslim population for about ten days after taking Srebrenica. As time passed, their actions became more ruthless. While the majority of the Muslim population went into hiding in the forests, Muslim villages were burned to the ground and the Muslims who remained behind were killed. One example mentioned is the village of Abdulici (or Zanjevo) near Fakovici, which was burned to ashes. Almost all Muslim inhabitants were liquidated by the Chetniks.¹⁷⁶ From Serbia, groups of Chetniks crossed the Drina River to participate in the plundering of Muslim villages; the booty was transported over the border into Serbia. Chetniks are also said to have searched Muslim houses for Ustashe hiding in them, some of whom were shot and "sent tumbling down the cliffs into the Drina".¹⁷⁷

Aside from antagonising the Muslim population, Chetnik actions led to growing tensions with the Partisans, who increasingly condemned the brutality of these actions and asked Chetnik commanders, such as Dangic, to stop them. Nevertheless, Partisan-Chetnik cooperation still continued at this stage: at their meeting in Drinjača, on 1 October 1941, Partisan and Chetnik leaders reached a formal agreement and the Chetniks promised to stop attacking the Muslim and Croat population.¹⁷⁸ A unified Partisan-Chetnik operational headquarters was established for eastern Bosnia, and joint civil administration bodies, the so-called People's Liberation Committees (*Narodno-oslobodilački odbori*), were set up in most of the liberated areas (Sekovici, Vlasenica, Srebrenica, Bratunac, Milici, Fakovici, and Skelani).¹⁷⁹ Men who enjoyed wide respect among the population were elected as members of the

¹⁷⁰ See, for instance, Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*.

¹⁷¹ Karchmar, *Draža Mihailovic*, p.462.

¹⁷² Hodzic, *Hronika*, pp.10-16. One of those killed by 'Ēelonja' was Jusuf Verlasevic, Bratunac's mayor at the start of World War Two. His son has claimed that during the first year of the war Ēelonja killed some four hundred Muslims, mostly wealthy people, in the districts of Bratunac and Srebrenica. Interview: Ibro Verlasevic 01/06/1998.

¹⁷³ Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, p.113; Galic, *Vezę narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta*, p.73.

¹⁷⁴ Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, p.113.

¹⁷⁵ Dedijer and Miletic. *Genocid nad Muslimanima*, pp.122-124.

¹⁷⁶ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.55.

¹⁷⁷ Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, p.79.

¹⁷⁸ Djuric, *Novi prilozi*, p.15; Karchmar, *Draža Mihailovic*, p.471; Galic, *Vezę narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta*, p.67.

¹⁷⁹ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, p.157. In October 1941, well-known local Partisans and Chetniks, such as Rodoljub Ēolakovic, Rade Jaksic, and Pero Djukanovic, organised meetings in Srebrenica, Fakovici, and Skelani, to set up local People's

committees at public meetings. The committees played an important role in administration, the coordination of agricultural activities and the distribution of agricultural products among the people and the armed forces.¹⁸⁰ Due to growing Chetnik-Partisan rivalry, however, some of these committees did not survive. The most active committee was the one in the Partisan stronghold, Sekovici. However, in Srebrenica and other places, such as Milici, these committees died a slow death because of Chetnik obstruction.¹⁸¹

The rift between the Chetniks and Partisans deepened in November 1941, when Mihailovic attacked the main Partisan stronghold of Uzice, signalling the beginning of the civil war in Serbia.¹⁸² Although this did not put an immediate end to their cooperation in eastern Bosnia (where the two movements worked more closely together and were also harder to distinguish from one another than in Serbia), relations between Chetniks and Partisans also became increasingly hostile there, which is reflected both in Chetnik, as well as Partisan, historiography. Both sides accused each other of undermining their cooperation, of sabotaging their activities, of plotting against the other and of attempting to infiltrate the other's forces. On 16 November, during a joint meeting in Vlasenica, Chetniks and Partisans were unable to put their mutual disagreements to rest, and formal cooperation was abandoned. The Chetniks established a separate command for eastern Bosnia, which was hesitantly joined by some Chetnik leaders, such as Pero Djukanovic, who was much more in favour of continuing the cooperation.¹⁸³ Unruly bands of armed Chetniks, joined by the Serb population, continued looting Muslim villages and committing atrocities against the Muslim population in revenge for Ustashe atrocities at the beginning of the war.¹⁸⁴ As Karchmar writes:

“Units marching to attack Ustasa strongholds were accompanied by columns of peasants, including women and children, who busily stripped the captured towns of everything portable and threw themselves upon the surrounding Moslem villages like a plague of locusts. The looting was accompanied by small and large massacres of the Moslem population, in which the armed Chetniks competed in inventing barbarous ways to dispatch the hated ‘Turks’. In this, they only modelled themselves on the earlier Ustasa treatment of the Serbs; but their indiscriminate persecution threw even those Moslems who were still politically uncommitted into the arms of the Ustase.”¹⁸⁵

The leader of the Chetnik forces in eastern Bosnia, Dancic, complained repeatedly about the cowardice and lack of discipline among peasants. He violently denounced the looting, saying that Bosnian Serb peasants “had become the most accomplished robbers in the world, so that he was ashamed to call himself a Serb”.¹⁸⁶ But he could do nothing to stop it. Chetnik forces also continued to carry out such

Liberation Committees (see Milivojevic, ‘Bio nam je drag gost’; for Srebrenica, see Document 5289, Tuzla Archive 5289). By mid September, the Communists had already established a party cell in Srebrenica (Tuzla Archive, Document 5288).

¹⁸⁰ Savic, ‘First people’s liberation committees’, p.398. According to Partisan sources, there were some 6,000 Partisan and 4,000 Chetnik forces in eastern Bosnia at the time. See: Eolakovic, *Zapisi*, p.268; Zekic, ‘The uprising in Birač’, p.350.

¹⁸¹ Savic, ‘First people’s liberation committees’, p.400.

¹⁸² For the start of the civil war in Serbia, see: Petranovic, *Srbija u drugom svetskom ratu*, pp.262-289.

¹⁸³ Karchmar, *Dražica Mihailovic*, p.479-80; Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, p.157; Miletic ‘O saradnji komandanta’, p.136; Djuric, *Novi prilozi*, p...; Galic, *Veze narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta*, p.82-83.

¹⁸⁴ This occurred especially in the zone under Italian command (for instance in Visegrad, Gorazde, Foča), where the Chetniks started to massacre the Muslim population after they took power under the auspices of the Italians (Galic, *Veze narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta*, p.86). In Foča, thousands of Muslims were killed during World War Two, even though only a few Muslims in the Foča district joined the Ustashe (Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniaks*, p.57-62). For the most detailed treatment of Chetnik massacres against the Muslim population during World War Two, see Dedijer and Miletic, *Genocid nad Muslimanima*. For Chetnik massacres of Muslim civilians in the Visegrad and Mount Zvijezda area, see Kljun, *Visegrad*, p.67-233; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.24-35.

¹⁸⁵ Karchmar, *Dražica Mihailovic*, p.473.

¹⁸⁶ Karchmar, *Dražica Mihailovic*, p.517.

actions in the Srebrenica area. In December 1941, Chetniks from Kravica, for instance, carried out a huge massacre in Sopotnik (near Drinjača), in which eighty-six Muslims were either shot dead or beaten and knifed to death.¹⁸⁷ In the beginning of January 1942, Rajko Ćelonjić's forces raided Muslim villages and plundered Muslim houses and shops in and around Srebrenica. As a result, eleven Muslims were killed in the town and an additional number in the surrounding villages. The Muslim population of Srebrenica fled into the forests and stayed there until the German army entered the town.¹⁸⁸ According to one Partisan source, the Partisans tried to prevent these Chetnik actions. Their efforts, however were futile as "[m]any Serbs regarded the Croats and Muslims all as Ustashe and threatened to kill them, and thus to avenge the victims of Rasica Gaj and other massacres".¹⁸⁹

Due to growing dissatisfaction with the Ustashe, whose actions had provoked Chetnik reprisals against the civilian population, increasing numbers of Muslims joined the much more disciplined Partisans. The Chetniks, in turn, perceived this as a form of Ustashe-Partisan cooperation.¹⁹⁰ The Chetniks tried to draw the Germans, and later the Italians, to their side in their fight against the Ustashe and the Partisans. Chetnik collaboration with the occupying forces in Bosnia was motivated primarily by the continuous pressure of the Nedic government on the Germans to incorporate the seventeen eastern Bosnian districts into Serbia. As a result, Dangić, commander of Chetnik forces in eastern Bosnia, aligned himself with the Germans and Nedić. The inevitable breakdown of relations between Partisans and Chetniks found its apotheosis in the Chetnik offensive against the Partisan stronghold of Sekovići.¹⁹¹ At this stage, many Serb peasants who had initially been organised in Partisan units went over to the Chetniks. This switch was prompted by rumours that the implementation of the 'seventeen districts' plan was imminent and that continued resistance to the Germans would jeopardise it. Only Serbs with a high degree of political consciousness remained with the Partisans. The number of Partisans in eastern Bosnia dropped from 6,000 to 1,000. The only area that remained in Partisan hands was a small pocket around Sekovići.¹⁹² In March 1942, the Partisans tried to re-gain some of their influence by creating the Volunteer Army of Yugoslavia (*Dobrovoljačka vojska Jugoslavije*), intended mainly to attract Chetniks and to draw them back under Partisan command. These attempts failed, however.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁷ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.143; Masić, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.12; Antonić, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovića*, p.146-47. After the war, Tito's secret police arrested some of the perpetrators, who, in the meantime, had become Partisans. See Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.144.

¹⁸⁸ Dedijer and Miletić. *Genocid nad Muslimanima*, pp.122-124; Hodžić, *Hronika*, p.17-20.

¹⁸⁹ Jakić, 'Activity of the Communist Party', p.382.

¹⁹⁰ See: Trew, *Britain, Mihailović and the Chetniks*, p.257-8; Milazzo, ..., pp.62-73; Karchmar, *Dražica Mihailović*, pp.457-502; Miletić, 'O saradnji komandanta'; Tomasević, *The Chetniks*, pp.159-161 and 206-209. In Krsmanović's account, Partisan-Ustashe cooperation is exemplified by the defeat of Rajko Ćelonjić's Srebrenica brigade in the attack on Zljebovi on 2 March 1942. He writes that Ćelonjić was betrayed by the Partisans, who enabled the Ustashe to attack the Chetniks from the rear. The forces of Ćelonjić were crushed, leaving 128 dead and 29 wounded. Krsmanović writes that this day was a black day for Ćelonjić's Chetnik army (Krsmanović, *The blood-stained hands*, pp.129-131).

¹⁹¹ Ostojić, 'Reflections and memories', p.405.

¹⁹² Savić, 'First people's liberation committees'; Karchmar, *Dražica Mihailović*, p.476-77, Galić, *Veze narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta*, p.87.

¹⁹³ Galić, *Veze narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta*, p.95-97.

Ustashe extermination campaigns against the Serb population



Ustashe iconography depicting the Drina as the unconquerable border of the Independent State of Croatia
(<http://cro.ustasa.net/images/drina2.jpg>)

During the first few months of 1942, the Germans attempted to pacify eastern Bosnia, which had become one of the main refuges and strongholds of the insurgent forces. Chetnik-Partisan rivalry and continued Serb attacks on Muslim villages in this region had also produced an extremely volatile situation, which was detrimental to German interests in the region as a whole. In mid January, German and Croat forces launched an offensive, (also termed the ‘Second Enemy Offensive’ in Partisan historiography), which aimed at destroying various insurgent forces in eastern Bosnia. Dangić ordered his units not to resist German troops. He even offered the Germans his cooperation in combating the Partisans. But the Germans were also intent on neutralising the Chetnik forces, which they deemed to be unreliable because of their previous cooperation with the Partisans and uncontrollable because of their continuous attacks on the Muslim population. Thanks to Dangić’s declarations of loyalty, however, the German forces were instructed not to kill the Chetniks, but to treat them as prisoners of war. Some Chetnik forces took refuge in the mountains, while others surrendered to the Germans without offering any resistance at all.¹⁹⁴ The Germans disarmed and arrested several hundred Serbs from the region of Kravica, Bratunac and Srebrenica, who were transported to a camp in Sabac. From there, they were sent to work camps in Germany.¹⁹⁵ Others fled to Serbia, including Dangić, who continued trying to convince the Germans to evict the Ustashe from eastern Bosnia in order to end the assaults on the Serb population. He proposed that the Germans place the area under his (i.e. Dangić’s) administration, and also offered to put his forces under German command to fight the Partisans. Although the German command in Belgrade entered into negotiations with Dangić, these proposals were unacceptable to the NDH and senior German officials, who favoured preserving the integrity of the NDH up to the Drina.¹⁹⁶

During the offensive, the Ustashe killed a number of Serbs in Srebrenica. When the Germans entered the town, local Muslims urged them to stay in order to protect them against possible Chetnik

¹⁹⁴ Djurić, *Novi prilozi*, p.38-40; Karchmar, *Dražica Mihailović*, p.488-489.

¹⁹⁵ Nikolić, ‘Kravica u prošlosti’, p.25; Antonić, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovića*, p.16-17.

¹⁹⁶ Karchmar, *Dražica Mihailović*, pp.475-76, 492-493; Tomasević, *The Chetniks*, pp.160, 206-209; Djurić, *Novi prilozi*, pp.44-54; Miletić, ‘O saradnji komandanta’; Redžić, *Muslimansko Autonomastvo*, pp.41-46. After negotiations with the Germans failed, Dangić turned to the Italians for help, which was one reason why the Germans arrested him in April 1942. The Italians hoped to occupy eastern Bosnia through Dangić and to include it in their zone of interest at the expense of the Germans. The Germans deported Dangić to Germany. See Tomasević, *The Chetniks*, p. 208; Djurić, *Novi prilozi*, p.55-56; Karchmar, *Dražica Mihailović*, p.501. After the war, he received the death sentence from a Partisan military court in Sarajevo. He was accused of cooperating with the Germans, Mihailović and Nedić, of fighting the Partisans and of bearing responsibility for the massacres against the Muslim population in eastern Bosnia (Djurić, *Novi prilozi*, p. 69-74; Masić, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.11).

reprisals. The Germans refused, claiming that the Croatian army would soon replace them, and left again after four days. As the Croat forces did not show up, many Muslim inhabitants followed the German forces to Zvornik. After they left, the Chetniks took control of the town again and ousted the Ustashe who had remained behind.¹⁹⁷ The same happened in several other towns in eastern Bosnia, such as Vlasenica and Bratunac.¹⁹⁸ This clearly shows that although the Germans had weakened the Partisan and Chetnik presence in eastern Bosnia, they did not succeed in eliminating them. Most of the insurgents took refuge in the mountains, or went to Serbia for the duration of the offensive, only to return and reorganise themselves afterwards. Thus, the Germans' objectives remained largely unfulfilled. Partisan elite forces were soon to resume their attacks on the Chetniks in eastern Bosnia, which led to serious defeats of the latter.¹⁹⁹ Vlasenica, Bratunac and Drinjača were taken by the Partisans. On 18 March, the Partisans entered Srebrenica. They soon left again for Sekovici, after which the Chetniks burned Muslim villages and carried out massacres against the Muslim population, especially in the Derventa region.²⁰⁰

All the same, the Chetniks were seriously weakened by the Partisan attacks. As a result, they were helpless against the subsequent Ustashe and German offensives that took place in April 1942 (called 'Operation Trio' or 'Third Enemy Offensive' in Partisan historiography). Ahead of the German army, were the forces of Jure Francetic's *Crna Legija* or Black Legion, which was an Ustashe combat unit similar to the German SS and notorious for its brutality. They first took Vlasenica, and then advanced in the direction of the Drina valley, plundering one Serb village after another. On their way to Bratunac and Srebrenica, villages were set afire, and several dozen Serbs were killed.²⁰¹ Fearing possible Serb reprisals, Muslims from the Suceska area took refuge in Srebrenica, where some of them joined the Ustashe for protection.²⁰² Some Serb settlements, such as those in Podravanje, Brezani, and Kravica, were largely destroyed, and all Serbs found there by the Ustashe were killed.²⁰³ Thousands of Serbs were driven to the Drina. There, in the few days before and after 9 April 1942, they were either shot and slaughtered en masse by the Ustashe, or drowned while trying to swim across the Drina to Serbia. There were only a few boats and rafts, and those who had money to pay to the rafters made it across first to the Serbian side of the river. These massacres, carried out near Polom, Tegare, Fakovici, and Skelani, among other places, are deeply etched in collective memory. They have also been commemorated and described in recent Serb publications, such as in Ivanisevic's book and in Pero Djukanovic's memoirs.²⁰⁴ Krsmanovic sketches the Ustashe atrocities, such as rapes and throat cutting, in brutal detail, using almost 'epic' strokes that do not fail to have an impact on the reader:

“Like rounding up cattle, the seven thousand Ustasha of Jure Francetic formed a huge semicircle and drove towards the Drina ten thousand Serbs, refugees from Eastern Bosnia. The columns of refugees, along with animal-drawn carts, cattle, horses, and sheep, pressed on to Milosevici and Stari Brod along the left bank of the Drina, where the boats plied all day and night, ferrying the Serbs to

¹⁹⁷ This passage is based on unpublished local documents from World War Two in the Ivanisevic's collection (Statement by Muharem Djozic, undated; another document entitled *Srež Srebrenica*, undated) and on similar documents of the same collection published in Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, pp.229-233. See also a document on Srebrenica published in Dedijer and Miletic, *Genocid nad Muslimanima*, pp.122-124.

¹⁹⁸ Karchmar, *Draža Mihailovic*, p.490.

¹⁹⁹ Djuric, *Novi prilozi*, p.58-59; Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, p.18.

²⁰⁰ Hodzic, *Hronika*, p.20-27.

²⁰¹ Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, p.18-19. Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniaks*, p.83. Ostojic, 'Reflections and memories', p. 404. Nikolic, 'Kravica u prošlosti', p.25-26; Galic, *Veze narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta*, p.105-106.

²⁰² Hodzic, *Hronika*, p.28-29.

²⁰³ In and around Srebrenica, these crimes were committed mainly by the Black Legion's commander, Arpadzic, who was a tax inspector in Srebrenica before the war. Ivanisevic claims that some 270 people died in Podravanje during World War Two (Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, p.301)

²⁰⁴ Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, p.22. Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, p.19,175-80,196-97. See also Lazarevic, 'Napad partizana na Srebrenicu'. Conversations Bozo Jovanovic 20/06/1998, Dobrisav Koëevic 14/11/1998.

the right bank of the Drina. People jostled one another in panic as they moved ever closer to the banks of the swollen, murky Drina river. The Ustashe were catching up with the stragglers and butchering them, coming closer and closer to the Drina. Mounted on his white horse, Jure Francetic observed the position of Milosevici and the vast multitude of people who were being killed by his ustashe and thrown into the Drina. The throng was being pushed onto the very banks of the river, near the ferry. Thousands of Ustashe swarmed over the crowd and, brandishing their knives, wrested the children out of the arms of their mothers and threw them into the river, slit the throats of the elderly, and took all the jewellery and gold they could find from the women and children before killing them and casting their bodies into the fast-running river, swollen from the recent rains and melting snow”.²⁰⁵

When the Germans arrived at the scene, steering course down the Drina in rubber boats, they were appalled by the atrocities committed by the Ustasha. As Krsmanovic writes, they went over to Francetic, and told him to stop it.²⁰⁶ At the end of this massacre, several thousand Serb corpses were left on the banks of the river. Some of the women and children who had survived the Ustashe atrocities returned to their destroyed villages under German protection.

The terror of the Ustashe, which had now reached its climax, continued during the summer, with incessant attacks on Serb villages and killing of Serbs. In the village of Zedanjsko, for example, almost everyone in the entire extended Spasojevic family (about forty people) were murdered in June 1942.²⁰⁷ Three thousand Serbs from the district of Srebrenica were arrested and interned in barracks near the hospital of Srebrenica. Pits were already prepared to bury the corpses. However, thanks to local Muslims, who intervened with the Ustashe authorities, all of these people's lives were spared.²⁰⁸ A high-ranking NDH police officer issued a critical report about the situation in Srebrenica in October 1942. In it, the local Ustashe leader, Kurelac, was blamed for indiscriminate arrests and internment of Serbs from the region. The report also noted that, while women and older people were released, the men were forced into hard labour with no compensation. Their properties were plundered, in spite of regulations prohibiting such acts. This same officer asked Kurelac to release the men in order to quiet down the situation and give the population a basic sense of order and security. Among the interesting passages in the report are those referring to the three to four hundred Serb refugees who returned to their homes after the summer. Although the police officially agreed that they should be expelled on the shortest route to Serbia, he felt this was not feasible because only the Ustashe were in a position to carry this out. They were more likely to kill these refugees than to expel them, which, as the police officer wrote, would certainly have negative repercussions for 'our people'. The report is critical about the lack of discipline among the Ustashe, and proposes the establishment of units of local volunteers, who are much more familiar with the region and 'know how to fight the outlaws'.²⁰⁹ Indeed, towards the end of 1942, organised local village militia, or the so-called 'legion' forces, were becoming more and more common in eastern Bosnia. They were based on the idea of local Muslim self-defence, offering a

²⁰⁵ Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, p. 157.

²⁰⁶ Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, p.161; see also Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.33; Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, pp. 229-233.

²⁰⁷ Hodzic, *Hronika*, p.30-34. One of the hotspots was the strategically important village of Jezestica, which was attacked three times during 1942 by Muslims from the nearby village of Eizmici. The first attack occurred in May (on the Serb holiday of Spasovdan), followed by an attack on 12 July (on Petrovdan), and finally one on 21 September (on Mala Gospojina). During these attacks 144 Serbs were killed. See Nikolic, 'Kravica u proslosti', p.26; Miljanovic, *Krvavi Bozic sela Kravice*, p.55; Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, pp.193-94; Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, pp.292-294.

²⁰⁸ Lazarevic, 'Napad partizana na Srebrenicu'. Interview: Boban Vasic 15/07/1998.

²⁰⁹ The document was published in: Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, 340-342. A copy of the original document was obtained from Milivoje Ivanisevic.

much more effective protection than the Ustashe rule of indiscriminate terror. Muslims lived under constant fear that the Ustashe assaults on the Serb population would provoke Chetnik reprisals.

This NDH police report also criticises the Ustashe for requisitioning food and other possessions, even from Muslims, without offering compensation. According to the report, this led to bitterness among Muslim peasants, who threatened to burn the wheat and 'to look for protection on the other [Partisan] side'. Muslims were also forced to harvest the fields in Serb villages, which they did reluctantly out of fear of possible Serb attacks. The report stated that the local Ustashe needed to stop this type of exploitative behaviour, and proposed raising the matter with the higher Ustashe command. On the whole, however, the security situation was considered satisfactory since there were no large groups of active insurgents in the area. Nonetheless, the number of Ustashe (some 1,200 to 1,300 at the time) and police officers was considered insufficient should a serious Partisan or Chetnik attack occur.²¹⁰

During spring 1943, fierce fighting broke out between Partisan units and the occupying and quisling forces. This led, among other things, to a huge Ustashe massacre of Serbs in the villages of Fakovici and Bjelovac during April.²¹¹ The Partisans succeeded nonetheless in destroying many Ustashe strongholds all over eastern Bosnia, and the entire defence system, which the Ustashe had set up in the spring of 1942, was crushed. The Partisans took control of certain areas, and Muslims joined the Partisan forces in increasing numbers.²¹² In early June, the Ustashe began a counter-offensive and managed to oust the Partisans from Sekovici, the most important centre of Partisan resistance.²¹³ The Partisans then simulated an attack on Vlasenica, in order to trick the Ustashe and carry out a surprise attack on Srebrenica, where they expected to find a large booty, especially of ammunition. The objective was not to take permanent control of Srebrenica.²¹⁴ Although these Partisan actions were successful, they also provoked a brutal reaction from the Ustashe. That led to the largest single massacre in Srebrenica during the war, in which many Serbs and several Muslims were killed. The entire Serb population of the village of Zalazje, a few kilometres from Srebrenica, were also butchered, which is still remembered as one of the worst crimes committed during the war. Recently, the 1943 massacre in Zalazje acquired enormous symbolic significance for Serbs of this region when Naser Oric's forces killed a large number of Serbs (about forty people) in the very same village during an attack in July 1992. Serbs view the occurrence of massacres against them on the very same sites of previous massacres as history repeating itself. From their perspective, it is as if nothing has really changed.²¹⁵

The Partisan surprise attack on Srebrenica started on 11 June 1943.²¹⁶ Many Ustashe, including, local commander, Kurelac, were fighting near Sekovici. When Kurelac received news of the pending attack, he returned immediately and arrived in Bratunac at the end of the day, where the fighting had already raged for several hours. Without delay, he sent auxiliary forces to Srebrenica, but only one Ustashe unit managed to get through. The fighting soon shifted to the centre of town, where the Ustashe occupied the main buildings, including the Orthodox church. The Partisans took these buildings the next day, while the Ustashe retreated in the direction of Bratunac. They were ambushed near the Srebrenica hospital, where many of them were shot by the Partisans. One of them was the younger brother of Kurelac, the Ustashe district commander of Srebrenica. He was still a boy at the time. A few hundred Partisans then plundered shops, took medical equipment and medicines from the hospital, and set fire to the district office and police station. In addition, they took considerable

²¹⁰ Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, pp.340-342. Hodzic, *Hronika*, p.34.

²¹¹ Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, pp.22-23.

²¹² Ostojic, 'Reflections and memories', pp.406-407.

²¹³ Galic, *Veze narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta*, p.208.

²¹⁴ Lazarevic 'Napad partizana na Srebrenicu'.

²¹⁵ Interviews and conversations, Momčilo Cvjetinovic, 10/06/1998, 11/06/1998, 14-15/09/1999; Luka Bogdanovic 15/09/1999; Mile Stanojevic 15-16/09/1999.

²¹⁶ Lazarevic, 'Napad partizana na Srebrenicu'; Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, pp.234-237; statement by Ivan Pavlovic about situation in Srebrenica, Tuzla, 16 June 1943 (collection Ivanisevic).

amounts of arms and ammunition, some 800,000 cigarettes, two wagons full of flour, substantial amounts of sugar, food and groceries found in shops. Because of the large amounts of booty, the Partisans were unable to transport everything out of Srebrenica; some of the booty was given to the local population.

During the night of 13 June 1943, the Partisans withdrew from Srebrenica. At this stage, local Muslims panicked when rumours spread that the Chetniks would enter the town soon after the Partisan retreat. However, it was the Ustashe, on their way from Bratunac, who reappeared on the scene the very same day. Wishing to avenge his brother's death, Kurelac ordered his troops to kill every Serb that they came across. One of his units passed through the village of Zalazje, where the Serb inhabitants were totally unprepared for the massacre that would follow. One platoon, consisting of some local Muslims, went into the village, while another positioned itself on the surrounding hills in order to prevent the inhabitants from escaping. Jusuf Djozic, the Ustashe commander of Srebrenica, told the Serbs to stay in their houses and not to worry. After the advance party left and continued for Srebrenica, thirty-two Ustashe entered the village, going from house to house and killing all inhabitants. Only a few people survived, hiding silently under the pile of dead bodies of their relatives, until the Ustashe had left. Those who tried to flee were killed. This massacre took the lives of ninety-six inhabitants of Zalazje (including some forty children). Some families, such as the Rakic-s, were almost completely exterminated.²¹⁷

The massacres continued in Srebrenica, during which some local Muslims were also murdered. The first victims in town were two Muslim nurses, who were killed near the hospital. The Muslim inhabitants of Srebrenica were shocked. Some local notables found the courage to approach the Ustashe in an attempt to stop them, but they showed no sign of remorse. They went on to kill local Serbs, some of whom had been waiting quietly outside on the street, in the naive hope that their lives would be spared in that way. One Jewish family was butchered with axes. The Ustashe also murdered local judge, Muhamed Aganovic (who had had the courage to approach the Ustashe after they murdered the two Muslim nurses), together with his wife and three children. Another local Muslim, Dzemal Pliska, a postman, was killed because he tried to protect some local Serbs.²¹⁸ Several Serb women survived thanks to Muslim families who provided them with shelter and Muslim clothes. But all other Serbs present in Srebrenica on that day were killed. The Ustashe ordered local people to dig a hole near the former Austrian army barracks to bury the dead. The same day, another group of Serb captives from Brezani were executed and buried in the same mass grave. It is estimated that these events in Srebrenica and Zalazje left some 200-250 people dead.²¹⁹

The massacre stirred a great deal of commotion, provoking widespread disgust with the Ustashe reign of terror in eastern Bosnia. Even several Ustashe officials in Srebrenica stepped down from their posts and left the movement out of protest. The Croatian army started an investigation into the massacre, and tried to arrest and convict the Ustashe perpetrators in order to quieten the situation. The case was dropped, however, in September 1943. The move was justified by the argument that the Ustashe had acted in rage because of the deaths of their comrades. It was also said that local Muslims had sympathised with the Partisans, disclosing local Ustashe to them. Judge Aganovic was also said to be a Partisan sympathiser. In the meantime, a delegation of Muslims from Srebrenica went to Tuzla to

²¹⁷ Interviews: Ljubo Rakic 09/06/98, Momèilo Cvjetinovic 10/06/1998, Ilija Miladinovic 10/06/1998, Boban Vasic 15/07/1998.

²¹⁸ Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, pp.252-253; Tuzla Archive, Document 5291. Interview: Boban Vasic 15/07/1998.

²¹⁹ The number of victims in Srebrenica was at least seventy-eight. One week after the massacre, on 20 June 1943, seventy-eight bodies were exhumed. Most of these victims had been shot or knifed to death (Milivojevic, 'Srebrenica u junu 1943. godine'). A document in the Tuzla Archive presents the following figures: 95 victims in Zalazje, 106 victims in Srebrenica, and another 22 who were captured in Brezani, and later killed in Srebrenica (Tuzla Archive, Document 5291). One informant claims that there were between 120 to 130 victims in the town of Srebrenica, 27 of whom were members of his own family. Interview: Boban Vasic, 15/07/1998. Pero Djukanovic mentions 307 dead (Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, p.196).

demand protection against Chetnik reprisals, or resettlement of the entire Muslim population of Srebrenica if protection could not be provided.

At this stage of the war, however, the Chetnik forces were in serious decline. The Partisans, by contrast, had managed to strengthen their positions and increase their influence among both Serb and Muslim peasant populations. They gained control over most of eastern Bosnia, and on 25-26 June, they launched new attacks on Srebrenica, Bratunac, and Vlasenica, driving out all remaining Ustashe and Croatian gendarmes. The Muslim population of the Srebrenica district, still fearing possible Serb reprisals, fled to Zvornik.²²⁰ On their retreat to the north, the Ustashe set Serb villages alight, killing at least one hundred Serbs in Kravica in early July. Approximately half of them burned to death hiding in houses.²²¹ The Ustashe tried to halt the Partisan advance at Drinjača, but failed. On 5 July 1943, the Partisans took Zvornik, the most important Ustashe stronghold in eastern Bosnia. This was a terrible defeat for the Ustashe, and they lost between four and five hundred people. Because of the Partisan successes, a German SS division, Ustashe forces, and Croatian army forces started a counterattack in an attempt to destroy the Partisan forces. They managed to recover some of the lost territories, but only Zvornik was retaken permanently.²²²

At this point, the tide of the war was clearly changing in favour of the Partisans. On 9 September 1943, Italy surrendered to the Allies, and Germany was losing terrain. In Yugoslavia, the Allies shifted support to Tito's Partisans. They formed a much more effective and disciplined force than Mihailovic's Chetniks, who continued to commit huge atrocities against the Muslim population, including in the Visegrad area.²²³ In addition, after the Italian surrender, the Partisans acquired huge amounts of weapons, food, and equipment from various disarmed Italian units. This was one of the main factors contributing to the shift in the balance of power.²²⁴ The Partisans were superior in weaponry and in manpower. Moreover, increasing numbers of Chetniks began joining their ranks, especially after Britain ended cooperation with Mihailovic's Chetnik resistance. On 2 October 1943, the Partisans achieved one of their largest military successes in eastern Bosnia with the liberation of the strategically important town of Tuzla, the first major town in the region.²²⁵ On 9 October 1943, the Srebrenica Partisan Detachment was created, incorporating Pero Djukanovic's (Chetnik) forces from Kravica and a Partisan unit from Fakovici, which had been established some time before.²²⁶ They set up the National Liberation Committee for Kravica, of which Jovan Nikolic, the pre-war mayor of Kravica, became the president.²²⁷

From December 1943 until the end of the war in May 1945, eastern Bosnia was a constant battlefield between Partisan and German and Ustashe forces. Srebrenica changed hands several times during this period. In December 1943, German SS forces (the 13th 'Handzar' and 7th 'Prince Eugen' SS divisions) began operation *Kugelblitz*, in an attempt to destroy the Partisans in the regions of Rogatica, Srebrenica, and Vlasenica. That operation ended on 16 December without much success, leaving the Birač region and Srebrenica still in Partisan hands.²²⁸ Nevertheless, the 13th 'Handzar' SS Division

²²⁰ Hodzic, *Hronika*, pp.43-44. During World War Two, the Muslim population of Srebrenica fled three times en masse—in large convoys or columns of people, animals and animal-drawn vehicles—to Zvornik. On their way, they usually suffered huge losses due to enemy attacks. Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, p.XI.

²²¹ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.144; Nikolic, 'Kravica u prošlosti', p.27.

²²² Lazarevic, 'Napad partizana na Srebrenicu'.

²²³ Kljun, *Visegrad*, pp.102-106; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp.34-35; Ćekić, *Historija genocida*, p.68.

²²⁴ Goldstein, *Croatia*, p.149.

²²⁵ Galic, *Veze narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta*, p.233.

²²⁶ Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, p.24; Hodzic and Milivojevic, 'Značajna vojna i politička uloga'; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.144. From Krsmanovic's point of view, Djukanovic betrayed the Chetnik army by crossing over to the Partisans (Krsmanovic, *The blood-stained hands*, p.207). The well-known post-war Bosnian writer, Mesa Selimovic, was appointed as political commissar of the Srebrenica Partisan Detachment (Hodzic and Milivojevic, 'Značajna vojna i politička uloga'). See also Selimovic's memoirs, *Sjecanja*, pp.126-32.

²²⁷ Nikolic, 'Kravica u prošlosti', p.26.

²²⁸ Galic, *Veze narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta*, p.238.

became notorious for the brutality of its actions in eastern Bosnia during 1943 and 1944. It consisted of Bosnian Muslim volunteers who were trained in France before they were sent off to Bosnia in late 1943. The fact that the Germans created this Muslim SS division reflected growing German influence in the NDH. The Germans tried to establish closer ties with the Bosnian Muslim elite, who wanted autonomy for Bosnia within the Third Reich at the expense of the NDH.²²⁹ The Handzar SS division acted as an occupying force, carrying out punitive expeditions against the Serb population and taking over civil administration from the NDH. During spring 1944, they organised frequent attacks on Partisan territory in eastern Bosnian. They did this together with the 'Prince Eugen' SS division, and other Ustashe and German units, as well as Chetnik forces from Serbia. All of them were joining forces in an attempt to eliminate the Partisans. The brutality of their actions, particularly against the Serb population, caused general dismay and fear among the Muslims in eastern Bosnia, many of whom either joined the local Muslim village militia or the Partisans.²³⁰

In May 1944, Ustashe forces took Srebrenica once again and began mobilising the Muslim population. The Partisans retreated towards the Kraljeva Gora mountain range near Han Pijesak.²³¹ Until the end of the war, Srebrenica remained firmly in Ustashe hands, in spite of frequent Partisan attacks on Ustashe positions west of Srebrenica (such as in Viogor, Zedanjsko, and Suceška). Many Muslim villages were controlled by local Muslim village militia, the so-called 'legion' forces or 'Green cadres'. These militia forces often cooperated with the Ustashe and carried out attacks on Partisan and Chetnik units that frequently roamed the area. The region around Srebrenica became a refuge for Ustashe and other Muslim legion elements that had fled from areas that had come under Partisan control.²³² Although neighbouring areas were in Partisan hands, Partisan attempts to retake Srebrenica remained largely unsuccessful. However, intermittent fighting did lead to continuous shifts in control over certain localities.²³³ Srebrenica was liberated on 11 March 1945, five months after Bratunac (and Belgrade) were liberated.²³⁴ It took several months to eliminate the last remnants of the 'enemy' forces. Local Chetniks and Ustashe and Muslim militia leaders were still hiding in the mountains, for instance, in villages near Bratunac and Skelani, where they were arrested by Tito's secret police in the months and years that followed.²³⁵

²²⁹ In March 1943, the Germans put up recruitment posters for the 'Handzar' division in villages around Srebrenica, including in Suceška. Muslims who joined the 'Handzar' division were promised a bonus of 3,000 kuna and large plots of land after the war. Several local Muslims joined the Handzar division (Hodžić, *Hronika*, p.39). See also Redžić, *Muslimansko Autonomastvo*, p.81; Galic, *Veze narodno-oslobodilačkog pokreta*, p.202. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin el-Huseini, who was an important Muslim ally of Nazi Germany, played a crucial role in establishing the Bosnian Muslim Handzar division (see Lebl, *Jerusalimski muftija*, pp.89-96).

²³⁰ Redžić, *Muslimansko Autonomastvo*, p.172, 184.

²³¹ Hodžić, *Hronika*, pp.68-70.

²³² Hodžić, *Hronika*, pp.46-81 passim. Well-known local Muslim 'Ustashe' militia leaders included Muradif Hreljić (who was based in the village of Bostahovina near Suceška), Jusuf Džović (who lived in Srebrenica), and Omer Mustafić and Kadrija Softić (both active in the region of Osat). The main organiser of these village militia was Meho Arapđić from Zvornik (Hodžić, *Hronika*, p. 46-48,49,77). Mustafić and Softić received weapons from the Germans, and had about eight hundred men under their command. Softić worked for the Gestapo. Both were from Dobrak near Skelani, which acquired a reputation for being a Ustashe stronghold. Interview: Ibisević 24/05/1998. Ibisević writes that after the war, local Muslims regarded Mustafić and Kadrić as their heroes, while Serbs saw them as war criminals (*Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, pp.4-5). See also Antonić, *Zapisi Pere Djukanović*, p.196.

²³³ Hodžić, *Hronika*, p.70.

²³⁴ Nada Ostojić, 'Kako je Srebrenica oslobođena'.

²³⁵ See, for instance, Kršmanović, *The blood-stained hands*, p.330; Ibisević, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, pp.4-5. Interview: Boban Vasić 15/07/1998. Omer Mustafić was caught by the secret police (OZNA) in January 1946. He shot himself as the police discovered his hideout. As Ibisević writes, his body was brought to Skelani, where Serbs danced around his deformed corpse. Kadrija Softić tried to escape with his unit to Germany, but failed. He was last seen at the Slovene-Austrian border in May 1945. See Ibisević, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, pp.4-5; Hodžić, *Hronika*, p.81. Well-known Chetnik leader, Rajko Ećlonjić, from Derвента near Milici, managed to elude the secret police until 1947, when he was killed with other members of his group (Hodžić, *Hronika*, pp.9,83).

Chapter 4

Under Communist Rule



Part of a World War Two monument in Zalazje, commemorating the massacre that occurred there in June 1943, listing the names of Serb victims.

Srebrenica in Tito's time

After the war, monuments for 'the victims of Fascism' were the only clear reminders of a brutal civil war, in which Muslims and Serbs, Ustashe, Chetniks and Partisans had fought each another. These monuments were erected throughout Tito's period, and even after his death. In Srebrenica, a huge white marble monument was built in the 1960s, on the slope of a hill near the centre of the town. The monument consisted of a relief representing the terror and killing of civilians and Partisans by Fascist forces. Apart from this monument, two plaques were placed in the Serbian Orthodox church, commemorating the victims of the massacre committed by the Ustashe in the town of Srebrenica on 14 June 1943. Other monuments were erected in Serb villages, such as Fakovici, Kravica, Jezestica, Zalazje, Banjevici, and Zlijebac. The majority of these were situated in the municipality of Bratunac.²³⁶ Most monuments listed the names of all the victims, while the perpetrators remained unnamed. Although the monuments did not explicitly mention the ethnic background of the victims, it was clear to everybody that these victims were Serbs, except for a small number of Muslims who had joined the Partisans and had also been killed. Monuments for the numerous Muslim victims of the war were non-existent. Although many had never joined the Ustashe, and had just been innocent civilians killed by local Chetnik bands, their names never appeared on any of these monuments.

Muslims who survived the atrocities, or had lost family members during the war, were unhappy with this silence, as recent criticism on these monuments plainly shows. The subtext of these monuments was clear: Serb victims were being commemorated because most Partisans had been Serbs (even though many had started out as Chetniks and only joined the Partisans in 1943). Muslim victims were silenced because the Muslim population had been the Ustashe's main base of support and

²³⁶ One of the last local World War Two monuments to be erected was the one in Zlijebac (municipality of Bratunac). Raised in 1983, it marked the fortieth anniversary of the creation of the Srebrenica Partisan unit (*Srebreničke novine*, 6(57), 1983, p.1). Many of these monuments were damaged or destroyed during the Bosnian war.

recruitment. Nonetheless, even the Serbs did not feel that the monuments told the whole truth. They did not like the fact that the Fascist perpetrators had remained unnamed. Nor were they happy about the lack of any mention that these perpetrators had been the same Croats and local Muslims with whom they had been forced to live after the war.²³⁷ Ivanisevic claims that many victims' names did not even appear on these monuments. For instance, the monument in Srebrenica listed only 145 victims, whereas at least 200 Serbs were claimed to have been killed there in June 1943 alone. Other Serb villages, some of which were completely levelled to the ground, contained no reminders of Serb suffering except for graves in Serbian Orthodox burial grounds.²³⁸ In other words, the Communists' approach of reducing the complexities of World War Two to a simple conflict between Fascists and Partisans left both Serbs and Muslims feeling that no real justice had been served.

Yet, this was not a real issue directly after the war, or, more accurately, the Communists did not allow it to become an issue. They wrote the history of the war, and theirs was a history of Partisan resistance against Fascist occupation. The fact that half of Yugoslavia's war casualties were victims of fellow Yugoslavs was glossed over. The dead were passed off as casualties in a war of 'national liberation'. Rebuilding the country and establishing a new socialist order was the main focus. Tito set out to reconstruct Yugoslavia with slogans, such as 'There can be no rest as long as reconstruction continues' and 'Brotherhood and unity'. Although bitterness remained, open expression of nationalist resentment was harshly suppressed, particularly in Bosnia where civil war had ravaged the country. As Chuck Sudetic writes in his wonderful description of post-war Yugoslavia, a deep silence prevailed. Nobody talked about the horrible events during the war, although all knew what had happened, who had been a Chetnik or an Ustashe, who had committed crimes and whose family had been killed. Serb and Muslim children sat next to each other on school benches and played with each other as if nothing had happened.²³⁹ But many painful memories of the war lingered, and they contradicted the Communist version of events in World War Two:

"The war had not just been a liberation struggle against invaders and their quislings. It had been something far more sinister. It had forced people to take sides. It had brought on circumstances that drove them to commit horrible acts and affiliate themselves with men and organizations committed to genocide. It had wounded the Yugoslavs in a thousand different ways, and though the wounds had healed over [...], the scar tissue was thin".²⁴⁰

Stories of fugitive Chetniks and Ustashe, who were said to be hiding in caves and forests, never stopped circulating even long after the war had ended. Although not completely fictional, these tales also symbolised hidden realities that were externalised but never exorcised. Some people stood up to denounce neighbours for killing civilians during the war, but few were ever tried, and fewer still, convicted. Former Chetniks, who had joined the Partisan forces towards the end of the war, now occupied positions in the administration and the police, although it was a public secret that some had killed their Muslim neighbours during the war.²⁴¹ Very occasionally, Tito's secret police caught an Ustasha or Chetnik wartime extremist in his hideout in some village deep inside a forest, and finished him off in ways sometimes reminiscent of wartime brutalities. Milovan Djilas recounted an interesting anecdote in discussing such an event with Nobel-prize winning writer, Ivo Andric (who was born in

²³⁷ Miljanovic writes, for instance, that the World War Two monument in Jezestica made an almost cynically imprecise reference to 'fascist terror'. In his view, this actually helped to cover up Muslim crimes (Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božić sela Kravice*, p.55).

²³⁸ Ivanisevic, *Hronika naseg groblja*, pp.22-23. Interview: Milivoje Ivanisevic 03/02/1998.

²³⁹ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.38.

²⁴⁰ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.57.

²⁴¹ Interview: Mitko and Mevla Kadric, 17/01/1998.

Travnik and grew up in Visegrad). Although Andric himself detests violence, he believes that it was an inevitable part of life in this region. Djilas:

“I once tried to explain to him how the party leadership endeavoured to put behind them those frightful events they could not avoid during the war and revolution. I told him how, in the mountains of eastern Bosnia during the first years after the war, security agents had killed an infamous renegade, a Chetnik. It was a long way for them to carry his body to the city, but they wanted to put it on public display. So they cut off his head and exposed it in the marketplace at Tuzla. When Belgrade was informed, I was talking with Rankovic in his office at the Central Committee. He received the report over the phone with a look of revulsion and gave immediate orders to remove the head and to avoid such displays in the future. Andric’s response was one of wise resignation: ‘You people took it too much to heart – in Bosnia that’s normal’.”²⁴²

Nonetheless, some Chetniks who had joined the Partisans during the war were tried for crimes they committed during the first two years of the war. One of them was Golub Eric from Kravica. In late December 1941, Eric participated in the massacre of Muslims in the village of Sopotnik, in which eighty-six people were killed.²⁴³ He then joined the Partisans, and was appointed after the war as president of the district court in Srebrenica. Five years after the war he was arrested, together with some of his accomplices, and was sentenced to several years in prison.²⁴⁴

As Sudetic illustrates, incidents, small provocations, and fights between former enemies continued into the 1950s in the area around Visegrad. The atrocities of World War Two had not been forgiven and vengefulness lingered: “memories live for a long time. *Kad tad*, sooner or later....”, as one woman told Sudetic.²⁴⁵ Nevertheless, wartime memories did fade. This development facilitated by a regime that suppressed any real discussion of these painful realities, a regime that believed it possible to make a fresh start without reflecting too much on the events of the war. Too many were also prone to believe that forgetting was the only remedy and that rebuilding their lives was the only option they had. Tito’s socialism certainly held the promise of creating a new kind of society, one that would prevent such atrocities from ever recurring. And quite clearly, this prospect found widespread support among the population. Josip Broz Tito became one of the few Communist leaders in Eastern Europe with a genuine popular mandate.

Yet some realities were very hard to change. One was that Serb and Muslim communities in eastern Bosnia continued to live almost separate lives, particularly in the countryside, where most villages were either almost exclusively Serb or Muslim. Segregation remained the dominant pattern despite the communists’ efforts to foster inter-ethnic contact and cooperation. Among these efforts was the establishment of mixed local administrative entities (i.e. communes that usually consisted of a number of Serb and Muslim villages).²⁴⁶ The communists also nurtured a common culture throughout society. In schools, Serb and Muslim children shared the same benches and teaching staff was mixed.

²⁴² Djilas, *Rise and Fall*, pp.55-56.

²⁴³ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.143; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.12; Antonic, *Zapisi Pere Djukanovica*, pp.146-147.

²⁴⁴ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.11-12; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.144.

²⁴⁵ See Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp.43-48.

²⁴⁶ The district of Srebrenica (including Bratunac) was divided into fifteen communes, most of which were ethnically mixed (Bjelovac, Bratunac town, Karaëici, Kravica, Krnjici, Skelani, Srebrenica town, Toplica). Only a few communes in largely Serb (Cravica, Fakovici, Krasanovici, Zljebac) or largely Muslim (Luka, Osatica, Suceska) areas were not mixed (*Konaèni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 15 marta 1948 godine. Knjiga IX: Stanovništvo po narodnosti*. Beograd: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1954). In the 1950s, the number of communes was reduced to seven, most of which consisted of both Muslim and Serb settlements (Bratunac town, Skelani, Kravica, Srebrenica town, Krnjici), with only one largely Serb (Fakovici) and one largely Muslim commune (Osatica). (*Popis stanovništva 1953. Knjiga XI: Starost, pismenost i narodnost*. Beograd: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1960, p.498).

Businesses and local government offices employed Serbs as well as Muslims. In the army, men intermingled with members of the other nations and ethnic groups in Yugoslavia, including in far-off places where they had never been, such as Slovenia and Macedonia. The same was true of interaction at party meetings and in sports clubs. Srebrenica for instance, had two mixed football clubs: 'Cinkarna' in Potoèari and 'Guber' in Srebrenica. Because of these practices, Bosnia became a model for the rest of Yugoslavia. Although Muslims, Serbs and Croats had fought one another during the war, they also had united in the Partisan struggle. Now, they lived and worked together peacefully, on the basis of equality and mutual respect. Despite this kind of socialist rhetoric, however, these groups led fairly segregated lives, particularly in the countryside. As William Lockwood demonstrated in his anthropological study of the small Bosnian market town of Bugojno, market exchanges were regarded in instrumental terms and did not really produce a sense of identity or community beyond the purely local or ethnic level.²⁴⁷

Although towns and municipal centres were mixed, and intermingling was more common there, in the private sphere, cultural and religious divisions ran deeper than is usually acknowledged. The element of 'mixing' often only applied to the town as a whole: some degree of ethnic separateness was retained, as groups were usually concentrated in particular quarters. During the war statements were commonly made to the effect of "it did not matter at all to us whether someone was a Serb, a Muslim, or a Croat, we did not even know!" Nonetheless, genuine respect and tolerance were paired with ignorance about the other. As Adil Zulfikarpasic said in his conversations with Milovan Djilas: "I would say that even though we lived together, Bosnia suffered and continues to suffer from the fact that we don't know much about each other. The private sphere was taboo. The religious sphere was particularly taboo".²⁴⁸ Even though mixed marriages between Serbs, Muslims and Croats became common in urban areas by the mid-1980s, they rarely came off without comments from family or neighbours. In the villages, these marriages were virtually unthinkable.²⁴⁹ On the other hand, it was common in Bosnian towns to exchange gifts on important religious holidays. In Zulfikarpasic's hometown, Foèa, for instance, Serb Orthodox neighbours would send Easter eggs to their Muslim neighbours, while Muslims reciprocated with meat and sweets on Muslim holidays. Before World War Two, the Serbs in the town of Foèa never raised pigs out of consideration for their Muslim neighbours. There are similar stories about Srebrenica and Bratunac. Serbs and Muslims exchanged gifts and visited each other on religious holidays, and paid due respect to each other's customs and traditions. Serbs even helped to build and repair mosques, or donated building materials or money for that purpose. Yet, ultimately, these strong reciprocal ties also tended to reinforce mutual differences.²⁵⁰ The well-known and admirable Bosnian notion of *komsiluk*, which stood for good neighbourliness and coexistence, was in fact predicated on ideas of ethnic and cultural difference.²⁵¹

The development of communal feasts in Srebrenica during this period is a good indicator of how the Communists tried to nurture forms of community across ethno-religious boundaries and attempted to replace traditional religious feasts with modern communist ones. Religious feasts – such as the Serb *slava*-s (the patron-saint ceremonies at the family or local church level) and the Muslim *bajram* celebrations – continued to be observed during the Communist period, particularly in the villages. They were usually celebrated as village fairs (called *vasar*-s among Serbs and *teferic*-s among Muslims) and offered ample opportunity for socialising and entertainment. Such fairs were also held in Srebrenica and Bratunac, mostly on Orthodox holidays, and even attracted local Muslims. In Bratunac, the main *vasar* took place on the Orthodox holiday of *Sv. Makaveja* (14 August). Muslims, in turn, celebrated *kurban*

²⁴⁷ Lockwood, *European Moslems*, p.210.

²⁴⁸ Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p.49.

²⁴⁹ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.69; see also Bougarel, *Bosnie*, p.87. Interview: Mitko and Mevla Kadric, 17/01/1998.

²⁵⁰ Interview: Mitko and Mevla Kadric 17/01/1998.

²⁵¹ In his excellent analysis of the significance of the concept of *komsiluk* in the Bosnian context, Xavier Bougarel shows that, in its original meaning, it symbolised local and non-territorial forms of daily coexistence. In 1990, the nationalist parties appropriated, and somehow perverted, this idea by turning it into a principle of political and territorial division (Bougarel, *Bosnie*, pp.81-100).

bajram, which evolved into huge mass gatherings on three consecutive days in the villages of Konjevic Polje, Voljavica, and Glogova, especially in the years preceding the war.

The Communists added, as some ironically put it, new ‘state saint’ holidays to the ceremonial calendar that had such great resonance among the population. Aside from official Communist feasts and events, such as International Women’s Day (8 March), the Liberation Day of Srebrenica (11 March), the Youth Relay Race (in April), the First of May celebrations, and the Day of the Partisan Uprising in Bosnia (27 July), the Communists organised popular fairs very similar to the traditional village fairs. Such fairs were held in the villages of Podravanje and Luka (on the anniversaries of the opening of the first local primary schools).²⁵² The main fair, however, was in Jezero, a village located on a plateau above Skelani. This so-called general national, or popular, fair was an event that attracted huge masses. Established in the mid 1950s, it was organised by the association of veterans. It was celebrated each year on 4 July, on Veterans Day, commemorating the start of the Partisan resistance against the fascists. It developed into the largest fair in the municipality of Srebrenica and drew Muslims, Serbs and Gypsies alike. The fair attracted some thirty thousand visitors, and the day usually kicked off with speeches from politicians and Partisan heroes. Events included horse racing, athletics, football competitions, and other sports. According to locals, the horse races were particularly outstanding. They featured the best horses from the area, especially from Krusev Do and Luka (two remote Muslim villages on the way to Zepa), and even horses from Serbia and Bosnia.²⁵³ In this way, the Communists tried to draw people away from the traditional religious fairs, which were felt to reinforce ethnic divisions and sustain backwardness in the countryside.

Aside from their efforts to reduce the role of religious communities and the clergy, the Communists introduced other measures aimed at modernising society and ridding the countryside of its general backwardness. In 1949, they launched a programme to create peasant cooperatives in order to collectivise agriculture. This measure proved extremely unpopular among the rural population. The clearest sign of discontent was the rapid drop in production. The plans to collectivise agriculture were abandoned, although some large agricultural collectives continued to exist, particularly in the lowlands.²⁵⁴ Instead, the communists focused on improving rural infrastructure (such as by constructing roads and introducing electricity and telephones). They also built schools to reduce the staggering illiteracy of the peasant population.²⁵⁵ Despite these initiatives, there were complaints that the communist regime followed a discriminatory policy in this respect. It was claimed that development efforts and investments were withheld from former Chetnik and Ustashe villages to “punish” them. Partisan villages, by contrast, were said to be provided with everything they needed.²⁵⁶ Jobs were also made readily available to them. Local historian and SDA leader, Besim Ibisevic claims, for instance, that it was difficult for Muslims of his native village, Dobrak, a former Ustashe stronghold, to secure jobs in the town of Srebrenica.²⁵⁷ He also claims that Serbs and Montenegrins, who had been the main

²⁵² These fairs were not always very peaceful due to the use of large amounts of alcohol. For example the annual fair in the village of Luka saw frequent fights between the inhabitants of this and other villages in this isolated area along the Drina (part of the Srebrenica municipality). See: *Delegatski bilten* (Srebrenica), no.11, 06/06/1977, p.12.

²⁵³ Interviews and conversations with Momčilo Cvjetinovic 25/06/1998, Dobrisav Kočević 26/06/1998. See also Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp.113-114. For local reports on the Jezero festivities see: *Srebreničke novine* 1(3), 1966, p.8; 4(37-38), 1981, p.1; 7(62), 1984, p.1.

²⁵⁴ See: Bokovoy ‘Peasants and partisans’.

²⁵⁵ Srebrenica was attached to the electricity network in 1952. Road construction started at the end of the 1950s and continued throughout the next two decades. The first roads were built in the southern part of the municipality (Srebrenica-Zeleni Jadar, and Zeleni Jadar-Kragljivoda-Jezero), mainly to open up the area for forestry. Afterwards the existing macadam roads between Srebrenica, Bratunac, and Konjevic Polje were modernised. See: Milivojevic, ‘Putevi uslov za razvoj’; see also *Srebreničke novine*, 1(3), 1966, p.5; 1(5), 1966, p.3; 6(53), 1983, p.1. Interview Dobrisav Kočević 10/06/1998.

²⁵⁶ Even towns, such as Ljubovija on the other side of the Drina, felt they suffered from their ‘Chetnik’ reputation, and were punished with underdevelopment for several decades after the war. Interview: Mitko and Mevla Kadric 17/01/1998. By contrast, the village of Kravica, where the Serb population had joined the Partisans in time, received electricity in 1956. Other villages had to wait until the 1970s (Nikolic, ‘Kravica u prošlosti’, p.28).

²⁵⁷ Interview: Ibisevic 24/05/1998.

recruitment base for the Partisan movement, took all the important positions in town, while Muslims did the hard, physical jobs. Similar charges were made on the Serb side with regard to former Chetnik villages. Although the protection of parochial interests always seems to be at the heart of such accusations, the former Partisans probably did reap the benefits of having fought on the right side during the war.

Eastern Bosnia's illiteracy rate was enormous, and much higher than in most other parts of Bosnia. During the 1950s, literacy improved, although discrepancies remained high between communes (particularly between towns and villages), between men and women, and even between boys and girls of school age. In 1953, for instance, seventy percent of the population in the district of Srebrenica and Bratunac, did not know to how read and write. (The illiteracy rate for women was over eighty-five percent). The situation was better among the younger age groups. Even so, there were still huge differences between boys and girls: 73.6% of boys aged 10 to 14 could read and write, while the figure for girls was only 34.7%. The general literacy rate was highest (including for females) in the communes of Fakovici and Skelani along the Drina, and lowest in Srebrenica and Kravica. The situation was similar in the neighbouring district of Vlasenica. There were notable differences between the Serb-dominated commune of Han Pijesak (50.9%) on one end of the scale, and the mixed commune of Nova Kasaba (24.9%) and Serb dominated Sekovici (27.4%) on the other.²⁵⁸ In order to improve the situation, the Communists targeted rural areas in particular, building many primary schools there from the 1960s on.²⁵⁹ Yet peasants still refused to send their daughters to school, particularly in the more remote Muslim areas, such as Luka. Some parents were fined for refusing to send their young children to school.²⁶⁰ Aside from primary education for children, the Communist authorities in Srebrenica also tried to improve the level of education among adults through literacy programmes and specialised training for workers.²⁶¹ Even so, the illiteracy rate remained high in these parts. During the 1980s, it still ranged between 22% and 25% in the municipalities of Sekovici, Bratunac, and Srebrenica, whereas in Bosnia as a whole, the percentage had dropped to around 15%.²⁶²

To some extent, economic development helped to improve general social and economic conditions. The 1960s and 1970s saw an increase in wage labour income, and peasants started to work in urban centres as miners, truck drivers, or factory workers. Some went to Serbia, others to Sarajevo, or even abroad, leaving their women behind in the village. Srebrenica saw its first industrial development, which at that stage in time, was mainly confined to primary industries, such as mining (the 'sase' lead and zinc mines) and forestry (the 'Drina' forestry firm). The mines in Sase began regular production in 1961, after several years of research and preparations. The municipality became an important supplier of raw materials (lead, zinc, silver, and timber) as well as of cheap labour, catering for the manufacturing industries in Serbia.²⁶³ Later, Muslims pointed out this fact to underline that Serbia had always exploited the area at the expense of the Muslim population.²⁶⁴ In addition, a bauxite mine was opened in neighbouring Milici, a Serb settlement, which is part of the Vlasenica municipality. Later, that mine was to become the largest of its kind in Europe. In 1981, the 'Boksit Milici' firm expanded its activities to Podravanje, in the territory of the Srebrenica municipality.²⁶⁵ Despite these economic developments, the municipalities of Srebrenica, Bratunac, and Vlasenica continued to be part of the most peripheral and underdeveloped parts of the republic.

²⁵⁸ *Popis stanovništva 1953. Knjiga XI: Starost, pismenost i narodnost*. Beograd: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1960.

²⁵⁹ In November 1966, a referendum was held in Srebrenica to gauge public opinion about an additional income tax of 1% for the construction of schools in villages. See *Srebreničke novine*, 1(6), pp.1 and 6-7.

²⁶⁰ Interview Hatidza Hren 18/06/1998. See also: *Srebreničke novine* 1(2), 1966, p.4; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.41.

²⁶¹ In the municipality of Srebrenica, these services were provided by the adult education centre 'Zvonimir Subić', which was established in 1960. See: *Narodni univerzitet 'Zvonimir Subić' Srebrenica. 20 godina rada*. Srebrenica: Narodni univerzitet 'Zvonimir Subić' u Srebrenici, 1980.

²⁶² See Smit, 'A regional geography', pp.394-95.

²⁶³ Conversation: Dobrisav Kočević 10/06/1998.

²⁶⁴ See for instance: Oric, *Srebrenica svjedoči i optužuje*, pp.10-11.

²⁶⁵ Rajko Dukic et al. *Dvadeset pet godina rada*. See also: *Srebreničke novine* 4(42), 1981, p.3.

This changed during the late 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, when steps were taken to process locally produced natural resources (timber, zinc, and lead) on site, particularly in the Srebrenica municipality. Huge Bosnian firms, whose headquarters were located in Sarajevo or Tuzla (such as 'sipad' for forestry and 'Energoinvest' for mining and related activities) established manufacturing industries in Srebrenica.²⁶⁶ An industrial zone was created around Potočari. Some of the factories there produced batteries ('Fabrika akumulatora') and car brake systems ('Feros'). Others (such as '11. Mart' and 'Potočari'), processed lead, zinc, silver, tin, and other minerals into final products. Most of these companies were set up by the 'Energoinvest' firm, which also controlled the 'sase' lead and zinc mines. A second industrial zone was created in Zeleni Jadar, at a road junction south of Srebrenica. It included a furniture factory ('Fabrika stolica') and a stonecutting workshop ('srebrenicakamen'). In Skelani, the 'UPP' food chain opened a cannery ('9. Maj'), and in the town of Srebrenica, the Zvornik 'Vežionica' opened a textile factory. Tourism became the main economic activity in the town of Srebrenica. The focal attraction was the 'Banja Guber' spa, which drew thousands of tourists each year. Two hotels were built ('Domavia' and 'Argentarija') to accommodate the tourists, although many visitors found accommodations among the local population.²⁶⁷ The municipality of Srebrenica also boasted one of the best-known hunting grounds in Bosnia, the Susica mountain range south of the town.²⁶⁸

Dutch geographer, Jan Smit has pointed out that it is fairly surprising that a small, isolated municipality, such as Srebrenica, should have such a high concentration of industries. He suggests that this may be attributable to the municipality's wealth of resources, as well as to the strategic importance of its isolated location. One important political element in Yugoslavia's industrialisation policy was to concentrate industries in the mountainous areas least vulnerable to foreign (Soviet) aggression. But, as Smit admits, this assumption is not based on any actual proof. However, Srebrenica - unlike most other parts of Bosnia - had almost no private enterprises. Moreover, official economic and employment figures as well as detailed maps of the area were non-existent. All of this indicates that Yugoslav authorities saw Srebrenica as a zone of special strategic importance. Srebrenica became one of the few places in eastern Bosnia where the local economy was not characterised by dependency, even though it was very similar in other respects to underdeveloped municipalities elsewhere.²⁶⁹

Local Communist officials claimed the credit for Srebrenica's remarkable economic success during the late 1970s and early 1980s. They stressed that it was the result of efforts at the local level to improve Srebrenica economically and culturally. This was done through a deliberate and well-planned shift from primary industries to manufacturing, allowing the town to profit from its own natural resources through the export of finalised products. Previously, others had reaped the benefits from Srebrenica's natural wealth. In addition, much energy was invested in improving the educational level in order to create a well-educated workforce. Srebrenica's secondary school (gymnasium) was one of the best in Bosnia.²⁷⁰ Although I heard this claim mainly from former Serb communist officials, who still

²⁶⁶ Smit, 'A regional geography', p.394. Conversations: Bozo Jovanovic 11/06/1998, Dobrisav Kočević 10/06/1998.

²⁶⁷ Milivojević, 'Četvrt vijeka turizma'.

²⁶⁸ Around the mid 1980s, 7,000 of the 38,000 residents of the Srebrenica municipality were employed. Conversation: Dobrisav Kočević 10/06/1998. For an economic survey, see *Privredni pregled* (special issue on Srebrenica, 4(2), December 1986). Bratunac's economy was based primarily on agriculture, for which good conditions existed in the lower parts of the valley (along the Drina, Jadar, and Kravica rivers). Aside from various agricultural collectives, there were several enterprises, such as the 'Kaolin' tile factory (which also exported tiles to Holland and other European countries), two other ceramic firms, and the 'Kartonaza' cardboard factory, which produced packaging for ceramic products. There was also a timber plant ('9 Oktobar'), a brick factory ('Ciglana'), a metallurgic construction company ('Metal'), and a tobacco processing plant ('Duhan'). One of the most important enterprises in Bratunac was the 'Vihor' transport company, which facilitated the transportation and distribution of ore and manufactured goods produced in Srebrenica and Bratunac. See: Masić, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.7-8. Interview: Mitko and Mevlā Kadrić 17/01/1998.

²⁶⁹ Smit, 'A regional geography', p.397.

²⁷⁰ Interviews: Bozo Jovanovic 11/06/1998, 20/06/1998. See also: *Dogovor o osnovama društvenog plana Opštine Srebrenice za period od 1981. do 1985. godine*. Skupštine Opštine Srebrenice. Izvršni odbor. Srebrenica, 16/02/1981, pp.35-36; *Srebreničke novine* 4(33), 1981, p.1 and 6(53), 1983, p.1. A substantial portion of the investments needed for industrial development in Srebrenica were financed by foreign loans. These loans covered eighty percent of the costs of industrial equipment

take pride in having built up the local economy after World War Two, Muslim authors, such as Masic, claim that it is not the Serb, but the Muslim cadres, who are to be credited for Srebrenica's success story. They suggest that the town started to thrive only when Muslims entered into cadre positions.²⁷¹ Although there may be some truth in this, the fact remains that Serbs usually continued to hold general management positions, whereas Muslims occupied the specialised technical cadres. A more accurate claim would be that the economic successes of the early 1980s are attributable to Serb and Muslim cadres alike. Unlike most other towns in the region, Srebrenica developed into a modern, prosperous town, a pleasant place to live.

Yet Srebrenica's prosperity, matched only by the other main mining town in the region, Milici, caused some economic rivalry with neighbouring municipalities, such as Bratunac. Bratunac remained one of the most economically backward and underdeveloped municipalities in the republic. Despite many family ties between the inhabitants of Srebrenica and Bratunac, Srebrenicans looked down on the 'frog catchers' (*žabari*) from Bratunac, a nickname derived from their location in a valley. They considered them less civilised and less educated as well as envious of Srebrenica's wealth. The inhabitants of Bratunac, in turn, called Srebrenicans 'storks' (*rode*), as they found them very arrogant and prone to guard their privileged position against outsiders.²⁷² It was harder for any outsider to get a job in Srebrenica than in Bratunac, they claimed. There was also a certain degree of ethnic rivalry running across these municipal divides. It surfaced more and more during the 1980s, when the economy collapsed and increasingly critical decisions had to be made regarding the distribution of jobs and other benefits.²⁷³ Ethnic rivalry was also fuelled by an undeniable shift in the ethno-demographic balance, increasing the Muslim and reducing the Serb share of the population. This process took place throughout Bosnia, where Muslims became the largest nation by the early 1970s. In eastern Bosnia, this development was visible in all municipalities, although it was expressed most poignantly in Vlasenica, as the following figures show:

Census ²⁷⁴	Srebrenica			Bratunac			Vlasenica		
	inhabitants	M %	S %	inhabitants	M %	S %	inhabitants	M %	S %
1921	27,422	50	49	<i>part of Srebrenica</i>			28,865	33	66
1931	35,210	49	50	“			37,532	32	67
1948	39,954	49	51	“			27,305	17	83
1953	46,647	50	49	“			30,749	25	73

purchased between 1976 and 1980 (*Dogovor o osnovama društvenog plana Opštine Srebrenice za period od 1981. do 1985. godine*. Skupštine Opštine Srebrenice. Izvršni odbor. Srebrenica, 16/02/1981, p.45).

²⁷¹ Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp.15-16.

²⁷² Interview: Boban Vasic 03/09/1998. This rivalry probably explains why the two municipalities of Srebrenica and Bratunac remained two separate entities, despite discussions during the 1960s to join the two for economic reasons. See: *Srebreničke novine*, 1(2), 1966, pp.1-2.

²⁷³ See also Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.139.

²⁷⁴ It is important to note that relevant categories during the censuses changed. The main categories in the censuses preceding World War Two were based on religious affiliation (Orthodox, Muslim, and Catholic). In post-war censuses, by contrast, they were ethnically based, which made it difficult to capture the Muslim component of the population, as Muslims were not recognised as a nation. The 1948 census placed them under a category labelled 'undeclared Muslims', and the 1953 census, under 'undeclared Yugoslavs'. In 1961, a new category was created, 'Muslims in the ethnic sense'. This was finally changed during the 1971 census into 'Muslims in the national sense' (Jackson, 'Changes in ethnic populations', p.98).

1961	29,283	50	43	23,149	43	56	23,457	14	60 ²⁷⁵
1971	33,357	63	36	26,513	51	48	26,623	48	50
1981	36,292	69	28	30,333	57	40	30,498	50	44
1991	37,211	75	23	33,575	64	34	33,817	55	42

The ethno-demographic balance between Muslims and Serbs (each comprising approximately half of the population) in Srebrenica and Bratunac throughout most of the twentieth century ceased to exist. By the 1980s, Muslims formed a clear majority in these two municipalities. In Vlasenica, the once strong Serb majority was replaced by a Muslim majority. Between 1981 and 1991, Srebrenica also witnessed a drop in the Serb segment of the population, both in relative (from 28 to 23%) and absolute numbers (from 10,924 to 8,315).²⁷⁶ Parallel to this demographic development was a rise in Muslim cadres in local government and industry, which resulted from the recognition of Bosnian Muslims as a nation (in 1968). As indicated earlier, a growing number of well-educated Muslims entered the cadres, while Serbs, who had almost monopolised them in the past, lost much of their influence in political and economic life. Many Serbs, particularly the younger generations, left for Serbia in search of better opportunities. In absolute terms, the number of Muslims in the Srebrenica municipality increased by more than ten percent between 1981 and 1991. The Serb population, by contrast, decreased by nearly twenty percent during that period. In the town of Srebrenica itself, Muslims increased their numbers by almost fifty percent, and Serbs by a mere sixteen percent.²⁷⁷ These figures also reveal a strong migration trend from villages to urban centres. Kravica, for example, witnessed a drop in the Serb population because young people left their villages to find jobs in towns, especially over the border in Serbia, while parents and grandparents stayed behind.²⁷⁸

Ethno-demographic shifts became even more painful for Serbs as Yugoslavia entered a period of economic and political decentralisation. Power devolved from the federal centre (dominated by Serbia) to the six republics and two autonomous provinces. This process was sealed with the 1974 Constitution, which put an end to Serbia's dominance and strengthened the position of other nations in the federation. A system of ethnic quota was introduced as part of this process. Based on census results, 'ethnic keys' were established, pertaining to all levels of administration. These quotas were used to ensure proportional distribution of key resources, such as jobs, houses, high positions in administration and industry, and scholarships between the various nations and nationalities. In Srebrenica, for example, local Communists established a system in which the eight highest positions in the municipality (including the mayor, chairman of the Executive Board, chief of police, etc.) were divided proportionally among Muslims and Serbs. (Normally, five of these posts went to Muslims and three to Serbs).²⁷⁹ According to Salih 'Tale' Sehomerovic, Srebrenica's mayor in the late 1980s, the Communists adhered strictly to this rule even until the end of the 1980s.²⁸⁰ Although the system of ethnic quota was

²⁷⁵ These figures do not include the people who identified themselves as 'Yugoslavs' during the post-war censuses. This explains the huge drop in percentage for Muslims (and to a lesser extent, also for Serbs) in Vlasenica. The 'Yugoslav' portion of the population, which was normally limited to a few percentage points, was highest during the 1961 census: in Vlasenica 24% of the population identified themselves as such, and in Srebrenica 7% (Bratunac only 1%). The enormous fluctuations in census results in Vlasenica may have been caused by a weak sense of ethnic belonging among local Muslims. Many of them may have listed themselves as Serbs during the 1948 and 1953 censuses, then shifted to the 'Yugoslav' category in 1961, and finally identified themselves under the 'Muslim' category in 1971.

²⁷⁶ *Stanovništvo Bosne i Hercegovine. Narodnosni sastav po naseljima*. Zagreb: Drzavni zavod za statistiku, 1995, pp.226-27.

²⁷⁷ Smit, 'A regional geography', p.396.

²⁷⁸ Miljanovic, *Krnavi Bozic sela Kravice*, p.11.

²⁷⁹ The highest administrative official at the municipal level was the President of the Municipal Council, which I will refer to as the 'Mayor' throughout the remainder of this text. The Chairman of the Executive Board of the Municipal Council was a position of almost equal standing, but was formally a subordinate to the Mayor.

²⁸⁰ Milovanovic and Loza, 'Nas niko nije pitao', p.16. A leading local politician and former mayor of Srebrenica, Veselin Stevanovic, stressed in an interview that the ethnic principle was indeed important, but not paramount, in selecting people for positions. According to Stevanovic, it was considered imperative, in principle, that cadres reflect the ethno-national

designed to guarantee fair distribution of resources and to reduce ethnic tensions, it did not always produce these positive effects in underdeveloped regions. In Kosovo, Macedonia, and Bosnia, it kept ethnic rivalries alive. The consequence was the creation (or continuation) of a political arena in which ethnic affiliation was of primary importance. This also led to forms of abuse and nepotism. Many people in key positions developed networks of family and friends, who were given jobs in exchange for loyalty.

Another development that would lead to increased tensions between Serbs and Muslims was the official recognition of the Bosnian Muslims as a nation. This recognition led to increased self-awareness among the Muslim elite, which was expressed in an unprecedented cultural revival. Although this revival was predicated on a secular definition of Bosnian Muslim identity, it was difficult to completely separate this ethnic identity from its religious origins. Thus, the cultural revival also brought about a religious revival. During the 1970s, many new mosques were built, especially in the countryside, which caused concern among the Serb population.²⁸¹ In addition, the Islamic community, though loyal to the Communist regime, set itself up as the main institution representing the Muslim nation within Yugoslavia. Several new Islamic journals were launched, and an Islamic theological faculty was opened in Sarajevo. Opponents of the exclusively secular definition of Bosnian Muslim identity, as propagated by Muslim communists, also became more verbal. Former members of the pre-war Bosnian pan-Islamicist organisation 'Young Muslims' (*Mladi Muslimani*) started to spread such views in journals of the Islamic community, generating support among young and conservative *ulema*, mostly from rural backgrounds. Written in 1970, Izetbegovic's 'Islamic Declaration' became a kind of implicit manifesto for this group.²⁸² The growing importance of the Islamic community in public life also led to a rapprochement between the Muslim clergy and various Bosnian intellectuals linked to the League of Communists.²⁸³

Others, particularly the Serbs, felt that the Muslim cultural and religious revival went too far. At the end of the 1970s, the Bosnian branch of the Yugoslav League of Communists started to campaign against the rise of 'Islamic fundamentalism' and 'Muslim nationalism' in the republic. The Serbian and Croatian press also voiced criticism of fundamentalist tendencies in Bosnia. In 1983, the Bosnian authorities organised a show trial against a group of thirteen Muslim intellectuals, who were accused of counter-revolutionary activities and of disseminating anti-Yugoslav propaganda. Five of them had been members of the group of 'Young Muslims', including Alija Izetbegovic, Omer Behmen, and Hasan Èengic (who later became leaders of the SDA). Twelve of them received long prison sentences. Although they were still marginal in political and intellectual life at that time, they became martyrs when they were released in the second half of the 1980s. It was this group of religiously inspired Muslim intellectuals, who, in the late 1980s, started to question the Islamic community's loyalty to the

structure of the population. However, exceptions were made on occasion for candidates with superior qualifications. Interview: Veselin Stevanovic 23/06/1998.

²⁸¹ Interview: Milivoje Ivanisevic 03/02/1998. At the outbreak of the Bosnian war, there were over 30 mosques in the municipality of Srebrenica, most of which were built after World War Two. Aside from the four mosques in the town itself, there were a large number of new mosques in villages, particularly in the region of Osat (southeast of Srebrenica), but also in Potoèari, Sase, Luka, and Sucevka. They were all damaged or destroyed during the war. (See the lists of damaged and destroyed religious buildings in: *Ratni zloèin*, pp.47-52). Serbian Orthodox churches were far fewer in number, both in the Srebrenica and Bratunac municipalities. However, there were churches in Srebrenica, Crvica, Bratunac, Fakovici, Sase, and Kravica, most of which were built before World War Two.

²⁸² For a discussion of Alija Izetbegovic's 'Islamic Declaration' see Xavier Bougarel, *Islam et politique*, pp.142-148. According to Bougarel, this document is a classic example of an Islamicist text. It contains all the elements of similar texts in other parts of the Muslim world: it is exemplified by its insistence upon the decadence and corruption of Muslim society, due to the loss of influence of Islam in modern and secular societies, and by its call for the restoration of an ethical and political order inspired by Islam. Bougarel stresses that Izetbegovic's pan-Islamic viewpoints, laid out in this text, also imply the rejection of nationalism as an anti-Islamic ideology.

²⁸³ Bougarel, *Islam et politique*, pp.130-150.

Communist regime, and began to advocate a more active role for Islam in society. They later established the SDA.²⁸⁴

Economic decline during the 1980s



OUR COMRADE TITO DIED

‘Comrade Tito, we swear to you that we will not turn off your road.’

Front page of a special issue of Srebreničke novine 3(24), on the occasion of Tito’s death, May 1980

“I am a worker and a peasant, I live in the village
on a small piece of land, here, near town.
Believe me, life would be difficult, my brother
had there been no jobs in the social sector.
At home almost everything is broken,
tractor, combine, and hoes are run-down,
the interest rates still fleece me, however
and they want me to pay this cursed money.
When the wheat grows high, the field calls me,
yet I do not have enough time to work the land.
I never manage, on neither side,
and my doctor says I cannot go on sick leave”

Poem written by peasant worker Mladen Kulic, published in *Biraè*
(Zvornik), December 1988

Growing nationalist tendencies and religious revivalism were rife throughout Yugoslavia after Josip Broz Tito, the country’s undisputed leader after World War Two, died on 4 May 1980. His death marked the beginning of a deep economic, moral and political crisis, which threatened the very fabric

²⁸⁴ Bougarel, *Islam et politique*, pp.161-169. See also Irwin, ‘The Islamic revival’; and Reuter, ‘Islam in Jugoslawien’

of socialist society, the established political order and the unity of the country. Tito, with his charismatic personality, had managed to hold Yugoslavia together. But his death left the federation without a powerful, unifying figure at its centre. Before he died, Tito wanted to make sure that his death would not give any politicians or ethnic groups an opportunity to gain predominance at the expense of others. For that reason, he introduced a rotating presidential system according to which the position of president changed hands every year.

During the 1980s, Yugoslavia was hard hit by the worldwide economic recession. The country was also sliding into a political crisis. This combined economic and political crisis manifested itself in low productivity figures, a growing lack of discipline among the workforce, widespread corruption, and the erosion of social and moral values. The Yugoslav system of workers' self-management proved inadequate in tackling these problems. Large firms fell apart into smaller 'self-managed' units, which started to act on their own, independently of the head offices. Many large firms teetered on the brink bankruptcy, and only survived due to state intervention. Financial scandals, such as the *Agrokomerc* affair (1987), came to light, unveiling the intricate and unhealthy links between the local and regional communist party bosses and the economy. Reforms that could have averted the approaching disaster were systematically blocked by the communist elite, who had no wish to relinquish their tight reins on the economy.²⁸⁵ The authorities began printing money to cover losses and pay the salaries, causing an unprecedented inflation rate. At its height, inflation reduced wages almost overnight and completely wiped out people's savings. Jobs were unavailable to the young and educated, and workers who once assumed they had a job for life suddenly faced the terrifying prospect of unemployment. As Sudetic writes: "Everyone grew anxious to see who would decide which workers would be laid off; who would decide the size of the pay checks, the pensions, and the unemployment benefits; who would inherit the assets of bankrupt factories that belonged to everyone and to no one; who would be the winners; who would be the losers; who would be the scapegoats; who would be the new masters?"²⁸⁶

At the end of the 1980s, when communism collapsed all over eastern Europe, and Yugoslavia's economic crisis had reduced salaries to a fraction of what they once were, communist politicians started to play the nationalist card. In a multi-ethnic state, ethnic rivalry has the potential to make things worse. This was especially true in Yugoslavia, since the communist leaders became defenders of the 'national' interests of their respective republics. Thus, the *Agrokomerc* case quickly acquired a political dimension, offering Serbian politicians an opportunity to attack the Bosnian Muslim communist leadership for having protected the corrupt management of the firm. Some Muslims, on the other hand, regarded the arrest of Fikret Abdic, the director of the firm (who became one of the most popular Muslim politicians in the early 1990s), as an anti-Muslim conspiracy.²⁸⁷ Behind the official façade of 'Brotherhood and Unity', a growing inter-republic rivalry developed, which evolved into outright nationalism by the end of the 1980s. It was Milosevic who opened Pandora's box, bringing these rivalries fully to the surface. He came to power playing on the feelings of existential insecurity among ordinary Serbs, who were afraid of losing their jobs. He knew he could find many who were desperate enough to fight for Serb control over factories, mines, and other economic assets that provided a means of subsistence for the workers, minimal though it was. He also took on and instrumentalised the theme of Serb suffering and victimisation, under the 'Turks' and the Ustashe, and under Tito, feeding widespread popular sentiment that history has always treated Serbs unfairly.

In the early 1980s, before Milosevic's rise to power, Serb suffering was epitomised in the alleged Albanian 'genocide' of Serbs in Kosovo. It was the Serbian Orthodox church that first openly addressed the issue, presenting the conflict in the province as a renewed battle between Christianity and Islam. Albanians were alleged to have embarked on a *Jihad* aimed at ethnically cleansing Kosovo of its Serbian population. Parallels were drawn with World War Two. After years of silence, memories of the

²⁸⁵ Meier, *Yugoslavia*, pp.10-17.

²⁸⁶ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.76.

²⁸⁷ Bougarel, *Islam et politique*, pp.155-56.

war resurfaced with a vengeance. Well-known writers, such as Vojislav Lubarda and Vuk Draskovic, published novels depicting the Ustashe atrocities against Serbs in graphic detail. Lubarda even mentioned the real names of the perpetrators in his hometown of Rogatica (in eastern Bosnia).²⁸⁸ In the second half of the 1980s, these themes of Serb suffering and victimisation became a leitmotif, including in Serbian politics, academic life, and mass media.²⁸⁹ The Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (1986) became a major ideological landmark in this process. It presented the predicament of the Serbs in Kosovo in almost apocalyptic terms: “The physical, political, legal, and cultural genocide of the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija is a worse defeat than any experienced in the liberation wars waged by Serbia from the First Serbian Uprising in 1804 to the uprising in 1941”. It compared the ‘genocide’ in Kosovo to the extermination of Serbs during World War Two. It also claimed that the Serbs were under threat in other parts of Yugoslavia, particularly in Croatia and Bosnia. “Intellectually and politically unmanned, the Serbian nation has had to bear trials and tribulations that are too severe not to leave deep scars in their psyche...”²⁹⁰

Most importantly, this discourse on Serb victimisation was adopted by Slobodan Milosevic, who soared to power when he stood up to protect the Serbs as a nation against further suffering, making his famous statement, “nobody should dare to beat you ...” during a visit to Kosovo in April 1987. In the years that followed, he launched a political campaign to abolish Kosovo’s autonomy, which was accompanied by a hate campaign against so-called Albanian nationalists and fundamentalists in the state-controlled Serbian media. This campaign was later extended to the Bosnian Muslims and Islam in general.²⁹¹ Attention was focused on Serb suffering – both under the Ottoman Turks and in World War Two. In the years before the outbreak of the war, the images of Ustashe concentration camps and slaughtered Serbs became commonplace on prime time Serbian television. As one Serb analyst writes, counting the dead became a kind of “national hobby”²⁹². At the same time, nationalist politicians (such as Jovan Raskovic, leader of the Krajina Serbs) started to refer to their nation as “the slaughtered people,” thus lending another, more sinister meaning to the notion of “heavenly Serbia”. The dead bodies of Serbian World War Two victims were exhumed and reburied in ceremonies held by the church and frequented by nationalist politicians.²⁹³ It became normal to refer to Croats as ‘Ustashe’. Bosnian Muslims, in turn, were branded as ‘Muslim fundamentalists’, who were said to want to turn the clock back to Ottoman times. As Milovan Djilas noted in his conversations with Adil Zulfikarpasic: “The Belgrade-based *Politika* newspaper fostered the belief that the Croats were going to slaughter Croatian Serbs. Highly misleading facts and distorted ideas were bandied around in the press and on television (...). An atmosphere of fear was created, which was followed by an atmosphere of hatred, and hatred was followed by ... conflict”.²⁹⁴ It seems that the hate campaign in the Serbian media was a deliberate attempt to prepare people for war and brace them for revenge. The Milosevic regime’s manipulation of the memories of World War Two were thus an important factor in the spiral of violence in the region during the 1990s.²⁹⁵

²⁸⁸ Dragovic Soso, *Between democracy and nationalism*, pp.211-218,

²⁸⁹ Markovic, ‘Nacija, zrtva i osveta’.

²⁹⁰ Mihailovic and Krestic, *Memorandum*, resp. p.128 and 138; see also Dragnich, ‘The rise and fall of Yugoslavia’.

²⁹¹ In academia, political scientist, Miroljub Jevtic, was the most outspoken protagonist of Serbian Albanophobia and Islamophobia. From the late 1980s on, he popularised his ideas on Islam, especially as regarding the Muslim Albanians in Kosovo and the Slavic Muslims in Bosnia. He achieved this by means of numerous articles and interviews in newspapers, such as *Politika*, *Interju*, *Svet* etc. He also published several books expressing his views; see in particular, Jevtic, *Dzihad*; Jevtic, *Od Islamske deklaracije*; Jevtic, *Siptari i Islam*. For a description of contemporary intellectual hostility towards Islam in Serbia, see Cigar, ‘serbia’s Orientalists’; see also Mufaku, ‘The Serbian view of Islam’.

²⁹² Markovic, ‘Nacija, zrtva i osveta’, p.647.

²⁹³ See: Denich, ‘Dismembering Yugoslavia’; Hayden ‘Recounting the dead’; Bax ‘Mass graves’.

²⁹⁴ Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p.158.

²⁹⁵ See for instance Bassiouni, *Final report*, p.78. See also a short text in the Serb nationalist journal, *Pogledi*, which criticizes the silence around Serb mass graves in Srebrenica (Vasic, ‘suti se o Srebrenici...’)

Political tensions rose in Bosnia as a result of Milosevic's actions. The Bosnian republican authorities grew increasingly nervous regarding expressions of Serb and Muslim nationalism, which they feared could lead to conflicts such as that in Kosovo. In Srebrenica, for instance, local Serbs, influenced by media propaganda from Serbia, joined the huge mass meetings in solidarity with the Kosovo Serbs in towns across the border in Serbia. This created a great deal of unrest among local Muslims.²⁹⁶ The Bosnian communist authorities tried to suppress these tensions, which were seen as extremely dangerous for multi-ethnic Bosnia, by fiercely repressing all forms of nationalist agitation. This policy was also implemented in eastern Bosnia. There, Serb, as well as Muslim political activists – some of whom later became well-known nationalist leaders – were monitored by the Bosnian state-security (SDB). Among them was Besim Ibisevic, a local historian and Muslim activist who later became mayor of Srebrenica for the SDA after the first democratic elections in Bosnia in 1990. In his political memoirs, he describes how he was arrested by agents of the Zvornik SDB section in January 1987 for sending a letter to the editor of a newspaper called *Oslobodjenje*. The letter contained a warning against renewed Serbian aggression towards Bosnia's Muslim population. The letter had been prompted by an incident at the Drina, where Serbs on the Serbian side of the river allegedly shot at two Muslims on the Bosnian side, injuring one of them. In his letter, Ibisevic wrote that forty years after the atrocities against Muslims during World War Two, Serbs were again firing at them.²⁹⁷ The newspaper did not publish the letter, but forwarded it to the Bosnian state security. Consequently, Ibisevic – as he himself writes with a sense of nationalist pride – acquired a reputation as a big fish, 'the most important nationalist and fundamentalist in the region of Zvornik'.²⁹⁸

As a figure, Ibisevic is interesting since he represents the archetypical village-born intellectual, whose attempts to gain respect from urban people in the *èarsija* (town) of Srebrenica failed, as he remained a 'peasant' in their eyes.²⁹⁹ Like many other village intellectuals, he became a nationalist and started to rally village against town when he – as the custodian of the local museum in Srebrenica after 1987 – paid frequent visits to villages to gather material and stories for the museum. In these villages, as Ibisevic writes in his book, people respected him. He was also able to talk more freely there, far from the earshot of the secret police. By 'lecturing' on local history during his visits to these villages, he claims to have raised Bosniac national consciousness. He also taught these ordinary peasants certain political lessons. One such lesson was that Yugoslavia was an artificial creation that conflicted with their own interests and that the Drina was a border between two different nations, two opposing civilizations. He tried, as he himself states, to convince people not to buy Serbian newspapers, not to support Serbian football teams, and to liberate themselves from the ekavian ('serbian') influences in their dialect. While many village people took his messages to heart, urban people mocked him,

²⁹⁶ Milanovic and Loza, 'Nas niko nije pitao', p.16.

²⁹⁷ Later, Ibisevic was forced to admit that the two Muslims had invented their story as a cover up for illegal fishing activities along the Drina (during which one had injured himself with explosives). Yet apparently, by the late 1980s, such incidents did in fact occur, judging from an article in the Serbian magazine, *Duga*. According to the article, a small fishing war was going on in the Drina canyon towards the end of the 1980s. Inhabitants of Muslim villages west of Skelani built dams and caught huge amounts of fish. The fishers association in Bajina Basta, on the Serbian side of the river, tried, in its turn, to prevent them by destroying these dams. This conflict escalated: Serbian guards shot in the air, while Muslims sabotaged and stoned a vehicle of the association. Muslims allegedly threatened Serbian officials with remarks like "we will cut your heads off and build them into the dams". The writer of the article thus draws a parallel with Ottoman times, stating that Muslims in Srebrenica are building a new skull tower such as the one the Turks erected in Nis, the famous Cele-kula (Elez, 'Cele-kula na Drini').

²⁹⁸ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, pp.5-11; interview Ibisevic 24/05/1998.

²⁹⁹ Besim Ibisevic was born in the village of Dobrak, near Skelani. After primary education, he enrolled in the Gymnasium in Bajina Basta (Serbia), where he was one of a very small number of Bosnian Muslim pupils. He claims having suffered discrimination at the hands of fellow students and Serb teachers. In 1978, he went to Sarajevo to study history, together with his close friend and future SDS activist, Momèilo Cvjetinovic. There he fell into trouble with the SDB, as he claims, for spreading anti-Yugoslav propaganda. He completed his studies in 1982, after which he served in the army. He fell into trouble again and spent some time in an army prison for similar offences. In 1986, he became the first custodian of the local ethnographic and historical museum in Srebrenica (located in the Culture House). Interview: Ibisevic, 24/05/1998.

regarding him as a typical history teacher turned nationalist. As he was born in Dobrak (near Skelani), some called him a *Kadrinovac* (a sympathiser of Kadrija Softic, a local Ustasha leader during World War Two).³⁰⁰

Eastern Bosnia becomes a ‘second Kosovo’

“...the Islamic countries, led by Turkey, and supported by Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan and others, are moving up towards Europe and the other developed countries. They use the demographic bomb, causing a quick rise of the population, while unable to sustain these people on their own territories. Nowadays, Islam and Christianity are competing for control over the Balkan space, which is, according to my own deepest conviction, the centre of the world, at the crossroad of three continents: Africa, Europe, and Asia”.

Ratko Mladic in an interview for *The Canadian Srbobran*, quoted in *Pogledi*, 12 November 1993, p.34

The Agrokomerc scandal was followed by a similar affair, with very similar effects, in eastern Bosnia. Eastern Bosnia also witnessed local tensions rise due to the economic crisis. These tensions manifested themselves in petty jealousy and resentment against ‘others,’ who appeared more prosperous in these times of hardship. Old enmities resurfaced during disputes over who was to get a particular job, apartment, or whose son or daughter would win a scholarship to study in Sarajevo. Some were convinced that certain villages received a larger share of municipal resources due to nepotism and ethnic favouritism on the part of those in power, while other villages were kept backward because they lacked the necessary *veze* (connections).³⁰¹ The fact that villages were either exclusively Serb or Muslim only reinforced a general pattern of thought, which regarded the main lines of division in society in terms of ethnic differences. The ‘haves’ became increasingly anxious to defend their position against incursions from ‘the have-nots’. In and around Srebrenica, these tendencies first manifested themselves most clearly in the neighbouring municipality of Vlasenica.

At the beginning of 1988, conflicts arose between municipal authorities and the community of Milici, a Serb-dominated mining town of several thousand east of Vlasenica. Milici had developed into a major economic centre, because the Vlasenica bauxite mines had concentrated their mining activities there. The firm was established in the late 1950s or early 1960s. Production had seen a rapid increase in the 1960s and 1970s, and since that time, the mines had grown into the largest of their kind in Europe.³⁰² The firm operated mainly in the municipalities of Vlasenica and Srebrenica. It also functioned as a major impetus to local economic and infrastructural development, providing employment for the inhabitants of Vlasenica and other communities, such as Zvornik. In 1979, one of Europe’s largest aluminium plants was opened there. It was the largest single employer in Zvornik. The hydroelectric plants along the Drina River (near Zvornik and Bajina Basta) supplied the huge energy

³⁰⁰ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, pp.15-17. Interview: Ibisevic 24/05/1998.

³⁰¹ Masic claims, for instance, that Serb officials in Bratunac only invested money in roads that connected Serb villages (for instance around Kravica). He also claims that some of these roads were built mainly for military reasons, with the assistance of ‘reliable’ construction companies from Bratunac and Serbia (Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.14).

³⁰² The mines accounted for 2.10% of the world’s bauxite production. Production started in 1959, even though the firm was not established until 1962. In 1969, it became part of the ‘Energoinvest’ company based in Sarajevo. In 1981, it opened a new mine in Podravanje in the territory of the Srebrenica municipality (See Dukic et al. *Dvadeset pet godina rada*). In 1990, the firm became a stock-trade company, selling shares to its workers. This was the result of economic reforms introduced by Yugoslav prime-minister, Ante Markovic. At the same time, the firm started to diversify its economic activities, as mining was not a viable long-term option due to limited local bauxite reserves. Interview: Dukic 14/06/2000; Andjelic, ‘Poplasen je bio spreman’.

resources needed to process bauxite. In short, the mines played an enormous role in raising the living standard of the population. This was especially true in Milici where large sums of money were invested in housing, health care, and cultural and sports activities. The mines turned Milici, like Srebrenica, into a booming town, an oasis of prosperity in an otherwise fairly underdeveloped region.

Because of this, tensions arose when Serb leaders in Milici started to discuss the option of separating from Vlasenica and creating their own municipality. That move would entail a return to the situation before 1964, when Milici was included in the municipality of Vlasenica.³⁰³ Muslims from Vlasenica accused Serb leaders of selfish attempts to keep the revenues of the mines in the Milici Township. "While the inhabitants of Milici have turned their settlement into a mini Switzerland, the town of Vlasenica has 2,000 unemployed", said critics in Vlasenica. The greatest target of criticism was Rajko Dukic, the director of the bauxite mine. Although immensely popular among his Serb workers, he was despised by many Muslims, who felt they had no equal share in the wealth and prosperity created by the mine. Most people in Milici saw these attacks on Dukic, a native of their town, as an attack on the community at large. Muslim officials in the municipal committee of Vlasenica drew comparisons with the *Agrokomerc* scandal. They compared Dukic with Fikret Abdic, the Muslim politician who had brought prosperity to the town of Velika Kladusa by means of financial speculation and malversations.³⁰⁴ An article published in *Nasi Dani* (February 1989) repeated these allegations. According to that article, Dukic was responsible for malversations, fraud, and shady investments, and also guilty of nationalist offences. The journalist who wrote the article suggested that the wealth he had accumulated for himself and his community had been acquired illegally.³⁰⁵

Similar conflicts occurred between Dukic and Muslim communist officials from the municipality of Srebrenica. They wanted a clearer say and a larger share of the revenues of the Podravanje mine, which though located on within the Srebrenica municipality, was run by Boksit Milici. The conflicts regarding the Podravanje mine seem to have existed from the outset, i.e. from the early 1980s. It was then that mining authorities authorized the company's commercial use of the bauxite reserves within the municipality of Srebrenica. Their lack of any formal say in matters relating to the mine located on 'their' territory made Srebrenican authorities feel that their municipality's interests were neglected. Increasingly, these problems acquired an ethnic dimension. This trend was welcomed by people like Dukic, who used it to divert public attention from their dubious economic activities. Local Muslim politicians, such as Salih Sehomeric, mayor of Srebrenica, began openly describing Milici as a Serb nationalist stronghold. Serbs, in turn, expressed fear that Muslim politicians from Vlasenica and Srebrenica were keen to seize control over 'their' firm.³⁰⁶ According to an article in the Belgrade nationalist bi-weekly *Duga*, Muslims had already successfully taken over the 'sumarstvo' forestry company. All Serb managers had been dismissed. The crucial element contributing to these rising ethnic tensions was the fact that Vlasenica's Serb majority had dwindled into a minority, as explained earlier. During the 1970s, Muslims became numerically predominant in that municipality, and Serbs

³⁰³ Interview: Dukic 14/06/2000; Vukovic and Barjaktarevic, 'Istoèna Bosna'. These Serb aspirations were part of a wider trend. Even in Kosovo, Serbs were trying to carve new 'serb' entities out of Muslim-dominated municipalities in order to secure control over important natural resources. See Roux, *Les Albanais en Yougoslavie*; Hardten, 'Administrative units'. One informant claims that Rajko Dukic offered Muslim villages around Milici schools and even a mosque in return for supporting the creation of the new municipality of Milici. Interview: Hasan Nuhanovic 16/06/1998. On 28 March 1992, on the eve of the outbreak of war, Milici proclaimed itself a separate Serb municipality, independent from 'mixed' Vlasenica (Stamenkovic 'Opet ce se Dukic pitati').

³⁰⁴ Meier, *Yugoslavia*, pp.41-2.

³⁰⁵ See Palameta, 'Dukic - jedan i jedini'. See also the polemics that followed between Dukic and various officials from the Milici mines, as well as between him and Palameta, a journalist, in *Nasi dani*, 17/02/1989 (pp.42-44) and 03/03/1989 (pp.37-38). In 1990 and 1991, accusations of fraud and malversations were also made by various Serb employees, whom Dukic then tried to fire (see B.S. 'Rajko se sveti!'). Dukic later became one of the leading members of the SDS in Bosnia.

³⁰⁶ The bitter conflicts between Sehomeric and Dukic over the Podravanje mines is mentioned as one of the reasons why the former was murdered at the start of the war. Conversation with Boban Vasic 05/05/2001. Another former Muslim director of a Srebrenican firm confirmed that there were constant clashes with Rajko Dukic about plans for regional economic development. Interview: Sefkija Hadziarapovic 22/05/1998.

feared this would also lead to Muslim political supremacy. This fear of Muslim domination, in Vlasenica and in Bosnia as a whole, was reinforced in the Belgrade press. Journalists even wrote that Serbs could no longer buy pork in the communal butcheries of Vlasenica.³⁰⁷

In Serbia, nationalist hysteria and anti-Muslim feeling reached a climax during the spring of 1989, when Milosevic's campaign to abolish Kosovo's autonomy went into full swing. The apotheosis of his campaign was the celebration of the six-hundredth anniversary of the Kosovo Battle on 28 June in Gazi Mestan near Prishtina. Milosevic – in tune with his new role as Serbia's modern-day saviour – was flown into the ceremony by helicopter, literally descending from Heaven. His portrait was plastered on thousands of buses, next to images of other Serb heroes from the past. Hundreds of thousands of Serbs, from Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia, as well as from abroad, gathered on the battle site. A number of Serbs from Srebrenica, Bratunac, and Vlasenica also attended the celebrations, and the story goes that one Serb, *vojvoda* from Vlasenica, even went to the celebrations at Gazi Mestan by horse.³⁰⁸ The remains of Serbian army leader, national martyr and saint, Tsar Lazar, were transported to the monastery of Gračаница, near Prishtina, after having toured churches and monasteries in Serbia and eastern Bosnia. The tour, organised by the Serbian Orthodox Church, had started one year before in order to underscore Serbian claims to Kosovo and eastern Bosnia. Lazar's martyrdom also served as a reminder of centuries of suffering among the Serb people. When Lazar's remains entered the diocese of Sabac-Valjevo (western Serbia, near the Drina river), the bishop wrote: "From the times of prince Lazar and Kosovo, Serbs have built Heavenly Serbia, which nowadays has grown into the largest heavenly state. If we only put together all the innocent victims of the last war, millions and millions of Serbian men and women, children and the weak, those killed and tortured in the most appalling pain or thrown into caves by Ustase criminals, then we can comprehend how large the Serbian empire in heaven is".³⁰⁹

For the Serbs, the celebrations marked Milosevic's victory in bringing Kosovo under his control and 'uniting' Serbia; they also showed that the defeat at the Kosovo battlefield six centuries earlier had finally been avenged. Serbia was reborn and Milosevic had a clear message for the other Yugoslav nations: "Six centuries after the battle of Kosovo Polje, we are, once again, embroiled in battles and quarrels. These are not armed battles, but the latter cannot be ruled out yet". As Sudetic writes, this was the moment when Milosevic decided to "drive a ceremonial stake into the heart of Brotherhood and Unity".³¹⁰ Obviously, in Bosnia, the celebrations were seen as a blatant provocation to Yugoslavia's Muslim population, a provocation addressed not only to Albanians, but also to Bosnia's Slavic Muslims. For the first time, Muslims in Bosnia started to show open solidarity with the Albanians. Within the ranks of the Islamic Community, the idea grew that Muslim groups all over Yugoslavia should form a common front against the Serbian Orthodox Christian threat.³¹¹

Milosevic's campaign did not stop at the borders of his new 'united' Serbia, as many politicians in Croatia and Slovenia had hoped. Since he had managed to 'solve' the Kosovo problem, he had a free hand to intensify his assault on Bosnia, which had begun a year before with an anti-Muslim media campaign similar to the campaign against the Kosovo Albanians. During the summer of 1989, Milosevic began in earnest to meddle in Bosnian affairs. This was done by intensifying activity on the part of pro-Milosevic politicians in Bosnia. Even as early as May, Mirko Ostojic, a high Belgrade official (and former partisan from Sekovici who had climbed to the ranks of ambassador in China), started to tour eastern Bosnia. His purpose was to rally public support for Milosevic's policy in Kosovo. On 26 May 1989, Ostojic made an unannounced visit to Srebrenica, where local Communist 'activists' organised a small meeting in the *Culture House*. All municipal officials who attended the meeting were very critical of Ostojic's views and Milosevic's policies in Serbia. They included: Salih Sehomeric 'Tale' (mayor), Nedžad Selmanagic (municipal secretary for economic affairs), Adib Džozic (president

³⁰⁷ See, for instance, Vukovic and Barjaktarovic, 'Istoèna Bosna'.

³⁰⁸ Oric, *Srebrenica svjedoèi i optužuje*, p.62.

³⁰⁹ Quoted in Radic 'Crkva i 'srpsko pitanje', p.278.

³¹⁰ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.78.

³¹¹ Bougarel, *Islam et politique*, p.157.

of the municipal Socialist League of the Working People), and Miloje Simic (president of the League of Communists of Srebrenica). Later, they complained that Ostojic had made notes of their names and personal details, as if the reason for his mission, the aim and status of which remained nebulous, had been to gather intelligence for Serbia's secret police.³¹²

During the summer of 1989, rumours started to circulate among Srebrenica's Muslim population that an armed group of so-called Chetniks was conducting military exercises in the hills above the town. As the story went, all respectable local Serbs had joined this organisation, and its leader was Goran Zekic (judge at the district court of Srebrenica).³¹³ Other names mentioned in the press reports were Bosko Milovanovic (director of the Culture House), police officer, Milisav Gavric, Miodrag Jokic 'Zmigo', and Delivoje Sorak. And indeed, some of these individuals did actually become local leaders of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) in 1990. According to Muslim sources, some peasants spotted Serbs hunting in the forests around Srebrenica, dressed up in uniforms and singing Chetnik songs. They were alleged to have received arms and uniforms from Belgrade. These were said to have transported to them in vans of the Serbian newspaper, *Politika*, where they were hidden among the early morning newspaper deliveries to Srebrenica.³¹⁴ In response to these rumours, local Muslim thugs started to show their muscles as well. In a café in the village of Glogova, four Muslims announced the formation of a group of Ustashe, and called on local Muslims to join. They were arrested, but released, as they had done this in a state of drunkenness.³¹⁵ The local Srebrenican radio station tried to quieten the situation.³¹⁶

During the autumn of 1989, just two months after the Kosovo celebrations, the Serbian media started talking about the 'ethnic cleansing' of Serbs from eastern Bosnia, particularly in the Bratunac and Srebrenica area. The whole issue became hot news when 'confidential' documents of the State Security of Serbia (SDB), containing information about the alleged expulsion of Serbs from eastern Bosnia, were leaked to the press.³¹⁷ The documents claimed that considerable numbers of Serbs from the Bratunac and Srebrenica area had immigrated to Serbia due to Muslim pressure. It was said that most local businesses and municipal offices were controlled by Muslim 'nationalists' and 'fundamentalists', who favoured their own people at the expense of the Serbs. It was claimed that Serb villages along the Drina still had no roads or telephone connections, while Muslim villages in the much more isolated mountain areas had much better facilities.

The documents also stated that political and economic life in Srebrenica and Bratunac was dominated by a number of old Muslim bey families, who had joined the Ustashe movement during World War Two and now had close ties to the Islamic community. All of them were said to collaborate in the Islamicisation of the region, by building mosques and other religious facilities, with an ultimate view to cleansing the area of its Serb population. They were said to have expressed strong anti-Serbian views and to have supported Albanian separatism. Among the names mentioned in the documents was Ahmed Smajlovic, a well-known Muslim theologian and high official of the Islamic community, who originally came from a village near Skelani. He was said to be the most prominent 'fundamentalist' in

³¹² Milanovic and Loza, 'Nas niko nije pitao'; Ibisevic, 'Ostojic je i mene ispitivao'; Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, pp.24-26. S.A. 'Mirkove bosanske turneje'.

³¹³ See Nestic, 'O èemu se telalilo'; Malisic, 'Masovni pojedinaèni sluèajevi'.

³¹⁴ Masic, *Srebrenica*, p.22; Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, p.35.

³¹⁵ Reljic, 'Nasi reporteri'.

³¹⁶ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, p.35.

³¹⁷ Excerpts of these documents were first published in the Croatian weekly, *Danas* (Mijovic, 'strogo kontrolirana republika'). During a meeting of the Yugoslav Presidency, Serbian representative, Borisav Jovic, waved these documents in order to pressure Bosnian representative, Bogic Bogicevic, into supporting Milosevic. Bogicevic, who was extremely critical of Milosevic's policies, took copies of them to Bosnia where he gave them to journalists. The full texts of the reports were published in the Bosnian weekly *AS* (Anonymous, 'sta su agenti trazili', Malenica 'sve je to suludo!'). See also, Malenica 'Opet bih isto rekao'; Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, p.28; M.L., 'sDB otvara krug; Milanovic and Loza, 'Nas niko nije pitao'.

the region. The SDB documents, however, failed to mention that he had died a year earlier.³¹⁸ The press also targeted Nedžad Selmanagic, the municipal secretary for economic affairs, and Sabit Begic, the director of the hospital (and later vice-president of the Social-Democrat Party). Selmanagic had never been a member of the League of Communists, and was known to be a regular visitor at the mosque. This made him an easy target. Muslim schoolteachers in Srebrenica and Bratunac were also mentioned as fundamentalist activists.³¹⁹ Several local Serb communist officials were criticised as well (particularly the president of the local branch of the League of Communists of Srebrenica, Miloje Simic) for opposing Milosevic's policies and attacking Serbian nationalism.³²⁰

After these reports were published, the Communist authorities of Bratunac and Srebrenica denied that Serb emigration was the result of Muslim pressure. They claimed socio-economic factors to be the main cause. Even some Serb officials, including Pavle 'Bato' Beatovic, Mayor of Bratunac, and Miloje Simic, president of the local branch of the League of Communists of Srebrenica, supported this point of view.³²¹ All of them denied that Muslim fundamentalism was to blame for the exodus of the Serbs. All the same, ethnic tensions were undeniably on the rise by this point and the nationalist press in Serbia was clearly adding fuel to the fire. This trend manifested itself in a dramatic increase in convictions for verbal offences, especially of Muslims, who had dared to criticise Milosevic and had taken a stand against Serbian nationalism. Among those sentenced was Malik Meholic, who was later to become the SDA leader and mayor of Srebrenica. In his case, the offence was having cursed Slobodan Milosevic in a café in the village of Bjelovac in July 1989.³²² Other local Muslims spent several weeks in Serbian prisons after making similar remarks about Milosevic in Serbia itself.³²³ Mounting ethnic tensions were also visible in the increasing number of café fights and other incidents. In December 1989, a group of local Muslims wrote a petition, protesting against nationalist provocations, including those by Orthodox priest, Todor Tomic and future SDS activist, Delivoje Sorak. Some Muslims were said to have been beaten up by Serb nationalists. The Communist authorities were criticised for doing too little to curb the rise of such incidents.³²⁴

The Serb village of Crvica (a few kilometres east of Skelani) played a particularly prominent role in Serbian press reports.³²⁵ The inhabitants complained to journalists that their village was completely isolated, that no roads had been built, and that the municipal authorities had refused to invest money in improving facilities and living conditions. They had already voiced their protest in December 1983, when the leaders of the local commune of Crvica called on the Bosnian presidency to do something

³¹⁸ Between 1975 and 1985, Smajlovic was President of the Bosnian branch of the Islamic Community. He participated in the purges against 'fundamentalists' in 1979, taking control over the main Islamic newspaper, *Preporod*. He also became editor-in-chief of *Islamska misao*, the mouthpiece of the Bosnian branch of the Islamic community. In 1985, he himself came under attack, after the publication of an article in *Preporod* (Smajlovic, 'Podvale umjesto zahvale'). He was removed from his position, and became a professor at the Islamic theological faculty in Sarajevo. Smajlovic had been a student at the well-known Al-Azhar university in Egypt, where he became the first Yugoslav Muslim to earn a doctorate. Because of his good connections in Egypt, where he had lived for twelve years, he played an important role during Tito's visits to Egypt. These visits took place at a time when Yugoslavia and Egypt were the two leading members of the Conference of Non-aligned States. He was a prolific author, publishing numerous articles on Islamic theology and the Muslim community in Bosnia and Yugoslavia. (See, for instance, Smajlovic 'Muslims in Yugoslavia'). He died in August 1988. (See the special issue of *Islamska misao*, 10(116), August 1988, which provides biographic data and a complete bibliography).

³¹⁹ Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp.21-2.

³²⁰ See also Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, p.27; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.12-13.

³²¹ Ignja, 'srebrenica - Bratunac'; Milanovic and Loza, 'Nas niko nije pitao', p.18. Muslim authors have rightly - or wrongly - 'unmasked' these Communist officials as Serb nationalists. For example, according to Masic, Pavle 'Bato' Beatovic was merely a crypto-nationalist who made every effort to ensure that Serbs would not lose their grip on power. He is said to have done this by nurturing a public image of himself as a friend of the Muslims (Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.19-20).

³²² Another was Ejub Golic, from Glogova, who became one of the most prominent commanders in the Srebrenica enclave during the war. For the names of those convicted, see Nesic, 'O èemu se telalilo'.

³²³ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.15.

³²⁴ Cosovic 'Prijetnje s udarcima'.

³²⁵ See, for instance, Reljic 'Nasi reporteri'; Caric, 'Akcija "Muslimanskog" socijalizma'; Nesic, 'O èemu se telalilo'.

about the road between Bratunac and Skelani.³²⁶ In August 1989, a group of World War Two veterans from the area re-addressed these matters in a letter of protest to the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Bosnia. “Serbian villages are easily recognisable: they have no telephones, no roads, no factories, nothing”. They claimed that, since the war, hardly anything had been done for these villages, and that the old road between Bratunac and Skelani in particular, which had been built by the Austrians, was still in deplorable condition. It was said that Serbs were forced in this way to send their children to Serbia to be educated or to find jobs. They held the local authorities of Srebrenica responsible for this, and also accused them of doing nothing against the pressures of Muslim ‘nationalists’ and ‘fundamentalists’.³²⁷

They warned against a Serb exodus due to what they called a deliberate policy of demoralisation by Muslim authorities. Hundreds of Serbs were said to have already immigrated to Serbia due to Muslim pressure.³²⁸ In one press report, published in *Duga*, Miodrag Jokic, a local Serb from Srebrenica, (who later proved to be one of the worst Serb extremists in town), claimed that because of this, he was leaving Srebrenica and selling all his property. He claimed that the town was controlled by a few Muslim families, who had the power to give their friends anything they wanted (a strip of land, a job, a scholarship, or credits).³²⁹ Many other stories of anti-Serb harassment appeared in Serbian newspapers. Most of these presented the truth in a very distorting light. The Muslim police were accused of entering Serb homes to demand the removal of Milosevic’s portrait from the walls, and of issuing fines to people for having small photos of Milosevic in their cars. Windows of houses, shops and cars featuring photos of Slobodan Milosevic or Cyrillic inscriptions were said to be smashed. The reports claimed that Serbs could not buy pork in Srebrenican butcher shops and that music was banned in the *gradska kafana* (the town café) during Ramazan.³³⁰ They also alleged that verbal offences against Serbs and President Milosevic were commonplace, and that Muslim cafes refused entry to Serb customers. Muslim supporters of the FC Guber football club were reported to have shouted such anti-Serbian slogans as, ‘This is Turkey,’ especially during football games against teams from Serbia or Montenegro. The press also ran stories on Muslims raping Serb girls and attacking Serbian Orthodox priests.³³¹ Most of the accusations in the press grossly misrepresented the facts.

The contents and timing of these press reports show a clear parallel with Kosovo. During the late 1980s, such stories had been commonplace in Kosovo in the Serbian nationalist press. Eastern Bosnia was now presented as a second Kosovo, ‘a special copy of Kosovo’. One press report drew a picture of a slow, but undeniable, process of ‘Muslimification’ in Srebrenica. According to the journalist, the handrails of the stairs in the municipal building were as green as the seats of the Culture

³²⁶ See also: *Srebreničke novine*, 7(60), 1984, p.3.

³²⁷ See also Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, pp.26-27. Some articles refer to non-ethnic and economic reasons for the lack of development in villages along the Drina. Before the onset of the war, rumours persisted that a new dam and hydroelectric power station was being planned here. As a result, banks refused to issue loans for the development of this region, as they expected the area to be flooded at some point in the future (Drazic ‘srbin Vidoje Radovic’; Elez, ‘Cele-kula na Drni’).

³²⁸ One report cites a figure of two thousand Serbs who immigrated to Serbia during the 1980s (M.L., ‘sDB otvara krug’). The last three censuses do indeed show a steady decline of the Serb population. The village of Crvica counted 992 inhabitants in 1971, 717 in 1981, and only 473 in 1991. In the municipality of Srebrenica as a whole, the number of Serbs dropped from 10,294 in 1981 to 8,315 in 1991 (*Stanovništvo Bosne i Hercegovine. Narodnosni sastav po naseljima*. Zagreb: Drzavni zavod za statistiku, 1995, pp.226-27).

³²⁹ Malisic, ‘Masovni pojedinaèni sluèajevi’.

³³⁰ The press reports do not mention that Miloje Simic, a Serb, was the director of the UPI firm that owned the *gradska kafana*. Interview: Sefkija Hadziarapovic 22/05/1998; conversation: Boban and Bedrija Vasic 14/12/2001.

³³¹ The priest who was allegedly attacked by Muslims was Mitar Krsmanovic in Fakovici. Muslim author, Nijaz Masic, writes that Krsmanovic provoked a conflict in a local café to polarise his village. He then organised a protest meeting against ‘Bosniacs who beat up Orthodox priests’. He was criticised for this by Srbislav (‘Bato’) Blazic, the Serbian Orthodox priest for Bratunac. Blazic told him that what he was doing was wrong and that his place was not in the café (Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.15-16). Later, Bratunac’s priest seems to have come into conflict with other Serb nationalists as well, as implied by Miroslav Deronjic, the SDS president for Bratunac, in an interview with local newspaper, *Nasa Rijec* (Anonymous, ‘Neka mi neko od vas pokaze’).

House (*Dom Kulture*), and local Muslims had just built a new mosque facing the Culture House. Local townspeople reacted with dismay to these reports, which infused them with nationalist fervour from the outside by describing incidents completely out of context, and creating an atmosphere of insecurity and suspicion. In the villages, these tendencies were even more divisive. Serbs were well advised not show up at any Muslim village celebrations, as that could cause problems. Slogans from a distant past re-emerged, and it became commonplace to brand members of the opposite group as 'Chetniks' and 'Ustashe'.

Moderate opinions were more or less marginalized, or, if represented in the press reports, were rendered as naive, unrealistic, or even insincere, voices. This happened, for instance, with Salih Sehomerovic, the Mayor of Srebrenica, who was presented as being out of touch with reality. He was quoted as saying that ethnic relations in Srebrenica were among the best in Bosnia; the fact that Radio Srebrenica could not reach the villages was to blame for the deterioration of ethnic relations there.³³² In another interview, Sehomerovic showed his goodwill towards Serbs, by stating, "There is no better Serb among the Muslims than me!".³³³ He did his utmost to convince the public that there was no anti-Serbian feeling in Srebrenica. He told journalists that Muslims in Srebrenica read Serbian newspapers, watched Serbian TV, and supported Serbian football clubs.³³⁴ Another communist official, Adib Djozic, also stressed that relations in Srebrenica were good: local Serbs had contributed to the building of the new mosque, while the Muslim municipal authorities had assisted with the restoration of a Serbian Orthodox church in the village of Medja.³³⁵ Others, such as the Muslim president of the local commune of Fakovici, told the press that there was no pressure on Serbs to leave and that relations had always been good, even during World War Two.³³⁶

Another well-known local communist official and 'Yugoslav', Mustafa Djozic 'Egber' ('the Mighty') from Bratunac, told one journalist stories of a past that seemed to have become obsolete. Many of his family members had married non-Muslims. Moreover, his father, a Muslim clergyman and local politician in the first decades of the twentieth century, had been good friends with the Serbian Orthodox priest. On major religious Serb and Muslim holidays, they paid mutual visits, and welcomed one another as the most honourable guests. He also pointed out that Serbs and Muslims had protected each other during World War Two, and that consequently, relations had been always good after the war. He admitted, however, that he himself had made enemies in Bratunac when, after the war, as director of the catastro of Bratunac, he had signed many decisions to usurp and collectivise private land. People, even some of his relatives, were still angry with him and did not want to talk to him. In the same press article, however, a local Serb policeman accused Djozic of being a Muslim nationalist, despite his communist and Yugoslav credentials. He claimed that Djozic was helping Muslim friends and family and refusing Serb requests for allotments of land.³³⁷

These press reports caused unrest in Bosnia as well as in Serbia. In Srebrenica, communist officials protested against the released SDB documents and the fact that no local official was ever contacted to verify the allegations made there.³³⁸ Local Serb officials, such as Miloje Simic and Boban Vasic, also denounced the contents of the documents.³³⁹ Boban Vasic showed that Serb directors of firms controlled most of the workforce in the municipality (5,000 out of a total 7,000). With this

³³² Malisic, 'Masovni pojedinaèni sluèajevi'.

³³³ Elez, 'Cele-kula na Drni'.

³³⁴ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, p.33. Salih Sehomerovic was arrested and executed at the bridge over the Drina near Bratunac at the beginning of the war (Masic, *Srebrenica*, p.16).

³³⁵ Malisic, 'Masovni pojedinaèni sluèajevi'.

³³⁶ Ignja, 'srebrenica - Bratunac'.

³³⁷ Drazic 'srbin Vidoje Radovic'.

³³⁸ Even the head of the local police, Savo Aleksic (a Serb), was not informed about these investigations of the Serbian SDB. See: Milanovic and Loza, 'Nas niko nije pitao', p.16.

³³⁹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, p.35. See, for instance, Malenica, 'Narod'.

knowledge, it was difficult to sustain that the Serbs were under Muslim threat in Srebrenica.³⁴⁰ In the Bosnian media, there was much talk about ‘serbian agents infiltrating Bosnia’.³⁴¹ One of the fiercest critics of Serbian propaganda was the Muslim journalist, Salih Brkic, who pointed out, among other things, that Serbs were over-represented in Srebrenica’s police force (even the Police Chief was a Serb). He produced a TV programme titled ‘Black on White’ in which he took the edge off most Serbian allegations.³⁴² The Bosnian authorities accused the Serbian SDB and Slobodan Milosevic of trying to destabilise Bosnia. They drew comparisons with the situation on the eve of World War One, when the Serbian state security was active on Bosnian territory. Serbia was accused of interference in Bosnian affairs and of ‘Apis’ methods.³⁴³ Similar comparisons to World War One were drawn on the other side of the Drina. Serbian authorities spoke of an anti-Serbian campaign in Bosnia comparable to that launched by Austria at the onset of World War One.³⁴⁴

Clearly, political temperatures were running high at the local level. Moderate people, such as Boban Vasic, received anonymous threats by phone.³⁴⁵ In their efforts to rein in these growing tensions, the authorities organised public meetings at Srebrenica’s Culture House, where Serbs and Muslims exchanged bitter words.³⁴⁶ In his memoirs, Ibisevic describes one such meeting in November 1989, which was attended by a large number of Muslims and a minority of Serbs. Among those present were Serbs from villages near Skelani, as well as several high Communist officials from Sarajevo: Muhamed Besic, the republican Minister of Interior, and Edina Residovic, president of the Socialist League of the Working People of Bosnia. During the meeting, Ibisevic writes, the Muslim president of the local Association of War Veterans was accused by a Serb of having been an Ustashe during the war and of having an ‘U’ (the Ustase symbol) tattooed under his armpit. While some Muslims, boiling with rage, geared up for a fight, the official accused jumped on the stage, took off his clothes and asked people to judge for themselves. Afterwards, he had to be taken to hospital as the stress of the incident had given him a heart attack.³⁴⁷

Miodrag Jokic, a Serb hardliner, also spoke at this meeting.³⁴⁸ He claimed that the Serbs were under-represented in cadre positions, and that the municipality of Srebrenica was run like some sort of feudal estate by one Muslim family. Hamed ‘sado’ Salihovic, the Muslim president of the local commune of Potočari, warned those present that statements such as these were merely the harbinger of greater Serbian aspirations. His assessment went too far for most urban Muslims, who hissed at him. Yet Muslims from the villages endorsed his point. After the meeting, various municipal officials and the guests from Sarajevo went to Crvica, where they were threatened and humiliated by these ‘imperilled’ Serbs, as Ibisevic put it. The police had to intervene to protect certain members of the delegation from the anger of the Serb mob. After these incidents, Miloje Simic became a *persona non grata* in Serb villages in the municipality, and received death threats. As he openly criticised the wave of nationalist

³⁴⁰ Interview: Boban Vasic 06/07/1998. Boban Vasic was the son of Veljko Vasic, a local Partisan who became a Communist official and well-respected figure in Srebrenica after the war. He died only a few years before Communist rule collapsed. During World War Two, he lost most of his family members in the Ustashe raid on Srebrenica in June 1943. Interview: Boban Vasic 15/07/1998. During the Bosnian war, Boban Vasic’s mother, Dragica, remained in the Srebrenica enclave together with the Muslim population. She is one of the main characters in Sudetic’s book. See, for instance, Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp.137-38.

³⁴¹ See, for instance, Milanovic and Loza, ‘Nas niko nije pitao’, pp.16-17; Anonymous, ‘sta su agenti?’.

³⁴² Conversation with Salih Brkic 02/02/1998, 10/11/1998.

³⁴³ The SDB of Serbia claims to have based its reports on interviews held in Serbia, i.e. Bajina Basta and other locations, where Serbs from the municipalities of Bratunac and Srebrenica had settled.

³⁴⁴ Nikolic, ‘strogo poverljiva rezija’.

³⁴⁵ Interview: Boban Vasic 06/07/1998.

³⁴⁶ See, for instance, Nestic, ‘O èemu se telalilo’.

³⁴⁷ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, pp.30-31.

³⁴⁸ Miodrag Jokic had been a salesman for the Feros company. Ibisevic writes that he was given early retirement because he was suspected of financial malversations. After that, “he had enough time to read the ‘objective’ Serbian press and look for Muslim fundamentalists in his community” (Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, p.32). Jokic publicly distanced himself from his own daughter who married a Muslim. Interview: Besim Ibisevic 24/05/1998.

propaganda from Serbia, he was regarded as a traitor, a Muslim vassal.³⁴⁹ In Bratunac, a similar large public meeting was organised in a cinema. Serb nationalists, including Miroslav Deronjic, claimed that Serbs were being expelled by Muslim fundamentalists. However, others countered these claims, saying that these were primarily cases of economic migration.³⁵⁰ During 1990, the attacks against so-called Muslim fundamentalists in Srebrenica and Bratunac continued, including by well-known Kravica notable, Jovan Nikolic, who was also president of the Socialist League of the Working People of Bratunac at the time. He released new 'confidential information' that fundamentalist intellectuals were active in Srebrenica's Health Centre (*Dom Zdravlje*) and in the 'Djuro Pucar Stari' secondary school in Bratunac. Although no names were mentioned, in cafes and on the street, everybody knew exactly whom he meant.³⁵¹

³⁴⁹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, pp.32-4.

³⁵⁰ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.16.

³⁵¹ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.13, 19.

Chapter 5

The Nationalist Take-Over

“Six hundred years ago, we stopped the advance of Islam, defending Europe but also sacrificing in Kosovo our great and glorious state, which during the Middle Ages was one of the most advanced states in Europe. Today, we again defend Europe, both from Germany and from Islamic fundamentalism [...] One day Europe will be grateful to us because we stood up in the defence of Christian values and Christian culture.”

Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic, in an interview with Pogledi, 12 November 1993, p.17-18.³⁵²

Election year 1990

The fall of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 also put an end to one-party rule in Yugoslavia. The country entered a period of political pluralisation. In January 1990, Yugoslavia's League of Communists (LCY) crumbled when the Slovenes and Croats walked out of the fourteenth extraordinary LCY congress. The rivalries between the various republican leaderships – particularly between the ‘centralists’ of Serbia and the ‘confederalists’ of Croatia and Slovenia – surfaced with a vengeance. Slovenia and Croatia favoured reforms, while the Serbian regime opposed party pluralism and the introduction of a market economy. The conflicts occurred after a long period of growing internal division within the LC. Republican party leaders were concerned primarily with protecting the economic interests of their own republics in times of economic crisis. By late 1987, they had started seeking allies *outside* Yugoslavia's League of Communists, but *within* their respective republics. In some republics, relations with the nationalist opposition improved and were often better than they were with sister branches of the League of Communists in other republics. Slobodan Milosevic was not the only one to find common ground with the nationalist intelligentsia. A very similar rapprochement occurred between Communist officials and nationalists in Croatia and Slovenia not much later. In multi-ethnic Bosnia, where such developments were potentially very dangerous and disruptive, the authorities tried to hang on to the old Yugoslav ideal of Brotherhood and Unity, frantically suppressing all forms of nationalism.³⁵³

After the LCY fell apart, however, the Bosnian leadership was forced to accept the inevitability of political liberalisation and democratisation. In March 1990, it agreed to the introduction of a multi-party system, even though it initially proscribed associations based on ethnic and religious affiliation. Many Bosnians, particularly in towns, supported the idea of prohibiting ethnic parties. According to a May 1990 opinion poll by the Zagreb weekly, *Danas*, a large majority of the inhabitants of Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar favoured the ban and expressed support for the economic reforms of Yugoslavia's prime minister, Ante Markovic. The memories of ethnic warfare during World War Two probably played an important role in this.³⁵⁴ In Srebrenica, Muslim and Serb nationalists discussed the creation of a joint peasant party as a possible and viable option if ethno-nationalist parties were to be banned from political life.³⁵⁵ The idea was that a peasant party of that nature could put an end to Communist hegemony by uniting rural populations against those in urban areas. It was clear to them

³⁵² Simonjan, ‘Zapad ce nam biti zahvalan’, pp.17-18.

³⁵³ Goati, ‘Politički život Bosne’, pp.49-52.

³⁵⁴ *Danas*, 22/05/1990, pp.24-26; Goati, ‘Politički život Bosne’, pp.52-53; Bougarel, *Islam et politique*, p.181.

³⁵⁵ Conversation: Besim Ibisevic 17/08/1999.

that the rural masses were the key to power. After all, they formed the majority of the electorate in Srebrenica (as they did in most other Bosnian municipalities).

Despite the Communists' wish to keep such developments at bay, ethnic politics made soon headway after the Slovenian and Croatian elections in the spring of 1990. When the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina formally lifted the ban on ethno-national parties, Bosnian Muslims, Serbs, and Croats finally gained a free hand to establish such parties.³⁵⁶ Ethnic parties then began to dominate the political landscape, just as they had under the Austrians in the first decade of the twentieth century. As Bosnian political scientist, Suad Arnautovic, observes, these parties were characterised by a conspicuous lack of any political profile or programme, although they had unquestionably rightist and ethnically exclusivist tendencies. As one former Communist official in Srebrenica noted, these parties had no programme; all they were banners, slogans, and flag bearers.³⁵⁷ The Muslim *Stranka Demokratske Akcije* (Party of Democratic Action) was the first of these parties to emerge in Bosnia, in May 1990. Alija Izetbegovic, a retired lawyer and prominent former member of the Young Muslims, who had spent several years in prison for political activities, became its leader. At this stage, liberal and secularly minded 'Bosniac' intellectuals, such as Adil Zulfikarpasic, an émigré, and Muhamed Filipovic, also joined the SDA. Later during the election year, they left the party again because of the predominance of traditionalists and conservative clericalists in it. Zulfikarpasic's idea of a secular Bosniac party did not find broad support in the SDA's leadership. The latter favoured a religiously oriented 'Muslim' party that mobilised the rural masses through the Muslim village clerics.³⁵⁸ This traditionalist faction within the SDA centred around a group of Bosnian 'fundamentalists' and 'nationalists,' who were convicted during the 1983 trial, especially Alija Izetbegovic, Omer Behmen, Dzemailudin Latic, and Muhamed Èengic.³⁵⁹ As former political prisoners, they enjoyed a great deal of authority in the party's upper ranks, particularly in the SDA's Executive Board. Although few in number, they were able to control internal developments within the SDA at the expense of the liberals, such as Zulfikarpasic and Filipovic.

As he later told Milovan Djilas, Adil Zulfikarpasic abhorred the excessive use of nationalist symbols, religious banners, and bizarre populist slogans during SDA mass gatherings, such as those held in Novi Pazar (29 July), Foèa (25 August), and Velika Kladusa (15 September 1990). These meetings reflect the efforts of SDA traditionalists to rally support from: the rural masses; urban inhabitants of peasant backgrounds, who had profited little, if at all, from modernisation; and the Muslim populations of marginalized regions, such as the Sandzak and eastern Bosnia. Undoubtedly, it is no coincidence that the first huge mass gatherings during the 1990 election campaign were held in these two peripheral and underdeveloped regions. Only after the SDA secured support from the most traditional segments of Bosnian society did they begin targeting Muslim communities in Bosnia's major

³⁵⁶ Bougarel, *Islam et politique*, p.177. Burg and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p.46.

³⁵⁷ Arnautovic, *Izbori*, p.40; Interview: Sefkija Hadziarapovic 22/05/1998.

³⁵⁸ For these divisions within the SDA, see Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, particularly pp.135-145. See also Burg and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p.47, 68; Borogovac and Rustempasic, *The White Paper on Alija Izetbegovic*.

³⁵⁹ French political scientist, Xavier Bougarel, describes how this relatively small and peripheral group of pan-Islamists succeeded in taking control of the SDA, thus influencing the way Bosnian Muslim nationalism was defined. Their activities dated back to their student days in the 1930s. They came from well-educated, but socially disoriented and politically deprived families, who had been part of the Muslim elite before the establishment of Yugoslavia. They embraced the ideals of an Islamic revival and the establishment of a Muslim state, and opposed the ideas of modernism and communism that appealed to other Muslim youth from similar backgrounds (such as Zulfikarpasic). During the 1940s, they established an organization called *Mladi Muslimani* (Young Muslims). After the war, the communists suppressed this organisation. Many of its members received prison sentences, and some were even sentenced to death. Almost half of the Muslim intellectuals indicted during the 1983 trial in Sarajevo had been original members of this organisation. Bougarel describes in great detail the longstanding opposition between two currents in Bosnian Islam. These are the conservative, religiously oriented traditionalists (supported by the lower clergy and the ulema) and the liberal, secularly minded modernists (consisting of intellectuals and higher religious leaders, such as Dzemailudin Èausevic, leader of the Islamic community in Bosnia between 1913 and 1930.). (Bougarel, *Islam et politique*, see particularly pp.170-213).

urban centres with mass meetings such as that in Sarajevo on 6 October 1990. There, the SDA's popularity and success was much more limited.³⁶⁰

Zulfikarpasic left the SDA in October, just weeks before the elections because of its strong traditionalist and populist tendencies. He publicly denounced the conservative and traditionalist attitudes of leading figures in the SDA's Executive Board. Together with other SDA dissidents, he formed the *Muslimanska Bosnjačka Organizacija*, the Muslim Bosniac Organisation (MBO), which attracted only a small minority of urban intellectuals. The semi-literate Muslim masses all rallied behind Izetbegovic's SDA, which formed a coalition with Serb and Croat nationalists in a bid to put an end to Communist rule. Bougarel notes that the SDA propagated a religiously inspired brand of nationalism very similar to that of other (Serb and Croat) nationalist parties. While Islam served as the most important marker of Bosnian Muslim identity, and pan-Islamists ranked among the SDA's leaders, the party's objective at this stage was certainly not to impose an Islamic religious order. As Bougarel notes, the sweeping support for the SDA during the November 1990 elections cannot and should not be interpreted as pan-Islamist support contrary to the Serb nationalist presentation of it. Votes for the party stemmed primarily from feelings of nationalism and not Islamic zeal, focusing above all on supporting Bosnian Muslim identity.³⁶¹

After the SDA's establishment in May 1990, the Bosnian Serbs and Croats soon followed suit, creating new branches of already existing nationalist parties in Croatia. In July 1990, The Bosnian branch of the *Srpska Demokratska Stranka*, or Serb Democratic Party (SDS), held its inaugural meeting in Sarajevo. It met with full support from Milosevic and the Belgrade leadership. Its goal was to make the Serb regions of Croatia and Bosnia either part of a reduced Yugoslavia or to include them into a Greater Serbia. These two main options were formulated during the pan-Serbian congress that took place in Banja Luka in October of that year. The SDS was a religiously inspired party with strong ties to the Serbian Orthodox church. The main party leaders were Radovan Karadzic, a psychiatrist and poet, and Momèilo Krajisnik, a manager of the 'Energoinvest' mining company. Sudetic points out that Karadzic and Krajisnik were once partners in crime in the mid 1980s when they took out a loan from an agricultural development fund and used the money to build themselves houses in Pale. They were arrested for fraud and spent almost a year in prison before they were bailed out by Nikola Koljevic, a professor of English literature at Sarajevo university. These three men became the key figures in the SDS.³⁶² Finally, the *Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* (HDZ), the Croatian Democratic Union, was the third main nationalist party created in Bosnia. It was established in September 1990 as an off-split of Tudjman's HDZ, but played no significant role in eastern Bosnia. Aside from the three main ethno-nationalist parties, a number of non-ethnic parties participated in the Bosnian elections. These were: the former Communists and Social Democrats, who formed one bloc (SK-SDP), and the Reformists (SRSJ), who were led by Yugoslavian prime minister, Ante Markovic. Both favoured civil society and the introduction of a market economy.

Barring the HDZ, most nationalist, as well as non-ethnic, parties were represented in the municipality of Srebrenica. In mid June 1990, a few weeks after the SDA's inaugural meeting, a group of Muslims gathered in Potoèari to establish a local branch of the SDA.³⁶³ Among those present were Malik Meholic, his brother Hakija Meholic, and Ibran Mustafic. Malik Meholic was chosen as the

³⁶⁰ Bougarel, *Islam et politique*, pp.187 and 190.

³⁶¹ Bougarel, *Islam et politique*, pp.207-208.

³⁶² Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.83. Burg and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p.47. As one interlocutor has pointed out, before the SDS became a broad Bosnian Serb movement there were intensive contacts between Bosnian Serb politicians and the Democratic Party in Serbia, led by Dragoljub Micunovic and Zoran Djindjic. They wanted to establish a Bosnian Serb party that was democratic and moderate in approach. They were, however, overruled by Milosevic, who steered the SDS into a tough nationalist course. Interview: Boban Tomic 11/11/1999.

³⁶³ In Bratunac too, the first local SDA meeting took place in June 1990. Among the founders was Mustafa Mujkanovic, the imam of Bratunac who was brutally murdered by Serb paramilitaries at the beginning of the war. Dzemail Becirovic was the chairman of the SDA steering committee. SDA branches were soon established in most Muslim villages throughout the municipality (Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.59-60).

president of a steering committee to establish a local branch of the SDA. Several weeks later, a number of other people entered the local steering committee. Among them was Besim Ibisevic, who later became Mayor of Srebrenica.³⁶⁴ At this stage, local SDA meetings were overseen by Ibrahim Džananović, a native of the town who worked at the Muslim theological faculty in Sarajevo and represented the SDA *centrala*.³⁶⁵

Initially, the SDA in Srebrenica was divided into two factions, replicating the higher-level divisions in the party. Locally, these differences crystallised into what were called the ‘urban’ and ‘village’ factions. The former was more liberal and moderate, while the latter was nationalist and anti-communist.³⁶⁶ This internal division first surfaced during the pre-election period, when Malik Mehlić (the main representative of the urban faction) put a large number of townspeople on the local SDA election list. The main representatives of the village faction, Besim Ibisevic and Ibran Mustafić, strongly objected, pointing out that 85% of all potential SDA voters in the municipality were Muslim peasants living in villages. As a compromise, Ibisevic was placed second on the list, while Ibran Mustafić became the SDA’s candidate for the Bosnian Parliament’s Council of Municipalities. Sadik Begić (a doctor) was appointed the SDA’s candidate for the Bosnian Parliament’s Council of Citizens.³⁶⁷

Similar – though less pronounced – divisions seem to have existed between members of the local SDS branch. Goran Žekić, a Srebrenican district court judge, who was a moderate and well respected by the town’s Serbs and Muslims alike, was made head of the party. At the same time, two extremists, Miodrag Jokić, a retired salesman from Srebrenica, and Milenko Ćanić, a former teacher from Skelani, were placed next on the electoral list.³⁶⁸ As with the SDA, support for the SDS generally came from village populations. Most urban Serbs rallied behind the former Communists. The main party in urban areas was the SDP, whose president, Miloje Simić, was a former Communist official. Having taken a strong position against Milošević in 1989, he was quite popular among Muslims, though many Serbs regarded him as a traitor. The SDP’s main slogan was ‘We will live together’ (*Zivcemo zajedno*). It was clearly an urban list, consisting of ‘pale intellectuals’ and ‘eternal directors’ as Ibisevic writes in his memoirs. Their programme was tailored to Srebrenica’s urban community, and not to the villages, where the SDP had a hard time conveying its message.³⁶⁹

The local branch of the Reformist Party in Srebrenica was led by Saban Mehmedović, a Muslim married to a Serb woman from Serbia. As Ibisevic writes, his wife wished to join the SDA, but was obstructed by the local steering committee, which felt they could never defend the move to their Muslim constituency. The Reformists worked more or less in conjunction with the SDA, and sought support among urban voters at the expense of the former communists. Like the SDP, the Reformists

³⁶⁴ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.41-42. Throughout this chapter and the next, I drew extensively on Ibisevic’s book *Srebrenica*, which is an invaluable source of information on the period immediately preceding the war. It was written from the perspective of a local Muslim politician and contains a wealth of inside information unparalleled in any other work. The book should be read as Ibisevic’s political testimony. For that same reason, however, it is necessarily biased (despite the author’s insistence that it is the work of a trained historian). What makes the book interesting is that Ibisevic, an SDA hardliner, tries to justify himself in the light of the accusations of ‘cowardice’ launched against him by other Muslims, who lived through the siege of the Srebrenica enclave. In their view, Ibisevic’s biggest mistake was to ‘run away’ at the very time the town and its Muslim population needed him most, while others took up arms. Although steeped at times in nationalist rhetoric, the book discloses, often down to the minutest detail, the rivalries, the factionalism and the alliances that existed between and among local politicians, particularly within the Muslim camp. It also offers insight into the divisions between rural and urban populations. Aside from its very critical view of people, such as Oric and Muslim politicians, who became crucial figures during the war, the book is also astonishingly frank at times in describing political intrigues and the (illegal) methods that nationalist politicians, such as Ibisevic himself, used to achieve their goals.

³⁶⁵ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.45.

³⁶⁶ Interview: Sefkija Hadžiarapović 22/05/1998. Similar divisions within the SDA existed, for instance, in Zvornik (Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.79).

³⁶⁷ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.76

³⁶⁸ Conversation: Zdravko Novčić, 09/06/1998; Boban Vasić 06/07/1998; Boban Tomić 11/11/1999, Marinko Sekulić 10/11/1998.

³⁶⁹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.72-3. Interview: Sefkija Hadžiarapović 22/05/1998.

did not campaign in the villages. Finally, there was the Democratic Socialist Alliance (DSS), a small, non-ethnic party led by Bosko Milovanovic, the Serb director of the local Culture House. The party's vice-president was Adib Djozic, a Muslim and former communist who had been once been president of the local branch of Srebrenica's Socialist League of the Working People (SSRN). Djozic was placed first on the list in order to draw as many Muslim voters as possible to the party. Ibisevic writes that activists of these leftist and non-ethnic parties were unable to campaign, or even to enter, villages. Muslim villages rallied behind the SDA en masse, while all Serb villages sided with the SDS. The town of Srebrenica supported the non-ethnic parties SDP, SRSJ and DSS.³⁷⁰

August 1990 witnessed the first series of election meetings. On 5 August 1990, a meeting took place in the Serb stronghold of Milici. It was attended by Serbs from Kravica, who travelled there in a convoy of cars and buses, decorated with Serb flags and other national symbols. "This will open their eyes so they will not see green colours only" was the caption local Serb nationalists placed under this still fairly unusual and provocative scene.³⁷¹ The SDA also started to prepare for election campaign meetings. Ibisevic's office at the museum in Srebrenica's Culture House became the SDA's local nerve centre, where he met regularly with two local SDA party leaders, Malik Meholic and Ibran Mustafic. Both men saw Ibisevic as the party ideologist, at least according to Ibisevic himself, who claims to have devised local party strategy for the elections and the immediate post-election period. He felt it was futile to fight the SDS at this early stage: the top priority was to eliminate the communists, if necessary in collaboration with the SDS. Ibisevic claims to have edited Meholic's first public speech for the SDA's inaugural meeting in Srebrenica, a speech that reflects this strategy.³⁷² This meeting was planned for 19 August 1990, at 2:00 PM in front of the Culture House in the town's centre. It was soon discovered, however, that the local SDS had planned its own inaugural meeting on the very same day at 10:00 AM in the yard of the Serbian Orthodox church only two hundred meters away. Although Ibisevic notes that this was sheer coincidence, neither party was willing to change the date of its inaugural meeting for fear that the move might be interpreted as a sign of weakness. The local SDA leader, Malik Meholic, tried to quieten the situation by talking to the local SDS leader, Goran Zekic. Both claimed that they, as two old school friends and respectable gentlemen, would be able to solve any problem that occurred in Srebrenica. In this case, their solution was to invite one another as honorary guests at their meetings.³⁷³

Although Zekic reassured his friend that he did not expect many people at the SDS meeting ("nothing to be afraid of"), the number of Serbs that turned up was higher than anticipated. They also arrived from the neighbouring towns of Bratunac, Kravica, Vlasenica, and Milici. The Serbs from Milici, in particular, made a nationalist road show of the event. As they passed through Muslim villages, they brandished knives, filling the local people with fear. Wearing Chetnik symbols, they entered Srebrenica in a boisterous and provocative manner, on open vans, holding up raised three fingers. In Potoèari, Muslims threw stones at the vans and buses on their way to Srebrenica from Kravica. As one eyewitness put it, "the air smelled of worse to come". During the meeting, Goran Zekic was chosen as the local SDS president, and Miodrag Jokic as vice-president. Malik Meholic, Zekic's honorary guest, was booed. He was unable to address the crowd. The most extreme and populist speech came from Miodrag Jokic, who claimed that Srebrenica was inalienable Serb territory and that the Serbs had historical rights to the town. Unrest spread through the Muslim community as a result of the SDS meeting and the arrival of the 'Chetniks', and Muslim villagers flocked to Srebrenica en masse to attend the SDA meeting there.

Roughly ten thousand Muslims soon gathered in front of the Culture House. Some even carried Tito's image and the Yugoslav flag, still not completely aware of the new era that had begun. Others, however, carried green Muslim banners, shouting, "we want arms!" Many inhabitants of Srebrenica stayed in their houses or left town during the day for fear of the trouble the Serb and Muslim village

³⁷⁰ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.73-74.

³⁷¹ Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božić*, p.38.

³⁷² Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.42-44.

³⁷³ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.46.

mobs might cause in town. At the meeting, Ibran Mustafic and Malik Meholjic held speeches. Muhamed Filipovic and Muhamed Èengic, two SDA leaders who had come from Sarajevo, also addressed the crowd. Goran Zekic was hissed at, as was Salih ‘Tale’ Sehomerovic, the Communist mayor of Srebrenica. An eleven-member Executive Board was appointed during the meeting. Among them were Besim Ibisevic, Ibran Mustafic, and Malik Meholjic.³⁷⁴ Meholjic represented the SDA’s urban faction and Ibisevic and Mustafic, its village faction. The latter two worked together almost daily. They knew each other from their student days in Sarajevo in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Both had been supporters of the FK Sarajevo football club. Ibisevic writes that they liked to yell anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist slogans when their club played against a team from Serbia, while he composed ‘pro-Bosnian’ and ‘pro-democratic’ songs for the supporters of his team. Ibisevic and Mustafic had much in common. Both were intellectuals from rural backgrounds. Both were of the same age and had similar ideological leanings. And both came from villages that the Serbs had considered ‘Ustashe’ strongholds during World War Two.³⁷⁵

The election campaign, the viciousness of which was echoed in the Bosnian and Serbian press, created a volatile situation that could easily end in ethnic violence. Anticipating such violence, the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) launched preparations to prevent Yugoslavia’s disintegration and to rally to the rescue of the Serb population in Croatia and Bosnia if the two republics broke away. One morning in June 1990, JNA units emptied the arms and ammunition storerooms of the Territorial Defence (TO) of Srebrenica, whose chief commander was local Serb, Miodrag Stanisavljevic. Stanisavljevic presented the move as a routine army procedure, even though it was obvious to everybody that this was not the case. The Army removed 1,300 long barrels, 7 light anti-aircraft weapons, and the complete rolling stock of Srebrenica’s TO.³⁷⁶ The JNA also emptied the stores of the Territorial Defence in Bratunac. There too, the local Serb commander aided in carrying out the operation smoothly.³⁷⁷ These actions were part of a wider campaign. Led by General Kadijevic, the Federal Minister of Defence and Commander-in-Chief of the Yugoslav People’s Army, this campaign focused on seizing all arms and ammunition from TO storehouses in predominantly non-Serb areas.³⁷⁸ At the same time, the army provided the Serb population in such areas with arms. According to Masic, arms taken from the TO in Bratunac went via SDS channels to the Serbs in Kravica.³⁷⁹

A number of incidents showed that violence was becoming imminent. On the afternoon of very same day that the local SDS and SDA organised their inaugural meetings in Srebrenica, makeshift barricades were erected, first in Kravica, and then in various Muslim villages. In Kravica, Serb militants

³⁷⁴ In Bratunac, the SDA held a large election meeting on 1 September. Mirsad Kavazbasic was elected as the first president of the SDA in Bratunac (Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.60). For the situation affecting the election meetings, see: Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.46-49. Interviews and conversations with Besim Ibisevic 24/05/1998, Hasan Nuhanovic 16/06/1998, Momèilo Cvjetinovic 10/06/1998; Becir Hasanovic 17/05/1998.

³⁷⁵ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.43-44.

³⁷⁶ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.39-40.

³⁷⁷ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.20-21.

³⁷⁸ The concept of Territorial Defence (*Teritorijalna Odbrana*) was central to Yugoslav military doctrine. According to this concept, the country would defend itself against foreign invasion or occupation by means of mobilising the entire population. This doctrine was introduced after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. It relied on partisan tactics and local territorial forces, which could, if necessary, operate independently under the command of local authorities. Weapon and ammunition stores were dispersed throughout the country, in municipal buildings and factories. Bosnia-Herzegovina was the centre of gravity in the Territorial Defence, as its mountainous, inaccessible terrain made it the most difficult to overrun. During World War Two, Tito’s Partisan resistance was most successful there. The republic became the favoured location for storing arms and supplies and building arms and ammunition factories. The Territorial Defence forces reflected the ethnic make-up of their respective municipalities. For that reason, they could pose a threat to the JNA if their local municipalities came under non-Communist (and nationalist) control after the elections (Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex III, pp.11-16). Even as early as 1989, General Kadijevic declared Tito’s concept of Total National Defence to be ‘a fraud’ (Arnautovic, *Izbori*, p.42). See also, Vasic, ‘The Yugoslav Army’, p.122.

³⁷⁹ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.21; see also Arnautovic, *Izbori*, p.42; Bassiouni *Final report*, Annex summaries and Conclusions, p.17 and Annex IV.

stopped Muslim cars, and in Potoèari, Muslims threw stones at Serb cars returning home from the meeting in Srebrenica. In other Muslim villages along the road from Bratunac to Konjevic Polje, Muslims set up roadblocks to check Serb cars and buses returning to such places as Milici.³⁸⁰ As in a chain reaction, barricades set up by one side provoked the immediate erection of new barricades by the other side. The next day, authorities in the eastern Bosnian municipalities (Srebrenica, Bratunac, Vlasenica, Zvornik) held meetings to discuss the new situation, which was growing increasingly tense. Officials with Serb sympathies proposed that the JNA intervene.³⁸¹

One week later, on 25 August 1990, the SDA organised a mass meeting in Foèa. Its aim was to commemorate the massacres that Chetnik forces had committed there against the Muslim population during World War Two, and to pay tribute to the dead. Over 100,000 people attended, including Jakub Selimoski, the *Reis-ul-ulema* (the Head of the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia) with a following of a hundred Muslim clerics. All major SDA leaders, such as Alija Izetbegovic, Adil Zulfikarpasic, and Muhamed Filipovic, were present. Representatives of the SDS and HDZ were also invited. The Serbs were invited to a ceremony, where flowers were to be thrown by both sides into the Drina as a sign of reconciliation. The SDS, however, refused to participate. The tone of the meeting was set by extremist elements from within the SDA as well as from the HDZ. These elements stirred up passions and referred to the 'serb genocide' of the Muslim population in Foèa during World War Two.³⁸² Aside from a large contingent of Muslims from the Sandzak, there were three buses with SDA sympathisers from the municipality of Srebrenica. On the road to Foèa, buses waving green flags and other nationalist symbols were stoned in Serb villages and towns, such as Kravica, Milici, and Han Pijesak.³⁸³

In early September 1990, not long after these events, Miroslav Deronjic (the SDS president of Bratunac) and Momèilo Cvjetinovic (an SDS activist from Srebrenica) visited Ibisevic. Their purpose was to invite him to a meeting in Bratunac, in order to discuss the situation in the two municipalities. They hoped especially to soothe tensions between Serbs from Kravica and Muslims from Potoèari. Relations between these two communities had deteriorated after the SDA and SDS election meetings in Srebrenica. Muslims were afraid to travel through Kravica and Serbs through Potoèari because of roadblocks erected in both villages. This situation had lasted for days and could explode into a major conflict at any time. Cvjetinovic, a journalist for the local Srebrenica radio station, promised to publicize this attempt at reconciliation so that it would have the desired defusing effect. They also made it clear that both the SDA and SDS could benefit politically, if the attempt succeeded. Ibisevic accepted their invitation. Joined by another SDA activist, he left for Bratunac, where they met SDS delegations from Bratunac and Srebrenica in Hotel Fontana. Although the Serbs were not encouraged by the small Muslim delegation that came to participate in the meeting, both sides agreed to provide freedom of movement in Kravica and Potoèari. On his return to Srebrenica, Ibisevic was criticised by Ibran Mustafic for entering into talks with the Serbs.³⁸⁴

The Bosnian electoral campaign officially started on 15 September 1990. The SDA began its campaign in Velika Kladusa with a large mass gathering, attended by Muslims from all over Yugoslavia. According to Ibisevic some 400,000 people attended, "the largest meeting of Bosniacs ever in their 1000 year history".³⁸⁵ Thousands of boisterous, fanatic Muslims were there from the Sandzak, waving green flags and shouting "Sandzak is ours!" Other chants from the crowd included: "We want arms," "We'll kill Vuk [Draskovic]," and "Long live Saddam Hussein". People held up images of the Iraqi dictator, wore Arab dresses, and carried hundreds of green flags with Islamic inscriptions. Izetbegovic spoke out a warning against the possibility of civil war, declaring that the Muslim nation would defend

³⁸⁰ Miljanovic, *Krvavi Bozic*, p.32.

³⁸¹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.49.

³⁸² Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p.138; Bougarel, *Islam et politique*, p.180. See also the reports in *Preporod*, 1 September 1990.

³⁸³ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.50-51.

³⁸⁴ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.51-53.

³⁸⁵ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.54.

Bosnia at any cost necessary, including with arms.³⁸⁶ In Srebrenica, Besim Ibisevic and Ibran Mustafic immediately launched a local campaign with a meeting in Pusulici (a Muslim village between Srebrenica and Zeleni Jadar). Together, they went to address the villagers, who seemed to be impressed by the fact that two politicians were taking the trouble to talk to them at all. Communists had never done this. Photos of Tito were removed from public places, and party membership books and other communist symbols were thrown into a brook. Feeling very satisfied with their performance, Ibisevic and Mustafic joked on their walk back to Srebrenica, “Wherever Besim and Ibran go, Communism will die!”³⁸⁷

Local SDA campaign leaders made plans to visit Muslim villages, first in order to recruit villagers to the party, then to establish local party branches, and finally, to organise a few large meetings. They divided the territory of the municipality among SDA members, who were usually appointed to the villages where they were born. Ibisevic covered the border region with Serbia near Skelani, i.e. the Muslim villages in the southern part of the municipality along the Drina. SDA activists usually campaigned during the weekends, trying to find local sympathisers willing to spread the campaign. One of them was Ahmo Tihic from Lijesce (a Muslim village near the Drina), who became a military commander during the war. A charismatic figure, he was extremely successful in recruiting people to the SDA. For that reason, the Serbs also saw him as a dangerous extremist.³⁸⁸ In Skelani, activists of the first hour were Fahrudin ‘Bijeli’ Salihovic and Nesib Mandzic, who became well-known Muslim officials during the war. (The former climbed the ranks to Head of Administration in Srebrenica, while the latter went on to become a Muslim representative in the negotiations with Mladic in July 1995). Ibran Mustafic, Hamed Efendic and Hamed Salihovic were active in the greater Potocari area, while the local SDA president Malik Meholic covered the town of Srebrenica and the remote village of Luka.³⁸⁹ Religious gatherings, such as the opening of mosques, were ideal occasions for spreading propaganda. One such occasion was the inauguration of a mosque in a suburb of Srebrenica, on 14 October 1990, which drew thousands.³⁹⁰

In late September 1990, SDA leaders from eastern Bosnia held a meeting in Nova Kasaba. Among the issues addressed there was the region’s complicated security situation. According to Ibisevic, the SDA leaders agreed to develop plans to arm the Muslim population as they recognized the danger of a coup attempt by the JNA or a Serbian attack on Bosnia. They also agreed to organise night vigils in Muslim settlements and to plan sabotage operations, for instance at important bridges over the Drina, in case of aggression from Serbia. Ibisevic, who was present at the meeting, proposed a coordinated defence plan for eastern Bosnia (under the code name *Štit*, ‘shield’). Coordination of the plan was to be assigned to a member of the SDA’s crisis staff. However, none of these plans ever materialised. As Ibisevic observes, this was due to petty rivalries and local chauvinism, which kept everyone from looking beyond the boundaries of their own municipalities. Contact between SDA leaders of various eastern Bosnian municipalities became less and less frequent. Nonetheless, the meeting highlighted what was perhaps the most important issue at stake in the elections, both for the SDA and the SDS: control over the local economy. The SDA representative from Zvornik complained that all the income generated by the local aluminium plant, ‘Glinice,’ went to Serbia. He promised that the first thing he would do after winning the elections was to bring the company under his control, so he could start financing the arms needed to fight the Serbs.³⁹¹

³⁸⁶ Arnautovic, *Izbori*, p.9.

³⁸⁷ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.56.

³⁸⁸ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.59-60.

³⁸⁹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.63.

³⁹⁰ The mosque had been financed by Azem Begic, a wealthy local businessman, SDA sympathizer, and fanatic horse lover. Begic enjoyed more than local fame for having given a pedigree horse to Libyan leader, Colonel Gadafi, when he visited Yugoslavia (*Preporod*, 1 November 1990, p.4).

³⁹¹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.64-66.

The fact that economics played no insignificant role also emerged clearly in the case of Skelani, a village that occupied a special position along the border with Serbia. It had formed a separate municipality during the 1950s and was now part of Srebrenica. Its inhabitants, Serbs and Muslims alike, were disgruntled about Skelani's inclusion into Srebrenica as they felt that the Srebrenican municipal authorities discriminated against them.³⁹² Muslims lived mainly in the hills, whereas the population in the low-lying areas along the Drina River was mixed. Since job opportunities were limited in Skelani itself, many people worked in Bajina Basta. Most of the Muslims there looked to Serbia for their economic needs and education, which made it difficult for the SDA to recruit new people and gain support among them. Muslims in Skelani shared the criticisms local Serbs had of Srebrenica's municipal authorities. Moreover, they were not particularly willing to embark on anti-Serbian ventures, as they were completely dependent on Serbia. Ibisevic tried to explain to them that Srebrenica was unable to do much for them, and that Serbia was entirely to blame for this problem. Serbia exploited this region. The hydroelectric plant near Perucac was in Serbian hands, which is why all the revenues went to Serbia and not to Bosnia.³⁹³ Skelani was a peculiar place, one that had figured prominently in police and intelligence reports during the communist era. There were no churches or mosques there. It was an 'atheist' oasis, where it was hard for the SDA to gain any ground. Ibisevic saw Skelani as a hotbed of Serbian nationalism and a source of Bosniac disunity.³⁹⁴ At the same time, it was strategically and militarily vital due to its position near the border and the bridge over the Drina.

The election campaign continued into the autumn. The Social-Democratic SDP organised a meeting in the Culture House, which was attended by former leading communist politicians, Mirko Pejanovic and Nijaz Durakovic.³⁹⁵ The SDA organised several large meetings in villages. The first took place near Suceška on Sunday, 23 September during the traditional local autumn fair. Some 1,500 to 2,000 people were present. Among them was Ibisevic, who waved a document he had found in the Tuzla archives about the Serb war crimes committed in Suceška at the beginning of World War One. He announced that, if the SDA were to win the November elections, the local school would be renamed the 'Osman Gabeljic' school after the youngest victim of the 1914 massacres. A second meeting was held on 21 October 1990, in the village of Peci next to Lake Perucac. The speeches by local SDA leaders were followed by a religious ceremony led by Muslim clerics: a commemoration of the Muslim victims of World War Two for whom the Drina had been the last resting place.³⁹⁶ The imam of Srebrenica gave a speech, as did the popular village imam, Abdurahman 'Dulan' Abdurahmanovic. Almost all imams from the Srebrenica municipality attended the ceremony.

According to Ibisevic's account, Ibran Mustafic began to demonstrate his demagoguery and megalomania for the first time at this meeting. Relations between the two leaders were deteriorating by this stage. Mustafic was campaigning ferociously against the communists as well as against Serbia, shouting that he would destroy the Perucac dam if Serbia refused to share its revenues with the municipalities on the Bosnian side of the river. Mustafic's threats sparked off rumours among the Serbs in Bajina Basta that Muslims were planning to destroy the dam. Srebrenica's communist authorities also felt that the SDA had declared war on them. The third large SDA village meeting was held in Osmace, on Sunday, 4 November 1990. It was attended by numerous Muslims from Vlasenica, Tuzla, Bijeljina, and the Sandzak, including Sulejman Ugljanin, SDA leader of the Sandzak. As Ibisevic observes, the meeting was of huge symbolic importance. During World War Two, the village of Osmace had been a centre of Muslim 'resistance' against the Chetniks as well as the Partisans. Moreover, the resistance had fought until the bitter end: the story goes that Osmace continued to fight even after Berlin had already

³⁹² Interview: Sefkija Hadziarapovic 22/05/1998.

³⁹³ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.60.

³⁹⁴ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.79.

³⁹⁵ Interview: Veselin Stevanovic 23/06/1998.

³⁹⁶ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.67-68.

surrendered.³⁹⁷ At the meeting, people sang the old and previously prohibited song, 'Berlin has fallen, Berlin has fallen, but Osmace hasn't [fallen] yet!'

As the elections drew near, the SDA distributed copies of filled-out voting forms to Muslim peasants to show them how to vote. The SDA feared that many people would not know how to go about voting, and they were right. During the elections, people took the very copies they had received from the SDA with them to place them in the ballot box.³⁹⁸ In the countryside, where the majority of the electorate was concentrated, people submitted to nationalist voting patterns, whereas the non-ethnic parties won in towns. Although it is often said that the elections were a demonstration of almost complete ethnic loyalty, the non-nationalist parties still won roughly one quarter of all votes. This was not reflected, however, in the number of seats because both the Presidency and the Chamber of Municipalities (one of the two chambers of the National Assembly) were elected on the basis of majoritarian rules. Only the Chamber of Citizens was elected according to proportionality, and there, the non-ethnic parties gained 21.5% of the seats.³⁹⁹ The SDA won most seats (86) in both chambers of the Bosnian parliament, followed by the SDS (72) and HDZ (44). In terms of the number of seats, the (former) Communists were completely marginalized. Izetbegovic became Bosnia's president, and he formed a coalition government of all three main nationalist parties.⁴⁰⁰ At the Yugoslav level, he did his best, together with President Kiro Gligorov of Macedonia, to save the entire country, proposing a loose and 'assymetrical' confederation, leaving Croatia and Slovenia virtually independent. These plans were rejected by the Serbian, Croatian and Slovene leaderships. Izetbegovic tried to plead with world leaders not to recognise Croatia and Slovenia until an overall settlement of the Yugoslav conflict was negotiated. In the meantime, Milosevic's propaganda machine continued to threaten violence. The JNA said it would go to war to preserve Yugoslavia's 'unity' and defend the Serbs against 'resurgent fascism' in Croatia.⁴⁰¹

The nationalist parties also won in the municipality of Srebrenica, except in the town itself. The SDA won almost 100% of Muslim votes in the villages. Skelani was the only exception. But even there, the SDA won twice as many votes as the SDS. SDA leaders were euphoric, as they were now in a position to take power according to the election results. The formal transfer of power took place at the inaugural meeting of the new Municipal Council of Srebrenica, which was held on 21 December 1990. The new Council counted seventy seats, almost two thirds of which (45) were occupied by the SDA. The rest of the seats were divided among the SDS (15), the SDP (6), the SRSJ (2), and the DSS (2). In terms of ethnic backgrounds, fifty-one of the municipal councillors were Muslims, and only nineteen were Serbs. Muslims and Serbs were both represented in the three non-ethnic parties (SDP, SRSJ, and DSS). Malik Meholic (SDA) was elected president of the Municipal Council and Miodrag Jokic (SDS) vice-president.⁴⁰² In Bratunac, the ratios between the SDA and SDS were more balanced. Of the sixty seats in Bratunac's Municipal Council, thirty-one went to the SDA, twenty-four to the SDS, and five to the other parties. After the elections, some SDA members left the party to form the MBO. However, this party soon fell apart, and most of its members returned to the SDA.⁴⁰³ The local branch of the Democratic Alliance - Alliance of the Socialist Youth (DS-SSO) also fell apart, and its members joined the SDA as well. The only non-ethnic party of any significance to remain active in Bratunac was the SDP.

³⁹⁷ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.69-71. Conversation: Ilija Miladinovic 10/06/1998.

³⁹⁸ Interview: Boban Vasic.

³⁹⁹ For a detailed account of the November 1990 elections see: Arnautovic, *Izbori*. See also Burg and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp.49-56.

⁴⁰⁰ All important positions were divided among the SDA, SDS, and HDZ. While Izetbegovic became president of the Presidency, Momèilo Krajisnik (SDS) became president of the National Assembly, and Jure Pelivan (HDZ) prime minister. The new Bosnian government consisted of twenty-two ministers, ten of whom came from the ranks of the SDA, seven from the SDS and five from the HDZ. See: Burg and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp.49-56.

⁴⁰¹ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp.84-87.

⁴⁰² Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.81; see also, Masic, *Srebrenica*, p.24.

⁴⁰³ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.23.

Nationalist parties in power

On the eve of the elections, the SDA, SDS and HDZ signed a coalition agreement to ensure that the (former) communists, most of whom were now Social Democrats, would not remain in power. And indeed, the nationalist parties won the elections hands down, after which they entered into a period of mutual 'partnership'. They removed the communist officials from their positions and tried subsequently to divide the power amongst themselves. This took place at the republic, as well as at the local levels.⁴⁰⁴ Their attempts to divide power along ethno-national lines could actually be seen as a continuation of the ethnic quota system that existed under communism. In their efforts to share power, the nationalist parties referred to, and in fact twisted, the well-known Bosnian concept of *komsiluk*, which stands for good neighbourly relations. They presented the coalition as a guarantee for further coexistence: the three nations would continue to live together as good neighbours. The concept of *komsiluk* was now used not only to refer to the grass-roots level, i.e. to the everyday life of ordinary citizens living in the same buildings, streets or city districts, but also to that of separate ethnic and national entities within the state.⁴⁰⁵

As could be expected, ethnic coexistence fell under immediate threat when the three nationalist parties began to carve up Bosnia. At the municipal level, the party with the majority vote started to monopolise all important local positions. This sparked off a process of ethnic homogenisation of the political cadres on the municipal levels, which was the first step towards ethnic segmentation in Bosnian society. The battle for strategic positions and other economic and political resources started immediately after the elections. Its development unfolded almost simultaneously with that of the deteriorating economy. In early 1991, production fell drastically, inflation soared once again to astronomical heights and unemployment spread.⁴⁰⁶ Aside from causing tensions *between* the nationalist parties, the competition for resources and positions also produced a great deal of factionalism *within* these parties, often turning moderates against hardliners, or urban populations against village communities.

Initially, the three parties agreed that they would divide power proportionally, at the republic, as well as at the local level. In Srebrenica, this meant that power was to be shared between the SDA and the SDS on a 75-25% basis. The non-nationalist parties were excluded. Despite these arrangements, however, problems soon arose between the SDA and the SDS.⁴⁰⁷ According to Ibisevic, the SDS demanded a larger number of posts in Srebrenica. Local SDS leader, Goran Zekic, claimed that he was not bound to the proportionality agreement as it conflicted with the existing municipal statute in which the Serbs were entitled to three of the eight most important cadre positions in the municipality. In an effort to resolve these problems, SDA leader, Malik Meholic, began negotiating with Zekic without consulting others in his party. The move soon created a great sense of dissatisfaction. Rumours spread that Meholic would even accept a fifty-fifty percent deal with the Serbs. During a local SDA meeting in late December, Meholic (the leader of the town faction) was openly attacked by Ibran Mustafic (one of the leaders of the village faction) for his tendency to monopolise the negotiations with his old school friend, Zekic. Meholic was subsequently forced to agree to negotiations with the Serbs through delegations. This set off a fierce internal struggle, in which Meholic began lobbying to have Ibran Mustafic and Hamed Efendic expelled from the party, efforts that met with the support of the majority of the SDA's Executive Board.⁴⁰⁸

Mustafic and Efendic were ultimately excluded from the SDA. As both were from the nationalist stronghold of Potoèari, they began to mobilise support among the rural population. While most village communities opposed Meholic and supported the Mustafic faction, urban Muslims

⁴⁰⁴ Goati, 'Politièki zivot Bosne', p.57. Burg and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp.52-53, 62-63.

⁴⁰⁵ See Bougarel, *Bosnie*, pp.81-100.

⁴⁰⁶ Goati, 'Politièki zivot Bosne', pp.57-58. Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, p.157.

⁴⁰⁷ Burg and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp.52-56.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.82-83.

favoured the Meholic faction. Serbs also supported Meholic because of his readiness to compromise. The struggle remained undecided until Ibisevic returned from a trip abroad in January 1991. Ibisevic lent his support to Mustafic even though the Meholic faction tried to win him over to its side by offering him the director's post at the Culture House if they remained in power. A hardliner, Ibisevic dryly comments that he considered Malik Meholic an unacceptable ally for the simple reason that he was an 'acceptable figure' to the Serbs. These divisions led to rapid polarisation between 'village hardliners' and 'urban moderates'. The hardliners gathered in Ibisevic's office or Hamed Efendic's home in Potocari, while the moderates established themselves in the new SDA office. Urban Serbs sided with the latter group. They considered the villages to be hotbeds of extremism and felt certain that their position would come under much further threat if SDA hardliners were to rise to power in Srebrenica.⁴⁰⁹

The SDA party headquarters in Sarajevo tried hard to reconcile the two factions. Omer Behmen, Osman Brka, and later also, Mehmed Kavazbasic (SDA leader in Vlasenica), came to Srebrenica to mediate. Local SDA leaders shuttled between Srebrenica and Sarajevo for talks. When the first SDA delegation from Sarajevo visited Srebrenica, the situation escalated immediately. Peasants came to the town to demonstrate in front of the SDA office. Village hardliners forced themselves into the office and almost started a fight with Meholic. Furious, Behmen accused Ibran Mustafic of resorting to street methods similar to those used by Milosevic in Serbia. At this juncture, the hardliners shifted their strategy. They started to organise the countryside by establishing local village committees, who would send representatives to the SDA municipal assembly to be held in Srebrenica. The moderates, in turn, used Srebrenica's radio station to attack SDA hardliners, and Serb journalists provided them with radio airtime. This period was marked by mutual accusations and mud slinging through Srebrenica's local media. Behmen put an end to the local media war, intervening on behalf of the SDA party headquarters.⁴¹⁰

Yet it was clear that the hardliners were in a much better position to win this internal battle. In late January 1991, the SDA organised an extraordinary municipal assembly. It was attended by over a hundred delegates, most of whom represented the SDA village committees. To secure their victory even more, the hardliners mobilised village mobs, who entered Srebrenica to attend the meeting. A new 45-member local SDA Council was chosen, along with a 22-member Executive Board. The newly established Executive Board pushed hard-line policy forward by appointing 'village faction' leaders to the posts of local SDA president (Hamed Efendic), and vice-presidents (Besim Ibisevic and Ibran Mustafic). The assembly ratified these candidates by acclamation. Moderates, such as Malik Meholic, were expelled from the party and were summoned to resign their posts in the town's administration.⁴¹¹

Apparently, similar processes were taking place within the SDS, although these are not as well documented. Serb villagers accused their leaders in town, including Zekic, of being too lenient towards the SDA and of having surrendered too much power to the Muslims. To placate these critics, the local SDS leadership proposed appointing Milenko Eanic, a village 'hardliner' as the new vice-president of the Municipal Council instead of Miodrag Jokic, a hardliner from the town of Srebrenica. The SDA accepted this proposal in a show of willingness to 'compromise' with the SDS despite their alleged extremism. In return, Zekic and the other SDS members of the Municipal Council promised to vote with SDA hardliners to remove Meholic and other moderates from their official posts, and nominate village candidates instead. SDA hardliners did not trust Zekic's promises, however, as he and Meholic were good friends. Moreover, other Serbs in town, who were Zekic's main support base, clearly favoured Meholic. For this reason, SDA hardliners hoped they would not need the SDS votes, but could rely on a majority within their own ranks, and possibly, on the support of a few odd councillors from other parties.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.85-86.

⁴¹⁰ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.86-89.

⁴¹¹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.89-91. Interview Besim Ibisevic 24/05/1998.

⁴¹² Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.91-92.

The Municipal Council, which was intended to cast a vote of no confidence to the present municipal officials, met on 23 February 1991. It was immediately adjourned, however, because of the unexpected absence of Malik Meholic, Goran Zekic and Miodrag Jokic. They had gone to a meeting in Sarajevo where a working party of SDA, SDS and HDZ representatives was discussing the practical issues involved in dividing up local power throughout the republic. Ibisevic claims that they had gone to the meeting to strike a deal for Srebrenica, which would have given them sufficient political credit to remain in power. A small group of SDA hardliners sprang into immediate action. Ibran Mustafic, Besim Ibisevic, Hamed Efendic and others rushed off to Sarajevo in Ahmo Tihic's Mercedes, vowing to remove Meholic at all cost, if necessary by non-democratic means, as Ibisevic recounts. They ran straight into the meeting at the parliament building, where SDA, SDS, and HDZ leaders were negotiating local power arrangements case by case. As Srebrenica had not yet been discussed, Mustafic and his following were in time to intervene. Meholic was deprived of the opportunity to represent the SDA in Srebrenica during these negotiations. At the same time, Radovan Karadzic summoned Goran Zekic and Miodrag Jokic to accept a deal based on 75% Muslim (SDA) and 25% Serb (SDS) participation, which they finally did despite previous objections.⁴¹³

Meholic's role was finished even though he remained in place as president of Srebrenica's Municipal Council. The SDA party headquarters still tried to bring about a reconciliation between the two factions. The battle was decided, however, on 28 February 1990, during a Municipal Council meeting. Many villagers gathered on the streets of Srebrenica to support Hamed Efendic's bid for power, while urban Muslims rallied in favour of Malik Meholic. The latter expressed their opposition loudly to 'a peasant' as mayor of Srebrenica: "Peasants will not be allowed to govern Srebrenica, we will chase them back to their villages!" This led to vicious verbal exchanges between villagers and townspeople. As could be expected, Hamed Efendic's faction emerged as the victors. The 'Malikovci' were removed from their official positions and hardliners were appointed instead. Even so, Efendic had faced a very close call with only thirty-six out of seventy votes. Nine SDA councillors voted in favour of Meholic, along with almost all other councillors from various parties (the SDS, the SDP, the DSS and the SRSJ). The SDS did not keep its promises to support the SDA hardliners and voted for Meholic because of 'higher' Serbian interests. Efendic actually won thanks to the support of Milenko Èanic, the SDS hardliner who was promised the position of vice-mayor if Efendic were to win, and one other SDS councillor from Skelani. Both were very critical of Zekic and the SDS leadership of Srebrenica, accusing them of ignoring the interests of Skelani.⁴¹⁴

As a result of the voting, all municipal posts were divided up among SDA and SDS hardliners, and members of the SDP lost all their influence. Besim Ibisevic became President of the Municipal Council (Mayor) and Milenko Èanic its Vice President. Ibran Mustafic stepped up as Chairman of the Executive Board of the municipality of Srebrenica. Hamed 'sado' Salihovic (SDA) was made Head of Police, and Miodrag Stanisavljevic (SDS) kept his position as Commander of the Territorial Defence of Srebrenica.⁴¹⁵ A handful of SDA moderates in the Municipal Council went over to the hard-line faction. Others, such as Malik Meholic, founded the local branch of the Muslim Bosniac Organisation (MBO). Before long, a number of freshly appointed municipal officials proved to be incompetent for their jobs. One of these was Salih Siruèic, the municipal secretary for the economy, who resigned just a few months after his appointment. As the SDA was unable to find any qualified people within its own ranks, they asked Cazim Salimovic, a former communist and member of the SDP, to take over the post. Ibisevic writes that this appointment was also meant to demonstrate the SDA hardliners' willingness to bridge the gap between town and countryside, and to signal the need for unity among all Muslims, regardless of party loyalties.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹³ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.93-94.

⁴¹⁴ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.97-98.

⁴¹⁵ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.95-97; see also Masic, *Srebrenica*, p.24.

⁴¹⁶ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.109-110. Interview: Sefkija Hadziarapovic 22/05/1998.

SDA hardliners govern Srebrenica

On 25 March 1991, Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman met secretly at one of Tito's grand old villas in Karadjordjevo, where they agreed to carve up Bosnia. They appointed a working party to draw up new borders.⁴¹⁷ In late June, Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence. Two days later, the ten-day war began in Slovenia. Croatia also witnessed clashes in Slavonia and the Krajina. By autumn, the conflict had escalated into a full-fledged and brutal war. Serbian-Croatian negotiations about carving up Bosnia and organising population transfers continued in Austria. At the same time, Milosevic tried to persuade Bosnia's Muslim leadership to support Serbia and remain within Yugoslavia. But Izetbegovic declared Bosnia neutral in the Croatian conflict. Moreover, he objected to the mobilisation of Bosnians by the Yugoslav army to fight the war in Croatia.⁴¹⁸ Milosevic responded by placing Bosnia under an economic blockade. He blocked supplies of food and agricultural products. Srebrenica's population, which depended on these imports, was hard hit as a result. These sanctions became even more effective by early 1992. On more than one occasion, Serb officials, politicians and company directors from both sides of the Drina met in towns, such as Ljubovija and Bajina Basta, to discuss how to continue the blockade without affecting the Bosnian Serb population.⁴¹⁹

While the town of Srebrenica was now governed by SDA hardliners, Ibisevic and Mustafic, tensions and fear of the future encroached increasingly on daily life. The fabric of society was disintegrating, a fact clearly reflected in the tug-of-war that developed over Srebrenica's local dumping site. At the heart of the conflict was the question of where to dump the town's wastes. The SDS wanted to close down the main collection point near the Serb village of Zalazje, which the SDA was willing to accept as a sign of goodwill. Yet an alternative site was not easily found without antagonising other Muslim or Serb villages. Because it took some time to resolve the issue, Srebrenica continued to dump its waste in Zalazje. Serbs in the village then blocked the entrance. By early April, barricades appeared making it impossible transport waste out of the town. The waste then began to pile up in the town itself. Ibisevic writes that although Mustafic was responsible, as chairman of the Executive Board, to respond to the problem, he left it to Ibisevic to solve. Attempts to find new locations failed due to protests by every Serb and Muslim village near the different dumpsites proposed. Nobody was willing to accept Srebrenica's waste. Instead, they all preferred to see it end up in "one of the other side's" villages. The entire operation became an exercise in manoeuvring – literally and figuratively – between Muslim and Serb villages. The solution was to find a site at an acceptable distance from any village and one located at a more or less equal distance from a Serb *and* a Muslim village. When the craters of the bauxite mines in Podravanje were eliminated as an option due to protests from the local Serb population, the authorities were forced to dump waste illegally at night in forbidden sites, such as in Zalazje. This prompted the Serb inhabitants there to begin guarding the old dumpsite again.⁴²⁰

The next cause of tension was the Yugoslav census, which took place in April 1991. People objected to the fact that the census takers were not local people, as was the case in previous censuses. Ibran Mustafic had chosen his own people from Potočari to carry out the census in the Muslim villages. Another source of criticism was the fact that Serbs were allowed to carry out the census in their villages, which, according to Ibisevic, was a recipe for malversations. He claims that many Serbs who had left Srebrenica and had gone to live in Serbia were included.⁴²¹ This problem existed, for instance, in the commune of Osat, where the number of Serbs was much inflated according to local Muslims.

⁴¹⁷ Silber and Little, *The death of Yugoslavia*, pp.143-44; Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p.82; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.85.

⁴¹⁸ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.86.

⁴¹⁹ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.13-14; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p.22; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.147.

⁴²⁰ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.98-100.

⁴²¹ In an interview for this report, Ibisevic admitted that Muslims also manipulated the census results, for instance by statistically 'assimilating' the 500 to 600 Romani living in the municipality of Srebrenica. Muslim census takers tried to convince these Romani to identify themselves as Muslims, which most of them did. Interview: Ibisevic 24/05/1998.

Mustafic undertook no action to conduct another census in these Serb villages. At this stage, Ibisevic (president of the Municipal Council) and Mustafic (chairman of the Executive Board) became more rivals than colleagues. According to Ibisevic, Ibran Mustafic liked nothing more than showing his face ‘among the people’ in the villages and holding nationalist speeches aimed at advancing his ambitions of becoming the leading local SDA politician. He neglected his executive duties, which included solving such practical problems as bad roads, local companies teetering on bankruptcy, and the deplorable condition of the water supply system.⁴²²

One of the major problems facing the municipality was the sudden unwillingness of the majority of citizens to pay communal taxes. Serbs as well as Muslims refused to pay these taxes for different reasons. In fact, several SDA and SDS politicians even instructed their constituents not to pay them. Ibisevic tried to turn the tide in this respect, pointing out to local Muslims that the municipality could never fulfil its communal duties if they failed to pay these taxes. The Muslims resumed paying taxes, but the Serbs continued to refuse. In villages near Skelani, the Muslim inhabitants refused to pay the taxes. Even worse, they threatened the Serb tax collector, whom they considered a nationalist ‘Chetnik’. In the village of Dobrak, Muslim women threw stones at him, after which he refused to ever return to any Muslim villages.⁴²³ Srebrenica’s overstuffed municipal bureaucracy was another problem Ibisevic tried to solve. It employed some one hundred and fifty people where seventy would have sufficed. By discharging forty people on early retirement, the number of employees working in the local bureaucracy was reduced by over twenty-five percent.

What Ibisevic does not mention is that most of these early pensioners were Serbs. Among them were directors of firms and of other institutions, such as the primary schools and the hospital. Moreover, they were replaced by Muslims loyal to the SDA. This process was carried out not without deliberately humiliating the Serbs. As one former Serb official, Veselin Stevanovic, put it during an interview, Ibran Mustafic ran into his office requesting the very desk at which he was working at the time.⁴²⁴ All of these developments nourished Serb fears that Muslims were using their political supremacy to take over the local economy and administration, and to take control of important firms and institutions as soon as they were privatised.⁴²⁵ And this process did indeed unfold throughout most of Bosnia, as well as in Serbia, where nationalist parties expelled members of the ‘other’ group from their jobs and positions as soon as they won the elections and took over local power. In this context, Serb authors refer to the ‘process of Islamicisation’ in SDA-dominated municipalities, such as those in eastern Bosnia.⁴²⁶ However, the same happened in Serbia: just across the border, in Ljubovija, numerous Muslims from Bratunac were dismissed from their jobs. Among them was Nijaz Dubiëic, the director of a firm, who later became the SDA mayor of Bratunac.⁴²⁷

Relations also worsened due to nationalist incidents and forms of symbolic warfare. These included the conspicuous use of nationalist banners and flags, and the practice of displaying photos of extremist leaders and other paraphernalia on cars and buses, as well as in cafés and restaurants, etc. Many Serbs, including moderates, became annoyed when Muslims hung two long banners across the road in Potoèari, a green Muslim banner and another featuring the nationalist Croatian *sahovnica* (chessboard). The banners were left to hang indefinitely.⁴²⁸ In the village of Glogova, it became fashionable for young men to shave their heads, dress in black, and call themselves Ustashe. The justifying rationale was: “If they can be Chetniks, we can be Ustashe just as easily”.⁴²⁹ Occasional incidents and conflicts between individuals of different ethnic backgrounds also exacerbated the

⁴²² Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.100-102.

⁴²³ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.104-105.

⁴²⁴ Interviews and conversations with Veselin Stevanovic 23/06/1998, Zdravko Noviëic 09/06/1998.

⁴²⁵ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp.146-147.

⁴²⁶ See Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božic*, pp.29-30.

⁴²⁷ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.16-17.

⁴²⁸ Interview: Veselin Stevanovic, 23/06/1998.

⁴²⁹ Z.B., ‘Majka Srbija’.

situation. Such problems occurred in Lijesce (a Serb village near Skelani) where a dispute escalated between Serb peasants and SDA activist, Ahmo Tihic, about the use of a small path over Tihic's land. Tihic blocked the path out of fear that it would develop into a permanent road, used not only by pedestrians, but also by vehicles. In May 1991, a mixed SDA-SDS delegation tried in vain to solve the conflict. The issue tended to polarise the entire community and to poison relations between local Serbs and Muslims. When the district court in Srebrenica decided in favour of the Serb peasants, the town's SDA government (supporting Tihic) refused to implement the judge's decision. The move gave new impetus to Serb complaints that they were living under a constant Muslim threat. Local Muslims, on the other hand, saw the demands of the Serb peasants in Lijesce as an expression of 'Great Serbian expansionism'. Ibisevic claims that the SDS thrived on such conflicts and that it was not really willing to solve them. However, he also ignores the fact that SDA leaders probably had just as little interest in ending this conflict. SDA officials refused to issue orders to the police to implement a court order.⁴³⁰

A similar problem arose concerning the building site of a Serbian Orthodox church in Skelani. The Serbs wanted a small piece of extra land belonging to the municipality next to the building site. The Muslims interpreted this as political provocation, a symbolic expression of Greater Serbian aspirations. The inhabitants of Skelani, Serbs and Muslims alike, had a reputation for not being particularly religious. Consequently, the common reaction among Muslims was: "why would they need a church in the first place?" Serbs justified it by pointing out that Muslims had built fifteen mosques in the municipality in the last two decades, while Serbs had built no churches at all. According to Ibisevic's rather one-sided perspective, the SDS used this conflict once again to reinforce the image of threatened Serbdom under Muslim domination. In the end, the Serbs simply took the three-metre wide strip of extra land and started to lay foundations for the church building without permission. When the foundations were completed, the Serbs organised a celebration to consecrate them. The bishop of Zvornik, as well as various other priests, took this opportunity to hold nationalist speeches and propagate slogans, adding extra fuel to the fire. Ibisevic was present at the event, as he was invited by Milenko Ćanic, but decided it was wiser not to address the crowd himself. Instead, he left the task to Cazim Salimovic, an old Communist who called for reason and self-restraint. In a small, but unfortunate slip of the tongue, Salimovic referred to the 'green' Drina river. This provoked an angry reaction from the Serbs: "Look, he talks about the green Drina! Fuck his fundamentalist mother! Because he's a communist, we thought he was a decent Muslim, but hear this!". Both Ibisevic and Salimovic felt intimidated and left, accompanied by gunshots from the Serb mob.⁴³¹

War was drawing close in Slovenia and even more so in Croatia, where the first armed clashes occurred between Serb paramilitaries and the Croatian police. In May and June, the extremist leader of one of these groups, Vojislav Seselj, incited panic in Bratunac and Srebrenica. Touring eastern Bosnia and areas across the border in Serbia, Seselj organised promotional meetings for his Radical Party. The Bosnian police set up checkpoints along the Drina, and on one occasion it sealed off the bridge near Skelani to prevent Seselj from crossing into Bosnia. Both Seselj's tour and the new Bosnian police checkpoints at the bridges crossing the Drina caused great unrest among Serbs and Muslims.⁴³² At this stage, Ibisevic and Mustafic persuaded Muslim men to stop responding to the mobilisation calls of the JNA. Ibisevic told them to go home, assuring them that the Srebrenican police had orders not to arrest them. He advised them to take refuge in the forests to hide from any military police that might come to fetch them. Some men left in order not to be mobilised by the JNA.⁴³³ SDA leaders also wrote to Muslim officers actively serving in the JNA, who had been born in the municipality of Srebrenica, calling on them to leave the JNA.⁴³⁴ As the first series of incidents unfolded along the Drina – shots were fired at Muslim villages from the territory of Serbia – the idea arose within the local SDA

⁴³⁰ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.107-109.

⁴³¹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.112-114. See also, Radulovic 'sve spremno za sukob'.

⁴³² Z.B. 'Majka Srbija'; Radulovic 'sve spremno za sukob'.

⁴³³ Interview: Becir Hasanovic 17/05/1998.

⁴³⁴ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.109.

leadership to establish a crisis staff to organise the local defence and arm the Muslim population. Ibran Mustafic and Hamed Efendic, however, opposed the establishment of SDA crisis staff, claiming that they could supply arms much more efficiently and discretely through their contacts in Sarajevo. After some discussion, most SDA Executive Council members accepted Mustafic's and Efendic's proposal, leaving the acquisition and further distribution of arms in their hands.⁴³⁵

Instead of keeping their promises, Mustafic and Efendic left the Muslims of Srebrenica completely unprepared for any armed conflict. In the villages, especially, many grew restless when the promised weapons were not delivered. In response, Ibisevic set up a number of local crisis staff units, who laid the groundwork for future Muslim resistance. However, the lack of arms proved to be an enormous problem. In early August, Mustafic and Efendic met with the Muslim directors of local firms to discuss the purchase of arms. They devised a plan to usurp municipal funds and to channel the money via a number of firms to the SDA, who was to buy the arms. One of the Muslim directors present at the meeting was also head of the municipal commission responsible for making decisions about these funds. The money was to be transferred to the bank accounts of three firms in Srebrenica. They would then pass it on via a Sarajevo bank account to Hamed Efendic, president of the SDA in Srebrenica. This method was intended to glean 1,400,000 dinars from municipal funds in order to purchase seventy rifles.⁴³⁶

During the summer of 1991, Naser Oric, the famous commander of the Muslim forces in Srebrenica during the war, entered on stage as Ibran Mustafic's confidant. He was born in 1967 in Potoèari, Ibran Mustafic's home village. They were related through Oric's mother whose maiden name was Mustafic. During the 1980s, Oric had done several jobs in Serbia, after which he followed a police course in Zemun. He applied for a job as a policeman in Srebrenica, but he was rejected because his grandfather had been a member of the Ustashe during World War Two. They accepted him in Belgrade, however, where he was soon recruited into a special police unit set up by Serbia's Ministry of Internal Affairs. Oric participated in actions against Albanian miners in Kosovo, during 1989 and 1990, as well as against the Serbian opposition in 1991. His extraordinary performance in these operations helped him to climb the ranks to one of Milosevic's bodyguards. He later fell into trouble when he was suspected of involvement in the murder of one of his colleagues, who was found dead a few days after a fight with Oric.

When the war in Croatia started, Oric returned to Bosnia and worked half a year as a police officer in Ilidza near Sarajevo. There, he was approached by an officer of Bosnia's Ministry of Internal Affairs, who asked him to go to Belgrade and try to persuade Muslim police officers working there to transfer to Bosnia. Oric claims to have responded to this request and recruited 150 Muslim policemen back to Bosnia. In the meantime, he moved back to Srebrenica, where he set up a small local militia of about thirty men, whom he trained in the hills near Potoèari.⁴³⁷ Serb sources claim that he and Adnan Karovic, another Muslim from Potoèari, were involved in the arms trade. Incidentally, Karovic was also the deputy commander of the police station in Zvornik. Together, the two are said to have organised several weapon transports from Croatia, via Tuzla and Zvornik, to Potoèari, where they sold these arms among the Muslim population. As soon as Adnan Karovic left for Croatia, Oric took over the entire organisation of this arms trade, at least according to Serb sources.⁴³⁸ Ibisevic writes, however, that it was Ibran Mustafic who was the key figure in these arms dealings and that Oric was merely his right

⁴³⁵ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.115-116; see also, Ibisevic 'Nisam pobjegao'.

⁴³⁶ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.117-118; see also Ibisevic 'Nisam pobjegao'.

⁴³⁷ For this short biography of Naser Oric I used: Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp.77-78, 150-151; Kamemica, 'U Kakanj'; Kamenica 'Zasto se nije vratio'; Maljukan, 'srebrenièki kapo'; Pargan 'Od legende'; *Dutchbat Srebrenica / Lukavac / Tuzla Milinfo*; July 1994 (MIDKL Dossier 1589); Chapter 1, Section D6; Westerman and Rijs, *Het zwartste scenario*, pp.51-53; Conversations: Naser Oric 23/10/2000, Momèilo Cvjetinovic 11/06/1998, Ibran Mustafic 16/04/1998.

⁴³⁸ Excerpts from police reports and interrogation records published in Serb sources seem to offer evidence of this. See Jovanovic et al, *Iskorenjivanje Srba*, pp.31-35. Miljanovic, *Krvavi Bozic*, pp.34-35. See also Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp.150-151.

hand, i.e. Mustafic's personal driver and bodyguard. They had their own local network and figureheads, such as Ahmo Tihic in Lijesce and the Muslim priest, Aziz Hasanovic, in Osmace, who sold the arms in their villages. Since Oric was employed as a local police officer, frictions occurred between Mustafic and Head of Police, Hamed Salihovic, who complained that Oric never showed up at work. Mustafic defended Oric against attacks by his boss, claiming that Naser was serving the broader interests of the Muslim people.⁴³⁹

During the summer, tensions mounted between Muslims and Serbs as a result of the war in Slovenia and Croatia. A number of local Serbs and Muslims went to Croatia to fight as volunteers on different sides. In the weekends, they would return, parading in their new uniforms. Others were recruited into the Yugoslav army and mobilised to the frontlines. Tensions also rose when JNA troops and paramilitaries were transferred to Bosnia, the base from which they carried out their operations on Croatian territory. Serb soldiers and paramilitaries often created small incidents, targeting Muslims or Islamic buildings, and adding fuel to the fire. In Skelani, a local Muslim primary school teacher was molested at this time. The perpetrator, a local Serb, fled to Serbia and was never arrested. This led to embitterment on the part of the Muslim population in the commune of Skelani.⁴⁴⁰ The schools now became part of the Serb-Muslim struggle. The SDA appointed Muslim directors at six of the seven primary schools in the municipality – the molested teacher being one of them. The SDS, in turn, began to boycott municipal council meetings in protest of these appointments. Incidentally, Serbs were not the ones to oppose these appointments. They were also opposed by quite a few Muslim teachers, who had been devoted communists and now sympathised with the SDP. In the primary school of Osat, for instance, both Muslim and Serb teachers defended their Muslim director, opposing the nomination of an SDA candidate to the position. In the end, however, the appointment went through.⁴⁴¹

Once the Serb-Muslim conflict began touching on the issue of who controlled the police and the army, the situation took a grave turn for the worse. In July 1991, Srebrenican authorities selected twenty-six Muslim boys for a three-month police course in Croatia, organised and sponsored by the SDA. The Belgrade press (particularly *Politika Ekspres*, a daily newspaper) now claimed that 'Ustashe' from Srebrenica were being trained in Croatia, to prepare them to partake in the massacres of Serb children. Lists of the trainees' names were also published. As a result of these reports, local Serbs started to see the Bosnian police as a Muslim militia, whom they refused to recognise as a legitimate police force. This led to tense incidents. In Skelani, for instance, a local SDS politician ignored a Muslim reservist policeman, who signalled him to stop. The policeman then stopped the man at gunpoint, which reinforced rumours of 'serbs being under threat'. Serbs in Skelani demanded that the Muslim reservist be dismissed. Trying to calm the situation, Hamed Salihovic gave in to the demand.

Nonetheless, tensions continued to mount as a result of such incidents. One of these occurred in the village of Zgunje, near Skelani. One night, a drunken Serb policeman there began a shooting spree. Terrified, the Muslim inhabitants fled to the forests. The next day, the Muslims responded by protesting at the police station in Skelani and erecting barricades at the bridge over the Drina. Local Serbs, in turn, set up barricades on the road to a Serb village. Ibisevic and Mustafic convinced the Muslim militants to remove their barricade, and thus managed to prevent the outbreak of a potentially very serious conflict. With tensions soaring rapidly at this point, Muslims in the villages along the Drina started to demand arms. Hamed Salihovic, Head of Police, saw to it that some weapons did indeed remain in Muslim hands. Fearing that Serbs would try to empty the weapon and ammunition stores of the police station in Skelani, he removed these weapons and transported them to Srebrenica in the

⁴³⁹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.118-119. Later, Mustafic reproached Salihovic for his hesitance about accepting Naser Oric into the police service (Ibisevic, 'Nisam pobegao'). Oric immediately removed Salihovic from his position as Head of Police when the war started. In May 1995, Salihovic was assassinated in the enclave, probably by Oric's men. Both Hamed Efendic (still the SDA president) and Ibran Mustafic survived the attack, which apparently targeted all three of them. Interview: Ibran Mustafic 16/04/1998, Besim Ibisevic 24/05/1998.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.119-120.

⁴⁴¹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.130-31; Komlenovic and Ivanisevic, 'sa Drine nema vedrine'.

middle of the night. The news soon spread among the Serb population in Skelani, triggering a new wave of protests: again a barricade was erected in Kalimanici.

These recurring incidents led to the activation of a local body called the National Defence Council on 17 July 1991. Set up to overtake the most urgent duties of the municipal council in times of crisis, this body's powers included introducing special measures to protect citizens and their properties. The new council consisted of twelve local officials. Eight of these were Muslims, including Besim Ibisevic, Ibran Mustafic, Hamed Efendic, and Ramiz Becirovic. The other four were Serbs: Milenko Èanic, Goran Zekic, Miloje Simic, and Miodrag Stanisavljevic. Ibisevic and Èanic agreed to organise a meeting in Skelani to discuss the situation with local Muslims and Serbs. This meeting took place in late July. Ibran Mustafic also attended, as did Desimir Mitrovic, a doctor at a hospital in Uzice, who was also the main local SDS 'ideologist'. It was at this meeting that the Serbs first put forth their demand to make Skelani a separate Serb municipality. This was unacceptable to the Muslims and led to fierce exchanges and mutual accusations. The meeting ended in dissension and the situation polarised even further.⁴⁴²

In August, the JNA arrived on the local scene for the first time. Two army officers from the Tuzla Second Corps and a number of soldiers entered Srebrenica in two vans. They had come to confiscate the local army card files in order to mobilise recruits and reservists. Muslims quickly gathered in and around the municipal building to prevent this. Besim Ibisevic removed the uninvited guests from the building with the help of two policemen. The news that the army had been chased out of town spread like wildfire. That afternoon, thousands of Muslims from surrounding villages and the town of Srebrenica itself gathered in front of the warehouse. Ibisevic addressed the crowd, saying that he refused to allow the army to recruit local Muslims and use them as cannon fodder to defend Serbian interests in Croatia. They were needed here, said Ibisevic, to defend their own town and to defend Bosnia. Most local Serbs regarded this Muslim protest meeting as an expression of growing anti-Serbian, anti-Yugoslav and anti-JNA sentiment. A number even interpreted it as a declaration of war against Serbia and the Serbian people. Some Serbs felt they that they needed leave Srebrenica.⁴⁴³

At the end of August 1991, the JNA Second Corps also attempted to confiscate the army card files in Bratunac. In the morning, Miroslav Deronjic and various other SDS officials entered the municipal building, demanding that the army card files be handed over. The Muslim caretaker refused. In the meantime, thousands of Serbs and Muslims gathered in front of the building. It was Friday, which was market day in Bratunac. The streets were already full of people, and many more – Serbs and Muslims alike - were mobilised from the villages over the next few hours. The Serb demonstrators urged the army to take the card files by force, if necessary, shouting "Armija", "Jugoslavija", and "Srbija". The Muslims, in turn, tried to prevent the army from taking such action. The chants on their side included: "Murderers", "Fascists", "This is Bosnia!" and "This is not Kosovo". Threats were exchanged. According to one Serb source, Mevludin 'Mevko' Sinanovic, a Muslim extremist, pulled out a dagger, kissed it and screamed: "The Vlachs [pejorative term for Serbs gd] will not live here, and this will teach them...!"⁴⁴⁴ A local SDS official reportedly videotaped the entire event from the roof of a building in the main street. Later, local Serb officials used the tape to identify Muslim 'extremists' when the war started.⁴⁴⁵

The mayor, Nijaz Dubièic, as well as the SDA president of Bratunac, Mirsad Kavazbasic, both tried to calm the situation, urging people to go home. They failed however, and the danger at hand began to rise to a boiling point, especially when the first army units arrived around 3:00 p.m. Around 10,000 Muslims and 5,000 Serbs had gathered. The Bosnian police sided with the Muslims, while the JNA joined forces with the Serbs. JNA soldiers pointed their guns at the Muslims, but shot in the air. When the Muslim police commander ordered his men to point their guns as well, Serb police officers

⁴⁴² Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.122-26.

⁴⁴³ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.129-30.

⁴⁴⁴ Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božić*, pp.32-33. Komlenovic and Ivanisevic, 'sa Drine', p.10.

⁴⁴⁵ See Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, p.9.

deserted their ranks to join the other side. Fortunately, the army decided to retreat, which prevented what would almost certainly have ended in bloodshed.⁴⁴⁶ Thinking Muslims were planning an attack on their village, Serbs in Kravica set up barricades and took some thirty Muslim young people hostage. They were released after one night.⁴⁴⁷ After these events, the SDA leaders in Srebrenica decided to transfer the local army card files from the municipal building to Potoèari.⁴⁴⁸

In August 1991, it became clear that the JNA's efforts to prepare Bosnian Serbs for war were well underway. Yugoslav Prime Minister, Ante Markovic, disclosed the existence of a secret army operation entitled 'RAM', which called for covert deliveries of weapons from JNA arsenals to local Serb forces in Croatia and Bosnia. Coordinated from Belgrade, the operation resulted in the delivery of hundreds of thousands of weapons to Serbs in several parts of Bosnia during 1990 and 1991. Markovic also released a telephone conversation, in which Milosevic instructed Karadzic to accept the arms delivered.⁴⁴⁹ According to the Slovene newspaper *Delo*, operation RAM was supplemented by plan for psychological warfare. This second plan was intended to tear down Muslim resistance if war broke out through the rape of girls and women and executions of Muslims in mosques.⁴⁵⁰ It became increasingly clear that the JNA's main objective after the disintegration of Yugoslavia was to protect the Serb population outside Serbia proper. One way it tried to ensure such protection was by supporting paramilitary forces and providing them with weaponry that the JNA had written off.⁴⁵¹ As a result of these activities, Kravica soon became a centre for arming and training Serbs from towns and villages from the municipalities of Bratunac, Srebrenica, Zvornik and Vlasenica. The JNA also built a new heliport in Bratunac, which was used for the delivery of weapons.⁴⁵² In November 1991, the JNA forces that had withdrawn from Croatia were redeployed in Bosnia. Some units were stationed in eastern Bosnia, such as in Zvornik and in Milici. The JNA strengthened its positions along the Drina, placing artillery on the mountains just across the border in Serbia and aiming it at Srebrenica.⁴⁵³

Alarmed by these developments, the Bosnian government decided to strengthen the police force by recruiting young men and training them in a six-month crash course. The police was the only armed force that the government could build up if the Serbs launched an assault on Bosnian territory.⁴⁵⁴ The authorities also started to form their own paramilitary units, called the 'Green Berets'. As compared to the (Bosnian) Serbs, however, the Bosnian government lagged far behind in its war preparations. The most important paramilitary force then became the so-called Patriotic League, which was created under the auspices of the Bosnian government. It had a reported strength of 3,500 troops. After the war started, it became the nucleus of the new Bosnian army.⁴⁵⁵ The first series of initiatives to create units of the Patriotic League in eastern Bosnia date to mid July 1991, when a regional steering committee met in Srebrenica. Dominated by the SDA, that meeting became known as the 'Podrinje initiative'. In it, the committee established the following action priorities: to retake possession of the weapons and other equipment belonging to the Territorial Defence, to prevent further disarmament, to start training members of the Patriotic League, and to prevent the JNA from seizing army archives.

⁴⁴⁶ For these events in Bratunac see: Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, p.9; Komlenovic and Ivanisevic, 'sa Drine nema vedrine'; Ibrahimovic, 'Pakleni vikend'; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp.147-148; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.21-22; Miljanovic, *Krvavi Bozic*, p.32; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp.37-38. Interviews and conversations with Mirsada Bakalovic 15/06/1998, 17/06/1998 and 19/06/1998; Mitko and Mevla Kadric 25/04/98.

⁴⁴⁷ Bosnjak, 'Da li je policija umijesena?'; Ibrahimovic, 'Pakleni vikend'.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.132-33. Komlenovic and Ivanisevic, 'sa Drine', pp.10-11. The JNA only succeeded in confiscating the card files in Zvornik. In Vlasenica, Srebrenica, and Bratunac, however, they were obstructed by the SDA's formidable resistance (Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.37).

⁴⁴⁹ Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, pp.149-50.

⁴⁵⁰ Bassiouni *Final report*, Annex III, p.21; Annex IV, p.27; Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, pp.149-50.

⁴⁵¹ Bassiouni *Final report*, Annex III, p.24.

⁴⁵² Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.36; Èekic, *The aggression on Bosnia*, p.66; interview: Boban Vasic 15/07/1998.

⁴⁵³ Bassiouni *Final report*, Annex III, p.22; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.60; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p.23, 30.

⁴⁵⁴ Interview: Becir Hasanovic 17/05/1998, Ibran Mustafic 16/04/1998.

⁴⁵⁵ Bassiouni *Final report*, Annex III, p.29; III.a, p.44. The Patriotic League (the original Green Berets) was a paramilitary organisation consisting largely of former JNA officers of Muslim backgrounds. See also, Vasic, 'The Yugoslav Army', p.135.

Even after this first step was taken, it took months to establish a military organisation. This task reached completion in early 1992 with the creation of the Patriotic League for the Tuzla region. Most of the staff consisted of former Muslim members of the Territorial Defence and JNA officers, who had deserted the army after the war in Croatia began. Although its core organisation was in place, the Patriotic League encountered numerous problems as it continued to develop. It faced a deplorable lack of arms and ammunition, causing some army officers to resign. One of these was Nedzib Husic, the commander for the region of Bratunac, Zvornik, and Vlasenica. In Bratunac, the SDA acquired only six automatic rifles and twenty-five pistols. Eventually, it was forced to rely on weapons in the possession of Muslim policemen and other licensed people. The Patriotic League in Bratunac also succeeded in seizing a considerable number of explosives from the Sase mines. However, despite all the signs of preparations for war among the Serbs, Muslims were generally not particularly eager, or willing, to organise resistance. Some Muslims accused SDA activists of contributing to the outbreak of a war in which Muslims stood no chance.⁴⁵⁶

Aside from the police and the Patriotic League, (a semi-official undertaking by the authorities), other Muslim paramilitary groups were created. However, these were usually little more than poorly armed village militia. There was one exception in Bratunac. In February 1991, Nurif Rizvanovic, a former JNA officer and undercover agent, established the *Muslimansko Nacionalno Vijeće* (MNV) or Muslim National Council. This was a militant organisation that tried to unite Muslims dissatisfied with the policies of the SDA and MBO. Rizvanovic was born in Glogova, had worked in Slovenia, and had served some years in prison for espionage for western intelligence services. Soon after his release, he returned to Glogova, where he was often seen together with Mevludin 'Mevko' Sinanovic.⁴⁵⁷ In press reports, Rizvanovic declared that his objective was to mobilise all Muslims of Yugoslavia, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds (including Bosnian Muslims, Muslims from the Sandzak, and Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia). He also announced the creation of units of volunteers. He established a steering committee in Glogova, and then set up similar committees in Konjevic Polje and Voljavica during the summer of 1991. Plans were made to establish a fourth MNV committee in Bratunac, but local SDA authorities prohibited its work, saying that the formation of paramilitary units would accelerate the break-up of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In early September 1991, Rizvanovic attended the celebrations of the first anniversary of the formation of the SDA. Held in the Bratunac stadium, the celebrations drew thousands of people. An embittered Rizvanovic addressed the crowd there, speaking out a prophecy that would later prove true: "We will see each other next year on the battlefield!" Within a few days, Rizvanovic returned to Slovenia, putting an end to his aspirations as a politician and paramilitary leader.⁴⁵⁸

The Kravica killing

Daily life in the municipalities of Srebrenica and Bratunac became punctuated by incidents, provocations, quarrels and café brawls. Certain cafés became gathering places for Serb or Muslim nationalists, who regularly burst into 'enemy' cafés to start fights. Serb and Muslim youth from villages infamous as hotbeds of nationalism, including Kravica and Potoèari, came to Bratunac every night to cause trouble.⁴⁵⁹ Kravica had an especially notorious history as a source of trouble. Feuds and

⁴⁵⁶ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.60-62.

⁴⁵⁷ Komlenovic and Ivanisevic, 'sa Drine', p.10.

⁴⁵⁸ See the interview with Nurif Rizvanovic in the Serbian magazine, *Duga* (Vasovic, 'Privatni dzihad'). See also, Delalic, 'Rizvanoviceva majka i brat tvrde', p.20; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.63-64; and Miljanovic, *Krvavi Bozic*, p.36. For reprints and translations of MNV documents, including a public invitation of the MNV to all Muslims to come to Bratunac on the first day of Bajram, see Jovanovic et al, *Iskorenjivanje Srba*, pp.15-19. See also, Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, p.136.

⁴⁵⁹ Interview: Becir Hasanovic 17/05/1998. A Serb chronicler describes how the authorities took little action against such provocations. See Miljanovic, *Krvavi Bozic*, p.39.

vengeance were a fairly normal part of village life.⁴⁶⁰ In light of this, no one was surprised when two Muslims were killed in an ambush near Kravica on 3 September 1991, the region's first victims of ethnic violence. Travelling by car, the Muslims ignored a group of Serb policemen, who signalled them to stop in the centre of Kravica. Instead, they drove full speed ahead, straight into an ambush prepared by Serb nationalists. The shooting was so heavy that it could be heard in Bratunac. As one of the perpetrators later declared, they wanted to put an end to Muslim provocations in Kravica. In the weeks preceding the incident, Muslim men had driven up and down the road through Kravica, yelling and insulting the local Serb population, waving green flags, and playing 'oriental' music. The Serbs wanted to teach these Muslims a lesson, especially Mevludin 'Mevko' Sinanovic, an extremist from Glogova, who had been in the car, but had managed to escape and survive the attack. Although the attack was carried out by two Serbs from Kravica and Ljubovija, Muslims thought that it had been orchestrated by the SDS and a Chetnik paramilitary group led by Radomir 'Raso' Milosevic. The perpetrators escaped to Croatia, where they fought as volunteers before returning to eastern Bosnia once the war started.⁴⁶¹

The next day, Muslims filled the streets of Bratunac, and tensions between Serbs and Muslims soared to unprecedented heights. Many Serbs and Muslims fled to Ljubovija (Serbia) for fear that the situation might explode. Schools and businesses closed down, and the authorities feared Muslims would start a general revolt. Muslims gathered in front of the police station, demanding an investigation to find the perpetrators of the Kravica killings. Their demonstrations continued throughout the night and following day. The demonstrators demanded the immediate resignation of Nezir Muratovic, Head of Police in Bratunac, and of Nikola Mandic, Police Commander. And indeed, both turned in their resignations after two days. Police troops from elsewhere were deployed in the town to keep the situation under control. The police also set up checkpoints throughout the municipality, which were manned twenty-four hours a day. Despite these measures, Muslims from the village of Voljavica witnessed Serbs crossing the Drina in small boats during the night; they were transporting arms into eastern Bosnia to distribute among the Serb inhabitants.⁴⁶² On the afternoon of 4 September, several police officials from Tuzla visited Bratunac. The next day, two prominent politicians, Ejup Ganic (SDA) and Nikola Koljevic (SDS), both members of the Bosnian presidency, arrived to urge their Muslim and Serb constituencies to stay calm. Ganic called on the Muslims not to take revenge for the attack, promising a thorough investigation. Koljevic, in turn, went to Kravica to inform local Serbs that the Bosnian police would not be entering their village. According to Muslim sources, police inquiries into the incident also revealed the involvement of three Bratunac police officers in the attack over and above the two perpetrators. One of these officers was Luka Bogdanovic, the future commander of Bratunac's Serbian police. None of the Serb perpetrators and accomplices in the attack were ever brought to trial, let alone convicted.⁴⁶³

After the Kravica incident, Muslims started to organise armed patrols in their villages and settlements with the few arms they had. Serbs did the same in their villages. However, they also evacuated women, children and the elderly to Serbia.⁴⁶⁴ Feelings of insecurity intensified, among other things, because clashes were occurring elsewhere, such as in the Visegrad area.⁴⁶⁵ Ibisevic's account clearly reveals how very difficult it was under the circumstances to maintain any degree of law and order, including in Srebrenica. The social fabric had more or less disintegrated. One of the main

⁴⁶⁰ Conversation: Zdravko Novičić 09/06/1998, Becir Hasanovic 17/05/1998, Boban Vasic 15/07/1998.

⁴⁶¹ For the Kravica incident, see Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp.36-37; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.25; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p.11; Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božić*, pp.39-41; Bosnjak, 'Da li je policija umijesena?'; Komlenovic and Ivanisevic, 'sa Drine'. Interviews: Mitko and Mevla Kadric, 17/01/1998, Becir Hasanovic 17/05/1998.

⁴⁶² Bosnjak, 'Da li je policija umijesena?'; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.26.

⁴⁶³ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.134-35. See also, Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp.36-37; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp.25-26. Interview: Ibro Verlasevic 01/06/1998. Luka Bogdanovic was arrested by the police and subjected to interrogations and lie detector tests. He was released after four days because - as he claims - they found no evidence against him. Conversation: Luka Bogdanovic, 15/09/1999.

⁴⁶⁴ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.60; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.37; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.26. Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božić*, p.41.

⁴⁶⁵ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp.90-91.

problems was the enormous rise in economic crime, such as the widespread theft of electricity in the villages and illegal chopping of trees in forests around Srebrenica. Muslim foresters accepted bribes to keep silent about the illegal transport of timber into Serbia. Measures to stop such practices failed. It was impossible to take any action against the trade, or the widespread corruption among foresters, road guards and policemen at the bridge in Skelani. Ibisevic writes that local Muslims were especially to blame for this. Many of them, having lost their incomes, needed money. Consequently, they resorted to chopping down walnut trees en masse, which were transported off to Serbia for a few hundred German marks per truckload. The theft of equipment from companies also became more common. As Ibisevic observes, everybody was stealing and it had become virtually impossible to protect state and communal property. The people appointed to protect the property were often corrupt. In fact, they were the ones who stole the most.⁴⁶⁶

After the Kravica killings, more incidents occurred near the Perucac dam. Serb gunmen shot at Muslim villages from the Serbian side of the Drina on 5 September 1991. The firing continued throughout most of the night. The next day, the inhabitants came to Srebrenica to demand protection. According to Ibisevic, the leader of the paramilitary forces who had organised the shootings was the brother of Bajina Basta's police chief. And he, in his turn, had provided the paramilitaries with arms and explosives. The JNA was also strengthening its positions along the Drina. Miodrag Jokic, the SDS extremist from Srebrenica, boasted to Ibisevic that the army had installed twenty-three cannons in the Tara mountains, which could scorch the municipality of Srebrenica within a few hours.⁴⁶⁷ The situation grew so tense that every village quarrel had the potential to escalate into a much larger-scale conflict. At this stage, municipal authorities and SDA and SDS party leaders were constantly moving from one locality to the next to extinguish the beginnings of would-be bonfires. To reduce tensions, local Muslim and Serb leaders called for a meeting on 24 September 1991 to discuss all contentious issues. Serbs put all their complaints on the agenda: the alleged discrimination of Serbs in the allotment of private building sites, the dismissal of Serb workers, the appointment of Muslim directors in primary schools, the removal of the army card files by the Muslim authorities, as well as the latter's refusal to forward regular calls for the army to Serb conscripts and reservists. The SDA added several other items: Serb obstruction of the work of local companies and that of the newly appointed officials in local communes, the excessive prolongation of negotiations regarding the distribution of directors' positions, the systematic absence of SDS members at municipal council meetings, and the refusal of Serbs to pay taxes.⁴⁶⁸

The coalition of nationalist parties that had replaced communist power after the elections was also disintegrating completely throughout the rest of Bosnia. In September 1991, the SDS began to create Serb Autonomous Areas or SAO-s, as it had previously done in Croatia.⁴⁶⁹ The SAO of Biracè was formed in eastern Bosnia, encompassing the municipalities of Bratunac, Srebrenica, Zvornik, Vlasenica, Sekovici, Kalesija, Zivinice, and Kladanj. Its assembly met regularly in Sekovici and Milici. At a meeting of the Bosnian parliament in mid October, the Muslim and Croat parties voted for a proposal that would make Bosnia a 'sovereign republic', formally part of Yugoslavia, but independent in practice. Radovan Karadzic, who attended the meeting, warned those present that this decision would lead Bosnia to war, and that Muslims might disappear as a people. The SDS delegation demonstratively left the parliamentary session. Only ten days later, the Bosnian Serbs created their own assembly, thereby underlining their determination to remain in Yugoslavia. This position was reinforced

⁴⁶⁶ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 135, 138, 172-173.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.136.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.137.

⁴⁶⁹ SOA stands for Srpska Autonomna Oblast (Serb Autonomous Area). See Burg and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p.73; Gow, 'After the flood', p.455.

by the Serbian referendum on 9 November, in which Bosnian Serbs voted against a sovereign Bosnia. Even in Srebrenica and Bratunac, many local Serbs took part in this referendum.⁴⁷⁰

Unwilling to cooperate any further with the Croats and Muslims who were heading for independence, the SDS stepped back from the state institutions – parliament, presidium and government – regarding the decisions taken by them as illegitimate. At the same time, the SDS started to carve out new ‘serb’ municipalities, such as Skelani and Milici, from the Muslim-dominated municipalities of Srebrenica, Vlasenica and Bratunac. The director of the Milici bauxite mines, Rajko Dukic, was one of the instigators of these plans.⁴⁷¹ As chairman of the SDS Executive Council, he held one of the highest positions within the party hierarchy in Bosnia as a whole. As such, he is still seen by many as the main mastermind behind the program of ethnic cleansing in eastern Bosnia. Dukic’s business empire was one of the main sponsors of the SDS. According to Muslim sources, his primary objective was to acquire full control over the economic resources and assets in eastern Bosnia. The main partners in this project were Jevto Subotic, director of ‘Biraè’, a large aluminium plant in Zvornik and Djordje Jovièic, the director of the Zvornik bank.⁴⁷² The hydroelectric plants on the Drina, near Zvornik and Bajina Basta, were already under Serbian control (i.e. they were owned by Serbia), securing the enormous energy resources needed for processing bauxite into aluminium.

In November 1991, the Yugoslav Army returned to the scene. At the start of the month, Hamed Salihovic, Head of Police, received a dispatch from the Second Army Corps in Tuzla, announcing the passage of JNA troops and vehicles through Srebrenica. Rumours spread that the JNA was planning to position its forces and heavy and light artillery in Brezani. A Serb village, Brezani lies southeast of Srebrenica on a plateau of great strategic importance. The JNA did exactly the same around Sarajevo and other Bosnian towns. Ibisevic protested to the commander of the Tuzla Army Corps, informing him that JNA forces were not welcome in Srebrenica. He even threatened with Muslim resistance (barricades) and acts of sabotage (destruction of roads and bridges). Milenko Gavric, the commander of the Tuzla Army Corps, threatened to arrest Ibisevic. Ibran Mustafic added fuel to the fire by telling Gavric that the only army welcome in Srebrenica was a Muslim one. Ibisevic called Izetbegovic to ask him whether he would support acts of direct resistance. Izetbegovic told him that he felt Muslims should put up resistance if they had enough weapons and stood a chance of defending themselves.⁴⁷³ In the face growing unrest among the town’s leadership, the command of the Second Army Corps abandoned its plans. At this stage, the JNA’s strategy was to take control silently of positions in eastern Bosnia, without attracting too much attention or provoking Muslim resistance. According to Muslim sources, between late 1991 and early 1992, the JNA supplied arms to many Serb villages, including Brezani, Podravanje, Orahovica and Ratkovici. Allegedly, every Serb in the region of Srebrenica was armed.⁴⁷⁴ It has also been reported that Serbs held army exercises in the area of Fakovici in early 1992.⁴⁷⁵

A year had passed since the elections, and the SDA and SDS had still failed to reached any agreement about the distribution of directors’ posts in various firms in Srebrenica. At this stage,

⁴⁷⁰ Burg and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp.73-79; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p.87; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.24; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p.27; Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.87.

⁴⁷¹ Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp.26-7; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.36. Several SDS activists from Srebrenica and Bratunac were involved in establishing and administering the Autonomous Region of Biraè, such as Goran Zekic, Miroslav Deronjic, Miodrag Stanislavljevic, and Milenko Èanic. Oric’s book contains the minutes of the SAO Biraè meeting on 5 February 1992 in Milici, where the discussion focused on closer ties to Serbia in economic policy as well as in the media (Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp.28-34).

⁴⁷² See Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp.12-13. Interview: Boban Tomic 11/11/1999. During the war, Dukic made huge profits by circumventing the sanctions imposed on Serbia, trafficking oil and expensive western consumer goods. Republika Srpska was exempted from the embargo and Boksit Milici, which also had an office in the centre of Belgrade, could freely buy oil and other products abroad. See Cohen, *Hearts grown brutal*, pp.178-82

⁴⁷³ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.141.

⁴⁷⁴ Some Serbs refused to take up arms against their Muslim neighbours. Muslim sources report cases of Serbs, who gave the weapons they had received from the JNA to Muslims when the war first broke out. See Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp.23,27.

⁴⁷⁵ Interview: Becir Hasanovic 17/05/1998.

divisions deepened within the SDA, with Mustafic and Efendic on one side and Ibisevic on the other. In his book, Ibisevic accuses Mustafic and Efendic of trafficking in arms and other dubious activities. This entire situation caused great dissatisfaction among the Muslim population in the villages along the Drina, as Efendic did not deliver the arms he had promised to them. Evidence of the abuse of the arms monopoly was piling up: Efendic and Tihic were selling arms only to those who had money, and not to those who needed them. Efendic also abused his position as local SDA President by opening a newsstand in Potocari called 'sDA'. Initially, many people thought it was an SDA party booth, but it was merely Efendic's private stand. Ibisevic claims that Efendic, unwilling to face growing criticism of his doings, refused to call any further meetings of the SDA's local Executive Council, thus paralysing the party's work.⁴⁷⁶

Radio Srebrenica was another bone of contention, in this case between Serbs and Muslims. As the director of the Culture House, Bosko Milovanovic, a Serb, was officially in charge of the station. And he employed only Serb journalists (including Momèilo Cvjetinovic and Marinko 'Kokeza' Sekulic). One Muslim was employed as a technician. Muslim nationalists claimed that Radio Srebrenica followed a pro-Serbian policy, and that it had become a propaganda instrument. In response, Ibisevic decided to bring it under SDA control. The municipal council suspended work at the radio station until a new, Muslim team was nominated. In late November 1991, all Serb journalists were dismissed and a Muslim became the chief editor. This decision was communicated to Milovanovic, who simply ignored it. In the end, the police closed the station down and sealed it.⁴⁷⁷ In his crusade against Bosko Milovanovic, Ibisevic also accused him of financial embezzlement and theft, which he claims was later proven during an investigation. SDS leaders, Goran Zekic and Milenko Èanic, begged Ibisevic to stop his campaign, but Ibisevic refused. Zekic admitted that Milovanovic was a thief, but pointed out that he was not the only one in Srebrenica, and that it would be unfair to persecute only him.⁴⁷⁸

In December 1991, Bosnia-Herzegovina applied for diplomatic recognition by the European Community. The EC stipulated that a referendum, which was to be held on 29 February and 1 March 1992, was to settle the question of independence. The Bosnian Serbs, in their turn, proclaimed their own Republic on 9 January 1992, and declared that it was to remain part of Yugoslavia if Bosnia's independence was to be recognised by the international community. On the local level, Serbs were still in the process of forming new 'serb' municipalities. The Serb municipality of Skelani was created in December 1991. At a meeting in Kravica in early 1992, the SDS of Bratunac formed the new Serb municipality of Bratunac. Ljubisav Simic (a Serbian literature teacher) became the 'Mayor' of this Serb municipality. Rodoljub Djukanovic was appointed as the President of the Executive Council, and Milutin Milosevic as the Head of Police. With the formation of these parallel Serb institutions, the existing municipal organs, which were dominated by the SDA, were completely paralysed.⁴⁷⁹ The same happened in Vlasenica, where, in March 1992, the Serb municipality of Milici was created. The final tug-of-war between Serb and Muslim nationalists over the territories, resources, and economic assets of eastern Bosnia had started.

In January 1992, the economic factor in the Serb-Muslim conflict surfaced during a strike at the bauxite mine of Podravanje. The mine, which was located on the territory of the municipality of Srebrenica, had been opened and developed by 'Boksit Milici', but was now controlled by Muslims and run by a director who became a prominent SDA leader. According to Serb sources, he recruited Muslim employees only, completely excluding local Serbs from Podravanje from jobs in the mine.⁴⁸⁰ After JNA units arrived in Milici in late 1991, Serb miners commandeered the machines and equipment

⁴⁷⁶ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.144-45.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.165-66; conversations Momèilo Cvjetinovic 23/06/1998 and 14-15/09/1999, Marinko Sekulic 10/11/1998 and 14/11/1998. Ibisevic claims he dismissed Serb journalists in January 1992, while Cvjetinovic has stated that this happened on 21 November 1991.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.165-169.

⁴⁷⁹ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p.17. See also, Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božić*, p.30.

⁴⁸⁰ Interviews: Dukic 14/06/2000, Cvjetinovic 11/06/1998.

of the Podravanje mine in order to end what they felt was the ‘Muslim’ exploitation of ‘serb’ bauxite reserves.⁴⁸¹ Muslim workers showed up at the municipal office in Srebrenica to demand the return of the mine’s equipment. However, the authorities felt it too risky to send in the local police to retake possession. It was commonly known that the JNA had distributed weapons among local Serbs, and that additional paramilitary troops had arrived in Podravanje from other places.

The Serb workers of ‘Boksit’ Srebrenica formed a strike committee, demanding the resignation of the Muslim director, Mirsad Kavazbasic (who was also president of the SDA in Bratunac at the time). The committee pointed out that the ratio of Muslims to Serbs among the employees had once been fairly equal (55% to 45%), but that this had changed after Kavazbasic’s appointment as director some six years earlier. Several meetings were organised in Srebrenica and Sarajevo, but nothing helped to solve the problem. Ibisevic writes that the Serbs from Podravanje had been incited by the SDS, and that the JNA was lying in wait to intervene if things escalated. In February 1992, Serbs proposed dividing the firm and its machines and equipment. Despite attempts at a compromise solution, however, the situation remained unresolved.⁴⁸² The mine did not resume operations in the three months before the war broke out. Similar divisions emerged in the Sase mine, albeit without the far-reaching consequences seen in Podravanje. There, the Serb miners established a separate Serb trade union.⁴⁸³

On 29 January 1992, the local SDA party held its first regular assembly in Srebrenica’s Culture House. As Ibisevic observes, instead of discussing how to defend the town in the ever-approaching war, the delegates were much more preoccupied with fighting enemies among their own people. Avdo Hasanovic, a Muslim doctor and SDA Executive Board member, tried to ban his colleague, Sabit Begic, from Srebrenica’s Health Centre, as Begic was vice-president of the Social-Democratic SDP. Hasanovic proposed that the SDA assembly bar Begic from treating members of the SDA, which it accepted by acclamation. Muslim unity also fell under serious threat elsewhere. In Lijesce, tensions mounted between Ahmo Tihic and inhabitants of villages along the Drina, who complained that only a limited number of families were able to obtain weapon licenses. They claimed that Tihic ensured that others would be prevented from obtaining these licenses. Tihic’s involvement in the secret arms dealings of Hamed Efendic and Ibran Mustafic dealt yet another blow to his reputation.⁴⁸⁴ Faced with defending themselves against growing criticism from the population, these men now claimed that the worst was over, that ‘there would be no war’. They told people that it was unnecessary “to throw away money on weapons”, even though they had been selling weapons before. Ibisevic accused Mustafic and Efendic of lulling people to sleep, and of delivering all the arms available into the hands of a select few in Potocari.⁴⁸⁵

Late February 1992 witnessed the referendum on Bosnia’s independence. The SDA Mayor of Srebrenica, Ibisevic, saw this as a historical opportunity for Bosnia to acquire its own sovereign state. To achieve this higher goal, he admits his involvement in small irregularities, such as collecting the

⁴⁸¹ This was not the only case in which villages claimed ‘their’ natural resources. During the summer of 1991, the Muslim villagers of Luka stood up to the SIP ‘Drina’ forestry company, as they felt the company was exploiting local forests without giving the local population anything in return. Similar protests occurred in the Serb village of Brezani six months later. In the newly created Serb municipality of Bratunac, ‘Drina’ was also banned from chopping ‘serbian forests’. Serbs from Kravica obstructed the firm’s activities and attacked its employees. Most workers had to be discharged on involuntary leave. Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.161-62; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.15. Interview: Hasan Nuhanovic 16/06/1998.

⁴⁸² Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.148-55.

⁴⁸³ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.162; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p.15.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.156-58.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibisevic himself, however, had also contributed to this – at least to some extent. One small episode is worth mentioning here. In February 1992, a 22 mm anti-aircraft gun disappeared at the battery factory in Potoèari. In June 1990, when local Territorial Defence arsenals were emptied by the JNA, the army left the gun because it had been unable to transport it. When Stanislavljevic (head of the Territorial Defence) told Ibisevic that the JNA was going to take it, Ibisevic informed Mustafic and Efendic, who removed it. See: Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.162-63; Mandzic, ‘Zlatni Ljiljani’, p.37. Interviews Besim Ibisevic 24/05/1998, Momèilo Cvjetinovic 11/06/1998.

votes of “dead souls”, i.e. of Muslims who had died but had not been removed from the list of voters.⁴⁸⁶ He also campaigned in the villages, explaining to peasants the importance of their participation in the referendum. As he recounts, he urged them “to register all people present and absent, all those dead and alive: let all of them vote for an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina - so history will not find fault with us!”⁴⁸⁷ The municipality’s Muslim population voted almost unanimously for Bosnia’s independence, while the Serbs boycotted the referendum. In Sarajevo, the referendum sent tensions between Serbs and Muslims soaring to unprecedented heights, culminating in the killing of a Serb wedding guest in the town’s old centre, and the erection of barricades by Serb gunmen. Rajko Dukic, who had become president of the SDS Crisis Committee, was closely involved with these barricades, negotiating directly with Izetbegovic and setting the conditions for their removal.⁴⁸⁸

Although war was now drawing near, the SDA Executive Board of Srebrenica did not call a meeting to discuss the situation. As no meeting had taken place for almost two months, Ibisevic went on 24 March 1992 to the SDA headquarters in Sarajevo. He discussed the situation with Omer Behmen, who bore primary responsibility for SDA problems at the municipal level. Ibisevic also met with Hasan Èengic, who was surprised to hear from Ibisevic that Srebrenica was unprepared for war. He had been informed by Hamed Efendic that the SDA in Srebrenica was ready. They also discovered that Ibisevic had not received the gun sent to him by SDA headquarters. Other weapon deliveries from the SDA Headquarters to Srebrenica had ended up in the hands of people who traded them away on the black market. Èengic then gave instructions to Ibisevic to organise the town’s defence. In a telephone conversation the very same day, he urged Efendic to call a meeting of the SDA Executive Board immediately. Efendic set up a five-member SDA crisis committee, which never met again simply because it was too late and events accelerated rapidly out of control.⁴⁸⁹

At this stage, the local security situation worsened by the day. At a meeting for workers of the SIP ‘Drina’ forestry company in Zeleni Jadar, Ibran Mustafic demonstrated his talent for demagoguery once again. He told everyone present that the time had finally come to settle accounts with the Serbs, whom he accused of all kinds of economic crime and sabotage. He did not realise that Serb workers were present at the meeting. Naturally, they informed Miodrag Jokic about the matter. Jokic, in turn, passed on the information to the Serbian press, which published stories of Muslims in Srebrenica preparing for a massacre of Serbs on the Muslim holiday of Bajram.⁴⁹⁰ Many Serbs decided to flee from Srebrenica. Parents took their children out of school, and many abandoned their jobs and left town. SDS leaders, such as Miodrag Jokic, urged Serbs to take refuge in Serbia in order to avoid the Bajram ‘massacre’ that Muslims were allegedly preparing for the Serbs.⁴⁹¹ The Muslims of Srebrenica watched with growing alarm as their Serb neighbours packed their belongings and left for Serbia, loading furniture, electrical equipment, and even windows, doors and posts onto trucks. These developments struck fear in the hearts of the Muslim population, as they felt they had nowhere to go.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁶ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.159.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p.163.

⁴⁸⁸ Dukic’s company, Boksit Milici had a branch office in the Holiday Inn hotel in Sarajevo, which became the SDS nerve centre at the start of the war. Mirko Krajisnik, brother of SDS heavyweight, Momèilo Krajisnik, was head of the Boksit Milici office in Sarajevo. In interviews, Dukic has minimised his role, claiming that the barricades were erected entirely spontaneously. He also denies widespread accusations that his company played a crucial role in financing the SDS, embezzling oil from the republican reserves of BiH in early 1992, and purchasing weapons. For Dukic’s role, see: Andjelic, ‘Poplacen je bio spreman’; Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p.118; Cohen, *Hearts grown brutal*, p.193; documents from the Rajko Dukic collection: *Obavjestenje kriznog staba srpskog naroda BiH*, dated 02/03/1992, and *Magnetofonski snimak 56. sjednice Predsjedništva SRBiH, održane 2. marta 1992. godine*, dated 02/03/1992; interviews: Mitko and Mevla Kadric 17/01/1998; Hasan Nuhanovic 16/06/1998.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.170-72.

⁴⁹⁰ Interviews: Marinko Sekulic 10/11/1998, Sefkija Hadziarapovic 22/05/1998. Later, in May, in an interview with *Ilustrovana politika*, Jokic claimed that Muslims intended to kill all Serbs during a joint SDA-SDS meeting in Hotel Domavija, which was planned for 6 April, the first day of the Bajram celebrations (Milanovic ‘Ubice su medju nama!’).

⁴⁹¹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp.173-74. Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp.334-336.

⁴⁹² Interview: Abdulah Purkovic, 04/02/1998.

Chapter 6

War In Eastern Bosnia

“Novi borci, novi praznici, novi sveci”

(New fighters, new holidays, new saints)

Dobrisav Koèevic, former Communist official of Srebrenica, in NIOD interview 26/06/1998

[Interviewer:] Do you believe in the church and in God?

[Arkan:] Yes I believe. Didn't you see my cross?

[Interviewer:] No, I didn't.

[Arkan:] Here, I will show you, this is the cross of the Serbian Volunteer Guard made of 34.5 grams of gold. I take it always with me. Here, you see the date when the guard was created. I can tell you, there are quite a few bishops who are envious of my cross.

Zeljko Raznjatovic 'Arkan' in an interview with journalist Dusica Milanovic, November 1992⁴⁹³

Recognition of Bosnia's independence and fights in Bijeljina

In late March 1992, just days before the European Community recognised Bosnia's independence (on 6 April), heavy fighting broke out in Bijeljina. Situated in northeastern Bosnia not far from the Serbian and Croatian border, this small town had a mixed population (the majority of which were Muslim). Even during 1991, when war was sweeping across Croatia, Bijeljina had been strategically important because of its location on the transit route between Serbia and the Krajina, from which Serbs in Croatia were supplied with arms. From the very onset of the war in Croatia in August 1991, the situation in Bijeljina was very tense. Serb gunmen established roadblocks and checkpoints and by the end of the year, they were levying tolls on vehicles passing through Bijeljina. Once the war in Croatia ended, in January 1992, Serb paramilitary forces crossed over into Bosnia, further exacerbating the situation. These forces were scattered around Serb-dominated areas, at the flashpoints of possible future conflicts, mainly in the northern and eastern parts of the country. Among them were the Arkan Tigers who established their presence in Bijeljina several weeks before the outbreak of the war.

On 31 March 1992, Arkan sent more troops from Serbia across the Drina. He attacked Bijeljina, making short work of a small Muslim militia that had been organized by the SDA. The SDA forces consisted partly of what were called *muhadžeri*, i.e. new settlers in Bijeljina who came from much more backward areas, such as Srebrenica and Bratunac.⁴⁹⁴ These Muslim militants fought back for about three days, erecting barricades and placing snipers on several high buildings in the town's centre. By 2 April, however, almost all barricades and sniper nests had been eliminated, and the next day, Bijeljina fell under full Serb control. JNA troops stationed not far from Bijeljina stayed inside their barracks on

⁴⁹³ Milanovic, 'Arkanov srpski san'.

⁴⁹⁴ *Borba*, 1992-04-03, p. 3.

receiving orders from Belgrade not to intervene. The local police, who had formed mixed Serb-Muslim patrols to keep the situation in check, also decided not to intervene in what was basically a battle between Muslim and Serb nationalist paramilitary forces. Once the Muslim militia fled Bijeljina, the Tigers and other local militia went from house to house, looting the Muslim homes and killing some of the inhabitants. According to press reports, at least forty-two people, almost all Muslims, died during these events. (Other sources place the death tolls in the several hundreds, though these figures appear to be grossly overestimated). Bodies were left lying in the streets, and were only removed when the fighting stopped. An SDS crisis committee took control of the local government with assurances that 'loyal' Muslims would not be harmed. Serb and Muslim inhabitants, who had fled the town to surrounding villages or to Serbia, began returning to their homes. During the following weekend, local Muslims celebrated the feast of *bajram*. Tensions diminished after Arkan's announcement on the local radio that everyone who had not participated in the fighting would be safe. "Let honourable Muslims," said Arkan, "freely make their famous pita-s at home today, and let them invite us. We will be their guests, because we have been their liberators as well. To Mr. Izetbegovic we want to say that he has bad advisors and that there will be no chance to establish a *mujahedin* state in this part of Europe".⁴⁹⁵

The Serb attack on Bijeljina prompted the Bosnian presidency to call for a general mobilisation. It decided to allow municipalities that were under Serb threat to raise Territorial Defence forces and to arm the population. In Sarajevo, paramilitary groups of both sides appeared on the streets. The Serbian media, in turn, accused the Bosnian presidency of being "selective" in its concern, saying it responded only to the clashes in Bijeljina yet ignored similar events in Kupres, Bosanski Brod and in the Neretva valley, where the main victims were Serbs.⁴⁹⁶ Unlike other eastern Bosnian towns, Bijeljina was not immediately cleansed of its Muslim population. Most Muslims were allowed to stay, and tried to establish a *modus vivendi* with the new SDS authorities. To avoid trouble, many Muslims decided to change their names into Serbian ones. Some Muslims converted to Orthodoxy to ensure they would not be expelled from their homes. (Others were forcibly 'baptised' in mock rituals by Serb paramilitaries, as documented in film footage of Bijeljina). Most Muslims remained in the town until the Serb SDS authorities started to expel its non-Serb inhabitants in 1993 and 1994.⁴⁹⁷

Three days after the Serbs took Bijeljina, the European Community recognised Bosnia's independence. This triggered the beginning of a full-scale war. Sarajevo became the focus of world attention. On 5 April, Serb snipers opened fire from the Holiday Inn hotel in Sarajevo, killing half a dozen people demonstrating for peace in the streets of the Bosnian capital. The Holiday Inn was the seat of the SDS crisis committee, which was headed by Boksit Milici, director Rajko Dukic.⁴⁹⁸ On 6 April 1992, after the SDS left its Sarajevo headquarters, the shelling of the town began. Izetbegovic declared a state of emergency. The next day, the Bosnian Serbs proclaimed the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (SRBiH), later to be renamed Republika Srpska. Immediately, they claimed two thirds of Bosnia's territory. In what appears to have been one massive military effort coordinated from Belgrade, local Serb militia, paramilitary forces from Serbia, and JNA forces took control of seventy percent of Bosnian territory in just a few weeks. Eastern Bosnia was invaded by paramilitary troops and the JNA, who launched an assault on towns along the Drina. SDS crisis committees were established all

⁴⁹⁵ *Borba*, 1992-04-06, p. 4. For the events in Bijeljina see: Silber and Little, *The death of Yugoslavia*, pp. 247-48; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp. 96-97; Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 119; Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex III.a: 136-138; Zafirovic, 'susret'. I also consulted press reports in *Politika* and *Borba*.

⁴⁹⁶ For these other clashes, see: Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 119; Jovanovic et al, *Iskorenjivanje Srba*, pp. 42-51.

⁴⁹⁷ For the situation in Bijeljina in 1993 and 1994, see the Humanitarian Law Center reports, 'Bijeljina' and 'Banja Luka and Bijeljina'. See also Williams and Cigar, *A prima facie case*, p. 15. Conversation with: Slavica Stančić 09/11/1999.

⁴⁹⁸ Dukic played a crucial role on the eve and during the beginning of the war. Trucks from 'Boksit' were used to erect barricades in Zvornik before the town was attacked and run over by Serb paramilitaries and the JNA (Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex IV, pp. 45-46). At the ICTY, in the Dragan Nikolic case, two Muslim witnesses named him as one of the main organisers of the take-over of Vlasenica in April 1992 (ICTY 12-10-95). See also Stamenkovic, 'Opet ce se Dukic pitati'.

over Serb-held Bosnia to plan and carry out the ethnic cleansing of non-Serbs. These committees were assisted in this by the JNA and various paramilitary forces from Serbia and Montenegro.⁴⁹⁹

The UN *Final Report of the Commission of Experts established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992)*, published by the head of that commission, Cherif Bassiouni, provides a detailed picture of the organization of this campaign of ethnic cleansing and the almost symbiotic nature of the cooperation between the army, local militia and paramilitary groups.⁵⁰⁰ Typically, the JNA took possession of strategic positions and then proceeded to shell Muslim settlements, after which the paramilitaries entered. In many cases, Serb inhabitants would receive notice in advance to leave the area. Once the paramilitaries took control of a town or village, they began terrorizing the non-Serb population, killing innocent civilians and looting their homes. They did this with help from members of the local SDS crisis committees, who pointed out which houses to target. Local administration was taken over by the SDS crisis committees, often in conjunction with the paramilitary groups. Finally, non-Serbs were detained and evicted, and their property confiscated.⁵⁰¹

As the Bassiouni report notes, Serb combatants, including those in the regular army, usually did not wear distinctive uniforms, recognisable emblems or insignias of rank. Officers freely moved from army to militia and from one unit to another, and the command structures were unclear even to insiders. What had emerged was “a multiplicity of combatant forces” operating within different command structures or without any structure at all, merging and cooperating in ad hoc combinations during specific operations. Although local Serb TO forces had a separate command structure, they frequently operated within the framework of the regular army and under regular army command. At times, however, they also operated independently of the army. According to the report, the unclear and hazy chains of command helped to conceal responsibility, and provided a shield of plausible deniability. This situation “seems to have been purposely kept that way for essential political reasons”.⁵⁰²

A crucial role was reserved for various paramilitary groups. These consisted of armed bands and ‘special (police) forces’ from Serbia, as well as local (police) forces augmented by small groups of armed civilians. The latter groups were active in their own towns and villages under local SDS leadership. The former groups, however, were mobile forces operating throughout all of what was once Yugoslavia, springing into action as soon as war swept over a particular region. (This was mainly the case in Croatia and Bosnia, and later also in Kosovo). They received weapons from and were trained by the Serbian Ministry of the Interior, yet these links were not always publicly known and they were usually denied both by government officials and paramilitary leaders.⁵⁰³ The first paramilitary units were established towards the end of 1990, at a time when non-Serbs were still recruited into the JNA. As it was unclear what the JNA’s role would be in the case of future armed conflicts, many nationalist politicians in Serbia (but also in Croatia and Bosnia) decided to create their own armed forces.⁵⁰⁴ Only after the war broke out in Slovenia and Croatia did the JNA transform itself into a Serbian army. And instead of defending the integrity and constitutional order of Yugoslavia, that army now served the interests of Serbs outside Serbia in republics that wanted independence. During this period, non-Serbs were walking out on the army en masse, leaving the JNA with serious personnel and recruitment problems. Unsuccessful efforts to mobilise reservists only added to the recruitment problem. By and large, Serb reservists had little inclination to join the army and morale was at an historic low after the JNA’s

⁴⁹⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁰⁰ The ‘Bassiouni report’ is a study of the first years of the Bosnian war, and includes several annexes on, among other things, the military structure of the ‘warring factions’ and the strategies and tactics employed by them, the policy of ethnic cleansing, the establishment of prison and concentration camps, and the destruction of public and cultural property. The report also gives a day-to-day account of the siege of Sarajevo (until 1994) and includes case studies of ethnic cleansing in the towns of Prijedor and Zvornik (by Serb forces), and in the Medak pocket (by Croat forces).

⁵⁰¹ See also Williams and Cigar, *A prima facie case*, p. 9-10.

⁵⁰² Bassiouni, *Final report*, pp. 30-32.

⁵⁰³ Bassiouni, *Final report*, pp. 31-32. For the intimate links between the paramilitaries and Milosevic’s regime (particularly the Serbian Ministry of the Interior) and the Yugoslav Army, see Williams and Cigar, *A prima facie case* (especially pp. 34-54).

⁵⁰⁴ Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex summaries and conclusions, p. 11.

humiliating military defeat in Slovenia in June 1991. The army needed the paramilitaries, and in July 1991, the JNA High Command took the (secret) decision to grant volunteers full status as members of the armed forces. With this decision, the JNA opened its gates to the paramilitaries, as well as to extreme nationalist ‘believers’, right-wing militants, and ordinary criminals.⁵⁰⁵

Aside from the plethora of small bands, the most well-known and notorious of the paramilitary groups were the Serbian Volunteer Guard, better known as the Arkan Tigers, Seselj’s Chetnik Movement, and the White Eagles. The Arkan Tigers were established in October 1990 by Zeljko Raznjatovic, alias ‘Arkan’. A former bank robber, Raznjatovic had also carried out assassinations for the Yugoslav secret police abroad. Initially, the Arkan Tigers operated illegally. In August 1991, however, Arkan became the commander of a paramilitary training centre in Erdut (Slavonia) under the auspices of the Serbian Ministry of the Interior – particularly Radovan ‘Badza’ Stojić, a former policeman and confidant of Milosevic. Arkan recruited his men mainly from the Red Star Belgrade supporters club, of which he was president.⁵⁰⁶ The Arkan Tigers fought in Croatia and later also in Bosnia. They were armed with tanks, mortars, sniper guns, machine guns and other modern infantry arms, and were also highly mobile.⁵⁰⁷ During their operations they often received artillery and logistic support from the JNA. The Tigers had a reputation for being extremely ruthless, and as they formed the vanguard of the attacking forces, they were first in line to loot. In general, all paramilitary groups sustained themselves primarily through looting, theft, ransom and trafficking.

Vojislav Seselj, the leader of the extreme rightwing, nationalist Serbian Radical Party, created his own paramilitary forces in late 1990. In April 1991, he carried out his first operation in Borovo Selo near Vukovar in Croatia, attacking a police patrol and killing several Croatian policemen. Later, Seselj participated in the ethnic cleansing operations in Bosnia and in Serb actions against Muslim forces around Srebrenica in late 1992.⁵⁰⁸ The third major paramilitary group was the White Eagles, led by ultra-nationalist intellectual, Dragoslav Bokan. Initially, the White Eagles had ties with Mirko Jovic’s SNO (Serbian National Renewal). A rightwing party, the SNO had played an active role in stirring up Serb nationalist sentiment in eastern Bosnia (for instance, in Milici) before the war.⁵⁰⁹ During the war, they participated in the killing and looting in Vukovar, the counties of Zvornik and Visegrad, and other Bosnian and Croatian counties. They also worked together with the JNA, Serb TO forces and local police, as well as other paramilitary groups.⁵¹⁰ The Bassiouni report estimates the total number of paramilitaries that fought in Bosnia and Croatia during the first years of the war to fall between 20,000 to 40,000.⁵¹¹

Although these forces usually fell under the army’s chain of command, the JNA failed to restrain them from committing war crimes against civilians. The lack of effective control over the army is among the factors contributing to the numerous excesses. However, as Bassiouni points out, it was probably also part of a deliberate policy of ethnic cleansing aimed at ridding strategic areas – linking Serbia proper with Serb-inhabited areas in Bosnia and Croatia – of their non-Serb populations as

⁵⁰⁵ See Ciric, ‘svi smo mi dobrovoljci’; Vasic, ‘The Yugoslav Army’, p. 128, 134; Williams and Cigar, *A prima facie case*, pp. 29-30. Some sources say that only fifty percent of Serb reservists obeyed summons to report for army duty. In Belgrade, this figure was a mere fifteen. Many men of military age went into hiding. Moreover, thousands of those who were involuntarily mobilised (particularly from the province of Vojvodina) deserted, usually ending up in Hungary or other European countries. See: Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 84.

⁵⁰⁶ For Arkan, see also Bassiouni, *Final report*, p. 76; Annex III.A, p. 31; Annex IV, p. 33; Williams and Cigar, *A prima facie case*, p. 14-15, 68-69, 80; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp. 97-98; Vujasinovic, ‘Ratnik’, ‘Pedagoska poema’; Komlenovic, ‘Arkanzas’; Nerazzini, ‘Ko stiti’; Thomas, *Serbia*, pp. 94-95.

⁵⁰⁷ Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex III.a: 24.

⁵⁰⁸ Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex III.a, p. 23; Andonovski ‘Odmah bih isao u Hag’; Thomas, *Serbia*, pp. 96-98; Williams and Cigar, *A prima facie case*, pp. 13, 15-16.

⁵⁰⁹ Malenica, ‘Pustite nas’.

⁵¹⁰ For Dragoslav Bokan’s White Eagles, see Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p. 39; Thomas, *Serbia*, pp. 95-96; Anastasijevic, ‘Èerupanje orlova’; Williams and Cigar, *A prima facie case*, p. 16; Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex III.a, pp. 130-32.

⁵¹¹ Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex Summaries and Conclusions, p. 14. For an overview of paramilitary groups, see Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex III.a - Special Forces.

swiftly and efficiently as possible.⁵¹² Instead of organising ‘decent’ deportations of unwanted populations, Serb officials relied on terror and brutality to drive Muslims away and strip them of any desire to ever return.⁵¹³ An unbridled army also permitted senior military and political leaders to claim they were unaware of such brutal violence or were unable to control it, as it was carried out largely by criminals, former prisoners, urban dropouts, uneducated young people from rural areas, and other individuals in the margins of society for some reason or other. Acts of brutality and savagery were publicized by the perpetrators to maximize the effect of the terror. This not only caused Muslims to flee, but also had another convenient side-effect: it intimidated other Serbs into submission. No one in his right mind would dream of confronting these people, or even worse, of reaping the material benefits of ethnic cleansing, of dipping into the booty once the dirty part of the whole job had been done.⁵¹⁴ All of these developments and circumstances appear to have been part of a deliberate policy that was planned and coordinated by Bosnian Serb politicians with the support and direct and indirect involvement of the Yugoslav government and the JNA.⁵¹⁵ As Cornelia Sorabji writes, although much of the violence was neither bureaucratic nor centralised, and although it appeared to be the disorganised work of ‘out-of-control’ extremists, the context *was in fact* organised. The violence stemmed from a kind of ‘franchise organisation,’ in which general aims were established at the top, and specific details were left to local initiative. Small politicians and commanders were free to organize the violence in their respective regions, allowing local ‘freelancers’ to inject their own individual sadistic methods.⁵¹⁶

In spite of the regional variation, patterns and practices were similar in the separate theatres of operation. As noted in Bassiouni’s report, the existence of a deliberate policy of ethnic cleansing was also indicated by the wholesale and surreptitious departure of Serb populations living in areas soon up for ‘ethnic cleansing’. In light of the facts, the report observes the following: “There is sufficient evidence to conclude that the practices of ‘ethnic cleansing’ were not coincidental, sporadic or carried out by disorganized groups or bands of civilians who could not be controlled by the Bosnian-Serb leadership. Indeed, the patterns of conduct, the manner in which these acts were carried out, the length of time over which they took place and the areas in which they occurred combine to reveal a purpose, systematicity and some planning and coordination from higher authorities. Furthermore, these practices are carried out by persons from all segments of the Serbian population in the areas described: members of the army, militias, special forces, the police and civilians. Lastly, the Commission notes that these unlawful acts are often heralded by the perpetrators as positive, patriotic accomplishments”.⁵¹⁷

The Drina valley campaign

[Interviewer:] Where did you get this [martial] talent?

[Arkan:] I am from a warrior house. I have an ancestor, called Jokelj Raznjatovic, who once, during the Serbo-Turkish war, cut seventeen Turkish heads off and seized two Turkish banners

⁵¹² Bassiouni, *Final report*, pp. 33-34. The term ‘ethnic cleansing’ is defined here as: rendering an area ethnically homogenous by using force or intimidation to remove from a given area persons from another ethnic or religious group. This definition was presented by Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex IV.

⁵¹³ Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex summaries and conclusions, p. 21; Annex IV, p. 9. See also Vasic, ‘The Yugoslav Army’, p. 134.

⁵¹⁴ Interview: Filip Svarm, Dejan Anastasijevic and Aleksandar Ciric, 03/11/1997; Bassiouni, *Final report*, p. 34.

⁵¹⁵ Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex IV, p. 21.

⁵¹⁶ Sorabji, ‘A very modern war’, pp. 86-87.

⁵¹⁷ Bassiouni, *Final report*, p. 35.

Zeljko Raznjatovic 'Arkan' in an interview with journalist, Dusica Milanovic, November 1992.⁵¹⁸

“The present generation of Serbs is conscious of the fact that they are predestined and obliged to accomplish the centuries-old dreams of their ancestors, and to finally bring the old myths, ideals, and aspirations to life”.

BSA General, Milan Gvero quoted in the local Serb newspaper of Bratunac, Nasa Rijec, 12/01/1993, p.1.

When the Bosnian war first started, one of the main objectives of the Serb campaign was to take control of the border areas along the Drina. Eastern Bosnia formed a vital link between the Serb-inhabited lands of Bosnia, it was part of this arch of 'serb' territory (from Foča, via Visegrad, Bratunac, Zvornik, and Bijeljina, to Banja Luka and Prijedor) that the Serbs wanted to include in a Greater Serbia. As in the first Serbian uprising, Serbs wanted to create a continuous territory, linking eastern Hercegovina and Romanija with the Bosnian Krajina, and both areas with Serbia proper. Not surprisingly, therefore, the first major Serb military campaign, the Drina campaign, focused on seizing full control over eastern Bosnia. The Arkan Tigers carried out this campaign, with the help of other paramilitary groups and the government of Serbia (particularly the Ministry of the Interior). The authorities in Belgrade supplied the paramilitary groups and special forces with weapons, equipment, uniforms, army maps, and vehicles.⁵¹⁹ The JNA was directly involved in the operations, providing support in various ways, including by bombarding and shelling Muslim areas.⁵²⁰

Once Bijeljina was taken, Serb forces moved southward along the Drina to the Muslim town of Janja, and then to Zvornik. At around the same time, Visegrad and Foča, two other major towns along the Drina, were attacked by forces from Serbia. Strategically, Zvornik was almost as crucial as Bijeljina, because of its rail and road bridges over the Drina, linking Bosnia and Serbia, and connecting Belgrade and Sarajevo. It was also economically vital due to the large hydroelectric dam a few kilometres south of the town and the huge alumina plant, which processed bauxite from Milici. On 6 April, the Zvornik branch of the SDS established a separate Serb police station in Karakaj, from where they blocked the entrance into town. On 7 April, TV Belgrade broadcast the news of an impending attack by Muslim extremists. Then, on 8 April, the Arkan Tigers, joined by JNA forces and special commando units of Serbia's Ministry of the Interior positioned themselves on the Serbian side of the Drina. They gave the town's Muslims an ultimatum to surrender, but received no response. As a result, the Yugoslav artillery opened fire on Zvornik from Serbia that same evening. Most Muslim leaders, including Asim Jazbasic, leader of the moderate SDA 'town' faction, fled to Tuzla. At the same time, two hundred Muslim fighters retreated to Kulagrad, the old Turkish castle above Zvornik, from where they fought a long battle against Serb forces.⁵²¹

The next day, the Arkan Tigers, special police units of the Serbian Ministry of Interior, and various other paramilitary groups (Seselj's Chetniks, the White Eagles, the Yellow Ants, and the Panthers of Ljubisa Savic 'Mauzer' from Bijeljina), entered Zvornik. Thousands of civilians fled to the forests, while the paramilitaries searched every house and apartment, stealing money and other valuables and killing any Muslims they encountered. For days, life in Zvornik was dominated by marauding, uncontrolled groups of paramilitaries. Some sources claim that during the assault on

⁵¹⁸ Milanovic, 'Arkanov srpski san'

⁵¹⁹ Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex summaries and conclusions, p. 15.

⁵²⁰ Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex Summaries and Conclusions, p. 4-5.

⁵²¹ Hamzic, *Zvornik*, pp. 193-223.

Zvornik, several hundred Muslims were murdered, and 42,000 were expelled from their homes.⁵²² Among the victims were the deputy director of the spa resort, 'Guber' in Srebrenica, Boban Vasic (a Serb) and his two Muslim drivers. On 11 April, after having returned patients to Zvornik, they were arrested by paramilitaries at a roadblock on their way back to Srebrenica. The paramilitaries imprisoned, interrogated and tortured them for the next two days. Vasic was released and brought to Serbia, while his two Muslim drivers were killed.⁵²³ Fights continued in Kulagrad, where Muslims managed to hold out until 26 April 1992. When the situation calmed down, the SDS called on Muslims to return. Although this appeared to be a good sign, it was in fact the beginning of a process of administrative ethnic cleansing: those who came back were arrested and forced to sign their property over to the Serb District of Zvornik as a precondition for their release. Moreover, from May on, the entire Muslim population of villages surrounding Zvornik were deported, many of them to Hungary, through Serbia, and others to Tuzla.⁵²⁴

The attacks on Foča and Visegrad occurred almost simultaneously with the one on Zvornik, though it took more effort to seize control of Visegrad. On 6 April 1992, Serbs started to shell the town. JNA tanks and artillery pieces were moved in from Serbia. Muslim villages on the right side of the Drina were torched and Muslim refugees streamed into town. The Muslim defenders of the town held out for some three days before their commander, Murat Sabanovic, withdrew and retreated to the hydroelectric dam with sixty of his men and several Serb hostages.⁵²⁵ In an attempt to stop the army's advance towards the town, he threatened to blow up the dam, which would cause massive, devastating floods that could wash away whole villages downstream. For several days, the inhabitants of the Drina valley remained anxious of a possible torrent that could also affect major towns such as Bajina Basta, Bratunac and Zvornik. Peasants living along the Drina packed their things and headed for higher ground, taking most of their cattle with them. Serbian television brought the hysteria to a boil in an effort to convince Serbs in Serbia that Muslims intended to commit genocide against the Bosnian Serbs.

After Serb commandos took the dam, the JNA entered Visegrad's suburbs on 13 April, together with special police forces and various paramilitary groups. One or two days later, they took control of the town. The head of the local SDS was appointed as President of the new Serb district. Once the fighting stopped, the JNA called on the numerous Muslims who had fled in the direction of Gorazde to return home, which most did. The ethnic cleansing of the Muslim population started in earnest only a month later, when the army left as part of the general 'withdrawal' of JNA forces from Bosnia. (These forces were replaced by the newly established Bosnian Serb Army). Under the command of local Serb, Milan Lukic, paramilitaries from Serbia and local irregulars started to expel and kill the Muslim inhabitants and plunder their homes. Many Muslims were deported to central Bosnia, or to Macedonia via Bajina Basta (where Lukic's distant cousin, Mikailo, commanded a special police unit). The killing continued for the next two months. So many dead bodies floated down the Drina that people gave up trout fishing in the river for the next three summers.⁵²⁶ Foča saw similar gruesome scenes. Here, Serbs established a network of detention centres, where many Muslim civilians were detained and tortured. Foča became particularly notorious for its rape camps.⁵²⁷

⁵²² Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex IV, pp. 36-62; Annex III.a, pp. 70,76-77,80; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp. 100-01).

⁵²³ Interview: Boban Vasic 06/07/1998. See also Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp. 148-49.

⁵²⁴ Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex summaries and conclusions, pp. 22-23; Annex IV.

⁵²⁵ Sabanovic had made himself a hero among nationalist Muslims as early on as 1991. In his home town of Visegrad, he destroyed the monument to Ivo Andric, the Nobel prize winning Bosnian writer, who was unpopular among Muslims because his portrayals of them in his writings (Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p. 90).

⁵²⁶ For a detailed account of the events in Visegrad, see Kljun, *Visegrad*, pp. 246-305; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp. 101-04 and 120-25. See also Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 74-78.

⁵²⁷ Human Rights Watch, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p. 4.

Srebrenica on the brink of war

“When I was young, I really loved cowboy films. From them I learned my first lessons about morale. I particularly liked the endings, when the main hero kills all bad guys, various plunderers, vagabonds and other communists, and when the town’s population gathers and offers him the sheriff’s star; he smiles, mounts his horse, and leaves. I think I will know to choose the right moment to climb my horse”.

Miroslav Deronjic, President of the SDS in Bratunac, in an interview for the local newspaper *Nasa Rijec*, May 1994.⁵²⁸

All major towns along the Drina were taken by the Serb forces, making the Drina valley campaign a major success. Even so, there were still several towns and numerous villages with a majority Muslim population that Serb forces had bypassed. (These included Srebrenica, Zepa, and Cerska). The geographic characteristics and settlement patterns of the area are significant in understanding why this happened.⁵²⁹ Eastern Bosnia is very hilly and rugged. Road connections only exist between major towns, whereas villages and hamlets often lie hidden away in isolation in the mountains. Paved roads in this region are few and far between. As a result, these settlements are difficult to reach, especially in bad weather (e.g. during winter or heavy rains). While distances between settlements may be technically small when viewed as a straight line on the map, actual travel times can be considerable. This is due to the inevitable detours along inferior mountain roads and narrow, winding and unpaved tracks. In addition, as discussed before, settlements are relatively small in size. Before the war began, villages usually contained no more than a few hundred inhabitants. Moreover, they were ethnically homogenous for the most part, which explains why it was easy for most combatants born in the region to discriminate between Serb and Muslim settlements. The small size of rural settlements also made it difficult to organise an effective defence against outside attacks. Enemy villages were usually easy targets for armed groups on each side. Srebrenica itself is located at the end of a narrow valley, surrounded by high, heavily forested hills. Approaching the town, the valley narrows and the surrounding hills rise ever higher and steeper. The highest hill, Kvarac, towers above the town at 1014 metres and lies only two to three kilometres from the town’s centre.

After the Serbs took control over the major towns, they began consolidating their grip over the rest of eastern Bosnia by clearing out these more isolated patches. The war started to affect Bratunac and Srebrenica only after the Drina valley campaign was complete. Muslim chroniclers, Nijaz Masic and Besim Ibisevic, describe these events in great detail.⁵³⁰ In early April, bad news from Bijeljina and Zvornik prompted Muslims in Bratunac and Srebrenica to flee towards Tuzla. Most Serbs went to friends or relatives in nearby Serbia, as did a number of Muslims. Some returned during the day to go to work. On the instigation of the SDS, local Serb children, women and elderly people were transferred en masse, which served to clear the schools of any Serb children. This situation continued for almost a week.⁵³¹ The local economy, as well as municipal services, ground to a halt as increasingly fewer people showed up to work. Ibisevic writes that people simply left without giving any notice. They just disappeared. By 11 April, only 20 out of a staff of over 110 civil servants at the municipality of

⁵²⁸ Pilovanovic, ‘Mi udaramo’.

⁵²⁹ I would like to thank Endre Bojtar who first pointed this out to me (conversation 28/05/1997).

⁵³⁰ During the war, Masic was head of the Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes in Srebrenica, as well as Assistant Commander for morale in the Srebrenica division of the ABiH. He is a historian by profession. The information compiled by this commission were included in Naser Oric’s as well as in both of Masic’s books.

⁵³¹ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 31-32.

Srebrenica were still in town.⁵³² Some Muslims returned after a few days. Those who tried to come back later, encountered great difficulties passing the Serb lines.

Members of the urban elite in Bratunac and Srebrenica regarded the attempts to resist the Serb advance as futile and hopeless. In Bratunac, the SDA's efforts to set up the defence were even considered counterproductive. Some felt that the SDA was contributing in this way to a war, which Muslims were certain to lose. Popular support for organising resistance disintegrated further when Muslims from the neighbouring village of Glogova returned from Bijeljina. They came with reports of how many houses had been destroyed there because the town's Muslims had refused to surrender, while the small town of Janja was left untouched because most of its Muslims had handed over all their weapons.⁵³³ Near Srebrenica, the population of several Muslim villages felt so threatened by the sporadic gunfire that they spent nights outside, organising guards to protect their houses and villages. Rumours spread that the Serbs in Fakovici kept arms and ammunition in an old school building. On 3 April, the mayor of Srebrenica, Ibisevic, went to check the location together with Miodrag Stanisavljevic, the Serb commander of the local TO. As they approached the school, they were stopped by half a dozen armed men, who confirmed that it was full of arms. But they were not allowed to inspect the building. Serb peasants were already driving their tractors and other vehicles to safety in Serbia in fear that war would soon break out. As Ibisevic observed, rumours were circulating in Bajina Basta that Muslim and Croat forces in Srebrenica were preparing for genocide against the Serbs. The commander of the local TO told Ibisevic that he had information that Muslim forces were being trained in the remote village of Luka and were preparing to attack Serbia. The JNA took positions on the Tara mountains pointing its guns at Bosnian territory. By this point, efforts to mobilise the army were underway in Bajina Basta and other Serbian towns along the border.⁵³⁴

Muslims from villages near Srebrenica came down to the town almost daily to 'besiege' the SDA office, asking for the arms that Ibran Mustafic and Hamed Efendic had once promised. Ibisevic accused Mustafic of not honouring his promises and of sacrificing Muslim villages along the Drina, keeping most of the weapons in Potoèari. Many Serbs also felt threatened. Along the Drina, villagers crossed over into Serbia in little boats every evening, to spend the night in Serbia and return in the morning to work the fields or take care of their animals. In many other Muslim and Serb villages, men organized guards at night with improvised checkpoints. In Podravanje, for instance, Serbs organised armed patrols, blocking the road between Zeleni Jadar and Milici, as well as the road to the two Muslim villages of Luka and Krusev Do, which were now practically cut off from Srebrenica. Other villages to the south and southeast of Srebrenica that depended on the road connection through Zeleni Jadar, were also affected by these armed Serb patrols. During this period, SDS and SDA leaders formed mixed teams that went to villages where the tensions ran highest. Ibran Mustafic went together with SDS hardliner, Miodrag Jokic. Besim Ibisevic paired up with Miloje Simic. They advised Serb and Muslim villagers to follow their example and form mixed patrols as well.⁵³⁵

On 6 April, Ibisevic sent out official summons to all members of the Anti-Sabotage Platoon to mobilise in preparation to defend the town. He pointed out to the unit's commander, Asim Redzic, that this also provided an opportunity to demand arms and ammunition from the Bosnian Ministry of Interior. He claimed he had received promises to that effect. He also told Redzic that he wanted him to be the commander of the future army in Srebrenica and his platoon to become the nucleus of that army. On 8 April, the Muslim members of the platoon reported for duty; the Serb members failed to appear. Redzic sent everyone back home, because, as he told Ibisevic, he did not want to become the commander of a purely Muslim unit. This earned him the grudge of the Mayor, who told him "You better go home to grow flowers of brotherhood and unity!" Ibisevic assumed that this 'indoctrinated communist' did not want to listen to orders of SDA politicians. On Monday, 6 April, Ibran Mustafic

⁵³² Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p. 192.

⁵³³ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 29-30, 62-63.

⁵³⁴ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 175-78; Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p. 95.

⁵³⁵ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 180-84. Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 31. Interview: Momcilo Cvjetinovic 10/06/1998.

travelled to Sarajevo to attend a meeting of the Bosnian parliament. As Ibisevic writes, however, the purpose of this trip was more to escape Muslim resentment regarding his unfulfilled promises to arm the population. Later that day, Mustafic pretended it was impossible to return to Srebrenica because the buses were no longer running.⁵³⁶

The situation in Skelani was also reaching a very critical point. On 7 April, SDA activist, Ahmo Tihic, urged Ibisevic to come to Skelani, where representatives of both the Muslim and the Serb sides were waiting in a restaurant. SDS politicians demanded a separate municipality from Skelani, and warned that 250 Bosnian Serb volunteers were waiting in Bajina Basta to cross the Drina to help them achieve this. At this point, Ibisevic walked out of the talks. Milenko Ćanic, who was present at the meeting, warned Ibisevic that he and four other SDS leaders (Goran Zekic, Miodrag Jokic, Desimir Mitrovic, and Blagomir Jovanovic) could call for immediate assistance from Serbian paramilitaries at the other side of the Drina if they felt that Serbs were under threat. As Ibisevic notes, these SDS politicians became the key figures in deciding about war and peace in that part of the municipality of Srebrenica. The next day, they took control of Skelani, paving the way for the establishment of a separate Serb municipality and a local Serb police force.⁵³⁷

Similar steps were taken in Bratunac. There, in a meeting held on 3 April, the SDS and several Serb policemen decided to create a Serb police force. In the days that followed, they began talking to individual Serb policemen to convince them to join the force. On 8 April, the SDS demanded the division of the MUP. The creation of a Serb police force was presented as a necessary measure to guarantee the security of Serb civilians. SDA leaders gave in to the enormous pressure, and legalised the formation of such a force in a meeting of the Bratunac municipal council on 9 April 1992. After the meeting, SDA and SDS politicians went for a drink in Hotel Fontana to celebrate the agreement, which they said 'saved peace' in the municipality. The next day, the Serb police set up its headquarters in the Vuk Karadzic school. Two Serbs from Bratunac living and working in Berlin, Miodrag Stevic and Sredo Aleksic, were particularly helpful in providing the equipment for the new police force.⁵³⁸ For the next eight days, before the SDS took over completely, Bratunac had two police forces. Serb policemen who had been against the creation of a separate Serb police had no choice and were pressured into joining the new force. In some cases, they were threatened by SDS members and by other newly appointed Serb policemen, some of whom had received no police training at all (but had sufficient nationalist credentials).⁵³⁹ Policemen from Srebrenica joined the Serb police in Bratunac as well, while others joined the Serb police in Skelani as soon as the SDS took over the police station there. Milutin Milosevic (from Kravica) stepped up as head of the Serb police in Bratunac, and Luka Bogdanovic was appointed as police commander. The Serb police in Bratunac immediately received new uniforms from Serbia.

Starting in early April 1992, meetings of the National Defence Secretariat (SNO) were held daily and attended by SDA as well as SDS members of the municipal council.⁵⁴⁰ Sometimes, the directors of the most important firms were present as well. In emergencies, the SNO was authorized to serve as a crisis committee and take over the town's civil administration. Under these provisions, Ibisevic – mayor and head of the SNO – would become the commander of all armed police and territorial defence forces in Srebrenica. In its meeting of 8 April, the SNO decided that six additional 'war' police stations were needed - over and above Srebrenica's police station - to maintain control in important villages. (These were the villages of Suceška, Potocari, Podravanje, Skelani, Sase and Osat).⁵⁴¹ On 9 April 1992, Ibisevic went to Ljubovija, where he noticed many paramilitaries and volunteers in JNA uniforms. Some people (unaware of his identity) told him that the JNA had placed heavy artillery on a hill above

⁵³⁶ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p. 185-189.

⁵³⁷ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p. 186-188; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 36.

⁵³⁸ K. Ć. 'Prava srpska milicija'; interview: Miroslav Deronjic 03/11/1999; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 30-31.

⁵³⁹ Interview: Becir Hasanovic 17/05/1998.

⁵⁴⁰ Interview: Sefkija Hadziarapovic 22/05/1998

⁵⁴¹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p. 188; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 32.

the town. He then went to Milos Mihajlovic, the mayor of Ljubovija, to ask him what was happening. Mihajlovic told him that he had received information that several buses with Croatian paramilitaries had arrived in Glogova (a Muslim village between Kravica and Bratunac), to create a Muslim Drina brigade. The JNA and volunteers had come to protect the town and its industrial zone near the Drina. Ibisevic then invited him and the mayors of Bratunac (Nijaz Dubiëic) and Bajina Basta (Milos Jelisavëic) to attend a public meeting in Srebrenica the next day. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss actions against the wild rumours and growing war fever. Despite promises, nobody showed up, which was a bad omen and clear sign that war was imminent.⁵⁴²

Anxiety increased as the last reliable source of information had disappeared at the very beginning of the war when Serb extremists blew up the television mast on Kvarac mountain above Srebrenica. As a result, the inhabitants of Bratunac and Srebrenica had no access to the Yugoslav federal Yutel and the Bosnian channels, only to Serbian television. Similar Serb attempts to inactivate broadcasting or take control of television relays were reported in many other parts of Bosnia, including in the county of Prijedor.⁵⁴³ One or two days after the town's television access was cut, its water system was mined as well. Left with blank screens and dry faucets, the inhabitants grew increasingly aware that worse was still to come. Ibisevic warned people over Radio Srebrenica that the radio mast on the Bojna hill, just one kilometre outside the town, could be the next target. He called on the population to protect the mast. No action was taken, however, and on the night of 9 April the radio mast was indeed mined. Hamed Salihovic confided in Ibisevic that he knew who the perpetrators were, but did not dare arrest them due to the explosive situation in town.⁵⁴⁴ The action cut off the population even from Radio Sarajevo.

In April, Hakija Meholic, a local policeman, started organising an armed Muslim militia in the Petrica and Klisa quarters of the town. He had stayed on sick leave for over a year, because he refused to accept the new head of police, Hamed Salihovic. He was also furious with SDA hardliners, who had removed his brother, Malik Meholic, from his post as mayor of Srebrenica. Malik formed the local branch of the MBO, of which also Hakija had become a member. This moderate party had many supporters in Petrica and Klisa. Relations between members of the SDA and MBO were unfriendly. According to Ibisevic, members of the MBO were quite impudent, arrogant and hostile to local SDA officials.⁵⁴⁵ Hakija Meholic attacked the SDA for having failed to organise defence for the town. Instead, he gathered his own people around him, people from Petrica and Klisa and MBO members, and established a checkpoint in Petrica on the road to Zeleni Jadar. He also managed to take a certain amount of arms from the police station. Serbs complained about this 'wild' checkpoint by a Muslim policeman, who had slipped away from the municipal police commander's authority. However, on the SNO meeting of 8 April (when six additional police stations were created) Meholic's role was formalized. He became the commander of the seventh additional 'war' police station of Srebrenica. Four days later, Ibisevic tried to re-establish relations with Meholic. He went to Meholic's 'headquarters' in Motel Lovac, located on a hill beneath the old Turkish fortress of Srebrenica. Meeting with a very cold welcome from Meholic when he entered the motel, Ibisevic left immediately.⁵⁴⁶

In the meantime, Serbs forged ahead with the establishment of the Serb municipality of Skelani. Blagomir Jovanovic, a former communist, who joined the SDS after the first elections in 1990, stepped up as president. On 11 April, Serbs in Skelani took control of the local police station, an operation coordinated from Serbia. Using arms transported over the Drina into Bosnia with little boats, they surrounded the police station and forced Muslim policemen to surrender. After allowing the policemen to leave unharmed, the Serbs proceeded to establish a Serb crisis committee in the building. On 13 April, Ibisevic went to Skelani to meet with Milenko Èanic in the new Serb police station. Èanic was

⁵⁴² Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p. 189-192.

⁵⁴³ Bassiouni, *Final report*, pp. 38-39; Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 65; Cohen, *Hearts grown brutal*, p. 193.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 190-191. Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 32.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 193-94.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 194-95.

wearing a camouflage uniform and was busy disassembling and re-assembling a new scorpion gun. In a corner of the building, Ibisevic saw a pile of hand grenades and dynamite. Èanic refused to talk to Ibisevic, referring him to Marko Milovanovic, commander of the Serb crisis committee for Skelani. Ibisevic asked him to identify the boundaries of this self-proclaimed municipality. Milovanovic then informed him that the border ran from Fakovici, over Bjelovac, Brezani, Osmace, and Kragljivoda, to Sjedaci, carving out a large piece of the southeastern section of the municipality of Srebrenica. Ibisevic objected, pointing out that the majority of the population in that territory was Muslim. Milovanovic responded simply by reminding him that 2,000 Serb volunteers were waiting in Bajina Basta to cross over into Bosnia. Milovanovic also claimed to have received information about the formation of a Muslim paramilitary unit in Kragljivoda and Osat, set up by Ahmo Tihic, an affiliate of Hamed Efendic and Ibran Mustafic.⁵⁴⁷

Ibisevic left Skelani and tried to find Ahmo Tihic to inform him that the Serbs were after him. He found him in Osat, where Tihic had organised a group of some twenty armed men. Ibisevic writes that, as Tihic's unit was 'the first armed Bosniac unit' in this part of the municipality, he promised to do his utmost to help him with food, blankets, and equipment, which he thought he could acquire from the TO's stores in Srebrenica. Ibisevic went to Srebrenica and managed to send one truckload of supplies to Tihic and one to Suceška.⁵⁴⁸ The next day, a couple of Muslims were found dead on the road between Skelani and Srebrenica, near the village of Jezero. These were the first casualties of the war in Srebrenica. According to Muslim sources, they were killed the day before by a group of Serb paramilitaries, who had been out to attack Ahmo Tihic's unit but were unable to locate it. In frustration, they killed the two Muslims as their car passed by. The victims were driving back from Bajina Basta, where they had gone to buy gasoline.⁵⁴⁹

On 14 April, an extraordinary meeting of the municipal council was scheduled to discuss Serb proposals to divide the municipality along ethnic lines. Although the SDA initially opposed the idea of dividing Srebrenica into Muslim and Serb sections, it yielded to Serb pressure and agreed to discuss the issue. Many Muslims from the town, who were desperate for a solution, gathered in front of the Culture House to demand anything but war. According to Ibisevic, some shouted out pleas to give the Serbs whatever they wanted. Only sixteen councillors (of the seventy) showed up for the meeting, mostly SDA members. SDS leader, Goran Zekic was the only Serb present. During the meeting, the SDA approved the principle of territorial division for the municipality. A mixed commission of Serbs and Muslims was established to lay the groundwork. Besim Ibisevic and five other Muslims, including non-SDA members, Sabit Begic and Cazim Salimovic, were appointed to the commission. The Serb appointees were Milenko Èanic, Momèilo Cvjetinovic, Desimir Mitrovic, and two other individuals. They agreed to meet twice daily to discuss further details. Ibisevic ordered topographic maps of the municipality and lists of communal assets.⁵⁵⁰ Apparently, the general objective was to make the upper section of the town 'Muslim', and allot the lower section to the Serbs. As Oric writes, even though the Serbs had already appropriated a large portion of the municipality's territory near Skelani, they now also demanded a share of what remained.⁵⁵¹

Muslims had gathered outside the venue where the meeting was held, eager to hear the decision. For that reason, Goran Zekic, Hamed Efendic, and Besim Ibisevic decided to address the population in the hall of the Culture House. Zekic declared that they had reached a basic agreement about the territorial division of Srebrenica, which he presented as a step towards peace. Some Muslims applauded. As Ibisevic writes, many Muslim townspeople – particularly MBO and SDP supporters – wanted Zekic, even as mayor of Srebrenica, if that would avoid war. It seems that they had confidence in Zekic. Compared to such figures as Milenko Èanic in Skelani, Miodrag Jokic in Srebrenica, and Miroslav

⁵⁴⁷ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 195-96.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 198-200.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 208-209; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 32-33.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 200-02; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 33.

⁵⁵¹ Interview: Momèilo Cvjetinovic, 10/06/1998. Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 20.

Deronjic in Bratunac, Zekic was certainly considered a more moderate politician.⁵⁵² In closing his short speech, Zekic tried to leave, but was stopped by Ahmo Tihic, who had come from Osat to discuss events in Skelani. He attacked Zekic, who defended himself saying that he had no influence in Skelani, because they did not recognize him there as president of the SDS. A group of Srebrenicans ended the conversation by removing Tihic from the room, giving Zekic free passage. A number of Muslim Srebrenicans yelled at Tihic, accusing him of creating a mess in the town after having done the same in Skelani. Tihic was accused of antagonising the Serbs and of jeopardising good community relations in town.

After Zekic, it was Hamed Efendic's turn to address the crowd. According to Ibisevic's account, he had hardly any chance to speak at all, as Muslim townspeople began shouting 'Thieves, thieves!' at him. A very heavily built man ran from the back of the hall to the speaker's platform and pushed Efendic away amidst loud applause from the crowd. The same happened to Besim Ibisevic, who was attacked by a group of MBO sympathisers. They shouted that there was no place for peasants in Srebrenica. "Go back to your village! Go plough your field! You peasants stirred up all of this by coming to Srebrenica! If it weren't for you, we wouldn't have had a war. If you'd allowed Goran Zekic to become mayor, it wouldn't have come to all of this!" At this point, someone actually physically attacked Ibisevic, forcing him to end his speech. Clearly, Ibisevic was no longer welcome. Similar voices were raised against him in Potocari, where Naser Oric had seized power after local SDA leader, Ibran Mustafic had left to Sarajevo. Ibisevic was warned not to show his face in Potoèari under any circumstances whatsoever. SDA leaders had clearly lost most of their support among the population. Many wanted to see Hamed Efendic removed as SDA leader, and Ibisevic as town mayor. Ibisevic writes that he received anonymous phone calls, from both sides: Serbs, who cursed his Muslim mother, and Muslims, who cursed his peasant mother. At this stage, the exodus of the Muslim population from the town intensified. Most people went in the direction of Tuzla, while others went to Serbia. Guards and night porters of factories and other public premises abandoned their posts, leaving these buildings unprotected.⁵⁵³

Due to his constant involvement in managing the growing political crisis in town, Ibisevic had not been able to buy food for his wife and son. As shops were closed or empty, he asked Momèilo Cvjetinovic to accompany him to Ljubovija just across the Drina to buy some basic food items.⁵⁵⁴ For security reasons, they drove in Cvjetinovic's car. When they finished shopping, they went to look for the SDS vice-president of Srebrenica, Miodrag Jokic, who had taken refuge in a motel in Ljubovija. They hoped that by talking to him they might be able to decrease tensions. Cvjetinovic advised Ibisevic not to be too rash and to talk to him in a jovial, non-confrontational way, "as peace depends on these kind of idiots". They found Jokic in a JNA officer's uniform, carrying a Scorpion on his waist belt. Cvjetinovic, who knew that Jokic had not served in the army, asked him whether he knew his rank. "How is it possible that you don't know! This is the rank of captain first class", said Jokic pointing at the insignia on his shirt. Cvjetinovic, who had great difficulties suppressing his laughter, told him: "How is it possible you do not see it! This is the rank of major. Whoever told you this stands for the rank of captain lied." Jokic, angry, said it did not matter: "Captain or major, it's all the same to me!" And to intimidate Ibisevic, Jokic showed him the receipts of two arms deliveries by the JNA from Tuzla and Belgrade, both which he had personally signed. They agreed to meet next day in Bratunac for further talks. On their way back to Srebrenica, Cvjetinovic complained to Ibisevic that the JNA gave its weapons to the biggest fools in town.⁵⁵⁵

The next day, on 16 April 1992, Serb and Muslim leaders met in Hotel Fontana in Bratunac. The Serb representatives there included Goran Zekic and Miroslav Deronjic. Ibisevic represented the

⁵⁵² This undermines Miodrag Jokic's claims during an interview with *Ilustrovana politika* that Goran Zekic had been the main target of Muslim attacks (Milanovic, 'Ubice su medju nama', p. 14).

⁵⁵³ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, p. 202-7; Ibisevic, 'Nisam pobjegao'; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 25.

⁵⁵⁴ This was confirmed by Momèilo Cvjetinovic; interview: 10/06/1998.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 206-07.

Muslim side, together with a few others whom he had gathered at random, as he had been unable to find anyone else. Among those who joined him was Sabit Begic, a former communist and member of the SDP. As Ibisevic writes, Begic, a 'moderate,' was useful in negotiations with the Serbs. With that in mind, the Muslim delegation left most of the talking to Begic, who tried to bide for time and divert the discussion from political to humanitarian issues. He pointed out that peasants were without food, because villages, such as Luka and Krusev Do, were completely cut off by Serbian barricades and checkpoints. He also mentioned the refugees streaming into the town from Bijeljina and Zvornik. Begic asked the Serbs to show a sign of goodwill and bring food to these people. Goran Zekic promised to do that. They agreed to meet again the next day in Srebrenica. On that same day, Goran Zekic also had a meeting with the head of police, Hamed Salihovic, in order to legalise a number of Serb checkpoints in villages. During that meeting, they signed an agreement sanctioning the formation of Serb police stations in Vijogor, Orahovica, and Sase, as well as in the main police office in the town of Srebrenica. The agreement stipulated that Serb police stations were to cooperate and coordinate their actions with the Bosnian police. It was signed by ten people, including Ibisevic, Zekic, Begic, Cvjetinovic, Perendic, and Salihovic.⁵⁵⁶

Bratunac and Srebrenica are taken by Serbs

A new SDS and SDA meeting was planned for the morning of 17 April. Moments before it was scheduled to start, Miodrag Jokic called Ibisevic to say that he and his SDS colleagues were not coming to Srebrenica, as they lacked sufficient guarantees of safety. He proposed holding the meeting in Bratunac that very same day. Once again, Ibisevic gathered several people, including Sabit Begic. When they arrived in Bratunac, they noticed various military units and paramilitary groups roaming the town's streets. Among these were regular army units from the Novi Sad corps, the Arkan Tigers, White Eagles, and Seselj's Chetnik forces. It was Friday, which was market day in Bratunac, and many people had been on the streets when these armed units entered the town. They met with no resistance, as the Muslim defence or Patriotic League was taken by surprise and completely unprepared for action. Even though the SDA had established a crisis committee days before the event, most Patriotic League commanders fled to Tuzla as soon as the Serbs entered the town. The crisis committee did not even have a chance to meet.⁵⁵⁷ Bratunac's SDS leaders issued an ultimatum to the Muslim authorities to surrender power, and also ordered the Head of Police to relinquish all weapons and leave the police station. This put an end to the existence of the two parallel (Muslim and Serb) police forces in Bratunac. The mayor of Bratunac, Nijaz Dubičić, was forced to hand over the municipal building. The Head of Police and the Mayor left immediately for Tuzla. Most other Muslims stayed in town, feeling intimidated and terrorised by the presence of the JNA and paramilitary forces.⁵⁵⁸

Units of the JNA Novi Sad corps, commanded by Colonel Svetozar Milosevic, set up headquarters in Hotel Fontana. The SDS crisis committee also sent out invitations to local Serb reservists and officers. Miroslav Deronjic, the head of the Serb crisis committee, coordinated the entire operation. According to a Muslim source, he met with Radovan Karadzic in Pale just days before the take-over of Bratunac to receive instructions.⁵⁵⁹ Ljubisav Simic was appointed as the new SDS mayor of Bratunac, and Rodoljub Djukanovic became chairman of the municipal Executive Board. Milutin Milosevic and Luka Bogdanovic remained head of the police and police commander, respectively. The Arkan Tigers played an important role in the Serb take-over of Bratunac. Sreten Radic, a wealthy local businessman, is said to have paid them 100,000 DM to come to Bratunac.⁵⁶⁰ Based in Café Jasen in the town's centre, the Arkan Tigers organised plunder expeditions to Muslim villages. They sped through

⁵⁵⁶ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 207-209, 249. Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 33.

⁵⁵⁷ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 62-63.

⁵⁵⁸ Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*; Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 211-12; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 33-39.

⁵⁵⁹ Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, p. 11.

⁵⁶⁰ Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, p.14 and p. 120; interview: Becir Hasanovic 17/05/1998.

town in cars and jeeps equipped with special sirens that frightened local residents even more than the incidental shots fired.⁵⁶¹ They also entered the mosque and played Chetnik songs from the loudspeakers of the minaret. The wife of the Serbian Orthodox priest of Bratunac, Bata Blazevic, who had died not long before, stopped them and threw them out of the mosque.⁵⁶² Paramilitaries controlled the town at night, plundering shops of Muslims and ‘disloyal’ Serbs. Explosions blasted through the night. Various Muslim shops were blown up or burned down. Muslims stayed inside their houses, turning off their lights. Some men slept in their gardens so they could escape if paramilitaries tried to take them from their beds.⁵⁶³

When Ibisevic arrived in Bratunac, he was welcomed by Miodrag Jokic, who pompously introduced various paramilitary leaders to Ibisevic and his company. They presented themselves as the commanders of the TO of Vukovar, the TO of Knin, the Yellow Ants, White Eagles, and Arkan Tigers. Those present also included local SDS leaders, such as Goran Zekic, Delivoje Sorak, and Miroslav Deronjic, as well as Miloje Simic, the former president of the League of Communists of Srebrenica. Goran Zekic began to address the meeting. Miodrag Jokic soon interrupted, however, laying down the terms in no uncertain terms: “All previous agreements between the SDA and SDS of Srebrenica are void. The borders of Yugoslavia (or Great-Serbia as you call it) have been redrawn and this area is part of it now. We want you to collect all your arms and hand them over to us in Srebrenica by 8:00 A.M. tomorrow. If not, we will destroy everything with our artillery. You Muslims have two options: you can either leave quietly or we will kill you!” The Muslim delegation asked for extra time to consult members of the Executive Board of the SDA, and promised to come back at five p.m. This proposal was accepted.⁵⁶⁴

The Muslim delegation denied the presence of any organised armed units in Srebrenica. However, they did promise to talk to those who had a certain number of arms at their disposal or those in a position to form militia, such as the police and the TO. They returned to Srebrenica, where they informed the townspeople about the Serb occupation of Bratunac and the ultimatum the SDS had issued Srebrenican authorities. On hearing the news, the population began to flee, mostly to Tuzla. A meeting was then held to discuss the Serb’s ultimatum to hand over all weapons. Among those present were Hakija Meholic, Hamed Salihovic, Hamed Efendic, and Suljo Hasanovic, Deputy Commander of the TO in Srebrenica. Meholic refused to comply and announced that he would rather escape to the forests, inviting others to join him. Hamed Salihovic said he would first need to contact the Bosnian Ministry of Internal Affairs for further instructions. The discussion prompted Ibisevic and several other members of the Muslim delegation, who had gone to Bratunac, to take their families and leave Srebrenica.⁵⁶⁵ Begic remained behind to wait for Zekic, while almost all inhabitants left the town. By around five o’clock that afternoon, only 300 to 400 Muslims remained, waiting to see what would happen. When Zekic failed to show up, Sabit Begic also left for Sarajevo. In the meantime, two Muslim policemen returned to Bratunac on their own initiative to gain time. Thanks to them, the ultimatum was postponed for two hours, from 8:00 until 10:00 A.M. the next day.⁵⁶⁶

Later, both during and after the war, the town’s elite came under fierce criticism by resistance organisers for having all fled on 17 April 1992. According to Naser Oric, the future commander of Muslim forces in Srebrenica, almost all Muslim leaders and intellectuals were unprepared and incapable of coping with the situation, and had responded indifferently and irresponsibly. Some SDA leaders

⁵⁶¹ Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, p. 13.

⁵⁶² Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, p. 25. Interview: Ibro Verlasevic 01/06/1998.

⁵⁶³ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 39; Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, pp. 14-16. Interviews: Mirsada Bakalovic 15/06/1998, 17/06/1998 and 19/06/1998.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 212-213.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibisevic claims to have contemplated evacuating the population en masse, but did not do so because it no longer seemed feasible. As Ibisevic writes, ‘newly composed commanders’, ‘political dilettantes’, and ‘war adventurers’ had given people false hope that they could do something against the Serb onslaught. In his view, it was much more realistic to go to Tuzla and try to re-conquer the town from there. Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 214-15.

⁵⁶⁶ Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 34-35; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 21,41; Ibisevic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 214-16

were trading arms instead of preparing the people for armed resistance. Although Oric does not mention any names here, he is clearly referring to his former patrons, Ibran Mustafic and Hamed Efendic. Oric also blames Muslim intellectuals for supporting the ‘pro-Serb’ oriented parties before the war began, which he felt had contributed to the establishment of Serb hegemony. According to Oric, all of them left town at the start of the war, including some with large foreign bank accounts. Abandoned by their leaders, ordinary people handed over their weapons to the Serbs, a pattern that repeated itself all over eastern Bosnia. The worst case was probably Vlasenica, where local Muslims handed over some 2,000 rifles to the Serbs. Oric provides lists of SDA leaders, local officials, heads of police and territorial defence, and directors of firms and other public institutions, who are said to have ‘betrayed’ their nation and to have left just before the start of the war. His list of Srebrenican leaders includes Besim Ibisevic, Cazim Salimovic, Ibran Mustafic, Sabit Begic, and Adib Djozic.⁵⁶⁷

The JNA and various paramilitary groups, commanded by Captain Reljic of the Novi Sad corps, entered Srebrenica in the afternoon of 18 April. Goran Zekic and other SDS politicians paraded through what had almost become a ghost town that offered no resistance whatsoever. The Serb flag was raised above the police station and other public buildings. In the meantime, paramilitaries ransacked the town, searching for weapons among the remaining Muslims, and seizing money and jewellery. Then they began plundering, assisted by local Serbs who pointed out which houses and shops to target. Numerous truckloads of livestock, machinery, equipment, and personal possessions (televisions, electric appliances, furniture, etc.) were transported to Serbia. The most popular commodity, however, were cars. Hotels, factories and the hospital were also plundered. X-ray and ultrasound equipment were removed from the hospital. The catastrophe was transferred to Skelani to leave the Muslims without any documentation to claim back their properties. Local Serb women participated in plundering the houses of their former Muslim neighbours, pilfering jewellery, Gobelins, carpets and fur coats. There was, however, one area where the paramilitaries and plunderers did not dare enter: the industrial complexes in Potočari where Oric was hiding. Once the Serb forces captured the town, Serb inhabitants who had fled returned to their houses. A small number of Muslims also remained behind. Most of them stayed in their homes the entire time or hid with Serb neighbours. None were killed until ten days later, on 28 April, when Serb plunderers killed a Muslim man who tried to resist them. He was the first Muslim killed in town. Other Muslims were now waiting for the first available opportunity to flee the town. On 3 May 1992, Serbs evacuated a busload of Muslims to Bratunac, and took some the police station for further interrogation. Many ended up in the Vuk Karadzic school, where some of them were tortured and killed.⁵⁶⁸

The last town to fall into Serb hands was Vlasenica, on 21 April 1992. Serbs arrested prominent Muslims and burned their houses, using lists they had previously prepared. Arrests continued during the next few months, when numerous Muslims were still hiding in their homes unable to leave the town. Many ended up in the Susica camp. Commanded by Dragan Nikolic, alias ‘Jenki,’ the Susica camp continued operating until the end of September (long after other concentration camps in north-western Bosnia had been discovered and closed down). Hundreds of Muslims, including from areas outside the municipality of Vlasenica (e.g. from villages near Bratunac) were tortured and killed in the camp.⁵⁶⁹ Others managed to escape through the forests in the direction of Srebrenica, and many ended up in the Muslim-held enclave. The Vlasenica municipality was soon divided in two, Vlasenica proper and Milici, which then became a separate (Serb) municipality. The SDS’s final objective was also to abolish the Srebrenica municipality and divide it between Bratunac and the newly established Serb

⁵⁶⁷ Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 15-21.

⁵⁶⁸ For accounts of the Serb take-over of Srebrenica, see: Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 139; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 35-37; Rifatbegovic, *Ratni mir*, pp. 52-57; Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, p. 15; Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex III.a, p. 161; Interviews: Hasa Selmanagic 07/08/1997, Damir Skaler 06/02/1998, Abdulah Purkovic 04/02/1998; Sefkija Hadziarapovic 22/05/1998.

⁵⁶⁹ For the events in Vlasenica, see Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 59-67; Cohen, *Hearts grown brutal*, pp. 195-198. For the Susica camp, see Cohen, *Hearts grown brutal*, pp. 203-209, 214-216.

municipalities of Skelani and Milici. According to these plans, Bratunac was to become the main Serb centre of the region.

Ethnic cleansing by Serbs and first acts of Muslim resistance

“Before this summer ends, we will have driven the Turkish army out of the city, just as they drove us from the field of Kosovo in 1389. That was the beginning of Turkish domination of our lands. This will be the end of it, after all these cruel centuries [...] We Serbs are saving Europe, even if Europe does not appreciate our efforts, even if it condemns them”.

Serb soldier besieging Sarajevo, at the beginning of the war, quoted in: Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 103

After taking over the towns of Bratunac and Srebrenica, the Serbs launched large-scale ethnic cleansing operations. This period also marked the beginning of active armed resistance by small, improvised groups of Muslims located in the hills and villages. They consisted of peasants and Muslim townspeople who had fled their homes and had tried to survive in the forests, in the snow, cold and rain, without proper food and shelter. Some Muslims from Srebrenica carried automatic rifles with them, which had been taken from police stores. Others made handmade rifles from water pipes. In the municipality of Srebrenica, two main centres of resistance emerged initially. One of these was in the village of Potoèari, where Naser Oric had been organising and training Muslim militia. The other developed in Stari grad (the upper part of town near the ancient Turkish fortress), where Hakija Meholic and Akif Ustic commanded a group of local armed men who were able to stave off the Serbs. Meholic and Ustic also protected some three hundred civilians who had taken refuge in the hills and forests above the town.⁵⁷⁰ Other resistance groups formed in the Muslim villages of Suceška (led by Ramiz Becirovic and Zulfo Tursunovic), Bajramovici (Hamdija Fejzic), Tokoljaci (Hedib Smajlovic), Biljeg near Osmace (Ahmo Tihic), Kragljivoda (Nedžad Bektić and Sefik Mandžić), Skenderovici (Senahid Tabakovic), Poznanovici (Dzevad Malkić) and Luka (Samir Habibovic). Although part of the municipality of Srebrenica, Luka was actually closer to Zepa than to the town of Srebrenica.⁵⁷¹ Similar centres appeared throughout the Bratunac municipality, including in Konjevic Polje (Velid Sabić), Bljeèeva (Ejub Golić), and in Muslim villages along the Drina, such as Poloznik (Osman Malagić). They often consisted of Muslims who had fled their homes in Serb assaults on their home villages.⁵⁷²

The first successful Muslim action against the Serb forces occurred on 20 April 1992, in Potoèari, where Oric attacked a group of Arkan Tigers only two days after the Serbs took Srebrenica. Seventeen armed Muslims blocked the road to Bratunac and ambushed several (police) cars and other vehicles returning from Srebrenica. At least four Serbs were killed in the attack.⁵⁷³ Local radio stations just across the border in Serbia began broadcasting reports that thousands of Green Berets were active around Srebrenica, leaving many local Serbs too terrified to go through Potoèari.⁵⁷⁴ Immediately, the JNA started shelling Potoèari and various other Muslim villages from artillery positions near Bratunac.

⁵⁷⁰ Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 44. Conversation: Meho Ustic 13/11/1998.

⁵⁷¹ Oric, *Srebrenica*, Srebrenica, pp. 142-44. See also Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 48.

⁵⁷² Golić's group in Bljeèeva consisted of refugees from Glogova. His group soon linked up with Oric's forces in Potoèari (Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 69-71). Malagić led a group of some two hundred men, who had fled from Voljavica (Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 71-74; Omeragić, *Satanski sinovi*, pp. 22-24).

⁵⁷³ Although Muslim sources usually cite more casualties, Ivanisević mentions only four names of Serbs killed in Potoèari on 20 April 1992. (Ivanisević, *Hronika*, p. 71). For the Muslim version of the attack see: Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 140-141. See also: Mandžić, 'Zlatni Ljiljani', p. 37; Interview: Mitko and Mevlā Kadrić 17/01/1998.

⁵⁷⁴ Interviews: Mitko and Mevlā Kadrić 17/01/1998; 25/04/1998.

The shelling forced the villagers to flee their homes. The first village destroyed and taken by the Serbs was one of vital strategic importance: Likari. Due to its location, Likari was eminently suited to monitoring and shelling the Muslim stronghold of Potoèari. Serbs also entered the nearby Muslim village of Peèista. According to some Muslim sources, however, they left the village again after one Serb was killed during internal clashes. In Vlasenica, Serb forces attacked and burned the Muslim villages of Nedjelista, Zaklopaèa, Pomol, and Djile, one day after they established control over the town. According to a Muslim source, over three hundred Muslims were killed during Serb actions around Vlasenica.⁵⁷⁵

Although they attacked Potoèari and various villages near Vlasenica, the Serbs usually issued ultimatums first to the inhabitants of Muslim strongholds before attacking them. The three most important Muslim strongholds that threatened to block Serb communications were Voljavica (on the road from Bratunac to Fakovici and Skelani), Glogova (between Bratunac and Kravica), and Konjevic Polje (on the road junction linking Bratunac to Zvornik, Milici, and Vlasenica). First, the head of the SDS crisis committee of Bratunac, Miroslav Deronjic, issued an ultimatum to the Muslims in Voljavica and Glogova. In it, he asked them to hand over all their weapons. On 20 April, Voljavica was surrounded by Serb forces. During the afternoon, SDS leaders entered the village, confiscating a limited number of arms. Voljavica was crucial to the Serbs because it was the only road connection linking Bratunac to Srebrenica after the Muslim attack in Potoèari. Since the Serbs were still seriously engaged in countering Muslim actions in Potoèari, they extended the deadlines for Glogova and Konjevic Polje by another week. Finally, when the SDS leaders entered Glogova on 27 April, most Muslims handed over their weapons. In Konjevic Polje, however, the head of the local Muslim crisis committee, Velid Sabic, refused to comply with the Serb demands.⁵⁷⁶

The SDS sent out a last ultimatum to hand over all weapons before 1 May, at which time 'peaceful' attempts to disarm the Muslim population ended. From then on, Serb leaders resorted to other methods. They began massive ethnic cleansing operations, expelling the Muslim inhabitants of the town of Bratunac and most other villages in the municipalities of Bratunac, Srebrenica and Vlasenica. Only a few Muslim strongholds held out against the general Serb assault, and these became the places of refuge for the displaced. The operations finally took off on 29 April, when Colonel Svetozar Milosevic, commander of the 'Drina' operative unit of the JNA, posted an official proclamation on all public buildings in Bratunac, ordering all Muslims to sign a declaration of loyalty to the Serb authorities in the municipal building. In effect, Muslims were given only a few hours to sign, which almost nobody did. The next day, the SDS authorities of Bratunac placed an official announcement on public display calling on all men aged 18 to 60 to join the army. Muslim men, who were also subject to this measure, fled to the forests to avoid being recruited into the army. By this stage, telephone service to most Muslim homes had already been disconnected.⁵⁷⁷

Then, on 1 May, a long series of armed attacks were launched against Muslim villages. They were carried out from the two main Serb operating bases in the area: Milici and Bratunac. This time, instead of SDS delegations, the Serbs sent out armed bands and paramilitary groups to the Muslim villages, who expelled and killed the inhabitants and plundered and burned their houses. Bands from Milici attacked most Muslim villages located south of the road to Podravanje between 1 and 4 May. All were burned to the ground. Some inhabitants were killed or taken to the Susica camp in Vlasenica, but most others through the forests to the Muslim-controlled villages of Krivaèe (municipality of Vlasenica) and Sucasca (municipality of Srebrenica).⁵⁷⁸ Serb forces also tried to take Sucasca, north of that same road, but failed due to fierce Muslim resistance.⁵⁷⁹ On 4 and 5 May, Serb forces took control

⁵⁷⁵ Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 39 and 54.

⁵⁷⁶ Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 44-45; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 36-38, 64-5.

⁵⁷⁷ Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 35-6; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 36-41; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 48; Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁷⁸ Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 62, 66, 118-121, 134. Interviews with: Hasan Nuhanovic 16/06/1998 and Omer Subasic 17/06/1998.

⁵⁷⁹ Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 141-42; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 39, 43

of Zeleni Jadar, an important and strategic road junction south of Srebrenica.⁵⁸⁰ In the municipality of Bratunac, the village of Hranèa was the first to be attacked. On 2 May, masked Serb gunmen set fire to numerous Muslim houses in the village, killing five people and abducting nine men.⁵⁸¹ British journalist, Tim Judah, visited Hranèa two days later. He found local Muslims keeping vigil next to the dead bodies of their relatives (including the body of seven-year-old, Selma Hodzic). The villagers told him that it was hard for them to recognise whether the perpetrators had been army reservists, police, or paramilitaries. Yet they were convinced that some had been from the neighbouring village of Repovac (a Serb suburb of Bratunac) and the Serb part of Hranèa.⁵⁸²

While the attacks on Muslim villages continued, the SDS consolidated its power in both Bratunac and Srebrenica. The SDS leaders replaced all Muslim directors, and ordered the Muslim population to report to work, which made it easier to exert control over them. Few Muslims returned to work, however. In the Sase mine, which was now part of the new Serb municipality of Bratunac, Muslim employees were also required to show up to work. The Serb authorities tried in this way to prevent them from starting any form of resistance and to block the road between Srebrenica and Bratunac. They were also paid bonuses to ensure loyalty.⁵⁸³ Many other Muslims in Bratunac and Srebrenica, however, were arrested and killed. In the town of Srebrenica, which had been abandoned by most of its Muslim population, gunmen killed Muslims hiding in their homes as soon as they appeared on the streets. Their bodies were left lying on the streets for days. Other Muslims were discovered inside their homes and murdered there. Several elderly Muslim inhabitants were burned alive when Serb paramilitaries set fire to Muslim houses in the centre of Srebrenica. Some Muslim families, however, found refuge with their Serb friends or neighbours. At least one Serb was forced to flee from Srebrenica after Serb gunmen discovered that he was hiding two Muslim families in his house.⁵⁸⁴

In Bratunac, the new Serb authorities started rounding up prominent Muslims, particularly political leaders, former officials and intellectuals. The objective was to eliminate existing non-Serb leadership. Some received summons to go to the police station, where they were interrogated and released - if they were lucky. Most, however, were carted off to makeshift prisons set up in such facilities as the Vuk Karadzic school and the cellars of local hotels, restaurants and firms. Once in prison, they were interrogated about who they knew to possess arms or to have been members of the Patriotic League.⁵⁸⁵ Many of those arrested or summoned to the police station disappeared, or were found dead later. The first to be liquidated were a father and two sons, whose bodies were found near the Krizevica river in Bratunac on 29 April 1992. According to the Serbs, the two sons had fought in Croatia for the Croatian National Guard (ZNG). They were also suspected of having participated in the Muslim ambush in Potoèari, in which several Arkan Tigers had been killed. The next day, Serb authorities issued permission to bury their bodies. The small funeral held was attended by close relatives only and was among the last few Muslim burials to take place in Bratunac.⁵⁸⁶

After these initial killings, the Serbs added new victims to the list almost daily. Among them were the local chemist, a police inspector, several managers of firms, the former head of the police of Bratunac, a teacher, and the former mayor of Srebrenica, Salih 'Tale' Sehomeric. Following his arrest, Sehomeric was executed at the bridge over the Drina. A number of other people were also liquidated there and thrown into the river. Others disappeared and were never found again.⁵⁸⁷ Between 18 April and 9 May 1992, seventy-four Muslims from Srebrenica were killed or disappeared. Various local

⁵⁸⁰ Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 39; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 57.

⁵⁸¹ Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, p. 31; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 41.

⁵⁸² Judah, 'Women keep tearful vigil'; interview: Tim Judah 09/12/1997.

⁵⁸³ Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 44; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 35; Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, p. 27.

⁵⁸⁴ Interviews: Abdulah Purkovic 04/02/1998; Boban Vasic 06/07/1998; Damir Skaler 06/02/1998.

⁵⁸⁵ See Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 34.

⁵⁸⁶ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 34-35; Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, pp. 17-28. Interviews: Mehmed Malagic 14/06/1998 and Mirsada Bakalovic on 15/06/1998, 17/06/1998 and 19/06/1998

⁵⁸⁷ Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 16; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 57; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 46-47; Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*:17-28. Interview Mirsada Bakalovic 15/06/1998, 17/06/1998 and 19/06/1998.

Muslim politicians went missing in far-away places in Serbia and Montenegro, where they had taken refuge after the Serbs took Srebrenica.⁵⁸⁸ Saban Mehmedovic (president of the local Reformist Party SRSJ) was arrested near Sabac, where his Serbian wife had a house. He too disappeared. Malik Meholic (MBO) and Azem Begic (SDA) were arrested by the Montenegrin police in the port of Bar and disappeared thereafter. At least seven other Muslims leaders from the municipality of Srebrenica also disappeared in Bar.⁵⁸⁹ Before this development, local SDS hardliner, Miodrag Jokic, issued an almost open invitation to eliminate the so-called Muslim 'extremists' who had fled Srebrenica, during his interview with the Belgrade weekly, *Ilustrovana politika*. "The murderers are among us," he declared and subsequently cited the names and places of residence of various Muslims hiding in Serbia. Among those he mentioned were Malik Meholic as well as Sabit Begic, member of the Social-Democrat Party (SDP), whom Jokic labeled a tough fundamentalist.⁵⁹⁰

These people, however, had played no role whatsoever in the now ever-increasing Muslim ambushes or (counter) attacks on Serb villages. On 6 May 1992, Muslims attacked the Serb hamlet of Gniona (north of the town of Srebrenica). Gniona was the first Serb village in the municipalities of Srebrenica and Bratunac to be attacked and burned down by Naser Oric's forces. The village was strategically important because it gave Muslim forces free passage to Sucevka, another centre of Muslim resistance. On the same day, Muslim forces also attacked Serb houses in the village of Bljeèeva (Bratunac municipality); after they took the village, they abandoned it again because it was so close to Potoèari. Several Muslims and Serbs were killed during these attacks.⁵⁹¹ Muslim forces also began striking back in Srebrenica, especially after Serb paramilitaries burned down Muslim houses in the town's centre on 4 and 5 May. Eighty houses were destroyed and thirty Muslim inhabitants were killed during these actions. One or two days later, Serb paramilitaries tried to do the same in Stari grad, the upper part of town, which led to the first open clashes with local Muslim militia. This became known as the 'Battle of Srebrenica'. On 7 May, several Serbs were killed in these actions. The Serbs were prevented from entering Stari grad, and three days later, they were completely expelled from the town. Muslims then took control of the town.⁵⁹²

Other events prepared the way for this major Muslim success. On 7 May, they ambushed a Serb truck near Osmace (on the road between Zelene Jadar and Skelani). According to Muslim sources, the truck was loaded with Serb plunderers from Srebrenica. Serb sources, by contrast, claim these were civilians. At least seven were killed (Muslim sources claim two or three Muslim casualties and dozens of Serb victims). Wherever the truth lies, the event was crucial because the road connection between Srebrenica and Skelani was now considered unsafe by the Serbs. After blocking the main road connection through Potoèari, on 20 April, Muslims now cut off a second important road linking Srebrenica to the outside world. Serbs in town felt that Srebrenica was being isolated and encircled by Muslim forces.⁵⁹³ The ambush in Osmace, however, also marked the beginning of a huge series of attacks on Muslim villages, which were part of the new Serb 'municipality' of Skelani. Organised by the local branch of the SDS and its president Dane Katanic, the attacks began on 8 May and continued for several days. Two dozen Muslim settlements were attacked, almost eight hundred houses were burned down, and the entire Muslim population was expelled. Over 1,300 Muslims were transported off to Serbia and Macedonia, and almost 900 fled to Muslim villages in the direction of Srebrenica. Seven Muslim men were shot in the presence of women and children. Near the bridge in Skelani, seventeen

⁵⁸⁸ For a list, see Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 37-38.

⁵⁸⁹ Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 24,37-38,57. Interview: Sefkija Hadziarapovic 22/05/1998.

⁵⁹⁰ Milanovic, 'Ubice su medju nama', p. 15.

⁵⁹¹ Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 45; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 50, 57, 144-145; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 43, 69-71; Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, p. 42-43, 71, 200, 258-61; Jovanovic et al, *Iskorenjivanje Srba*, pp. 93-94.

⁵⁹² Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, p. 71

⁵⁹³ Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 46; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 143; Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 41, 59, 71.

Muslims were taken out of a bus and also executed. According to Muslim sources, a total of fifty-five Muslims died during Serb actions in and around Skelani.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹⁴ Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 57-58, 84-87; Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 39-40. Human Rights Watch, *War Crimes*, pp. 60-62.

Chapter 7

The Rise of the Muslim Enclave of Srebrenica



Photo of Goran Zekic (1956-1992), in army uniform, on his gravestone in Srebrenica

The assassination of Goran Zekic

Despite the massive military force mobilised by the Serbs in their attempts to ethnically cleanse eastern Bosnia, the morale of Muslim fighters in and around Srebrenica received a major boost with the death of Srebrenica's SDS president, Goran Zekic, on 8 May 1992. The official version of the event, which is confirmed by Muslim and Serb publications alike, is that Zekic was killed in a Muslim ambush near Vidikovac (between Srebrenica and Zalazje).⁵⁹⁵ According to this version, Zekic had been to the funeral of a Serb soldier who was killed during clashes in Srebrenica the day before. On his way back to Bratunac, he drove into a Muslim trap. However rumours have also persisted that Zekic was not killed by Muslims, but by SDS hardliner, Delivoje Sorak, commander of the Serb Territorial Defence. Sorak travelled together with Zekic in the same car. Although he was injured in the incident, he survived it, giving rise to speculations that he might have actually carried out the assassination. Speculations have it that a private dispute or argument over money lay behind the murder.⁵⁹⁶ This 'unofficial' version is corroborated by the statements that both Delivoje Sorak and Miodrag Jokic, the other major SDS hardliner in Srebrenica, gave to the press. For one thing, these statements were issued immediately following Zekic's death. What is more, they contained major inconsistencies and are, therefore, not entirely credible.⁵⁹⁷ Two informants claim that both Sorak and Jokic were arrested after the incident and

⁵⁹⁵ Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, p. 72, 165, 203; Toholj, *Crna knjiga*, vol. 2, p. 210; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 47; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 145. Interview: Miroslav Deronjic 03/11/1999.

⁵⁹⁶ Interviews: Boban Vasic 06/07/1998; Mirsada Bakalovic 15/06/1998, 17/06/1998 and 19/06/1998; Mitko Kadric 17/01/1998; Munib Hasanovic 14/09/1999. Apparently, Zekic's assassination was a taboo subject in discussions with Sorak. Interview: Delivoje Sorak 20/10/2000. If the rumours are correct, then this case is similar to that of Stanko Pecikoza in Visegrad, a wealthy sawmill owner and SDS official, who was assassinated by Serb gunmen in an ambush in June 1992. He was reportedly killed because he did not pay the 'blood money' he had promised as a compensation for the executions of Muslims by Milan Lukic's paramilitary gang (Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p. 355).

⁵⁹⁷ In an interview with *Ilustrovana politika*, Jokic claims to have thrown a hand grenade at the Muslim attackers, killing two of them. He claims (inaccurately as we have seen from Ibisevic's account) that Zekic had been always the target of Muslims in

placed in pre-trial detention in Bijeljina, only to be released again.⁵⁹⁸ Muslim spokesmen never contradicted the official Serb account because they could trumpet Zekic's assassination as a major Muslim victory to boost their troops' morale.

Whatever the truth may be, the fact that most Serbs believed that Zekic was killed in a Muslim ambush meant that a third major road connection, that between Srebrenica and Bratunac (via Sase), was now off limits to them. Zekic's death shocked the Serbs by demonstrating that even their main leader was not invulnerable. What is more, it spread panic because the town was now almost isolated and surrounded by Muslim forces. In the night between 8 and 9 May, they fled the town en masse. All that remained behind were some thirty people (some Serbs, Macedonians, Croats, and a few individuals from mixed marriages).⁵⁹⁹ Fearing Serb vengeance, most Muslims also fled the town the morning after the killing. Soon, dozens of Muslim houses were, in fact, burned down, and some of the occupants who had decided to stay were shot or burned alive in their homes. By this stage, the town was almost completely abandoned. In the afternoon of the next day, Akuf Ustic entered the town and took control. In the days that followed, Muslim inhabitants, who had spent several weeks in the forests, returned to Srebrenica, where they stayed for the next three years. They removed bodies from the streets and buried them near the mosque.⁶⁰⁰

The Muslims of Bratunac and surrounding villages immediately suffered the consequences of Goran Zekic's assassination and the humiliating defeat of the Serbs in Srebrenica. On 9 May, the Muslim village of Glogova, which lies between Kravica and Bratunac, was surrounded. The Serbs then carried out a pogrom on the population. About sixty Muslim men were executed in a field near the village mosque.⁶⁰¹ On Sunday 10 May, thousands of Muslims from Bratunac and various suburbs and villages to the west and north of the town were rounded up in one huge operation and brought together in the FC 'Bratstvo' (Brotherhood) sports stadium in Bratunac. On the previous evening, several had been warned by Serb neighbours that something bad was going to happen the next day, and that it was better to leave. Some Muslims decided to flee into the forests. This entire population of Muslims were rounded up by Serbs from Bratunac and Srebrenica, who searched the streets and drove people out of their homes. Muslims were given almost no time to collect their personal belongings. They were taken to the stadium, where they ordered to hand over money, other valuables, ID cards and car keys. Using megaphones, they called the names of well-known, prominent Muslim men and summoned them to step forward and identify themselves. The men were then taken to the gym of the Vuk Karadzic elementary school. The school, which was located near the stadium, was now used as a Serb drumhead court.⁶⁰² After the Serb takeover of Bratunac, on 17 April, several prominent Muslims were sentenced and executed there. According to Muslim sources, the head of the court was Veljko Macesic, the hospital paediatrician from Bratunac.⁶⁰³

Srebrenica (Milanovic, 'Ubice su medju nama', p. 14). In *Revija 92*, Sorak claims to have shot at the Muslim attackers, but makes no mention whatsoever of the fact that he killed two of them. The writer of this article also emphasises (and rightly so) that Zekic was quite well respected among ('honest') Muslims in Srebrenica. He spoke to Zekic just a few days before his death, and at that time, Muslims from Srebrenica who had fled to Tuzla were calling him, begging him to help them return and to join forces against the extremists (Mitric, 'Otac zamenio sina junaka'). Zekic made an appearance on TV Novi Sad in which he invited Muslims to discuss their return. Interview: Marinko Sekulic 10/11/1998.

⁵⁹⁸ Interviews: Boban Vasic 06/07/1998; Marinko Sekulic 10/11/1998.

⁵⁹⁹ Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, p. 41.

⁶⁰⁰ Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 47; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 145; Rifatbegovic, *Ratni mir*, pp. 54-56. Interview: Damir Skaler 06/02/1998.

⁶⁰¹ For the events in Glogova, see: Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 53, 79; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 50-51, 90-91; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 43-44, 68, 70; Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, pp. 34-38; Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex III.a, pp. 74, 141. Interview: Miroslav Deronjic 03/11/1999.

⁶⁰² Throughout the rest of Bosnia, public places, such as schools, factories, sports arenas, mines, and warehouses were also converted into camps and prisons, where the civilian populations were detained before being displaced. Control of these camps lay in the hands of different parties. Some were run by the army, and others by local authorities, the police, various paramilitary groups and local armed militias, or combinations of these. (Bassiouni, *Final report*, pp. 51-55).

⁶⁰³ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 33. See also the eyewitness account of Mehmedalija Hadziarapovic in Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 92-97.

By late afternoon, four to five thousand Muslim civilians gathered in the sports stadium.⁶⁰⁴ In the early evening, they were taken outside to transported elsewhere. At this point, all men of military age were separated from the women and children at the entrance of the stadium. Women and children were put on buses and transported to Tisce, from where they walked to Muslim-held territory. The men, about six to seven hundred of them, were lined up in rows guarded by soldiers and paramilitaries. They were brought to the gym of the Vuk Karadzic School, where one of the cruellest and bloodiest episodes of the war took place.⁶⁰⁵ Many of them later recounted that when they entered the gym, they saw the dead and mutilated bodies of those who had gone before. The dressing rooms to the left and right were covered in blood. Some thirty to fifty people were lying on the floor of the gym itself, many of them unconscious. They were asked to stand up and move. Those who could not comply were shot in the neck. After the dead were removed, all the men were pressed inside and forced to stand in one half of the gym, which was too small for them to breath. During the first night, nine people died of suffocation. The prisoners were offered extremely salty food without any water to drink. Then, on the second day they received nothing to eat or drink at all.

On the first evening, paramilitaries, most of whom had come from elsewhere, started to kick and beat the Muslim prisoners. The first victim was a priest, Mustafa Mujkanovic, who was killed in front of the other prisoners. He was forced to cross himself, to lift his hand and raise three fingers in the Serb manner (he lifted only two) and to drink beer (which he refused). Then he was beaten with various objects until he lost consciousness. He was finally killed off by a gunshot through the head.⁶⁰⁶ This orgy of violence continued for the next three days until 13 May at midnight. In the gym were also Muslim men from Srebrenica and Potoèari who had ended up in Bratunac. They were personally targeted in order to avenge the attack on the Arkan Tigers and the murder of Goran Zekic. Zekic's father reportedly entered the gym to order the murder of all men from Srebrenica as retribution for the killing of his son.⁶⁰⁷ Others, who also had private accounts to settle, entered and selected their own candidates to be assaulted. In most other cases, however, the victims were chosen more or less at random through certain 'games' the Serbs played. Men wearing green shirts (the colour symbolising the Islamic faith) were certain to be selected. Prisoners had to sing Chetnik songs, and those who refused to do so were killed. Basketballs were thrown into the air, and any prisoner hit in the head by one would be sentenced death. Some prisoners were taken into an 'investigation' room, one of the dressing rooms in the gym, where they were interrogated and tortured. Another dressing room was used to kill people off. Others who were already half dead were carried outside in front of a hangar behind the school building to be killed there.

There, the dead bodies of Muslim prisoners were collected, and trucks came to transport them away. Prisoners were forced to carry bodies out of the school to the hangar, and throw them into a ditch or load them on the trucks. In some cases, those who had carried the bodies were then killed themselves and thrown on top of the pile. Others were put to work removing bloodstains and human remains. Most prisoners who were brought to the school later, and who did not belong to the first group of six to seven hundred men, were killed in front of the hangar. The bodies of all those killed were dumped in mass graves or thrown into the Drina.⁶⁰⁸ According to eyewitnesses, at least three hundred Muslims were liquidated in the school. Several of the perpetrators were not from Bratunac and for that reason were often known by their nicknames only: 'Bane' (reportedly a paramilitary and member of the White Eagles, who was said to be from Sabac in Serbia), 'Makedonac' (probably from Vranje), Dragan Maric (who was from Milici), Novak 'Krke' Stjepanovic (originally from Vukovar but

⁶⁰⁴ At least one Muslim family was allowed to go back home. They hid for the next twelve days before they acquired a permit to leave the town. Mirsada Bakalovic 15/06/1998, 17/06/1998 and 19/06/1998.

⁶⁰⁵ Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, pp. 61-196; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 51-53, 102-107, 122-127; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 44-52; Bassiouni, *Final report*, Annex III.a, pp. 140-141; Mazowiecki, *Situation of human rights*, par. 65.

⁶⁰⁶ Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, pp. 95-98.

⁶⁰⁷ Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, pp. 159-161; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 126.

⁶⁰⁸ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 48-52.

living as a miner in Sase), and Milan 'Rocko' Trisic (who was from Bratunac).⁶⁰⁹ They also used mock Muslim nicknames among themselves such as Huso, Haso, and Mujo.

According to one Muslim account, they used lists of people to be liquidated, which they received from the local SDS. They were said to have been paid by Sreten Radic, who reportedly gave them 500 Deutsch marks for every Muslim they killed. They also had a video of the Muslim demonstration on the streets of Bratunac in late August 1991 when the Yugoslav Army attempted to confiscate the army card files. Using that video, they were able to identify Muslims who had been on the forefront of these demonstrations.⁶¹⁰ One of their victims was a local Serb, Milutin 'Moler' Vuksic, who was taken into the school and killed because he had been hiding a Muslim family.⁶¹¹ He was one of the very few local Serbs who helped Muslims and resisted the massive expulsion of the Muslim population. Many other Serbs took part in it, becoming complicit in the act of ethnic cleansing without fully anticipating the brutality with which it was carried out. Many were convinced that Muslims would not suffer much harm, and that most of them would be transported to Kladanj as part of an exchange between Muslim and Serb territories. They were told, "Muslims have to go and Serbs will come here". The paramilitaries, however, made sure that things were much worse than anyone could imagine. There were some Serbs, including individuals participating in these actions, who tried to assist or rescue former Muslim friends. They did this, for instance, by trying to help them to flee, giving them money, or making sure that they escaped any harm from extremists. Some were horrified and very distressed about what was happening.⁶¹²

At midnight on 13 May, the torturing in the gym of the Vuk Karadzic School stopped. All remaining prisoners were put on buses to Pale to be exchanged for Serb prisoners. The exchange took place a few days later. In the other parts of the municipality of Bratunac, Serbs continued to round up Muslims, including in the villages along the main road to Konjevic Polje. The Muslim populations of these villages were taken to Kravica. Polom served as the main collection point for villages north of Bratunac. Some men ended up in the prison camp Susica, while women were deported to Muslim-held central Bosnia. Several dozen Muslims from the villages of Gradina and Sase were imprisoned in a building of the Sase mine, from which most disappeared.⁶¹³ Muslim villages south of Bratunac along the Drina (such as Bjelovac, Voljavica, and Sikiric) came under attack from Bratunac and the Serb stronghold of Fakovici.⁶¹⁴ Instead of surrendering to the Serbs, most villagers took refuge in the hills and forests or went to Muslim villages near Srebrenica that had not yet been assaulted. These people were to form the first large group of refugees to enter the enclave. They received help from Muslim fighters (including the group led by Osman Malagic), who had taken refuge in the hills as early on as April. These fighters assisted Muslim civilians to flee to safer territory, and also helped them return to their villages during the night to collect food and other belongings. Almost all of these Muslims ended up in the town of Srebrenica, where they were accommodated in apartments and houses that had been abandoned by their previous occupants.⁶¹⁵

These large-scale Serb operations raged from the beginning up through the end of May. During that time, over three quarters of the entire Muslim population in the Bratunac municipality (seventeen thousand people) was cleansed from the area. At least five hundred people were killed. Almost five

⁶⁰⁹ Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, pp. 101-107, 116-120.

⁶¹⁰ Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, pp. 18-119.

⁶¹¹ Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, pp. 166-167.

⁶¹² Interviews: Mitko and Mevla Kadric 17/01/1998; Mirsada Bakalovic 15/06/1998, 17/06/1998 and 19/06/1998.

⁶¹³ Probably most prisoners were killed and buried in an earthen dam near the mine. Only eleven people survived. Girls were raped. For an eyewitness account, see Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 98-101. See also Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 55-57. Interview: Edina Karic 20/10/1997.

⁶¹⁴ Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 53-55; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 51-54; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 53-57, 74-75; Omeragic, *Satanski sinovi*, pp. 57-59. Orlica, a Roma settlement near Tegare, was also attacked and cleansed by Serb forces on 16 May 1992 (Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 56).

⁶¹⁵ See Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 51-56; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 115-16. Interviews: Mehmed Malagic 22/10/1997 and 14/06/1998.

thousand people (less than a quarter of the Muslim population) stayed in their own villages. This was because those villages were under Muslim control; about 3,300 in and around Konjevic Polje, as well as 1,500 Muslims in Blječeva, Joseva and Jagodnja. Of those displaced, about nine thousand were deported to central Bosnia. Another eight thousand fled to villages that were part of the Muslim-held territory of Srebrenica.⁶¹⁶ Although these large population movements were the result of massive expulsions, local SDS leaders made it appear in the Serbian press as though these people had left their homes out of free choice. On 14 May 1992, *Vjèernje novosti*, a daily newspaper, quoted Miroslav Deronjic as claiming that many Muslims had fled the area on their own initiative. According to Deronjic, they did this out of fear of Serb reprisals after Muslim extremists had killed Zekic and carried out massacres against the Serb population. He claimed that roughly one hundred Serbs had been slaughtered in Srebrenica.⁶¹⁷

First wave of coordinated Muslim attacks on Serb villages



Naser Oric, main commander of the Muslim forces in the Srebrenica enclave.

Groups of armed Muslims in and around Srebrenica responded to these massive ethnic cleansing operations with a wave of coordinated attacks on Serb villages, which started in all earnest on 15 May. The villages initially targeted were Viogor, Orahovica and Osredak. These first operations were intended to link up various centres of Muslim resistance and create a compact Muslim-controlled territory in a semi-circle west of Srebrenica (at the perimeters of which lay Potocari, Srebrenica, Suceska, and Zeleni Jadar).⁶¹⁸ During these attacks, Serb villages were plundered and burned down, and several Serbs were killed. Generally, however, the number of Serb casualties was low because most of the population (particularly women and children) had already taken refuge in Bratunac or elsewhere. On 16 May, Serb forces carried out a counterattack from Milici, trying to raid the Muslim stronghold of Suceska west of Srebrenica. But local commander, Zulfo Tursunovic, managed to overcome the Serbs, a victory that cost both Serb and Muslim casualties.⁶¹⁹ Serb forces retaliated by encircling the village of Zaklopača, a few miles west of the town of Milici. There, they carried out a massacre the very same day,

⁶¹⁶ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 57-58, 113.

⁶¹⁷ Sobot, 'U Srebrenici pobijeno sto Srba'.

⁶¹⁸ Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 88-89; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 145; Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 72, 162, 172-3.

⁶¹⁹ Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 59; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 142.

killing at least eighty-three Muslims.⁶²⁰ A second series of Muslim attacks on Serb villages and hamlets was carried out between 16 and 18 May. These attacks were launched from strongholds near Kragljivoda and Osmace, in the hills between Zeleni Jadar and Skelani. Several armed Muslim groups had emerged there, who still had no ties to similar groups in and around Srebrenica. In the following days, Serb forces carried out a counterattack from Skelani, raiding a number of Muslim settlements and killing several Muslims.⁶²¹

Soon, Muslim forces in Potočari, Srebrenica and Sućeska succeeded in linking up. On 20 May 1992, at a meeting in the village of Bajramovići, all groups in the municipality were brought under the command of Naser Orić. Akif Ustić became the deputy commander. The headquarters of what was now called the Territorial Defence of Srebrenica was located in Srebrenica's post office in. Despite these measures to organise and coordinate the resistance, however, the situation remained chaotic due to the enormous lack of trained and experienced officers.⁶²² In May, the military authorities opened a war hospital in the town of Srebrenica, where a handful of doctors did their best to revive healthcare. They collected medicines from people's houses.⁶²³ The post office also returned to operating; fortunately the Serbs had not destroyed the telecommunication system, which was soon restored. For security reasons, all private telephone service was cut off. Military leaders, however, retained one phone and one fax line to the outside world for army purposes. In addition, a radio link in the PTT building was used to transmit official and codified messages as well as to exchange private messages.⁶²⁴ Ordinary people depended mainly on radio amateurs to help them contact relatives outside the Srebrenica enclave. The police force, which was reinstated, introduced a curfew that lasted from sunset to dawn. The only factory in operation during the first months of war was the Vežionica' textile factory. It produced clothes for the army and the civil defence. It took several weeks to re-install some form of civil administration. On 1 July, the War Presidency of the Municipality of Srebrenica was established in the PTT building. Hajrudin Avdić stepped up as its president, and Hamdija Fejzić as chairman of its Executive Board. Orić's position as commander of the Armed Forces of Srebrenica was confirmed.⁶²⁵

In late May 1992, many Muslim refugees who had been hiding in the forests started to flood into the enclave, bringing cows and everything else they had managed to take with them. Others ended up in the nearby Muslim pockets of Zepa, Konjević Polje, and Čerška, to the southwest and northwest of Srebrenica. They came from all sides, from Muslim villages near Bratunac, Milici, Skelani, and Vlasenica. In Srebrenica, only three to four hundred original inhabitants remained in town; the rest had left.⁶²⁶ Even though most of Muslims in the municipalities of Bratunac, Srebrenica and Vlasenica were on the move, cleansing operations in the area had not achieved what the Serbs expected. They were now confronted with the threat of an ever-expanding Muslim enclave, which was joining forces with other pockets of Muslim resistance in Konjević Polje, Čerška, Luka, Zepa, and villages to the south-east of Srebrenica. Serb frustration over this state of affairs expressed itself in acts of revenge, which were carried out mainly when Muslims achieved military successes. These acts of revenge were often

⁶²⁰ Orić, *Srebrenica*, pp. 62-63. Human Rights Watch, *War Crimes*, pp. 50-55. Mazowiecki, *Situation of human rights*, par.37. Interviews and conversations with Hasan Nuhanović 16/06/1998 and Omer Subašić 17/06/1998. The massacre in Zaklopača was included in the indictments against Momčilo Krajišnik and Biljana Plavšić at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), under case numbers IT-00-39-I and IT-00-40-I, respectively.

⁶²¹ Masić, *Srebrenica*, pp. 58-9,96; Orić, *Srebrenica*, p. 58; Ivanisević, *Hronika*, pp. 72, 160, 165, 266-7.

⁶²² Interview: Damir Skaler 31/01/1998.

⁶²³ Interview: Abdulah Purković 94/02/1998.

⁶²⁴ Interview: Hasan Nuhanović, 19/06/1998.

⁶²⁵ Masić, *Srebrenica*, pp. 49-52. The War Presidency, a council of seventeen members, replaced the municipal council. Because the municipal council could not meet regularly (as most councillors were outside the enclave) and many decisions had to be made quickly, the council's work was suspended. The War Presidency continued to exist until August 1994, when the municipal council was reinstated, albeit without including its SDS members. Interview: Fahrudin Salihović 04/02/1998.

⁶²⁶ According to Boban Vasić, a list was drawn up of all original inhabitants who had returned to the town. The list contained 366 names. This information was provided by his mother, Dragica Vasić, who stayed in Muslim-held Srebrenica throughout most of the war. Interview: Boban Vasić 06/07/1998.

disproportionate in terms of their scale and intensity of violence. On 21 May 1992, Serbs took thirty-two inmates from the Susica camp and executed them after they had failed to seize Nova Kasaba (part of the pocket of Konjevic Polje). Of these prisoners, all of whom originated from villages north of Bratunac, three survived.⁶²⁷ The executions in Glogova (9 May) and Zaklopača (16 May), which were discussed earlier, were also part of this pattern. Moreover, in Bratunac, the death of Srebrenica's local SDS leader, Goran Zekic, was used as pretext to start a wholesale assault on the town's Muslim population (10 May).

We should not forget, however, that the Serbs suffered important losses during the first two months of the war. Several of their leaders were injured or killed. Aside from Zekic, some Serb leaders and commanders were killed in Konjevic Polje and Kravica. There, Serbs tried continually to take control of the road junction linking the towns of Bratunac, Zvornik, and Vlasenica. Muslim forces in Konjevic Polje had managed to block these connections. All Serb attacks were unsuccessful and they led to serious casualties. For instance, Raso Milanovic (commander of the local defence in Kravica) was heavily injured on 26 May. The next day, Serbs attempted to open up the road to Milici with a convoy of trucks from Boksit Milici. Five drivers were killed during this operation, and all the trucks were burned. Two days later, on 29 May, Golub Eric (World War Two veteran and member of the Serb crisis committee of Kravica) and Milutin Milosevic (police commander of Bratunac) were also killed in heavy fighting near Konjevic Polje as they tried to remove Muslim barricades. The Serbs retaliated by executing almost ninety men of military age in Drinjača the following day.⁶²⁸ Finally, Radomir 'Raso' Milosevic (one of the commanders of the Serb defence in Kravica) was killed in an ambush in Glogova on 1 June. These losses formed a serious blow to defence in Kravica. The morale of local Serb forces improved only after two buses with volunteers from Nova Pazova in Serbia arrived.⁶²⁹

In early June, the Serbs were also hit hard near Zepa, where a Serb army convoy was ambushed and completely destroyed by Muslim forces, killing at least thirty-nine soldiers. Dozens of Serbs were taken prisoner. The Bosnian Serb leadership was shocked, because most soldiers who had been killed were actually from Pale, the seat of the war-time government of the Republika Srpska (Radovan Karadzic was later present at the funeral). In the days that followed, Zepa was pounded by Serb artillery, while Yugoslav Army jets bombarded Muslim hamlets in the enclave.⁶³⁰ During the summer of 1992, Muslim attacks on Serb-held territory only intensified, including from the enclave of Srebrenica. This was partly due to the fact that Muslims who had taken refuge in the hills near Srebrenica were now returning to their villages to take food and other belongings. Starting in July, they were joined by many other refugees who had ended up in Srebrenica and who were suffering increasingly from hunger. The villages along the Drina were often targeted by groups of refugees since they possessed the most fertile land in the region. That is where most people went to look for food.

Initially, only men went to these villages in search of food. Women and children soon joined, however, to carry back as much as possible in bags. At times long columns were formed of several thousand people. People gathered at the usual locations, such as Mocevici, Pirici, and Jagodnja. Serbs tried to prevent these raids by ambushing them or by putting mines along the tracks used by these so-called *torbari* ('bag-people'). Several people were killed. In June, for instance, four Muslim *torbari* were shot in Zalazje. In July, eleven people died in a minefield near Magasici. And in September, thirteen people were killed and twelve were taken hostage in Tegare and never seen again. Serbs also carried out ambushes on tracks leading to Konjevic Polje and Zepa, for instance, in Podravanje where dozens of

⁶²⁷ Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 80; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 55-56,66; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 55-56,108-110,146.

⁶²⁸ Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 80-82

⁶²⁹ For details on the clashes around Konjevic Polje and Nova Kasaba, see Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božić sela Kravice*, pp. 45-49,161; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 57,66-68,77-78,80-82; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 146-147,161-64,166; Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 73,126; Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 60-61, 330-332.

⁶³⁰ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp. 115-117. Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 72; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 68-69. Interview: Omer Subasic 17/06/1998, Hasan Nuhanovic 16/06/1998.

Muslims were killed during the war. The road to Konjevic Polje was also dangerous. Muslims usually tried to bring homemade tobacco from there to exchange for corn and other foods.⁶³¹

Military forays into Serb territory continued, the main aim of which was to eliminate Serb positions around the town and link up various pockets of Muslim resistance. The attacks were often carried out on Serbian-Orthodox holidays, such as Sveta Trojica (8 June) and Vidovdan (28 June), when the Serb defences were usually less alert because of the celebrations. Another well-known example of this pattern was the attack on Zalazje on Petrovdan (12 July). During June and early July, Muslim forces tried repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, to take this Serb outpost, which was located on a hill overseeing Srebrenica town. On that particular day, however, Oric carried out a surprise attack. After one day of fighting, he succeeded in taking the village, killing at least forty Serbs, some of whom were burned alive in their homes. Among the victims were three members of the Rakic family, one of whom had been best friends with Naser Oric (Mile Rakic). As the story goes, Oric desperately tried to convince his friend to surrender. He stubbornly refused, killing himself with a hand grenade.⁶³² Another victim of the battle at Zalazje was army officer and commander of the prison camp in Sase, Miroљub Todorovic. At least six Serbs, including Mile's uncle Miodrag, were taken hostage. They were then transported to the prison in Srebrenica, never to be seen again. According to Ivanisevic, a unit of Gypsies from the Srebrenica suburb of Kazani was among the attackers. In Voljavica, Muslims ambushed and killed a large number of Serb reinforcements, which were on their way to Zalazje and never arrived at their destination.⁶³³

The Muslim territory expands



The terrible, salvation-bringing truth

⁶³¹ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 116-118. Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 128, 132-133, 135, 166.

⁶³² Before the war, Mile Rakic ran a café in Bratunac. In November 1991, on the family's *slava* (the family's patron saint day), a group of Muslim hoodlums entered the café and demolished it. Oric later forced them to pay back the damage. After the battle in Zalazje, Mile's body was the only that was exchanged with the Serbs. Conversations with Goran Rakic 20/06/1998 and 25/06/1998.

⁶³³ For the battle in the village of Zalazje, see: Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 49, 68, 78-79, 145, 172-3, 201, 285-88; Jovanovic et al, *Iskorenjivanje Srba*, pp. 107-110, 268-69; Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božić sela Kravice*, pp. 51-52; Toholj, *Crna knjiga*, vol.2, p. 216. Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 80, 86; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 86. Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 161. Westerman and Rijs, *Het zwartste scenario*, pp. 73-75; Interviews and conversations with Ljubo Rakic 09/06/1998, Goran Rakic 20/06/1998 and 25/06/1998, Momčilo Cvjetinovic 11/06/1998, Staka Cvjetinovic 10/06/1998, Mile Stanojevic 15-16/09/1999; Miroslav Deronjic 03/11/1999. One Muslim document found by the Serbs after they took Srebrenica in July 1995 mentions that ninety-six Serbs were killed and nine taken prisoner during actions in Zalazje, Spat and Sase. NIOD, Coll Momčilo Cvjetinovic, War diary of Vahded Huseinovic.

Map of Serb villages in the district of Srebrenica destroyed by Naser Oric's Muslim forces, printed on the front page of *Nasa Rijec*, Bratunac, June 1995.

The Muslim attacks on Serb villages continued throughout the summer and autumn of 1992. On 30 June, Muslims took Brezani, a Serb stronghold in the hills southeast of Srebrenica (near Zeleni Jadar). Nineteen Serbs were killed during this attack. This victory enabled Oric's forces in the Srebrenican enclave to link up with armed Muslim groups in Osmace and other Muslim villages to the east. According to Serb sources, Muslims took all livestock (over two hundred cows) and mutilated the bodies of the Serbs killed. One of the victims had his ear cut off, another was crucified, and several others burned in their homes. At the time of the attack, some sixty men were present in the village, thirty of which were capable of fighting. Women and children had already left Brezani.⁶³⁴ In July and August, attacks on Serb villages between Kravica and Bratunac intensified, and there were frequent Muslim ambushes in Glogova. On 25 July, Muslims took Hranèa and subsequently blocked the road connection between Kravica and Bratunac. Cut off from the ten-kilometre asphalt road, Serbs now had to make a thirty-kilometre detour to get from Kravica via Sopotnik and take the macadam road along the Drina to Bratunac, or vice-versa. After three days, Serbs re-conquered Hranèa. Nonetheless, the fact that the Muslims had been able to take control of it made it all too clear that Kravica and Bratunac were now in an extremely precarious position.⁶³⁵ Serb authorities in Bratunac pushed for negotiations with Muslims in Srebrenica in order to bring about a cease-fire and an exchange of prisoners. Initially, the Serbs held talks with Zulfo Tursunovic. When Naser Oric was expected in Bratunac to continue the discussions and negotiate a deal, he failed to appear.⁶³⁶

In late July, the Muslims received reinforcements from outside. Nurif Rizvanovic, who, as mentioned earlier, had tried to set up a paramilitary group in Bratunac the year before, returned to the scene. Before his return, however, Nijaz Dubièic, the former mayor of Bratunac, had talked to him in Tuzla to engage him in the war. Rizvanovic formed a Muslim Brigade of 450 men, consisting of refugees from Bratunac and the Podrinje area. They walked through the Serb lines to Konjevic Polje and Srebrenica. One of his companies, well equipped and in ABiH uniforms, arrived in Srebrenica on 7 August. They received an enthusiastic welcome from the population of Srebrenica, who saw the ABiH uniforms for the first time.⁶³⁷ The next major Muslim operations took place in autumn 1992, when Muslims attacked the Serb stronghold of Podravanje and villages along the Drina, burning numerous houses and killing dozens of Serbs. The attack on Podravanje occurred on 24 September and was carried out by a force of two to three thousand Muslims. It cost the lives of at least thirty-one Serbs, many of whom died brutal deaths. Some were burned alive; others were decapitated or dismembered. Podravanje was taken by the Muslims. As a result, Srebrenica was linked with Zepa, as well as with the villages of Luka and Krusev Do. The Muslim forces captured two T55 tanks and other weaponry, and took huge numbers of cattle with them. They also attacked the nearby surface mine of Bracan, where they eliminated a Serb artillery post located there. Muslims used a tank in this attack, during which seven Serbs were killed. Two days later, Muslim forces carried out attacks on villages near Milici and

⁶³⁴ Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 94-95; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 160; Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 47, 76, 172-3, 191, 272-277; Jovanovic et al, *Iskorenjivanje Srba*, pp. 110-112, 267; Toholj, *Crna knjiga*, vol.2, p. 215.

⁶³⁵ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 83; Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božić sela Kravice*, p. 53-62.

⁶³⁶ Interview: Miroslav Deronjic 03/11/1999. Deronjic also refers to these negotiations in an interview he gave to the local paper, *Nasa Rijec*. He defends himself against accusations that he was trading off Bratunac. Anonymous, 'Neka mi neko od vas pokaze'.

⁶³⁷ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 79-80, 86-87. Nurif Rizvanovic, who was based in Konjevic Polje, was assassinated in November 1992. It is rumoured that he was killed by Oric's men. Oric may have feared Rizvanovic's influence. See: Delalic, 'Rizvanoviceva majka'; Mrkic, 'Predsjedništvo', p. 8. Interviews: Almir and Zahira Ramic 6-10/11/1999, Ibran Mustafic 16/04/1998 and 18/09/2001. After the war, ABiH commanders from Srebrenica denied that Oric was behind the assassination of Rizvanovic. See: Mandzic, 'Zlatni Ljiljani', p. 37.

Konjevic Polje, killing thirty-seven Serbs. Serbs retaliated with air raids on Srebrenica, causing huge material damage though no casualties.⁶³⁸

On 5 October 1992, Muslims launched massive attacks on Fakovici and other Serb villages along the Drina, killing at least twenty-four Serbs and burning down 120 houses. The villages were looted, and in Fakovici the church was desecrated. The attackers seized huge amounts of food, and also shot at Serbs at the other (i.e. Serbian) side of the Drina. Serbs fled with small boats over to Serbia. Muslims now controlled most villages along the Drina River, from where they could shell Bratunac.⁶³⁹ At this stage, the attacks on Serb villages became increasingly brutal. Soldiers were joined by hundreds of hungry civilians in search of food and revenge. This proved to be an extremely effective tactic, as Serbs could not defend themselves against such overwhelming numbers. They were terrified by such attacks, which usually started with the deafening noise of baking utensils being banged by women to create panic among the Serb defenders. The Serbs could take on small groups of armed soldiers, but hundreds, or even thousands, of *torbari* were invincible. They set up mines and booby-traps in fields, but were unable to stop the massive raids. Because such staggering numbers of *torbari* took part in the attacks, there were no real civilians in Srebrenica as far as the Serbs were concerned.⁶⁴⁰

Most Muslim commanders were unable to keep this overwhelming force in check. The result was often acts of uninhibited violence and cruelty. Bodies of Serbs killed in battle became the object of deliberate mutilation by the *torbari*. Ivanisevic gives details of this: bodies of Serbs were found which bore the marks of torture and burnings, with cut throats, heads cut off, eyes cut out, skulls smashed, arms and legs broken, and men castrated or circumcised. Sometimes, a capital 'U' (the symbol of the Ustashe) was carved into bodies.⁶⁴¹ One of the most notorious perpetrators of such acts was Kemal 'Kemo' Mehmedovic, who is said to have decapitated Serbs and carried their heads through the town of Srebrenica. According to Ivanisevic, a few dozen psychopaths of this calibre lived in the enclave. During the first year of the war, almost ten percent of Serb victims were not simply killed, but were also tortured, burned or mutilated in various ways.⁶⁴²

Most civilians were refugees. Not only were they suffering from hunger, they were also driven by a thirst for revenge. Many had been expelled from their homes when the war began. One Muslim document, a war diary of a local ABiH soldier, clearly demonstrates that revenge played a role. Found when the Srebrenica enclave was taken by the Serbs, this diary describes the soldier's thoughts. Watching his unsuspecting Serb victims working the fields from the hills near Fakovici, just before his unit attacks them, he writes: "Now a terrible and bloody revenge will come over them, carried out by people whose possessions have been taken away and destroyed".⁶⁴³ The numbers of hungry, embittered civilians only increased after a new wave of refugees entered Srebrenica in September 1992. These were people displaced after Zepa came under relentless shelling, attacks and bombardments by the Yugoslav Army. In mid September, Zepa seemed to lie at the brink of falling. At that point, many Muslims refugees decided to go to Konjevic Polje, Cerska and Srebrenica, from where they hoped to continue to Tuzla. On 9 September 1992, a large column of about six thousand refugees were ambushed and shelled by the Serbs. They killed many of them and captured several hundred. An even greater tragedy was averted when Muslim forces intervened the next day. The refugees were forced to go back to Konjevic Polje, Cerska, and Srebrenica. In the Srebrenica enclave, they roamed through villages in

⁶³⁸ Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 51-53, 82-83, 160, 172-3, 179-80, 213, 294-305; Toholj, *Crna knjiga*, vol.2, p. 218-19; Jovanovic et al, *Iskorenjivanje Srba*, pp. 112-117, 275. Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 164-65; Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 72, 100, 124.

⁶³⁹ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 85, 88; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 166-67; Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 102-03; Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 53-54, 84, 173, 199, 305-313; Jovanovic et al, *Iskorenjivanje Srba*, pp. 276; Anonymous, 'Ustaski pir u Fakovicima'; Cvjetinovic, 'Granatama po djeci'. NIOD, Coll Momčilo Cvjetinovic, War diary of Vahded Huseinovic.

⁶⁴⁰ Interviews and conversations: Mile Stanojevic 15-16/09/1999, Muhamed Durakovic, 21/11/1999, Milivoje Ivanisevic 03/02/1998.

⁶⁴¹ Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 96-101.

⁶⁴² Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, p. 102. Mehmedovic was taken out of the enclave and brought to Tuzla at the beginning of 1993. Conversation: Luka Bogdanovic 15/09/1999.

⁶⁴³ NIOD, Coll Momčilo Cvjetinovic, War diary of Vahded Huseinovic.

search of food. While some peasants shared the little food they had, others did not for fear they too would soon go hungry.⁶⁴⁴

The need for food raids grew more pressing. It would have been difficult for the Muslim commanders to prevent the worst of the violence even if they had wanted to. (Moreover, it is unlikely that they would have had any such desire since they could make good use of the *torbari*). Usually, the news of impending attacks spread quickly from the mouths of soldiers, most of whom stayed with their families. They told their relatives to follow the army at a short distance and to take as much food as they could. It was impossible to keep military actions secret for long.⁶⁴⁵ Yet some Muslims refused to participate in the raids on Serb villages out of fear that they would lead to Serb retaliations. Nobody was allowed to say that openly, and anyone who did express concern was told in no uncertain terms to keep silent.⁶⁴⁶ The attacks were led by Naser Oric, Zulfo Tursunovic, Akif Ustic and Hakija Meholic, although Meholic did not always participate. According to one Muslim document, he decided, for instance, not to take part in the attack against Serb villages along the Drina (the Fakovici area) in early October 1992.⁶⁴⁷

On 3 November 1992, the forces of the Muslim-held enclaves of Srebrenica, Konjevic Polje, and Cerska were brought under one unified command. Once again, Oric stepped up as commander-in-chief.⁶⁴⁸ Although all groups were under Oric's command, it is clear that he was not always able to impose his decisions on other commanders. This was especially true of Zulfo Tursunovic and Hakija Meholic. Some units wanted to remain more or less independent, such as Meholic's company. Initially, he called his unit the HVO (Croat Council of Defence), but was forced to drop the name by the War Presidency.⁶⁴⁹ During the first year of the war, Meholic commanded a unit of fifty soldiers, who were much more disciplined than other units. Unlike members of other units in the enclave, they did not sleep at home but stayed in Hotel Domavija. The Hotel was their *kasarna*, and they had their own kitchen. From there, they provided their own families with food, which was usually taken from Serb villages during the raids. They had two trucks to transport whatever they seized during raids.⁶⁵⁰ Tensions between Oric and Meholic continued throughout the war, partly due to their very different views on the objectives of their armed struggle. Oric was fighting for the Muslim cause and also wanted to expand his territory at the cost of the Serbs. Meholic wanted to protect the town and did not exclude future cooperation and coexistence with Serbs. Later during the war, Meholic was appointed head of police. In that capacity, he did his best to fight crime and the mafia, to protect the very few Serbs and Croats left in the town, and to save the Orthodox church from destruction. This placed yet another strain on relations between Oric and Meholic.

Aside from these frictions, political opposition was developing in the enclave. It was led by Ibran Mustafic as soon as he returned to Srebrenica in December 1992. Mustafic had been in Sarajevo when the war broke out, and stayed there until November. He managed to leave Sarajevo and walked to Gorazde through the forests. From there, he continued on to besieged Srebrenica, where he arrived on 12 December 1992.⁶⁵¹ At the time, the SDA was completely marginalized in the enclave. Since most SDA leaders left Srebrenica at the beginning of the war, Oric dissolved the party. This situation was not unique. Often, in parts of Bosnia most affected by the war, the SDA lost its power to local warlords, who managed to organise the defence that the SDA had failed to establish before the war started.⁶⁵² Local SDA leader, Hamed Efendic, lost all his influence. Moreover, once Srebrenica was proclaimed a safe

⁶⁴⁴ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, pp. 132-134; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 81; Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 72, 98; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 69, 70, 137, 163-64; Ćekić, *The aggression on Bosnia*, p. 170.

⁶⁴⁵ Interview: Hasan Nuhanovic 19/06/1998.

⁶⁴⁶ Interviews and conversations with Omer Subasic 19/10/1997 and 20/10/1997, and Vahid Hodzic 04-05/07/1997.

⁶⁴⁷ NIOD, Coll Momčilo Cvjetinovic, War diary of Vahded Huseinovic.

⁶⁴⁸ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 88-89.

⁶⁴⁹ Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 139-42.

⁶⁵⁰ Interview: Hasan Nuhanovic 19/06/1998, Damir Skaler 31/01/1998.

⁶⁵¹ Interviews: Ibran Mustafic 16/04/1998 and 18/09/2001. Anonymous, 'Glasna sutnja'.

⁶⁵² Interviews: Mehmed Pargan 16/06/1998, Almir and Zahira Ramic 6-10/11/1999.

area, he was even imprisoned several times. Mustafic claimed a special position as the only locally elected Muslim representative in the Bosnian parliament. However, he was ignored by all the military and civil leaders in the enclave. Mustafic survived two assassination attempts, the first of which took place in April 1993 and the second in May 1995. During the second attempt, Mustafic was seriously injured, but his close SDA affiliate, Hamed Salihovic, was killed.⁶⁵³ A third attempt to kill him occurred right after the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995, when he claims he was attacked again by political opponents.⁶⁵⁴

Mustafic arrived in the enclave during Srebrenica's first – and harshest – winter in the war. Many were starving due to the constant lack of food and humanitarian aid. The first UNHCR convoy entered the enclave only after seven months of war, on 28 November 1992. Several previous attempts had failed due to Serb obstruction. It took three days of negotiations with the Serbs for the first convoy to get through. Tim Judah, who joined the convoy, wrote, “[p]eople tumbled down the hills to greet the first United Nations aid convoy to breach Serbian lines since the war began. Cheering and waving, crying and laughing, thousands lined the roads as the UN convoy rolled in. (...) The joyous reception was in stark contrast to that given to the convoy as it passed through Serb-held Bratunac where locals spat and jeered”. Judah described how the inhabitants of Srebrenica were without electricity, running water or communications. He also sketched an impression of the appalling conditions in the hospital: “[...] torch bulbs have been taped to the walls, powered by lorry batteries. [...] old alcohol [is] still being used to distil water. Operations are carried out without anaesthetic, and the hospital has no medicines”. A local doctor told Judah they had no disinfectants, bandages, infusions, power, or antibiotics, and informed him that medicines were even more urgently needed than food. Over three hundred people had died in the hospital, who could have survived had the proper medicines been available. To the astonishment of the hospital staff as well as the journalists accompanying it, the convoy carried no medical supplies. After just one hour, the UN lorries rolled back into Serb-held territory. A second convoy arrived on 5 December, carrying medicines, blankets and detergents.⁶⁵⁵

Inspired by previous military successes, and driven by hunger and the will to survive, Oric's forces and auxiliary troops of *torbari* launched a new offensive along the Drina in December. Once again, they captured a number of villages. The Serbs countered these attacks using aviation and artillery from Serbia. Despite these efforts, however, Muslims succeeded in expelling the Serb populations of the villages of Bjelovac, Voljavica, Loznica, and Sikiric on 14 December 1992. Almost seventy Serbs were slaughtered in these attacks; many others fled across the Drina. Serbs who witnessed the attacks also saw women carrying guns and shooting Serb civilians, and others carrying large bags in which to haul plundered goods. After being shot, some victims were hacked with knives or blunt objects. Pigs were slaughtered and carried away in pieces, which was a clear indication of how desperate Muslim refugees were for food. Oric's forces were now in control of all villages on the left side of the Drina, from Voljavica to Zlijebac. They also seized a considerable supply of arms, ammunition, and food. They also commandeered another tank, pieces of artillery, and a few hundred rifles. They paraded these war trophies through the centre of Srebrenica, where the population went wild in jubilation.⁶⁵⁶ Ten days later, Glogova was also taken by the Muslims, i.e. by Ejub Golic's unit (consisting of Muslims expelled from Glogova in May). As a result, the road between Kravica and Bratunac was completely blocked to the Serbs. During the heavy fighting, at least eighteen Serbs and twelve Muslims were killed. In

⁶⁵³ Interviews: Ibran Mustafic 16/04/1998 and 18/09/2001, Besim Ibisevic 24/05/1998.

⁶⁵⁴ Anonymous, 'Glasna sutnja'.

⁶⁵⁵ NIOD, Coll UNHCR, Mission report on convoy (Jolles) 30/11/1992; Report on second humanitarian convoy (Jolles) 06/12/1992; Judah, 'UN brings hope'. See also the report on the first convoy in *Nasa Rijec*, 22/12/1992, p. 3. Interviews: Tim Judah 09/12/1997 and Zoran Kusovac 01/11/1997.

⁶⁵⁶ Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 46-47, 54-55, 174, 90, 267-272, 282-283, 313-323; Jevtic, 'Ponovo ustasko pirovanje'; Jovanovic et al, *Iskorenjivanje Srba*, pp. 101-104, 277-78. Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 89; Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 164, 168; Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 73, 105-110; Judah 'serb forces move south'. See also Mazowiecki, *Situation of human rights*, par. 42. NIOD, Coll Momčilo Cvjetinovic, War diary of Vahded Huseinovic.

addition, Jovan 'Jole' Nikolic, one of Kravica's commanders, was seriously injured. Although the Serbs received reinforcements from Milici, they generally suffered from a lack of manpower.⁶⁵⁷

Bratunac comes under Muslim threat



Graves of Serb victims of the Muslim assault on the village of Fakovici, October 1992

Now, Muslim forces had virtually reached the perimeters of Bratunac. The town's situation was clearly becoming extremely precarious. Militarily, the situation deteriorated to such an extent that many Serbs feared that Bratunac might fall into Muslim hands. Bratunac was surrounded from three sides and the town's defenders were pushed into a corner.⁶⁵⁸ When journalist, Tim Judah, visited Bratunac in late December, the Bosnian Serb Army was bringing in reinforcements from the Krajina (north-western Bosnia). The Panthers, a paramilitary group led by Ljubisa Savic 'Mauzer', were also brought in from Bijeljina. They were shocked by the state of Bratunac's defences, which were in serious disarray, and had little regard for the disorganised locals. They said that they were not really willing to die for Bratunac if the locals were not prepared to fight for it. As one soldier told Judah, "The Serbs aren't fighting hard enough because they have got somewhere to run to" [over the Drina into Serbia - gd].⁶⁵⁹

Various sources confirm that morale among local Serbs was at a historical low point. Soldiers felt demoralised by the fact that many local Serbs had gone to Serbia (or remained in Serbia if they had jobs there) to avoid being drafted. Those who refused to take part in the defence undermined the morale of those who did. The soldiers felt they were now risking their lives and that those hiding in Serbia were among the people who stood to benefit. The local press ran a good deal of bitter commentary about these 'deserters' and 'traitors.' Among the commentators was Momèilo Cvjetinovic in *Nasa Rijec*, a local newspaper. According to Cvjetinovic, many of these 'career Serbs' went to Serbia before the war even started, and had given their arms to Muslims who were now killing Serbs with them. He mentioned some by name, including Major Miodrag Stanisavljevic, the former head of Srebrenica's Territorial Defence, and Savo Aleksic, the former head of police. He also criticised

⁶⁵⁷ Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 61-62; Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božić sela Kravice*, pp. 64-72, 101; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 90; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 169; Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 110-111.

⁶⁵⁸ Interviews and conversation with Miodrag Josipovic, 14/09/1999, Miroslav Deronjic 03/11/1999, Momèilo Cvjetinovic 10/06/1998.

⁶⁵⁹ Judah, 'serb forces move south' and Judah, 'Hardline Serb Generals'. For the Panthers see the local paper, *Nasa Rijec*: Jovanovic 'Mi ratujemo'; M.Dj. 'Mi idemo'; Cirkovic, 'Pjesmom'.

Srebrenica's urban youth, who were now living safely in large towns in Serbia, while young people from villages, such as Podravanje and Skelani, were risking their lives to fight the enemy.⁶⁶⁰ In his opinion, these draft dodgers added insult to injury by boasting about their nationalist credentials in Serbia's cafés after having put the lives of their fellow Serbs in jeopardy. Kravica had similar problems. There, local Serbs expelled several deserters who had had the audacity to return to their village in December 1992, after several months of absence.⁶⁶¹

Despite their enormous contempt for deserters, the authorities called on Serbs living in Serbia to return to Bratunac to defend their town. In December 1992, Rodoljub Djukanovic, Chairman of the Executive Board of the Municipality of Bratunac, made such an appeal in *Nasa Rjeca*. Interestingly enough, he added that they would be recruited as regular army soldiers into a regular army unit. He also promised that they would no longer be commanded by unprofessional people as had happened before, but by the best officers the Serb nation had.⁶⁶² This statement indicates that at least some Serbs were critical about the way military operations had been conducted before. When the war began, Serb defences were structured according to the territorial principle, i.e. on the basis of TO units placed under the authority of local branches of the SDS and the SDS crisis committees. Local SDS leaders, some of whom had little or no army experience, were appointed to commanding posts (as was the case with Miodrag Jokic). Although unqualified for these posts, they were able to conceal their incompetence by relying on the Yugoslav Army and scores of paramilitary forces. However, when these forces pulled out in spring 1992, the local TO forces were left on their own. At this stage, the Bosnian Serb Army had yet to form. There was also a huge dearth of trained army officers capable of organising the town's defence. Consequently, most of the responsibility lay in the hands of dilettantes. Subsequent fights during the summer and autumn of 1992 clearly showed that they were incompetent for the task at hand. Local Serbs struggled with a tremendous sense of frustration about the way local defence forces functioned.⁶⁶³ Some people held the SDS responsible for this state of affairs, and refused to enlist in units led by SDS party officials and SDS crisis committees.⁶⁶⁴

Aside from the loss of confidence in the SDS, there were also clear signs of popular discontent with the paramilitaries. They had entered the place and plundered it, taking all the booty they were able to. (The fact that Muslims had been expelled in the process was less of a concern). Local Serbs were left with nothing, and although the town was now under firm SDS control, Muslims were still there in great numbers as refugees in the nearby Muslim enclaves. Even at the time Goran Zekic was killed, there were tensions between the local Serbs and the paramilitaries from Serbia.⁶⁶⁵ This discontent shines through in a small portrait of everyday life in Bratunac, which *Nasa Rjeca*, a local newspaper, published in October 1992. The author, who wrote anonymously, describes the terrors of war that reigned at night in Bratunac:

The days are bearable to some extent, although there is shooting on all sides. The inhabitants are able to discriminate between the sounds of arms, and they recognise precisely when and from which positions our fighters are shooting. They know when soldiers are testing their arms and when they are engaged in fighting. The alarm sirens cause general chaos and panic among the people, yet somehow, this is still bearable during the daytime. But when night falls, and the first evening hours begin ... [p]eople hurriedly rush into their houses, because the police curfew starts. Everything becomes quiet, and then the numerous barking stray dogs start to make a deafening noise. The noise is excessive

⁶⁶⁰ Cvjetinovic, 'Bjezi, ne okreci se' and Cvjetinovic, 'Pobjegli od naroda'.

⁶⁶¹ Djukanovic, 'Takvi nam ne trebaju'; For Kravica's problems with recruitment and desertion, see also Djukanovic, 'Nas tri brata'; M.Dj. 'Dobrovoljci i dezerteri'; Miljanovic, *Krvavi Bozic sela Kravice*, pp. 106, 123. Kravica's situation improved when volunteers, arrived from Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia. Among them was at least one (former) *Arkanovac*.

⁶⁶² Anonymous, 'Narod treba da zna', p. 3.

⁶⁶³ B.S. and M.P. 'A Drina teèe'. Conversation: Novak 'Krke' Stjepanovic 19/10/2000.

⁶⁶⁴ A reference was made to this during an interview with Miroslav Deronjic in *Nasa Rjeca*, where he defends himself against criticisms about the SDS's role. Anonymous, 'Neka mi neko od vas pokaze'.

⁶⁶⁵ Interview: Munib Hasanovic 14/09/1999.

because these dogs became stray dogs only recently, abandoned by the people who left their homes. Their barking sound also signals the beginning of the frequent noise of motors, cars, and 'nightly campaigns'. People lock themselves up in their homes, while the war profiteers do their work. They contemplate whether to switch on the light or to sit in the dark, because the surrounding hills are bristling above the town, which gives them the feeling that the enemy can follow every detail of their movements from the nearby hills. The next day, the small thieves will also find something for themselves on the remaining trash heaps.⁶⁶⁶

Popular discontent about this state of affairs was aggravated by the great sense of dissatisfaction among the troops. Ordinary soldiers experienced problems because of their ill-defined status. Republika Srpska had not declared a state of war, which meant that soldiers were not recognised as being on active combat duty. Consequently, their rights and those of their families would not be guaranteed in case of invalidity or death. For all practical purposes, they had nothing to rely on. On the other hand, they saw many petty and major war profiteers, paramilitaries as well as RS politicians, who were profiting shamelessly, while they themselves were forced to survive on meagre wages.⁶⁶⁷

This situation changed only gradually after Mladic was appointed as chief commander of the Bosnian Serb Army in early May 1992. He moved the BSA headquarters to Han Pijesak, and started to reshuffle the Bosnian JNA troops into new BSA structures.⁶⁶⁸ During the summer of 1992, when most of Bosnian territory had come under Serb control, the leaders of Republika Srpska pressured paramilitary groups from Serbia to leave Bosnia. They had outworn their usefulness and, even worse, they were poisoning the political situation for the SDS.⁶⁶⁹ Local paramilitary groups and other 'special forces' were integrated into the regular army. In Bratunac, the army did not begin organising the town's local defence until after the devastating attack on Zalazje on 12 July 1992. Svetozar 'Ceto' Andric, commander of the Birac brigade, played a particularly pivotal role in this. In November 1992, the Bratunac brigade was established. It was part of the Drina corps, which was commanded by General Milenko Zivanovic.⁶⁷⁰ It was not until 1993 that the BSA as a whole developed a more centralised command structure.

Despite these efforts, continuing recruitment problems formed a major obstacle in building up local defence in Bratunac. Local Serb forces were unable to ward off assaults by Muslim troops, who outnumbered them by far. These assaults culminated in the attack on Kravica during the Orthodox Christmas, on 7 January 1993. It was carried out by several thousand Muslims. (Some estimates place the figure at as high as three to four thousand attackers, including *torbani*). Serb defenders, by contrast, numbered no more than a few hundred. At least forty-six Serbs were killed in the attack and over five hundred houses were burned down. Since the attack took place during Christmas, Serb defenders of Kravica received no help or reinforcements from Bratunac or Milici. In the end, they were forced to retreat.⁶⁷¹ Local commander, Lazar Ostojic, ordered soldiers and civilians to abandon their homes and retreat towards the Drina. They went through the snow via a small forest road to Sopotnik. The column of Serb refugees arrived in Sopotnik in the middle of the night. Some elderly people stayed behind in their homes. Most were killed next day, while Muslims plundered Kravica and other nearby

⁶⁶⁶ Anonymous, 'Besane noci ratne'.

⁶⁶⁷ B.S. and M.P. 'A Drina teèe'.

⁶⁶⁸ JNA personnel born in Bosnia were redeployed into the BSA, and huge supplies of arms and equipment were transferred from the JNA to the BSA. See: Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 101.

⁶⁶⁹ Interview: Filip Svarm, Dejan Anastasijevic and Aleksandar Ciric 03/11/1997; conversation: Dejan Anastasijevic 06/02/1998.

⁶⁷⁰ See articles about the Bratunac brigade in local newspaper, *Nasa Rijec*: R.J. 'Formirana Bratunaèka brigada'; B.M. 'sad Srbi gledaju'; Cirkovic 'Za postignute rezultate'. See also Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božić sela Kravice*, p. 52. Interview: Miroslav Deronjic 03/11/1999.

⁶⁷¹ Serbs from Kravica have defended themselves against suggestions made by others that Kravica fell because the population was celebrating Christmas and many were drunk. Miljanovic writes that it was not the Serbs from Kravica, but those from Bratunac who were celebrating, and who failed to come to Kravica's rescue (Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božić sela Kravice*, p. 106).

settlements. According to Miljanovic, a chronicler of local events in Kravica during the war, the Muslims even opened up fresh graves in search of cloth, cigarettes and rakija. Some Serbs returned to their houses in the days that followed, but were expelled, killed, or arrested and taken to the prison in Srebrenica.⁶⁷²

The fall of Kravica produced a shockwave among Serbs in eastern Bosnia and beyond, particularly because the village was seen as a symbol of Serb national perseverance. Panic broke out in Bratunac, and the authorities were forced to close down the bridge over the Drina and introduce other measures to prevent the population from fleeing en masse to Serbia.⁶⁷³ For the Muslims, the take-over of Kravica was a crucial victory. Oric could now link up directly with Muslim forces in Konjevic Polje and Cerska, which was a serious blow to Serb war efforts in eastern Bosnia. The enclaves of Srebrenica, Zepa, Konjevic Polje and Cerska were now linked into one huge Muslim-controlled territory. The call for revenge was strong among the Serbs. As Miljanovic writes, Serbs were awaiting their moment to avenge this humiliating defeat and to finally settle accounts with the Muslims. And they firmly believed that it would happen one day. They retaliated with an air raid on Srebrenica, hitting the mosque in the town's centre and killing three Muslims. Among the victims was Dr. Nijaz Dzanic, the head of the war hospital.⁶⁷⁴

The Muslim attacks still continued, however. Instead of taking Bratunac, which was his ultimate ambition, Oric decided to carry out an attack on Skelani. His aim was to destroy the bridge over the Drina river and to prevent Serbs from sending reinforcements from Serbia. Two Muslim attempts to mine the bridge had already failed in November.⁶⁷⁵ The attack on Skelani took place on 16 January 1993. It resulted in at least forty-eight Serb deaths, including those of some civilians trying to escape over the bridge to the other side of the Drina. Once again, however, the Muslim plan failed, and Skelani remained in Serb hands.⁶⁷⁶ After heavy fighting and huge personal losses in the days that followed, Muslim forces took the strategic height of Jezero, which overlooks the Perućac hydroelectric plant and Serbia on the other side of the Drina.⁶⁷⁷ Oric's forces now controlled the largest area ever (nine hundred square kilometres), encompassing most of the territory of the municipalities of Srebrenica and Bratunac as well as parts of Vlasenica, Zvornik, Han Pijesak and Rogatica.⁶⁷⁸ On 20 January, new front lines were established. Only Skelani and a few other villages along the Drina remained in Serb hands. Hopes were increasing that Srebrenica could be linked up with Tuzla and the rest of central Bosnia in a matter of days. Serb public sentiment in Republika Srpska and in Serbia was in a state of alarm. The Bosnian Serb Army as well as the Yugoslav Army prepared for massive intervention. The attack on the bridge in Skelani was a welcome pretext for the Yugoslav Army to justify military operations on Bosnian territory. January witnessed the launching of a large-scale military campaign. Led by Ratko Mladic, this campaign marked the beginning of the collapse of Oric's forces and almost the end of the existence of the enclave.

On the Serb side, the numerous Muslim attacks became a source of deep humiliation and indignation. The Serbs viewed these attacks as yet another confirmation of their lot as a nation of continual 'suffering', a nation threatened with genocide and extinction. Although this view took absolutely no account of the immeasurable suffering the Serbs themselves had inflicted on the Muslim population when the war first began, it was somehow understandable. After nine months of Muslim attacks, the Serbs were completely pushed back in a corner. Only around ten Serb villages in the area of

⁶⁷² Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 50,55-56,88-89,160,172-3,323-329; Miljanovic, *Krvavi Božić sela Kravice*, pp. 73-90, 99-106; Jovanovic et al, *Iskorenjivanje Srba*, pp. 279; Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 72,112-113; Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, pp. 90; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 169. See also the reports and interviews in the local Serb newspaper, *Nasa Rijec*, 05/02/1993, pp. 1 and 5.

⁶⁷³ Petrovic, 'Ono malo zivota'.

⁶⁷⁴ Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 72,73; Oric, *Srebrenica*, p. 164

⁶⁷⁵ Cvjetinovic, 'Most je siguran'. NIOD, Coll Momèilo Cvjetinovic, War diary of Vahded Huseinovic.

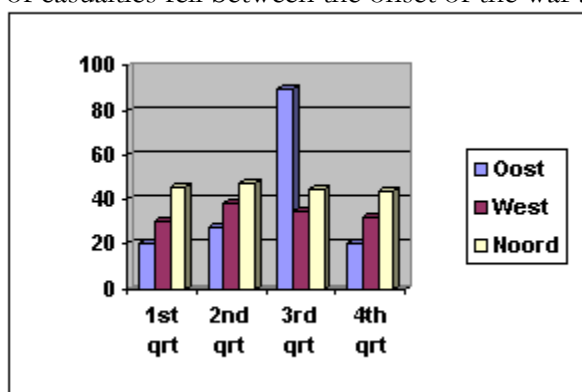
⁶⁷⁶ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 91; Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 115; Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 56-57,161.

⁶⁷⁷ Masic, *Istina o Bratuncu*, p. 91; Masic, *Srebrenica*, pp. 114-117

⁶⁷⁸ Sudetic, *Blood and vengeance*, p. 136.

Srebrenica and Bratunac had remained in Serb hands. Another thirty Serb villages and seventy hamlets had fallen under Muslim control. By January 1993, over one hundred Serb settlements had been attacked. Only Bratunac, Skelani, and a few villages along the Drina were still in Serb hands.⁶⁷⁹ In addition, Serbs had suffered enormous material damage. Ivanisevic estimates that 5,400 out of a rough total of 8,000 Serb households in the municipalities of Srebrenica and Bratunac lost part or all of their property. Most of their houses were plundered, burned, and destroyed. Huge numbers of livestock (cows, goats, and poultry) were also taken away.⁶⁸⁰ Bratunac and Milici accommodated thousands of refugees from Srebrenica as well as from central Bosnia (particularly Zenica). They destroyed the surrounding Serb villages. Living conditions for these refugees were usually bad, and they received little help from humanitarian relief organisations. Most had to solve their own housing problems. Many Serb refugees, including those from Srebrenica, were not very satisfied with their reception in Bratunac.⁶⁸¹ For that reason, some who had friends or relatives in Serbia decided to go there and join them. In early 1993, thirteen thousand Serbs from the municipalities of Srebrenica, Bratunac, Skelani and Milici were registered as refugees in Serbia, mainly women and children (comprising 45% of the total Serb population of these municipalities).⁶⁸²

Most bitterness, however, was caused by the high number of casualties that the Serbs suffered during the first year of the war. According to Ivanisevic, who has documented all cases, at least one thousand Serb civilians were killed between April 1992 and January 1994.⁶⁸³ By far, the largest number of casualties fell between the onset of the war and the creation of the Safe Area; see the chart below:



Source: Ivanisevic, *Hronika nasseg groblja*, p. 102.

After April 1993, the number of casualties dropped drastically. Serb sources estimate the total number of Serbs killed in the area between April 1993 and July 1995 (i.e. throughout the over two-year period of war) at roughly one hundred to one hundred and fifty.⁶⁸⁴ The Muslim attacks during the first year of the war appear to have caused the most resentment among the Serbs, who felt deeply humiliated by Oric. It is primarily defeats in places such as Zalazje, Podravanje, Fakovici and Kravica that Serbs wanted to avenge. Probably, that thirst for vengeance was one of the main driving forces behind the

⁶⁷⁹ Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 40-42.

⁶⁸⁰ Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 106.

⁶⁸¹ Conversation Stevo Milivojevic, 11/11/1998.

⁶⁸² Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, pp. 109-111.

⁶⁸³ Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, p. 67. In an earlier draft of the text published in the local newspaper, *Nasa Riječ*, Ivanisevic mentions 1,200 Serb victims (Ivanisevic, 'Genocid kao sudbina'). Ivanisevic's information is probably misleading, as he appears to include not only civilians, but also soldiers and paramilitaries who died in combat or during plundering expeditions. He includes, for instance, the names of four Serbs killed in Potočari on 20 April 1992. In all probability, these four were members of the Arkan Tigers or policemen who were ambushed there by Oric (Ivanisevic, *Hronika*, p. 71). Ivanisevic's work has been widely publicised in the Serbian and Bosnian Serb press, e.g. in *Borba* (from 26/05/1993 to 04/06/1993) and *Veernje Novosti* (from 13/06/1994 to 26/06/1994). The articles he published in *Nasa Riječ* (between July and December 1993) contain the lists of names of victims and perpetrators for every Serb village attacked by Muslims. See also the interview in *Nasa Riječ* in April 1993 (Jovanovic, 'Genocid').

⁶⁸⁴ Interview: Milivoje Ivanisevic 03/02/1998. See also: *Srpska vojska*, 25/08/1995, pp. 24-25.

massacres in July 1995. It should be noted, however, that while the Serbs suffered high casualties during the war, the number of Muslim casualties in Srebrenica and Bratunac, even before the July massacre, was probably considerably higher. Most Muslim sources claim that by July 1995, some two thousand Muslims had been killed in and around the enclave.⁶⁸⁵

⁶⁸⁵ Oric has claimed that between April 1992 and April 1993, 1,860 Muslims were killed in Srebrenica (Kamenica, 'Predali pokvareno oruzje'; see also Masic, *Srebrenica*, p. 215). His book presents a list of 1,912 victims, who died between April 1992 and September 1994 (Oric, *Srebrenica*, pp. 195-251). Hazim Osmanovic, one of the Muslim commanders in the enclave, claimed in an interview with *Ljiljan* that some two thousand Muslim soldiers were killed before July 1995 along with a similar number of civilians (Rizvanovic, 'Ubijanje zrtve'). Fahrudin Salihovic, former President of the War Presidency in Srebrenica, cites the following figures: 1,860 soldiers and 3,500 civilians died, and around 150 people disappeared before July 1995 (Omeragic, 'Nakon 10 hiljada ubijenih', p. 13).

Final Remarks

“...I am very much inclined to a kind of relativism, i.e. to the notion that things did not really depend on us so much. These are historical sways, the movement of nature and of physical and spiritual matter...”

Miroslav Deronjic, president of the SDS of Bratunac, in an interview in *Nasa Rjeva*, 6 October 1992.

This book seeks primarily to present an historical and anthropological background account of eastern Bosnia, devoting special attention to the municipality of Srebrenica and surrounding areas. As explained at the beginning of this report, this book was not intended as a comprehensive history. Rather, its focus lies on highlighting certain episodes, as well as investigating the social and cultural realities of the region that are important in understanding the events of July 1995. I have concentrated especially on certain historical episodes. These are the episodes actively remembered and used by the actors in the July 1995 events in their efforts to understand their world and what happened during the late 1980s and early 1990s. In fact, some even exploited these episodes in justifying their political aims and actions. In this respect, the emphasis in this report was bound to lie on the violence and turbulence in the region's history, i.e. on events etched deeper in historic memory. Despite the prominence of violent events, it is remarkable how much periods of relative peace and coexistence have become 'blank spaces' in present-day collective memories, and even in official historiography. They only seem to have been retained in vague remnants of people's private accounts.

So as to avoid ignoring these elements of peaceful coexistence entirely, I have included a chapter on the communist period, which still fresh in people's minds. As a corollary, I have invested much effort in trying to describe the process of transformation from the relatively peaceful conditions under socialism to the outbreak of ethnic and nationalist violence in the 1990s. A major problem in describing this recent period has been the existing multiplicity of 'histories' and 'memories', which are often at odds with one another. Views differ radically between the members of different groups, including ethnic groups, supporters of different political ideologies (e.g. communists and nationalists), and the 'traditionalist' rural and 'modernist' urban layers of society. The most remarkable finding, however, was that views even conflict within the self-same individuals in their attempts to resolve all these contradictions and construct coherent stories for themselves. The different views on Srebrenica's history appear to be incompatible, particularly with regard to events during World War Two and the most recent war. Although I do not wish to claim that there is only one single historical truth, I have done my best to shape a more inclusive and 'truthful' interpretation of events, which does justice to all sides.

It is clear that memories, often welded into historical interpretations of the past, have played a prominent role during the war. I need only to refer to Ratko Mladic's reference to the first Serbian uprising when he entered Srebrenica in July 1995, to his Kosovo speech just days before the attack was launched, and to the numerous statements included here as vignettes at the beginning of most chapters. My efforts to gain an understanding of the recent conflict have departed from the premise that we cannot fully understand the war, and such events as the Srebrenica massacre, by leaving history aside, or more especially, by ignoring the fact that people live and perceive their place in history in their own unique ways. As I noted in the beginning, historical narratives shape people's cognition and perceptions. Consequently, those narratives help to motivate and justify actions, as well as to place them in context. People 'make' history by imagining and constructing the past in ways that are relevant to the present and by acting accordingly. It is important to acknowledge that 'history' (i.e. the historical facts) as such does not necessarily have a direct impact. It is through their culturally elaborated and mediated representations that historical facts influence people's actions.

Thus, claims (such as the one above by local SDS politician, Miroslav Deronjic) that the brutalities of the war were the product of inevitable historical forces, like ‘movements of nature’, are in effect, denials of personal involvement and responsibility. I have tried to demonstrate that, even if events and developments are beyond people’s actual control, they are always based on the choices and decisions of individuals, who should always bear responsibility for their actions. A major undercurrent in my account is that there is no historical inevitability in the way the recent conflict developed. Although this view may seem compelling when we examine all the evidence of repeated violence and brutality in the region, I think that history is never decided in advance. As I observed earlier, history is the work of people, who act and interact with different motives and interests in mind, the chemistry of which leads to results that are often unintended in their final outcome. I have tried to demonstrate that people in eastern Bosnia have justified their actions by pointing to the past in ways simplistic and unrefined. I also have attempted to juxtapose these crude versions of the past with alternative understandings that are more inclusive and try to do justice to the complexities of historical processes.

Let me leave these programmatic statements behind, and try to highlight some of the issues that have come light in this study. For one thing, this study appears to have demonstrated that historical consciousness is considerably stronger among the Serbs than among Muslims. Over the last two decades, the Serbs have drawn on and made use of history much more than have other groups. The memories of the centuries-old struggle against the Turks, symbolised in the Kosovo myth and the epics about the first Serbian uprising, have played a crucial role in the Serb perception of the recent war. That war was often seen as one waged between Christians and Muslims, between Serbs and ‘Turks’. Related to this is the theme of continuous national suffering, under the Ottomans, the Austrians, the Ustashe, Tito, the Albanians and the Bosnian Muslims. The Drina is one of the key nationalist symbols that represents this history of constant struggle and suffering. The Serb’s enemies – the 19th-century Ottoman Turks, the Austrians between 1878 and 1914, and the Ustashe during World War Two – are seen to have turned the Drina River into a frontier to divide the Serbs as a nation. During the first Serbian uprising and World War One, the Serbs fought their enemies at the Drina in heroic battles meant to rectify what they saw as the injustices of history.

The recent conflicts have been perceived in very similar terms. For Serb nationalists, the border at the Drina has been an important symbol of the lack of Serb unity, of the division of the Serbian people, and of the oppression the Serbs have suffered in Bosnia under the Muslims. Serbian war efforts in eastern Bosnia – particularly the 1992 Drina offensive and subsequent actions against Muslim enclaves – were meant to redress this situation and to return eastern Bosnia to Serbian territory once and for all. A member of a special VRS unit, who participated in the July 1995 attack on Srebrenica, recalled Mladic’s address to his unit before the attack. In it, he told them, “The Drina must become our own, internal river, and not a border. The main obstacle today is Srebrenica with which the Germans and Americans, who defend it, want to fix Serbia’s border at the Drina... It is your task to prevent this...”⁶⁸⁶ Serb nationalists have seen eastern Bosnia’s return to Serbian territory as a matter of national survival. The feeling has been that the Drina should be a river that flows through Serbian lands – ‘the spine of Serbia’ – instead of a border with territories under foreign power.⁶⁸⁷ Serb nationalists have regarded it as their sacred duty to avenge the injustices of Kosovo, and re-conquer the territories once lost to the Turks. It is no coincidence that the myth of Kosovo has been a major source of inspiration for Ratko Mladic and the Bosnian Serb Army, who were in the forefront of this struggle. The parallels between the first Serbian uprising at the dawn of the nineteenth century and the recent war in Bosnia, and the similarity in objectives and aims, and even in the methods on the ground, have reinforced this almost mythical perception of history.

Looking at history and the politics of memory is just one way to understand the recent conflicts in eastern Bosnia. Another is by examining the realities of today, even if they are also understood in

⁶⁸⁶ Kolendic, ‘Milan iz Drvara’, p.61.

⁶⁸⁷ Interview: Boban Tomic, 11/11/1999.

terms of the past. History does not explain very much, it is only important to the extent it is transmitted, mediated and made relevant to the present-day context. For this reason, my analysis has focused largely on contemporary developments themselves, the dramatic economic and political crisis of the 1980s after Tito's death and the ways these affected the situation on the ground in a small area, such as Srebrenica. In all practical terms, the economic crisis was dramatic, reducing salaries to a fraction of what they were only a decade earlier, and leaving people unemployed and deeply insecure about their existence and future. From the Serb perspective, the economic crisis was exacerbated by the threat of political marginalisation resulting from the demographic growth and social and political emancipation of the Bosnian Muslim nation. Local Serbs were highly susceptible to propaganda from Belgrade, which subsumed all these processes under the label 'Islamic fundamentalism'. However, it was the fight over the economic assets, in times of uncertainty and economic crisis, which formed the crucial background to many of the conflicts. History was a symbolic resource. Retrieved from nationalist folklore, it was the most effective tool in mobilising the population.

If any period in the region's modern history left real traces in people's personal and collective memories, it is probably World War Two. The history of that war is vivid and part of people's actual experiences in ways that cannot be claimed of other periods, where history consists primarily of clichés. But since the war was a bloody and complicated civil war, with various groups fighting each other along different and shifting lines of division, the Communists decided that it was better to forget what had happened and to focus on a bright, socialist future. Most of the chaotic wartime experiences were suppressed and simplified in terms of the fight between the good guys, the Partisans, and the bad guys, the Ustashe, Chetnik and Fascist forces. Consequently, World War Two history was not addressed properly in public debate. What is worse, the victims were probably right in feeling that their persecution had gone unrecognised and the perpetrators unpunished. The non-addressed traumas of the former and the legal impunity of the latter placed the future under a heavy strain. Some of the memories of what happened during World War Two, memories that no one had been allowed to discuss, resurfaced with a vengeance during the 1990s. The Ustashe massacres against the Serb population and the Chetnik massacres against the Muslims became the focus of nationalist commemorations that did little to relieve the traumas, but much to foster new conflict.

Some have argued that the violence and massacres in the most recent war were driven by the desire for historical revenge for the events of World War Two. It has been said that Serbs, in Srebrenica for instance, were only waiting for their opportunity to avenge the suffering they felt the Muslims ('the Ustashe') had inflicted on them two generations ago. In my opinion, this is too simplistic a view. It is also one that has been advocated by Serb nationalists, who needed historical justification for the ethnic cleansing campaigns they planned and carried out against the Muslim population. Although I do believe that experiences in World War Two hold a very prominent place in the perceptions of Serb suffering in Bosnia, I believe that this in itself was not sufficient to make ordinary Serbs kill their Muslim neighbours. In the beginning, the architects of a greater-Serbia were forced to rely primarily on other methods. Before the onset of the war, their methods included the unremitting spread of propaganda and speeches inciting people to hatred. Once the war began, they resorted to paramilitary force with its potential for unspeakable violence. These methods made it possible to drive a wedge between groups that had been living in a relative - though not always easy - peace since World War Two. As anthropologist, Cornelia Sorabji, noted, the forms of personalised violence that occurred at the beginning of the war helped to deconstruct and disentangle the legacies of shared life and common existence in the minds of victims and perpetrators alike, and to establish unambiguous identities and undivided loyalties.⁶⁸⁸

If we were to try to understand the July 1995 massacre of Muslim men in Srebrenica, we would probably agree that there are certain historical legacies and memories of similar violence in the past. However, those are not sufficient to explain the orgy of violence and revenge that took place. Most

⁶⁸⁸ Sorabji, 'A very modern war'.

importantly, I feel we need to focus on contemporary events themselves, especially when the war first broke out and Serb attempts to conquer eastern Bosnia and cleanse it of its Muslim population marked the beginning of a vicious cycle of violence, revenge, and retribution. The Serbs' drive for revenge in 1995 was inspired primarily by events in 1992 and 1993, when over a thousand Serbs were killed by Muslim forces. Despite Serb nationalist plans for ethnic cleansing in eastern Bosnia, Muslims who had been expelled from their homes and had already suffered tremendously, managed to resist the Serb onslaught and to carve out a territory under their own control. They started attacking and looting Serb villages. These attacks intensified in frequency and violence during the autumn and winter of 1992-1993. As a result, many Serbs were killed or driven from their homes. Numerous Serb villages were also destroyed. This left the Serbs feeling victimised and deeply humiliated, particularly after the fall of Kravica in January 1993. Largely blind to what Serb politicians and militiamen had inflicted on the Muslim population when the war began, most Serbs felt Srebrenica had become 'an epicentre of genocide'. They had already suffered genocide once, and were determined to settle the accounts as soon as the opportunity presented itself.

Appendix V

Western Perceptions and Balkan Realities

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Foreword

During the past decade, an overwhelming amount of material encompassing a wide variety of approaches and analyses has been published on the crises in Yugoslavia. When attempting to elucidate the part played by image-forming in this matter, it is important to consider two diametrically opposed standpoints. One views the wars as the result of political conflicts. The tiny differences between the various population groups could not, however, have generated such conflicts, even though they were artificially stirred up and ruthlessly exploited by political adventurers. The opposing view is that the war can only be understood by recognizing that Yugoslavia is part of the Balkans, and that Yugoslavs are therefore fundamentally different from ourselves. The countless atrocities and war crimes were the result of ancient ethnic contrasts, which are so pronounced because the area is bisected by the border between civilized Europe and the primitive Balkans.

These two viewpoints, which have been formulated and expressed in a variety of forms and numerous nuances, are at the heart of this essay. They also determine the kind of books and articles under discussion. It has been my objective to investigate to what extent such conflicting opinions about Yugoslavia are generated by traditional concepts concerning the Balkans.

The first chapter explores the problems associated with the study of image-forming processes. Chapters II and III sketch the historical development of the image of the Balkans in the West, and in the Netherlands in particular. In this context, the association between image-forming and decision-making during the western intervention in the recent Yugoslavian conflicts has been investigated. The final chapter focuses on the relationship between image and reality.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“Hamlet: Do you see yonder cloud that’s almost in shape of a camel?”

Polonius: By the mass, and ‘t is like a camel indeed.

Hamlet: Me thinks it is like a weasel.

Polonius: It is backed like a weasel.

Hamlet: Or like a whale?

Polonius: Very like a whale.”¹

1. Holbrooke and the Rebecca West Factor

At a 1998 international conference organized by the Institute of Eastern European Studies of the University of Amsterdam, the Bosnian lawyer and eminent scholar of Bosnian history, M. Imamovic, described various contacts that he had had with foreigners in Sarajevo during the past several years. He remarked that the majority of these individuals had only a meagre knowledge of the historical background of the conflict. In general, those that had taken the trouble to do some research had all consulted the same books, namely those by Rebecca West, Robert Kaplan and Noel Malcolm. In *To End a War* Richard Holbrooke specifically cited these three books when proposing that a ‘misreading of Balkan history’ was one of five factors that might explain the failure of the West in Yugoslavia.² He alludes to ‘Bad History’ or the ‘Rebecca West Factor’, asserting that West’s pro-Serb stance, together with her view that Muslims were an inferior race, had influenced two generations of readers and politicians. ‘Thus arose’, writes Holbrooke, ‘an idea that ‘ancient hatreds’ [...] made it impossible for anyone outside the region to try to prevent the conflict.’³

Prior to Holbrooke’s arrival, Lord Owen had attempted (in vain) to mediate between the warring parties. Owen described ‘callousness’ as ‘the most distinctive feature of the fighting’, referring to a ‘culture of violence within a crossroad civilization where three religions, Orthodox Christianity, Islam and Roman Catholicism, have divided communities’. Owen admitted that, before he had departed for the peace conference in Geneva, he had ‘dipped into rather than reread Rebecca West’s account of her travels in Yugoslavia’⁴. According to Holbrooke, however, the idea that ethnic groups in the Yugoslavian region had always been after one another’s blood was mainly derived from *Balkan Ghosts* by the American author Robert Kaplan. Furthermore, in his book, Kaplan himself emphasized that he had been largely inspired by Rebecca West. Holbrooke confirmed that Clinton, after reading Kaplan’s book, was even more hesitant to intervene in Bosnia. *Bosnia: A Short History*, by Noel Malcolm, was published in 1994. This was a much more balanced book, which repudiated the view that Bosnia ‘was forever seething with ethnic hatreds’.⁵ However, Holbrooke felt that it had been published too late to bring about a rapid change in American policy.

Other authors feel that it is not Kaplan or West who are primarily responsible for western vacillation in the Yugoslavian conflict, but rather the elderly yet still influential George Kennan. This American diplomat, celebrated historian and widely recognized expert in East-West relations had written an introduction to *The Other Balkan Wars*. This was the rather odd title of a book that was republished in 1993. The original, which had been written by a committee working for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was published in 1913. It dealt with the horrors of the First and Second Balkan Wars. Kennan felt that this report was still topical, since nationalism in the Balkans ‘drew on deeper traits of character inherited, presumably, from a distant tribal past [...] And so it

remains today'.⁶ In addition, centuries of Turkish rule in the Balkans had created a separate world 'which had continued to the present day to preserve many of its non-European traits'.⁷ In 1993, Kennan felt that none of the Western powers was either prepared or able to occupy 'the entire distracted Balkan region'⁸ in order to calm the agitated population groups there. In 1994, the American historian and leading specialist on Yugoslavia, Ivo Banac, therefore indignantly concluded that 'Western aloofness and indifference to the area itself and to any action or involvement in it' derived from the view of authorities such as Kennan, that the Balkans diverge too widely from Western civilization.⁹

In this way, adverse images and prejudices about the Balkans that were propagated by a few best-sellers and some authoritative authors are supposed to have had a major influence on the current policy of leading world powers. The best-seller *Balkan Ghosts* (a superficial book, written with very little objectivity) does indeed contain some rather crass statements about the character of the inhabitants of the Balkans. Kaplan even felt that 'Nazism [...] can claim Balkan origins'¹⁰. He saw in Serbia 'a spirituality and primitivism that the West knows best through the characters of Dostoyevsky'.¹¹ To further underline the exotic character of the Serbs, on the same page Kaplan cited the work of the Polish-British writer Joseph Conrad and that of the British thriller writer, Eric Ambler. Although their books are populated with sinister figures of Russian or Bulgarian origin, like Dostoyevsky neither of these authors has ever visited the Balkans, nor indeed have they carried out any in-depth research into the region¹². Literature dealing with the Balkans frequently characterizes the inhabitants of that region as being both spiritual and primitive. These are therefore clichés, and as such they are of dubious veracity.

Clinton was not the only example of a politician who, in Holbrooke's view, may have been influenced by Balkan literature. Holbrooke also cites a statement made by the former American ambassador to Yugoslavia and later Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger: 'until the Bosnian Serbs and Croats decide to stop killing each other, there is nothing the outside world can do about it'¹³. However, this statement was made in 1992, a year before the publication of Kaplan's book. It is also rather farfetched to attribute such a great influence to the erudite, exuberant and exorbitantly long (1200 pages) literary masterpiece by Rebecca West. Although it was reprinted several times from 1968 onwards, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* was originally published in 1942. At that time it was quite normal for people to state their views about other peoples and cultures in a rather frank and impressionistic way, entirely unencumbered by political correctness. West was primarily interested in the more exotic aspects of the kingdom of Yugoslavia. She did indeed have a weak spot for the Serbs, but she gave no indication of a systematic contempt for the Turks or for the Bosnian Muslims, or that she considered them to be an inferior people or race. She showed great admiration for the remnants of Turkish architecture in Yugoslavia, and in Sarajevo she also attempted (without success) to learn the art of belly dancing. She felt that the enormous empires of the Habsburgs and the Ottomans had had a lethal influence on the Balkans. She wrote, 'I hate the corpses of empires, they stink as nothing else.'¹⁴ However, her wrath at German and Austrian meddling, and their lust for power, was far greater than any feelings she might have harboured against similar actions by Turkey in the past. It is scarcely realistic to ascribe the Western powers' lack of boldness to feelings of sympathy for the Serbs or contempt for the Bosnian Muslims that may have been generated by West's work. Holbrooke admits that as long ago as 1992 the American government had reached the conclusion that ninety percent of all atrocities in Bosnia were the work of Serbs. Although it was of little help to those involved, world opinion was nevertheless very sympathetic to their Islamic Bosnian victims.

In his book, Holbrooke emphatically distanced himself from the ethnic prejudices about the Balkans that, in his view, were too often aired in books of this type. He refuses to condemn Serbs, Croats or Bosnians as a group, but instead blames the conflict on the political leaders and their hysterical nationalism¹⁵. Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic are the main culprits, immediately followed by Slobodan Milosevic and, at some distance, by Franjo Tudjman and Alija Izetbegovic. He shares this 'politically correct' view with many other authors on Yugoslavian events. However, in describing how he intervened during a quarrel between the latter two leaders, Holbrooke was unable to desist entirely from comment. He pointed out that 'An aspect of the Balkan character was revealed

anew: once enraged, these leaders needed outside supervision to stop themselves from self-destruction'¹⁶. So even Holbrooke was not fully able to shake off a belief in the primitive features of a character supposedly typical of the Balkan peoples.

Holbrooke admitted that Kaplan himself had opposed the imputation that *Balkan Ghosts* contained a justification for ethnic cleansing.¹⁷ Nor indeed does Kaplan's book contain any advice to the Western powers to refrain from intervention. Nevertheless, both Banac and Holbrooke create the impression that America's passivity prior to 1995 was partly the result of an incorrect view of the Balkans. While not denying that many other factors were involved, Holbrooke suggests that the United States only started to play a more active role once he and other like-minded politicians were able to shape policy. Since they had not read any inferior history books, such politicians were unhindered by prejudice. They were therefore able to take a common-sense approach to the situation in Yugoslavia. However, is it really plausible to imagine that the US only started to play a more active role in 1995 because American policy-makers either read other books or no books, ignored authorities such as Kennan or modified their views concerning the inhabitants of the Balkans? Is it not much more likely that, given the situation that had arisen in 1995, America's prestige as the only remaining superpower would be irreparably damaged if it failed to act with more resolve? And had America really been so passive up until then? And what of the Washington Agreement of 1993 between the US, Bosnia and Croatia, which had been prepared by American diplomats other than Holbrooke? Clearly this was a significant condition underpinning the American success that was achieved 18 months later. Was Kennan wrong when he said that the Western powers' would continue to have very little appetite for a long-term occupation of this entire, problematic region? Although a protracted air war was finally waged against Serbia, the sluggish aversion that characterized Western governments' approach to the Yugoslavian situation emerged once again in 1998, during the Kosovo crisis.

The statements made by Holbrooke, Banac and others correctly alert us to the role that opinions and prejudices about other countries and other peoples can play in international relations. Indeed, Holbrooke's 'slip of the tongue' concerning Tadjman and Izetbegovic, occurring as it did in a book that had been very carefully edited and screened by a large team of co-workers, shows how ineradicable such views are. At the same time it seems difficult to establish the exact effect of image-forming on current developments in international relations. It is remarkable that so much importance is attached to the views of an individual author or to the content of a single book, even when written more than fifty years ago. Passing over the many authors who published works on the subject of Yugoslavia before and after West, Holbrooke says that she caused two generations of authors to be misinformed about the Balkans.

Holbrooke's view regarding the innocence of Yugoslavian peoples and his remarkable statement about the Balkan mentality of the political leaders of Bosnia and Croatia give rise to a number of questions. The same is true of Kennan's opinion about the non-European character of the inhabitants of the Balkans, and Banac's indignant response to this. Are these irresponsible generalizations the product of Western image-forming, bearing no relation to reality? Or are there still traces of reality left in such images, even though they partly stem from clichéd views? Then there is 'political correctness', the refusal of those involved in Western decision-making to take into account, openly and clearly, any ethnic, cultural and mental differences between population groups. Might this have been equally responsible for the fateful developments in Yugoslavia? We will return to these questions later, especially in the final section of this study. However, we will first attempt to find a better basis for distinguishing between the 'politically correct' and the 'prejudiced' points of view in the broader context of imagology.

2. From essentialism to constructivism

It is implausible that widespread prejudices and ideas about countries and peoples are entirely due to good sales figures for a few authors. Why should so many readers of a travel book assume that it contains the entire truth about a foreign country which they have never visited? The success of such

books can best be explained by the *Aba-Erlebnisse* that they generate. The pre-existent views of a large group of readers presumably corresponded to the contents of such books. It is extremely likely that the authors also harboured pre-conceived ideas before undertaking their journeys. Image-forming almost never involves the creation of a new image, instead it is all about the continual dusting-off and freshening-up of old images.

In the last two or three decades, imagology has evolved into a specific field of study within the discipline of comparative literature. Imagologists have published a considerable amount of material, in which they show that the distinctions we draw between nations and ethnic groups are largely determined by literary traditions. They do not assert that all people and groups of people are entirely identical to one another. Cultural differences, however, are considered to be much less relevant than the images presented to us by literature.

In this respect the imagologist Joep Leerssen speaks of an 'important epistemological shift, which has taken place over recent decades: the shift from essentialism to constructivism. What is 'typical' of a given nation is no longer considered to emanate from a characteristic essence inherent within that nation, but rather from a specific way of perceiving that nation.'¹⁸ Or, as couched in different terms by the same author, 'national images are a largely self-referential and self-perpetuating poetical system which is only marginally determined by social or political reality.' The characteristics ascribed to a given people in the literature 'are determined by intertextual rather than empirical factors.'¹⁹

It goes without saying that the acceptance of such views drastically changes our perception of reality. It clearly contradicts the age-old belief that different peoples have distinct characteristics. In the glory days of Western European nationalism, the existence of national characters was accepted as an irrefutable truth. During the 1960s, American social psychologists were still publishing studies on the Russian 'national character', based on questionnaires given to Russian immigrants entering the United States.²⁰ This material allowed the British psychiatrist Henry Dicks to conclude that the 'oral character structure' (i.e. restless, impulsive, aggressive, resentful, demanding, tending to gluttony and obesity, but also showing a considerable appetite for reading) is typical of Russians.²¹ At the time other scientists refuted such conclusions. However, modern imagologists would emphasize that, at best, questionnaires of this kind simply reflect the views of the Russian immigrants in question about their national character. They do not provide hard facts about the way in which Russians actually behave, as a people.

Whether the approach to such a remarkable phenomenon as the character of peoples has been subject to a general switch from essentialism to constructivism is, nevertheless, very debatable. After all, the converse can also be asserted. During the Soviet period, the Communist authorities took every opportunity to deny that irreconcilable differences existed between various nationalities within the USSR. The same went for the situation in other Eastern bloc countries and certainly for Tito's Yugoslavia. In the declining years of Communism, and especially after its fall, there was a perceptible change in this approach. Throughout Eastern Europe the character of peoples was no longer denied, instead it was embraced. Modern Russians still believe (or, more accurately, have rediscovered) that there really is such a thing as a national psyche. At the same time, they violently disagree with one another concerning the characteristics to be ascribed to their collective character. This also applies to Russian scholars, who are making every effort to link up once again with recent developments in Western scholarship. In the course of theoretical-historical debates about 'the Russian mentality', much is made of the enormous problems and obstacles met by those attempting to conduct research into this phenomenon. Nevertheless, the virtual, imaginary and constructivistic aspects of this topic are omitted²².

In the West, however, there is a clear interest in these specific aspects. Nonetheless, this interest does not solely derive from the activities of literary imagologists, since their approach is not exactly novel. It was the great nineteenth-century sociologist Durkheim who first drew attention to the constructivistic element in the self-image of human groups, which he referred to as 'collective representation'. In the wake of the Second World War, social scientists applied themselves as never before to studying and combating social and ethnic prejudices.²³ Historians have also been occupied

with image-forming processes for quite some time. It is probably no coincidence that even more emphasis was placed on this when nationalism became passé and was reduced to sporadic eruptions of 'football chauvinism'. As the national past declined in importance, historians opened the assault on the patriotic elements contained therein. Many long cherished 'images' had become unworkable or even offensive. For example, it could no longer be said of the populations of former colonies that they could never measure up to the inhabitants of Europe in terms of civilization and intellect. It is this more critical stance with regard to various expressions of Western ethnocentrism that accounts for the success of Edward Said's *Orientalism. Western conceptions of the Orient*. Published in 1978, this work portrays the predominantly negative view of 'the East' as a construction of modern western imperialism.²⁴ In a situation in which a war between France and Germany had become unthinkable, it no longer made sense to keep going on about the irreconcilable contrasts between the civilizations of 'Latin' and 'Germanic' peoples. In addition, the transfer of ever more national power to supranational organs in Brussels makes traditional and flattering views about the greatness and uniqueness of one's own country look rather dated.

However, critical historical literature on the subject of nationalism has remained the preserve of Western European scholars studying the history and culture of Western Europe. Their writings are in stark contrast to the enormous stream of recent publications on the amazing vitality of ethnic, religious and nationalistic phenomena in the rest of the world. The term 'ethnicity' first appeared in handbooks and reference works in the latter part of the 1970s, when imagology was starting to develop into a distinct discipline. American scholars in particular started to write on the subject. Back in 1975, in his *Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change*, Harold R. Isaacs predicted that states and peoples would split into ever smaller units, 'bursting like big and little stars from exploding galaxies.'²⁵ Another pioneer in the area of ethnicity studies, the prominent American senator Pat Moynihan, said of his own country: 'The notion that the intense and unprecedented mixture of ethnic and religious groups in American life was soon to blend into a homogenous end product has outlived its usefulness, and also its credibility... the point about the melting pot is that it did not happen'²⁶ He believes that ethnicity has an enormous influence in the arena of international politics. The effect of this is summarized in the title of this book, *Pandemonium*, which means uncontrollable chaos.

His fellow countryman, Samuel Huntington, believes that the end of the Cold War did not signify the end of the east-west conflict. On the contrary, Western standards and values concerning democracy, human rights, the division of church and state, and free enterprise are encountering considerable resistance elsewhere in the world. The situation in the world can best be summarized by the phrase 'the West versus the rest'. It can only be understood if one is aware of certain time-honoured and virtually unchanging cultural differences. Such differences are determined by religion and have become associated with ethnic entities. This is why conflicts primarily erupt in the areas where different civilizations share a common border. 'The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.'²⁷ Yugoslavia is a perfect example of this, as the country is divided by two fault lines. One line runs between Islam and Christianity, while the other separates the Orthodox Church and Catholicism. Thus something had to go wrong.

Huntington has been subjected to a great deal of criticism because his model does not provide a definitive explanation for the development or absence of violent conflicts in the world. The most murderous genocides and the bloodiest wars of the past century all occurred within a single civilization, that of the West. He is accused of blowing up cultural differences into sharp contrasts, thereby contributing to a unilateral image-forming process that is far more likely to cause conflicts than to avert them. There is no such thing as irreconcilable differences between civilizations. After all, modern civilizations are highly complex and extremely diffuse affairs that have never before existed in unmixed form anywhere on Earth, nor do they do so today. The fault lines between civilizations are also man-made, and are largely a product of the imagination.²⁸

However accurate such comments may be, they do not prove that authors such as Moynihan or Huntington entirely lack a sense of reality. In 1993, in response to the conflict in Yugoslavia, imagologists organized a conference in Leiden. The conference theme was 'ethnic stereotypes', and

those invited included Serbs, Croats and Bosnians. However, none of these scholars attended the conference, nor could any of them be persuaded to submit written work on this topic.²⁹ This was quite understandable. Imagologists usually assume that nations are artificial things. At that time, in the Balkans, this was a highly unpopular, even dangerous standpoint. Although some courageous Yugoslavian intellectuals attempted to turn the rising tide of nationalism, another section of the intelligentsia emphasized that essential differences had existed between Yugoslav peoples for centuries. Although such assertions aggressively enhanced the existing tensions and contributed to the outbreak of war, they cannot be said to be patently false in all respects.³⁰

However, the attempts by intellectuals from the former Yugoslavia to construct separate ethnic-national identities did not always denote a lack of responsibility on their part. This became clear at the above-mentioned conference at the Institute of Eastern European Studies, in September 1998. There, the representatives of ten different Eastern European countries conducted a debate on the theme of history and identity. A historian from the former Yugoslavian federal republic of Macedonia, now an independent state, gave a presentation to the conference on the subject of his national identity. He constructed this by referring to Alexander the Great as a Macedonian. Yet, unlike the current inhabitants of Macedonia, the language spoken by this king from the fourth century was not a Slavic one. This historian also annexed Cyril and Methodius, the apostles of the Slavic peoples from the 9th century, as Macedonians. Both missionaries came from Saloniki, a city located in present-day Greece, but in an area that modern Macedonians consider to be part of the original land of Macedonia. It was at this point that a Bulgarian delegate at the conference politely but firmly objected. This is because most Bulgarians believe Macedonia to be a part of Bulgaria, asserting that the language spoken by Macedonians is really just a Bulgarian dialect. It would therefore seem that, in reality, Cyril and Methodius are figures from Bulgarian history. The delegate immediately conceded, however, that his Macedonian colleague was well within his rights in following the path taken by Bulgarian historians a century ago, when Bulgaria obtained its independence. He admitted that the creation of a new state virtually compels historians to construct something approaching a national identity, and to use historical myths as tools. A state will not be able to survive unless its national identity is given form and content. Of itself, this is neither wrong nor offensive, it is simply a question of national duty.

The Belgian anthropologist Roossens explored this process of creating ethnicity, not in the Balkans but among Indian tribes in Canada and allochthonous groups in Belgium. He found that strong ethnic feelings do not need to be based on genuine culture which has had a lengthy and uninterrupted existence. Ethnicity always leans heavily upon an idealized past. In this connection, the truth is often the first victim. Roossens wrote "The feelings of the masses are not troubled with historical accuracy."³¹ At the same time, people do not have carte blanche to allow their imaginations to run wild. Although culture and history have a certain inherent elasticity, they are by no means completely arbitrary realities. "With very little one can obtain very much [...]but there is always a minimum of incontestable and noninterpretable facts necessary..."³² And even that is sometimes not enough. Russia, for example, has a thousand years of a highly eventful history, more than enough heroic and illustrious incidents, or so one might think. And yet the current population of that country is suffering from a severe identity crisis, one that no amount of stories about a glorious past can exorcise. Sometimes, nations simply lack the will to adopt an identity of their own. Belarus is currently an independent country. It has its own language and history, and is led by a dictator who is prepared to propagate any and all nationalistic myths, no matter how fantastic they may be. However, both the head of state and the majority of Belarusians would much rather return to the arms of Mother Russia. The disappearance of Communism in Eastern Europe has by no means resulted in a universal eruption of nationalism or to a strengthening of national and ethnic identities, as was the case in Yugoslavia.

Identities can be created and repaired, they are also malleable and degradable. However, the extent and tempo of these processes vary from people to people, and are subject to circumstances. What determines peoples' resistance to a given identity or their desire for it, and their degree of susceptibility to nationalistic propaganda? In commenting on this, J.Krecí, a British historian and political scientist of Czech origin, pointed out that "The so-called awakening of national consciousness

for which philosophers, historians and poets were largely seen as responsible was in fact the awakening of something which had for a long time been potentially present and had for some time been in the process of maturation as a result of combined processes of communication and imitation.³³ Historians of nationalism, such as Anthony Smith and John Armstrong believe that nations emerge from a previously existing ethnic identity.³⁴

What then is the difference between a peoples' character and such a pre-existent ethnic identity capable of developing into a national identity? In what ways does such an identity differ from the 'mentalities', 'the collective unconscious' or '*ouillage mental*', that are studied by the history of mentality? And if such things do indeed have an 'objective' existence, then how can we come to understand them? The imagologist, Joep Leerssen, considers the attempts by social scientists such as Hofstede to establish the content of national identities through empirical research to be regrettable. Leerssen feels such attempts to be evidence of a 'naive essentialism'. His main objection concerns the 'inescapable informant-dependence' that is inherent in all characterizations of national characters. 'It is impossible to make the jump from the discursive world of informant-dependent sources to a non-discursive objectivity [...]. We will never be truly independent of our sources. All too often, research that uses informant-dependent sources while professing to enquire into *reality* is only really investigating informant-dependent *opinions* [...]'³⁵

Scholars such as Hofstede and Huntington might be open to criticism when they greatly overestimate the degree of reality and the durability of cultural differences or national characteristics. But should they be reproached for continuing to research phenomena that are, at the very least, connected in some way to numerous conflicts in today's world?³⁶ After all, knowledge is based on observation. Leerssen himself acknowledged that informant dependence is inherent to all descriptions of the past. The question remains, however, of whether this dependence is also 'inescapable'. Historians are always trying to escape from the 'prison of their sources' into historical reality. That is their profession, and despite all of the ontological, epistemological or heuristic objections to their activities, they remain industrious escapees.³⁷ Why then should social scientists remain chained to the 'informants'? The literary imagologists could, in fact, be accused of not wanting to escape from this prison. They give little or no consideration to the historical circumstances that led to the creation of nations or to the socio-psychological mechanisms that resulted in the formation of ethnic groups. They generally restrict themselves to the study of literary texts. 'The merit of the imagological approach to stereotypes such as linguistic phenomena is that it points out *topoi*, but it either falls short or overshoots the mark because it fails to take account of reality.'³⁸

The literature on nationalism, nations, national identities, *ouillages mentales* or the character of peoples is liberally strewn with 'conceptual dichotomies'³⁹, contrasts between 'objective' and 'subjective' views, and either 'essentialistic' or 'constructivistic' approaches to these topics.⁴⁰ Many imagologists tend to focus on one side of the question, while political scientists and sociologists such as Huntington or Hofstede mainly point to the other side. There are no simple solutions to these intellectual dilemmas. There remains a yawning gap between finding out how literary constructions of national identities develop and using existing ethnic contrasts to explain the outbreak of a war. Both approaches require text, but while this can be used to show that national and ethnic identities are artificial matters, it can equally well be used to demonstrate that people perceive these as absolute realities, which have far-reaching effects on their behaviour.

It is difficult to distinguish between reality and people's opinions about reality. Without the lens of prejudice, no collective differences between people can be observed.⁴¹ Aside from the language, a Dutch person can only be recognized as Dutch by those who are already familiar with what constitutes (or should constitute) a Dutch person. Even when not inspired by xenophobia or racism, images such as these (which derive from the cultural traditions of the observer) remain crude generalizations. They are never reliable or innocent, but we have little else to go on. It follows from this that it is inadvisable to allow the political relations with another nation to be determined by currently fashionable prejudices about that people. On the other hand, such prejudices often contain a grain of truth. Although the 'politically correct' standpoint seems to be the safer option, this is not the case. One would be

exceptionally naive to assume that the image has no relation to reality, and that all peoples and ethnic groups are identical to one another. This is not to say that one should believe that the character of a people is incapable of change, condemning all the members of a nation to follow the same patterns of behaviour for centuries.⁴²

Chapter 2

Western image-forming

1. The image of barbarism

Anyone wanting to know whether or not ‘the Balkan type’ really exists, or whether there are really any differences between Serbs and Croats, will first have to explore the problem of image-forming. After all, it is the image that obstructs a direct view of reality. Even if the image is an accurate reflection of reality, it is by no means the same thing. For many centuries, the West has had a marked tendency to blame the changing fortunes of Eastern Europe on the character of its indigenous peoples. Depending on the circumstances in question, this resulted in favourable or adverse characteristics being attributed to the peoples in question. Although this tendency can be perceived in a very large number of texts on Eastern Europe, no systematic study of this phenomenon has ever been carried out. As has already been pointed out, virtually no research has been carried out on the image of Yugoslavia in the West, and the literature pertaining to the image of the Balkans is very limited. In addition, few books have been published on Eastern Europe’s image in the West. Imagologists tend to focus mainly on literary texts. They often deal with relatively minor topics, ones that are clearly demarcated in time and place. In addition, they have not paid very much attention to Eastern Europe. The same goes for the social scientists, who have been intensely preoccupied with ethnocentrism, a phenomenon that is closely related to image-forming. The only national image whose historical development can be traced is that of Russia, because so much has been written on the subject by social scientists, historians and historians of literature. Conversely, the literature on other countries and areas is fragmentary at best. Nevertheless, existing studies on image-forming in general and on Eastern Europe in particular enable us to draw some broad conclusions that are also applicable to Yugoslavia.

Eastern Europe’s image in the West, as well as our modern-day ideas about the Balkans, can be seen as variations in the clichéd ideas that Europeans have traditionally held about the world and the peoples outside Europe. They are the result of traditional European reactions to the centuries-old contrast between east and west, and between north and south. The sheer continuity of these reactions is astonishing. Some of these images contain thoughts that the Ancient Greeks harboured about peoples who did not speak Greek. Because they perceived these people to be babbling something like ‘bar-bar’, the Greeks referred to them as barbarians. We are unable, here, to offer more than a thumbnail sketch of the long historical development that spans the years between Thucydides and Holbrooke.

The occupants of the Ancient World tended to associate climate with the character of a people. This tendency can be traced back to Hippocrates who, in 400 BC, published a relatively elaborate theory on the subject. Aristotle drew a distinction between the wild, primitive people found in the cold lands of northern Europe, who were fiercely independent, and the inventive and intelligent inhabitants of balmy Asia, who had a slave-like mentality. Living in the intermediate, temperate climes, the Hellenes were both civilized and free and independent. This ‘tripartite division of the oecumene’ is an extremely persistent idea. Having adapted to changed circumstances, it is still in use. During the Middle Ages, the inhabitants of the West perceived the temperate regions to correspond to the territories occupied by Christians. This was the continent allotted to Noah’s third son, Jafeth – in other words, Europe. By contrast, the continents given to Noah’s other sons, Sem and Cham (Africa and Asia), were occupied by heathens, slaves and barbarians.⁴³ The idea that the inhabited world was divided into three climatological zones enjoyed renewed popularity during the Renaissance, and persisted until the Age of Reason. Zacharasiewicz felt that the climate theory was a ‘Lieblingsidee’ of the 18th century.⁴⁴ However, the frontier separating extreme from temperate climates, and civilization from Barbary no longer lay between Europe and the other continents, now a line was being drawn within Europe itself. Political theoreticians such as Bodin or Montesquieu explained the despotism in Asia and Africa, the

autocracy of the Czar in northern Europe and that of the Sultan in southern Europe, in terms of the heat or cold that prevailed in those regions. The monarchy was associated with the temperate climate of Western Europe.⁴⁵

At the same time, some parts of this western region were more temperate than others. Initially it was mainly the Italians, Spanish and French who claimed to belong to the privileged peoples of the centre. Later, the same claim was made by the more northerly English and the Germans. Still imitating Aristotle, people assumed that the peoples of the Centre had the best of both worlds. They possessed the finer qualities of the inhabitants of the north (such as perseverance and bravery) and the south (such as mobility of mind and body). At the same time, they were not prone to the former peoples' more extreme and negative characteristics (such as the melancholy, insensitivity and rigidity of the north and the laziness and passionate sensuality of the south). In W. Stanzel's descriptions of the 'Völkertafel' (the 18th century paintings depicting representatives of the main European peoples, as well as their good and bad characteristics), the lowest ranking peoples were the Poles, Russians, Hungarians, Greeks and Turks.⁴⁶

Throughout the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, climate was still considered to exert a major influence on the development of civilizations and on the characteristics of peoples.⁴⁷ Individuals such as the positivistic historian Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862) and the deterministic geographer Ellsworth Huntington (1876-1947) considered it to be self-evident that England's political and economic success was linked to the country's temperate climate.⁴⁸ Although heavily criticized by fellow professionals, the work of such scholars was incredibly popular at the time. However, they are not solely responsible for the fact that people still see 'the perfect European' as a sort of 'Mittelzohnenbewohner'.⁴⁹ This study covers other historical and imagological factors that account for the apparent ease with which Central-European countries such as Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic are admitted to the Western world, while there is as yet no place for the more northerly Russia and the more southerly Balkans.

While the climatic theory enabled the barbarian realms to be geographically defined, the ambivalent attitude of 'civilized' peoples towards barbarians was even more stubbornly maintained through the centuries. This involves three mutually contradictory emotional complexes: contempt, fear and admiration for the barbarians.⁵⁰ In ancient times, the strongest emotion was contempt, and this remains the case to this very day. According to the Greeks, the barbarians were at a lower level of civilization and were therefore unworthy of respect. The same was true of the later Euro-centric approach to peoples who were considered to be un-European or non-Western.

Nevertheless, the barbarians were also feared because they were brutal, savage and belligerent, and because their incursions threatened the continued existence of Western culture and freedom. Throughout history, various events have rekindled the fear of the *Untergang des Abendlandes* as a result of assaults by barbarians. The Persian wars of the Greeks were followed by the fall of Rome and the Byzantine empire and assaults by Arabs, Mongols and Turks. Next there was the expansion of the Russian empire under the Czars, followed by the Soviet Union. In this context, China and Japan (the Yellow Peril) are also seen as a possible threat. East-West or North-South divides existed as long ago as the Middle Ages. During the first half of the 19th century, the fear of continued Russian expansion generated a tense atmosphere in Western Europe, not unlike the one which prevailed during the Cold War. By contrast, there were also protracted periods of Western military ascendancy. Such periods saw the flowering of the Roman Empire, Byzantium, the German *Drang nach Osten*, European colonial expansion and the Great Powers' continual intervention in the Balkans.

In those situations that were not dominated by fear, it was also possible for people to develop admiration for the barbarians. Although they held the barbarians' lack of political freedom in contempt, people developed a certain respect and admiration for despotic dominions. This was based on their power, stability, order and justice, and on their ability to implement large-scale, rational reforms. The Greeks had just such an ambivalent attitude to the eastern despots of their era, and they were not alone in this. The same attitude prevailed in the West during the Middle Ages, this time with respect to the Arabs and the Mongols. During the 16th and 17th centuries there was a firm rejection of the autocracy of

the Muscovite Czar and the Turkish Sultan. In the 18th century, however, there was a certain amount of veneration for despotic but reforming rulers such as Peter I and Catherine II of Russia. In this regard, Voltaire and Diderot can be seen as the predecessors of the 20th century 'fellow travellers' and western Communists who would not brook any criticism of Lenin or Stalin. As long ago as the 15th century, in addition to the usual fear and contempt, there was also a certain degree of respect for the Turks. They were seen as born rulers, able to allow their Christian and Jewish subjects freedom of religion without causing any disruption to the law and order of the enormous Ottoman empire. Respect for the Turks continued well into the 19th century, even though the Ottoman empire was regarded as the sick man of Europe at the time.

In addition, there was general admiration for the unspoiled, primitive and free character of the barbarian lifestyle. It was thought that their lack of civilization enabled the barbarians to be more relaxed about maintaining social contacts, while giving them more direct access to nature and the supernatural, as well as to the world of art. It was for these reasons that the Greeks admired the nomadic Scythians, a fierce people from the region to the north of the Black Sea. However, the motto *ex oriente lux* continued on into later eras. During the Middle Ages, the Germans exhibited enthusiasm for the moral purity of the Slavic peoples, while at the same time subjugating them. During the New Age, people were captivated by the American Indians, who were seen as *bons sauvages*, even if they did live to the west of Europe. This appreciation did not, however, stop the Indians from being exploited and exterminated. In the 18th century, the cult of China and all things Chinese was even given a special name: *Chinoiserie*. During the 19th century, Russian writers such as Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy were venerated as modern Scythians, while admiration for the savage but noble Balkan peoples gave rise to a distinct literary genre.

Current literature shows for how long and to what extent the western perspective of the rest of the world was restricted by such emotions. The attitude of 'non western' peoples towards Europe was no less complex nor contradictory, however. Although the same feelings were involved, their exact role and the sequence in which they occurred were different. This was because the relationship between east and west, or between north and south if you will, was never particularly well-balanced. From the 16th century on, the West was increasingly in the ascendancy. Contacts with peoples from outside or from Eastern Europe were often characterized by a clashes between 'our' self-satisfied feeling of superiority and 'their' inferiority complex. The dominant feelings of fear and admiration were accompanied by insecurity, frustration, envy and wounded pride. Here too, this jumble of sentiments settled out into prejudices and traditional patterns of response which proved to be extremely persistent. Both on the 'eastern' and the 'western' side, the complex of image-forming factors contained so many internal contradictions that the attitudes of one party relative to the other varied enormously in intensity, depending on the circumstances. The images that people constructed of one another were even able to switch from black to white, and vice versa.

2. The image of Eastern Europe

The existence of an east-west dividing line within Europe itself was a complicating factor in these already complex image-forming processes. For a long period of time, Eastern Europe – in the form of Greece and, later on, Byzantium – was the most civilized part of our continent. The Greeks looked down on the Romans, and the Orthodox Byzantines considered the Latin Christians to be semi-barbarians at best. The roles were reversed, however, when the entire Balkan region and a large part of Hungary were occupied by the Turks. At about the same time Western Europe was establishing the first contacts with Muscovite Russia. From the very beginning, the Europeans considered it to be a barbaric and Asiatic country. The subjugation of the Czechs by the Habsburgs in the 17th century, and the decline and fall of Poland in the 18th century brought about a change of attitude. The whole of Eastern Europe, from north to south, could now be seen as a backward region where poverty, bondage and despotism were indissolubly bound together. The entire region was therefore quite alien to the real (i.e. Western) Europe.⁵¹ At about this time, the concepts of *Oriental Europe* and *l'Europe orientale* started

to appear in travellers' tales. From that time onwards, Europe had an East all of its own. A sort of semi-Asia right in its own backyard. Every positive and negative stereotype and prejudice about the orient that the West had cherished since time immemorial could now also be applied to Eastern Europe.⁵²

In geographical terms, Eastern Europe was still part of Europe, but in economic, political and cultural terms, it was no longer part of the continent. The general belief was that the gap between East and West in Europe could only be bridged by subjecting Eastern Europe to a protracted and intensive process that - *nomen est omen* - was referred to as westernization, Europeanization or modernization. Although that process started as long ago as the 18th century, and radically changed the face of Eastern Europe, the fact that terms such as Eastern Europe remain in common use today indicates that this region is still seen as backward and non-European. However, backwardness was not always seen as a drawback. In Eastern Europe, attempts to replace 'authentic' and 'original' regional cultures with modern western civilization have met with virtually constant resistance. Furthermore, conservatives and romantics in the West occasionally like to believe that in Eastern Europe the best European traditions were preserved from change and corruption. During the first half of the 19th century people were very envious of the Russians as they were reputed to live in accordance with the standards and values of the *ancien régime*. In the second half of the 19th century the rural population of the Balkans were considered to be very fortunate, in that they were still innocent of the ways of the modern world. They were thought to live in a sort of reservation, an 'open-air European peoples museum'.⁵³

This 'otherness' of Eastern Europe was not always viewed as backwardness. Following the development of the Soviet Union, Western progressives went on a pilgrimage to this workers' paradise and declared that they had seen the future.⁵⁴ The system of worker participation in management that was introduced in Tito's Yugoslavia also drew pilgrims and inspired positive reactions.⁵⁵ In addition, there were regular disagreements about the most extreme manifestations of 'otherness' in Eastern Europe. Did they spring from typical Eastern European traditions, mentalities or circumstances, or were they actually the product of unnatural westernization? A nationalistic Russian like Solzhenitsyn, for example, believes that Marxism and Communism were imported from the West and forcibly imposed on the Russian people. The extremely violent nationalism that was ignited by the disintegration of Yugoslavia can also be seen as a result of western influence. The Bulgarian historian, Todorova, wrote that 'It may well be that what we are witnessing today, wrongly attributed to some Balkan essence, is the ultimate Europeanization of the Balkans.'⁵⁶

The eternal question as to whether the differences between East and West really are so great and so fundamental, is being posed once again. In 1994 Willy Claes, the Secretary General of NATO, welcomed the Baltic states, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia as candidates for integration into Europe. He also included Croatia, with the words 'and let's hope'. These candidates were either already sufficiently 'European', or were rapidly becoming so. Claes then referred to Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Romania and Serbia as countries 'of Byzantine influence'. He felt that they were not yet ready for incorporation into Europe, due to their 'Oriental world view' and 'the latent mentality of those areas'. Vesna Goldworthy, who was raised in Yugoslavia, added: 'Ironically for an exponent of the moral virtues of the Occident, Claes had to resign from NATO over serious allegations of corruption in Belgian politics.'⁵⁷ The *New York Times* expressed astonishment at the influence of Middle Age history on Serbian nationalism and commented that, in the West, it would be unthinkable for people to slaughter one another because of something that happened five hundred years ago. The Bulgarian historian Todorova responded by pointing out that 'In Europe, with a longer span of civilized memory, they were killing because of something that happened 2,000 years ago. One is tempted to ask whether the Holocaust resulted from a 'due' or 'undue' predominance of barbarity.'⁵⁸

The West could also experience the need to place greater emphasis on affinity with Eastern Europe, rather than on the region's strangeness. This usually occurred in times of war, when alliances with Eastern European states were seen as essential for the survival of western nations. This was especially true of Russia, which from time to time was seen either as a deadly danger or an indispensable ally. Anti-Russian and pro-Russian groups, that were clearly identifiable as such, existed

as long ago as the 18th century. They were responsible for a deep division of public opinion in most Western countries. Curiously, depending on the circumstances, views sympathetic towards that country were alternately expressed by conservative and progressive circles. In this regard, prevailing attitudes towards Russia often largely determined the attitude that was adopted towards other Eastern European nations. In the 19th century, anyone who was anti-Russian was often also pro-Polish and pro-Turkish. However, Russia was widely admired as ‘the saviour of Europe’ in the battle against Napoleonic France. The western allies also considered Russian support during both world wars to be of vital importance. As a result, there was a decline in the traditional Russophobia of the French and British. It was for this reason that Serbs were able to count on their sympathy during the First World War, as were Yugoslavian partisans during the Second World War.

During the first half of the 19th century, the most extreme forms of Russophobia existed within left-wing circles in Germany. At that time, however, it was the conservative historian Leopold von Ranke who came up with an argument for definitively placing Russia outside the borders of Europe. He put forward the view that free, civilized Europe was the result of feudalism, the Renaissance and the Reformation. These were things that the German and Latin peoples had in common. Not having participated in any of these developments, Russia could justifiably be considered un-European.⁵⁹ In August 1914, it was the fear of the ‘Russian steamroller’ that united the German nation behind its government. During the First World War, German propaganda presented the Russians as dangerous barbarians. Nevertheless, German-Russian relations were not exclusively determined by mutual rejections and differences of opinion. The conservative-aristocratic elite in the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm were aware of a kinship with the other *Militärmonarchie* in the east, Russia. Furthermore, as a group, Germans in Russia wielded considerable political and economic clout and German culture and science had an exceptionally large influence, as did the workers’ movement. After 1918, Germany saw Russia as a partner. These two countries felt themselves to be victims of the Treaty of Versailles, and they signed a treaty with one another in 1922, at Rapallo. At the time, German intellectuals such as Thomas Mann pointed out the fundamental cultural kinship between the two nations.

This was, however, a deviation from the dominant historical pattern. The German-speaking peoples generally attempted to strengthen their central position in Europe by seeking a rapprochement with the peoples of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, with whom they had had strong ties ever since the Middle Ages. Since the early 19th century people have attempted to give Central Europe an identity of its own. To a varying extent, some were even in favour of making it an economic and political unit. The argument in favour of such a solution rested on assumed affinities between Hungarians, Romanians and Western and Southern Slavs who were supposedly in favour of linking up with the German-speaking peoples. This new area could then shed its connections with advanced Western Europe and backward Russia. Once the bisection of Europe into East and West had been replaced by the classical triad, Central Europe would form a separate unit, under German hegemony. This idea was undermined, however, by the disagreement concerning the formation of a Greater or Lesser Germany⁶⁰, and by the nationalism of the non-German peoples. Nevertheless, for a long time, Germans were attracted by the concept of a peaceful Central Europe, based on the harmonious collaboration of all peoples in the area. Evidence of this was the success of *Mitteleuropa*, a book on this theme by the liberal politician Friedrich Naumann, published in 1915. Ultimately, the achievement of this dream was permanently prevented by the de facto outcome of both world wars.⁶¹

In the period between the wars, non-Germans were the main proponents of the ideal of Central Europe. During the First World War, the Czech T.G. Masaryk devoted himself to a democratic, *Střední Evropa*, which would be predisposed towards the West. His Central Europe was to consist of a number of small, independent states. This concept met with little enthusiasm in the camp of the Entente. Versailles granted independence to a variety of small countries in Central Europe, but this was merely a consequence of the collapse of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires. A note of caution was sounded concerning the admission of these new states to Europe. In the years between the wars, they were seen as a ‘squabbling mixture of races’ that represented a danger to peace on the continent. At the time, in British government circles, no distinction was drawn between Central Europe and the Balkans. Even

though democracy was working rather well in Czechoslovakia, the British ambassador considered the Czechs to be 'arrogant pigs... suffering from persecution mania.'⁶² The continuing strength of public opinion regarding the strangeness of that country was illustrated by a radio address given by the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, during the Munich crisis of 1938. Chamberlain commented 'How horrible, fantastic and incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing.' Other members of Chamberlain's cabinet felt equally strongly that what happened in Czechoslovakia had little or nothing to do with England. That country was simply 'an unstable unit in Central Europe', 'a modern invention, a very artificial creation with no real roots in the past.'⁶³ Similarly, contemporary British opinion concerning Poland and Hungary was equally negative⁶⁴.

This changed during the Cold War, when Hungary (in 1956), Czechoslovakia (in 1968) and Poland (in 1980-81) aroused enormous sympathy as a result of their revolts against soviet dictatorship. From that time on, each of these nations was seen as some kind of western outpost. This situation was aptly described as 'a captive nation syndrome, often accompanied by a glorification of dissent'⁶⁵. It ensured that, during the 1970s and 1980s, the West was extremely open to members of the intellectual opposition in these countries, who presented Central Europe as a region that had been forcibly ripped from the bosom of the West by the Soviet Union. The view taken by the Czech Milan Kundera and his sympathizers was that the dictatorial Communist regime that had been thrust upon his people was 'eastern', different and repugnant, while their native culture should be seen as 'western' in all respects. Although the shortcomings inherent to this view of things were expertly revealed by historians such as Dittrich⁶⁶, Central Europe was back on the map. Since that time, Poles, Czechs and Hungarians have been given preference by the West. As a result, Europe was once again divided into three. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, this situation was perpetuated by the real need of these three countries to rid themselves of the stigma attached both to Communism and to Eastern Europe. In the words of Václav Havel, they wanted to 'to go home to Europe'.⁶⁷ They have indeed made rapid advances in the process of transition, joining NATO and gaining the prospect of being the first former Communist countries to be admitted to the European Union. Thus the concept of Central Europe has well and truly taken hold. This region is now generally seen as being fundamentally distinct from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.⁶⁸

3. The image of the Balkans

In the Western image of the Balkans we can once again see the traditions and ambivalences, the shifting standpoints and differences of opinion and especially the glorification and abuse of the barbarians that derive from the Western view of Eastern Europe. For Western Christians, the orthodox faith was, of course, one of the most striking features that South-East Europe and Eastern Europe had in common. From the Great Schism between Rome and Byzantium in 1054, right up to the present day, differences between the Latin and Greek churches have been presented as the major cause of divergence between Western and Eastern Europe, in terms of the development of the state, of society and of peoples' mentality. Western literature on the subject of Russia and the Balkans consistently displays a lack of understanding of the particular nature of Eastern Christianity and contempt for its 'heretical' or 'superstitious' views. Another commonly expressed view is that orthodox clergy lack theological insight and an adequate knowledge of the Bible.

Nevertheless, this is just one side of the picture. There were also various counterweights to this rejectionist and often hostile attitude. There was sympathy for the fate of fellow Christians under the Turkish yoke, and Rome often tried to restore unity between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Protestants too have favoured an anti-Catholic alliance with the Greek church. Orthodoxy has been praised as the only true form of Christianity, by humanists such as Melanchton in the 16th century, as well as by 18th century Pietists and by 19th century Romantics⁶⁹. Western views of the Ottoman political regime and the characteristics of the peoples of South-East Europe are no less ambivalent. Thus, sharp differences of opinion about the Balkans are a common Western European phenomenon. However, the

polarization of these views varied from country to country, as did the way in which this issue was resolved. This situation was influenced by the extremely varied situations in South-East Europe, and by the relationships between the Great Powers. Since the 18th century, these countries had been forced to fill the power vacuum that had resulted from the decline of the Ottoman empire. They sometimes collaborated in this endeavour, while at other times they opposed one another. Each country had its own particular stake in the Balkans.

Since the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Russians had felt that their fate was linked to that of Orthodox Christians living under Ottoman rule. They had been engaged in a centuries-long struggle against Islam in all of the areas to the South and East of Muscovy.⁷⁰ As far back as the 17th century, the Croatian monk Juraj Krizanic travelled to Moscow to request the Czar's support for the oppressed Slavic peoples of the Balkans.⁷¹ Well over a century later, in 1774 the peace treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji compelled the Ottomans to recognize Russia's right, from then on, to act as the protector of Orthodox Christians in the Balkans. In the 19th century, a number of prominent Russian intellectuals became obsessed with pan-Slavic ideals. The Bulgarians particularly became their 'pet nation'. At the same time, however, these same Russians adopted the attitude of 'civilized Europeans' with regard to the 'Asiatic' peoples of the Balkans. They occasionally succeeded in engaging Russian public opinion in their solidarity with the Christians who were supposedly 'groaning under the Turkish yoke'. However, knowledge of the Balkans among the Russian political, military and intellectual elite remained very limited. High-ranking Russians were much more interested in Western Europe.⁷²

During the 'eastern crisis' of the 1870s, it emerged that even an autocratic government was sometimes compelled to pay heed to public opinion. As a result, Russia went to war with Turkey, in order to liberate Bulgaria. Generally, however, Russian foreign politics in the 19th century were primarily focused on Western Europe, Central Asia and the Far East, and not on the Balkans. In addition, the Russian government was handicapped in the extent to which it could intervene in South-Eastern Europe, since it was also an outspoken advocate of the principle of legitimacy. On this basis it was compelled to oppose local rebelliousness. In the interests of restoring law and order, the Russians felt obliged to collaborate with Turkey, Austria, France and Great Britain. Although it had snapped up the northern part of the Danube principalities, Russia had no ambitions to annex the Balkans as a whole. Instead, it attempted to behave as the natural ally of the Greeks, Romanians, Serbs and Bulgarians. However, these peoples often perceived Russian assistance in winning and perpetuating their national independence as clumsy, inadequate or contrary to their interests and turned instead to Austria for protection.⁷³

The house of Habsburg compensated for its loss of power in the Low Countries, Germany and Spain by extending its influence at the cost of the Ottoman empire. In the Balkans, Russia took on the role of the powerful head of the family, who was not prepared to take the trouble to properly get to know the poorer, dependent relatives. Meanwhile, Austria played the part of the expert and extremely dominant neighbour. As far back as the 16th century, the Austrians were publishing remarkable detailed and accurate descriptions of South-East Europe, and of the peoples who inhabited that region.⁷⁴ From the modern viewpoint, the majority of the Habsburgs' non-German subjects were westerners. They were also Catholic and belonged to peoples who, to a greater or lesser extent, had been exposed to the influences of Humanism, Reformation, Counter Reformation and Enlightenment.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, considerable incompatibility remained between the Emperor's German-speaking civil servants and the Slavs, Hungarians and Romanians.⁷⁶ The statesman Metternich, who came from the Rhineland, served as chancellor to the Habsburg emperor. He thought that there was nothing to be done about the problem, due to its fundamental nature. In his opinion the larger portion of the empire he ruled was outside Europe. The 'fault lines of civilizations' drawn by Metternich differed considerably from those that were later to be set out by Huntington. In 1820, the Austrian chancellor is reputed to have remarked that 'Asia starts at the Landstrasse' (the road that runs between Vienna and Budapest).⁷⁷

The Hungarians did indeed represent a considerable danger to the empire's stability. It was only able to suppress their 1848-49 revolt with Russian help. Nor, of course, did the Austrian government have any sympathy whatsoever for the liberation struggles of the Balkan peoples. In 1867, Emperor

Franz Joseph was compelled to share the empire's power with the Magyars. His negotiator, Friedrich Ferdinand von Beust, must have commented to his Hungarian counterparts 'Keep your barbarians under control and we'll do the same with ours.'⁷⁸ This meant that the Austrians would deal with the Poles, Czechs and Slovenians, leaving the Hungarians to handle the Croats, the Slovaks and a section of the Serbs and Romanians. Much to the distaste of Serbia and Montenegro, from 1878 onwards, Bosnia-Herzegovina was groomed to be Austria's very own colony in the Balkans. In 1895, the Austrian administrator of those areas, the Hungarian Beni Kállay von Nagy-Kállay, wrote in a London newspaper that: 'Austria is a great Occidental Empire charged with the mission of carrying civilization to Oriental peoples.'⁷⁹ The occasionally impressive modernization that was implemented in the southern areas of the Habsburg empire, did nothing to improve the popularity of the local Austrians and Hungarians. Their arrogant 'divide and rule' policy aggravated the tensions in the Balkans and undermined peace in Europe. The Habsburg authorities were fearful of a revolt in Bosnia, and lacked the courage to make major changes in rural areas. As a result, large numbers of orthodox Serbian farmers continued to be the serfs of a small group of Muslim land owners.⁸⁰ Given the continued existence of social and political differences in the area, with all that this implied, historians later viewed the occupation and subsequent annexation of Bosnia as a fatal form of imperial overstretch.⁸¹

The Balkans was something familiar to Russia. Although the region fell within the natural sphere of influence of Russia's foreign policy, it was not vitally important. The continued existence of Russia as a Great Power was not dependent on the Balkans. The area was of vital importance for Austria but, despite its proximity, it remained very foreign. The remaining Great Powers considered the Balkans to be odd and insignificant. Their only involvement in the region was related to the international complications associated with the decline in Turkish power and with the competition between Russia and Austria. The anti-Turkish crusade mentality that had made such a mark on Russian and Austrian history was much weaker in Germany, France and England. Thus, they were able to be more candid in their appreciation both of the Ottomans and of the Balkan peoples' struggle for freedom.

In addition to the rebellious Poles and Hungarians, the Greeks enjoyed considerable support in liberal circles throughout Western Europe. Furthermore, such support was by no means limited to moral platitudes. Germans made up the majority of the philhellenes who joined the Greeks in their struggle for liberation. This was characteristic of the swing in German mentality that had taken place under the influence of the French revolution and the Romantic Movement. In his *Hyperion* (1797), the poet Hölderlin had already shown himself to be a philhellene *avant la lettre*. Schiller and Beethoven were inspired by the rebellious Greeks. In *Faust*, Goethe splendidly illustrated the Germans' self-satisfied views concerning the Balkan wars of the 18th century.⁸² He himself was deeply impressed by Byron's life, and his death for the resurrection of Greece. Goethe also showed great interest in and admiration for Serbian culture and rebelliousness. He was not alone in this, Jakob Grimm, Ranke and others felt the same way.

Sharply divergent views were held by Marshall Von Moltke, who at the start of his career, had spent a considerable amount of time in Turkey, as a military instructor. In his well known *Briefe aus der Türkei*, Molke had declared himself in favour of the reformation of the Ottoman empire. The German liberal and orientalist, Jakob Fallmerayer, supported Greek independence. Nevertheless, in 1830, he put the damper on the romantic philhellenism to which those with a classical education were so attached. Fallmerayer asserted that 'auch nicht ein Tropfen echten und ungemischten Hellenenblutes in den Adern der Christlichen Bevölkerung des heutigen Griechenland fließet.'⁸³ He stated that modern Greeks were of either Slavic or Albanian origin, and were certainly not the decedents of Homer and Plato. Marx and Engels also attempted to curb the 'poetic' enthusiasm in their circles for 'edle Räubervölker' such as the Serbs, Bulgarians or Albanians. Such 'Völkerabfälle', 'Völkerruinen', 'gebrochene Barbarische Reste' or 'unhistorische Völker' were simply tools in the hands of Russian pan-Slavists. Nevertheless, they later experienced a growing appreciation of the Serbs. However, this was outweighed by their Russophobia and, in the Russo-Turkish war of 1876, they allied themselves with the Ottomans.⁸⁴

The Balkans was mainly important to the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm because of his relationship with Austria. Bismarck, who took on the role of “ehrlicher Makler” at the Berlin Congress of 1878, had not the slightest understanding of the liberation struggles of the Balkan nations. ‘Diese Hammeldiebe’s role was simply to adhere, in every respect, to the arrangements of the Great Powers. They were still not worth ‘die gesunden Knochen eines einzigen pommerschen Musketiers’ to him.⁸⁵ While the German academic world boasted respectable Eastern-Europe experts, the image of the Balkans owed more to a popular author such as Karl May than it did to these scholars. Although he never visited the region, his *In den Schluchten des Balkan* (published in 1892) was just as popular as his other adventure novels. Books of this type served to enhance the exotic image of the Balkans that had taken root. This image could also be found in the pages of the authoritative Brockhaus encyclopaedia.⁸⁶

French foreign policy had a long tradition of being anti-Austrian, anti-Russian and pro-Turkish. The writings of French travellers from the 16th century onwards initially showed an appreciation of the effective administration and religious tolerance of the Ottomans. This was gradually replaced by critical reports about despotism and corruption. Yet, throughout this period, political, economic and cultural relations became ever more intensive.⁸⁷ It was especially the brief period of Napoleonic administration in Dalmatia that served to enhance French expertise concerning the Balkans and the peoples who inhabited that region. There was considerable sympathy for the Greek freedom fighters. In their imaginations, French travellers saw the rocky terrain of Greece inhabited by ancient gods. They visualized Demosthenes and Socrates strolling under the plane trees and olive trees. Leading writers such as Victor Hugo and Chateaubriand expressed their sympathy for the Greek cause. In 1824, the fashionable Delacroix painted *Scènes des massacres de Scio* (which depicted the bloodbath that the Turks inflicted on Chios in 1822). In 1826 he created *La Grèce sur les ruines de Missolonghi* to commemorate the defenders of Missolonghi, who had blown themselves to smithereens, along with the besieging Turks who had entered the city. However, a far greater number of drawings and paintings produced by this artist drew upon the exotic, martial and voluptuous Muslim Orient. This was a topic that very much occupied peoples’ imaginations during the Romantic period.⁸⁸

In his well-known *Voyage en Orient*, the poet-diplomat Alphonse de Lamartine showed that he was very much against the artificial preservation of the Ottoman empire. He expressed great admiration for the Serbian and Bulgarian peasants, indicating that he thought them capable of sustaining independence, nor were his views about the Turks -as a people - dismissive. The poet Prosper Mérimée published a collection of Serbian epic poetry from his own pen. The novelist Honoré de Balzac also incorporated Serbian themes into his work. While it appealed to the romantic imagination, such literature had little influence on the shaping of political opinion.⁸⁹ French meddling in the Balkans was not based solely on its considerable interests in the Mediterranean region. There was also a hope that the Eastern question might lead to a revision of the decisions taken at the Vienna Congress, which held out to France the prospect of revenge and of strengthening its position in Western Europe. Critics of France wrote that while the French were shouting about Greece, what they really meant was Belgium and the banks of the Rhine.⁹⁰ Despite the great enthusiasm for the banditry of rebellious peasants (known in the Balkans as *klephts*, *armatoles* or *hayduks*), as a Catholic country, France had its reservations about the schismatic, orthodox faith of the Balkan peoples. French diplomats did not have a particularly high opinion either of the Ottoman administration, or of the reigning princes of Serbia or Montenegro. Unlike Britain, public opinion concerning participation in the Crimean War was half-hearted and divided. Nor, later on, was there much support for the rebellious peoples of the Balkans.⁹¹

It was the United Kingdom, more than any other country, that made its mark on the Western image of the Balkans. In Britain, the Balkan issue caused more political division and inflamed emotions than anywhere else. Nevertheless, it was not until the second half of the 19th century that the British really became interested in the Balkans. This interest derived solely from a much older preoccupation with Russia and Turkey. In England, from the 16th century onwards, these countries had been seen as despotic and barbarian powers. Throughout the entire 18th century and up until about 1820, British government circles saw Russia as an important trading partner, a friendly power and a natural ally for Britain. Numerous travellers tales show that during this period, and even later, the British had more

respect for the Turks, as a dominant power, than for the peoples they had subjugated.⁹² In 1800, interest in Greece derived mainly from the traditions of the *Grand Tour* and from a classical education. When the Elgin marbles were brought to Britain in 1812, British tourists saw the Greeks as ‘ignorant, superstitious, factious, venal, obsequious, lazy, dirty and ungrateful’⁹³ This applied to the Turks either to a much lesser extent or not at all. Even philhellenes such as Byron had similar opinions about Greeks and Turks. However, such people were passionate about freedom, they also tended to focus on the good qualities of the Greeks and on the injustices of the Turkish administration. The philhellenic craze soon petered out, however. The main protagonists were a small group of *angry young men* from the British elite, mostly of Scottish descent. The most prominent members of English society were ‘violent anti-Greeks’ and they received the support of powerful men such as Castlereagh and Wellington. In 1830, the young Benjamin Disraeli joined the Turkish Grand Visier in Albania on a campaign against local rebels. In letters to his family, he wrote about ‘the delight of being made much of by a man who was daily decapitating half the province.’⁹⁴

Russophobia was a more important factor in the development of the image of the Balkans than was philhellenism. Anti-Russian feelings arose in Whig circles at the end of the 18th century. At the start of the 19th century, this spread out to include ever wider circles of the aristocratic elite and the well-to-do. Throughout Europe, contemporary left-wing circles were overcome by such sentiments. Those on the European mainland were fearful that the Cossacks might invade and put an end to European freedom. In England, there was an equally unfounded fear that Russian expansion in central Asia and in South-East Europe threatened British India, or the routes leading to it. Public opinion was exceptionally anti-Russian. It was mainly pressure from this quarter that caused the British government to undertake the Crimean War (1853-1856). Although the war served to highlight Russian weakness, this did nothing to assuage the exaggerated British fear of that country.⁹⁵ Since Palmerston’s government had sacrificed 25,000 British lives in the Crimea and had spent seventy million pounds to get the Turkish empire back on its feet, the Balkans continued to be an important focus for foreign policy even after 1856⁹⁶. Although the war with Russia was not a response to the repression of the Balkan peoples, further British support for the Ottoman empire was provisional upon the Turks implementing certain reforms in order to greatly improve the lot of their Christian subjects. Failure to take this action would give the other Great Powers, with Russia at their head, an excuse to intervene. Since the Turks failed to implement significant reforms, the British shifted their focus for the first time to the Balkan peoples.

The British had long been inclined to dismiss the rebellions in the Balkans as an adverse phenomenon caused by Russian intrigues. In the 1860s and 1870s, however, many became convinced that by supporting ‘the unspeakable Turk’, the British were partly responsible, possibly even partly to blame, for the barbarities taking place in the Balkans. In their book, published in 1867 and entitled *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces? of Turkey-in-Europe*, Georgina Mackenzie and Adelina Irby informed many of their fellow countrymen about ‘the sullenness, the poverty and the squalor of the Christian Slavs’. While both ladies remained firmly convinced of British superiority in all things, it was for this very reason that the British should be concerned about these peoples’ fate. They set a good example and remained in Bosnia, where they carried out many good works despite the fact that they viewed the Bosnians as barbaric, dishonest and lazy.⁹⁷ In the period from 1875 to 1878, British public opinion was shocked by the so-called *Eastern Crisis*. This involved rebellions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Thessaly, wars in Serbia, Montenegro and ultimately a conflict between Russia, Romania and Turkey. There was great anxiety about the savagery inflicted on the Bulgarians by irregular Turkish troops known as Bashi-Bazouks. The press devoted little attention to the slaughter of Turkish and Slav Muslims by the rebels.

However, Disraeli’s conservative government continued to pursue an anti-Russian policy. Such was the importance of a safe route to India that the British Empire would, if necessary, go to war to defend it. Given the weakness of France, the three conservative empires of Russia, Germany and Austria were capable of dominating the continent. Britain’s aim was to drive a wedge between them. As far as Disraeli was concerned, Turks and Christians were mere pawns on his chessboard. He tended to

see rebellions in the Balkans as a 'throwback to barbarism', and he dismissed the accounts of Turkish atrocities as exaggerated. Disraeli's imperturbability resulted in an unprecedented explosion of moral indignation among the opposition and large sections of the population. This took the form of numerous meetings, committees and pamphlets.⁹⁸ This movement gained enormous political significance when Gladstone, Disraeli's main liberal adversary, took on the role of spokesman for protesting intellectuals, artists, nonconformists and many ordinary citizens, who had just been given the right to vote. In September 1876, he wrote his famous pamphlet *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*. Two hundred thousand copies were sold within one month. This did not lead to any changes in foreign policy, however. The presence of British warships in the Dardanelles prevented the Russians from profiting from their successful operations in the Balkans. Thus, when the Great Powers met at the 1878 congress of Berlin to settle the 'eastern crisis', 'der alte Jude' (the term used by Bismarck when referring to Disraeli) triumphed.⁹⁹ Todorova takes the view that the discovery of the oppressed Christian peoples of the Balkans coincided with the discovery of the 'Victorian poor' in Britain itself. The domestic 'moral issue' gave rise to the foreign one. 'If there is any lesson to be drawn from the Bosnian crisis of 120 years ago, it is more about the domestic imperatives in Great Power foreign policy than about 'ancient enmities'.¹⁰⁰

4. Balkan writers and Balkan literature

The 'Eastern crisis' of the 1870s gave definite shape to the image of the Balkans, not just in Great Britain but in the continent of Europe as well. The Balkans was to remain a crisis area until 1914, so this image was confirmed and reinforced over and over again. Despite all of the agitation about Turkish atrocities, there was little evidence of racially or religiously motivated prejudice against Turks or Muslims. People no longer wrote about an undifferentiated mass of Christians who, because of their faith, were all conveniently labelled as Greeks. From that time on national stereotypes were used, such as 'suffering Bulgarians, wild Albanians, martial Serbs and proud, brave Montenegrins.' At the same time, public opinion was concerned about Russian manipulation of the Balkan peoples, who were generally considered to be incapable of independence and of conducting an efficient administration.¹⁰⁰ The numerous reports of revolutionary terror, revolts, coup d'états, political assassinations and widespread corruption in the Balkans only served to reinforce these views. Like the image of Eastern Europe and the even older image of barbarism, however, the image of the Balkans retained certain Janus-like features. Adverse, deprecatory aspects were balanced by the positive, romantic impressions that were chiefly presented in that period's extensive imaginative literature and travel literature on the Balkans.

The legendary figure of Byron, his selfless efforts on behalf of the Greek cause, and his death at Missolonghi in 1824 remained symbolic of ethically inspired, western interference in the Balkans. The landscapes of Greece, Macedonia and Albania reminded him of the Scottish Highlands, and the fierce clans that used to inhabit the region. The repercussions of his lyrical poetry on this subject continued for many years. The glorification of wild and noble mountain dwellers was a familiar theme in European literature.¹⁰² The untouched mountainous areas of the Balkans, whose primitive inhabitants apparently still followed a tribal way of life, therefore had considerable magnetism for western visitors. In the midst of all the uproar in England about the 'Eastern crisis', the poet Alfred Lord Tennyson (egged on by Gladstone) dedicated a verse to Montenegro. His poem describes a 'rough rock-throne of freedom' where 'a race of mightier mountaineers' dwelt. There was much about the numerous peoples and regions of the Balkans that appealed to the imagination. In addition to an eventful history, they had a colourful folklore, revolutionary movements, secret societies, ethnic and religious contrasts, agricultural poverty, a violent political culture and political instability. Balkan royalty was an equally exotic subject. This applied both to the native royal families of Serbia and Montenegro and to those of Greece, Romania and Bulgaria, which had their origins in Western Europe. The western yellow press gave extensive coverage to the frivolous behaviour of some of these monarchs and to the bloody deaths of others. As the 19th century neared its end, Scotland, the Iberian peninsula and post-

unification Germany and Italy, had lost much of their appeal for writers seeking new material for a novel. The Balkans appeared to be a region that had somehow managed to escape the tedium and bourgeois values that were gradually taking hold elsewhere in Europe.

The Prisoner of Zenda by Anthony Hope was published in 1894. It was a novel about a British aristocrat who closely resembled the king of an obscure Balkan country named 'Ruritania'. Their close resemblance to one another enabled this Byronic hero to save the fictitious monarch, and his imaginary kingdom, from a national crisis. Several hundred thousand copies of this novel were sold. The story was also used as the basis for plays and films. The success of this novel led to the production of dozens of adventure novels, castle novels, thrillers, detective stories, comedies, operettas and films. These were often set in imaginary Balkan states such as Syldavia, Dardania, Kedaria, Kravonia, Drynia, Vulgaria, Carpathia, Pottibakia, Herzoslovakia, Moesia, Mlavia or Silaria. Most of these are long forgotten, but some enjoyed more lasting fame. Some examples of the latter are: Bernard Shaw's play *Arms and Men* (1894); *Dracula*, Bram Stoker's Gothic novel (1897); Franz Lehar's operetta *Die lustige Witwe* (1905); *The Thirty Nine Steps*, John Buchan's spy novel (1915); Agatha Christie's detective story, *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934); Eric Ambler's thriller, *The Mask of Demitrios* (1939); Hergé's cartoon strip, *Kuifje en de scepter van Ottokar* (1947) and the film *The Prince and the Showgirl* (1957), starring Laurence Olivier and Marilyn Monroe.¹⁰³

Amusements of this kind reached broad sections of the general public, and served to confirm the image of the Balkans as one of a mysterious, exotic and semi-Asian corner of Europe. Usually, their authors or producers had never set foot in that region. Their only goal was to offer Western readers a pleasant and exciting escape from their day-to-day troubles. On the other hand, some novels attracted attention because they were based on personal experiences, and were truer to reality. One example is Evelyn Waugh's comical and critical *Unconditional Surrender* (1961), about his experiences with Tito's partisans. Another is Olivia Manning's autobiographical *Balkan Trilogy* (1960-1965), about mundane life in Bucharest and Athens just before and during the Second World War. In the Anglo-Saxon world, however, Mary Edith Durham and Rebecca West already had insuperable reputations as writers on the subject of the Balkans.

Durham arrived in the Balkans in 1900, at the age of 37. She was to remain there for most of the next 25 years. She wrote a series of travel stories, as well as stories with an anthropological component, about Serbia and Albania. She worked in field hospitals during the Balkan wars. She also had a distinct preference for desolate, mountainous regions such as Montenegro. She saw this as 'the Lhasa of Europe', peopled by 'fearless heroes straight from the pages of Homer'. She can be seen as 'the last of the Victorian travellers in the Balkans', one of those 'English spinsters who go about adopting small countries' who, convinced of their British superiority, were on a mission to spread the light of civilization. She attempted to learn Serbo-Croat and Albanian, and spared no effort to further her knowledge and understanding. Nevertheless, she became convinced of the region's complexity, the incomprehensibility of its inhabitants and the complexity of the 'Balkan tangle'. She continued to see herself as an objective observer and eternal outsider. Her compatriots, however, saw her as increasingly Balkanized, feeling that she identified too closely with the region. In the period between the World Wars, she became a fierce advocate of Albanian independence. As a result, she also became extremely anti-Serbian.¹⁰⁴

Whereas Durham was a Spartan and seasoned inhabitant of the Balkans, West was a woman of letters. She restricted herself to three short and extremely luxurious trips to Yugoslavia in 1936 and 1937. In the introduction to her *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, she wrote disparagingly about countrymen who travelled to the Balkans, only to return 'with a pat Balkan people' for pampering. She referred specifically to 'Miss Durham who had been led by her humanitarian passion to spend almost all her life in the Balkans' and, as a result, had become the undisputed champion of the Albanians, one who was inclined to believe even the most unlikely of anti-Serbian stories. West made brief observations in the field, which were subsequently embellished and extended at great length after she had returned home. However, she was just as concerned as Durham about the enigmatic and incomprehensible nature of

the Balkans. Even though she considered herself to be an objective judge of Yugoslavian relations, she had in fact already sided with the Serbs.

In terms of her attitude to the peoples of the Balkans, Durham remained a sort of Victorian school teacher and do-gooder. West, who completed her book while German bombs were raining down on London, adopted a more humble attitude. She believed that, in their struggle against the Turks, the Serbs had shown Europe how Christian civilization must be defended against the despotic and immoral powers that were once again menacing our continent. This view turned her travel stories in Yugoslavia into 'an inward journey of self-discovery and a spiritual quest'. Yugoslavia seemed to offer her the key 'to the understanding of all mankind, all human history and God.'¹⁰⁵ In this, West was a great deal less unique than is often assumed to be the case. The belief that only primitive barbarians were capable of holding up a mirror to the civilized world, one in which people could see their true selves, dates back to Ancient Greece. She had entertained Slavophilic views for many years. In the period between the wars, like many others in Western Europe before and since, she greatly admired Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. She tested feelings and thoughts of this kind during her pilgrimage to Yugoslavia, and in the course of her subsequent studies of that country. Other artists and intellectuals had previously seen a journey to Czarist or Communist Russia as a sort of spiritual rebirth, a liberation from the spiritual narrow-mindedness of the West.¹⁰⁶

Although many works of fiction and non-fiction have been published on the subject of Russia and other Eastern European countries, Balkan literature is quite astonishing in terms of its volume and diversity. It not only gives the impression of a region torn by centuries of enmity and hate between the various inhabitants. Its image of the Balkans is complex, and contains too many contradictory elements for this to be the case. Although ethnic differences and conflicts are regularly addressed, the majority of authors do not see these as wholly or partly responsible for the specific characteristics of the area. Indeed, they are not usually interested in explanations. A systematic analysis of the strange, unknown, exotic and Eastern nature of the Balkans would dispel its attractive mysteriousness. Nevertheless this literature often presents a marked contrast between the corrupt world of the Balkan capital cities, with their numerous political intrigues, and the purity, nobility and heroism of people in rural and mountainous areas. The real, original Balkans lay outside the cities. This was seen as 'Europe in its cradle', as a 'genuine unspoilt Europe'.

The romantic and anti-modernist tendency of much of the more dated Balkan literature is remarkable when seen against the light of contemporary literature dealing with the recent Yugoslavian civil wars. The latter highlights the contrast between the civilized, multinational, Western character of urban society and the primitiveness and ethnic contrasts of the agricultural areas. In her book on English-language Balkans' fiction, Vesna Goldsworthy notes that there was an additional tension in these older images of the Balkans. This was the discrepancy 'between the idea of the centrality of the region and that of its total marginality in the world of European politics'. The Balkans was represented as either irrelevant to Europe, or fatal to it. For the political and military elite in 1900, however, the potential hazards of the Balkans were all too clear. In 1893, a group of British military experts wrote a scenario for the outbreak of a world war. This document was entitled, *The Great War of 189.: A Forecast*. The document contains a description of the murder of a Bulgarian prince, by a Russian spy dressed as a priest. The Serbs use the ensuing confusion to create a border incident. As a result, the Austrians rapidly occupy Belgrade, which in turn leads to a Russian invasion of Bulgaria etc. *The Great War of 189.* was a popular book, especially in its German translation. This inspired Shaw to write *Arms and men*. Prior to 1914, it also caused many other authors to describe the Balkans as the powder keg of Europe.

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While the hazardous and negative aspects of the Balkans cannot be denied, the most striking feature of former Western perceptions of the region is a positive evaluation. Since contemporary opinions and prejudices about the Balkans reveal no trace of this former appreciation, it is inaccurate to assert that they are simply a continuation of past views. In the literature on the Yugoslavian conflicts, various factors have been associated with the views and attitudes of the 'international community'. Traditional views of the Balkan peoples were only one of many issues. Some importance has also been

attached to the 'traditional' character of the relations that the Great Powers maintained with the Balkan states, especially Yugoslavia. It is for this reason that, in the next section of this historical sketch of images of the Balkans and of Yugoslavia, the greatest emphasis will be placed on international relations, both past and present.

5. Traditional friendships

Writing about relations between the independent Serbia and other states, prior to 1914, the Polish-British historian, Sir Lewis Namier, stated: 'Hardly another rising, or renascent, nation had so great an array of enemies and so few friends. Habsburg, Austrians, Magyars, and Italians, were fully united in their hostility to the Serbs. [...] Russia might have been expected to befriend the Serbs: but the Bulgars, her vanguard against Constantinople, were her favourites.[...] In Great Britain [...], there were more pro-Turks and pro-Bulgars (as in 1876-8), but very few pro-Serbs.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, despite admiration for the primitive inhabitants of the Balkans, British political circles at the turn of the century mainly saw Serbia as a 'thoroughgoing nuisance' and a 'nest of violent barbarians'.¹⁰⁹ Great Britain (and the Netherlands) broke off diplomatic relations for several years, following the horrifying murder of the Serbian king and queen in Belgrade in 1903. From then on, until 1914, events only served to make Serbia even less liked in the West. Existing prejudices were confirmed by the wholesale slaughter carried out by the Serbs in Kosovo in 1913, as well as by the assassination of the successor to the Austrian throne in Sarajevo in 1914. There were exceptions, however. The renowned British historian, G.M. Trevelyan, who visited Kosovo in 1913 as a guest of the Serbian army, was receptive to the historical myths that were being used to justify the struggle to create a Greater Serbia. Thanks to the support of Russia and France, the Great Powers permitted Serbia to retain the conquered territory of Kosovo. However, the establishment of an independent Albania meant that the Great Powers were not prepared to concede to Serbia's intense desire for some Adriatic coastline.

During the First World War, the countries of the Entente developed considerable sympathy for their only true allies in South-Eastern Europe, the heroic Serbs, who were making considerable sacrifices for the common cause. In addition to the St Vitus days that were celebrated in Britain and America¹¹⁰, other campaigns were used to familiarize the populations of western countries with Serbian history. The Kosovo myth was seen as the source of inspiration for the admirable behaviour of the Serbs. They were applauded as 'the thoroughbreds of the Balkans', as 'magnificent specimens of humanity' and as 'the guardians of the Gate' of civilized Europe.¹¹¹ To some extent, the Central Powers also amended their opinion of the Serbs, who they primarily saw as regicides. Wendel, a socialist representative in the German Reichstag, stated that the Serbs were 'the most slandered people in Europe'. Germans, in particular, had made fun of them 'until 1914, when everyone suddenly stopped laughing'. During the Balkan campaigns, the Serbs proved to be highly energetic and tenacious opponents. Virtually every Serbian village was found to contain a normal school, and their inhabitants were people who conducted themselves in a civilized and dignified way.¹¹²

Nevertheless, the creation of a Yugoslavian state and the demarcation of its territories were ultimately due to the considerations of power politics and to the outcome of the war.¹¹³ The continuing Serbian outrages in Kosovo caused the American president, Woodrow Wilson, to resist Anglo-French plans for an expansion of Serbia at the cost of Albania. However, those who drew up the treaty of Versailles favoured a degree of Serbian predominance within the new Yugoslavian state, whose primary role was to act as a bastion against future German expansionism in the Balkans. Accordingly, another influential British historian, R.W. Seton-Watson, stated that 'the potent Serbian wine should not become overly diluted with weak Yugoslavian water'. During the war, this authority on Central and South-Eastern Europe had done a great deal for the Serbian cause. At the same time, he became intensely irritated by what he saw as the 'Turkish' political culture of Serbian statesmen like Nikola Pasic. In the period between the wars, Seton-Watson made even more critical statements about the dictatorial tendencies of the Serbs in Yugoslavia. Several prominent French journalists and politicians, such as Charles Rivet and Robert Schumann, had warned about this, both during and after the war.¹¹⁴

At the peace negotiations, there was a sharp conflict between Italian and Serbian interests. Any sympathy for the Serbian cause at Versailles was prompted by a desire on the part of France and Great Britain to retain a reliable ally in South-Eastern Europe. In this, they were to be disappointed. France had become a weak power and its attempts to prop up Yugoslavia with a system of alliances (the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente) met with failure. Neither France nor Great Britain were able to grant the kingdom economic prosperity or military protection. By the 1920s, Yugoslavia was primarily oriented towards Germany, Austria and Italy. Most Yugoslavian exports went to those countries. This tendency became still more pronounced during the 1930s.¹¹⁵ In 1935, a French observer noted that ‘Germans are everywhere in Belgrade these days. French is never spoken. Merchants and waiters can neither speak nor comprehend the language, but nine out of ten of them speak and comprehend German.’¹¹⁶

Such elementary facts passed unnoticed by Rebecca West, who was extremely anti-German, when she visited Yugoslavia two years later. At that time the economic and political life of the country, which was still dominated by Serbs, was almost completely dependent on Nazi Germany. West finally published her book in 1942, five years after her journey. In it she states that she saw marked similarities between Great Britain in the ‘appeasement’ period and this so-called ‘neutral’ Yugoslavia under premier Stojadinovic and the prince regent Pavel Karadjordjevic. West stated that in her own country the ‘springs of national will [were] locked fast in frost’, while members of the British upper class flirted with Hitler and Mussolini. She felt that it was only the return of Churchill to public office in 1939 that saved Great Britain’s honour.

According to West, a similar event occurred in Yugoslavia two years later. In 1941, when the treaty confirming Yugoslavia’s alignment with the Axis Powers was signed, the Patriarch condemned it as being contrary to the spirit of Kosovo. This statement was immediately followed by an anti-fascist coup d’etat led by a group of officers. The coup was supported and even inspired by the British.¹¹⁷ This coup provoked the German bombardment of Belgrade, and the kingdom’s subsequent conquest, occupation and downfall. However, West felt that the Serbs had followed the example of the British in showing their true face to the world, thereby revealing the similarities between them. Even the difference between Britain in 1939 and Serbia on the eve of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 ‘lay in time and place and not in the events experienced, which resembled each other even in details of which we of the later catastrophe think as peculiar to our nightmare.’¹¹⁸

West was unaware that the Nazi interpreter and diplomat, Dr Paul Otto Schmidt, had made an altogether different comparison in the German press, several years previously. Schmidt claimed that there was a substantial moral affinity between the Germans and the Serbs as their age-old struggle against the Turks had caused the latter to become virtuous, militant and chivalrous. This convinced Hitler of the desirability of a close alliance between both peoples. In fact, Yugoslavia was to become the stage both of large-scale collaboration with the Italian and German occupiers, and of equally large-scale resistance to them. Serbs, Croats and the other nationalities worked closely together during the war, but they also slaughtered each other as well. In 1942, the annual commemoration of the Battle of Kosovo was held in occupied Belgrade. The collaborating press celebrated this occasion with attacks on the Communist resistance which, of course, was presented as a betrayal of the Kosovo tradition. West, as an ardent anti-Communist, continued to support the Serbian royalists during the war. The British government decided to support Tito’s partisans, since they could offer more effective resistance to the Germans than the Serbian royalist Cetniks. The king of Yugoslavia was in exile in London and, for a while, the allies attempted to match up his interests with those of Tito. But Churchill was not really interested in the political future of Serbia or Yugoslavia.¹¹⁹

In the post-war years, the Communist authorities made every effort to suppress the annual commemoration of the Battle of Kosovo. They used the defeat of the partisan movement at the battle of Sutjeska as a new Kosovo, one that was not exclusively Serbian and which could be celebrated by the whole of Yugoslavia.¹²⁰ It was indeed Communist Yugoslavia, rather than Serbia or Croatia, that acquired a good reputation in the West. As a result of Tito’s rift with Stalin, Yugoslavia was able to adopt a unique position between East and West, which made that country extremely significant and

interesting to us. Over a period of four decades, it was the only Communist country with which the West was able to maintain relatively normal and intensive contacts. Foreign labourers from Yugoslavia made an important contribution to West European prosperity. Large-scale American and international financial support generated an artificial blossoming of the Yugoslavian economy.

Yugoslavia became more acceptable to right-wing political movements in the West when it firmly distanced itself from the Soviet bloc. At the same time, the country remained the focus of attention for left-wing and progressive circles as a result of its role in the group of 'non-aligned' countries and the 'breathtaking boldness'¹²¹ of the experiments with worker self-management. Other factors were the unorthodox Marxism of some Yugoslavian theoreticians and the excellent, extremely readable books produced by members of the opposition, such as Djilas. Many Western European tourists were attracted by Yugoslavia's countryside, its climate, music, food and low prices. This was of much greater importance to the country's wider popularity. Post-war Western news coverage and scholarly literature prior to 1980 therefore projected a predominantly positive image of Communist Yugoslavia. Although the country's problems were not completely glossed over, for a long time they appeared to be less serious or more solvable than those in the rest of Communist Europe. In the divided but stable world of the Cold War, the Balkans was no longer seen as a powder keg. It seemed that the old clichés about a barbaric, violent, exotic and semi-Asian Yugoslavia were wearing rather thin. For a long time, Tito's state was seen as a relatively westernized country. It was broadly comparable to other Mediterranean countries such as Greece, Spain or Portugal, if not more prosperous. From 1948 to 1988, it occupied the position that is currently occupied by the Central European countries.¹²²

It became increasingly clear that the Communist government had not succeeded in eliminating regional antipathies. There was a distinct possibility that the republic would fall apart after Tito's death.¹²³ Foreign governments viewed such a possibility with deep concern. Military authorities even thought that this might trigger a Third World War. In spite of all this apprehension, however, no scenarios were developed to prevent the disintegration of the Yugoslavian federation.¹²⁴ No commentators, other than those in Yugoslavian emigré circles, would even consider expressing a preference for Croatian independence or the formation of a Greater Serbia, as this might reveal the unavoidable bankruptcy of the Yugoslavian state. Commentators in the West continued to sympathize with dissident groups and individuals. Their nationalism was seen as a sign of burgeoning pluralism rather than one of impending disintegration.¹²⁵

When the political and economic situation in Yugoslavia sharply worsened during the 1980s, the West's attention was no longer specifically focused on that country. The remarkable developments in the Soviet bloc and the reduction of tension between East and West caused Yugoslavia to be seen as much less important and interesting. It lost both its privileged position and American protection. The requirements that the IMF now imposed on loans accelerated the country's economic downfall and worsened the social circumstances of large sectors of the population. After 1989, Yugoslavia found it more difficult to obtain support from the European Community than did former Eastern Bloc countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. This was because the latter countries complied with all of the current definitions of European civilization, whereas Yugoslavia was unable to satisfy some of the criteria. This encouraged the separatist tendencies of Croatia and Slovenia. These Catholic countries, which before 1918 had been part of the Habsburg empire, took pride in their European roots.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, the central government had already weakened considerably. Although it was granted European financial support, this was contingent upon keeping the country in one piece and implementing economic reforms. The introduction of a market economy forced the population to tighten their belts and eroded political support for the federal government still further.

It was only on the eve of war, in 1991, that international attention once again focused on the southern Slavic region. The West felt compelled to intervene, but deep differences of opinion arose between the European powers as soon as the Yugoslavian conflict broke out. These came to a head in the autumn of 1991, when Germany (with the support of Austria) expressed a desire to recognize the independence of Slovenia and Croatia as soon as possible. Germany's intentions generated passionate

reactions among those in the war zone. Slovenians and Croats used every channel made available by the modern communications media to express their heartfelt gratitude. Conversely, the Yugoslavian defence minister expressed the view that this was the third time that Germany had attacked his country.¹²⁷ Serbian leaders and intellectuals claimed that this was the rise of the 'Fourth Reich', a resurgence of the Danube monarchy and a new German *Drang nach Osten*.

The historical undertone in both Serbian and Croatian wartime propaganda was quite striking. There were continual, emotional references to a past with which the general public was only vaguely familiar or with which it had yet to come to terms. This mainly applied to the period of the Second World War. There was a strong tendency to think in terms of historical friendships and enmities. The Serbian media, for example, expressed their aversion to the Pope, who they saw as a traditional friend of the Catholic Croats and enemy of the Orthodox Serbs. Serbian nationalists had a similar role in mind for Islamic countries such as Turkey, Iran or Libya. They felt that these countries were the mainstay of the Bosnian, Kosovars and Macedonian Muslims. At the same time, they praised their renewed, time-honoured ties with the Russians.¹²⁸ Vehement reactions of this kind are entirely consistent with the war psychosis that had seized the Yugoslavian peoples. More surprising was the immediate focus in the West on reminiscences about the period prior to 1945. This development was not sparked by the actions of Germany and Austria alone. Western critics of the stance taken by the USA, Britain and France accused these countries of renewing their traditional alliance with the Serbs, or of practising the appeasement politics of the 1930s.¹²⁹ Warren Christopher, the American Secretary of State during Clinton's first term as President, described the war as 'a humanitarian crisis a long way from home, in the middle of another continent'¹³⁰. This did indeed revive memories of Chamberlain's comments during the Munich crisis.¹³¹

The impression that old times were being revisited owed more to the ambiguity of the West's policies on Yugoslavia than to the past itself. The responses of foreign powers to the outbreak of the Yugoslavian conflict, and the motives that underpinned them, were contradictory and complex. The intervention by the 'international community' was insufficiently related to the immediate interests of the states and supranational agencies involved. Since no country was prepared 'to take mortal risks to bring about any particular outcome', Western policies up until 1995 remained extremely obscure and hesitant.¹³² The literature on the Yugoslav crises contains a wide range of explanations and views of the West's actions (or lack of action). Many books and articles point out that the differences of opinion between the Great Powers (and between the members of the European Community) contained 'echoes of nineteenth and early twentieth century European politics'.¹³³ It is therefore necessary to investigate whether patterns of Western image-forming, as well as historical traditions in Western policies on the Balkans were involved.

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, and even for some time afterwards, the United States and the European countries (including Germany) saw the preservation of the Yugoslavian state as their main task. They feared that the disintegration of Yugoslavia might have a domino effect, leading to the destabilization of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. They probably felt that unity within the Yugoslav federation could only be enforced by Serbia and the Serbian-dominated federal army. In this case, it would be necessary to take the Serbian view into consideration. As far as France and Britain were concerned, this would have meant returning to the politics of the period from 1914 to 1941. References are often made to the pro-Serbian stance of the French president, Mitterrand.¹³⁴ The record shows that, at that time, both the *Quai d'Orsay* and the *Élysée* repeatedly brought up the historic alliance between Serbia and France.¹³⁵

The past could indeed serve as an example. In the years between the wars, French diplomacy was primarily directed at the Serbian politicians who dominated Yugoslavia. The French considered the Croats, who opposed the centralism of Belgrade, to be difficult and unreliable. King Alexander Karadjordjevic, a Serb, was assassinated in 1934, during a state visit to France. The French Foreign Minister, Barthou, was also killed in the attack, which took place in Marseilles. Those behind the assassination were the Croatian Ustashe and fascist Italy. However, Mitterrand indicated that he was mainly referring to the period of the Second World War. In an interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*

Zeitung, he said ‘As you know, unlike Croatia, Serbia was not part of the Nazi bloc.’¹³⁶ This is a rather odd comment since Serbia, under the government of general Nedic, was collaborating with the Nazis during that period. It was no more a part of the Allied camp than was Petain’s Vichy France. Under Nedic, Serbia and Belgrade were the first European country and capital to be made completely *Judenfrei*.

It is remarkable that Mitterrand should have such a poor memory of historical events, especially in view of his own war record (when he maintained close contacts with collaborators in Vichy as well as with the Resistance). This socialist politician can hardly be accused of naivety. However, many French people had an inaccurately positive image regarding the stance taken by Serbia during the last world war. Some authors have remarked that the French even displayed ‘représentations collectives non seulement fausses, mais totalement inversées’.¹³⁷ It is therefore quite conceivable that the President primarily used these perceptions as a useful weapon against the pro-Croat critics of his Yugoslavian policy.¹³⁸ The ‘historic’ friendship between France and Serbia is unlikely to have had any real significance in shaping official policy. The current ‘friendship’ between France and Germany - generally regarded as the basis of European integration - was of much greater importance. France was apprehensive that the absorption of the DDR would result in a much stronger Germany. It was attempting to find a way to counterbalance this. French foreign policy was primarily aimed at maintaining *le rang de la France* at a high level. This was primarily achieved by, whenever possible, adopting a highly distinct standpoint in international discussions. Other countries would then have to take this standpoint into account. Within this policy of *différence*, as with Iraq on the eve of the Gulf War, it was appropriate for France to maintain contacts of its own with Belgrade. The French standpoint shifted in the course of 1991. From being to some extent pro-Serbian, the country switched to advocating international action against Serbia, including military action if necessary.¹³⁹

For this reason, the assertion that ‘French and British governments, as well as the media, engaged in a veritable orgy of Croatia-bashing’¹⁴⁰ would appear to be a gross exaggeration of the facts. In Britain also the Serbs continued to enjoy the image of ‘a noble and faithful ally’ during the Second World War. Some authors felt that this was because British observers such as Fitzroy Maclean had depicted the military actions of Tito’s partisans as ‘a crusade headed by Serbs’.¹⁴¹ This was not the case. In *Eastern Approaches* (1949), Maclean repeatedly mentioned the multinational nature of Tito’s forces, as well as Serbian collaboration with the Germans.¹⁴² The novelist Evelyn Waugh was also part of the British military mission in Yugoslavia during the war. His *Sword of Honour* trilogy (1952-1961) is outspokenly critical of Tito and the Communist partisans. As a devout Catholic, Waugh was inclined towards an anti-Serbian, pro-Croat standpoint. The successful writer, Lawrence Durrell revealed even stronger anti-Serbian sentiments in his well known book *White Eagles over Serbia* (1957).¹⁴³ In 1991, and for some time afterwards, the British government maintained an extremely reserved stance. In view of its experience in Northern Ireland, it had no desire to get involved in a similar conflict in the Balkans. Nevertheless, the British government unreservedly criticized Serbia. Those defending or, like Margaret Thatcher, attacking British policy paid no heed to the traditional ‘friendship’ with that country.¹⁴⁴ It is quite possible that, at the start of the 1990s, French and British government circles were somewhat influenced by Serbian propaganda and by pro-Serbian experts on Yugoslavia. In Britain, two individuals often linked to this are Nora Beloff and John (later Jovan) Zametica, who first advised the British government, and then Radovan Karadzic.¹⁴⁵

Equally, the possibility cannot be excluded that American government officials were similarly influenced. In July 1990, John D. Scanlan, the former ambassador to Belgrade, expressed concern about ‘the bad public image that Yugoslavia in general, and Serbia in particular, now tends to receive in the American media.’ Scanlan was of the opinion that *glasnost* was actually invented in Yugoslavia. The Serbs had for many years been the most important advocates of democratization. It was not until the end of the 1980s that they were overtaken by the Slovenes and the Croats. But, according to authorities such as Djilas, even under the current authoritarian regime of Milosevic ‘the intellectual atmosphere in Serbia [is] freer than it has ever been.’¹⁴⁶ Lawrence Eagleburger, the Deputy Secretary of State and former US ambassador to Yugoslavia, had views similar to those of François Mitterrand. At the start of the war in Bosnia in 1992, he admitted that the Serbs were most to blame. Nevertheless, he reminded

journalists of 'the very close historical relationship' between America and Serbia, dating from the Second World War, when both countries were 'allies'.¹⁴⁷

Statements of this kind were meant to counteract anti-Serbian sentiment in the Western media. The literature that has been investigated does not provide a definitive answer concerning the exact development of public opinion (about the belligerents) in each and every Western country. In 1991, most Western Europeans felt that the democratic right of self-determination for all Yugoslavian peoples was more important than the artificial maintenance of Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁸ Thus there was a considerable difference of opinion between public opinion and the stance of some Western governments. This was to reveal itself once again during the war in Bosnia. Long before 1995, most members of the general public in America and Western Europe were in favour of vigorous military intervention by the West.¹⁴⁹

In addition to sharp criticism of Serbian actions, the Western media also tended to overestimate the democratic content of political developments in Croatia. This tendency was most pronounced in Germany, where many Croats lived. Such a short time after the reunification of Germany, many Germans felt very sympathetic towards countries such as Croatia and Slovenia, that had managed to free themselves from Communist dictatorships. Meanwhile, in Milosevic's Serbia, it seemed to be business as usual for the old Communist style of government.¹⁵⁰ The German government yielded to this pressure and devoted itself to the speedy recognition of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. In doing so, they thwarted the policies of negotiators who were working on behalf of 'Europe', such as Hans van den Broek and Lord Carrington. They wanted to achieve a compromise between the combatants with the aim of preserving the unity of Yugoslavia or, if this proved impossible, to at least prevent further bloodshed. The German policy toward Yugoslavia caused great commotion, not least because there was great uncertainty concerning the results of German reunification in terms of the situation in Europe. Ruling circles in Europe, afraid of a German 'Alleingang', realized that the Yugoslavian state was beyond salvation and were repelled by Serbian atrocities. This caused the governments of Britain and France, which had previously been rather deaf to Slovenian and Croatian arguments, to rapidly shift to the German standpoint.¹⁵¹

The emotions that this aroused are well illustrated by a confrontation between the British journalist Misha Glenny and a Serbian reservist, during January of 1992, in the Krajina region of Croatia. The Serb asked 'Why did you fucking English capitulate to the fucking Nazis?'¹⁵² Such statements only serve to highlight the escalating national hysteria that was a major cause of the outbreak of war. In Croatia, there was probably a rekindling of warm feelings towards former Second World War allies. However, this was not the case in Germany. The same was true of the government of Austria. Major interests were at stake for the latter country, which shared a common border with Yugoslavia. It had been the first to alert its European partners to the dangerous developments that were taking place in the south. Austria had strong historical links with Slovenia and Croatia. However, these sprang from a much more remote past than the time of the Second World War, and were by no means entirely amicable in nature. Hungary was in a similar position, since it saw Serbian political developments as a threat to the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina. From the outset, Denmark had supported the policies of Germany and Austria towards Yugoslavia, although it had no direct interests or traditional relationships in the area.

In Italy, Greece and Russia, segments of public opinion exhibited clear pro-Serbian inclinations. In the early part of the 20th century, Italy was certainly no friend of either Serbia or Yugoslavia. However, the country did have an interest in the wellbeing of the Italian minority in Croatia, and Serbia was seen as a guarantor of 'law and order' on the other side of the Adriatic. Nevertheless, the Italian government took a different stance and, together with Germany and Denmark, was one of the first to advocate the swift recognition of Croatia and Slovenia within the EU. Obviously, this can scarcely be seen as a renaissance of Mussolini's foreign policy.¹⁵³ Greece adopted a somewhat less responsible attitude. This was not solely due to a feeling of kinship with fellow Orthodox Christians, after all the history of Greco-Serbian relations includes a number of conflicts. Greece, the most southerly of the Balkan countries, opted to join the West following a bloody and brutal civil war (1944-1949). In

addition to indirect support from the Soviet Union, Greek Communists received direct military aid from Albania, Bulgaria and especially Tito's Yugoslavia. They were nevertheless defeated, as their opponents enjoyed the support of Britain and the United States. Greece has, however, retained a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the United States and to the relatively distant 'Europe'. In addition, the Macedonian question impinged directly on Greece's interests. Historical factors had a large part to play in Greek attitudes towards the Yugoslavian conflict. Yet there was no restoration of emotional alliances from the Second World War.¹⁵⁴

The same was true of Russia. Russian feelings of religious and political kinship with Serbia date back to the 15th and 16th centuries.¹⁵⁵ Yet Russia and Serbia have not always been close allies since then. The 19th century Serbian politician, Ilija Garasanin, was one of the first to designate Greater Serbia as a political objective. He set out the details in a pamphlet, entitled *Nacertanije (Sketch, 1844)*. In this treatise, he also admits that it is difficult to combine such political ambitions with acceptance of Russian leadership in Balkan affairs.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, in the 19th and 20th centuries, Russian support for Bulgaria occasionally caused Serbia to orient itself more towards Austria.¹⁵⁷ In 1914, the prominent Russian statesman Sergei Witte was opposed to Russian participation in the First World War on behalf of 'that vain Balkan people, the Serbs, who are not Slavs but Turks rechristened under a false name.'¹⁵⁸ The kingdom of Yugoslavia was notorious for its persecution of Communists. That country, which was a refuge for Russian émigrés, had poor relations with Soviet Russia.¹⁵⁹ It was not until 1940 that Yugoslavia recognized the USSR. Following the rift between Tito and Stalin in 1948, socialist Yugoslavia was reviled throughout the entire Eastern Bloc. After 1968, the threat of invasion and domination by the Soviet Union led Tito to stockpile vast amounts of weaponry and to create a large federal army, supported by strong regional people's militias. As a result, the disintegration of Yugoslavia quickly degenerated into large-scale, very bloody conflicts. President Gorbachev was extremely concerned about the disintegration of Yugoslavia, because of the possible repercussions for his own country. The relationship between Yeltsin's Russia and Milosevic's Serbia was never exactly open and cordial. This was largely due to Serbian support for the anti-democratic, pro-Communist coup that took place in Russia in August 1991. The affection for Serbia expressed by Russian nationalist politicians in the Russian parliament was mainly a result of anti-Western feelings¹⁶⁰ and of the opposition's desire to thwart the government. Traditional links with fellow Orthodox Christians and Slavs, as well as sympathy for Milosevic's policies, were relatively minor factors here. Russian specialists on the Balkans could not agree and were divided into pro-Serbian and anti-Serbian camps.¹⁶¹ Gradually, the Yeltsin government began to pay more heed to the wishes of the Opposition, but they continued to contribute to the Western interventions in Yugoslavia, and never seriously obstructed them. On the contrary, the West gained considerable benefit from the influence that Russia was able to exert in Belgrade.¹⁶²

Religious connections did not lead to powerful and effective alliances. Even the link between Muslim peoples, the 'green transversal' so feared by the Serbs, proved to be mainly a phantom. In 1968, the Communist regime recognized the Bosnian Muslims as a fully-fledged ethnic and national group. From that point on, Tito proceeded to exploit them, in order to intensify relationships with Islamic states. The Libyan dictator, Gaddafi, contributed funds for the construction of mosques in Yugoslavia. Young Bosnian Muslims completed their theological education in Arab countries. In July 1991, President Izetbegovic toured Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Ankara subsequently opened an embassy in Sarajevo. The close and centuries-old ties with Albania played a decisive role in the recent Kosovo crisis. However, the upheaval in Yugoslavia failed to produce a powerful alliance between Islamic states and the Muslim inhabitants of Bosnia or Kosovo. During the war, Bosnia was only able to reap very moderate benefits in the form of weapons and volunteers from Muslim countries. In addition to Bosnia, Turkey also established diplomatic relations with Macedonia. Since the Muslims in Bosnia spoke a different language from those in Kosovo, there had never been much contact between these two groups. This situation remained unchanged. Even as recently as the past decade, developments in both areas proceeded quite independently of one another. During and after the wars, the fate of these two countries was almost entirely decided by the US and the European powers.¹⁶³

Chapter 3

Dutch policy on the Balkans and Yugoslavia

“Greater Serbia! Why not? A more deserving people you could not imagine. A vital and productive country inhabited by sturdy, lively and tough people. A land so rich in natural sources of life that even if the present population were to double, there would still be space and food aplenty.

Throughout the centuries, inch by inch, the Serbs have shed their blood to regain that land. They were subsequently placed in bondage by foreigners, and dishonoured. Yes, they have seen that land abused by indolent Asians.

Greater Serbia!

No desire for expansion prompted by monarchs hungry for new lands. No kings with a Napoleonic lust to expand their demesne. After all, Serbia is ultra democratic. Both the Crown and the Government must comply with the will of the people.”¹⁶⁵

1. Prior to 1800

Following the presentation of a historical sketch of image-forming in Europe as a whole, separate consideration will now be devoted to the Netherlands. With the exception of the first half of the 17th century, the Netherlands had far less to do with developments in the Balkans than the countries referred to in the second chapter of this essay. In the period prior to 1800, most of the literature on this region that was printed and read in the Netherlands was of foreign origin. Even after this time, translated books continued to play a major role. In view of this, it is hardly surprising that the image of the Balkans in literary works produced by Dutch authors¹⁶⁵ largely followed the European pattern. Nor did the Dutch stand out from the rest in terms of a markedly greater distancing or disinterest. Since the start of the 16th century, the Dutch have commented continually (and usually favourably) on the culture of the inhabitants of South-East Europe. This historic continuity over a period of almost five centuries, which is remarkable in itself, merits further consideration.

At the start of the Early Modern Period, the reputation of the Turks was as bad in the Northern and Southern regions of the Netherlands as anywhere else in Christian Europe.¹⁶⁶ But here, the usual cries of opposition were equally absent. In 1529, when the Turks were at the gates of Vienna, Erasmus felt compelled to comment. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he felt that the Turks' success did not stem from their limitless courage and savagery, nor was it a result of mutual antagonisms among the Orthodox peoples of the Balkans. Instead, Erasmus attributed the triumph of Islam to the sins of 'all' Christians.¹⁶⁷ The European humanists had great respect for the Byzantine scholars and for the Orthodox faith, with which they shared a great love for the fathers of the early Christian church. This reduced the medieval enmity for the 'heretical' Greeks. In the Netherlands, from then on, there was considerable sympathy for the Orthodox Christians in South-East Europe.

This in no way precluded an appreciation of the Turks. An early example of this was the aristocrat Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522-1592), from the south of the Netherlands, who travelled through the Balkans to Constantinople. Once there, he negotiated with the Ottoman court on behalf of the Habsburg emperor. He published letters about his journeys, in which he compared the bad traits of Christians with the good characteristics of the Turks. Busbecq discovered important ancient

inscriptions and studied the Turkish language. He also described a wedding and a *caravanserai* in Serbia. Besides bringing back tulip bulbs to the West, his company also introduced the lilac and the chestnut. They were in contact with Clusius, the founder of the botanical gardens at Leiden, who was the first to produce a scientific description of the tulip.¹⁶⁸ De Busbecq's interest in the fate of the Orthodox Christians later led to him being described as the first of the philhellènes.¹⁶⁹ Religious and scholarly interest in the area was to blossom still further during the Netherlands' Golden Age. While this, of course, generated more knowledge, better insights and even appreciation, at the same time the clichéd images continued to exist.

The Dutch rebels who opposed Philip II were greatly encouraged by the Turkish actions against Spain in the Mediterranean area. The slogan of the 'Gueux' or 'Beggars' was 'Better a Turk than a Papist!', and Dutch Calvinists wore silver crescent moons as jewellery. Neither, however, indicated that these groups had any real sympathy for the Turks. On the contrary, the whole point was to suggest that the regime of the Spanish king was even worse than that of the Sultan. The same unflattering comparison was made with the French foe in the 17th century, with the British in the 18th century (during the fourth English War) and with the German occupier in 1940-45. In the Netherlands and in the Balkans, the Rebellion focused attention on the kinship between the oppression of Protestants by the King of Spain and of Orthodox Christians by the Ottoman Sultan. This was why Prince Maurits of Orange, during the 'Twelve Years' Truce' (when, as commander of the State army, there was apparently little for him to do), was approached several times by Orthodox clerics and dubious adventurers from those parts. They wanted his support in their intrigues and struggles against the Turks. Although the Protestant Republic hadn't quite shed the last vestiges of the crusader mentality, the stadholder (always highly circumspect when it came to war and matters of state) did not comply with these requests. Because of the growing importance of trade with the Levant, the Dutch republic was eager to establish normal diplomatic relations with the Ottoman empire.¹⁷⁰

Nevertheless, commerce was not the only motivation for seeking such contacts. Other stimuli were studies of Ancient Greece or the collection of antiquities. The first Western history of the Byzantine Empire was written in 1652, by Jacob van Oort, an amateur historian from Zaltbommel. The early relationships with Istanbul were not strictly economic in nature, since Dutch and British Calvinists saw in the Orthodox church a potential ally against the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Cornelis Haga, a lawyer from Schiedam, was the first Dutch ambassador to the 'sublime Porte'. In one particular matter, he received great support from Cyril Lucaris, the Patriarch of Alexandria, who usually resided in Constantinople. This concerned the refutation of the rumour that Prince Maurits was assembling a great fleet with which to drive the Turks from the Peloponnese. Lucaris, who had studied in Italy, was closely associated with the Orthodox church's efforts to counteract the increasing influence of the Pope and the Jesuits. In the disputed areas (Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine and Transsylvania), the approach adopted by the Orthodox church was to seek closer ties with local Lutherans and Calvinists. Lucaris and his supporters among the Greek clergy therefore tended to look for doctrinal similarities between Orthodoxy and Protestantism. They also emphasized the common differences of both faiths with Catholicism. Lucaris also hoped that contacts with the British and the Dutch would improve the level of knowledge within the Orthodox clergy. He aimed to make the leadership of his church better able to resist Catholic influences in the court of the Sultan, primarily in the form of the French and Austrian ambassadors.

At Haga's request, various theological books, including works by Calvin and Melancthon, were purchased in the Netherlands. The ambassador presented these books to Lucaris. Revius, a Dutch poet and theologian, sent Lucaris a Greek translation of the Dutch Calvinistic creed and the Heidelberg Catechism (published by Elzevier). For his part, Lucaris began to correspond with Dutch theologians such as David le Leu de Wilhelm and Johan Uytenbogaert, the leader of the Remonstrant Church. In this correspondence, Lucaris expressed his sympathy for Protestantism. These contacts assumed great political significance in 1620, when Lucaris was elevated to the position of Patriarch of Constantinople, thereby becoming the leader of all Orthodox Christians. Together with the British ambassador and Antoine Leger (chaplain to the Dutch embassy), Haga now attempted to develop a programme that he

hoped would contribute to the Protestantization of the Orthodox church. A Modern Greek translation of the New Testament was printed in Geneva, at the expense of the Dutch parliament. In an attempt to further strengthen ties with the Protestants, Lucaris wrote a rather unorthodox creed that was also published in Geneva, in Latin. These documents caused a great commotion within his extremely traditional church. The Catholic diplomats and clergy in Constantinople, as well as those Orthodox bishops with closer ties to Rome, seized the opportunity and began plotting various intrigues against Lucaris. The Patriarch was twice deposed, exiled and (with financial support from Haga) subsequently reinstated. The Sultan ordered his arrest in 1638, however, and Lucaris was subsequently strangled by his jailors.¹⁷²

The premature demise of 'the Calvinist Patriarch' coincided with Haga's departure from Constantinople. Nevertheless, the struggle between Catholics and Protestants for the favours of the Eastern Church was continued for a time by the *Congregatio de propaganda fide* in Rome and by the University of Leiden. In the 1640s, prominent Orthodox clergy and students of Lucaris studied theology at Leiden. They translated important Calvinist writings into Greek, and their expenses were partly reimbursed by the Dutch parliament.¹⁷³ Modern research has shown that Dutch and British Protestants had got rather carried away concerning the chances of an alliance with Orthodoxy. For a time, the Greek Church saw Calvinist Europe as a very interesting political option that had to be explored. However, the ties with Rome were never broken. The writings of clergy residing in Leiden reveal that, despite their public professions of solidarity with Calvinism, they continued to cling to the doctrine of their own church. These lively contacts with western Christendom were, however, not an isolated phenomenon in the history of Orthodoxy. In fact, the Eastern church has been a much less introverted institution than is often thought in the West.

In Leiden, the Eastern clergymen were also able to assist Golius, the renowned orientalist, in his studies of oriental languages. Haga had supplied Erpenius, Golius's predecessor, with model letters and manuscripts. Golius himself resided at Haga's embassy for two years. In addition to writing a Turkish-Latin dictionary, he also introduced the study of Turkish at the University of Leiden. Levinus Warner, one of Golius's students, succeeded Haga as the ambassador in Istanbul. He proved to be more successful as a scholar than as a diplomat. Nor, indeed, did any subsequent ambassadors from the Netherlands measure up to Haga in terms of status and influence. The study of Turkish at the University of Leiden was not maintained at the level set by Golius. Haga had suggested that a course of study in the languages and geography of the Near East be established for young Dutch people. He felt that this would benefit trade and diplomacy in the Islamic regions. However, this suggestion was never taken up by the Dutch Parliament or the Directorate of Levantine Trade. Such courses were set up in Paris and Vienna, where the study of orientalistics reached greater heights and achieved greater continuity than in Leiden.¹⁷⁴

In the Netherlands, there was a gradual improvement in the public understanding of Balkan geography. Austria's wars against the Sultan were followed with interest. The Dutch wrote panegyrics about the exploits of Eugenius of Savoy in which Belgrade was even described as a city 'without equal in Europe'¹⁷⁵. Yet the traditional, negative image of all things Turkish persevered in the Netherlands. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the characteristics attributed to Turks were generally more bad than good. Jan Luyken, who had never visited any part of the Ottoman empire, made splendid pictures of Turkish atrocities such as the impaling or crushing of condemned prisoners. Cornelis Calkoen, the Dutch ambassador to the Sultan's court in the second quarter of the 18th century, took a different approach. He collected the work of the French artist Jean Baptiste Vanmour, who resided in Istanbul. These paintings gave an accurate picture of life in the capital of the Ottoman empire.¹⁷⁶

Turkish influences can also be seen in Dutch prints and paintings, ceramics, clothing and architecture. However, as the Ottoman threat declined in the course of the 18th century, other countries became much more receptive for 'turquiserie'. Following the publication of *Mille et une nuits* by Antoine Galland in Paris, the image of the Turks became increasingly shaped by fantasies about harems. Such lusty imagery did not appeal to the Dutch. The ancient religious objections to Islam continued to hold sway. The collections and lotteries that were regularly held to buy the freedom of Dutch people held in

slavery in North Africa only served to exacerbate these views.¹⁷⁷ A less dismissive view was taken by the Amsterdam aristocrat, Joan Raye van Breukelerweert, in letters describing his stay in the Ottoman and Habsburg empires from 1764 to 1769. He even asserted that he had personally visited the Sultan's harem, however unlikely this may have been. Remarkably, he described the Serbs that he met as carefree 'noble savages'. Whenever he charitably threw money into their hovels, the coins were flung back out again.¹⁷⁸

There was one individual, however, who flew in the face of prevailing opinion towards the end of the 18th century. This was the independent-minded physician Pieter van Woensel, who published a great deal of material about his stay in Ottoman and Russian regions. He thought that the outcry in the Netherlands about Muslim slave-keepers was extremely hypocritical, given that the Dutch were major contributors to the international slave trade. Furthermore, he asserted that slavery in the Ottoman empire was considerably less harsh than his countrymen imagined. The atrocities committed by the Turks were greatly exaggerated. The government of Turkish regions was nowhere near as despotic as the government of Russia. Despite the dismissive stories about polygamy, the Turks were also much more chaste and virtuous than the Dutch thought. Although the Koran permitted Muslims four wives, this was a luxury that most Turks could not afford.¹⁷⁹

Ancestry, the absence of modern civilization and the fate of the Greeks were recurring themes in travel literature published and read by the Dutch after 1500. Such literature also repeatedly mentions the fierce Maniots on the Peloponnese, who were reputedly descended from the ancient Spartans and had never been fully subjugated by the Turks. It is known that the De Hochepeid family, who for many generations served as Dutch consuls in Smyrna (Izmir), sometimes hid Greek rebels who were on the run from the Turkish authorities.¹⁸⁰ In 1741, Calkoen (the Dutch ambassador) and his British colleague provided a Greek archimandrite with letters of recommendation so that he could collect funds in Protestant regions. The funds were to be used to buy the freedom of Greek Christians who had been enslaved after the Turkish-Venetian war. Then also, Western sympathizers continued to assert that the Orthodox faith had more in common with Protestantism than with Catholicism.¹⁸¹ Half a century later, Van Woensel stated that any resemblance between his Greek contemporaries and their renowned classical ancestors was limited to their appearance only. Although the prevailing view was that their cultural and intellectual degeneration resulted from the Turkish yoke, Van Woensel attributed it instead to the dim-witted, superstitious Orthodox clergy.

2. The 19th century

As mentioned in Chapter II, Western Europe's appreciation of the Turks and its lack of interest in the rebellious Balkan peoples was initially closely associated with the enormous increase in Russophobia during the first half of the 19th century. During this period, however, there was hardly any anti-Russian sentiment at all in the Netherlands. The Dutch kingdom, which had been established in 1814-15, was very dependent on the support of the Great Powers, of which Russia was a prominent member. The dynastic link of the Dutch House of Orange and the Romanovs, created by the marriage of the Crown Prince to Anna Pavlovna, appeared to be an important guarantee for the continued existence of the new state. In addition, the Dutch and the Greeks had enjoyed continuous bilateral relations since 1600, and Amsterdam has had a small Greek community since the 18th century. One of the intellectual pioneers of the Greek national revival, Adamantios Korais, had had numerous contacts with Dutch people in Smyrna. In 1771, he travelled to Amsterdam, where his Dutch friends instructed him in the concepts of the Enlightenment. Seven years later he departed for Paris, but he continued to correspond with various Dutch acquaintances. At first glance it would appear that there was little to prevent the development of a powerful philhellenic movement in the Netherlands during the early years of the 19th century.

Nevertheless, unlike Germany and Britain, no movement of note came into being. A few leading liberals and clergymen wrote pro-Greek poetry and brochures. There was a Greek Committee that met from time to time, and which managed to collect 46,000 guilders. Gijsbert Karel van

Hogendorp allowed his name to be used by the committee, although that was the limit of his involvement. In 1825, the siege of Missolonghi and the death of Byron led people in the southern part of the Netherlands to suggest that a 'Liberal legion' be set up, but nothing came of this. A small number of Dutch people participated in the conflict as individual volunteers, and at least three of them died there. Three Dutch people were later decorated by the first Greek king, for their services to the Greek cause. At home, the Dutch philhellenes had emphasized that the Greeks were our 'Christian brothers'. They also, quite naturally, drew parallels between the Greeks' struggle for freedom with the Dutch rebellion against Spain.

This tactic did nothing to silence their opponents, however. Willem Bilderdijk opposed those liberals who extolled the Greeks as heroes. In his opinion these compatriots collaborated with 'filthy thieves' who were 'the foul spawn of a wicked race of slaves'. His pupil, Isaïc Da Costa, entertained more moderate views. Nevertheless, he had little sympathy for the 'Jacobite' mentality of Greeks who 'fleece their friends and helpers, sending them home without a penny'. In 1826, Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (another of Bilderdijk's followers) published 'Bedenkingen tegen de Oproeping tot ondersteuning der Grieken' (Objections to the call to support the Greeks). In this publication he asserted (four years before Fallmerayer¹⁸²) that the intermingling of races down through the centuries meant that the contemporary Greeks could not be seen as the descendants of the Ancient Greeks. Their faith had become so watered down that it could no longer be described as Christian. The Turks were more civilized than the Greeks. 'Mohammedanism' had been a blessing to humanity, and there was no threat to Christianity under Ottoman rule. Nevertheless, Groen felt that a reasonable solution should be found for the conflict between Greeks and Turks. He took the view that this was a job for governments rather than private individuals. In this he was pinning his hopes on Russia, and many of his fellow countrymen felt the same way.

The Dutch government was shocked by the actions of the philhellenes. The ministers of Justice and of the Interior advised the king to inform the Sultan that decrees had been passed to prevent the funds that had been collected from ever reaching the Greeks, but these measures were largely ineffective. Dutch citizens were warned that they would be stripped of their citizenship if they took up arms in Greece. For the first time since the days of Haga, a top diplomat was dispatched to Constantinople in the person of Baron Van Zuylen van Nijevelt. Although Van Zuylen did indeed contribute to the search for a solution to the Greek crisis, he had already left Constantinople when the Russian troops approached the city in 1829. Jules Polignac, the French foreign minister, then proposed to the court of St Petersburg a radical solution to the Eastern Question. Russia would have the Danube princedoms, Austria would take Serbia, Belgium would be given to France, the Netherlands would be given to Prussia and the southern portion of the Balkan peninsula would be given to king William I of Orange. None of this came to pass, but for some time thereafter those in international diplomatic circles seriously considered prince Frederick (the second son of William I) as a possible king for an independent Greece. Frederick was far from disappointed when Otto, the seventeen-year-old son of the extremely philhellenic king of Bavaria, was chosen instead.¹⁸³

As a result of the philhellenic movement, the idea of the Balkans gradually took root in the Netherlands. The imagination was stimulated by the fierce mountain peoples of that region. This period of the Romance Movement saw the publication of books such as *Abdul-Ali of De vluchteling in het gebergte van den Balkan* (Abdul-Ali or the fugitive in the Balkan mountains) by J.E. de Witte van Heemstede, which was published in 1829. N.G. van Kampen, who published several books in and around 1837, was probably the first Dutch author to adopt a more academic approach to the ethnic and religious diversity of South-East Europe. He had been one of the most ardent philhellenes. Later, he became a lecturer in German at Leiden University, and Professor of Dutch Literature at the Amsterdam Athenaeum. One of many critics, Van Kampen was the only Dutchman who sought to counter Fallmerayer's views with linguistic arguments. Yet his views about the Greeks were no longer entirely favourable. 'Modern-day Greeks still have many attributes in common with their renowned ancestors, yet the good ones have been corrupted and the bad ones are given greater emphasis.'¹⁸⁴

After an intensive study of recent western literature on the subject, Van Kampen was a great deal more positive about the other Balkan peoples. He felt that, while underdeveloped, the Bulgarians were also 'soft-natured and applied themselves to agriculture, cattle-rearing and commerce'. The majority of the Bosnians were Muslim, but were 'nothing like Turks'. They were monogamous and had 'no unmanly vices; they are seldom low and open to bribery, nor are they cowardly, yet in the face of the enemy they are often barbaric.' The Montenegrins were among 'the most courageous of mountain peoples'. Although they had never been subjugated by the Turks, they were 'averse to European civilization'. Their lives consisted of 'battle and thievery [...], while the people *swear* on the Bible and even *kiss* it, they never read it'. While Albanians in Greece had been pacified 'by a milder climate and less desolate mountains', the tribal leaders in Albania were locked into a state of eternal warfare. The population of that country was permanently prepared for battle, and was satisfied with an extremely frugal life. A widespread rebellion in Albania could pose a considerable danger to Turkey.¹⁸⁵

In imitation of Lamartine, Van Kampen saw the Serbian nation as 'most remarkable', because '*its history must be sung, not written*'. Serbian was the 'purest and most beautiful Slavonian dialect'. Their recently collected and published folksongs were quite exquisite. They contain 'songs full of grace, naivety and deeply moving poetry'. Many of these poems make reference to the *vila* and other evil spirits of nature that make people's lives miserable. This reflects the 'dark' superstition of the Serbs. However, the women mainly sang charming and virtuous love songs. The lengthy heroic songs were performed by the men. In the oldest of these, which dates back to the 14th century, the main character is Marco Kraljewitsch (Prince Marko), the 'serbian Hercules'. The most recent recounted the deeds of Black George, the leader of the Serbian revolt of 1804. Van Kampen praised the Serbs' struggle for independence, describing them as patriarchal and freedom-loving. He saw their agricultural community as extremely egalitarian and receptive to education and modernization.¹⁸⁶

Van Kampen's work marks the transition to modern Dutch literature on the Balkans and Yugoslavia. In the next one hundred and fifty years, the positive image would achieve greater dominance than it had ever done in centuries past. For the time being, however, little of substance was written about the region. The Crimean War produced an anti-Russian mood among Dutch liberals and their leader, prime minister Johan Rudolf Thorbecke. They had not become friends of the Turks, but they did support British and French policy. In his dissertation on the Eastern Question (Utrecht, 1869), August von Daehne van Varick also adopted an anti-Russian standpoint. Europe had to oppose that country's expansion and keep the Turkish empire intact.¹⁸⁷ The Protestant Anti-revolutionary Party and its leader, Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer, remained loyal to Russia. The very Protestant *Tijdgeest* praised the noble strength of character of Czar Nicholas I. The lack of similar qualities in the Sultan was ascribed to his 'premature life in the harem'.¹⁸⁸

Unlike Britain, in the Netherlands, the 'Eastern crisis' of the 1870s did not result in an explosion of emotions. The Netherlands remained as neutral as possible in the conflict. In 1877, the government only expressed official concern in Istanbul about atrocities being carried out by irregular Turkish troops.¹⁸⁹ The Dutch government was very concerned about rumours that the Great Powers planned to ask the Netherlands and Belgium to base troops in certain parts of the Turkish Balkans. They undertook diplomatic action to prevent such an invitation from being offered.¹⁹⁰ One outsider in terms of Dutch neutrality was Jeanne Merkus, the extremely wealthy daughter of Pieter Merkus, former Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies. She travelled to Bosnia where she used her wealth to purchase Krupp munitions for the rebels. Unaided, she attempted to blow up Turkish reinforcements in Herzegovina using dynamite. She also participated in the assault on Trebinje. She was captured by the Austrians, but following her liberation in 1876 she was honoured in Belgrade as a Serbian Joan of Arc. When she died in Utrecht in 1897, she was penniless and her family refused to pay the funeral expenses.¹⁹¹

The only book to be published on the conflict in the Balkans was *In den Kruiddamp* (In the gun smoke; 1880) the first novel to be translated directly from Russian into Dutch. In the book, Karazin, its second-rate author, describes the actions of Russian volunteers in Serbia in 1876. He portrayed the Serbs as extremely superstitious and unheroic.¹⁹² (They did indeed lose this war against Turkey, but

their defeat was partly due to the amateurism of the Russian detachment.) This work was translated by Hendrick Wolfgang van der Mey, the pioneer of Dutch Slavonic Studies.¹⁹³ Five years later Van der Mey restored the Serbs' positive image in a long article about Serbian folk poetry, which was published in the magazine *Nederland*. He admired this epic oral poetic art because he felt that it represented the true synthesis of realism and idealism, something that was sadly lacking in the anaemic Western literature of his day.¹⁹⁴

One year after that, he wrote an even longer and entirely uncritical article about Montenegro, which was published in *De Gids*. Van der Mey felt that 'Europe was better acquainted with the Zulus and the inhabitants of the Congo than it was with this fascinating mountain people' in 'the unknown interior of European Turkey'. Their 'heroic deeds are at least equal to those attributed to the Ancient Greeks' and their literature is 'the product of a Homeric spirit'. This was followed by a story about the Montenegrin resistance to the Turks, spanning many centuries. The unspeakable atrocities were simply seen as a source of beautiful poetry, and the folk poetry itself was taken to be a faithful and accurate account of the past.¹⁹⁵ Other Dutch commentators repeatedly imitated Van der Mey's example, producing lyrical descriptions of Montenegro.

Pure literary works decorated with impressions from the exotic Balkans were also published in the Netherlands. In 1894, the same year that Anthony Hope unleashed a minor avalanche in western fantasies about Balkan princedoms with *The Prisoner of Zenda*, Louis Couperus published *Majesteit*. This 'royal novel' was about a melancholy crown prince by the name of Othomar, who reigned over the imaginary country of Liparia. The sequel, *Wereldvrede* (World Peace), was published in 1895. Both novels, neither of which are the best of Couperus's works, give rise to reminiscences of the Romanovs, the Habsburgs and the royal families of the Balkans. They could just as well be situated in that area, as in Italy or in the Slavic regions of the Austrian empire.¹⁹⁵

3. The 20th century

Couperus never visited the Balkans. In 1901, the naturalistic novelist and playwright, Marcellus Emants visited Bosnia and Herzegovina. He later published a series of beautifully illustrated articles about the region in *Het Vaderland* (The Fatherland), one of the newspapers of The Hague. Emants was an accurate observer, but his artistic focus was primarily on the beautiful landscape, the Eastern characteristics of the population and their primitive lifestyle. While playing the tourist, Emants was not entirely unaware of the social and political tensions within the country. From time to time he found the trip to be rather hazardous and spine-chilling. Nevertheless, he mainly emphasized the geniality with which the Austrian civil servants and gendarmes saw to it that the highly disparate religious groups were able to peacefully coexist. Emants was impressed by Austria's modernization work in Bosnia. However, he regretted the fact that this would swiftly result in the loss of that country's exotic and picturesque nature.¹⁹⁷

The assassination of King Alexander Obrenovic and his wife Draga by Serbian officers in 1903 was a major shock for the general public throughout Europe. However, the only countries to break off diplomatic relations with Serbia as a result of this were the Netherlands and Britain. In 1906, the government of the Netherlands informed Queen Wilhemina that Britain had restored diplomatic relations, as the assassins had been discharged from the army. It was recommended that the Netherlands follow Britain's example.¹⁹⁸ Catherina Alberdingk Thijm (1848-1908), inspired by the death of the royal couple, produced a work of literature. She was the daughter of the renowned Catholic writer and critic, J.A. Alberdingk Thijm, and the sister of the famous Eighties figure, Lodewijk van Deyssel. Catherina wrote a great deal, and had a very broad readership. She had specialized in romantic books about royal figures. Some examples of her work are *Het geheim van den Czaar* [*The Czar's Secret*], *Een vorstelijke doornenkroon* [*A Regal Crown of Thorns*], *Een Koninklijke misdaad* [*A Royal Crime*], etc. At the start of *Koningsliefde* (*Het drama in Serbia*) [*Royal Devotion (The Tragedy in Serbia)*] the writer stated that she had spent many years travelling in Eastern Europe. She claimed that she had friends there who 'because of their position, had been able to provide her with unprecedented details concerning the relationships

at the Serbian court.¹⁹⁹ Indeed although her book has all the appeal of an up-market pulp novel, it does provide the reader with an impression of the inner lives of Alexander and Draga, as well as the passionate conflicts between Alexander's parents, King Milan and Queen Nathalie. In addition, as promised on the cover, the book is indeed 'illustrated with photographs'. One shows *Queen Draga's boudoir after the assassination* or *Queen Draga's bedroom; on the table lies the boa that she put on as she fled*. However, the book reveals very little of substance about Serbia itself. The following book from Ms Alberdingk Thijm's pen bore the title *Den harem ontvlucht: een Turksch verhaal uit onze dagen* (*Escape from the harem: a tale of modern-day Turkey*).

It was not by chance that people were so fascinated with Balkan royalty. In 1902, *De Balkan-keizerin* [*The Balkan Empress*] was translated and used as the basis for a stage play. This historical drama is set in the late 15th century, during the Turkish expansion into the Balkans. Using rather stilted verse, it deals with resistance, collaboration and treason within the medieval Zeta or Montenegro. The work was written by the reigning monarch of that country, Prince Nikita Petrovic Njegos. According to a contemporary article in the Dutch newspaper *NRC*, Nikita I was 'not only Russia's only friend and the only popular monarch of Slav blood, but also a man of letters and a journalist, who is currently just as skilled with a pen as he was formerly with a sword.'²⁰⁰

Just before the outbreak of the First Balkan War, Henri van der Mandere visited that small mountainous country. He wrote an account of his travels in what had now become a kingdom. According to the writer, the Montenegrins still displayed all the virtues and vices of the peoples described in the songs of Homer. The men's militant behaviour, their bandit-like appearance and their aversion to everyday work were closely associated with this people's biblical simplicity. Bishop Petar II (Petar Petrovic Njegos), who became the country's ruler in 1830, outlawed banditry and the decapitation of enemies, practices that had hitherto been quite common. He also initiated the construction of a modern state. Petar II had been an even greater poet than Nikita, the present king. However, *The Mountain Wreath*, the long epic poem that he produced in 1847, showed that the barbaric and noble character of the people had remained virtually unchanged. Nevertheless, their vices had been moderated and there was even a competent and free educational system. Yet women still had an extremely subservient role and pursuit of vendettas continued virtually unabated. Autocracy was therefore the best form of government for this essentially mountain-dwelling people. One advantage was that direct contacts between the king and his subjects were not obstructed by the red tape of a professional bureaucracy. Van der Mandere saw his visit to Montenegro as a dream.²⁰¹ This derived from his view of Montenegrins as an un-European people, whose folk poetry was accompanied by a 'fierce romanticism without the frills' and whose 'child-like, kindly naturalness' was coupled with 'unequaled pride and self-assurance'.

Dutch authors who published details of their first-hand experience of the bloody Balkan wars were somewhat more critical. Responding to a request for help from the Montenegrin Red Cross, H. Koppeschaar travelled to the region in 1912. There he worked as a surgeon, either at the front or at improvised hospitals in nearby towns. He was shocked by the unlimited power exercised by the sovereign. Without the personal intervention of King Nikita it was impossible to do anything. Military discipline was unknown, as was martial law. There was no administration, nor was there medical care of any kind. Everywhere people lived in filth and utter poverty, and the food was awful. The Montenegrins were suspicious and idle. Blood feuds made it impossible to lead anything resembling a normal life. What little military success they were able to achieve was entirely due to the support of the Russian monarchy, which meant that the army was at least well dressed and well equipped. They were by no means squeamish about pain, and most operations could be carried out using little or no anaesthesia. The women were just as valiant as the men. Montenegrins never complained about their fate. With better leadership they could have achieved much greater prosperity. They might even have turned their beautiful and fertile land into a version of Tyrol or Switzerland.

During the Second Balkan War, Koppeschaar served in Serbia, which he considered to be well on the way to becoming a western country. It compared favourably to Montenegro in every respect. Belgrade was an entirely modern city. The army was well organized. The Serbs were industrious farmers

and manufacturers. He developed a deep respect 'for the inner strength that emanates from this people'. He felt that because of 'its high level of development, its courage and viability it should play a leading role' in South-East Europe. For this reason, Koppeschaar heartily approved of their aspiration to found a Greater Serbia. Koppeschaar had nothing but contempt for the Bulgarians. Describing them as the 'ex-Prussians of the Balkans' and 'accomplices of the Austrians', they had made a failed attempt to establish a sort of new Byzantine empire.²⁰²

No Dutchman was more volubly enthusiastic about Serbia and its aspirations to create a Greater Serbia than the journalist Gosinus de Voogt. He visited the country in 1913, together with an industrialist from Amsterdam, to scout around for potential trading opportunities for the Netherlands.²⁰³ Thanks to the efforts of physicians like Koppeschaar, the Netherlands enjoyed an excellent reputation in Serbia. This was an opportunity that had to be seized with both hands. The Serbs were 'a good race', they were honest and candid, yet they were 'better smoking companions than wartime allies'. He disregarded the internal political situation, focusing instead on the Serbs' indomitable urge to 'unify the race', which he felt was unstoppable. 'Whenever they are driven out of Serbia, the Serbs eventually return just as surely as night follows day [...] Serbs may sometimes bend, but they can never be broken'. He provided a detailed summary of the country's economy, and reported that the 'Hungarian' plums on sale in Dutch delicatessens actually came from Serbia. His conclusion (printed in bold typeface) was: 'serbia will never perish while there is a good corn and plum harvest.'²⁰⁴

Jan Fabius was a Dutch artillery officer who worked as a journalist on the Bulgarian front during the First Balkan War. He was less unequivocally pro-Serbian. He described the Bulgarians as a young, energetic and courageous people with a great future. However, he found their rigorous military censorship intensely irritating. Fabius discovered that there was a mutual hatred between Bulgarians and Serbs. Furthermore, the Bulgarians looked down on the Serbs, who they considered to be less civilized than themselves. However, he considered the Serbs to be more candid and jovial, and altogether more pleasant company. In December 1912, Fabius travelled to northern Albania, where the Montenegrins had laid siege to the town of Skutari (Shkodër). He rapidly reached the same conclusions about this people as Koppeschaar, who he met while he was there. As a military man, Fabius certainly respected these 'fierce chaps in their fantastic uniforms' who, despite the anarchic state of the army, were nevertheless well able to use modern canon and a telegraph.²⁰⁵

These Dutchmen did not express much concern about the crimes and ethnic cleansing that took place during these wars. Fabius's reports have a tough, flippant tone. It may well be that this was what his readers expected of him.²⁰⁶ Nevertheless, in 1913, the Dutch government dispatched the warship *Gelderland* to Istanbul, in order to guarantee the safety of its embassy staff. The Great Powers found it extremely difficult to get a grip on the conflicts that were constantly erupting between the Balkan countries. At the same time, they themselves had to reconcile all manner of conflicting mutual interests. In 1913, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sazonov, proposed to give Queen Wilhelmina the casting vote in the matter of the dispute between Romania and Bulgaria, should it prove necessary. In the end it did not come to that, but the Netherlands was asked to intervene in Albania.²⁰⁷

That country's independence was recognized by the Great Powers in December 1912. An international force of naval and army units assembled by Great Britain, France, Italy, Austria, Russia and Germany compelled Serbia, Montenegro and Greece to relinquish the Albanian territory that they had conquered. The Great Powers also appointed a six-member International Monitoring Committee. This resulted in the selection of a captain in the German army, Wilhelm, Prinz zu Wied, as the future *mbret* (monarch) of Albania. He was a blood relative of the German Kaiser, of Queen Wilhelmina and the queen of Romania. The International Monitoring Committee had asked the Netherlands to take control of the establishment of a native gendarmerie, the purpose of which was to bring law and order to the chaos that was Albania. As a result, fourteen Dutch officers were sent to Albania at the end of 1913 and the beginning of 1914. Their leader was a former liberal member of parliament, Lodewijk Thomson. The team included Jan Fabius. Abraham Kuyper apparently warned the queen that this affair would end in tears.²⁰⁸ De Voogt was also opposed to it. He was appalled that Serbia's access to the

Adriatic Sea should be blocked by an independent Albania. Why was it so important that a new gendarmerie be established to tame this backwater country of highwaymen and kleptomaniacs? ‘Our Dutch officers have better things to do!’²⁰⁹

The new monarch did indeed prove to be incapable of dealing with the court intrigues of the Albanian elite and of foreigners. Various groups of rebels roamed the countryside, sometimes with support from Italians, while Greeks and Montenegrins continued to make trouble in the border areas. Furthermore, the members of the International Monitoring Committee were often unable to agree with one another. The Dutch officers became involved in skirmishes in various regions of Albania during which some of their Albanian gendarmes deserted and joined the enemy. It cannot be said that the Dutch were lacking in terms of courage. Fabius described how, under enemy fire, he commanded his battery of field artillery while calmly sipping from a glass of cold champagne. Thomson was killed by an Italian sniper and one of the other officers was wounded. Their adventure, which had involved more bravura, romance and exoticism than many a Balkan novel or operetta, was brought to a sudden end by the outbreak of the First World War.

The Dutch were proud of their officers. Two statues were erected in memory of Lodewijk Thomson. In The Hague, an avenue and a square were named after him. Fabius later wrote that their deeds had generated so much respect in international circles that this contributed to the maintenance of Dutch neutrality during the First World War. However doubtful this claim may be, it is a fact that Edith Durham accorded the Dutch officers great respect in her book about ‘plots and counterplots’ in the Balkans.²¹⁰ Fabius had first met her in Montenegro, and they encountered one another again in Albania. In addition to an admiration for the work that she did in field hospitals, he respected her detailed knowledge of the complex web of relations in the Balkans. However, he did not share her admiration for the Albanians. He considered them to be cunning and thirsty for knowledge, with a type of crafty-merchant mentality, but also entirely untrustworthy. With the exception of the Kossovars among them, at decisive moments they generally refused to fight. Their cowardice also revealed itself in the *vendetta*, which usually involved assassination. Hired assassins were two-a-penny. It was only by chance that Fabius himself avoided an ambush that had been prepared for him.

In 1915, a surgeon by the name of Van Tienhoven wrote a book about his experiences in Serbia in 1914, during the First World War. He published photographs of serious war crimes committed by the Austrians at the start of the war against the Serbian civilian population. Another ‘modern means of propaganda produced by the Central European Culture’ were their explosive bullets, which caused ghastly wounds. Van Tienhoven admitted that he had developed a great fondness for the Serbs. They were anything but the ‘people of savages and murderers’ that the Austrian press made them out to be. They were ‘simple farmers who just wanted to be left in peace’. There were no large landowners in Serbia. The farmers farmed their own land and were usually illiterate. They lived in patriarchal families, and were both brave and patriotic. They were usually big men with few needs, who only used strong drink in moderation. This is why their militias were able to manage with very light equipment in contrast to the heavily loaded Austrians. They were also tougher. Among Van Tienhoven’s patients, the Serbs had a much higher survival rate than the Austrians. ‘It may sound odd, but it is much easier to operate on Serbs.’ The Serbian elite was highly civilized, and their physicians made an excellent impression. On the other hand, the middle-class, the lower-ranking officers and the civil servants were often corrupt schemers who cow-towed to their superiors and walked all over their inferiors. Yet, all things considered, the Serbs were nevertheless an ‘extremely pleasant people’ with an ancient culture. Their folk songs ‘sung in the evening, to the accompaniment of a single-stringed musical instrument resonate [...] to the depths of one’s soul.’²¹¹

In 1914, Woislav Petrovic, an attaché at the Serbian embassy in London, translated an extensive anthology of Serbian folk poetry into English. In 1915, this collection was also published in Dutch.²¹² In the years between the wars, Dutch people were inclined to be somewhat pro-Serbian. This is exemplified by Felix Rutten’s highly detailed and lyrically adorned travel story about Yugoslavia, which was published in 1937. This account describes 19th century Serbia as ‘the predominant power in the Balkans’. There ‘burns the holy flame that ignites the hope of other Slavic peoples’. At the end of the

world war, this young country was 'bursting with resilience, and ready to assume the leadership' of the new Yugoslavia. Following the death of 'the genial king' Alexander in 1934, the regency fell to Prince Paul, 'the astute thinker' who was also 'highly artistic' and was adored by his subjects. King Petar, who was still under age, was 'used to the most exacting discipline' and was 'tutored by eight professors'. In this modern Serbia 'everything is different. Here a different civilization was carving a notch in the Turk-like Muslim area.' The Serbs were 'a people who had achieved some prosperity, but who were not afraid of austerity and who always had something of the soldier about them.'²¹³

Nevertheless, Van Rutten actually preferred the more exotic Bosnia. Rather trifling Balkan romance also featured in the stories published by the art critic, J.B. de La Faille, about simple and superstitious people in Yugoslavia. The same was true of the perceptions of G. Monnick, who toured wild and vendetta-ridden Montenegro and Albania alone, equipped with nothing more than a bicycle and a small tent.²¹⁴ S.A. Reitsma also expressed a 'great admiration for everything Balkan'. Writing for the magazine *Spoor en Trammwegen* [Track and Tramways], he reported extensively about the narrow gauge trains that he used during his many travels in this region. Reitsma had once written a short study on Jeanne Merkus. He regretted that Serbian folk songs were virtually unknown in the Netherlands while the German public had been familiar with them for many years, thanks to the efforts of Goethe and Jacob Grimm. Nevertheless, he was extremely critical of the nationalism exhibited by Balkan peoples and of the atrocities committed in its name. He acknowledged that the Serbs bore their share of guilt in this respect. While tourists were largely unaffected, 'those who travel in the Balkans cannot help but notice the widespread risk of eruption, the almost palpable tensions and the highly charged atmosphere.' With the author's permission, he illustrated the point by quoting extensively from the works of his 'old friend' Edith Durham, who he had visited in London, in 1937.²¹⁵

In his published work, Reitsma repeatedly made reference to the work of A. den Doolaard. This was the literary pseudonym of Cornelis Spoelstra (1901-1994).²¹⁶ While wandering through France in the early 1930s, Den Doolaard's attention was caught by newspaper headlines such as 'Belgrade ... Bombings ... Bulgarian border ... shoot-outs'. As a result, he could no longer resist the call of the Balkans.²¹⁷ He subsequently visited the area at regular intervals, and Yugoslavia eventually became his second home. Den Doolaard had no preference for any given Balkan people. In novels such as *De herberg met het hoefijzer* (1933) [The Inn with the Horseshoe], *De Oriënt Express* (1934) [The Orient Express], *De bruiloft der zeven zigeuners* (1938) [Marriage of the Seven Gypsies] of *Het land achter Gods rug* (1956) [The Country Behind God's Back], which were all set in south Slavic mountain areas, he attempted to portray what he felt was the true nature of the inhabitants of the Balkans. These books reveal to the reader the simplicity, generosity, hospitality, passion, bravery and violence of the southern Slavs. Like many Dutch authors before him, Den Doolaard propagated traditional, clichéd images of the Balkans. He also idealized the mountain dwellers. He didn't get too carried away, however. In his work, his own perceptions and extensive knowledge of the area are always interwoven with an apparently sober, seemingly typically Dutch view of people and events.

While not possessing great literary quality and often lacking in character development, these novels were written with journalistic flair and pace. They appealed to a wide readership and were often reprinted. As a result of his realistic yet sympathetic approach, Den Doolaard made a greater contribution than any other author to the maintenance of a positive image of the Balkans and Yugoslavia in the Netherlands. In his non-fictional work *Het land van Tito* [Tito's Country] (1954), Den Doolaard emphasized the unique character of the southern Slavs. He concedes that, of course, not every individual Yugoslavian possessed these characteristics in equal measure. He was not entirely uncritical of these qualities. There were some very rough edges to their quick-tempered nature, and Den Doolaard did not attempt to gloss over the cruel and bloody aspects of their history. Even in the peaceful round of daily life, he found that they were not always easy to deal with. 'No, I'm not completely blind – they are no saints. Their lethargy and slovenliness and dirty habits are often intensely irritating. You often wonder whether they have any brains at all. In the same way, they must sometimes wonder whether we have any hearts ... they are simply different.'

Den Doolaard was often critical of their inability to organize, of their naive idealism in some respects and of the cult of personality associated with Tito. Nevertheless, he did see some advantages to the irrational tendencies of the Yugoslavs. These included their excessive sense of independence, their tough nonconformism, their amazingly original artistic sense and especially their natural humanism and innate love of their fellow man, which meant that they preferred to give rather than to receive. Since the people were unburdened by Dutch pettiness and small-minded materialism, socialism seemed to have a better future in impoverished Yugoslavia. This was all the more so since the country was governed by Communists like Tito, who were the very embodiment of these unbourgeois tendencies. He was well aware that Yugoslavia was not exactly a parliamentary democracy. Nevertheless, he felt that 'social democracy' in that country was better developed than in the Netherlands or Britain, where 'a bureaucratic semi-dictatorship mitigated by ingrained parliamentary habits' held sway.²¹⁸

Den Doolaard was an influential and authoritative author, but he cannot be held responsible for the positive publicity about the Balkans in the Netherlands between 1950 and 1980. While not totally uncritical, this literature projected a more or less identical and highly optimistic vision of Yugoslavia.²¹⁹ Hans Alma was almost strangled in his sleep by Albanian thieves while staying at a shabby, dilapidated hotel in Novi Pazar. Nevertheless, in 1953, he noted that 'Even if I had started out with the intention of blackening Yugoslavia's name with my writing, I would have been quite unable to do so.'²²⁰ Marinus Schroevers thought that Tito was 'the friendliest dictator in the entire world.' In 1961 he wrote 'In Yugoslavia one can actually believe in the dream that one has found paradise.' Affluent western countries had their 5-day working week, 'but paradise, the poor destitute paradise is there...'²²¹ This image was confirmed by more than fifty guide books (and cook books) published in the Netherlands between 1955 and 1990. Naturally, these devoted little or no attention to Yugoslavia's political and economic problems.²²²

However, even when such matters received extensive coverage, the criticism was circumspect and the tone sympathetic. This was true of the first Dutch scholastic study of post-war Yugoslavia published in 1955 by the Slavist Tom Eekman. He believed that the Slavs' ancient 'collective instincts' were probably at work in contemporary Yugoslavia and could explain the people's support for Tito's socialist experiment. The Communist regime appeared to have found a workable and lasting solution to the nationalities issue. Thus, any assessment of Tito's dictatorship could not be based on western standards alone. Before the Second World War, the parliamentary system that had been adopted from Western Europe had never worked properly in this region. Even now it would be quite unable to unite the diverse peoples of the area.²²³

The left-wing journalist Anton Constandse, although more superficial, adopted the same approach to Yugoslavia in his biography of Tito (1962) and in his book on country, people and culture (1964). In view of the peasants' resistance to the collectivization of agriculture, Constandse found it inadvisable to account for the suitability for a life under Communism in terms of what was frivolously referred to elsewhere as a 'people's character'.²²⁴ Since Yugoslavia contained twelve different nationalities, the construction of such a character was a hopeless task, but 'it should not be forgotten that large areas of Southern Europe (Portugal, Spain, southern Italy, Greece) were quite backward in comparison to Yugoslavia.'²²⁵ Of course, comparisons were more often made with the USSR and other Eastern Bloc countries, which were of course advantageous to Yugoslavia. During the repression of the Prague Spring in 1968, Milo Anstadt had reported from Yugoslavia, Romania and Czechoslovakia. He commented that while rebellious students had become a normal phenomenon in capitalist and Communist countries, it was only in Yugoslavia that the head of state was actually on their side.²²⁶

Western admiration for the Balkans arose from a nostalgic and romantic longing for an idealized past, for a world that was as yet untouched by modern civilization. People felt that such a place still existed, in South-East Europe. However, once it became clear that our dreams of the future could no longer be projected onto the Soviet Union, many 'political pilgrims' headed for Cuba, China and Yugoslavia in search of solutions for major current issues. Yugoslavia's system of worker participation in management in particular seemed to point the way for many wealthier and more highly

developed capitalist societies. In the Netherlands, during the 1960s and 1970s, a great debate arose concerning the further democratization of society. As a result, many Dutch people began to look at Yugoslavia quite differently. Of course the country retained its charm as a poor and backward – thus cheap and exotic - tourist destination. In addition, it began to be seen as a model and an example. This view was not restricted to left-wing intellectuals, it began to be shared by trade unions, politicians and even some captains of industry.²²⁷

In 1965, the Productivity Committee of the Socio-Economic Advisory Council visited Yugoslavia to find out whether the increased productivity of Yugoslavian enterprises was linked to the powers wielded by their workers. The committee, which also included delegates from employers' organizations, concluded that the circumstances in the two countries could not be directly compared. Nevertheless, it felt that the Netherlands should imitate Yugoslavia's greater willingness to implement socio-economic experiments. It was essential that the Netherlands find out more about Tito's socialist system. To this end, a Dutch social scientist would be permanently stationed in Yugoslavia. The Institute of Eastern European Studies and the Industrial Democracy Working Group of the University of Amsterdam were encouraged to intensify their studies of Yugoslavia.²²⁸

However, that country's system of worker participation in management proved to be a very difficult subject to study. The situation differed from one industrial sector or geographical region to the next. It was affected in various ways by legislation, the party apparatus and market mechanisms. Furthermore, the shape of the Yugoslavian political and economic system was constantly shifting. A member of the Institute of East European Studies, the slavacist Marius Broekmeyer, was very enthusiastic about Yugoslavia in the 1960s. According to him South Slavic Communism was moving 'above and beyond a form of economic democracy, to the start of political democracy'. Nevertheless, in his 1968 thesis, Broekmeyer revealed how overly complex the system was and how poorly it still functioned. Worker participation in management was, in fact, totally incompatible with a one-party regime that still exhibited dictatorial tendencies. Reforms in Yugoslavia were sabotaged 'by an elusive, invisible but nevertheless highly influential opponent who was everywhere and nowhere at the same time'.²²⁹ Broekmeyer did not believe that the Yugoslavian model could be successfully transplanted into the Netherlands. Nevertheless, in 1969, he co-authored a book with Igor Cornelissen which compared the situation in Yugoslavia to that in the Netherlands. This was because both authors were convinced that the democratization of companies in both socialist and capitalist countries had become an unstoppable process.²³⁰ At the time, this view was shared by Labour Party politicians such as Van Lier or Dankert, trade union leaders like Boon, Hugenholtz or Kloos and many other Dutch people.²³¹

In 1970, Broekmeyer organized an international symposium on Yugoslavian proletarian self-management in Amsterdam. This was attended by well-known experts on Yugoslavia and prominent Western scholars such as Jan Tinbergen, T.B. Bottomore and Shlomo Avineri. At this meeting, the entrepreneur A. Stikker of AKZO asserted that many western companies were also keen to promote 'participative management'. He professed to having the greatest respect for Yugoslavia, where this concept was first developed.²³² Since 1967, the Dutch trade unions NVV, NKV and CNV had engaged in regular contacts with their Yugoslavian counterparts. Delegations also visited each other's countries. In 1970, a delegation from the Consultative Committee of Netherlands Trade Union Federations travelled to Yugoslavia to study the system of worker participation in management. Eleven of the sixteen delegates who went on this trip were from denominational trade unions. The delegation returned home with the 'distinct impression that Yugoslavia's economic democracy exerted a democratizing effect on social and political relations outside the realm of industry. There is reason to expect that the achievement of worker participation in management in the Netherlands would have a reanimating effect on that country's fossilized political democracy. [...] The trade union movement in the Netherlands will have to make the achievement of worker participation a clear priority.'²²³

Accordingly, the trade union movement must make more frequent trips to Yugoslavia, in order to carry out further studies of the Yugoslavian system. The delegation also emphasized the need for extensive documentation of this system in the Netherlands. The Institute of East European Studies did indeed set up a catalogue of more than 10,000 titles on this very subject. With the support of the ZWO

(the Dutch Organization for Academic Research) the Netherlands Universities Institute for Co-ordination of Research in Social Sciences (SISWO) began a long-term research project. The work was carried out by R.M. Boonzajer Flaes and J.J. Ramondt. In 1974, however, they concluded that, in Yugoslavia, there existed 'a total discrepancy...between the stipulated degree of worker participation and its realization'. There were numerous strikes, particularly in poor companies, and labour conflicts were often brutally suppressed.²³⁴

At the start of the 1970s, Broekmeyer became increasingly convinced that worker participation in management in Yugoslavia simply did not work. His critical stance was not appreciated by the Dutch trade union movement, and he was no longer invited to give lectures. Boonzajer too accused him of cynicism, although in his 1978 dissertation he was forced to conclude that there was no such thing in Yugoslavia as 'genuine worker domination of decision-making'²³⁵ One industrial trade union, the NVV, which was headed by Arie Groenevelt, stayed true to the ideal of worker participation in management for many years. However, at the start of the 1980s, a worsening economic situation in the Netherlands and the desertion of members from its ranks compelled Groenevelt's successor, D. Visser, to switch the union's policy to 'those things that the members believe to be really important.'²³⁶

Times had changed and, in the Netherlands, it was also necessary to change the idealized image of Yugoslavia. On Christmas Day 1973, Slobodan Mitric killed three of his compatriots in Amsterdam. He was sentenced to a term of 18 years in prison. Mitric, alias Karate Bob, was a professional assassin who had deserted from the Yugoslavian secret service. Three years later, he had his sentence reduced when it emerged that he had acted in self-defence, in an attempt to prevent his own execution. At the time, the story was in all the papers. In 1982, Mitric was once again in the news, as a result of some books that he had published while in prison. One was an unremarkable manual on karate, but the other two were strange books about his sexual escapades and about the bloody operations carried out by Tito's security services, both inside Yugoslavia and abroad.²³⁷

At that time, however, Dutch public opinion was more captivated by the struggles of Solidarity, the Polish trade union, than by developments in Yugoslavia, which had long ceased to be a source of good news. This was highlighted by a study published by the Utrecht-based geographer De Rijk, in 1980, shortly before the death of Tito. He felt that the experiment with worker participation in management had petered out, without producing any increased political freedom. Unemployment in Yugoslavia was the highest in Europe. The policy of decentralization had revived nationalism among the various peoples of Yugoslavia. Although the federal government had made an attempt to restore its authority, it appeared to have completely lost its grip on the economy. De Rijk was unable to answer the question *Quo vadis Yugoslavia?* The country could go in any of a variety of directions,²³⁸

In a book published in 1985, Broekmeyer asserted that prognoses were still dangerous, since developments remained contradictory, while Yugoslavia was passing through 'the deepest and most severe crisis since 1945'. According to him, the greatest villains were the Communist leaders of the various republics and provinces. They had dismantled the federal state, were responsible for the economic chaos and countered all forms of opposition with the machinery of a 'totalitarian state'. While the state of Yugoslavia had almost no friends beyond its own borders, dissident members of the intelligentsia did receive considerable moral support from the West. Amnesty International immediately offered its support to Alija Izetbegovic who, as the author of a relatively moderate *Islamic declaration* in Sarajevo, was a candidate for persecution.

Amnesty also supported Vojislav Seselj, a young Sociology professor in the Bosnian capital, who had criticized the corrupt practices of the authorities, thereby incurring their wrath. Seselj was advocating a Greater Serbia and the division and annexation of Bosnia by Serbia and Croatia. Broekmeyer emphasized that regional nationalism was rapidly gaining momentum in Yugoslavia, however this worrying development was also connected with attempts to achieve greater openness and democracy. Various influential figures such as Djilas, the authoritative Serbian novelist Cosic and the Croatia politician and historian, Tudjman seemed to be in favour of 'national reconciliation'. If this could be achieved, the dictatorship of the party would fade away.²³⁹

Very few copies of this study (which was published by *Clingendael*, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations) were sold.²⁴⁰ Following Gorbachev's rise to power in the Soviet Union, interest in Yugoslavia declined even further. At the time, no Western observers could foresee the roles that Izetbegovic, Tudjman or Seselj were to play. During this period, most Yugoslavia-watchers thought that the omens favoured a hopeful political multiformity rather than violent disintegration. Two years later, when the USSR and the entire Eastern Bloc were in the same situation as Yugoslavia, there was still much optimism among most of the experts on Russia and Eastern Europe. The dramatic turn of events in 1989, when the countries of Central and Eastern Europe regained their independence, caused general euphoria in the Western world. The subsequent disenchantment was all the more bitter as a result. 'Just a short while ago', wrote journalist Raymond van den Boogaard at the start of 1992, 'Yugoslavia was a rich and variegated country, full of different peoples and landscapes, virtually a modern Arcadia. Now most of it lies in ruins, and the budding democracy has become a playground for those who worship violence.'²⁴¹

The necessary brevity of this essay precludes a detailed account of how the disintegration of Yugoslavia was covered in the Dutch media. That in itself would require a separate study. However, it can be determined that this caused a huge shift in Dutch views about the region. The admiration (often bordering on glorification) for the inhabitants of that region had persisted for almost five hundred years, but the savagery and duration of the wars in southern Slavia, coupled with the incessant and sometimes highly detailed reporting of these events, shattered this positive image forever. Some things remained the same, though. Dutch public opinion about Yugoslavia was still strongly influenced by other countries. For the first time, the Netherlands had an intimate, large-scale political and military involvement in western interventions in the Balkans. Dutch journalists were in the area to collect information, but the European and American press and television remained of overriding importance. Flemish and Dutch writers produced excellent books about the latest developments in Yugoslavia. Yet their contribution was a mere trickle, compared to the torrent of primarily Anglo-Saxon literature that washed over European readers.²⁴²

Accordingly, the Dutch image of Yugoslavia in particular and of the Balkans in general again largely conformed with Western ideas on the subject. Since the previous chapter examined the extent to which more traditional modes of thought concerning the Balkans influenced recent image-forming and decision-making, such trends should also be investigated in the Netherlands. Did the Netherlands take sides in the conflict? What remained of past sympathies for Serbia? In the 1980s, Broekmeyer was still able to appreciate the position of the Serbs within Yugoslavia, both during the Tito era and thereafter. In 1991, Europe was initially in favour of retaining the political integrity of Yugoslavia. This position favoured the Serbs much more than it did Slovenia and Croatia. The western world feared that, if it conceded to every nation's (or ethnic group's) desire for independence, there would be disintegration and chaos throughout Eastern Europe. With the Netherlands holding the chairmanship of the European Union, the Dutch Foreign Secretary, Hans van den Broek, was scarcely in a position to deviate from the general viewpoint. Within his ministry there were few illusions about the chances of keeping Yugoslavia in one piece.²⁴³ While no one sympathized with Milosevic's efforts to build a Greater Serbia, there might have been a more pronounced antipathy towards the Croats.

This possibility was examined by Norbert Both, in his book on Dutch involvement in the Yugoslavian crisis. He wrote that 'In 1991, West European politicians and diplomats looked at Croatia with little or no more sympathy than they reserved for the Serbs'. The Dutch in particular were influenced by the legacy of the Second World War, during which Nazi Germany had occupied the Netherlands for five years and murdered most of its Jewish population. For decades after the war, anti-German feeling ran deep among the Dutch. The fascist Croatian *Ustashe* regime had been a staunch ally of Nazi Germany and had methodically murdered hundreds of thousands of its Serb, Gypsy and Jewish inhabitants. [...] From the Dutch point of view, Croats and Serbs were equally bad. Hence, the communis opinio inside the Dutch Foreign Ministry at this stage was that for any solution to be both effective and fair, it would have to be even-handed.'²⁴⁴ Both offers no evidence in support of this interpretation. To some extent, it contradicts the previous few pages of his book, in which he shows

that reports by Eastern European experts at the ministry and diplomats at the Dutch embassy in Belgrade during 1990 and 1991 continually urged the Netherlands to take a stand. In their view, taking a stand for or against the disintegration of Yugoslavia was tantamount to expressing a preference either for a future democracy in Slovenia and Croatia, or for maintenance of the authoritarian government in Belgrade. In 1991 and 1992 Henri Wynaendts, Van den Broek's right-hand man, conducted negotiations with all of the parties in Yugoslavia. He considered Milosevic's Greater Serbia policy to be the main cause of Yugoslavia's disintegration. Nevertheless, without referring to the Second World War, he made some ascerbic statements concerning Tadjman's dubious policies.²⁴⁵

Nina Peternel also asserted that there was 'an anti-Croatian campaign in 1991-92 [...] that centred on Croatia's collaboration during the Second World War'. She also claimed that the western and Dutch media served as 'an extension of Milosevic's propaganda mills'.²⁴⁶ This author, once a Dutch Yugoslav, had been converted, becoming a Dutch Croat. Her book played down the less palatable aspects of Croatian nationalism. A similar trend was also apparent in Dutch journalism. Milo Anstadt asserted that Dutch journalists also laboured under the misapprehension that the combatants could be neatly divided into reactionary Serbian Communists on the one hand and democratic Slovenes and Croats on the other. In this context, he referred to an article written in 1991 by Paul Scheffer pleading for the recognition of both northern republics. Anstadt felt that Croatia's democratic credentials were 'no better than those of Syria, for example'. He actually attempted to shield the Serbs, to some extent, from the more virulent attacks.²⁴⁷ Any investigation of the Dutch reports and analyses produced during the wars in Yugoslavia will doubtless reveal subtle nuances and differing opinions. While there was certainly criticism of Tadjman and Croatia, there was no predominantly anti-Croatian tendency fuelled by Dutch experiences during the German occupation.²⁴⁸ In the Netherlands, as elsewhere in the world, the general tenor of opinion was anti-Serbian. Milosevic and his adherents in Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia were picked out as the principle villains in the conflict. They were held mainly, but not solely, responsible for the outbreak of the war and for the bloody way in which it was fought. In the Netherlands, as elsewhere, the greatest sympathy was for the Bosnian Muslims. This did not mean, however, that writers simply turned a blind eye to the Muslims' actions. In the Netherlands it also created a general groundswell of public opinion in favour of humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping in Bosnia, to prevent any further ethnic cleansing or exacerbation of human suffering.

The Dutch soldiers in Srebrenica, whose job it was to implement this national intention, were a striking exception to this pattern. Their isolation, coupled with an almost total dependence on Mladic and his henchmen, played no small part in this. Nevertheless, a parallel can be drawn between the views of a Dutch physician like Koppeschaar in 1913 and the views of the Dutchbat soldiers in 1994 and 1995. Koppeschaar's favourable opinion of the Serbs and the Dutch soldiers' appreciation of the Bosnian-Serb army were mainly based on a respect for the other party's discipline, good organization and military capabilities. Koppeschaar's contempt for the Montenegrins and the Dutchbatters' contempt for the Bosnian Muslims in the enclave stemmed largely from an aversion to the disorderly, chaotic, dirty and impoverished conditions under which both autochthonous population groups lived. In earlier times, as now, this was considered to be the result of an ethnic culture that deviated from European norms.²⁴⁹ In both cases, such Dutch short-sightedness is quite astonishing. Nevertheless, any similarities between 1913 and 1994-95 are mainly coincidental. They do not indicate the existence of a continuous tradition of pro-Serbian sympathies in the Netherlands.

Vacillation on the part of the international community, and limited Western involvement during the first four years of the conflicts worked primarily to the advantage of the Serbs. But it cannot be said of the Netherlands or of other Western countries that ancient emotional bonds with a particular ethnic or national group influenced image-forming and decision-making with regard to the conflicts in Yugoslavia. Of much greater political significance, both in the Netherlands and elsewhere, is the switch from a positive to a negative image of the Balkans. Peternel indignantly described an 'immense arrogance and condescension' towards the 'primitive, blood-spilling' Balkan peoples. She quoted C.J. Visser who, writing in the Dutch daily *NRC Handelsblad*, described the situation as a 'tribal settling of scores'. Another quote was taken from Anet Bleich and Ewoud Nysingh who reported in *De*

Volkscrant that: ‘serbs and Croats have been enthusiastically smashing one another’s heads in for more than six months’.²⁵⁰ In addition to well-known foreign examples such as Kaplan and Kennan, the journalist and academic expert in international relations, Bart Tromp, quoted from a radio interview with Joost Hilterman in which the latter described ‘the pent-up hatred of tribes who refuse to live together any longer.’ Tromp also made reference to the views of Dutchbat veterans who thought that the best solution would be to fence in this ‘country fit only for goats, and populated by chicken slaughterers’.²⁵¹ Statements of this kind are common, and many more examples can easily be found. Even a diplomat like Weynandts wrote about Milosevic: ‘Le côté suicidaire, présent chez tant de Serbs, semble l’avoir emporté.’²⁵² In 1993, Van den Boogaard stated that ‘all of the warring parties [...] display an apparently indestructible, almost irrational belligerence.’ They ‘want war, there is no other possible conclusion’.²⁵³ Anstadt talked of a specific ‘southern Slav mentality’, of people who ‘still need danger to feel truly alive’ for whom ‘the lust for survival [...]’ had become ‘a lethal adventure’. He therefore scoffed at Dutch people such as Mient Jan Faber who represented the peace council of the Dutch churches and wanted to send western soldiers and civilian personnel to the Balkans ‘to provide real help in solving the underlying problems’.²⁵⁴

Tromp was also a fervent advocate of more effective western intervention and saw these views of the former Yugoslavia as patently transparent excuses for doing nothing. Together, these formed the ‘myth of Balkan man’, a clearly identifiable mode of thought in public opinion, which was also exhibited by politicians, commentators and diplomats. According to this reasoning, the wars in Yugoslavia had broken out simply because the inhabitants of the Balkans are uncivilized barbarians. Such catastrophes were unthinkable in our society. Since the southern Slavs were not open to reason, any attempt to intervene in their mutual conflicts would be quite pointless.²⁵⁵ Tromp disputed such views by denying that there was any such thing as ‘Balkan man’.

Nevertheless, those who opposed such prejudices were still able to put forward a series of reasoned arguments in support of intervention. In addition, both politicians and the media appealed to our compassion for our fellow man, in the form of the southern Slavs. There was no systematic campaign by the anti-interventionists to propagate this view of the bloodthirsty *Homo balkanensis*. These and many other like-minded individuals made all sorts of superficial, arbitrary statements about the less palatable aspects of the inhabitants of the Balkans. However, they rarely or never took the trouble to provide a more detailed description of ‘Balkan Man’ nor did they carry out a thorough psychoanalysis of this modern barbarian. Not long ago, however, detailed discussions of the Dutch national character, or that of other peoples, had by no means been unusual. Initially, contemporary statements about the ‘fierce’ inhabitants of the Balkans were simply the rudiments of a much older image. As the previous pages have shown, in times past the Dutch took great delight in characteristics that these days give people the shivers. Whatever the case, ‘Balkan Man’ was not simply a concept invented during the last decade of the 20th century to prevent Western intervention in Yugoslavia. Only at the end of the 1990s was a comprehensive explanation conceived for the adverse course of events in eastern and South-Eastern Europe. This led to a new image of Eastern Europe, one in which far greater importance was attached to the mentality of its population. In the first chapter of this essay I explained how the images of other peoples consist of peculiar combinations of observations, opinions and emotions. They cannot simply be dismissed as ‘a pack of lies’. Such images are in fact reflections of reality in a series of distorting mirrors. Although this is not always the case, they often contain elements of the truth. Image and reality can never be completely separated. Images should nevertheless be subjected to critical analysis, and their level of truth assessed. In the next chapter, we shall attempt to do so.

Chapter 4

Image and reality

1. Eastern Europe, its modern image and its past

The previous chapters have primarily focused on the historical development of the western image of Eastern Europe and the Balkans. This chapter is entirely devoted to contemporary views of the situation that has developed in eastern and South-Eastern Europe. We will focus mainly on the emphasis (or lack thereof) given to the connection with what, in the past, was openly referred to as race or as the character of a people. These days it is more euphemistically described as ethnicity, culture or, most candidly, as mentality. That connection is most apparent in the currently prevailing perception of Eastern Europe. The present-day image of the Balkans and the adverse views of the region's inhabitants are all part of this.

Religious differences in particular have been identified as the main cause of the many and varied developments that have taken place since the fall of the Berlin Wall. This primarily concerns differences between Western and Central Europe on the one hand and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe on the other. According to many observers a rather fundamental contrast exists between two types of people. One has emerged from the Latin Christian tradition while the other is the product of the Orthodox Christian ideology. The latter finds it more difficult to keep up with the rapid pace of change in our modern world. Many reasons can be found, however, for rejecting this interpretation as either too one-sided or just plain wrong. Accordingly, we will go on to review explanations for the disintegration of Yugoslavia in terms of factors that have nothing to do with ethnicity, mentality, religion or the existence of a type of 'Balkan Man'. Next it will be the turn of those authors whose views cannot be directly linked to traditional prejudices about the Balkans but which, nevertheless, subtly draw our attention to the important part that may have been played by collective mind-sets in the outbreak and development of the Yugoslavian conflicts.

Yugoslavia and its people, which were once held in such high esteem, are now largely viewed with contempt. On the other hand, there is Central Europe, which has undergone a complete *facelift* since the 1980s and has once again been elevated to the status of a distinct European zone. As we have seen in previous chapters, there have been many such changes in the history of western image-forming with regard to Eastern Europe. In the past, as now, these changes were always prompted by major current events. At the same time, people usually felt the need to search for more profound explanations, by re-examining the past. This is now happening all over again. The events that have occurred in Central European countries since 1989 have been relatively favourable, certainly when compared to the vicissitudes of other former Communist states. However, the course of the process of transition in Central Europe cannot only be explained by the situation that has prevailed during the past decade, but also by re-vitalizing 19th century views about the special position of this region. After many years in obscurity, such traditional interpretations were suddenly very topical once again, because they seemed to provide a convincing explanation for very recent events.²⁵⁶

During the last few years it has often been asserted that Communism concealed the 'real' dividing line between Eastern and Western Europe for the past fifty years. With the fall of Communism, this line has once again become visible, it is none other than the 'ancient' border between Rome and Byzantium, between Latin and Orthodox Christianity.²⁵⁷ To the west of this line, the Central European countries have, during the past decade, largely completed the transition to a market economy, democracy and a multiform society. To the east of this line, in regions where the Orthodox faith holds sway, the economic situation is worsening rather than improving. Power is increasingly gravitating into authoritarian or criminal hands. Such a disparity in terms of development is explained by the difference in faith and by the associated mentalities of the populations involved. According to this view of things, Orthodoxy is a religion of rigid rules and rituals. It is a church entirely lacking in

social engagement, which slavishly submits to any type of political authority. The Orthodox regions were never oriented towards the West. As a result, they were left untouched by feudalism, the Gothic age, Humanism, the Reformation and the Age of Reason, all defining aspects of our civilization. This is why the current process of modernization and westernization is making such faltering progress in this region.

This, in brief, is the latest image of Eastern Europe.²⁵⁸ Any attempt to formulate criticism of this image will take up considerably more space. After all, it is not reasonable to assert that society has been entirely unaffected by at least one thousand years of exposure to a given form of Christianity.²⁵⁹ The main objections focus on the way in which this long and highly complex history has been reduced to a simple formula, which can then supposedly be used to provide the only true insight into the past, present and future. It would seem that the civilized, politically correct approach is to explain current situations in terms of ancient cultural differences. Nevertheless, such 'culturistic' views are no less repugnant than older concepts which identified race as the cause of the differences between East and West. The arguments that are being used to re-orientalize Eastern Europe and to permanently demote its 250 million inhabitants to the status of second-class citizens of our continent are far from sound. Nevertheless, they have gained wide acceptance. This is probably because they fit snugly into the long tradition of western ethnocentrism, and because they seem to explain away so many problems. As part of this, the Balkans are firmly placed within the sphere of the Byzantine East. Since Serbia is usually labelled as the greatest villain of the Yugoslavian wars, the latter can simply be attributed to Serbian Orthodoxy and to the character of the Serbian people, which has been shaped by their faith.

After thinking it through, almost everyone will acknowledge that this is too simple an explanation to be true. For this reason it is important to judge the 'culturistic' image of Central and Eastern Europe on its historical merits, even though this has already been dealt with above, in a different context. The previous chapters contain comments that are intended to put the contemporary use of Ranke's cultural 'canon' and Huntington's fault line theory in perspective. Mention is also made of the arbitrary way in which our continent was divided up in the past, into two or three parts. We have seen how the position of the 'centre' was always shifting. As a consequence of this, during the Cold War, Yugoslavia was an exception to the east-west divide, and was valued as a small, separate Central or 'in-between' Europe.

There is little reason to attach such enormous importance to the symbolic dividing line between 'Rome' and 'Byzantium'. During the five centuries that separated the fall of Constantinople (1453) and the fall of Communism (1989-1991), this border only played a minor part in European history. It is certainly true to say that the Orthodox world made little or no creative contribution to the spiritual movements in the West that mark the transition between the Middle Ages and the early modern period. However, East and West were not separated by watertight bulkheads. As the main repository of Greek classical civilization, Byzantium was an extremely important source for the western Renaissance and Humanism. The difference between Orthodoxy and Catholicism is smaller than that between Protestantism and Catholicism. The contrast between Eastern and Western Christianity did not generate a bloody and destructive series of conflicts like those that arose within Western Christianity itself. It can also be concluded that the Age of Reason, the Romantic movement, and subsequent movements in western spiritual life did not leave the Orthodox regions untouched, but rather had an ever increasing effect on them. This is why, in cultural terms, these countries are less strange and foreign than is generally thought.

It is by no means unusual to see relationships between religious and economic developments. Few historians will deny that Britain and the Netherlands became the leaders of Europe because the flowering of their economic and political systems was fostered by voyages of exploration and by the Reformation. However, the Central European countries did not benefit from this and, as a result, they failed to keep up with Western Europe. The Reformation and the Counter Reformation had disastrous repercussions for Germany, Bohemia, Slovakia and Hungary. It is therefore odd that this religious past is now proudly put forward as proof of the European character of the Central European countries. Countries such as Spain, Portugal and France also sustained economic damage by expunging religious

minorities such as Jews, Moriscos and Huguenots from their societies. Conversely, the economy of the Ottoman Empire profited from the religious tolerance that was permitted by the Sultans. Even the Czarist government, which practised the repression of non-Orthodox religions, never adopted an expulsion policy. As a result, the activities of Muslims, Jews, Armenians, Catholics, Protestants or religious separatists such as the Old Believers continued to be of decisive importance to the economic development of the Russian empire. Thus the adverse economic effects of religious conflict and intolerance were greater in the Catholic western and central regions of Europe than in the Orthodox east or south-east.

However, it is difficult to demonstrate the existence of a connection between a population's religious mentality and the process of economic growth or decline. During the first half of the 20th century, many western historians and sociologists were fascinated by the idea that the Calvinistic mentality was one of the major driving forces behind modern capitalism. This was the best explanation for the post-1600 economic prosperity of the Protestant North of Europe and the decline of the Catholic South. Nevertheless, even Max Weber (the leading writer on this issue) did not dare to put into words the idea that the religious mentality directly influenced the economy. He described the relationship between both phenomena as a 'Wahlverwandschaft'.²⁶⁰ The doubt surrounding this issue has continued to grow since Weber's time, since a given religious mentality can also have an economic background.

For these reasons, the low level of economic development in the Orthodox regions can not simply be ascribed to the religion or religious mentality of the population. During the past few centuries, their faith never stopped Greek merchants, ship-owners and seamen from playing a dominant role in the economy of the whole of south-east Europe and the Near East. Within the European Union, modern-day Greece – which is still extremely Orthodox – is equal in rank to Catholic Portugal. Nor did Orthodoxy impede the amazingly rapid take-off of Russian industrialization in the 1890s.

Historians often commented that serfdom has been a hindrance to the rise of modern forms of capitalism, which are highly dependent on a free labour market. From this point of view in particular, as has already been pointed out in this study, the dividing line between East and West was previously situated much further to the west. After 1500 it was mainly serfdom that caused Central Europe to appear so different to western eyes. Bondage, however, did not exist in the Balkan countries of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro. Farmers in Croatia were bound to the land from the 16th century onwards, whereas Serbian immigrants in the Krajina region of Croatia – while no less poverty-stricken – were free and armed.²⁶² A fawning, subservient attitude to authority was more typical of the Habsburg Slavic areas than of the Ottoman Slavic areas. It characterized the societies of Austria, Poland, Bohemia and Slovakia for much longer than it did those of Serbia or Montenegro.²⁶²

The relationship between governments and Orthodoxy, between political culture and religious mentality is also less one-sided and simple than that which is put forward in 'culturistic' debates. The Eastern church is indeed conventional and conservative. It had a tradition of anti-western and anti-intellectual movements, and this is still true today. However, it was never a religious community that attempted to shut out the outside world completely. As in the West, the Orthodox church could not escape the influence of society. It was even more exposed to the power of the state which in the post-1800 East, was usually oppressive and arbitrary in nature. Nevertheless, the balance of power between church, society and state authority in Eastern Europe has also been very unsettled and changeable. As defenders of the faith, the emperors of the Eastern Roman Empire had considerable influence on the administration of the church. In the final centuries of Byzantium, however, their influence was on the wane while the prestige of the patriarch and the power of the church was on the rise. Even under the *millet* system of the Ottoman empire, the Patriarch of Constantinople continued to exert a relatively autonomous authority over all Orthodox Christians. Under Turkish rule, the patriarchate remained in contact with Catholic and Protestant circles in the West.²⁶⁴

In Russia, the church was indeed subjected to worldly authority by Peter the Great. Prior to that, however, it had played a major role in the process of shaping the state. Prominent clergymen had

forcefully resisted the government, had functioned as heads of state in times of crisis and even aimed to render the state subordinate to the church. On occasion, the Serbian church had also been highly critical of Serbian politics. The national churches and monasteries played a major part in the independence struggles of Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians and Romanians. Priests and monks joined in the fight against the Turks.²⁶⁵ As has already been mentioned, at that time western public opinion strongly sympathized with the rebellious Balkan peoples, who were seen as being oppressed by an Islamic Turkish (thus, non-European) regime. At that time the emphasis was on the fact that these countries were Christian and that they therefore had an affinity to the West. These days, the main emphasis is on their Orthodox character, and their consequent 'otherness'.

In terms of the relationship between church and state, there is less difference between East and West than is often alleged. In the West also, there was a distinct inclination towards *Caesaro-Papism* (the state dominates the church). Medieval monarchs wanted the right to nominate their own bishops. Even after the Reformation, worldly governments attempted to retain their power over religious affairs. In 1555 the Religious Peace of Augsburg was based on the rule *cuius regio eius religio* (*whose the region, his the religion*, in other words, subjects are obliged to accept their monarch's faith). All British monarchs since Henry the Eighth have been the head of the church. There is also a long tradition of state churches in Western Europe. In the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands, where the Reformed Church was the dominant faith within the state, many within the reigning bourgeois elite felt that this church also should be subjected to their political authority. Intellectuals like Hugo Grotius provided a suitable legal and political doctrine for this point of view. In all Western countries, the division between church and state occurred quite late and was generally never fully completed. In the Danube Monarchy, the state quite forcefully imposed Catholicism on the Protestant segment of the population. Hungary was the only country where the Habsburg rulers were less than completely successful in this regard. However, they continued to use the Roman Catholic state church as 'an instrument of spiritual control, yes – as a sort of auxiliary police force'²⁶⁶. There was a very good reason why Stjepan Radic (leader of the Catholic but anti-clerical Croat Peasant Party in the years between the wars) opened all of his political speeches with the slogan 'Hvaljen Isus, dolje s popovima' (Believe in Jesus, get rid of the priests).²⁶⁷

On the other hand, education in Orthodox countries was mainly a secular activity before it became so in the West. Nor did denominational political parties ever play a major role in Eastern Europe. It is also doubtful that the faith of the Russian or Serbian peasant ever had much to do with the official religions of their respective countries. They often adhered to one of the many religious sects and had little respect for the Orthodox village priests and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Although religion underwent something of a revival following the fall of Communism, it is doubtful whether the mental attitude of more than 250 million East Europeans is still so strongly influenced by religious traditions. Eastern Europe has been equally affected by the processes of individualization and secularization.

It is easier to summarize the deficiencies of the current image of Eastern Europe than to briefly point out the actual roots of the differences between Eastern and Western Europe. If one was forced to single out one historical factor, then the discovery of America would rank above the Byzantine or Orthodox mentality. This event caused the economic centre to move from the Mediterranean areas to the coasts of the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea. The resultant economic gap between the wealthy West and the impoverished East proved difficult to bridge.

It is even more difficult to identify the deeper historical roots of various current developments in Central and Eastern Europe. Even in centuries past, the eastern half of Europe was no less varied than its western counterpart. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the Jesuits worked hand in hand with governments to provide an effective and modern educational system in Catholic regions. In this regard, they contributed to the creation of a Western-minded elite in Central Europe. Miroslav Hroch stated that, at the start of the 19th century, the average level of literacy of the population (including all of the German-speaking peoples) in this area was higher than in the rest of Europe.²⁶⁸ Prior to 1900, in Orthodox regions, neither the church nor the state was able to make any substantial impact on illiteracy within the population. Serfdom was retained in Russia for decades after it had disappeared elsewhere. In that country, as in the Balkans, social modernization

was slower and less complete than in large areas of Central Europe. Furthermore, any changes in those regions took place under Habsburg and Prussian authority. While these regimes also had authoritarian qualities, unlike the Russian and Ottoman empires after 1800, they had accepted the rule of law and their civil service was generally more competent and less corrupt. However, the lead that Central Europe enjoyed over Eastern and South-Eastern Europe at the start of the 20th century was of little benefit to that region in the years between the wars. Things went badly wrong in the Centre, the East and the South. The worst affected country was the most western of all, Germany.

The relatively favourable situation currently enjoyed by Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary can perhaps be better understood by examining the more recent past. They were the only Eastern Bloc countries where there was resistance to Soviet domination, on a national scale. After the Second World War, these states were characterized by an ethnic homogeneity that was quite exceptional in the Eastern part of Europe. This may well have made it easier to stage such revolts.²⁶⁹ The revolt and opposition was fuelled by the rejection of Communism as foreign and 'Eastern'. This, in turn, served to reinforce existing national solidarity and the perception of their national identity as a western people. Poles, Hungarians and Czechs were determined to be Western. The possibility cannot be excluded that, after 1989, this mentality contributed substantially to the development of a socio-psychological climate in which economic and political changes were able to proceed at a faster pace than in other formerly Communist European countries. The majority of the population and the political elite in Russia, Ukraine and most Balkan countries had little or no interest at all in becoming Western. It is difficult to describe this as anything other than a mental phenomenon, but it is impossible to prove that such a mentality is closely linked to religious traditions. If this were true, it would imply that the situation is virtually unchangeable. Temporary circumstances probably played a more important role. In 1945, Greece differed little from countries such as Bulgaria or Serbia. Taking advantage of the more favourable circumstances in which it found itself, however, it has been able to modernize. The country's position today is quite different from what it was then.

Conceivably, the current transition might have been much easier in the Eastern Europe of three or four decades ago. At that time there was much talk of a 'convergence between East and West', as represented by the welfare state and the construction of a 'mixed' economy in the West, and by powerful reformist tendencies in the post-Stalinist East. Modern neo-liberal Capitalism, together with the exacting demands imposed on former Communist countries by supra-national financial institutions and the EU make it difficult to implement the changes that are required. It may also be that, a few decades into the future, Central European countries will still not have caught up with the West because the international economic climate has worsened while the European Union has been weakened by administrative impotence. Disappointment with the Western course, which is already being experienced by large sectors of the Central European population, may lead people to conclude that the gap between Central and Eastern Europe has narrowed while that between Central and Western Europe has widened. The perception of Central Europe as a region radically different from the Orthodox East, which is now popular in the West, may then have to be modified once again, to take the changed situation into account.

2. Are circumstances alone the deciding issue?

Circumstances change drastically over time. It is hard to identify a moment in the past on which to base the mythology of the current image of Eastern Europe, which presupposes a profoundly significant border between regions using either the Cyrillic or the Latin alphabet. During the Soviet era, all Communist countries were pretty much alike. Although the Central European countries have all made great efforts to distance themselves from that past reality, they have still not been able to convince either themselves or the West of their European credentials. For reasons that have already been discussed, the part of the 20th century that preceded the pre-Communist era was equally unsuitable in this regard. The same goes for the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. In order to prove their western character and essence, the Central Europeans had to make a great leap back in history, to the years leading up to

1500 and shortly thereafter.²⁷⁰ Only in that period does Leopold von Ranke's argument about the common heritage of Western and Central Europe (feudalism, Gothic architecture, the Renaissance, Humanism and Reformation) seem to have any validity.

However, such a leap back in history says as much about the similarities between Central and South-Eastern Europe as about their differences. After all, in shaping their national identity, the Serbs also used historical myths from a dim and distant past, before the time of Turkish rule. We seem to consider it quite normal when we use the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period to identify ourselves as Central or Western Europeans. At the same time, however, we view the Serbian preoccupation with the late Middle Ages as unhealthy. We even point to it as one of the causes of their excessively violent actions during the Yugoslavian conflicts. This observation should make us cautious. We may well be wrong to attempt to construct or de-construct links between behaviour in crisis situations and the history, culture, religion or mentality of a nation. If we want to explain the origin and course of the Yugoslavian crisis, it would be wiser to first look for other, more objective causes. In the following pages we will discuss literature in which the question of guilt is not linked to ethnic, religious or mental factors. Although this examination is far from complete, an attempt has been made to demonstrate the validity of a 'politically correct' point of view.

Firstly, there is constant confirmation of the observation that the use of force is a general human behaviour, and that it is not restricted to particular ethnic groups. This is borne out by the socio-psychological experiments of researchers such as Milgram and Zimbardo in the United States, and Mees and Raaijmakers in the Netherlands. Their work has shown that people of all levels of intelligence, educational achievement, character, social standing or national background can be induced to cause severe injury or pain to their fellow human beings. Such behaviour can be evoked within a short period of time and without the use of any physical coercion. To the astonishment and dismay of the researchers, only a small minority of the test subjects totally refused to engage in such activity.²⁷¹ As it was made increasingly clear to the test subjects that their behaviour could well lead to unpleasant repercussions (such as the possibility of legal liability), more of them refused to engage in such activity.

Given that the anticipation of punishment or correction has an important part to play here then it is not so surprising that the Netherlands, one of the oldest and most stable constitutional states in the world, should also be one of the least violent countries in the world. Murder and manslaughter are far less common here than in the United States, Russia or Brazil. Nevertheless, in 1994 there were 65,900 crimes of violence in the Netherlands. According to official estimates, there is a hard core of 23,000 young people between the ages of twelve and eighteen who regularly commit acts of violence.²⁷² How would the size of these groups and their activities be affected if, within a period of ten years, the economy were to collapse almost completely, the central government became incapable of maintaining law and order, the state disintegrated and power devolved into the hands of local potentates who openly encouraged the use of force? In other words, if the same were to happen in the Netherlands as happened in Yugoslavia from 1980 to 1991, could we be so sure that no 'serbian'-type events would take place there?

In addition, it has often been pointed out that modern wars are almost always accompanied by crimes and atrocities against the civilian population. This argument, also, makes it much more difficult to ascribe the excesses of the war to specifically Yugoslavian circumstances or to a sort of primitive Balkan mentality. The horrors of war can also be explained by the authoritarian command structures that are the mental and organizational essence of any army. These can cause soldiers to become totally estranged from the prevailing standards and values of civilian society. Under such circumstances, the principle of *Befehl ist Befehl* has a much greater influence than nationalism, ethnic hatred or other ideological motives. There are many examples that can be used to illustrate this point. When reporting the Bosnian wars, the Western media devoted a considerable amount of time to reporting the case of a Sarajevan soldier by the name of Borislav Herak. He learned how to cut throats by practising on pigs. Later, when ordered to do so, he exercised this 'skill' on Muslims. His father was a Serb, his mother a Croat, and his sister was married to a Muslim for whom he had the greatest respect. In the course of several interviews, he stated that he had nothing against Muslims.²⁷³ H. Tromp was certainly not the

only person to conclude from this that: ‘The mass murders of Croats by Serbs in Vukovar in 1992, or the mass murders of Muslims by Croats in Ahvinici in 1993 are not the symptoms of a specific Balkan culture – neither are the mass murders by Germans in Lidice or by Americans in My Lai symptomatic of the degree of civilization in Germany or the United States’. [...] It is the culture of war that prescribes such killings, and committing ‘war crimes’ is therefore inevitable.’²⁷⁴

We can add to this that there was more to the wars in Yugoslavia than the slavish obedience of soldiers like Borislav Herak. Disobedience was no less important, in fact it may well have been even more significant. Even under the most trying conditions, some intellectuals and journalists continued to resist disinformation and incitement to ethnic hatred and violence. ‘Ordinary’ people did more than just shoot at one another, they also held peace demonstrations.²⁷⁵ Several instances were reported of Yugoslavs who attempted to prevent the ill-treatment, deportation or liquidation of their fellow villagers or neighbours, even if the former were people of a different ethnic group. Such courageous people were frequently murdered by people of their own ethnic group. There was wholesale evasion of national service. One hundred and fifty thousand to two hundred thousand young men either went into hiding or emigrated. Many others were coerced into joining up, and it was common for men to be violently pressured into service. As a result the Yugoslavia army was eighteen divisions short at the start of the war against Croatia.²⁷⁶ This meant that the only action that the army could take against towns such as Vukovar was to subject them to protracted artillery barrages. In order to capture towns and to carry out ethnic cleansing, it was necessary to use irregular troops.

It was primarily bands of this type that were responsible for widespread crimes against the civilian populations of Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Such actions were responsible for the extremely violent character of these wars. As early on as June 1991, when it became clear that the normal process of conscription would not yield sufficient numbers of recruits, the army decided to train paramilitary forces in special training centres and to deploy them in battle. The Croat and Bosnian armies also used units of this type to carry out their dirty work. In all, some 40 to 60 units of this type were active at that time. The most infamous were the ‘Tigers’ headed by Arkan (a criminal wanted by Interpol, who had worked as a hit man for the Yugoslavian secret service) and the Cetniks headed by Seselj, a pathological intellectual. Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb general, often worked with these groups. The literature on this topic often emphasizes the ‘lower class’ content of these units: criminals, marginal figures, the *Lumpenproletariat* of the towns and cities and especially boys from peasant families with no work and no future, who were used to handling weapons. Joining these bands gave them a purpose in life, considerable power and ample opportunities for plunder. Accordingly, enrichment by terror is the sole motive attributed to these men.²⁷⁷

A much larger group of people played no part, either as volunteers or as conscripts, either in the battles or in ethnic cleansing. Yet it was this group that, either as demonstrators or voters, supported Milosevic or Tudjman. They represented the power base of such politicians, and it was they who made the violent dismemberment of the Yugoslavian state possible. Their behaviour is often explained in terms of ‘a switch in mass psychology’. This was supposedly brought about by the virtually absolute control of the media, together with all the other techniques of mass mobilization that Communist regimes had always used. These tools were now successfully applied by the new rulers in post-Communist Croatia and Serbia. Television had an almost hypnotic effect. This was particularly so in Serbia, where the population became too poor to buy newspapers. In the course of the media war, viewers were bombarded with propaganda day after day. This included images and messages exploiting ancient nationalist myths and Second World War events with which people had not come to terms. The primary objective was to demonize the enemy. Impartial observers were staggered by the one-sidedness of the news coverage. Nevertheless, sixty percent of the viewers considered such propaganda to be completely true. The ‘dizzying repetition of pseudo-patriotic terminology’ had a ‘shamanistic’ and ‘paralyzing’ effect on a population that was ‘trapped in radically deteriorating economic, cultural and social conditions’. Almost ten years of confinement in the ‘media gulag’ had made these people completely apathetic.²⁷⁸

This supports the view (which crops up time and again in the literature) that the various population groups had managed to live together for the greater part of the 20th century in spite of the considerable differences in language, religion, culture, regional development and a protracted series of internal conflicts. The only large-scale violence occurred as a result of the highly exceptional situation caused by the Second World War. At the start of the 1990s, it was a unique combination of circumstances that brought them into conflict again. This involved the crisis and downfall of the Communist system, economic decline, the loss of Yugoslavia's exceptionally favourable international position and, primarily, manipulation by unscrupulous politicians. These rulers wanted a state of their own, with a population whose composition would be as homogeneous as possible. This would, of course, entail a certain amount of ethnic cleansing. This activity was left to the criminal and antisocial elements that are present in any population, and it was facilitated by the dehumanizing effect that results from war. Other countries with multinational societies, such as Belgium or Switzerland, have not suffered Yugoslavia's fate only because they were able to develop under much more favourable circumstances. The collapse of the Yugoslavian federation was not an inevitable consequence of ancient ethnic animosities.

Authors who hold this point of view tend to emphasize the cosmopolitan and multicultural character of cities such as Sarajevo and Belgrade. Such commentators also point out that, in most rural areas, different ethnic groups managed to live peacefully alongside one another (even if not, generally, in the same village) for long periods of time. Experts who regularly visited Tito's Yugoslavia, concluded that the country at that time gave the impression of being a single, national entity. This was not only due to the collaboration between different ethnic groups during the partisan struggle and to Tito's charismatic leadership. At that time, the inhabitants of Yugoslavia were also very proud of their country's independence, of its unique position between East and West, of the relative freedom that they enjoyed, of their increased prosperity and of the Yugoslavian variant of socialism that was worker participation in management. The antagonism between Serbs and Croats appeared to have subsided to the level of 'a harmless local patriotic rivalry'.²⁷⁹

During the 1980s, more and more people in multi-ethnic regions such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Vojvodina felt that they were first and foremost Yugoslavs. Young people in particular increasingly found that interethnic contacts posed no insuperable problems. Cohen concluded that 'such Yugoslavism indicated the existence of a reservoir of support for the country's cohesion at approximately the same time that ethnic tensions and economic problems throughout Yugoslavia were becoming more serious.'²⁸⁰ No referendum was held about whether or not Yugoslavia should continue to exist, possibly in the form of a new confederation.²⁸¹ It is by no means certain that the majority of people would have been opposed to the retention of the united state.

3. The importance of ethnic mentalities

The views set forth above make it clear that the Yugoslavian conflict cannot simply be described as inevitable. The problem with the 'politically correct' standpoint, however, is that while it is based on various indisputable facts, it is still open to contention and is one-sided in nature. Taken as a whole, the literature on Yugoslavia does not support the conclusion that the disintegration of Yugoslavia was entirely due to the specific circumstances of the 1980s and 1990s. The opinions expressed are too contradictory and varied to support the view that all statements about profound ethnic tensions and the special mentality of the region's inhabitants are entirely the product of western prejudice and of inaccurate images of the Balkans.

Firstly, a number of authors feel that the population as a whole did not have a strongly Yugoslavian identity. No more than 6.6% of citizens ever registered themselves as Yugoslav, a high point that occurred during the 1991 census. These individuals were generally the children of 'mixed' marriages.²⁸² As long ago as the 19th century, Serbs and Croats were expressing ideas and feelings about their strong mutual relationship, and about the desirability of unity. However, *Jugoslavenstvo* was a relatively recent phenomenon, and could not be compared to the much older and highly charged

‘emotional poignancy’ of *Italianità* among Italians or *Deutschtum* among Germans.²⁸³ Subsequently, neither the kingdom nor the Communist republic were able to create a form of ‘Yugoslavianism’ that was attractive and convincing to all of the country’s citizens. As a result, few Croats, Serbs and Slovenes gave up their own, pre-existing national identities. Among Macedonians, Bosnian Muslims and Muslim Kosovars, regional and ethnic consciousness gradually increased in strength. Yugoslavia is by no means unique in this regard. Multiethnic populations elsewhere in 20th century Europe were confronted with the same difficulties when they tried to create a unified state and nation.

Andrej Simic states that a modern nation has a common ethical code that gives its citizens a clear idea about what is good, decent, natural or God-given. This code, that Simic dubbed a ‘moral field’, only governs behaviour within the group. Different nations inhabit different ‘moral fields’, while mutual behaviour between nations falls into the ‘amoral’ realm. Ramet took Simic’s concept and applied it to Yugoslavia, concluding that the Yugoslavian veneer that the Communist regime had used to paper over the gaps of ethnic diversity (the mythology of the partisans, or the projects for worker participation in management) was too thin, and wore out too quickly. ‘The Titoists failed to create a common moral field in which all the Yugoslavs would be included. Instead moral fields remained coincident with ethnic communities, heightening the risks and dangers of political disintegration.’²⁸⁴

Wachtel also emphasizes the major repercussions of faulty Yugoslavianism. The country would not have disintegrated ‘had a robust vision of the Yugoslav nation been in place’. This was predominantly the case in rural areas. Socio-psychological studies carried out during the 1970s showed that city dwellers, and especially the well-educated young people among them, were less susceptible to ethnic nationalism. However, it was already clear that the best approach for power-hungry, nationalistic politicians was to appeal to the poorly educated, rural elements of the population. ‘An autocratic party with strong ties to the church and to traditional values would be able to garner significant support for a programme based on Serbian nationalism, particularly in the countryside, the provinces and among the lumpen-workers of Belgrade. Anti-Croat, anti-German propaganda would work as well.’²⁸⁵

At that time, such developments were blocked by the existence of a Communist one-party state, but fifteen years later this obstacle disappeared and events swiftly followed their predicted course. Wachtel feels that the wars that subsequently occurred were probably conflicts between country and town, rather than between ethnic or national groups. ‘It was to my mind the successful challenge to any supranational Yugoslav vision by particularist nationalist ideals that drove the country to destruction and led to the rise of figures such as Milosevic and Tadjman, rather than the other way around.’²⁸⁶ Statements of this kind just serve to demonstrate how any number of facts can be interpreted in many different ways. A slight shift of emphasis is all that is needed to reach an entirely different set of conclusions.

The wars conducted by Milosevic and Tadjman in the media were not necessarily successful attempts to gain support for criminal policies from uninformed and gullible citizens. They were only successful because the views of such political leaders coincided with those held by large sectors of the population, or with ideas that had been long dormant. So these bloody and highly destructive wars were not only the result of recent developments. The mentality of certain sectors of the population may have played a more fundamental role. This even applies to the gangs that were guilty of the most vile forms of ethnic cleansing. In the literature on this subject they are not only presented as a random bunch of criminals and riffraff of the kind that occur in all societies, but reference is also made to their primitive nationalism and ethnic racism. They delighted in expressing this by their speech, behaviour, exotic costumes and enthusiasm for ‘turbo folk rock’ and all other forms of ‘ethno-kitsch’. Some authors also point out that many of these individuals were from *doslavi* families. These immigrants from mainly mountainous areas had colonized other areas or cities in post-1945 Yugoslavia. They were reputedly more receptive to ethnic paranoia than the *starosedeoeci*, people who had lived in the same place for generations.²⁸⁷

It is no simple matter to evaluate the true merit of such statements. There have been no in-depth socio-psychological studies on the contemporary Balkan mentality or the national character of the Serbs. There is a general recognition of the important role played by historical myths in the ethno-

nationalism of Serbs or Croats. However, there is also a marked tendency to deny the existence of a relationship between the violence of the Yugoslavian wars and the existence of a type of 'Balkan Man'. Few recent academic studies have attempted to characterize the inhabitants of mountainous regions of the Balkan peninsula, but Dennis Hupchick for instance stated that they are characterized 'by extremes in their expression – communal generosity and stubborn territoriality; overt hospitality and brutal atrocity, bouts of fun loving enjoyment and irrational violence. All exhibit one common characteristic: a sense of passionate, tenacious, microcultural pride'.²⁸⁸ Such a characterization is strongly reminiscent of Jovan Cvijic's 'Dinarian Man'. Cvijic (1865-1927) was a famous Serbian geographer who taught at the Sorbonne and who was highly respected throughout Western Europe. According to Cvijic, the Dinarians (the original inhabitants of the Dinaric Alps) were a distinct human race, to which the Serbs belonged. They were energetic and impulsive, devoted to the traditions of their ancestors, filled with patriotic zeal, prepared to kill large numbers of Turks and to recapture Kosovo. Cvijic used his academic studies to 'prove' the rightness of the Serbian claim to Macedonia.²⁸⁹

As we have already seen, Cvijic's enthusiasm for the southern Slav mountain-dwellers was shared by many contemporary Western travellers and writers. It is strange, however, that around 1900 the same combination of extreme traits of character was also attributed to the Russians, who lived in wide open spaces. The latter were said to possess a 'sirokaja natura' or 'wide nature'.²⁹⁰ Cvijic's racist and nationalistic theories, together with contemporary Western attempts to construct a sort of *Homo balcanicus* influenced serious scholarship up to and even after the Second World War²⁹¹. Although such concepts also had their critics,²⁹² the literature on Yugoslavia published in the decades before its disintegration reveals that 'a Balkan mentality' is not only an academic construct, a literary topos or an imaginary image, but that it does to some extent really exist.

A number of serious historical and ethnographic studies of the clans or extended families of living Serbs and Montenegrins described their martial behaviour (*junastvo*) and their code of honour (*obraz*), part of which was their tremendous hospitality. The harshness of their impoverished and constantly threatened existence produced a society with markedly egalitarian values where only the males' abilities as warriors counted. These extended families were much larger than our modern nuclear families and were ruled by a system of patriarchal authority, with women and children at the bottom of the pecking order. Infanticide, patricide and fratricide occurred on a regular basis. In certain parts of southern Serbia, the practice of *lapot* persisted into the 20th century. This was the public liquidation, at the hands of their own children, of parents who had become surplus to requirement.²⁹³ Like Albania, Montenegro also had a strong tradition of blood feuds. The Serbs' and Montenegrins' long history of extremely violent raids and rebellions is well known, as are their activities in *haiduk* gangs or as mercenaries in the pay of Byzantium, the Ottoman Empire, Venice, the Habsburg Empire and Russia. Their lengthy folk poetry endorsed their militant lifestyle. These poems kept alive the hatred for the Turks, the traditional enemy, and the memory of regions such as Kosovo that had once been inhabited and administered by Serbs. They also inspired individuals to acts of manly heroism (*coistvo*). In this vein the Montenegrin poet, prince and bishop Petar Petrovic Njegos wrote his *Gorski vijenac* (*The Mountain Wreath*, 1847). This epic poem is a glorification of the 18th century mass murder of fellow-countrymen who had converted to Islam.²⁹⁴ It is still venerated as the most important literary product of the Serbs and Montenegrins.²⁹⁵

It remains difficult, however, to determine the significance of Serbian social habits and culture, and its influence on the history of the Balkans. Other Balkan peoples were also the victims and perpetrators of terror and barbaric instances of ethnic cleansing. Although no precise figures are available, it is estimated that the victims and refugees of the 1875-78 crisis numbered about one and a half million. With regard to the 1912-1970 period, a figure of 12-14 million out of a total population (for Yugoslavia, Romania, Greece and Bulgaria) of about 50 million has been mentioned.²⁹⁶ The Bulgarians, Greeks, Albanians and Croats also had an agricultural lifestyle coupled with a tradition of folklore dominated by the struggle against the Turks and sometimes also the same heroes (such as Prince Marko). However, the literature consulted gives the impression that ancient oral epic traditions

have not shaped the latter countries' national consciousness to the same extent as they have that of the Serbs and Montenegrins.

The only other European people to have been so deeply influenced by such folk poetry are the Finns. A comparison between Finland and Serbia in this respect is instructive. The region of East Karelia, which since the Middle Ages, has been a part of Russia has had the same emotional significance for Finnish nationalism as does Kosovo for the Serbs. The *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic poem published in 1835, was a compilation of epic songs sung by illiterate Finnish bards in Russian Karelia. It was only here, among Finnish Orthodox Christians, that this oral tradition was still alive and kicking as recently as 1800. In the western areas, among Lutheran Finns, the tradition had largely been lost. For this reason, the Finns have come to see East Karelia as the cradle of Finnish culture. Such was the power of the *Kalevala's* romance and the myth of Karelianism that the Finns allied themselves with the Germans in both world wars in an attempt to recapture this region from the Russians.

The differences between Serbian and Finnish nationalism are no less striking. Prior to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Serbian nationalists complained that their people always tended to win the war but lose the peace. The Finns lost both wars for East Karelia, and for many years after 1945 their sovereignty was restricted by the Soviet Union (Finlandization). However, they did manage to win the peace. Finland had been one of the poorest countries in Europe, it received no Marshall aid and was also obliged to pay substantial reparations to the Soviet Union. The successful modernization of the country was therefore a victory of political realism over romantic nationalism. This may have been easier for the Finns than it was for the Serbs, since their folk poetry was not permeated with hate for the Swedes or the Russians, who had ruled over them for so long. In the *Kalevala*, heroes such as Ilmarinen and Väinämöinen are just as dominant as the robber prince Marko or Obilic the sultan-slayer in Serbian folk poetry. However, the epic poem of the Finns lacks the excessive savagery of its Serbian counterpart. Its leading themes are sorcery and animism, rather than battle and violence. Furthermore, the events take place in a vague and unrecognizable past.²⁹⁷

How can we account for this difference? North-West Europe is a region of great linguistic diversity. Here, extremely divergent families of languages exist in close proximity to one another. Orthodoxy has existed alongside Catholicism and Lutheranism for centuries. Political boundaries in these regions are the result of centuries of power politics and sabre rattling. The criminal politics of Stalin and Hitler have left an indelible mark here. Yet this region's history contains few, if any, episodes of ethnic cleansing. It is far from being the regularly repeated phenomenon that it is in the Balkans. The Finns have never been guilty of this. This may be due to the fact that most of the peoples in the north-west have lived in a given area for thousands of years, and they still inhabit these areas today. This territory was thinly populated, and the subsequent penetration of Germans into the Baltic countries and of Russians into Finnish-Ugric-speaking regions meant that the original population was not driven out en masse.²⁹⁸

If any such stability was ever present in the Balkans it was destroyed by the Turkish conquests and, later, by Austrian military campaigns. Ottoman rule resulted in the destruction of the native aristocracy, thereby compelling Serbian and Montenegrin peasants to adopt new social structures, such as tribes or clans. The large-scale displacement of populations as a result of warfare is a particularly characteristic feature of Serbian history. Even though the Serbs later tended to exaggerate the scope and drama of these events, this may nevertheless be the root cause of their militant attitude and folk culture. The Montenegrins also adopted such characteristics, because the only way in which these mountain-dwellers could hold out against the Turks was by permanent military mobilization.

The differences between Finnish and Serbian folk poetry are easier to understand when the divergent histories of North-West and South-East Europe are examined. It may be true that, as a result of this, the Finns do indeed differ from the Serbs in some ways. However, we would be confusing cause and effect if we were to take genocidal actions as evidence of Balkan peoples' savage and warlike nature and the lack of such actions as proof that northerners are essentially peace-loving. In general, the waves of ethnic cleansing that occurred in the Balkans during the 19th and 20th centuries were not

spontaneous initiatives undertaken by the local population. They were state-sponsored campaigns prompted by imported western notions of romantic nationalism, which presupposed a homogeneous population within the borders of a state.

Nevertheless, it can at least be concluded that the mentality and culture of a people like the Serbs certainly did not help to moderate the violent developments in the Balkans.²⁹⁹ It is no coincidence that Gavrilo Princip, the man who assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, had learned Njegos's *Mountain Wreath* by heart. At that time, most Serbs lived in rural areas, with a lifestyle that had not changed in generations. Even Princip, a young intellectual, had this type of background. The Montenegrin peasants lived in a harsh and cruel world, and were always armed. They were still around during the youth of Milovan Djilas, who was just 17 years younger than Princip, and his memoirs contain accurate descriptions of these soldier/brigands.³⁰⁰ This Communist leader also knew *The Mountain Wreath* inside out and wrote a reverential study about Njegos. In addition to personally cutting prisoners' throats and showing himself to be a passionate proponent of executions without trial, he made black marketeering and similar offences punishable by death.³⁰¹

Of course, examples of such unusual characters shed little or no light on the behaviour of all Serbs or Montenegrins. Although Den Doolaard reported that portraits of Njegos still adorned many a farmhouse wall, and that even humble shepherds read his poem,³⁰² their characteristic lifestyle was a reaction to a given set of temporary circumstances. It was, therefore, subject to changes and swings in intensity, especially during the 20th century, under the influence of urbanization, industrialization, the mechanization of agriculture, increased social mobility, contact with Western tourists and trips abroad. All of these, together with the propaganda for Yugoslavian and Communist versions of national values, myths and symbols, resulted in the erosion of traditional local cultures and ways of doing things. The literature that has been examined contains contradictory reports concerning its magnitude and extent. According to Eekman, by the start of the 1950s 'oral epic poetry was as good as dead', even though many elderly village peasants were still able to recite many of these songs. Eekman expressed the view that the ancient squabbles between Serbs and Croats had become quite harmless.³⁰³ However, Doder writes that the inhabitants of Serbian villages in the Krajina region immediately started arming themselves during the 'Croatian spring', the nationalist revival of 1971, which was forcefully suppressed by Tito.³⁰⁴

Studies of Serbian and Montenegrin villages, carried out by Boehm and Halpern during the 1960s, reveal the persistence of ancient social patterns and nationalist sentiments. Even though the size of peasant households in the Sumadija³⁰⁵ almost halved between 1860 and 1960 (from an average of 8.3 to 4.5 family members), this did not amount to a real dissolution of the extended family. The ancient songs about Kosovo were still known (or had been rediscovered) by young and old. Furthermore, most families held the traditional annual celebrations in commemoration of their ancestors (the *slava*), although this sometimes occurred in the guise of the May Day celebrations. Among villagers there was still an intense patriotism (an 'ongoing sense of pride') and a need to identify themselves with a tradition of heroic struggle. They retained lively recollections of the tragedies that had taken place during the Second World War. Sound fieldwork carried out by the anthropologist Mart Bax drew attention to the *mali rat* (the little war) between Serbs and Croats (and between Croats themselves) in Medjugorje, the Bosnian place of pilgrimage. This consisted of long-established and virtually uninterrupted traditions of rivalry, vengeance and murderous violence.

The increasing similarity between urban and rural societies not only resulted in the disappearance of a 'distinctive rural subculture'. The 'urbanization of the villages' was accompanied by the 'peasantization of the towns', caused by the massive movement of rural populations to the cities, a phenomenon also characterized as 'rurbanization'. There was a drastic reduction in the influence of magical practices and religious customs, while daily life became more modern, more commercialized and more luxurious. Many people found this less satisfying than their previous existence and, during the 1960s, they started to rediscover their own past. At first this was all quite innocent, involving the opening of museums, the setting up local monuments and the more frequent singing of ancient songs. 'Kinship and ethnicity, never discarded and now reinforced, remained vital.'³⁰⁷

Thus there was a revival of traditional standards and values among the Serbian population, together with renewed interest in their own culture and history. This all took place twenty years before the nationalistic ‘backlash’ by Serbian intellectuals in the 1980s that features extensively in virtually every book on the disintegration of Yugoslavia. This whole development tends to reinforce the above-mentioned interpretation by Wachtel. In the intervening years, Tito’s state had given up its attempts to create a single, unified national culture. The Communists had to accept that Yugoslavia was genuinely multicultural in nature. Naturally, they made a virtue of necessity and presented cultural variety as a sign of strength under the slogan ‘unity in diversity’.³⁰⁸

However, in reality this led to a huge increase in the autonomy and mutual rivalry of the various Yugoslav states. All government posts were carefully assigned in accordance with an ethnic key. At the same time the individual prosperity that had been so laboriously achieved began to unravel, and life became increasingly uncertain. As mentioned above, these developments caused some people to realize that they were Yugoslav, first and foremost, but it is more logical to assume that the majority of their countrymen were inclined towards the opposite reaction. In that case, Serbian intellectuals made no attempt to push the people in a new direction. They simply reflected the widespread ethnic consciousness that had returned after a long period of absence or had, perhaps, always been present.

Their activities were nevertheless of crucial importance, since they smashed the Communist-Yugoslavian taboos. Ivo Andric, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature, was elevated by Tito’s regime to something of a national cultural icon. It didn’t matter that he wasn’t a Communist and that his work dealt primarily with the painful, tragic and often violent aspects of a society driven by ethnic differences. He was considered acceptable because he incorporated ‘a central, nation-building message’ into books such as *The bridge over the Drina*. Andric suggested that it would ultimately prove possible to overcome the differences and that the unpleasant past could be accepted in a de-mystified form through ‘the existence of an overarching truth that links peoples and groups who think they have no common ground’. Initially, virtually all Croatian and Serbian writers conveyed this type of Yugoslavian message. From the 1970s onwards, however, they developed into nationalists who were devoted to the destruction of supra-ethnic values. That was the end of the Communist ideal of ‘brotherhood and unity’. From then on their own people came first.³⁰⁹

Serbia went further than the other nations in this regard. Its literature came to be dominated by themes such as the violence and injustice that had been inflicted on Serbia (especially between 1941 and 1945), the Croats’ hatred of the Serbs (which was exceeded only by that of the Yugoslavian Muslims) and the glorification of ancient Serbian traditions. The novel *Nož (Knife)*, by Vuk Draskovic, resembles a version of *The Mountain Wreath* set in the Second World War, although it lacks the literary quality of the original. Such books were well received by a wide range of ‘low- and middle-brow readers’. This was especially true of the work of a well-known and established novelist like Dobrica Cosic. He also played a leading role in the infamous, ultra-nationalistic statement issued by the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1986. In works like *The Chazar Dictionary*, typically ‘high-brow authors’ like Milorad Pavic demonstrated, in a veiled and post-modernistic way, the impracticability of Yugoslavian unity. Draskovic and Cosic were soon to occupy important positions in Serbian politics, and even Pavic openly expressed his support for Milosevic.³¹⁰

In this way, the tables were turned and times changed in the Serbian cultural and political landscape. To use Simic’s terms, a new ‘normative zone’ had been created, which was used to determine who was ‘good’ and who was ‘bad’. Here was the entire gamut of past nationalistic traditions, symbols, attitudes, political views and mythological interpretations of the past, all restored to their former glory. Culture and power, the elite and the common people were united with one another by favourable sentiments concerning their own ethnic group and by unfavourable views concerning outsiders. The objective was a larger, more powerful Serbia. The minority who opposed this development were politically and socially marginalized. Anyone expressing a dissenting view encountered an increasingly unpleasant backlash. This climate favoured the fomentation of a hysterical mood in response to the perilous position of the Serbs in Kosovo. This in turn helped to bring Slobodan Milosevic to power.

The new political leader and his cronies made use of their supporters in the population to seize power in Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro, and to strengthen their control of the federal army. Serbian society was whipped into a state of national psychosis by a series of events, most of which were carefully staged. The simultaneous victory of nationalist/separatist movements in Croatia and Slovenia made war virtually inevitable. Large-scale, highly intensive political manipulation was required to achieve a situation in which all parties were prepared to resort to force. However, this would not have achieved the desired effect if citizens had been less receptive to the ethnic/nationalistic message.

The Serbs and Croats had a marked propensity for distancing themselves, as civilized Europeans, from the 'semi-Asian' Serbs. However, this was more than equalled by the way in which the Serbs, as Christian Europeans, wanted to distinguish themselves from the 'barbaric' Yugoslavian Muslims.³¹¹ At the same time, the Serbs continued to impress upon foreign visitors that Serbian identity and history were just too different to be comprehensible to Western Europeans. 'Obstinate otherness', or the deep-seated need to be different from other ethnic groups³¹², was widespread among Serbs. It must therefore be accepted as a major element in the fatal developments that occurred prior to 1991, and thereafter. During the 1980s, the erosion of the totalitarian system in Yugoslavia meant that citizens could no longer be compelled to toe the line. The Yugoslavia one-party state was in an advanced stage of decay. Strong public support was needed if the country was to discard this system and switch to an entirely different political situation. Appeals to ethnic solidarity proved to be an extremely effective means of winning over a majority of voters in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.

The release of accumulated ethnic tensions in Yugoslavia, in eruptions of excessive violence, was by no means unique in the history of this peninsula. The fact that this has occurred at regular intervals to some extent justifies statements about 'ancient hatreds' and 'deeper traits of character presumably from a distant tribal past'³¹³. In a sense, it also supports the 'Balkan Man' school of thought. However, such generalized qualifications tend to gloss over both the complexity of the region's past and the elusive phenomenon of ethnic identity. Many Western observers consider merciless nationalism to be the true characteristic of the Balkans. History shows, however, that this phenomenon usually 'has only ever been sustainable for brief periods by governments before it begins to soften, then fragment and finally decay.'³¹⁴ In other words, from time to time, violence-prone Balkan Man suddenly pops up all over the place, only to disappear again. During the intervals between these upheavals, the various ethnic groups live relatively peacefully with or alongside one another.

For this reason, the notion that ethnicity is purely a question of a rigid tradition, unalterable dependence and deep conviction on the part of numerous, clearly demarcated groups of people needs to be amended. The enormous contrasts and fluctuations that characterize the history of the Balkans result from the complex distribution of different population groups throughout the area, from the Ottoman heritage and from the incomplete Europeanization of the region. In comparison to Western Europe, the Balkans has remained a poverty-stricken region, most of whose inhabitants are condemned to a harsh, hand-to-mouth existence. Although the state assumed Western parliamentary forms, a truly democratic *civil society* failed to develop, and the citizens lacked a decent system of legal security. They were confronted with the dictatorial abuse of power, with suppression, clientelism, patronage, bribery, corruption, extortion, incompetence and inefficiency. The mainly peasant population therefore had to pay a very high price for the poorly implemented modernization of the Balkan countries.³¹⁵ Respectful civil obedience is based on the confidence that the government is serving the general interests of the nation. This characterized the pillared and segregated society of the Netherlands during the first half of the 20th century, but could not develop in the Balkans. The population of South-Eastern Europe continued to display the characteristics that so typified people's relationships with the official bodies of church and state during the Ottoman period: *bachsıs* (distrust), *iavaslık* (lethargic submissiveness) and *kismet* (fatalism).³¹⁶

The uncertainty of everyday existence caused people to identify strongly with the interests of their own family and to adopt a defensive, if not xenophobic, attitude to outsiders. Loyalty to one's own small group of relatives was always more important than ethnic solidarity. Ethnicity was very strongly rooted in some groups, while others had only a faint awareness of it, or paid it lip service for

utilitarian reasons. Dishonesty, deception, lies and deceit were all permissible tools in the struggle to survive in a hostile outside world. In practice, ethnic and religious boundaries were sometimes frayed and vague. Many marginal groups arose who had integrated the habits and practices of various cultures into their daily lives. Religious syncretism was much more common than doctrinal piety. Among the Serbs there was also a striking mixture of heathen magic and Christian practices. The church served as the most important repository of national culture, but its saints could also offer protection to Muslims, Catholics or gypsies. The literature repeatedly makes reference to the fact that, as a religious institute, the church played a rather insignificant role in the spiritual life of Serbs and Montenegrins during the 19th and 20th centuries. Village churches were unobtrusive and small, and they were not regularly attended. Village priests had little authority, and people were as distrustful of the senior incumbents of the state church as they were of worldly authorities. An opinion poll held in 1985 showed that no more than eleven percent of the population of Serbia, Montenegro and Vojvodina stated that they were religious.³¹⁷

In times of profound change, increasing uncertainty and danger, people seek any means of protection and tend to 'go with the flow'. Large groups of citizens are immediately prepared to renounce the symbols and practices of a discredited regime or leader, and to offer their support to a new patron, preferably the most powerful individual. 'In modern conditions, with the mass media, this means that they will carefully emulate what the 'most' authoritative voice – His Master's Voice – tells them to think and believe.'³¹⁸ This results either in a greater emphasis of dependence on traditional ethical values or a more ostentatious display of adherence to a given religion. In order to avoid persecution or being driven away from their village, people will (if possible) adopt an entirely different ethnic or religious identity. This behaviour does not necessarily have much to do with these people's genuine feelings or religious conviction: '... the more menacing the power, the thicker the mask.' Such chameleon-like behaviour has been a regularly-recurring feature in the history of the whole of Eastern Europe. Elsewhere also, sudden changes at the top of the political pyramid were associated with the continuation of despotism, poverty and dependence. It was essential to make the correct political choices, and to do so quickly.³¹⁹

It seems, therefore, that many inhabitants of the Balkans are capable of considerable adaptive flexibility. However, anyone who supposes that this characteristic would enable the rapid reconstruction of healthy, multicultural societies in Kosovo, Bosnia and Macedonia under international supervision would probably be in for a disappointment. The ability to use ethnic and political mimicry is directly related to the destruction and violence that characterized so many Balkan conflicts. Nothing is more important in this world of pretence and sham than the national symbols, ethnic marks and religious beacons. It is these things that delineate and fill the 'normative zone'. They provide direction and clarity. It is imperative that both this abstract territory and the nation's actual physical territory be clear and pure. They must be free of any confusing or contaminating elements. This is why Serbs are not permitted to live on Croat land and why all mosques on Serbian soil must be destroyed. Many individuals were willing and able to demonstrate their loyalty to their fatherland by assisting with the cleansings. They have seldom been carried out as thoroughly as in the most recent of the Yugoslavian conflicts.

These conflicts were much worse than many previous eruptions of ethnic violence, primarily because they lasted much longer. The Balkan wars at the start of the 20th century were bloody, but the first lasted only for a couple of months and the second for no more than a month. In terms of their nature, duration and scope, only the events of the Second World War were of a comparable order of magnitude. The population was never given the opportunity of properly coming to terms with the tragic events that occurred between 1941 and 1945. This would have required lengthy and thorough historical research. Such studies were initially impeded by the Communist regime, and subsequently by the nationalist hysteria that succeeded Tito's administration. However, the Second World War taught all Yugoslavs that ethnicity can be a very perilous thing indeed. Half a century later the ongoing fear of a possible repetition, coupled with the need to be permanently alert to such developments, had the effect

of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Now people have to come to terms with the repetition of these events as well. This is an enormous barrier to the restoration of normal social and political relations.

At the end of this account, the break-up of Yugoslavia appears to have been caused by a remarkably tangled series of diametrically opposed forces. These included the conflicts between traditional indigenous cultures, the unbridgeable gap and constant interplay between mountain dwellers, rural and urban populations, or between *doslaci* and *starosedeooci*, as well as attempts to introduce westernization and modernization in all these population groups. Other factors were the interweaving of internal political conflicts and international meddling, or the significance of political manipulation of the population by unbridled political powers on the one hand and the dependence of such rulers on the mentality and opinions of their common supporters on the other. Finally, closely-knit family life and ancient village communities existed within an extremely dominant state. This led to a situation in which highly stable forms of ethnic dependence and political loyalty existed side by side with highly changeable, bizarre variants of these characteristics.

We will just have to be satisfied with the fact that determining the origins and effects of complex events is not the strong suit of the historical profession. In the Netherlands, four centuries of historical study have failed to identify the 'real' causes of the Dutch rebellion against Spain. In this context, one commentator pointed out that 'Large-scale historical events are generally so complex and polysemantic that causal explanations are not merely inadequate, they are utterly pointless. The only thing that we can do when confronted with phenomena of this kind is to study those factors that seem to have contributed to the development of the historic event. It is wrong to give the impression that we can indicate whether they caused the event in question and, if so, the extent to which they were responsible.'³²⁰ Accordingly, it has never been my aim to identify all of the riddles of the Yugoslavian conflict, let alone solve them.

Similarly, I do not believe that it would be useful - or even possible - to cut through the Gordian knot of image and reality once and for all. I have thus attempted to unravel these tangled webs a little bit. I also trust that I have been able to make clear that it is not necessary to decide whether or not to accept the existence of 'Balkan Man', or whether or not to accept the existence of 'ancient ethnic hatreds'. What is vitally important, however, is to realize exactly what we want such terms to mean. The distinctive history of the Balkans has led to the development of sharp ethnic contrasts. It has also given rise to a mentality (or mentalities) in large sections of the population that differs from the Western European frame of mind. In attempting to visualize this, we usually fail to allow for their enormous range of variation and for the fact that they are in a state of constant flux. The image is reality fossilized into a stereotype. Whenever those using a particular image feel that it has been overtaken by events, and is therefore unsound, they simply opt for a new cliché. However, such choices are also determined by certain habits and historical traditions. Although direct observation of objective reality remains impossible, the study of image formation allows one to recognize such clichés as platitudes, and to distinguish between them and genuine attempts to adopt a more candid approach to reality.

Notes

¹ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene II.

² Holbrooke, *War*, 21.

³ *Ibidem*, 22.

⁴ Owen, *Odyssey*, 3, 5.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 23. Western observers were not alone in believing Bosnia's ethnic conflicts to be unbridgeable. Long before the outbreak of the Bosnian conflict, Yugoslavs referred to this area as 'krava Bosna' or 'Bloody Bosnia'.

⁶ *Other Balkan Wars*, 7.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 13.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 14.

⁹ Quoted by Todorova, *Balkans*, 185.

¹⁰ Kaplan, *Ghosts*, xxiii.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, xvi.

¹² For details about Ambler see: Goldworthy, *Ruritania*, 109.

¹³ Holbrooke, *War*, 23.

¹⁴ West, *Black Lamb*, 280. See also pages 288, 302, 309 and 316-7.

¹⁵ Holbrooke, *War*, 23-24, 366-68.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 165.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 22.

¹⁸ Leerssen, 'The allochronic periphery', 285.

¹⁹ Leerssen, 'L'effet de typique', 131.

²⁰ See: Bauer, *Soviet system*, 157 onwards

²¹ *Ibidem*, 161.

²² See Gorskij, *Mental'nost'*. (also for additional references)

²³ The notion that our understanding of reality is based on a construction, was popularized by Berger and Luckman in *Social Construction*.

²⁴ See: Said, *Orientalism* and Said, *Culture*. For a reliable follower see: Kabbani, *Myths*. For a different vision, see: Sharafuddin, *Islam*. Said's one-sided position and indignant tone generated a great deal of criticism. See, for example: Daniel, 'Edward Said', 211-222. My main objection is that Said restricts himself too much to the 19th century and to the Near East, and that his interpretation of the concept of *orientalism* is too narrow. Said tends to gloss over the fact that 'orientophilia' existed even in Ancient times. He also passes over the fear of Eastern barbarians that has existed ever since. He does not appreciate that Eastern Europe was also orientalized by the West, and that in the case of Russia (which was never subjugated by the West) the connection between orientalization and imperialism is hardly relevant. For details of this, see Chapter II below. For details of the inadequacy of Said's views, in terms of providing a better understanding of the Western image of the Balkans, see: Allcock, 'Constructing the Balkans', 173 onwards.

²⁵ Cited by Friedman, *Bosnian Muslims*, 1, 5.

²⁶ Moynihan, *Pandaemonium*, 22.

²⁷ Huntington, 'Clash of civilisations', 22-49.

²⁸ See, for example: Naarden, 'Het Westen' ('The West'), 331-2; Boer, 'Reactie' ('Reaction'), 390-1.

²⁹ See: Barfoot, *Beyond Pug's Tour*, 2.

³⁰ The following statement by Tudjman is symptomatic. 'The Yugoslav experience showed that the cultural and geopolitical divides and constraints turned out to be decisive - so strong that the common state proved not viable. The current fault-line overlaps with those of the Roman Empire (Theodosian line), between Rome, Byzantium, and Islam, as well as with the region where this divide of civilizations is most palpable, Bosnia-Herzegovina, which produced one of the most serious power crises of today.' Views concerning the superior, Catholic and western civilization of a country such as Croatia were

rivalled by the opinions of Serbian intellectuals such as Milorad Pavic, concerning the excellence of the Orthodox culture. Similar sentiments were being expressed by Islamic clergymen and intellectuals in Bosnia. See: Tindeman's, *Unfinished Peace*, 16. See also Kaplan's account of his conversation with the Croat journalist Slavenka Drakulic about the clash of civilizations in Yugoslavia. (Kaplan, *Ghosts*, 6-7).

³¹ Roosens, *Creating Ethnicity*, 123.

³² *Ibidem*, 156.

³³ Cited by Kamp, 'De weg naar complementariteit' ('The road to complementarity'), 176.

³⁴ Formulation of Benthem van den Bergh, 'De kracht van het symbool' ('The power of symbols'), 228. Leerssen, 'Over nationale identiteit' ('On national identity'), 420.

³⁶ Hofstede achieved this with his Institute for Research on Intercultural Co-operation at the University of Limburg, the Netherlands. The same was true of Tilburg University where, in 1990, a European values study was carried out into the cultural similarities and differences between 16 countries. See: Stokvis, 'Beeldvorming, stereotypen en karakteristieken' ('Formation of images, stereotypes and characteristics'), 279-288; Schnabel, 'God in vele landen' ('God in many countries').

³⁷ It is no coincidence that objections of this kind are mainly made against the history of mentality, which examines topics that are related to the common character of a people or to national identity. This is 'one of the most difficult branches of historiography', because it 'requires empathy [...] a deliberate attempt to set aside one's own cultural assumptions that is not easy to attain.' Furthermore, mentalities are extremely 'volatile' research topics, and cannot be measured directly. The source material provides only their 'partial and coloured reaction to culture'. See: Frijhoff, 'Impasses en beloften' ('Impasses and promises'), 407 and 409. See also: Bertels, 'skepsis' ('scepticism'), 155-166. The importance of the study of mentalities is also recognized by socio-economic historians, who work with 'hard' data. One of the comments made on this issue by David S. Landes, the author of the book *The wealth and poverty of nations*, was 'If we have been able to learn anything from the history of economic development, it is that culture makes an enormous difference (in this regard, Max Weber was quite right).' Witness the entrepreneurial zeal of exiled minorities - the Chinese in East and South-East Asia, the Indians in East Africa, the Lebanese in West Africa, Jews and Calvinists throughout almost the whole of Europe, etc. Academics tend to be deterred, however, by culture in the sense of the inner values and mentality that direct a people. It reeks of race and origins - as if nothing can ever be changed [...] The technicians prefer the concrete approach: changing interest rates and exchange rates, freeing-up trade, changing political institutions, governance. In addition, when we criticize someone's culture they may feel that their ego, identity and self respect are under attack.' David S. Landes, *Arm en Rijk*, (The wealth and poverty of nations) 542-543.

³⁸ Stokvis, 'Nationale identiteit' ('National identity'), 287.

³⁹ Van den Kamp, 'De weg naar complementariteit' ('The road to complementarity'), 180-1.

⁴⁰ Benthem van den Berg, 'De kracht van het symbool' ('The power of symbols'), 228-230. With regard to Anderson's view of nations as an 'imagined community' Daniel Kofman comments that: 'However 'creative' imagination can be, an underlying assumption lingers that there is a 'real' substratum of nationless individuals against which one 'imagines' the mental construct of national identity. But one would have to imbibe a heavy dose of materialism [...] to take nationless individuals as less 'imaginary' than the thickly described and self-identifying people we know.' D. Kofman, 'Israel and the War in Bosnia', 120.

⁴¹ One work that provides a unique and instructive attempt to examine Russia without such prejudice is *Kontakt met de vijand* (Contact with the enemy) by Kees Verheul.

⁴² Leerssen once appealed to E.H.Kossmann to be able to describe a people's characteristics as 'historical artefacts'. It is therefore remarkable that the latter also points out actual differences between the Belgians and the Dutch. During a series of lectures dedicated to the Belgian, Johan Fleerackers, he denied that a national identity can arise spontaneously from history. He also made the following remark about Fleerackers 'if he had been Dutch he would perhaps have been caught up by that people's longstanding, supreme optimism that the state would be able to fundamentally reform society by means of legislation. He was Belgian, however, and he knew that Belgians have good historical reasons for

distrusting the government. As a highly placed administrator in the civil service he considered such a distrust misplaced, but accepted that it was compellingly present. E.H.Kossmann, *Een tuchteloos probleem* (An unruly problem), 10.

⁴³ Hay, *Europe*, 2, 5, 10, 14, 21. According to the English chronicle writer, William of Malmesbury, on the occasion of his call for the First Crusade Pope Urbanus II addressed the faithful as follows 'You inhabitants of temperate regions'. (Vos estis gens in temperationibus mundi provinciis oriunda). Hay, *Op.cit.*, 32.

⁴⁴ See: Zacharasiewicz, *Klimatheorie* (Climate theory), 16.

⁴⁵ Febvre, *Terre*, 2-10, 108-111. Martin and James, *All possible Worlds*, 102-105.

⁴⁶ Stanzel, *Europäer*, 28-33, 44-55.

⁴⁷ See: Febvre, *Terre*, 12-34, 58-73, 112-135. Claval, *Geschiedenis aardrijkskunde* (Historical geography), 29-36.

⁴⁸ For Huntington see: Martin, *Huntington*. For details of his ideas about climate and Britain, see: Huntington, *Principles*, 408-416, 722-723, for example.

⁴⁹ Stanzel, *Europäer*, 95-99.

⁵⁰ For a summary and further references, see: Naarden, *Socialist Europe*, Chapter 1, and Naarden, 'Dutchmen', 1-20.

⁵¹ It should be noted here that serfdom prior to 1800 was still common in the Habsburg countries and in parts of Europe to the east of the Elbe. It was far less common in the Balkans, however. Todorova mentions 'the existence of a relatively free peasantry' as one of the beneficial results of Ottoman rule, which was characteristic of all Balkan societies on the eve of their independence. She cites Romania as an exception, but Bosnia should also have been included, since bondage continued to exist in that country right up until its incorporation into Yugoslavia. Todorova, *Balkans*, 172. See also note 81.

⁵² See: Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*.

⁵³ Jahn, *Russophilie*; Todorova, *Balkans*, 111.

⁵⁴ See: Hollander, *Political pilgrims*.

⁵⁵ See, for example: Soergel, *Arbeiterselbstverwaltung*; Schrenk, *Yugoslavia. Self-management Socialism*; Lilge, *Arbeiterselbstverwaltung*; Meister, *Où va l'autogestion yougoslave?* For details of the responses in the Netherlands, see Chapter III below.

⁵⁶ Todorova, *Balkans*, 13.

⁵⁷ Goldworthy, *Ruritania*, 9.

⁵⁸ Todorova, *Balkans*, 6.

⁵⁹ See: Malia, *Russia under Western Eyes*, 127-130.

⁶⁰ In other words, the difference of opinion that existed in the 19th century between the proponents of a future united Germany without Austria, and those who opposed this view, who felt that the Habsburg empire should also be included.

⁶¹ See: Droz, *Europe centrale*; Schöpflin, *In Search of Central Europe*; Lord, *Central Europe*.

⁶² He also wondered 'Can we get back to the state of affairs in which the Slovaks return to their natural job of scrubbing windows, the Romanians are confined to the exercise of their only national industry (which, according to Lord D'Abernon's statement in an official memorandum, is fornication), the Poles are restricted to piano playing and the white slave traffic, and the Serbs are controlled in their great national activity - organizing political murders on foreign territory?' Cited in: Burgess, *Divided Europe*, 54-55.

⁶³ Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security*, 190. Simms, 'Bosnia', 74.

⁶⁴ About Poles: 'J.M. Keynes, the theorist of modern capitalism, called it 'an economic impossibility whose only industry is Jew baiting'. [The historian] Lewis Namier called it 'pathological'. [The historian] E.H. Carr called it 'a farce'. [The former British Prime Minister] Lloyd George talked of 'a historic failure'. [...] In 1939 he announced that 'Poland had deserved its fate'.' Davies, *God's Playground*, Vol. II, p. 393. See also: Forster, 'Britain and East Central Europe', 112 onwards.

⁶⁵ See: Craig Nation, 'Balkan Images', 30, 32.

⁶⁶ Dittrich, *Midden-Europa?* See also: Naarden, 'De identiteit van Centraal-Europa' ('The identity of Central Europe'); Roobol, 'Central Europe'.

⁶⁷ See: Kinsky, 'Central Europe', 155 and Renner, 'Midden-Europese paradoxen' (Central European paradoxes).

⁶⁸ For further details, see Chapter IV below.

⁶⁹ See, for example: Ebels-Hoving, *Byzantium*. Petkov, *Infidels*. Naarden, *Spiegel*, 15, 17.

⁷⁰ See, for example: Naarden, 'Education' and Naarden, 'Ljev Goemiljov'.

⁷¹ For Krizanic see: Eekman, *Slavische dromen* (Slavic dreams); Eekman, *Juraj, Krizanic*

⁷² See: Milokovic-Djuric, *Panslavism*. Todorova, *Balkans*, 83-88.

⁷⁴ Jelavich, *Establishment*; Thaden, *Russia*.

⁷⁵ Todorova, *Balkans*, 69.

⁷⁶ For further details on this matter, see Chapter IV below.

⁷⁶ See: Kann, *Peoples*, 3-22, 476-492.

⁷⁷ Taylor, *Habsburg monarchy*, 11. According to Alan Palmer, Metternich liked to repeat this 'slightly tedious joke' in various forms. He even considered his own summer residence, which was situated in an eastern suburb of Vienna, to be the 'ultimate frontier of civilized Europe'. Palmer, *Metternich*, 286. In a letter to Princess Mélanie written in 1836 he made the following statement about Hungary: 'Les pays, les lois qui le régissent, les moeurs, les usages sont en arrière de plusieurs siècles du reste de l'Europe.' Erzébet Andics who uses this quote, comments: 'Eine der Hauptquellen von Metternichs Irrtümern in Bezug auf Ungarn war die irrealer Wertung, d.h. die überstiegene Geringschätzung des Landes.' Andics, *Metternich*, 82.

⁷⁸ Dittrich, 'Oost-Europa' (Eastern Europe), 421-2.

⁷⁹ Donia, *Islam*, 14.

⁸⁰ The extent to which actual serfdom existed in Bosnia, in the formal and legal senses, is a matter of debate for historians. There is no discussion, however, concerning the burden of the *kmets*' obligations to the *begs*, and the backwardness of agrarian relationships. See, for example: Donia and Fine, *Bosnia*, 75-79, 96.

⁸¹ Other historians, however, feel that the fall of the Habsburg empire, like its German and Russian counterparts, was a result of the First World War, rather than a consequence of ethnic contrasts. See, for example: Goudoever, 'Nationaliteiten vraagstuk' (The issue of nationalities), 440-441.

⁸² J.W.von Goethe, *Faust*, I Theil:

Vor dem Tor: ANDRER BÜRGER:

Nichts Bessers weiss ich mir an Sonn- und Feiertagen,

Als ein Gespräch von Krieg und Kriegsgeschrei,

Wenn hinten, weit, in den Türkei,

Die Völker auf einander schlagen.

Man steht am Fenster, Trinkt sein Gläschen aus

Und sieht den Fluss hinab die bunten Schiffe gleiten;

Dann kehrt man abends froh nach Haus,

Und segnet Fried' und Friedenszeiten.

⁸³ Leeb, *Fallmerayer*, 55.

⁸⁴ Todorova, *Balkans*, 70-3; Rosdolsky, *Engels*.

⁸⁵ Craig, *Deutsche Geschichte*, 108; Dittrich, 'Bismarck und Rumänien', 38.

- ⁸⁶ Grimm, 'Balkan-Bild des Brockhaus'.
- ⁸⁷ See: Müge Göcek, *East Encounters West*.
- ⁸⁸ See: *Delacroix*, 62-81.
- ⁸⁹ Todorova, *Balkans*, 73-82; Goldsworthy, *Ruritania*, 23-4.
- ⁹⁰ Bartstra, *Handboek*, deel III, 93; Sas, 'Europese statenstelsel' (European state system), 243.
- ⁹¹ Cobban, *History of modern France*, Vol. II, 172; Pattinger Saab, *Crimean Alliance*, 146-7.
- ⁹² Anderson, *Britain's Discovery*, 124; Todorova, *Balkans*, 90-5.
- ⁹³ Woodhouse, *Philhellenes*, 37; See also: Angelamatis-Tsougarakis, *Greek Revival*, 85-100.
- ⁹⁴ Blake, *Disraeli*, 65.
- ⁹⁵ Gleason, *Russophobia in Britain*, 164-204.
- ⁹⁶ Thomson, *England*, 158.
- ⁹⁷ Todorova, *Balkans*, 97-8; Hadziselimovic, 'Two Victorian Ladies', 1-7.
- ⁹⁸ '...there occurred in Britain one of the deepest, most varied, and most prolonged outbursts of public feeling ever to manifest itself in a people not usually given to extravagant display of private feeling.' Millman, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, 176.
- ⁹⁹ See: Seton-Watson, *Disraeli*; Shannon, *Gladstone*.
- ¹⁰⁰ Todorova, *Balkans*, 103.
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, 102.
- ¹⁰² Stanzel, *Europäer*, 29.
- ¹⁰³ For a more extensive discussion of this literature see Goldsworthy, *Ruritania*, *passim*.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, 161-171; Todorova, *Balkans*, 120-1; Hodgson, 'Edith Durham. Traveller and Publicist' and June E. Hill, 'Edith Durham as a Collector' in: Allcock, *Black Lambs*, 8-35.
- ¹⁰⁵ Hall, *Impossible Country*, 9.
- ¹⁰⁶ Goldsworthy, *Ruritania*, 171-184; Naarden, *Spiegel* (Mirror), 26-27.
- ¹⁰⁷ Goldsworthy, *Ruritania*, 71.
- ¹⁰⁸ Namier, *Facing East*, 53-54.
- ¹⁰⁹ Crankshaw, *Fall of Habsburg*, 377.
- ¹¹⁰ The Serbian day of remembrance (28 June), which commemorates the defeat by the Turks at the Battle of Blackbird Field in Kosovo, in 1389.
- ¹¹¹ The Entente camp glossed over the fact that Serbian detachments (and even a Serbian Field Marshal) fought on the Austrian side. Grmek, *Nettoyage ethnique*, 23; Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, 149, 153; Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 253-4; *Other Balkan Wars*, 151; Jelavich, *Establishment of Balkan States*, 191; Emmert, *Serbian Golgotha*, 121 onwards.
- ¹¹² Seleskovic, *Serbie dans l'opinion allemande*, 8.
- ¹¹³ See, for example: Dutton, *The Politics of Diplomacy*.
- ¹¹⁴ For details of Seton-Watson's views, see: H. and Ch. Seton-Watson, *Making of a New Europe*, 61, 121, 140, 152, 175, 212-215, 300-302, 312, 323, 341. For France, see: Grmek, *Nettoyage ethnique*, 135-149.
- ¹¹⁵ For details of this, see: Grenzenbach, *Germany's Informal Empire*.
- ¹¹⁶ Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, 155.
- ¹¹⁷ Rothschild, *East Central Europe*, 8-11, 201 onwards; Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 3-21; West, *Black Lamb*, 1115-1117.
- ¹¹⁸ West, *Black Lamb*, 1119.
- ¹¹⁹ Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, 156; West, *Black Lamb*, 1115 onwards; Maclean, *Eastern Approaches*, 102 - 103.
- ¹²⁰ Emmert, *Serbian Golgotha*, 140-141. However, in 1947, a commemoration was held to mark the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of *Gorski vijenac* (The Mountain Wreath). The renowned epic poem by Petar Petrovic Njegos about the 18th century slaughter of southern Slavs who had converted to Islam. The fact that Njegos was a Montenegrin rather than a Serb or a Croat made it possible for this work to be honoured and annexed as the most important book in Yugoslavian literature. Furthermore, Tito's partisans could be portrayed as 'updated versions' of Njegos's freedom fighters. See: Wachtel, *Making a Nation*, 142-146. See also Chapter IV, below.

¹²¹ Rijk, *Yugoslavia*, 7.

¹²² Stojan Cerovic, the renowned journalist employed by the Belgrade weekly *Vreme*, commented that in many ways Communist Yugoslavia was closer to Europe than the republics that succeeded it, 'however much these may take pride in their democracy and European orientation.' Paul Panin quoted Cerovic in describing Tito's state as 'politisch, kulturell und ideell von dem durchsetzt, was Mitteleuropa ausmacht.' *Europa im Krieg*, 31.

¹²³ See: Ströhm, *Obne Tito*, for example.

¹²⁴ See: Hackett, *Third World War*. See also: Both, *From Indifference to Entrapment*, 80.

¹²⁵ Broekmeyer, *Joegoslavië*, 38-42, 46-48; Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, 119-120, 167-168, 294-296, 437-440.

¹²⁶ Tudjman's party saw its victory in the 1990 elections as the decisive step for the inclusion of Croatia in Central Europe, 'the region to which it has always belonged', except in the most recent past, when Croatian territory was subjected to 'an Asiatic form of government'. The same rhetoric was employed in Slovenia: 'We Slovenes have difficulty identifying ourselves with the pro-Asian or pro-African Yugoslavia. We cannot identify with such a Yugoslavia so long as we have the character that we have acquired in a thousand years of history. The symbolic fact that the rulers of the Slovenes were Charlemagne, Charles V, and Napoleon is less important: it is more important that we embodied the way of life that was created in central-western Europe.' For details of these and other citations, see: Bakic, 'Orientalist Variations', 10-11.

¹²⁷ Tindemans, *Unfinished Peace*, 19.

¹²⁸ Silber, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 198; Glenny, *Fall*, 26-27; Vasic, 'Black Hand, White Rose', 38.

¹²⁹ Furguson, 'Europa Nervosa', 127-132; Meyer, *Jugoslawien verspielt*, 423; Sadkovich, 'American Media and Balkan', 134; Mestrovic, *Balkanization*, 43,51; Conversi, 'Moral Relativism' 244-281; Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 22, 24, 259, 264; Hoffman, 'Yugoslavia: Implications for Europe', 114-115; Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 104-195, 156-157, 176-177; NRC, *De verwoesting* (The devastation), 7, 36-37; Rohde, *Endgame*, 24-25.

¹³⁰ Cited by Merrill, *Old Bridge*, 12.

¹³¹ See above, in the section entitled 'The image of Eastern Europe'.

¹³² Ullman, 'The Wars in Yugoslavia', 16.

¹³³ G.F. Treverton, 'The new Europe', 105.

¹³⁴ See: Mestrovic, *Genocide After Emotion*, 18-19, 170; Mestrovic, *Balkanisation*, 31; Holbrooke, *War*, 65; Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, 161; Franchet, *Casque bleu pour rien*, 126; Glucksman, 'Le Rouge et le Brun', 69.

¹³⁵ Howorth, 'The debate in France', 112; Lukic, *Europe from the Balkans*, 266-267.

¹³⁶ Cited by Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, 161. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, one of the most important newspapers in Germany, is considered to be largely responsible for creating a pro-Croatian and anti-Serbian mood there. See: Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 149.

¹³⁷ Grmek, *Nettoyage ethnique*, 190, note 2.

¹³⁸ One of them, Alain Finkelkraut, was – with good reason – referred to as 'Finkelcroat'. *Europa im Krieg*, 69.

¹³⁹ Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 158-166. Mitterrand's famous lightning visit to Sarajevo in 1992 was also intended to stimulate the international community to greater activity. It was certainly not an anti-Serbian gesture. His visit coincided with St Vitus' day and the President had originally planned only to meet with Izetbegovic. The Croats and the Bosnians might have taken that as a deliberate affront. At the insistence of the UN commander (General L. MacKenzie, a Canadian who was also accused of being sympathetic to the Serbs), shortly before his departure, Mitterrand shook hands with Karadzic and Koljevic. Silber and Little, *Death*, 225.

¹⁴⁰ Mestrovic, *The Balkanisation of the West*, 46.

¹⁴¹ Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, 158-159.

¹⁴² Maclean, *Eastern Approaches*, 293, 326-331, 448, 447, 494, 517, 523, 527.

¹⁴³ For an extensive discussion, see: Goldsworthy, *Ruritania*, 137-159.

¹⁴⁴ Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 174-183.

¹⁴⁵ Conversi, 'Moral relativism and Equidistance', 258-260. The evidence that Conversi puts forward in this article, to support the existence of a pro-Serbian tradition in Great Britain, is very flimsy indeed. With regard to Zametica, see also: T. Judah, *The Serbs*, 220, 222.

¹⁴⁶ 'Banquet Address by U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia John D. Scanlan July 22, 1990' in: Dragnich, *Serbia's Historical Heritage*, 111-115. This book is an undeniably pro-Serbian publication, produced by elderly Serbian academics in the US. However, their patriotic writings preceded the outbreak of war, and express no support for Milosevic's policies. According to V. Meier, American policies were undeniably pro-Serbian until W. Zimmerman arrived in Belgrade. Scanlan became a branch manager in Belgrade for the Serbian-American businessman Milan Panic, who became Prime Minister of the new Yugoslavia in 1992. Meier, *Jugoslawien verspielt*, 77. Many other, more objective, authors, put forward the notion that *glasnost* was originally conceived in Belgrade rather than Moscow. See, for example: Udovicki, *Burn this House*, 82. Ramet also confirms that Milosevic initially 'restored grace to many Serbian dissidents, including Milovan Djilas' (who was not actually a Serb). Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 27.

¹⁴⁷ See: Mousavizadeh, *The Black Book*, 134. For a summary of the activities of Serbian groups in the US (who were generally rather amateuristic and not particularly influential) see: Blitz, 'serbia's War lobby', 187-243. It must also be said that, in 1991, the Croatian authorities were highly incompetent in their use of the western media. The Slovenes had a better feel for such matters. See: Bennett, *Yugoslavia 's Bloody Collapse*, 162-163 and Gow, 'After the Flood', 457-458.

¹⁴⁸ See: Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 235. For America see: Bert, *Reluctant Superpower*, 79 onwards.

¹⁴⁹ Sobel, 'U.S. and European Attitudes', 146.

¹⁵⁰ According to Bogdan Denitch, an American sociologist of Serbian extraction who was highly critical of Serbian policies, the image of Serbian culture and history that was presented in the German media could 'only be described as racist.' Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism*, 52. See also Gow, *Triumph*, 166-174. According to Van den Boogaard, the Yugoslavia specialists at the German embassy in Belgrade opposed the recognition of Croatia. See: R. van den Boogaard, 'The civil war cannot be ended' in: NRC, *Verwoesting* (Devastation), 57.

¹⁵¹ For critical evaluations of the German position, see, for example: Wynaendts, *L' engrenage*, 187; Walsum, *Verder met Nederland* (Further with the Netherlands), 65-66; Glenny, *Fall*, 112, 188-190, 280; Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 183 onwards. For the opposing standpoint, see: Meier, *Jugoslawien verspielt, passim*.

¹⁵² Glenny, *Fall*, 25.

¹⁵³ For Italy see: *Italy and the Balkans*. See also: Both, *From Indifference to Entrapment*, 104, 120, 132, 134, 135.

¹⁵⁴ For a brief summary and for modern literature on the Greek civil war, see: Klok, 'Griekse burgeroorlog' (Greek civil war), 392-396, 414. For a Greek response, see: Veremis, *Greece, the Balkans and the European Union*.

¹⁵⁵ 'The Serbian kingdom, during its golden age under Stephen Dushan (1331-55), represented in many ways a dress rehearsal for the pattern of rule that was to emerge in Muscovy' (Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*, 56). In the *Archangelskij Sobor*, a 16th century church inside the Kremlin, the Czars preceding Peter the Great are buried. The church contains frescos depicting the ancestors of Ivan the Terrible, as well as four foreign rulers and saints. The latter include the Byzantine emperor Michael VII Palaeologos and three Serbs, including Saint Sava and Saint Lazar (the hero of Kosovo). Lazar and Kosovo also occupy a prominent place in Muscovite chronicles. Conversely, in Serbia at that time, the cult of Lazar was localized to the area around the monastery of Ravanica where his relics are housed. See: Mihaljcic, *The Battle of Kosovo*, 58-60.

¹⁵⁶ Romanenko, 'Russia in the Balkans', 32.

¹⁵⁷ Jelavich, *Establishment of Balkan States*, 185 onwards.

¹⁵⁸ Hersh, *Verraad, Lafheid en Bedrog* (Treachery, Sloth and Sham), 186-187.

¹⁵⁹ Djakov, *Slanjanskaja ideja*, 37.

¹⁶⁰ See: Romanenko, 'Erfenis van het verleden' (Legacy of the past), 40-48. Such Russian views are, to some extent, reinforced by Western attitudes and prejudices. For example, by Huntington who sees

Russia as an un-European power and a natural quality in the 'Orthodox Slavic alliance', an alliance between Russia and its congenators, such as Serbia. See: Kardelj, 'Huntington's Clash', 25-41.

¹⁶¹ One outspoken defender of the Serbian standpoint is Elena Guskova of the Institute of Slavistics and Balkanistics at the Russian Academy of Sciences. See, for example, her work *Jugoslavenskij krizis*.

¹⁶² See, for example: Gobble, 'Dangerous Liaisons', 182-197. For a more extensive study see: Lukic, *Europe*.

¹⁶³ Dania, *Bosnia and Hercegovina*, 172, 178; Friedman, *Bosnian Muslims*, 223; Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 176-177; Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 185-186.

¹⁶⁴ Voogt, *In den Balkan*, 10-11.

¹⁶⁵ I have not investigated any other sources. The only study on this subject that has been completed to date is the dissertation of Novakovic-Lapusina, *Srbi i Jugoistocna Evropa*.

¹⁶⁶ Theunissen, 'Barbaren en ongelovigen' (Barbarians and infidels), 37.

¹⁶⁷ Petkov, *Infidels, Turks, and Women*, 185-186.

¹⁶⁸ See also: Wijnands, 'Tulpen naar Amsterdam' (Tulips to Amsterdam), 97-106.

¹⁶⁹ Theunissen, *Topkapi*, 40; Roding, 'Die met dit zoort van volk wil verkeeren' (*Who mixes with people like that*), 56-57; Novikovic, *Srbi*, 30-34; Koster, *To Hellen's Noble Land*, 44; Huussen, *Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq*.

¹⁷⁰ Theunissen, 'Barbaren en ongelovigen', 43 (Barbarians and infidels), 53; Westerink, 'Liever Turks dan paaps' (Rather Turkish than Papist), 75-80.

¹⁷¹ Groot, *Ottoman Empire and Dutch Republic*, 181-189.

¹⁷² Groot, *Ottoman Empire*, 202-205; Heeringa, *De eerste Nederlandsche gezant (The first Dutch envoy)*, 116-139; Runciman, *The Great Church*, 259-288; Hadjianthoniou, *The Protestant Patriarch*, 47 onwards.

¹⁷³ See: Rozemond, *Archimandrite Hierotheos Abbatios*.

¹⁷⁴ Groot, *Betekenis Nederlandse ambassade (Significance of the Dutch embassy)*.

¹⁷⁵ Novikovic, *Srbi*, 107.

¹⁷⁶ Luttervelt, 'Turkse' schilderijen ('Turkish' paintings).

¹⁷⁷ Boon, *Westfriesse zeeman (West Frisian sailor)*.

¹⁷⁸ Flinkenflögel, *Entre perruques et turbans*, 42-43.

¹⁷⁹ Woensel, *Staat der geleerdheid (The level of scholarship)*; Wesselo, *Pieter van Woensel*; Reve-Israël, 'Een Hollandse arts (A Dutch physician)', 91-111; Novikovic, *Srbi*, 96-97; *Topkapi & Turkomanie*, 51-52; Koster, *To Hellen's Noble Land*, 120.

¹⁸⁰ *Topkapi & Turkomanie*, 15.

¹⁸¹ Koster, *To Hellen's Noble Land*, 104, 108.

¹⁸² For details about Fallmerayer, see Chapter II.

¹⁸³ For details of Dutch philhellenism see: Koster, *To Hellen's Noble Land*, 8-10, 164-195; Renting, 'Nederland' (The Netherlands), 21-50.

¹⁸⁴ Kampen, *Griekenland en Europeisch Turkije (Greece and European Turkey)*, 62-63.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, 294, 300-307.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 295-300.

¹⁸⁷ Daehne van Varick, *Bijdrage (Contribution)*.

¹⁸⁸ See: Naarden, 'Nederlanders' (The Dutch), 22-23.

¹⁸⁹ Woldring, *Bescheiden (Documents)*, 447-448.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, 343-344.

¹⁹¹ Reitsma, 'Jeanne Merkus'; West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, 271-273.

¹⁹² Karazin, *In den kruiddamp (In the gun smoke)*. Original title: *V porochorom dymu*.

¹⁹³ For details of Van der Mey, see: Willemsen, 'Hendrik Wolfgang van der Mey'.

¹⁹⁴ Mey, 'servische Epos' (Serbian epic poetry).

¹⁹⁵ Mey, 'Montenegro'.

¹⁹⁶ For details of a study on these books, see: Koch, *Koningsromans (novels about royalty)*. According to Koch, the numerous 'novels about royalty' in French literature were the main source of inspiration for Couperus. She failed to notice the similarities to the romantic Balkan genre initiated by Hope.

¹⁹⁷ Emants, *In Bosnië (In Bosnia)*.

- ¹⁹⁸ Smit, *Bescheiden* (Documents), Third Period, Second part, 723-724.
- ¹⁹⁹ Alberdingk Thijm, *Koningsliefde* (Royal Devotion, The Tragedy in Serbia), 5.
- ²⁰⁰ *Balkankeizerin* (The Balkan Empress), 101.
- ²⁰¹ Mandere, *Montenegro*, 194.
- ²⁰² Koppeschaar, *Montenegro en Servië* (Montenegro and Serbia), 68-71.
- ²⁰³ See the quotation at the start of this chapter.
- ²⁰⁴ Voogt, *In den Balkan*, xii, 9,11, 13, 107, 178, 195.
- ²⁰⁵ Fabius, *Met Bulgaren en Montenegrijnen* (With Bulgarians and Montenegrins).
- ²⁰⁶ Bartstra wrote the following about this: 'The newspaper-reading public in Europe derived frivolous enjoyment from the sensational reports about the Balkan war: a result of the dimming of their humanitarian ideals. Victories, charges with fixed bayonets, it was all great fun, but nobody realized how little was needed to kindle the flare-up in the Balkans into an inferno that would engulf the entire world'. Bartstra, *Handboek*, deel IV, 299.
- ²⁰⁷ Smit, *Bescheiden* (Documents), Third Period, Third part, 695, 830, 989, 993. Smit erroneously states that the Netherlands was not officially involved in sending the Dutch officers to Albania. He was also mistaken about the number of officers involved.
- ²⁰⁸ Goslinga, *The Dutch*; Fabius, *Albanië* (Albania).
- ²⁰⁹ Voogt, *In den Balkan*, 200.
- ²¹⁰ Durham, *Balkan Tangle*, 258, 261-262, 264-265, 268, 274- 275.
- ²¹² Petrowitch, *Heldensagen* (Sagas). The book has 388 pages.
- ²¹³ Rutten, *Joegoslavië* (Yugoslavia), viii-xi, 172.
- ²¹⁴ Faille, *Flitsen* (Flashes); Monnink, *Gastvriend* (Guest friend).
- ²¹⁵ Reitsma, *Zwerftochten* (Wanderings), 80, 82, 83, 87, 88, 119,128-132.
- ²¹⁶ For details of Den Doolaard, see: Doolaard, *Gesprekken* (Conversations).
- ²¹⁷ Doolaard, *Wilden* (Savages), 69.
- ²¹⁸ Doolaard, *Land van Tito* (Tito's country), 8, 32, 55, 76, 121, 149, 152, 163, 164, 166, 171, 214, 250.
- ²³⁹ This also occurred in books by foreign authors that were sold here in the Netherlands. Four years before the publication of *Het land van Tito* (Tito's country), a Belgian, Paul Speyer, asserted that the party and people of that country were 'fearlessly blazing new trails towards the fulfilment of their ideal'. See: Speyer, *Zuid Slavië* (Southern Slavia), 127. The British Yugoslavia expert, Bernard Newman, believed that the regime had become extremely liberal, following the breach with the USSR, and could therefore depend upon the genuine support of the population. See: Newman, *Rood Joego-Slavië* (Red Yugoslavia).
- ²²⁰ Alma, *Waar Europa eindigt* (Where Europe ends), 53.
- ²²³ Schroevers, *Op zoek* (Searching), 24, 113, 114.
- ²²² Here also, Den Doolaard was something of a trend-setter. He wrote three travel books. See: Doolaard, *Joegoslavië. Kaleidoskopisch reisland* (Yugoslavia – kaleidoscopic destination); Doolaard, *Dit is Joegoslavië* (This is Yugoslavia) and Doolaard, *Vakantieland Joegoslavië* (Yugoslavia – holiday destination). Prior to the Second World War, most tourists visiting the area were from Central European countries. In 1933, about 1000 Dutch people visited Yugoslavia, while in 1932 German tourists to the country numbered about 79,000. In 1954, 8,000 to 9,000 Dutch people visited the country (source: Eekman, *Joegoslavië* (Yugoslavia), 249). During the 1960s and 1970s, huge numbers of Dutch tourists visited Yugoslavia. They mostly spent their holidays on the Dalmatian coast, and got to know only a small part of Croatia, in a very superficial way.
- ²²³ Eekman, *Joegoslavië* (Yugoslavia), 143, 144, 175, 186, 200, 211, 218.
- ²²⁴ Constandse, *Joegoslavië* (Yugoslavia), 209, 210.
- ²²³ Constandse, *Josip Broz*, 97.
- ²²⁶ Anstadt, *Yugoslavia*, 50.
- ²²⁷ This is shown, for example, by the critical focus on Yugoslavia in an extensive study produced by the former KVP (Catholic People's Party) minister, Van den Brink, who was one of the architects of Dutch post-war industrialization: Brink, *Zoeken naar een Heilstaat* (Searching for Utopia), 277-297.

- ²²⁸ *Samenwerking* (Collaboration), 72-75.
- ²²⁹ Broekmeyer, *Arbeidersraad* (Worker's council), 360 onwards.
- ²³⁰ Broekmeyer, *Arbeidersraad of ondernemersstaat* (Worker's council or entrepreneurs' state), 13.
- ²³¹ *Ibidem*, 9; *Interlinks*, 13, 28, 73.
- ²³² Broekmeyer, *Yugoslav Workers' Self-management*, 196, 198.
- ²³³ *Baas in eigen bedrijf* (Being the boss in your own company), 2, 3, 50, 51.
- ²³⁴ Boonzajer Flaes, *Autoriteit en democratie* (Authority and democracy), 268, 269, 285, 287. Studies by leading Yugoslavian intellectuals whose work was translated into Dutch also had a very critical tone. See: Vidakovic, *Het tweede decennium* (The second decade); Markovic, *De revolutionaire weg* (The revolutionary path). A comparative study of the steel industry in the Netherlands and Yugoslavia came to the conclusion that there was actually very little basis for comparison. See: Dekker, *Planning*, 172 onwards.
- ²³⁵ Boonzajer Flaes, *Macht in overvloed* (Power in abundance), 9, 231.
- ²³⁶ Cited by: Brink, *Zoeken naar een heilstaat* (Searching for Utopia), 297.
- ²³⁷ Mitric, *Geheim agent* (Secret agent); Mitric, *Tito 's moordmachine* (Tito's murder machine).
- ²³⁸ Rijk, *Joegoslavië* (Yugoslavia), 7, 54, 55, 58, 68, 100, 143, 185-189.
- ²³⁹ Broekmeyer, *Joegoslavië in crisis* (Yugoslavia in crisis), 12, 14, 17-18, 38, 47, 57, 61, 63-64.
- ²⁴⁰ In the course of an interview, Joris Voorhoeve, the Dutch Minister of Defence during the tragedy of Srebrenica, stated that: 'When I was the director of the Clingendael Institute, I found piles of books in the cellar - all of which predicted the current tensions. That warning was given in 1984 [in fact it was 1985]' See: NRC, 7 March 1995.
- ²⁴¹ Boogaard, *Gewijde grond* (Consecrated ground), 178.
- ²⁴² Dutch or Flemish books on the recent history of Yugoslavia (such as: Stallaerts, *Afscheid* (Parting); Heuvel, *Het verdoemde land* (The cursed country) or Detrez, *De sloop van Joegoslavië* (The break-up of Yugoslavia) were, of course, largely based on secondary, foreign literature. For discussions of a somewhat arbitrary selection of these, see: Naarden, 'Het Joegoslavisch labyrint' (The Yugoslavian Labyrinth); Gow, 'After the flood'; Kent, 'Writing the Yugoslav Wars'.
- ²⁴³ Walsum, *Verder met Nederland* (Onward with the Netherlands), 69-78. Van Walsum, who at the time was the Director-General, Political Affairs at the ministry, put forward the concept of modifying the internal borders of Yugoslavia to comply with the ethnic proportions of the population. However, the European community wanted to retain the existing borders and the ideal of a multi-ethnic society (which had meanwhile become unattainable in Yugoslavia). Nevertheless, it is scarcely conceivable that it would have been possible to create a just and practical division of Yugoslavia along ethnic lines, without armed conflict and only as a result of peaceful pressure by Europe.
- ²⁴⁴ Both, *From Indifference to Entrapment*, 106.
- ²⁴⁵ Wynaendts mistakenly assumed that the red and white chequered flag, the symbol of Tudjman's Croatia, was derived from the coat of arms of Ante Pavelic's fascist Croatia. In fact, it is a traditional Croatian symbol. Wynaendts, *L'engrenage*, 33.
- ²⁴⁶ Peternel, *Voorheen Joegoslavië* (Previously Yugoslavia), 103, 105.
- ²⁴⁷ Anstadt, *Scheuren in de beksenketel* (Cracks in the cauldron), 128.
- ²⁴⁸ The Netherlands-Croatia Foundation gave Dutch people a clear opportunity to express criticism. See: Dosen, *Verlangen naar Vrijheid* (Yearning for freedom).
- ²⁴⁹ Some sources of information on the attitude of Dutchbat are: Honig, *Srebrenica*, 187; Westerman, *Srebrenica*, 14, 121, 123, 225.
- ²⁵⁰ Peternel, *Voorheen Joegoslavië* (Previously Yugoslavia), 97, 105.
- ²⁵¹ Tromp, *Verraad* (Treason), 209.
- ²⁵² Wynaendts, *L'engrenage*, 57.
- ²⁵³ NRC, *Verwoesting* (Devastation), 88.
- ²⁵⁴ Anstadt, *Scheuren in de beksenketel* (Cracks in the cauldron), 38, 42, 43.
- ²⁵⁵ Tromp, *Verraad* (Treason), 209.
- ²⁵⁶ For a critical discussion of this debate, see: Todorova, *Balkans*, 140-160.

- ²⁵⁷ See, for example: Schöpflin, 'Central Europe. Definitions Old and New' in: Schöpflin, *In Search*, 10-15. Or, more recently: Michielsen, 'Rome versus Byzantium'; Garton Ash, 'The Puzzle of Central Europe'. For an opposing view see: Detrez, 'Over de grootspraak van Europa' (About Europe's bragging).
- ²⁵⁸ During the Cold War, views of this kind were common among conservative Central European émigrés in America. See, for example: Wagner, 'Introduction to the History of Central Europe' and Buc, 'Croatia'. For a contemporary and highly detailed account, which is undoubtedly presented as a correct depiction of reality, see: Hupchick, *Culture and History*.
- ²⁵⁹ See: Dittrich, *Uitgestelde bevrijding* (Delayed liberation), a book which emphasizes the similarities between the Catholic and Orthodox countries in Eastern Europe. See also: George Schöpflin, 'Discontinuity in Central and South Eastern Europe' in: Lord, *Central Europe*, 57-66.
- ²⁶⁰ See: Tellegen, *Max Weber*, 33-37.
- ²⁶¹ See Chapter II above, notes 52 and 81. See also: Kann, *Peoples of Habsburg Lands*, 92, 97, 175, 259; Wandycz, *Lands of Poland*, 6-7, 13, 16, 18-19; and Udovicki, *Burn this House*, 17.
- ²⁶² See Dittrich, *Uitgestelde bevrijding* (Delayed liberation), 18.
- ²⁶³ This was the system introduced by the Ottomans, under which the Christian and Jewish religious communities could be autonomously administered by their own spiritual leaders.
- ²⁶⁴ For details of these contacts, see Chapter III.
- ²⁶⁵ See, for example: Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 169 onwards.
- ²⁶⁶ Dittrich, *Uitgestelde bevrijding* (Delayed liberation), 28.
- ²⁶⁷ Rijk, *Yugoslavia*, 14.
- ²⁶⁸ Hroch, 'Central Europe: The Rise and Fall of an Historical Region' in: Lord, *Central Europe*, 30.
- ²⁶⁹ In 1920, Hungary was compelled to relinquish two thirds of its territory, with the result that one in three ethnic Hungarians ended up living outside Hungary proper. These three countries almost completely lost their important Jewish minority during the Second World War. Aside from this, Poland was ethnically cleansed as a result of Stalin's re-drawing of frontiers and the resultant mass migrations. After 1945, the Czechs and Slovaks kicked out their German fellow citizens. In 1993, they agreed on a friendly parting of the ways. This vision can of course be countered by the observation that there were no such national revolts in ethnically pure East Germany. In post-1945 DDR, however, a native national-socialist system was replaced by a totalitarian Communist one. Furthermore, only a minority of the German nation lived in the territory of the DDR.
- ²⁷⁰ In other words, to the time when Poland-Lithuania was the most important political formation in East Europe (long before it was wiped off the map in the 18th century), when the Bohemian-Czech nation had not yet been subjugated by the Habsburgs at the beginning of the 17th century and before most of Hungary was conquered by the Turks at the beginning of the 16th century.
- ²⁷¹ Milgram, *Grenzeloze gehoorzaamheid* (Limitless obedience); Zimbardo, 'The human choice'; Zimbardo, 'On the ethics of intervention'; Mees, *Gewoon gehoorzaam* (Simply obedient).
- ²⁷² See: Hoogerwerf, *Geweld in Nederland* (Violence in the Netherlands), 8, 34, 36. See also: Bolen, *Racistisch geweld* (Racist violence).
- ²⁷³ See works such as: 'Banislav Herak: Ik draaide me om en haalde de trekker over' (Banislav Herak: I turned round and pulled the trigger) in: NRC, *Vernoeving* (Devastation), 95.
- ²⁷⁴ Tromp, 'On the Nature of War', 118-131.
- ²⁷⁵ See, for example: I. Torov, 'The Resistance in Serbia' and S. Bala, 'The Opposition in Croatia' in: Udavicki, *Burn this House*, 245-278.
- ²⁷⁶ Udovicki, *Burn this House*, 109, 142, 188, 195, 203.
- ²⁷⁷ Denitch, *Ethnic nationalism*, 74-75, 153; Udovicki, *Burn this House*, 141; Silber, *Death*, 246; Benett, *Yugoslavia 's Collapse*, 164; Judah, *Serbs*, 186-187.
- ²⁷⁸ Milosevic, 'The Media Wars: 1987-1997' in: Udovicki, *Burn this House*, 108-129.
- ²⁷⁹ Verbal communication from Dr M. Broekmeyer to the author. See also: Eekman, *Joegoslavië* (Yugoslavia), 58, 252.
- ²⁸⁰ Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 49.

²⁸¹ In March 1991 such a plebiscite did take place in the Soviet Union, which had comparable political-economic problems and similar ethnic conditions. Eighty percent of the voters (almost 149 million people) voted and 76.4 percent voted in favour of retaining the union. Nevertheless, on 8 December 1991, the presidents of Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus declared the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Thus the actions of nationalist politicians meant that this state suffered the same fate as Yugoslavia. See, for example Gorbatsjov, *Mijn Rusland* (My Russia), 143.

²⁸² Hall, *Impossible Country*, 9.

²⁸³ Lederer, 'Nationalism', 398. With regard to this problem see also: Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms*.

²⁸⁴ Simic, 'Obstacles to Development', 31. Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 321-322.

²⁸⁵ Wachtel, *Making a Nation*, 196.

²⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 17, 192-197, 229.

²⁸⁷ Van de Port compares their 'barbarian' appearance with the 'wild' poses and 'savage' scenarios of ordinary citizens out of control in the gypsy cafés of Vojvodina. See: Port, *Einde van de wereld* (End of the world), 311. In my view, Denitch's characterization is a better one, when he speaks of a 'bastardized version of the new post-modern youth culture' and about the western influence of skinheads, motorcycle racists, Rambo and ninja films. This all tended to make these young people resemble the Second World War Cetniks in some ways. See: Denitch, *Ethnic nationalism*, 74-75, 178. However, Judah states that Arkan was very insistent that his troops have a neat appearance. See: Judah, *Serbs*, 184-190, 256, 274. See also: Udovicki, *Burn this House*, 141, 150, 207, 213, 288. Bennett, *Collapse*, 164, 165, 183, 211. Glenny, *Fall*, 5, 8, 10, 107-108, 168-170.

²⁸⁸ Hupchick, *Culture and History*, 48.

²⁸⁹ The 'Dinarians' were primarily identified as Serbs, however Cvijic considered Montenegrins, Bosnians, Macedonians, Slovenes and Croats to be Serbs, to a greater or lesser extent. He acknowledged that each population group was able to make its own contribution to a higher form of the Yugoslavian-Dinarian culture. The Serbs were full of idealism, imagination and intuition. They tended to favour self-sacrifice, but were entirely without discipline. The Croats were more highly developed, more self-controlled, and they excelled in art and science. The Slovenes were rational, hard workers, etc. The Bulgarians and Albanians, on the other hand, were non-Dinarian. This distinction was not inspired purely by the concept of Greater Serbia, to which Cvijic subscribed. In comparison to Serbia, Bulgaria circa 1900 was richer and more bourgeois. The Bulgarians had no lengthy revolutionary tradition, nor were the peasants used to handling guns. They regarded themselves as hard working, thrifty, sober and well-organized in comparison to the 'reckless, romantic' Serbs, who lived in accordance with the Haiduk tradition. They also felt that the Romanians and Greeks were 'sly and unreliable', with a much more commercial mentality. Foreigners referred to the Bulgarians as 'The Prussians of the Balkans' or the 'Japanese Slavs'. While there were marked similarities between the lifestyles of Albanian and Montenegrin mountain dwellers, Albania was more poverty-stricken and more primitive than Serbia. Rothschild describes King Zog's regime in the years between the wars as 'a mixture of the styles of a tribal chieftain, a haiduk brigand, an Ottoman pasha and a modernising despot'. This characteristic would also have applied to the rulers of Serbia one hundred years previously, but it did not apply to Zog's contemporary, Alexander Karadjordjevic. See: Rothschild, *East Central Europe*, 331-332, 366; Glenny, *Balkans*, 117-120. For details about Cvijic see: Grmek, *Nettoyage ethnique*, 127-132; Judah, *The Serbs*, 65-66; Wachtel, *Making a Nation*, 92-93.

²⁹⁰ See, for example: 'Breite Natur — heute' in: Mehnert, *Sonjetmensch*, 45 onwards.

²⁹¹ For example, in the work of Gerhard Gesemann during the 1930s and 1940s on 'Dinarier' and 'der montenegrinische Mensch', in which reference is also made to Cvijic. Gesemann emphatically rejected racist views, instead adopting a strictly academic, literary-sociological approach. As a result, during the Nazi period, he was compelled to accept early retirement. Gesemann's work was still valued in academic circles after the war, and his principal work was republished in 1979. See: Gesemann, *Heroische Lebensform*.

²⁹² See, for example: Todorova, *Balkans*, 181.

- ²⁹³ The Serbian director and writer Zivojin Pavlovic wrote about this phenomenon in a novel entitled *Lapot*. See: R. van den Bogaard, 'Wie niet jagen kan, gaat moorden' (Those who can't hunt, murder) in: NRC, *Vernwoesting* (Devastation), 85.
- ²⁹⁴ See, for example: Boehm, *Montegrin Social Organisations*; Halpern, *Serbian Village*; Vucinich, 'serbian Military Tradition' in: Kiraly, *War and Society*; Djordjevic, *Balkan Revolutionary Tradition*; Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms*; Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, 45-68; Judah, *The Serbs*, 29-48, 81-85, 121-125; Agoston-Nikolova, *Immured Women*; Popovic, *Prince Marko*; Mihajcic, *Battle of Kosovo*; Emmert, *Serbian Golgotha*.
- ²⁹⁵ For details of Dutch responses to Njegos, see above Chapter III. See also note 120.
- ²⁹⁶ Sundhaussen, 'Nation und Nationalstaat'.
- ²⁹⁷ Concerning the history of Finland and Finnish folk poetry, see for example: Mazour, *Finland*; Kirby, *Finland*; Vosschmidt, *Kalevala*; Ahonen, *Kalevala*; *Kalevala 1835-1985*; Naarden, 'Kalevala'; Branch, *Uses of Tradition*.
- ²⁹⁸ The compact and large scale emigration of Russians to the Baltic countries after 1945 was something of an exception in this regard. Even today, this still generates considerable tension.
- ²⁹⁹ This is convincingly demonstrated in documents collected by individuals like Gmrek in *Nettoyage ethnique*.
- ³⁰⁰ Djilas, *Land without Justice*.
- ³⁰¹ Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, 61-63. See also: Broekmeyer, *Joegoslavië in crisis* (Yugoslavia in crisis), 27-28.
- ³⁰² Doolaard, *Land van Tito* (Tito's country), 50.
- ³⁰³ Eekman, *Joegoslavië* (Yugoslavia), 58, 252.
- ³⁰⁴ Doder, *Yugoslavs* (Yugoslavs), 37-38.
- ³⁰⁵ The region south of Belgrade and the area in which the first successful rebellions against the Turks took place, at the start of the 19th century.
- ³⁰⁶ Bax, 'Medjugorjes kleine oorlog' (Medjugorje's little war) and Bax, *Medjugorje: Religion, Politics and Violence*.
- ³⁰⁷ Boehm, *Montegrin Social Organization*, 73-75; Halpern, *Serbian village*, 26, 43, 64, 66, 74, 110, 118, 123-124.
- ³⁰⁸ Wachtel, *Making a Nation*, 174.
- ³⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, 156, 174, 176. See also: Bakic, 'Orientalist Variations', 18-20.
- ³¹⁰ Wachtel, *Making a Nation*, 197-220. Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, 99-146. Judah, *The Serbs*, 75-80.
- ³¹¹ See: Bakic-Hayden, 'Nesting Orientalisms'; Norris, *Islam in the Balkans*. 257 onwards.
- ³¹² In particular, see: Port, 'It takes a Serb'.
- ³¹³ See above Chapter I.
- ³¹⁴ Glenny, *Balkans*, 241-242.
- ³¹⁵ See, for example: L.S. Stavrianos, 'The Influence of the West on the Balkans' in: Jelavich, *Balkans in Transition*, 184-222.
- ³¹⁶ See: W.S. Vucinich, 'some Aspects of the Ottoman Legacy' in: Jelavich, *Balkans in Transition*, 61-114; Vucinich, *Ottoman Empire*, 120-121.
- ³¹⁷ Duyzings, *Religion and Politics*, 1-36; Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, 26-27; Boehm, *Montenegrin Social Organisations and values*, 87; Halpern, *Serbian Village*, 114; Vucinich, 'Ottoman Legacy', 96; Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia*, 366-376.
- ³¹⁸ Duyzings, *Religion and Politics*, 35-36.
- ³¹⁹ Dittrich, *Uitgestelde bevrijding* (Delayed liberation), 19, 29.
- ³²⁰ Kossmann, 'Volkssouvereiniteit' (Sovereignty of the people), 59.

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Appendix VI

The Background of the Yugoslav crisis: A review of the literature

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Introduction

There is no consensus among experts about the causes and even the course of the conflict, and the factual details of this conflict and their interpretation are still under discussion. The British Yugoslavia expert James Gow¹ pointed out in his review of the relevant literature entitled “After the Flood: Literature on the Context, Causes and Course of the Yugoslav War - Reflections and Refractions” that the publications devoted to the former Yugoslavia often reveal a situation in which each fact, claim or interpretation given by one author is refuted by another: “It is clear that not only was the Yugoslav war hideously complex in its detail and in the variety of issues raised, but comprehension of it was made more difficult by the welter of competing narratives seeking to explain it.”² Another important remark by Gow referred to the many factual errors and dubious interpretations in the literature on both the history of Yugoslavia and the current crisis. Gow concludes that: “Mistakes and important omissions are common in the literature - and both inevitable and understandable, given the complex nature of the subject and the period in question. There is a danger for the non-expert reader (or even for the expert reader who may have happened to have missed something) that, where a mistake is repeated from one author to another, it will be taken as correct.”³ In “Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession,” four Yugoslavia experts review recent English-language publications dealing with the war in the former Yugoslavia.⁴ On the basis of a limited number of books, they try to find answers to a series of questions which have been regularly posed since the start of the conflict: “While the peoples of the former Yugoslavia have suffered and died, a horrified but nevertheless fascinated world has wondered how it was possible that a seemingly prosperous and stable country could collapse into such brutal internecine war. Was this caused by “ancient ethnic hatreds” breaking loose? Who was at fault, the Yugoslav communists or ethnic nationalists, western financial pressures or indecisive western policy? Could the wars have been prevented? What to do now?”⁵

The literature on the history of the Yugoslav state and the crisis of the nineties is vast but of variable quality. The authors of “Instant History...” point out a wide diversity of themes and a lack of theoretical orientation in the literature they select. They distinguish between books written by academics (historians, political scientists, sociologists, etc.) and those by non-academics (journalists, diplomats and other writers). The American historian Sarah A. Kent also stressed the problem of the lack of a proper theoretical framework in the publications about the recent war in the former Yugoslavia in her review article “Writing the Yugoslav Wars: English-language books on Bosnia (1992-1996) and the challenges of analysing contemporary history”.⁶ She considered that “The challenge for historians is how to employ the distinctive analytical tools of our discipline to evaluate the basically ahistorical body of work on a current event”.⁷ While she also stressed the distinction between publications written by scholars and those by non-scholars, she pointed out that the three best books on the crisis in the former Yugoslavia were actually written by non-scholars.⁸

¹ The main books by Gow on this topic are *Legitimacy and Military: The Yugoslav Crisis* (London 1992) and *Triumph of Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* (London 1997).

² Gow (1997) 477.

³ *Ibid.*, 481.

⁴ G. Stokes, J. Lampe, D. Rusinow, J. Mostow, ‘Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession’ *Slavic Review* 55 (Spring 1996). 138-162.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁶ Sarah Kent, *A Writing the Yugoslav Wars: English-language Books on Bosnia (1992-1996) and the Challenges of Analyzing Contemporary History*; *American Historical Review* (October 1997) 1087-1114.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1086.

⁸ Kent means the books by C. Bennett, *Yugoslavia’s Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course, and Consequences* (New York 1995). B. Magas, *Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the Break-up, 1980-92* (London 1993), and L. Silber and A. Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York, 1996)

On this basis, Sarah Kent warned against looking for the “truth” in the literature on the Yugoslav crisis: “A general reader’s principal task in approaching these books, like those produced by similar contemporary conflicts, is therefore to develop a critical perspective: that is, to examine authorial intent, to reconstruct the context of the author’s experience, and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of an author’s interpretation.”⁹ In other words, it is important not only to understand the claims made in the books but also to consider who wrote them. A clear impression that the authors are very closely involved with their topic may lead the reader to suspect that they are biased. Most of the authors who have written about the former Yugoslavia - especially those writing about the recent war - have been accused by their colleagues, book reviewers or the parties involved in the conflict of being biased or of favouring one particular side, of being pro-Serb, pro-Croat or pro-Muslim. For example, critics accuse the American Yugoslavia expert Susan L. Woodward of defending Serb policies in her book *Balkan Tragedy* - but they still regard this work as an indispensable contribution to the debate.¹⁰ Other authors have openly taken sides, such as the Austrian writer Peter Handke who is now regarded as pro-Serb. When anti-Serb feeling was at its height in Europe, he travelled through Serbia to gain a better understanding of Serb political viewpoints, after which he adopted an extreme stance by depicting the Serbs as innocent victims. On the other hand, the British historian and commentator Noel Malcolm is regarded by some as a supporter of the Bosnian Muslims. His book on the history of Bosnia appeared in 1994, when the foreign mediators involved in the negotiations had arrived at a position of extreme doubt about the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a unitary state. In his book, Malcolm defended the historical legitimacy of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state, in line with the official position of the Bosnian government under Alija Izetbegovic.¹¹

The British author Rebecca West gave a telling description of the lack of objectivity and tendency to take sides exhibited by her compatriots in their writings about the Balkans more than half a century ago¹²: “English persons, therefore, of humanitarian and reformist disposition constantly went out to the Balkan Peninsula to see who was in fact ill-treating whom, and, being by the very nature of their perfectionist faith unable to accept the horrid hypothesis that everybody was ill-treating everybody else, all came back with a pet Balkan people established in their hearts as suffering and innocent, eternally massacree and never a massacer.”¹³

A typical example of bias in modern times is provided by the scientific staff of the Institute for Slav and Balkan Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. Most of the researchers there were experts in one particular region such as Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia. Great disagreement arose between these various regional experts during the Yugoslav war, each specialist showing a very marked tendency to defend the political stance adopted by “his” or “her” republic. The publications produced by the staff of the institute during this period show for example that the Croatia expert Sergej Romanenko was critical of Serb policy concerning Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, while the Serbia expert Elena Guskova defended this policy.¹⁴ This type of bias could be regularly observed in similar institutes in other countries during the recent war.

⁹ Kent (1997) 1087-1088.

¹⁰ Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* (Washington, 1995). It is stated in ‘Instant History...’ e.g. that she avoided writing about Kosovo and that she found countless ways of defending the policies of Milosevic (146-147).

¹¹ Peter Handke, *A Journey to the Rivers: Justice for Serbia* (New York, 1997). Noel Malcolm, *A Short History of Bosnia* (London, 1994).

¹² West herself was (and still is) regarded as pro-Serb and anti-Croat.

¹³ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon - a Journey through Yugoslavia* (Harmondsworth, 20th edition, 1994). This book was first published in 1942. Since then, it has gone through many editions and been translated into many languages.

¹⁴ Elena Guskova had a big colour photograph of the Serb general Ratko Mladic (who has been accused of war crimes) on the wall of her room in the Russian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1998. When asked why it was there, she replied that she had a great admiration for him as a soldier, and that it was not his fault that his political masters had adopted such a catastrophic policy.

As a by-product of this trend, authors with roots in the former Yugoslavia were often regarded *a priori* as biased. Even though some of them had worked abroad for many years (or had even been born abroad), there was a tendency to think that they could not be objective because of their ethnic origin.¹⁵ For example, if authors of Serb descent were critical of Serb policy in their writings, no one will think of accusing them of doing this because they are pro-Croat or pro-Bosnian. At most, they could be characterized as “traitors” by Serb ideologists. But if these same authors expressed criticism of Bosnian policy, their criticism ran the risk of being disregarded as biased.

This problem is made more complicated by the fact that some authors of Yugoslav descent do support the policies of the ethnic group to which they belong - or would like to belong. A well known example is John Zametica¹⁶, a political scientist who worked in Great Britain before the war. He was the author e.g. of the study *The Yugoslav Conflict* in the authoritative *Adelphi Papers*, which appeared in the summer of 1992. Though not of Serb origin, he acted as the spokesman of the Bosnian Serb government in Pale in 1993. In his analysis of the political crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina, he questioned the concept of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a ‘republic of burgers’. His argument that the Serbs would always be voted down as a minority by the other two population groups in such a state agreed with the line followed by nationalist Serb politicians from Bosnia.¹⁷

A separate group is formed by the authors who played an active role in formulating nationalist ideologies and in fomenting inter-ethnic intolerance. Some of them were respected as experts in their own field before the conflict started, such as the Bosnian historian of Serb descent Milorad Ekmecic who has written a number of standard works on the history of the South Slav people.¹⁸ He was however also one of the founder members of the nationalist party of the Bosnian Serbs, the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party). He fled from Sarajevo to Belgrade in 1992, and has since written a number of political pamphlets about the risks posed by Muslim fundamentalism in Bosnia.¹⁹

1. Selection criteria

It remains difficult to find a clear, comprehensive explanation of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. This is certainly not due to a lack of literature about the region. Even before the start of the Yugoslav crisis, there was a vast literature about the history, politics and culture of Yugoslavia available in many languages, especially in English. The main problem, however, is that there are hardly any good works reviewing the field and summarizing the different views expressed by the various authors. The objective of the present text is to collect as many representative views as possible concerning the above-mentioned topics.

This text is based in the first instance on an analysis of the English, Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian literature. The English-language literature on the history of Yugoslavia and the recent war predominates in terms of both quality and quantity. The great advantage of the English-language literature is that it is accessible to an international audience and that it is read world-wide by journalists,

¹⁵ A few more of the many examples of such authors are the British journalist of Croatian descent, Christopher Cvijic (known in Croatia as Krsto Cvijic), the American historian of Croatian descent Ivo Banac, the British historian of Serbian descent Stevan Pavlowich and the American diplomat and historian of Serbian descent Alex Dragnich.

¹⁶ John Zametica is an example of how ethnic origin need not always imply political loyalty. He was a child of an ethnically mixed marriage and is half Slovak and half Muslim. His original name was Omer. When the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina broke out, however, he took the side of the Bosnian Serbs and now calls himself Jovan Zametica.

¹⁷ According to the Serb journalist Slavko Curuvija, Zametica offered his services to the Bosnian Serbs in London in 1992. It has been claimed that he influenced public opinion in Great Britain in favour of the Bosnian Serbs even before the war broke out (see the article ‘Dzon Vejn na Miljacki’, in *Borba*, 10-11 April 1993).

¹⁸ M. Ekmecic, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije, 1789-1918* (Belgrade, 1989). One of Ekmecic’s best known works is the book *Ratni ciljevi Srbije* (Belgrade, 1973), which won him international acclaim.

¹⁹ For example, he published two long essays in the weekly *Nedeljni Telegraf* under the title ‘Islamerika’, in which he accused the USA of giving worldwide support to Islam (25 February and 4 March 1998).

diplomats, politicians, military personnel, scholars and students. In addition, major works not originally written in English are regularly translated into this language.²⁰

In addition to the English-language literature, it is essential to study the literature in the languages that are spoken in the region if one wishes to have an optimum understanding of the history of the region and of the political developments in the recent past. This literature is only accessible to a limited audience outside Yugoslavia, viz. the regional experts and a few journalists and diplomats. For the purposes of this review, in particular the relevant Serb, Croat and Bosnian sources have been consulted, as has the Dutch, French, German and Russian literature (albeit to a much lesser extent).

The various themes found in the literature concerning the former Yugoslavia and the recent war have been collected in two chapters, entitled:

- The history of the Yugoslav state
- Theories concerning the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

Some details concerning the content of these two chapters are given below.

(Chapter I). The main themes concerning the history of Yugoslavia in the 19th century are the development of the South Slav national question and the power struggle in the Balkans during this period. The following books have been analysed in this context: *National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, (Ithaca, 1983) by Ivo Banac; *Stvaranje Jugoslavije, 1790-1918*, (Belgrade, 1989) by Milorad Ekemčić; and *Jugoslavenska ideologija u hrvatskoj i slovenskoj politici: Hrvatsko-slovenski politički odnosi 1848-1870*, (Zagreb, 1986) by Petar Korunić.

The following books dealing with the creation and dissolution of the Yugoslav state in the 20th century have been analysed: Ivo Lederer, *Yugoslavia at the Paris Conference: A Study in Frontiermaking* (New Haven, 1977). D. Djordjević and S. Fisher-Galati (eds.) *The Creation of Yugoslavia 1914-1918* (Santa Barbara, 1980). A. Dragnich, *The First Yugoslavia* (New Brunswick, 1974). - *Serbs and Croats: The struggle in Yugoslavia* (New York, 1992). Dusan Bilandžić, *Historija SFRJ: glavni procesi, 1918-1985*, (Zagreb 1985). Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije, 1918-1988*, 3 vols, (Belgrade 1988). Vladimir Dedijer et al., *History of Yugoslavia* (New York 1974). John Lampe, *Yugoslavia, Twice There was a Country* (Cambridge (UK), 1996); Stevan K. Pavlowich, *The Improbable Survivor: Yugoslavia and its Problems 1919-1988* (London, 1988) and Catherine Samary, *Yugoslavia Dismembered* (New York, 1995).

The literature on the history of the Yugoslav state tends to concentrate on Serbo-Croat relationships. Much less attention has been (and still is) paid to the other South Slav peoples, in particular the Slovenes, the Montenegrins, the Macedonians and the Bosnians.²¹ The Kosovo Albanians could also be considered to belong to this group of peoples, but the problems of Albanian nationality fall outside the scope of the present study. Interest in Montenegro and Macedonia since the disintegration of Yugoslavia has been limited, however. Most of the literature on the history of these regions appeared before Yugoslavia split up in 1991. Ivo Banac's book *Yugoslav National Question* gives a good overview of the growth of national awareness in Montenegro and Macedonia and the attitude of their inhabitants to the South Slav union. His work has provided a basis for more recent studies of these regions. For example, the British commentator Hugh Poulton cites extensively from Banac's work in his book *Who are Macedonians?* (London 1995); however, Poulton's book is still a useful addition to the existing literature since it places the recent confused political developments relating to Macedonia in a wider historical perspective.

Interest in Bosnia-Herzegovina has grown since the war broke out there, and dozens of books about the history of this region have appeared since 1994. The following (mainly) English-language books about the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina which were published since the outbreak of war there will be analysed in the present study: Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia - A Short History* (London, 1994). Mark

²⁰ See e.g. Catharine Samary, *Yugoslavia Dismembered* (New York, 1995), translated from the French by Peter Handke, and *A Journey to the Rivers: Justice for Serbia* (New York, 1997), translated from the German.

²¹ Gow refers to these peoples as 'uncharted territories'.

Pinson (ed.), *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia* (Cambridge, Mass, 1994). R. Donia and J. Fine, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: a Tradition Betrayed* (London, 1994). J-M. Calic, *Der Krieg in Bosnien-Herzegowina: Ursachen, Konfliktstrukturen, Internationale Lösungsversuche* (Frankfurt, 1995). Franciene Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims: Denial of a Nation* (Boulder, 1996).

In 2000, the historian Robert Donia published a review of four books on the history of Bosnia and the Bosnians published after the recent war, under the title “The New Bosniak History”. The four books in question are Ahmed Alicic, *Pokret za autonomiju Bosne i Hercegovine od 1831. do 1832. godine*, (Sarajevo, 1996); Sacir Filandra, *Bosnjacka politika u XX.. stoljecu.*, (Sarajevo, 1998); Mustafa Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, (Sarajevo, 1996); Behija Zlatar, *Zlatno doba Sarajeva* (Sarajevo, 1996).²² Donia describes the significance of these works as follows: “Although these studies build upon several propositions advanced by Bosniak scholars in the 1960s and 1970s, they reflect substantial additional research and are characterized by originality, boldness, and a concern with the historical antecedents of contemporary Bosniak identity. Therefore, they are substantial contributions to a new Bosniak history, which may be defined as recent works written by Bosniak authors about the Bosniak past.”²³

The review in the present study of the historical roots of Bosnian identity is based on analysis of the following historical studies: Vera Krzisnik-Bukic, *Bosanski identitet izmedju proslosti i buducnosti*, (Sarajevo, 1997) and Mustafa Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, (Sarajevo, 1998).

(Chapter II). This chapter deals with the various theories about the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the various interpretations and definitions of the recent war. According to Gow, one of the main characteristics of this war was the general disagreement about its nature: “It was variously typified as, inter alia, ethnic, nationalist, historic, religious, genocidal or aggressive”.²⁴ Gow himself considered all these definitions relevant, but none of them decisive. He defines the war as “a clash of state projects”.²⁵ A very wide selection of books will be analysed in this chapter, varying from highly specialized regional studies giving details of the escalation of the conflict, to more theoretical works giving an insight into the theories about e.g. ethnic conflicts and nationalism. This selection includes the following books: *Yugoslavia: The Process of Disintegration*, (New York, 1993) by the Yugoslav sociologist Laslo Sekelj; *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the Break-Up*, (London, 1993) by the British journalist of Croat descent Branka Magas and *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* by the journalists L. Silber and A. Little (London, 1995). The theoretical insights into the causes of the disintegration of Yugoslavia are underrepresented compared with the works dealing with the reconstruction of the escalation process. In the book *The South-Slav Conflict: History, Religion, Ethnicity, and Nationalism*, edited by R. Frieman and R. Thomas (New York, 1996), the authors analyse the Yugoslav conflict from various theoretical viewpoints. Another book with interesting theoretical insights is *War and Religion in Bosnia*, edited by Paul Mojzes, (Atlanta, 1997), in which the authors deal with the historical and religious background of the war. The book *Unfinished Peace: Report of the International Commission on the Balkans*, edited by Leo Tindemans (Washington, 1996) gives an interesting survey of perceptions in the former Yugoslavia and abroad about the causes of the war. An extensive analysis is also given of the involvement of the international community, in particular the policies of the EU member states, Russia, the USA and the UN.

²² See: Robert Donia, ‘The New Bosniak History’, in *Nationalities Papers*, (Vol. 28, No. 2) 2000: 351-358.

²³ *Ibid.*, 351.

²⁴ Gow (1997) 446.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 447.

Chapter 1

The history of the Yugoslav state

1. South-Slav national ideology

The South-Slav or Yugoslav national question is the name given to the question as to how a feeling on national identity developed among the South-Slav peoples²⁶ This topic is of great importance for the history of the 20th century and for the origin of the Yugoslav state. Right from the beginning, it comprised two diametrically opposed concepts of state formation, one arising from nationalist ideologies and aiming at the creation of separate Serb and Croat national states within their 'historical and ethnic boundaries' and the other arising from South-Slav unitarism and envisaging the formation of a joint state embodying both national entities.

The history of the 19th and 20th centuries shows a continual alternation between nationalist and unitarist state projects. The historian Ivo Banac lays the main stress on the development of the Serb and Croat national ideologies which have been advocating the formation of national states for each group since the 19th century; he contrasted these with the 'unitarist' and 'integrationalist' ideologies which made a plea for the formation of a joint South-Slav state. Banac describes the Yugoslav national question as arising from a conflict between the various ideologies: "Yugoslavia's national question was the expression of the conflicting national ideologies that have evolved in each of its numerous national and confessional communities, reflecting the community's historical experiences. These ideologies assumed their all but definite contours well before the unification and could not be significantly altered by any combination of cajolery or coercion. The divisions inherited in the national movements of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the three principal nationalities of Yugoslavia, were not, however, sufficient to forestall the rise of a single southern Slavic state. The credit for this feat must be ascribed to the ideology of unitaristic Yugoslavism. It captured the imagination of the southern Slavic intelligentsia in Austria-Hungary and could be accepted by the Serbian elite without any significant departures from all the traditions and trappings of Serbian statehood."²⁷

The Serb historian Milorad Ekmecic distinguishes four periods in the development of the 'south-Slav national question':

- a period of belief (1790-1830);
- a period of culture (1830-1860);
- a period of politics (1860-1903);
- a period of violence (1903-1918).²⁸

The period of belief was characterized by the predominant role of religion and the church, especially in Serbia, in the growth of a proto-national identity.

The period of culture saw the secularization of national identity, with language as the main criterion of nationality. The prominent Serb intellectuals Dositej Obradovic (1739-1811) and Vuk Karadzic (1787-1864) introduced linguistic criteria for determination of Serb ethnic identity. According

²⁶ See e.g. I. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, (Ithaca and London, 1984). W.D. Behschnitt, *Nationalismus bei Serben und Croats 1830-1914: Analyse und Typologien der nationalen Ideology* (Munchen, 1989). V. Cubrilovic, *Istorija politicke misli u Srbiji XIX veka*, (Belgrade, 1958). M. Ekmecic, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije 1790-1918*, 2 vols., (Belgrade 1989). F. Gerstin and V. Melik, *Slovenska zgodovina od konca osemnajstega stoletja do 1918* (Ljubljana, 1966). P. Korunic, *Jugoslavenska ideologija u hrvatskoj i slovenskoj politicians: Hrvatsko-slovenski politicki odnosi 1848-1870*, (Zagreb, 1986). Viktor Novak, *Antologija jugoslavense misli i narodnog jedinstva (1390-1930)* (Belgrade, 1930). Carole Rogel, *The Slovenes and Yugoslavism 1890-191* (Boulder, Col., 1977). Ferdo Sisic, *Jugoslavenska misao. Istorija ideje jugoslavenskog narodnog ujedinjenja i oslobocjenja od 1790-1918* (Belgrade, 1937).

²⁷ I. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca and London, 1984) 406-407.

²⁸ Milorad Ekmecic, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije, 1790-1918*, 2vols. (Belgrade, 1989).

to these criteria, all South Slavs who spoke the *sto* dialect belonged to the Serb nation.²⁹ In 1836, Karadzic wrote in an essay entitled *Srbi svi i svuda* (Serbs All and Everywhere) that 5 million people spoke the same language, though they were divided over three different religions (Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim). According to Karadzic, only the Orthodox Serbs were really 'serbs': the Muslims who spoke the same language regarded themselves as 'Turks', while the Catholic Serbs belonged to other groups such as the Slavonians, Dalmatians and Bosnians. He was surprised that the Muslims and Catholics who belonged within the Serb linguistic group did not wish to be called Serbs, while for examples Hungarians and Germans of the Catholic, Lutheran or Calvinist faith still regarded themselves as Hungarians and Germans.³⁰ Karadzic made a plea for a common Serbo-Croat language based on the *sto-ije* dialect, which was spoken by the Serbs, the Croats, the inhabitants of Bosnia (Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox) and the Montenegrin. This was also the dialect in which the oral folk literature had been created, and in which the Renaissance literature of Ragusa was written. In Karadzic's opinion, this dialect was the most suitable one for general use because apart from its rich literary tradition it was already spoken by the majority of South Slavs. Banac regarded Vuk Karadzic's 'linguistic nationalism' as the basis for the Serb territorial expansion in the second half of the 19th century. In 1844, Ilija Garasanin (1812-1874), at the time minister of Internal Affairs, drafted a secret political programme that became known as *Nacertanije* (The Plan), in which he stated that the boundaries of the new Serbian state should be such as to enclose the regions occupied by the Serbian population. Banac writes that in adopting this approach, Garasanin had distanced himself from the ideas of the religious traditionalists, who regarded the Orthodox faith as the main criterion for the determination of Serbian ethnic identity. By accepting Karadzic's linguistic criteria, he had created a much wider basis for the expansion of the Serbian state. However, this approach reduced Croatian ethnicity to the regions where the *ca* dialect was spoken (Istria, Primorje and the islands off the Adriatic coast). During the recent war, Garasanin was often called the evil genius behind the Serbs' aggressive nationalism. It should be noted, however, that the text of *Nacertanije* was not published until 1906, and that opinions about Garasanin's political intentions have been deeply divided since then. The Croat historian Ferdo Sisic, writing in 1926, saw no evil intentions in *Nacertanije* and regarded this document as the basis for innovations in Serb national policy in the second half of the 19th century. Other Yugoslav and in particular Serb historians regarded Garasanin as the founder of 'Yugoslavism', and *Nacertanije* as a political programme for South-Slav union with Serbia as the main political driving force behind the movement.³¹ It was not until 1937 that *Nacertanije* was first linked with Serb expansionist policies, when the Serb historian J.D. Mitrovic wrote that *Nacertanije* embodied a plea for a Greater Serbia rather than for a South-Slav state. Banac pointed out that there was a tendency in Serbian and Yugoslav historiography to regard any attempt at South-Slav union as Yugoslavism: "What precisely is the meaning of Yugoslavism? There is a tendency, especially in Serbian historiography but not only there, to view any attempt at southern Slavic conglomeration as Yugoslavism. And since the ideology of Karadzic and the policy of the Serbian state did take an expansive direction, their Yugoslav character is frequently assumed."³²

The Communist historiography manifests the same dilemmas: was Garasanin the 'spiritual father of Yugoslavism' or the evil genius behind the idea of a Greater Serbia?³³ Any judgement about

²⁹ The Serbo-Croat system of dialects comprises four main dialects: torlak, kajkavian, cakavian and stokavian, which are further subdivided into the sub-dialects ikavian, ijekavian and ekavian. The stokavian-ijekavian combination is the most highly developed, with four accents, seven cases etc., and is spoken by the largest number of South Slavs, including the Serbs, Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Montenegrins. The stokavian-ekavian combination is only used by the Serbs of Vojvodina and Sumadija. The kajkavian dialects are spoken in the north of Croatia and Slovenia, and the cakavian in the coastal regions of Dalmatia, Primorje and Istria. See e.g. Asim Peco, *Pregled Srpskohrvatskih dialekata*, (Belgrade, 1980).

³⁰ See N. Tromp, 'servo-Kroatische talenstrijd', *Oost Europa Verkenningen* 123 (1992).

³¹ Mirko Valentic, 'Prva programska formulacija velikosrpske ideje' in Boze Covic (ed.) *Izvori velikosrpske agresije* (Zagreb, 1991) 41-64.

³² Banac (1984) 108-109.

³³ See Valentic (1991).

Nacertanije as a manifesto for the formation of a Greater Serbia can never be complete, however, without taking the time when the document was written into consideration. The formation of a strong state occupied a central position in Garasanin's geopolitical ideas, as it did in the currents of geopolitical thought throughout Europe at the time. A strong Serbian state was intended as a counter-balance against the power politics of the European great powers in the Balkans, which is why Garasanin was sometimes called the Serbian Bismarck.³⁴ Garasanin's political plans, and in particular the concept of Serbian 'linguistic nationalism', did not give rise to violent reactions from the other South Slav peoples at the time. The Illyrianists had their hands full with problems of internal politics: the repressive policies followed in Vienna with respect to the Slav peoples after 1848 did not change until 1867.³⁵ Between 1866 and 1867, the Croatian supporters of political union of the South Slavs under the leadership of Bishop J.J. Strossmayer even had talks with followers of Garasanin about the form of a joint state.³⁶ The dominant idea among Croatian adherents of Yugoslavism at that time was that the current political and economic developments meant that union would have to be realized in two phases. The first phase would comprise unification of the South Slav regions within the Habsburg Empire (i.e. Slovenia, Croatia and Vojvodina). Unification with the other South Slav regions (i.e. Serbia) would take place in a subsequent phase.³⁷ Garasanin did not intend to relinquish the Serbian leadership, but his discharge as minister in 1867 meant an end to his ambitious plans for radical restructuring of the Balkans under Serb leadership.³⁸

The 'period of politics' was characterized by the dominant role of political parties in the formulation of national interests. Ekmecic sees the political changes in the Balkans following the Congress of Berlin (1878) as decisive for the formation of modern political parties in Serbia. After 1882, Serbian politics were controlled by the Serbian Radical Party (SRS). The charismatic leader of this party, Nikola Pasic, was an active supporter of the idea of a strong Serbian state. It was not until the First World War that he changed his political strategy and began advocating a joint South-Slav state. The founder of the Serbian Socialist Party, Svetozar Markovic, who was the first to use the term "Greater Serbia" as criticism of the expansionist Serb policies, was in fact the supporter of the formation of a Serbian state, which he believed however should ultimately develop into a multi-ethnic supranational federation.³⁹

In Croatia, the traditions of the Illyrianist movement were continued by an influential group of liberal intellectuals round Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1815-1905) and his disciple Franjo Racki (1828-1894). Strossmayer financed projects intended to pave the way for the political unification of the South Slavs. It was considered that the new state should have a neutral name, which would be acceptable to everyone. The group chose the name Yugoslavia, and their ideology came to be known as *Jugoslavenstvo* (Yugoslavism). Strossmayer founded the Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences in Zagreb. Thanks to his efforts, Zagreb became the centre of activities aimed at the cultural and political unification of the South Slavs in the second half of the 19th century. One of Strossmayer's most important initiatives was his attempt to end the religious schism between the Roman and Orthodox churches, which in his opinion had had disastrous consequences for the Slavic peoples in particular. The political instrument of this influential circle of intellectuals was the National Liberal Party. The short-term political goal of this party the unification of the South-Slav peoples in Croatia, as a federal unit within the Habsburg Empire. Its long-term political goal was the formation of a great South-Slav state after the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, in which the South Slavs from the Habsburg regions would join up with the Serbs and Montenegrins. However, Strossmayer found no political allies in Serbia who were prepared to work with him for a South-Slav federation.

³⁴ Zie b.v.: S. MacKenzie, Ilija Garasanin: Balkan Bismarck (Boulder Col., 1985)

³⁵ Banac (1984) 85.

³⁶ Korunic (1986) 24.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Jelavich (1990) 11.

³⁹ Banac, (1984) 109.

One of the first critics of Karadzic's linguistic nationalism was the Croat Ante Starcevic (1823-1896), who together with Eugen Kvaternik (1825-1871) was the founder of a Croatian national ideology which contrasted sharply with that of the Illyrianists. They started from the assumption that the Croats were a 'political people' who had the right to a state of their own. On the basis of their interpretation of old historic sources, they concluded that the Croatian state should extend from the Alps in the west to the River Drina in the east, and from Albania in the south to the Danube in the north. Starcevic moved the eastern boundary of the state to the River Timok, thus leaving only the Croats and the Bulgarians as South-Slav peoples. He called the Slovenes 'mountain Croats' and the Serbs a 'mixed race' whose name was derived from the Latin *servus* (which means slave).⁴⁰ He also regarded the Bosnians as belonging to the Croatian nation, and he showed his admiration for Islam by calling it the 'oldest and purest nobility of Europe'.⁴¹ Starcevic and Kvaternik founded the Party of Right, whose goal was the complete independence of Croatia from the Habsburg Empire. They hoped that all South Slavs, with the exception of the Bulgarians, would become croatized on the basis of this Pan-Croatian ideology. The role that Starcevic played in the development of the Pan-Croatian or Greater Croatian idea is comparable with that of Garasanin for the formulation of the Pan-Serbian or Greater Serbian idea. Opinions about Starcevic are also divided among historians. Communist historiography regarded him as the evil genius behind the Croatian extreme nationalist Ustaša regime (1941-1945), while he is seen as the father of the nation in nationalist Croatian historiography. A more obvious choice for the role of evil genius behind Croatian extreme nationalist movements would however seem to be his successor Juraj Frank (1844-1911), who founded the Pure Party of Right in 1895 and formulated an extreme nationalist ideology which preached hatred against Serbs. Since the second half of the 19th century, a deep split has existed in Croatian political life between those who believed in South-Slav unification such as Strossmayer's National Liberal Party and their opponents such as Starcevic's Party of Right.

The 'period of violence' was dominated by factions which used violence in the conflict with their political opponents. The best known example of such a faction was the Serbian organization *Ujedinjenje ili smrt* (Unification or Death), whose aim was to unite all Serbs in a single state. Violence was used to deal with political opponents. It is noteworthy that the violence in this period was not directed against ethnic groups, but was generally used to settle political scores, and in response to domestic political issues. Deep political division existed in Serbia at this time between the three main pillars of the establishment: the royal house (the Obrenovic dynasty up to 1903 and the Karadjordjevic dynasty thereafter), the Serbian government under Nikola Pasic and the Serbian army (which also pursued the aim of a Greater Serbia and was the most radical of the three). The hard core of *Ujedinjenje ili smrt* consisted of Serb army officers; it was this organization that planned the assassination of the last Obrenovic king in 1903, and that of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914.

2. The history of the Yugoslav state (1918-1992)

It is clear from the literature concerning the South-Slav national question that there were different forms of Yugoslavism (the idea of political unification of the South Slavs), varying from Pan-Serbism and Pan-Croatism to Austro-Slavism and Yugoslavism. Ivo Banac introduced the term 'political Yugoslavism' to denote the final phase in the development of the Yugoslav idea. He ascribed these developments to the students and youth movements that were active at the beginning of the 20th century. Although various student and youth groups were active abroad, e.g. in Vienna and Prague, it was the National Youth Movement on home soil which did most to define political Yugoslavism. The members of the National Youth Movement were young intellectuals from Croatia, Dalmatia and Slavonia who propagated the theory of national unity (*narodno jedinstvo*). They regarded the Serbs, Croats

⁴⁰ Ibid., 87

⁴¹ Ibid., 108.

and Slovenes as all belonging to one and the same nation - an idea that is also known as 'Yugoslav unitarism'. The creators of this theory believed that the differences in linguistic and literary traditions, and the religious differences between the various South-Slav peoples, could be overcome by the political will to form a unitary state; they expected that each of the peoples in question would have to make concessions relating to their national identity in order to create a common Yugoslav identity.

The National Youth Movement was active in the period between 1909 and 1914. The First World War created new political realities: the Habsburg Empire collapsed in 1918, Slovenia and Croatia were liberated and the politically weakened Serbian government looked for new ways of uniting the Serbs in a single state. The formation of a common South-Slav state seemed one possibility.

The first common South-Slav state was founded in 1918, under the name 'the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes'. Its name was changed to 'the Kingdom of Yugoslavia' in 1929.⁴² The Kingdom of Yugoslavia collapsed in 1941 as a result of the military attack by the Axis powers. A new Yugoslav state was founded in 1945, this time as a communist federation, the official name of which was initially 'the Federative Peoples' Republic of Yugoslavia' (FNRJ - *Federativna Narodna Republika Jugoslavija*). The name was changed in 1963 to 'the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia' (SFRJ - *Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija*). This state would remain in existence for more than 45 years, but collapsed in 1991. In 1992, Serbia and Montenegro founded the third Yugoslav state, the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia.⁴³

3. The legitimacy of the Yugoslav state

Artificial?

Yugoslavia was founded three times, and collapsed twice. This has led to many studies of the legitimacy of the Yugoslav state, especially after the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991. The French journalist Catherine Samary wrote a book about the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1995, in which she devoted a great deal of space to a discussion of the legitimacy of the Yugoslav state.⁴⁴ Her book rejected the thesis often put forward in the early nineties, that the common South-Slav state was 'artificial' and was 'imposed' on people who in fact could not and did not wish to live together. The following words, written by a Dutch journalist, are typical of such analyses: "In this artificial country, built in 1918 on the ruins of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires and dominated by Serbia, (...) the various peoples have always treated one another with suspicion - even in the time of Tito. For 73 years, these peoples have been more separated by centuries of historical, economic and cultural differences than united by common characteristics (...). The deeper reasons for all these inequalities are hidden in the dark wood of history and in an illogical economic development."⁴⁵ These and similar arguments are supported by political theories which claim that ethnically homogeneous states are more stable and longer-lasting than multi-ethnic or multi-national ones.⁴⁶ The adherents of these approaches are surprised not so

⁴² Yugoslavia means South Slavia (the land of the South Slavs).

⁴³ For the history of the Yugoslav state see: Ivo Lederer, *Yugoslavia at the Paris Conference: A Study in Frontier-making* (New Haven, 1977). D. Djordjevic and S. Fisher-Galati (eds.) *The Creation of Yugoslavia, 1914-1918* (Santa Barbara, 1980). A. Dragnich, *The First Yugoslavia* (New Brunswick, 1974). - *Srbs and Kroats: The struggle in Yugoslavia*, (New York, 1992). A. Dilas, *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919-1953* (Cambridge, 1991). Dusan Bilandzic, *Historija SFRJ: glavni procesi, 1918-1985*, (Zagreb 1985). Branko Petranovic, *Istorija Jugoslavije, 1918-1988*, 3 vols, (Belgrade 1988). Vladimir Dedijer et al., *History of Yugoslavia* (New York 1974). L.B. Valev, G.M. Slavin and I.I. Udal'cov (eds.), *Istoriia Jugoslavii*, 2 vols, (Moscow, 1963).

⁴⁴ Catherine Samary, *Yugoslavia Dismembered* (New York, 1995).

⁴⁵ Peter Michielsen et al., *Verwoesting van Joegoslavië* (Rotterdam, 1993) 9.

⁴⁶ Susan Woodward used this argument, referring to the works of Robert A. Dahl, 'Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy: Autonomy vs. Control' (1982) and C. Tilly: 'Reflections on the History of European State-Making' in Charles Tilly, (ed.) *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (1975). See: Woodward (1996) 21, 427.

much by the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia as by the fact that it managed to stay in existence for so long.

The centuries of foreign domination are regarded as the main explanation for the 'unbridgeable' conflicts arising between the South-Slav peoples, who were divided between two strongly opposed great powers - the Habsburg Empire (with Slovenia and Croatia) and the Ottoman Empire (with Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina). The above-mentioned Dutch journalist also stated this idea, in a rather popularized form, as follows: "This separate development has turned the Serbs and Croats into different peoples, despite the bond of a common language. Serbia is Orthodox, used the Cyrillic alphabet, and directs its gaze to the south and east. Croatia is Catholic, uses the Latin alphabet and looks westward and northward. But there is more. The Croats - in the Serbs' opinion, at least - have felt quite comfortable throughout their history as subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. While the Serbs fought to the death, were impaled on stakes, while their wives were murdered and their children abducted, the Croats lived in comfort and enriched themselves."⁴⁷

Ethnic similarities

Some authors, on the other hand, regard ethnic differentiation based on relatively minor differences as artificial, and believe that a common South-Slav state is the most pragmatic solution for a region where related ethnic groups live in close proximity. According to this approach, it was precisely the disintegration of the Yugoslav state in 1941 and 1991 and the formation of separate national states after the latter date that caused the civil war, because these processes inevitably lead to boundary conflicts. The adherents of this view regard the formation of the Yugoslav state as the realization of a centuries-old dream of the South-Slav peoples to free themselves from foreign domination and found a state of their own.⁴⁸ They see the legitimacy of Yugoslavia as based on the common ethnic descent of the Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Bosnians and Macedonians, who all belong to the South Slav peoples. The differences and similarities in ethnic descent between the various South-Slav peoples have been the subject of discussion in intellectual circles for more than a century, but this debate has not produced a final conclusion. What is clear is that there are certain marked similarities, and certain marked differences, between these peoples. In reality, these and similar arguments about similarities and differences have always been subordinated to the political aims of the moment and the desire of certain political groups either to create political union at state level or to get out of existing multinational states. In any case, the union of the South-Slav peoples in 1918 would have been impossible without the political will of the political representatives of the peoples in question. When the joint Yugoslav state was founded, the main stress was laid on the similarities between the national groups that went to make it up; in 1991, on the other hand, the differences were emphasized.

The foreign diktat: the Versailles Peace Conference

The authors who describe Yugoslavia as an 'artificial state'⁴⁹ argue that a variety of different peoples were forced to live together in this country against their will, and that Yugoslavia had no historical legitimacy because it was thought up and imposed on the peoples concerned by the Great Powers during the Versailles Peace Conference (1918-1919).

The criticism of the legitimacy of the Yugoslav state was based in particular on the failure to hold a referendum in 1918 in which the population concerned could express its opinion about the formation of the South-Slav monarchy. Mihailo Crnobrnja, a former Yugoslav diplomat, disagrees

⁴⁷ Michielsen (1993) 10.

⁴⁸ See e.g. Branka Prpa-Jovanovic, 'The Making of Yugoslavia', in J. Udovicki & J. Ridgeway (eds.), *Burn This House*, (London, 1997) 49.

⁴⁹ 'A (...) It was an artificial country, (...), the refrain goes, which never deserved to last its seventy-three years.' Cited in Woodward (1996) 21.

however with the idea that the foundation of the South-Slav state occurred against the wishes of the majority of the population: “First and foremost, Yugoslavia was created out of, and one could say in spite of, strong national ideologies and national policies. Though blended into a new state, these did not cease to exert some centrifugal force, even when the official and dominant ideology became centralist. But it would be wrong to say it was created against the will of the people. The people in the proper sense of the word were never asked. No one can say with certainty what the verdict would have been had a referendum on the proposition tested the will of the people. Political decision-making at that time did not take account of popular expression, and not only in Yugoslavia was this true. The people involved in politics, the unchosen representatives, clearly made the decision to unite of their own free will and without overt pressure. If there was implied pressure, especially from the big powers, that was a part of the game at the time, not entirely unlike current events.”⁵⁰

According to Ekmecic, support for the unification of the South Slavs was growing steadily among the general population towards the end of the First World War. It varied from 100 % in Dalmatia to 60 % in Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵¹

Another historian, Stevan K. Pavlowich, wondered whether the mainly agrarian population was really able to give a well considered answer to this question: “The declarations of politicians had been full of good intentions; for the population at large it corresponded to vague feelings rather than to a clearly expressed national will. Modern scholarship has yet to consider the question of peasants’ consciousness of their common ‘ethnicity’ before 1914, or that of the common person’s view of the future over the war years to 1918.”⁵²

According to Dragnich, the arguments for doubting the legitimacy of the Yugoslav state could be applied equally well to all the other states built up on the ruins of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires in 1918. The new system of states in Central and South-East Europe was in theory based on the right to self-determination of the peoples concerned, as defined by the American president Woodrow Wilson in his Fourteen Points. But the people were rarely consulted. Dragnich describes Wilson’s intentions with regard to the South-Slav peoples as follows: “Conveying confidence and idealism, President Wilson, in January 1918, announced his Fourteen Points as the basis of an honourable peace. Although he did not use the word ‘self-determination’, his reference to the indigenous rights of peoples within Turkey and Austria-Hungary made his meaning unmistakable. Of the Balkan states he mentioned only Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania by name (along with Poland, not then in existence independently). (...) The reason for this omission is simple: the victorious Allies had not yet agreed on the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Only when they did so, about mid-1918, was it realistic to think that peoples in the territories of the Dual Monarchy could attempt to form independent states.”⁵³

The domestic diktat: the Corfu declaration

The idea that the joint South-Slav state would never have been possible without international pressure is countered by those authors who have followed the creation of this state from the perspective of the negotiations between Serb and Croat politicians. They point out that a basic agreement about the future state was concluded as early as the summer of 1917. This document, known as the Corfu Declaration, represented a compromise between the Serb and Croat positions regarding the political structure of the future state. It was agreed that the new state would be a monarchy, ruled by the Serbian royal house of Karadjordjevic. No concrete agreements were made about further details of the state’s constitution, due among other things to the great differences of opinion between the Croats and the Serbs. The Croats were in favour of a confederation in which each ethnic group would have a high degree of political and

⁵⁰ M. Crnobrnja, *Yugoslav Drama* (London, 1994) 48-49.

⁵¹ Ekmecic (1989) 829-832.

⁵² S. K. Pawlowich, *The Improbable Survivor: Yugoslavia and its Problems, 1918-1988*, (London, 1988) 1.

⁵³ A. Dragnich, *Srbs and Kroats: The struggle in Yugoslavia*, (New York, 1992) xix.

cultural autonomy; the Serbs, on the other hand, wanted a centralized state. “Serbs claimed that centralized control by the government under the Serbian monarchy was necessary to keep the fledgling multi-ethnic state together in its formative stage.”⁵⁴

The Corfu Declaration was however criticized by other historians, who doubted whether the Croat politicians involved had any real authority to enter into these negotiations. These politicians were representatives of an informal political organization known as the *Jugoslavenski odbor* (Yugoslav Committee), which operated in exile and had no political basis in Croatia.⁵⁵ The members of the Committee were political émigrés from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina who maintained contacts with intellectuals and politicians in the European capitals in order to convince them that the Habsburg monarchy had no future and that a joint South-Slav state would be the best political solution for all the peoples concerned. They were supported by the British commentators Robert Seton-Watson and Wickham Steed, who were powerful advocates of South-Slav political union among Western European politicians. Another weak point of the Corfu Declaration, according to some, concerned the motives of the Serb politicians and intellectuals who were actively working towards the creation of a South-Slav state: “However, the vision of South Slav unity for many Serbian intellectuals usually implied an inclusive Greater Serbia, where all Serbs would be incorporated within a single state. In other words, the uniting of the South Slavs was secondary to the uniting of the Serbs.”⁵⁶

The significance of the Corfu Declaration was also appreciably lessened by the fact that the Montenegrins and Slovenians were not directly involved in the negotiations (with the exception of the Slovenian politician Antun Korosec), though they were intended to be part of the joint state. The Montenegrins would lose their separate ethnic status, and their king, in the new state. The Montenegrin Committee (consisting of Montenegrin émigrés in Paris) reacted positively to the Corfu Declaration. King Nikola of Montenegro was less enthusiastic, however, since the new state would mean the end of his rule. As soon as the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy was announced, the Croatian parliament (the *Sabor*) created the National Council of Slovenians, Croats and Serbs, which then decided to form a joint state together with the Slovenians and Serbs.

The unification of the South Slavs was thus not imposed by Versailles, but was the result of the unitary ‘Yugoslav ideology’, which had developed during the First World War and had gained a steadily increasing number of adherents in Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian political circles during the war. No foreign power would have been able to impose this unification without the support of the local politicians and political parties.

The influence of external factors on the political unification of the South Slav peoples was nevertheless of great significance. It became known in 1917 that Italy had signed a secret treaty in London in 1915, under the terms of which it undertook to fight on the side of the Entente in exchange for major territorial gains at the expense of Austro-Hungary and Turkey, including large parts of Slovenia and Croatia.⁵⁷ The threat of Italian domination speeded up the decision-making process about the formation of a joint state among the Slovenian and Croatian politicians: “It should be strongly emphasized that the South Slavs of the monarchy were under extreme pressure, and they had no real practical alternatives. Austrian-Germans and Hungarians were in the process of organizing republics on a national basis. The imperial framework no longer existed. The realistic alternatives appeared to be either the establishment of a South Slav state or a possible partition of Croatian and Slovenian lands among Italy, Serbia, and perhaps even Austria and Hungary.”⁵⁸

The Serbian side was also under pressure from the international political developments. Czarist Russia ceased to exist in 1917, and the communist government of the new Soviet Union withdrew from

⁵⁴ R. Thomas ‘History, Religion, and National Identity’, in R.G.C. Thomas & H.R. Friman (eds.), *The South-Slav Conflict: History, Religion, Ethnicity and Nationalism* (New York-London), 22.

⁵⁵ See M. Paulová, *Jugoslavenski odbor* (Zagreb, 1925).

⁵⁶ Thomas (1996) 21.

⁵⁷ D. Zivojinovic, *America, Italy and the Birth of Yugoslavia, 1917-1919* (Boulder-New York, 1972).

⁵⁸ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans Twentieth Century* (Cambridge (UK), 1982) 125.

the war. In addition, the Slovenian and Croatian representatives in the Austrian parliament had already drawn up a declaration (the May declaration) in May 1917, advocating the unification of the South Slavs in the Habsburg monarchy – including the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. Alarmed by this, the Serbian government speeded up their negotiations with the Yugoslav Committee. Hence, the Corfu Declaration is often interpreted as a tactical move on the part of the Serbs, which merely postponed the implementation of Serb plans for the creation of Greater Serbia. However, some Serb historians such as Ekmečić consider that the Serb war objectives were already defined in the Nis Declaration of 1914, which stated that the main Serb war aims were liberation from Habsburg occupation and unification of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians in a joint South Slav state.⁵⁹

Although Serbia's European allies did not accept the Nis Declaration, the Serbian parliament secretly ratified it a year later.⁶⁰ After the creation of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, Serb politicians did all they could to impose a centralized, Serb-dominated state on the other peoples. The first constitution, the *Vidovdanski ustav* (Saint Vitus Constitution), adopted in 1921 despite strong opposition from Croatian politicians, did indeed make the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians a centralized state dominated by Serb politicians.

4. The legitimacy of the Yugoslav state and the Serbo-Croat conflict

The majority view in the historical literature is that the Yugoslav state, and particularly its stability, was closely linked with Serbo-Croat political relationships. These two, the largest ethnic groups involved, were the first South Slav peoples within the Yugoslav state in whom a sense of national identity had developed and who had already formulated their national interests in the 19th century. Indeed, the conflict between Serbs and Croats could be thought of as starting with the schism of 1054 that divided the South Slav peoples, despite their common language, into two separate religious camps, thus justifying to a certain extent the idea that this 'century-old' conflict was almost 'insoluble', it should be remembered that the Serb and Croat kingdom had never fought against one another throughout the Middle Ages. Dominated by foreign powers for centuries they had never had any independent foreign policy and could thus have no direct conflicts.

An important background factor in the Serbo-Croat political conflict was the presence of large numbers of Orthodox Slavs (not called Serbs until the 19th century) in Croatia as a result of the migrations caused by Ottoman expansion towards the north-west. The Orthodox refugees who escaped the Ottoman forces received protection from the Habsburg Emperor. A large part of Hungary fell under Ottoman occupation after the Battle of Mohacz in 1526. In 1527, Ferdinand I set up a new defensive system, known under the name of the 'Military Border Zone' (*Vojna Krajina*).⁶¹ This militarized zone extended from Transylvania in the north-east to the Istrian Peninsula in the south-west. The defence line consisted of a series of small villages and fortifications where the Orthodox refugee population was offered sanctuary, adult males from this population being recruited as frontier guards. The Military Border Zone was abolished in 1881, the idea being that the Serb population there should be integrated into Croatia (the part known as 'Civil Croatia'). The period between 1878 and 1903 is known in the literature on the South Slav question as the period of South Slav conflict, characterized by deterioration of the relationships between the Croats and the Serbs living in Croatia. Political conflicts between the Croatian Serbs and the Croats were intensified after the abolition of the military border zone, and were exacerbated by the 'divide and rule' policy adopted by the Hungarians with respect to the Croatian Serbs and the Croats. The Hungarian governor (*ban*) of Croatia, Karoly

⁵⁹ Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije* (Belgrade 1974).

⁶⁰ A. Dragnich (1992) 23.

⁶¹ See G. Rothenberg, *The Military Border in Croatia, 1740-1881* (Chicago, 1966).

Khuen-Hedervary (1883-1903), was notorious for his anti-Croat policy. He gave the Serbs a preferential position, rewarding them with important functions in Croatian public life.⁶²

Tensions between Serbs and Croats at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century alternated with periods of political *rapprochement* and co-operation. Drago Roksandic, a Croat historian of Serb descent, wrote as follows in this connection: “This same history also demonstrates that the periods in which the fundamental national interests of both communities were reconciled were also periods in which Croatian society moved forward, modernised, and in which Croatian as well as Serbian national identity were preserved and developed. An example for this was the Illyrian movement of 1835-1848, which was an important phase in the national integration of the Croats, but also of the Serbs in Croatia and Slovenia. Other instances were the period of revolutionary upheaval in 1848-49, the period of renowned constitutionalism from 1860 to 1868, as well as the period of the Serbian-Croatian coalition from 1905-1918.”⁶³

Authors like Thomas and Dragnich believe that the Serbo-Croat political conflict did not arise until after the formation of the Yugoslav state. The kingdom of Yugoslavia did not meet Croat expectations, and a power struggle arose between the Serb and Croat politicians right from the beginning. Dragnich, who has described the history of the Yugoslav kingdom from the perspective of Serbo-Croat relations, disagrees with the usual interpretations involving Serb domination and suppression of non-Serb peoples. According to him, it is wrong to argue that the state was dominated by a block of Serb politicians who did their best to marginalize the non-Serbs, and whom the Croats opposed in vain: “Through all political events of the First Yugoslavia ran a two-stranded thread: Serbian politicians did not have a determined political line directing their relations with Croats; the Croats had a constant Croatian line. The Croats reduced their five or six political parties of relatively equal strength to one, a Croatian national party. The Serbs moved from two major parties to about ten, to say nothing of the factions that developed within some.”⁶⁴

Serbo-Croat political relations radicalized at the end of the 1920s. In 1928, the leader of the Croatian National Peasant Party Stjepan Radic was murdered by a Serb nationalist from Montenegro on the floor of the Yugoslav parliament (the *Skupstina*). King Aleksandar reacted by dissolving parliament and suspending the Vidovdan constitution. His personal dictatorship exacerbated ethnic tensions.⁶⁵ According to Banac, in this period Yugoslav unitarism turned into a totalitarian ideology with anti-Marxist, anti-liberal, anti-conservative, anti-urban and anti-catholic traits – all characteristic of fascism.⁶⁶ Some Croat nationalist politicians, intellectuals and artists fled the country in the 1930s. An extreme-nationalist Croatian terrorist organization, the Ustase, was set up in Italy under the leadership of a Croatian nationalist, Ante Pavelic, a lawyer of Bosnia-Herzegovina descent. Pavelic received political and financial support from the Italian fascist regime. His political aim, and that of the Ustase, was to liberate Croatia from the Serbian kingdom and to create a Greater Croatia.

The permanent political crisis in the kingdom of Yugoslavia was resolved by the *Sporazum* (Agreement) of 1939, which gave Croatia a great degree of cultural and territorial autonomy. The Croatian province, known as *Banovina Hrvatska*, included parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina where the Croatian population was in the majority, and also Srijem province (without East Srijem) and Dalmatia (without the Bay of Kotor).

Many historians regarded the *Sporazum* as the real solution to the Serbo-Croat conflict. Recent studies of the history of the Yugoslav state have been more critical, however. Mustafa Imamovic writes

⁶² The Croat historian Mirjana Gross points out that the Serbs played an important social role in Croatia even in the time of Hedervary's predecessor Ivan Mazuranic who was known as a Croatian nationalist. Serbs occupied the following important positions under Mazuranic: Speaker of the Croatian parliament (Sabor); Ministers of Internal Affairs (and Vice-Governor); and President of the Croatian Supreme Court. See Drago Roksandic, *Srbi u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, 1991) 100.

⁶³ Drago Roksandic, “The Myth of ‘Historical Conflict’” in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, (1992) 18-20.

⁶⁴ Dragnich (1992) 179.

⁶⁵ See e.g. J. B. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis, 1934-1941* (New York, 1963).

⁶⁶ Banac (1992) 13.

that the Bosnians initially supported the agreement between the Serbs and the Croats because it was seen as an important compromise that could lead to stabilization of the political situation. The division of Bosnia-Herzegovina was soon found to involve major drawbacks, however, to which the Bosnians responded by setting up a movement for the territorial autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁶⁷

The Serb historian Branka Prpa-Jovanovic likewise believes that the *Sporazum* did not offer a lasting solution to the Serbo-Croat conflict: "But a federal Yugoslavia might have had a better chance at another time. It was now too late - not only because the Serbian-Croatian agreement was reached on the eve of the World War II, in difficult international circumstances, or because the other Yugoslav nations were bitter about being left out, but also because the solution satisfied neither the Serbs nor the Croats. Croatian politicians were angered by the limited nature of autonomy and Serbian politicians by loss of their domination, the abandonment of centralism, and the new division of administrative powers."⁶⁸

A low point in the Serbo-Croat conflict was reached during the Second World War. The kingdom of Yugoslavia disintegrated in 1941, as a result of the invasion of the Axis powers. King Petar Karadjordjevic and his government fled to London. Germany, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Italy then occupied large areas of Yugoslav territory, and what was left was divided between the Serb and Croat Nazi satellite states. The subsequent civil war was waged between different ethnic groups. The Croatian extreme nationalist movement, the Ustase, founded the Independent Croatian State (*NDH - Nezavisna Dr'ava Hrvatska*). The Ustase wanted an 'ethnically clean' Greater Croatia; the Serb population were the main victims of their activities. The Serb nationalist extremists, the Cetniks, fought in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia for the creation of a 'Greater Serbia'; it was mainly the Bosnian Muslims from the east of Bosnia-Herzegovina who fell victim to their ethnic cleansing.

5. The legitimacy of the Communist Yugoslav federation, 1945-1992

The legitimacy of communist Yugoslavia was based on the role played by the Communist resistance movement under the leadership of Josip Broz-Tito (1892-1980) during the Second World War.⁶⁹ The Communists had clearly formulated war objectives: the expulsion of the foreign occupying forces, social revolution modelled on the example of the Soviet Union and the recovery of the Yugoslav state. Alongside the guerrilla war against the German and Italian occupiers, they were also engaged in a power struggle with their ideological enemies, in particular the Cetniks and the Ustase. The Yugoslav Communists emerged from the Second World War as victors. They also won the political and diplomatic struggle after the war, by preventing the return of the king and his government in exile.

The legitimacy of the Communist federation was based on the following arguments. Firstly, the Communists had established themselves as the protectors of the civilian population, no matter what their ethnic origin. The civilian population, that had been a target of extreme nationalist aggression, regarded the Communist resistance fighters as their protectors; this was the case e.g. with the Croatian Serbs, who had been exposed to Ustase terror for four years. They joined the Communist resistance, and remained very loyal to the Communist system after the war. The Communists stressed the ethnic similarities between the South Slav peoples, while the ethnic polarization that had manifested itself so prominently during the Second World War seemed to become less important in the light of the proclaimed supra-national character of the Communist ideology. Nationalism was regarded as anachronistic and reactionary, and the proponents of nationalist ideologies were tried by the courts as 'enemies of the people' or driven into exile. National identity was supposed to give way gradually to a Yugoslav identity based on the Yugoslav language - the *lingua franca* for all the peoples concerned, to be based on a combination of the Serb and Croat standard languages.

⁶⁷ M. Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, (Sarajevo, 1998) 520-521.

⁶⁸ Prpa-Jovanovic (1997) 57.

⁶⁹ See Bogdan Denich, *Legitimation of a Revolution: The Yugoslav Case* (New Haven, 1975).

Many historical studies have been written on the role of the Communist resistance to the Axis powers and the civil war between the different nationalist movements. A great deal of attention was paid in this context to the role of the Cetnik⁷⁰ resistance to the Axis powers. Were they fighting for a Greater Serbia or for the kingdom of Yugoslavia? Were they patriots who organized the resistance to the Nazis, or collaborators who worked together with the enemy to defeat their common enemy, the Communists? Other important themes concern Ustase violence and the place of their extreme nationalist ideology in Croatian history.⁷¹ The questions about the collective guilt of the Croats and national reconciliation between the Yugoslav peoples who adopted opposing positions during the war received little attention after the war. According to the Communists, the national question had been solved: "During a war with all the features of a religious and ethnic war, the Communists offered - at the time when the renewal of Yugoslavia seemed entirely impossible - a new vision of Yugoslavia, expressed in the slogan 'Brotherhood and Unity'. Yugoslavism was reborn in blood, but on new foundations. The Communists hoped not to repeat the errors of their predecessors."⁷²

The first step towards establishing the legitimacy of Yugoslavia in the post-war international system of states was taken when the Allies recognized of the Yugoslav communist guerrilla forces as the official resistance movement in 1943. Nora Beloff regards Great Britain's decision to drop Draza Mihailovic's Cetniks and to support Tito's Partisans as a big mistake on the part of the Allies. While Great Britain and the USA opposed the formation of a Communist Yugoslav federation after the war, the recognition of Tito as the leader of the resistance contributed to his political victory over his domestic enemies. Tito's greatest political rival was King Petar. Great Britain, supported by the USA, assumed that the Yugoslav king would return after the war. Stalin, on the other hand, planned to set up a Communist Balkan federation including Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria. It was decided by way of compromise during the Yalta conference that Yugoslavia would be divided into two spheres of influence – a Communist half and a capitalist half. Tito managed to ensure, however, that the new Yugoslavia became a Communist federation in 1945, and that the king did not return. The initial fear of the western countries that Yugoslavia would end up in the Soviet sphere of influence turned into euphoria in 1948 when the split between the Yugoslav Communists and Stalin led to complete cessation of contacts between the two states. Yugoslavia acquired a special position as 'no man's land' in European politics during the Cold War'.

Communist Yugoslavia was set up as a federation, within which the Slovenes, Croats, Montenegrins, Serbs and Macedonians were recognized as the constitutive nationalities. Bosnia-Hercegovina became one of the six Yugoslav republics, but the Bosnian Muslims did not acquire the status of constitutive nationality until the 1960s.⁷³ The other nationalities – including the large numbers of Albanians in the Serbian province of Kosovo – were classified as national minorities. The main constitutional difference between a people (*narod*) and a national minority (*narodnost*) was that the former had the right to self-determination and got a republic of its own. This also gave it the formal right to secede from the federation, if the other constitutive nationalities agreed. The national minorities did not have this right. Bosnia-Hercegovina received a special status within the federation because the three constitutive nationalities who lived there, the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians, were all placed on an equal footing. Bosnia-Hercegovina was therefore often called 'Yugoslavia in miniature'.

⁷⁰ See Jozo Tomasevich, *The Chetniks - War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945* (Stanford, 1975) and Matteo Milazzo, *The Chetnik Movement and the Yugoslav Resistance* (Baltimore/London, 1975). Fikreta Jelic-Butic, *Cetnici u Hrvatskoj 1941-1945* (Zagreb, 1986).

⁷¹ See Bogdan Krizman, *Ante Pavelic i Ustase* (Zagreb, 1978). - *NDH između Hitlera i Mussolinija* (Zagreb, 1980). - *Ustase i Treci Reich* (Zagreb, 1983). Fikreta Jelic-Butic, *Ustase i Nezavisna država Hrvatska 1941-1945* (Zagreb, 1978).

⁷² Prpa-Jovanovic (1997) 59.

⁷³ For details of Yugoslav federalism see e.g. P. Shoup, *Communism and the Yugoslav National Question*, (New York, 1968). P. Lendvai, *Eagles in Cobwebs: nationalism and communism in the Balkans* (London, 1970) S. Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962-1991* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1992).

6. The demystification of Communist history

The Communist rulers saw the history of the Second World War in black and white and the historiography of this period provided the basis for an important part of Yugoslav Communist ideology, leading to the creation of new historical myths. The Communist intellectual elite even produced a myth of Tito's leadership while the Second World War was still continuing. This myth bore striking resemblances to those dealing with the epic heroes in folk tales: a poor Croatian boy becomes the leader of an important state, fights against social injustice and powerful foreign enemies, and even becomes a respected world leader thanks to his role in the movement of non-aligned nations. Other historical myths created and fostered by Communist historians and ideologues dealt with the role of the Communist anti-Fascist resistance in the liberation of Yugoslavia, Tito's 'historic no' to Stalin, the 'brotherhood and unity' of the Yugoslav peoples, and workers' self-rule as an alternative to the capitalist and Communist political systems.

Although these myths were thought up by the Yugoslav Communists, western historians and regional experts made an important contribution to their popularization and propagation beyond the boundaries of Yugoslavia. An influential group of intellectuals was writing sympathetically about Yugoslavia in the West. The British authors Stephan Clissold, Fitzroy McLean and F.W. Deakin, who had been liaison officers with the task of maintaining contact with the Yugoslav Partisans on behalf of the British government, wrote a number of influential books about the Communist resistance and Tito after the war. These publications made a big contribution to the formation of the positive image of Tito's Yugoslavia held by the West.⁷⁴ Another group of authors who contributed to the positive image of Communist Yugoslavia consisted of young westerners who had helped in the rebuilding of war-ravaged Yugoslavia as members of international youth brigades in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Some of them later became influential scientists, writers and politicians. One of these was the British historian and regional expert Fred Singleton who subsequently played an important role in the setting up of the department of Yugoslav studies at the University of Bradford, where many generations of young historians have been trained.⁷⁵ The former Swedish premier Olaf Palme also belonged to this group.⁷⁶

The world first began to hear dissident voices from within the Yugoslav Communist Party itself in the 1950s. Milovan Djilas, one of the five most important Communist politicians, made furore with his criticism of the privileges of the Communist rulers, whom he called the 'new class'. He did not, however, distance himself from Communist ideology or the Yugoslav state. His criticism was aimed at the Communist elite and the way they dealt with power. He belonged to this elite himself, and initially believed that the solution for these shortcomings was to be found in liberalization of Yugoslav society.⁷⁷ Those at the top of the party, and in particular Tito, had no wish to consider such criticism and Djilas ended up in prison. After his release, he began a successful career as an author and political commentator whose publications played an important role in bringing about a change in the perception of Communist Yugoslavia abroad.

Critical works on the history of Communist Yugoslavia originated mainly from the circles of anti-Communist political émigrés, who came from widely differing ideological backgrounds. Some of them, for example, had a liberal-democratic viewpoint: they accepted the idea of the Yugoslav state, but

⁷⁴ See S. Clissold, *Whirlwind; An Account of Marshal Tito's Rise to Power* (London, 1949). *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union 1939-1973* (London, 1975). F.W.D. Deakin, *The Embattled Mountain*, (London, 1971). F. Maclean, *Eastern Approaches*, (London, 1949). *Disputed Barricades: the Life and Time of Josip Broz Tito, Marshal of Yugoslavia*, Cape, (London, 1957). *Tito: A Pictorial Biography*, (New York and London, 1980).

⁷⁵ See e.g. F. Singleton, *Twentieth Century Yugoslavia* (New York, 1976) and *A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples* (Cambridge, 1985-1993).

⁷⁶ The group also included many young people from the Netherlands who went on to occupy important positions in society, such as Marius Broekmeyer the expert on Yugoslavia and Russia, and the former minister of Defence Relus ter Beek.

⁷⁷ See e.g. M. Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York, 1962). *The Imperfect Society*, (New York, 1969). *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (New York, 1973). *The New Class* (New York, 1974). *Wartime* (New York 1977). *Tito: The Story from the Inside* (New York, 1981). *Rise and Fall* (New York, 1984).

were critical of Communism. The nationalist émigrés, on the other hand, were against both Communist ideology and a shared Yugoslav state.⁷⁸

In the 1970s, the 'Praxis' group of Marxist humanist philosophers attracted a great deal of attention outside Yugoslavia. Their main criticism of Yugoslav society was that the Communists paid too much attention to life in the ideal society of the future. They wanted to investigate the real face of Communist society.⁷⁹

The demystification of the historiography of Yugoslavia in the Second World War came from an unexpected source. In 1985 the Yugoslav émigré Bogoljub Kocovic, who had left Yugoslavia in 1943, published a statistical study of the demographic losses in Yugoslavia during the Second World War - a very sensitive issue in Communist circles. He distinguished between demographic losses in a wider and in a narrower sense, the latter including actual war victims only while the former included losses due to emigration and the drop in birth rate as well. Kocovic estimated the total demographic losses in the wider sense at 2 million, including between 900 000 and 1 150 000 war victims.⁸⁰ His final estimate of 1,014,00 war victims included 478,000 Serbs, 207,00 Croats, 86,000 Muslims and 60,000 Jews. Another book published in 1989 by Vladimir Zerjavic, a Croat economist and demographer, and entitled *Gubici stanovništva Jugoslavije u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, showed similar results. According to Zerjavic, the total number of war victims on Yugoslav soil was 1,027,000, including 271,000 from Croatian territory and 316,000 from Bosnia-Hercegovina.⁸¹ He further calculated that the total number of victims in all concentration camps within the territory of the NDH was 92,000.⁸² These figures differed widely from the estimates put forward by the Communists and by the nationalist émigrés. According to Communist sources, the Ustase-run Jasenovac concentration camp alone was responsible for between 350 000 and 700 000 deaths, while the 1959 edition of the Yugoslav General Encyclopaedia gave a figure of 350,000 victims in the article on "Concentration camps". The 1950 edition of the same encyclopaedia stated that the exact number of victims was impossible to estimate, but it was sure to exceed 700,000. The lack of exact data on war victims made it possible for a myth to grow up around Jasenovac, which according to some Croat historians and intellectuals have led to the stigmatization of the Croatian people. A heated public debate about the past was held in Yugoslavia in the 1980s. Despite Communist claims that an open-hearted reconciliation process had taken place between the various ethnic groups in Yugoslavia soon after the Second World War, in fact there had never been a widely based discussion involving all layers of society about how people had dealt with the traumatic events of the war. According to official Communist historiography, the Serb and Croat versions of extreme nationalist ideology were regarded as opposite poles of the same evil. Historical studies of the Cetnik movement published outside Yugoslavia reveal a different picture, however. The American historian of Yugoslav descent Jozo Tomashevich wrote in his book on the history of the Cetnik movement that this movement was not a homogeneous political/military organization. The main Cetnik movement was that of General Draza Mihailovic (1893-1946), which may be regarded as the official resistance movement of the Yugoslav government in exile. Mihailovic was loyal to the king, and officially his Cetniks fought for the restoration of the kingdom of Yugoslavia. There was, however, another Cetnik movement in Croatia which was led by an Orthodox priest, Momcilo Djuic, and which collaborated with the Italian Fascists. Bands calling themselves Cetniks, but not under the direct authority of Mihailovic, also operated in Bosnia, Kosovo and Serbia. The public debate was extended to cover the role of the Cetnik movement in the anti-fascist resistance and the 'collective guilt of the

⁷⁸ See Mirko Galic, *Politika u emigraciji: demokratska alternativa*, (Zagreb, 1990). Mustafa Imamovic, *Bosnjaci u emigraciji*, (Sarajevo, 1996).

⁷⁹ See e.g. S. Stojanovic, *Between Ideals and Reality* (New York, 1973). S. Cohen and M. Markovic, *Yugoslavia: the rise and fall of socialist humanism* (Nottingham, 1975)

⁸⁰ Bogoljub Kocovic, *Zrtve drugog svjetskog rata* (London 1985). Details of the discussion about the number of victims are given by Franjo Tudjman, *Bespuca povijesne zbiljnosti* (Zagreb, 1990).

⁸¹ Vladimir Zerjavic, *Gubici stanovništva Jugoslavije u Drugom svjetskom ratu* (Zagreb 1989).

⁸² Vladimir Zerjavic, *Opsesije i megalomanije oko Jasenovca i Bleiburga* (Zagreb 1992)..

Croats' in connection with the past deeds of the Ustase. A discussion also arose about whether Mihailovic had had a double agenda and had been fighting for a Greater Serbia right from the start. It is known that the Cetniks were responsible for the slaughter of groups of Muslims in Sandzak and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Historians still cannot agree whether Draza Mihailovic knew about these atrocities. Serb historians and commentators like Vladimir Dedijer, Velimir Terzic and Vuk Draskovic resisted the idea of 'equal responsibility' and 'symmetry' of the crimes committed by the Serbian Cetniks and the Croatian Ustase. While they conceded that the violence committed by the Cetniks could be regarded as genocide, they defended it as necessary in the struggle against the terror of the Partisans and the Ustase. In Draskovic's opinion, these were rare cases of vengeance, 'for which the Serbian people have often expressed regret and condemnation after the war.' The accusation of a Greater-Serbian hegemony in the kingdom of Yugoslavia was rejected as a fabrication by the Comintern. Franjo Tudjman (1922-1999), a historian as well as a former general, also took part in the public debate about the Second World War. Tudjman had been one of the first communist intellectuals to state, as early as the 1950s, that an anti-fascist movement including non-Communists had been active in Croatia since 1941. According to official Communist historiography, anti-fascist resistance in Croatia had not got going till 1943 and before then the communist resistance movement in Croatia had consisted mainly of the Serbian populace.⁸³ Tudjman, however, claimed that the Cetnik movement actively supported the formation of a Greater Serbia. According to him, the crimes of the Cetniks in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia were part of this policy aimed at shifting Serbia's western border. He saw this as a proof of the genocidal character of the Serb nationalist Cetnik movement, which could thus certainly not be regarded as just a reaction to Ustase terror.

Another very critical book about Communist Yugoslavia, by the British journalist Nora Beloff, appeared in 1985.⁸⁴ This book represents one of the best argued attempts to revise Yugoslav communist historiography. She showed up the falsity of the historical myths about the great leader Tito and the heroic Communist anti-Fascist resistance. Her sympathy for the Cetnik movement made her the target of criticism from those who accused her of viewing the history of Yugoslavia through Serb nationalist spectacles.⁸⁵ According to Beloff, Draza Mihailovic was a misunderstood resistance fighter who had been betrayed by the Allies. However, Beloff's book had a great influence on western thought and set the tone for a growing group of historians and regional experts who were very critical of Communist historiography.

The Serb historian Miso Lekovic wrote the book *Martovskin pregovori* (The March negotiations), about the controversial contacts between the Communist Partisans and the German occupiers, in the same year.⁸⁶ The Communists always claimed that they had used all means at their disposal to combat the foreign occupiers – unlike the Cetniks, who are known to have collaborated with the Germans. While rumours existed that the Partisans had also negotiated with the Germans about a cease-fire, official Communist historiography was silent on this point.⁸⁷ Lekovic's treatment of this politically sensitive theme led to a heated public debate about the Communist anti-fascist resistance, which had always been treated as a sacrosanct ideological dogma by the Communists.

Yugoslav media were flooded with historical debates. After nearly forty years of Communist censorship, it was suddenly possible to write about historical topics that had been taboo until recently. This led to great public interest in everything to do with the past, especially the recent past. Critical analyses of the Communist era and revelations about topics that had been closely guarded secrets until

⁸³ Tudjman wrote at length about his quarrels with Communist historians, and his interpretation of this topic is highly subjective. Nevertheless, his book offers interesting insights into the discussions of the history of the Second World War that were carried out in the 1980s. See Franjo Tudjman, *Bespuca povijesne zbiljnosti* (Zagreb, 1990).

⁸⁴ Nora Beloff, *Tito's Flawed Legacy: Yugoslavia and the West* (London, 1985).

⁸⁵ See e.g. C. Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Courses and Consequences* (New York, 1995) 253.

⁸⁶ See Miso Lekovic, *Martovskin pregovori* (Belgrade, 1985).

⁸⁷ Pavlowich (1988) 129-157.

recently, such as over Tito's private life, turned historical research into media hype.⁸⁸ There was also wide media attention for topics from the pre-Communist era that had been regarded by the Communists as 'contra-revolutionary' and dangerous, such as stories about the proponents of extreme nationalist ideologies and nationalist leaders from the Second World War. The Dutch Slavist Willem Vermeer expressed his surprise about the attention paid to history in the Yugoslavia of the 1980s, commenting that it looked as if the past had become more important than the present: "To an outsider, it is quite astonishing to see that the popular press in Yugoslavia is full of interviews with historians and similar people, evidently not because the public is really interested in what happened in the past, but because it is thought that past facts are somehow more important than present reality. (...) since the past is considered more important than the present, there is a tendency to treat reality not as something ethically neutral to be managed, but as something essentially undesirable to be changed back into a situation that is assumed to have existed at some selected period in the past and that is held to represent an ideal.(...)"⁸⁹

There was resistance to this new historiography from orthodox Communist circles, especially the leadership of the Yugoslav Federal Army (JNA). However, the settling of accounts with Yugoslavia's Communist past was not restricted to incidental publications. These changes also led to another trend: the new critical approach to history which made it possible to discuss many controversial themes also facilitated the publication of studies with a nationalist tinge. The political climate changed, and post-Communist nationalist ideologies were born. The neo-nationalists in Croatia began to formulate a new interpretation of the role of the NDH and Ante Pavelic in Croatian history; for example, some intellectuals and politicians described Ante Pavelic's Ustase as a progressive Croatian national movement. The conservative politician Ivan Gabelica stated in an interview printed in the weekly *Globus* that Pavelic was the Croatian George Washington. The Croat commentator and historian Zvonimir Kulundzic said in another interview that Pavelic was a democrat of the British type. Kulundzic regarded Pavelic's links with Hitler and Mussolini as political miscalculations based on Pavelic's belief that fascism was going to come out on top throughout Europe.⁹⁰

Thomas writes that nationalist interpretations of history led each ethnic group to develop its own 'truths', which came to play an important role in the struggle against political opponents. Before the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina broke out, the Serb nationalist ideologists tried to prove on the basis of 'historical facts' that co-existence with the other 'ethnic groups' there was impossible. Thomas explains this tendency as follows: "Nationalist interpretations of history influence contemporary domestic and regional politics, which then leads to violent conflict. Selective and manipulative versions of history are then used to advance nationalist objectives of secession from the existing state. Similarly, nationalists usually seek to house their narrow concept of 'nation' within a state that is all-inclusive of their ethnic group and, in the same time, exclude other 'nations' from the state or reduce them to secondary status."⁹¹

The Communist era was nearing its end, but instead of looking to the future the post-Communist politicians sought inspiration in the past. The old ideological polarizations were reborn through the setting up of political parties based on the old ideological inheritance.

⁸⁸ A good example of this is a historical work on the life of Tito by the well known historian Vladimir Dedijer. His book, entitled *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita* (Rijeka, 1981), was sold out in a few days.

⁸⁹ Willem Vermeer, 'Albanians and Serbs in Yugoslavia' in J.G. Siccama and M. van den Heuvel (eds), *The Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1992) 104.

⁹⁰ See e.g. the interview with Zvonimir Kulundzic in the weekly *Globus* (7 May 1993). He was working on a study entitled 'Pavelic was no fascist' at the time.

⁹¹ Thomas (1996) 16.

7. The ideological background of extreme nationalist movements and political parties

In 1991, at the height of the war in Croatia, a group of Croat intellectuals compiled a book from source material intended to give a survey of the development of the Greater-Serbian nationalist ideology since the 19th century.⁹² The compilers saw Ilija Garasanin's *Nacertanije* as the first major political manifesto serving as a basis for Serbia's expansionist policies. In addition to the *Nacertanije*, the book contained a reprint of Vuk Karadzic's *Srbi svi i svuda*, which was presented as the basis for Serb linguistic nationalism. Texts relating to the well known secret organization *Ujedinjenje ili smrt* (Unification or death) were also reprinted.

Of course, this collection also contains less well known texts such as *Do istrage nase ili vase* (Till our extermination, or yours), by the Serb lawyer and commentator Nikola Stojanovic (1880-1965), which was initially published in Zagreb in 1902. Stojanovic argued in this text for absorption of the Croats in the Serbian people: "The Croats...are not and cannot be a separate nation, but they are on their way to becoming - Serbs. By taking Serbian as their national language, they have taken the most important step towards unification. Also, the process of merging continues apart from the language. By reading every single Serbian book, any folk song, by singing any Serbian song, an atom of fresh Serbian democratic culture is passing into their organism (...) This struggle must be fought until extermination, yours or ours. One party must succumb."⁹³ The Croats in Zagreb reacted to the publication of Stojanovic's article with indignation, and the leader of the Croat extreme nationalist "Pure party of Right" Juraj Frank organized (with support from Budapest) the plundering of Serb houses and shops, which lasted for three days and nights. On the fourth day, the Hungarian authorities announced a state of emergency to put an end to the riots.

The interest in Serb nationalism was generated by the large-scale atrocities committed in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1991 and 1995. People tried to find an explanation in the historical continuity of Serb nationalist ideology for the slaughter of Croats and Bosnians by the Serb army and various paramilitary organisations. For example, the text by the historian Vasa Cubrilovic from 1937 on the plans for expelling the Albanian population of Yugoslavia to Albania and Turkey was regarded as a consequence of Serb nationalist ideology. Cubrilovic was inspired by Hitler's successful expulsion of the Jews and Stalin's suppression of undesired population groups. He proposed that systematic intimidation and terror should be used to make the life of the Albanians impossible, so that they would flee to Albania or Turkey. His proposal also included the deployment of various paramilitary groups, such as the Cetniks, in order to carry out violent actions against Albanian villages and neighbourhoods in collaboration with the government.

The compilation also includes the pamphlet *Homogena Srbija* (Homogeneous Serbia) by Stevan Moljevic, one of the leaders of the Cetnik movement in the Second World War. This brief manifesto included full details of the boundaries of the Serbian state to be set up after the war. Moljevic's Greater Serbia was to include parts of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania. The formation of this Serbian state was to be followed by a federative alliance with Slovenia and Croatia. This manifesto was used as a proof that the Cetnik movement during the Second World War was fighting for a Greater Serbia and not for the kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The main attention in the book was focused, however, on the Memorandum written in 1985 by a prominent group of academics from the Serbian Academy of Sciences (SANU) in reaction to the political and economic crisis that had been plaguing the Yugoslav federation since the 1960s. The compilers of *Izvori velikosrpske agresije* share the opinion of most commentators that the SANU Memorandum formed the basis for the nationalist policy followed by the Serbian Communists under

⁹² See Boze Covic (ed.), *Izvori velikosrpske agresije*, (Zagreb 1991). Philip Cohen, *Serbia's Secret War: Propaganda and Deceit*, (Texas, 1996). M. Grmek, M. Gjidara, N. Stimac, *Le nettoyage ethnique: Documents, historiques sur une idéologie serbe* (Paris, 1993).

⁹³ This translation is taken from P. Cohen (1996) 4.

Slobodan Milosevic. It consists of two thematic parts, the first of which contains general considerations about the socio-economic, cultural and political crisis suffered by Communist Yugoslavia. The blame for the faulty policies followed in Yugoslavia is laid on the shoulders of the Communist rulers. The second part deals with the position of Serbia within the Communist federation, as defined in the 1974 Constitution. The main argument here is that the Serbian people had not been given the right to a state of their own. Serbia itself was divided administratively into three parts: Serbia proper, and the two autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. The political steps derived from this analysis were aimed in the first instance at re-uniting Serbia administratively by abolishing the autonomous status of the two other provinces. Although the SANU Memorandum did not mention any explicit links between the policies it proposed and Serb national ideology in the tradition of Garasanin or the Cetnik movement, Serbian policy under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic was placed in the tradition of 19th century Serb nationalism because both were aimed at uniting the Serb population (including that from other republics) in a single state.

It is noteworthy that while many books about the background of Serb nationalist ideology have appeared since 1991, there have been no systematic analyses of the ideological background of Croat extreme nationalist movements and political parties.⁹⁴ The Croatian share of war atrocities is generally related to the Croat extreme nationalist ideology of Starcevic and Frank. While Starcevic regarded the Habsburg monarchy as the greatest enemy of the formation of the Croatian state and warned against co-operation with Budapest and Vienna, Frank was notorious for his anti-Serb attitude. He did not hesitate to work together with Budapest to intimidate the Croatian Serbs. Frank's ideological legacy was continued by the lawyer Ante Pavelic (1899-1965), the founder of the Ustase movement. Pavelic fled the kingdom of Yugoslavia after having been found guilty *in absentia* of incitement to armed rebellion against the state. He sought refuge in Mussolini's Italy, where he set up the Ustase (Rebels) terrorist group. Pavelic was convinced that the political future of Croatia lay in the hands of the Croatian peasants and he gained a great deal of support in Lika (Knin-krajina) and Hercegovina, where the peasant population lived under very poor conditions and where the royal police were given a free hand to terrorize the non-Serb population. The Ustase's support for the poor and socially disadvantaged groups led initially to such confusion about their ideological background that even the Yugoslav Communist Party though they had gained a new ally.⁹⁵ This was a big miscalculation, because the main aim of Ustase ideology was the formation of an ethnically pure Greater Croatian state. The Ustase government unleashed a reign of terror in 1941, with the promulgation of the "Decree for the Defence of the People and the State", in which it was stated that whoever damaged the vital interests of Croatia was guilty of high treason, the penalty for which was death.⁹⁶ The "Decree for the Protection of Arian Blood" promoted the Slav Croats, by way of exception and with the implicit approval of Hitler, to the Arian race and made it an offence for them to have dealings with Jews. The Serbian question was dealt with in the "Decree concerning Conversion from one Religion to another". The Serbs were defined as 'Eastern Greek Orthodox', and Catholic priests were encouraged to convert them to Catholicism.⁹⁷ After the restoration of political pluralism in Croatia in 1990, a number of new political parties claimed an ideological affinity with the Party of Right, the Pure Party of Right and the Ustase. The winner in the

⁹⁴ See e.g. Branimir Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, (New York, 1999). Norman Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of Ethnic Cleansing* (Texas A&M, 1996). Philip J. Cohen, *Serbia's Secret War: Propaganda and Deceit of History* (Texas A&M, 1996/1999). TH. Cushman and S. Mestrovic, *This Time we Knew: Western Responses to Genocide in Bosnia* (Texas A&M, 1996). Boze Covic (ed.), *Izvori velikosrpske agresije* (Zagreb 1991). M. Grmek, M. Gjidara, N. Stimac, *Le nettoyage ethnique: Documents, historiques sur une idéologie serbe* (Paris, 1993). Stjepan. Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide After Emotion: The Postemotional Balkan War* (London, 1996). Michael Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Berkley, 1996).

⁹⁵ A. Djilas, *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919-1953* (Cambridge, Mass, 1991) 109-110.

⁹⁶ Z. Löwenthal (ed.), *The Crimes of the Fascist Occupants and their Collaborators against Jews in Yugoslavia* (Belgrade, 1957) 6.

⁹⁷ P. Cohen (1996) 88-92.

1990 elections was the HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union), a neo-nationalist party with one main aim: the creation of an independent Croatian state. Anything that stood in the way of this aim was considered to be ideologically unacceptable. HDZ policy was a combination of anti-Yugoslav, anti-Communist and anti-Serb elements.⁹⁸ Unlike the Ustase, HDZ ideologists no longer regarded the Muslims from Bosnia-Herzegovina as 'natural allies' but as political opponents on the way to a great, independent Croatian state.

⁹⁸ See e.g. Franjo Tuđman, *Izabrana djela*, 3 vols. (Zagreb 1990).

Chapter 2

Theories concerning the disintegration of Yugoslavia

Introduction

After the outbreak of war in 1991, many studies of the background of the war were published. Most of these included a reconstruction of the events leading up to the disintegration of Yugoslavia. In parallel with a step-by-step description of the escalation process, an attempt was made to trace the causes of the disintegration of the state. The most recent publications have tended to concentrate mainly on the question of the succession after the death of Tito, the economic crisis and the crisis of the federal system as the fundamental causes of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. In addition, authors have tried to assign responsibility for the violent escalation of the conflict: was this perhaps due to the secessionist policies of Slovenia and Croatia, who decided to leave the Yugoslav federation in 1991? Or were these policies merely a reaction to the Serb nationalist policies of Slobodan Milosevic, who had been mobilizing the Serb population in other republics since 1987 in order, as he claimed, to 'save' them from the genocide others were planning to carry out on them?

In order to explain the causes of the violence, and in particular the escalation of violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it is necessary to start off by analysing the various definitions of the conflict. Was it historical, ethnic, religious, ideological or political in nature? Or was it a confirmation of the theory of a 'clash of civilisations' that had suddenly become so popular in the 1990s?

1. The question of succession: Tito after Tito?

For more than three decades, the political leadership of the Yugoslav federation was in the hands of one single person: Josip Broz Tito. He was the State President, the Federal Premier and the Supreme Commander of the army. He fulfilled all these functions till the end of his life, and was accepted as impartial by all ethnic groups.⁹⁹

Tito started to arrange his succession in the 1960s. It was ultimately decided that he would be succeeded by a Presidium with eight members, representing the six republics and the two autonomous provinces. It was later realized, however, that such a collective presidium would be unable to save the federation if the one-party system should cease to exist. Democratic centralism provided a vital basis for the solution of political problems in Communist Yugoslavia: once the party had taken a decision, this should be followed at all levels.

The historian Stevan Pavlowich believes that Tito was not really interested in arranging his succession, and offers as evidence the fact that he expelled a whole generation of competent politicians from the party in the 1970s. In Pavlowich's opinion, these clean-ups were aimed not so much at removing deviant 'nationalist' and 'liberal' elements from the party as at dealing with his succession: "This was intended both to prevent a struggle for the succession, and anyone ever again wielding such power as he had - in order to keep his achievements and his memory intact and unique."¹⁰⁰

The question as to what would happen to the Communist Yugoslav federation after Tito's death was also of great importance for European security. The first scenarios for the future of

⁹⁹ See e.g. P. Auty, *Tito: A Biography* (New York, 1970). N. Belloff, *Tito's Flawed Legacy: Yugoslavia and the West since 1939* (London, 1985). V. Dedijer, *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita* (Rijeka, 1981). M. Djilas, *Tito: The Story from the Inside* (New York, 1981). S.K. Pavlowich, *Tito, Yugoslavia's Great Dictator* (London, 1992). J. Ridley, *Tito: A Biography*, (London, 1994). R. West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia* (Cambridge, 1994).

¹⁰⁰ Pavlowich (1988) 26.

Yugoslavia after the death of Tito appeared in the 1970s.¹⁰¹ A frequently recurring theme was the warning that this event was likely to lead to the loss of Yugoslav neutrality. The doom scenarios included the possibilities of regional destabilization, Soviet expansion to the South-East of Europe, and ethnic tensions: “The scenario could be grim: Tito successors are unable to impose their will on the feuding republics; nationalism, the historic bane of the Balkans, explodes with new strength, fuelled by Kosovo Albanian irredentists and the Croat clamour for more autonomy; the TDF (Territorial Defence Force, N. Tromp), the pride of Yugoslavia’s military planners, splits up along national lines; armed bands of Ustashi and Cominformist Soviet agents cross the borders, spreading terror and chaos.”¹⁰²

The German commentator and Yugoslavia expert Carl Gustaf Ströhm pointed out that radical Croatian and Serbian nationalist émigrés were waiting for the chance to topple the Communist system. An underground war had been raging outside Yugoslavia between the Yugoslav secret service (UDBA) and these groups for years. The general assumption was that Communist Yugoslavia would disintegrate along ethnic fault lines after Tito’s death, opening the door to the return of political émigrés with very radical views.¹⁰³

European diplomatic circles devoted a great deal of attention and energy to maintenance of the *status quo* during the Cold War years. Any *rapprochement* between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia could disturb the precarious balance of power in Europe. But unlike the prediction made in most doom scenarios, Yugoslavia did not fall prey to Soviet expansionism. The disintegration of Yugoslavia did not happen until the Communist system in Europe had collapsed in 1989, closely followed by the crumbling of the Soviet Union in 1991.¹⁰⁴

From 1980 onwards, the Yugoslav political elite tried to keep Tito’s legacy alive under the motto ‘Tito after Tito’.¹⁰⁵ In fact, however, the bankruptcy of Communist ideology, the economic malaise and social and ethnic tensions caused the Communist elites in the republics to distance themselves more and more from Tito and his political legacy. Various republics were on the look out for a new ‘strong man’, for Yugoslavians had never known a political system that did not derive its authority from a strong leader. This was generally explained with reference to the patriarchal traditions of the region, where democratic political institutions remained underdeveloped and all political systems in the past had rested on the power and authority of a strong leader. The Serb geographer and anthropologist Jovan Cvijic explains the tendency of the population of the Balkans to submit to the authority placed above them by the centuries of suppression undergone by the region which had forced the populace to an extreme form of adaptation if they were to survive.¹⁰⁶ Paradoxically enough, the Communist system was the most liberal political system in the history of the South Slav peoples despite all its shortcomings and its repressive character. Anyone who followed the rules could become a member of the Communist party and advance in society on that basis. But the Communist system also depended on the strong leadership of one person, Tito. It appeared with hindsight that the system could not survive without a new strong man. It has been said of Slobodan Milosevic that he was the

¹⁰¹ See e.g. Carl Gustaf Ströhm, *Ohne Tito: Kann Jugoslawien überleben?* (Graz-Vienna-Cologne, 1976). Andrew Borowiets, *Yugoslavia after Tito* (New York, 1977). Gavril Ra’anen, *Yugoslavia after Tito: Scenarios and Implications* (Boulder, 1977). Slobodan Stankovic, *Tito’s Erbe: Die Hypothek der alten Richtungskämpfe ideologischer und nationaler Fraktionen* (Munich, 1981) and, by the same author, *The End of Tito Era: Yugoslavia’s Dilemmas* (Stamford, 1981).

¹⁰² Borowiec (1977) 103.

¹⁰³ ‘Für jede ausländische macht, die an einer Desintegration des jugoslawischen Systems interessiert ist, stellt dieser Untergrundkrieg im kroatischen und serbischen Exil einen günstigen Ansatzpunkt dar.’ (This underground war between Croat and Serb exiles is a useful point of attack for any foreign power interested in the disintegration of the Yugoslav system.) Cited from Ströhm (1976) 295.

¹⁰⁴ See A. Lynch and R. Lukic, *Europe from the Balkans to the Urals, the Disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union* (Oxford, 1996).

¹⁰⁵ L. Sekelj, *Yugoslavia: The Process of Disintegration* (Boulder, 1993) 145.

¹⁰⁶ Wayne Vuchinich, ‘some Aspects of the Ottoman legacy’, in Charles and Barbara Jelavich (eds.), *The Balkans in Transition. Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics since the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley- Los Angeles, 1963) 89.

only politician in the former Yugoslavia who had understood that Tito was dead and who wanted to become the new Tito. His problem, however, was that he was not accepted by the non-Serbs, the Serb liberal intelligentsia and the liberal Communists. His power in Serbia was based on the support of the Serbs from the other republics, in particular Kosovo and Croatia.

After the death of Tito, the new generation of Communist leaders promised never to 'depart from his ways'. However, the rise of nationalism in the Yugoslav republics at the end of the 1980s led to increasing criticism of Tito. In Croatian post-Communist historiography, he is generally described as a tyrant who used Communist ideology as an effective means of repression to hold the South Slav peoples, in particular the Croats, together against their will. In post-Communist Serb historiography, Tito is said to be responsible for splitting Serbia up into three (administrative) units, Serbia proper and the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. It is claimed that he did this because he believed that Yugoslavia could only be strong if Serbia was weak.

The bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia led to renewed interest in Tito and his times. The British commentator Jasper Ridley wrote a biography of Tito in 1994, in which he gave a more positive assessment of the Yugoslav leader. Ridley stated that Tito had long had doubts about the future of the Yugoslav federation; he apparently said as early as two years before his death that Yugoslavia no longer existed. Ridley believed that Tito was less unpopular in post-Communist Croatia than in post-Communist Serbia. The Croatian president Franjo Tudjman always showed respect for Tito, whom he praised e.g. for his creation of a federal Yugoslavia in the 1970s, which was very good for Croatia. In another biography of Tito, the British historian and Yugoslavia expert Richard West described how the inhabitants of Bosnia carried Tito's portrait through the streets and called his name during parades held in Sarajevo and Mostar on the eve of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Many inhabitants of the ethnically mixed regions where the memories of ethnic violence from the Second World War were still fresh saw Tito and his Yugoslavia as guarantees of peace.¹⁰⁷

2. The economic crisis

One of the first books describing the escalating disintegration of Yugoslavia as the result of economic, political and ethnic tensions appeared in 1993.¹⁰⁸ Branka Magas, a British historian and journalist of Croatian descent, had initially been interested in the direction in which Yugoslav socialism and 'workers' self-rule' was going to develop in the 1980s. She soon realized, however, that not only the Yugoslav socialist system but also the continued existence of the state itself was at risk.¹⁰⁹ In the early 1980s, shortly after Tito's death, signs of a deep economic crisis in Yugoslavia became evident. The Communist rulers tried to deal with it with the aid of a series of economic measures. A *Long-term Programme for Economic Stabilization and Development* was introduced in 1982. The main measures this programme contained involved large-scale cuts in expenditure in all segments of society. In the view of Yugoslav economists, however, the crisis was structural and could not be solved by the proposed economic changes. Industry depended on imported raw materials and technology, and the facilities for agriculture, transport and energy were systematically neglected. Despite the strict measures taken to reduce expenditure, the foreign debt continued to rise: "In 1983 alone \$900 million were added to the country's \$20 billion foreign debt. To service this debt, and in order to be able to borrow more, the government has been cutting down imports and stepping up exports 'at all costs'. Import reductions have in turn produced a great shortage of essential materials. The result has been great industrial

¹⁰⁷ West (1995) 392.

¹⁰⁸ B. Magas, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the Break-up 1980-92* (London, 1993). L. Sekelj, *Yugoslavia: The Process of Disintegration*, (Boulder, 1993). L. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Boulder-Oxford, 1993).

¹⁰⁹ Magas (1993) Introduction.

stagnation: depending on the branch, only between 30 per cent and 60 per cent of industrial capacity is at present being utilized. This means that enterprises are increasingly operating at a loss (...)”¹¹⁰

The foreign experts who saw the crisis in Yugoslavia as basically economic in nature believed that it was a result of the oil crisis that had hit all developing countries in the early 1980s. In the opinion of the American financial expert Martin d’Andrea, the Yugoslav economy had adapted well to the consequences of the oil crisis. Susan Woodward believed, however, that the most liberal Communist country could never make a successful transition to the market economy because of its internal economic development and the monetary policy of other countries at the time of the global debt crisis. According to her, the international financial crisis led to the economic crisis in Yugoslavia, which meant that the federal government could no longer function properly; and this then led in its turn to collapse of the socio-political system. Woodward ascribes the failure of the reform process in the 1980s to the international monetary organizations, which did not consider the political consequences of their policy and which kept on making new demands on the Yugoslav government. The Yugoslav sociologist Laslo Sekelj notes that the Yugoslav crisis was long regarded simply as an economic crisis which had to be solved by appropriate ‘stabilization policies’ on the part of the federal government. Yugoslav experts, on the other hand, saw the economy as only part of the problem. The main problem, according to them, was the execution of the stabilisation programmes at republic level. Sekelj believes that the economic disintegration of the federation had already begun in the early 1980s as a result of the ‘consensus economy’ which had led to six national economies.

The emphasis of the Communist leaders on the economic aspects of the crisis led to prolonged underestimation of its political consequences. Jovan Miric, Professor of Political Science at the University of Zagreb, was the first to point out the political aspects of the crisis. According to him, the causes of the economic crisis should be sought in the fact that the administrative rules and the political control of the economy were informal in nature and not laid down by law. In other words, political involvement in the economy was anonymous and intangible; no one could be held responsible for it.¹¹¹ This politicisation of the economy led to ‘political investment’, an ironic euphemism for the building of vast industrial conglomerates in economically under-developed regions. Founded on political considerations and not on economic calculations, they suffered enormous losses.¹¹²

The economic and social crisis also manifested itself at other levels. Ever since the creation of the Yugoslav state in 1918, great economic inequality had existed between its various regions. Slovenia and Croatia already had an industrial infrastructure, while society in Macedonia and Kosovo still showed feudal traits. This economic inequality continued under Communism and even got an added ethnic dimension since the allocation of economic resources within the federation was decided at republic level. Kosovo and Macedonia were regarded as under-developed regions and Slovenia and Croatia as rich, developed ones. Simmie and Dekleva concluded that the war was due to “economic wars between the richer northern republics and the poorer southern ones.”¹¹³ According to some calculations, Slovenia was 7.5 times as rich as Kosovo.

The economist Milica Zarkovic Bookman took an interesting approach to the importance of the economy in the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation¹¹⁴. She studied the relationship between economic stagnation and nationalism in the former Yugoslavia. It is generally assumed that modernization of society leads to weakening of the forces of nationalism, and on the other hand that nationalism is reinforced when the economic situation deteriorates. Some authors believe that the consequences of the economic crisis for the population of Yugoslavia led to the disintegration of the state. The standard of living dropped: in the mid-1980s, only 16% of Yugoslav households could live from their monthly income while by 1987 this figure had dropped to 5%. The population had lost all

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 95.

¹¹¹ Sekelj (1993) 160-162.

¹¹² See e.g. Marius Broekmeyer, *Joegoslavië in crisis* (in Dutch) (The Hague, 1985).

¹¹³ J. Simmie and J. Dekleva, *Yugoslavia in Turmoil: After Self-Management?* (Londen, 1991) xvii.

¹¹⁴ M. Zarkovic Bookman, *Economic Decline and Nationalism in the Balkans* (London, 1994).

confidence in the Communist leaders. By the end of the 1980s, Communism had completely lost the respect of the populace and was only associated with corruption, nepotism and incompetence. Steven Burg pointed out that populist movements and political demagogues used the economic crisis to gain political support among the population by promising quick, radical solutions to complex socio-economic problems.

Zarkovic Bookman also saw a clear relationship between the economic stagnation, the rise of nationalism and the resulting demands for secession from multi-ethnic communities.¹¹⁵ She based her analysis on the theories of authors like Karl Deutsch and Samuel Huntington¹¹⁶, who claim that modernization increases the chance of assimilation and hence reduces the risk of ethnic conflicts. It also raises the level of civilization and education or training in a society. As a result, more people come to regard themselves as members of the civil society, and identify themselves less with their ethnic descent. The contrary view is that modernization increases the competition between different peoples, as a result of which ethnic groups actually want to distinguish themselves from others. Other experts, such as Immanuel Wallerstein,¹¹⁷ believe that it is precisely the richer regions that tend to make more extreme demands such as secession. Experience in Yugoslavia actually seems to confirm both these views. The first demands for secession came from Kosovo, the least developed region in Yugoslavia. At the end of the 1980s, however, it was precisely the richest Yugoslav republic, Slovenia, that used economic arguments to legitimize its secession from Yugoslavia. The Slovene economist Joze Mencinger called the arguments about the economic exploitation of Yugoslavia's rich northern republics 'economic demagogy'¹¹⁸, which was used for political ends to legitimize secession from the federation. In fact Slovenia, which though relatively small was economically the best developed region of Yugoslavia, profited from the large market for its products offered by the rest of Yugoslavia. Slovenian complaints at the end of the 1980s referred to the execution of the federal economic policy.

The last hope for economic recovery was placed in the 'shock therapy' instituted by the last Yugoslav federal premier Ante Markovic, who started an ambitious programme of measures aimed at correcting the economic and monetary imbalance in the federation in 1989. His efforts were however continually frustrated by the republican leaders in Slovenia and Croatia, who refused to pay the customs and tax income they received into the federal chest. Serbia also refused to cooperate with the reforms at federal level. In December 1990, just before the first multi-party elections in Serbia, the Serb President Slobodan Milosevic had 1.7 billion US dollars worth of dinars printed without authorization from the federal government or the Central Bank. This measure won the elections for him in Serbia, but the monetary consequences for the rest of the federation were catastrophic. The federal government lost any credibility it still had, and Slovenia and Croatia saw it as justification for their declaration of independence.

3. The crisis of the federal system

Apart from the question of the succession to Tito and the economic crisis, the literature on the disintegration of Yugoslavia devoted a great deal of attention to the crisis of the federal system. One of the paradoxes of Yugoslav society was that while official Communist ideology sketched nationalism as ideologically dangerous and socially unacceptable, ethnic criteria were still used as starting point for the formation of the Yugoslav federal system. Sabrina Ramet used the 'balance of power' theory from

¹¹⁵ 'The greater the underdevelopment, deterioration and stagnation of regional economy, the greater the efforts of the ethnic group to differentiate itself from the union.' in Zarkovic Bookman (1994) 8.

¹¹⁶ See K. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Its Alternatives* (New York, 1969). S. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (New Haven, 1968). Cited in Zarkovic Bookman (1994) 8.

¹¹⁷ See I. Wallerstein, *Africa: The Politics of independence*, (New York, 1961). Cited in Zarkovic Bookman (1994) 8.

¹¹⁸ See J. Mencinger, 'Costs and Benefits of Secession' in D. Fink-Hafner and J. Robbins, *Making a New Nation: The Formation of Slovenia* (Dartmouth, 1997).

international relations to analyse the disintegration of the Yugoslav state.¹¹⁹ The relations between the republics and the federation were laid down in the Yugoslav Constitution, the last version of which (from 1974) contained provisions for decentralization of the federation. The republics were given greater independence, and could stand up for their own rights. At the same time, there was less incentive for the republics to make compromises with one another and the relations between them changed into what one author described as ‘combative federalism’.¹²⁰ Although ethnic tensions had also occurred regularly in the past, they had according to Ramet never led to eruptions within the federal system as long as the authority of the Communist party remained unchallenged. Tito acted regularly as the ultimate arbitrator in disputes between the republics right up to his death.

Many books on the crisis of the 1980s contain descriptions of the bankruptcy of Communist ideology in Yugoslavia well before the major upheavals in Eastern Europe. The Constitution of 1974 caused the Yugoslav Communist party to be split up into national Communist parties, which demanded changes in the federal system. The conflict between the Yugoslav republics was largely regarded in the late 1980s and early 1990s as one between the centre and the disobedient republics. The Dutch researcher Koen Koch describes the power struggle as a collision between ‘conflicting visions of state and society’ and distinguishes the following pairs of opposites in this context: ‘centralization vs decentralization’ (‘federation vs confederation’), ‘democracy vs communism’ and ‘pluralism vs nationalism’.¹²¹ Koch refers to the analysis by Milovan Djilas, who saw the struggle of the 1980s as a conflict between the national elites of the various republics, who used nationalism as a ‘technique for domination’.¹²² Ramet distinguishes the ‘national liberals’ (Slovenia and Croatia), and the ‘conservative anti-reformers’ (Serbia and Montenegro). The former wanted more autonomy for the republics and further decentralization, while the latter actually wanted centralization of the federation. The Serb preference for a centralized federation was thus diametrically opposed to the Slovene and Croat demands for further decentralization. In addition, Slovenia and Croatia presented themselves as proponents of democratic change while Serbia and Montenegro were not prepared to give up Communism.

When the nationalist parties came to power in Slovenia and Croatia in 1990, this marked the start of what Robert Hayden called a period of ‘constitutional nationalism’, characterized by a constitution and a legal system in each new republic that was intended to guarantee the dominance of the largest ethnic group.¹²³ The other ethnic groups were declared ethnic minorities, which led to violent reactions since no one wanted to belong to a minority. The new political elites in Slovenia and Croatia applied the principle of ‘total national sovereignty’ by claiming the right to self-determination, which led eventually to their secession from Yugoslavia.¹²⁴

During the final phase of the conflict before major violence erupted, there was a heated debate about the meaning of the term ‘self-determination’. In the Communist vision of the federal system, each people had the right to self-determination - including the right to secession - on condition that the other constitutive nationalities agreed. Slovenia and Croatia derived the legitimacy and legality of their decision from the results of the preceding referendum. In fact, however, this referendum had not given them the backing of the other nationalities or of the federal government, which had declared the independence of these republics illegal.¹²⁵ The Croatian government was not worried about the boycott of the referendum by the Serb population of Croatia. In their opinion, the right to self-determination applied to the republics within their existing boundaries – often called the communist boundaries. This

¹¹⁹ Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962-1991* (Bloomington, 1992).

¹²⁰ Sekelj (1993) 247.

¹²¹ Koen Koch, ‘Conflicting visions of State and Society in Present-day Yugoslavia’ in M. van den Heuvel and G. J. Siccama, *The Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1992) 189.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 200.

¹²³ See R. Hayden, ‘Constitutional Nationalism in the Former Yugoslav Republics’ *Slavic Review* (51), 654-673.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 665.

¹²⁵ Samary (1995) 75.

difference of opinion was, however, of no importance for the resolution of the crisis, for no matter whether the self-determination of peoples or of republics was at issue, the results of the referendum meant the end of the Yugoslav federation in both cases.¹²⁶ As early as 1991, a democratic Yugoslavia was no longer a realistic possibility. The Italian minister of Foreign Affairs Gianni de Michelis said in 1991 that “According to its present constitutional structure, Yugoslavia could be either united but undemocratic, or democratic - but in pieces.”¹²⁷

Despite his rhetoric, however, the Serb president Milosevic did not appear to be willing to grant the right to the self-determination of nationalities to anyone but the Serb population. In his opinion, the Serb population of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia should have the chance of expressing their opinion about the disintegration of the Yugoslav state and of deciding whether they wanted to remain in Yugoslavia. He has never explained why he was not prepared to grant the rights he claimed for the Serb minorities in the other republics to the Kosovars in Kosovo, the Muslims in Sandzak and the Hungarians in Vojvodina. One of the causes of the fighting that broke out in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina was that the Serb population there had set up Serb “autonomous regions”: according to the Serb nationalist politicians, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina could become independent – but without the regions which they (the Serb politicians) regarded as Serbian. The Croat politicians followed the Serb example, and in 1992 the Croat ‘autonomous region’ of Herceg-Bosna was proclaimed, with the intention of incorporating it into Croatia later.

4. The question of the responsibility for the disintegration of Yugoslavia

The power struggle between the various Yugoslav republics in the period from 1990 to 1992 was followed closely by foreign journalists, diplomats and politicians. The official EU policy was that Yugoslavia had to be saved. When this proved impossible, a discussion flared up about the responsibility for the disintegration of Yugoslavia. While the Serb president Slobodan Milosevic has always claimed that he wanted to save Yugoslavia, he is generally considered to bear most of the blame for its disintegration. Initially, Milosevic’s claim that he was in favour of the preservation of Yugoslavia was believed in European political circles. European policy in 1991 was also aimed precisely in this direction. Things changed after the failure of the conference held in The Hague in the autumn of 1991, where a Draft Proposal for a Yugoslav confederation was presented to the leaders of the various republics. According to this proposal, the republics would get a great deal of autonomy and would be joined together in a confederation; the national minorities in each republic would have a large measure of self-government. Milosevic was the only participant at this conference to reject this proposal, because he was not prepared to grant the Kosovo Albanians a wide degree of autonomy.¹²⁸ This is the main reason why Milosevic is regarded as having prime responsibility for the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia; a subsidiary reason is that he was the first Yugoslav politician to introduce nationalist rhetoric into his discourse. The main lines of Serbian policy under Milosevic were based on the SANU Memorandum (see section 1.6 above), a manifesto produced in 1986 by a group of leading members of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (Serbo-Croat abbreviation SANU). According to them, the 1974 Constitution was the cause of many problems in Yugoslav – and in particular in Serbian - society. They blamed the crisis on the political and economic domination of Slovenia and Croatia in Communist Yugoslavia, because these two republics had formed a kind of anti-Serb coalition during the rule of Tito and his right-hand man, the Slovene Edvard Kardelj. But the strongest criticism concerned federal policy in Kosovo: “Everyone in this country who is not indifferent has long ago realized that the genocide in Kosovo cannot be combated without deep social (...) changes in the whole country. These changes are unimaginable without changes likewise in the relationship between the

¹²⁶ See V. Gligorov, *Why Do Countries Break Up: The Yugoslav Case* (Uppsala, 1994).

¹²⁷ Sekelj (1992) 245.

¹²⁸ Little and Silber (1995) 213.

Autonomous Provinces and the Republic of Serbia (...). Genocide cannot be prevented by the (...) gradual surrender of Kosovo and Metohija to Albania: the unsigned capitulation which leads to a politics of national treason.”¹²⁹

The word ‘genocide’ had been uttered, with the implication that the Serb population in Croatia was also at risk. This kind of language also awoke memories of the Second World War, which had far-reaching consequences for the relations between the Serbs and the non-Serb nationalities in Yugoslavia. The suggestion of a planned anti-Serb policy and the threat of genocide led to a sort of existential crisis among the Serb people. This ‘propaganda of threat’ turned all kinds of Serbs – rich and poor, Communist and non-Communist, with or without a religious belief – into political allies in a broadly based national movement.¹³⁰

Although Milosevic claimed to support the preservation of Yugoslavia, he rejected all proposals for reformation of the Yugoslav federation: the Slovenian-Croatian proposal for a confederation; the Izetbegovic-Gligorov proposal, and finally that made by Lord Carrington in October 1991. After the rejection of the last-mentioned proposal, the international community was powerless to save Yugoslavia. Slovenia and Croatia were recognized as independent states by the EU countries shortly thereafter.

While Robert Hayden and Susan Woodward recognized that Serb nationalism had had negative effects, they did not think that Milosevic bore most blame for the disintegration of Yugoslavia. In their opinion, Slovenia shared the blame. The political scientist Phil Nel (1994) considers that Croatian policy under Franjo Tudjman has most to answer for, since this led to the revolt of the Croatian Serbs against the new Croatian government in August 1990.¹³¹

Although there was much criticism of Croatian policy under Tudjman, Croatia was generally held to bear a smaller share of the blame than Serbia. The mistakes made by the Croatian government relate to the treatment of the Serb population in Croatia after the elections in 1990. The new Croatian political elite did little to rebut the claims that the demands for independence in 1990 bore a striking resemblance to those made for the independent Croatian Ustase state (NDH) in 1941. Tudjman has never unconditionally condemned the Croats’ Ustase past. In fact, he made things worse by stating that even though the Ustase movement with its fascism and ethnic cleansing was reprehensible, the independence of Croatia in the period between 1941 and 1945 had been a valuable historical fact.

In the new Croatian constitution adopted in 1990, the Serb population of the state was defined as a ‘national minority’. No new legislation was passed to protect the rights of the Serb population, even though they had an absolute majority in 11 municipalities and made up nearly 12% of the overall population of Croatia. This led to increasing uncertainty among the Serbs, and finally to resistance to the new Croatian government. A majority of the Croatian Serbs voted in 1990 for the SDP (Party of Democratic Change - the old Communists, who were in favour of reformation of the federation). After the defeat of this party, however, they showed increasing support for the Serb nationalist parties. With the approval of Slobodan Milosevic, the Croatian Serbs designated a series of areas as ‘serb Autonomous Regions’ in 1991; these areas became no-go areas for the Croatian authorities.

The international community is often blamed for the outbreak of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They recognized the independence of various parts of the former Yugoslavia too quickly. This claim is difficult to substantiate, however. After the declarations of independence of Slovenia and Croatia, it would have been hard to justify leaving the population of Bosnia behind in a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia. Moreover, if the EU had not recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina, two ethnic groups (the Croats and the Muslims) would have revolted. But when Bosnia-Herzegovina was recognized, it was the Bosnian Serbs who revolted. The political leaders of the Bosnian Serbs had repeatedly stated before

¹²⁹ Magas (1993) 49.

¹³⁰ See Z. Tomac, ‘Ozivotvorenje memorandumskih ciljeva’ in B. Covic, *Izvori velikosrpske agresije*, (Zagreb, 1991).

¹³¹ P. Nel, ‘Who is to Blame? International Responses to Serbian Fears and the Conflict in Yugoslavia’, in F. Pfesch (ed.) *International Relations and Pan-Europe*, (Munster-Hamburg, 1994) 389-417.

April 1992 that they did not wish to live in a state where the Muslims together with the Croats had a parliamentary majority and could always outvote the Serbs.¹³² The Bosnian Serbs had therefore designated a series of areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina as 'serb Autonomous Regions' before September 1991, in preparation for a territorial division of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In January 1992, these regions were proclaimed the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (*Republika Srpska*). This provocation exacerbated the ethnic divisions.¹³³ Thereafter, the Bosnian Serbs boycotted the referendum on the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They wanted the Republika Srpska to become part of the new Yugoslav state formed in April 1992 as a federation between Serbia and Montenegro.

An authoritative assessment of the causes of the disintegration of Yugoslavia was made by the Badinter Commission, set up by the EC Member States in 1990. This commission consisted of the presidents of the constitutional courts of the Western European countries, and was chaired by the French judge and head of the French Constitutional Court Robert Badinter. It concluded that the Yugoslav federation had already ceased to function before Slovenia and Croatia made their declarations of independence.¹³⁴ The judgement of the Badinter Commission had far-reaching consequences for the way the crisis was dealt with in international law: Slovenia and Croatia did not end up in the dock, and the new Yugoslav federation set up by Serbia and Montenegro could not assume the mantle of the former Yugoslavia. All debts and assets of the former Yugoslavia were divided proportionately between the five states that had succeeded it: Slovenia, Croatia, Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia.

5. Definitions of the nature of the conflict

As we have just seen, the discussion about the responsibility for the disintegration of Yugoslavia generally assigned most of the blame to Slobodan Milosevic. According to the authors who have applied conflict theory to the Yugoslav crisis, however, all parties share the responsibility for the violent escalation of the conflict, because they all played according to the rules of the 'zero-sum game'. They were prepared to use all available means, including military force, to achieve their political objectives. None of the parties was willing to compromise: the aim was winning. The content of the discussion of the background of the conflict also changed after the outbreak of war. The violence in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina was played out on a world stage, and evoked first astonishment and then outrage. How could people who had lived together peaceably for more than forty years suddenly become enemies? Arguments involving the economic and constitutional crisis of the Yugoslav federation might explain why the mechanism of the federation no longer functioned, but threw no light on the intensity of the violence between the ethnic groups in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina after the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation.

The causes of the war have been studied and explained from many different perspectives. Practically all authors try to find support for their theories in the history of the South-Slav peoples, no matter whether the recent war is defined as ethnic, religious, economic, ideological or political in nature. One group of eminent intellectuals who studied the causes and consequences of the conflict saw a clear relationship between the current crisis and the history of the region. Inspired by the work of the Commission of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace which investigated war crimes during the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, they decided in 1994 to engage in a similar fact-finding mission: "As the Commission travelled the length and breadth of the Balkans during the second half of 1995 and the first half of 1996, its members were often struck by parallels between their impressions and the insights

¹³² J. Zametica, *The Yugoslav Conflict Adelphi Paper 270* (Summer 1992).

¹³³ See Cohen (1993).

¹³⁴ See K. Begic, *Bosna i Hercegovina: of Vanceove misije do Daytonskog sporazuma*, (Sarajevo, 1997).

of the first Carnegie Commission of 1913-14.”¹³⁵ They wrote in the report of their investigation that in broad lines three historical explanations of the causes of the recent Balkan wars could be distinguished.

The first explanation sees the present conflict as a continuation of the power struggle between foreign powers: the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires and czarist Russia. In the post-Cold War era, Germany, Turkey and Russia may be regarded as trying to create a new balance of power in the international system by increasing their own political influence in the Balkans. Since the outbreak of the war, the parties involved in the combat have made repeated attempts to blow new life into the old alliances with European countries: Croatia with Germany, Bosnians from Bosnia-Herzegovina with Turkey, Serbia with Russia. According to the authors, this explanation is a good example of the overestimation of the geopolitical significance of the Balkans for Europe.

The second is the historical explanation of the war, which is particularly popular in Europe. Here the eruption of violence in the former Yugoslavia is seen as a resurgence of the ‘centuries of hate’ between the peoples in question. This explanation suggests that the findings of the 1914 Commission can throw light on the recent crisis. The violence between the Balkan peoples in 1914 was ascribed to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, which was no longer able to control the conflicts between these peoples. It is suggested that the collapse of the Communist system led to the same consequences in 1990, causing the old ethnic conflicts to flare up again.

The third explanation, which according to the authors had many adherents both in the western world and in the Balkans, was that the war was the result of the existence of cultural and religious ‘fault lines’ running through the region. The American political scientist Samuel Huntington referred to this idea in 1993 as the ‘clash of civilizations’.¹³⁶

According to Huntington, the fault lines between the civilizations correspond to the differences between the religions, and the boundary between the three major civilizations in Europe runs right through the Balkans: “In the Balkan this line, of course coincides with the historic boundary between the Habsburg and Ottoman empires. The peoples to the north and west of this line are Protestant or Catholic; they shared the common experiences of European history - feudalism, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution; they are generally economically better off than the peoples to the east; and they may now look forward to increasing involvement in a common European economy and to the consolidation of democratic political systems. The peoples to the east and south of this line are Orthodox or Muslim; they historically belonged to the Ottoman or Tsarist empires and were only lightly touched by shaping events in the rest of Europe; they are generally less advanced economically; they seem much less likely to develop stable democratic political systems.”¹³⁷ According to the current map of the Balkans, Slovenia and Croatia (which are mainly Catholic) may be regarded as belonging to the western civilization and Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Muslim, while Montenegro, Macedonia and large parts of Serbia belong to Orthodox Christian civilization which has its roots in the old Byzantine empire and is perhaps the one most commonly associated with the Balkans. In *Unfinished Peace...*, the authors state that the idea that the Yugoslav war was a ‘clash of civilizations’ is shared both in the Balkans and other countries.

Even before Huntington wrote his article, Slavenka Drakulic, a well known Croat commentator, had described the various dimensions of the conflict as a ‘clash of civilisations’ in a conversation with Robert Kaplan. Kaplan cites her in his book as follows: “Here (...) the battle between Communism and capitalism is merely one dimension of a struggle that pits Catholicism against Orthodoxy, Rome against Constantinople, the legacy of Habsburg Austria-Hungary against that of Ottoman Turkey - in other words, West against East, the ultimate historical and cultural conflict.”¹³⁸ Slovene and Croat politicians have repeatedly stated that they did not belong to ‘the Balkans’, but to western Christian civilization. The Croat president Franjo Tudjman put this into words as follows: “The Yugoslav experience showed

¹³⁵ L. Tindemans (ed.), *Unfinished Peace: Report of the International Commission on the Balkans* (Washington, 1996) 3.

¹³⁶ Samuel Huntington, ‘The Clash of Civilisations?’ *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (Summer 1993) 29-30.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³⁸ R. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York, 1993) 74.

that the cultural and geopolitical divides and constraints turned out to be decisive - so strong that the common state proved not viable. The current fault-line overlaps with those of the Roman Empire (Theodosian line) between Rome, Byzantium, and Islam, as well as with the region where this divide of civilisations is most palpable, Bosnia-Herzegovina, produced one of the most powerful crises of today."¹³⁹ A number of well known Serb intellectuals and artists, including the post-modern author Milorad Pavic, have contributed to the glorification of the Byzantine civilization which they consider to be superior to western civilization. At the same time, Serb politicians have stated that the fear of the return of Islam provided a key motivation in their policy regarding in the conflict about Bosnia-Herzegovina. Radovan Karadzic has said, for example, that the Serbs would never allow Turkey to return to the Balkans.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand the spiritual leader of the Bosnians, Reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Ceric, regarded the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a Crusade aimed at driving Islam from that part of Europe.¹⁴¹

6. Historical alliances and rivalries

An important aspect of the debate on the clash of civilizations in the Balkans was the revival of the historical and cultural links between the Balkan peoples and other countries. The involvement of the EU (or the EC, as it was then) as a mediator in the crisis between the Yugoslav republics led all parties to strengthen the old ties with the European great powers. Serbia claimed exclusive rights to friendship with Great Britain and France. The Croats expected support from Austria and Germany. There was even talk of a 'Balkanization' of Europe. Great Britain and France wanted to prevent the disintegration of Yugoslavia, which led to their policies being regarded as pro-Serb. Present-day political considerations were related to old geo-political alliances and friendships. After the proposal for a Yugoslav confederation had been turned down, Germany announced in the autumn of 1991 that it was prepared to recognize Slovenia and Croatia as independent states. This step was seen by many as a restoration of the Second-World-War alliance and as a result Germany was regarded as pro-Croat, even within the EU. This also led to the dramatic statement by the Yugoslav minister of Defence, Veljko Kadijevic, in the French *Le Monde* that Yugoslavia had been attacked by Germany for the third time this century.¹⁴²

At the same time, the rival political elites within Yugoslavia did not know how to interpret US policy with regard to the Yugoslav crisis, and in the early 1990s it was far from clear who was whose 'traditional ally'. One of the best known examples of the contradictory interpretations that can be given to a contemporary event concerns the visit of the American Secretary of State James Baker to Belgrade on 21 June 1991 - four days before the outbreak of war in Slovenia. It may be stated that the official American policy was to support the Yugoslav federal government of premier Ante Markovic, and America made diplomatic efforts to save the Yugoslav state from collapse. During his meeting with Markovic, Baker pointed out the consequences of the unilateral declaration of independence by Slovenia and Croatia: Yugoslavia's borders would be at risk and it would be necessary to deploy the federal army (JNA). This was later interpreted as giving the 'green light' for the military intervention of the JNA in Slovenia and Croatia. Baker himself, however, regarded his statement that America disapproved of any form of violence as his main message in this dialogue with the Yugoslavs.¹⁴³ The

¹³⁹ Tindemans (1996) 16.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid, 19.

¹⁴³ Baker explained in his memoirs that US policies were aimed at preservation of the Yugoslav state. While he disapproved of the Slovene and Croat desire for independence, he was also aware of the dangers of the Serb policies which aimed at achieving Serb domination under the pretence of furthering the preservation of the Yugoslav state. He warned Milosevic that Serbia would become an 'international pariah' if he continued to make claims on territories outside the boundaries of Serbia. See James Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy, Revolution, War, Peace 1989-1992* (New York, 1995).

balance of opinion after the event was nevertheless that his visit had delivered 'mixed signals' and that each party could interpret the American diplomatic rhetoric in its own way. For example Stipe Mesic, the last Croatian representative in the federal presidium, cited Baker's farewell speech, in which he said that the US was against the disintegration of Yugoslavia, in his memoirs. Mesic regarded the US as an opponent of Croatia, on the basis of the principle that who is not for us is for our enemy.¹⁴⁴ The Croat commentator Tomislav Sunic similarly concluded that the American pro-Yugoslav stance was by definition regarded as anti-Croat in Croatia.¹⁴⁵ Most Serb politicians, on the other hand, were far from regarding American policies as pro-Serb or pro-Yugoslav. The Serb politician Borislav Jovic, the penultimate president of the federal presidium who had the reputation of carrying out Slobodan Milosevic's political plans, accused the US of pro-Slovene and pro-Croat policies in his book.¹⁴⁶ General Veljko Kadijevic, the Yugoslav minister of Defence in 1991, was even sharper in his criticism. He went so far as to write that American politicians had a well thought out plan to destroy Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁷

The international community, which was trying to play the role of a mediator in the Yugoslav crisis, was in this way made part of the crisis. All individual states were continually accused of bias, as were the individual negotiators who were exposed to all kinds of provocations and accusations.¹⁴⁸

After the outbreak of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, new life was also blown into the old alliances based on religion: the north-western or Catholic alliance, the south-eastern or Orthodox alliance and the Green Transversal which united the Bosnian Muslims with the Muslims from Sandzak, Kosovo, Albania and Turkey.¹⁴⁹ Velikonja called such alliances 'hereditary alliances'. 'Hereditary' allies were supposed to protect their friends against their 'hereditary enemies'. The Croats look for such allies in the West, where they see themselves as belonging in a 'historical and cultural' sense. The Serbs look towards the Russians and Greeks, their brothers in Orthodoxy. This has led to the 'Bosnjaks' (Bosnian 'Muslim') had come to count on the support and empathy of their 'richer' co-religionists from near and far."¹⁵⁰ In other words, when conflicts arise with other countries, 'hereditary allies' should always back one another up, no matter whether they are directly involved in the conflict. For example, during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina the Bosnian Muslims received support from Muslim countries in the Far and Near East, even though they had had hardly any contact with these countries in the past and despite the fact that these countries, with the exception of Turkey, had no geo-political interests in the Balkans. Not only the 'hereditary allies' but also the 'hereditary enemies or rivals' are an important factor in this equation, however. Velikonja describes the 'hereditary enemies' of the Serbs as follows: "The Serbs for example, consider the Pope to have been a permanent malignancy from time immemorial, even though the man who sat on the throne of St. Peter during the medieval period invariably collaborated with the Serbs. The second 'enemy' are the Muslims. 'Christian' Serbia and Montenegro try to present themselves as defenders of the faith against the 'Istanbul-Tirana-Sarajevo green crescent of Islam' and the 'Macedonia-Bulgaria-Romania-Albania-Bosnia axis of Turkish affinity'. (...) The third of Serbia's 'historical' enemies are the Germans together with their 'Drang nach Osten'

¹⁴⁴ See Stipe Mesic, *Kako smo srusili Jugoslaviju* (Zagreb, 1992).

¹⁴⁵ See Tomislav Sunic, *Americka ideologija* (Zagreb 1993).

¹⁴⁶ See Borislav Jovic, *Komadanje Jugoslavije* (Belgrade, 1992).

¹⁴⁷ See Veljko Kadijevic, *Moje videnje raspada* (Belgrade, 1993).

¹⁴⁸ The Canadian general Lewis McKenzie was accused of having visited Serb-controlled brothels. Thorsten Stoltenberg was regarded as a great friend of the Serbs since the time when he worked as a diplomat in Belgrade, and many authors wrote that he was unsuitable to be a negotiator because his children had been taught by their Serb nurse to say that they were Serbs too during that period. A great deal of malicious gossip about Carl Bildt also appeared in the media, including the completely fictitious story that he had had an affair with a Serb woman from Pale which had led to his divorce.

¹⁴⁹ Tindemans (1996) 21-22.

¹⁵⁰ Mitja Velikonja, 'Liberation Mythology, the Role of Mythology in Fanning War in the Balkans' in Paul Mojzes (ed.), *Religion and the War in Bosnia* (Atlanta, 1998) 40. See also the same author's book *Masade duha: Razpotja Sodobnih Mitologij* (Ljubljana, 1995).

(eastward push) project (not to mention Austrian-German ‘meddling’ in Serbia’s affairs which directly led to World War I).¹⁵¹

One of the main points of criticism of Huntington’s ‘clash of civilizations’ theory is the fact that most clashes actually take place within a single civilization. One of the most irreconcilable political conflicts of the 19th and 20th centuries in the Balkans was the rivalry between the two neighbouring Orthodox countries Bulgaria and Serbia, which led to a series of wars about competing claims to Macedonian territory. When the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia became independent in 1992, however, Bulgaria did not become involved. In the power struggle between the different ethnic groups within Yugoslavia in the 1980s and 1990s, power-political motives and geo-political interests were usually intentionally concealed. For example, the Serb political leaders never admitted that they wanted to found a state that would also include Serbs from other Yugoslav republics. They preferred the argument that it was (and is) impossible to co-exist with ‘hereditary’ enemies: the existence of Serb population groups in Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina would be threatened by their Muslim and Catholic compatriots.¹⁵² There is however no proof of the existence of a Muslim alliance (the ‘Green Transversal’) in the Balkans. It is true that the Bosnian Muslims have close political ties with the Muslims from the Serb province of Sandzak – indeed, they consider themselves to be a single people. They have no political links with the Kosovars, however, and do not even speak the same language. Turkey was politically very active in the Balkans during the Yugoslav crisis; however, it supported not only Muslim Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina but also Orthodox Macedonia.¹⁵³ Alija Izetbegovic did strengthen the political links with the Muslim countries that provided humanitarian aid and weapons during the war, but it was the support of the United States that was decisive in preserving Bosnia-Herzegovina as a sovereign state, and in ending the genocide of the Bosnian Muslims.

7. Hereditary alliances: Russia, Serbia and Montenegro

In particular Russia is recognized as Serbia’s historical ally. The American Russia specialist Paul Goble, who in 1996 wrote an interesting study of Russian policies in connection with the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, believes that the importance of the historical links between the Russians and the Serbs has been overestimated, and that both Russia and Serbia blew new life into the old idea of Slav brotherhood and solidarity for reasons of self-interest.¹⁵⁴ After the end of the Cold War, Russia had to secure a new place for itself in the international system and at the same time restore political authority at home, while Serbia was looking for political allies with reasonable standing in the international political world. Soviet politicians were initially worried about the comparisons that were regularly made between the Soviet Union and communist Yugoslavia, implying that the disintegration of the Soviet Union could also lead to a series of ‘Bosnias’ in its wake. The Croatian Russia specialist Radovan Vukadinovic concluded that the disintegration of Communism had made both Russia and Serbia considerably less powerful, and that the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia had had adverse consequences for both the Russians and the Serbs because the new boundaries had been fixed in such a way that a large part of the Russian and Serbian population had been left outside their respective countries.¹⁵⁵ Goble pointed out however that the role of Russia in the Soviet Union differed appreciably from that of Serbia in the Yugoslav federation. This is certainly true if we consider the position of Russia in world politics after the fall of the Soviet Union as compared with that of Serbia after the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Goble went on to observe that both countries had their own

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁵² ‘Memorandum SANU’ in *Nase teme* 33 (Zagreb, 1989) 128-163.

¹⁵³ Tindemans (1996) 31.

¹⁵⁴ Paul A. Goble, ‘Dangerous Liaisons: Moscow, the Former Yugoslavia, and the West’ in R. Ullman (ed.) *Yugoslavia’s Wars* (New York, 1996) 182-197.

¹⁵⁵ Radovan Vukadinovic, ‘Yugoslavia and the East: From Non-Alignment to Disintegration’ in J.G. Siccama and M. van den Heuvel (eds). *Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Atlanta-Amsterdam, 1992) 156-163.

ideas about the nature of their political co-operation: “Regular contacts between Moscow and Belgrade seem to be enabling Russia to play the role of mediator between the West and Serbia as well to show to the opposition at home its international influence.(...) Unfortunately we can speak now not only about Moscow influencing Belgrade but also Belgrade and Pale influencing Moscow’s politicians for their own ends.”¹⁵⁶

According to the Russian historian Sergej Romanenko, the current Russian political involvement in the Balkans is based on Russia’s geo-political interests, as it always has been: “It considered the Balkans as an arena, and the national movements of the Balkans and their states as tools (means), for achieving Russia’s own political, military or economic goals. These interests sometimes contradicted, and sometimes partly coincided with the interest of the Balkan peoples.”¹⁵⁷

Initially, the Serbs and the Montenegrins in the 19th century sought – and received – support from Russia in their struggle against the Ottomans. When Serbia became an independent state in 1838, however, this ushered in a new phase in Russo-Serbian relations and the two countries became rivals. The Serbian minister of Foreign Affairs wrote in the notorious ‘*Nacertanije*’ that the formation of a strong Serbian state would lead to conflicts with Russia: “Great Serbia inevitably led to a conflict with Russia, because the entire Serbian political thought was based on non-acceptance of pan-Slavism and Russia’s leadership.”¹⁵⁸

The diplomatic involvement of Russia in the war in Bosnia-Hercegovina led to much debate among Russian historians and Balkans experts about the background of Russo-Serbian relations. During a conference on the history of the ‘slav idea’ held in Moscow in 1994, the historian Pavel Gracev stressed that the idea of Slav solidarity was not thought up by the Russians but arose among the Slav peoples living under Ottoman and Habsburg domination.¹⁵⁹ The 17th- century Croatian thinker Juraj Krizanic was the first to ask the Russian Czar for support for the Slavs in the Balkans. A small group of Russian intellectuals founded the pan-Slavist movement in 1858. They saw the political future of Russia in an alliance with other Slav peoples who shared the same Orthodox Christian belief, i.e. the Bulgarians, Serbs and Montenegrins. It was not until the 1870s that pan-Slavist ideas found official recognition in Russian foreign policy. When Serbia and Montenegro declared war on the Ottomans in 1876, these two countries got a lot of support from Russian public opinion. Russian volunteers travelled to the Balkans to join the fight. The Russian involvement in the war had little to do with political idealism, however, and much to do with Russian political ambitions in the Balkans. The protection of the Slav population offered a plausible basis for Russian power politics.¹⁶⁰ In line with this, most historians regard the period between 1878 and 1903 as a low point in Russo-Serbian relations. Despite the pan-Slavist rhetoric, Russia did not support Serbia during the peace negotiations in San Stefano (1878) but preferred the formation of a Bulgarian state. When the peace negotiations were continued during the Congress of Berlin, Russia allowed Bosnia-Hercegovina to be made an Austro-Hungarian protectorate – to the great frustration of the Serb politicians. In fact, the Serbian Obrenovic dynasty maintained close relations with Austro-Hungary in this period. It was not until 1903 that King Petar Karadjordjevic restored the good relations with Russia. When Russia stood up for Serbia in 1914, thus taking part in the First World War, a number of prominent Russian politicians and intellectuals openly expressed their doubts about this decision. Sergej Witte put his anger at the Russian involvement in the war into words as follows: “This war is idiocy! Why should Russia fight? To maintain our prestige in the Balkans, because of our holy duty to help our blood brothers? That is a romantic, old-fashioned delusion. No one here – no one of any intelligence at least – cares a tinker’s

¹⁵⁶ Goble cites the daily *Kommersant* (29 June, 1995) here; see Goble (1996) 182.

¹⁵⁷ Sergej Romanenko, ‘Russia in the Balkans: Eternal Allies or Eternal Interests’ in *Balkan Forum* (September 1996) 32.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁵⁹ V.P. Gracev, ‘Ideja Slavjanskoi vzaimnosti...’, in V.A. Djakov (ed.) *Slavjanskaja ideja: isstorija i sovremennost* (Moscow, 1998) 37-39.

¹⁶⁰ See e.g. M.B. Petrovich, *Emergence of the Russian Panslavism, 1856-1870* (New York, 1956). D. MacKenzie, *Serbs and Russian Panslavism* (New York, 1967).

cuss for those excitable, vain Balkan folk, the Serbs, who don't even have a drop of Slav blood in their veins but are simply Turks christened under a false name. We should let the Serbs undergo the punishment they so richly deserve."¹⁶¹

Serbia lost the support of Russia through the outbreak of the revolution in 1917 and the separate peace Russia made with Germany in 1918. This was one of the factors that forced Serbia to give up the hope of the formation of a Greater Serbia and to acquiesce in the formation of a joint South-Slav state. The Russian historian Romanenko writes, however, that czarist Russia was never in favour of the union of the South Slav peoples in a single state. The Russian politicians were afraid that the new state would not maintain a pro-Russian foreign policy. Moreover, a great Slav state in the Balkans would be a direct rival of Russia.¹⁶²

The relations between the Soviet Union and the kingdom of Yugoslavia were far from good. Yugoslavia was the last Balkan country to recognize the Soviet Union officially, which it did in 1940. According to the historians A.N. Gorjainov and E.P. Aksenova, the Russian Communists initially went so far as to consider 'slavic studies' socially and scientifically unacceptable, since in their eyes they made no contribution to the class struggle.¹⁶³ They were moreover extremely critical of the role of Serbia in the kingdom of Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union openly criticized Serb oppression of other nationalities in the kingdom of Yugoslavia in the 1920s. "During the inter-war period, and especially in the 1920s, the SKP(b) and the USSR took advantage of the national movements of the Yugoslavs against the Serbian monarchy, which had granted asylum to many Russian emigres and to the Orthodox Church, as well as against the Versailles system. Centralist Yugoslavia, based on the foundations of Serbian statehood, followed a clear anti-Soviet policy."¹⁶⁴

The historiography concerning the relations between the Soviet Union and Communist Yugoslavia also deals with the break between Tito and Stalin in 1948. Relations were restored after Stalin's death, but Tito continued to steer an independent course. Belgrade expressed disapproval of the Soviet Union's interventionist foreign policy in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Cambodia and Afghanistan, because the Yugoslav Communists feared Soviet intervention in Yugoslavia. The Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev paid an official visit to Yugoslavia in 1989, to normalize relations between the two countries. In *Yugoslavia, Death of a Nation*, L. Silber and A. Little describe in detail how Serbia sought support from abroad during the late 1980s in the struggle for the preservation of Yugoslavia. When the Western European countries were not prepared to give such support, Yugoslav and Serb diplomacy turned to the Soviet Union (still in existence at this time). In March 1991, on the eve of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, General Veljko Kadijevic (still the Yugoslav minister of Defence) travelled to the Soviet Union to discuss the Yugoslav crisis with his colleague Dimitri Jazov. Word would later leak out about Karijevic's mysterious trip to Moscow. Kadijevic came back believing that President Mikhail Gorbachev would not last long and that, if they could hold out just a bit longer Communism would be shored up in the Soviet Union which, in turn, would save them."¹⁶⁵

A *coup d'état* aimed at toppling president Gorbachev did indeed take place in August 1991. This was openly welcomed by the political and military leaders in Belgrade, since they hoped that the new Soviet rulers would support the Serb policy of a centralized Yugoslav state. However, when Boris Yeltsin subsequently became president of Russia he approved the independence of the Baltic states, thus giving the starting signal for the rapid and largely non-violent crumbling of the old Communist empire. Yeltsin's subsequent pro-western foreign policy was a great disappointment to the Yugoslav and Serbian Communists.

¹⁶¹ Elisabeth Hersh, *Verraad, Lafheid en Bedrog - leven en dood van de laatste tsaar* [Betrayal, Cowardice and Deceit – The Life and Death of the last Czar; in Dutch] (Amsterdam, 1992) 186-187.

¹⁶² Romanenko (1996) 35.

¹⁶³ See V.A. Djakov (ed.) *Slavjanskaja ideja: isstorija i sovremennost* (Moscow, 1998).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁶⁵ L. Silber and A. Little, *Yugoslavia, Death of a Nation* (Hammerworth, 1997) 127.

The Russian expert on the Balkans Pavel Kandel writes that the disintegration of Yugoslavia was seen in Communist hardliner and Russian nationalist circles as a dangerous precedent for a possible fragmentation of Russia itself.¹⁶⁶ The Russian parliament made repeated pleas for a 'pan-Slavist' approach in Russian foreign policy towards the Balkans, which implied support for the Orthodox Serbs and Montenegrins. The Russian Communists and nationalists were supported in their struggle for a pro-Serb policy by an influential group of intellectuals, including a number of staff members of the Institute for Slavist and Balkan Studies of the Russian Academy of Arts and Sciences. For example the Balkan specialist Elena Guskova, who has been the head of the department for study of the Yugoslav crisis since that crisis broke out, has written a series of publications defending Serb policies.¹⁶⁷

The differences of opinion about Balkan policy in Russian politics and public opinion are by no means unique, however. As Goble has pointed out, governments and public opinion in the West also show internal divisions concerning just about every aspect of the recent wars in the former Yugoslavia.

8. Traditional geo-political alliances: England, France, Germany

Apart from 'hereditary alliances and rivalries', commentators in this field often speak of 'traditional political friendships and rivalries'. The term 'traditional' implies the continued existence of long-term historical relations between various states or peoples. The question is what forms the basis for such alliances and rivalries. Apart from the above-mentioned religious basis for some alliances, it goes without saying that geo-political interests played an important role. From a geo-political viewpoint, the fate of the South Slav peoples since the 19th century has been closely linked to international political developments. International relations in the 19th century were characterized by varying political and military alliances, which often had little to do with religious or ideological affinities. The peoples of the Balkans found themselves in the middle of a great power struggle about the 'Eastern Question', which Barbara Jelavich describes as follows: "The whole cluster of issues surrounding the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the revolt of the subject people, and the European intervention became known as the Eastern Question. This problem was to become the single most important cause for diplomatic controversy among the powers and was to lead to the only two general wars in the century after the Congress of Vienna - the Crimean War and World War I."¹⁶⁸

The geo-political and hereditary criteria for the definition of traditional alliances are conveniently mixed up in Serb collective memory. Alongside Russia as an important Orthodox power, the Serbs often count western countries such as France and England among their traditional allies. The Serbs see themselves as the defenders of European Christendom during the many centuries of Ottoman domination – even though Serbia did not start to become integrated into European politics until the 19th century. Serbia has steered a highly variable and unpredictable course in its relations with the European great powers. Velikonja gives a number of examples which could serve as evidence of a traditional friendship between Serbia, Austro-Hungary and Germany: the Austrian army supported the Serbs in 1691 and 1739 in their struggle against the Ottoman Empire; Austro-Hungary was the main political ally of the Obrenovic kings in the 19th century, in 1917, the Serb government in exile tried to sign a separate peace agreement with the Central Powers; and during the Second World War there was a Serb Nazi satellite state led by General Milan Nedic.¹⁶⁹ Philip Cohen mentions the Serb historical revisionism about the Second World War which was intended to conceal Serb collaboration with the Nazis while Nedic had worked so hard in the service of the holocaust that there were hardly any Jews left in Serbia in 1942.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ See e.g. the contributions of Pavel Kandel and Sergej Romanenko in *Rossija na Balkanax* (Moscow, 1996).

¹⁶⁷ See Elena Guskova, *Jugoslovenska kriza i Rusija* (Belgrade, 1996). *Uregulirovanie na Balkanax: ot Brioni do Deitona - mirnye plany 1991-1995 gg.* (Moscow, 1997). *Jugoslavskii krizis i Rossija* (Moscow, 1993).

¹⁶⁸ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkan: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, (1 vol.) (Cambridge, 1983) 186.

¹⁶⁹ Cohen (1996) 39.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 63-84.

The alliance between Serbia and France was geo-political in nature. France's 'historical links' with Serbia go back to the First World War. France was one of the countries that had supported the formation of the Yugoslav state. French politicians saw Serbia as the most important political factor in Yugoslavia, and when France started to play a important role in the Balkans in the interbellum years it supported the centralist regime in Belgrade and regarded Croatia as troublesome and unreliable because Croat politicians, including Stjepan Radic, had been campaigning abroad since 1918 for the federalization of Yugoslavia while French diplomacy clearly favoured a centralized Yugoslavia. Relations between France and Serbia were particularly close during the personal dictatorship of the French-speaking king Aleksandar Karadjordjevic, but the assassination of king Aleksandar in Marseille in 1934 led to a marked change in Franco-Yugoslav relations. The regent Pavle, one of Aleksandar's brothers, was pro-British while the Serbian government under Milan Stojadinovic sympathized with Nazi Germany. The Second World War put an end to Serbian diplomacy, and after the war France maintained fairly good relations with the Communist regime in Yugoslavia. It is questionable whether one can speak of a 'traditional alliance' between Serbia and France on the basis of such short-lived and unstable relations, and it may further be asked what arguments there are for calling French policy with respect to the wars in the former Yugoslavia pro-Serb. It is true that the French were regularly accused of being pro-Serb during the war in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina because they were against the recognition of Croatia, the ending of the UN weapons embargo for Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to give the Bosnians the chance of defending themselves, and military intervention to end the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Nevertheless, François Mitterrand did pay a symbolic visit to Sarajevo under siege in June 1992 – right on the Serbian national holiday, Saint Vitus Day. This led to the reopening of Sarajevo airport, permitting the supply of humanitarian aid to the war zone to start up again. French policies were mainly the result of their own national agenda, in which reinforcement of France's role in European politics played an important part. France was concerned about the political influence of a united Germany in post-Communist Europe; this consideration made it support an independent European security policy for Yugoslavia, free from NATO and US control.¹⁷¹ The tendency of some French officers in Bosnia-Herzegovina to accuse all parties of crimes against the civilian population ('symmetry of blame') changed in 1995, however, when the Bosnian Serbs also took French UN troops hostage. This even led to a radical swing in French policy as regards a possible military intervention. There was no longer any trace of the 'traditional alliance' between France and Serbia: France supported the American initiatives, and the Dayton Agreement was signed in Paris.

Similar questions may be asked about the background of the 'traditional alliance' between Great Britain and Serbia and the influence of this on British policy towards Yugoslavia. It has been claimed that the political links between Serbia and Great Britain from the First and Second World Wars laid the basis for a 'historical friendship'. The fact that British policies in Yugoslavia during the Second World War made it possible for the Communists to seize power and prevented the return of the Serbian king to Belgrade are apparently disregarded as unimportant in this connection. British foreign policy during the Yugoslav crisis of the 1990s was regarded as pro-Serbian because the British government was against military intervention and 'imposed' solutions. In fact, it was the Bosnian Serbs who were determined not to accept a compromise: in view of their military superiority, they thought they were in a position to dictate the future of the Bosnian state. The question was therefore whether John Major's government was against military intervention in the Bosnian conflict because of Britain's historical friendship with Serbia (i.e. because they wanted the Serbs to win) or because British policy was based on an incorrect assessment of the nature of the conflict and underestimation of the consequences of the war for the civilian population. There is little reason to believe that John Major's view of Britain's 'historical friendships' in the Balkans would differ substantially from those of his predecessor Margaret Thatcher, who was decidedly in favour of military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina to put an end to Serbian aggression.

¹⁷¹ Tindemans (1996) 61.

9. A historical conflict

The foreign politicians, military personnel and diplomats who came to Yugoslavia after the outbreak of the war as observers and mediators were regularly confronted with emotional and mutually contradictory stories about the background of the war. The reply to each question about the conflict usually involved long stories about what terrible wrongs the one ethnic group had done to the other at some time in the past. This sometimes gave foreign diplomats the impression that the roots of each problem went right back to the dawn of history.¹⁷² Historical tales were even served up at the negotiating table. During the first peace conference on Yugoslavia in the autumn of 1991 in the Peace Palace in The Hague, the Serbian president Milosevic reminded the delegates of the crimes committed against Serbs in the Second World War in order to show that the Serbian population could not expect decent treatment at the hands of an independent Croatian state. He clearly believed that such arguments could help to prevent the recognition of Croatia as an independent state. During the negotiations, the representatives of each ethnic group told long stories about the tragic fate that ethnic group had suffered in the past. Foreign diplomats, military and journalists were expected to react appropriately to such stories and to display a greater understanding of the speaker's political standpoint. Before negotiating with a delegation of Bosnian Serbs, the American mediator Richard Holbrooke therefore told the Serbian president Milosevic that no references to history should be made during the discussions.¹⁷³ He refused to attach any special significance to the 'historical' arguments that were regularly used by the nationalist politicians to influence the current political situation, because they made it difficult to reach any reasonable practical solution. The Bosnian Serbs wished to live apart from the Muslim and Catholic inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which led them to lay claim to more than 70% of Bosnian territory. It appeared in the final analysis that their historical arguments only served as a means of winning the conflict. Mitja Velikonja tried to explain this remarkable way of dealing with history from an anthropological perspective: "Any research into history of collective conceptions must always include both an historical and sociological perspective. Whilst the former reveals the sequence of occurrences, the latter reveals their position in the stormy firmament of social conception and the ways in which authority repeatedly tries to manipulate them. Accepted historical facts are not indispensable, necessary, or even important in the construction of social conceptions. The function of society "is possible" merely if it believes in its own story, and to do that it isn't even necessary for it to be familiar with that story."¹⁷⁴

The politicians from the former Yugoslavia also used their history, the unpronounceable names and the topographic concepts as a means of gaining an intellectual edge on the foreign mediators. It regularly happened that foreign mediators who did not have a good knowledge of the history of the region were not taken seriously: "How can they command our respect and guide our negotiations if they don't know what they are talking about?" and "he can't even point to our country on a map!"¹⁷⁵ At the same time, the foreign partners in the discussions who did have some factual knowledge of the history of the South Slav peoples were often discouraged by such remarks as: "You can't learn our history from the history books, you need to be one of us to understand it!" The Dutch anthropologist Mattijs van de Port, who was carrying out an investigation in Novi Sad (Vojvodina) when war broke out in 1991, has had personal experience of such attitudes: "You don't know our history'. I don't know how many times I heard this remark. Sometimes it was whispered with fatigue, sometimes hurled at me

¹⁷² The Dutch diplomat Marco Hennis, who was involved in the first peace negotiations in the former Yugoslavia, stated that it initially looked as if all conflicts there started 'round about the time of the birth of Christ'.

¹⁷³ '(...) they must not give us a lot of historical bullshit, as they have with everyone else. They must be ready for serious discussion.' In: *How End a War* (New York, 1998) 148.

¹⁷⁴ Velikonja (1998) 20.

¹⁷⁵ See e.g. the interview with the former American ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith, in the Croatian weekly *Globus* (18 December 1998: 31). He referred to a remark by the Croatian politician Ivic Pasalic describing the American senator Paul Simon, the leader of the OVSE observers at the Croatian elections at that time, as someone who would not be able to point to Croatia on a map.

in a quarrelous tone of voice. 'You don't know our history' would usually follow a news report saying that some figure of international standing or some human rights committee had once more read Serbia a lecture about its misbehaviour in the war zones or its violation of the rules of diplomacy and international communication. Sometimes it would follow a remark from me that, according to my informant, was too critical. 'What do you know? You don't know our history!' (...) Don't bother, is what the phrase seemed to imply, you are not going to find out, for if you really want to find out what our history is all about, learning our language, reading our books or knowing the facts doesn't suffice."¹⁷⁶

The question as to whether the recent war was due to age-old disagreements was highlighted by the appearance of *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* by Robert Kaplan. In this book, Kaplan offered a fairly obvious but rather over-simplified explanation of the causes of the ethnic violence in the former Yugoslavia by describing it as a prolonged conflict that was incomprehensible to outsiders and that had its roots in an equally incomprehensible past. One of the main participants in the Yugoslav conflict, Radovan Karadzic, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs during the recent war, appeared to share this view. He claimed that Serbs find it impossible on the basis of past experience to co-exist with other ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina: "Mr. Karadjic, mingling historical and biological determinism wants us to believe that history has created two very different Serbo-Croatian speaking animals - sort of a Balkan version of natural selection - and that the world is foolishly 'trying to put cats and dogs in the same box'."¹⁷⁷

Another important aspect of the discussions on the relationship between history and the current conflict was the debate about the utility of drawing parallels between the past and the present in order to permit a better understanding of the background of the war. The core of this debate was that while comparisons with the past might be enlightening, they were not considered to be 'politically correct' if they confirmed stereotype images of the Balkans as being 'non-European' and 'violent'. The British author Tim Judah put this dilemma into words as follows: "It is unfashionable to link the past and the present when writing about the wars in the former Yugoslavia. One stands the risk of being accused of implying that somehow the peoples of the former Yugoslavia are more predisposed to war than anyone else in Europe or that they went to war because they were led into it by their leaders. But these leaders drew on the malign threads of their people's history to bind them and pull them into war. If Serbian history had been different, today's generations could not have been manipulated in the same way. In the most obvious case, there might have been no Serbs in Croatia or Bosnia."¹⁷⁸

The American historian H. R. Friman describes how links are established between history and the present, and distinguishes two approaches which he calls 'throwback' and 'blowback'. "Throwback approaches seek explanatory parallels in the past. This selective use of history argues for interpreting current events as the latest manifestation of past dynamics. In contrast, blowback approaches seek to explain current dynamics as the result, often unintended, of past policies. As in the case of throwback arguments, this approach relies on the selective and simplistic use of history."¹⁷⁹ Friman cites as the best example of blowback argumentation the analysis in which links are laid between the recent conflict and the long-term 'ethnic hate' between the peoples concerned, and summarizes this argument as follows: "The war in the former Yugoslavia, the extent of violence between Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, the ethnic-cleansing, rapes, and camps, therefore, all stem from a long, continuous history of atrocity and counter-atrocity in the region."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Mattijs van de Port, Gypsies, 'It takes a Serb to Know a Serb: uncovering the roots of obstinate otherness in Serbia' in *Imagining the Balkans* Press Now Reader 13 January 1999). See also the same author's *Wars & Other Instances of the Wild* (Amsterdam, 1998) 97-98.

¹⁷⁷ G. Walters, 'The Future of History in the Balkans', in Thomas and Friman (eds.) (1996) 3.

¹⁷⁸ Tim Judah, *The Serbs, History, Myths & the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven, 1997) xi.

¹⁷⁹ Thomas and Friman (1996) 3-4.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

The history of the South Slav peoples and in particular that of Yugoslavia is indeed often described as an endless succession of violent incidents and ethnic conflicts. It is true that the South Slav peoples did provide several items of world news during the 20th century involving wars and spectacular political assassinations: the assassination of the last Serbian king from the royal house of Obrenovic (1903), the Balkan wars (1912-1913), the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the successor to the Habsburg throne, in Sarajevo (1914), the assassination of the Croatian political leader Stjepan Radic in the Yugoslav parliament (1928), that of the Serbian king Aleksandar Karadjordjevic during an official state visit to France (1934), and two civil wars (1941-1945 and 1991-1995).

Not all authors regard South Slav history as particularly violent, however. Janusz Bugajski plays down the long history of ethnic conflicts in the Balkans by pointing out that class conflicts and agrarian disputes were also important.¹⁸¹ Thomas plays down both the intensity and the frequency of violence in the Balkans: "The history of the Balkans is not one of prolonged and enduring conflict among Serbs, Croats and Slav Muslims. Before the creation of the kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, there was little conflict among these groups. Certainly, conflict among these groups in the centuries before 1918 was not much greater than in similar regional conditions elsewhere. Oppression of the poor Serb peasants by more privileged Slav Muslims, who tried to be 'more Turkish than the Turks', did not lead to extensive bloody conflict. Since the Serbs fell under the Ottoman Empire and the Croats under Austro-Hungarian empires, the two communities were largely separated through much of their recorded history. Even when the Serbs were brought in to settle the Krajina region of the Austro-Hungarian lands, their role was to defend Austrian-controlled territory from encroaching Turks, not to fight Croats."¹⁸²

The references to violent incidents from the past did however influence international politics, especially through the 'sarajevo metaphor'. Sarajevo achieved international fame in 1914 as the site of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, the successor to the Habsburg throne, by a Serb nationalist which eventually led to the First World War. Since that time, this event in Sarajevo is regarded as a warning that a conflict at the periphery of Europe can have fatal consequences for European security.¹⁸³ Translated into political terms, this fear of escalation of the Yugoslav crisis initially led to a containment policy: the conflict had to be isolated to prevent it from spreading to neighbouring countries.

Though it is generally agreed that a knowledge of history is important for a proper understanding of the background to the Yugoslav conflict, it is very difficult to explain the wars solely on the basis of historical analogies without taking the recent power struggle between the political elites into account. It is clear, however, that the various parties have (mis)used history to justify their aggressive policies towards other ethnic groups and to cloak the real political objectives – which generally involved boundary changes at the expense of their neighbours.

10. Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the disintegration of Yugoslavia

It is paradoxical that the peoples who had nothing to say about the formation of the Yugoslav state in 1918 later came to regard it as the best solution to their own national questions. There is ultimately a feeling of regret that Yugoslavia ceased to exist in 1991.

¹⁸¹ J. Bugajski, *Balkan Myths and Bosnian Massacres* in Thomas and Friman (1996) 121-122.

¹⁸² R. Thomas (1996) 22.

¹⁸³ See e.g. Jacques Rupnik (ed.), *De Sarajevo á Sarajevo: L'échec yugoslave*, (Brussels, 1992). Charles Gati, 'From Sarajevo to Sarajevo', *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1992, pp. 64-78. In the Netherlands, the article 'Europa wentelt zich in zijn Sarajevo-complex' (Europe wallows in its Sarajevo complex), by Alfred Pijpers led to a heated debate about the utility of repeated references to the image of Sarajevo in European history in connection with the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995. See also H.J.A. Hofland 'Het Sarajevo-complex' (The Sarajevo complex), *NRC Handelsblad* (22 March 1995) and H.L. Wesseling 'sarajevo-complex', *NRC Handelsblad* (30 March 1995).

The *Pax Jugoslavica* had kept a number of 'explosive' Balkan conflicts under wraps for half a century. It was clear that little Montenegro would have great difficulty continuing to exist as an independent state after the disintegration of Yugoslavia: it was afraid of being swallowed up by Serbia. Bosnia-Herzegovina was regarded as a miniature Yugoslavia and it was generally believed that the disintegration of Yugoslavia would inevitably cause it to crumble too, with the result that the Bosnians would lose their right to self-determination. It was further feared that making Macedonia independent would revive the old territorial claims of the neighbouring states, which had already gone to war with one another in the past about Macedonian territory.

Since the Montenegrins, Macedonians and Bosnians had not defined their national identity until the 20th century, they lagged a long way behind the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in the development of their national awareness. This is reflected in what James Gow calls the 'uncharted territories' in their historiography. He puts Slovenia, about which there is still relatively little historical literature, in the same class.¹⁸⁴

Two different, complementary, approaches to the study of the history and politics of these peoples can be distinguished. In the first, the researcher considers the viability of the people or nationality, generally with reference to the historical roots of the ethnic group in question and the development of its national consciousness during the 19th and 20th centuries. The second concentrates on the legitimacy of the region in international law: have Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina a well established history of existence as an independent state? The historian must thus make a choice between studying the history of the people and the history of the region. The British author Hugh Poulton wrote *Who are Macedonians?* in 1995. This deals with the ethnic background of the Macedonians. Two books about Bosnia-Herzegovina have recently appeared. One of these, by the British historian Noel Malcolm, concentrates on the history of the region. The other, by the Bosnian historian Mustafa Imamovic, emphasizes the cultural, ethnic and political roots of the Bosnians.¹⁸⁵

In contrast to the national identity of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, that of the Montenegrins, Macedonians and Bosnians is disputed or even denied by the surrounding peoples.

Montenegro and the Montenegrins

The political, religious and cultural development of Montenegro is so closely interwoven with that of Serbia that Montenegrin history is usually dealt with as part of Serbian national history.¹⁸⁶ An important milestone in the political history of Montenegro was the formation of the independent kingdom of Montenegro 1878. Montenegro and Serbia were both involved in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1875-1878), which started as a peasant revolt but rapidly escalated into a European war. It was one of the few successful peasant revolts in European history, and enabled Montenegro to gain a place on the map of Europe independent from Serbia. European politicians and intellectuals showed a flattering increase in interest in Montenegro in the years after its independence. European historians and other authors worked busily together to create the image of a rebellious, honest, indomitable people of mountaineers who had never been conquered by the Ottomans.

For example, the well-known author and expert on the Balkans referred to the Serbian background and warlike nature of the Montenegrins as follows: "The history of the Black Mountain (Crnagora) is in many respects the most romantic in all chequered annals of the peninsula. Its barren rocks and precipices became a rallying place for the Serb survivors from the fatal carnage of Kosovo; and under Ivo Crnojevic, renouncing in many ancient ballad as Ivo the Black or Ivo Beg, this remnant of a warlike nation defended itself desperately against all comers (...)"¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Gow (1997) 469.

¹⁸⁵ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia - A Short History* (London, 1993). Mustafa Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, (Sarajevo, 1998).

¹⁸⁶ See e.g. Jelavich (1990).

¹⁸⁷ R. Seton-Watson, *Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*, (London, 1917) 31.

This myth of the brave, warlike race of mountaineers does not completely agree with historical reality, however, since a large part of present-day Montenegro was conquered by the Ottomans in the 15th century. It is true that the local notables were able to retain their power in the mountainous, forbidding terrain of Montenegro, but they did have to pay tribute to the Ottomans, which did in fact make them subjects of the Ottoman Empire. The Montenegrins only started to develop an awareness of their national identity under the influence of Serbian nationalism in the 19th century. The Montenegrin ruler Petar Petrovic Njegos was a Serbian nationalist, who had no difficulty combining his dual role as sovereign of Montenegro and the most important Serbian author of the 19th century. The last king of Montenegro, Nikola Petrovic Njegos, had excellent connections in many European courts, thanks to the marriages of his numerous children. His oldest daughter was married to the king of Italy, and another daughter to the Serbian king Petar Karadjordjevic. His son and heir Danilo had married a German princess, and two other daughters had married Russian grand dukes. Montenegro's political links with Russia were strong. The Russian Czar Nicholas the Second regarded Montenegro as a Slavic ally in the Balkans, of great importance because of the access it gave to the Adriatic Sea. Russia gave Montenegro a generous annual donation, and king Nikola said enthusiastically of this alliance: "We and the Russians have combined forces of 60 450 000 men!"¹⁸⁸ Nikola proclaimed Montenegro a kingdom in 1910, and became its first king.

Historians point out, however, that the awareness of a separate Montenegrin identity only started to grow during the First World War, as a result of the power struggle between the Montenegrin and Serbian royal houses which preceded the formation of the South Slav kingdom in 1918.¹⁸⁹ King Nikola and his government fled Montenegro in 1916, and the Montenegrin royal family remained in France till 1921. Historical records concerning this period are incomplete, as all important documents and archives were destroyed by the Austrian occupiers after the capitulation of Montenegro in 1916. The main sources for the history of Montenegro during and just after the First World War are to be found in the archives of the French Foreign Ministry and the French secret service. French diplomatic involvement in Montenegro began in 1880. Since that year, almost daily despatches were sent to Paris. King Nikola never made a public statement of the reasons for his abdication in 1918, and there are very few memoirs or other personal reminiscences of his courtiers or others close to the throne. It is known, however, that he had to renounce the throne to make way for the Serbian king when the latter assumed the sovereignty of the new kingdom. This led to political division among the Montenegrins: part of the population was pro-Serbian and supported the Serbian king, while another part remained loyal to the Montenegrin royal house. King Nikola died in exile. His grandson Aleksandar Karadjordjevic, the son of Nikola's daughter (who had died in 1890) and the Serbian king Petar, succeeded his father in 1921. During the interbellum years, Montenegro was not a separate political or administrative entity within the Yugoslav kingdom.

Milovan Djilas has written a number of interesting studies of the status of Montenegro in the Communist federation. He was involved as a communist ideologist in the definition of the status of Montenegro in the Communist federation in 1943. While he supported the idea of political and administrative independence of Montenegro, he did not believe that the Montenegrins were a separate nation. He was in no doubt as to their Serbian descent, and he interpreted the Communist decision to make the Montenegrins a separate nation as an attempt to weaken the position of Serbia within Communist Yugoslavia.¹⁹⁰ The population of Montenegro remained divided about their own national identity. About half the inhabitants of Montenegro considered themselves to be Serbs while the other half felt Montenegrin. The arbitrary nature of ethnic identity is well illustrated by the fact that some

¹⁸⁸ See Kim Fancev, 'Pour la France: French Intelligence and the Montenegrin Government -In-Exile, 1916-1921' in R.B. Spence & L.L. Nelson, *Scholar, Patriot, Mentor, Historical Essays in Honor of Dimitrije Djordjevic*, Boulder, 1992: 251. M. Djilas, *Land Without Justice* (New York, 1974).

¹⁹⁰ Djilas (1974).

members of a given family often felt Serbian while others regarded themselves as Montenegrin. The family of the Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic, who was born in Montenegro, provides one of the most interesting examples of this. Milosevic moved to Serbia as a child and regards himself as Serbian, while his older brother calls himself Montenegrin.

The national identity of the inhabitants of Montenegro was (and is) sometimes based on historical insights, and sometimes on practical considerations. The latter were mainly applied in connection with the 'ethnic quota' used for appointments to important political and social functions in the Yugoslav federation. Montenegrin Communists could determine their nationality depending on the moment when an important function had to be filled, and they chose the nationality that gave them the best chance of being appointed. Post-communist Montenegro still shows similar divisions along national lines. The Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic belongs to the faction that claims its own Montenegrin identity, while his political opponent Momir Bulatovic sees Montenegro as part of Serbia and hence follows the political line laid down by Belgrade.

Macedonia and the Macedonians

In 1860, a Serbian priest published a collection of Macedonian folk songs under the title *The Folk Songs of Macedonian Bulgars*. He stated that he had chosen this title because each Slavic Macedonian regarded himself as a Bulgar and called his mother tongue Bulgarian.¹⁹¹ One of the first political movements in Macedonia, the VMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization), founded at the start of the 20th century, was also initially supported by Bulgarian nationalists. It is unclear, however, whether the VMRO was an extension of Bulgarian politics, or had its own political agenda with the independence of Macedonia as its main objective. As a result of the rivalry between Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece for control of Macedonia, various cultural and political organisations from these three countries maintained contacts with the Macedonian population in an attempt to win their political sympathy: "They were Bulgars in struggle against Serbian and Greek hegemonism, but with the Bulgar world they were increasingly becoming exclusive Macedonians."¹⁹² The British author Hugh Poulton followed the development of the Macedonian national question, which he defined as "the unresolved status of territories with mixed population coveted by a set of bordering states."¹⁹³ The Balkan wars of 1912-1913 led to the division of Macedonian territory between Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. In 1918, the Serbian part of Macedonia was incorporated into the new kingdom of Yugoslavia. This part of Macedonia was granted autonomy in 1945, and became the national state of Macedonia in 1991. The kingdom of Yugoslavia never gave the Macedonians any territorial or cultural autonomy, but the Yugoslav Communists recognized them as a separate nationality and Macedonia was made a constitutive republic within the Yugoslav federation. The Yugoslav Communists tried without success to incorporate Greek Macedonia into the new republic.

After the Second World War, the Yugoslav Macedonians began to write their national history and their language was standardized. The process of nation-forming followed by the Macedonians starting in 1945 was characterized by the nationalist tone of their historiography and attempts to substantiate the legitimacy of the nation on the basis of national symbols and heroes from the distant past. Macedonian intellectuals and political elite regarded the Yugoslav state as a good solution for the Macedonian national question. The disintegration of Yugoslavia showed clearly once again why the Macedonian national question poses such a threat to the stability of the Balkans. Poulton pointed out Greece's adverse reaction to the recognition of the Yugoslav part of Macedonia as an independent state, and the unfortunate compromise choice of an alternative name for the new state, which came to be officially called "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". An important study of Greek and Macedonian nationalism was written by Loring Danforth, an anthropologist who became interested in

¹⁹¹ Banac (1983) 310.

¹⁹² Ibid., 327.

¹⁹³ H. Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians?*, London (1994) 47.

the Macedonian question through his investigations in Greece. He confirmed the arbitrary nature of ethnic identity by citing examples of families where one member chooses to be regarded as Greek and another as Macedonian.¹⁹⁴

However, the main message of all authors writing about modern Macedonia is that under the political conditions currently prevailing in the post-Yugoslav Balkans, it has the right to independent statehood – and that if it is not given this right it will be swallowed up by the surrounding countries.

Bosnia-Hercegovina and the Bosnians

As Bosnia-Hercegovina has not existed as an independent political and administrative unit since the 14th century, historians have tended to regard its history as part of that of the Ottoman Empire (1463-1878), the Habsburg Empire (1878-1918) or the Yugoslav state (1918-1941 and 1945-1992). Alternatively, they often describe the history of Bosnia-Hercegovina as part of Serbian or Croatian national history. Despite the fact that Bosnia-Hercegovina has often been the subject of historical studies since the second half of the 19th century, none of the existing studies could give satisfactory answers to the questions posed after the outbreak of war in Bosnia-Hercegovina in 1992. Many foreign observers, diplomats and commentators appear to have read the work of the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature Ivo Andric as an introduction to Bosnian history. Klaus Kinkel, who was the German minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, mentioned in August 1993 that he intended to read Andric's masterpiece *The Bridge over the Drina* during his holidays – doubtless as a sign that he would not be neglecting the Bosnian crisis even while he was officially taking a break. Similarly, the Croatian diplomat Janko Vraniczany-Dobrinovic stated in August 1994 in an interview published by the Croatian daily *Slobodna Dalmacija* that he had advised the chief prosecutor of the International Tribunal for War Crimes in the former Yugoslavia, Richard Goldstone, to read this same book by Andric as an aid to understanding the current political problems. The Austrian writer Peter Handke likewise said on Serbian television that he understood the Serbs much better after reading "*The Bridge over the Drina*". Although professional historians warned that Andric was not a historian and that his work should not be interpreted as if it were based on reliable historical facts, many readers did use him as a source in their search for the causes of the war. Andric was cited as a prophet who had written a 'psycho-political geography' of Bosnia, showing the Serbs in Bosnia-Hercegovina as the victims of suppression and terror meted out by their Muslim rulers. The current political tensions were also explained from this viewpoint.¹⁹⁵

Bosnia-Hercegovina was certainly not a 'blind spot' in the historical literature: many publications of high quality were devoted to it. It would probably be better to characterize it as a 'grey zone'. The problem was that there was no history of Bosnia-Hercegovina as a whole, that could provide an answer e.g. to the questions concerning its historical legitimacy as an independent state or the national identity of the Bosnians. Even before the war in Bosnia-Hercegovina broke out, it was clear that each ethnic group had its own interpretation of Bosnian history. The Serbs, for example, pointed out the long history of conflicts, mutual intolerance, religious segregation and suppression of the non-Muslim population during the Ottoman rule. The Bosnian Muslims, on the other hand, mentioned the long tradition of mutual respect and tolerance between the various confessional groups arising from the Ottoman '*millet*' system, under which the autonomy of the non-Muslim religious communities was guaranteed. Soon after the outbreak of the war, all the parties engaged in the conflict could be observed mobilizing history to justify their political interests. The five most important books on the history of Bosnia-Hercegovina, which appeared after the outbreak of war in 1992, were written in reaction to the contradictory and often arbitrary interpretations of history.¹⁹⁶ The authors Malcolm,

¹⁹⁴ Loring Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict - Ethnic Nationalism in a Transitional World* (Princeton, 1995).

¹⁹⁵ I. Zanic, 'Pisac na osami: upotreba Andricove knjizevnosti u ratu u BiH' in *Erazmvs* 18 (1996) 48-55.

¹⁹⁶ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia - A Short History*, (London, 1994). Mark Pinson (ed.), *The Muslims of Bosnia-Hercegovina: Their Historic Development from Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*, (Cambridge Mass, 1994). R. Donia and J. Fine,

Calic, Donia & Fine, Pinson and Friedman are jointly known as the 'Bosnian school' because to a certain extent they all share the view that the Bosnian state has historical legitimacy; that Bosnian history is one of multi-confessional tolerance; and that the use of violence between different ethnic groups is of much more recent date than generally assumed. As the British historian Noel Malcolm puts it in the introduction to his book, "Paradoxically, the most important reason for studying Bosnia's history is that it enables one to see that the history of Bosnia in itself does not explain the origins of this war."¹⁹⁷

The members of the Bosnian school see Serb and Croat nationalism as destructive of the peaceful Bosnian society, and argue against the claim put forward in both Serbian and Croatian historiography that Bosnian history can, on grounds of historical and ethno-religious criteria, be regarded as part of Serbian or Croatian national history. These authors ascribe the intra-confessional tensions that have arisen to forces from outside Bosnia-Herzegovina, but they do not give a satisfactory explanation of why the social cohesion they claim was present was so fragile that Bosnian society could become so divided in 1991. Donia and Fine ascribe the polarisation of Bosnian society to the mobilization of vague fears and prejudices by nationalists, which turned the slogan 'the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians cannot live together' into a self-fulfilling prophecy. The authors of the Bosnian school claim that the history of violence between the three religious groups does not go back before the Second World War. In their zeal to dispose of the claims of a long history of conflicts, however, they often tend to exaggerate the inter-confessional harmony of the period before the Second World War. Their critics point out that Christians were second-class citizens in Ottoman society, and that violent clashes have in fact been quite common since the 19th century. For example, Ekmecic listed thirteen conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1805 and the war of 1992.¹⁹⁸

Another important approach shared by the members of the Bosnian school was their rejection of the claim that an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina has no legitimacy because it has no tradition of existence as a state. In a book written in 1994 by Bosnian intellectuals in reaction to Serb and Croat crimes against the Bosnian population, the authors used a line of argument concerning the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent entity similar to that deployed by the members of the Bosnian school.¹⁹⁹ Their message was basically that Bosnia-Herzegovina shows a historical continuity going back to the Middle Ages, peaking during the rule of Tvrtko I Kotromanic (1358-1391) when it was proclaimed a kingdom in 1377 with a southern boundary extending far into Dalmatia and including the islands Korcula, Brač and Hvar.

Ottoman rule was established gradually between 1389 and 1528, but the Ottomans maintained the territorial continuity of the region. In 1580, Bosnia was made a province (*ayelet* in Turkish, *beglerberluk* in Serbo-Croat), comprising large parts of present-day Serbia, Croatia (Dalmatia, Slavonia, Banija and Lika) and Montenegro. The Ottoman system of privileges, in which Muslims enjoyed a favoured position, was formally done away with by Sultan Abdulmecit I (1839-1851) in the *Hatt-i-^aerif* of Gülhane (the "noble signed decree of the rose-garden courtyard") promising equal rights to all his subjects, irrespective of their religion and class. This formed part of a wider series of reforms known as the *Tanzimat* (Reorganization). Bosnia-Herzegovina got its first written constitution in 1867. During the period of Austro-Hungarian rule (1878-1918), Bosnia-Herzegovina was also regarded as a *corpus separatum*, i.e. as a separate entity within the monarchy: the Ottoman province had become '*Reichsland*'.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: a Tradition Betrayed, (London, 1994). J-M. Calic, *Der Krieg in Bosnien-Herzegovina: Ursachen, Konfliktstrukturen, Internationale Lösungsversuche*, (Frankfurt, 1995). Franciene Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims: Denial of a Nation*, (Boulder, Col. and Oxford), (1996).

¹⁹⁷ Malcolm (1994) Introduction.

¹⁹⁸ Gremaux and A. de Vries, 'Het omstreden verleden van een verloren land: historiografie en nationaal bewustzijn in Bosnië-Herzegovina [The disputed past of a lost country: historiography and national awareness in Bosnia-Herzegovina; in Dutch], *Groniek-Historisch Tijdschrift*, Oct-Nov (1995) 109.

¹⁹⁹ See the reaction of the Bosnian intellectuals in Safet Halilovic (ed.), *Vrijeme bescasca - genocid nad Bosnjacima dvadesetog stoljeca*, (Zenica, 1994).

In 1918, Bosnia-Herzegovina was incorporated into the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. The Yugoslav Muslim Organization demanded that the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina should be respected, but when the kingdom was divided into four provinces in 1919 the historical boundaries of Bosnia-Herzegovina were not taken into account and it was divided between these four provinces. The Serbo-Croatian *Sporazum* (Agreement) of 1939 did not take the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina into account either: the region was again divided between Serbia and Croatia, to the great discontent of the Bosnian politicians and intelligentsia. In Communist Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina was made one of the six constitutive republics, implying recognition of its territorial sovereignty.

The members of the Bosnian school have made a substantial contribution to the discussion of the legitimacy of Bosnia-Herzegovina by placing a new emphasis on certain interpretations of Bosnian history.

In his review of the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Robert Donia wrote: "Most Bosniaks subscribe to an origin myth that traces their ethnogenesis to the Middle Ages. The popular legend is simple, attractive, and unambiguous. After migrating to the Balkan Peninsula in the sixth and seventh centuries, the story goes, Slav speaking inhabitants of Bosnia were proselytised by Christian missionaries from Rome to the West and from Constantinople from the east. Unwilling to succumb to either Catholic or Orthodox overlordship, the Bosnians formed their own church, and many church members adopted the dualist heresy known as 'Bogomilism'. (...) Following the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia (completed in 1463), the Bogomils and nobility of medieval Bosnia converted *en masse* to Islam and became Bosnian Muslims, member of the group known today as the Bosniaks."²⁰⁰ The historian Imamovic mentions that the first use of the term 'Bosnian language' in a written document occurred in a notarial deed dating from 1436. Before that time, the term Slavic or Illyrian language was generally used.²⁰¹ The historians Vera Krzisnik-Bukic and Mustafa Imamovic²⁰² tried to demonstrate that the national identity of the Bosnians has a long historical continuity and was also recognized by the Ottomans who called them the "Bosnian people". The South Slav Muslims from Bosnia-Herzegovina did not want to be called Turks, preferring a term emphasizing their regional identity such as 'Muslims from Bosnia'.²⁰³ A controversial aspect of the identity of the South Slav Muslims was however that they never denied their cultural background and continued to speak the same language as their South Slav neighbours, the Orthodox and Catholic South Slavs. This often caused Serbian and Croatian national ideologues to regard them as renegade Serbs or Croats, who would really do best to return to their old faith. Bosnian historians and intellectuals, however, see a relationship between the heretical Bogumil sect from the Middle Ages and modern Bosnian national identity. This theory was introduced in the 19th century by Franjo Racki, who suggested a connection between the Bogumil sect (which he called *Paterani*) and the mediaeval Bosnian church. According to this theory, the Bosnian population converted *en masse* to Islam to protect themselves against the hostile attitude of Rome towards the members of the Bosnian Church. This theory became very popular among Bosnian intellectuals, who regarded it as a proof that the Bosnians already had a separate identity from their neighbours before the Ottomans captured the Balkans. Although this theory is no longer taken seriously by most historians, it is still popular in the former Yugoslavia and in particular among Bosnians. Malcolm (1994) put forward the theory that the Bosnian Church was originally a Catholic monistic order with religious elements from the Orthodox faith. The Bosnian bishopric was moved to Hungarian soil, and no longer had any control over the Bosnian Catholics. The long isolation of the Bosnian Church made it *de facto* autonomous with respect to Rome, and members of the Bosnian Church were regarded as heretics there. In order to root out Bosnian heresy, Rome started to send Franciscan monks to Bosnia in the

²⁰⁰ Robert Donia, 'The New Bosniak History', Nationalities Papers (Vol.28, No. 2) 2000; 352.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 15.

²⁰² Vera Krzisnik-Bukic, *Bosanski identitet između prošlosti i budućnosti* (Sarajevo 1997). Mustafa Imamovic, *Historija Bosnjaka*, (Sarajevo, 1998).

²⁰³ Imamovic (1998) 14.

14th century. These monks were respected by the peasants for their practical attitude and knowledge of such matters as agriculture and medicine. Little is known about the number of members of the Bosnian Church, but it is assumed that the Bosnian nobility also belonged to it. It appears from the new historical interpretations of this period that there is no real evidence to back up the theory of mass conversions of the members of the Bosnian Church to Islam. The Ottoman registers show that the conversions were very local in nature and that most converts gave their former religion as Orthodox or Catholic, with only a small minority coming from the Bosnian Church. Malcolm concludes on this basis that there were no mass conversions in the period immediately following the Ottoman conquest. He believes that social and economic considerations, and not religious ones, were decisive for conversion. Muslims enjoyed many privileges in Ottoman society, from which non-Muslims were excluded. Muslims could make a career in the army or the civil service, the latter in the administrative centres that were set up in every town. The legal system was also a source of systematic discrimination: Christians were not allowed to take a Muslim to court, or to act as a witness against Muslims. However, none of the authors of the Bosnian school gives a satisfactory answer to the question of why so many people from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania converted to Islam while the Serbs and Montenegrins did not. If practical social and economic considerations were decisive, surely they would apply equally to the Serbs and the Montenegrins. Imamovic regards the year 1737 as decisive for the formation of the Bosnian national identity. In that year, the Habsburg Emperor called on the Bosnians to surrender before his army attacked the town of Banja Luka. He promised that all who renounced Islam would be allowed to keep their possessions and would be left in peace. But according to Imamovic this threat only strengthened the Bosnians in the defence of their religious identity - and they won the battle.²⁰⁴

The Bosnian historian Ahmed Alicic²⁰⁵ minimalizes the contribution of religion to Bosnian ethnic identity. In his opinion, the Bosnians have had a national identity of their own since the Middle Ages, and were regarded as a separate ethnic group by the Ottomans. Like Imamovic, Alicic regards the revolt against central Ottoman authority in the 19th century under the leadership of Husein Gradasevic as a milestone in the development of Bosnian identity. Under Gradasevic's leadership (1831-1832), the Bosnians demanded autonomy for Bosnia within the Ottoman Empire. This demand was based on the economic interests of the Bosnian landowners, and had nothing to do with western ideas of nationalism that were popular at the time.²⁰⁶ European nationalism came to Bosnia under the influence of the Croatian Illyrian movement. The eminent Bosnian historian and Franciscan Ivan Frano Jukic argued that the three main religious communities in Bosnia shared a common ethnic identity. The Habsburg politician and expert on Balkan affairs Benjamin Kallay, who was ambassador in Belgrade between 1868 and 1875, wrote an important book on Serbian history in 1877, that was also translated into Serbian.²⁰⁷ In this book he defended the viewpoint that Bosnia-Herzegovina was Serbian territory; when he was made governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1883-1903), however, he was forced to give up this view and ban his own book. From 1883, Kallay's policy was aimed at creating a common identity for all inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina irrespective of their confessional background, whom he called *Bosnjaci* (the singular form of which is *Bosnjak*). Kallay took the concept from the Ottoman ruler Topal Pasha, who had tried to introduce a Bosnian identity for all inhabitants of Bosnia in the 1860s. Even then, the Serbs and Croats had refused to go along with the idea: the Orthodox and Catholic inhabitants of Bosnia preferred to associate themselves with the Serbian and Croatian national movements respectively. Kallay could not even rely on the support of the Muslim upper classes, who did not wish to form a single people with their former subjects. After 1878, the Muslim inhabitants of Bosnia were called *Mubamedanci* or *Mubamedovci*, the German translation of which was *Mubammedaner*. According to Imamovic, the term *musliman* was also increasingly used. This comes from the Arabic word *muslim* ('devote oneself to God'); the plural form of the Persian equivalent of this, *musliman*, came

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 301.

²⁰⁵ A. Alicic, *Pokret za autonomiju Bosne od 1831. do 1831. Godine* (Sarajevo 1996).

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 333-337

²⁰⁷ B. Kallay, *Geschichte der Serben*, (Leipzig, 1877). See also Gremaux and de Vries (1995) 105.

to be used for members of the Islamite faith. The term *Bosnjak* was initially used to denote any inhabitant of Bosnia-Hercegovina.²⁰⁸

The period of Habsburg rule of Bosnia-Hercegovina, which lasted some forty years, has been interpreted differently by different authors. Imamovic regards it as unfavourable for the Bosnian Muslims, who lost their privileged social position compared with non-Muslims. Part of the Muslim elite adapted quickly to the new conditions and accepted Habsburg rule, but many Bosnian Muslims decided to leave the country.²⁰⁹ Krzisnik-Bukic notes that about 100 000 Bosnians emigrated to Turkey during the forty years of Habsburg rule, the largest waves of emigration occurring after the introduction of general conscription in 1881 and the annexation in 1908. On the other hand, the Habsburg authorities encouraged the immigration of Croats, Slovenians, Germans and other Christian population groups from the monarchy²¹⁰

The concept of *bosnjastvo* (Bosnian identity) was revived at the end of the 19th century in the movement for raising national awareness among the Muslim inhabitants of Bosnia-Hercegovina. The periodical *Bosnjak*, which according to its founder Mehmed Kapetanovic was intended to protect the patriotic sentiments of all inhabitants of Bosnia-Hercegovina against Serb and Croat nationalist propaganda, first appeared in 1891. The editorial policy was aimed at removing the prejudices against Bosnians and bringing Bosnian society closer to European civilization.²¹¹ The founders of *Bosnjak* worked closely together with the Austro-Hungarian authorities, and their interpretation of Bosnian identity agreed with that of Kallay. But then it was found that the Serbs and Croats were not prepared to accept this idea, and the term *Bosnjak* remained associated with Bosnian Muslims. This interconfessional element has not played a role of any significance since 1900.

Seen from a historical perspective, however, *Bosnjak* did play an important role in the process of stimulating the national (self-)identification of the Muslims of Bosnia-Hercegovina, which was continued in various 20th-century nationalist concepts. The first Bosnian Muslim political movement was set up in 1906. This was the Muslim National Organization (MNO), whose aim was to promote the political interests of Muslims in Bosnia-Hercegovina. Bosnians did not find 'Yugoslav ideology' very attractive, and as late as 1917 plans were being made to make Bosnia-Hercegovina an administrative part of Hungary. The older generation of Bosnian politicians supported this idea, while the younger generation preferred some form of South Slav political union. The disintegration of the Habsburg monarchy accelerated the process of political co-operation between Bosnian politicians and their counterparts in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, and in 1918 Bosnia-Hercegovina was incorporated into the new South Slav kingdom. The first important Bosnian political party in the new state, the Yugoslav Muslim organization (JMO), was founded in 1919 and was a force to be reckoned with in the Yugoslav parliament. The kingdom of Yugoslavia was not a success from a Bosnian point of view, however. Immediately after the First World War, the Bosnians became the target of Serbian intimidation. The Bosnian *Reis ul-ulema* (head of the Muslim religious community) Dzermaludin Causevic told the French press in 1919 that 1000 Bosnian Muslim men had been killed shortly after the end of the war, 76 women had been burned and 270 villages plundered by Serbian bands.²¹² It was expected of the Muslim population of Bosnia-Hercegovina at the time that they identified themselves from an ethnic and national point of view either as 'Muslim Serbs' or as 'Muslim Croats'. The best known Muslim politician of that period, Mehmed Spaho, regarded himself however as a Yugoslav, while one of his brothers considered himself to be Croatian and another to be Serbian.²¹³

²⁰⁸ Imamovic (1998)

²⁰⁹ Nusret Sehic, *Autonomni pokret Muslimana za vrijeme austrougarske uprave u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Sarajevo 1980). Robert Donia, *Islam under the Double Eagle - The Muslims of Bosnia and Hercegovina 1878-1914* (New York 1981).

²¹⁰ Krzisnik-Bukic (1998) 29-30.

²¹¹ Imamovic (1998) 377.

²¹² Malcolm (1994) 162.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 166.

According to the Bosnian historian Sacir Filandra,²¹⁴ the Bosnians had lagged far behind the Serbs and Croats from a social and political point of view during the 20th century, and only started developing an active policy aimed at achieving recognition of their national identity in the 1960s. Communist recognition of the Bosnians as a separate nation in 1968 was largely thanks to the backing of influential Communists of Muslim descent. During the Communist era, the Islamic inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina were generally called *Muslimani*, the capital 'M' being used to denote nationally while a *musliman* with a lower-case 'm' was someone of the Islamic faith. During this phase, the concept of *bosnjastvo* lost something of its significance. However, it was picked up again by the Bosnian émigré Adil Zulfikarpasic who was one of the co-founders of the periodical *Bosanski pogledi*, and who subsequently founded the Bosnian Institute in Zurich.²¹⁵ Zulfikarpasic advocated defining Bosnian national identity on a regional basis instead of the usual religious one, and replacing the term *Musliman* by *Bosnjak* (Bosnian). His approach was criticized not only by Serb and Croat nationalists but also by his co-religionists who felt that this strictly regional identity was not in line with pan-Islamic concepts. He returned to Bosnia to take an active part in the political manoeuvring leading up to the election there in 1990. However, his secular approach was not to the taste of the convinced Muslim Alija Izetbegovic and led to a split between the two.²¹⁶

11. Ethnic conflict

The definition of the Yugoslav crisis as an ethnic conflict resulting from a history of hate and intolerance between the ethnic groups of the region going back many centuries has been categorized by sociologists and anthropologists as one of the products of the 'primordial hatred school'. According to the American sociologist and Yugoslavia expert Leonard J. Cohen, this model assumed "the cyclical role of 'ancient enmities' and atavistic impulses in the Balkans"²¹⁷ as a given in its attempts to explain the conflict. In this approach, the identity of an ethnic group was determined with the aid of a classification system making use of certain criteria such as language, religion and myths about ethnic descent, thus allowing this group to be clearly distinguished from others.²¹⁸ Links based on language, religion and myths were regarded as very old and thus stronger and more important than those relating e.g. to the state. This approach to ethnic identity is also a starting point for the post-communist nationalist movements in Yugoslavia. For example, Croatian nationalist academics have tried to demonstrate that the Croatian people is one of the oldest of Europe. The *History of Medieval Croatia* by Stanko Goldescu cites an old Croatian theory according to which the Croats are descended from the Persian *Harahvat* tribe. This name may be found in one of the inscriptions of the Iranian ruler Darius dating from the 5th century B.C. This genealogical fantasy was not taken seriously by Communist historians, but survived in Croatian émigré circles. Dominik Mandic, a Croatian Catholic priest and historian from the United States, mentioned this theory in his book *Srbi i Hrvati dva različita naroda*²¹⁹ ('serbs and Croats, two different peoples'), which appeared in 1971. It was subsequently further developed by various other Croatian authors.²²⁰ Such a search for the ethnic origins is indeed very important because the South Slav peoples do share many linguistic, ethnographic and folkloristic characteristics. It was precisely these similarities which led some people to look for striking differences

²¹⁴ S. Filandra, *Bosnjačka politika u XX stoljeću* (Sarajevo, 1998).

²¹⁵ See M. Imamovic, *Bosnjaci u emigraciji 1955-1967* (Sarajevo, 1996).

²¹⁶ Malcolm (1994) 219.

²¹⁷ Leonard Cohen, 'Bosnia's 'Tribal Gods': The Role of Religion in Nationalist Politics' in P. Mojzes (1997) 43.

²¹⁸ See C. F. Keyes, 'The Dialectics of Ethnic Change' in C. F. Keyes (ed.) *Ethnic Change* (London, 1982) 5.

²¹⁹ Dominik Mandic, *Srbi i Hrvati dva različita naroda* (München-Barcelona, 1971).

²²⁰ Mandic's book was first published abroad, and did not appear in a Croatian edition until 1990. Other important works dealing with the postulated Iranian descent of the Croats include B. Vidov, *Povijest Hrvata* (Toronto, 1975). Vinko Grubisic, *Od domovine do pradomovine* (Chicago, 1979). Alemko Gluhak 'Porijeklo imena Hrvat' in *Jezik* 37 (June 1990). Tomislav Heres 'Podrijetlo i značenje imena Zagreb u svjetlu nekih zagonetaka najstarije hrvatske povijesti' *Marulic* 3 (April 1983) and Mirko Vidovic, 'Hrvatski Iranski korijeni' (Zagreb, 1991).

between the various Balkan peoples. For example, the Croatian nationalists feel it very important to be able to prove that the Croats have a different origin from the Serbs, and that the differences between these two ethnic groups existed even before they arrived in the Balkans. In order to demonstrate the Persian-Croatian link, some authors have even compiled long lists of Persian and Croatian words which are intended to reveal many etymological similarities between the Croatian and Persian languages. Despite all such 'scientific' proofs, the Croats have never managed to produce hard evidence of their Persian descent: many of the words given as Croatian lists could equally well be Serbian or Bosnian.²²¹

There is however another approach to ethnicity, more or less opposed to that described above, which is known as Instrumentalism.²²² This regards the ethnic identity in terms of group loyalty rather than of common origin. In the case of the South Slavs, this group loyalty arose in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Instrumentalists regard ethnic conflicts as the result of the conscious manipulation of history and ethnic symbols, aimed at mobilizing great masses in an attempt to achieve political objectives defined by national elites.

Yet another approach has been described by Donald Horowitz, who defines three causes of all ethnic wars: (1) an external affinity problem, i.e. the difficult relationship between an ethnic minority and the state to which this minority is subject; (2) differences in views about emotional symbolism and stereotypes; and finally (3) concrete historical experience of domination and violence between ethnic groups. According to Horowitz, these factors lead to fear of extermination and feelings of hate against other groups.²²³ He distinguishes between 'elite-driven' and 'mass-driven' conflicts. Kaufman²²⁴ has described how an elite-driven ethnic conflict begins: first of all, the elite gains control of the media, which it then uses to propagate its hyper-nationalist ideas. It claims that it wants to 'protect' the members of its own ethnic group against other ethnic groups – but this of course automatically makes it a threat to the other groups. However, the angst psychosis which it creates among its own ethnic group strengthens its hold on power, and it can use each incident that arises between its own group and the others as a pretext for escalation of the conflict. According to Kaufman, if a political elite creates the conditions required to spark off ethnic conflicts after it comes to power the resulting violence may be called 'elite-driven'. If on the other hand extreme nationalist ideas were already popular when the political leader (or elite) came to power, the ensuing violence may be called 'mass-driven'. This analysis indicates that the Serbian nationalism is 'mass-driven'. Milosevic changed from a Communist apparatchik into a Serbian nationalist after addressing a heated Serb demonstration in Kosovo demanding protection against 'Albanian terror'. His promise to stick up for their interests in Belgrade made him one of the most popular Serbian politicians. It is striking how little trouble he had combining his Communist convictions with nationalism: as a result, he is often called an 'opportunist nationalist'. Franjo Tudjman, on the other hand, was a convinced nationalist before he came to power, who only had to convince the Croatian population of the correctness of his ideas. His conviction that Bosnia-Herzegovina was 'historical' Croatian territory was common knowledge as early as the 1970s, but was rejected even by nationalist circles in Croatia. According to the theory developed by Horowitz and Kaufman, Slovenian nationalism was also 'mass-driven': the social movements in Slovenia which opposed the federal government in Belgrade and Slobodan Milosevic in the 1980s managed to convince the Slovenian Communist leaders that radical solutions were called for, but it was the Communist elite that led Slovenia to independence. Slovenian 'constitutional nationalism' was the least explosive, because Slovenia was ethnically homogeneous. It had not experienced any ethnic conflicts in the past, and had no 'hereditary' or 'traditional' enemies among the other Yugoslav nationalities.

²²¹ E.g. *sukkar-secer*. The word *secer* (sugar) is used not only in Serbian but also in Bosnian. In fact, there is no synonym for this word either in the Serbian or the Bosnian language. See Vidovic (1991) 68.

²²² See A. Cohen, 'Variables in Ethnicity' in C.F. Keyes (ed.), *Ethnic Change* (London, 1982). F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Differences* (London, 1969).

²²³ D. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, 1985).

²²⁴ S. Kaufman, 'The Irresistible Force and the Imperfect Object' in *Security Studies* 4 (2) (1994) 281-329.

Ethnic conflicts are closely connected with nationalism and nationalist ideologies. While there are great similarities between the concept of an ethnic group and that of a nation, not every ethnic group constitutes a nation. The criteria for it to do so are that it should be reasonably large, have its own territory and should have enough resources to be reasonably self-supporting.²²⁵ Nations claim the right of self-determination and form their own states, but not every nation consists of a single ethnic group. Hugh Seton-Watson makes a distinction between 'old' and 'new' nations. The old ones had developed their national identity before 1789, when nationalism became the norm in Europe, while the new ones did not begin this process until the 19th century or even later, under the influence of national movements. The processes of development of national awareness were initiated by small, well-educated elites.²²⁶ The South Slav peoples had drawn another distinction since the 19th century, viz. that between 'historical' and 'non-historical' nations. The South Slav peoples who had had their own kingdom in the Middle Ages regarded themselves as 'historical peoples', or 'old nations' in Seton-Watson's typology. The Dutch historian Raymond Detrez has the following to say on this topic: "The distinction that is sometimes drawn between 'historical peoples' and others can also be highly relevant: historical peoples are those that can prove with reference to old texts, maps and the like that they had their own state and wrote history as long ago as the Middle Ages."²²⁷

The historical peoples claim that even after centuries of foreign rule, they have still kept their own nature. Detrez regards this belief in the preservation of the Balkan peoples' own nature as one of the most persistent Balkan myths: "The myth that the Balkan peoples managed to preserve their own nature during the five centuries when they were under the Turkish yoke is particularly persistent. It remains unclear, however, what precisely a people's 'own nature' is, what it looked like at the end of the 14th century and how it is possible that, while literally everything changed, the 'own nature' of these peoples could remain unchanged from the 14th to the 19 century (and even up to the present day)"²²⁸

Serb and Croat nationalists claim the status of 'historical peoples' for their own nations, which implies that they have the right to a national state of their own in contrast to the Muslim inhabitants of Kosovo and Bosnia, and the Macedonians. They accorded this same right grudgingly, if at all, to such 'non-historical' peoples: "The 'non-historical' peoples who developed a national awareness in the 19th century had just as much right to be called nations as the 'historical' ones: the only difference was that they had fewer trumps in their hand when they tried to substantiate their national identity, to find a historical justification for their territorial claims and the like."²²⁹

'Historical peoples' want 'historical frontiers' corresponding to those of their medieval kingdom at its most successful. The 19th-century Serb nationalist ideologists, inspired and supported by the Serbian Orthodox Church, argued for restoration of the frontiers of the Serbian kingdom as they were at the time of Dusan the Mighty (1331-1355), who was crowned 'czar of the Serbians and the Greeks' in 1346 in Skopje, the capital of present-day Macedonia, and who wanted to conquer the whole Byzantine Empire. Croat nationalist ideologists talk of the 'historical frontiers' of Croatia from the 11th century, when Bosnia still formed part of the Croatian kingdom: "Politicians in the post-communist Croatian society tend to glorify this period of the early Croatian kingdom. In this case we can mention Branimir, Zvonimir and especially Tomislav. However, the idea of a national unified state could better be seen as a product of the romantic and nationalistic ideology of the middle of the nineteenth century. The Croatian national kingdom was based on a feudal system, where personalized and decentralized relationships were the rule, rather than a strong centralized administration. For example, a king or a ruler always bore the title of several regions that could easily change owners."²³⁰

²²⁵ Thomas (1996) 13.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ R. Detrez, 'De Macedonische kwestie' *Kleio* (June 1994) 8.

²²⁸ R. Detrez, *De sloop van Joegoslavië: het relaas van een boedelscheiding* (Antwerpen-Baarn, 1996) 28.

²²⁹ Detrez (1994) 9.

²³⁰ R. Stallaerts and J. Laurens, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Croatia*, (New York-London, 1995) 9.

The definition of nationalism, which is usually described as a political principle, doctrine or ideology, is based on the definition of the nation state. Gellner defines nationalism as a “political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent.”²³¹ But the precise content of nationalism depends on the definition of the nation. Gellner distinguishes two types of nations. The nation in a stricter sense comprises people with the same cultural background. This definition of the nation forms the basis for ‘ethnic nationalism’ – also known as ethno-tribalism or tribalism²³² - which excludes ‘the others’. The formation of national states on the basis of this principle leads to the drawing of new boundaries intended to keep out ‘the others’ or to (re-)unite the country’s ‘own people’.

The definition of the nation in a wider sense according to Gellner is related to the convictions, loyalty and solidarity of the members of a group whose members need not have the same cultural background, which form the basis for ‘revolutionary-democratic nationalism’.²³³ Gellner mentions 19th-century German and Italian nationalism as examples of ethnic nationalism, and France and America as examples of revolutionary-democratic nationalism’. According to him, ethnic nationalism creates exclusive states while revolutionary-democratic nationalism creates inclusive ones. Thomas regards the former Yugoslavia as an inclusive state, formed by combination of the various ethnic groups. The 19th-century concept of South Slav unity, that regarded the Slovenians, Croats and Serbs as three tribes of the same nation, was however radically modified by the developments in the kingdom of Yugoslavia and Communist Yugoslavia.²³⁴ He regarded the disintegration of Yugoslavia as the result of the ‘exclusive concept’ of the nation: “Different perspectives of each group’s historical experience, renewed awareness of one’s religious origins, exaggerated beliefs about different cultures surely played an important part in the transition from South Slav unity to disunity.”²³⁵

National myths

According to the typology of Anthony Smith (1991), the following characteristics are important for the definition of national identity: (1) a historical territory or ‘fatherland’; (2) shared myths and historical memories; (3) a shared popular culture (mass public culture); (4) common legal rights and duties for all subjects; and (5) a shared economy and territorial mobility for all.²³⁶

This typology may be clarified by comparing the Yugoslav national identity with that of the individual South Slav peoples. It will be found that the individual South Slav peoples all score higher on Anthony Smith’s scale than Yugoslavia, which in fact only meets the last two criteria. This is hardly surprising, however, since the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians have done all they could during the past decade to manifest themselves as separate nations, e.g. by linguistic renovation aimed at creating a new standard language and by the revival of old myths or the invention of new ones: “Time worn myth and an ideological vulgarization of history are all too frequently encountered in the Balkans: a partisan historical memory, political amnesia, concealed defeats, the glorification of past tragedies, are all topped-off by an unreasonable pride in times gone by. Current occurrences are, as a rule, mixed with and mistaken for mythical elaboration of past events. It was during the period of national awakening, which itself began in the nineteenth century and, to an even greater degree over past few years, that actual events were manipulated in such a way that they were made to adopt or absorb mythological elements. The bloody Balkan conflict, unfolding before a bewildered world audience, is a sinister

²³¹ E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford, 1983) 1.

²³² See Michael Walzer, ‘The New Tribalism’, *Dissent* (Spring, 1992). Slavenka Drakulic, *The Balkan Express*, (New York, 1993).

²³³ Gellner (1983) 7.

²³⁴ Thomas (1996) 14.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

²³⁶ A. Smith, *National Identity* (London, 1991) 14.

example of where and how far an ideologized abuse of historical fact and ancient mythology can lead”.²³⁷

The medieval rulers of the Nemanjic dynasty play an important part in Serbian national mythology, though the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 was the cornerstone of modern Serbian national mythology. A pivotal role in Croatian national mythology is played by two medieval kings. King Tomislav is supposed to have founded the first Croatian kingdom in 924. The historian Ivan Kukuljevic who is thought to be responsible for the creation of the ‘myth’ about this king based himself on an old chronicle in which an eyewitness gave details of the coronation of the Croatian ruler Svatopluk. There is no evidence that Tomislav and Svatopluk were one and the same person, and this free interpretation on the part of Kukuljevic is challenged by many historians. The Croatian nationalists, on the other hand, have adopted Kukuljevic’s version which is now to be found in Croatian history books.²³⁸ Little is known about Tomislav, however. He is not named as ruler of Croatia by the 10th-century Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in his *Administrando Imperium*, the main source of information about the region at the time. This source does however describe Croatia as an important military power in the region.

The last king of medieval Croatia was Zvonimir (1075-1089). After his death, the Hungarian king Kalman (the brother of Zvonimir’s widow Jelena) persuaded the main noble families of Croatia to conclude an agreement with Hungary, leading to a political union that lasted until 1918. As a result, the rule of king Zvonimir became the theme of a series of historical myths. An important 13th-century chronicle, for example, describes how Zvonimir cursed his land and his people after being murdered by his own nobles: “He cursed the unfaithful Croats and their descendants before God and all saints for his violent death, saying the Croats should never again have a ruler of their own tongue but should always be under foreign rule.”²³⁹ The Croatian anthropologist Ivo Zanic has described how the myth of king Zvonimir was used to ‘throw light’ on current political events. He cited an article that appeared in the Croatian weekly *Globus* in 1991: “Murdered in 1089, the first King of Croatia to be recognized by the Papacy called down upon his killers, according to Nostrodamus and serious astrological experts, a nine-hundred year curse. Moreover, for these nine centuries the Croats have not been able to restore their state. When the curse is finally lifted, what will those years bring?”²⁴⁰

Another example of the bizarre proportions a ‘sense of history’ can assume, and of the poor grasp of historical facts by the Croats themselves, is described by the historian Ivo Goldstein. Goldstein is one of the few Croatian historians specialized in medieval Croatian history. He reacted to a 1998 report from the Croatian press bureau HINA, stating that 18 September would be chosen as ‘Croatian Navy Day’, in memory of the victory by Prince Branimir in a naval battle in Central Dalmatia in 887.²⁴¹ Goldstein managed to trace sources referring to a battle that had taken place on 18 September – but it had not been a naval battle. Moreover, Goldstein discovered that the Slavic prince in question could not be Branimir, because the description of the site of the battle indicates that this must have been the city of Makarska which belonged to the principality of Neretva at the time. This principality was not incorporated into the kingdom of Croatia until the 12th century: it was only after this event that the *Neretljani* were also called Croats.²⁴²

²³⁷ Velikonja (1997) 20.

²³⁸ See N. Budak and V. Posavac (1997).

²³⁹ Z. Crnja, *Cultural History of Croatia* (Zagreb, 1962): 134, cited in Marcus Tanner’s *Croatia, a Nation Forged to War* (New Haven, 1997) 1.

²⁴⁰ I. Zanic, ‘The Legend of King Zvonimir and Political Discourse in Embattled Croatia’, in *East European Politics and Societies* (1995) 88-122.

²⁴¹ Ivo Goldstein, ‘sluzbeno falsificiranje povijesti: Dan Hrvatske ratne mornarice slavi se u spomen na veliku pomorsku pobjedu kneza Branimira iz 887 koje uopce nije bilo!’ *Globus* (25 September 1998).

²⁴² *Ibid.*

12. Religious conflict

The reaction of the sociologist of religion Esad Cimić to the question as to whether the war in the former Yugoslavia could be characterized as a religious conflict is typical of the debate that has been carried out on this topic. His answer is 'yes and no'. In his opinion, "neither the motive nor the impulses for this war resulted from religions or faiths respectively and, even less, can the religious communities be accused of waging the war." But at the same time, Cimić believes that religion has been used intentionally to mask the real motives for the war and to make it appear that it really was a religious conflict: "Politicians are certainly trying to present it in these terms, and regretfully, a part of the hierarchy of religious communities are doing likewise, especially those of the Serbian Orthodox Church. These are allegedly God-fearing people who with their attitudes, behaviour, and actions offer excuses to the "masters of war," supplying them with acceptable justification and reason for the conflict."²⁴³

The impression that the war was a religious one was reinforced by the fact that the hostile armies started off by destroying one another's churches and mosques. This was certainly true of the Serbian and Croatian armies in Bosnia-Herzegovina who were engaged in a systematic attempt to get rid of all traces of the region's oriental and Islamic legacy (mosques, cemeteries and cultural monument).²⁴⁴ The Serbian soldiers were told that they were fighting against the 'Muslim peril', and were surprised that Europe was not grateful for their efforts.

A number of publications that appeared after the disintegration of Yugoslavia threw light on various aspects of the role of religion in the conflict.²⁴⁵ Michael Sells describes the Serb anti-Muslim attitude as an ideology, which he calls Christoslavism. He compares it with anti-Semitism, which is based on the accusation that the Jews are guilty of the death of Christ. Christoslavism, on the other hand, finds its roots in the medieval Serbian history and the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. The Islamic Ottomans are blamed for the death of the Serb Prince Lazar. According to this interpretation, his death also meant the end of the Serbian Orthodox Christian kingdom. These ideas formed the basis for 19th-century Serbian national ideology, and played an important role in inspiring the struggle against the Ottomans, liberation from whom would, it was hoped, allow the frontiers of the old Serbian kingdom to be restored.

Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the first UN human rights rapporteur in the Balkans, denied in his report that the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was religious in nature, but he stressed the importance of religion in determining the national identity of the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians.²⁴⁶ This was confirmed by various empirical studies. Tone Bringa, a Norwegian anthropologist, who was engaged in a study of Bosnian identity before the outbreak of the war, concluded: "Islam is the main distinguishing factor between the Muslims and their Bosnian-Herzegovinian compatriots and the main constitutive factor, either as practical religion or as cultural heritage, in self-ascription of collective *nacija* identities. As such, Islam is the key to understanding Muslim identity in Bosnia. Yet, Bosnian Muslim identity cannot fully be understood with reference to Islam only, but has to be considered in terms of a specific Bosnian dimension which for Bosnian Muslims has implied sharing history and a locality with Bosnians of other non-Islamic religious traditions."²⁴⁷

The sociologist of religion Paul Mojzes considers that the religious character of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is often exaggerated, because that war cannot be defined as a 'crusade' or *jihad*. The link between the religious and the ethnic identity had been weakened because the Communists

²⁴³ E. Cimić, 'The Bosnian Crossroads' in Mojzes (1997) 133.

²⁴⁴ L. Cohen, 'Bosnian Tribal Gods' in Mojzes (1997) 65.

²⁴⁵ See e.g. Paul Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans* (Atlanta 1996). M. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Berkeley 1996).

²⁴⁶ See T. Mazowiecki (1994).

²⁴⁷ Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim in a Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village* (New York 1995) 230-131.

regarded religious feelings as an individual, private matter. Marriages between people of different religions were quite common until the 1990s, when mixed marriages were no longer tolerated. Mojzes uses the term 'ethnoreligiosity' to denote the link between the ethnic and the religious identity. If someone converts from Islam to Orthodoxy, this automatically involves a change in ethnic identity: such a person immediately becomes Serbian, and *vice versa*. In Mojzes' opinion, however, the ethnoreligious identity of the Muslims is stronger than that of the Serbs and Croats. At the end of the 1960s, the Bosnians were proclaimed a nationality, purely on the basis of their religion.

The religious groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina used to live in a social environment often called *komsiluk*. This term literally means 'neighbourhood', but was used in Bosnia-Herzegovina to denote the tolerance and respect for others that had become a matter of course between followers of different religions there.²⁴⁸

Mazowiecki emphasizes the negative influence of the churches on interconfessional relationships. In particular the Serbian Orthodox Church was active in the persuading the Serbian population that they were the victims of a conspiracy between Catholics and Muslims. The leaders of the Catholic Church in Croatia remained politically neutral, but in Herzegovina Catholic priests were very active in stirring up nationalist rhetoric against both the Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims. The latter have complained regularly since the start of the war in 1992 that 'Christian' Europe was prejudiced against them because of their religious background. They saw this as the reason why the West hesitated so long about military intervention to save the Bosnians from genocide.²⁴⁹ The Serbian sociologist Milan Tripkovic goes so far as to accuse the religious organisations themselves of responsibility for starting the war,²⁵⁰ while Mojzes comments that in any case the religious authorities did not do much to improve interconfessional relationships during the war. The Serbian Patriarch Pavle openly supported the radical policies of the Bosnian Serbs. The notorious war criminal Arkan boasted that Patriarch Pavle was his commander-in-chief.²⁵¹ The Serbian Orthodox Church was in favour of the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁵² According to Norman Cigar, Serbian intellectuals and clergy played a sinister role in providing the motivation for and justification of the genocidal crimes committed against the Muslim population in Bosnia-Herzegovina. One of the most extreme anti-Muslim ideologists is the Serb academic Miroslav Jevtic, who has been writing texts demonizing the Muslims for years. The following is a typical specimen of his prose: "the hands of the Muslims who are with us are stained and polluted with the blood of their ancestors from among inhabitants of Bosnia at that time, namely those who did not embrace Islam."²⁵³

Sells concluded after a three-year study of genocide that there is no evidence that the Bosnians were also guilty of a genocidal policy aimed at destroying Serb and Croat communities in Bosnia. He did observe individual atrocities committed against Serb and Croat civilians, but concluded that the Bosnian political leadership was not aware of these activities.²⁵⁴ Cigar likewise stated that the Bosnians were the main victims of the genocidal crimes.

There is not such a clear picture of the role of the Croatian Catholic Church in inciting and justifying hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina as there is for the Serbian Orthodox Church. Mojzes ascribes this difference to the brutal openness of the Serb nationalists about their intentions. The Croat nationalists, on the other hand, often concealed their intentions. The Croatian Catholic Church welcomed the advent of the non-Communist Croatian government in 1990 because this political change raised the prestige of the Church and because the new Croatian nationalist elite embraced

²⁴⁸ See e.g. Tindemans (1996) 32.

²⁴⁹ See Jonathan Luxmore, 'Former UN envoy accuses churches of blocking cooperation', *Ecumenical News International* 14 (September, 1995).

²⁵⁰ Milan Tripkovic, *Samoniklice* (Novi Sad.,1993).

²⁵¹ Mojzes (1997) 172.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 179.

²⁵³ N. Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, (Texas, 1995) 29.

²⁵⁴ M. Sells, 'serbian Religious Nationalism, Christoslavism, and the Genocide in Bosnia, 1992-1995' in Mojzes (1997) 203.

Catholicism as an important symbol of Croatian national identity. The link between the Catholic Church and Croatian nationalist ideology was even more explicit in neighbouring Hercegovina, where many Croats lived. During the Second World War, Hercegovina was already known as a breeding-ground for the Ustase movement, and Catholic priests in Hercegovina also showed open support for the extreme nationalist Ustase ideology. The Communist regime suppressed local feuds. In 1980, however, the Catholic faith in Bosnia was given an enormous boost by the 'Medjugorje phenomenon'. It was reported that the Virgin Mary had appeared to a number of children in the little village of Medjugorje. The local Franciscans used this 'miracle' to reinforce their own position in the region in relation to the diocesan hierarchy and the authority of the Bishop of Mostar.²⁵⁵ In connection with this, the Franciscans were held responsible for the development of a 'militant Maria ideology' which strengthened ethno-religious nationalism and had ideological links with the views of the nationalist and extreme nationalist (neo-Ustase) Croatian parties. Medjugorje became part of the *Herceg Bosna* proclaimed by the Croats in 1992. Since various other ethnic groups were seen as an obstacle to an ethnically 'clean' *Herceg Bosna*, crimes of genocide were committed. The political and military leadership of the region maintained close links with Catholic priests. The American sociologist of Croatian descent Stjepan Mestrovic (1993) considered, however, that the central message of the appearance of the Virgin Mary was peace. He also denied that the Croats had been guilty of genocide: in his opinion, Croatian violence since 1991 was a reaction to the expansionist policies of the Serbs.²⁵⁶

The 'Medjugorje phenomenon' reflected a power struggle within the Croatian Catholic Church. The Franciscans had lost much of their influence and power since the introduction of the diocesan hierarchy in the 1960s, and they used the appearance of the Virgin Mary to reinforce their prestige and position among the rural population of Hercegovina. The head of the diocesan hierarchy in Croatia, Cardinal Franjo Kuharic, has never confirmed these visions of Mary, and the Vatican has never recognized Medjugorje as an official Catholic pilgrimage site. The tensions between the Franciscans and the diocesan hierarchy were exacerbated by the fact that Kuharic opposed the division of Bosnia-Hercegovina, in line with the official Vatican standpoint.

The relative freedom of religion in Yugoslavia in the 1970s made it possible for many Muslim clergy to study in centres of Islamic learning abroad. The social prestige of the *imams* and *bodjas* rose, and they began to make open pleas for improvement of the position of the Bosnian Muslims. The contacts with other Islamic countries also led to radicalization of part of the clergy.

The Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic had been seen as an important exponent of Muslim fundamentalism since the early 1970s, when he wrote a political pamphlet entitled *Islamska deklaracija* (Islamic declaration) in which he advocated a worldwide Muslim commonwealth. This had led to his being accused of Muslim nationalism by the Communists and sentenced to a period in prison. The *islamska deklaracija* was regarded as a political manifesto in which Izetbegovic advocated a political system that differed significantly from the known democratic systems. Izetbegovic was not an admirer of the secular Turkish state: in his opinion, the old Islamic Ottoman Empire was one of the most important empires in the world, while modern secular Turkey had become an unimportant Balkan state without any role of significance in European politics.

Mojzes points out that Izetbegovic was certainly no fundamentalist as his political opponents claim. In Mojzes' opinion, the war actually increased the influence of Islam among the Bosnian Muslims. Initially, the vast majority of Bosnians had been fighting for a multicultural, multi-confessional Bosnia, but part of the Bosnian army consisted of fundamentalist units who believed in pan-Muslim ideas. The 3000 members of the Seventh Muslim Brigade wore Islamic symbols and used Arabic as their language of communication.²⁵⁷ The picture of a radicalization of Muslim politics during the war was reinforced by the presence of hundreds of Muslim volunteers from the Arabic world and

²⁵⁵ The Dutch anthropologist Mart Bax described how the Franciscans had been actively preparing children for the visions months before they happened. See M. Bax, *Medjugorje: Religion, Politics and Violence in Rural Bosnia*, (Amsterdam, 1995).

²⁵⁶ S. Mestrovic, *Habits of the Balkan Heart*, (Texas, 1993) 128-129.

²⁵⁷ P. Mojzes, (1997) 5

the military and humanitarian aid Izetbegovic received from Islamic countries. The growing influence of Islam was reflected in the choice of material in the periodicals of the various Muslim organisations, which aired ideas about the unity of the political and religious systems, with Islam being portrayed as superior to all other religions.

Signs of radicalization could also be observed in the politicians. Some Bosnian politicians started to talk about the formation of an Islamic state: they suggested that if the proportion of Muslims in the population of Bosnia could be boosted from the pre-war value of 44% to 51%, this majority would form the basis for the formation of a Muslim state with Islamic laws.²⁵⁸ The ideological foundation for an ethno-national Bosnian state was laid down in a number of manifestos. In 1993, a group of Bosnian intellectuals advocated the formation of a Muslim state within the boundaries controlled by the Bosnian army. While based on Islamic ideology, this state should still possess a system of norms and values that were compatible with European civilization.²⁵⁹ One of Izetbegovic's close collaborators at the time, Rusmir Mahmutcehajic,²⁶⁰ expressed resistance to the idea of the formation of a Muslim republic, however, because this would lead to ghettoization and would make this mini-state a 'closed society' surrounded by suspicious non-Muslim countries. Mahmutcehajic followed the 'cosmopolitan' direction, whose adherents advocated keeping Bosnia multicultural and multi-confessional. Izetbegovic himself vacillated for years between the 'fundamentalist' and 'cosmopolitan' directions, whose followers criticized him in turn for being too 'Islamic' or too 'secular'. In 1993, he stated that the Bosnians had become a political nation, capable of forming their own state. When the Bosnians were at war with the Serbs and the Croats later the same year, however, he was almost prepared to give up the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Acceptance of the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina would inevitably have led to the formation of an Islamic mini-state in central Bosnia. However, American pressure led to an end of the war between the Bosnians and the Croats, and the chance of maintaining Bosnian territorial sovereignty rose steadily. This was confirmed in the Dayton Agreement of 1995. According to Cimic (1997), the motives for the war were not religious but political, despite the use of religious symbols during the war and the significant role played by religious organisations and churches in justifying it.

13. Ideological conflict

Authors who regarded the Yugoslav war as an ideological conflict saw the ideological polarization between the integrative ideology (which held a joint South Slav state to be the ultimate objective) and the nationalist ideology (aiming at separate national states) as the essential feature of the political struggle in the late 1980s and early 1990s.²⁶¹ The history of the South Slav peoples in the 20th century is clearly marked by this polarization: the formation of a joint state in 1918 was followed by the formation of an independent Croatian Nazi satellite and a smaller Serbian state. In 1945, the Communists again founded a unitary state, which in its turn was replaced by five smaller states in the 1990s.

The first phase of the ideological polarization began in the 1980s, and concerned the contrast between communism and nationalism. The Croatian nationalist ideologists regarded the Yugoslav state as a-historical because it conflicted with the historical right of the various peoples involved – and in particular the Croats – to a state of their own. In their eyes, the Yugoslav state was a failure, and they identified Yugoslavia with Serbian hegemony or Communist totalitarianism. Conversely, the Communists regarded Croatian nationalism as dangerous because of the separatist tendencies it encouraged. They therefore suppressed it forcefully. Post-Communist Croatian nationalist ideology was aimed at the formation of an independent Croatian state.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 96.

²⁵⁹ See the manifestos of A. Jahic, *Krjeposna muslimanska drzava* (1993) and M. Ajanovic, *Manifest bosnjacke republike*, (Tuzla, 1995).

²⁶⁰ See R. Majmutcehajic, *Citanje historije i povjerenje u Bosni: kriva politika* (Sarajevo, 1998).

²⁶¹ See I. Banac, 'Fearful Asymmetry of War', *Daedalus* (Spring 1993).

Slovenian nationalism, which was not a significant movement till the 1980s, also tended towards separatism on the basis of the argument that Slovenia would be able to develop much faster, both economically and politically, if it were not slowed down by the other republics, in particular by Serbia. One of the few authors who regarded Slovenia as an essential part of the history of the Yugoslav state was the historian of Slovenian descent Joze Pirjavec.²⁶² Ever since 1918, Slovenia has been the main source of resistance to Serbian policies of domination; and in the 1980s Slovenia was the first Yugoslav republic to declare open opposition to the rise of Serbian nationalism.

The main characteristic of Serb nationalism is usually regarded as a pursuit of 'hegemony'. Milosevic's nationalist policies were initially aimed not at the disintegration of the Yugoslav state but at its centralization under Serbian leadership. In 1990, he annexed Vojvodina and Kosovo. The leadership in Montenegro was also loyal to him, so Serbia could count on four of the eight votes in the federal presidium. Milosevic had never been against Communism, and he made skilful use of the Communist institutions to reinforce his power. As a result, he was the only political leader in the former Yugoslavia on whom the Yugoslav army (JNA) - that had always set itself the task of keeping Yugoslavia intact - could call. After the fall of Communism in 1990 and the victory of the nationalist parties in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, a new kind of ideological polarization arose: nationalism versus nationalism. This conflict first manifested itself in Croatia. The Serb population there, who did not wish to be a minority in a Croatian ethno-national state, rebelled in 1990 and closed off areas which they regarded as Serbian on the basis of ethnic, economic and historical criteria. They did not object to Croatia becoming independent, as long as these regions were excluded. Serbian and Croatian nationalist ideologies were also opposed to one another in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where they made overlapping territorial claims.²⁶³

Nationalist ideologies divide people into 'us' and 'them', 'our nation' and 'the others'. Serb and Croat nationalists saw 'the others' as an obstacle to the formation of their ethno-national states. The violence against 'the others' was used functionally and well-planned, so that the regions which according to the nationalist ideology had to be taken over could be effectively 'cleansed' of 'others'. An important step in the preparation of genocide against the other groups is the dehumanization process, defined as denial of the idea that the members of the other group possess human characteristics. This process is prepared and guided by the political elites, who often mount an intensive media campaign to demonize 'the others'. The media in the former Yugoslavia bear a heavy responsibility for the dehumanization of ethnic and religious groups. Memories of crimes from the Second World War were revived; the Serbs were called "Cetniks", the Croats "Ustase" and the Bosnians "Islamic fundamentalists".

Borislav Herak, a normal Bosnian boy who became a war criminal, recounted a typical example of how the dehumanization process worked. Herak told journalists from the New York Times how he and two companions had shot dead ten members of a Muslim family one sunny morning in late June and mentioned that he could still clearly remember how a young girl, aged about ten, had tried to hide behind her grandmother. The fact that he noticed her illustrates how dehumanisation works. He had not really paid any attention to the other nine members of the family, had not noticed whether they were young or old, male or female: they were simply 'the enemy'. He also told how he had been ordered "to cleanse our whole people of Muslims." He fought on the side of the Bosnian Serbs, though his mother was a Croat and his sister had married a Muslim²⁶⁴.

The initial confusion about the nature of the crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina was cleared up by journalists. The first book describing the crimes against the Bosnian Muslims as genocide was written

²⁶² See J. Pirjavec, *Jugoslavija 1918-1992: nastanek, razvoj ter razpad Karadordeviceve in Titove Jugoslavije* (Ljubljana, 1995).

²⁶³ R. Hayden, 'The Use of National Stereotypes in the Wars in Yugoslavia' in *Vampires Unstaked: National Images, Stereotypes and Myths in East Central Europe*, A. Gerrits and N. Adler (eds.) (Amsterdam 1995) 207-223.

²⁶⁴ *New York Times*, (24. 11. 1992).

by an American journalist, Roy Gutman.²⁶⁵ On the basis of the investigation of genocide in the 20th century, the various authors who dealt with this topic concluded that genocidal crimes are always the result of an intentional, well planned policy: “Indeed, the crimes seem more horrifying when the extermination is carried out, not in blind hatred, but in pursuance of some further purpose, the victims being cast in a purely instrumental role”.²⁶⁶ Several studies identifying nationalist ideology and nationalist political elites as responsible for the genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina appeared after 1993.

The Bosnian historian Husein Serdarevic placed the Serbian and Croatian acts of genocide on Bosnian Muslims in a historical perspective.²⁶⁷ The first genocidal crimes against Muslims were committed after the Peace of Karlovci in 1699, which returned large parts of Croatia to Habsburg rule. About 100,000 Muslims in these regions were murdered, forcibly converted to Christianity or driven out. There was a long history of great intolerance to Muslims in Serbia, and after the First Serbian Uprising in 1804 the Serbs undertook a ‘general clean-up of the Turks’. This was continued after the Second Serbian Uprising in 1815. The measures for expulsion of the Muslim population were intensified during the reign of Milos Obrenovic (1858-1868). The Montenegrins also showed great long-term hostility to the Muslims. The first ‘pogrom’ dated from the early 18th century: 800-1000 Muslims were killed, forcibly converted or driven out from Montenegro in 1711. Mass conversions of the Vasojevic Muslims in various villages took place in 1852, under state supervision. Serdarevic also described the treatment of the Muslim population after the creation of the joint Yugoslav state in 1918, and the land reforms occurring between 1918 and 1941 which were highly unfavourable for the Muslim population. The Bosnian Muslims owned about 62% of the land in Bosnia-Herzegovina privately, but their land was confiscated after 1918 on the basis of the argument that the Ottomans had taken the land away from the Christians in the first place. The Serbs received large tracts of the confiscated land; this brought about major changes in the ethnic and social map of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Radovan Karadzic stated in 1991 that 64% of Bosnian land was in Serb hands. During the Second World War, the Serb extremist forces (Cetniks) carried out four great extermination campaigns in Bosnia, killing about 50 000 Muslims.

It is however striking that the Bosnian Muslims were much milder in their judgement of Croatian crimes on the Muslim population in Central-Bosnia. Atrocities in Ahmici, Busovaca, Vitez, Jelinka and Nadeonik were described, but they were not placed in a historical and sociological context and the word ‘genocide’ was avoided.²⁶⁸

Who actually carried out the acts of genocide in the former Yugoslavia? The Yugoslav Federal Army (JNA) was deployed by the Yugoslav Federal government in June 1991 to guarantee the territorial sovereignty of the federation. However, after the short-lived war with the Slovenian Territorial Defence forces – called a ‘phony war’ by some authors²⁶⁹ – the JNA left Slovenia. Samary (1996) states that, by defending the Yugoslav federation, the JNA was also defending its own status and privileges. The JNA was a pro-Communist, pro-Yugoslav military organization²⁷⁰, which initially wanted to have nothing to do with Milosevic’s nationalist populism. The rise of Croatian nationalism made Milosevic increasingly acceptable to the JNA top brass, however: while Croatia wanted to secede, Milosevic wanted to keep Yugoslavia intact. During the war in Croatia, which began in 1991, it became clear that many individual officers of Serb descent were supporting the Croatian Serbs. After Croatia declared independence, the JNA combined forces with Serb paramilitaries to keep Serb regions outside the Croatian state. The great military superiority of the JNA determined the face of the war. Croatian cities like Vukovar and Dubrovnik were bombarded from a safe distance with heavy artillery in 1991. During the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, there was hardly any difference between professional soldiers

²⁶⁵ Roy Gutman, *Witness to a Genocide*, (New York, 1993).

²⁶⁶ L. Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1981) 87.

²⁶⁷ Husein Serdarevic, ‘Het ontstaan van de Zuid-Slavische nationale staten en de Bosniaken’ in Halilovic (1996) 156.

²⁶⁸ See Halilovic (1996). 156.

²⁶⁹ See Samary (1996) 76-77.

²⁷⁰ See J. Gow, *Legitimacy and Military: the Yugoslav Crisis* (London, 1992).

and paramilitary groups; and when the JNA was formally disbanded in 1992, the former JNA officers went over to the Bosnian Serb Army that had been set up. This army was led by officers who had switched allegiance from Yugoslavia to Serbia. The supreme commander of the army, Ratko Mladic, worked together with paramilitary groups such as 'Arkan's Tigers', the force led by Zeljko Raznjatovic (Arkan). These small bands often consisted of criminals who were not interested in politics and ideology but made use of the war to murder, plunder and get rich. They were accepted in political circles, and their social status rose from criminal to war hero. The local population called them 'special soldiers'.

The paramilitary forces played a vital role in the genocide activities. They were used in particular to commit acts of 'exemplary' violence: intimidation and torture, as savage as possible, to 'encourage' the 'undesired' ethnic group to flee *en masse* from the whole area in question. The usual scenario was that one village was attacked and plundered, women were raped and inhabitants slaughtered, after which the population of the surrounding villages would flee spontaneously. The official army could now occupy the area without any trouble. The Serb paramilitary organisations fought alongside the official army in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, but did not fall under the command structure of the army; instead, they answered directly to the Serbian ministry of Internal Affairs.²⁷¹

Another type of violence was committed by the victims' former neighbours and acquaintances. The Dutch anthropologist Mart Bax coined the term 'private violence' for this. According to Bax, it results from the local religious, economic and social conditions, often involving blood feuds and vendettas continuing from generation to generation. Bax states that the Medjugorje region (where he had been carrying out his studies), had been plagued by a 'little war' that had been going on at local level for centuries. From time to time in the past, this 'little war' had merged in ideological harmony with a greater war (e.g. the Second World War): each ethnic group that possessed political power suppressed the other. Under the Ustase regime, the local Croats were guilty of genocide against the Serbian population; during the Communist era, the Serbs were more powerful and they persecuted the Croats because of their Ustase past. In 1991, Medjugorje formed part of the Croat-dominated region of *Herzeg-Bosna* and the Serb population was intimidated and forced to leave. The motives for the conflicts were usually of a social or economic nature: the biggest house, the most fertile soil. Once more, the context of the 'great war' in Bosnia-Herzegovina was used to serve the purposes of the local 'little war'.²⁷²

Another Dutch anthropologist, Mattijs van de Port, has described the power of memories of crimes from the Second World War, in the case of the inhabitants of the multi-ethnic city of Novi Sad. These memories were revived in 1991, and influenced the attitude of the various ethnic groups in the city.²⁷³

14. Political conflict

Yugoslav society was subject to major economic, ethnic, religious and ideological tensions during the various wars it has been subjected to in the course of the 20th century. The economic and the political crisis in Communist Yugoslavia laid the foundation for the rise of radical ideological movements. In the opinion of Cimic (1997), the main factor uniting all aspects of the crisis is the absence of democracy. He believes further that despite all the problems involved, war would never have been invoked as the means of resolving all the conflicts without the fatal principle "all citizens of a nation have to live in a single state". This principle provided the motive, the objective and the means for the war.²⁷⁴

Looking back on the above detailed discussion of the nature of the Yugoslav conflict, it may be concluded that while all aspects are important, the best way of describing the conflict is as a political

²⁷¹ See Cigar (1996).

²⁷² See Bax (1995).

²⁷³ See M. van de Port, *Gypsies* (1998).

²⁷⁴ Cimic (1997) 133.

one – a conflict about power and control between political elites who resort to violence when the political struggle involving other means does not yield the desired resolution. The struggle was carried out by political parties who had come to power in free elections and who could thus conceal themselves behind the façade of democratic legitimacy. The populist character of the power struggle between various ethno-religious groups was largely the result of manipulation by political and intellectual elites whose objective was to set the different ethno-religious groups against one another. The use of violence to continue the political struggle had a single objective: victory, so that the victorious party can determine who gets what. Gow spoke of a ‘clash of state projects’ in this connection: one state has ceased to exist, and its successors are competing for the best possible boundaries within the space that has become vacant.

The Dayton Agreement brought peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina after more than three years of war. It was a compromise that was accepted by all parties to the conflict under pressure from the international community. But five years post-Dayton, the Bosnian state is still not functioning as a political entity and polarization into three opposing political camps is still present despite the efforts of the international community. It would seem that the Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat political elites have still not given up all hope of realizing their territorial objectives.

Appendix VII

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Resupply by air

1. Introduction

As mentioned in various places in this report, shortages of all sorts of supplies started to arise in the three enclaves in Eastern Bosnia: Zepa, Gorazde and Srebrenica. These problems were due to the fact that the Bosnian Serbs were increasingly refusing to let convoys through to the eastern enclaves. This concerned both humanitarian convoys for the population as well as food and fuel convoys for UNPROFOR. As for Dutchbat III in Srebrenica, it was mainly the shortage of fuel that became increasingly problematic.

This appendix focuses on one specific question: if convoys could no longer reach the Srebrenica enclave by road, then why was the enclave not resupplied by air? This could have been done in various ways: for instance, by dropping supplies from planes (air drops) or by getting helicopters with supplies to land in the enclave. Despite these options, no supplies were ever brought in by air during Dutchbat III's presence in the Srebrenica enclave. This appendix looks at the reasons why.

To understand why resupply by air never actually took place, we must bear the command structure of the UN in the former Yugoslavia firmly in mind. As discussed more extensively in the main report, this consisted of four levels: Dutchbat III in Srebrenica; above that came Sector North East in Tuzla; next came Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo (with General Rupert Smith as the most important player in 1995); and finally, at the highest level, UNPF in Zagreb (with General Janvier and Akashi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN, as the most important players in 1995). To gain a proper understanding of the problem, it is furthermore necessary to remember that the UN headquarters in New York (with Kofi Annan, the then Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, as the most important player), the southern NATO command in the Italian city of Naples (Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTH) with Admiral Leighton Smith as the most important player (known as CINCSOUTH in military terms)), and senior military officers and envoys and politicians in the various NATO member states and other troop-contributing nations also played a part.

Battalion Commander Karremans was one of those who saw resupply by air as a simple, practical and feasible option. British Joint Commission Officers (JCOs) who had been attached to Dutchbat had pointed this option out to him early in June 1995. The idea was to drop containers over the enclave with the aid of parachutes controlled from the ground. Karremans decided it was worth sending a message about this option to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo and to the Ministry of Defence in The Hague. Karremans was under the impression that this message never got across to the authorities in question.¹ Even so, resupply by air was a subject that had been on the agenda at many levels for a considerable period of time, though Dutchbat III was largely unaware of this.

The supply problem had in fact already existed before Dutchbat III arrived in the enclave; Minister Voorhoeve spoke of 'convoy terrorization' perpetrated by Bosnian Serbs against Dutchbat.² Dutchbat II had already been deprived of supplies for long periods of time. The option of parachute-assisted air drops to provide UN personnel and the population with supplies was an idea that had also been mentioned then. There were a few temporary interruptions in that 'terrorization' and this gave the battalions some respite – however briefly – but the subject never disappeared from the various agendas.

Resupply was for instance on the agenda of the meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the NATO member states and other troop-contributing nations in The Hague on 19 and 20 December 1994 (see part II of this report). The twofold objective formulated in this context was: to resupply the UNPROFOR troops and to continue the humanitarian aid to the population. The Chiefs of Defence Staff concluded that UN commanders (in consultation with NATO) needed to work out plans for

¹ Karremans, *Srebrenica. Who Cares?*, p. 147.

² Voorhoeve's Diary, p. 58.

aerial resupply operations with the greatest possible urgency. These plans were to take account of the risks, the consequences for UNPROFOR as a whole and the required resources, while also outlining the Rules of Engagement for the operation. In addition, the need for political support by the troop-contributing nations was emphasized.³

A working group under the direction of Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Major General A.P.P.M. van Baal, immediately took up the task of formulating an outline plan. Their basic starting point was that a plan should be activated if supplies had not been allowed through for a period of thirty days and there was no prospect of any improvement; emergency supplies were sufficient to bridge a period of thirty days at maximum. The results that the working group presented were based on maintaining maximum safety, and for this reason the planning of such an operation would offer little prospect of actual execution.

Srebrenica could only be reached by land with a mechanized brigade; a resupply operation with helicopters was only possible if there was an adequately protected landing zone and that would take six to eight battalions per Safe Area. Neither personnel nor equipment were available in such numbers and, moreover, both options would probably require a new mandate from the Security Council.⁴

After the meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff, the British promised to look into whether they could contribute transport helicopters to UNPROFOR.⁵ The United States would contact Paris about an emergency resupply plan for the enclaves.⁶ Shortly afterwards the British Chief of Defence Staff, Sir Peter Inge, informed his Dutch colleague Van den Breemen that a land corridor or an airlift needed to be established. According to Inge, UNPROFOR was the organization best equipped to undertake this task.⁷

2. Working out the options at Sector North East in Tuzla

Even before the Chiefs of Defence Staff started to address the resupply problem, the Staff of Sector North East in Tuzla was already actively seeking ways of improving the resupply efforts. If resupply by land was no longer possible, then resupply by air might be a viable alternative. The underlying idea was that unless the situation improved, the population could get restless. The discord between the original population of Srebrenica and the Displaced Persons in the enclave would be aggravated and the Displaced Persons would be the first to suffer hunger. Their despair and fury would then be vented on the UN and the Bosnian government could try to make political capital out of this.

Consultation with the higher levels in Sarajevo and Zagreb would remain necessary. Sector North East realized that resupply by air would be complicated, which was why the opportunities for resuming resupply by road had to be explored. One snag was that this would necessitate negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs to persuade them to let convoys through. An offer of humanitarian aid to hospitals in Bosnian Serb territory (in Zvornik and Bratunac), which were also in dire need of supplies, might possibly win the Bosnian Serbs over. Earlier, the 'fuel for passage' concept had worked well in Sarajevo. Other possible bargaining counters were supplies of salt, repairing a road at Bratunac and an agreement about the use of the southern road past Srebrenica. While awaiting further events, the Staff in Tuzla already started to work out a negotiating plan with the Bosnian Serb General Zivanovic, the commander of the Drina Corps.⁸

³ MARSTAF, No. S30859. Memo CDS to BDZ, BLS, BDL, CKMAR, 10[?]/01/95, No. S95/061/116.

⁴ DCBC, 1681. 'Working Group on an Emergency Re-Supply Plan for Sarajevo and the Enclaves', Draft, Confi, undated [12/94].

⁵ DS, S95/061/196. Appendix 2 (Code Biegman 020, 10/01/95) to memo DS No. S95/061/196, 13/01/95.

⁶ DS, S95/061/196. Appendix 2 (Code Biegman 020, 10/01/95) to memo DS No. S95/061/196, 13/01/95.

⁷ DS, No. SN 95/890/399. Chief of Defence Staff Field Marshall Sir Peter Inge to General H.G.B. van den Breemen, 09/01/95, Archive.

⁸ UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 193, File SNE Tuzla, 23/05/95-15/10/95. HQ Sector NE to HQ BHC, 07/12/94 No. 3402-1.

The Staff of Sector North East arrived at four resupply options, each of which had its own complications. These illustrate why resupply by air turned out to be not so simple in practice.

The first possibility was air drops. Air drops had already been used with a reasonable degree of success to provide humanitarian aid, but fuel had not been dropped before and it was uncertain whether this was possible. Before air drops could be carried out, several problems remained to be resolved. One of these concerned the altitude from which the drops should take place. Low altitude had the advantage of greater accuracy (Dutchbat II had been in favour of this for that reason) but entailed the disadvantage of exposing the aircraft to the Bosnian Serb air defences (which was why AFSOUTH, NATO southern command, was against this option)⁹. The higher the altitude, the less accurate the drops would be, thereby also increasing the risk of Dutchbat coming into conflict with the population or the local mafia in their efforts to secure the supplies.

A second option was the use of transport helicopters. The main problem with this option was that UNPROFOR had no such helicopters at its disposal and would therefore have to rely on an individual country to provide these. It was by no means certain that any country would be found willing to do this. And even if helicopters were made available, there were still restrictions attached to their use. The visibility, for instance, would have to be good enough. Moreover, from a geographical perspective the Srebrenica enclave offered few landing opportunities for larger helicopters. Another drawback was that the helicopters would not be able to transport large quantities of fuel. Finally, here too, there was the problem that the Bosnian Serbs might not be automatically willing to accept such transports, for the same reason that they refused to allow convoys by road. This could be solved by bypassing the customary practice of informing the Bosnian Serbs in advance and letting them inspect the cargo, but in that case active protection from NATO aircraft would be required (involving the use of flying radar stations - AWACS – and fighters to provide Close Air Support and suppress air defences). Whether NATO would be prepared to risk aircraft for this purpose remained to be seen.

A third option was to force a breakthrough by road from Tuzla with support from the air. Tanks, armoured vehicles, mine disposal teams and Forward Air Controllers (to guide the pilots to their target) would be necessary in this case. The Scandinavian units in Tuzla had these resources but whether their governments would be prepared to authorize their deployment was by no means certain. Moreover, active support from NATO would again be necessary. Another problem was that the Dutchbat troops could be taken hostage relatively easily. The presence of the media could be harnessed as an extra weapon. The prevailing idea at Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo was that firmness and resolution had to be shown to put the Bosnian Serbs in their place. According to the UN command in Sarajevo, this operation was compatible with the existing Rules of Engagement.

A fourth option was not to resupply by air but to organize an overland supply route through Serbia via the bridge over the Drina at Bratunac. Dutchbat would then have to secure and protect the route to Srebrenica but this option was hardly realistic in view of the expected conflicts with the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁰

3. Earlier problems with resupply by air

'Resupply by air' was also on the agenda of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UNHCR. This organization had already requested resupply by air in October 1994 for the Safe Area of Bihac. Then too, the main problem was that Admiral Leighton Smith was unwilling to approve the deployment of NATO aircraft as these would be exposed to surface-to-air missiles of Bosnian Serbs around Bihac. Food drops could only go ahead if escorting aircraft were allowed to suppress the air defences. And NATO was only permitted to suppress air defences upon a request from the UN in

⁹ DS. Memo CDS to the Minister, 23/12/94, No. S/94/061/4497.

¹⁰ UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 193, File SNE Tuzla, 23/05/95-15/10/95. Chief G2/G3 to Chief G3 HQ BHC, Srebrenica – Options, 04/12/94, No. SREB009.

New York. The UN, however, was not prepared to make such a request for fear of escalation and retaliation on the ground if NATO aircraft were detected by Bosnian Serb radar and immediately responded with strikes against Bosnian Serb positions.¹¹ This was by no means the only time that support would be sought from the UN in New York to enable resupply by air.

In February 1995 the situation in Bihac was once again at the centre of attention.¹² The Netherlands also played a role in the question as to whether air drops should be carried out over Bihac after UNHCR had reported that an emergency situation had arisen and had made an urgent appeal to the Western countries for assistance. Minister Voorhoeve mooted the idea that the NATO countries involved should inform the warring factions that drops were to be carried out on a particular day. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed the Permanent Representatives at NATO and the UN to gauge the level of support within the UN for authorizing such air drops. One practical point was that virtually all aircraft to be deployed in this mission were American.¹³ (The C-130 aircraft that the Dutch had recently acquired were not yet operational.) The Americans would only be prepared to carry out such an operation according to their own rules and these conflicted with the existing procedures under which the UN and NATO carried the joint responsibility for such operations.

A further complicating factor was that four parties were involved in the hostilities in Bihac; if any aircraft came under fire, it would be difficult to establish which party was to blame. And there was the problem already touched upon in relation to air drops: the aircraft would have to fly at very low altitude because the dropping zones in Bihac were very small.¹⁴

In the specific case of Bihac other concerns cropped up later and ultimately resupply by air never took place. The Croatian President Tudjman had announced that the UNPROFOR mandate in Croatia would not be extended after 31 March 1995. This decision could also have negative consequences for Bosnia-Herzegovina. On top of this, the truce in Bosnia was due to expire at the end of April and the US Congress was in the process of determining its standpoint concerning the arms embargo against Bosnia.¹⁵ All these matters could re-ignite the hostilities and put a further damper on the plans to resupply by air.

Until 18 February 1995 the Bosnian Serbs had allowed Dutchbat to receive fuel supplies with intervals of about one week. Thereafter, they regulated the supplies either by blocking convoys or by means of bureaucratic obstructionism: permission for a convoy had to be requested 48 hours in advance. If the Bosnian Serbs refused to honour the request, the procedure had to be started up again. It was not possible to request permission for several days.¹⁶ The problems afflicting UNPROFOR supplies concerned all eastern enclaves incidentally.

UNHCR convoys with food and fuel for the population were intermittently allowed through by the Bosnian Serbs but fuel convoys for UNPROFOR were systematically blocked. Dutchbat later benefited from the fuel brought in by the UNHCR convoys: in March General Smith agreed with the UNHCR that UNPROFOR could make use of (38m³ of) the UNHCR fuel supplies stored in the eastern enclaves if their own supplies ran out. Commanders and local UNHCR representatives were to work out the details amongst themselves. This agreement was not to be made public and was only intended to cover UNPROFOR's minimum needs. Smith wanted to leave the Bosnian Serbs under the delusion that their 'sanctions' were having effect.¹⁷

The possibility of smuggling in supplies when leave-takers returned to the enclave was rejected by the Chief of Defence Staff. It would only have a counterproductive effect. After all, if the Bosnian

¹¹ DCBC, 377. Memo PCDS to the Minister, 10/02/95, No. S/95/061/598.

¹² For plans for helicopter operations in Bihac, see the OP Order 36/94 (UNNY, UNPROFOR Box 87295, Office of the FC, 30/10/95-25/10/95) signed General de Lapresle on 11/02/95.

¹³ This applied to all aircraft whose task was the *Suppression of Enemy Air Defences* (SEAD) as well as the transport aircraft.

¹⁴ DCBC, 383. Memo CDS to the Minister, 16/02095, No. S/95/061/696.

¹⁵ TK, 1994-1995, 22 181, No. 90 (10/02/95).

¹⁶ DCBC, 402. Memo CDS to the Minister, 08/03/95, No. S/95/061/1013.

¹⁷ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Commander BHC Directive 1/95, 15/03/95. Confi.

Serbs found out they might also start blocking convoys of leave-takers.¹⁸ As it happened, the Bosnian Serbs were to do this anyway at a later stage.

Medical supplies presented a big problem. Efforts on the part of UNHCR to send medical supplies along with the convoys failed. The International Red Cross and *Médecins Sans Frontières* deliberated on how to tackle the situation in the eastern enclaves. This problem was also discussed only sporadically and only after the exertion of considerable pressure. This pressure was brought to bear when the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Yasushi Akashi, took an interest in the problem. He sent the President of the Republika Srpska, Radovan Karadzic, a letter outlining the serious shortage of medical supplies in the eastern enclaves. Since November 1994 supplies had been consistently refused and after 19 January blockades had been thrown up to stop most medical convoys. Akashi pointed out to Karadzic that under Resolution 771 (from 1992) all parties were bound to comply with the Geneva Conventions. He made an urgent appeal to Karadzic to issue instructions in order to permit the resumption of medical re-supplies. Failing this, Akashi would find himself compelled to put the matter to the Security Council.¹⁹ Following this pressure from UNPROFOR, a UNHCR convoy which included medical supplies was allowed through by the Bosnian Serbs on 5 March.²⁰

Karremans meanwhile expressed his concerns to the Commander of Sector North East in Tuzla. He requested air drops unless the situation improved. Air drops remained an option, but not much more than that. The stumbling block was still that NATO wanted to knock out the Bosnian Serb air defences first (which obviously entailed substantial risks).²¹ And, as before in the case of Bihac, there was the added problem that NATO felt it needed the UN's political support for such an operation. Within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the UN, the alternative of high-altitude air drops had been mentioned but soon dismissed on account of the rough terrain, the small area in which the supplies were to be dropped and the fear that dropped supplies might fall into the wrong hands. In addition, the UN also feared that such operations might infuriate the Bosnian Serbs and cause the existing contacts with the VRS (Bosnian Serb Army) to be broken off.²²

4. Sarajevo intervenes

In Sarajevo the Commander of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Lieutenant General R.A. Smith (not to be confused with the commander of the southern NATO command, CINCSOUTH Admiral Leighton Smith), played an active role in the efforts to restart the flow of supplies. When Smith met Mladic upon the latter's invitation on 5 March in Pale, the discussion largely revolved around the problem of resupplying the enclaves.

Mladic, for his part, complained about the sanctions imposed on the Bosnian Serbs. He tried to elicit a condemnation of the sanctions from Smith and asked him to have a report drawn up by the humanitarian organizations. His aim in this connection was to secure an equal distribution of the aid between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs. Mladic demanded - and was to do so repeatedly - that for every UNHCR convoy that went to the enclaves, one convoy would go to the Bosnian Serbs. Mladic also suggested that UNPROFOR would buy supplies for its own use in Bosnian Serb territory. Unless his demands were met by 15 March, he would impose blockades against all enclaves. Another suggestion made by Mladic was that Smith would make sure that each convoy would include two vehicles with fuel and that Smith would allow Mladic to have one of these. The meeting produced no

¹⁸ DCBC, 405. Memo CDS to the Minister, 09/03/95, No. S95/061/1034.

¹⁹ UNGE, UNHCR, Bijleveld files. Code Cable Annan to Gharakan, 04/03/95, No. Z-359.

²⁰ DCBC, 402. Memo CDS to the Minister, 08/03/95, No. S/95/061/1013.

²¹ UNHCR Briefing 01/03/95. From private source.

²² Interview Manfred Eisele, 14/10/99.

tangible result other than an arrangement to meet again on 7 March in Vlasenica after Smith had returned from a visit to Srebrenica.²³

This second meeting on 7 March was largely a repeat of the meeting in Pale two days earlier. Mladic made no further mention of sanctions or the deadline for meeting the Bosnian Serb demands, but he did explain that the reason for not allowing any future convoys through was that he was expecting the military forces of the ABiH (the army of the Bosnian Muslims) to launch an attack from Tuzla in the direction of Srebrenica and Zepa and from Trnovo in the direction of Gorazde in an attempt to create a corridor to the eastern enclaves. Fears of such an attack had made him decide to restrict the amount of food, medicines and fuel going to the enclaves.²⁴ More in general, the obstruction of the convoys remained a Bosnian Serb reaction to the economic sanctions and the closure of the border between Serbia and the Republika Srpska.²⁵

Smith was fully aware of the seriousness of the supply problem during these talks. He knew that Dutchbat and *Médecins Sans Frontières* had run out of supplies. Smith was determined to resupply the enclaves by air if overland convoys were not allowed through. He informed Mladic of his intention.²⁶ Smith was not bluffing either; he emphatically wanted to put himself on the map as the UN commander in Bosnia, and this was his first opportunity. During his meeting with Mladic on 5 March he had already said that a blockade of the Bosnian Serbs would result in resupply by helicopter with NATO involvement. Mladic was in a position to know that preparations had been made and that the plans had been rehearsed on 4 and 5 March. The helicopters were ready for action at Split airport.²⁷ Smith's plan was to use Ukrainian civilian Mi-26 transport helicopters supported by British Lynx Helicopters armed with anti-tank missiles. Transport helicopters alone would not be sufficient; other helicopters were necessary to protect the transportation. Smith had planned the safety measures surrounding the operation in consultation with the Staff of the NATO's Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force (5ATAF) in Vincenza.²⁸ One positive factor in this operation was that the threat of the radar-guided air defences of the Bosnian Serbs posed no real problem in the mountainous area between Tuzla and Srebrenica.²⁹

The governments of the United Kingdom, Norway and France, which were to provide the helicopters for the operation, had agreed. Smith had discussed the matter in person with the British Chief of Defence Staff, Sir Peter Inge, who had given him the green light as far as the use of British military resources was concerned.³⁰ Because a convoy had been let through on 5 March (also after Smith had exerted pressure on Mladic, and Akashi on Karadzic), the need for resupply by air had become a little less urgent, but the pressure would soon build up again if no further convoys were allowed through. Smith was in the advanced stages of setting up a resupply operation by air but had not yet obtained permission from New York. Within the UN hierarchy, it was the responsibility of the headquarters in Zagreb to pass that request on to New York.

As things turned out, obtaining permission from New York for a resupply operation with helicopters as envisaged by Smith was a problem. Minister Voorhoeve found this out for himself when he, together with Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen, spoke with Undersecretary-General Kofi Annan on 17 March in New York. On that occasion Voorhoeve requested that Dutchbat be resupplied

²³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan 06/03/95, No. Z-363, with attached notes of a meeting held between Gen Smith and Gen Mladic, 06/03/95, Ref. 8594.

²⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 08/03/95, No. Z-377, with attached Summary Meeting Gen Smith and Gen Mladic 07/03/95, Ref 8594. This account outlining Mladic's intentions reached the Netherlands with Fax BHC Fwd Sarajevo to DOKL09/03/95, Outgoing fax 122/95. UNGE, UNPROFOR Box 215, File BHC95 07/03/95-14/03/95

²⁵ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Commander BHC Directive 1/95, 15/03/95, Confi.

²⁶ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

²⁷ See also Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force*, p. 48.

²⁸ DCBC, 405. Memo CDS to the Minister, 09/03/95, No. S95/061/1034.

²⁹ See also Ripley, *Operation Deliberate Force*, p. 48.

³⁰ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00

with the aid of helicopters, with an armed air escort if necessary. This was precisely what Smith was organizing at the time. Kofi Annan's response was that this option 'would be actively pursued'. The military adviser to the UN Secretary-General, the Canadian General Baril, added that this concept – discussed in December during the first conference of Chiefs of Defence Staff in The Hague – was still being emphatically considered.³¹ These were reassuring and optimistic noises from the UN top, which however would never come to anything.

Encouraged by his visit to New York, Voorhoeve reassured Parliament that if the food supplies to the Dutch soldiers were in danger, then air drops or helicopter flights would be carried out, either with or without permission from the Bosnian Serbs.³² But, as it later transpired, it was really impossible to make this claim with such certainty at the time. Plans for air drops had not yet been worked out in detail in early March, the main problem still being that the lack of precision of these air drops meant that the supplies might end up in the hands of the Muslim population instead of reaching the units. That would be very hard to swallow for the Bosnian Serbs who might then use their air defences against the aircraft or helicopters to prevent any further drops. This, in turn, could trigger an air war aimed at the destruction of the Bosnian Serb air defences.³³

Meanwhile Smith stuck to his plan to deploy helicopters if the Bosnian Serbs continued to deny UNPROFOR access to supplies by land. This resupply by air would be announced beforehand and also in the media. Smith deliberately wanted to manoeuvre the VRS into a position where they would be challenged to use force. Smith had prepared plans for resupply using helicopters with NATO air support. The concept needed to be perfected further but what it also needed, above all, was the support of the will of the international community to carry it out.³⁴

Smith saw a comparison with the airlift to Berlin in 1948. His prime concern was to give a convincing display of willpower, and to demonstrate that if the VRS refused permission to fly over Bosnian Serb territory, then the flights would take place without their permission. The VRS and Mladic in particular were to be taken down a peg or two, but without provoking war and jeopardising the mission. It had to be made clear to the VRS that there was a credible capability to resupply the enclave, and Smith wanted to use this to his advantage in the negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs. The execution of the operation had to be timed to perfection, which could mean the enclaves suffering temporary shortages. That too was a test of national and international willpower. Smith had even taken into account that if the VRS succumbed to this pressure and allowed overland convoys after all, it might have one of these convoys ambushed and robbed by its own 'bandits' to test the strength of the national and international willpower.

Smith subsequently wanted the plans to be worked out in greater detail, but in view of the nature of the operation he felt that this was really a task for the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb. He had discussed the outlines of his plan with General Janvier, and had entrusted the further detailing to the Chief of Staff in Zagreb, Brigadier General Denaro.³⁵

At the end of March Smith spoke both with the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb and with the NATO Staff of AFSOUTH in Naples about the issue of resupplying the eastern enclaves. From these talks it emerged that General Janvier had certain reservations. Janvier did not want a resupply operation to be exclusively left to Sarajevo, but actually thought it was mainly Zagreb's affair. Furthermore, he did not yet see eye to eye with Smith as regards the possibilities for carrying out such an operation. Janvier foresaw a conflict with the Rules of Engagement and therefore concluded that any decision on deployment should be taken at the highest level: by the UN in New York.³⁶

³¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 17/03/95, No. 879.

³² TK, 1994-1995, 22 181, No. 92 (23/03/95).

³³ DCBC, 405. Memo CDS to the Minister, 09/03/95, No. S95/061/1034.

³⁴ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Commander BHC Directive 1/95, 15/03/95. Confi.

³⁵ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Smith to COS HQ UNPROFOR, Brig Gen Denaro, 15/03/95, Confi.

³⁶ NIOD, Coll. De Ruiter. Diary of Lieutenant Colonel De Ruiter, 31/03/95.

At the same time Smith forged ahead with the organization of a resupply operation by air. His preference was for a daytime operation, which was possibly less safe but technically less complicated. A daytime operation would also make it easier to establish who had fired on the helicopters if there were any shooting incidents. Meanwhile Smith continued to lobby for three heavy-duty Chinook transport helicopters at the British headquarters for operations in the former Yugoslavia (the *Joint Headquarters* in Salisbury). Fall-back options also formed part of his plans: if the Chinook helicopters were not released, Smith still wanted to press ahead with the execution of his plan. The French were now considering sending four extra Puma transport helicopters. Smith emphasized to the British national headquarters that – judging by his earlier experiences with Mladic - the threat of resupply by air might already be sufficient to obtain some freedom of movement and it was this freedom of movement that it was all about: as soon as that was guaranteed, there was no further need to deploy helicopters as resupply operations could then be resumed by road.

Smith also stressed that in view of the seriousness of the situation, there was ample reason to proceed with the operation without delay. He also underlined that this was not to be a one-off operation. The UN, NATO and the participating countries had to be prepared to sustain the operation over a longer period of time. The troop-contributing nations had not yet been approached about the plans of the operation that Smith had planned for early March (but which was not necessary because a convoy was allowed through after all). The United Kingdom, France and Norway had expressed their willingness to take part in the operation. The Norwegians did insist that any subsequent operation could only take place with full NATO support; so far, Smith had only had informal contact with that organization. Smith had gathered from these contacts that NATO embraced his concept wholeheartedly, but as yet no formal requests had been made to NATO, which had therefore not yet formally agreed to the operation.³⁷

5. Smith seeks permission at top level

Meanwhile, however, it had become clear that NATO's thoughts about the operation were actually different from those of General Smith. His namesake at NATO, Admiral Smith, was eager to ensure that the NATO aircraft ran as little risk as possible and therefore insisted on pre-emptive strikes to suppress the air defences of the VRS. General Smith saw no need for this, arguing that the Bosnian Serbs would consider this a hostile act.

Smith had in the meantime informed the British headquarters that Janvier had agreed 'in principle' to the plans but had not yet approached Akashi about the matter. Smith's expectation however was that Akashi would support the plans provided that the troop-contributing nations also endorsed the operation. He emphasized, however, that the UN headquarters in New York would also have to support the operation.³⁸

General Janvier, for his part, was trying to form a clear idea as to whether the operation as envisaged by Smith stood any chance of success. Janvier asked the UN in New York to arrange with the British that they would provide the Chinook helicopters, as Smith had in fact already requested. Janvier pointed out that the British had already offered these helicopters during the meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff at The Hague in December 1994. At the time, the UN had contracted two Ukrainian civilian Mi-26 transport helicopters, but UNPROFOR could not do much with these.

At the same time Janvier explained to New York that it would be ideal to have the Bosnian Serbs' permission for the flights but that in an emergency it would possibly be sufficient to merely give the Bosnian Serbs notification of the flights.³⁹ The UN headquarters in New York replied that the British were indeed prepared to send Chinook helicopters immediately if this was necessary.⁴⁰

³⁷ CRST. HQ BH Command to JHQ Salisbury, 312030B Mar 95, UN Conf.

³⁸ CRST. HQ BH Command to JHQ Salisbury, 312030B Mar 95, UN Conf.

³⁹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan for Baril, 21/03/95, No. Z-455.

⁴⁰ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Baril to Akashi, 29/03/95, No. 987.

Smith also spoke to the visiting Dutch Chief of Defence Staff, Van den Breemen, about his plans for resupplying by helicopter. According to Smith, the plan might become topical 'sooner' than expected on account of all sorts of strategic developments. Van den Breemen took measures: he asked Battalion Commander Karremans to give his criteria for determining when the aerial resupply plan should be activated. Van den Breemen also realized that the Netherlands needed to make a timely decision about its standpoint in the international context concerning the question when the plan should be put into effect.⁴¹

On 4 April Smith again discussed his plan with the staff in Zagreb. This sparked a conflict between Smith and Janvier 'about being forceful' in relation to the deployment of helicopters and the air force for resupplying the enclaves. According to Smith it was the only time that Janvier and he had really disagreed. Smith asserted that at a certain point the 'young firebrands' in Zagreb even turned against Janvier because they agreed with Smith: force had to be used. Janvier was opposed to this.⁴²

When he presented the strategic situation in Bosnia to Janvier and Akashi, Smith argued that there were four options for tackling the deteriorating logistical situation in the enclaves. The first option was: agree to the Bosnian Serbs' demand that they should get half of the humanitarian aid. The second option was to fight a way into the enclaves with a convoy. Both these options however fell outside his mandate: it was the UNHCR and not Smith who was to decide where food and medical supplies should go. For this reason, Smith was not free to consider these options. The third option was to continue negotiating with the Bosnian Serbs and accept that UNPROFOR had been taken hostage in the eastern enclaves, which would mean that UNPROFOR was no longer effective there. The fourth and last option was Smith's 'helicopter plan'. This required transport helicopters and helicopters to provide protection, while NATO aircraft would be kept in reserve in case the Bosnian Serbs were to fire at the helicopters. If this option was accepted, Smith wanted absolute assurances that the helicopter-contributing nations accepted the risk of losing these helicopters; that these countries were prepared to support NATO air strikes if necessary; and that they were prepared to accept a widening of the conflict. If any of these three conditions was not satisfied, Smith would abandon this option.⁴³

6. Plans are refined further in Zagreb

Janvier's staff in Zagreb subsequently worked out Smith's plans in greater detail. The detailed plan was unveiled on 9 April. In Zagreb too resupply by helicopter was preferred to air drops. The latter option was no longer considered.

The plan to resupply by helicopter was intended for the three eastern enclaves: Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde. One essential thing, incidentally, was to give advance warning to the VRS (and also the Bosnian Muslim Army for that matter) that any attack on the helicopters could result in an armed conflict with NATO. UNPROFOR was to carry out the plan with determination and be prepared to accept losses. The condition that the troop- and helicopter-contributing nations had to endorse the plan was reiterated. NATO was capable of suppressing the radar-guided air defences of the VRS, but the biggest threat came from heat-seeking missiles, anti-aircraft artillery and gun fire. These risks could be reduced by carrying out the operation by night, which Smith had opposed.

The involvement of land forces was indispensable, even if only to take action in the event of incidents or to protect helicopters on the ground. The endurance of the helicopters entailed that the operation had to be launched from Central Bosnia from where an enclave could be reached, via a corridor, with NATO aircraft and armed helicopters escorting the transport helicopters. Such protection was a minimum condition for winning the consent of the troop-contributing nations. The best way of implementing the plan depended on how the VRS reacted to a request for permission to

⁴¹ CRST, CRST/2191. Travel report CDS visit to the former Yugoslavia [31 March – 4 April 1995], without number.

⁴² Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/00.

⁴³ NIOD, Coll. Smith. BHC Situation Report signed Lt Gen R.A. Smith, 05/04/95.

carry out these helicopter flights. The VRS would undoubtedly refuse permission, but the reaction of the VRS when they were subsequently told in reply that the flights would be carried out anyway was by no means certain. They might threaten to attack the helicopters, but they might also ‘merely’ answer that the safety of the flights could not be guaranteed.⁴⁴

The deployment of armed UN helicopters to protect the transport helicopters was a particular problem. It was not certain that the risks to the transport helicopters warranted the use of armed helicopters, while the deployment of armed helicopters might endanger routine helicopter flights. This risk had to be set off against the short-term gain of supplying the eastern enclaves.

The plan was that the Mi-26 helicopters would supply Srebrenica and Gorazde simultaneously. Smaller helicopters would then be able to resupply the smaller garrison in Zepa. An Mi-26 helicopter could carry a maximum load of twenty tons from Central Bosnia, but a load of ten tons would increase the flying range and permit the use of other starting points and corridors.

An alternative plan would have to be followed if the VRS posed a significant threat: in that case the Mi-26 helicopters could not be used and the operation would have to be carried out with military transport helicopters such as the French Puma and the British Seaking. These would then need to be escorted by armed helicopters: the Lynx, Gazelle and Arapaho. The drawback of these military transport helicopters was that their smaller capacity necessitated the additional deployment of the earlier-mentioned British Chinook transport helicopters, particularly if the operation was to be sustained for an extended period of time.

If the Bosnian Serbs attacked the helicopters, a rapid reaction would be essential. The authority to deploy Close Air Support therefore had to be transferred to the Commander of UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, General Smith. In that case the NATO aircraft would interpret the right to self-defence in a broad sense. From a safety point of view it would be wiser to eliminate the air defences of the VRS beforehand, but this option did not seem viable as it contravened one of the principles of the operation, namely that the VRS would only be attacked if it dealt the first blow.⁴⁵ As for the further discussions about the decision-making surrounding the deployment of NATO’s Air Force, reference is made to Chapter 3, Part III.

7. What will the VRS do?

The detailed plan for a resupply operation by air was signed by General Janvier on 9 April. Certain complications remained on account of the uncertainties regarding the reaction of the VRS. For if the operation went ahead, the VRS could carry out all sorts of counteractions. For this reason, a long list of foreseeable reactions of the VRS was attached to the plan. It was however also conceivable that the VRS would not dare to take any action against the helicopters for fear of NATO intervention. But it did seem likely that the longer the resupply operation by air lasted, the more aggressive the Bosnian Serb reaction would become.

Remarkably, NATO’s reaction was evidently also still an uncertain factor for Janvier: in his view, there was a serious possibility that NATO would refrain from action if the VRS fired on the transport helicopters; after all, the actions of the VRS against the aircraft maintaining the airlift with Sarajevo had also gone unpunished by NATO. Another alternative was that the helicopters might not come under fire from the VRS as such but from individual soldiers or – if their situation deteriorated – units of the VRS.

It was also possible that the VRS might react to the resupply operation by firing on the population of the enclaves or that VRS snipers would target civilians working at the supply centres in an effort to hinder the resupply process. It was less likely that the landing sites of the helicopters would come under fire as the VRS would realize that this would provoke an immediate reaction from NATO.

⁴⁴ CRST. Helicopter resupply of the Eastern Enclaves, 09/04/95, No. COS 3070 (signed Lieutenant General B. Janvier).

⁴⁵ CRST. Helicopter resupply of the Eastern Enclaves, 09/04/95, No. COS 3070 (signed Lieutenant General B. Janvier).

A further danger was that the resupply of the eastern enclaves could lead to a military reaction in Sarajevo: the VRS could step up the pressure on Sarajevo to such an extent that the Bosnian government would be forced to call a halt to the resupply by air of the eastern enclaves. In the worst case, the airlift to Sarajevo could even fall victim to the operation. The resupply operation could also cause the VRS to question the neutrality of UNPROFOR and consequently to boycott all ceasefire negotiations.

Furthermore, the VRS might feel compelled to break the military resistance of the ABiH from the enclaves or even to capture the enclaves if they interpreted the supply activities as a contribution towards the Bosnian Muslim war effort. Attacks of the VRS on the enclaves might provoke intervention by NATO or UNPROFOR, but that would be an acceptable risk for the VRS if it basically already wanted to release military resources around the enclaves for redeployment in the west of Bosnia (as was to prove all too true in July 1995).

If the VRS were to gain the impression that UNPROFOR was indirectly supplying the ABiH, it might decide to restrict UNPROFOR's freedom of movement in the entire mission area. This could involve the hijacking of UNPROFOR vehicles on the grounds that UNPROFOR had become a party to the conflict and was therefore no longer a peace-keeping unit. They could even use this as a pretext for retrieving heavy weapons from the Heavy Weapon Collection Points.⁴⁶

General Janvier presented his plan to Kofi Annan, noting that it had been drawn up with the Air Planning Staff of NATO, but that further detailing was still necessary. Janvier asked the UN headquarters in New York to approach representatives of the potential helicopter-contributing nations (France, Norway and the United Kingdom) and to request their support for the plan.

Janvier also pointed out that once the execution of the plan had been set in motion, it had to be brought to a successful conclusion. Everyone was to be aware of the consequences for the mission if the plan failed.⁴⁷

8. The ball in New York's court: the UN ponders the options

From New York, Kofi Annan reported to Akashi that the options were being carefully studied in New York. However, in view of the implications of the plan, the UN headquarters wanted to know exactly how serious the supply situation was. They consequently needed a clear overview of that situation. According to the situation reports several convoys had got through by land, though none of these carried fuel supplies. Information from UNHCR suggested that the humanitarian aid situation was really not as bad as suggested: 75% of the required aid was covered. New York had however heard reports that the British in Gorazde had started to use mules in order to save fuel.⁴⁸

Janvier subsequently took a cautious stance. He had no objection to New York approaching the British representative at the UN with the request to keep three British Chinook helicopters ready for action within three days, but he didn't want to go any further than that. If the plan went ahead and the helicopters were moved to Central Bosnia, then in Janvier's eyes that was not just a military measure but also a powerful political signal. In his view, such a step was not merely a technical measure but a 'major command decision'. First of all, New York needed to secure a commitment from the countries supplying the helicopters. They would have to accept the risks involved and not distance themselves from the operation at any time. As a first step in this direction, New York had to give its formal approval to the operational concept.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ CRST. Annex A to UNPF-HQ 3070, dated [9] April 1995.

⁴⁷ DCBC, 441. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 11/04/95, No. Z-581.

⁴⁸ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol I, Resupply Eastern Enclaves 17/04/95-11/07/95. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 17/04/95, No. MSC-1205.

⁴⁹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol. I Resupply Eastern Encl, 17/04/95-11/07/95. Note Col F. Bureau [MA to FC] to DFC, COS, 17/04/95.

But New York was not yet ready to approve resupply operation by air; UN headquarters still saw quite a few obstacles that needed to be overcome. First of all, Annan wanted to know why the VRS was obstructing the normal UNPROFOR convoys. Was there no longer any dialogue with the VRS?⁵⁰ Janvier replied that the plan to resupply by air was merely the consequence of the VRS's intransigence and their persistent refusal to allow convoys through to Sarajevo and the three eastern enclaves. All three were without fuel although Smith had arranged for the use of 38 m³ of UNHCR's diesel.⁵¹

Talks with the Bosnian Serbs about the urgency of the supply situation were still taking place incidentally: Akashi and Smith raised the issue with Karadzic. His reply was that the clearances for letting a UNPROFOR convoy through were denied because of irregularities in the paperwork (the convoy manifests). Smith doubted this as Mladic had cited a different reason to him, namely that the rejection was a retaliation for the measures imposed on the Bosnian Serbs. The problem was to be discussed further between the military people, so Smith said; in this way he hoped to drive a wedge between Mladic and Karadzic.⁵²

From the UN headquarters in New York, Director of Communications and Special Projects Sashi Tharoor also wondered whether the Bosnian Serbs were following a strategy 'to squeeze UNPROFOR out of the enclaves'? Had the UN headquarters in Zagreb studied the possibility of (reinforced) convoys by land? Tharoor pointed out that plans for such reinforced convoys had been made earlier, namely when Dutchbat relieved the Canadians in Srebrenica.

What struck New York as a particular problem was that such a complex operation as resupply by air with helicopters was not necessarily compatible with the applicable arrangements governing requests for NATO support. As this was an entirely new operation, political permission would have to be requested from the separate countries within NATO, and that meant going back to the North Atlantic Council. New York appeared to be uncertain about whether the North Atlantic Council should be involved; remarkably enough, New York instructed Zagreb to find out through military channels whether this was a matter for the North Atlantic Council. Moreover the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the UN was to keep the UN Security Council informed of such plans. After all, if the operation failed, this would mean the end of UNPROFOR. The UN also foresaw problems in relation to the leadership of such a complicated operation which, so it claimed, went beyond the capabilities of UNPROFOR. On the other hand, New York also believed that it would be difficult to justify placing the leadership of the operation in NATO's hands.⁵³

New York did continue to actively seek the support of the national governments of the countries that were to supply the helicopters. The representatives of France, the United Kingdom and Norway had been asked to consult their governments about the use of their helicopters.

The British wanted the planning to continue though they saw no need for resupply by air as yet. First, further attempts needed to be made to get supplies through by road. The UN was only permitted to embark on such an operation if there was really no alternative. It was to be a UN operation with NATO in a supporting role. The operation was to be in accordance with the neutrality concept of UNPROFOR: force was only to be used in self-defence. London was only prepared to take part in an operation if it was clear that the French were willing to participate. It had to be made clear to the parties involved that military intervention in such an operation would meet with a military response.

During Anglo-French military talks, the French supported the plan to resupply the enclaves by helicopter and were prepared to participate with twelve helicopters. Apart from that, the French were more concerned about the prospect of a VRS attack on the enclaves and on Sarajevo. The British replied, however, that there were no indications that the VRS was preparing to attack the enclaves.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 18/04/95, No. MSC-1218.

⁵¹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol. I Resupply Eastern Encl, 17/04/95-11/07/95. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 18/04/95, No. Z-613.

⁵² UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 22/04/95, No. UNPF-HQ Z-644.

⁵³ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 18/04/95, No. MSC-1218.

⁵⁴ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

9. Between Sarajevo, Zagreb and New York: can the operation go ahead?

Meanwhile General Smith, still unperturbed, took the bull by the horns in Sarajevo. On 18 April he issued a warning order. His plan was to assemble three packages of helicopters, one for each of the eastern enclaves. At his disposal were two Mi-26, three Chinook and four Puma transport helicopters. The available Seaking, armed Arapaho, Lynx and Gazelle helicopters were intended for Command and Control, troop transportation, an armed escort and the evacuation of the wounded.

The plan was to get as much fuel as possible into the enclaves in a single day. In view of the distance from Split to the enclaves it meant that only two trips could be made. Whether the resupply operation needed to be continued until supplies had been replenished to a certain level depended on the situation.

Earlier the other helicopters had already been stationed at various bases in the UNPROFOR Sector South West. The Mi-26 helicopters were to be loaded in Split and after refuelling in Tomislavgrad would subsequently fly with the other helicopters via Kiseljak to an area to the north and east of Sarajevo. From there, they would fly along corridors to Srebrenica and Zepa, on the one hand, and Gorazde on the other. Apart from fuel, the commanders of the various sectors in Bosnia could set priorities for other critical items, such as medical supplies and communication equipment.⁵⁵ Akashi had been briefed on the plan.⁵⁶

Meanwhile Zagreb replied to the questions asked from New York. The use of a reinforced land convoy had not been considered; that would have meant fighting a way into the enclaves, which was not desirable. Moreover, UNPROFOR did not even have the equipment required for such an action. Another factor was that the local terrain made it easy for the VRS to cut off the routes to the enclaves. Also relevant was the fact that NATO Admiral Leighton Smith had said that it was not necessary to request NATO's permission for the operation; existing arrangements were sufficient in his view. According to him, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo had the necessary means to lead the operation and the commander on the ground was the most appropriate person to be put in charge. An arrangement for the command and control relationship was still being worked out with NATO.

In reply to the question why the VRS were blocking the overland supplies, New York was told that General Mladic had already informed General Smith on 5 March of his intention to impose sanctions against UNPROFOR. Mladic claimed this was in response to the sanctions that the international community had introduced against the Bosnian Serbs. The sanctions of the Bosnian Serbs, so the reply continued, were primarily aimed at impeding fuel resupplies. On several occasions the VRS had offered to allow fuel through, provided that UNPROFOR surrendered half to the VRS. UNPROFOR never took this offer up. They saw it as clear proof that the sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs were beginning to have an effect. Smith, so Janvier said, considered the continuation of this sanctions policy as a matter of the utmost importance, even if it meant that no further fuel would reach the enclaves.⁵⁷

According to the Chief of Land Operations (known in military terms as the G3 Land Ops) in Zagreb, Colonel De Jonge, a decision on the resupply operation by air was to be taken on 19 April. The biggest fear was still a negative attitude of the VRS towards Dutchbat, which might possibly be expressed in the actions mentioned earlier.⁵⁸

But the Chief of Land Operations in Zagreb had been too optimistic about the decision date. New York was still not willing to give the operation the green light. No consultation had taken place

⁵⁵ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 246, File 2200-2 AVN General 10/08/95-04/10/95. HQ BHC FWD, Warning Order 005/95, 181500B Apr95, No. G3 Ops 3217.

⁵⁶ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 246, File 2200-2 AVN General 10/08/95-04/10/95. Fax Lt Col Baxter, MA to Comd to HQ UNPF Zagreb, 23/04/95.

⁵⁷ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol I, Resupply Eastern Enclaves 17/04/95-11/07/95. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 19/04/95, No. UNPF-HQ Z-627.

⁵⁸ CRST. G3 Land Ops to KL Crisis Staff, 14/04/95.

yet with NATO in Brussels. Despite the serious fuel shortages, General Smith also refused to mention a date though he was prepared to say that the operation would definitely not be carried out before 30 April. The circumstances did not permit this, also in view of the fact that the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement was due to expire on 30 April. Another restricting factor was that units in Sector South West were on the point of being relieved: this was not to be put in jeopardy.⁵⁹

Smith had publicly announced that resupply by air was being considered. As was the case earlier in March, this was intended to put pressure on the VRS. The critical point would be reached in mid-May, after which the fuel shortages would make measures imperative. Another problem, alongside the fuel supplies, was Dutchbat's limited supply of ammunition (for the TOW anti-tank weapon) and the quality of that ammunition. By that time, UNPROFOR had received ample medical supplies thanks to the fact that convoys had been let through on an incidental basis.⁶⁰

The Permanent Representatives at the UN of the countries involved discussed Janvier's plan on 21 April in New York. The parties at the table were the helicopter-contributing nations (the United Kingdom, France and Norway), the troop-contributing nations in the eastern enclaves (alongside the United Kingdom, also Ukraine and the Netherlands) and the countries that were to supply the ground troops required for the operation (Canada and New Zealand).

Chairman Sashi Tharoor made it clear that New York wished to go no further than study the opportunities for carrying out the plan. Given the risks for the future of the mission there was no intention 'to rush into action'. After all, so Tharoor went on, the operation effectively amounted to telling the Bosnian Serbs that the enclaves could also be resupplied without their permission. The Bosnian Serbs would see this as a challenge. And whatever way you looked at the situation, it would be utterly irresponsible to embark on an operation without consulting the Security Council and the North Atlantic Council. The Secretary-General of the UN and NATO in Brussels had not even been informed yet of the plans, Tharoor said. It was also desirable in his view to include the Russian Federation in the plan. In fact, it might even be necessary to adopt a new Security Resolution for this operation.

The French UN representative felt, however, that UN Resolution 836 was sufficient for the purpose. The British agreed to this in principle but also said that Tharoor was right in saying that the Security Council and the North Atlantic Council had to be informed.⁶¹

At this point it emerged that the officials at the UN headquarters in New York were not well-informed. Tharoor, for instance, asked whether fuel was also to be supplied by helicopter. As we have seen, this of course formed part of Smith's plans and Janvier's elaboration of these plans. Furthermore, New York was also opposed to a night-time operation, as proposed in Janvier's plan. This, they said, would impair the transparency of the operation. New York also wanted UNPROFOR to inform the Bosnian Serbs in advance of the plans, arguing that this in itself would go a long way towards making a resupply operation unnecessary.⁶² Also, as soon as resupply by land could be resumed to any extent, the plan for resupply by air was to be immediately shelved.

Here the British UN representative, Sir David Hannay, hardly promoted the cause of resupply by air by contending that the supply problems were not nearly as serious as suggested. He pointed out that national reports indicated higher stock levels than the figures of the UN secretariat.⁶³ As a result, the British government in London was no longer convinced that an operation was necessary. Moreover, food convoys had reached all three enclaves in mid-April (fuel, the biggest problem, was not mentioned here).⁶⁴ The British also made it known that they were actually not at all enthusiastic about

⁵⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 246, File 2200-2 AVN General 10/08/95-04/10/95. HQ BHC FWD, Warning Order 005/95, 181500B Apr95, No. G3 Ops 3217.

⁶⁰ DCBC, 2379. Report of bunker meeting DCBC dated 21/04/95. Conf.

⁶¹ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 21/04/95, No. MSC-1286.

⁶² NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 21/04/95, No. MSC-1286.

⁶³ ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Code Biegman 335, 21/04/95.

⁶⁴ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 21/04/95, No. MSC-1286.

the plans, which they feared might lead to a total ban on overland convoys. The whole intention of General Smith's plan, however, had consistently been to have an alternative for resupplying the enclaves in an emergency situation.⁶⁵

Subsequently New York asked the individual capital cities to give their reaction to the plans.⁶⁶ The fact that the Permanent Representatives at the UN did not arrange a follow-up meeting to report the reactions from the capital cities indicates that there was no real sense of urgency in New York. Whatever happened, the plan would not be carried out before 1 May 1995.

The question as to which organization would direct the operation led to differences of opinion. The French had suggested in the North Atlantic Council that NATO should be put in charge of the operation in analogy with the NATO plan (Determined Effort, Oplan 40104) for withdrawing UNPROFOR from Bosnia in case of emergency.⁶⁷ The UN by contrast saw this as a UN operation governed by the Rules of Engagement for a peacekeeping operation, with NATO only in a supporting role.⁶⁸ The French were considerably more amenable to Janvier's plan than the British. The French were of the opinion that resupply by air could take place within UN Resolution 836 and the existing arrangements made between the UN and NATO. The French even wondered why it was necessary to start up a lengthy and complicated consultation procedure about this matter. They were in favour of a night-time military operation with transport helicopters escorted by armed helicopters. The operation was to have a high profile and be surrounded by publicity. For safety reasons, the French were keen to have Russian UN peacekeepers on board the helicopters but stopped short of stipulating this as an absolute precondition.⁶⁹ The Chiefs of Defence Staff naturally welcomed the French contribution. The Netherlands expected the plans to be discussed at the meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff on 19 May in Soesterberg. Until now, the Netherlands (and Ukraine) had not been involved in the plans for resupply by air.⁷⁰

10. Further reactions to Janvier's plan

Zagreb drew encouragement from the positive reactions of the troop-contributing nations. They would be ready to launch the operation at any time after 1 May. The UN command in Zagreb was concerned however about the question marks that the United Kingdom had placed behind the plans and – as it was perceived in Zagreb – the details that were receiving attention in London. The British government, so they said, could rest assured that General Smith and his officers were fully aware of the necessary 'battle procedures': force would only be used in self-defence.

From Zagreb it was re-emphasized that General Smith and the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb were unanimous in their opinion that overland resupply could only take place if the parties agreed. The political risks were fully understood and Zagreb saw no need for further comment. Zagreb also reported that Admiral Leighton Smith was looking into the question of NATO authorization.

Finally Zagreb pointed out that it would be a good thing for the UN headquarters in New York to get in touch with NATO themselves. In a message to the UN in New York, Janvier's Deputy Force Commander, the Canadian Major General R.R. Crabbe, wrote that he believed that 'you clearly understand our logic in planning'.⁷¹ Judging by the above, this was very much open to question. According to UNPROFOR, the supply figures for 21 April were as follows:⁷²

⁶⁵ DCBC, 453. Memo CDS to the Minister, 02/05/95, No. SN/95/061/1788.

⁶⁶ ABZ, Coll. Hattinga van 't Sant, 05277. Code Biegman 335, 21/04/95.

⁶⁷ DCBC, 453. Memo CDS to the Minister, 02/05/95, No. SN/95/061/1788.

⁶⁸ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 21/04/95, No. MSC-1286.

⁶⁹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 25/04/95, No. MSC-1354 with attached fax Mission Permanente de la France pour Mr Annan, 25/04/95, No. 454/MPF/CM.

⁷⁰ DCBC, 453. Memo CDS to the Minister, May 1995, No. SN/95/061/1788.

⁷¹ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol I, Resupply Eastern Enclaves 17/04/95-11/07/95 Code Cable Janvier (signed R.R. Crabbe) to Annan, 21/04/95, No. UNPF-HQ Z-635.

⁷² UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol I, Resupply Eastern Enclaves 17/04/95-11/07/95

(days of consumption)	Fresh food	Rations	Diesel
Zepa	1	23	0
Gorazde (BRIT)	19	54	0
Gorazde (UKR)	0	8	0
Srebrenica	5	26	0

Six days after this list was made available, New York reproached Zagreb that this kind of information was hardly helpful. After all, Annan had asked for an overview of the *situation*, not for this. This came on top of the confusion over the supply situation which had already arisen on 21 April during Tharoor's meeting with the Permanent Representatives in New York and a press release from Sarajevo in which the UN Public Relations Officer had sketched an extremely gloomy picture of the fuel situation. Annan therefore told Akashi that he had still not received any comment on the supply *situation*.⁷³

After the discussions in New York and the various capital cities, Janvier had taken stock of the situation. He reiterated that the aim of the operations had to be absolutely clear: it was all about fuel supply.

On 26 April he came up with the following scenario: the first step, as before, was New York's approval of the plan. The next step was the announcement of the plan both in Pale and Belgrade. Janvier wanted to do this during his next trip to Pale, and in the first week of May in Belgrade. As soon as the reactions of the Bosnian Serbs were clear, he would inform the UN in New York. Next, he proposed to ask the UN and NATO to approve the operation and to bring the military helicopters into Bosnia as a warning.⁷⁴

Janvier and Smith spoke to each other in Sarajevo about this plan. Akashi was still to travel to Pale but Janvier and Smith doubted whether there was any point in Akashi making a further diplomatic *démarche* to urge Karadzic to allow convoys by land. Without that permission, Janvier too would move a step closer to 'a more forceful option'. Ahead of Akashi's trip to Pale, Smith again drew his attention to the state of affairs in the eastern enclaves. He gave a fairly grim portrayal of the situation. The lack of fuel for the generators in Zepa had caused a loss of communications with that enclave. For this reason Smith was considering withdrawing the military observers of the UN, the UNMOs, from Zepa: they were unable to do their job under these circumstances. In Gorazde the Observation Posts could no longer be manned from 14 May 1995, and in Srebrenica the UN soldiers would be able to hold out until the end of May if they kept their fuel consumption to a minimum. Earlier, incidentally, the Netherlands Ministry of Defence had assumed that fuel would only last until mid-May; the new estimated date, i.e. end of May, was the direct result of different calculations at various different headquarters and Dutchbat, which led to different results. This problem was to crop up again later (see Chapter 4, Part III). During the visits to Pale, Smith was keen to establish a connection between the worrying supply situation and the plans for resupply by helicopter.⁷⁵

Meanwhile the discussion about the supply operation continued in the various countries involved. After the note of concern struck by London, the Canadians now also raised objections to the plan. So much so, in fact, that Canada no longer wished to supply Tactical Air Control Parties and armed troops to man the helicopters. As far as the Canadians were concerned, a helicopter operation represented an unjustifiable breach of the UNPROFOR mandate. It would send the Bosnian Serbs a signal that one of the most fundamental aspects of the mission – Freedom of Movement – could be breached with impunity. That this Freedom of Movement no longer existed *de facto* was evidently of no

Code Cable Janvier (signed R.R. Crabbe) to Annan, 21/04/95, No. UNPF-HQ Z-635.

⁷³ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 27/04/95, No. MSC-1407. The press release was from AFP dated 27/04/95.

⁷⁴ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol. I Resupply Eastern Encl, 17/04/95-11/07/95.

Fax FC's Office to BH Command, 26/04/95, Ref FC/95/0649.

⁷⁵ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol. I Resupply Eastern Encl, 17/04/95-11/07/95. Fax LtCol Baxter MA to Comd to HQ UNPF Zagreb attn COS, 28/04/95.

significance. According to the Canadian authorities, the Bosnian Serbs would treat an airlift with helicopters to the eastern enclaves in exactly the same manner as the airlift to Sarajevo. The Bosnian Serbs also regularly fired at that, just to show that *they* were the ones who decided when and under what circumstances the airlift could be open.

The Canadians pointed out that even with more helicopters than provided for in the plan, UNPROFOR would still be unable to feed the population in the enclaves whereas UNHCR was able to do this overland. Couldn't that organization also take along food for UNPROFOR, so the Canadians wondered. But this line of reasoning completely ignored the biggest problem: the need to supply the UNPROFOR units with fuel. Canada was in favour of informing the regime in Pale that UNPROFOR was going to resume heavily protected convoys by land.

The noises from New York were not particularly encouraging either. The UN headquarters had already warned Zagreb that the loss of a single helicopter would force the UN to decide whether or not to leave the enclaves. That could mean the end for UNPROFOR.⁷⁶

Though the political outlook was not auspicious, UNPROFOR in Sarajevo went ahead with the planning of a resupply operation by air: a timepath had been plotted, an official line had been formulated for the media and a 'coordination conference' had been planned. New York was to give the green light no later than four days before the operation was launched. Other conditions were that the helicopter- and troop-contributing nations consented to the operations and that NATO made all relevant arrangements. The pressure on the VRS to let through fuel convoys had to be stepped up and concerns about the situation were to be given public expression as a further signal to the Bosnian Serbs. Visible preparations were to be made four days in advance and the operation would be rehearsed three days beforehand. Two days before the operation, a meeting was to take place with (a) representative(s) of the VRS and General Smith would issue a statement. On the eve of the operation, the flights would be announced and the UN organization in Zagreb and NATO would issue statements.⁷⁷ During the coordination conference that had been held in the meantime, agreement had been reached about the commander of the operation: this was to be the Norwegian T. Johansen, a Lieutenant Colonel of the Air Force who was in the possession of the necessary qualifications and was well-known to all helicopter squadrons. The Norwegian Chief of Defence Staff had already expressed its agreement. His presence was required for discussions on 3 and 4 May in Sarajevo and on 5 May at NATO.⁷⁸

Meanwhile Dutchbat III was facing an increasingly acute shortage of fuel. The battalion had not received fuel resupplies for two and a half months (since 18 February). For this reason, Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen had asked Battalion Commander Karremans to indicate the criteria for determining when resupply by air would be necessary. As for water and food, Dutchbat set the criterion at nine days' rations. Of these nine days, seven were intended to give the higher levels time to take measures. If that failed, two days would remain to leave the enclave. As for diesel, the warning level had already been passed; according to Dutchbat's count, the supplies had formally run out.

Dutchbat could still make use of UNHCR supplies. But if the VRS also continued to block the UNHCR convoys, the fuel supplies would be exhausted by the end of May. Moreover UNHCR had already indicated its wish to stop supplying diesel to Dutchbat. Faced with this situation, Dutchbat wanted to maintain a supply of 6000 litres of diesel so that it could withdraw from the enclave to safe territory in case of an emergency.

If fresh supplies were brought in by air, there would also be the possibility of taking along anti-tank weapons plus testing equipment and (light) mortar grenades if that were necessary. Due to the

⁷⁶ Confidential information.

⁷⁷ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 215, File BHC95, 7 Mar-May95. Fax HQ BHC FWD to HQ UNPF Zagreb, 26/04/95.

⁷⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Fax HQ BH Command to HQ UNPF/COS, 261445B Apr 95, Outgoing Fax No. 0876/95. Because the person in question was in Norway, sent with Code Cable Janvier (signed R.R. Crabbe) to Baril for Annan, 28/04/95, No. Z-681 with the request to take up the matter with the Norwegian government.

poor storage facilities, the anti-tank weapons had been affected by damp and were possibly no longer functioning properly.

It was all very well for the Netherlands to set its own criteria, but the key to the execution of the operation was and remained in the hands of the political and military leadership in Zagreb and New York.⁷⁹

Janvier in Zagreb had meanwhile sent the framework for a plan of operations to New York. At the same time he tried to dispel some of New York's concerns about the plan and to demarcate the tasks. Janvier felt that an analysis of the political consequences and of the military limitations of the plan should be left to Akashi and himself. If the plan were executed, this would take place 'with utmost transparency' towards the warring factions. In addition, Janvier pointed out that only he, as Theatre Commander, could be responsible for drawing up the guidelines of such a complex and difficult operation.⁸⁰

On 4 May 1995 the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Van Mierlo, informed Parliament publicly (this had previously taken place behind closed doors) that the supply of fuel was an increasing source of concern. Patrols in the enclave could now only be carried out on foot. The minister said that things might come to such a pass that the UN and NATO would have no other option than to resupply the enclave by air, even against the will of the Bosnian Serbs if need be. In this case, precautions had to be taken on the ground in collaboration with the allies because of the risk of reprisals by the VRS. The Dutch government continued to put the safety of the Dutch soldiers first 'as an absolute priority'.⁸¹ The same applied to the governments of the other countries, particularly after the expiration of the truce, the Croatian offensive in West Slavonia and the outbreak of hostilities in Bosnia.

11. Support for resupply by air starts to crumble

After voicing hesitations about resupply by air, Canada became the first country to definitely pull out of the operation. The Hague woke up to this fact early in May. Resupply by air had proved to be an unviable proposition for the Canadians. The country had come to the conclusion that the operation would be an unjustifiable breach of the UNPROFOR mandate (UN Security Council Resolutions 824 and 770). It would give the Bosnian Serbs a signal that a contravention of the most fundamental aspect of the mission - Freedom of Movement – would be accepted. The statement made by the UN headquarters, i.e. that if a helicopter was brought down the UN would have to consider abandoning the enclaves, was the final straw for the Canadians: this would give the Bosnian Serbs an opportunity to humiliate UNPROFOR, Ottawa claimed. After all, the power to end the UNPROFOR operation then no longer rested with the highest political level but with the lowest conceivable level on the ground, namely the VRS.⁸²

The Canadian stance did not prevent the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York from pressing on with the planning process. Early in May the British were requested to supply a Royal Air Force officer with expertise on Chinook helicopter operations as a matter of urgency. The request was met with surprise in the United Kingdom because nothing more had been heard about the plan for resupply by air since the meeting of the troop- and helicopter-contributing nations on 21 April and the Canadian rejection of the plan.⁸³

Early in May the French were still prepared to resupply the enclaves by helicopter, but were also hoping that the British would take part. The French government would not be happy if the British

⁷⁹ DCBC, 453. Memo CDS to the Minister, 02/05/95, No. SN/95/061/1788.

⁸⁰ UNNY, UNPROFOR, DFC Files. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 29/04/95, No. Z-683.

⁸¹ TK, 1994-1995, 22 181, No. 94 (02/05/95).

⁸² ABZ, DPV/ARA/00581. Milad PVVN to Min. of DEF/DS and DAB, 08/05/95, No. NYV-2814. See also DCBC, 462. Code Biegman 393, 08/05/95.

⁸³ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

decided to withdraw their troops from Gorazde and the Dutch government were to do the same with its troops in Srebrenica. That would leave France as the only remaining western country with troops in an enclave (in Sarajevo).⁸⁴ The French military were prepared to do everything in their power to avoid a unilateral French withdrawal. They wanted the UN headquarters in Zagreb to take a more robust stance. French military personnel hinted to British diplomats that the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Juppé, was not a strong proponent of withdrawal. In this phase the French military top was emphatically seeking British support in order to prevent the policy of President Chirac, and possibly also that of Minister Juppé, being thwarted. This was one reason why the French military wanted to resupply the enclaves with helicopters.⁸⁵

Early in May both Force Commander Janvier and the UN delegate Akashi in Belgrade re-opened the discussion about the problem of resupplying the enclaves. On 5 May Janvier spoke with the Yugoslavian Chief of Staff Perisic. According to Janvier, Perisic was perfectly aware of the seriousness of the problem, but saw the deployment of helicopters as a dangerous solution. Perisic therefore promised to exert pressure on Mladic so that resupply by road could be resumed.⁸⁶

Shortly afterwards, on 10 May, the UN delegate Akashi spoke with the Serbian President Milosevic. On that occasion, Akashi raised the issue of the VRS blockading the resupply of UNPROFOR in the enclaves. Milosevic was prepared to help but said he had little practical support to offer. It was up to the Generals Smith and Mladic to get round the table and sort things out. But that was precisely what Mladic obstinately refused to do. Milosevic did however promise to do his best to arrange a talk, 'to try to solve those banalities' (i.e. the resupply of the enclaves).⁸⁷

Later too, however, Mladic would continue to refuse a meeting with Smith. During a telephone conversation with General Mladic on 24 May, Smith also said he wanted a meeting with him at the earliest opportunity to speak about the urgent need to resupply UNPROFOR in the enclaves. At the time Mladic said he fully understood the problems of the enclaves but that his soldiers faced much greater problems. Mladic was unwilling to arrange a meeting in the short term because he was not feeling well.⁸⁸

Around the same time that Akashi spoke with Milosevic, Smith had a secret meeting with President Karadzic. Karadzic explained that the VRS had decided to introduce sanctions against UNPROFOR in the form of a blockade of (fuel, food, mail and leave-taker) convoys. The Bosnian Serbs were no longer willing to cooperate with the international community and had already taken this decision before the Croatian offensive. 'The Security Council is the enemy of the Serbian people and the instrument of hostile US policy', according to Karadzic. The UN had been biased in favour of the adversary during the Croatian offensive in West Slavonia. Furthermore, the Bosnian Serbs had heard that the ABiH had started an offensive aimed at breaking through the Bosnian Serb siege of Sarajevo.

The VRS had also convinced Karadzic that there was sufficient fuel in the enclaves, so Karadzic said; it was even alleged that the ABiH in Srebrenica had built up a large stock of fuel from UN supplies. Smith denied this; he said that the fuel situation was so acute that this problem would soon be out of his hands. Karadzic was only prepared to reconsider his stance if the Bosnian Serbs received 30,000 tons of fuel for humanitarian purposes. Karadzic was told that a decision on this matter did not rest with UNPROFOR, but with the Sanctions Committee of the UN in New York.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

⁸⁵ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

⁸⁶ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88041, File 4-4 Notes on Meetings. Interoffice Memorandum FC to SRSG, 06/05/95, 'Rencontre avec le Général Perisic Belgrade 5 Mai 1995'.

⁸⁷ Confidential information.

⁸⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Telephone call Gen Smith and Gen Mladic 20.45 hrs [24/05/95] attached to Code Cable Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 25/05/95, No. Z-861.

⁸⁹ UNGE, UNPROFOR, Box 92, File 4.2.1. Office of the Commander BH Command to UNPF Zagreb attn Mr. Akashi, Gen Janvier, 091900B May 1995, UN Confi; See also letter Smith to Akashi sent by fax Office of the Commander BH Command to UNPF Zagreb, 091615B May 1995, UN Confi.

As Gorazde would run out of fuel on 10 May and Srebrenica in mid-May, the plan for resupply by air remained high on the agenda in Sarajevo and Zagreb. Planning and technical preparations between UNPROFOR and NATO had been set in motion and the expectation was that Akashi and Janvier could be briefed about this shortly.⁹⁰ It was also expected that the announcement of the plan would induce the Bosnian Serbs to allow a quantity of fuel to be supplied by road after all.

A reaction of the Bosnian Serbs on the ground to the announcement of the resupply operation by air could not be ruled out: for safety reasons, the military observers and civilian police of the UN (UNMOs and UNCivPols) were therefore to place themselves under the protection of the local UN troops and all convoys were to be stopped 72 hours before the operation started.⁹¹

On 9 May Dutchbat still had 4258 litres of fuel. With effect from 10 May additional measures were taken to further reduce the consumption of fuel to 450 litres per day. This meant switching over to rations to save fuel for the kitchen trucks; disconnecting refrigerating and freezing installations; stopping supplies to the observation posts; stopping the medical evacuation of civilians; and no longer giving fuel to the police (UNMOs and UNCivPols). In this way, the tasks could continue to be carried out for a further ten days. Resupply was now an urgent necessity. The Chief of Defence Staff, General Van den Breemen, spoke about this with the UNPROFOR Chief of Staff in Sarajevo, Brigadier General Nicolai. He said that if there was no change of circumstances a decision to resupply by air could be on the agenda in the week of 15 May.⁹²

This issue was also mentioned in passing in the Ministerial Council, though mainly in the form of a statement that the situation was becoming increasingly difficult for Dutchbat because there was virtually no fuel left. A decision to resupply by air was therefore probable. Such an operation was not without risk, so it was said, as it could elicit a reaction from the Bosnian Serbs. The Ministerial Council was told that the Bosnian Serbs would be informed in advance if the resupply operation by air went ahead.⁹³ Note that at the time Serbia had nothing to do with the problem of resupplying the eastern enclave, their involvement only started in June. No doubt, the minutes were actually referring to the Bosnian Serbs instead of Serbia.

At the end of May the resupply question was raised again in the Ministerial Council; not to discuss the substance of the problem, but merely as a matter of procedure. On that occasion, the most closely involved ministers were authorized to hold mutual consultation in order to discuss the day-to-day developments and take care of the logistical interests.⁹⁴

The second conference of the Chiefs of Defence Staff took place in Soesterberg on 19 May. Janvier and Smith had come to Soesterberg for this conference. They said that the fuel situation would become critical in June and that New York was considering resupply by air. The French Chief of Defence Staff, Lanxade, asked whether NATO might be able to take the task of resupplying the enclaves upon itself. Janvier believed this was possible provided that NATO received an appropriate mandate, but the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Shalikashvili, disagreed. He said that such an operation would require a multitude of military resources which fell outside the authority of General Smith.

Smith stated that the lives of the UN people in the enclaves were not in danger, but that their capability to perform their duties was being steadily undermined. He was prepared to continue the negotiations but if these talks failed to produce any result, withdrawal would be the only remaining option. Lanxade agreed that the enclaves would have to be abandoned unless action was taken. The

⁹⁰ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 88040, File 4-2 SRSG Meeting, Srebrenica Staff 95 May-Oct. SRSG, Senior Staff Meeting, 11/05/95.

⁹¹ DCBC, 2013. Briefing Bgen Nicolai, undated.

⁹² DCBC, 477. CDS to the Minister, 11/05/95, No. S95/061/1984, Confi.

⁹³ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 12/05/95, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

⁹⁴ Objectivized summary of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting of 29/05/95, prepared for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

Turkish Chief of Defence Staff, General I.H. Karadayi, felt this was too dangerous as it would cause the total withdrawal of UNPROFOR. The Chiefs of Defence Staff concluded that a resupply operation would be inevitable within a month and that the UN commanders were to send the plans to the political decision-makers as soon as they were ready.⁹⁵

In the meantime Kofi Annan had identified new problems. He informed his chief, Boutros-Ghali, of the results of the conference of the Chiefs of Defence Staff and added that he saw the helicopter operation as a 'high risk strategy' that might entail crossing the notorious 'Mogadishu line'. Annan also believed that formally speaking Boutros-Ghali did not require the approval of the Security Council to resupply his troops in the enclaves; however, a failure of the operation could have such far-reaching consequences that the Security Council should be made aware of this possibility. Furthermore, NATO would also have to ask the North Atlantic Council for permission and NATO would not do this without a written request from Boutros-Ghali.⁹⁶ As will be clear, the need to go through all these channels would hardly promote a rapid decision-making process.

12. A decision about the operation?

Meanwhile General Smith stuck to his line that the operation had to be carried out as soon as possible. He felt supported by the conference of the Chiefs of Defence Staff and asked Janvier on 21 May to take up the resupply plan 'with urgency'. He requested General Janvier to arrange the required units and helicopters through the UN headquarters in New York. A joint planning team of NATO and the UN was to get together in order to work out the command aspects in greater detail. General Smith now set the date that the fuel supplies would run out at 1 June; but on this date, Dutchbat's emergency stock of fuel would also be completely exhausted, while that was precisely intended as a reserve for getting out of the enclave in special circumstances.

Given limited use of the UNHCR stocks of 10,000 litres of diesel, the date that Dutchbat's fuel would be exhausted could be shifted from 1 June to 15 June. But even with this fuel, the abandonment of the observation posts would still be inevitable and the UN soldiers would have to be concentrated on the compounds. Smith insisted that a decision should be taken no later than 24 May, that the required helicopters should already be brought over to Central Bosnia, and that a definite arrangement should now be made with NATO. He drew up a new time schedule with D-day on: 15 June 1995.⁹⁷

In New York, Janvier also continued to emphasize the urgency of the logistical situation in the enclaves. Dutchbat had received 4500 litres of diesel from UNHCR stocks. Leaving aside enough diesel to get out of the enclave and reach Tuzla, the battalion would run out of fuel on 1 June, assuming a consumption of 450 litres per day. UNHCR was keeping a further 10,000 litres in reserve for its own use. Janvier and Smith gave the same forecast: with further support from UNHCR, Dutchbat could hold out until 15 June. In Zepa the diesel supplies had entirely run out; wood was being used for cooking. The last fuel convoy to reach Gorazde had been on 18 February, the same date that Dutchbat had received its last resupply. But the British in Gorazde still had stocks of 16,500 litres, including the fuel tanks of the vehicles. Given minimal consumption, they would run out on 4 July.⁹⁸

Zagreb was increasingly convinced that the fuel situation was now so urgent that an operation was becoming inevitable. Janvier had modified his plan and on 22 May he suggested to New York that they approve his Concept of Operations. This concept emanated a spirit of purposeful action. Countries that were to take part in the operation needed to be asked for approval by the UN in New York. The United Kingdom would be requested to increase the availability of their Chinook

⁹⁵ DCBC, 1793 and 1825. Report Informal CHODs Meeting on UNPF, Soesterberg, 19/05/95. Confi.

⁹⁶ Confidential information.

⁹⁷ DCBC, 505. CDS to the Minister, 23/05/95, No. S/95/061/2184; UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol. I Resupply Eastern Encl. 17/04/95-11/07/95. Fax Office of the Comd HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, attn FC, COS, 211000AMay95.

⁹⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan 22/05/95, No. Z-837.

helicopters. Any loss of helicopters was to be accepted. Large-scale NATO air strikes against the most threatening ground targets of the Bosnian Serbs and in retaliation for hostile actions against the helicopters had to be possible. It had to be clear that counteractions of the VRS could not be ruled out and that the UN was thus running severe risks. The reaction of the Bosnian Serbs could also lead to the enclaves being sealed off even more tightly, in which case resupply would *only* be possible by air. That would have major consequences, also for Dutchbat, and could put the relieving of the troops in jeopardy. The key question was and remained: did the supply of diesel weigh up against all the possible disadvantages?⁹⁹

The evident determination in Zagreb also found expression in the fairly hard tone that Janvier now adopted towards the UN in New York. Even so, many hurdles remained to be taken in New York before the operation could genuinely get under way. The simple remark during the Senior Staff Meeting in Zagreb that: ‘cable was sent to NY in order to get into action’ did not mean that everything was now cut and dried. After Kofi Annan, Janvier also recognized that the UN Security Council would have to approve, as would the troop-contributing nations and the North Atlantic Council but NATO had still not been approached by New York.

Efforts had been made in the meantime to sort out the command structure for the operation. One sticking point was that NATO aircraft could not be placed under the command of a UN (UNPROFOR) officer. However, this problem could be overcome if a UN officer authorized to respond immediately to UNPROFOR requests for Close Air Support were present on board an Airborne Command and Control Centre. Janvier furthermore suggested to New York that the authority to decide on the deployment of both Close Air Support and ‘responsive air strikes’ would be delegated to him.¹⁰⁰

But this still did not clear up all the problems between the UN and NATO; there were also matters of principle to be resolved. General Smith (a UN officer) wanted all aircraft involved in the operation, including NATO aircraft, to be under his command. General Shalikashvili, the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, by contrast, felt that UNPROFOR was insufficiently equipped for such an operation and that NATO should be in charge of the execution. The British Chief of Defence Staff, Sir Peter Inge, noted that this would change the nature of the mission from peacekeeping to peace enforcement. The French Chief of Defence Staff, Lanxade, re-emphasized that without resupplies the eastern enclaves would have to be abandoned and that this might herald the withdrawal of UNPROFOR. French helicopters would however be available at all events, so he affirmed.¹⁰¹

NATO Admiral Leighton Smith felt that the Rules of Engagement needed to be adapted for such an operation. Under the existing Rules of Engagement, NATO aircraft were only permitted to use force if it could be established that a weapon or rocket had been fired at a helicopter. To guarantee success over a longer period, Admiral Smith wanted a mandate to emphasize UNPROFOR’s and NATO’s strength of will to the VRS. This also meant the power to take military action against targets to warn off further attacks on the helicopters. This was an issue which the UN and NATO had not yet sorted out.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ DS, No. SN 93/938/1299. G3 Land Ops HQ UNPF Zagreb (Col J.H. de Jonge) to Crisis Staff BLS, 24/05/95, without number, UN Confi. UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol I, Resupply Eastern Enclaves. 17/04/95-11/07/95. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 22/05/95, No. Z-841 and 842.

¹⁰⁰ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol I, Resupply Eastern Enclaves. 17/04/95-11/07/95. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 22/05/95, No. Z-837. UNNY, UNPROFOR New York, Box 88040, File 4-2 SRSG Meeting, Srebrenica Staff 95 May-Oct. SRSG, Senior Staff Meeting, 23/05/95;

UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol I, Resupply Eastern Enclaves 17/04/95-11/07/95. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 22/05/95, No. Z-841 and 842.

¹⁰¹ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

¹⁰² UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol I, Resupply Eastern Enclaves, 17 Apr – 11 Jul 95. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 22/05/95, No. Z-837.

The Hague started to realize that an operation was now a serious possibility. The Ministry of Defence considered issuing a statement just before the operation got under way. Such a statement could emphasize that little cooperation was to be expected now from the Bosnian Serbs, given their strategic objective to gain control of the enclaves. One question that was raised but could not be answered was the line of action to be taken if the countries involved came to different conclusions regarding the risks attendant on the operation. Things had really progressed too far for each separate country to make an individual risk assessment. Such an assessment would have to be made at multinational level. Added to this, there was the increasingly pressing question whether it would still be possible to relieve Dutchbat under these circumstances.¹⁰³ This subject is extensively discussed in Chapter 4, Part III.

13. No decision yet

During his presence in New York, where he briefed the Security Council on 25 May, Janvier also discussed the plan for resupplying the Safe Areas by helicopter. His plea for unconditional support for the operation fell on deaf ears. New York wasn't particularly enthusiastic about the plans in the first place and in a talk with Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, British diplomats, the French Permanent Representative at the UN, Jean Bernard Merimee, and Gharakan (of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations) on that same day, everyone expressed dismay at the idea of using helicopters to supply the enclaves with fuel.¹⁰⁴ Nor did the subject command much interest among the Dutch diplomats in New York. The Military Adviser Colonel R. van Veen said he had repeatedly pointed to the supply problems, but that this had usually led to 'bored faces'.¹⁰⁵

On the same day of these talks, NATO aircraft bombarded a munitions complex of the VRS at Pale. This basically closed the door on the plan to resupply the eastern enclaves by air. At the same time, the air attacks also eliminated any prospect of resupply by road for the time being.¹⁰⁶

The problems in the enclaves obviously remained, however, and the item did not entirely disappear from the agenda in Zagreb. On 29 May Akashi told Annan that the operation was 'clearly justified by safety and logistical needs'. In view of the planning and preparation that was necessary for the operation, 'UNPROFOR must now consider helicopter resupply to the enclaves'. Akashi wanted New York to give some indication as to whether the UN was prepared to accept the risk of a confrontation with the Bosnian Serbs and to carry out a resupply operation that went 'considerably beyond peacekeeping principles'.¹⁰⁷ The fact that on that very same day the VRS shot down a Bosnian helicopter with the Bosnian Minister of Interior Affairs on board will hardly have fanned New York's enthusiasm for the operation.¹⁰⁸

Janvier re-directed his attention towards the possibility of air drops. His staff was working out a plan for this and he asked General Smith to set conditions for resupplying the enclaves with food.¹⁰⁹

Janvier's staff also considered the possibility of a secret, night-time resupply operation with helicopters. The dangers attached to this did not seem so great and the shooting down of a helicopter would be a question of luck rather than accurate firing. Yet the danger that the helicopters would be fired at remained; not only by the VRS but possibly also by the ABiH, which could then pin the blame

¹⁰³ DCBC, 2415. Secure fax DCBC to G3 Land Ops HQ UNPF Zagreb, Col de Jonge and Milad PVVN New York, Maj Koestal, 241524Z May 95, No. 399.

¹⁰⁴ Interview Lord Owen, 27/06/01.

¹⁰⁵ Interview R. van Veen, 16/08/00.

¹⁰⁶ Confidential information.

¹⁰⁷ Confidential information.

¹⁰⁸ Confidential information.

¹⁰⁹ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. Force Commander to LtGen R. Smith only, 29/05/95, File Ref: FC/95/0801, UN Confi.

on the Bosnian Serbs. Serious risks would be run, however, during the unloading of the cargo from the helicopters at the place of destination.¹¹⁰

UN and NATO assessments followed. It was particularly important to establish how great the chance of success was, what the risks were and whether the Rules of Engagement needed to be altered. Even with extensive NATO support it remained a risky operation. Support from NATO aircraft could not guarantee success, but could minimize the threat of the Bosnian Serbs attacking the helicopters. Adequate support could only be given if Admiral Leighton Smith were permitted to order air strikes in the event that the helicopters were attacked. In addition, he should be authorized to order the retrieval of stranded helicopters by NATO Combat Search and Rescue units at the UN's request. It did not seem necessary to alter the Rules of Engagement. A Combat Search and Rescue operation was in accordance with the existing rules for NATO's *Deny Flight* operation and only required a decision of the North Atlantic Council to extend the scope of these rules to UNPROFOR personnel. Much of the preparatory planning work had already been done by the staff of Admiral Smith. It was now up to New York to approve UNPROFOR's Concept of Operations, after which the UN could direct a formal request to NATO.¹¹¹

NATO Secretary-General Claes subsequently informed his UN counterpart Boutros-Ghali that the NATO military authorities were looking at how NATO air power could be used to help to protect helicopters supplying the enclaves.¹¹²

The issue of resupplying the eastern enclaves was also raised during a meeting of the Ministers of Defence of the WEU countries and NATO in Paris on 3 June 1995. The British and French standpoints were decisive.

The British Minister of Defence, Malcolm Rifkind, contended that if the enclaves could not be resupplied in a normal manner, it would be better for UNPROFOR to leave the enclaves. Rifkind did add that in this exceptional situation resupply by helicopter could be considered on a one-off basis, but for practical considerations and reasons of principle he did not see this as a structural solution. That, after all, would entail an implicit acknowledgement that the VRS could block convoys by road. It forced the UN to take tremendous risks and if a helicopter was brought down, this could provoke a sharp reaction with an enormous risk of escalation. Rifkind also feared provocation by the ABiH.

The French Minister of Defence, Millon, was less outspoken but largely shared this line of thought. He particularly emphasized the risks of the operation and only wished to consider resupply by air in an extreme emergency. General Janvier recognized the risks but thought the operation should still go ahead in view of the plight of the eastern enclaves.

The Dutch Minister of Defence, Voorhoeve, agreed that no unnecessary risks were to be run but also pointed out that Dutchbat had already gone without resupplies of fuel for 105 days and would possibly soon run out of food. Voorhoeve said that the choice was basically between resupply by air or withdrawal of UNPROFOR from the eastern enclaves. In his view, the latter option was equally risky and could even lead to the entire withdrawal of UNPROFOR, which was considered a highly undesirable scenario. Other resupply options were discussed but did not lead to new standpoints.

The US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Shaliskashvili, pointed to the dangers to which the aircraft would be exposed in the case of air drops.

The French suggested that resupply by road be resumed by deploying the Rapid Reaction Force which happened to have been set up at this very meeting with the participation of France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands (this is discussed at greater length in Chapter 1, Part III). The task of this Rapid Reaction Force would then be to break through the blockades of the Bosnian Serbs.

This French suggestion was sharply rejected by the British Chief of Defence Staff, Sir Peter Inge. The conclusion of the meeting therefore was that a one-off resupply operation by air was the

¹¹⁰ NIOD, Coll. Theunens. Interoffice Memorandum G2 UNPF-HQ to G3 Land, G3 Plans, 02/06/95.

¹¹¹ Confidential information (179).

¹¹² UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Letter Willy Claes to Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 31/05/95, No. SG/95/MIN.2. Confi. Attached to Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 31/05/95, No. 1831.

most that could be done, and even that only in an extreme case of emergency.¹¹³ This conclusion was hardly different from the standpoint taken by New York. On the day of the ministerial meeting in Paris, Kofi Annan also said in the talks with the troop-contributing nations that resupply by air was a 'last resort'.¹¹⁴

At the beginning of June, during following meetings about the Rapid Reaction Force, the resupply of the eastern enclaves was again placed on the agenda, but it was not a major item of discussion. There were differences of opinion between the troop-contributing nations and those contributing helicopters. It was mainly the helicopter-contributing countries that wanted to proceed with the planning for the helicopter operation, so that NATO could rapidly decide on a request for support if the UN wanted to set the operation in motion. Other countries, by contrast, thought it was not proper to continue the NATO planning before the UN had submitted a formal request. The chance of success was small and the risks high: it was the very last option and not an alternative for getting sufficient fuel into the enclaves. The Dutch agreed with the conclusion that the chance of success was small. However, as Minister Voorhoeve had observed four days earlier, the possibility of an operation had to remain open in view of the dramatic situation in the enclaves. No decision would be taken about NATO support until the UN had submitted a formal request for this. The preparation of the plans could continue, however, to permit a rapid response to any request for support.¹¹⁵

During the ministerial Defence Planning Committee on 8 June about the Rapid Reaction Force that had been set up in Paris, Voorhoeve once again called attention to Dutchbat's precarious position. While hoping that resupply by air would not be necessary, Voorhoeve said that Dutchbat should be helped and that they were already practically being held hostage. In such a situation it was important to keep the communication channels open with the hostage-takers. In this connection, Voorhoeve was hoping for the support of the Greek Minister of Defence Arsenis who had 'entrées' in Belgrade and Pale. Voorhoeve's intervention did not lead to any further discussion of the problem of resupplying the eastern enclave.¹¹⁶

On 4 June Generals Janvier and Mladic spoke to each other in Zvornik. The resupply of the eastern enclaves was also mentioned in this context. Janvier said that the situation was no longer acceptable; the military personnel needed food and fuel. If Mladic continued to block resupplies by road any longer, then Janvier would find himself compelled to resupply by helicopter. As Mladic would understand, that could lead to provocation and escalation. Moreover, so Janvier argued, it would give Mladic a disastrous image and totally undermine his credibility among the international community. According to Janvier, that same international community was exercising pressure to resupply the UN troops in the enclaves through use of force (this statement was not wholly without bluff). Janvier acknowledged that the Safe Area concept was unsatisfactory and needed to be discussed, but the overriding priority now was to resupply the enclaves. In view of the situation in Central Bosnia, and assuming that the authorities in Belgrade would agree, this could be done by road via Serbia. The need was now so great that the Serbs could expect a request for a clearance to let a convoy through very soon.

Mladic in turn pointed out once again that the resupply problems were directly related to the restrictions imposed on the Bosnian Serbs. The checks at the crossing points over the Drina also formed a big problem for the Bosnian Serbs, so he argued. It was not reasonable to expect him to devote attention to the resupply of the enclaves if he was not given any prospect of the sanctions being relaxed in return. These sanctions, he said, had to be mitigated or suspended. Mladic did not see the arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force as helpful either. Not that he, Mladic, was in any way daunted by its presence, but he said its size was exaggerated and claimed that its deployment would merely serve to fuel the spiral of violence, which was precisely what Janvier wanted to avoid.

¹¹³ DCBC, 1876. Min of Foreign Affairs to Paris embassy, 06/06/95, No. paru072, Confi.

¹¹⁴ ABZ, DPV/ARA/02110. Code Biegman 499, 05/06/95.

¹¹⁵ Confidential information (181).

¹¹⁶ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05278 Code Veenendaal 870, 08/06/95.

Mladic added that nobody could fool him regarding the supply situation in the eastern enclaves: he claimed to have recent data on the food and fuel stocks in the enclaves. Nevertheless Mladic was prepared to make a gesture and said he would allow supplies through via Serbia. To this end, he was to be contacted two days later at 12 noon for details of the exact rendezvous points for each enclave.¹¹⁷ For the discussions resulting from this, reference is made to Chapter 4, Part III.

On 5 June, the day that Battalion Commander Karremans sent out his 'cry for help' regarding the situation in which both Dutchbat and the population of Srebrenica found themselves, Chief of Defence Staff Van den Breemen visited Janvier. Janvier believed there was no way that the Bosnian Serbs would give permission for resupply by air or road under the current circumstances. The hostage crisis was dragging on and Mladic had linked the blockade of Srebrenica to the economic blockade of the Bosnian Serbs, so Janvier said. Janvier felt that a forced resupply by helicopter was too risky at that particular moment. He had now pinned his hopes on an agreement with the Bosnian Serbs so that the enclaves could be resupplied by road via Serbia.¹¹⁸ Janvier did not entirely rule out a resupply operation with helicopters, but resupply by road was clearly the preferred solution at this juncture. The Rapid Reaction Force which was in the process of being set up could possibly provide support in this connection. What that Rapid Reaction Force could not do, however, was keep a land corridor to the enclaves open on a sustained basis.¹¹⁹

The fact that the Intelligence and Security Section of the Royal Netherlands Army carried out a tactical weather and terrain study in June to identify dropping zones and landing sites for helicopters in the enclave (which, incidentally, had already been studied by Dutchbat I) was therefore merely a rearguard action.¹²⁰

It was clear that resupply by air was no longer an option. The individual countries (except Norway) were no longer prepared to provide helicopters.¹²¹ Not only Janvier had come to find the operation too risky, Smith now also saw resupply by air as 'potentially destabilising and escalatory'. Smith started to look for ways of resupplying the enclaves with permission from the Bosnian Serbs.

The problem here was that the ABiH might oppose this. And even if Janvier managed to reach an agreement in principle with Mladic and then a definite agreement with the VRS, this would make UNPROFOR even more dependent on the VRS and possibly result in negative publicity for the UN. Belgrade would demand a price for allowing resupply operations via Serbia. But by this time, Smith badly needed any solution he could get to avoid the eastern enclaves having to be abandoned purely because of resupply problems.¹²²

14. Overland supplies after all?

General Smith warned Janvier on 11 June that difficult decisions had to be made within a few days. For six weeks no leave-taker convoys or mail had been allowed through and the relieving of troops had been stopped. Mladic had allowed Gorazde and Zepa to receive food supplies, but a clearance for Srebrenica had been rejected, though there was still hope that Mladic would let food through to Srebrenica after all. There was still no permission for fuel, however.

Sarajevo had recalculated the supply situation yet again. Fuel remained the central problem: the stock of fuel in Srebrenica would reach its critical point on 15 June, even though there were also some UNHCR stocks. In Gorazde the UN soldiers would run out on 26 June and in Zepa the Ukrainians

¹¹⁷ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF Code Cables 14/06/95-30/06/95. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 15/06/95, No. Z-995. With attached 'Rencontre entre le General Janvier et le General Mladic, Commandant en chef les Forces serbes de Bosnie, Bosnie 04/06/95.

¹¹⁸ Bstas. Memo CDS to the Minister, 06/06/95, No. S/95/061/2330.

¹¹⁹ DCBC, 1878. Force Commander's Intent on the Employment of the Quick Reaction Force, undated [06/06/95].

¹²⁰ MID/KL. TWTS Srebrenica, June 1995 ed. 1. Conf.

¹²¹ Interview R.A. Smith, 12/01/01.

¹²² NIOD, Coll. Smith. Lieutenant General R. A. Smith, Eastern Enclave Operations Assessment, 06/06/95, No. 8940.

were completely without fuel. Unlike the Dutch and the British, they didn't even have fuel in their vehicles in case of an emergency. The fuel shortages entailed the threat that the observation posts (OPs) at both Srebrenica and Zepa could no longer be manned. Smith therefore proposed to withdraw the OPs at Srebrenica and Zepa. After all, without fuel the OPs would be bereft of supplies and could not be reinforced in the event of an attack by the VRS. The lack of fuel also meant that communications could no longer be maintained.

Smith worked out three options for solving the resupply problem. The first option was to bring the matter to a head by publicly announcing that the OPs at Srebrenica and Zepa would be pulled back around 14/15 June. The possibilities for performing observation and reporting duties in and around these Safe Areas would thus be severely curtailed. Such a measure would not remain without consequences for the ABiH in the enclaves and for the humanitarian situation there. The measure would meet with resistance from the Bosnian government. It was expected that as a result of this the troop-contributing nations would no longer be able to remain on the sidelines and would therefore probably undertake action to stabilize the situation in Bosnia. The second option was to postpone a decision. That was only possible if the UNHCR permitted the use of its fuel supplies in Srebrenica or if fuel supplies could be guaranteed via Bosnian Serb territory. The latter would make UNPROFOR even more dependent on the Bosnian Serbs; either way, they would be at the mercy of the Bosnian Serbs' whim. This option would make it possible to put a decision off for a few more weeks. If the resupply problem had not yet been solved by that time, then it would be necessary to fall back on the third option: i.e. to declare that Dutchbat was no longer operational or to re-open negotiations with the VRS. And then UNPROFOR would be the requesting party; concessions would have to be made repeatedly to the VRS in exchange for the fundamental right to resupplies.¹²³

Three days later, on 14 June, Smith continued to press his case, sending Janvier yet another personally written fax concerning the resupply problem. Despite the sparing use of fuel, Srebrenica would run dry on 18 June, Sarajevo on 21 June and Gorazde on 26 June. Zepa was already without fuel. All enclaves were also in need of other supplies and the troops needed to be relieved. The direct attack that the VRS was carrying out against the sanctions imposed on the Serbs had to be stopped.

Smith therefore again recommended a hard line. The Bosnian Serbs had not been particularly cooperative in the past and further negotiations were not justified, so he argued. It had to be made clear through the highest international and national channels that the sanctions would not be lifted and that the right to Freedom of Movement was absolute. UNPROFOR had been forced to stand back and watch its convoys being searched, checked and regulated, without being able to do anything about it. Without Freedom of Movement UNPROFOR was unable to function and the VRS was managing to turn all this to its own advantage. Smith rejected the idea of further negotiations; he now simply wanted to announce when convoys would be dispatched and to where. Nor did he want to tolerate convoys being stopped and searched any longer. The convoys were to be escorted and if the Bosnian Serbs attacked the convoys, Smith wanted to be able to carry out a strong counter attack with all possible means. The alternative was to declare that the UNPROFOR units were no longer operational, in which case the enclaves would have to be abandoned.¹²⁴

15. Resupply by land after all – negotiations with the VRS

As a result of the arrangements made between General Mladic and Janvier during their talks on 4 June, food supplies were eventually allowed through to the UN troops in Gorazde and Zepa. A clearance to resupply Srebrenica submitted on 9 June was rejected, though the hope remained that Mladic would also let food through to Srebrenica.

¹²³ NIOD, Coll. Smith. The Office of the Commander HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, 111900BJun95.

¹²⁴ NIOD, Coll. Smith. The Office of the Commander HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, 141730BJun95.

On 12 June Mladic wrote to Janvier about the resupply issue, but he never mentioned fuel in the letter. He expressed his willingness to honour the arrangements made on 4 June with Janvier. Mladic would allow the most essential supplies through in accordance with the needs of the UN military personnel stationed in the enclaves. Mladic did add incidentally that it would be wise to report the free passage of the convoys to the Yugoslavian authorities. Before the convoys started, Mladic also wanted the release of four of his soldiers being held in UN hands. He, for his part, had already released 231 hostages, so Mladic claimed. Mladic also promised to discuss the times and routes of the convoys at a next meeting with Janvier.¹²⁵

On 17 June Janvier and Mladic spoke to each other again. Apart from supplies for the UN personnel, humanitarian aid for the population and Displaced Persons was also on the agenda. Mladic was adamant that this humanitarian aid would not be resumed unless an equal share went to the Bosnian Serb population. The discussion subsequently turned to the issue of resupplying the UN military personnel in the eastern enclaves. Janvier said that they not only needed food and fuel to perform their tasks but also for their safety and survival. The authorities in Belgrade had meanwhile agreed to a resupply operation via Serbia; it was now up to Mladic to actually permit the execution of this operation which had already been postponed several times. Failure would have a disastrous effect on Mladic's image, so Janvier asserted. Mladic said that he understood the need to supply the troops, but in view of the fact that ammunition and goods had been smuggled through for the black market with previous convoys, Mladic wanted to check the convoy at Zvornik in Bosnian-Serb territory. Mladic saw this convoy as a test.¹²⁶

As early as 12 June a convoy of fifty lorries destined for Dutchbat had departed Split for Zagreb. On 19 June twenty vehicles of this convoy went ahead, leaving Zagreb for Belgrade.¹²⁷ The prevailing mood among the Staff at Zagreb was that the Bosnian Serbs would again refuse to allow the convoy through. In this case, Dutchbat could continue to man the OPs but no longer be operational as a unit. A similar situation had already been accepted for the British battalion in Gorazde. At that time, Zagreb had not worked out any policy for its further actions but, whatever happened, Janvier certainly did not want to force anything. If nothing was done, the pressure on Janvier would be increased. In fact, the Bosnian government had already started doing this by declaring that it would intervene of its own accord to help the population in the enclaves. Differences of opinion and irritations arose between the headquarters in Zagreb and Sarajevo, which was in favour of taking a harder line. But Janvier was evidently having difficulty making up his mind; he put the issues to New York which, in turn, replied that the solutions had to be found in Zagreb.¹²⁸

Earlier Kofi Annan had asked Akashi from New York what he proposed to do after political agreement about resupply had been reached in Pale on 9 June; this was probably the result of the contacts between the American negotiator Robert Frasure and Milosevic which had been maintained despite the hostage crisis. During these contacts, the need to resupply the enclaves in the shortest possible term had been pointed out to Milosevic.¹²⁹

Evidently, however, the Bosnian Serb military leaders had simply ignored the political agreement of 9 June. Was there any prospect whatsoever of Zagreb being able to convert this political agreement into concrete action to force local commanders to comply, so New York wondered.¹³⁰

The question was whether New York was prepared to accept any escalation of a resupply operation. Resolution 998 of the UN Security Council of 16 June demanded unhindered access for humanitarian aid, particularly for the Safe Areas. Akashi again underlined to Karadzic that this was one

¹²⁵ NIOD Coll. Smith. Letter Mladic to Janvier, 12/06/95, No. 06/17-430.

¹²⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF Code Cables 14/06/95-30/06/95. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 20/06/95, No. Z-1025.

¹²⁷ DCBC, 2512. Memo Voorhoeve [?] 'Noodkreet Karremans' ('Karremans' Cry for Help'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, undated.

¹²⁸ CRST. Fax G3 Land Ops HQ UNPF Zagreb (Col. J.H. de Jonge) to CDS (in hands) and BLS (in hands), 17/06/95, no number, UN Conf.

¹²⁹ ABZ, Code Jacobovits 378, 08/06/95; DCBC, 2811, Code Veenendaal NATO 870, 08/06/95.

¹³⁰ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 15/06/95, No. 1981.

of UNPROFOR's principal objectives.¹³¹ This resolution received no powerful endorsement from New York, however (see Chapter 1, Part III).

Smith in Sarajevo was still more inclined to take robust action than Janvier in Zagreb; Smith held that the willingness to accept escalation should be evident. If the cards were to be laid on the table, then a resupply plan needed to be more than bluff alone. Smith therefore issued a new operational order on 17 June. Though the plan concentrated on Sarajevo in this particular instance, it would also be applicable to the eastern enclaves in the future.¹³² With the last hostages being released around this time, Smith also saw fresh scope for a round of negotiations. To this end, he wanted to coordinate a negotiating plan with Zagreb. One of the priorities that Smith mentioned in this context was the safety of the military personnel, and resupplies were part and parcel of this.¹³³

On 20 June the VRS eventually let 23 of the 56 vehicles in the convoy through. Of these 23, six were destined for Srebrenica. This entailed that 50% less food and 70% less fuel was delivered than if the entire convoy had got through.¹³⁴ As regards further resupply operations, Akashi wanted to avoid risks as far as possible until the situation changed. Consequently, his efforts were aimed at achieving resupply 'in the normal manner'.

The main thing however was that at least some supplies had got through, though not nearly in the quantities required. A more robust approach at that point would have been premature and would have given rise to risks to which UNPROFOR was unable to respond adequately as long as the Rapid Reaction Force had not yet arrived. While this Force would have the capability to open resupply routes more robustly, it would not be able to do so on a permanent basis.¹³⁵ This was the last convoy to reach Srebrenica before the town fell; other convoys were not allowed through.

Janvier did continue his efforts from Zagreb to resupply the eastern enclaves via Belgrade and Zvornik, even though this meant a tremendous detour for the convoys. Apart from the Croatian authorities and the Croatian Army, the Bosnian government also raised objections to this. In addition, the Bosnian government created problems when it got wind of UNPROFOR's intention to re-route convoys through Yugoslavian territory. Minister Hasan Muratovic vigorously protested against this to Akashi. In his view, it was in contravention of Resolution 820 (which stipulated that any flows of goods, other than for humanitarian purposes, that went through territory controlled by the VRS would only be permitted after authorization from the Bosnian government). Akashi had no objection to exploring alternatives more in accordance with the wishes of the Bosnian government, but did not wish to rule out this option. According to Akashi, Muratovic's considerations appeared to be based on the wish to maintain the isolation of Belgrade and Pale and to protract the logistical crisis in the enclaves in an effort to tempt UNPROFOR to take more extreme measures.¹³⁶

The long detour that the convoys would have to make via Belgrade led to the idea of using transport aircraft which had little to do now that all supply routes to Sarajevo had been cut off. These transport aircraft could carry supplies to Belgrade from where a transport detachment to be stationed in Belgrade could take the goods to the enclaves. This, incidentally, came too late to alleviate the plight of Dutchbat. For the Bosnian Serbs had already launched their attack on the enclave when this idea was being developed.¹³⁷

Until Srebrenica fell, the question of resupplying the enclaves virtually disappeared from the agenda. The few times that the issue was raised, the demands made by the Bosnian Serbs continued to

¹³¹ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Letter Akashi to Karadzic, 19/06/95, attached to Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 19/06/95, No. Z-1022.

¹³² NIOD, Coll. Smith. HQ UNPROFOR Sarajevo, Operation Order 011/95, 171800B Jun95, UN Conf.

¹³³ NIOD, Coll. Ashton. The Office of the Commander HQ UNPROFOR to HQ UNPF Zagreb, attn COS, 161330BJun95.

¹³⁴ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 20/06/95, No. UNPF Z-1026.

¹³⁵ Confidential information.

¹³⁶ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Akashi to Annan, 16/06/95, No. Z-1011.

¹³⁷ UNNY, UNPROFOR, Box 87305, File 3300 SEE Vol. I Resupply Eastern Encl, 17 Apr-11 Jul95. UNPF Zagreb Interoffice Memorandum, COS Log & Adm & CISS to DFC & DOA, 07/06/95.

stand in the way of a solution. This became clear during the third talk that Janvier and Mladic had with each other on 29 June in Zvornik. When the matter was broached again, Mladic repeated his standpoint that he would agree to the delivery of humanitarian aid, provided that 50% of this aid went to the Bosnian Serb population. They, after all, were in the same needy circumstances as the UN troops in the enclaves, so Mladic claimed, and the international community was also under an obligation to keep them alive.¹³⁸

The talks with Mladic were fruitless and the risks of a resupply operation by air remained as great as ever. This transpired during a talk that the Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic had with the Secretary-General of NATO, Claes. Claes felt that resupply by air without political agreement about the consequences of such an operation was too dangerous for the UN mission. If the operation went wrong, then the political conclusion would probably be to withdraw from Bosnia.¹³⁹

EU negotiator Bildt subsequently again raised the issue of resupplying the enclaves during his talks with Milosevic, but by then the fighting around Srebrenica had already started.¹⁴⁰

16. Conclusions

The issue of resupplying the eastern enclaves was a never-ending story. The most important conclusion to be drawn from the above is that there was no political will to undertake such a risky operation as resupply by air. It initially seemed as if a certain will existed among the countries involved and UNPROFOR to set up an operation, but the more they were confronted with the risky prospect of a counteraction by the VRS, the less eager they became to approve an operation. The momentum that had existed earlier in March 1995 petered out.

The lack of clarity concerning the exact period of time that the UN troops in the enclaves could hold out with the existing stocks did not help the decision-making process either. That the UN and NATO failed to answer essential questions about the mutual division of tasks and powers in the event of an operation was partly due to the fact that the UN headquarters in New York did not send NATO a formal request for support. As a result, though NATO was preparing for an operation, there was no immediate need to make hard-and-fast decisions.

It is, incidentally, not entirely clear what would have happened if the UN had decided to go ahead with the operation. When asked about this, the Commander-in-Chief of NATO's Southern Command, Admiral Leighton Smith, said that he would have been prepared to grant NATO support for the operation if UNPROFOR had asked him for this. In that case, he would not have asked NATO for authorization.¹⁴¹ This, however, was said after the event. Admiral Smith was all too willing to assist UNPROFOR but he had already been personally rapped on the knuckles by NATO Secretary-General Claes because of the insistence with which he had pressed for bombardments in contravention of Security Council resolutions.¹⁴²

From Dutchbat's perspective the supply situation in the enclaves remained serious throughout; the supplies became progressively depleted. Freedom of Movement had become a dead letter for the UN. With the exception of a small consignment at the end of June, Dutchbat received no resupplies of fuel from 18 February 1995 until the fall of Srebrenica.

Apart from supply convoys, the Bosnian Serbs also obstructed leave-taker convoys. Food supplies for Dutchbat also only came through in dribs and drabs. And as soon as any overland supplies, no matter how meagre, reached the enclave, the resupply issue was swiftly taken off the agenda. This, of course, was not the way to reach a structural solution to the problem. UNPROFOR was thus trapped in a vicious circle. The UN units in the enclaves were like lemons being squeezed to the last

¹³⁸ UNNY, DPKO, UNPF. Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 01/07/95, No. UNPF Z-1082.

¹³⁹ Confidential information (181).

¹⁴⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05244. Madrid Coreu 454, 11/07/95.

¹⁴¹ Interview Leighton Smith, 06/06/00.

¹⁴² Interview W. Claes, 12/03/01.

drop. These problems incidentally were not unique to Srebrenica: Zepa and Gorazde were in a comparable position.

To General Smith in Sarajevo, resupply by air was primarily a form of psychological warfare to put Mladic in his place and to persuade him to allow resupply by land. Time and again, he took the initiative to look at alternatives and options, advantages and disadvantages, and the reactions of the warring factions. Smith continued to emphasize the problem to his superiors in Zagreb. He revealed himself to be an imaginative thinker who continued to look for a solution that took the complicated military and political circumstances into account. In doing so, he was prepared to run a certain risk and put the VRS on the spot. His basic arguments hardly changed; the problem was serious and remained serious. The reaction to Smith's plans also hardly changed: these were repeatedly found to be too risky.

Smith thus displayed greater resolve than General Janvier in Zagreb. Janvier was more cautious. He usually supported Smith's plans after some hesitation, but his problem was then to obtain permission from New York. The UN in New York, in turn, was in no hurry to force through a solution. Several times, New York also expressed doubts about the seriousness of the situation.

It seemed as if New York did not really understand the concept of resupplying the eastern enclaves by air. Though the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the UN did look at the possibilities for planning such an operation, it appeared to have little faith in the helicopter option.

Resupply by air was not seen as a structural solution. This view, incidentally, was held more widely and was also shared in Zagreb and Sarajevo. The preference was to stick to overland convoys, which had a much greater capacity, and to seek permission for these from the Bosnian Serbs.

New York was also loath to compromise the peacekeeping nature of the operation. If a helicopter had been brought down, the line of demarcation between peacekeeping and peace enforcement might have been blurred, thus putting the entire UNPROFOR operation in jeopardy; this fear also explains why New York kept such a wary eye on NATO Admiral Leighton Smith's persistent urging to suppress the Bosnian Serb air defences in order to pre-empt Bosnian Serb attacks on NATO aircraft.

This general picture is confirmed by the German General Manfred Eisele, Assistant Secretary-General for Planning and Support of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the UN in New York. He said that he had worked on improving the political climate for resupplying UNPROFOR units within the UN. But resupply with helicopters and support from NATO aircraft turned out to present far too many difficulties which, in his view, were mainly caused by the risk of possible counteractions by the VRS. The NATO member states, so he said, were also insufficiently willing to give air support. According to Eisele, the chance that the plan for resupply by air would actually be carried out was not 'close to zero: it *was* zero!'.¹⁴³

There was nothing unique about the constant hesitations at the UN in New York. UN operations by definition depend heavily on the governments of individual countries. The British government was non-committal on the whole; the French were more cooperative. The British Minister Rifkind made it clear that the British government had serious doubts. He reiterated this on 20 June to Annan in New York, but he had already reached his standpoint that such an operation was too dangerous well before then. The Canadian government had withdrawn its support for the same reason. Rifkind then reaffirmed his support for resupply by road with the permission of the VRS; failing that permission, the British government doubted whether there was any point in maintaining a presence in the enclaves.¹⁴⁴ There were even suggestions that the British Permanent Representative at the UN, Sir David Hannay, had deliberately misrepresented the concept of resupply by air because the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office was against any resupply operation based on force; the British

¹⁴³ Interview Manfred Eisele, 14/10/99.

¹⁴⁴ NIOD, Coll. Smith. Code Cable Annan to Akashi, 20/06/95, No. 2042.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs felt it was more important to keep NATO together. Meanwhile, it was all too true that 'NATO was standing by as an irrelevance'.¹⁴⁵

The Bosnian Serbs gave no quarter and saw the obstruction of UNPROFOR as a means of paying the UN back in kind for the increasingly painful UN embargo. The Bosnian Serbs wanted to punish UNPROFOR for the sanctions imposed against them and demanded that half of the contents of convoys be surrendered to them. In addition, their strategy was a deliberate effort to restrict the logistical support of UNPROFOR in the enclaves and the supplies to the population. UNPROFOR and the population were to be made dependent on the good will of the Bosnian Serbs. Their aim was to create an unbearable situation without any hope of improvement. In an international context, it was expected that if the Serbs were prepared to block convoys by road, they would also have no qualms about undertaking action against resupply operations by air.

If there was any time that resupply with helicopters and NATO air support had been possible, it was at the beginning of March. Faced with the threat of concrete action, the VRS relented and allowed a convoy through, although again without fuel. The success of this resupply mission was largely attributable to a solo effort by General Smith who managed to persuade the British Chief of Defence Staff to give him permission to use British Chinook helicopters for this purpose.

The Bosnian government was not very helpful either. When a small convoy managed to reach Srebrenica from Yugoslavia in June, this elicited protests from the Bosnian government which Minister Muratovic expressed in a letter to Janvier: 'UNPROFOR yielded to the blackmail of the Serb Aggressor side and accepted to receive supplies from and via Serbia'. According to the Bosnian Muslims, all this was one of the results of the secret meetings between Janvier and Mladic (for a more extensive discussion of this, see Chapter 2, Part III). It was unacceptable to the Bosnian people to see that those responsible for the safe delivery of humanitarian aid were negotiating with the party who had caused all the misery. For this reason, the Bosnian population might respond in an unpredictable manner to vehicles bringing supplies from 'occupied territory'. Muratovic also questioned the fact that UNPROFOR was going to such lengths to supply its own personnel without doing a thing to provide the population of Sarajevo with food 'which was your mission in the first place'. Janvier had no intention of responding to Muratovic's letter.¹⁴⁶

There were also a number of external factors that thwarted the initiatives to resupply by air. The hostage crisis after the bombardments on Pale only made the possibility of a solution more remote than ever. The announced arrival of the Rapid Reaction Force also had a counterproductive effect. In contrast to what the Netherlands had hoped, this unit's task was not to obtain access to the enclaves through the use of force. Moreover, Janvier also felt that the Rapid Reaction Force had been foisted upon him; he feared that its deployment would expose UN personnel in the eastern enclaves to reactions of the VRS.

Looking back with hindsight, the then Chief of the Directorate for Atlantic Security of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, F. Majoor, ventured that the Netherlands should possibly have spoken out at the meeting in Paris on 3 June to say loudly and clearly that Dutchbat could no longer accept responsibility for the safety of Srebrenica.

On the other hand, such a statement might have made the Ukrainians think twice about relieving Dutchbat precisely when the agreement was politically close to finalization. Another not inconsiderable problem was that such a stance would have placed the population at the mercy of the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁴⁷

Even so, this frank admission raises the question as to whether the Netherlands should not have exerted more vigorous pressure on New York to take measures to improve the resupply situation. Ministers Van Mierlo and Voorhoeve had spoken to each other regularly about the rapidly deteriorating

¹⁴⁵ Interview J. Baxter, 16/10/00.

¹⁴⁶ NIOD, Coll Ashton. Hasan Muratovic to General Rupert Smith, 27/06/95, No. 01-91-1158/95. Sent with Code Cable Janvier to Annan, 28/06/95, No. Z-1070.

¹⁴⁷ ABZ, DAV 999.241. Memorandum DAV to RPZ (H.J. Hazewinkel), 16/11/95, No. 95/1225. ABZ, DAV 999.241.

situation, but this had not resulted in any strong signals indicating to New York that, unless the UN changed its policy, the Netherlands would find itself compelled to discontinue its task in the enclave. Such a signal, as was said retrospectively at Foreign Affairs, would have been the obvious course of action after Karremans had made the hopelessness of Dutchbat's position clear to The Hague.¹⁴⁸

Representatives of the Ministry of Defence who visited the UN headquarters in Zagreb and New York did repeatedly raise the resupply issue. Janvier's staff in Zagreb needed no convincing, however. The problems lay with the UN in New York which, in turn, pointed to the individual governments whose hesitations steadily grew as time progressed.

The Hague, too, failed to send any powerful diplomatic signals to New York. Whether the Netherlands could have achieved anything there on its own is very much open to question, but a combined effort with the other countries that had supplied troops to the eastern enclaves (the United Kingdom and Ukraine) would at least have made it possible to present a stronger case.

¹⁴⁸ ABZ, DAV/MS, 01100. Memorandum Head DAV/MS to Head DAV, 16/10/95, No. DAV/MS-89/95.

Appendix VIII

Background and influence of media reporting
of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia during
the period 1991–1995:

A study of views and methods of Dutch
journalists

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Introduction

In 1998, the Amsterdam School of Communications Research (ASCoR), was asked by the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (NIOD) to contribute to the investigation being undertaken by that organization into the circumstances and events before, during and after the fall of Srebrenica. ASCoR was specifically asked to perform a study of the role and significance of media aspects in this regard.

Clearly, the term ‘media aspects’ can have many different meanings. However, given the terms of reference of the NIOD’s overall investigation, the priority was seen to be a consideration of the manner in which media may have influenced the formation or confirmation of general assumptions and prejudices on the part of the actors relevant to the study, and the extent of any such influence.

Much of the research this involved was difficult, if not impossible, to separate from that conducted by the NIOD itself. However, while the interaction with the NIOD study was in itself important, useful contributions could be made ‘from outside’ in two important areas, namely, an examination of the news process itself and a content analysis of some representative media.

These then were the areas of research undertaken by ASCoR. The analysis of news reporting in the national newspapers NRC Handelsblad, De Telegraaf, Trouw, and De Volkskrant and the NOS Journaal television news in August 1992, throughout 1993 and the first seven months of 1995 is reported in detail in *In Sarajevo wordt geschoten, in Genève gepraat* (‘They’re shooting in Sarajevo, they’re talking in Geneva’) and *Good guys, bad guys* by Otto Scholten, Nel Ruigrok and Pieter Heerma (2001a and 2001b).

The current report, *Srebrenica and journalism*, should be seen as a ‘companion volume’ to the Scholten, Ruigrok and Heerma study. Its primary purpose is to present and clarify the background to the reports from and about the former Yugoslavia. The first part of this document consists of an account (based on desk research) of the news production process, the context in which it is carried out, and the complex relationship between mass media, politics and public opinion. The second section is largely based on interviews with Dutch journalists who were involved in reporting the hostilities in the former Yugoslavia. The main purpose of these interviews was to gain an insight into the motives and working methods of the journalists, (and of the publications they represented at the time), their opinions concerning the conflict and those concerning the role and influence of the media. Given the aims and terms of reference of this part of the research, little or no attempt was made to ascertain the veracity of the statements made or to verify the opinions stated by comparing them to those of others.

Like the analysis conducted by Scholten et al., this component of the study is concerned with the media reporting in the period immediately prior to the deployment of Dutchbat forces in Srebrenica, and the events surrounding the fall of the enclave in July 1995.

It should be noted that no attempt has been made to arrive at a representative sample of Dutch journalists. Rather, those interviewed were selected because their position, or that of the media organizations which employed them, suggested that their influence on the process of providing information and forming opinion – might have been greater than average. To some extent, the selection was made on the basis of the results of the content analysis.

Because the scope of the NIOD study overlapped with that of this ASCoR report, it was decided that some of the journalists whose names appeared on both organizations’ lists would be interviewed jointly by Paul Koedijk of the NIOD and the author of this report. The main in-depth interviews were conducted between August 1999 and November 2000. They varied in duration from approximately ninety minutes to over four hours. The respondents were – without exception – remarkably willing to cooperate with the research, not only in answering our questions but in many cases also by providing additional information. We are grateful for their help.

Direct quotations from interviews and references to statements made in interviews are indicated in the footnotes by the name of the respondent and the date of the interview, e.g. ‘Zimmermann, 28

April 2000¹. Where comments were received by e-mail or by telephone, this is indicated in a similar manner. The following is a list of respondents, their date of interview, and (journalistic) position/affiliation:

- Anet Bleich, 16 September 1999. De Volkskrant; foreign editor since 1 October 1989.
- Raymond van den Boogaard, 5 November 1999. NRC Handelsblad; correspondent in Moscow and Berlin; correspondent in the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1994; currently media editor.
- Carolien Brugsma, 2 February 2000. Nova; November 1990, editor at NOS Laet; editor at Nova since 1992.
- Gerri Eickhof, 18 January 2000. NOS Journaal; as news editor since 1988; domestic news chief in 1992; reporter since 1992.
- Twan Huys (23 December 1999), 8 July 2000 (interviewed by Paul Koedijk, NIOD¹) Nova; reporter. Currently Washington correspondent for Nova and Radio 1.
- Mark Kranenburg, 13 September 2000. NRC Handelsblad; political editor and chief parliamentary editor. Editor of editorial and opinion page since 1996.
- Cees Labeur, 16 August 1999 and 21 August 2000 (with Roelof Schut). NCRV Hier en Nu (Netwerk); executive editor Hier en Nu (TV), now manager of current affairs unit.
- Hans Laroës, 18 and 24 November 1999. NOS Journaal; deputy editor, later joint executive editor.
- Harry Lockefeer, 30 November 1999. De Volkskrant; editor-in-chief until early 1995; now Professor of Journalism at Groningen University.
- Willem Lust, 19 July 2000 (interviewed with Paul Koedijk of NIOD). Reporter for RTL Nieuws 1990-1998. Now works on Nova.
- Peter Michielsen, 15 September 1999. NRC Handelsblad; Eastern European editor since 1982.
- Bart Nypels (with Fons de Poel), 28 October 1999 (interviewed with Paul Koedijk of NIOD). KRO Reporter, Brandpunt (Netwerk); reporter.
- Ewoud Nysingh, 14 September 2000 (interviewed with Paul Koedijk, NIOD). De Volkskrant; foreign editor 1990- 1994, political editor 1994 – 2000. Currently on the staff of Nova.
- Ab Pilgram, 27 September 2000 (interviewed with Paul Koedijk, NIOD). KRO Echo (later Radio 1 Journaal); parliamentary editor.
- Fons de Poel (with Bart Nypels), 28 October 1999 (interviewed with Paul Koedijk, NIOD). KRO Brandpunt (Netwerk), Reporter; 1982 reporter for KRO television's Brandpunt; executive editor and presenter of the Brandpunt editions of the Netwerk programmes since 1994.
- Linda Polman (with Eliaan Schoonman), 24 August 1999. Freelance journalist; war correspondent. Lecturer in overseas journalism at the School of Journalism in Utrecht.
- André Roelofs, 29 September 2000. De Volkskrant; Moscow correspondent until early 1991, then senior foreign editor.
- Jan Schoeman, 12 August 1999. Stichting Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht (Society and Armed Forces Foundation), information and public relations spokesman; currently working for Stichting Dienstverlening Veteranen (Veterans' Assistance Foundation).
- Eliaan Schoonman (with Linda Polman), 24 August 1999. Independent advisor to Issues Management Institute, lecturer at the School of Journalism in Utrecht.
- Roelof Schut (with Cees Labeur), 21 November 2000. NCRV Hier en Nu (Netwerk) editor; now journalist with the documentation department of NCRV.
- Othon Zimmermann, 28 April 2000 (interviewed with Paul Koedijk, NIOD). Algemeen Dagblad; foreign editor, Balkans specialist. Now parliamentary editor.

Bibliographic references are included in the text according to the conventions used in the social sciences (e.g. McQuail 1992), with the full title and publication details given at the end of the report.

¹ Paul Koedijk spoke alone to Twan Huys in Washington when it proved impossible to conduct a planned joint interview.

For practical reasons references to newspaper articles are usually given in footnotes. Quotations from respondents which are not germane to the text but which are nevertheless illustrative are also included as footnotes. Footnotes are used to provide any explanation of the main text considered necessary by the author. Translations of the titles of articles are provided for information only and the inclusion of the title in English does not infer that the entire article is available in translation. Translations of personal (spoken) accounts are, of necessity, periphrastic.

The bibliography and list of references contains both publications that have been cited in this report and others which have been consulted during research. Furthermore, books which have been named by respondents as being of particular significance to their work, such as Glenny's *The fall of Yugoslavia* and Rohde's *Endgame* (referred to as 'Nova's bible') are also listed. It should be noted that several publications of an academic nature, dealing with the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1995 and the role of the media, are somewhat apologist in nature (e.g. Mestrovic, 1996, with regard to the role of Croatia). This reflects the emotionally charged nature of the Balkans conflict.

The terminology used in relation to the Balkans conflict is also heavy with meaning. 'War' or 'civil war', 'serbs' or 'Bosnian Serbs': these and other seemingly neutral terms, may indicate a leaning towards one party or the other, or a preference for one or other definition of the conflict. However, throughout this report terms such as these will be used freely, and with no special meaning intended.

Chapter 1

Media: process and effects

Politics, media and public opinion

The media, public opinion and politics are closely interrelated. Provided the mass media are able to safeguard their own independence, this interrelationship works in the general interest. The media act as intermediaries between the state and its citizens, providing information which enables people to orient themselves within the society in which they live, and which they need to exert influence over the forces which control society. At the same time, the media also reflect and represent the existing power relationships and the prevailing ideas and values within a society.

In their role as intermediaries in the democratic process, it is essential that the media are reliable and trustworthy, which means that they must be seen as taking their task seriously, and doing all they can to ensure the greatest degree of care and accuracy as information providers. This is, of course, not to say that they can really be expected to provide a thoroughly objective or true picture of reality.

There is a considerable body of research (cf. Seymour-Ure 1969; Dahrendorf 1974; Mancini 1991) to suggest that another function of the media may be just as important. Media function not only as means of communication between political elites and the general public, but also facilitate communication, horizontally, between the elites themselves.

The need for the media to provide information which is credible and accurate has led to a number of journalistic conventions and practices, such as a separation of news and comment, presentation of both sides of a story, and the habit of checking and double-checking. However, various forces and developments within the media and within society itself may interfere with the application of such basic rules of good journalism (McQuail, 1992). This is even more true in wartime, when, as has been remarked, truth is often the first casualty.

The ideal situation is one of balance between media and (political) news sources. The media are largely dependent on news produced and by political and other official sources. Likewise, in a democracy, those with political power rely on publicity regarding their actions and dealings. When this relationship becomes too close, it can have a negative effect on both parties' ability to function independently and in particular on the assumed democratic function of the media.

However, this may not be the root cause of the 'democratic malaise' which some authors claim Western society now faces. This is attributed to other developments: such as more critical, more sensational and more ad personam forms of television journalism and the increasingly professional marketing of political parties which, taken together, are likely to give rise to a more cynical attitude on the part of the public (see Norris 2000; Schulz 2001). Various observers (e.g. Patterson, 1993) have identified a trend in political reporting whereby content has become less important than the question of who is going to win or lose.² Dahlgren believes that political culture has all but converged with that of television:

"The interaction between journalists and power holders, the ensemble of news values, the framing of events, the accepted modes of discourse, the style of interviews and so on, all express an integration of television and political culture." Dahlgren (1995: 45).

Interrelationship and mutual dependency is traditionally the greatest in the geographic centres of political power, which are usually also the centres of most media activity. In the Netherlands, The Hague is the centre of political power and decision-making and is hence the permanent focus of

² See also Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2000.

considerable media attention. Much has been written about the mutual relationship and occasional interference between political and journalistic interests in such centres. Works dealing specifically with the Dutch situation include Kaiser (1985) and, more recently Geelen (1998). Bernard Cohen's classic 1963 study *The Press and Foreign Policy*, characterizes the relationship as one in which journalists are heavily reliant on the official news issued by government sources (see also Gans 1980; Tunstall 1970, 1971; Sigal 1973; Tuchman 1978, and others). Cohen (and later Kaiser in her study of journalistic practice in *The Hague*) concludes that there is a form of symbiosis between politics and journalism; each needs the other and each uses the other for its own purposes. Later studies point out that the official sources have actually become more important over time, especially with regard to foreign policy and security issues (Hallin 1986; Bennett 1994; O'Heffernan 1991,1994).

Representation

The ideal-typical image of the media as providers of a complete and unobstructed view of the real world is, needless to say, an illusion³, albeit one which is cherished and maintained not only by the media themselves but also by those whom the media address, their audiences (Ridell 1998). The media reinforce the illusion through the forms in which they choose to present news and information. These presentational styles deliberately create an impression of distance, impartiality and credibility. Newspapers, radio and television act as the intermediaries between ourselves and the events in the world around us, but mediation inevitably leads to distortion through selection, structuring, accentuation and processing. News can perhaps be better described as stories about events rather than as a reflection of reality itself. Furthermore, we must not lose sight of the fact that, trivia aside, there is no one single shared reality, recognizable to us all.

None of this is intended to suggest that the media will always act in a random, unpredictable manner, nor that the picture presented to us actually conflicts with reality. In the first place, the media must function within our culture, i.e. within a complex of shared habits, ideas and opinions which have been formed by a long historical process and under the influence of specific power relationships within a given community. The media are rarely ahead of their time, nor are they much behind. Where there is no difference of opinion, the media cannot be expected to voice dissent. Western cultures may have become increasingly heterogeneous, and therefore allow for a lot of different positions, but one is never completely out of touch with its central values. Our concepts regarding the role and function of the media and of journalists are part of this shared culture.

The media function not only within a specific culture, but also within a given social structure. Until a few decades ago, media were often directed from and targeted towards clearly defined social factions – a particular religious denomination or a political leaning, for example. Today, there is far greater market orientation. National and European deregulation policies, and the emergence of cable and satellite, have given rise to a new competitive structure in the world of broadcasting. Such developments are not restricted to the Netherlands but are to be seen throughout the West. Almost all Western European countries have seen their public broadcasting monopolies replaced by a dual system of public broadcasters operating alongside and in competition with commercial stations, who are in turn competing with each other. Relative scarcity has given way to an abundance of choices, but this does not necessarily mean diversity of choice. Some commentators believe that we are simply being offered more of the same.

Such developments have also had an effect on the provision of information via the mass media, since, at the end of the day, the only bottom line for a private broadcaster is the balance sheet. The need to make a profit implies an approach rather different to that of an organization devoted to public service. Even among public broadcasters, competition seems to have entailed a shift in focus from what the public needs to what the consumer (or advertiser) demands. In journalism in general, and in

³ As demonstrated already in one of the first studies of television news reporting, by Lang and Lang (1953).

television journalism in particular, some critics signal a ‘dumbing-down’ process, in which there is increased emphasis on lightweight, fast and sensationalistic reporting, more and more human interest, and various mixtures of serious information with pure entertainment in infotainment-type formats. This trend might be illustrated by comments reportedly made by Harm Taselaar, the executive editor of commercial television news programme RTL Nieuws (in the *Gooi- en Eemlander* newspaper, 3 January 2001). Referring to his programme’s lack of coverage of a fire in Volendam in the early hours of New Year’s Day 2001 (a news item which quickly took on the significance of a national tragedy) he allegedly remarked, “Having seen the ratings of the other channels, I have to admit that we made the wrong decision.”⁴

Nevertheless, matters are rather more complicated than they may seem. It is a little too easy to blame increased competition with commercial stations and ratings wars for everything that has gone wrong in the world of journalism. Comparative research has found little evidence to suggest a general trend of adaptation, in the sense of convergence between the public and commercial broadcasters. The media in general have certainly become less apodictic in their presentation, more accessible and understandable to a wide audience than was the case forty or fifty years ago (Wieten 1998). Research so far shows no harmful effects, in the sense of people being less well-informed now than they used to be (Norris 2000). Nevertheless, Schulz (2001) believes that increasing political cynicism, particularly among those who are better informed, could be attributed to a more critical and sensationalist style of television journalism. Those who glean their news from newspapers and those who watch television for entertainment rather than information do not display this tendency.

News as a matter of time, place and person

The media are professional organizations which are equipped to gather, organize, and process an endless amount of events and to turn these into understandable news messages, coherent stories about the actualities of the day and the world that we live in (cf. Schudson 1989). Over the course of their existence they have developed routines which enable them to bring order to the chaos of events in the short time available, and to select what is relevant. Journalistic routines provide the minimum required level of continuity, security and predictability in a field that, by its very nature, is unpredictable and insecure.

The ‘news’ that we see, hear and read, shaped as it is by this largely routine process of selection, editing and presentation, is coloured and biased news, not because it is deliberately slanted, but because bias is simply unavoidable. Nevertheless, most authors agree that the working methods of the media and of individual journalists result in some systematic distortion, in which some news and some providers of news have easier access to the media than others. The causes of this phenomenon can be classified according to factors of place, time and persons (see McQuail 1994, and Shoemaker & Reese – 1996 for overviews).

In news production, the time factor plays a significant role in several ways. News events are new events. The media rely entirely on actuality: they operate within a certain temporal framework and rhythm. In many cases they are published daily (or with even greater frequency), and they work to strict deadlines. This encourages the selection of events that fit neatly into such a schedule, but also entails a certain tendency on the part of the mass media to ignore long-term processes. Issues may be announced, but their development over time is rarely followed. The short time available for news production frequently means that there is little room for reflection or analysis. This is particularly true of television, a medium that in any case lends itself less well to the presentation of information with a high degree of abstraction. The tempo has increased significantly, with short ‘soundbites’ replacing the exposition and development of any sustained train of thought. This has now become so commonplace that newspaper articles of, say, fifty years ago are now seen as overly detailed and long-winded, while

⁴ See *Vrij Nederland* 3 February 2001

television news broadcasts of fewer than twenty years ago are experienced as pompous and excessively slow.

Sources can take advantage of the characteristic features of news production. An editor may be unable to carry a particular story without breaking his deadline, which enables the mala fide source to wait until the last moment to 'leak' a snippet of information, knowing that there will be no time to check the facts properly. This is the kind of thing that may have occurred on 10 July 1995, when the presenter of Nova, Maartje van Weegen, asked Joris Voorhoeve, then Minister of Defence, to comment on an incoming report about military casualties among the Dutchbat forces. The report later proved to be unfounded.⁵ But even when there is time to check the facts, there is a tendency not to do so properly. This was the case when a member of the German parliament, Stefan Schwarz, spread a story about Bosnian women having had canine foetuses implanted in their wombs, which later proved to be false. Various Dutch media, including *De Volkskrant*, carried the story. Few (e.g. the *Algemeen Dagblad*) took the time to check the story, first.⁶

In addition to the lack of time, competition between the media can play a role here. This is not confined to the commercial media. Indeed, the competition for prestige between current affairs programmes such as Nova and Netwerk⁷ can lead to lapses of judgement. At the same time, competition can also serve to increase news organizations' vigilance and critical appraisal. Hard news, i.e. that which is happening now and is unexpected, enjoys greater prestige than the less time-critical events, often qualified (or dismissed) as 'soft' news. The fact that some news is so current – every story having a 'tell-by date' – combines with the public function of the media to produce a desire to be first with certain, preferably contentious, revelations. This aim has been further enhanced by the increased competition and commercialization of the media. In fact, coming up with a 'scoop' is more a game enjoyed by journalists to impress their colleagues, than it is an achievement admired (or even noticed by) the general public.

Personalization, increased pace of reporting and presentation, diminished depth and a reduction in time for background analysis and commentary, all may well have to do with commercialization and competition between media, but there are other factors. These include technological innovations and the characteristics of the dominant medium of our times, television. Furthermore the popularization of the media is not based on business motives alone, but is to some extent a reflection of social change, as expressed in new leisure-time patterns, and the altered reading, viewing and listening habits of a more and more fragmented audience. It is also the result of the media having gained more insight into people's varying capacities to process information, for instance, or their interest in following the news.

Like any other organization, the media must devote their limited resources in as efficient a manner as possible. In the first instance, this means focusing attention on those events, places and institutions which are accessible and which, experience suggests, are likely to provide important news for a wide audience. The media have developed an extensive news-gathering net based on this very concept, and know how to cast it upon the waters in order to ensure that it comes back appropriately filled. Accordingly, the news net is particularly finely meshed and catches most in the established centres of power.

This effect is enhanced when journalists with specific areas of responsibility or in a particular location are expected to 'come up with the goods', i.e. to continue supplying reports and commentaries that meet with the media definition of news. In practice, this usually means that they are expected to report the same news that is being reported by prominent colleagues in other organizations. Correspondents and reporters are often instructed on the basis of information that their editors have gleaned from other media, both at home and abroad. The content of the media is therefore largely

⁵ Brugsma 2 February 2000; Groenhuijsen and Van Liempt 1995.

⁶ Willem Beusekamp, 'Artsen Servië doen proeven op moslimvrouwen' ('serb doctors perform experiments on Muslim women'), *De Volkskrant*, 4 January 1993 (see also *De Volkskrant*, 14 January 1993).

⁷ Both programmes have been known to boast of their successes on occasion. See articles in *Het Parool*, 26 August 1998 and *Vrij Nederland*, 10 July 1999.

determined by what other media and other journalists consider to be important, a situation that can occasionally result in 'pack journalism', possibly choreographed by the newsmakers themselves (Crouse 1972). During the 1994 Dutch general election campaign, the main evening television news resurrected an old story to the effect that the Christian Democrats (CDA) planned to freeze disability benefits. According to Geelen (1998:91) newspaper editors everywhere immediately instructed their political desks to carry that same story. Here, the guiding factor was not the actual content of the report, but the fact that a respected medium had carried the somewhat alarmist story. In general, the agenda of television news and current affairs programmes is still influenced by the content of the newspapers, while the newspapers will often choose to elaborate on a story introduced by television.

The task of ensuring a constant flow of news is partly delegated by the media to organizations which specialize in doing just that: the press agencies. The news net of a press agency is wider and/or more targeted than those of the individual media, but is nevertheless subject to similar limitations with regard to the sources from which information is derived. Television news and current affairs programmes often use the same footage when covering foreign news stories. The news media, wherever in the world they may be situated, have much in common. However, this does not detract from the fact that there can also be marked differences between the various types of media and between the media in different countries (Cook 1994; see also Wesselius 1999).⁸ Despite the use of the same video footage, the international news items on different stations or on the news programmes of different countries display significant differences, because the selection and editing of images and the content of the spoken news commentary will be adapted to the interests and knowledge of the target audience, or will stress a particular relevance to the country concerned (Näsi 2000; Gurevitch, Levy and Roeh 1991).

The routine selection and processing of material also results in the media presenting more news about predictable events than about unexpected, unpredictable occurrences (cf. Galtung and Ruge 1981; Tuchman 1978). Much media content is planned in advance, which in practice means that it is determined by the most prominent national and international newsmakers. News management on the source side – that of the newsmakers – has become extremely professional over the years. Access to the media is greatly facilitated when the source is important and is able to supply relevant material to the media in an efficient manner (Gans 1980; Manheim 1994). The media may try to preclude this situation by inviting independent experts to speak, but in many cases these experts, or the organizations they represent, are themselves linked to the government or other prominent newsmakers.

Because events are linked to a particular location, in a war situation the authorities can be seen to enjoy greater control of access to the location, or can ensure that a particular location becomes the focus of a news event (McQuail 1994; Gow, Paterson and Preston 1996). In conflict situations, the freedom of the press is frequently restricted by the lack of transport facilities between locations, or (at the psychological level) by the risks involved in moving from one location to another.

The news net is also a social relations network between journalists and their sources. While the intention is usually to reveal previously undiscovered facts, the position of the parties can undeniably lead to the construction of news. The events at the location in which the network is based have a far greater chance of being accepted as newsworthy than those elsewhere. The news network operates according to a self-fulfilling prophecy: the media are to be found where the news is, and the news emerges where the media are. Newsmakers across the spectrum, from aid organizations to terrorist networks, are generally aware of the importance of the media presence.⁹

The news process relies heavily on personal contacts between journalists and their sources. Because such contacts are of great mutual benefit (and to a certain extent also in the public interest),

⁸ Harrison (2000) studied the British television news of 23 April 1993 and found marked differences in the coverage of events in Bosnia in terms of selection, editing and commentary accompanying film footage. These differences were observed between the various broadcasting companies – BBC, ITN Channel 4 and GMTV – but also between news broadcasts on one and the same channel.

⁹ See Ronald Ockhuysen: Overdrijven om bestwil ('stretching the truth'), *De Volkskrant*, 8 March 1997; Von Merveldt 1998.

there is a degree of reciprocity implied in the services provided by one to the other. In such a situation the fact that newsmakers and independent journalists represent conflicting interests can easily be obscured. In the closed journalistic culture that existed until the 1950s, there was sometimes a tendency – even among journalists themselves – to consider secrecy more important to the public interest than openness.

The stronger emphasis on persons and personalities in the news process can also be seen as a consequence of the dominant role of television and the increased competition between the various media. By definition, television relies on visual material, while it is perhaps less able to convey abstract material than the print media.¹⁰ It is therefore inevitable that television news will take on a personal element, but this can also be deliberately exploited in the pursuit of audience ratings. More and more newsmakers, in politics and in other spheres, now try to meet the demand for such material themselves.

Compared to the print media, television works in more associative ways, inviting affective responses rather than cognitive or rational ones. The ‘personalization’ of social and political processes or developments is, however, not a new phenomenon and it is inherent in media reporting in general, only in television it is vital to the very existence of the medium.

In the editorial structure of news organizations, and in the print media in particular, the reliance on more or less permanent news sources is reflected in the internal organization, with separate ‘desks’ for domestic news, political affairs, foreign news, etc. In the print media, with their relatively large staffs, such specialist sections have been able to develop, fed by the continuity and predictability of certain news flows, a stable thematic interest, a defined set of news sources, or a certain procedure for handling the news. Under normal circumstances, this division of responsibilities is effective, but, for instance in case of a foreign conflict in which the Netherlands might become politically and militarily involved, this fragmentation into separate editorial departments can only impede the news production process. Editorial staff will inevitably be less able to deal with aspects of the news which cannot be fitted into one of the existing ‘pigeonholes’ or which fall outside their usual remit. An additional complication caused by a conflict of the type seen in Yugoslavia is that there will be tensions between the editorial staff at home and those who are more or less permanently involved in gathering the news some considerable distance away.

News values and frames

The cohesion and consistency of this system of news gathering and processing reveal a shared vision of what is to be regarded as important. There is a considerable degree of agreement on this point, at least in the Western world. The media announce what in the world we should think about and discuss (‘agenda-setting’), they report on the processes involved and they indicate which aspects are important (‘priming’), and beyond this, they tell us how issues should be seen and understood, in a process known as ‘framing’.

Although generally speaking, the media would not deliberately want to impose any one vision of actuality on their readers or viewers, when approaching topics and selecting sources, journalists will inevitably be led by their vision with regard to the issues, by their knowledge and expectations concerning the background to events, or at the very least by an idea concerning the context in which the events should be placed (Altheide 1974, Fishman 1980). But the contexts and interpretive frameworks in which facts are placed do open up certain interpretations while excluding others. Altheide and Snow (1976) use the term ‘media logic’ to indicate established ideas and conventions which govern form and content of certain categories of news in certain media.

¹⁰ NATO spokesman during the Kosovo crisis, Jamie Shea, expands on this idea in his explanation of the lack of media attention for the displacement of people from Kosovo in April 1999: “(...) why do the media not report on this? Because there are no pictures. And it is a fundamental lesson which all military personnel must learn. It is very simple: no pictures means no news.” (Shea 2000:53).

Readers, listeners and viewers also have clearly defined terms of reference, knowledge and understanding, 'frames', which, when activated, determine their interpretation (see Biocca, 1991). Without a common set of frames, any meaningful transfer of information from the media to their audience is all but impossible. Accordingly, the frames adopted must reflect a reasonably high level of social and political 'correctness'.

In mass communications the initiative always lies with the producers of the news. The frames reflect the visions held by the newsmakers with regard to the events, as well as the perspective from which the media and individual journalists interpret those events. They work as more or less compelling suggestions that a certain event should be understood in a certain manner. In a sense, frames add a historical element to messages that describe the actuality of the here and now, since they may serve to place the events in the sequence and context of past events. These ways of understanding are culturally defined. In Serbia, current events could be related to the mediaeval Battle of Kosovo, a significant event in Balkan history, marking the beginning of five hundred years of Ottoman rule. However, such an analogy would be lost on most Western Europeans, for whom the reference to a battle of more than 600 years ago, would merely place current events in an incomprehensible, primitive light.

Frames establish the values that are at stake. With a single term, keyword, example or picture, whole series of associations and meanings can be activated, the 'good guys' can be distinguished from the 'bad guys', the perpetrators from the victims. Cause and effect relationships become immediately apparent, responsibilities apportioned (Graber 1984). Here, 'responsibility' includes both that for the creation of the problem (blame) and its eventual solution. While the literature distinguishes between 'historical' frames and 'responsibility' frames (Bennett 1995; Ruigrok 2000), it is difficult to apply this distinction to the frames used in the coverage of the Bosnian conflict, since historical analogies are used which also indicate or suggest certain causal relationships and which separate the good guys from the bad ('genocide', 'concentration camps', 'appeasement', 'Vietnam').

The choice of a historical analogy restricts the number of policy options, including those open to the journalists themselves. Once a particular context has been assigned, information which points in any other direction is likely to be dismissed, consciously or otherwise, as irrelevant (Dorman & Livingston 1994). Journalism as a whole – and television in particular – has a general tendency to simplify political scenarios, by taking concrete examples to stand for complex situations (Burns 1996; Iyengar and Simon 1994; Caldwell 1995).

The news process in international conflicts

The process of selecting, editing and presenting international news is not greatly different from that for domestic news, although the role of intermediaries such as the international press agencies is noticeably more significant. Certain news values, such as distance (in a political, economic and geographical sense) and the relationship with the national interest, play an important part in the international news process (Galtung & Ruge 1981; Shoemaker & Reese 1996). Kleinnijenhuis (1990) states that the media's own expectations with regard to the manner in which relationships between countries will develop serve to explain the degree of coverage of those countries. Cohen's seminal 1963 study, *The Press and Foreign Policy*, concludes that the manner in which news is presented depends on such factors as the foreign policy of a country's government, with which the media will largely align themselves.

At first glance, this seems a rather remarkable conclusion, since in the conflict that has contributed most to defining this mutual relationship – the Vietnam War – the media rejected and railed against the foreign policy of their own government. This attitude eventually led to the USA's withdrawal from Vietnam. Although this view is not undisputed, arguably Vietnam was crucial in developing an idea about the role and influence of the mass media, particularly television, in armed conflict situations. The general view of the government, military apparatus and general public seems to be that the United States lost the Vietnam War partly because public opinion gradually came to decry all involvement in the conflict as a result of free and open television coverage.

Media policy in later military operations – Panama, Grenada, the Gulf War – shows that the American authorities learned from this experience. After Vietnam, the media were no longer allowed free access to the theatre of operations. The supply of information was carefully organized and rationed. The Somalian conflict appeared to confirm what Vietnam had first revealed: that television is able to influence public opinion one way or the other – for or against a conflict – with evocative and shocking images. As soon as television showed the body of an American being dragged around the streets of Mogadishu, the US intervention in Somalia was as good as over.

A number of researchers have now expressed doubts as to whether the theory presented in the foregoing paragraph is based on an accurate analysis. The reality of the reports from Vietnam was, according to these authors, very different to the established image that has existed to date. American political leaders may have assumed that the general public have a low level of tolerance when it comes to casualties on their own side or for gruesome images of any type, but the actual situation is somewhat more complicated. During the Vietnam War, American television did not show all that many casualties, and a general decline in public support for a war has been seen in other armed conflicts as well (Strobel 1997). Moreover, at first, the American media were not remarkably critical of military interventions in Indochina at all (see Schoeman 1993). They only became so when the political consensus among the American elite began to show cracks.

According to Hallin (1986) and Gitlin (1994), American television news even tends to glamorise war. Vietnam was no exception. War is presented as drama: an exciting tale of combat between the forces of good and evil, presented as a show complete with supportive captions and graphics, dramatic music and carefully selected images. The media, especially the local and popular media, have a marked tendency to throw their support behind ‘our boys’, thus helping to form a national consensus (Hvitfelt 1992; Ottosen 1992). Media which choose to take a stance outside the general feeling of togetherness are likely to receive a hostile response from the public, as the BBC discovered during the Falklands conflict (Young and Jesser, 1997). In times of war, public opinion is usually on the side of the government rather than that of the critical journalist (Paletz 1994). Because television ‘belongs to everyone’ it is somewhat more vulnerable in this regard than a critical newspaper.

An interesting question is whether the relationships between the media, public opinion, governments and the military apparatus have changed since the end of the Cold War. Many authors believe they have. Until recently, most conflicts were placed in the context of East-West relations or, in the case of former colonies of the West, in that of their colonial pasts (Wall 1997a, 1997b). Any automatic political consensus between the media, the government and the general public is now a thing of the past. Today’s military interventions are of a different order, being primarily peacekeeping operations. They are unlikely to call on the total available (military and economic) potential, and are less likely to attract public attention as a matter of course. Public opinion is not mobilized. The country’s survival is not at stake. According to Strobel (1997), today’s media cannot be subjected to the same constraints that would apply in the war situations of old. Indeed, the division of roles between the political and military authorities on the one hand and the media on the other is reversed: the authorities need the media in order to drum up support, to explain their actions and even to gather information. In return, they have to provide facilities for the media to function. The end of a peacekeeping operation is often unclear and without demonstrable results, so considerable explanation is required. Hallin (1994) identifies an increasing tendency in the USA to regard post-Cold War conflicts as manifestations of pointless political anarchy and barbarism, from which America must distance itself completely. This may or may not be a uniquely American perspective. Wolberink (1995:79; see also Berghorst 1995; Bohr 1996) suggests that it was ‘a development in thinking brought about by the end of the Cold War’ that led to the almost unanimous willingness within Dutch political circles to intervene in the former Yugoslavia.

Influence of media reports and opinion in international conflicts

‘What is the influence of the media?’ When couched in such general terms, the question is rather meaningless. The pointless answer would be that media impact can be both big and small.¹¹ The media are not primary social actors: they are followers rather than leaders (McQuail 1992), embedded in and reliant on society (Dahlgren 1995). Television has been most people’s main source of information since the 1960s, or at least this is what almost all surveys suggest. In fact, there are indications that the role of television in this regard has diminished in recent years (Schoenbach & Lauf 2001).

The media’s influence on political decision-making depends on countless factors, many of which are specific to the circumstances of a given situation. The nature of the conflict, the phase it has reached, the extent of the national interest – all such factors will help to determine the influence of the media. Usually, many of the relevant environmental variables will be determined by the authorities themselves (according to Strobel 1997). In a clear two-sided war situation, such as the Gulf War, the authorities dominate the stage and the influence of the media is minimal. In situations which are less clear-cut, the media may be able to exert considerable influence on the political decision-making processes. This situation can be seen in many peacekeeping operations, which take place against a background of plentiful information and few opportunities for overall control.

The degree of control over circumstances is an important factor, but most researchers in this area (such as Bennett 1990; Hallin 1986; Paletz 1994; Sparrow 1999; Strobel 1997; Wolfsfeld 1997; Zaller 1994) see the influence of the media primarily as a function of the consensus and determination among the political elite. When the authorities are largely in agreement and when there are clear political objectives, it is unlikely that the media will be in a position to bring about a shift in policies. That is another lesson which may be learned from the Vietnam War. Only when cracks in the political consensus started to appear could the media step in. When there is no discussion and no criticism, the media are inclined to follow the government line.

Of course, this conclusion can be seen as self-evident. It would be highly surprising if, given a high degree of homogeneity within the political elite, this would not be reflected by (or be a reflection of) similar consensus among the media elite and the general public. After all, media and politicians work on the basis of similar assumptions and reference frameworks, whereupon they will arrive at conclusions which tend to be mutually reinforcing. The media can hardly be expected to take a dissenting position during times of great social consensus (such as that in the Netherlands during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia).

All such aspects bring the influence of the media into perspective and also serve to determine the role of public opinion, insofar as any discrepancy between the two exists. Under normal circumstances, public opinion is just that – ‘opinion’, not much more. In other words, no matter how strongly held, there is little likelihood that it will have its way, once those in power have made up their minds. However, in the eyes of the policy-makers themselves, there is often little difference between public opinion and media opinion. Aside from formal opinion polls or occasional personal contacts, politicians have little opportunity to gauge public opinion directly. Instead they have to assume that general public opinion is represented (and to a considerable degree also created) by the media.

Two conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, as long as the political elite remains united, the likelihood of serious and effective public or media opposition is relatively small. Secondly, it is unlikely that the media would be able to single-handedly alter foreign policy or security decisions. That is not to say that there may not be some influence. The Bakker Committee (Report 2000: 444) distinguishes between media influence with a limited effect – mainly confirming and strengthening opinions – at the decision-making stage prior to the deployment of Dutchbat, and a very much more significant media impact in the wake of the fall of Srebrenica.

¹¹ The influence of Yugoslavian media prior to the dissolution of the state and during the (civil) war will not be considered here. (See La Brosse 1996, etc.).

Television and other media

Considerable influence is often ascribed to television. Ministers such as British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and his Dutch counterpart Jozias van Aartsen complained that they were put under pressure by television reporting and television reporters. Some authorities just refer to a 'CNN effect', meaning certain forms of fast and direct on-the-spot reporting. Shocking images, beamed directly into the viewer's home, demand an immediate reaction, without time to consider the situation in depth. 'CNN' also stands for the selective nature of media coverage in general and television coverage in particular. Why was there so much coverage of Somalia, Lebanon, Rwanda, Kuwait, and Bosnia, and next to nothing about Sudan, Mozambique, Nagorno-Karabach or Liberia (Siccama 1993; Paletz 1994)?

While television does exert such pressure, quite a number of analysts, both academic researchers and journalists (Strobel 1997; Gowing 1996) ascribe greater influence to the quality (broadsheet) newspapers than to television. Strobel believes that newspapers may not have a great influence on the mass public, and hence on public opinion, but do clearly speak to the elite responsible for policy. Gowing (1996:86) believes that this is because senior politicians are unlikely to spend much time watching television, and react only when they are confronted with the opinions of editors, columnists and involved politicians who do indeed keep a 'weather eye' on the television. Their comments are avidly read and acted upon by the policy-makers, because they believe that such comments represent a 'direct line' to public opinion. Moeller (1999) points out that during any real crisis today the television is on, and watched by even the most senior officials, while at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy and his Defense Secretary McNamara still had to rely on internal channels for all their information. According to former US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, television sets much of the agenda, " '(...) and then the President and his Secretary of State have to deal with it. There's just no argument.'" (cited in Bell 1995:145).

Others ascribe an even more direct and important role to television, both in the creation of short-term 'hypes' and longer-term trends. One of the significant factors is the integration of television and political culture in the Western world, as discussed above (Dahlgren 1995).

Although policy-makers, or executives of aid organizations, for that matter, do complain about the disproportionate influence that the media seem to have on elected officials at all levels, they have nevertheless adapted their own behaviour to the laws of the media and are most indignant if the cameras and microphones should fail to turn out to cover any crisis or event they might consider important enough. Furthermore, they themselves – as 'stakeholders' – are to a significant extent responsible for the supply of information used by television and the other media, and they are certainly not averse to using the media for their own purposes. This may not always be admitted, but Major General Lewis Mackenzie for instance, the officer commanding Canadian UNPROFOR troops in Sarajevo, made no secret of the fact that the media occasionally performed a useful function for him:

"Whenever I went into negotiations with the warring parties, it was a tremendous weapon to be able to say: 'OK, if you don't want to do it the UN's way, I'll nail your butt on CNN in about twenty minutes.' That worked, nine times out of ten." (MacKenzie, quoted in Minear, et al. 1996:59).

The parties involved in a conflict increasingly rely on the services of professional news managers and public relations companies who try to take advantage of politicians' perceived susceptibilities. One of the most conspicuous instances was the case of the story manufactured by Citizens for a Free Kuwait and Hill & Knowlton, to the effect that babies were being taken from their incubators in Kuwait and routinely murdered (Luostarinen 1992; Manheim 1994; Bennett 1994).¹² Conversely, as Dirk Schumer

¹² The Croatian government seems to have enjoyed some success, also with Dutch journalists, using women of Croatian origin they had brought in from Canada and the United States as propagandists. Often fiercely nationalist, these women

relates in connection with the debacle in Srebrenica, politicians in our media society often approach military missions in such a fashion that they give the impression of being more concerned about their own public relations (and having a demonstrably clear conscience) than about any consequences of their actions.¹³

Bernard Cohen (1994) is among those who believe that the power and influence of television has increased enormously. The visual reports it carries are able to evoke such emotions among the viewers that the conscience of various public institutions is mobilized and governments may be forced to implement interventions on purely humanitarian grounds (as in Somalia and Bosnia), without careful consideration of the costs and risks.

The speed and emotion of the reporting are factors that may cause politicians to feel hard pressed into action. This was the case with Van Aartsen's public comments at the time of the East Timor crisis, and those of British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd in his famous speech at the Travellers' Club in London. Referring to recent events in Yugoslavia, Hurd said:

“There is nothing new in mass rape, in the shooting of civilians, in war crimes, in ethnic cleansing, in the burning of towns and villages. What is new is that a selection of these tragedies is now visible within hours to people around the world...” (quoted in Bell 1995:137)

Sometimes, sustained and focused media attention on certain events can lead to a ‘policy panic’, a situation in which governments feel constrained to take some form of action merely to avoid a public relations disaster. This was the case with Mogadishu. Such reactions mostly take the form of crisis management rather than policy change (Gowing 1996). Gowing (1995) describes them as ‘high profile responses (...) that produce rapid, visual evidence of action’. Minear, Scott and Weiss (1996) believe that even the sustained coverage of the war in Yugoslavia did not influence the strategic policy of the Western powers as such but that, at most, certain peaks in media attention would have led to minor adjustments in tactics on the part of governments and the UN.

Paletz (1994; see also Siccama 1993), however, cites a number of cases in which television coverage would indeed have influenced policy to the extent that an entirely different strategy, namely active intervention, was brought much closer (as in Lebanon, the Philippines, Yugoslavia and Somalia). Bennett (1995) cites cases in which the media forced governments to openly consider matters which they would rather have kept out of the public domain. For example, the conference on Yugoslavia held in London in the summer of 1992 would not, Bennett believes, have taken place at all were it not for the images of the camp at Omarska broadcast on Britain's Channel 4 and the ensuing commotion. Gowing (1996), cites the same Channel 4 report, the mortar attack on the market in Sarajevo, the scenes of an American soldier's body being dragged around the streets of Mogadishu, and Tony Birtley's reports of the bombardment of Srebrenica in March 1993, as ‘exceptions’ to the general rule that television news coverage is unable to influence policy. In these instances, journalists placed topics on the agenda which the politicians would have preferred not to have had to consider at all.

Burns (1996:97) believes that this makes the electronic media jointly responsible for ‘creating the conditions in which policy errors have been made’. When the media act as self-appointed advocates of certain forms of action, this interferes with their position as independent observers of conflict; they become a party, with a share in the responsibility for anything that may go wrong.

However, many researchers believe that the effect of spectacular television reports and film footage on public opinion is easily overestimated. Furthermore, any effect is unlikely to be long-lasting. Gowing (1996) cites the shocking scenes of the Croatian massacre of Muslims in Ahmici. These pictures temporarily rendered the Croats the ‘bad guys’ in public opinion, until that role was once again

spoke excellent English and could communicate well. However, many commentators (including Bleich) believe that the professionalism of the parties' information provision mechanism was less than impressive.

¹³ ‘Das richtige Gefühl für den Umgang mit Massakern.’ Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 23 September 1995.

assumed by the Bosnian Serbs. Findahl (2001) demonstrates that once one particular image has become dominant, its effect can be retrospective, leading to a reinterpretation of historical events. This is how the population of Umeå in Sweden came to blame the Serbs for the mass murders in the village of Stupni Do in the autumn of 1993, while in fact the atrocities had been committed by Croats.

Chapter 2

Yugoslavia and Dutch journalism

Actors

Various parties play a role in the media process of opinion forming about ‘the Netherlands and Yugoslavia’. Before going on to analyse the news process in any great detail, it is useful to identify a number of relevant actors, if only in outline. Moreover, we must remember that opinions and policies are influenced not only by Dutch actors, but also by international organizations such as the UN, the EU, the WEU (Western European Union) and NATO, by certain individual countries, the warring parties in Yugoslavia and, of course, foreign media. In general terms, the parties most closely involved in political decision-making in the Netherlands are the government (in particular the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence), the Lower House of Parliament and the political parties. In addition, we must consider the chiefs of the armed forces, opinion leaders and experts from outside the political arena or the military apparatus, ‘public opinion’ and the media.

Of course, the position of the various actors in this process is, to a certain extent, predictable. Each represents certain interests and carries certain responsibilities which determine their position and policy. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was, under the leadership of Van den Broek, Kooijmans and Van Mierlo, a proponent of an active Dutch role in the context of the Netherlands’ membership of the UN, NATO and the EU. Human rights considerations were given high priority and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposed taking firm action, particularly directed at the (Bosnian) Serbs. In the period prior to Dutchbat forces being sent to Srebrenica, the Netherlands became one of the first UN countries to advocate the Safe Area concept. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs pressed the Ministry of Defence to ‘do more’ in the military sense. In addition to these motives, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (and the government as a whole) apparently expected this role to raise the country’s international prestige and influence.

Under the stewardship of ministers Relus ter Beek and Joris Voorhoeve, the Ministry of Defence was rather more cautious, an attitude prompted in large measure by reservations held by senior staff in the armed forces. The Defence ministers themselves were not deaf to the arguments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and were especially attuned to pressure from Parliament and particularly the larger parties, which urged the maximum possible show of force.¹⁴ Even before his appointment as minister, when still director of the Clingendael Institute (the Netherlands Institute for International Relations), Voorhoeve had advocated a firmer approach to the Serbs and a more significant military contribution by the Netherlands. Within the armed forces themselves, an extensive post-Cold War process of restructuring and redefining tasks had resulted in considerable uncertainty regarding the future.

The nature, extent and scope of the events in Yugoslavia created a situation in which spokespersons for aid organizations, moral and opinion leaders of many sorts, as well as columnists and people with all kinds of relevant expertise, also chose to become involved in the process of opinion-forming, or were drawn into this process. Their views could be read on the editorial pages of newspapers and serious magazines or heard in the news and current affairs programmes on radio and television. Among the moral leaders who were frequently to be heard expressing firm opinions were representatives of the Netherlands Interchurch Peace Council (IKV), Pax Christi, Médecins sans Frontières and the Red Cross, but also politicians such as Minister Jan Pronk and Member of the European Parliament Arie Oostlander. Another group to take part in the public debate via the media

¹⁴ Surveys show that this view was shared by a majority of the Dutch population, although support for it gradually declined.

was formed by military experts (often retired senior officers), polemologists, representatives of the Clingendael Institute and experts in Balkan affairs.¹⁵

After the fall of Srebrenica, the public debate continued to be dominated by the same domestic actors, but by that time various roles and positions had shifted. Even before the fall of Srebrenica, we can identify various phases in which not only the degree of media attention varied, but also the role and prominence of the various actors. This is a reflection of the development of the situation itself and of the various players involved, both at home and abroad.

Coverage

For several years the war in the former Yugoslavia was among the major news topics in the Western media. The accompanying study of its coverage in some Dutch newspapers and television news programmes shows that this was also the case in the Netherlands, even before Srebrenica (Scholten et al. 2001a). Indeed, media attention was such that it made some people wonder why there should be so much coverage of events in Yugoslavia as opposed to, say, Rwanda, Sierra Leone or Afghanistan (see Polman 1997). Part of the answer has already been given: this is how the media work. Wall (1997b) points out that there are not only widely varying levels of coverage, but also differences in interpretation. The media presented the civil war in Rwanda as a pointless, primitive tribal conflict. The events in Yugoslavia, on the other hand, were depicted as dreadful but nevertheless understandable in their historical and political context. The BBC journalist Martin Bell (1995:271) disputes that the difference in approach could be the result of any ulterior motive. "It is not, as some have misinterpreted it, a racist argument; that the victims in Bosnia are white and the victims in Rwanda are black. It is a neighbourhood argument, that this is happening in our own backyard. It threatens the security of all of us, and we ignore it at our peril." André Roelofs, foreign editor of *De Volkskrant*, gave a similar answer although he did so in rather more words (here in translation):

"That is complicated, it goes quite a bit further actually, a sort of self-interest you could say. And I see Europe as a small region in the world as a whole, a reasonably small and diminishing proportion of the world population, and I believe that the first duty we owe ourselves is to stabilize Europe and the neighbouring region, to maintain this as a region in which there is a reasonably high degree of civilization. One in which this type of dreadful regime is given no opportunity. I also believe that it is in the interest of the rest of the world. If you let that go, we have lost everything. I am prepared to do everything I can for other parts of the world. Of course, it would be of great significance if we could ensure that the dramatic history of the unstable Balkan region could be stabilized and develop along more acceptable lines. Not remove the stark contrasts that exist there, but make them manageable."¹⁶

Another distinct paradox emerges, in that although the Balkan situation attracted what can only be described as widespread media coverage, this was in contrast to the impression that many journalists formed then and still hold today, namely that the general public did not attach great significance to the

¹⁵ For the standpoints they adopted, see Honig & Both 1996; Kees Schaepman in *Vrij Nederland*, 19 September 1992; Willebrord Nieuwenhuis in *NRC Handelsblad*, 22 December 1993; Leonoor Meijer in *Trouw* 10 February 1994; Frits Baltesen & Alain van der Horst in *HP De Tijd*, 8 September 1995.

¹⁶ Roelofs, 29 August 2000. Hans Laroes (NOS Journaal) offers the same argument (Laroes, 24 November 1999). Linda Polman (19 August 1999) is noticeably more cynical: "(...) it was a very mediagenic expedition, What I mean is that all newspapers were prepared to send journalists to Yugoslavia, all the television companies were there, politicians could visit every weekend to have their photographs taken. There were thousands of journalists in Yugoslavia throughout the entire war. You could get to Sarajevo with a train Awayday ticket!"

Bosnian war, and that it also failed to stir the politicians sufficiently.¹⁷ As most of the interviews conducted for this study suggest, a large proportion of Dutch journalists did indeed feel fully involved. This is not merely a convenient reconstruction after the event (i.e. the fall of Srebrenica) since countless examples of media reporting published or broadcast before July 1995 demonstrate an intense concern. A few of these examples, including an appeal by four prominent journalists in late 1991 and the dramatic enjoiner with which the television current affairs programme *Hier en Nu* (Netwerk) ended each edition for several months, will be considered in greater detail below.

Another issue is that of the quality of coverage. Maggie O’Kane, who worked for *The Guardian* and Channel Four, and received plaudits for her reporting from Bosnia, states in an interview with the Australian magazine *Arena*: “in the Bosnian war, journalists made a good job of telling the truth, and made a good job of making Western governments uncomfortable with the reality in Bosnia”.¹⁸ But not everyone is equally convinced that journalists did such a good job. Linda Polman has already been cited above, but some of those who were closer to the actual events than she were not impressed either.¹⁹

Finally, the quality of the journalists themselves is also an issue. Even Maggie O’Kane did not escape controversy. She and Roy Gutman of *Newsday* were among the first to write about the Serbs’ prison camps.²⁰ Her reports from the former Yugoslavia, like the manner in which she had highlighted the use of depleted uranium warheads during the Gulf War, raised a number of questions. In 1992, former radio reporter Wouter Kurpershoek described her thus: “...and then there’s this Irish journalist Maggie O’Kane, who works for a number of British media, because she takes the most amazing risks. She was the first journalist to enter Gorazde, scene of weeks of fighting. [She is] completely crazy!”²¹

O’Kane personifies various controversies to which the coverage of the war in Yugoslavia gave rise. What should we make of this breed of war correspondent, who is apparently only interested in the thrill of danger, and what must we make of this style of reporting from one who is so engaged, or has even openly taken one side or the other? BBC correspondent Martin Bell coined the term ‘journalism of attachment’, referring to a form of journalism which does not attempt to be impartial, but which clearly takes the side of the victims, of the ‘good guys’ rather than that of the ‘bad guys’. Apart from Bell himself, well-known proponents (and exponents) of this approach (from outside the Netherlands) include O’Kane, Gutman and Ed Vulliamy. Others, such as Bell’s BBC colleague John Simpson, are very much against such ‘slanted’ journalism (Simpson 1998; Broer & Kleijwegt 1999; see also Vulliamy 1999).

It is a controversy concerning the journalist’s task that is almost as old as journalism itself. Most journalists have a foot in each camp, combining a little of both types: those who attempt to be objective observers and those who take sides because objectivity does not exist (see also Weaver & Wilhoit 1996²²). In Bosnia, a preference for the ‘attached’ form of journalism may have been prompted by the situation on the ground. Confronted with the scenes they found there, many journalists concluded that impartiality would be wholly inappropriate.

¹⁷ Brugsma believes that this is not applicable to the period following the fall of the enclave: “(...) since strangely enough there is not yet any Srebrenica ‘fatigue’ in the Netherlands, although everyone believes this to be the case.” (Brugsma, 2 February 2000).

¹⁸ ‘Covering Bosnia’, *Arena Magazine*, no. 20, December/January 1995-1996, pp. 33-36 (interviewer Eddy Jokovich); also <http://members.optusnet.com.au/~contempa/publications/int01mo.html>. See also Gjelten 1999.

¹⁹ E.g. Bart Rijs, ‘Journalist leek meer op Dutchbatter dan hij wil toegeven’ (‘Journalist was more of a Dutchbatter than he cares to admit’), *De Volkskrant*, 22 August 1998; Theo Klein, ‘srebrenica ook journalistieke les’ (‘srebrenica also a lesson in journalism’), <http://www.volkskrant.nl/achtergronden/extra/355022294.htm>, 7 October 2000. See also Westerman & Rijs, 1997.

²⁰ *Newsday* 19 July and 5 August 1992. Fame is distinctly ephemeral. By the time Roy Gutman began to write about Srebrenica in 1995, his name had already been forgotten at the Ministry of Defence in The Hague. At ITN, interest was excited by Maggie O’Kane’s report in *The Guardian* of 29 July 1992 (Moeller, 1999:267).

²¹ Judit Neurink, *Angst en stress in Sarajevo*, (‘Angst and stress in Sarajevo’) *De Journalist*, 28 August 1992.

²² Also: Deuze (2000b) <http://home.pscw.uva.nl/deuze/publ14.htm>; Van Schuur & Vis (2000) <http://www.egroups.com/files/JourNL/PAPERjourcul.htm>

The media's interest in Yugoslavia was clear from the presence of a large number of journalists from all over the world. Some were there more or less full-time, various large news organizations having established a permanent presence. Others came when something particularly newsworthy took place, or accompanied fact-finding missions made by foreign dignitaries. Most journalists went no farther than Sarajevo. However, a notorious element in situations such as this are the 'parachutists', desperately seeking 'someone who's been raped and speaks English'. Unencumbered by any deep background knowledge of the situation, they send their reports home to their editors and disappear as quickly as they arrived. The parachutists are not purely a 'foreign' phenomenon. Algemeen Dagblad journalist Thomassen recounts the tale of several Dutch journalists who were parachuted into the war zone, did a quick 'stand-upper' in which they dissected the war in all its complexity in a few seconds flat, and then hopped rapidly back onto the safe aircraft, no doubt to pass themselves off as true Yugoslavia experts thereafter.

Often, the first to report from a region will be the correspondents under whose aegis it falls. Depending on the intensity and extent of the events, the involvement of press bureaus and the media will increase, whereupon other journalists – some specialists, others not – will be assigned to the story. An increasingly common phenomenon is the independent (television) news production company, such as Zolcer TV from which Netwerk/Hier en Nu took a large number of reports. Large and reputable news organizations, such as BBC World, function from the very beginning as an orientation point for many fellow journalists, just as the editorial desks at home will look to influential foreign media such as The Guardian, The Independent, The New York Times, Le Monde and Die Zeit.

Besides the specialists and dyed-in-the-wool war correspondents, military conflicts such as that in the former Yugoslavia will also attract inexperienced, adventurous journalists who throw themselves completely into the situation. They go where others dare not, yet are often unable to place the events in any broader perspective due to this close involvement. Many allow themselves to rely on local informants who may well have ulterior motives. However, some do develop into valuable and reliable war reporters (Rijs 1998; Rathfelder 1998; Burns 1996; Karskens 2001; Pedelty 1995). Without the journalistic mavericks in the O'Kane mould, many aspects would go unreported altogether. The majority of Yugoslavia reporters fell somewhere between the two extremes.

When covering a complex war situation, the reporters attached to foreign media are frequently dependent on local interpreters, 'stringers' and 'fixers' to arrange meetings and other matters. In a long-term conflict, such stringers may develop extensive and very effective networks. In retrospect, we can observe that the media were not in attendance at a number of crucial moments, such as the fall of Srebrenica itself, often because the combatants prevented them from being there. On occasion, it may also have been due to pure laziness, fear or a combination of the two, or because editors or insurance companies imposed certain minimum standards with regard to personal safety.²³ It has been suggested – usually in the form of an accusation levelled at the media – that the outcome would have been different had (non-Serbian) media been there to cover the assault on Srebrenica.²⁴ The suggestion sounds plausible. However, little more can be said about this without entering the realms of pure speculation.

²³ See also Karskens, 2001. After a news team including Harmen Roeland had suffered a serious accident in early 1992, TV reporters from the *NOS Journaal* were expected to ride in convoy during official trips. This became so routine for Hilversum that, when Gerri Eickhof sent a report of a journey with the Transport Battalion to Busovaca from Split, the news presenter automatically assumed that the whole battalion had returned to Split. (E-mail Eickhof 21 January 2000.)

²⁴ Apart from the camera crews and possibly a few other journalists who entered the enclave on the heels of the Serbs, no journalist was an eye witness to the fall of Srebrenica. It has been suggested that the outcome might have been different had the press been there. (Among those making this suggestion are Michael Williams, media advisor to Akashi, during the 'Conference on media and crisis management: the lessons of the Bosnia and Kosovo crises', organized by the Reuters Foundation Programme and held in Oxford in October 1999.) Nova editor Carolien Brugsma is personally convinced that an appeal from the enclave to CNN would have made a difference (Brugsma, 2 February 2000; also Labeur, 16 August 1999).

The description above applies to journalism in general, and also includes Dutch journalistic involvement in Yugoslavia. The newspapers examined as part of the current study reveal almost constant attention for the events in Slovenia, then Croatia, then in Bosnia-Herzegovina, although intensity varies. The same pattern is found in the content of television news programmes on the public channels and on the commercial channel RTL4, as well as various current affairs programmes. The latter also reflect something of the fluctuating level of activity in Yugoslavia, episodes of intense hostility being interspersed with those of comparative calm, and probably also a growing level of fatigue as the civil war dragged on. For example, between July 1991 and July 1995, the Hier en Nu programme covered the Yugoslavian conflict in one out of three of its weekly editions on average. In 1993, the conflict was reported in 46 broadcasts, i.e. almost every week.

Table 1. Coverage of the war in the former Yugoslavia by NCRV's Hier en Nu*

Year	> 7/1991	1992	1993	1994	< 7/1995
Yugoslavia – broadcasts	8	15	46	17	7

*figures supplied by Hier en Nu

There were a few extended periods which saw no Yugoslavia coverage at all in the programme: 14 October 1991 to 27 April 1992, 18 April to 17 October 1994 and 2 January to 1 May 1995.²⁵ During the periods in which coverage was at its most intense, the items recurring most often were the weekly summaries (25 January 1993 to 21 February 1994), which always closed with the same phrase: ...and still no intervention. We shall return to this subject later.

That prominent Dutch media devoted continuous and extensive attention to the war in the former Yugoslavia does not mean that they maintained any permanent presence of reporters or camera crews, nor that they shared resources to ensure ongoing coverage. A few of the problems which occurred as a result may be related here.

The structure of the Dutch broadcasting system, in which air time on three public TV channels is divided among a number of broadcasters, results in each of those broadcasters attempting to offer different perspectives and backgrounds to the news, based on the ideology (political or religious) of the company concerned. In itself there is nothing strange in this: it is, after all, also common practice among newspapers. Differences in ideology between the various Dutch broadcasting companies have become less important, however, and nowadays public broadcasters have to compete with commercial stations. This has resulted in growing cooperation between the broadcasting companies who share air time on the public service channels. This cooperation is perhaps more advanced in radio (Radio 1), but even television now has current affairs programmes which are either jointly produced by several companies, or produced by each of the partners in turn. The three companies which share the Nederland 1 channel (AVRO, KRO and NRCV) broadcast their current affairs programmes under a joint name (Netwerk) although each produces its own programme.

It is a rare occurrence for all the companies to work together though, seen only during major disasters of short duration (Groenhuijsen and Van Liempt, 1995). In a conflict lasting somewhat longer, no editor would be willing to endorse such joint efforts.²⁶ Groenhuijsen and Van Liempt (1995:61) found that the number of foreign trips made by news reporters from the different broadcasters has increased since NOS and RTL have been in competition, and especially at the time of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. However, the news departments of the individual broadcasting companies are too small to allow a permanent presence in a war zone or any concentration on a particular region. Critics believe that the quality of journalism remained below par as a result: 'ten school newspapers

²⁵ Ten Cate (1998:14) found a similar pattern in the proportion of factual reports, commentary, leader opinion, analyses and background articles in *De Volkskrant* between 1992 and 1995.

²⁶ Labeur & Schut, 23 November 2000.

rather than two serious broadsheets'.²⁷ During the monthly meetings of the editors of the current affairs programmes of the public broadcasters, which have been held for a number of years under the chairmanship of Cees Labeur of NCRV, plans for joint coverage of the Yugoslavian conflict were discussed, but eventually did not materialize.²⁸

Around the same time, i.e. early 1993²⁹, the main Dutch television news programme NOS Journaal was planning to cover Yugoslavia on a semi-permanent basis. The idea was to send a small team of reporters, together with a cameraperson and an editor and equipped with a suitable vehicle and all necessary equipment, into the field for periods of six weeks at a time. Gerri Eickhof was the first to be dispatched, followed by Harmen Roeland. However, in April 1993 the experiment was abandoned. The returns in terms of interesting material were not great enough to justify such an expensive undertaking, and perhaps more important, the level of 'Yugoslavia fatigue' in the Netherlands had been underestimated. 'Yugoslavia is a dead horse,' was one opinion heard.³⁰ Thereafter, reporters were sent out only when there was something definite to do. This is how Gerard Arninkhof, Paul Grijpma, Tim Dekkers and Maria Henneman came to join Roeland and Eickhof on the list of correspondents to the war in Bosnia.³¹ In 1992 and 1993, Dick Verkijk also sent back a number of reports, mostly from Belgrade.

Table 2. Reports from Yugoslavia for NOS Journaal*

-	Roeland	Eickhof	Verkijk	Dekkers	Grijpma	Arninkhof	Duchoisne	Henneman	Total
1992	4	3	2	2	-	-	-	-	11
1993	17	10	4	-	1	-	-	-	32
1994	10	7	-	4	4	3	-	-	28
1995	5	2	-	-	1	10	1	5	24
total	36	22	6	6	6	13	1	5	95

* information supplied by NOS Journaal

When measured by the number of reports from Yugoslavia sent by its own correspondents, the NOS Journaal coverage of the Yugoslavian conflict was at its most intensive in 1993, whereupon it began to decline somewhat. However, there is no really marked variation. Interestingly, most reports in 1992 and 1994 were made in the spring; there was then an interval of some months before the reporters returned to capture the Christmas and New Year's spirit among the Dutch troops.³² In 1994, the war in the former Yugoslavia changed from being more or less the exclusive domain of Harmen Roeland and Gerri Eickhof to one in which several other journalists were active. Unsurprisingly, this is most noticeable in 1995.

The more restricted resources and the size of the news team at RTL rendered a roster system such as that adopted by the NOS out of the question. RTL4's coverage of Yugoslavia was first provided by Herman van Gelder, but was soon taken over by Willem Lust.³³ This situation meant that

²⁷ Lust, 19 July 2000; also Michielsen 14 September 1999.

²⁸ Peter l'Ami, 'Nederlandse pers nog onvoldoende "ingeschoten" op grondoorlog' ('Dutch press not yet fully fired up for ground war'), *De Journalist*, 21 May 1993.

²⁹ During a meeting on 7 January 1993 (Eickhof e-mail, 18 January 2000). For a comprehensive account of the news production process, in particular that of the *NOS Journaal* programme (in 1994) see Hermans (2000); cf. Bardoel 1996; Lohmann and Peters 2000.

³⁰ Eickhof 18 January 2000.

³¹ Information provided by *NOS Journaal*.

³² In April 1992, Harmen Roeland and cameraman Jan van Eijndhoven suffered a serious car accident during a visit to Bosnia.

³³ Later (after the fall of Srebrenica and on various other occasions) Jaap van Deurzen also went to the region on a more regular basis.

Lust was probably in a better position than his NOS counterparts to develop in-depth knowledge and permanent contacts upon whom he could call each time he returned.³⁴

Table 3. Lust's reports from Yugoslavia for RTL Nieuws*

1992	37
1993	47
1994	24
1995	6
Total	114

* information provided by RTL Nieuws

Only now and then did Hier en Nu send reporters to Yugoslavia. The first reports in the NCRV current affairs programme of 1991 and 1992 were products of a short-lived collaboration between the public broadcasters right at the beginning of the conflict and link-ups with on-the-spot radio journalists Wouter Kurpershoek and Gert van Wijland. Harald Doornbos began to make regular contributions in early 1994, including a factual item (broadcast on 5 June 1995) about war correspondents, in which he himself was the central figure. Like the regular news bulletins and the other current affairs programmes, Hier en Nu made extensive use of the Eurovision exchange system through which various European public service broadcasters (including those of the combatants themselves) and the major television press agencies World Television News and Reuters TV (formerly Visnews) make footage available to each other. In addition, Hier en Nu regularly purchased third-party material from foreign producers, including much from the German production company Zolcer TV.³⁵

The regular news bulletins aside, there is little direct competition between public and commercial broadcasters in the Netherlands in the field of news and current affairs. Unlike some other European countries, the Netherlands imposes practically no requirements with regard to the quality of service provided by the commercial stations. As a result, there is little need for them – unlike their counterparts in, say, Britain, Sweden and Finland – to provide serious current affairs information. The

³⁴ Even Lust was completely unprepared the first time: “(...) I assumed that there was peace by that time. They had signed a treaty. We were not prepared for war. We just didn't realize it was possible – a ceasefire had only just been declared. Why should a treaty concerning Croatia create any extra commotion in Bosnia? I was only sent to cover for Herman van Gelder who was on holiday. ‘Just pop over to Zagreb to cover the arrival of the troops’, that's what they said. It wasn't such a big deal. (...) Then everything went wrong in Bosnia and we were not prepared. The Dutch troops who arrived there were stationed at the Rainbow Hotel, that colourful building (...). They were not prepared either. They thought it would be a sort of holiday resort. Far from the turbulence in Croatia. Then it all began in Bosnia. There was that demonstration at which shots were fired by the SDS, Karadzic's supporters. That is when things got out of hand. Then at one point it looked as if it was going to be a little quieter again. We left and we ran into the tanks coming from Belgrade.(...) We really were not prepared. We had a nice shiny car from Vienna, and nothing else. The tanks were coming from Belgrade. You could see them just coming down the road. So many, and formations that I have never seen since. All neatly on trucks. They came back-to-back into the town from Krajina. That's when it all started in Krajina. Arkan was already active there. That's where it all came from. I really thought, ‘Good lord, what's going on here?’. I was really shocked. I was not prepared for this, either mentally or physically. I came home in a rather shocked state. ‘The things that happened there!’ You saw it all with your own eyes as it got out of hand?. (...)I knew very little about the conflict. It was really not a primary concern for me up until then. (...) I was absolutely unprepared for what was to happen. It happened before your very eyes. In Sarajevo, in the city, it was then even more dangerous than later, in my view. I did not know the city, I did not know the situation. I had enough difficulty telling the Serbs and Croats apart. (...) I went back several times that year. Let me see...in any case, I can count two or three trips here. You find out more as you go along.” (Lust, 19 July 2000.)

³⁵ ‘Zolcer hat Abnehmer in ganz Europa, in Deutschland arbeitet er für ARD und ZDF, aber auch für taff, Exklusiv oder Explosiv, Boulevard-Magazine, deren Titel Reißerisches versprechen. “In Holland reicht es aus, wenn wir eine Geschichte mit mehreren Interviews erzählen. In Deutschland wollen sie zu jedem Thema nur noch Szenen, da darf kein Statement länger als 20 Sekunden sein.”’ Zolcer, in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 29 January 1996.

competition in this area is therefore mainly between the current affairs programmes of the public broadcasting companies.³⁶

At the time of the war in Yugoslavia the public broadcasting system in the Netherlands underwent considerable organizational change, whereby companies lost part of their autonomy. These changes were not entirely unconnected with the emergence of the commercial stations. In the early 1990s the programmes NOS Laat and Achter het Nieuws merged to become Nova, and the cooperative alliance known as Netwerk developed between Televizier, Brandpunt and Hier en Nu, while the companies EO and TROS took on joint production of 2Vandaag. Together with the political round-up Den Haag Vandaag, Nova rapidly rose to become the most prestigious of these programmes – in the eyes of politicians and journalists alike – closely followed by Netwerk (and in particular the Brandpunt section provided by the KRO). Other programmes followed at some distance.

Reports from staff correspondents or reporters are a more permanent feature of newspaper coverage than of television coverage. This was even the case in 1993, the year in which the television companies' deployment of staff correspondents was at its greatest. In that year, NRC Handelsblad published 129 articles by its correspondent Raymond van den Boogaard, while De Volkskrant ran 99 pieces by Frank Westerman and 60 by Ewoud Nysingh. In some months – January in Van den Boogaard's case and May for Westerman³⁷ – their work appeared on an almost daily basis. This distinction can largely be attributed to the logistic, technical and budgetary differences between the print media and the electronic media, as well as the kind of journalism each entails. In part, it is also due to the greater degree of specialization within newspapers, with their separate 'desks'.

In general, the media pay their own travelling costs. On occasion, however, if it is regarded as a matter of national importance that the people are informed about a situation, the government will make a contribution. During the Yugoslav conflict, the most significant cost components were insurance policies, rental of armoured vehicles and, for the TV teams, satellite relay time and link-ups, available only in Vitez and Sarajevo. In addition, the United Nations was not exactly lavish when it came to providing facilities; journalists were not allowed to travel in UN vehicles, for example. Only those who

³⁶ However, the impact of the competition with the private broadcasters should be brought into perspective. Twenty years ago, when public broadcasters still had a monopoly, C. Boef stated, "Because people are trying to meet the demands of the majority, programmes with low viewing figures are broadcast late at night or are scrapped altogether. Those programmes, which are found interesting by relatively small groups of viewers, are the main casualties. A conspicuous example is current affairs, with all such programmes now broadcast very late in the evening. A broadcasting company used to be able to permit itself the luxury of broadcasting less popular programmes." (Boef 1981:218.)

³⁷ In May 1993, Westerman made a lightning visit to the Srebrenica enclave, where Canadian forces were then stationed. He returned in June 1994. His articles for *De Volkskrant* included a profile of Naser Oric: 'De sheriff van Srebrenica is nog niet verslagen' ('The sheriff of Srebrenica is not yet beaten'), 23 June 1994; see also Westerman and Rijs 1997. ABC News reporter Tony Birtley succeeded in entering the besieged enclave in March 1993, just before French general Morillon made his incursion (Strobel 1997). At around the same time, the German photographer Philip von Recklinghausen and the Bosnian journalist Haris Nezirovic (of *Slobodna Bosna*) spent several weeks in Srebrenica (articles in *The Guardian*, 11 and 15 April 1993).

That few journalists managed to penetrate Srebrenica was not entirely the fault of the Ministry of Defence. *Nova* reporter Twan Huys recalls:

"(...) actually, they [Nicolai and Van Baal] both did everything they could to get me into the enclave. In fact the Ministry wanted me there. The Ministry's frustration at the time was that none of the good things that Dutchbat soldiers were doing within the enclave could be filmed. At one stage, the Ministry's Department of Information even talked about putting me in a military uniform to get me in. But it was not possible because the Ministry was operating under the UN flag. (...) I gained the impression that the Ministry wanted to take as many people as possible. Let's just say that before it all went wrong, they wanted far more press presence than was actually possible."³⁷

A group of journalists comprising reporters from Radio 1, GPD, ANP, *NOS Journaal* and RTL, together with an RTL cameraman, travelled with the first Dutchbat troops but were pulled out of the convoy by the Serbs before it reached Srebrenica and held in Bratunac.

Because Srebrenica remained inaccessible, the Ministry of Defence arranged for a fairly regular flow of camcorder pictures and photographs from the enclave. NOS and RTL agreed to share the videos, while the stills were passed on to the print media through the ANP photo library.

had been accredited by the Directorate of Information at the UN's crisis headquarters in New York were accorded the status of 'official visitor'.

Official visits by ministers provided opportunities for larger groups of journalists to be shown Yugoslavia in a more or less organized fashion. For the Dutch media, it was important to cover such occasions in person, since the large international news organizations were unlikely to do so.

Nevertheless, the UN usually granted only some of the applications. In order to

In November 1993, when Minister Ter Beek visited Dutch troops in Italy and Yugoslavia, he was accompanied for part of his tour by Willebrord Nieuwenhuis (*NRC Handelsblad*), Leo de Rooy (*Defensiekrant*), Hennie Keeris (*Defensiekrant*), Frans Stultiëns (*KRO Echo*/broadcasting coalition), Teun Lagas (*Trouw*) and Marion Busstra (*Friesch Dagblad*), and on another leg of the trip by Willem Lust (RTL4), Keith Tayman (RTL4), Harmen Roeland (NOS), Wim van de Pol (NOS) and Jeroen van Eijndhoven (NOS).

avoid problems, the Ministry of Defence introduced a pooling system for the newspapers and broadcasters. Every official visit would be accompanied by one ANP reporter, one radio reporter (on behalf of all stations and companies) and a number of journalists from the national dailies according to a roster system in alphabetical order. For television, a complicated system for sharing certain facilities was devised (which led to many altercations).

In addition to their own in-house expertise, television, radio and newspapers regularly call upon external third parties. In today's newspapers, 'forum' items are given a much more prominent place than in the papers of a few decades ago. The opinion pages of the leading newspapers feature analyses by a wide range of experts. Some articles are commissioned, others are written and submitted 'on spec'. The editors of these pages attempt to arrive at an appropriate balance between control and spontaneity. In addition to obtaining expert opinion or establishing an authoritative and relevant standpoint, one of the prime aims of editorial direction is to promote an exchange of views on important issues. In television news and current affairs programmes, external contributors are invited primarily to explain a situation, whereupon their analysis is often treated as a final word instead of the beginning of a debate (unless an opposing expert is invited to put the other side of the story).

In the current affairs programmes made by the NCRV (and in others) external experts were mainly called upon during the early phases of the conflict in Yugoslavia. New and unfamiliar situations had to be explained and rendered comprehensible to the audience. Eventually however, a conflict acquires its appropriate interpretative framework and then there is little left to add (Labeur).³⁸ From then on pictures were allowed to speak for themselves and viewers were expected to be able to judge the events for themselves. This is not to say that events were not placed in a historical or political context, but rather that this process was largely confined to a particular period. In the case of *Hier en Nu*, that period was 1991-1992, with a similar phase occurring during and after the fall of Srebrenica.

The gradually diminishing role of the experts should not therefore be ascribed to any 'Yugoslavia fatigue' but rather to the establishment of an agreed-upon interpretation of the conflict among media and the public.

Background I (prior to Dutchbat)

How the media dealt in practice with the major events in Yugoslavia can best be illustrated by a number of examples. Reporting, analysis and commentary concerning a military conflict in which the Dutch government and Dutch troops are involved transcends the boundaries between certain areas and fields of interest within journalism: Parliament, domestic affairs, foreign affairs, defence, etc. Newspapers in particular apply a clear demarcation between such specialisms and there is unlikely to be much internal communication between, say, the parliamentary desk and the foreign desk.³⁹ At the *Algemeen Dagblad*,

³⁸ Labeur and Schut, 23 November 2000.

³⁹ Roelofs 29 September 2000; Nysingh 14 September 2000; Kranenburg 13 September 2000.

the Yugoslav conflict itself fell under the heading of ‘foreign news’, while aspects specifically involving the Netherlands as well (e.g. Dutch troops in Yugoslavia) were within the domain of the domestic news staff.⁴⁰

Working methods and news values may diverge greatly between the various departments. For parliamentary journalists, reporting standpoints and statements is more or less second nature, while foreign news editors are more likely to concentrate on issues. The content analysis conducted as part of the present study indicates that from time to time this may result in differential reporting of facts and opinions (as in the case of *De Volkskrant*), although the influence of such conflicting views on the overall picture may not be all that great.⁴¹

Not all specialisms within the media are developed to the same degree. The radio and television news departments have little knowledge of military matters ‘in house’. Specific knowledge of the Balkan region was, at the beginning of the hostilities, relatively thin on the ground throughout the media, although there were some journalists with experience in Yugoslavia, or at least Eastern Europe. They included Peter Michielsen and Raymond van den Boogaard (*NRC Handelsblad*), Othon Zimmerman (*Algemeen Dagblad*) André Roelofs (*De Volkskrant*) and Dick Verkijk (radio and television).

Like the broadcasters, Dutch newspapers were ill-prepared for a long-term conflict in Yugoslavia. After the departure of Frits Schaling, the *NRC Handelsblad* had been without a correspondent in Belgrade for many years. Another Eastern Europe expert, Raymond van den Boogaard, was dispatched to the city. He was the newspaper’s Berlin correspondent when the secession of Slovenia began to take shape. He would remain in the region on an almost permanent basis until 1995. Later, other journalists took up longer postings there: Alfred van Cleef (mid-1993 to April 1994), Coen van Zwol (February 1994 to mid-1995) and Marjon van Royen (March 1994 to late 1995).⁴² Nicole Lucas (*Trouw*) went to Yugoslavia for the first time at the end of 1990.

De Volkskrant already had a correspondent in Yugoslavia – Marianne Boissevain – although the focus of the newspaper has traditionally been on regions somewhat farther afield. When hostilities broke out, she immediately moved from Ljubljana to the somewhat safer Trieste, in line with the paper’s policy. Later, André Roelofs paid occasional visits to the country. Ewoud Nysingh reported from Zagreb, while Frank Westerman and Bart Rijs entered the war zone for longer periods.

Newspapers maintain fairly close contact with their overseas staff, particularly in situations such as that in Yugoslavia. There will usually be daily telephone contact to discuss the situation in depth. In general, the correspondents have little influence on the editorial position of their newspaper (or broadcast organization). The degree of control exercised by editors over their staff in the field differs widely from case to case.

Today’s media tend to speak less with only one voice than those of the past. Journalism has become more personal, which also means that newspaper, radio and television speak with less authority than they used to. A newspaper is no longer one anonymous gentleman, but a collection of recognizable ladies and gentlemen. It is now far more usual for articles to bear the writer’s name (as a signature rather than as a by-line) which implies that the writers, no matter how much prestige and trust they may enjoy, lose some of their unassailability. It is now also less unusual to find varied, even contradictory, opinions in the same newspaper, even outside the domains of the regular columnists. At one Dutch newspaper – *NRC Handelsblad* – this individuality has become almost a matter of principle, while at others – such as *De Volkskrant* – internal discussions about important issues, and hence about the position of the paper, remain part of the journalistic culture.

While it may have become smaller over time, newspapers still have a space in which their own opinion can be expressed: the editorial leader. This is much less the case in television. According to

⁴⁰ Zimmermann 28 April 2000.

⁴¹ See Scholten, Ruigrok & Heerma.

⁴² Information provided by Peter Michielsen (*NRC Handelsblad*).

Hans Laroes, the 'leader which sets the world to rights' is about the only thing which really sets television and newspaper journalism apart.⁴³

Newspapers now give more room to divergent views. The need to advocate one particular opinion on a matter is less acutely felt than it once was. A certain inconsistency between the editorial line and the foreign correspondent's has been tolerated for a long time, but many newspapers now also allow various desk editors to provide their own analysis of news events. In the case of the NRC Handelsblad, the newspaper's liberal attitude is reflected in a loosely organized form of consultation between the regular leader-writers. Editor-in-chief and commentators usually meet once a week in an informal setting in Amsterdam. At these meetings, they discuss current affairs and prospects, but without the express intention of arriving at a joint position.⁴⁴ De Volkskrant has rather more formal meetings, the original intention of which was undoubtedly to set the editorial course of the paper and to devise appropriate means by which to express this course. But even at De Volkskrant, this does not have the priority it used to have.⁴⁵ We shall return to this point later, partly because at one stage there were rather marked differences of opinion among the foreign editors at De Volkskrant with regard to journalistic coverage of the Yugoslav conflict.⁴⁶

Unlike the leader writers at the NRC Handelsblad, those of De Volkskrant attend a daily meeting chaired by the editor. For almost the entire period covered by this study (until early 1995) Harry Lockefer was editor of De Volkskrant. At the time, the meetings included Jan Luyten, (senior foreign leader-writer) and Jan Joost Lindner (home affairs.) The chief of Forum, the section in which the paper's editorial leaders appear, would also have been present. As a rule, only the broad outline of the editorials is discussed during these meetings, but because they are a daily ritual, some sort of consensus on issues often emerges. However, in the case of a foreign policy issue, the real discussion about which line to follow usually takes place in a consultation between the foreign editors (just as at NRC Handelsblad), right after the meeting of the editorial writers. Editors who fundamentally disagree with the main editorial are given the opportunity to have their opinion aired in the newspaper. Lockefer was not the type to impose his own 'stamp' on the newspaper. On the other hand, he had long been of the opinion that his sub-editors should not contribute to the opinion pages.⁴⁷ Even that standpoint came to be abandoned.

Engagement – December 1991

Opinions among the foreign affairs staff of De Volkskrant diverged prior to the summer of 1992, because the editors held widely different ideas about the desirability of Yugoslavia's division into separate states. As at NRC Handelsblad, the arguments were prompted by various human rights issues, but were no doubt also due to the fact that there was a strong leaning to the old left among the foreign affairs staff dating from Cold War times. The Yugoslav model had, certainly after the death of Tito, lost much of its appeal but it still stood for such humanistic values as multi-ethnicity and social justice. The re-emergence of nationalism on the other hand brought with it nasty memories of a not too distant past.⁴⁸

At the end of 1991, the division of the country became unavoidable, partly due to German insistence on international recognition for each of the separate republics. The ethnic conflicts reached a climax at this time, with the capture of Vukovar by the Yugoslav army. This was a situation which De

⁴³ 'Kritiek op tv-journalistiek te gemakkelijk' ('TV journalism criticized too easily'), <http://www.nrc.nl/W2/Nieuws/1998/03/03/Med/05.htm>.

⁴⁴ Kranenburg, 13 September 2000.

⁴⁵ See also Van Westerloo, 1996; Van Vree, 1996.

⁴⁶ See Ten Cate, 1998.

⁴⁷ Lockefer, 30 November 1999.

⁴⁸ Bleich and Boissevain, unlike say, Nysingh and Roelofs, were extremely concerned about the disintegration of Yugoslavia (Bleich, 16 September 1999; Nysingh, 14 September 2000; Roelofs, 29 September 2000).

Volkskrant was not yet able to diagnose satisfactorily, which, of course, made it impossible to render any unequivocal advice to its readership and the politicians, except in a general moral sense. However, amid the awareness that a disaster could well be impending, the extent of which no one could foresee, a remarkable journalistic initiative emerged.

There are several reasons to consider this initiative by four journalists a bit more closely here. Firstly, their action (like some others which were taken at the time of the war in Yugoslavia) raises the question of how much caution journalists should exercise in using the resources at their disposal to influence opinion, both within and outside media circles. However, even more important for the purposes of our analysis is that this initiative provides an insight into the high degree of personal engagement of a few prominent opinion-makers in the world of journalism. We believe that this involvement continued to be a determining factor. At the same time, their campaign demonstrates that prominent Dutch journalists assumed a high degree of indifference and cynicism among the general public and politicians, both at home and abroad. This is also relevant in view of what was to come later. Finally, the events demonstrate that a clearly defined interpretative framework had yet to be developed, other than that which could be derived from the history and symbolic significance of the country concerned. With hindsight, the action was more significant for the spirit it revealed rather than for its impact, which would seem to have been extremely limited outside the realms of journalism itself.⁴⁹

On 31 December 1991, the leader pages of the NRC Handelsblad and De Volkskrant carried articles of almost identical tenor.⁵⁰ The article in NRC Handelsblad had been written by Elsbeth Etty (opinion page sub-editor) and Peter Michielsen (editor Eastern Europe desk), while the one in De Volkskrant was the work of two foreign editors, Anet Bleich and Ewoud Nysingh. The idea for the pieces originated with the Volkskrant journalists.⁵¹ A meeting had been held (in the restaurant at Amsterdam's Central Station) to discuss what they as journalists could do about the civil war in Yugoslavia. According to Michielsen the frustration and anger he felt about what was going on were such that he was willing to consider making an unprecedented appeal. He fully realized that it would appear to be over-emotional and extremely naive.⁵² Harry van Wijnen, editor of the NRC Handelsblad's opinion page, did not object to publication, but the editor-in-chief, Ben Knapen, was extremely unhappy with the idea and was unwilling to allow publication of a joint appeal signed by Volkskrant staff as well.⁵³ The piece in De Volkskrant bore the names of Anet Bleich and Ewoud Nysingh and was headed 'Yugoslav war cries out for action by European citizens', while Elsbeth Etty and Peter Michielsen had given their piece in NRC Handelsblad the title 'European peace initiative is what Yugoslavia needs'. Each piece concluded that if no one was prepared to intervene, unarmed civilians should place themselves between the warring factions if need be. Despite the objections from his editor, Michielsen claims that he never received any negative reaction to the piece from his own newspaper. Etty's experience was somewhat different. At De Volkskrant not everyone welcomed the initiative either, although there were no objections to its publication as such. Foreign editor, André

⁴⁹ Mient-Jan Faber gave a tart response in both the *NRC Handelsblad* and *De Volkskrant* to criticism of the peace movement 'by a couple of disappointed, biased foreign editors and one or two isolated former communists'. 'Juist de media laten het afweten in Joegoslavië' ('Media fail in Yugoslavia'), *De Volkskrant*, 3 January 1992 and 'Media lijden aan beeldversmalling over de oorlog' ('Media suffer from restricted vision of Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 7 January.

⁵⁰ Particularly noteworthy is the uncompromising tone of the introduction to the piece in *NRC Handelsblad*, about pictures which television failed to show: '...eyes gouged out, legs ripped off, the wounds caused by a dum dum bullet or a glowing hot iron. Or a dead child, *en face* – not these, for these scenes offend the dignity of the person and the conscience of the viewer.' No similar introduction appeared in *De Volkskrant*.

⁵¹ Michielsen, 6 December 2000 (e-mail); according to Nysingh it was actually mainly attributable to Etty and Bleich. Bleich was the main author (Bleich, 30 March 2001).

⁵² Michielsen, 6 December 2000 (by e-mail). Nevertheless, these journalists would normally be hesitant to champion any cause not directly connected with the profession. Of Michael Stein, who declared he would use the cheque he received as part of the Scherpenzeel Prize for journalism to buy weapons for the Bosnian Muslims, Michielsen says "(...) I know him well, and I know he means well. In one way I found this most admirable. On the other hand, it is something that I as a journalist would never do." (Michielsen, 14 September 1999; also Bleich 16 September 1999).

⁵³ Etty, 16 March 2001 (telephone).

Roelofs, recalls, “I was also against it, it seemed deadly dangerous to me. I am not so naive and was not labouring under this delusion. I believe it would have turned into a bloodbath”⁵⁴

In a piece submitted to the NRC Handelsblad, Henri Beunders let his displeasure be known in no uncertain terms.⁵⁵

That the journalists required to cover the earliest stages of the conflict lacked a clear interpretive framework is confirmed by Raymond van den Boogaard, NRC Handelsblad correspondent, who points out that the first foreign journalists in Yugoslavia tended to assess the conflict in a more balanced way than those who came later.⁵⁶ This is a view also held by Peter Michielsen, who states that it took time before any clear idea of what this conflict actually entailed was formed.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, there is a remarkable difference in interpretation. Van den Boogaard does not believe that a clearer understanding of the conflict came about, but, on the contrary, that the complexity of the situation came to be obscured. The journalists who arrived years later had the idea that they knew what was going on; the morality of right and wrong had been apportioned by then.

The articles by Anet Bleich and Ewoud Nysingh and by Elsbeth Etty and Peter Michielsen are heavy with historical analogies. There are references to the Greek and Spanish civil wars, to Vietnam, to the demonstrations against Cruise missiles. However, there are no references to the Second World War.

The picture – Omarska, August 1992

An interpretation of a conflict develops gradually and to a large extent independently of the events themselves. This applies both to the image established in public opinion and the view developed by and among journalists. Nevertheless, there are certain specific moments which can later be recognized as turning points in the process of shaping opinions. Concrete events, mostly mediated by media, then act as catalysts in that process. This is what happened in the summer of 1992, by which time (civil) war had broken out in Bosnia. Once the general picture has been established, it will remain largely unaffected by any further events which do not fit within the general pattern.⁵⁸ The threshold for messages which confirm the established idea will be lowered, and vice versa.

By mid-1992, the dissolution of Yugoslavia was accepted as a *fait accompli*. Some may have welcomed it, others may have seen it as inevitable, still others as regrettable, but from that time on the old undivided Yugoslavia did not play much of a role in the ideas about what should be done. This also held for the foreign department of De Volkskrant. A new situation emerged in which there was only limited room for diverging opinions as to the correct interpretation of the conflict. This is no doubt why a television programme such as Hier en Nu/Netwerk no longer felt much need to bring in experts to explain the situation to the viewers.

In mid-1992, as noted by Ten Cate (1998), De Volkskrant and more especially the NRC Handelsblad demonstrated a radical shift in their assessment of the situation.⁵⁹ Dissent could still be heard, but the tenor of editorial comment had clearly changed. The change of direction was too acute to be attributed to any ‘normal’ variation in a newspaper’s standpoints. Parallel to this, there was a comparable shift in the opinion-based articles contributed by prominent outside parties such as the Clingendael Institute.⁶⁰ Military intervention in Yugoslavia suddenly became a serious policy option and perceptions of the conflict changed accordingly.

⁵⁴ Roelofs, 29 September 2000.

⁵⁵ In his piece *Een roekeloos initiatief voor Joegoslavië* (‘A reckless initiative for Yugoslavia’), NRC Handelsblad, 7 January 1992, Henri Beunders dismisses the appeal out of hand and calls into question the motives of its authors.

⁵⁶ Van den Boogaard, 5 November 1999.

⁵⁷ Michielsen, 14 September 1999.

⁵⁸ In the newspapers examined, the general tenor of editorial comment in certain periods deviates from the impression created by the factual reports.

⁵⁹ See Scholten, Ruigrok and Heerma 2001a.

⁶⁰ Observed at the time (in *De Volkskrant* of 5 August 1992) by André Roelofs.

On 16 June 1992, the NRC Handelsblad published an editorial entitled *Twee burgeroorlogen* ('Two civil wars'). It stated that experience had shown that the outside world is, unfortunately, unable to influence conflicts such as those in the former Yugoslavia and in Nagorny Karabach.

Less than two months later, on 5 August 1992, the same newspaper's editorial was headed *Ingrijpen noodzakelijk* ('Intervention necessary'). It stated that the objections to military intervention which are based on experience gained in Vietnam, Lebanon and Ulster ('the conflict is too large and the background too complex') or in Cambodia, Angola and Afghanistan ('a solution will emerge once the warring factions are exhausted') do not hold up to scrutiny. The 'values for which Europe stands' are at risk, and there must therefore be intervention, stated the editorial. 'With every day that passes, there is less to protect.'

On 14 May 1992, Lt. Col. Van den Doel, in his capacity as researcher with the Netherlands Institute for International Relations (Clingendael), wrote a piece for NRC Handelsblad entitled *Militair ingrijpen in Bosnië-Herzegovina niet de oplossing* ('Military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina not the solution'), which contended that peacekeeping operations were not a viable option and that such action would inevitably lead to further loss of life. There was, in the colonel's view, no comparison with the Gulf War and the international community would have to prepare itself for 'long-term guerrilla warfare' if it opted for military intervention.

On 1 August 1992, the same newspaper published another article by Lt. Col. Van den Doel. This was headed *Westen dient snel te interveniëren in conflict Balkan* ('The West should quickly intervene in Balkans conflict'), but went on to state that, despite the increasing weight of public opinion, intervention was not feasible. Nevertheless, just a few days later, in *De Volkskrant* of 5 August 1992, Lt. Col. Van den Doel joined Joris Voorhoeve (then still director of the Clingendael Institute) in calling for armed intervention 'to limit the extent of the bloodshed'. Such intervention would be geared towards 'creating safe havens under international control', 'liberating the inmates of concentration camps' (using 'commandos' and 'special forces') and 'securing the supply and distribution of humanitarian aid.'

On 10 August 1992, they wrote, again in NRC Handelsblad:

'There is a very real risk that doing nothing will result in a major war in the Balkans. The world is prompting a new bloodbath out of fear of the risks of humanitarian intervention'⁶¹

(see also Scholten, Ruigrok and Heerma 2001a, Chapter 8)

A second remarkable phenomenon is that the analysis of what was happening in Yugoslavia and what should be done about it was placed more than previously in the historical context of the Second World War, and that the terms used referred directly to the events of the 1940s. Voorhoeve and Van den Doel open their article on the Forum page of *De Volkskrant* of 5 August 1992 thus:

It is unimaginable that, 46 years after the genocide of the Jews, there should once again be a systematic hunting and killing of an ethnic group in a European country, while no authority or international organization can do anything whatsoever about it.

The subtitle of the article states: 'If international law does not force us to take action against the genocide in Bosnia, then ethics should force us to act against mass murder, torture, starvation and displacement ...'. The mention of international law refers to the international treaty of 1948 which deals explicitly with the question of genocide, while the suggestion that moral obligations now weighed

⁶¹ During this period Van den Doel appeared three times on the current affairs programme *Hier en Nu* (on 22 and 29 June and on 31 August).

more heavily than the objections to intervention was based on the idea that ‘evil’ would triumph if ‘good people’ decided to do nothing.

Elsewhere in the same edition of *De Volkskrant*, André Roelofs wrote in a commentary⁶²: “The Serbs have now started an ‘ethnic cleansing’ of a type not seen in Europe for the past forty-five years.”⁶³ The NRC *Handelsblad* also applied a World War II analogy, albeit less direct: “Europe has seen all this before”.

Which events occurring at this time could have functioned as catalysts in the process of forming public attitudes? Since April 1992, there had been fighting throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, with particularly heavy activity in and around Sarajevo. On 15 May, the Bosnian Foreign Minister, Silajdzic, asked the Security Council to create ‘safe havens’ such as those provided for the Kurds in northern Iraq. On 24 May, the US Secretary of State (Baker) announced that the United States would call upon the UN to apply the same sanctions against Serbia as it had imposed on Iraq. He accused the Serbs of using Nazi-like methods in their ‘ethnic cleansing’ of regions. Three days later in Sarajevo, a number of people queuing for bread were hit by (what was in all probability) artillery fire. Sixteen people were killed, 140 injured. In the American newspaper *Newsday* of 19 July, Roy Gutman reported that the Serbs had deported thousands of Muslims and Croats from north-western Bosnia, under conditions reminiscent of the transports of Jews during World War II.⁶⁴ He described the situation in a prison camp in Manjaca, while *The Guardian* of 29 July carried a report by Maggie O’Kane about concentration camps at Omarska, Trnopolje and Bratunac. In an interview for the BBC aired on 31 July, President Izetbegovic of Bosnia-Herzegovina compared Serb leader Karadzic to Hitler because of the ‘ethnic cleansing’ being carried out. On 2 August, another article by Gutman in *Newsday* was headed ‘Serbs’ death camps’, in which he reported that the Serbs had set up concentration camps in which hundreds of people were likely to starve to death or be executed. A day later, the American government admitted to having known about the concentration camps for some time. In the Dutch television news programme *NOS Journaal* of 4 August, Sacirbey, the Bosnian Ambassador to the United Nations, confirmed the existence of concentration camps where citizens were tortured and killed by the Serbs. British reporters Ian Williams and Penny Marshall (ITN) together with Ed Vulliamy (*The Guardian*) visited camps in Omarska and Trnopolje. The resulting film footage was broadcast in Britain on 6 August and was picked up by the Dutch news bulletin the same day. It was then shown again the following day on *NOS Laat*.⁶⁵ Having seen the film, the American president George Bush Sr. declared, “No one can see the pictures or hear the accounts of this human suffering and not be deeply moved (Seib, 2000:60). In *NOS Laat* Dutch Minister of Defence Ter Beek stated: “When you see the terrible pictures of those poor wretches in Yugoslavia, you cannot as a world community just stand back and do nothing.”⁶⁶ The Dutch Parliament interrupted the summer recess for an emergency debate.

The picture of the emaciated Fikret Alic behind the barbed wire of the Trnopolje camp (usually referred to as Omarska) has become an icon of the war in Bosnia.⁶⁷ On the day after the television broadcast, the British tabloids needed few words to describe the situation. *The Daily Star* wrote simply, ‘Belsen 1992’ while the *Daily Mirror*’s headline was ‘Belsen 92’.⁶⁸

The associations with concentration camps which the ITN footage evoked certainly had a major influence. These are pictures which practically everyone remembers to this day. However, the

⁶² ‘Kunnen we nog blijven zuchten en protesteren?’ (‘Can we just carry on sighing and protesting?’)

⁶³ On 4 August, *De Volkskrant* had published an article by Anthony Lewis of *The New York Times*. Headed ‘Violence in the Balkans’, it presented a clear historical analogy with World War II. Lewis was one of the few proponents of military intervention writing in the American media at the time.

⁶⁴ The headline to the article read, ‘There is no food, there is no air’. Two days later, *Newsday* ran the headline: “‘Like Auschwitz’. Serbs pack Muslims into freight cars’. See also Gutman, 1993.

⁶⁵ On 10 August 1992, *NOS Laat* broadcast part of a British television interview with Ed Vulliamy.

⁶⁶ In Kees Schaepman, ‘De vredeshaviken willen actie’ (‘The peacehawks want action’), *Vrij Nederland*, 19 September 1992.

⁶⁷ The controversy concerning the footage itself (were the scenes deliberately staged?) is not unimportant but of less relevance here.

⁶⁸ *The Economist* of 15-21 August ran the headline ‘Not quite Belsen’. For an analysis, see also Halonen 1999.

chronology of De Volkskrant and NRC Handelsblad's changing editorial positions demonstrates that it could not have been these images alone which led to the revision of August 1992.⁶⁹ In fact, the reports about the camps did not lead to any immediate forceful intervention in the conflict either.⁷⁰

It seems that it was the combined effect of the news coverage, in both words and images, and the historical associations which this directly evoked, which led to a powerful effect in the short term, and to a more long-term influence on many people's view of the conflict. According to Michielsen in the NRC Handelsblad, Jewish organizations in the United States had stated from the outset that the term 'Holocaust' was applicable to the situation in Bosnia and that names of camps such as Omarska belonged alongside those of Auschwitz, Treblinka and Dachau.⁷¹ 'Holocaust imagery', writes Moeller (1999:223) 'reverberates for Americans as the extreme benchmark of atrocity. The Holocaust has been appropriated as a cultural icon unequivocal in its meaning.' In Newsweek,⁷² Charles Lane asked whether the same outcry would have been prompted had Gutman not used the term 'death camps'.

It seems not unlikely that terms and symbols such as these may have had an even greater effect in countries such as the Netherlands and Germany, where the Second World War is still very much part of a comparatively recent past, with an ongoing psychological effect.⁷³ In Barcelona, a Dutch radio journalist attempted to persuade the Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers that he really could not watch an Olympic football match so soon after the pictures of Omarska had been on television. According to Kees Schaepman in Vrij Nederland (19 September 1992), the general desire to "teach the Yugoslavs, and particularly the Serbs, a lesson only really emerged after the television scenes of skinny men behind barbed wire [were shown]. Concentration camps!"⁷⁴

Perhaps with the dramatic call he and his colleagues had made still reverberating in his mind, Peter Michielsen observed somewhat sourly, "there is something remarkable in all this, since conscience is only now speaking out. Fighting has been going on in the former Yugoslavia for a year. There have been prison camps for a year. People have been tortured and murdered for a year, and cities reduced to rubble. (...) People seem to think that the human rights abuses only began when that British television crew managed to get inside Omarska and the term 'concentration camps' was used for the first time."⁷⁵

Like his NRC Handelsblad colleague J.H. Sampiemon⁷⁶, Michielsen proved himself aware of the radicalization of the terminology used and the possible consequences:

"And so at a given moment those Bosnian camps were discovered and we saw those emaciated skeletons on television. Then it was suddenly 'concentration camp' this and 'concentration camp' that. We had deliberately tried to avoid the term, since we believed and still believe that those camps are not

⁶⁹ cf. Shaw 2000.

⁷⁰ A few years later this seems to have been forgotten. On the VARA/NPS programme MiddagEditie of 9 June 1997, Inge Diepman introduced a discussion about possible manipulation of the Omarska footage between Cees Labeur of Netwerk and Cees Hamelink, Professor of Communication Science, with the words: "Government leaders such as Bush and Major decided that the situation in the former Yugoslavia could not be allowed to continue and responded by intervening."

⁷¹ In: Peter Michielsen, 'Het geweten spreekt wel wat laat' ('Conscience speaks out a little late'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13 August 1992. The term 'Holocaust' was explicitly linked to the camps in Bosnia on a number of other occasions, such as the 17 December 1993 edition of the KRO television programme *Reporter* (KRO 17 December 1993), dedicated to the failings of European politicians with regard to Bosnia.

⁷² Charles Lane, 'When is it genocide?', *Newsweek*, 17 August 1992.

⁷³ See Ward op den Brouw, 'Televisiebeelden uit kampen hebben invloed op beleid' ('Television pictures from camps influence policy'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13 August 1992. Op den Brouw points out that willingness to receive refugees in Germany and the Netherlands suddenly increased. 'The pictures from the Serbian refugee camps had their effect'.

⁷⁴ This may well serve to explain the anti-Serb feeling in the Netherlands (see Honig & Both, 1996), although the country has no historical leaning toward either of the demographic groups (unlike Britain and France which have traditionally been pro-Serb, and Germany which has traditionally been pro-Croat). See also Grundmann, Smith and Wright 2000.

⁷⁵ 'Het geweten spreekt wel wat laat' ('Conscience speaks out a little late'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13 August 1992.

⁷⁶ J.H. Sampiemon, 'Het gevaar van historische analogieën' ('The danger of historical analogies'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13 August 1992.

comparable to camps such as Auschwitz, for which we have reserved the epithet ‘concentration camp’.’⁷⁷

Indeed, the content analysis performed as part of this study reveals NRC Handelsblad to have been somewhat cautious in its use of the term ‘concentration camp’, but this does not mean that the reports, analysis and commentary in the newspaper were totally devoid of a World War II corollary. In De Volkskrant, this interpretive framework is somewhat more apparent, however, since there appear to have been fewer qualms about using emotionally charged terms. In the case of the more popular newspapers (such as De Telegraaf) and the television news, the selection of appropriate terminology may have been an even more complex undertaking (both in the semantic sense and that of legal accuracy) since clarifying an issue to a large audience without resorting to long-winded explanation is difficult if one’s choice of words has to be guarded.⁷⁸

Placing events in Yugoslavia in the authorized context of the Second World War (whether rightly or wrongly- it matters little for our purposes) appears to have had major consequences in terms of opinion-forming with regard to intervention in the conflict and any Dutch involvement. It may also have had an influence on public opinion with regard to subsequent events (after Srebrenica). Placing the Yugoslav conflict in a similar interpretive framework to the Second World War would certainly have increased the urge to ‘do something’. The atrocities shown on the television and in the newspapers had in themselves been enough to invoke the ‘something must be done’ mentality (Hurd), but their insertion into the WWII context increased and intensified their impact. The warring parties in Yugoslavia were fully aware of this effect, and exploited it to the full in their propaganda. The Second World War means ‘never again’. The WWII context makes clear what is right and what is wrong, who the oppressors are and who the victims are. It is important for what is to come, that this frame contradicts the official United Nations standpoint which rejected such a distinction between the parties.

The Second World War also provides ready-made recipes for solutions: no appeasement, no Munich, no Chamberlain.⁷⁹ Anyone who gives way makes himself morally culpable as an accessory. A criminal regime responds only to violence and can be stopped only by hard and effective military intervention.

It is this interpretation of the conflict in Yugoslavia which also helps to explain why the call to intervene was heard from some unexpected quarters: not from the generals but from those whom Kees Schaepman referred to as the ‘peacemakers’.⁸⁰ Prior to the summer of 1992, comparisons with the Second World War were usually made to refer to the complexity of the conflict in Yugoslavia, or to point to the failure of the Germans to defeat Tito’s partisans and used as evidence of the impossibility of effective military intervention. Ten Cate (1998) shows that other historical analogies, the history of the Balkans, Vietnam, Afghanistan, etc. – were also raised later on in the intervention debate. De Volkskrant also continued to publish statements opposing intervention,⁸¹ but internally it was ‘politically correct’ to be in favour of intervention.⁸²

On the other hand, not everyone needed the analogy with World War II to be in favour of intervention. When Jan Pronk, then Minister of Development Cooperation, stated in Trouw (22 August

⁷⁷ Michielsen, 14 September 1999. See also: Peter Michielsen, ‘Excessen in Bosnië: wel aanwijzingen, maar geen bewijzen’ (‘Excesses in Bosnia; indications but no evidence’), NRC Handelsblad, 3 August 1992, and Peter Michielsen, ‘Het geweten spreekt wel wat laat’ (‘Conscience speaks out a little late’), NRC Handelsblad, 13 August 1992.

⁷⁸ Also Pilgram, 27 September 2000. The NOS Journaal made efforts to avoid long words (Laroes, 18 November 1999).

⁷⁹ See Biolley (1993) for the use of this historical analogy (e.g. by Bosnian president Izetbegovic).

⁸⁰ Kees Schaepman, ‘De vredeshaviken willen actie.’ (‘The peacemakers want action’), Vrij Nederland, 19 September 1992.

⁸¹ Joris Cammelbeeck, ‘Mislukte interventie is erger dan niets doen’ (‘A failed intervention is worse than doing nothing’), De Volkskrant, 28 April 1993. Laroes (18 November 1999) believes that there was no mass call for action (of the type later seen in Kosovo) at this time.

⁸² Pilgram, 27 September 2000.

1992) that the West should intervene because “Hitlerdom had seized power in Yugoslavia”, his colleague Relus ter Beek responded: “I don’t need Hitlerdom for that.”⁸³

Perhaps the most conspicuous change to take place in the summer of 1992 was that the military intervention that many had seen as morally essential, was now also considered practically feasible, provided the political will was there.

During the summer of 1992, the interpretation of the facts in the newspapers ran more or less parallel with the reporting itself. Serbs and Muslims were in the roles of perpetrators and victims respectively, in line with the events of those months. This interpretation, this image, was reflected in commentaries, editorials, columns and external contributions and continued to hold throughout the media for a number of years thereafter, despite changing circumstances, despite changes in events reported, and despite differences between the various newspapers. In 1993, the newspapers reported atrocities committed by various parties, not only the Serbs but also the Croats and Muslims. Nevertheless, the editorials continued to cast the Serbs in the role of the ‘bad guys’ to a greater extent than the events reported in 1993 would seem to justify. In 1995, when most news related to the cruelties on the Bosnian-Serb side, there appeared to be a greater correspondence between the reported facts and the editorial commentary based upon them.⁸⁴

This is the interpretation of the conflict that the ‘second generation’ of Dutch journalists to arrive in Yugoslavia would have had: of (Bosnian) Serbs and Muslims in the position of villain and victim respectively, with the Croats occupying some vague role somewhere in between.⁸⁵ However, even these journalists appreciated that the Serbs might have to be regarded as the main villains, but certainly not as the only ones. This broad outlook could be attributed to almost all Dutch journalists, although major differences could be detected between them. In many cases, a certain vision would seem to correlate with an individual’s interpretation of the journalist’s role: distant or involved, neutral or engaged.

The German parliamentarian Stefan Schwarz (CDU) said in an interview with Willem Beusekamp⁸⁶ when the latter was *De Volkskrant*’s correspondent in Bonn, that all sides in Yugoslavia were guilty of atrocities, but that those committed by the Croats and Muslims should be compared with the acts of the Polish resistance during the Second World War, while those of the Serbs could be compared to the actions of Nazi Germany itself. One solicits understanding, the other is beyond contempt. Dutch freelance journalist Harald Doornbos agreed with this appraisal. As one of four war correspondents interviewed by Wendy Traa⁸⁷, he admitted that he had taken sides, but:

⁸³ Wio Joustra & Jan Trom, ‘Er bestaan geen militaire operaties zonder risico’s’ (‘There are no risk-free military operations’), *De Volkskrant*, 15 September 1992.

⁸⁴ This does not in itself mean that the dominant interpretation was false. In fact, the discrepancy is much greater in the case of the opinion columns and external contributions (see content analysis).

⁸⁵ Van den Boogaard, 5 November 1999. In the eyes of the UN, all parties were equally guilty. Officially, the Dutch peacekeepers also maintained this ‘blue’ standpoint. However, some commentators believe that the troops would have been tutored in pro-Serb arguments by such authorities as the cultural anthropologist Rene Gremaux and the historian Abe de Vries. See Frank Westerman, ‘VN-soldaat krijgt les in Servische argumenten’ (‘UN soldier given lesson in Serb arguments’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29 July 1995; Petra de Koning, ‘Docenten Clingendael leerden soldaten hún lesje’ (‘Clingendael professors taught soldiers their lesson’), *Vrij Nederland*, 15 March 1997; Rene Gremaux and Abe de Vries, ‘De term “genocide”’ (‘The term “genocide”’), *Vrij Nederland* 29 March 1997; Westerman & Rijs 1997:119). See also: Ewoud Nysingh, ‘Couzy was tevoren op de hoogte van tekst overste Karremans’ (‘Couzy had been informed of Col. Karremans’ text in advance’), *De Volkskrant*, 11 August 1995: “‘The media’ are accused by the military of putting forward the one-sided image that “only the Muslims are to be pitied.” This is what they are taught during their training in Ossendrecht.’ Since the summer of 1995, Ewoud Nysingh has repeatedly pointed to anti-Muslim sentiments among Dutchbat troops. (Ewoud Nysingh, ‘Chef Dutchbat 2 geeft hekel aan Moslims toe’ (‘Dutchbat II commander admits a dislike of Muslims’), *De Volkskrant*, 1 September 1995; Nysingh 14 September 2000.

⁸⁶ ‘Duitse parlementariër Schwarz inventariseert misdaden Serviërs’ (‘German parliamentarian Schwartz takes stock of Serbian crimes’), *De Volkskrant*, 14 January 1993.

⁸⁷ ‘Vier oorlogscorrespondenten in de frontlinies van het vak’ (‘Four war correspondents in the front line of the profession’), *De Journalist*, 24 September 1999. See also Willem Offenbergh, ‘De CNN-factor’ (‘The CNN factor’), *Wordt Vervolg*, December 1999/January 2000.

“...if you compare this war with the Spanish Civil War, you see that all the great journalists of that time – Hemingway and Orwell, for example – also took sides. The factions were clear: fascists and anti-fascists. I found Sarajevo very similar to the Spanish Civil War. A real anti-fascist struggle. Of course, then I know which side I am on. And I let other people know, too.”

Fons de Poel and Bart Nypels of Netwerk/Brandpunt also saw the Yugoslav war as a struggle between fascism and democracy, rather than as an ethnic conflict, which means that “...you have to make choices”⁸⁸

Most journalists seem to have applied a similar line of reasoning to RTL4 reporter Willem Lust:

“I consider it improper to tar all sides with the same brush. (...) The Serbs were to blame for that conflict. (...) The idea that the Serbs were the main villains of the piece – that they were in any event the only people who could have prevented the war. If they had wanted no war, there would have been no war. But they wanted a war. That’s why the war started. What happened later through the actions of the Muslims and the Croats is all bad. But the root cause was that the Serbs wanted the war to start, and that they thought they could win it within a couple of weeks.”⁸⁹

Or as Cees Labeur, editor of *Hier en Nu*, puts it:

“... the tenor was, as far as we were concerned, that of course they were all doing the most dreadful things, but that the Serbs were doing so on a much larger scale with very much more force and with many more resources. We established that over a long period and it was indeed the case.”⁹⁰

At the other end of this spectrum were reporters such as Nicole Lucas (*Trouw*), Raymond van den Boogaard and Marjon van Royen (*NRC Handelsblad*) and the foreign news editor of the *Algemeen Dagblad*, Othon Zimmermann:

“I always take the position that the Balkans conflict was started by the Serbs, but was eagerly embraced by the Muslims, the Croats, the Slovenes, etc. The Kosovars too, later on. In my view, responsibility lies with the regime. But there is a lot more [to consider] besides.”⁹¹

Eventually, this standpoint came under criticism. Lucas and her ilk were reproached for their neutrality, or for ‘seeking an objectivity which does not exist’ and for ‘always placing the blame somewhere in the middle’.⁹² “Every little shade of meaning,” said Zimmermann, “makes you into a pro-Serb journalist.”⁹³ According to Van den Boogaard, fellow journalists on the same paper wanted him to side more with the oppressed Muslims. This is one of the reasons, he believes, that the *NRC Handelsblad* considered it necessary to send other journalists, such as Alfred van Cleef, to Yugoslavia.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ De Poel and Nypels, 28 October 1999.

⁸⁹ Lust, 19 July 2000.

⁹⁰ Labeur, 16 August 1999.

⁹¹ Zimmermann, 28 April 2000.

⁹² Wendy Traa, ‘Vier oorlogscorrespondenten in de frontlinies van het vak’ (‘Four war correspondents on the front lines of the profession’), *De Journalist*, 24 September 1999.

⁹³ Zimmermann, 28 April 2000.

⁹⁴ Van den Boogaard, 5 November 1999. According to Peter Michielsen this conclusion is unfounded (e-mail, 6 December 2000).

Once a certain view of a situation has become a general assumption, there is a danger that facts which do not coincide with that vision will be ignored, while others which fit easily into the pattern will automatically be accepted at face value.⁹⁵ This is an additional problem in the quest for accurate reporting, alongside the demands of speed, the competition between the media, and in the case of Yugoslavia, the local obstacles preventing the use of normal methods of journalistic reflection and control.

Although both the news-gathering process and the reports about prison camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina were extremely controversial, paradoxically the danger that facts will not be checked is comparatively small in the case of events with undisputedly high news value and corresponding media exposure. Truth is protected to some degree, precisely because everyone has to ‘discover’ the camps for themselves.⁹⁶

The creation and worldwide dissemination of the Omarska footage demonstrates how this particular journalistic process works. ITN’s decision to send Williams and Marshall to film prison camps was not based on any ‘hunch’ but was prompted by Maggie O’Kane’s earlier reports of such camps in *The Guardian*. RTL reporter Willem Lust was given a similar assignment, and for similar reasons, when he found himself in Croatia in late July and early August 1992 to cover the presidential elections and the departure of Bosnian refugees to the Netherlands.⁹⁷ So the process in which news about an event is hyped and made to spread like wildfire, brings with it the likelihood that a possible hoax will eventually be disclosed. Lust saw the camps for himself and was therefore able to assess the previous reports and the pictures in the light of reality. As a matter of fact, his own impressions coincided with these reports.

“During that initial period, we produced a report about the concentration camps which were to be found around Banja Luka. That was after Omarska. A couple of days later, I think. My advantage over the people that had been there before me is that I speak German. They did not speak German, but a lot of the people in the camps did. The guards did not speak German but the prisoners did because they had been migrant workers. I was therefore in a better position to talk to these people.

I also went inside the camps. They were not extermination camps, but concentration camps. You cannot describe them as normal prison camps. It was really dreadful there. People ask themselves whether you can really term them concentration camps – perhaps they think that the barbed wire was just there for decoration. Nonsense. Of course not.

I did not go into the camp at Omarska, but into a camp close to Banja Luka or at least in that general direction. As far as I could see, the people there did not have enough to eat. They were being mistreated. They were corralled within the barbed wire which was there solely to keep them in. It was not Omarska. It was Manjaca or something like that.

⁹⁵ See also Vasterman 2000.

⁹⁶ Of course, there is the danger that everyone will come down on the side of one and the same party. It is not always helpful for a story to come from a source which is generally considered to be reliable, since this will reduce the natural inclination to check it: “When the pictures are so straightforward and you see them on ITN, and again in *The Guardian*, you just assume that this must be the situation.” Nova editor Brugsma, 2 February 2000. Laroes (24 November 1999): “In these circumstances, you cannot say that you will not broadcast something until you know its exact background, because in that case we would still all be waiting.”

⁹⁷ His interviews with former prisoners were broadcast as part of the *RTL Nieuws* programmes of 4 and 5 August 1992.

From what I remember of the pictures I had seen, this was very much in the same league. Except that in the camp I saw, the people would not have dared come anywhere near the barbed wire. The atmosphere there was too harsh for that, and the people themselves were far too timid. They had to sit, all in long rows. They sat like that the whole day.”⁹⁸

The pattern repeated itself for Lust when he returned to Yugoslavia in late 1992, at a time when stories were reaching the Netherlands about atrocities in Serbian ‘rape camps’. “My editors were constantly on the phone asking me to investigate the atrocities,” recalls Lust. “And so (...) trips that were planned to last a couple of days would sometimes go on and on, because there was something new to investigate every time.”⁹⁹

NRC Handelsblad journalist Mark Kranenburg describes the pack journalism that results: “Something happens. We must all focus on it. That one image, that one restricted image. That receives all the attention. This flywheel effect. (...) There is no one who says, ‘let’s ignore this for a moment and go and have a look at things from the other side’.”¹⁰⁰ In fact, this is not just an example of the type of pack journalism which gives rise to ‘hypes’ but also demonstrates how low the threshold can be for news which fits into a certain expected pattern.

Lust’s assignment had been prompted by rumours (propagated by the German politician Stefan Schwarz) of Mengele-type experiments on Bosnian women. Having first appeared in *Bild Zeitung* and on Sat1 television, the story was eagerly seized upon by the Dutch media, including *De Volkskrant* (through its Bonn correspondent Willem Beusekamp) and Willem Lust’s employers RTL Nieuws.¹⁰¹ The rumour eventually proved to be unfounded.¹⁰² It seems likely that a story like this would have been more carefully checked and managed had it not fitted so neatly into a long series of known atrocities and into the established image of the situation in Yugoslavia. This may also be said to apply to the numbers of casualties reported, sometimes vastly exaggerated (possibly at the instigation of the aid organizations¹⁰³) and to the rumours of the Serbs having the wherewithal to start World War III.¹⁰⁴ This could also explain why some images and facts were given an unwarranted ‘anti-Serb’ bias in an evening-long KRO programme devoted to Yugoslavia. Not because of any malicious intent, but probably due to lack of care prompted by an established assumption about the situation.¹⁰⁵

Manipulation and influence

There is considerable controversy surrounding the manner in which the ITN footage of the camp at Trnopolje was obtained. Had Fikret Alic and his companions been asked to pose behind the barbed wire? Was Alic’s physical appearance representative of that of the prisoners in general? Was the camp enclosed by barbed wire or not? On which side of the wire were the prisoners filmed – inside or outside the camp?¹⁰⁶ Is it acceptable for journalists to manipulate the facts, or to stage a reconstruction

⁹⁸ Lust, 19 July 2000.

⁹⁹ Lust, 19 July 2000.

¹⁰⁰ Kranenburg, 13 September 2000.

¹⁰¹ Willem Beusekamp, ‘Artsen Servië doen proeven op moslimvrouwen’ (‘serb doctors perform experiments on Muslim women’), *De Volkskrant*, 4 January 1993; *RTL Nieuws* 4 January 1993. See also Anstadt 1999:194.

¹⁰² Beusekamp himself more or less retracted this during an interview with Schwarz in *De Volkskrant* of 14 January 1993.

¹⁰³ Ronald Ockhuysen, ‘Overdrijven om bestwil’ (‘stretching the truth’), *De Volkskrant*, 8 March 1997. See also Moeller 1999; von Merveldt 1998; Schoeman 1997.

¹⁰⁴ Wendy Traa, ‘Vier oorlogscorrespondenten in de frontlinies van het vak’ (‘Four war correspondents in the front lines of the profession’), *De Journalist*, 24 September 1999.

¹⁰⁵ Findings of the Raad voor de Journalistiek (Dutch Press Council) URL: <http://www.rvdj.nl/uitspraken/1993-14.htm>.

¹⁰⁶ See the proceedings of the case brought by ITN against the magazine *Living Marxism* following publication of an article by Thomas Deichmann (*The picture that fooled the world*; *Living Marxism* no. 97, February 1997) which accuses the makers of the ITN report of deliberate manipulation. The article had previously been published (in Dutch) in *De Groene Amsterdammer* of 22 January 1997

of an actual situation? Were journalists themselves being manipulated – by the Bosnian Muslims in this instance?¹⁰⁷

Television reporters frequently face the problem of there being no actual footage of an event, perhaps because the camera crew was unable to reach the location in time. Should they accept this as a fact of life, even when it may be possible to ‘rectify’ matters? Further dilemmas arise when using library footage to illustrate current events: is it permissible to use footage of a roadblock at Travnik from the archive to illustrate a report about a roadblock at Vitez, for example? After all, no one will spot the difference. It is the direct reference to the reality of television images which causes the problem. Life is a bit less complicated for radio and print journalists.

Most reporters who were actually in Yugoslavia faced such problems, up to and including the creation of (false) media events. In July 1992, *Algemeen Dagblad* journalist Othon Zimmermann came across thousands of despondent, apathetic refugees from Srebrenica in the town of Tuzla.

“Suddenly, a television crew arrived. A car with a camera on the roof. They were filming. Someone from that team called out to the women: ‘You should protest and shout things.’ Then came: ‘We want our men back!’ This was transmitted that evening wherever. Later, my editor phoned me and asked whether I had missed the demonstration. ‘What?’ ‘That demonstration – we just saw it on the news.’”¹⁰⁸

The journalists have no ready-made answer to the questions about the gathering of the Trnopolje footage.¹⁰⁹ Television journalists are, like the radio reporter Ab Pilgram, maybe somewhat more flexible and tolerant than their newspaper counterparts. Othon Zimmerman questions whether you can even alter a camera angle in order to include some barbed wire in a shot.¹¹⁰ André Roelofs considers it a ‘particularly thorny’ problem: what should you as a television reporter do if you are convinced that by means of just a small ‘tweak’ reality might be better represented?¹¹¹

Pilgram, political editor of the Radio 1 news service (and previously of KRO’s *Echo*), takes a different view:

“If it has been firmly established that there is genocide, based on the actual dominant position of one party, and you are given the opportunity to present that in a strong manner, you must be prepared to edit a little here and there. But you must actually have something to work with. My criterion would be to be absolutely sure that there is genocide or something equally dreadful (I can’t think what) if you intend to manipulate what you have, and you then edit it so that it immediately becomes very apparent in the film what is going on. In a sense, the television reporter is like any other artist, hired to make clear what certain pictures are about, whether those pictures are shown left to right or right to left. However, there are of course limits and this is an area in which there are many question marks.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ In *MiddagEditie* of 9 June 1997, Professor of Communication Science Cees Hamelink discussed the methods of the ITN team with Cees Labeur, editor of *Hier en Nu/Netwerk*. They failed to reach agreement.

¹⁰⁸ Zimmermann, 28 April 2000. In August 1992, *NOS Journaal* reporter Gerri Eickhof found more than one thousand refugees in Capljina who, according to the Bosnian Hassan Huremovic (speaking on TROS radio on 15 August) desperately wanted to go to the Netherlands. However, the refugees themselves knew nothing of this ambition (Eickhof, e-mail of 18 January 2000).

¹⁰⁹ The possibility of deliberate misinformation on the part of ITN journalists is left aside here.

¹¹⁰ Zimmermann, 28 April 2000.

¹¹¹ Roelofs, 29 September 2000.

¹¹² Pilgram, 27 September 2000.

Carolien Brugsma (Nova) does not believe that she, or anyone else from Nova or Netwerk, would actually set up a scene: if the film showed a fence around the camp, then there was a fence around the camp. However, the footage of Omarska prompted a discussion within the editorial team, and eventually throughout the field of television journalism. “It is a commonly held misconception that television journalists will only seek out the sensation in a shot and will simplify the other aspects,” says Brugsma.¹¹³

The first part of the report produced by the Bakker Commission describes the influence of reports and images from Yugoslavia as follows:

“With regard to the UNPROFOR/UNPF operation, a number of people involved in decision-making processes refer to the poignant pictures and reports in the media when recounting their motives for sending troops to the former Yugoslavia (or supporting others in this decision). However, they state that such pictures and reports served only to reinforce opinions and standpoints which they already held. Incontrovertibly such reports and pictures contributed to the creation of support for the decision to deploy forces in the former Yugoslavia.”¹¹⁴

Journalists themselves might see things rather differently. After all they are professionals; they know how the news-gathering, editing and presentation processes actually work. This leads one to expect that they will experience the influence of media messages somewhat differently than ‘mere mortals’ such as politicians and the general public. Indeed this expectation is held by many journalists, including Pilgram:

“I have always been somewhat sceptical about these kinds of pictures, I do not know who has made them, how it has been manipulated, what part of the actual situation I am being shown. But I believe that for any other people it will be very different and I think that the effect will be very different on people who have not been trained in journalism or in information.”¹¹⁵

However, the effect was also different on some people who had been trained in journalism. Mark Kranenburg describes the development in his attitudes thus:

“At the time I was part of the Journalists’ Forum on radio. When it all started in the early 1990s. The question then was, ‘should something be done?’. At first, the answer was no. There is so much history. Let it just fizzle out of its own accord. Don’t get involved. Later, I stopped saying that. You can’t just ignore something like that. But right at the very beginning, it was all a long way away. A civil war. We should not interfere. I was influenced, and by those pictures I think.”¹¹⁶

Kranenburg has strong ideas about the political influence of television:

¹¹³ Brugsma, 2 February 2000. As exemplified also by the discussion between Cees Labeur of *Netwerk/Hier en Nu* and Cees Hamelink, Professor of Communication Science, in *MiddagEditie* of 9 June 1997.

¹¹⁴ Report of the Special Commission on decision-making with regard to deployment of armed forces, Part 1, Lower House of the Dutch Parliament, session 1999-2000, 26 454, nos. 7-8, p. 444. *De Volkskrant* journalist Anet Bleich (16 September 1999) takes the view that: “the media certainly played a part, but would not have succeeded in forcefully persuading a Parliament and a government which knew better.”

¹¹⁵ Pilgram, 29 September 2000.

¹¹⁶ Kranenburg, 13 September 2000. Brugsma (2 February 2000) also explicitly cites the Omarska images.

“Images are very dominant. The images are so very important. Certainly in this case. You have emotion. In a newspaper it is not possible to convey this to the same degree. The odd photograph perhaps. But the pictures on television [are different]. Television is also a crucial source of information for The Hague, for the politicians and the bureaucracy. This is how they see the world and how the world sees them. How should they respond? But then, how will their response be presented? First of all they see the mortar attack on the market in Sarajevo – the pictures that are shown on television. They know that this will cause an emotional shockwave. They think, we must respond. Then, the manner in which they formulate their reactions is also shown on television. You have to show your involvement. That is very important. There has to be a statement on television. Newspapers play a subordinate role in this regard, I believe.”¹¹⁷

Television journalists are inclined to be somewhat reticent when asked about the influence of their medium. Newspaper journalists are rather more forthcoming. They give little credence to the view of Strobel (1997) and Gowing (1996) that the quality newspapers are important in terms of influencing political opinion.

Some older political editors and reporters have seen how television has usurped the printed media in terms of political influence, and they regard this as a good indication of the major influence which politics itself ascribes to television. Geelen (1998) suggests that the print media are contributing to this development by hiding more and more behind television reporting.

The permanent presence of a much larger number of media than used to be the case has given more prominence to the hierarchy among them: a piece on the opinion page of the NRC Handelsblad is seen to carry more weight than a piece in the *Algemeen Dagblad*. Appearing on Nova is more important than appearing on Netwerk. Politicians have a much more calculating approach to such matters than they once did. For some non-television journalists, politicians now appear to be less accessible, even aside from the insulation provided to those in authority nowadays by their communications people.

Ewoud Nysingh believes that the favouritism shown towards television journalism may, remarkably enough, also be a result of the TV’s dependence on images. It is much easier to confide detailed background information to a television journalist, knowing that in all probability he or she can’t do much with it anyway.¹¹⁸

In contrast to people such as Ewoud Nysingh¹¹⁹, Peter Michielsen, who has become sadder and wiser as a result of his experiences over the last ten years, no longer believes that the printed press has any influence on political decision-making at all:

“Television has influence, but only if the pictures are shocking enough and public opinion also makes itself heard. But print media have not a shred of

¹¹⁷ Kranenburg, 13 September 2000. See also Mark Kranenburg, ‘Beeldreligie bestaat’ (‘The religion of images exists’), <http://www.avtmz.nl/Pages/MarkKranenburg.htm>. Zimmerman: “That has frustrated me more than once of late. I thought, ‘People, just read it! Do something about it!’ Things only became important two or three days later. Sometimes there was some delay before the pictures appeared on television, while the events had long been reported in the newspaper. In this sense, the visual media are dominant. Not even the opinion pages in the newspapers can claim the same influence. It is the images that evoke emotions and politicians respond to emotions. You see that here more than anywhere else.” (Zimmermann, 28 April 2000).

¹¹⁸ Nysingh, 14 September 2000.

¹¹⁹ Nysingh (prompted by a case in which the Ministry of Defence scuppered a Ministry of Foreign Affairs plan by leaking it): “And you know that the longer you’re in The Hague, the more likely you are to be used. Sometimes you have to decide whether you’re going to allow yourself to be used. You know exactly what is going on. You write something and then something might happen – it usually does if you write for *De Volkskrant*. In a certain way, you are a factor and you know it.” (Nysingh, 14 September 2000)

influence. I am convinced of this. Perhaps the odd Member of Parliament will read something and think, 'I really must do something about that', and perhaps he actually will. But not in the sense that print media have influence on politics as such, I simply do not believe it. Not after the last ten years. I believe that television with its shocking pictures, first of bombed-out cars at Ljubljana airport, then Vukovar and all the dreadful events in Croatia, then Bosnia with the most memorable example of those skeletons in Omarska – I believe that this has an enormous impact, a positive impact, I think, since otherwise there might have been nothing and there might have been nobody in The Hague who was affected in any way at all."¹²⁰

Most journalists have little sympathy for politicians such as the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Jozias van Aartsen or his British counterpart Douglas Hurd who complain about politics being constantly put under pressure by television.¹²¹

In a speech made at Duisburg in 1999¹²², Van Aartsen referred to a tendency he had noticed among Dutch parliamentarians to react to whatever they had just seen on television or just read in the newspapers. He might have had a point there, also as far as the war in the former Yugoslavia is concerned. According to Geelen (1989:12), the weekly question time in Parliament "has become illustrative of the current relationship between politics and the press. It is largely concerned with issues that have been elevated to the status of 'hot items' by the press. Furthermore, those politicians who are seen to be involved in such issues will attract publicity more readily." However, this is not a new phenomenon. Over twenty years ago, Ton Planken (1980:49) observed that members of the House at the time of the 'Ultracentrifuge' affair, "referred directly to articles published in the mass media on no fewer than 160 occasions", even though the quality of much of the information provided by the media had been highly questionable, in his view.

Few parliamentarians now balk at the sight of a camera, whether they have had media training or not. Quite the reverse. When BBC's television news department moved to Television Centre in White City, away from Westminster and the centre of London, several years ago, concerned journalists wondered whether MPs would be willing to travel all the way to the studios. In practice, there proved to be no problem at all.¹²³ Experience in the Netherlands has been similar. As Carolien Brugsma (of Nova) puts it: "they're in make-up before we've even phoned them!"¹²⁴

Ab Pilgram too finds politicians far too hungry for publicity:

"With some regularity over the past twenty years, I have looked at politicians and thought, 'well, why allow yourself to be interviewed at all? You could say to Wouke van Scherrenburg, 'excuse me – did we have an appointment?' I wish they would say that, or ask why they are expected to have an opinion on that particular issue. They could tell her to come back tomorrow. But so very few do, even though it is perfectly acceptable practice in America and England. Here, everyone immediately starts answering even the most banal questions."¹²⁵

In Pilgram's view, this says something about a particular way of practising politics as well as about a style of journalism. On the one hand, drawing attention to issues and stating one's standpoint is part of the politician's job, but the desire for publicity often outweighs the legitimate desire to contribute to the

¹²⁰ Michielsen, 14 September 1999.

¹²¹ Lockefer, 30 November 1999; Brugsma, 2 February 2000 and others.

¹²² At the opening of the fifth Netherlands-Germany conference on 9 September 1999.

¹²³ Carey Clark, deputy editor *BBC Breakfast News*, 16 December 1998.

¹²⁴ Brugsma, 2 February 2000.

¹²⁵ Pilgram, 7 September 2000.

public debate. Similarly, the desire to ‘score’ can sometimes overshadow the journalist’s duty to provide relevant information. As Geelen (1998:143) notes in the rather sombre conclusion to his book on the relationship between press and politics: “Every journalist will tell you the one thing that counts is ‘content’, but there is little evidence of this in practice.”

Journalists who come to parliamentary journalism from some other specialism have to get used to the lack of distance between politics and journalism, and the ‘under the counter’ culture in which news items and information are planted, leaked and passed on. They arrive in a setting in which everyone tends to think in ‘what if’ scenarios. Nothing merely happens of its own accord. Politicians always regard an item in the press as having an ulterior motive: it will not be there by accident or coincidence.¹²⁶ Similarly, the journalist is inclined to believe that nothing is brought to his attention by accident or coincidence. There must be a purpose.

This too is nothing new and it is not confined to the Dutch situation (see Tunstall 1970,1971). The system relies on a common interest in publicity, on certain unwritten rules of conduct and on a mixture of calculated mutual trust and suspicion. If the desire or temptation to ‘score’ is too great, the rules may occasionally be broken. The market forces which served to forge the relationship in the first place have become distorted in recent decades, as spokespersons and spin doctors have elbowed their way in between the journalists and their political targets. This professionalization of communication on the part of the politicians is partly a response to the increasing swiftness and the sheer ubiquity of the media.

Critics believe that the politicians’ desire for publicity and, more especially, the journalists’ desire to score have combined with the effects of increasing competition to bring about an impasse in political reporting. It is an impasse to which no one can find a solution (Geelen 1998; cf. Kaiser 1985). This is probably too sweeping a conclusion, but it is certain that the degree of interdependence between journalists and politicians in The Hague makes it practically impossible to determine who is influencing whom and to what extent. The questions to the House, the submissions to the podium pages in the newspapers give a clue, but no more than that. They are, after all, part of the toolbox of standard parliamentary practice, ritualistic reactive actions from which little can be deduced one way or the other. They belong to the public face of politics and offer no conclusive evidence that politicians’ decisions are in any way led by ‘primary emotions’ and images.

Between ‘something must be done’ and Yugoslavia fatigue

In the eyes of some people in the media, even Omarska achieved little more than to prompt a few of these ritual dances in politics and to briefly break through the lethargy of the general public. Even fellow journalists kept demonstrating a lack of ongoing motivation. One month after the concentration camp images were aired, Henk van Hoorn expressed surprise (in an opinion column in *De Journalist*) that news about Yugoslavia had not moved to the inside pages of the newspapers or the ‘other news’ section of the TV news, despite it being so predictable and ‘more of the same’.¹²⁷ Many journalists remember the cartoon (which has been on display for a long time in the NOS Journaal newsroom) showing a television salesman promising his prospective customers that the model they had in mind would ‘automatically switch channels as soon as pictures of Yugoslavia were shown’.¹²⁸ Even the editorial desks seem to have suffered this ennui, as *Algemeen Dagblad* editor Othon Zimmermann recalls:

“As I came in there would be a large pile of all sorts of reports to sift through. Nobody had much interest in Yugoslavia. So every day you were working on

¹²⁶ Kranenburg, 13 September 2000: “Thank heavens you do not know that [reason] while you are actually writing the piece. You get to make that up later.”

¹²⁷ ‘strijdlust’ (‘Bellicosity’), *De Journalist*, 11 September 1992.

¹²⁸ Cartoon by Jos Collignon in *De Volkskrant* 7 July 1993. See also Scholten, Ruigrok & Heerma (2001a), para. 9.8.

this, while in the back of your mind you were fairly certain that there was very little interest at the news desk. Nevertheless, you believed that you should keep it up. Lots of little, regular items and then some major coverage every now and then. There was not very much interest. And so you would concentrate on the little incidents. Incidents? Of course they weren't incidents. But you used them and sometimes you may have been inclined to blow them up a little."¹²⁹

On 6 December 1992, *Brandpunt*, *Reporter* and *Kruispunt*, the current affairs programmes made by KRO and RKK, presented a special edition of almost three hours' duration, entitled 'Yugoslavia Exit'. The theme of the programme was 'should we intervene or not?' The format was derived from successful television charity campaigns (such as the one to raise money for the famine in Ethiopia), with reports, testimonials from Dutch celebrities, commentary and explanations (with Dick Verkijk at the map of Yugoslavia), and a 'swingometer'-style presentation of the number of callers for and against military action (eventually over 90% of callers were in favour).¹³⁰ Various external experts both for and against intervention were interviewed in the studio. They included Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek and BBC reporter Jeremy Bowen. The programme was not intended to collect money or goods – at least, this was not the prime intention – but to answer the question of whether there should be military intervention. Although the programme avoided pushing only one opinion, Milo Anstadt (1999a), one of the people taking part, has accused the makers of being extremely one-sided. It is true that the general tone of the programme was very much in line with public opinion, i.e. in favour of intervention.¹³¹ At a quarter past midnight, editor and presenter Fons de Poel closed the programme with the rather cryptic words: "Intervention or not? Let's hope we never have to say, 'Wir haben es nicht gewusst'."¹³²

Later, De Poel commented "If we were to do this again, we would probably be a little more reserved in our presentation. There were oppositional voices, however, but right from the start, the feeling in the country was 98% for intervention and 2% against or something like that, so our opinion poll was not too informative. We would do it rather differently today, perhaps with Internet discussions to broaden the public debate. There are so many more opportunities now."¹³³

Some weeks after the programme, on 25 January 1993, the NCRV broadcast its first weekly overview of events in the former Yugoslavia, mainly compiled from news footage from both the Netherlands and elsewhere. It was to be the first of 54 editions in all, the final one being aired on 21 February 1994. The most memorable feature of these weekly summaries is that they all closed in the same manner, with a caption appearing across the full width of the screen reading: [Date] and still no intervention.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ "Everyone was fed up to the back teeth with it. People just didn't want to talk about it, they didn't want to read about it. I would really have to push just to get small items printed in the newspaper." (Zimmermann, 28 April 2000). This is a widely recognized phenomenon, which was seen even during the short Gulf War. Wober (1991:46) writes in an article about British public opinion during that conflict: "One problem that the suppliers of news and information face is that the public rapidly showed signs of fatigue. There were many complaints to the broadcasting organizations of excessive news coverage." See also Moeller 1999.

¹³⁰ On 9 May 1993, *Brandpunt* ran another edition focusing on the public mood. This revealed that 66% were in favour of intervention, a figure which was broadly in line with other opinion polls of the time. The 88-90% of the *Yugoslavia Exit* programme suggests that interest in this broadcast was greatest among those who were in favour of intervention in the first place.

¹³¹ The Dutch Press Council upheld a complaint made by the Serbian Information and Cultural Centre, which claimed that 'facts had been presented accompanied by images which were not appropriate to those facts'. See <http://www.rvdj.nl/uitspraken/1993-14.htm>.

¹³² Serbian television later broadcast an edited version of this programme to show how prejudiced the media in the Netherlands were. See also Verkijk (1997:62).

¹³³ De Poel and Nypels, 28 October 1999.

¹³⁴ Preceded by the date.

In contrast to the appeal made by the four journalists from NRC Handelsblad and De Volkskrant (now remembered almost exclusively by those directly involved), the campaign waged by the makers of the NCRV's current affairs programme *Hier en Nu* still prompts a (critical) response today. Nevertheless, the two forms of action seem to have been prompted by very similar motives. In any event, the *Hier en Nu* team's idea was not an entirely new one. Walter Cronkite did something very similar at the time of the Iran hostage crisis (Bliss 1991). The fact remains that it is a highly unconventional means of drawing attention to a situation, and one which raises a number of critical questions. Some fellow journalists tend to mock this form of action, dismissing it as a trick that one would not use if one's journalistic qualities were up to the task of covering the story in a serious manner. Others have their doubts about the admissibility of this kind of moral pressure in a journalistic programme.

Minister of Defence, Relus ter Beek, clearly demonstrated his annoyance. In an interview with Willem Breedveld and Leonoor Meijer of *Trouw*, he said: "What am I supposed to make of a current affairs programme which ends each edition with the dramatic call, 'and still no intervention'? I understand that it serves to assuage their conscience, but I cannot be led by emotional outbursts."¹³⁵

Executive editor Cees Labeur is still unable to appreciate that response. "It was certainly not focused on the Netherlands alone. We were pointing out that all of civilized 'old' Europe was standing by, watching what was happening in its backyard, and the Netherlands was part of that. And when Mr Ter Beek said, 'what am I supposed to make of that', well of course he would. Everyone was thinking 'what are we supposed to make of it?' but we could have gone on that way for years."¹³⁶

"This was a unique moment in the history of what was then still *Hier en Nu*. Given what we could all see, the helplessness of the politicians – helplessness above all – while all these dreadful atrocities were going on before our very eyes. That was the entire situation in essence. And no matter what was said at the political level, it just went on. Then we took a conscious decision: 'Listen, we have to tackle that helplessness.' It was a deliberate action, with the idea of influencing Dutch public opinion. Experience has shown that the greater the pressure of public opinion, the more politicians are likely to give way in certain situations. Based on this, on genuine concern as journalists, but also because we were in a position to do something in prime time, this is how we decided to go about it."¹³⁷

There was no measurable effect on public opinion. Though the general level of support for military intervention cannot be unequivocally ascertained by the surveys, and there was seemingly little immediate and ongoing increase in such support, except perhaps among the supporters of the Groen Links party. A significant majority of the Dutch people were already in favour of intervention in 1992, and this remained the case between 1993 and 1995, although there may have been a slight decline in support (Cras & Wecke 1996; Van der Meulen 1998; Scholten, Ruigrok & Heerma 2001a: para. 9.11).¹³⁸ Certain peaks in pro-intervention sentiment may be attributed to the influence of certain events in Yugoslavia which attracted considerable media coverage, but are difficult to relate to the actions of any

¹³⁵ He made similar complaints against Mient-Jan Faber and his fellow minister Jan Pronk. See 'Hoe zo ingrijpen? Waar dan en hoe?' ('What do you mean, intervene? – Where and how?'), *Trouw* 15 January 1994. In the same interview, Ter Beek comments on the differences between Bosnia and the Gulf War: "there [the Gulf], we saw cross-border aggression whereupon it became obvious at once who the 'good guys' and 'bad guys' were."

¹³⁶ Labeur, 16 August 1999.

¹³⁷ Labeur, 16 August 1999.

¹³⁸ According to surveys conducted by Stichting Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht (Society and Armed Forces Foundation), the proportion of people in favour of Dutch participation in the UN mission fell from 68% in 1993 to 54% in late 1994 and to 41% by mid-1995. See 'Twijfel over VN Missie' ('Doubts concerning UN mission'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 5 July 1995). See also Scholten, Ruigrok & Heerma (2001a), para. 9.17.

one current affairs programme or any one newspaper. Even in the case of the increased support for military action among Groen Links members, media influence (from *De Volkskrant* for example) cannot be distinguished from the impact of support for such a policy from the peace movement, from Groen Links MPs, or from that of specific issues which may or may not have attracted media coverage.

Was there any observable effect on the politicians? In 1993, Mient-Jan Faber and Pronk called upon the public to overwhelm the government with postcards condemning the scandal of non-intervention.¹³⁹ However, Christian Democrat MP Ton de Kok found little evidence of outraged public opinion:

“No doubt the Dutch public is not unmoved by events in the former Yugoslavia, but I have not heard any ‘loud outcry’. A few weeks ago there was a pro-intervention demonstration in Amsterdam. Only about three hundred people turned up.”¹⁴⁰

According to De Kok, Faber’s criticism of the passive attitude of Dutch politicians unfairly placed them in the same category as their counterparts elsewhere in the EU. The Dutch government and the Dutch parliament had been in favour of intervention for some time. Shortly after publication of De Kok’s article, Parliament took a definitive step towards the deployment of Dutchbat when it voted in favour of the Van Traa/Van Vlijmen motion. Later that year, the decision to send the Dutch Airmobile Brigade to Srebrenica was made.

In the period following Omarska, the most prominent of the Dutch media called for military intervention in the former Yugoslavia, each doing so in its own way. Following the decision to deploy troops, the mood appeared to be one of satisfaction – not that the goal of effective military intervention had been attained, but that at least the Netherlands had understood its moral duty. More than that was not attainable. *Hier en Nu* withdrew its weekly ‘... and still no intervention’ caption shortly before the departure of Dutchbat I.

In the decision-making phase, which eventually ended with the deployment of Dutchbat, the desirability of a role for the Netherlands was primarily assessed from a moral perspective. Practical objections were occasionally dismissed as being prompted by irrelevant or even questionable motives.

With hindsight, most journalists approached to contribute to the current study agree that there was too little critical or in-depth analysis during this period, or that they themselves had failed in this respect. However, not all journalists consider this part of their task. The political desk of a newspaper and the television news departments will usually restrict themselves to recording and reporting standpoints; they are usually not in a position to flesh out an issue. Carolien Brugsma (*Nova*) does not believe it is part of a television news programme’s remit to present the dissenting voices:

“We report facts, we do not state opinions. That is my view of journalism. I certainly do not believe that *Nova* should have to present all the divergent opinions, asking people why they believe there should or should not be intervention and exploring all the objections. If you invite a proponent of something into the studio, then the presenter should play devil’s advocate in order to test the validity of that person’s arguments.

I believe that the newspapers have a different role to that of television. We do not provide editorial comment. You should let critical voices be heard, but only when there are critical voices... You must take care not to become involved in opinion leading, although eventually this is inevitable no matter how objective

¹³⁹ The campaign resulted in 160,000 postcards being sent in the Netherlands (*Trouw*, 14 March 1993).

¹⁴⁰ Ton de Kok, ‘Haagse politici valt over Bosnië geen passiviteit te verwijten’ (‘Politicians in The Hague cannot be accused of passivity with regard to Bosnia’), *De Volkskrant*, 25 March 1993.

you are. You are an opinion maker, but this is a role you should fulfil by exploring as many different sides of an issue as possible.”¹⁴¹

Was there a total lack of reservations during the decision-making process, and did the media fail to point out the precarious situation in which Dutchbat forces would soon find themselves, as Polman (1998) and others suggest? No, that is not the case. As early as 1993, the newspapers regularly carried articles examining the restricted mandate of the UN troops in Srebrenica, the possible inadequacy of their arms and equipment, and suchlike.¹⁴² Television did likewise.¹⁴³ January 1994 saw a spate of articles examining the risks of the operation, although this was, of course, after the die had been cast. Nevertheless, the media – like the politicians – give the impression of not having ever expected that expressing a need for military intervention could eventually materialize in a Dutch mission to Srebrenica.¹⁴⁴

Until the spring of 1995, when reports about the lack of supplies and about serious misconduct on the part of Dutchbat troops began to appear, the Dutch media did not devote intensive coverage to the town of Srebrenica or its people. The total failure of the press mission to Srebrenica which accompanied the first Dutchbat contingent in early 1994 and the general isolation of the area in the months which followed undoubtedly played a part, as did the recurring Yugoslavia fatigue on the part of the public. Moreover, Sarajevo seemed much more important, and there were other theatres of war where more was happening than in Srebrenica or its immediate vicinity. Dutch troops were actively deployed at various locations in the former Yugoslavia.

‘Good guys’

In the period following the Omarska revelations, the nature of the Balkans conflict was clear and there was broad social consensus that only forceful military intervention could solve the problem. In this climate, the government took one small step at a time in a direction which would eventually lead to the deployment of the Dutchbat forces in the Srebrenica enclave.¹⁴⁵ This was not entirely intentional and was indeed rather an unexpected development. During the whole process there was severe criticism, both in the media and elsewhere, of the international community and of various Dutch organizations which had failed to respond to their moral duty with appropriate celerity.

The UN was seen as powerless and not daring to take sides (although it was quite clear who were the perpetrators and who were the victims). Countries such as France, the United Kingdom, Germany and the USA were accused of not daring to act at all, or (unlike the Netherlands) acting out of self-interest. The Dutch Minister of Defence was seen to waver, while the senior ranks of the armed forces were comparing Yugoslavia (mistakenly) to Vietnam; perhaps they had forgotten what the role of the armed forces actually is? In overly simplistic terms, this is the attitude held by many politicians and the general public, and one which appeared to be confirmed by a seemingly endless stream of

¹⁴¹ Brugsma, 2 February 2000.

¹⁴² See Scholten, Ruigrok & Heerma 2001a.

¹⁴³ Such as the *Nova* edition of 17 December 1993, which was prompted by comments by the Netherlands Federation of Officers (NOV) to the effect that the deployment of the brigade was ‘irresponsible’. On 27 January 1994, *Nova* featured the commanding officer of the Canadian troops relieved by Dutchbat, who stated that it was almost impossible to defend Srebrenica.

¹⁴⁴ Fons de Poel: “[The deployment decision was] based on the realization that people were being driven out of their homes and murdered, and that we must therefore play a role in protecting these people. That it took place under an idiotic mandate – of course that story was put forward, but when it all started to go wrong in Srebrenica, only then could the idiocy of the mandate and the sheer impossibility of actually doing anything be seen. Together, we created an illusion of safety, and only later was the proper analysis made” (De Poel and Nypels, 14 July 2000).

¹⁴⁵ The political decision-making aspects were examined in the KRO *Reporter* programme of 25 November 1999. See also Honig & Both 1996.

reports in the media. Following the fall of Srebrenica, some of these assumptions came to be examined in a different light altogether.

A (simplified) reconstruction may demonstrate how this vision (most apparent in *De Volkskrant*) came to be formed. The basis is the perceived moral obligation to act and to provide an example to others in doing so. This is a role which the Netherlands has not been reluctant to take on in the past, but on this occasion it was presented as an inevitable choice, forced upon the Dutch because other countries were failing to do the right thing. The international community was thus the fly in the proverbial ointment. According to Ben Knapen, editor of *NRC Handelsblad*, dissatisfaction with our allies was "...displayed with disarming honesty as far as Bosnia was concerned. The Germans are incapable, the British are cowards, the French only care about themselves and the American president is only interested in opinion polls, etc."¹⁴⁶ Ton de Kok (a Christian Democrat MP) responded to criticism from Mient-Jan Faber by saying that Dutch politicians should not be 'tarred with the same brush' as those elsewhere in the EU.¹⁴⁷ Anet Bleich agreed, writing in *De Volkskrant*: "...in the criticism of the international response to the atrocities in Bosnia, an honourable exception should be made for Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans van den Broek. For some time they have been urging military action to stop the mass murder and to create safe havens in Bosnia."¹⁴⁸

However, not only the moral aspects were subject to scrutiny; the practical feasibility of intervention was also examined in this discourse. Military intervention was not only the appropriate response in moral terms, it was practicable and it could be efficient. The circle of the argument is then closed by disproving the practical arguments against intervention. Such objections to intervention were primarily heard from senior military personnel and the Minister of Defence. Bleich termed this 'the disastrous pacifism of the generals',¹⁴⁹ while Nysingh commented "...where do people get the idea that generals want to fight? They are bureaucrats interested only in acquiring new hardware."¹⁵⁰ The generals' fear of becoming embroiled in another Vietnam or a partisan struggle is a specious argument, according to Nysingh: "Drunken Serbs with rifles are not partisans."¹⁵¹

Background II (Srebrenica and beyond)

The events leading up to 'srebrenica' and those which followed the fall of the enclave are closely interrelated. The image of the conflict in Yugoslavia that was held by the media, politicians and the general public, the historic place which it had acquired – even before Srebrenica – among the century's great humanitarian dramas, and the resulting view of the responsibilities of the international community and of the Netherlands itself, go some way towards explaining the Dutch response to the fall of the enclave and to the massacre which ensued. The self-image held by the Dutch contrasted strongly with the reality of Srebrenica. This may well have served to heighten the traumatic effect. It also seems to form an important consideration in any analysis of the role of the media after July 1995. While an

¹⁴⁶ Ben Knapen, 'Wie bij de wereld wil horen, hoort nergens bij' ('Anyone who wants to be part of the world will be part of nothing'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 4 September 1993. One example is the 17 December 1993 edition of the KRO television programme *Reporter*, which dealt with the failing politics of the EU and of the British in particular, in which the Minister of Foreign Affairs, P.H. Kooijmans, vented his frustrations. See also Rozemond in *De Volkskrant* of 14 August 1993 (Scholten, Ruigrok & Heerma 2001a, para. 9.10.2). *De Telegraaf* wrote in an editorial (31 March 1995) "...that there are still countries such as the Netherlands proves that feelings of human compassion still exist".

¹⁴⁷ *De Volkskrant*, 25 March 1993. Faber observed in late 1993 (notably in *De Volkskrant* of 18 November) that Dutch public opinion was turning against the Bosnians (Scholten, Ruigrok & Heerma 2001a, para. 9.14).

¹⁴⁸ Anet Bleich, 'Het funeste pacifisme van de generaals' ('The disastrous pacifism of the generals') *De Volkskrant*, 11 December 1992. See also Anet Bleich 'safe havens in Bosnië: een zinnig voorstel' ('safe havens in Bosnia: a sensible suggestion'), *De Volkskrant*, 24 November 1992.

¹⁴⁹ *De Volkskrant*, 11 December 1992.

¹⁵⁰ Ewoud Nysingh, 'Tijdrekken voor volkenmoord' ('Wasting time in the face of genocide') *De Volkskrant*, 18 December 1992.

¹⁵¹ *De Volkskrant*, 14 August 1992.

investigation of the journalistic process and of reporting in this period falls outside the remit of the current study, the interviews with the journalists who were involved may shed some light upon the nature of the media coverage of Srebrenica, and on the methods, assumptions and motives of these journalists and the media for which they worked.

A number of aspects will be examined in some detail here. The most important factor is the ‘dossier’ itself, the extent and nature of the drama and the direct involvement of the Netherlands in that situation. Other factors that have been influential include the relationship between the media and ‘Defence’, the influence of competition between the media (and between journalists), the discrepancy between the official interpretation of Srebrenica and the observations of journalists, and finally official information policy concerning Srebrenica. After 11 July 1995, Srebrenica very rapidly took on a new status as a news story – the ‘srebrenica Affair’ – whereupon the role of the day-to-day news reporters became rather less important, the focus shifting to research journalists working for current affairs programmes and the more serious dailies and weeklies.

The media and the military

Aside from the comments of Bleich and Nysingh reported elsewhere in this document, it is useful to examine the relationship between the Dutch media and the country’s armed forces, since it has been suggested that this poor relationship accounts at least in part for the journalists’ tendency to lay blame for Srebrenica at the door of the Dutch military.¹⁵²

To what extent do journalists’ views and prejudices play a role in determining attitudes towards the armed forces? In the Netherlands, Linda Polman (1998, 1999a) has been among the most outspoken critics of the manner in which the media dealt with Srebrenica and Dutchbat. She points to *Volkskrant* journalist Joris Cammelbeeck to demonstrate how prejudiced Dutch journalists can be with regard to any matter connected with the Ministry of Defence or the armed forces. At a meeting to which former Dutchbat soldiers had also been invited, Cammelbeeck countered accusations of biased and incomplete reporting in his newspaper in a somewhat clumsy manner, pointing out that *De Volkskrant*’s journalists were of the Vietnam generation and hence anti-Defence Ministry and anti-military.¹⁵³

A significant proportion of the prominent journalists at the time of the civil war in Yugoslavia were indeed of the Vietnam generation, but this does not automatically imply any anti-military tendency. Rather, it is noticeable (at least among those approached for this study) that many choose to distance themselves from the traditional Dutch ‘culture of tolerance’, although none goes as far as Jan Blokker in his rejection of the glorification of the 1960s as a whole. Where these journalists fail to give the Dutch military much credit, they tend to blame the cultural changes of the 1960s for having permeated the military mentality, an accusation which also features regularly in international assessments (including those by the military counterparts) following the fall of Srebrenica, and one which may be shared by a considerable number of Dutch journalists (even if it is seldom aired in public). It is a view which even enjoys some currency within the Dutch forces themselves.¹⁵⁴ From here

¹⁵² Polman 1998, 1999a.

¹⁵³ According to Ten Cate (1998), Cammelbeeck, along with Hans Moleman, was among those who expressed doubts concerning the pro-intervention attitude of colleagues such as André Roelofs, Anet Bleich and Ewoud Nysingh.

¹⁵⁴ Schoeman, 12 August 1999. An example of this line of thinking can also be found in a Finnish television interview with Lieutenant General Ensio Siilasvuo (retd.), a veteran of UN peacekeeping operations. Interviewer Sakari Kilpelä: “The Dutch failed badly in Srebrenica. The people of Srebrenica sought protection in their camp but the Dutch soldiers were so afraid that they dared not defend them. When the Serbs entered the compound, they took all boys and men over the age of twelve and murdered them within days. Between six and eight thousand men. Would the Finns have allowed this to happen?” Lt. Gen. Siilasvuo: “It is a tragic story. Because I was not there, I cannot comment on the behaviour of the Dutch troops. But I am absolutely convinced that Finnish troops would not have permitted this to happen. Force would have been met with force.” (Sakari Kilpelä and Liisa Riekkö in discussion with Ensio Siilasvuo in *Huomenta Suomi*, MTV3, 19 October 1996; transl. Sari Näsi).

it is only a small step to establish a link between ‘typical’ statements by the Dutch military who, for instance, complained about the personal risks they had to face when deployed in Yugoslavia (as broadcast, for example, in the VARA television programme *Met Witteman* of 28 January 1993), and the later failure of Dutchbat to offer adequate protection to the people of Srebrenica.¹⁵⁵ If such analyses were indeed made, it would be interesting to know why these doubts did not lead to more critical comments in the media at the time when increased military involvement by the Netherlands was still being discussed.

Even under normal circumstances, the relationship between the military and the journalist is a complicated one. This is inevitable since, almost by definition, each will have a different idea about the expediency of secrecy or disclosure. However, there are other, more concrete factors which can be identified as having had an influence on the relationship during the conflict in Yugoslavia. Some were of a temporary nature, others more permanent. Some were, at first glance, quite trivial. We shall mention a few. For example, one minister – Relus ter Beek – was able to communicate somewhat more readily with journalists than another – e.g. his successor Joris Voorhoeve. Even in defence matters, some journalists get to hear things sooner than others, and stories may be deliberately ‘planted’.¹⁵⁶ As one of the main national news organs, public broadcasting’s NOS Journaal maintains a special relationship with the Ministry of Defence; its journalists will always be present when an event of national importance occurs, whether an official visit of a minister or the homecoming of a Dutch contingent. In this specific situation commercial RTL Nieuws also enjoyed a special status, certainly among those troops on the ground, because RTL could be received (by satellite) in Yugoslavia, whereas the Dutch public service channels could not. Furthermore, RTL Nieuws tends to focus on stories about ‘ordinary people’.¹⁵⁷ Such special positions may have led to real or imagined forms of favouritism in certain situations, so that at one time RTL was seen to enjoy an advantage over the NOS Journaal,¹⁵⁸ or, at another time, that pleasing the NOS Journaal took priority over dealing fairly with a current affairs programme such as *Nova*.¹⁵⁹

Compared to most other government departments, the Ministry of Defence is a closed and impenetrable stronghold. Not only are there the usual ‘spokespersons’ barring the way to the people responsible for decisions, but the Ministry covers a range of different military departments, each of which has its own interests and strategies. None enjoys a high reputation for openness. The war in Yugoslavia took place at a time of great change, as the focus of the armed forces shifted from active defence to a peacekeeping role, with a parallel shift in the social view of the armed forces’ position. This was also a time of cutbacks in government spending and the formulation of new tasks, accompanied by conflicts of interests between the various divisions of the armed forces. More sceptically inclined journalists could then be easily tempted to place contradictory statements made by senior officers (e.g. about the desirability of deploying the new Airmobile Brigade or about the level of acceptable risk within a certain operation) within the perspective of these interests.

Much information is provided by the Ministry’s own press and public relations department. The Defence spokesman with whom political editors had most contact at the time was H.P.M. (Bert) Kreemers, the Deputy Director of Information. Many journalists working on the Srebrenica case came

¹⁵⁵ e.g. *Labeur*, 16 August 1999.

¹⁵⁶ In his memoirs, Ter Beek (1996:179) recalls the successful insertion in *De Volkskrant* (via Wio Joustra) of a summary of Dutch contributions to UN peacekeeping missions, on the eve of a debate in Parliament. This is particularly ironic in that *De Volkskrant* was pushing for greater military efforts in Yugoslavia (*De Volkskrant*, 10 March 1993).

¹⁵⁷ Lust: “In any case, this was probably more so at RTL than at the NOS Journaal. We always wanted to cover the war from the point of view of ‘the man in the street’, the ordinary soldiers and citizens, and from that of the people actually there on the ground. The human story, the ‘micro-story’ if you will. Of course, we received the big items through the press agencies just like everyone else.” (Lust, 19 July 2000)

¹⁵⁸ Eickhof, 18 January 2000.

¹⁵⁹ Huys, 8 July 2000.

to cast Kreemers in the role of ‘evil genius’ and auctor intellectualis of much misinformation.¹⁶⁰ His immediate superior, the Director of Information H. van den Heuvel, remained somewhat in the background.

The most serious complaints regarding the quality of the information services, and hence regarding the pressure exerted on journalists and their potential sources, date from the period after the fall of Srebrenica. Until then, most criticism from the reporters and correspondents in the field concerned poor organization and a lack of cooperation on the part of the Ministry during press visits to Yugoslavia.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, even in this earlier phase a gradual build-up of irritation could be perceived. A few examples may be given by way of illustration.

In the period prior to the fall of Srebrenica, the Ministry went to great lengths to inform the media about the work being done by ‘our boys’. But not all publicity is favourable, and the media were expected to keep things positive. There was no need for reports about the risks of the operations which could serve to cause disquiet on the home front.

Eickhof: “And then I arrived in Busavaca. The first thing that I heard was that there was a reconnaissance party of about eleven men from the quartermaster’s unit here. They told me that they had been threatened a couple of days earlier while out buying provisions. They had come face to face with the business end of rifles. I interviewed these men and phoned in a report for the ten o’clock news bulletin. No sooner had the programme finished than the Ministry of Defence was on the line. The local commanding officer. They gave me such a dressing down. Apparently, I was not allowed to make this kind of report because it might worry families at home.”¹⁶²

Obviously official quarters wished to present a somewhat brighter picture of the situation facing Dutch troops in Yugoslavia than was actually the case. This may well be a relevant factor when considering events after July 1995 as well.

The journalists who were in Yugoslavia, whether on a short-term or long-term assignment, were generally able to compare the Dutch Ministry of Defence’s information provision with that of the other countries and UN organs involved. They could also compare the level of service provided to the various countries’ troops. Some assessments of the Dutch organizations are favourable¹⁶³, others quite the reverse.

Particularly conspicuous are the recurring complaints about the inflexibility and lack of improvisational ability or initiative on the Dutch side.¹⁶⁴ The examples cited range from an anecdote

¹⁶⁰ See Frank Westerman, ‘srebrenica wel in de doofpot’ (‘srebrenica was to have been hushed up’), *De Journalist*, 13 November 1998.

¹⁶¹ Bart Nypels (KRO Netwerk): “I think that the military information was reasonably accurate before and during the fall, in other words what was happening and who was doing what, etc. Things started to go wrong during the fall itself, but more especially afterwards. The army in particular was at fault.” (De Poel/Nypels, 28 October 1999).

¹⁶² Eickhof, 18 January 2000. “Although I seldom received any feedback from my editor, except remarks made about my report of events in Lukavac, the only ones I remember, the second line – the desk chiefs and the foreign news coordinator – were somewhat more communicative. They were glad to receive complaints from the Ministry whenever I mentioned anything that the people ‘back home’ might not have liked. They regarded it as a real score.” (Eickhof, e-mail 21 January 2000).

¹⁶³ Zimmermann (about his contact with European observer Jan Ballast): “The ECMM [European Community Monitor Mission in Former Yugoslavia] are real soldiers but on a sort of temporary posting. My experience with them was very good. I was always welcome, there were always facilities available to me and they were always available for comment.” (Zimmermann, 28 April 2000).

¹⁶⁴ Eickhof, 18 January 2000; Huys, 8 July 2000; Lust, 19 July 2000; Nysingh, 14 September 2000. Lust: “That was often the problem with the Ministry of Defence. The people had difficulty getting on with us. They just didn’t understand. Journalists are a race apart. They do not fall under military authority. They have minds of their own and their own idea of what they are

about how a British officer helped take revenge on a Dutch unit which had simply abandoned a journalist at the roadside (because “we’re not supposed to help the press”¹⁶⁵) to a more serious account of how Dutch soldiers placed the same journalist in a potentially life-threatening situation.¹⁶⁶

The failed press expedition to Srebrenica with the first battalion of Dutchbat was another major source of frustration, usually blamed on the Ministry of Defence and the spokesman who accompanied the journalists during the journey and during their forced stopover in Bratunac. During that same trip, there was a major argument between the NOS Journaal crew (with Eickhof) and the RTL4 team (with Lust) concerning the system of pooling resources that had been imposed on them by the Ministry of Defence.¹⁶⁷ It is difficult to assess whether this had any impact on the way in which Srebrenica and its aftermath were dealt with (the news programmes and their reporters were not the most prominent players in this) but as this was not an isolated incident, it may have made a contribution to the reputation that the Ministry enjoyed among journalists. However, more significant in terms of the events following the fall of Srebrenica is that other journalists seem to have shared their conviction that Dutch forces were less able to deal with the media effectively than those of other countries or that they did not wish to cooperate because they had been encouraged to avoid all contact with the press.¹⁶⁸

going to do. They are occasionally difficult. Things went rather better at the transport battalion I visited a couple of times. It was a lot more relaxed there.”

¹⁶⁵ Eickhof: “They regularly got stuck in the mud. They then liked to announce how they were going to resolve the situation. But then, when we got bogged down they just drove on past. At a given moment we saw two locals emerging from the woods. They hadn’t shaved for a couple of days. Then along came a Dutch vehicle. An officer got out and told us that we were not to allow these people to help us. So I asked if he was going to help us instead. ‘No, we’re not allowed to help the press’ he replied. ‘Well, drive on then, matey’ I said. We eventually got going again and at one point I realized that we had only ever seen other vehicles from behind – let’s film them from the front for a change. There were three groups somewhere behind us, and we decided to wait for them. For safety’s sake we stopped by a control post manned by the British. Having learned from experience, I told them that there was no guarantee that the Dutch would allow us to join the convoy. ‘Oh?’ said the British officer, ‘We’ll see about that.’ He made a quick call to some of his men further along the road. They moved a crane into the middle of the road. No matter what happened, the Dutch would be unable to pass before he was certain that we were safely in the convoy. He went forward and spoke to one of the drivers. ‘These are journalists from your country. They will be travelling behind you.’ That’s how the British do these things.” (Eickhof, 18 January 2000).

¹⁶⁶ Eickhof: “We went with them to Santici. The chap from the Red Cross, who was actually the son of the former Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, asked Pronk how long we would be staying. ‘One hour,’ was the reply. ‘Oh good, because I have run out of fuel. I shall go and fill up,’ and he disappeared. Pronk wandered around the compound for a while. We had an interview with him. Suddenly, we heard shots and the commanding officer of the base shouted, ‘Get the Minister out of here – get him out! There will be crossfire and I cannot be held responsible for the consequences.’ The military police literally picked Pronk up and bundled him into the back of the nearest car, together with his official spokesman. We just stood there thinking: ‘Our car isn’t back yet, we’ll have to go with the Minister. ‘No,’ said the military policeman, ‘we are not supposed to help the press. We are not taking any civilians with us’. So we replied, ‘We are not civilians as such – on this trip we’re with the UN.’ ‘No, you are press and we are not taking any journalists!’ The door closed and they drove off. After a few yards, before they turned the corner, he stopped and called back to us, ‘if it gets really dangerous, here’s a tip – lie flat on the ground!’ And with that they were gone. We were rescued because the transport battalion was a joint operation involving both Dutch and Belgian troops. If a Dutch minister was visiting, he would be shown around by Dutch troops under the command of a Belgian officer, while a Belgian minister would have a Dutch officer. In this case, the Belgian officer looked in his mirror and realized that something was amiss. He stopped and told us to get in, quickly!” (Eickhof, 18 January 2000).

¹⁶⁷ Eickhof: “But that was the case with Kreemers. He was the main man behind the Srebrenica operation. He was the man who decided in The Hague that RTL should be given every possible assistance. The man behind Schenkers. He told RTL to sue NOS *Journaal* if they would not share a cameraman, and then told them to sue again if we wouldn’t all share the edited footage.” (Eickhof 18 January 2000) Lust: “Then we said that we weren’t happy with that. We would take our own camera crew and our own vehicle. We did not particularly want to be arrested by the military, since we had already had some bad experiences in that context.” (Lust, 19 July 2000). The argument between the two broadcasting companies was partly the result of poor communication between Hilversum and the NOS and RTL4 teams (Eickhof, 18 January 2000; Lust, 19 July 2000).

¹⁶⁸ This refers to the (first) ‘Journalists in Wartime’ training course, which included instructions to soldiers on how to deal with the press. The general gist was to avoid all contact wherever possible by referring journalists to the official spokesman. Eickhof believes that the British had a better understanding and a better feel for good relations with the press. “We were on the Busavaca side of the path, where we had to wait for a convoy to pass. The British commanding officer came over and

Turning point

The first days following the fall of Srebrenica set the tone for what many journalists regard as ongoing attempts by the authorities to trivialize the nature and extent of the Srebrenica drama, to disclaim responsibility, to shift blame, or preferably to cover up the entire affair. According to the official account of the events, there were no ‘good guys’ or ‘bad guys’, there was no genocide, and Dutchbat forces did all that was humanly possible to defend and protect the people of Srebrenica. At first, reporters went along with this interpretation of events, if only to protect those Dutchbat troops still in the compound at Potocari. However, even at that relatively early stage, this ran counter to the observations of many of the eye-witness journalists. They could muster little tolerance for legalistic nit-picking over terminology, such as when mass murder should be called ‘genocide’. Some had difficulty placing themselves in the position of the authorities, who must themselves have lost track in this disastrous situation, but who also gave the impression that they just wanted to play down its gravity.

RTL reporter Willem Lust was probably the first Dutch journalist on the scene. Immediately prior to the assault on Srebrenica, he was in Split reporting the arrival (on 11 July) of Dutch marines of the Rapid Reaction Force. From there, he moved on towards Tuzla.

“It was just a lucky coincidence that we were already in Split. At the time, I did not realize how important that was. As we left Split, we did not realize that there were such large numbers of refugees on the move. Nothing had happened up until that point. On the day we left, the buses were leaving Srebrenica. We were cut off from everything. We had no radio – nothing. We arrived in Tuzla completely unaware that anything out of the ordinary was about to happen. It was the day before everything started in earnest, but there were already buses full of people streaming in. We were the only Western media crew, there was no one else. We were the only reporters in all Tuzla. We had no satellite transmitter with us. We had to move heaven and earth to get our material out that day. The Bosnian television was there and had filmed people coming over the border. We were the first in Tuzla. I think it took two days altogether. There was complete pandemonium. The women getting off the buses. I just couldn’t believe my eyes. A horde of totally hysterical people. Those women cornered us and told us that their menfolk were missing. They wanted to take it out on someone. There were no UN soldiers there as the buses emptied, only Bosnian forces. The women told us that we had to go and look for their husbands and sons. That became reasonably clear after only a few minutes. There was a lot of ill feeling toward the Dutch – that was also quickly apparent. We were advised to say we were Belgian or something like that. That was already the situation: the Dutch had betrayed them. Looking back, I am not sure whether I understood everything clearly enough on that first day. I don’t think I realized what had actually happened.”¹⁶⁹

On his arrival in Tuzla, Lust first went to speak with Colonel Brantz, the UNPROFOR commanding officer in that sector. He gained the impression that Brantz was also unaware of exactly what was going

asked if we were making a report for that day’s news. When we told him that we were. He asked what our deadline was. We told him that it was eight o’clock. He looked to see what convoys were on the road ahead, had a number of them stopped and then passed on the registration number and description of our vehicle. He told them that we were Dutch reporters in a Volvo with such-and-such a registration and a sign saying ‘NOS’ behind the windscreen, and that they should wait for us. They could carry on once we had passed. We easily made the deadline that day.” (Eickhof, 18 January 2000). Lust: “I met up with the British battalion at Vitez, after we had been there for some time. That was a complete change from what we had been used to.” (Lust, 19 July 2000)

¹⁶⁹ Lust, 19 July 2000.

on at that time. For Lust, ‘the penny dropped’ on 15 or 16 July, when Bosnian soldiers arrived on foot. “They told us what they had seen happening en route. They described the massacre and told us how many people they had lost. This was all part of this story, even though the word ‘executions’ had yet to be used.”¹⁷⁰

On 13 July the *Algemeen Dagblad*’s foreign news editor, Othon Zimmermann, and his Croatian stringer were stranded in Zenica on the way to Tuzla.

“It quickly became clear what was going on and what our situation was. You knew that it was very serious, that everything was going horribly wrong, if I can put it that way. You knew and you felt the seriousness of the situation. There was a lot of tension and there was a lot of commotion. And there was a lot of aggression as well, even at the roadblocks manned by the Bosnian soldiers. Of course, the rumours were flying thick and fast. In most cases, they had been prompted by the BBC reports – the radio news, that was the catalyst, not CNN. It was another time. There were no mobile phones. Ordinary telephones didn’t work. A shortwave radio receiver then becomes a sort of lifeline.

There were no journalists in Zenica but there were already refugees, and there were stories. It is difficult to say – and you have to be cautious doing so – but to my mind the stories were less serious at that time. We knew that the situation was serious but we didn’t yet know the exact extent. Of course, there were stories of deportations, right from the very beginning. That was very quickly established. The numbers quoted varied widely, from four thousand to twenty thousand people. We soon heard about executions and that violence had been used, but we still did not know the exact extent. Nevertheless, we had the idea that it was all very serious. Firstly, from the manner in which I had been sent to cover the location. You could sense the urgency from the instructions given by my newspaper. It was a question of responding to the statements made in The Hague. Then there were the local contacts and the radio reports that I have already mentioned. We heard all sorts of stories, both on the radio and from the people on the ground. There were people in the ECMM who had contacts throughout the country. Everything started to add up. In Tuzla the true extent of the drama became apparent within five minutes. The total tragedy in its full scale. We spoke to about fifty or sixty people. These were the women who had arrived without their menfolk. Few had any confidence in a satisfactory conclusion, I can assure you of that. No one thought, ‘it will be all right in the end, there will be a trial. They are just being interrogated.’ The tension was electric.”¹⁷¹

Twan Huys, the Nova reporter, also realized what was going on after having reached Tuzla.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Partly due to the experiences on the spot, some uncertainty remained concerning the exact extent of the catastrophe: “At the time, I did not think that thousands of people were dead. Absolutely not – not that kind of figure. I only realized that later. And those figures might have been deliberately planted as a rumour. To be honest, we did not even know how many people had arrived in Tuzla. The people we spoke to moved straight on to people in the neighbourhood, family in Tuzla. They did not register with anyone. But what is so much worse, and this is something that only dawned on me later, is that the group of combatants who had managed to fight their way through to Tuzla from Srebrenica were actually prevented from registering. I came across them by accident when I was travelling behind a truck in which people were sitting with old rifles. ‘What’s going on here?’, I thought. Eventually we arrived at a small secret airfield. Just a landing strip, really. All these people assembled there and they were not allowed to report to the authorities or to contact their families. That is something that did surprise me at the time, more from the humanitarian point of view.” (Zimmermann, 28 April 2000).

“When I arrived in Tuzla, like all the other journalists, I interviewed the women (with the help of interpreters) who told stories about ‘rivers of blood’. At first we thought they must have been exaggerating, but then we realized, and that was confirmed by the stories told by the UNHCR, that few if any men between the ages of 12 and 65 had crossed the border alive. This became immediately apparent. Something had happened to them. Perhaps they had followed another route, or they may have been killed on the way. Or perhaps those stories were true – the stories told by the Muslim women who had crossed the border at Kladanj and who said that all the men had been executed. That is what we reported. On the way back from Tuzla to Split, I met Minister Pronk and he confirmed the stories. So you could no longer claim that it was all down to a bunch of hysterical women. By then, given the experience of Bosnia that I already had, I was certain that this was a very serious situation. I was sure that the Geneva Convention, the treaty that ensures correct treatment of prisoners of war, would not be observed here. That Mladic and his followers would kill prisoners immediately to be rid of them. Of course, I had not seen this for myself. I had only heard the stories. In the case of Srebrenica, first you heard reports of no men having crossed the border at Kladanj. There were women who made statements about what had happened to their menfolk. There were the UNHCR staff, level-headed, one of whom was actually Dutch. Early on, this Margriet Prins had told my cameraman, ‘Your story is in Tuzla. You will find the most dreadful stories to recount there.’ She knew what was going on. It was on her advice that we went to Tuzla when we did, although it is now almost incomprehensible that we didn’t realize what was happening sooner. I stayed with her for a couple of days, and so I heard confirmed what I already knew from my own observations. On the way back from Tuzla we stopped in Split, which is where we met Minister Pronk who also confirmed the stories. Then later at Camp Pleso we met people coming back from Bratunac. They told us that they had seen truly horrific sights.”¹⁷²

Once the press had left, but with the Nova camera still rolling, the released Dutch hostages were addressed by General Couzy. “Lads, we have decided that you can go home tomorrow. But there is one thing you must realize: when you land in the Netherlands the press will be there and they will want to talk to you about the things you have seen. I wish to make an urgent request. Keep your mouth shut! To say anything would place those who remain behind in danger”.¹⁷³ Huys recalls: “Afterwards, some men approached us of their own accord and said, ‘What we saw was really dreadful’. When I asked what they had seen, they replied, ‘dumper trucks full of bodies,’ and ‘bodies being taken from Bratunac to Zvornik’.”¹⁷⁴

Having consulted Couzy, Huys decided not to interview the soldiers on camera.¹⁷⁵ The next day, *Algemeen Dagblad* reporter Karel Bagijn heard similar stories from one of the freed soldiers in Zagreb.¹⁷⁶ On Monday 17 July, Minister Jan Pronk spoke to Huys about genocide and thousands of deaths.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Huys, 8 July 2000.

¹⁷³ *Nova*, 17 July 1995; the words are those of Huys, 8 July 2000.

¹⁷⁴ Huys, 8 July 2000.

¹⁷⁵ Huys: “I went to Couzy and said, ‘It all sounds very serious and I would like to do a report, but I heard from you that you do not wish anyone to speak to the press. What is the exact situation?’ He then gave a very plausible, reasonable explanation and said, ‘I understand that you would like to record a report but I nevertheless request you not to do so’.” (Huys, 8 July 2000).

¹⁷⁶ Karel Bagijn, ‘Eerste militairen vrij. “Vreselijk wat mensen elkaar kunnen aandoen”’ (‘First soldiers freed: “terrible what people can do to each other”’), *Algemeen Dagblad* 17 July 1995. On the front page, the newspaper carried a photograph of

Nova was among the first to receive official permission to talk to Dutchbat soldiers as they returned to the Netherlands. As a token of his appreciation for Huys's restraint, General Couzy offered Nova a videotape that had been made in Srebrenica and which showed actual executions. The editors of Nova immediately approached The Hague for permission to broadcast the tape.

On Friday 21 July, the main body of Dutchbat forces eventually reached the Croatian border at Lipovac. No one had expected journalists to be present at the border crossing from Serbia into Croatia, but there were some there nonetheless. Colonel Karremans told RTL4 journalist Jaap van Deurzen of his 'admiration' for General Mladic. Most reporters waited at Camp Pleso for the arrival of Dutchbat. Van Deurzen's colleague Lust was by this time on his way home, via Zagreb.¹⁷⁸

On the Saturday, it transpired that the promises made to Huys were not to be kept. The video had been burnt in Srebrenica 'for security reasons'. The planned interviews with Dutchbat soldiers were cancelled. According to Huys, General Couzy said that he had been willing but had been overruled by the Ministry of Defence in the Hague because of a special NOS broadcast scheduled for the next day (Sunday).

Huys: "What made us really angry was firstly that the promises were not to be kept, and secondly a very simple detail. We had no broadcast scheduled for the Sunday. Thirdly, well actually firstly, that footage of soldiers telling us what had happened to the Muslim men had to be dropped in favour of a grand celebratory broadcast on the Sunday. We considered it absolutely unacceptable that the Ministry was keeping things back and also planning a party to be broadcast live by NOS."¹⁷⁹

The editors in Hilversum were also disgruntled:

"When I came back with the story of what had happened, there was great dismay. The way things had gone with Couzy, the failure to keep promises, the organization of a broadcast which we, the editorial team, considered shameful. Objections were made to the NOS: you can't just allow yourselves to be used as an extension of the Ministry of Defence. They had allowed themselves to be misused – that was our view."¹⁸⁰

As a gesture of goodwill, General Couzy agreed to a live interview from Zagreb with the presenter of Nova, and also agreed to take part in a press conference at the gate of Camp Pleso – together with Karremans – about the events in Srebrenica.¹⁸¹ During that informal press conference and the press conferences held later on the Sunday, Couzy attempted to play down the extent of the disaster, while Karremans once more expressed his regard for Mladic. Huys noticed no outrage or even unease among

two of the released soldiers, and on page 5, another photograph of members of the same group of Dutchbat forces from Bratunac celebrating in Novi Sad. (Most of the battalion were still in Srebrenica at the time).

¹⁷⁷ *Nova*, 18 July 1995.

¹⁷⁸ Lust: "I must say that I came back from Tuzla rather shaken. Then I heard that a band was on its way. I did not think I could face that. I had my own conclusions about what had happened. I thought, I really don't need this!" (Lust, 19 July 2000).

¹⁷⁹ Huys, 8 July 2000. There was a major argument with Couzy and the defence spokesman Paul Hartman. In his rage, Huys threatened "I shall be arriving at Camp Pleso in a tank on Saturday and you will let me in because I want to talk to those Dutchbatters!"

¹⁸⁰ Huys 8 July 2000. Responsibility for the image that would be presented – that of Dutchbat troops celebrating while the bloodbath continued – was (according to Huys) entirely that of the Ministry of Defence and the Prime Minister, who were stage-managing events.

¹⁸¹ The intention was that Couzy should be confronted (in the 22 July edition of *Nova*) with the statements made by the first group of Dutchbat forces to have returned to the Netherlands, but this was not possible due to technical difficulties. (Huys, 8 July 2000).

his colleagues. “The atmosphere was more one of, ‘Well, that’s an end to that, then. They have all returned safely’. That was the general feeling. There was a more or less bewildered response to questions with a critical slant such as those that Harald Doornbos and I asked.”¹⁸² The same atmosphere marked the press conference for the Dutch media held the following day. The international journalists posed much more critical questions during their press conference.¹⁸³

For journalists like Huys who would devote considerable attention to Srebrenica, the days following the fall served to build up considerable mistrust of the Dutch authorities, a mistrust that would only grow thereafter. Huys:

“I think that the events in Zagreb and the way we were treated helped to make us realize we were being shafted by the Ministry of Defence, to put it bluntly. Then there was the film and the list which both disappeared. From then on we took nothing at face value, we assumed that there was something seriously amiss. We never got over that feeling.”¹⁸⁴

This turning point is not just a change in the personal convictions and the attitudes of journalists, but it has manifested itself in at times radical changes in the manner in which responsibility and accountability were apportioned. In a rather laudatory, not to say sycophantic, report in *De Volkskrant* of 13 July 1995, Jan Hoedeman and Ewoud Nysingh describe how Minister Voorhoeve managed the situation from the bunker under the Ministry building in The Hague. “There is not a moment’s panic. He does not make a single mistake. Voorhoeve has proven himself to be the right man in the right place. The refrigerator had been cleared of all alcoholic beverages upon the departure of his predecessor Ter Beek. It now contains only muesli and yoghurt. The Minister is in excellent physical condition, thanks to his jogging and long walks.”¹⁸⁵ One month later, the same Nysingh describes Voorhoeve as “too resolute on Srebrenica, against the advice of others.” On 28 October: “he should not give the UN all the blame, since he himself succumbed to pressure from the military top brass” and by 9 December 1997, Nysingh awards Voorhoeve an extremely low grade of “three out of ten for his performance.”¹⁸⁶

Official information

A ‘classic information failure’, is how Ministry of Defence’s spokesman Olivier described it a few weeks later on *Nova*: “not telling people what you saw and what you went through. Only dropping tiny pieces of information here and there when the media had already unearthed them.”¹⁸⁷ Half-truths, incomplete information, disinformation, blunders, clumsiness, all resulting in enormous mutual suspicion: these were the features that marked the public information process concerning Srebrenica. Carolien Brugsma: “I could talk for hours about the things that were hushed up or brushed under the carpet. Formal requests for information were made under the Public Administration (Disclosure) Act, but apparently this does not apply to certain sections of the Ministry of Defence. They covered things up or they played for time. The law just didn’t matter to them.”¹⁸⁸ According to Westerman and Rijs (1997), the

¹⁸² Huys, 8 July 2000.

¹⁸³ Huys had left Zagreb by then, angry and frustrated. On the plane, he met General Nicolai, Colonel Brantz and Colonel De Ruiter. They were also on their way home to avoid having to attend any festivities, Huys concluded. (Huys, 8 July 2000).

¹⁸⁴ Huys, 8 July 2000; also Brugsma, 2 February 2000.

¹⁸⁵ Jan Hoedeman and Ewoud Nysingh, ‘Voorhoeve bewijst zich als juiste man op juiste plaats’ (‘Voorhoeve shows himself to be the right man in the right place’), *De Volkskrant* 13 July 1995.

¹⁸⁶ ‘Voorhoeve stellig over Srebrenica tegen advies in’ (‘Voorhoeve resolute on Srebrenica contrary to advice’), *De Volkskrant* 12 August 1995; ‘Voorhoeve kan VN niet alle schuld geven’ (‘Voorhoeve cannot lay all blame on UN’), *De Volkskrant* 28 October 1995; ‘Een idealist redt het niet op Defensie’ (‘An idealist would not last long at Defence’), *De Volkskrant* 9 December 1997. All articles were written by Ewoud Nysingh.

¹⁸⁷ *Nova*, 4 August 1995; Huys, 8 July 2000.

¹⁸⁸ Brugsma, 2 February 2000.

Ministry of Defence spokesmen did all they could to shift the focus of the public debate onto to the role played by France, the UN and the USA.¹⁸⁹ “They certainly tried to stage manage matters, especially in the aftermath of the events,” recalls Brugsma, “I cannot remember how many times they tried to exert pressure by saying that our broadcasts would hurt the already traumatized Dutchbat forces. We weren’t doing it, they were.”¹⁹⁰

Not only lack of cooperation and attempts to dictate the content of news programmes, but also the (suspicion of) pressure on military officers such as Colonel Brantz and Captain Rutten as well as on the journalists involved served to reinforce the feeling that there was a lot being covered up.¹⁹¹ Brugsma: “I am 99.9 per cent certain that people were pressured into refusing to talk to us, people who actually wanted to talk to us.”¹⁹²

Much of the criticism was directed at Bert Kreemers¹⁹³, the Deputy Director of Information at the Ministry of Defence. “You knew that if you had any bad news, Bert would try to keep it out of the papers. By almost any means possible.”¹⁹⁴ Bart Rijs writes, “the spin doctors at the Ministry of Defence, with Bert Kreemers at the fore, trivialized or denied every revelation, leaked selective information to their favourites in the media, and boasted that they had nothing to fear from them – ‘they’re on our drip-feed’.”¹⁹⁵ Huys reports that, after he had threatened to enter Camp Pleso in a tank, Nova received a visit from Ministry spokesmen Van den Heuvel and Kreemers who suggested that Huys should be sacked.¹⁹⁶ If journalistic efforts were led away from investigating the exact facts surrounding the drama Srebrenica itself and into revealing the scandal of Srebrenica in the Netherlands, circumstances such as these may well have contributed to this development.¹⁹⁷

Competition

“There is a war going on between Netwerk, Nova and the Journaal,” Linda Polman says in her critical analysis of the television summer of 1998, “and that war was fought out over the backs of the Dutch

¹⁸⁹ See also Bart Rijs, ‘Journalist leek meer op Dutchbatter dan hij wil toegeven’ (‘Journalist was more of a Dutchbatter than he cared to admit’), *De Volkskrant*, 22 August 1998.

¹⁹⁰ Brugsma, 2 February 2000.

¹⁹¹ *Netwerk*, 24 January 1997.

¹⁹² Brugsma, 2 February 2000.

¹⁹³ Five years later, when Kreemers had revealed the context in which he was expected to work, journalists such as Ewoud Nysingh, Bart Nypels and Twan Huys took a somewhat more lenient view of his actions. They are now prepared to accept that he, like the responsible minister, was not always in possession of fully accurate information at crucial moments. Nypels: “Based mainly on documents, I can see that very little of the official information during the period after the fall was accurate. This means that information must have been deliberately withheld by some people, particularly the senior army staff. Even the official spokesman would then have little or nothing to report, of course.” (De Poel and Nypels, 28 October 1999).

¹⁹⁴ Nysingh, 14 September 2000; see also Frank Westerman, ‘srebrenica wel in de doofpot’ (‘srebrenica was to have been hushed up’), *De Journalist*, 13 November 1998.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Journalist leek meer op Dutchbatter dan hij wil toegeven’ (‘Journalist was more of a Dutchbatter than he cared to admit’), *De Volkskrant*, 22 August 1998.

¹⁹⁶ Huys, 8 July 2000. Huys himself was not present but according to Ed Ribbink, deputy editor of Nova, he recounts the gist of the message accurately. The comments were actually made in a private conversation between Kreemers and Ribbink. Later, a further conversation which also involved Van den Heuvel and editor Ad van Liempt took place, with a view to restoring the relationship which had been disrupted (Ribbink, 4 September 2001). The effect of such outside interventions is always the opposite of what is intended, suggests Huys. See also Eickhof (above) on the response to critical reports. However, Nysingh claims to have received no support from his editors in a similar case (after 1995). (Nysingh 14 September 2000).

¹⁹⁷ Kranenburg: “When you look at all those supposed or actual revelations, you see a number of separate incidents. There is no connecting line. I believe that with an issue such as Srebrenica, it’s all about somewhat larger patterns. Clearer lines. Yet all editions of *Nova* feature just one aspect, one incident. No focus on the overall picture, no taking account of the inevitable chaos. That is always the case with disasters. ‘Emergency services were chaotic’ – that is a standard journalistic response. It would be more of a news item if things hadn’t been chaotic” (Kranenburg 13 September 2000).

UN peacekeepers in Srebrenica.”¹⁹⁸ It has already been stated that the competition in terms of news coverage (and ‘scoops’) is relatively modest in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, with a dossier such as Srebrenica a lot of professional, and also personal, acclaim, could be earned.¹⁹⁹

Journalists are not known for hiding their light under a bushel. Modesty is not a journalistic virtue, and when journalists describe their own accomplishments this may result in rather gushing prose, as in *Het Parool*’s special 1998 supplement on ‘the summer of Nova’²⁰⁰ to which Polman refers. “Competitor Netwerk was left far behind, and even the newspapers couldn’t keep up” runs the subtitle to an article in which Nova’s chief Ad van Liempt says, “I feel sorry for the boys at Netwerk.” Executive editor Gerard Dielessen explains, “Nova is still pure journalism, while Netwerk is moving in the direction of entertainment. It’s all part of a trend. The dumbing-down of television. We shall not be taking part.” A year later, Fons de Poel, who had been executive editor of KRO’s contribution to Netwerk since 1993, explained in *Vrij Nederland* that Nova could not be regarded as the best, since that was clearly Netwerk and in particular the *Brandpunt* contributions. “For years, we at Netwerk have done our best to avoid being staid and boring, to make a programme with a certain degree of excitement. The emphasis is on the reporting itself. Nova is easy to make; it relies not on the reporters but on the presenters. I, on the other hand, try to arouse the viewer’s curiosity.”

The aftermath of Srebrenica was unmistakably an area in which one programme could attempt to outdo the other, or, to put it less optimistically, in which personal glory could be achieved by ‘scoring’ over others. In fact, the two programmes are not all that dissimilar in terms of journalism; and the margins are narrow. Healthy rivalry has traditionally been among the factors spurring the journalist along, but it is also clear that increased competition in television and radio have intensified the struggle for journalistic survival.

When judged according to the criteria which journalists apply to their own performance, Polman may have been right. The current affairs programmes fought their own war over Srebrenica. Carolien Brugsma, editor of Nova, also attributes part of the satisfaction derived from investigating the Srebrenica drama from the comparison with Netwerk: “Of course, it is blowing one’s own trumpet somewhat, but I think that Netwerk lost the battle of Srebrenica. In 1995, they were still ahead of us in terms of revelations, but they then went off in a different direction. They are often much better than we are at studying complete dossiers, but I believe that the Kemenade Commission was set up as a direct result of the five days of reporting on Nova. Then everyone sat up and took notice – the research journalists and the newspapers.” Referring to the week in November 1999 in which the UN published its report on Srebrenica, she adds: “They were furious at Netwerk. Nova knew exactly when the second report would appear, but Netwerk did not. That’s all to do with the fact that Twan Huys and I are persistent to the point of being obsessive. I phoned Kofi Annan’s office every day for weeks and said that if I did not find out the publication date I would be sacked. They gave us the date.”²⁰¹

At the same time, she attributes her own resolute language, and that of the other television makers, to the ‘inferiority complex’ of television news, always having to prove itself alongside the print media.

¹⁹⁸ Polman 1998, 1999a. For a profile of the television current affairs programmes, see Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2000.

¹⁹⁹ Even David Rohde, the *Christian Science Monitor* reporter who won the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for his investigation into Srebrenica, admits that, besides a ‘sense of moral justice’ and the ‘need to awaken the world to the horrors of Srebrenica’, there were also personal motives behind his quest for evidence of mass murder in Srebrenica. His decision to seek out such evidence entirely on his own was taken ‘to ensure that the new grave sites would be my exclusive story’ (Boucher 1998:4). See also Rohde 1997.

²⁰⁰ Paul van Liempt, ‘De zomer van Nova: Komkommertijd bestaat niet meer’ (‘The summer of *Nova*: the silly season is no more’), *Het Parool*, 26 August 1998.

²⁰¹ In late November 1999, following the publication of the UN report, Leslie Woodhead’s documentary *A cry from the grave* and the Mladic tapes were broadcast. KRO’s *Reporter* programme (under the editorship of Steven de Vogel) examined the political decision-making process which led to the deployment of Dutchbat. The KRO documentary was brought forward by a month ‘in connection with the publication of the UN report’ (according to a statement made by Margot Smit of *Reporter* on 28 November 1998).

Huys: “Let us just say that, immediately after the events in Zagreb which took place during the summer months, there was no competition for Nova, except from the Journaal news programme. The other current affairs programmes were not being broadcast – of course that would have played a role. The journalistic quality will be that much better if you are on top of the subject and can devote an entire programme to it, rather than just one minute and ten seconds. We wanted to cover everything that happened since 1995. We very soon took the lead in the first days after the return of Dutchbat, with Karremans’ statements roundly refuted shortly thereafter. Nova was the first to broadcast the Minister of Defence’s own account, on the Monday following the press conference I think. That can be looked up easily enough. If I am not mistaken he distanced himself from Karremans’ comments on three or four occasions, saying ‘this should not have been said by that man’. And each time, we thought ‘it should not have been said, but you are entirely responsible, Minister’. This gave rise to the question of how something like this could have happened in the first place. Why were these statements made? Who wrote these words? Were they Karremans’ own words and why is the minister now saying something else? Eventually, there was a never-ending string of things that went wrong. The disappearing film, the disappearing list of names of the Muslim men. These were brought up every time in Nova. At one stage, the Minister had to come to the studio on innumerable occasions to make another statement about who was responsible. No wonder we soon came to be incredulous. It was a marvellous story from the journalistic point of view and one in which we were always ahead. Naturally, that led to the feeling that we were doing extremely well. That we should continue what we were doing. But after a while, the dust settled and there was a period of calm. Then in August there was an edition featuring the Petrovic tape and a report made in collaboration with NRC Handelsblad. That resulted in considerable publicity, not only within Nova and NRC Handelsblad, as the story was soon taken up by others. We quickly got the idea that we were decisive in a journalistic sense for the reporting about Srebrenica.”²⁰²

The Srebrenica dossier

Most journalists who played a significant part in providing information about the war in the former Yugoslavia and about Srebrenica were driven by a combination of motives. The nature of ‘the dossier’ was not the least among these. Although the majority would probably deny any allegiance to a ‘journalism of attachment’, many demonstrated particular concern and engagement with the events in Yugoslavia – the *cri de coeur* by Bleich, Eddy, Michielsen and Nysingh in 1991 was one of the first demonstrations of this involvement.²⁰³ Brugsma:

“We were considerably more involved in this dossier than in any other subject. Something like this comes along only once in a lifetime, such a combination of journalistic passion, interest... How could eight thousand people be slaughtered under our very eyes? That is dreadful enough in itself, but it has happened on a number of occasions in history. However, this was also an appeal to one’s sense

²⁰² Huys, 8 July 2000.

²⁰³ When Brugsma and Huys came to express their feelings about the Srebrenica dossier, each recalled the words of Dutch soldier Monique Bergman who described what she had seen as ‘scenes from *Schindler’s List*’ (Brugsma, 2 February 2000; Huys, 8 July 2000).

of democracy. The main reason that *Nova* devoted so much time to this dossier is a matter of choice, since so many people involved in the programme believe this to be one of the most important dossiers, if not *the* most important dossier, of the past ten to fifteen years.”²⁰⁴

‘srebrenica’ seems to have stimulated discussion about the desirability of in-depth investigative journalism as a counterbalance to such tendencies as the increased pace of news production, leaving less time for reflection, and the news itself becoming more superficial. However, for a news organization to employ investigative research journalists on a permanent basis remains problematic, not only because of the costs involved. Investigative reporters are, by definition, set aside from the day-to-day work of the organization. In the view of those colleagues who are involved in the frantic world of up-to-the-minute news and current affairs production, this position can only be justified by results. The pressure to produce is postponed, but it exists nonetheless. Some lack of success will be taken into account, it is all part of the game, but in practice there will be limits to what a news organization can endure.

Furthermore, the investigative reporter himself or herself may succumb to the temptation of trying to become the next Bernstein or Woodward. According to Paul van Liempt (Het Parool, 26 August 1998), the investigative journalist fulfils a lifelong dream if he achieves the desired results: “Digging out the news, sniffing around in files and court papers, the rush of adrenaline if sleaze is unearthed. Illicit meetings in car parks are interspersed with conversations in dark bars – the only places where anonymous sources can go unobserved. Twan Huys, responsible for the Srebrenica broadcasts, has seen it all. “For the investigative reporter, there is also the risk of becoming totally obsessed with the topic being investigated. Nothing will distract him from his purpose, nothing which contradicts the impressions already formed will be accepted as possible.”²⁰⁵

Another problem may arise when investigative journalists or research teams enter the fields of established specialisms within the news organization. When NRC Handelsblad assigned Frank Westerman to the Srebrenica story, this seems to have given rise to some conflict between him and the political reporter allied to the Ministry of Defence in The Hague.²⁰⁶

Shortly after the events in Zagreb, *Nova* decided that Srebrenica should become a target area. Ad van Liempt recalls, “Srebrenica was a very sensitive matter throughout Dutch society. Although there was a degree of ‘Yugoslavia fatigue’ among the viewing public, we considered it extremely important to continue our coverage.”²⁰⁷ Srebrenica was not accorded this status in all quarters. At the NRC Handelsblad, Frank Westerman was allowed to carry on his investigative work, but other newspapers such as *De Volkskrant* assigned low priority to the topic. Various editorial staff, including

²⁰⁴ Brugsma, 2 February 2000. At first, Hendrina Praamsma and Twan Huys worked on the Srebrenica case. Later on Twan Huys and Carolien Brugsma (Brugsma, 16 July 2001).

²⁰⁵ Brugsma: “Of course, there were times when Twan Huys and I suffered from a sort of tunnel vision, but we did not broadcast anything that wasn’t subject to the usual editorial control. Everything was always well-founded from the journalistic viewpoint.” (Brugsma, 2 February 2000)

²⁰⁶ Kranenburg: “A political editor has a certain territory. Then someone else comes along and encroaches upon that territory. That was very much the case in the wake of Srebrenica. Frank Westerman came from *De Volkskrant*. He produced a lot of material. The first man in The Hague was Willibrord Nieuwenhuis, covering defence matters, who said: ‘This is not news’. You see it elsewhere as well. Leader-writer Roel Janssen was even more reluctant. You can see that in the editorials he wrote, after the revelations. There were not many editorials in total. But on the one hand that ‘smoking gun’ piece from the reporter, and on the other hand the same newspaper asking: ‘What is so new?’ One consideration is professional honour. He reveals it all, and I cannot. On the other hand, wasn’t it blown out of proportion a bit? Hadn’t all this been in the news before? He brought a lot of news to light, but other things had been more or less common knowledge for some time.” (Kranenburg, 13 September 2000).

²⁰⁷ Paul van Liempt, *De zomer van Nova*, (“The summer of *Nova*”), *Het Parool* 26 August 1998.

Ewoud Nysingh and Hella Rottenberg in The Hague and foreign editor Bart Rijs – continued to concern themselves with Srebrenica, but there was little coordination or continuity.²⁰⁸

In general, it is easier to fit investigative journalism into the working practices of current affairs programmes and weekly magazines than into those of a typical news programme. Netwerk undertakes some investigative reporting, while the entire format of Reporter is based upon this type of journalism. The task a medium has set for itself, the size and character of its audience or target group and the size of the organization itself will play a role. NOS Journaal does conduct investigative activities. RTL Nieuws does not. At RTL, reporter Willem Lust might have been able to lay claim to the topic of Srebrenica, but felt no desire to do so. Nor was there any pressure from his editors in this regard:

“The editors did not assign anyone specifically to this topic. *RTL Nieuws* is not known for its investigative culture. It provides a daily news bulletin, seven days a week. That is the priority. Those bulletins take up so much time and energy that it would be difficult to keep up investigative activity for any length of time. That has never been our strength. I have always assumed that it could not be done anyway. I was perhaps wrong in that, since *NOS Journaal* manages very well. I had always believed that the investigative department of a smaller news organization couldn’t possibly work well, that things would always go wrong. That there would always be such pressure to produce results that things would be broadcast before the full facts were known.”²⁰⁹

In retrospect, it may seem as if the media turned their spotlight on Srebrenica immediately and simultaneously. This was not the case. It was some time before the Dutch media began to devote any close or critical attention to the Srebrenica dossier. Some foreign journalists (such as Gutman and Rohde) did so some time before the Dutch. Even then, it was not the media in general, or all journalists, but just a small number who took up the cause. Shortly after the fall itself there was general interest, but the excitement waned considerably once ‘our boys’ had returned home. The safe homecoming was itself subject to much coverage, encouraged by the authorities. This apparently excessive attention to the fortunes of the ‘home side’ is not unusual in itself.

Othon Zimmermann mentions that Srebrenica received attention for a relatively long time in the *Algemeen Dagblad*, but qualifies this immediately by asking “what is long? A lot was revealed in the first months and then every July the whole thing is regurgitated time and time again.”²¹⁰ According to Bart Rijs, it was only after the initial revelations that other media decided to make good their earlier inactivity. “They scurried round looking for Dutchbat troops willing to tell tales, whereupon one trivial revelation would be followed by the next. Some journalists did a professional job, but most of them were lazy, poorly informed and cowed by authority.”²¹¹

The behaviour of the media after Srebrenica followed an established pattern seen after most major disasters, first devoting all attention to the actual events, then providing a tentative explanation of those events and then finally seeking to determine who was responsible (COT, 1997: 41–42).

²⁰⁸ Theo Klein, ‘srebrenica ook journalistieke les’ (‘srebrenica also a lesson in journalism’), <http://www.volkskrant.nl/achtergronden/extra/355022294.htm>; Bart Rijs, ‘Journalist leek meer op Dutchbatter dan hij wil toegeven’ (‘Journalist was more of a Dutchbatter than he cared to admit’), *De Volkskrant*, 22 August 1998. Nysingh claimed that he had to provide *De Volkskrant*’s coverage practically single-handed (Nysingh, 14 September 2000).

²⁰⁹ Lust, 19 July 2000.

²¹⁰ “Whereupon I do all I can to persuade the editors to keep these items out of the newspaper. Documenting that all this was already known in August or September 1995. Everything -absolutely everything – has been published before. Every year, *Nova*, VPRO and even the *NOS Journaal* reinstate this as major news. That annoys me. It means that you have been unearthing information and writing reports for nothing.” (Zimmermann, 28 April 2000).

²¹¹ Bart Rijs, ‘Journalist leek meer op Dutchbatter dan hij wil toegeven’ (‘Journalist was more of a Dutchbatter than he cared to admit’), *De Volkskrant*, 22 August 1998.

Epilogue

The end of the Dutch presence in the Srebrenica enclave was represented by a television image which was perhaps every bit as forceful as the reports and pictures of Omarska which had pricked everyone's conscience in the summer of 1992 and which had acted as a catalyst for discussions concerning military intervention. For many people, the photograph of Lieutenant Colonel Karremans and Bosnian-Serb general Mladic drinking a toast to each other encapsulated the futility of the international community's efforts, and those of the Netherlands in particular.²¹² Here was another image with clear references to the Second World War, and to the preferred framework within which the conflict had been defined by the Dutch (and others) as a question of 'good guys' and 'bad guys'. However, here the Dutch were not unequivocally in the role of the good guys, but were playing Daladier and Chamberlain (comparison made by French president Chirac, in a slightly different setting), or were cast as the engine-drivers of the trains to Westerbork (Herman Wigbold).²¹³

Media and politics seem to have aided each other in creating a rather stereotypical, simplified picture of the conflict, and, as a consequence, also of what the international community, the Netherlands in particular, could do to bring it to an end and solve it. In the Dutch political climate, so they say, it is easier to score with a solution which takes the moral high ground than might be the case elsewhere. And media and public opinion in the Netherlands are more susceptible to the temptation offered by such solutions. There was a widely shared belief among the media and journalists, particularly after the summer of 1992, that the conflict in Yugoslavia could only be resolved by means of military intervention. Dutch politics needed no convincing of that, though *De Volkskrant* and the *Netwerk* programmes *Brandpunt* and *Hier en Nu* put the pro-intervention argument forward clearly. That the Netherlands should play a prominent role in military action was seen as even more self-evident, and the politicians needed even less persuasion on this point. It should be noted that the image presented by the media in this regard was somewhat more balanced than this schematic outline suggests (see Scholten, Ruigrok and Heerma, 2001a).

Many journalists are aware of the shortcomings apparent during this period: too much moralizing, too few facts, too much opinion, too little analysis, too much emotion.²¹⁴ The trauma of Srebrenica is also a trauma of the Dutch journalist, even though it failed to lead to any marked degree of open and critical self examination. Bart Rijs (who, by the way, did produce a critical analysis of his own performance and of Dutch journalism in general) wrote: "After having urged the government to intervene in Bosnia for years, the media then went on to vent their wrath on Dutchbat."²¹⁵ The contrast between the standpoints before and after Srebrenica is sometimes extremely marked²¹⁶ and it is therefore tempting to describe the Dutch media's approach to Srebrenica as a reaction – or over-reaction – to the feeling that they or society as a whole had failed to respond adequately in the period preceding the drama. There is a probably some truth to this assessment.

Writing about a review *De Volkskrant* produced of its coverage of Yugoslavia, Theo Klein, then head of the news department and now *De Volkskrant*'s complaints ombudsman, remarks: "The drama of Srebrenica was not adequately placed in the complex international (UN) framework in which it had developed. The analyses and editorial comments did make such a link, but in uncovering and reconstructing events we leaned too heavily on Dutch informants." (Klein 2000). In other words, *De Volkskrant* did not do enough factual research of its own and the newspaper also relied too heavily on

²¹² See Alain Franco, 'Quand les "casques bleus" néerlandais trinquaient avec les Serbes à Srebrenica...', *Le Monde*, 2 September 1995.

²¹³ 'VN lieten zich manoeuvreren in rol van collaborateur' ('UN allowed itself to be manoeuvred into role of collaborator'), *De Volkskrant* 17 July 1995.

²¹⁴ Aside from all shortcomings in the organization of the news production process.

²¹⁵ 'Journalist leek meer op Dutchbatter dan hij wil toegeven', *De Volkskrant* 22 August, 1998.

²¹⁶ Apart from the brief euphoria surrounding the safe homecoming of the Dutchbat battalion.

opinions. This diagnosis does not apply to all the main Dutch media to the same degree. *De Volkskrant* has always been more opinion-based than, say, the *NRC Handelsblad*. Nevertheless, several of our respondents come to similar conclusions, the newspaper journalists more often than their television counterparts.

The shortcomings identified by Klein for the period following Srebrenica are also significant in the period preceding the deployment of Dutchbat forces. All possible standpoints – for and against intervention, for and against safe havens, for and against deployment of the Airmobile Brigade – could be found in the media at that time. However, for most Dutch politicians, the majority of the general population and many journalists, there could be no doubt about where the moral duty lay.

Media coverage, whether factual reports or editorial opinion, have only limited direct influence on political decision-making. Journalists are aware of this. The ways in which politicians, or authorities in general, react to media publicity are no proof of any real influence in the sense of effectuating change with regard to a policy that has already been defined. If there are no great differences of opinion among the political elite, the overall effect will be slight. The feverish activity that can sometimes be seen is more in the nature of crisis management: by showing that one has listened and taken note, some of the pressure from media and public opinion can be relieved. In this respect, television is no different from the print media. Even events in Yugoslavia with a very marked and immediate media impact – such as the discovery of the prison camps in the summer of 1992 – serve to confirm this general pattern. The public outcry is immediate, but the subsequent call for effective military intervention will not yet be heard.

Nevertheless, such events are not without consequences. Omarska provided one of the direct impulses for the Yugoslavia Tribunal, and did more than any other event help to define the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. That definition was not the same as the official UN position, which did not distinguish between ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’. The trickle-down effect of such a definition – of a way of understanding and interpreting which gradually becomes more generally accepted and self-evident – is far greater than the short-term effect of media campaigns or media events.²¹⁷

The trap into which a journalist may fall is that opinions which are not in line with such an established view are given less opportunity to be heard, and events which do not match the overall pattern are likely to be ignored. Nevertheless people, journalists in particular, should be even more aware of their biases in such a situation and more self-critical of their preconceived ideas. This applies even more if the standpoints have been validated as politically or morally correct. The risk is greatest for those journalists who choose to take sides, no matter how honourable their reasons. The accuracy of the general definition (or their definition) of a situation is not particularly important; what matters is that any conviction, once established, will affect one’s ability for critical reflection.

The developments in the media and in the production of news in recent decades have not been conducive to critical reflection or self-criticism. The greater part of the news production process is largely based on routine and displays little similarity to the idealized picture of the investigative journalist at work. Various respondents in the current study have felt deeply involved in the events in Yugoslavia, because they believed the conflict to be one in which important human values were at stake. They often had the idea that they had to fight indifference and apathy on the part of the public, politicians and even their own colleagues. The evaluation produced by Rijs (1998) and the responses of various interviewees use terms such as ‘complacency’ and ‘provincialism’ to describe the performance of Dutch journalists in connection with Yugoslavia and Srebrenica.

The Dutch media in general, and the broadcasters in particular, may be more reliant on reporting by outside news providers than is either necessary or desirable. Even the ‘quality’ newspapers, which in terms of circulation, size of staff and budget could easily compete with broadsheets in larger countries, fail to take full advantage of their position, as Peter Michielsen points out.²¹⁸ The editorial

²¹⁷ See the discussion accompanying the analysis of media coverage in 1993 in Scholten, Ruigrok & Heerma 2001a.

²¹⁸ Michielsen 14 September 1999.

teams of the television current affairs programmes may be too small and their resources too limited to allow a permanent presence in an area such as Yugoslavia, but it is nevertheless surprising that greater cooperation and collaboration were not achieved, particularly in view of the historical and moral significance that was attached to events in the Balkans.

Another problem is the lack of continuity. There is little opportunity to develop expertise if a field is constantly being covered by different people. In the case of the reporting on Yugoslavia and the UN action there, this problem was exacerbated by a lack of expertise among the editorial staff. It also proved difficult to coordinate knowledge internally, with the various desks sometimes working at cross purposes. After Srebrenica, the situation may well have improved, at least in some ways. The traumatic experience persuaded the media that more concentrated and ongoing efforts were required if such an event was to be reported and analysed adequately. While some changes were made, the Srebrenica dossier was nevertheless passed from person to person within many media. This occasionally resulted in 'old news' being presented as 'new news', as the media do have a tendency to be swayed by the issues of the day. The increasing cooperation between public broadcasting's current affairs programmes is in itself a good thing, but was not a direct result of Srebrenica. Rather, it was brought about by broadcasting policy considerations, leading to increased 'profiling' of the various channels.

Our research material does not allow us to make a balanced judgement of media and journalistic performance after Srebrenica, apart from one based on experiences and qualifications given by some of our interviewees. Nevertheless, it is apparent that there was a somewhat one-sided fixation on incidents and on the 'scandal' element of Srebrenica, which was helped along by an inadequate publicity policy on the part of the government. In other words, the government actually contributed to a situation in which media attention focused more on its own performance and that of the Dutch forces than the Srebrenica issue itself would have justified.

There is a stark contrast between the ever increasing tempo at which news is gathered and processed in the media and the slow speed at which a government still collects and processes information. This is not entirely unrelated to Minister Jozias van Aartsen's complaint about media pressure. In crisis situations, there is likely to be an even greater clash of interests, needs and opportunities between the media and the government. The media want immediate answers to their questions, while the government feels the need for extensive consultation and careful consideration. The avoidance strategies often adopted by the government – delaying tactics, the removal of sensitive information or inclusion of vast amounts of irrelevant information (COT 1997:131) – are not always the result of unwillingness to provide information. However, many of our respondents have experienced too much of this in the wake of Srebrenica to keep faith in the goodwill of the government, and the Ministry of Defence in particular.

As far as official communication is concerned, the problem goes beyond poor crisis management. Even under normal circumstances it would have been difficult enough to speak for a department so markedly fragmented as the Ministry of Defence seems to have been at this time. Moreover, it is not a department known for its tradition of openness. Another factor could be a style of communication (or of communicators) in which good relations with the media, or at least with some journalists, are to some extent maintained by favours (cf. Rijs 1998), and in which the main purpose of providing information at all is to 'market' policy or to protect the responsible authorities. Official spokespersons, whose increased significance and involvement is not looked on favourably anyway by most journalists, then become 'spin doctors'. The logical consequence is a greater degree of cynicism. However, even without the unfortunate approach to communication taken by the government and journalists being put off the scent, the Srebrenica dossier would still not have been closed.

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Appendix IX

List of people interviewed

7. Finland

Nieminen, Tauno, Finnish Brigadier General, head ICFY Border Monitoring Mission in 1995, London, 25 May 2000

Suonio, Aaro, Finnish Lieutenant Colonel, member ICFY Border Monitoring Mission in 1995, London, 25 May 2000

8. France

Aubert, Marie-Hélène, member Mission d'Information of the French Assemblée Nationale, Paris, 14 March 2001

Bougarel, Xavier, Political scientist and author, Paris, 19 May 2000

Boutros-Ghali, Boutros, Secretary General of the UN from 1992 to 1997, Paris 30 January 2001

Checketts, Valérie, Administrateur adjoint of the Mission d'Information of the French Assemblée Nationale, Paris, 14 March 2001

Cot, Jean, French General, Force Commander UNPROFOR from July 1993 to February 1994, Paris, 19 April 2000

Guesdon, Michel, Employee staff Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in 1994 and from 1995 to 1999 head of Balkans desk at the Ministère de Défense, Paris, 7 June 2000

Heisbourg, Levy, Conseillère of Mission d'Information of the French Assemblée Nationale, Paris, 14 March 2001

Lacoste, Pierre, Admiral, Former director of the Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE), Brussels, 20 January 1999

Klein, Laurant, Director of the investigation bureau and secretary of the Mission d'Information of the French Assemblée Nationale, Paris, 14 March 2001

Lamy, René, Member of the Mission d'Information of the French Assemblée Nationale, Paris, 14 March 2001

Lanxade, Chr, French Admiral, Chef d'Etat-Major des Armées from 1991 to 1995, Paris, 4 July 2000

Loncle, Francois, President of the Mission d'Information of the French Assemblée Nationale, Paris, 14 March 2001

Quesnot, Christian, French General, Chef d'état Particulier Elysee from 1991 to 1995, Paris, 7 June 2000

Valentin, H., Conseiller Technique Cabinet du Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, 10 July 1998

9. Hungary

Open Society Archives of the Central European University, Budapest, 26 and 27 October 2000

Spasojevic, Bosko, Archivist Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 26 and 27 October 2000

Szekely, Ivan, Archivist Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 26 and 27 October 2000

10. International Committee For The Red Cross (ICRC)

Coetzer, Jon-Hans, ICRC Information Delegate in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Sarajevo, 5 August 1997

Girod, Chr., ICRC Deputy Delegate General Western and Central Europe and the Balkans, Geneva, 18 February 1997

Gnaedinger, A., ICRC Delegate General for Europe, Geneva, 18 February 1997

Kraehenbuehl, Pierre, ICRC Deputy Head of Delegation in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Sarajevo, 5 August 1997

Kosyrnik, René, Deputy Director International Law and Communication, Geneva, 19 November 1999

11. Japan

Akashi, Yashusi, Special Representative of the Secretary General, Tokyo, 25 November 1999

Imafuku, Takao, Central and Eastern European Division European and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Gaimusho, Tokyo, 22 November 1999

Kondo, Shigekatsu, Director Research Department Japanese National Institute for Defense Studies, Tokyo, 24 November 1999

Radtke, Kurt W., Professor at the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University Tokyo, Tokyo, 19 and 22 November 1999

Sato, Massaki, Deputy Director International Peace Cooperation Division Foreign Policy Bureau Gaimusho, Tokyo, 22 November 1999

Schnabel, Albrecht, Researcher Peace and Governance Programme United Nations University Tokyo, 25 November 1999

Tanaka, Akhiko, Professor International Politics, Institute of Oriental Culture University of Tokyo, Tokyo, 24 November 1999

Tsuchiyama, Jitsuo, Professor International Relations at the School of International Politics, Economics & Business, Aoyama Gakuin University Tokyo, Tokyo, 19 November 1999

Ueda, Susuma, Central and Eastern European Division European and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Gaimusho, Tokyo, 22 November 1999

Wada, Shuichi, Program Officer Japan Center for International Exchange, Tokyo, 22 November 1999

Wessels, David W.H., Director Institute of International Relations Sophia University Tokyo, 18 November 1999

12. The Netherlands

Amnesty International Netherlands, Amsterdam, 14 January 1997

Baal, A.P.P.M. van, Lieutenant General, as Brigadier General Chief of Staff B-H Command from 1 March to 1 September 1994 and as General Major Deputy Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army from October 1994 to June 1996, The Hague, 27 May 1998, Amsterdam, 1 November and The Hague, 12 December 2001

Bakker, Hans, Assistant Johan Riemens as editor *Balkan Forum*, Amsterdam, 26 May 2000

Bank, J., Professor of history, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, Amsterdam, 11 February 1997

Barmantloo, W.H., Coordinator social work BMNO Centrum, Doorn, 17 August 2001

Barth, D.J., Secretary General Ministry of Defence, The Hague, 5 December 1996 and 8 October 1999

Bas Backer, W.A., summer 1989 to summer 1992 policy official PVVN for the Middle East and Eastern Europe; from summer 1992 head DEU-OE and from 1993 to 1996 also deputy Yugoslavia coordinator, The Hague, 22 May 2000

Bastiaans, G.J.M., General Major, former Chief UNMO in Zagreb, Commander Airmobile brigade and leader of debriefing Dutchbat in Zagreb, Heidelberg, 26 October 2000 and Amsterdam, 20 November 2000

Bax, M., Professor of Cultural Anthropology *Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam, 23 January 1997

Beek, A.L. ter, Minister of Defence from 7 November 1991 to 22 August 1994, Assen, 23 December 1999 and 13 January 2000

Beekers, E., Employee of CDA (Christian Democrats' Party), by telephone, 30 June 1999.

Bentinck of Schoonheten, H.V., Chief European Affairs Department from 20 August 1990 to 1 April 1992, The Hague, 4 September 2000

Bentinck, M.R.O., Deputy Head of the bureau Political Affairs at the Directorate Political UN Affairs from April-June 1995, The Hague, 12 April 2000

- Berg, A. of den, Lieutenant Colonel, Head cluster management Central Military Hospital, Utrecht, 13 March 2000
- Besselink, G.H., Colonel, Military adviser Permanent Representative at the United Nations and former employee Defence Staff, New York, 3 June 1998
- Beuge, C.R. of, Director General European Cooperation from November 1990 to September 1995, Paris, 10 July 1998
- Beukering, R.H. of, Sergeant Major Dutchbat III, Novi Travnik, 14 December 2000
- Biegman, N. H., Permanent Representative at the United Nations, New York, 19 March, 2 May and 6 June 1997
- Blaauw, J-D., MP for the VVD (Labour), The Hague, 23 April 1999
- Bleumink, A., Deputy Head MID/KL from October 1994 to September 1996, Utrecht, 19 March 2001
- Blois, de G., Chief photo workshop Centre for Audiovisual Services Royal Netherlands Navy, Amsterdam, 6 August 2001
- Blokland, M., Warrant Officer Royal Netherlands Navy, by telephone, 3 November 2001
- Boering, P., Major, Head Section 5 of Dutchbat III, Amsterdam, 14 and 17 December 2001
- Boersma, H., Captain Royal Netherlands Marechaussee retd, Soestdijk, 9 August 2001
- Boetzelaer, H.W.J. van, Former Employee Royal Netherlands Navy, The Hague, 26 July 2001
- Bokhoven, H., Brigadier General, as Colonel from April 1994 to 15 December 1995 HMID/KL and autumn 1993 to spring 1994 staff officer planning UNPROFOR, Tervuren, 16 May 2001
- Boogaard, R. van den, Editor *NRC Handelsblad*, Amsterdam, 13 February 1997
- Borgh, B.C. van den, Deputy G-4 Operational Staff KL, The Hague, 15 and 22 February 1995
- Bos, Barbara, Editor Country Updates European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, Amsterdam, 17 July 1999
- Bosch, J.M.J., Brigadier General, as Colonel Chief-Cabinet of Army Commander, Amsterdam, 10 May 1999 and Rijswijk, 10 October 2001
- Bosch, R. in den, Employee Directorate Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs/Military Cooperation, spring 1992 to 1st week July 1995, The Hague, 19 April 2000
- Bot, B.R., Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until 1 October 1992 and subsequently Permanent Representative at the EU, Brussels, 7 September 2000
- Both, N., Co-author of *Srebrenica: Reconstruction of a war crime*, Amsterdam, 13 February 1997
- Bourgondiën, C.A.T.M. in 1995 as Major employed at G-2 UNPF Zagreb, 't Harde, 26 April 2000
- Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, F. van, Lieutenant Colonel, Chief of Staff Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff from 1 November 1992 and at the time of the deployment of Dutchbat, The Hague, 28 August 2000
- Brands, M.C., Professor of General and Theoretic History at the University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 11 February 1997
- Brantz, C.L., Colonel, Chief of Staff Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff from February 1994 to February 1995 and Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander Sector North East UNPROFOR from March to September 1995, Rome, 11 July and The Hague, 11 August 1999
- Breedveld, W., Editor *Trouw*, Amsterdam, 11 February 1997 and 11 October 2000
- Breemen, H.G.B. van den, General Marine Corps, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff and Chief of Defence Staff, The Hague, 10 January 1997, 20 May 1998 and Amsterdam, 20 October 1999
- Brinkman, J.W., General Major retd, subsequently Deputy head Planning of the Army Staff; Commander Airmobile Brigade from April 1993 to September 1994; chief of staff BH Command from September 1994 to March 1995, Rotterdam, 11 October 1999
- Broeder, A.E., Corporal Dutchbat III, Amsterdam, 3 May 2000
- Broeders, A.P.A., Head department Writing, Speech and Document Research Netherlands Forensic Institute, Rijswijk, 27 July 2001
- Broek, H. van den, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1982 to 31 December 1992 and subsequently European Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, Amsterdam, 15 November and 2 December 1999
- Broekhuizen, E.J. of, Major Marine Corps, staff officer at US Strike Force South, correspondence, 4 January 1998

Bruijn, M.J.L., Major, as Captain Commander of the medical battalion of Dutchbat III, by telephone, 9 January 2002

Bruurmijn, General Major artillery ret'd former Commander First Division and current chairman Netherlands Officers Society, The Hague, 8 April 1999

Buirma, J.J., Head department Administrative, Criminal and Disciplinary Law Ministry of Defence, 13 July 1999.

Caris, A.A.L., Captain, as First Lieutenant Commander reconnaissance platoon Dutchbat III, Bergen-op-Zoom, 3 March 2000

Ceelen, W.A.; Sergeant, Group Commander of the B Company, Assen, 2 July 1999

Couzy, A.H., Lieutenant General ret'd, Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army from October 1992 to June 1996, Amsterdam, 19 August and The Hague, 7, 14 and 17 September 1998, Amsterdam, 4 October 2001

Cramer Bornemann, Captain, Deputy Commander 101 MI platoon, Ede, 27 November 1998

Dam, R. of, Colonel, Former Head of the Department Operations Defence Staff, 21 November 1996

Dedden, B., Brigadier General, as Colonel Chief of Staff of Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, The Hague, 11 March 1998

Derksen, A, Lieutenant Colonel, as Major S-5 of Dutchbat I, Amsterdam 10 April 2001

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Lemmen, J., Colonel and in 1995 Deputy Commander of the Airmobile Brigade, Amsterdam, 17 October 2001

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Martens, W.J. Colonel, Head Department Individual Relief Health Care Department Dutch Army, Amersfoort, 5 November 1998

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Meer, D. van der, Colonel, Defence attaché Paris, The Hague, 4 November 1997

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- Sanders, P.M., Lieutenant Colonel, Psychologist Dutchbat III, Bugonjo, 12 and 13 December 2000
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- Wijsbroek, M.P. Major, Military Assistant Deputy Commander Sector North East from 4 March to 5 September 1995, Amsterdam, 10 December 1997
- Wilde, S. de, Former member 'Kodak team' Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Amsterdam, 30 July 2001
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Nowak, Manfred, Ludwig Boltzmann-Institut Wenen, UN Special Process on Missing Persons in the Former Yugoslavia, Sarajevo, 4 August 1997

York, Heather, Deputy Director Forensic Assistance Physicians for Human Rights, Sarajevo, 7 September 1999

14. Norway

Blom, Jan, General Major, Director of the Norwegian Military Intelligence Service, Oslo, 9 August 2001

Eide, Espen Barth, Director UN Programme Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Oslo 4 May 1999

Haukland, Hagrup, Norwegian Colonel and as Brigadier General Commander UNPROFOR Sector North East from 1 April to 20 December 1995, Sessvolmoen, 3 May 1999 and Oslo 22 September 2000

Holm Roar, Lieutenant Colonel Norwegian Army, from September 1994 to 9 October 1995 active as engineer at Tuzla Air Base, Tuzla, 11 March 1999

Kristensen, Terje, Deputy Director of the Norwegian Military Intelligence Service, Oxford, 12 May 2001

Knutsen, Kyrre, Head Department of Security Policy Norwegian Ministry of Defence, Oslo, 22 September 2000

Linstad, Jan Erik, Project coordinator Norsk Folkehjelp and in 1993-1994 involved in Srebrenica, Oslo, 22 September 2000

Øen, Marianne, Region leader Europa Norsk Folkehjelp and in 1993 involved in Srebrenica, Oslo, 22 September 2000

Pharo, Per, author of *Norge på Balkan 1990-1999: Lessons Learned*, Oslo, 22 September 2000

Stoltenberg, Thorvald, Co-chairman International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Oslo, 22 September 2000

Tamnes, Rolf, Director Norwegian Institute for Defence studies, Oslo, 4 May 1999

15. Organisation For Security And Cooperation In Europe (OSCE)

Collins, Gary F., Lawyer at UNPF Zagreb in 1994 and 1995 and subsequently active at the Office of the High Representative, Property Team, Sarajevo, 8 June 2000, as Head Human Rights, Rule of Law Department OSCE, Belgrade, 15 September 2001

Landman, J. C., Netherlands Permanent Representative at the OSCE, Vienna, 12 September 2001

Pollman-Zaal, Hannie, Chief Cabinet of the Secretary General of the OSCE, Vienna, 17 and 18 September 2001

Rhijn, R. van, Employee OSCE, Sarajevo, 10 March 1999

Thijn, E. Van, OSCE Coordinator of the International Election Monitors in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Amsterdam, 18 December 1997

Vries, J. de, OSCE, Employee Sarajevo 10 March 1999

16. Republika Srpska

Aleksic, Savo, Chief of police of Srebrenica, Srebrenica, 14 September 1999

Basic, Risto, Chief analysis Police Republika Srpska, Banja Luka, 1 November 1999 and 21 March 2000

Bogdanovic, Luka, Chief of police of Zvornik, Bratunac, 15 September, 1 November and 10 December 1999

Buha, Aleksa, from 1992 to 1998 Minister of Foreign Affairs Republika Srpska,

Belgrade, 17 December 1999

Cvijetinovic, Momcilo, Journalist and SDS chairman of Srebrenica, Srebrenica, 10 November 1998, 11 June, 23 June and 25 June 1998, 14 and 15 September and 2 November 1999

Delivoj, Sorak, Former Mayor of Skelani, Bratunac, 20 October 2000

Deronjic, Miroslav, SDA President of Bratunac and Opstina President of Srebrenica in July - August 1995, Srebrenica, 17 September and 3 November 1999

Dukic, Rajko, Mine director in Milici, Milici, 14 June 2000

Hasanovic, Becir, Former police officer in Bratunac, Rotterdam, 17 May 1998

Ivic, Jovan, (Jovo), Liaison officer of the VRS, Bratunac, 20 October 2000 Janetovic, Zeljko, Deputy Minister of Home Affairs Republika Srpska, Banja Luka, 1 November 1999 and 21 March 2000

Jelicic, Slobodan, Colonel, acting Minister of Defence of the Republika Srpska, Banja Luka, 18 November 1998

Josipovic, Miodrag, President of the executive of Bratunac, 14 September 1999

Jovicic, Jovica, Veterinary assistant, Fakovici, 16 September 1999

Kadric, Mevla, Former resident of Bratunac, Rotterdam, 14 December 1997, 17 January and 25 April 1998

Kadric, Mitko, Former resident of Bratunac, Rotterdam, 14 December 1997, 17 January and 25 April 1998

Katanic, Dane, Member of the municipal administration Srebrenica in 1991-1992, Skelani, 16 September 1999

Madzarevic, Ranko, Bus driver, Milici, 14 June 2000

Maksimovic, Maksim, Police officer, Bratunac, 17 September 1999

Militunovic, Milovan, VRS Colonel retd., Head of the VRS department of information 1994 – 1996, Banja Luka, 20 and 22 March 2000

Milovanovic, Manojlo, Minister of Defence of the Republika Srpska and former Chief of the VRS General Staff, Banja Luka, 18 November 1998 and 21 March 2000

Miljanovic, Boro, Journalist/publicist and author of *Boro, Krvavi Božić Sela Kravice*, Sekovic, 15 June 2000

Mitrovic, Desimir, Physician and former SDS president of Skelani, Skelani, 16 September 1999

Mitrovic, Mikajlo, Colonel, assistant to minister Manojlo Milovanovic, Banja Luka, 18 November 1998

Nikolic, Desimir, Former mayor of Skelani, Skelani, 16 September 1999

Nikolic, Momir, Major, Former liaison officer of the Bratunac Brigade, Srebrenica, 20 October 2000

Pecanac, Brane, Acting Minister of Home Affairs Republika Srpska, Banja Luka, 21 March 2000

Petrusic, Nenad, Legal council of VRS General Krstic, Bratunac, 18 September 1999

Simic, Miladin, Mayor of Bratunac, Bratunac, 13 September 1999

Sorak, Delivoj, Resident of Bratunac, Bratunac, 20 October 2000

Stanojevic, Mile, VRS soldier in the Drina Corps, Bratunac and Zalazje, 15 and 16 September, 2 November and 10 December 1999, 20 August 2001

Stjepanovic, Novak, Chairman of the SRS in Srebrenica and former VRS soldier, Bratunac, 20 October 2000

Toholj, Miroslav, from 1993 to 1996 Minister of Information Republika Srpska, Belgrade 14 December 1999

Trifunovic, Darko, Member of the Commission of Legal Experts of the Republika Srpska, Belgrade, 10, 11 and 12 June, 28 September 1998 and 15 December 1999 Union of War Invalids of Bratunac and Srebrenica, Tuzla, 23 October 2000

Uscumlic, Petar, UNMO interpreter in Bratunac, Bratunac, 14 September 1999

Verlasevic, Ibro, Former resident of Bratunac, Rotterdam, 1 June 1998

Visnjic, Tomislav, Legal council of VRS general Krstic, Bratunac, 18 September and Belgrade, 11 December 1999 and The Hague, 28 May 2000

Zametica, John, Consultant of Radovan Karadzic, by telephone, 12 June 2000

Zec, Momir, BSA General, Bijeljina, 19 February 2000.

Zivanovic, Milenko, General Major, Commander Drina Corps VRS from 1 November 1992 to 12 July 1995, Valjevo, 17 September 2001

17. Russia

Andreev, Viktor, Head Civil Affairs UNPROFOR from March 1992 to January 1995, Moscow, 7 July 2000

Cavalieri, Jean-Paul, UNHCR Program Officer in Belgrade 1994-1995, Moscow, 8 July 2000

18. Serbia

Anastasijevic, Dejan, Journalist, Belgrade, 3 November 1997, 31 January and 6 February 1998

Batakovic, Dusan, Historian, Belgrade by telephone, 4 February 1998

Bogosavljevic, Srdjan, Demographer, Belgrade, by telephone, 4 February 1998

Brankovic, Slobodan, Director Vojnoistorijski institut, Belgrade, 1 April 1998

Ciric, Aleksandar, Journalist, Belgrade, 3 November 1997

Colovic, Ivan, Ethno-linguist, Belgrade, 10 November 1997, 4 February 1998

Cosic, Dobrica, President of Yugoslavia in 1992-1993, Belgrade, 13 September 2001

Dimic, Ljubodrag, Coordinator of the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, Belgrade, 7 November 1997, 15 June, 1 August and 12 September 2001

Dimitrijevic, Vojin, Centar za ljudska prava, Belgrade, by telephone 27 August 2001

Djukic, Slavoljub, Journalist *Politika*, Belgrade, 4 August 2001

Djuric, Ksenija, Serbian Ministry of Communication and Information, Foreign Department, Belgrade, 29 September 1998

Dukic, Petar, Former police general, Belgrade, 13 December 1999

Dusan, Kadic, Head of the Federal Committee of Yugoslavia Committee for Compiling Data on Crimes against Humanity and International Law, Belgrade, 11 June 1998

Fond za humanitarno pravo, Belgrade, 2 August 2001

Grubacic, Bratislav, Journalist, Belgrade, 6 November 1997

Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Belgrade, 19 July 2001

Ignjatovic, Djordje, Vice-president of the Federal Committee of Yugoslavia Committee for Compiling Data on Crimes against Humanity and International Law, Belgrade, 11 June 1998

Igric, Gordana, Journalist and Human Rights activist, Belgrade, 5 February 1998

Ivanisevic, Milovoje, Director of the Centre for Investigation of Crimes against the Serbian People, Belgrade, 3 February, 30 March, 9 June, 19 September 1998, 13 December 1999 and 13 September 2001 and Bratunac, 17 September 1999

Jakovljevic, Bosko, President, Commission of International Humanitarian Law, Yugoslav Red Cross, Belgrade, 15 December 1999

Jamadzija, Bogdan, Chairman of the society of Bosnian Serbs, Belgrade, 14 December 1999

Janjic, Dusan, Sociologist and director Forum for Ethnic Relations, Belgrade, 9 November 1999

Jovanovic, Vladislav, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Yugoslav Federation and Serbia 1991-1995, Belgrade, 14 September 2001

Jovanovic, Zoran, Journalist and former Public Relations Officer Drina Corps VRS,

Kandic, Natasa, Chairman of the Committee for Human Rights, Humanitarian Law Center, Belgrade, 5 November 1997 and 2 August 2001

Karajovic, Dragan, Assistant to the former Prime Minister of Yugoslavia Panic, Belgrade, 4 September 2001

Koljanin, Dragica, Historian, Belgrade, 14 September 1998 and 10 November 1999

Koljanin, Milan, Historian, Belgrade, 14 September 1998 and 10 November 1999

Komljenovic, Uros, Journalist, Belgrade, 6 November 1997

Kusovac, Zoran, Journalist, Belgrade, 1 November 1997

Mandic, Nebojsa, Assistant of politician and former Chief-of-Staff VJ General Perisic, by telephone, 4 September 2001

Maslic, Andjelko, Former secretary of the Committee for Security Services in Yugoslavia, Belgrade, 16 December 1999

Matovic, Vladimir, Former consultant of President Cosic, Belgrade, 16 December 1999 and 2 August 2001

Milinov, Petar, Journalist, Belgrade, 17 November 1999

Milovanovic, Bane, Major General VJ, Belgrade, 3 August 2001

Milovanovic, Dragan, Photojournalist, Belgrade, 17 December 1999

Milovanovic, Dusan, Chief editor *Revija 92*, Belgrade, 11 June and 1 October 1998, Banja Luka 22 March 2000, Belgrade, 13 September 2001

Mitrovic, Momčilo, Historian, Belgrade, 7 November 1997

Nakarada, Radmila, Joint Coordinator of the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, Belgrade, 15 June 2001

Novicic, Cvetko, 'Fixer' for foreign journalists who visited Srebrenica during the war, Belgrade, 30 January 1998

Perisic, Momcilo, General, Former Commander of the Vojska Jugoslavenska, by telephone, 4 February 2002

Perovic, Latinka, Historian, Belgrade, 14 June and 1 August 2001

Petrovic-Pirocanac, Zoran, Journalist, Belgrade, 31 March and 2 April 1998

Savic, Mile, Sociologist, Belgrade, 22 June 1998

Simic, Ilija, Member of the Federal Committee of Yugoslavia Committee for Compiling Data on Crimes against Humanity and International Law, Belgrade, 11 June 1998

Simic, Milorad, Former resident of Srebrenica, Belgrade, 8 November 1999

Spaisic, Bozidar, until the early nineties active at the Federal Bureau for Internal Security and until 1993 Cabinet Minister of Home Affairs of Serbia, Belgrade, 16 September 2001

Stancic, Slavica, Resident of Bijeljina, Belgrade, 9 November 1999

Stankovic, Zoran, General, Forensic specialist Vojna Akademija, Belgrade, 31 March, 10 June, 30 September 1998 and 16 December 1999, 15 June 18 July, 23 August, 15 September 2001

Starcevic, Miodrag, Senior Adviser on Humanitarian Law Yugoslav Red Cross, Belgrade, 15 December 1999

Stavljanin, Dragan, Journalist, Belgrade, 4 November 1997

Stojanovic, Svetozar, Professor political philosophy and sociology at the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory of Belgrade University, Belgrade 3 August 2001

Svarm, Filip, Journalist, Belgrade, 3 November 1997

Tomic, Boban, Journalist, Belgrade, 6 February 1998, *Bajina Basta* 22 June 1998 and 11 November 1999

Vladic-Krstic, Bratislava, Ethnologist, Belgrade 3 February 1998

Vlasenica, 13 September, 3 November and 11 December 1999, 19 October 2000, 20 August 2001

Zajovic, Stasa, Activist for Women in Black, Belgrade, 7 November 1997

19. Sweden

Arlefalk, G., Colonel, from 30 March to 14 October 1995 Commander Norbat in Tuzla, Vienna, 18 May 2000

Bildt, Carl, EU negotiator from 1 June 1995, Stockholm, 13 December 2000

Haglund, Magnus, Vice-Admiral, end 1995 and 1996 head Swedish National Intelligence Cell (SWENIC) in Zagreb, Stockholm, 4 November 1999

Ljunggren, Ingmar, Lieutenant Colonel, Assistant G-2 UNPROFOR Zagreb, Stockholm, 4 November 1999

Pellnäss, Bo, Colonel, Chief UNMO November 1992 – 1993 and author, Uppsala, 3 November 1999

Pierre, Erik, Former Ambassador of Sweden in Sarajevo, Brussels, 1 July 1997
 Svensson, Jan-Inge, Colonel, in 1995 Head G-2 UNPROFOR Zagreb, Stockholm, 4 November 1999
 Wahlgren, Lars-Eric, Lieutenant General retd., until 1 July 1993 Force Commander UNPROFOR, Halmstad, 3 June 1999

20. United Kingdom

Bahari, Maziar, Iranian documentalist, London, 4 and 5 July 1998
 Balian, Hrair, Director Bosnia of the International Crisis Group, London, 4 and 5 July 1998
 Baxter, James, Colonel, Military assistant of Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander General Rupert Smith, London, 16 October 2000
 Bickford, David, Former Undersecretary of State and Legal Adviser to the British Security and Intelligence Services, Brussels, 20 January 1999
 Chuter, David, Balkans Secretariat of the British Ministry of Defence, London, 10 September 1998
 Jagger, Bianca, Activist for Bosnia, London, 4 and 5 July 1998, by telephone 9 July 1998
 Bojtar, Endre, Journalist, London, 28 May 1997
 Dawson, Betty, Deputy Director Media Development Office and Director Media Monitoring Office OSCE, London, 4 and 5 July 1998
 Goulding, Sir Marrack, Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping from January 1986 to February 1993 and Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs from February 1993 to 1997, Rijswijk, 30 September 2000
 Gowing, Nik, Journalist and presenter of BBC World, London, 25 March 1999
 Herman, Michael, Author *Intelligence Power in Peace and War*, Ottawa, 29 September 2000 and Oxford, 9 May 2001
 Judah, Tim, Journalist and author, London, 9 December 1997
 Lashmar, Paul, British investigative journalist, London, 26 March 1999
 Le Hardy, C.A., British Lieutenant Colonel, until March 1995 G2/G3 UNPROFOR, Sector North-East, Amsterdam, 8 October 1997
 Miers, Sir David, British ambassador in The Hague from 23 August 1993 until the end of 1996, London, 1 August 2001
 Neville-Jones, Pauline, Chairman of the British Joint Intelligence Committee and in 1995 Political Director of the Foreign Office, London, 15 November 2001
 Owen, Lord David, for the EEC co-chairman of the Yugoslavia Conference, from 1992 to 1 June 1995, London, 21 October 1999 and 27 June 2001
 Pears, Karin, Head of the Bosnia Section of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London, 10 September 1998
 Politi, Alessandro, Strategic and OSINT analyst, Oxford, 26 September 1999
 Rifkind, Sir Malcolm, British Minister of Defence from 1992 to July 1995 and from July 1995, Minister of Foreign Affairs, by telephone, 16 November 2001
 Ripley, Tim, Investigative journalist and author of *Deliberate Force*, London, 12 December 1999
 Rudd, Mike, as Air Commodore from February to December 1995 Nato Liaison Officer at UNPF Zagreb, The Hague, 9 November 2000
 Schlapobersky, John, Chairman Board of Trustees Sarajevo Charter, London 4 and 5 July 1998
 Smith, Michael, Journalist and author van *New Cloaks. Old Daggers*, London, 28 March 1999
 Smith, R.A, General, as Lieutenant General Commander Bosnia-Herzegovina Command/UNPROFOR Sarajevo, Mons, 12 January and 8 February 2000
 Stankovic, Milos, [Mike Stanley], Former British Captain and interpreter and author of *Trusted Mole*, London, 18 April 2001
 Stephen, Chris, Journalist at the *Sunday Times*, London, 4 and 5 July 1998
 Tornbury, Paul, Liaison Officer British Armed Forces in Bosnia, London, 2 October and 27 November 1997

Urban, Mark, Editor *BBC Newsnight* and author of *UK Eyes Alpha: The Inside story of British Intelligence*, London, 26 March 1999

21. United Nations

Ali, Tahir, Special advisor, Division of International Protection, UNHCR, Geneva, 29 June 1998

Arria, Diego, Venezuelan Permanent Representative at the UN and Head of a Security Council mission to Srebrenica in April 1993, New York, 10 May 2000

Banbury, Tony, Head Civil Affairs Bosnia-Herzegovina Command from April 1994 to May 1995 and subsequently Political Affairs Officer Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General in Zagreb, Washington, 11 May and 5 June 2000

Baril, M., General, Canadian Chief of Defence Staff and former Senior Military Advisor to the Secretary General UN, by telephone, 21 December 1999

Blewitt, Graham T., Deputy Prosecutor International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, The Hague, 12 July 2000

Böhi, Erwin, Chief of Staff International Commission on Missing Persons, Sarajevo, 5 August 1977

Bossel-Lagos, Margarita, Psychologist and in 1995 connected to the Centre for Human Rights, part of UNHCR, in Zagreb, Geneva, 20 December 2000

Bowman, Laura, Deputy Chief of Staff International Commission on Missing Persons, Sarajevo, 5 August 1977

Cleaver, Todd, Research Officer, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, The Hague, 12 July and 15 September 2000

Cortiello, M., United Nations Office at Geneva, Chief of the Registry, Records and Mailing Section, Geneva, 11 November 1999

Erdős, A., Hungarian Permanent Representative at the UN and member of a Security Council mission to Srebrenica in April 1993, New York, 11 May 2000

Faubert, Carrol, UNHCR Special Envoy in Sarajevo, Sarajevo 4 August 1997

Fujiwara, Hiroto, Intelligence Analyst, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, The Hague, 15 September 2000

Harland, David, United Nations Acting Head of Civil Affairs, Sarajevo, 4 August 1997 and 18, 21 and 25 May 1999 and Amsterdam, 14 December 1999

Hövell tot Westerfliet, W. van, Former Senior Legal Adviser UNHCR, The Hague 21 April 2000 International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Den Haag, 5 November 1997

Ivanko, Alexander, UNHCR Head, Press & Information/Spokesman Sarajevo, Sarajevo, 5 August 1997

Janowski, Kris, Public Information Officer UNHCR and former Field Officer UNHCR in Srebrenica, Sarajevo, 7 August 1997

Jensen, Bent, Special Envoy to the High Representative Srebrenica, Srebrenica 14 September 1999

Kappen, F.H. van Major General Royal Netherlands Marine Corps ret'd., former Military Adviser of the Secretary-General UN from 1 July 1995 to 1998, Amsterdam, 24 February 1999 and Doorn, 21 June 2000

Kapungu, L.T., Chief Lessons Learned Mechanism Department of Peace-Keeping Operations United Nations New York, The Hague, 10 July 1997

Khan, Irene, from 1991 to 1993 policy adviser High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata, Geneva, 28 January 2000

Koenig, C., Legal Officer International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Amsterdam, 25 January 2000

Mikhailov, Nikolai, Investigation Teamleader, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, The Hague, 15 September 2000

Morgan, Ric, Deputy Chief G-2 Headquarters UNPF in Zagreb, Elbert (Colorado), 25 November 2000 International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, The Hague, 25 January, 12 July and 15 September 2000

Pierre, Monique, Former Head UNHCR Tuzla, Brussels, 1 July 1997
 Powell, Charlie, Representative in Srebrenica of the Office of the High Representative, Srebrenica, 16 June 2000
 Reid, B., Investigations Commander International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Amsterdam, 25 January 2000
 Riza, Iqbal, Chief cabinet of the UN Secretary-General, New York, 19 March 1997 and 2 June 1998
 Rooyen, R. van, UNHCR Coordinator Special Operations for the former Yugoslavia, Sarajevo, 4 August 1997
 Salvisberg, R., UN Mission Human Rights UNPROFOR, Sarajevo, 8 March 1999
 Schmitz, Peter, Bosnia desk of the DPKO, New York, 16 June 1999.
 Schollaert, Jim, OHR North Representative, OHR office Tuzla, 3 February 1998
 Shitaka, Emma, Employee Civil Affairs UNPROFOR Zagreb from 1992-1993 and personal assistant of SRSG Akashi from 1994-1995
 Stiglmayer, Alexandra, Public Affairs Department Office of the High Representative, Sarajevo, 17 May 1999
 Tharoor, Shashi, Director of Communications and Special Projects, Office of the Secretary-General, New York, 16 June 1999
 Trippel-Ngai, E., UN Headquarters, Geneva, 11 November 1999
 Tuzmukhamedov, Bakhtiyar, Employee UN Civil Affairs in central Bosnia, London, 26 October 1999
 Wieruszewski, Roman, Head UN Office Sarajevo of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 6 February 1998
 Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, Political Adviser Staff Akashi, New York, 7 June 1997

22. United States

Aid, Matthew, Former employee of the American Ministry of Defence and expert in the field of Intelligence, Washington, 19 June 1999, 24 June, 6 June, 18 November 2001 and 28 September 2001
 Albright, Madelaine, Former American Permanent Representative at the UN and Secretary of State, Washington, 28 September 2001
 Bamford, Jim, Intelligence expert and author about the NSA, Washington 24 June 1999
 Bang-Jensen, Nina, Official Balkan Action Council, Washington, 21 June 1999
 Bell, Randolph, Director EUR/UBI, U.S. State Department, Washington, 31 March 1998
 Berkowitz, Bruce, Employee of RAND and co-author of *Best Truth*, Ottawa, 29 September 2000
 Berry, Sheila, Office of War Crimes Issues, US Department of State, Washington, 24 June 1999.
 Bringa, Tone, Employee of the staff of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Akashi, The Hague, 13 July 1999
 Goodman, Mel, Former employee of the CIA and currently employed at the National Defense University, Ottawa, 29 September 2000
 Gutman, Roy, Journalist and author of *A Witness to Genocide*, London, 4 and 5 July 1998
 Daalder, Ivo, Former employee Bosnia Desk National Security Council, University of Maryland, Washington, 30 March 1998
 Danner, Mark, Journalist, Berkeley, 14 November 1999
 Donahue, Lina L., Chief War Crimes Unit U.S. Department of State, Washington, 7 June 2000
 Dornbush, Terry, Former America ambassador in The Hague (since March 1994), Amsterdam, 29 January 2001
 Durakovic, Muhamed, UN Civpol interpreter in Srebrenica, Sarajevo, 20 April 1998, Philadelphia, 21 November 1999
 Ellis, Curtis, Reporter CBS 60 minutes, New York 14 June 1999.
 Fink, Sheri L., American investigator Partners Emergency Medicine, Amsterdam, 12 September 2000
 Frelick, Bill, Senior Policy Analyst United States Committee for Refugees, Washington, 5 and 6 July 2000

Feurth, Leon, National Security Adviser to the Vice-President Al Gore, 1992-2000, Washington, 28 September 2001
 Galbraith, Peter, Former American ambassador in Zagreb, Washington, 23 June 1999.
 Heffernan, John W, Coalition for International Justice, Washington, 21 June 1999.
 Hersh, Seymour, Investigative journalist, Washington, 22 June 1999.
 Hicks, Peggy, Human Rights Consultant to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Zagreb, Washington, 10 July 2000
 Hollingworth, Larry, Former employee UNHCR and author of *Merry Christmas Mr Larry*, London 4 and 5 July 1998
 Hooper, James R., Bang-Jensen, Nina, Employee Balkan Action Council, Washington DC, 21 June 1999.
 Hunter, Robert E., Former American Permanent Representative at Nato, Washington, 9 June 2000
 Joulwan, George, American General, Supreme Allied Commander Europe from October 1993 to July 1997, Washington, 8 June 2000
 Kenney, George, Former official US Department of State, Washington DC, 23 June 1999.
 Koring, Paul, Balkan correspondent for the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, Washington, 5 July 2000
 Lane, Charles, Employee Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), Sarajevo, 20 May 1999
 Madsen, Wayne, Intelligence expert, Washington DC, 21 June 1999
 Marks, Laura, Director International Monitor Institute, Los Angeles, 15-18 November 1999
 Miller, Tom, American ambassador at the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina since 1999, by telephone, 18 June 2000
 Munoz, Joaquin, International Monitor Institute, Los Angeles, 15-18 November 1999
 Neuffer, Elizabeth, Bureau Head Europa *Boston Globe*, New York, 15 July 2000
 Orentlicher, Diane F., Professor of Law and Director of the War Crimes Research Office, American University, Washington, 6 July 2000
 Pardew, James, Head Balkan Task Force of the Pentagon in 1995 and subsequently Special Advisor to the President and the Secretary of State for Balkan Affairs, Washington, 1 April and 12 November 2000
 Power, Samantha, Executive Director Carr Center for Human Rights Policy Harvard University and in 1995 correspondent of the *Washington Post* in Sarajevo, Washington, 8 June 2000
 Redman, Charles, American negotiator for the Balkans from mid-1993 to mid- 1994 and then American ambassador in Bonn, London, 27 June 2001
 Richelson, Jeff, Intelligence expert and author of *The Wizards of Langley*, Washington, 25 June 1999
 Rohde, David, Journalist of *The Christian Science Monitor* and author of *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica*, London, 7 July 1997 and New York, 16 July 2000
 Rosenblatt, Lionel, President Refugees International, Washington, 7 July 2000
 Screen, James A., Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Affairs and former consultant for Akashi, Washington, 30 November 2000
 Scheffer, David, Ambassador at large, U.S. State Department, Washington, 31 March 1998
 Schollard, Jim, US Department of State, Washington, 25 June 1999
 Schwartz, Stephen, Freelancer and journalist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sarajevo, 8 March and 9 December 1999
 Schwering, Katherine, Official State Department, Washington, 5 June and 1 December 2000 and 28 September 2001
 Smith, Leighton, Admiral US Navy, Commander in Chief Allied Forces Southern Europe 1994-1996, Washington, 6 June 2000
 Soto, Oscar G. de, Country Officer for the Netherlands, Bureau of European and Canadian Department of State, Washington, 1 April 1998
 Stader, Donald E., Chief War Crimes Unit U.S. State Department, Washington, 31 March 1998
 Steele, Robert, Director of the American Open Sources Solutions, Ottawa, 30 September 2000.
 Stover, Eric, Human Rights Center University of California, Berkeley, 12 November 1999
 Studeman, Bill, Deputy Director Central Intelligence Agency in 1995, correspondence 15 June 2000

Stuebner, Bill, US Institute of Peace, Washington, 22 June 1999

Sudetic, Chuck, Former correspondent of the *New York Times* and author of *Blood and Vengeance*, Belgrade, 1 February, 31 March and 7 June 1998

Valcourt, Richard R., Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, New York, 15 June 1999.

Ward, George, from 1992 to 1996 Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Organizations and Acting Assistant Secretary for International Organizations State Department, Washington, 1 December 2000

Warrick, Thomas S., Deputy of the Office of War Crimes Issues, US Department of State, Washington, 21 June 1999.

Wentz, Larry, Department of Defence Consultant and editor of *Lessons from Bosnia: The IFOR Experience*, Washington, 30 November 2000

Williams, Paul R., Associate Professor of Law and International Relations, American University and former consultant of the Bosnian government in Dayton, Washington, 6 July 2000

Woodward, Susan, Head Analysis and Assessment Unit UN Protection Forces Zagreb and author of *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, Amsterdam, 20 October 1999

Woolsey, R. James, Director Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) from 1993 to 10 January 1995, Washington, 8 June 2000

Appendix X

Archive Overview

Introduction

A large number of records and collections of documents were consulted for this enquiry. Private organizations and individuals also made documents available. It is a generally accepted rule that the curator, manager or owner of such archives or documents must give permission for third parties to consult them. This usually means, certainly in the case of all documents belonging to government agencies and international organizations, that applications have to be submitted to the bodies concerned in order to inspect the material. In several cases the institutions or individuals involved gave the NIOD permission to have third parties inspect the documents (originals or copies). In such cases the NIOD was obliged to check whether there were any restrictions on making the documents public by virtue of the Freedom of Information (Public Access) Act, the Personal Data Protection Act and the Public Records Act. It is possible that as a result of these Acts certain data and/or names of individuals must be made illegible. Below a detailed survey is provided of the records, collections and separate documents consulted, with mention of the abbreviations used in the report.

Chapter 1

Ministry of Foreign Affairs archives

Introduction

Until 1988, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had a central system of archive management. When decentralization of the central archive was introduced in 1989, each department was charged with managing its own archives. Until then the decimal system had been used for filing, which meant that files could be arranged according to the same principle at the ministry and at the missions abroad. Record group 9 stood for politics, record group 3 for legal matters and record group 6 for economic relations. Main categories and sub-categories were marked by the addition of figures. From 1989 onwards, this decimal system gradually fell into disuse because the transition to digital registration of files, whereby each file was given a number and a title, made it less necessary to classify documents by category and subject. The decimal system of making files persisted longer in the missions abroad.

The selection of documents from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was based on several key words such as peace operations, UNPROFOR, Srebrenica, Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Security Council from the files of the Documentary Information Service (Dutch DDI). On the basis of this list files considered relevant were selected. In the course of the enquiry this list was supplemented by other files, usually for one of two different reasons. The first reason was that they were referred to in files included in the first selection and the second was that they were found as a result of a search on specific topics. In general, due to decentralization of the archives, documents on particular subjects were spread throughout several files. The most important policy departments were Europe, Political UN Affairs and Atlantic Security. As a result of this broad formation of policy, files were compiled in large numbers, but unevenly distributed.

In addition to these archives, civil servants also created their own working files. These were generally no longer available for the enquiry, because when civil servants are transferred they usually clear them away. An important exception was the sizeable working archive of the Deputy Director of the Europe department, which included Yugoslavia cooperation.

At Foreign Affairs there is no tradition of making files for the political leaders. Documents are presented to the ministers via the directors-general and the secretary-general and after use are returned to the civil service to be implemented and filed. This does not mean that no records are made at all at the ministerial level. There are archives pertaining to Ministers Van den Broek, Kooijmans, Van Mierlo and Pronk which are not formally registered. These archives have usually been compiled by personal secretaries. They contain documents such as correspondence with other ministers, documents for the meeting of the Ministerial Council, correspondence with the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament and memos to the minister from his private secretary about his diary. Finally, in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there are information files which were compiled in preparation for a visit abroad. Similar files exist for meetings of the EU General Council and other international organizations. In some cases these files were consulted to check the information in the official files on specific subjects.

At the missions abroad the custom of using the decimal record group for filing records persisted longer than at the ministry in The Hague. Moreover, because they were small-scale organizations, documents were not spread over a large number of files; documents relevant to the Srebrenica enquiry were concentrated in one central file. In general, no systematic study was made of the archives of the missions abroad. There are two exceptions: the archives of the UN Permanent Representation in New York and those of the embassy in Washington.

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs two categories of documents accounted for the greater part of the material: internal memoranda and coded messages. The first category plays an important role in internal decision-making; the second is crucial to communication with the missions abroad. In general,

these documents had been properly indexed and could be traced easily. This is less true of communications by fax and e-mail, which were filed in the official records only very rarely.

1. Survey of the records collected

DPV/ARA/02032, *SCR 770 humanitarian aid*. Discussion (1992–1993) as to whether aid convoys under military escort should fight their way through if they were obstructed. Subject of discussion in WEU; also consultations with USA, which does not want military action.

DDI-Kabinet/GS/ARA/00665, *Part III Yugoslavia political relations and parties 1990–1991*.

Correspondence about EC boycott (October 1991) and US warning against recognition of Slovenia and Croatia (December 1991).

DPV/ARA/01804, *ICFY follow-up September–November 1992*. Reports from London and internal memos.

DDI-Kabinet/GS/ARA/00666, *Yugoslavia political relations and parties*, May/October 1992.

DDI-Kabinet/GS/ARA/00664, *Yugoslavia political relations and parties*. Reports from various sources, including MID.

DPV/ARA/00999.0, *UNPROFOR (October–December 1992)*. Humanitarian relief, convoys to Muslim pockets (later enclaves) and setting up of safe havens near UNPF bases. Contains some indications of Dutch reactions to proposals within the CSCE, Austria and Mazowiecki. The Netherlands in favour provided on the basis of new UNPF mandate. In late 1992 the matter does not yet seem very acute, since convoys are on the move again.

DPV/ARA/00782, *Yugoslavia / humanitarian aid / human rights / policy 1993 (Part 2)* Widely varying subjects: UNHCR relief in Bosnia in general; HCA initiatives (Faber and others) with respect to Safe Areas; support for press in FRY via Press Now; Kalshoven Committee; Dutch part in identification of victims in mass graves.

DPV/ARA/0818, *Yugoslavia: main resolutions on human rights questions General Assembly 1992*, text of Bosnia resolution 1992 and correspondence about para. 7 (lifting of arms embargo) and EU voting behaviour.

DPV/ARA/01802, *Yugoslavia Civil War. SCR 757 (sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) Part 1: June–November 1992* Consultations on implementation, monitoring and evasion or easing, particularly in EU context. Clear indications of Dutch position.

DPV/ARA/01809, *SCR 757 sanctions against Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Lesser Yugoslavia) June – November 1992*. Implementation of sanctions and support from EC/EU to non-member states in Central Europe to compensate for the effects of the implementation of sanctions.

DDI, *Resolution 771: Human rights abuse/ethnic cleansing*. Dutch support for activities of Mazowiecki.

DPV/ARA/02045, *Yugoslavia: military intervention 1992*. French view of more drastic military intervention in Yugoslavia (September 92); consultations in NATO and WEU aimed at greater effort, and relation to British-Dutch-French initiative in UN; memo MinDef (Dec. 1992) about expansion of military operations (including discussion on safe havens/areas).

DPV/ARA/01813, *ICFY 1992–1993*. Covers August 1992 (and a few documents from March 1993). Matters relating to progress of ICFY. Much attention paid to organization of conference August 1992.

DPV/ARA/01803, *Yugoslavia civil war / WEU / direct contacts with UNPROFOR and UNHCR 1992–1993*. Reports on WEU meetings relating to role in implementation SCR 770, 787, NFZ and implementation VOPP. Dilemma is always whether WEU might be able to play a role of its own in addition to UNPROFOR and NATO. Good description of Dutch position in reports.

DPV/ARA/02051, *SCR 780: war crimes (War Crimes Commission and foundation of Yugoslavia Tribunal) (no.508363)*. The documents give an outline of the steps needed to implement SCR 780. The Netherlands plays familiar role as promoter of international law. Many contacts with USA.

DVL/WO *Yugoslavia / human rights / mass graves / missing persons 1992–1997*. Commentary on Warburton report II and so-called Kleiverda report (sexual abuse of Bosnian women); UNO Committee led by Kalshoven / Bassiouni (violations of humanitarian law and laws of war in Yugoslavia) (May 1994); Srebrenica 1995 – 1997 missing persons.

DIE/ARA/01232, *the former Yugoslavia and UN/SC 1992–93*.

DEU/2000/00354, *background information Bosnia 1992–4*.

DPV/ARA/02051, *Special session of General Assembly on Bosnia*. File deals with two questions: 1. whether the Netherlands should sign letter to UNSG requesting special session and 2. whether the Netherlands can be one of the initiators of resolution in resumed GA. Positive in both cases.

DPV/ARA/00141/42/43, *establishment UNPROFOR and Dutch participation*. Widely selected file on setting up and deployment of UNPROFOR and Dutch participation. Also documents on financing, appointment of Dutch personnel to staff positions, setting up Safe Areas etc. Also internal memos.

DPV/ARA/00154, *Peace operations / UNPROFOR / Dutch participation / policy / coordination Part 2 (October – November 1992)*. Despatch of transport unit and consultations on the subject; Dutch UNMOs and assessment of several who worked in Croatia.

DPV/ARA/00155, *Peace operations / UNPROFOR / Dutch participation / policy / coordination Part 1 (February–September 1992)*. Dutch participation in UNPROFOR (in addition to UNTAC) (Signals unit); possible anti-Dutch attitude in Croatia because of EC presidency; participation in UNVICPOL. Many Foreign Affairs internal documents which give insight into decision-making process.

DMP/ARA/00071, *Yugoslavia: humanitarian crisis 1992–1993*. Documents about aid workers' consultations in UNHCR. Shows increasing urgency of situation in early 1993 and UNHCR's attempts to change it. Reports on Srebrenica from March 1993 onwards, UNHCR's views on Safe Area concept. Several documents show that as early as late 1992 the Netherlands was in favour of setting up protected zones for the safety of Displaced Persons.

DPV/ARA/01812, *Yugoslavia civil war humanitarian assistance / UNHCR / follow-up Ctee (October 1992 – July 1993)*. Delivery of relief by UNHCR; from end of 1992 onwards, attention for situation around Srebrenica; also WEU consultations on aid.

DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS, *No Fly Zone Part 1: September–December 1992*. Documents about preparation of SCR on no-fly-zone over Bosnia and whether it should be enforced. Netherlands very interested. There is an investigation underway as to whether F-16s are suitable for the purpose. Part 2 and following are about preparation for implementation: many NATO documents on deployment of F-16 squadron as Dutch contribution and results, including reports on violations.

DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS, *SCR 781 and 786 establishment No Fly Zone B-H. (Operation Deny Fly)*. International discussion on enforcement of no-fly-zone. The Netherlands is in favour provided it is based on SC resolution. Following files on implementation.

DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS, *SCR 816: Enforcement No Fly Zone Part 3 (April 1993)*. Decision-making in NATO. Important question is whether Turkey can take part in action. The Netherlands advocate of Turkish participation.

DPV/ARA/01806, *Yugoslavia civil war SCR 781, 786 and 816 (prohibition military flights over Bosnia (NFZ)) (October 1992 – July 1993)*. Much attention paid to realization of SCR 816 and authorization of NATO (or WEU); also documents on NFZE and Safe Areas. Important file for Dutch position.

DPV/ARA/00209, *Peace operations / UNPROFOR / Dutch participation / policy / coordination Part 3 (1992 – 1993)*. Documents about decision-making on despatch Dutchbat. Important file.

DPV/ARA/01818, *Yugoslav civil war Part 3 (April – July 1993)*. Mainly EU consultations on VOPP and Joint Action Plan. Gives insight into Dutch position and contribution.

DDI-Kabinet/GS/ARA/00286, *Yugoslavia: political relations and parties Part VII (May 1993 – March 1994)*. BVD (Dutch National Security Service) report for CVIN+ (Committee of Unified Intelligence Services the Netherlands) for CVIN 11-5-93.

DVL/WO Yugoslavia / UNPROFOR 1993–1995. *Surveys of Dutch participation in UNPROFOR (1993–4)*; surrender of Gorazde; Malaysian newspaper on Dutchbat.

DEU/2000/00354, *Political relations and parties in Bosnia, 1993–1996*. US initiative towards more forceful action in Bosnia via NATO (July 1993); Voorhoeve-Sacirbey talk 15.9.94; Foreign Affairs reaction on debriefing report. NB. Many red codes from August – September 1995 and June – July 1996.

DEU/2000/00355, *US proposal for NATO air support in Sarajevo in connection with peace plan (preparation NATO council 2-8-1993)*

DEU/2000/00354, *Bosnia 1992–96*. US sitreps on Bosnian Serb compliance with NAC decision of 9-8-93; separate document on Owen and JAC plan July 1993 and missing list of Muslim men (21-8-95).

DPV/ARA/00144, *UNPROFOR September 1993–March 1994*. Task/mandate UNPROFOR, withdrawal/reinforcement, consultations among troop-contributing nations at UN in New York. Copy of memo of conversation between Vos and Gharekhan about Dutchbat and CAS.

DPV/ARA/02051, *Intsums Defensie 1993*. Copied to supplement incomplete series at Defence.

DPV/ARA/005814, *Deployment of Dutchbat I and affairs / peace operations / UNPROFOR / Dutch participation / policy / coordination part concerning Dutchbat II and III; staff positions at UNPROFOR, UNMOs and UNCIVPOL*. Important files for impression of attention paid to Dutchbat by Foreign Affairs.

DPV/ARA/02016, *1994 UNGA resolution on Bosnia*. Correspondence on voting behaviour with respect to resolution, on behalf of which Sacirbey is lobbying hard and has consulted with Washington. The Netherlands has two objectives: 1. EU must vote en bloc; 2. vote yes if clause on lifting of arms embargo is removed.

DPV/ARA/00797, *Yugoslavia / Bosnia-H / policy / instructions Part 2: 1994–1995*. Documents about possible state visit by Izetbegovic (October 1994), peace plan; lifting of arms embargo; fall of Srebrenica and UN action; Sacirbey's contacts with Dutch ministers.

DPV/ARA00210, *UNPROFOR Part 5* (March – September 1994), International talks on role of UNPF in implementation of peace plan and real need of reinforcement in connection with necessity of more robust action.

DPV/ARA/00580, *UNPROFOR Part 6* (October 1994 – April 1995) In this file there are documents relating to a discussion about withdrawal or reinforcement of UNPROFOR. The CHOD's meeting in The Hague 18/19 December was in this framework. A proposal by Voorhoeve for article in American newspaper. Delivery of supplies to enclaves by helicopter.

DPV/ARA/02110, *UNPROFOR Part 7* (May–September 1995). In general documents about establishment of RRF, delivery of supplies to Safe Areas in eastern Bosnia by air, and defence of Gorazde. Also documents about fall of Srebrenica. Dutch government is particularly worried about plan to recapture Srebrenica in connection with threat to Dutchbat.

DPV/ARA/02108, *UNPROFOR, Dutch participation Part 6: 1995–1996*. Information about publications on fall of Srebrenica. Several documents show that according to Foreign Affairs, Defence should be more concerned about press publications leading to discussions about Srebrenica flaring up.

DEU/ARA/03356, *UNPROFOR January–May 1995*. Discussion about reinforcement /withdrawal UNPROFOR. Discussions about this subject take place mainly within NATO. Other subjects: delivery of supplies by air, appointment of Dutch officers in UNPF, alteration of French policy with respect to UNPROFOR and hostage crisis May 1995. A few documents about independent search for a successor to Dutchbat for Srebrenica.

DPV/ARA/00141/00142/00143, *UNPROFOR Dutch participation Parts 5–7: June–October 1995*. Ukraine to relieve Dutchbat. Incidents around the fall; criticism from Paris and actions of Wijnaendts. Reactions of other countries and the UN. Smith-Mladic agreement. Parliamentary letters from the end of August onwards. The first part of the file is particularly interesting because of the direct reactions it contains. At the end of October 1995 the first evaluation was made of decision-making about the despatch in 1993.

DWH/ARA/03412, *Relieving of Dutchbat*. Attempts from May 1995 onwards to find a successor. Only a few documents. Not about the Ukraine.

DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS, *NATO and B-H 1995*. Mostly about discussions of the situation in NAR. Withdrawal of UNPROFOR, RRF, Deny Fly, supplies by air, Safe Areas and CAS. Little specifically about the Netherlands. Remarkable: at Ministerial meeting of DPC Voorhoeve draws attention to the position of Dutchbat and speaks of possible delivery of supplies by air.

DPV/ARA/02090, *UNPROFOR/RRF (June–December 1995)*. Implementation of the plan and preparation of SCR about setting up, and lengthy consultations on US contribution to financing. Joint action of UK/France/Netherlands, also at NSC in Washington.

- DPV/ARA/01208, UNPROFOR *June–August 1995*. Correspondence about fall (previous history and winding up). Gives good insight into the steps taken, foreign reactions and the history of the drafting of SCR 1004. Gives insight into what was known at what point.
- DIO/ARA/00407, *Human rights/Srebrenica 1995*. Mainly about missing men. Few Foreign Affairs activities. Mainly collection of data. To a lesser extent attempts to steer external activities. Voorhoeve, who reacted quickly to reports he thought were incorrect, on missing men and actions carried out by Dutchbat.
- DDI/DAV/00036, *Dutch military effort in Yugoslavia (1995)*. Various documents, partly about consultations in June (reinforcement of UNPROFOR), party at Zagreb, Foreign Affairs analysis November 1995 and information to Parliament.
- Military situation in Gorazde, July 1995–August 1996*. Selected for comparison with Srebrenica.
- DDI/DVN/PZ, *Unprofor Dutch participation: Gorazde 1995*. Discussion August 1995 about relocation of C-Company Dutchbat IV from Simin Han to Gorazde (official memos from Defence and Foreign Affairs for minister for discussion).
- Military situation in Srebrenica: Dutch effort UNPF, aerial photographs, men taken away, Smith-Mladic agreement (July 1995–August 1996)*. File begins on 11 July 1995 and contains information on matters such as French recapture plan, Bildt-Milosevic agreements of 17 July 1995; American aerial photographs of mass graves; Foreign Affairs analyses of the fall of Srebrenica; air support and proposal for UN enquiry.
- DDI-DAV/999.241/DAV/MS, *Yugoslavia/Nato/coordination: military situation in Srebrenica (July 1995–August 1996)*. Many documents about what happened at the fall in July 1995 and discussions about it later.
- DMP/2000/01188, *Bosnia-Herzegovina: contingency planning Displaced Persons Srebrenica-Zepa 11–13 July 1995*.
- DDI/DAV/01101, *Military situation in Srebrenica: aerial photographs of men who had been taken away and Smith-Mladic agreement July–August 1995*.
- DEU/2000/00355, *Bosnia-H/Foreign politics/The Netherlands-Srebrenica 1995*. Documents about international aspects: TV broadcasts; Janvier-Mladic deal on Close Air Support after hostage crisis (information from Muratovic); conversation Van Mierlo-Akashi; Mazowiecki.
- DVL/WO, *Srebrenica in general 1995*. Correspondence between Van Walsum and Voorhoeve about German press and Srebrenica (in particular relation massacre – Mazowiecki – debriefing) and Voorhoeve's keeping back information about Mladic-Smith agreement (19-7-95). N.B. Voorhoeve's first letter to Van Walsum (in response to telegram from Bonn dated 31/10) is missing.
- DDI/DAV/01101, *List of 239 men and injured people (September–October 1995)*. Mainly information sent on from Defence to ICRC in Geneva and vice versa.
- DIO/ARA/00408, *Srebrenica 1996*. Various documents about matters arising in the aftermath of the fall.
- DAV/MS/999.241, *Dutchbat-debriefing-Parliamentary questions*. Many implementation documents, and correspondence with Parliament.
- DMP/2000/01192, *Srebrenica: Pilav, Helsinki Citizens Assembly, TK December 1995*.
- DVN/ARA/00374, *Government's reaction to recommendations of Advisory Council for Peace and Security (AVV) Verloren Onschuld (Lost Innocence), about peace operations and Srebrenica (1996)*.
- DCH/2020/00087, *DMP/NH Yugoslavia humanitarian aid 1995–1996*. Documents on applications from NGOs for aid for the survivors of Srebrenica.
- DPV/ARA/01654, *Yugoslavia/humanitarian aid/human rights, Part 3 (1995/6)*. Documents about human rights abuses in Srebrenica. Also Pronk report about his trip to Bosnia in July 1995.
- DWH/ARA/00844, *United States-Yugoslavia relations (1995)*. Contact group, talks with US diplomats; press publications autumn 1995.
- DEU/2002/00535, *Bosnia-H/NATO/IFOR 1996*. One document: conversation between Voorhoeve and Perry 13-6-96 on possible UN enquiry into Srebrenica. Voorhoeve lists a number of arguments

against it and expects little outcome. Perry is against it because of possible unfavourable consequences for NATO.

DCH/2020/00087, *DMP/NH Bosnia-H / humanitarian aid 1996 report on aid programme for relief of Displaced Persons from Srebrenica*.

DEU/2002/00001, *Bosnia-H/NATO/IFOR 1995*. Authority IFOR to apprehend war criminals (discussion within NATO, and Dutch position).

DMP/ARA/00071, *Dutch contribution September–October 1995*. Discussion about Dutch contribution to IFOR (Defence – Foreign Affairs) and reports on international consultations. Interesting for relations between Foreign Affairs and Defence with respect to peace operations and deployment of military resources for international affairs.

DDI/DVN/PZ, *Unprofor/ Dutch participation 1996*. Documents about UN enquiry into fall of Srebrenica.

DVL/WO, *Srebrenica / debriefing / Unprofor / Dutchbat 1995*. One coded cable: questions asked of TZ Sarajevo (presented in May 1996) from October 1995 in relation to debriefing.

DDI/DVN/2007/00256, *DVN/PZ / general / policy / Bosnia-H 1996*. Several documents about Sacirbey's views on Bosnia's international position.

Cabinet archives, strictly confidential codes, Red telegrams. N.B. *Only the request lists are still in the dossier. The telegrams themselves have been stored in binders, divided into two groups (incoming and outgoing) per embassy/permanent representation. Red fax messages are filed by date along with the coded telegrams. Internal memoranda are stored in a separate binder.*

DPV/ARA/01803, *Yugoslavia civil war UN / GA human rights resolutions (November–December 1992)*. Bosnia resolution, Dutch position and contribution to drawing it up.

DPV/ARA/01820, *Bosnia Safe Areas for humanitarian purposes 1992–1993*. Documents about the establishment of Safe Areas in late 1992 (WEU, CSCE), April/June 1993 (UNO) and about Dutch contribution to implementation of SCR 836. *Important file. Still needs to be supplemented by information about WEU discussion October–December 1992, CSCE discussion November–December 1992 and UN discussion on Austrian resolution December 1992 (SCR 787 para.18?)*

DWH/ARA/00844, *United States and Yugoslav crisis 1991–1994*. Mainly codes from Washington about US policy. Mainly of importance for American attitude.

DEU/ARA/00405, *Yugoslavia / Domestic Politics / Croatia 1990–1991*. Documents about the war in Croatia, the ceasefires and other activities of the Netherlands in framework of EC presidency.

DEU/ARA/003293, *Yugoslavia / CFSP / Arms embargo July–December 1991*. Correspondence about EC policy on implementation of arms embargo of 5 July 1991 and call for other states to join in. Also documents about SCR 713. No copies were made.

DEU/ARA/003286, *EPS ministerial September–December 1991*. Dutch and EC reports of meetings. In every case speaking notes for the ministers.

DEU/ARA/003288, *Yugoslavia / EU / Council working groups / ad hoc Yugoslavia group. Preparation of Dutch contribution and report of meetings July–December 1991*. Dutch and EC reports from EPS ad hoc Yugoslavia group.

DEU/ARA/003287, *EU / CFSP / preparation and reports of visits of Troika to Yugoslavia July–August 1991*. Dutch and EC reports and Dutch memos.

DEU/ARA/001233, *EC / Yugoslavia, November 1991*. European consultations on mediation in Yugoslavia, in particular Dutch role as president and SCR resolutions relating to sanctions and peace force.

DEU/ARA/001232, *EC / Yugoslavia, September–October 1991*. Yugoslavia conference.

DIE/2002/00022, *DIE/EE third countries background information on Bosnia-Herzegovina March 1995 - August 1996*. Briefing Dutch Refugee Council on relief for refugees in EU countries after Srebrenica drama.

DIE/ARA/00018, *DIE/EE third countries background information Bosnia-Herzegovina April 1992–December 1994*. Lifting of arms embargo; report of UNSG on Safe Areas (1994) and CHODS meeting.

DMP/ARA/EG/000074, *Structural policy with respect to Yugoslavia: humanitarian aid to Bosnia-Herzegovina (November–December 1993)*. Attempts in EU to arrive at a joint plan for aid to B-H and financing it.

- DIE/EU, 000758, *coordination of ad hoc Yugoslavia group 1995-1996*. Document on meeting 12 May 1995: Dutch views on situation in B-H and CAS and blocking by Akashi and Janvier.
- DIE/EU/000659, *coordination B-H 1992-1996*. Documents on providing relief after fall of Srebrenica: EU-AR 17-7-95; report of Commissioner Bonino and intervention by Van Mierlo after Bildt's introduction.
- DEU/ARA/05274, *Bosnia-H / Defence / NATO / UN Exchange of information with respect to military affairs of UNPROFOR 1992-1993*. Documents about sharing costs for UNPROFOR II, discussion within WEU about safe havens and enforcement of sanctions; idem documents about lifting arms embargo and implementation of SCR 836.
- DDI/DAV/00041, *DAV Yugoslavia / EU / ICFY implementation of peace plans January-August 1995*. Various documents about plans of contact group, Bildt's mission, London conference 21 July 1995.
- DDI/DAV/00245, *DAV Yugoslavia / EU / ICFY peace initiatives and implementation conference 1995-96*. Previous history of Dayton; the Netherlands and Contact Group Plus (September-December 1995).
- DWH/ARA/00844, *United States and Yugoslavia crisis 1991-1994*. Documents on US policy on Bosnia under Clinton / Christopher; role of NATO / WEU; talks between Kooijmans and Christopher, March (Washington) and May (Bonn) 1993; safe havens / Safe Areas (US views between SCR 824 and SCR 836).
- DEU/ARA/00877, *Serbia and UNO 1992-1994*. Document of FRY trade union about sanctions and UN bias as illustrated by Srebrenica 1992-93.
- DEU/ARA/00404, *Yugoslavia / Croatia*. Documents on recognition of Croatia.
- DEU/ARA/00402, *Yugoslavia / Bosnia-H. Reports on domestic politics 1990-1991*. Documents on Bosnia-H from July 1991 to recognition in 1992. Mainly internal relations and appeals to 'international community' (Yugoslavia conference).
- DEU/ARA/00585, *special sessions of UN Commission on Human Rights in relation to Yugoslavia 1992-1994*. Documents on safe havens / Safe Areas; Mazowiecki as rapporteur.
- DDI/DAV/00547, *Yugoslavia reports 1995*. Several internal memoranda dating from December 1995 about the evaluation of decision-making in relation to the despatch of Dutchbat.
- DDI/DAV/00246, *Reports on Yugoslavia April-October 1995*. Documents about developments in RS, American peace initiatives (Frasure mission), French policy on Bosnia (RRF and Sarajevo), Bildt mission and Dutch Parliament after the fall of Srebrenica. Also includes diplomatic statement by Fietelaars dating from July 1995 on objectives of Serb policy.
- DDI/ARA (no file number), series of coded messages from December 1997-April 1998 in which, in response to position taken by the Netherlands at Peace Implementation Council with respect to Bosnia, Dutch policy on Bosnia in 1991-92 is discussed. Interesting discussion between Van Walsum, Wijnaendts, Biegan, Fietelaars, Sizoo, Van Mierlo and others.
- DDI/DAV/00041, *ICFY peace implementation in Bosnia 1995*. One document about Contact Group (January) and about conversation between Van Mierlo and Bildt.
- DDI/DAV/000246, *Reports on the former Yugoslavia 1995*. Documents on various subjects (Frasure mission before and after the fall).
- DEU/ARA/00408, *DEU Yugoslavia domestic politics: reports from missions abroad 1986-1991*.
- DIE/2001/00023, *EU / third countries / background information / former Yugoslavia / coordination consultations (March 1993-December 1995)*.
- DEU/ARA/00042, *Yugoslavia / EPS deu / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia (November 1990-May 1991)*.
- DEU/ARA/00081, *Yugoslavia / EPS deu / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia (June 1991-September 1991)*.
- DEU/ARA/00083, *Yugoslavia / EPS deu / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia (January 1992-June 1992)*.
- DEU/ARA/00084, *Yugoslavia / EPS deu / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia (July 1992-August 1992)*.

- DEU/ARA/00112, *Yugoslavia / EP / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia (April 1993–June 1993).*
- DEU/ARA/00411, *Yugoslavia / EPS/deu / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia (October 1991–December 1993).*
- DEU/ARA/00740, *Yugoslavia / EPS/deu / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia (July 1993–October 1993).*
- DEU/ARA/00754, *Yugoslavia / EPS / ad hoc group.* Files relating to preparation and reporting of the meeting of the Yugoslavia ad hoc group in the context of European political co-operation / Brussels (Belgium) 1993, February 1993–November 1993.
- DEU/ARA/00755, *Yugoslavia / EPS / ad hoc group.* Files relating to preparation and reporting of the meeting of the Yugoslavia ad hoc group in the context of European political co-operation / Brussels (Belgium) 1992. Includes documents about the Netherlands and safe havens/ Safe Areas – war tribunal - NFZ (SCR 782), April 1992–December 1992.
- DEU/ARA/02078, *EU / CFSP / COPO / SPECIAL.* Suggestions for the Dutch contribution to the special consultations of the Political Committee of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) relating to Yugoslavia in Brussels (Belgium) on 28 July 1994, 26 July 1994–28 July 1994.
- DEU/ARA/02914, *Reports from the missions abroad concerning CFSP with respect to Yugoslavia 1993-1994* (NB: EU General Council and COPO), December 1993 - December 1994.
- DEU/ARA/02915, *Yugoslavia / CFSP / Ad hoc Group 1994, January 1994–December 1994.*
- DEU/ARA/03283, *EU / CFSP / extra COPO 1991/ Dutch contribution to extra COPOs in connection with Yugoslavia crisis 1991,* July 1991–November 1991.
- DIE/2001/00023, *EU / third countries / background information / former Yugoslavia / coordination consultations,* March 1993–December 1995.
- DEU/ARA/00042, *Yugoslavia / EPS / deu / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia,* November 1990–May 1991.
- DEU/ARA/00081, *Yugoslavia / EPS / deu / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia,* June 1991–September 1991.
- DEU/ARA/00083, *Yugoslavia / EPS / deu / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia,* January 1992–June 1992.
- DEU/ARA/00084, *Yugoslavia / EPS / deu / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia,* July 1992–August 1992.
- DEU/ARA/00112, *Yugoslavia / EPS / deu / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia,* April 1993–June 1993.
- DEU/ARA/00411, *Yugoslavia / EPS / deu / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia,* October 1991–December 1993.
- DEU/ARA/00740, *Yugoslavia / EPS / deu / reports by means of COREUS on the positions of the European political partners on Yugoslavia,* July 1993–October 1993.
- DEU/ARA/00754, *Yugoslavia / EPS / ad hoc group.* Files relating to preparation and reporting of the meeting of the Yugoslavia ad hoc group in the framework of European political co-operation / Brussels (Belgium) 1993, February 1993–November 1993.
- DEU/ARA/00755, *Yugoslavia / EPS / ad hoc group.* Files relating to preparation and reporting of the meeting of the Yugoslavia ad hoc group in the framework of European political co-operation / Brussels (Belgium) 1992. Includes documents on the Netherlands and safe havens/ SafeAreas / war tribunal / NFZ (SCR 782), April 1992–December 1992.
- DEU/ARA/02078, *EU / CFSP / COPO / SPECIAL.* Suggestions for the Dutch contribution to the special consultations of the Political Committee of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in relation to Yugoslavia at Brussels (Belgium) on 28 July 1994, 26 July 1994–28 July 1994.
- DEU/ARA/02914, *Reports from missions abroad concerning CFSP with respect to Yugoslavia 1993-1994* (NB: EU General Council and COPO), December 1993–December 1994.
- DEU/ARA/02915, *Yugoslavia / CFSP / ad hoc group 1994, January 1994–December 1994.*

DEU/ARA/03283, *EU / CFSP / extra COPO 1991*. Dutch contribution to extra COPOs in connection with Yugoslav crisis 1991, July 1991–November 1991.

2. Collection Hattinga van 't Sant

DEU/ARA/05274, *Bosnia / defence / NATO / UN*. UNPROFOR's situation in the field 1992–1993. Documents about the development of the Safe Area concept and of SCRs 824 and 836. Consultations on the subject within various bodies (WEU, NAVO, UNSC) and Dutch attitude 1992–1993. Also SCR 844 (use of air power for Safe Areas).

DEU/ARA/05293, *Bosnia-H, diplomatic relations between Bosnia and the Netherlands 1992–1996*. Documents on recognition, opening of embassy at Sarajevo and possible visit by Izetbegovic to the Netherlands in 1994/5.

DEU/ARA/05294, *Bosnia-H, setting up by USA of group Friends of the Bosnian Federation, 1994–1997*. Documents on American plan, visit by ambassador Serwer and Dutch participation in Friends of the Federation.

DEU/ARA/05266, *Economic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro (III)*. Implementation and lifting of sanctions 1995 (partly as a result of Dayton agreement).

DEU/ARA/05264, *Economic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro I (1993)*. Implementation and evasion of sanctions.

DEU/ARA/05265, *Economic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro II (1994)*. Implementation, suspension and evasion of sanctions.

DEU/ARA/05253, *Domestic politics in Croatia, 1994*. Documents on Dutch policy on Croatia and aid programmes.

DEU/ARA/05252, *Domestic politics in Croatia, 1993*. Documents on Dutch-Croatian relations and international position of Croatia.

DEU/ARA/05238, *B-H / Foreign politics / negotiation process*. Exchange of information concerning negotiations for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, November 1992–December 1993.

DDI/DAV/05311, *DEU Bosnia – H / UN / Tribunal / human rights trial of war criminals in connection with human rights abuse*. Documents on Srebrenica after the fall; Pronk's visit in March 1996; 276 survivors in Serb prisons (September 1996); Glaubitz's visit in May 1996; Defence questions October 1995 / answer July 1996.

DDI/DAV/05309, *DEU Bosnia / UN / Tribunal / human rights trial of war criminals 1995–1996*. Documents on human rights abuses in Srebrenica and return of refugees after Dayton.

DDI/DAV/05288, *DEU FRY / FRY domestic politics 1995/6*. Documents on contacts with FRY authorities in Belgrade and Arkan in western Bosnia.

DDI/DAV/005317, *Bosnia / emergency aid / human rights July–October 1995*. Documents on Srebrenica: US briefing of SC on 10/8/95 and Society for Threatened Peoples congress at Bonn, August/September 1995.

DDI/DAV/005287, *FRY internal politics during war, and peace negotiations 1992–1994*. Documents on Dick Verkijk (visa application and deportation); contact with FRY authorities and visit by FRY opposition (Draskovic and others) to the Netherlands.

DEU/ARA/05239, *B-H / foreign politics / negotiation process*. Exchange of information concerning negotiations for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, January 1994–April 1994.

DEU/ARA/05240, *B-H / foreign politics / negotiation process*. Exchange of information concerning negotiations for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, May 1994–August 1994.

DEU/ARA/05241, *B-H / foreign politics / negotiation process*. Exchange of information concerning negotiations for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, September 1994–December 1994.

DEU/ARA/05242, *B-H / foreign politics / negotiation process*. Exchange of information concerning negotiations for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, January 1995–March 1995.

DEU/ARA/05244, *B-H / foreign politics / negotiation process*. Exchange of information concerning negotiations for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, January 1995–September 1995.

DEU/ARA/05243, *B-H / foreign politics / negotiation process*. Exchange of information concerning negotiations for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, April 1995–June 1995.

DEU/ARA/05275, *B-H / Defence / NATO / UN*. Exchange of information concerning the situation in the field in B-H with respect to military affairs such as the implementation force (IFOR), the UN police and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), August 1993–February 1994.

DEU/ARA/05276, *B-H/ Defence / NATO / UN*. Exchange of information concerning the situation in the field in B-H with respect to military affairs such as the implementation force (IFOR), the UN police and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), March 1994–October 1994.

DEU/ARA/05277, *B-H/ Defence / NATO / UN*. Exchange of information concerning the situation in the field in B-H with respect to military affairs such as the implementation force (IFOR), the UN police and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), November 1994–May 1995.

DEU/ARA/05278, *B-H/ Defence / NATO / UN*. Exchange of information concerning the situation in the field in B-H with respect to military affairs such as the implementation force (IFOR), the UN police and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), June 1995–August 1995.

DEU/ARA/05279, *B-H/ Defence / NATO / UN*. Exchange of information concerning the situation in the field in B-H with respect to military affairs such as the implementation force (IFOR), the UN police and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), September 1995–December 1995.

DEU/ARA/05278, *B-H Defence / NATO / UN*. Exchange of information concerning the situation in the field.

Chapter 2

The Ministry of Defence archives

Introduction

The archives present at the Ministry of Defence on the subject of the Dutch mission in Srebrenica, its background and its consequences fill more than one hundred metres of shelf space. The study of the archives focused mainly on the period from 1993 to 1996, but in connection with the run-up to the Dutch military involvement in the former Yugoslavia and the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica, it also extended to 1992 and 1997.

There is no uniform system of archive management at the Ministry of Defence; widely divergent indexing systems are used. The different branches of the armed forces each have their own system. Within the Central Organization different electronic and manual systems are in use for the Directorates-General and for independent departments. As a result, a different approach was required in each case. In general, the possibilities of consulting electronic files were limited and often it was necessary to resort to old-fashioned, time-consuming manual work. The 'Key File' system used at the Defence Crisis Management Centre for the electronic storage of scanned documents turned out not to be suitable for retrieving all the documents relating to Srebrenica. It was only rarely that reports or documents were saved electronically. A few of these exceptions were: MID/CO documents dating from 1995, the Debriefing Archive and several files kept by Section 2 of the Staff of the Airmobile Brigade and a policy assistant at the Directorate for General Policy. In 1995 neither the Defence Crisis Management Centre nor the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff had as yet established a system of recording all incoming and outgoing telephone calls and saving the tapes.

It was not until after the fall of Srebrenica that more detailed directives and regulations for safeguarding the archives and collections of operational units abroad were drawn up, for both the Royal Netherlands Army and the Royal Netherlands Air Force. At that time there was no custom of transferring archives and collections of this sort to the Netherlands at regular intervals. The archives of Dutchbat I and II were left behind in the enclave and when the Dutch troops left Srebrenica they were completely destroyed by Dutchbat III. Copies of reports which were sent to the Netherlands were not always kept. This meant that there was a serious gap in the material available for the enquiry.

This problem was exacerbated by the Royal Netherlands Army's rigorous policy of destroying documents. For common documents, staff, organizational and materiel affairs and exercises, the Regulation for the destruction and handing in of Royal Netherlands Army archive documents¹ prescribes a term of only one year for keeping documents. The same period also applies to larger organizational units such as army corps and divisions, with a few exceptions. When this period has expired, documents may be destroyed. For the NIOD enquiry, this meant that the Airmobile Brigade and the brigade battalions no longer had any records available. The only Army Corps documents which had been preserved were those that had been sent to the Army Headquarters; at headquarters in The Hague documents are not destroyed. A search at the Defence Central Archives Depot (CAD), which also functions as a semi-static archive for the Royal Netherlands Army, also failed to unearth any documents.

Various Royal Netherlands Army archives and collections of documents were consulted. Most of the archives at the headquarters in The Hague covering the period concerned were opened by means of the 'Automated Letterbook System' (GBS). This system makes archives accessible by assigning key words to documents. The quality of the data management sometimes leaves something to be desired.

¹ VS 2-1112 (4th impression) from 1989, drawn up on the basis of the order made jointly by the Minister of Defence, dated 21 November 1988, no. D87/028 and the Minister of Welfare, Health and Culture, dated 21 November 1988, no. CD/RAI/1988/317/MZ, and the Ministerial Order dated 27 December 1988 no. D87/028/35368.

For instance, there were three different spellings of 'srebrenica' as a key word. Consistent usage of a thesaurus and of abbreviations was still at a primitive stage. A printout was made of the files in each archive by key word. Then the GBS was used to examine these often long lists of key words to see if the documents to which the key words had been assigned were relevant to the enquiry and the period it covered. Then the relevant documents were extracted. In many cases no dossiers had been compiled; most of the documents were filed in numerical order. The reports of the Royal Netherlands Army Council were filed, along with relevant documents, per meeting. An index of these documents covered only half of the period relevant to the enquiry.

At the Royal Netherlands Army Operational Headquarters there are not only archives, but also a large collection of documents originally from units deployed in the former Yugoslavia. These documents are not indexed. While the enquiry was in progress, this collection was supplemented by more documents from the army organization. Up till May 1998 documents continued to turn up as a result of relocations and reorganizations. It should be pointed out that these documents were not records, but working files compiled by staff officers over the years. When such documents were found, archive managers informed the NIOD.

Reports of importance to the enquiry, such as Dutchbat situation reports to the headquarters of Sector North East under which Dutchbat came after 30 March 1994, proved to be incomplete. Situation reports for the period from January to July 1995 from Dutchbat III were missing; not all of Dutchbat's logistic reports had been preserved. Scarcely any reports from Dutchbat companies to the battalion headquarters were found. Only a few of the summaries containing military intelligence about the conflicting parties, which were sent as annexes to the situation reports, had been preserved. The same goes for the UNPROFOR reports sent to The Hague by Dutchbat and Dutch UN staff officers, for example from Sector North East to Bosnia-Herzegovina Command at Sarajevo and from there to the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb. Some of the missing Dutchbat reports could be supplied from the collection of the Military History Section of the Royal Netherlands Army Headquarters, but unfortunately they were far from complete.

The battalions of the Airmobile Brigade, which were despatched as Dutchbat I, II and III, no longer had any documents at all about the mission. At the headquarters of the Airmobile Brigade at Schaarsbergen a few more or less accidentally saved documents and a few diskettes were found. This material did not offer much interesting information. The Dutchbat III company stationed at Simin Han and the 42nd Infantry Battalion Regiment Limburgse Jagers from Seedorf, which was supposed to relieve Dutchbat III and received situation reports to prepare itself for this task, also destroyed all situation reports.

The archives of the Royal Netherlands Navy relating to operations carried out in and around the former Yugoslavia by this branch of the armed forces were mostly to do with the deployment of frigates and maritime patrol aircraft for the NATO and WEU embargo operation in the Adriatic Sea. This operation was not taken into account in the enquiry. Although the deployment of a naval unit for the 'Rapid Reaction Force' was connected with UNPROFOR's role and possible use in the protection of the 'safe Areas', the realization of the Rapid Reaction Force was a matter concerning the Central Organization of the ministry. The despatch of the naval unit itself took place on the day Srebrenica fell. For these reasons naval archives were not examined any further.

The archives of the Royal Netherlands Air Force were examined in connection with the Dutch contribution of F-16 squadrons to the NATO operation 'Deny Flight' and the deployment of air power near Srebrenica. Furthermore, the Air Force was closely associated with the preparations for the despatch of Dutchbat because of the addition of a helicopter squad. Reports from this squad – which was in fact never allowed into Srebrenica – have been preserved. The Royal Netherlands Air Force was also involved in the enquiry into the relief offered to Displaced Persons at Tuzla after the fall of Srebrenica. After the government decision to commission an enquiry into the events surrounding the fall of Srebrenica, any documents still with the F-16 squadron at Villafranca and the Dutch staff officers with the 5th ATAF at Vicenza were transferred to The Hague. All of these collections were

consulted. At the Air Force History Section there were no documents which were not also stored in the archives of the Royal Netherlands Air Force.

At the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, in addition to a limited number of archive documents mainly related to the period after the fall, there were also several working files on organizational matters with respect to the addition of a marechaussee contingent to Dutchbat, and a number of reports sent to The Hague by the Marechaussee Post at Srebrenica. Requests were submitted to the Public Prosecutor's Office in Arnhem for reports which had been drawn up in the enclave, and also for reports of the enquiries later carried out by the Ministry of Justice.

In April 2000 the archives collected for purposes of the Temporary Parliamentary Committee for Decision-Making on Deployment were searched for missing and supplementary material. These documents had been scanned at the Ministry of Defence and the Military Intelligence Service (MID) and could be searched and consulted by means of key words using the search system Hyperlink. The archives consulted are listed below, with a few remarks on their contents.

1. Ministry of Defence, Central Organization

Cabinet Archive of the minister of Defence.

This was the personal archive of Minister Voorhoeve; it had not been indexed. It consisted of two files containing documents of various sorts, such as a number of personal letters, notebooks, speeches, several Cabinet and Parliament documents, several coded messages from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, press announcements and newspaper cuttings. In a working file there were some sketches relating to the progress of the attack on Srebrenica. This file contained no complete information. No documents from Minister Ter Beek's period in office were found in this archive. No minutes are kept of the weekly Political Consultation chaired by the minister.

Archive of the Department of the junior minister of Defence.

This archive, which had not been indexed, consisted of two boxes of policy documents which had been sent to the junior minister.

Archive of the Secretary-General's Department.

This archive contains all policy documents submitted to the ministers through the Secretary-General from the civil service and the branches of the armed forces. 382 policy documents relating to the former Yugoslavia had been indexed. This archive also contains correspondence between private individuals and organizations and the minister, and the minutes of consultations chaired by the Secretary-General, such as the Departmental Consultation and the Consultations of the Secretary-General with the Directors-General. This archive was examined in its entirety.

Archives of the Defence Staff.

This sizeable archive consists of two sections: a national archive and a NATO archive. The two have been compiled in the same way, by means of dossiers. Almost all of the documents relating to the former Yugoslavia are to be found in two dossiers containing several thousand documents. Eleven other national and NATO dossiers containing about 1100 more documents were also consulted. All of the dossiers were in chronological order and indexed by means of 'Rapid File'. With the help of this filing system an initial selection was made, after which all the documents were extracted and inspected. In the national archive, many documents from 1993 and some from 1994 had already been destroyed. However, with the help of other archives in the ministry, most of the documents which had been destroyed could still be tracked down. At the end of the search, there were fifteen missing documents whose possible relevance to the Srebrenica enquiry could not be established.

Collection of the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC).

This collection is not an archive in the literal sense and has not been systematically filed. It consists of a variety of documents collected and preserved at the Defence Crisis Management Centre over the years, and of collections of documents compiled by staff officers working at the Defence Staff's Department of Operational Affairs for personal use. Part of the collection was stored in the building where the Defence Crisis Management Centre was housed at the time. Another part, mainly concerned with the period after the fall of Srebrenica and its aftermath was brought together and put into a certain amount of order by an archives assistant at the Royal Netherlands Army's Military History Section at the beginning of the NIOD enquiry. There is no system of access to the collection, it cannot boast of being complete in any area and can be characterized as a hotchpotch. In several cases original documents had found their way into it. A collection of code telegrams from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs covering the entire period of the Dutch presence in the former Yugoslavia was also found at the Defence Crisis Management Centre. Similar telegrams were consulted at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The twelve metres of boxes and files contain the following documents of relevance to the Srebrenica enquiry:

Situation reports from the Defence Crisis Management Centre covering the period from April 1992 to August 1994.

The reports for September–December 1992, January–March 1993 and 1995 and 1996 were missing, but could be supplied from the archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the missing intelligence summaries periodically attached to these reports could be supplied from the archive of the Netherlands Military Intelligence Service.

- Two boxes and files containing situation reports from the Royal Netherlands Army and Royal Netherlands Air Force, from 10 February 1994 to 31 January 1996.
- Two files containing weekly situation reports from the Defence Crisis Management Centre and the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, from 30 December 1993 to 28 March 1996.
- Fourteen files containing incoming messages from various peace operations during the period from 27 December 1993 to 5 May 1994. After this date incoming messages were processed by a computerized system; however, the possibilities offered by this system for searching and reproducing were not ideal.
- Fourteen files containing coded messages from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, filed by sender, from February 1992 to May 1994.
- A file containing diary notes of DCB duty officers. However, the diaries were not kept up every day and cover only 1992, 1993 and 1994. These notes were also saved in digital form.
- A box and a pack of documents originating from the Deputy Chief of Staff of Operations of the Defence Staff. The box contains mainly material relating to the aftermath of the fall; the pack contains documents about Srebrenica from 8 September 1993 to 14 September 1995.
- A box containing UN directives and briefings.
- A box containing reports of working visits by various officials to the former Yugoslavia and information packs.
- A box containing maps and transparencies; however, most of them are not dated.
- Twelve boxes, in chronological order, containing various documents dating from 1993 to 1996. These boxes contain the most valuable collection of documents; some of them are unique.
- Two boxes containing copies of documents from the archives of the Defence Staff, from 1993 to 1996.
- Two boxes of preparation packs for parliamentary debates in August and December 1995.
- Sixteen files containing outgoing faxes from the period 1993-1995. These faxes are mainly about minor administrative and personnel matters. *In some cases only the covers were filed and not the faxes themselves.*
- A file containing UNPROFOR Standing Operating Procedures.
- A file containing UNPF Fact Sheets, overviews of troop supplies and staffing.

- Various packets including reconnaissance reports from Dutchbat, first reports on Zepa and Srebrenica, intelligence reports on Srebrenica and Zepa, UNPROFOR Rules of Engagement, situation reports, departure regulations for Dutchbat, the use of satellite links, Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Operational Command no. 22 and UNPROFOR Operational Plan no. 006.
- Two files containing reports from the Dutch military liaison officer stationed with the UNHCR.
- A file containing reports from the European Commission Monitor Mission (ECMM). All reports in which the word Srebrenica occurred were later supplied in digital form by the European Commission.
- Two files about the Vance-Owen peace plan and a file containing peace plans of the international Contact Group for Yugoslavia.
- Nine files containing NATO plans for the withdrawal of UNPROFOR.
- Eight files containing NATO plans for the Operation 'Deny Flight'.
- Four files about the meetings of the Chiefs of Defence Staff in December 1994 and May 1995.
- Various files about NATO decisions, relations with the UN, NATO troops and fleet movements, police monitors, Security Council resolutions, reports from the UN Secretary-General.
- Three files containing documents about WEU operations.
- A file containing documents about the Airmobile Brigade and Safe Areas.
- Two files about Peacekeeping.
- A file containing agendas and reports of the routine Defence Crisis Management Centre 'Bunker Consultations'. These reports offered little substantive information.
- Two files containing information packs for the Chief of Defence Staff and a briefing for the Dutch Defence College.
- A file about air defence and the air threat over Bosnia and a pack about Air Strikes dating from January, February and March 1994.
- Two packets about informal meetings of the NATO Defence ministers at Seville on 29 and 30 September 1994.

Archive of the Directorate for General Policy.

Documents about the former Yugoslavia which had been offered to the ministers by this directorate were selected with the help of a letterbook. This archive also includes draft versions of outgoing letters to Parliament, the Ministerial Council and private individuals. Other documents found were preparations for Parliamentary debates and meetings with foreign ministers, and reports of such meetings, both bilateral and in the context of NATO and WEU. Parts of the working files of officials in this department who dealt with the former Yugoslavia were also kept.

Archive of the Directorate of General Information.

In the archive of the Directorate of General Information scarcely any documents were found which were not in other archives or in the collection compiled over the years by the Deputy Director. This collection also contains 'informal documents'. The collection, which was compiled especially in connection with Srebrenica, contains 26 files relating to a variety of matters, such as information for the minister about all sorts of 'issues', documents in preparation of hearings and Parliamentary debates, many notes of talks with various people who played a role in Srebrenica, documents about the preparations for the despatch of Dutchbat and statements about it. The Directorate of General Information also possesses a collection of national and international newspaper articles. It was ascertained that the collection of newspaper articles cannot boast of being complete. The Directorate also has a collection of videotapes of television programmes, three tapes of Dutchbat and tapes of several telephone calls from the Defence Crisis Management Centre and the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. It must be noted that incoming and outgoing calls at the Defence Crisis Management

Centre and the Army Crisis Staff were not taped systematically. The Deputy Director of General Information wrote up his personal notes for the purposes of the NIOD.

Archive of the Directorate of Legal Affairs, Department of Administrative Law, Criminal Law and Disciplinary Rules.

In this archive there were ten working files, ordered by subject: correspondence between the Director of Legal Affairs and the minister and the Royal Netherlands Army, memoranda and incoming documents from the UN Tribunal in The Hague, the UN rapporteur on human rights, the Red Cross, files on medical aid provided by Dutchbat to the population, misbehaviour by UN troops and statements by Dutchbat.

Archive of the Directorate-General of Personnel.

This archive contains 23 files, mainly about financial and legal provisions with respect to the despatch to the former Yugoslavia. These files were not consulted. What was relevant to the enquiry was correspondence about the availability of national servicemen for the despatch. The Archive of the Inspectorate of Military Health Care, which comes under this directorate-general, contained several documents about medical aid provided to the population and a complaints procedure which had been set up as a result. In the archive of an assistant at the Inspectorate of Military Health Care at 'Zwaluwenberg' another two files containing documents and notes were found.

Archive of the Directorate-General for Equipment.

This archive occupies 3.2 metres of shelf space and consists of a wide variety of correspondence and reports. A check of the inventory of these documents showed that the archive had been set up mainly to receive documents made elsewhere in the ministry. The archive was not consulted further. The directorate-general did not play any role in Dutchbat's equipment management.

Archive of the Directorate-General for Economy and Finance.

This archive consists of eight files containing financial documents. A few documents about loss of materiel by Dutchbat were selected. *Financial relations between the Dutch government and the United Nations did not fall within the scope of this enquiry.*

Archive of the Military Intelligence Service (MID), Central Organization.

All documents which had been registered in other archives as having been sent by the MID but had been removed from those archives were requested from this archive. The MID also supplied all the intelligence summaries which were missing at the Defence Crisis Management Centre. Material used to compile the intelligence summaries had not been saved. The archives of the First Air Force Signals Group (1LVG), the 898 Signals Battalion (898 Vbdfat) of the Royal Netherlands Army in Eibergen, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee's Technical Information Processing Centre (TIVC) in Amsterdam and the Department of Signals Information (AVI) in The Hague were consulted. For other MID documents, see under Royal Netherlands Army archives.

Archive of the Armed Forces Hospital Organization.

In this archive a few documents about blood supplies in Srebrenica were found.

The archive of the Defence attaché in Ottawa.

In this archive documents dating from 1993-1994 were inspected to see what contacts there had been between the Dutch and Canadian ministries of Defence about relieving the Canadian unit in Srebrenica.

2. Royal Netherlands Army Archives

Archive of the Army Council.

The section of the Army Council's Archive which covers 1993-1995 consists of 12 boxes. This was the Royal Netherlands Army's most complete archive. Drafts of minutes and notes were also kept in it. In some cases a comparison provided more information than would have emerged on the basis of the minutes only. In 1993 the preparation for Dutchbat I was a regular information point for the Council. With the exception of a document about the formation of the third battalion of the 11th Airmobile Brigade (the later Dutchbat III), documents for the purpose of discussions on Dutchbat were not found. In later years Dutchbat was no longer a subject of consultations, with the exception of a few announcements after the fall of the enclave.

Archive of the Cabinet/ Staff Group of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army.

This archive has a number of sub-archives:

Cabinet of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army.

This archive, 0.2 metres in length, seemed to have been cleared out at some stage. No personal documents of the commander were found in the archive. It consisted mainly of memoranda drawn up at the ministry and documents about follow-up care for Dutchbat personnel.

Legal Affairs Section.

In this sub-archive documents of various kinds were found.

General Policy Section.

This archive also contained documents of various kinds, including one document from the First Army Corps containing recommendations about the appointment of Dutchbat.

3. Archive of the Royal Netherlands Army Operational Staff.

The archive of the former Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff also includes the collections of Section G4 (8 metres), Section G3 Plans (0.5 metres) and Section G3 Operations (3 metres). There are also boxes containing documents dating from 1993 (1.0 metre), 1994 (2.0 metres), 1995 (3.0 metres) and 1996 (3.0 metres). In the 1996 boxes there were also documents with earlier dates. Some documents were missing from the 1993 boxes. Prior to the NIOD enquiry the collections had been put into more detailed order. The collections consist mainly of a variety of reports from units in the former Yugoslavia, military intelligence surveys and data on unit rotations. A small part of the collection contains UNPROFOR and UNHCR documents, including instructions and various reports. There are no inventories. All the boxes were checked to see if there were any documents which might be of use to the enquiry. The collections relating to Dutchbat are incomplete. Diaries of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff Situation Centre had not been preserved.

At the Operational Staff's 'Lessons Learned' Section there were also documents relevant to the enquiry. Following is a list describing the archive of the Department of Operational Affairs.

Archive of the Department of Operational Policy.

Both of these archives contain documents of a general nature and were searched by means of the Automated Letterbook System and for the key words considered to be the most important manually as well. Both archives were of limited size.

Archive of the Military Intelligence Service, Royal Netherlands Army (former Department of Intelligence & Security).

In the archive of this service 62 documents, dossiers and files containing various intelligence reports and data on the former Yugoslavia were examined.

Archives of the Central Personnel and Organization Service.

In this archive attention was focused on:

Archive of the Department of Personnel Care.

Most documents about general personnel affairs and follow-up care for Dutchbat were to be found here.

Archive of the Department of Behavioural Science.

Several reports on follow-up care and exit studies from the despatch area were selected.

Archive of the Task Area of the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Medical Service.

This fairly extensive archive contained a number of well-ordered files offering information about both medical affairs and general operational affairs.

Archive of the First Army Corps.

This archive was destroyed. A search at the present location at Munster also failed to unearth any more documents from 1993, when the First Army Corps played a role in the preparations for the despatch of Dutchbat.

Archive of the 11th Airmobile Brigade at Schaarsbergen.

This archive was destroyed. It turned out that Staff Sections 1 (Personnel) and 2 (Information) still had a collection of assorted documents, videotapes and a few diskettes. The material found at Section 2 consisted mainly of information about the conflicting parties in the former Yugoslavia and their equipment, several situation assessments, weather and terrain studies and a few videotapes of the post in Srebrenica. There was little unique material. Some of the other documents and diskettes were related to the preparations for the despatch of Dutchbat I and exercise drills. A box of photographs turned out to include some photographs of the compound at Potocari. At Section 1 there was a file containing data on compensation for equipment and personal property belonging to Dutchbat III which had been lost on departure from Srebrenica. At the Communications Section there was an extensive collection of videotapes. One part of the collection contained all television broadcasts which were in any way related to the Airmobile Brigade and its battalions, another part contained tapes of the exercises carried out by Dutchbat III in preparation for despatch. Copies of the weekly information bulletin 'Tell-Yoe', which was compiled each week by Section S2 of the Staff of the 11th Airmobile Brigade had been saved.

Collection of the Military History Section.

This collection, which had excellent access facilities, consists of about 6 metres of documents of a wide variety, mostly relating to Srebrenica; it consists partly of unique material and partly of copies of archive documents which are also kept elsewhere. The unique material includes situation reports from Dutchbat III and the B-company, which was stationed in the city of Srebrenica, military intelligence reports, reports from military observers and messages from Section 5 of Dutchbat III. There are also some UN, UNPROFOR and UNHCR documents and some letters from Lieutenant Colonel T.J.P. Karremans. However, the reports are far from complete. Many of the unrelated documents focus on the period just before the fall and are remnants of a study of the operational functioning of Dutchbat carried out in Zagreb by the Military History Section at the request of Lieutenant General H.A. Couzy; however, this study was never completed because it was overtaken by the 'Debriefing Enquiry'.

In August 1998 another 56 documents were added to the Collection of the Military History Section. These documents came from the then head of the Legal Affairs Section of the Commander in Chief of The Royal Netherlands Army.

Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Archive of Srebrenica Debriefing.

The 'debriefing archive' is a collection of documents compiled at the time of and for the purposes of the debriefing. There is a special access regime. The collection, which is stored at the Institute of Military History, contains the debriefing reports of 490 Dutchbat soldiers, a description of the administrative organization involved in the debriefing, a factual account, and photographs and pictures. The collection is 9.6 metres long. Documents which had not been found elsewhere were selected from the non-confidential section of the debriefing archive. In view of the confidentiality promised to those taking part in the debriefing, the NIOD asked the participants for a declaration giving their permission for their statements to be inspected. 212 individuals responded to this request.

Archive of the 101st MI platoon at Ede.

In this archive there were a number of Dutchbat patrol reports, intelligence data on BSA and ABiH formations, several interview reports about the actions of the Bosnian and the Bosnian Serb armies and a sheaf of operational 'debriefing reports' of Dutchbat II as they were carried out by the then 101st MID Company on 1 and 2 February at Schaarsbergen.

Archive of the 'Lessons Learned' Section.

This archive, 5.5 metres in length, contained a wide variety of documents including several from the earliest period of Dutchbat. However, the archive contained no material which could be classified as 'lessons learned' by the various Dutchbats.

Archive of the School of Peace Missions in Amersfoort.

This school still has learning materials about Bosnia and the conflicting parties, dating from 1993. They were used in the second half of that year at the former Peace Operations Centre (CVV). At that time the CVV was responsible for passing on knowledge in the area of peacekeeping techniques and basic military skills to the 11th Airmobile Brigade, which then took charge of training Dutchbat.

Archive of the Department of Individual Counselling, Royal Netherlands Army Health Service, in Amersfoort.

There was a certain amount of material here connected with the run-up to the debriefing of Dutchbat in Assen.

4. Archives consulted at the Royal Netherlands Air Force

At the Royal Netherlands Air Force, all documents relating to Srebrenica, Yugoslavia and the NATO operation 'Deny Flight' were selected by means of a computerized archive system. The Air Force Registration assigns a correspondence number to each department each year. The documents with the relevant numbers were retrieved and in each case the box in which the document was stored was searched for any surrounding documents which might have been of importance to the enquiry. If the same document was found in the archives of several departments, the documents were checked in case there were extra comments in the margins or on the covers. The method used led to entry into the following archives:

- Archive of the Air Force Council
- Archive of the Commander of the Air Force, General
- Archive of the Commander of the Air Force, Confidential
- Archive of the Commander of the Air Force, Secret
- Archive of the Commander of the Air force, NATO
- Archive of the Royal Netherlands Air Force Personnel Director, General
- Archive of the Royal Netherlands Air Force Personnel Director, Confidential
- Archive of the Royal Netherlands Air Force Director of Operations, General
- Archive of the Royal Netherlands Air Force Director of Operations, General Confidential
- Archive of the Royal Netherlands Air Force Director of Operations, Secret
- Archive of the Royal Netherlands Air Force Director of Operations, Personnel Confidential
- Archive of the Royal Netherlands Air Force Director of Equipment
- Archive of the Director of Operations, Staff Department of Operations, Exercises, Plans, Evaluations & Reporting (STAOOPER).

In the archive of the Staff Department of Operations, Exercises, Plans, Evaluations & Reporting (STAOOPER) there are also several collections:

- Sitreps, messages and faxes from the helicopter squad, 24 January - 21 September 1994
- Documents related to the despatch of Dutchbat and the helicopter squad
- Sitreps, messages and faxes from Operation Deny Flight
- Sitreps, messages and faxes from the Villafranca Detachment
- Diary notes from the 5th ATAF at Vicenza dating from July 1995.

The photo archive of the 306th Squadron at Volkel Air Base was inspected to see if it contained any aerial photographs of the Srebrenica Safe Area. However, the photographs which were found had no bearing on the period from June - July 1995.

At the Air Force History Section there were no documents which were not also to be found in the archives of the Royal Netherlands Air Force.

5. Archives consulted at the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee

In the office archive of the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the common archive and the confidential archive several memoranda had been preserved, most of which had to do with events after the fall of Srebrenica.

At the Department of Operations, 'special reports' and 'alteration reports from the operations room of the Operations Department, Implementation Affairs Section' dating from 1994 and 1995 had been saved. The special reports were about particular incidents and originally came from the Srebrenica Post of the UNPROFOR Brigade. At the Royal Marechaussee there was also a working file about organizational matters involved in the addition of a marechaussee contingent to Dutchbat and a number of reports about routine Dutchbat staff talks, sent to The Hague by staff stationed at the Srebrenica post. Although these documents are unique, they offer little information.

6. Special Defence archives

Archive of the Chief Army Chaplain's Office.

This archive contained correspondence between the chaplain at the enclave and the Chief Army Chaplain.

Archive of the Chief Armed Forces Adviser's Bureau.

This archive provided one document about the preparation of Dutchbat III, but due to circumstances the adviser stayed only a short time with Dutchbat III, and therefore the document offered little information.

Chapter 3

Other archives and collections

1. Ministry of Justice

A pack of documents was received from the Ministry of Justice; these were mainly related to records and annexes kept at this ministry which had to do with Srebrenica.

From the Public Prosecutor's Office in Arnhem (military division) records were received which had been drawn up by the Srebrenica Post of the UNPROFOR Brigade of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in the period from February 1994 to July 1995 and also records of later enquiries.

2. Ministry of Home Affairs

Collection of the Dutch National Security Service (BVD) in Leidschendam. Several dossiers from this archive concerning the situation in the former Yugoslavia and its possible implications for Dutch national security and the democratic system were made available for inspection.

3. Ministry of Finances

Collection of the Economic Investigation Service, International Economic Investigations Branch in Utrecht. In this archive documents concerning evasion of the embargo against the former Yugoslavia were consulted.

4. Ministry of General Affairs

At this ministry the archive of the Prime Minister's office (KMP) and of the Secretary-General were inspected. Objectivized summaries of the minutes of the Ministerial Council meetings from 1992–1998 were made for the purposes of the present NIOD study.

5. United Nations, Geneva

UNPROFOR Collection. The archive contained documents from the UN headquarters in Zagreb, Sarajevo and Tuzla. Many of the documents from Tuzla originally came from the UNPROFOR Civil Affairs official in Tuzla, who reported on a wide variety of subjects.

Collection of the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) Papers, Palais des Nations. This collection includes the most important correspondence between the European negotiators Lord Owen, Vance, Stoltenberg and Bildt, the UN Secretary-General's special envoy Akashi, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations led by Annan and the Unprofor military representatives in the period from 1992–1996.

Collection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In the UN refugee organization's archive many documents concerning humanitarian affairs in the Srebrenica enclave were found.

6. United Nations, New York

Collection of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). This collection includes all of the United Nations coded cables which were exchanged between DPKO and the Unprofor representatives and diplomatic negotiators during the war in Bosnia. The part of this collection covering the period from 1992–1995 was inspected.

Collection of Siergo Vieira de Mello. This archive contains correspondence between DPKO and UPROFOR officials in Bosnia.

UNPROFOR Collection. This archive contains the most important correspondence between the UN Secretary-General's special envoy Akashi, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the UPROFOR commanders during the period from 1992 – 1996 and also the archives of the Force Commander, Deputy Force Commanders and Chiefs of Staff.

7. International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslavia, The Hague

A collection of documents used in the trial of Serbian General Krstic before the Yugoslavia Tribunal (IT-98-33).

8. Canada

Collection of the Canadian Ministry of Defence in Ottawa. In the so-called *Green Folder Confidential* and *Red Folder Secret I & II* documents concerning the Canadian UNPROFOR units in Bosnia in general and Srebrenica in particular were inspected. They were mainly reports from Bosnia to the National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) of the Canadian Ministry of Defence and correspondence with the Canadian UPROFOR units in Srebrenica. There were also Canadian Situation Reports from the Canadian UPROFOR unit in the enclave.

Collection of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) in Ottawa. A total of 39 dossiers from the so-called File No. 21-14-6-UNPROFOR were consulted from the archive of the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This collection contains Canadian diplomatic code telegrams which were exchanged between the ministry in Ottawa and the Canadian diplomatic representations abroad relating to UNPROFOR affairs.

9. European Union

Reports from ECMM observers in Bosnia were acquired through the Ministry of Defence.

Bosnia

A total of 44 documents about Srebrenica dating from July 1995 were received from the headquarters of the army of the Bosnian Federation (ABiH).

A total of 76 documents of various sorts were sent by the headquarters of the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla.

documents connected with the journey of the men of Srebrenica to Tuzla were received from the Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska (*Ministarstvo Unutrasnjih Poslova*).

Yugoslavia

Ivanisevic Collection. This collection contains documents which are kept at the *Centar za istraživanje zločina nad Srpskim narodom* at Belgrade, of which Milivoje Ivanisevic is the director. The collection contains about 300 documents including 86 Bosnian army documents from a plundered computer in Zepa, containing commands and reports connected with Srebrenica and Zepa. The authenticity of these documents has been confirmed by Ramiz Becirovic, former Chief of Staff of the 28th Division from Srebrenica. One hundred documents came from the Republika Srpska and were mainly witnesses' statements, drawn up in the Opstinas of Skelani, Srebrenica, Zvornik, Milici and Bratunac, about Muslim-perpetrated violence from 1992 to 1994. Also in this collection are about 60 UN documents dating from July and August 1995, from UNMOs, and messages exchanged between UN agencies in Bosnia about Displaced Persons from Srebrenica. Several Dutchbat documents were also found in the collection. At a later stage two diaries from Srebrenica were also made available through this centre;

they are mainly concerned with administrative matters. The Ivanisevic collection also contains Bosnian Serb newspaper and magazine articles and video tapes recorded by private individuals which give an impression of everyday life and were found in Srebrenica after 11 July 1995.

Trifunovic Collection. This collection is kept at the Law Projects Centre in Belgrade, an organization affiliated with the Republika Srpska. The collection contained video tapes from both Srebrenica and surrounding Bosnian-Serb towns and villages. The material includes pictures of victims of Muslim attacks in 1993 and 1994. A small number of documents relating to the presence of Dutchbat in Srebrenica was also found at this Centre.

Yugoslav Ministry of Information. A collection of articles from international periodicals and newspapers concerning the media warfare between the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnians was received from this ministry.

Denmark

Situation reports dating from July 1995 and a few unrelated letters were received from the archive of the Danish Army Operations Command.

10. Clingendael Institute

'The Clingendael Collection', a pack of UNPROFOR documents thought to be originally from the archives and staffs of the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia. These documents were made available to the Clingendael Institute for research by an anonymous source in the autumn of 1996.

Archive of the Education Department. In this archive some data were found relating to courses on negotiation techniques followed by several Dutchbat members at Clingendael. The lessons themselves were not found.

11. Military interest organizations

Articles from club papers and press releases relating to the despatch of Dutch troops to the former Yugoslavia and their presence in Srebrenica were received from the General Christian Soldiers' Organization (ACOM), the General Federation of Military Personnel (AFMP), the Marechaussee Association and the Dutch Officers' Association.

12. Médecins sans Frontières (Brussels)

In the archive of Médecins sans Frontières there were reports dating from 1993 about the situation in Srebrenica and a complete series of 'Capsat messages' exchanged between the coordinator of *Médecins sans Frontières* in Srebrenica and coordinators elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. In this archive a number of messages from Dutchbat about medical matters were found, as well as messages concerning Dutchbat.

13. Swedish Rescue Services Agency (Räddnings Verket) at Karlstad, Sweden

This organization ran the so-called Swedish Shelter project, a village made up of prefab houses offering shelter to about 3000 people. This organization made its 1994 and 1995 reports, written mainly in Swedish, available. The last report dates from 11 July 1995.

14. Norwegian People's Aid (NPA, Norsk Folkehjelp) in Oslo, Norway

This organization was involved in humanitarian projects in Srebrenica and Bratunac and made all its documentation from Srebrenica and Bratunac available.

The documents written in Norwegian and Swedish from collections 28 and 29 were adapted by Krsti Thørsen at the request of the NIOD. These reports give detailed descriptions and analyses of the archive material made available to the NIOD by these organizations. The titles of the reports are: Swedish Rescue Services Agency, Swedish Shelter Project in Srebrenica, 01/03/1994–11/07/1995 (date of report 9 September 2000); Norsk Folkehjelp (Norwegian People's Aid), Humanitarian Aid Programmes in Srebrenica and Bratunac, 1993–1995 (12 April 2001). The collections of MSF and UNHCR were also adapted and summarized in reports. The titles of these reports are: Médecins Sans Frontières. Humanitarian Aid Programme in Srebrenica, 4/12/1992–21/7/1995 (23 January 2001); United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (15 July 2001). In referring to these reports, the common abbreviations are used (SRSA, MSF, NPA, and UNHCR).

15. Private Collections

Sector North East Collection, 1994 and 1995. Several documents originally from the headquarters of UNPROFOR Sector North East at Tuzla were submitted by a private source. These documents are mainly about relations between the 2nd Corps at Tuzla and the SNE Headquarters.

Collection of UNHCR Tuzla reports: UNHCR messages to and from Tuzla, concerning relief for Displaced Persons after the fall of Srebrenica. Acquired from a private source.

Quiggin Collection: UN documents about the Gorazde crisis in 1994.

Voskamp Collection: documents concerning the provision of Close Air Support to Dutchbat in July 1995.

Collection of De Weerd, former adviser to the NATO Permanent Representative at Brussels: diary and abstracts of NATO documents, compiled for the purposes of the NIOD.

Sudetic Collection: abstracts of UN documents originally from the UN Headquarters in New York. At the time of the war in Bosnia, Sudetic was a correspondent for the *New York Times* and author of *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*.

Karremans Collection: letters and documents belonging to the former commander of Dutchbat III.

Rohde Collection: various documents including UN documents, collected during Rohde's time in Bosnia as a correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Westerman Collection: documents collected for the book *Srebrenica: Het zwartste scenario* (Srebrenica: the Blackest Scenario), of which Frank Westerman, at the time a correspondent for *NRC Handelsblad* in the former Yugoslavia, was a co-author.

Brantz Collection: documents belonging to the former Deputy Commander of UNPROFOR Sector North East at Tuzla. In addition to notes dating from the period when Brantz was Chief of Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff, this collection also contains an (adapted) diary of the Crisis Staff Situation Centre which was not found anywhere else in the archives. The collection also contained a series of diaries which were supplemented over the years. The original version of the diary was not made available.

Van Duijn Collection: several documents relating to the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica.

Wahlgren Collection: documents belonging to the former UNPROFOR Force Commander, mainly about the realization of the Safe Areas.

Stagge Collection: several documents about the organization of the debriefing in Assen.

Nicolai Collection: documents originally belonging to the former BH-Command Chief of Staff in Sarajevo. The documents are mainly concerned with the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica and came from a Dutch source.

Collection of Momcilo Cvijetinovic: the diary of an ABiH soldier, found at Srebrenica, and a newspaper published in Srebrenica on 8 February 1994.

Stanojevic Collection: several diaries and a collection of internal ABiH documents pertaining to the administrative affairs of several brigades in Srebrenica.

Kolsteren Collection: diary notes and several documents from the UNPF Headquarters in Zagreb.

Vader Collection: correspondence relating to the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica.

Hegge Collection: documents about training and the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica.

Vandewijer Collection: diskettes containing notes and briefings dating from 1993-1994.

Hilderink Collection: chronology and notes on various subjects, written after the fall of Srebrenica.

Collection of Rupert Smith: 58 documents which were not found in the UNPROFOR archives in Geneva were selected from four files containing personal correspondence, documents and notes.

Vermeulen Collection: personal documents belonging to the commander of Dutchbat I.

Schouten Collection: diaries from Srebrenica covering the period from February to July 1995 and documents about medical matters and training courses.

Collection of David Moore (Commander of Canbat): documents about Canbat's time and rotation in Srebrenica.

Collection of Bo Pellnäss (Chief UNMO): diary and several documents.

Collection of General Kjeld Hillingsø (Commander of Danish Operational Forces): Danish situation reports.

Collection of Berry Ashton (Deputy Force Commander, United Nations Protection Force): diary notes and policy documents.

Collection of Tony Banbury (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General): diary notes, accounts of talks and a 'srebrenica dossier'.

Collection of Emma Shitakha (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General): diary notes and accounts of talks.

Meurkens Collection: correspondence and diary notes.

cobovits de Szeged Collection: diary notes.

Van den Breemen Collection: annotated copies of archive documents.

Uiterweer Post Collection: notes and documents about Tuzla Air Base and relief for Displaced Persons there.

Jansen Collection: Diary fragments and documents from the UN headquarters in Zagreb and intelligence briefings for the Army Council.

Lubbers Collection: notes made for the purposes of the NIOD enquiry.

Rave Collection: diary notes.

Neisingh Collection: diary notes dating from 11 July 1995.

Hicks Collection: documents concerning humanitarian affairs associated with the fall of Srebrenica.

Bourgondiën Collection: documents concerning humanitarian affairs associated with the fall of Srebrenica.

Groen Collection: notes of the debriefing in Zagreb.

Beneker Collection: document about the press conference in Zagreb.

TCBU Collection: documents collected for the purposes of the Temporary Committee for Despatch Decision-Making.

Svensson Collection: UNPF documents and diary notes.

Jacobovitz de Szeged Collection: diary notes made as NATO Permanent Representative.

Ter Beek Collection: archive documents and newspaper articles used to write his book

Manoeuvres (Manoeuvring).

Pennin Collection: several documents relating to the debriefing in Assen and the aftermath of Srebrenica.

De Ruyter Collection: documents originally from the UNPROFOR headquarters in Sarajevo.

16. Personal memoirs

For the purposes of the NIOD enquiry, the former Minister of Defence J.J.C. Voorhoeve compiled a diary on Bosnia policy and Srebrenica covering the period from 22 August 1994 to August 1995.

Deputy Director of General Information of the Ministry of Defence, B. Kreemers, recorded his memories of Srebrenica and its aftermath for the purposes of the NIOD.

Adjutant Koreman (Dutchbat III) lent the NIOD a manuscript he himself had written about his time in Srebrenica, illustrated with abstracts of reports.

17. Archives of Political Parties

1. Blaauw Collection: documents from the archive he had compiled on the former Yugoslavia as VVD parliamentary party spokesman and also from his term as chairman of the so-called Blaauw Parliamentary Committee on Srebrenica.
2. VVD Collection: documents selected from the archives of the party executive and secretariat.
3. CDA Collection: several documents were received from the personal archive of Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, long-time spokesman for the parliamentary party. Large sections of De Hoop Scheffer's archive were destroyed, partly by mistake.² The well-organized archive of the CDA party executive turned out to be particularly informative, especially the part relating to the Foreign Affairs Committee.
4. Valk Collection: documents released for the purposes of the Srebrenica enquiry.
5. D66 Collection: documents selected from the archives of the party executive and secretariat.
6. GroenLinks Collection: documents released for the purposes of the Srebrenica enquiry.
7. PvdA Collection: documents selected from the archives of the party executive and secretariat, and copies of documents collected for the parliamentary Temporary Committee, including minutes and documents of consultations within the parliamentary party and the party committees involved. Documents were also received from the Alfred Mozer Stichting.

18. Miscellaneous

CD-ROM Collection.

This collection appears to contain the complete correspondence between the 28th Division in Srebrenica and the 2nd Corps of the ABiH in Tuzla during the period when Srebrenica was a Safe Area. The CD-ROMs also contain material from civilian authorities in Srebrenica, and VRS archive material from the 'Zivojin Misic' barracks at Zvornik, which sheds some light on the conflict at Baljkovica where the retreating column had to fight its way through VRS lines after the fall of Srebrenica. The printouts of the most relevant documents in these CD-ROMs were about two metres long.

Veterans Institute/BMNO Centre.

These institutes provided material and reports relating to the follow-up care of Dutchbat III.

² Information by telephone from Ms B. Rutgers, 10/05/99; H. Hillen to NIOD, 06/07/99; NIOD to H. Hillen, 15/07/99.

Chapter 4

Additional private collections

Another twelve private collections were consulted which it was agreed would remain confidential.

- Confidential Collection (1): documents originally from the American State Department.
- Confidential Collection (2): a large number of documents dating from 1994-1995 which were originally from G-2 UNPF Zagreb, and 11.000 military diary notes on CD-ROM.
- Confidential Collection (3): report on Unprofor intelligence acquisition.
- Confidential Collection (4): several Interoffice Memoranda from the Military Information Branch UNPF-HQ.
- Confidential Collection (5): UNMO documents from the UN headquarters in Zagreb.
- Confidential Collection (6): diplomatic correspondence of foreign origin.
- Confidential Collection (7): military documents of Canadian origin.
- Confidential Collection (8): military documents of foreign origin.
- Confidential Collection (9): notes and policy documents.
- Confidential Collection (10): notes and policy documents.
- Confidential Collection (11): notes and reports of Bosnian origin.
- Confidential Collection (12): documents about secret arms supplies to Tuzla.
- Confidential Collection (13): documents related to the trial of General Krstic before the Yugoslavia Tribunal, which were not included in the trial documents.

Chapter 5

List of audio-visual material consulted

1. The Netherlands

Liberal use was made of audio-visual source material for the purposes of the enquiry. Without detailed specification, relevant NOS and RTL4 news bulletins issued throughout the entire period covered by the enquiry were consulted. Some of this material came from the Netherlands Audiovisual Archive (NAA) in Hilversum or from the broadcasting corporations themselves. Videotapes of relevant broadcasts made by Defence General Information were also used. The same goes for tapes of various current affairs programmes: *Brandpunt*, *Kenmerk*, *Lopende Zaken*, *Netwerk*, *Nova*, *Reporter*, *2Vandaag* and *Zembla*. With regard to relevant radio programmes, special mention must be made of the series of radio documentaries about Srebrenica made by Gerard Legebeeke in 1998 for the programme *Argos*. The documentary *Crazy* by Heddy Honigman (1999) also deserves a special mention. Use was also made of transcriptions of relevant statements made on radio by politicians and military staff; these were made available by the press documentation service of Parliament. In addition, several specific collections of videotapes were consulted:

- Defence Collection: tapes made personally by W. Dijkema and B. Rave (April-July 1995)
- Defence Collection: Dutchbat I, II and III; ‘Dutchbat in Vredesnaam’ (1996)
- Everts Collection: Dutchbat I and II

2. The former Yugoslavia

The ‘Institute for the collection of data on crimes committed against the Serb people’ in Belgrade has in its possession a large amount of Bosnian video material which was plundered after the capture of Srebrenica. In many cases this material consisted of longer or shorter fragments recording events within the brigades of the 28th Division, scenes from everyday life in the enclave, activities in the hospital and private video shots, apparently intended to be a sort of letter on video for family members outside the enclave. A total of four tapes containing fragments were watched, all of which were related to events which took place in 1992 and 1994.

Plundered video material was also inspected elsewhere in the area. For example, M. Cvijetinovic has a tape showing victory celebrations of several brigades of the 28th Division. Another example is a tape showing Hakija Meholic during various military operations. G. Ivanisevic gave access to material showing Naser Oric in various operations. Z. Petrovic-Pirocanac gave access to tapes which he made in and around Srebrenica in July 1995. At the Centre for Criminological Research in Belgrade, video material about Bosnian-Serb victims during 1992–1993 was inspected. At the Bosnian State Committee for the collection of data on war crimes in Sarajevo, statements recorded on video by survivors of the journey to Tuzla and of mass executions were examined.

3. Other material:

- International Monitor Institute, Los Angeles (USA)
- Balkan Archive (an extensive collection belonging to international film material, transcribed in translation and arranged by key words)
- Refugees International, Washington D.C. (USA)
- Private tapes of interviews with refugees from Srebrenica, made in July 1995. Films and documentaries:
 - *Crime and punishment*, by Maria Fuglevaag Warsinski (1999, Speranza Films)
 - *Warriors*, by Peter Kasminsky (1999, BBC)

- *Panorama* (11/03/96, BBC)
- *Srebrenica, une chute sur ordonnance* (Srebrenica, an orchestrated tragedy), Yves Billy and Gilles Hertzog (Paris, Les films du village, 1996)
- *Bosnia!!*, Bernard-Henry Levy (1994)
- *Envoyé Spécial* [*Srebrenica: enquête sur un massacre*], 26/09/96

Television Programs

- 2 Vandaag, TROS, 21/07/95
- 2 Vandaag, TROS, 10/07/95
- 2 Vandaag EO, 12/07/95
- 2 Vandaag, EO, 08/07/95
- 2 Vandaag, EO, 08-07-95
- 2 Vandaag, EO, 12/07/95
- 2 Vandaag, EO, 24/12/94
- 2 Vandaag, TROS, 10/07/95
- 2 Vandaag, TROS, 13/07/95
- 2 Vandaag, VOO, 18/01/94
- Achter het Nieuws, VARA, 19/05/91
- Brandpunt, KRO, 03/03/96
- Brandpunt, KRO, 03/09/95
- Brandpunt, KRO, 09/05/93
- Brandpunt, KRO, 09/08/92
- Brandpunt, KRO, 11/12/94
- Brandpunt, KRO, 16/06/96
- Brandpunt, KRO, 16/07/95
- Brandpunt, KRO, 16/08/92
- Brandpunt, KRO, 22/09/95
- Brandpunt, KRO, 23/07/95
- Brandpunt, KRO, 24/09/95
- Brandpunt, KRO, 26/11/95
- Brandpunt, KRO, 27/08/95
- Brandpunt, KRO, 28/02/93
- Dutchbat vrij (Dutchbat free), NOS, 23/07/95
- Het Capitool, NOS, 30/01/94
- Hier en Nu, NCRV, 01/05/95
- Hier en Nu, NCRV, 11/04/94
- Hier en Nu, NCRV, 17/07/95
- Hier en Nu, NCRV, 20/12/93
- Hier en Nu, NCRV, 27/02/95
- Hier en Nu, NCRV, 28/08/95
- Journal, NOS, 01/02/94
- Journal, NOS, 06/08/92
- Journal, NOS, 07/08/92
- Journal, NOS, 08/02/94
- Journal, NOS, 08/08/91
- Journal, NOS, 11/01/94
- Journal, NOS, 11/07/95
- Journal, NOS, 11/07/95
- Journal, NOS, 11/07/95, 12/07/95
- Journal, NOS, 12/04/94

Journal, NOS, 12/07/95
Journal, NOS, 12/07/95
Journal, NOS, 12/08/92
Journal, NOS, 12/11/93
Journal, NOS, 13/07/95
Journal, NOS, 13/07/95
Journal, NOS, 16/04/93
Journal, NOS, 16/04/93
Journal, NOS, 17/04/93
Journal, NOS, 18/04/93
Journal, NOS, 21/01/94
Journal, NOS, 27/04/94
Journal, NOS, 29/04/93
Journal, NOS, 30/04/93
Journal, NOS, 31/01/93
Kenmerk, IKON, KRO-RKK, 11/11/93
Kenmerk, IKON, KRO-RKK, 17/02/94
Middageditie, NPS, VARA, VPRO, 28/09/98
Middageditie, RVU, RPS, VARA, VPRO, 09/06/97
Netwerk, KRO, 26/01/97
Netwerk, NCRV, 28/09/98
Niet Bekend, NPS, VARA, 31/07/95
NOS Laat ,NOS, 18/10/91
NOS Laat, NOS, 05/08/92
NOS Laat, NOS, 07/08/92
NOS Laat, NOS, 09/08/91
NOS Laat, NOS, 10/08/92
NOS Laat, NOS, 12/08/92
NOS Laat, NOS, 27/07/92
NOS Laat, NOS, 29/07/92
NOS Laat, NOS, 29/07/92
NOS Laat, NOS, 30/07/92
NOVA, NOS, 10/03/93
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 01/04/94
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 02/10/92
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 03/02/94
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 04/01/93
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 05/06/93
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 07/05/93
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 11/04/94
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 12/04/94
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 14/04/94
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 16/04/93
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 16/04/94
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 20/10/93
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 21/06/93
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 22/04/94
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 22/06/93
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 24/11/92
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 24/11/92
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 25/06/93

NOVA, NOS, VARA, 27/01/94
NOVA, NOS, VARA, 29/01/93
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 01/06/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 04/08/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 08/07/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 09/05/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 10/05/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 10/07/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 11/07/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 12/07/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 13/06/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 13/07/93
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 14/07/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 15/07/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 17/07/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 18/07/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 19/07/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 20/07/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 22/07/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 24/07/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 26/07/95
NOVA, NPS, VARA, 27/07/95
NOVA/ Gesprek met de minister-president (Conversation with the Prime Minister), NOS, VARA, 20/11/92
NOVA/Den Haag Vandaag, NOS, 10/12/92
NOVA/Den Haag Vandaag, NOS, 28/06/95
NOVA/Gesprek met de minister-president, NOS, 14/07/95
Reporter, KRO, 11/02/94
Reporter, KRO, 17/12/93
Televizier, AVRO, 08/02/94
Televizier, AVRO, 13/05/91
Televizier, AVRO, 15/12/92
Televizier, AVRO, 16/02/93
Televizier, AVRO, 22/06/93
Televizier, AVRO, 30/03/93
Televizier, AVRO, 31/10/95
Tijdsein 1, EO, 10/12/92
Tijdsein 1, EO, 12/05/92
Tijdsein 1, EO, 19/09/91
Tijdsein 1, EO, 30/12/92
Tijdsein 2, EO, 06/10/93
Tijdsein, EO, 02/09/95
Yugoslavia Exit, KRO, 06/12/92
Zembla , NPS, VARA, 07/09/95, Observatiepost Foxtrot (Observation Post Foxtrot)
Zembla, NPS, VARA, 19/11/98, Dutchbat en het gifgas (Dutchbat and the poison gas)

Appendix XI

Author: B.G.J. de Graaff

The organization and coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

1. Introduction

The ‘apehouse’¹, as the headquarters of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague is known, is a shining white steel and glass structure dating from the 1980s. Its various wings seem to probe the world around it like tentacles. Huge antennae sprouting from the roof only reinforce the image of an insect sending out its feelers in every direction. The car park at the side of the building – known as the ‘VIP entrance’ because it is where big black cars carrying prominent guests speed in under police escort – rather suffers from a lack of allure but does conjure up an image of directness: the high and mighty are whisked safely inside and can step straight out of their cars and into the lift up to the conference room or the minister’s office. Not a single drop of Dutch rain stains their bespoke suits, and no demonstrator has a chance to make his protest heard.

The Yugoslavia crisis would raise the question of how much this apparent efficiency corresponded with the reality of the Dutch government’s foreign-policy apparatus. Was the civil-service machine effective? And to what extent were those who spent their days, and sometimes much of their evenings, in this late 20th-century building able to project themselves into a war which seemed to have thrown part of Europe back into a dark and distant past? The Minister of Foreign Affairs was responsible for foreign policy, which from the late 1970s would specifically incorporate human rights. After the Second World War, the Netherlands had definitively turned its back on its previous policy of neutrality. From the 1950s, membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European integration were central elements in Dutch foreign policy.

During the 20th century, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had developed from a fairly closed ministry managing a very small diplomatic service, consisting largely of aristocrats, to an institution more receptive to influence from Dutch society. With the rise of the audiovisual media, the Dutch people were – if not better, then certainly more directly – informed about developments in the world. This development was also reflected in a shift in emphasis in decision-making from the diplomats on the ground to the Ministry itself. During the decades immediately following the Second World War, several ambassadors – such as one-time Minister E.N. van Kleffens, H.J. van Roijen, D.U. Stikker and former Governor General of the Dutch East Indies Jonkheer A.W.L. Tjarda van Starkenborg Stachouwer – exerted a major influence over foreign policy.² But from the beginning of the 1960s, it was the civil servants inside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who became the dominant players in policy formulation.³

From that same period dates the Ministry’s greater openness to ideas from wider Dutch society.⁴ Comparatively speaking, the Netherlands was thick with so-called non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and campaign groups concerned with foreign policy.⁵ The Dutch churches and trade union movement also started to pay more attention to international politics at around this time. Aid to countries in the developing world, which had begun in the late 1940s, was stepped up and

¹ This nickname, ‘*apenrots*’ in Dutch, is a corruption of ‘Aponrots’, a reference to the building’s architect, D.C. Apon.

² B. Zeeman, ‘Jurist of diplomaat? Eelco Nicolaas van Kleffens (1939-1946)’ (‘Lawyer or diplomat? Eelco Nicolaas van Kleffens (1939-1946)’), in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, p. 149; C. Wiebes and B. Zeeman, ‘Nederlands diplomaat in bange dagen. Jan Herman van Roijen (1946)’ (‘Dutch diplomat in troubled times. Jan Herman van Roijen (1946)’), *ibidem*, p. 158; J. Bank, ‘Overal een ondernemer. Dirk Uipko Stikker (1948-1952)’ (‘An entrepreneur everywhere. Dirk Uipko Stikker (1948-1952)’), *ibidem*, pp. 193-194; J. Bosmans, ‘Een gedreven politicus. Wilhelmus Klaus Norbert Schmelzer (1971-1973)’ (‘A driven politician. Wilhelmus Klaus Norbert Schmelzer (1971-1973)’), *ibidem*, p. 235.

³ Cf. J. Bosmans, ‘Een gedreven politicus. Wilhelmus Klaus Norbert Schmelzer (1971-1973)’ *ibidem*, pp. 235, 239.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 235, 237-239; M. Kuitenbrouwer, ‘Een realistische idealist. Max van der Stoel (1973-1977, 1981-1982)’ (‘A realistic idealist. Max van der Stoel (1973-1977, 1981-1982)’), *ibidem*, p. 247.

⁵ See, for example, Malcontent, *Kruisocht*, p. 33.

institutionalized with the creation of the office of Minister for Development Cooperation. The new minister and his officials were housed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building. In particular the issue of human rights, which had remained very much in the background during the almost 20 years Joseph Luns was minister, gained a far more prominent position in foreign policy after his departure from Dutch politics in 1971.⁶

The 1970s also saw the beginning of harmonization of Dutch foreign policy with that of other EEC countries.⁷ However, the increasing importance of European integration did somewhat erode the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' central position. On the one hand, the prime minister's participation in the European Council of heads of government (plus the French head of state) increased his role compared with that of his colleague at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the other hand, virtually every Dutch ministry was now directly involved with matters of policy-making in Brussels.

Following a very long period of preparation, in 1987 the personnel of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself and of the Diplomatic Service were merged. This made the frequent changes of posting which had always typified the foreign service a feature of the Ministry, too. During the 1980s, the Ministry was swept by a series of swathing staff cutbacks, as a result of which some of the directorates discussed below contained no more than a handful of civil servants when the conflict in Yugoslavia broke out.

2. The ministerial organization

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Development Cooperation oversaw three directorate generals in the early 1990s: Political Affairs, European Cooperation and International Cooperation. It was the Director General of Political Affairs' (DGPZ) task to handle all aspects of foreign relations involving a policy component. This encompassed not only the coordination of those directorates directly under him, but also that of sections of the ministry which were nominally controlled by the two other director generals. This made the DGPZ both the *primus inter pares* of the three director generals and the senior political adviser to the Minister.

Directly under the DGPZ were four regional directorates (Asia and Oceania, Africa and the Middle East, Western Hemisphere and Europe), plus the Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Matters and the Directorate of UN Political Affairs. Moreover, the DGPZ and his counterparts from the other member states of the European Community (EC) sat on its Political Committee, which reviewed matters prior to their submission to the Council of Ministers.

As far as the issue of Yugoslavia was concerned, the main players at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were the Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Matters (DAV), the Directorate of UN Political Affairs (DPV) and the Europe Directorate (DEU). The composition and tasks of these organizations are described briefly below, insofar as they are relevant. This is followed by a survey of policy coordination, and finally a review of relevant official representation abroad. This summary therefore concentrates upon those sections of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerned with the purely political aspects of foreign policy. Those involved with humanitarian aid are not covered. Nor does this appendix examine the relationship between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defence. This is addressed in the appendix devoted to the Ministry of Defence entitled 'Defence in a changing world'.

⁶ J. Bosmans, 'Een gedreven politicus. Wilhelmus Klaus Norbert Schmelzer (1971-1973)', in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 237-238; M. Kuitenbrouwer, 'Een realistische idealist. Max van der Stoel (1973-1977, 1981-1982)', *ibidem*, pp. 243, 247, 248, 249, 252; D. Bosscher, 'Een onwennig minister. Christoph Albert van der Klaauw (1977-1981)' ('An uncomfortable minister. Christoph Albert van der Klaauw (1977-1981)'), *ibidem*, pp. 264-265; P. Rusman, 'De laatste Koude-Oorlogstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)' ('The last Cold Warrior. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)'), *ibidem*, p. 277.

⁷ J. Bosmans, 'Een gedreven politicus. Wilhelmus Klaus Norbert Schmelzer (1971-1973)', in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 237, 239; M. Kuitenbrouwer, 'Een realistische idealist. Max van der Stoel (1973-1977, 1981-1982)', *ibidem*, p. 248.

3. The Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Matters (DAV)

Thanks to the long tenure as minister of the Atlanticist Hans van den Broek – from 1982 to early 1993 – the post of Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Matters became a far more central part of the Ministry than it had been before his time. The formal task of the directorate encompassed promoting Dutch security interests at international level – that is, within NATO, the Western European Union (WEU) and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) – plus arms control, verification and export policy, and Atlantic cooperation. In practice, the directorate was also concerned with relations with the United States and Canada, which were really the task of the regional Western Hemisphere Directorate.⁸

Like many of his predecessors, Van den Broek attached great importance to the appointment of able civil servants to this directorate.⁹ Since August 1990, its head had been Boudewijn van Eenennaam, who had mainly made his career within this directorate and, like Van den Broek, was a committed Atlanticist with a strong affinity with the American mentality. As director, he was given full room for manoeuvre by the minister.¹⁰ Van Eenennaam was a supporter of power politics, but in that respect suffered the disadvantage of living in the Netherlands. His perception of international politics was strongly coloured by the Cold War. His conviction that Serbia was the aggressor state in all the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia led him to believe that it must be treated firmly and forced into isolation.¹¹ His experiences during the Cold War were also behind Van Eenennaam's opinion that policy should be based not upon the principles prevailing in the region concerned but rather upon one's own standards and values. He was steeped in the idea that if the Netherlands wished to take the lead internationally with the provision of development aid and contributions to solving humanitarian crises, then it must be prepared to suppress the violence which tended to accompany such situations.¹²

In 1991 the directorate had two divisions, one military and one political, each led by a policy adviser. Herman Schaper headed the Political Division, Pieter de Savornin Lohman the Military Division. In April 1992 Schaper was succeeded by Frank Majoor. When Van Eenennaam became Deputy DGPZ in June 1993, Majoor became head of DAV. Its deputy head then became Maurits Jochems.

The directorate was made up of five bureaux. The focal point of its decision-making in respect of the former Yugoslavia was the Bureau of Military Cooperation (DAV/MS), which traditionally was concerned primarily with defence cooperation with the Netherlands' Atlantic and European allies. This bureau had a staff of three, initially headed by M.T. Vogelaar. When he became leader of the Dutch delegation in the European Community Monitoring Mission for Yugoslavia (ECMM) in spring 1992, Vogelaar was succeeded by the energetic and self-confident Kees Klompenhouwer. In matters related to Yugoslavia, he was supported by Robert in den Bosch, who had only recently joined the bureau. Both men stayed in these posts until one week prior to the fall of Srebrenica. In September 1993 Joep Wijnands joined DAV/MS, where he started by acting as back-up to In den Bosch.

Like Van Eenennaam, other members of the DAV staff were well known for their militant attitude and close identification with NATO. They had little faith in UN control of military operations.¹³

Although the DPV did maintain contacts with the Ministry of Defence, it was the Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Matters which increasingly became the central link between the foreign affairs and defence organizations. Over time daily contacts would become a matter of course, as

⁸ Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 49.

⁹ Interview M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

¹⁰ Interview M. Hennis, 09/03/99; L. Ornstein, 'Het stratego van de experts' ('The experts' game of stratego'), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/93, p. 11.

¹¹ Interview B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00.

¹² Interview B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00; TCBU, *Vertrekepunt*, III, hearing B.J. van Eenennaam, 05/06/00, p. 280.

¹³ Interviews M.R.O. Baron Bentinck, 12/04/00, and H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

In den Bosch – and following his departure from DAV, Wijnands – would attend the morning briefings held at the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) from about New Year 1994. In den Bosch and later Wijnands represented not only their own bureau, but the entire Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This made them *trait-d'union* between the Ministry of Defence and the directorates or even, in matters of sufficient importance, the overall leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. DAV's involvement in the Yugoslavia crisis was not confined to NATO matters. The directorate demanded a say in all strategic military aspects of that conflict.¹⁴ As Yugoslavia evolved more and more from being a diplomatic issue into a military one, with NATO's role increasing all the time, so DAV's involvement grew compared with that of the other directorates.

The militant stance adopted by DAV officials opened up a gulf between its perspective and that of civil servants at the Ministry of Defence, who were more inclined towards traditional peacekeeping methods and avoiding provocation of the combatants by overt use of force.¹⁵

From the very early days of the conflict, DAV played a significant role in organizing the ECMM, the monitoring commission of the EC. Van Eenennaam headed a working party which coordinated policy aspects related to the ECMM. Its other members were Jan Hoekema (deputized by the deputy head of DPV, Joop Scheffers) and Hendrik Bentinck van Schoonheten on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, F.J.J. Princen and J.H.M. de Winter from the Directorate of General Policy Matters (DAB) at the Ministry of Defence, and Commander J. Waltmann (deputized by Brigadier G.G.M. van Leeuwe) on behalf of the Defence Staff.

In support of the ECMM's day-to-day work, a separate Liaison Office (DAV/LSO) headed by Karel van Oosterom was established. This office formulated the ECMM's tasks and was responsible for its logistics, setting up its regional offices and distributing its reports using COREU telegrams to the EC capitals. Later, following the formation of UNPROFOR, this task would be transferred to the DAV/MS. The Liaison Office consisted of two policy staff and an administrative officer from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, plus a military adviser who was responsible for the communication between DAV and the Defence Staff. Because there were difficulties at first in finding a suitable intelligence officer, Thom Karremans – later to become the commander of Dutchbat III – took up the post on 14 August 1991. He had most recently been head of the Arms Control Section of the Army Staff, but because he had already fulfilled two international appointments he was regarded as ideal for secondment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Karremans found it easy working with the officials at the bureau¹⁶, and his appointment – which had originally been intended to last two weeks – was eventually extended until the end of the Dutch EC Presidency.

Christiaan Kröner, the Ambassador-at-Large (AMAD) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was also heavily involved in matters pertaining to the ECMM. It was he, for example, who led the mission's quartermasters.¹⁷ The Ambassador-at-Large, who until 1993 was also Deputy Director General of Political Affairs, was a 'roving' ambassador who could be dispatched by the DGPZ on important missions abroad. Kröner had also hoped to play a part in the negotiations in Yugoslavia itself, originally on behalf of Van den Broek and later as an assistant to the EU mediator, Lord Carrington. This role, however, eventually fell to Van den Broek's confidant and trouble-shooter, the Dutch ambassador to Paris, Henri Wijnaendts.¹⁸

¹⁴ Interviews Hattinga van 't Sant, 18/07/00; K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

¹⁵ Interviews R. in den Bosch, 19/04/00; B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00; and K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 13/12/99 and 20/01/00; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview B.J. van Eenennaam, 12/05/95.

¹⁶ Interview J.L. Sandee, 12/06/00.

¹⁷ "EG-kwartiermakers' in Belgrado" ('EC quartermasters in Belgrade'), *Trouw*, 10/07/91.

¹⁸ Interview P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99.

4. The Europe Directorate (DEU)

The influence of the regional directorates – the repositories of ‘institutional memory’ and analytical specialization in specific parts of the world – was curtailed under Van den Broek in favour of the Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Matters.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the Europe Directorate (DEU), responsible for bilateral contacts in Europe, was the most obvious department when it came to Yugoslav politics, which would eventually lead to one of its sections coordinating policy.

The original head of the Europe Directorate was Hendrik Bentinck van Schoonheten. The Europe Directorate was divided into two bureaux, one for Western Europe and the other for Eastern Europe. The latter was responsible for Dutch involvement in the former Yugoslavia. In 1991 the two bureaux had only three members of staff each. Western Europe was not regarded as being of particular interest from the perspective of bilateral relations: the emphasis here was upon multilateral diplomacy. During the Cold War there was an impression at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it had little to do in Eastern Europe.

The three officials working in the Eastern Europe Bureau, which encompassed the Soviet Union, during summer 1991 were Harm Hazewinkel, Ellen Berends and F.R. Dorsman. Hazewinkel headed the bureau, as well as being Deputy Director for Europe. Prior to the outbreak of the conflict, it was also he who did most of the work related to Yugoslavia. In mid 1991, as the region began to demand more and more of the bureau’s attention, it was expanded with the appointment of the young diplomat Tony van der Togt. He was assigned exclusively to the Yugoslavia portfolio.

There were a number of personnel changes at the Europe Directorate in mid 1992. On 23 March Herman Schaper, hitherto Deputy Director for Atlantic Security, became head of the directorate. He would remain in the post until 1 August 1994. Hazewinkel, Berends and Dorsman all left the directorate at the same time. Hazewinkel became an adviser in the DGPZ. His old post was split. Leadership of the Eastern Europe Bureau was taken over by W.A. Bas Backer, who for the previous three years had been First Secretary in the Dutch Permanent Mission to the United Nations. His portfolio there included the Middle East and Eastern Europe. A new post of Deputy Head of the DEU was created, since it was now apparent that the subject of the former Yugoslavia was taking up too much of the Head of the Eastern Europe Bureau’s time. The new post was filled by Onno Hattinga van ‘t Sant. He concentrated upon Yugoslavia so as to leave Schaper free to deal with other matters. Bas Backer, who as Head of the Eastern Europe Bureau was mainly concerned with Russia, stood in for Hattinga van ‘t Sant when necessary.

Hattinga van ‘t Sant had spent the previous five years at the Dutch Permanent Mission to the European Community in Brussels. One of his main areas of responsibility there was the Mediterranean Working Party, which was concerned with relations between the EC and the other states around the Mediterranean, including Yugoslavia. In this role he was heavily involved in the termination of the Community’s treaty of cooperation with Yugoslavia and the initiation of economic ties with independent Croatia and Slovenia.

Hattinga van ‘t Sant was originally able to rely upon full-time assistance from Sandee. Van der Togt’s orientation was changed to the former Soviet Union. He was happy to be ‘taken off’ Yugoslavia, a region into which he had put much time without ever personally being convinced that the conflict could be solved from outside.²⁰ Van der Togt’s seat at the ‘Yugoslavia desk’ was thus taken over by Sandee, who remained there for three years. He seemed ideally suited to the position: he had studied history at the University of Utrecht, specializing in Eastern Europe and had taken a separate course in the history of the Balkans. One of his first jobs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was at the DAV, and involved providing support for the ECMM. There he had been Van der Togt’s counterpart in the Atlantic Directorate. He was then seconded to Portugal when it held the EC Presidency during the first

¹⁹ Interview M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

²⁰ Interview A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

half of 1992. After some time another official, Thijs van der Plas, was added to Hattinga van 't Sant's team.

Schaper assumed the leadership of a somewhat marginalized Europe Directorate. The Regional Directorate Europe had experienced how differing policy threads existed alongside one another, not only at the Ministry but also within the European Community. At the beginning of the crisis, for example, the European Commission still adhered to the treaty of cooperation with Yugoslavia whereas the European ministers were already developing sanctions against the country. There were also policy contradictions. Whilst the DAV adopted a militant attitude towards Yugoslavia in the tradition of the Cold War, the DEU originally regarded any form of military involvement as 'extremely worrying'. It would draw the West into a quagmire.²¹ Schaper, who had transferred from the DAV to the DEU and so could see both sides of the argument, was able to improve the atmosphere between the two bodies. In mid 1992 he initiated a weekly Yugoslavia meeting for representatives from the directorates involved: the Europe Directorate itself, the Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Matters, the Directorate of UN Political Affairs, the Directorate for International Organizations, the Directorate of General Affairs, the Directorate of Economic Cooperation, the Directorate for European Integration, the Directorate of Multilateral Development Cooperation and Special Programmes, the Assistant Director General of Political Affairs, the legal adviser, the traffic adviser and, once appointed, the spokesperson on Yugoslavia, Rob Swartbol. A representative from the Ministry of Defence also attended.²² One major reason for instigating this regular forum was that the DEU lacked the information which was available to the DAV,²³ partly because of the latter's strong tendency to monopolize contacts with the Defence Ministry²⁴ and partly because its chief, Van Eenennaam, had a direct personal line to the Minister.²⁵

The chairmanship of these weekly coordination meetings fell upon Hattinga van 't Sant. The principal purpose of these meetings was to exchange information and to prepare papers from and for the Minister. At each gathering Hattinga van 't Sant outlined the latest political situation and a representative from the DAV described the military position. Then an assessment was made of the issues pertaining to the former Yugoslavia which were likely to arise during the coming week.

His position as chairman of the Yugoslavia meeting turned out to be a springboard for Hattinga van 't Sant to assume a more general coordinating role at an operational level. This would earn him the nickname 'Mister Yugoslavia'.²⁶ He monitored all the developments in the conflict, advised the Minister and – based partly upon material submitted to him by other sections – often wrote the statements sent to Parliament in the Minister's name. But the statements sent jointly on behalf of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence seem for the most part to have been coordinated by the DAV. Hattinga van 't Sant also coordinated the compilation of the points of discussion used by the Minister in discussions with Parliament and fellow ministers, or at international meetings. In fact, Hattinga van 't Sant eventually ended up drafting these statements and notes himself, then distributing them for comment by a certain deadline before passing them on to the Minister. Finally, it was usually Hattinga van 't Sant who represented the Netherlands at the Brussels meetings of the EC's ad-hoc working party on Yugoslavia – the body which was attempting to coordinate European policy with respect to the region on a permanent basis. Before he joined the DEU, these gatherings were attended by Bentinck and Van der Togt.

Nevertheless, Hattinga van 't Sant's coordinating activities remained confined to directorate level. The Director General of Political Affairs did not attend his weekly Yugoslavia meetings. The

²¹ Interview A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

²² For the agendas and conclusions of these meetings, see ABZ, DIE/2001/00023.

²³ Interview P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00.

²⁴ Interviews M.R.O. Baron Bentinck, 12/04/00; J.L. Sandee, 12/06/00.

²⁵ Interview A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

²⁶ Interviews M.R.O. Baron Bentinck, 12/04/00; J.M. Vos, 24/06/00.

Minister and the DGPZ decided on basic policy, sometimes during direct telephone contact with the Permanent Representatives.²⁷

5. Directorate of UN Political Affairs (DPV)

The Directorate of UN Political Affairs (DPV) was responsible for contacts with the United Nations. From 1 July 1990, it was headed by Jan Hoekema, who had developed a particular interest in disarmament questions. On 17 May 1994, he exchanged his civil-service role for a political one, becoming an MP for D66 (Democrats). His place was taken by Dr P.M. Kurpershoek, who had already had plenty of experience with the Yugoslavia issue as Head of the Political Section at the Dutch Permanent Mission to NATO. The directorate included a Political Bureau. At the outbreak of the conflict, this was headed by G. R. Reinders. He had not yet had very much to do with Yugoslavia, since the United Nations had at first taken a reticent attitude towards the subject. That did not apply to his successor, Henk van der Zwan, who remained in the post until April 1995. He had previously been Deputy Head of the Legal Affairs Bureau, with special responsibility for the legal position of the staff. This proved useful in his new role, because when he joined the Political Bureau he was one of a staff of just three. That made it quite short-staffed, especially given the fact that the United Nations had begun to stretch its wings as regards peacekeeping operations since the end of the Cold War. As well as these missions, the Political Bureau was also heavily involved in the sanctions being imposed by the UN. These two aspects covered not only Yugoslavia but also Cambodia, Haiti, Somalia, Iraq, Libya and several other smaller operations. Van der Zwan succeeded in using his knowledge and contacts with regard to personnel affairs to expand the strength of his bureau to six or seven officials. His main staff were R.S. van Ees, Hans Würzner, Sigrid Kaag, Karin van Stegeren and, specializing in sanctions issues, Joep Janssen. There was also a German official on secondment to the Ministry, Philip Ackermann.

The DPV's most important contact in the field was the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations in New York. It also maintained contacts with the Ministry of Defence regarding peacekeeping operations. There were two types of meeting in this respect, general and specific, the former covering all peacekeeping operations and the latter covering those in specific operations like Yugoslavia or Cambodia. On the Ministry of Defence side, it was Commodore J. Waltmann and members of his Defence Staff who participated in these. The general meetings were held once every six weeks, alternately at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence. The chairmanship rotated too. Hoekema chaired those held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Waltmann and later Brigadier A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren chaired at the Ministry of Defence. In addition, from a later date there were regular Friday-afternoon meetings on Yugoslavia held in the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) bunker under the Ministry of Defence building in The Hague. As well as representatives of the armed forces and the Defence Staff, these were also attended by officials from the DAV and DPV.

6. Policy coordination

From 1989 the Secretary-General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was Dr Bernard Rudolf Bot. His reputation was as one of the best Dutch diplomats of the period. However, the Secretary-General's role was not as prominent at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as it was in some other ministries. The primary responsibility for policy coordination rested not with him but with the Director General of Political Affairs (DGPZ). In order to filter the flood of documents, and to guard access to the minister, the office of Principal Private Secretary to the Minister had been created some years before.²⁸ This left the Secretary-General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as little more than the head of the official

²⁷ Interview O. Hattinga van 't Sant, 18/07/00.

²⁸ Between 1991 and 1995, this position was held successively by Pieter de Gooyer, Marco Hennis and Rob Swartbol.

organization. Bot was disappointed that the incumbent minister, Van den Broek, and DGPZ Peter van Walsum formed a practised team who gave him no opportunity to play a strong part in policy matters.²⁹ Consequently, a disillusioned Bot departed for Brussels in autumn 1992, where he became Dutch Permanent Representative to the European Community.

Van den Broek now felt the need to appoint a secretary-general from outside the Ministry. His choice as Bot's successor fell upon Dirk Jan van den Berg, at the time Deputy Secretary-General at the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Van den Berg was therefore an outsider at a ministry that had little experience with outsiders being 'parachuted in' like this.³⁰ It was only a few months before Van den Berg witnessed the man who had brought him in with such aplomb, Van den Broek, leave for Brussels himself. On 2 January 1993 Van den Broek became European Commissioner for External Political Relations. However, Van den Berg had the good fortune that the new minister, Professor Pieter Kooijmans, was much more inclined to allow him to function as a secretary-general in the way he had been used to operating at the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

The DGPZ is the minister's most important political adviser. Together with the principal private secretary, he acts as a 'gatekeeper' to the minister and is responsible for the overall line and consistency of foreign policy. Peter van Walsum, a refined and respected diplomat, had been DGPZ since July 1989. His diplomatic career had prepared him well for the role he was to play during the Dutch Presidency of the EC during the second half of 1991, when the war in Yugoslavia was high on the Community's agenda. His diplomatic introduction to South-Eastern Europe had come more than 20 years earlier. From 1967 he had been posted in Bucharest, and from the Romanian capital he travelled to Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece and the European part of Turkey. In 1970 he was transferred to the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations, which is also where he would end his diplomatic career between 1998 and 2001. At the UN Van Walsum represented the Netherlands on the General Assembly Third Committee, which was concerned with human rights. In 1979 he was posted to the Dutch Permanent Mission to the European Community. His character was contemplative: he was a sharp analyst, but his reactions tended to be rather measured. This made him very different from the more direct Van den Broek, who felt that his DGPZ often responded too late.³¹

Van Walsum's deputy was Christiaan Kröner, the Ambassador-at-Large. He also had a direct aide, the political assistant. This office was originally held by Alfons Hamer and later by Dr P. de Heer. Van Walsum stepped down as DGPZ on 9 April 1993. His successor, Joris Vos, did not take up office until 17 May. This interval meant that Minister Kooijmans was left without one of his senior officials during a crucial phase in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia: when Srebrenica was in danger of falling for the first time, when the UN Security Council passed its first resolutions on Safe Areas, when US Secretary of State Warren Christopher consulted his European counterparts on Yugoslavia policy and when the Bosnian Serbs finally rejected the peace plan put forward by international mediators Cyrus Vance and David Owen.

The new DGPZ, Vos, was less independently minded than Van Walsum. He was more the loyal civil servant, a man who would very much see things from his minister's point of view.³² Vos selected Van Eenennaam as Deputy Director-General because he was convinced that the pair would make a good team.³³ Both were also very emotionally involved in the Yugoslavia issue.³⁴ The position of Deputy Director General of Political Affairs – PDGPZ in the Ministry's acronym culture – had until then been held by the Ambassador-at-Large. Vos, though, made it a separate post. But the position, which essentially involved doing everything Vos was unable to do for whatever reason, did not really

²⁹ Interviews B.R. Bot 07/09/00, and P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99.

³⁰ Wio Joustra, 'Minister kwetst ambtenaren met benoeming' ('Minister offends civil servants with appointment'), *De Volkskrant*, 01/05/92.

³¹ Interview P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99.

³² Interviews P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99; H. Hazewinkel, 17/04/00; K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/1/00.

³³ Interview J.M. Vos, 24 and 25/06/00.

³⁴ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

suit Van Eenennaam's dynamic personality and preference for being 'on top of the case' as much as had his previous job as Head of DAV.³⁵ In fact, he remained very much involved with the former Yugoslavia during this period.

When hostilities broke out in Yugoslavia, the senior figures at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were Minister Van den Broek, DGPZ Van Walsum plus, to a certain extent, his deputy Kröner. There was also Van Eenennaam, in a rather unusual position, and the Minister's personal confidant, Wijnaendts. From this élite group, it was the DGPZ who was officially responsible for policy coordination – not to be confused with the coordination at operational level which was handled by Hattinga van 't Sant from the summer of 1992.

As far as the Yugoslavia portfolio was concerned, however, Van Walsum did not perform the coordinating role which might reasonably have been expected of him. One consequence of this was that policy pertaining to (the former) Yugoslavia remained distributed across three Directorates – Atlantic Cooperation and Security Matters, Europe and UN Political Affairs – where the main players had to develop policy proposals by mutual agreement.³⁶ To the staff in these three units, it was not always clear who should handle what aspect of Yugoslavia policy because there were often several aspects to one issue and these could to a certain extent be placed within the remit of any or all of the three directorates.³⁷ If there was no direction coming from above, at DGPZ level, then could the heads of directorates be expected to provide it? 'But then who was actually responsible for the matter?,' asked Klompenhouwer. 'That was not clear. No single task was ever formulated. One undisputed chief. Who would that be? ...it was typical of the management style. Let everyone just plod on and then we'll see who does best and talk to the Minister. That's an opaque way of working. You don't know what happens to what you produce. Nor do you know what is being asked of you. You don't know who has the initiative.'³⁸

Not only were there no directions filtering down to them, to the officials in the directorates it was often unclear what was going on at the highest level. A lot of information and policy suggestions were passed upwards through the hierarchy, but very few signals came back in the opposite direction.³⁹ This situation was exacerbated by the fact that the ministers, particularly Van den Broek during the Dutch EC presidency, discussed many matters directly with their foreign counterparts by telephone. And the DGPZ did the same with the ambassadors. Moreover, it was Van den Broek's custom not to make decisions based upon official documents but to call together a number of directorate chiefs and their closest staff for discussions in the early evening. The feedback on these various forms of verbal consultation at the highest level to the directorates often left a lot to be desired. Conversations were seldom minuted, as was the case at foreign ministries in other countries.⁴⁰ The same complaint applied to feedback from the Ministerial Council to the directorate officials. As one of the civil servants involved remarked:

'Preparing a document for the Ministerial Council was a trial. You never heard what had been decided in the Ministerial Council. For example, it sometimes happened that we were passed over when things occurred in the Ministerial Council or even that documents were presented to the Ministerial Council

³⁵ Interviews B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00, and K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

³⁶ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

³⁷ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

³⁸ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00. Cf. Michiel van Hulten, 'Zwarte Maandag. Kroniek van een gemiste kans' ('Black Monday, chronicle of a missed opportunity'), in Labohm (ed.), *Waterdragers*, p. 196, in which the then Director General of European Cooperation, Ronald van Beuge, states that Van den Broek 'was always used to receiving contradictory advice, between which he could arbitrate'.

³⁹ Interviews P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00; K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00; J.L. Sandee, 12/06/00; R. Swartbol, 08/07/00; and A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

⁴⁰ Interviews R. in den Bosch, 19/04/00; J.T. Hoekema, 05/03/98; K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00; R. Swartbol, 08/07/00; and A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

which we had not seen in their final form... We were seriously handicapped, and that was also to do with the organization in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself. There was never any feedback from the Ministerial Council on a Monday morning because we have two ministers...'⁴¹

And even when something was recorded in writing, there was no distribution structure.

The same applied to the provision of such information to diplomatic missions abroad. At the foreign ministries of the countries to which they were accredited, Dutch ambassadors repeatedly found themselves being confronted with records of conversations – between the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs and his local counterpart or an ambassador – about which it was assumed that the Dutch diplomat had already been informed by The Hague. But that was not the case. And insofar as conversations were recorded, the report often lacked details of the Dutch side of the dialogue so that readers in overseas missions were unable to infer what the Dutch policy was.⁴²

Thus arose an extraordinary situation in which the Minister of Foreign Affairs was often well-briefed about the position of the Netherlands' EC partners through telephone contacts with his counterparts, yet civil servants in his own ministry had to scrape together the same information from embassy reports, the newspapers, press agencies and CNN.⁴³ The situation was mitigated somewhat during the second half of 1991 because of the very frequent ministerial meetings or gatherings of the EC Political Committee. These had to be prepared for, which led to preliminary discussions in Van Walsum's office. This temporarily reduced the need for structured coordination between the directorates. Moreover, once Hattinga van 't Sant began coordinating Yugoslavia meetings at operational level in the second half of 1992, he - as deputy head of DEU - gained direct access to the DGPZ.⁴⁴

Another question is how the Ministry organized its knowledge about Yugoslavia. According to Van Walsum, it took some searching but there did turn out to be sufficient expertise on the Balkans – including his own – available inside the Ministry.⁴⁵ But many other senior officials felt that there was a serious lack of knowledge about the Balkans in general and Yugoslavia in particular. Schaper claims that this lack of knowledge soon created a 'bottleneck'.⁴⁶ The ministerial official with the most relevant knowledge was Hazewinkel, Head of the Eastern Europe Bureau. Yet his directorate was marginalized and both he and his director were far less prominent than the self-confident civil servants in the DAV, who over the previous years had built up good access to the Minister and the Director General of Political Affairs. When hostilities began, several officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs rushed out to libraries and bookshops to find literature about Yugoslavia.⁴⁷ Like Schaper and Hoekema, Van Eenennaam had to admit in an interview with the magazine *Vrij Nederland* that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had largely approached the Yugoslav conflict using Western European logic, and so had seriously underestimated the degree of difficulty it involved.⁴⁸

⁴¹ '... As well as [the Minister of] Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Development Cooperation, each with their own teams. That was a very weak point in the Department's organization. The distribution of confidential documents, Ministerial Council decisions and minutes was also a very slow process. Several days would pass before you got to see them. That was something of a handicap. We often had to ask the Ministry of Defence what had been decided.' [Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00].

⁴² Interview A.P.R. Jacobovits de Szeged, 21/09/00.

⁴³ Interview A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

⁴⁴ Interview P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00.

⁴⁵ TCBU, *Vertretpunt*, III, hearing A.P. van Walsum, 22/05/00, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Herman Schaper in L. Ornstein, 'Het stratego van de experts', *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 12. See also interview N. Biegman, 03/07/00.

⁴⁷ Interviews B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00 and A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00; L. Ornstein, 'Het stratego van de experts', *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 11; Willem Wansink, 'scheepstoeter-diplomatie' ('Foghorn diplomacy'), *Elsevier*, 22/07/95.

⁴⁸ Leonard Ornstein, 'Het stratego van de experts', *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 11.

The lack of knowledge was also dismissed by civil servants with the argument that knowledge of the region had little policy relevance, assuming that there was a policy being developed:

‘We were very much swayed by the issues of the day... You reacted, and from the first moment you had to carry on reacting. I worked myself silly writing statements to Parliament. I had no time at all to think about policy and policy options, nor was I asked to. I have the feeling that that was done at the level of the DGPZ and the Minister, and perhaps one or two of the directors... Look, doing nothing wasn’t an option. What if that’s the conclusion your deeper knowledge of the Balkans leads you to? Yes, that’s all very well, but public opinion makes certain things impossible. You can’t say, “Yes, it’s all just terrible but as I see it we only have one realistic option and that’s to do nothing and wait, see how things unfold.” No... anything which tended towards that was simply not an option. We had to do something.’⁴⁹

Almost a year after the Dutch EU Presidency ended, Van den Broek himself would say, ‘I constantly hear Balkan experts tell me, “You underestimated the nationalist forces”. That may well be so, but what would we have done differently if we had evaluated them correctly?’⁵⁰ And even later he would add, ‘What would it have mattered if we had all been fully-fledged professors of Balkan history? (...) Even if you had read the histories of the Balkan Wars at the beginning of this century⁵¹ from cover to cover, what would you have learned for this situation?’ Van den Broek particularly called into question the policy relevance because the essence of Dutch policy lay in holding together the standpoints of the EC member states. Personal insights were of little value in that context.⁵² And, in any case, there was always the problem ‘that if you put two Balkans experts together, there is very little chance that they will agree’.⁵³

7. The Minister

The lack of sufficient coordination amongst civil servants meant that a great deal fell to the Minister, who in general did not have enough time to enlarge upon the basic outline of policy.⁵⁴ But during the Yugoslavia conflict, that was little problem for Minister Hans van den Broek who was known as a ‘bruiser’⁵⁵ with many years of experience. He also enjoyed a reputation as a ‘great brief expert’ and a fast reader.⁵⁶

The politician Van den Broek was born in Paris, where his father was correspondent for the newspaper *De Telegraaf*. Politically, he was discovered by CDA (Christian Democrat) leader Norbert Schmelzer, himself a former Minister of Foreign Affairs. Schmelzer first brought Van den Broek to The Hague as an MP. After spending a year as Junior Minister of Foreign Affairs, he became minister of that same department in November 1982. Van den Broek was on the right of his party, as his stance on such issues as abortion and euthanasia during his parliamentary years showed. As minister, he supported the deployment of cruise missiles in the Netherlands and opposed a unilateral oil boycott

⁴⁹ Interview A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

⁵⁰ L. Ornstein, ‘Minister Van den Broek: ‘Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg’ (‘Minister Van den Broek: I’d say, start with a shot across the bows’), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 10.

⁵¹ The twentieth.

⁵² Interview H. van den Broek, 02/12/99.

⁵³ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing A.P. van Walsum, 22/05/00, p. 9.

⁵⁴ These shortcomings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were referred to earlier and in a more general sense in Everts (ed.), *Controversies*, pp. 74 and 330.

⁵⁵ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

⁵⁶ Interviews B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00; P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99 and H.A. Schaper, 12/04/00; P. Rusman, ‘De laatste Koude-Oorlogstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)’, in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, p. 269.

against South Africa. When the Lubbers-Kok government was formed in 1989, he had difficulty with the policy differences with the PvdA (Labour).⁵⁷ His public reputation was as a ‘cold fish’, but according to fellow politicians he could be quite emotional in private.⁵⁸

Van den Broek’s term of office exhibited all the advantages and disadvantages of a long ministerial incumbency. During more than eight years as a minister, he gathered a small group of trusted advisers around him. Boudewijn van Eenennaam was probably the most prominent member of that inner circle.⁵⁹ Van den Broek was a man of outspoken opinions,⁶⁰ who only became more convinced that they were right as his time in office went on.⁶¹ The ‘flip side’ of this was that it gave him the image of ‘a dominant man who would rather convince than be convinced,’ as fellow CDA politician Harry Aarts put it.⁶² Van den Broek’s argumentation was highly legalistic in tone. He was not very flexible and believed that once a politician had adopted a line, he should stick to it: ‘We do not waver’.⁶³

Van den Broek’s attitude was both the strength and the weakness of his ministry. ‘Of course he made a directive structure, a coordinating structure, unnecessary because he took care of that,’ says Klompenhouwer. ‘He was the boss and he did it himself. With just a couple of close advisers.’⁶⁴ The press, too, became increasingly tired of the Minister after almost a decade in office.⁶⁵ As did the political establishment,⁶⁶ including his own party, the CDA (Christian Democrats).⁶⁷

The key position taken by the Netherlands during the debate about the stationing of cruise missiles had massaged the egos of the ministers concerned. In a then still straightforward world, the idea had taken root that the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs ‘had a little, just a very little, say in world events’.⁶⁸ That would not have had any tempering effect upon the ego of Van den Broek, who was regarded by friend and foe alike as ‘arrogant’.⁶⁹ The impression he was to make on the Yugoslavs would be no different.⁷⁰

⁵⁷ Metze, *Stranding*, p. 178.

⁵⁸ Metze, *Stranding*, pp. 85 and 188.

⁵⁹ Interview M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

⁶⁰ Gualthérie van Weezel, *Rechts door het midden*, pp. 71 and 101.

⁶¹ Interview H. van den Broek, 02/12/99; cf. P. Rusman, ‘De laatste Koude-Oorlogsstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)’, in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, p. 269, 270.

⁶² L. Meijer & C. Welgraven, ‘Internationaal kan Henz Vendenbroek niet meer stuk’ (‘Internationally, Henz Vendenbroek can do no wrong’), *Trouw*, 13/07/91. See also Dankert in: Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendernijis*, pp. 144, 151; Metze, *Stranding*, p. 188; Rob Meines, ‘De ster van Hans van den Broek staat er bleekjes bij’ (‘Hans van den Broek star wanes’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/01/92.

⁶³ L. Ornstein, ‘Minister Van den Broek: ‘Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg’’, *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 10.

⁶⁴ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00. Cf. Edy Nicolassen, ‘Bijna te lang op het feestje gebleven’ (‘Almost been at the party too long’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/12/92.

⁶⁵ Interview B. Hiensch, 13/07/00; ‘steile calvinist alleen populair op aperots’ (‘Dour Calvinist only popular in apehouse’), *De Volkskrant*, 18/09/91; W. Joustra, ‘Ervaring bezorgt Van den Broek nog geen baan’ (‘Experience still doesn’t get Van den Broek a job’), *De Volkskrant*, 16/09/92; J. Tromp, ‘Van den Broek had geen minister meer moeten willen wezen’ (‘Van den Broek should not have wanted still to be a minister’), *De Volkskrant*, 08/10/91; J.J. Lindner, ‘Koks steun voor Van den Broek is dwaze keuze’ (‘Kok’s support for Van den Broek is crazy choice’), *De Volkskrant*, 19/12/92; J.L. Heldring, ‘Een te lang ministerschap?’ (‘Too long a minister?’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/01/92; P. Scheffer, ‘Van den Broeks tijd was gekomen’ (‘Van den Broek’s time had come’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/12/92; E. Nicolassen, ‘Bijna te lang op het feestje gebleven’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 19/12/92.

⁶⁶ J.T.J. van den Berg, ‘Een nieuwe start zonder minister Van den Broek’ (‘A new start without Minister Van den Broek’), *Trouw*, 01/02/92.

⁶⁷ W. Joustra, ‘Buitenlandse Zaken’ (‘Foreign Affairs’), *De Volkskrant*, 01/02/92; idem, ‘Ook in CDA taant gezag Van den Broek’ (‘Van den Broek’s authority waning even in CDA’), *De Volkskrant*, 26/11/92; L. Meijer, ‘Nu Van den Broek vertrekt, kan zelfs de oppositie niet zonder hem’ (‘Now that Van den Broek is going, even the opposition cannot live without him’), *Trouw*, 16/12/92.

⁶⁸ L. Ornstein, ‘Minister Van den Broek: ‘Ik zou zeggen: beginnen met een schot voor de boeg’’, *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, p. 9.

⁶⁹ L. Ornstein & M. van Weezel, ‘Van den Broek kan de wereld weer aan, dertel als een veulen’ (‘Van den Broek can face the world again, frisky as a foal’), *Vrij Nederland*, 11/04/92; L. Meijer & C. Welgraven, ‘Nederland is bijna te klein voor Hans

As far as foreign policy was concerned, Van den Broek was an ‘Atlanticist *pur sang*’.⁷¹ Piet Dankert, who was Junior Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the Lubbers-Kok government, said that he never thought Van den Broek was much interested in Germany or France: ‘His concern lay much more with Britain and America.’⁷² The Minister was well-known for always wanting to join in when America was at war.⁷³ But the ‘small-but-valiant syndrome’⁷⁴ had not made Van den Broek a power obsessive. When it came to the future of Europe, he generally argued in moral terms.⁷⁵

Van den Broek’s final years in office were blighted by his troubled relationship with the Prime Minister, Ruud Lubbers. Lubbers had long admired Van den Broek. But in 1989, things began to cool down between them. Together with Minister of Finance Onno Ruding and parliamentary party leader Elco Brinkman, Van den Broek was one of three potential CDA candidates to succeed Lubbers. In order to assess their abilities, the party leadership decided that Ruding and Van den Broek should each prove themselves in a role other than that in which they had thus far made a name for themselves. The proposal was that Ruding become Minister of Foreign Affairs and that Van den Broek move to the Ministry of Justice. The plan failed because Van den Broek refused to leave ‘his’ ministry⁷⁶ – a decision which, in Lubbers’ view, disqualified him from the succession race.⁷⁷

However, the personal relationship between Lubbers and Van den Broek was only really damaged in autumn 1990 by a battle over foreign policy responsibilities.⁷⁸ The establishment of the European Council of Ministers in 1976 had drawn attention to the fact that the Dutch premier had far more limited foreign policy powers than most other members of the Council. Generally meeting twice a year, the Council was formally made up of the EC heads of government, the French president and the President of the European Commission. They were accompanied to these gatherings by their foreign ministers. But there were moments during such a summit – for example, during the closing dinner for the heads of government – when the Prime Minister was unaccompanied by his Minister of Foreign Affairs and in a position to exchange views with his counterparts. The Dutch premier was officially bound by a mandate drawn up by the government – and the foreign ministry in particular – but this was sometimes far from conclusive once he entered the Council chamber.⁷⁹ It was partly in response to this situation that, late in 1978, then Prime Minister Dries Van Agt had written that the primacy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs had ‘long since’ disappeared when it came to European aspects of foreign policy.⁸⁰

van den Broek’ (‘The Netherlands is almost too small for Hans van den Broek’), *Trouw*, 13/07/91; ‘Van den Broek mikpunt spot’ (‘Van den Broek butt of mockery’), *De Telegraaf*, 24/03/93; Jan Bron Dik, ‘De Hollanditis ligt gelukkig achter ons, er is weer internationaal respect’ (‘Fortunately, the Hollanditis is over: there is international respect again’), *CD/Actueel*, 16/01/93, p. 6; P. Rusman, ‘De laatste Koude-Oorlogstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)’, in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, p. 281.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Kadijevic, *View*, p. 46; interview A. Buha, 17/12/99; interview V. Jovanovic, 14/09/01.

⁷¹ Stermerdink, *Dromen*, p. 157; cf. Dankert in: Rehwinkel & Nekkers, p. 147; P. Rusman, ‘De laatste Koude-Oorlogstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)’, in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 269, 272, 275, 276; Van Walsum, *Nederland*, pp. 52 and 60; R. Meines, ‘Hans van den Broek. Atlanticus gaat naar Europa’ (‘Hans van den Broek: Atlanticist goes to Europe’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/12/92; W. Joustra, ‘Van den Broek bleef atlanticus tegen verdrukking en Europese wanhoop in’ (‘Van den Broek remained Atlanticist despite opposition and European despair’), *De Volkskrant*, 16/12/92.

⁷² Dankert in: Rehwinkel & Nekkers, p. 143.

⁷³ Stermerdink, *Dromen*, pp. 191-192; P. Rusman, ‘De laatste Koude-Oorlogstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)’, in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, p. 274

⁷⁴ This term is taken from Ben Knapen, ‘Het vaderland in Europa’ (‘The fatherland in Europe’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91.

⁷⁵ See, for example, H. van den Broek, ‘Continuïteit en vernieuwing in Europa’ (‘Continuity and renewal in Europe’), *Christen Democratische Verkenningen* (1990)5, p. 208.

⁷⁶ Metz, *Stranding*, p. 39.

⁷⁷ Metz, *Stranding*, pp. 40, 188-189.

⁷⁸ For more on this issue, see also Rozemond, *Regeringsleider*.

⁷⁹ Schmelzer, *Minister-president*, p. 193.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Schmelzer, *Minister-president*, pp. 190-191.

Towards the end of 1990, the Minister of the Interior Ien Dales proposed in a memorandum to the Ministerial Council that – like the German Chancellor – the Prime Minister should be given executive authority so that he could adopt positions at his own discretion and on behalf of the government during European summits. Lubbers agreed: he was not just experiencing difficulties with his constitutional position at the twice-yearly summits, but he also wanted to keep in touch with his foreign counterparts as ‘a colleague in Europe’⁸¹ during other contacts, particularly by telephone. In a letter to Van den Broek he stated that he wished to have the same freedom of movement as the other heads of government, without hindrances regarding ‘information, contacts, presence, status’ and the like.

Van den Broek did not take lightly what he saw as an attempt by Lubbers to achieve excessive ‘European harmonization’ of the prime ministerial office and threatened to resign.⁸² Although the immediate conflict was smoothed over, it created a lasting rift between Lubbers and Van den Broek.⁸³ The pair did not stop squabbling, and on this point Van den Broek continued to give the impression of being – to quote the newspaper *Trouw* – ‘a whining child who just can’t get his way’.⁸⁴ Underlying the conflict were rumours that Lubbers might succeed Jacques Delors as President of the European Commission, an appointment which could eventually hinder the further development of Van den Broek’s own international career given the small number of international top positions available.⁸⁵

As concern about Yugoslavia mounted, Van den Broek soon had hardly any time for other matters.⁸⁶ This particularly applied to the draft treaty due to be signed by EC leaders in Maastricht at the end of 1991, one important aspect of which was a model for a European Political Union. Van den Broek had to largely turn over this dossier to his Junior Minister, Piet Dankert.⁸⁷ It was a move which would have disastrous consequences.

Under Dankert’s leadership the plan, drawn up by the Netherlands’ predecessor in the EC presidency, Luxembourg, was rewritten. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Luxembourg plan was based far too heavily upon an intergovernmental approach; The Hague preferred a supranational one. Moreover, The Hague objected to the proposed security cooperation, which it felt threatened to ‘tread on NATO’s toes’. On Monday, 30 September 1991, ‘Black Monday’, the Dutch draft proposal for political union was rejected by every other European Community member state

⁸¹ TK, session 1990-1991, *Handelingen*, p. 1129, (08/11/90)

⁸² Metz, *Stranding*, pp. 40 and 189; A.E. Kersten, ‘Een woud van verandering. Ontwikkeling van taak en organisatie van het ministerie’ (‘A forest of change. Developing the ministry’s task and organization’), in Van Ditzhuyzen et al. (eds.), *Jaar*, p. 74; TK, session 1990-1991, 21 865, no. 1; *ibidem*, pp. 1115-1133.

⁸³ Dankert in: Rehwinkel & Nekkers, *Regerendernijfs*, p. 153; P. Rusman, ‘De laatste Koude-Oorlogstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)’, in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 269, 270, 272, 276-277, 281; ‘Duitsland verwacht veel van Nederland als voorzitter van de EG’ (‘Germany expects much from the Netherlands in EC Presidency’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91; Victor, *Presidency*, 6.2.1.

⁸⁴ L. Meijer & C. Welgraven, ‘Nederland is bijna te klein voor Hans van den Broek’, *Trouw*, 13/07/91.

⁸⁵ ‘Had Lubbers Van den Broek maar op cake getrakteerd’ (‘If only Lubbers had just treated Van den Broek to cake’), *Trouw*, 18/06/91; J. Tromp, ‘Delors draait Lubbers in moeilijke positie. Premier vindt speculaties over EG-carrière vervelend en vervuilend’ (‘Delors puts Lubbers in difficult position. Premier finds speculation about EC career annoying and contaminating’), *De Volkskrant*, 26/06/91; O. Garschagen & W. Joustra, ‘Premier Lubbers over het Nederlands EG-voorzitterschap: ‘Ik hoor nergens een vals geluid’’ (‘Prime Minister Lubbers on Dutch EC Presidency: ‘I hear no bad notes’’), *De Volkskrant*, 27/06/91; O. Garschagen & J. Tromp, ‘De nieuwe voorzitter heet Lubbers’ (‘The new chairman is called Lubbers’), *De Volkskrant*, 27/06/92; L. Meijer & C. Welgraven, ‘Internationaal kan Henz Vendenbroek niet meer stuk’, *Trouw*, 13/07/91.

⁸⁶ Interview P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99; Elsbeth Tiedemann, ‘Terug naar Zwarte Maandag’ (‘Back to Black Monday’), *Elsevier*, 22/06/96, p. 14; M. van Hulten, ‘Zwarte Maandag. Kroniek van een gemiste kans’, in Labohm (ed.), *Waterdragers*, p. 194.

⁸⁷ Interview P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99; E. Tiedemann, ‘Terug naar Zwarte Maandag’, *Elsevier*, 22/06/96, p. 14; Michiel van Hulten, ‘Zwarte Maandag. Kroniek van een gemiste kans’, in Labohm (ed.), *Waterdragers*, p. 194; Hans Nijenhuis, ‘Nederland heeft niet het laatste woord’ (‘The Netherlands does not have the last word’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 25/09/91.

except Belgium.⁸⁸ In a statement to the assembled press, Van den Broek said, ‘We’ve been made to look like real idiots’.⁸⁹

It speaks volumes that the failure was partly due to poor consultation and a disregard of advice coming from the Netherlands’ EC partners and its own Permanent Representative in Brussels, Peter Nieman.⁹⁰ The signals that the plan would be poorly received were there, but they were not picked up because they were at odds with established views.⁹¹ Another cause of the fiasco was that, because of his battle with Van den Broek over areas of responsibility, Lubbers had not lobbied on behalf of the Dutch concept outside the country. He knew that Van den Broek did not appreciate his direct contacts with his foreign counterparts.⁹² Nieman, who did not agree with Van den Broek and Dankert, sought direct contact with the Prime Minister. But Lubbers saw it as his task to support the two ministers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁹³ Bonn, which had originally appeared to support the Dutch ideas, dropped the plan when it became clear that Paris opposed it. The Franco-German axis proved too hard a nut for The Hague to crack.⁹⁴ ‘We lost the Treaty of Maastricht because the Germans hid behind the French skirts,’ said a disappointed Dankert.⁹⁵ ‘Adding insult to injury’, a week later Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Roland Dumas decided to ‘help’ the Dutch EC Presidency by calling a round of consultations about the European Political Union in Paris. When Van den Broek protested that the Presidency was being hijacked, Paris replied that the issue of creating the Union was too important to be left to the Netherlands.⁹⁶ It was only intensive repair work by Lubbers – yet another major setback for Van den Broek – which enabled the EC member states to agree to a revised draft treaty, one which looked very much like the original Luxembourg proposal, on 9 and 10 December 1991. After ‘Black Monday’, foreign and security policy would not become ‘federal’ matters but remain topics for intergovernmental agreement based upon unanimity.

The poor relationship between Van den Broek and Lubbers also left its mark on civil servants at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. ‘Every time we deal with General Affairs [the Prime Minister’s Department], feelings of mistrust gain the upper hand at our ministry and we no longer see things in proportion,’ said an anonymous senior official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs towards the end of January 1992.⁹⁷ The repeated conflicts with the premier had by now seriously damaged Van den Broek and his Ministry.⁹⁸

⁸⁸ Dankert in: Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendernijis*, p. 150.

⁸⁹ M. van Hulten, ‘Zwarte Maandag. Kroniek van een gemiste kans’, in Labohm (ed.), *Waterdragers*, p. 194.

⁹⁰ ‘Premier erkent fouten bij presentatie unievoorstel EG’ (‘Premier acknowledges errors in presenting EC union proposal’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/10/91; E. Tiedemann, ‘Terug naar Zwarte Maandag’, *Elsevier*, 22/06/96, p. 16; M. Sie Dhian Ho, ‘Federatiekampioen of trouwe bondgenoot. Het Nederlandse beleid ten aanzien van de Europese en Atlantische Samenwerking’ (‘Federal champion or faithful ally? Dutch policy on European and Atlantic Cooperation’), in Van Ditzhuyzen et al. (eds.), *Jaar*, p. 303; Michiel van Hulten, ‘Zwarte Maandag. Kroniek van een gemiste kans’, in Labohm (ed.), *Waterdragers*, pp. 196-197.

⁹¹ Victor, *Presidency*, 6.2.2.1.

⁹² M. van Hulten, ‘Zwarte Maandag. Kroniek van een gemiste kans’, in Labohm (ed.), *Waterdragers*, p. 209. This disputes the claim that the premier wanted nothing to do with the matter until it was too late. For that claim, see Leonard Ornstein & Max van Weezel, ‘Van den Broek kan de wereld weer aan, dertel als een veulen’, *Vrij Nederland*, 11/04/92; ANP report, Coenraads, ‘EU-voorzitterschap. ‘Black Monday’ resultaat van grove inschattingsfouten’ (‘EU Presidency. ‘Black Monday’ result of gross errors of judgement’), 22/12/96, 08:52. Elsewhere, a distinction is drawn between private involvement by Lubbers, which is said to have taken place, and public involvement which did not, W. Joustra, ‘Competentiestrijd hield Lubbers af van ingrijpen’ (‘Battle over responsibilities stopped Lubbers intervening’), *De Volkskrant*, 11/10/91.

⁹³ Michiel van Hulten, ‘Zwarte Maandag. Kroniek van een gemiste kans’, in Labohm (ed.), *Waterdragers*, p. 206.

⁹⁴ Michiel van Hulten, ‘Zwarte Maandag. Kroniek van een gemiste kans’, in Labohm (ed.), *Waterdragers*, pp. 203-204.

⁹⁵ G.-J. Bogaerts, A. Brouwers & A. Elshout, ‘Graaien in Europa’ (‘Grab-bag in Europe’), *De Volkskrant*, 16/12/00.

⁹⁶ Victor, *Presidency*, 6.2.1.

⁹⁷ ‘Conflicten schaden aanzien v.d. Broek’ (‘Conflicts tarnish Van den Broek’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/01/92.

⁹⁸ M.C. Brands, ‘Wanneer betaalt Nederland eindelijk het Brusselse leergeld?’ (‘When will the Netherlands finally pay Brussels’ tuition fees’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/01/92; R. Meines, ‘Alles wat mis kon gaan rond reis ging mis’ (‘Everything which could go wrong with trip did’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 20/01/92; ‘Conflicten schaden aanzien v.d. Broek’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/01/92; R. Meines, ‘De ster van Hans van den Broek staat er bleekjes bij’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 28/01/92; J.L.

When Van den Broek was unexpectedly appointed as a European Commissioner in December 1992, he was succeeded on 2 January 1993 by Pieter Kooijmans, Professor of International Law at the University of Leiden. Kooijmans had extensive international experience, including as Junior Minister of Foreign Affairs (1973-1977), Dutch Representative to the General Assembly of the United Nations (1967 and 1973-1976), Head of the Dutch Delegation to the UN Committee on Human Rights (1982-1986 and 1992), Chairman of that Committee (1984-1985) and UN Rapporteur on Torture (1985-1992). In late 1991 and early 1992 he had been a member of a CSCE mission which visited all the Yugoslav republics and autonomous provinces to assess the human-rights situation. This meant that he had been to Bosnia, which he described at the time as 'a place of tranquility'.⁹⁹ As Rapporteur on Torture, later in 1992 Kooijmans had been a member of the mission to Kosovo led by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission for Human Rights in the Former Yugoslavia. As a result of his visits to the region, Kooijmans felt a strong emotional involvement with the Yugoslavia issue.¹⁰⁰ He believed that the international community must do more¹⁰¹ and, in that regard, took the same line as Van den Broek 'with complete conviction'.¹⁰²

Because the Lubbers government had no more than 18 months left in office, Kooijmans was regarded as a 'caretaker' minister when appointed.¹⁰³ But the combination of his proven expertise, his independent thinking, his ability to take decisions fast and the fact that he was not a 'party baron' won over many people.¹⁰⁴ 'seldom has a minister had such a smooth introduction,' wrote the daily *De Telegraaf* three months after he took up office. He was admired by both Left and Right as 'amiable, inspiring, balanced, astute, courteous, almost charismatic'.¹⁰⁵

As minister, Kooijmans at first had no major ambitions because he was well aware that his term at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be short-lived.¹⁰⁶ Once in office, though, he would probably have liked to continue his job as a minister. However, the exclusion of the CDA from the new coalition formed in 1994 put an end to any such ambitions.¹⁰⁷

Kooijmans' regal distance from the political arena also extended to his ministerial relationship with the Ministry of General Affairs, which under Van den Broek had been damaged by the conflict with Lubbers over primacy in foreign policy responsibility. According to Kooijmans, it was 'absurd' to

Heldring, 'Een ongelukkig halfjaar' ('An unhappy six months'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 31/03/92; M. van der Stoel, 'Grotere rol premier in buitenlands beleid' ('Bigger role for premier in foreign policy'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/07/92; K. Koch, 'Die twee' ('Those two'), *De Volkskrant*, 31/01/92; W. Joustra, 'Buitenlandse Zaken', *De Volkskrant*, 01/02/92; 'Pronk wil voor Lubbers meer armsgang in Europa' ('Pronk wants more elbow room for Lubbers in Europe'), *De Volkskrant*, 13/03/92; J. Tromp, 'En Lubbers kijkt jaloers naar de groten der aarde' ('And Lubbers looks jealously at the great of the world'), *De Volkskrant*, 31/03/92; K. Koch, 'Machteloze Apenrots' ('Powerless apehouse'), *De Volkskrant*, 10/04/92; L. Meijer, 'Voor Lubbers nog geen allesverloren' ('All is not yet lost for Lubbers'), *Trouw*, 08/02/92; idem, 'Zuid-Afrika vreet Van den Broek op' ('south Africa eats up Van den Broek'), *Trouw*, 18/03/92.

⁹⁹ P. Nijman & E. Bode, 'Tussenpauze denkt al aan verlenging. Hoogleraar Kooijmans heeft het naar zijn zin als minister van Buitenlandse Zaken', ('Caretaker thinks of staying on. Professor Kooijmans is enjoying being Minister of Foreign Affairs') *De Telegraaf*, 20/03/93.

¹⁰⁰ Femke Halssema, 'Kleine stapjes. Het pragmatisch optimisme van Peter Kooijmans' ('small steps: Peter Kooijmans' pragmatic optimism'), *de Helling*, 9(1996)3, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ Interview H.A. Schaper, 10/04/00.

¹⁰² Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

¹⁰³ P. Baehr, 'Pleitbezorger van de mensenrechten. Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans (1993-1994)' ('Champion of human rights. Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans (1993-1994)'), in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 283 and 284.

¹⁰⁴ Interviews M. Hennis, 09/03/99 and J.M. Vos, 24/06/99.

¹⁰⁵ P. Nijman & E. Bode, 'Tussenpauze denkt al aan verlenging. Hoogleraar Kooijmans heeft het naar zijn zin als minister van Buitenlandse Zaken', *De Telegraaf*, 20/03/93.

¹⁰⁶ Interview M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

¹⁰⁷ P. Baehr, 'Pleitbezorger van de mensenrechten. Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans (1993-1994)', in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 292; C. Janssen & T. Ruigrok, 'Peter Kooijmans', *HP/De Tijd*, 12/03/93, p. 16; P. Nijman & E. Bode, 'Tussenpauze denkt al aan verlenging. Hoogleraar Kooijmans heeft het naar zijn zin als minister van Buitenlandse Zaken', *De Telegraaf*, 20/03/93; 'Kooijmans voelt voor voortzetting ministerschap' ('Kooijmans would like to continue as minister'), *ANP*, 20/10/93, 15:54.

deny the premier an increasing role in foreign policy at European level by appealing to Dutch tradition.¹⁰⁸ The new minister also had a significantly better relationship with the Minister for Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk, than did his predecessor.¹⁰⁹

Kooijmans knew the Ministry and how its official apparatus worked because, as a member of the old ARP (Protestant Party), he had been Junior Minister of Foreign Affairs with particular responsibility for disarmament issues during the Den Uyl government of 1973-1977. The Ministry was pleased with its new minister because he was better able than his predecessor to listen to his officials and concentrated on overall policy, leaving the civil servants with more freedom of movement.¹¹⁰ More than Van den Broek, Kooijmans took decisions based upon documents compiled by junior officials.¹¹¹ Parliament, too, appreciated the 'caretaker' minister for his thorough knowledge of the briefs and his open style of consultation.¹¹²

Kooijmans tried to steer a middle way between Van den Broek's pro-Atlantic views and a stronger emphasis on a European policy. He was aware that the relationship with the United States would primarily be shaped by how capable the European countries were of adopting a more common policy.¹¹³

His own policy would be heavily influenced by his human-rights expertise.¹¹⁴ In 1991, Kooijmans had already come out as a proponent, under certain circumstances, of humanitarian interventions not sanctioned by international law. In his view, respect for national sovereignty should not obstruct the fulfilment of humanitarian needs.¹¹⁵ Moreover, he was a strong supporter of the use of Dutch troops in UN peacekeeping operations.¹¹⁶

In the new government which took office on 22 August 1994, the first so-called 'Purple Coalition', Hans van Mierlo became Minister of Foreign Affairs. Unlike Kooijmans, he had no

¹⁰⁸ O. van Boetzelaer, 'Minister Kooijmans. Het is niet zinnig premier grotere rol op buitenlands politiek terrein te ontzeggen' ('Minister Kooijmans: it is absurd to deny premier greater role in foreign policy'), *CD/Actueel*, 28/08/93. Kooijmans' milder attitude towards Department of General Affairs is also apparent from interviews A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00; J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00; and Swartbol, 24/02/99.

¹⁰⁹ Interview P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99; R. Meines, 'Conflict tussen Pronk en v.d. Broek fundamenteel' ('Conflict between Pronk and Van den Broek is fundamental'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/05/92; 'Besluiteloos' ('Unresolved') and 'Kwestie Pronk-v.d. Broek voorlopig gesust' ('Pronk-Van den Broek dispute temporarily hushed'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 20/05/92; L. Meijer, 'Van den Broek niet altijd stille diplomaat' ('Van den Broek not always quiet diplomat'), *Trouw*, 09/04/92; 'Van den Broek vindt mensenrechten geen zaak voor Pronk' ('Van den Broek does not think human rights are a matter for Pronk'), *Trouw*, 10/04/92; 'Van den Broek wil ook beheer over ontwikkelingssamenwerking' ('Van den Broek also wants control over development cooperation'), *De Volkskrant*, 09/04/92; 'Van den Broek eist ook primaat ontwikkeling en ontwapening op' ('Van den Broek demands primacy over development and disarmament'), *De Volkskrant*, 10/04/92; 'Van den Broek en Pronk bevechten macht in de toekomst' ('Van den Broek and Pronk fight over future power'), *De Volkskrant*, 01/05/92; C. Janssen & T. Ruijgrok, 'Peter Kooijmans', *HP/De Tijd*, 12/03/93, p. 16; Olaf van Boetzelaer, 'Het is niet zinnig premier grotere rol op buitenlands terrein te ontzeggen', *CD/Actueel*, 28/08/93, p. 14.

¹¹⁰ Interviews P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99; J.L. Sandee, 12/06/00; R. Swartbol, 24/02/99; and J.M. Vos, 24/06/99; Dig Ishta quoted in C. Janssen & T. Ruijgrok, 'Peter Kooijmans', *HP/De Tijd*, 12/03/93, p. 16; Dankert in: Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendernijs*, p. 144.

¹¹¹ Interview K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

¹¹² P. Baehr, 'Pleitbezorger van de mensenrechten. Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans (1993-1994)', in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 291.

¹¹³ P. Baehr, 'Pleitbezorger van de mensenrechten. Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans (1993-1994)', in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 289-290.

¹¹⁴ P. Baehr, 'Pleitbezorger van de mensenrechten. Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans (1993-1994)', in Hellema et al. (eds.), *Ministers*, pp. 291; Dankert in Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendernijs*, p. 144.

¹¹⁵ O. van Boetzelaer, 'Rol Verenigde Naties' ('The role of the United Nations'), *CD/Actueel*, 11/05/91; O. van Boetzelaer, 'Kooijmans kan de juiste man op de juiste plaats zijn' ('Kooijmans could be the right man in the right place'), *CD/Actueel*, 16/01/93, p. 10; O. van Boetzelaer, 'Het is niet zinnig premier grotere rol op buitenlands terrein te ontzeggen', *CD/Actueel*, 28/08/93, p. 15; M. Meijer, 'Kooijmans: Verenigde Naties moeten bij vredesoperaties eigen grenzen kennen' ('Kooijmans: United Nations must know its own limitations in peacekeeping operations'), *CD/Actueel*, 28/10/95, p. 12.

¹¹⁶ P. Nijman & E. Bode, 'Tussenspauz denk al aan verlenging. Hoogleraar Kooijmans heeft het naar zijn zin als minister van Buitenlandse Zaken', *De Telegraaf*, 20/03/93.

experience in international politics. Van Mierlo's political career had mostly been played out in the domestic field. As its political leader, he had played a prominent role in the party Democraten '66 (D66, Democrats) since its foundation. After some serious electoral setbacks, D66 had experienced a recovery in 1986 under Van Mierlo. In the 1994 general election it won 24 seats in Parliament. Van Mierlo had both rational and personal reasons for accepting the appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs: as well as an acknowledgement of his role as the 'spiritual father' of the Purple Coalition, it was the crowning moment in his own political career. As Foreign Minister, Van Mierlo was a *tabula rasa*. He had little administrative experience, although he had gained some experience as a minister – less than six months – at the Ministry of Defence. He did not have a reputation as a minister who ran his department on a tight leash, and his knowledge of the files was not great. In developing policy, rather than relying upon written briefs he preferred to cultivate ideas in conversation with his staff – an inspiring but time-consuming process.¹¹⁷ By his own admission, Van Mierlo had little more than general knowledge of the Yugoslavia issue when he took office in August 1994. Prior to that, he had left the detail to his party's foreign affairs spokesman.¹¹⁸ But he soon caught up: much of his time at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was devoted to Yugoslavia. He tried to achieve a good working relationship with Minister of Defence Joris Voorhoeve, but left him a great deal of room to act independently. Voorhoeve gained the impression that Van Mierlo and his ministry had little interest in the military aspects of the question.¹¹⁹ According to civil servants at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Van Mierlo relied heavily upon the Dutch Permanent Representative to the United Nations, fellow D66 member Niek Biegan. Both Biegan and Van Mierlo play down that reliance, claiming simply that they largely agreed on general policy matters.¹²⁰ Van Mierlo viewed the conflict in Yugoslavia primarily as a European matter, but was troubled that Europe was being so indecisive. He maintained close contacts with his German opposite number, Klaus Kinkel, but Dutch influence over international decision-making remained modest. Van Mierlo's style of formulating a standpoint in open discussion was not much appreciated by his counterparts elsewhere in Europe. His influence in that circle was very limited.¹²¹

8. The diplomatic missions

The Dutch government had permanent representatives to a range of international organizations. To the Netherlands, the most important in respect of the Yugoslavia issue were those to the European Community, NATO and the United Nations. The Dutch Permanent Representative to the EC and his counterparts from the other member states made up the 'Coreper', the *Comité de Représentants Permanents*. This was the final body to consider proposals before their referral to the EC Council of Ministers for a definitive decision. The Coreper was also charged with implementing mandates issued by the Council of Ministers, the council on which ministers of foreign affairs or other relevant ministers took seat.

The foreign ministers also met in another, informal forum known as 'Gymnich Meetings'. At least twice a year, usually at the end of a member state's six-month presidency of the EC, the European Council met (not to be confused with the Council of Europe). In the European Council, the Community's heads of government plus the President of France came together.

Until the beginning of 1993, the post of Dutch Permanent Representative to the EC was held by Peter Nieman. Then former Secretary-General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Bernard Rudolf Bot took up the position. The Dutch Permanent Mission was the second smallest of all the EU

¹¹⁷ D. Hellema, 'Een charmante bewindsman' ('A charming minister') in: Hellema, Zeeman & Van der Zwan (eds.), *De Nederlandse ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken in de twintigste eeuw*. (The Hague, 1999), pp. 295-308; interview J. Vos, 24/06/99.

¹¹⁸ Interview H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo, 10/02/00.

¹¹⁹ Interview J.J.C. Voorhoeve, 15/04/97.

¹²⁰ Interviews N. Biegan, 03/07/00 and H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo, 19/05/00.

¹²¹ Interviews P. Neville-Jones, 15/11/01 and M. Rifkind, 16/11/01.

member states, after Luxembourg's, because the Dutch government believed on principle that the European Commission should be hampered as little as possible.¹²²

In 1970 the EC countries decided to set up European Political Cooperation (EPC), an intergovernmental forum to consult upon and coordinate their individual foreign policies. This form of cooperation was formally enshrined in the Single European Act of 1986, the first substantial revision and modification of the original European treaties. The Act stated that the member states were obliged 'to avoid taking any action or adopting any stance which might undermine their effectiveness as a cohesive force in international relations or within international organizations'.¹²³ The EC and European Political Cooperation were supposed to coordinate. But for the heads of government and foreign ministers involved, there was little difference between an EPC meeting and the rest of a European Council or EC Council of Ministers session. At EPC level, as well as regular telephone contact between the various foreign ministries, there was also another, more formal means of communication: the 'COREU', a telegram sent to all the other EC capitals.

The Treaty of Maastricht would codify diplomatic cooperation within the context of European Political Union. The Treaty was prepared by the Intergovernmental Committee (IGC). The first pillar recognized the existing European Community. The second pillar laid the foundations for a common foreign security policy. The third pillar paved the way for cooperation in the fields of Home Affairs and Justice. The Treaty came into force on 1 November 1993. At first it changed little in practical terms as far as a common foreign policy was concerned. The common defence policy made only slow progress.

Since 1989, Adriaan Jacobovits de Szeged, former Director General of Political Affairs (DGPZ), had been Dutch Permanent Representative to NATO. In 1993, he was succeeded by Bert Veenendaal.

Holding the rank of Ambassador, the Permanent Representative sat on the North Atlantic Council – also known as the NATO Council – the alliance's most important decision-making body. The council was chaired by the Secretary-General of NATO. Decisions of the then 16 NATO members were reached by consensus. Votes were seldom held. The Secretary-General summarized the discussion and circulated his résumé. During meetings the Council used a 'decision sheet', on which resolutions were recorded. A 'procedure of silence' applied: if no objection was received within a set deadline, a decision was adopted. If there was opposition to a text, the Council met again to reformulate it until all the members could agree. The Dutch Permanent Representative to NATO maintained contacts with both the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence in The Hague.

The position adopted by the Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council was always based upon written instructions compiled before each meeting. They were compiled from a process of written and verbal consultation between Permanent Mission staff and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence in The Hague.¹²⁴ According to Jacobovits de Szeged, however, this was hardly ever done when Yugoslavia was on the agenda.¹²⁵ This is not as strange as it may appear, because the Dutch ambassadors to NATO were usually allowed great policy freedom. They were 'heavyweights' in Dutch diplomacy who had been specially selected for their ability to make the most of that freedom.¹²⁶

The North Atlantic Council met in ministerial session twice a year. At these gatherings, the member states were represented by their ministers of foreign affairs and defence. On occasion, there were also meetings at the level of heads of state and government leaders. One such meeting was held in January 1994, when the so-called 'Partnership for Peace' was agreed upon, the new policy relationship with the nations of the former Eastern Bloc. That meeting also discussed the issue of air support over Yugoslavia.

¹²² Jan Bron Dik, 'Permanent vertegenwoordiger bij EG' ('Permanent representative at EC'), *CD/Actueel*, 16/01/93, p. 12.

¹²³ Single European Act, Title III, Article 30.

¹²⁴ Interview L.W. Veenendaal, 17/08/00.

¹²⁵ Interview A.P.R. Jacobovits de Szeged, 21/09/00.

¹²⁶ Interview J.M. Vos, 24/06/00.

The chiefs of staff sat on the Military Committee, NATO's highest military organ. As well as a permanent diplomatic mission in Brussels, there was also a permanent military mission which formally operated under the responsibility of the Permanent Representative but which in practice was directed by the Chief of Defence Staff. This problem, which is found in all embassies containing sections which fall under other ministries of state, is exacerbated in the case of the NATO because of that organization's military function. During the Yugoslavia crisis, the inherent dichotomy was further intensified because in NATO decision-making military matters increased in significance compared with the political. The relationship between the two Dutch missions was difficult. Like their colleagues from most other member states, the Dutch military representatives tended to 'keep their cards close to their chests' where the diplomats were concerned, partly out of a fear of leaks.¹²⁷ Although the Permanent Missions to the EU and NATO were both based in Brussels, there was little or no contact between them.¹²⁸

At the beginning of the period covered by this report, the Dutch Permanent Representative to the United Nations was R. J. van Schaik. He was mainly concerned with the socio-economic aspects of the organization.¹²⁹ The Security Council and other political aspects of the UN were handled by J.M.V.A. (Jan) Count de Marchant et d'Ansembourg. Accordingly it was he who mainly dealt with peacekeeping operations and the Yugoslavia issue. He also felt a personal involvement with that region, having been born in Zagreb. D'Ansembourg left New York in August 1994 and was replaced as Deputy Permanent Representative by Herman Schaper.

When Dr Niek Biegman succeeded Van Schaik in September 1992, tasks within the mission were reassigned. Biegman, an Arabist by training, was married to a Croatian. He felt closely involved with the events in the former Yugoslavia and had outspoken opinions about Dutch policy towards the region; it had to be based upon the conviction that the conflict had been caused by Serbian aggression and that any concession to the Serbs was totally wrong.¹³⁰ It is therefore hardly surprising that, unlike his predecessor, Biegman was extremely active with regard to the issue of the former Yugoslavia.¹³¹ His reputation was that of an amiable and accessible man, who was highly respected by his immediate staff.¹³²

Like all Dutch Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, Biegman maintained close contacts with the Director General of Political Affairs and the Minister. Most of this communication was conducted on the telephone, and so has left few traces on paper.¹³³ Moreover, the pace of developments in New York often made it unavoidable that instructions from The Hague had to be issued by telephone rather than in writing. Only in important cases did the mission in New York request that written instructions be sent retrospectively. During Pieter Kooijmans' tenure as minister, Biegman's influence was limited because his personal involvement with the Yugoslavia issue was so well known at the Ministry and there existed a natural bureaucratic tendency in The Hague to dismiss strong opinions emanating from the missions.¹³⁴

¹²⁷ Interview L.W. Veenendaal, 17/08/00.

¹²⁸ Interviews A.P.R. Jacobovits de Szeged, 21/09/00; L.W. Veenendaal; and J.M. Vos, 24/06/00.

¹²⁹ For Van Schaik view of his work at the UN, see Lucas Ligtenberg, 'Het VN-apparaat heeft te veel loten gekregen' ('The UN apparatus has been given too much'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/08/92.

¹³⁰ Interviews N. Biegman, 03/07/00; P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00; M. Hennis, 09/03/99; Major E.A.W. Koestal, 24/05/00; C. Minderhoud; H.A. Schaper, 10/04/00; R. Swartbol, 24/02/99; J.M. Vos, 24/06/99; H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

¹³¹ Interviews C. Minderhoud, 02/06/00; H.A. Schaper, 10/04/00.

¹³² Interviews E.A.W. Koestal, 24/05/00, and R.P.H. van Veen, 16/08/00.

¹³³ Interviews O. Hattinga van 't Sant, 18/07/00 and H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

¹³⁴ Interviews M. Hennis, 09/03/99, and P.H. Kooijmans, 10/09/99.

As a long-standing member of D66¹³⁵ and a good friend of Minister Hans van Mierlo, Biegman is claimed by various civil servants at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to have exerted considerably influence when Van Mierlo was minister.¹³⁶

When Biegman did seek contact with the Directorate of UN Political Affairs (DPV), it was mainly with its head, Jan Hoekema. The strong direct links between the Permanent Representative and the Minister sometimes meant that the Directorate did not know exactly what the current policy situation was.¹³⁷ Another risk was that the Permanent Representative would appeal to the Minister or the Director General of Political Affairs (DGPZ) if he did not like an instruction issued by the directorate. The instruction concerned could then be, to use diplomatic parlance, 'refined'.¹³⁸ To prevent such backtracking, civil servants at the Directorate of UN Political Affairs tried to have their instructions confirmed by the Director General of Political Affairs or the Minister. If New York subsequently expressed dissatisfaction with that instruction over the phone, the official could fall back upon the confirmation.¹³⁹

The lead responsibility for day-to-day development of Dutch policy with regard to UN involvement in Yugoslavia lay with the Permanent Mission. Unlike the governments of many large nations, which issued their ambassadors to the UN with strict instructions, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs accepted that its diplomats in New York had to be given proper room to manoeuvre.¹⁴⁰

The Permanent Mission consisted of about 20 policy officials. Every autumn, during the annual session of the UN General Assembly held between mid September and mid December, they would be temporarily reinforced by MPs, representatives of employers', employees', women's and youth organizations and a number of additional policy staff flown in from the Netherlands. In the hierarchy, immediately under the Permanent Representative and his deputy were a large number of senior embassy secretaries each with their own portfolio. From spring 1992 one of those diplomats, Cora Minderhoud, was entrusted with matters pertaining to peacekeeping operations.

As early as the end of 1990, the operational chiefs of the Netherlands armed forces had called for the stationing of a military adviser at the Permanent Mission in New York.¹⁴¹ However, the Ministry of Defence's Directorate of General Policy Matters and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided after consultations that an appointment would be too expensive, 'and, moreover, would deliver insufficient added value'. But the Permanent Representative in New York noted that the presence of a military adviser would be desirable if the Netherlands were to become involved in important peacekeeping operations in the future.¹⁴² By the end of 1992, some 14 nations had such an adviser in New York. They ranged from traditional suppliers of UN troops like Canada and the Scandinavian countries to the likes of Brazil and Venezuela, which used the position as a sort of honorary posting. Once the Netherlands had made substantial contributions to both UNTAC, the peacekeeping force in Cambodia, and UNPROFOR in Yugoslavia during 1992, it became clear that the country could no longer postpone the appointment of a military adviser. There was a lack of military expertise at the Permanent Mission and peacekeeping operations were taking up an increasing amount of Minderhoud's time,

¹³⁵ Biegman had joined the party in 1976 and so was not, as is sometimes claimed, a founder member of D66; H. Camps, 'Leed deert Nederlanders, meer dan anderen' ('suffering upsets the Dutch more than others'). 'Niek Biegman, nieuwe ambassadeur bij de NAVO' ('Niek Biegman, new ambassador to NATO'), *Elsevier*, 20/09/97, p. 40.

¹³⁶ Interviews M.R.O. Baron Bentinck, 12/04/00; O. Hattinga van 't Sant, 01/08/97; M. Hennis, 09/03/99; J.M. Vos, 24/06/99; H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

¹³⁷ Interview H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

¹³⁸ Interview H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00. See also interview with M.R.O. Baron Bentinck, 12/04/00.

¹³⁹ Interview H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

¹⁴⁰ Interviews Colonel R.R.H. van Veen, 16/08/00 and H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

¹⁴¹ Sie LL. LL./621, memorandum from the Chairman of the Joint Services Head of Operations Committee, Brigadier P.H.M. Messerschmidt, to the Chairman and members of COCSB, 14/11/90, S90/139/3162.

¹⁴² Ibidem, Van den Broek 319 to PR UN, 25/10/90; index card re. ICOSCO 08/11/90; MARStaf. exh. no. S6109/4431Geheim, minutes of 56th ICOSCO, 08/11/90, agenda point 8; NIOD, Coll. Vandeweyer, disk 1, file Milavn.not. Note from the Defence Staff about the need for a military representatives at the United Nations, 12/06/92.

whilst her portfolio also included the Middle East and Central and Eastern Europe. Many of the contacts she had to maintain at the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), founded in 1992, were military professionals. There was a huge difference in culture between them and the diplomats at the United Nations, which must have handicapped Minderhoud in establishing contacts. Moreover, she did not always know which sections of the Ministry of Defence or the armed forces in the Netherlands she should refer particular information or questions to.

One person to be confronted with this lack of expertise was Colonel Raymond van Veen, Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Staff. Minderhoud was at first unfamiliar with elementary military terms, so that she constantly had to seek explanations, either in New York or from the Army Crisis Staff or the Defence Staff in The Hague. The result was ‘confusion, delay, misinformation and misunderstanding’ – on both sides.¹⁴³ This was an impossible situation for both the Dutch Permanent Mission and the Crisis Staff.¹⁴⁴ At the same time, the Defence Staff felt the need to exercise greater influence within the military sections of the United Nations and to better promote Dutch military interests there.¹⁴⁵ When the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, Henk van den Breemen, visited Biegman in summer 1992, the pair soon agreed that the appointment of a military adviser was desperately needed.¹⁴⁶ This time the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs were quickly persuaded to agree.¹⁴⁷

Consequently, on 2 January 1993, Colonel Raymond van Veen joined the Dutch Permanent Mission to the United Nations as its military adviser, or ‘milad’ for short. He would remain in this new position until summer 1996. His job description was wide-ranging: to collect and report upon information which could be of importance to the political and military leadership of the Ministry of Defence for military-political, military-economic, strategic, tactical, technical or historical reasons. As well as hard facts, he would also have to monitor background, trends and potential developments so as to pre-empt topics which might become of interest to the defence chiefs. The main thrust of his work, however, was to maintain contacts with the DPKO about the planning and conduct of Dutch participation in UN operations.¹⁴⁸

With Van Veen in place, the Ministry of Defence soon discovered the advantages of having its own man in New York. So it was not long before the Colonel was doing more than his share of work in his new job. Biegman felt that Van Veen was being forced to take on too many operational issues and was not left with enough time to deal with policy matters. The Permanent Representative therefore insisted that a deputy military adviser be appointed.¹⁴⁹ In the autumn of 1993, Major Eddy Koestal arrived in New York, and in his wake a secretary. A year later, a warrant officer was added to the Military Section. Koestal had been sent to Yugoslavia in 1991 as an observer with the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM). After his return to the Netherlands, he became G3 in the Crisis Staff. His latest appointment was to some degree controversial, because as ECMM spokesman in 1991 he had incurred Van den Broek’s wrath by upsetting his delicate diplomatic ‘apple cart’ with a

¹⁴³ NIOD, Coll. Vandeweyer, disk 1, file Milavn.not. Note from the Defence Staff about the need for a military representatives at the United Nations, 12/06/92.

¹⁴⁴ Interviews E.A.W. Koestal, 24/05/00; C. Minderhoud 02/06/00; and R.P.H. van Veen, 16/08/00; Coll. Vandeweyer, disk 1, file Onderzoek. Defensiestaf, entry on the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) research, 21/11/92.

¹⁴⁵ NIOD, Coll. Vandeweyer, disk 1, file Milavn.not. Note from the Defence Staff about the need for a military representatives at the United Nations, 12/06/92.

¹⁴⁶ Interviews N. Biegman, 03/07/00, and R.P.H. van Veen, 16/08/00.

¹⁴⁷ ABZ, 999.0 UN/Operations/UNPROFOR/Yugoslavia. Ter Beek to Van den Broek, 23/10/92, S92/066/3112; ABZ, Governmental Archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Van den Broek to Ter Beek, 18/11/92. See also BSG. Arrangement of military adviser to PR UN, appendix from Lieutenant Colonel W.H.J. Logt, Head of the Foreign Relations Bureau of the Defence Staff, to Kooijmans et al., 06/05/93, DIS/93/071/1573.

¹⁴⁸ ABZ, PR NY. Note from E.A.W. Koestal, ‘PVVN New York’ (‘PR UN New York’).

¹⁴⁹ Interview Colonel R.P.H. van Veen, 16/08/00.

comment that recognition of Croatia would lead to an escalation of the war there. The Minister is said to have personally ensured that Koestal never spoke on behalf of the ECMM again.¹⁵⁰

The milad maintained direct contact with the DPKO about possible Dutch contributions to meeting UN needs with regard to peacekeeping operations. The DPKO was also his most important source of information. It ran separate 'desks' for the various peacekeeping operations. The UNPROFOR desk was amongst the largest with about 16 people. Van Veen – and later also his deputy, Koestal – would regularly visit it to catch up on the latest developments.

There was a monthly meeting of the military advisers at the UN, whose number grew rapidly after Van Veen's arrival. Their deputies also met periodically. These gatherings usually featured an invited guest, who would give a talk on topics such as the establishment of rules of engagement. Questions could be put and those present would provide a national update and other information. Van Veen's experience was that it was difficult to do business with his counterparts, because most of them were tied to far stricter orders from their capitals than were the Dutch diplomats.¹⁵¹ Van Veen, often accompanied by Biegman, was also present whenever a force commander visited New York and held a briefing there for the nations contributing troops. However, the Dutch milad did not think much of the opportunities available for putting questions at such meetings.¹⁵² There was no official contact whatsoever with the Netherlands' Defence Attaché in Washington.¹⁵³

The political aspects of peacekeeping operations remained the sole responsibility of Biegman, who kept in touch with DPKO head Kofi Annan and UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's own military adviser, the Canadian General Maurice Baril. Biegman generally took Van Veen with him to meetings with Annan.¹⁵⁴ Minderhoud or her replacement, J. S. Cohen, continued to gather information from the Security Council. The meetings of the nations supplying UN troops were usually attended by Biegman, Minderhoud and Van Veen, with one of the two diplomats always speaking at them on behalf of the Netherlands.

From the Netherlands, Van Veen received information from the crisis staffs of the various sections of the armed forces and from the Defence Staff, including situation reports. But, if anything, there was too much information rather than too little. Van Veen was therefore well aware of the problems facing Dutchbat, such as its supply difficulties. He discussed such issues at the Monday-morning meetings of the Permanent Mission.¹⁵⁵ Coded messages from Van Veen and Koestal were transmitted through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the Ministry of Defence receiving transcripts. Because the coded traffic was always signed by Biegman, Van Veen had agreed with the Ministry of Defence prior to his departure for New York that any message which he had personally written would always contain the word 'milad' in the first sentence. The same was later done, *mutatis mutandis*, with coded traffic originating from deputy milad Koestal.¹⁵⁶

Coded messages from the Permanent Mission dealing with military matters were submitted to Van Veen or Koestal prior to being sent to The Hague. Conversely, they showed their messages to Minderhoud or Cohen before they went to Biegman.¹⁵⁷

Despite the grip which the diplomats and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had over Van Veen and Koestal's coded traffic, they sometimes regarded the two soldiers' communications with envy. The Defence organization made far greater use of the telephone than did the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which may have had a lively telephone culture at the very top but otherwise still relied very much upon

¹⁵⁰ Interview E.A.W. Koestal, 24/05/00; Eyal, *Europe*, p. 47; 'Croatian radio reports 11 deaths', *The Independent*, 14/12/91; T. Engelen, 'servische president heeft zich ernstig verkekend' ('serbian president has badly miscalculated'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 30/12/91.

¹⁵¹ Interview R.P.H. van Veen, 16/08/00.

¹⁵² Interview R.P.H. van Veen, 16/08/00.

¹⁵³ Interviews E.A.W. Koestal 24/05/00; C. Minderhoud, 02/06/00; and R.P.H. van Veen, 16/08/00.

¹⁵⁴ Interview R.P.H. van Veen, 16/08/00.

¹⁵⁵ Interview R.P.H. van Veen, 16/08/00.

¹⁵⁶ Interview R.P.H. van Veen, 16/08/00.

¹⁵⁷ Interviews E.A.W. Koestal, 24/05/00 and R.P.H. van Veen, 16/08/00.

the coded telegram.¹⁵⁸ The desired information from the milad and his deputy did arrive eventually at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'but perhaps rather later than you would have wished for'.¹⁵⁹

Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tended to think that the Ministry of Defence used the milad or Dutch staff working in the DPKO to broach requests to the Dutch government when the Ministry of Defence wanted to station people in a particular place as part of a peacekeeping operation.¹⁶⁰ Van Veen does not deny that such a 'proactive approach' was taken. For example, if he heard that mine clearance was needed somewhere and he knew that the Dutch experts in that field had just returned from Cambodia, he would sound out the Defence Staff as to whether he should or should not 'put out feelers' in that respect. If the answer was affirmative, a 'negotiating game' about wishes and possibilities would begin with the DPKO without the Ministry of Foreign Affairs being involved. Only once an informal request came from the UN Secretariat would Van Veen take it to Biegan and tell him that he had already been discussing the idea. However, this proactive route was usually confined to smaller contributions: those involving larger units would be discussed at a higher level much earlier. 'Of course,' says Van Veen, 'it's not as if I was walking around the UN Secretariat with a battalion in my back pocket to see if there was anything exciting I could do with those men.'¹⁶¹ His deputy, Koestal, also regarded this state of affairs as defensible. 'I don't accept that what we were doing was untraceable. In the early stages you can call the world and his wife and make agreements, but the important things always have to be recorded... We sent everything important in our coded messages.'¹⁶²

Far removed from New York, in the region of the former Yugoslavia, the Netherlands had an embassy in Belgrade. Because it had been the local representative for Luxembourg's EU Presidency during the first half of 1991, it was ideally prepared for the developments after the end of June that year. But for the next six months, the heavy Dutch involvement in the Yugoslav issue during its own EU Presidency would create a heavy workload for the embassy. In early November 1991, ambassador Jan Fietelaars complained that he did not have enough time for 'frequent, considered, verified and yet still short reports' about the political developments in Yugoslavia. He had to spend too much time keeping up with current developments. At the same time he complained that he could hardly reflect at all upon what was happening in Croatia and the other republics because the news about these regions that reached him in Belgrade was heavily filtered.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, his reports were one of the most important sources of information from the region and therefore contributed to the views of the Eastern Europe Bureau at the Ministry.¹⁶⁴ At the end of May 1992, as part of the UN sanctions regime, diplomatic relations with the Belgrade government were downgraded to *chargé d'affaires* level. Of course, this restricted access by the Dutch embassy in Belgrade, headed at the time by R.J.H. Engels, to the leading figures in Yugoslavia.

From the beginning of 1993, a diplomat was stationed at the Dutch consulate in Zagreb. The first appointee stayed there less than six months. After that the position of *chargé d'affaires* in Zagreb was held by Kees Nederlof for a year. In December 1993 the Dutch government decided to open an embassy in the Croatian capital, despite the distance the government wished to keep from the country, mainly because of the Croat involvement in the war in Bosnia.¹⁶⁵ The embassy opened on 15 April 1994. The Dutch ambassador in Budapest, Hans Sondaal, had already presented his credentials to President Tudjman on 7 December the previous year, upon which he was officially accredited to

¹⁵⁸ Interviews M.R.O. Baron Bentinck, 12/04/00 and H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00; Bais, *Mijnemveld*, p. 29.

¹⁵⁹ Interview H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

¹⁶⁰ Interviews H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00 and C. Minderhoud, 02/06/00.

¹⁶¹ Interview R.P.H. van Veen, 16/08/00.

¹⁶² Interview E.A.W. Koestal, 24/05/00. Cf. interview C. Minderhoud, 02/06/00: 'There were a number of things on paper. When you needed clear, businesslike instructions. But a great many things were not.'

¹⁶³ ABZ, DIE/ARA/01233. EC/Yugoslavia, November 1991, Fietelaars 406 to Van den Broek, 03/11/91.

¹⁶⁴ Interview P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00.

¹⁶⁵ 'Nieuwe ambassades' ('New embassies'), *Het Parool*, 18/12/93. For the Dutch government keeping its distance from the regime in Croatia, see ABZ, DEU/ARA/05252, *passim*.

Zagreb.¹⁶⁶ The actual work at the embassy continued to be done by Nederlof, until he was succeeded as *chargé d'affaires* by Joop Scheffers – until then Deputy Head of the Directorate of UN Political Affairs (DPV) and previously the second man at the Belgrade embassy.¹⁶⁷

The recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Netherlands and the other EC nations in spring 1992 did not intensify diplomatic contacts straight away. At the time, the Netherlands had offered to formalize relations, but received no response from the Bosnian government.¹⁶⁸ As a result, the Netherlands, like the other EC countries, lacked any diplomatic reporting from Sarajevo in 1992. On the occasion of the CSCE ministerial meeting in Stockholm on 15 December 1992, Dutch Ambassador-at-Large Christiaan Kröner and Bosnian Minister of Foreign Affairs Haris Siladjic exchanged letters formally establishing diplomatic relations between their two countries. Present at the ceremony was the Bosnian ambassador to Belgium, Nedžad Hadžimusić, who shortly afterwards would also be accredited to the Netherlands.¹⁶⁹ At the beginning of January 1993, the ambassador of Denmark – the holder at the time of the EC Presidency – became the first representative of a European Community member state to present his credentials in the Bosnian capital.

On 15 December 1992, the Netherlands and Bosnia-Herzegovina decided to establish diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level. For the time being this led only to the accreditation of the Bosnian *chargé d'affaires* in Brussels to the Dutch government. The Netherlands maintained its side of the relationship from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague. The appointment of a Dutch ambassador or *chargé d'affaires* to Sarajevo was delayed because the security situation in the city and its lack of accessibility would make it impossible to function effectively. In summer 1994, the Eastern Europe Bureau considered that Dutch involvement in the reconstruction of Sarajevo justified the Netherlands following the example already set by France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Italy, Austria, Croatia, the Vatican, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Iran and Turkey appointing an ambassador, or at least a *chargé d'affaires*, to Sarajevo. Political reporting from the Bosnian capital would usefully complement that coming from Belgrade and Zagreb, as well as from Baron van Pallandt, the ambassador to Albania who was based in The Hague.¹⁷⁰ However, a Dutch diplomatic mission would not actually open in Sarajevo until March 1996.¹⁷¹

The lack of the Netherlands' own direct diplomatic reporting from Sarajevo meant that the Permanent Representative of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the United Nations, Muhamed Sacirbey, who had a very good working relationship with Biegan and was a frequent guest at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, would become an important source of information for the Dutch ministry.¹⁷²

9. The ECMM and the Yugoslavia Conference

Reports from the European Community Monitoring Mission for Yugoslavia (ECMM) were also of great importance, particularly during the first year of the war: for a long time, it was the only source of direct information from Croatia apart from US intelligence. Dutch Military Intelligence Service (MID) reports were also sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but initially their usefulness was considered very limited since the information they contained had often already been gleaned from open sources.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁶ For a report of this, see ABZ, DEU/ARA/05252. Nederlof to Kooijmans, 07/12/93, no. ZAG-93.19.

¹⁶⁷ For his experiences in the Croatian capital, see Scheffers, *Ambassadeur*.

¹⁶⁸ ABZ, DIE2001/00023. Memorandum from DEU to AP et al., 02/12/92, no. DEU-295/92.

¹⁶⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05293. Van den Broek, 17/12/92, circ 839.

¹⁷⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/05293. Memorandum from DEU/OE to Deputy DGPZ, 29/07/94, no. deu-609; Memorandum from DEU to PLVS, 11/08/94, no. 644/94.

¹⁷¹ ABZ, DIE/2001/00023. Memorandum from Deputy DEU to AP et al., 27/11/95, no. DEU-995/95. At first, only a *chargé d'affaires* worked there. An ambassador was appointed in June 1996.

¹⁷² Interviews N. Biegan, 03/07/00; O. Hattinga van 't Sant, 18/07/00; F.A.M. Majoor, 19/04/00; C. Minderhoud, 02/06/00; P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00; J.L. Sandee, 12/06/00; H. Hazewinkel, 17/04/00; J.M. Vos, 24/06/99; and H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

¹⁷³ Interview J.L. Sandee, 12/06/00.

Foreign diplomatic representatives in the Netherlands also played a limited role in shaping Dutch opinions and policy with regard to Yugoslavia. Virtually all the policy officials involved concede that there was frequent contact only with the United States diplomats accredited to The Hague, and to a lesser extent with staff of the British embassy.¹⁷⁴

When the Yugoslavia Conference was formed in early September 1991 under the chairmanship of Lord Carrington, Dr C. Barkman was appointed as one of its vice-chairmen and L.A. Kleinjan was seconded from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Carrington's Secretariat.

Maarten Lak headed a small Yugoslavia Conference Secretariat within the Ministry, which coordinated all internal matters related to it. His room was located in an office next to the Europe Directorate (DEU), but fell directly under the control of the Director General of Political Affairs (DGPZ). Lak reported directly to the Director General or to the Ambassador-at-Large, but also had to make sure that he kept the Europe Directorate fully informed.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Interviews O. Hattinga van 't Sant, 18/07/00; H. Hazewinkel, 17/04/00; F.A.M. Majoor, 19/04/00; A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00; H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

¹⁷⁵ ABZ, DAV, 921.353.22, memorandum from DGPZ to Head of DEU and Lak, 11/09/91, no. 211/91.

Appendix XII

Author: B.G.J. de Graaff

Defence in a changing world

1. Defence after the Cold War

‘My predecessors had one advantage over me. They had to deal with a reasonably straightforward world. I didn’t.’ The words of Relus ter Beek, who was appointed as Dutch Minister of Defence on 7 November 1989 – two days before the fall of the Berlin Wall. During the first four decades after the Second World War, the international order had been dominated by the Cold War. Two power blocs headed by the United States of America and the Soviet Union shaped the international arena. Until the end of the 1980s, Dutch defence policy was based upon the notion that the nation’s security was threatened by the USSR, which was following an expansionist policy.¹ The best guarantee against that was membership of the NATO alliance.

Ever since NATO had existed, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been particularly concerned with how to maintain or enhance Dutch influence within the organization. The Netherlands’ efforts in the area of defence were relatively intensive during the 1960s, because the country wanted to be taken seriously in NATO, wanted to improve its prestige and influence, and wanted to be an inspiring example to the other member states.² During the 1950s and 1960s, therefore, Parliament approved ‘almost blindly’ what the Government presented as its ‘NATO obligations’. But from about 1970 defence policy became a topic of much more intense debate.³ As a result of domestic pressure, Dutch defence efforts during the 1970s fell more in line with those of other NATO member states.

The first really drastic changes to the Dutch defence budget came under Minister Ter Beek. When he first entered the Ministry of Defence, it was forecast that defence spending would increase slightly over the next few years. Eventually, however, the departmental budget would fall by the best part of 20 per cent during his period in office.⁴ The question which would dog the Ministry in the years that followed was what - to use the administrative jargon current in The Hague - its ‘level of ambition’ was.

One related problem was the recruitment of military personnel. In 1993 the Dutch government decided to suspend conscription. This not only created a recruitment problem which would become acute in subsequent years⁵ but also prompted debate about the overall relationship between the armed forces and society. According to Paul Rosenmöller, leader of the *GroenLinks* (Green Left) party in Parliament, ‘since the end of the Cold War, virtually all the natural assumptions underlying the triangular relationship between politics, the armed forces and society have evaporated.’⁶ And General Hans Couzy, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, realized that by severing the link between society and the army which conscription had fulfilled ‘appreciation of the Netherlands armed forces and of the army in particular [would now] stand or fall on the extent to which their activities were regarded as useful by society.’⁷ So, as a result of the altered international situation after the end of Cold War and the different relationship between the armed forces and society, the Ministry of Defence and – in particular – the Royal Netherlands Army had to reflect upon their task. One branch particularly affected by this issue was the Airmobile Brigade, which was the first branch to be made up entirely of volunteers.

¹ Van den Hoogen, *Besluitvorming*, pp. 14-15 and the literature referred to therein.

² Van den Hoogen, *Besluitvorming*, p. 40.

³ Van den Hoogen, *Besluitvorming*, p. 99.

⁴ Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendernijds*, p. 101.

⁵ See, for example, S. Derix and J. Oranje, ‘Daar komen de vredesagenten. De Koninklijke Landmacht blijft worstelen met haar ambities’ (‘Here come the peace police. Royal Netherlands Army still wrestling with its ambitions’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/11/01.

⁶ P. Rosenmöller, ‘Van gemanipuleerde geheimhouding naar optimale openheid’ (‘From manipulated secrecy to optimum openness’), in *Hoe communiceert Defensie?*, p. 8.

⁷ Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 104.

2. Drawbacks of the Ministry of Defence's matrix organization

By the early 1990s, not only was a large-scale review of the role and tasks of armed forces needed, but also a reorganization of the relationship between the senior officials at the Ministry of Defence and the branches of the Armed Forces. There had been constant debate since the end of the Second World War about how the upper echelons of the Dutch military apparatus should be organized. Underlying this problem was the long-standing tension between the branches of the Armed Forces on the one hand and senior officials at the Ministry of Defence – also known as the ‘Central Organization’ – on the other.⁸ Roughly speaking, there were two schools of thought about the best organizational structure. At one extreme of the spectrum were the proponents of ‘vertical organization’, who argued for as much independence as possible for the individual services. In support of their viewpoint, they pointed to the fact that these separate sections participated in different NATO units and had their own NATO tasks. The other school comprised proponents of ‘horizontal organization’, who hoped to increase political influence over the Armed Forces.

After a 13-year period of vertical organization, in December 1976 a ‘matrix organization’ was introduced. This was a compromise between the two schools of thought.⁹ In this new structure the individual services continued to exist alongside one another, but at the policy level they were now directed and controlled by central bodies charged with leadership, coordination and inspection: the Ministry's Directorates-General of Materiel, of Personnel and of Economics and Finance. Overseeing all these was the Defence Council, chaired by the Minister. In addition, a Defence Staff was created, the head of which would be the highest military adviser to the political leadership on ‘general military and operational policy’. In this capacity, he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. At the head of each branch of the Armed Forces was a board: the Admiralty, Army and Airforce Boards. The Army Board, for example, acted as a sort of ‘board of directors’ for the Army, and as well as the Commander-in-Chief also included the Director of Army Materiel, the Director of Army Personnel and the Director of Army Economics and Finance. These military directors were thus under the dual command of their own Commander-in-Chief and of the head of their particular Directorate-General at the Ministry of Defence. The Commander-in-Chief would mainly present them with military demands, the Directors-General mainly with political ones. It was a structure which was bound to lead to frictions. General Couzy, who had himself been Director of Materiel RNLA between 1988 and 1990, gave the following example.

‘From his own background, an Army Director of Personnel might well understand that the Director-General of Personnel was urging part-time soldiering for political reasons (...) But if he had to give account of that demand in the Army Board, he was bound to be given short shrift by his Commander-in-Chief, who considered it utter nonsense that part-time soldiers be sent on peace-keeping missions, for example. The man concerned would then inevitably –and usually much against his will – be sent back to his functional committee [comprising the Director-General and the directors of the other branches of the Armed Forces] with the message that the branch involved could not agree with this rubbish. The result was endless meetings until all parties could eventually come to some heavily watered-down compromise.’¹⁰

⁸ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvreren*, p. 216.

⁹ For details of this reorganization, see Oskam, *Reorganisatie*; T.J.G. van den Hoogen, ‘Het ministerie van Defensie’ (‘The Ministry of Defence’), in Breunese and Roborgh (eds.), *Ministeries*, pp. 150-159; Ministeries Stemerding, *Dagboeken*, pp. 138-144.

¹⁰ Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 88.

The matrix organization did not therefore lead to the greater effectiveness which had been expected of it in 1976. It proved impossible to delineate central functions and powers from those within the individual branches. Policy integration suffered. Bureaucracy increased and decision-making slowed down. As Couzy puts it, 'Hardly any decisions were taken any more.'¹¹ And when it was done, it was still not right. Wim van Eekelen, Minister of Defence between 1986 and 1988, claimed that, 'All that talking was bad enough, but what was even worse was that nobody felt themselves to be responsible for a definitive decision.'¹²

3. The 1991 Defence White Paper: cut, reorganize and carry on

The tone for a new defence policy for the 16 NATO countries was set at the organization's London summit in July 1990. Its core themes were smaller, more flexible and more mobile fighting forces, and more multinational units. A few months later, on 19 November 1990, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) was signed. Under this the member states of NATO and the Warsaw Pact agreed to drastic reductions in their conventional armed forces, to equal levels. This accord effectively marked the end of the – perceived – threat from the Soviet Union which had shaped Western defence policy for the previous 40 years. In 1991 Washington announced that it would be reducing the US contribution to NATO from the 300,000 troops then stationed in Europe to 100,000. The Canadian government announced the complete withdrawal of its armed forces from Europe. NATO's main force would thus be reduced to 500,000 men, plus a rapid intervention force of four divisions which would consist of 70,000 troops in total.

The policy-level response to the changing perception of international security and the position of the Netherlands in the 'new international world order' was the subject of the Defence White Paper published by Minister Ter Beek in March 1991.¹³ The Netherlands thus became the first NATO country to issue a policy white paper after the CFE treaty had been signed. In so doing, one of the underlying intentions was to send a signal to the country's allies that they should not retreat into renationalization following the end of the Cold War.¹⁴

According to the White Paper, the threat of a large-scale surprise war initiated by the Soviet Union in the heart of Europe was now a thing of the past: 'The Cold War is at an end.'¹⁵ The Minister of Defence predicted that the disappearance of the menace from the East might lead to countries in the Western camp falling back on patterns of national defence, but called such a development 'utterly undesirable'.¹⁶ The government was convinced that the collective and integrated nature of the NATO alliance – with its considerable American contribution – still formed the best basis for stability in Europe. However, the Netherlands did recognize that Europe would be expected to make a relatively larger contribution to the Atlantic alliance. It declared its willingness to strongly support multinational forces, partly in the hope of thus preventing Germany from developing its own aggressive line.¹⁷

The uncertainty which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union could, according to the Defence White Paper, lead to armed conflicts both inside and outside Europe which might necessitate military containment action. It noted that, 'particularly in the Balkans... reawakened nationalism and

¹¹ Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 89.

¹² Van Eekelen, *Sporen*, p. 199.

¹³ TK session 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3.

¹⁴ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 77; Lieutenant Colonel H. Sonneveld, 'Vierkant beschouwd: 'Defensienota 1991: voorbarig en onvolledig'' ('squarely viewed: "The 1991 Defence White Paper, rash and incomplete"), *Carré* 14 (1991)7/8, pp. 16-17.

¹⁵ TK session 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 9.

¹⁶ TK session 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 21.

¹⁷ P.G.S. van Schie, 'Vrede en veiligheid in het nieuwe Europa' ('Peace and security in the new Europe'), *Liberaal Reveil* 32 (1991) 4, p. 123.

major economic problems have led to new tensions.¹⁸ A ‘wave of democratization’ might be sweeping Eastern Europe, but in Yugoslavia this was being checked by ‘deep internal chasms’.¹⁹

The Government wanted to enhance to the role of the Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which was not restricted to military security in the narrow sense but also addressed such issues as human rights and minorities. It believed, too, that the nascent European Political Union (EPU) had a part to play in defence policy. The Netherlands had pressed for the EPU’s mission to include potential participation in UN peacekeeping operations and joint actions outside the region covered by the NATO treaty.

The Defence White Paper was optimistic about the chances of UN operations succeeding now that the Soviet Union’s attitude was more constructive. ‘The UN now has the space to become involved in ‘peace enforcement’, not just ‘peacekeeping’,’ it stated.²⁰ Against this new background, the 1991 White Paper defined the main tasks of the Netherlands – in addition to protecting its own sovereign territory in Europe, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba – as contributing to collective defence by NATO, to multinational operations beyond the NATO area and to peacekeeping operations.

At the same time as reorienting its defence policy, the Government also wanted to economize on the armed forces. This would reduce their manpower by 30 per cent over seven years. But the savings and reorganization should not impair the effectiveness of the Netherlands’ armed forces in the new order of things. Conversion should not become dismantling, and Ter Beek did not want to have to hang a ‘closed for renovations’ sign on the door whilst the changes were under way.²¹ Restructuring and downsizing would go hand in hand, and in both cases it would be the Royal Netherlands Army which bore the brunt of the changes. Its personnel would be reduced from 65,000 to 40,000, the numbers of divisions reduced from three to two and the number of brigades from ten to seven. In order to have a rapidly deployable unit available for crisis-management operations – that is, those which fell outside the traditional NATO collective-defence scenario – one of the armoured infantry brigades was to be converted to an airmobile brigade equipped with attack and transport helicopters. In this way the Netherlands was presenting itself as an attractive ally, one which was not only making major savings but also modernizing. The Airmobile Brigade would form part of one of the divisions in NATO’s rapid intervention force, serving as a sort of ‘fire brigade’ to go into action in advance of the deployment of mechanized units. The transport helicopters it needed would be purchased by 1995. The attack helicopters would in the first instance be leased. Under the Defence White Paper, 40 would be purchased after 1995. Parts of the Airmobile Brigade, which was made up of three light infantry battalions, could be deployed rapidly on UN peacekeeping operations because of their high state of readiness and the fact that it was the only unit in the Netherlands Army to be made up entirely of volunteers.

The troops on standby from this brigade provided the first phase of the increased Dutch contribution to UN peacekeeping operations. On 19 November 1985 the Netherlands had made a promise to the United Nations that, in broad terms, it could supply 300 marines, one frigate, three helicopters and 30 military police within 48 hours. Within a week another 300 marines, several more frigates and a supply ship could be made available. Other units could be provided over a period of three to six months, ‘depending upon circumstances and availability’. On 21 May 1990 the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Perez de Cuellar, had asked all the organization’s member states to inform him what personnel and equipment they could make available to the UN in the light of its new needs.²²

¹⁸ TK session 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 9.

¹⁹ TK session 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 16.

²⁰ TK session 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 30.

²¹ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 181; L. Ornstein, ‘Het eergevoel van Relus ter Beek’ (‘Relus ter Beek’s sense of honour’), *Vrij Nederland*, 18/03/95; M. Reijmerink, ‘Vooral luisteren naar de generaal’ (‘Above all listen to the general’), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 15/06/95.

²² DS. exh. 02/05/91, S91/139/1409, Perez de Cuellar to the Dutch Government, 21/05/90, SPA/Q/05.90.

The Defence White Paper provided the Dutch response to this request. The increased offer included an infantry battalion, a signals company, a medical unit, personnel for staff functions and military observers. In this respect, the Dutch Government was one of only a few to respond to the Secretary-General's plea.²³

As already mentioned, the new mission and the cutbacks led to a reassessment of the organization of both the Ministry of Defence and the branches of the Armed Forces. On the one hand, the political leadership of the Ministry had to have control over policy preparation and retain an insight into its implementation. On the other hand, the commanders of each branch had to be able to shape their own policy, in particular with regard to the restructuring. The Defence White Paper marked the end of the matrix organization introduced in 1976, which had proven too expensive and too inefficient. Minister Ter Beek now opted for a 'corporate' structure, in which the Ministry effectively acted as the 'parent company' with the individual branches as 'operating subsidiaries'. As a result, from 1992 the leadership of each branch was placed in the hands of a commander-in-chief who became entirely accountable for the functioning of 'his' branch of the armed forces, a responsibility which encompassed its personnel policy, its materiel policy and its financial and economic policy. The collective accountability of the service councils was abolished, as was the situation under the matrix model whereby the policy directors in each service could be given instructions directly from the Central Organization. From 1992 the military directors came under the exclusive control of their own commander-in-chief, who in turn became the sole link between senior departmental officials (the ministers and the secretary-general) and his branch. In this way, the formulation and the implementation of policy, which in the Ministry of Defence had traditionally been intertwined, were finally separated from one another as much as possible.

Parliament approved the plans set out by Ter Beek in the Defence White Paper, but harboured serious reservations about the high investment and operating costs of the Airmobile Brigade. Both the Minister and the Army knew that the legislature was keeping a watchful eye on them, and every six months they had to report to Parliament about the progress in and costs of establishing the Brigade.²⁴

4. The Defence White Paper of 1993 (*Prioriteitennota*)

The international situation changed fast during the early 1990s. In fact, the analysis of the international situation as described in the Defence White Paper was already outdated by the time the document appeared. On 31 March 1992 Minister Ter Beek therefore found himself compelled to redefine his vision of the international security situation in a speech to the Netherlands Society for International Affairs.²⁵ He now said that within the next few years there was no chance of a large-scale conflict,

²³ Bais, *Mijnenveld*, p. 121.

²⁴ W. Joustra, 'Kamer twijfelt aan tijdig gereedkomen brigade' ('Parliament doubts brigade will be ready in time'), *De Volkskrant*, 06/02/92; 'Ter Beek mag van Kamer doorgaan met luchtbrigade' ('Parliament gives Ter Beek go-ahead for Airmobile Brigade'), *De Volkskrant*, 07/02/92; Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, 'Kamer heeft twijfels over luchtbrigade. Stapsgewijze goedkeuring' ('Parliament has doubts about Airmobile Brigade'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/02/92; 'Kamer voortaan sneller ingelicht over luchtbrigade' ('Parliament to be informed faster about Airmobile Brigade'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/02/92; M. van den Doel, 'De luchtmobiele brigade dreigt nu al vleugellam te raken' ('The Airmobile Brigade in danger of being winged already'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/03/92. See also TK session 1991-1996, 22 327, nos. 1-39.

²⁵ Full text in: CDA Secretariat, Foreign Affairs Committee, Peace and Security working party, 1992, H4.156, agenda point 6. See also A.L. ter Beek, 'Nationale soevereiniteit wordt een anachronisme' ('National sovereignty becoming an anachronism'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/04/92; idem, 'Krijgsmacht kan kleiner maar niet goedkoper' ('Forces can be smaller, but not cheaper'), *De Volkskrant*, 01/04/92; 'Toespraak minister Ter Beek op 31 maart 1992' ('speech by Minister Ter Beek on 31 March 1992'), *Carré* 15 (1992) no. 5, pp. 23-24; 'De luchtfietsbrigade' ('The dream brigade'), *Carré* 15(1992) no. 5, pp. 16-17; W. Nieuwenhuis, 'samenwerking is noodzaak voor Nederlandse krijgsmacht' ('Cooperation is essential for Dutch armed forces'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 31/03/92; P. Volten, 'Ter Beek heeft krijgsmacht uit de droom geholpen' ('Ter Beek has woken forces from their dream'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/04/92; 'Ter Beek kondigt verdere inkrimping leger aan' ('Ter Beek announces further army cuts'), *De Volkskrant*, 01/04/92; J.G. Siccama, 'Ter Beek ontziet ten onrechte luchtmacht en marine' ('Ter Beek unfairly sparing Air Force and Navy'), *De Volkskrant*, 09/04/92; Perry Pierik, 'Ter Beeks defensieplan:

although this had still been considered a possibility in the Defence White Paper. It was now thought that existing security structures like the United Nations, NATO, the CSCE and the WEU could cope with the remaining problems and risks. This meant that further cuts could be made in Dutch reserve units and a greater emphasis placed upon rapidly deployable forces like the Airmobile Brigade. The Netherlands would never again embark on a military operation by itself, except in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. ‘Thinking in terms of national sovereignty is out of date,’ claimed the Minister. From now on, there was no need to maintain independent Armed Forces. The Dutch Armed Forces would increasingly act as a sort of service-providing organization, contributing to international coalitions for the maintenance of peace and security. In principle, all Dutch military units of the Armed Forces would in the future be available for peacekeeping operations.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans van den Broek was not happy with the fact that Ter Beek’s speech was not sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until the last moment.²⁶ ‘The Minister of Defence (...) does of course have the right to make speeches,’ he was quoted as saying, ‘but it would be better if he did not surprise me with them.’²⁷ An incensed Van den Broek wrote to Minister Ter Beek that, ‘Only with difficulty was my Ministry able to obtain the text of this’²⁸ from the Ministry of Defence a few hours before you delivered it. And this when it was already in the hands of several members of the Parliamentary Committee for Defence. I find this rather crass for a speech approximately 75 per cent of which concerned international politics.’²⁹ The upper echelons of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also had objections to the content of the speech. They regarded Ter Beek’s view of the international security situation as too optimistic. Russia might well have disappeared as a threat since the disintegration of the Soviet Union but – given the instability in the former USSR and Eastern Europe, and the presence of a considerable armoury of nuclear weapons in the Confederation of Independent States (CIS) – it could not be concluded that there would never be a large-scale conflict. Minister Van den Broek questioned the strong emphasis placed upon internationalization, indeed Europeanization of defence as foreseen by Ter Beek, as a result of which the Netherlands would no longer need more-or-less independent armed forces. According to Van den Broek, the Netherlands could not expect its allies ‘to take on the defence of our territory whilst the Netherlands confines itself to operations of a peacekeeping nature’.³⁰ In his turn, Minister Van den Broek set out his standpoint in speeches to the Netherlands Atlantic Association on 10 April 1992³¹ and to the Dutch International Relations Student Association in Leiden that autumn.³² It was in his address to the Atlantic Committee that he launched his masterly plan for enabling NATO to contribute to future peacekeeping operations under the

internationale blunder’ (‘Ter Beek’s defence plan: international blunder’), *Trouw*, 08/04/92; idem, ‘Dienstplicht nog even laten bestaan’ (‘Keep conscription for now’), *De Volkskrant*, 14/04/92; S. van Berge Henegouwen, ‘Ter Beek heft dienstplicht feitelijk op’ (‘Ter Beek effectively abolishes conscription’), *Trouw*, 10/04/92; idem, ‘Commissie Meyer doet overbodige herhalingsoefening’ (‘Meyer Committee unnecessarily repeats exercise’), *De Volkskrant*, 13/04/92; W.H.T. Heijster, ‘Leger wacht angstig op de volgende schok’ (‘Army anxiously awaits next shock’), *Trouw*, 06/05/92.

²⁶ Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, p. 138; Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, p. 213; ‘Inkrimping krijgsmacht maakt vakbonden woedend. Van den Broek oneens met Ter Beek’ (‘Army cuts anger unions – Van den Broek disagrees with Ter Beek’), *De Volkskrant*, 02/04/92.

²⁷ L. Ornstein and M. van Weezel, ‘Van den Broek kan de wereld weer aan, dartzel als een veulen’ (‘Van den Broek can take on the world again, frisky as a foal’), *Vrij Nederland*, 11/04/92.

²⁸ Speech.

²⁹ ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Van den Broek to Ter Beek, 01/04/92.

³⁰ ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Van den Broek to Ter Beek, 06/04/92.

³¹ CDA Secretariat, Foreign Affairs Committee, Peace and Security working party, 1992, H4.157, agenda point 5, ‘Freedom and instability. Risks and opportunities for European security in a new era’. See also ‘Van den Broek neemt afstand van Ter Beek’ (‘Van den Broek distances himself from Ter Beek’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/04/92; L. Wecke, ‘Veilig Europa geen zaak van legers meer’ (‘secure Europe no longer a matter for armies’), *Trouw*, 15/04/92; ‘Van den Broek neemt afstand van analyse Ter Beek’ (‘Van den Broek distances himself from Ter Beek analysis’), and W. Joustra and J. Tromp, ‘Van den Broek zet de binnenhelm alvast op’ (‘Van den Broek already putting on his helmet’), *De Volkskrant*, 11/04/92.

³² CDA Secretariat, Foreign Affairs Committee, Peace and Security working party, 1992, H2.437, ‘Welke toekomst voor het Nederlands Buitenlands Beleid?’ (‘What future for Dutch foreign policy?’), 17/09/92. See also Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, p. 214; ‘De moeder van alle redevoeringen’ (‘The mother of all orations’), *De Volkskrant*, 15/09/92.

umbrella of the CSCE. Soon afterwards he managed to convince the French government of the idea that only NATO possessed the infrastructure required to carry out such an operation on behalf of the CSCE. This sidelined the WEU, in which Paris had always placed such confidence. Moreover, Van den Broek's plan gave NATO a new *raison d'être* following the end of the Cold War, as well as offering a new security structure to Eastern Europe. 'It is not always "Black Monday" for Dutch diplomacy,' rejoiced the newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, in a reference to the failure of Dutch plans for the European Community on 30 September 1991.³³

Meanwhile, a commission chaired by Wim Meijer, Queen's Commissioner to the province of Drenthe, had begun investigating the future of conscription. Its verdict could, of course, only be reached in the light of international developments. The Commission originally considered the question based upon the principles enshrined in the Defence White Paper. But confronted now with two government ministers presenting new and radically different perceptions of the international situation, the Meijer Commission decided not to ask the government to take a united stance, as it could have done, but instead developed a perspective of its own. The Commission turned out to be less optimistic than Ter Beek. It took the view that the international organizations were still underdeveloped at a time when there remained considerable lack of clarity about long-term international developments and a large number of internal and regional conflicts. Moreover, the Commission believed that there remained a potential threat from Russia and the other countries of the CIS. The Commission therefore concluded that an active military of credible size must be retained.

The different analyses of the security situation adopted by the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence were also reflected in heated debate about the organization of the armed forces between officials in the Foreign Ministry's Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (DAV) and their colleagues at the Ministry of Defence. The DAV wanted to retain as many heavy units as possible, and dismissed the Ministry of Defence's preference for light, highly manoeuvrable forces as 'boy-scout' tendencies. Conversely, the Ministry of Defence accused civil servants at the DAV of being stuck in the Cold War. It was the DAV which would eventually prevail, with its vision pervading the Defence White Paper (*Prioriteitennota*)³⁴ which in early 1993 would supersede the programme outlined in the 1991 Defence White Paper.³⁵

The main changes announced in the new White Paper were the abolition or suspension of conscription, with effect from 1 January 1998, and a reversal in the order of defence priorities from the protection of the national territory to participation in so-called crisis-management operations. The basic notion underlying the Defence White Paper of 1993 was that the former Soviet Union no longer represented a major threat. Whereas 'the big war' had still dominated the 1991 Defence White Paper, it was now pushed into second place by crisis management operations. The heading of crisis management operations included peacekeeping operations. The White Paper proposed that professional military units be able to operate on peacekeeping duties at battalion strength in four different areas simultaneously and for a period of at least three years. In the case of peace enforcement, it should be possible to deploy a force of up to brigade strength. Since peacekeeping would involve only the deployment of light and lightly-armoured units, the sections of the Royal Netherlands Army under consideration were: the three airmobile battalions, the two armoured infantry battalions and the reconnaissance battalion. Because each operational battalion required two others, one in training and

³³ 'Den Haag en de vrede' ('The Hague and peace'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/04/92. See also 'Navo in beginsel bereid militairen te leveren voor vredesoperaties' ('NATO prepared in principle to supply troops for peacekeeping operations'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/05/92; 'CVSE en NAVO' ('CSCE and NATO'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/05/92; Leonoor Meijer, 'Joegoslavië gruwelijke voorbode' ('Yugoslavia a dreadful omen'), *Trouw*, 12/06/92.

³⁴ TK session 1992-1993, 22 975 nos 1 and 2.

³⁵ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, pp. 163-168; interviews with B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00 and K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 13/12/99; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with B.J. van Eenennaam, 12/05/95. Seen also ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Correspondence with MP/MR 1992, Van den Broek to Lubbers, 14/12/92.

another in refitting and recuperation, the Airmobile Brigade, as the only one with three battalions dedicated to peacekeeping duties, seemed to be the ideal candidate.

All this had to be made possible whilst downsizing even further than envisaged in the 1991 Defence White Paper. Then the size of the military was to be cut by 30 per cent over seven years; in the new White Paper of 1993 the target was raised to 44 per cent. The size of the Army's peacekeeping force would be reduced by more than half, from 55,000 troops to 25,000. Compulsory discharges, which had been avoided under the Defence White Paper of 1991, now became inevitable. Those personnel who remained would be expected to be highly flexible. They would have to abandon the assumptions of the Cold War, and at the same time become used to the fact that in the new situation their chances of being deployed in conflict zones had considerably increased.

5. The Ministry and its councils

The starting point of policy formulation at the 'Central Organization' (CO), that is, the Ministry, was the political responsibility of the ministers. Formally, policy coordination within the Ministry was headed by the Secretary-General or, in planning matters, the Chief of Defence Staff.

The most important consultation within the Ministry was the Political Council held every Monday morning. The Council was attended by the Ministers, the Secretary-General, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Directors-General of Materiel, of Personnel, and of Economics and Finance, the Director of General Policy Affairs, the Director of Information and the Director of Legal Affairs.

As a consequence of the 1991 Defence White Paper, a Departmental Council was established to prepare policy. This was chaired by the Secretary-General and also contained the Chief of Defence Staff, the Commanders-in-Chief and the Directors-General. Decisions about policy preparation were taken in the highest consultative body, the Defence Council, which was chaired by the Minister. Between 1989 and January 1993, its other members were the Junior Minister, the Secretary-General, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Commanders-in-Chief, the Commander of the Royal Marechaussee (the military police), the director of General Policy Affairs, the Director of Information, the Director of Legal Affairs and the Directors-General. The Inspector-General of the Armed Forces and the Head of the Foreign Affairs' Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were ex-officio members, with the latter only attending those parts of the meetings which addressed security policy. Ter Beek, however, regarded the weekly Defence Council as a large bureaucratic gathering which lacked an open exchange of ideas. In his view, the Commanders-in-Chief in particular used the Council as a forum to forward their own interests. He did not like this 'united front' of generals³⁶ and so abolished the Defence Council at the beginning of 1993.

With the abandonment of the matrix model and the disbanding of the Defence Council, maintaining a good relationship between the Minister and the individual Commanders-in-Chief became a matter of the utmost importance. The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Arie van der Vlis, thus came up with the idea of a monthly consultation between himself, the Minister and the Commanders-in-Chief, but this too did not work. The meetings were not frequent enough and the members of this new council were frequently unable to attend.³⁷ Ter Beek then tried separate meetings with the individual Commanders-in-Chief, but this system also did not work well. It was only after the experiences surrounding the fall of Srebrenica in the summer of 1995 that there came renewed calls for the Commanders-in-Chief, the CDS and the Minister to create a joint forum.³⁸ Eventually, Ter Beek's successor as minister, Joris Voorhoeve, would re-establish the Defence Council.

³⁶ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvreren*, pp. 219-220; Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, p. 153; Couzy, *Jaren*, pp. 106-107; interviews with H. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98 and A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99

³⁷ Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99

³⁸ SMG, 1002. Major General B.A.C. Droste, future Commander-in-Chief of Air Forces, to PCDS, 18/08/95, no. BDL 95.058.466/252.

Minister Ter Beek had a tendency to avoid direct consultation about policy proposals not just with the Commanders-in-Chief, but with military men in general. For example, the Dutch Officers Association (NOV) complained that it was only in the press that it first heard about the Minister's view that independently-operating armed forces were no longer needed and that the number of military personnel could be sharply reduced, as announced in his address to the Netherlands Society for International Affairs on 31 March 1992. The Minister had cancelled scheduled meetings with servicemen's associations both before and after this speech due to 'a lack of subjects to discuss'.³⁹

6. Minister Ter Beek

This avoidance of consultation with the military is not surprising insofar as the Minister, who together with his Junior Minister defined the main thrust of defence policy, was a fairly lonely figure in the Ministry's headquarters at Plein 4 in The Hague. He was surrounded by civil servants whose interests and loyalties lay more with the individual branches of the Armed Forces than with politics and the Central Organization.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the Minister did benefit from the 'can-do' mentality of the military. According to Ter Beek, there existed a sort of 'Plein 4 Law': 'What the minister wants, he can't have. But if it needs to be done tomorrow, it could have been done yesterday.'⁴¹

Minister Ter Beek was a member of the PvdA (Labour), a party renowned for its enthusiasm for defence cuts. As its leader, Wim Kok, had said in the run-up to the previous general election, 'When it comes to saving on defence, no figure is actually high enough for me.' Although he had added a rider: '(...) International consultations and their results always play their part.'⁴² After the election Kok became Minister of Finance, and as such he had an even greater interest in making savings so that the nation's finances could be brought into line with the 'Maastricht criteria' for European Monetary Union, which had been agreed in late 1991. The first priority of the Lubbers-Kok Government (1989-1994) was to reduce spending.⁴³ Its coalition agreement envisaged cuts of NLG 2.2 billion (approximately □ 1 billion) in defence expenditure between 1991 and 1995.

In 1989 Ter Beek became only the third PvdA Minister of Defence in history, after Henk Vredeling (1973-1976) and Bram Stemerding (1977). His appointment was something of surprise; an MP since 1971, Ter Beek had been his party's foreign affairs spokesman. Moreover, the PvdA had a number of experienced specialists with a thorough grounding in defence – Stemerding, Piet Dankert and Harry van den Bergh – all of whom had been named as potential ministerial candidates during the formation of the coalition. Ter Beek was able to settle into the post quickly, however, unlike some of his predecessors. Roelof Kruisinga, for example, who once appointed had been unable to develop any interest in the subject.⁴⁴ Or Hans van Mierlo and Frits Bolkestein, neither of whom had significantly enhanced their knowledge of the subject during their period of office.⁴⁵

In Parliament, Ter Beek had stood out as a strong debater⁴⁶ with highly developed political antennae. As a minister, too, he unfailingly sensed what interested the public and Parliament.⁴⁷ A bitter Stemerding, who had been passed over for the defence appointment, claimed that whatever you said

³⁹ 'Toespraak minister Ter Beek op 31 maart 1992', ('speech Minister Ter Beek on 31 March 1992') *Carré* 15(1992)5, p. 24; Group Captain N. Stuijver (retired), President of the NOV (Dutch Officers Association), 'De Nederlandse krijgsmacht op weg waar naar toe? Jaarrede 1992' ('Where are the Dutch forces heading? Annual address 1992'), *Carré* 15(1992)12, p. 8.

⁴⁰ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 216.

⁴¹ Ter Beek in Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendernijds*, p. 103. See also Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, pp. 241-242.

⁴² Kok during the the meeting of the PvdA Party Council on 24/06/89, Stemerding, *Dromen*, p. 145.

⁴³ See, for example, Pronk in Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendernijds*, p. 116.

⁴⁴ Gualthérie van Weezel, *Rechts*, p. 44.

⁴⁵ Stemerding, *Dromen*, pp. 124 and 230.

⁴⁶ Stemerding, *Dromen*, p. 171.

⁴⁷ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with Couzy, 21/04/95; Couzy, *Jaren*, pp. 13 and 122.

about Ter Beek, 'You cannot say that he does not know which way the wind is blowing, nor how to blow with it.'⁴⁸

Although it was Ter Beek who had to implement the Lubbers-Kok Government's cutbacks at the Ministry of Defence, he very soon came to be highly regarded by the Dutch military. And that regard was reciprocated. Ter Beek really learned to love the Armed Forces.⁴⁹ Of the two 'hats' which the Minister had to wear, that of political accountability to the Parliament and the Ministerial Council and that of head of the national defence apparatus, Ter Beek felt that the latter fitted him ever better. In the end, it was 'the most comfortable to wear'.⁵⁰ The Minister kept personnel policy as part of his own portfolio, whereas his predecessors had often delegated it to the junior minister. This enabled Ter Beek to express his sense of responsibility for the personal safety of Dutch troops sent into danger zones.⁵¹ The jovial Minister visited many soldiers deployed in crisis areas and demonstrated a genuine involvement and fellow feeling with them.⁵²

Another aspect of the Minister's personal involvement played an important part in the events surrounding the former Yugoslavia. As a 19-year old, in the summer of 1963 Ter Beek had served as an international volunteer working on the construction of the famous motorway between Belgrade and Zagreb. Three years later he became engaged to his Dutch girlfriend in Dubrovnik. In 1972 he and former PvdA Chairman André van der Louw visited President Tito. And in 1989, just a few weeks before his appointment as Minister of Defence, he and his family had taken a holiday in Split. After conflict broke out in Yugoslavia, he found it difficult to disentangle his ministerial duties from his personal experiences of the country.⁵³

The principal personal support for the Minister in his work came from the members of his Personal Office, headed by Gijs ter Kuile,⁵⁴ his aide-de-camp (under Ter Beek initially Marines Major Gerco Vollema and later Ruud Hardenbol) and the Directors of General Policy Affairs. Over time, an informal group of close advisers also developed around Ter Beek, which at various times included: Hans Kombrink, Director-General of Economics and Finance, who had been brought into the Ministry by the Minister himself; the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Navy Vice Admiral Nico Buis; Deputy Chief of Defence Staff Lieutenant General Henk van den Breemen; Gijs Ter Kuile; departmental spokesman Bert Kreemers; and Lo Casteleijn of the Directorate of General Policy Affairs.⁵⁵

7. The rest of the Ministry

The contribution made by Junior Minister Baron B.J.M. van Voorst tot Voorst, in respect of matters pertaining to the former Yugoslavia was a limited one.⁵⁶ This was in part because Ter Beek had removed responsibility for personnel policy from the Junior Minister's usual portfolio. For Van Voorst tot Voorst, therefore, the main remaining task was the issue of materiel, together with such items as

⁴⁸ Stemerink, *Dromen*, p. 127. See also *ibidem*, pp. 171-172.

⁴⁹ W. Breedveld and L. Meijer, 'Hoezo ingrijpen? Waarom dan en Hoe?' ('Intervene? But why and how?'), *Trouw*, 15/01/94; H. van Loon, 'Proberen met de Russen samen te werken maar de ogen wijd open houden' ('Try to work with the Russians, but keep your eyes wide open'), *Armex*, July/August 1994, p. 8.

⁵⁰ Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁵¹ For example, 'Ter Beek komt zijn belofte na' ('Ter Beek keeps his promise'), *Het Parool*, 12/06/92; interview with W.J.G. Gooijers, 09/04/99.

⁵² Interviews with B. Snoep, 26/03/99, and C. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.

⁵³ A. Joustra, 'Hollandse stootarbeiders voor Tito' ('Dutch shock workers for Tito'), *Elsevier*, 05/09/92, pp. 16-20. See also Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 180.

⁵⁴ For the importance of his private office, see Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, pp. 221-222.

⁵⁵ L. Ornstein, 'Het eergevoel van Relus ter Beek', *Vrij Nederland*, 18/03/95.

⁵⁶ Cf. Stemerink, *Dromen*, p. 227.

planning, training grounds, buildings, internal organizational matters and general administrative law.⁵⁷ In the spring of 1993 Van Voorst tot Voorst was appointed Queen's Commissioner to Limburg, and on 1 June 1993 he was succeeded at the Ministry of Defence by Ton Frinking of the CDA (Christian Democrats). After many years of service as an army officer, Frinking had been an MP specializing in defence matters since 1977. At the Ministry he was mainly occupied with implementing the Defence White Paper of 1993 in respect of military equipment and ordnance policy.⁵⁸

As in all Dutch ministries, the senior civil servant at the Ministry of Defence is the Secretary-General. He is responsible for the provision of information to the ministers and for integrating and coordinating policy. Ten days before Ter Beek became Minister of Defence, VVD (Liberal) member Michiel Patijn was appointed as Secretary-General by the outgoing minister and party associate, Frits Bolkestein. According to General Couzy, this mischievous gesture by Bolkestein reflected badly on Patijn, who as a result found it difficult to settle in at the Ministry of Defence.⁵⁹ Having previously held a number of senior administrative positions in the Ministry of Economic Affairs, according to Ter Beek he knew as much – or rather, as little – about Defence as the new minister. This made it hard for Patijn to take on the role of the Minister's chief official adviser. Or, as Ter Beek himself put it, he pointed out the problems rather than suggesting the solutions.⁶⁰ Originally a diplomat, Patijn's main interest was in Foreign Affairs. He played hardly any role at all in matters related to the former Yugoslavia.⁶¹ Patijn left the Ministry on 22 August 1994, at the same time as the ministers.

During the early 1990s, three director-generals at the Ministry of Defence were charged with advising about the main aspects of defence policy: personnel, economics and finance, and materiel. They were the principal losers when the matrix structure was abolished, since the old system had given them considerable influence. Finally, the Secretary-General was responsible for four independent directors: the Director of General Policy Affairs, the Director of Information, the Director of Legal Affairs and the Director of the Defence Audit Board. As far as Yugoslavia is concerned, the first two of these were of primary importance.

8. The Directorate of General Policy Affairs

In 1969, an Office of General Policy Affairs was first established, originally for the main purpose of critically assessing the contributions being made by the individual branches of the Armed Forces. In 1976 this bureau was merged with the Office of Disarmament Affairs to create the Directorate of General Policy Affairs (DAB) under the direct leadership of the Secretary-General.⁶² DAB's role was comparable with that of the Office of the Secretary-General in other ministries. This 'civilian department' of the Ministry of Defence employed about ten policy staff at the beginning of the 1990s. It made an increasingly important contribution to defence and security policy by advising the Minister directly on domestic and international political matters. However, not all documents reaching the Minister passed through this directorate. The extent of its role depended heavily upon the personality of the minister at the time. But at the very least the DAB, as the directorate was popularly called, sounded out departmental documents intended for Parliament in terms of their political feasibility, and checked them against the prevailing defence policy. Just as the Chief of Defence Staff was the senior military adviser to the Minister, so the Director of General Policy Affairs was more or less his senior

⁵⁷ See also W. Nieuwenhuis, 'Hoffelijk en vlijtig, maar onbekend. Profiel van mr. B.J. van Voorst tot Voorst' ('Courteous and diligent, but unknown. A profile of B.J. van Voorst tot Voorst'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/03/92.

⁵⁸ See also Pieter Nijdam, "'t Is dat mijn vrouw het goed vond..." ('My wife thought it was a good idea...'), *De Telegraaf*, 22/06/93.

⁵⁹ Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 17.

⁶⁰ Ter Beek in Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendewijs*, p. 101; interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁶¹ Interviews with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99; H.G.B. van den Breemen, 20/05/98; M. Patijn, 28/08/00 and A.K. van der Vliet, 13/02/98.

⁶² For more about DAB, see, amongst others, Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, II, interview with Casteleijn, 26/08/98, p. 1.

political adviser. The Director of General Policy Affairs also had official responsibility for the explanatory memorandum which accompanied the departmental budget, with the exception of matters related to NATO, which fell within the remit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Together with the Defence Staff, the Director of General Policy Affairs was responsible for defence white papers, which were edited by his directorate. The Director of General Policy Affairs accompanied the Minister on trips abroad and to such events as NATO summits. The staff of the DAB were regarded more or less as ‘the minister’s men’. During his period of office, Ter Beek was very satisfied with them, not just for their loyalty, but also for their creativity and profuse production of official documents.⁶³

Between 1986 and August 1994, the DAB was headed by Dirk Barth. He subsequently became Acting Secretary-General and from May 1995, Secretary-General proper.⁶⁴ His replacement at the DAB was J.H.M. de Winter, who deputized for him from August 1994 before succeeding him definitively in June 1995. De Winter’s close involvement in peacekeeping operations only began when he became Deputy Director of General Policy Affairs. Although the DAB’s staff theoretically had a ‘general’ orientation, between 1991 and 1995 matters related to Yugoslavia were in practice mainly entrusted to F.J.J. Princen.⁶⁵

As senior official adviser, the Director of the DAB could clash with the senior military adviser to the Minister, the Chief of Defence Staff. After this had indeed occurred early on, the two men agreed to coordinate their policy before presenting it to the Minister.⁶⁶

9. The Directorate of Information

‘*Plein 4*’, the Ministry of Defence, was an organization with many faces. Accordingly it was very difficult to make it speak with one voice.⁶⁷ Moreover, the defence apparatus regularly ‘leaked’ information, a phenomenon which became much worse after the deep cuts of the early 1990s. This was a constant source of concern for the Directorate of Information.

The original head of this Directorate was Jaap van der Ploeg. When he left at the end of 1990, he was replaced by his deputy, Hans van den Heuvel, who in his turn was replaced by an official from the DAB, Bert Kreemers. Van den Heuvel largely remained in the background in respect of the former Yugoslavia.⁶⁸ In allocating duties within the Directorate, Minister Ter Beek put the Director of Information in overall charge but gave day-to-day control to Van den Heuvel’s deputy, Kreemers. Whilst Van den Heuvel chaired the fortnightly Directorate meeting, it was his deputy who led the daily news meeting. Kreemers was also given responsibility for advising and guiding the Minister and for the international political aspects of defence policy, including acting as departmental spokesperson in this area. He was responsible, too, for consulting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for maintaining parliamentary contacts, particularly with the chairman and members of the Permanent Parliamentary Committee for Defence.⁶⁹

As a former assistant of the PvdA parliamentary group, Kreemers was used to political anticipation and loyalty to his immediate superior; in his position as Deputy Director of Information this was in fact the Minister. Under Ter Beek, the Directorate operated very much to the Minister’s

⁶³ Interview with A.L. Ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁶⁴ For a description of his job and an interview with him, see Henry van Loon, ‘Defensie bereid tot verbeteringen en kijkt kritisch naar Prioriteitennota’ (‘Department of Defence prepared to improve, and looking critically at Defence White Paper’), *Armed*, 80(1996)5 pp. 6-8.

⁶⁵ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, II, interview with Princen, 27/08/98, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

⁶⁷ Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

⁶⁸ Cf. interview with Bruurmijn, 07/04/99.

⁶⁹ ‘Taakverdeling tussen de directeur Voorlichting en de plaatsvervangend directeur Voorlichting’ (‘Division of tasks between the director of Information and the deputy Director of Information’), appendix in Kreemers to NIOD, 07/06/99; interviews with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99, and B. Kreemers, 16/04/99.

satisfaction.⁷⁰ In the wake of the Srebrenica drama, however, Kreemers was repeatedly criticized in the media for going too far in trying to control coverage in the media, so-called ‘spin doctoring’.⁷¹

10. The Chief of Defence Staff

The senior adviser to the Minister in matters of operational policy was the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). As a full general, the highest rank in the Netherlands Armed Forces, this officer occupied a unique position in the Defence apparatus. He was responsible not only for developing the main aspects of operational policy, but also for communications policy and operational information processing, as well as handling the Ministry of Defence’s long-term policy as a sort of ‘corporate planner’. He discussed all planning matters to be presented to the political leadership with the Ministry’s Director-Generals. In his planning role, the Chief of Defence Staff had direct access to the Minister, bypassing the Secretary-General. Finally, the CDS was the perfect official to investigate international cooperation opportunities, both as a member of the Military Committee of NATO and through bilateral contacts, as well to a lesser extent through meetings with colleagues from other member states of NATO and the WEU.

The Chief of Defence Staff was the pivotal figure between the Minister and the rest of the political establishment on the one hand and the Armed Forces on the other hand. As chairman of the Committee of CDS and Commanders-in-Chief (COCB), he also played an important role in coordinating the Armed Forces.

In carrying out his duties, the Chief of Defence Staff was supported by a Deputy CDS and several subordinate deputy chiefs: the Deputy Chief of Operational Affairs, Communications and Information Systems (SCOCIS); the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for National Plans (SCPL); Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for International Planning and Cooperation (SCIPS); and – although, as we shall see, this was a source of conflict – the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Intelligence and Security (SCIV), who was also head of the Military Intelligence Service.

11. Van der Vlis

Arie van der Vlis was appointed as Chief of Defence Staff on 14 May 1992, succeeding General P.J. Graaff. Van der Vlis was regarded as a man of great authority amongst the military and had more operational experience than any other lieutenant general serving at the time.⁷² He had been successively a battalion commander, deputy brigade commander, brigade commander, corps commander and deputy commander-in-chief. Van der Vlis was known as an uncompromising man.⁷³ Couzy later wrote that he had heard rumours that Van der Vlis was appointed as Chief of Defence Staff in 1992 and while he himself was made Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army because in the latter post it was expected that Van der Vlis would have opposed the planned downsizing much more vigorously than Couzy.⁷⁴ According to Ter Beek, this rumour was not true: Couzy was never in the running to become Chief of Defence Staff.⁷⁵ If it had been true then it demonstrated great prescience, since Couzy implemented the policy of cuts with great dedication, whereas Van der Vlis resigned as CDS in 1994 because he could no longer support the downsizing. Ter Beek did allow himself to be swayed in his appointment of Van der Vlis by the fact that Van der Vlis was a ‘green’ CDS, because the Minister

⁷⁰ Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

⁷¹ See, for example, Eric Vrijzen, ‘De Graves corvee (‘De Grave’s duty’), *Elsevier*, 23/01/99, p. 12.

⁷² For example, interview with J.T. Bruurmijn, 07/04/99; Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 43.

⁷³ Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, p. 211.

⁷⁴ Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 42.

⁷⁵ Ter Beek, *Manouweren*, p. 234.

realized that the Army would be the branch of the services most seriously affected by the planned economies and reorganizations.⁷⁶

Whichever branch of the Armed Forces the ‘the generals’ general’ came from, he should not show too much preference to any one of the forces. He must not be a ‘green’ (Army), ‘dark blue’ (Navy) or ‘light blue’ (Air Force) man but, in military parlance, a ‘purple’ one, independent of all three branches. The balance was not always so easy to strike in practice. Van der Vlis, however, succeeded reasonably well in his duty of assuming a neutral position between the services. As the Commander-in-Chief of Naval Forces, Vice Admiral Nico Buis, once said to him, ‘You’re as purple as hell, but if we were to cut you open green blood would still come out.’⁷⁷

But as the pivot between the Armed Forces and their political masters, Van der Vlis was not ideal. He was a ‘commander of troops *pur sang*’⁷⁸ who, as he himself puts it, was ‘outspoken’.⁷⁹ Van der Vlis was almost unconcerned about his lack of ‘clout’ in political circles in The Hague, since he did not consider that he had a major role to play there.⁸⁰ Ter Beek claims that Van der Vlis saw himself as an extension of the Armed Forces towards the political leadership of the department, whereas the Minister had expected the opposite of his CDS.⁸¹

Van der Vlis may not entirely have played the part expected of him by Ter Beek, but the CDS was absolutely clear in his attitude about where the boundaries of his political influence should lie. He drew a sharp distinction between his role as policy adviser and the moment a decision was made. During the advisory phase, he considered that he best served the Minister by not necessarily seeing eye-to-eye with him nor starting out from what was politically feasible. In that sense, regarding himself as the ‘conscience’ of the Armed Forces, he did not shirk heated discussion. Moreover, he wanted his opinions to be known within the defence apparatus at this stage.⁸² But once the political decision had been taken, as far as he was concerned that was the end of the matter. From then on, orders had to be faithfully obeyed. The Minister’s adviser must not become his opponent.⁸³

The increasing instability in the international arena only increased the importance of the position of the CDS, who was responsible for developing a vision of the future. Moreover, peacekeeping operations gave him a more and more significant role in operational matters since they often involved joint activities by more than one branch of the Armed Forces. This began with the operations in northern Iraq after the end of the Gulf War,⁸⁴ but was particularly accelerated by his involvement with the political problems surrounding the deployment of marines in Cambodia, followed shortly afterwards by the secondment of Dutch troops to UNPROFOR. After a while Van der Vlis realized that he was devoting three hours a day to operational matters.⁸⁵ Comparable in some ways with the problems in the Ministry of Justice where a so-called ‘super attorney general’ was appointed during the 1990s, the position of the CDS in relation to both the Commanders-in-Chief and the Secretary-General was called into question. Van der Vlis refused, however, to accept the logical consequence of this evolution – that his position be transformed into that of a Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. He believed that the further integration of the branches of the Armed Forces would destroy ‘the soul’ of each of them.⁸⁶ Van der Vlis therefore remained very reticent about operational matters,

⁷⁶ Interviews with Ter Beek, 01/12/99, and A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

⁷⁷ Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99

⁷⁸ Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

⁷⁹ Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

⁸⁰ Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

⁸¹ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 235; Ter Beek in Rehwinkel and Nekkens, *Regerendernijis*, p. 104.

⁸² Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

⁸³ Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

⁸⁴ TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing with M. Schouten, 22/05/00, p. 32.

⁸⁵ Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

⁸⁶ Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

respecting both the individual Commander-in-Chiefs' own responsibility for these matters and their consequent 'direct line' to the Minister.⁸⁷

Van der Vlis resigned as CDS in August 1994 because he felt that he could no longer bear responsibility for the cuts being imposed by the government. He was succeeded by Lieutenant General of the Royal Netherlands Marines Henk van den Breemen, who had been Deputy Chief of Defence Staff since 1991. The government had already approved his appointment on 28 April 1994⁸⁸ but, had Van der Vlis not resigned prematurely, then Van den Breemen would only have taken up the position in mid 1995. The new Deputy Chief of Defence Staff under Van den Breemen was Lieutenant General Maarten Schouten, who until then had been Commander of the First Army Corps.

12. The Defence Crisis Management Centre

The Department of Defence had its own Crisis Management Centre (DCBC), which was charged with steering and evaluating policy during crisis-management operations in the name of the Chief of Defence Staff. It had been established during the Gulf War, and from 2 April 1992 was permanently staffed in support of peacekeeping operations.⁸⁹ The catalyst for its activation was the outbreak of fighting in Sarajevo, where a contingent of approximately 60 troops from the Signals Battalion was stationed.⁹⁰ When Van der Vlis became CDS some six weeks later, however, it had hardly developed at all. The DCBC met in a bunker under the Ministry of Defence which had been built in 1984 as the 'emergency headquarters' for the Minister and his staff in the event of a nuclear war. This bunker was rarely even visited until the early 1990s.⁹¹ All that changed with the rise of the phenomenon of crisis-management-operations. With various branches of the Armed Forces involved, peacekeeping operations could, and during the Yugoslav conflict would, redefine traditional roles and boundaries between the services. Planning, coordination and operational control were therefore best conducted from a single point. The person most suited to do this was the Chief of Defence Staff, supported by the DCBC.

The political sensitivities involved in peacekeeping operations also played their part in this development.⁹² During such an operation, 'full command' over the units involved remains with the Dutch government (an authority enshrined in Article 98, Paragraph 2 of the Constitution: 'The Government is in full command of the Armed Forces.')⁹³ This means that the troops involved may be withdrawn by the government at any time, as indeed happened in the case of the Dutch UNIFIL contingent in 1985. The Dutch authorities also remain responsible for so-called administrative command: such things as legal status, disciplinary matters, and so on.

Under normal circumstances, a unit's activities, locations and period of deployment are agreed in advance, before it is made available for a peacekeeping operation. Operational control is then transferred. This means that a United Nations commander may use the unit as he sees fit, as long as

⁸⁷ Interview with G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

⁸⁸ Coenraads, 'Voordracht generaal Van den Breemen als nieuwe chef defensiestaf' ('General Van den Breemen proposed as new Chief of Defence Staff'), *ANP*, 28/04/94, 18:42.

⁸⁹ DGP, exh. 06/04/92, PX1925/92009557, memorandum from Waltmann to directors-general, DAB, DJZ, DV and HMID/CO, 01/04/92, S92/139/1291.

⁹⁰ TK session 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 28.

⁹¹ For information about the bunker see, for example, L. Ornstein, 'Onder de grond speelt de oorlogsstaf de Balkan' ('The war staff plays the Balkans underground'), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, pp. 12-13; G. den Abtman, 'In de bunker klopt het hart van het crisiscentrum' ('The heart of the Crisis Centre beats in the bunker'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 15/07/95; Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, 'Vijftien meter onder de grond handhaaft Defensie de vrede' ('Defence ministry keep the peace 15 metres underground'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/06/92; Rob Schoof, 'Vloeren kraken en faxen ratelen in Crisiscentrum' ('Floors creak and faxes rattle in Crisis Centre'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/07/95; H. Rottenberg, 'De bunker van Voorhoeve' ('Voorhoeve's bunker'), *De Volkskrant* 06/05/95.

⁹² For the following passages about the transfer of powers and the residual responsibility of the Minister of Defence, see for example Bstas. no. 550, memorandum from G.H. de Keizer for Voorhoeve, 29/08/95, no. 95000860.

⁹³ Cf. Point 10 in the checklist, TK session 1994-1995, 23591 no. 5, p. 11.

such deployment remains within the permitted duties, resources and geographical limitations. Changes to the agreed objectives are possible only after consultation and approval with the country supplying the troops. Transfer of operational control thus means that the troop-contributing nation remains closely involved in the operational evolution of a peacekeeping operation, particularly when problems arise about execution of the mission.⁹⁴ So, whilst the troop-contributing nation is not formally able to issue direct orders with respect to those aspects of control which have been transferred to the UN, close consultation remains essential.⁹⁵

The intensification of Close Air Support for UN troops in the former Yugoslavia increased political involvement in peacekeeping operations there. The authority over such operations fell to the NATO commander, and operational command of the forces of NATO member states was transferred to the organization. This is the most extreme form of transfer, going much further than the transfer of operational control, as is the case with peacekeeping operations. Nevertheless, Dutch authority actually increased in this case because within NATO it was customary to involve contributing member states very closely in operational planning and the developments at the operational headquarters.

However great the transfer of power, the Minister of Defence always remained politically responsible for the actions of Dutch units seconded to peacekeeping operations. This meant that it was his task to constantly monitor the interests of those units, and if necessary to contact the responsible authorities about them. Given this ongoing involvement by the Minister and his closest advisers with regard to the seconded units, it is hardly surprising that the DCBC began round-the-clock operations in April 1992, shortly after the creation of UNPROFOR, to monitor events during peacekeeping operations from a policy perspective. Since the Defence Staff itself did not have enough personnel to do this, the branches of the Armed Forces had to place officers and NCOs at the DCBC's disposal.

Day-to-day command of the DCBC was in the hands of the chief, Royal Netherlands Navy Commander P.P. Metzelaar. The DCBC formed part of the Department of Operational Affairs, which was headed by the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Operations (SCOCIS). From August 1990 this was Commodore J. Waltmann, between 5 November 1993 and 21 June 1995 Brigadier General A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, and then from 28 June 1995 Air Commodore C.G.J. Hilderink. Because Kolsteren was on leave at the time of his appointment and busy moving house and so on, he only took up his job on 1 January 1994, the moment of Waltmann's actual departure.

Although the intention was that the DCBC – also known as ‘the bunker’ – would develop into a nerve centre for information flowing in from regions in which crisis-management operations were under way, it failed to live up to this plan during the first few years of the conflict in Yugoslavia. Whilst the Armed Forces had supplied the officers and NCOs needed to man the centre, the haste with which this was done meant that until autumn 1994 those posted to it did not always possess the necessary skills. One problem, for example, was the ability to assess what information was politically sensitive.⁹⁶ Moreover, the CDS was still heavily dependent upon information reaching him from the branches of the Armed Forces, each of which, when a unit was deployed on peacekeeping duties, remained responsible for its administrative command and its logistics in the broadest sense of the term – including the supply and care of personnel, medical care, training, transport and supply of equipment. The required information was therefore supplied to the bunker by the crisis teams of each branch – in other words, from another bunker under the Admiralty building in The Hague, where messages from Dutch naval frigates, aircraft and submarines in the Adriatic were received, from the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Centre at the Princess Juliana Barracks in The Hague, and from the headquarters of the

⁹⁴ DJZ. Memorandum from H-IJB to P-DJZ, 30/08/95 no. 95000873.

⁹⁵ For examples with respect to the deployment of Dutch marines in Cambodia, see Bais, *Mijnenveld*, pp. 64-70.

⁹⁶ DCBC, 2212. Annotation, ‘Verbetering van de effectiviteit en efficiëntie bij de aansturing van vredes- en humanitaire operaties’ (‘Improving effectiveness and efficiency in the control of peacekeeping and humanitarian operations’) for chair and members of ICOSCO, undated (19/10/94); Coll. Vandeweyer, disk 1, documents Briefing.cds and Personee.not, memorandum from Waltmann to PCDS in respect of staffing consequences of the extension of duties for the Operational Affairs Department, 01/06/92.

Royal Netherlands Air Force. Additional information was gleaned from radio and television broadcasts and from the ANP news wire. Contacts between the separately seconded staff officers and the DCBC were also indirect at first, going through the individual branches.

This indirect supply of information to the DCBC led to delays, confusion and misunderstandings. It was therefore agreed in spring 1994 that commanders and staff officers in the field would have discussions with the Defence Staff prior to their deployment and when on leave in the Netherlands. During these conversations, the importance of contacting the Defence Staff about politically sensitive subjects would be emphasized. This, however, did not stop commanders of the branches of the Armed Forces making parallel contact with the crisis staffs of their own branches, and sometimes even prioritizing that contact.⁹⁷

Information from the DCBC came in the form of situation reports, which were issued daily at 10am to the Minister and a large number of Ministry of Defence officials, as well as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and General Affairs, the Commanders-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and NATO officials. In addition to the operational section, in which external communications were maintained, the bunker also contained a briefing room. But when Van der Vlis took up his post, there were still no daily briefings. He introduced one at 9.30 every morning, a select group of officials from the Defence Staff, the DAB and the Directorate of Information – plus, from late 1993, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs civil servant (Robert in den Bosch), would gather for a briefing of the situation in the crisis zones lasting about half an hour. Van der Vlis also instructed the Military Intelligence Service (MID), which had not until then been involved in the DCBC briefings, to take part in them and to play a more active role in every aspect of the deployment of Dutch military units. Because the MID ‘cell’ in the bunker was not functioning as desired, it was disbanded in 1994. Only after the fall of Srebrenica would a new MID cell be established in the DCBC.⁹⁸

In addition, fortnightly meetings were held in the bunker from autumn 1992 with the intention of creating a regular forum at operational level for all the organizations involved in crisis missions. They also included participants from the Central Organization, the branches of the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

13. The Military Intelligence Service

After the Second World War, each of the Dutch Armed Forces had had its own intelligence and security service: the Military Intelligence Service RNLA, the Military Intelligence Service RNLAf and the Military Intelligence Service RNLN. These services were occupied with both intelligence and security matters. Their intelligence tasks consisted of gathering information about the overall potential and the armed forces of other powers which was necessary in order to achieve an appropriate structure and the effective deployment of Dutch forces, and of collecting data for use during the mobilization and concentration of Dutch forces. Until about 1990, the intelligence work of these services focused heavily upon studying the military capability of the Warsaw Pact nations.⁹⁹ Their security tasks involved combating espionage, sabotage, terrorism and ‘subversive’ propaganda, as well as protecting information and ‘vetting’ personnel.

Late in 1985, Parliament passed an amendment to the Intelligence and Security Services Bill (*Wet op de Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten*, WIV) providing for the merger of three military intelligence services. When this bill became law on 1 February 1988, Article 9.1 therefore stated, ‘There is one Military Intelligence Service’. Decisive as the wording of the new act may have sounded, the reality was rather more complicated. The new MID, which in accordance with a promise by the Minister of Defence to Parliament actually came into being on 1 January 1987, comprised simply the combined

⁹⁷ DCBC, 2217. Annotation by SCOCIS Brigadier General Kolsteren in respect of opportunities for policy control of larger peacekeeping operations for PCDS, 15/06/94 no. Command.001.

⁹⁸ Confidential interviews (25) (78) (86).

⁹⁹ Engelen, *Inlichtingendiensten*, pp. 62 and 82.

staff of the intelligence and security sections of both the Defence Staff and the staffs of the branches of the Armed Forces. The 'integrated' MID was not much more than 'the sum of its parts' (i.e. the former RNLA Military Intelligence Service, RNLA Military Intelligence Service, RNLN Military Intelligence Service and the Defence Staff's Intelligence and Security Section.¹⁰⁰ The heads of the Intelligence and Security Sections of the three branches of the Armed Forces remained subordinate to their service commanders in matters of actual intelligence work. Formally they were now joint 'deputy heads' (PHMIDs) of the new service, under the command of the new Head of the Military Intelligence Service (HMID). The HMIDs to serve during the period covered by this report were, successively, Air Commodore P.J. Duijn (July 1990 to 31 December 1993), Commodore P.C. Kok, (1 January 1994 to 25 June 1995), and Brigadier General J.C.F. Knapp.

The HMID was directly accountable to the Minister. Organizationally, he originally reported to the Chief of Defence Staff and then, from the beginning of the 1990s, to the Secretary-General. The HMID was of a lower military rank (commodore, air commodore or brigadier general) than the Commanders-in-Chief, so that in the event of any conflict of interest the heads of department would in all likelihood refer no to him, but to their Commanders-in-Chief. Given the political sensitivity of the powers involved, command of security activities was devolved entirely to the HMID. Nevertheless, the units charged with operational duties continued to be organized along branch lines.

In March 1995 it was noted that the three branches had 'not sufficiently' adopted the political command from 1987 to organize one single, integrated MID headed by one person. This meant that operations were not succeeding often enough. According to the final report by a reorganization commission chaired by a former head of the Naval Intelligence Service, retired Rear Admiral S.W. van Idsinga, there still existed a 'high resistance factor' and 'infighting... with all the mistrust which that entails'.¹⁰¹

In the Netherlands, the MID was now widely regarded as a many-headed monster to which all kinds of acts were attributed without anyone really being clear what it was or whether it was one organization or separate military intelligence services for each of the armed forces. Abroad, the vague and fragmented nature of the MID's work engendered mistrust amongst its sister organizations, as the head of MID, P.J. Duijn noted in a September 1992 briefing to the Defence Council. Minister Ter Beek heard the same complaint during a visit to Dutch marines serving on a peacekeeping operation in Cambodia.¹⁰² It was only in mid 1996 that the separate intelligence and security sections of the individual branches would finally be brought under the sole command of the HMID. And not until 1997 would the signals intelligence units of each branch be incorporated into the MID.

At first there did not seem to be much work left for HMID. Amongst his duties was the compilation of the Defence Intelligence and Security Requirements Report (DIVB). But little would come of this in practice. In 1998 it was observed that the DIVB was really just an extrapolation of work that was already being done. Moreover, the heads of the naval and air force intelligence and security sections did not participate in a central needs assessment.¹⁰³ With a certain cynicism, it was noted that, 'Inside the MID, there is broad consensus about the status and usefulness of the DIVB: it has next to no operational value in directing what is to be delivered to clients. The CS¹⁰⁴ even calls it a "non-paper". In short, the DIVB is "half dead" within the MID organization. And the document is even less relevant as far as the customer is concerned; after all, it is not theirs either.'¹⁰⁵ One problem was that the 'clients' of the MID's intelligence, for example the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Operations (SCOCIS), were unable to state what they needed. This was in part because they did not know what the

¹⁰⁰ Engelen, *Inlichtingendiensten*, p. 95.

¹⁰¹ MID. Van Idsinga report, 29/03/95, DIS/95/21.11/809.

¹⁰² MID. 'Directie Organisatie en Informatie, Nieuw evenwicht' ('Directorate of Organization and Information, new balance'). MID Screening Report. Phase 1, p. 16.

¹⁰³ MID. 'Directie Organisatie en Informatie, Nieuw evenwicht.' MID Screening Report. Phase 2, p. 30.

¹⁰⁴ Chief of Staff of the MID.

¹⁰⁵ MID. 'Directie Organisatie en Informatie, Nieuw evenwicht.' MID Screening Report. Phase 1, p. 59.

intelligence service was capable of. This is distinctly odd when one considers that the MID must have been aware of the practice at its British counterpart, where the identification of needs is an interactive and iterative process between the intelligence service and its clients.

Another of the HMID's tasks was the production of intelligence for use in policy making, and in particular crisis management.¹⁰⁶ The HMID was also Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Intelligence and Security (SCIV). With the heads of the other intelligence and security services, he sat on the Netherlands Joint Intelligence and Security Services Committee (CVIN). In addition, he participated in the twice-yearly meetings of the NATO Intelligence Board and the Intelligence Conference of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE).

In practice, the HMID had his hands full with the integration of the intelligence and security sections of the different branches of the Armed Forces, in consequence of which he had little time for the organization of the actual intelligence work itself.¹⁰⁷

In 1987, the HMID was given an Intelligence Staff and a Security Staff. The former was concerned mainly with the production of intelligence in the military-political, strategic and economic fields, whereas the services' intelligence organizations would concentrate mainly upon operational, tactical and technical matters. Intelligence capacity within the Central Organization remained hindered by understaffing. In March 1995 the Van Idsinga Commission recommended that the number of military intelligence analysts there be increased from 28 to 42. Conversely, the same commission said that the number of intelligence positions in the Army could be reduced from 47 to 41.¹⁰⁸

The Security Staff would handle counterintelligence, industrial security and – eventually – security investigations. Only gradually would personnel and resources become available to the MID at Central Organization level. Discussions about the international political and military situation following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Defence cuts, the transfer of tasks from the disbanded Foreign Intelligence Service and ongoing debate about the organization of signals intelligence were constantly shifting parameters for the integration process.

After the Berlin Wall fell, the Warsaw Pact disintegrated and the Soviet Union collapsed, the MID's intelligence interest shifted from the Eastern Bloc to the crisis-management and peacekeeping operations in which the Netherlands Armed Forces were participating. During the first half of the 1990s, MID activities relating to an East-West conflict were 'reduced practically to nil'.¹⁰⁹ But the CIS continued to be a focus of attention due to the combination of its huge military potential and the political instability in the region. The tendency to concentrate more upon peacekeeping operations had already begun earlier with, for example, a large number of supplementary intelligence reports, also known as 'supintreps', produced by the RNLA Military Intelligence Service about Lebanon during the period when the Netherlands was participating in the UNIFIL mission there (1979-1985). The debriefing of military personnel who had taken part in peacekeeping operations with a view to their security aspects also became more and more important. All things considered, the crisis-management operations created new intelligence needs which would substantially increase the MID's workload.¹¹⁰

From November 1992, the MID reported at intervals of a few days on military and political developments in the former Yugoslav republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia-Montenegro and Macedonia, and on international peace efforts. Reports several pages long entitled 'Developments in the Former Yugoslav Federation' were sent to the Minister of Defence, to the Coordinator of the Intelligence and Security Service, who was also Secretary-General at the Ministry of General Affairs, to the Ambassador-at-Large at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AMAD) and to the Head of the Internal Security Service. These intelligence summaries were primarily a résumé of the latest news events. They

¹⁰⁶ Engelen, *Inlichtingendiensten*, p. 97.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with P.C. Kok, 07/06/00.

¹⁰⁸ MID. Van Idsinga report, 29/03/95, DIS/95/21.11/809.

¹⁰⁹ MID. Van Idsinga report, 29/03/95, DIS/95/21.11/809.

¹¹⁰ MID. 'Directie Organisatie en Informatie, Nieuw evenwicht.' MID Screening Report. Phase 2, pp. 1 and 78.

offered little analysis and, as Minister Joris Voorhoeve rightly stated,¹¹¹ were no better in content than a quality newspaper. The only exceptions to this were the issues of (illegal) weapons shipments and of sanctions busting, which were covered in greater depth than in the press. The reports were not much appreciated amongst the policymakers. Minister Ter Beek dismissed the ‘intsums’ as ‘those little reports’. ‘I always had trouble concentrating on them,’ he said. ‘I didn’t find them that exciting. There was no question of the MID having a specific role in respect of the minister, or anything like that. From time to time I did receive some analyses, some reports, which were more detailed than the daily ‘sitrap’, the situation reports, but they came from the Defence Staff. I assume that from time to time the Defence Staff borrowed from the MID, and from the DAB of course.’¹¹²

It was striking that the MID did not perform better in its analysis of the former Yugoslavia. Prior to the outbreak of the conflict there, it was the Netherlands which had been allocated responsibility for intelligence gathering in Yugoslavia at NATO level. The MID did succeed in collecting plenty of raw intelligence in the region during those years, but its analyses were already regarded as poor in quality by the other NATO intelligence services.¹¹³

The Intelligence and Security Section of the Royal Netherlands Army, which between 1991 and April 1994 was headed by Colonel J.M.J. Bosch, was primarily loyal to its own Commander-in-Chief and only secondarily to the Minister.¹¹⁴ It had its own ‘Yugoslavia Bureau’ at the start of the conflict there, in fact consisting of one warrant officer, which concentrated upon monitoring the battle orders and on information about individuals. Its sources included signals intelligence.¹¹⁵ In 1992 the Counterintelligence and Military Security sections were separated. Eventually, a ‘study Centre’ was also set up in the Security Section to keep abreast of all security matters pertaining to Yugoslavia. For example, it was responsible for the regular debriefings of people returning from Yugoslavia. The field security NCOs who accompanied military units at battalion level sent to the region also reported to this section. The Head of the Intelligence and Security Section originally gave briefings on Yugoslavia to the Army Board, until the Commander-in-Chief put a stop to them. His deputy Lieutenant Colonel Herman Bokhoven did the same with the Crisis Staff. In April 1994, Bokhoven became Bosch’s successor as Head of the Royal Netherlands Army Intelligence and Security Section.

14. The relationship between the Minister and the Commander-in-Chief

The Defence White Paper of 1991 stated that, in principle, authority should rest at the lowest possible level within the organization: the notion of ‘decentralize unless...’. The complement of an efficient line organization with extensive delegation of powers is a good supply of information, both from the top down and vice versa. Within the Defence structure, this meant that the branches of the Armed Forces had to be well informed about the policy wishes of the political leadership whilst, conversely, the information required to formulate policy needed to be passed up from the branches. The branches therefore had to have a clear idea of the information required by ministers in order to take political responsibility for the functioning of the Defence apparatus. Since that political accountability could manifest itself in an ad-hoc way, the branches needed to have a ‘nose’ for political sensitivities. In many cases, that seemed to be asking too much. Or, as Minister Ter Beek put it, ‘...I never sensed an excess of political sensitivity in the Netherlands Army.’¹¹⁶ Military men often felt that the politicians should not embroil themselves in operational matters, an idea which would create nasty cracks in the Defence organization in the wake of Srebrenica, when issues like the notorious ‘roll of film’ and ‘Franken’s list’

¹¹¹ Interview with J. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

¹¹² Interview with A.L.ter Beek, 13/01/00.

¹¹³ Confidential interviews (69) and (82).

¹¹⁴ Confidential interview (20).

¹¹⁵ Interview with J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99.

¹¹⁶ Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99. See also Rosenthal et al., *Calamiteiten- en incidentenmanagement*, pp. 8, 11, 17 and 19-20.

came to the fore. There was also little understanding within the military of the political decision-making process, which it perceived as laborious and indirect. The Armed Forces had a poor opinion of the politicians' military expertise. As Director of Information Van den Heuvel cautiously commented in this respect; 'The idea that ultimate responsibility for military matters lies not with the commanders-in-chief but with ministers is not always highly developed in all soldiers.' According to Van den Heuvel, some military men also lived under the misapprehension that they were doing their branch of the Armed Forces a service by opposing the Central Organization.¹¹⁷ The forces had a tendency to behave secretively, especially if they realized that they had made a mistake. Conversely, the Central Organization did not adequately communicate the political aspects of such matters as participation in peacekeeping operations.¹¹⁸

The matrix organization may not have been very efficient, but it did incorporate a system of checks and balances which was lacking in the corporate model,¹¹⁹ and which particularly affected the mode of communication. The relationship between the Central Organization and the Royal Netherlands Army was, as Minister Ter Beek called it, like that of 'elephants rubbing up against one another'. As already mentioned, the corporate model was heavily dependent upon the relationship between the Minister of Defence and the Commanders-in-Chief, particularly after Ter Beek abolished the Defence Council. In his memoirs of his time at the ministry, Ter Beek claims that his system of holding separate meetings with the various commanders-in-chief worked well.¹²⁰ However, it was actually an open secret that he and the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army (BLS), General Marinus Wilmink, who had been appointed at the end of 1988, before Ter Beek, could barely stand being in the same room together.¹²¹

On 10 September 1992, General Hans Couzy succeeded Wilmink. Couzy had been RNLA Deputy Commander-in-Chief since March 1991. Replacing him in that post, and as Director of Operations of the Royal Netherlands Army, was Major General R. Reitsma. He had previously played an important role in restructuring the Army, and in this context had once described himself as the Army's Jan Timmer, a reference to the man called in to turn around the fortunes of the Philips concern.¹²²

Couzy's image was that of a deskbound general with little experience as a leader of men,¹²³ and he took up his new post at a time when major cuts in the Netherlands Armed Forces, and in particular the Army, were about to be implemented. There was therefore a danger that the general would try to present himself as the man who stood by 'his' servicemen and women, which could harm his relationship with the Minister.¹²⁴ At the same time, Couzy sometimes had trouble even contacting Ter Beek. When he tried to resist certain cuts, it appeared that the Minister was protected by his staff. According to Couzy himself, he had difficulties gaining access to Ter Beek, 'and it was completely impossible when the iron was in the fire. I always had to beg and plead until, by the grace of God, I could arrange a meeting with him.'¹²⁵ When it came to operational matters like the deployment in

¹¹⁷ DV. Annotation by Van den Heuvel for Voorhoeve, 'De val van Srebrenica en de beeldvorming van Defensie' ('The fall of Srebrenica and Ministry of Defence conceptualization'), 18/08/95, no. V95015937. See also Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, II, interview with Voorhoeve, 31/08/98, p. 8; interview with H. van den Heuvel, 05/11/01.

¹¹⁸ DV. Memorandum by Van den Heuvel for Voorhoeve, 24/08/95, no. V95016235. In this respect, cf. SMG, 1002. Major General B.A.C. Droste, future Commander-in-Chief of Air Forces, to PCDS, 18/08/95, no. BDL 95.058.466/252.

¹¹⁹ Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, II, interview with Ijbema, 26/08/98, p. 8.

¹²⁰ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 220.

¹²¹ W. Nieuwenhuis, 'Nederlandse generaal commandant NAVO' ('Dutch general commander of NATO'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/06/92; F.J.D.C. Egter van Wissekerke, 'Verdiert Ter Beek's beleid wellicht een beter onthaal?' ('Does Ter Beek's policy perhaps deserve a better reception?'), *Carré* 16(1993)4, p. 11.

¹²² L. Ornstein, 'Het gevaar van een Rambo-leger' ('The danger of a Rambo army'), *Vrij Nederland*, 20/11/93, p. 54.

¹²³ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 234; Couzy, *Jaren*, pp. 15-16; interview with J.T. Bruurmijn, 07/04/99.

¹²⁴ Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

¹²⁵ Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 14.

Yugoslavia, however, the Minister was always available to him.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, according to Couzy the pair would sometimes not see one another, or even speak on the telephone, for months at a time:¹²⁷

‘As a result I, as Commander-in-Chief, hardly knew what the Minister was doing and what his thoughts were about important issues. I did not see him and very rarely heard from him. We met once every two months at most, whilst it was necessary to synchronize watches much more often than that.’¹²⁸

But according to Ter Beek he and Couzy met two or three times a month. The fact that he was sometimes unavailable to Couzy when critical decisions had to be made was not a problem in Ter Beek’s opinion. In such a case, Ter Beek knew what the Commander-in-Chief thought about the issue concerned.¹²⁹

In his turn, Ter Beek complained that he found that the Army lacked transparency in its attitude. It kept its cards close to its chest, so that he as minister always had to ‘push and shove to get information’.¹³⁰ For his part, Couzy thought that Ter Beek kept his thoughts to himself for too long. ‘First he covered his back politically, and only then did he make a decision,’ wrote the General. ‘When it came to the crunch, you were never sure whether he would really stand up for the military interest.’¹³¹ Van der Vlis also thought that the Minister held on to his cards for too long.¹³²

In addition, Couzy had no great sense of political relationships or behaviour. His own approach was very direct.¹³³ This could be a problem. In the early 1990s, public freedom of speech for serving members of the Armed Forces was still formally governed by Article 12a of the 1931 Military Service Act. This stated: ‘A serving member of the Armed Forces shall refrain from expressing ideas or opinions, and from exercising the right of association, assembly or protest, if the exercise of any such right may reasonably be adjudged to interfere with the proper performance of his duties or with the proper functioning of the public service insofar as this is related to his duties.’ And in 1992 the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence issued his own ‘Instructions for Contacts with the Public Media’. These imposed the narrowest of interpretations on personal freedom of expression: contact with the media was confined to the Ministry’s own Directorate of Information.

In defiance of these guidelines, Couzy repeatedly confronted Ter Beek with statements made publicly.¹³⁴ The awkward relationship between the two men was not, as Ter Beek suggests, caused

¹²⁶ Interviews with H. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98; Robijns, *Baas*, p. 12.

¹²⁷ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with Couzy, 21/04/95.

¹²⁸ Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 107.

¹²⁹ Robijns, *Baas*, p. 12.

¹³⁰ Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

¹³¹ Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 13.

¹³² Interview with Van der Vlis, 12/02/99

¹³³ Interview with J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99.

¹³⁴ See, for example, ‘PvdA en VVD willen dat bevelhebber landmacht zwijgt’ (‘PvdA and VVD want Army Commander-in-Chief to keep quiet’), *ANP*, 14/01/93, 19:14; W. Joustra, ‘Bevelhebber Couzy moet zich wel roeren’ (‘Commander-in-Chief Couzy has to stir’), *De Volkskrant*, 18/03/93; idem, ‘sfeer tussen minister en generaal te rellierig’ (‘Atmosphere between minister and general too obstreperous’), *De Volkskrant*, 29/01/94; P. Petit and J. Warners, ‘Legertop vreest hoog dodental’ (‘Army chiefs fear high death toll’) and “Ik een politiek onbenul, dan lach ik in mijn vuistje” (‘Me a political fool? That makes me laugh’), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25/03/93; ‘Kamer praat over Couzy’ (‘Parliament talks about Couzy’), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29/01/94; M. Reijmerink, ‘Vooral luisteren naar de generaal’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 15/06/95; F. Peeters, ‘Discussie tegen achtergrond van affaire-Couzy’ (‘Discussion against background of Couzy affair’), *Het Parool*, 19/03/93; Marcel Reijmerink, ‘Militairen moeten zich publiekelijk kunnen uiten’ (‘Military personnel must be able to speak publicly’), *Het Parool*, 24/03/93; ‘Couzy: luchtacties in Bosnië gevaarlijk. Bevelhebber krijgsmacht met minister van Defensie oneens’ (‘Couzy: air strikes in Bosnia dangerous. Armed Forces commander disagrees with defence minister’), *Het Parool*, 28/01/94; ‘slechte relatie tussen krijgsmacht en politiek verontrust PvdA en D66’ (‘Poor relationship between armed forces and politicians disturbs PvdA and D66’), *De Volkskrant*, 09/11/95; ‘Dwarsligger Couzy’ (‘Couzy the troublemaker’) and Henk Bouwmans, ‘Ter Beek liet probleem-Couzy achter voor opvolgers’ (‘Ter Beek leaves Couzy problem to successors’), *Het Parool*, 06/02/96; ‘Weer Couzy’ (‘Couzy again’), *Dagblad de Limburger*, 06/02/96; ‘PvdA dringt aan op aftreden Couzy’ (‘PvdA

solely by Couzy's lack of communication skills.¹³⁵ Structurally, communication between the armed forces and politics was difficult. The abolition of various forms of dialogue between the Armed Forces and the Central Organization had restricted communication to that between Minister and Commander-in-Chief, leaving no room for appeal. There thus arose an irresistible temptation for members of the Armed Forces to use the press to air opinions to which the Central Organization paid little or no attention. On the political side, both the Minister and Parliament responded awkwardly to such statements. One example is the outcry caused by Major General A.J. van Vuren when he publicly criticized the Defence White Paper in February 1993. Ter Beek told him that, under Article 12a of the Military Service Act, he must refrain from such statements. Van Vuren claimed that the Minister's blanket ban infringed his constitutional right to freedom of expression and took the matter to court. Before the magistrate could deliver a verdict, Ter Beek withdrew the ban on future criticisms. In an article published in the newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* on 18 January 1994, Van Vuren urged Parliament to reconsider, but rationally this time, the decision to send the Airmobile Brigade to Yugoslavia. CDA parliamentary party spokesman Jaap De Hoop Scheffer called on Ter Beek to rap the general's knuckles for this call. For his part, the Minister described Van Vuren's conduct as 'inappropriate'. As a serving officer Van Vuren should loyally carry out what his political masters had decided. And Ter Beek told him so in writing.¹³⁶ Shortly after this ministerial ticking off, Van Vuren left the service and became free – as retired officers so often do, to comment about defence policy to his heart's content.¹³⁷ After all, retired generals usually say what serving ones are not allowed to. Hence the alternative definition of the abbreviation 'b. d.' (*buiten dienst*, 'retired') often used in Ministry of Defence circles: *buitengewoon deskundig*, 'exceptionally expert'.¹³⁸

On 10 November 1992, two months after his appointment as Commander-in-Chief, Couzy used the opinion page of the *NRC Handelsblad* to vent his own criticisms of a further drastic reduction in the transitional period for the suspension of conscription.¹³⁹ This came at an extremely inopportune moment for Ter Beek. He still had to convince Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans van den Broek to agree to the ending of national service. Moreover, Couzy's article could give the impression that Ter Beek was bowing to the Commander-in-Chief in respect of the transitional period, which in turn would endanger political acceptance of the forthcoming Defence White Paper of 1993. Ter Beek therefore demanded written confirmation from Couzy that his statements were intended 'to support the policy of the Minister of Defence. This means that I unconditionally accept the decisions of the Minister in respect of the future structure of the Royal Netherlands Army and of

demands that Couzy resign'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/02/96; 'Coup van Couzy' ('Coup from Couzy'), *Elsevier*, 09/02/96; T. Olde Monnikhof and P. Petit, 'De generaal is een taaie dwarsligger' ('The general is a tough troublemaker'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 10/02/96; A. van der Horst, 'De eigen oorlog van Hans Couzy' ('Hans Couzy's own war'), *HP/De Tijd*, 16/02/96; L. Meijer, 'Ter Beek probeert tevergeefs streng te zijn' ('Ter Beek tries in vain to be tough'), *Trouw*, 27/11/92; P. Pierik and M. Reijmerink, 'Politiek muilkorft de generaals' ('Politicians gag generals'), *Trouw*, 01/02/94; W. Joustra, 'Dwarse historicus zit dicht bij het vuur' ('Contrary historian close to the flames'), *De Volkskrant*, 27/10/92; PvdA-fractie beticht legerbevelhebber van deloyaal gedrag' ('Parliamentary PvdA accuses commander-in-chief of the Army of disloyal conduct'), *De Volkskrant*, 12/11/92; J. Schaberg, 'Het dictum van Michiel de Ruyter behoeft bijstelling' ('Michiel de Ruyter's dictum needs changing'), *De Volkskrant*, 30/11/92; R. Kagie, 'Het spreekverbod. Wat generaal Couzy wel en niet mag zeggen' ('The gag: what General Couzy can and cannot say'), *Vrij Nederland*, 30/01/93.

¹³⁵ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 234; L. Ornstein, 'Het eergevoel van Relus ter Beek', *Vrij Nederland*, 18/03/95.

¹³⁶ For Van Vuren's performance and the criticism of him, see also *De Boode*, 'Vrijheid' ('Freedom'), p. 218; W.T. Eijsbouts, 'Van Vuren', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25/01/94; H.F. Fabri, 'Generaal van Vuren' ('General van Vuren'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 26/01/94; A.J. van Vuren, 'Ook militairen hebben vrijheid van meningsuiting' ('soldiers have freedom of expression, too'), *Limburgs Dagblad*, 25/01/94; 'Ter Beek: kritiek van militair op beleid misplaatst' ('Ter Beek: policy criticism of military misplaced'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/01/94; 'Kritiek defensietop op beleid valt slecht bij Ter Beek' ('Criticism of defence chiefs angers Ter Beek'), *Trouw*, 27/01/94; Perry Pierik and Marcel Reijmerink, 'Politiek muilkorft de generaals', *Trouw*, 01/02/94.

¹³⁷ See, for example, A.J. van Vuren, 'Den Haag laat Nederlandse militairen in de steek' ('The Hague leaves Dutch troops in the lurch'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/06/95.

¹³⁸ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 238.

¹³⁹ H.A. Couzy, 'Afschaffen dienstplicht vergt ruime overgangstijd' ('Abolition of conscription requires long transitional period'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/11/92.

conscription, and am prepared to implement and enforce the said proposals without reservations.’¹⁴⁰ Drawn up by Van den Heuvel, this statement would come to be known inside the Ministry of Defence as the ‘pledge of loyalty’ and for the Army it became a huge stumbling block. The incident made Couzy a martyr in military eyes, something which worked to his advantage,¹⁴¹ and generated contempt within the Army for the Directorate of Information, which the Army viewed as siding too much with the Minister whilst underplaying Army views.¹⁴² Couzy gained a reputation for ‘standing up for his people’, and they in turn put him on a pedestal.¹⁴³ Former soldiers, amongst them now-retired Major General Van Vuren, made the most of the plaudits being heaped upon Couzy. They spoke of the ‘overreaction’ by Dutch politicians whenever military men expressed an opinion.¹⁴⁴ The politicians responded ‘as if stung by a wasp whenever soldiers publicly expressed their opinion about the feasibility or effectiveness of measures taken or to be taken.’ Instead, the politicians with their ‘utopian, idealistic and unrealistic’ defence policy would do better to ask themselves why ‘soldiers permeated with subservience’ felt the need to speak out in public.¹⁴⁵

When Couzy stepped down as Commander-in-Chief in the summer of 1996, accusations once again started flying back and forth between the military and politicians. After his departure, Couzy published a critical retrospective entitled *Mijn jaren als bevelhebber* (‘My Years as Commander-in-Chief’), in which he complained about the poor communication between senior military commanders and political leadership at the Ministry of Defence. This prompted Prime Minister Wim Kok to observe that the General could sometimes have picked up the telephone himself to call ministers, to which Couzy responded that the telephone was not enough on critical occasions and that ministers claimed they were too busy for face-to-face meetings.¹⁴⁶ An offended Kok retorted that he was ‘not inclined to respond to the pile of quotes’, adding that Couzy had ‘a lot of problems (...) including with himself’. Therefore, the Prime Minister had ‘no objection to his’¹⁴⁷ departure.¹⁴⁸

As reported in the main text of this report, Couzy also made regular statements about the deployment of Dutch troops in Yugoslavia which were not welcomed by the Minister or Parliament. But despite all the commotion he caused, Couzy remained highly regarded by Ter Beek and Van der Vlis for his loyal cooperation regarding the cuts to the Army.¹⁴⁹ Van der Vlis stood by Couzy on several occasions when his statements caused irritation in political circles. On the other hand, he did feel that Couzy could sometimes have stood up to the Minister more firmly.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁰ F. Peeters, ‘Couzy verbergt zijn twijfels achter ferme uitspraken’ (‘Couzy conceals his doubts behind firm statements’), *Het Parool*, 08/02/96.

¹⁴¹ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with Couzy, 21/04/95; R. Kagie, ‘Het spreekverbod. Wat generaal Couzy wel en niet mag zeggen’, *Vrij Nederland*, 30/01/93; Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, p. 234; Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 20; E. Nysingh, ‘De pers over Defensie’ (‘The press on the Ministry of Defence’), *Hoe communiceert defensie*, p. 18; ‘Officieren zijn ontstemd over optreden Ter Beek tegen generaal’ (‘Officers disgruntled by Ter Beek’s action against general’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/11/92.

¹⁴² M. Reijmerink and P. Pierik, ‘Bij defensie dienen alsnog kopen te rollen’ (‘Heads still need to roll at Defence’), *De Volkskrant*, 02/09/95; interview with B. Kreemers, 18/03/99.

¹⁴³ General Coopmans, quoted in Debbie Langelaan, ‘De laatste in zijn soort. Generaal Couzy verlaat de actieve dienst als een omstreden man’, (‘The last of his kind: General Couzy leaves active service a controversial man’) *De Stem*, 30/03/96. Identical words are quoted from Bauke Snoep, Chairman of the General Federation of Military Personnel, in H. Goudriaan, ‘Een om zich heen slaande generaal. Couzy veroorzaakt commotie, maar kan bij ‘zijn’ landmacht niet stuk’, (‘A general lashes out: Couzy causes commotion but can do no wrong with ‘his’ army’) *Trouw*, 09/02/96 and from Bauke Snoep and Major General Schaberg (retired) in A. van der Horst, ‘De eigen oorlog van Hans Couzy’, *HP/De Tijd*, 16/02/96.

¹⁴⁴ M. Reijmerink, ‘Vooral luisteren naar de generaal’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 15/06/95.

¹⁴⁵ A.J. van Vuren, ‘Den Haag laat Nederlandse militairen in de steek’, *De Volkskrant*, 17/06/95.

¹⁴⁶ ‘Ex-generaal Couzy over rol leger top in politiek’ (‘Ex-general Couzy on role of Army chiefs in politics’), *De Stem*, 08/07/96.

¹⁴⁷ Couzy’s.

¹⁴⁸ Van Gils and Van der Meulen, ‘Kok neemt afstand van verwijten Couzy’ (‘Kok distances himself from Couzy’s accusations’), *ANP*, 05/07/96, 18:56.

¹⁴⁹ Interviews with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with Couzy, 21/04/95; Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 20; Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, p. 230.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

Although the 1992 reorganization of the Ministry of Defence specifically facilitated direct contact between the Minister and the Commanders-in-Chief, in practice Couzy often channelled his views through the Chief of Defence Staff.¹⁵¹ He assumed that the CDS would inform the Minister. However, this procedure guaranteed misunderstandings and opacity. One example was Couzy's order to the Airmobile Brigade in June 1993 to start planning for deployment in Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to Couzy, he and General Van der Vlis discussed the matter fully and he understood that Van der Vlis would inform the Minister.¹⁵² But Ter Beek says that he knew nothing of the plan until he read about it in the Defence journal of press cuttings in early July.¹⁵³ He then demanded that the order to plan for deployment be withdrawn because no political decision about the use of the Airmobile Brigade had yet been made. According to a number of those involved, however, the Minister had known about the order and only countermanded it because the press had got wind of it.¹⁵⁴ But Van der Vlis claims that Couzy never informed him of the order either.¹⁵⁵ Confusion of this kind was a practical consequence of the triangular structure which had been opted for, and was further exacerbated by the fact that almost all communication between Van der Vlis and Couzy was by telephone.¹⁵⁶ Van der Vlis occasionally overcame this by taking Couzy along to his meetings with Minister Ter Beek.

15. The relationship between the Defence Crisis Management Centre and the Crisis Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army

Another source of tension between the Central Organization and the Armed Forces was found at the level of the Ministry of Defence's Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) and the Crisis Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army. Article 5d of the 1992 General Defence Organization Order stated that the Chief of Defence Staff could be charged with the command of particular operations, including peacekeeping operations, if their nature so demanded, but only following an express decision by the Minister. This power was first used in mid 1994, in respect of the Dutch contribution to the relief of Rwandan refugees in Zaire. It was next invoked for the military operation to assist the Caribbean island of Saint Martin recover from the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Luis in September 1995. Never, though, did the CDS assume direct command of Dutch military resources in Yugoslavia under the terms of Article 5d.

As already mentioned, Van der Vlis was cautious on this point. Soon after his appointment as CDS, he reached an agreement with the Commanders-in-Chief about the division of duties between them.¹⁵⁷ The operational, logistical, personnel and materiel command of military units would be provided by their own branch. The services themselves would liaise with the CDS, or, to be more accurate, the DCBC. Matters with a political aspect had to be submitted to the CDS. The tension in the relationship between the DCBC and the Army came about mainly because, over time, a need arose for operational monitoring at the Crisis Management Centre.¹⁵⁸

Officially, for units of the Royal Netherlands Army that task rested with its own Crisis Staff. The Crisis Staff had remained largely dormant throughout the Cold War. Known as *Staf Ochtendblad* ('Morning Newspaper Staff'), the organization was under the command of the War Staff of the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. Between 1965 and October 1992, *Staf Ochtendblad* prepared, coordinated and directed what were then for the most part small-scale

¹⁵¹ Interview with F.J.J. Princen, 08/01/98.

¹⁵² Interview with H. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98.

¹⁵³ Robijns, *Baas*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁵⁴ Interviews with G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00, and H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

¹⁵⁵ Van der Vlis, Srebrenica dossier for NIOD, 08/02/99, p. 19.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with F.J.J. Princen, 08/01/98.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. SMG, 1002. Major General B.A.C. Droste, future Commander-in-Chief of Air Forces, to PCDS, 18/08/95, no. BDL 95.058.466/252; interviews with M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00, and F.J.A. Pollé, 08/03/00.

contributions made by the Netherlands Army to international peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. Throughout this period *Staf Ochtendblad* acted as a project organization, its size and composition varying from one operation to the next and personnel of *Staf Ochtendblad* did this task alongside their other work. But more intensive participation in peacekeeping operations eventually created a need for a permanent coordinating organization. This ‘new-style’ Crisis Staff became operational on 1 October 1992. Its full title was *KL Crisisstaf Ochtendblad* (the Royal Netherlands Army Morning Newspaper Crisis Staff). It fell under the auspices of the Army’s Directorate of Operations, and so its overall commander was the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Operations (SCOCIS): until November 1993 Brigadier General G.J.M. Bastiaans, thereafter Brigadier General F.J.A. Pollé. Its original Chief of Staff was Lieutenant Colonel Raymond van Veen, who at the beginning of 1993 became Military Attaché at the Dutch Permanent Mission to the United Nations.¹⁵⁹ From 1 November 1992, his replacement was Lieutenant Colonel F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse. In February 1994 he was replaced by Colonel Charles Brantz, who in his turn was succeeded by Colonel B. Dedden a year later.

The Operational Affairs Section of the Army Directorate of Operations (DOKL) provided the core of the Crisis Staff. It also contained permanent representatives from the other directorates – Personnel, Economic Management and Materiel – so that in fact it was a joint body for officers from all sections of the Army. Their presence meant that lines of communication to any part of the Army were short, enabling effective operation. Sections G1 (Personnel) and G4 (Logistics) were fully staffed from 1 October 1992. Over time it expanded to include experts in the fields of personnel, logistics, training, transport, medical care, intelligence and security, signals, legal affairs, and so on. The Defence Staff, the Naval Staff, the Air Force Staff and the Royal Marechaussee (military police) Staff were also more-or-less permanently represented. The Army Crisis Staff was based at the Princess Juliana Barracks, the ‘the Royal Netherlands Army’s Valhalla’,¹⁶⁰ close to the RNLA Commander-in-Chief (BLS).

The task of the Army Crisis Staff was to put into effect decisions to provide units of the Netherlands Army for crisis-management operations. To this end, it communicated with the Army organizations supplying those units – for example, the First Army Corps. It was also responsible for scheduling and monitoring the progress of deployment. From the moment of secondment, the Crisis Staff was charged with operational command and control. Missions abroad sent their situation reports to the Crisis Staff.

The new-style Crisis Staff also had a Situation Centre (SITCEN BLS) at its disposal. This too became operational on 1 October 1992. It acted as an internal Army information centre for peacekeeping missions and as the permanent point of contact between troops in the field and their families at home.¹⁶¹ Six shifts of two people ensured that the Centre was manned at all times. SITCEN also provided care for the personnel, including material needs, and monitored the media. Its staff compiled daily situation reports, updated maps and gave daily morning briefings. In addition, every Thursday morning a briefing was held, which was attended by staff officers. The briefing was also addressed by a representative from the Army Intelligence and Security Section. The number of people attending this varied between 5 and 30. The sometimes small turnout was due in part to the fact that this briefing was more of a ‘ritual’ than a ‘serious exercise in information exchange’¹⁶²

At first, the DCBC did not interfere much with the Crisis Staff and its duties. Quite the contrary. As General Bosch remarked, ‘staffs at lower levels discover that in practice those at a higher level say, “Boys, you’re entitled to your own problems. Good luck with them!” Now and again the

¹⁵⁹ See appendix on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¹⁶⁰ NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz, *Dagboek*, p. 5.

¹⁶¹ See also ‘Defensie wil meldpunt voor ‘thuisblijvers’ (‘Ministry of Defence wants contact point for families’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/03/92; E. de Visser, ‘Leger faxt geen liefdesbrieven naar VN’ers in ex-Joegoslavië’ (‘Army does not fax love letters to UN troops in former Yugoslavia’), *De Volkskrant*, 18/02/94; Hella Rottenberg, ‘De bunker van Voorhoeve’ (‘Voorhoeve’s bunker’), *De Volkskrant*, 06/05/95.

¹⁶² Interview with C. Klep, 18/02/99.

Crisis Staff found that they really were entitled to more than their fair share of problems.¹⁶³ As time progressed, however, it turned out that the DCBC and the Army Crisis Staff each had its own line of communication with colleagues in the field and staff units based in the former Yugoslavia. It was not always clear where powers and responsibilities lay or how tasks were allocated.¹⁶⁴ In theory, the Crisis Staff would concern itself with operational matters and the DCBC with policy. In the opinion of the Army, however, the Crisis Management Centre was increasingly involving itself with operations.¹⁶⁵ This notion was in part fostered by the fact that the Crisis Staff had a very limited ability to judge what matters were of political importance.¹⁶⁶

An attempt was also made to demarcate contacts. The Crisis Staff would maintain them with the seconded battalion and the next level up. Those at higher levels, including political and international contacts, would be the responsibility of the DCBC. This arrangement also failed, however, because the Crisis Staff, the DCBC and the Dutch 'players' in the field all overstepped their agreed marks.¹⁶⁷

Another contributory factor was that many of the troops sent to Yugoslavia were familiar with the Army's Crisis Staff – which was involved in preparing their mission and maintaining their contacts with home – but not with the DCBC. Even when it was made clear to them that they should send certain information to the Crisis Management Centre, they responded by commenting that the Crisis Staff should pass it on.¹⁶⁸

The exchange of information between the two crisis centres was far from perfect. Apart from the submission of the daily situation report by the Crisis Staff, much of their communication was on an ad-hoc basis.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, after Van Kolsteren's departure in June 1995, the Army felt underrepresented at the DCBC whilst it was carrying out the lion's share of the peacekeeping operations.¹⁷⁰

Another problem for the Crisis Staff was that Commander-in-Chief Couzy, although only 'just around the corner', never showed his face. Whereas Van der Vlis appeared almost every day at the DCBC briefings, Couzy was never briefed by the Crisis Staff. Nor was there any response when it asked what information Couzy would like to read in situation reports from Dutchbat. Conversely, Couzy did not share information with the Crisis Staff. The Crisis Staff had the impression that Couzy thought it was merely an information centre to keep the seconded troops in touch with home.¹⁷¹ Eventually, the Crisis Staff moved to the Frederik Barracks and so literally disappeared from Couzy's view.

By July 1995 the division of tasks between the two crisis centres was, in practice, as follows. The Army Crisis staff was primarily concerned with Dutchbat's personnel and equipment needs, as well as with channelling information between troops in the field and their families. The DCBC, on the other hand, informed the political leadership and maintained contacts with the military chiefs in Sarajevo and Zagreb, with NATO and with foreign representatives in the Netherlands. For this reason the Army Crisis Staff had virtually no dealings with Zagreb and very few with Sarajevo, and the DCBC had next

¹⁶³ Interview with J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99.

¹⁶⁴ DV. Annotation by Van den Heuvel for Voorhoeve, 'De val van Srebrenica en de beeldvorming van Defensie', 18/08/95, no. V95015937; interview H. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98; SMG, 1004. Transcript of telephone conversation between Colonel Dedden and Petra Groen, 21/07/95; conversation between Dedden, Petra Groen and Christ Klep, 10/08/95; transcript of conversation between Colonel Smeets, Petra Groen and Christ Klep, 02/08/95.

¹⁶⁵ SMG, 1004. Conversation between Colonel Dedden, Petra Groen and Christ Klep, 10/08/95.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with R. Reitsma, 04/10/99.

¹⁶⁷ SMG, 1004. Conversation between Colonel Dedden, Petra Groen and Christ Klep, 10/08/95; transcript of conversation between Colonel Smeets, Petra Groen and Christ Klep, 02/08/95.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with E.A.W. Koestal, 24/05/00.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with C. Klep, 18/02/99; SMG, 1004. Transcript of conversation between C. Klep and Lieutenant Colonel Felix, 20/07/95.

¹⁷⁰ SMG, 1004. Transcript of conversation between C. Klep and Lieutenant Colonel Felix, 20/07/95; transcript of conversation between Colonel Smeets, Petra Groen and Christ Klep, 02/08/95.

¹⁷¹ Interview with M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00.

to no contact with Dutchbat. Contacts with Dutchbat were therefore primarily the task of the Crisis Staff.

As the tensions in Srebrenica grew, however, under political pressure the DCBC began to become more involved with the actual operation. This blurred the dividing line between the tasks of the DCBC and the Army Crisis Staff.¹⁷² (see Part III, Chapter 7.) The DCBC had a more central and influential position because of the proximity of the Minister, as a result of which its power grew, particularly during July 1995. It also maintained contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the Dutch permanent representatives to the UN in New York, with those of NATO in Brussels and with the foreign military attachés accredited to The Hague.¹⁷³

In theory, the Army Crisis Staff and the DCBC were supposed to exchange information about peacekeeping operations. But in practice they did not always do so, and much of what did pass between them was very ad hoc.¹⁷⁴ Although the point had been on the agenda for some time, an arrangement by which the Chief of Defence Staff would be charged with directing peacekeeping operations had not been put in place by the time Srebrenica fell. That matter was not settled until later that year.¹⁷⁵

The tenuous the situation in Srebrenica became, the more information from the former Yugoslavia went to the DCBC. As a result, the Army Crisis Staff began to feel that it was lagging behind the facts at a time of crisis. This led to some friction at the higher operational level. On the other hand, the relationship between the DCBC and the Army chiefs was good, because the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Ad Van Baal – to whom Couzy delegated a lot of responsibility – was a member of the Crisis Management Centre.

As well as people from the Ministry of Defence, the DCBC also contained a permanent representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who reported back to his minister and officials. But senior foreign ministry officials – such as the Director of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs, Frank Majoor, and the Deputy director-General of Political Affairs, Boudewijn van Eenennaam, were only very occasionally to be found in the DCBC. According to former Director-General of Political Affairs, Wijnaendts, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs played little part in the bunker in The Hague: in his opinion, military policy on the Dutch side was formulated by the Chief of Defence Staff, Van den Breemen. He very much controlled things in the bunker.¹⁷⁶ Other permanent members of the DCBC also say that Van den Breemen decided policy there. The then Director-General of Political Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Joris Vos, had little influence on that process.¹⁷⁷

16. The tensions between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence

Tensions were not confined to the Defence organization itself. There were also problems between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. Responsibility for foreign policy, including security, rested in the first instance with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁷⁸ The Minister of Defence was primarily responsible for the structure, maintenance and functioning of the Armed Forces. In the past it was irreverently said the Ministry of Defence was only there to look after the hardware store, the 'boys with their toys'.¹⁷⁹ Traditionally the Ministry of Foreign Affairs handled security policy, including defence matters, abroad. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was strongly inclined to bow to the pressure for the Netherlands to act on the international stage by being ready to play a role in maintaining international

¹⁷² SMG/1004. Conversation with Colonel Dedden (Chief of Crisis Staff), 10/08/95.

¹⁷³ SMG/1004. Conversation with Colonel Dedden (Chief of Crisis Staff), 10/08/95.

¹⁷⁴ DPK. Pers/95/37.763/21.787. BLS Crisis Staff Blueprint, sent by fax on 01/06/95.

¹⁷⁵ SMG/1004. Transcript of conversation between C. Klep and Captain Voets and Lieutenant Colonel Felix, 20/07/95.

¹⁷⁶ Wijnaendts received his information about the DCBC from the Director of Atlantic Security, F. Majoor (conversation with H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00).

¹⁷⁷ Interviews with Major General C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00 and J.C.S. Wijnands, 24/05/00. Telephone conversation with H. Wijnaendts, 25/04/00; SMG/1004. Transcript of conversation with Colonel Smeets, 02/08/95.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Van Eenennaam, *Kruisraketten*, pp. 36-37.

¹⁷⁹ Ter Beek *Manoeuvres*, p. 167. Cf. De Ruiter, quoted in Van Eenennaam, *Kruisraketten*, p. 37; Berghorst, *News*, p. 26.

security and the rule of law. But in September 1981, during the debate about modernizing NATO's arsenal of medium-range weapons, Minister of Foreign Affairs Max van der Stoep and his colleague at the Ministry of Defence, Hans van Mierlo, recognized 'the close relationship between arms control and defence, and the effects of the decisions made by each upon the other's field'. They thus concluded that they had 'joint and special responsibility (...) for a closely integrated policy' in the area of international security. From then on the Ministry of Defence would increasingly emphasize that the two ministries shared responsibility for security policy, although each could of course set its own priorities.¹⁸⁰ Because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs never really entirely accepted this notion, even in the 1990s defence ministers and their officials still found it 'important to underline the joint responsibilities with some regularity'.¹⁸¹

The Minister of Defence's first task was to investigate whether the desired security policy could actually be put into effect using the military resources available to the country. He was also responsible for the safety of troops.¹⁸² Such considerations did not weigh upon either ministers or officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ter Beek, for example, had the impression that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had 'a natural tendency to offer a box of soldiers at every opportunity'¹⁸³ to promote the greater honour and glory of the Netherlands. Or, in the words of the Head of the Military History Section, Piet Kamphuis, '(...) whereas the Ministry of Defence carefully weighs up the risks for its own personnel, our diplomats seem to behave like travelling salesmen peddling soldiers.'¹⁸⁴ As a result there were sometimes 'earnest discussions' between officials from the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs about the reserved attitude of the Ministry of Defence. In these Ter Beek and his civil servants had to point out to colleagues that they, not the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were the ones who would have to explain to families what had happened if their boys came home in body bags.¹⁸⁵ The conflict between the two ministries was thus caused in part by the distinction between home and foreign policy. For the Ministry of Defence, the attitude of Parliament was paramount. MPs had to be reassured so as to create broad support for the policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not ignore the issue of potential casualties: even some of its own officials regarded the readiness to take action in Yugoslavia as potentially 'gruesome'. Dutch diplomats also asked themselves how resilient public opinion would be if Dutch soldiers did start returning in body bags.¹⁸⁶

Another source of friction between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defence was the process of restructuring in which the armed forces were embroiled. This often made it difficult to find units which could actually be deployed. It was all too easy for an inability to do something on the part of the Ministry of Defence to be interpreted as unwillingness by officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who regarded troop deployments as a way of making the Netherlands count on the international stage.¹⁸⁷ Linked to this was the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was particularly impressed by operations which involved NATO, whereas that was much less so at the Ministry of Defence. Political contacts with NATO were primarily the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, NATO traditionally favoured a large-scale approach whereas the Dutch Defence organization – under pressure to save money and concerned about its own personnel – preferred peacekeeping operations requiring the limited use of resources and entailing less risk to the troops involved. The Director of General Policy Affairs at the Ministry of Defence regarded the trend of international developments following the end of the Cold War as far less likely to be reversed than did

¹⁸⁰ See also Berghorst, *News*, pp. 26-27.

¹⁸¹ DAB. Memorandum from De Winter to the minister, 05/10/98, D98/537. Also interview with J. de Winter, 20/07/00.

¹⁸² Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 49.

¹⁸³ Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

¹⁸⁴ Review by P.H. Kamphuis van R. ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*. Herinneringen aan Plein 4, Amsterdam 1996 ('Memories of Plein 4, Amsterdam 1996'), in *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 114(1999)1, p. 166.

¹⁸⁵ Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, pp. 176 and 205; interviews with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99 and F.J.J. Princen, 08/01/98.

¹⁸⁶ Interviews with A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00, and H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00. See also interviews with R. Swartbol, 24/02/99, and 08/07/00.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with R. Swartbol, 24/02/99.

the Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁸⁸ These disparate aspirations and responsibilities made it almost a reflex for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take the lead in offering a Dutch contribution to international military enterprises, in particular peacekeeping operations, whilst the Ministry of Defence always seemed to be putting on the brakes.

This basic contradiction was only reinforced by the person of Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans van den Broek. He regarded the Armed Forces as a tool of foreign policy, and himself as a ‘constant safeguard against the decimation of Defence’ in a time of cutbacks.¹⁸⁹

During the formation of the Lubbers-Kok government, Wim Kok believed that Ter Beek could act as a counterweight to Van den Broek, both domestically and internationally.¹⁹⁰ But in the early stages of his period at the Defence ministry, Ter Beek was overshadowed by Van den Broek.¹⁹¹ During the Gulf Crisis Ter Beek detected a strong desire by Van den Broek to ‘play with the big boys’ – the United States and the United Kingdom.¹⁹² But later, too, there was huge concern in Defence circles when officials from Foreign Affairs went around more or less advertising what Dutch military resources were available for international operations.¹⁹³ According to Boudewijn van Eenennaam, Van den Broek’s offer to supply Patriot missiles during the Gulf War, which was made without informing Ter Beek, permanently damaged the relationship between the two ministers.¹⁹⁴ Years later, Ter Beek still described the incident as ‘dreadful’. At the time he threatened to resign,¹⁹⁵ but in *Manoevreren*, his mild-mannered memoirs of his ministerial career, he wrote that the matter was closed once Van den Broek had made a public apology.¹⁹⁶

The longer Ter Beek remained in office, the more the advantage of Van den Broek’s ministerial seniority eroded. From time to time Ter Beek was even able to ‘put one over’ on the Minister of Foreign Affairs by presenting him with a *fait accompli*.¹⁹⁷ During the parliamentary debate on the Defence White Paper, for example, Ter Beek tried to marginalize Van den Broek’s role by pointing out that the Minister of Foreign Affairs should at least agree with the opening, general sections of the document (they had been written by his own department). Van den Broek felt obliged to comment that he was ‘coincidentally’ a member of the third Lubbers government.¹⁹⁸ Not only did Van den Broek and his officials object to the procedure followed, they also did not much like the content of the White Paper’s other sections. In their view, the Ministry of Defence had been too quick in leaping to the conclusion that the threat of a major conflict with the Soviet Union was now a thing of the past allowing the heavier military units to be pushed to one side.¹⁹⁹

As Ter Beek ‘grew into’ his ministerial role, he began emphasizing more and more that security policy was a joint responsibility of the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs.²⁰⁰ Dutch participation in UN operations led to him making many overseas visits and developing his own international network. That caused some ‘professional jealousy’ in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,²⁰¹ for example,

¹⁸⁸ Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, pp. 156 and 168.

¹⁸⁹ Brandsma and Klein, *Pronk*, p. 136.

¹⁹⁰ Stemerding, *Dromen*, pp. 173, 232.

¹⁹¹ Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, p. 159; P. Rusman, ‘De laatste Koude-Oorlogstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)’ (‘The last Cold Warrior: Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)’), Hellema et al. (eds), *Ministers*, p. 273; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with B.J. van Eenennaam, 12/05/95; idem, 22/08/00.

¹⁹² Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, p. 26.

¹⁹³ Interview with K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

¹⁹⁶ Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, p. 58.

¹⁹⁷ See, for example, Rehwinkel and Nekkens, *Regerendewijs*, pp. 102-103.

¹⁹⁸ ‘PvdA botst opnieuw met Van den Broek over defensiebudget’ (‘PvdA clashes again with Van den Broek over defence budget’), *Trouw*, 18/06/91. See also Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, pp. 69 and 83.

¹⁹⁹ Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, pp. 69-73; interview with K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 13/12/99.

²⁰⁰ See, for example, the extensive interview with Ter Beek on RTL4 television, *De Vierde Kamer*, 21/06/92, 23.05.

²⁰¹ Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, p. 224. See also *ibidem*, pp. 36-37. Cf. ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Van den Broek to Ter Beek, 01/04/92.

during a visit to New York in late August and early September 1993 when Ter Beek offered UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali use of the Dutch Airmobile Brigade in Bosnia. The issue was also highlighted during Ter Beek's first visit to Dutch troops stationed in the former Yugoslavia, in June 1992. He had promised them that he would make a morale-boosting visit at the earliest opportunity. Van den Broek, UN headquarters and the headquarters of the EC observers all objected. They believed that the ceasefire in place at the time was still fragile, and the Minister's travelling through Serbian-held areas of Croatia might be interpreted as de-facto recognition of the occupation. Ter Beek would be setting a precedent as the first Minister of Defence of a nation with troops based in the former Yugoslavia to visit them there. With the support of Prime Minister Lubbers, however, Ter Beek went ahead with the visit.²⁰²

It was the officials in the Foreign Affairs' Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (DAV) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, primarily responsible for maintaining contacts with *Plein 4* and close confidants of Van den Broek, who had to adjust most to the Ministry of Defence's more assertive stance. DAV was made up of 'fighters' who, under Van den Broek, had learned to involve themselves in Defence matters.²⁰³ Or, as General Couzy put it, 'You automatically get senior civil servants aligning themselves with their minister and starting to behave in the same brazen way. When Pieter Kooijmans came along, that had to change. They were forced to come back down to earth, but it was not easy for them.'²⁰⁴

Because Ter Beek had abolished the Defence Council, on which the head of the DAV sat, the DAV no longer came into direct contact with the chiefs of the branches of the Armed Forces. In principle, civil servants at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were not supposed to deal directly with the Armed Forces. All contacts had to go through *Plein 4*. In practice, however, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had always had an excellent relationship with the Royal Netherlands Navy, arising in part out of its global orientation and role in 'showing the flag' abroad. But both the Defence Staff and the Directorate of General Policy Affairs (DAB) at the Ministry of Defence indicated that they were unhappy with these direct links. DAV and Directorate of UN Political Affairs (DPV) officials only came into face-to-face contact with representatives of the Army at consultative meetings about peacekeeping operations.²⁰⁵

Conversely, officers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarded the DAB as something of a competitor: a sort of 'Foreign Affairs Section' of the Ministry of Defence. They much preferred to do business with the Defence Staff.²⁰⁶ In fact, this assessment by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reflected the DAB's own opinion of itself. As one Directorate official, J. de Winter, put it, 'We here at the DAB have quite an extensive understanding of what we are allowed to do in regard of Foreign Affairs, because we consider that we know something about foreign policy and sometimes believe we even know slightly better. That's very arrogant, of course, but it is what we think.'²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, in

²⁰² W. Nieuwenhuis, 'Ter Beek naar VN-troepen in Joegoslavië' ('Ter Beek visits UN troops in Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/05/92; idem, 'Nu zie je wat hier een bloedspoor getrokken is' ('Now you can see what a trail of blood there is here'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/06/92; 'Ter Beek gaat half juni naar VN-troepen in Joegoslavië' ('Ter Beek to visit UN troops in Yugoslavia in mid June'), *De Volkskrant*, 02/06/92; T. Lagas, 'Ter Beek: Gebed zonder end' ('Ter Beek: the never-ending story'), *Trouw*, 15/06/92; 'Ter Beek gaat toch naar militairen in Bosnië' ('Ter Beek visits troops in Bosnia after all'), *Trouw*, 02/06/92; 'Ter Beek wil naar Joegoslavië om soldaten mentaal te steunen' ('Ter Beek wants to go to Yugoslavia to give soldiers moral support'), *De Volkskrant*, 13/05/92; W. Joustra, 'VN-militairen populair bij bevolking' ('UN troops popular with local people'), *De Volkskrant*, 15/06/92; Michiel Hoogers, 'Zagreb boos over bezoek Ter Beek' ('Zagreb angered by Ter Beek visit'), *de Telegraaf*, 15/06/92; 'Ter Beek komt zijn belofte na' ('Ter Beek keeps his promise'), *Het Parool*, 12/06/92, Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

²⁰³ Interview with M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

²⁰⁴ NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with Couzy, 21/04/95.

²⁰⁵ Interviews with R. in den Bosch, 19/04/00, and F.A.M. Majoor, 19/04/00.

²⁰⁶ Interview with J.M. Vos, 24/06/00.

²⁰⁷ Interview with J. de Winter, 20/07/00.

consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, despite differences of opinion between the Defence Staff and the DAB, *Plein 4* always managed to present a united front.

Unlike during the Gulf Crisis and the Kosovo conflict, no interdepartmental organization of civil servants from the Ministries of General Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Defence was formed during the first half of the 1990s, to deal with the former Yugoslavia. An initiative from Van den Broek to create one when the UNPROFOR operation began in March 1992 came to nothing.²⁰⁸ Early in March Van den Broek had disclosed to Ter Beek his concerns about the ‘increasingly lone path being taken by Defence’ in matters of defence and security policy. Ter Beek responded that these worries were unfounded, but Van den Broek continued to detect a tendency by the Ministry of Defence to shut the Ministry of Foreign Affairs out of kinds of matters in which it had a role to play. On 1 April 1992, he demanded that Ter Beek ‘make urgent changes if mutual trust and, no less importantly, policy uniformity are to remain intact’.²⁰⁹ One factor underlying this insistence was the speech Ter Beek had made the previous day to the Netherlands Society for International Affairs. The steering group which acted as a coordinating body during the Gulf War was even recalled especially to discuss that address.²¹⁰

In the meantime, the Ministry of Defence had charged the Chief of Defence Staff with interdepartmental coordination, and assigned its implementation to the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Operations (SCOCIS). If necessary in cooperation with the DAB, SCOCIS had to ensure that policy was properly coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²¹¹ In practice, however, collaboration between civil servants in the two ministries took place on an ad-hoc and personal basis.²¹² For example, there were consultations about the content of letters to be sent jointly to Parliament by ministers in the two ministries, which was something they almost always did in the case of the former Yugoslavia.²¹³ Such letters were a policy instrument, but often had to be compiled at very short notice: ‘It was always a race against the clock.’²¹⁴ Preparing them therefore required intensive discussions and negotiations between civil servants in the two ministries.²¹⁵ Only at quite a late stage, towards the end of 1993, was an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs admitted to the daily meeting in the bunker. This gathering was a deliberate attempt by the Ministry of Defence to become more involved in policymaking than had been the case during the Gulf War, when officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had exercised great influence through the Gulf Group due to the lack of structure in the Ministry of Defence.²¹⁶ Half-hearted attempts by council adviser Joop Merckelbach, responsible for foreign and security policy at the Ministry of General Affairs, to establish a form of interdepartmental coordination of the type which had existed at the time of the Gulf War failed.²¹⁷ According to Merckelbach, another factor contributed to the difference in interdepartmental consultative procedures during the Gulf War and in the Yugoslavia situation. The Gulf conflict was a war in which the Dutch were involved as belligerents, whereas their role in Yugoslavia was ‘only’ as peacekeepers. Such an operation did not constitute a crisis, and would not do so until Srebrenica was attacked.²¹⁸

The combination of their conflicting interests and the absence of structured consultation between them led to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence clashing publicly, for example, in

²⁰⁸ ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Memorandum from Van den Broek to DGPZ, 06/03/92, no. 15/92.

²⁰⁹ ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Van den Broek to Ter Beek, 01/04/92.

²¹⁰ ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Van den Broek to Ter Beek, 06/04/92.

²¹¹ BSG. Memorandum from Van den Breemen for Ter Beek and Van Voorst tot Voorst, 19/03/93, S92/139/1056; MARStaf. exh. 24/04/92 no. S14806/4431, annotation with reference to information processing and coordination by the Defence Staff during the forthcoming peacekeeping operations in Cambodia and Yugoslavia, 20/03/92.

²¹² For example, interviews with B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00, and J.M. Vos, 24/06/00; Def 926, SG DV 91/92, Van den Heuvel to Itha, 02/04/92, V-350/92.

²¹³ See the series of parliamentary records numbered 22 181.

²¹⁴ Interview with K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

²¹⁵ Interview with K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

²¹⁶ Interview with K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

²¹⁷ Interview with K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

²¹⁸ Interview with J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00.

Parliament and in the press. On 9 March 1993, for instance, Kooijmans told Parliament in the absence of Ter Beek that he had taken proper note of the desire expressed by MPs to increase the strength of Dutch forces on the ground and would raise the matter in his scheduled meeting with the Minister for Defence the next day.²¹⁹ The following morning *De Volkskrant* ran a story, fed to it by Ter Beek himself, featuring graphics disclosing just how much the Netherlands was already contributing to peacekeeping operations.²²⁰

At this time, opponents of Army cuts or reorganization of the Royal Netherlands Army found a stronger ally in the Minister of Foreign Affairs than in their 'own' Minister of Defence. 'Things were done in a roundabout way,' says Ter Beek. 'I as Minister of Defence was bombarded with questions via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about whether I was not being too optimistic because the future did not look it, and so on.'²²¹ Overall, however, the relationship between Ter Beek and Kooijmans was more relaxed than that between Ter Beek and Van den Broek.²²²

17. The Ministry of General Affairs

The Prime Minister and his officials at the Ministry of General Affairs could possibly have adopted a coordinating role between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. However, the part played by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands has traditionally been a modest one. Until the 1930s he was no more than chairman of the Ministerial Council, a *primus inter pares* and not a policy coordinator.²²³ Ministers enjoyed considerable autonomy in their own policy areas. The prime minister also became head of the Ministry of General Affairs, only set up in 1937, which has always remained quite small compared with the other ministries. The creation of this ministry did begin to enhance the prime minister's coordinating role,²²⁴ although the way in which he exercised this always remained highly dependent upon the approach of the individual fulfilling the office.²²⁵ The title of prime minister was not even mentioned in the Constitution until the reforms of 1983. Then his position was formalized as chairman of the Ministerial Council and he was also assigned special responsibility for the uniformity of government policy. Nevertheless, individual ministerial autonomy remained strong and the prime minister was still depicted as nothing more than a *primus inter pares*.²²⁶ He was subject to a sort of principle of non-intervention in interdepartmental relationships.²²⁷ He was also unable to give instructions to individual ministers.²²⁸ During the debate sparked by the animosity between himself and Hans van den Broek over their respective positions at the European Council in late 1990,²²⁹ then Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers defined his role as follows:

'The chairman of the Ministerial Council must function in such a manner that he in no way obstructs the work of ministers: be it through lack of contact, treading on colleagues' toes or being too enthusiastic and so, as it were,

²¹⁹ TK session 1992-1993, *Handelingen*, p. 3866. (09/03/93).

²²⁰ W. Joustra, 'Vredeshandhaving in Bosnië legt zware claim op krijgsmacht' ('Peacekeeping in Bosnia makes heavy demands on forces'), *De Volkskrant*, 10/03/93; Kreemers, *Achterkant*, p. 9; interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

²²¹ Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

²²² Interview with P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99.

²²³ De Graaff, *Kalm*, p. 390. Cf. Rehwinkel, *Minister-president*, pp. 94-99 and 115.

²²⁴ Breunese and Roborgh, *Ministeries*, p. 94; Rehwinkel, *Minister-president*, pp. 98-99.

²²⁵ Rehwinkel, *Minister-president*, p. 116.

²²⁶ TK session 1987-1988, 20 559, no. 7, pp. 117-118; Van Thijn, *Retour*, p. 37; R.J. Hoekstra, 'De minister-president en Europa' ('The Prime Minister and Europe') in Rehwinkel, Boven d'Eert and Hoekstra, *Positie*, p. 45. See, for example, the statements by VVD MP G. Wilders in 2000: 'I am not saying that the Prime Minister should keep his mouth shut. But he is no more than the first amongst equals. And it should stay that way', 'Kamer moet niet willen meeregeren' ('Parliament should not want to join in governing'), *De Volkskrant*, 04/10/00.

²²⁷ Van Thijn, *Retour*, p. 37.

²²⁸ R.J. Hoekstra, 'De minister-president en Europa' in Rehwinkel, Boven d'Eert and Hoekstra, *Positie*, p. 45.

²²⁹ See appendix on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

physically overshadowing the policy of a colleague to whom a portfolio has been entrusted. That's one side of the coin. The other is that the chairman of the Council, because he is chairman, has primary responsibility for keeping policy moving, explaining its cohesion and actually achieving that cohesion, not only at home but also beyond our borders.²³⁰

The Ministry of General Affairs did little to coordinate the Yugoslavia policies of the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²³¹ In the early 1990s, the principal official advisers to the prime minister were 11 Ministerial Council advisers for individual policy areas who made up the prime minister's private office. The one responsible for foreign and security policy at the time was Joop Merckelbach. He explained the lack of coordination from the Ministry of General Affairs in respect of Yugoslavia as resulting from his efforts to prevent the prime minister from becoming involved in other ministries' affairs as far as was possible. As long as he heard nothing from the ministries concerned, Merckelbach assumed that nothing was the matter.²³² Other people involved also say that the Ministry of General Affairs only 'stepped in' when things became really tense²³³ and there were clear differences of opinion between the two ministries.

Neither Ruud Lubbers, who had been prime minister since 4 November 1982 and was set to become the longest-serving premier in Dutch history on 16 July 1993, nor his successor, Wim Kok, saw any need to turn the Ministry of General Affairs into some kind of shadow organization, or into a 'super ministry' of either Defence or Foreign Affairs which would constantly be monitoring the relationship between the two departments.²³⁴ According to Ter Beek, Lubbers' guiding influence over defence and security policy was 'not great, and that's putting it mildly. It was occasional.'²³⁵ In fact, that distance was not attributable solely to the Prime Minister: Lubbers was well known amongst ministers for his readiness to 'brainstorm' with them.²³⁶ As Ter Beek puts it:

'The Lubbers recipe was (...) always: he would ask the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs to put their heads together. He assumed that they agreed with one another, but if that turned out not to be the case he was ready and available to brainstorm with them. That was usually enough to get you to agree, because if you had Ruud²³⁷ with you it only made things more complicated. He would come up with ten problems when you thought you had a solution. All very creative.'²³⁸

Despite all his pressure to find solutions to apparently insoluble problems, Lubbers remained a hesitant, fumbling figure.²³⁹ Again and again he came up with ideas, big and small, with which to

²³⁰ TK session 1990-1991, *Handelingen*, p. 1127. (08/11/93)

²³¹ Interviews with D. Barth, 08/10/99; P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00; B. Hiensch, 13/07/00; J.T. Hoekema, 05/03/98; K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00; J.L. Sandee, 12/06/00; R. Swartbol 24/02/99; A.K. van der Vlis, 13/02/98; H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

²³² Interview with J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00.

²³³ Interview with B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00.

²³⁴ Amongst others, interview with W. Kok, 08/05/00; 28/05/00. Cf. 'Bijlmerramp. Lubbers: afhandeling ramp was bij Van Thijn in goede handen' ('Bijlmer disaster. Lubbers: management was in good hands with Van Thijn'), *ANP*, 12/03/99, 15:01; 'Tweede Kamer. Kosto: Vreemdelingentoezicht via uitkijkposten en vliegende brigades' (Parliament. Kosto: monitor immigrants using lookout posts and flying squads'), *ANP*, 24/03/94, 23:43.

²³⁵ Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

²³⁶ Interview with J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00; Metze, *Stranding*, p. 63; Willem Breedveld, 'Het geheim van de spil' ('The secret of the pivot'), *Trouw*, 07/11/92.

²³⁷ Lubbers.

²³⁸ Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00

²³⁹ Metze, *Stranding*, pp. 55-56.

bombard his ministers in memos, sometimes driving them to the point of distraction.²⁴⁰ During so-called 'bilaterals' at his office, known as 'the Turret', the Prime Minister presented himself as a mediator, someone who could reconcile differences. His statements were peppered with words like 'with one another', 'together' and 'by working away'. But others were by no means always certain where he was heading.²⁴¹ His sometimes firm statements may have given him a public reputation as a 'doer',²⁴² but to Government insiders he was 'by no means a bruiser. Lubbers lets things take their course'.²⁴³ Lubbers himself said that he was not there as prime minister 'to dole out punches'.²⁴⁴

One example of the detachment shown by the Prime Minister and his adviser, Merckelbach, came behind the scenes at the NATO summit in Brussels on 10 January 1994. When Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien casually asked whether the Dutch Airmobile Battalion was going to Srebrenica or Zepa, neither knew and they had to refer back to The Hague for an answer.²⁴⁵

18. The Ministerial Council

In theory, coordination was also possible during meetings of the Ministerial Council. Article 4 of its Rules of Procedure stated that its role was to promote the unity of government policy. A non-exhaustive list of the subjects about which the Council can take decisions includes 'White Papers to the States-General', 'policy proposals by a minister which may affect the policy of another minister' and 'important topics pertaining to foreign policy, including international participation in or assent to proposals which may have a significant influence upon the prevailing rule of law, [or] which may result in obligations of a lasting nature'.

However, cabinet meetings were not an ideal forum for policy coordination. They were usually only presented with draft letters to Parliament or the Dutch contribution to international consultations. When the Prime Minister, be it Lubbers or Kok, wanted to solve disputes between Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence, they preferred to do so outside the Ministerial Council. 'Of course,' said Kok, 'something needs to be well out of hand and highly contentious to be worked out in full Ministerial Council because political relationships and loss of face are in play there and, moreover, the Council is primarily there to discuss and make decisions which have been properly prepared in draft form. The (...) Ministerial Council is not a massage parlour...'²⁴⁶ So its meetings never included any real discussion about Yugoslavia policy.²⁴⁷ Minister Jan Pronk points out that the 1990s were a decade of 'no-nonsense' government. 'We have no need of reflection and consideration,' he said. 'It is not like the 1970s anymore, when we had 20 minutes to set out an analysis. All that is a thing of the past.'²⁴⁸ In principle, in the Council ministers did not tread areas which did not affect their own department.²⁴⁹ This meant that, as far as Yugoslavia was concerned, it was mainly the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Development Cooperation and Defence who did the talking. The Deputy Prime Ministers also had a role as leaders of their party political section in the coalition. Only when the question of Displaced Persons from the former Yugoslavia was addressed could other ministers be guaranteed to take a 'professional' interest. For example, the Ministers of Justice, Finance, of Welfare, Health and Culture and of Education and Science. This explains why the topic of Yugoslavia is so often

²⁴⁰ Metze, *Stranding*, p. 57.

²⁴¹ Cf. H. Righart, 'De meestergoochelaar' ('The master magician'), *HP/De Tijd*, 24/04/92; M. van Weezel and L. Ornstein, 'Lubbers zit er niet om lellen uit te delen' ('Lubbers is not there to dole out punches'), *Vrij Nederland*, 21/01/93.

²⁴² Willem Breedveld, 'Het geheim van de spil', *Trouw*, 07/11/92.

²⁴³ Jan Tromp, 'Lubbers is helemaal geen krachtpatser' ('Lubbers really is no bruiser'), *De Volkskrant*, 18/09/91.

²⁴⁴ M. van Weezel and L. Ornstein, 'Lubbers zit er niet om lellen uit te delen', *Vrij Nederland*, 21/01/93.

²⁴⁵ Interview with J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/02/00.

²⁴⁶ Interview with W. Kok, 08/05/00.

²⁴⁷ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 237-238.

²⁴⁸ Interview with J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

²⁴⁹ Cf. R.B. Andeweg, 'Tweeërlei Ministerraad. Besluitvorming in Nederlandse kabinetten' ('Dual council: decisionmaking in Dutch cabinets'), in idem (ed.), *Ministers*, pp. 26-27.

found in the Ministerial Council minutes in connection with flows, actual or possible, of refugees.²⁵⁰ In general, there was a huge fear of the country's attractiveness to refugees. In fact, however, the influx into the Netherlands of people fleeing the former Yugoslavia remained comparatively small, certainly given the nature and extent of the conflict. The vast majority of refugees headed for Germany.

According to Merckelbach, there was no great desire within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for involvement by other ministries. In his opinion the Ministry guarded its business jealously and was not really inclined to have it discussed in the Ministerial Council, except when requested to.²⁵¹ Foreign policy may have been a standard agenda item for Ministerial Council meetings, but it was given little attention. Points tended to be 'swept under the table' unless the Prime Minister specifically brought them up. On some occasions Parliament was actually told about Yugoslavia-related matters before the Ministerial Council. One example was in early December, when the Parliament was earlier informed about the deployment of the Airmobile Battalion to Srebrenica and Zepa than the Council.

19. Voorhoeve's term of office

'Ter Beek was Relus. Voorhoeve is *doctor ingenieur* J.J.C. Voorhoeve, a gentleman of standing.' But that was more a difference in style than in deep political *raison d'être* between the two men, a social-democrat and a conservative respectively. As former director of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 'Clingendael', Joris Voorhoeve had become known as a fervent interventionist in Bosnia. His involvement with the region was no less intense than his predecessor's, and was only reinforced by a visit to Srebrenica which left a deep impression on him.²⁵²

Much of the other business of the Ministry of Defence was secondary to the situation in the former Yugoslavia during Voorhoeve's time there. He was still very busy, because he also held the time-consuming Netherlands Antilles and Aruba portfolio. However, apart from those cutbacks which still had to be carried through, there were no Defence White Papers on the Minister's agenda.

Voorhoeve attached great importance to the humanitarian mission in Bosnia, and saw its task as saving as many lives as possible.²⁵³ Yet it was his period in office which would be scarred by the expulsion of the population in the enclave entrusted to Dutchbat, and the murder of many of them. The newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad* may have written just a month before the fall of Srebrenica that if things unexpectedly went wrong in Bosnia then Voorhoeve would not experience it as a personal defeat, after 11 July the crisis would remain a millstone around his neck for the rest of his term, even though he did not readily show it. Outwardly he remained calm and apparently stoical, describing the seriousness of the situation and analytically listing all the dilemmas.

Immediately after his appointment to the Ministry of Defence, it became clear to Voorhoeve that the presence of Dutchbat in Srebrenica had left him with a legacy from his predecessor over which the Dutch Government had little control and over which it was unable to gain control. Day in, day out, the Minister had his nose rubbed in the facts by the daily reports from the field and in his contacts with the families of the troops in the former Yugoslavia. The Dutch government really wanted its battalion in Srebrenica to be relieved, but it was unwilling to simply abandon the local population to its fate.²⁵⁴

It was not difficult for the new Chief of Defence Staff, General Henk van den Breemen, who was in firm control of the military, to convince Voorhoeve of the untenable position in which

²⁵⁰ Interviews with W. Kok, 08/05/00, and J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

²⁵¹ Interview with J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00.

²⁵² M. Delaere, 'Voorhoeve: verantwoordelijkheid waarmaken: 'Bosniërs zijn van ons afhankelijk'' ('Voorhoeve: make good responsibilities, 'Bosnians are dependent upon us'), *Haagsche Courant*, 08/12/94.

²⁵³ M. Delaere, 'Voorhoeve: verantwoordelijkheid waarmaken: 'Bosniërs zijn van ons afhankelijk'', *Haagsche Courant*, 08/12/94.

²⁵⁴ P. Koopman: 'Voorhoeve: 'Nu hebben we één duidelijke leider'' ('Voorhoeve: "Now we have one clear leader"'), *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 23/03/95, 'Voorhoeve: Ik heb het liever over verantwoord risico' ('Voorhoeve: I would rather talk about justifiable risk'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 30/03/95; T. Olde Monnikhof and P. Petit, 'De minister is niet uitgewoond' ('The minister is not run down'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 03/06/95.

Dutchbat was beginning to find itself because the Bosnian Serbs refused to allow regular resupply. Although the relationships between the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs and between their Ministers, Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo, could be described as good at this stage, it was mainly Voorhoeve and Van den Breemen who would take the lead in international initiatives for the military reinforcement of UNPROFOR, contributions to the Rapid Reaction Force and the relief of Dutchbat.

Following an original initiative by the US Secretary of Defense, William Perry, joint efforts by Voorhoeve and Van den Breemen also led to conferences of the Chiefs of Defence Staff being called in December 1994 and again in May 1995 to examine how UNPROFOR could be reinforced. The results of these were negligible. Voorhoeve's worries about the tenability of the 'safe Areas' concept were not eased as a result. He even wanted to express his concerns in an American newspaper. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered it a bad idea to air government-level concerns in the press.²⁵⁵

Like his predecessor, Ter Beek, Voorhoeve was plagued by the public statements made by the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Couzy, who rather 'got under the feet' of the Minister. But Voorhoeve was not a man to sideline or dismiss Couzy for that reason. The Minister was also disturbed by critical comments made by officers actually in the former Yugoslavia, since they could lead to unease or confusion at home. Voorhoeve was equally irritated by reports of alleged misconduct by Dutch troops in Bosnia. He found it offensive that the many soldiers who were serving or had served in Bosnia, as well as their families, were being shown in such a bad light by rumours and generalizations.²⁵⁶

At first, Voorhoeve commanded great respect for the way in which he handled the crisis around Srebrenica. The press used terms like 'professional, cool and calculating' to describe his performance during the critical days: 'A correct mixture of involvement and the intellectual and analytical ability to fathom this complex situation.' The fact that he even spent the night in the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) was also regarded as a sign of commitment. The newspapers lauded the Minister's empathy after he spoke at the funeral of Raviv van Renssen, a soldier killed in Srebrenica, and at a press conference, his appearance 'drained white, clearly emotional, but composed as always', had announced that a disaster had occurred in Srebrenica. His involvement, resistance to stress and resolute performance made an impression and appeared to reinforce Voorhoeve's authority.²⁵⁷

These were days in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was rather relegated to the sidelines: the Ministry of Defence and the UN were the main players for the time being.²⁵⁸ As far as Parliament was concerned, the two ministers generally adopted a common line during the weeks and months after the fall of Srebrenica, as they had done beforehand. But there was one notable exception. An analysis of the fall promised by Van Mierlo and drawn up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not presented to Parliament jointly in the name of the Minister of Defence.²⁵⁹

The 'heroification' of Voorhoeve immediately after the capture of Srebrenica by the Bosnian Serb Army, the VRS, was short-lived. Whereas originally his presence in the bunker under the Ministry of Defence had been depicted as evidence of his 'commitment', it now reinforced the view that The Hague had imposed too much control during the decisive days of the events around Srebrenica, as if the operational command of Dutchbat were in national hands, not in those of the UN.²⁶⁰ The disastrous press conference in Zagreb after Dutchbat's return from Srebrenica, the loss of a roll of film

²⁵⁵ Interview with J.M. Vos, 25/06/99.

²⁵⁶ 'Voorhoeve roept commandanten VN tot de orde' ('Voorhoeve pulls UN commanders into line'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/06/95; 'Verhalen over gedrag militairen in Bosnië irriteren Voorhoeve' ('stories about conduct of troops in Bosnia irritate Voorhoeve'), *De Volkskrant*, 30/06/95.

²⁵⁷ R. de Jong, 'Minister in bange dagen' ('Minister in troubles times'), *Het Parool*, 15/07/95; W. Dekker, 'Joris Voorhoeve, onbesproken crisismanager in bange dagen' ('Joris Voorhoeve, blameless crisis manager in troubled times'), *GPD Pers*, 15/07/95; E. Vrijssen, 'In de bunker van het geweten' ('In the bunker of conscience'), *Elsevier*, 22/07/95

²⁵⁸ Interview with H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo, 10/02/00.

²⁵⁹ TK session 1995-1995, 22 181, no. 149 (04/03/96).

²⁶⁰ R.C.R. Siekmann, 'Bunker-beeld' Voorhoeve blunder defensie' ('Voorhoeve's 'bunker mentality' a Ministry of Defence blunder'), *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 05/09/95; editorial, *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/08/95.

containing evidence of war crimes, a declaration signed by Dutchbat about the deportations, the mislaying of a list of names and the reporting of a mass murder created so much controversy that Voorhoeve's image was quickly tarnished. The Minister blamed 'inadequacies' in communication between the Royal Netherlands Army and his department. But the press used terms like 'bungling' and 'stupid', and accused the Ministry of Defence of turning in on itself.²⁶¹ Voorhoeve became the scapegoat for everything which had gone wrong in the communications between the Royal Netherlands Army and the Ministry. 'The more Voorhoeve tried to lay bare, the less he was trusted.'²⁶²

Voorhoeve did indeed do his very best to bring as much information as possible from the Defence organization out into the open, but he temporarily allowed himself to be silenced by the Army-managed press conference in Assen. Revelations, blunders and negligence had now acquired a dynamic of their own, and continued to dog the Minister.²⁶³ Moreover, the results of the debriefing were disappointing. It necessitated follow-up investigations, which this time the Central Organization managed itself. In so doing, it felt obliged to conceal many of the errors made by the Army.

The additions to the debriefing report could no longer alter the image of a 'cornered' Voorhoeve, hindered by 'miscommunications' and a lack of political sensitivity and transparency on the part of the Army. Nor would the appointment in October 1995 of the Chief of Defence Staff as commander of peacekeeping operations, replacing the individual commanders-in-chief, immediately restore his image as a Minister in charge of his own department.

²⁶¹ Eric Vrijssen, 'In de bunker van het geweten', *Elsevier*, 22/07/95; 'Voorhoeve onder druk na kritiek op VN'ers' ('Voorhoeve under pressure after criticism of UN troops'), *De Volkskrant*, 28/08/95; editorial, *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/08/95; Pieter Nijdam, 'Voorhoeve in nauw na blunders' ('Voorhoeve cornered after blunders'), *De Telegraaf*, 28/08/95.

²⁶² K. Colijn and P. Rusman, 'De hiaten in de nieuwste brief van Voorhoeve' ('The gaps in Voorhoeve's latest letter'), *Vrij Nederland*

²⁶³ A. Koper, 'Voorhoeve is nog niet uit de gevarenzone' ('Voorhoeve is still in the danger zone'), *De Volkskrant*, 02/09/95.

Appendix XIII

Chronology of the Bosnian conflict 1990–1995

Author: D.C.L. Schoonoord

Introduction

Overviews of political and military events of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia can be found in various chronologies. Mid 1998 the Internet offered about thirty different chronologies. Originators are international organisations such as the UN, NATO, WEU, universities, interested parties, press agencies and individuals.

Books mostly offer only limited data. Surveys presented, for example, by Nader Mousavizadeh in *The black book of Bosnia: the consequences of appeasement* / by the writers and editors of *The New Republic*. - New York, 1996 and Michael A. Sells in *The bridge betrayed: religion and genocide in Bosnia*. - Berkeley, 1996 provide insufficient information to follow the course of events in the former Yugoslavia.

Exceptions are the chronologies as found in: Mark Heirman, *Oorlog op de Balkan, 1991-1995*, IPIS, Internationale Vredesinformatiedienst, IPIS-brochure 89 and the chronologies from the Insitut za Evropske Studije in Belgrade: Slobodanka Kovacecvc and Putnik Dajic, *Chronology of The Yugoslav Crisis 1994*. - Belgrade : Insitute for European Studies, 1995 and Slobodanka Kovacecvc and Putnik Dajic, *Hronologija Jugoslovenske Krize 1995*. -Beograd : Insitut za Evropske Studije, 1996. Ivo Peric, *Godine koje ce se pamtiti*. - Zagreb : Skolska Knjiga, 1995 offers the best survey for the years 1989-1992.

The most comprehensive chronologies electronically available are those originating from the American Center for Post-Soviet and East European Studies: *Yugoslavia Events Chronology* [<http://www.uta.edu/cpsees/>] for January-Juni 1992 [yec-192.txt], January-July 1993 [yec-193.txt], January-April 1994 [yec-194.txt], January-April 1995 [yec-195.txt], July-December 1992 [yec.292.txt], August-December 1993 [yec-293.txt], May-August 1994 [yec-294.txt], May-August 1995 [yec-295.txt], September-December 1994 [yec-394.txt], September-December 1995 [yec395.txt] and 28 March 1989-5 October 1991 [yec-89-91.txt].

A different source for the early years is the West European Union: The Yugoslav conflict – Chronology of events from 30th May 1991-8th November 1993. Information Document submitted by Sir Russell Johnston, Defence Committee (Thirty Ninth Session of the Assembly), Paris, 29th November 1993, no. A/WEU/DEF(93)14 [cco.caltech.edu/~bosnia/doc/weudoc.html].

Detailed chronologies can also be found on the server of the “Serbian Unity Congress” [<http://www.suc.org>]. These chronologies offer not only overviews of events in the international political arena but also of domestic political events in the Federal Republic Yugoslavia. Events in the Republika Srpska, apart from proceedings of the Bosnian-Serb ‘parliament’, get less attention than one would expect.

BosNet, a platform run by volunteers aiming at providing information on developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina, also offers a chronology in which Bosnia is central [<http://www.bosnet.org/bosnia/history/contemp.html-ssi>]. The extent of this chronology, which covers the years 1991-1996, is, however, limited. Only 1995 proved to be useful.

There are several sources available for the involvement of NATO in the conflict. The headquarters of Allied Forces Southern Europe published ‘Fact Sheets’ on the various operations which were led from this headquarters: Operation Deliberate Force, Operation Deny Flight, Operation Maritime Guard, Operation Maritime Monitor, Operation Sky Monitor en Operation Sharp Guard [[http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/docs/\[followed by the codename for the operation\].htm](http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/docs/[followed by the codename for the operation].htm)]. The “Nato Gopher Site” can also be consulted for Operation Deny Flight [<http://www.cco.caltech.edu/~bosnia/natoun/opdeny1221.html>] as well as “NATO a to z: Air Operations” (Extract from the NATO Handbook) [<http://xs4all.freenet.kiev.ua/NATO/docu/handbook/hb10603e.htm>]. “The Navy Public Affairs Library (NAVPALIB) also offers information on Operation Deny Flight [<http://chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/intl/bosnia.denyflt.txt>].

There are also more or less official sources such as: “United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Former Yugoslavia – UNPROFOR”, prepared by the Department of Public Information United Nations as of September 1996 [<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko>]; “The Former Yugoslavia:

Chronology January 1990-1 November 1995. Paper prepared for general briefing purposes”, [UK Foreign Office], November 1995 [<http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/docs/yugo-chronology.htm>]; “The Sanctions of the UN Security Council” [<http://www.gov.yu/sanctions/san-un.html>] and “The Sanctions of the European Union” [<http://www.gov.yu/sanctions/san-europ.html>]

Numerous smaller chronologies offer information, albeit limited, e.g.: “Key dates in Yugoslavia’s War” by *Associated Press* [<http://www.nytimes.com/specials/bosnia/context/opchrono.html>], “Chronology of Nato’s involvement in Bosnia” based on data originating from NATO; *BosNet Archives* and *OMRI Digest*; “Yugoslavia Society & Law: Chronology of Events 1990-1995” [<http://www.yugoslavia.com/Society-and-Law/Chronology/default.htm>]; “Bosnia Chronology”, [cop. 1998 Canoe Limited Partnership [<http://canoe1.canoe.ca/calgaryBosnia/history.html>]] as well as the site run by S.T. Planken, “Chronology of Key Events Pt. 1 UNPROFOR in Yugoslavia (June 25, 1991-December 20, 1995)” which makes use of sources as NATO, UN, *Associated Press*, *Reuters*, *NRC Handelsblad* and *Air Forces Monthly* [<http://www.cybercomm.nl/~stp/b-index.htm>].

The different chronologies present a wide-ranging array of facts and, apart from important developments in the Security Council, there is less duplication than one would expect. Dates for the same events may sometimes vary because of a discrepancy between the actual date and its mentioning in the media.

The chronologies have been combined, edited and abridged in such a way that they can offer a general overview of the main political and military developments in the former Yugoslavia in the years 1990-1995 and of the involvement of the international community. Developments in Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro en Croatia are only presented in outline. The focus is on the political and military affairs in and around Bosnia.

January 20-22

The 14th Special Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) took place in Belgrade. Bitter antagonism between various republican delegations culminated in the decision of the Slovenian and Croatian delegations to leave the Congress.

January 24

Demonstrations commenced in Kosovo. Forty thousands Albanians demanded lifting of emergency measures and the proclamation of an ‘Albanian Republic of Kosovo’.

January 31

Kosovan death toll up to 16; 100,000 Montenegrins demonstrate against Albanians.

February 1

6 more killed in Kosovo; death toll at 30.

February 5

Slobodan Milosevic, Serbian president, threatens to send 100,000s of Serbs to Kosovo.

February 7

Federal government steps up army presence in Kosovo.

February 1-2

In order to prevent spreading of demonstrations the Army was taken out in the streets of several towns in Kosovo.

February 16

Croatian CP decides to leave LCY.

March 4

In Petrova gora, in Kordun a mass meeting took place in favour of territorial integrity of SFRJ and against 'neofascism and Franjo Tudjman'.

March 13

Government of Republic of Croatia sent a letter to the Yugoslav Federal government and governments of all Yugoslav republics in which it condemned events both at the Sabor of CDU and at the meeting in Petrova gora. Croatian government appealed for co-operation and joint action against any further disturbance of good inter ethnic relations.

March 15

Serbian government offers economic aid to Slavs wanting to resettle in Kosovo.

April 8

Parliamentary and presidential elections in Slovenia. At the first multiparty elections in post-war Yugoslavia the united opposition won a majority in the Assembly.

April 22

Parliamentary elections for the Assembly of Croatia. Although Croatian Democratic Union. Milan Kucan elected President of the Presidency of Slovenia.

April 25

Voting in Croatia gives victory to centre right group 'Croatian Democratic Association' headed by Tudjman. It received 41,5 per cent of the votes, but wins 104 of 131 seats in parliament thanks to the majority electoral system.

May 6

Second round of voting in Croatia.

May 8

Croatian Democratic Union wins 2/3rds of 80 seat main chamber of Republican Parliament; also gets 2/3rds of 116 member Chamber of Communes.

May 15

Borisav Jovic, representative of Serbia was appointed President of the Presidency of the SFRY.

May 30

The January 14th Special Congress of the LCY was completed. The delegations of LC of Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia did not participate.

The Assembly of Croatia elected Tudjman President of the Presidency of Croatia, and Stipe Mesic was appointed Prime Minister.

June 29-30

Tudjman explained proposed amendments to the Constitution. Croatia would cease to be 'a socialist republic' and the five-pointed star on the flag would be replaced by the 'chessboard'. President of the Croatian Parliament Vladimir Seks said that state sovereignty of Croatia in the community with other peoples of Yugoslavia could be ensured only in the confederated basis, in a Union of sovereign states.

July 2

The Assembly of Slovenia adopted the Declaration on the sovereignty of the state of Slovenia. Slovenian members of Federal Parliament refuse to cast votes on federal matters in one of two chambers.

Albanians in Kosovo Parliament declare Kosovo sovereign within Yugoslavia.

July 5

The Assembly of the SR Serbia decided to dissolve the Assembly of Kosovo because of illegal act of proclaiming Kosovo Republic.

July 16

The League of Communists of Serbia and the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Serbia merged into the Socialist Party of Serbia. Milosovic was elected the President of the party by 1228 out of 1294 votes.

July 20

The Assembly of Serbia passed a law introducing a multiparty system.

July 25

The Assembly of the Croatia adopted amendments to the Constitution and ceased to be 'a socialist republic', and the five-pointed star on the flag was replaced by the 'chessboard'.

August 8

The Federal Assembly of SFRY adopted several amendments to the Constitution of SFRY enabling the establishment of multiparty system.

August 17

As a reaction to the attack of the Croatian special police forces on the police station in Benkovac, Serbs took the arms from the reserve police forces and set up barricades on the lines of communications.

August 19

The Serbian people in Krajina voted during a referendum with more than 90 per cent in favour of autonomy of the Region.

August 20

The Yugoslav Federal Government required from the Croatian authorities not to prevent the plebiscite of Serbs in Kninska Krajina, and the citizens of Kninska Krajina to remove the barricades.

August 24

Due to the unrest in Kninska Krajina the Croatian Assembly adopted at its extraordinary session Resolution of the protection of the constitutional order and of national rights in Croatia.

August 29

Riot police break up Albanian crowd waiting to meet US Congressional delegation.

September 3

100,000 Albanians go on strike in Kosovo.

September 7

At a secret meeting in Kaccanik (Kosovo) Albanian representatives of the dissolved Assembly of Kosovo passed the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo.

September 13

111 Albanian members of dissolved Kosovo parliament meet secretly to adopt alternative constitution; 2 Albanians shot by police during weapons search in Palatna, Kosovo.

September 28

The Assembly of the SR Serbia passed the new Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. The Republic of Serbia was defined as 'a democratic state of all of its citizens, based on freedoms and human and civil rights, rule of law and social justice'. The two provinces were deprived of attributes of statehood and were turned into the forms of territorial autonomy. Vestiges of autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina effectively ended.

October 1

The Knin-based 'serbian National Council', led by Milan Babic, declared 'autonomy within Croatia for areas of Serbian majority Population'.

October 3

The Presidencies of the Republic Croatia and Slovenia submitted to the Presidency of the SFRY the confederate model of the Yugoslav community.

November 11

Elections held in Macedonia.

November 15

Macedonian officials declare vote null and void in 54 counties due to irregularities; 25,000 Macedonians protest in Skopje against Albanians; Prime Minister Markovic warns country is heading toward disintegration.

November 18

Bosnia-Herzegovina holds first multiparty elections. Results: the (Moslem) Party of Democratic Action 86, the Serbian Democratic Party 72 and the Croatian Democratic Union 44 seats.

December 9

The first ballot of multiparty elections took place in Serbia and Montenegro. It was in the first ballot that the candidates of the League of Communists won the greatest number of representatives in Montenegro. Albanians boycotted elections in Serbia. The second ballot took place in Serbia on 26 December. Due to the majority electoral system the Socialist Party of Serbia, which received 48 % of the votes, won 192 out of 250 seats in the Assembly of Serbia. Milosevic was elected President of Serbia getting in the first ballot 65 % of votes.

December 21

Croatian parliament adopts new constitution.

December 22

The Assembly of the Republic of Croatia adopted the new Constitution of the Republic of Croatia proclaiming the Republic of Croatia 'the national state of Croats', thus demoting Serbians in Croatia to the status of national minority.

December 23

Plebiscite took place in Slovenia and 88,5 per cent of the voters vote for sovereignty and independence of Slovenia.

In Serbia the Socialist Party (formerly CP) wins 194 of 250 seats in parliament.

Chronology 1991

January 4

President of the Republic of Croatia Franjo Tudjman made decision to establish the Council of National Defence and Protection of the Constitutional Order of the Republic of Croatia.

January 9

The Presidency of the SFRY made out the Order of dismantling all irregular forces and delivering the weapons illegally brought in the country to the nearest authorised institutions or units of the Yugoslav National Army. State presidency and army issue warning to Slovenia and Croatia to disarm their militias by January 19.

January 17

The Assembly of SFRY stated that there could be no recognition of any of the Yugoslav republics until all points connected with the right to self-determination and secession had been definitely cleared up.

January 19

Slovenia and Croatia defy disarmament warning; state presidency extends deadline until January 21.

January 20

At the request of the Government of the Republic of Croatia the Presidency of the SFRY approved to extend the time-limit for disarming and dismantling the illegal armed forces. Stjepan Mesic Vice President of the Presidency of the SFRY declared at the Convention of the Croatian Democratic Union that Croatia had purchased weapons for its police through the trading network, and that Croatia committed itself for self-defence and therefore the reserve police forces were given the same authority as the regular police. In his opinion, the only paramilitary forces in Croatia were those in Kninska Krajina.

January 21

Federal collective presidency says that republican militias are not exempt from disarming; warns that military will confiscate weapons from 'illegal' paramilitary organisations (including Interior Ministry troops).

January 22

Collective president says there will be no military action against Croatia and Slovenia.

January 23

Defence Ministry initiates legal proceedings in military courts against individuals organising 'illegal' armed groups.

January 24

Federal and republican troops put on battle alert.

January 24

The military police arrested a certain number of persons in Croatia on the suspicion of being involved in organising and providing illegal paramilitary units with arms.

January 25

The Presidency of the SFRY issued a statement on the compulsory demobilisation of the reserve police forces in Croatia.

Several Yugoslav TV centres broadcast a documentary film of the Information Centre of the Federal Ministry of Defence on the illegal arms export from Hungary to Croatia.

The Assembly of Macedonia adopted the Declaration of independence of this republic as well as the Platform for negotiations about the future of Yugoslavia.

January 25

Croatia's interior Minister says they will welcome foreign help if attacked by federals.

January 26

Croatian president Tudjman says Croatian police reserve will be disarmed; army guarantees it will not act against the republic.

January 27

The Assembly of Macedonia elected Kiro Gligorov President of the SR Macedonia.

Tudjman says crisis and war narrowly averted.

January 30

Izetbegovic-Gligorov talks took place in Sarajevo. It was assessed that Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia were truly interested in preserving Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavian military orders Croatian Defence Minister, Martin Spigelj, to be detained for questioning about plotting to use arms to launch a civil war; Croatia does not comply.

January 31

The Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Charter announcing that it would initiate the procedure of disassociation from Yugoslavia.

Tudjman leaves meeting of leaders in Belgrade over dispute of military's commitment to defend communism and the federal system.

February 2

Yugoslav Army says Croatia reneges on pledge to disarm police reserves and arrest Spigelj; says it will carry out its constitutional duties.

The tension grew in Slavonia and Baranja. The meeting of the regional organisation of the Serbian Democratic Party took place as well as the rallies in Vukovar, Beli Manastir and other towns.

February 6

The delegation of the Council of Europe (Fernandez Ordonez and Catherine Lalumiere) visited Yugoslavia. It was assessed that if Yugoslavia wished to join the Council of Europe the first condition

it had to fulfil was to peacefully resolve its crisis and hold multiparty elections for the Federal Assembly.

February 7

At the session of the Presidency of the SFRY that took place in Belgrade Janez Drnovshek declared that Slovenia would formally initiate the procedure for disassociation from Yugoslavia announced in the Charter of the Assembly of Slovenia adopted on 31 January.

February 8

Slovenia announces legal steps to secede from Yugoslavia.; Slovenian and Croatian presidents boycott third round of talks in Belgrade aimed at resolving Yugoslavia's crisis.

February 16

Special police units of the Croatian Interior Ministry arrived to the Plitvice Lakes area, causing numerous protests and complaints of the local Serbian population.

February 20

Assembly of Slovenia adopted amendment to the Constitution of the Republic according to which Slovenia is defined as an independent state, that will as one of successors to the SFRY regulate its relations with other states on the basis of international law.
Slovenian parliament votes 173-1 (2 abstentions) to begin formal secession; constitutional amendment adopted declaring republican laws sovereign to federal laws.

February 21

Croatia follows suit voting 340-0 to make republican laws sovereign over federal laws; Resolution also formally approved to begin secession proceedings

February 22

Slobodan Milosevic, President of the Republic of Serbia, and Momir Bulatovic, President of the Presidency of the Republic of Montenegro, submitted a common draft on principles of constitutional organisation of Yugoslavia as a democratic federation. Federal presidency decided to appoint committee to examine differing attitudes to survival of Yugoslavia.

February 26

Constitutional Committee of the SFRY Assembly submitted to the SFRY Assembly a Declaration for the New Agreement on Yugoslav Community, and obliged republican parliaments to respect the Constitution of SFRY and federal laws until the adoption of the said Declaration.

February 27

Bosnian parliament deadlocked over sovereignty decree; Serbs claim proposal of Muslim Party for Democratic Action will break up state.

February 28

Serbian National Council of the Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina adopted a Declaration on independence and secession from Croatia, by which Krajina would remain in Yugoslavia.

March 1

Tudjman boycotts 6th round of talks aimed at resolving secessionist crisis; Serbs in Croatian town of Pakrac seize local police station.

March 2

Croatian security forces storm police station in Pakrac thus causing armed confrontation with Serbs; at least 30 arrested, some gunfire exchanged; Yugoslavian president, Borisav Jovic, deploys federal troops in Pakrac; troops welcomed by Croatian deputy interior Minister, Milan Brezak.

March 2-3

At the order of SFRY Presidency units of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) interfered in order to prevent inter-ethnic conflicts.

March 3

700 Croatian security troops withdrawn from Pakrac; federal army to stay on to prevent recurrence of unrest.

March 6

Assembly of Slovenia declared moratorium on sending Slovenian draftees to JNA.

March 8

Serbia cuts school funding to Kosovo; Kosovan schools refuse to utilise new Serbian restrictions on teaching Albanian history and literature.

March 9

Rally of 100,000 in Belgrade against communist media bias results in riots; several members of democratic opposition arrested; federal tanks and troops used to quell unrest which leaves 2 dead; some opposition members of parliament declare hunger strike against government.

March 10

Protests continue in Belgrade for 2nd day; at least 15 opposition leaders/party members arrested by Serbian government.

March 11

Tens of thousands of anti-government Protestors gather again in Belgrade; government organises counter demonstration of between 30-50,000 in Novi Beograd.

March 12

100,000 demonstrate in Belgrade; government gives in to some demands and dismisses 5 directors of Belgrade TV who demonstrators hold responsible for propagandistic reporting; Vuk Draskovic of the Serbian Renewal Movement, released from prison, addresses crowd; parliament passes legislation requiring state TV to be guided by professional principles rather than Political interests; Federal army requests that federal Presidency meet to discuss the country's security situation', and restore law and order; presidency rejects military's demands.

March 12-14

SFRY Presidency at its session in the capacity of Supreme Command refused the proposal of the Supreme Command Headquarters to raise the JNA combat readiness due to impaired political and security situation in the country. Dissatisfied with such decision of the Presidency, its President Borisav Jovic resigned on March 15, and a day later Presidency members from Vojvodina (Jugoslav Kostic) and Montenegro (Nenad Buccin) did the same.

March 13

Interior Minister, Radmilo Bogdanovic, offers to resign to satisfy protestors; 25,000 gather again in Belgrade.

March 14

Collective presidency deadlocks on role to be played by army in latest strife.

March 15

Serbian member of collective presidency, and current president, Borisav Jovic, resigns from it; Jovic, a Milosevic ally, had proposed that the army be allowed to put down interethnic conflicts; a mobilisation be called; and republican laws contradicting federal laws be declared invalid. Presidency votes 5-3 against these (Macedonian president, Vasil Turpurkovski, Kosovan president, Riza Sapunxhia, Bosnia-Herzegovina president, Bogic Bogicevic, Slovenian president, Milan Kucan, and Croatian president, Tudjman all vote against).

March 16

Army threats to take 'emergency measures' to deal with crisis are met by Croatian and Serbian mobilisation of police and paramilitary troops; Milosevic declares that Serbia will no longer recognise the authority of the collective presidency; Montenegrin and Vojvodinian presidents also resign from collective presidency (possibly at Milosevic's request); Sapunxhia dismissed from his post by Milosevic thereby depriving presidency of a quorum.

March 17

Krajina region of Croatia declared a 'serbian autonomous region' by activist Serbs living there; Milosevic said to be behind move to provoke Croats against Serbs and convince army to move in.

March 19

National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia assumed authorities of dissolved Kosovo Assembly and released Riza Sapunxhia from the office of SFRY Presidency member from Kosovo.

Army high command says it will not interfere in internal political crisis, but will protect against inter-ethnic civil war, halt unrest, protect borders, and prevent any republic from leaving the federation unless all others agree.

March 20

Serbia's Presidency member Jovic withdraws his resignation after the Serbian parliament refuses to accept it.

March 21

At the expanded session of SFRY Presidency agreement was reached to start negotiations between Presidents of Yugoslav republics on the future of Yugoslavia.

March 25

Milosevic and Tadjman meet on the border of their republics and agree to peacefully settle disputes.

March 26

The European Community released a Declaration on Yugoslavia in which it supported all efforts to solve the crisis through dialogue and call all sides to refrain from the use of force. Expressing their conviction that the process of democratic reforms in Yugoslavia should be based on political dialogue of all sides, the EC considers that 'united and democratic Yugoslavia has the best chance of being harmoniously integrated in new Europe.'

March 27

Tens of thousands gather in Belgrade to commemorate 50th anniversary of coup that overthrew pro Nazi government, and to denounce communist authorities.

March 28

The first meeting of Presidents of Yugoslav republics was held in Split. No agreement was reached.

March 31

Armed conflict breaks out in Plitvice national park in Croatia between units of the Croatian police and members of Kninska Krajina militia when Serbs attempt to seize the park. At the extraordinary session SFRY Presidency called for cease-fire and ordered increased combat readiness of relevant JNA units and measures to ensure observance of cease-fire.

March 31

Assembly of the Republic of Serbia refused to accept Borisav Jovic's resignation from SFRY Presidency and obliged him to return to this office. Assembly of the Republic of Serbia elected Sejdo Bajramovic as the SFRY Presidency member from Kosovo.

April 1

The 11th plenary session of the Conference on Yugoslavia held in Brussels. Discussion focussed on possibilities for renewal of economic relations between the former Yugoslav republics and questions of succession.

April 1

Serbs in Krajina region of Croatia declare that they are uniting their area with Serbia.

April 6

In Luxembourg, Ministerial Council of the EC adopted a Declaration on Yugoslavia in which they state that the Community and its members decided to recognise the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina within the present borders. The Community also decided in principle to abolish economic sanctions against the Republic of Serbia, i.e. 'to expand to the Republic of Serbia the benefit of positive measures' provided to other republics on 2 December 1991 and 10 January 1992.

Armed clashes broke out in Sarajevo and other places throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which 14 persons were killed and more than 100 wounded. A large group of Sarajevo citizens demonstrated against stirring of national conflicts, occupied the Bosnia-Herzegovina Assembly building and demanded the formation of the national salvation government. At its extraordinary session held without attendance of Serbian deputies the Bosnia-Herzegovina Presidency issued an order on cease-fire in Sarajevo and introduction of state of emergency.

'Rump' Presidency of SFRY met in Belgrade to assess the political and security situation in the country prompted by dramatic deterioration of the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Presidency expressed serious concern over future development of events in this republic. The present situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they said, is the direct consequence of the policy aimed at braking up Yugoslavia and of the EC decision on international recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which ignited ethnic clashes there. The Presidency stressed again that the solution to the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina was only possible by peaceful means, through agreement of all its three constitutive nations.

April 7

The Assembly of Serbian People in Bosnia-Herzegovina declared in Banja Luka the independence of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, 'which may enter into association with other entities in Yugoslavia'. The Assembly 'acknowledged the information' that Biljana Plavsic and Nikola Koljevic resigned from the position of members of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Presidency.

April 16

700,000 workers in Serbia go on strike for back pay; 400 striking mechanics of JAT keep the airline from flying.

May 2

Armed conflict broke out between Serbian population of Borovo Selo when Croatian police are ambushed in predominantly Serbian town; at least 12 people killed before Yugoslav army intervenes.

May 3

Demonstrations of Croatian citizens took place in Zadar and Sibenik, during which Serbian property has been demolished on a massive scale.

May 5

Croatian President Franjo Tudjman on visiting Trogir suggested to the municipal leaders that enterprises shift to the production of military equipment and invited citizens to confront JNA. In his interview to France Press Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov stated that Macedonia was going to be constituted as an independent state should Slovenia and Croatia brake away from Yugoslavia.

May 6

30,000 Croatian anti-military protestors attack Yugoslav troops guarding naval port in Split over military's inability to break blockade of Croatian town of Kijevo. One soldier was killed and several wounded. Federal Defence Minister, General Veljko Kadijevic, declares combat alert and says country is in a state of civil war. Federal Defence Secretariat issued a statement, warning that any attack on JNA members, units and facilities will be answered by fire. \$5 million of US aid to Yugoslavia suspended due to systematic human rights abuses; \$1.1 billion loan from IMF could be suspended as well.

May 7

Demonstrators in Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina demand their military service be restricted to their own republics.

May 8

Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia addressed to the Assembly of SFRY a Declaration on dissociation from Yugoslavia, scheduled to take place by 26 June 1991 at the latest.

May 9

Army given permission by federal president to halt ethnic violence.

May 9-10

SFRY Presidency adopted a concrete six-point programme of measures and activities for long-term solution of ethnic and inter republican conflicts. One of the most significant measures stipulated that between areas of Croatia predominantly inhabited by Serbian population, movement should be allowed only to JNA and federal police units.

May 10

Joint session of both chambers of SFRY Assembly was interrupted after delegates from Croatia, Slovenia and 17 Albanian delegates claimed that appointment of Sejdo Bajramovic as a new SFRY Presidency member from Kosovo was illegitimate and against Constitution since the Kosovo Assembly had been dissolved. Proclamation of other two Presidency members - Branko Kostic from Montenegro and Jugoslav Kostic from Vojvodina - has been postponed as well.

May 11

Federal PM Markovic tells Serbs and Croats to surrender their weapons or have them taken from them.

May 12

Serbian enclaves in Croatia vote to unite themselves with Serbia.

May 15

Serbia blocks rotation of federal president to Croatian, Stipe Mesic, provoking federal governmental crisis.

May 18

Defence Minister Kadijevic warns neighbouring countries (Italy and Bulgaria) against taking advantage of Yugoslavia's continuing governing crisis.

May 19

Croats voting in sovereignty referendum overwhelmingly support independence for republic, and right to form alliances with other republics. 83% of electorate showed up at the polls, of which 94,17% gave their votes for an independent and sovereign state of Croatia. Citizens of Krajina boycotted the referendum.

May 29

Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted a Resolution on Consensual Dissociation from SFRY.

May 29

Croatian president Tudjman declares Croatia is an independent state.

May 30-31

At a preliminary stage of the Yugoslavia crisis and still before the unilateral declarations of independence by both Slovenia and Croatia on 25th June 1991, the EC made it known that it was ready to help a democratised and reformed Yugoslavia, with unchanged internal and external borders, provided, among other things, that this state was willing to resolve problems in a peaceful manner without the use of force.

As soon as the constitutional crisis was resolved, the EC was prepared to start talks on Yugoslavia's associate membership of the EC.

June 3

Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov and President of Bosnia-Herzegovina Presidency Alija Izetbegovic announced a joint proposal - Platform on the Future Yugoslav Community - which foresaw future Yugoslavia as the commonwealth of sovereign republics.

June 6

The sixth and the last Summit of Presidents of Yugoslav republics was held in Stojcevac near Sarajevo. The six Presidents did not accept the Gligorov-Izetbegovic Platform on the Future Yugoslav Community.

June 12

Tudjman-Milosevic-Izetbegovic meeting held in Split as another in a series of attempts toward peaceful untangling of the Yugoslav crisis.

June 17

Croatian Party of Justice published the June Charter in which it called for 'restoration and reestablishment of Independent State of Croatia on its entire historic and ethnic territory, with eastern borders stretching along Subotica-Zemun-Drina-Sandzzak-Boka Kotorska line'.

June 18

The session of the Croatian Assembly began in Zagreb. Some 60 laws necessary for dissociation from Yugoslavia and establishment of an independent and sovereign state were adopted.

June 19

Ministerial Council of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) at its meeting in Berlin adopted a Declaration expressing their support for democratic development, unity and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, based on economic reforms, full application of human rights in all parts of Yugoslavia, including the rights of minorities, and peaceful solution of the present crisis in the country.

June 20

Federal Chamber of the SFRY Assembly at its session gave notice to SFRY Presidency to elect the President and Vice-President of the Presidency not later than June 25.

June 20

The United States State Department declared that Belgrade had to 'find a way to give vent to the national aspirations of the various elements within Yugoslavia in a peaceful way'.

June 21

Yugoslav Federal Government adopted proposals for the solution of the crisis and establishment of new relations within the Yugoslav community. The Government foresaw future Yugoslavia as the confederation of sovereign republics, which brought its view close to Gligorov-Izetbegovic Platform. At the end of his visit to Yugoslavia US Secretary of State James Baker stated that the US supports democratic and unified Yugoslavia, while its future should be decided through agreement. Baker also said that the US will not recognise unilateral secessionist moves. Slovenia is hastily building border crossings toward Croatia.

June 22

Tudjman and Slovenian president Kucan meet to co-ordinate independence moves.

June 24

Both the European Community and CSCE declare they are in favour of the 'unity and territorial integrity' of Yugoslavia, and that they will not support either Slovenian or Croatian independence.

June 25

The Assembly of the Republic of Croatia unanimously adopted a Declaration on Proclamation of an independent and sovereign Republic of Croatia and started the process of dissociation from Yugoslavia. It also adopted a Charter on rights of Serbs and other national minorities. Assembly of Slovenia adopted documents on separation from SFRY and Declaration of independence. Representatives of Serbs adopted the decision to form the Serbian Autonomous Region of Slavonia, Baranja and West Srem.

June 26

The Yugoslav Federal Government assessed that decisions of Slovenia and Croatia on the gaining of independence were illegal. It issued an order banning the establishment of border check points within the territory of SFRY. Federal police and JNA were authorised to remove these border check points and regain control over state borders of Yugoslavia with Italy, Austria and Hungary, occupied by Slovenian border organs.

Delegates from Slovenia and Croatia left the Yugoslav Federal Assembly.

Slovenes block highways to prevent movement of troops. Gun battle breaks out in Croatian town of Glina killing a Croat policeman and 2 civilians; US declares it will ignore 'unilateral' declarations of independence by the two republics.

June 27

Armed conflicts broke out between JNA units and Territorial Defence (TO) of Slovenia in Ormoz and near Jezersko. Throughout Slovenia TO members placed road barricades to prevent movement of JNA troops toward border crossings. Slovenian Presidency declared JNA actions as aggression on independent Slovenia and called population to resistance. It was the beginning of seven day war in Slovenia.

Slovenian Defence Minister, Janez Jansa, reports skirmishes have killed or wounded 100 people; claims his forces have shot down six army helicopters; Austrians send 5.000 troops to border crossings.

Supreme State Council of Croatia requested from JNA to retreat to barracks and no longer prevent security organs in establishing legal order in the Republic of Croatia. Unless this request is observed, it was said, members of the National Guard (ZNG) will confront the Federal Army.

Unification of Bosanska Krajina and Kninska Krajina proclaimed in Bosansko Grahovo and Declaration adopted stating that unification of all Serbs is imperative.

The Federal Secretariat for National Defence released a statement declaring illegal and unconstitutional the unilateral proclamations of independence of Croatia and Slovenia.

June 28

After the unilateral declarations of independence by both Slovenia and Croatia, there were several days of military confrontation between the Yugoslav national army (JNA) and republican forces.

The Yugoslav Federal Government called for cease-fire in all parts of the country and reported to the Federal Defence Secretariat that JNA units have fulfilled all their tasks and regained control over SFRY borders in Slovenia.

The European Community decided to send a peace mission (so-called 'troika') to Yugoslavia. The mission included three foreign ministers Jacques Pos, Gianni de Michelis and Hans van den Broek. It also decided to freeze any economic assistance to Yugoslavia.

June 29

Cease-fire brokered by three EC Foreign Ministers. (Italy, Luxembourg, and Netherlands); terms include exchange of prisoners, lifting of blockades, and suspension of the declaration of independence for three months.

Agreement was reached between the Federal Prime Minister and Presidents and Prime Minister of Slovenia to stop any war operations, to transport wounded JNA members to hospitals, to withdraw JNA units into barracks, and to establish a mixed committee which will monitor all this. Federal army says Slovenia not obeying terms and should surrender control of border posts.

June 30

Federal army barracks in Slovenia are surrounded by militia forces. At least three die in Ljubljana in shooting incidents on Saturday night.

German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, announces he will go to Yugoslavia as part of CSCE crisis negotiating team on July 1.

July 1

In the presence of a three-member EC delegation SFRY Presidency declared Stipe Mesic President and Branko Kostic Vice-President of the Presidency. Presidency members from Serbia, Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro demanded a written guarantee from the EC that the Assemblies of Croatia and Slovenia will observe a three-month moratorium on enforcement of decisions on dissociation.

Army high command accuses Slovenia of harassing army units in their barracks.

German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, threatens Yugoslavia with loss of aid if troops are sent into Slovenia and Croatia again; CDU chairman, Volker R uhe, urges Germany and other EEC countries to recognise republics' independence.

July 2

New fighting breaks out between federal army and Slovenian troops, 25 reported killed; army has vowed to destroy Slovenian independence; Army Chief of Staff, Blagoje Adzic, says a truce is no longer possible; Federal army troops fire on crowd in Zagreb who are trying to stop a tank convoy from leaving its barracks (3 killed, 7 wounded).

Presidency of Slovenia accepted the proposal on ending of hostilities in this republic.

US Administration continues to hold to position that unilateral declarations of independence are not to be rewarded.

July 3

Convoys of federal troops head for Slovenia and Croatia, but stop far short of the borders; troops told not to fire unless fired upon.

July 3-4

The Committee of Senior Officials of the CSCE, meeting in Prague, agreed to recommend the dispatch of an EC-based observer mission to supervise the agreed cease-fire.

July 4

3rd truce in effect; federal troops ordered to their barrack while Slovenes haul off captured tanks; Serbia supposedly no longer opposed to Slovenian independence, if it is achieved peacefully; Croatia not included in this plan.

CSCE waits to hear if Yugoslavia and Slovenia will accept their monitors for cease fire.

July 5

In the Declaration on the Situation in Yugoslavia adopted in Hague, the European Community underlined that only the peoples of Yugoslavia should decide the future of their country and expressed its strong opposition to every use of force.

EC bans all arms shipments, and suspends \$900 million in aid, to Yugoslavia; Slovenia begins releasing hundreds of Yugoslavian army prisoners captured in fighting; President Stipe Mesic says army will not intervene.

July 6

Truce talks break down over control of Slovenia's international border crossings; Milosevic tells Serbs to prepare for war, as pressure intensifies between Serbia and Croatia.

July 7

Under the auspices of European Community the meeting of members of the SFRY Presidency, leaders of Slovenia and Croatia, federal Prime Minister, and interior and defence ministers took place on Brioni. The Common Declaration on Peaceful Solution of the Yugoslav Crisis (so-called Brioni Declaration) was adopted.

The following principles were accepted for the peaceful solution of the crisis in Yugoslavia: only the peoples of Yugoslavia can decide their own future; a new situation has developed in Yugoslavia which requires careful monitoring and negotiations among various sides; negotiations must begin urgently; all sides will refrain from all unilateral steps, particularly from forcible acts. It was agreed to establish international monitoring missions in Yugoslavia, particularly in Slovenia, and possibly in Croatia, consisting of 30 to 50 military and civilian persons. The decisions of Slovenia and Croatia to declare sovereignty and independence were suspended for a duration of three months.

July 8

The United States Administration, which, on 2 July, had made it clear that it did not support the use of force to preserve the integrity of the Yugoslav state, while it would accept the republic's independence if achieved peacefully, endorsed the EC arms embargo.

July 8

Gorbachev tells Yugoslavs they should use democratic means to achieve peaceful solution, but that he supports the 'unity and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia'.

Croatian artillery used for first time against Serb militants inside Croatia (7 dead).

Slovenia announces it is withdrawing its deputies from Yugoslavian Parliament.

July 9

The Parliament of Europe at its session in Strasbourg adopted a Resolution on Yugoslavia, which did not support unilateral acts of secession.

July 10

Slovenian parliament ratifies peace agreement, 189-11; Yugoslav and Albanian border guards exchange gunfire.

July 11

Fighting spreads to Osijek, on border with Vojvodina; two killed.

July 12

SFRY Presidency adopted the Brioni Declaration and decided to demobilise by July 18 all armed formations, except JNA and regular peacetime militia, to re-establish the situation that existed before June 25 at the borders of SFRY, and that military barracks and other military installations should be deblocked.

July 14

Fighting breaks out in Banija region, south of Zagreb; at least two killed.

July 18

SFRY Presidency decided that JNA should withdraw from Slovenia within three months.

July 21

The Yugoslav Federal Government proposed an Agreement on the functioning of the country during the period of three month moratorium. The proposed Agreement was sent for adoption to SFRY Presidency and to all republics.

July 22

Extended SFRY Presidency meeting adopted a Statement against the use of force. Croatia conditioned its acceptance of the Statement by unconditional retreat of JNA to garrisons. President Tudjman stated at a press conference that 'population should perhaps be ready for a general war for defence of Croatia'.

July 22

20 killed in fighting between Serbs and Croats in Eastern Croatia.

July 24

The Federal Assembly, in the absence of representatives of Slovenia and Croatia, adopted a decision to suspend these two republics decision to declare sovereignty and independence.

July 25

Fighting between Croats and federal troops kills 18 militiamen and one army soldier.

July 26

24 more die according to TANJUG; federal president fails to come up with solution during meeting.

July 27

Ten killed in town of Glina (south of Zagreb); Yugoslav air force jet fires on Croatian forces in town of Ilok (E Croatia).

July 28

Prime Minister Markovic calls for EC Foreign Ministers to return to Yugoslavia; threatens to resign if his proposals are not accepted by warring factions.

July 29

EC Foreign Ministers say they will travel to Yugoslavia to help negotiate peace.

The EC Foreign Ministers offered to quadruple the number of EC observers to 200 plus 400 support staff, mentioning that these observers would go into Croatia only if their safety was guaranteed and if all parties accepted a cease-fire.

July 29

JNA units started to withdraw from Slovenia.

July 30

At the session of SFRY Presidency Branko Kostic was proposed as the President of the state committee in charge of monitoring the execution of the Presidency order on cease-fire in Croatia, which made Stipe Mesic leave the session.

Committee of the Croatian Assembly for protection and improvement of equality of nations and minorities offered Serbs in Croatia political and territorial autonomy. According to this proposal, Serbs in Croatia would be a sovereign nation with all rights except right to secession.

July 30

Serbs in Krajina region refuse to allow EC ministers in unless they are invited by Krajinan government. One killed, 6 wounded by Yugoslav air force attack on village of Majur; two youths shot by Croatian police in southern Croatian town of Imotski.

July 31

Supreme State Council of Croatia suggested to the Assembly and Government to undertake urgent measures in order to increase defence capability and carry out necessary mobilisation.

With the fighting between Serbs and Croatians worsening in eastern Croatia, Tudjman announced that legislation had been prepared to offer home-rule to the Serbian community in the self-proclaimed 'Autonomous Region of Krajina'.

August 1

Tudjman dismisses Defence minister due to poor showing of Croatian Defence forces; Yugoslav airplanes bomb targets around Erdut and Dalj.

Clash between Croatian police and National Guard with Serbian inhabitants took place in Dalj.

August 3

SFRY Presidency decided on absolute and immediate cease-fire, on stoppage of all further movement and on separation of conflicting forces. Commission was established (chaired by Branko Kostic) to monitor the enforcement of this decision together with competent organs of the Republic of Croatia. Immediately following this session, Stjepan Mesic addressed the Croatian Assembly asking them to refuse this Commission and to name Serbia as aggressor.

Despite violation of the provisions of the Brioni Agreement by Slovenia, after talking with Milan Kuccan EC Ministerial troika assessed positively the execution of obligations by Slovenia. In talking with Milosevic the EC representatives failed to reach agreement on arrival of the European peace forces.

The Assembly of Croatia adopted a decision to sever all relations with Republic of Serbia.

August 4

EC Ministers blame Serbia for breakdown in peace talks; Leader of Serbian Renewal Movement's militia (Serbian Guard), Branslav Metic, assassinated in Belgrade.

August 6

EC Foreign Ministers call on CSCE to support cease-fire efforts.
SFRY Presidency adopted a five-point decision on absolute and unconditional cease-fire on the territory of the Republic of Croatia.

August 7

The WEU Council convened in London to discuss a possible monitoring role.

August 8

A working group of the Croatian Assembly submitted a study in which Serbian population in this republic was offered local self-government, cultural autonomy, proportionate participation in government at all levels. Establishment of the District of Krajina with special status was proposed as well.

August 9

Serbia proposes redrawing ethnic and territorial lines in new Yugoslavia.
CSCE meeting in Prague urges an end to fighting and creation of a peace accord.

August 10

Small prisoner exchange occurs between federal army and Croats.

August 11

Cease fire falls apart as several are killed in renewed fighting.

August 12

Milosevic orchestrated a summit in Belgrade, where it was proposed to draft a new constitution for those republics which wished to stay in Yugoslavia as a 'confederation of equal republics and peoples'.

August 14

Federal president agrees to begin negotiation within a week to resolve federal crisis.

August 16

Truce effectively dead with renewed fighting.

August 17

Pope John Paul II says Croats have legitimate aspirations during mass held in Pecs, Hungary; fighting renewed as Croatian forces blow up bridge over the Sava River and federal troops bomb Croatian positions.

August 18

Federal troops reinforce positions inside Croatia.

August 19

Fighting around Pakrac and Okucani.

August 23

Truce officially proclaimed broken as Serb and Croat militias call for general mobilisation of their populations.

August 25

Federal troops cause heavy Croatian losses in fighting around Vukovar (eastern Croatia on border with Serbia); at least 18 reported dead.

August 26

7 more killed in fighting; Austrians apparently ready to recognise Croatian independence. Italians also threaten Serbia with this unless fighting is stopped.

August 27

At their meeting in Brussels, EC Foreign Ministers mentioned Serbia's responsibility for the conflict and envisaged a monitored cease-fire, the formation of an EC arbitration committee and an international peace conference.

August 31

Serbs says they will accept EC monitors of fighting; Yugoslav jets force down Ugandan and Romanian planes at Zagreb airport and accuse them of arms smuggling.

September 2

A cease-fire agreement provided for by EC, CSCE, and representatives of all parties to the conflict to monitor the cease-fire, while extending the EC observer mission into Croatian territory. Fighting in Petrinja.

September 3

Declaration of the European Community on Yugoslavia adopted in the Hague. It announced and scheduled for 7 September a Conference on Yugoslavia in the Hague and initiated at the same time arbitration procedure. Lord Carrington was appointed the chairman of the Conference. The Conference will adopt mechanism which should ensure a peaceful fulfilment of opposing aspirations of the Yugoslav peoples on the basis of the following principles:

- no unilateral change of borders by use of force;
- protection of rights of all in Yugoslavia; and
- full respect for all legitimate interests and aspirations.

September 3-4

During a meeting in Prague the CSCE called for an embargo on weapons and war equipment against all parties involved in the conflict.

September 4

Renewed fighting in Slavonia; Serbs cut highway to Okucani (75 miles S of Zagreb) and move to cut off Osijek; app. 20 dead in this area.

Genscher again warns Yugoslavia that Germany may recognise Slovenia and Croatia unless fighting stops.

September 5

Yugoslav army says EC can send observers; heavy fighting with tanks, planes, and gunboats around Vukovar; 13 more killed; EC officials believe Croats may be provoking attacks on army so as to gain German recognition.

September 6

Fighting in Glina (S of Zagreb); Dalmatia reported quiet as Serbs agree to truce along with federal army and Croats.

September 7

Conference on Yugoslavia opened in the Hague with the participation of the representatives of SFRY Presidency, Federal Government, Presidents of the Yugoslav republics, the Council of the European Community, representatives of EC members states and of the European Commission. A Declaration was adopted to the effect that the common goal of all participants was to bring peace to all in Yugoslavia and find lasting and just solutions for all their interests and aspirations.

It was established as a basis for negotiations that:

- internal borders could not be changed by force;
- the rights of minorities must be guaranteed;
- full account must be taken of all legitimate concerns and aspirations.

It was also declared that any differences which could not be resolved through negotiation would be submitted to an arbitration commission. At the same time, an arbitration commission of constitutional lawyers was appointed.

Referendum on the independence of Macedonia and its possible association with Yugoslavia was held in Macedonia: 95% of voters in Macedonia supported independence.

September 9

EC monitors arrive amid renewed battles; fighting in Kostajnica (near Bosnia) and Pakrac (in Slavonia) where 10 have been killed since hundreds of Croatian militiamen were ambushed by Serbs; Serbs cut Belgrade-Zagreb highway near Okucani.

Serb leader in Krajina, Milan Martić, detained by police in Bosnia for posing threat of spreading hostilities to this region

Yugoslav soldiers in firefight with Albanian border guards kill 5 Albanians.

September 10

Bosnia asked the EC to send observers to its territory. While nationalist Serbs were taking control of Serbian areas in Bosnia, President Izetbegovic called for the establishment of a six-mile demilitarised zone along the Una and Sava rivers to separate the republic of Bosnia from Croatia. Serb leaders in Krajina sign EC-sponsored truce; fighting in Slavonia leaves 15 dead 15,000-20,000 Albanian demonstrators in Pristina dispersed by police.

September 11

With the cut-off of oil supplies to Serbia by Croatia on 7 September and heavy fighting in Croatia in the following days, EC monitors admitted that their peace mission had failed and warned that they would leave Yugoslavia if their safety could not be guaranteed.

September 12

The first plenary session of the Conference on Yugoslavia started in the Hague behind closed doors with participation of Foreign Ministers from Yugoslavia and senior EC officials. Yugoslavian Defence Minister rejects President Stipe Mesic's call for JNA forces to pull out of Croatia. Kostajnica falls to Serb forces; 12 Croats killed in fighting, while 11 people killed in other parts of Croatia.

September 15

Air raid sirens go off in Zagreb for first time since World War II; Croatian forces begin blockades of federal troops throughout the republic resulting in JNA retaliations; 26 killed; Croats claim to have captured hundreds of federal troops.

September 16

Yugoslav jet shot down near Hungarian border in fighting near Osijek; 3 jets crossed into Hungarian airspace; Osijek's hospital shelled by federal troops; air raid sirens again sounded in Zagreb; fighting in Otocec, Okucani, Vukovar; partial mobilisation ordered in Vojvodina.

September 17

Lord Carrington, co-chairman of Conference on Yugoslavia, President of Croatia Tudjman, President of Serbia Milosevic and general Veljko Kadijevic signed in Igalo a joint cease-fire statement. The Assembly of Macedonia adopted a Declaration on strict respect of existing frontiers, rejecting any territorial claims on whatever neighbouring country.

September 19

Following increasing violations of Hungarian national air space by Yugoslav military aircraft and border incidents, the Hungarian Prime Minister offered to help the EC monitor the borders with Yugoslavia. Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand suggested sending a peace-keeping force to Yugoslavia, which should operate in a buffer zone, under the auspices of WEU. The United Kingdom, however, opposed sending a peace-keeping force because it represented a long-term commitment. A communiqué after a meeting of EC Foreign Ministers and WEU Defence Ministers stated that 'no military intervention is contemplated', but proposed that WEU should explore ways of supporting the activities of EC monitors to make their contribution more effective. A study by military experts was immediately set in motion.

September 20

JNA begins massive offensive to relieve army barracks surrounded by Croats.

September 22

Croats offer to halt blockade in exchange for end of offensive, but JNA refuses; Petrinja (30 miles S of Zagreb) lost to JNA/Serb militias; Serb militia units in hills along Dalmatian coast and YPL is maintaining a naval blockade; intense fighting in Zagreb around army barracks; 4 killed in Bosnia.

September 23

Cease-fire takes hold while both sides regroup; federal troops have fled Varazdin leaving behind 50 tanks, 60 armoured vehicles, anti-tank weapons, and anti-aircraft guns which are being redistributed to Croatian forces, especially around Vukovar; tanks, mortar fire in Vukovar for 90 minutes; continued fighting around Okucani and Nova Gradiska, as well as coastal town of Sibenik; 9-day blackout in Zagreb ends; shells fired on Monday evening at Vinkovci; Vice-president of ultra-nationalist Croatian group, Croatian Party of Rights, Ante Pradzic, is killed by Croatian police outside of Zagreb.

September 24

Milosevic tells BBC that Croatia may be allowed to secede but only if Serbian parts are kept inside Yugoslavia; battles between Croats and Serbs in west-central town of Medak (near Gospic) where Croats are trying to regain territory; shelling of Vinkovci by federal troops to break Croat blockade of garrison there; Split bombarded; army armoured column in Tovarnik (near Vukovar) stopped by Croats.

September 25

The United Nations Security Council, convened at the request of France, unanimously adopted Resolution 713, calling on all States to implement immediately a 'general and complete embargo on all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Yugoslavia'. The Council commended and fully supported the efforts already undertaken by the European Community and its member States, with the support of the States participating in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), to restore peace and dialogue in Yugoslavia.

September 26

At the fourth session of The Hague peace conference, Lord Carrington warned that no economic aid could be forthcoming until a long-term constitutional solution had been found. The conference set up three working groups to meet immediately, chaired by the European Commission, to study:

- constitutional solutions;
- economic relations between the republics;
- the position of ethnic minorities.

Meanwhile, the EC continued to broker cease-fire agreements which often collapsed again on the same day.

Branko Kostic called for a session of the SFRY Presidency referring to a special provision of the Presidency Rules of Procedure. From then on the sessions of the Federal Presidency were attended only by representatives of Serbia, Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro.

Fighting continues despite cease-fire agreement; 9 more dead; Kosovans begin voting on independence referendum even though Serb authorities say they will prevent the vote.

September 27

Serbian police arrest Kosovan leaders and interfere in independence referendum. Croatian plane carrying EC observers is fired on by Croatian anti-aircraft missile (Croatia later apologises).

September 29

Several army barracks abandoned by federal troops; fighting in Vinkovci-Vukovar area, also in Bjelovar (40 miles E of Zagreb); troops appear ready to leave some barracks in Zagreb; artillery bombardments of Nova Gradiska.

September 30

Clashes in Sisak (30 miles S of Zagreb); army begins new offensive due to surrender of 400-troop force in Bjelovar, trying to prevent redeployment by Croats of 130 captured armoured vehicles; armed forces command announces that it will destroy a vital facility in each town where a garrison or army facility is attacked.

October 1

Dubrovnik surrounded; Montenegrin army reservists overrun Croatian position south of Dubrovnik.

October 3

The SFRY Presidency began functioning under conditions of immediate danger of war.

Serbia announces that it and its allies are taking over the federal parliament.

Croat troops retreating from Banija area; federal troops within 20 miles of Zagreb; navy warships close off Dubrovnik, bombardment of hills above coastal city start forest fires.

October 4

Zagreb blacked out while Dubrovnik cut off from rest of Croatia. Dubrovnik airport and Adriatic Highway are bombed; TV tower 5 miles outside of Zagreb hit by federal jets; Sisak, Karlovac, and Vukovar all under attack.

Serbia orders partial mobilisation; Serbian presidency Member Borisav Jovic, says federal government now under control of Serbian republic and its allies.

Federal army agrees at the Hague to halt assault on Croatia if blockade against garrisons are lifted.

October 5

Tudjman urges all Croatians to 'fulfil their sacred duty' and join in defending the republic; roadblocks erected in Zagreb; Serbia also calls for full mobilisation; TV tower outside Zagreb hit again by jets; Croatian forces fight off attacks around Dubrovnik.

October 7

Slovenia started to implement its declaration of independence. In this framework, the JNA agreed to withdraw from Slovenia by 25th October and to hand over military hardware to the Slovenian authorities.

October 8

After the expiring of the three-month Brioni moratorium, the Assembly of the Republic of Croatia made a decision to sever state and legal bonds with SFRY and declared the independence of this Republic, at the same time identifying the JNA as an invading force.

The Assembly of Slovenia declared the independence of this republic and gave a 10-day notice to JNA to withdraw all its units from the territory of Slovenia.

UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar appointed Mr. Cyrus Vance, former United States Secretary of State, as his Personal Envoy for Yugoslavia.

October 13

The three-month mandate for EC monitors ran out, but was renewed indefinitely.

October 14

Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina, without participation of Serbian deputies, adopted a decision to call a referendum on the future status of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

October 15

Bosnian Parliament issued a memorandum on sovereignty. Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic, declared this could lead to war of extermination, and Serb delegates walked out.

October 15

On invitation of President Gorbachev, President of Croatia Tudjman and President of Serbia Milosevic met in Moscow, where they signed an agreement on immediate cease-fire.

In the Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina deputies representing the Moslem Party for Democratic Action and Croatian Democratic Union adopted the Memorandum on Sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina, after deputies representing the Serbian Democratic Party left the session.

October 16

JNA removed the red five-pointed star as its symbol.

Croatian Government gave notice to JNA to withdraw from the territory of this republic by November 10.

October 18

At the session of The Hague peace conference, the EC proposed a plan for the future structure of Yugoslavia which was loosely based on its own structure. Of the six republics attending the conference, only Serbia rejected these proposals.

The EC proposal envisaged a free association of sovereign states co-operating on trade, fiscal and security matters, with a council of ministers, an executive commission and a court of appeal. The independence of republics within existing borders would be recognised if the republics so wished and minorities would be given a second nationality and their own schools and legislature.

In referendums declared legal by the Serbian government, voters in Kosovo approved sovereignty, while those in Sandrah were in favour of autonomy.

October 21

Rump Federal Presidency rejected EC proposals for loose association of sovereign republics.

October 24

Serbian Deputies in Bosnia proclaimed Assembly of Serbian Nation.

November 5

In The Hague, the eighth session of the peace conference on Yugoslavia took place. The peace plan proposed by Lord Carrington in October, had been amended to allow republics to form a common state, whose economy could be organised on non-market lines, which the article granting autonomy to the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina deleted. Serbia and Montenegro proposed an amendment to permit not only republics but also 'nations' to remain within Yugoslavia. No agreement was reached.

November 8

Meeting in Rome, the EC Council of Ministers imposed trade sanctions on Yugoslavia, suspended the Treaty on Trade and Co-operation with Yugoslavia and invited the UN Security Council to enhance effectiveness of the arms embargo and to take steps towards imposing an oil embargo. Compensatory measures were to be applied vis-à-vis parties, which did co-operate in a peaceful way towards a comprehensive political solution.

November 9-10

A separate plebiscite of Serbian people took place in Bosnia-Herzegovina. More than 90 per cent of Serbs opted to stay within Yugoslavia.

November 10

The President of the United States declared that it would also impose trade sanctions, and the following day, the G-24 donor countries suspended aid to Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav collective State Presidency requested United Nations peace-keeping forces to be deployed around Serb-populated regions in Croatia, while the Croatian leadership insisted that such peacekeeping forces should be kept on the legal republican borders.

November 12

At its meeting at Noordwijk the member states of the European Community condemned the further escalation of attacks upon Vukovar, Dubrovnik and other towns in Croatia.

November 19

Meeting in Bonn, WEU Foreign Ministers agreed to allow naval ships to create 'humanitarian corridors' for relief to Yugoslavia.

November 20

After more than three month bitter fighting between Croat forces and JNA, the JNA forces took the town of Vukovar.

Bosnia-Herzegovina requested the deployment of United Nations troops.

November 21

Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia promulgated a new Constitution, defining Macedonia as a sovereign and independent democratic and social state.

November 22

Cyrus Vance, special envoy of the UN Secretary General, talked in Belgrade on possibilities for sending UN peace forces to Croatia.

November 23

Cyrus Vance, special envoy of the UN Secretary General convened in Geneva a meeting which was attended by the Presidents of Serbia and of Croatia and Defence Minister, Veljko Kadijevic, as well as Lord Carrington. During the meeting, the Yugoslav parties reached agreement on an immediate cease-fire and on a number of other issues. Each of the Yugoslav parties expressed the wish to see the speedy establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation. However, while progress was made on the other issues, the cease-fire broke down almost immediately.

November 27

The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 721 requesting a report on the feasibility of sending peacekeeping forces to Yugoslavia, conditional on the observance of a 23 November cease-fire agreement and endorsed that the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Yugoslavia could not be envisaged without full compliance by all parties.

November 30

CSCE Crisis Committee convened without the participation of the Yugoslav delegation. It adopted the Resolution supporting the activities of the UN in connection with crisis in Yugoslavia.

December

It was estimated that there were approximately 500,000 refugees, displaced persons and other victims of the conflict requiring assistance and protection. As the conflict intensified and extended to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the humanitarian problems increased dramatically with the growing number of refugees and displaced persons, widespread violations of basic human rights and international humanitarian law.

December 2

The EC Ministerial Council meeting in Brussels, considering so-called positive measures decided not to apply economic sanctions, introduced on 8 November, on Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia and Croatia. The Council agreed to continue monitoring the situation regarding Montenegro in order to eventually expand the above positive measures to this republic and expressed its hope that Serbia would evolve towards a more co-operative position. This decision in practise means that economic sanctions should refer only to Serbia and Montenegro.

December 4

The Assembly of Croatia unanimously approved a law on minorities, committing Croatia to accept all international conventions on human rights and granting cultural autonomy to ethnic communities within Croatia once there was peace in the republic within its 1974 borders.

December 5

Croatian Assembly recalled Stepan Mesic from SFRY Presidency with retroactive effect since 8 October. On that occasion Mesic said: 'Thank you for placing trust in me to fight for Croatian interests [...] I think I have performed my assignment - Yugoslavia no longer exists.'

December 9

At invitation of Lord Carrington the peace conference in The Hague continued its work. The Presidents of all Yugoslav republics attended. Agreement was reached on continuation of the Conference on Yugoslavia.

December 10

The Arbitration Commission of the Conference on Yugoslavia (so-called Badinter Commission) issued its first opinion. The Commission was of the opinion that Yugoslavia was in the process of dissolution; that it was to the republics to solve those problems of State succession that may derive from this process in accordance with the principles and rules of international law, with special attention to human rights and rights of peoples and minorities; and that it was upon those republics wishing to do so to act jointly to create new associations which would have democratic institutions according to their choice.

December 11

The so called Vance Peace Plan on the UN peace-keeping operation in Yugoslavia was submitted to the UN Security Council. Under the provisions of the Plan UN peace-keeping forces would be deployed in specified area of Croatia, designated as 'United Nation Protected Areas' (UNPA zones). There will be three such areas under the protection of UN peace-keeping forces: in Eastern Slavonia, Western Slavonia and Krajina. All units and personal of the Yugoslav Peoples Army, Croatian National Guard and Territorial Defence would be withdrawn from these areas, and all paramilitary and irregular units would be disbanded and demobilised. Local police forces would be responsible for maintenance of public order. UN infantry units and civilian police observers would perform the function of protecting the population in the UNPA zones and ensuring the process of demilitarisation. The UN peacekeeping operation would be a temporary arrangement designed to create conditions for peace and security which are indispensable for any negotiations on a comprehensive settlement of the crisis. It was said in the Plan that this arrangement would not prejudice the outcome of the negotiations.

Based on oral report of his personal envoy Cyrus Vance, the UN Secretary General stated that conditions for sending UN peace forces to Croatia had not yet been met since a cease fire had not been established.

December 13

Meeting of the Co-ordinating Bureau of Non-Aligned Countries held in New York discussed the situation in Yugoslavia and concluded that until a lasting political solution to the crisis in Yugoslavia is found, no attempts should be made that could undermine the sovereignty, territorial integrity and international legal subjectivity of Yugoslavia.

December 15

The Security Council, by its Resolution 724, approved the Secretary-General's report which contained a plan for a possible peace-keeping operation. A small group of military officers, civilian police and United Nations Secretariat staff travelled to Yugoslavia to prepare for the implementation of this plan. The Security also urged United Nations members to do nothing to exacerbate the situation (i.e. recognise the independence of republics).

December 17

Foreign Ministers of the European Community adopted in Brussels a Declaration on the Guidelines on the Recognition of New States in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and the Declaration on Yugoslavia. The first document determined general criteria to serve as guidelines for the EC in recognition of new states 'in conformity with normal standards of international practice and political reality in any particular case'. The second document states that the EC would recognise the independence of all Yugoslav republics which wish that, provided they fulfil criteria from Declaration on the Guidelines on the Recognition of New States in Eastern Europe. All Yugoslav republics have been invited to submit by December 23 their applications and proof that they met the criteria. Proofs on qualification would be assessed by the Arbitration Committee of the Conference on Yugoslavia, while decisions on possible recognition would be made by the EC Ministerial Council after January 15, 1992.

December 18

SFRY Presidency stated that EC Ministerial Council by its decisions of 17 December violated the UN Charter and international law. In its communication the Presidency underscored that by its interference in internal matters of Yugoslavia the EC supported unilateral and anti constitutional acts of secession and tried to abolish Yugoslavia as the only subject of international law.

December 19

Two Serb enclaves in Croatia, the Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina and the Autonomous Region of Slavonia, Branaja and Western Srem, proclaimed themselves the Serbian Republic of Krajina. The two enclaves did not share a common border, but together occupied about a third of Croatian territory and included 300 000 people. Milan Babic was elected president.

December 20

Federal Prime Minister Ante Markovic resigned.

December 21

The Assembly of Serbian People in Bosnia-Herzegovina adopted a Resolution to form the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina within the framework of Yugoslavia.

December 23

The government of Montenegro said that it would not be asking for EC recognition. The ethnic Albanians of Kosovo asked for EC recognition of an independent Kosovo. Germany recognised the independence of Slovenia and Croatia and promised that diplomatic relations would be established on 15 January 1992.

December 23

Slovenian Assembly adopted a new Constitution proclaiming Slovenia as sovereign and independent state.

December 23

President Izetbegovic requested UN peacekeepers for Bosnia.

December 24

Until the deadline set by the EC Declaration of 17 December applications for recognition were filed by Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia. Serbia and Montenegro did not apply, pointing to the fact that Serbia and Montenegro had been recognised at the Berlin Congress 1878 and that they had been maintained full international legal continuity.

The Grand National Assembly of the Serbian Autonomous Region of Slavonia, Baranja and West Srem decided to join the Republika Srpska Krajina.

December 25

The Serbian-dominated collective state presidency approved the United Nations plan for peace-keeping operations. This plan envisaged three demilitarised areas in Croatia, covering the Serbian enclaves of Western Slavonia, Eastern Slavonia and Krajina. Irregular forces would be disarmed and JNA and Croatian National Guard forces would be withdrawn.

December 26

Macedonia drafted constitutional changes to meet the EC conditions for recognition.

December 27

The Yugoslav presidency and the Federal Assembly condemned the EC's proposals and the presidency asked the United Nations to take control of the peace process.

Chronology 1992

January 2

Federal air strikes on Daruvar and Adriatic island of Ugljan, rocket attacks on Zadar, clashes around Pakrac and Vinkovci continue even as army and Croat National Guard leaders agree to a cease-fire. As part of his attempts to remove remaining obstacles, the Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General, Cyrus Vance, convened in Sarajevo a meeting between military representatives of the Republic of Croatia and representatives of the JNA, at which the Implementing Accord on the unconditional cease-fire to come into effect on 3 January was signed.

With the Security Council's concurrence, the newly elected Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, sent to Yugoslavia a group of 50 military liaison officers, with the task of using their good offices to promote maintenance of the cease-fire by facilitating communication between the two sides and by helping them to resolve difficulties that might arise. In the meantime, the Personal Envoy, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations and their team continued their efforts to secure the co-operation of all Yugoslav parties in implementing the United Nations plan for a peace-keeping operation.

January 3

New truce takes effect at 6 pm. Army claims Croatian forces east of Zagreb take advantage of truce to launch tank and artillery assaults between Novska and Kamensko.

Large parts of Krajina, Srem and eastern Slavonia have been conquered by the Serbs.

Representatives of 159 political parties gather in Belgrade to call for a new Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia.

January 4

Truce continues to hold with only minor clashes.

January 6

Truce gains strength despite Serbian militias refusing to accept terms.

Macedonia amended its constitution to fall in line with EC criteria for recognition. The amendments stated that Macedonia had no territorial claims on other countries, and renounced interference in their affairs. Constitutional amendments also abolished Macedonian representation in the Yugoslav Assembly and presidency. However, Macedonia's internal divisions were highlighted by a referendum held by the ethnic Albanian minority in Macedonia on 11-12 January, in which 99.9% voted for territorial and political autonomy.

January 7

Yugoslavia jet shoots down EC observer helicopter killing five on board. Federal President suspends air force commander, General Zvonko Jurjevic.

January 8

Notwithstanding the shooting down by the Yugoslav air force of an EC monitor helicopter on 7 January, killing all five of its crew, the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved the deployment of an advance force in the planned operation to send 10 000 United Nations peacekeeping troops to Yugoslavia.

January 8

Federal Defence Minister Kadijevic, who had resigned on December 31 due to, as stated, reasons of health, formalises his decision and is replaced by hard-liner, Chief of Staff Blagoje Adzic. Milosevic tells Serbs in western Croatia to ignore Serb leader Milan Babic and obey the cease-fire; actions draw praise from Lord Carrington.

January 9

UN Security Council adopted Resolution 727 supporting the proposal of UN Secretary General to send to Yugoslavia 50 officers that would monitor cease-fire and make initial preparations for possible arrival of some 10,000 'blue helmets'.

Assembly of Serbian People in Bosnia-Herzegovina declared in Sarajevo the Republic of Serbian People in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a federal unit of Yugoslavia and claim Sarajevo as their capital. The Assembly announced that Bosnia-Herzegovina's President and Foreign Minister 'no longer represent the interests of Bosnia-Herzegovina's Serbian people in international forums'.

The EC peace conference reconvened in Brussels. The risk of ethnic conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina was considered to be too great for that republic to qualify for EC recognition. President Milosevic accepted the EC plan for guaranteed minority rights, which also affected Serbian enclaves in Croatia. Serbian opposition leader, Vuk Draskovic, head of Serbian Renewal Movement, is indicted in Belgrade for inciting violence and organising pro-democracy demonstrations.

January 10

The Conference on Yugoslavia, initiated at The Hague, was continued in Brussels.

The EC Foreign Ministers lifted sanctions against Montenegro due to 'contribution to creation of necessary conditions for continuation of the Conference on Yugoslavia', thus leaving only Serbia subject to the sanctions imposed on 8th November 1991.

The EC Arbitration Commission had also recommended recognising Macedonian independence, but Greece objected to an independent state under that name and insisted on the inclusion of a clause in the EC criteria for recognition stating that republics should renounce 'the use of a denomination which implies territorial claims'.

Bombing of Catholic Church and three restaurants in Mostar; army reservists fire on train and injure two near military airport in Mostar; army claims it was fired upon from train. Serb leader in Krajina region, Milan Babic, denounces Milosevic for agreeing to UN peace plan. Croatian radio says one person died in attack in Sunja (42 miles S of Zagreb).

January 12

Five killed in clash in Baranja region near the Hungarian border; TANJUG blames Croats for launching the attack; otherwise, truce considered to be holding.

January 14

50 UN observers arrive in Belgrade and Zagreb.

January 15

The presidency of the EC announced that its member states had decided to recognise Croatia and Slovenia as independent states. Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina which had also sought recognition, were not recognised.

January 16

EC monitors extended their activities to Hungary to monitor compliance with the arms embargo on Yugoslavia after having signed a protocol with Hungary.

Serbian Premier, Radoman Bozovic, warns that violence will erupt if Croatia doesn't allow self-determination for ethnic Serbs. Milosevic says that Yugoslavia is to be reformed by Serbia and Montenegro. Croatian Foreign Minister, Zvonimir Separovic, says in *Le Monde* interview that Croatia's borders are negotiable, but only under peaceful conditions. Shelling around Osijek.

January 21

Talks being held in Pecs, Hungary, fail to reach an agreement on the terms for the Yugoslavia army's withdrawal from Croatia.

January 21

UN Security Council Resolution 743 set up a Protection Force (UNPROFOR), mandated to create three UN Protected Areas (UNPAs) in Croatia.

January 22

Macedonian parliament votes to withdraw its representatives from federal parliament.

January 25

A debate in the Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina, boycotted by Serbian parties, endorsed a referendum on the republic's sovereignty to be held from 29 February to 1 March.

January 26

UN Under-secretary-General in charge of UN peacekeeping, Marrack Goulding, arrives in Belgrade for talks. Croatian radio claims that federal troops fired anti-aircraft weapons on villages near Vinkovci (155 miles SE of Zagreb), and also that troops fired 20 mortar rounds onto Croat positions near Osijek. Army claims that Croats fired on federal positions around Dubrovnik. Federal forces turn over 294 prisoners captured in siege of Vukovar to Croats.

January 29

Referendum on independence held in Bosnia. Majority of Muslims and Croats in favour, majority of Serbs boycotted it.

January 31- February 2

After three-day continuous session, SFRY Presidency adopted Vance Peace Plan, in spite of opposition by Milan Babic, President of the Republika Srpska Krajina. Mile Paspalj, President of the Assembly of the Republika Srpska Krajina voted (instead of Babic) for adoption of the Vance Peace Plan.

February 6

Tudjman sent a letter to Cyrus Vance, personal envoy of the UN Secretary General, in which he reported that Croatia fully and unconditionally accepted the Vance Peace Plan.

February 9

At the session of the Assembly of the Republika Srpska Krajina in Glina the Vance Peace Plan was adopted by a majority vote despite opposition of Serb leader Babic.

February 10

At the session of the part of Assembly of the Republika Srpska Krajina in Knin, attended by delegates who support Milan Babic, President of the Republic, Babic counters the opposition with 2nd vote in parliament which overturns 1st vote and the decision was made to call a referendum in Krajina on Vance Peace Plan.

February 10

Army Chief of Staff Adzic says Yugoslavia army will protect Serbs in Croatia if the peacekeeping effort collapses.

February 11

In his letter to the United Nations, Borisav Jovic, President of the State Committee for Co-operation with the UN, officially reported that 'nothing stands in the way to arrival of blue helmets'.

February 12

UN envoy Vance recommends UN go ahead with deployment of forces.

February 14

Federal army shells Osijek, killing 3 Croatian soldiers. Fist-fights break out between several Serbs and Montenegrins and Macedonians in Macedonian town of Bitola. Tudjman gives unconditional support to UN peacekeeping plan.

February 15

Notwithstanding the fact that certain political groups in Yugoslavia were still expressing objections to the United Nations plan, the Secretary-General recommended to the Security Council the establishment of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). In making this recommendation, he stressed that, in his view, the danger that a United Nations peace-keeping operation would fail for lack of co-operation from the parties was less grievous than the danger that delay in its dispatch would lead to a breakdown of the cease-fire and to a new conflagration. Croatian officials said that Croatian law and control should be re-imposed in Serb dominated areas of Croatia.

February 16

Members of Krajina parliament, meeting in Glina, vote to remove Babic from office. Babic rejects this action claiming that only 47 out of 161 deputies were present, but TANJUG says 74 voted for his dismissal, 8 were opposed, and 3 abstained.

February 17

Babic accedes to the deployment of 13,000 peacekeeping troops.

February 21

The Security Council, by its Resolution 743 established UNPROFOR for an initial period of 12 months and agreed to deployment of 13,000 troops. The Council confirmed that the Force should be an interim arrangement to create the conditions of peace and security required for the negotiation of an overall settlement of the Yugoslav crisis within the framework of the European Community's Conference on Yugoslavia. It requested the Secretary-General to deploy immediately those elements of UNPROFOR, which could assist in developing an implementation plan for the earliest possible full deployment of the Force.

February 27

Milosevic declared to the Serbian parliament that the war with Croatia is over, and admitted for first time that Serbia had supplied Serbs in Croatia with arms. He also called for union of Serbia and Montenegro. Shelling of Osijek for at least 8 hours; over 200 shells fired at Vinkovci.

February 29

In the referendum in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 29 February to 1 March, 99.4% of the votes opted for full independence with a 63% turnout. Holding a referendum had been one of the conditions demanded by the EC before it would consider recognition of independence. Persons of Serbian nationality largely refused to participate in the referendum, pointing that the idea of an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina was unacceptable to them.

March 1

Referendum held in Montenegro with 66,04% response of voters, of which 95,94% cast their vote in favour of the option of Montenegro as a sovereign state remaining in Yugoslavia. Moslems, Albanians and some opposition parties boycotted the referendum.

March 2

Almost overnight, fighting erupted in Sarajevo between Muslims and both Serb irregulars and JNA and Croatian irregulars. The tension that dominated during the referendum culminated – according to Serb sources - when a Serb who attended his son's wedding was killed in front of a church. Within few hours barricades were put up all over the city guarded by armed civilians - Serbian on one side, and Moslem on the other.

Serbs sealed off Sarajevo with barricades, as well as 3 other Bosnia-Herzegovina towns and opened fire on crowd of 1,000 demonstrators, wounding three. Muslims also erected barricades, but police took control of these.

March 3

Barricades dismantled in Sarajevo after an agreement in the Presidency of the Republic. Mixed national police patrols in co-operation with the JNA were established, and appeals by SDA and SDP leaders Izetbegovic and Karadzic, temporarily calmed down an extremely explosive situation during the night of 3 March. Serbs were conceded more access to radio and TV and a greater voice in police activities. Serbs also claimed that Muslims attacked Serbs in town of Pale. Two reportedly killed in town of Gatsko (SW Bosnia-Herzegovina).

Karadzic, said he did not think Bosnia-Herzegovina would be able to escape inter-ethnic war if independence is gained.

German Foreign Minister Genscher called for recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

March 3

Meeting of representatives of governments of Serbia and Macedonia held in Skopje in order to negotiate unsettled political and economic issues between these two republics.

March 3

The Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina declared itself independent. Fighting spreads over the country.

March 4

Fighting in Bosanski Brod (Bosnia-Herzegovina town, 41% Croat, 33% Serb) near Croatian border. Four wounded before truce declared. Mosque bombed in Prnjavor. Police and federal troops team up to patrol streets in Sarajevo. Bosnia-Herzegovina President Izetbegovic walks through downtown Sarajevo to cheers of people and tells *Le Figaro* that 'there is a balance of fear, and I believe that for the moment, fear is conducive to peace'. Serbs reportedly hijack police truck carrying explosives in Visoka (NE of Sarajevo). Two army reservists hurt in ambush near Foca (S of Sarajevo).

March 6

Preparations continue for large anti-Milosevic protest rally in Belgrade; organisers say they will have 10,000 unarmed guards to defend protestors; Belgrade TV reports that 579,000 people had signed a petition demanding Milosevic's ouster; head of Serbian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Pavle, says he will conduct a memorial service for those killed a year ago during similar demonstration.

One killed in Bosnia-Herzegovina overnight bringing total to 9 thus far; 10,000 peace activists rally in Mostar.

Denmark sends 900 troops as part of early contingent for peacekeeping force.

March 7

Croatian defence officials say federal army artillery attacked Osijek Saturday night killing 7, wounding 30; 2 soldiers (Croats?) killed in shelling in Dalmatia; artillery fire reported around Masic and Poljane (60 miles E of Zagreb).

March 8

UNPROFOR commander, Lt. General Satish Nambiar, of India, (2nd in command, French General Philippe Morillon) and director of the civil part of the operation Cedric Thornberry and advance party arrive in Belgrade to prepare for the arrival of the 14 000 strong force in the United Nations-protected areas of Eastern and Western Slavonia and Krajina. Nambiar says he is determined to succeed. Sarajevo is to be headquarters for multinational force.

March 9

About 40,000 gather for protest demonstration in Belgrade marking one year anniversary of demonstrations that resulted in police repression and two deaths.

The plenary session of the Conference on Yugoslavia held in Brussels, chaired by Lord Carrington and attended by Cyrus Vance. Participants of the meeting were five Presidents of Yugoslav republics and Serbian Foreign Minister Vladislav Jovanovic (instead of the absent Milosevic, who was slightly injured in a car accident). Agreement was reached on continuous work of three conference groups - for institutional issues, for rights of minorities, and for economic issues.

March 11

Anti-government rally in Belgrade turns into all-night vigil held by high school and university students; vigil starts at 10 p.m. Tuesday and continues well into next day; parliament opposition leaders, Zoran Horvan and Mihaljo Kovac (Democratic Party) address the students.

March 17

Agreement between Slovenia and Macedonia on the establishment of diplomatic relations at the level of embassies signed in Skopje.

The fifth round of negotiations on Bosnia-Herzegovina started in Sarajevo.

March 18

Leaders of the three main ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina signed an agreement in Sarajevo, under EC auspices, on the future of the republic which provided for its division into three autonomous units along ethnic lines (known as the Coutilhero Plan). However, all signatories also agreed that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to implement because very few areas were in fact exclusively inhabited by any one of the three communities.

Shelling of Osijek by Serbs wounds eight. UN peacekeeping forces begin to arrive.

March 21

Croat officials say that towns of Osijek and Gospic (inland from Adriatic) have been shelled by artillery.

March 22

Federal artillery fires on Croat town of Neum in Bosnia-Herzegovina on Adriatic coast. Federal forces claim they have repulsed 200-man Croat attack in Baranja region near Hungary.

At the session of CSCE Ministerial Council Slovenia and Croatia were admitted to full-fledged membership of CSCE.

March 23

The fourth (follow-up) meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe started in Helsinki. As scheduled, during subsequent 14 weeks it should determine a platform on further development of the CSCE process. New states from Eastern Europe and the former USSR, as well as Slovenia and Croatia, participated for the first time in the capacity of full-fledged members.

March 25

Izetbegovic called on all citizens to reject the division of the republic along ethnic lines alone and to accept the concept of a military state. He had signed the Sarajevo agreement only because he had been isolated and because the EC mediators had insisted on signing as a precondition for recognition of independence.

March 26

JNA formally left the territory of the Republic of Macedonia by signing a document on transfer of facilities and equipment.

March 26

Muslim leaders reject EC-brokered peace plan for preserving Bosnia-Herzegovina; 11 Serbs killed in town of Sijekovac (outside of Bosanski Brod); Serbian media claims they were massacred by members of Patriotic League, a combined Muslim-Croatian militia.

March 27

The Assembly of Serbian People in Bosnia-Herzegovina (leader, Momcilo Krajisnik) promulgated in Sarajevo the Constitution of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and declared the independent state Republika Srpska.

Initiative and Co-ordinating Committee for the establishment of the Serbian National Assembly founded in Zagreb.

Muslim member of Bosnia-Herzegovina collective President, Ejup Ganic, urges UN to dispatch peacekeeping forces immediately to Bosnia-Herzegovina and to send military observers in order to monitor a cease-fire in Bosanski Brod.

In Sarajevo 399 Moslem intellectuals signed a Declaration on the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina in which they stress territorial integrity and indivisibility of this republic as main principles.

March 28

Federal army says it will respond to any attacks on its troops or civilians (similar statements marked beginning of civil war in Croatia in June '91).

March 29

Convention of Serbian intellectuals from Bosnia-Herzegovina and those originating from Bosnia-Herzegovina finished its work after two days in Sarajevo. The participants adopted a Declaration underlining indivisibility of interests of Serbs wherever they lived.

Fighting in northern Bosnia kills three despite newly negotiated truce. 40 have died in the course of the past week. Croat refugees fleeing across Sava River into Croatia to escape federal tanks which attacked before cease-fire deadline.

March 30-31

The sixth round of negotiations on Bosnia-Herzegovina held in Brussels. Representatives of all three national parties - SDA, SDP and HDZ - proposed separate 'corrections' in already adopted Declaration of principles of new constitutional order of Bosnia-Herzegovina of 17 March (the Cutilhero Plan). General principles of that document were nevertheless confirmed. It was agreed to set up a working group to define the territories of the communities within Bosnia-Herzegovina. The maps of the constituent units should be based on national, economic and geographic principles, but also on historic, religious, cultural, educational, and transport and communication criteria.

March 31

Serbs announce formation of their own police force in 'autonomous' areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

April 1

The 11th plenary session of the Conference on Yugoslavia held in Brussels. Discussion focussed on possibilities for renewal of economic relations between the former Yugoslav republics and questions of succession.

Paramilitaries from Serbia 'ethnically cleansed' the Bosnian town of Bijeljina.

April 2

Commercial flights to Croatia resume for first time since September 1 (Aeroflot jet with only 3 passengers on board). Federal troops shell Croatian towns of Vinkovci and Valpovo killing 4 and wounding 12. Fighting in NE Bosnian town of Bijeljina; Serbs block roads, while factories, schools, and shops close. Gunfire in Neum and Mostar. Representatives of all 3 groups meeting in Brussels agree to plan for defining autonomous areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

April 4

1,200 French members of UN peacekeeping force arrive in Rijeka. Up to 50 may have died in fighting since April 2 in Baranja region and around Osijek. Croats claim that at least 24 have died (including 6 Croatian soldiers) in attacks in and around Osijek in 24 hour period. Fighting around Bosanski Brod and Kupres in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

April 6

In Luxembourg, Ministerial Council of the EC adopted a Declaration on Yugoslavia stating that the Community and its members decided to recognise the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina within the present borders. The recognition of Macedonia was put off due to Greek opposition. The Community also decided in principle to abolish economic sanctions against the Republic of Serbia, i.e. 'to expand to the Republic of Serbia the benefit of positive measures' provided to other republics on 2 December 1991 and 10 January 1992, but it warned of renewed sanctions and of severing diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia if fighting involving Serbian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina did not stop by the end of the month.

On the same date, the United States recognised Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Armed clashes broke out in Sarajevo and other places throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which 14 persons were killed and more than 100 wounded. A large group of Sarajevo citizens demonstrated against the stirring up of national conflicts, occupied the Bosnia-Herzegovina Assembly building and demanded the formation of the national salvation government. At its extraordinary session held without attendance of Serbian deputies the Bosnia-Herzegovina Presidency issued an order on cease-fire in Sarajevo and introduction of the state of emergency.

Serbian snipers, firing from the headquarters of Serbian Democratic Party in Sarajevo Holiday Inn, killed five members of a huge peace demonstration. Serb militiamen also fired on buses bringing more participants for the rally into Sarajevo. Bosnian police stormed the hotel and arrested six gunmen. Izetbegovic blamed the fighting on Serbs who oppose individually. Fighting between Serb and Muslim forces around Sarajevo airport. Overnight shelling from Pale killed two. The siege of Sarajevo started. 'Rump' Presidency of SFRY met in Belgrade to assess the political and security situation in the country prompted by dramatic deterioration of the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Presidency expressed serious concern over future development of events in this republic. The present situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they said, is the direct consequence of the policy aimed at braking up Yugoslavia and of the EC decision on international recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which ignited ethnic clashes there. The Presidency stressed again that the solution to the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina was only possible by peaceful means, through agreement of all its three constitutive nations.

April 7

After receiving a report from the Secretary-General on 2 April that all the Force Commander's interlocutors had emphasised the need for the earliest possible deployment of UNPROFOR, the Security Council, by its Resolution 749, authorised the full deployment of the Force.

The Assembly of Serbian People in Bosnia-Herzegovina declared in Banja Luka the independence of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, 'which may enter into association with

other entities in Yugoslavia'. The Assembly 'acknowledged the information' that Biljana Plavsic and Nikola Koljevic resigned from the Bosnia-Herzegovina Presidency.

April 8

Izetbegovic and Bosnia-Herzegovina collective President declare state of emergency and assume control over territorial defence force declaring 'war is imminent' as federal troops and Serbs move into Bosnia. Izetbegovic calls on EC, UN and US to intervene and collective President orders all loyal paramilitary groups to merge with security forces. Serbs fire mortars at Sarajevo suburbs from Serbian-controlled area of Lapisnica.

Federal troops claim victory against Croatian forces in area of Kupres (60 miles E of Sarajevo); villages of Zloseo and Osmanlije reportedly 'razed'. Heavy fighting around Mostar between federal troops and Croat militias. Serb and Muslim militias battle around Zvornik (Drina River boundary with Serbia) and Kalesija. 150 reported dead in last week.

April 9

UN envoy Cyrus Vance says US and EC recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina independence has damaged peace process.

April 10

Zvornik said to be 'razed' as 10,000 Muslim refugees are found to have been chased from their homes by Serbian guerrillas, US ambassador to Belgrade, Warren Zimmerman, delivers protest to Milosevic, blaming Yugoslavia army for the crisis.

April 11

Federal army units attack Muslim-Croatian town of Modrica. Serbian plan said to be to drive out Muslims-Croats from strategic areas to create well-defined Serbian enclave. UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali sends Vance to Bosnia-Herzegovina to try to end the conflict. EC-sponsored talks underway in Sarajevo which caused Serbs to temporarily halt fighting in the city. More fighting around Mostar as Serbs seize hydroelectric dam on Neretva River. TANJUG reports federal army officials as saying 320 Croatian fighters killed around Kupres (not confirmed).

April 13

Truce broken only two hours after having gone into effect as Serbs attack police in Sarajevo, shell Visegrad and Foca, and proclaim two 'serbian autonomous regions' in NE Bosnia. Mortar and artillery fire in Bosanski Brod; gunfire in Capljina, Stolac, and Zvornik. US issues sharp warning to Yugoslavia that Serbian aggression is 'completely outside the bounds of civilised behaviour'. US representative to CSCE says international community should hold Serbian and Yugoslavia military leaderships responsible for aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

April 14

Serbian chief-of-staff, General Zivota Panic, says army can expect attacks on it in Bosnia-Herzegovina. JNA takes control of Visegrad sending thousands more fleeing for safety. Bosnia-Herzegovina Foreign Minister, Haris Silajdzic, in Washington asks for US assistance to prevent 'mass massacres'. US Secretary of State Baker says government has sent strongly worded note to Serbs; also announces that US is sending airlift of food and blankets to Sarajevo and that Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Ralph Johnson will accompany flights. Vance holds talks in Sarajevo and then heads for Belgrade.

Greece announces that it will oppose international recognition of Macedonian independence. Tadjman demands that Serbia halt its offensives in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

April 15

Serbs capture Foca. Shelling in Sarajevo. Spokesman for UN High Commissioner for Refugees says Serbs stopped and confiscated six agency trucks carrying food and medicine for refugees in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Vance warns Tadjman to stay out of the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis.

April 18

Serbs capture munitions factory in Vogosca (10 miles N of Sarajevo). Fighting across Bosnia-Herzegovina. Railway bridge across Neretva river blown up, thereby isolating Mostar from rest of Bosnia. US shipments of food and medicine begin to arrive in Sarajevo. Serbian Foreign Minister tells US charge d'affaires that it is conducting a 'one-sided, non-objective and biased' policy regarding the crisis.

April 21

EC brokers a new truce.

April 22

Street-to-street fighting in Sarajevo as Serbs seek to gain control of downtown. Fighting ebbs by midday, but continues into late afternoon in suburb of Ilidza as Muslims attack Serb-held area with mortars, and in nearby villages of Sokolovic and Butmir.

Fighting also in Bosanski Krupa (W Bosnia-Herzegovina), Derventa (N), Bosanski Brod and Bosanski Samac (on Croatian border).

April 23

Artillery battles in Mostar. Fighting around three towns on northern and western borders. Leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina factions and Yugoslavia army sign truce at Sarajevo airport, but signing is interrupted by sniper fire on them. Overnight shelling of Sarajevo and Capljina by Serbs. Germany and Netherlands urge UN Secretary Council to hold emergency session to deal with the crisis.

April 24

Izetbegovic and Army Chief Adzic meet in Skopje and call for groups to respect the cease-fire, remove barricades, and unblock army bases. Yugoslavia army claims it has nowhere to put troops if they leave Bosnia-Herzegovina. Army commander Milutin Kukanjac says, however, that the army 'will be transformed in the way agreed by legitimate representatives of its 3 peoples - Muslims, Serbs, and Croats'. Croatian radio says Serbs occupy Bosnian town of Kula Grad on Serbia's border. Gunfire reported in Serbian-held suburb of Sarajevo, but police say it is in celebration of Orthodox Easter. EC monitors heading towards Derventa on Croatian border forced to turn back due to heavy fire.

April 27

The Federal Assembly adopted the Constitution for a new Yugoslav state, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), comprising Serbia and Montenegro. The constitutional law granted cultural minority rights, but the Albanian and Hungarian minorities distanced themselves from the new constitution.

Bosnia-Herzegovina collective President calls on Yugoslavia army to withdraw. Heavy fighting occurs in Sarajevo at night. Shelling of Mostar causes destruction to maternity ward in local hospital. UN High Commission on Refugees says it will reduce its 25-man staff in Sarajevo.

April 28

The United Nations agreed in principle to extend its involvement to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

April 29

Heavy mortar fire in Mostar kills eight. Yugoslavia army commander refuses orders of Bosnian President to withdraw his troops. EC monitors withdrawn from Bihac, Banja Luka and Tuzla for their safety. UN cuts back on refugee workers for Sarajevo and cancels plans for basing a logistics headquarters in Banja Luka.

April 30

Although the mandate of UNPROFOR originally was only related to Croatia, it was envisaged that after the demilitarisation of the UNPAs, 100 UNPROFOR military observers would be redeployed from Croatia to certain parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, in light of the deteriorating situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Secretary-General decided to accelerate this deployment by sending 40 military observers to the Mostar region.

Last two bridges linking NE Bosnia-Herzegovina (near Brcko) with Croatia destroyed by masked commandos. Refugees fleeing the area killed in explosions. Refugee totals now near 400,000. Federal shelling of Sarajevo Muslim section. Federal shelling of Mostar leaves three dead. Serbs set fire to Muslim village of Moremislice (40 miles E of Sarajevo). Fighting in Bosanska Krupa (W Bosnia-Herzegovina) leaves over 130 dead in week-long battles. Greek Premier Mitsotakis goes to Belgrade to meet with Milosevic. Yugoslavia establishes border posts with Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

CSCE admits Bosnia as 52nd member (Yugoslavia assents).

May 1

13 people reported killed in fighting across Bosnia-Herzegovina. Tank, mortar, and machine-gun battles in Sarajevo. Yugoslavia army attacks TV tower on Mt. Vlasic outside Sarajevo. Shelling overnight and in the afternoon in Mostar.

May 2

EC Foreign Ministers, meeting in Guimaraes, agreed on an action plan including:

- humanitarian aid;
- collaboration with any United Nations action to separate the warring parties;
- reinforced diplomatic efforts.

The Foreign Ministers also concluded that the EC was 'willing to recognise Macedonia as a sovereign and independent state within its existing borders and under a name that can be accepted by all parties concerned'.

Bosnian attacks on military club in Sarajevo prompted federal army to seize Izetbegovic when he came into airport. Army plans to exchange him for safe conduct of federal convoy from General Kukanjac's headquarters out of Sarajevo.

May 3

Bosnians attack federal convoy killing four and wounding 15 others, thereby jeopardising release of Izetbegovic (released later that night); eight children and two women killed in Yugoslavia air force raid on Croatian town Slavonski Brod (near Bosnia-Herzegovina border).

May 4

The Presidency of SFRY adopted a decision to the effect that the Yugoslav People's Army should evacuate from Bosnia-Herzegovina and all citizens of FR Yugoslavia serving in JNA in Bosnia-Herzegovina should return to the territory of FR Yugoslavia within 15 days, i.e. by May 19. Citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina serving the Army should remain on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina (80% of forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina are Serbs).

Bosnia-Herzegovina Presidency (without Serbian representatives) named Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, JNA and Serbian paramilitary formations as aggressors in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Presidency decided to seek foreign military help, if not men, then guns.

Serb forces advancing into historic Basharskija (old town) district, and firing on Parliament building; jets attack TV relay station. Izetbegovic says he will ask CSCE for military help. US, in continuing attempts to act even-handed, says that Serbian forces 'clearly bear the heaviest blame'.

UN envoy Marrack Goulding goes to Belgrade to try and arrange another truce.

May 5

In Sarajevo representatives of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Presidency (Fikret Abdic and Stjepan Kljucic), JNA (general Milan Aksamovic) and European Community (Lord Carrington's envoy Colm Doyle) signed a peace treaty, which provided for a cessation of conflict throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, the deblocking of barracks and Sarajevo Airport and the exchange of dead, wounded and captives.

May 6

Representatives of the Serbian and Croatian communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina Radovan Karadzic and Mate Boban met in Graz and agreed on a truce under the EC control. They also agreed in principle on the ethnic division of Bosnia-Herzegovina and territorial divisions between the two nations, stressing that they agreed that all conflicting issues should be resolved by peaceful means.

Overnight fighting in Doboj (N Bosnia-Herzegovina), now in its 4th day. Heavy fighting in Mostar where federal army barracks are set on fire. Federal troops continue to fire on Osijek in Croatia, killing two.

May 7

Fighting in suburb of Ilidza (Serb-controlled). Milosevic, in a meeting with UN Under-secretary-General Goulding, calls for immediate cease-fire and declares that 'no one in Bosnia is innocent' and that Serb paramilitary forces are not controlled by Serbia. TANJUG says army will complete partial withdrawal by May 19.

State-run media in both Serbia and Croatia announce secret agreement by Bosnian Serbs and Croats reached in Graz, Austria, to partition Bosnia-Herzegovina Muslims not consulted but Serbs say they will be given small section called 'Alija's Pashalik' (little domain, named for Izetbegovic).

May 8

The Assembly of the Republic of Croatia adopted the Bill on Constitutional Law on Changes and Amendments to the Constitutional Law on Human Rights and Freedoms and on Rights of Ethnic and

National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia, which stipulated the establishment of two (Serbian) autonomous districts - Knin and Glina - with 11 municipalities in which Serbs make up over half of the population. The Bill was adopted with 210 votes for and 14 against. During discussion of the Bill many deputies pointed out that they would accept the so-called 'Minorities Law' only because of the pressure of international community.

Milosevic purges top army leadership, firing Acting Defence Minister Blagoje Adzic, Bosnian commander Milutin Kukanjac, and 36 other generals and admirals; those purged represent old Yugoslavia partisan, communist, or former Tito supporters, and are replaced by younger, more aggressive nationalist Serbs; Army's new commander is General Zivota Panic, 58, who is committed to Serbia standing up against western pressure.

May 11

Ministerial Council of the European Community at its session in Brussels adopted a Declaration on Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which it repeatedly stresses that political solution in this republic may only be based on principles established during talks between representatives of Serbs, Croats and Moslems under auspices of the peace conference. Although all sides, each one in its own way, have contributed to continuous deterioration of security situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the greatest blame is, it was said in Declaration, on the JNA and authorities in Belgrade, which control the Army and support directly or indirectly the irregular Serb forces. The EC demanded complete withdrawal of the JNA from Bosnia-Herzegovina, the commitment of Belgrade to respect the integrity of the borders of all republics, to observe the rights of minorities, including Vojvodina and Kosovo, to work on concluding an agreement on the special status of Kosovo, whereby respect for the territorial integrity of Croatia would be ensured, to co-operate in solving the questions of State succession.

European Community and its members decided to recall their ambassadors in Belgrade for consultations, to demand suspension of the Yugoslav delegation from decision-making in CSCE for the time being, committed themselves to work, if the situation did not change, on ever greater isolation of Yugoslav delegations in international fora and to examine the modalities of possible economic sanctions. The EC and its members invited the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina to fully co-operate in withdrawal of JNA, and invited the Government of Croatia to do all within their competence in order to prevent the invasion by military and paramilitary formations, as well as arms smuggling into Bosnia-Herzegovina.

CSCE votes to exclude Yugoslavia from all decisions it takes regarding Bosnia until June.

In Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference condemns Serbian aggression and sends envoy to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Fighting very heavy in Sarajevo, especially around Marshall Tito barracks (controlled by Muslim and Croat forces). Federal troops supposed to withdraw to another barracks under UN escort, but Serb militiamen move into the area to prevent their departure. Croatian radio reports that 90% of Mostar has been destroyed. Radio Belgrade says that army has been forced to fire on Mostar's 16th century bridge to dislodge Croatian snipers on either bank. Report of Croat and Muslim clash in Busovaca (30 miles NW of Sarajevo) as federal troops withdraw from local barracks; Croats are refusing to submit to authority of new Muslim-Croat army. Belgrade paper, *Borba*, says that Serb militiamen are 'systematically murdering Sarajevo' by shelling the city day and night; paper also says that all Serbs are being forced by militia to join in fighting and terrorising Muslims.

May 12

After a week's negotiation and attempts to find compromise, the Committee of CSCE Senior Officials at the meeting in Helsinki adopted a new Declaration on Bosnia-Herzegovina. Stating that authorities in Belgrade and JNA have clearly, grossly and persistently violated the CSCE principles and commitments and that the greatest responsibility for the escalation of bloodshed and destruction lies

with them, the Committee decided that appropriate action on issues relating to this crisis will be taken by June 30, in the absence of the consent of the Yugoslav delegation. The Committee will decide on June 29, in the light of information provided by the European Community about the situation on the ground and about the progress at the EC Peace Conference, whether to extend the application of this decision. Committee requested again from all involved sides to restrain from use of force and to observe the cease-fire agreement consistently and immediately. The Declaration underscores the strongest support to tireless efforts toward peaceful solutions of this crisis situation through peace process initiated by the EC and supported by the UN, in particular efforts within the Conference on Yugoslavia and Lisbon talks on the future system in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

US follows EC lead and recalls ambassador Zimmermann in protest against 'serb-led aggression', but State Department says the use of force 'is not an option' and that Bosnia-Herzegovina is not 'a national security interest' for the US.

Bosnian Serbian Parliament says it will form own army, and names Major General Ratko Mladic to head it; says it will carry out unilateral 5-day truce. Six more killed in Sarajevo and Mostar. Serb tanks take control of centre of Mostar, heavy casualties reported. Shelling damages TV tower in N. Sarajevo. In agreement with federal army, Bosnian authorities to take control of airport while troops pull out of four Sarajevo barracks and central Bosnia-Herzegovina towns of Zenica, Travnik, and Konjic (all have Muslim majorities).

Last EC observers in Bosnia-Herzegovina burn their records and leave.

May 13

UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali submitted to the Security Council the report on the Yugoslav crisis, based on data presented by Under-secretary Murrack Goulding after he completed his mission. The report mentions that the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is 'tragic, dangerous, full of violence and confusing', and that at this stage of conflict no conditions exist for UN peace operation in this republic. The Secretary-General recommended the Security Council that:

1. UNPROFOR headquarters should no longer be in Sarajevo for the safety of its own personnel.
2. No United Nations peace-keeping force should be sent to Bosnia-Herzegovina.
3. The United Nations peace plan for Croatia was in jeopardy from the failure of Serbs in Croatia to demobilise.

Shelling in Sarajevo comes to end at 6 a.m. deadline for truce, but not before shells hit Bosnian President building, main shopping area, and train station. Fighting around towns of Derventa, Modrica, and Doboje.

May 14

Presidents of European central banks meet in Paris to discuss freezing Serbian assets, but the news is leaked which weakens prospects for carrying out plan. EC discussion of trade sanctions against Serbia opposed by Greeks, French and British.

Cease-fire broken when mortars fire on hotel housing UN peacekeepers in Sarajevo, this after Boutros-Ghali ordered most of 300 mission members to withdraw to Belgrade or Zagreb.

May 15

UN Security Council adopted Resolution 752 which requests from all sides and all involved in Bosnia-Herzegovina to stop fighting without delay, that all forms of external interference in Bosnia-Herzegovina be immediately suspended, that neighbours of Bosnia-Herzegovina undertake urgent action in order to end any interference and to observe territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, that JNA units on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina withdraw or place under command of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Government, and other disband and disarm, and weapons be placed under efficient international control, that all irregular forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina be disbanded and disarmed, that conditions be ensured for unobstructed delivery of humanitarian aid.

UN Security Council directs the Secretary-General to consider ways to secure Sarajevo airport so as to allow supplies in.

Bosnian Foreign Minister Silajdzic appeals to Security Council to create safety zone like the one for Kurds in Iraq. Six hours of shelling overnight in Sarajevo despite truce. Boutros-Ghali says Muslims broke the truce. UN Commander General Nambiar and 30 of his men cut off at his villa. Six killed in fighting in Sarajevo and sniper fires into office of Izetbegovic.

UN troops in Croatia scheduled to take control of Slavonia region captured by Serbs last year.

Macedonian President, Kiro Gligorov, having met with Secretary of State Baker and Under-secretary Eagleburger the day before, says he is disappointed that the US has not recognised his country; US trying to balance concerns of Greeks (who claim to fear Macedonian territorial claims against their own province of Macedonia) with those of the new state.

May 16

Truce breaks down with fighting in Sarajevo (7 dead) and in Tuzla (25 miles N, 11 dead).

May 17

About two thirds of UNPROFOR headquarters personnel also withdrew from Sarajevo leaving behind some 100 military personnel and civilian staff who lent their good offices to promote local cease-fires and humanitarian activities.

150 Serbs rally in Sarajevo to support Bosnia-Herzegovina during lull in fighting.

May 18

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev arrived to Belgrade, where he met with Vice-President of the Yugoslav Presidency Branko Kostic. The plan of his visit included trips to Podgorica, Skopje, Sarajevo, Zagreb and Ljubljana and talks with Presidents of all six former Yugoslav republics.

Red Cross convoy bringing medicine to Sarajevo hit by Serb rockets and mortars killing a passing civilian, and wounding 3 members of convoy, destroying one truck. Sarajevo has first night of relative calm, but fighting rages in Tuzla and Bihac. 30,000 people, including 20,000 Muslim refugees, trapped in Gorazde (E Bosnia-Herzegovina). Five killed in Bosanski Samac (N Bosnia-Herzegovina, on Sava River). UN plans to send relief aid into Sarajevo by May 22nd.

May 19

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev talked in Belgrade with President Milosevic, and in Podgorica with Momir Bulatovic, President of Montenegro. During talks he made an indication of a possible Russian peace initiative for the solution of the Yugoslav crisis. Kozyrev interrupted his visit to other former Yugoslav republics 'due to internal reasons'.

Yugoslav People's Army began its evacuation from the territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

US tells Bosnia that it will not send troops. US State Department spokesperson Margaret Tutwiler says US has no national Security interests in Bosnia-Herzegovina and, 'Where is it written that the United States government is the military policeman of the world?'

Bosnian Foreign Minister Silajdzic states 'My country has turned into a slaughterhouse millions are threatened with starvation, lack of medicine and clean water and brutal ex-termination'.

Between 3,000-5,000 mainly Muslim refugees trying to leave Sarajevo are stopped by Serbian troops and held in suburb of Ilidza.

May 20

A new Declaration on Yugoslavia adopted at the meeting of the Committee of Senior CSCE Officials in Helsinki. Committee expressed its concern for the further deterioration of situation in the former SFR Yugoslavia. It demanded from all sides in conflict to ensure opening of the Sarajevo airport for delivery of humanitarian aid, support for efforts of the international community for solution of the heavy refugee problem, decided to send to Yugoslavia two special missions which would examine the military situation in Kosovo and establish whether claims that conditions have not been created for free and fair elections for the Assembly of FR Yugoslavia are justified.

As a 'response to protracted Serbian aggression to Bosnia-Herzegovina' US suspended landing rights for JAT in retaliation for Serbian blockades of emergency food and relief.

Izetbegovic cannot get out of Sarajevo for new round of talks in Lisbon. UN abandons efforts to fly him out. Bosnian Serbs call for general mobilisation of all Serbs in Bosnia.

May 21

In the communication issued after the session of the Presidency of Yugoslavia it was said that the Presidency judges the situation in FR Yugoslavia as rather stable, that all measures have been taken on the border toward Bosnia-Herzegovina to prevent crossing in either way of any paramilitary formations, that the Yugoslav Army is not present on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina and that consequently the Presidency of Yugoslavia has no longer any competence to decide on any military operation on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Presidency therefore pointed to full responsibility of three parties in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina for violation of cease-fire, sharply condemned all unacceptable acts of the warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina and appealed to them to immediately allow delivery of humanitarian aid to all war afflicted persons.

Bosnia accuses Serb General Ratko Mladic of ordering the refugee convoy halted; convoy finally allowed to leave Ilidza only after 2 truckloads of food brought in to Serbian barracks. Police chief in Ilidza, Tomo Kovac, says he would let refugees go if it was his choice, 'but I don't make the decisions'.

May 22

At the plenary session of the UN General Assembly Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia were admitted by acclamation to the membership of the United Nations. Yugoslavia's seat remains but left vacant.

UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali stated that he decided to set up a special co-ordinating body for Yugoslavia, whose members would be UN Under-secretary Murrack Goulding, Ian Eliason and Vladimir Petrovski, with a task of monitoring, analysing and assessing the situation on the Yugoslav territory and suggesting appropriate measures.

US closed Yugoslavia consulates in New York and San Francisco and expelled diplomats, along with Yugoslavia military attaché in Washington; consulate in Chicago allowed to remain open. Secretary of State Baker said he will urge the EC to take similar measures.

May 23

EC states consider new sanctions against Serbia (trade embargo, freeze of financial assets, cut-off of oil); Greece and France hold up unified action.

May 24

US Secretary of State Baker says US will appeal to UN to impose similar sanctions on Serbia as those applied to Iraq; compared Serbian policies to those of Nazi 'cleansing' and 'ethnic purification' in trying to force Muslims and Croats out of Bosnia-Herzegovina; Baker said there will be no unilateral US use of troops but did not rule out multi-lateral options.

'Multiparty parliamentary and presidential elections', deemed illegal by the Serbian authorities, were held in Kosovo and Metohija. According to information of the 'republican electoral board' out of 821,588 registered voters 721,534, almost exclusively of Albanian nationality, turned up at the polls. Ibrahim Rugova was elected 'President of the Republic of Kosovo' by 95 per cent of votes. Democratic Alliance of Kosovo in the first round of elections won 78% of votes and all the seats in the 'republican parliament'.

May 25

The Presidency of Yugoslavia discussed the text of the UN Security Council Resolution 752 of 15 May, as well as the UN Secretary General's report on Yugoslavia and demarche of the Chairman of the Security Council of 21 May and tried to distance itself from Bosnia-Herzegovinian conflict. The Presidency noted that there are attempts without any justification to shift responsibility for ethnic war in Bosnia-Herzegovina to FR Yugoslavia. It declared that FR Yugoslavia will do its best to co-operate and participate in activities and decisions of the United Nations, that it is ready to engage in efforts of the UN and international humanitarian organisations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, appealed to all sides to allow deblocking of the Sarajevo airport, openly called all warring parties to immediately stop shelling Sarajevo, Mostar and destroying other cities, distanced itself from all unacceptable acts committed by certain military formations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, including the formations of Serbian people. The Federal Executive Council appealed to all parties in conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina to allow free and safe passage to vehicles with humanitarian aid and expressed its belief that the problem of state organisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina should be resolved in a peaceful and democratic way. Muslim forces continue to block withdrawal of Yugoslavia forces in Sarajevo barracks until they surrender weapons.

May 26

The Presidency and the Government of Yugoslavia sent a letter to the UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, which presented positions of these two organs on issues raised by Security Council Resolution 752. The letter gave a full account of general stands of FR Yugoslavia toward the present crisis, what Yugoslavia did so far to overcome conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and what it intended to do in connection with requirements set by UN documents. It expressed readiness for full co-operation with the UN, in particular in carrying out decisions of the Security Council and underlined that FR Yugoslavia is fully attached to goals and principles of the UN Charter and CSCE and to peaceful solution of the Yugoslav crisis within the framework of the Conference on Yugoslavia and the Conference on Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yugoslavia army commander in Sarajevo, Colonel Komnen Zarkovic, says that army is ready to end war in Bosnia-Herzegovina if they can leave the city peacefully (1,500 soldiers and their families still in three barracks). Serb leader Karadzic says his forces prepared to remove heavy artillery from Sarajevo area if army is allowed to leave the city.

May 27

In downtown Sarajevo, in Vase Miskina Street a line of people waiting to buy bread was hit by shellfire. 16 were killed and more than 140 wounded. Breadline shelling breaks 4-hour old truce mediated by Russians. Maternity hospital shelled overnight by Serbs. Six Serbs killed in fighting in mainly Muslim town of Kiseljak. Two Croats killed in southern Bosnia due to artillery fire. Izetbegovic calls for popular offensive against Serb-led forces.

Negotiations of three national delegations on the future constitutional order of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which started on May 21, were interrupted in Lisbon. Portuguese ambassador Jose Coutilhero, chairman of the Conference on Bosnia-Herzegovina, stopped the talks at request of the Moslem delegation.

EC imposes trade embargo on Serbia, asks UN to impose oil embargo and freeze Yugoslavia assets. International Red Cross says it is withdrawing remaining 16 workers from Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serbian Orthodox Church declares it is openly distancing itself from the Milosevic government. Fighting around Sarajevo airport. Yugoslavia commander in Sarajevo says Muslim forces attacked his troops overnight and captured 50 of his men.

May 29

Mortar, heavy artillery, and rocket attacks on Sarajevo. Serbs shell old town of Dubrovnik several days after 8-month siege of town lifted. Fighting in Mostar kills two. Karadzic blames Muslim intransigence for the continued lack of progress in peace talks in Lisbon.

Helmut Kohl calls for Yugoslavia expulsion from UN. Turkish President, Turgut Ozal, says NATO should intervene in Bosnia-Herzegovina and that Turkey will send troops there for that purpose.

May 30

Acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council, in its Resolution 757, imposed wide-ranging sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (which by then consisted of Serbia and Montenegro), in order to help achieve a peaceful solution to the conflict. It also demanded that all parties create the conditions necessary for unimpeded delivery of humanitarian supplies to Sarajevo and other destinations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the establishment of a security zone encompassing Sarajevo and its airport. The Council requested the Secretary-General to continue using his good offices to achieve this objective.

The sanctions prohibited all commercial activities with Yugoslavia, all kinds of trade, transport and reloading, all payment operations were suspended and the property of the FR of Yugoslavia abroad was frozen. The diplomatic and consular activities were limited, the participation of the FRY in international sport events and competitions was prohibited, the scientific, technical and cultural co-operation was suspended. The transport of certain strategic commodities via Yugoslavia was prohibited, a strict control of traffic was introduced.

Bush Administration ordered \$214 million in government assets seized by Monday. Russia said Belgrade brought the sanctions on itself. Serbian government denounced attacks on Sarajevo, first time in 3-month war. Fighting around Marshall Tito barracks in Sarajevo.

May 31

Izetbegovic declared sanctions to mark the beginning of the end of the fascist policy of Serbs in Bosnia. Tens of thousands demonstrate in Belgrade against Milosevic regime; estimated at 50,000, the largest anti-government protest since March 1991. Gas prices rise 100% at midnight. Milosevic comments on sanctions that this is a price we have to pay because we are helping Serbs outside Serbia. *Politika* says government will stop repayment of \$8 billion foreign debt due to sanctions.

Elections held in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, i.e. Serbia and Montenegro, for the Federal Assembly, provincial and local government bodies. Opposition parties did not participate in the elections. Out of 7,277,471 registered voters on the whole territory of FR Yugoslavia 56,06% cast their ballot. In Serbia voted 55,79% of the electorate, in Montenegro 56.74%. In Serbia Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia won most votes - 43.44% of those who participated, followed by Vojislav Seselj's Radical Party - 30.44%. In Montenegro the Democratic Party of Socialists received most votes.

June 1

In his message to UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, Branko Kostic, President of the Presidency of Yugoslavia, stated that the UN Security Council had imposed severe sanctions against Yugoslavia based on the false accusations that it had committed aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina. In order to get real picture of the situation Kostic proposed UN to send observers to Yugoslavia.

New truce announced in Sarajevo to take effect at 6pm. Fighting south of city and in Gorazde. Slavonski Brod fired on by Serbs from Bosnian side, killing two. Dubrovnik shelled again, Croats return fire. Yugoslavia jets attack Tuzla.

June 2

At its meeting in Luxembourg the Ministerial Council of the EC adopted a set of measures ensuring that the EC could implement a total trade embargo and suspension of air traffic with FR Yugoslavia. The member countries were to decide on the modalities for implementation of other sanctions (credits, freezing of accounts and financial transactions, reduction of diplomat staff).

The Presidency of FR Yugoslavia made four demands to the Serb leadership in Bosnia-Herzegovina requiring that

1. in accordance with the obligation it had taken and declared in public it should invite representatives of the UNPROFOR to take control of the Sarajevo airport;
2. prevent any bombardment of Sarajevo and other towns from the territories controlled by the Serbs;
3. invite observers of the UNPROFOR to supervise the cease-fire they had proposed themselves, and
4. ensure a free passage for humanitarian shipments on the territories under the Serb control.

Shelling of Sarajevo resumes overnight; fighting on west side of the town.

June 3

About 100 students begin sit-in at University of Belgrade until Milosevic steps down.

June 4

At the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the North Atlantic Council in Oslo NATO agreed that its troops may be used as peacekeepers outside of the NATO area. The Council also adopted a separate Resolution on 'the crisis on the territory of the former Yugoslavia' providing for a possibility of taking a military action in this area only if requested by the CSCE.

Chairman of US Senate Foreign Relations committee, Claiborne Pell, called for a UN naval blockade against Yugoslavia, authorisation of military strikes against Serb forces surrounding Sarajevo, and stated that those bombarding Sarajevo are a bunch of cowards whose bravery will quickly disappear with the arrival of just a few well-directed smart bombs. US presses, but fails to convince, NATO allies to enact sanctions against Yugoslavia and to aid Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Serbia demands UN sanctions be lifted now that UN report declares Croatia also responsible for fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Montenegrin President Bulatovic says that Montenegro may have made a mistake in allying itself with Serbia, change is possible.

June 5

Muslim fighters lift blockade of the 'Marshall Tito' barracks in Sarajevo and allow 800 soldiers and families to evacuate without incident, while leaving much heavy weaponry behind. The last soldiers who were citizens of FR Yugoslavia left the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Tentative pact signed to reopen airport, but Serb shelling of town continues. US imposes comprehensive trade ban against Yugoslavia in compliance with UN sanctions. One killed, one wounded in fighting around Dubrovnik.

June 6

The Secretary-General reported to the Council that UNPROFOR had negotiated, on 5 June, an agreement for the handing over to the Force of the Sarajevo airport.

Renewed overnight artillery duels between Serbs and Sarajevo defenders said to be fiercest of the war, at least two killed. 'Marshall Tito' barracks targeted by Serbs so as to destroy supplies/weapons left behind by the army.

June 8

The Security Council, by its Resolution 758, approved the enlargement of UNPROFOR's mandate and strength and authorised the Secretary-General to deploy military observers and related personnel and equipment to Sarajevo to supervise the reopening the Sarajevo airport for humanitarian purposes and withdrawal of anti-aircraft weapons and the concentration of heavy weapons at agreed locations in the city.

Heavy bombardment of Sarajevo leaves 29 dead. Bosnian Defence Minister spokesman says the decisive battle for city has begun. Muslims reportedly capture some high ground around city. Serbs intensify attacks; worst fighting around suburb of Dobrinja on edge of airport, as Muslim forces attempt to recapture area. Sarajevo radio says Muslim forces capture several villages in west and suffer 16 wounded. Fighting around Tuzla. TANJUG reports that Serb leader Karadzic appealed to his forces for cease-fire to allow Red Cross to deliver aid.

June 9

The Supreme State Council of Croatia headed by President Tudjman, 'assuming the need of the Croatian people to pay tribute to all victims', proposed as 'a gesture of national and ideological reconciliation' to bury in Jasenovac the remains of the killed Ustashe and Domobrans together with the victims of Ustashi terror of Independent State of Croatia, Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and Croats.

Twelve parliamentarians of the Socialist Party break with Milosevic and create new Social Democratic Party of Serbia.

UN General Louis MacKenzie and 30 men leave Belgrade to try to arrange a truce in Sarajevo.

June 10

MacKenzie and UN team arrive in Sarajevo after 12 hour trip. Serbs reported to have withdrawn dozen tanks and artillery units from around airport to facilitate talks, but heavy shelling continues: 31 killed, 129 wounded.

Pensioners in Belgrade begin to receive food handouts from Serbian Red Cross.

June 11

The European Parliament adopted a Resolution on Yugoslavia stating that Yugoslavia as a federation of 6 republics had ceased to exist and the new Serbian-Montenigrin federation could not claim to be its only successor. International recognition of states depended on the fulfilment of the conditions provided for in the Declaration on Criteria for Recognition of New States adopted by the EC Council of Ministers on 16 December 1991. The borders between the newly-created states could be altered only by agreement between the concerned parties. The European Parliament severely condemned 'the ethnic homogenisation' achieved by means of threats and forced migrations. It was stated that the Yugoslav National Army had no longer a legal basis and therefore should be disbanded under UN control. All other armed groups and militias should be brought under control of legitimate authorities.

June 12

Karadzic, speaking from Belgrade, announces a new unilateral cease-fire effort to begin on 15th, and sends telegram to UN asking immediately for 800 UN monitors to oversee it from Serb positions; says Serbs support reopening of Sarajevo airport for humanitarian flights, and that truce will apply to all of Bosnia-Herzegovina (although admits that he cannot guarantee anything outside of Sarajevo). Taxi drivers in Belgrade stop day-old blockade of downtown streets to protest falling living standards, and to protest attack on cabby by bodyguard of ultra-nationalist Serb leader, Vojislav Seselj. In face of the protests, Socialist Party warns of civil war if Milosevic steps down

June 15

Deputies of the Federal Assembly voted by ballot and elected Dobrica Cosic the first President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

June 16

Presidents Tudjman and Izetbegovic signed a joint statement on the establishment of diplomatic relations between Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The two Presidents of the former Yugoslav republics discussed the creation of a joint defence alliance of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina 'for the struggle against the Serbs'.

June 17

Heavy machine-gun battle starts up around Bosnian parliament building, shelling by Serbs begins before dawn and Serbian tanks start barrage from Lukavica barracks. Serbian gunners on Trebivici Hill fire into suburb of Hrasno. Central old town battered. Bosnian Foreign minister Silajdzic attending the Organisation of Islamic Conference in Istanbul called to discuss Bosnian situation says that 6-10,000 have died in fighting and that over 40,000 have died since conflict began nearly a year ago; claims that tens of thousands are near starving. Kosovan PM- in-exile, Bujar Bukoshi, says that fighting may erupt next week in Kosovo as new, but illegal, parliament holds first session.

June 18

The UN Security Council adopted the Resolution No. 760 lifting a ban on the imports of foodstuff and humanitarian products.

UN and Serbs sign accord to open airport and pull back heavy artillery to UN-monitored positions. With the agreement of both parties the Belgrade-Zagreb motorway was opened for the needs of the UNPROFOR.

June 19

UN and Bosnia sign similar accord to open airport and pull back heavy artillery to UN-monitored positions. Serbs launch offensive.

The Ministerial Council of the West European Union adopted the 'Petersburg Declaration' which laid the foundation for the formation of forces which could be engaged in humanitarian tasks, rescue actions, peace-keeping and combat operations.

June 20

The Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina proclaimed the state of war, ordered a general mobilisation and compulsory work for all public enterprises 24 hours a day. It explained that it had made such decision because of the aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina committed by the Yugoslav National Army, Serbia, Montenegro and extremists from the Serbian Democratic Party. The Presidency neither approved nor verified the political and military alliance between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia which Izetbegovic had made with Tudjman.

UNPROFOR withdrawn from airport. General MacKenzie suspends efforts to open airport after both sides fail to observe June 5 cease-fire.

June 21

Croatian armed forces undertook an offensive and occupied part of the territory in Krajina in the zones protected by the UN.

June 25

Chairman of the Conference on Yugoslavia, Lord Carrington, had separate talks with Milosevic and Tudjman in Strasbourg. Instead of Izetbegovic Haris Silajdzic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia-Herzegovina, participated. During those talks were also present the ambassadors Cutilhero, De Bosse and Vainands. President Milosevic said that Serbia and Yugoslavia were by no means involved in the armed conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and that the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina should result from an agreement to be reached at the Conference on Yugoslavia by the three constitutive nations in that republic.

The President of the UN Security Council, Belgian Ambassador Paul Notredam, sent a severe warning to Croatia for an attack of the Croatian army on Knin and Drnish.

Quiet in Sarajevo as Serbs make unilateral promise to put guns under UN supervision.

Heavy fighting in Croatia on the first anniversary of Croatian independence as Croatian forces make a big push towards the Serb stronghold of Knin; at least 150 killed and 300 wounded in several days of fighting.

Student protest in Belgrade against Milosevic regime now in 11th day, said to have spread to Novi Sad, Kragujevac, and Nis.

June 26

UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali says Security Council will have to find other ways of relieving Sarajevo if Serbs do not lift siege within 48 hours. No solution should be excluded (US backs away from unilateral use of force to get aid to Sarajevo). Fighting continues in Dobrinja. Milosevic condemns Serb shelling of Sarajevo and says international observers should come to Belgrade to see Serbia's lack of involvement

Karadzic stated that the leadership of the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina ordered a cessation of all artillery fire on Sarajevo, withdrawal of all anti-aircraft weapons from the zone around the airport and that safe and free passage for humanitarian shipments through all territories under control of the Army of RS would be ensured and guaranteed.

June 27

During the summit of the European Community in Lisbon a Declaration on Yugoslavia was adopted. The urgency of opening the Sarajevo airport was pointed out as well as establishing an humanitarian air bridge. It was assessed that all warring parties bore a part of the responsibility for the present situation but the Serbian leadership and Yugoslav National Army were most to blame. Leaders of the EC countries supported the idea of temporary suspension of the Yugoslav delegation in the CSCE until a final decision was made on the succession or continuity of the former Yugoslavia. Macedonia would be recognised when it changed its name. It was also expected that the Serbian leadership would stop reprisals in Kosovo and establish a serious dialogue with the representatives of Albanians from that province.

After the Lisbon summit French President François Mitterrand, escorted by a member of the French government, Bernard Couthner, suddenly arrived in Split in effort to get to Sarajevo and declares 'we have a moral obligation to help... Serbia is today the aggressor, and we cannot wait'. Mitterrand meets with Izetbegovic, says that he has not come to negotiate with anyone, but to deliver aid, if necessary by force. Departure delayed from airport by firefight between Serbs and Muslims. Later, Serbs supposedly give control of airport to UN troops while two French planes with aid fly to Split.

Serb shelling of Sarajevo and Dobrinja only hours after UN ultimatum. Fighting also in northern and central Bosnia-Herzegovina. Boutros-Ghali issues statement condemning Bosnian forces for retaliatory attacks. Bosnian forces in Dobrinja say they have repelled Serbian ground attack and are close to establishing corridor with Sarajevo.

White House spokesperson says US 'willing to consider all options' if fighting does not stop. Crown Prince Alexander arrives in Yugoslavia to popular acclaim, and says he wants to promote a Spanish-style alternative in a transition to peace and democracy.

June 28

President Bush says that the US will 'do its part' and that 'every option is open', implying force may be used to open airport.

In front of the Federal Assembly building in Belgrade the St. Vitus' Day (Vidovdan) convention commenced. It was organised by the opposition grouping DEPOS (Democratic Movement of Serbia) and it lasted eight days running. Participants in the convention demanded resignation Milosevic, disbandment of the National Assembly and formation of a government of national salvation.

June 29

Following intensive work by UNPROFOR to establish modalities of implementation of the 5 June agreement, the Secretary-General reported to the Security Council that Bosnian Serb forces had been withdrawing from the Sarajevo airport, and both sides - the Serb and the Bosnia Presidential forces - had begun to concentrate their heavy weapons in locations to be supervised by UNPROFOR. On the

same day, the Council, by Resolution 761, authorised deployment of additional elements of UNPROFOR to ensure the security and functioning of the airport.

Serb armed forces left Sarajevo airport and handed it over to UNPROFOR. French plane with 6.5 tons of food and medicine arrives. UN Secretary Council orders battalion of 1,000 troops already in Croatia to redeploy in Sarajevo. All Serb guns reported withdrawn from airport by evening, but scattered fighting continues around it and in Sarajevo city centre. UN spokesman says that control of airport is not assured and that sporadic gunfire continues.

At the meeting of high officials of the CSCE in Helsinki Yugoslav Ambassador Vladimir Pavicevic said that due to the unprincipled pressure Yugoslavia itself had decided not take part in the CSCE summit scheduled for 9 July.

20,000 continue rally in Belgrade against Milosevic. Four killed, 12 wounded in artillery bombardment of Dubrovnik.

June 30

Three UN peacekeepers wounded by fire from Muslim side at airport.

Pentagon spokesman, in policy reversal of Department of Defense, says 2,200 Marine contingent is now in Adriatic on 6 amphibious assault ships, and that combat jets and helicopter gunships may be used as support for other forces over Yugoslavia, but there is no plan to put US forces on the ground. Canadian contingent from Croatia on its way to Sarajevo airport; 125 French commandos join in securing airport.

At its session in Budapest the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe decided that Yugoslavia should be waived the status of a special guest it had gained in 1989 and adopted the Resolution condemning all parts for killing and injuring of civilians in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Security Council, by its Resolution 762, authorised UNPROFOR to undertake monitoring functions in the 'pink zones' - certain areas of Croatia controlled by the JNA and populated by then largely by Serbs, but which were outside the agreed UNPA boundaries. It also recommended the establishment of a Joint Commission chaired by UNPROFOR and consisting of representatives of the Government of Croatia and of the local authorities in the region, with the participation of the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM), to oversee and monitor the restoration of authority by the Croatian Government in the 'pink zones'.

July 2

200 Canadian troops arrive in Sarajevo to begin securing airport. Four French military planes and one Norwegian land with supplies for city. Britain and Italy have supplies in Croatia waiting for airport to be secured. Islamic Development Bank says it will donate \$5 million for emergency supplies and \$15 million for rebuilding Sarajevo infrastructure. Serb businessman, Milan Panic, living in US for past 25 years, agrees to be premier of new Yugoslavia, and says he will withdraw regular army troops from Bosnia.

July 3

Despite continued fighting in the area, United Nations observers and troops were deployed at the airport and at other locations in Sarajevo.

US joins relief effort with two C-130 Hercules transports flying to Sarajevo making total for day of 11 planes.

EC negotiator Lord Carrington holds 5 hours of talks in Sarajevo and leaves saying he is discouraged that neither side is willing to make concessions. Izetbegovic tells Carrington that he 'will not negotiate with war criminals'. Serbs in Grbavica section of Sarajevo begin expelling non-Serbs in round of ethnic cleansing after Carrington leaves.

At its session in Grude the Presidency of Croatian community of Herzeg-Bosnia adopted a set of decisions establishing formally a 'Croatian state' in Bosnia-Herzegovina with its own flag (the Croatian tricolour with chess-board in the middle) and armed forces. On the same day the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina made a decision on establishment of a single republic army, and on that occasion Minister of Defence Jerko Doko said that the Croatian Council of Defence would be dissolved as a formation and merged into the Bosnian-Herzegovinian army.

July 4

The Arbitrary Commission of the EC (the so-called Badenter Commission) published three opinions on the questions put in the letter of 18 May 1992 forwarded by Lord Carrington, Chairman of the Conference on Yugoslavia. In the Opinion No. 8 the Commission considered 'that the process of dissolution of SFRY has come to the end and it should be recognised that SFRY does not exist any longer'. In the Opinion No. 9 the Commission considered 'that states successors of SFRY should come to terms and by making agreement settle all issues related to succession'. In the opinion No. 10 it was said that 'FRY (Serbia and Montenegro) appears as a new state which could not be considered the exclusive successor of SFRY' and that 'its possible recognition on the part of member countries would depend on fulfilment of terms provided by general international law as well by the declaration and directives of 16 December 1991'.

Overnight shelling of Dobrinja by Serbs from surrounding hills and from within the city's Jewish cemetery. Fighting in Northern Bosnia kills three in Bosanski Brod. Bosnian government gives new casualty count as 7,561 dead, including 1,359 in Sarajevo and 27,412 wounded since February 29. Nine more planes land, but UN commander MacKenzie says he may have to turn back relief flights.

July 5

Defense Secretary Cheney says Bush 'prepared to use US naval and air assets' to guarantee delivery of aid, but that US reluctant to use ground forces; statement in contrast to Secretary of State Baker who says 'nothing short of a show of force' would work on the Serbs.

Four killed in Sarajevo. Croats in Mostar area declare state of Herzeg-Bosnia comprising 20% of former Bosnia-Herzegovina

July 6

Bosnian government declares Croatian mini-state of Herzeg-Bosnia 'treasonous' and that it will weaken efforts to resist Serbs. Croatian President Tudjman says that Croatia recognises Bosnia's independence, but that Croats had to organise against Serb aggression and certain 'tendencies' of the Muslim leadership; Tudjman also says war in Croatia is definitely over. Yugoslavia Premier Panic asks CSCE officials not to expel his country and that he will stop fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 100 days.

US broadens sanctions against Yugoslavia to include all companies located in Montenegro and Serbia as being owned or controlled by governments.

15 relief flights arrive, but fewer than half of all communities in Sarajevo have been able to get assistance.

July 7

At its summit in Munich Seven Most Industrialised Countries of the World (Group of 7) adopted the Statement on Yugoslavia appealing to Serbia, and to Croatia also, to respect the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The main responsibility for the Yugoslav crisis lied with the Serbian leadership and Yugoslav Army. The idea on holding a conference on Yugoslavia was supported. It was required that all warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina should resume their negotiations and that they should

not jeopardise humanitarian efforts. In case these efforts gave no results a conviction was expressed that the UN Security Council would consider all other measures, 'not excluding military means too'.

July 8

At the meeting of the Committee of High Officials of the CSCE a decision was made that Yugoslavia should not be removed from the list of member countries, but that it should be applied the rule of 'empty chair' till 14 October. It meant that within a period of hundred days representatives of Yugoslavia would not take part in the summit or any following meeting of the CSCE. The Committee made itself liable to hold a meeting not later than 13 October at which it would make a final decision on the status of Yugoslavia. It depended on how Yugoslavia would accept the co-operation with the CSCE missions.

The Yugoslav Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement saying that this decision was opposite to the principles of the Conference European Co-operation and Security. UNPROFOR took on responsibility over all zones protected by the UN in Croatia.

July 9-10

The CSCE summit took place in Helsinki. The Yugoslav delegation did not take part in the conference. President of FR Yugoslavia Dobrica Cosic forwarded a message stating that Yugoslavia as a founder of the CSCE and UN would keep on being devoted to the principles of these organisations. The Declaration on the Yugoslav Crisis was adopted accusing Serbia and Montenegro for being most responsible for the violence and aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was pointed out that the Declaration was not directed against the peoples in Serbia and Montenegro which also suffered for the policies of their leaders and hope was expressed that they would soon have an opportunity to freely elect their governments. The summit confirmed the decision of the Committee of High Officials of the CSCE on suspending the participation of Yugoslavia in the Helsinki summit and work of the CSCE. In Rome commander of UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina General Louis MacKenzie warned that the use of foreign military force could jeopardise his mission.

July 10

The Foreign Ministers of the North Atlantic Alliance discussed, at Helsinki, the contribution to the monitoring of sanctions mandated by the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 713 and 757. Welcoming the Ministers' decision to establish a naval monitoring force, they agreed on a corresponding NATO force to be drawn from NATO's (STANAVFORMED). They, also, required the NATO force to act in close co-operation and co-ordination with the Western European Union naval force.

July 11

The military blockade of the Yugoslav part of the Adriatic commenced: the Italian frigate and corvette had been the first to take control from the international waters of the access of freighters to the port of Bar and the following days a large number of destroyers, helicopter carriers and other war ships joined them. Since Italy chaired the West European Union from 1 July it was assigned the role of co-ordinator of the joint military operation taken by West European and NATO forces in the Adriatic.

Concerning the Declaration on the Crisis in Yugoslavia adopted at the CSCE summit the Yugoslav Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement saying, among other things, that by one-sided and unjust accusations against FRY an attempt was made to cover up responsibility of some CSCE member countries, and authorities of Bosnia-Herzegovina, for violation of constitutional equality of the three constitutive nations in this republic.

Serbs attack Gorazde, last significant Muslim-held town in Eastern Bosnia, where 50,000 have been under siege for 3 months; 15 children a day reported to be dying here of malnutrition. Renewed artillery attacks on Dubrovnik.

July 12

8-vessel NATO force heads towards Adriatic to apply pressure on Yugoslavia by monitoring UN embargo compliance.

July 13

The United Nations Security Council endorsed a recommendation from Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali to send an additional 500 troops to join the 1 100 supervising the Sarajevo relief operations. Serbs dynamite four power transmission lines leading into Sarajevo cutting off city's electricity and water pumps. Renewed artillery barrages have killed 25 since Saturday. Attacks on Gorazde said to include air strikes. French planes bringing supplies into Sarajevo hit by small-arms fire. France suspends planned deployment of helicopters to Sarajevo. Karadzic says that international intervention would be 'disastrous' for the civilian population.

July 14

Milan Panic elected premier of Yugoslavia by parliament. Speculation by *Borba* that Milosevic will step down. Yugoslavia President, Dobrica Cosic, sends letter to UN Secretary Council denying that Yugoslavia forces are still involved in fighting.

The Federal Assembly elected the first government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. At the proposal of President of FRY Dobrica Cosic Serbian-American businessman Milan Panic (63) was elected Prime Minister. After the election Prime Minister Panic presented his four basic programme principles: ending of the war and achievement of lasting peace, creation of conditions for establishment of a free multinational and multi-party society, establishment of democratic principles of right of free speech and free press, and revival of the economy.

July 15

Panic begins trying to form a government. All three groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina agree to negotiations in London.

The North Atlantic Council and NATO's Defence Planning Committee (DPC) finalised the arrangements for implementing the decisions taken by the Alliance Foreign Ministers at Helsinki on 10 July. The Council agreed that the NATO force based on STANAVFORMED should commence operations at 0800 local time on 16 July. By direction of the DPC, the NATO units were ordered to conduct 'surveillance, identification and reporting of maritime traffic in areas to be defined in international waters in the Adriatic Sea.'

July 16

The first units of STANAVFORMED entered the Adriatic and commenced their monitoring role in international waters. This Operation was given the name 'MARITIME MONITOR' and it complemented the parallel linked operations being conducted by WEU forces, whose operation was named 'sHARP VIGILANCE'.

Prior to and subsequent to the start of the mission, detailed co-ordination arrangements were worked out between NATO and WEU military officials both for patrol aircraft and for surface ships. These included co-ordination of areas of responsibility, methods of operation, communications, support and re-supply. During further co-ordination meetings, patrol areas were again agreed as well as the periodic

shifting of these patrol areas between the two—starting on 29 July—so as to grant equal sharing of duties and responsibilities and to enhance the interoperability of the two operations.

The NATO naval force was supported by maritime patrol aircraft, both those under NATO command and those operating on behalf of the WEU.

Karadzic, in London for peace talks, gives order for Serbs around Gorazde to stop firing; order has little effect as artillery duels continue.

July 17

Leaders of the three warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina Karadzic, Silajdzic and Boban signed in London the agreement on cease-fire throughout the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina that should come into effect on 19 July at 18.00. The two-week cease-fire calls for all refugees to be able to return to their homes and for freedom of movement across blockaded roads.

Two French peacekeeping troops killed by land mine in Zadar (1st UN troops killed in conflict).

July 19

Panic travels to Sarajevo for talks with Izetbegovic. Despite truce, heavy shelling, machine-gun, and mortar fire takes place in Sarajevo. Serbs trying to extend control over territory before cease-fire takes hold.

July 20

At the headquarters of the UN in New York Prime Minister Milan Panic had talks with UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali and his special envoy Cyrus Vance. These talks were the first in the Prime Minister's ten day diplomatic tour of the USA, Great Britain, Spain, Switzerland and Hungary.

July 21

Newsday reports that up to 20,000 Muslims and Croats have been deported from NW Bosnia to Zenica in Central Bosnia in cattle cars without food or water; deportations part of Serb efforts to cut corridor from Serbia to Krajina region of Croatia. Conditions described as being similar to deportations of Jews in World War II.

According to the Commander of United Nations operations in Sarajevo, General Lewis MacKenzie, 40 000 United Nations troops were needed in Sarajevo alone to keep the peace.

In Zagreb Tudjman and Izetbegovic signed the agreement on friendship. It was accepted that the basis of the future state system of Bosnia-Herzegovina should be 'the principle of full equality of the three constitutive nations' while 'the constitutional and political system would be based on constitutive units'; it was said that 'the armed forces of the Croatian Council of Defence is a part of single armed forces of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina' and that it would have its representatives in the joint command of the armed forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

July 22

Boutros-Ghali rejects Security Council plan to place heavy weapons under UN control saying UN not prepared to supervise the situation. Heavy fighting continues around Gorazde; mayor says town has only enough food to last 48 hours.

July 23

Serb assault on Gorazde kills 20, wounds 50 in 24-hour period.

July 24

US aircraft carrier Saratoga and battle group now off Adriatic coast.

July 25

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain officially stated that this country would organise an international conference on Yugoslavia in the second half of August.

Artillery attacks kill 12 in Sarajevo including three waiting in line for humanitarian aid (23 killed in last 24 hours). UN food truck hits land mine.

July 26

Bosnians to attend peace talks in London but Izetbegovic says they will not negotiate since previous agreements were not honoured.

July 27

US warplanes fly sorties off Adriatic coast but have orders to stay out of Yugoslavia airspace. New round of EC-sponsored peace talks begin in London.

July 29

The International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid to the Victims of Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia, held in Geneva, endorsed a seven-point humanitarian response plan proposed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata. The elements of the plan were: respect for human rights and humanitarian law, preventive protection, humanitarian access to those in need, measures to meet special humanitarian needs, temporary protection measures, material assistance, and return and rehabilitation.

Boutros-Ghali calls for 850 police and civilians to prevent further ethnic cleansing in Serb-dominated areas of Croatia; says that UN resources stretched too thin. Renewed fighting in Sarajevo, some of it near airport.

July 30

According to estimates from the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and local Red Cross committees, some 2.5 million people from the former Yugoslavia were displaced and some 10 000 people from Bosnia were joining them every day. The total included about 600 000 people who had been displaced during the war between Serbia and Croatia in 1991. The majority of the refugees, 1 885 000 remained in the former Yugoslav republics: 681,000 in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 672 000 in Croatia (including the Serb-occupied zones), 383 000 in Serbia, 70 000 in Slovenia, 49000 in Montenegro and 31 000 in Macedonia. Among neighbouring countries, Germany had taken in some 200 000 refugees, Hungary and Austria some 50 000 each and Sweden 44 000; smaller numbers were accepted in other European countries.

Notwithstanding the need to address this problem, there was a considerable lack of consensus among the countries most affected. A German proposal to adopt a quota system for distributing refugees to EC member states found no support among the EC members and France and the United Kingdom proposed that refugees should be accommodated and given assistance as near as possible to their place of origin.

Others proposed the establishment of so-called safe havens on the territory of former Yugoslavia, in particular in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but there was no consensus to provide the ground troops needed to protect these safe havens against armed attack or intimidation.

July 31

Bosnian defenders launch offensive against Serbs in hills around Sarajevo; at least 40 Bosnians killed as they fight with light weapons against heavy weapons of Serbs. Izetbegovic, in BBC interview, rejects EC suggestion that Bosnia negotiate a settlement, and compares Karadzic to Hitler for ethnic cleansing policy.

August 1

Bosnian offensive called off after 36 hours; 100-150 Bosnian troops killed in battle.

August 2

Presidential and parliamentary elections in Croatia. Franjo Tudjman was re-elected President of the Republic winning 56,2 % of the votes. At the elections for the Assembly the Croatian Democratic Union won with 42,6 per cent of votes; the Croatian Social-Liberal Party 17,7%, the Croatian People's Party 6,9%, the Croatian Party of Right 6,4% and the Party of Democratic Changes (former communists) 5,8%.

Bus with 40 orphans attempting to leave Sarajevo is fired upon and 2 children are killed. *Newsday* reports that Serbs are maintaining concentration camps where hundreds are being executed or starved to death. Red Cross says it will try to gain access to camps.

August 3

President Izetbegovic addressed a letter to the United Nations Security Council demanding that Bosnia-Herzegovina be allowed to import arms in order to 'achieve the right of individual and collective self-defence' guaranteed by Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. At the same time he proclaimed general mobilisation.

August 3

Bush Administration says it can confirm *Newsday* accounts of concentration camps. 18 killed in Sarajevo in last 24 hours. UN peacekeeping soldier dies in Bonn from mortar wound received in Bosnia the previous week.

August 4

UN suspends aid to Sarajevo for three days due to heavy fighting. Funeral for two children killed by snipers during evacuation on Saturday disrupted by Serbian shelling of cemetery. US Assistant Secretary of State, Thomas Niles, tells House subcommittee that it cannot confirm reports of detention centres and executions.

At a meeting in New York, the Islamic Conference Organisation (ICO) advocated the use of force against the Serbian forces in compliance with Article 42 of the United Nations Charter, and the lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia-Herzegovina.

August 5

Russia recognised the Republic of Macedonia. Greece closed its border with Macedonia and imposed an oil embargo. The Greek action, based on opposition to the creation of an independent state using the name Macedonia, brought the republic to the verge of economic collapse.

Red Cross officials able to visit 9 camps and find conditions 'very difficult', but cannot confirm atrocities. Bi-partisan group of US senators (Mitchell, Dole) sponsor non-binding Resolution calling on Administration to ask UN to authorise use of force if necessary to deliver humanitarian aid. Resolution

blocked after Senator John Warner says it would give the UN a blank check. Aircraft carrier Saratoga leaves Adriatic for Mediterranean.

August 6

President of the USA George Bush announced establishment of diplomatic relations with Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and required that the CSCE should send its observer missions to Vojvodina, Sandzak and Macedonia.

The Senate Committee for Foreign Affairs adopted the Resolution requiring that the President of the USA should ask for an extraordinary session of the UN Security Council with the aim of making decision authorising the UN to take 'all necessary measures including the use of armed force' that would ensure shipment of humanitarian assistance and stop the attacks on the population in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

British TV shows video of camp inmates near starvation. Vatican calls for military intervention. UN headquarters in Sarajevo shelled, wounding four French soldiers.

August 7

The Security Council, by its Resolution 769, authorised the enlargement of UNPROFOR's strength and mandate to enable the Force to control the entry of civilians into the UNPAs and to perform immigration and customs functions at the UNPA borders at international frontiers. Bush says US 'will not rest until the international community has gained access to any and all detention camps', but says he is not prepared to commit US troops. Serbs and Croats agree to exchange 1,500 prisoners on August 14.

August 8

Bosnian Serb leader, Aleska Buha, threatens 'kamikaze missions' against nuclear plants in Western Europe if there is outside military intervention in Bosnia. Karadzic says that he has proposed turning detention centres over to Red Cross, and that he has ordered release of all sick prisoners and 60 years of age or older. Fighting around Sarajevo, and in Visoko (NW Bosnia-Herzegovina).

Federal Prime Minister of Yugoslavia Milan Panic met in Budapest with Prime Minister of Croatia Franjo Greguric. That meeting was initiated and organised by the International Committee of Red Cross. The two prime ministers signed the agreement on the exchange of prisoners of war.

August 9

Serbs say they will give access to camps to Red Cross officials. Critics fear that Serbs will show only certain camps. Izetbegovic travels to Pakistan to rally Muslim support for Bosnia, and applauds Iranian call for Islamic army to fight Serbs. Fighting on Croatian-Bosnian border (Bosanska Gradiska) kills 20 Serbs and dozens of Croats. Serb air raid on Bosanski Brod kills 14.

August 9-16

An Inter-Agency Assessment Mission, co-ordinated by UNHCR with the assistance of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, visited the Republics of the former Yugoslavia to reassess the emergency humanitarian requirements. According to the findings of the Mission, over 2.7 million people were directly affected by the crisis and were in need of emergency humanitarian assistance - particularly in the areas of food, shelter and health care. On the basis of those findings, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in close collaboration with UNHCR, other concerned United Nations agencies and NGOs, formulated a Consolidated Inter-Agency Programme of Action and Appeal for the period September 1992 to March 1993. The overall requirements identified by the

Assessment Mission amounted to over \$1 billion. Subsequently, it was established that \$434 million would be required for addressing life-threatening priority needs to be channelled through the United Nations system. The areas targeted for immediate relief were food, health services and shelter.

August 10

At the extraordinary meeting of the European Parliament in Brussels dedicated to the former Yugoslavia, the Declaration was adopted requiring opening of all prisoner-of-war camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina for representatives of the Red Cross, free passage for shipments of humanitarian assistance and giving shelter to refugees. In order to achieve those goals the use of force was also required. Members of the European Parliament concluded that decision on a military intervention was not only their right but their duty too.

Focus shifts to Bihac where 300,000 are nearly encircled by Serbs. Serbs have been shelling the town of 70,000 since mid-June to try and force Muslims out.

August 11

In spite of the warnings of Pentagon with 72 votes for and 22 against the American Senate supported the initiative of President George Bush that by taking 'all necessary means' the international community should commit itself through the UN in resolving of the Yugoslav crisis and war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This also implied military engagement with the aim of ensuring shipments of humanitarian assistance to the endangered population.

Ethnic cleansing continues in NW Bosnia as 28,000 are being forced from their homes near Bihac. Serbs around Sarajevo say they will allow women and children under 18 to leave the city.

August 12

At the extraordinary session of the Committee for Protection of Human Rights in Geneva the representative of the USA proposed that the UN should consider the possibility of setting up an international tribunal for prosecution of war crimes committed in Yugoslavia and Iraq.

The Assembly of the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina made a decision in Banja Luka on the change of name of this republic. The new name was the Republika Srpska and it entailed no geographic or other determinants. The Assembly also adopted an annex to the Declaration on the State and Political System of the New State, saying that it was the state of the Serbian people where also lived citizens of other nationalities enjoying the equal rights.

August 13

The Security Council, disturbed by the situation prevailing in Sarajevo, which severely complicated UNPROFOR's efforts to ensure the security and functioning of Sarajevo airport and the delivery of humanitarian assistance, adopted Resolution 770. The Council, acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, called on States to 'take nationally or through regional agencies or arrangements all measures necessary' to facilitate, in co-ordination with the United Nations, the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Sarajevo and wherever needed in other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In further discussions, however, it was decided that that task should be entrusted to UNPROFOR.

The Security Council invited all states to take all necessary measures with the aim of helping the UN and other humanitarian organisations in shipment of humanitarian assistance to Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Security Council required that representatives of the International Committee of Red Cross and other humanitarian organisations should be allowed a free access to all prisoner-of-war camps, jails and detention centres.

The same day the Security Council adopted Resolution 771 condemning any violation of international humanitarian law including 'ethnic cleansing'. States and humanitarian organisations were invited to

provide the Security Council with all available information on violations of humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

UN sends aid convoy to Banja Luka instead of evacuating 28,000 Muslims who are being forced out of their homes by Serb militias. International Committee of the Red Cross blames all three groups for 'systematic brutality' against civilians. Yugoslavia recognises Slovenia. ABC TV producer David Kaplan killed by sniper fire while in car leaving Sarajevo airport (1st American to be killed in this war).

At its session in Prague the Committee of High Officials of the CSCE adopted the report of the mission on the situation in Kosovo, Sandzak and Vojvodina. It was proposed that a permanent mission should be sent to Kosovo while missions for Sandzak and Vojvodina should be casual.

The Executive Committee of the Reform Democratic Party of Vojvodina adopted the Declaration on Vojvodina as an autonomous province within the Republic of Serbia and FR Yugoslavia, joining them by free will of its citizens on a voluntary basis. As provided for under this document the autonomy implied decentralisation of power, division of competencies and independent management of affairs directly involving the province

August 14

On the initiative of Chairman of the Peace Conference on Yugoslavia Lord Carrington, the 13th plenary session of the Conference took place in Brussels, but it lasted only one hour. The session had been preceded by separate talks between Carrington and the leaders of the four former Yugoslav republics: Kucan, Tudjman, Izetbegovic and Gligorov. Presidents Milosevic and Bulatovic had not arrived explaining it by the fact that FR Yugoslavia existed as a federal state. Although he had not been invited Prime Minister of FR Yugoslavia Milan Panic arrived to Brussels and had talks with Carrington and special envoy of the UN Secretary-General Vance. Panic did not take part in the plenary session since the four republic leaders opposed to it. The next day Karadzic and Boban met and reached agreement on cease-fire at all battle lines between the Serbs and Croats. They also discussed all issues in dispute concerning the territorial settlement as well the proposal of new confederate agreement on the arrangement of Bosnian-Herzegovinian states of three constitutive nations.

In accordance with the agreement of 28 and 29 July signed by the representatives of FR Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia the Federal Government of Yugoslavia made a decision on repatriation of prisoners from Croatia who had taken part in the armed conflicts. The decision was implemented the same day near Jelenovo (former Sarvash) in the presence of representatives of the UNPROFOR. Unnamed US official says Bush ministers knew of atrocities in Bosnia as early as May and directed CIA and DIA to find out more in June. *Newsday* reports systematic cover up by ministers. NATO refuses to commit large numbers of troops to support UN relief convoys. Aircraft carrier Saratoga again heads for Adriatic.

France offered to contribute a 1 100 strong 'force of protection and escort', followed by Spain, Italy and Belgium with unspecified numbers.

August 15

UN aid convoy reaches Gorazde. Shelling of Sarajevo continues. New convoy of women and children scheduled to leave Sarajevo, this time for Serbia. Izetbegovic refuses (again) to meet with Bosnian Serb leaders. Pope sends envoy (French Cardinal Roger Etchegaray) to Sarajevo.

August 16

After visiting several prisoner-of-war camps near Banja Luka and Sarajevo French Minister for Social and Humanitarian Affairs Bernard Koushner said that 'in Bosnia there are no camps of death of the Nazi type'.

The Assembly of the (Serbian) Muslim National Council took place in Novi Pazar. The Assembly adopted the Declaration to be a platform for negotiations on the status of Muslims and territories of Sandzak. The following two alternatives were elaborated for settlement of the Sandzak issue:

1. in case Serbia and Montenegro applied for international recognition Sandzak would request to enjoy a special status while the principle of inviolability of borders should be respected;
2. if these two republics applied for recognition as a single state in that case Sandzak would request to become a single sovereign territory.

Fighting in Rogatica (between Gorazde and Sarajevo) kills 10.

August 17

The Permanent Committee of High Representatives of the EC considered in Brussels measures that should be taken for tightening control of the embargo on commodity imports to Yugoslavia since, as reported by the EC commission, it had constantly been violated. It also forwarded a request to the UN to exercise such control on the Danube and Adriatic.

UN convoy returns to Sarajevo from Gorazde. UN official with convoy estimates population of town at 40,000 instead of 80,000-100,000 as previously thought; says population near starvation and operations conducted in hospitals without anaesthetics. Serbs shell refugee hotel in Sarajevo killing 5; say it is retaliation for Bosnians shelling a nursery and clinic in nearby Pale; other shelling in Sarajevo kills six.

August 18

Nearly 1,000 women and children (TANJUG says 65% are Serbs) allowed to leave Sarajevo for Belgrade. 24 killed in Bosnia, 12 of these in Sarajevo. British transport plane reports that unidentified radar locked onto it while leaving Sarajevo airport, but plane arrives safely in Zagreb. UN reports that 250,000 Bosnian Muslims are facing a campaign of terror and hunger that will only get worse as winter comes on.

The United States established diplomatic relations with Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The United States and the United Kingdom reiterated their opposition to the use of ground troops, but the United Kingdom offered 1 800 troops to ensure the protection of humanitarian convoys in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

August 19

Commander of UN forces General Satish Nambiar, says he does not have enough troops to monitor latest accord; also says that airport will reopen. Germany's Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel, demands that Serb leaders be tried for genocide charges under a 1948 UN convention. Bosnian Foreign Minister Silajdzic accuses the international community of ignoring atrocities against his people that it knew about.

August 20

Mortar attacks hit main Sarajevo hospital and parliament building, setting the latter on fire. Bosnian Minister of Health says that 34 were killed, 207 wounded across the republic in 24-hour period. Ukrainian members of UN peacekeeping force killed by sniper fire. Sarajevo airport reopened when same British Hercules transport that was fired upon earlier in week comes back in. 41 killed, 202

wounded throughout Bosnia in 24-hour period (11 and 55 in Sarajevo). Yugoslavia relief convoys sent into Bosnia to bolster Belgrade governments image.

The Conference on Yugoslavia was scheduled for 25 and 26 August in London. Invitations were sent to the representatives of 12 EC member countries, five permanent members of the UN Security Council, representatives of Japan and Canada (in order to assemble 'the Group of 7' too), Czechoslovakia, being the chair of the CSCE, Sweden, as its successor, Switzerland as a host of many humanitarian organisations, Senegal as a representative of the Conference of Islamic Countries, Turkey and Indonesia as future co-ordinators of the Non-Aligned Movement, representatives of the neighbours of the former Yugoslavia as well as representatives of all six former Yugoslav republics. The status of the representatives of FRY, President of the Federal Republic Dobrica Cosic and Prime Minister of the Federal Government Milan Panic remained unclear since Lord Carrington invited them personally and not as official representatives of Yugoslavia. With the aim of making consultations for the London Conference Cosic invited representatives of all parliamentary parties from Serbia and Montenegro to have talks with them. It was concluded that a single Yugoslav delegation should attend the Conference and be headed by Cosic.

August 21

On the occasion of the forthcoming London International Conference on Yugoslavia the debate on the international position of FR Yugoslavia took place in the Federal Assembly at the joint session of both Houses in Belgrade. Prime Minister Panic submitted a report and pointed out that the Government had fulfilled 11 conditions, which were in accordance with the demands made in the Resolutions 752 and 757 of the UN Security Council. After the debate six conclusions were adopted as a platform for approach of the Yugoslav delegation at the London conference. The basis of this approach was the Constitutional Declaration of FR Yugoslavia. Former Polish Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, arrives in Zagreb to head UN commission investigating concentration camps.

August 22

The British newspaper *Independent* published an article of its correspondent from New York on confidential reports of the UNPROFOR from Sarajevo saying that the several most horrible massacres, including the death of 16 civilians standing in a queue for bread in Vase Miskina Street [27 May], had been committed by the Muslims in order to win the public opinion over for a military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

30 killed in street fighting and shelling in Sarajevo by midday. Airport closed for half-hour due to mortar fire. Two British and two French soldiers wounded by shrapnel.

August 24

After being barred from Serbian detention camps, UN envoy Tadeusz Mazowiecki accuses Serbs of cover-up. Sarajevo airport reopened after being closed all weekend. Mortar attacks on Sarajevo leave at least 6 dead, 18 wounded.

August 25

NATO fails to come up with plan for providing military support for relief shipments. Presidential palace and military headquarters in Sarajevo hit by shells. 93 reported killed in Monday's fighting (republic-wide).

A United Nations General Assembly Resolution was adopted citing Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter which authorises the use of force where economic embargo has failed.

Lord Carrington, Chairman of the EC Peace Conference on Yugoslavia said that he was going to withdraw from the post.

August 26

US State Department official in charge of Yugoslavia affairs, George D. Kenney, resigns to protest 'ineffective' and 'counterproductive' policy. Serbs continue heavy shelling of Sarajevo.

August 26-27

The International Conference on Yugoslavia, organised by the UK presidency of the EC, took place in London with representatives of more than thirty countries and organisations, Presidents of Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia and the delegation from FR Yugoslavia: President Cosic, Prime Minister Panic, President of Serbia Milosevic and President of Montenegro Bulatovic. A Permanent Committee was set up for which as Co-Chairmen were appointed Cyrus Vance, representing the UN, and Lord David Owen, representing the EC. There were also set up six working groups for settlement of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. The seat of the bodies would be Geneva. Special Decisions on Bosnia-Herzegovina were adopted by a separate document requiring cessation of fire and any hostilities as soon as possible, establishment of international control over the heavy weapons and bringing under control of all paramilitary units of all warring parties and ban for all flights of military aircraft in the airspace of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Proposal on the Statement of Serbia accusing it for aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina was not adopted as an official document of the Conference since the delegation of FR Yugoslavia opposed to it.

In its final declaration, the conference once again outlined the terms for a political settlement of the crisis in former Yugoslavia:

- recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina by all the former Yugoslav republics;
- respect for the integrity of present frontiers unless changed by mutual agreement;
- guarantees for national communities and minorities;
- the right of return for those who had been expelled;

It also stated that 'an international peace-keeping force under United Nations auspices may be created by the United Nations Security Council to maintain the cease-fire, control military movements and undertake other confidence-building measures'.

August 27

Serbs agree in London to lift siege of Sarajevo and other cities, but Karadzic tells journalists that his forces were not besieging Sarajevo so the agreements do not apply to him. Milosevic quarrels with Panic in front of entire conference.

August 28

Serbs conduct intensive overnight shelling of Sarajevo in violation of accords; 19 killed, 145 wounded in Sarajevo. Karadzic says shelling is a result of Muslim provocation.

WEU ministers agreed to tighten the embargo enforcement on the Danube and in the Adriatic. WEU also announced that it would place almost 5 000 troops, together with transport and logistical equipment, at the immediate disposal of the United Nations.

August 29

Serbs say they are lifting siege of Gorazde. Karadzic gives order to stand down and says 1,000 troops are withdrawing. In SE Bosnia Serbs issue order banning the return of Croats and Muslims to their area.

August 31

Nationalists attempt vote of no-confidence against Panic's government. Mazowiecki reported to UN calls for international commission to investigate war crimes. 2nd attack in month on a funeral in Sarajevo cemetery kills one. 23 killed, 259 wounded in 24-hour period. Muslims announce they have recaptured 80% of Gorazde as Serbs withdraw.

August 31 - September 4

In the Assembly of FR Yugoslavia a group of deputies from the Serbian Radical Party and Socialist Party of Serbia initiated a debate on casting of vote of non-confidence to Federal Prime Minister Milan Panic and his government. It was said that Panic stretched his authority what was not in accordance with the Constitution and that he had acted at the London conference in a way not in conformity with the position taken by the Federal Parliament. President of FR Yugoslavia sent a letter to the Federal Parliament warning that 'casting a vote of non-confidence to the Federal government and Prime Minister Milan Panic would seriously jeopardise the results which were achieved in London and bring back distrust of peaceful and democratic policy of FRY'. After several days of debate conclusions were adopted appraising the activities of the delegation of FR Yugoslavia at the London conference as successful and casting a vote of confidence to the Federal government.

In his interview to Budapest *Nepszabadszag* President of the Democratic Union of Hungarians from Vojvodina, Andrash Agoshton, said that unlike the Albanians from Kosovo the Hungarians from Vojvodina did not wish to secede from Serbia. 'Within the present state borders we wish to achieve the rights which we have been entitled to in accordance with the conclusions adopted at the London conference'.

September 1

US senators urge Bush Administration to break diplomatic ties with Serbia. Karadzic and deputy commander of the UNPROFOR headquarters Colonel Daveau reached agreement in Pale on establishment of control over the Serbian heavy weapons at eleven positions in and around Sarajevo. The agreement applied to concentration and control of 82 mm mortar batteries.

September 2

Muslim forces attacking Serbian towns and forces as they pull back from Gorazde.

September 3

In Geneva, the new permanent conference on Yugoslavia co-chaired by Lord Owen for the EC and Cyrus Vance for the United Nations, was opened. Italian relief plane crashes outside of Sarajevo killing four on board, and causing UN officials to suspend other flights.

September 4

The Secretary-General of the UN said that one 'particularly unconscionable' aspect of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia was the deliberate attempt to prevent much needed relief assistance from reaching the affected population.

The Ministry of Information of the Republika Srpska stated that 1,300 mujahedins from Arab countries had joined the Muslim forces as well as 1,500 Muslims which had been recruited in Germany.

Italian officials say relief plane was shot down by missile.

US Secretary of Defense Cheney says 'we're not eager to put US military forces on the ground in Yugoslavia to end that conflict'.

September 6

The tenth summit of non-aligned countries in Jakarta adopted a document on political and economic problems of the world that also included a section on Bosnia condemning the Serbs for 'disgusting policy of ethnic cleansing'. The Yugoslav delegation headed by Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladislav Jovanovich strongly opposed this and had to make a tremendous effort to maintain its membership since the Muslim countries demanded that it should be expelled from the Movement. In a communiqué, the Geneva conference announced that by 12 September, the warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina were to place under United Nations supervision their heavy weaponry (artillery over 100 mm calibre, 82 mm mortars, tanks and rocket launchers) deployed around Sarajevo, Gorazde, Bihac and Jajce. (This was only partly observed.)

Croats break with Muslim forces when Croatian headquarters in Mostar demands that Bosnian government withdraw from six suburbs around Sarajevo.

September 7

By setting up groups for confidence and security building and division of heritage (succession) the work of the permanent Conference on Yugoslavia started in Geneva.

Libyan leader Mohamer Gadaffi proposed that Bosnia-Herzegovina should get united with Serbia and Montenegro for the sake of protecting the historical rights of the Muslims as well as preserving Yugoslavia.

The constitutive session of the Assembly of Croatia took place at which Stjepan Mesic was elected Speaker.

More shelling in Sarajevo. 26 killed, 182 wounded in 24-hour period (13 and 77 in Sarajevo).

September 8

Two French officers of UN peacekeeping force killed by machine-gun fire, three others wounded. Water supply to Sarajevo still cut off.

September 9

UN commander in Sarajevo accuses Bosnian forces of attacking French troops and killing two. Health Minister says 29 killed; 181 wounded in previous 24 hours.

Acting US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger says US not ready to use force, blames pressures for involvement on newspaper columnists and Washington insiders. US claims Iran flying supplies (4,000 machine guns, 1 million rounds of ammunition) into Bosnia.

September 9

By applying 'the written procedure' the Council of Ministers of the EC adopted the decision on tightening the control of trade embargo imposed against FR Yugoslavia.

September 10

Following consultations with a number of Governments, the Secretary-General submitted a further report to the Security Council recommending the expansion of UNPROFOR's mandate and strength in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He proposed that UNPROFOR's task, under its enlarged mandate, would be to support efforts by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to deliver humanitarian relief throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in particular to provide protection, at UNHCR's request, where and when UNHCR considered such protection necessary. In addition, UNPROFOR could be used to protect convoys of released civilian detainees if the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) so requested and if the Force Commander agreed that the request was practicable. UNPROFOR would be deployed in four or five new zones. In each zone there would be an infantry battalion group, whose headquarters would also include civilian staff to undertake political and information functions and liaison with UNHCR. UNPROFOR troops would follow normal peace-keeping rules of engagement, which authorise them to use force in self-defence, including situations in which armed persons attempt by force to prevent them from carrying out their mandate. UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali calls for up to 7,500 UN troops in Bosnia.

NATO says it will send AWACS planes to monitor air activity.

Fighting near airport results in some successes for Bosnian troops in suburb of Nedzarici. Overnight shelling of Dobrinja.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of FR Yugoslavia Vladislav Jovanovich resigned. In a letter forwarded to Federal Prime Minister Milan Panic he said that he could no longer be a member of the government which followed the policy opposite to the interests of Serbia and the Serb people. The next day Prime Minister Panic appointed Ilija Djukic, who until recently had been the Yugoslav ambassador to China. The Croatian authorities said that they had kept arms and ammunition at the Zagreb airport Pleso that had been found in an Iran aeroplane which transported humanitarian assistance to Bosnia.

September 11

During the meeting of Co-Chairmen of the Conference on the Former Yugoslavia Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen with President of FRY Dobrica Cosic and Prime Minister Milan Panic in Belgrade the Joint Statement was signed on resolving issues at dispute in the former Yugoslavia by peaceful means. A deadline was fixed for the collection of heavy weapons in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The opening of the Belgrade-Zagreb motorway was planned to take place soon. An agreement was reached on military experts and foreign observers who should be posted on the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to prevent shipment of military assistance to the warring parties. A general agreement was reached on Prevlaka which should be demilitarised and placed under the UN control until a final solution was found. Vance and Owen also met with Milosevic and discussed issues concerning the follow-up of the London conference.

Bosnian Health Minister says death toll tops 10,000. US State Department spokesperson says US 'condemns in the strongest terms' Bosnian Serb practice of 'shadowing' UN relief flights (being protected against radar detection). Both Panic and Karadzic say they will try to end the practice.

September 12

The Serb artillery was concentrated at 11 positions around Sarajevo and placed under control of the UNPROFOR.

At the consultative meeting in Hatfield (Great Britain) ministers of foreign affairs of the EC member countries proposed that Yugoslavia should be expelled from the UN and supported the proposal of the UN on the ban of military flights in the airspace of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They also decided to require establishment of an international tribunal for war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia. They gave up the idea of introducing new sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro since Lord Owen informed them that 'the Bosnian Serbs partly fulfilled their promise to place their heavy weapons under control of the UN by 12 September'.

September 14

In Resolution 776, which made no reference to Chapter VII of the Charter, the Security Council approved the Secretary-General's report and authorised the enlargement of UNPROFOR's mandate and strength in Bosnia and Herzegovina by up to 6 000 troops, in addition to the 1500 in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the 15 000 in Croatia. A separate Bosnia and Herzegovina Command was established within UNPROFOR to implement Resolution 776, in addition to Sector Sarajevo.

The Resolution approved to protect humanitarian aid in Bosnia-Herzegovina, including protection of convoys with prisoners of war which had been set free. The member countries were requested to offer financial and other kinds of assistance at the national. More troops are to come from Canada, France, Britain and other west European countries (countries will pay for costs themselves instead of UN).

September 14

'No-fly zone' not agreed upon as Britain, France, and US can't agree on how to enforce it. Serbs use guns monitored by UN to shell Sarajevo.

September 15

More fighting in Sarajevo with more use of UN-monitored Serb artillery. Muslim-held town of Sokolac (near Bihac) said to have been 'practically destroyed' in Serb air raid. Izetbegovic agrees to attend peace talks.

September 16

The American State Department set forth its position that the USA would use all its power and influence to get Yugoslavia expelled from the UN. Regarding such and similar threats Yugoslav Prime Minister Milan Panic said on his return from China and after a meeting at the Moscow airport with Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Kozyrev, that he would propose to the Government of FRY that Yugoslavia should apply for membership in the UN.

Italian investigators conclude plane shot down on September 3 was hit by heat-seeking missile.

September 17

The Government of the Republic of Serbia issued a notification pointing out that the statement of the Federal Prime Minister Milan Panic on application for membership in the UN 'is legally neither a decision nor binding for FRY'. It was further said that with such application 'we would participate in destruction of our own state' and that 'renunciation from international continuity would bring FRY into a state of institutional isolation'.

September 18

Heavy fighting continues in Sarajevo with at least 30 Bosnian troops killed repulsing Serbian attacks on suburb of Stup. Bosnian government says 34 killed, 290 wounded (25 and 185 in Sarajevo) in 24 hour

period. Bosnian government says it has reports of 200 bodies in Drina River floating towards Gorazde (many civilians with throats cut). Karadzic, in Geneva, says Serbs will stop fighting with Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but offers no deal for Muslims.

September 19

The UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 777 saying that the state previously known as SFR Yugoslavia has ceased to exist. The request of FRY (Serbia and Montenegro) to automatically continue the membership of the SFRY in the UN has not been generally accepted and the General Assembly is recommended to make a decision that FRY (Serbia and Montenegro) should apply for membership in the UN and not participate in the work of the General Assembly. Muslim delegations had threatened to walk out of General Assembly opening. Measure was toned down due to insistence of Russia and China, Yugoslavia will be allowed to reapply by December at end of current General Assembly session. Three factions agree to permit resumption of aid flights into Sarajevo.

September 21

The delegation of the Bosnian Muslims submitted in Geneva a proposal on decentralisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to that proposal Bosnia-Herzegovina would be 'a democratic, secular and decentralised state with equal rights for all nations' and 'a single state with decentralised power of its constitutive regions which would not have the character of states'. Geneva talks end with no progress. Shelling of Sarajevo continues. TANJUG claims that Serbs halt Bosnian government attack on Mt. Zuc (N of Sarajevo), and repulse Croat-Muslim attack on Dobož (N Bosnia-Herzegovina). Government commander in Sarajevo says his troops beat back tank assault by Serbs.

September 22

Yugoslavia submitted a request to the Security Council to lift the embargo on fuel imports that should be used for heating of hospitals, kindergartens and schools. The USA submitted a claim to the UN Secretary General for establishment of a commission for war crimes committed in Yugoslavia. As an annex to the claim was submitted a detailed report in accordance with the paragraph 5 of Resolution 771 requiring that states should notify violations of humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia. In this report the leaderships of Serbia and the Yugoslav Army as well as the Serb armed forces in Krajina and Bosnia-Herzegovina were accused of a number of most serious crimes which had been committed during the 15 month war in the former Yugoslavia. Some, but not so severe accusations were also brought against the Croatian and Muslim parts.

September 23

Yugoslavia expelled from UN General Assembly by vote of 127-6 (26 abstentions) despite last minute pleas to Assembly by Panic. He pleaded for withdrawal of all foreign troops from Bosnia-Herzegovina accusing the world organisation for applying 'double standards' in resolving the Yugoslav crisis. He supported this with an example that the UN had not reacted although forty thousand Croat soldiers fought in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Karadzic claims UN expulsion will have no effect since 'Yugoslavia has nothing to do with that war'. After the debate on the effects of the Resolution both Houses of the Federal Assembly decided to send a letter to the UN General Assembly requesting that the International Court of Justice should give its opinion on the continuity of FRY.

In the headquarters of the United Nations in New York Presidents Tudjman and Izetbegovic signed an annex to the pact between Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina of July 1992 on joint defence of their borders. A joint committee should be set up for co-ordination of defence efforts. A joint request would be submitted to the Security Council for lifting the arms embargo in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In his letter

to the President of the Security Council of 29 September Yugoslav Prime Minister Milan Panic characterised it as an attempt to make legal the presence of the Croat army in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

September 24

UN armoured personnel carrier hit by bazooka shell wounding 7. Fighting across Bosnia.

September 26

US State Department confirms massacre of 3,000 Muslims and Croats by Serbs in Bosnian town of Brcko during May. Up to 50 killed at a time and bodies cremated, some tortured beforehand. Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance say they have gathered evidence of Muslims being forced from their homes and then shelled by Serbs.

Bosnian Health Minister says 54 killed, 285 wounded (21 and 104 in Sarajevo) in last 24 hours. Jets attack factory in Croat-held Vitez (40 miles NW of Sarajevo).

TANJUG claims Croatian troops killed Serb civilians in attack on Milici (35 miles NE of Sarajevo).

In his interview to the Paris weekly *Pouint* ex-chairman of the Conference on Yugoslavia Lord Carrington said that Europe had not realised at proper time that Yugoslavia had disappeared and it had prematurely recognised Croatia and Slovenia, and then Bosnia-Herzegovina.

September 27

Izetbegovic, in Pakistan, appeals for aid from world's Muslims.

Serb shelling of Sarajevo overnight. Serb media says Muslims massacre hundreds during fighting in NE Bosnia.

September 28

Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Yugoslavia Vance and Owen talked in Belgrade with President of FRY Cosic and it was agreed that Cosic-Tudjman talks should begin on unsettled state issues between FR Yugoslavia and Croatia. The two Co-Chairmen also met with Milosevic and talked about Kosovo.

September 30

Under the auspices and in the presence of Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Yugoslavia Vance and Owen President of FR Yugoslavia Cosic and President of Croatia met in Geneva. They confirmed the obligations of the London Conference on inviolability of existing borders; agreed to take more decisive actions in co-operation with the UN peace-keeping forces in enabling repatriation of displaced persons; that the Army of Yugoslavia should leave Prevlaka peninsula near Dubrovnik by 20 October and the security of the area should be ensured by its demilitarisation and stationing of observers; condemning all actions concerning 'ethnic cleansing'; welcoming the arrival of international observers to the airports in the two countries.

UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali submitted a report to the Security Council on implementation of the decisions of this body through the UNPROFOR at the critical points in Yugoslavia. In his report he pointed out that all warring parties were responsible for irregular situation in all sectors.

Representatives of UNPROFOR prevented repatriation of around 10,000 refugees, Croats and Hungarians, to their villages in Baranja and Slavonia. They explained it by the fact that there were mine fields and no appropriate conditions were created for their living there.

US Senate adopts amendment to foreign aid bill which calls on UN to exempt Bosnia from arms embargo (House unlikely to agree). State Department will consider request by Panic to ease sanctions by allowing for importation of Chinese heating oil.

October 1

US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger says US airlift to resume; agrees with CIA assessment that 50,000 could die in Bosnia over winter due to cold conditions. Split over 'no-fly zone' which President Bush will have to resolve. Bosnia says death toll now 14,000, with 57,000 missing.

October 2

President George Bush submitted a proposal to the UN Security Council for adoption of a new Resolution banning all flights in the airspace of Bosnia-Herzegovina except those to be approved by the UN which includes shoot-down of Serb planes in violation (previously opposed by Defense Department). It was announced that the USA would be more engaged, which also included military involvement, in all actions of offering assistance and protection of humanitarian convoys for Bosnia, and in taking measures to intensify the effects of the sanctions imposed against Serbia.

At the American request to ban flights in Bosnia-Herzegovina under the threat of use of combat aircraft Karadzic proposed that the Serbs themselves should cease their flights in the airspace of Bosnia-Herzegovina provided that the Muslim part stopped their offensive actions. After that commander of the Air Force and Antiaircraft Defence of the Republika Srpska Major-General Zivomir Ninkovic said that flights ban was the same as a capitulation and that no one, not even President Karadzic, has the right to sign the capitulation of the country. Approximately 1,561 Bosnian prisoners (mainly Muslims) exchanged with Serbs, and brought to Karlovac, Croatia; prisoners give accounts of massacres at Kereterm concentration camp in late July where hundreds were gassed by Serbs.

October 3

At the headquarters of the International Red Cross in Geneva the warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina committed themselves to 'unilaterally and unconditionally' set free by the end of October all civilian and military prisoners of war who had not violated the rules of humanity. On that occasion the warring parties admitted that there were 52 prisoner-of-war camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina, of which 24 were Serb, 19 Muslim and 9 Croat ones.

First American aid arrives in Sarajevo in month. Serb planes bomb Tesanj and Zenica (NW of Sarajevo).

October 5

At its session in Luxembourg the Council of Ministers of the EC adopted a new Declaration on Yugoslavia saying that the EC and its members insist on an urgent action on the implementation of agreements which had been reached at the London Conference, including establishment of no-fly zone in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as subsequent agreements such as the one on demilitarisation of Prevlaka. Recognising that there was numerous evidence on crimes, including mass killings and ethnic cleansing, mostly committed by the Serb groups ministers supported the idea of establishment of a mechanism for data collection and evidence analysis so that the persons who have committed mass killings and other grave breaches of international humanitarian law could be individually responsible.

October 6

The third enlargement of UNPROFOR's mandate in Croatia came about, when the Security Council adopted its Resolution 779, authorising UNPROFOR to assume responsibility for monitoring of the demilitarisation of the Prevlaka Peninsula near Dubrovnik. By the same Resolution, the Council approved the Secretary-General's action to ensure the control by UNPROFOR of the vitally important Peruca dam, situated in one of the 'pink zones' in Croatia.

The same day the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 780 establishing a commission of experts which would investigate war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia communicating its conclusions to the UN Secretary General. The Security Council again expressed its concern for violation of international humanitarian law in Yugoslavia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular. The Security Council invited states and competent organisations to collect information supported by documentary evidence. Dutch Professor Eric Kalshoven was appointed President of this commission. Serbs capture town of Bosanski Brod from Muslims/Bosnia-Herzegovina forces creating key link with Krajina region.

October 7

Thousands flee across Sava River into Croatia from fighting around Bosanski Brod. Heavy infantry fighting in Novo Sarajevo and Hrasno area of suburb; artillery and mortar fire in center of Sarajevo. Croatian Defence Council for North Bosnia says 8,000 Serbs killed in fighting, 60 tanks destroyed, and 21 planes shot down. Serbs drop cluster and napalm bombs on Northern Bosnian towns of Maglaj, Tesanj and Teslic, killing at least 12 in Maglaj. NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner says that if UN says military action warranted, then NATO would no doubt follow suit. Iranian leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, says West should allow Iran to send 'Muslim youth and our combatant forces to put the Serbs in their place'.

The House of Representatives of the American Congress gave its approval for adoption of the Law depriving FR Yugoslavia of the status of most favoured nation in trade with the USA.

October 8

With the agreement of all three ethnic communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina Executive Secretary of UNICEF James Grant proclaimed publicly that the first week in November would be 'the Week of Tranquillity' so that assistance could be freely delivered to the endangered people before winter. Serb artillery pounds N Bosnian towns of Gradacac and Maglaj.

October 9

In a further development, the Security Council adopted its Resolution 781 banning all military flights in the airspace of Bosnia and Herzegovina, except for those of UNPROFOR and other flights in support of United Nations operations, including humanitarian assistance. The Council requested UNPROFOR to monitor compliance with the ban, and that it place observers, where necessary, at airfields in the former Yugoslavia. The Council also requested that the Force employ 'an appropriate mechanism for approval and inspection' to ensure that the purpose of other flights to and from Bosnia and Herzegovina was consistent with its Resolutions. It also called on States to provide technical assistance to UNPROFOR in its monitoring efforts.

October 9

NATO agreed to provide the UN with air space monitoring assistance by extending the role of the Airborne Early Warning Aircraft that had been assisting in naval monitoring operations in the Adriatic since 16 July 1992, in support of UN Resolutions 713 and 757 which subsequently became, in support of UN Resolution 787 on 22 November 1992).

The air space monitoring aspect of the combined operation has been called operation 'SKY MONITOR'. Information collected as a result of NAEW Force monitoring of the air space was provided to UN authorities.

Serbs conduct eight air raids on Gradacac Croatian radio reports. Jajce also attacked even as UN votes to impose 'no-fly zone' over Bosnia. More ethnic purges by Serbs around Banja Luka as 6,500 Croats

and Muslims held in new camps. UN troops escort utility repair crews to help restore power in Sarajevo.

October 10

Serb planes continue to bomb Gradacac and Brcko. Karadzic denies Serb planes involved. Ukrainian member of UN peacekeeping force killed (17 total dead, 243 wounded). Heavy fighting in and around Sarajevo, and in Sava River border region.

October 11

Red Cross plans to evacuate 3,000 women and children from Sarajevo. Bosnian military says it will not attend peace talks since power and water have not been restored in Sarajevo.

October 12

The first meeting of the Committee for bilateral negotiations between the Republic of Croatia and FR Yugoslavia held in Zagreb. Five commissions established: for traffic, finances, succession, ownership and property issues and for refugees. The Government of Serbia issued a communication on this occasion, explaining that in the conditions when persecution and harassment of the Serbian people by Croatian authorities continues, while Croatia is avoiding to fulfil the obligation of withdrawing all military forces from Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is happening without adequate reaction by the UN Security Council.

Peaceful demonstrations held in almost all towns in Kosovo. The protesters presented six demands: immediate opening of schools for Albanian pupils, students and teachers, abolishment of emergency and forced measures in student dormitories, recovery of financial resources, cessation of repression and accountability for all who participated in the destruction of educational system in Kosovo. The next day strong police forces in Pristina prevented new attempt of Albanians to gather in large numbers.

The Assembly of Montenegro promulgated the new Constitution. Cetinje was proclaimed the capital of Montenegro, while the administrative capital remained in Montenegro.

In the interest of co-operation with the UN Security Council, the FRY Government set up a task force which would engage in compiling evidence on crimes committed in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia.

October 13

At the Geneva Conference on Yugoslavia, the delegation of Republika Srpska led by Radovan Karadzic, and Co-Chairmen of the Conference Owen and Vance reached an agreement on moving of Serbian aviation from the airports in Banja Luka to Yugoslav airports, where UNPROFOR monitors would be deployed. The agreement was endorsed by the federal Prime Minister Milan Panic.

October 13

Serbian police fight with Albanians in Pristina; Panic appeals for calm and says he will travel there. UN official calls Sarajevo situation 'desperate'. Fighting continues in suburb of Stup. Bosnian Serb air force commander says he will defy 'no-fly zone' ban.

October 14

Talks on the problems of education in Albanian language ended in Pristina. The proposals included conditions for instruction in Albanian language in primary schools in Kosovo and preparation of curricula referring to the national culture and history of Albanians and Albanian minority in Kosovo.

October 15

Federal Prime Minister Milan Panic visited Kosovo. After talks with representatives of Serbs and Montenegrins, he met with the leader of the Kosovo Albanians Ibrahim Rugova. They agreed on the establishment of joint task forces that would deal with legislation, education and provision of information in Albanian language. There was no discussion about the status of Kosovo.

October 16

In their Birmingham declaration, EC leaders warned that they would ask the Security Council to consider enforcement measures if delays in compliance with the ban on military flights continued. US President George Bush signed the law which deprives FR Yugoslavia of the status of the most favoured nation 'because of support to Serb armed forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina'.

NATO forces began monitoring flights in the airspace of Bosnia- Herzegovina in NATO Operation SKY MONITOR. Monitoring was carried out by NAEW aircraft which were already involved in the naval monitoring and subsequent embargo operations in the Adriatic.

Members of the Serbian Radical Party and Socialist Party of Serbia criticised the policy of the Prime Minister Milan Panic and raised the question of confidence in the Federal Government. Deputies of the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro supported the Federal Government, assessing that its policy of peace and negotiation is the only way out of the crisis.

Bosnian forces blockade UN relief supply route claiming Serbs trying to advance under UN cover. Yugoslavia President Cosic urges Milosevic to resign during parliament session.

October 18

Decision on withdrawal from Prevlaka was practically implemented, since most members of the Yugoslav Army withdrew from this peninsula, except from Kupica where a water tank and theodolite station are situated.

October 19

Talks held in Geneva between the FRY delegation, led by President Dobrica Cosic, and delegation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, led by Alija Izetbegovic. They issued a joint statement in which the two Presidents confirmed their dedication to the obligations undertaken at the London conference, particularly on inviolability of the existing borders. They also stressed the need to make every effort to stop hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina and unblock Sarajevo. Delegations agreed that it was necessary that all parties in conflict place all armed units in the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina under efficient command and control and to eliminate armed gangs, paramilitary forces, and criminal and mercenary elements irrespective of where they come from and expressed firm commitment to prosecute in conformity with relevant legal provisions all perpetrators of criminal offences committed during the armed conflict, including the practice of ethnic cleansing.

Serb police, in dispute with Panic, take control of Interior Ministry building in Belgrade. Milosevic government announces it will hold early elections as demanded by opposition, but no election date set.

October 20

Cosic, President of FR Yugoslavia, and Tudjman signed in Geneva the second Declaration on the establishment of co-operation between FR Yugoslavia and Republic of Croatia. They stated that almost all provisions of the first Declaration, signed on 30 September 1992, are being implemented. The second Declaration stipulates the opening of representative offices of FR Yugoslavia in Zagreb and Croatia in Belgrade, opening of roads, railways and telecommunications, settlement of issues referring

to personal property, pensions and other problems relevant for economic well-being of people, research of issues referring to dual citizenship.

All facilities within the Prevlaka barracks placed under the UNPROFOR supervision.

Fierce conflict between the Muslim and HVO forces near Vitez in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

October 21

NATO defence ministers offer to step up peacekeeping efforts in Balkans. Croats and Muslims clash NW of Sarajevo; 22 Croats reported killed. UN temporarily halts flights into Sarajevo due to fighting.

October 22

The US Government submitted to the UN Secretariat the second report on war crimes, torture and destruction in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia, compiled after eyewitness statements and testimonies. All but one of 30 described grave cases are attributed to the Serbian armed forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina. United Nations also received a request by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, special envoy of the UN Secretary General, for a team of experts to be sent by the UN to investigate the allegations on the existence of mass graves in Vukovar.

Croats said to be blockading aid convoys to Muslims in Bosnia.

October 23

The Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council approved the request lodged by Montenegro for import of various goods necessary to the population in northern parts of the republic suffering from the consequences of natural disasters and suggested that Montenegro apply to the UN for the award of humanitarian aid. Re-establishment of the ferry connection between Bar and Bari was also approved. Amnesty International says rights abuses committed by both Serbs and Muslims; accounts the massacre of at least 83 Muslims by Serbs in village of Zaklopaca (45 miles NW of Sarajevo) on May 16.

October 24

Intention to symbolically mark the opening of the Belgrade-Zagreb highway, with the consent of the Yugoslav and Croatian governments, as well as UNPROFOR representatives, did not succeed. Coach and van convoy by which local and foreign reporters travelled from both capitals toward Okuccani, where they were supposed to meet, came across barricades and armed militia members of the Republika Srpska Krajina. Agreement on re-establishment of telephone connections between Belgrade and Zagreb also fell through.

Bosnia reports Croatian attacks on town of Prozor (30 miles W of Sarajevo), and Serb attacks on Brcko and Jajce. Serb forces pushing on Gradacac. Cosic announces that federal elections will be held December 20 in Serbia and Montenegro.

October 25

Fighting between Serbs and Croats enters fifth day on 42-mile front around Trebinje (Serb stronghold in E Bosnia). Karadzic threatens to launch planes against Croats.

Mate Boban, President of Herceg-Bosnia sent an appeal to the Croatian President Tudjman, asking him to prevent the transport of mujahedeens through Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

October 26

FRY President Dobrica Cosic met with the Italian minister for foreign affairs Emilio Colombo and President of the Republic Luigi Scalfaro, while his special counsellor Svetozar Stojanovic talked with

under-secretary of the Vatican Ministry for Foreign Affairs Celli, who conveyed the message by Pope John Paul II that Vatican wants dialogue and promotion of relations with FR Yugoslavia. Bosnians remain trapped in refugee camps in Karlovac, Croatia, due to unwillingness of western nations to admit them. US says it will admit 1,000 of estimated 10,000.

October 27

Croatian leader on Bosnian Presidency, Miro Lasic, recently elected, says Croats plan to lay claim to 30 of Bosnia-Herzegovina's 109 local districts; says he might become President of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and that he takes orders directly from Tudjman.

UNPROFOR warned that Croatian and Serbian sides increasingly frequently violate cease-fire in 'pink zones' and that without disarmament and demilitarisation the Vance Plan would be jeopardised.

October 28

The Geneva negotiators formally rejected the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into three 'ethnic-, confessionals-based republics' and presented constitutional proposals for a decentralised Bosnia-Herzegovina aimed at preserving its territorial integrity.

The reshaped republic, it was proposed, would be based on seven to ten provincial governments with substantial power and autonomy to control education, police, health and law enforcement. The borders of the provinces still had to be negotiated. A central government would remain in Sarajevo with responsibility for defence, foreign policy and trade. The largely ceremonial presidency would rotate among major groups.

October 29

Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Yugoslavia David Owen and Cyrus Vance, together with Prime Minister Panic, visited Pristina, where they met with prominent Kosovo public and political figures - Serbs and Albanians. At the press conference Lord Owen stated that 'Kosovo should have a special status or autonomy, but only within Serbia'.

Tadeusz Mazowiecki, special envoy of the UN Secretary General, submitted a report to the UN Commission on violation of human rights in the former Yugoslavia. In the report he pointed out that human rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina were being increasingly violated at the time when parties in conflict promised at Geneva negotiations that they would stop this practice.

Bosnian government officials accuse Croats of cutting supply lines. Fighting continues around Gradacac, Tuzla, Doboje, and Maglaj. Jajce falls to Serbs, much of population flees.

October 30

Assemblies of Republika Srpska and Republika Srpska Krajina at the joint session in Prijedor adopted the Declaration on unification of these two republics. They also decided that this decision be shortly tested at the plebiscite in both republics, after which the elections for the common constitutional assembly should be scheduled.

October 31

NATO air coverage was enhanced when an additional NAEW orbit was established over Hungary with the support of the Hungarian and Austrian governments. The UN assessed that more than 500 flights violated the ban during the period 16 October 1992 to 12 April 1993.

October 31

Within the UNICEF campaign 'A Week of Silence for Children' a convoy of trucks carrying milk, blankets and winter clothes, that left from Belgrade a day earlier, arrived at Sarajevo.

Former defenders, residents of Jajce (estimated at 20,000) pour into Travnik after 3-day, 25-mile journey. Serbs bombard Sarajevo at rate of one shell per second.

November 1

Bosnian government officials refuse clothing brought by UNICEF.

November 2-3

At the Federal Assembly of Yugoslavia deputies cast a vote of confidence in the government of Prime Minister Milan Panic. Since the vote did not receive adequate support in both chambers of the Federal Assembly, the Federal Government continued its work.

November 3

Over 3,000 shells fall on Gradacac.

November 4

Refugees from Jajce turned away at Croatian border despite pleas from UN officials. Heavy fighting around Olovo (25 miles NE of Sarajevo), Maglaj, and Tuzla.

November 6

Bosnian military officials cancel evacuation of 6,000 due to concerns of losing able-bodied fighters (18-60 year-olds). Relief convoy carrying 240 tons of food for Bratunac (Serbian town) and Srebrenica (Muslim town, 50 miles NE of Sarajevo) forced to turn back to Belgrade. Violations of UN 'no-fly zone' reported.

UNPROFOR convoys trying to reach towns under siege repeatedly came under fire and returned fire.

November 8

Relief flights into Sarajevo halted; city is without water and electricity for 3rd day. Red Cross official appeals to UN for escorts for 6,000 to leave Sarajevo. 10-truck aid convoy for Sarajevo stopped near Mostar.

November 9

Karadzic proposes recognition of Bosnia's external borders with simultaneous recognition of Serb's internal boundaries. Bosnian government rejects the plan immediately. Izetbegovic signs order that allows all boys under 18, or men older than 60 to leave Sarajevo. TANJUG reports that Croat and Muslim forces cut Serb supply line to Banja Luka. Fighting in Mostar renewed.

November 10

The Security Council adopted its Resolution 786 authorising the expansion of UNPROFOR's strength by 75 military observers to enable it to monitor airfields in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

Cease fire declared as 2,000 refugees allowed to leave Sarajevo; convoys halted by Serb forces.

November 11

The President of Macedonia conveyed to the Secretary-General a request for the deployment of United Nations observers in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in view of his concern about the possible impact on it of fighting elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. Such deployment was also recommended by Mr. Vance and Lord Owen, Co-Chairmen of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia.

16th cease-fire holding in Sarajevo.

November 12

In separate declarations Serbia, Albania and Bulgaria expressed support for a Greek initiative to guarantee the existing borders of Macedonia, apparently designed to allay international concern about Greece's intentions towards the former Yugoslav republic.

Cosic warns UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali that unless regular Croatian forces withdraw from contested areas in Eastern Bosnia, the federal army may have to intervene.

November 13

Serb forces violate cease-fire and attack Maglaj while British observers watch. US ambassador to the UN, Edward Perkins accuses Greek, Italian, and Egyptian companies of illicit arms shipments to the former republics of Yugoslavia.

November 16

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 787. Expressing deep concern about reports of continuing violations of the embargo imposed by its Resolutions 713 (1991), 724 (1991) and 757 against FR Yugoslavia, the Security Council by this Resolution extended the embargo against FR Yugoslavia, among other things by prohibiting the transshipment of a number of commodities and products through FRY (crude oil, petroleum products, coal, energy-related equipment, iron, steel, other metals, chemicals, rubber, tires, vehicles, aircraft and motors of all types) and by tightening the control of shipments of goods in inland, river and maritime transport, particularly on the Danube, to prevent further violation of the Security Council decisions.

November 18

NATO agrees to stop-and-search enforcement of naval embargo; enforcement to be carried out with Western European Union.

November 19

First snowfall on Sarajevo as 8-day old truce is violated in north and east (Gradacac, Maglaj, Tensaj, and Teslic).

Alternative Bosnian Serb constitutional proposals based on the three-way subdivision of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as laid down in the March 1992 Lisbon agreement with provision for joint foreign, defence and other policies, were presented to the Geneva conference.

November 20

The North Atlantic Council met to follow up its earlier decision in principle to support Security Council Resolution 787 aimed at enforcing the UN embargoes in the former Yugoslavia. The Council agreed that enforcement operations by maritime forces could commence, in co-ordination with forces in the Adriatic. Subsequently the Defence Planning Committee met to authorise the forces of NATO's

integrated military structure to carry out the enforcement and to endorse the operational concept proposed by alliance military authorities for NATO's (STANAVFORMED). NATO and WEU thus agreed to adopt powers to stop and search any ships entering or leaving Yugoslav waters, with warships being allowed, if necessary, to fire across the bows of vessels to force them to stop.

November 20

WEU Defence ministers give their forces the right to fire warning shots at vessels that fail to heed the naval embargo. French troops guarding aid convoy in NW Bosnia forced to return fire when attacked near Muslim city of Bosanska Krupa.

November 21

Serbs launch artillery attack against refugee-filled Travnik, killing 4, wounding 5. Croats and Muslims said to have sent additional 6,000 troops to defend city which is a major link to Sarajevo. Serbs attacking suburb of Turbe, considered to defence of Travnik. Izetbegovic says Serbs now using ground-to-ground missiles supplied by Yugoslav army, to get around UN ban on warplanes (Serb General Mladic admits to having them and willingness to use them).

November 22

Operation MARITIME MONITOR ended, conducted from 16 July to 22 November 1992, when NATO forces commenced enforcement operations in support of the UN Security Council Resolution 787. This new operation was named 'Operation Maritime Guard'. The Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Mike Boorda, exercised operational control of the NATO forces from his headquarters in Naples, Italy. This control was further delegated to two subordinate commanders also located in the Naples area: (COMNAVSOUTH), Adm. Carlo Alberto Vandini, for STANAVFORMED and maritime patrol aircraft flying under the NATO flag, and Commander (COMAIRSOUTH), Lt. General James Callaghan, for the NATO Early Warning Force aircraft (NATO AWACS). In order to enforce strict compliance with the terms of Security Council Resolutions 713 and 757, all ships bound to or from the territorial waters of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) were halted to inspect and verify their cargoes and destinations, as well as all ships proceeding to all other ports of the former Yugoslavia. Cease-fire fails with heavy shelling of Sarajevo. Bosnians claim Serbs deploying Scud missiles, but Serbs deny this.

November 23-25

Three-day talks of the delegations of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Croatian Roman Catholic Church and Islamic religious community from Bosnia held in Zurich. At the close of their talks they sent an Appeal for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, signed by Patriarch Pavle, Archbishop Vinko Puljic, Reis ul Ulema Jakub Selimovski and Great Rabbi of the USA Arthur Schnyer.

November 23

UN says it will send armoured convoys to ensure delivery of relief supplies to Gorazde and Srebrenica after Serb militias repeatedly turn them back. UN official says UN has assumed responsibility to keep victims of war alive and it will do it. Shelling of Sarajevo airport forces cancellation of last two relief flights of the day.

November 25

French relief plane hit by small arms fire on approach to Sarajevo airport. Serb forces block UN relief convoy in violation of agreement reached between UN and Karadzic.

The Balkan Conference on Bosnia-Herzegovina held in Istanbul. Besides Turkey, the conference was attended by the representatives of the four former Yugoslav republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia), Hungary, Albania, Bulgaria, Austria and Romania. FR Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy declined the invitation to the conference.

November 26

Despite an agreement between military commanders of the Croat and Serb armed forces in Bosnia and the UNPROFOR commander, Major-General Philippe Morillon, for Croatian regular forces to begin withdrawing from the self-proclaimed Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina as from 30 November, there was no sign of a decrease in fighting. An earlier cease-fire arranged on 11 November, had broken down after five days.

US State Department representative J. Sinder said in Washington that the USA strongly believes that the only way to resolve the crisis situation in Kosovo is to grant the people of Kosovo all the rights and full autonomy in the framework of the present borders. 'We have publicised on several occasions our position on Kosovo. We recognise the autonomy, but not the independence of Kosovo', he said. Serbs continue to block relief convoy to Srebrenica. Serb and Croat generals meet at Sarajevo airport with UN commander to discuss cease-fire.

November 27

UN convoy leaves Ljubovija, but is blocked by Serb women and children at Skelani.

November 28

With the Security Council's approval, the Secretary-General sent to Macedonia a group of military, police and civilian personnel to assess the situation and prepare a report concerning a possible deployment of UNPROFOR in that Republic.

UN finally manages to get 137 tons of food and aid to Srebrenica (first aid to reach town since spring where 80,000 refugees are concentrated).

Fighting around Travnik and Turbe. UN says a cease-fire scheduled for midnight between Croats and Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

NATO ships divert Maltese ship as part of embargo.

November 29

Fighting endangers Serb-Croat truce.

November 30

UN human rights special investigator, Tadesz Mazowiecki, presents findings to UN Human Rights Commission blaming 'massive and systematic' rights abuses on policy of ethnic cleansing. Bosnian government raises death toll figure by 20%. Artillery duels between Serbs and Muslims around Sarajevo airport. Boutros-Ghali says Serbs in so-called Republic of Krajina region of Croatia are blocking UN peacekeeping plan.

December 1

Panic says he will run against Milosevic for presidency on December 20. UN suspends airlift to Sarajevo for two days after US plane hit by small arms fire. UN Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva condemns Serbs as main perpetrators of atrocities in war; only Yugoslavia votes against the Resolution.

December 3

Ministerial conference of 50 Islamic states ended in Jeddah with the request that United Nations by 15 January 1993 undertake all measures to ensure cessation of war in Bosnia and 'extermination of Muslims'. Otherwise, they said, Islamic states would undertake their own financial and military measures to defend Muslims in Bosnia.

December 3

Plane carrying UN commander in Bosnia, French General Philippe Morillon, hit by machine-gun fire; chief UN General Satish Nambiar, continues suspension of relief flights as a result.

December 4

Serbs overrun part of Sarajevo suburb of Otocac prompting Bosnian commander to request UN help to prevent massacre of civilians after Bosnian forces run out of armour-piercing shells; attack on suburb has been longest since siege of Sarajevo began (Serbs now control line through western part of Sarajevo); Serbs are said to be using 40 tanks, armoured personnel carriers and self-propelled guns; Bosnian forces manage to open corridor to Otocac to evacuate citizens.

December 5

Fighting in Gradacac, Modrica, and Doboj. UN aid convoys still manage to get into Sarajevo with 220 tons of food despite artillery shelling.

December 6

Presidential and parliamentary elections held in Slovenia. Milan Kucan was elected President of the Republic in the first round. Fierce fighting between Serbs and Muslims as Serbs press to cut off airport road. Mayor of Serb-held Vlasenica slips through lines to Zagreb and tells of 70 people having starved to death in region controlled by Serbs. Government forces reportedly make some gains against Serbs in Zuc mountain area north of Sarajevo. Nurse killed in Serb shelling of Kosevo hospital in Sarajevo.

December 7

Serb shelling of Sarajevo prompts UN to suspend aid flights. Sole bakery shut down for lack of fuel; shelling by Serbs of Gradacac's historic castle. Serbs said to be retreating in Zavidovici.

December 8

At the Geneva peace conference on Yugoslavia, leaders of the three warring factions in Bosnia presented maps for the 'cantonisation' of the republic along ethnic lines. Serbs seal off all escape routes out of Sarajevo and fire on UN observers who appeal to them for a cease-fire. Bosnian Serb news agency SRNA says Serbs will facilitate evacuations. Serb forces said to be trying to starve Sarajevo into submission.

December 9

The Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report in which he recommended an expansion of the mandate and strength of UNPROFOR to establish a United Nations presence on Macedonia's borders with Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). He indicated that the Force's mandate would be essentially preventive, to monitor and report any developments in the border areas which could undermine confidence and stability in Macedonia and threaten its territory. The Secretary-General recommended that the enlargement of UNPROFOR comprise an estimated battalion of up to 700 all ranks, 35 military observers, 26 civilian police monitors, 10 civil affairs staff, 45 administrative staff and local interpreters. This contingent would operate under UNPROFOR's 'Macedonia Command' with headquarters in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia. Serb shelling of old city kills five in bread line. Karadzic says Serbs do not want to take complete control of the city.

December 10

Over one million Greeks demonstrated in Athens against the international recognition of Macedonia under its existing name. In Brussels, EC Foreign Ministers criticised Greece for allowing Greek companies to violate United Nations sanctions by shipping oil to Serbia while at the same time withholding oil from Macedonia. United Nations sanctions against Serbia had already cut off Macedonia's main trade route.

Sarajevo bakery producing only 25,000 loaves of bread a day since UN suspension of humanitarian aid flights. Dutch Prime Minister, Ruud Lubbers, says 'its scandalous that there's intervention in Somalia, but not in Yugoslavia' and says Bosnia will be high on list of items at upcoming EC meeting.

December 11

The Security Council, by its Resolution 795 authorised the establishment of UNPROFOR's presence in Macedonia.

President-elect Clinton says he is in favour of enforcing no-fly zone.

December 12

The Summit of the European Community in Edinburgh adopted the Declaration on Yugoslavia, requesting from the Security Council to urgently consider new measures, including military, which would ensure prevention of military aircraft flights over Bosnia-Herzegovina and safe passage of convoys with humanitarian aid. They also demanded the establishment of Safe Areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina to provide protection to the civilian population. The Declaration also stressed that 'the present leadership of Serbia and Bosnian Serbs' bear the greatest responsibility for the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

Acting Secretary of State Eagleburger says US now considering changing UN-sponsored embargo of arms so that Bosnia may obtain weapons, and that international community must consider the use of force to ensure the delivery of food.

December 13

Bosnian Muslim, Serb, and Croatian commanders renew cease-fire pledge to allow for movement of civilians out of Sarajevo. Serb shelling of Travnik in third day.

December 14

In effort to keep NATO forces from intervening, Karadzic, in Belgrade, says Bosnian Serb parliament will meet to declare war over in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and try to end hostilities before end of year; also accuses US, Russia, and EC of 'nailing Serbs to the cross' by singling them out as responsible for war. US Secretary of State Eagleburger, in Sweden for CSCE meeting, urges Europeans to hold 'perpetrators of crimes against humanity' responsible by trying them as war criminals'. French Foreign Minister, Roland Dumas, tells Eagleburger that France is now in favour of enforcing no-fly zone. Eagleburger and Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev issue statement that encourages Serbians to oust Milosevic in upcoming elections.

December 15

Boutros-Ghali reportedly asks NATO to draw up plans for enforcing no fly zone. CSCE meeting in Sweden asks UN Secretary Council to enforce the zone and to lift arms sanctions against Bosnia. Bosnian Serb second-in-command, General Milan Gvero, says intervention would be suicide.

December 16

US Secretary of State Eagleburger names 7 Serbs and Croats as responsible for war crimes and says Milosevic, Karadzic and General Mladic could be held responsible for failing to prevent atrocities. Cyrus Vance says 'the overall level of violence has been reduced'. 1,001 prisoners released from Serb-run detention camp of Manjaca and allowed to go to Croatia (supposedly last Muslim and Croat inmates).

December 17

Foreign Ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which was preparing contingency plans for intervention, agreed to support any future United Nations Resolution enforcing the existing flight ban over Bosnia, on condition that such a Resolution provided for continued humanitarian efforts. The United Kingdom had consistently expressed reservations over intervention, in contrast to the stance of the United States which called for preventive bombardment of Serb positions. Montenegrins vote in election but run-off necessary (January 10, 1993) between current President Momir Bulatovic (43%) and Branko Kostic (24%) former Yugoslavia President. Bulatovic's Democratic Party of Socialists win parliament elections.

December 18

The UN General Assembly adopted the Resolution on the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. If Serbia and Montenegro in the shortest period possible fail to fulfil all relevant Security Council Resolutions, the Resolution among other things, calls for application of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which inter alia stipulates the use of military force. The Resolution was adopted with 102 votes for, while 57 delegations abstained from voting. The latter included, among others, all EC member states, Russia, China, Bulgaria, Romania, Sweden, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Canada. The USA was the only state among the permanent Security Council members that voted in favour of the Resolution. The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 798 in which it expressed consternation over the reports of massive, organised and systematic detention and rape of women, in particular Muslim women, in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Security Council demanded immediate closing of all detention camps, particularly camps for women. The Assembly of Republika Srpska adopted the Declaration on ending of the war. Through amendment to the Constitution the Presidency has been abolished, while the function of the President of Republic was established. Karadzic was elected the first President.

December 20

United States President George Bush and United Kingdom Prime Minister John Major agreed in Washington to support a United Nations Resolution enforcing the flight ban.

Federal, republican and provincial parliamentary and local elections, as well as elections for the Presidents of the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro, held in FR Yugoslavia.

December 21

The Secretary-General submitted a report to the Security Council in which he indicated that in order to ensure compliance with the relevant Security Council Resolutions, it would be necessary to give UNPROFOR a mandate which would include the right not only to search but also to turn back or confiscate military personnel, weapons, or sanctioned goods whose passage into or out of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be contrary to the decisions of the Council. He pointed out that a symbolic presence at selected crossing points would 'not only fail to fulfil the Council's requirements, but would also undermine the already strained credibility of UNPROFOR'. He proposed, therefore, an enlargement of UNPROFOR with some 10,000 additional troops to provide for a 24-hour observation and search operation at 123 crossing points on Bosnia and Herzegovina's border with neighbouring countries.

Panic accuses Milosevic of fraud and calls for new elections. Independent observers (including CSCE) agree, but say it is too early to tell if the voting met 'minimum acceptable standards'. Planes land with supplies in Sarajevo for first time in 3 weeks. City without heat, electricity, or running water, and low on food; 2 children die from hunger.

December 22

Serbian Election Commission certifies vote giving Milosevic 55% to Panic's 36%. Serbian Radical Party leader, Vojislav Seselj, whose followers are accused of some of the worst atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina wins more than 20% of vote for parliament (33 of 138 seats).

December 23

Opposition says true election figures give Milosevic 49% and Panic 43% which would force a run-off (50% needed).

NATO gives UN plans on how it would enforce 'no-fly zone'. Yugoslavia Army Chief of Staff, General Zivota Panic, says forces on alert.

December 24

Election commission spokesman says 'not a single republican organ did anything wrong'. Seselj calls for uniting Yugoslavia with Serb-held areas of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and for prosecuting Panic with embezzling state funds and inviting outside interference in Yugoslavia affairs.

December 25

Quiet in Sarajevo, but UN commander General Philippe Morillon says his home shelled by mortar from Bosnian government side for second day.

December 26

Panic send congratulations to Milosevic on re-election but says he still opposes his policies.

December 27

President Bush warns Serbs in letter to Milosevic that the US 'will be prepared to employ military force against the Serbs in Kosovo and in Serbia proper' if conflict spreads to Kosovo. Associated Press reports that Panic close to resigning. Vance meets with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev in Geneva; Kozyrev says he and Jeltsin are under pressure to support the Serbs as fellow Slavs. Greece says it will try to stop UN Secretary Council from recognising Macedonia. French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas said that France would participate in United Nations efforts to enforce the flight ban.

December 28

President of FR Yugoslavia Cosic talked in Geneva with Boutros-Ghali, Vance and Owen, Kozyrev and Tudjman. Cosic and Tudjman agreed that peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina can be established only with its constitutional arrangement as a confederation of the three peoples. UN sends 33 military observers to Macedonia as first part of 800-man force to be deployed along the border with Kosovo (first UN effort at preventative action). 19 humanitarian flights land at Sarajevo airport while 4 land convoys arrive. Bosnian Health Minister reports 33 killed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 17 of them in Sarajevo.

December 29

Federal Prime Minister Milan Panic ousted as premier both chambers of the Federal Assembly of FR Yugoslavia cast a vote of no confidence in parliament. Thousands of Bosnian troops being massed around Sarajevo to try to break the siege.

December 30

Yugoslavia Army Chief of Staff, General Zivota Panic, warns that western military intervention would only cause the war to spread. Lord Owen presents plan on decentralising Bosnia-Herzegovina to Karadzic, who rejects it by saying, 'Why did we have a war if Bosnia should stay unified?'. Boutros-Ghali sends letter to Security Council expressing 'grave concern over the growing momentum for military action in the area'.

December 31

Boutros-Ghali goes to Sarajevo to appeal for more time for peace talks, but is booed by residents for comments such as: 'you have a situation here that is better than in 10 other places in the world'. In co-operation with Albanian authorities NATO warships were granted unrestricted access to Albanian territorial waters for the purpose of embargo enforcement. This additional aspect of the overall NATO operation was given the name 'ALBANIAN GUARD'.

Chronology 1993

January 1

Boutros-Ghali urges the International community to await the outcome of Geneva talks where leaders of three sides will meet face-to-face for the first time, before using military action. Panic flies to US to try to convince US officials to not enforce 'no-fly zone'.

January 3

Summit meeting of representatives of three parties in conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina started in Geneva. The meeting is attended by Karadzic, Boban and Izetbegovic and Presidents of FR Yugoslavia Cosic and Croatia Tudjman. Co-Chairmen of the Conference on the Former Yugoslavia Vance and Owen submitted a draft proposal for Bosnia-Herzegovina, including:

- the reorganisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina into ten provinces, according to a detailed map.
- the establishment of five major corridors between the provinces would allow the safe passage of humanitarian aid and civilians.
- constitutional principles for the republic with a large measure of autonomy for the provinces within a decentralised state.
- cease-fire and demilitarisation arrangements.

January 3

Bush and Mitterand in Paris say Geneva talks should be given chance to succeed, but 'no-fly zone' could be quickly enforced.

Bosnian government threatens to besiege Lasva Valley unless 65,000 Croats living there leave. Serb offensive against Sarajevo kills 15, wounds 30. UN commander in Yugoslavia General Jean Cot says his forces are prepared for defensive military action, and blames Serbs for acting as greatest hindrance for UNPROFOR

January 4

Geneva conference recesses with no agreement. Bosnian government apparently willing to agree to plan's military and constitutional aspects, but ethnic divisions stumbling block. Croat Boban accepts whole agreement, but Karadzic asks for extra time for consultations and says that 'we cannot accept Bosnia as one state', but that Serbs have given up idea of 'greater Serbia'. New gathering scheduled for 10 January.

January 5

Operators of Sarajevo home for the elderly announce that ten have died in zero degree weather in the past 36 hours in building only 750 yards from UN headquarters (UN provided food, but did nothing about heat being cut off).

January 6

President of FR Yugoslavia Cosic addressed the nation. In a longer speech he presented his views on internal situation and the country's international position. He stressed that 'a new state and national policy must be pursued', that 'the outcome of the Geneva negotiations will decisively influence the political consolidation of the entire territory of the former Yugoslavia and the Balkans', and proposed the establishment of a government of democratic unity of Montenegro and Serbia.

Shelling of Sarajevo districts of Novi Grad and Stari Grad, and street fighting in Dobrinja and Vojnicko Polje districts begins anew after Yugoslavia President Cosic warns on radio that Bosnia Serbs risk attack by the US and NATO if they do not accept peace plan. US says that as many as 70,000 prisoners are still held in Yugoslavia unknown to International Red Cross.

January 7

EU report says as many as 20,000 women (mainly Muslims) raped by Serbs in Bosnia so as to demoralise and terrorise communities. US Defence Secretary-designate, Aspin, endorses enforcement of 'no-fly zone' but says it would be his preference to use European troops on the ground.

January 8

Serbian troops kill Deputy Prime-Minister of Bosnia, Hakija Turajlic, while detaining French UN peacekeeping vehicle at Sarajevo airport.

Deputies of the National Assembly in Republika Srpska assessed that 'proposed maps and constitutional principles (for Bosnia-Herzegovina) represent the initial material that needs further elaboration' and that 'the Geneva conference should continue until final solution is found'.

January 9

Bosnian President Izetbegovic boycotts latest round of peace talks in protest over killing of Deputy Prime-Minister. Bosnians demonstrate against UN forces saying they have provided inadequate protection. Bosnian Serb parliament rejects elements of peace plan that would break Bosnia up into separate districts.

January 10

After an Amnesty International publication on conditions in detention camps and, in particular, on the organised and systematic rape and sexual abuse of women in camps, the French Foreign Minister Dumas said that France was prepared to act alone to free civilians from detention camps in Bosnia. Later, Defence Minister Joxe said that his colleague's words had been 'misinterpreted'.

Yugoslavia army parades its military in town of Cuprija, Yugoslavia to demonstrate strength against western intervention. Bosnian government calls for urgent UN aid for town of Zepa where 73 bodies have been found in last several days due to starvation and cold. British UN troops escorting Danish relief convoy near Kladanj are hit by small-arms and mortar fire and return 17 rounds of cannon fire from light tanks and machine-gun fire (1st instance of such a response).

In the second round of elections for the President of the Republic of Montenegro Momir Bulatovic was elected.

UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali said in the United Nations in New York that 'Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia and UN action could be aimed at ensuring the autonomy of Kosovo, but for this Belgrade agreement is needed. In no way can the principle of inviolability of borders be brought into question', he said.

January 10-12

The Conference on Bosnia-Herzegovina continued in Geneva. Serbs demand change in Vance-Owen plan that recognises 'three constituent ethnic units' in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Muslims say they will not accept changes in plan. Milosevic arrives in Geneva to participate in talks. Representatives of Bosnian Croats . Boban and Muslims Izetbegovic agreed with the Constitutional Principles for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Delegation of FR Yugoslavia endorsed the proposed Constitutional Principles, since they 'guarantee full equality to the Serbian people and consensus of three peoples in Bosnia-Herzegovina'. After first refusing the proposal and pressure from Cosic and Milosevic, Karadzic accepts peace plan to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina into ten ethnic provinces with Serbs getting roughly half of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but Bosnian Serb leader, Plavsic, says Bosnian Serb parliament will not accept deal. Presidents Cosic, Milosevic and Tudjman agreed to continue negotiations on normalisation of the Yugoslav-Croatian relations.

January 13

Croat-Muslim fighting near Travnik and Gorni Vakuf (apparently after Croatian commander demands Muslim troops be put under Croatian control in area Croats expect to get under Geneva plan).

January 14

EU Foreign Ministers gave the Bosnian Serbs a six-day ultimatum for the definitive acceptance of the latest proposals, and the EU presidency threatened the complete political and economic isolation of Serbia if this ultimatum was rejected.

Acting US Secretary of State Eagleburger says world may have 'dithered' away its chances to stop war.

January 15

Serbs shell downtown Sarajevo killing seven, and other parts killing two. UN aid convoy to Zepa delayed 9 miles south. Karadzic says his people will not buckle under deadlines imposed by UN.

January 16

Bosnian government offensive to cut Serb corridor between Serbia and Pale escalates tension when Bosnians fire across border into town of Bajna Basta. Fighting around Bratunac kills 40 Serbs, according to Serb commanders. Bosnians report that 60 have froze to death in last several days around Zvornik (on border with Serbia). Renewed Croat-Muslim fighting around Gorni Vakuf.

January 17

Cross-border shelling intensifies as Bosnians hit villages and power plant in Perucac (25 miles SW of Bratunac). More clashes between Croats and Muslims with numerous dead. Aid convoy reaches Zepa.

January 18

Bosnians again fire across Drina into Yugoslavia. Continued fighting around Gorni Vakuf.

January 19

Serbs in Pale begin debate over acceptance of peace plan. Karadzic sends letter to President-elect Bill Clinton asking for change in US' 'misinformed' policy towards Serbs.

January 20

The Assembly of Republika Srpska at the session in Pale adopted nine principles on constitutional arrangement of Bosnia-Herzegovina proposed at the Conference on Former Yugoslavia in Geneva. The proposal was endorsed by 55 deputies, 15 voted against, while one deputy abstained.

January 21

US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, says he doubts UN peace plan will succeed.

January 22

US State Department Says Clinton Administration considering providing arms to Bosnian government despite UN embargo.

The Croatian Army launched an offensive in the territory of the Republika Srpska Krajina in a number of locations in the southern part of UNPROFOR's Sector South and the adjacent 'pink zones'. The aim of attack was to seize the Maslenica bridge, Zemunik airport near Zadar and Perucha dam. The Croatian Government stated that it took this action out of impatience with the slow progress of negotiations in respect of various economic facilities in and adjacent to the UNPAs and 'pink zones'. It was also meant to establish a new cease-fire line before the expiry of the United Nations peacekeeping mandate on 21 February and to recover Croatian territory from the Serbs. It significantly altered the situation on the ground.

Following the renewed outbreak of hostilities in Croatia, intensive efforts were made within the framework of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia and by UNPROFOR to bring about a cease-fire and a restoration of the prior status in accordance with Security Council Resolution 802 of 25 January 1993.

After a closed session the UN Security Council 'condemns the attack (of the Croatian armed forces) and demands that the offensive be immediately stopped and Croatian forces withdrawn to the starting positions'. UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali regretted 'unilateral action of the Croatian authorities which was a blow for the peace efforts of the United Nations'.

January 23

The third round of negotiations on Bosnia-Herzegovina started in Geneva, with participation of Presidents Cosic, Milosevic and Tudjman, and representatives of three national communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina Karadzic, Izetbegovic and Boban.

US intelligence sources says Serbs still running camps and that 70,000 people may be in camps run by all three sides.

January 24

Croatian attacks lead Serbs to regain weapons monitored but not controlled by UN. Serbs inside Croatia declare formal state of war and shell Zadar.

January 25

The Security Council adopted Resolution 802, in which it demanded an immediate cessation of hostile activities by Croatian armed forces within or adjacent to the UNPAs and their withdrawal from these areas, an end to attacks against UNPROFOR personnel, return of all heavy weapons seized from UNPROFOR-controlled storage areas, and strict compliance by all parties with the terms of cease-fire arrangements. It called upon all parties to co-operate fully with the International Conference on the

Former Yugoslavia and to refrain from any actions which might undermine efforts aimed at reaching a political settlement.

As to the implementation of this Resolution, the Croatian Government on 26 January informed the Force Commander of UNPROFOR that, upon compliance by the Serb side with the various provisions of the Resolution, they would remove their military, but not their police, from the areas they had taken. For its part, the Serb side stated that Croatia must return to its pre-22 January positions before the implementation of the remainder of the Resolution could be considered.

Eventually, after several rounds of talks held under the auspices of the Co-Chairmen of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, the Government of Croatia and the Serb local authorities signed an agreement regarding the implementation of Resolution 802 .

Croatia says it has ended its offensive, but fighting persists around Zadar. Tudjman says the attack is a warning to Serbs to submit to Croatian authority, and due to Serb unwillingness to allow reconstruction of bridge at Maslenica. Serbs claim that 29 of their soldiers have died and that Croats massing 20,000 in the Zadar area and other points. Croats say they lost 10, but killed 120 Serbs. Fighting continues in eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina.

January 26

Artillery duels between Croats and Serbs in Dalmatia, fighting inland from Zadar. Russia says Croatia taking 'provocative actions'. France says it will send aircraft carrier and 7 other warships to region. State Department gives report to UN on atrocities which blames worst massacre on Muslims who killed 60 Serbs in Bratunac area December 14. Tudjman says troops will leave Serb areas only once Serbs are disarmed.

January 27

UN Security Council adopted Presidential statement in which it said that the Security Council was extremely alarmed because the Croatian forces, in spite of previous strict warnings, continued with the offensive, and demanded from all warring parties to immediately stop hostilities and urgently fulfil all requirements from Resolution 802.

US Administration says it is considering options beyond those of the Bush Administration. More Serb bombardments of Sarajevo, killing 17.

Croatian Army attacked and captured the Peruca dam. Fight forces 80 UN peacekeepers to abandon it. The Serbs responded to the Croatian offensive by breaking into a number of storage areas, which were under joint control under a double-lock system in the UNPAs, and by removing their weapons, including heavy weapons.

UNPROFOR warned both the Croatian Government and the Serb authorities not to attempt further incursions into the UNPAs. The Force also sought to limit the damage caused by the fighting, and made repeated representations to the parties concerned with a view to preventing escalation and bringing about a cease-fire.

January 29

Croats try to repair dam before it can break. Zadar Mayor, Zivko Kolega, say 21 Croats and 45 Serbs killed in offensive. Fighting around Srebrenica near Drina River.

January 30

At the negotiations in Geneva parties failed to reach agreement on all points of the Vance-Owen plan for the solution to the Bosnian crisis. All three sides signed constitutional principles for the future Bosnia-Herzegovina arrangement. Bosnian Croat leader Boban also signed the peace plan and maps of the future provinces, Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic signed the peace plan, but not the maps, while

Izetbegovic, Bosnian Muslim leader, signed neither the peace plan nor the maps. Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Yugoslavia Owen and Vance therefore decided that negotiations be continued in New York under the auspices of the UN Security Council.

January 31

Tudjman threatens to expand offensive if UN doesn't disarm Serbs and reopen roads through Serb-controlled areas. UN repair crews give up working on a main electrical transmission line in Sarajevo after being fired upon by Bosnian government troops. French aircraft carrier Clemenceau with 30 fighter and 30 combat and transport helicopters enters Adriatic.

February 1

EU Foreign Ministers delay imposing stricter sanctions against Yugoslavia on request of Lord Owen as he seeks Serbian and Muslim consensus on his peace plan. TANJUG reports major Croatian offensive against Serb-held Obrovac and Benkovac (SW Croatia). UN observers say fighting over Serb-held town of Drnis (SE of Zadar). Zadar and Biograd under 10th day of alert. Croat Chief of Staff, General Janko Bobetko, says Serb force of 700-1,000 attacking Zadar. Serbs allow women and children to leave eastern Bosnian town of Cerska for Kalesija.

February 2

Muslim funeral in Sarajevo fired upon by anti-aircraft machine guns killing one.

February 3

Boutros-Ghali says that 3-5,000 Croatian troops are actively involved in Bosnia, but German Foreign Minister Kinkel says there is no proof and opposes sanctions against Zagreb. UN aid convoys to stop using Mostar-Sarajevo road (most heavily travelled) after UN aid worker killed by shelling of line of UN trucks. France suggests that if UN peace talks fail that western allies ring Sarajevo with troops to drive Serbs out of hills surrounding Sarajevo.

February 4

Bosnian President Izetbegovic declares that he wants air strikes to end war. Karadzic, in New York (where he is confined to 10-block area around UN due to State Department declaration that he is a war criminal) urges Clinton Administration to support UN peace plan and that US would face another Vietnam if it intervenes in Bosnia.

February 5

Negotiations on the solution to the Bosnian crisis continued at the United Nations headquarters in New York with the first working meeting of Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Yugoslavia Owen and Vance and President of Republika Srpska Karadzic.

February 6

US Defence Minister Aspin presents new Clinton approach to British, French, Belgian, Canadian, German, and Dutch diplomats at meeting in Munich. German transport plane hit in propeller by gunfire over Sarajevo, UN suspends further flights.

February 7

Serb mortar hits line of people waiting for water in Sarajevo, killing 3, wounding 5. Bosnian Serbs and Muslims stalemated in last day of Geneva talks. NATO Secretary General Wörner says at Munich meeting with Aspin that NATO may have to use force in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Karadzic says all sides should 'stop the war immediately'.

February 8

UN Secretary Council prepares to meet on Bosnian conflict, but must await Clinton administration's policy review. Yugoslavia Foreign Minister, Ilija Djukic, says all three sides should agree to UN peace plan (seemingly puts pressure on Bosnian Serbs). Muslims accuse UN mediators of trying to divide Sarajevo along ethnic lines. Kenneth Blackwell, US delegate to UN Human Rights Commission says there is increasing evidence that senior Serbian officers directed organised rape of Muslim women in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Fighting in Vlasenica and Bratunac. Croats and Serbs battle near Zadar in Croatia. Aid flights resume to Sarajevo.

February 9

President of France François Mitterrand in an interview to *Le Monde* said that the Yugoslav crisis could not have been avoided, but that it had been necessary to have clear view of what was about to happen and that international institutions made the mistake of not settling the question of rights before recognising certain former federal units.

February 10

Before the mandate of the Force expired, the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council a report in which he summarised the activities of UNPROFOR and presented his recommendations on its future. The Secretary-General noted in his report that UNPROFOR had succeeded in keeping Sarajevo airport open, despite interruptions as a result of hostile military action against humanitarian aircraft. In the period from 3 July 1992 to 31 January 1993, the humanitarian airlift organised by UNHCR under UNPROFOR protection brought in 2,476 aircraft carrying 27,460 tons of food, medicines and other relief goods.

The operation to protect humanitarian convoys throughout the Republic had been persistently thwarted by obstruction, mines, hostile fire and the refusal of the parties on the ground, particularly, but not exclusively, the Bosnian Serb party, to co-operate with UNPROFOR. None the less, from November 1992 until January 1993, a total of some 34,600 tons of relief supplies had been delivered to an estimated 800,000 beneficiaries in 110 locations throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although the ban on military flights in the airspace of Bosnia and Herzegovina had been violated by all three parties on nearly 400 occasions since its imposition, it had achieved its principal purpose of preventing the use of air power in military combat. UNPROFOR observers, using AWACS information made available by NATO, had found no evidence to suggest that any party had flown combat air missions, or conducted hostilities from the air, since the interdiction regime was established by the Council.

UNPROFOR's efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina had been characterised by a regrettable tendency on the part of the host Government to blame it for a variety of shortcomings, whether real or imagined. Criticism of UNPROFOR's performance had largely been directed at its failure to fulfil tasks that the Force had not been mandated, authorised, equipped, staffed or financed to fulfil. There had been a number of attacks on the Force by the Government and by elements answerable to it, both in public statements and declarations and, more seriously, through violence, resulting in several UNPROFOR fatalities.

As to UNPROFOR's mandate in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Secretary-General stated that it might need to be altered significantly when the outcome was known of the ongoing talks led by the Co-Chairmen of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia. US Secretary of State Warren Christopher reported that the US supports the negotiating process coordinated by Vance and Owen and that the US intends to engage more actively in the solution of the Bosnian conflict. US President Bill Clinton decided to appoint Reginald Bartholomew, former US Ambassador to NATO as special envoy of the US in the negotiations of the Bosnian crisis. The United States administration offered to become 'actively and directly engaged' in peace efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and clarified its policy on former Yugoslavia with a series of proposals. Reginald Bartholomew, currently the United States ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, was appointed as the United States special envoy to the international peace talks on former Yugoslavia. The administration expressed serious reservations about certain aspects of the Geneva peace plan drafted in January which, it maintained, rewarded ethnic cleansing. The United States administration proposed that:

- any peace plan had to be accepted by all parties rather than imposed.
- sanctions should be tightened against Serbia, which had to be dissuaded from spreading the war to Kosovo or Macedonia.
- the no-fly zone over Bosnia had to be enforced by a Security Council Resolution.
- if there were a 'viable' agreement on Bosnia, the United States would join with 'the United Nations, NATO and others' to enforce it, if necessary by military force.

Izetbegovic generally praises plan.

February 11

French forces say they will transport Sarajevo women and children across Sarajevo airstrip to safety. Serbs shell airport in retaliation causing 5 French wounded. Fighting in E. Bosnia.

February 12

Boutros-Ghali tells Security Council he may request withdrawal of 14,000 UN troops from Croatia due to renewed fighting there. Bosnian government tells UN it will not accept further aid until eastern Bosnia is also supplied.

Vitaly Churkin, deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation was appointed Russia's representative in the negotiations of the solution to the Yugoslav crisis.

February 13

UN says it will suspend all aid flights into Sarajevo to counter Bosnian governments' decision. UN commander General Morillon calls Bosnian action 'a decision to fast to death'. In Moscow, US ambassador Reginald Bartholomew gets pledge of co-operation from Foreign Minister Kozyrev, but parliamentarians tell him they will not support more sanctions against Serbia.

February 14

Serbs block UN relief convoy for Cerska (Eastern Bosnia). Bosnian Muslims launch attack against Serbs in Ilidza district of Sarajevo (near airport) and possibly Lukavica. Heavy fighting near Bratunac, Gorazde, and Srebrenica.

February 15

Sarajevo's last operating bakery shuts doors due to lack of fuel. 3 killed, 18 wounded in city as result of heavy shelling. city government continues to refuse to distribute UN aid. Heavy fighting continues in Krajina region. Bosnian government now sets death/missing figure at 134,208, 146,158 wounded, and 64,050 as invalids. Serb tanks, mortars pound villages in Eastern Bosnia, killing 19. Cosic denies that Serbs have been systematically raping Muslim women.

February 17

UN calls off relief missions to Muslims saying all sides have made a mockery of humanitarian assistance.

February 19

The Security Council adopted Resolution 807, by which it extended UNPROFOR's mandate for an interim period until 31 March 1993. The Council demanded that the parties and others concerned comply fully with the United Nations peacekeeping plan in Croatia and their other commitments, and refrain from positioning their forces near the UNPAs and in the 'pink zones'. It invited the Secretary-General to take all appropriate measures to strengthen the security of the Force, in particular by providing it with the necessary defensive means.

The Council urged the parties and others concerned to co-operate fully with the Co-Chairmen of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia in the discussions in order to ensure full implementation of the United Nations peace-keeping mandate in Croatia. It also demanded the full and strict observance of all relevant Security Council Resolutions relating to the mandate and operations of UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Boutros-Ghali intervenes in aid crisis and orders aid shipments resumed while rebuking decision of UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata. UN Security Council votes 15-0 to give soldiers in Croatia the right to rearm and fight back when fired upon. Clinton Administration studying plan to use American cargo planes to drop aid to isolated Bosnian towns.

February 21

UN convoy blocked by Serbs finally makes it through to town of Zepa. 18 killed in fighting across Bosnia.

Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in the Rome *La Stampa* said that the biggest mistake was the international recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

February 22

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 808 on the establishment of an international tribunal for the prosecution of persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia since 1991.

February 23

Boutros-Ghali meets with Clinton, agree on air-drops as 'temporary and supplemental to land convoys'. Clinton says 'there's no combat implications whatever'. Bosnian Serb Major General Milan Gvero (deputy commander of Serb forces) states that this will 'bring about the use of massive military force and the escalation of armed clashes'. British welcome plan but decline to join in. US ambassador to UN, Albright says US thinks it already had authorisation for air drops. Critics say the drops from 10,000 feet will be imprecise.

February 24

Yugoslavia military general staff says Clinton plan is intended to create 'deeper and wider US military involvement'. Karadzic says the plan is 'dangerous' and that Muslims will fire on the planes to provoke US action. US says aid will also be dropped over Serb and Croat areas.

February 25

The White House issued an official announcement of President Bill Clinton on the US action for direct delivery of humanitarian aid to endangered population in Eastern Bosnia by parachutes dropped from transport planes. C-130s to fly alone with no military escorts. Bosnian Serb leaders order their troops not to fire on planes.

February 26

New fighting in Sarajevo with Serb shelling of suburb of Stup. Egyptian peacekeeping soldier killed by sniper fire.

February 27

After the expiration of one-year mandate, which he did not extend 'for private reasons', Indian General Satish Nambiar, UNPROFOR commander in former Yugoslavia, officially completed his mission. US prepares for first air supply mission by dropping 1 million leaflets telling Muslims that food is coming. Aid inspected by 2 Serbs, 1 Croat, and 1 Muslim.

February 28

Two US Hercules C-130 transport planes, after taking off from the Rhein-Main air force base near Frankfurt, dropped during the night one million flyers over the territory of Eastern Bosnia, explaining to the population the upcoming humanitarian action.

Ham radio operators say that 7 villages around Cerska overrun by Serbs. Radio operators also say leaflets miss their mark in Zepa.

British newspaper, *Observer*, reports that Russia signed secret arms deal with Serbs in January worth \$360 million to sell Serbs T-55 tanks, anti-aircraft, and anti-missile missiles. Russian technicians and soldiers said to have been sent to operate missile batteries.

March

Fighting intensified in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, with Bosnian Serb paramilitary units attacking several cities in the area, including Srebrenica. The military attacks resulted in a heavy loss of life among the civilian population and severely impeded United Nations humanitarian relief efforts in the area. In mid-March, UNHCR reported that thousands of Muslims were seeking refuge in Srebrenica from surrounding areas which were being attacked and occupied by Serb forces, and that 30 or 40 persons were dying daily from military action, starvation, exposure to cold or lack of medical treatment.

Bosnian Croats and Muslims begin fighting over the roughly 30% of Bosnia not already in Serb hands.

March 1

Serb tanks fight into Cerska area. 10,000 flee fighting and are trapped on slopes of Mt. Udrac. Despite claims by Aspin and Powell that 'many of the bundles' fell in clear drop areas, Pentagon spokesperson says only 1/3rd of aid reaches Muslims, some falling into Serb hands. Intense fighting around Sarajevo area town of Vogosca as Bosnian factions meet at UN in New York for new round of peace talks.

March 2

Newly appointed UNPROFOR commander for the former Yugoslavia, Swedish General Lars Eric Wahlgren, assumed his office. Russia denies *Observer* report on arms sales. Serb forces overrun Cerska, reports of over 500 civilians killed as Serbs take control. US temporarily ends airdrop after 3rd day. Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev says Jeltsin has ordered plans for Russian airdrop. UN says 19 hamlets fall to Serbs in last 3 days. General Mladic refuses to let UN trucks in to evacuate wounded unless Muslims surrender or agree to leave. UN negotiators deplore the continued fighting while talks proceed.

March 3

Serbs shell refugees in Cerska area. Grenade thrown at US embassy in Belgrade. Defenders of Cerska try to regroup around Srebrenica at eastern edge of region. Local Bosnian government officials say American airdrops responsible for pulling defenders off front lines. 17,000-20,000 flee area to Konjevic Polje and say they will surrender to Serbs. Airdrop to Konjevic Polje hits target according to radio operator.

March 4

In open letter to American people, Karadzic attempts to connect World Trade Center bombing to America's exposure to terrorism, later disavows this. Clinton says Karadzic 'made a terrible mistake' and that the American people can't afford to be afraid. UN to be allowed to have access to Cerska region and Mladic says a corridor will be opened.

March 5

Negotiations break down in New York over areas to be given to each group. Izetbegovic and Karadzic did not accept or signed a part of the Vance-Owen peace plan referring to the maps. Clinton proposes tighter sanctions, including total isolation embargo against Yugoslavia as result of the Cerska offensive, but this is opposed by Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania since they would be affected.

March 6

General Morillon, visiting Cerska and Konjevic Polje, says there have been no atrocities. Muslims criticise his comments saying that he only visited Cerska battle area for half an hour.

March 8

Bosnian commander orders counter-attack by government troops against Serbs. Mladic agrees to let women, children, and elderly leave Konjevic Polje and Srebrenica. Last Muslim town in Cerska area, Udrac, falls to Serbs. Shelling of Konjevic Polje continues.

March 9

Serb forces advance on Srebrenica along with continuous shelling. Serbs seize hills around Serb-held town of Bratunac (6 miles north of Srebrenica). WHO doctor says 30 dying daily in Srebrenica.

March 10

US urges allies to accept 50,000 troop NATO intervention force for peacekeeping after cease fire is arranged, but French object to US control and say UN should be in charge. US would possibly contribute 20,000.

March 11

Mrs. Ogata reported to the Security Council that 3.8 million people were receiving assistance in the whole of the former Yugoslavia. In Bosnia and Herzegovina alone, some 2.28 million people, or half of the original population, were beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance from UNHCR, and the situation there was still deteriorating. UNHCR's biggest concern remained gaining humanitarian access to the victims, especially to those in the Government-held enclaves in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina where access had in many instances been denied altogether. She said the enormous suffering and devastation in the former Yugoslavia underscored the critical importance of an immediate cessation of hostilities. Civilians fleeing Serbs from Konjevic Polje flood Srebrenica, which has been under siege for 11 months, bringing population to 60,000. UN General Morillon unable to reach Srebrenica with aid convoy. Muslims in Konjevic Polje detain British members of UN peacekeeping force to protest Serb refusals to allow evacuation of wounded.

Talks between Mitterand, Milosevic and Co-Chairmen of the Peace Conference on former Yugoslavia Vance and Owen on 'peaceful denouement of the Yugoslav crisis, in particular the Bosnian conflict' held in Paris at the initiative of the French President.

March 12

12 British held captive in Konjevic Polje released. Serbs fire on civilians in town killing at least 16, say they were retaliating for Muslims shelling nearby villages. General Morillon detained in Srebrenica by civilians.

March 13

Morillon says he will stay in Srebrenica denying he is being held captive, says he will stay to calm the population, and that Serbs should immediately halt their offensive. Serbs block aid convoys trying to get into Sarajevo, keep Muslim legislators from reaching city for debate on draft peace agreement.

March 14

Srebrenica shelled. Konjevic Polje still under siege.

March 15

Konjevic Polje falls. Morillon gains conditional agreement from Serbs to stop shelling of Srebrenica. Serb military says it will open corridor to Srebrenica to allow evacuation of wounded. Conflicts with Serb chief-of-staff Manojlo Milovanovic who says it won't happen as long as Morillon remains.

March 16

The Secretary-General reported that three aircraft dropped bombs on two villages east of Srebrenica on 13 March, before leaving in the direction of Serbia. It was the first time since the Security Council instituted the 'no-fly zone' in Bosnia and Herzegovina that aircraft were used in combat activity in that country. UNPROFOR was not able to determine to whom the aircraft belonged.

March 17

The Security Council strongly condemned all violations of its relevant Resolutions and underlined the fact that since the beginning of the monitoring operations in early November 1992, the United Nations had reported 465 violations of the 'no-fly zone'. The Council demanded from the Bosnian Serbs an immediate explanation of the violations and particularly of the aerial bombardment of the two villages east of Srebrenica, and requested the Secretary-General to ensure that an investigation was made of the reported possible use of the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to launch air strikes against Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The United Nations issued a revised Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for the period from 1 April to 31 December 1993. The Appeal called for \$840 million as new funding requirements in addition to the nearly \$496 million already spent or committed in the former Yugoslavia since the beginning of the emergency operation in November 1991.

March 18

At the scheduled continuation of negotiations on the solving of the Bosnian crisis at the UN headquarters in New York Izetbegovic told Co-Chairmen on the Conference on Yugoslavia that he would not attend the continuation of negotiations 'because of attack of Serbian forces on Sarajevo and Srebrenica'.

Serbs continue to hold up aid convoy to Srebrenica. Shelling of Sarajevo intensifies along with Serb tank assaults on western part of city. UN Secretary Council agrees in principal to enforce no-fly zone.

March 19

First aid convoy in three months reaches Srebrenica. Serbs shell town hours before convoy, killing 2 children, 2 adults. Serbs also shell Tuzla airport and nearby town of Kalesija. Bosnian government says dead/missing toll in war now 134,000.

March 20

680 wounded Muslims evacuated by UN from Srebrenica to Tuzla. Morillon accompanies convoy to assure safe passage, then returns to Srebrenica. thousands attempting to flee town mob UN forces.

March 21

Morillon negotiates evacuation of Serbs from Tuzla in exchange for more Muslims leaving Srebrenica. France says it will take part in airdrops.

March 22

Karadzic promises to open escape corridor from Srebrenica.

March 23

French and British helicopters to begin lifting out wounded from Srebrenica in response to Karadzic promise. Serbs hold up aid convoys going to Sarajevo, Zepa including French military hospital heading for Srebrenica. Fighting continues near Zadar, Dubrovnik, and in Serb-held Trebinje in south.

March 24

Serbs shell 3 French helicopters trying to evacuate wounded from Srebrenica prompting mission to be halted. Serbs deny responsibility saying UN trying to infiltrate soldiers into Srebrenica to 'save Muslim criminals who committed genocide against the Serb population'.

March 25

Report of the Secretary General on the Activities of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia presented the activities of Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia Vance and Owen during the past seven months, positions of three parties in conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, including the integral text of the Vance-Owen Peace Plan. In his report to the Council, the Secretary-General stated that while some progress had been made in these talks, fundamental differences remained between the two sides. Having said that more time would be needed to bring the negotiations to a meaningful conclusion, he recommended the extension of UNPROFOR's mandate for a further interim period of three months.

Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Yugoslavia Owen and Vance presented a modified peace plan for Bosnia, with minor corrections of provincial maps of provinces and an annex on interim arrangements and offered it to the delegations of Bosnian Serbs, Muslims and Croats for adoption. Boban, representative of Bosnian Croats, and Izetbegovic signed the Plan. Karadzic, Bosnian Serb leader, refused to sign, since he considered the proposed maps unacceptable for Serbs, while the section on the organisation in the interim period, according to Karadzic is a recreation of the former Presidency and government that provoked war and that Serbian people refused.

March 26

The UN Security Council issued a presidency communiqué which stresses that 'the Security Council supports the action of parties that signed the Peace Plan and invites the Bosnian Serbs who failed to do so to sign without delay'.

Agreement was reached in Belgrade on cease-fire in the entire Bosnia-Herzegovina, to come into force on 28 March at 12 noon. The agreement was reached between General Mladic and Milan Gvero, and highest UNPROFOR officials Wahlgren, Morillon, Thornberry and UNHCR envoy Mendiluce. General Wahlgren departed for Zagreb to ensure agreement on the observance of cease-fire by the commanders of other two warring parties.

Serbs declare cease-fire to go into effect on Sunday, March 28. Bosnian Defence Minister, Bozo Rajic, says he has no faith in it and was not told about it in advance.

Clinton says International community growing in impatience with Serbs and that allies are eager to enforce no-fly zone.

March 28

The cease-fire agreement, after being approved by the Muslim and Croatian parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina, came into force and with minor exceptions is observed throughout the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher stated that 'it is not unlikely that some changes would be made in the text of the Vance-Owen Plan toward the demands of the Serbian side'. However, if Serbs

do not sign the Plan, new steps in terms of pressure on the Bosnian Serbs, Serbia and Montenegro will be undertaken in consultation with the allies.

German plane joins US, French planes in dropping aid over Srebrenica. Aid convoy finally reaches town.

March 29

UN convoy that was to take 650 out of Srebrenica instead arrives in Tuzla with 2,346.

March 30

The Security Council, by adopting its Resolution 815, extended the mandate of UNPROFOR for an additional interim period until 30 June 1993. It also decided to reconsider within one month, or at any time at the request of the Secretary-General, UNPROFOR's mandate in light of developments of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia and the situation on the ground. The Council requested the Secretary-General to report to it on how the United Nations peace plan for Croatia could be effectively implemented.

Dobrica Cosic, President of FR Yugoslavia addressed the members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Security of the European Parliament in Brussels, presenting his analysis of the Yugoslav crisis, its causes and ways to the solution.

Bosnian military court condemns to death 2 Serbs who admitted to committing war atrocities.

March 31

The Security Council adopted its Resolution 816, by which it extended the ban on military flights to cover flights by all fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft in the airspace of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Council authorised Member States, seven days after the adoption of the Resolution, acting nationally or through regional arrangements, to take, under the authority of the Security Council and subject to close co-ordination with the Secretary-General and UNPROFOR, 'all necessary measures' in the airspace of Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure compliance with the ban on flights, and proportionate to the specific circumstances and the nature of flights. UNPROFOR's mandate, due to expire on 31st March was extended for a further three months. At the same time, President Tudjman continued to call for the implementation of the 1992 United Nations peace-keeping plan for Serb-occupied Croatian territory.

Despite cease-fire Srebrenica again under attack. UN evacuation of 2,000 to Tuzla results in 4 children being crushed or trampled to death. 1 child rescued by Bosnian Serb soldier after falling off of truck. Bosnian military checkpoint stops convoy for 2 hours and tries to prevent people from leaving the area.

April

Despite strong political pressure from the international community and the Security Council, and the efforts by UNPROFOR and UNHCR in the field, the fighting persisted and the humanitarian situation in the area continued to deteriorate.

The Clinton administration, conscious of public opposition to direct military intervention, started to express the view that the arms embargo on Bosnian Muslims should be lifted while allied air strikes might be used to reinforce sanctions and diplomatic pressure.

April 1

Vitaly Churkin, Russia's special envoy in negotiations on Yugoslavia, talked about the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina with Cosic, President of FR Yugoslavia, Milosevic, President of Serbia, Radoje Kotic, federal Prime Minister, and Vladislav Jovanovic, federal minister for Foreign Affairs.

Serbs refuse to allow new aid convoys into Srebrenica, but say they will let people leave. UN says it will not participate in this form of ethnic cleansing. Clinton urges Serbs to sign peace plan, calls ethnic cleansing an 'outrage'.

April 2

NATO endorsed the enforcement of a United Nations-imposed no-fly zone over Bosnia, but it laid down strict rules of engagement with Serbian military aircraft, with the provision that those violating the ban would first be warned off and only if the warning were ignored would they then be shot at. Yugoslavia Prime-Minister, Radoje Kotic, calls no-fly enforcement a 'major error that could lead to an escalation of war'.

April 3

Bosnian government says it will end cease-fire if West doesn't force Serbs to sign peace plan. UN says Serbs shell Srebrenica, wounding two of their officers, violating cease-fire.

Bosnian Serb parliament, meeting in Bileca, reject Karadzic's proposal that the Vance-Owen plan is a good basis for agreement. The Assembly did not accept the part of the plan on maps, supported the continuation of the peace process through direct negotiations of parties in conflict, condemned the policy of pressures and punishment and warned that it would stop all co-operation with international institutions if such policy of punishment for the Serbian People continued.

April 4

The Government of FR Yugoslavia reviewed the results of the session of the Assembly of Republika Srpska in Bileca. The Government believes that the adopted Declaration confirms that Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina are firmly committed to continue the peace process, that the Vance-Owen Plan is a good base for further negotiations and that remaining unsettled issues referring to maps need not jeopardise the peace process.

Muslim forces bar further evacuation of Srebrenica to prevent it being weakened under Serb pressure. Government reports at least 23 deaths from artillery and small-arms fire in previous 24 hours.

April 5

Srebrenica under intense attack. Bosnian government military leader boycotts peace talks at Sarajevo airport due to continuing attacks on Srebrenica. US says it will press for lifting arms embargo. Western European Union agrees to send patrol boats, police, and custom officials to Danube to enforce UN sanctions.

April 6

Officials in Srebrenica continue to refuse refugee evacuation. On anniversary of war Milosevic warns that sanctions only make the situation worse. Talks held with Greek Prime-Minister Mitsotakis. Karadzic to head to Moscow for talks with Russian hard-liners.

Delegation of the Republic of Croatia and Republika Srpska Krajina signed in Geneva the Agreement on the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 802. The Agreements stipulates cessation of hostilities, withdrawal of armed forces of the Republic of Croatia to the demarcation lines before the outbreak of hostilities on 22 January 1993 and right of all for civilian use of the Maslenica bridge, Zemunik airport, Perucca dam and side roads. This agreement is due to come into force when Co-Chairmen on the Conference on Yugoslavia receive assurances of acceptance from all parties.

April 7

Leaders in Srebrenica approve evacuations. Morillon goes back to help deploy UN peacekeepers, Serbs express disapproval of his efforts. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Vitaly Churkin meets Milosevic and Karadzic in Belgrade with reported new peace initiative.

April 8

The North Atlantic Council approved NATO's plans for the enforcement of the ban and notified the UN of their willingness to undertake the operation.

World Court appeals to Yugoslavia to end genocide and take responsibility for actions of troops inside Bosnia (Russian justice on court casts lone dissenting vote). Court does not allow for lifting of International arms embargo for Bosnia-Herzegovina. At UN Russia refuses tougher American-sponsored sanctions against Yugoslavia. Morillon unable to enter Srebrenica due to crowd of angry Serbs. Serbs searching UN relief truck claim to have found ammunition hidden beneath flour sacks, TV Serbia on hand to film the discovery. UN says it was placed there to discredit UN mission.

The Secretary-General reported to the Security Council that representatives of the Government of Croatia and the Serb local authorities had signed, on 6 April, an agreement regarding the implementation of Resolution 802.

The agreement was to enter into force when the Co-Chairmen of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia received from both parties assurances regarding the stationing of police in the areas from which the Croatian Government's armed forces were withdrawn, and their agreement that UNPROFOR should exclusively fulfil all police functions in those areas during an interim period. The Croats orally gave that assurance at the time of signature. The Serb assurance required the approval of their Assembly. That approval was not forthcoming and the agreement therefore did not enter into force.

Macedonia is admitted to the United Nations under its provisional name 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'.

The German constitutional court in Karlsruhe authorises the participation of German military in NATO's AWACS operations, controlling air space in order to help apply the no-fly zone over Bosnia for Serbian aircraft.

April 9

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Security Council a letter from the Secretary General of NATO informing him that the North Atlantic Council had adopted the 'necessary arrangements' to ensure compliance with the ban on military flights and that it was prepared to begin the operation at noon GMT on 12 April 1993. Wörner also reported that France, the Netherlands, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States had offered to make aircraft available for the operation. In order to commence the enforcement on time, aircraft from France, the Netherlands and the United States were initially deployed in the region and liaison cells were established at UNPROFOR's headquarters in Zagreb and in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kiseljak). In addition, UNPROFOR would send a liaison team to the command headquarters of the NATO countries concerned.

The UNPROFOR Force Commander assessed the additional resources required to implement the agreement and recommended that UNPROFOR be augmented by two mechanised infantry battalions of some 900 all ranks each, one engineer company of up to 150 troops all ranks, and 50 additional military observers. The Secretary-General recommended that, once the agreement entered into force, the Security Council approve the recommended changes to UNPROFOR's strength and mandate.

April 11

Clinton advisory group sent to Bosnia in February urges Administration in draft report to seriously consider use of force saying humanitarian efforts of little utility if the conflict itself is not ended. Report encourages creation of 'safe Areas' in areas where shelling of local populations is purposeful, and will require force to protect these areas. Pentagon and AID suggested to help UN forces.

UN Security Council accepted Russia's proposal to postpone voting on introduction of new stricter sanctions toward FR Yugoslavia, to give opportunity to the Bosnian Serbs to sign the Peace Plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

April 12

NATO fighters from France, the Netherlands and the United States started to enforce the 'no-fly' zone as authorised by Resolution 816 .

In the United Nations Security Council, the United States was instrumental in bringing about a decision to postpone the vote on tighter sanctions against Serbia until after the Russian referendum on 25th April, conscious that President Jeltsin was facing hard-line opposition from pro-Serbian conservatives. Serbs shell Srebrenica, killing 56 (including 15 children) in defiance. Sarajevo also shelled. French plane crashes in Adriatic due to mechanical problems. Serb General Mladic refuses to let UN soldiers enter Srebrenica (Morillon wants to put 150 Canadians in town to prevent Serb attack).

April 13

UN officials in Bosnia denounce previous day's Serb attack on Srebrenica in uncharacteristically harsh terms saying it was an atrocity. Karadzic says shelling was response to Muslim violations of cease-fire. Serb Deputy Commander of militia denies there was any shelling and says Muslims faked explosions to make UN believe there was an attack. 800 refugees leave Srebrenica bringing total to 8,000 in recent weeks. 8 killed in new attack after convoy leaves. 7 children die during convoy trip to Tuzla. Margaret Thatcher blasts western states for their responses to Serb aggression calling it appeasement.

April 14

US special envoy Reginald Bartholemew, in Belgrade for talks with Milosevic, warns Serbs to stop the war now or US will press for lifting arms embargo regarding Bosnia. Russians convince Security Council to put off new sanctions until April 26 (after Russian referendum). Serb attacks against Srebrenica now sporadic, Karadzic continues to deny that Serbs shelled town on Monday. Bosnian and Croat troops fight in central Bosnia.

April 15

Gallup Poll finds that 61% of Britons want International force sent to Bosnia to impose peace, and 67% want British troops included.

April 16

The Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, adopted Resolution 819, in which it demanded that all parties treat Srebrenica and its surroundings as a 'safe Area' which should be free from any armed attack or any other hostile act. It demanded the immediate withdrawal of Bosnian Serb paramilitary units from areas surrounding Srebrenica and the cessation of armed attacks against that town. The Council requested the Secretary-General to take steps to increase the presence of UNPROFOR in Srebrenica and to arrange for the safe transfer of the ill and wounded, and demanded

the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance to all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular to the civilian population of Srebrenica.

By other provisions of the Resolution, the Council condemned and rejected the deliberate actions of the Bosnian Serb party to force the evacuation of civilians from Srebrenica and other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina in its campaign of 'ethnic cleansing'. It also decided to send a mission of Council members to ascertain, firsthand, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Clinton now says that the US should consider intervening in ways previously thought unacceptable. Armed conflict between the Serbian and Muslim forces broke out in Srebrenica. Serb forces said to be only 1,000 yards from centre of Srebrenica as attacks continue. Over 50 persons were killed. This most serious violation of cease-fire in Bosnia-Herzegovina, according to some sources, was provoked by Serbs, who shelled Srebrenica with heavy artillery. According to the report by General Lars Eric Wahlgren, UNPROFOR commander in the former Yugoslavia, submitted to the UN headquarters, cease-fire was first violated by the Muslim forces, causing return fire from the Serbian forces stationed in the vicinity of Srebrenica.

Renewed fighting between Croats and Muslims in central Bosnia.

April 17

General Ratko Mladic, commander of the Republika Srpska Army and General Sefer Halilovic, commander of the Bosnian Muslim forces, in the presence of General Lars Eric Wahlgren as a mediator, at the meeting held at the Sarajevo airport, concluded an agreement on complete cease-fire in the Srebrenica area and demilitarisation of Srebrenica, i.e. that Muslim forces turn over all their weapons to UNPROFOR within 72 hours. A Canadian unit within UNPROFOR was appointed to monitor the implementation of the agreement.

Last attack by Serbs kills dozens, estimates for total dead reach 5,000. 150-man Canadian force to be allowed into Srebrenica to demilitarise city.

The UN Security Council approved its Resolution 820, which strengthened the previous Resolutions 713, 757 and 787 to include additional restrictions to the merchant traffic to and from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) if Bosnian Serbs within nine days fail to sign the Vance-Owen peace plan. The Resolution contains a detailed description of all measures that will be undertaken toward FR Yugoslavia, and steps that would ensure strict enforcement of the decision on the blockade of FR Yugoslavia. The Resolution invites all states to strictly enforce these measures and calls upon them to bring proceedings against persons and entities violating the mentioned measures. In the Resolution, the Security Council further undertakes 'after all three Bosnian parties have accepted the peace plan and on the basis of verified evidence, provided by the Secretary General, that the Bosnian Serb party is co-operating in good faith in effective implementation of the plan, to review all measures in the present Resolution and its other relevant Resolutions with a view to gradually lifting them.'

The Government of FR Yugoslavia issued a statement commenting the Security Council Resolution 820, in which it 'concludes with regrets that the Security Council, under the pressure of some of its members and under the influence of biased information, decided to increase pressure on FRY'.

Denying some statements in the Resolution and explaining the activities undertaken by FRY toward 'cessation of armed conflict and establishment of just and lasting peace', the Government of FRY stresses that it 'remains firmly devoted to peaceful policy and political overcoming of the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis on the basis of equal recognition of legitimate rights of all three constituent peoples. In this sense, FRY will continue to closely co-operate with the UN and its representatives.'

On the occasion of Resolution 820 Karadzic said that if announced sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro are implemented, Bosnian Serbs 'will abandon peace negotiations and conference on the former Bosnia-Herzegovina'.

British Labour Party leader, John Smith, calls for bombing Serbian targets. Bartholemew leaves London frustrated by the Prime-Minister John Major's downplaying military options.

April 18

Lord Owen says if Bosnian Serbs refuse to sign plan he would personally favour bombing Serbian positions. French, Italian, and Belgian government officials now saying military force may be necessary. Croatian forces (HVO) bomb mosque in town of Vitez, massacre villagers. British peacekeepers confined to barracks due to ferocity of attacks which leave 150 dead.

April 20

Clinton Administration holds top-level meetings with Foreign political advisors, Democrats, and Jewish leaders to try to arrive at a Bosnian policy. Senator Judiciary Committee chair Joseph Biden calls for immediate air strikes against Serb artillery. Cease-fire agreed on between Croats and Muslims, but does not hold.

Two Nato fighter aircraft patrolling the no-fly zone investigated a radar contact near Banja Luka. The contact landed before visual identification could be performed.

Violent conflicts in central and western Bosnia near Vitez, Kiseljak, Jablanica, Mostar and Konjic between members of the Croatian Defence Council and Muslim forces.

April 21

UNPROFOR Commander reported that 170 troops, civilian police and military observers had been deployed in Srebrenica to collect weapons, ammunition, mines, explosives and combat supplies and that by noon on 21 April they had successfully demilitarised the town.

Croat-Muslim fighting intensifies in Travnik-Vitez-Zenica-Kiseljak area. Karadzic refuses to meet with Owen in Belgrade.

April 22 to 27

As requested in Resolution 819, the Security Council's fact-finding mission, composed of representatives of France, Hungary, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Russian Federation and Venezuela, visited the region.

April 22

The UN Security Council discussed the latest hostilities between Muslim and Croatian units. It adopted a presidency communiqué, expressing 'grave concern and consternation of the Council' and 'most strongly condemning this new outburst of violence which jeopardises all efforts to maintain cease-fire and achieve political solution of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and therefore urges Bosnian government forces and Croatian paramilitary units to immediately stop hostilities and strictly observe the cease-fire agreement.

Six NATO fighter aircraft patrolling the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina in Operation DENY FLIGHT investigated three radar contacts. The first radar contact was investigated by two Dutch F-16s but the aircraft landed before visual identification could be performed. The other two contacts could also not be visually identified.

April 23

Declaration of the Federal Yugoslav Assembly assessed sanctions as 'an act which constitutes a direct attack on the sovereignty of FR Yugoslavia and grave infringement of all international legal and political documents on human rights and humanitarian norms'. The Assembly emphasises that FRY is not a belligerent party in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and that when deciding to tighten the existing sanctions and to impose new ones, the Security Council utterly neglected Yugoslavia's continuing

peace-finding efforts and contributions. The Assembly considers that it is most important now to establish peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina and to end negotiations on all open issues of the Vance-Owen Plan.

At the session of the Assembly of Republika Srpska in Novi Grad, the deputies condemned UN Security Council Resolution 820 as 'an unjust and genocide act'. The Assembly did not take a definite stand toward the Vance-Owen Plan, and instead authorised Karadzic to demand in direct contact with Owen certain concessions and find solution that would be acceptable to Serbs. Karadzic says concessions must be made.

Clinton says bombing Serb artillery should be considered to halt Serbs, but not by acting unilaterally. Senator Minister Leader Dole says arms embargo should be lifted.

April 24

Karadzic rejects compromise on peace plan contending that Serbs need a corridor in the north to connect Serbian gains and stated that 'the maps are so bad that they cannot be corrected, they must be changed'. Owen angrily leaves meeting with Karadzic as Serb leader refused to compromise. New truce and joint commission established between Croats and Muslims, but fighting continues around Busovaca.

At the joint session in Novi Grad, deputies of Republika Srpska and Republika Srpska Krajina decided on the establishment of the common assembly of RS and RSK, which represents 'a further step toward unification of western Serbian republics'.

April 25

In the talks in Belgrade with participation of Presidents Cosic, Milosevic and Bulatovic, Owen and Karadzic, the latter did not accept the suggestion by the three Presidents to sign the corrected Vance-Owen Peace Plan. Final meeting between Owen and Karadzic a failure. Karadzic travels to Bijelina to report to Bosnian Serb parliament blaming the situation on Vance-Owen plan.

European governments with troops involved in United Nations operations on the ground were opposed to such steps and EU Foreign Ministers took the view that lifting the arms embargo might escalate and prolong the conflict. Only Germany supported lifting the arms ban. The United Kingdom government stated that limited air strikes on Serb supply and communication lines would remain as the 'least worst' option.

At the same meeting, EU ministers reinforced their commitment to make tougher United Nations sanctions work by agreeing to double the number of EU sanctions monitors.

NATO fighter aircraft patrolling the no-fly zone investigated three radar contacts. Two Dutch F-16s were vectored to the first contact. The other contacts were also investigated by Dutch F-16s.

April 26

After unsuccessful talks and refusal of Karadzic to sign the Vance-Owen Plan, Presidents Cosic, Milosevic and Bulatovic early in the morning (2 a.m.) via Federal Foreign Minister Jovanovic, sent a message to the Assembly of Republika Srpska in Bijeljina in which they presented the essence of changes to the Peace Plan agreed with Owen and the obtained guarantees. The three Presidents expressed their 'firm belief that the remaining unsettled issues of the so-called Interim Arrangements and maps could be solved more successfully through the procedure set out in the Plan, than by its refusal and continuation of confrontation and bloodshed.' 'At the time when equality and right to decision-making by consensus are guaranteed to you as a constituent nation, as well as the proposed territories, you have no right, reads the message, to endanger 10 million citizens of Yugoslavia and expose them to international sanctions for the sake of the remaining open issues, which are far less significant than the achieved results.'

Slightly before the deadline set by the Security Council Resolution 820 the Assembly of Republika Srpska unanimously refused the demand for signing the Vance-Owen Peace Plan. The Assembly issued an appeal to the Serbian people, calling on them to 'resolutely stand guard of the homeland, close the ranks and bring struggle to the close'. The Assembly decided to schedule a referendum at which the citizens of Republika Srpska would have their say about the Vance-Owen Plan.

The new regime of blockade and economic and political sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia automatically came into force at 6 AM on 26 April 1993.

Clinton signs executive order freezing American business interests in Serbia and Montenegro, and all Yugoslavia assets in US.

April 27

The Secretary-General reported to the Council that on 24 March the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) had been requested to provide any information relevant to the incidents east of Srebrenica. The only response received was a note verbale conveying a statement by the Government of that country, in which it stated that 'airplanes and helicopters of the Air Forces of the Army of Yugoslavia have not violated the airspace of Bosnia and Herzegovina since the no-fly zone came into effect'.

At a meeting with NATO senior military officials in Brussels, General Powell made it clear that the United States government would not contemplate military action without specific authority from the United Nations. On the same occasion, the Chairman of NATO's Military Committee insisted that western political leaders should first specify their political objectives in Bosnia before advocating any kind of military action.

New Serb offensive opened in NW Bosnia in Bihac pocket. 1,000 Serbs with tanks invade region from across Croatian border. UN General Wahlgren, commander of Protection Force instructs French battalion to protect the Muslim population by standing on top of houses if necessary to prevent them from being targeted. UN official speculates that Serb force is made up of old men who want to keep Milosevic from trading Krajina region for Slavonia.

Russian President Jeltsin stated that Russia 'will not protect those who confront the entire international community' and that 'the party which refuses to endorse the peace plan documents must assume the burden of responsibility'. Jeltsin expressed his hope that Bosnian Serbs, unlike their Assembly, will opt at the referendum for a 'better balanced solution'. US Secretary of State Christopher tells Congress that he is 'personally quite prepared to see the US use force' but only under 'severe tests'.

A Dutch F-16 noted a slow moving radar contact, which was confirmed by a second Dutch F-16.

There was no positive identification. The second radar contact was also investigated by Dutch F-16s with a similar result.

April 28

At a press conference in Belgrade, President of FR Yugoslavia Cosic proposed urgent convoking of an international conference on Bosnia-Herzegovina, with participation of three belligerent parties, FR Yugoslavia, Croatia, heads of state or government of the five permanent Security Council members and of India, Egypt, Brazil and Zimbabwe. Secretary General of the United Nations and Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Yugoslavia should also participate.

With majority vote, the Assembly of Serbia adopted as its Declaration the message sent on 26 April by three Presidents Cosic, Milosevic and Bulatovic, to the deputies of the Assembly of Republika Srpska. The also appealed to the deputies of the Republika Srpska to 'once again, without haste and with additional information, reconsider their decision'.

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 821, reaffirming that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) cannot continue automatically the membership of the former Socialist Federal

Republic of Yugoslavia in the United Nations, and therefore recommended to the General Assembly that FR Yugoslavia shall not participate in the work of the Economic and Social Council.

The North Atlantic Council decided to support the implementation of Resolution 820, prohibiting all commercial traffic from entering the territorial sea of the Federal republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) except on a case-by-case basis by the Committee established by Resolution 724 or in case of force majeure.

April 29

Karadzic and Krajisnik, the Speaker of the Assembly of Republika Srpska, accepted the proposal by Milosevic and the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia to schedule a session of the Assembly of Republika Srpska, at which all aspects of the proposed Vance-Owen plan would be discussed. The session was scheduled for 5 May 1993.

President of FR Yugoslavia Cosic sent special messages to US President Bill Clinton and President of Russia Jeltsin. Messages refer to the diplomatic initiative of Cosic to convene an international conference on peaceful solution to the crisis in former Bosnia-Herzegovina.

UN Secretary General informed the President of the Security Council on the initiative put forward by the Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Yugoslavia Owen and Vance to convene an international conference for the solution of the Bosnian crisis in Athens, on 1 May 1993.

The NATO maritime forces operating in the Adriatic Sea started enforcing Resolution 820.

April 30

US President Clinton, after long consultations with political and military advisers, decided on 'possible military engagement' in Bosnia-Herzegovina unless peaceful solution to the Bosnian crisis is reached. Secretary of State Christopher set out on a several-day 'ally enlisting' mission for President Clinton's plan. The trip includes visits to London, Moscow, Paris, Madrid, Rome, Brussels and Bonn.

April 30

Karadzic says he won't sign accord unless concessions are made to Serbs.

May

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was further aggravated when intense fighting between the Muslim and Bosnian Croat forces erupted in central Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite the calls by the Security Council, efforts of the Co-Chairmen of the Steering Committee and UNPROFOR, hostilities between the two former allies continued. The fighting intermittently blocked the main supply routes for humanitarian assistance into northern Bosnia, and further restricted the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR and UNHCR in the area. In this connection, UNPROFOR and UNHCR initiated a humanitarian 'Operation Lifeline' to keep the main routes open to help ensure the survival of up to 2.7 million people in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the winter.

May 1

Thorvald Stoltenberg, a former Norwegian Foreign Minister, replaced Vance as UN Representative and Co-Chairman of ICFY.

More shelling of Sarajevo kills 8. Christopher goes to Europe for consultations with allies, says US response involves strategic interests, and that US is now willing to use air power but only with European support.

May 1-2

An international conference on the Bosnian crisis held in Athens. In addition to the host, Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis, the participants included Presidents Cosic, Milosevic, Bulatovic and Tudjman, leaders of three ethnic communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina Karadzic, Boban and Izetbegovic. Newly appointed Co-Chairman of the Conference on Yugoslavia Stoltenberg, and US and Russian envoys for the former Yugoslavia Bartholomew and Churkin joined Owen and Vance, who convened the conference. At the end of the meeting and under strong pressure Karadzic signed the Vance-Owen Peace Plan, on condition that the Assembly of Republika Srpska at its session on 5 May supports the decision.

May 2

Christopher meets with British Prime-Minister Major, but Britain is opposed to arming Muslims. Serb offensives continue throughout Bosnia particularly in Gorazde.

May 3

In a press release issued after the UN Security Council session it was stated that 'members of the Security Council welcome the success achieved in Athens and the fact that now all three parties in the Bosnian conflict accepted the Vance-Owen Peace Plan'. The statement further emphasised that the Security Council will review further preparatory actions necessary for the implementation of the Plan in practice.

May 4

The Federal Government of FR Yugoslavia assessed the signing of the Vance-Owen Plan by Karadzic as 'a reasonable and thoughtful decision', expecting that it would be ratified by the parliament of Republika Srpska.

Croatian side agreed with the subsequently demanded guarantee of the delegation of the Republika Srpska Krajina, which was its condition to accept the Agreement on the implementation of the Security Council Resolution 802. If the Assembly of the Srpska Krajina adopts the signed Agreement, cease-fire will come into force within four days, and within 10 days the Croatian forces would withdraw to the positions prior to 22 January.

May 5

Co-Chairman of the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia Vance turned over his duty to the newly appointed Co-Chairman, Stoltenberg.

May 5-6

The Assembly of Republika Srpska, held on Mt. Jahorina, discussed the verification of Karadzic's signature on the Vance-Owen Peace Plan. The session was attended by Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis, Presidents Cosic, Milosevic and Bulatovic, who appealed to the deputies to accept the Plan. After a 17-hour debate, in early hours of 6 May by vote of 51-2 (12 abstentions), and despite warnings from Mitsotakis, Milosevic and others, the deputies refused to endorse the signature. The Assembly confirmed its earlier Bijeljina decision to hold a referendum on 15 and 16 May.

May 6

Having considered the Security Council's fact-finding mission report and recommendations, the Security Council adopted Resolution 824, in which it declared that, in addition to Srebrenica, Sarajevo

and other such threatened areas, the towns of Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, Bihac and their surroundings, should be treated as Safe Areas. The Council declared that in those areas armed attacks must cease, all Bosnian Serb military or paramilitary units must withdraw and all parties must allow UNPROFOR and the international humanitarian agencies free and unimpeded access to all Safe Areas. It authorised the strengthening of UNPROFOR's mandate by an additional 50 military observers to monitor the humanitarian situation in those areas.

The Government of Serbia stressed that 'the decision of the Assembly of Republika Srpska to shift the final decision on the Vance-Owen Plan to the people is an irresponsible act'. The Government assessed that since conditions for peace have been created, economic exhaustion of Serbia is becoming unacceptable and unjustified. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia decided to seal its border to Bosnia for strategic materials, except food and medicines.

Clinton calls Serb decision 'grave disappointment', and referendum a delaying tactic to consolidate gains. Says Yugoslavia decision to cut off all but humanitarian supplies to Bosnian Serbs a 'good start'.

May 8

Kontic, Prime Minister of FR Yugoslavia, sent a letter to the UN Secretary General, Security Council President, Prime Ministers of the five permanent Security Council members, Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Former Yugoslavia Owen and Stoltenberg and President of the Turkish government Demirel. Kontic emphasised that 'consequences of the possible military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina would be disastrous and unforeseeable' and therefore appealed for resistance to the 'risky war option' and that all efforts and influence should be focused to the continuation of the negotiating process.

General Mladic, commander of the Republika Srpska Army and General Sefer Halilovic, commander of the army in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the presence of General Morillon, signed a cease-fire agreement on the entire territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina along the demarcation lines between the Serb and Muslim forces. The cease-fire and cessation of all armed activities came into force on 9 May at 12 noon. They also signed an agreement on the establishment of Safe Areas in Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde, in accordance with the Security Council Resolution 824.

Clinton tells Christopher to begin new round of negotiations with European allies. Danish Prime-Minister Rasmussen supports Clinton's call for action. Serb forces attack Zepa despite designation by UN as Safe Area. UN gets Muslims and Serbs to accept demilitarisation of Srebrenica and Zepa. Morillon to send troops to Zepa and Gorazde.

May 9

Truce goes into effect between Muslims and Serbs in E.Bosnia, but new fighting breaks out in Mostar as Croats attack Muslims and evict women and children from their homes. Izetbegovic calls on Tudjman to help resolve conflict, says that 100 trucks with troops from Croatia heading to Bosnian town of Kojnice. Croats attacking to get more land before UN peace plan goes into effect. UN military observers reach Zepa, find evidence of massacres, town reportedly nearly deserted.

May 10

The Security Council held an emergency meeting to discuss the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina after the offensive of Croatian paramilitary formations against the Bosnian Muslims in the Mostar region. In a communiqué the Council expressed grave concern and most severe condemnation of this action by the Bosnian Croats and demanded that hostilities in the Mostar region stop immediately and the Croatian paramilitary formations withdraw.

UN peacekeeping force of 100 reaches Zepa where fighting has ebbed. Croats carrying out ethnic cleansing in Mostar, UN reports.

May 11

Croats continue their attack in Muslim old quarter of Mostar, attempt to push Muslims to east bank of Neretva River. Izetbegovic appeals to UN to make Mostar a Safe Area. Milosevic tells Bosnian Serbs they should cancel planned referendum and ratify peace accord, but Serb leaders reject request. Bosnian Foreign Minister Silajdzic calls on UN to remove its 9,000 troops/aid workers from Bosnia.

May 12

Cease-fire agreed on by Muslims and Croats at Medjugorje, but fighting continues in Mostar. UN aid operations chief says 'Croats have to understand that the International community will not accept a second wave of ethnic cleansing'.

May 13

Serbs launch new attack on Brcko which is still partially under Muslim control. EU warns Croatia that it could face sanctions if offensive in Bosnia is not stopped. Muslim and Croat troops refuse to return to barracks in Mostar.

May 14

Serb leaders renew pressure on Bosnian Serbs to approve referendum. Joint session of deputies of assemblies of FR Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro, was held in Belgrade. Originally intended as the joint session of deputies of five parliaments, the meeting was attended by a three-member delegation of the Assembly of Republika Srpska and about 30 deputies of the Assembly of the Republika Srpska Krajina without the decision-making mandate.

Heavy shelling around Brcko, UN condemns Serbs for 'extremely serious' violations of cease-fire. Sniping in Mostar, Croat-Muslim clashes in Vitez. France proposes to Secretary Council international army of 40,000 to occupy parts of Bosnia. Russia proposes Secretary Council meeting of Foreign Minister to discuss the war.

May 15

Serbs apparently have taken over Zepa.

May 15-16

In a referendum, the Bosnian Serbs reject the Vance-Owen plan with a 96% majority and vote in favour of the independence of the 'serbian Republic'. According to the official report, 92% of registered voters went to the polls, of which 96% voted against the Vance-Owen Plan. The same percentage approved the second question on the referendum: the independence and freedom of association of Republika Srpska with other states.

May 16

Bosnian Serb commander Mladic with Croatian counterpart, General Mlivoje Petkovic, in the presence of General Morillon, signed at Sarajevo airport an agreement on cessation of hostilities, exchange of prisoners and killed Serb and Croatian soldiers. The cease-fire is due to come into force on 18 May. Lord Owen appeals for thousands more peacekeepers for Safe Areas. Serbs continue attacks around Brcko, TANJUG says Muslim-led forces counter-attack, inflicting heavy Serb casualties. Karadzic announces that the Vance-Owen plan is dead and 'Bosnia never existed, and it will never exist'.

May 17

Clinton Administration rejects Russian plan for Foreign Minister meeting, which allies support. British Defence Secretary Rifkind says new actions (intervention) must not jeopardise gains already made by 15,000 UN troops. Clinton National Security Council officials meet but fail to agree on options for US. Fighting in Mostar.

May 18

At the meeting of delegations of the Republic of Croatia and the Republika Srpska Krajina in Topusko an agreement was reached on cease-fire and truce, which is due to come into force on 20 May. The two delegations also agreed to set up expert teams for negotiations of economic issues.

Owen gets Izetbegovic and Croat leader Boban to agree to implement Vance-Owen plan. Fighting lulls in Mostar.

May 19

UN human rights investigator Mazowiecki criticises peace plan for being used for ethnic cleansing. New fighting between Croats and Muslims in Central Bosnia, also between Muslims and Serbs around Brcko.

May 20

US President Bill Clinton stated that the US is not ready to send troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina 'to fight on one side in the civil war'. The main aims of the US are to prevent the spread of conflict and to protect innocent population from ethnic cleansing, and all actions will be undertaken through and in the agreement with the United Nations.

Serb militia commander in Krajina fails to show up for UN-mediated cease-fire. Serbs shell Zadar area for second day.

May 21

Yugoslavia President Cosic rejects UN monitoring of border with Bosnia saying it will threaten Yugoslavia sovereignty and national dignity, and that Yugoslavia must be trusted. Fighting around Brcko, Maglaj. Muslims and Croats continue to battle in Central Bosnia.

May 22

The Bosnian Serbs pronounce their military victory, controlling 70% of Bosnian territory. The United States, Russia, France, the United Kingdom and Spain establish in Washington a 'joint action plan'. The 'joint action plan', rejecting the military option, plans the creation of six security zones (Bihac, Gorazde, Sarajevo, Srebrenica, Tuzla and Zepa) in order to protect the Muslim civilian population and the deployment of international observers at the frontier between Serbia and Bosnia in order to control Serbia's support to the Bosnian Serbs.

Bosnian leaders criticise Safe Area idea as establishing reservations for Muslims. 13 killed in artillery attacks on Sarajevo. Secretary of State Christopher says European caution preventing Clinton from taking tougher measures.

May 23

Izetbegovic rejects Safe Area plan as 'absolutely unacceptable and disastrous' and invited the people to unite and fight with all permitted means for the protection of an independent, sovereign and integral Bosnia-Herzegovina'. Karadzic says plan is 'more realistic' and that 'the Bosnian Serbs support the plan

of five ministers, since it renders possible the continuation of the peace process'. Praises Clinton for not involving US in another Vietnam with air strikes.

May 24

51 Islamic countries denounce Safe Area plan because it fails to authorise military force to roll back Serb gains. Karadzic now says he is opposed to UN sending troops into so-called Bosnian Serb Republic.

Russia's special envoy for former Yugoslavia Churkin arrived to Belgrade explaining the Action Program for the achievement of peace in Bosnia. President of FR Yugoslavia Cosic. He said that the document is a major step in the peace process, that the most important thing now is to stop the war and bloodshed and immediately set out to find political solutions for the Bosnian conflict. However, Cosic also pointed to negative aspects of the plan, above all the determination to continue the enforcement of sanctions toward Yugoslavia.

The Cabinet of the Croatian President Tudjman stated that the action plan cannot be considered a sufficiently effective model for stopping the war and establishing the fair peace. The warning to Croatia that sanctions may be imposed because of its assistance to the Bosnian Croats 'obviously serves as an excuse for the failure of the international community and for shifting responsibility to those who did not contribute to the present situation'.

May 25

NATO defence ministers supported the Action plan as a short-term solution to stopping the Bosnian conflict, with the assessment that long-term and permanent peace depends on the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan.

Serbs continue attacks on Maglaj.

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 827, establishing 'an international tribunal for the sole purpose of prosecuting persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia between 1 January 1991 and a date to be determined by the Security Council upon the restoration of peace'.

State Department official says US deliberately letting Europeans take lead on Bosnia due to constraints on US power.

May 26

Izetbegovic refuses to go along with new UN plan saying this will create ghettos for Muslims within country. Serbian Orthodox Church urges ouster of nationalist leaders saying they are to blame for war, but also calling for a government which will unite all Serbs even in neighbouring republics.

May 28

Serb commander Mladic backs out of talks in Sarajevo saying Muslims are attacking Serb positions around Srebrenica.

June 2

The Yugoslav President, Dobrica Cosic, is accused by the Yugoslav Federal Parliament of conducting an independent foreign policy and removed from office.

June 4

The Security Council, by its Resolution 836, acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, further expanded the mandate of UNPROFOR to enable it to protect the Safe Areas, including to deter attacks against them, to monitor the cease-fire, to promote the withdrawal of military or paramilitary units other than those of the Bosnian Government and to occupy some key points on the ground. The Council authorised UNPROFOR, acting in self-defence, to take necessary measures, including the use of force, in reply to bombardments against the Safe Areas or to armed incursion into them or in the event of any deliberate obstruction to the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR or of protected humanitarian convoys. The Council also decided that Member States, acting nationally or through regional arrangements, might take, under its authority, all necessary measures, through the use of air power, in and around the Safe Areas, to support UNPROFOR.

June 8

At a meeting in Luxembourg, the Foreign Ministers of the EU declare their unanimous support for the proposal for 'safe Areas'. The North Atlantic Council and the WEU Council hold their first joint session on the surveillance operations for enforcement of the embargo, conducted by WEU and NATO in the Adriatic since June 1992. The two Councils approve a unique arrangement for the command of these operations: delegation of operational control of the NATO/WEU Task Force via SACEUR to the Commander of Allied Naval Forces, Southern Europe, who will conduct operations to secure compliance with United Nations sanctions on behalf of NATO and WEU.

June 9

Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Yugoslavia Owen and Stoltenberg, talked in Belgrade with President of Serbia Milosevic and stated that the world is not giving up the Vance-Owen peace plan, but it is liable to changes if all three belligerent parties in Bosnia agree.

June 10

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 838, requesting the Secretary General to submit to the Council as soon as possible a further report on options for the deployment of international observers on the borders of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, giving priority to the border between the Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to monitor effectively the implementation of the relevant Security Council Resolutions on ban on import, export and transshipment through the areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina under the control of the Bosnian Serb forces. At the meeting of the NATO foreign ministers in Athens, Member States in response to UN Security Council Resolution 836 decided to make 80 combat aircraft available to the United Nations for operations under NATO command to provide protective air power in case of attacks against UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

American Secretary of State, Christopher, confirms the dispatch of 300 troops to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. These are the first American soldiers to set foot in former Yugoslavia. Following the signature of memoranda of understanding between WEU and each of the Danube states in order to optimise monitoring of the embargo against Serbia and Montenegro, the WEU mission is based at a co-ordination centre at Calafat, Romania. WEU member states will send some 300 civilian officials and eleven patrol boats with the task of stopping or diverting river traffic in order to check cargoes and destinations.

Adoption by the Security Council of Resolution 837 authorising the deployment of international observers in Serbia and Bosnia. This Resolution in principle completes the 'joint action programme' signed in Washington on 22nd May.

June 11

At the session of foreign ministers of 16 NATO countries and 22 East European countries, a decision was passed that NATO would provide air support to UNPROFOR after the UN demand. Serbs, Croats and Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina were invited to stop the war and start negotiations. The Government of the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia accepted UN proposal to deploy a contingent of 300 US soldiers within the UN protection force in Macedonia. US Secretary of State Christopher in an interview for *USA Today* said that many mistakes have been made during the course of the Yugoslav crisis, while the biggest one was rash recognition of independence of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, where 'the Germans bear special responsibility for influencing and pressuring their colleagues from the European Community to do so'.

June 14

In response to the Council's invitation to report to it on the requirements for implementing Resolution 836, the Secretary-General, in his report indicated that it would be necessary to deploy additional troops on the ground and to provide air support. While the UNPROFOR Force Commander had estimated an additional troop requirement of approximately 34,000 to obtain deterrence through strength, the Secretary-General stated that it was possible to start implementing the Resolution under a 'light option', with a minimal troop reinforcement of around 7,600. That option represented an initial approach and had limited objectives. It assumed the consent and co-operation of the parties and provided a basic level of deterrence.

As to the air support, the Secretary-General reported that he had initiated contacts with Member States and had invited NATO to co-ordinate with him the use of air power in support of UNPROFOR. The Secretary-General pointed out that the first decision to initiate the use of air resources in this context would be taken by him in consultation with the members of the Security Council.

June 15

The joint NATO/WEU Operation SHARP GUARD began to replace the separate NATO and WEU operations MARITIME GUARD and SHARP FENCE. The operation was suspended on 19 June 1996 and terminated following a United Nations Security Council Resolution adopted on 1 October 1996. A total of 12,367 merchant vessels were contacted by NATO and WEU forces patrolling the Adriatic Sea and the Otranto channel until the operation ended. Of them, 1,032 were inspected, or diverted to a port to be inspected. Nine ships were found to be in violation of the UN embargoes.

June 15-16

Within the framework of the Geneva meeting on Bosnia, Presidents Milosevic and Tudjman presented their joint initiative on revision of the Vance-Owen plan which contains proposals on division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into three provinces (Serb, Croatian and Muslim) within a common confederate or federal state of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

June 17

The day after the Serbo-Croat initiative for partitioning Bosnia into 'three constituent nations' Lord Owen states that the proposal marks the failure of the Vance/Owen plan.

June 18

The Security Council welcomed the United States offer to provide about 300 troops to reinforce UNPROFOR's presence in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In adopting Resolution 842, the Council authorised the deployment of the additional personnel.

In adopting Resolution 844 the Security Council authorised an additional reinforcement of UNPROFOR initially by 7,600 troops and reaffirmed the use of air power, in and around the declared Safe Areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to support the Force.

June 19-20

Referendum held in the Republika Srpska Krajina at which voters were asked to choose whether they are for

1. sovereign Republika Srpska Krajina and
2. its unification with Republika Srpska and other Serbian lands.

According to official data, 96,5% of citizens went to the polls, of whom 98,6% answered 'yes' to the first question, and 93,8% to the second.

June 20

The Foreign Ministers of the EU affirm the need to respect 'Bosnia's territorial integrity', while examining with the mediator, Lord Owen, the creation within the country of three entities for each of the three communities, Croat, Serb and Muslim.

President Izetbegovic meets the European 'troika' (the Foreign Ministers of Belgium, Denmark, and the United Kingdom), who urge him to take part in the new negotiations starting between Serbs and Croats. Izebegovic again refuses to participate in any negotiations unless the siege of Sarajevo and the Muslim enclaves is lifted.

June 22

Heads of state or government of EU Member States adopted a Declaration on Bosnia-Herzegovina at the meeting in Copenhagen, in which they confirm their full confidence in Co-Chairmen of the Conference on Former Yugoslavia in their effort to attain just and fruitful solution, acceptable for all three constituent nations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and favourably reply to the request of the UN Secretary General for manpower, equipment and finances for the establishment of Safe Areas for Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Participants of the meeting rejected Germany's demand for lifting arms embargo to Bosnian Muslims.

Talks are resumed in Geneva on the Serbo-Croat plan for the partition of Bosnia between the three ethnic communities – in the absence of President Izetbegovic.

June 23

The session of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina which was held in Zagreb, decided that seven Presidency members (excluding Izetbegovic and Ganic) should participate at the Geneva negotiations on the solution to the Bosnian crisis.

According to the information released after the session, the negotiations focused on the government arrangements for Bosnia-Herzegovina and proposed maps for the three provinces.

The talks between the Bosnian collegial presidency delegation and Presidents Milosevic and Tudjman come to a close, apparently without any progress being achieved.

June 24

The statement of the UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali announced that the present UN peace Force Commander in former Yugoslavia, Swedish General Wahlgren, will be replaced by the French General Cot on 1 July 1993. At the same time, the commander of UN forces for Bosnia-Herzegovina, French General Morillon will be replaced by the Belgian General Briquemont.

June 25

In Belgrade, Zoran Lilic is elected leader of the Yugoslav Federation (Serbia and Montenegro). The new president, reputedly 'close' to the Serb President, Milosevic, replaces Dobric Cosic, who was overthrown at the beginning of June.

The Chamber of Counties of the Croatian Parliament adopted Conclusions on the Current Political Situation: 'Irrespective of all pressures, present and future, we resolutely reject any option and any possibility for any integration in the territory of the former Yugoslavia or any restoration of Yugoslavia. Croatia is willing to normalise relations with Serbia and Montenegro and so-called FR Yugoslavia and to establish good neighbourly relations, provided Serbia, Montenegro and Yugoslavia recognise Croatia in its internationally recognised borders and publicly deny support to those forces in Croatia that are willing to separate a part of the Croatian territory.'

The Secretary-General submitted his further report on the situation in Croatia, in which he drew attention to the failure of the parties to permit implementation of the United Nations plan and to cooperate in establishing a political process leading to an early settlement. He noted, nevertheless, that the presence of UNPROFOR was indispensable for controlling the conflict, fostering a climate in which negotiations between the parties could be promoted, preventing the resumption or escalation of conflict, providing a breathing-space for the continued efforts of the peacemakers and for supporting the provision of essential humanitarian assistance. He also informed the Council that the termination of UNPROFOR's mandate at that point, in the judgement of his Special Representative, would risk the resumption of a major conflict in the region and cause severe adverse consequences for humanitarian relief operations. The Secretary-General recommended that the Security Council extend the mandate of the Force by a further three months, to 30 September 1993.

June 25-26

Yugoslav minister for Foreign Affairs Vladislav Jovanovic during his visit to the Russian Federation met in Moscow with the Russian minister for Foreign Affairs Kozyrev. Minister Jovanovic proposed suspension of sanctions toward FR Yugoslavia during negotiations on the solution to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Minister Kozyrev stated that Russia favourably assesses Yugoslavia's peace efforts and that this initiative should be supported. Minister Jovanovich invited Boris Jeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, to visit Belgrade.

June 28-29

Talks about the solution to the Bosnian conflict continued in Geneva. Owen and Stoltenberg, talked separately with seven members of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Presidency, and then attended the meeting between Karadzic and Boban. Representatives of Republika Srpska and the Community of Herzeg-Bosnia agreed on the document on 'interim arrangements' for Bosnia-Herzegovina, which set forth in detail the role and organisation of the co-ordinating body, boundary commission, future international borders, role and organisation of police forces, international access authority and defines the mode of protection of human rights and reversal of the results of 'ethnic cleansing'.

June 29

Session of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina held in Sarajevo with the presence of ten members (chaired by Izetbegovic). The Presidency discussed the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, peace initiatives, particularly the latest proposal by the representatives of Republika Srpska and Croatian Community Herzeg-Bosnia. The Presidency decided that the task force encompassing Ejup Ganich, Miro Lasic and Miro Lazovic should prepare a proposal on the future arrangement for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

June 30

In its Resolution 847 the Security Council decided to extend UNPROFOR's mandate for an additional interim period terminating on 30 September 1993. The Secretary General was requested to report one month after the adoption of the present Resolution on progress towards implementation of the United Nations peace-keeping plan for Croatia and all relevant Security Council Resolutions, taking into account the position of the Croatian Government, and decided to reconsider, in the light of that report, UNPROFOR's mandate in the territory of the Republic of Croatia.

The UN Security Council rejected the draft Resolution, proposed by a group of Islamic and non-aligned countries, non-permanent members of the Security Council, which demanded lifting of embargo on arms deliveries to Muslims in Bosnia. Six Security Council members (including USA) voted for the proposal, while nine abstained (including all other SC permanent members). The American vote appears to be in contradiction with the 'joint action programme' agreed with the Russians and Europeans in Washington in May.

July 1

The Secretary-General presented the Security Council two options for the deployment of international observers on the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On option one it would be unrealistic to authorise international observers to establish full control over the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina as world-wide resources for additional peace-keeping troops were becoming increasingly stretched. Full border control would require a capability to deny passage and to act where borders had already been crossed. It would also mean that UNPROFOR would supersede the national authorities in respect of certain border-control functions.

Border monitoring was another option. Observers would only observe and report and would not be in a position to check the nature of goods coming into and out of Bosnia. Even this more limited option would require substantial additional resources, and the necessary personnel and financing might not be available. Outstanding contributions to United Nations peace-keeping accounts totalled \$1.26 billion in mid-June 1993, while unpaid assessments amounted to \$2.236 billion. He said it was 'highly probable that in the coming months the Organisation will not be able to meet its day-to-day obligations'.

Arrival in Zagreb (Croatia) of General Jean Cot, the new commander-in-chief of the twenty-five thousand UNPROFOR in former Yugoslavia. The French general - who replaces General Wahlgren - stresses he will give priority to protecting and providing aid to the civilian populations.

At the end of a two-day visit to Greece, Boris Jeltsin and Constantin Mitsotakis emphasise their two countries' common position on the Balkans.

At its meeting in Prague the CSCE High Officials Committee rejected the proposal of the Yugoslav government on resuming the participation of FR Yugoslavia in institutions and activities of the CSCE and invited Yugoslavia to extend the mandate of the CSCE missions in Kosovo, Vojvodina and Sandzak.

July 2

The government of FR Yugoslavia stated to the representatives of the CSCE mission that their mandate in Yugoslavia had expired. The extension of the mandate of missions in Kosovo, Vojvodina and Sandzak was, as it was declared, closely tied to the membership of FR Yugoslavia in that organisation on the basis of equality.

July 3

The UN Security Council Committee for Sanctions declared that Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine and Uganda suffered greatest losses for the sanctions imposed against FR Yugoslavia. The recommendation of the Committee was to urgently consider the ways that would help alleviate the negative effects of the sanctions on the economies of these five countries.

Heavy shelling of Sarajevo on anniversary of air-lift of supplies to city. US Secretary of State Christopher warns Milosevic against expelling CSCE monitors from Kosovo.

July 4

Intense fighting in central Bosnia as Serbs and Croats advance against Muslim forces. Heavy fighting in Maglaj. Government forces said to have taken Fojnica from Croats, and blockaded UN base in Visoko (NW of Sarajevo) demanding UN hand over Croat commander on base to be tried for war crimes (Croats retaliate by blockading UN bases in Kiseljak. 4 more mosques destroyed in Banja Luka.

July 5

20 US troops arrive in Macedonia, first of 300 Americans to take part in UN-commanded force of 1,000.

July 6

Muslims lift blockade of UN base and allow Croat commander to return to his area after four Muslim officers released. New UN commander in Yugoslavia, General Cot, snubbed by Serb and Croat commanders who refuse to show up for an introductory meeting at Sarajevo airport.

New tensions arose following the decision of the Croatian Government to take unilateral actions aimed at rebuilding and reopening the Maslenica bridge on 18 July. Though, in pursuance of the Erdut/Zagreb agreement concluded on 15/16 July 1993, which required the withdrawal of Croatian armed forces and police from the area of the Maslenica bridge by 31 July 1993, UNPROFOR had moved 2,000 troops into the areas adjacent to those from which the Croatian forces were to withdraw, these troops could not be deployed because the Croatian military authorities would not allow UNPROFOR full access to the areas concerned.

July 7

The President of the Security Council addressed a letter to the Secretary-General informing him that Council continued to believe that international observers should be deployed on the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They invited the Secretary-General to contact Member States in order to establish whether they were ready, individually or through regional organisations or arrangements, to make qualified personnel available to act as observers along the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to continue to explore all possibilities for implementation of the border monitors concept.

The meeting of the NATO Council at ambassador level adopts plans for an air operation in support of the UN in Bosnia, involving French, United Kingdom and Netherlands aircraft. The relevant operational procedures have been communicated to the United Nations.

July 8

The American, European and Japanese partners of the G7 in Tokyo for their annual summit meeting state in a policy declaration on Bosnia that they cannot accept a solution imposed by the Serbs and Croats at the expense of the Bosnian Muslims.

Milosevic says that Muslim refusal to talk on dividing Bosnia doesn't matter since all those who do matter have accepted the plan.

After visiting Zagreb Co-Chairmen of the Conference on the former Yugoslavia Owen and Stoltenberg met in Belgrade with Zoran Lilic, President of FR Yugoslavia and Milosevic, President of Serbia. The purpose of the visit was to exchange opinions on the stage of negotiations reached in Geneva so far concerning resolving the Bosnian crisis and other issues related to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia.

July 9

At its meeting in Helsinki the CSCE Parliamentary Assembly rejected the proposal of the American deputies that the members of this forum should lift the arms embargo for the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In Sarajevo, the Bosnian collegiate presidency rejects Serbo-Croat proposals for a tripartite confederation of Croatian, Muslim and Serbian republics. 'We reject the division of Bosnia along ethnic lines' President Izebegovic states.

July 10

Meeting in Zagreb, 9 of 10 members of Bosnian Presidency reaffirm that ethnic division of the country is unacceptable.

July 11

Bosnian President agrees to resume talks after continuing pressure from Owen and Stoltenberg. The Bosnian collegial presidency confirms the existence of a proposal for organising Bosnia on a federal basis, without ethnic divisions.

July 12

Arrival in Skopje of a 300-strong American battalion to support the 700 blue berets from the Scandinavian countries in their mission to prevent the conflict extending into Macedonia.

Accord reached between Izebegovic and Karadzic on restoring Sarajevo water and natural gas. 12 people waiting for water killed by shelling.

July 13

As to UNPROFOR's activities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Secretary-General reported to the Security Council that a Nordic battalion was deployed at Kjojila, east of Skopje, the capital of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and a United States contingent of 315 troops arrived in Skopje in early July, deploying to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia side of the border with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) on 20 August 1993. United Nations military observers, civilian police and civil affairs officers had also been deployed.

UNPROFOR maintained close co-operation with the CSCE monitor mission and enjoyed an excellent co-operative relationship with the host Government. In his report, the Secretary-General concluded that the Force had so far been successful in its preventive mandate in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Former Co-chairman of the Conference on the former Yugoslavia Lord Peter Carrington in an interview to French daily *Le Figaro* said that the premature recognition of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina was a big mistake of the international community. He said he had warned European leaders that, by recognising the republics, they would destroy all peace efforts and added that they listened to him, but did not hear him.

During a visit to Budapest, Alain Juppé, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, expresses regret that United Nations Resolution 836 creating security zones in Bosnia remains a dead letter.

July 14

Deployment of NATO fighter aircraft starts at Italian bases - a prelude to the operation to provide air cover for the blue berets responsible for protecting the besieged Muslim enclaves.

July 15

Both Croats and Muslims accuse each other of throwing all they have into renewed attacks in Mostar. Serbs shell Karlovac in Croatia as Croats prepare to reopen Maslenica bridge.

July 16

Croatia signed the so-called Erdut agreement. As provided for by this agreement Croatia should withdraw its troops from the territories of the Republika Srpska Krajina by 31 July 1993, in exchange for opening the pontoon bridge across the Maslenica channel and the Zemunik airport near Zadar. The agreement had been proposed by Arens and Volbek, deputies Co-Chairmen of the Conference on the former Yugoslavia, and it had previously been signed by the Government of the Republika Srpska Krajina.

Utilities again cut off in Sarajevo.

July 17

Milosevic and Tudjman met in Geneva. In a joint statement released after the talks they declared that 'the only way for achieving lasting peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina is in recognising the interests of all three constitutive nations and reaching agreement on establishing three republics within a confederation'. Milosevic and Tudjman both warn Muslims that refusal to negotiate will worsen the war.

July 18

The (Muslim) Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina decided to participate in the follow-up of negotiations with the Serbian and Croatian part, giving no comment on the joint proposal of the Presidents Milosevic and Tudjman on the confederation of three republics.

In accordance with the so-called Erdut agreement Franjo Tudjman, President of the Republic of Croatia, opened the newly-built pontoon bridge across the Maslenica channel. the Zemunik airport was opened too.

Serbs press assault on Mt. Igman breaking through government defenses in 3 places. Mladic says he will no longer allow Sarajevo to be supplied through International organisations.

July 19

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the European Community decided to send a mission to Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo calling on the initiation of tripartite negotiations on the peaceful settlement of the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The chairman of the Ministerial Council of the EU, Willy Claes,

would convey 'a message of warning' to Zagreb that sanctions would be imposed against Croatia unless the Croatian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina stopped the ethnic cleansing and attacks on Muslims in Mostar and elsewhere.

UN relief workers say Bosnian forces left 230 mental hospital patients without care after taking Fojnica (25 miles East of Sarajevo) for 3 days. 2 children dead.

July 20

Heavy fighting as Serbs press on Mt. Igman. Izetbegovic calls for UN help. Karadzic says he will unite Serbian portions of Bosnia with Serb-held enclaves in Croatia. Fighting between Muslims and Croats near Gornji Vakuf and Bugojno (central Bosnia).

July 21

Secretary of State Christopher says US 'is doing all that it can consistent with its national interest', effectively rules out military assistance.

July 22

Geneva peace talks delayed by Izetbegovic after Serbs shell Sarajevo, killing at least 4. Serbs temporarily halt attack on Mt. Igman, but fire tank cannons at Mali Hum (outside of Sarajevo).

Three day negotiations of the delegations of the Republic of Croatia and Republika Srpska Krajina ended in Vienna with no success. The two parts should have signed the agreement on the cease-fire.

NATO began providing air cover for UNPROFOR.

July 23

The Security Council released a Presidential statement condemning the offensive of the Bosnian Serbs on Mt. Igman demanding stopping all attacks on Sarajevo. The Security Council invited all parties in the conflict to meet in Geneva and seriously negotiate for the purpose of achieving a just solution of the Bosnian drama.

First aid convoy reaches Sarajevo in 10 days. Another approaches Tuzla.

July 24

Renewed Serb shelling of government positions outside of Sarajevo as Serbs continue to try to choke off supply lines to Sarajevo.

July 25

Serbs fire 68 rounds of artillery at French UN base in Sarajevo destroying 4 vehicles, damaging others. Much heavier shelling of Brcko by Serbs.

July 26

UN commanders Briquemont and Cot denounce Serb explanation of shelling ('Muslim provocateurs'), and say Serbs will face immediate retaliation if it happens again.

July 27

After several delays negotiations on ending the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina started in Geneva. - Karadzic, Izetbegovic, Boban, Milosevic, Bulatovic and Tudjman, and Co-Chairmen of the Conference on the former Yugoslavia Owen and Stoltenberg participated.

July 28

President Clinton says US ready to provide air cover for UN forces if UN asks.

July 29

Fighting on Zuc Hill outside of Sarajevo, Serbs shell Maglaj, Doboj, and continue attacks on Brcko. Bosnian government forces recapture 2 villages in central Bosnia and press on towards Gornji Vakuf.

July 30

Agreement is reached in Geneva between the Serbs, Croats and Muslims on a proposal for a 'Union of Republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina'. This agreement envisages three constituent republics under the authority of a joint government with limited powers. Izetbegovic agrees to partition of Bosnia into three separate territories within B-H with a guaranteed corridor to the Adriatic. Milosevic proclaims on Belgrade TV that the war 'was worth it'.

After an urgently summoned Security Council, a Presidential statement was released demanding the immediate withdrawal of the Croatian forces from the area around Maslenica and enabling deployment of the UNPROFOR with no delay. The deadline for withdrawal of the Croatian forces from the Maslenica area expired at midnight.

August 1

Croatian Serbs shell Maslenica bridge when Croatian troops fail to pull out.

August 2

The North Atlantic Council under US pressure and after bitter debate (Canada), decided to make immediate preparations for stronger measures, including air strikes, against those responsible for the strangulation of Sarajevo and other areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and for wide-scale interference with humanitarian assistance.

These air strikes would be carried out within the framework of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, including 770, 776 and 836, and in support of UNPROFOR as it carried out its overall mandate.

Clinton claimed support from NATO for the plan of air raids on the Serbian positions round Sarajevo and other protected zones - Muslim enclaves, softening the statement of the representative of the State Department, given the previous day, that the USA would solely take air raids on the Serbian positions if the allies did not give support.

Boutros-Ghali, UN Secretary General, confirmed that, in accordance with the Resolution 836, a possible decision on the use of air power in Bosnia-Herzegovina could be approved only by the UN Secretary General.

Following Croatia's failure to withdraw from the area and Serb shelling thereof, one of the pontoons of the Maslenica bridge sank. However, the Co-Chairmen concluded that there was still enough common ground to continue negotiations.

August 3

NATO war-planners begin listing potential Serb targets.

August 4

Serbs claim Mt. Igman to be in their control. Muslim defenders said to be abandoning their positions. The Geneva talks broke off since Izetbegovic said that he would not resume the negotiations until the Serbian forces withdrew from Igman and Bjelasnica.

State Department official in charge of monitoring conflict, Marshall Freeman Harris, resigns in protest against Clinton Administration efforts to get Bosnian government to agree to partition.

August 5

Karadzic and Mladic say they will withdraw from Mts. Igman and Bjelasnica and turn them over to UNPROFOR in order to prevent other forces from taking those positions. UN negotiators Owen and Stoltenberg's proposal to give Muslims 30% of land in Bosnia rejected by Izetbegovic in Geneva talks.

August 6

US and NATO officials warn Serbs that the military operation is ready but conflicting statements come from Washington on what will trigger air strikes. Mladic fails to agree on handover of mountains to UN.

Federal Prime Minister Kontic sent a letter to Albright, chairwoman of the UN Security Council, requesting the Council to take measures for the purpose of lifting the sanctions imposed against FR Yugoslavia, and to approve the export of some products for financing the humanitarian imports. After Tudjman declared that 'the Erdut agreement is not any more valid', Slavko Degoricija, leader of the Croatian delegation for negotiations with the Serbs from Krajina, said that Croatia agreed with the proposal on resuming the negotiations on cease-fire, to be followed by negotiations on all other separate agreements. Djordje Bjugovic, Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska Krajina, replied that when Croatia fulfilled its obligations from the Erdut agreement the Serbian part would be willing to discuss all other issues.

August 7

Serbs dig in to mountain positions around Sarajevo. UN peacekeepers in Bosnia continue to assert that air strikes will cause them to become targets in war.

August 8

Mladic says troops will leave Mt. Bjelasnica in a day. Tactic said to be designed to get Izetbegovic back to negotiations while giving up as little as possible. Third State Department official (Jon Western) resigns, says Administration not tough enough.

August 9

The NAC approved the military planning for air strikes options in support of humanitarian relief efforts and stood ready to implement them. It further decided to maintain a close review of the situation on the ground in Bosnia-Herzegovina and to re-convene at short notice to decide whether to implement air strikes in co-ordination with the UN.

French UN forces blocked from Mt. Igman take over by mines and 'unidentified people'.

The UN Security Council adopted the Resolution demanding that the Government of FR Yugoslavia should enable the observers of the CSCE to keep on working in Kosovo, Sandzzak and Vojvodina.

The Geneva negotiations are broken off.

In Brussels, the countries of the Atlantic Alliance reiterate the threats made by the United States President on 2nd August. NATO approves the principle of military intervention in Bosnia in the form

of air strikes to protect UNPROFOR troops and loosen the Serb stranglehold on Sarajevo. The final decision on whether the operation goes ahead rests with the United Nations.

August 10

Geneva talks suspended because of the withdrawal of Izetbegovic. The Bosnian leader refuses to continue talks on the partition proposal until Serb forces are withdrawn from Mt. Igman and Mt. Bjelasnica. Karadzic warns of all-out war if Serb troops attacked. Serbs beginning to leave Igman positions return when they see Muslim troops taking up vacated spots.

August 11

At Sarajevo airport the commanders of the three warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina - Mladic, Milivoj Petkovic and Rasim Delic, and Briquemont, commander UNPROFOR, signed a military peace agreement. The provisions of the agreement would be implemented immediately after adoption and signing of the Geneva peace documents.

August 12

Serbs claim to have left both mountains, UN says they are only redeploying. Threat of air strikes remains.

Accepting the invitation of the Co-Chairmen, the parties began negotiations in Geneva on a cease-fire which would include the elements of the original Erdut/Zagreb agreement. Despite intensive discussions in Geneva, Zagreb and Knin between the representatives both of the Co-Chairmen and of the parties, an overall cease-fire agreement could not be achieved.

August 14

Serbs end occupation of mountains under threat of NATO warplanes which buzz their positions. New fighting around Doboj (NCBosnia). Government-Croat clashes in Mostar and Gornji-Vakuf. UNPROFOR spokesman confirmed that Serbian forces had withdrawn from Mt. Igman to the positions they had taken before 30 July. UNPROFOR were taking over the positions. NATO concluded that at the moment there was no justification for air raids on the Serbian positions around Sarajevo, except in case of dramatical deterioration of the situation.

August 15

Serb forces complete their evacuation of the mountains above Sarajevo. The Muslims agree that UNPROFOR should occupy the positions surrendered by the Serbs.

August 16

The Secretary-General recommended the Security Council that no action be taken at this stage and said that he would submit a further recommendation to the Council in the latter half of September 1993. Factions agree to demilitarise Sarajevo and place it temporarily under UN Administration. UN spokesman refuses to call Sarajevo situation a 'siege', instead refers to it as 'encirclement' from 'tactically advantageous positions'. The peace negotiations continued in Geneva, and all three warring parties were present.

August 17

Bosnian-Croatian fighting intensifies in Mostar killing 33. UN and Bosnian government officials refer to condition there as 'bestial'. No aid convoys allowed in by Croats in 2 months.

August 18

The Secretary-General informed the Security Council that following the necessary training exercises in co-ordination with NATO, the United Nations had the operational capability for the use of air power in support of UNPROFOR.

UN spokesman Frewer confirms that small groups of Serbs (possibly 250) remain on Igman, but says they pose no threat. Negotiations in Geneva agree on 2-year UN Administration of Sarajevo. However it is anticipated that this agreement will only come into force once an overall settlement of the conflict has been achieved.

August 19

UN now trying to persuade remaining Serbs to leave Igman. Sarajevo quiet, but Serbs shell Brcko. Aid convoy reaches Mostar. UN troop commander General Briquemont calls potential air strikes against Serbs 'totally inappropriate'. Milosevic says Muslims will be given a 'take-it-or-leave-it' offer of 32% of land area including a land corridor connecting territory.

August 20

The international mediators, Lord Owen and Mr. Stoltenberg, submit a plan for the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina into three Republics to the warring factions. This plan appears to consolidate Serbian gains in that 52% of the territory is allocated to the Serbs, 30% to the Muslims and 18% to the Croats. A special status is proposed for Sarajevo and Mostar - which are to be administered under United Nations and EU mandate for two years. President Izetbegovic has misgivings over the plan for partition. However this is backed by the Bosnian Serbs, while the Bosnian Croats say they will accept it if the Serb and Muslim factions also approve.

August 21

Izetbegovic says he will recommend that the proposed peace plan be rejected by Bosnian legislators (three loosely-linked ethnic-based republics. Cease-fire followed by withdrawals, total demilitarisation. Renewal of humanitarian efforts. Return to their homes of those driven out by ethnic cleansing.

August 22

Intensified fighting by all sides as they seek to consolidate their gains before peace. Krajina Serbs renew shelling near Sinj and Drnis in Dalmatia. Maslenica bridge shelled by Serbs.

August 23

Karadzic tells *Politika* that the question of a Serb outlet on the Adriatic remains open.

August 24

UN negotiator Stoltenberg urges Security Council to plan for army of 65,000 to police Bosnia. Croats continue to block UN convoy trying to get to Muslim sector of Mostar. Reports that some Serb militia forces are moving out of Bosnia and into Croatia to renew fighting there. Croats declare Republic of Herceg-Bosnia in town of Livno, formally breaking with B-H.

August 25

The UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 859 on the latest development of peace negotiations in Geneva and inviting all three parties to find as soon as possible a just and global political solution based on a free will.

Croatian civilians block UN aid convoy.

August 26

42 Serbian generals purged including Chief of Staff, General Zivota Panic. Panic replaced by compromise choice (to Milosevic and Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj), Lt. General Momcilo Perisic. US drops 37 tons of relief to Muslims in Mostar while UN convoy distributes 200 tons of food and 10 tons of medicine. French captain wounded in Bosnian government attack on Mt. Igman.

August 27

Arguments heard before World Court by Bosnians that Yugoslavia has backed a campaign of genocide. Lawyers for Yugoslavia argue that it has no territorial ambitions against Bosnia and that there are no Serb paramilitary forces of any kind in the conflict.

Opposition to Tudjman's alliance with Serbs in Bosnia growing in Croatia. Croatian Cardinal, Franjo Kuharic criticises the leaving of numerous Croats in Bosnia under either Muslim or Serbian rule. Trade unions call for a renewal of the alliance with Muslims against a common foe, say the partition endorses 'serbian fascism and ethnic cleansing'.

The Assembly of the Republika Srpska adopted the proposal of the peace plan on Bosnia-Herzegovina. Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia was proclaimed in Grude and the Assembly-parliament of this republic was established. The newly-established parliament adopted the decision on accepting all Geneva documents and the agreement on establishment of the Union of republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina, if accepted by the other two parties in conflict.

August 28

Bosnian parliament rejects plan, calls for return of 8 districts controlled by Serbs, and an outlet to Adriatic at the town of Neum. Croatian parliament formally endorses 'Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosnia', but split between Bosnian Croats widens since the former stand to lose in the Geneva peace plan.

August 29

Tudjman meets with Bihac 'pocket' leader, Fikret Abdic on Brioni.

August 30

Croats and Muslims fighting around Gornji-Vakuf and Kiseljak, and in Mostar (Serbs also fighting Croats there). Muslims refuse to let UN aid convoy depart Mostar. Belgrade issues 1 billion dinar note (worth \$3), government says inflation in July 1,880% for annual rate of 1.7 billion %.

August 31

Negotiations resumed in Geneva between Muslims, Serbs and Croats, although the new Owen/Stoltenberg plan is accepted unconditionally only by the Serbs.

US ambassador to UN, Albright, says UN will 'presumably' retain sanctions against Yugoslavia unless it assists in handing over those accused of war crimes.

Continued fighting between Croats and Muslims in Central Bosnia. Tudjman and Milosevic use Geneva meeting to talk on separate issue of ending Serb rebellion in Croatia.

450 Muslim detainees released from Croat prison camp Drecelj (in Caplijina, S. of Mostar). Muslims allow UN aid convoy to leave Mostar.

September 1

Geneva talks collapse after Izetbegovic demands revisions to the map. Serbs make minor concession in agreeing to land corridor between Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia, but Croats refuse land access to port of Neum.

September 2

Meeting between Karadzic and Boban in Montenegro to plan co-ordinated response to Muslims after their rejection of the peace plan.

September 3

The UN Security Council demanded resuming of the peace negotiations in Geneva and ending the war in Bosnia.

Two-day cease-fire ends in Mostar with new shellings preventing UN evacuation of Muslims in Mostar. UN begins evacuation of wounded in central Bosnia town of Nova Bila (held by Croats, surrounded by government troops). Shelling of Gornji Vakuf holds up relief convoy carrying diesel fuel to Sarajevo. Izetbegovic goes to Turkey for consultations.

September 4

Izetbegovic says talks will resume in two weeks, Croatian Foreign Minister, Mate Granic, says Bosnian Croats cannot make more territorial concessions. UN officials say recently released Muslim prisoners from Croatian camps appeared to have been beaten.

Macedonia made the decision to strictly apply the Security Council Resolutions on the blockade imposed against FR Yugoslavia. Therefore the control of lorries was intensified on the frontier with FR Yugoslavia.

September 6

Wounded Muslims being evacuated from Mostar by UN.

September 7

Thousands flee fighting in central Bosnia. UN relief convoys unable to reach refugees in Jablanica.

September 8

Clinton Administration warns Serbs that renewed shelling of Sarajevo could trigger NATO military response, but State Department says Bosnians need to return to bargaining table and get an agreement, promising that the American diplomacy would help the Bosnian Serbs and Croats make additional concessions regarding fixing boundaries between the territories in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Izetbegovic, in meeting with Clinton, fails to get him to set deadline for Serbs ending siege of Sarajevo. The Bosnian President also fails to obtain any formal assurance that the United States will intervene in the conflict. Croats launch offensive against Muslims in Vitez area. Croatian news agency says Serbs reinforcing positions on Mt. Igman. Croatian opposition announces that a unified Bosnia is in the interests of the

Croatian state and people. Croats launch new attacks taking two villages from Serbs near Gospic (185 km S of Zagreb).

September 9

After visiting China, Ukraine and Russia Vladislav Jovanovic, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, returned to Belgrade. Jovanovic stated that as soon as peace was made in Bosnia-Herzegovina all three countries would be willing to help lifting the sanctions.

After several days of grave incidents in the UNPAs and 'pink zones', and rising tensions, shelling intensified on both sides of the confrontation line, and the Croatian Army once again carried out a military incursion in the area of Medak, where three Serb villages were seized. The hostilities worsened on 10 and 11 September.

September 10

Stoltenberg, Co-Chairman of the Conference on former Yugoslavia, invited Tudjman to order his forces to stop the attacks on the territories where the Serbs live and to withdraw from the three villages they had taken over in Lika.

The centre of Banja Luka was blocked by tanks and armoured vehicles of the part of the military forces of the Republika Srpska. The crisis staff of this action called 'september 93' demanded improvement of the position of soldiers and invalids and combat war profiteers whose arresting started immediately.

In its detailed report the Belgrade Bureau of the World Health Organisation warned the international community that the position of health in Serbia and Montenegro was disastrous and the UN Committee for sanctions should urgently take measures in order to prevent the sanctions applied against FR Yugoslavia make the health services totally collapse.

Serbs shell Karlovac (Croatia) overnight killing 9.

September 11

2 Serb rockets hit Zagreb suburb of Lucko.

September 12

Serbs fire 5 rockets at Jastrebarsko (18 miles SW of Zagreb), send fax to *Associated Press* listing 50 possible military targets if Croats do not stop attacks. Tudjman calls for halt to offence by Croatian troops in order to arrive at an armistice with the Serbian forces in Krajina. Croats shell Muslim sector of Mostar killing 10.

September 13

Serbs continue to shell Gospic, Karlovac, and Sisak areas. Bosnian Serbs may be encouraged to go fight in Krajina area. Mutiny in Banja Luka continues.

September 14

Agreement reached in Geneva between Tudjman and Izetbegovic calling for temporary cease-fire, full-fledged truce by the 18th, exchange of prisoners, closing of camps, and ensuring of free passage for humanitarian convoys. Serbs reportedly down Croatian Mig-21 sent to attack Serb missile positions. Food rationing in Serbia.

The UN Security Council adopted a Presidential statement 'expressing deep concern for the resumed military conflicts in Croatia...and inviting both parties to immediately agree with the proposal of the UNPROFOR on the urgent cease-fire'. The Council also 'demands that the Croatian Government

should withdraw its armed forces to the positions they had taken before starting the offensive on 9 September'.

September 15

Following the intervention of the Secretary-General's Special Representative and the UNPROFOR Force Commander, and a call from the Security Council, the parties finally agreed to a cease-fire. UNPROFOR moved some 500 to 600 troops into the area to replace the Croatian armed forces which eventually withdrew to positions occupied before the incursion began. When UNPROFOR gained access to the area it found that most houses had been deliberately destroyed during the withdrawal. Eighteen corpses were recovered, most of them riddled with multiple bullet wounds or incinerated. 35 Croats massacred by Bosnian troops in village of Kriz (Central Bosnia). Fighting continues despite truce in Mostar.

Karadzic finally meets with mutineers in Banja Luka who are now demanding resignation of Bosnian Serb government.

September 16

Croats launch attacks in retaliation against Muslims for massacre in Kriz.

The Muslims and Croats having reached agreement on some points (14th September), Izetbegovic and the head of the Bosnian Serb Parliament, Momcilo Krajisnik, sign a joint declaration in Geneva containing further adjustments to the Owen/Stoltenberg plan: enforcement of a cease-fire and dismantling of the detention camps. The most important clause allows the three republics the option of seceding from the future 'Union' purely on the basis of a referendum.

September 17

State Department announces it sent letters to Milosevic and Tudjman on September 1 hinting at possibility of easing sanctions if a Bosnian peace settlement is agreed upon. Banja Luka mutiny over after Karadzic agrees to crack down on profiteers. Tanks and 200 soldiers returned to barracks. Some mutineers arrested.

September 18

Muslims launch attack against Croatians along 20-mile stretch of Lasva valley (Central Bosnia). Government forces take control of village of Bobas near Vitez. Fighting for control of ammunition factory in Vitez. Cease-fire fails to take hold.

September 19

Fighting temporarily abates as UN tries to bring about signing of peace accord. Izetbegovic says he will not sign agreement unless Croats give Muslims access to the sea.

September 20

The Secretary-General recommended that the Security Council renew the mandate of UNPROFOR for a period of six months. In a report dealing primarily with Croatia, the Secretary-General said that he had been 'sorely tempted' to recommend the withdrawal of the Force altogether because of the criticism of UNPROFOR by both sides and the dangers and abuse to which its personnel were exposed, but that such a step could only result in further conflict.

The Secretary-General pointed out that the peace-keeping plan for Croatia had been difficult, if not impossible, to implement, and had become more so since the resumption of hostilities following the

Croatian incursion of 22 January 1993. He stressed that the fundamental solution to the problem had to be sought through political dialogue. In this process, the principal objective of UNPROFOR could only be to keep the peace, thereby permitting negotiations to take place on an overall political settlement. To enhance the security of the Force, he requested the extension of close air support to the territory of Croatia.

The Secretary-General also stated that he would give 'favourable consideration' to a suggestion by the President of Croatia that the Force be divided into three parts - UNPROFOR (Croatia), UNPROFOR (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and UNPROFOR (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) - while retaining its integrated military, logistical and administrative structure under the command of one Special Representative of the Secretary-General and one theatre Force Commander.

Three sides meet on British aircraft carrier in Adriatic but talks founder on Muslim demand for access to the sea.

Fighting in Mostar, Vitez. Bosnian government forces make gains in Central Bosnia against Croats. Croats shelling Serb positions around Trebinje (East Herzegovina) for several days. Serb police arrest 50 members of Muslim-dominated Party of Democratic Action (SDA) in Sandzak as part of crackdown on 'militants'.

September 21

The proposed meeting between the three factions at Sarajevo airport to consolidate the peace agreement is cancelled.

September 22

Croatia threatens to end UNPROFOR mandate unless rebel Serbs disarmed.

September 23

Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic lays out specific conditions for renewing UNPROFOR mandate including carrying out all existing UN Resolutions (Vance plan of January '92), respect for Croatia's sovereignty and pre-existing borders.

September 24

The Security Council was informed by the Croatian Government that if the mandate of UNPROFOR was not amended to promote energetic implementation of the relevant Resolutions of the Security Council, Croatia would be forced to request UNPROFOR to leave the country not later than 30 November 1993.

September 25

Bosnian government forces launch new offensive against Croats in Vitez (Central Bosnia), try to capture ammunition factory in town. Deadline for HVO (Croatian) forces to hand over defensive positions in Sarajevo extended a week.

September 27

The newly-established Constituent Assembly in Velika Kladusa unanimously made a decision on proclamation and establishment of the (Muslim) Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia within the Union of Republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Fikret Abdic was appointed President. Bihac pocket secedes from Muslim Republic.

September 28

Izetbegovic declares military rule in Bihac pocket, tells 5th army corps to take control of local radio, impose 24-hour curfew. Tudjman, at UN, again demands UNPROFOR carry out mandate or leave. Assembly of Bosnian Muslims decide to reject latest peace plan unless Serbs cede more land. Serbs shell old town of Sarajevo.

September 29

The Bosnian Parliament accepted the Geneva peace plan provided that the Serbs should give up 'the territories taken over by force. In that way it effectively rejects the Owen/Stoltenberg peace plan in the present form.

September 30

Bosnian Croat assembly withdraws concessions made to Muslims including outlet on Adriatic. Karadzic says his assembly will do the same. Pro-Izetbegovic troops take control of much of Bihac area, fire at ground around demonstrators.

October 1

UN Security Council extends UNPROFOR mandate until October 5.

At its session in Neum the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia made a decision to deny 'all territorial concessions' granted to the Muslims if they would not accept the Geneva peace plan for Bosnia by 15 October at the latest.

October 2

The Assembly of the Republika Srpska said 'Republika Srpska is forced due to the rejection of the peace plan by the Muslim part, to deny all the concession it had given during the peace process in exchange for the instantaneous signing of peace'. It also appealed to the international community to immediately lift sanctions against the Serbian nation.

Abdic declares himself military leader of western Bosnia, troops block roads against 5th Army Corps. Fighting in Mostar, Maglaj, and Tesanj breaks truce declared between Muslims and Croats signed in Medjugorje.

October 3

Fighting amongst Muslims in Bihac area. As many as 2,500 troops from 5th Army Corps may have defected to Abdic's side.

October 4

The Security Council, by its Resolution 871, extended the mandate of UNPROFOR to 31 March 1994. The Council took this action under Chapter VII of the Charter reiterating its determination to ensure the security of UNPROFOR and its freedom of movement.

The Council called for an immediate cease-fire agreement between the Croatian Government and the local Serb authorities in the UNPAs, mediated under the auspices of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia. It urged all parties to co-operate with UNPROFOR in reaching and implementing an agreement on confidence-building measures, including the restoration of electricity, water and communications in all regions of Croatia. Stressing the importance of restoring Croatian authority in the 'pink zones', the Council called for the revival of the Joint Commission established under the chairmanship of UNPROFOR.

The Council took note of the intention to establish three subordinate commands within UNPROFOR - in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Council decided to continue to review the extension of close air support to UNPROFOR in the territory of Croatia.

October 5

Tudjman says Resolution 871 satisfies all Croatian demands. Serbs angry and Krajina leader Goran Hadzic says 'a total war has never been closer'. No aid convoys have reached Maglaj and Tesanj now for 100 days.

October 6

Fighting continues in Bihac pocket.

October 7

Izetbegovic tells UN that peace plan inadequate since it affirms ethnic cleansing and does not allow refugees to return home. Renewed shelling and small arms fire around Sarajevo. Croats continue to expel Muslims from Croatian part of Mostar.

In a report published in Zagreb, UNPROFOR accuses the Croat army of having wreaked 'systematic and planned destruction' in September in Croatian villages with a majority Serb population.

October 8

A Consolidated Appeal was launched, seeking some \$696.5 million to cover the urgent humanitarian needs of almost 4.26 million affected people.

The humanitarian operations in Bosnia continued to be seriously obstructed. Access to populations in need was repeatedly denied or sabotaged for political or military purposes, especially by the Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat sides. Moreover, all three sides frequently threatened the security of the personnel of UNPROFOR, UNHCR and other organisations.

Darko Domjan, the Vice President of the Croatian Parliament, said that 'the Croats should overcome the mental barrier and agree with the autonomy of the Serbs in Croatia' what was 'a prerequisite for re-establishing the Croatian sovereignty over the occupied territories'.

Belgrade announces its intention of blocking the peace process in Bosnia if the peace plan is not accompanied by a 'specific proposal' for lifting the United Nations embargo against Serbia and Montenegro.

Cease fire agreed to by both sides in Bihac. Bosnian army claims to have found 3 mass graves near Mostar of 575 Muslim civilians. Izetbegovic and Tudjman meet in Vienna, appeal for NATO forces in disputed territories.

Serb units advance on Srebrenica.

October 9

Croats continue to shell Muslims trapped in Mostar. Croats blow up road near Vitez in anticipation of Muslim attack. Muslims launch attack and fighting flares. Spain is threatening to end its role in peacekeeping force.

The Humanitarian Group within the Conference on the Former Yugoslavia warned that the effects of the sanctions imposed against FR Yugoslavia were detrimental. The economic embargo produced destructive effects on the Yugoslav economy that practically collapsed. It was estimated that almost 50 per cent of citizens could be treated as persons with inadequate means of support.

October 10

Serbs beat up 3 UNPROFOR soldiers who try to prevent Serbs soldiers from entering Serb-controlled Krajina. *Politika* reports more troops defect from 5th army to Abdic in Bihac. *NY Times* quotes Karadzic as saying he hopes for peace since 'we are all of the same blood, we are all Slavs.' The UNPROFOR commander, General Cot, strongly criticises the attitude of the United Nations and NATO towards the crisis in former Yugoslavia.

October 12

Red Cross relief convoy for Maglaj, Tesanj hits land mine, forced to turn back to Banja Luka. Croatian Foreign Minister Granic denies UN accusation that civilians were killed in Gospic, says all were 'killed in action'. Granic and Bosnian counterpart agree to exchange all prisoners starting on October 14. Fighting in Central Bosnia near Novi Travnik, 5 patients said to have died in Croatian hospital for lack of medicine. Also fighting near Kiseljak (NW of Sarajevo), and near Vares between Serbs and Muslims.

October 13

UN official Cedric Thornberry warns of impending war in Croatia. Prisoner exchange in Central Bosnia cancelled due to renewed fighting. Radio Serbia says monthly wages have dropped 90% since sanctions imposed.

October 14

Bosnian government mortar attack on Sarajevo suburb of Vogosca results in heavy Serb shelling of Sarajevo. Maglaj aid convoy abandoned after Serbs refuse to guarantee its safety (shelling of these towns by Serbs continues). Fighting in Vitez between Croats and Muslims.

October 15

Croatian President, Tudjman says he is opposed to a 'blanket' approach to the crisis and especially to an international meeting which would link the Bosnian conflict with all the other problems dealt with by the Conference on former Yugoslavia.

October 16

Serb shelling of Sarajevo kills at least 12. Croats report that Bosnian government forces recapture town of Cazin in Bihac pocket from Abdic's troops. Izetbegovic calls for International Balkan conference to deal with Bosnia. Tudjman overwhelmingly wins re-election to head Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ), and removes some right-wing elements from leadership positions. Party now describes itself as 'Christian democratic'. Greece refuses to participate in talks with Macedonia on name for the state.

October 19

Prisoner exchange begins between Muslims and Croats. Radio Croatia reports that Bosnian government troops arrest 750 in Bihac pocket. Karadzic rejects Balkan conference proposal, says he will continue to negotiate under Owen-Stoltenberg plan for partition. Serbian leadership says conference would only meddle in Serbia's internal affairs.

October 20

Milosevic dissolves assembly to prevent no-confidence vote, calls for new elections on December 19. UN war crimes commission says there is evidence Serbs have used rape as weapon in war, but number of rapes may be substantially lower than EU's earlier estimate of 20,000. The United States confirms its readiness to participate in a peace-keeping force for Bosnia if a peace plan is accepted by the three parties to the conflict.

October 22

Abdic signs separate peace agreement in Belgrade with Milosevic and Karadzic.

October 23

Abdic defends his actions in Zagreb by saying he is trying to forge a 'just and lasting peace'. Abdic condemned by other Bosnian Muslim leaders. Muslims attack Croatian enclave of Vares. Serbs shell Sarajevo.

October 25

Bosnian presidency moves Haris Silajdzic from Foreign Minister to Prime-Minister.

October 27

Tudjman in interview with newspaper warns that International conference on Balkan crisis must recognise Croatia's Tito-era boundaries. UN investigating report of mass grave of Croats at Vukovar, but are being blocked by Serbs. Muslims claim Croats massacred Muslim civilians at Stupni Dol (20 miles N of Sarajevo). UNPROFOR confirms that at least 19 were killed by Croats, town destroyed. New Prime-Minister Silajdzic has two local Muslim commanders arrested for organised crime and warlordism. 17-21 killed mostly hostages, civilians) in arresting Ramiz Delalic (Celo), and Musan Topalovic (Caco, who is killed while trying to escape) both renegade army commanders.

October 29

AFP reports that Serbs may be arming Muslims against Croats so as to further destroy their alliance. The European Council invited all interested parties to immediately resume negotiations in order to achieve a just and lasting peace, and demanded abstention from any act of hostility. The Council also condemned the crimes that had recently been committed by the members of the Croatian forces in Stupni Do.

October 31

Aid flights to Sarajevo suspended after French officer hit by bullets at airport. Croats advance around Travnik (NW of Sarajevo), Bosnian army making progress around Vares, capturing village of Dubostica.

November 1

Newsday reports that UNPROFOR officers have been visiting Serb-run brothels using captive Muslim women, and that they failed to investigate a Serb-run concentration camp nearby. UN says it will investigate, but UNPROFOR spokesman in Sarajevo says story is 'disinformation' and troops never visited the town.

November 2

Vecernji List (Zagreb) says Yugoslavia President Zoran Lilic visited Kosovo previous week but Albanian leaders would not talk until school and media rights restored.

Bosnian Serbs cause paperwork obstacles to UN's restoration of electricity in Sarajevo (out since October 30).

Secret negotiations between the delegations of the Republika Srpska Krajina and Croatia took place near Oslo. The main questions were the cessation of hostilities, and reestablishment of traffic and economic ties between Krajina and Croatia. The negotiations broke off. At the same time Tudjman declared in Zagreb that he was willing to offer 'full autonomy' to the ethnic Serbs in the southern part of Krajina around Knin and northern part round Glina, where the Serbs made a majority of the population.

November 3

Croatian troops abandon Vares under pending threat of Muslim attack. 15,000 townspeople flee into nearby fields and woods. Izetbegovic fires army chief-of-staff General Sefer Halilovic (from the Sandzak, considered an outsider and too close to warlords). Replaces him with General Enver Hadzihasanovic, formerly of 3rd Corps. Greek Prime-Minister Papandreou says sanctions against Yugoslavia unfair.

November 4

Croatian and Serbian forces in Krajina reportedly sign cease-fire in Osijek. Bosnian government troops enter Vares, some reports of looting. Relief workers trying to get Croat refugees of Vares to come out of forests. Croats say Bosnian government forces now attacking Croat-held town of Zepce (NW of Vares). Ultranationalist paramilitary leader Arkan (Zeljko Raznatovic), considered by International community to be a war criminal, says if he comes to power in Kosovo he will expel 'those who look to Tirana'.

November 5

In *Politika* interview Milosevic says key to lasting peace is close Serbian-Croatian co-operation, but also says regional tensions are largely the fault of Tudjman's unwillingness to commit to peace.

November 6

For third time in two weeks, government forces crackdown on organised crime in Sarajevo. HVO HQ in Sarajevo shut down, troops told they can join new Croat brigade of 1st Corps (Sarajevo defense force). *Vecernji List* says Tudjman has almost universal support by Croats for his new peace plan. Serb gunmen kidnap two aides to Sarajevo Catholic archbishop claiming they are war criminals. *Borba* says Bosnian government has arrested Croatian military leadership in Sarajevo.

November 7

Fikret Abdic, President of the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia, met in Velika Kladusa with Vladimir Lukic, Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska and Jadranko Prlic, Prime Minister of Herzeg-Bosnia. The three parties signed a joint declaration on development of the political and economic co-operation.

November 8

In Brussels, the Foreign Ministers of the EU state their willingness to resume the initiative over the crisis in former Yugoslavia both as regards humanitarian aid and the search for a settlement. The Twelve envisage a progressive lifting of the sanctions against Belgrade in this connection. First evacuation of civilians from Sarajevo since May begins. 642 Serbs to leave in stages. Serbs force open UN armoured vehicle and abduct 2 Croats taking part in a peace mission. 1 of them later released. Radio Serbia reports that October monthly salary was \$15 and inflation 1,800%.

November 9

The Security Council expressed deep concern at the deterioration of the situation in central Bosnia where increased military activities posed a serious threat to the security of the civilian population. The Council was equally concerned at the overall humanitarian situation and demanded that all parties concerned guarantee unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance.

In a separate statement issued on the same day, the Council condemned all attacks and hostile acts against UNPROFOR by all parties in Bosnia, as well as in Croatia, 'which have become more frequent over the last weeks', and demanded that 'they cease forthwith'.

Although numerous cease-fire agreements were signed by the warring parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, practically none of them were implemented and the military situation remained grave. Serbs shell school in Sarajevo killing 9, mostly children. Serbs deny the attack. Croats finally destroy arched bridge over Neretva River in Mostar (built between 1557 and 1566).

November 10

8 more killed in Sarajevo, including 3 children. Mourners at funeral of school attack victims fired upon. Government asks UN to declare Mostar 'safe Area'.

November 11

Seselj at press conference accuses Milosevic and those around him of corruption, profiteering and participation in war crimes in Croatia and Bosnia over past 2 years. Milosevic supporters counter by accusing Seselj's fighters of atrocities. Death toll in Sarajevo after 2 days of shelling reaches 17, 100 wounded.

November 12

Granic to Sarajevo along with Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Cetin to mediate between local Croats and Muslims. Hundreds of Muslim refugees from frontline town of Olovo (20 miles NE of Sarajevo) flee before Serb attack. Russian envoy to Yugoslavia, Vitalii Churkin, meets with Karadzic in Pale.

November 13

Refugees tell of Serb rapes, massacres, and mass detentions in area around Olovo. Croatian forces heading towards Gornji Vakuf area. Churkin in Sarajevo for talks with collective presidency, says sanctions against Yugoslavia should be lifted when a peace accord is agreed to.

November 14

Croats and Serbs advance on Central Bosnian town of Fojnica, hospitals caught in crossfire. Churkin in Zagreb for talks with Tudjman, others, agrees to idea of Safe Areas for Bosnian Croats.

November 15

Intense fighting between Croats and Muslims for Gornji Vakuf with as many as 4,000 Croats taking part. Muslim forces again take town of Fojnica when Croats do not occupy it. Serbs and Croats fighting around Vares, UN forces shelled near Olovo. Radio Sarajevo reports that Izetbegovic says he is committed to fighting the war and that Bosnia no longer has a future as a multi-ethnic state.

November 16

Tudjman threatens to intervene in Bosnia to protect Croats living there. More combat in Mostar. Macedonia Prime-Minister, Branko Crnvenkovski survives confidence vote over governments' handling of alleged plot by All-Albanian Army to undermine the state by force. The Bulgarian Prime Minister Luben Berov said that Bulgaria, Greece and Romania were considering the possibility of making a joint demarche in early 1994 for the purpose of easing the sanctions imposed against FR Yugoslavia.

November 17

Turkish Foreign Minister Cetin proposes to NATO that armed force be used to protect aid convoys. War crimes tribunal meets for first time in Hague. Serbian opposition groups DEPOS says it will take part in December elections. 5 armed Serbs enter Macedonia and abduct 3 Macedonian border guards trying to prevent gasoline smuggling. All later released.

November 18

For the first time, HVO accuses its own forces for massacre of Muslims in Stupni Do in October. Silajdzic, Boban, and Karadzic meet in Geneva to discuss handling of relief efforts. Stoltenberg, Co-Chairman of the Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, submitted a report to the Security Council on the situation in the former Yugoslavia and possibilities for ending the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He concluded that the UN efforts had given visible results in improving the humanitarian assistance, preventing of spreading of the war and offering assistance in the negotiations, but that making peace, what was the fundamental objective, had not yet been achieved. Stoltenberg declared that 'there is no longer any sense to speak of the (Serbian) aggression, since it is a civil war including the elements of interference of the neighbouring states, Serbia and Croatia'.

November 19

The Working Group on Humanitarian Issues held a meeting in Geneva with the donor community and other interested States, UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, WHO, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and ICRC to review the state of preparations for the relief effort during the winter period. Notwithstanding the Joint Declarations on the delivery of humanitarian assistance, signed by the three sides at Geneva, the level of violence, the imposition of bureaucratic procedures hindering the transport of relief goods or the denial of clearance for the passage of UNHCR convoys reduced deliveries of humanitarian assistance to half the amount required. Furthermore, elements of all three sides deliberately fired upon relief convoys and United Nations personnel. Serbs in Krajina claim that Croatian forces attacked targets in Krajina.

November 21

Fighting across Bosnia. Aid convoys having difficult time reaching recipients due to local military commanders. Western agencies and TANJUG report that Croatian forces and Serbs in western

Slavonia have reached a cease-fire in effect for 10 days. Serbian version of Macedonia border incident is that Macedonians entered Serbia illegally.

FR Yugoslavia forwarded Memorandum to the UN, WHO and the world public that the rigorous and extended application of the sanctions had produced tragic and vast effects on the health of the population, and that by its character it was directed towards its destruction. The Memorandum appealed to take action in the Security Council for the purpose of lifting of the sanctions.

November 20-22

Croatian and Serbian intellectuals met in Zagreb in an attempt to build 'a bridge of understanding and tolerance'. They issued a declaration saying that all participants acted as citizens whose intention was to establish direct contacts between the two parties in order to try to reduce disagreements and misunderstandings.

November 22 EU Foreign Ministers meeting in Luxembourg offer Yugoslavia a 'gradual suspension' of sanctions in exchange for territorial concessions the Bosnian Serbs should grant to the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as for the agreement on Krajina, or the 'modus vivendi' status for the territories in Croatia controlled by the UNPROFOR as part of a program for peace.

November 24

Amnesty International issues report strongly critical of Serbian policy in Kosovo. Vatican Radio says Pope John Paul II will not travel to Croatia in '94. *Borba* says Croats plan to rebuild historic bridge in Mostar, but refuse to claim responsibility. Food convoys reach central and eastern Bosnia for first time in a month.

November 25

Fighting continues in Gornji Vakuf and in Bihac pocket. Greek deputy Foreign Minister accuses Germany of being responsible for a conspiracy to gain full diplomatic recognition for Macedonia. In a lecture delivered in London Lord Owen, Co-Chairman of the Conference on the former Yugoslavia, assessed that the creation of a Muslim republic in Bosnia was inevitable since Washington had destroyed his plan for Bosnia as a multiethnic state. If the warring parties agreed with proposed division to three parts, Owen was of the opinion that the Croatian and Serbian part 'could possibly join Serbia and Croatia afterwards'.

November 26

UN says all 3 sides again blocking aid (Serbs to Srebrenica and Zenica. Croats to central Bosnia. and Muslims between Fojnica and Bakovici).

November 27

Serbs let convoys pass to Sarajevo and Srebrenica, but Croats do not let any through in Central Bosnia. Karadzic says no territory will be given to Muslims unless sanctions against Yugoslavia lifted. EU preparing to discuss Franco-German proposal for gradual lifting of sanctions in exchange for territory, but Karadzic rules it out saying Germany is in the 'forefront of genocide against the Serbs'.

November 28

Serb shells kill 5 in Sarajevo prior to renewal of peace talks in Geneva.

November 29

Milosevic accuses EU of genocide against Serbs through use of sanctions at 1st round of new peace talks. Tudjman willing to discuss Muslim 'free zones' in Rijeka or Ploce, but will not give up Neum for use as Muslim outlet to sea.

November 29-30

New negotiations on resolving the conflict in Bosnia commenced in Geneva. Apart from the Presidents Milosevic, Bulatovic and Tudjman and the representatives of the three warring parties Karadzic, Boban and Izetbegovic, Co-Chairmen of the Conference on the former Yugoslavia Owen and Stoltenberg, the commanders of UNPROFOR generals Cot and Briquemont participated as well as American and Russian special envoys Redman and Churkin, President of the UNHCR Ogata, President of the International Committee of Red Cross Somaruga, and ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 12 EU member countries. They discussed the issues at dispute that had been left over, and these were the status of Sarajevo, fixing of borders between the Serbian and Muslim territories, and others. Milosevic proposed that the sanctions should be immediately suspended, and that final lifting of them should be tied to the implementation of the peace plan for Bosnia. No significant progress was made, but it was concluded that the talks should be continued on 12 December.

November 30-December 1

The meeting of the ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CSCE took place in Rome. The ministers called upon the warring parties in Bosnia to 'take initiative based on the EU action plan'. They declared that the territories protected by the UN (Krajina) 'should be peacefully reintegrated into the political and legal system of Croatia' and that the international observes should be allowed to resume their missions in Kosovo, Vojvodina and Sandzak. They also said that 'Yugoslavia should agree with all principles, commitments and decisions of the CSCE, since it is necessary condition for its participation in the CSCE'.

November 30

Muslim authorities in Zenica (Central Bosnia) agree to let Croats and Serbs leave thereby abandoning hope of multi-ethnicity. Serb artillery pounds Maglaj and Tesanj. Geneva talks deadlock, and Izetbegovic accuses EU of siding with Serbs.

December 1

As requested by Security Council Resolution 871, the Secretary-General reported that various initiatives were under way, with the co-operation of the two sides in the Croatian conflict, which could lead to implementation of the United Nations peace-keeping plan for the Republic. Therefore, he would not recommend reconsidering the mandate of UNPROFOR in Croatia. However, he strongly urged the two sides to intensify their efforts for achieving a cease-fire agreement, for instituting practical measures of economic co-operation and for negotiating a lasting political settlement. He also appealed to them to extend their co-operation to UNPROFOR as it sought to improve conditions in the UNPAs.

Muslims say they will discuss possibility of splitting Sarajevo in exchange for land concessions in East Bosnia. Serbs apparently offer Sarajevo suburbs of Vogosca and Ilijas for Muslim enclaves of Zepa and Srebrenica. Greece blocks Macedonia's entrance into CSCE, WEU criticises Greek Foreign policy. November inflation rate in Serbia at 20,190% (hourly rate of 0.7%. daily rate of 18.7%. annual rate at 286 billion%). New 500 million dinar note issued.

December 3

Yasushi Akashi, a former Japanese diplomat, became UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for the former Yugoslavia.

December 4

Greek Prime-Minister Papandreou says border with Macedonia may have to be closed. Abdic's forces said to have moved through Serb-held territory in Croatia to surprise Bosnian government forces. Heavy fighting in Mostar, Gornji Vakuf Serbian government to give out bread to pensioners, those on welfare.

The UN undersecretary Garekhan informed the Security Council of the results of the latest round of negotiations in Geneva on resolving the crisis in Bosnia. The conviction prevailed that further solutions should be sought within the division of that country into three ethnic entities. Creation of an independent Muslim state was also not excluded.

December 5

24 killed, 77 wounded in fighting between Muslims and Serbs north of Sarajevo. Serbs contend Muslims have attacked near Doboje. Serb-Croatian attacks on Maglaj and Tesanj (nearly 1,000 shells). Reuters says Serbian government may be planning to replace the dinar to prevent complete collapse of economy.

December 6

Bosnian Prime-Minister Silajdzic claims Serb forces now shelling areas with large concentrations of people to save ammunition.

December 7

Japanese diplomat Yasushi Akashi took office in Zagreb as UNPROFOR representative for the former Yugoslavia. Up to that moment the office had been held by Thorvald Stoltenberg who would remain at the post of the Co-Chairman of the Conference on the Former Yugoslavia.

December 8

Croatian paper *Nedjeljna Dalmacija* says Serbs might offer to exchange Vukovar and Knin for Baranja (bordering Serbia). Croatia reportedly rejects the idea as swapping Croatian land for Croatian land.

December 10

At their meeting in Brussels the ministers of Foreign Affairs of the European Union member countries discussed the conditions that should be fulfilled 'in order to consider the suspension of the sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro'. Apart from the territorial concessions that the Serbs should grant and the modus vivendi for Krajina, the Muslim part should also be granted a path to the sea, the cease-fire should be achieved and observed and Sarajevo should be brought under the UN control for a two year period.

The elections were held in the Republika Srpska Krajina for the Assembly and President of the Republic. Milan Babic won - 49%, while Milan Martić, supported by Milosevic, won 26% of votes. The second ballot was scheduled for 23 January 1994.

December 11

EU Foreign Minister invite 3 sides to resume negotiations on December 22. Over 1,000 shells land on Gorazde killing 2. Government forces push 2 miles into Serb territory 15 miles E of Tuzla, report 50 Serbs killed, 23 captured.

December 13

Serbs attack two UN convoys trying to bring humanitarian aid to Tuzla. Karadzic vows to bring about complete military defeat of Muslims if Serb positions around Sarajevo attacked.

December 14

Heavy fighting in and around Sarajevo killing at least 10. Bosnian Croats free several hundred Muslim prisoners from camp near Mostar.

December 15

Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DEPOS) rally in Belgrade brings out 30-50,000.

December 16

UN High Commissioner staff members detained by Serbs in Banja Luka while trying to inspect sites of mosques destroyed by Serbs. Germany, Britain, Netherlands, and Denmark confirm that they are proceeding towards full recognition of Macedonia. France, Italy, Finland, and Sweden all considering it also. Greece protests.

December 17

The President of the Security Council informed the Secretary-General that the members of the Council agreed with the observations contained in his 1 December report regarding the mandate of UNPROFOR in Croatia.

Croat representatives and local Serb authorities in Croatia signed a Christmas Truce Agreement, mediated by UNPROFOR. The two parties undertook to cease all armed hostilities along all existing confrontation lines from midnight on 23 December until midnight on 15 January 1994. They also agreed to implement certain confidence-building measures, and to open negotiations as soon as the truce took effect on a 'general and lasting' cease-fire, with the separation of forces on both sides. Subsequently, the truce was extended beyond 15 January and has generally held since then.

December 19

Serbs vote for 250-seat parliament. Most Kosovo Albanians boycott (Kosovo's 24 seats in parliament most likely will go to Serbs). Milosevic Socialist Party won.

December 20

On the initiative of the Muslim group of countries the UN General Assembly adopted the Resolution on Bosnia. Among other things the blame for the civil war and its consequences was laid on the Serbian part, and partly on the Croats. It was also required that the Security Council should lift the embargo on the arms import to Bosnia. 109 countries voted for the Resolution, there were 57 abstentions, and no vote against. Among those which abstained were all permanent members of the Security Council, except the USA which voted for, and all European Union member countries. Serbs shell Muslim forces near Zvornik (East Bosnia) and Olovo (N. of Sarajevo).

Aid flights suspended after Russian plane hit by machine-gun bullets. Serb attacks on government positions on Mt. Zuc cause power line for Sarajevo to be cut. Fighting near Tuzla, Doboj, Gradacac, and Fojnica.

December 21-23

Peace talks in Geneva, but fighting in Sarajevo. The Presidents of Serbia, Croatia, Republika Srpska, and Herzeg-Bosnia agreed in Geneva that 33,3% of the territory of Bosnia should belong to the Muslims. The Muslim part agreed with such division in percentages, but it put forward some new claims since it was not content with 'the quality of the offered territories' - some towns remained points at issue, as well as access to the sea and the Sava river, and the status of Sarajevo.

Truce agreed upon in EU negotiations in Brussels, to extend over Christmas season (December 22-January 15). Serbs promise not to bomb Sarajevo during this period. Fighting remains heavy on same day. All sides agree to refrain from shooting at UN planes.

December 22

Socialist Party of Serbia falls short of majority in parliament (125 needed) with 123 seats. DEPOS, 45. Serbian Radical Party, 39. Democratic Party, 29.

December 24

Muslims launch attacks on Lasva Valley, shell Vitez. Croats claim they regain 20% control of Jelin Skok area (SW of Vitez). Serbs shell Sarajevo despite pledge, hit power lines.

December 26

Croats contend Muslims shelling them near Novi Travnik and Vitez.

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference presented a statement in Dubai, requiring that the UN Security Council should lift the embargo on the arms delivery to the Bosnian Muslims, and that the international efforts should be directed towards re-establishment of 'sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina'.

December 27

France formally recognises Macedonia. Greeks prevent Macedonian drivers from loading fuel at Greek refineries. Serb shelling of Sarajevo continues. British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd says Britain cannot be counted on indefinitely to remain in Bosnia.

December 28

UN evacuates 1,000 from Sarajevo, sends them to Split. Croatian Defence Minister, Gojko Susak threatens Croatian intervention in Bosnia if Muslims continue to threaten Croats. New President elections in Krajina set for January 23.

December 29

Borba reports that all Serbian opposition parties say they will refrain from forming coalition with Socialists.

December 30

Politika reports Yugoslavia national bank devalues dinar by 9 zeros. No government formed yet. Montenegro announces it has relocated capital to Cetinje.

December 31

Serb shelling of Sarajevo kills 5. Muslims shell suburb of Grbavica killing 1. Building where relief workers are holding party hit by shell. Mortar fire in Mostar kills 1 amidst heavy fighting. Serbs and government forces battle in Gracanica (N. Bosnia). UN investigating Croatian claims of Muslim massacre of as many as 80 around Krizancevo (Central Bosnia) invade Bosnia.

Chronology 1994

January 3

Bosnian Government threatens to besiege Lasva Valley unless 65,000 Croats living there leave. Serb offensive against Sarajevo kills 15, wounds 30. UN commander in Yugoslavia General Jean Cot says his forces are prepared for defensive military action, and blames Serbs for acting as greatest hindrance for UNPROFOR.

January 4

Croatian Foreign Minister Granic and Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic meet in Vienna, agree that Mostar should be placed under international control. Lord Owen comments that UNPROFOR troops could be withdrawn by spring if sides do not come to an agreement. UN commander in Bosnia, General Francis Briquemont, resigns.

January 5

US ambassador to UN, Madelaine Albright, tells Croatia US may apply sanctions if Croatia carries through on its threat to invade Bosnia. Heavy shelling of Sarajevo kills 2, wounds 32. Police for first time turn civilians back into their homes and clear streets. Airport closed. UN counts 1,535 Serb shells, and only 56 government shells in response.

January 5

The negotiations between Silajdzic, Bosnian Prime Minister and Granic, Vice Prime Minister of Croatia, were completed in Vienna. As announced in their joint statement the two parties agreed on the cease-fire in Central Bosnia and cessation of all military activities between the Muslim and Croatian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

January 6

Izetbegovic appeals for UN intervention against Serbians to stop shelling of Sarajevo. Serb shelling of Sarajevo continues keeping airport closed, killing 4, wounding 50 (death toll for '94 now 37). 5 French peacekeepers wounded. Bosnian Government troops launch attack on hillside suburb of Grbavica. Fifth US State Department official, former ambassador to Belgrade Warren Zimmerman, resigns in protest against US Yugoslavia policy.

January 7

The Security Council, in a Presidential statement, condemned any hostilities in United Nations-designated 'safe Areas', particularly the relentless bombardment of Sarajevo by Bosnian Serb forces, and demanded an immediate end to attacks against Sarajevo, which had resulted in a large number of civilian casualties, disrupted essential services, and aggravated an already severe humanitarian situation. The Council reaffirmed its commitment to implement all its relevant Resolutions, in particular Resolution 836, by which it had authorised UNPROFOR to use force to protect Sarajevo and five towns previously declared 'safe Areas' in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and expressed its readiness to consider further measures to ensure that all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina abided by their commitments.

Serbs continue shelling despite Orthodox Christmas, 6 killed, airport still closed. In Bonn, Silajdzic demands resignation of Lord Owen for trying to force Muslims to accept unjust peace. Albright says blocking aid convoys should be considered war crime.

January 8

UN Security Council condemns all sides for recent fighting prompting Serbs to call for cease-fire, which they break several hours later. Shelling of airport prevents Izetbegovic from attending talks with Tudjman. 6 killed, 31 wounded in Sarajevo (death toll in city for '94 now more than 50). Shells fall on civilians waiting in line for water. UN denies that air strikes were called for by UN commander after 5 soldiers wounded earlier in week.

January 9

Bosnian and Croatian presidents meet in Bonn. NATO warplanes fly low over battlefields in Sarajevo area as NATO talks on Bosnia begin.

January 10

Talks in Bonn end inconclusively. Clinton tells NATO meeting that the alliance must be ready to back up its rhetoric if it issues threats. Tudjman presents Muslims with new package of proposals for regulating relations between two sides. They only agreed on the immediate cessation of combats between the Croats and Muslims in Central Bosnia.

January 10-11

The Heads of State and Government participating in the summit meeting of NATO, held in Brussels on 1994, issued a Declaration, by which they deplored the continuing conflict in the former Yugoslavia. They expressed their continued belief that the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina must be settled at the negotiating table and not on the battlefield, and supported the efforts of the United Nations and the European Union to secure a negotiated settlement in that Republic. They were determined to 'eliminate obstacles to the accomplishment of the UNPROFOR mandate' and called for the full implementation of Security Council Resolutions regarding the reinforcement of UNPROFOR. They reaffirmed their readiness under the authority of the Security Council 'to carry out air strikes in order to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo, the Safe Areas and other threatened areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina'. In this context, they urged UNPROFOR 'to draw up urgently plans to ensure that the blocked rotation of the UNPROFOR contingent in Srebrenica can take place and to examine how the airport at Tuzla can be opened for humanitarian relief purposes'.

January 11

The UN Security Council appointed British General Michael Rose commander of UNPROFOR for the former Bosnia-Herzegovina. He would replace Belgian General Briquemont. Shelling of Sarajevo intensifies. NATO leaders, using joint French-British proposal, warn Serbs of airstrikes unless airport in Tuzla is reopened, UN forces in Srebrenica are allowed to rotate, and siege of Sarajevo lifted. Karadzic rejects this saying the airports in Mostar, Tuzla, and Banja Luka will be reopened only when an international-guaranteed peace is signed.

January 12

The Secretary-General instructed his new Special Representative for the former Yugoslavia, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, to undertake an urgent preparatory study of the NATO proposal 'to draw up urgently

plans to ensure that the blocked rotation of the UNPROFOR contingent in Srebrenica can take place and to examine how the airport at Tuzla can be opened for humanitarian relief purposes'.

Muslim forces attack Croat positions in Lasva valley, 60 UN peacekeepers evacuated from area. 4 killed, 12 wounded in Sarajevo. Serb-Muslim fighting around Olovo. Pope John Paul II calls for 'all forms of action aimed at disarming the aggressor' but does not specify who these are. Izetbegovic rejects Tudjman plan, demands Serbs give up all seized land, that Muslims now have 200,000 men in the fight. Tudjman tells press conference Muslims are using poison gas in central Bosnia assaults, but UN cannot confirm this.

January 13

Bosnia UN ambassador Sacirbey calls on Muslim states to boycott NATO countries' goods until arms embargo lifted. Serbs and Croats announce extension of their Christmas truce until end of January. Serbs shell Sarajevo. Serbia says it is planning new gold dinar pegged to D-mark. Inflation now at 1,000,000% a month. Bosnia Catholic bishops tell Tudjman that 440,000 of the 830,000 Croats in Bosnia prior to war are now refugees.

January 17

In his report to the Secretary-General, the Special Representative reaffirmed the urgent necessity of rotating the contingent in Srebrenica. As to Tuzla, it was concluded that the opening of the main airfield there would improve the flow of humanitarian supplies to the Tuzla Safe Area. In both cases, it was confirmed that the use of air power could make an important contribution if a military operation by UNPROFOR was needed for those purposes.

The Assembly of Republika Srpska adopted a new platform for negotiations with the Croatian and Muslim parts in Geneva. It is stated that 'since the Muslim part rejected the proposal for the settlement of the crisis in the way that it should be offered one third of the territory of the former Bosnia-Herzegovina (33,3 per cent) Republika Srpska makes decision to revoke the offer.' 'Republika Srpska shall take part in the peace process, but it shall demand equal treatment, this implying that the international community should lift the sanctions and stop threatening the Serbs'.

January 18

The Secretary-General sent a letter to the President of the Security Council, indicating that the use of air power would require military assets in excess of what was available to UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Secretary-General also stated that the proposal to use air power implied that UNPROFOR could launch offensive action against Bosnian Serb elements which obstructed - or threatened to obstruct - its operations. UNPROFOR had previously been allowed to use air support only in defence of United Nations personnel.

The Secretary-General instructed Akashi, with the assistance of the UNPROFOR Force Commander, to prepare detailed plans for military operations, including the use of air power as required, to ensure the rotation of the contingent in Srebrenica and the opening of the main airfield at Tuzla in close co-ordination with NATO's Southern Command. The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Marrack Goulding, was sent to Brussels to brief the Secretary General of NATO on the matter.

January 18-19

Negotiations on the settlement of the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina resumed in Geneva. No progress was made and the negotiations broke off.

After separate talks in Geneva between the delegations of FR Yugoslavia and Croatia the two states, signed a statement on the process of normalisation of relations and opening of diplomatic missions in Belgrade and Zagreb.

Republika Srpska and the Croatian community of Herzeg-Bosnia signed in Geneva a statement on establishing lasting peace and official relations between the two republics.

January 19

The High Commissioner for Refugees expressed fears for the fate of tens of thousands of civilians in Bosnia and Herzegovina deprived of basic humanitarian assistance, despite repeated assurances by all Bosnian sides to let the aid through. In conveying her concern to the representatives of the warring parties attending the Geneva peace talks, she made particular mention of the civilian population in Maglaj, Tesanj, east Mostar, Gorazde and parts of central Bosnia.

January 20

UN senior aid official, Larry Hollingworth says UN should bring in more troops and get tough or get out of Bosnia. European Parliament recommends Lord Owen be replaced by someone with fresh perspective.

January 21

Boutros-Ghali considers air strikes to enforce rotation of UN troops in Srebrenica area. Snipers kill 2 children playing in snow in Sarajevo. Zagreb dailies say Croatian opposition furious with Tudjman's deal with Milosevic.

The Russian Doema adopted a document requiring that Jeltsin and Prime Minister Chernomydin should take all necessary measures to request the UN Security Council to lift the sanctions imposed against FR Yugoslavia.

January 22

Serb shelling of children playing in Sarajevo kills 6. Silajdzic writes to Boutros-Ghali demanding retaliatory air strikes.

January 23

Serbs block medical evacuations from Sarajevo in retaliation for detention of Serb doctors who were trying to leave city. Boutros-Ghali says he is ready to order NATO air strikes if troops on ground ask him to. Departing UN General for Bosnia, Lt. General Francis Briquemont says UN mission impossible while fighting continues.

Second ballot held for the President of the Republika Srpska Krajina. Milosevic ally Milan Martić was elected President.

January 24

In FR Yugoslavia a new economic programme became effective. The basic target of the programme was to crack down the hyperinflation and reconstruct the monetary system. The new, internally convertible dinar was established. The exchange rate between the dinar and Deutsche Mark was fixed at 1:1.

British general Michael Rose replaced Belgian general Briquemont as a new commander of the UNPROFOR for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

French idea of imposing borders on warring groups rejected by US which says pressure should be focused on Bosnian Serbs. French say they may be forced to pull out 6,000 troops unless political pressure used for settlement. Clinton says fighting will continue until those in Bosnia agree to stop it.

Departing UN General for Yugoslavia, Jean Cot, calls for air strikes to support safe havens or other areas. Boutros-Ghali contends that settlement could take years and NATO is unwilling to use force.

January 25

Bosnian Croats claim to have captured Muslim village of Here (Central Bosnia). Muslims contend that 25 civilians massacred.

January 25-26

Seven Bosnian police beaten by crowds who try to seize UN food shipments in village of Ticići.

January 26

US State Department spokesman Mike McCurry says France's peace plan to pressure Muslim forces 'requires a very strange moral calculus'.

January 27

French Foreign Minister angrily criticises US by calling it a bystander on Bosnia. Two UN soldiers wounded by Croatian artillery barrage that hits aid convoy near Fojnica. *New York Times* reports Yugoslavia People's Army still actively involved in Bosnia war. France recommends airstrikes to open Tuzla airport and to support UN in Srebrenica. US Senate votes in favour of non-binding Resolution to lift arms embargo on Bosnian Government. Serbian and Croatian governments announce in Geneva they will set up joint commission to determine fates of 9,000 from war in '91. Croatian Foreign Minister Granic says he and Yugoslavia Foreign Minister Simic have opened talks on Krajina.

January 28

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, the Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina reported that military formations of the regular armed forces of Croatia, supplemented by heavy artillery, armoured vehicles and other war - materials, were involved in military actions on his country's territory.

The Secretary-General submitted a letter to the President of the Council, containing three scenarios envisaged under the plans prepared under Akashi's direction by the UNPROFOR Force Commander. In the first scenario, troops in Srebrenica and Zepa could be rotated and the Tuzla airport opened through negotiations and with the consent of the parties. In the second, if the parties did not consent, but were judged unlikely to use military force, existing UNPROFOR military assets would be used with the support, if necessary, of NATO air power. In the third scenario, if the parties resorted to military force, UNPROFOR would use available assets, reinforced with additional troops and equipment contributed by United Nations Member States, and supported, if necessary, by NATO air power. The first two scenarios, the Secretary-General pointed out, represented 'a measured step-by-step approach geared to the attitude of the parties', while the third scenario would imply 'a different level of military action' and could not be implemented without Security Council authorisation and the deployment of additional troops in the area.

The Secretary-General stated that he would not hesitate to initiate the use of close air support if UNPROFOR were attacked while implementing plans to rotate peace-keepers in Srebrenica and Zepa and to open Tuzla airport. At the same time, he distinguished between close air support involving the use of air power for self-defence, which had already been authorised by NATO, and air strikes for pre-emptive or punitive purposes. NATO forces were not authorised to launch the latter types of air strikes without a decision of the North Atlantic Council.

The Secretary-General said he hoped that the troops could be rotated and the airport opened in accordance with the first scenario, namely, by mutual agreement. However, he noted that UNPROFOR's mandate regarding Safe Areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina had been adopted under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, and the Force did not have to seek the consent of the parties for operations falling within its mandate.

The Secretary-General warned that 'any resort to the second scenario, and a fortiori to the third scenario' would entail considerable risk for UNPROFOR's operations and for the troops involved in its implementation, as well as for the humanitarian assistance operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nevertheless, he instructed the Special Representative to 'pursue actively', in direct contact with the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the leadership of the Bosnian Serbs, the implementation of the two plans. In the specific circumstances of UNPROFOR operations in Srebrenica and Tuzla, the Secretary-General delegated to his Special Representative the authority to approve a request for close air support from the Force Commander.

UN investigators say some abuses occurred by UNPROFOR towards civilians, but majority of accusations unfounded or still being investigated. 3 British aid workers abducted near Zenica, in Muslim-controlled territory. 1 killed, 2 wounded. British halt participation in aid convoys in protest.

January 29

Bosnian Croat forces admit to killing of 3 Italian TV journalists previous day in mortar attack in Mostar. Croatia denies its troops are involved in Bosnia, but head of political department of Croatian army says there are volunteers who may have neglected to remove their Croatian army insignia. Serbia also denies troops in Bosnia.

UN Secretary General, authorised Akashi to ask, if necessary, the support of the NATO air force in the operation of opening the Tuzla airport and corridors to Srebrenica and Zepa.

January 31

The Supreme Command of the Army of Republika Srpska decided on the general mobilisation of all population fit for the military service or work. They should be organised in combat or working units, and some special women units would also be formed 'for the purpose of completing the war successfully and achieving economic revival of the country'.

3 accused of killing British aid worker themselves killed in Sarajevo while resisting arrest Russian LDP leader Zhirinovskiy visits town of Bijeljina (NE Bosnia), tells Serbs Russian has the means to punish those who bomb the Serbs.

Upper house of Croatian parliament endorses pact with Belgrade as 'a step towards peace'.

February/March

Cease-fire arrangements in Sarajevo, in central Bosnia and around Mostar alleviated suffering and deprivation and brought considerable relief to the populations in these areas. In addition, political developments leading to accords on new constitutional arrangements for the Bosnian Muslim and the Bosnian Croat communities as well as an agreement on a proposed confederation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia gave a new impetus to the peace process and facilitated access for humanitarian convoys through routes hitherto closed or very difficult to use.

February 1

The Secretary-General reported that the Croatian Army (HV) had been directly supporting the Bosnian Croat Army (HVO) with manpower, equipment and weapons for some time. The number of Croatian soldiers had apparently increased following successful offensives of Bosnian Government forces

against the HVO. It was assessed that in total there were approximately 3,000 to 5,000 Croatian regular army personnel in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

February 2-3

Daily Telegraph and *Washington Post* both report that Bosnian Serb authorities enforcing conscription amongst refugees in Serbia with compliance of Serb officials. Bosnian Serb Defence Minister says 'They are our people...and...we are getting them back so they can finish their military obligations.' *Daily Telegraph* also reports on 2-2 that Bosnian Croats are also being pressed into service in Bosnia. Boutros-Ghali says on 2-3 that 3-5,000 Croatian troops are actively involved in Bosnia, but German Foreign Minister Kinkel says there is no proof and opposes sanctions against Zagreb. *Washington Post* also reports (2-2) that both Izetbegovic and Sacirbey believe 'successful actions on the battlefield are the best diplomacy'.

February 3

In a Presidential statement, the Security Council strongly condemned Croatia for deploying elements of its Army and heavy military equipment in the central and southern parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and demanded that they be withdrawn. The Council stated that it would consider 'other serious measures', if Croatia failed to put an immediate end to 'all forms of interference' in that Republic. The Council again condemned the acquisition of territory by force as well as the 'practice of 'ethnic cleansing' by whomsoever committed', and reaffirmed the sovereignty, territory integrity and independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In terms of food aid, WFP reported that, although refugee needs in the former Yugoslavia were covered for the winter, there would be shortages in the spring, since only 67 per cent of the food requirements had been met until the end of June 1994, leaving a shortfall of 145,000 tons, valued at \$86 million. For the whole of 1994, nearly 750,000 metric tons of food aid, valued at some \$500 million, was required for the former Yugoslavia.

February 4

The UN Security Council adopted the Presidential statement giving an ultimatum to Croatia to withdraw its regular military units from Bosnia within two week period. In case Croatia ignored the ultimatum, 'it would face serious consequences', it was said.

The explosion of a mortar shell fired at the Sarajevo suburbs Dobrinja caused death of nine people who stood in a queue for distribution of humanitarian assistance.

February 5

A 120-mm mortar round fired at the Sarajevo central market killed at least 58 civilians and wounded 142 others in the worst single incident of the 22-month war. This followed a similar attack on one of the suburbs of Sarajevo on 4 February in which 10 civilians were killed and 18 injured. After initial investigation, UNPROFOR established that the round fired on 4 February had come from a Bosnian Serb position, but it had not been possible to locate the source of the attack against the central market on 5 February.

Izetbegovic accused the Bosnian Serbs for the attack. General Manojlo Milovanovic, chief of staff of the Army of Republika Srpska, rejected the accusation that the Serbian part was responsible for this incident and demanded forming of a mixed expert group that would investigate the case.

February 6

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, the Secretary-General stated that the two Sarajevo incidents made it necessary, in accordance with Resolution 836 to prepare urgently for the use of air strikes to deter further such attacks. The Secretary-General also informed the Council that he had requested the Secretary General of NATO to obtain 'a decision by the North Atlantic Council to authorise the Commander-in-Chief of NATO's Southern Command to launch air strikes, at the request of the United Nations, against artillery or mortar positions in and around Sarajevo which are determined by UNPROFOR to be responsible for attacks against civilian targets in that city'.

General Rose, commander of UNPROFOR for Bosnia-Herzegovina stated that, after making analysis of the crater UNPROFOR experts were unable to say which part had fired the shell at the Sarajevo market Markale. Akashi, special envoy of the UN Secretary General said 'we have some doubts, but we are still not certain' which part had fired the shell.

Milosevic expressed his bitterness condemning the crime committed in Sarajevo and expecting that the persons responsible for it would be brought to justice. Yugoslavia army officers agree with Karadzic that bombing is the work of Muslims to gain International sympathy.

The Serbian-Muslim negotiations on the cease-fire for the area of Sarajevo conducted at the Sarajevo airport were interrupted.

February 7

At their meeting in Brussels ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EU agreed to authorise, if necessary, use of NATO air force for the purpose of destroying the forces laying siege to Sarajevo.

Andrey Kozyrev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia said that air raids in Bosnia could be authorised, at the proposal of the Security Council, only by UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali. In his opinion they could be taken only against the part obstructing shipment of humanitarian relief or jeopardising security of UNPROFOR members.

US endorses UN plan calling on NATO to prepare for bombing Serb positions. Some administration opposition to air strikes comes from new Secretary of Defence William Perry. European Union calls for immediate lifting of Sarajevo siege using 'all the means necessary', but unable to come to agreement on issuing ultimatum. French make plea for intervention and say they are disappointed with EU statement. British say French proposal just one of several options.

February 8

As NATO prepares response, US says deadline for lifting of siege should be a week or air strikes to take place. Growing US-French consensus emerging where there had previously been competition. US proposal calls for Serb forces to withdraw tanks and artillery 20 kilometres from city, Muslims to place their heavy weaponry under UN monitoring.

February 9

Moving to end the strangulation of Sarajevo, the NAC issued a statement calling 'for the withdrawal, or regrouping and placing under UNPROFOR control, within ten days, of heavy weapons (including tanks, artillery pieces, mortars, multiple rocket launchers, missiles and anti-aircraft weapons) of the Bosnian Serb forces located in the area within 20 kilometres of the centre of Sarajevo, and excluding the area within 2 kilometres of the centre of Pale'. It also called upon the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, within the same period, 'to place the heavy weapons in its possession within the Sarajevo exclusion zone described above under UNPROFOR control, and to refrain from attacks launched from within the current confrontation lines in the city'.

The NAC decided that, ten days from 2400 GMT 10 February, heavy weapons of any of the parties found within the Sarajevo exclusion zone, unless controlled by UNPROFOR, would, along with their

direct and essential military support facilities, be subject to NATO air strikes. The strikes would be conducted in close co-ordination with the UN Secretary-General. The NAC accepted the 6 February request of the UN Secretary-General and authorised CINCSOUTH, to launch air strikes, at the request of the United Nations, against artillery or mortar positions in or around Sarajevo, including any outside the exclusion zone, which were determined by UNPROFOR to be responsible for attacks against civilian targets in that city.

In a parallel development, a few hours prior to the announcement of the NATO decision a cease-fire agreement had been reached between the warring parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the area in and around Sarajevo. The agreement followed intensive discussions at the political and military levels brokered by the Secretary-General's Special Representative, the Force Commander of UNPROFOR and UNPROFOR's Sector Commander for Sarajevo. The agreement involved the positioning of UNPROFOR troops in sensitive areas, monitoring, and the placing of all heavy weapons under UNPROFOR's control.

Immediately following the decision by NATO, the UN Secretary-General instructed his Special Representative to finalise, with CINCSOUTH, detailed procedures for the initiation and conduct of air strikes. He delegated to the Special Representative the authority to approve a request from the UNPROFOR Force Commander for close air support for the defence of United Nations personnel anywhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Secretary-General also instructed him and UNPROFOR military authorities to negotiate arrangements under which: (a) there would be an effective cease-fire in and around Sarajevo. (b) the heavy weapons of the Bosnian Serb forces would be withdrawn or regrouped and placed under UNPROFOR control. and (c) the heavy weapons of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be placed under UNPROFOR control.

At a press conference in the White House Clinton said that NATO was ready to respond by taking air raids against those responsible for jeopardising security of the Safe Areas.

Karadzic warns that Serbs will 'shoot down every plane we can'.

Russian Deputies express outrage at possibility of bombing including nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy who, in trip to Bosnia, says bombs dropped on Serbs would amount to bombs dropped on Russia.

Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev urges world leaders to make Sarajevo UN protectorate rather than launch airstrikes.

US formally recognises Macedonia, but uses title of 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.'

Yugoslavia Finance Minister says army now claims 75% of budget.

February 10

Russian UN ambassador Yulii Vorontsov says Russian will not insist on Security Council authorisation of airstrikes. President Clinton finally able to reach Jeltsin by telephone after 2 days of not being able to get through to discuss Bosnia crisis. 2 artillery blasts hit Sarajevo. Bosnian Serb generals say they will not withdraw artillery voluntarily.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation stated that NATO's call for the parties - both the Serbs and the Muslims - to place the heavy weapons deployed in the Sarajevo area under United Nations control or to withdraw them from the area was close to the Russian position. At the same time, however, the Russian Federation could not agree with the position of a number of NATO members which interpreted the NATO decision as 'a one-sided ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs, who are being threatened by air strikes'. It requested an urgent meeting of the United Nations Security Council, open to all countries concerned, to consider practical ways to demilitarise Sarajevo and to introduce a United Nations administration there. A Security Council meeting to discuss the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was also requested by the Government of that country and Pakistan.

February 11

General Rose, commander of the UN forces in Bosnia, said that the cease-fire in the Sarajevo area was observed 'within reasonable limits' and that the Army of Republika Srpska started to withdraw its heavy weapons around Sarajevo.

Zoran Lilic, President of FR Yugoslavia sent a telegram to Boutros-Ghali, expressing his concern for the inappropriateness of the NAC decision to search the Resolution of the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina by issuing ultimatums and using military force. Peace could be achieved only by negotiations of the warring parties on equal footing.

February 12

After three day talks the latest round of negotiations on Bosnia was completed in Geneva and no progress was made. It was concluded that the conference should be resumed in late February or early March. Negotiations between the delegations of FR Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia took place in Zagreb.

February 13

UN officials in Bosnia say they are not concerned that Serb guns might still be pointed at Sarajevo after February 21 deadline. Spokesman Lt. Col. Aikman says deadline 'is a NATO ultimatum, it is not a UN ultimatum'. Cease-fire in 4th day, but only 26 Serb weapons of greater than .50 calibre placed under UN control, and these are in Serb-run barracks. 10 Bosnian Government guns under UN control. US, German, UK, Canada and Netherlands have all begun evacuation of dependants at embassies. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vitalii Churkin in Belgrade for talks with Milosevic, says west interpreting UN Resolution in own way and trying to circumvent veto in Security Council. Bosnia Prime Minister Silajdzic rejects Serbs demands that Muslims put infantry and light weapons under UN control also. Croatia says it will withdraw troops from Bosnia if UN protects Croatian communities in central Bosnia

February 14-15

Over the course of four meetings, the Council Council heard a total of 58 speakers. Member States generally welcomed the decision by NATO and the steps taken by the Secretary-General to prepare for the use of force, adding that those actions had been fully authorised by existing Council Resolutions. They emphasised that force was designed to underpin efforts by the UN and the EU to achieve a negotiated settlement of the conflict, and that air strikes had to be carried out with caution and precision. Although the NATO ultimatum was widely supported, several Member States either opposed it or expressed concern that, as a result of air strikes, UNPROFOR might become a target for retaliatory measures. No Security Council Resolution or statement was put forward during the meetings.

February 15

German authorities arrest Serb concentration camp guard on genocide charges. First instance of action taken against accused war criminals. Jeltsin, in meeting with British Prime Minister Major, says Bosnia problem cannot be solved without Russia. Greek Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias in Belgrade for meetings with Milosevic.

The UN Security Council completed its two day debate on Bosnia. With more or less reserves almost all participants supported the NAC decision on the possible bombardment of the Serbian forces deployed around Sarajevo. Only the representatives of China, Greece and FR Yugoslavia were against such a decision. No conclusions or official positions were presented by the Security Council at the session.

Radoje Kotic, Prime Minister of the Yugoslav federal government, commenced a series of meetings in New York with the UN officials.

February 16

The UN five member commission stated in Zagreb that there was no sufficient proof to determine the party responsible for firing the shell at the Sarajevo Markale market on 5 February. 'The shell could be fired by any of the parties' (Serbian and Muslim).

Andreas Papandreu, Greek Prime Minister said Greece would impose a blockade on all the trade the FYR of Macedonia carried through the Thesaloniki harbour and close its consulate in Skopje for 'skopje keeps on provoking the Greek part' and 'applies the irredentist principles'.

Differences remain between NATO, UN on what sort of control will be maintained over Serb weapons. Serbs moving some weapons to other parts of Bosnia. Jeltsin, in phone conversation with Chancellor Kohl, makes clear Russian opposition to air strikes. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Churkin says Russia opposed to redeploying Russian peacekeeping troops from Croatia to Sarajevo. Meets with Milosevic. Greece reimposes economic blockade against Macedonia.

February 17

Churkin and Karadzic reach agreement on pull-back of Serbs to stave off air strikes. Russia also now offers to send 400 soldiers from Croatia to Sarajevo after February 21 deadline passes if Serbs pull back behind UN-NATO 20 kilometre exclusion zone.

February 18

After discussions in Sarajevo with Karadzic and Izetbegovic, and later in Zagreb with CINCSOUTH, the Secretary-General's Special Representative reported that progress was being made towards achieving a durable cease-fire, disarmament and disengagement, with a clear-cut role for UNPROFOR. There was agreement with the Bosnian Serb leader on having extensive and unhindered UNPROFOR patrolling within the weapons exclusion zone. Heavy weapons not withdrawn from the exclusion zone would be grouped and placed in seven different sites, under the control of armed UNPROFOR elements. An agreement had also been reached with regard to communications, with the full assurance that hot-lines would be established between UNPROFOR and the Bosnian Serb and Muslim sides. The Secretary-General informed the Council that despite its demand for non-interference in Bosnia and Herzegovina, some 5,000 Croatian Army troops were still believed to remain in that country. Also, no action had been taken regarding the proposed establishment of a monitoring mechanism to verify troop withdrawals.

US Secretary of Defence Perry and Chairman of JCS Shalikashvili sent to Italy to review preparations for NATO air strikes. Karadzic tells UN envoy Yasushi Akashi that Serbs will have pulled back 24 hours early 'regardless of other deadlines'. Military experts says Serbs have largely withdrawn guns for use on other fronts rather than have them controlled by UN. Bosnian Government concerned that many Serb guns still in position.

February 19

Croatian Foreign Minister Granic and Bosnia Prime Minister Silajdzic hold talks in Frankfurt-Main, say progress made in their relations. US acting as mediator in latest Croat-Muslim talks.

February 20

UN special envoy Akashi announces there is no immediate need for air strikes as Serbs have made a 'substantial withdrawal or regrouping of heavy weapons in and around Sarajevo'. UN commander in

Sarajevo, General Rose, says UN has identified 41 mortar and artillery sites around Sarajevo, but 9 had yet to be surveyed, 23 were abandoned, 5 were under UN control and the remaining 4 would soon be. UN declines to give estimates of total Serb weaponry (anywhere from 300 to 900). 5 suspected Serb shells hit Tuzla. 400 Russian peacekeepers arrive in Pale.

The Security Council met in informal consultations at the request of the Russian Federation, with the NATO deadline for withdrawal of heavy weapons scheduled for midnight that night. The Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, Mr. Kofi Annan, who reported that according to the Secretary-General's Special Representative for the former Yugoslavia, the UNPROFOR Force Commander and NATO, Serbian compliance with the ultimatum had been effective. Certain weapons on both the Serb and Muslim sides, which had not been removed from the exclusion zone, would be monitored in place by UNPROFOR. As a result, the Council decided, in co-ordination with NATO, not to recommend that air strikes be carried out at that time.

February 21

UN and NATO agree that air strikes not necessary at this time due to Serb withdrawals, but retain option. NATO considering extending tactic to other areas of Bosnia, but Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev says there should be 'no more ultimatums or similar devices'. Russian Defence Minister Grachev tells US Secretary of Defense Perry that US should send ground forces to Muslim sector of Sarajevo as this would reduce chances of provocation caused by Muslim forces. UN says new wave of ethnic cleansing being carried out by Serbs against Croats, Muslims around Banja Luka calling it 'criminality on a huge scale. Serb-Muslim artillery duel around Tuzla. Bosnian Government troops kill 2 in Vitez. US envoy Charles Redman in Zagreb for talks.

February 22

Serb artillery reported to still be around Sarajevo. 5 Swedish peacekeepers wounded by a shell in Tuzla. Churkin, in Bonn, urges no further use of ultimatums (Churkin also states that Russian troops are placed on dividing line in Sarajevo between Muslim and Serbs to provide 'psychological comfort' to the Serbs. Russian Foreign Minister says it was Russian initiative, not unilateral ultimatums that convinced Serbs to pull back. also, Foreign Minister says Russian has no objections to Turkish peacekeepers after Turkey renews its offer. UN troops sent to area near Bosnia-Croatia border after Krajina Serbs blockade Nepalese peacekeepers and take control of transit route on Sava River. *Borba* says UN has called for jets to fly overhead to 'intimidate the Serbs' after Serbs bring tanks to reinforce their positions.

February 23

Jeltsin invited Clinton, as well as leaders of France, Great Britain and Germany, to hold a summit for the purpose of finding the most optimal solution to stop the war in the former Yugoslavia. The White House assessed that the proposal 'is inappropriate for the time being'.

Military representatives of the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Croat sides signed a cease-fire agreement. Under this agreement, reached at a meeting hosted by UNPROFOR in Zagreb the two parties agreed to the immediate and total cessation of hostilities with effect from noon 25 February, a halt to all forms of propaganda against one another, and a fixing of lines of contact and positions as of the time of the cease-fire. UNPROFOR forces were to be positioned at key points. Heavy weapons were to be withdrawn or put under UNPROFOR control, and a Joint Commission was to be established, with representatives of both sides and chaired by UNPROFOR. 4 road corridors to be opened to allow deliveries by UN convoys, checkpoints and weaponry to be under UN control or to have been pulled back 10 kilometres by March 7. Both sides agree to open detention centres and exchange prisoners. no mention of Mostar. Leader of ruling council of 'state' of Herceg-Bosna says single federation Muslim and Bosnia preferable to 3 ethnic ministates.

February 24

Through mediation of Milosevic, Karadzic and Fikret Abdic, President of the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia, signed in Belgrade an agreement guaranteeing to keep the peace along all borders between Republika Srpska and the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia.

Shell hits hospital in Muslim enclave of Maglaj killing 5. Tudjman endorses idea of federation Bosnian Croat and Muslim state.

February 25

Croat and Muslim leaders meet in Sarajevo, express commitment to cease-fire.

February 26

At the initiative of the USA, negotiations commenced in New York between Haris Silajdzic, Prime Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mate Granic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Croatia and Kreshimir Zubak, representative of the Bosnian Croats. The three parties discussed the creation of a future common state to be composed of the Bosnian Muslims and Croats.

Overnight bombardment of Maglaj by Serbs kills 2 children, wounds 13 other people. Cease-fire holding in Sarajevo and Mostar.

February 28

2 American F-16s shoot down 4 Bosnian Serb Super' Galeb' jets which are strafing munitions factory in Novi Travnik in violation of no-fly zone (1st instance of NATO forces being used for combat).

Russia gives support to NATO use of force. Bosnian Serbs deny any planes shot down. Some Serbs continue to defy UN/NATO commands to hand over control of their weapons, UN says this makes no difference since their firing will provoke a NATO attack. Shell reportedly lands in centre of Sarajevo overnight, but UN says it knows nothing about it. Serbs illegally move 6 or 7 tanks outside of 20-km zone around Sarajevo. Serb tanks and artillery attacking around Maglaj and Bihac, where they are trying to establish rail line between Krajina and Serbia proper. Attacks also on Tuzla

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March 1

The Bosnian Serbs, following talks with high-ranking officials of the Russian Federation in Moscow, agreed to open the Tuzla airport for humanitarian purposes. Deployment of UNPROFOR troops around the airport began in early March in preparation for an airlift that was expected to bring relief supplies to hundreds of thousands of people in the area. The first UNPROFOR flight landed in Tuzla on 22 March 1994.

As to the restoration of the essential services in Sarajevo, the Secretary-General reported that UNPROFOR had established an Interim Co-ordination Board to act as a temporary focal point for the various organisations operating in that city. The Board would prepare a comprehensive status report, which would provide the basis for the plan requested by Security Council Resolution 900. The Secretary-General also stated that he would shortly announce the appointment of a senior civilian official, with the title of Special Co-ordinator, who would co-ordinate the initial efforts under the overall authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Croats and Muslims, under US direction in Washington, sign framework agreement on uniting their territories. Agreement would create Swiss-like canton system where each will have authority over culture, police, education, communication, tourism, and public services. Bosnian Prime-Minister Silajdzic also signs preliminary accord on financial and economic confederation with Croatia. This federation could also be joined by the Bosnian Serbs as a separate unit.

March 2

Russia criticises Muslim-Croat pact for not including Serbs, but says agreement could prove useful within general settlement of conflict. Serbs press sieges of Maglaj, Bihac, Breza (N of Sarajevo). Also fire 3 rocket propelled grenades at government troop positions near downtown Sarajevo saying they were doing so because government forces reinforcing their positions.

March 4

After a two week debate the Security Council adopted Resolution 900. The Council called on all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to co-operate with UNPROFOR in the consolidation of the cease-fire in and around Sarajevo, to achieve complete freedom of movement for the civilian population and humanitarian goods to, from and within Sarajevo, and to help restore normal life to the city.

The Council requested the Secretary-General to appoint a senior civilian official to draw up an overall assessment and plan of action for the restoration of essential public services in the various opstinas of Sarajevo, other than the city of Pale, and invited him to establish a voluntary trust fund for that purpose.

The Council further requested the Secretary-General to present a report on the feasibility and modalities for the application of protection, defined in Resolutions 824 and 836, to Maglaj, Mostar and Vitez, taking into account all developments both on the ground and in the negotiations between the parties.

UN says it is no longer opposed to using troops with historic ties to former Yugoslavia, especially Italy and Turkey. Russia ready to send 300 more troops. Serb guns moved within 12.4 miles of Sarajevo into exclusion zone. Three mortar rounds fired by Serbs at British troops in Zepce (45 miles N of Sarajevo). French troops fire warning rounds to silence Serb guns firing on government positions near Jewish cemetery. Rose pleads for more troops before peace initiative breaks down.

Muslim-Croat negotiations commenced in Vienna on the future common federation of the Bosnian Muslims and Croats.

March 5

Serbs blockade 7 aid convoys, continue shelling of Maglaj, fire on French troops in Sarajevo. UN confirms there are still Serb heavy weapons in area.

March 6

Serb shelling and bombing of Maglaj.

March 7

Croats and Muslims begin pull-back of heavy weapons in Central Bosnia. Tudjman says Croatian voters should decide fate of confederation, but this will not solve issue until Serb position defined. Also states that Serbs must give up Krajina area if relations are to be normalised. Fighting reported between Croats and Serbs in Northwest Krajina. Swedish and Danish UN troops move into Tuzla airport area with 10 Leopard tanks armed with 105mm cannons taking control over the airport.

UN peacekeeping forces started taking over control of the airport of Tuzla by deploying troops around it.

March 8

Serbs continue shelling of Maglaj killing 8. US envoy Charles Redman reports progress in talks with Tudjman, but sides still differ on inclusion of Serbs. Milosevic tells Redman he will not challenge pact since it does not violate Serb interests. 5,000 Turkish troops said to be ready to go to Bosnia within 2 weeks, but Serbs opposed. Currently 28,350 UN troops in all of Yugoslavia, with approx. 13,000 in Bosnia. Spanish NATO military transport plane hit by rockets fired from Krajina area forcing it to land on Krk. Trams run through central Sarajevo for first time in 2 years.

A Spanish CASA 212 transport aircraft, on a routine flight from Zagreb to Split, made an emergency landing at Rijeka Airport (Croatia) after being hit by groundfire while flying over Croatia.

March 10

The rotation of troops in Srebrenica, after protracted negotiations with the Bosnian Serb side, was completed, with the Dutch troops replacing the Canadian contingent.

Serb shells hit Maglaj killing 12. UN says 2 Serb soldiers killed by snipers in Sarajevo. French soldier killed near Bihac, air strikes not called in since origin of shooting not clear. US says it might recognise Serb state on Bosnia territory if this would bring about quicker Resolution of war. Reuters says 1,000 Turkish troops offer has been accepted for total of 7,200 soldiers from European and Argentina (goal of 10,650).

March 11

The Secretary-General estimated that the implementation of Resolution 900 would require an increase of the authorised strength of UNPROFOR by a total of 8,250 additional troops, 150 military observers and 275 civilian police monitors. Of these additional troops, 2,200 would be required for the operation in and around Sarajevo and 6,050 for operations in central Bosnia, including Mostar and Vitez. A further 1,500 troops would be needed if the Council were to extend the Safe Area concept to Maglaj. The Secretary-General noted that recent developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina had created a new situation, which 'should provide numerous opportunities for UNPROFOR to make substantial progress' in the implementation of its mandate. UNPROFOR's ability to achieve those objectives, however, was severely limited by the lack of military resources. If Member States did not provide the necessary personnel, its mandate would have to be modified. 'It would be a tragedy for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina if the present opportunity were lost for lack of resources,' he concluded.

March 12

Croat, Muslim commanders sign agreement (brokered by US General John Galvin) to merge armies. Russian envoy Vitaly Churkin says he is not optimistic about peace. Serbs warn UN against sending Turkish troops, that this would lead to escalation of war. Shelling of Maglaj kills 1, wounds 6. French come under fire in Bihac area, call for air strikes which are not authorised for 3 hours, but by this point Serbs leave. UN says weather obscured targets.

NATO responded to the first UNPROFOR request for Close Air Support (CAS). Aircraft were sent to provide protection for French troops who were being fired upon near Bihac in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ultimately, the UNPROFOR Tactical Air Control Party did not request the aircraft to attack a ground target.

March 13

Croats and Muslims agree in Vienna on the draft Constitution of the future Croatian-Muslim federation (which includes federation government, assembly, decentralised cantonal system). Negotiations on fixing the boundaries of cantons were not completed.

March 14

French contend that weather not reason for calling off airstrike, but rather ground spotter could not see Serb position, although planes could. Churkin in Belgrade and Zagreb for talks.

March 15

UN Security Council demands Serbs lift 31 March - The UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 908. The Resolution contained the analysis of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, assessment of the role of the UN and several specific decisions on the further activities of the UNPROFOR in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the FYR Macedonia. The decisions were made to extend the mandate of the UNPROFOR for the next six months upto 30 September 1994 and to send there additional 3,500 soldiers (instead of 8,500 as was proposed in the draft Resolution). siege of Maglaj, but don't declare it 'safe Area'.

March 16

Croat negotiator at Vienna talks says Croat-Muslim alliance to be jointly represented at face-to-face negotiations with Serbs.

The Secretary-General recommended the renewal of the Force's mandate for a further 12 months beyond 31 March 1994. The Secretary-General stated that the continuing conflict in UNPROFOR's area of operations since its mandate was last renewed had led to considerable, but unjustified, criticism of the effectiveness of the Force. Those, together with mounting threats to the safety and security of United Nations personnel, and the continuing failure of Member States to honour their financial obligations to UNPROFOR in full and on time, had led him to consider seriously whether the continuation of the Force constituted a worthwhile use of the limited peace-keeping resources of the United Nations.

The diversity and scope of the problems in the former Yugoslavia, the Secretary-General continued, required the deployment of more military forces than troop-contributing nations appeared to be prepared to make available. The encouraging developments around Sarajevo at the end of February 1994, however, provided reason for hope that an overall political settlement might at last be within reach.

March 17

Serbs and Muslims sign an agreement negotiated by UNPROFOR on the freedom of movement in the Sarajevo area and an anti-sniping agreement and agree to open up road from Sarajevo to Zenica to civilians in buses or cars under UN escort, civilians must apply to military authorities first. Agreement opens up Bridge of Brotherhood and Unity in centre of Sarajevo. Serbs fire on streetcar in Sarajevo possibly killing 1, wounding 2. Bosnian radio contends that in last 3 days 12 have been killed in Sarajevo. 1 soldier, 3 civilians killed in Bihac area, while 1 killed in Maglaj.

March 18

Agreement between Muslims and Croats officially signed in Washington. Serbs and Bosnian government sign limited movement agreement opening 4 access routes between Sarajevo and suburbs.

March 19

UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali reported on the activities of the UN in resolving the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, on the results achieved by the UNPROFOR, on the situation in the critical areas in the former Yugoslavia, as well as on the perspectives of the peace processes and future activities of the UN. Up to that moment the Security Council had adopted 54 Resolutions and 39 Presidential statements on the Yugoslav conflict, and that costs for the peace-keeping forces amounted to a billion and six hundred million dollars. During this operation 924 UN soldiers had been shot, of whom 79 got killed.

March 20

Serbs abandon blockade around Maglaj allowing aid convoys to reach town for first time in 3 months.

March 21

Bosnian Serb assembly rejects joining Muslim-Croat federation, also says Serbs should refrain from negotiations for a general cease-fire until sanctions against Yugoslavia are lifted. Karadzic says this does not preclude establishing ties with federation. Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Cetin says Turkey will send 2,700 to Bosnia as peacekeepers. Bulgarian President Zhelev says this could rekindle old fears in the region. Greece suggests it may send its own troops and opposes Turkish forces. Russia says it is sending another 100 soldiers to Sarajevo.

March 22

Tuzla airport reopened for aid flights for first time in 2 years, but Bosnian Serb parliament head, Momcilo Krajisnik says this cannot be permanent until agreement on inspections arrived at. Greece 'categorically opposes' Turkish troops as part of UN peacekeeping force in Bosnia. Boutros-Ghali agrees to extend NATO air cover to Croatia.

Negotiations commenced in the Russian Embassy in Zagreb between the representatives of the Republic of Croatia and the Republika Srpska Krajina. The meeting was chaired by ambassador Kai Aide, representative of the UN, and ambassador Gerd Arens, representative of the EU. Also were present Vitaly Churkin, special envoy of the President of Russia and Peter Galbraith, American ambassador in Croatia. They discussed a cease-fire and separation of the warring parties. The negotiations were interrupted on 23 March so that both of the parties could make consultations over the draft agreement and they would be resumed on 29 March.

March 23

The Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of FR Yugoslavia issued a statement saying that on 18 March the Government of FR Yugoslavia submitted a claim to the International Court of Justice to take legal proceedings against the NATO member countries for the flagrant violation of the Article 2, paragraph 4 and Article 52, paragraph 1 of the UN Charter. This concerned the NAC decision made on 9 February to take air raids on the Serbian positions around Sarajevo should the heavy weapons of the Army of Republika Srpska was not withdrawn at least 20 kilometres from Sarajevo.

UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali decided to accept the offer of Turkey and he would propose the Security Council to approve joining of 2,700 Turkish soldiers to the UNPROFOR in Bosnia.

March 24

UN Security Council agrees to use of Turkish troops for peacekeeping in Bosnia.

The Secretary-General outlined his plans for the reopening of Tuzla airport, under UNPROFOR's exclusive authority, for the delivery of humanitarian supplies and related purposes. It was estimated that approximately 800,000 people lived in the Tuzla region, 240,000 of them being refugees and displaced persons and another 200,000 being considered cases in need of assistance. Because of the fighting in central Bosnia, the region had been effectively cut off from normal commercial traffic for almost one year, which had made almost the entire population dependent on humanitarian assistance for its survival.

Tuzla airport would be opened for UNPROFOR and humanitarian use only, and restricted to UNPROFOR and humanitarian airlift co-ordinated by UNHCR. The Secretary-General stated that, in addition to the Nordic battalion already deployed at the airfield, operating the airport would require a number of support staff to carry out various communications, administrative, transportation, engineer and logistics support tasks. Apart from those functions, UNPROFOR identified a need for some 120 specialist personnel, 20 military observers and 20 United Nations civilian police monitors.

The Assembly of Republika Srpska adopted a platform for future peace negotiations on resolving the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Negotiations should embrace the following stages: conclusion of peace and freezing of all military activities, demilitarisation and final fixing of borders between the Croatian-Muslim federation and Republika Srpska, recognition of sovereignty and independence of Republika Srpska. The Assembly rejected joining Muslim-Croat Federation and demanded that sanctions against Serbs should be lifted.

March 25

Responding to the decision of the UN Secretary General to accept the offer of Turkey to send its soldiers to the former Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement saying that 'not only that this decision is not in the interest of pacification of the situation on this territory, but it could directly make the conflicts flare up'.

Karadzic warns that if Turkey troops are deployed Bosnian Serbs will have to call on Yugoslavia army for security.

March 26

British UN troops exchange small-arms fire with Serbs near Maglaj for hours, destroy Serb bunker. Political assembly of Bosnian Croats approve pact with Muslims, choose Kresimir Zubak (Croat) to head new government. UN says Serbs intensifying ethnic cleansing in northern Bosnia.

Concerning the claim the Government of FR Yugoslavia submitted against the NATO member countries on 18 March the International Court of Justice in The Hague stated that pursuant to the present Statute the Court could not take legal proceedings against them since the statement was based on the unilateral claim of one country.

March 26-27

The ministerial meeting of the EU took place in Janina (Greece). The ministers discussed the French plan on European stability and the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. The ministers hailed the commitment of the USA and Russia in resolving the crisis, but agreed that the EU plan on Bosnia-Herzegovina should be the basis for the future activities of the EU within the joint actions of the USA, Russia and the EU in resolving the crisis in Bosnia.

March 27

Government forces attack Serb positions near Maglaj. Karadzic says the offensive must be broken.

March 29

In Zagreb, representatives of the Government of Croatia and the local Serb authorities in UNPAs concluded a cease-fire agreement aiming to achieve a lasting cessation of hostilities. The agreement was concluded in the presence of the representatives of the Russian Federation and of the United States, and witnessed by the representatives of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia and the Force Commander of UNPROFOR.

March 30

In his letter to the President of the Security Council, the Secretary-General reported that the implementation of this cease-fire agreement would involve the interpositioning of UNPROFOR forces in a zone of separation of varying width, the establishment of additional control points, observation posts and patrols, as well as the monitoring of the withdrawal of heavy weapons out of range of the contact line. In order to enable UNPROFOR to perform the functions called for in the agreement, the Secretary-General recommended that the Council increase the authorised strength of the Force by one mechanised infantry battalion of 1,000 all ranks and four engineer companies (600 all ranks). In addition, a helicopter squadron of at least six helicopters with 200 all ranks would be needed for effective monitoring of the cease-fire agreement.

Muslims and Croats approve constitution for new federation. Croats and Krajina Serbs sign cease-fire agreement to go into effect April 4 with removal of heavy weapons the next day and disengagement of forces April 8. Churkin warns that this is only the beginning and much still needs to be done.

US Chairman of JCS, General Shalikashvili, and UN ambassador Albright arrive in Sarajevo where Albright announces \$10 million US contribution to rebuilding Sarajevo, and US support for war crimes tribunal.

Bosnian Serb forces launched an infantry and artillery offensive against the Safe Area of Gorazde that is not protected by UN presence. The indiscriminate shelling of the city and of the outlying villages led to considerable casualties among the civilian population.

March 31

The Security Council, by its Resolution 908, extended the mandate of UNPROFOR for an additional six-month period terminating on 30 September 1994 and decided, as an initial step, to increase the Force's strength by an additional 3,500 troops.

The Council approved UNPROFOR's plans for the reopening of Tuzla airport for humanitarian purposes and authorised additional resources.

The Council decided that Member States might take all necessary measures to extend close air support to the territory of Croatia in defence of UNPROFOR personnel in the performance of its mandate, under the authority of the Council and subject to close co-ordination with the Secretary-General and UNPROFOR. It further authorised the Force to carry out tasks relating to the cease-fire entered into by the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Bosnian Croat party.

The Council demanded that the Bosnian Serb party cease all military operations against the town of Maglaj

Tudjman, in Vecernji List, warns Serbs that military option still possible if they are not integrated peacefully into Croatia..

April 1

UN and Red Cross accuse Serbs of killing 19 civilians in Prijedor in worst ethnic cleansing in 18 months. 15 more reported killed in Serb attacks on Gorazde, more fighting also in Maglaj.

April 2

Serb offensive on Gorazde seen as challenge to UN, probably fostered by Serb General Mladic. TANJUG calls Gorazde worst fighting in area in 2 years. Red Cross says it is preparing to evacuate thousands of Croats and Muslims from Banja Luka/Prijedor areas contrary to long-standing UN policy. Karadzic calls Prijedor killings 'criminal acts of murder, not ethnic killings'.

April 3

US Defense Secretary William Perry says Administration will not use air strikes to prevent Serbs from overrunning Gorazde. Rose tells BBC Serbs 'do not pose a serious threat' to Gorazde. Mayor of Gorazde invites Rose to visit town to witness destruction and suffering.

April 4

The agreement on cessation of fire and all armed hostilities signed in Zagreb on 30 March between the Republic of Croatia and the Republika Srpska Krajina became effective at 9 a.m.

As fighting continues around Gorazde, Rose announces he will visit town. Mayor says 7 villages in area burned in past week and death toll now at 47 killed, 200+ wounded. Red Cross says Serbs refuse safety guarantees for evacuation of Prijedor civilians and postpone effort.

April 5

Gorazde death toll now put at 52/249. General Shalikashvili says air power largely ineffective against small arms fire around Gorazde but also that circumstances could change and air power would be used. State Department, displeased, hoping to keep options open. Tank from Nordic battalion near Gradacac (N. Bosnia) destroys Serb bunker after coming under fire from 40mm anti-aircraft gun. UN reports that Croats and Krajina Serbs do not meet deadline for pulling back heavy weapons. Albanian President Sali Berisha tells Serbs that ethnic cleansing of Albanian from Kosovo would mean war with Albanian.

April 6

The Security Council, in a statement by its President, strongly condemned the shelling and infantry and artillery attacks against the Safe Area of Gorazde, and demanded the immediate cessation of further attacks against the city. The Council called on all concerned fully to respect Safe Areas, in accordance with its Resolution 824. It also welcomed measures being taken by UNPROFOR to strengthen its presence in Gorazde.

Despite the Council's demand and UNPROFOR's efforts to arrange for a cease-fire, attacks against Gorazde continued unabated. After UNMOs in the city were endangered by Serb shelling, UNPROFOR requested NATO to use close air support for self-defence of UN personnel.

Notwithstanding Bosnian Serbs' repeated commitments to a cease-fire, however, the heavy shelling of the city did not cease.

Serbs prevent Rose from visiting Gorazde, although they let 3 UN observers and 8 of Rose's liaison officers go ahead. TANJUG claims Serbs fighting to liberate Serb villages in area of Gorazde. Serb advance temporarily slowed down on outskirts of town. International relief workers say Bosnian government breaking promise not to draft men released from Serb concentration camps. EU tells Greece to lift blockade of Macedonia, or face court case for violation of EU treaty. Croatia says 15,000 refugees, including 8,000 from Mostar, must leave.

April 7

While Rose says Serbs and Muslims close to reaching peace plan, US and NATO urge UN to send hundreds of peacekeepers to Gorazde. US NSC advisor Anthony Lake states the peacekeepers would be protected by NATO air power.

April 8

Serbs capture Gradina ridge area overlooking Gorazde despite 24-hour cease-fires announced by both sides. US says it wants quick deployment of Ukrainian force of 1,000 to Gorazde.

April 9

Boutros-Ghali tells Serbs to give up territory taken in recent offensive and authorises UN forces to 'use all available means' to halt Serb advance.

April 10

UNPROFOR military observers in Gorazde asked for NATO air protection. After approval by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, NATO close air support was provided by two U.S. F-16s, which dropped bombs under the control of a UN Forward Air Controller (FAC). This was NATO's first attack of ground targets in the conflict

Serbia calls attack 'clear case of aggression against the Serbian people, striking civilian targets far from the front lines'. Bosnian Government ambassador calls attack 'face-saving' since Gorazde is a UN Safe Area. Rose had called for Serbs to break off attack, Mladic replies that no Serb gunfire striking civilian areas. Shelling stops temporarily.

April 11

President Milosevic received Vitaly Churkin, special envoy of President Jeltsin. They discussed the latest developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Milosevic pointed out that after the bombardment of the Serbian positions around Gorazde the objective position of the international community in the crisis became a disillusion. Churkin says NATO should have consulted with Russia 'but the Serbs must also bear some responsibility' as Russian had tried to warn them that Gorazde was dangerous. Churkin also met in Pale with Karadzic in his effort to find the ways for political solution of the crisis in Gorazde.

President Clinton said that the attack around Gorazde was carried out after the repeated request of the commander of the UNPROFOR for Bosnia-Herzegovina and it was fully in accordance with the corresponding Resolutions of the United Nations.

President Jeltsin had a telephone conversation with Clinton. Jeltsin warned that the actions such as the bombardment of the Serbian forces around Gorazde must be in accordance with the decisions adopted by the UN bodies, while Russia and the USA should hold consultations on such actions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia expressed regret for the fact that 'the information on the bombardment was given at the last moment' and requested that all parties - the Muslims, Serbs and the world community - should show the greatest possible restraint.

Second attack by American planes (F-18s) destroys 3 armoured personnel carriers, 1 truck, but 3 bombs fail to explode.

US Secretary of State Christopher warns Serbs US 'stand ready to act again if necessary'. Serbs had intensified attacks causing response. Death toll in Gorazde now set at 156/640. Bosnian Serbs state they will not be intimidated and they won't abandon Gorazde 'or a centimetre of our territories'.

April 12

Serbs tell Churkin they will hold off on attacks against Gorazde, but continue to fight with government forces in hills. Russian Deputy Prime-Minister Sergei Shakhrai comments that air strikes have strengthened nationalists in Russia. Mladic orders his troops 'to shoot down every aircraft flying in their direction'. US State Department official says US planes will shoot back. Yugoslavia government bans CNN and French news agency AFP for 'satanising the FR of Yugoslavia and the Serbian people'. The Republika Srpska expressed 'bitterness for the actual involvement of the UN in the civil war in the former Bosnia-Herzegovina on the Muslim side'. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of RS would 'separately inform Russia, Germany, China, Japan and India on the aggression of the NATO, that is UN' and ask those states to condemn the aggression and give support to the peace processes. Karadzic and general Mladic visited the front lines around Gorazde. Karadzic condemned the attack on the Serbian positions and assessed 'the act of bombardment as a fall of the United Nations'. Mladic said that the order was given to 'shoot down all aircraft firing at us'.

April 13

Milosevic separately received Akashi and Vitaly Churkin, special envoy of President Jeltsin. They discussed the latest developments in the former Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The State Duma of the Russian Federation adopted a statement 'condemning the unilateral and violent actions of the NATO in Bosnia-Herzegovina'. The State Duma requested that 'the session of the UN Security Council should be immediately convened in order to consider the situation after the NATO had got military involved in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina'.

Serbs detain 58 UN military observers near Gorazde, also in Banja Luka. 11 French relief workers still detained in barracks outside Sarajevo. Serbs fire 4 rockets into Sarajevo breaking cease-fire, cut off natural gas to city. Churkin says Serbs ready to stop attack on Gorazde even as NATO says it will strike again if shelling continues.

April 14

UN accuses Serbs of 'orchestrated campaign' against UN observers/military personnel for airstrikes including Serb sniper wounding French soldier in Sarajevo. Serb forces surrounding 20-30 French troops at Krivoglavci weapons collection point demanding artillery be returned, also at collection point at Hresa demanding Russian troops hand over weapons, abduction of 14 Canadian soldiers, 3 unarmed UN military observers and an interpreter near Cifluk for total of 155 UN personnel. Serb artillery shells UN observation post near Tuzla and its airport. Canadian commissioner in Bosnia says Mladic gave order for seizing troops. Bosnian Serbs declare General Rose persona non grata, ban American journalists from territory.

Milosevic received Co-Chairmen Stoltenberg and Owen. They discussed the initiatives and ideas for cessation of combat in Bosnia-Herzegovina and creation of conditions for resumption of the peace processes.

For the third time in the last 24 hours Milosevic received Churkin. They discussed the ways for reaching agreement on cessation of hostilities throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina.

April 15

Serbs renew offensive against Gorazde despite UN warnings, take key points overlooking river, and demand surrender of town. General Rose asks for third air strike after 2 British soldiers hit, killing 1, but special UN envoy Akashi, having come out of meeting with Karadzic, decides against option instead asking Serbs for cease-fire to evacuate UN personnel. Karadzic agrees and helicopters sent in to pick up wounded observer, but are fired on by Serbs nevertheless. UN again warns that it will protect its observers with air strikes. Serbs only 500 yards from centre of town. French Etendard recon plane

fired on, but only lightly damaged. Reuters reports that UN commission on war crimes has linked Serb forces to genocide in campaign of ethnic cleansing in Prijedor in '92.

April 16

A British Sea Harrier from the British carrier HMS Ark Royal is shot down near Gorazde while attempting to conduct a CAS mission. The pilot ejects and was later rescued by UN forces. Serbs then shell Gorazde hospital and a hospital annex for two days, reportedly killing 38 people. UN warns air strikes imminent unless Serbs hold fire and dispatch planes for strike but mission scrubbed due to poor visibility. Akashi warns Serbs that unless changes occur he will recommend change of nature in UN military force. Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev goes to Belgrade to talk with Milosevic. Serb tanks firing directly into town and Rose calls for air strikes, to which Akashi agrees. UN proposes to Bosnian government 2-3 mile DMZ around Gorazde, government refuses saying it is capitulation. American journalist detained by Serbs in Zvornik, released after 27 hours. 13 foreign reporters now banned by Yugoslavia authorities in last several days.

April 17

Akashi and Karadzic agree to cease-fire, but Bosnian government rejects it. Serb tank and troops enter Gorazde violating previous day's agreement. Aid workers say Serb snipers shooting at people unable to take shelter. Air strikes again called in but do not take place. Clinton says US will respond to additional military requests but the goal is to get peace talks back on track. Kozyrev blames Muslims for provoking attacks on Serbs, but also Serbs for responding, also comments NATO military actions 'inappropriate'. Later on Russian TV, Kozyrev says Serb threats to Russian peacekeepers 'shows with utmost clarity the degree of irresponsibility of Serb fighters'. Croatian Serbs in Baranja region (E. Croatia) are taking back weapons under UN control.

April 18

After the situation in and around Gorazde became extremely dire, the Secretary-General asked NATO to authorise the use of air strikes, at the request of the United Nations, against artillery, mortar positions or tanks attacking civilians in Gorazde, as well as in four other Safe Areas, namely the towns of Tuzla, Zepa, Bihac and Srebrenica. In a letter to the NATO Secretary-General, he noted that permission for such air strikes had already been given regarding Sarajevo and said that the tragic events in Gorazde demonstrated the need for the NATO Council to take similar decisions on the other Safe Areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

BBC reporter comments 'Radical Karadzic is playing the international community like an orchestra'. Also quotes Churkin as saying about the Serbs, 'I have heard more broken promises in the last 48 hours than probably in the rest of my life'. Serbs continue to shell Gorazde after giving another cease-fire pledge. 7 of 12 UN observers evacuated by helicopter. Rate of shelling as high as 1 every 20 seconds in the morning. Death toll now at 302/1,075. Clinton's advisors to recommend broader use of force in policy re-assessment as Boutros-Ghali requests NATO for authority to call in air strikes in other 'safe Areas'. US sends additional 46 infantrymen to Macedonia as part of 180 to augment 300 already there. After talks with Akashi the leadership of the Serbs in Bosnia decided that Serbian forces should withdraw from their positions around Gorazde to the distance of 3 km and should accept deployment of the UN forces in this area.

On his return to Moscow after nine day efforts to mediate in pacifying the situation in Gorazde Vitaly Churkin said that 'it is time for Russia to break off all talks with the Serbs in Bosnia', and that 'when Russia is concerned the Serbs in Bosnia should realise that they should have to deal with a great state and not with a banana republic'. Discontent for the fact that 'the Serbs showed no willingness or sincerity to reach agreement' Churkin also said that the blame was on 'a small group of Serbs from Bosnia who got sick of the war madness'.

April 19

Jeltsin invited the Serbs in Bosnia to meet the commitments they had undertaken as proposed by Russia, 'to stop attacking Gorazde, and to withdraw to a distance from this town'. Jeltsin confirmed that he had made a proposal on holding a summit between Russia, the USA, EU and UN in order to find the ways for stopping the bloodshed in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Serbs seize 18 anti-aircraft guns from UN collection points after diverting French troops guarding them. 13 of the guns returned by nightfall, as well as 40 of 55 UN personnel being held hostage released. In evening Serbs again announce cease-fire and say they will allow 350 UN troops to enter Gorazde to form buffer zone, but continue heavy shelling of town throughout the night. Clinton, advisors agree to propose broadened airstrikes against Serbs. Also announces they are now open to summit of major powers concerning Bosnia, but still against American forces being used until a peace agreement is reached.

April 20

Russian parliament to send delegation to Bosnia. Kozyrev says increased airstrikes will only escalate crisis, and that cessation of hostilities will be met by lifting of sanctions. Churkin comments 'the Serbs are on the brink of a catastrophe'. Reports from Gorazde say shelling kills 44, wounds 137.

The North Atlantic Council accepted the request of UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali to approve the use of air force for 'the protection of Safe Areas in Bosnia'.

Clinton calls for more NATO air protection for Safe Areas and wants Serbs to 'pay a higher price for continued violence'. After consultations with Presidents of Russia and France Clinton made public the American action plan in Bosnia. The plan embraced three basic elements: support to a wider use of the NATO air forces for the protection of Safe Areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina, initiative for tightening the sanctions against FR Yugoslavia or more rigorous application, and support to sending new peace-keeping forces to Bosnia.

The cabinet Karadzic stated that 'the Serbian part pronounces peace in Gorazde unilaterally'. 'The cease-fire at the Gorazde front is immediately in effect' and the UN troops would get in Gorazde.

April 21

Jeltsin press secretary says Russia has convinced US to hold meeting on Yugoslavia to include EU and UN. House-to-house fighting in Gorazde. Serbs apparently firing 1 round every 10 seconds at hospital. Serbs organise roadblock to prevent UN convoy from reaching town.

April 22

The North Atlantic Council authorised the use of air strikes against Bosnian Serb military targets around Gorazde if the Bosnian Serbs did not end their attacks against the Safe Area immediately, pull their forces back three kilometres from the city centre by 0001 GMT on 24 April 1994, and allow United Nations forces and humanitarian relief convoys freedom of movement there. The NAC agreed that a 'military exclusion zone' (within the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina) be established for 20 kilometres around Gorazde, which called for all Bosnian Serb heavy weapons (including tanks, artillery pieces, mortars, multiple rocket launchers, missiles and anti-aircraft weapons) to be withdrawn by 0001 GMT on 27 April 1994. The NAC also agreed on similar arrangements for four other Safe Areas if they were attacked by heavy weapons from any range or if there was a concentration or movement of heavy weapons within a radius of 20 kilometres of these areas.

NATO reaffirmed its readiness to provide close air support should the Bosnian Serbs attack UNPROFOR or other United Nations personnel in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or forcibly interfere with the implementation of their mandate. It also called on the Bosnian Government not to undertake offensive action from within Gorazde.

The Security Council, by its Resolution 913, condemned the shelling and attacks by Bosnian Serb forces against the Safe Area of Gorazde and demanded the withdrawal of those forces and their weapons to a distance from which they would cease to threaten the Safe Area. It demanded the immediate conclusion of a cease-fire agreement in Gorazde and throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the auspices of UNPROFOR. The Council also demanded an end to any provocative action in and around the Safe Areas, the immediate release of all United Nations personnel held by Bosnian Serb forces and unimpeded freedom of movement for UNPROFOR. Underlying the urgent need to intensify efforts towards an overall political settlement, the Council called for the intensification of close consultation between the United States and the Russian Federation and the UN and the EU with the aim of bringing together diplomatic initiatives.

The Council also invited the Secretary-General to take necessary steps to ensure that UNPROFOR was able to monitor the situation in Gorazde and to ensure respect for any cease-fire and disengagement of military forces, including measures to put heavy weapons under United Nations control.

April 22-23

Akashi held talks with Milosevic and Karadzic in Belgrade. An agreement envisaged: immediate and full cease-fire in and around Gorazde, withdrawal of the Serbian forces and deployment of an UNPROFOR battalion in the area 3 km from the centre of Gorazde, and withdrawal or placing under the UNPROFOR control the Serbian heavy weapons in the area 20 km from the centre of Gorazde, guarantees for safe urgent medical evacuation from Gorazde, full freedom of movement for all personnel of the UNPROFOR and humanitarian organisations, immediate initiation of negotiations on all military issues and intensification of efforts towards achieving a comprehensive political solutions that would be acceptable for all parties.

April 23

NATO requests air strikes after Serb shelling kills 21 in Gorazde but UN official Akashi rejects it. Gorazde toll now 715 dead, 1,970 wounded. Serbs begin pullback.

April 24

Although the Bosnian Serbs had not yet fully complied when the 24 April deadline expired, the Force Commander of UNPROFOR decided against the immediate use of air strikes. UNPROFOR felt that significant progress was being made and that the Serbs would soon comply with the ultimatum. In addition, it was important to get UN troops and medical units into Gorazde as quickly as possible and the air strikes might have jeopardised that operation. UN warns them to be punctual for April 27 deadline for withdrawal of heavy guns 20 km 600 UN troops arrive in Gorazde.

Talks took place in London between the USA (Warren Christopher), Russia (Vitaly Churkin), Great Britain (Douglas Hurd) and France (Alain Juppé) with the purpose of reviving the process of searching a comprehensive peace solution for the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina. A Contact Group was established involving, at ministerial level, the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union Commissioner for Foreign Affairs and the two Co-Chairmen of the Steering Committee. The group would co-ordinate diplomatic actions and try to build a common peace platform for the crisis in Bosnia.

April 25

Russian Defence Minister Grachev says additional air strikes should be abandoned as they serve no purpose. Kozyrev says they are but of limited value. Serb aid blockade of Gorazde continues and Serb troops blow up water plant for town in pullback. Reportedly also resettling ethnic Serbs in Muslim villages/homes.

April 26

The UN Secretary-General announced that Bosnian Serb forces had complied with the demand that they cease their attacks on Gorazde and pulled their forces and heavy weapons out of the 20-kilometre exclusion zone around the city. He noted that the UN had some 500 personnel in Gorazde, and was evacuating the most seriously wounded and bringing in relief supplies.

The Secretary-General stated that the Security Council, with the support of NATO, had taken a clear position that there must be no further threats to any of the Safe Areas, UN humanitarian efforts must continue unimpeded, and all sides must commit to a meaningful cease-fire and negotiate in good faith a political solution.

First meeting of 'Contact Group', comprising representatives of Britain, Russia, US, France and Germany, held in London. The Group was set up as a forum to present a united front to the warring parties, and concentrated on securing agreement on a territory allocation as the first step in a political settlement. It produced a map for the parties to consider.

British Embassy opened in Sarajevo.

April 27

The Security Council, by its Resolution 914, authorised an increase in the strength of UNPROFOR of up to 6,550 additional troops, 150 military observers and 275 civilian police monitors, in addition to the reinforcement already approved in Resolution 908 .

In a joint statement in New York Akashi and the representatives of the NATO said that based on the reports of the military observers the withdrawal or placing of the Serbian weapons under the control of the UNPROFOR had been completed. Therefore there was no immediate danger of the NATO air strikes on the Serbian positions. The withdrawal was carried out in accordance with the corresponding UN Resolutions on Safe Areas and the agreement that had been made on 22 April in Belgrade between the representatives of the UN and Republika Srpska.

April 28

Serb forces may be leaving Gorazde for Brcko.

April 29

Serb tank/artillery attack on UN observation post in Kalesija (near Tuzla) responded to by Danish tank platoons which fight back for 90 minutes killing 9 Serbs, wounding 5. Bosnian Serb forces say they will get even, that incident is proof of biased nature of UN involvement. British peacekeepers in Gorazde in fire-fight with Serbs, kill 3, wound 5. Churkin in Oslo for talks with Norwegian Foreign Minister Bjorn Godal on Bosnia war.

April 30

UN warns of Serb build-up in Brcko area as they try to expand their corridors between Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

May 1

2 US journalist killed, 1 wounded when their car hits land mine near Mostar. Serbs surround UN arms depot manned by French inside Sarajevo exclusion zone, demanding they hand over 122 mm artillery weapon, stand off continues until NATO jets buzz area at midnight. UN comments that Gorazde becoming unstable as small arms fire and Serb presence continues. Croatia announces that it now backs lifting of arms embargo against Bosnian Government.

May 2

Shelling and fighting near Brcko, Bihac. Serbs shell Tuzla, Zavrovici, and attack Doboje and Tesanj (N. Bosnia). Germany and France both call for making Brcko a 'safe Area' to allow for air strikes against Serbs. Serbs claim 4 of theirs killed by Muslim shelling of Doboje. Serbs preventing 160 British peacekeepers from reinforcing 500 UN troops already in Gorazde. NATO jet buzzes Serb forces near Sarajevo trying to retake heavy weapons under French control, Serb back officer US announces it is sending 37 more troops and 3 helicopters to Macedonia. US ambassador to UN Albright says congressional efforts to lift arms embargo would undermine sanctions against Libya, Iraq. German Defence Minister says NATO needs to be able to establish credibility of its ultimatums and lifting arms embargo won't help. Boutros-Ghali orders UN officials to stop criticising US approach to Bosnia (directed at Akashi).

May 3

UNPROFOR reaches agreement for transport of 5 Serb tanks through Sarajevo exclusion zone, but Akashi does not mention this at press conference. US and Russia call for meeting of Foreign Ministers to try to settle Bosnia war. Olovo and Kladanj continuously hit by Serb shelling. UN helicopter shot at at Sarajevo airport Serbs agree to Brcko cease-fire. 2 hr. fire-fight in Sarajevo at Vrbanja Bridge after government forces put up flag with what UN observers call 'Islamic connotations'. UNESCO delegation in Sarajevo begins plans for rebuilding landmarks destroyed in war. Croatia announces it will reintroduce wartime currency the kuna on May 30 despite protests against its use by the Ustashe. Karadzic linked to collapse of Dabimbank (largest private institution in Serbia which closed doors in April '93) by former owner indicating possible falling out between Karadzic and Milosevic.

May 4

Bosnia Prime Minister Silajdzic calls for Akashi's resignation over tank transportation issue. 2 of these tanks (T-34s) moved prematurely. UN warns Serbs of possible NATO airstrikes if they launch offensive on Brcko, as is expected. Aid flights to Sarajevo suspended after 2 planes hit by gunfire, but also admits that armed Serb forces remain in Gorazde despite NATO ultimatum. Possible tank fire reported in Sarajevo. UN aid convoy held up since May 1 by Serbs allowed to go to Gorazde. 7 UN observers take up positions on Croatian side of Sava near Brcko. British Junior Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg meets with Milosevic and Karadzic and tells them they can hold a maximum of 49% of land. Ethnic cleansing continues in Banja Luka area as 469 Muslim and Croats arrive in Croatia from that city. Milosevic's wife, Mirjana Markovic, says Serbs outside country 'who think war is their only option...have no right to foist that option on all Serbs'.

May 5

Serbs shell government positions on Mt. Vlasic and push back government forces. Croats refuse Muslims aid, ammunition Requests due to lack of trust. Silajdzic demands that Akashi be replaced and his government will no longer negotiate with him, but Boutros-Ghali refuses. Karadzic says he will not attend more peace talks until UN oil and trade embargo against Serbia lifted. Bosnian Croats block UN aid convoy, demand 'import tax' of \$8 per truck.

May 6

Reports that government troops were successful in forcing back Serbs S of Bugojno, out of Maglaj salient, against Mt. Ozren (N. of Zavidovili), and against Mt. Vlasic (N. of Travnik). US rebukes Akashi, calls on him to do a better job.

May 7

UN says 4 Serb tanks violating Sarajevo exclusion zone. Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati in Sarajevo, says Iran willing to contribute 10,000 troops to peacekeeping forces but UN won't allow it. Promises 10,000 barrels of oil and \$1 million in assistance to Bosnian Government. Belgrado bans presence of Zhirinovskiy at Serbian People's Renewal Party rally scheduled for May 9, to preserve public order.

May 8

6 UN monitors move into Brcko. UN says no aid flights have arrived since airport in Tuzla was opened 2 months ago. Saudi Arabia to send 2 jumbo jets to Sarajevo to bring out 500 pilgrims for Haj. French government reported to have given military rank of Lt. Col. to 14 businessmen and allowed them into Sarajevo to get first access to contracts for rebuilding city.

May 9

The Secretary-General reported to the Security Council with regard to the concept of Safe Areas. Srebrenica, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde and Bihac. He suggested that the successful implementation of that concept required the acceptance of three overriding principles:

- (a) That the intention of Safe Areas is primarily to protect people and not to defend territory and that UNPROFOR's protection of these areas is not intended to make it a party to the conflict.
- (b) That the method of execution of the safe-area task should not, if possible, detract from, but rather enhance, UNPROFOR's original mandates in Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely supporting humanitarian assistance operations and contributing to the overall peace process through the implementation of cease-fires and local disengagements.
- (c) That the mandate must take into account UNPROFOR's resource limitations and the conflicting priorities that inevitably arise from unfolding events.

According to the Secretary-General's report, in addition to the arrangements already in place for protection of the Safe Areas, it was necessary:

- (a) that the UNPROFOR mission in relation to the Safe Areas be clearly defined.
- (b) that the Safe Areas be delineated, as proposed by UNPROFOR.
- (c) that they be respected.
- (d) that complete freedom of movement, on a 'notification' (as opposed to 'clearance') basis, be ensured for the provision of humanitarian aid to the Safe Areas, as a prelude to further normalisation, including the resumption of commercial traffic.

The Secretary-General believed that Safe Areas could be made somewhat more effective and manageable. On the other hand, because of difficulties in their implementation as well as their limited effect, it must be recognised that Safe Areas did not in themselves represent a long-term solution to the fundamental conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which required a political and territorial solution. The

Secretary-General therefore viewed the safe-area concept as a temporary mechanism by which some vulnerable populations could be protected pending a comprehensive negotiated political settlement. In this respect, UNPROFOR's protection of the civilian population in Safe Areas must be implemented so as to provide a positive contribution to the peace process, and not to detract from it.

Croats, Muslims begin third round of talks on federation in Vienna (US sponsored). UN says 100 Serbs disguised as police remain in Gorazde exclusion zone despite Karadzic pledge to move them out. Serbs still maintaining heavy weapons inside Gorazde zone, not giving UN observers freedom of movement. Serbs fire on UN armoured car near mostly Muslim village of Gornji Rajinci killing 2 17-year old schoolgirls nearby. Milosevic claims there has been no Serb policy of ethnic cleansing, but Albanians have carried out one against Serbs in Kosovo. Police in Belgrado relent and allow Zhirinovsky to participate, 5,000 attend rally.

May 10

Akashi writes to Karadzic of deteriorating conditions in Gorazde area. Bangladesh says it will contribute 1,200 troops to UN force in Bosnia. Fighting between Muslims in Bihac kills 12, as Serbs reportedly now joining up with rebel leader Fikret Abdic. Serbs claim Muslims shell Brcko killing 4 but UN says it has no evidence of attack. UN estimates 1,000 Muslim troops deployed in DMZ of Mt. Igman. Serbs break Safe Area accord for Gorazde. Serbs say they will put on trial 11 French aid workers held since 4-11 on charges of smuggling arms. Russian objects to draft UN proposal on freezing of Serb positions under threat of air strikes near Brcko.

May 11

Government and Serb troops massing around Olovo, Kladanj (NE of Sarajevo). French Foreign Minister Juppé in Washington for talks with Christopher trying to convince US of need to impose political solution on Bosnia-Herzegovina, threatens to take out French peacekeepers if one isn't found, but State Department says imposed solution not the best way to achieve the goal. Belgrade government charges Serb with killing 16 Muslim civilians in Bosnia. Bosnian Government forces fire 10 mortar rounds into Brcko during conference of top Serb leaders (1 woman, 2 children killed, 10 wounded), Brcko's electricity cut off.

Five days of talks completed in Vienna between the representatives of the Bosnian Croats and Muslims on establishment and organisation of the future Croatian-Muslim Federation. They adopted agreements - on appointment of President of the Federation, Prime Minister and ministers, on establishment of eight cantons (four Muslim, two Croatian and two mixed ones), on external borders of the Federation, that is on fixing the borders with the Serbs (as agreed the Federation should take 58 per cent territories of the former Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina).

May 12

The American Senate demanded lifting of the arms embargo in Bosnia-Herzegovina. With 50 votes 'for' and 49 'against' the Senate adopted two versions of the amendment: the first one demands that President Clinton should unilaterally lift the arms embargo imposed by the UN Security Council for the whole territory of the former Yugoslavia, and the second previously to demand 'the allies and United Nations' to lift the embargo.

General Milivoj Petkovic, chief-of-staff of Bosnian Croat forces says his troops will help government forces if Serbs attack near Brcko. More shelling of Brcko, also of Olovo - Kladanj area. Boutros-Ghali recommends against creating new Safe Areas, saying UN should redefine role to protect civilians, not defend territory. Croatia says Serbs attack group of civilians near Batinska Rijeka (50 miles N. of Zagreb) killing 5.

May 13

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the USA, Russia, Great Britain, France, and Belgium, Greece and Germany (as representatives of the European Union) met in Geneva and adopted a Declaration for resolving the conflict in Bosnia. Parties were required to agree on cessation of hostilities and cease-fire for a period of four months, and to unconditionally make efforts for a political agreement. Ministers accepted the proposal of the EU on division of Bosnia-Herzegovina to two units, of which 51 per cent of the territory of this former Yugoslav republic would belong to the Croatian-Muslim Federation while 49 per cent would belong to the Serbs. At the same time the Ministers supported an agreement 'preserving Bosnia-Herzegovina as an union within its internationally recognised borders'. Russian State Duma votes 270-1 to arm Serbia if US begins supplying arms to Bosnian Government. Fighting in Brcko, Bihac areas. Serbs outside of Gorazde hold up British UN convoy for 2 hrs until British reinforcements arrive. Serbs now blocking supplies to Srebrenica for 12th day. Malaysian UN peacekeeping officer killed outside Sarajevo exclusion zone. Small arms fire NE of Kosevo hospital in Sarajevo as government says Serbs have launched infantry attacks. Serbs shell Tuzla and Muslim villages near Zvornik.

May 14

Silajdzic says peace plan proposed by US, Russia, and European countries flawed since there is no way to ensure Serbs will withdraw. Increased gunfire in Sarajevo. New Croat and Muslim commanders named to jointly-lead alliance: Croat Ante Roso and Muslim Fikret Muslimovic. Their task is 'to form unified armed forces in the transitional period of establishment of the Federation'.

May 15

Government forces push Serbs off plateau near Tuzla dislodging artillery used to shell town killing 53 Serbs, capturing 2 tanks, 8 mortars, and 5 cannons. Government forces have gained about 4 sq. miles near Tuzla in fighting, and claim to have captured Serb TV tower. Serbs shell Kalesija (E of Sarajevo), Maglaj, Gradacac.

May 16

Fighting intensifies around Tuzla, Bihac, Gorazde, Jablanica, and Mostar. Bosnian Government and Serbs fighting over Serb communication relay station on Mt. Majevisa. Muslim forces said to be massing near Turbe and Travnik (C. Bosnia), also possible Mt. Igman (Sarajevo). Milosevic meets with Russian envoy Churkin, also Russian Patriarch Alexei II.

May 17

Karadzic says he wants signing of comprehensive and unconditional agreements on cessation of hostilities. fighting around Brcko, Cazin (near Bihac). Bulgaria says it will not oppose Turkish peacekeepers in Bosnia.

Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Alexy II, Serbian Patriarch Pavle and Cardinal of Zagreb Franjo Kuharic met at Sarajevo airport. After three hour talks they signed a Joint Declaration for Peace. Head of the Islamic community for Bosnia-Herzegovina Reis Ul Ulema Mustafa Cerich did not wish to meet Russian Patriarch since 'the Russian Orthodox Church has not condemned the aggression on Bosnia-Herzegovina'.

May 18

Private French aid group paid ransoms for \$44,000 11 French aid workers held since 4-11. Serbs say they freed the workers as a gesture of goodwill to France to help restore favourable ties. UN cancels aid flights to Tuzla after Serb shelling of airport. Akashi turns down UN request for airstrikes, sends protest to Karadzic instead. Mortar hits Sarajevo airport. Government forces attack Serbs in Olovo-Kladanj area, Serbs respond with artillery fire. Ukrainian peacekeeper killed in Gorazde. French say they will have 2,500 fewer troops in Bosnia by year's end. speaker of Bosnian Serb parliament, Momcilo Krajisnik, rejects new peace plan proposed by Owen and Stoltenberg.

May 19

The Secretary-General reported to the Security Council on the situation in Gorazde. The situation had remained tense although the cease-fire within the 3-km total exclusion zone, as well as the 20-km heavy weapon exclusion zone, had been largely respected.

British Junior Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg warns that time is running out on solution to crisis. UN says fighting heavy on route between Tuzla and Sarajevo. Bosnian Serb civilians leaving Zenica and Novi Travnik for Serbian-controlled territory, UN says 1,000 have moved in past 2 weeks. Shelling of government-controlled Bugojno increases. Serbs admit their soldiers and not police are in Gorazde exclusion zone. Aid flights into Tuzla resumed with NATO fighter escorts.

May 20

UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali submitted to the Security Council a report on Bosnia saying, that the situation in Gorazde was still very tense and the danger that the combat could be resumed had not yet been averted. The Security Council was requested to keep making efforts to cease hostilities on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina for at least four months in order to reach a political solution within that period.

Belgrado paper closely associated with Karadzic attacks General Mladic for losses taken by Serbs in Tuzla. Denmark protests to UN for not allowing its troops at Tuzla airport NATO air strike.

May 21

Croatian artillery firing from Croatia (across Sava River) hits Serb positions in Brcko seriously wounding 5. More fighting in C. and E. Bosnia as government forces advance against Serb positions. Serbs promise to vacate a 1.9 mile radius zone around Gorazde but fail to do so and instead reinforce bunkers. Tudjman demands that all of Krajina be handed back to Zagreb within 4 months.

May 22

Serbs continue to remain in Gorazde area and say they won't leave unless government forces accept a DMZ accord, which the government rejects. Government says Serbs setting villages in Gorazde area on fire. Croats continue to barrage Brcko from across Sava River.

May 23

Izetbegovic rejects 51-49% partitioning as surrendering part of country to occupation and said that the proposal on cessation of hostilities for a four month period was not acceptable. At the same time Prime Minister Silajdzic said that his government could consider the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Serb tanks fire on Bihac. Serbs turn back UN relief convoy headed to Bihac. 2 Serb tanks attack government troops in Sarajevo exclusion zone.

May 23-24

The two day conference on business co-operation in the Balkans and South-Eastern Europe took place in Athens. The conference was participated by representatives from Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, FR Yugoslavia, Slovenia, Croatia, Cyprus, Moldavia, as well as representatives from Russia and the European Union.

May 24

Serbs fire on UN-escorted bus in Sarajevo killing 1, wounding 1. Heavy fighting in Maglaj, Tesanj, and Doboj as government troops continue offensive. Artillery duels in Sava River valley. New Zealand announces it will send 250 troops to join British peacekeepers in Bosnia. Tudjman announces re-introduction of kuna currency which Ustashe regime had used. Yugoslavia says sanctions cause direct losses of \$5.3 and \$2 billion in lost joint investments. Speaker of Bosnia-Serb parliament, Momcilo Krajisnik, says Serbs will not be conciliatory at talks in Talloires, France. French Foreign Minister Juppé says if talks fail France will consider withdrawing troops, but NATO meeting same day declares there will be no unilateral pullout. Non-aligned countries to meet in Cairo decide to not invite Yugoslavia as it is not successor to original Yugoslavia.

May 25

Clinton says sanctions should continue. Serbs at General Assembly talks complain that pressure for settlement is only on them. Serb and Muslim troops fighting around Tesanj. UN and Bosnia officials reveal plans for beginning to rebuild Sarajevo, initial costs to be \$530 million to begin project. At a press conference in New York Secretary General Boutros-Ghali said that easing and lifting of the sanctions against FR Yugoslavia could be considered when the agreement on peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina was made.

May 25-26

Preliminary talks between the representatives of the Contact Group and the Croatian-Muslim Federation and Bosnian Serbs took place in Talloires, France. They discussed the plan on division of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina and maps fixing boundaries between Croatian-Muslim Federation and Republika Srpska. There were no official statements on the results of the talks. It was only said that the talks would be resumed in about ten days.

May 26

After the debate on the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina that took several days, the UN Security Council adopted a Presidential statement based on the report submitted by UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali. It was pointed out that there was an urgent need for finding a political solution for the conflict. The warring parties were required to immediately and unconditionally enter into negotiations. Akashi was authorised to get himself directly committed on achieving that goal.

At the press conference in Washington the spokesman of the Department of State said all warring parties were responsible for the continuation of combats and that 'no one in particular is to blame for the lack of progress in peace negotiations'.

Serbs refuse to pull 150 troops from Mala Biserna hill near Gorazde area insisting government forces pull back before they leave, also deny UN access to Gorazde area. British peacekeeper wounded by mine in Gorazde, and Serbs and British exchange fire after UN observation post fired upon. Contact Group talks in France end after 2 days without any agreement. Silajdzic in Zagreb for talks on fighting in Bihac. Fighting continues around Tesanj.

May 27

UN to protests to Bosnian government troops taking up new positions on Mt. Igman. Muslims using 3 Croat tanks to push back Serbs around Tesanj, Serbs fire 500 artillery rounds at Gradacac.

May 28

Akashi invited all three parties in the Bosnian conflict to meet in Geneva on 2 and 3 June and conduct talks on a general cessation of hostilities. Co-Chairmen Owen and Stoltenberg were also invited as well as special envoys of Russia and the USA, Churkin and Charles Redman. Apart from Akashi UNPROFOR commanders de Lapresle and Rose should also take part.

342 Serbs leave Sarajevo on buses for Serb-held territory. Serbs fire 100 artillery rounds at government forces around Gradacac. Serbs fire 1 round at Swedish observation post forcing their troops to pull back 8 miles south of Gradacac.

May 29

Karadzic says Serbs have lost ground to Muslims, says Serbs waiting for international community to warn Muslims, comments that Serbs would take 49% of territory if they get Tuzla and Sarajevo. Fighting near Kupres, government forces on offensive on Mt. Vlasic and around Tesanj (NE). Government and Croat forces shell Serb positions in Brcko area, Serbs charge. Serbs demand permanent cease-fire, but Karadzic says this could be shortened.

May 30

Government commander Rasim Delic says government defensive tactics over as government troops continue to advance before start of new round of talks. Serbs shell Travnik, Gradacac, Turbe, and Bugojno, Serbs reportedly have lost territory between Bugojno-Donji Vakuf. Serbs fire on, and prevent from landing UN resupply plane at Tuzla. Serbs to allow UN movement in Gorazde. Fighting in Bihac between Muslims. Churkin meets with Croatian leaders in Zagreb. Serbs take artillery piece from UN collection point near Sarajevo.

May 31

Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Non-Aligned Movement member countries opened in Cairo. Apart from the ministers of 108 member countries the representatives of Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Bulgaria, of some newly created states of the former USSR and some West European countries also participated in the Conference as guests or observers. FR Yugoslavia did not participate since Egypt, as host, did not send invitation.

Bosnian Assembly elected Zubak (Bosnian Croat) and Ejup Ganic (Bosnian Muslim) as President and Vice-President of Federation until federal elections, scheduled after six months. Assembly also endorsed Washington and Vienna Agreements (see 1 March and 11 May). Izetbegovic to remain at head of wartime collective presidency.

Government troops shell Serb positions defending mountain pass near Bugojno (SW Bosnia), fighting also near Donji Vakuf, shelling of Gradacac, Turbe, Travnik, near Olovo. 9 artillery shells land near Tuzla airport causing UN forces to request airstrikes, but Akashi rejects request after Karadzic tells him it was a mistake. Churkin in Belgrado for talks with Milosevic on prospects for cease-fire.

June 1

The Security Council issued a Presidential statement which reiterated the urgent need for a comprehensive cessation of hostilities throughout the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and called

upon parties to resume, without preconditions, serious efforts to reach a political settlement. It fully supported efforts by the Secretary-General's Special Representative and the UNPROFOR Force Commander to negotiate a cessation of hostilities. The Council welcomed the decision to convene in Geneva a meeting with the delegations of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the Bosnian Serb side.

The Assembly of the Republika Srpska discussed the 1994 economic policy, the reorganisation of the Army and the platform for the forthcoming negotiations in Geneva on resolving the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

7 shells land near British base at Bugojno. British request NATO air support after 2 shells hit, but it is denied. Shelling of Travnik kills 2, 40 explosions at Kobilja Glava (N of Sarajevo). Heavy artillery, infantry fighting overnight at Gradacac, shelling of Bugojno.

June 2

All invited parties, except the Muslim delegation, came to the negotiations in Geneva on a general cessation of hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina convened by Akashi. In an explanation the Muslims stated that the Serbian part had not fulfilled the condition to withdraw all its soldiers from the Safe Area Gorazde. The beginnings of the negotiations were rescheduled.

UN Commission of Experts preparing evidence for war crimes tribunal finds that ethnic cleansing and rape were deliberate Serb policy and constitute genocide, that all sides have committed rape but Serbs are most responsible, that 'the magnitude of victimisation is clearly enormous'. Heavy shelling around Srebrenik (N. of Tuzla). Serb military commander tells reporters that Serbs have taken heavy losses. Serb shelling east of Teocak, government shelling of Doboj claimed, but AP reports that only 2 shells hit town. UN says 150 detonations N of 12 mile exclusion zone around Sarajevo, also reports 1,400 shells hit government-held Gradacac and Ribnica areas, 79 hit Maglaj (10 hit school). Serb Lt. comments on government offensive: 'They used to be afraid of us--now they seem to be encouraged and on the offensive'.

June 3

Shelling of Gradacac and Ribnica continues, General alert signalled in Doboj where Serbs are under assault.

June 4

Continued heavy fighting on front lines in north as UN attempts to reschedule talks for June 5. shelling also near Mostar and Srebrenica in the east. Former member of Bosnian collective presidency, and Croat moderate, Stjepan Kljuic, announces formation of new multi-ethnic Bosnian Republican Party.

June 5

UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali arrived in Geneva with the aim of helping overcome the delay in negotiations on a general cessation of hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Serb forces continue to violate Gorazde exclusion zone while Akashi says he hopes all sides will be able to get down to serious negotiations. US Senator Biden (supporter of lifting arms embargo) says he has no respect for Akashi's judgment, calls him an impediment. Izetbegovic proposes 100-mile heavy weapons exclusion zone for central Bosnia as alternative to lifting arms embargo. Geneva talks again postponed as Bosnian Government tries to confirm that last Serb troops have left Gorazde exclusion zone but reports that 50 Serbs have simply dressed as civilians and remain in area. Bosnian army presses offensive in Doboj/Gradacac, Serbs respond with heavy shelling of Teocak, intensify attacks on Bugojno.

June 6

After several days of delay the negotiations started in Geneva on a general cessation of hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina since the UNPROFOR officials confirmed that all Serbian forces had withdrawn from Gorazde. Muslims drops 100-kilometre exclusion zone proposal.

At a press conference in New York Fred Ekhard, UN spokesman for peace-keeping operations, said that 90 members of UNPROFOR had been killed and 1 014 had been wounded.

June 7

President of FR Yugoslavia Zoran Lilić, warning that the strategy of getting Serbia and Yugoslavia involved in the war would not be achieved, said: 'Millions of Yugoslav citizens cannot be hostages of any leader, either from FRY, Republika Srpska or the Republika Srpska Krajina. No one has given them such right and this war must end'.

Gunfire in Gorazde area. Slovenian president Milan Kucan in Zagreb for first talks with Tudjman in 20 months, talks to focus on Italian irredentism towards Istrian peninsula. US official comments that US has 'moved towards the European position'. Yugoslavia president Zoran Lilić criticises unnamed leaders for prolonging conflict (Karadzic?).

June 8

Negotiations on a general cessation of hostilities between the warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina were finished in Geneva. The parties signed an agreement according to which they would not engage in any offensive military operations or provocative actions for one month. The agreement came into effect from 1200 hours GMT on 10 June 1994. The agreement also provided for the immediate release, under the auspices of the ICRC, of prisoners-of-war and detainees and the exchange of information on persons whose whereabouts were unknown.

While that agreement was still in effect, Government forces attempted to capture dominating terrain or to secure routes in the areas of Ozren and Travnik. At the same time, Bosnian Serb elements continued to expel Muslim civilians from the Banja Luka and Bijeljina areas and imposed new restrictions on the movement of UNHCR convoys. The agreement, which was renewed for an additional month in July, lapsed on 8 August 1994.

Fighting near Dobož, Gradacac, Brčko, and possibly Gorazde. Croatia says it will resort to war to regain Krajina if negotiations fail by September 30.

June 9

US House of Representatives votes 244-178 to terminate arms embargo while administration warn them that this 'will fracture the NATO alliance and put us at odds with Russian'. Secretary of State Christopher in meeting of Contact Group Foreign Ministers discusses lifting of sanctions against Serbs if they agree to peace plan. UN concludes that Serb campaign of ethnic cleansing continues in Banja Luka area.

Representatives of Croatia and Srpska Krajina agreed to resume negotiations on normalisation of their relations on 16 and 17 June at Plitvice.

June 10

Draft Memorandum of Understanding on the EU administration of Mostar initialled ad referendum by enlarged EU Troika and Bosnian and Bosnian Croat sides.

Shelling continues as both sides accuse the other of violations. UN commander Rose optimistic that end of war near. fighting continues in Bihac area which is not subject to cease-fire. 31 explosions S. of Vares.

June 11

Bosnian Serb parliament speaker Momcilo Krajisnik denies there is rift between Bosnian Serbs and Belgrado (in response to Serbian president Zoran Lilic saying Belgrado will not support Bosnian Serbs indefinitely). Says 'there can be no talk about relations getting cold' with Serbia. Bosnian army reportedly advancing into suburbs of Serb-held Donji Vakuf (C. Bosnia).

June 12

5 rockets fired on Brcko. 30 rounds hit Croat positions near Orasje, Samac, peacekeepers fired on near Gorazde.

June 13

British armoured vehicle patrol fired on by Serbs near Maglaj, British return fire but no air support called. Foreign Government frees 19 Serbs from prison in Sarajevo, allows them to leave for Serb territory. Govt's Fifth Corp in Bihac takes over rebel-held villages, captures 300 of Abdic's troops.

June 14

Akashi calls Muslim shelling of Brcko 'reprehensible'. Krajina Serbs refuse to let US ambassador to Croatia visit area. Tudjman visits Sarajevo for meeting with Izetbegovic, opens new Croatian embargo. After his meeting in Moscow with President of Republika Srpska Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Andrey Kozirev said that 'the Bosnian Serbs could count on the most decisive and firmest support of Russia if they accept the plan of the international community on peaceful settlement of the problem in Bosnia-Herzegovina'. In that case 'Russia will demand lifting of the sanctions against Belgrade to a rate appropriate to consolidation of the peace'. If they do not accept the plan the Bosnian Serbs 'could expect nothing good', he said.

June 15

Nova Makedonija reports that Serb troops set up camp in Macedonian territory last month occupying 200-250 meters.

June 16

Negotiations between the representatives of the Republic of Croatia and the Republika Srpska Krajina on normalisation of their relations, scheduled for 16 and 17 June at Plitvice, were cancelled since the Croatian delegation had not arrived. The Croatians stated that the Krajina had not permitted five Croatian journalists to report the meeting but only two (the same number of two journalists from the RSK had been permitted to report from the negotiations that had taken place in March 1994 in Zagreb).

Croatian Serbs fire 1,000 artillery rounds into Bihac pocket in support of Muslim rebel leader Fikret Abdic. UN says civilians being held prisoner by Abdic's troops for not supporting rebel side. Sniper fire in Sarajevo kills 1 civilian, 1 Serb soldier (in Nedjarici suburb). Artillery duels near Maglaj, tank fire near Gradacac, Brcko. Croatia turns away group of 462 refugees from Banja Luka area saying they have no accommodation for them.

June 17

Fighting continues in Bihac area, with heavy fighting reported around Pecigrad (10 miles S of Velika Kladusa). Serbs report Muslim attack 5 miles W of Brcko. Bosnian Serb leader Krajisnik comments that Contact Group's maps 'are far from what the Serbs could accept'.

June 18

Artillery exchanges in NE Posavina Corridor. Light gunfire near Ribnica (25 m. SW of Tuzla), 48 cease-fire violations in Sarajevo, and some gunfire in Gorazde area.

June 19

Relatively quiet, but Serbs say government forces taking territory near Vozuca. 10 civilians wounded by Serb shelling of Cazin. 1 killed, 3 wounded by snipers near Holiday Inn in Sarajevo.

June 20

Government forces within 13 km of Abdic stronghold, Serbs shell Pecigrad in response. Fighting in Doboje-Gradacac area NW of Tuzla as government puts pressure on Serbs. 'substantial' small arms fire between British and Muslim forces around Gorazde. 'Contact Group' meeting to finalise partition plan scheduled for June 22 postponed until July 1. Clinton to replace State Department official responsible for Bosnia, Stephen Oxman (considered ineffectual) with ambassador to Germany, Richard Holbrooke.

June 21

Serbs fire anti-aircraft rounds into Gorazde, artillery into Zavidovici, Tesanj. UN reports cease-fire violation in Sarajevo triple in 24 hrs., fighting in Hadzici (W of Sarajevo). British patrol apparently fired on by Bosnian government soldiers 3 miles out of Gorazde. Artillery duels along Sava River. Artillery duels die down in Bihac. 2 killed by Serb snipers in Sarajevo suburb of Marijin Dvor. Authorities at Croatian-Bosnian border begin allowing refugees into Croatia. large numbers of small weapons reported moving into Bosnian Government hands after Croats take their cut. UN official says G-7 meeting to endorse territory settlement. puts pressure on Serbs by saying arms embargo against Muslim could be lifted if Serbs don't sign.

June 22

Government forces take more territory in Bihac. Russian says it might drop opposition to ending arms embargo if Bosnian Serbs don't accept peace plan, British Foreign Secretary Hurd tells US Senators this would leave British, France, no choice but to pull out troops. 300-man Turkish mechanised infantry battalion arrives at Split (first part of 1,500 man contingent), to take up duties around Gornji Vakuf, Doboje, and Maglaj. Parliaments of Bosnia and Croat-Muslim federation expected to approve joint government. Kozyrev, in Brussels, does not exclude lifting of embargo if peace plan signed by Bosnian Serbs. German to send 70 police to Mostar to help provide security.

June 23

Fighting declared worst since cease-fire agreed to, particularly between Muslims in Bihac area where government troops said to be closing in on Abdic stronghold. 9 killed, 40 wounded as Serbs shell Travnik. Fighting near Maglaj, Doboje, and Tesanj. Several thousand Serbs driven from their homes on Mt. Ozren as government forces attack. Bosnian General Rasim Delic tells officers 'we are going into phase two, a war of liberation'. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* says Serbs preparing for new offensive. Prime Minister Silajdzic expected to name new coalition government of 10 Muslim and 6 Croats.

June 24

Fighting in North increases, especially around Visoko (15 miles NE of Sarajevo), and North of Zavidovici, Gracanica shelled for 4 hours. Serbs attack UN aid convoy NE of Tuzla, but pull back when NATO planes drop warning flares, Serbs blame government forces for attack, UN contends that

government forces responsible for provoking fighting on Mt. Ozren. Karadzic says Contact Group plan won't be accepted because 'serb soldiers are the ones who draw maps'. Hand grenade thrown into Sarajevo cafe wounding several. Croats and Muslims sign accord in Gornji Vakuf on terms of troop withdrawals from battle lines. Talks on anti-sniping agreement between government and Serbs postponed after government refuses to send senior commanders.

June 25

Heavy artillery fire in North. UN General Rose says cease-fire violation can't continue since Serb General Mladic can't be reached. UN reports 316 detonations including cluster bombs in Gracanica as Serbs shell town, 79 explosions near Gradacac, 24 explosions in W suburbs of Sarajevo. Serbs shell government positions in Bihac. Bosnian General Delic says progress made in retaking Mt. Vlasic. Serb military officials admit on TV that they have taken large losses in fighting in C Bosnia.

June 26

Bosnian government forces reportedly taking territory back from Serbs in heavy fighting in NC Bosnia. Karadzic, in Banja Luka, says he doubts Serbs will accept peace plan. Yugoslavia troops refuse to leave encampments made 150 meters inside Macedonian territory. Belgrado calls accusation 'groundless'.

June 27

Heavy fighting around Serb-held Doboj, Mt. Ozren. Artillery shelling of Gradacac, Gracanica, Ribnica, and Doboj. Bosnia 7th Corps commander Mehmed Alagic says his troops plan to retake Mt. Vlasic, Donji Vakuf, and Jajce. UN says government forces violating cease-fire more than Serbs. UN positions come under fire in Sarajevo, British peacekeeper killed by small arms fire of Serbs near Gorazde. UN says ABiH has captured supply route for Maglaj area and made big gains near Doboj.

June 27-28

Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Martino went on a peace mission to Sarajevo, Zagreb and Belgrade endeavouring to resolve the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, and particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

June 28

Bosnian government reports Serbs preparing for major armoured offensive due to increased fighting in Ozren-Doboj area and in Visoko and Kiseljak (NW of Sarajevo). Rose calls situation critical, Akashi says fighting will prompt new calls for NATO air strikes. Serbs halting aid convoys into Gorazde. Contact Group said to have agreed on partition map. Croatian Foreign Minister Granic says his government will use peaceful diplomacy to solve dispute with Krajina.

June 29

Contact Group negotiators agree on Bosnia peace plan including 51% of territory to go to Muslim-Croat Federation and 49% to Serbs. Russian envoy Alexei Nikiforov visits Milosevic to try to get support for plan. The proposals should first be accepted on 5 July in Geneva by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Russia. After that the peace plan would be presented to the warring parties. They should come out for or against it before it was to be presented at the G-7 summit + Russia which would take place in Naples on 9 and 10 July.

Bosnian army offensive in central Bosnia reported by *Borba*. Serbs report to have taken weapons from UN storage depot in Croatia and moved them into Bosnia including 20 tanks/artillery pieces, says UN.

European Court of Justice refuses to order Greece to end embargo since EU Commission, which had brought the case, had not proved the embargo adversely affected any EU members, says more time needed to review facts of case. Greek Prime Minister says this lends legitimacy to Greece's action.

June 30

Boutros-Ghali favours extending cease-fire, but all sides continue fighting with government forces making some gains in NC Bosnia. High level of artillery fire near Mt. Ozren, Zavidovici, Doboj, and Gracanica. Reuters reports Krajina Serbs sending heavy weapons to Abdic's forces in Bihac. US ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith says renewed fighting between Croatia and Krajina will lead to defeat of Croatia. Macedonian Foreign Minister amazed at European Court of Justice decision saying Greek embargo legal.

July 1

In his first reaction to the Contact Group plan for Bosnia Karadzic said that the proposed maps 'are humiliating since they break the territorial continuity of the Republika Srpska and make absolutely impossible survival of the Serbs in the former Bosnia-Herzegovina...In spite of that fact the Serbian part will study the maps and assess whether they could be taken as a satisfactory basis for continuation of the peace process.'

The eighth United Nations appeal since the beginning of the crisis in former Yugoslavia - covered humanitarian needs for the period until 31 December 1994. The appeal addressed emergency needs for a revised beneficiary population of 4,121,500 persons with programmes amounting to \$532,070,211.

US Senate votes 50-50 not to lift arms embargo against Bosnia.

Serbs recapture territory around Mt. Ozren, UN monitors count 1,500 explosions in area. Fighting in Bihac, Bugojno, Travnik, and new tensions in Sarajevo, Visoko, and Gorazde. Heavy fighting/shelling between Zavidovici and Ribnica.

Croatian internally displaced started a blockade of UNPROFOR check-points along roads to UN Protected Areas. This protest against UNPROFOR's inefficiency lasted until August 22.

July 2

Bosnian Foreign Minister says his side will not rule out accepting 51% as proposed. Karadzic says if proposals are set, Serbs should 'cancel our co-operation with this worldwide mafia'.

July 3

Serbs reportedly break Muslim pressure on supply corridor between Serbia and Krajina, also putting their own pressure on Sarajevo's highway link to Adriatic. *Newsday* reports that Yugoslavian army units had been involved in Gorazde fighting in April, not just Bosnian Serb forces. British *Sunday Express* reports arms embargo being circumvented by flights into Croatian island of Krk.

July 4

Serbs attack British post near Gorazde 4 times before reinforcements arrive. UN High Commissioner for Refugees says Croats evicted 80 Muslims from Mostar recently, Croats blame rogue units for actions. Serbs beat 50 Muslims waiting at UN office in Banja Luka to leave city. 989 children that had been evacuated to Libya in December '92 repatriated to Bosnia. Kozyrev warns that airstrikes against Serbs will split Contact Group and could lead 'up to a world war'.

July 5

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Contact Group accepted in Geneva the proposal of the Peace Plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Ministers agreed with the proposed maps. It implied that 51% of the territory should belong to the Croatian-Muslim Federation and 49% to the Republica Srpska, while Bosnia-Herzegovina would remain a single state within its internationally recognised borders. The parties would have to accept the map as presented, unless they could agree between themselves on changes. The Ministers also agreed on the measures that should be taken in case the warring parties accepted or rejected the Plan. The warring parties could declare themselves for or against the Plan within a two week period.

Izetbegovic says Bosnian governments answer to peace plan will not be 'radical no', but Prime Minister Silajdzic says it legalises mass murder and ethnic cleansing. Bosnian government position in E Bosnia firmed up with proposed return of Visegrad, Brcko other towns. Serbs would be allowed to keep northern supply corridor and ethnically cleansed towns of Zvornik, Rogatica, Prijedor (Muslim to get suburbs), Foca but would also have to surrender roughly a third of territory they captured. Muslims to get Modrica, Derventa, Doboj. Visegrad to be divided. Kozyrev says lifting embargo 'may be inevitable' if peace plan rejected by Serbs. Serbs retake some land near Zavidovici, inflict heavy losses on government forces, threaten offensive in Sava valley near Bosanski Samac. 2 Serb mechanised battalions each with 20 tanks advancing towards road across Mt. Igman.

July 6

Milosevic received in Belgrade Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Kozyrev. They discussed the proposed Peace Plan of the Contact Group for Bosnia.

Karadzic criticises Russia for not defending Serbs regarding new peace proposal, saying it was dictated by Washington. Kozyrev says Serbs have no choice but to take the plan. Croats seem relatively supportive of peace plan as their positions in central Bosnia would be assured. Macedonia bans state-backed Serbian papers for propagandistic reporting. UN helicopter hit by ground fire near Mt. Zuc. New shelling between Serbs and government forces. Serbs violation Sarajevo exclusion zone by moving 75mm mounted gun through suburbs, Russian Battalion (Rusbat) sent to track and possibly apprehend. Canadian Prime Minister Chretien says he will not support lifting arms embargo and would withdraw troops if this happens. 100 Abdic troops enter Bihac, clash with government troops killing 3.

July 7

Bosnian government leaders endorse the peace plan to their parliament. Karadzic says he has not rejected the plan but that Serbs have been hurt most by it, says acceptance to be based on whether Serbs can unite with Serbia proper. Krajisnik says returning Brcko doesn't suit Serbs at all. US envoy Charles Redman tells *NY Times* that moral compromises were necessary to arrive at wider peace and keeping Bosnia together.

July 8

Heavy fighting in Bihac as Abdic's forces launch new offensive (17 killed, 30 wounded), heavily damaging radio building. Croatian radio says some troops of Bosnian Fifth Army Corps defect to Abdic's side (this later reported to have been a trick by 5th Corps to find Abdic's supporters. Serbs attack British UN recon patrol outside of Gorazde exclusion zone.

Justice Richard Goldstone of South Africa approved as Chief Prosecutor for International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

July 10

G-7 meeting including Russian backs Contact Group plan. They also warned that the participants of the summit would support implementation of the measures that had been presented to the warring parties in case they accepted or rejected the Plan.

July 11

Contact group warns warring sides they have only 8 days left to end hostilities and agree to peace plan or face possibly tougher sanctions. Fighting around Mt. Ozren, Bihac. 350 explosions reported along government-Serb frontline on Grabez Plateau (N. of Bihac). Protests in Zagreb against Tudjman's policy of evicting Croats from apartments to give them to war veterans. Owen and Stoltenberg meet with Milosevic, Cosic in Belgrado to try to get them to endorse peace plan. Milosevic reportedly distancing himself from Karadzic by refusing to meet with him after latest round of Geneva talks, but meets with his deputy (Koljevic) and Mladic instead. Socialist Party opens offices in Bosnian-Serb territory posing direct challenges to Serbian National Party of Karadzic.

July 12

Akashi trying to get all sides to extend the cease-fire even though it has not had much success. Representatives of the Croatian-Muslim Federation and the Republika Srpska made a verbal commitment to accept the request of the UN to extend for another month the truce in Bosnia-Herzegovina they had agreed on 8 June in Geneva. Serbs still refusing to accept terms of peace plan as Karadzic states 'We did not accept that state (Bosnia) in the past and will not accept it in the future. There can be no compromises'. Karadzic says talk of split with Milosevic is 'pure imagination. There are no misunderstandings between us'. Also refused to allow Akashi to visit Banja Luka. Tudjman says no meeting with Milosevic until Serbia recognises Croatia's borders. Over 300 artillery rounds fall in Bihac. Fighting in Zavidovici.

July 12-13

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain and France Douglas Hurd and Alain Juppé, visited Zagreb, Sarajevo, Pale and Belgrade where they met with the Presidents Tudjman, Izetbegovic, Karadzic and Milosevic. In this 'last chance mission' the two ministers made effort to convince all concerned parties that the Peace Plan of the Contact Group for Bosnia should be accepted.

July 13

General Mladic promises retributions if NATO planes bomb his forces. Bosnia UN ambassador Sacirbey says Bosnia-Herzegovina will accept peace plan if it retains country's territorial integrity.

July 14

Serbs continue to resist peace plan even though British and French negotiators warn that arms embargo against Bosnian Government could be lifted. Serbs continue to refuse to let 32 be evacuated from Gorazde by UN demanding prisoner exchange first. France opens embassy in Sarajevo. Government troops cross into Krajina from Bihac to fight Serbs after Serbs fire artillery at them. Fighting near Konjic (SW of Sarajevo) where government says Serbs have massed 49 tanks at Kalinovik. 100 artillery shells exploded near Serb-held Doboju, 217 explosions, gunfire near Srebrenica, in Posavina corridor (on border with Krajina), and around Zavidovici and Grabez Plateau. Several hundred refugees from Krajina area block entrance to UN headquarters in Zagreb to protest their

inability to return home. UN says Croat side of Mostar shows 'total breakdown of law and order' as 90 Muslim evicted from homes since April, others murdered, disappeared, or abused. Yugoslavian and Bosnian Serb military leaders said to oppose Milosevic on giving up Doboj, Ozren mountains.

July 15

Serbs force 135 Muslims/Croats out of Bijeljina toward Tuzla, round up 200-300 military-age Muslims and hold them prisoner. UN establish only 7-8,000 remain out of prewar population of 30,000.

July 16

UN-appointed administrator for Mostar, Hans Koschnick (mayor of Bremen) says chances for success just over 50%. Heavy fighting in Zvornik, Bihac.

July 17

Bosnian Serb deputy Prime Minister Vitomir Popovic says Contact Group plan 'absolutely unacceptable...and should be rejected in its entirety'. Karadzic also says response to plan should be no. Serbs attack Usora (South of Doboj). Tudjman, Izetbegovic, and Turkey president Demirel meet on Brijuni island and call on Serbs to accept plan. Reuters reports that local Muslim and Croat leaders in C. Bosnia are violating their alliance and taking action against each other.

July 18

Bosnian parliament accepts peace plan, but Karadzic urges his assembly to reject it saying it would 'give away huge territories to our enemies and exterminators', and that the Serb population must prepare for all-out war, and all Serbs will have to be mobilised. Muslim refugees say Serbs cleansed villages of Satorovici, Osave (near Rogatica). Fighting on Mt. Ozren. Croatian parliament passes non-binding Resolution calling on UNPROFOR to enforce truce agreement and reintegrate Krajina. Slovenia rejects Italy's demands that Slovenia compensate Italians who fled during Tito era (Italy is blocking Slovenia's EU entry over the issue).

July 19

Bosnian Serbs delay acceptance of Contact Group plan, keep secret their deliberations in sealed envelope to keep international community guessing. Serb demands made for modification of maps, access to sea, and part of Sarajevo. US National Security Advisor Lake warns Serbs not to say no, that a unified Bosnia is fundamental, secession not acceptable. 14 explosions in Sarajevo suburb of Rajlovac, more fighting on Mt. Ozren, heavy shelling of Zavidovici, Ribnica. Serbs attack in Bihac, Croatian Serbs fire on Bosnia town of Buzim (25 m. NE of Bihac), attacks around Doboj, Lukavac (near Tuzla). US ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith, denies Muslim-Croat alliance under any real strain. In Macedonia, US Defense Secretary William Perry says there no plans for expanding current US force of 524 troops and 600 Nordic soldiers, but does conclude defence co-operation agreement allowing Macedonia to receive excess US military equipment, training for some Macedonia officers in US.

July 20

Bosnian Serb Declaration handed to Contact Group in Geneva. Stated that: they could not take position on Contact Group peace plan because constitutional arrangements for Bosnia were not fully elaborated, and further work was required on map. But it could serve as basis for further negotiations, while the Contact Group says 'the map is the map'. Western diplomats say they realise their bluff has been called by Serbs.

UN airlift to Sarajevo suspended after US Air Force cargo plane hit by gunfire. Radio Sarajevo says 128 Muslims driven out of Rogatica by Serbs, while Izetbegovic contends that only 10% of Banja Luka's pre-war Muslim/Croat population still lives there. UN chief prosecutor for war crimes says he wants indictments by end of year. Half hour gun battle near Sarajevo's Jewish cemetery.

July 21

The Declaration of the Assembly of the Republika Srpska adopted on 19 July was made public. The Assembly was not able to make a decision on the Peace Plan proposed by the Contact Group for the following reasons: a) The Assembly has not been acquainted with all elements of the Peace Plan (constitutional arrangements, agreement on cessation of hostilities, the issue of Sarajevo, access to the sea, agreement on implementation of the Peace Plan, agreement on lifting of the sanctions imposed against the Serbian people) and b) it is necessary to continue the work on the proposed map. After negotiations had been finished the Assembly would make a decision on the complete Peace Plan. Izetbegovic withdraws his government's unconditional acceptance of peace plan due to Serb unwillingness to agree. Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Vladislav Jovanovic calls Bosnian Serb response highly constructive stemming from a 'positive attitude'.

3 UN planes struck by gunfire, US Secretary of Defence William Perry cancels trip to Sarajevo as a result. Serbs attack, shell government positions near Brcko.

July 22

Explosions in Jewish cemetery of Sarajevo and at Vrbanja Bridge. UN says Serbs moved 5 tanks, 3 heavy weapons into Sarajevo exclusion zone.

July 23

EU takes over administration of Mostar as part of Muslim-Croat cease-fire deal. Sniper fire in Sarajevo forces police to close centre to traffic. UN troops fired on in 9 separate incidents. British troops on high alert. 5 planes hit at Sarajevo airport over 3 days as sniping increases. shelling of Bugojno, fighting in Ozren mountains, along road between Zavid.-Tuzla. UN armoured vehicle nearly hit by shell in Dobo. Akashi says Serbs continue expelling Muslim from homes. Bosnia daily *Oslobodjenje* claims Serbs forcing Muslim/Gypsies in Bijeljina region of Ciganlika to take Slavic names, efforts being supervised by Orthodox Bishop Vasilije Kacavenda. Russian Minister Churkin comments Serb rejection 'cannot, to say the least, satisfy us', says Russian will take steps to make Serbs change their minds.

July 24

3 killed in Tuzla due to Serb bombardment. Cease-fire violations also at Travnik, Bugojno. Bosnian army artillery hits Serb positions in Brcko. 1,100 artillery rounds fired in Bihac fighting. 9 killed by Serb mortar in Maglaj. UN says Serbs responsible for firing on Ukrainian plane previous day. Christopher says Serbs need to change their minds about peace plan. Croatia says Serb artillery from eastern Herzegovina shells Konavle (S. of Dub.).

July 25

In his letter to the Security Council UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali proposed that the UNPROFOR should be withdrawn from the former Yugoslavia and replaced by the NATO or combined military forces particularly set up for this purpose. In his explanation Boutros-Ghali pointed out that, since the Contact Group had taken the leading negotiating role in resolving the problems in the former Yugoslavia, it was natural that it would implement its decisions by committing its own forces, and second, UNPROFOR and United Nations had no power, people or means necessary for

implementing the decisions proposed in the Peace Plan or imposing it by force. Accord would call for 60,000 troops, 3,000 police, several hundred civilian staff, and cost \$4-5 billion per year

The Contact Group discussed in Moscow the situation that had arisen after the warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina had given their responses to the Peace Plan for Bosnia. The only information that was made public was that the talks would be resumed in Geneva.

Serbs violation UN Gorazde weapons exclusion zone by firing 40mm anti-aircraft gun at workers in fields, killing 1. UN gives them 'warning letter'. Serbs meet with UN commissioner in Sarajevo, General André Soubirou, say they will not fire on planes, but UN charges that Ukrainian plane was shot at from Serb-controlled suburb. UN reopens Sarajevo airport. Reuters reports that 2 French soldiers defect to Serbs, who claim they wanted to 'fight the Muslims who have flooded France'.

July 26

Russian Minister of Defence Pavel Grachev and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Vitaly Churkin met in Belgrade with Milosevic, Karadzic and Mladic to try to persuade Bosnian Serbs to sign peace plan but have no success. Kozyrev says UN, not NATO forces should act as peacekeepers, while Grachev says there is no need for UNPROFOR to pull out, but NATO is not needed.

Serbs again violation Gorazde exclusion zone by firing 82mm mortar at government troops. Serbs say they will close off highway connecting Sarajevo to Adriatic shutting off food supply for capital.

Karadzic says road closed because Bosnian government had violated March agreement by smuggling in arms and ammunition, firing into Serb-held territory, and failing to honour agreements on prisoner exchanges, later says closure only temporary. UN says it has no evidence of such charges, protests Serb action.

UN human rights monitor Mazowiecki says there are 800 POWs in Bihac, all being treated inhumanely, many beaten. Also contends that Serbs continue ethnic cleansing in Banja Luka but unable to gain access to Serb-controlled territory.

July 27

UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali forwarded a letter to the Security Council proposing that the Security Council should take necessary actions and invite of Croatia to fulfil its obligations and lift the blockade imposed against the UNPROFOR at the check points in the UNPAs.'

Serbs ambush UN convoy on road to Sarajevo just closed, killing 1 British soldier, wounding 1, later say they mistook this for government convoy. NATO called in for overflights, but not asked to attack since Serb targets disappeared. British say convoy clearly marked, attack deliberate.

July 28

The Assembly of the Republika Srpska considered the Peace Plan of the Contact Group again. It was said the Assembly did not reject participation of the Contact Group in resuming negotiations, provided the international community would ensure:

- a) further adjustment of the map;
- b) territorial division settlement for Sarajevo;
- c) access to the sea;
- d) right of self-determination, including the possibility of establishing state ties with neighbouring countries;

e) agreement on cessation of hostilities, implementation of the Plan and lifting of the sanctions.

It was also said that in case the international community demands that the Peace Plan should be accepted the Assembly is obliged to schedule a referendum.

July 29

Churkin says Russian opposes air strikes against Serb targets, but Kozyrev warns Serbs not to hold referendum under war conditions. Lord Owen calls for air strikes against Bosnian Serbs, blockade of Serbia especially its border with Macedonia. Christopher says international community must be prepared to lift arms embargo although British and France both resist. Contact Group considers establish protective zones around Srebrenica, Zepa, but as Contact Group consensus breaks down, Karadzic says 'there is hope in this critical moment'.

July 30

The Contact Group considered the responses of the warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Peace Plan. In a communiqué Ministers welcomed the decision of the Croatian-Muslim Federation to accept the Plan and regretted the decision of the Serbian part not to accept the Plan on the territorial settlement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ministers agreed to propose to the UN Security Council deepening of the sanctions against FR Yugoslavia, application of more severe regime and enlargement of the Safe Areas, and decisive action against those who violated the agreement on cease-fire in Bosnia. In case the Serbs responded positively the Contact Group would submit to the Security Council a draft Resolution on gradual lifting of the sanctions against FR Yugoslavia, but if otherwise lifting of the arms embargo for the Muslims could become unavoidable. The Republika Srpska was given a chance to reconsider its decision on rejecting the Peace Plan. British Foreign Secretary Hurd says that none of them have the strength to impose solutions, while Christopher declares 'We've made a decision not to seek to impose a solution'.

Milosevic made a statement for the Belgrade newspaper *Politika*. Milosevic invited the Republika Srpska to opt for peace and accept the proposal of of the Contact Group. He said that the proposal was not in all aspects just for the Serbian side but was not against it. The proposal was an unavoidable compromise and peace was more just than war. Milosevic pointed to the fact that the Republika Srpska should be legitimised by the international community. Milosevic stressed that 'no one has the right to reject peace on behalf of the Serbian people'.

UN accuses Serbs of violations and attacks on peacekeepers. French UN troops fire on Serb snipers in Sarajevo.

July 31

Milosevic received in Belgrade Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Kozyrev. Kozyrev said Russia would give guarantees that after the Contact Group Plan had been accepted all sanctions imposed against FR Yugoslavia would be lifted at the moment the Army of the Republika Srpska withdrew within the agreed boundaries. The boundaries between the Republika Srpska and Croatian-Muslim Federation would be guaranteed by the international community and the Republika Srpska would have the same right to establish a confederation with FR Yugoslavia as the Croatian-Muslim Federation would have the right to form a confederation with Croatia.

President of FR Yugoslavia Lilic said that 'for the present internal and external circumstances it is our common conclusion that peace has no alternative'. He also said that the Contact Group Plan is 'an honourable compromise'.

August/September

The security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina deteriorated. Continued fighting persisted in several regions of the Republic. In Sarajevo, attacks, especially by snipers (despite the anti-sniping agreement), escalated in frequency and deadly effect. The extent of heavy weapons attacks also increased. Attacks occurred in both the city centre and the suburbs and on many occasions were directed at residences, pedestrians and moving vehicles, such as trams packed with people. United Nations personnel were also targeted and suffered fatalities. Twice, in August and September, UNPROFOR called in NATO warplanes to hit Serbian heavy weapons violating the exclusion zone around Sarajevo.

There were numerous interference with humanitarian aid. A key humanitarian route in Sarajevo was closed by Bosnian Serb forces, thus greatly impeding the delivery of aid not only to the city, but also to many points in northern and eastern Bosnia. Attacks both by Bosnian Serbs and Government forces on Sarajevo airport resulted in its frequent closure.

Attacks and interference with humanitarian aid were also reported in other areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including Gorazde, Maglaj, Travnik, Bugojno, Srebrenica and Tuzla. In a number of other locations, the situation remained tense, and widespread violations of human rights in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina persisted.

August 1

Republika Srpska expressed its wish to immediately resume negotiations with the Contact Group on some aspects of the proposed map. After making some changes to the map and reaching agreement on constitutional arrangements that will guarantee sovereignty of the Republic, the Serbs would be ready to accept the Plan. US, France, and German new talks over the map. Kozyrev tells Bosnian Serbs Russia may not support them if plan not accepted.

Sniping increasing in Sarajevo. *New York Times* says Serb guard at concentration camp near Vlasenica claims 3,000 prisoners executed there in '92.

August 2

Regarding the statement of the Republika Srpska of 1 August Milosevic forwarded a letter to the Assembly, President and Government expressing surprise and concern for the fact 'that two questions that have already been clarified are raised again' (indispensability to make changes on the map and guarantees for sovereignty of the Republika Srpska). The letter also said: 'If at this moment, when the peace is offered you usurp for yourself the right to decide on the fate of FR Yugoslavia, it will become impossible to maintain our relations in the future. In case you miss the chance to accept peace you will commit the greatest treason of the Serbian national interests which has ever occurred. Therefore stop raising questions that have already been clarified. You have no right to wait. Make decision to accept the Plan. The interests of the state and people make it necessary'.

Krajisnik responds that they are subject to 'blackmail and pressure'. Muslim and Serbs to end sniping in Sarajevo.

Serbs in Krajina are reported to have stolen weapons from UN depots to send to Abdic in Bihac, and UN says Serbs moving guns in and out of Gorazde area. 700 reported cease-fire violations in Sarajevo, heaviest fighting in north since March with government troops on offensive, Serbs retaliate by shelling Tuzla. Government troops take Pecigrad, surround 400 Abdic troops.

August 3

Bosnian Serb leaders unanimously reject plan saying it would 'sign their own death warrant' and would be a 'masochistic crime at which the devil would laugh'. The Assembly of Republika Srpska made a decision on holding a referendum on the Peace Plan of the Contact Group. In an explanation it was said that 'the Assembly sticks to the Declaration which had been forwarded to the Contact Group

before the Ministerial meeting'. The referendum would take place on 27 and 28 August. The Assembly also initiated a proposal for unification of the Republics of Srpska Krajina and of Srpska with Serbia and Montenegro. Karadzic says 'we have to accept that the Serbian government does not support us anymore'. Russian officially freezes relations with Bosnian Serbs and endorses Milosevic effort to cut ties if peace plan not accepted. Bosnian dinar linked to German mark at rate of 100-1. 5 killed by artillery in Tuzla.

August 4

In an effort to persuade the Bosnian Serb authorities to accept the map, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia severed economic and political relations with the Bosnian Serb leaders and took measures to cut off telecommunications between the FR of Yugoslavia and Bosnian Serb-controlled territory, to deny visits to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by Bosnian Serb officials and to close the 300-mile border to all traffic except for food, clothing and medical assistance.

Concerning the decisions of the Assembly of the Republika Srpska Milosevic said: 'The decision of the leadership in Pale is the most serious decision directed against the interests of citizens of the very Republika Srpska, and also against the whole Serbian people and citizens of FR Yugoslavia...They reject peace at the moment when the Republika Srpska has been recognised and its territory is half as big as the territory of the former Bosnia-Herzegovina, and when, if accepting peace, the sanctions will be lifted to those without whom they could not exist at all. They scheduled a referendum to evade responsibility by laying it at the door of citizens and people...They have usurped the right to make decision on the fate of eleven million citizens of FR Yugoslavia...Number of times they have given us reasons to break off all ties with them since they have never kept their word. Therefore we have to break off all relations and co-operation with such leadership.'

As reported by the news agency *Iskra* the Assembly of the Republika Srpska Krajina had supported the decisions of the Assembly of the Republika Srpska concerning the Peace Plan of the Contact Group and the initiative for unification of all Serbian lands.

US White House Chief-of-Staff Leon Panetta says if Serbs continue defiance, US will seek multilateral or possibly unilateral lifting of arms embargo against Muslim side.

2 wounded by Serb snipers in Sarajevo while other Serbs threaten to retake UN-controlled weapons. all but 100 Abdic troops captured in Pecig. Radical car bomb explodes outside hotel in Budva, Montenegro. Pope John Paul II to visit Zagreb on 9 October (1st visit by a pope since 1177).

August 5

The Bosnian Serb Army seized a number of heavy weapons from the Ilidza Weapons Collection site in the Sarajevo Exclusion Zone, despite having been warned by UNPROFOR not to do so. At the request of UNPROFOR, NATO launched aircraft to attack heavy weapons that were violating the Sarajevo Exclusion zone. Despite poor weather conditions the force, made up of Dutch, French, NATO, UK and US aircraft, were able to locate an M18 Tankbuster (a tracked 76mm anti-tank gun). This was attacked by two US A-10 aircraft which strafed it. Following the airstrike the BSA returned the heavy weapons they had taken. Serbs quickly return 2 personnel carriers. Krajisnik expressed his regret for the incident and ordered that all weapons should be brought back to the storage. UN sends French helicopters to track tank but it returns after being fired upon. Serbia cuts off telephone service to Bosnian Serb territory. UN reports that Serbs fire 2 mortar rounds into central Sarajevo neighbourhood.

Croatian and Republika Srpska Krajina delegations meet to discuss preparations for resumption of the economic relations.

August 6

UN begins patrols to find snipers in Sarajevo after having to shut down streetcar service in capital due to snipers. Russian armoured personnel carrier has 7 grenades dropped on it from apartment building in government-controlled area of Sarajevo. Karadzic announces mobilisation of Bosnian Serb population in response to Milosevic move saying 'only God is with us'.

August 8

Security Council postponed debate on draft Resolution in case of accepting or rejecting the Contact Group Plan for Bosnia. The reason for that were the new circumstances which arose after FR Yugoslavia had decided to break off the political and economic relations with the Republika Srpska. Krajisnik demands 64% of all land for Serbs saying this is the amount rightfully owned by Serbs before war despite census figures proving otherwise. Bosnian Serbs suspend holidays and paid vacations, and expand work week to 60 hrs. in response to emergency.

General Rose proposes removing all soldiers and heavy weapons from Sarajevo region. Bosnian government says Serbs repositioning forces around Sarajevo. Bosnian forces make gains around Vares, take Serb-held town of Brgule (South of Vares), heavy fighting around Dobojo, Brcko (where Serbs are bringing in more reinforcements, and Bresa (20 km NW of Sarajevo). Heavy shelling along front in Kladanj-Dastanko corridor.

August 9

Government forces liberate Cazin municipality of Abdic strong-hold Velika Kladusa. 5,100 civilians and 1,600 Abdic troops flee into Croatia. Government offers amnesty to all who join army in 7 days, except those charged with war crimes (such as Abdic). Airlift resumes in Sarajevo, but British helicopter hit by ground fire causing temporary suspension of helicopter flights. Serbs blocking all UN convoys on Serb held territory. Karadzic resists pressure to accept peace plan. Government forces capture high ground near Gracanica, advance within several thousand yards of Serb supply line near Brcko. US Senate committee reaches agreement on lifting arms embargo if Serbs do not agree on peace plan, Secretary Christopher says administration does not rule this out.

August 10

State Department spokesman said that the sanctions against FR Yugoslavia could be eased if the USA was made sure that the leadership of Yugoslavia seriously carried out the measures of closing the border to the Bosnian Serbs.

General Rose threatens government side for first time with NATO air strikes for violating Sarajevo exclusion zone by firing artillery at Serb positions inside (Serbs also warned).

Karadzic says only option is 'resistance of a unified people in a unified state'. Meeting of Serbian Orthodox Bishop's Council at Patriarch's residence condemns Milosevic and supports Karadzic on issue of blockade.

August 11

The Security Council adopted a Presidential statement assessing that the blockade imposed in UNPAs by citizens of Croatia against the UNPROFOR was impermissible as well as the similar actions directed towards thwarting of the peace-keeping forces which were performed by representatives of the Croatian government. The Security Council demanded that the Croatian government should strictly observe the achieved agreements and stop the actions performed so far.

UN says 3,000 government troops put into new offensive to break sieges of Visoko, Breza. Sarajevo airlift again halted after UN planes fired upon.

Clinton sets October 15 deadline for asking UN to lift embargo if Serbs don't comply, France says it will go along but not if peacekeepers are 'exposed to a generalised war'. US Senate endorses Clinton plan but then sets November 15 deadline for lifting embargo unilaterally. Russian Foreign Minister official Grigorii Karasin says Serbian leadership's 'courageous' act in imposing blockade deserves reward in lifting of sanctions. Islamic Development Bank gives Bosnia \$6 million for emergency medical aid. Bosnian Government says it welcomes Rose proposal to demilitarise Sarajevo.

August 12

3 unsuccessful attempts by Serbs to retake weapons in UN arms depot. Fighting around Sarajevo's Jewish cemetery. Blockades of UNPROFOR posts in Croatia now over as Croatian police.

August 12-13

Stoltenberg met in Belgrade with Milosevic, and in Pale with the leadership of the Republika Srpska. His mission was aimed at making the Serbs accept the Contact Group Plan. After the meeting Karadzic said that 'the maps in the present form cannot be accepted either by the leadership or Assembly, and the people will reject them at the forthcoming referendum'.

August 13

Serbs again try to retake 2 T-55 tanks from UN arms depot, but peacekeepers resist. Sarajevo airport partially reopened. Government says it has retaken 14 sq. miles around city in last 10 days. UN reports Serbs fire 122mm howitzer inside Sarajevo exclusion zone.

August 15

Sniping agreement takes effect in Sarajevo. Fuel reportedly slipping across border from Serbia to Bosnian Serbs.

August 16

Bosnian government demands UN reopen roads into Sarajevo. Serbs have also cut off most of city's supply. 150 explosions reported around Breza (N. of Sarajevo) where government troops make substantial gains in fighting. UN reports 684 cease-fire violations over previous 24-hr. period in Sarajevo. British peacekeeper killed near Gornji Vakuf while clearing mines. Serbs seize anti-aircraft weapon from UN and fire on government troops who had been who had attacked them with small arms fire. UN begins airlift again. Snipers fire on Holiday Inn area. Stoltenberg says lifting arms embargo may be useful in bringing Serbs into compliance with peace plan, but this should be done through the Security Council and not unilaterally. Russian Foreign Minister says US plan to lift embargo will only lead to greater bloodshed.

August 17

The Security Council considered the situation in Bosnia. It did not express its views on the situation and discussion was postponed for 'some other occasion'.

Representatives of the Union of Forced Displaced Persons of Croatia stated that the blockade of the UN peace-keeping forces at the check points in the UNPAs had been lifted. In case their demands to return 'to the occupied areas' were not met by mid-September they threatened to organise a new 'total blockade of the UN peace-keeping forces in Croatia.'

Bosnian Serb headquarters in Pale sends letter to UN in Sarajevo demanding UN give Serbs gas to replace that lost by Yugoslavia blockade or else UN won't be allowed to travel through Serb territory.

UN refuses calling it blackmail. Bosnian General Delic tells troops to prepare for continuation of war. Abdic reportedly calls for unilateral cease-fire in Bihac while government says he must surrender in 7 days. Prisoner exchange in Sarajevo sends 13 to Serb side, 14 to government. Artillery exchanges for several hours around Sarajevo.

August 18

Bosnian Serb leaders announce they will formally seek unification with Yugoslavia and Krajina. Serbs withdraw permission for evacuation of seriously wounded in Gorazde and again link it to prisoner exchanges. UN says this 'totally unacceptable'. Mortar hits Sarajevo airport Serbs aim, but do not fire 40mm anti-aircraft gun on Sarajevo airport (gun supposedly under control of Ukrainian UN forces). Vatican says decision on Pope's visit to Sarajevo won't be made until day before September 7.

August 19

Government troops make new gains in Bihac. Karadzic warns Pope that his security can't be guaranteed as Serbs did not give their consent to the visit. 122mm mortar fired at Sarajevo airport shutting down relief flights. 110 refugees from Bijeljina arrive in Tuzla. Heavy fighting near Bijela (N. Bosnia). French peacekeeper killed near Jewish cemetery.

August 20

In interview to Belgrade newspaper *Politika* President of FR Yugoslavia Zoran Lilic supported again the Contact Group Plan for Bosnia since it 'brings peace'. Condemning the leadership of the Republika Srpska for rejecting the Plan Lilic said that the Serbs in Bosnia should be protected from their own leaders who 'plunge into a new war'. In his opinion 'the strategy of enlarging the territory and losing the people is insane' and 'we have supported the defence war in Bosnia-Herzegovina because it has been justified'...but 'now we cannot support the war of conquest policy...the policy which is suicidal and directly opposite to the interests of the whole Serbian and Montenegrin people and all citizens of FR Yugoslavia'.

Government forces within 1 mile of Velika Kladusa. Shells from Krajina hit village of Kokovi (12 miles S of VK) killing 5 children, wounding 7.

August 21

After the talks with the leadership of the Republika Srpska Krajina in Knin Karadzic said that 'one should not urge unification of the Republika Srpska with the Republika Srpska Krajina because Croatia could take it as reason to attack RS Krajina'.

Velika Kladusa falls to Bosnian forces, fighting continues in area. UN estimates 22,000- 25,000 refugees flee into Krajina. Croatia did not permit the refugees to cross over to the territory of Croatia. 109 'blue berets' have been killed, 1007 wounded since April '92, including Croatia, Macedonia and other parts of former Yugoslavia. Serbian Orthodox Metropolitan Jovan warns Vatican that Pope's visit would pose security risks, says he is not opposed but the trip would be valid only if the Pope condemns all parties for war atrocities.

August 22

Milosevic rejects Akashi proposal for international monitors for Serb-Bosnia border. Abdic reportedly in Serb-held town in Croatia. UN airlift and tram operations resume in Sarajevo.

August 23

Head of Krajina Serbs, Milan Martić, tells UN they need assistance for 60,000 refugees who have fled Bihac. Serbs expel 250 more Muslims from Bijeljina, refugees say Bosnian Serb major Vojislav Djurković, and his Civilian Committee for the Exchange of Populations responsible for all expulsions from region. Clinton says he will ask UN Security Council to lift arms embargo against Bosnian Government unless Serbs accept peace plan by October 15.

August 24

Russian Prime Minister Chernomyrdin said that Russia would intercede in favour of lifting of the sanctions against FR Yugoslavia. Two agreements were signed on economic co-operation between Russia and Serbia and they would come into effect after lifting of the sanctions imposed against FR Yugoslavia.

UN convoy in Croatia, blocked for 2 days by Muslim refugees from Bihac, allowed to pass. Fighting North of Sarajevo around Srednje near supply route. Serbs say they have regained some territory but UN can't confirm. UN observer claims he saw Bosnian Government troops fire on refugees fleeing Velika Kladusa. Kozyrev says Yugoslavia should be rewarded for its position on peace plan by easing some sanctions, Bosnian Serbs should be dealt with even harsher. UN commissioner in Macedonia now says Serbs respecting border, but international commissioner should meet to determine exact demarcation.

August 25

Thousands of refugees from Bihac head toward crossing into Croatia at Turanj where Croatian troops are poised to keep them out due to 400,000 refugees already in country. Abdić's whereabouts unknown. Parliament in Belgrade calls upon Bosnian Serbs to accept peace plan. UN says Serbs violated Gorazde exclusion zone over past 2 days by firing artillery into area, killing 1. UN sends warning letter in response. Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Vladislav Jovanović says there is no need for monitors since Serbia would 'firmly adhere to the blockade'.

August 26

Serbian parliament passes Resolution calling on Bosnian Serbs to accept peace terms. Germany says Serbia must allow international monitors of its borders to avoid tougher sanctions. Karadžić, on TV, threatens to 'block the Moslem state and close all Moslem supply routes'.

August 27

Bosnian Serbs begin voting on peace plan. Karadžić, in *Der Spiegel*, says that if arms embargo is lifted, Serbs will abduct foreigners and peacekeepers, and shoot down planes. Mladić reportedly meets with 2 US generals in Banja Luka including Lt. General Wesley Clark (aide to Shalikhshvili). UN says Mladić had called for the meeting. Government responds to Karadžić blockade threat by saying it will do likewise to Serb areas. New fighting reported in Bihac, also in Maglaj, Doboje areas. After visit from German Foreign Minister Kinkel, Tuđman says on TV that autonomy for Croatian Serbs would be limited to Knin and Glina districts since these were only areas with majority Serb populations prior to war, but all Serbs would have full civil rights, Krajina problem to be solved by peaceful means. French Minister of Defence Leotard warned the USA that lifting of the arms embargo for the Bosnian Muslims would put the UN forces in Bosnia in a very delicate position. In his opinion such decision would be 'a tremendous failure' and would mean 'an open war', which might spread, to the Balkans.

August 27-28

Referendum in the Republika Srpska at which citizens voted on the following question: 'Do you accept the maps on territorial settlement in the former Bosnia-Herzegovina proposed by the international Contact Group?' According to the data presented by the RS Referendum Commission 90% went to the polls. 96% were against.

August 28

Kozyrev in Belgrado for talks with Milosevic, says 'we are no longer talking about toughening or imposing extra sanctions on Belgrado The task is the opposite'. 400 Muslims driven out of Bijeljina towards Tuzla by Serbs. UN reports heavy exchanges of artillery North and West of Sarajevo. Ilias area outside of Sarajevo hit by several hundred rounds of artillery inside exclusion zone. Government forces fire rocket propelled grenades from Jewish Cemetery into Serb territory. Serbs do not return fire. Some fighting near Bihac in Bosanska Krupa between government forces and Serbs, also along Grabez plateau. Serbs shell Olovo, fighting near Breza where Serbs are counterattacking, shelling in Dobo.

August 29

Kozyrev in Sarajevo and Zagreb after conferring with Milosevic, says Russian pushing for swift rewards for Belgrado, but Germany and France both say vote not legitimate. Dutch confirm they are pulling out part of their troops due to technical reasons. US ambassador to UN Madeleine Albright states again that US will unilaterally lift arms embargo if Serbs don't go along with peace plan. Karadzic predicts that escalation of war would lead to total victory of Serbs, threatens to take UN forces hostage if arms embargo lifted.

August 30

Red Cross calls on Bosnian Serbs to stop expelling Muslims after 432 forced out of Bijeljina over weekend. Muslim refugees march on Turanj crossing pt. with Croatia. Kozyrev says West too slow in rewarding Belgrado. Bosnian Serb liaison officers at Sarajevo airport force 2 UN planes to turn back since they didn't arrive on time. Shooting near airport said to be part of campaign to keep Pope from visiting. Gunfire at Mt. Igman, other areas W & NW of Sarajevo.

In Sarajevo newspaper *Oslobodjenje* Izetbegovic said that a balance had been achieved between the Muslim and Serbian military forces. In his opinion the Muslims needed more arms but 'procurement of additional weapons should not necessarily proceed from lifting of the arms embargo'.

August 31

UN says Serbs deliberately restricting access to Sarajevo airport Serb efforts seen as part of campaign to keep Pope from visiting Sarajevo. Serb snipers force 100 British soldiers to take cover near airport. Belgrado papers report Milosevic tells Kozyrev that 400 monitors could be allowed but only if from friendly countries, and these would have to be inside Bosnian territory. UN says Serbs drove 232 gypsies out of Laktasi (near Banja Luka) towards Croatia in July, 420 more reported to be on their way. US ambassador, UNPROFOR officials meet with Abdic who rejects plans for refugees to return. Reports that Abdic troops blocking returns by some refugees. Serb snipers fire on Red Cross vehicle, and one with 2 journalists inside. Serbs also cause British humanitarian convoy headed to Sarajevo to turn back, French return sniper fire. UNPROFOR says it will ensure Pope's safety in Sarajevo. 140 refugees arrive in Travnik from Serb-held Sanski Most. Silajdzic criticises British, France for threatening to pull out of area if arms embargo lifted. German Foreign Minister, after meeting with Kozyrev, says they will only consider lifting some sanctions against Belgrado.

September 1

Karadzic says Serbs will cut water, gas, power, and food to Muslim/Croats unless Belgrade ends its blockade. French Prime Minister says US efforts to lift arms embargo would lead to pullout of troops. Vatican affirms Pope's visit still on, but security concerns remain. UN reports another 149 Muslim refugees expelled from Banja Luka, sent to Zenica. 157 Serbs leave Banovci area (C. Bosnia-Herzegovina) for Pale, Sokolac. Peter Kessler of UN High Commission for Refugees calls Serb expulsion campaign 'state ordained terrorism'. French UN helicopter hit by gunfire in Sarajevo, source unknown. Fighting near Grabez Plateau as Serbs try to take hill. Serbs shell Bosanski Samac overnight. US State Department objects to General Clark's meeting with Mladic particularly photos taken of 2 men wearing each other's hats, gifts given by Mladic to Clark. Defence Department says Generals were not aware of objections prior to trip.

An updated appeal was issued by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNHCR. The appeal incorporated changes calculated for a revised target population of 2,274,500 for the remainder of 1994. It was pointed out that the number of beneficiaries had decreased only marginally since the September revised appeal, from 2,274,500 to 2,244,400 persons.

Addressing the French ambassadors, President Mitterand said that France would remain faithful to the idea that the Bosnian war should only be politically settled and therefore it resolutely opposed to lifting of the arms embargo for the Bosnian Muslims since this would bring about spreading of a more violent war not only in Bosnia-Herzegovina but also across its borders.

September 2

In a Presidential statement the UN Security Council condemned ethnic cleansing 'wherever and by whoever has it been committed' and expressed a special concern 'for the continuing reports on ethnic cleansing committed by the Bosnian Serbs in the area of Bijeljina. The Council demanded that such practice should be immediately stopped as well as the violations of international humanitarian law for which the persons who had committed them would be individually responsible.

UN reports 700 Muslims forced out of Bijeljina to Tuzla.

September 3

Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Kozyrev said in Moscow that his country would withdraw its units from the former Yugoslavia if the arms embargo was lifted for the Bosnian Muslims or if large-scale operations started again.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden Margareta af Ugglas said that Sweden would withdraw its soldiers from the UN peace-keeping forces in Bosnia if France and Great Britain did that so.

Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mate Granic said in Zagreb that Croatia welcomed the Milosevic's acceptance of the Peace Plan of the Contact Group, but in his opinion it was 'not much and enough for he has to finally take a stand towards the occupied areas in Croatia'. Normalisation of relations between Croatia and FR Yugoslavia, he said, was one of the goals of the Croatian foreign policy but a prerequisite for achieving this was that the two states should recognise each other within their internationally recognised borders. In return Croatia was willing to discuss the quality of local self-rule for the Serbs in the UNPAs (the Republika Srpska Krajina) as well as all other issues which were guaranteed by the Constitutional law on the rights of minorities and ethnic communities.

Croats report that 500-700 refugees arrive in Travnik, and are transferred to Bugojno.

September 4

780-900 more Muslims forced out of Bijeljina, 100 men reportedly taken to Serb labour camp in Lopare. Again, Serb major V. Djurkovic named as responsible, but also reports of shootings amongst Serbs over cleansing. Vatican official in Sarajevo hedges on Pope's visit even as Serb snipers fire on UN

forces near sight of Pope's mass. UN says Serbs have halted government attack and advanced near Breza after heavy artillery attack within Sarajevo exclusion zone, also shell Orasje area. Owen and Stoltenberg hold talks with Milosevic in Belgrado.

September 5

Serbs fire rockets at Bihac towns of Cazin and Buzim killing 3, wounding 60 and 50 respectively. French defusing unexploded shells in Bihac. Owen and Stoltenberg meet Montenegrin president Bulatovic who wants sanctions eased against his republic. Izetbegovic denies UN claim that his forces responsible for mortar attack on airport, saying this is part of Serb effort to sabotage Pope's visit.

September 6

Pope's bullet-proof vehicle sent to Sarajevo in preparation for his visit, but after Serbs fire 11 artillery rounds within Sarajevo exclusion zone (worst violation since February) and Akashi sends letter to Vatican warning of risks, the Pope says he will postpone Sarajevo part of trip since security can't be guaranteed for those coming to see him. Heavy gunfire at airport but UN claims this is not a factor in cancellation. Heavy fighting in Bihac where cluster bombs used for first time. UN reports 7 killed, 100+ wounded previous day. UN now puts expulsion of Muslims at 5,580 since middle of July. NATO ambassadors meet in Brussels to discuss breakdown of cease-fire. Yugoslavian aircraft violations Hungarian airspace. US Deputy Secretary of State for Europe Richard Holbrooke meets with President of Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kresimir Zubak and Izetbegovic to try to get federation back on track.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Churkin says Contact Group has agreed to recommend to Security Council to partially lift sanctions against Yugoslavia, but German Foreign Minister Kinkel says Milosevic must first agree to presence of border monitors.

September 7

Sarajevo airlift suspended due to firings on 2 planes previous day. Rose, in interview, says lifting arms embargo would not benefit government forces as much as government thinks. Belgrado agrees to international monitors on border with Bosnia.

September 8

Airlift resumes. 2 British jets fired on over Bosnia, UN blames Serbs. Diplomats say Russian, British, French trying to convince US not to try to lift embargo. Contact Group agrees to ease sanctions if Belgrado allows monitors, Belgrado apparently accepts. Bosnian Serbs, possibly with help of 500 Krajina Serbs with tanks, launch pincer assault on 5th Corps in Bihac. Serbs fire SAMs at 2 NATO jets but fail to hit them. Bosnian Serbs possibly trying to retake land lost to government forces around Sarajevo.

September 9

Organisation of the Islamic Conference says members may provide arms to Bosnian Muslims even though this would violation UN embargo, if embargo is not lifted (decision unanimously approved at meeting). French troops in Bihac forced to pull back out of way of Serb offensive, but UN says government troops doing well despite Serb tanks, artillery. Serbs trying to take re-supply airstrip in Cazin. Red Cross reports Serbs expelled another 500-600 Muslims from Bijeljina previous day.

September 10

UN warns Serbs firing on Bihac this could bring NATO air strikes.

September 11

EU offers Serbs deal to cut off war supplies, allow 135 EU monitors, and sanctions will be eased (largely cultural and air traffic-related), but also warn of 'incalculable consequences' if arms embargo lifted, and German Foreign Minister Kinkel says it should be a 'solution of last resort'. Estimated crowd of 800,000 attend Pope's mass in Zagreb. Says he felt 'deep pain' at calling off Sarajevo trip. Pope condemns nation-state glorification, rejects tying relations to national intolerance, tells people 'dare to forgive and welcome others'. also praises late Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, considered by Serbs to have been Nazi collaborator. Catholic and Serb Orthodox officials meet in Assisi for gathering of world religions.

September 12 Serbs continue assault in Bihac which Bosnian radio says is being co-ordinated by Mladic personally. UN now says Serbs entering Bihac may be Bosnian Serbs and that Croatian Serbs have either pulled back or were not involved. 1,000 detonations reported NE of Bihac. EU administration of Mostar opens new bridge to temporarily replace that destroyed by Croats during fighting.

September 13

In Geneva experts of the Contact Group and the Conference on the Former Yugoslavia proposed setting up a civilian mission to be sent to the border between FR Yugoslavia and the Republika Srpska to verify the contents of convoys from FR Yugoslavia carrying food and medical supplies to the Republika Srpska. The proposal was a response to the refusal of FR Yugoslavia to accept military observers.

Bosnian Croat military authorities arrest a number of demobilised Croat Defence Council military police for complicity in attempted assassination of EU administration.

September 14 Izetbegovic, Tudjman in 2 days of talks agree to open up key supply route between Metkovic and Doboij, create joint municipal authorities, begin repatriation of refugees, work on creation of joint army in Bosnia. Yugoslavia agrees in principle to monitors. Kozyrev accuses West of dragging its feet on easing sanctions. Government forces fire 7 rockets into Brcko prompting Serbs to fire back at Orasje. UN says 5th Army Corps has repelled Serb assault in Bihac and recaptured some ground as well as Serb tank, artillery.

September 15

UN claims Serbs have made hundreds of helicopter flights in past 10 days primarily in Sapna Thumb area near Serbian border, and suspects this is Serb resupply route. Head of international observer mission, Swedish General Bo Pellnas, meets with Yugoslavian officials to discuss his 135-man mission. Shelling in and near Bihac, Serbs attacking government positions near Brcko. Croats said to be upset with possible lifting of arms embargo thinking weapons will only go to Muslims, pull out of positions supporting government forces around Konjic. Intense fighting around Brcko, also in Konjic area (50 miles SW of Sarajevo).

September 16

NATO to extend air cover to UN peacekeepers in Bosnia especially in Bihac where Serbs have been on attack. Also drawing up contingency plans for ground troop involvement to support UN forces which might come under attack if withdrawing due to lifting of arms embargo. Non-aligned states on Security Council now apparently supportive of idea. British ODA providing majority of British relief says it will discontinue flights after one of its planes fired on while on ground at Sarajevo airport. 15-20 UN

monitors on way to border to begin work. Yugoslavia closes 5 of 6 border crossings to UNHCR convoys.

In Prague the Committee of High Officials of the CSCE welcomed the efforts of the Contact Group directed towards reaching a political settlement of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and demanded that the Bosnian Serbs should accept the Plan, warning that, if otherwise, they would face a total international isolation and the UN would impose sanctions against them. The Committee called for 'urgent resumption of the negotiations between the Croatian government and Serbs in the UNPAs for the purpose of reaching a settlement that would lead to reintegration of the UNPAs into the political, economic and constitutional system of Croatia'. The Committee also 'condemns the continuing repression in Kosovo and Sandzak and the current tensions in Vojvodina' and pointed out the need 'for urgent and unconditional return of the so-called long-lasting missions in Yugoslavia'.

The Contact Group submitted to the Security Council proposals of Resolutions on easing of the sanctions against FR Yugoslavia, tightening of the present and introducing of some new measures against the Republika Srpska. It proposed opening of the Belgrade and Podgorica airports for international air traffic and lifting of the sanctions in sports and culture.

September 17

The Secretary-General noted in a report that the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia were closely interrelated and had had a direct impact on UNPROFOR's operations in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. In this context, the work of the Contact Group working with the Co-Chairmen of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, could be of great significance for UNPROFOR's future.

Sarajevo now in 4th day without utilities which Serbs have cut off. Heavy sniping and shelling kill 4, wound 15 in city. 700 more Muslims expelled from Banja Luka area.

September 18

Heaviest shelling and gunfire in 6 months in Sarajevo kills 2, wounds 18. Rose warns both sides to stop and accuses government of starting it. Critics respond that he has never issued a threat of air strikes this quickly against Serbs who they say he favours. Fighting around Doboje. Serbs expel further 1,300 Muslims (total since July now over 7,000). Also threaten French unit at Poljina by surrounding it with land mines. UN says Serbs fired 12 rounds from 3 120mm mortars within exclusion zone. Some fighting around city. French Defence Minister Leotard states he is opposed to massive air strikes against Serbs in Sarajevo since this could jeopardise his troops. UN reports that 12 days prior French ground forces fired on and destroyed Serb anti-aircraft gun used to fire on town of Butmir, Sarajevo supply road from Ilidza (1st such action by UN ground forces). Izetbegovic pledges to halt provocative attacks.

September 19 UN says Serbs have now driven 3,000 Muslim from homes in Bijeljina over last 2 days, estimates now 10,000 have been forced out since mid-July. 2 Muslim killed, 1 wounded while crossing front-lines. UN, Red Cross both say Bosnian Serb leaderships have given their support to this campaign. Karadzic tells Russians that they stand to lose their influence in Balkans forever if they don't support Serbs.

UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali conveyed to the Security Council the report submitted by Co-Chairmen of the Conference on the Former Yugoslavia Stoltenberg and Owen. It was said in the report that the civilian humanitarian mission which had been sent to the border between FR Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, started to work. According to the first impressions 'the Federal Yugoslav Government takes all necessary measures and the border between FRY (Serbia and Montenegro) and Bosnia-Herzegovina has been efficiently closed'.

September 20

Airlift suspended again after C-130 hit by bullet at airport UN officials confer with Bosnian Serbs about restoring power to Sarajevo but Serbs want to link this with regaining power for Serb-held towns. UN commanders tell Serbs they must remove guns from exclusion zone by next day or face air strikes. Bosnian Government says Rose should be replaced due to pro-Serbian bias.

September 21

UN says hundreds of helicopter flights in N. Bosnia originating in Serbia and could be part of resupply effort undetected by monitors. Serbs shell Mostar. US Admiral Leighton Smith, CINCSOUTH, says of 18 Serb artillery pieces in Sarajevo exclusion zone will not be tolerated. General Rose delivers ultimatum to Serbs threatening air strikes unless weapons removed, to which Serbs apparently agree. Sarajevo airlift begins again. Canada says it may cut UN contingent for other duties such as Haiti. EBRD extends \$22 military loan to Croatia to rebuild its air navigation system. US delegation to Contact Group meeting in Zagreb says that isolating the Bosnian Serb leadership should be the group's highest priority.

The Contact Group in talks with Milosevic confirmed that the Peace Plan for Bosnia offered international security guarantees for the boundaries to be established by the Plan. There was also an agreement that the Republika Srpska should achieve the same right to establish ties with FR Yugoslavia as the Croatian-Muslim Federation had the right to link up with the Republic of Croatia. The Contact Group also confirmed that the proposed Plan was a basis of the peace process and in elaborating it, it would be possible to make some territorial changes if the two parties reach a bilateral agreement.

September 22

NATO jets launch strike against Serb tank after Serbs fire 4 rocket-propelled grenades at French unit (tank not involved in attack but targeted because it is thought to be empty and will not cause loss of life. UN Protection Force commissioner, French General Bertrand de Lapresle, calls for attack. Bosnian Serbs say NATO planes hit civilian target and that they will retaliate. French soldier also wounded by sniper in Sarajevo, and 2nd French APC fired on SE of Sarajevo but returns fire. UN says Serbian violation 'no-fly zone' to re-supply Bosnian Serbs. Serbs claim to have removed 3 guns from exclusion zone, while UN says it was ready to call for more air strikes to force compliance after Sunday's fighting. Rose claims this was an 'agreement' not an 'ultimatum'. Christopher warns of more air strikes. Bosnia reportedly not on summit agenda between Jeltsin and Clinton. Russian backs NATO attack.

September 23

In Resolution 941 the Security Council demanded that the Bosnian Serbs immediately cease their campaign of ethnic cleansing and authorise immediate and unimpeded access for representatives of the UN and of the ICRC to Banja Luka, Bijeljina and other areas of concern

The Security Council, by its Resolution 942, welcomed the territorial settlement for Bosnia and Herzegovina proposed by the Contact Group, strongly condemned the Bosnian Serb party for their refusal to accept it, and decided to strengthen the sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs. The sanctions, which apply to 'all activities of an economic nature, including commercial, financial and industrial activities and transactions', would be reconsidered if the Bosnian Serbs unconditionally accepted the proposed territorial settlement. Excepted from the sanctions were medical supplies, foodstuffs and goods for essential humanitarian needs.

Serbs fire mortars at Canadian unit N of Sarajevo, and artillery at UN APC in Zivinice, machine-gun fire at French observation post in NW Bihac as Mladic threatens retaliation against UN forces.

September 24

Bild am Sonntag reports that Russian arms taken from Eastern Europe have been sent to Serbia. Croatian parliament unanimously votes to tell UN it has 100 days to disarm Serbs or withdraw, but government also set to renew mandate later in week.

September 25

Bosnian Serbs reopen gas supply lines to Sarajevo after 11 days in exchange for restricted flights into airport, warn they cannot guarantee safety of flights.

September 26

Bosnian Serbs enter UN weapons compound and stage 'training exercises' with anti-aircraft weapons, UN says 'this is a direct result of the air strike'. Serbs now trying to require UN military vehicles get 3-day advance clearance for movement through Serb-held territory. Serbs promise to allow gas supplies to Sarajevo again, but fail to follow through. Airport again shut down due to Serb threats.

September 27

Izetbegovic after talks with Clinton in New York drops demand that arms embargo be lifted immediately, now government will accept 6-month delay if UN peacekeepers remain in Bosnia, Serbian blockade of Sarajevo is lifted immediately, and safe havens are expanded.

Milosevic received Co-Chairmen Stoltenberg and Owen. They discussed issues which referred to ending of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, relations between FR Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia and the situation in the Republika Srpska Krajina. Bo Pelnas, Co-ordinator of the UN humanitarian mission in Yugoslavia, also participated in the talks. After the talks Stoltenberg, Owen and Pelnas visited the border between FR Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to inspect implementation of the decision on closing the border.

September 28

Serbs restore utilities to Sarajevo, but continue to enforce closing of airport, and limit UN movements. Serbs release UN convoy with 30 British peacekeepers held for a week, allow it to proceed to Gorazde. US Secretary of Defense Perry says NATO should respond to Serb aggression 'with compelling force', and not just tit-for-tat. Sniping on increase in Sarajevo. Serbs shell warehouse in north killing 2. Jeltsin says lifting arms embargo should be tabled indefinitely.

September 29

NATO agrees to US position, and British Defence Minister Malcolm Rifkind says there will be 'no more pinpricks', but this still dependent on UN calling in strikes. UN tries to accommodate Serbs in seeking advance clearance for UN vehicles, but Serbs ignore requests. Seselj arrested in Belgrade, sentenced to 30 days in jail for assaulting another parliamentarian, followers name key figures in Milosevic government as supporting Bosnian Serb forces in war. Austria supports US, Bosnia on lifting arms embargo. General Rose states 'We cannot bomb our way to peace. Increased use of force...is not a solution at the moment'.

September 30

The Security Council, by its Resolution 947, extended UNPROFOR's mandate for an additional period terminating on 31 March 1995, and approved the Secretary-General's proposals relating to civilian police, mine-clearance and public information. It called on all parties and others concerned to fully

comply with all Security Council Resolutions regarding the situation in the former Yugoslavia, and concerning in particular UNPROFOR in Croatia to create the conditions that would facilitate the full implementation of its mandate.

Karadzic says Serbs willing to cede some territory and participate in union of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but there must be separate state within the state with independent foreign and economic policies, and its own currency. Defense Secretary Perry says 'incomplete reports' show embargo not stopping flow of war goods to Serbs. NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Spain say they will respond promptly and without warning to Bosnian Serb violations of UN accords. Sarajevo airport still closed, UN convoys subject to Serb restrictions.

In a Presidential statement the Security Council expressed concern at the deteriorating security situation in the Safe Area of Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which included increased levels of armed violence, deliberate attacks on UNPROFOR troops and on humanitarian flights, severe restrictions on public utilities, and continued restrictions on the flow of transport and communications. It noted that normal life had not been fully restored in Sarajevo, as called for in Resolution 900. The Council encouraged the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNPROFOR to explore as a matter of priority proposals for the demilitarisation of Sarajevo.

October

After defeating the forces of Fikret Abdic in western Bosnia during the summer, the Bosnian Government army, acting in co-operation with Bosnian Croat units, mounted a large and, initially, successful offensive operation against Bosnian Serb forces in and around the Bihac pocket.

October 1

Bihac refugees in Croatia riot after UN officials try to convince them to go back to Bihac. Kozyrev calls lifting of arms embargo 'suicide' as it would open up the war.

October 2

Serbs still blocking UN convoys despite having promised day before for freer movement, UN official says this is not renegeing on pledge but that word simply has not yet reached soldiers in field. US embassy First Secretary has been blocked from reaching his post for more than a week. Serbs fire 2 shells into Mostar, hundreds of shells reportedly fall on outskirt towns of Bijelo Polje, Blagaj, and Buna for 2nd day. Bosnian Government says they have captured Kiser Plateau in central Bosnia after 2-week offensive. French pilots on surveillance mission say a missile fired at them. UN says Serbs using misinformation to disrupt Muslim-Croat alliance. Canadian peacekeeper caught in crossfire, wounded.

October 3

UN reports 2,100 truce violations around Sarajevo in 24-hr period (mostly gunfire). French peacekeepers reportedly prevent 300 Bosnian Government troops from crossing DMZ on Mt. Bjelasnica near Sarajevo. Defense Secretary Perry calls for pressure on Serbs through 'robust program of air strikes'.

October 4

UN Secretary General submitted a report to the Security Council, stating that the government of FR Yugoslavia fulfils the undertaken obligations on sealing of border between FR Yugoslavia and the Bosnian Serbs. This created conditions for the Resolution 943 on partial lifting of sanctions against FR Yugoslavia to come into effect.

Serbs continue to block 25 of 27 aid convoys bound for Gorazde and are now demanding payment for reopening Sarajevo airport 2 convoys get through to Gorazde. UN blames poor communication within Serb ranks for blockades despite Serb promises.

October 5

Belgrade airport formally opens to international traffic, Russian envoy Churkin arrives to mark occasion, also holds talks with Milosevic and tells him remaining sanctions will be lifted with Belgrade recognition of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serbs agree to security guard for Sarajevo airport after 6 hrs of emergency talks with Akashi in Pale, but renege on prisoner swap by expelling 120 Muslim from Rogatica area instead of sending detainees to government side.

October 6

French peacekeepers report finding 16 Serb soldiers and 4 nurses killed near Sarajevo, Akashi says corpses mutilated, but Bosnian Vice President Ejup Ganic denies any accusation. Karadzic says Serbs will retaliate in manner of their own choosing. Exchange of 128 Serbs, 166 Muslim in Sarajevo, while 55 Serbs leave Gorazde. Milosevic apparently forces out 3 top military men who may have been opposed to his policy towards Bosnian Serbs.

President of FR Yugoslavia Lilic thanked Churkin for his personal contribution to peace negotiations for the solution to the crisis in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia.

October 7

UN attempts to defuse tensions by forcing government troops out of demilitarised area near site of previous day's killing of 20 Serbs. UN withdraws Akashi statement which accused government troops of mutilating dead in attack saying it was 'based on the best information at the time'. Izetbegovic accuses UN of slandering government forces. UN resumes, then suspends airlift after 2 planes found to have been hit by gunfire, possibly by both sides.

October 8

Snipers kill 1, wound 11 in retaliatory attacks on Sarajevo streetcars for deaths of 20 Serbs, UN peacekeepers do not return fire even though 1 child is hit less than 2 yds from peacekeeper. Bosnian forces shell Serb-held town of Ilijas killing 2 children. UN says it will resume airlift as Sarajevo has only 3 days worth of food left. Izetbegovic demands UN apologise for mutilation story but Akashi spokesman refuses. UN continues to remove government troops (521) from Mt. Igman.

October 9

Yugoslavian Deputy Prime Minister Uros Klikovac says Belgrade will not recognise authority of international tribunal on war atrocities, but does not rule out ties with the body since it would be in their interest to see that those who have committed crimes 'pay for their misdemeanours'. Rose sends letters to both sides in Sarajevo demanding an end to their renewed sniper activity.

October 10

NATO officials send UN letter requesting they be given 4 targets to hit in raids as compared to UN standard of 1, NATO calling for strikes that are 'robust and effective'. Serbs, government forces fighting near Dobojo, near Mostar, and Bugojno (Western Central Bosnia). Serbs give Bosnian government 10 days to move troops out of Mt. Igman DMZ. 3 Serb tanks enter Sarajevo weapons

exclusion zone. UN says Serbs have completed Muslim expulsions from Borati (near Rogatica). Karadzic says Serbs may tell UNPROFOR to leave (move said to be posturing).

October 11

Streetcars running again in Sarajevo with UN armoured escorts. Aid convoy with 50 tons of food reaches Gorazde. UN evacuates 24 patients, relatives from Srebrenica. Turkish peacekeepers help Croats rebuild Catholic church desecrated by Islamic volunteer fighters, apparently confronting them with a heavily armoured patrol and forcing the 'mujahadin' to back off gunfire exchanges near Dobo, Mostar, and Bugojno. UN confirms Serbs have expelled last Muslim from village of Borati (near Rogatica). Serb commanders threaten to push Muslim forces out of Sarajevo DMZ unless they leave by October 20.

October 12

Flights into Sarajevo airport suspended after mortar attack probably by government forces. 212 Muslim refugees from Banja Luka arrive in Croatia. Government forces move through Sarajevo DMZ, ambush Serb unit on other side. Fighting near Mostar.

October 13

Bosnian Serbs demand UN force government troops to leave Mt. Igman and Mt. Bjelasnica or they will cut ties with UN. Relief flights resume to Sarajevo despite small-arms fire. Serb forces attacking on 2 fronts trying to cut government supply lines, also move tanks through Sarajevo exclusion zone, but UN takes no action. Mostar Muslims declare state of war against Serbs in response to heavy shelling.

October 14

Milosevic received in Belgrade Stoltenberg and Owen, Co-Chairmen of the Peace Conference on the Former Yugoslavia. Discussion referred to current issues of solving the crisis in ex-Yugoslavia. The need to speed up the process of lifting of sanctions against FR Yugoslavia in the interest of the progress of the peace process was particularly stressed.

Tudjman stated in Zagreb: 'The framework for the solution of the problem of occupied areas in Croatia (Republika Srpska Krajina) are provided in the Constitution and Constitutional Law on the Rights of Minorities. Any federation, let alone confederation is out of question. Solutions can be sought only within the autonomy of counties which had predominant Serb population according to 1991 census, and nothing more than that.'

Heavy Serb shelling of Mostar area (over 700 counted by UN). UN says this is effort to pin down government troops prior to new attacks around Konjic which threaten to cut government supply lines between Croatia and Zenica, Tuzla.

October 15

UN says Serbs using artillery within Sarajevo exclusion zone but don't know where it is. Serbs recapture town N. of Sarajevo.

October 16

Serb forces trying to take high ground in Cemerska Planina area north of Sarajevo DMZ (Mt. Dernak), continue attacks on Mostar, Konjic (between Mostar-Sarajevo), and Bihac but Serbs in Pale say reports 'completely inaccurate'.

Presidential and parliamentary elections held in Macedonia. Gligorov was re-elected President, after winning 52% of votes.

October 17

Serbs hijack 5 trucks of medical supplies at Sarajevo checkpoint. UNPROFOR won't use force to get government troops off of Mt. Igman, rejecting Serb demand. Government troops recapture some high ground at Cemerska Planina (N. of Sarajevo). Serbs shell town of Bihac, killing 2 civilians, also continue Mostar shelling. heavy gunfire in C. Sarajevo.

October 18

15 US officers arrive in Sarajevo to help integration of Croat and government forces. Serbs fire on UN convoy headed for Gorazde killing 1, wounding 1. British peacekeepers ask UN for air strike but are turned down as 'there was no clearly identifiable target'. Letter of protest lodged instead against Serbs. Serbs contend their previous day's hijacking was a mistake, but refuse to release supplies. Fighting continues in Cemerske Hills as government forces stop Serb advance with heavy casualties on both sides. Supplies in Srebrenica said to have run out. Russian replaces special envoy Churkin with career diplomat Aleksandr Zotov (Churkin posted to NATO).

October 19

Fighting around Sarajevo as government forces launch offensive. Government refuses to withdraw 500 from DMZ on Mt. Igman. Clinton administration encourages Serbia to recognise Croatia, Bosnia in exchange for easing sanctions saying this is 'the highest thing on our agenda', and that Serbian blockade of border is de facto recognition of border. UN warns Serbs of extremely strong action unless UN allowed to get fuel supplies to its troops. France, Britain, and Germany all tell Karadzic that no changes in map will be allowed.

October 20

In speech, Milosevic says Bosnian Serbs have benefited from international community's recognising both the territory and the struggle of the Serbs, and that 'the war in Bosnia must stop'. Karadzic says world is 'wasting its time' waiting for Serbs to give up territory.

October 21-22

Government demands Serbs pull big guns out of Sarajevo exclusion zone. *The Guardian* and Serbian dailies suggest that Karadzic has thwarted coup effort against him by pro-Milosevic elements of army, police.

October 22

Serbs fire 2 mortar rounds on government forces in Butmir (S. of Sarajevo). Government forces make some gains near Doboje and Teslic in N. Bosnia, and near Bugojno (C. Bosnia). Silajdzic protests to Russian government over presence of Russian mercenaries fighting with Serbs, claims that 2-5,000 Russian fought in first 2 years of war. Government agrees to troop withdrawal from DMZ W. of Sarajevo.

October 23

UN accuses Bosnian Government of expanding front lines in violation of agreement with Serbs. Fighting near Dobo, Maglaj, Bugojno. Tudjman agrees to talks with Serbs and Bosnians, Akashi says plan for Croatia would involve it being federalised.

October 24

100 Bosnian Government troops leave Mt. Igman DMZ area, 400 remain, some stage commando raid on Serbs. Serbs shell Gradacac.

October 25

Bosnian Government forces capture Serb military barracks/compound on plateau east of Bihac, routing Serbs and capturing 40 sq miles of territory. Shell explodes in Sarajevo wounding 7 children. Government puts on trial 17 renegade soldiers for atrocities against civilians. 3 Danish Leopard tanks open fire on Serb T55 that had fired at them near Gradacac after UN forces tried to reoccupy observation post abandoned during recent sniper attacks. All 8 parties in Bosnia parliament say they want Rose replaced. UN observers find mines on Croatian side of Montenegro border, ask Croatian army for help in their removal.

October 26

Government forces close in on Kupres from north and east, Serbs admit that town is threatened and heavy losses taken, call on UN to pressure government to call off offensive which is being called government's most successful of war. UN estimates 7,500 Serbs flee advance to Serb-held Croatia or to Bosanski Petrovac. Offensive nets government forces 60 sq miles east and southeast of town and large caches of weapons, tanks, and mortars. Government says its goal is to capture at least 1 major town before winter. UN and NATO reach compromise over airstrikes allowing NATO to launch unannounced strikes when civilians are not endangered, and allow them to strike at 3-4 targets proportional to the Serb provocation, joint control to be maintained over strikes. US diplomat Charles Thomas replaces Charles Redman as ambassador to former Yugoslavia.

October 27

Negotiations between Croatia and Srpska Krajina, held in Zagreb under the chairmanship of Stoltenberg and Owen, engaged in general discussion on normalisation of economic relations between the two sides. They scheduled the next meeting for 3 November.

Representatives of UN and NATO at the meeting in New York agreed on the use of NATO air force in Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to the agreement, decisions on air strikes and selection of targets in conformity with relevant Security Council decisions will continue to be taken jointly by military authorities of the UN and NATO. Only general rather than tactical warnings about the strikes will be given in the future. Attacks on three to four targets will be allowed, and will be undertaken by the NATO in co-ordination with UNPROFOR.

UN spokesman Thant Myint-U says Serb behaviour in blocking aid convoys is 'deliberate, hostile, and provocative'. Croatia reports that foreign tourist visits were up 55% over previous year.

October 28

Karadzic calls for counteroffensive to recapture area in NW lost to government forces. Serb General Dragomir Milosevic threatens to renew artillery attacks on Sarajevo each time government forces mount new attacks so as to protect Serb civilians from 'Muslim fanatics', UN warns that will result in

new air strikes. US asks Security Council to lift arms embargo unless Serbs agree to international peace plan.

October 29

UN accuses government of firing 4 rounds of artillery at French observation post, threatens air strikes if repeated. Government denies targeting UN forces and says shells aimed at Serbs.

October 30

1 killed, 13 wounded in Sarajevo shelling (2nd day in a row). Kozyrev threatens to withdraw Russian peacekeepers if NATO obtained the 'decisive say on the possible use of force'. Krajina Serbs said to be massing near border. 2nd round of voting in Macedonia.

October 31

Government forces push ahead with attacks on supply routes to Sarajevo near Trnovo, take 12 sq. miles in advances on towns of Bosanska Krupa and Bosanski Petrovac.

November

After regrouping, Bosnian Serb forces launched a major counteroffensive. They were supported by Krajina Serb forces acting from across the border with Croatia and Muslim forces loyal to Fikret Abdic. By mid-November, the Bosnian Serbs had regained most of the territory lost during the earlier Bosnian Government offensive and advanced on the Safe Area of Bihac.

Both the offensive by the Bosnian Government army and the Bosnian Serb counteroffensive resulted in civilian casualties and a new flow of refugees and displaced persons in the region.

November 1

Croat militias mobilising to fight alongside of government troops south of Kupres (which had been 40% Croatian before war) where heavy fighting continues as government troops have now taken 100 sq. miles in 7 days. 12-13,000 Serbs have fled homes in NW as government troops encircle Bosanska Krupa. Krajina Serbs shell Velika Kladusa, Bihac wounding 5. Government forces S of Sarajevo claim they have cut Serb supply route S. of Trnovo, and have taken 63 sq. miles including tanks, artillery and equipment. Belgrado says Bosnian army has attacked Donji Vakuf (C. Bosnia) sending civilians into shelters. Macedonian election commission says Gligorov's Alliance for Macedonia party got 90 seats in the 120-seat legislation. Yugoslavia government announces that with easing of sanctions they will re-admit refugees but only those with 'valid documents' (which allows them to ethnically cleanse Yugoslavia).

November 1

Newly appointed special envoy of the President of Russia for the former Yugoslavia Alexander Zotov held talks in Belgrade with President of FR Yugoslavia Lilic and President of Serbia Milosevic, and in Podgorica with the President of Montenegro Bulatovic.

November 3

Negotiations on normalisation of economic relations between Croatia and Srpska Krajina continued in Knin. No concrete agreements signed. Delegations to continue their negotiations on 15 November.

Committee on Foreign Affairs and Security of the European Parliament adopted in Brussels a Resolution in which new mitigation of sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro is made conditional on recognition by FR Yugoslavia of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Part of Kupres falls to joint Muslim-Croat attack. Karadzic admits his troops pulled back, states 'we have to crush any Muslim force to force it to accept' peace. UN reports over 3,400 explosions over last 24 hrs. along with infantry fighting in area N. of Kupres, along with shelling to the south. Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Vladislav Jovanovic in Zagreb for talks with Croatian Foreign Minister Granic in 1st publicly reported meeting between these two in 4 years. They discussed possibilities for normalisation of relations.

November 5

Government forces fire 4 mortar shells from Sarajevo suburb of Hrasnica at Serb positions in Ilidza, and Serbs respond.

November 6

NATO warplanes fly over Sarajevo as warning to both sides to end fighting in area, Rose also warns both sides. Serbs accuse government forces of crossing Mt. Igman (UN-DMZ) to carry out attack on Trnovo. Government troops say they are close enough to fire on the town and disrupt traffic, but Serbs claim to have recaptured some ground in area. Government says its focus to shift to hills N. of Sarajevo over high ground controlling access to Tuzla. Fighting NE of Bihac near Bosanska Krupa where government has now captured 155 sq. Miles.

November 7

Bosnian government buses reinforcements from Bugojno (NE of Kupres) to front lines to gain more ground before winter, UN says Croat militia also mobilising. Bosnian commissioner in Kupres area, General Mehmed Alagic, says his 7th Corps.' morale boosted by co-operation. with Croats, capture of Serb supplies. Clinton administration tells Bosnian Serbs they will try to negotiate an arrangement more to Serbs liking once they accept peace plan. UN's Yugoslavia War Crimes Tribunal indicts 1st person, Bosnian Serb Dragan Nikolic, commissioner of Susica concentration camp near Vlasenica in '92, but suspect said to be in Bosnia and tribunal does not permit trials in absentia. Serbs, government forces fire 175 artillery rounds at each other at night in Sarajevo, UN protests, NATO planes again buzz capital. Bosnian Serbs break into UN-guarded weapons depot reportedly firing their weapons.

November 8

Sniping, shrapnel fire kill 4 (including 3 children), wound 7 in Sarajevo. UN YWCT asks Germany to extradite indicted Serbs. Serbs reported to have moved 2 1/2 miles against government forces near Bosanska Krupa.

November 9

Bosnian or Croat-Serb plane fires rocket from Croatian side into Bihac, wounding 10, but since it was still in Croatian airspace may not have violated no-fly zone. Serbs fire machine guns from hills into central Sarajevo wounding 5, UN returns fire. Rose refuses to call for NATO air strike after previous day's shelling since source of fatal shell can not be determined. Bosnian Serb parliament debates Karadzic proposal to impose martial law.

November 10

US unilaterally ends its naval interdiction of weapons to Bosnia or Croatia (most weapons smuggled in by air). Congress action to cut off funds was scheduled to go into effect by November 15. US and Croatia also apparently agree to sign memorandum on military co-operation. UN accuses Bosnian Government of shelling its own territory to provoke Serb response. Serb parliament continues debate focusing on Karadzic/military proposal for parliament to give up its immunity, other rights. Also considers declaring war against government/Croat forces.

November 11

Statement by NATO Secretary General W. Claes regarding the limitations to US participation in Operation *SHARP GUARD*.

Croatia decided to postpone the announced continuation of talks in Belgrade between Foreign Ministers Vladislav Jovanovic and Mate Granic on normalisation of relations between FR Yugoslavia and Republic of Croatia.

November 11 Serbs shell Mostar, other areas in SW, killing 2 children, wounding 5 others attending catechism at Catholic cathedral. Karadzic gets Serb parliament to give him power to act without its consent in waging war. Serbs shell western front lines (Bosnia-Herzegovina 4th Corps). Serbs claim that Bosnian troops besieging Serb-held towns near Mostar but no outside confirmation of this. *Borba* reports that Yugoslavia to resettle 100,000 Serbs in Kosovo.

November 12

Bosnian Government asks Croatia, UN for help in getting Croatian Serbs to stop attacks on Bihac where they are reportedly advancing. Croatia demands that UN stop Serbs from attacking across border. Akashi writes to Milosevic to get him to apply pressure on Croatian Serbs.

November 13

Bosnian forces battle Bosnian and Croatian Serbs in Bihac area. Bosnian Government General Delic says his forces will attack Serb-held Croatia unless UN stops Serb attacks from there, but admits his forces have been forced to pull back from ground captured 2 weeks previously. Rocket-propelled grenades, machine-gun fire hit Sarajevo Holiday Inn for first time in almost a year. UN soldiers, fire-fighters come under machine-gun attack causing French troops to fire 20mm cannons at Serb positions in Grbavica (Sarajevo suburb). Russian Defence Minister denies that they have sold arms from Russian forces in Germany to Serbs.

The Security Council expressed alarm at the escalation in the fighting in the Bihac area and strongly urged all parties and others concerned to refrain from all hostile actions and to exercise the utmost restraint. It condemned any violation of the international border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and demanded that all parties and others concerned, in particular the Krajina Serb forces, fully respect that border and refrain from hostile acts across it.

The Council emphasised the significance of its Resolutions on Safe Areas and demanded that all concerned facilitate implementation of those Resolutions. It also demanded that all parties ensure, in co-operation with UNPROFOR, unimpeded access for humanitarian supplies, expressed full support for the efforts of UNPROFOR, and called on the parties to respect UNPROFOR's safety and security, unimpeded access to supplies, and its freedom of movement.

Results of the population census in Macedonia announced. It has 1,925,000 inhabitants, of which 66.9% Macedonians 22.5 Albanians 3.84 Turks, 2.28 Gypsies 2.04 Serbs 0.4, Walachs and other 1.81.

November 14

At a conference held in Noordwijk the Ministerial Council of the EU expressed full support to the efforts of the Contact Group to find political solution to the conflict in Bosnia. The Council regretted the unilateral decision of the USA to withdraw from the control of arms supplies to the Bosnian Muslims and expressed the EU's determination to continue with the enforcement and respect of all UN Security Council Resolutions referring to the former Yugoslavia.

UN officials says Serbs have forced government troops out of about 60% of territory they had captured in recent offensive, Serbs nearing Jankov Vrh (hilltop 6 miles E of Bihac), and Bosnian troops cross Una River heading N away from villages of Baljevac, Garevica. UN expects Serbs to open 2nd front along northern end of Bihac near Velika Kladusa. Abdic reportedly massing 6,000 troops for assault on Bihac. Serbs shell Tuzla. Milosevic meets with Russian envoy Zotov for talks.

November 15

Fighting continues as Serbs threaten to break into Bihac 'safe Area'. Croatian government and NATO officials meet to discuss possible air strike against Croatian Serbs, while Bosnian Serb commander in area, General Manojlo Milovanovic, says Serbs are ready for NATO attacks and that 'safe Areas no longer exist'. 11 killed, 26 wounded in Bihac. Fighting in Majevisa hills (NE Bosnia) near Serb-held TV tower, and near Mostar. Serbs shell Tuzla, killing 1, wounding 3. Croatian and Krajina Serb officials meet for talks in Zagreb on economic issues.

November 15-16

Negotiations continued Croatia and Srpska Krajina on normalisation of economic relations. It was agreed to adopt a Draft Agreement on Economic Cupertino, offered by the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, that contains solutions for water and electricity supply, reopening of the gas pipeline and the Zagreb-Belgrade highway.

November 16

President of the Yugoslav Federal Government Radoje Kontic sent a letter to the President of the UN Security Council Madeleine Albright, explaining the demand to adopt a decision on lifting of all sanctions against FR Yugoslavia.

National Defence units of the (Muslim) Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia entered Velika Kladusa. Together with them 30,000 civilians returned. Refugees who fled from the attack of the Fifth Corps stayed for months in refugee camps in Srpska Krajina.

Izetbegovic calls on UN, NATO to declare Bihac area heavy weapons exclusion zone. Heavy shelling around, but not in, Bihac area. UN reports heavy artillery, small-arms fire for 3 days in Grabez plateau area. UN calls on NATO for low-level warning flights after Serbs fire surface-to-air missile near UN base near Coralici. 1 civilian killed, 2 wounded by Serb shelling of Tuzla for 3rd day.

November 17 Clinton administration, under Congress mandate, draws up options for arming and training Bosnian Government forces, evacuating UN troops, and unilaterally lifting arms embargo.

Administration officials warn this could cost \$4 billion. Defense Department denies report in *The European* that it is sharing intelligence with Bosnian Government. Serbs fire 3 missiles, other shells into Bosnia President building in downtown Sarajevo wounding 2. General alert declared in city. 4 artillery shells hit suburb of Hrasnica wounding 4. Shots fired into hotel room of American ambassador. Heavy shelling of Velusa Kladusa, Bihac result in 12 deaths, Abdic forces reportedly surrounding Velusa Kladusa. UN comments that continuation of shelling of 'safe Area' could result in NATO airstrikes.

November 18

The Security Council, in a Presidential statement, strongly condemned the attack on the Safe Area of Bihac by aircraft belonging to the Krajina Serb forces. It demanded that all parties, in particular the Krajina Serb forces, cease immediately all hostile actions across the international border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Two Serb fighter jets flying out of former Yugoslavia army air base at Udbina in Croatia drop napalm, cluster bombs in centre of Bihac, which do not explode. NATO Secretary General Claes says time has come to act against Serbs, but UN regulations prevent combat flights in Croatian air space. Serbs fire anti-tank missiles into central Sarajevo for 5th day. Serbs also shell Tuzla again killing 2.

November 19

The Security Council, by its Resolution 958, decided that the authorisation given to Member States under Resolution 836, to take under its authority and subject to close co-ordination with the Secretary-General and UNPROFOR, all necessary measures, through the use of air power, in and around the Safe Areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina to support UNPROFOR in the performance of its mandate - also applied to such measures taken in the Republic of Croatia.

On the same day, the Council adopted Resolution 959, in which it condemned violations of the international border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and demanded that all parties, in particular the Krajina Serbs, fully respect the border and refrain from hostile acts across it. The Council expressed full support for the efforts of UNPROFOR to ensure implementation of its Resolutions on the Safe Areas and demanded that all parties end hostile actions in and around those areas. Also by the Resolution, the Secretary-General was requested to update his recommendations on implementing the concept of Safe Areas and to encourage UNPROFOR to achieve agreements on their strengthening. Serbs launch new attacks on Bihac, even as Serb jets bomb Cazin (10 miles N. of Bihac) for 2nd day with 1 jet crashing into apartment building, wounding 9. UN ambassador Albright says UN Resolution allows for retaliation for previous attacks, but French disagree.

The Assembly of the Republika Srpska Krajina assessed that the Draft Agreement on economic issues with Croatia was a good basis for further negotiations, but it had objections. The Assembly gave support to continue negotiations with Croatia.

November 20

NATO ready to bomb Udbina airfield but attack postponed due to weather conditions. UN forces in Bosnia, Croatia, and Macedonia placed on red alert. NATO officials in Brussels agree to let Admiral Leighton Smith launch bombing missions in Croatia if UN officials request them.

November 21

NATO aircraft attacked the Udbina airfield in Serb-held Croatia, destroying airfield and anti-aircraft defences (planes include US, British, French, and Dutch). At the request of General de Lapresle Serb planes at end of runway were not attacked. The airstrike was in response to attacks which had been launched from that airfield against targets in the Bihac area. The objective of the strike was to deter further attacks by aircraft flying from the airfield in Serb-held Croatia. It was carried out under the authority of the North Atlantic Council and United Nations Security Council Resolution 958.

FR of Yugoslavia 'most severely condemned unfounded and irresponsible shelling of the Udbina airport by NATO airplanes, considering this another proof of bias and prejudice shown in the Yugoslav crisis by the Security Council under the influence of countries which have their own strategic interests in the region'.

UN calls for raid to protect Bihac civilians and 1,000 newly-arrived Bengali soldiers trapped in area with little food or weapons. Croatian Serb leader Milan Martić calls bombing 'insolent and scandalous act,

which we have not provoked at all', Akashi tells Martić that raid was a 'necessary and proportionate response' to Serb attacks on Bihac. Admiral Smith explains limited attack due to need to 'limit collateral damage'. Heavy sniper fire in Sarajevo near temporary US embassy. Serbs fire missiles at British Harrier jets over Bosnia but do not hit them. Serb missiles hit Sarajevo city hall and president building for 2nd time in a week.

November 22

President Lilić of FR Yugoslavia talked to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Security of the European Parliament in Brussels. Lilić spoke about the reasons for the break-up of SFRY and civil war, on the policy of FRY for peaceful solution of the crisis in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia, on the need to lift sanctions against and its reintegration in all international and regional organisations.

Serbs continue Bihac attacks with tanks and helicopters, area villages burning and 8,000 refugees flee fighting. Croatia agrees to further NATO flights over its territory. US Defense Secretary Perry warns Serbs that further air attacks will be met with more decisive NATO strikes. Reuters says Serbian helicopter fires rockets at town of Gata Ilidza during night of 21st-22nd. Mladić sends letter to UNPROFOR saying bombing of airfield likely to intensify fighting. Danish court sentences Bosnian Muslim Refić Sarić, former guard in Croat-controlled prison camp, to 8 years in prison for gross violence and torturing prisoners, some to death. Yugoslavia brings 2 brothers before court on charges of war crimes for committing murder and rape (1st war crimes trial in Yugoslavia).

November 23

Following an attack on British jets the previous day on NATO aircraft by surface-to-air missiles, NATO reconnaissance aircraft were accompanied by escorts. The aircraft were illuminated by SAM radars, and in self defence attacked the SAM sites at Otoka and Bosanska Krupa in Bosnia and Dvor in Croatia, firing anti-radiation 'HARM' missiles. Later that same day, NATO carried out a strike against the Otoka SAM site, as it had been assessed as still posing a threat to NATO aircraft. Serbs take dozens of UN peacekeepers hostage

Karadžić, in meeting with Rose, threatens war against UN personnel. Rose said to be thinning out UN personnel in high-risk areas as Serbs block peacekeepers at 9 weapons collection points and order UN personnel in Serb-held territory to remain in their quarters. Akashi meets with Milošević and Martić in Belgrade, says 'we stand at the crossroads between war and peace'.

November 24

Serbs push assault on Bihac while Rose, on return from Pale, states 'I have no idea what their intentions are, but it does seem extraordinary to me that they should be in such a flagrant and blatant violation of the UN-designated Safe Area'. Also says Serbs have 'unequivocally' crossed the line in threatening civilians. Speaker of Bosnian Serb parliament Krajišnik says his forces want to enter Bihac and disarm the 20,000 Muslim troops and 'ensure a total defeat of the 5th Corps'. US pushes allies to endorse proposal to order all combatants out of the area and expand safe have 4 miles N., but allies do not approve it. Serbs now holding 50 Canadians, and 200 French and Ukrainian peacekeepers hostage at weapons collection points.

November 25

Nikola Koljević, vice-President of the Republika Srpska, and Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdžić met at the Sarajevo airport. The Serbs proposed immediate signing of the end of war, with optional signing of the final agreement in Geneva or some other place within 7-10 days, without prejudice to the territorial issue. Silajdžić says only a general ceasefire in all of Bosnia acceptable to his government.

Serbs continue advance against Bihac, and UN says most of 5th Corps has disappeared and only 400 soldiers apparently defending Bihac. Serb General Milovanovic calls on them to surrender, pledges safety to any soldier who gives up, and Karadzic declares 60,000 Muslim civilians will not be truly safe until Serbs take the town. UN says need to get food convoys into area absolute since there are no supplies left. Mediators Owen and Stoltenberg meet with Tudjman and Milosevic to try to negotiate wider Balkan peace, but Akashi says these talks do not produce anything, says further air strikes may be necessary despite threats to civilians. Clinton administration orders 2,000 marines to Bosnia to assist in possible evacuation of UN peacekeepers if Serbs attack them.

After Bosnian Serb forces began shelling the town of Bihac, NATO planes were called in by UNPROFOR to protect UN troops. The planes flew for 60 minutes but could not initiate any attack without endangering both UNPROFOR troops and civilians. Despite all efforts and warnings, the Bosnian Serbs continued their attack eventually capturing some high ground within the Bihac Safe Area but did not move into the town of Bihac itself. Also, in an apparent retaliation for NATO air strikes, throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Bosnian Serbs detained a number of UN personnel, restricted their movement, subjected some to humiliation, and stopped most humanitarian and supply convoys in territories under Bosnian Serb control.

November 26

Serbs shell Bihac Safe Area, fire missiles at NATO planes. Upwards of a quarter of Bihac area now in Serb hands. UN Security Council demands immediate cease-fire in area and withdrawal of Serb forces but does not specify use of force to get them out. Bosnian ambassador to UN Sacirbey accuses UN of not having will to stop Serb offensive. Rose says it is not UN's job to defend one side against attacks of another. Prime Minister Silajdzic criticises Rose personally and then throws him out of meeting. Government forces blocking streets in Bihac to halt Serb advance. UN operations in Zagreb refuse to call for new air strikes, but NATO officials also divided on how to deal with crisis. Serb plan to resettle 100,000 Serbs in Kosovo with UNHCR funds falls through when UNHCR says this would help change ethnic structure of area.

The Security Council, in a statement by its President, demanded the withdrawal of all Bosnian Serb forces from the Bihac Safe Area and condemned all violations, in particular, the 'flagrant and blatant' entry of Bosnian Serb forces into the Safe Area. It demanded that all parties agree to an immediate and unconditional cease-fire in the Bihac region, particularly in and around the Safe Area.

The Council also demanded that all hostile acts across the border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina cease immediately and that Krajina Serb forces withdraw immediately from the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Co-Chairmen Owen and Stoltenberg met in Belgrade with Srpska Krajina Prime Minister Borislav Mikelic. Owen and Stoltenberg endorsed some remarks on the Draft Agreement on Normalisation of Economic Relations between the Republic of Croatia and RSK.

November 26-27

Milosevic received Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev. They agreed that consistent development of the elements of peace plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina presumed elimination of remaining doubts in connection with equal rights of the Muslim-Croatian federation and Republika Srpska regarding linking with Croatia and FR Yugoslavia respectively, definition of constitutional solutions and creation of conditions for efficient bilateral harmonisation of territory delimitation's. They stressed that any loosening of the embargo on arms import in the war-afflicted areas encouraged advocates of the military solution, undermined the peace process and endangered the achieved positive results. They demanded that the commanders of all forces sign an agreement on cessation of hostilities, and stated that international community should speed up the process of lifting of sanctions against FR Yugoslavia.

November 27

UN Security Council adopted a Presidential statement demanding that all warring and involved parties reach an agreement and implement unconditional cease-fire in the Bihac region. Parties were invited to start negotiations on cessation of hostilities in the entire territory of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to reach a territorial agreement as proposed by the Contact Group, as part of the comprehensive peace agreement. All parties were also invited to observe the status of Safe Areas, particularly in relation to the civilian population.

UNPROFOR proposed a three-point plan for an immediate and unconditional cease-fire for the Bihac Safe Area, involving the demilitarisation of the Safe Area, turning it over to UNPROFOR, and interposition of peace-keepers in the sensitive areas. The proposal was accepted in principle by the Bosnian Government. The Bosnian Serb side indicated that it needed more time to review the proposal.

Bosnian Serbs ignore call for cease-fire for Bihac and continue offensive. Cease-fire would make government troops abandon safe haven area of Bihac. Serbs shell Velika Kladusa with tank, artillery fire. UN turns down NATO request to destroy 6 surface-to-air missile sites in Bihac/Croatia area due to concerns about peacekeepers' safety. US Defense Secretary Perry says further air strikes would be ineffective at this point, says that Serbs control the situation and could overrun Bihac if they choose. Senator Dole says UNPROFOR should leave Bosnia, and US should begin supplying Muslims despite embargo. Serbs detain 150 primarily British and Dutch peacekeepers in Eastern Bosnia.

November 28

US agrees to Contact Group plan, which would give Serbs permission to form confederation with Serbia, as well as 49% of Bosnia territory. US agrees in order to keep allies from withdrawing troops marking a reversal of policy for Clinton administration. Serbs continue to hold UN peacekeepers, and to advance on Bihac.

Milosevic received in Belgrade members of the Contact Group. It was stated that it would be necessary to implement the initiatives for overall cessation of hostilities and thus create conditions to finalise the peace process according to the Peace Plan. It was stressed that the Contact Group should work out the elements of its Peace Plan, which above all refer to constitutional arrangement of Bosnia-Herzegovina and bilateral negotiations on the final territory delimitation.

November 29

Members of the Contact talked in Zagreb with the deputy Foreign Minister Ivo Sanadar. The discussion covered situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, relations between Croatia and RS Krajina and plans of the Contact Group.

The Security Council reiterated its concern over the continuing conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including in the Bihac region and in particular in and around the Safe Area of Bihac. It expressed its full support for the efforts of United Nations officials to stabilise the situation in and around Bihac, and for the cease-fire proposal in the Bihac region to be followed by a cease-fire throughout the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Council welcomed the acceptance by the Bosnian Government of that proposal and called on the Bosnian Serb party also to accept it. The Council also welcomed the impending visit of the Secretary-General to Bosnia and Herzegovina and demanded that all parties cooperate fully with his efforts.

Government claims that 10,000 Serb reinforcements have been brought into Bihac from Banja Luka. SAM missile sites reported to be installed around Bihac. Reuters says Bosnian Serb TV has shown imprisoned Muslims being verbally insulted, forced to chant 'Bosnia is Serbian, just as Moscow is Russian'.

November 30

Serbs refuse to meet with Boutros-Ghali in Sarajevo, insisted that the meeting take place in Lukavica, part of Sarajevo under the Serbian control, instead of the Sarajevo airport but Bosnian Government refuses to make concessions. Boutros-Ghali says unless sides co-operate, he won't be able to persuade Security Council to keep troops in Bosnia, but UN officials in NY say there are no serious discussions of withdrawal. Boutros-Ghali tells Izetbegovic that UN troops may pack their bags and leave as in Somalia, but Izetbegovic replies 'This is not Africa. This is Europe'. Attacks continue on Bihac with Serbs reportedly able to enter town anytime. Serbs take 7 Ukrainian peacekeepers captive near Bihac. UN refugee spokesman says population of Bihac being 'terrorised' by Serbs. 450 UN soldiers still being held. Croatian Defence Minister Gojko Susak says Croatia may have no choice but to intervene if Bihac falls, but both US and France warn them not to do so.

December 1

Since the establishment of the 'no-fly zone' in the airspace of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the total number of flights assessed as apparent violations of the ban was 3,317. Mortar, artillery fire between Croatia and Krajina Serbs in Limar and Vranovaca areas S. of Knin in latest of 129 violations in area in 2 days. Exchange occurs after Bosnian Serb commandos conduct raid into Krajina attacking UN post and capturing 7 Ukrainians taking them back into Bosnia. Attack crosses international border. UN says there is no large-scale movement of Croatian troops to indicate a new offensive, but classified report says Serbia/Montenegro supplying men, ammunition, fuel to Croatian Serbs in Bihac.

December 2

UN, NATO agree to halt flights over Bosnia, and entire UN leadership in Bosnia goes to Pale as a gesture to Serbs to accept cease-fire. Serbs say they will free UN troops and stop blocking convoys, but Karadzic rejects temporary cease-fire. Russia vetoes Security Council Resolution to stop Yugoslavia fuel supplies reaching Bosnian Serbs. Serb attacks on Bihac, also fire 3 anti-tank missiles at Bosnia presidential building in Sarajevo as Akashi arrives for meeting. Revised text of the Agreement on Economic Relations between Croatia and Srpska Krajina signed. Agreement regulates issues relevant to water supply, re-establishment of electricity supply, reopening of the oil pipeline, and starting of traffic on the Zagreb-Belgrade highway. Agreement also stipulates that negotiations will continue to reach an agreement on return of refugees and expellees, regulation of pensions and opening of the Zagreb-Okuccani-Beograd and Zagreb-Knin-Split railway lines and Zagreb-Knin-Split road. The agreement was also signed by Owen and Stoltenberg, UNPROFOR general Pierre Peters, head of the EU monitoring mission Joachim Stutnagel. Co-signatories were also the US and Russian ambassadors in Croatia Peter Galbraith and Leonid Kerestedziyants. Foreign Ministers of the Contact Group adopted in Brussels the revised plan for the solution of the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The plan stresses that solutions cannot be reached by military means, but only through negotiations on the basis of the former Contact Group plan (51% for Muslims and Croats, 49% for Serbs) and may be altered on the basis of agreement between the parties. The UN Security Council did not adopt the draft Resolution submitted by Croatia and the Islamic states, which called for the implementation of stricter economic sanctions against the Republika Srpska Krajina because of alleged oil deliveries from FR Yugoslavia to Serbs in Krajina and Bosnia.

December 3

Charles Redman, the US President's envoy, met in the last three days with Karadzic, Silajdzic and Izetbegovic. He delivered to Izetbegovic a letter of the former US President Carter.

Serbs refuse to release UN hostages, including one with a heart condition, saying he cannot be released without a replacement. UN rejects this as 'totally unacceptable'. Velika Kladusa, under siege by rebel Muslims, about to fall. NATO resumes overflights, but Karadzic says there is no reason for these and says Serbs have right to self-defence (shooting them down). Also says unless Croatia removes troops from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serb forces will target Zagreb. Boutros-Ghali says plans for withdrawal are 'quite advanced'. Peacekeeper dies in Bihac area.

December 4

US Defense Secretary Perry says it would take 10,000 American troops to help evacuate UN troops, says US will participate in any effort. Clinton sends letter to Bosnian Government saying US is committed to preserving Bosnia-Herzegovina as a single state within existing borders. Serbs release 2 convoys of UN troops but continue to hold 329 Canadian, French, and Russian peacekeepers, and another 29 military observers. Serbs allow UN military force convoy into Bihac with supplies for Bangladeshi troops.

Milosevic received Foreign Ministers Douglas Hurd and Alain Juppé. They stated that stands of the ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member states in the Contact Group, expressed in the revised plan of 2 December, represent the basis on which the parties in the conflict should start final negotiations on territorial adjustment and delimitation, including the possibility of exchange of territories in accordance with their agreement. Hurd and Juppé confirmed the positive attitude of the international community toward equal rights of the Muslim-Croatian Federation and Republika Srpska to enter into confederate relations with the Republic of Croatia i.e. FR Yugoslavia, which will be defined by constitutional arrangement for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

After meeting with American envoy Charles Redman, Silajdzic stated that the Bosnian government rejected the new peace plan proposal of the Contact Group for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

December 5

Milosevic received delegation of Assembly of the Republika Srpska in order to gain information on the latest course of the peace process. The delegation expressed that if the interpretations of the latest proposal of the peace plan are not controversial within the Contact Group as a whole, the Assembly should assess the possibility of adopting the plan. Convinced of the existence of new elements and conditions for reaching peace, the delegation advocated immediate cessation of hostilities.

UN condemns Serbs for holding hostages, says this is deliberate, and calculated insult that cannot be allowed to pass without great cost. Serbs do allow 2 civilian aid convoys access Srebrenica and Gorazde. As Serbs advance in Bihac, Izetbegovic tells OSCE meeting in Budapest war is being prolonged due to western incapability, hesitation, and sometimes ill-will. Jeltsin tells conference that NATO is trying to split Europeans with its plans for admitting new members, says European is in danger of falling into a 'cold peace'.

December 5-6

The Summit of heads of state or government of members of the CSCE was held in Budapest. Participants decided that the CSCE will change the name into the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Proposed Declaration on Bosnia-Herzegovina condemning Serb aggression on Bihac and Bosnia, submitted by the Bosnian delegation was not adopted. Participants did not reach a consensus, because Russian delegation assessed the proposal unacceptable. Participants of the summit adopted an Appeal on Bosnia, as an unofficial document, in which all warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina, particularly in Bihac, were invited to immediately proclaim cessation of hostilities, implement the cease-fire and enable unobstructed passage of humanitarian aid throughout the country's territory.

December 6

Bosnian Serbs refuse to release UN officer with heart problem, and take 2 more hostage who were to replace him. 3 officers reportedly forced to park their vehicles for 8 hours on Banja Luka airfield to act as human shields against NATO air strikes. Serb deputy chief of staff General Milan Gvero says matter in hands of local commander.

December 7

French Foreign Minister Juppé accuses US of contributing to 'total dead end in Bosnia', that certain governments 'have not lifted a little finger to put even one man on the ground', and that position of French troops was untenable and plans for withdrawal had to be drawn up. Bosnian Croats take Celebic which had been in Serb hands for 2 years.

At a press conference in Pale, Aleksa Buha, minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republika Srpska, read a statement welcoming the new interpretation of the Peace Plan of the Contact Group which enables further work on the maps, definition of the constitutional arrangement and peace agreement prior to definite adoption of the Plan. 'We are ready to immediately end the war and start negotiations on amelioration and improvement of the Plan so that the entire package could be adopted'.

December 8

Clinton says as many as 25,000 US troops will be sent to assist in evacuation of UN forces in order that the US maintain its leadership role in NATO. Dole says Congress only willing to go along if US troops not subject to UN command. British and French officials in Washington say they welcome the president's decision. Serbs release 55 Canadians, but 300 others remain hostage.

December 9

European allies back away from threats to remove troops since they now believe this would allow US to lift arms embargo. British and French say they will have to offer the Serbs new concessions to get them to accept peace plan.

December 10

Meeting of the heads of state or government of the member states of the European Union was held in Essen. A statement on the situation in the former Yugoslavia was adopted, expressing concern over repeated aggravation of conflict in Bosnia. The violation of the Safe Area in Bihac 'by armed forces of the Bosnian Serbs' was condemned. An immediate armistice in Bihac was demanded, and subsequently in the entire territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. EU leaders offered full support to the Contact Group, convinced that the solution to the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina may be found only at the negotiating table, pointing that territorial issues may be solved only in direct negotiations and stressing the principle of equal treatment of the Muslim-Croatian and the Serbian sides, provided the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina is preserved. They also stressed that mutual recognition of all new states on the territory of the former Yugoslavia within their internationally recognised borders was inevitable.

Serb blockade has paralysed UN military and aid operations, UN says. Serbs release 187 French, Russian, and Ukrainian soldiers, but only 187 others are sent in to replace them. Croatian Serbs refuse to let Rose travel through their territory to see Bangladeshi troops in Bihac. Serbs let food convoy through to Srebrenica for first time in 6 months.

December 11

Serbs highjack UN fuel shipment as it tries to enter Sarajevo, also take 2 vehicles with satellite communication equipment. UN officials refuse to call for air strikes or overflights for fear of Serbs killing UN soldiers.

December 12

After meeting with Perry, French Defence Minister Leotard says France will not pull out its troops as this would undermine the credibility of NATO and UN. Also comments that UN mission must be more credible by demonstrating that it does not operate at tolerance of Serbs, says a ground corridor from Adriatic to Sarajevo for delivering aid could be established. Perry supports this position. Croatian Serbs ambush Bangladeshi peacekeepers in Velika Kladusa, killing 1, wounding 4. UN turns down request of Bangladeshi commander for air strikes claiming poor visibility.

December 13

British Defence Minister Rifkind cool to French proposal, says 'these ideas have to be analysed and assessed'. NATO Secretary General Claes calls French plan 'very constructive', but rejects UN account that it did not call for air strikes on prior day after Bangladeshi troops called for them was due to Serb missiles posing a threat to NATO pilots, says NATO jets on runways ready to go, but UN afraid to call for them due to Serb threats of retaliation against US troops.

December 14

Karadzic contacts former US president Jimmy Carter to act as mediator in talks. Carter says he may go to Bosnia for talks with Serbs, Muslims if Karadzic carries out pledge to give free movement to UN convoys. Karadzic promises unilateral cease-fire for Sarajevo, reopening Sarajevo airport, release of Muslim prisoners under 19 years of age, and guarantees for human rights. White House sceptical of Karadzic promises, but visit to be allowed. 2 shells hit Bihac centre. Fighting around Mt. Igman, and in W. Bosnia as Serbs counter-attack against Croats. Heavy artillery and mortar fire around Bihac, also around Velika Kladusa.

December 15

Serbs continue to fire on civilians, harass UN forces, and block aid convoys to Sarajevo despite promises to do otherwise. Karadzic says in Belgrade magazine *Telegraf* that sovereignty is our minimum. Whether they allow it or not, our unification with Serbia is a matter of time. European parliament passes Resolution expressing support for all independent media in Yugoslavia, especially *Borba*.

December 16

Serbs allow aid convoy into Bihac town of Cazin. Heavy shelling of Velika Kladusa.

December 17

Sniper fire kills woman walking with her son in Sarajevo. Velusa Kladusa falls to Abdic's forces. Carter arrives in Zagreb, holds meetings with Tudjman and Silajdzic. A French Etendard IV P jet on a NATO reconnaissance flight over Bosnia-Herzegovina was hit by ground fire and returned safely to an air base in Italy. The aircraft which had taken off from the French aircraft carrier Foch received tail damage.

December 18-19

Former US President Jimmy Carter met in Sarajevo with Izetbegovic, and in Pale with Karadzic. After several hours of meetings a 7-point agreement was reached and signed by Karadzic, Mladic and Carter. They agreed to reach an agreement between the warring parties on cessation of hostilities for a period of four months, that this time would be used for negotiations on a comprehensive peace agreement 'with proposal of the Contact Group as the basis for negotiations and that during this period unobstructed movement of humanitarian convoys would be allowed. Each side would be responsible within the area under its control for total elimination and prevention of firing and protection of human rights in conformity with international standards. An early exchange of all detainees, under the auspices of the International Red Cross was also agreed. It was concluded that 'in a final agreement, all has to be agreed, otherwise, nothing is agreed'.

December 19

Carter announces 'the Bosnian Serb side agreed to an immediate cease-fire and to negotiations of a lasting cessation of hostilities, but Karadzic later says 'we can't stop our activities until we get an agreement on the cessation of hostilities' and further that 'we have worked out a new interpretation of the...plan'.

Serb assaults on Bihac increased with 2 tank rounds being fired into city. Bosnian Government soldier killed, several civilians wounded by gunfire in Sarajevo. Milosevic travels to Greece for bilateral meetings with Greek premier Andreas Papandreou.

December 20

Carter gave a statement at the Sarajevo airport that after his new meeting with the leaders of the Bosnian Muslims and Serbs, the parties agreed with a partly modified text of the agreement reached in Pale on 19 December. Modified sections of the agreement refer to the agreement on cease-fire in the entire Bosnia-Herzegovina starting at noon on 23 December and obligation during the four-month armistice to resume negotiations on the global peace agreement 'with the proposal of the Contact Group as a basis for negotiations, or adoption of the proposal by the Contact Group as the starting point for negotiations'.

Milosevic received in Belgrade Carter after his mediating mission between the warring parties. 2 Serb rockets hit Bihac, wounding 14 civilians. 1st UN aid flight in a month lands at Sarajevo airport under Serb guarantees of safety. UN to send more equipment but not more troops to bolster UNPROFOR mission.

December 21

Carter says that agreement is only a 'tentative pact' and 'the whole thing can very easily come apart'. French Foreign Minister Juppé says of Contact Group plan 'we will not accept any going back on the principles in the plan' and that he 'won't see Karadzic until he has accepted the peace plan'. UN reports 4 (including 2 children) wounded in Cazin by shells, 2 missiles fall on Zedar. German government says it will send as much as 26 aircraft, including fighter-bombers, to assist in NATO evacuation of UN troops if necessary.

Milosevic met in Belgrade members of the Contact Group. Development of the elements of the peace plan was positively assessed, in addition to expressed anticipation that, in accordance with such development and successful mediation of Carter, the peace process in Bosnia-Herzegovina would continue with the negotiations on the entirety of the peace package.

The Zagreb-Belgrade highway opened after three years, as the first part of the implementation of the agreement on economic relations between Croatia and Srpska Krajina. On the sections of highway under the Croatian control Croatian police will be in charge of general security and traffic safety, and

on the sections going through the territory of RSK, these tasks will be performed by UNPROFOR soldiers.

December 22

Tudjman spoke in Croatian Sabor on the 'situation of the Croatian nation', assessing that it is 'better than it ever was and much better than in many other states'. Tudjman announced that Croatia would cancel hospitality to UNPROFOR if 'Knin continues to oppose all UN Resolutions, whether it enjoys Belgrade's support for such conduct or not'.

Milosevic gave a comprehensive interview to the US TV network CNN in the 'Larry King Live' show. Shells hit Sarajevo market place killing 2, wounding 7.

December 23

With the mediation of Akashi, representatives of Bosnian Muslims and Serbs signed separately in Sarajevo and in Pale the Agreement on one-week overall cease-fire in the entire territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Agreement came into force at noon on 24 December.

December 24

In a statement issued in Paris the Contact Group welcomed the establishment of cease-fire in Bosnia-Herzegovina and expressed readiness to shortly start negotiations for the achievement of the overall peace agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

December 27

UN says cease-fire violations increasing, as Rose prepares to go to Bihac. Gunfire across frontline positions at Velika Kladusa which Serbs and rebel Muslims now mainly control. 4 mortar rounds land in Bihac, Serb sniper fire wounds woman in Sarajevo. UN records 10 mortar rounds near NE Posavina corridor.

December 28

Rose meets with Fikret Abdic but gets only verbal agreement. Karadzic promises to halt missile and artillery attacks on Bosanska Krupa.

December 29

Rose meets with Serb leaders in Pale trying to get them to agree to 4 month truce, freezing of front lines, and withdrawal of some troops. Bosnian Serb assembly says it is willing to resume negotiations. Cease-fire generally holding except around Velika Kladusa.

December 31

After Akashi shuttles back and forth between Pale, Sarajevo to work on the final text, representatives of Bosnian Muslims and Serbs signed separately in Sarajevo and in Pale an Agreement on complete cessation of hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Agreement was signed by Izetbegovic, Karadzic and Mladic, as well as Akashi and General Rose. The Agreement was due to come into effect at 12 noon on 1 January 1995 for a period of four months, with the possibility of extension with the consent of all parties. The Agreement contained 10 items, determining the measures to be carried out during the cease-fire and way of monitoring the cease-fire by UNPROFOR. The parties agreed that this Agreement should not prejudice the final political and territory solution. Sarajevo marks 1,000 days under siege.

Chronology 1995

January 1

Start of a truce for a period of four months.

January 2

Missile fired from Serb side hits Holiday Inn in Sarajevo. Bosnian Croats agree to observe truce.

January 3

Milosevic received in Belgrade Stoltenberg and Owen. It was pointed out that the Agreement on Cessation of All Hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina opened perspectives for a peaceful settlement of the crisis in this area.

Yugoslav Ambassador to the UN Dragomir Djokic submitted to UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali the letter which the Yugoslav government had forwarded to the International Tribunal. It was said in the letter that the authorities of FR Yugoslavia would make decisions on submitting to the Tribunal the documentation on commitment of such acts in case they could not be prosecuted by Yugoslav tribunals.

Tram service begins again in Sarajevo. Mortar and artillery fire around Velika Kladusa as rebel Muslims and Croatian Serbs (who have not signed the truce) continue fighting.

January 4

Representatives of Croatia and Srpska Krajina adopted the joint plan on implementation of the Agreement on Economic Matters signed on 2 December 1994.

Fighting in Bihac with heavy shelling of Velusa Kladusa. Legislation introduced by Dole in US Senator to end US compliance with arms embargo, State Department says it is wrong idea at this point in the crisis. Croatian government threatens to end talks with Krajisnik. Serbs unless they implement provisions of December economic agreement, again threaten not to renew UNPROFOR mandate.

January 5

Serbs walk out of truce implementation talks at Sarajevo airport over governments refusal to withdraw 100-150 forces from Demilitarised Zone on Mt. Igman. Fighting continues around Velusa Kladusa, Bosanska Krupa, and Cojluk even though truce calls for withdrawal of foreign troops. Rebel Muslims block resupply convoy for Bangladeshi troops outside of Velusa Kladusa. 3 killed, 26 wounded in fighting. Serbs fire anti-aircraft guns, mortars near Mostar.

January 6

Serbs expand demands saying access to Sarajevo now dependent on government forces giving up all positions gained in fall fighting. Government troops take village of Klokot (near Bihac)

January 7

Relief flights into Sarajevo suspended for 1st time since truce came into affect after 2 planes hit by gunfire, UN spokesman says they may have come from Serbs celebrating Orthodox Christmas. UN spokesman Alexander Ivanko accuses both sides of foot-dragging. Overnight artillery, mortar, and gunfire strike Velusa Kladusa.

January 8

Mladic says they won't lift Sarajevo blockade until government troops leave Mt. Igman (new demand). Aid flights resume. UN spokesman Paul Risley also attributes gunfire to celebration of Christmas, says it poses 'no significant threats' to the truce (thereby verifying that it is working).

January 9

US, Bosnian Governments at odds on whether Serbs will be allowed to change points of Contact Group plan with Bosnia saying the West has given in to Serbs. US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke now says peace plan 'the basis for further negotiations'. Croats announce that tourism brought in \$1.3 billion in '94.

Tudjman meets with delegation from Croat-Muslim federation including Zubak and Ganic.

January 10

Serbs attempt to retake village of Klokot and its water reservoir. Rose rebuffed in attempts to meet with Krajina Serb leaders about truce. Serbs claim meeting cancelled for 'technical reasons'. OSCE delegation told in meeting with Milosevic that they cannot reopen offices in Kosovo unless Yugoslavia is readmitted to OSCE as a member.

January 11

In AN interview to Associated Press Karadzic said that the Bosnian Serbs accepted the proposal of the Contact Group on settlement of the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a basis for future negotiations. In 10 hours of face-to-face talks Serb commander Mladic and Bosnian commander Delic along with Rose agree to open UN 'blue routes' connecting government-controlled areas with Sarajevo for civilian and humanitarian assistance in exchange for Serbs being able to cross airport to get to suburbs under their control; First Red Cross convoy since October makes it into Bihac; Croatian negotiator in talks with Krajina says sides have agreed to reopen Adria oil pipeline connecting coast with Hungary; Krajina Serbs still have not signed cease-fire which commits all foreign troops to leave area. Increased fighting in Bihac with reports of Serbs using Croats and Muslims as human shields.

January 12

UN Security Council adopted Resolution 970 on extending for a period of another hundred days the suspension of some sanctions imposed against FR Yugoslavia as provided by the Resolution 943 (suspension of the ban of air and sea traffic as well as co-operation in the field of sports and culture). Russia abstains due to extra restrictions on oil convoys from Serbia to Serb-held Croatian territory. Croatia informed the Contact Group, UN Security Council and Vatican on decision that mandate of UNPROFOR in Croatia should be terminated and UN forces should leave the country by 31 March 1995. Tudjman added he was willing to negotiate conditions for withdrawal may continue to use Zagreb as UN regional Headquarters. Germany and US both critical of Tudjman move.

Speaking before the Committee for Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives former American Secretary of State James Baker said that the unilateral proclamation of independence on the part of Croatia and Slovenia and their use of force in taking the border crossings had caused the civil war in Yugoslavia.

January 14

UN declares supply road near Sarajevo airport reopened after failure to get agreement from Serbs in late-night negotiations, and Serbs use opportunity to get 4 carloads of their people across before telling

UN they will shoot civilians at traffic crossings. UN describes this as 'outrageous'. Serb artillery kills 4 civilians in Bihac despite truce.

January 15

Continued Serb artillery attack on Bihac kills 2 women, wounds 11 others. Mortar fire near Velusa Kladusa, shelling and groundfire near Maglaj. Serbs tell UN their commanders have relented and allowed crossings to reopen. Serbs then cross several hundred of their men before closing it again to UN, Bosnian Government. UN reports Abdic forces using forced labour on front lines including women. Government troops blockade UN forces at Tuzla airport, and call for immediate withdrawal of UN troops.

Prime Minister of Slovenia Janez Drnovssek said that Slovenia would normalise its relations with FR Yugoslavia at the same time when the decision to do so was made by the international community. FR Yugoslavia expressed serious concern for the official position taken by Croatia not to extend the mandate of the UN peace-keeping forces after 31 March 1995.

January 16

UNPROFOR tells Croatian military to leave Bosnia. UN finds 50 Bosnian soldiers on Mt. Igman in Demilitarised Zone. BBC says Rose planned to give Serbs copies of NATO flight plans for Bosnia as confidence building measure, but NATO did not agree and will no longer provide this info to UN. Belgium withdraws its 130 troops as planned, Jordan now contemplating same.

January 17

UN Security Council in a presidential statement expressed its concern for possible serious implications of the Croatian demand for withdrawal of the UNPROFOR from Croatia after 31 March 1995. In the statement was also said that the Security Council re-affirmed its commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Croatia within its internationally recognised borders.

Bosnian Government tells Rose to either reopen Tuzla airport by February 1 or remove 200 UN troops here. Government 11th Corps continues to blockade UN troops over Rose' deployment of Serb liaison officer Colonel Slavko Guzvic at airport (Rose was trying to get Serbs to reopen airport through appointment). Serbia offering free credits to Serbs who want to buy houses in Kosovo or return there, goal to settle 100,000 in region. Bosnian Serbs reported to have forced 500 more from homes in Banja Luka, Kotor Varos, Bosanska Gradiska, Kljuc, and Doboje areas.

January 18

General Rose fails to convince government forces to end blockade of 1,000 UN troops around Tuzla. Muslim-Croat Federation president Kresimir Zubak refuses to step down after 6 months as president in favour of Ejup Ganic, prompting cancellation of federation assembly session. Croats say rotation of the office only possible 6 months after election of a president which cannot be held during wartime. Krajina Serbs fly 20 supply missions to forces in Bihac. Serbs reported to have reinforced positions around Srebrenica. Federation Constituent Assembly fails to meet due to sides not reaching agreement on rotation of leadership.

January 19

Contact Group members to return to Sarajevo in effort to renew negotiations on ending war. Over 400 shells fired in Bihac area by government and Serb forces, 800 explosions S. of Velusa Kladusa. Serbs advance 1.5 kilometres within Srebrenica Safe Area. US Secretary of State Christopher sends letter to

Izetbegovic telling him that US hopes to negotiate directly with Bosnian Serbs despite UN Security Council Resolution barring such contacts.

January 20

First Serb-Muslim prisoner exchange under terms of cease-fire takes place. Government troops in Bugojno fire artillery at Donji Vakuf, Serbs respond. Serbs set up roadblocks into Srebrenica. Brief mortar exchange E. of Tuzla while government blockade of UN troops in 9th day.

January 21

Fighting renewed in Bihac. Serb liaison officer leaves Tuzla airfield, Bosnian forces lift blockade of UN forces. UN Security Council votes to extend sanctions placed on Bosnian Serbs. Serbs attack Livno in Bihac area.

January 22

US envoy Charles Thomas goes to Pale for first direct talks with Serbs since they rejected Contact Group plan, saying they are conditional upon Serbs reopening roads to Sarajevo. Government angered by meeting. Krajina Serbs fire 200 artillery/mortar rounds around Velusa Kladusa. Zegar, Vedro Polje in Bihac area attacked by Croatia Serb tanks, mortars.

January 23

Tudjman says in Der Spiegel interview that Serbia is unable or unwilling to risk new war with Croatia. Abdic forces, Serbs attack SE of Velusa Kladusa (Vedro Polje, Klokoc, Zegar). Cease-fire violations reported in Sarajevo, Ribnica, and Orasje-Bosanski Samac front.

January 24

General Rose's tour of duty officially ends, but is summoned to meet with Boutros-Ghali and successor, British Lt. General Rupert Smith, 51, former assistant chief of British defence staff (who is said to follow Rose's approaches and the pro-Serb Foreign Office), to discuss future of peacekeeping. Thomas holds 2nd round of talks in Pale, then with Bosnian Vice President Ganic and Federation President Zubak. Contact Group mediators go to Pale for talks. Serbs continue attacks on Bihac pocket. Tudjman, Izetbegovic meet to discuss issues. Serbs expel more Croats, Muslim from Banja Luka, arrest 21 mainly elderly Croats and put them in Kamenica detention camp.

January 25

Izetbegovic gives Serbs 2 months to accept Contact Group plan (May 1), or they may pull out of cease-fire arrangement themselves. BBC quotes Milosevic as saying UNPROFOR departure could have 'unforeseeable consequences'. Contact Group, Serbs continue negotiations on reopening 'blue routes' to Sarajevo. More fighting in Velusa Kladusa. Croatian Serbs open fire on Slavonski Brod (in Croatia). At a press conference in Geneva UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali said that the withdrawal of the UNPROFOR from Croatia would be a disaster and he requested the President Tudjman to change his decision not to renew the mandate of the peace-keeping forces in Croatia. Boutros-Ghali warned that in case Croatia did not change its decision the UN peacekeeping forces would withdraw both from Croatia and Bosnia.

January 26

UN admits that heavy fighting has occurred between government troops and Bosnian Serbs. Hundreds of explosions in Bihac area as Serbs, Croatian Serbs press assault on Bihac. Croatian Serbs fire at least 8 shells across border into Bihac, and UN says Serbs in tanks have crossed into Bihac from Croatian territory in recent days. Heavy shelling, fighting south of Velusa Kladusa. Government, Croatia reportedly capture village of Bugar (9 miles NW of Bihac). Rose's replacement, General Rupert Smith, formally takes up duties, pledges to 'give aid to unfortunate and long-suffering people caught up in this conflict', meets with Izetbegovic and plans to meet with Karadzic. Serbs detain Muslim journalist Namik Berberovic after Russian soldiers violation UN policy and open door of APC to Serb inspection. Contact Group unwilling to quit negotiations due to Serb intransigence. Zagreb, Bosnian Governments call on Washington to act as mediator in Federation disputes. Adriatic pipeline scheduled to start pumping oil again. New ethnic Serbian party, Independent Serbian Party (SSS), to be formed by Milorad Pupovac on January 29 to represent Serbian interests in Croatia

January 27

Police chief in government-held Tesanj arrests local Croat officials in response to Croat arrests of government officials earlier in week. Ganic and Zubak meet in Mostar to resolve differences, agree to sign accord on Monday for release of all prisoners, and that federation leaders should visit Tesanj area. Carter launches new effort at peace talks, says Serbs should be allowed to enter negotiations 'on the basis' of the plan but without formally accepting it.

Croatian Parliament adopted declaration supporting the decision of Tudjman not to extend the mandate of the UNPROFOR in Croatia after 31 March 1995. It was said that the peacekeeping forces had not fulfilled the Croatian requests, and that deputies 'resolutely reject all pressures on Croatia to change the decision not to extend the mandate of the UN peace-keeping forces'.

January 28

UN reports high tension between government and Croat forces near Tesanj, Serb tanks re-entering Bihac, say 66 artillery shells hit near Velusa Kladusa. French troops fire warning shots at 40 government soldiers trying to enter Demilitarised Zone on Mt. Igman.

January 29

Fighting intensifies in Velusa Kladusa with 400 explosions as Serb artillery fires on government. Government troops push Serbs back across border into Croatia in S. Bihac. Serbs moving lines closer to Srebrenica cause government troops to blockade 75 Dutch troops. French troops shoot 4 government soldiers in Sarajevo for evading inspection.

January 30

Draft plan of the 'Z-4' for the solution of the relations between Croatia and Srpska Krajina was handed Tudjman by French Ambassador Jean Jacques Gayard and President of the Republika Srpska Krajina Milan Martić. The plan, drawn up by EU, UN, US and Russian representatives, aimed to bring a political settlement to the conflict in Croatia. Martić said that Srpska Krajina would not consider the plan until the Z-4 gave guarantees that the UN peace-keeping forces would remain in the territory of RSK after 31 March 1995 in a capacity as protection forces and not as observers. President Milosevic refused to receive Z4 ambassadors.

Bihac hit by more than 1,000 shells. Silajdzic, in US, meets with administration officials but does not get commitment on lifting arms embargo. Also meets with Dole. US ambassador Galbraith and

members of Z-4 (Zagreb) group meet with Tudjman. German Foreign Minister Kinkel in Zagreb to try to persuade Tudjman to extend UNPROFOR mandate.

January 31

Minister of Foreign Affairs of France Alain Juppé proposed a new international conference on the former Yugoslavia. Juppé said in Paris that this initiative was co-ordinated with the USA and Russia, but US diplomats say this is not the right time.

Z-4 efforts to meet with Krajina Serbs and Milosevic fail when Serbs refuse until UNPROFOR is allowed to stay on in Croatia. Fighting heavy in Bihac. Muslim, Serbs carry out for 1st time agreement between them (on evacuation of wounded, sick).

February 1

Izetbegovic says government troops could attack Serb forces in Bosnia if Bosnia and Krajina Serbs do not halt attacks in Bihac area. Krajina Serbs reported to be preparing for new offensive in Bihac. Serbs partly reopen road to Sarajevo to 8 UN-related relief agencies, but not to civilian traffic. Ganic, and Zubak and their military commanders (Delic, Tolimir, Blaskic) meet in Kresevo to discuss tensions in Vares, Usora areas. 5 member of Bosnia collective presidency (2 Croatia, 2 Serbian, and 1 Muslim) protest TV footage showing Bosnian army brigade troops wearing Islamic green headbands and carrying flags with Islamic inscriptions, saying this violates multiethnic principle of Bosnia-Herzegovina state, but Izetbegovic and Ganic disagree saying freedom of relations extends to the military. Belgrade government says it wants to close Tito Memorial Centre.

February 2

Silajdzic says French proposal for international meeting would only be good for public relations and giving Serbs opportunities to expand their conquests.

Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mate Granic said that Croatia was willing to negotiate the plan proposed by the 'Z-4' although it contained some provisions which were unacceptable to Croatia.

February 3

UN warns that truce is threatened with constant violations. Karadzic says that if Croatian attacks rebel territory, 'we will defend it'. Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Jovanovic says Croatian Foreign Minister Granic may still visit Belgrade this month. Dutch UNPROFOR observers report that as many as 20 Serbian helicopters land near Srebrenica to resupply Serbs. Russian, Bosnia agree to exchange diplomatic representatives, Kozyrev says Russian supports Bosnia territory integrity.

February 4

Senator William Cohen (R-ME) calls for sweeping air attacks against Serbs if UN forces are further harmed, says this is necessary 'to establish the credibility of UNPROFOR's mission and might' and 'the response should be disproportionate to the transgression, and no area of Serbia ruled out of our bombsights' while British Defence Secretary Rifkind says Cohen should consider the 'vast improvements in Bosnia in the past year'.

February 5

US convened a meeting in Munich in support of the Bosniak/Croat Federation. A nine-point aid plan was announced and Muslim and Croat officials agreed to the appointment of an arbiter for Muslim/Croat disputes. UNPROFOR says record number of violations (168) occurred between Croats

and rebel Serbs in Krajina. Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic and Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev agree to exchange diplomatic representatives, and to take further steps toward establishing full relations, with Kozyrev saying that Russia accepts territory integrity of all former Yugoslavia republics.

February 6

EU Foreign Ministers agree to back French plan for international conference on former Yugoslavia and invite Milosevic, Tudjman, and Izetbegovic. US warns this type conference will require careful preparation. Russian Deputy Premier Oleg Davydov visits Belgrade, holds talks with Milosevic and comments that sanctions 'imperils peace and security on the wider European scene'. BBC reports Serbs agree to limited reopening of Sarajevo airport. US mediators get Croats and Muslims to accept binding 9-point arbitration of disputes. 20 US troops on Brac setting up intelligence operations, CIA reported to be launching both manned and unmanned reconnaissance planes from this site.

It was stated in Paris that President Mitterand might invite Presidents Milosevic, Tudjman and Izetbegovic to meet in Paris. The objective of that meeting would be mutual recognition of all states created in the territory of the former Yugoslavia as well as paving the way for convening a new international conference on the former Yugoslavia.

February 7

The Assembly of the Republika Srpska Krajina decided to break off the negotiations with Croatia on economic matters until it changed its decision not to extend the mandate of the UN peace-keeping forces. The Assembly also decided to proclaim the state of emergency.

UN says since 1 February a total of 62 Serbian helicopters flew into E. Bosnia in violation of ban, threatens possible air strikes. Milosevic calls idea for Yugoslavia-area summit 'a waste of precious time', refuses to recognise Croatia and Bosnia as this 'would prejudge fundamental solutions' while Yugoslavia Foreign Minister Jovanovic says it is 'out of the question'. US envoy Holbrooke says further talks with Serbs pointless unless they accept peace plan. Belgrade-controlled Borba begins campaign to encourage Serb settlement in Kosovo. Serbia, Russia agree to long-term natural gas deliveries to year 2010, with Moscow prepared to send prohibited aircraft fuel to Serbia.

February 8

First railroad transport in Bosnia capital in 2 years. Krajina Serb legislation suspended all economic and political negotiations with Croatia until she reversed her decision on terminating the UNPROFOR mandate, sets up military alert in response to Tudjman's efforts to cancel UNPROFOR mandate. UN says Serbs denied them access to border radar 4 times in previous week and that there were 62 helicopters flights near Srebrenica. Serbs fire mortars at Sarajevo.

February 9

UN aid convoy finally reaches Bihac area (Cazin), but 3 of 10 trucks seized as toll in Velusa Kladusa by Abdic troops. Bosnian Serbs fire artillery into Bihac area, UN counts 650 explosions in Bihac. Serbs fire 8 shells at government bunkers in Sarajevo, small arms fire exchanged around Jewish Cemetery. Government says 1 killed, 2 wounded by sniper fire in city. Government forces reportedly digging trenches between government-controlled Butmir and Serb-held Ilidza. Bosnian Government arrests Svetlana Boskovic, Serb working with UNHCR, for spying (along with Croat co-worker), but probably in retaliation for Serb detention of Bosnian journalist Namik Berberovic, claim he was involved in kidnapping Sarajevo residents trying to pass Serb checkpoints in UN vehicles. NY Times reports that US administration no longer believes direct contacts with Bosnian Serbs useful (Holbrooke comments 'there is no point in shuttling up the hill from Sarajevo to Pale to listen to the kind of crap which is

dished out by Karadzic'). UN says Serbs preventing their access to radar installations at Belgrade airport so military flights cannot be detected.

At a press conference in New York Cyrus Vance, former special envoy of the UN Secretary General in Yugoslavia, said that the premature recognition of Croatia and other former Yugoslav republics had been a terrible mistake since no comprehensive political settlement of the Yugoslav crisis had preceded it.

February 10

Serbs trying to take Bihac water supply system on plateau above town. Serbs halt aid convoys into Sarajevo in retaliation for government arrest of Boskovic, UN suspends airlift as of 2-11.

February 11

Serb assault begins on Bosanska Krupa. General Delic says that training, preparation for new fighting after cease-fire necessary. 2nd road out of Sarajevo opened this month. UN reports more violations of no-fly zone around Banja Luka. Serbs fire on British helicopters carrying Serb liaison officer to Banja Luka.

February 12

Heavy fighting in Bihac pocket as tanks, mortars, artillery all used. Reports of 1,000 Serbs crossing over from Croatia as Serbs try to push 5th Corps away from border. UN says that all sides have violated flight restrictions but that Serbs have been 'especially active' with daily flights from Banja Luka and Krajina in past 2 weeks. Karadzic says if Croatian attacks Krajina Serbs his troops will defend them and this will lead to practical unification. UN commander General Smith meets with Delic. Fighting also on Velusa Kladusa, and Bosanska Krupa fronts.

February 13

International Tribunal indicted 21 Serbs of atrocities against Croats, Muslims, but only 1 of the suspects in custody in Germany. Karadzic refused to allow extradition of anyone. FR Yugoslavia ruled that alleged FRY war criminals must be tried there. UN says Serbian combat aircraft involved in flights around Tuzla, but NATO says it can't detect them on radar. 1,000 more Krajina Serbs reported in Bihac. UN warns of imminent starvation in Bihac. US envoy Charles Thomas to leave position as representative to the Contact Group and be replaced by part-time appointee (Thomas to concentrate on the Croat-Muslim alliance), US now feels direct negotiations with Serbs not productive. US ambassador to Bosnia Jackovic reassigned to Slovenia after being disenchanted with talks with Serbs. The Assembly of the Republika Srpska expressed willingness to negotiate the peace process with the Contact Group and international mediators but only on equal footing and with no ultimatums. Deputies also forwarded letter to Milosevic expressing their hope that Serbia 'will not recognise Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and make the same mistake as did the international community'.

February 14

Clinton administration switches policy by endorsing Contact Group proposal to lift economic sanctions against Serbia in exchange for its recognition of Croatia, Bosnia (Albright and Gore advisor Leon Fuerth argue against this). Government claims to have retaken most gains made by Serbs in Bihac counteroffensive (boundaries of 'safe-area' around Bihac city), but UN cannot confirm this. Karadzic says Contact Group 'a bewildered bunch that does not know how to solve the war' and states Serbs will no longer just strike in forests but where it hurts the most, also imposes news blackout in Bihac pocket.

UN helicopter airlifting 3-month old infant fired on by Serbs over Gorazde, handgrenade thrown at peacekeepers in Srebrenica, and UN observation post fired on in Serb provocations.

February 15

Ten food truck convoy fired on in Abdic-controlled territory but manages to get into Muslim-held part of Bihac. Heavy fighting near Bosanska Krupa, shelling near Velika Kladusa, and UN reports government now controlling 95% of Safe Area. sniper attacks over last 2 days wounds 2 in Sarajevo. Serbs complain that government resupply flights are getting into Tuzla. Karadzic meets with Krajina leader Martic to discuss joint military plans.

February 16

Government checkpoint in Sarajevo stops Russian APC from taking Bosnian Serb doctor out of city in violation of UN rules, take him into custody. AFP reports increased military activity on both sides between Dubrovnik and Prevlaka areas in Croatia, and on Serb-held side of Bosnia and Montenegro, Serbs increasing artillery batteries, and Yugoslavian navy conducting exercises in Kotor Bay, Croats building bunkers in Glavica (near Montenegro). UN again allowed access to radar facilities at Belgrade airport.

Unofficially confirmed in Paris that the Contact Group accepted the French initiative on a partial and temporary suspension of the sanctions imposed against FR Yugoslavia in case it recognised Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

February 17

Prime Minister of Croatia Nikica Valentic said that the 'Z-4' plan was unacceptable to Croatia because 'it actually leads up to dissolution of Croatia'.

Abdic forces block UNHCR convoy, other convoy coming from Zagreb also blocked.

February 18

Abdic forces launch attack to reclaim land lost to government forces in Bihac area, heavy fighting reported. 3 Ukrainian soldiers taken hostage by government troops in Zepa. Government gunfire kills 2 in Serb-held Sarajevo suburb of Grlica, Serbs threaten to close airport, fire mortars at suburb.

February 19

Milosevic, in meetings with Kozyrev, refuses to recognise Bosnia, Croatian borders in exchange for suspension of sanctions.

February 20

In talks in Knin with President of Srpska Krajina Milan Martic Akashi said that the Serbs had expressed willingness to start political negotiations with Croatia and resume implementation of the economic agreement if the mandate of the UNPROFOR in the UNPAs was extended.

More fighting in Bihac, Krajina Serbs stop UNHCR convoy, reroute it to Velusa Kladusa. Bosnian and Croatian Serbs discuss joint military strategy if Croatian attacks Krajina area, create joint military council in Banja Luka. OSCE High Commissioner for Minorities, Max van der Stoep in Macedonia, calls for restraint after riots, meets with Gligorov. Karadzic, Martic form Supreme Defence Council for joint military actions. Fighting in Posavina corridor (N. Bosnia). Bonn promises to send 200 troops (including 33 officers to Kiseljak) to help with possible UN withdrawal. Both sides reported to be digging trenches in Krajina in preparation for fighting.

February 21

Washington Post reports that UN observers saw C-130 cargo planes unloading high tech equipment for Bosnian forces at Tuzla, but NATO denies this happened, says UN should change its report. Tudjman decision on UNPROFOR said to be 'irreversible' by EU external affairs communication. Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia all protest to UN about Yugoslavia claim to be sole legitimate successor to old system. Akashi sees 'a glimmer of hope' in negotiations on UN relief convoy held by Serbs.

February 22

UN convoy of 99 tons of food aid reaches Bihac pocket, first to get through to area since May. Shelling in Velusa Kladusa area, French peacekeepers come into line of fire in Sarajevo. Bosnian Serb Foreign Minister Aleksa Buha in Belgrade for talks with top Serbian officials. Croatian Cardinal Franjo Kuharic meets with Serbian Orthodox Metropolitan Jovan Pavlovic. Catholic Bishop Ratko Peric goes to Trebinje in Serb-held E. Herzegovina to bring relief supplies, hold talks with Orthodox leaders.

February 23

BBC says reported flights of C-130 transports into Tuzla may be either US resupply efforts of Bosnian forces, or US protecting another country doing just this. Fighting continues in Velusa Kladusa and Bosanska Krupa areas, while Karadzic, Krajisnik visit Posavina corridor, tell crowds without the corridor there is no Bosnian Serb Republic. In Krajina, Milan Babic says new Supreme Defence Council part of effort to set up greater Serb federation. 2,000 Macedonia students demonstrate against Albanian language university saying it is pretext to break up of Macedonia.

Milosevic received political directors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain, France and Germany. In his interview to New York Times Minister of Foreign Affairs of FR Yugoslavia Vladislav Jovanovic said that recognition of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina could be considered but not until all open questions related to the position of the Serbs in those former Yugoslav republics were resolved.

February 24

Milosevic discussed with Akashi the current situation in the former Yugoslavia and assessed that the decision of Croatia not to extend the mandate of the UNPROFOR in the protected areas after 31 March 1995, was a dangerous step jeopardising peace and endangering the process of normalisation of relations between Zagreb and Knin. It was concluded that the Vance plan for Croatia was a solid basis for settlement of the disputes by peaceful means.

UN reports Serbs storing 4 heavy weapons in Rajlovac warehouse (Sarajevo suburb) in violation of exclusion zone. UN accuses Muslim military of co-ordinated campaign to drive out UNPROFOR.

February 25

UN says Serbs renewing beatings, robberies, and other intimidation of non-Serbs in Banja Luka forcing 300 more to flee (only 30,000 Muslim, Croats now left in area). Serb helicopter flights, attacks on Croats inside Bosnia. Government troops blockading UNPROFOR troops for 3rd day in Gornji Vakuf. Advance plane for Turkish president Demirel's visit to Sarajevo hit by gunfire. UN reports 20 explosions in Travnik area, 2 East of Vitez, and 2 around Zenica, brief exchange of fire near Tesanj. Serbs close 1 of 2 civilian rights out of Sarajevo over fuel dispute with UN. 3rd convoy in as many days reaches Bihac. UN officials discover heavy weapons in Sarajevo exclusion zone. UN agrees with NATO there is no conclusive evidence of aircraft actually landing in Tuzla.

February 26

Croatian ambassador to UN, Miomir Zuzul, says only chance for peace in Croatia lies with Serbs accepting reintegration, that war will come if Bosnia and Croatian Serbs join forces, or if Serbia intervenes directly in Croatia. Government troops set up roadblocks against British peacekeepers in Gornji Vakuf to protest presence of 2 Bosnian Serb liaison officers, UN lodges protest over this 'serious irritation'. Serbs prevent UN officials from inspecting suspected arms cache in Sarajevo, also prevent resupply of Dutch peacekeepers in Srebrenica. Western diplomatic says Karadzic responds to UN requests for security guarantee with 'extreme evasion'.

February 27

Demirel's trip cancelled due to Serbs firing Sarajevo airport (UN forces return fire) and refusal of Karadzic to guarantee his safety during visit, goes to Zenica in C. Bosnia instead to visit 1,500 Turkish peacekeepers, then to Zagreb to talk with Tudjman. Serb sniper fire wounds 5, halts trams in Sarajevo.

February 28

Kozyrev meets with Yugoslavian Defence Minister Pavle Bulatovic, says 'UN Security Council and the Contact Group owe Belgrade', says he favours lifting sanctions. UN officials say Serbs mopping up ethnic cleansing in Banja Luka of Muslim, Croats. Fighting increases in Bihac pocket, 9 empty relief trucks shelled. UN calls NATO statement on flights over Tuzla being its own or commercial, 'ludicrous and insulting', and hints that flights may be either US or Turkish resupply efforts. 63 Catholic graves desecrated in Novi Sad, but police say they are random acts. Government troops under heavy attack South of Velusa Kladusa, launch counteroffensive, 5 killed. Government attacks near Travnik force Serbs to evacuate 300 villagers. Serbs open fire on Sarajevo airport 20 minutes after supposed arrival of Turkish president Demirel, UN returns fire. Serbs also violate cease-fire along Orasje-Tuzla road, Usora, and Livno-Kupres front. Croatian court sentences 4 Serbs in absentia for war crimes around Sibenik (Djordje Bjugovic, General Kosta Novakovic, General Mile Novakovic, and Goran Hadzic).

March 1

Clinton administration considering putting 500-1,000 more troops to a maximum of 10,000 in NATO-led division in Macedonia. Albanian deputies in Macedonia parliament boycott session over issue of education and university in Tetovo. Croatian Defence and National Security Council says it remains firm on UNPROFOR pullout. 679 Muslims and Croats expelled from Banja Luka area, their houses dynamited while 6 members of Muslim charity 'Merhamet' arrested. Serbs issue blanket ban on all UN refugee agency convoys to Sarajevo. Contact Group meets with Milosevic. Pro-Bosnian Serb head of Yugoslavia army propaganda division, Col. Ljubodrag Stojadinovic fired after military tribunal finds him guilty of impugning Milosevic and the military. 800 detonations reported S. and SE of Velusa Kladusa. 15 wounded by shelling in Travnik.

March 2

Contingent of Zagreb doctors arrives at C. Bosnia monastery in Nova Bila whose hospital had been destroyed in '93 fighting. Krajina Serbs put total ban on food convoys for town of Bihac. 342 explosions in Velusa Kladusa area. 1 killed, 1 wounded by sniper fire from Serbs in Sarajevo, UN cargo plane hit by gunfire after leaving Sarajevo airport

March 3

At a press conference in Vienna UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali said that 'it would be a real tragedy for the former Yugoslavia if we were forced to withdraw the troops from Bosnia or Croatia'. He also appealed to all members of the international community to 'to do all they should to keep the UN troops within the former Yugoslavia'.

Bosnian Serbs claim they are trying to start talks with government, but government denies story.

March 4

UN says it will not tolerate Serb blockade against Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde. Serbs let through 30 tons of food aid for 500 Dutch peacekeepers in Srebrenica, but not medical aid.

March 6

Croatia and Croat-Muslim Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina agree to set up military alliance, and Croatian Chief-of-Staff, General Janko Bobetko says joint command will defend the Croatia-Muslim federation'. Serb General Mladic says UNPROFOR not welcome in Bosnia-Herzegovina if they leave Croatia. Pale authorities levy 200 DM monthly per capita tax on Bosnian Serbs living abroad. Bosnian Foreign Minister Irfan Ljubijancic says an expanded war is coming. Abdic forces gain ground S. and E. of Velusa Kladusa. 1 killed, 2 wounded by snipers in Sarajevo.

EU adopted negotiating mandate for Trade and Co-operation Agreement between the EU and Croatia, but made start of the negotiations dependent on continued UN presence in Croatia.

March 7

Slovenian Premier Janez Drnovsek says Slovenia prepared to resolve 'practical' issues with Yugoslavia, and that a Slovenia bureau may be opened in Belgrade 'in the near future'.

March 8-10

Zubak and Ganic, in Bonn, signed the Petersburg Agreement on the implementation of the Bosniac/Croat Federation.

March 9

UN relief agency cuts food aid to Croatian Serbs, Abdic's supporters to try to force them to allow aid into Bihac. More fighting in area, with Croatian Serbs shelling Bihac. UN reports increase in military activity in Croatia ahead of deadline for UNPROFOR to pull out troops. Croatian Foreign Minister Granic says Croatia may have all of its foreign relations frozen if it does not relent on UNPROFOR. Krajina Serbs reported to be mobilising 5,000 'volunteers' in expectation of renewed fighting with Zagreb. Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia given membership in World Bank. CIA report on war crimes says Serbs committed 90% of war crimes, and that Serbs alone were involved in systematic use of ethnic cleansing, that this is not a civil war, but a case of Serbian aggression.

March 10

BBC reports that US tried to stifle CIA report for fear of alienating Milosevic, but US Assistant Secretary of State Holbrooke admits it is authentic. Manoeuvres of tanks, heavy weapons reported in E. Krajina. 130 Orthodox tombs vandalised in Kumanovo. Bosnian Croats, Muslim conclude pact in Bonn to strengthen Federation which includes provisions on return of refugees, and creating police system. Herzegovinan Croats contend that Bosnian Government forces in Bihac pocket kidnapped

Croatian General Vlado Santic on March 8. Serbs launch campaign to draft ethnic Albanians in Kosovo into army.

March 11

Tudjman backs down on demanding UNPROFOR withdraw in exchange for the troop contingent being reduced to 5-6,000 of which 10% will guard border crossings into Bosnia and Serbia. Tudjman comments that 'the US has pledged to assist Croatia in restoring its sovereignty over the whole of its territory'.

March 12

Akashi's aeroplane hit by gunfire as it approaches Sarajevo airport. Artillery and sniper fire kill 3 (including 2 girls hit by government soldier in Serb-held suburb), wound 8 in Sarajevo. Russian Federation Council member Sergei Shirshov accuses US of 'arming Croatia for struggle against the Serbs', says Russian should provide economic assistance to the Serbs.

US Vice President Al Gore met in Copenhagen with President Tudjman (they participated there in the UN Summit on Social Development). At the joint press conference Tudjman said that the UN peace keeping forces might stay in Croatia after 31 March until a new, changed mandate of those forces was defined, while their number would be reduced.

March 13

NATO planes give cover to UN flight over Sarajevo as Indonesian President Suharto leaves city. Heavy fighting in Velusa Kladusa.

March 14

9 French peacekeepers killed in accident when their truck falls off road on Mt. Igman. Akashi finishes talks with government and Serbs but no progress on truce. NY Times says 'a considerable number of tanks' has moved into Krajina from Serbia in anticipation of international monitors being stationed on border. HINA reports Serb attacks in Gradacac, Stolac, Orasje, and Mostar areas.

March 15

UNPROFOR to change names to UN Forces in Croatia (UNFIC) if new arrangement on guarding of borders is worked out. Karadzic rejects idea of UN forces on border separating Croatia from Bosnia. Tudjman to US for talks on new force, also to attend ceremony on 1 year anniversary of Croat-Muslim federation. Izetbegovic did not attend since the anniversary 'conflicts with the previously arranged schedule for his visit to Germany'. Government arrests 3 Muslim military policemen in connection with Santic murder. British peacekeeping force comes under Serb fire near Gorazde.

March 16

Bosnian Muslim and Croat leaders meet in White House with Clinton and Christopher who promise them economic aid, military advice. NATO working on evacuation for UN peacekeepers called 'Determined Effort' which may include 70,000 troops (force could include 2,000 German troops to be used in Croatia). Serbian Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj reported to be in Bosnia claiming to have 1,000 'volunteers' from the Sandzak. Macedonia reportedly also wants UNPROFOR mandate changed so that it has organisational structure distinct from that of Croatia and Bosnia. Yugoslavia reports 3 army officers arrested for spying for Croatia. In separate meetings, Tudjman and Zubak meet with Clinton in Washington. Izetbegovic, in Bonn, says there will be no extension of cease-fire unless Serbs

accept Contact Group peace plan. Italian Foreign Minister Agnelli says Italy may support easing of sanctions against Belgrade.

March 17

Nasa Borba reports that Milosevic, Bosnia and Krajina Serb representatives secretly met with Orthodox Patriarch Pavle. Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Jovanovic meets with Pope John Paul II. China, Bosnia agree to establish diplomatic relations. British vehicles hijacked by Serbs in Ilidza, Serbs close civilian route into Sarajevo.

March 19

2 killed by snipers in Sarajevo. Serbs renew attacks on airport firing on French air transport causing French to fire back. Serbs also firing on government supply road and arrest Russian UN observer in campaign of harassment against UN. Bosnian Vice President Ganic sends condolences to Zubak for murder of Croatia General Vlado Santic in Bihac area on March 8.

March 20

Serb shell hits government army barracks in Tuzla killing 26, wounding 80. Fighting also near Travnik as government attacks and Serbs retaliate with shelling of cities. Shelling also of Priboj, Jablanica, and Lukavica which ends only due to blizzard conditions. UN reports 2,000 government troops moving into Stolice area. 6 wounded by sniper fire in Sarajevo.

Fred Ekhard, UN spokesman for peace-keeping operations, said in New York that ever since the cease-fire had been signed in early 1995 by the warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina it was now most seriously violated in the region north-eastern from Tuzla. Actually, the Bosnian army conducted a large-scale offensive against the army of the Republika Srpska. In response the Bosnian Serbs opened mortar fire on military installations in Tuzla. There were also some small-scale combats along the Sava-valley corridor as well as near Travnik and Konjic.

March 21

Final report of UN Commission of Experts on the Bosnian War says evidence shows 'a systematic rape and sexual assault policy' against Muslim and Croat women, that attacks 'do not appear to be random, and indicate a policy of at least tolerating rape and sexual assault', that rape was part of a 'a highly developed' Serb strategy of ethnic cleansing, and 'that there is no factual basis for arguing that there is a 'moral equivalence' among the warring factions' (that all sides do it equally). Serbs shell civilian targets in Kalesija (NE Bosnia), also retake 3 hilltops near Majevisa lost to government previous day. Serbs take 2 UN vehicles from Dan, French peacekeepers in Ilidza.

March 22

UN reports 1,432 detonations in Majevisa area (near Tuzla) in 24 hr. period with government possibly having gained some territory.

March 23

In a letter to UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali leader Izetbegovic required that the mandate of the UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina, expiring on 31 March, should be extended not later than 1 May 1995. He also requested that within this period possibilities should be explored for a change of the mandate.

March 24

UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali proposed to the Security Council that UNPROFOR should be renamed UNPF (United Nations Peace Forces) and divided into three separate units - for Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia. Each UNPF would be headed by its civilian chief and have its own military commander and the headquarters of all three operations would remain in Zagreb. It would be under command of the current UNPROFOR commander French General Bernard Janvier while Akashi, special envoy of the UN Secretary General, would keep on being the key political figure of the operations. According to this proposal the peace-keeping forces were neither willing nor equipped to impose solutions on the warring parties but they should help them achieve the lasting peace negotiated by the parties themselves.

Karadzic, in response to losses, calls for immediate and direct negotiations.

March 25

UN reports government forces take control of communication tower at Stolice, and on Mt. Vlasic, with Serbs shelling Sarajevo, Mostar, Velusa Kladusa, Gracanica, Gorazde, and Tuzla in response. UN says 1,200 Serb civilians flee government advance which has taken 30-50 sq. kilometres, and sends Serbs relief aid to Skender Vakuf. German TV reports that Karadzic calls for retaking Tuzla, says this is 'last call' for 'immediate direct talks on peace, with cessation of all offensives'. Serb snipers fire on US ambassador car in Sarajevo.

March 26

Karadzic writes to world leaders saying they need to 'bring a halt to the Muslim offensives' but Bosnian Government says he must accept Contact Group plan first. Karadzic also calls for General mobilisation of all Bosnian Serbs and threatens to confiscate property of reservists who do not return home from abroad. Krajina Serbs reported to be conducting manoeuvres in Slavonia with 100 tanks, some taken from UN collection points, but including 13 new T-72 and M-84s brought across Danube on pontoon bridges. Both sides reported regrouping around Tuzla as government forces now surround Serbs at Stolice.

March 27

Serbs hit Sarajevo road with 500 cannon rounds in retaliation for government offensive near Tuzla. Nasa Borba reports that Bosnian ambassador to Swit., Muhamed Filipovic meets previous week at Serb request in Belgrade with Milosevic to discuss status of Muslims living in Serbia. Krajina town Bracev Dolac shelled by Croat, Bosnian Croat forces. 7 member delegation of Sarajevo Serbs in Belgrade to plea for peace, prove they are not discriminated against. International women's convoy still blocked from Bihac by Serbs.

Meeting of high diplomatic officials of the Contact Group in London issued a statement saying that all of its members expressed concern over the situation in Bosnia which had aggravated in the field. They invited all parties to observe the agreement on cessation of hostilities. The Group would continue its efforts that would lead to imminent negotiations and it also invited the Bosnian Serbs to adopt the plan of the Contact Group as a basis for further negotiations. It welcomed the agreement on the presence of the UN forces that would be continued in Croatia and also stressed the importance it attached to the imminent mutual recognition of the states created in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

March 28

Fighting for TV tower continues near Stolice, also on Vlasic plateau. UN investigating Croatian claim that 900 Yugoslavian troops, 20 tanks, ground-to-ground rockets and other weapons have crossed

Danube into E. Slavonia. *Newsday* reports Belgian battalion tried to block them but Russian General ordered them to back off, UN says it can't confirm claim. Croatian Foreign Minister Granic criticises UN peacekeeping force plan saying it violates spirit of Copenhagen agreement between Zagreb and US. UN has decided to rename force UN Peace Force One which Croatia doesn't like since it doesn't have Croatia in title.

March 29

Serbs shell Velusa Kladusa, government troops destroy 2 tanks in Majevac. Dutch peacekeeper killed by artillery.

March 30

Serbs still control TV transmitter in Majejica hills (NE of Tuzla) but government reported to be picking up ground. UN scales back relief effort to Sarajevo as Serbs blockade food convoys (airlift to Sarajevo now only at 40% of capacity). Turkish parliament approves bill allowing Council of Ministers to lift arms embargo against Bosnia-Herzegovina. British peacekeepers rescue 66 Croat soldiers including commander of Croatian forces General Janko Bobetko, from convoy stranded in snow in W. Bosnia, find 5 frozen to death.

Republika Srpska Krajina issued a statement that it could not allow blockade of the borders of RSK to be imposed by any military formations unless the mission of those forces was based on the principles on which the UN protection forces had been established so far. It was 'quite unacceptable' to Krajina that the new mandate of the peace-keeping forces was to be defined as an interim arrangement for creation of the conditions that would facilitate political settlement which would be 'consistent with the territory integrity of Croatia' if this included the territory of RSK which is 'a sovereign state of the Serb people and all its citizens and is not within the territory of Croatia'.

March 31

The UN Security Council adopted three separate Resolutions defining the missions of the peace-keeping forces in Croatia (Resolution 981), Bosnia-Herzegovina (982) and Macedonia (983). UNPROFOR would be divided into three separate organisational and military units called 'The United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia, known as UNCRO', 'United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR)' in Bosnia-Herzegovina and 'United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP)' within Macedonia. Each operation will be headed by a civilian chief of mission and have its own military commander, but all three will be under the overall command and control of the current special envoy of the UN Secretary General, Akashi, and the current UNPROFOR commanding general, General Janvier. Their headquarters will remain in Zagreb. The mandates of the peace-keeping forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia will chiefly remain unchanged. However UNCRO's mandate shall include: 'performing fully the functions envisaged in the Cease-Fire Agreement of 29 March 1994 between the Republic of Croatia and the local Serb authorities', 'facilitating implementation of the Economic Agreement of 2 December 1994', 'facilitating of all relevant Security Council Resolutions', 'assisting in controlling, by monitoring and reporting, the crossing of military personnel, equipment, supplies and weapons, over the international borders between the Republic of Croatia and Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) at the border crossings for which UNCRO is responsible...'. The Council also decided that UNCRO should be an interim arrangement to create the conditions that will facilitate a negotiated settlement consistent with the territorial integrity of Croatia and which guarantees the security and rights of all communities.

Resolution 981 reducing size of UN force in Croatia, renaming it UN Conference Restoration Operation in Croatia (name in title to emphasise sovereignty over all Croatia territory by Croatia, while

Krajina leader Martić rejects name change). 1,000 peacekeepers to patrol border as part of total force of 7-8,000, but does not authorise them to stop shipments across orders.

Women's convoy returns to Zagreb after failing to get Serb permission to continue, but British civilian and translator of Croat origin, Mirko Buzuk taken away by Serbs. US ambassador Victor Jackovic leaves Bosnian post.

April 1

431 explosions in Majeвица area, 293 around Kalesija (E. of Tuzla), government still hasn't captured Stolice tower. In north-west Bosnia, artillery shells smashed into the UN-protected Safe Area of Bihać, injuring several people and badly damaging a water pipeline. In Sarajevo, separatist Serbs ended a blockade that had prevented trucks from carrying international aid from the airport to the besieged city. Croats in Mostar kidnap local bishop after he tries to replace Franciscan monks with diocesan priests who are less nationalistic, bishop and his security are released after 8 hrs.

German Parliament cleared the way for the first international war crimes trial since post-World War II by agreeing to extradite a Bosnian Serb Dusan Tadić accused of murdering and torturing Muslims. Tadić was arrested in Germany in February 1994 and charged with genocide after witnesses accused him of killing at least 10 prisoners and torturing 150 others while he was a guard at separatist Serb-run concentration camps in north-western Bosnia in 1992. Tadić is also accused of forcing Muslims out of their homes, and of organising gang rapes.

US ambassador to Bosnia, Victor Jackovic, announced he will leave Bosnia soon, probably forced out due to his support of Bosnian Government, now to become ambassador to Slovenia. His expected replacement is John Menzies, who became deputy chief of mission for Bosnia late last year. Cardinal Vinko Puljić, the newly appointed Roman Catholic archbishop of Sarajevo, announced that he will be in Chicago next week as part of the mission to alert the rest of the world that war atrocities are still committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

April 2

Serb infantry, artillery, and tanks attacking Bihać in waves, fighting heavy around Velusa Kladusa. Abdić says on radio that entire pocket will be under his control in days. German relief worker arrested by Bosnian Serbs in harassment effort.

In a statement given to the state news agency HINA Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mate Granić said that Resolution 981 'is the most vigorous political document adopted by the Security Council for the benefit of Croatia'. In his words the Resolution strongly affirmed the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Croatia, introduced the mechanism of control of the borders of the Republic of Croatia, directing Knin to enter negotiations on political issues concerning its peaceful reintegration into Croatia.

April 3

In his first reaction President of the Republika Srpska Krajina Milan Martić assessed that the Resolution 981 disturbed the initiated peace process, endangering the results achieved so far in the field of peaceful settlement of the dispute between the RSK and Croatia.

Serbs seize 2 Swiss UNESCO workers en route to Sarajevo airport at illegal checkpoint. Krajina Serbs and rebel Muslim continue attacks in Bihać. Heavy fighting in Majeвица Hills (NE of Tuzla), and Serbs fire artillery in Livno area and attack Orasje-Samac area causing material damage. China becomes 92nd country to recognise Bosnia-Herzegovina.

April 4

Swedish peacekeepers reported fierce artillery exchanges in the Majevisa hills near Tuzla with Serbs firing 2,000 rounds of artillery at government positions. UN officials reported the second Serb attack in two days on the UN-declared Safe Area of Bihac town. One UN observer and his interpreter were slightly wounded. UN observers said Bosnian troops had taken control the Stolice television tower at the summit of Mt Vlasic, which rises over the government-held town of Travnik. Control of Vlasic secures access routes to the towns of Donji Vakuf, Jajce and Skender Vakuf. Serbs attack Zvornik, Teocani areas, as well as Gradacac, Kalesija, and Gracanica. UN monitors say Yugoslavia keeping its borders closed. Serbs deny Belgian cardinal permission to visit Banja Luka Catholics.

April 5

The people of Sarajevo began fourth year of war. About 15 people gathered in Sarajevo to place flowers on the grave of Suada Dilberovic, the first woman killed in the Bosnian war.

Members of Contact Group met in London, reportedly discussing another sanctions-easing proposal for Serbia. A UN official said that the diplomats are hoping to persuade Milosevic to recognise Croatia and Bosnia in exchange for relief from UN sanctions.

Serbian Foreign Minister Vladislav Jovanovic stated that Serbia's stand on this issue 'has been established three years ago -- we are open to recognition of former Yugoslav republics as independent states when conditions for that are met.'

International observers monitoring Belgrade's blockade of rebel Bosnian Serbs said they were satisfied Serbian authorities had closed the border despite reports of goods getting through.

NATO warplanes over Bosnia forced a single-engine Cessna down over government-held territory twice. The plane was flying over Visoko, north-west of Sarajevo in territory controlled by the Bosnian government, the spokesman said.

Pope John Paul issued one of his strongest appeals for peace to come to former Yugoslavia, saying that the fighting there was the worst tragedy to hit Europe since WWII.

April 5

Fighting continues, 1,500 rounds of artillery fired in exchanges in Majevisa area, government claims to have closed escape route of Serbs at TV tower, but Serbs claim to have retaken strategic hill. Pro-government Serb leader, Ljubomir Berberovic, hit by Serb sniper fire in Sarajevo. UN protests Serb attacks on Safe Areas. Owen says international community will not accept secession of any parts of former Yugoslavia (Krajina, Kosovo), tells Kosovo Albanians to work for political autonomy. Reports of Croatian troops moving into Sector West around Daruvar (in Slavonia). Krajina suspends permission for UNPROFOR patrols in Sector East.

April 6

Serbs shell government-held Sarajevo suburb of Hrasnica with 120mm mortars killing 2, wounding 3, UN calling it most important violation of cease-fire yet, respond by firing smoke shells. New Serb shelling of Bihac prompts UN call for NATO show of force with planes. Fighting in Majevisa mountains and near Tuzla. Hrasnica hit by shells, killing 2, wounding 4. Karadzic asks UN to allow oil shipments for 'agricultural purposes'.

April 7

Karadzic says he expects relations with UN to deteriorate. Krajina Serb leader Martic rejects UN Resolution 981 (transforming UNPROFOR into UNCRO) blaming it on US, German dominance in Security Council, says 'there are no borders between Serbian territories'. Serb leader Nikola Koljevic

was quoted as warning Belgrade would unleash a civil war among Serbs in former Yugoslavia if it agreed to recognise Bosnia and Croatia.

Serb forces backed by heavy artillery launched a co-ordinated assault on two hills near Tuzla, and captured both objectives, Bosnian army sources told Reuters in Tuzla. A rocket slammed into a government-held suburb of Sarajevo, Hrasnica. In another incident French peacekeepers and Serb soldiers were engaged in a tense stand-off on a road outside Sarajevo. Serb soldiers at the checkpoint near the airport, known as Sierra Four, harassed UN convoys, hijacked vehicles, stolen radios, weapons and flak jackets and detained civilians carrying UN identification. 'The French deployed a full platoon of soldiers and four armoured personnel carriers to the airport road checkpoint this morning,' said Alexander Ivanko, a UN spokesman in Sarajevo.

NATO pressed ahead with contingency plans for a possible pullout of UN peacekeepers if fighting broke out of control and decided to send 80 communications experts to the region, alliance said. The communication experts are the first NATO ground troops in the region.

April 8

US C-130 relief plane hit by 10 bullets at Sarajevo airport by Serb snipers damaging hydraulic system, hitting cockpit, UN suspends flights as result saying Serb harassment is on increase. UN agrees to let Serbs check all vehicles on road to airport in exchange for guarantees of safety for all vehicles, Bosnian Government protests action saying UN has caved in to Serb pressure. Heavy shelling in NE Bosnia, and large movement of Krajina Serbs/Abdic forces in Bihac. CIA reports that 2 oil rigs have been shipped from Iran to Serbia in violation of UN embargo. Macedonian president Gligorov rules out possibility of Balkan federation or confederation, says this will only lead to new divisions and conflicts, but agrees to sign treaty with Greece on their common border.

President of Srpska Krajina Milan Martić said that the Resolution 981 was 'absolutely unacceptable'. 'Control of the borders between us and our brothers from the Republika Srpska will never be allowed'. 'We are to organise our state as proper as possible and no one will push us into Croatia where we do not want to be'.

April 9

UN says Serbs using 120mm mortars in violation of cease-fire agreement in Sarajevo killing 3, wounds 7, UN requests NATO air presence over city. Intense fighting in Tuzla, Bihac areas with government forces claiming capture of Mt. Vlasic including TV relay station North of Travnik. Assembly of Serbian Citizens (pro-government) meets in Sarajevo, calls on government for 'constituent nation' status within Croat-Muslim federation. Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen visits Yugoslavia, meets Jovanovic, criticises international sanctions.

German Foreign Minister Kinkel announced that the envoys from the Contact Group will visit Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb to promote their peace plan. Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic stated that international pressure to extend a battered truce will help Bosnian Serb forces cement the gains they have made on the battlefield. 'Because the Contact Group cannot pressure the Serbs it always ends up pressuring the Bosnian government,' said Silajdzic.

UN charged Serbs with targeting Sarajevo's civilian neighbourhoods with 'big guns', which are supposed to be banned from around the capital.

April 10

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé rounded on Milosevic accusing him of killing efforts to prevent a return to all-out war. Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Jovanovic says 'we do not wish to repeat the mistake (of) prematurely recognising the former Yugoslavia representatives'.

NATO fighters fly for several hours over Sarajevo in response to UN concerns over Serb shelling. Snipers kill 1, wound 2 in city. Serbs, Croats fight near Zepce (N. of Sarajevo). Krajina Serbs fire on

UN vehicles S. of Zagreb, hijack 2 UN cars. Bosnian artillery shelled town of Dobojo and nearby Teslic, wounds 5 civilians in Serb-held Teslic.

April 11

UN dismisses Russian commander, Maj. General Alexander Perelyakin, in Sector East (Krajina) for 'severe shortcomings' and lack of leadership (allowing soldiers, weapons to cross from Serbia into Krajina, wide-spread corruption, smuggling in Sector East), replaces him with deputy UN commander in area who is Belgian. Moscow says he remains commander in sector and that he 'will only be changed in accordance with a plan'. Bosnian Government bans public gatherings to reduce casualties from Serb sniping. Members of Contact Group go to Belgrade for talks. Renewed fighting as Serbs attack Gorazde with 13 artillery shells hitting city causing NATO overflights. Serb and Bosnian forces battle on Mt. Majevisa. Serbs remove, then replace heavy gun from UN storage depot near Sarajevo. Izetbegovic wants UN to declare Sarajevo Demilitarised Zone, says Serbs will get all-out attack if they do not quit shelling, sniper fire. Croatia reported to want all-European peacekeeping force since they will have more clout with Serbs than 3rd world forces, UN says no to this.

Milosevic and Contact Group concluded in Belgrade that the peace plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina was a realistic formula serving as a basis for a comprehensive political settlement upon which the negotiations between the warring parties could be resumed.

UN spokesman Chris Gunness said two children were killed when two shells hit a school in the government-held town of Tesanj, about 50 miles north of Sarajevo. Croatian Defence Minister Gojko Susak said Croatia will demobilise 30,000 troops and send them back to civilian work due to labour shortages, despite lingering tensions with rebel Serbs. Albania denied accusations that it had violated international sanctions by smuggling vast amounts of fuel to Serbia.

April 12

Contact Group called off mission to Sarajevo as hostilities escalated across Bosnia and Serbs won't guarantee security. US State Department said that Milosevic refused to recognise Bosnian and Croatian independence and would not support an extension of a cease-fire in the former Yugoslav republic. Bosnian Serbs hijacked a pickup driven by UN military observers outside Sarajevo. Three military observers, along with their interpreter, were held up by Serb soldiers on the road leading from Sarajevo to Pale and forced to hand over their vehicle.

Serb shell hits downtown Sarajevo wounding 7. Airport closed for 5th day, Mladic sends letter to UN saying claims of attacks are 'incorrect and tendentious'. Government helicopters attack Serb positions around Donji Vakuf, Serbs launch attacks in several areas. Dubrovnik shelled, killing 1, wounding 3.

April 13

US admits that it is facilitating transfer of large ('hundreds of tons') weapons shipments from Iran to Bosnian Government forces. Krajina Serbs, Abdic forces launch new attacks on Velusa Kladusa. Karadzic praises Milosevic for refusing to recognise Bosnia-Herzegovina. Both Macedonia and Greece reveal they have seized contraband oil-drilling equipment headed for Serbia (shipped through Iran by Canadian firm).

Representatives of all seven Danube-basin countries agreed to forward a letter to the UN Committee for Sanctions to explain the problems in traffic on the Danube caused by the embargo against FR Yugoslavia. All delegations supported the idea to plead for at least easing and some even for lifting of the sanctions imposed against FR Yugoslavia.

New York Times said that 'a former senior member of the Serbian secret police has come forward with documents that could incriminate Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic as a war criminal.'

April 14

Serb nationalist leader Vojislav Seselj led thousands of cheering supporters across a bridge between Serbia and Bosnia on Friday to demand an end to a blockade of Bosnian Serbs by Belgrade. Bosnian Serbs began forcing Muslims from their homes in north-eastern Bosnia in a repeat of an 'ethnic cleansing.' 'After more than four months of calm a new wave of expulsions of minority members has begun in Bijeljina,' said Nina Winqvist, spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross in Sarajevo. The World Health Organization stated that a million people in former Yugoslavia need medical help to fight war-related psychological trauma and only some five percent are likely to receive it.

French peacekeeper killed in Sarajevo while driving through Dobrinja. 2 Pakistani peacekeepers wounded when UN convoy fired on by Serbs SE of Tuzla. Serb gunmen rob UN relief fuel convoy at Serb checkpoint outside of Sarajevo of \$7,200 worth of German marks.

April 15

Sniper fire kills 2nd French peacekeeper in 2 days. French Defence Minister Leotard says France may discuss withdrawal of troops. Serbs drag aid workers from UN vehicle, steal vehicle, flak-jacket, and radio at Serb checkpoint. Sarajevo Jews open ancient (600 years) illuminated manuscript brought from Spain in 15th Century to commemorate Passover, Izetbegovic tells them to 'stay in this country, because this is your country'.

April 15-17

A three day session of the Assembly of the Republika Srpska in Sanski Most, behind closed doors, dealt with the military and political situation in the Republic. General Mladic delivered a military report. Karadzic said that conclusions were directed towards promotion of the combat power with the aim of achieving a final military victory unless a political solution to the Bosnian conflict was soon found. The Assembly also adopted to work out a plan on unification with Srpska Krajina. Karadzic denied rumours of disagreement between the political and military leadership. A Belgrade source who visited Pale told Reuters that the 'leadership has no clue what to do next. They are sitting on top of their mountain, having lost touch with reality.'

April 16

Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole said in an interview that he would move soon to lift the US arms embargo against the Bosnian government. 'My view is that they (Bosnia) are an independent nation, a member of the United Nations. They are entitled to the right of self-defence'. He also said that he is opposed to sending US troops to Bosnia.

April 17

UN negotiators tried to get Serbs to promise not to attack [Sarajevo airport](#), and were reconsidering concessions that Bosnian officials said violated previous agreements. The US ambassador to Bosnia, Victor Jackovic, and eight other Americans were forced to take a dangerous land route out of the Bosnian capital Monday after Serbs refused to guarantee the safety of their flight. US Secretary of State Warren Christopher later 'expressed anger' over a Serb refusal to let the US ambassador to Bosnia fly out of Sarajevo and said he would have 'something to say' to the UN about it.

French Foreign Minister official says his country 'looking to avoid a withdrawal at all costs. In our eyes it would be a solution of despair'. Government troops push E. of Bihac and Serbs shell town in response. Government also gains ground on Treskavica Mt. range killing 14 Serb soldiers in push toward Gorazde.

April 18

Serbs fire 26 artillery rounds at Hrasnica, government fires artillery back hitting Ilidza, while US planes fly overhead. Serbs raid UN collection depot and use artillery to fire 6 rounds at Sarajevo from one location, 4 rounds from another. 4 explosions S. of Sarajevo airport.

France called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council after the deaths of two French peacekeepers in Sarajevo and said it would have to withdraw its troops from Bosnia if a ceasefire was not extended. Germany urged France not to react to the killing of two French soldiers on peacekeeping duty by pulling its troops out of Bosnia. Bosnian Serbs heavily shelled the only land route out of Sarajevo - at least 30 mortar rounds were fired, a UN spokesman said. UN source said Croatian troops have advanced to within artillery range of Knin, the rebel Krajina Serb stronghold in Croatia, after pushing through mountain passes in adjacent Bosnia. 'The Croats could hit Knin now with long-range artillery,' a UN source said.

Karadzic said that if the war in Bosnia continues it will be a war to the end, 'to their [Bosnian Government] complete military defeat.'

April 19

In violation of UN imposed embargo about 90 trucks believed to be carrying fuel and other contraband entered Serb-held territory in Croatia from neighbouring Yugoslavia, UN officials said. Serbs fired a shell at Cilipi, near Dubrovnik, at the same time when Croatian Prime Minister Nikica Valentic was opening a newly-refurbished building at Cilipi Airport. There were no injuries or damages reported. In an emergency session today, the UN Security Council debated a draft Resolution on Bosnia, condemning the killing of UNPROFOR personnel and to call upon the Secretary General to recommend ways to deter future attacks on UNPROFOR.

Serbs shell Sarajevo with UN-collected weapons until NATO overflight causes them to quit, fire mortar at Dubrovnik-Cilipi airport. Croats now on Mt. Dinara east of Knin in position to strike at Serbs. UN War Crimes tribunal says documents about Milosevic responsibility for crimes of 'no evidentiary value'.

April 20

Silajdzic tells Akashi cease-fire not to be extended.

Bosnian Serbs raided UN-monitored weapons collection sites and, ignoring warning shots from Ukrainian peacekeepers, used artillery impounded there to shell Sarajevo. Milosevic agreed to allow foreign experts to analyse radar tapes for possible helicopter violations of Serbia's blockade against Bosnian Serbs. UN radar registered about 25 helicopter sorties from Bosnia into Serbian territory between April 2 and April 7, according to the monitoring mission report.

Three British soldiers wounded when their patrol wandered into a mine field in the eastern Bosnian enclave of Gorazde.

April 21

New acting US ambassador to Bosnia, John Menzies arrives at Sarajevo airport, but Serbs prevent his entering city until he agrees to visit Serb military barracks.

April 22

Menzies gives up trying to enter Sarajevo, vows to return. 3 French peacekeepers killed, 4 others wounded while trying to defuse explosives at airport. Karadzic says Sarajevo is Serbian airport and that no political visitors to the Bosnian Government will be allowed to use it, rejects Contact Group plan, and refuses US and German representatives, and Akashi without their gaining access to Sarajevo.

Milosevic meets with Krajina Prime Minister Mikelic, Abdic, and Mladic in Belgrade. Boutros-Ghali says UNCRO may have to be pulled out since Serbs and Croats cannot agree on its size or presence. UN Security Council Resolution 988 puts tougher restrictions on lifting embargo against Belgrade, sanctions can now only be lifted temporary for 75 instead of 100 days (as Resolution 943 provided). France invited all five heads of state from the former Yugoslavia to ceremonies in Paris marking the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. Strong Bosnian government attack on Doboij, 22 miles south-west of Brcko, was reported by the Serbs.

April 23

Fighting largely limited to Brcko area over Orthodox Easter weekend. Krajina Serbs block Zagreb-Belgrade highway in 2 places.

April 24

Richard Goldstone, chief prosecutor of the International Tribunal named Karadzic, General Mladic and Micho Stanisic, former Minister for Internal Affairs and secret police chief as war crimes suspects. 'My office is currently investigating the question of responsibility of these prominent individuals for genocide, murder, rape, torture and the forced removal of many thousands of civilians from large parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina,' Goldstone told reporters in The Hague. Pakistani peacekeepers came under Serb fire on a front-line route about 35 miles north of Sarajevo.

April 25

The UN said Britain had asked for soldiers from another nation to replace its peacekeeping troops in the Serb-besieged enclave of Gorazde in eastern Bosnia.

Meeting of the Montenegro/Croatia interstate commission on Prevlaka agreed to establish a joint sub commission which should contribute to realisation of the already established security regime in the so-called blue and yellow zones until the dispute between the two countries over the state border was settled.

UN indicates that it may concede to Serb demand that flights out of Sarajevo only carry official passengers in order to secure delivery of fuel supplies to the capital. 7 wounded in gunfire in Sarajevo. Krajina Serbs lift blockade of Zagreb-Belgrade highway after Tudjman says force may be used to reopen it, Serbs still saying they will not allow convoys under the UNCRO designation due to their rejection of being part of Croatia. Britain says it wants its contingent of 350 out of Gorazde in September at end of tour of duty. Russian says accusations against Mladic, Karadzic will escalate tensions and that this will damage peace efforts. Karadzic welcomes Serbian Patriarch Pavle, who criticises Milosevic for abandoning Bosnian Serbs, says 'it is better to die than to betray our soul'. Mazowiecki's 15th report on Bosnia accuses Serbs of 'unrelenting terrorisation and discrimination'. Serbs hijack UN military observer team near Ilidza, Pakistani peacekeepers fired on by Serbs 35 miles N. of Sarajevo.

April 26

Josip Gelo, spokesman for Bosnian Croat forces (HVO) said that HVO controlled 'most of Mount Dinara and we can see (the towns of) Glamoc, Grahovo and Knin as if they were on the palm of our hand.' Rumours fly around Livno that a major, co-ordinated Croat-Moslem offensive could start soon but HVO is reluctant to admit any large-scale operations are imminent. The State Department announced that the senior officials of the Contact Group will meet in Paris to try to extend the current cease-fire in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

1st war crimes suspect Dusan Tadic pleads not guilty. Shelling in Brcko area, government forces take Vel. Skocaj and Cot plateaux (S. of Bihac, near Croatia). Serbs fire 2 tank shells into Bihac. 5 wounded

in Sarajevo. US ambassador Menzies arrives in Sarajevo by land route as Serbs continue to refuse security guarantees to UN flights carrying non-civilian personnel. Russia says it may withdraw its troops if cease-fire is not renewed, while French Prime Minister Balladur again says France may also. HVO forces in Bosnia now within 10 miles of Knin, Glamoc, and Grahovo.

Clashes reported in Bosnia's North-East, North-West and in Sarajevo, where increased sniping led officials to close all schools temporarily. Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic said that the Bosnian government will not extend a battered truce due to expire in three days despite mounting outside pressure and threats to withdraw peacekeepers. He added that Bosnian Government will abandon war when the Serbs accept the deal dividing Bosnia in two between Serbs and a Federation of Moslems and Croats.

April 27

Bosnian Serb Minister of Information says Hague Tribunal accusations false, states the 'undisputed military and political supremacy of the Serbs over the side which was predestined for destruction. The victory for the Serbs gained through the regular means of a liberation struggle cannot be proof that [they] have committed a crime'. UN warns of 'full-scale war', protests both sides using heavy weapons in exclusion zone, and threatens use of 'all available means' to prevent attacks on civilians as fighting intensifies. Fighting continues near Doboij and government continues 3-day old offensive near Bihac. French peacekeepers return Serb sniper fire near Holiday Inn, and in W. suburb of Stup. Danish peacekeepers return fire near airport. Bosnian army General Vahid Karavelic says 'Pale will soon come under attack by our forces...I'm certain we will manage to lift the blockade by the end of the year.' UN says it won't be that fast.

April 28

Security Council adopted Resolution. 989 supplementing the Resolution 981 of 31 March 1995 concerning the new mission of the UN forces in Croatia - UNCRO. This additional Resolution fixed the number of UNCRO, reducing them from the previous 12,000 to 8,750. The Council invited Croatia and the local Serbs to co-operate to a full measure with the UNCRO in implementing the mandate of the peace-keepers.

April 28

Fighting escalated in North-Eastern Bosnia, along front lines near Serb-held Doboij, before ebbing later in the day. Bosnian government troops continued a three-day-old infantry attack on Serb positions south of the besieged government enclave of Bihac, in North-Western Bosnia.

Serbs refused permission for UN commander Lt. Gen. Bernard Janvier, to fly to Srebrenica. They also prevented peacekeepers from leaving Gorazde. The UN warned Serbs in Croatia that refusal to accept controls on borders with Yugoslavia and Serb-held Bosnia will force peacekeepers to withdraw.

Heavy fighting near Brcko as Muslim, Croats press attacks against Serbs. Sarajevo's perimeter was also rocked by mortar exchanges. A UN van carrying locally hired civilians was hit twice by sniper fire, provoking bursts of machine-gun and automatic weapons fire from French peacekeepers nearby.

UN aid officials sounded the alarm on the food situation around Bihac. The lack of food is 'getting more and more critical every day,' affecting more than 90 percent of the area's 205,000 aid recipients, said a UNHCR report. UN efforts to contain Bosnia's war after a cease-fire expires at midnight April 30th, were dealt a serious blow when Serbs from Croatia attacked the Bihac enclave in north-west Bosnia. Akashi to go to Pale for last-ditch effort to extend truce. Izetbegovic confirmed that he would not extend the truce, though he promised that his forces would show restraint. Contact Group agrees to new low-level talks.

April 29

2 Serb planes based in Croatia bomb Bihac dropping cluster bombs killing 1, wounding 4 as Serbs launch ground, artillery, and tank attacks in area. UN observers spot 70 Croatian Serb troops crossing into Bosnia.

April 30

Both sides reject UN efforts to extend truce but Silajdzic says government will show restraint if Serbs stop harassing food convoys and shelling civilian areas. Karadzic says new cease-fire possible only if international sanctions are lifted. Croats and Krajina Serbs battle and Serbs close recently reopened highway.

May 1

Four months cease-fire ends and fights escalate. Start of the Croatian offensive, 'Operation Flash', to retake western Slavonia and launch attacks on 3 fronts against Krajina Serbs. 2 Croatian MiG-21s attack key bridge on Sava river linking Croatia to Bosnia. Croatian Serbs responded by shelling, and detained some UN personnel. Serbs claim Croatia have shelled 2 Serb-held towns on N. border with Bosnia. Karadzic threatens to come to their aid. US, UN Security Council condemn Croatian attack. Serbs shell Sarajevo, enter UN weapons collection point in Ilidza and prepare to take tanks. Ukrainian peacekeepers trapped inside by mines laid outside (2nd site entered in 2 days). Sniping increases along Sniper Alley. Serbs also shell village of Pazaric (10 miles SW of Sarajevo) killing 2. More fighting around Brcko as Croatian government forces shell corridor. Government troops come under Serb attack in corridor while other government forces launch attack against Serb communication tower in Majevisa hills (S. of Brcko).

May 2

Croatian government declared that it took over the UNPA territory, Sector West, and the organised resistance of the Serbs had been broken down. In this way 'it was completed the action taken by the combined police and armed forces of Croatia with the aim of opening the highway and railroad'. Prime Minister of Croatia Nikica Valentic said that this military action had made possible 'the beginning of a peaceful reintegration of the occupied territories into the Croatian state and legal system'.

Krajina Serbs fire rockets with cluster bombs into Zagreb town squares killing 5, wounding 121. US ambassador Galbraith calls it 'a repugnant act clearly intended to kill many people' says it is designed to provoke full-scale war. US evacuates 35 from Zagreb. Rockets probably fired from Petrinja (25 miles S.). Karlovac also hit by rockets. Tudjman says Croatian offensive over after surrender of Okucani, but talks between Krajina Serbs and Croats near Zagreb airport suspended as safety of Serbs cannot be guaranteed. Serbs shell Sarajevo.

After an urgently summoned session the UN Security Council issued a presidential statement demanding Croatia to immediately stop the offensive in Western Slavonia or 'the Sector West'. The Council also demanded from the warring parties to immediately stop all their hostilities and observe the current agreement on cease-fire.

Milosevic, Montenegro president Bulatovic, and FR Yugoslavia president Lilic meet to discuss Croatian attack, call it criminal and inexcusable to attack civilians. Russian Foreign Minister demands hostilities cease at once and negotiations resume.

May 3

Serbs fire more rockets at Zagreb, killing 1, wounding 43. Flow of Serb refugees into Bosnia largely halted as Croats now control north side of Sava bridge at Bosanska Gradiska. Serbs free UN personnel

held hostage, cease-fire negotiated. Speculation that Milosevic, other Serb leaders considered Sector West indefensible and would not come to its aid. Up to 1,000 Croatian soldiers reported moving into Sector South (Dalmatia). Tension high in Gospic-Medak area.

Through UN mediation Croatia and Srpska Krajina signed an immediate and general cease-fire in Western Slavonia and on all other front lines. Akashi and Janvier, verified the truce.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Srpska Krajina Milan Babic forwarded a letter to UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali. He informed him that about 400 Serb civilians had been killed while more than 6,000 people escaped from Western Slavonia to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Babic appealed to Boutros-Ghali to do all he could in order 'to stop the Croatian army and prevent massacre of the Serb population'.

May 4

Council of Ministers of the EU adopted a declaration saying that by taking a military action in Western Slavonia the Croatian government had violated the truce and endangered the past efforts of the international community in reaching a peaceful settlement for Krajina. The governments of the EU member countries also condemned the reprisal taken by the Serb forces on some urban zones in Croatia, including Zagreb. In future negotiations over the agreement on establishment of co-operation with Croatia, the EU would take into consideration the Croatia's acting in implementation of the UN Resolutions as well as its behaviour in the peace process.

Tudjman addressed the nation on TV. He said that 'by winning this and such victory Croatia has proved to the rebel Croatian Serbs as well as to the international community that its armed forces are capable of liberating all areas which are still occupied'. Tudjman warned the Serbs that 'if they do not stop offering their armed resistance Croatia will know how and be able to establish its power all over its territory in its internationally recognised borders and it will be done in the same way it was done yesterday and the day before yesterday in Western Slavonia'.

The joint Council of Defence of Srpska Krajina and Srpska chaired by Martić and Karadžić assessed that 'the latest aggression (against Western Slavonia) was committed with the tacit approval of the international community and was followed by a mild reaction of the UN Security Council which is unacceptable'. The UN Security Council was bound to ensure 'liberation of the occupied Serb population and withdrawal of the Croatian army to the old lines of separation between the warring parties'. If this was not fulfilled RS and RSK were 'determined to liberate the Serb population and the whole area of Western Slavonia by all available means'.

Pakrac (55 miles SE of Zagreb) falls to Croatian forces, 5,000 civilians, troops surrender. Bosnian Serbs expel 9 Catholic nuns to Croatia in retaliation, convents abandoned. 800-1,000 Serbs taken away by Croatia despite UN protests. UN Security Council passes Resolution condemning Croatia behaviour in Pakrac, Serb missile attacks, calls on Croatia to withdraw to previous positions. Serb war-criminal Seselj sends 'volunteers' to defend Krajina, as is 'Arkan' (Zeljko Raznatovic). Drunk French peacekeepers throw grenades killing Bosnian soldier. Serbs in Maglaj wound 6 British peacekeepers, drawing 'strong protest' from UN to local Serb headquarters, also shell Bihac killing 1, wounding 6 (4 children).

May 5

Croatia shows hundreds of well-treated prisoners to TV to disprove charges it is mistreating them. Croats, Serbs move forces into UN separation zones, some shelling reported. Croatian authorities say minors and men over 60 to be released that night. Prime Minister Valentić, in Pakrac, says all civilians may return to be 'peacefully reintegrated into the Croatian system'. UN official reports both sides concentrating troops in E. Croatia. Sarajevo airport closed for all but UN military flights, Serbs shell Mt. Igman road and government threatens retaliatory shelling of Serb supply lines if it continues. Government troops launch 'probing attack' near Turbe (C. Bosnia), Serbs attack Croatia enclave of Orasje (N. Bosnia), shelling by both sides. Serbs confine Banja Luka Catholic Bishop Komarica to

house arrest, bishop says he has been told nuns abducted in stolen ICRC vehicles. US to give \$28 military in aid to refugees in Croatia, Bosnia. Ukrainian peacekeeper killed in Zepa.

Government of FR Yugoslavia forwarded letter to the UN Security Council condemning aggression of Croatia against Srpska Krajina as well as the crimes which had systematically been committed against the Serb civilians and captured soldiers. It demanded that the Security Council immediately take measures to stop criminal activities against captured and endangered Serbs and make the Croatian army and police withdraw to their old positions.

The Security Council adopted a presidential statement inviting the warring parties in Western Slavonia to immediately stop all hostilities and enter into negotiations with no delay. The Council condemned the action of the Croatian army as well as shelling of Zagreb committed by the Serbs. It demanded from the Croatian government to fully respect rights of the Serb population in accordance with international standards which they had severely violated. Before this ambassador Garrekhan, representative of the UN Secretary General, had submitted a report on the severe violation of human rights of the Serbs in Western Slavonia.

At the press conference in New York ambassador of Croatia to the UN Mario Nobile said that the action of the Croatian army in Western Slavonia had been peaceful, the Serb population was not mistreated and there was no plundering in that area. He accused ambassador Garrekhan, whose reports had misinformed the Security Council.

May 6

EU military monitors say Serbia moves 27 tanks towards Croatian border, but they are operating in daylight indicating a warning only. Croatian army building up near Osijek where thousands of Serb civilians are being evacuated. Croatia moves 300 troops into UN buffer zone over Drava River. Over 5,000 of western Slavonia's 15,000 Serbs have fled into Bosnia. Croatian Defence Minister Gojko Susak says Serb casualties 450 dead. Krajina Serb leader Martić admits he ordered rocket attack on Zagreb.

May 7

Serbs shell Sarajevo suburb of Butmir killing 11, injuring 40 near tunnel under airport battles around Jewish cemetery, mortars, rockets hit Holiday Inn. Bihac hit for 4th straight day, UN backs off threat of air strikes. Serbs in Krajina fire 24 rockets at Coralici (W. Bosnia). Serbs claim to shoot down Bosnian helicopter near Zepa killing 12, wounding 11. Serbs also blow up 2 Catholic churches, set fire to another in N. Bosnia in retaliation for Croatian offensive. Vice President Ganić tells UN General Rupert Smith government troops will shell Serb civilians if NATO doesn't stop Serb attacks. NATO jets fly over capital but UN doesn't call in strikes. Croatian Chief-of-staff General Zvonimir Červenko meets with leader of Croatian Serbs Borislav Mikelić who are in opposition to Krajina Serbs.

May 8

Serbs fire on Tuzla killing 4, UN protests. Serbs also attack Sarajevo, but UN turns down General Smith's request for air strikes citing safety concerns of peacekeepers. NATO jets circle Lukavica (Serb-held) for 2 hrs. UN confirms Serbs have dozens of heavy weapons within Sarajevo exclusion zone, also says Serb tanks fired on government positions inside zone. 2 killed in Serb artillery attack on Jelah (near Maglaj). UN also reports that it knew of Croatian air strikes against bridge at Bosanska Gradiska during offensive but could not confirm that a convoy of civilians had been attacked.

May 9

UN buses Serb civilians out of area captured by Croatia (first time UN used to help expel Serbs during war). Bosnian Government says UN no longer feels competent to defend Sarajevo after Serb shelling which killed 11. Monument to victims of fascism at Jasenovac reported to have survived Croatian

advance. Akashi meets in Belgrade with Milosevic, Martić, others to try to keep situation in Krajina under control. Serbs concentrating heavy weapons 80 km SE of Zagreb, also fire 3 artillery rounds near Dubrovnik. Serbs also shell Tuzla.

Richard Goldstone, the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal said in The Hague that he had initiated investigation of the persons who were suspected to be responsible for the genocide ethnic cleansing which the Bosnian Croats had deliberately committed over the Muslims from October 1992 till May 1993 in the Lashva valley in Central Bosnia. Goldstone requested that the Tribunal should be provided with information from the UN and other international sources on the plausible new violence and violation of international law committed in Western Slavonia by Croatian units and formations of the Croatian Serbs.

May 10

Fighting in Posavina corridor between Serbs and Croats as Croats claim that town of Orasje (N. of corridor and part of Croat-controlled pocket in region) came under Serb attack. Shells explode in Sarajevo Old Town wounding 4. Artillery shell explodes in Serbian town of Mali Zvornik killing 1, wounding 2, Yugoslavia ambassador to UN says Belgrade will not tolerate attacks on its territory. Krajina leader Martić accuses Croats of massacring 150 in attack on Western Slavonia but no evidence offered.

May 11

National Assembly of Serbia most severely condemned the aggression of Croatia against Srpska Krajina and particularly violation of the truce agreement, as well as crimes committed against Serb civilians. Assembly appealed to the Serbs not to respond by way of reprisal. The Assembly expected that the international community would ensure that the truce agreement would be fully observed, this implying withdrawal of the Croatian armed forces and resumption of the peace negotiations.

French peacekeeper killed, 8 civilians wounded by sniper fire in Sarajevo, government snipers wound 2 in Grbavica. French Foreign Minister Juppé says new French government will debate withdrawal of troops if UN presence is not secured, but also says giving them ability to use more force could be one solution. Serbs still shelling Orasje with 500 shells hitting Matici alone, government shelling Brcko. Serbian leg. condemns Slavonian attack. UN now backing away from accusations that Croatian army shot fleeing civilians.

May 12

Die Presse says Dutch peacekeepers in Bosnia-Herzegovina under investigation for using children to search for mines.

May 13

Bishop Komarica protests to Bosnian Serb leadership after nun and priest's burned bodies found in church destroyed by explosions (Serbs have destroyed 40 in area).

May 14

Heavy fighting around Orasje pocket, Posavina corridor, Croatian and HVO forces shell Brcko after Serbs fire 5,000 shells on Orasje. Government 5th Corps firing on Bosanska Krupa with artillery, mortars to gain control of key road, Serbs firing machine guns at Mt. Igman road. 208 Muslim bussed by Serbs into government territory at Turbe after being forced to pay \$350 each to leave homes, 40 men taken from buses by Serbs.

May 15

Bosnian Serb forces fail to push back Croatian troops after week-long offensive in Orasje- Grebnice-Vidovice areas, UN denies that Croats have launched counter-offensive against Brcko area. Serbs cut off national gas supply line to Sarajevo despite agreement not to do so.

May 16

Heaviest fighting in 2 years hits Sarajevo with hand-to-hand fighting in trenches, mortars, rockets, and heavy artillery, at least 5 killed, 26 civilians, 2 peacekeepers wounded. Fighting begins with government mortar attack on Serb military base near Serb supply road to Pale, Serbs attack government positions near Lukavica. Government plea for NATO air strike turned down despite presence of NATO planes overhead. Boutros-Ghali said to be favouring reduction and redeployment of UN forces. Croatian ambassador to UN Mario Nobilo tells UN Security Council that Croatian forces will complete withdrawal from buffer areas of Sector South that day. Croatian Serb commander General Milan Celeketic hands in resignation to Martić saying he no longer has 'the moral force necessary' to lead troops. Tudjman in Bonn for conversations with Kohl, Kinkel promises again that Croatian troops will withdraw.

May 17

UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 994 demanding from the warring parties in Western Slavonia to withdraw their forces from the zone of separation without delay, and that Croatia should fully respect rights of the Serb population, this including freedom of movement and access of representatives of international humanitarian organisations. It also demanded to observe the existing agreements and abstain from taking any measures and actions that could lead to escalation of the hostilities.

Milosevic, in negotiations with US Contact Group representative Robert Frasure, reportedly ready to recognise Bosnia-Herzegovina in return for 200 day lifting of sanctions. Heavy shelling continues in Sarajevo with UN reporting hundreds falling, but also saying it is mainly 'military on military' (15 wounded including 2 peacekeepers, 5 government soldiers, and 8 civilians). Serbs fire 12 shells in Safe Area of Bihac killing 3, wounding others. UN says Serbs fail to gain ground in NE offensive to strengthen narrow supply corridor with Serbia. Serbian administration in Kosovo plans to settle 10,000 refugees from Slavonia in Kosovo.

May 18

Shelling and sniping in Sarajevo kills 2, wounds 7. Both sides pledge not to resume fighting unless attacked. Government forces take town and 3 villages S. of Bihac, Serbs have apparently evacuated up to 6,000 Serb civilians from area. Serbs blow up 6th Catholic church in recent weeks in Banja Luka area. Catholic bishop in Banja Luka, Franjo Komarica goes on hunger strike in protest, while UN says 'an atmosphere of panic and fear reigns' among remaining Croats. UN orders Serbs, Croats to move from buffer zones near Krajina. Serbian Orthodox church in Belgrade issues condemnation of violence against Catholics saying 'evil is evil, regardless of who does it and against whom'. Slovene government denies entry visa to Patriarch Pavle saying his visit could cause ethnic tensions within Slovenia.

May 19

Government troops reported to be burning Serb homes in retaken Bihac area. Some mortar explosions in Sarajevo as lull in fighting sets in. NATO asks members to confirm their commitment to sending in troops to help with UN withdrawal if needed.

May 20

Assembly of Srpska Krajina demanded that the Supreme Defence Council should urgently make an analysis of the fall of Western Slavonia and reorganise the army to ensure the defence of the Republic and take back the occupied areas. The Assembly also established a commission to ascertain individual responsibility of government and army authorities for the events in Western Slavonia. The government of RSK was ordered to demand from the international community to force Croatia to immediately withdraw from the territories of Western Slavonia. The Assembly unanimously decided on unification between RSK and the Republika Srpska and that a decision should be made at the joint session of the two assemblies in May 1995.

Fighting in Posavina corridor near Brcko. Macedonia Defence Minister Blagoj Handziski returns from US trip, says two countries agree on new forms of co-operation, including training in US. UN says government troops in Bihac not systematically burning Serb homes as Serbs claim.

May 21

Prime Minister of Srpska Krajina Borislav Mikelic said that unification between RSK and the Republika Srpska was a matter that should be thought over since it could make the position of Krajina even more unfavourable. He also said that the military leadership of RSK and President Milan Martic were responsible for the fall of Western Slavonia and not the government and parliament of RSK.

Thousands of Croatian Serbs heading into Bosnia. UN reports almost 2,000 explosions in Posavina corridor as fighting heats up with Serbs launching artillery, infantry attacks against government positions along Orasje-Samac line, and attack government positions on Mt. Trebevic and Treskavica (S. of Sarajevo). Karadzic threatens to take UN personnel hostage if air strikes are carried out, also pledges to take Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde.

UN says 1,400 Croatian troops have not left buffer zones in Dalmatia as of previous day.

Approximately 4,000 Serb refugees from Croatia 'Operation Blitz' (May 1-2) leave shelters, head to E. Slavonia. Croatian authorities admit that 20 Serbs were killed in crossfire during operation. Contact Group officials say Milosevic close to making recognition deal.

May 22

Serbs raid UN heavy weapons depot, taking 2 guns, later shell Sarajevo killing 3, wounding 6.

May 23

Frasure fails to get Milosevic to agree to recognise Bosnia. UN Security Council extends sanctions against Bosnian Serbs for their failure to accept peace plan. Croatian Bishop Franjo Komarica in 6th day of hunger strike to protest Serb attacks on Croats, Catholic churches, and clergy.

May 24

General Smith warns Bosnian Serbs and government forces to stop using banned weapons in exclusion zone by noon on the 25th, and tells Serbs to return 4 guns taken from collection points or NATO air strikes will be ordered. Karadzic responds that UN failure to stop Croatian offensive in Croatia means UN has betrayed Serbs, says if UN orders strikes 'we are going to treat them as our enemies'. Heavy fighting at Debelo Brdo hill in southern part of Sarajevo killing 5, wounding 20. Government troops push Serbs out of several villages in Bihac fighting. HVO and Croatian troops putting pressure on Serbs in Livno valley. Perry, in Germany, says he has been 'very forceful' in urging UN to use air strikes. Bosnian Serb legislation votes to unify with Krajina Serbs. UN estimates 100 Croatian, 50 Serbs still in Dalmatian buffer zones, and that 11,000 Serb refugees have left since the Croatian offensive.

Assembly of the Republika Srpska supported the decision of the Assembly of Srpska Krajina adopted on 20 May 1995 on unification of RS and RSK in a single state. Speaker of the Assembly of RS Momcilo Krajisnik said that such single state west from the Drina would just be a transitional creation for a short term and it would precede unification of all Serbs which would occur soon after.

May 25

Milosevic talked in Belgrade with Alexander Zotov, special Russia envoy. During those talks they exchanged their views on the possibilities for settlement of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. At a press conference in Zagreb UN special rapporteur for human rights Tadeus Mazowiecki said that during the Croatian offensive against Western Slavonia there had been cases of violation of human rights and killings of civilians which could not be justified by military actions. During the offensive civilian buildings had been shelled, there had been plundering and destruction of the property belonging to the Serbs. He said that it was difficult to determine the proportions of such actions since during the first five days of the Croatian offensive the access to those areas had been banned to the international observers.

Four hours after the expiration of the ultimatum UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia Rupert Smith had given to stop combat in the Sarajevo zone, in 'Dual-key' NATO air strikes NATO aircraft (US, Spain, Dutch, French) fired two missiles at Serb ammunition site 1.2 miles from Karadzic headquarters, but do not do substantial. Serbs retaliate by shelling Tuzla, killing approximately 70 most outside a cafe. Serbs also attack UN weapons storage depot near Sarajevo. Both attacks said to be in defiance of UN. Shelling also of Srebrenica, Bihac and Gorazde. Russians calls for 'maximum restraint in the use of force' on air strikes, but Jeltsin says Serbs were warned.

May 26

Early in the morning Akashi demanded from the Muslims and Serb to withdraw their heavy weapons from around Sarajevo and store them in depots by noon that day. Akashi warned both sides on this rather dangerous situation. He said there was an urgent need for desisting from the military option and turning to a peace dialogue by all parties. An hour and a half before the expiration of the ultimatum six NATO aircraft attacked Serb positions near Pale.

Serbs retaliate by stealing weapons in UN depots, then by seizing 145 UN military observers and peacekeepers hostage. Bosnian Serb TV shows 6 of the peacekeepers handcuffed to poles near ammunition dumps and Mladic tells Smith that their lives will be in danger if there are any more air strikes. British Prime Minister Major suggests it may be necessary to withdraw British troops from Bosnia. France demands that UN protect peacekeepers or France will withdraw its contingent. Clinton calls hostage taking 'totally wrong', Pentagon orders aircraft carrier and cruiser into Adriatic Sea. After Milosevic intervenes, and after Lt. General Bernard Janvier, the UN commander, pledges no more air strikes, the hostages are released over several weeks.

The Government of FR Yugoslavia expressed deep concern for the resumed escalation of combat in Bosnia-Herzegovina since it undermined the peace process and favoured those who supported violent solutions in the Yugoslav crisis. The FR Government invited the warring parties to immediately stop their military activities and supported the proposal made that day by Akashi that both parties should immediately cease combat with the aim of creating necessary conditions for resumption of the dialogue and reaching a political settlement.

May 27

Serbs seize more hostages bringing total to over 200. Serbs disguised as French peacekeepers capture 12 French peacekeepers at Vrbana Bridge in central Sarajevo, then get in firefight with UN reinforcements (1 French soldier killed, 4 Serbs). Mladic calls Smith, demands release of 4 captured Serbs. France sends aircraft carrier *Foch* to Adriatic to pressure Serbs. NATO meets in emergency

session but cannot decide how to respond. 1 French peacekeeper killed by sniper in Sarajevo. Tuzla shelled.

The Information Service of the General Staff of the Army of the Republika Srpska issued a statement saying that after finding out that the NATO forces will resume their attacks on targets of the Republika Srpska, the General Staff assigned to command positions, depots, fire positions and other installations captured members of UNPROFOR and other foreign citizens who, acting against the Serbs have proved to be their enemies. Members of UNPROFOR and other captured foreigners are safe and will be treated correctly, while their fate will depend on the future decisions and actions of the NATO forces.

The Committee for Defence and Security of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly adopted in Budapest a resolution condemning 'the barbarian taking of the unarmed UN military observers whom the Bosnian Serbs use as a human shield, which is opposite to all humanitarian principles, international conventions and rules of acting in war'. The Committee demanded that the hostages should be set free and it invited all warring parties to immediately stop their aggression and attacks against civilians. It also expressed its support to the efforts to establish peace and gave credits to the NATO for its contribution in achieving those targets.

President Chirac had a telephone conversation with President Milosevic and appealed to him to use all his influence over the Bosnian Serbs in order to make them set free the UN peace-keepers which they took hostage.

The UN Security Council considered the situation in Bosnia but could not reach agreement on a presidential statement since Russia opposed to the proposal. In a statement given by the President of the Security Council, Jean Bernard Merimé, the Council condemned the artillery attacks of the Bosnian Serbs on the Safe Areas and demanded they should immediately stop them. The Council stressed that all parties should observe the Security Council Resolutions on Safe Areas. Merimée pointed out that the Security Council was deeply concerned of the totally unacceptable actions of the Bosnian Serbs (taking of hostages) which strongly affected the security and freedom of movement of UNPROFOR and UN personnel and it demanded from them to immediately set free all persons they had taken.

May 28

33 British in Gorazde and 8 Canadians in Ilijas seized bringing total number of hostages now to 325. Serbs shoot down helicopter near Cetingrad in Serb-held Croatia killing Bosnian Foreign Minister Irfan Ljubijankic (1 of 3 co-presidents of governing Party of Democratic Action). UN spokesman Ivanko says Serb army now acting 'like a terrorist organisation'. NATO aircraft fly over Pale drawing anti-aircraft fire, but do not fire back. Serb Lt. Col. Milovan Milutinovic says 168 peacekeepers held at 'potential air strike targets'. Serbs have now taken 200 guns/mortars from UN collection points, also have cut off water, electricity, gas to Sarajevo, continue to shell Tuzla killing 1, wounding 2.

Borislav Mikelic, Prime Minister of Srpska Krajina, forwarded a letter to the Assembly of RSK severely criticising President Milan Martic and Minister of Foreign Affairs Milan Babic. He pointed to the decision of the Assembly of RSK to enter into the process of prompt unification with the Republika Srpska which, in his opinion, had been a great error.

May 29

Contact Group meeting in Berlin, agrees to expand peacekeeping force rather than limit it so as to protect UN forces or allow them to evacuate. Serbs push offensive in north with use of captured weapons. 5,000 British troops to join French and American forces (2,000 marines) in Adriatic. Clinton administration official says use of US troops to conduct commando actions to free hostages not ruled out. Hurd says there must be better co-ordination between NATO, UN, and that 'we are not going to be combatants in this war'. French ambassador to US says France must find credible ways to reinforce peacekeepers 'or the withdrawal will have to take place'. Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev says 'Russia

can no longer tolerate barbarity as regards to peacekeepers in Bosnia, Russian envoy Alexander Zotov says 'we are really outraged...it was quite unfortunate the local (Serb) leadership resorted to those extreme actions'. Serbs seize 35 UN armoured vehicles from hostages, shell road connecting Sarajevo to Split near Mostar. 900 shells fired in Posavina corridor.

Assembly of the Republika Srpska Krajina cast a vote of non-confidence and ousted the government of the Prime Minister Borislav Mikelic.

May 30

North Atlantic Council demands that the shelling of Safe Areas be stopped and that UNPROFOR members and UN observers held hostage by the Bosnian Serbs be released unharmed, unconditionally. British forces begin landing in Croatia. John Major sends message to Karadzic, Mladic saying they will be held personally responsible if any British hostages are harmed. 174 French, 55 Canadian, 41 Ukrainian, 37 Russian, 34 British, and 26 others now being held hostage. Government attacks in Mt. Ozren area gains ground.

Milosevic discussed with Russian special envoy Alexander Zotov the crisis and escalation of fighting in Bosnia. Zotov conveyed a message of President of Russia Boris Jeltsin asking Milosevic to assist in resolving the Bosnian conflict and setting free the captured members of UNPROFOR whom the Bosnian Serbs took hostages.

May 31

Bosnian Serbs call for talks which will give security guarantees to Serbs, but UN rejects this saying hostages must be freed unconditionally (UN spokesman Ivanko comments 'UN appears to be beyond any reconciliation with the Serbs', while General Smith says Mladic is 'behaving like a terrorist'. French aircraft carrier arrives off Croatia. 20 British troops arrive in C. Bosnia. UN estimates Serbs have stolen 16 APCs, 6 tanks, and hundreds of uniforms and helmets. Heavy fighting for hours in Sarajevo with artillery, also in Gorazde. French say new rapid deployment force (RDF) will be under UN command. Clinton says US ground troops being considered to help possible UN evacuation if NATO needs them. Bosnian Serb Foreign Minister Aleksa Buha says changing UNPROFOR mandate would mean war. Serbian Foreign Minister Vladislav Jovanovic says Contact Group and Belgrade may reach a deal. US envoy Frasure in Belgrade for talks to try to get Milosevic to help in releasing hostages.

June 1

British troops landing in Split with heavy weapons. French Foreign Minister Alain de Charette says US and French policy 'are now the same'. Serbs taken 1st civilian UN worker prisoner in Banja Luka. Karadzic warns that rescue attempts of hostages 'would resemble a butcher's shop'. 350 shells hit Gorazde, heavy fighting also in Srebrenica and near Doboj. Germany, in policy switch says it will send more than 2,000 troops to help with UN redeployment.

June 2

Serbs shoot down US F-16 with SA-6 missile while on routine patrol over Banja Luka, pilot cannot be located despite search and rescue effort. Clinton meets with Perry, Shalikashvili to discuss Bosnia policy, says policy 'remains firm' on limiting role of Americans. Serbs release 121 hostages sending them to Serbia after Milosevic 'appeal'. Bosnian Serbs call this goodwill gesture to the world. French armed forces chief, Admiral Jacques Lanxade, resigns after Chirac accuses his military leaders in Bosnia of cowardice. NATO Defence Ministers announce RDF which will bring total (with British troops) to 10,000, US to supply AC-130 gunships, AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter, cargo and troop-carrying aircraft, and other equipment. Members to be under UN control but will wear national uniforms and not blue helmets. Serbs attack 2 UN positions and seize more hostages, renege on promise to provide

information on US pilot despite telling AP that he was in their hands. Croatian Foreign Minister Granic says concessions given to Milosevic are 'moral capitulation'.

June 3

In Paris ministers of defence of fourteen member countries of the EU and NATO, with soldiers deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, decided to establish 'a Rapid Reaction Force' in Bosnia. Its assignment was to strengthen protection of UNPROFOR and help them carry out their mission within the mandate they had been given.

Serbs attack Dutch peacekeeping post in Srebrenica while Bosnian government says 2 of its army corps within 1 mile of linking up on Mt. Ozren (near Tuzla). UN says 1,900 shells fired on this front, 1,300 more in Majevisa Hills.

June 4

For the time being the NATO suspended possible attacks on the anti-aircraft batteries of the Army of RS after shooting down the American F-16. This was explained by the concern and uncertainty for the fate of the pilot as well as by the fact that part of the captured members of UNPROFOR were still kept by the Bosnian Serbs.

Serbs refuse to clarify fate of American pilot, resume shelling of civilians killing 5, wounding 6 in Sarajevo suburb. Mladic threatens to widen war by launching missile attacks on heavily-populated areas of Croatia in retaliation for new Croatian army offensive along border with Bosnia (near Knin).

June 5

Croatian army offensive continues as Croatia tries to cut off supply line for Serbs. Serb leader Martić appeals to UN to stop Croatian attack or face renewed missile attacks on Zagreb and Split. Croatia said to have gained control of 4 key mountains. Serbs continue to shell cities in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Washington announces that it has received beeper signals from area where US pilot was downed.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin says Russia opposes NATO taking independent stance in Bosnia. Greek Foreign Minister and Defence Minister and Milosevic aide put pressure on Karadzic to release hostages.

After talks with Milan Martić, President of Srpska Krajina and chief of cabinet of Croatian President, Akashi appealed to the warring parties to abstain from further military activities in Sector South. He informed the UN Secretary General and President of the UN Security Council of the current situation in Sector South. President of the Security Council Detlev Runkau informed journalists that after the report submitted by the UN Secretariat on the artillery and infantry attack of the Croatian forces against the Serbs in the region of Dinara mountain, the Council 'has expressed its concern for this military action taken by Croatia'.

June 6

NATO ministers of defence agree on the establishment of an international quick reaction force, existing of French, British and Dutch forces.

US says signal from pilot has ceased, but Bosnian Serb official says they are not holding him. Croatian forces still trying to cut supply road for Serbs, but Serbs have not launched counterattack. US calls on Croatia to cease shelling of area. US says 1,500 US troops and 50 helicopters would be moving from Germany to Italy although they are not on alert. Karadzic says he has 'no immediate plans' to free hostages. Milosevic reported to have expressed concerns over Croatia moves against Krajina to Akashi. Kozyrev now says Russian 'somewhat reassured' about NATO RRF role in Bosnia. Talks between Frasure and Milosevic break down when Milosevic refuses to let organisation other than UN Security Council reintroduce sanctions.

June 7

Serbs free 108 hostages claiming to have got agreement from NATO to halt air strikes. 3 more hostages released later in the day. UN official tells *NY Times* that there are to be no more air strikes. Bosnian Foreign Minister Sacirbey accuses UN of placing higher priority on saving troops than Bosnian civilians. Serbs take tank, 100mm gun from UN depot near Sarajevo. Heavy fighting in Sarajevo with 1 patient in hospital killed by stray bullet. Artillery being used again in city. Siege of Orasje now 1 month long. Milosevic's office says all remaining hostages will be released in next few days. Serbs halt 10-truck food convoy headed for Zepa saying it is carrying ammunition, launch heavy attack on town, also fire 4 mortar rounds into Tuzla, attack government positions on Mt. Trebevic and positions controlling communication in Lukavica-Pale.

Prime Ministers of Croatia and Slovenia, Nikica Valentic and Janez Drnovsek, met to discuss moot issues in relations between two countries. It was said that most of the border issues had been resolved except the claim made by Slovenia to be granted a path to open sea at the Piran bay.

June 8

A special unit of US Marines, consisting of around forty men, found and pulled out from the territory of the Republica Srpska pilot Scott O'Grady whose plane had been shot down by the anti-aircraft defence of the Army of RS (pilot had hidden from Serbs for six days) after he established voice contact with a NATO aircraft in the vicinity.

With 318 votes for and 99 against the House of Representatives adopted a Resolution requiring that Clinton should unilaterally lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims.

Fighting along Kupres-Livno front, 3 killed, 22 wounded in Sarajevo. Serbs fire artillery on Dubrave-Crni Vrh (in Teslic region). Serbs fire 40mm tank cannons at government positions on Igman road which have been targeting Serb supply routes. British APC hit by small arms fire at Sarajevo airport, 3 French APCs fired on by tanks. UN says 3 Serb tanks operating S. of Debelo Brdo, and that Serbs have taken tank and 100 mm gun from UN depot. Serbs reported to have fired white phosphorus rounds (banned by General convention) at UN personnel near Vrbanja bridge. France deploys heavy mortars in Igman Demilitarised Zone to support peacekeepers. Serbs agree to reopen aid flights into Sarajevo, but UN says it doesn't have the truck capacity to bring in the needed 6,000 tons per month.

June 9

White House refuses request by Prime Minister Silajdzic to lift arms embargo, and says President will veto legislation requiring it. Serbs promise Red Cross access to remaining hostages soon. Serbs give remains of Bosnian Foreign Minister Ljubjankic to government in Bihac. Krajina Serb planes bomb Croatian positions in Dinara range as Croatia offensive in area continues. French president Chirac tells Greek Prime Minister that Serbs are not fighting for relations but instead are 'terrorists'.

Former Prime Minister of Sweden Carl Bildt was appointed new Co-Chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia as a representative of the European Union. He replaced David Owen who had decided to resign from this duty.

June 10

Three British peacekeepers wounded by mine in Gornji Vakuf, Canadian peacekeeper wounded by sniper near Visoko. Serbs fire 15 rounds from 88mm at UN depot in Hrasnica, Butmir suburbs, 27 mortar rounds from Kovacici into Hrasnica. Tudjman visits Okucani (W. Slavonia), tells Serbs that another lightning offensive will be carried out if they do not reintegrate with Croatia by end of October when UNCRO mandate runs out.

June 11

Fighting in Gorazde, Dobo, Bihac, and in Orasje-Bosanski Samac area. Government and Croats co-operation near Travnik. Government forces claim to be making gains in Majevisa Hills. Malaysian peacekeepers near Breza (N. of Sarajevo) forced to abandon positions after 5 artillery rounds fired at them. *New York Times* reports Yugoslavia still paying salaries of some Bosnian Serb officers, and supplying troops with ammunition, fuel, and training. Government Vice President Ganic rejects Boutros-Ghali's peace plan since this would allow Serbs to keep occupied territory. Bosnian Serbs seize food aid for Muslim in Zepa.

June 12

1st aid shipment in 3 weeks reaches Sarajevo brought in by government drivers escorted by Bosnian Serb police after Akashi approves scaled-back UN operations in exchange for allowing aid into Sarajevo, 5 other areas. Red Cross says Serbs have stopped them from visiting UN hostages. Serbs continue shelling Croat positions on Orasje-Samac front including villages of Ostra Luka and Vidovice. Milan Babic named Prime Minister in Krajina to replace Borislav Mikelic

June 13

Serbs say they have released all but 14 hostages, but promise they will be freed in coming days, Karadzic pronounces crisis over, but says if Serbs are attacked they will defend themselves. Akashi contends that no deal cut with Serbs over hostages. Government troops reported massing at several locations near Sarajevo for possible offensive to break Sarajevo siege. UN officials say they have been ordered by New York not to challenge Serbs, and Serbs continue to refuse to turn over heavy weapons taken from UN.

June 14

UN now warns that 15,000 government troops are massing N. of Sarajevo, *Nasa Borba* says possibly as many as 20-30,000. Serbs say they will increase shelling of city if attacked. Clinton tells Silajdzic 'the military solution is not available to the Bosnian Government'. 50 Krajina Serbs allowed to return to homes in W. Slavonia region by Croatian government.

June 15

Government attack begins with pre-dawn attack and shelling (1,800 explosions counted by UN) against Serb positions on mountains near Serb supply lines near Ilijas (12 miles N. of Sarajevo) and Vogosca (3 miles N. of city). Government troops attacking around Teslic on Dobo-Banja Luka road. Karadzic calls offensive 'a last try to change the situation on the ground'. Bosnian Government closes only road into city due to danger and warns Sarajevo population to stay inside. Government won't say if this is attempt to break siege but Sacirbey says city cannot live through another winter like this. Government strategy said to be to stretch Serb resources too thin. UN says 91 peacekeepers detained by Serbs still unable to leave posts. Krajina Serb refugees being pressganged into military service in Serbia despite this being illegal according to UN charter. Serbs still holding 26 peacekeepers.

At a closed session in Jahorina the Assembly of the Republika Srpska discussed the current military and political situation. The Assembly also adopted the Decision and Constitutional Law on Unification between the Republika Srpska and Republika Srpska Krajina.

June 16

UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 988 on reinforcement of UNPROFOR and establishment of Rapid Reaction Force. The Council permitted an increase in the number of UNPF/UNPROFOR personnel up to 12,500. Council approved RRF by 13-0 (Russian, China abstain) with troops wearing national uniforms and not using white vehicles.

Government offensive continues causing Serbs to launch counterattack on Sarajevo, killing 20 (including 2 in hospital). UN says government has won some territory N. of city, and may have cut Serb supply lines. Government forces advancing S. of Sarajevo also and may have cut supply route here too. UN reports that government forces have taken 42 heavy weapons from UN depots, disarmed Russian peacekeeping unit. Fighting around Teslic, Mostar. Clinton tells G-7 meeting that he will back Rapid Reaction Force but can not promise to pay for it due to Congress opposition.

June 17

After a several day discussion on the situation in Croatia, based on the report submitted by Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement inviting both parties to co-operate with the UNCRO as fully as possible. The Council 'warns the warring parties, and the Government of the Republic of Croatia in particular, to stop the military operations in the Sector South'.

At the summit in Halifax, Canada, members of the Group-7 of the most industrialised countries of the world and Russia invited all parties in Bosnia to urgently declare a moratorium on military operations in order to enable political negotiations without which no lasting solution to the conflict in Bosnia would be possible to achieve.

Izetbegovic says on TV that troops will eventually lift siege but time might not be right for all-out offensive. Government troops consolidating gains, Pale targeted for missile attacks. Serbs declare 'state of war' exists outside of Sarajevo, suspend civilian authorities, and step up drafting of men. Also call on G-7 summit to denounce government offensive. Some shelling of Sarajevo. Serbian Radical Party's anti-Milosevic rally in Belgrade draws 5,000 supporters, SRS leader Seselj not in attendance since he is in jail.

June 18

Last group of 26 members of UNPROFOR, captured by the Bosnian Serbs on 27 May 1995, set free. Total number of UN in Bosnia-Herzegovina captured and then set free was 388.

Serbs wound 10 in Sarajevo by shelling those lined up for water. UN abandons heavy weapons collection sites leaving 284 artillery pieces subject to Serb seizures, says move necessary to prevent another hostage crisis. Serbs also win release of 4 Serbs being detained by UN, although UN denies it is a prisoner swap. UN reports 700 explosions in Majevica Hills. Serb supply lines N. and S. of capital cut. Serbs declare special mobilisation in Sarajevo area, declare 'state of war'.

June 19

Serbs reject Izetbegovic offer to end offensive if they respect 20-km exclusion zone. UN reports that Pale-Lukavica road still in Serb hands.

June 20

600 Canadian UN soldiers detained by government forces in Visoko who threaten to destroy the camp if they are interfered with. Bosnian forces explain this as necessary so that offensive plans not divulged to Serbs. Fighting on N. and S. fronts of Sarajevo. French peacekeepers destroy Serb tank after being fired on by it. Bosnian Croat leader Zubak says Croatian forces will back government troops 'to the

end'. Serbs shell Croat held territory on Bosnia side of Sava river. Zagreb rejects Krajina demands that Croatian forces withdraw from W. Slavonia, or at least from Dinara heights overlooking Knin, Tudjman says army will retake Krajina if talks fail within a year. Russian special envoy Vitaly Churkin makes unannounced visit to Milosevic and Karadzic to 'exchange ideas'.

June 21

2 Serb warplanes violate no-fly zone but General Janvier rejects NATO request to strike at airbase. Western diplomats, UN sources confirm that a deal was struck with Serbs in secret meetings to remove air strike threat in exchange for hostages (France, Russian, and Greece said to have part of the deal). UN spokesman says NATO request was NATO's way of getting UN to admit that deal was cut. Serbs shell French peacekeepers on Mt. Igman, Danish peacekeepers in E. Sarajevo. 6 civilians killed, 12 wounded by Serb shells in Dobrinja, 3 killed, 11 wounded by Serbian artillery in Sreb. Government troops advance 12 miles S. of Sarajevo, but lose Bihac town of Vrnograc to Bosnian and Krajina Serb forces. Food convoy gets through to Sarajevo, but UNPROFOR troops replaced by UN command with Serb military through Serb territory.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Croatia Mate Granic said in interview given to the Zagreb weekly *Panorama* that Croatia was determined to achieve 'reintegration of the occupied territories' (the Republika Srpska Krajina). 'There is no dilemma on whether these territories will be reintegrated or not, but it is only the question whether it will be achieved peacefully or we shall have to liberate the occupied areas', said Granic.

June 21-23

Co-Chairmen Bildt and Stoltenberg talked in Sarajevo with Izetbegovic, in Zagreb with Tudjman and in Belgrade with Milosevic. The basic aim of these talks was to get newly-appointed Co-Chairman Bildt acquainted with the positions of the key politicians in the region as well as with the possibilities for initiating a new political process directed towards settlement of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

June 22

In an interview given to the BBC Karadzic said that the Army of RS had taken hostages in order to avert NATO from possible future air attacks on the Serb positions in Bosnia. He said that this action had been a mistake.

International Herald Tribune reports that Akashi sent letter to Karadzic reassuring him that RRF will not open roads for convoys by force, and that 'all sides' have caused UNPROFOR problems. US ambassador to UN Albright calls letter 'highly inappropriate'.

June 23

UN Security Council adopted presidential statement expressing its deep concern for a blockade of UNPROFOR in Visoko, Gorazde, Gornji Vakuf and Kladanj imposed by the Bosnian government and restriction of movement for members of UNPROFOR in Sarajevo placed upon it by the Bosnian Serbs. The Council emphasised that such actions were unacceptable and demanded that all parties should fully respect the security and freedom of movement of members of UNPROFOR.

June 24

Both Serb and Government troops steal supplies from French peacekeepers on Igman. Former commander of Yugoslavia army special units, General Mile Mrksic, reported to be in charge of reorganising Krajina Serb forces proving allegations of Yugoslavian involvement in Croatia. Croatia protests to Akashi presence of increasing Yugoslavia forces in Croatia especially in Krajina.

June 25

Government troops recapture strategic hill outside of Sarajevo, also continue block peacekeeping movements until clarification received of RRF role (government fearful RRF will hamper offensive). Shelling and sniping kill 9 in Sarajevo.

June 26

German Chancellor Kohl's cabinet agrees to send military forces to support UN in Bosnia, Belgrade condemns move. Serbs again shell Sarajevo killing 1, wounding 8, also fire on UN convoy provoking French peacekeeper warning shots.

June 27

EU mediator Bildt says increased war likely in near future. Serbs shell Sarajevo again killing 1 child, 1 man while wounding 7 more children, 8 others. Karadzic rejects EU truce offer saying 'temporary cease-fires ...have been misused by our enemies for regrouping and for the further obtaining of weapons', while Mladic says Serbs will fight and are prepared for protracted conflict. Serbs fire on civilian targets in NW, and in Sarajevo killing 2, wounding 15. Sacirbey says Bosnia prepared to accept UN withdrawal, although government is not seeking this. Tudjman says Croatia not planning offensive against Krajina Serbs unless provoked.

June 28

Serb rockets hit TV station, nearby buildings in Sarajevo killing 5 in retaliation for government shelling, attacks on Serb-held suburbs. Karadzic tells troops in honour of Vidovan holiday, attacks should be stepped up to end war. NATO approves 'last resort' withdrawal plan.

June 29

Government demands UN mission be reviewed even as 3 mortar rounds hit UN headquarters (UN spokesman comments 'it is difficult to say but, when we receive 3 rounds together, we are obliged to consider this as a direct attack'). Zubak tell British, French RRF that they will only be allowed to stay around Tomislavgrad for 1 month. Croatia protests to UN over growing Yugoslavian presence on Croatia territory (5,000 troops cited).

June 30

7 wounded in Sarajevo when shell hits market, 13 others injured elsewhere. Government offensive continues, Serbs press offensive in Bihac. Bosnian Government says it will no longer deal with Akashi since he is too conciliatory to the Serbs. Clinton tells Congress \$50 military from Pentagon budget will be used to support RRF. US petitions UN to impose travel ban against 40 key Bosnian Serb leaders ('94 UN sanctions already prohibit non-peace talk travel) including Karadzic, Mladic. French Foreign Ministry officials accuse US of supplying, instructing Muslim-Croatian forces, US denies it. German Bundestag votes 386-258 to send jet fighters to fly cover for RRF and medical personnel to the territory of the former Yugoslavia (considerable protest during debate). Serbs say German decision is tantamount to a military invasion.

July 2

UN HQ at Sarajevo shelled by Bosnian Serbs.

July 3

UN convoy on Mount Igman fired at and returned fire.

July 4

Serbs fire on French peacekeepers for 3rd straight day with French returning fire. 1 killed, 17 wounded in Sarajevo shelling. Bosnian Croats again say they will not allow RRF to pass until their mission is clarified. Croatian Prime Minister Nikica Valentic says Operation Blitz (May 1-2) was limited and no new attacks will be made, but Croatian troop movements reported near Krajina. Muslim National Council of the Sandzak reports to UN that ethnic cleansing, terror in region continuing. 90 US logistics troops arrive in Split to support RDF. Austria tells Germany it may use its airspace for planes supporting UN mission.

July 5

UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 1003 extending the existing partial suspension of the sanctions against FR Yugoslavia in the fields of air and sea traffic and culture and sports for another 75 days or until 18 September 1995. The Council also called for early mutual recognition between the States of the former Yugoslavia within their internationally recognised borders, recognition between the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the FR of Yugoslavia, and urged the authorities of FR of Yugoslavia to take it. 14 members of the Security Council voted for the Resolution while Russia abstained.

Serb plane attacks Ostrozac power plant in NW Bosnia (3rd no-fly zone violation in 2 months), Silajdzic says embargo makes UN accomplice to murder. 1 killed, 14 wounded in shelling of Sarajevo. UN peacekeepers move 3 convoys into Sarajevo over Mt. Igman route under cover of night. 2 British armoured vehicles on Mt. Igman fired on by Serb mortars, anti-aircraft batteries. AFP reports that 140,000 of 760,000 workers in Croatia have not been paid in months.

July 6

Serbs shell Srebrenica killing 4, wounding 17, pin down Dutch peacekeepers, hit Dutch observation post with tanks, mortars, and hit refugee centre. Serbs reported to be attacking N. and S. perimeters of enclave. Sarajevo's suburbs hit by mortars killing 6, wounding 11. UN relief convoy arrives in Sarajevo under cover of fog. EU mediator Bildt meets with UN, Bosnian Government officials trying to convince government to allow 12,000-man British-French RRF to be allowed in. Zubak tells RRF that it must leave Herzegovina by end of month if his questions about its mission not clarified. UN says RRF not subject to civilian vetoes (Akashi) but will be resorted to Janvier.

July 7

Serbs attack Mt. Igman road where Bildt is travelling, and then fire 3 rockets near his helicopter site after Bildt comments that he is not a tourist and not going to Pale because he doesn't think he will achieve anything there. More Serb artillery attacks on Sarajevo brings 2-day casualty toll to 8 dead, 21 wounded. Serbs claim 5 civilians killed, 4 wounded in Serb parts of city. Heavy Serb attacks on Srebrenica, UN convoys fired at near Tuzla, Sarajevo. Amnesty International says most of Bosnian atrocities work of the Serbs although all sides have committed some.

July 8

Serbs launch tank, infantry assaults on Srebrenica with dozens reported dead and wounded, NATO planes called in but not requested to attack. Dutch observation post under attack and 15 forced to

withdraw. 1 Dutch peacekeeper killed. Serb shell hits line of people waiting for water in Sarajevo killing several.

July 9

UN officials tell Mladic that air strikes will be called for if Serbs continue attacks on Dutch peacekeeping force in Srebrenica causing Dutch to return fire and stymie advance. Serbs now hold 32 Dutch peacekeepers hostage. Serbs continue to bombard Sarajevo. 2,000 French enter Tomislavgrad area despite Croatia warnings against it.

July 10

Serbs tell refugees in Srebrenica to leave safe area within 48 hours, some civilians already fleeing into hills. Dutch peacekeepers fight with Serbs on outskirts of town, UN again declines to call in NATO air strikes due to hostages and British UN official says 'the Serbs have limited aims' in Srebrenica. Serb guns hit Sarajevo and Zepa. Bosnian Government accuses UN of 'deliberate inactivity' around Srebrenica, and women in Tuzla threaten to blockade UN unless UN stops Serbs in Srebrenica. After carrying out an investigation in Western Slavonia and Bosnia UN special rapporteur on human rights Tadeus Mazowiecki submitted a report to the UN Commissioner for Human Rights on violation of humanitarian law committed by units of the Croatian Army during and after the four day's action when they had taken Western Slavonia. Specifying the breeches it was said that the Croatian government was responsible for violation of humanitarian law committed in this military operation, of which many were severe but not done to a large scale.

July 11

Srebrenica falls to Serb forces, NATO carries out 2 air strikes requested by Dutch after observation posts, UN base compound, and hospital come under fire. Attack hits Serb tank but UN calls off 3 strike after Serbs threaten to kill 30 Dutch peacekeepers and Mladic promises to shell refugees. Mladic says he wants to 'demilitarize' area and that civilians have nothing to fear if they stay. Serbs also threatening to take Zepa where 16,000 refugees are located. Silajdzic says UN failure is betrayal and sentence of death for people in Srebrenica. Thousands now fleeing to nearby Potocari where Dutch forces remain even as Serbs continue shelling them. Serbs shell UN headquarters in Sarajevo in response to air strikes. 5th Corps gains ground near Cojluk. Serb shells hit Catholic cathedral, residential area in Sarajevo.

July 12

Serbs expel 5,500 Muslim refugees from Potocari where up to 30,000 seek safety. Mladic comes into area at head of convoy of buses, trucks and personally takes charge of expulsion. Women, children, and elderly told to abandon camp while males over 16 held for interrogation. UN decries 'cleansing' as 'outrageous', US says it is largest single instance in war. Izetbegovic says government probably will not renew UN mandate in November, demands UN restore Safe Area with force. French President Chirac calls for military action to recapture Srebrenica but he is not joined in this. Boutros-Ghali says UN force not capable of defending other Safe Areas, much less recover Srebrenica. President Clinton presses UN to keep troops in Bosnia even though they cannot carry out task. British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind says 'with. must remain an option' but also calls on Milosevic to pressure Bosnian Serbs to 'behave in a more civilised fashion'.

UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 1004 demanding that the Bosnian Serb forces cease their offensive and withdraw from the Safe Area of Srebrenica immediately. The Security Council also demanded that the parties respect fully the status of the Safe Area of Srebrenica in accordance with the

Agreement of 18 April 1993 but does not threaten action. Karadzic comments 'srebrenica is our country'. EU demanded Bosnian Serb withdrawal from Srebrenica.

July 13

Muslim refugees from Srebrenica tell of hangings, torture, rapes as Serbs take over town, UN estimates 8,000 have arrived in Tuzla. NATO General Secretary Claes warns that Zepa is now in danger due to artillery, tank, and shelling attacks. Serbs demand that Zepa and Gorazde be demilitarised even as they continue to shell both it and Sarajevo. France demands that Srebrenica be retaken by force if necessary, Clinton comments 'this is a serious challenge to the UN mission'. Russia criticises French proposal to retake Srebrenica since it would involve the use of force. Dutch Defence Minister Voorhoeve comments 'we have no authority to demand anything...the Serbs have won'.

Contact Group held a high-level meeting in London. Deputy US Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke and Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia Bildt and Stoltenberg also participated. Bildt informed the meeting of the visits he had made in the previous weeks. The Contact Group gave its support to Bildt to continue with his peace efforts. It also supported the Security Council Resolution 1004 on the Safe Area of Srebrenica.

July 14

Serbs begin full scale attack on Zepa, shell 3 UN positions in enclave, move tanks and infantry on town, NATO jets fly overhead but do not attack. UN tells its force of 79 Ukrainian peacekeepers not to resist. French Defence Minister sets 48 hour deadline for European allies to meet French demand to use military force. 20,000 refugees from Srebrenica now in Tuzla, continue to tell of atrocities.

The Republika Srpska Krajina State Commission assigned to establish the reasons and ways of the fall of Western Slavonia, completed its work and submitted a report to the Assembly. It was said that Milan Martić, President of RSK, bore the greatest responsibility for taking of Western Slavonia by the Croatian Army. The Commission suggested that the Assembly should call Milan Martić to account for 'not acting in accordance with the Constitution in the field of defence' what caused 'the disgraceful military defeat in Western Slavonia'.

July 15

Serbs press assault on Zepa trying to take heights around town, Serb leadership says it has moved into UN posts and disarmed Ukrainian troops. UN says it has lost radio contact with its troops. In Gorazde government troops seize 4 armoured vehicles and some weapons from Ukrainian troops. Bosnian Government denies this saying it was the action of angry civilians. French pushing plan to defend Gorazde, reportedly have given up on Zepa. British drag feet on response by instead scheduling meeting of Contact Group for the 21st.

July 16

Serbs launch tank, infantry attacks on Zepa, overrun 3 UN peacekeeping posts, but halt later that evening once inside the enclave. NATO planes called in but not for strikes. Karadzic comments 'the Muslim enclaves are not viable and must disappear, or we will do it by force', also says 'ethnic cleansing has never been part of our policy...what's happening is not ethnic cleansing. It's ethnic displacement-- people who want to leave'. Akashi says UN 'in a very difficult position', while Bildt says hard line against Serbs will only broaden war. Government says chief of Yugoslavian General Staff, Momčilo Perišić, led attack on Srebrenica with assistance from Yugoslavia artillery and Arkan's troops. French fire 30 mortar rounds at Serb positions after Serbs attack UN convoys on Igman road.

July 17

Serbs detain Ukrainian peacekeepers, threaten to kill them if NATO uses air strikes. Government troops continue to resist. Serbs temporary halt infantry advance, but continue shelling, officials negotiate for evacuation of enclave's 16,000 Muslim. UN officials still unable to make contact with 4,000 males missing since fall of Srebrenica (Serbs now in violation of international law). AFP says as many as 15-20,000 may be missing. 4,000 soldiers, civilians make it through Serb lines to Tuzla.

July 18

Government troops in Zepa surround UN camp and say they will use Ukrainian peacekeepers as shields unless NATO calls in air strikes (now both sides are using same hostages). Serbs shell Zepa for 5th day, refuse offer of Izetbegovic to negotiate evacuation of women and children. Sacirbey says UN should either leave voluntarily or be shown the way out of Bosnia. US Senate considering legislation which would require US to break arms embargo in certain cases. Karadzic warns that attempts to reinforce Gorazde will mean a war against the Serbs. Croatian media report that Serb forces attacked Croatian troops and UN peacekeepers near Osijek and killed 2. Arkan denies that his troops are in Bosnia due to Milosevic but instead are voluntarily to defend Serbian people. Israeli Prime Minister Rabin says Jordan King Hussein called to suggest that Israel send troops to support Jordan's 2,000 troops which are in Bosnia.

July 19

Serbs claim to have captured Zepa, but government troops are still fighting, civilian authorities may have worked out deal with Serbs. British, UN officials predict fall of Zepa. More accounts of Srebrenica atrocities being reported to UN. Serb and Abdic forces attack across border in Bihac with artillery and tanks. Karadzic says government forces in Gorazde should surrender immediately and that NATO aircraft will be shot down if they help the Muslim. Clinton asks Dole to delay vote on lifting arms embargo before meeting with allies in London.

July 20

Bosnian troops still resisting Serb advances in Zepa despite some civilian leaders' surrender. When negotiations break down, Serbs shell city. US proposes to allies that Serbs be issued ultimatum to leave Gorazde alone or face large-scale air strikes including attacks on military targets, and pre-emptive strikes against missile and anti-aircraft sites, attacks to continue even if hostages are taken. Chirac still favours reinforcing Gorazde with troops supplied by US helicopters but agrees to accept US proposal also. 30,000 refugees now in Tuzla area with 6,600 at airport alone. Bosnian and Krajina Serbs have now taken much territory in W. Bihac. Croatian Foreign Minister Granic says Zagreb will take steps to protect the enclave. Artillery shell hits Bosnian president building while Bildt is visiting. Croatian Serbs take town of Sturlic causing 1,200 to flee while tanks, artillery shell part of Bihac driving back government troops 3 km.

UN Security Council adopted a presidential statement condemning the offensive of the Bosnian Serbs on the Safe Area of Zepa and the recent acts of violence and intimidation of UNPROFOR personnel, which had been committed by the Bosnian Serbs and Muslims. The Council demanded from the Bosnian Serbs to immediately stop their attacks on the Safe Area of Zepa. It condemned violations of humanitarian law and warned that the persons who had committed those acts as well as the givers of such orders would be individually responsible for them.

July 21

The International Conference on Bosnia took place in London. Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence and Chiefs of General Staffs participated of 16 countries: members of the International Contact Group, and troop contributors Italy, Canada, Ukraine, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Bangladesh, Belgium and Turkey. Secretary Generals of UN and NATO Boutros-Ghali and Claes and Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia Bildt and Stoltenberg also participated. The conference gave full support to the peace efforts of the Co-Chairmen. It was emphasised that there was an urgent need for resumption of negotiations between the parties concerned which should be conducted over the territorial and constitutional aspects for settlement of the crisis in Bosnia and based on the plan proposed by the Contact Group. The Bosnian Serbs were severely warned that they would be faced with a resolute, prompt, substantial and decisive reaction, this including the use of air force, in case they tried to take the Safe Area of Gorazde. Christopher says in London that Sarajevo can be included in air strikes without specific authority if shelling continues, and that Russia does not have a veto since these actions are already authorised by UN. Allies agree to reinforce Sarajevo UN garrison, use part of RRF to open relief corridor to Sarajevo. British Defence Minister Rifkind says some countries (British, France) 'are concerned about the risk', while Kozyrev complains that West 'artificially restraining the political process'. Also states that Russia opposed to escalation of use of force by peacekeepers.

The Government of FR Yugoslavia expressed its concern for the escalation of military activities and tension in Bosnia-Herzegovina which jeopardised the efforts directed at strengthening of the peace process and settlement of the crisis through negotiations. The Federal Government particularly appealed to the military leadership of the Republika Srpska not to attack Gorazde since, apart from causing the loss of human lives and suffering of the civil population, the escalation of military activities was also a factor which produced strong negative effects on the peace process and its successful outcome.

More atrocities reported at Srebrenica including Serbs posing as UN peacekeepers and machine-gunning 20-30 women and children, and possible massacre of up to 2,000 men by Serbs, others of rapes and killing of children. British paper *Independent* interviews Serbs living across Drina from Srebrenica who confirm that as many as 4,000 soldiers may have been massacred. Pope John Paul II calls for 'defensive and proportionate' intervention in Bosnia in a 'just war' to defend civilians. Yugoslavian parliament tells Bosnian Serbs not to attack Gorazde as this would endanger the peace process, but Mladic accuses Muslims of aggression and threatens that 'by autumn we will occupy Zepa, Gorazde, Bihac, and, if need be, even Sarajevo and end this war'.

14 German Tornado fighter-bombers arrive in N. Italy for RRF support. Serbs shell Sarajevo wounding 10 including 4 children, 5 children killed by Serb attack in Bihac, 12,000 flee homes. Israel and Jordan launch joint medical relief supply effort for Bosnia Muslims.

Bildt says he has reached deal with Belgrade on recognition of Bosnia, but US says it is not conclusive.

July 22

Serbs fire on convoy killing 1 French peacekeeper, also fire rockets at UN compound killing another French peacekeeper, and shell Zepa. Tudjman, Izetbegovic meet in Split with large delegations including US ambassador to Croatia, Galbraith, Izetbegovic asks for urgent military help which Tudjman promises.

Delegations of Croatia, Muslim-Croatian Federation and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Split adopted a declaration on co-operation and permanent co-ordination of defence activities between Croatia and Bosnia. The declaration was signed by Tudjman, Izetbegovic, Zubak and Silajdzic. It was said that the leadership of Bosnia-Herzegovina and of the Muslim-Croatian Federation invited Croatia to urgently offer military as well as all other kinds of aid for the purpose of defence against the aggression, particularly in the area of Bihac, which has been accepted by of Croatia.

July 23

UN commanders order the Rapid Reaction Force to send artillery units to Sarajevo to protect convoy road after previous day's Serb shelling. UNPROFOR says the situation is escalating. US administration officials say France launched 2 air strikes with 3 Mirage fighters against Pale in retaliation for deaths of French peacekeepers (apparently 1st raid hits home of someone close to Karadzic). Serbs press assaults on Zepa and Bihac, shell Sarajevo killing 6 wounding 35, while UN warns that Bihac is the largest Serb offensive in Bosnia and that Serbs are preparing for major battle for city. Tudjman offers to send emergency military aid to Bihac, while Granic says fall of Bihac will affect his country's 'vital interests'. UN feels this is prelude to Croatia launching offensive against Krajina. UK, US and French representatives delivered ultimatum to Ratko Mladic, commander of the RS army: attacking Gorazde or putting UN lives at risk there would lead to extensive air strikes.

July 24

Boutros-Ghali contends that air strikes must be authorised by him, while US says no. Confusion continues on rules for air strikes. Pale again reported rocked by explosions. 300 British and 500 French soldiers move onto Mt. Igman to establish artillery, light tank positions. Serb shelling wounds 9 in Sarajevo, UN says Bosnia and Krajina Serbs have taken 30 sq. miles in 6-day offensive in Bihac which avoids the UN Safe Area. UN human rights envoy Mazowiecki accuses Serbs in Srebrenica of atrocities, calls findings evidence of 'barbarism', while UN spokesman Chris Gunness says Serb 'actions are an affront to the values of all civilian people'. Kozyrev in Belgrade for meeting with Milosevic, brings Churkin. Milosevic condemns international 'threats... and military action' aimed at Bosnian Serbs.

July 25

The UN Security Council adopted a presidential statement expressing its deep concern for the situation in the Safe Area of Zepa, and in particular for the critical conditions of civilians and other persons protected by international law. The Council invited the Bosnian Serbs to withdraw from the Safe Areas of Srebrenica and Zepa.

After days of conflicting reports, the Safe Area of Zepa crumbles before advancing Bosnian Serb forces. Government denies Zepa has fallen, but civilian authorities have made agreement with Serbs to evacuate women, children, and elderly, and 21 buses of people leave area for Kladanj. Many Muslim refugees seek cover in the hills surrounding the town. After executing the Muslim commander of the Muslim government forces, the Serbs take and burn the town, after the UN ignores NATO air strike request by Ukrainian peacekeepers in the enclave.

Former UN human-rights investigator, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, issued his final report on war crimes in former Yugoslavia by citing evidence of mass murder after Srebrenica was overrun by Serbs. The report said that Serbs lined up unarmed male prisoners and shot them, slit their throats, and shelled refugees fleeing the town. Mazowiecki says 7,000 missing from Srebrenica, calls situation 'barbarism'. A UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination issued an urgent call for Bosnia to be given 'all means to protect itself' - effectively asking the UN to exempt the Bosnian government from the UN arms embargo.

The Bosnian Parliament, which is controlled by the SDA, changed the constitution, taking over from the Executive Council the power to replace members of the presidency who are unable to continue in their posts. Parliament also determined that as long as the war lasts, the president of the council, currently Izetbegovic, be a Muslim and a party member.

Albania warned that rump Yugoslavia's moves to resettle Croatian Serb refugees in Serbia's Kosovo province could cause the region to be engulfed in turmoil and become 'another Bosnia.' Croatia threatened a new war against Serbs in Bosnia if they did not stop bombarding the area around the historic Adriatic seaside town of Dubrovnik.

Krajina forces have reached edge of Bihac Safe Area, as Serbs try to split enclave in two, while Security Council warns them not to continue. NATO ambassadors appeal to Boutros-Ghali to devolve air strike decisions to military commanders in Bosnia. Croatian forces attacking Serbs in Bihac pocket, General Atif Dudakovic says 30,000 Serbs/Muslim are on the offensive in area. Malaysian Prime Minister Mohamad says he is 'disgusted' with West's inaction, says he is willing to face sanctions to ship arms to Bosnian Government, while Saudi King Fahd calls on UN to lift embargo.

North Atlantic Council decisions specified that further Bosnian Serb offensive action must be met with a firm and rapid response with the 'aim of deterring attacks on Safe Areas and responding, if necessary, through the timely and effective use of airpower...until attacks on or threats to the Safe Areas have ceased'. Graduated NATO air operation triggered by: 'Any concentration of forces and/or heavy weapons, and the conduct of other military preparations which, in the common judgement of the NATO and UN military commanders, presents a direct threat to the Safe Areas', or 'Direct attacks (e.g. ground, shelling, or aircraft) on the Safe Areas'. Authorised operations 'to support the defence of the Safe Areas within a wider zone of action' than had previously been considered. Using the latest NAC guidance, NATO planners developed individual air attack plans for the defence of each Safe Area into a comprehensive graduated air strike plan under the name of 'Operation Deliberate Force'.

UN War Crimes Tribunal formally charges Karadzic, Mladic, Martić, 21 others with crimes against humanity for 'atrocities perpetrated against the civilian population throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, for the sniping campaign against civilian in Sarajevo, and for the taking of UN peacekeepers as hostages and their use as human shields'. The three individually or in agreement with others, had planned, encouraged, ordered or in some other ways participated in planning, preparations and execution of the acts of genocide and crimes against humanity as well as other acts, or had had the knowledge that their subordinates had intended to commit or had committed the acts mentioned above, and had not taken necessary and reasonable measures to prevent such acts or punish the persons who had committed them.

July 26

1,400 Zepa refugees begin arriving in Kladanj, men aged 16-60 detained by Serbs or in hiding. UN negotiations with Serbs for men's safety. Boutros-Ghali gives air strike authority to military commander General Bernard Janvier bypassing Akashi. NATO agrees on graduate escalation campaign of air strikes if Gorazde attacked or threatened, also plans to protect Bihac, Sarajevo but these are not yet approved. Serbs intensify attacks in Bihac and 8,000 flee advance, Bihac Mayor Mersud Ferizovic says 25,000 Serbs involved, and 58 civilians killed, 180 wounded in recent days. US Senate votes 69-29 to end arms embargo in 12 weeks after Bosnia calls for UN forces to leave, but also gives Clinton 30-day waiver if more time is needed, and also requires him to go to Security Council to seek full removal of embargo. Mladic calls on Gorazde to surrender. Abdic declared himself President of the 'Independent Republic of Western Bosnia'.

July 27

Assembly of the Republika Srpska Krajina appointed a new government and Milan Babic as its Prime Minister. In case of Croatian attack against the Republika Srpska Krajina the Army Command proclaimed a general mobilisation in the area of operation of the North Dalmatian corps. Silajdzic calls US Senate action 'of lifting arms embargo a great victory of justice and principle...We are very grateful for this' and predicts other countries will do the same. Mladic says this will not effect the war since Bosnia already 'saturated' with weapons. Cargo plane delivers supplies to government forces in Bihac but UN, NATO say they don't know whose plane it is. Serbs say last 5,000 evacuated from Zepa, refugees are not mentioning atrocities as with Srebrenica. HVO forces advancing along Tomislavgrad-Grahovo line, and in Livno region, now within 4 km of Glamoc and 8 km from Grahovo. 250 Serbs flee to Knin, while Muslim refugees in north now number 8,000 in Bihac.

Mazowiecki resigns position as UN special rapporteur for human rights citing 'lack of consistency and courage displayed by the international communication and its leaders', saying he could not participate in pretence of protection of human rights. Serbs shell Sarajevo killing 2, also Mostar and Gorazde (killing 1 civilian). Serb tank fires on UN post in Krupac (S. flank of Mt. Igman) wounding French peacekeeper. Auxiliary Bishop of Sarajevo Pero Sudar calls on West to destroy Serb stockpiles of weapons, ammunition, and military infrastructure.

July 28

The war widens as Croatia sends thousands of troops into Bosnia. Republika Srpska and Srpska Krajina both declared state of war.

Croat, HVO forces attack Serb forces in Krajina border area cutting Serb supply line and taking town of Grahovo which controls it. Glamoc also taken and 20,000 reported to have fled area. Bosnian Serbs declare general mobilisation of men 18-60 for all areas of Serb-held territory. UN says war in danger of being widened as Croats mass thousands of troops along border, move into Livno Valley in effort to retake Krajina. UN spokesman says Croats have taken 100 sq. miles of territory in Grahovo area. Bihac area but not town being shelled by Serbs so as to keep NATO pressure off, UN reports 1,000 explosions in 1 hr alone in NW. Krajina Serb parliament elects Babic Prime Minister. Zadar airport closed, Croatia highway shut off as military supplies moved to front. Dutch paper accuses Dutch UNPROFOR commander of cutting deal with Serbs allowing his men to leave Srebrenica in exchange for Muslim men between 17-60 being arrested and 'debriefed'. *NY Times* says Zepa defenders were hit with chemical agent BZ which is banned by international agreement. Buses from Belgrade being used to transport Muslim refugees out of Zepa.

July 29

Akashi talked to Tudjman and Martić with the aim of averting a Croatian offensive but no results achieved. Tudjman warns Serbs to negotiate or be reincorporated into Croatia by force. Karadžić orders generals to use 'all necessary measures' to retake Grahovo, Glamoc. Krajina Serbs say they will fire missiles at Croatia coastal cities if attack comes. BBC reports that Zepa burned and looted, Muslim civilian negotiator detained and military commander has disappeared. Mladić tells UN he ordered execution of Zepa military commander Avdo Palić who had successfully ambushed Serb forces 3 years earlier.

July 30

UN reports Croatian troops continuing to mass along edge of Krajina. Mladić says Croatia 'will pay dearly' for attacks, but Yugoslavian president Ličić only calls for negotiations without pre-conditions, but also for lifting of sanctions. Belgrade condemns Croatia for its 'aggressive behaviour'. Krajina Serbs reported to be leaving Bihac to help defend Knin. French group 'Doctors of the World' says military-age men of both Srebrenica and Zepa have 'completely disappeared'. 4 Croatia brigades mobilised in Zagreb with almost all men of military age being assigned to units.

Akashi and Martić had talks in Knin in also participated Prime Minister Milan Babić and commander of the Army of RSK Milo Mrksić. They signed an agreement binding the RSK to have its units withdrawn from Bihac, the area would not be shelled and military observers would be allowed to deploy along the border area between the Bihac enclave and RSK. Tudjman rejects 6-point agreement worked out by Krajina Serbs and Akashi as 'unacceptable', says UNCRO must be deployed on all of Croatia frontiers especially since new troops coming into the country across Danube, and that Krajina must be reintegrated into Croatia. Tudjman stipulated four terms for further negotiations with the Serbs: the Croatian government would not negotiate with Milan Martić, negotiations could start 24 hours after the Serbs put into operation the oil pipeline, negotiations on opening communication lines running through the Krajina and the Zagreb-Split railway should start immediately, and that negotiations should

start over 'the immediate implementation of the Constitution of Croatia in the occupied territories and provisions of the Constitutional Law on the Rights of the Serbs Ethnic Community'.

July 31

More fighting in Bihac as Serbs attack government forces less than 24 hrs after promising Akashi they would not do so in border area. Advisor to Croatian Foreign Minister says 'Bihac is of vital strategic importance to Croatia', and that military intervention legal due to military alliance between Croatia and Bosnia. Croatian forces poised to attack at 4 locations and has 'blocking force' in E. Slavonia to slow Serb resupply effort, but no signs of Bosnian Serbs sending troops or material to assist Krajina. Bosnian Government and Croatian forces pushing west and north to cut 2 Serb supply roads between Bosnian Serbs and Krajina.

August 1

NATO agrees to extend threat of air strikes to other safe-areas, including all forces which attack Safe Areas (Krajina Serbs, Abdic forces). UN General Janvier begins concentrating UNPROFOR forces to prevent Serb retaliation against them, US sending more radar jamming planes, and NATO Secretary General Willy Claes to ask Tudjman to authorise use of Croatian airspace in NATO strikes. 3 Serb jets fire rockets at Croatian positions near border, shell outskirts of Gospic. Nearby Otocac under general alert. US Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights John Shattuck interviews refugees in Tuzla, Zenica, says reports of mass executions credible. US House of Representatives votes to lift arms embargo by vote of 298-128, Clinton administration says they might still be able to sustain veto. Russia protests Croatian attacks in Krajina, says this could lead to escalation of violation.

August 1

Karadzic and Martic appeal to Milosevic to send them aid in the face of impending Croatian attack, but Milosevic has already sent Mladic, Izetbegovic letters calling for peace, saying fighting would only result in 'enormous human...losses', inviting them to take a decision on cessation of the hostilities between the Muslim and Serb forces in order to establish conditions for resumption of the peace process, termination of the war and establishment of a final peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

August 2

US ambassador to Croatia Galbraith meets secretly in Belgrade with Krajina Prime Minister Milan Babic who apparently agrees to key Croatia demands including negotiations on reintegration of Krajina to Croatia. Israeli TV reports that sophisticated Israeli weapons are being sold to Serbia by Israeli military with French dealers.

August 3

Operation Deliberate Force was briefed by Admiral Smith and Lt Gen Ryan to NATO Secretary General Willy Claes and General Joulwan, SACEUR.

UN establish Croatia has 100,000 mobilised. Serbs fire missiles at Gospic, Otacac, also Dubrovnik where 3 killed, 3 wounded. Serbs say they will continue to shell Dubrovnik unless Croats stop shelling Drvar (W. Bosnia). Both sides sending mid-level delegation to Geneva for talks with Stoltenberg. Croat troops breach Krajina Serb lines in at least 30 places, planes destroy Celavac radio-tv stations and other points. UNCRO says Croatian army had notified them of operation and that Canadian commanders had passed the information on to Krajina Serbs. Serb shelling of Mostar over last 2 days kills 5. Last 70 peacekeepers pull out of Zepa. US ambassador Galbraith meets with Tudjman near Zagreb, appeals for peace, but 2 hours later Serbs fire rockets at Dubrovnik. Silajdzic gives letter of resignation to

parliament in dispute with ruling Party of Democratic Action (Muslim party) over inefficiency, corruption.

Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska Krajina Milan Babic said in Belgrade that RSK was willing to negotiate with Croatia over the political settlement of the crisis. The basis for negotiations would be a modified Z-4 plan offered by the international mediators. Integral part of the peace process would be implementation of the Agreement on economic issues.

UN-brokered talks in Geneva, between Croatian Government and Republika Srpska Krajina broke down since the Croatians refused to accept the text offered by international mediator Stoltenberg. The Croatian delegation insisted on including an additional paragraph on 'peaceful integration of the occupied territories into Croatia'.

August 4

Croatian armed forces launched operation 'storm' attacking from all directions Republika Srpska Krajina, using artillery, air force and infantry units, rapidly retaking most of remaining Serb-held land in Croatia, sending up to 180,000 Serbs fleeing to Banja-Luka and Vojvodina in Serbia. Smaller numbers agreed to move to Kosovo. All bigger towns and villages in Krajina territory, including Knin, were under artillery and missile fire. Every 15 minutes the Croatian Radio broadcast a statement of Tudjman saying that 'Croatia is forced to take military and police measures aimed at reintegration of the occupied territories into its constitutional and legal system', since 'this was refused by the Serbs (in Geneva) to be done in a peaceful way'. Tudjman invited 'members of the Serb paramilitary units to surrender their weapons to the Croatian authorities and give themselves up, as well as to be pardoned or tried justly'. Croatian government says Knin surrounded, troops reported to be within several miles of city centre. UN estimates 1,500-1,800 shells have fallen on city by evening. Serb lines penetrated in as many as 30 places but claims cannot be independently confirmed as UN forces are caught in crossfire and communication is minimal. UN commander in Knin requests air strikes against those shooting at UN troops (1 Danish peacekeeper killed, 2 Polish peacekeepers wounded) but Janvier only considering this. Croat planes attack UN post at Gospic (C. Croatia), threaten to do so again if UN doesn't withdraw, Croatian tanks attack Serb positions in area. Town of Petrinja reclaimed by Croats, 760 Serbs said to be 'neutralised', along with Serb missile system and destruction of Serb communication centre and brigade headquarters. Serbs respond with fiercer resistance than Croats expect even as Croatian Foreign Minister Granic claims that entire operation will be done in 1 week and 'artificial Krajina Serb regime will collapse immediately'. 15 rockets fired at Karlovac, 1 missile hits Zagreb suburb.

FR Yugoslavia condemned the aggression against the Serbs in the Republika Srpska Krajina and required the UN Security Council to order a prompt cessation of all hostilities, ensure a withdrawal of the Croatian forces to lines of separation fixed by relevant Resolutions and create conditions for resumption of negotiations between the two parties.

Bildt said in Geneva that the offensive should be condemned as early as possible, since it came at a moment when the Serbs had clearly shown that they were willing to make considerable concessions in the economic and political field. Bildt particularly condemned the artillery firing on civilians. He also said that Tudjman was responsible for criminal acts committed by the Croatian army and expressed fears that there might occur a new humanitarian tragedy in Europe, with tens of thousand of Serb refugees.

Bildt, Stoltenberg and Milosevic said in Belgrade of the Croatian attack that it endangered the peace in the whole region and pointed to the necessity of taking decisive political measures aimed at stopping the negative developments in the region as well as resolute steps which would be directed towards stopping of the escalation of war. At the moment it was necessary to prevent escalation of the fighting, ensure cessation of all hostilities and create conditions for an unhindered resumption of the peace process.

After lengthy consultations, the UN Security Council strongly condemned the decision of the Croatian Government to launch an extensive offensive in Krajina and demanded from Serbs and Croats to

immediately cease all military activities. The Security Council condemned artillery attacks on civilian targets and attacks of the Croatian army on UN peacekeepers in which one Danish soldier had been killed.

Kozyrev, Russian Foreign Minister, issued a statement in Moscow condemning the offensive and warned that it could spread the war in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Russia says nations issuing weak protests are really supporting Croats. State Department spokesman said that the United States regretted the resort to force by Croatian military forces and called on all sides to exercise restraint and to respect the safety and rights of civilians, prisoners-of-war, and especially peacekeepers. Clinton expresses only 'concern' about war spreading, says offensive 'launched in response to the Serb attack on Bihac' while Perry says with luck 'the Croatians will have limited objectives and will succeed in these objectives, in keeping the Krajina Serbs out of the Bihac fighting'. Dole blames attack on failure of UN policy.

Karadzic demotes Mladic from supreme military commander to advisor while Karadzic takes on military role, blames Mladic for Croatian capture of Glamoc, Grahovo: Karadzic decided, as President of the Republika Srpska and supreme commander of armed forces, under the conditions of imminent war threat and state of war, to rename the Main Headquarters into Supreme Headquarters of the RS Army, assuming direct leadership and command, and appointing General Mladic the special advisor to the Supreme Commander and co-ordinator of the joint defence of the Republika Srpska and Republika Srpska Krajina.

Four NATO aircraft fired two missiles on the radars of the Army of the Republika Srpska Krajina surface-to-air missile radar sites near Knin and Udbina using anti-radiation 'HARM' missiles. Two U. S. Navy EA-6Bs and two U. S. Navy F-18Cs struck sites in self-defence after the aircraft' electronic warning devices indicated they were being targeted by anti-aircraft missiles. The NATO.

After killing a soldier and injuring two members of the UN peacekeeping forces during the attack of Croatian artillery near Petrinja, general Janvier said in Zagreb that for the purpose of protecting of the blue helmets UNPROFOR consider the possibility of asking a close air support of the NATO.

August 5

Army, political leadership of the Republika Srpska Krajina and most of the population left Knin, while the Army command retreated to the 'reserve position'. Croatian forces seized Knin at 12.30 pm without any considerable resistance by Serb forces. Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic sent a protest to Carl Bildt, calling the latter's statement about the responsibility of President Tudjman cynical, and demanding an apology. Croatian army units started combined artillery, tank and infantry attacks on the eastern part of the Republika Srpska Krajina - Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem. Bosnian Government troops reported to have crossed into Croatia to aid Croatian army. UN protests Croatian attack saying it violates international law due to civilian casualties, and that Croatia has targeted UN peacekeepers. Russian Foreign Minister condemns attack saying the situation was not properly assessed by Zagreb. 2 Czech peacekeepers killed near Gospic, 2 others wounded. 40 manned UN posts taken, 200 peacekeepers briefly detained by Croatians. Serb resistance crumbles as Gracac, Lovinac, Ljubova, and 280sq. miles of Krajina fall. Serbs fire artillery shells into E. Croatia cities. Croatian government leaves 2 corridors open for Serbs to flee into Bosnia.

Information Office of the Republika Srpska's Army Main Headquarters issued a communication, stating that 'in connection with unconstitutional and illegally taken decision' of President of Republika Srpska Radovan Karadzic, referring to appointment of General Ratko Mladic for special advisor and co-ordinator of joint defence of RS and RSK, General Ratko Mladic stated that he refused this cabinet duty, considering it as his removal from the duty of the commander of the Main Headquarters of the RS Army in an illicit way. He said that he intended to remain in his previous position as long as 'the Serb soldiers and people support him' and until he had been 'released from this duty in conformity with the Constitution and the valid Army and Defence Law'.

Momcilo Krajsnik, Speaker of the Assembly of the Republika Srpska said that according to the agreement between RS and RSK the two are 'obliged to defend every step of Serbian territory west of the Drina' and that the Republika Srpska 'will militarily aid the Republika Srpska Krajina to defend itself from the latest Croatian aggression'. 'Besides us, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia must also become involved in this, as it is obliged to this by the Vance plan', added Krajsnik.

August 6

Croats capture Petrinja, Slunj, Cetingrad, Plitvice, while tens of thousands of Serb refugees flee towards Banja Luka. Tudjman visits area, says victories ensure security of Croatia for centuries. 2 Serb tank companies holding out near Karlovac. Croatian army blocking UN bases preventing monitoring. Denmark, UN protest Croatian use of 7 Danish peacekeepers as human shields in front of advancing troops, Croatia denies incident. Sacirbey says Silajdzic asked to rescind his resignation.

In Geneva, Javier Solana, Foreign Minister of Spain and President of the EU conveyed to Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic the condemnation of the EU regarding the Croatian offensive in Krajina and seizure of Knin. According to Solana, Croatia's recent revival of war represents the most critical moment since the onset of the crisis on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Granic said in Zagreb that 'the Americans understood our operation in Bosnia and our concern over Bihac' and volunteered 'some very strong suggestions regarding Serb civilians, members of the UN peacekeeping forces in Croatia and the extent of operations'.

The Government of FR Yugoslavia claims that, in spite of severe condemnation by numerous countries and international fora, Croatia continues unperturbed its ruthless and brutal aggression on RSK. The Federal Government expresses its profound dissatisfaction at the inefficiency of the international community in stopping the Croatian aggression and expects and demands that the international community, and the UN Security Council in particular, take immediate and resolute measures to put an end to the aggression and the killing of the innocent civilian population, to prevent ethnic cleansing and ensure that the Croatian armed forces withdraw to the separation lines. The Federal Government also points to dramatic humanitarian situation resulting from the exodus of tens of thousands of refugees. Milosevic tells *International Herald Tribune* calls Croatia 'the biggest threat to peace in the Balkans', calls on international community to 'justly' take action.

Akashi and advisor of the Croatian President, signed an agreement by which the Croatians guarantee the safety of civilians and UN personnel in the territory of Krajina.

The Collegium of the Commander of the Main Headquarters of the Republika Srpska Army, at a meeting held in Banja Luka on 5 and 6 August concluded that they cannot accept and implement the decision of the President Karadzic 'by which he removed the commander of the Main Headquarters of the RS Army and ordered other systematic, organisational and personnel changes'. The text of the conclusions, addressed to the Assembly of the Republika Srpska and to the President of RS, was signed by 18 generals of the RS Army. Bosnian Serb parliament meets in Banja Luka to support Karadzic even as 18 top generals back Mladic.

August 7

Serbia sends tanks, troops to E. Slavonia in show of force, declare war alert and exchange artillery fire with Croats at Osijek. UN says 50,000 refugees trapped by new fighting in Krajina, UN now claims that 150,000-200,000 are refugees from fighting, while EU monitors say none of them are being recruited to fight for Bosnian Serbs. Cease-fire collapses after Croatian government says Bosnian Serb jets bomb Croatian cities (Sisak, Zupanja, Pozega, Daruvar, Novska Grahovica, Podravska, Slatina, Mackovac, Savski Bok) killing 2, wounding 11. 6,000 Serbs said to be resisting near Topusko, 5 wounded in Karlovac by Serb rocket. Croatia anti-aircraft fire shoots down 2 Serb 'Eagle' aircraft. Croatian Defence Minister Susak says as Krajina Serb agree to surrender, that they will be allowed to leave for Bosnia or Serbia if they leave weapons, but those suspected of war crimes to be detained. Susak also says war

could widen as Croatia will not renounce claims to E. Slavonia but that Croatia is demobilising. Karadzic, Vice President Biljana Plavsic say Milosevic responsible for loss of Knin, while Serbia calls for sanctions against Croatia, calls their attack 'shameless aggression'. 5th Corps enters Velusa Kladusa, all fighting ceases as Abdic troops surrender.

At a press conference in Zagreb, Croatian Defence Minister Gojko Susak said that operation 'storm', whose aim was to return the Republika Srpska Krajina under the Croatian authority, had been completed and that all fighting ceased at 6 pm. The casualties of the Croatian Army in the four-day operation included 118 killed and 620 wounded. The UN informed that three members of the UN peacekeeping forces were killed in this Croatian offensive.

Deputy head of UNPROFOR Belgrade Office Sergei Kosenko revealed that he had information that Croatian soldiers and members of the Muslim 5th Corps from Bihac fired with automatic weapons and cannons on a column of 12,000 Serb refugees from Krajina on the Topusko-Dvor road near a place called Bojna.

Jeltsin invites Milosevic, Tudjman to Moscow for peace talks, but Croatia says no decision has been made. US State Department says former US generals working for Virginia based Military Professional Resources, Inc. helping Croatian army to democratise. Mladic appoints Greek lawyer Alexandros Lykourazos to defend him at International Criminal Tribunal at the Hague.

August 8

5 refugees killed when escape route bombed by Croatian jets on Bosnian side of border, Croatia denies it. UN estimates 15,000 refugees near Dvor trapped by fighting as well as 40,000 more on way to Bosnia. Red Cross to begin bringing relief supplies into Banja Luka airport, while first relief convoy since May reaches Bihac, and that government forces have burned 6 Serb villages, possibly shot 5 elderly Serbs. Croatian troops restricting refugee access to prevent roughly 10,000 Krajina soldiers from entering Bosnia, while Bosnian Serbs have set up court martial in Banja Luka and sentenced 20 for leaving Knin, Benkovac battlefields. Martić appears on Bosnian Serb TV supposedly from Krajina town of Srb, appeals to all Serbs to defend the fatherland. UN warns that Serbs in Banja Luka area carrying out another wave of ethnic cleansing while *Newsday* reports Srebrenica refugees say Mladic pledged 'it is going to be a 'meze' (a long, delectable feast). There will be blood up to your knees', and told his troops to 'enjoy' the best-looking women, and that 'for every one of mine, 1,000 of yours are going to die'. Serbian Orthodox Church says Serbian, Montenegro representative governments no longer 'fit' to lead Serbian nation.

Akashi said to the press in Zagreb that it was necessary to ensure at least a temporary cease-fire in Krajina to allow safe passage to all Serbs who wished to leave that area. Akashi mentioned that he had an information that Croat forces deliberately fired on refugees and harassed Serbian civilians. Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic sent a letter to the President of the European Commission Jacques Santer, informing that Croatia cannot co-operate with European mediator Carl Bildt. The reason he mentioned was Bildt's statement about the possible responsibility of the Croatian President Tudjman for criminal acts committed by the Croatian army in Krajina.

Milan Babic, Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska Krajina said in Belgrade that he was shocked to learn that the Supreme Headquarters of the Srpska Krajina Army and President of RSK Milan Martić had ordered complete evacuation of the population and retreat of the army, although no serious military activities had taken place at most contact lines. 'I cannot believe that anyone wanted mass exodus of people from Krajina only to force FR Yugoslavia to get directly involved in war', said Babic.

August 9

President of the Republika Srpska Krajina Milan Martić said at a press conference in Banja Luka that he did not recognise the outcome of the Croatian aggression as long as there was one single Krajinian

from RSK, that the population able for military service were willing to return and place themselves at the disposal of the Krajina Serb Army, and that they would victoriously return to Krajina. Croatian civilians attacking convoys of fleeing Serb refugees near Sisak, stoning some, beating others. UN reports troops wearing Bosnian government uniforms kill 5 elderly, possibly mentally retarded, Serbs in village on border. Danish peacekeepers report Croatian planes drop bombs on refugee column near Dvor. Clinton administration accuses Bosnian Serbs of human rights violations based on eyewitness accounts, says it has spy photo evidence suggesting mass grave near Srebrenica, calls for international war crimes investigation. Also says Croatian offensive creates 'additional cause for concern', but ambassador Galbraith says British and French wrong in accusing Zagreb of ethnic cleansing. Tudjman refuses talks in Moscow unless Izetbegovic allowed to participate (probably to defuse speculation that he and Milosevic will cut deal on Bosnia). Jeltsin agrees to invite Izetbegovic. Jeltsin, in interview, says war crimes accusations against Karadzic, Mladic 'unjust' since this is civil war and neither side is 'right' or guilty'. Karadzic writes letter to Milosevic accusing him of turning his back on Krajina and being a traitor to all Serbs, and Milosevic responds that problem lies with Karadzic and Krajina leadership refusing to accept peace initiatives. *Le Figaro* says Serbs must no longer be viewed as aggressors and Muslim, Croats as victims. 10,000 demonstrate in Belgrade against Milosevic.

August 10

During a two-day visit to Russia, Milosevic had meetings with President Jeltsin, Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, and Speaker of the State Duma Ivan Rybkin. Jeltsin expressed full support to Milosevic's policy and condemned Croatia's military attack on Krajina and ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Croatian army. He indicated that, if the international community failed to lift sanctions against FR Yugoslavia in the close future, Russia might be compelled to unilaterally abandon the enforcement of sanctions. Russian President suggested an idea about the summit meeting of the leading states in the world aimed at stopping the war and establishing peace, and presented his peace initiative for the resolution of the Yugoslavian crisis.

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1009, demanding from Croatia to cease immediately all military actions in Krajina, to respect human rights of the local Serb population in Krajina, including their right to remain, leave or return to their homes in safety, and allow access for representatives of international humanitarian organisations. The Resolution also emphasised that all those who commit violations of international humanitarian law will be held individually responsible in respect of such acts. President of FR Yugoslavia Zoran Lilic sent a message to the UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali expressing, on behalf of FR Yugoslavia, the strongest resentment and disappointment over the Security Council's reluctance to condemn unequivocally and resolutely Croatia's aggression on the Republika Srpska Krajina along with the monstrous crimes committed by the Croatian army against Serb civilians, prisoners of war and columns of refugees.

US President Clinton's National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake, began four-day trip to London, Bonn, Paris, Madrid, Rome, Moscow and Ankara to outline new US peace initiative, based on the existing Contact Group map. The aim of these visits was to consult with the European allies about the new American plan.

NATO and UN commanders signed a memorandum of understanding on the execution of NATO air operations for the protection of UN-designated 'safe Areas' in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Aim is to deter threats of attack against Safe Areas and to conduct air operations in order to eliminate any threat or to defeat any force engaged in an attack on a Safe Area. The agreement followed the London Conference of 25 July 95 and the subsequent North Atlantic Council decisions of 26 July and 1 August 95.

August 11

President Clinton vetoed the Congressional legislation that would lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian government and declared that unilateral US action was not the answer to the Bosnian crisis.

Karadzic backs off efforts to reorganise military community at Mladic's expense. In response to the appeal of Patriarch Pavle, Serbian intelligentsia, people and soldiers, as well as Serbian generals, in the name of Serbian unity and victory Karadzic decided to suspend all proposed changes in the RS Army, reports the Press Office of the Republika Srpska.

Ron Redmond, UNHCR spokesman said in Geneva that Serb refugees leaving Krajina are being exposed to harassment, beating and insulting while going through the Croat territory, and that they have reports that abandoned Serbian houses in Krajina are being burnt down and robbed.

Abdic reported under house arrest in Zagreb. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia donates \$13 million to Bosnian Muslims in start of fund-raising campaign there. Government troops massing near Donji Vakuf, Croatian forces doing same around Dubrovnik. UN says tensions declining near E. Slavonia.

August 12

Croatian forces launch new attack on Serbs near Dubrovnik, Serbs fleeing from Trebinje inside Bosnia. Bosnian Government forces pushing towards Donji Vakuf, Bosanska Krupa, and Prijedor with Bosnian Croatian forces providing some artillery support (1,300 explosions in 3 hr period). Russia sends 90 tons of food, medicine to Belgrade for refugees, says it is not in violation of embargo. Russian Duma adopted a law on unilateral lifting of sanctions against FR Yugoslavia. At the same session, the Duma adopted a law imposing economic sanctions against Croatia because of its genocide against the Serbs and mass violation of their human rights. Both laws shall come into force if signed by the President Jeltsin.

August 13

Heaviest artillery exchanges near Dubrovnik since '91. Bosnian Government troops slow advance towards Donji Vakuf, Croatian troops do not appear to be helping. Clinton administration offers Serbs chance to make changes in Contact Group map once negotiations begin. Izetbegovic says Gorazde not to be traded.

US National Security Adviser Anthony Lake met with Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev and presented the new American plan for the settlement of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. There are still differences between the two countries, particularly regarding the lifting of sanctions against FR Yugoslavia.

August 14

Croatian troops trying to push across Bosnian border near Dubrovnik but making little progress. Serb artillery attacks continue while Croats shell Trebinje. Bosnian Government troops renew their attack on Donji Vakuf. Serb police give up trying to keep out military-age men with refugee from Krajina as over 130,000 now fleeing into Serbia. 600-1,000 more Croats driven out of Banja Luka to Davor. 670 Krajina Serb refugees arrive in Kosovo for resettlement, and 450 in Montenegro. Martić calls for all Croatian Serbs to return home to fight. US Defense Department says 2 of 4 \$2 military-each 'Predator' spy drones lost over Bosnia, 1 due to motor failure, the other possibly shot down (based at Gjader, N. Albania). Karadzic, Mladic reportedly both saying the other is 'crazy'. Russian Foreign Minister now says lifting sanctions unilaterally not being considered.

Consistent with the MOU between NATO and UN, and following co-ordination with Lt General Smith, COMD UNPROFOR, Lt General Ryan, COMAIRSOUTH, briefed the concept of operations for Operation Deliberate Force and obtained agreement in principle from CINCSOUTH and FC UNPF for both the operation and associated targets. Additionally, in accordance with the MOU, an Air-Land Co-ordination Document was developed by COMAIRSOUTH, the NATO air component commander, COMD UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, and Major General David Pennyfather at the Rapid Reaction Force Operational Staff Headquarters in Kiseljak, specifying the necessary operational details of joint/combined operations.

August 15

UN says most of remaining 15,000 Croats in Banja Luka area will be forced out by an organised campaign within next several days. 900 Croats cross Sava from Bosnia to Croatia. 370 Croats expelled from homes in N. Serbia being resettled in E. Croatia while 800 Serbs refuse resettlement in Kosovo. Refugees being refused entry to Belgrade. Karadzic says he is not causing refugees, but they are leaving to be reunited with families. Holbrooke meets with Croatian Foreign Minister Granic and Bosnian Foreign Minister Sacirbey on new plan for division of Bosnia, but Bosnian ambassador to Britain Filipovic says 'it has no chance at all'. Croatian army commander in-chief General Zvonimir Cervenka tours Dubrovnik after Serb shelling, says 'I will destroy their (Serbs) towns, not just Trebinje (source of shelling), but all of them - reduce them to a state they cannot imagine...they know this'. 3,000-man Croatian 'Puma' brigade arrived in Dubrovnik over weekend. Hard-line Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Vladislav Jovanovic removed, replaced by another Milosevic ally, Milan Milutinovic. Washington begins intensive effort for a new peace plan.

August 16

Croatian forces advancing against Serbs around Drvar in W. Bosnia-Herzegovina. More Serbs fleeing Trebinje in anticipation of Croatian attack. Fighting continues for Donji Vakuf. Holbrooke meets with Tudjman over plan to redraw borders according to ethnic lines. Bildt meets with Serbs Jovan Zametica, Momcilo Krajisnik. Serbs still expelling Muslims and Croats from Banja Luka. Spanish Foreign Minister Javier Solana's car hit as it enters Sarajevo. Medicines without Frontiers says of Serb expulsions of Croats from Banja Luka that 'the transport of cattle is done better than this'. 700 refugees from Krajina now in Montenegro, 2,000 in Kosovo. Yugoslavian Prime Minister Kontic asks Denmark to unfreeze its assets so they can be used for humanitarian aid.

August 16-18

American delegation headed by Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke visited Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo where they presented the new American plan for the settlement of the crisis on the territory of the former Yugoslavia to the Presidents Tudjman, Milosevic and Izetbegovic.

August 17

Holbrooke meets with Milosevic on new peace plan, calls talks 'extremely useful'. Milosevic reported to be generally favourable to it. Bosnian Serb Momcilo Krajisnik says plan would allow Serbs access to Adriatic and would give them wider links between east and west Serb territory. Silajdzic says peace plan does not include land swap. Mladic sends fax to news agencies saying Karadzic 'is probably aware that he has lost the support of the main pillars of our society, the people and the army'.

August 18

Croatia claims to have captured Drvar (across border in Bosnia) and destroyed elite Podrinjska Brigade, Serbs deny capture. 10,000 Croatian troops massing near Dubrovnik. 1 killed, 14 wounded as rifle grenade hits bus in Sarajevo. UN peacekeepers begin withdrawal from Gorazde as UN claims NATO can protect city from the air, Serbs refuse to let 90 Ukrainian peacekeepers leave unless they take all of their weapons with them. Croatian Defence Minister Susak says his country willing to help other countries ship weapons to Bosnia if asked to do so, states 'Croatia will do everything it can for Bosnia to be liberated'. Izetbegovic shakes up command structure of army, especially at corps level. Abdic reported to be under arrest in Zagreb Palace Hotel. Croatia says it expects Serbs to expel up to 20,000 Bosnian Croats and that 4,769 have already arrived from Banja Luka area, another 406 from Srijem. 350 Muslim expelled by Serbs to Travnik.

President Izetbegovic issued a 12-point peace as the first official government response to a US-sponsored plan to end 40 months of war.

August 19

US negotiators Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Robert Frasure, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence Joseph Kruzel, and NSC aide Col. Samuel Drew killed when their APC plunges off Mt. Igman road while travelling to Sarajevo to meet President Izetbegovic. Other members of the American delegation, including Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, at the time of accident were in another vehicle and remained unharmed. Karadzic offers condolences.

Christian Science Monitor reporter says he has found evidence in Srebrenica of bones and ammunition near supposed mass grave site. Artillery exchanges continue in Dubrovnik area, Serbs shell Osijek killing 1, wounding 6. Bosnian Serb artillery hits Gorazde killing 3 children. Serbs now demanding \$1,200 in German marks from those they expel around Banja Luka.

August 20

US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke arrived in Croatia.

August 21

Nationalist Bosnian Serbs blocked Ukrainian peacekeepers trying to pull out of Gorazde. A day after Serbs shell Gorazde, killing three girls, the UN says it will replace peacekeepers defending the Safe Area with 50 unarmed observers.

UN protests to Yugoslavian government about their deporting of 1,000 military age men back to Serb-held Bosnia in previous week. New evidence of Croatian army having killed civilians, burned and looted Serb homes. UN appeals to Zagreb not to return 25,000 Muslim refugees loyal to Abdic to Bihac area, and accuses Zagreb of not admitting Muslim refugees from Banja Luka area. Serbs reported building up in Dubrovnik area. Tudjman urges Russian president envoy Aleksandr Zotov to persuade Serbia to recognise Croatia. Total number of Krajina Serbs in Yugoslavia now 154,079 (according to BETA) with 83,000 in Vojvodina.

August 22

Government fires 14 mortar rounds at Serb ammunition factory in Vogosca (Sarajevo suburb), killing 2 civilians. Serbs retaliate by shelling Sarajevo after 12 more rounds fired killing 6, wounding 38 in city. Sacirbey accuses UN of abandoning Gorazde. Karadzic tells Croatia that if they evacuate area around Trebinje, Serbs will grant peace accord, also calls for 30 km of Prevlaka peninsula (down to Bay of Kotor in Montenegro) being turned over to Serbs otherwise fighting to continue. Serbs fire on UN observation post in Sarajevo wounding 6 Egyptian peacekeepers and other civilians, RRF returns fire. Croatian cultural centre opens in Sarajevo. Serbs shell Tuzla airbase where refugees are being housed. Croatia says 11,782 refugees of ethnic cleansing in Banja Luka have arrived between 8-14 and 8-24. Yugoslavian officials now say 5,000 Serbian refugees are in Kosovo, another 7,000 expected, but 50 have already left Prizren for Serbia.

August 23

Karadzic says 'any solution below 70% of the territory is painful for us, but any one below 64% - which we have according to land registers - is unjust'. Clinton administration names Robert Owen to head up new negotiations team which includes Brig. General Donald Kerrick, James Pardew (Defence Department), and Christopher Hill (State Department). Reports about peace plan say Bosnian Government must give up Zepa and Srebrenica. 58 Ukrainian peacekeepers pull out of Gorazde and

government troops reportedly demanding \$13,350 from them for rent and environmental damage. Croatian Defence Minister Susak says Croatia could push Serbs out of E. Slavonia, and that his government will no longer tolerate shelling of Dubrovnik. Serbs in Trebinje now preventing everyone from leaving area without special permission. Catholic bishop in Banja Luka says Serbs dynamited 43rd church in area on August 19.

August 24

British peacekeepers kill 2 government soldiers in Gorazde after 30 attempt to take supplies from British before their scheduled pullout. 3 British convoys with 76 peacekeepers pull out and head for Serbia. Russian envoy Zotov meets in Belgrade with Milosevic.

August 25

Croatia signs cease-fire with E. Slavonia Serbs. Croatian Foreign Minister Granic rejects Serb calls for territory exchange in S. Croatia. 700 Serbs still holed up in UN headquarters in Knin as Croatia wants to examine 61 they suspect of being war criminals. Sacirbey says US peace plan has no provisions for punishing Serbs if they reject proposal. Krajisnik says Bildt has given Serbs 'guarantees that there will be two separate states with compact territory within the former Bosnia-Herzegovina (Croatian and Bosnian authorities will not meet with Bildt). EU administrator of Mostar threatens to withdraw EU police force unless Croats and Muslims unify their police forces, accuses Croats of blockading Muslims. Yugoslavian trade minister says Russian planning to resume deliveries of gas to Yugoslavia. In response to a letter by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Jose Ayala Lasso, Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mate Granic denies charges Croatian troops have systematically destroyed Serb property and violated human rights of Serbs in Krajina. The Croatian army undertook no actions against the civilian population and did all it could to protect civilians and their property. However, Granic allowed the possibility that 'some isolated incidents' could have happened and explained them by the extent of the operation 'storm'.

August 26

Foreign Ministers of Greece, Karolos Papoulias, Bulgaria, Georgi Pirinski, and Romania, Theodore Malescanu, in Yanina (Gr) assessed that the Yugoslav crisis could be solved only by political means. They demanded on behalf of these three Balkan countries the lifting of sanctions against Yugoslavia within the process of searching for a solution to the Yugoslav crisis. Croats being resettled in Krajina area with government assistance, reported not to be paying for former Serb homes. Rail line between Zagreb and Split reopened for first time in 4 years. Tudjman says of Serbs who fled they 'disappeared ignominiously, as if they had never populated this land. We urged them to stay, but they didn't listen to us and, well, bon voyage.'

August 27

Clinton administration backs away from plan to send 25,000 troops to Bosnia to help enforce peace agreement, Holbrooke says smaller force may be used as part of NATO contingent in event of peace agreement, and that NATO air strikes may be used if Serbs continue to resist peace.

August 28

Serbs shell central Sarajevo Markale market killing 37, wounding 86. Muslim media in Sarajevo blamed the Army of the Republika Srpska that it fired this shell. General Mladic said that the RS Army had no connection with the incident and demanded from UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina, General Rupert Smith, to set up a joint commission of representatives of UNPROFOR, Serbs and

Muslims to investigate the incident. According to the first report of UN representatives, their analysts were unable to precisely locate the spot from which the shell had been fired. S blames Serbs for attack and calls on UN and NATO to respond militarily. Kosevo hospital hit by shell after attack. Bosnian Serb official Miroslav Toholj calls shelling 'a classic act of Islamic terrorism'. Silajdzic calls for NATO air strikes and suspension of peace talks until 'the obligations and role of NATO are clarified', but Izetbegovic goes to Paris for talks anyway. Holbrooke in Paris for talks and Karadzic comments that the 'American initiative takes account of the minimum interests of the Serbian side'. Chirac said to be ready to propose demilitarisation of Sarajevo but government opposes this. Controversy continues in Netherlands over whether Dutch peacekeepers allowed civilian massacres in Srebrenica. 565 Croats expelled from Vojvodina to Croatia, while 300 cross Sava River from Srbac to Davor. More reports of pressganging by Serbian authorities of refugees for military service in E. Slavonia. Operation Deliberate Force was triggered by a BSA mortar attack on Sarajevo. A 'Dual-Key' decision was made by CINCSOUTH and FC UNPF to initiate air strikes on 29 August. Subsequently, COMAIRSOUTH directed COMFIVEATAF, Lt General Fornasiero, to launch NATO forces with an execution time planned for not earlier than 0200 on 30 August.

August 29

The Government of FR Yugoslavia condemned the massacre of innocent civilian population in Sarajevo. It is necessary to undertake a detailed investigation, find and adequately punish the perpetrators of this crime, says a communication of the Federal Secretariat of Information. UN public relations officer in Sarajevo Alexander Ivanko said that the commander of the UN peace-keeping forces in Bosnia, General Rupert Smith, 'after being acquainted with the results of investigation, established beyond any doubt that the attack (on the Markale market) came from the Bosnian Serb positions'. Russian commander of UN peace forces in the Sarajevo sector, colonel Andrei Demurenko said that 'some technical aspects of yesterday's incident in Sarajevo leave room for serious doubts of the validity of claims that mortar shells had been fired by the Serbs'. He clarified that 'the odds of hitting such a place with a mortar are one to million'. UNPROFOR turned down General Mladic's request for the establishment of a joint commission composed of representatives of UNPROFOR, Serbs and Muslims to investigate and determine all relevant facts regarding the explosion of a shell on the Markale marketplace. Karadzic accuses Bosnian Government of staging 'a massacre of its own population to sabotage the peace process', but UN says it has 'concluded beyond all reasonable doubt' Serbs were responsible.

The Assembly of the Republika Srpska welcomed the American initiative for a political solution of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and confirmed the willingness of the Republika Srpska to conclude a lasting and just peace. The statement also emphasised that a delegation of the Republika Srpska must be included in negotiations. The Assembly demanded normalisation of political and economic relations between the Republika Srpska and the FR of Yugoslavia.

At a joint meeting of FR of Yugoslavia, Republika Srpska and Serbian Orthodox Church an agreement was reached about joint action in the negotiating process. 'The leadership of the Republika Srpska agrees to harmonise completely its approach to the peace process with the leadership of FR Yugoslavia. The Republika Srpska shall delegate three members into one single delegation of six members, headed by the President of the Republic of Serbia Slobodan Milosevic shall be decisive.' The Agreement was signed by Radovan Karadzic, Nikola Koljevic, Biljana Plavsic, Momcilo Krajisnik, Dusan Kozic, Aleksa Buha and Colonel-General Ratko Mladic (on behalf of the Republika Srpska) and by Zoran Lilic, Slobodan Milosevic, Momir Bulatovic, Radoje Kontic, Pavle Bulatovic and Colonel-General Momccilo Perisic (on behalf of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). On behalf of the Serbian Orthodox Church the Agreement was signed by Patriarch Pavle and bishop Irinej Bulovic.

Karadzic sends letter to Carter calling for 'comprehensive peace agreement' based on US initiative, US says it is encouraged by Karadzic proposal but this would not deter NATO strikes in retaliation for

previous day's attack. Karadzic later agrees to talks in Belgrade and to co-ordinate negotiations strategy with Belgrade.

August 30

NATO planes begin attacks on Serb positions in pre-dawn hours, continue throughout the day. 60 planes (mostly American) launch strikes on air defence radar installations, SAM batteries, communication facilities, and ammunition factories, dumps. NATO planes also attacked the positions of Bosnian Serbs near Tuzla, Gorazde, Stolice on Mt. Majevisa and Mostar. UNPF commander Janvier previously sent a written warning to General Mladic that NATO air strikes would be launched if attacks or threats of attack on the protected area (Sarajevo) did not cease. NATO Secretary General Claes, UN commander Janvier, and Admiral Smith all approve attacks, Claes saying they will intensify if Serbs don't remove heavy weapons from 12 mile exclusion zone and if they don't stop threatening Tuzla, Gorazde. RRF fires at least 1,000 artillery rounds at Serb positions in support. The Army of the Republika Srpska opened artillery fire on three UN facilities in Sarajevo in retaliation for NATO air strikes and attacks of the Rapid Reaction Force on the Serb positions. These attacks caused no casualties among the UNPROFOR members. 5 EU monitors killed in Serb-held suburb by shell. A French fighter was shot by a SAM-7 missile by Bosnian Serb militia. The two pilots ejected from the aircraft, but their fate is unknown. *International Herald Tribune* says US, French, and British commandos behind Serb lines had been identifying targets for several months.

Karadzic calls attacks 'a moral disaster for the West and NATO' that 'may trigger a third world war'. Mladic rejects UN demands saying 'we will not be the first to fire, but we will respond to every attack'. Russian President Jeltsin condemned 'any violence and use of force in the former Yugoslavia'. Use of force, in particular air strikes, do not lead to a solution, as they only cause new violence through counterattacks. Jeltsin renewed his proposal for convening an international conference for the solution of the Bosnian crisis.

American President Clinton assessed that the return NATO action 'had to be undertaken'. 'I strongly support this operation. I find it an appropriate response to the shelling of Sarajevo'. He also said that he did not believe that the bombing would hamper the peace process in Bosnia. 'Activities within the American peace initiative will continue and I hope they will be successful', said President Clinton. Dole says he will postpone attempt at overriding Clinton arms embargo veto, but that 'it should have happened a year ago or two'. British muted in their support of attacks. Croatian government says Operation Storm included 402 Serb soldiers, 116 Serb civilians, 211 Croatian soldiers, and 42 Croatian civilians and that Croatia has identified 217 Serb rebels it want to try as war criminals. Holbrooke holds 4 hrs of talks with Milosevic in Belgrade.

'RS' and 'FRY' leaderships announced that joint negotiating team, led by President Milosevic who would have casting vote, would consider US peace plan.

August 31

NATO attacks continue, although more limited due to cloud cover. Three strike packages attacked targets in the Sarajevo area. Majority of targets attacked were Integrated Air Defence System nodes, ammo depots and equipment storage and maintenance facilities. Continuous CAS and SEAD coverage provided. A 24 hour suspension of air strikes beginning at 0400, 1 September was requested by COMD UNPROFOR in support of negotiation efforts. Mladic says he is willing to remove guns around Sarajevo, and that 'it is time to talk about peace, even after this dreadful bombing'. Holbrooke meets for 2nd day with Milosevic, and with Tudjman and Sacirbey in Zagreb. Clinton says NATO attacks 'the right response to savagery'.

September 1

State Department announces Bosnian Serbs have agreed to talks in Geneva next week on allowing ethnic confederations within existing states, and that Milosevic will take part in negotiations. NATO planes continue bombing Serbs in morning but suspended to allow for negotiations with Serbs. More than 500 sorties have been completed. Claes says attacks to resume unless Serbs withdraw heavy weapons, and that 'we are ready to maintain and enhance our attacks'. UN says not many of 300 Serb artillery pieces have been destroyed. Washington to send 10 more planes to assist in strikes. Fighting around Bihac, UN counts 300+ explosions after Serbs launch attack on town. 5 EU monitors reported dead taken by Serbs to Visegrad and released to Zagreb.

Commander UNPF, General Janvier, demanded from the RS Army command to pull back their heavy weapons to a distance of at least 20 km around Sarajevo, as the condition for the suspension of NATO air strikes on the Bosnian Serb positions. Request for a 24 hour suspension of air strikes honoured. The deadline is set as September 4, 11 o'clock local time. CINCSOUTH in Naples confirmed that NATO attacks on Bosnian Serb positions have been suspended until further notice to allow the RS Army to withdraw its heavy weapons from the exclusion zone around Sarajevo. Recce missions focused on bomb damage assessment. German assets were tasked following RRF request for recce. RRF artillery continued to fire on BSA positions. Uninterrupted CAP, NAEW, AAR, ABCCC, ELINT/ESM, and daylight CAS and SEAD continued.

September 2

NATO suspends air strikes, but Mladic, in 14 hour meeting with Janvier in Zvornik, refuses UN demands to remove guns around Sarajevo unless Bosnian Government also removes theirs. 7 wounded in rocket-propelled attack in Sarajevo suburb by Serbs, French peacekeepers fire 24 rounds in response. Janvier meets with Mladic for 13 hrs beginning previous night, Mladic tries to set conditions for removal of weapons. Silajdzic warns Bosnia may pull out of general talks if NATO, UN compromise with Serbs.

September 3

Holbrooke calls Mladic reply to ultimatum insulting, says 'this bombing package, it has only just begun' and 'the problem is Mladic'. UN opens Mt. Igman road to private traffic and brings aid convoy into city. NATO planes fly over Sarajevo but do not renew attacks, while Sacirbey charges NATO has 'let their finger slip off the trigger'. Serbs attacking in W. Bosnia to widen supply corridor to Serbia, shell Gradacac.

Commander UNPF, General Janvier, warned that failing to receive by 4 September at 11 pm firm assurances from the RS Army command that they would withdraw their heavy weapons from the 20 km exclusion zone around Sarajevo, NATO forces would resume their attacks on Serb targets in Bosnia. RRF Artillery continued firing on threatening BSA positions.

September 4

Bombing deadline passes with no new NATO action. Mladic sends letter to UN stating 'nobody, not even myself, has the right to order a withdrawal. This is a political question, not in the jurisdiction of generals', while Karadzic aide Nikola Koljevic sends letter saying they have accepted NATO demand. Greece and Macedonia agree to resume negotiations on flag, name issues.

September 5

NATO launches hour-long attacks in response to Bosnian Serb intransigence, UN spokesman says they 'will go on until the Serbs comply with our demands'. Attacks occur after NATO, UN conclude Serbs

not pulling back weapons as demanded. Mladic says on TV 'the more they bomb us, the stronger we are', and Serb artillery hits Sarajevo wounding several. Previous attacks now estimated to have destroyed 10% of artillery positions, 15% of anti-aircraft systems, and 40% of communication network. UN War Crimes Tribunal investigating Croatian actions in Krajina and UN says 50 bodies found in area and Orthodox Churches possibly destroyed/desecrated. Serbs continue deportations of Muslim, Croats. Holbrooke in Belgrade for meeting with Milosevic who protests air attacks. UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali said in New York that the UN would continue to support the use of NATO air force against the Bosnian Serb targets until all Serb heavy weapons had been withdrawn from the positions around Sarajevo. General Mladic accused the NATO and the UN of openly siding with Muslims and Croats against the Serbs. He also warned that fire would be returned in the case of NATO attacks.

September 6

Serbs refuse to move heavy weapons causing NATO to renew bombing around Sarajevo (Lukavica, Hadzick), Cajnice and Foca (E. Bosnia), and Kalinovik and Nevesinje (S. Bosnia). Karadzic said in an interview to the American TV network CNN that Bosnian Serbs cannot pull out any more heavy weapons and that they must sustain further destruction, because the Serbian civilians would not allow them to do this. 'We have withdrawn as much armament as we could in view of our own safety and safety of the Serb population in Sarajevo.' ('They are bombarding us so terribly that it hasn't been seen since the second World War in European, and it can't be justified by any reasons'). Also says he is still in charge and that Mladic takes his orders, and that Sarajevo 'was once entirely Serbian'. RRF fires 18 105mm 155mm shells at Serb mortar firing on Mt. Igman road. Admiral Leighton Smith shows video of hit Mt. Jahorina radar complex but comments that Serb artillery difficult to target, not as many targets hit as he would like. Jeltsin warns that Russian may have to aid Serbs.

After returning from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Russian intelligence officers said in Moscow that shelling of civilians near the Markale market in Sarajevo on 28 August had been prepared by the experts of Western secret services and carried out by the troops of the Muslim commander Rasim Delic. Russian intelligence officers also accused the UNPROFOR command for inadequate reports on the explosion which decisively affected the results of investigation.

September 6,7 and 8

NATO forces conducted search and rescue missions for the two downed French aircrew members. While over Bosnia on the night of 8 September, two NATO crew members were slightly wounded by enemy fire as their aircraft attempted to locate the downed French aviators. All three missions returned to their bases without confirmed contact with the French air-crew.

September 7

NATO strikes continue hitting ammunition dumps (in Pale) and military base at Lukavica (2nd time). Holbrooke says Foreign Ministers talks will cover controversial issues, but not territory. Yugoslavia tells UN that NATO strikes jeopardise peace process. UN Security Council condemns Croatia for exodus of 150,000 Serbs and human rights violation against Serbs, also condemns Bosnian Serbs for not allowing access to Muslim prisoners.

Government of FR Yugoslavia demanded from the UN Security Council the immediate cessation of bombing of Serb positions and other targets in the Republika Srpska, which would eliminate the danger from possible escalation of conflict in the former Bosnia-Herzegovina and threat to the international peace and security in the entire region. President Jeltsin said that prolonged NATO air and artillery strikes on Bosnian Serbs undermine the efforts for the political resolution of the crisis. These strikes 'go beyond the framework of the UN Security Council decisions, drawing the international community into the war against one party in conflict in Bosnia'.

NATO refused Jeltsin's criticism of air strikes on the Bosnian Serbs, explaining that they are fully compatible with international law. 'The stakes are too high to revoke the operation', said a NATO official in Brussels, and added that the NATO mission would continue until Serbs have been forced to fulfil the UN demand for withdrawal of heavy weapons around Sarajevo.

UN Security Council adopted a presidential statement, expressing the Council's deep concern over the grave situation of Serb refugees from Krajina and over the violation of international humanitarian law by the Croatian authorities. The Council was also concerned by the information of the burning of Serb houses, rubbing of property and killings, and demands from the Croatian authorities to undertake adequate measures to investigate these crimes and stop the violence.

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member states of the Contact Group and representatives of the Organisation of Islamic Countries met in Paris to discuss the possibilities to end the war in the former Yugoslavia. The ministers concluded that the chances for diplomatic progress seem better than recently, but that negotiations would be long and difficult.

September 8

Foreign ministers of Bosnia Croatia and Yugoslavia agree in Geneva in the presence of representatives of the Contact Group to the division of Bosnia into Serb and Muslim-Croat entities within one state. 51:49 territorial division proposed by the Contact Group would be the basis of the agreement. This proposal would be open for modification through mutual agreement. Both entities will continue to exist with their valid constitutions and entitled to the establishment of parallel relations with the neighbouring states, in conformity with the sovereignty and territory integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Both entities will undertake reciprocal obligation to hold elections at all levels under international supervision, to adopt and observe the international standards of human rights. The entities in principle agreed to the setting up of a Committee for Displaced Persons, for Human Rights, establishment of public companies that would own and manage transport and other infrastructure, a Committee for the Preservation of National Monuments and to the elaboration and implementation of a system of arbitration for the settlement of disputes. Refugees would be allowed to return to their homes or be compensated for losses, and freedom of movement would be guaranteed, but issue of E. Slavonia still unresolved.

Serbs fire anti-air missile at NATO jet prompting RRF to fire 40 artillery shells. Serbs say 10 patients, hospital staff killed, 22 wounded due to RRF shelling. Jeltsin at first press conference in year condemns attacks, says Russia may reconsider expansion of NATO and blames foreign ministers for failures, hints at changing Kozyrev, while Christopher says Russia has stake in peace being achieved.

September 9

More NATO strikes against Lukavica barracks, Serbian air defence systems, bridges in E. Bosnia. Croatia threatens military action against E. Slavonia unless solution is found 'within 2 or 3 months'. Clinton administration has proposed that Serbia would retain control for present but Croatia would regain territory. Russian Duma votes 258-2 in non-binding Resolution that Kozyrev be fired for lack of Russian diplomatic successes, calls on Jeltsin to suspend participation in NATO PfP program. Five strike packages planned. Two aborted because of weather. Three were delayed but successfully conducted planned attacks. Stand-off weapons including Anti-radiation Missiles (HARM) and GBU-15, 2000 lb glide bombs employed against Integrated Air Defence System targets in well-defended NW Bosnia-Herzegovina. Reports of possible BSA vehicles moving out of Sarajevo late at night resulted in a temporary suspension of air strikes against targets in the immediate vicinity of Sarajevo.

September 10

Strike packages struck targets which were not previously attacked because of weather. A US Navy ship, in support of NATO Operation 'Deliberate Force,' launched Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles against

Bosnian Serb air defence assets in north-western Bosnia and radio, communication sites at Lisina (near Banja Luka). Thirteen missiles were launched, jets hitting same targets. Commander UNPROFOR requested suspension of strikes on targets in the immediate vicinity of Sarajevo to assess BSA intentions to remove heavy weapons. Recce mission tasking was increased in support of the effort to verify reports of BSA removal of weapons from Sarajevo.

Pentagon considering using F-117 Stealth bombers, but Italy balking at this. Both France and Italy concerned about escalation of attacks. UN says they have seen some Serb movement NE of Sarajevo but don't know what it means. Mladic says weapons will not be removed since they are necessary to protect civilians. UN requested CAS support following BSA shelling of UN positions near Tuzla airport, three flights of fighters supported the CAS requested. Two command bunkers and an artillery position were identified, targetted and successfully engaged.

September 11

More ammunition dumps in hit. Assistant Russian Foreign Minister Churkin says about use of cruise missiles 'we are very worried that this will get out of hand'. NATO officials, Pentagon differ on effectiveness of missile use with Pentagon expressing disappointment. Bosnian Serbs say more attacks could threaten peace talks, Karadzic calling them a declaration of war. Serb authorities restricting Red Cross access to Banja Luka and can't confirm Serbs accusations of civilian casualties. Bosnian Croatian forces take mountain pass of Mliniste and peaks of Demirovac and Vitorog, government forces advancing Mt. Ozren area and take town of Voguca connecting Tuzla and Zenica.

September 12

NATO continues bombing ammunition dumps at Vogosca (near Sarajevo) and in the Doboje area in campaign to damage military infrastructure. Option 3 being considered (attacks on power plants, transport, etc. UN says supplies now getting through to Sarajevo but that Serb threat to city remains. Russian calls attacks 'genocide', says it will release humanitarian aid to Bosnian Serbs and that attack is part of US plan for world domination. Bosnian Government forces take Donji Vakuf while Croats capture Sipovo, and Drvar.

UN Secretary General spokesman Joe Sills confirmed in New York the existence of a secret MOU, signed on 10 August 1995 at Zagreb airport by the commander of NATO forces for Southern Europe Leighton Smith and commander of UN Peace Forces for the former Yugoslavia Bernard Janvier. This Memorandum allows the NATO air forces to bomb Bosnian Serb positions and Serb-populated areas in Croatia (Republika Srpska Krajina), in the case of 'attack or attack threat' by the RS Army on the four areas under UN protection - Gorazde, Sarajevo, Bihac and Tuzla. Sills said that the Memorandum is an 'internal document' of which the Secretariat is not obliged to inform the UN Security Council nor the member states of the Security Council.

September 13

At UN headquarters in New York Foreign Ministers of Greece and Macedonia signed an agreement on the normalisation of relations. Greece and Macedonia undertake to observe the sovereignty, territory integrity and political independence of the two countries, accepting the present internationally recognised common borders. Macedonia will remove from its state symbols the Alexander of Macedonia's golden six-pointed star of Vergina, while Greece undertakes to lift within 30 days the economic blockade of Macedonia, introduced in February 1994. Negotiations about the a change of the name of Macedonia will take place subsequently.

Stand-off weapons used to complete attacks on Integrated Air Defence System targets in NW Bosnia-Herzegovina. Poor weather resulted in a significant reduction in tempo - over 40% of the day's sorties did not fly. Rocket-propelled grenade fired at US embassy in Moscow, speculation that it is in response to NATO bombing. Muslim (7th Corps)-Croatian force captures Donji Vakuf and Jajce (15 miles N.)

surrounding 6,000 Serbs whose leaders tell them to surrender weapons to Croats rather than government troops. BiH threatens Bosanski Petrovac as 5th Corps pushes south out of Bihac and Croats move north 40,000 Serbs from this area (including Sipovo, Mrkonjic Grad) flee towards Banja Luka, 5,000 more fleeing government advances near Mt. Ozren. NATO, US warn Bosnian-Croatian force to use restraint. Serb resistance reported to be light (Jajce to have been given back to Bosnian Government in peace accords), and Karadzic claims that Serb casualties are light. Russian accuses NATO of genocide, Kohl rejects this as unacceptable.

September 13-14

US Government delegation, headed by the Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke met in Belgrade with Milosevic, in Zagreb with the Tudjman and in Mostar with Izetbegovic. The talks focused on controversial issues in the search for political solution to the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

September 14

NATO General Secretary Claes said that he ordered a 12-hour suspension of air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs. Claes said that the ambassadors of NATO member states agreed upon a temporary suspension of air operations, so that the American special envoy Richard Holbrooke could negotiate with the commander of the Bosnian Serb Army General Mladic about the fulfillment of the conditions for the withdrawal of heavy weapons of the RS Army from around Sarajevo. Offensive air operations were suspended in response to a letter from Commander UNPF to CINCSOUTH. Representatives of the warring factions had agreed to the conditions set out in the UN-brokered Framework Agreement: Cease all offensive operations within the Sarajevo TEZ, remove heavy weapons from the TEZ within 144 hours, unimpeded road access to Sarajevo, Sarajevo Airport opened for unrestricted use, BiH and BSA commanders meet to formalise a cessation of hostilities agreement. The initial suspension would last 72 hours (17 Sep). Compliance with initial conditions would result in an additional 72 hour suspension after which UN/NATO would review progress toward full compliance with the Framework Agreement (20 Sep).

Russian President Jeltsin refused to sign the two laws adopted in the Russian Duma on 12 August: the Law on unilateral lifting of sanctions against FR Yugoslavia and the Law on imposing of sanctions against the Republic of Croatia.

Karadzic, Mladic sign agreement with Holbrooke to withdraw most heavy weapons (exclusion mortars under 82mm and artillery under 100mm) 12 1/2 miles from Sarajevo after 11 hrs. of talks in Belgrade with Milosevic. Holbrooke seeks Izetbegovic assurance that government will refrain from offensive around Sarajevo as Serbs pull back. Government and Croatian forces continue to make gains in west, and government troops move forward towards Ozren liberating 10 villages. Serbs withdrawing towards Doboje. Serbs fire artillery at Tuzla-area towns, villages around Gracanica, also at Vranovaca and Rajska to divert attention from arms convoy moving along corridor.

September 15

In the presence of Milosevic an agreement was signed on the withdrawal of heavy weapons of the RS Army deployed around Sarajevo. The agreement sets out that within 72 hours the Bosnian Serbs should withdraw heavy weapons from the 20 km exclusion zone around Sarajevo. The Agreement also binds the Muslims to refrain from offensive actions in and around Sarajevo. The Agreement was signed by Karadzic and Mladic and Holbrooke

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1015 extending the existing partial suspension of the sanctions against FR Yugoslavia in the fields of air and sea traffic, culture and sports for another six months or till 15 March 1996.

Clinton welcomes Serb decision but warns that NATO air strikes will resume if they do not honour commitment, also says Serbs have promised to halt all offensive actions in Sarajevo area. 5th Corps captures Bosanski Petrovac, moves on towards Kljuc and Sanski Most, Serbs withdrawing towards Prijedor, Banja Luka leaving behind stores of weapons, ammunition. US says Bosnian Government not asked to sign agreement like Serbs did. Serbs open 2 roads into Sarajevo as promised to allow convoys into city, French cargo plane with flour supplies lands at Sarajevo airport (1st plane since April). Holbrooke in Geneva for meeting with Contact Group. Fire destroys equipment at independent radio station 'studio 99' in Sarajevo which is critical of government, arson suspected by operators. Prosecutor International Tribunal, Richard Goldstone, warns against making deal in peace negotiations granting immunity to war criminals.

September 16

NATO tells Serbs that it will resume air strikes if they don't speed up withdrawal, 71 artillery pieces moved by nightfall, although Defense Secretary Perry says 'preliminary indications are positive'. BiH troops on outskirts of Sanski Most and Prijedor. Perry also says F-117s will not be brought over to Italy. UN reports that atrocities against civilians may have been committed by both sides in Donji Vakuf. 1st US Air Force C-130 lands with relief supplies at Sarajevo airport. Holbrooke back in Belgrade for more talks with Milosevic. Serbs says 100,000 refugees in Banja Luka, UN says 60,000.

September 17

Smith and Janvier say enough weapons are being withdrawn to allow another 72 hr halt in bombing. Bosnian Serb commander in Sarajevo General Dragomir Milosevic says half of weapons have been withdrawn, rest will be gone by 20 September deadline and UN spokesman Lt. Col. Chris Vernon now says Serbs have been told to remove 82mm mortars and 100mm cannons as well. Holbrooke shuttles from Belgrade to Zagreb to Sarajevo, then back to Belgrade. The three Presidents also talked with the British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind. Serbs still losing ground in west, government-Croat forces now about 30 miles from Banja Luka. Karadzic says Serbs have taken 'heavy losses' and Belgrade radio confirms that Sanski Most, Bosnia Krupa, and Prijedor have fallen.

September 18

UN says Bosnian Government-Croatian forces now control as much as half of country, and that government artillery now only 10 miles from Banja Luka, but Izetbegovic and Tudjman in meeting with Holbrooke in Zagreb say attack on city is not imminent. Croatian Foreign Minister Granic says Croatian army will stop moving on Banja Luka and 'this is the right time for the end of war and for a final just peace'. Bosnian Foreign Minister Sacirbey comments it is 'a little premature' to discuss land division and 'the best diplomacy is created on the ground'. Government says troops have taken 36 sq. miles around Mt. Ozren for a total of over 2,400 sq. miles captured in past week, forces pressing in on Bosansko Petrovo Selo, and Doboj-Tuzla road claimed to be under government control. Fighting now along Sava River between Prijedor and Sanski Most. Member of Government General staff says enough Serb weapons taken to arm 2 infantry brigades, and artillery and tank companies. *Nasa Borba* reports column of refugees 70 km long leaving Banja Luka and heading for Derventa and Serbia. Sacirbey says his government willing to negotiate with 'reasonable leaders' in Banja Luka as forces close in. British Defence Minister Rifkind urges restraint on Bosnian Government, and other British officials contend that government successes will only draw Serbia into the war. State Department cautions Bosnian Government noting 'now is not the time to escalate the war'. Mladic reported in Belgrade hospital due to kidney stone surgery keeping him away from battlefield. War criminal Zeljko 'Arkan' Raznatovic in Banja Luka with troops. Bosnian Croats reported to be willing to hand over to Tribunal indicted war criminal Ivica Rajic for massacre of Muslim civilians in Stupni on October 23, '93.

UN Security Council President, Italian Ambassador Paolo Fulci, summoned the heads of missions with the UN of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia and warned them on behalf of the Security Council that Muslim and Croatian forces must immediately cease offensive activities in Bosnia. The White House press secretary, said that President Clinton warned the Muslim and Croatian authorities to immediately cease military activities in Bosnia and return to the peace process for the settlement of the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina. During 15 days of air raids, NATO airplanes dropped more than 1.000 bombs and missiles on Serb emplacements in the Republika Srpska.

September 19

After repeated talks with US envoy Richard Holbrooke, who conveyed a message of President Clinton, Croatian President Tudjman ordered the regular troops of the Croatian Army to cease further attacks on Serb positions in Bosnia. Tudjman, Izetbegovic and Federation President Zubak met in Zagreb. They reached a 9-point Agreement in which they confirm support for the American peace initiative and Contact Group plan for the settlement of the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina, reiterate the commitment to the Washington Agreement on the establishment of the Muslim-Croatian Federation and all subsequent agreements aimed at strengthening the Federation and its relations with Croatia, demand immediate integration of functions of Bosnia-Herzegovina and of the Muslim-Croatian Federation, consent that all refugees and displaced persons from Bosnia-Herzegovina should be entitled to return to their homes.

September 20

In a joint statement, UN and NATO commands said that Bosnian Serbs had withdrawn heavy weapons to 20 kilometers from Sarajevo before the set deadline, and that UN and NATO commanders had agreed that 'the air strikes on the Bosnian Serb positions need not be resumed for the time being'. UN 'content' with Serb compliance, says 250 weapons withdrawn and no new air strikes to take place unless Sarajevo again attacked.

Croatian Parliament adopted Law on the Temporary Seizure and Management of Certain Property, which legalises and regulates the disposal and use of all property of Serb refugees from Krajina and immovable property in Croatia owned by citizens of FR Yugoslavia.

Croatian and government forces continue to move toward Banja Luka, now also attacking Prijedor, and Croats take Bosnia Kostajnica and Bosnia Dubica. 5th Corps reported to have moved into Bosnia Novi. Bosnian Government sends letter to UN saying offensive will end if Banja Luka is demilitarised, and Silajdzic tells Serbs that an attack will come on Banja Luka if it resists reintegration in to Bosnia. Karadzic warns that his troops will take revenge now that they have consolidated themselves. UN says Croatian government has misled press about offensive. Bosnian troops in Sarajevo fire 3 mortar rounds at Serb positions in violation of promise to UN, UN condemns it, calls it 'provocation', also claims government troops shelling Doboj. Bosnian Serbs fire 2 missiles at NATO plane near Sarajevo, plane not hit. Bosnian Serbs claim Croatia firing mortars at Serb civilians from across border. EU report says of 18,232 houses in 240 Serb villages in Krajina, more than 13,600 (73%) have been partly or fully destroyed. Serbs have expelled 944 Muslim, Croats from Banja Luka, 432 from Doboj, and 442 from Mrkonjin Grad. Milosevic issues statement with Stoltenberg saying 'it was necessary to bring about the end of...hostilities', and Milosevic says he is in favour of diplomatic solution. Croatia lower house of parliament dissolves itself so as to begin early election campaign which Tudjman, HDZ (Croatia Democratic Community) are expected to win due to war successes.

September 21

Serbs beat back Croatian offensive in N. Bosnia with Croatia taking heavy casualties, Western diplomats say Croatians push across Una River poorly planned, executed, and Serbs have been bombing them with cluster bombs (NATO takes no action). Serbs counterattacking to keep back

government forces near Prijedor, Sanski Most and UN reports 5th Corps has stalled 10 km SW of Bosanski Novi and 12 km W of Sanski Most with thousands of government- Croatian troops moving from Travnik. Heavy fighting on Mt. Ozren with Serbs shelling civilian areas in response to government advances. 2nd and 3rd Corps advancing on Doboj causing Serb civilians to flee to Bijeljina. Serbs fire rocket at Maglaj wounding 20. French and US commandos fail in 3 attempts to rescue 2 French flyers in Serbian control. US apparently commits to further rescue efforts

September 22

UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1016, in which it recognises that it received the assurances of the Governments of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia that they would stop offensive activities in Western Bosnia, but warns parties of their obligation to strictly observe the demands of the Council of 18 September. The Security Council demands from the warring factions to cease hostilities without delay and to immediately sign a cease-fire agreement. The Council requests greater involvement of the international community in relieving the dramatic humanitarian situation in Bosnia.

Bosnian troops in Sarajevo again fire mortar at Serbs, UN condemns action. 5th Corps commander General Dudakovic says of goals, 'We want to connect the three Bs: Bihac, Banja Luka, and Bijeljina'. Izetbegovic calls for demilitarisation of Banja Luka and says refugees can stay in town and army will not enter if this is accepted, also calls for free access to Gorazde as condition for 60-day cease-fire. Serb member of Bosnia-Herzegovina presidency, Mirko Pejanovic, calls on Serbs living in Pale-run areas to set up their own civil authorities. Yugoslavia Foreign Minister Milutinovic says Yugoslavia army's involvement cannot be ruled out in conflict. German Foreign Minister Kinkel warns Croats to respect abandoned Serb property in Krajina and not to hinder return of Serb refugees.

Head of the Office for Refugees of the Croatian Government Adalbert Rebic said in Zagreb that Croatia had abolished refugee status for 100,000 Muslims and Croats from Bosnia and that it would send them back to Bosnia-Herzegovina. The order for their deportation was issued by President Tudjman.

September 23

Both sides accuse other of pre-dawn attacks near Brcko, heavy fighting near Sanski Most with Arkan's paramilitary involved. Silajdzic announces mass grave of 540 bodies found near Krasulje probably from 1992 and this gives government reason to pursue advance on Banja Luka. UN says Serbs still in control of Sanski Most, Mrkonjic Grad, and launching small counterattacks. 5th Corps recapture 10 villages and 130 sq. miles of territory in area in past 2 days, capture 16 APCs, and other artillery. Croatian and Bosnian Governments agree to return of 100,000 Bosnian refugees in Croatia. UN spokesman Ivanko says Serbs now hold only 49.7% of territory, while Government has 29.4%, Croats 20.9%.

September 24

Bosnian Government says it will not participate in peace talks in New York probably due to successful offensive in Banja Luka area. Government troops advancing in Ozren mountains (N. of Doboj), reported to have killed 25 Serb troops and capture large amounts of weapons. Government, Croats fire artillery at Serbs in NE corridor, Yugoslavian army claimed to be involved in fighting on Brka-Vranovaca front (S. of Brcko), and Government-Croat forces counterattack near Gradacac and capture village of Krecane but have to abandon it due to Yugoslavian intervention. Serbs shell Gorazde. Bosnian Serbs reject demilitarisation of Banja Luka, and Silajdzic says offensive will continue. US ambassador Galbraith tells Croatian government that postwar aid will be linked to treatment of Serbian minorities.

German Minister for Foreign Affairs Klaus Kinkel disclosed the contents of the Contact Group's draft peace plan for Bosnia. The proposal contains four phases. The first one is signing of a cease-fire agreement. In the second phase, territorial division in 49:51 proportion would be determined, along

with the future constitutional arrangement of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The third phase would include the implementation and insurance of the peace plan, with the participation of new peace forces with new mandate, disarmament and control of permitted armament of the warring parties, insurance of borders and regulation of refugee issues. The fourth phase implies the reconstruction of the country, including humanitarian aid to all parties, and aid for reconstruction that would be provided only to areas heavily destroyed during the war which, according to Kinkel, excludes the Serb side. This phase also includes the 'reintegration of the successors of the former Yugoslavia' into the international community.

September 25

Secretary of State Christopher calls Izetbegovic, urges him to participate in peace talks, then meets with Foreign Ministers in New York to keep peace talks on track. Government and Croatian troops put pressure on Serb territory near Banja Luka to allow equipment to come through. UN tells Serbs that attacking Gorazde would be 'mad'. Tudjman meets in Paris with Chirac, both stress that Bosnia must not become a radical Islamic state. Tudjman also says 100,000 of 200,000 refugees to be returned to liberated areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but Bosnian Government says it was not consulted on this. Izetbegovic writes to Tudjman saying that Muslim minorities in Croatia do not have guaranteed representatives in parliament. Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Milutinovic meets with German Foreign Minister Kinkel (first such high-level meeting since '91).

September 26

With the mediation of the Contact Group, Foreign Ministers of FR Yugoslavia, Croatia, and Bosnia at a meeting in New York, chaired by Holbrooke and Bildt, adopted the Agreement on the constitutional arrangement of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Agreement is elaboration of constitutional arrangement provisions contained in the Geneva Agreed Basic Principles of 8 September 1995. The New York Agreement sets out an obligation for both entities (Muslim-Croatian Federation and Republika Srpska) to hold elections as soon as social conditions allow. Within 30 days after OSCE delegations have determined that elections could be properly held, the governments of the two entities will hold free and democratic elections and will fully co-operate with international monitors of the elections. Two thirds of the parliament/assembly will be elected in the territory of the Muslim-Croatian Federation, and one third in the territory of the Republika Srpska. All parliamentary decisions will be taken by majority vote, provided the majority includes at least one third of votes of each entity. The Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina will be elected by the same principle and it will decide in the same way as the assembly. If a third of members of the assembly or Presidency disagrees with a decision, or deems it harmful for vital interests of the one or both entities, the issue shall be referred to the parliament of the one or both entities. If any of these parliaments by a 2/3 majority confirms the disagreement with the said decision, it cannot become effective. Common government and Constitutional Court shall be set up and operate according to similar principles. The mentioned institutions will be responsible for foreign policy. The parties will continue to negotiate about the extent of responsibility of these institutions for other issues, in accordance with all agreed constitutional principles.

Clinton re-pledges US troops to secure agreement, says 'America will strongly oppose the partition of Bosnia', but Republic senators express opposition. Karadzic says agreement 'a confirmation of the existence of the Serb Republic'. 2/3rds of parliament to come from Muslim-Croatia territory, 1/3rd from Serb areas, parliament action to require 1/3rd from each entity to pass, president to be elected based on 2/3rds-1/3rd formula but size not decided upon. 17 Muslim and 17 Serb prisoners exchanged at Sarajevo airport with another set for Tuzla. UN says 1,000 Muslim/Croats (half of remaining population) expelled by Serbs from Doboj this past week. BBC reports Serbs still pressganging among Croatian Serb refugees. *Novi List* quotes Tudjman as saying 'I promise today that we will soon enter Ilok and Vukovar'. Croats, Serbs fire artillery at each other in border area near Slavonski Brod and Novska. Mladic in Banja Luka again, says diplomacy way to solve war, but also threatens of wider war if

it continues. Spokesman of UNHCR said at a press conference in Geneva that this Commissariat is profoundly concerned at the intention of the Croatian authorities to forcefully return to Western Bosnia some 100,000 Muslim and Croat refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and that it will resolutely demand from the Croatian authorities to abandon this decision.

September 27

BiH troops very near to Mrkonjic Grad, within shelling distance of Banja Luka, Serbs shell Travnik with cluster bomb killing 2, also hit Zenica in retaliation for government offensive. Silajdzic says government will not negotiate while civilians being killed. UN says more than 400, including soldiers, arrested in Croatia for looting and burning Serb homes in Krajina. Serbs claim government attacking rail and road junctions at Doboj. Mayor of Jajce says 'Herceg-Bosna' authorities ban Croats from settling in 'Bosniak' (Muslim) houses in anticipation of Croats returning to towns held by Bosnian Government. International Tribunal sends Milosevic letter saying it is his resolution to hand over Karadzic, Mladic. Christopher says administration will ask for Congress approval before committing troops to peacekeeping effort. Shalikhvili welcomes non-NATO states to contribute troops to potential peacekeeping force. *Oslobodjenje* reports that now 2,000 bodies have been discovered in Kljuc mass grave instead of just 540. Council of Europe approves Macedonia membership for November 9 under name of Foreign Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia.

September 28

Bosnian troops press offensive in Banja Luka area shelling Serb positions around Mrkonjic Grad (40 miles from Banja Luka), Serb MiG-21s used against them. Government says it has captured Serb Army volunteers fighting with Bosnian Serbs but have executed them. Government commanders in area say they have been ordered to take high ground around Banja Luka and cut city off from other Serb territory. Silajdzic says troops will keep fighting 'as long as there is no peace, there is war', and calls for NATO air strikes in response to previous day's attacks on Zenica, Travnik, but NATO says no as these are not Safe Areas. Stoltenberg in E. Slavonia for talks with rebel Serbs. *International Herald Tribune* says Clinton administration has endorsed civil suit against Karadzic filed by 2 Bosnian women. Mladic reported to have arrested officers responsible for Serbs' defeat in Croatia-Bosnia offensive. Russia said to have gained 2 Tomahawk cruise missiles from Bosnian Serbs who shot down US reconnaissance aircraft.

Government of FR Yugoslavia gave full support to the New York Agreement on the basic principles of constitutional arrangement for Bosnia-Herzegovina, while cessation of hostilities is the absolute prerequisite for successful continuation and completion of the peace process. The Government also stated that immediate lifting of sanctions against FR Yugoslavia is an unavoidable part of the present peace process, without which it cannot be successfully brought to the close.

NATO forces suspended the French air-crew search based on the French assessment that further missions would not be productive.

September 29

UN Security Council issued a presidential statement that it fully shares the concern of UNHCR, which warned that the decision by the Croatian authorities on the abolition of refugee status for 100,000 Muslims and Croats from Bosnia means forceful deportation of people into areas which are neither safe nor economically capable of receiving them. The Council demands from the Croatian Government to allow all refugees, irrespective of their origin, to remain in Croatia and reiterates its demand for full observance of human rights for the Serb population in Krajina, including their right to stay in their homes or return in safety. Elizabeth Rehn from Finland was appointed the new special rapporteur for human rights in the territory of the former Yugoslavia instead of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who resigned.

Serb cannons fire on Konjic killing 2, attack Zenica killing 1, and Gorazde, fighting also around Kljuc and Mt. Ozren, while UN reports some fighting between Muslim and Croats over reconquered territory but says their alliance holding.

Holbrooke in Sarajevo for meetings. Ireland, Bosnia-Herzegovina establish diplomatic relations.

Clinton responds to Republican Senator letter of September 25 that he is not keeping them informed of Bosnia plans by meeting with 24 Republic and Democratic congress leaders, tells them costs of peacekeeping and rebuilding Bosnia cheaper than continuing war. Dole still opposed and prefers lifting arms embargo, Gingrich calls meeting 'interesting', Lugar says it is a 'good discussion'.

North Atlantic Council, taking note of a report by NATO military commanders, stated that the Bosnian-Serb reply to UN demands was not a sufficient basis for the termination of air strikes, and set out further conditions.

September 30

EU, UN officials accuse Croatia of violation against Serbs in Krajina, calls actions part of systematic campaign to kick 3,500 remaining Serbs out of region. Bodies of slain elderly Serbs being found, whole villages being destroyed. Croatia claims this is the action of 'renegades', says 370 have been arrested for looting. US Assistant Secretary of State Shattuck calls for end to 'major human rights abuses' in Krajina. Serbs fire guns at Gradacac, mortars on Mt. Ozren fired at villages around Gracanica. Fighting around government-held Konjic (25 miles SE of Sarajevo) where 3 civilians killed, 10 wounded by shelling, heavy fighting around Mrkonjic Grad. Holbrooke in Belgrade, says 'all fundamental issues...remain unresolved...(the sides are) very far apart'. UN says report which blames Serbs for firing market on August 28 correct despite British, Russian contentions otherwise. Croatian Primate Cardinal Kuharic tells Croatia soldiers in mass that there is no justification for harming a human being regardless of ethnic origin. *Vecernji List* says 3/4rds of Catholic churches in Krajina destroyed under Serbian control, while only 2.5% of Orthodox buildings ruined.

October 1

7th Corps said to be on Mt. Manjaca only 20 km away from Banja Luka, heavy Serb artillery response, 3 at Zenica. Holbrooke continues shuttle diplomacy meeting with Tudjman, Milosevic, says sides don't agree on how to stop fighting. Milosevic calls for cease-fire as first step. Holbrooke says reintegration of E. Slavonia into Croatia essential but must be peaceful.

Croatia ruled out a referendum or special status for Eastern Slavonia, the last of its territories under Serb control, in any overall peace settlement for the former Yugoslavia. In the New York talks, the three sides in the wars in Bosnia and Croatia struck a deal on the future of Bosnia, laying the constitutional ground for a possible end to the conflicts.

October 2

Bosnian government troops launched a major attack south of Sarajevo in an attempt to cut a key Serb supply route. A Bosnian Serb radio report that 'the Bosnian army launched an artillery and infantry attack in the Treskavica mountain region with the aim of taking control of the Sarajevo-Trnovo road.' EU Foreign Ministers endorsed in Luxembourg Franco-German plan to rebuild Bosnia in the event of peace, but held back from calling for a European to co-ordinate the multi-national effort. The six points in the plan were:

- (1) implementing the peace plan,
- (2) dealing with refugees,
- (3) providing humanitarian aid,
- (4) reconstruction,
- (5) controlling arms and regional security, and,
- (6) dealing with open questions such as human and minority rights.

Silajdzic in Moscow for talks with Kozyrev, Chernomyrdin. Serb tanks and mortar fired at government troops NE of Bosnia Krupa, government fires back killing 3, UN says no new changes in sides' positions.

October 3

With the mediation of Co-Chairman Stoltenberg and American Ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith, a meeting was held in Erdut between the representatives of the Srem-Baranja region ('sector East' of the Republika Srpska Krajina) and Republic of Croatia. The delegations agreed on basic principles for the future negotiations on the settlement of the status of this area. The Agreement sets out a transitional period for this region, the length of which should be determined subsequently. During this period a transitional authority will be established, composed of the representatives of the interests of the Croatian Government, local Serbs, Croatian refugees and displaced persons, and ethnic minorities. During the transitional period international forces will ensure peace and compliance with the final agreement. The area will be demilitarised during this period. All persons entitled to Croatian citizenship irrespective of their ethnic background will be afforded the right to return to their homes, repossess their property or to compensation for property that cannot be recovered.

Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov (78) was injured in an assassination attempt when a remote-control bomb exploded near the president's passing car in downtown Skopje. Bosnian Government troops, Serbs fight near Banja Luka. Government forces launch attack around Mt. Treskavica (S. of Sarajevo) to cut Serb supply road between Sarajevo-Trnovo, Serbs demand to be allowed to return their weapons to area to respond but UN says no. UN protests government attack. UN says Serbs regain some territory in NW. Government says 3 killed, 3 wounded in Gorazde. Secretary of State Christopher says if US does not participate in NATO peacekeeping force it could mean end of alliance. Akashi says 9 elderly Serb civilians murdered in village in Krajina by men wearing military uniforms. Holbrooke, in Belgrade, says talks not at impasse.

October 4

NATO planes attack 2 Serb SAM systems in Central Bosnia and another in south after batteries lock onto NATO craft. Serbs continue offensive in W. Bosnia with intense fighting around Otoka, Bosnia Krupa. Government troops of 4th Corps near Mostar say they have driven Serbs off key heights near Sarajevo-Trnovo road and are controlling road between Konjic and Kalinovic (Mladic's home town). Holbrooke says he has been given 'serious cease-fire proposal' by Bosnian Government authorities. UN protests torture of Serbs by Croats to Tudjman saying Croatian security forces probably involved. Zubak admits to conflicts between Croat and Bosnian forces but downplays them. US ambassador to Bosnia, John Menzies, arrives in Sarajevo to take up post.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Jose Ayala Lasso sent a warning from Geneva to the Croatian President Tudjman regarding the drastic violation of human rights in Krajina. 'United Nations are profoundly concerned at everything that the Croatian authorities and/or their Army are doing in the devastated Krajina. That is why the UN warn the Zagreb officials that such drastic violation of human rights will no longer be tolerated,' concludes the High Commissioner.

EU monitors said that a Bosnian army general was hurt and seven soldiers were killed in 'friendly fire' between allied Bosnian Government and Croat HVO forces in Mrkonjic Grad, western Bosnia; a Bosnian army source denied it.

October 5

Clinton announces Bosnia cease-fire to take effect on 10 October after electricity, gas restored to Sarajevo, all shooting to stop, and no new mines laid or barriers imposed, but existing positions to be temporary maintained. Cease-fire to last 60 days, negotiations to begin in US on 25 October. Agreement drafted by Holbrooke, signed by Izetbegovic, Karadzic and Mladic, witnessed by Milosevic.

No US troops to be involved until formal peace settlement reached. Agreement does not include Croatia, and UN says over 100 Croatian troops have moved into Bihac area, but Croatian government to be full partner in cease-fire due to presence of Croatian troops in Bosnia. Jeltsin calls agreement 'major step toward peace'. Croatian artillery positioned near Dvor in Croatia. Serbs firing artillery at Gracanica, Zavidovici, and Maglaj. Yugoslav army fighting in Doboj-Kraljina-Bosnia Petrovo Selo area. UN says 1/3rd of peacekeeping force (9,000) to be removed due to stabilisation and progress of peace talks. Russia says it will resume deliveries of natural gas to Sarajevo but land mines need to be removed from around electric pylons. Official Dutch explanation of Dutchbat role in fall of Srebrenica contradicted by soldiers who say they knew executions were going on, and that Dutch commanders preferred to deal with Serbs who they considered to be professional soldiers. UN warns Croatia, Bosnia to protect their minority citizens better.

October 6

Approx. 3,500 Croatian troops providing artillery support for Bosnian Government forces who repel Serb advance west of Bosanska Krupa (125 miles NW of Sarajevo), and 400 Croatians have crossed into Bihac area in past 3 days. EU says Kljuc (85 miles NW of Sarajevo) still in government hands but Serbs say they will recapture it as early as tomorrow. Government gains made near Trnovo (S. of Sarajevo). Holbrooke says delays in re-establishing utilities to Sarajevo could temporarily delay cease-fire. Tudjman says Croatian troops to observe cease-fire, Russia says it will contribute troops to multinational force.

At the initiative of Italy, an expanded Contact Group meeting was held in Rome. Besides representatives of five Contact Group members, the meeting was attended by diplomats of Italy, Canada and Japan, Foreign Ministers of FR Yugoslavia Milan Milutinovic and Bosnia, Muhamed Sacirbey, and deputy Foreign Minister of Croatia Ivo Sanader. Participants welcomed the cease-fire and termination of all hostilities. Constitutional and territorial modalities for the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina have been discussed, as well as ways for reconstruction of war-afflicted areas. In a presidential statement the UN Security Council welcomed the signing of the cease-fire and termination of all hostilities throughout the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

October 7

Momcilo Krajisnik, close associate of Karadzic, and president of the assembly of the Republika Srpska, announced continuation of military operations in Bosnia so that separatist Serbs till next Tuesday, when cease-fire comes into force, could gain the best possible position.

Delegates of the lower house of Russian Parliament, tried to outvote the veto of Russian president Jeltsin on their decision for unilateral lifting sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro. Two-third majority of 300 needed votes was not achieved as only 248 delegates voted.

The Bosnian government threatened to call off peace talks due at the end of the month.

White House Chief-of-Staff, Leon Panetta, said President Clinton could send US troops to Bosnia as part of NATO peacekeeping force without authorisation from Congress.

Following an 8 October meeting in Geneva with US Defense Secretary William Perry, Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev said the two sides had reached an agreement in principle on Russian participation in a Bosnian peace implementation force.

World Bank Vice-president Wilfried Thalwitz suggested that Bosnia's Government will need at least three billion dollars to rebuild its economy and create a decent standard of living. This figure is lower than that called earlier by Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic who said Bosnian Government will need 12 billion dollars in post-war reconstruction aid.

Serbs expelled 450 women, children, and old people from around Banja Luka to Zenica, refugees say many of them expelled by Arkan and his troops, males have been taken to unknown locations. Heavy fighting around Bosanska Krupa. UN says it will be clearing mines from road leading to Gorazde as

part of government demands for cease-fire. Tudjman confirms that regular Croatian troops still in Bosnia.

October 8

Serb planes bomb refugee camp at Zivinice near Tuzla with cluster bomb (M-87 Orkan rock- et) killing at least 6, wounding 30, NATO planes respond but call off strikes due to bad weather (Bosnian Serb TV blames Bosnian Government of massacring own citizens). Serb planes bomb Tesanjka (N. Bosnia) killing 9, wounding 45, while Croatia reports that Serb planes also drop cluster bombs on Croatian villages of Jelah, Lepenica in Usora River valley (N. Bosnia). Artillery and rocket fire near Bosanska Krupa, heavy fighting near Kljuc. Silajdzic threatens to call off peace talks if attacks not stopped, but Izetbegovic says cease-fire to be observed if mines cleared as agreed.

October 9

NATO planes bomb Serb bunker which has been directing shelling of Tuzla for 2nd day (16 dead, 90 wounded, including Norwegian peacekeeper and 2 civilians). Moscow criticised NATO's air attack, saying such actions could jeopardise efforts to establish a ceasefire in Bosnia. Serb units directed by Arkan expel 3,500 from Prijedor and Bosanski Novi (near Banja Luka). Women refugees report that men were taken away and that they were detained in stadium for several days without water. Bosnian Government says cease-fire to be delayed since utilities have not been restored to Sarajevo, and Croatian newspapers say Bosnian Government forces ready to take Mrkonjic Grad. Croatian officials say they have found mass grave in Krajina of mostly elderly Croatian citizens killed by Serbs in '91 in area retaken from Serbs. Macedonian parliament ratifies interim agreement with Greece.

October 10

After a seven months of blockade gas and electricity flowed into Sarajevo. Bosnian Government says amount of electricity powering Sarajevo homes inadequate, refuse to accept truce under these conditions, but Serbs say they are not authorised to accept offer and will have to consult leaders. The Bosnian Serbs responded to the Bosnian-Croat federation's offer of a cease-fire starting 12 October. The cease-fire was originally due to have started on 10 October. UN says Serbs in final push to ethnically cleanse territory and have expelled 10,000 Muslim, Croats in last 4 days with the usual rapes, murders, and robberies. Bosnian Croat troops captured Mrkonjic Grad, 40 km south of Banja Luka, the last Serb-held town on the vital Bihac-Sarajevo in the early afternoon. Other big towns on the route - Donji Vakuf, Jajce, Kljuc and Bosanski Petrovac - were seized in an offensive last month. Serbs say they will shell Croatian border towns in retaliation. BiH stops Serb advance on Bosnia Krupa and Kljuc and gained ground near Doboje. Government troops start offensive towards Mt. Vis (S. of Kalesija, E. of Tuzla). Serbs fire artillery at Okucani wounding 3. The Bosnian Army's 5th Corps based in Bihac said the town of Sanski Most was re-captured. The fall was confirmed by Serbs in Banja Luka. The Army's 5th Corps reported it found bodies of 50 Croat & Muslim civilians - eleven civilians' were reportedly shot in the back, while 15 were killed by automatic rifles' fire. Bodies of 10 killed civilians were found in the Trnova village, while two mass graves were found near Catholic church in the Sasina village. 7th Corps links up with Croats at Ugar River, 1st Corps has liberated 100 sq. km near Trnovo and moving towards Gorazde. Serb headquarters calls for last stands in defence of Prijedor and Sanski Most, says Manjaca Hill near Banja Luka under BiH rocket-launcher fire, 15,000 more Serbs flee fighting and 3,200 soldiers missing, killed, or captured in these offensives according to Serbs. Ibro Osmanovic, 30, gave first accounts of routine beatings, torture and deaths at a Serb prison camp in Bosnia during hearings held by the UN criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Hague. The testimony came during the hearing of evidence against Dragan Nikolic, accused of murdering and torturing prisoners while running the Susica camp in northeastern Bosnia in the summer of 1992.

UN announces that it (temporary) will replace Akashi at end of month with Ghanian diplomatic Kofi Annan , UN General Undersecretary for Peacekeeping . Akashi will leave this post on 1 November at his personal request.

October 11

Serbs accuse Bosnian Government of delays implementing cease-fire as tactic to seize towns of Mrkonjic Grad and Sanski Most to widen corridor between Sarajevo, Bihac. Cease-fire document signed by Foreign Minister of the Republika Srpska Aleksa Buha, and by Hasan Muratovic on behalf of Bosnian Government. Karadzic ordered the Main Headquarters of the RS Army, members of the Interior Ministry and all armed units to cease fire and all military activities as of 12 October at 00.01. The Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina ordered Army commander Rasim Delic to issue orders to armed units 'to cease all military activities except defensive'.

October 12

Bosnia-wide sixty-day cease-fire (36th) begins after midnight, 2 days later than scheduled but within time frame. Cease-fire largely in effect although fighting in NW. Both sides accuse other of violation of truce with Serbs saying government forces shelling road between Sanski Most and Banja Luka. UN monitors still prevented from entering war zone and can't verify fighting. More fighting reported around Sanski Most despite government having taken town, BiH also advancing N. on Prijedor and claims to have taken highway 6 miles W. of town. Government says that forces had advanced within 12 miles of Banja Luka prior to cease-fire. 5th Corps commander Dudakovic meets with central Bosnian 7th Corps commander General Mehmet Alagic in Sanski Most to plan next advances. UN convoy testing openness of road out of Sarajevo turned back due to Serb mines, French peacekeepers begin clearing them. UN establish of refugees from fighting between 9,000-40,000 with most Croatia-Muslim men unaccounted foreign government troops find mass grave with 15 bodies in village of Kokic near Jajce.

In a presidential statement the UN Security Council welcomed the cease-fire in Bosnia asking all warring parties to observe it strictly and restrain from taking any military action that could discredit and endanger the peace process. The Council also expressed its deep concern for the violent displacement of population and condemned any ethnic cleansing by whosoever, demanding that such actions should be immediately stopped. Macedonia admitted into OSCE.

US Assistant Secretary of State and peace negotiator Richard Holbrooke announced that negotiations on Bosnia will start on October 31, in US and will last until the results are obtained. The NATO Council decided that multinational forces of NATO equipped with helicopters and tanks will arrive to Bosnia immediately after the signing of peace agreement.

October 13

Bosnian Federation, ignoring a nation-wide cease-fire, attacked the north-western town of Prijedor forcing 40,000 Serbs to flee under a barrage of shells. There were 70,000 refugees from other areas in Prijedor itself. Prijedor shelled, loses electricity and radio while Karadzic visits, and UN spokesman Vernon says Dudakovic probably wants to take city despite what he has told UN. Karadzic says 'American has brokered this cease-fire, and it is obliged to stop the Muslim'. Bosnian Serb officials threatened in a meeting with UN-officials to quit the peace process, and Deputy Serb commander General Milan Gvero demands NATO air strikes. Serbs say 2 villages S. of Banja Luka evacuated and one on fire, Banja Luka hospitals crammed with wounded. Serbs set up checkpoints around Banja Luka to keep population from leaving. UN allowed into Sanski Most for 'controlled' visitation UN says Serbs' ethnic cleansing starting again in Banja Luka.

After four day negotiations in Skopje representatives of Greek nad Macedonian governments signed the Memorandum on Implementation of the Agreement on Normalisation of the Macedonian-Greek

Relations which had been signed in New York on 13 September. The Greek government issued a statement saying that 'all restrictions on movement of goods from and to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will be lifted' at midnight that day. In this way Greece lifted the trade and economic blockade it had imposed against Macedonia on 16 February 1994.

October 14

UN favourable on reduction of fighting but criticises government for not allowing monitoring, while government commanders in Sanski Most say they were not given orders to halt advance until 4 days after the cease-fire. Sacirbey calls on Serb civilians not to flee homes. Silajdzic tells UN that large numbers of Yugoslavian troops, weapons crossing into Bosnia in recent days which prompts government to halt further fighting. Bosnian Serbs say they will adhere to cease-fire and send representatives to peace talks in US. Shalikashvili meets with Izetbegovic in Sarajevo and says air strikes still option to enforce truce. Bosnian Serb leader Koljevic says they will call on Yugoslavia and Orthodox/ Slavic countries to aid them in stopping BiH/Croatian advances.

UN Brigadier-General Alain Forand of Canada, released a detailed report of Croat atrocities against Serbs in Croatia's Krajina region. The report gave details of murders of elderly civilians, looting and house burning. The details confirmed reports by media and human rights groups over the past month. Forand said the crimes were 'ongoing.'

October 15

Aid workers say that older Serb refugees are dying in refugee camps due to exhaustion caused by fighting (many of them in Omarska, former prison camp). UN says Croatian army unit with 22 tanks crosses back into Croatia, and 2,500 Croatian troops move away from positions along N. border. Government army commanders meet in Sarajevo and send representative to NW to ensure cease-fire. Serbs claim fighting still going on in this area with shelling of Prijedor. There can be no lasting settlement in Bosnia-Herzegovina 'without a military defeat' for the Serb separatists, Bosnian General Atif Dudakovic said in an interview published in the Madrid daily *ABC*. Government forces in Sanski Most find corpses of 85 civilians killed by Serbs during their retreat, 1,000 Muslim men missing in this town alone. Tudjman re-elected head of Croatia Democratic commander (HDZ).

October 15-16

Assembly of the Republika Srpska discussed in Banja Luka military and political situation, peace process and problems concerning the accommodation for refugees coming from 'the occupied territories of the Republika Srpska'. The Assembly removed Prime Minister Dusan Kozic but Karadzic demands army leadership 'bear the consequences' for losses and Assembly decided on retirement of four generals: Deputy Serb commander, Milan Gvero, military intelligence chief Djordje Djukic and local commanders, Zdravko Tolimir and Grujo Boric as well as lieutenant-colonel Milovan Milutinovic, because they 'have made some mistakes in performing the duties they have assigned to'. Generals are blamed for military defeats in various parts of Bosnia, particularly in western Bosnia. A group of former Karadzic's associates, led by Radoslav Dodik, requested Karadzic and Mladic to be removed as well, as the ones guilty for series of military defeats. According to the Bosnian Serb news agency SRNA the Bosnian Serbs have asked Serbia for 'protection of the Republika Srpska and its people'.

October 16

UN says truce holding 80% but fighting persists, with Bosnian government troops and Serb forces fighting a fierce artillery duel near Sanski Most, northwest Bosnia, in continued violation of a ceasefire which was officially in its fifth day. More refugees flooding into Banja Luka area with 40,000 Serbs

fleeing Prijedor in 1 day. AFP reported that Bosnian Croats and Muslims expelled from the Banja Luka area claim the Bosnian Serbs have reopened two concentration camps near the north-western city of Sanski Most. *Financial Times* says 2,500 Croatian troops have not returned from Bosnia to Adriatic garrisons, may be headed to E. Slavonia. Quoting sources in Pentagon, *The Washington Post* writes that the US found the second half of the next month to be the final dead-line for the deployment of the peacekeeping troops in Bosnia.

Washington-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) suggested that forthcoming elections in Croatia would be far from fair. NDI said President Franjo Tudjman was inflating the ballot with votes from nationalist Croats outside Croatia, rigging constituency boundaries and media access to favour his party and to squeeze the Serb minority out of the political picture.

October 17

Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev urged top policy-makers from the five-nation Contact Group to find a 'balanced' approach in their peace efforts in Bosnia.

Christopher, Perry present administration plan for sending troops to Bosnia to Congress. Perry comments that 'if US forces are attacked... they will bring a large hammer down on them immediately'. Both say US forces to be under NATO command, not UN. US announces site of new peace talks to be Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton Ohio. BiH says Mladic now requesting meetings with their commanders. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* says 22 Croatia tanks pulled out of Bosnia to be sent to Nasice near E. Slavonia. Montenegro says Croatian Serbs moving into Montenegro causing humanitarian problem. Holbrooke arrives in Belgrade for talks with Milosevic.

Concerning the decision on retirement of four generals, the general staff of the Army of the Republika Srpska issued a statement saying that the officers had been accused 'on no grounds and without any evidence'. Such action was a part of the campaign which had been waged against the Army of RS 'in order to make it responsible for all failures of the state policy, this particularly regarding to the incapability to verify the results of our struggle at the international level'. The decision 'cannot be accepted because it would endanger giving of orders, commanding and operation of the general staff and army as a whole'.

Representatives of the Contact Group met in Moscow to co-ordinate their views on settlement of the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This was the last meeting of the Contact Group before the negotiations due to start on 1 November in Dayton.

October 18

Bosnia and Serbia agree to open liaison offices in each other's capitals. UN reports 100 Muslim killed by Serb paramilitary forces in Bosanski Novi. Croatia says 25 arrested in killing of Serb civilians in Krajina. In 2nd day of testimony before US Congress, administration officials are grilled by sceptical legislation about committing US force. Karadzic, in first admission that Serbs hold 2 French pilots says unknown group, possibly Muslim, has kidnapped them.

October 19

Fighting around Sanski Most with Serbs retaking 4 sq. miles, and around hydroelectric station near Jajce (Croatia-held). Bosnian Serbs demand government give back land taken in past month. Tudjman tells Holbrooke that Croatia will try peaceful methods to regain E. Slavonia. Unnamed 'western officials' say they have evidence of thousands of Muslim men and boys killed by Serbs in Banja Luka area in past week, UN sources say US is deliberately remaining silent on the issue so as not to derail peace talks. For the first time during the current cease-fire a humanitarian aid convoy reached Gorazde. The UN convoy used the road via Pale and Rogatica, facing no obstructions, nor it was stopped by Serb paramilitary at their checkpoints. UN officials in Bosnia issued a 24-hour deadline to the Bosnian Government and Bosnian Croats to allow UN observers access to their territory to monitor compliance

with the cease-fire agreement or be condemned for obstruction. At the moment, the Federation forces control 52.26% of Bosnia and Herzegovina. After several cease-fire violations which had become effective on 12 October the Central Joint Commission of the Warring Parties for Implementation of the Agreement and representatives of UNPROFOR held a meeting at Sarajevo airport. Parties agreed that a full cease-fire should be implemented throughout the territory of Bosnia on 19 October at 24.00. French officials in Belgrade with Foreign Minister de Charette say Milosevic doesn't seem to know about pilots, call Karadzic story 'grotesque'. EU negotiator Bildt detained by French troops at Sarajevo airport but finally allowed to leave, no explanation given. Karadzic says map is key question in future settlement, says relations with Mladic good. Bosnian Serbs reported to have arrested 1 British, 2 American journalists at Pale. Holbrooke says Sarajevo should not become a divided Berlin.

October 20

Holbrooke, assistant US Secretary of State, announced that Bosnia and Serbia agreed to open liaison offices in each other's capital. US Defense Secretary Perry says he believes Congress will support President Clinton's plan to commit more than 20-thousand US troops to implement a peace accord in Bosnia. Retired General Colin Powell said US troops would be an 'appropriate tool' to police a Bosnian peace agreement. After Belgian parliament voted to send him to court over corruption allegations NATO's Secretary General, Willy Claes, said he will resign from his post. Russian President Boris Yeltsin ruled out Russian troops coming under any form of NATO command and instead proposed some form of shared leadership - an unacceptable condition for Washington. Izetbegovic announces 20 goals of Bosnia-Herzegovina including maintaining sovereignty and territorial integrity, the Contact Group map being considered valid, no surrender of Gorazde, or Brcko, an undivided Sarajevo, agreement to be enforced not by UNPROFOR but by 'powerful international forces' who must be deployed throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina and not only along separation lines, Croatian forces to remain on Bosnia-Herzegovina territory only 30 days after agreement signed. Government formally calls for Abdic's extradition. Cease-fire around Sanski Most agreed on by front-line commanders. Car bomb explodes in front of county police station in Rijeka killing 1, seriously wounding 2.

October 21

France supports Russian peacekeeping contribution, Chirac says, and comments that 'Russian and French positions on this point are perfectly convergent'. Serbs free 2 Turkish journalists, 2 Saudi aid workers, and Vladimir Srebrov, a pro-government Serb writer, while government frees 10 Bosnian Serbs including 1 soldier at Sarajevo airport. UN reports 55 women who refused to leave homes in Prijedor beaten to death by Serbs, also says that fighting in NW is now at 'negligible' levels. Arkan says his troops will be redeployed to E. Slavonia. Militant Egyptian Islamic group, Al-Jama' ah al-Islamiyah, claims responsibility for Rijeka explosions, calls for release of their spokesman who has been detained by Croatian police since September.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel was quoted as saying the signing of a Bosnian peace agreement would not automatically lead to the lifting of international sanctions against rump Yugoslavia.

October 22

Bosnian Serbs accuse government forces of firing on Serb positions in Doboj and Mt. Ozren. US Defense Secretary Perry says Russian unwillingness to send peacekeepers under NATO command a 'major hang-up' for peacekeeping mission and that NATO would unravel if the United States failed to send troops to help enforce a possible future peace accord in Bosnia. Yeltsin tells UN that Russian peacekeepers will go to Bosnia 'but only under a strict mandate of the UN Security Council', and that 'military force should never be used in those cases when diplomacy has not yet managed to succeed' and calls NATO use of force in Bosnia 'an obvious and clear-cut' violation of UN principles. Perry,

Christopher refuse to guarantee that US peacekeeping role will only last 1 year, instead say this is an 'approximate date'. French Defence Minister Charles Millon says Milosevic has given some assurances that 2 pilots are alive, speculating that they are held by Yugoslavia secret police but no negotiations are being conducted with Milosevic. Bosnian Serb assembly appoints Banja Luka mayor Rajko Kasagic as new premier.

October 23

Bosnian Serb assembly calls for part of Sarajevo to be under their control, the right to hold a referendum on secession from Bosnia within a year, the return of some land lost in recent battles. Serbs also still demanding access to Adriatic and a 12-mile wide corridor linking territory in E. and W. Bosnia. Government has no immediate reaction. Jeltsin, Clinton meet in New York, discuss Bosnia but come to no agreement on participation of Russian troops under NATO command. Karadzic inspects Arkan's troops in Bijeljina who have now postponed their departure. Bosnian Government protests Bosnian Croats running in upcoming Croatia parliament elections (12 of 127 seats are reserved for Croatia diaspora). Tudjman, Izetbegovic, and Turkish president meet in New York, discuss return of Abdic refugees to Bosnia, but Bosnian Minister of Justice demands extradition of Abdic.

October 23-24

Negotiations between the delegations of Srem-Baranja region (Eastern Slavonia) and the Republic of Croatia took place in Osijek. Mediators, Co-Chairman Stoltenberg and American ambassador to Croatia Galbraith offered a draft agreement on a peaceful settlement of the problem in this region. The negotiations were broken off but Croatian-Serb negotiators say they have made progress with Serbs accepting principle of peaceful reintegration. Tudjman says Zagreb not to use force to retake E. Slavonia.

October 24

Western road out of Sarajevo opened by UNPROFOR after cleared of mines. Bosnian Government says Croatian government decision to allow Bosnian Croats to vote in Croatia elections undermines sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Tudjman insists in interview (*USA Today*) that no Islamic nations help in reconstruction of Bosnia, and this would cause Croatia to withdraw from peace negotiations. Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Milan Milutinovic says Belgrade participation in peace talks conditional upon lifting of sanctions. US officials ask Milosevic to help locate hundreds of missing Muslim, Croats in Banja Luka area. Karadzic, Koljevic, Krajisnik in Belgrade for talks with Milosevic but Yugoslav media do not report on meeting. Croatia arrests 15 (13 Serbs, 2 Croats) including human rights activist Radovan Jovic for spying for Yugoslavian army in '91, providing information to Krajina Serbs.

October 25

Clinton, Jeltsin agree that as many as 2,000 Russian troops to carry out support functions for peace accord, although details of how they will answer to NATO not worked out. Peace talks delayed 1 day to allow Jeltsin to meet the leaders in Moscow on October 31. UNHCR estimates that 2-3,000 Muslim men missing in Banja Luka area due to October expulsions. Croatian and Croatia-Serb negotiation resume.

October 26

Bosnian Serbs say they will allow relief organisations immediate and unrestricted access into areas such as Banja Luka where Muslim prisoners are or executions have taken place after Milosevic promises this to US official, but Red Cross says they are still being denied. UNHCR spokesman Jankowski says he

has more evidence that 2-3,000 Muslim men were perhaps killed by Serbs in Banja Luka area. Perry, Grachev meet in Washington, make little progress on how Russian troops would work with NATO. Dole, 50 other Republic senators write Clinton requesting he seek authority before committing 20,000 troops to peacekeeping force, but Perry says Clinton will seek non-binding 'sense of the Congress' 'at the right time'. Izetbegovic says stable peace not possible unless accused war criminals are removed, but also comments that Russian should not be excluded from NATO-led peacekeeping force. Tudjman wound up a parliamentary election campaign with a speech promising to win back every inch of Croatian territory, if possible with peace, but if not possible with peace, we will use all means available. Military action now expected.

October 27

British television station, Channel Four, said it had unearthed evidence of US involvement in covert weapons drops to Bosnian forces in violation of an international arms embargo.

Four days before the start of the US-led peace talks, chief negotiator Holbrooke warned that there will be no peace if Serbs continue to insist on the right to secede from Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNICEF said it had ferried 53 tonnes of aid into Gorazde since its first convoy in 15 months reached the town 10 days ago. Some 60,000 people are besieged in the Gorazde enclave. Many are from nearby villages while others are from two former Safe Areas Zepa and Srebrenica.

A group of Islamic volunteer fighters held up and threatened to kill British soldiers in a UN convoy in central Bosnia, backing off only after a Bosnian army officer intervened, the UN said. French Major Herve Gourmelon said the UN estimated there were between 1,000 and 2,000 of the Islamic fighters in central Bosnia.

Perry, Grachev agree to set up multi-national military force to help in reconstruction of Bosnia, issue of how they will relate to NATO not clarified. Unit to be separate from NATO force, and carry out engineering, clearing rounds, manning checkpoints, and to answer to US General George Joulwan as commander of US forces in European (not NATO). Unit to arrive in Bosnia 1 month after NATO. Due to sickness of Jeltsin the meeting of President of Milosevic, Tudjman and Izetbegovic, which was to take place in Moscow on 31 October, was postponed 'for the time being'.

FR Yugoslavia submitted to the UN in Geneva a memorandum on crimes committed in Western Slavonia and Republika Srpska Krajina during and after the Croatian military operations. Memorandum will be published as an official document for the next session of the UN Commission for Human Rights.

October 27-28

Negotiations between delegations of the Srem-Baranja region (Eastern Slavonia) and Croatia resumed in Erdut. The changed text of the draft agreement offered by mediators Stoltenberg and Galbraith was not accepted by the Serbs since that agreement 'implies prompt, full and almost unconditional reintegration into Croatia', as was said by Serb delegation head Milan Milanovic. Slavko Dokmanovic says they could not allow for Croatia police immediately being stationed on border with Yugoslavia. Serbs say column of Yugoslavia army tanks moving towards border with E. Slavonia. Zagreb continuing to hint it will attack in mid-November unless Serbs agree to submit to Croatian authorities. Holbrooke pessimistic about Dayton talks saying his greatest fear is that bringing together 3 presidents 'will prove to have been a mistake' and that 'there will be no peace' if Serbs insist on secession.

October 29

Croats vote in parliamentary elections. Ruling Croatian Democratic Union won 73 of the total of 127 seats and fall short of 2/3rds majority necessary for amending Constitution. OSCE observers note polling irregularities and some infringements of secret balloting. Diplomats trying to keep Croatia, Serbs from attacking each other in E. Slavonia. 30 Islamic volunteers hold up, threaten to kill 5 British

peacekeepers in retaliation for British soldier having killed one of them, UN protests. UN accuses US of having made weapons drops to BiH over summer (according to British TV), US denies it. US gives war crimes prosecutors photo evidence of 6 more mass grave sites in Srebrenica area, says it had not done this earlier to prevent Serbs from destroying evidence. 1st passenger bus to leave Sarajevo since April '92 heads west under UN escort. Government, Serbs exchange 19 prisoners, 5 corpses in Sarajevo. About 1,000 Muslim refugees have returned to homes in Sanski Most, Kljuc and Mrkonjic Grad. Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic said the minimum outcome acceptable by his government from peace talks planned in the Dayton, US, 'is the sovereignty and territory integrity of Bosnia and the creation of central government bodies ensuring this integrity.'

October 30

Dutch Defence Minister Voorhoeve said that the 'number of men killed in Srebrenica cannot yet be established, but may be several thousand.' He added that 'There is strong evidence to suggest mass execution and the existence of mass graves outside the enclave.' The Dutch, in his words, could not be blamed for the carnage: 'I refuse to apportion blame to any particular person or institution, except the Bosnian Serbs.' Dutch say their peacekeepers were not responsible for fall of Srebrenica after *Boston Globe* publishes UN documents sent to Dutchbat in July which state 'giving up any weapons and military equipment is not authorised and is not a point of discussion', and 'take all reasonable measures to protect refugees and civilians in your care'. *New York Times* says US now claims that Serbs massacred up to 6,000 Muslim in Srebrenica tried to hide it by destroying bodies and moving them from mass graves.

US House of Representatives votes 315-103 in favour of non-binding resolution telling Bosnia peace negotiations that US troops should not be presumed to be available to enforce agreement. Izetbegovic leaves for talks saying he will not accept division of country, will hold out for united Sarajevo, while EU Foreign Ministers meet in Luxembourg and agree to provide \$2 billion in reconstruction aid and call for Bosnia-Herzegovina to remain single state with 2 entities. Bosnian Government, Serbs have now exchanged more than 500 civilian, military prisoners in Koprivna (near Sanski Most). UN reports Bosnian Serbs shelling near Dubrovnik previous day, Croatian Foreign Minister Granic threatens retaliation while Bosnian Serbs say Croatian army has conducted shelling. UN says it will withdraw 6-8,500 of its 18,000 man force for cost-cutting purposes. At the farewell reception for the UNPROFOR Commander to Bosnia-Herzegovina, British General Rupert Smith, Bosnian president Izetbegovic presented him with a painting and Bosnian passport saying he would always be welcome to Sarajevo and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

October 31

Clinton administration official says parties in Dayton peace talks will not initially face each other but instead be in proximity to one another. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Bildt to co-chair talks. Milosevic says he is optimistic about talks and that 'our aim is peace', Tudjman that he is 'hopeful'. UNHCR says expulsions of Muslims continuing in Banja Luka area, Sacirbey calls for investigation of fall of Srebrenica says Milosevic ultimately responsible for slaughter of thousands. Serbian Assembly of Srem-Baranja Region (E. Slavonia) formally reject reintegration proposals, negotiator Milantovic calling for 5 year period of UN control.

November 1

Izetbegovic, Tudjman, Milosevic convene for peace talks, begin meeting by shaking hands, Christopher meets separately with Tudjman, Milosevic. Izetbegovic, Tudjman reach agreement on first phase of refugee problem, while Milosevic, Tudjman agree to settle E. Slavonia problem peacefully. Christopher submitted to the delegations the draft peace plan in ten chapters which had been made by the expert team of international mediators. *Christian Science Monitor* correspondent David Rohde disappears in Serb

territory, US tells Serbs it holds them responsible for his safety. German newspaper *Die Tageszeitung* reports that on May 24 Britain, France and Russia voted to abandon Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde and that US, German tacitly consented. Paper also contends that Chirac gave Janvier order not to authorise 5 air strikes requested by Dutch peacekeepers in Srebrenica and that French and US secret services were aware of Serbian plans. Yugoslavian government denies *Washington Post* reports that its troops were involved at Srebrenica, denies existence of prison camps for Bosnia Muslim on Yugoslavian territory.

November 2

Christopher says NATO forces can't be expected to serve if Bosnian Serb leadership remains in power. Sacirbey comments 'we know we are going to be sitting across the table from some monsters but if that's what it takes to make peace we'll do it'. Washington said to be offering to turn information on Milosevic and advisors over to War Crimes Tribunal if they do not co-operate in peace talks. *The Guardian* reports that prisoners exchanged by Bosnian Serbs said that Serbs massacred civilians during withdrawal from Sanski Most, possibly as many as 151.

November 4

HVO troops block Muslim refugees from coming back to Jajce for prayers despite agreement on opening it up. British intelligence says US had info on Srebrenica assault by tapped phone lines between Bosnian Serb leaders but Washington denies it had anything more than general info. Stoltenberg and Galbraith had separate talks in Erdut with members of the delegations of the Srem-Baranja region and Croatia. They presented a somewhat changed proposal of the agreement on a peaceful settlement of the problem in this region. Negotiations would be resumed in Dayton through direct talks between Milosevic and Tudjman. Newly-appointed special envoy of the UN Secretary General for the former Yugoslavia Koffi Anan arrived to Zagreb where he entered upon his duties.

November 5

Tudjman backs off pledge made in Dayton and now says force may be used to regain E. Slavonia, that Serbs have until November 30 to sign agreement restoring region to Croatia (also says Croatia will not renew UN mandate in Croatia). Bosnian Serbs reject proposal to drop Karadzic, Mladic as part of peace agreement. After strong protests at Dayton by US, officials allowed to meet with *Christian Science Monitor* correspondent Rohde who is serving 15-day sentence for illegal border crossing. Tudjman replaces Prime Minister Valentic with Zlatko Matesa, former minister for relations with EU.

November 6-7

French peacekeepers from RRF attacked, wounded at base near Mostar, assailants unknown. Ejup Ganic says that government agrees to NATO dividing Bosnia-Herzegovina into 3 military sectors under US, French, and British control. French to be based in Mostar, British to be responsible for W. Bosnia with headquarters in Gornji Vakuf, and US to be headquartered in Tuzla with NATO General headquarters in Sarajevo. Bosnian Government accuses Bosnian Croat authorities of not allowing several hundred Muslim families to return to Jajce.

UN special envoy for human rights Elizabeth Rehn submitted to UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali and the UN General Assembly her first report on respect of human rights in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. The report related to violations of human rights on the part of the Croatian authorities and army during and after military operations in Krajina, violations of human rights in particular in Bihac region, Banja Luka and Srebrenica. The report also included conditions concerning respect of human rights in FR Yugoslavia.

November 7

In a letter forwarded to UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali FR Yugoslavia asked the UN to extend the mandate to the UNCRO after 30 November until a satisfactory and acceptable political solution was found for the Srem-Baranja region.

Clinton administration tells War Crimes Tribunal it is withholding evidence for 'national-security reasons', says Goldstone's complaints about this are 'unfortunate'. Goldstone says 'quality and timeliness' of US intelligence 'disappointing'. US again denies it has intelligence information about phone calls between Mladic and Yugoslavian Army commander General Momcilo Perisic with Perisic advising Mladic on Srebrenica. Serbs in E. Slavonia say they are willing to fight. US administration officials now say Christopher 'misspoke' about not sending troops if Karadzic, Mladic remain. Bosnian Government allowing Abdic followers to return to Velusa Kladusa, but UNHCR says Croatia's 'voluntary return' of 11,000 refugees a forcible relocation. UNHCR also says Muslim, Croats recently evicted in Banja Luka area now being forced to sleep in the open. Bosnian Government agrees to adopt Deutsch Mark as official currency with Bosnia dinar. Boutros-Ghali says in interview that he has 'no criticism of Dutchbat. They performed good work'. *Nasa Borba* says 71,750 Serb refugees in Banja Luka, 60,000 more have been moved into 'individual accommodations'.

November 8

Russia and US report compromise allowing Russian troops to participate in peacekeeping efforts independent of direct NATO command, Russian brigade to consist of 3 battalions (1,000 troops) attached to 1st Armored Division, to be under day-to-day 'tactical' control of its commander, but 'operational' control to be carried out by Russian commander who will be deputy to General Joulwan. Reporter for *Christian Science Monitor* released after 2 weeks captivity by Bosnian Serbs, Karadzic saying David Rohde had been 'cleared of all charges'. Clinton administration now tells War Crimes Tribunal it will give it any intelligence information relevant to its inquiries.

November 9

Dayton talks get agreement on reviving Bosnian-Croat Federation. War Crimes Tribunal for first time links Serbia with war crimes after it indicts 3 Yugoslavian army officers (General Mile Mrksic of JNA, aides Miroslav Radic and Veselin Slijivancanin) who had 'command responsibility' for massacre of 261 men in Vukovar hospital in '91. US proposes that draft constitution for Bosnia prevent Karadzic, Mladic from holding office as Holbrooke says Karadzic is 'complicates or worse in the worst war crimes since the end of the Second World War', but Milosevic refusing to budge on ousting them. UN Security Council unanimously approves Resolution condemning all violation in former Yugoslavia, urge Serbs to close detention camps, provide monitors with access to suspected grave sites, Croatia told to respect rights of Krajina Serbs to return home. Macedonia becomes 37th member of Council of Europe. US troops participate for first time in joint exercises with Macedonia. Perry says 12 NATO PfP members offer troops or logistical support. Jeltsin vetoed law on unilateral lifting of sanctions against FR Yugoslavia adopted by State Duma on 12 August 1995.

November 10

Tudjman and Izetbegovic signed in Dayton a new agreement on strengthening of the Muslim-Croat Federation. As provided by the new agreement a common customs union would be established, free movement of all citizens would be enabled throughout the territory of the Federation as well as repatriation of refugees, and the status of Mostar as a single town would be established.

Sniper wounds 1 in Sarajevo, first such incident in 2 weeks. Bosnian Government agrees to give most domestic authority to Bosnia-Croatia federation leaving central government with foreign trade, foreign political, currency, and air-traffic control. Shattuck says after talks with Banja Luka mayor that

Serbs have finally admitted to arresting Muslim civilians, that 1,400 Banja Luka Muslim have been arrested or imprisoned. Shattuck also tells Serbs to allow war crimes investigators into Banja Luka area, says 'the guilty will be found' but western diplomats say policy without substance. UN human rights investigator Elizabeth Rehn accuses Croatia of abuses against Krajina Serbs and 120 killings, and accuses Bosnia 5th Corps of abuses against Abdic followers. UN sanctions committee allows Yugoslavia to import national gas, liquid petroleum gas, and heating oil from Russia despite previous agreement to prevent this until peace accord reached, but on condition flow of gas to Sarajevo be uninterrupted. 750 troops of Croatia 5th Corps reported moving towards E. Slavonia

November 11

UN holds ceremony in Sarajevo marking end of WW I. NATO unanimously decided in Brussels on accession of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the 'Partnership for Peace' programme.

November 12

Serbs in Erdut (E. Slavonia) with Galbraith and Stoltenberg as witnesses sign agreement made by Milosevic, Tudjman to reintegrate area into Croatia, Croatian government signs in Zagreb. agreement calls for 1-year transitional period which may be extended to 2, interim administration created by UN, troops deployed to act as peacekeepers, local elections 30 days before transition period ends, Serbs to have own municipal council, return of thousands of Croatia refugees, and respect for human rights. Agreement to come into effect when UN Security Council ratifies it.

November 13

6 members of HVO and Bosnia branch of HDZ indicted for war crimes (removal, death of Muslim population in Lasva valley) during fighting against Bosnian Government, group includes commander of HVO Tihomir Blaskic, and President of Bosnian branch of HDZ Dario Kordic. German media report that Karadzic, Mladic tried to cut deal with Washington having them leave office without fear of indictment by Hague, NIN says US refused it. UNHCR estimates repatriation costs \$300-500 million, to take 2 years. IMF mission in Sarajevo for talks.

November 14

Goldstone says he will resign from Tribunal if Karadzic, Mladic avoid prosecution, Bosnian Serbs say neither will resign. Tudjman appoints accused war criminal outgoing chief of the general staff Blaskic as inspector of Croatian army. Mladic reported at JNA ceremony in Obrenovac, Serbia (1st appearance in 6 weeks). E. Slavonia Serbs reported to believe that peace agreement means they can hold referendum on sovereignty in 2 years. Zoran Macai, ally of Arkan, found guilty of inciting murder in Hungary, given 10 years in Serbian prison, and Marinko Magda sentenced to death in absentia for 6 murders in Vojvodina. 4 other members of Arkan's Tigers also given jail terms.

November 15

Christian Science Monitor correspondent Rohde tells of fresh burial sites, possibly mass graves in Eastern Bosnia, says Serbs are tampering with evidence. NATO commander of RRF meets with top government officials in Sarajevo to plan NATO deployment. Russian Defence Minister Grachev says Russia has route to veto NATO orders for its troops in Bosnia. Tudjman leaves Dayton talks with no explanation, speculation that it is due to Blaskic controversy. Bosnian Muslim arrested in Netherlands at request of War Crimes Tribunal on suspicion of war crimes.

At NATO headquarters in Brussels Prime Minister of Macedonia Branko Crvenkovski signed the 'Partnership for Peace' programme. Macedonia was the second country in the territory of the former Yugoslavia (after Slovenia) which accessed to the programme.

November 16

UNPROFOR reports 8 shells fired by government, Serbs in Sarajevo. Perry rejects Russian position, says they can only pull troops out. War Crimes Tribunal hands down new indictments against Karadzic, Mladic charging them with genocide in attack on Srebrenica for ordering (Karadzic) and participating (Mladic) in executions of thousands. Prosecutor Goldstone meets with US administration to try to convince them to include the surrender of these two as condition of peace accords, but admits that White House would not give assurances. Milosevic reportedly holding out to try to get sanctions against Belgrade removed. Bosnian Government demands in writing that agreement requires all signers to 'arrest, detain, and transfer' indicted individuals to Tribunal. US criticises Croatia for giving accused war criminals positions in Croatian army, but Croatian Prime Minister Matesa says Croatia has no intention of turning over 6 indicted Bosnian Croats since charges have not been substantiated. Bosnia, Croatia agree to link dinar (Bosnia) and kuna (Croatia) based on the Deutschmark and go into effect January 20. Kosovo group Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms says it will give War Crimes Tribunal documents which could lead to Milosevic indictment and that of Serbian police chief Zoran Sokolovic, others

November 17

US, UN contend Milosevic, Yugoslavian army rebuilding Bosnian Serbs' communication network, repairing air defence systems, conference UN report dated October 30, says helicopter and fixed-wing transports spotted making regular night flights into Banja Luka with parts to repair Serbs' planes. House of Representatives votes 243-171 to bar Clinton from sending troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina unless Congress approves money in advance. Tudjman back in Dayton for talks. Christopher meets twice with Milosevic. Albright meets with UN Security Council ambassadors to discuss possible removal of sanctions. Zubak says he will not sign Dayton accord unless Bosnian Croat interests are taken into account. UN in Sarajevo says that Bosnian Government, Bosnian Croat forces denying UN free movement. *Newsday* says War Crimes Tribunal may hand down indictments against Croatian Defence Minister Susak.

November 18

Bosnian Serbs reported to be removing bodies of massacres, disposing of some of them in abandoned mine in Ljubica (?). 8 Muslim found after hiding in forest near Srebrenica 130 days. Sacirbey resigns saying this will make way for Bosnian Croat in power-sharing arrangement, but sources say it is because of rivalry with Silajdzic and the direction of peace negotiations. Sacirbey comments 'a bad peace is better than a war'. State Department says 'significant gaps' between parties on 'all the major issues', Christopher making rounds between sides to close gaps, and may have promised to equip and train Bosnian army should Serbs fail to disarm.

November 19

Christopher tells negotiations they have until 10 November 20 to conclude deal, territorial issues said to be sticking point. Ethnic Croatian and Minister of Justice in Bosnian Government, Mato Tadic resigns. Yugoslavia legislation foreign political chairman Borisav Jovic says Belgrade not prepared to turn over accused war criminals to War Crimes Tribunal but says 'we will prosecute criminals if there are any'.

November 20

Christopher foregoes threat to call off talks, holds extra day of meetings as Milosevic and Serbian delegation prepare to leave, State Department calls this 'great theatre'. Croatian, Serbian Foreign Ministers sign agreement on release of all detainees.

November 21

After twenty day talks in Dayton, the peace negotiations on Bosnia were completed by initialising the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 12 Annexes as an integral part of the Agreement, which reached providing for Bosnian Serb representative and Muslim-Croat federation within the representative, parties co-operating with international authorities on prosecuting war crimes. Sarajevo to remain intact under government control, land corridor to link Banja Luka with E. Bosnia, status of Brcko to be left to international arbitration, land corridor to be set up between Sarajevo and Gorazde, withdrawal to agreed positions and monitoring of forces by NATO. FR Yugoslavia and Bosnia recognize each other as sovereign independent States within their international borders. Each representative to retain own armed forces, but central government to have control over foreign political, trade, monetary political, citizenship, immigration. Elections to be held next year to choose president and parliament. Shared president, constitutional court, and federation government to be establish. Indicted war criminals to be banned for life from politics. Refugees to be allowed to return to homes or receive 'just compensation'. Military annex to treaty calls for general arms reduction talks to begin within 30 days, no importing weapons of any sort for 90 days after pact signed and no heavy weapons (tanks, artillery 75mm or above, mortars of 81mm or above or anti-air weapons of 20mm or above) for 180 days. Arms within Bosnia would have to be divided equally among all parties. Izetbegovic says 'to my people: This may not be a just peace, but it is more just than a continuation of war'. Milosevic comments 'No party should regret the concessions which were given', calls it 'just solution' since Serbs get more land than in previous agreements. Krajisnik says 'The agreement that has been reached does not satisfy even a minimum of our interests' and says they have warned Milosevic that 'no one has the right to sign such a plan'. Jeltsin calls accord a 'big step'. Agreement also calls for lifting arms embargo on Bosnia, and an end to sanctions against Serbia.

November 22

UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1021 on gradual lifting of embargo on arms delivery to the states in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Embargo should be lifted after it had been reported that Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and FR Yugoslavia had signed the Peace Agreement and it should be implemented in the following way: during the first 90 days after signing of the Agreement all measures of the embargo would remain effective, during the second 90 days all provisions of the arms embargo would be lifted except delivery of heavy weapons, ammunition, mines, military aircraft and helicopters, that would keep on being prohibited until the agreement on arms control became effective, and after 180 days after the Secretary General had submitted a report on implementation, all measures of the embargo on arms delivery would be lifted unless decided otherwise by the Council.

UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1022 on suspension of the sanctions against FR Yugoslavia and decided that 'the measures which were introduced or re-affirmed by the Resolutions 757 (1992), 787 (1992), 820 , 942 (1994), 988 992 , 1003 and 1015 should be indefinitely suspended and this immediately becomes effective'. Suspension would not apply to those which had been imposed against the Bosnian Serbs until commander of the peace-keeping forces, which were to be deployed in accordance with the Peace Agreement, reported to the Council through the Secretary General, that the Bosnian Serbs had withdrawn from the separation zones set by the Peace Agreement. If the Council was notified that FR Yugoslavia or Bosnian Serbs did not to a considerable extent fulfil obligations they had undertaken in accordance with the Peace Agreement, the above mentioned suspension would be

lifted the fifth day after such report had been received, unless the Council decided otherwise. The Council decided to lift all measures the tenth day after the first free and fair elections. UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1023 on Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem and accepted establishment of the Transitional Authority and engagement of international forces. The Council stressed that Croatia and local Serb authorities should fully co-operate and refrain from any military activities or measures that could endanger implementation of the transitional arrangements, and fully co-operate with the UNCRO and ensure its security and freedom of movement.

November 23

The leaderships of FR Yugoslavia and the Republika Srpska met in Belgrade. Participating were President of FR Yugoslavia Lilic, Presidents of Serbia and Montenegro Milosevic and Bulatovic, Federal Prime Minister Kontic and Minister of Foreign Affairs of FRY Milutinovic, and from the Republika Srpska Karadzic, Speaker of the Assembly Krajisnik, Vice-Presidents Plavsic and Koljevic, Prime Minister Kozic, Ministers of Foreign and Interior Affairs Buha and Kovac and assistant commander of the general staff of the Army of RS general Zdravko Tolimir. The leadership of the Republika Srpska stated that it accepted the Dayton Agreement and in spite of some painful solutions it would implement the Agreement and meet all obligations provided negative consequences resulting from some solutions would be overcome by endeavours of the whole community and with the assistance of FR Yugoslavia.

November 24

Karadzic says on Bosnian Serb TV 'the time has come to use political means to achieve our goals', but heads of Serb-held suburbs remain defiant. Karadzic and Krajisnik both say their demands ignored at negotiations by Milosevic. Milosevic meet with Yugoslavian president Lilic and Montenegro president Bulatovic to consider what to do if Bosnian Serbs reject peace accord. Bosnian army loots UN base as peacekeepers prepare to leave, Croats burning and looting in area to be given to Serbs in NW.

November 25

Thousands of Serbs protest in Serb-held Sarajevo suburbs. Karadzic says agreement must still be ratified by Bosnian Serb parliament, and that Sarajevo remains sticking point, that it should be renegotiated.

November 26

US officials say they will not renegotiate accord while Karadzic says Sarajevo will 'bleed for decades'. US National Security advisor Anthony Lake says US expects Milosevic to 'be able to enforce discipline on the Bosnian Serbs [and] that the cease-fire will hold'.

November 27

Clinton says in national speech that risks are necessary because America's 'interests and values demand it'. Public/political support for plan mixed. 1,400 NATO troops including 735 Americans to leave for Bosnia within days, and 1,200 NATO troops including 700 Americans to set up headquarters in Zagreb. US Joint Chiefs of Staff approve 'mission statement' to reinforce 18-page military annex to Dayton accords, statement says peacekeepers 'not responsible for election security, conducting humanitarian missions, or clearing mines', 'mission 'is not disarmament. It will not attempt to collect and control weapons'. Annex also gives troops right to use force in face of perceived threat. More reports of Croats (possibly HVO) burning, looting Serbian property while Banja Luka Croatia bishop Komarica calls on Croatian troops to respect Serb property.

November 28

Chirac calls for giving Bosnian Serbs greater security guarantees, but US says Dayton accord to be signed as is in Paris. Austria pledges 300 troops for IFOR. Clinton administration officials lobby Congress for support. Republicans generally resigned to mission. Public opinion polls generally negative about mission. Albright comments 'this is not an agreement that the US has forced down anybody's throat' and that troops would be there 'to implement a peace and not to be part of a war'.

November 29

Serbs expel 93 sick, elderly Muslim from Banja Luka area. Hungarian parliament votes 312-1 to allow US troops to stage deployment from Hungarian territory. Czech Republic offers to send 1,000 for IFOR. Perry states US will arm Bosnia within 6 months if talks prove unsuccessful in arms reduction. Tudjman meets with Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati in Zagreb to discuss 'trilateral co-operation' with Bosnia, Iran. Velayati says lifting arms embargo will mean Iran will begin weapons supplying to these two.

November 29-30

The Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina supported the decision made by the delegation of Bosnia-Herzegovina to initialise the Dayton General Framework Agreement and authorised the delegation to sign the Agreement in Paris on 20 December 1995. The Assembly also approved the Agreement on Strengthening of the Muslim-Croat Federation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, signed in Dayton on 10 November 1995.

November 30

UN Security Council adopted three Resolutions on extending the mandate of the UN peace-keeping forces in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Resolution 1025 extended the mandate of UNCRO in Croatia and Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem till 15 January 1996. Not later than 15 December UN Secretary General was bound to prepare a proposal of the solution for new peace-keeping forces and Transitional Authority in the region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem. Resolution 1026 extended the mandate of the UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina till 31 January 1996 for the purpose of handing over their authorities to the new peacekeepers - the Implementation Force (IFOR), which should be formed in accordance with the Peace Agreement made in Dayton. Resolution 1027 extended the mandate of the UN preventive forces (UNPREDEP) in FYR Macedonia till 30 May 1996.

Rocket fired from Serb suburb hits building in Sarajevo. Silajdzic rejects Chirac call for more security guarantees saying Serbs enjoy same protection as everybody else. Defence Secretary Perry says costs of deployment will probably be \$2 billion, not \$1.5 and require 32,000 instead of 20,000 troops, says in testimony before Congress that 5,000 would be necessary for backup in Croatia, and 7,000 support personnel will be needed in Hungary and Italy. Costs to be \$1.2 billion for Bosnia, \$500 million for support units, and \$300 million for missions including flying air operations out of Italy, says 'these are costs which are not in the present budget'. Dole says of criticism in Congress it is 'time for a reality check in Congress' and that 'we should find a way, if possible, to support our men and women in Bosnia'. Greece agrees to establish diplomatic relations with Bosnia. Slovenia recognises FRY. *Frankfurter Allgemeine* reports Milosevic purging hard-liners from government including ideologist Mihailo Markovic and Borisav Jovic.

December 1

NATO Council agrees to send 2,600 'enabling force' to Bosnia to prepare for deployment. Christopher says US forces 'will not be asked to guarantee the success of democracy of reconstruction or to act as a police force', says 1st 6 months of deployment will be used trying to convince Serbs to reduce their arsenal but that since this is unlikely, 2nd 6 months to be used to ensure Bosnian Government to get weapons, training. Christopher says US will not directly arm or train Bosnian forces, but will 'coordinate' other nations doing it. Clinton defends policy by noting that NATO allies assisted US in Persian Gulf and Haiti crises.

At a press conference Tudjman said that Croatia was not against the intention of FR Yugoslavia to keep its continuity with the former SFR Yugoslavia. Accepting that continuity did not imply FR Yugoslavia as the only successor of the former state.

December 2

At its meeting in Mostar the Executive Council of the Croatian Democratic Union for Bosnia accepted the resignation of Kreshimir Zubak, who had acted as President of the Muslim-Croat Federation. Zubak resigned for his disapproval of a part of the Dayton Peace Agreement on territorial division of Posavina (the Sava River basin). The Council also accepted the resignation of Dario Kordic who had acted as President of the Executive Council of the Croatian Democratic Union for Bosnia. (On 13 November 1995 the War Crimes Tribunal had brought charges against him, and five other Croats from Bosnia, for crimes committed against the Muslim population by members of the Croatian Council of Defence of the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia during 1992 and 1993).

Mladic, in first remarks since Dayton accords signed, demands changes in Sarajevo governance saying 'we cannot let our people live under butchers' rule...Serbs cannot agree with the maps'. Bosnian Government liaison to UN mission in Sarajevo, Hasan Muratovic, asks for change in NATO deployment plan due to pro-Serb bias of Brigadier General Jean-Rene Bachelet who had described Sarajevo plan as unworkable and said Serbs would have to choose between 'the suitcase and the coffin' under Muslim-Croat rule. Muratovic accuses French of providing fuel to Serbs for civilian buses during Serb protests. UN denies it.

December 4

NATO deployment begins with 28 soldiers (French, British, Belgian and Americans) arriving in Sarajevo. 56 British communication experts arrive in Split. Pentagon orders 3,800 reservists to prepare for duty in Bosnia. Sarajevo Serbs say they will hold referendum on December 12 on peace accord to allow Sarajevo Serbs to make their views known. France orders General Bachelet back home due to comments. Croatia says 3 million mines laid in that country after '91 and 100,000 unexploded shells remain.

In accordance with the Resolution 1022 of 22 November, ministers of Foreign Affairs of EU suspended sanctions against FR Yugoslavia. (The European Community had been the first to impose sanctions against the former SFR Yugoslavia and it made such decision on 8 November 1991). EU Ministers offered their full support to the Peace Agreement on Bosnia-Herzegovina, initialised in Dayton.

December 5

Bush, Ford back Clinton on issue of American leadership despite doubts about mission. Dole forced to postpone Senate resolution supporting deployment but only with 'conditional authorisation' in face of Senate criticism. Resolution also calls for 'immediate effort, separate and apart' from peacekeeping force to arm and train Bosnian army. Secret meeting held between representatives of Croatian INA oil firm and Yugoslavian firm Jugopetrol on reopening Adriatic oil pipeline.

December 6

First 12 Americans arrive in Tuzla to help in refurbishing airport. Perry says Clinton plans to begin bringing troops home in October 1996. Christopher, Kozyrev meeting in Brussels, say pact can be carried out so as to take account of Serb complaints but that it cannot be renegotiated. US intelligence says 2 French pilots shot down on August 30 have been killed by Bosnian Serb captors. British peacekeeper officer says he witnessed Bosnian Croat police setting fire to 2 villages to be handed over to Serbs in C. Bosnia, UN condemns action.

December 7

Bosnian Serbs expel 60 more Muslim families from village of Dubrave in Banja Luka area, fly Serb flags over their houses. Bosnian Croatian authorities release from jail in violation of accords military commander Ivaca Rajic indicted for '93 Stupni Do massacre, US protests. Croatian Foreign Minister Granic says Croatia wants to co-operation with War Crimes Tribunal regarding Dario Kordic but also says Croatia wants to defend him. UN demands Croatian forces stop scorched earth policy in C. Bosnia of territory to go to Serbs, also says Serbs have been blocking access to Gorazde for week. Perry says US not approaching the peace accords 'as psychologically neutral'. US diplomats urge Bosnian Government to send 2,000 Islamic fighters home. UN protests forced eviction of 60 Muslim families in N. Bosnia.

December 8

Izetbegovic tells Holbrooke that it will remove foreign Islamic fighters by mid-January or even before, and ensure Serbs safety. French Foreign Minister de Charette demands immediate release of 2 French pilots, says this could endanger peace process, and sets deadline of December 10. France demands Dayton accords be known as 'Elysee Treaty', State Department calls this 'very imaginative'. Serbia announces large increases in military spending (military annex allows Serbia 5:2 advantage over both Croatia, Bosnia). Serbian Renewal Movement head Vuk Draskovic first opposition leader to accept Dayton accords. OSCE agrees to oversee elections, arms control and human rights in Bosnia (France opposes US candidate for job).

December 8-9

Third International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, entitled Peace Implementation Conference, took place in London. Ministers of Foreign Affairs of 43 countries and 12 international organisations, participated. These were representatives of the states created in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, neighbours of the former Yugoslavia, NATO member states, EU, Organisation of Islamic Conference, Japan and China, United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund. The conference dealt with future work on resolving the overall Yugoslav crisis and in particular with preparations for implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, after the signature at the Paris Conference on 14 December. It was said that 'with the signature of the Peace Agreement, important objectives of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) have been met and a new structure is required to manage peace implementation'. A Peace Implementation Council (PIC), composed of all those states, international organisations and agencies attending the Conference, will subsume ICFY. Meeting of the PIC to review progress in peace implementation will be held in Italy in June 1996 under chairmanship of Italian government. A Steering Board composed of representatives of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom, United States, Presidency of the EU, European Commission and Organisation of Islamic Conference, will be established with immediate effect under the chairmanship of the High Representative. It will give him political guidance on peace implementation. The Conference approved designation of Carl Bildt as High Representative, who will continue to act as EU Mediator for Former

Yugoslavia. The Conference invited the UN Security Council to agree Bildt's designation as High Representative.

December 9

Holbrooke meets with Milosevic, appeals for release of 2 French pilots. 3 C-130 Hercules transports bring 110 US soldiers to Taszar airfield in Hungary to establish staging area (1st NATO forces to be stationed there). Clinton says in interview, US troops should leave after a year, that even if war breaks out again, 'we gave them a chance'. French Foreign Minister tells Serbs there will be 'hits' and 'strikes' against them if they don't give information on 2 pilots by 10 December. Chirac says Milosevic personally responsible for information about them. Krajisnik says Karadzic should attend peace conference, that 'full political independence' for Republika Srpska has been agreed to. World Bank estimates rebuilding costs to be \$4.9 billion, promises \$600 military emergency money.

December 10

22 US Marines, 32 special forces troops arrive in Sarajevo. Karadzic says peace accord signing means war 'will come to a definite end'. UN War Crimes Tribunal rejects Russian request for freeze on proceedings against Karadzic so that he could attend peace signing. Tribunal orders release of Bosnian Croatian soldier accused of killing Bosnian Serbs after Belgrade refuses to give evidence to support indictment. French say they have not heard from Serbs on fate of 2 downed pilots by deadline. Bosnian Croatian parliament approves Dayton accord. Izetbegovic promises all foreign Islamic fighters to be gone within 30 days. Bosnian Croatian forces in Mrkonjic Grad blocking 5 British APCs, also move reporters out of city.

In Mostar the Assembly of the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia supported Dayton. The delegations of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were, however, asked to try through negotiations to bring back the Bosnian part of Posavina (the Sava River basin) to the Muslim-Croat Federation before signing of the Agreement in Paris on 14 December.

December 11

Yugoslavian army Chief-of-staff Perisic says French pilots to be handed over to Yugoslavian authorities by 12th, Mladic reported to have been using their release as means to get indictments against him dismissed. Serbs reported to be fleeing Sarajevo suburbs. Kosovo 'shadow state' to open information office in Washington.

December 12

French pilots turned over to Yugoslavian authorities by Bosnian Serbs, then to French authorities. Both French, US officials deny that deal was cut with Bosnian Serbs for release. Bosnian Serbs in Sarajevo area vote to reject Dayton accords while Bosnia Constitutional Assembly votes to accept it. Zagreb court gives prison sentences of 10-20 years to 18 rebel Serbs for destruction of village of Skabrnja, deaths of 43 Croats in '91. Dole, McCain tell Clinton they want US to assure arming of Bosnian Government and to clarify this point before Senate vote on deployment. Clinton replies that he intends to keep promise on getting assistance to Bosnia. British ambassador to Washington says this will harm impartiality of peacekeeping forces. US to fly U-2s over Bosnia from French airbase.

Croatian parliament accepted General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina initialised and The Basic Agreement on the Region of Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem, signed in Erdut and Zagreb on 12 November 1995.

December 13

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of FR Yugoslavia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia, fifteen member states of the EU, Russia, USA, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and several Islamic countries representing the Contact Group of Islamic Countries met near Paris. They dealt with the process of stability and good neighbourly relations in South-Eastern Europe. A Declaration on the Process of Stability and Good Neighbourly Relations in South-Eastern Europe was adopted expressing necessity to make joint and sustained efforts for improvement or gradual reopening of dialogue and re-establishment of confidence, prevention of tensions and crises, reconciliation, promotion of regional co-operation, economic restoration and establishment of good neighbourly relations. It was proposed to hold a regional round table on strengthening of stability, good neighbourly relations and co-operation in South-Eastern Europe.

Clinton leaves for Paris before Congress votes on deployment. House votes 287-141 to support troops but criticises decision to send them. Senate defeats similar resolution, 52-47, rejects House-passed bill to cut off Defence Department funding, 77-22, adopts Dole-McCain Resolution, 69-30 to offer qualified support for mission. House leaders say they will refuse to vote on Dole Resolution.

December 14

Milosevic, Tudjman, and Izetbegovic sign Dayton peace agreement in Paris. Izetbegovic says his government 'taking part ...without any enthusiasm', but that signing 'is being done with full sincerity on our part'. Milosevic comments that peace 'is the only path open to civilised men', later on Serb TV tells Bosnian Serbs that 'room for fears or worries does not exist'.

December 15

UNSCR 1031 terminated Resolutions 781,816,824 and 936 which provided authority for operation Deny Flight.

UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 1033 giving IFOR a year mandate to make possible implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina signed in Paris. By taking over authority from UNPROFOR the mandate of the UNPROFOR in Bosnia would cease. The Council also agreed designation of Carl Bildt as High Representative of the Peace Implementation Conference for Bosnia.

Government of FR Yugoslavia supported activities of the Yugoslav delegation led by Milosevic and assessed that its role had been prominent and constructive. Signing of the Peace Agreement was the crown of the past peace efforts.

President of Montenegro Bulatovic said in interview the Croats had not fulfilled the obligations undertaken in Dayton. 'We and the Croats absolutely reached accord on the text of agreement on normalisation of our relations. However, in order to implement such agreement issues at dispute should be resolved. And the issues at dispute are the path of the Republika Srpska to the sea, and Prevlaka which should belong to Montenegro, and all that is based on the clearly acceptable process of fixing of borders between the sovereign states in this area...Our position is clear: a full normalisation of our relations would be possible when Croatia fulfils the obligations it once undertook'. In Zagreb Tudjman said that 'from the Croatian point of view we can be content with the Peace Agreement because we have achieved all our goals'. He stated that FR Yugoslavia and Croatia had not recognised each other because no agreement on Prevlaka had been reached. According to his interpretation 'today it is not legally possible to sign the agreement on Prevlaka because the hinterland of Dubrovnik is within Bosnia and Herzegovina' which FR Yugoslavia had recognised. He said Croatia accepted international arbitration in resolving the issue and it would agree with the decision made.

December 16

North Atlantic Council adopted in Brussels beginning of the operation Joint Endeavour under command of CINCSOUTH, American admiral Leighton Smith. IFOR would consist of 73000 soldiers from 12 NATO member countries as well as 15 other countries. The greatest contingents would be American - 20000 soldiers, British - 15000, French - 10000 and German 4000. As for non-NATO countries the greatest numbers would come from Pakistan - 3200, Russia - 2000, Malaysia - 1600 and Bangladesh - 1200. NAC also agreed that Operation Deny Flight should be terminated on Transfer of Authority to the Implementation Force for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

NATO Supreme Allied commander in Europe, General George Joulwan, issues activation order for Operation Joint Endeavor saying 'the mission is clear: limited in time and scope and with robust rules of engagement'. 826 US troops from 5th Corps land in Kaposvar, Hungary. 922 NATO troops already in Bosnia (200 American with 80 in Tuzla), 915 in Croatia. Fog continues to prevent deployment of troops to Tuzla as 12-20 planes unable to land.

At their summit in Madrid EU leaders said that signing of the Peace Agreement was a crucial step in resolving the crisis in the former Yugoslavia and all signatories were invited to fully implement it. The EU was willing to contribute to the agreement on restoration of Bosnia-Herzegovina and it invited the international community to help in those efforts by equally sharing the costs. All EU member states should immediately normalise their relations with FR Yugoslavia and exchange ambassadors.

December 17

Preparatory conference for negotiations on implementation of the Regional Stabilisation provisions of the Peace Agreement took place in Petersberg near Bonn. 32 countries participated. Negotiations on disarmament and regional stability should begin on 4 January 1996 in Vienna under auspices of the OCSE.

Assembly of Republika Srpska met on Mt. Jahorina (above Sarajevo), conditionally accept accords with 10-point list of objections, particularly one relating to the status of Sarajevo. The Assembly reserved the right to peacefully and by political means settle the issues at dispute and reject war crimes charges against Karadzic who says they 'do not consider the Americans our enemies' and that 'Dayton represents an overall defeat of the Serbs'. Bosnian Government denounces Serb comments.

December 17

Heavy fog prevents US troops deployment in Tuzla for 4th day, with some NATO planes being redirected to Sarajevo. 2 trains en route from Hungary to Zupanja, Croatia (137 miles E. of Zagreb) with US troops, equipment to build bridge across Sava.

December 18

Break in weather allows 16 transport planes to land in Tuzla. Airstrip still unlighted, new ground radar system installed. Yugoslavian ambassador to UN (former Foreign Minister) Vladislav Jovanovic sends letter to Security Council accusing Bosnian Muslims of having carried out massacre of thousands of Muslim in Srebrenica.

December 19

Sarajevo gets lights as new electricity line paid for by Germany is turned on. British Major General Sir Michael Walker arrives in Sarajevo to help co-ordinate NATO troops. 7 US C-130, 1 C-17 cargo planes bring more troops and food to Tuzla. Unnamed 48-year old Serb arrested in Dusseldorf on suspicion of having been involved in genocide. Bosnian Serb premier Rajko Kasagic calls on Serbs to co-operate

with IFOR 'because our future will depend on such co-operation.', says stealing international vehicles to end. Albright says Jovanovic has insulted intelligence of Security Council, accusations a 'big lie'.

December 20

UN turned over its Bosnian operation to NATO Implementation Force. Deny Flight thus ceased. Forces associated with Deny Flight were transferred to Operation Decisive Endeavor - as part of the overall NATO operation Joint Endeavor - to provide support to IFOR and close air support for the UN RNCRO forces in Croatia. Admiral Leighton Smith takes command replacing UN commander General Janvier. At Sarajevo airport Smith says NATO is not 'a bunch of cowboys looking for a fight', but 'on a peaceful mission'.

Montenegro president Bulatovic says Belgrade won't recognise Croatia until Prevlaka Peninsula dispute settled.

Assembly of FR Yugoslavia accepted the results achieved at the Peace Implementation Conference in London and the Conference in Paris at which the General Framework Agreement for Peace was signed. Before Minister Milutinovic addressed the Assembly most deputies coming from opposition parties had left the session because the Speaker of the Chamber of Citizens Radoman Bozovic had said that the session would be closed and the work of the Assembly would not be broadcast on TV.

Under the auspices of the European Commission and the World Bank the first conference of representatives of 14 European countries and 20 international financial institutions and specialised agencies took place in Brussels. The greatest attention was given to the immediate assistance which should be offered to Bosnia as well as setting of mechanisms for organisation of the programme as a whole. US promised to provide US\$ 135 million in the next months for the reconstruction and humanitarian relief to Bosnia. US president Clinton will demand from the Congress additional US\$ 600 million for the reconstruction of Bosnia in the coming three years.

December 21

UN Security Council passes Resolution 1034 rebuking Jovanovic for blaming Srebrenica massacre on Muslims, blames instead Bosnian Serbs, condemning its armed forces and paramilitary units for killing a large number of persons in the former Safe Areas of Srebrenica and Zepa, as well as in Banja Luka, Sanski Most and other areas which were suspected to be the places of mass crimes committed against the Muslim population. Serbs to provide immediate access to mass graves and not to hide or remove the evidence of the committed crimes or impede the investigation in the area. The Security Council also condemned Croatian forces in Bosnia for the current mass plunder of houses and other property in Mrkonjic Grad and Sipovo which should belong to the Republika Srpska in accordance with the Peace Agreement. The Council requested Croatia to annul with no delay all time limits for return of the Serbs to their homes as well as all limits related to restitution of their property. Croatia should also remove all actual, legal and administrative obstacles for their return to Krajina. At the same session the Council adopted the decision on sending 1,700 persons to assist organisation and training of the local police to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Commander of US forces in Bosnia, Major General Wm. Nash says all parties beginning to pull back, clear mines, indicates co-operation with all groups and that he had been in Serb territory for launching bridge allowing US troops to cross Sava R. delayed due to weather. Some Serbs reported to be digging up coffins of dead, fleeing Sarajevo despite Serb authorities trying to prevent them, government encouraging them to stay. Serbs in Banja Luka release Bishop Komarica from 7 months of house arrest. Muslim, Croats establish joint army and police commands to report to one another. Admiral Smith meets with chiefs-of-staff of 3 forces in Sarajevo, all promise co-operation in pulling back, following accords. Serbia, Croatia resume civilian telephone service for first time in 4 years. Deputy commander of Russian forces in Bosnia, Major General Nikolai Staskov meets with Mladic in E. Bosnian town of Han Pijesak despite prohibition of this in Dayton accords, Russian explains it as not effecting them

until their forces are deployed in January. OSCE names Swiss diplomat Gret Haller as human rights ombudsman for Bosnia set up under Dayton accords.

December 23

Small arms fire hits US C-130 transport, British helicopters near Sarajevo, Admiral Smith says 'I hope the parties will knock it off. It's stupid, and it's very dangerous. I put the onus on the leaders to find out who did it and to stop it from happening again' and 'if we see who's doing it they will come under direct fire, and if we learn who's doing it we will have them apprehended', but US 'target acquisition radar' for detecting hostile fire not in place yet. Civilian, military officials, including Smith, say Bosnian Serbs have been co-operative in allowing freedom of NATO movement into Bosnian Serb territory. General Nash says Sava bridge should be in place by December 29. EU negotiator Bildt says he does not expect NATO mission to solve problems in 1 year.

December 24

Bosnian Government and Serbs exchange 245 prisoners W. of Tuzla including some who were taken prisoner in fall of Srebrenica, 2nd exchange of 28 (14 from each side) near Sanski Most but NATO spokesperson says Serbs prisoners in poor condition while government troops look to have been treated well and with their possessions. British helicopters fired on as it flies over Croatia-held Jajce, source of shots not determined (5th such incident). 8 US Apache and Blackhawk helicopters of 1st Armored Division land in Tuzla, French peacekeepers take control of checkpoints N. of Sarajevo, resort in Ilidza to be NATO headquarters.

The weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné* reported that two French pilots freed after 104 days in Bosnian Serb hands were mistreated by their captors but a French general told them to cover it up. The paper said the pilots were badly beaten after they parachuted from their burning plane and landed in mountains near the Bosnian Serb stronghold of Pale on August 30.

December 25

Christmas mass held in Sarajevo Catholic cathedral to standing-room only with Muslims attending also. Croatian Cardinal Kuharic calls for all Croatian Serbs who fled to return home if they declare themselves loyal citizens.

December 26

NATO says Mladic sent Smith letter previous week asking for delay in Sarajevo reunification by 6 months, say they want reply by January 6th (Orthodox Christmas), Smith says he was noncommittal but also that he has authority to modify some Dayton deadlines. Dayton agreements stipulate that NATO commander must not have communication with indicted war criminals. 8 fighting vehicles of 1st Armored Division cross pontoon bridge over Sava to secure other bank, 2nd column of American troops leaves Tuzla, goes 40 miles N. into zone of separation to secure building for meetings of military commanders of all sides. US troops set up first checkpoint in Brcko corridor.

December 27

Bosnians and Serbs pulling back from front-line positions near Sarajevo according to treaty deadline. Bosnian Government protests Smith offer to consider Serb request to delay reunification of Sarajevo. General Nash meets with leaders of 3 armies in Posavina Corridor to discuss American deployment. 400 French peacekeepers forced to evacuate near Mostar due to flooding. Unidentified gunman fires automatic weapons into area occupied by US troops, no one injured. British peacekeepers find 12 bodies near Sanski Most probably result of retreating Serb forces. French Defence Minister admits

Serbs under Mladic's direction beat, abused 2 French pilots. ICRC says all sides preventing them from proper access to prisoners.

December 28

US and Russia suspend sanctions against Serbia, Montenegro. Sava River flooding forces US troops to evacuate. 35,000 IFOR troops now in Bosnia, Croatia. Commander of the IFOR ground forces in Bosnia British general Michael Walker said that all parties demonstrated spirit of co-operation and respect of the peace agreement. He also stated that he was very satisfied with the results achieved during the first 10 days of IFOR in Bosnia. Talks between Milosevic and commander of the NATO forces in Europe, general Joulvan in Belgrade. They expressed content for the fact that implementation of the Peace Agreement was successfully going on.

December 29

Nash promises Sava bridge to be open within 24 hrs. Admiral Smith makes first trip to Banja Luka, now says he has no authority to change deadline except by several hours for purely military or logistical reasons and that only EU moderator Bildt could do more. UN says airlift will end next week now that roads are open. EU administrator in Mostar Hans Kochnik says talks have broken down where to draw cities borders.

December 31

Us armour begins crossing into Bosnia, gets caught in traffic jam, but begins deploying throughout Posavina corridor on road to Tuzla.